

READING (Berks)



The Former Boots Building Broad Street Reading

Historic Building Analysis

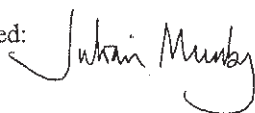


Oxford Archaeology

21st March 2002

Client Name:
John Mowlem and
Company PLC

Issue N^o: 1
NGR: SU 7142 7342

Client Name: John Mowlem and Company PLC
Client Ref No: ~
Document Title: The Former Boots Building, 90-93 Broad Street, Reading
Document Type: Buildings Survey
Issue Number: 1
National Grid Reference: SU 71142 7342
Planning Reference: ~
OA Job Number: 851
Invoice Code: RBESEV
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Date: 20th February 2002
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CONTENTS

Summary	4
1 Introduction	4
1.1 Location and scope of work	4
1.2 Archaeological and historical background	4
1.3 Acknowledgements	4
2 Aims	4
3 Objectives	5
4 Methodology	5
4.1 Scope of Analysis	5
5 Historical Background	6
6 Description	8
6.1 General Form	8
7 Blocks A and B: The Northern Buildings	8
7.1 Introduction	8
7.2 North elevation	8
7.3 South elevation	9
7.4 Ground and First Floors	9
7.5 Second Floor	9
7.6 Third Floor	10
8 Block C: Chain Street	10
8.1 Introduction	10
8.2 Exterior	10
8.3 Interior	11
8.4 First Floor	11
8.5 Second Floor	11
9 Block D: Chain Street	12
9.1 Introduction	12
9.2 Exterior	12
9.3 Interior	12
10 Block E: Chain Street	13
10.1 Introduction	13
10.2 Exterior	13
10.3 Interior	13
11 Block F: The Modern Shop	13
11.1 Introduction	13
11.2 Exterior - Eastern facade	14
11.3 Exterior Western facade	14
11.4 Exterior Southern Wall	14
11.5 The Main Roof	14
11.6 Interior	15
11.7 Basement	15
11.8 Ground Floor	15
11.9 First Floor	15
11.10 Second floor	15

12 Block G: Flat roofed structure adjacent to Block C.....	13
12.1 Introduction	13
12.2 Exterior	13
12.3 Interior	13
13 Block H: Flat roofed structure adjacent to Block H.....	13
13.1 Introduction	13
13.2 Exterior	13
13.3 Interior	13
14 Discussion And Interpretation.....	14
APPENDIX I Trade Directories	15
APPENDIX II Bibliography and references.....	18
APPENDIX III Summary of Site Details	19

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig 1	Site location map
Fig 2	Ground floor plan
Fig 3	First floor plan
Fig 4	Second floor plan
Fig 5	Basement plan
Fig 6	Section of Nos 9-10 Chain Street
Fig 7	Phasing Plan

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SUMMARY

The Boots building at 90-93 Broad Street, Reading, is made up from several buildings with frontages on both Broad Street and Chain Street. Boots had established itself on Broad Street by 1907 and gradually expanded, buying up and converting a number of premises adjoining the property. The present group of buildings includes two 19th-century shops with a unified 1930s façade and an early 19th-century block, with accommodation above a 19th-century warehouse. The greater part of the building, however, consists of a massive modernist 1960s block which lies over earlier buildings, yards and gardens. The earlier buildings were incorporated into this block destroying much of the historic fabric.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) has been commissioned by John Mowlem and Company PLC to undertake an architectural and archaeological study of the former Boots the Chemists buildings on Broad and Chain Streets in the historic heart of Reading, Berkshire (centred at NGR SU 7142 7342). The buildings on the site are being demolished to allow the construction of new commercial premises. Due to the site's location and the archaeological potential of the area a programme of building investigation was carried out; this report (and associated archive) are the results of this investigation. The fieldwork was carried out from 28th-30th August 2001.

1.1.2 Archaeological excavations are also being carried out on the site. The results will be reported separately.

1.2 Archaeological and historical background

1.2.1 An archaeological assessment was undertaken by Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd (ASC) in 2000. This was almost exclusively concerned with the potential for buried archaeology on the site rather than historic buildings. This is the only previous archaeological investigation known to have been undertaken on this site.

1.3 Acknowledgements

1.3.1 Oxford Archaeology would like to thank the building staff at Broad Street, who facilitated access throughout the site.

2 AIMS

2.1.1 The general aims were:

- to assess the date and nature of the buildings prior to demolition.
- To compile a written and photographic archive detailing the historic buildings before demolition.

2.1.2 The oldest and most archaeologically interesting buildings lay along Chain Street and were recorded in more detail than the main core of the building, which is modern and was built during the 1960s.

3 OBJECTIVES

- To locate and record any surviving historic fabric in the property.
- To investigate the historical development and uses of the buildings on site.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Scope of Analysis

4.1.1 *The Base Survey*

The base survey for the present programme of archaeological recording was previously commissioned by John Mowlem and Company PLC. This survey includes floor plans and a number of elevations, provided to OA at a scale of 1:100.

4.1.2 *The Drawn Record*

Annotations were made to the pre-existing survey drawings, with additional details added to allow the reconstruction of basic internal elevations.

4.1.3 *The Photographic Record*

A full black and white negative, colour print and colour slide photographic record was made by OA of all features and details.

4.1.4 *The Written Record*

Written descriptions of the structure were made as part of the annotated drawings, and additional notes were taken as appropriate.

4.1.2 The drawn survey consisted of full plans of the structures at scale 1:100 and one internal sectional elevation taken through the buildings on Chain Street at 1:100. The plans were based on a plan of the complex provided by the contractor. The photographic survey consisted of a comprehensive 35mm survey (black and white prints and colour slides), both internal and external, of general shots and detailed features. The descriptive survey complemented the drawn survey and consisted of further notes. The site work was undertaken in August 2001 by a two man team.

4.1.3 No extensive program of documentary research has been undertaken as part of this project; however, a limited number of sources were consulted to provide a background knowledge of the site and its development. A bibliography of the sources consulted is included at the end of this report.

- 4.1.4 The archive, consisting of the photographs, slides, negatives, site drawings, a copy of this report and further site notes will be deposited with the Museum of Reading.

5 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 5.1.1 Broad Street is historically one of Reading's main thoroughfares and shopping streets. The buildings at 90-93 Broad Street and 6-10 Chain Street lie in the heart of the planned medieval town. The surviving historic buildings which line Broad Street are largely Victorian or 20th-century in origin, and the street is particularly rich in large Victorian gothic red brick shops and public buildings. The street formerly acted as a market.
- 5.1.2 Chain Street is a narrow alleyway running roughly north-south and providing access from Broad Street to Saint Mary's Church and its small green to the south. The alley has long been used as a shopping area although at the time of writing a number of the premises along the street were disused.
- 5.1.3 Historic maps are one of the most reliable ways to track the development of an area the collection of maps for Reading and 90-93 Broad Street is relatively good, from early maps pre-dating the main subject of this study to later more directly relevant maps. Rocque's map of 1752 is rather indistinct but shows houses along the junction of both streets and what appears to be an orchard or large yard behind these buildings. The southern part of Chain Street however appears to have been undeveloped.
- 5.1.4 Charles Tomkins's map of 1802 shows the area in somewhat greater detail. The buildings on the junction of Chain Street and Broad Street are clearly shown with their projecting wings at the rear. Long strip-like plots are attached to the rear of the Broad Street properties and a number of smaller buildings are indicated within these. A group of buildings along the southern end of Chain Street may be on the site of the Boots properties.
- 5.1.5 The next two maps, of 1813 and 1834, do little more than confirm that there were buildings along Chain Street and Broad Street. The 1834 map shows the area to the east of the site (later occupied by the chapel) as being open and seemingly undeveloped. The 1:500 Ordnance Survey town plan of 1879 is at a scale large enough to accurately detail the outline of the buildings. This map shows that by this date the frontages on both roads were not substantially different from those surviving today. The rear yards (now entirely covered by 1960s development) are clearly shown as are paths, trees etc. Nos. 91-93 had long garden plots with trees and outbuildings whilst the humbler properties on Chain Street have small yards which are largely filled with outbuildings.
- 5.1.6 Ordnance Survey maps of 1912 and 1931 show the same situation with both Chain Street and Broad Street crowded with buildings whilst the area of yards and gardens has dwindled considerably.

- 5.1.7 Of particular use in the documentary research were several photographs and illustrations showing Broad Street in the early 20th century. The earliest photograph located, which shows the facade of 90-93 Broad Street, is a photo of a Victory Parade in 1919. This photo shows part of the Boots building from a very narrow angle. It is however possible to make out a tall building with three tall gables; this appears to occupy 90 and 91 Broad Street. The site of 92-93 Broad Street seems to be occupied by a much lower building, perhaps only two stories in height and with a brick facade.
- 5.1.8 The next available historic photo shows a fire in the Woolworths building on the opposite side of Broad Street on 29th August 1922. This photograph shows the old facade of numbers 90 and 91 Broad Street quite clearly. Although again at an inconvenient angle and with much of the building obscured it does give a good idea of the earlier facade. The building is four stories high with three steep gables facing the road. The lower floor is the shop front itself; this is largely obscured on the photograph but appears to be plate glass windows. The first floor is lit by at least two projecting bay windows with what appears to be a cased sash window between them. The second floor seemingly has a row of six rather plain arched windows topped by shallow arches. The third floor is lit by slightly projecting mullioned window cases of a mock medieval appearance. Number 90 is painted white while Number 91 may be in a slightly darker colour. The building has a Boots sign projecting from a bracket on the facade and a large 'Boots the Chemists' sign in metal lettering across the upper stories. Later photos all show the 1930s facade still visible at the time of writing. OA was unable to locate any old photographs of the buildings on Chain Street.
- 5.1.9 A number of town trade directories were consulted as part of this project (these list the trades carried out in towns and were the forerunner of modern directories like Thompsons and the Yellow Pages). The Directories for every year were not consulted but a representative sample was examined (see Appendix 1). The earliest trade directory is the Kelly's of 1847; there are unfortunately no available directories for a further twenty year period until 1867. Reading trade directories were published until the 1970s; the last consulted by the OA was the Kelly's of 1947.
- 5.1.10 The street numbers on Broad Street and Chain Street (Fig. 2) seem to have remained unchanged since the mid 19th-century and the buildings identified in the directories are almost certainly on the site of the development area.
- 5.1.11 The directories indicate patterns of continuation and change. In the earliest entry for 1847 both the Broad Street and Chain Street properties housed a mixture of trades, with a predominance of clothing and apparel makers.
- 5.1.12 Interestingly Number 91 Broad Street was already a chemist's shop by 1847 and remained so until 1895, when it is listed as a fruiterers and seedsmans. By 1905, however, it was a branch of Boots and again a chemist's shop. Other long term businesses included Thomas Alfred's hair dressers at number 90 Broad Street (1860s-mid 1890s), George Hookham's Trunk and Perambulator Warehouse at nos

6 and 7 Chain Street (1880s-late 1920s) and Joseph Gilkes's changing businesses, including toy and fancy repositories, toy bazaars and engraver's shop (1890s-1920s).

5.1.13 Number 9 and 10 Chain Street seem to have seen the most changes in use having been a boot makers and picture dealers (1867), watchmakers (1884, 1890), tinsmiths (1884), herbalists (1895-1907), dining rooms (1895), tobacconists (1901-1922) and fruiterers (1914-22).

5.1.14 In the 20th century with the arrival of Boots in 1905 the general picture became one of gradual expansion of the chemists and its taking over of neighbouring properties. From its original shop at 91 Broad Street it then extends to Number 90 by 1914. By 1938 it has acquired Nos 92 and 93, and by 1947 it has also acquired Nos. 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 Chain Street and covers the whole of the development area.

5.1.15 The buildings of Broad Street and Chain Street have undergone a gradual process of development. The site lies in the heart of the medieval town and both thoroughfares are ancient in origin. Whilst the buildings investigated were all relatively recent in date (see below) it is highly likely that other (now vanished) buildings stood on the site in the past. The location of the buildings suggests that this area may have been used for commercial as well as residential properties since at least the Middle Ages.

6 DESCRIPTION

6.1 General Form

6.1.1 The former Boots building is made up of a number of different buildings fronting onto Broad Street and Chain Street, and are here treated as seven different buildings: A and B, C, D, E, F, G, and H, described in Sections 7-13 below. A number of sites are recorded on the local Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) but these all lie outside the immediate area. No known archaeological work has previously taken place on the site of the Boots buildings.

7 BLOCKS A AND B: THE NORTHERN BUILDINGS

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 Two 19th-century blocks unified by a 1930s facade and much altered both internally and externally. The two lower floors are dominated by the 1960s extension to the south.

7.1.2 This group of buildings front onto Broad Street and present the main facade and entranceway to the larger Boots buildings behind. Behind the 1930s facade lie two joined buildings, both of late nineteenth-century date. These were later used as offices and training areas by Boots the Chemists and were incorporated into 1960s rebuilding.

7.2 North elevation

7.2.1 The brick built north elevation faces onto Broad Street and is the main facade of the entire complex. It presents a somewhat grand brick frontage with a glazed shop front surmounted by two stories with glazed windows (seven on the first floor, nine on the second). These are mostly rectangular sash windows with a large central window on the upper floor, provided with a bath stone surround capped by a scrolled pediment. Two bands of light coloured stone run between the first and second storey windows. On the second floor there are small oval windows at each end of the facade. Above the upper windows runs a line of six small rectangular blind windows or plaques, which are purely decorative. Much of the roofline is hidden from the street by a projecting parapet.

7.2.2 The facade is built in a symmetrical neo-Queen Anne/Georgian style fashionable in the 1930s. The facade itself is largely unchanged from as built but the plate glass windows of the shop front itself is post war in origin.

7.3 South elevation

7.3.1 The two buildings are largely incorporated into later building, and only the upper two stories can be seen from the flat roof of the 1960s shop. The fact that there are two different blocks is clearly visible on this elevation whereas on the main facade they appear to be one building.

7.3.2 Block A: This eastern block has brick walling painted an off-white colour. It is joined to Block B to its west and is slightly lower in height than its neighbour (from which it is divided by a stepped gable). The roof is slated and has two dormer windows both probably relatively recent in origin (post-War?). Below the windows are two small sash windows and a door which leads onto the flat roof of Block F. The external waste pipes from the sinks and toilets on the upper floor are attached to the outside of the wall.

7.3.3 Block B: Slightly more is visible of this block than its neighbour and three stories remain exposed. Once again the construction is brick painted in an off white colour. The lowest visible story has a fire door exiting onto Block F as its only feature. The floor above this has another fire door, an iron balcony and fire ladder and a window with shallow brick arch. The upper floor has a large (inserted) window, a smaller (possibly original) sash and three small (inserted) latrine windows. Once again external pipe work may be noticed, which serves the toilets on the upper floor. A chimneystack is situated on the west end of the block.

7.4 Ground and First Floors

7.4.1 On the ground and first floors the shop floor was almost entirely inaccessible during the visit (except the stairwells) due to asbestos removal being undertaken at the time.

7.5 Second Floor

7.5.1 The second floor was available for inspection; this area had been used as offices and training areas by Boots and was still carpeted and partially furnished during the visits by OA. This area was entirely refurbished in the later 20th-century and consequently there were no features identified as being of historic interest.

7.5.2 The stairs have been refitted and refurbished recently. There is a solid banister rail topped with a squared polished wood handrail. The stairs are lit by modern strip-lights and there are no recognisable historic features remaining in-situ. There are a number of offices on this floor, as well as several smaller storage rooms. As with the stairwells, all of these rooms have modern fittings with no historic fabric being visible. The main facade however retains its 1930s windows and the rooms facing Broad Street are lit by these. All the rooms have modern fire doors. There are several cased girders in the larger rooms at the east end of the building which may be contemporary with the 1930s facade.

7.6 Third Floor

7.6.1 The small third floor again houses offices and storage areas of later 20th century date. There are also two toilet rooms on this floor, and as with the floor below there was very little historic fabric or fittings available for inspection by OA. On the western side lies the stairwell, a corridor area and the male WCs. The only feature of interest was an access hatch in the corridor, which allowed a very limited glimpse of the brickwork of the west wall; this seemed to be typical 19th- or early 20th-century brick laid in a stretcher bond.

7.6.2 The roof of the third floor is cut away on the north side and the roof slopes steeply on this side, whilst on the south side it is full height. There are two dormer windows on the north side which allow in light and air, but only look out onto the brick pediment of the main facade.

7.6.3 The roof structure is made up of simple soft wood trusses entirely consistent with a 1930s date. Although only a small area was visible, it was apparent that the roof consisted of a simple series of plain trusses supporting a series of rafters.

8 BLOCK C: CHAIN STREET

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 An early 19th-century town building, somewhat mutilated by later alteration and refurbishment. This building has undergone a host of uses since its original construction.

8.1.2 This plain three-storied structure is aligned roughly north-south and looks out over Chain Street to the east; to the west it faces a yard at the rear of a number of properties. There may have been a building on this site for some considerable time - during the 19th and 20th centuries it acted as a shop, restaurant, home and doss house. Latterly the upper part was used for storage and to support aluminium ducts from the air conditioning system while the lower part was part of the shop floor.

The building itself appears to date from the first half of the 19th century although it may be late 18th-century in origin.

8.2 Exterior

8.2.1 The main facade onto Chain Street is three stories tall; the lower floor is the shop floor with two accommodation floors above. The shop floor is fronted with plate glass windows, and on the floors above there are three iron framed windows on each floor set in shallow topped brick arches. The roof itself is of a shallow pitch and is covered in slates. Modern Boots plastic signage and fascia is set above the first floor on the street front.

8.2.2 The rear face is mostly obscured by Block G. The north and south elevations are joined to the adjacent buildings.

8.3 Interior

8.3.1 Only the upper two floors were available for inspection during the field visit (due to asbestos removal in the shop floor area). The first floor was covered in numerous aluminium and steel ducts associated with air-conditioning and heating of the shop below. Apart from this, and some limited signs of the area having been used for storage, it seems as if these floors have been unoccupied for some time.

8.3.2 All the windows on this floor are iron framed and have been painted white over the glass. The rooms are almost universally decorated with 1960s or 1970s wall paper in brightly coloured geometric patterns. The electric fittings are all old Bakelite types, which do not appear to have been used for a considerable time.

8.3.3 The first floor is accessed from a small door or hatch on the northern wall, which leads into the adjacent building. The floor was originally accessed by a now blocked stairway.

8.4 First Floor

8.4.1 *Room 1:* A large open room with timber partition south wall and stud and plasterboard east wall. There are no features of any historical significance this room.

8.4.2 *Room 2:* A former bathroom and toilet divided from the other rooms and the stairwell by a stud and planking partition. The fittings have been stripped out although the pipework is still visible, as is a built-in cupboard.

8.4.3 *Room 3:* A large open room lit by two iron windows; a cupboard is built into the thickness of the south wall under the staircase.

8.4.4 *Room 4:* This room is finished in white paint rather than the wallpaper seen elsewhere. During the visit the room was filled with air vents and ducts (inserted in recent years to service the shop floor below), which severely limited access.

8.4.5 *Rooms 5 and 6:* A toilet and a possible shower room, side by side and divided from each other by a thin partition wall; a mirror survives in the northern room. The shower and toilet have been removed, although a sink and patches of tiling remain in situ.

8.4.6 *Stairs:* The stairs down to the ground floor are blocked although the banister and newel post remain in place. A narrower staircase leads up to the floor above.

8.5 Second Floor

8.5.1 The second floor has three rooms, two to the left of the stairwell and one to the right. The rooms all have the iron framed (painted over) windows seen on the floor below. The rooms are all decorated in the same geometric 1960s or 1970s green wallpaper and have the Bakelite electrical fittings and light switches seen elsewhere. The western walls of the rooms slope with the roofline, although this slope does not run all the way to the eaves as a storage area runs uninterrupted along the entire west wall. In this quite large open area the softwood joists of the roof are exposed. The doors are not original, but are plain wooden board doors with handles and hinges suggestive of a 1960s or 1970s date.

8.5.2 *Room 6:* The upper floor has a plasterboard ceiling, some of which appears to be a recent repair. Patches of this board have fallen away allowing a slight glimpse of the roof structure above. This roof is a simple affair (possibly recently rebuilt) with softwood timbers making up open trusses.

8.5.3 *Room 7:* This L-shaped room lies at the centre of the block and has the decorative scheme seen elsewhere in this building; a hatch accesses the storage area on the west side of the room.

8.5.4 *Room 8:* A chimney breast sits in Room 8 on the left of the stairwell. This feature has dictated the shape of the rooms and although there are no existing fireplaces a timber step in the northernmost room may be related to a hidden hearthstone.

9 BLOCK D: CHAIN STREET

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 A 19th-century urban building, altered on the lower floor but with its two upper floors almost intact. This building was most probably used as warehouse space and offices for much of its history.

9.1.2 This building was for a long period a furniture warehouse (see Appendix X), and is a tall, narrow three-storied brick structure facing onto Chain Street to the east. To the west it faces onto the flat roofs of the 1960s Boots building. The present building appears to be late 19th-century in origin and is little altered apart from on the ground floor. The building now forms part of the Boots complex and the lower floor was used as shop, while the two floors above seem to have been offices.

9.2 Exterior

9.2.1 The eastern facade looks out over Chain Street and is constructed of brick on the lower part with render on the jettied top storey. The ground floor has a plate glass shop front topped by a frieze displaying the Boots logo. On the first floor is a large bay window, which slightly projects over the street. Above this window is a slight jetty supporting the gable of the upper floor. The gable has a double window and is capped by bargeboards and a turned finial.

9.2.2 The western facade looks out onto the rear of the property and is mostly obscured by the flat-roofed Blocks G and H. The facade has a hipped roof partially built into Block F. There is a sash window in the gable and a small window below. The only other opening is a fire escape exiting onto the roof of Block H.

9.3 Interior

9.3.1 The ground floor was inaccessible at the time of the visit due to asbestos removal. The first floor is divided into two small offices joined by a narrow corridor and divided by the stairwell; the walls are made of thin stud and plaster. Both rooms are served by fireplaces (boarded over during the visit). The western room is rather plain and is lit by a single sash window. The eastern room has a decorative plaster cornice running around the ceiling and is lit by a large bay window, which takes up most of the eastern wall. The window still retains some panels of frosted glass.

9.3.2 The upper floor is accessed by a narrow staircase running between the offices. At the top of this stair lies a shallow recessed arch in the interior wall. This is formed by the two flues feeding smoke up from the fireplaces in the rooms below, and joining a central chimneystack. There are two rooms on the upper floor. The eastern room has somewhat restricted headroom due to the groining of the roof above. The western room has greater space although the hipped roof is somewhat low.

10 BLOCK E: CHAIN STREET

10.1 Introduction

10.1.1 A modern retail building built in a traditional style.

10.1.2 The status of this building is unsure, although it may be leased not owned by Boots - there is a suggestion that it will not be affected by work in the development area. This building is modern (built in the 1990s). It was used by Boots as an optician's shop and offices.

10.2 Exterior

10.2.1 The eastern elevation faces onto Chain Street, and is brick built with a tiled roof. The building is two stories tall with a central gable. The ground floor is the shop floor, and is defined by a row of plate glass windows; above this lies a white frieze with the Boots logo. The upper floor has four windows (two in the projecting central portion and one at each end); above this lies the gable itself which is decorated with a inscribed stone panel.

- 10.2.2 The rear elevation faces onto a small walled yard. It has a long sloping roof with several dormers with louvered vents, and is lit by a number of small skylights in the roof.

10.3 Interior

- 10.3.1 The interior was not inspected due to asbestos removal during the site visit.

11 BLOCK F: THE MODERN SHOP

11.1 Introduction

- 11.1.1 A massive late 20th-century shop building with shop floors, offices and storage space. This building incorporates several earlier structures (dealt with elsewhere in this report).

- 11.1.2 The main area of the Boots shop is made up of a large block constructed over an area of former yards and gardens. This 1960s block is built of uniform grey/green brickwork and houses a large area of the shop floors as well as offices, kitchen canteen and changing rooms. The block is accessed from the rear (south) by a loading bay and on the east by a side entrance to the shop floor.

- 11.1.3 Although the 1960s Boots building incorporates a number of earlier buildings (these are discussed separately), it has largely obliterated whatever stood on the site before and is devoid of features of historic interest.

11.2 Exterior - Eastern facade

- 11.2.1 The eastern facade of the 1960s block faces onto Chain Street and provides a side entrance to the main shop floor plate glass shop windows. There is a Boots sign and fascia above the glass doors, and above this the exterior wall is faced in small white ceramic tiles.

- 11.2.2 A flat roofed area on the top of this face forms a balcony area next to the canteen. This is fronted by steel railings, and has a rear wall of aluminium sheet with a glazed wall above.

11.3 Exterior Western facade

- 11.3.1 This side of the building fronts onto a narrow alleyway; between this and the adjacent property there are few architectural details visible on this side. The walls are built of the usual plain grey/green brick. They are at two levels a steel walkway runs along the roof of the lower level this is part of a fire escape. Fire doors exit onto this walkway from the shop floor and offices.

11.4 Exterior Southern Wall

- 11.4.1 The southern side of the 1960s building is a large plain face with almost no features. A loading bay lies on the west side, with a platform for unloading/ loading

lorries. The wall above the loading bay is covered with a large blank area of aluminium sheet. Above this sits a row of narrow windows looking out from one of the changing rooms. To the east of the loading bay lies a massive blank wall pierced only by a security door and the canteen window.

- 11.4.2 The security door lies on the first floor level and is accessed along a steel walkway running along a flat roof, accessed from the ground by a galvanised steel stair. This flat roofed structure is fronted by a low brick wall which is evidently earlier than the 1960s building it fronts (see Block H).

11.5 The Main Roof

- 11.5.1 The roof of the 1960s building is a flat roof at different levels. The largest area lies immediately behind the Broad Street buildings and comprises a flat roof surrounding a lantern light of timber decking, overlain with bituminous felt. A network of steel walkways and pre-cast concrete slabs crosses it. A covered walkway, with a roof of corrugated Perspex walls of opaque fibreglass panels on a mild steel frame, runs across the roof.

- 11.5.2 The pipes and ducts of air handling units also run along the southern edge of the roof. A large raised area lies to the south of this roof this contains lift machinery, air conditioning units, heating plant and other services, which all lie behind doors with aluminium louvers. The upper floor of this area is accessed by an external ladder.

11.6 Interior

- 11.6.1 It was noted that there were almost no features of historic interest within the 1960s building as it was inspected by OA.

11.7 Basement

- 11.7.1 The basement is a large open area interspersed with rows of columns (steel and concrete). This area was used for storage during the Boots occupancy and was linked to the floors above by stairs and a lift. The basement has been deeply terraced into the ground surface and lies below the modern street level.

- 11.7.2 The only surviving historic features are the coal arches from the 19th-century buildings. These lie in the north of the basement beneath the modern entrance.

11.8 Ground Floor

- 11.8.1 This area was mostly not inspected due to asbestos removal. It forms the main shop floor, with its paved concrete flooring and tiled walls and ceiling. The finance offices also lie on this floor; these have safes and reinforced doors and windows.

11.9 First Floor

- 11.9.1 This floor was similarly not inspected due to asbestos removal.

11.10 Second floor

- 11.10.1 This floor was mostly accessible during the OA visit. This level was part of the service area of the shop and included the canteen and its associated kitchen and the toilets and changing rooms. The canteen is a large open area lit by windows on the eastern wall. The canteen's kitchen is open to the dining area and is tiled throughout; it has a window overlooking the loading bay to the rear of the building.
- 11.10.2 The main lift shaft and two stairwells lie on this floor. There are also two sets of toilets/changing rooms (male and female), which are tiled throughout and again entirely modern.

12 BLOCK G: FLAT ROOFED STRUCTURE ADJACENT TO BLOCK C**12.1 Introduction**

- 12.1.1 A small modern flat roofed structure.
- 12.1.2 This small block lies between Blocks H, C and E and is a modern flat roofed structure supporting a galvanised steel walkway and fire escape.

12.2 Exterior

- 12.2.1 The exterior is a plain brick wall in grey/green brick identical to that found in the 1960s block, and is pierced by a single security door and a blocked door with concrete.

12.3 Interior

- 12.3.1 Not inspected due to asbestos removal.

13 BLOCK H: FLAT ROOFED STRUCTURE ADJACENT TO BLOCK H**13.1 Introduction**

- 13.1.1 A modern flat roofed structure incorporating an earlier brick wall.
- 13.1.2 A small flat roofed structure forming the rear of Block F. This block lies at the end of the 19th-century gardens and incorporates an old boundary wall.

13.2 Exterior

- 13.2.1 This is a plain brick wall topped in 1960s brick. There is evidence for repair and patching; a number of nail holes indicate that fittings were once attached to the wall. The bricks appear to be 19th-century in date and historic maps show a garden wall on or near this location. This earlier wall has been incorporated into the later shop building.

13.3 Interior

13.3.1 Not inspected due to asbestos removal.

14 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

14.1.1 The buildings which make up the former Boots property are a good illustration of the historic development of this part of Reading. The earliest building on the site is Block C, which appears to be early 19th-century in date, although buildings of this simple form may be somewhat earlier or later in origin. The lack of datable features caused by the stripping and reordering of the interior, and the replacement of the roof timbers, has left very little dating evidence.

14.1.2 Its neighbour Block D is probably the next oldest surviving building and is late 19th-century in origin. Its mock Tudor facade conforms with a great number of other Reading buildings of a similar date. Both Blocks C and D were used for various purposes before they were purchased by Boots, and they are good examples of the type of commercial buildings in the back streets of the town centre.

14.1.3 The next buildings in the sequence are Blocks A and B, which are presumably the buildings shown on early 20th-century photographs of Broad Street and were part of the original Boots. Again constant reordering both inside and out has meant that there is a lack of readily datable features, and only a very general date may be given. In the 1930s the elaborate brick front was added to Blocks A and B, creating a unified facade.

14.1.4 The next known major development was the addition of the large 1960s block, which overlaid an area of gardens and the earlier shop. This massive building all but obliterated any signs of earlier activity in the area which it covered. Later development was limited to slight alteration and addition to this set of buildings, and reordering of the fittings.

14.1.5 These buildings are the main physical remains of centuries of urban development on this site. They are, however, mostly recent in origin and this is reflective of the premium value of this town centre location for commercial activity. The earliest buildings (Blocks A, B, C and D) have all suffered from various stages of alteration and remodelling to suit their changing uses. Surprisingly it is the oldest building (Block C) which was most complete, and managed to retain a few historic elements (despite a major 1960s or '70s reordering). The conversion of the ground floors of all the 19th-century buildings to shop floors meant that any early commercial features were either obscured or destroyed, and the lack of access (due to asbestos removal) precluded any inspection by OA.

Oxford Archaeology

March 2002

APPENDIX I TRADE DIRECTORIES

Several trade directories were consulted by the OA to establish the changing nature of commercial activity on the site from the mid 19th century to the present day. These Directories are invaluable in showing continuity and change of building use in this part of the town centre. The entries below are condensed extracts from chosen directories.

Kelly's Directory 1847*Broad Street*

- 90 Bress Miss, dress maker and milliner
- 91 Hodson James, chemist and druggist and agent to Star fire and life insurance company
- 92 Rivers Henry James, painter and glazier
- 93 Page Charles, boot and shoe maker

Chain Street

- 7 Pursey William, fruiterer
- 8 Sumner Mrs Jane, straw bonnet maker
- Sumner George, tailor

Macaulay's Directory 1867*Broad Street*

- 90 Thompson Alfred, hair cutter wig maker and perfumer
- 91 Sprent Charles, dispensing and family chemist
- 92 Rivers Henry, house sign and ornamental painter
- 93 Winch William, watch and clock maker and jeweller

Chain Street

- 8 Cooper, John Gooding, hair cutter, perfumer and public library
- 9 Garrard William, boot and shoe maker
- 10 Cooper LJ hosier, picture and general dealer

Steven's Directory 1884*Broad Street*

- 90 Thompson Alfred and Son, hair dressers
- 91 Spent and Biddles, chemists and dentists
- 91 Biddles WB, veterinary surgeon
- 92 Yard Wm, tobacconist and valuer
- 93 Hodges Wm, confectioner

Chain Street

- 6and7 Hookham Geo, trunk and perambulator warehouse
- 8 Dennis W, wardrobe dealer
- 9 Drake S, watch repairing warehouse
- 10 Upright Alfred, tinsmith

Kelly's Directory 1890-91*Broad Street*

- 90 Thompson Alfred and Son, hair dressers
- 91 Spent and Biddles, chemists
- 93 Hodges Wm, confectioner

Chain Street

- 6and7 Hookham George, furniture warehouse
- 8 Dennis Wm, Wardrobe dealer

9,10,11 and 12 Drake Samuel, watch maker

Smith's Directory 1895*Broad Street*

90 Newman R M Bookseller, stationer, printer, bookbinder

91 Rudland William, seedsman and fruiterer

92 and 93 Gilkes, Joseph Charles, engraver India rubber stamp works

Chain Street

7 Hookham George, trunk warehouse

8 Savory Mrs, wardrobe dealer

9 Tull David and son, herbalists

10 May James, dining rooms

Kelly's Directory 1901*Broad Street*

90 Public Benefit Boot co

91 Rudland William, Seedsman

92 and 93 Gilkes Joseph C, toy bazaar

Chain Street

6,7 and 8 Hookham George, furniture warehouse

9 Tull David, herbalists

10 Roberts Charles, tobacconists

Postal Directory of Reading and neighbourhood 1907*Broad Street*

90 Hepworth J and son Ltd, clothiers

91 Boots cash chemists

92 and 93 Gilkes Joseph Charles, toy and fancy repository

Chain Street

7-8 Hookham George, trunk warehouse

9 Tull David and son, medical herbalists

10 Roberts Charles, tobacconist and newsagent

Kelly's Directory 1914*Broad Street*

90 and 91 Boots cash chemists (southern) Ltd

92 and 93 Gilkes Joseph C, toy bazaar

Chain Street

6,7 and 8 Hookham and son, furniture warehouse

9 Clarke William John, fruiterer

10 Roberts Charles, tobacconist

Smith's Directory 1922*Broad Street*

90 and 91 Boots cash chemists (southern) Ltd

92 and 93 Curry's cycle co toy fancy and stationery repository

Chain Street

6,7 and 8 Hookham and son, furniture warehouse

9 Clarke WJ, Fruiterer etc

10 Roberts Charles, tobacconist and newsagent

Kelly's Directory 1938

Broad Street

90,91,92 and 93 Boots the Chemists

Chain Street

9 Humphrey H (F.R.H.S) and son fruiterers

10 Boots the chemist

Kelly's Directory 1947

Broad Street

90,91,92 and 93 Boots the chemists

Chain Street

6,7,8,9 and 10, Boots the chemists

APPENDIX II BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

The main research was undertaken at Reading Local Studies Centre, Reading Public Library. Other sources were consulted at the Ashmolean Library, Oxford and the Oxford Archaeological Unit's library

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- Map of the borough of Reading as determined by the commissioners appointed by the honourable the commons house of parliament (1834)
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- Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Surv 1875/7 revised 1909/10
- Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Surv 1875/7 revised 1931S
- Ordnance Survey 1:1250 Surv 1956, revised 1967
- Ordnance Survey 1:1250 Surv 1956 revised 1987

Other sources

List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historic Interest (Berkshire) DOE

APPENDIX III SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: The Former Boots Building, 90-93 Broad Street, Reading

Site code: RBES01

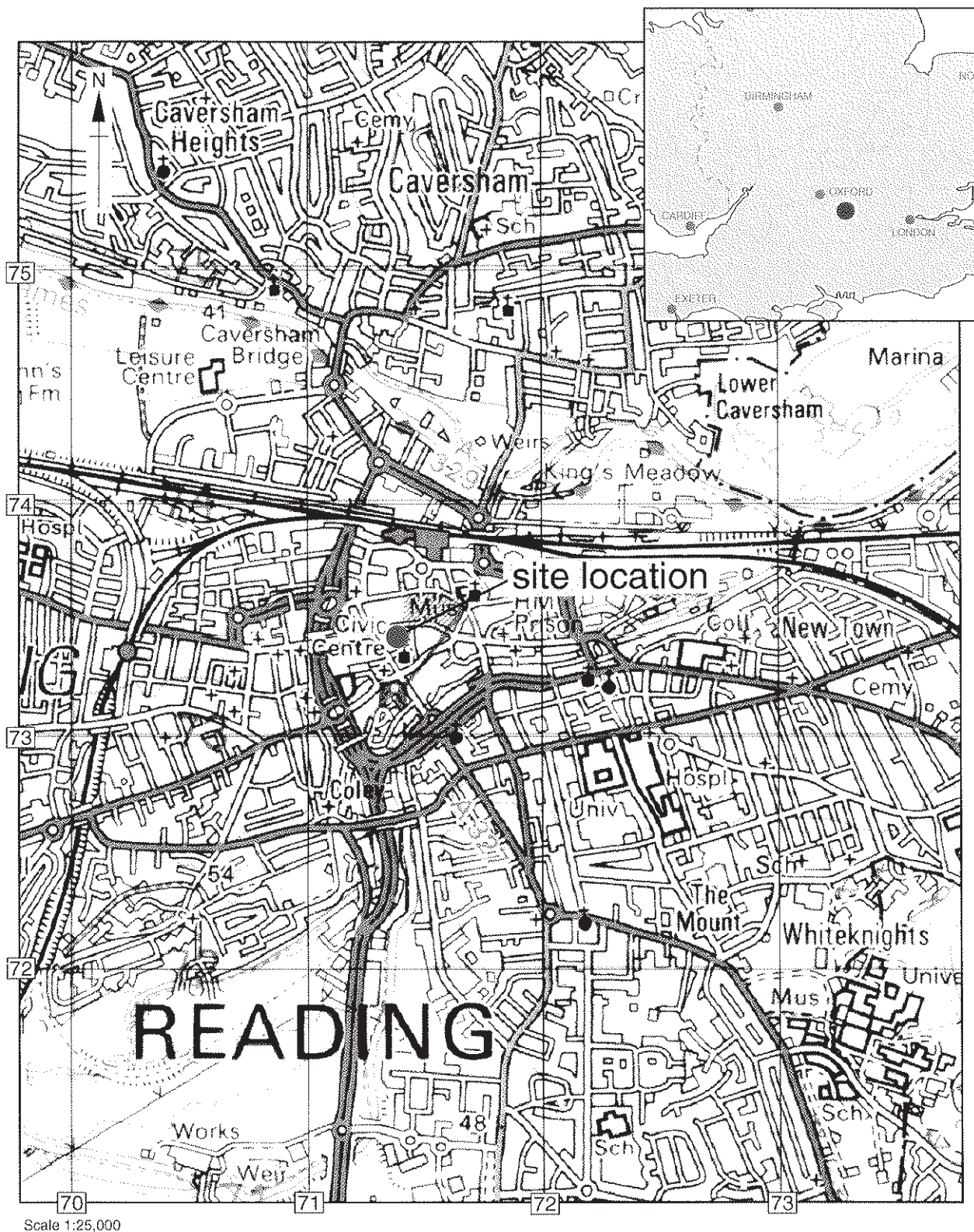
Grid reference: SU 7142 7342

Type of evaluation: Building Analysis

Date and duration of project:

Summary of results: The investigation focussed on the former Boots the Chemists premises on Broad Street and Chain Street, central Reading. 19th-century properties made up much of the road frontages and a 1930s facade looks out onto Broad Street itself. The greater part of the building however consists of a massive modernist 1960s block which lies over earlier buildings, yards and gardens. The earlier buildings were incorporated into this block destroying much of the historic fabric.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited in due course with the Museum of Reading.



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Figure 1: Site Location

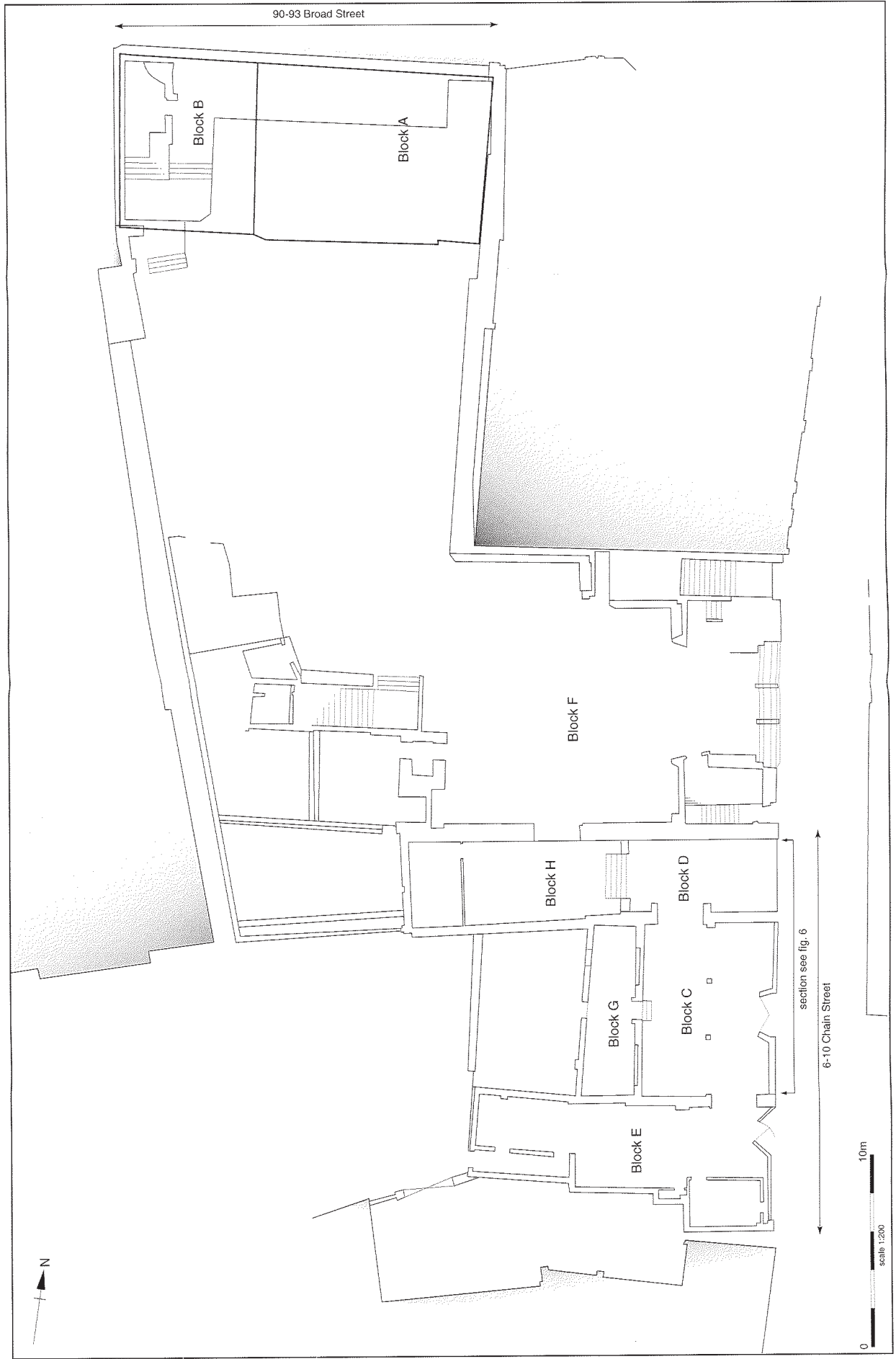


Figure 2: 90-93 Broad Street, Reading, Ground Floor



Figure 3: 90-93 Broad Street, Reading, First Floor

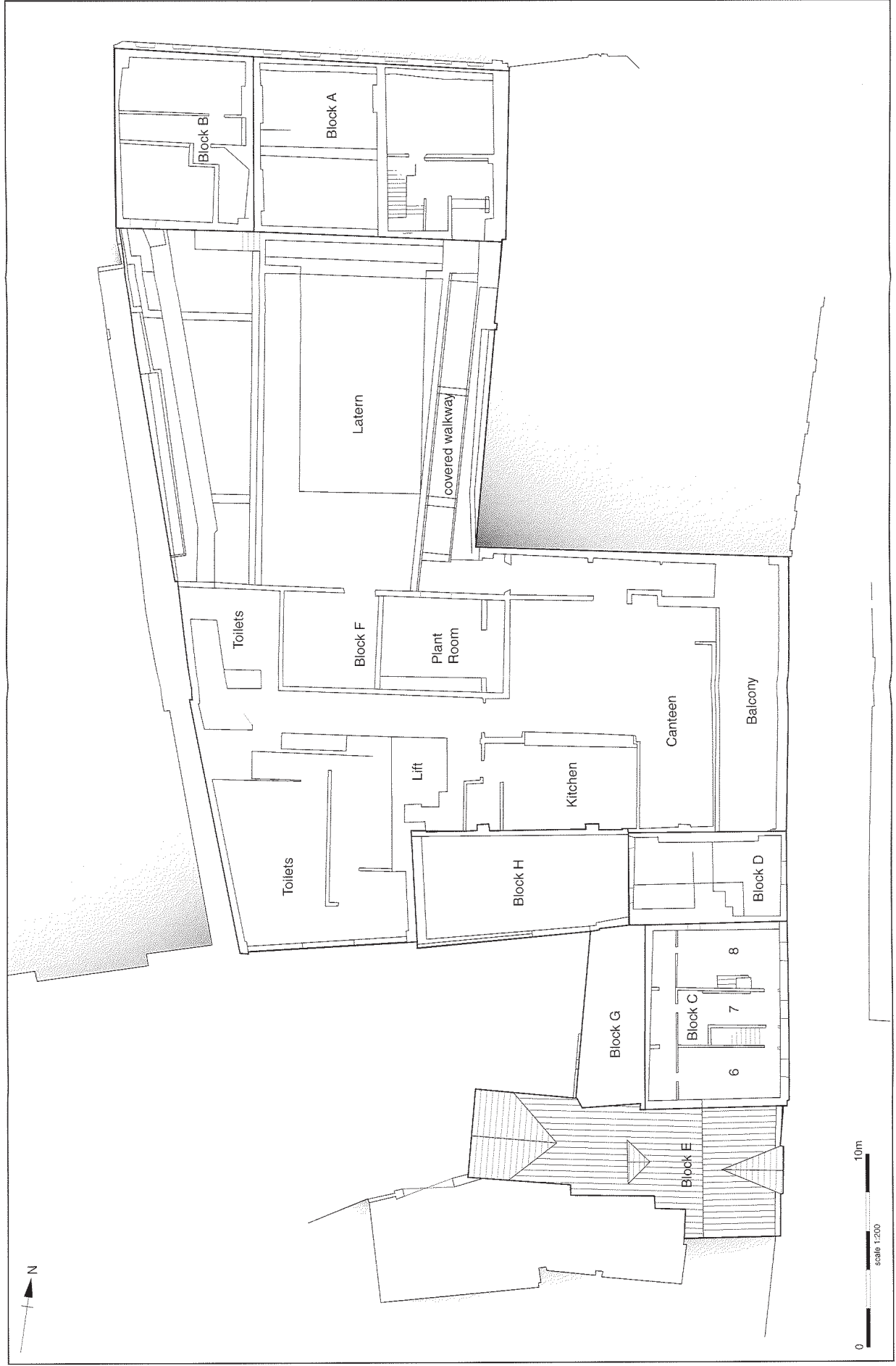


Figure 4: 90-93 Broad Street, Reading, Second Floor

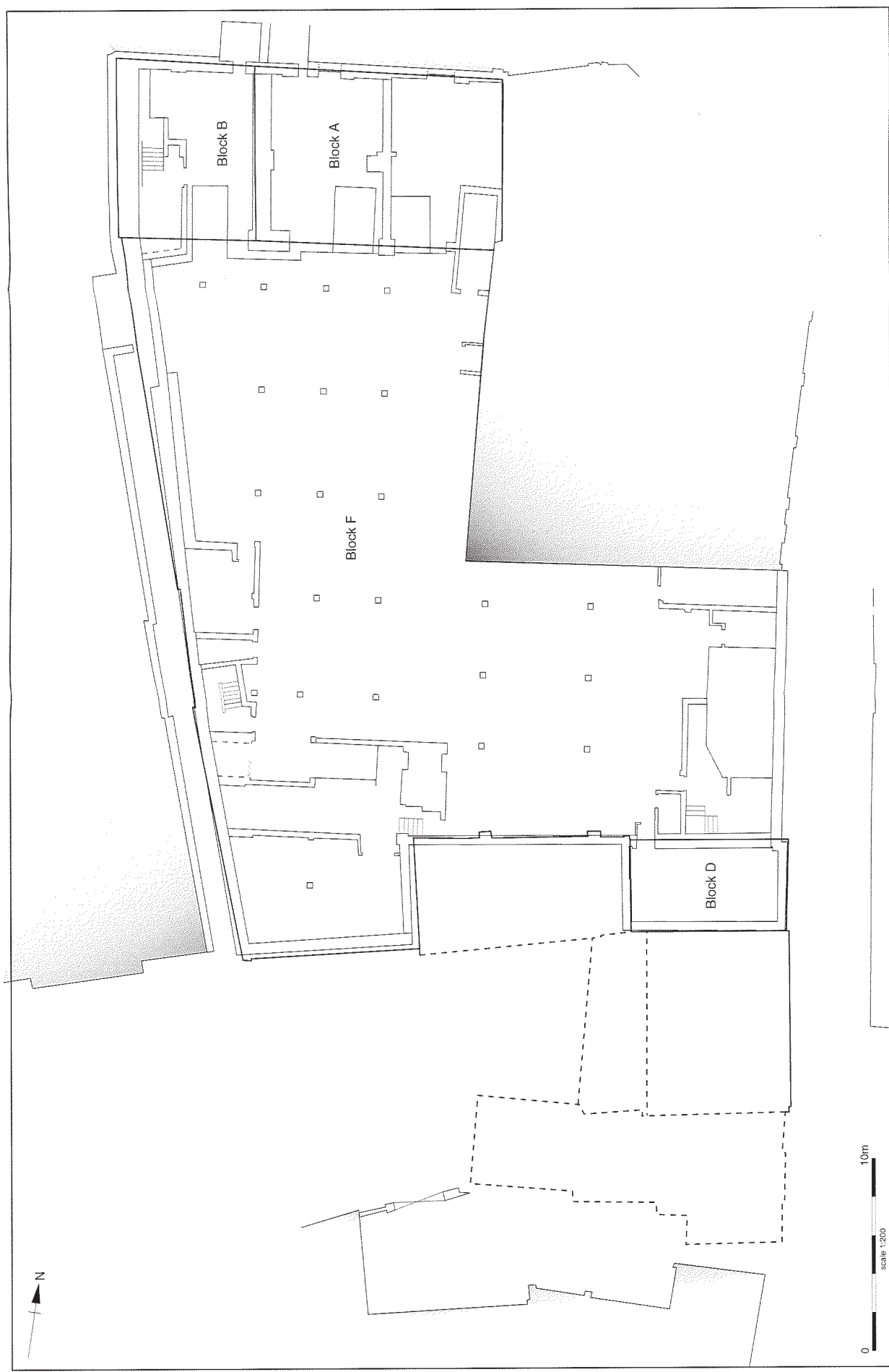


Figure 5: 90-93 Broad Street, Reading, Basement Floor

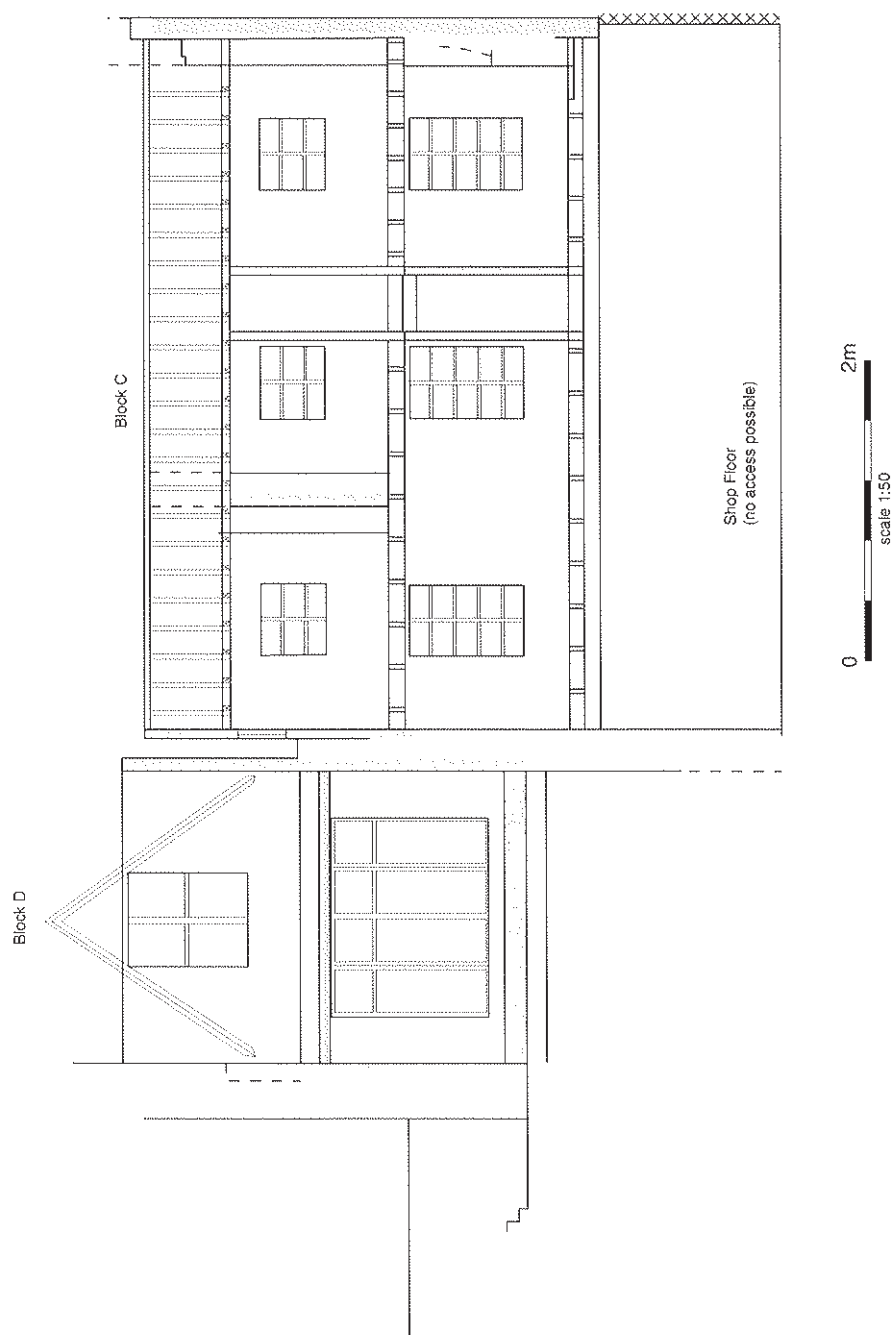


Figure 6 : Section of Nos. 9-10 Chain Lane, Reading

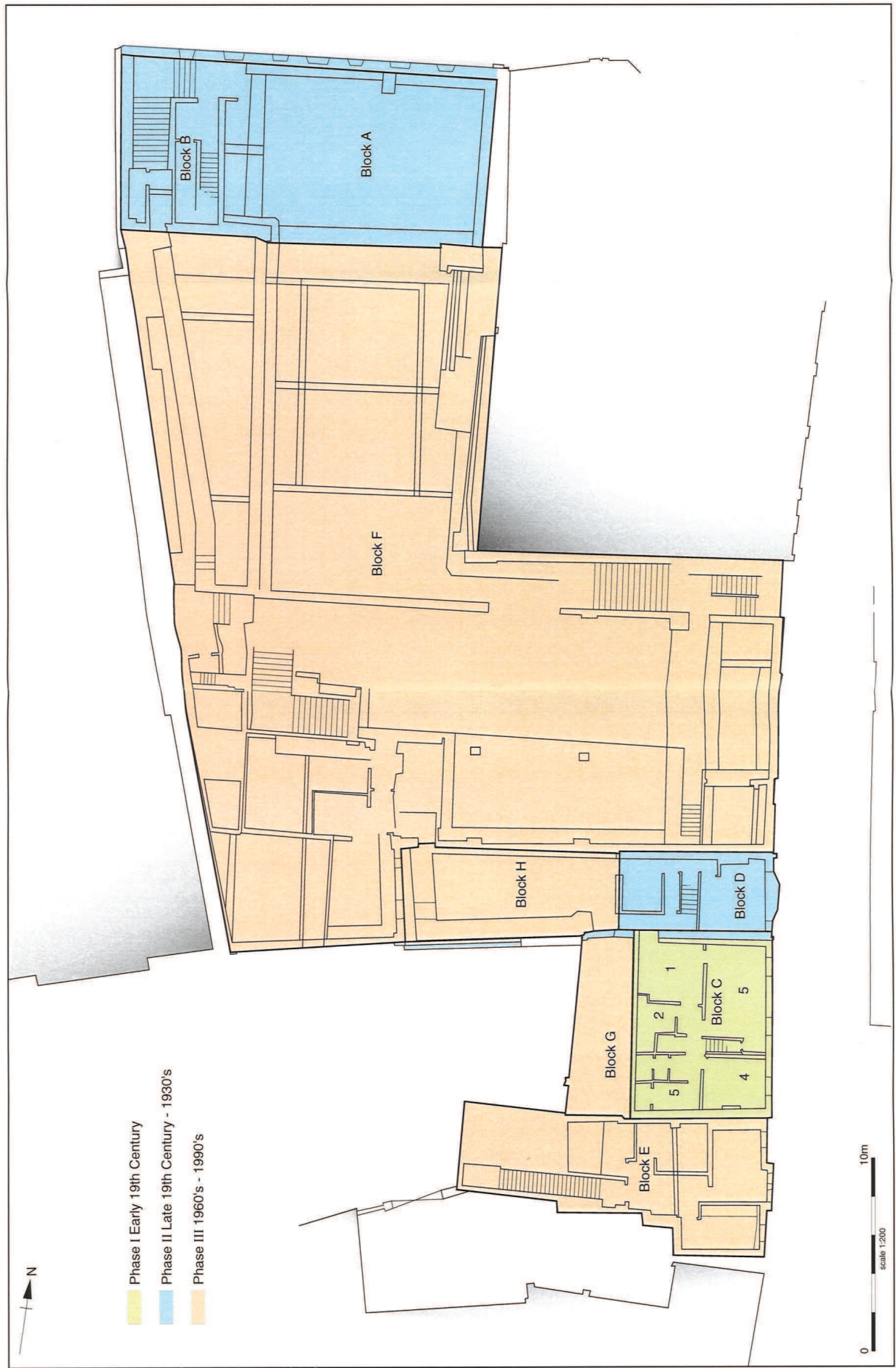


Figure 7: 90-93 Broad Street, Reading, Phasing



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