

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AT
“SNUFF MILL WAREHOUSE”
6 PARK LANE.
BEWDLEY
WORCESTERSHIRE



Mike Napthan Archaeology

3 Hamilton Road, Worcester, WR5 1AG mike@mikenapthanarchaeology.co.uk

Historic building recording at “Snuff Mill Warehouse” 6 Park Lane. Bewdley Worcestershire

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Mike Napthan MCIFA
with historical research by Alison Wragg MA

1 Summary

Building recording was undertaken at “Snuff Mill Warehouse”, Park Lane, Bewdley, Worcestershire prior to proposed sub-division of the property into apartments. The building is still in partial use as office units therefore full internal recording was not possible at this time. The appellation “Snuff Mill Warehouse” is a modern concoction and no links to the snuff industry have been found.

The building is clearly one of the most important historic industrial structures remaining in the town, but its early history remains very unclear. The buildings are listed as early 18th and late 18th Century warehouses, but the built form of the earlier block strongly suggests that it was built as a well lit workshop rather than a storage building. Elements of the later block are also very suggestive that the building was used and adapted for evolving industrial purposes. The shell of the earlier (southern) block remains remarkably well preserved with evidence of original fenestration to all elevations – those windows blocked by construction of the northern block remain visible as areas of blocking on three levels. The building also has evidence of an original early 18th C chimney stack – again evidence that it was not a warehouse but used industrially. There is some residual evidence of probable drive shafting, and areas of wear suggestive of belt driven machinery – these are unlikely to be 18th Century, as no evidence of motive power is currently visible, but given the loss of many of the ancillary buildings there is some possibility that a horse powered gin was available in this period.

The character of the building materials and style of construction indicates a date in the 1720s-40s for the earliest block. The documented history of the building suggests that it was occupied by the leather processing trade from circa 1819 and it is quite possible that Block 1 was specifically built for the unwholesome but profitable business of preparing hides. This skilled trade required very good natural lighting and ventilation and a certain level of warmth to retain flexibility in the hides. There is excavated archaeological evidence of tanning pits on a site just to the east, but no clear evidence of when the trade began on the present site.

The construction of Block 2 appears to have occurred around the end of the 18th Century, but at present no closely dateable features have been seen. The second block was built abutting the northern wall of the earlier structure but there was only limited communication between the two buildings. The availability of natural light in the earlier block was drastically reduced by the new building, and Block 2 had very few windows – this suggests a change in function at the

time Block 2 was built. Block 2 was provided with large arched openings linking it to a now lost building in the north-west corner of the present property/part under Orchard Rise.

Further examination after removal of modern partitioning, floor cladding and ceilings may reveal some more significant features. The floors in particular may retain evidence of the former internal layout; the present internal divisions being almost entirely modern studwork.

2 Introduction

2.1 This report represents the findings of historic building recording at 6 Park Lane, Bewdley (NGR SO7848175235; Fig 1). The building survey was undertaken by Mike Napthan Archaeology in February 2021. The project was designed to provide a basic interpretative record of the building as it stands prior to division of the property into apartments. The building is Grade II Listed. The proposed conversion scheme is being submitted for Mr Ralph Round the owner. The project design has been prepared in accordance with the RCHME guidance “Recording Historic buildings- a descriptive specification”, (3rd Edn, 1996) and the Standard and Guidance for Historic Building Recording issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (1994) and Heritage England’s Understanding historic buildings – a guide to good recording practice (2006). The project also met the requirements and guidelines for Archaeological Projects in Worcestershire.

2.2 The building is Grade II Listed:
SO 7875 SW BEWDLEY CP PARK LANE (west side)

12/195 Nos 4 & 6 (formerly listed as No 4 and 2.10.75 adjoining warehouse)

GV II

Warehouse and barn, now workshops and house. Early C18 (warehouse) with late C18 addition (barn) and some late C20 alterations. L-plan, no 4 (barn) extending to south-west and no 6 (warehouse) extending to south-west. South-east front: range projecting to right (no 4) has a blind gable end rebuilt in late C20; to left warehouse (no 6) of three storeys, bands to ground and first floor, four windows: blind to left, a timber cross-window, a blind window, and a further timber cross-window to right, all under cambered heads; second floor: alternate blind windows as below and 2-light casements; ground floor: two timber cross-windows to left with cambered heads, to right wide C20 opening with rolled steel joist lintel, with remains of two cambered window heads above it, cellar entrance to left. Entrance to no 4 is from the north-east front, which also has two hit-and-miss diamond pattern former ventilators.

Listing NGR: SO7848175235

2.3 The Listing description is clearly lacking in many aspects; notably there is no mention of the northern block, the “barn” is clearly not a barn, and there is no mention of the large arched former openings to the western elevation.



1930s view of warehouse complex from the east

- 2.4 There have been several alterations since the 1975 Listing and the building was converted to industrial and office units. The recorded planning history is as follows:
Town and Country Planning Act 1971 WF225/86 dated 28 May 1986. Change of use to furniture restorer and upholstery at The Warehouse, Park Lane, Bewdley.
Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Town and Country Planning General Development Procedure Order 1995 WF776/95 dated 12 December 1995. Change of use of part of ground floor from office to chiropractic consulting room/surgery on ground floor unit Ref. No: WF776/95 | Status: Pending Consideration
Town and Country Planning Act 1971 WF595/87 dated 18 August 1987. Change of use to Language Centre at second floor of The Warehouse, Park Lane, Bewdley. Ref. No: WF595/87 | Status: Pending Consideration
Town and Country Planning Act 1971 WF225/86 dated 28 May 1986. Change of use to furniture restorer and upholstery at The Warehouse, Park Lane, Bewdley. Ref. No: WF225/86 | Status: Pending Consideration
Town and Country Planning Act 1971 Listed Building/Conservation Area Consent WF885/85 dated 10 December 1985. Alterations at The Warehouse, Park Lane, Bewdley. Ref. No: WF885/85 | Status: Pending Consideration
Town and Country Planning Act 1971 WF788/85 dated 12 November 1985. Alterations to existing windows and staircase at The Warehouse, Park Lane, Bewdley. Ref. No: WF788/85 | Status: Pending Consideration

3 Aims

- 3.1 The aims of the building recording were to gather high quality data from the direct observation of the historic building fabric in order to provide sufficient information to establish the nature of the resource (including character, extent, date, state of preservation and quality). The purpose of an archaeological project (as defined by CIFA) is “to examine the archaeological resource in a given area or site within a framework of defined research objectives, to seek a better understanding of and compile a lasting record of that resource, to analyze and interpret the results, and

disseminate them”. It should be noted that the present report is not a complete record of the building.

4 Methodology

- 4.1 The building was examined and recorded in February 2021. The building was part occupied and furnished at the time of recording, which limited the scope of observations – a second stage of recording was undertaken in August 2021 as areas of the building became available for inspection (see Figs 18-22).
- 4.2 The majority of recording was undertaken photographically. The digital images are presented with hard copies of this report on DVD.
- 4.3 The phase plans (Fig 2) were based on the architect’s “as existing” drawings, It was not practical to check all dimensions on site, however the present drawings may be considered representative of the general structures. Due to restricted access on the northern and eastern sides of the building rectified photography was not possible.
- 4.4 Background research for the present project was unfortunately limited in scope by the effective closure of archives and libraries due to government enforced “lockdowns”, however all available newspaper and genealogical database material plus trades directories held in house were consulted. As far as can be determined the historic deeds for the site are not held in any public archive (though the indexes to Worcestershire Archives are only partially available online)

5 Archaeological and Historic background

- 5.1 The town of Bewdley has its origins as a settlement on Wyre Hill in the late medieval period and developed as a borough and inland port on the River Severn during the 14th to 18th centuries. By the 16th century it had become a prosperous and important centre for river trade between the Midlands and Bristol, Bewdley being the head of navigation for medium sized vessels. This wealth was reflected in the architecture of the town with new construction as well as remodelling of earlier buildings in brick. After this period of prosperity Bewdley began to experience economic decline following the construction of a canal junction at nearby Stourport in 1768.
- 5.2 The first bridge across the Severn was stone and built in 1447 in the same place as the present bridge. During the Wars of the Roses this was destroyed by the Lancastrians. It was rebuilt in timber, but in 1483 a new stone bridge was constructed a little further downstream. A market place was established in Lode Street by 1539 and the area regained prominence with the replacement of Bewdley Bridge in 1798 at the eastern end of the street.
- 5.3 The present street layout was likely settled in the 15th century when settlement became refocused nearer to the river as a result of quayside and bridge-head development to the west of the new bridge crossing. This replaced the earlier linear settlement and marketplace situated along Wyre hill. The Lode Street (now officially spelled as Load

- Street) area was developed during this period with tenement plots laid out along the road from the later 15th century onwards. The name Lode derives from the middle English for a watercourse. Medieval activities in the area to the north of the street are likely to have included industrial sites such as warehousing and tanneries as well as domestic buildings. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Bewdley had become a busy inland port for trade between Bristol and the west midlands, and was an ideal base for merchants who established offices, warehouses and premises within the town. While goods including iron, timber and coal were transported downriver, luxury items from the Caribbean and American colonies were brought up from Bristol allowing an increasingly affluent gentry and middle class access to items such as sugar, tobacco, and liquors (Davies 2012).
- 5.4 The present “Snuff Mill Warehouse” site is situated approximately 120 m to the south-west of St Anne’s Church and the main centre of Bewdley lying within an area of formerly open land between the tenement plots on Wyre Hill to the north and Tickenhill Palace to the south west. It is likely to have once formed part of the palace grounds. Prattinton noted the area in 1815 as ‘uneven ground to all appearances carved up by the remains of foundations’ (quoted in Buteux, 1996). He suggested this could be the location of a castle, but it is more likely that these were buildings associated with the mediaeval palace or royal park . There is no clear evidence of occupation in this area during the mediaeval period and much of the area remained an open space until relatively recently.
- 5.5 Leather processing in the town probably commenced in the early post medieval period, John Monnow (Monoxe) of Bewdley, tanner was documented in 1551-53 (NRO C1/1315/20-22) and appears to have been a man of property. Two tanners named Burlton are recorded in the town in the 1590s Leather processing became established as a significant local trade in the 17th Century – the Will of John Crumpe, Tanner of Bewdley was proved in 1647 (NRO PROB 11/201/536). In 1663 Will of John Wilkes, Currier of Bewdley, was proved (NRO Ref: PROB 11/311/43). Probate for the estate of George Hamond, tanner of Bewdley was granted in 1682 (NRO PROB 4/17496). Thomas Radley, tanner of Bewdley died in 1712, Samuel Slade another tanner died in 1715. Humphrey Bach, tanner of Bewdley died in 1743, the same year a property transaction between Goodyear Wildy of Bewdley, tanner and Joseph Cotterell of Bewdley, currier, was documented (WRO MS 3671/ACC 1938-051/590272). There would appear to have been generally three or four tanneries operating in the town in this period; those tanners wealthy enough to have wills proven would generally have been proprietors of businesses rather than employees.
- 5.6 Park Lane was first recorded in 1595 although it may have been in existence before this date (Buteux, 1996). The eastern end joins the junction of Load Street and Welch gate to the north of St Anne’s Church, the site of a chapel of ease recorded by Leland in 1539. From here the road heads south-east towards Tickenhill palace before turning sharply east to run parallel to Sandy Bank, terminating just short of the 16th century Wyre Court. The first edition OS map shows the line of the road continuing as a footpath from this point onwards leading to Rock Coppice near Long Bank a little over a mile away.
- 5.7 “Snuff Mill Warehouse” (a name not based on historical usage) consists of a Grade II Listed “barn” converted to a dwelling, warehouse and workshop of brick, tile and

- timber construction. The HER records the building as an early 18th century warehouse with late 18th century barn addition, and some late 20th century alterations (WSM 17634). The “Snuff Mill” appellation is relatively recent and appears to have no connection with the previous usages of the site. No earlier names are recorded however, and it appears that during the twentieth century at least, the building was known simply as the ‘Park Lane works’.
- 5.8 The property is situated on the north side of Park Lane and was originally bordered on the north east by the rear of tenement plots fronting Load Street and Welch Gate. An open area of land associated with the Crown land of Tickenhill Palace extended to the south and west, and the area of the site was likely carved out of this estate. Since the 1960s the site has become surrounded by modern housing and has lost garden areas to the north and east as well as losing associated buildings as a consequence of road widening (Figs 16 and 17).
- 5.9 No previous archaeological work has been undertaken on the site, however an evaluation of adjacent land between 2 Park Lane and 35 Load Street took place in 2009 (WSM 40828, Cook 2009). Two trenches were excavated which revealed an 18th century brick and clay lined pit/tank related to tanning.
- 5.10 The early development of the site seems to be potentially linked to John Prattinton (c1670-1732), who came to Bewdley from Hartlebury in the last decade of the seventeenth century. He established a grocery business in the town that flourished for several generations. John initially purchased “Corner House” at the junction of Load Street and High Street in 1696 before buying four adjoining messuages in 1711 (Davies, 2012). Although he continued to pay rates at Corner House, by 1727 he had built a new house in Park Lane along with ‘new storehouses’ (Davies 2012). The paucity of larger buildings along Park Lane, even by the early nineteenth century, suggests that this initial development potentially included the present warehouse site. There is however no certain evidence that Prattinton owned the property north of Park Lane, and the present buildings would be rather inappropriate storage for a grocer.
- 5.11 John Prattinton’s Will of 2nd February 1729 gave the largest portion of his estate to his youngest son, Thomas (1708-1762), a maltster, (although he was also occasionally referred to as a grocer). This is possibly because his eldest son, Adam (1679 -1769) was already well-established, and may already have owned a considerable portion of the business outright. Indeed, John had already given Adam all his messuages on Load Street and High Street in 1718 when Adam was purchasing the considerable stock and shop of another grocer in the town (Davies 2012).
- 5.12 Prattinton Senior in 1729 bequeathed Thomas “*all my Messuages Buildings Lands and Tenements to which I hold by Lease from and under Salwey Winington Esq together with the respective leases thereof*”. It is possible that this refers to the present site, as the land the property was built on belonged to the Crown and only held copyhold by the subsequent owners until the late nineteenth century. The Winington (or Winnington) family were granted possession of the manor of Bewdley by Charles II in the 17th century and held it until the 1840s when they were listed on the 1843 Tithe Map as owners of the present Park Lane site. The Earl of Dudley became the subsequent lessee until all the local Crown lands, including the site, were sold to private purchasers in 1870 (Burton, 1883).

- 5.13 The history of the site for the hundred years following 1729 is difficult to trace as Thomas left no will and it is unknown whether it was owned by the Prattinton family after this date. The earliest nineteenth century trade directories for Bewdley list no businesses at all on Park Lane, however by 1835 a William Bucklee is mentioned in Pigot's for the first time. Bucklee had lost his 39 year old wife Sarah to a sudden illness in 1822, and was then described as having a young family (Worcester Journal 31 January 1822). A monumental inscription in St Leonards Church Ribbesford commemorates her death. Williams parents appear to have been Thomas and Sussanah Bucklee (nee Newton) of Bodenham Herefordshire. They married in 1772, so William is likely to be around 25 -35 at the time of his wife's death.
- 5.14 Bucklee had previously been an apprentice and then a partner with his cousin Thomas Shaw, trading as curriers and leather sellers (Worcester Chronicle, 26th July 1843). Thomas Shaw appears to have originally operated as a currier with premises near the wharf at Wribbenhall, at the time of the sale of those premises in 1825 (Aris's Birmingham Gazette 16 June 1828). By 1834 the same premises were described as late occupied by Thos. Shaw. The partnership was dissolved in 1830 when Shaw retired (Worcester Journal, 5th August 1830), with Bucklee taking on all book debts and continuing to run the business on his own. For his part in the concern he paid Shaw £4000 (later reduced to £3500) in the form of a bond, which was inherited by Shaw's brother after his death. The bond was subsequently cancelled by Shaw's brother shortly before his own demise, leading to an unsuccessful court battle later on to recover the debt by his executors (Cardiff and Merthyr Guardian, Glamorgan, Monmouth, and Brecon Gazette, 29th July 1843).
- 5.15 It is likely that Bucklee renewed the lease of the present building shortly after acquiring full control of the business in 1830. The date of the original lease is unknown. He moved into Park House, opposite the site, with his family, and the census of 1841 records him living with his sons, daughters and a single servant.
- 5.16 The Tithe map of 1843 shows that both properties were leased by Bucklee from Sir Thomas Edward Winnington, who in turn leased them from the Crown. The plot containing the warehouse (no 173) encompassed a wider area than the current property boundaries as it included the orchard field behind the site to the north (now housing), as well as land on the eastern side (now occupied by a modern bungalow). There were four separate buildings on the plot, and the whole is described in the tithe apportionment as 'House, Buildings, Garden, and Shrubbery' occupied by William Bucklee and others. As Bucklee and his family were resident in Park House this description implies that either the premises were being sublet, or, more likely, that either or both of the domestic buildings were being lived in, possibly by employees of the business.
- 5.17 Bucklee became mayor of Bewdley in 1840 (Burton, 1883) and he is recorded as such in Bentley's Directory of that year. The business is named as 'Bucklee & Son, curriers &c', with William listed also as a leather cutter, and his son Thomas as a leather seller.
- 5.18 The census for 1851 reveals William Bucklee still resident in Park House, but his occupation is listed as 'Currier and Farmer of 150 acres' employing 15 men and boys. The tithe apportionment records that he leased several fields from Winnington situated

further down Park Lane, and it may be these that he was farming alongside land he owned outright in Sandy Bank which is mentioned in his will. There are 'two void houses' listed next to Park House which are likely to refer to the buildings on the site suggesting none of them were occupied domestically at this time. The present day structure constitutes the only surviving part of a larger series of buildings which were demolished in the 1960s in order to allow Park Lane to be widened for traffic. Around the same time, a road (Orchard Rise) was built across the western part of the property. Mapping and photographs (Figs 15-17) show that prior to demolition there was a further building attached to the current eastern block extending to the edge of Park Lane, as well as a house and outbuildings (Orchard House) to the south-west of the site. Both buildings appear to have been designed as domestic rather than industrial and were certainly used as housing during the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

- 5.19 William Bucklee died in 1856 aged 74, leaving the majority of his estate to Thomas in his will. Thomas continued the currier business in Park Lane and also moved into Park House from his previous residence at 38 Load Street. The 1861 census reveals him living there with a large family of sons and daughters and lists his occupation as currier and liquor merchant. He had purchased a wholesale and retail wine and spirit business from John Brookes, a relative, in 1856 (Worcester Journal, 20th September 1856). This was almost certainly John Brookes Bucklee, wine merchant, who had been subject to a bankruptcy petition in 1845 (Worcester Journal 24 July 1845) The premises were located on Load Street. A "J Bucklee" was still operating as a wine merchant in the town in 1859 (Worcester Journal 12 February 1859) probably in partnership with Thomas. It is likely that the current premises was also used as warehousing for this business too. Two households are listed in the 1861 census in the correct location for the present warehouse site; Joseph Turford, a gardener occupying in the southern building, and Fanny Williams, the wife of a commercial traveller living in the eastern block.

**PARK LANE, BEWDLEY,
WORCESTERSHIRE.**

**IMPORTANT SALE OF HOUSEHOLD
FURNITURE, PLATE, LINEN, and
EFFECTS.**

J. PARSONS

Has been favoured with instructions from the Administrator to the Estate of the late **MR. THOS. BUCKLEE,**

TO SELL BY AUCTION,

On Friday and Saturday, the 24th and 25th days of January, 1862, upon the Premises, situate in Park Lane, Bewdley ;

THE whole of the superior **HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, PLATE, LINEN, CHINA,** and other Effects, particulars of which with Catalogues, may be had at the principal Inns in the surrounding district, and of the Auctioneer, George Hotel, Bewdley.

The **HOUSE and PREMISES,** together with some excellent **MEADOW LAND and ORCHARDING, TO BE LET,** and may be entered upon immediately.

The **PLANT, FIXTURES, &c.,** of the **CURRYING-BUSINESS,** carried on by the late Mr. Bucklee, **TO BE SOLD BY PRIVATE CONTRACT.**

For a view of the Premises and information respecting the **Currying Business,** apply to the Auctioneer.

- 5.20 Thomas died suddenly of an epileptic fit in Park House on the 8th October 1861. He was only 50, and his eldest son was just in his mid twenties. The estate was valued at under £3000 and principle registry went to his brother William Henry Bucklee, a chemist in London and now also the guardian of Thomas' younger children as their mother had died some time before. The following year the plant and fixtures of the currying business were sold at auction along with the contents of Park House. The family had moved away and house and premises, along with some meadowland and orchards were to be let with immediate occupation available (Worcester Journal, 18th January 1862).
- 5.21 In 1870 the Crown estates leased by the Earl of Dudley were sold to private individuals. The auctions took place in Bewdley Town Hall and included 100 separate lots comprising both large houses with extensive land as well as smaller properties (Worcestershire Chronicle, 6th July 1870) . Interest was extremely high as this allowed many residents to buy their properties freehold for the first time. Lot 17 was Park House and the warehouses, but they remained unsold at the end of the auction. This is possibly because the premises appear to have remained unoccupied since Bucklee's death and without a proprietor already on site ready to step in and purchase his

- buildings, the reserve price may not have been met. Many of the undisposed lots were subsequently purchased after the auction, and this is likely the case for the Park Lane warehouse as the new owner was resident before the end of the year.
- 5.22 Kelly’s Directory for 1870 shows that the site was now occupied by Samuel Jefferies (also spelled Jeffries), a timber merchant. He had previously been a grocer on Load Street before diversifying into dealing timber in the 1860s. By the time of the 1871 census he was living on the site with his wife, daughters and mother-in-law, and listing his occupation as timber dealer and boat builder, having apparently given up the grocery side. His entry in Littlebury’s Directory for 1873 reveals that not only was he operating from Snuff Mill but he was also based at Dowle’s Place timber yard, and at premises in Stourport, where the boat building operation is likely to have taken place.
- 5.23 It is possible that during the negotiations to purchase the unsold lot, Park House was detached and subsequently sold separately as Jefferies and his family moved in to the southern building on the site (now called No.3, Park Lane), rather than living opposite in Park House as the Bucklees had done. Living in the eastern block (No.2, Park Lane) was Milson White, a gardener. He used the land to the east and north of the site as a plant nursery and also operated as a florist (County Advertiser and Herald for Staffordshire and Worcestershire, 25th April 1896). Like the Prattintons before him, Jefferies was also involved in local politics and was twice elected mayor of Bewdley as well serving as a magistrate and alderman of the borough (Worcester Chronicle, 8th February 1896). His entry in the 1881 census lists him as a timber merchant and mayor, living with his wife and a servant. Milson White was still resident at No.2.
- 5.24 By 1888, Jefferies had once again diversified his business and was now operating as a coal merchant as well as a timber merchant (Kelly’s Directory). He continued both trades up until his death in 1896 aged 80. After this his property was sold at auction by the trustees and executors of his estate. His former residence, No. 2, an orchard, and the warehouses were all sold together as a single lot (Worcester Journal, 25th April 1896). The latter was described as “EXTENSIVE AND STRONGLY BUILT WAREHOUSES with 2 floors and Basement, each consisting of about 1,800 square feet, Malt Kiln, 2 Stables, Loft and other conveniences. “ The description goes on to say that the premises are suitable for any purposes requiring “mechanical power” or “space and strength” and that there is a convenient supply of water. The cottage formerly occupied by Milson White was at this time being lived in by Daniel Gardner, a tanner and leather drier.

BEWDLEY.

**VALUABLE RESIDENTIAL & BUSINESS
PREMISES AND ORCHARDING.**

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION

By Order of the Trustees and Executors of Samuel
Jefferies, Esq., J.P., deceased, by
MESSIES. NOCK and JOSELAND, at the
GEORGE HOTEL, BEWDLEY, on MONDAY, the
4th of MAY, 1896, at Six o'clock in the Evening,
subject to Conditions incorporating the Birmingham
Common Form Conditions, the following PRO-
PERTIES, situate in Park Lane, Bewdley.

LOT 1.

A DWELLING-HOUSE, lately occupied by
Mr. Jefferies, consisting of Two Parlours, Kitchen,
Two Bedrooms, Two Attics, with a Garden, and
other Conveniences.

A DWELLING-HOUSE,
in the occupation of Dr. Daniel Gardner, consisting
of a Parlor, Kitchen, Wash-house, Cellar, Three
Bed Rooms, with an excellent Garden, and other
Conveniences. These last premises were for many
years occupied by a Nurseryman and Florist, and
the Garden is well adapted for such a business.
There is a growing demand for Flowers and Garden
Produce from the numerous visitors to Bewdley.

A LARGE ORCHARD,
well stocked with Fruit Trees of good bearing, and
notably one of the most productive Orchards in the
district.

**EXTENSIVE AND STRONGLY-BUILT
WAREHOUSES**

with Two Floors and Basement, each consisting of
about 1,800 square feet, Malt Kila, Two Stables,
Loft, and other conveniences. These premises are
suitable and adaptable for many business purposes
requiring Mechanical Power or Space and Strength,
and were for a great number of years used by the
late Mr. Jefferies in his business of a Timber and
Coal Merchant. There is a capital and convenient
supply of water for all these premises, which com-
prise an area of 3A. 0R. 20P. or thereabouts.

LOT 2.

A PIECE of LAND (used as a Garden), situate
on Sandy Bank, Bewdley, adjoining Lot 1, facing
towards Welsh Gate, being the site of several
Dwellings taken down by Mr. Jefferies, and suitable
for the erection of Cottages which would readily
find Tenants. This Property is Copyhold of the
Manor of Bewdley, a tenure almost equal to Free-
hold, and the chief rent is 6d. a year.

The above Properties well deserve the attention
of Capitalists, Business Men, and others seeking
good Investments and Desirable Residences. They
are contiguous to the Town, River, and Railway
Station, and possess in other respects many ad-
vantages.

For further particulars apply to Messrs. Macey,
Hemingway, and Son, Solicitors, Bewdley; or to
the Auctioneers, Kidderminster and Wolver-
hampton.

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(Worcester Journal, 25th April 1896)

- 5.25 The sale was well attended and included the Mayor, Town Clerk, and most of the town council of Bewdley (Bridgnorth Journal and South Shropshire Advertiser, 9th May 1896). Biddings commenced at £600 with the final price realised at £900 secured by Mr T C Dalley who also purchased a small piece of copyhold land adjoining the site for £20. Thomas Caldwell Dalley was a wine and spirit merchant, as well as a printer and

- stationer (Worcester Chronicle, 24th June 1893). In the same year that he bought the Park Lane property he sold his wine and spirit business for £19,000, leaving him £8000 after the company debts and liabilities had been paid. He used this money to invest in the Rockmoor Colliery near Bewdley, adding an additional £4000 over the next three years exploring for coal. Sadly the speculation failed and the colliery was repossessed in October 1899. After trying his hand managing a hotel in Stoke-on-Trent, he was finally declared bankrupt in 1903 owing £2768 with no assets (Worcestershire Chronicle, 12th December 1903).
- 5.26 It is unclear why Dalley purchased the warehouse – presumably it was just another speculative purchase. His bankruptcy hearing does not mention any ownership of the site so he may have disposed of it before 1903. No businesses were recorded at the address in directories up to 1924, although the 1901 and 1911 censuses show that both No. 2 and No. 3 (now called ‘Ivy Cottage’ and ‘The Orchard’ respectively) continued to be inhabited.
- 5.27 A series of photographs from the 1930s (Fig xx) shows a tight cluster of buildings on the site, Two twin pitched outbuildings are north of Orchard House, and it is unclear if they were part of the former carrier’s works or associated with the domestic use of the house. In the north-east corner of the site there appears to be a walled but roofless former building area to the west of Block 2. The range to the south-east of Block 1 has a further and slightly taller southern block towards Park Lane. In 1966 tenders were invited for the demolition of No.1 Park Lane, Church hall, Ivy Cottage, The Orchard, and 34 Load Street, in order to widen Park Lane (Birmingham Daily Post, 9th December 1966). Contractors were advised that they would also be responsible for the erection of gable wards for adjoining buildings, including that of Ivy Cottage. The Council acquired the properties before demolition and went ahead with the scheme despite some local anger at the loss of old buildings (Birmingham Daily Post, 19th June 1967).
- 5.28 During the later 1960s and 70s, “Snuff Mill Warehouse” was let to a variety of small artisan businesses, each working in separate parts of the building. ‘Hell For Leather’ was run by a married couple who made leather clothing and items, and was reputedly once visited by Suzie Quatro. Brian Packer ran a furniture upholstery business in the attic space, and a horn works was located in the cellar. Between these two business was a signwriting studio.

6 Description (Block 1)

The building consists of two principal blocks (Fig 2); a third block attached to the south-east corner is now in separate ownership (No 4 Park Lane). The 3 storey southern block is part of the first phase of construction, as is the attached 2 storey south eastern block. Historic mapping indicates that there were formerly other buildings on the site, one attached to the western side of the building, and a separate building to the south-west, apparently an associated dwelling.

6.1 *Cellar*

6.1.1 Block 1 includes a cellar level consisting of brick-built vaults. Parts of the cellar exterior wall are of sandstone. The present cellar entrance door is down a short flight of external stairs on the southern elevation. The cellar has blocked original vaulted window openings on three of the external walls, as well as a probable second entrance doorway and a round opening in the ceiling that appears to have been either a “drop” for goods or possibly an opening for a spiral stair. The opening appears to be partially below the present staircase in the south-west corner of the building.

6.1.2 The cellarge has more than adequate headroom and would appear to have been used for activities or processes above and beyond storage – it must be noticed that the western elevation of the cellar originally had a window opening that was subsequently opened up to a large arched opening, blocked again in the late 19th Century. The cellar area is presently full of discarded items and further features may come to light when this area has been cleared

6.2 Ground floor

6.2.1 Most of the ground floor of the building was inaccessible at the time of survey as it is tenanted offices. There is a small entrance lobby and stairs to the first floor. The west facing elevation at this level consists largely of a large brick arched opening which has been bricked up. This arched opening was cut through an earlier window opening, the rubbed brick head of which is still clearly visible.

6.2.2 The southern elevation has an enlarged doorway opening at ground floor level – the present opening appears to have replaced a centrally positioned doorway and a window opening to the east. The heads of both openings are still discernible, as is a break in the platt band/string course directly over the central doorway. The platt band also terminates just short of the two storey block indicating that that structure was contemporary with Block 1. The large opening has modern wooden doors and panelling of late 20th C date. The south facing windows at this level are modern softwood transom windows with side opening casements broadly replicating the original fenestration. Blocked window openings on the northern elevation indicate that the fenestration of the southern elevation was largely mirrored on the northern elevation. This would have made the original building well lit and well ventilated prior to construction of Block 2. Stairs to the first floor appear to be modern.

6.3 *First Floor*

6.3.1 All of the first floor was accessible, the building at this level being a single large open space with modern plasterboard and stud partitions. The stairs in the south west corner appear to be of early-mid 19th Century origin - a re-used plank and batten door has been added part-way up the flight. The floors are fully carpeted but appear to conceal primarily historic planking. The ceilings are modern plasterboard with exposed tie beam soffits and some exposed joisting. There is some residual evidence of probable drive shafting, being characteristic spike marks and staining on the sides of the tie beams, together with one remaining example of a probable shaft hanger (Fig xx) There are, on the upper part of the northern wall clear areas of wear suggestive of belt driven machinery or some other repeated stroke action – these are unlikely to be 18th Century, as no evidence of motive power is currently visible, but given the loss of many of the ancillary buildings there is some possibility that a horse powered gin (or “ginny ring”) was available in the later 18th Century.

6.3.2 The first floor south and west facing windows, with one exception, appear to be modern approximate replicas of transom windows with side opening casements. The exception is a probably early 19th C transom frame second from the west on the southern elevation. The opening casements have been replaced but it would appear that this frame was retained as an exemplar of the original window form. The former window openings on the original northern elevation are mostly visible as patches of brick blocking beneath the original heads.

6.4 *Attic level*

6.4.1 The attic level floor is externally expressed by a string course/platt band on the gable ends – this is conclusive evidence that there was originally a load bearing floor at eaves level. There are, however, no indications that there was any original fenestration at attic level. The window at attic level in the western gable end is an insertion of the 1980s, and does not appear on mid 20th Century photos of the building. Tellingly there is also no head to this window opening. The attic floor now occupies only a single bay at the western end of the block. The truss forms do not provide doorway openings at this level and it must be assumed that the spacious attic spaces were each accessed separately.

6.5 *Roof*

6.5.1 The main roof of Block 1 is of a generous span and the two trusses carry a remarkable load, the tie beams being of heavy oak scantlings. The truss form is simple with principal rafters tied by a pegged collar and trenched into the tie-beams. Both collars are morticed on the soffits for raking queen struts, and the mortices have been double pegged. However there are no queen struts and the tie beams have no mortices for the feet of the queen struts. It would appear on this basis that the tie-beams have been replaced, but achieving this *in situ* would be a massive task even with modern equipment, and it must be assumed that the trusses were altered before they were raised. The omission of the struts is inexplicable. It is of note that the fair faces of the trusses have assembly marks on opposing faces, whereas convention would have both trusses fair faced in the same direction.

6.5.2 The most significant feature of the roof is the presence of timber merchants/shippers marks on the southern principal rafter of the western truss (Fig xx). The marks here are typical of the north German ports of the Baltic trade (Vandenabeele *et al*, 2016)– whilst such marks are relatively common in late 18th-mid 19th C Baltic sourced softwood and redwood the importation of Baltic oak (other than for door and wall panelling) as structural baulks is unusual at this date in the Midlands. As Bewdley lies in the centre of the traditional oak woodland of the Wyre Forest (and the tanning industry was based on locally grown oak) it is remarkable that there was a need to source the largest structural oaks from abroad even by the early 18th Century. Whilst dendrological sampling would be needed to identify the area in which the oak was grown, it is generally found (throughout northern Europe and UK) that incised “runic” type symbols on timber not fully squared relate specifically to the ports and shippers of the Baltic timber trade. In many cases the timbers lost the inscribed marks when being further reduced and dressed for use; such marks are therefore usually in locations where there were no cosmetic considerations. The oak here has certain colouring and grain characteristics that are not typical of local timber, though it is possible that use of the building for tanning processes would stain the oak.

- 6.5.3 The roof has been internally lined and the rafter soffits are not visible. The roof was reputedly re-laid reusing original common tiles (with cement based torching) circa 1970s. Earlier photos show the roof in relatively good condition so it is unlikely that there has been any widespread replacement of rafters etc, unless this occurred in the mid-late 19th Century.

7 Description (Block 2)

- 7.1 Access into the northern block was restricted due to the offices being partially in use – a rapid walk through of the offices was however possible.
- 7.2 The block is clearly distinguished from Block 1 by a straight vertical butt joint in the brickwork and a slight change in coursing and brick heights. Internally areas of former window blocking are visible on the northern elevation of Block 1. Block 2 is also rather lower than Block 1, and has no southern wall. Historic photographs show that Block 2 was originally built into the hill-slope and had no original ground floor windows. As there were only three windows at first floor level (facing north) the block was substantially less well lit than Block 1.
- 7.3 The three infilled brick arches in the western gable end of Block 2 appear to be an original part of the structure, contemporary with its erection. This contrasts with the very similar former arched opening in Block 1 which in that structure is clearly secondary. The character of the original brickwork of Block 2 would appear to be early 19th Century. Though there are few closely dateable features the use of hand-made brick suggests a date prior to the late 1820s., but probably not earlier than 1800. The brick used to infill the larger arched openings is similar to that used to build Block 2, but not identical and is laid in a different mortar. The infilling of the smallest arched opening (with the double doors) is clearly late 20th Century.
- 7.4 The fenestration is all recent, though in original window openings on the upper levels. The blocked former arched openings have been noted above – within the building there is an early 19th C arched folding double door retained as a decorative feature (Fig 19) – this appears to have been originally fitted to the first floor entrance.
- 7.5 Internal partitioning within the building appears to all be modern studwork with the exception of a plastered brick or blockwork wall which may possibly pre-date the 1970s. The floors in this section of the property are almost entirely carpeted, but uneven-ness suggests that original flooring may survive in places.
- 7.6 The roof structure within this block consists of fairly basic simple collared trusses, notable only for haunched principal rafters against the wall of Block 1 (Fig 22). One tie beam retains faint chalk inscriptions in what appears to be an early 19th Century script (Fig 22). There is no distinct evidence that the main roof timbers were re-used from an earlier structure, but as the common rafters are concealed it remains possible that some elements were re-used.

8 Discussion

- 8.1** The buildings remaining at 4 and 6 Park Lane are clearly only a fragment of the former industrial complex, which seems to have been established circa 1720 and expanded (within a limited plot boundary) and developed over the next 150 years or so, being adapted for different purposes. Being only a fragment, and with very limited information about the lost buildings, and no documentary evidence for the early years of the site interpretation must be rather limited.
- 8.2** Considering Block 1 (and the linked contemporary two storey block now No 4) on its own the physical and cartographic evidence indicates that these two blocks were the core buildings, around which the rest of the site developed. The form of Block 1 indicates, with a very high degree of probability, that it was built as a workshop for a trade that required good lighting, ventilation and a certain level of warmth. In the context of Bewdley the probability is that the only local industries requiring large well lit buildings were leather processing (curriers), horn workers or the carpet trade, though the latter is not known to have been well established in the town. Other industries such as metal working or maltings would require very different facilities, and would have left different traces. Initial construction as a warehouse seems highly improbable as warehouses for any purpose require secure design – this building had large ground floor windows. The building also lacks any evidence of loading doors to the upper storeys, and had apparently only one or possibly two internal hoists. Despite the lack of any documentary evidence for a currier occupying the premises prior to the early 19th Century it seems highly probable that this was the intended function of the building. The buildings now No 4 appear to have included a stable block with hayloft over, but without internal inspection of the area now under separate ownership the full function is unclear. The present owner reports having seen evidence of a rotary mill or horse gin during the late 1980s refurbishment, and it would usually be the case that the stables would be immediately adjacent to a gin. The configuration of the platt band/string course on Block 1, and the presence of an original first floor communicating doorway between Block 1 and No 4 Park Lane are conclusive evidence that the buildings were contemporary, though No 4 may have been later modified or even rebuilt.
- 8.3** The construction of Block 2, probably around 1810-20s, seems to mark a change of function for the premises, as it clearly blocked half of the natural light and ventilation that Block 1 previously enjoyed. Block 2 has considerably less windows, and light was not, apparently, a consideration. This block was squeezed in between Block 1 and the property boundary by terracing into the hill-slope, which was clearly not ideal. The most unusual features of the building are the large arched openings to the west. Whilst arches of this size are structurally very efficient they are not able to be constructed fast or without complex centering. Particularly the arched opening retrospectively inserted into the gable end of Block 1 represents a significant level of required skill and effort. A flitched timber beam would easily span the openings without reducing headroom, at much less labour cost. It must therefore be assumed that there was a functional need for arches – possibly the lost building west of Blocks 1 and 2 had barrel vaulting, as a form of fireproof construction. But barrel vaulting on two levels seems very unlikely due to the stress it would place on the side walls. Given that the ground levels in this area were reduced to form the carpark it is unlikely that the form of the lost building will ever be known, though its outline is clearly visible (Fig 4)
- 8.4** There are presently no signs of the malting kilns mentioned in historic sales particulars, and these may conceivably have been in the “lost” block, particularly if it had

“fireproof” floors. The block only appears on mapping between 1844 and 1884, after which a single wall seems to have remained visible on the 1950s aerial photos.

- 8.5 Further recording and interpretation of the Park Lane works must await stripping out of modern partitions and finishes during the proposed refurbishment. Of particular interest will be areas of the original floor structure which are likely to show traces of former machinery, including possibly traces of a gin or rotary mill within the ground floor of Block 1, and wear patterns indicating earlier partition lines. The building is clearly an important example of an early purpose built multi-storey brick workshop at a key stage in the industrial revolution. It would appear to be the earliest factory building in Bewdley, and more information about its origins would greatly enhance its interest.

9 Bibliography

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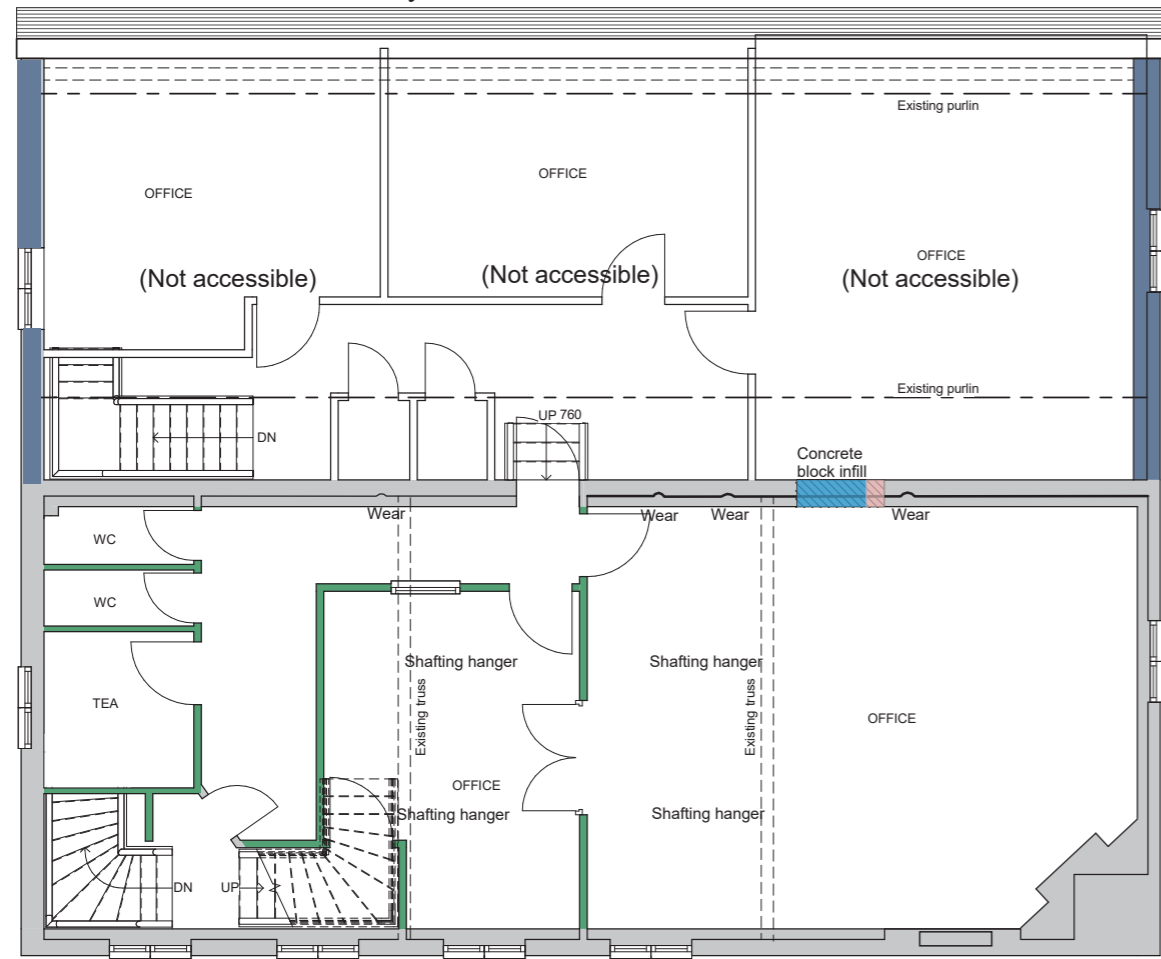
Vandenabeele, L, Bertels, I; Wouters, I 2016 , *Baltic shipping marks on nineteenth-century timber: their deciphering and a proposal for an innovative characterization of old timber* (Construction History)

10 Acknowledgements

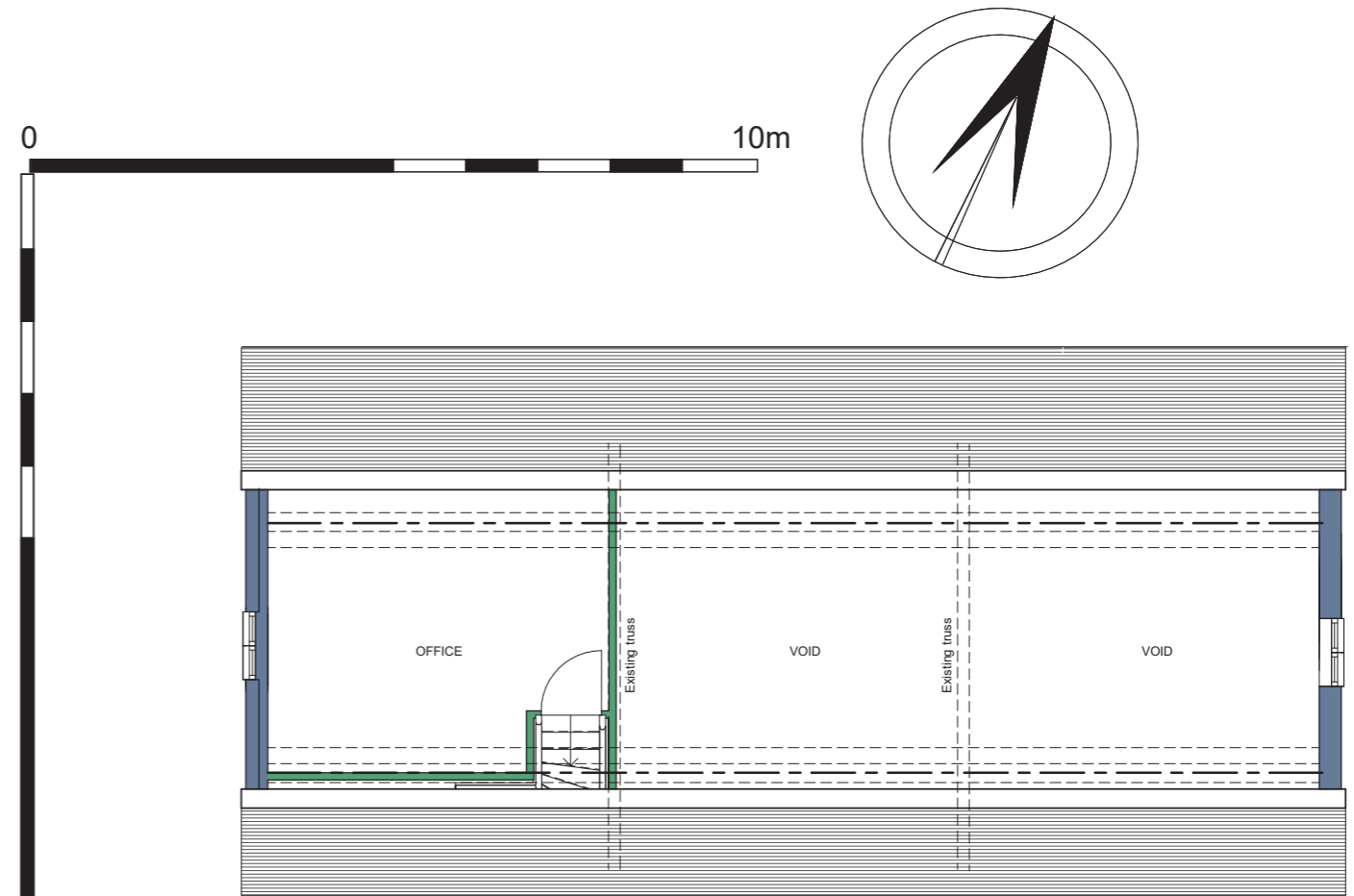
Particular thanks are due to the owner of the building, Mr Ralph Round, who was extremely informative about the more recent history of the site and its previous owner; as Mr Round undertook the conversion to offices he was able to describe the extent of previous works and the currently obscured historic fabric. Thanks are also due to Stephen Price and Peter Bassett for their comments on the building.



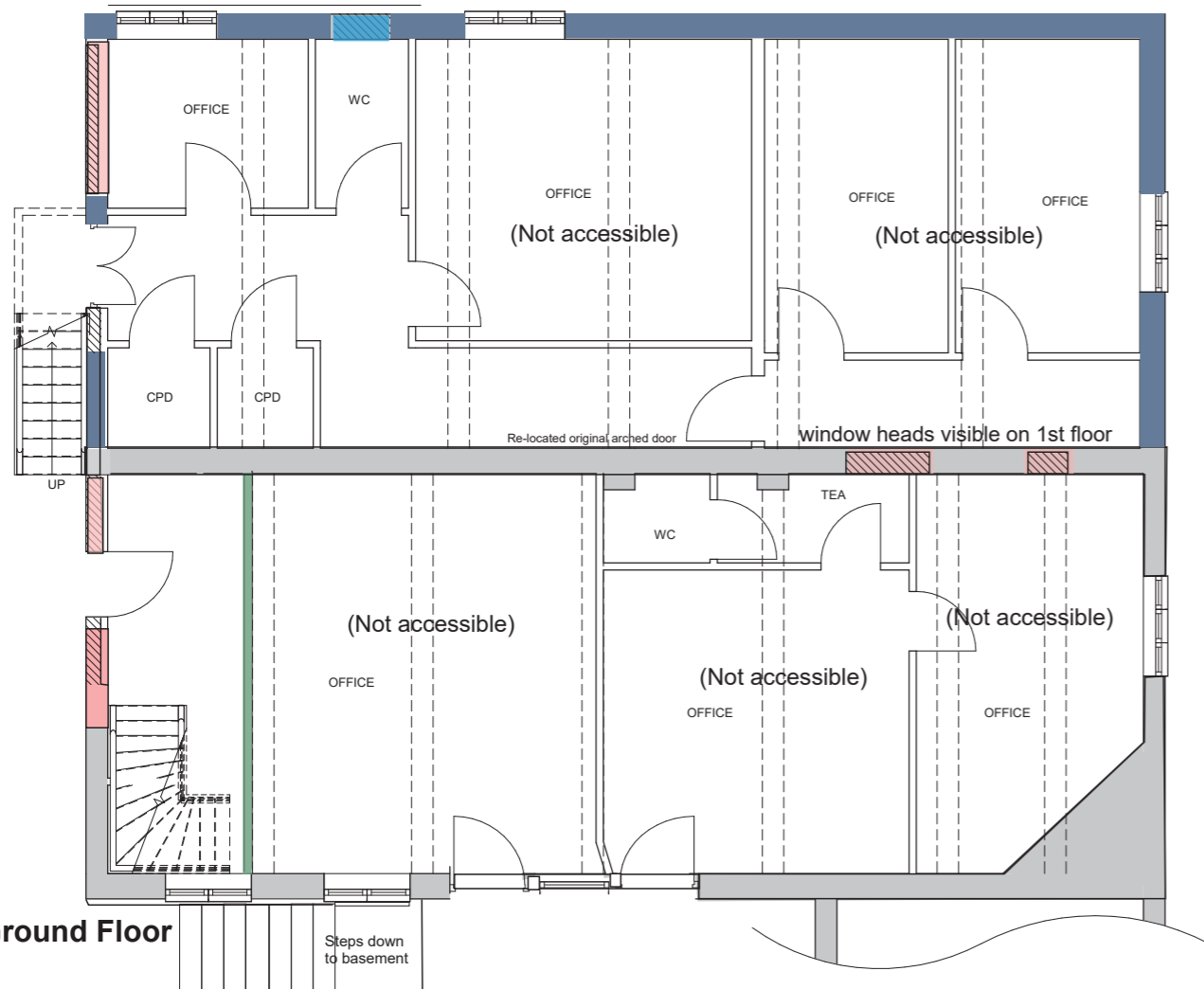
Figure 1: Site Location



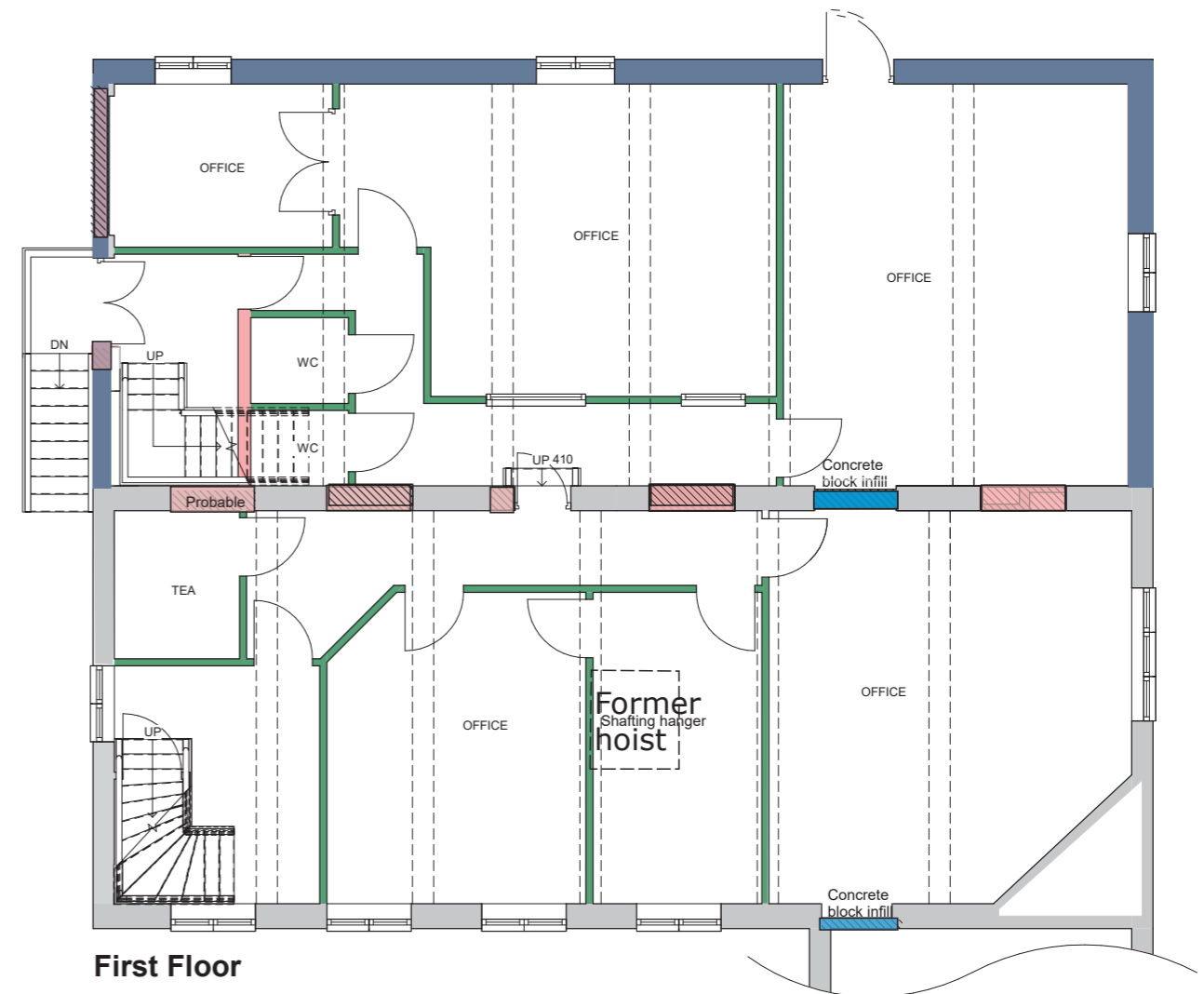
Second Floor



Third Floor



Ground Floor



First Floor

Figure 2: Plans (as existing) with indications of blocked openings (pink, hach and blue) and inserted modern partition (green)



Figure 3: External views



Figure 4: Western elevation



Figure 5: Details of southern elevation and attached former stable building (in separate ownership)



Stair at first floor level, with rehung door from elsewhere in the building



Arch interior of ground floor entrance door - the arch is a secondary insertion cut through a original window opening, the infill of the arch is again later than the arch



Probably original early 19th C wooden casement window frame, replaced side opening casements



Block 1 - attic level room and west side of truss 1

Eastern face of truss 1

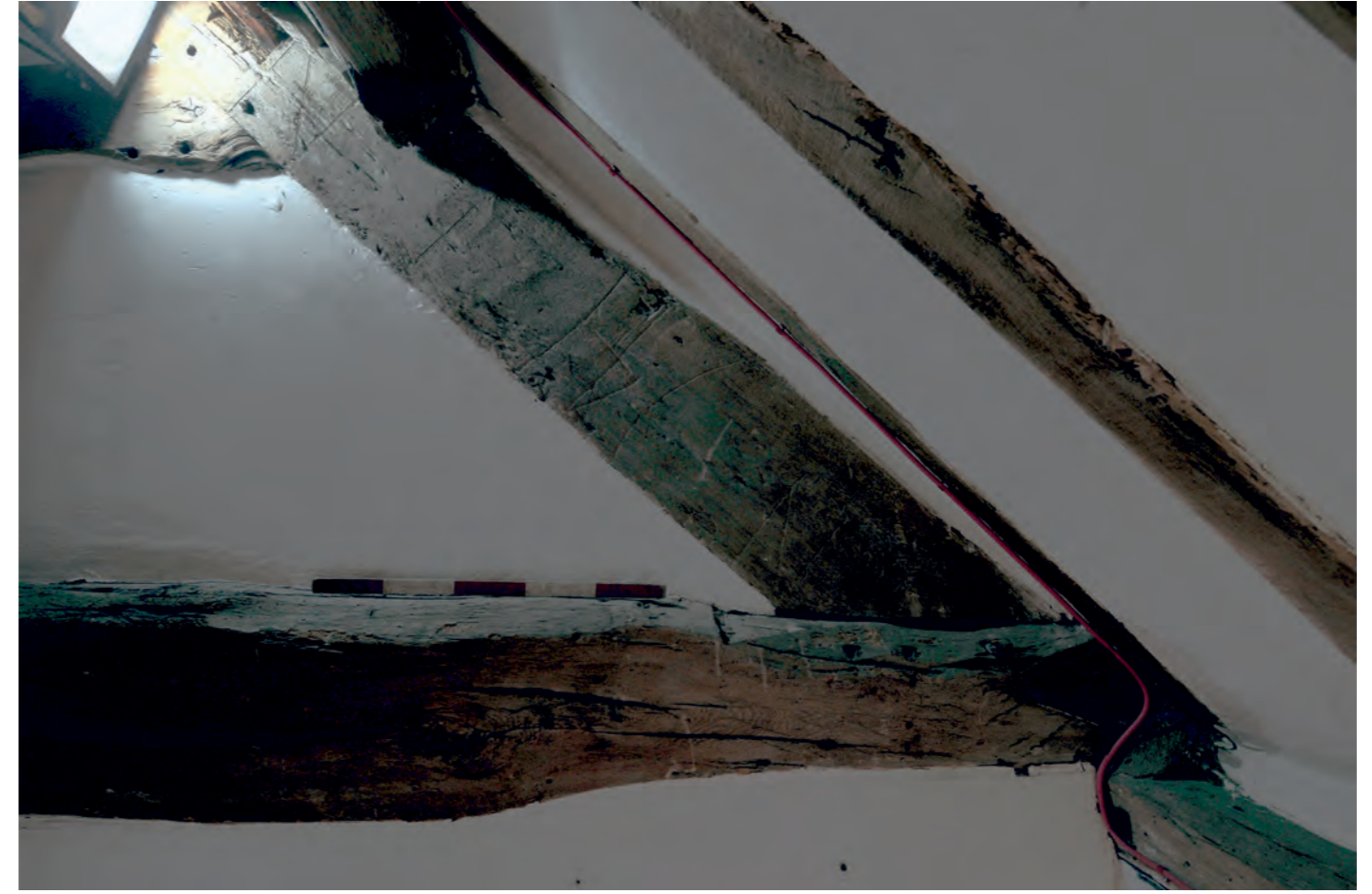


Assembly marks I - I

Assembly marks II-II



Western face of truss 1



Truss No. 1 - detail of assembly marks and Baltic timber importers marks (probably North Prussian oak) on southern end of truss



First floor Strap hanger



Truss 1 Scar of strap hanger



Truss 1 Scar of strap hanger



Scar of strap hanger



Truss 3 view facing east

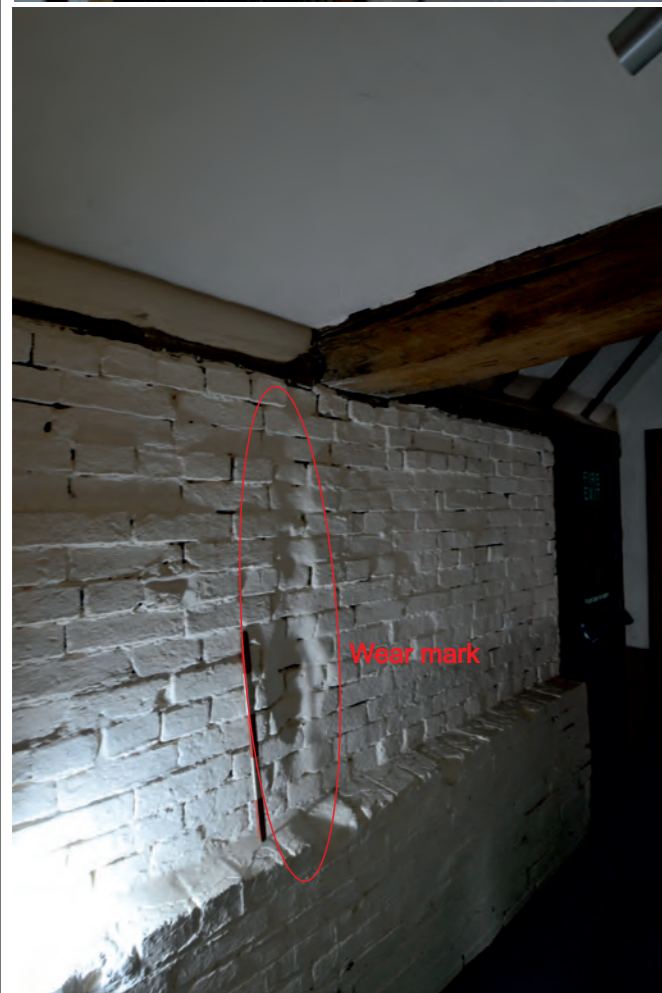


Scar of strap hanger

Figure 9: Evidence of removed strap hangers relating to rails or horizontal drive shafting hung from tie beams - the sole surviving hanger appears to be of 18th or early 19th C date, and the spike fixings suggest similar dates for all.



Figure 10: Probable former floor trap door location - note strap hanger



Wear marks relating probably to former belt driven machinery on upper floor, interior of northern wall of Block 1

Figure 11: Wear marks probably caused by adjacent belt driven machinery rubbing against brickwork



Figure 12: Truss 2, with details of assembly marks on western face. Note that the queen strut mortices on the collar have no corresponding mortice on the tie beam.



Figure 13: Northern wall of Block 1, visible from within Block 2, showing former string course and heads of blocked ground floor north facing windows



Figure 14: Ground floor of Block 2



Ground floor window head and sill of 1st floor blocked window openings of Block 1

Figure 19: Block 2 corridor - detail of salvaged door and blocked window openings on north side of Block 1



Figure 20: Basement area - Block 1



Internal drop close to south-western corner of cellar - partially beneath present stair of Block 1



Blocked former entrance



Figure 21: Cellar details



Detail of 19th C. inscription on tie beam



Haunched principal rafter of Block 2 roof truss

Figure 22: Details of Block 2 roof structure