Standard Works, Vittoria Street
Birmingham

An Architectural and Historic Survey

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An Architectural and Historic Survey

Grid reference 406161, 287533

Introduction and Acknowledgements

The Ruskin Mill Land Trust has commissioned Nexus Heritage to prepare an architectural and historic survey of Standard Works. This study is part-funded by the Architectural Heritage Fund.

As a consequence of the particular nature of Standard Works, and the desire to approach the brief in the most diligent and professional manner, Nexus Heritage has partnered with Mel Morris Conservation in order to bring to bear an ideal combination of skills and experience. This report has been written by Mel Morris with additional research by Kate Churchill.

We gratefully acknowledge the documentary material provided by James Edgar, who is currently preparing a Conservation Area Appraisal of the Jewellery Quarter, and research by Zeta Sutcliffe on behalf of Birmingham Conservation Trust.

Standard Works has a fascinating history and its significance lies part within its unusual, dual-purpose (front and back) methods of construction, and the surviving evidence for this, and part in its social history, the relationships between the occupiers of the building, who worked at times in partnership, and at times in isolation, all within a close-knit and specialist area of the city where there was great cultural diversity. The stories behind the occupants of the buildings, many of whom were immigrants, are as interesting and as compelling as the buildings, and reveal entrepreneurial spirit, speculative ambition, innovation, artisanry and artistry.

This report fulfills the brief to: “help in understanding the historical development of the building between its original inception and the current day”.
PART A – RECORDING AND ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

Documentary Research

There have been a number of different organisations that have carried out research on this site over the last 15 years. For the purposes of producing the most authoritative report possible, we have gone back to original documents wherever possible and primary sources; this has included the original Building Plans Registers for 1876-1880 and the original drawings, where these survive. Research has been carried out primarily at Birmingham Central Library Archives and Local Studies, supplemented with online sources. Telephone enquiries were made to English Heritage, the Jewellery Quarter Museum and Birmingham City Council (Historic Environment Record).

The principal source for information on the building is an English Heritage unpublished report written by Barry Jones in 2000, which preceded their publication “The Birmingham Jewellery Quarter – An Architectural Survey of the Manufactories” published in 2002. There are a few minor errors and misunderstandings in the 2000 monograph, which we have addressed on page 18.

The ability to carry out comprehensive research of many online archives has provided a very reliable means of cross-checking dates and names. Entries in the census returns and newspaper articles have been compared with documents held in Birmingham archives, such as maps, rate assessment books, trade directories and the Buildings Register, to provide as reliable as possible a list of key dates and events and an analysis of different uses and occupiers of the buildings.

Standard Works has also been recorded by a measured survey (BPN Architects, February 2014) and rectified photographs (James Brennan Associates, 2015), which have reproduced, photographically, internal elevations and sections through the building. These, combined with a detailed inspection, have informed our analysis of building development and the surviving evidence.

The name “Standard Works” was coined around 1884, and at that time this name applied to just the southern half of the building; the northern half was named “Canada Works” by the Levetus Brothers in 1880. The building may have never had a specific name and was simply known administratively as 15a and 16 Vittoria Street for many years until the street was re-numbered in the 1880s. The title New Buildings appears in 1880 (BBP 2148) and it may have been known locally by that name. To provide some continuity and clarity, we have adopted the name New Buildings within the document until, at key dates, it positively changes name and number.

This report, therefore, has cross-checked multiple sources of data (both dates and names) and a number of published sources. Key dates from the following sources have been reproduced in Appendix 1, which incorporates a chronological list:

• Historic maps
• Trade directories (1876 - 1900)
• Rate assessment books and rate assessment map (1869-1881)
• Census returns (1841-1901)
• Home Office references
• Trade Catalogues
• Board of Trade Registered Designs
• Aerial Photographs (Britain from Above and Birmingham Archives)
• Newspaper articles

Photographs

The building has been photographed digitally at high resolution using a Canon EOS 350D SLR and each image is recorded on plan showing the location and angle of view. Photographs are included in the digital archive, with the key plan. Some of the images have been stitched together to create a panoramic view of an internal or external elevation and reproduced later in this document.
High resolution photographs were taken of the building by James Brennan using a Hasselblad medium format camera and these have been produced as rectified internal elevations looking at two sections through the building, one longitudinal and one lateral. These provide a detailed record of the building before alteration. The lateral section illustrates the best surviving internal elevation, which incorporates the greatest expanse of surviving ground floor of the rear ranges. The longitudinal section incorporates a view of the original back wall of the Vittoria Street range. A third rectified photograph is an internal elevation of the ground floor back wall, adjoining 25 Regent Place.

Further Research

There are further opportunities for research, which we have established as part of this report (see sources listed in Appendix 1).

Building plans from the original building survive in a very fragile form, on tracing paper, in the Birmingham Central Library Archives and it may be feasible one day to see these drawings, if they can be conserved and stabilised. One option may be to use grant funding to enable this to happen. This may provide, once and for all, definitive information about the builder or architect of the building, although this is by no means guaranteed, as there are very few drawings.

A number of jewellery designs were registered with the Board of Trade by some of the companies occupying the buildings, in particular Levetus Brothers. The designs are held in the National Archives (Kew – London). Visiting the archives and copying the designs was outside the scope of this report, but may prove a fruitful avenue to pursue to provide illustrative material. Sources are listed in Appendix 1 entitled – Chronological References.

An aerial photograph of the building has been viewed at Birmingham Archives. Unfortunately, because of the copyright restrictions on “orphaned works”, the photograph cannot be copied. However, there may be other aerial photographs of the site, in the Historic England archives at Swindon, which may provide more detailed photograph evidence of the original form of the building. Research of aerial photographs at Swindon was outside the scope of this report. A full list of references to aerial photographs of this area of Birmingham, provided by Historic England NMR, is included in Appendix 1.

Site investigation – the sectional rectified photographs reveal anomalies around the location of the third original entrance (No. 47 Vittoria Street). The floor is unusually deep at this point with a squat cast-iron column. This may indicate the location of the original primary staircase between ground floor and basement or the presence of further ‘jack-arching’. This area may merit further investigation to inform the archaeology of the building. Further areas around the original cast-iron lightwells within the courtyard at ground floor level may also contain buried setts. The first floor to Regent Place retains the largest part of the original pier and panel wall construction to the courtyards. This would merit further investigation of the brickwork and window junctions to confirm construction details for the intermediate brick panels.

Phase Plans

The phase plans which have been produced illustrate the Basement, Ground and First Floors. These are illustrated in Appendix 3. The second floor is not illustrated because it is very simple; it has a combination of the original outer walls to Vittoria Street and Regent Place and replacement brick walls to the internal courtyard above cill height. There are no internal walls and no evidence of subdivision or adaptation at this level and the roof is entirely modern (1937-1955).

Basement, Ground and First floor phase plans show only two phases, that of the original building (in black) and that of subsequent alterations (in dark pink). Whilst there is evidence of some different phasing between 1880 and 1890, most of this evidence has been removed. After 1900, the majority of the alterations are undatable, as steel joists, brickwork and shuttered concrete was fairly standardized and universally applied during the 20th century. The extent of alteration undertaken within the building during the 20th century also makes identifying phasing and the purpose of phasing a virtually impossible task. Wherever possible we have identified and described phasing in the descriptive text (section B).
Aerial Photographs

There is an aerial photograph of the building in the Birmingham Archives collection. This is located in a book of aerial photos entitled "Birmingham and District 1923-1930." The image is listed as Newhall Hill, Frederick Street, 1926 – pages 22 and 23.

This image cannot be reproduced because of copyright restrictions. However, it illustrates the building in a view from the south, looking north. It is clear in this image that the building has its rear ranges intact. They are three-storey and a series of chimneys stacks are evident along the range fronting Vittoria Street and at the end of the third bay to each workshop range. The photograph illustrates multi-paned cast-iron windows to the third floor of the main range to Regent Place. However, the image is too small to accurately identify the glazing pattern and the angle is too oblique to see the pier and panel construction of the ranges.

Another, poorer quality aerial photograph, dated 1937, has been reproduced here. This view is looking south towards the building from Warstone Lane Cemetery. Although the pitched slate roofs and chimney stacks are clearly visible, this image seems to indicate a large, flat-roofed, three-storey extension to the rear of the part of the building occupied by the former Canada Works, which is similar in form to the existing, flat-roofed, first floor extension. By 1955 the courtyards had been filled-in and the present floor plan appears to date from between 1940 and 1955.

Reconstruction Drawing

We have produced a ‘reconstruction’ drawing of the ground floor, as built in 1879, based on the existing measured survey. By a process of deduction we have arrived at the location of doors but the location of windows is not shown accurately. The location of staircases and corridors are shown only tentatively. This reconstruction drawing serves to provide some ‘flesh’ to the descriptions but should not be relied upon for an accurate representation of the original appearance. It is produced in Appendix 9.

Map Regression

There are a number of useful maps that we have consulted to inform this report, sections of which are reproduced in Appendix 2:

- 1828 – J Piggott Smith map of Birmingham (surveyed 1824-5)
- c.1855 - J Piggott Smith map of Birmingham
- 1869 – Rating Map (updated regularly until ca.1890)
- 1889 (pub.) – 1:500 Ordnance Survey map

These maps provide a very detailed picture of development. However, they do not show all of the different phases of development on the site. The period of development in the 19th century was intensive and demand for space was high, pre-empting periodic spates of reconstruction. The maps are illustrated in Appendix 2- Map Regression.

Discussion of Historical Development

Standard Works was built on the site of a large Georgian town house, its large gardens and its ancillary buildings. Standard Works is referred to as New Buildings in the Building Plans Register of 1880 but it is identifiable as 16 Vittoria Street until 1884, adopting the same number as that of the detached Georgian house, and No. 15a and 16 are applied to the whole block and used to distinguish the businesses.
16 Vittoria Street (late C18 town house, dem. c1877)

The house numbered 16 Vittoria Street was probably a large, detached Georgian town house. The Georgian town house appears on the 1828 map of Birmingham (by J. Pigott Smith, surveyed 1824-25), the c1855 Pigott Smith map of Birmingham and the Rating Map, which was first produced 1869, at which time the buildings were picked out in pink, and then overlaid in hatched tones as buildings were replaced, until the late 1880s.

The house fronted Vittoria Street and had a large south-facing garden, running parallel with the street, with a range of narrow buildings stretching far behind, east along Regent Place, which by all accounts were used as business premises for the family living in the main house. In this respect the combination of house and ancillary workshop was typical of the Jewellery Quarter by the early 19th century.

Vittoria Street does not appear in the 1851 census and this return may be missing. The layout changed slightly between 1855 and 1869, with a large L-shaped building in the south-facing garden, possibly the Warehouse referred to in the Rate Assessment. The entry for 24 Regent Place in the 1851 Census is a large town house owned by Ann McTurk, a widow of 61, with her family and several servants, probably located on the opposite corner.

The town house which sat on the corner of Vittoria Street and Regent Place, and which was numbered as 16 Vittoria Street on the Poor Rate Assessment map, was also numbered 19 in the Rate Book. It is the same building; both rate assessment and trade directories indicate that Bernard Rubenstein, a jewellery factor, was living and working at 16 Vittoria Street (1875 Post Office Directory and 1876 Hulley’s Trade Directory) and he replaced Henry Fear (1871 Census). The Poor Rate Assessment books reveal that the house and plot was owned by James Lea.

Both directories and rate assessment books separate the property addresses by number, bisected by the side streets. Helpfully, the trade directory entries state “Regent Place here”, after 16 Vittoria Street.

16 Vittoria Street in 1871

Henry Fear (aged 50 from Briton Ferry in Glamorganshire) was a Lock Safe Maker. He lived at the house in early 1871 with his wife Mary Annie (aged 47 from Cradley, Worcestershire) and children Eliza (aged 26), Catherine (aged 11), Harry (aged 9) and Frank (aged 7) all of whom were born in Stourbridge. The business was clearly profitable as the family had a servant Ruth Harvey (aged 26 from Epwell in Oxfordshire). By 1876 the family had moved to Aston.
In the 1876 Rate Assessment Books this house is occupied by Bernard Rubenstein and is numbered as 19 Vittoria Street, after which it states “Cross Regent Place”. There is no doubt that this is the same building and Rubenstein must have replaced Henry Fear in 1871. Until 1876, the buildings at 16 Vittoria Street included a large house, shopping and a separate Warehouse, at the back of the site. After 1876, the fate of the town house is tied up with the redevelopment of the whole plot and the whole group was demolished to make way for the New Buildings in 1878/79.

Fig. 4: Poor Rate Assessment book entry for 19 Vittoria Street (1876)

25 Regent Place

In 1851 the property known as 25 Regent Place was a separate house attached to the back of 16 Vittoria Street and occupied by a Cook, Mary Wilkes, and a Stable Boy, Robert Smith. It is not clear for whom they were working; it may have been the owner of 16 Vittoria Street or the property on the north side of Regent Place. The census entries and documentary references during the next couple of decades seem to suggest that the property was progressively rundown. There are no entries for 25 Regent Place in 1861 or 1871, and it is not even identified as uninhabited, which may indicate that it was either completely derelict or had been amalgamated into the property fronting Vittoria Street. Bloomer’s 1880 drawings for 25 Regent Place support this.

New Buildings – 16 Vittoria Street (1878-79)

In the 1881 Rate Assessment Book the New Buildings are not numbered specifically, but there are five separate entries following Number 15½ Vittoria Street and they are clearly grouped together.

The entries are as follows:

- Offices, Warehouses, Shopping and premises (owner – George William Court)
- Offices and premises Ground Floor (owner - George William Court)
- Offices, Warehouses, Shopping and premises (owner – George William Court), occupied by Hyman Levetus and Joel Blanckensee
- Offices, Warehouses, Shopping, Steam Engine and premises (owner – George William Court), occupied by Hyman Levetus and Edward Levetus
- Basement and premises (owner – George William Court),

Fig. 5: Poor Rate Assessment book entry for Vittoria Street (1881)
What these entries show is that the building was largely a speculative venture, with only 50% occupancy, at best, within the first two years. Whilst the original intention may have been to create flatted manufactories and offices, within two years of having been constructed, this intention had evaporated for a large portion of the site and there were single occupiers for those later known as Nos. 45 and 47. Only the first range on Vittoria Street (later identified as No. 43) was properly flatted by 1881 and this was split into ground floor accommodation (office and shopping) and flatted offices and workshops above. This block was vacant in 1881. The second doorway served the block occupied by Levetus and Blanckensee and the third doorway served Levetus Brothers and was known colloquially as “Canada Works” at this time; it seems to have included the three levels of the offices to Vittoria Street, all three levels of the rear wing of “shopping” and the first floor over Regent Place, accessed from the staircase within No. 47, in a similar arrangement to that we find today, although the staircase has been remodelled and re-positioned following the removal of a structural wall and chimney breast. The fourth doorway at the corner of Vittoria Street and Regent Place served a single ground floor space, possibly the original ‘Restaurant’ envisaged in 1878, but later a shop. The fifth doorway on Regent Place served a ground floor office only. This may have had no separate workshops, but another possibility is that the ‘shopping’ workshops at the rear of No. 25 Regent Place were linked to this office.

In 1881 the Basement was clearly intended to have its own tenant, but this does not seem to have ever transpired and quite how it was used in the 1880s, or by whom, remains elusive.

Early on, Levetus Brothers were operating from two adjoining buildings and it may have been at this time that a ground floor doorway was created to connect the two, later blocked up (see A on inset plan - Fig.6).

In 1877 there was a large gap between 16 Vittoria Street and the next property on the frontage to the south, which was a pair of town houses numbered 14 and 15. They first appear on the 1855 plan of Birmingham and they still exist, set back from the street frontage. The earlier Pigott Smith plan of c1828 shows other buildings on this site, partially overlapping the site of Standard Works, possibly a third building in a terrace of three, of which only two survive. There were no other houses or buildings along this section of street frontage between 1855 and 1878. All of the documentary evidence reflects this.

Therefore, when the whole site of New Buildings is eventually developed and constructed in 1879, the numbering remains 16 (19) Vittoria Street and 25 Regent Place, even though the building is multi-occupancy. There are five separate entries under 16 Vittoria Street in the 1881 Rate Assessment Book, all listed under the name of George William Court. His name also appears on Regent Place, on the opposite corner, where the first names are reversed to William George Court and this is the name which consistently appears in the trade directories. Although the plot appears to be located on the other side of the street, there are so many inconsistencies in the documents, that it is probable that the building is in fact located on the south side of Regent Place.
although it is not separately numbered. He appears to be the sole owner of New Buildings by 1881, within 2 years of it having been built. The name in the Building Plans Register of 1879 for the applicant is Thomas F. Williams. This remains something of a mystery. The most likely explanation is that Williams was acting in a clerical capacity, as suggested by the census returns (see Building Owner explanation below).

The descriptions in the entries in the 1881 Rate Assessment Book are very detailed and whilst they do not give a complete breakdown of how the property was subdivided, they provide sufficient detail for us to understand how this relates to the surviving evidence.

The street numbering is confusing and different numbers appear for the same building. 15a is occasionally identifiable as one of two separate blocks in the new building occupied in 1880. No. 16 was the third block in the row whilst 15a was the second in the row of new buildings, the first one and the corner building being unoccupied for a time, after construction. It was 16 Vittoria Street, however, which was known as Canada Works, a name coined by the Levetus Brothers.

The street numbering then eventually changed around 1884/85, when the whole of the street was re-numbered, and at that point the separate entrances along Vittoria Street were numbered: 43, 45, 47 and 49 (the corner shop). Slightly later, around 1888, the numbering for the south side of Regent Place was reversed. Number 25 Regent Place became 5 and 7 Regent Place and the first entrance doorway after the corner shop became 1 Regent Place. This was a ground floor unit, with Canada Works occupying the first floor above, as well as the adjoining No. 47 Vittoria Street.

**Key Dates and Groups**

Although New Buildings appears to have been an entirely speculative venture, it is possible that it was built in the full knowledge that Levetus Brothers were able to occupy at least part of the works, as they were trading from here in 1880, within months of it having been completed. Their nearby premises at 56 Vittoria Street, recorded in 1879, were then vacated.

**1878 - 1880**

The first plans for the range were submitted on August 6th 1878 (1298 BBP) by Thos. F. Williams for “Restaurant, Offices and Workshops”. These were under construction during 1879, as they were noted in the book - “Visited 30.9.79 Walls 9” instead of 14”. Thomas Williams had submitted plans for “Shopping” at Vittoria Street on 24th April 1877 (BBP 423). This may have been a short-term precursor to the existing buildings, or indeed plans that were not realised.

Within two years of having built the complex, only the central two blocks had been let (later Nos. 45 and 47 Vittoria Street), and these lettings may have been limited; the first block with its ground floor accommodation was vacant, as were the floors above this, the restaurant / shop envisaged on the corner was vacant, and the ground floor block fronting Regent Place was vacant.

The central two units were then dominated by Levetus Brothers and Joel Blanckensee. If there had been an agreement between William George Court and the Levetus Brothers about the accommodation provided during construction, this may have influenced the layout and internal planning.

**Fig. 8 and 9: Census return for Thos. F Williams in 1861 and entry in the Building Plans Register for 1878 (Birmingham Central Library archives)**
The pace of change was rapid. When in April 1880 plans were submitted for the extension of the New Buildings to incorporate 25 Regent Place, there appears to have already been some limited expansion of Canada Works, possibly during construction of the main building. The proposals for the extension at 25 Regent Place clearly show a range of buildings already on the site, which were not there in 1869 (see Appendix 2). It seems that by this time the frontage house (No. 25), a tall three-storey building, had either already been knocked down and replaced with an open yard or was in a poor state and was being demolished as part of the site redevelopment. The side (east) wall of 25 Regent Place was retained in-situ as part of the scheme. The rear buildings behind 25 Regent Place had already been replaced with purpose-built ground floor “Shopping”, in the same style as that adopted at New Buildings, and probably coeval with it. It is possible that this was required by Levetus Brothers as part of their agreed tenancy, whose business was expanding and who were squeezing every morcel of available space out of the site. Access into the shared yards from Regent Place was originally through the narrow gap alongside 25 Regent Place. The other two ranges probably quickly followed suit, in the early 1880s, and were extended by a bay to add an extra first and second floor bay to the rear “Shopping” wings, at which time the windows and doors in the eastern wall of the basement would have become largely redundant and were blocked up. It is clear from the 1880 drawings that the back wing of 25 Regent Place was intended to be built onto existing single-storey “shopping” units, which were being adapted and enlarged.

The building plans submitted for Bloomer’s extension have been incorrectly transcribed as dated 1886, but the drawings are clearly dated and stamped 1880. These plans were produced and submitted by a Builder from Cradley, John Bloomer, and submitted on April 20th 1880. The drawings are numbered 2148 in the Building Plans Register and were described as “proposed extension to New Buildings Vittoria Street Regent Place”. This maintained the original cart access to the rear “Shopping” ranges from Regent Place, but built over this access at the upper level from the first to the third floor. There was no link intended at ground floor level, although there is a later blocked doorway in the end wall, under the present arch. There was also no link at first floor level. Instead, there was an opening created at first floor level to provide access to a toilet (W.C.), which is one of a pair shown on the plan and this is all that was serviced at first floor level. The buildings were properly linked with a doorway connecting the third floor of 25 Regent Place with the second floor of New Buildings. Although the drawings were produced, stamped and dated, they were not executed as shown. The buildings were occupied by Swan and Adams by 1882 (Post Office Directory). Broadly, the layout was maintained as proposed, but the whole rear range was increased by a full bay from the first to the third floor level and the floor-to-ceiling heights were increased. This may have made some of the connections between the existing building and the link different or impossible.

It is only in 1884 that we find the first tenants of No. 43 Vittoria Street. By that time 45 Vittoria Street had
been vacated by Levetus and Blanckensee, and was occupied by Lionel Spiers & Co.

1884 – 1890
In 1884 the first property in the block, known as 43 Vittoria Street, had been partially let. It was occupied by Edward and Thomas Smith & Co. and Henry and William Haddleton. Then by 1888 Adie and Lovekin Silversmiths had let another part of the building and were located at 43 Vittoria Street. 43 Vittoria Street was split, as the Rate Assessment Books specified, into ‘Offices, Warehouses, Shopping and Premises’ at first and second floor levels and then ‘Offices and Premises’ on the ground floor and this is the only part of the block that we can truly say was let into fully flatted units. It had the narrowest of the rear workshop ‘shopping’ ranges.

In 1884 No. 45 Vittoria Street was let to Lionel Spiers & Co. This encompassed the whole block. No. 47 was let to Levetus Brothers and from what we can gather this included the rear range behind No. 47, all three floors and the first floor of the range running along Regent Place, as well as the upper floors of 25 Regent Place, which are synonymously called Canada Works on occasion. It is a confusing picture, made all the more confusing because the businesses did not follow the template set by the builder.

The subsequent alterations to the building after 1900 were undertaken in several swathes of comprehensive alterations, primarily to adapt and strengthen the building for the production of pressings for the automobile trade. There is a distinct split between Standard Works and Canada Works and significant differences in construction details, indicating that some of the alterations predated the ‘unification’ of the building in 1900; some timber floors were replaced with steel and reinforced concrete, although No. 1 Regent Place seems to have survived with its timber floors and joists. The two main staircases at 45 and 47 Vittoria Street were removed (that to No. 45 is probably a later staircase on the same footprint) and that to No. 49 Vittoria Street was re-positioned when the chimney breast and party wall was removed. The largest alterations were the removal of two stories from the rear ranges, the replacement of the pitched roofs with flat roofs and the partial reconstruction of the back wall of the third floor. Stylistically this dates from the early 1950s.

Building Owner
According to the Rate Assessment Book of 1881, the owner of the whole block was William George Court. The site had previously been owned by James Lea in 1871. There are a number of people named W G Court in Birmingham at this time, but the most likely candidate is a Heraldic & General Engraver, who was living at 1 Regent Street in 1880 and who is recorded working at 56 Vittoria Street in 1879 (Post Office Directory) in the same building where Joel Blanckensee was working. He was still at 1 Regent Street in 1883 but by 1890 William Henry Court (his son?) was based here (Kelly’s Directory). Clearly there was a working relationship between Court and Blanckensee. It is unclear how he had sufficient capital to develop a building of this size, but it is possible that he went into this venture as a partner with Blanckensee and Levetus Brothers, and they jointly raised the capital, in which case the layout of the middle blocks (later Nos. 45 and 47) would have been to their specification. It is, however, a little strange that they are not all named as co-owners of the building in the Rate Assessment Book.

There are two men named in the Census record as Thomas Francis Williams: Thomas F. Williams was a 23-year old Clerk to a Builder in 1861 (b. 1838), living at Aston with his sister’s family. He was living with his grandmother at 106 Rea Street, Birmingham in 1851. He is the most likely candidate for the name on the Building Plans register. There was also a Thomas Francis Williams whom in 1886 joined the Metropolitan Police (national archives ref. MEPO 4/354/71161). However, this is probably another individual.

Further investigation could be carried out into these individuals to firmly establish the role of Williams and the relationship between W G Court, Joel Blanckensee and the Levetus Brothers.

Building Occupants
Levetus Brothers were recorded in 1877 at 56 Vittoria Street, producing “metal chains gilded and burnished to resist acid” (BT 43/45/337459). This may have been the “Mercurial Fire-Gilt” Jewellery mentioned in H C Hartnell’s 1883 Illustrated Guide to the Cork International Exhibition.
They were first recorded at Canada Works on 24th March 1880 (BT 43/46/347908), and an entry appeared in the Birmingham Daily Post on 26th March 1880 advertising for a “General Servant (experienced) Wanted; good character; for Edgbaston. – Apply after 12, Canada Works Vittoria Street”. They must have been the first occupants of the New Buildings, as it was still being constructed in September 1879 (BBP 1298).

In May 1882 Mrs Levetus of Canada Works was looking for a “Plain Cook” and a “Good Housemaid” for Edgbaston.

The Brisbane Courier of 22nd July 1880 recorded the Intercolonial Exhibition at Brisbane at which Messrs. Levetus Brothers of Birmingham had exhibited “a magnificent collection of Canadian gold alberts, lockets, necklets, &c., displayed in a case near the post and telegraph office”. The Sydney Morning Herald on 4th August 1880 also stated that the small show of “Canadian gold jewellery” merited a word of commendation.

Edward Moses Levetus and Hyman Levetus were the sons of Lewis Levetus. Edward Moses had married Sarah Isabelle Himes in Montreal Canada in 1870. In 1873, he and his brother Hyman had formed a gold and gilt jewellery manufacturers based in Birmingham and Montreal. However, Edward remained based in Canada until at least 1877, during which time he had four children. He then moved to London, where he had his fifth child.

Levetus Brothers not only adopted the name Canada Works in homage to Edward’s adopted land, but developed a lucrative monopoly on using the name “Canadian gold” in England. This is recorded in the Birmingham Daily Post on 29th March 1882, when a court case was held into the use of the term “Canadian Gold”.

This case was summarized in the Sheffield Daily Telegraph on 25th March 1882. It was stated in a slightly derisory tone, which perhaps reflects the rivalry between the two centres of silverware, that:

“Canadian gold” is not gold at all, but a fancy name in the trade. Mr. Edward Moses Levetus says so, and he ought to know for he claims the sole monopoly of introducing “Canadian gold” to England.

“Mr Levetus so highly values his monopoly (he comes from Birmingham, and therefore is a monopolist by birth) that he has gone to great legal expense in suing a highly respectable travelling auctioneer, who had ventured to sell articles made of Canadian gold without going to Birmingham for a license from Levetus…..”

Sheffield Daily Telegraph - 25th March 1882
The further hearing of the case in which Messrs. Levetus Brothers, manufacturing jewellers, of Birmingham, seek to restrain Mr. Newton, a travelling auctioneer, from selling watch chains and other jewellery not made by the plaintiffs under the name of “Canadian gold,” which is a term claimed by Levetus Brothers as a trade name used to distinguish their goods, was resumed yesterday in the Chancery Division, before Mr. Justice Chitty. The following additional witnesses were called for the defence: - Mr. R.J. Trevist, examined by Mr. Alexander, said he was member of the firm of Nicholls and Trevist, jewellers and chainmakers, of Birmingham. At one time he carried on business in the United States, but came back to England in 1875. He had heard the term “Canadian gold” applied to imitation jewellery; but it was not confined to the goods of any particular firm. He had sold alberts under the name, and they were so entered in his books. - Cross-examined by Mr. Ince: We employ about 40 hands. To the best of my belief I never saw the advertisement of Messrs. Levetus in “Kelly's Directory of the Watch and Clock Trade.” I never heard of it in my life. I will not swear that on Levetus's old place of business there were not the words “Canadian gold” in very large letters. – Mr. Thomas Hopwood, examined by Mr. Nathan, said: “I deal in plated jewellery, and also in jeweller’s tools, in Birmingham. I have known the term “Canadian” since 1871, and “Canadian gold” since 1873 or 1874. The terms were used to designate the best kind of plated goods. The plaintiffs were customers of mine. Mr. Hyman Levetus bought a gilding battery of me and also some tools. I have had hanging in my workshop for six years a trade list of a man name Lyne, in which the term is used. My customers did not go into the workshop. There were twenty-three workmen who would see the list. Mr. Lyne is a manufacturer of fancy metals and gold plate, and I have dealt with him seven or eight years, he sent me the price list in the usual way. The list included “Canadian gold.” I purchased two chains of Mr. Cartwright made by Levetus Brothers, and they were sent to be analysed for the purposes of this trial. – Cross-examined by Mr. Jelf: Mr. Lyne is in business in the same street as Mr. Levetus. The patterns of goods vary very much in different countries. I remember seeing Mr. Hyman Levetus in September, 1880. I don’t remember his asking me if I ever made goods as “Canadian gold.” He knew I made them. I don’t remember seeing any circulars of the plaintiffs in which they claimed the exclusive use of “Canadian gold.” I have been in Levetus’s office in his old place. I dropped the use of “Canadian” in 1877, because it had become so common that some of my customers objected to it, and said everything was now called Canadian. I made the goods before Mr. Levetus sold them. – Re-examined by Mr. Nathan: I have continued to make the goods the same as before, but I have not used the word “Canadian” since the year 1877, for the reason I have given. – Mr. E J Adams, examined by Mr. Alexander, said: I have carried on business at Spencer Street, Birmingham, for fifteen years, as a manufacturer of jewellery. I have known the term “Canadian gold” since 1874. It means a superior class of imitation gold. …..The goods I first bought from them came from Canada. They did not make them at that time. …..The peculiarity of the Canadian gold is that it has a certain colour resembling 18 carat gold. It is no secret. It is produced by electro-gilding.”

The process of making the gilt jewellery was recorded in an advert dated 1876 for “Quadruple American Electro-plate manufactured by The Wilcox Electro-plate Company, Meriden, - Wholesale Agents, Levetus Brothers, 56 Vittoria Street.” In 1879 Levetus Brothers were selling a horizontal steam engine made by Tangyes from their works, prior to their move, but a Steam Engine was recorded at Canada Works in 1881 (Rate Assessment).

The use of the premises at Canada Works presents an interesting tableau, the workplace forming a vibrant extension to homelife, with various sundry activities taking place, depicted in the newspaper advertisements of the day.
Swann and Adams may have permitted or encouraged use of their yard for diversification:

Turkeys (three) for Sale; blue, bronze, azure colours; fit for any show; the cockerel weighing 36lb; hens 16½lb each. Hens both laying – Swann and Adams, Canada Works, Regent Place

(Birmingham Daily Post - Monday 7th May 1883)

Phaeton and Dogcart, and new Harness; suit a cob 15 hands. Swann and Adams, Canada Works, Regent Place

(Birmingham Daily Post – Wednesday 15th August 1883)

On one occasion the Levetus brothers had to take an employee to court for theft of silver scraps:

BIRMINGHAM POLICE COURT – YESTERDAY

An Untrustworthy servant. - William Nicholls (50), porter, 47. Prescott Street, was charged with stealing some scrap silver clippings, the property of his masters, Messrs. Blanckensee and Levetus, jewellers, Vittoria Street. – Mr. Levetus said the prisoner had been in the employment of his firm for two years as porter. He came with a somewhat indifferent character. Lately they had missed quantities of silver, and suspicion fell upon the prisoner, who was watched. He was seen taking scrap silver several times, but was not arrested till Wednesday, as the previous cases were difficult of proof. On that day he was seen by a girl in witness’s employ to take two pieces of scrap from her bench, and they were found in the prisoner’s possession when he was subsequently arrested. Several other witnesses having been examined, prisoner pleaded guilty to the theft of the two pieces of scrap, the value of which was about a shilling. – Mr. Levetus said he wished to press the case against the prisoner, in order to make an example of him. – Mr Kynnersley sentenced Nicholls to three months imprisonment.”

Birmingham Daily Post Friday 7th September 1883

Joel Blanckensee, who was working at 15a Vittoria Street with Hyman Levetus in 1880, was the second son of Mayer Blanckensee, who was listed as a Jeweller in 1881 (aged 72) employing four men and living at 168 Ladywood Road, Edgbaston.

Joel Blanckensee and Hyman Levetus had been working in Birmingham in partnership with Heber Maxwell Laugher in the trade of “Manufacturing Silversmiths and Jewellers” under the ‘style’ of H.M. Laugher and Co. until 13th April 1880, when the business was wound up (The London Gazette April 23rd 1880). This presumably was the catalyst for the two men to establish their joint venture at Vittoria Street.

Mayer Blanckensee had emigrated to England from Germany in 1838, when he was recorded as a Commercial Traveller based in Cullompton, Devon. At this time he met and married Julia Levy from Plymouth. By 1851 Mayer was recorded as a Jeweller living as a Lodger in Swindon. His wife Julia was living in Birmingham with their six children (Harrietta 10, Eliza 9, Rachel 6, Abraham 5, Joel 3 and Florence 2 months). All of the children apart from Florence were born in Bristol, which suggests that the family had spent over 10 years...
in Bristol before moving to Birmingham. In 1853 they had their final son Barnet before Julia died in 1857. Mayer later married Esther Warradyn (from Rennen in Holland) in Birmingham in 1867. Esther already had two children from her previous marriage, Eliza Warradyn (aged 20 born in Amsterdam), and Anna Warradyn (aged 18 born in Amsterdam).

In 1871 Mayer was living in Birmingham with Esther, Eliza, Florence, Barnet, Eliza W, Anna, and nephew, Sally Warschauer (aged 25 from Preuben Wilmack). They also employed a governess and five servants. Sally shortly after received citizenship and married his cousin Florence Blanckensee. Sally remained in Birmingham as a watch maker (1880 Kelly’s Post Office Directory).

Abraham and Joel both continued in the Jewellery business. In 1861 Mayer was training Abraham to be his assistant but by 1871 Abraham had returned to Bristol as a General Merchant, possibly still under his father’s employment.

Joel was listed as a Commercial Traveller in the Jewellery Trade and was residing in a hotel in Leeds at the time of the 1871 census. The following year he married Eliza Warradyn, his step sister. It was he who went on to establish his business with Hyman Levetus. By 1876, Hyman was describing himself as an Exporter of Jewellery and was living at 4 Summer Hill Terrace, next door to Mayer Blanckensee. Joel, whose wife Elizabeth was Belgian, was a Watch Importer. Joel and Elizabeth had three children together: Esther (born 1874, Birmingham), Leon (born 1877 Birmingham) and Frank (born 1882, Birmingham).

In 1881 Mayer was a widower living with his daughter Eliza (aged 39 from Bristol), his housekeeper Patience Wastreed (aged 31 from Sutton Coldfield), and three servants; Annie Prosser (aged 27 from Hereford), Sarah Tew (aged 30 from Leamington) and Mary Ann Scott (aged 24 from Birmingham).

The Jewellery Quarter was clearly a melting pot of cultures and nationalities, with a symbiotic relationship of small manufacturers, dominated by close-knit Jewish families, if this site represents a typical example. The birthplaces of the servants also reveal the influx of people from all over the West Midlands to the growing city in the late 19th century.
**D & L Spiers** were recorded at Standard Works in 1886 (Birmingham Daily Post, Friday 3rd September) advertising for “Jewellers – Several Hands Wanted, used to Coloured Gold”.

In the same year it is recorded that:

“MESSRS. LEVETUS Bros., Birmingham, have a nice display of well-looking cheap jewellery in Canadian gold and oxidized silver, including watch guards and alberts, ladies’ belts, and some very pretty things in scent bottles.” (The Watchmaker, Jeweller and Silversmith – October 1886)

A fire took place in 1889, recorded in “The Watchmaker, Jeweller and Silversmith”, October 1st:

“The dreaded element of fire does not often get the upper hand in a jeweller’s premises, but when it does it appears to find something very combustible and goes ahead merrily. In the recent fire at Messrs. Levetus, Bros., jewellers, Vittoria Street, Birmingham, when about £500 worth of working tools and machinery, & c., were destroyed, the heat was so great as to melt up a quantity of rough gold work that was left out of the safe, in spite of the fact that it was enclosed in one of the workman’s boxes; none of the other stock was injured, as the fire was confined to the workshops: the origin of the fire is unknown. The loss was covered by insurance, and the re-fitting of premises has already commenced.”

The 1896 Birmingham Trade Directory recorded Levetus Brothers producing “scent and salts bottles”. In 1898 Levetus Brothers Canada Works was occupied by various companies in which Arthur Levetus appears to have an interest, as company secretary; Thornton Scarth Automatic Lighting Syndicate Limited was one; the sole-maker of the “Thornton Scarth Patent Acetylene Generator”, which was described in one advertisement as:

“No Levers, Chains, Ball-cocks or anything else to get out of order. No Governors required, the low pressure being constant and self-regulating. No Safety-Valves necessary as the machine never makes too much gas. The gas delivered Cool, Dry and PURIFIED”

The other company is Midland Motor Carriage Syndicate Limited. Registered in February 1897, it specialised in Steam Motor Vehicles and Rotary Valves (Schumacher Patents). The Directors were W. Somers, J.P., J. A. Cooke, C. C. H. Millar, H. Levetus and E. L. Levetus. A detailed description of this business and the Levetus family foray into the early development of the motor car is described in “Monkeying with The Brass Pot: Birmingham’s Early Motor Industry” by Tim Griffiths.

In 1900 Regent Place was occupied by **I. Rosenthal and Co., Henry H. Aston and Swann and Adams.** In 1900 David and Lionel Spiers were the only occupiers of the Vittoria Street frontage, Edward Moses Levetus had died in 1895 and his brother appears to have lost interest in the jewellery side of the business, preferring to pursue inventions and patents in developing batteries and motors. By 1901 he had moved to London, eventually emigrating to Canada in 1905.

There was a name change in 1915 when ‘**D and L Spiers’** was registered as a business in 1915 which took over the business of L. Spiers, at Standard Works (Birmingham Daily Post - Friday 31st December 1915).

**D. and L. Spiers Ltd,** silversmiths were listed as an exhibitor in the 1922 British Industries Fair. They were identified as:

‘Manufacturers of Silver Goods, Gold Jewellery, and Electro Plate, all exclusive designs, to suit any market; special display of Enamel Goods. (Stand Nos. D.22 and D.44)’

They were also listed as an exhibitor in the British Industries Fair of 1929, described as:

‘Manufacturers of Silver and Tortoiseshell Goods, Enamel on Silver, Gold and Electro-Plate. Specialties - Brush and Toilet Sets, Tea-sets, Cigarette and Cigar Cases and Boxes, Tableware, Cups, Frames, Vases, Dishes, Manicures, etc. Birmingham Jewellers’ and Silversmiths’ Association Member. (Stand Nos. J.43 and J.54)”

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Fig. 13: Antique Victorian sterling silver and hand-cut crystal pair of scent bottles, made by Edward Moses Levetus of Birmingham in 1892.
Lionel Spiers died in June 1925 and his personnel wealth came to £173,460, a considerable sum. Although the company did not have a recorded presence at Standard Works after 1931, they were still based in Birmingham. In the 11th May 1957 issue of The London Gazette D & L. Spiers Ltd. was wound up under the Companies Act as an involuntary liquidation.

The next recorded occupier of the building is the Hockley Auto Company Ltd. and they occupied the building from 1940 until at least 1974 (the last record for them).

In the 1958 edition of the Manufacturers Manual and Buyers Guide The Hockley Auto Co. Ltd. is listed at:
‘47 Vittoria Street, and 1-7 Regent Place, Birmingham, 1. General Pressworkers for Holloware and Motor Trades. Steel Fabrications, Welding and Enamels. Telephone—Central 1305 P.B.X. Hockley...’

The last company to occupy the building was Joseph Smith and Sons (Birmingham) Limited, manufacturing silversmiths, during the 1980s.

**Discussion of the English Heritage Report – Standard Works 2000**

English Heritage recorded Standard Works on 6th June 1999. The English Heritage report (dated 2000) states that the building is “the largest and perhaps the most significant example of the purpose-built manufactories erected for multiple occupancy in the Jewellery Quarter during the 19th century”. The report states that “the combined use of rolled-iron and cast-iron beams in the same structural frame is of considerable interest, representing a period of transition in the development and application of structural ironwork”. The overview of the Jewellery Quarter and detailed understanding of the building stock led English Heritage to this conclusion and they are best placed to make this judgement. In fact, we consider that the building has possibly even greater significance as an engineered building; the nature of the structure is such that the comprehensive use of rolled iron beams that can be found throughout the building, with large areas of externally exposed structural iron is an early use of this construction method. The use of structural cast-iron for the basement and ground floor window bays is very unusual, although probably not unique.

References to the building having been designed for 15 letting units by the Victorian Society are, however, entirely conjectural and presumably based on the five entrances and three floors. However, this is an over-simplification, as the evidence demonstrates that the greatest number of tenants at any one time was only ever seven, including the extension to Regent Place.

Some card entries from the Buildings Plans Register in the Birmingham City Archives are incorrectly transcribed both in detail and date and have led to incorrect conclusions; in particular the extension to Standard Works along Regent Place was planned within months of the completion of the “New Buildings”. The drawings are dated 1880, not 1886 as the transcript states, and it was occupied by 1882. The style of the frontage to Regent Place was in marked contrast with the original phase, although the rear four-storey wing was much closer in detail to the rear wings of the first phase. The English Heritage report states that the drawing is reversed to the form in which it was actually built – this is incorrect. English Heritage also refer to both John Bloomer and Thomas F. Williams as architects but neither had this status. It is difficult to conceive that the building was designed by a builder, as the frontages to Vittoria Street and Regent Place are very accomplished, but the designer continues to elude us. The engineered character of the building and particularly that of the rear ‘shopping’ ranges does suggest a pragmatist at work, rather than an architect, and perhaps the building represents the hands of two designers, an architect and an engineer.

**Bibliography**

1. Left - Vittoria Place pier and panel brick construction with three window bays separated by a large door bay to No. 43. The reducing scale in the windows, from ground floor to second floor, adopts classical proportion and the piers reflect classical pilasters. This has become exaggerated since the second floor windows were altered but was nevertheless an important part of the original design. The classical proportions are emphasised by the channelled and rusticated ashlar, with a chiselled face to the blocks rather than true vermiculated masonry, at ground floor level.

2. Below - the corner of Vittoria Street and Regent Place is expressed as a gentle curve, with a larger panel of channelled, rusticated ashlar to the unit on the corner. The loss of the pitched slate roof is barely noticeable at this angle. The present coping to the parapet probably replaced a course of brickwork to the eaves, and would have been added when the building was re-roofed.
BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Standard Works is an imposing building with a three-storey, stone and brick-built façade fronting Vittoria Street, to the west, and Regent Place, to the north. The façade has been painted, which has damaged its architectural design, by removing the contrast between the rustic stone and smooth orange brick, and obscuring the detail of the fine jointing, the modelling of the raised panels and the moulded terracotta and carved stonework.

Removal of the paint would considerably enhance its architectural significance and is desirable for its long-term conservation, although initial indications are that the original smooth face of the bricks has delaminated in pockets where there has been prolonged saturation.

The building has relatively few decorative details and its high architectural impact is a result of the articulation and rhythm of the bays, the pier-and-panel form, and the unusual cast-iron window bays to the ground floor. However there are some more intricate details: the stone lintels have carved soffits and there are small areas of moulded terracotta panels, off-the-shelf products, rather than made bespoke for the building. These include pierced terracotta panels used as ventilators, located above the ground floor cornice on the main piers, and nail-head terracotta raised panels, located between the first and second floors. On the rounded corner at the junction of the two streets, the terracotta tiles have small quatrefoils with a rope edge border. With the exception of the parapet/ eaves and the windows to the third floor, which replaced larger sashes, the façade is largely complete. The ground floor has rusticated, chanelled and face-chiselled stonework to each original doorway, now painted.

The arched entrance bays have small altered windows to the second floor and it may be beneficial to reinstate the original proportions of the sash windows to both the first and second floor windows and at the same time to reinstate full-height doors to ground level to unify these vertical bays.

The building’s use for multi-occupancy is reflected in the presence of five, original, round-arched doorways leading directly onto the street, three facing Vittoria Street, one on the corner, and a fifth on Regent Place. Each of these doorways was set between a pair of enlarged brick piers (with a rusticated stone base to the ground floor) and a round-arch to the ground floor emphasised with a scrolled console bracket forming a dropped keystone, with deep fluting and fruity swags; the third storey was finished with a carved stone round-arch and a projecting keystone and deeply recessed window (altered). Three of these entrances have been blocked and the current entrance on Regent Place broke through one of the original cast-iron piers.

The facades are articulated by pier and panel construction in brick. The piers spring from heavy-duty, square-section, cast-iron mullions, which rise as continuous massive castings from basement level to ground floor level, where they are given finesse with mouldings to each cast-iron pillar, replicating joinery details, with reeding to the base, ‘panelling’ to the shaft and a scrolled bracket to the top. There is a
continuous stone cornice running above the rusticated stonework and the cast iron piers, which is stepped to form a decorative capital to each cast iron pier. These cast-iron piers, which were cast in single pieces, carry a significant proportion of the loading of the upper floors. Each panel is subdivided into three, with tall sash windows between the intermediate piers at ground floor level, but mainly later 20th century windows to the floors above. The entrance bays have more substantial and deeper brickwork piers.

The quality of the architecture to the streets contrasts with utilitarian architecture to the rear although the use of corbelled brickwork is consistent within both elevations. The remains of three, rear, workshop ranges, colloquially known as ‘shopping’, and perpendicular to Vittoria Street, survive at ground floor level. These ranges were once three-storey, as aerial photographs reveal, and were separated by open, parallel yards. They contain the same pier and panel construction with brick piers in Staffordshire blue engineering brick and panels with corbelled brickwork. Original windows to the back wall and the rear ranges have been removed but all the evidence, including aerial photography, indicates that these were cast-iron and the use of cast-iron was prevalent throughout the building.
Construction Details

Perhaps more important than the use of cast iron, and often overlooked and perhaps misinterpreted as a much more modern intervention in the building, is the early developed use of rolled iron construction as an engineered system of building. It is particularly obvious at the back of the main blocks and all along the three rear ranges, where it survives. These elements of the original fabric reveal that the building was dressed to impress to the street frontage but was essentially a simple and lightweight partially-framed iron structure at the back, with exposed structural iron, more usually a 20th century convention, enabling large expanses of windows to provide copious natural light. These are the main indications that the building may have been in part designed by an engineer.

Cast-iron posts at basement level support pairs of I-section, rolled iron beams which in turn support blue-brick piers at ground floor and upper levels. Butt-jointed, I-section beams run around both internal sides of the back range, running in a continuous strip at the same height. They support brickwork above, which is constructed in 12 rows of English bond brickwork with 3 corbelled rows in English bond above this, forming the cill of the windows above. On the back elevation of the second floor of the main block there are seven rows of English bond brickwork in-situ, with mixed header and stretcher courses above. The same detail still survives on the flanking walls of the rear ranges above the first floor I-section beams, which are still in-situ.

10. view of a blue-brick pier at ground floor level, with its internal face flush with the rolled iron beams, and outer face articulated to project beyond the rolled iron beams. In practice, the I-section beams were continuous and encased within the brickwork. A timber transverse beam in-situ, with chamfered profile, supported the floor joists.

11. cast-iron columns at basement level support pairs of I-section beams.

12. Butt-jointed and bolted sections of rolled iron I-section beams are visible on the internal wall face at first floor level.

13. Externally, to the rear yards, the I-section beams and their soffits were exposed.
This type of construction with butt-jointed, I-section beams to the back of the building is a form of iron framing with exposed ironwork at each floor. The raw, cut-off ends of some of these rolled iron beams can now be seen in the stub walls at flat roof level. These iron beams were inserted during the process of construction and later enveloped with the piers, which overlap the butt-joints, as the building was constructed.

Pier and panel construction enabled a very strong framework of brick piers, which appear to have been largely built or faced in Staffordshire blue semi-engineering brick, with blue brick chamfered plinths. The panels appear to be built in contrasting red brick. This would account for the different weathering of the brickwork and the misconception that some of the rear ranges have been rebuilt. The brickwork is uniformly painted but in fact the more uniform character of the brick piers reflects a harder more durable blue brick, rather than a later phase of construction.

Cills to windows on the three rear ranges were constructed in corbelled brick, with moulded shaped brick cills, the top moulded brick being blue, creating a regular rhythm and horizontal articulation to the elevations. This corbeling extended across the whole of the width of each panel, although it is unlikely that the window filled the whole of the width of the panel. The corbelled brickwork is a detail which is also evident at the top of the main frontages to Vittoria Street and Regent Place.
The ground floor of the three rear ranges and the floors above are one bay deeper than the basement on plan. The fourth bay to the most northerly range, however, appears to be contemporary with the main building, and was probably added during the construction phase, as it is illustrated in-situ on the 1880 drawings for 25 Regent Place. But the other narrow, three-storey bays were added to the original building, squeezing every possible shred of space available out of the site. The main ranges were divided into three equal bays, with the further narrow fourth bay to the east providing a covered cartway at ground floor level, with ‘shopping’ over. This bay in the most southerly range was filled in at ground floor level. The redevelopment of 25 Regent Place subsumed the earlier yard access into the site. There are a series of blocked windows at basement level running along the line of the third to fourth bay. These are identical in form, with segmental arches and part of the first phase of construction. They would have provided borrowed light from the east and from external lightwells into the basement before the extension of the ranges but at this point in time the windows into the basement along the line of the outer eastern flank wall would have become largely redundant and would have been blocked, making the basement very dark indeed. It was a very costly exercise and would have provided little additional working space, but if workspace in the Jewellery Quarter was at a premium, it demonstrates the pressure for space on the businesses in this block.

Each open courtyard was supported by reinforced floors at basement level; cast-iron posts with traditional, classical details (astragal, necking and echinus - forming the moulded capital) supported pairs of rolled iron I-section beams, which were reinforced and strengthened with brick laid on edge sandwiched between the beams. These in turn supported brickwork for the panels above. The lower flange of the rolled iron beams also supported cast-iron, V-section beams running in the opposite direction, supplemented with iron tie-rods, which in turn supported brick jack-arches. The English Heritage report refers to this as fireproof construction but, although it is the same detail as found in fireproof buildings, it was not carried out with this purpose, rather to provide a very strong engineered reinforcement for the yards. Within each courtyard, light was provided into the basement by means of cast-iron and glazed floor lights, one of which still survives. The brick jack-arches which sat on the cast-iron V-section beams supported heavy-duty, stone-cobbled yards, of which one large fragment still survives, and there may be more buried along the courtyard to the former No. 43 Vittoria Street.
At ground floor level the fourth narrow bay was the main access into the works and serviced all of the ranges. Large timber beams support the open cartways at the end of the first and second ranges and these survive. The last range in the row has rolled iron beams in place of timber baulks, because it was not open and was filled with brick and glazed window. Each of the three yards which served a rear range seems to have been approached independently from Regent Place and indeed the type of buildings in the Jewellery Quarter supports this practice where workers had a separate access to the workshops.

The rear ranges are similar in size and length but the last range is much narrower and this would have been built with a ‘lean-to’ or pentice roof. The plans reveal that the ranges faced north into the courtyards. Each range therefore had its own courtyard. The pier and panel, brick and iron construction would have contained large windows on the north side, providing the best quality light, with further windows on the south side. Where there is evidence for blocked windows in the basement, these were built with segmental brick arches and were relatively small and typical of the period.

The large glazed windows required for jewellery manufacture can be seen in many other places. The very tall height of the rooms was designed to make best use of light and to accommodate very large windows, rather than to accommodate machinery or equipment.
The rear ranges of "shopping" were probably lit from both sides, although it makes sense that they would have operated from one courtyard, the northern one. Each courtyard had a glazed pentice roof, at the junction of the ranges and the main building, providing a covered area where there would have been a large doorway. These are evident on the rate assessment map, although by 1888 they had been replaced with solid roofs (probably slate).

26. The back wall of the narrowest southern range has brick-filled sockets where the original floor joists of the second floor were positioned. A large part of the party wall has been removed at this upper level. The high-level suspended doorway is a modification for a fire escape and probably dates from the 1950s adaptation.

27. View within the former southern yard. The projecting moulded bricks above the I-section beams supported a pentice-roof single-storey addition, in the form of a glazed roof, which was shortlived and replaced with a slate roof. The original brickwork survives above the beams with 12 courses of English bond brickwork finished with corbelled brick cills to former cast-iron windows.
Surviving brickwork

Whilst blue bricks were used for repairs, they were also part of the original construction and were used on the outside face of the ranges and for the main supporting piers. Whether these blue bricks were also adopted for the backs of the piers, facing into the buildings, is unknown, as the brickwork is now comprehensively painted but a large number of the piers were built in blue brick on both sides. By removing paint from brickwork a much more colourful and archaeological understanding of the building could be achieved (see PART C Recommendations for Interpretation).

In addition to the original brickwork, there are small moulded bricks in-situ which supported the pentice roofs of the lean-to courtyard extensions. These extensions are evident on the 1869 and 1888 plans.

Courtyard 2 (middle) - elevation between Range 1 and Range 2 – 12 courses of English bond brickwork with three corbelled courses above. Panel of original brickwork – with plinth, now covered. Single skin of brick below the rolled iron beams, with double skin above floor level forming the plinth to a brick cill (now enclosed).

Range 2 (middle)
Internal facing bricks to Range 2 – 14-15 courses of English bond brickwork above the rolled iron beam.

Courtyard 3 (southern) - elevation between Range 2 and Range 3 – 12 courses of English bond brickwork with three corbelled courses above. Bricks for glazed pentice roof in back wall and side wall of Range 3.

Range 3 (southern) – 11 courses of English bond to outer face, with more random, mainly stretcher bond bricks, above.

Floor structure

The original upper floor structure of the main building and the ‘wings’ was timber. Within the rear ‘wings’ there are still two lateral beams in-situ, which supported the original timber floor joists, located within the middle range. Within the southern section of Standard Works there are a number of timber floors in-situ at first and second floor level. These may be original although they differ slightly in construction detail from those along Regent Place; there have been later modifications to remove staircases and they were constructed from a grid of both axial and transverse I-section rolled iron beams with intermediate timber joists of thin scantling. Within the Regent Place range there are also several timber floors, which are not as deep on plan, and did not require iron to provide additional strength, relying instead on transverse joists of larger section; there is evidence of severe charring, which may have occurred at the time of the 1889 fire. Within the Canada Works block (Nos. 47 and 49), however, the timber floors were comprehensively replaced in steel and concrete.
Floor plans

The surviving evidence shows that the ranges fronting Vittoria Street had large offices lit by sash windows with a corridor at the back providing access to the rear ranges. This corridor was lit by windows on the back wall of the range, overlooking the rear yards, and probably constructed with segmental arched lintels. One of these original windows survives, enclosed within a later first floor extension, and another window survives as a niche, which is repeated at both ground and first floor level.

The English Heritage report suggests that the rolled iron beams which were built into the back wall of the main Vittoria Street building “probably spanned open ‘working arches’.” There is no evidence for this, as the same construction can be seen all along the Regent Place rear elevation and this was not connected to any workshops in 1877. In fact, the rear elevation of the Regent Place elevation still survives substantially intact at first floor level and by removing plaster from both internal and external faces of these walls and recording the brickwork we can get a much better sense of the original form of construction of the building (see Interpretation).

In all probability, the main panels of brickwork would have contained 9” brick walls, set back in a rebate behind the line of the rolled iron beams, which formed a soffit, whilst the external piers were a brick and a half deep. There is no evidence to support the theory that there were working arches serving open plan spaces. This point would have been the place where the internal communal corridors met the rear ranges, and in all likelihood they would have been separated simply, by doors to remove noise from the offices.

Windows and Doors

From the available evidence, it appears that the buildings were originally glazed with large multi-paned cast-iron windows to the rear workshop ranges. These would have butted up to the underside of the rolled iron beams, which would have formed a soffit to the opening. The windows did not appear to fill the entire panel between the piers and instead there were panels of brickwork set on the same plane as the cast-iron windows. The distribution of cast-iron windows, however, is unknown and it cannot be assumed that they replicated the original windows to the 25 Regent Place extension.

The windows facing Vittoria Street and Regent Place were all originally vertically sliding sash windows, to all three floors, but these only survive at ground floor level, with one bay of sashes at first floor level to Regent Place. The second floor contains smaller windows with replacement, inserted lintels, although the original stone lintels are still in-situ. It would be feasible to reinstate sash windows to this floor with no loss of significance.

To the rear of the main blocks (the back wall of the Vittoria Street and Regent Place frontages), the windows did not need to be particularly large, as they were lighting corridors, stairwells and circulation areas. Some square-headed niches surviving in the building indicate the probable position of these and the masonry details suggest that these extended up to the height of the rolled iron beams. The narrow proportions of the niches also implies that these may have been working sashes. The position of doorways is not possible to accurately pinpoint but each courtyard required access at ground floor level and a doorway entered both the yard and the workshop range in each bay, leaving enough room...
for a small sash window to light the rear corridor.

**Description of Floors**

**Basement**

The basement was designed to be occupied by one user, and there is little evidence of any historic subdivision or deliberate fire-compartmentation. There is, however, a small core of brickwork which indicates a cell-like structure close to the crossing of the two wings. This enclosed space was lit with borrowed light from the courtyard.

The building was heated by means of hearths in individual offices and at the end of each row of workshops. The hearths probably contained enclosed stoves. There are some small fragments of flues in the south-east corner of the building (pictured right - 30), which served the upper floors of the narrowest workshop range. There was some maintenance of the flues enabled at basement level and one of the flues has a cast-iron access door. Indications are that these were probably added and adapted rather than built during construction in 1879.

The basement was originally lit by the large pavement-level windows which were part of the casting of the window bays running along the two streets, and which were located above ground level. These were supplemented by cast-iron pavement lights, in the Vittoria Street and Regent Place pavements, and square cast-iron pavement lights in the courtyards. Additional borrowed light initially came from the eastern wall, which had a series of segmental arched windows (probably blocked up in the 1880s).

The square, cast-iron mullions are located at every window bay, although some are now buried in the masonry, which was built up around them.

Round cast-iron columns with moulded capitals support the workshop ranges. These are largely complete, with only two missing, and have been supplemented during the 20th century with a large number of smaller brick piers and steel columns, many of which are probably redundant. The columns support pairs of rolled iron beams which in turn support the large blue-brick masonry piers which rise up through the building, all in-situ at this level and as built in 1879.

The open courtyards at ground level were originally supported by brick 'jack-arches', tied together with iron rods. These shallow arches were supported on inverted V-section cast-iron beams which were seated onto the bottom flange of a rolled iron beam. The paired rolled iron beams were placed at 90 degrees to the street frontage and they were butt-jointed and bolted together, the junction being supported by a large cast-iron column. Of these original jack-arches there are only fragments of...
two rows; the middle row has been completely removed. Within the surviving two rows there are still the remains of cast-iron pavement lights or their frames.

The location of the original staircase serving the basement is difficult to pin-point but the presence of a squat cast-iron column may indicate the position of an intermediate landing. There is another possibility – that the squat cast-iron column is just one surviving from a row of central cast-iron columns supporting a brick-vaulted structure to the ground floor of the Vittoria Street block. This might explain the anomaly with the floor depth, which can be best seen in the rectified photograph of this longitudinal section.

The Regent Place block contains one slender cast-iron column at a central-point and this appears to be the only surviving cast-iron column which supported the barrel-vaulted brick entrance bays in the frontage blocks. The depth of the floor plan along the Vittoria Street frontage would support the likelihood that this range also once contained cast-iron columns, as intermediate support for the ground floor structure, which contained heavy-duty stone flagged entrance bays, of which only one now survives. There are at least two other cast-iron posts missing from the Regent Place frontage, displaced when the concrete safes were inserted. When these safes are removed, the reinstatement of cast-iron posts is desirable. The combination of timber floor structure and occasional cast-iron posts is original to this range.

Ground Floor

The ground floor contains the largest surviving area of the 1879 building and the ‘shopping’ ranges. The steam engine recorded in 1881 was probably accommodated in an outhouse, illustrated in 1888.

The corner bay at the junction of Regent Place and Vittoria Street was one small unit, just one room for many years until it was incorporated into Canada Works. It is unusual because in terms of external appearance it is the part of the building with the greatest impact and the largest, round-arched, rusticated door-surround, perhaps a reflection of its original purpose as a Restaurant. It has been remodelled, with both the back wall (to Regent Place) and a section of the side wall (to Vittoria Street) removed. The side wall, which joined No. 47 Vittoria Street would have contained an original chimney breast, providing heat for the corner ‘shop or office’, and was presumably removed when the brick-built strong rooms, or safes, were inserted at ground and basement level. The aerial photograph of 1937 shows a chimney stack in this location, which suggests that the safes are probably 20th century. The current staircase is a 20th century insertion. The back wall of this space, which has been removed, was continuous and separated the
ground floor from the rest of the Regent Place building. No. 1 Regent Place was approached via a separate entrance door and a corridor led to the eastern wing of the building at ground floor level only. In all probability there would have been another separate doorway onto the courtyard in this location. This corridor is now only evident by the location of the original moulded plaster ceiling cornice. Patches of plaster have become detached and here the ceiling appears to also contain fragments of an inverted V-section, cast-iron beam. There is no evidence that there was a staircase leading from ground to first floor in this part of the building and indeed the documentary evidence supports this and suggests that at least one of the tenants occupied the ground floor and the second floor, with Canada Works sandwiched between them on the first floor, although quite how this worked in practice is unknown.

The bay of the building which contained No. 47 (the ground floor of Canada Works) contains a stone-flagged pavement leading from the main doorway. In the other bays this area was occupied by a staircase; one is in-situ and the other is ghosted on the party wall. However, there is no evidence for a staircase along this wall and the floor plan appears to have been slightly different in Canada Works, with light coming from a small window on the eastern wall of the frontage range, which would have lit either the stairwell or a corridor. This was later blocked up and a spiral cast-iron staircase was inserted here, at the same time that the floor level to the first floor was altered and the floor structure was replaced with steel I-section beams and cast-concrete floors.

The remainder of the ground floor contains ephemeral evidence of the original form, with fragments of the floor structure along the middle workshop range, in the form of a pair of timber transverse beams, the occasional blue brick chamfered plinth to the blue brick piers of the former outside wall, and a few areas where the window to wall arrangement can still be seen. The best example of this is shown in the rectified...
photograph of the lateral cross-section. Blue brick piers (now painted) support substantial sections of the original brick masonry between ground floor and first floor. Pairs of rolled iron I-section beams are butt-jointed and bolted together and supported at these junctions by the blue brick piers. The gap between the rolled iron beams is filled with bricks laid on edge, providing some ballast. Above the beams there are 12 course of brickwork laid in English bond (alternative rows of headers and stretchers) and then three rows of corbelled brickwork above this forming a cill for the windows to the first floor. Most of this brickwork is still in-situ above the iron beams. Variations in the bond generally reflect modifications to the building, such as blocking up of windows.

First Floor
The first floor of the building contains transient evidence of the original layout, with the trimmed timber surround of one former first to second floor staircase still evident in the ceiling joists to the southernmost bay. The main staircase is a relatively modern addition (after 1900). The first floor contains most of the evidence of the arrangement of hearths and chimney breasts provided heated rooms to the first and second floor offices. The ghosted alignment of former brick dividing walls at this level, which is illustrated on the first floor phase plan, represents a later remodelling to provide toilets and smaller offices. The presence of an inserted and lowered section of floor within No. 47 can only logically be explained by the need to provide a viewing area of the first workshop range, overseeing the shop floor at ground floor level. This adaptation is coeval with the inserted steel and concrete floor, post 1912 and pre 1955.

Second Floor
The entire second floor is now open plan and all of the original dividing walls and chimney breasts have been removed. There is no sense of the original cellular form of the building.
Phase 2 - Division between Canada Works and Standard Works

By 1888 the building had been split into two distinct blocks — Canada Works and Standard Works. At this time the two structures were physically separated at ground floor level. A large doorway, which was the size of opening required for a large internal lobby / hall within the dividing wall at ground floor level, was blocked up.

The physical evidence suggests that there was never a link at this point at first floor level and it is probable that the former opening at ground floor level was created by Levetus Brothers, rather than during construction. The original window at ground floor level, which was created to provide light into the passage or stairwell, was later blocked up and a cast-iron spiral staircase was inserted into Canada Works. This was presumably done because, by separating the two structures completely, the original staircase on the south side of the party wall could no longer provide access to the first floor of Canada Works. It is not clear whether there was a separate staircase leading from the main door to the first floor. The well-worn, stone flagged entrance hallway which still survives suggests that there was no staircase along this party wall by 1888 serving the rear range. The position of the staircase is therefore something of a mystery. It may have had a different layout from the original staircase to the first two blocks (Nos. 43 and 45), which can be positively located rising from the entrance door in a straight flight to the first floor.

Steel marked as Applby Frodingham Steel located between the ground floor and first floor in Canada Works dates from after 1912, as the company was formed at that date. The cast-iron staircase could date from an earlier phase, as this was manufactured by Haywards Ltd of Borough, which was manufacturing cast iron staircases in the last decades of the 19th century, but was clearly adapted or installed at the same time that the steels were installed to replace a timber floor.

Both Canada Works and Standard Works evolved after this time independently with different construction details / modifications until they were unified during the 1900s.

Standard Works retained a large number of the timber floors between first and second floor levels, with a combination of rolled iron beams and timber joists, whilst the floors within Canada Works were largely replaced in concrete and steel RSJs, with cast concrete floors. The main range to Regent Place retained its timber floors between basement and ground floor and between first and second floor levels. After the 1930s the building was comprehensively altered with precast concrete beams and posts installed between the basement and ground floor. These are heavily engineered and may have been installed to support heavy machinery. Much of this reinforcement may have been carried out after the blitz and WWII.

Summary of Significance

Standard Works has a fascinating history and its significance lies part within its unusual, dual-purpose (front and back) methods of construction, and the surviving evidence for this, and part in its social history, the relationships between the occupiers of the building, who worked at times in partnership, and at times in isolation, all within a close-knit and specialist area of the city where there was great cultural diversity. The stories behind the occupants of the buildings, many of whom were immigrants, are as interesting and as compelling as the buildings, and reveal entrepreneurial spirit, speculative ambition, innovation, artisanry and artistry.

The building constructed in 1878 and 1879 was largely a speculative venture, owned by George William Court, with only 50% occupancy, at best, within the first two years of having been built. Whilst the original intention may have been to create flatted manufactories and offices, within two years of having been constructed, this intention had evaporated for a large portion of the site and there were single occupiers
for those blocks later known as Nos. 45 and 47 Vittoria Street. Only the first range on Vittoria Street (later identified as No. 43) was properly flatted by 1881 and this was split into ground floor accommodation (office and shopping) and flatted offices and workshops above.

The plan form with its series of rear parallel workshop ranges serviced by open yards was not new and was well-established in Birmingham, with ranges of ‘shopping’ perpendicular (90 degrees) to a main block. The narrowest range would have contained a mono-pitch roof whilst the others were wide enough to contain double pitched roofs.

The different functions of the spaces within the workshop ranges are not possible to interpret as there is no surviving evidence. The ranges would have contained benches for jewellery manufacture and must have contained some form of warehousing, but how this was subdivided is unknown and the evidential value has been damaged by demolition and internal modifications.

Technological Interest

English Heritage recorded Standard Works on 6th June 1999. The English Heritage report (dated 2000) states that the building is “the largest and perhaps the most significant example of the purpose-built manufactories erected for multiple occupancy in the Jewellery Quarter during the 19th century”. The report states “the combined use of rolled-iron and cast-iron beams in the same structural frame is of considerable interest, representing a period of transition in the development and application of structural ironwork”.

The building has possibly even greater significance as an engineered building; the nature of the structure is such that the comprehensive use of rolled iron beams that can be found throughout the building, with large areas of externally exposed structural iron, is an early use of this construction method. There is nothing
comparable within this part of Birmingham but there are examples of this type of construction in parts of the West Midlands, in association with industrial buildings such as railway buildings. It was a form of building which eventually led to fully-framed steel framed building with continuous steel stanchions in the place of the brick piers. The use of structural cast-iron for the basement and ground floor window bays is very unusual, although probably not unique.

The workshop or ‘shopping’ ranges were purpose-built for jewellery manufacture, with large glazed windows and timber floors, designed to accommodate benches. Fragments of this structure survive, but are more clearly represented in the adjoining building at 9 Regent Place. The stacked, early 20th century, safes contain evidence of the need to recycle valuable precious metals, although the small built-in safes are both locked and cannot be inspected in detail. In the absence of other evidence of the jewellery trade, the safe fittings have high evidential value. Jewellers’ boards, mentioned in 1999, do not survive.

Architectural Interest

The elevations to Vittoria Street and Regent Place share a strong rhythm of heavily articulated brick pier-and-panel construction. This has lost some of its architectural impact through over-painting. The building has relatively few decorative details and its high architectural impact is a result of the articulation and rhythm of the bays, the pier-and-panel form, and the unusual cast-iron window bays to the ground floor and basement. The building’s original purpose for multi-occupancy is reflected in the presence of five, round-arched doorways leading directly onto the street, three facing Vittoria Street, one on the corner, and a fifth on Regent Place.

The quality of the architecture to the streets contrasts with utilitarian architecture to the rear although the use of corbelled brickwork is consistent within both elevations. The remains of the three, rear, workshop ranges, contain the same pier and panel construction with brick piers in Staffordshire blue engineering brick and panels with red corbelled brickwork. The loss of the greater part of these rear ranges has significantly diminished the historic and social interest of the building. The surviving fragments at ground floor level, therefore, have greater significance than they might otherwise have had.

Cast-iron posts at basement level and fragments of jack-arched construction are of very high significance. Butt-jointed, I-section beams run around both internal sides of the back range, running in a continuous strip at the same height. They support original brickwork above, which is constructed in 12 rows of English bond brickwork with 3 corbelled rows in English bond above this, forming the cill of the windows above. These have the same level of significance as the basement structure, of very high significance.

Historic Interest

The significance of the building is intertwined with the development of the jewellery industry in Birmingham in the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century. The changes to the building mirrored the developments in the industry, as the jewellery trade reached a peak at the end of the 19th century and first decade of the 20th century, and tailed off to later diversify into the production of car parts.

The increasing commercial exploitation of new processes of electro-plating and electro-gilding seems to have been a principal factor in the development of ‘Canada Works’. Making jewellery more affordable had a direct impact on the scale of production. The passing in 1854 of the Lower Standards Act also had a profound effect in permitting lower standards of gold alloys - 9, 12 and 15 carat. There was an increasing demand for lower priced pieces and this is where the developments of the Levetus Brothers fits into the history of the site and its significance. By maintaining two separate businesses alongside each other, one devoted to the high quality silverware and one to highly affordable gilt jewellery, Levetus Brothers could ride the storm of occasional fluctuations and downturns in the market.

The scale of the building required for these new processes may have been a primary factor in its development.
PART C – INTERPRETATION

The preparation of this study is underpinned by the desire of the Ruskin Mill Land Trust to engage the new users of the building in its history, to develop an understanding of the importance of the building and how it has changed over time in order that it can be better appreciated by staff, students and visitors and to identify opportunities for interpretation. The brief for this study was to:

• understand the existing features of the original building
• understand how the building has developed
• identify the significance of these changes and their inter-relationship with the occupants and social-history of the area
• how these might inform the future conservation and maintenance of the building and future phases of work
• to explain to users the significance of the building in which they study, work or visit

Interpretation of Social and Economic History - Trades and Occupiers

Lack of physical evidence for the various artisan and industrial processes which took place within the building hampers a fully-developed understanding of how the building was used. However, there is scope to explore the nature of the different specialist trades. Specialisation was a feature of the jewellery trade and artisan craft from the 15th century. Manufacturers tended to concentrate on one particular aspect of production in the mid 19th century. Individual items could go through multiple manufacturing processes and their mutual dependency led them to work in close proximity. This was referred to in 1844:

“There is perhaps no town in England where there are so many persons combining in themselves the character of master and workman, as Birmingham, and none in which there is more observable a chain of links connecting one with another” (The Penny Magazine 1844).

The building accommodated at different times multiple specialist trades: watch makers, silverware manufacturers, a wedding ring maker, brooch tongue maker, makers of alberts, scent bottles, electroplating and electrogilding and a printers.

The increasing commercial exploitation of new processes of electroplating and electrogilding seems to have been a principal factor in the development of ‘Canada Works’. Making jewellery more affordable had a direct impact on the scale of production. Electroplating required an electrical supply, which would have been provided by batteries or a steam-powered generator. Hyman Levetus was particularly interested in these processes. Electroplating made possible the production of a huge variety of hard-wearing silver objects in great numbers and it is likely that the separate workshop of Levetus Brothers and Levetus and Blanckensee would have separately produced and refined the goods, breaking the mould of the separate business models, and keeping the various manufacturing processes ‘in the family’. By maintaining two separate businesses alongside each other, one devoted to the high quality silverware and one to highly affordable gilt jewellery, Levetus Brothers could also ride the storm of occasional fluctuations and downturns in the market.

The scale of the building required for these new processes may have been a primary factor in its development. The manufacture of machine-made gold or gilt chains would have required steam or gas-driven engines. Again, this could be explored in more detail, as a Tangyes steam engine was recorded in the ownership of Levetus Brothers in 1879 and the building accommodated a steam engine in 1881.

The clusters of buildings and trades located in the Jewellery Quarter was clearly mutually beneficial. Much could be done to explore the links between the families and businesses but to make it focussed and relevant, it should be linked to the occupiers of the buildings.
Interpretation of The Structure of the Building and Flatted Factories

There were distinct differences in detail within the separate parts of the building, which could be exploited as part of the interpretation of the building and restored by a simple hierarchy of materials and finishes; e.g. front offices had hearths and had plastered walls, as the surviving section of plastered cornice indicates at 1 Regent Place. Staircases provided access to workshops from the front entrance and were probably quite rudimentary in design. The internal walls to the back workshop ranges appear to have been finished in painted brick.

The removal of paint from the blue-brick piers and blue and red brickwork above the rolled iron beams at ground floor level would do much to help with the interpretation of the insides and outsides of the building, revealing courtyards and workshops, where there were differences in construction, colour and finish which have been obliterated by over-painting. Painting of the rolled-iron beams so that these are also preserved and are more obvious would also assist in the interpretation of the surviving evidence. Architectural paint analysis could also assist with identifying original painted finishes and colours for the structural iron.

The structure of the building is a simple one and this could be explained simply looking at basic principles of construction. Taking the first principles of classical architecture of 'post and lintel' construction and applying this to the building, looking at the structure as a modular system of building.

The best way to achieve this is to produce a scaled model of the building and a series of component parts which can be rebuilt to recreate the original form, using texture or colour to differentiate between building parts.

In the absence of definitive information about the location of staircases and corridors, it would be worthwhile asking students to explore the possible layouts how people would arrive and get around the buildings, how they would use the buildings and what they housed. The key dates are presented in the Phasing and Occupiers diagrams - Appendix 4.

The presence of ephemera can often add much to the appreciation of the use of the building. The 20th century safes add to the appreciation of the use of the building, albeit relatively late adaptations. Retention of the smallest built-in stacked safes would assist in interpretation and could be interwoven with the court case against William Nicholls, jailed for theft of silver clippings.

The relationship between the jewellery industry in Birmingham, Bristol and London and the international connections with trade and skilled artisans from Germany and links with markets and gold in America, Australia and Canada could be explored further to establish how this bore fruit and influenced the development of the area.

Specific recommendations for further research or investigation, identified at the beginning of the report, are reproduced here. There are further opportunities for research, which we have established as part of this report (see sources listed in Appendix 1).

Building plans from the original building survive in a very fragile form, on tracing paper, in the Birmingham Central Library Archives and it may be feasible one day to see these drawings, if they can be conserved and stabilised. One option may be to use grant funding to enable this to happen. This may provide, once and for all, definitive information about the builder or architect of the building, although this is by no means guaranteed, as there are very few drawings.

A number of jewellery designs were registered with the Board of Trade by some of the companies occupying the buildings, in particular Levetus Brothers. The designs are held in the National Archives (Kew - London). Visiting the archives and copying the designs was outside the scope of this report, but may prove a fruitful avenue to pursue to provide illustrative material. Sources are listed in Appendix 1 entitled – Chronological References.
An aerial photograph of the building has been viewed at Birmingham Archives. Unfortunately, because of the copyright restrictions on “orphaned works”, the photograph cannot be copied. However, there may be other aerial photographs of the site, in the Historic England archives at Swindon, which may provide more detailed photograph evidence of the original form of the building. Research of aerial photographs at Swindon was outside the scope of this report. A full list of references to aerial photographs of this area of Birmingham, provided by Historic England NMR, is included in Appendix 1.

Site investigation – the sectional rectified photographs reveal anomalies around the location of the third original entrance (No. 47 Vittoria Street). The floor is unusually deep at this point with a squat cast-iron column. This may indicate the location of the original primary staircase between ground floor and basement or the presence of further ‘jack-arching’. This area may merit further investigation to inform the archaeology of the building. Further areas around the original cast-iron lightwells within the courtyard at ground floor level may also contain buried setts. The first floor to Regent Place retains the largest part of the original pier and panel wall construction to the courtyards. This would merit further investigation of the brickwork and window junctions to confirm construction details for the intermediate brick panels.