

**CENTRAL LANCASHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH
UNIT**

Internal Report No. 17

**19th century
COMMUNAL BAKEHOUSES
in PRESTON**



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19th century

COMMUNAL BAKEHOUSES in PRESTON

Rescue Archaeology

In the late 1960's destruction of archaeological sites by large-scale development schemes reached crisis proportions. Nation-wide concern led to the formation of "Rescue Archaeology", a campaign launched to generate public and political awareness of the scale of the threat and rescue as many threatened sites as possible. Then there were no statutory obligations upon developers or landowners to pay any regard to un-scheduled remains on their land or any archaeological discoveries revealed during development. Many ignored the pleas of Rescue Archaeology but a growing number responded, some giving financial support or other facilities. In a few cases buried sites and ruins were restored and incorporated into the development schemes.

In the following years increased government funding, the response of university departments and the appointment of archaeologists to county planning departments began to exercise some control. New excavation teams along with many archaeological societies carried out the enormous task of rescue excavations and fieldwork - the tide was beginning to turn.

MAUDLANDS

Archaeological surveillance and Discovery

In 1978 against this background of Rescue archaeology attention was directed to an urban re-development scheme at Maudlands in Preston, Lancashire. Past discoveries of stone axes and other artefacts indicated prehistoric settlement on its sandy sub-soils, a type of soil well known for preservation of ancient remains.¹ It was known to be the site of a mediaeval friary and leper colony eventually becoming a gentleman's estate. In the 19th century it was covered with cotton mills and streets.

¹ the Bronze Age site at Astley Hall, Chorley, was a good example; see : "*Bronze Age Burial Site, Astley Hall, Chorley*", John Hallam, C.L.A.R.U. Internal Report No. 20.

A study of the early maps showed streets of workers' houses had been built over former pastures and meadows. As their foundations were no deeper than the old plough soil any buried remains beneath may have survived undisturbed.

With these possibilities in mind arrangements were made with Wimpeys, building contractors, to monitor the building sites during the early stages of their work.² Posters listing the kind of archaeological finds expected were displayed in the building huts and site offices: almost unbelievably they produced a result. One of the site agents, Michael Glover, rang with a message saying an excavator had unexpectedly broken through a brick dome whilst digging a drain (Plate 1.). Its depth suggested it was ancient, could we tell them what it was? With visions of the remains of the cellar of some unknown 17th or 18th century house - or even earlier - the site was promptly visited. However, what they had uncovered was built of 19th century brick and appeared to be some sort of kiln. Being at this low level the houses must have been built over it; a sequence not readily understood. The building contractors were anxious to know if more of these buried structures were likely to turn up. It was agreed the discovery should be archaeologically investigated to find an answer. Excavation and documentary research were carried out concurrently producing, as will be seen, unexpected results.

Excavation.

The main objective of the excavation was to uncover the brick structure as far as the limited area between two newly laid concrete foundations would allow. The surface was very disturbed and in the undisturbed part of the trench there appeared to be about two foot of 'fill' covering the brickwork. This fill consisted of building debris and domestic rubbish, dated by the broken pottery dateable to the late-19th century. The purpose of the 'fill' seemed to have been to level the ground to build the houses, but evidence from early maps showed the houses had been built nearly 50 years earlier, between 1836 and 1849. Another purpose would have to be sought.

² carried out by the Central Lancashire Archaeological Research Unit on behalf of Adrian Olivier, D.O.E. Field Officer, Lancaster University.



red dot: site of future 1, Peel Street.

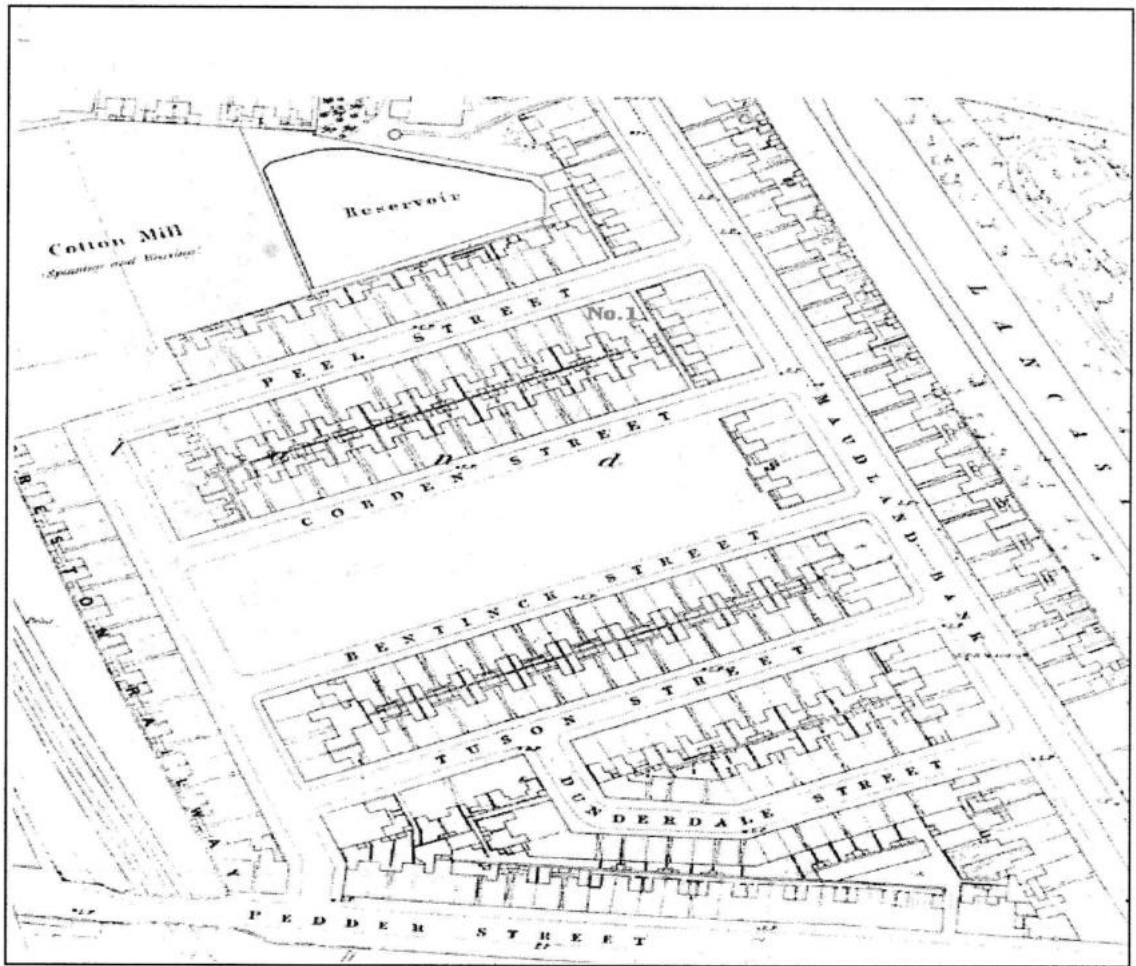
MAP 1.

MYERS MAP 1836

After the 'fill' was removed by the digger hand-excavating gradually revealed more of the structure that finally emerged as the remains of a baker's oven.

Further excavation revealed a second oven and the remains of the bakehouse. Whilst bakehouses were known to exist in 19th century mill streets, none had been recorded and detailed information was wanting. Could this be the site of a corner shop and the bakehouse part of it?

The old street no longer existed to answer this question but, fortunately, the corners and pavements remained undisturbed and could be used as survey points. Measurements to the ovens were obtained and plotted on to the 1:2500 1892 Ordnance Survey map. The result showed the ovens were not part of a corner shop but sited on the edge of a backyard at the end house in Peel Street. More curious, was the greater part of the ovens extended into the backyards of the next door houses.



1849 ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP Scale: 1:1056 (reduced)

MAP 2.

It was concluded there must have been alterations, but none were shown on the maps so it was decided to excavate all the available space for more details. As excavation continued a wall bonded into the brickwork of the ovens emerged, aligned towards the house. It was slightly curved (Plate 3). A similar curve on the backyard wall between 1 and 2 Peel Street was shown on both the 1849 and 1892 maps. Here, was a definite link between excavation and map evidence. When the original maps were examined³ a heavier line was noted enclosing the backyard area of No 1. which meant a building instead of an open yard. We now had confirmation of a bakehouse associated with the ovens. Some 5 feet below ground level excavation revealed a compacted horizon indicating the floor level of the bakehouse lowered to this depth to accommodate two subterranean ovens. The nature of the discovery by the excavator driver now became apparent. The ovens and the half-cellar bakehouse were a

communal bakehouse associated with a terraced house rather than a corner shop and, further, an original feature of the house.

Excavation further revealed what had finally happened to this communal bakehouse. The ovens when first uncovered were found with the doors and ash boxes bricked up and traces of blue-wash⁴ in the crevices of the brickwork. At some stage the bakehouse had been put to another use. Finally, the building was demolished leaving the two ovens undisturbed beneath the neighbouring backyards. The five foot deep cavity was filled in with the earlier unexplained 'fill' containing the late 19th century pottery. The stone flags of the old bakehouse floor were re-laid to form the new back-yard, which then looked like any other backyard. This was how local people who visited the excavation remembered it, expressing their surprise when they saw what had been lying beneath – nothing like it had been seen before.

Maps and Plans.

Further details of the history of the bakehouse at Peel Street can be found with a further look at the maps and plans already mentioned. The maps from 1836 to 1892 show the Maudlands covered by an ever-increasing industrial landscape.

The earliest street map of Preston, Myers Map (1836), shows the railway passing through Maudlands along with a few houses on the road known as Maudland Bank and a row of cottages along Peddar Lane. A number of streets between Maudland Bank and the railway, shown in outline, have been planned but not built. One of them was to become Peel Street. The Ordnance Survey map of 1849 [Map No. 2] shows some of these streets built, amongst them Peel Street and Cobden Street. It will be noticed a cotton mill on the south side of Fylde Road has also been built.

The 1849 map gives details of the houses in the terraced rows with their small backyards joined to those of the next street. Access to these enclosed yards was by covered passages, known as a 'back-lobbies', between pairs of houses. They are indicated on the map by crossed lines. The passage had a door at the street end and

³ photo-copies of originals in the Lancashire Record Office were used on site.

⁴ 'blue-wash': white-wash with 'dolly-blue' added; widely used for the annual 'white-washing' of kitchens, bedrooms, the interior of privies and other outside buildings.

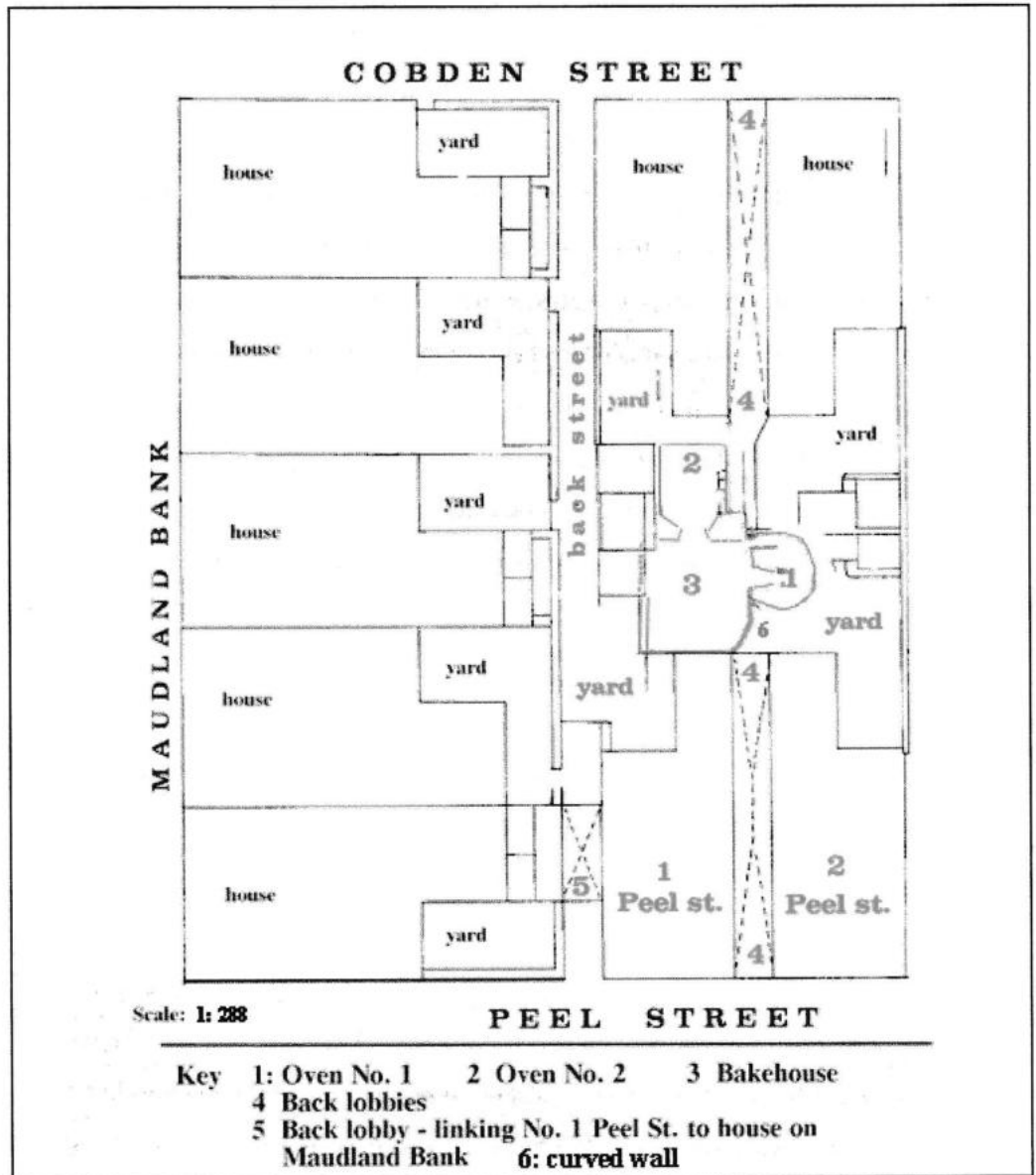


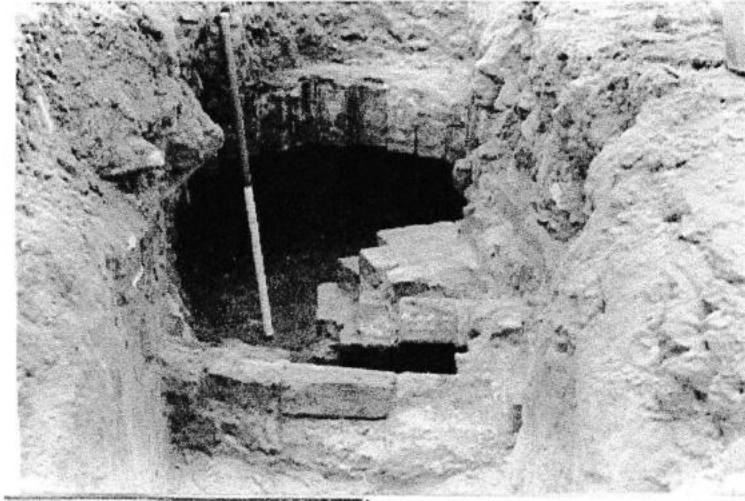
FIG. 1.

PLAN OF PEEL STREET CELLAR BAKEHOUSE
 (based on 1893 1:2500 Ordnance Survey Map)

two wooden gates at the yard end giving access to the respective backyards divided by a central wall.⁵ It will also be noted on the 1849 map that where streets cross at right angles the backyards of one row are separated from the backyards of the other row by a 'back-street'. This arrangement was important for the siting of the communal bakehouse providing it with good public access.

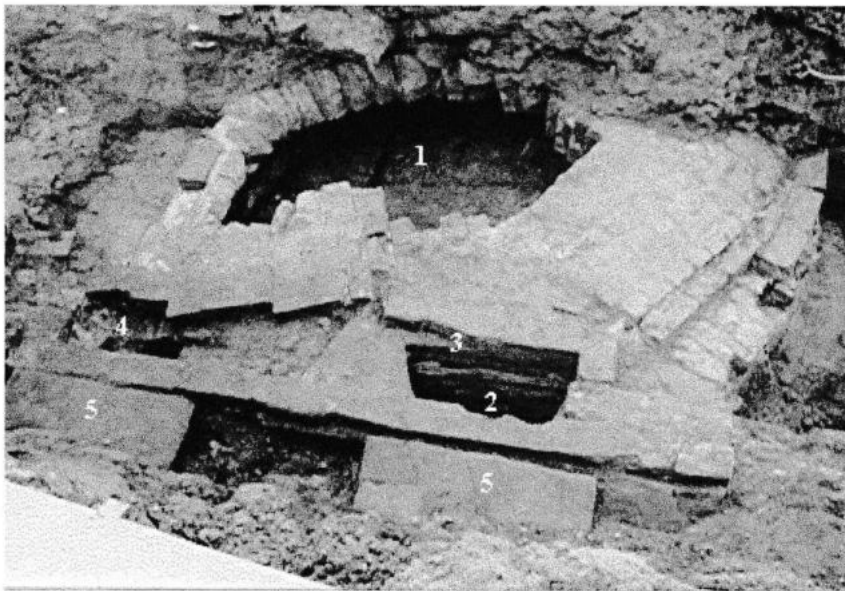
On the 1892 map a short length of covered passage over this back street is marked between No 1 Peel Street and the backyard of the house on Maudland Bank.

⁵ See fig. 5 and Plate 16.



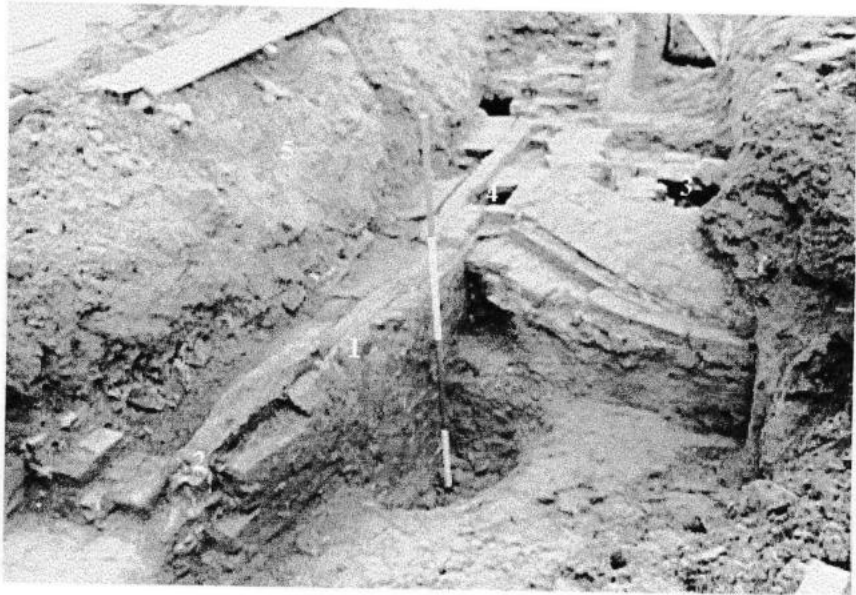
No. 1 OVEN as discovered. view N

PLATE 1.



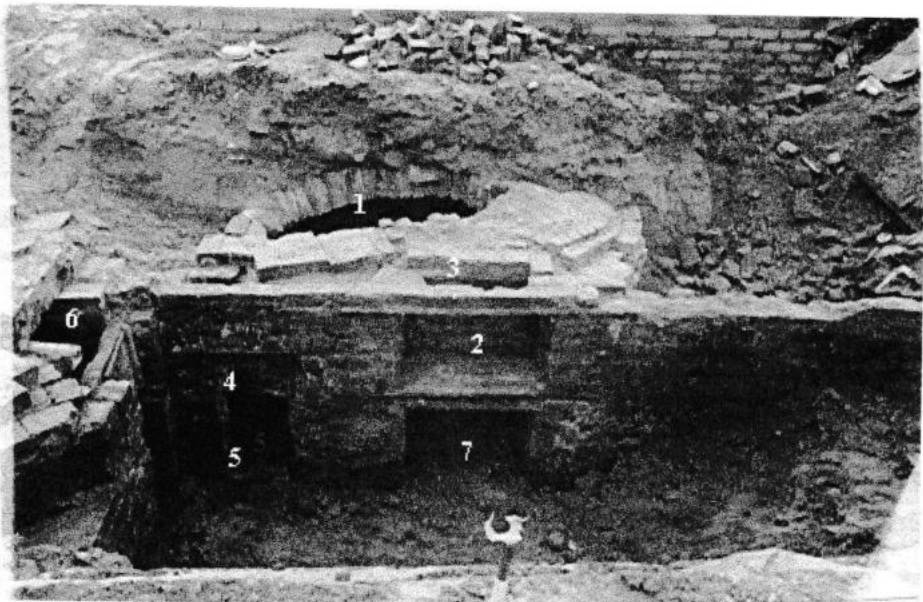
No. 1 OVEN EXCAVATION W view
1: interior of oven. 2: oven door. 3: flue. 4: firebox.
5: stone flags, remains of the later backyard.

PLATE 2.



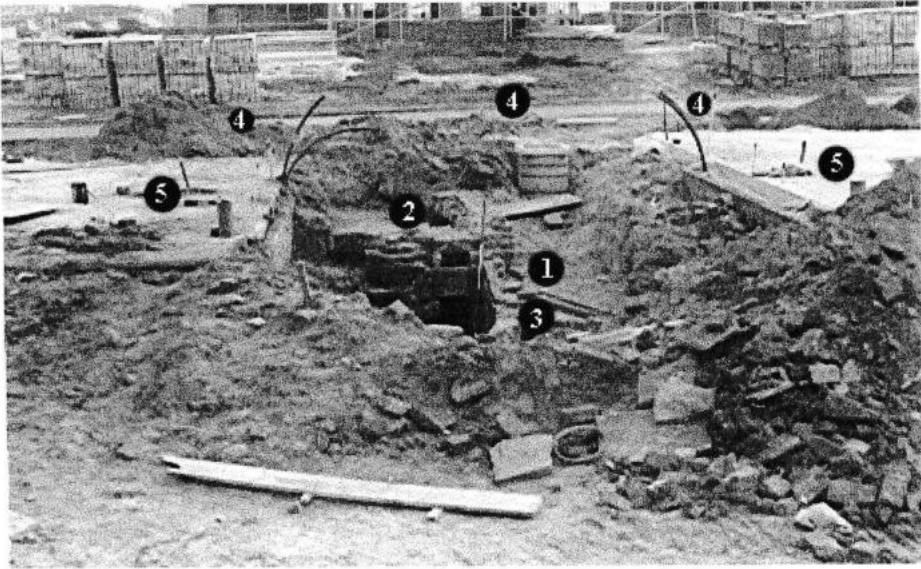
CURVED WALL of BAKEHOUSE View S
1: curved wall, *note the slight curve shown on the OS plan.*
2: corner of bakehouse. 3: oven, 4: flue above oven door.
5: the fill used to level-off the demolished bakehouse.

PLATE 3.



No. 1 OVEN - blocking removed. view W.
1: oven. 2: oven door. 3: flue. 4: fire-door. 5: ash pit.
6: firedoor of No. 2 Oven beginning to emerge. 7: cavity beneath oven.

PLATE 4.



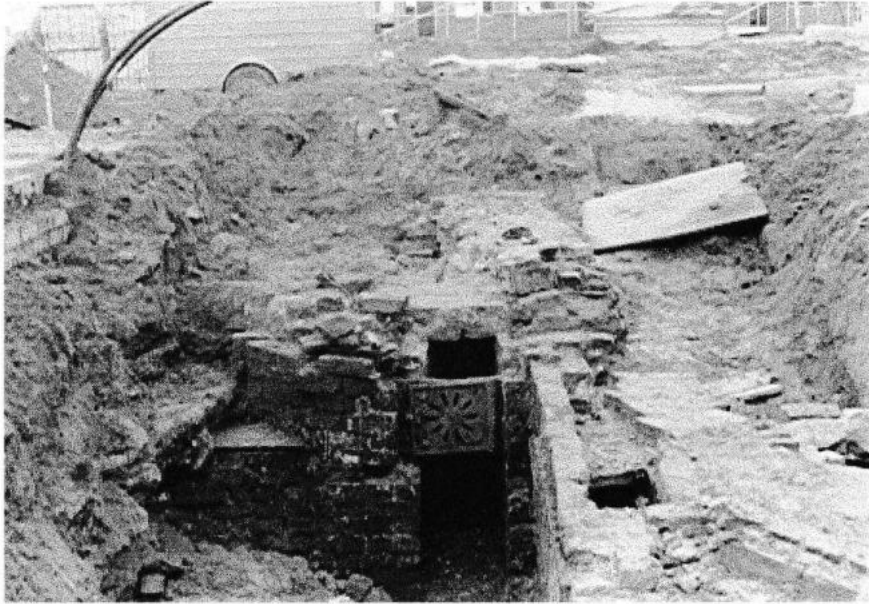
FINAL STAGES OF EXCAVATION. Looking south towards Cobden St.
 1: No. 1 Oven. 2: No.2 Oven. 3: curved wall. 4: Cobden Street. 5: concrete foundations.

PLATE 7.



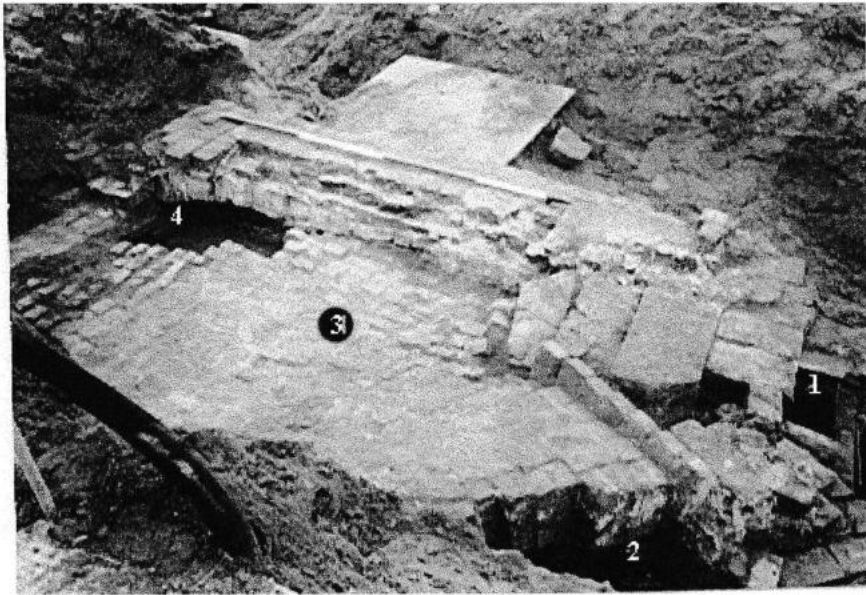
FINAL VIEW OF EXCAVATION. view SW
 1: No. 1 Oven. 1a: original discovery dome of No.1 Oven. 2: No. 2 Oven. 3: corner of bakehouse.
 4: floor of bakehouse, flags removed during Phase III. 5: wall of bakehouse begins to curve.
 6: old roadway of Cobden Street.

PLATE 8



No. 2 OVEN. during excavation. view S.

PLATE 5



No. 2 OVEN. fully excavated.
1: firebox. 2: site of oven door. 3: dome of oven. 4: collapsed dome.

PLATE 6

As it is not shown on the earlier map of 1849 it can be assumed that a bedroom extension was built onto the Peel Street house.

Census Returns

The Census Returns made it possible to learn something of the occupants of 1, Peel Street at this time. The first of the ten-yearly Returns is for 1841, in which Peel Street is not included, indicating it had not been built.

However, the 1851 Return shows the house built and occupied by a 'baker' and his family:

John Taylor	husband	34	baker
Margaret Taylor	wife	30	
Thomas Taylor	son	4	
Ann Taylor	mother	59	
William Taylor	brother		

The name 'John Taylor' is listed as a 'baker' some six years later in the 1857 Preston Directory, but living in Cobden Street not Peel Street.

Four years later the 1861 Return lists the surname "Taylor" at 1, but 'John Taylor' is not included.

Margaret Taylor		40	baker
Thomas Taylor	son	15	reed maker
Plus 8 boarders			

Margaret Taylor is entered as head of the household in his stead. Not being described as a 'widow' suggests she is living on her own, running the bakehouse and taking in boarders.

The 1871 Return lists a different family name:

Henry Rawsthorne	60	engine tender
Margaret Rawsthorne	52	baker

From the Christian name, age and occupation of the wife 'Margaret Rawsthorne' it can be assumed she is the former Margaret Taylor who has re-married and continues to run the bakehouse.

The 1871 Returns were the last set available at the time of research. Search through later Census Returns as they become available will no doubt continue this history.

Date

The excavation evidence makes it clear that the cellar bakehouse was built at the same time as the row of houses. The two maps and the absence of Peel Street in the 1841 Census Return, imply that Peel Street and its neighbouring streets were built between the years 1841 and 1849.

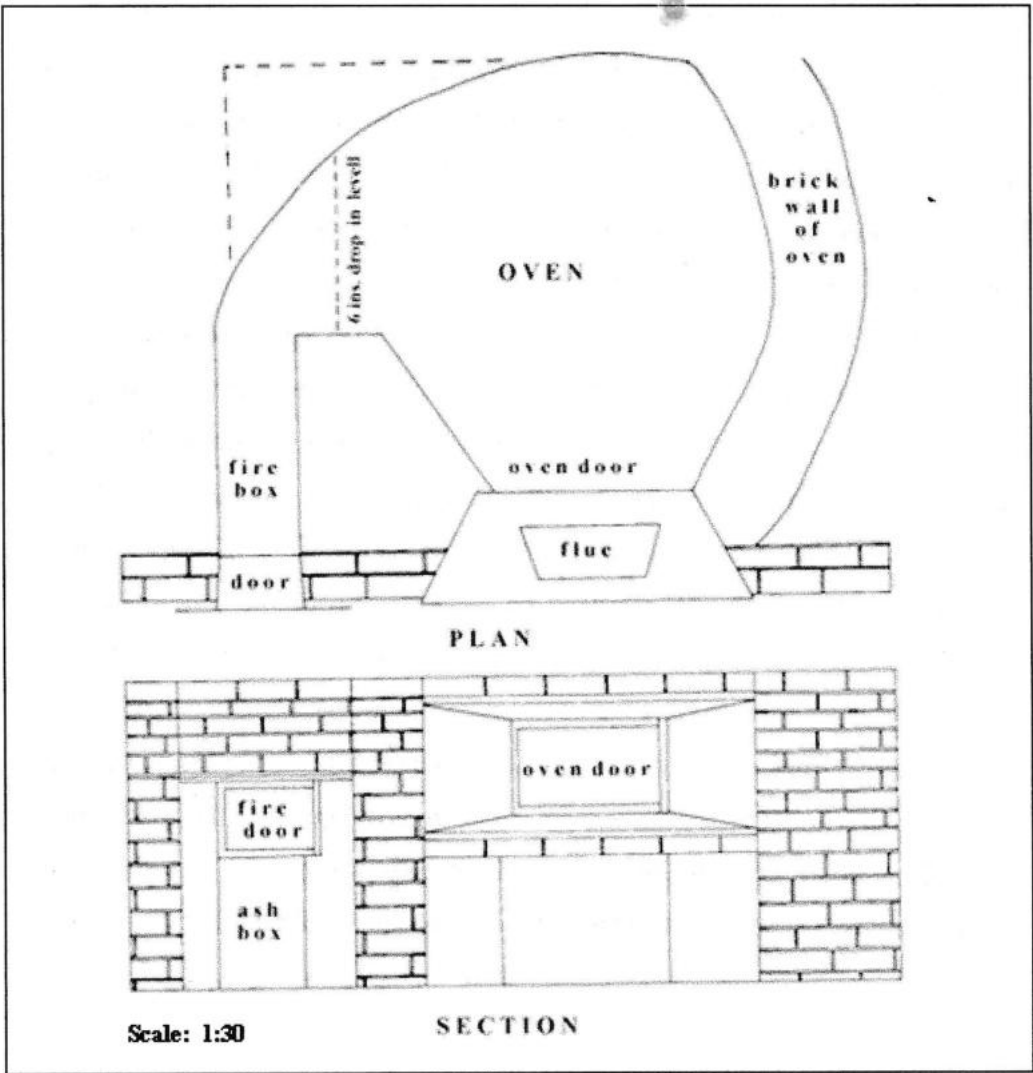
Whilst this bakehouse is the first of its kind to be recorded it is unlikely to have been the only one. There are probably more lying unsuspected in similar situations beneath houses in the old streets of Preston and the other mill towns of Lancashire. Close examination of large-scale 19th century maps and analysis of Census Returns could provide clues to their location. Hopefully, a few others may be excavated before all the streets are gone forever.

This newly discovered type of bakehouse is a further example of Victorian enterprise. Built into a terraced row it shows a skilful economy of space within the rigid confines of the street plan and at the same time its half-cellar arrangement provided the necessary insulation for a beehive oven. An additional factor was the bakehouse could be run from the terraced house as a 'cottage industry' - an arrangement familiar to families fresh from rural backgrounds.

Details of Ovens and Bakehouse

It is possible to reconstruct the sequence of events when the houses were being built. At an early stage a pit was dug in the backyard area at the end of Peel Street and Cobden Street to accommodate the communal bakehouse. After they were built the two ovens were covered by a depth of sand which was then flagged on top to form the backyards of the two houses.

The Bakehouse A building with a lowered floor level of some 5 feet was erected on what otherwise would have been the backyard of No. 1. This was the bakehouse with its door opening onto the back-street behind Maudland Bank. According to the 1892 map the dimensions were approximately 10 feet by 13 feet.



PLAN and SECTION of No. 1 OVEN

FIG. 2

The two ovens were well built of common brick (9ins. x 4ins. x 2.75ins) and fire-bricks of various sizes.⁵ They were a type of oven traditionally referred to as 'beehive ovens', because of their shape, or as 'enclosed ovens', describing their method of heating. They were similar in construction but differed in size and detail suggesting they served different purposes.

No. 1 Oven The oven was roughly circular in shape with a diameter of approximately 5.5ft. and about 1ft. 7ins. high at the centre. Only part of its exterior could be uncovered, but fortunately it was the part bonded to the bakehouse wall confirming the two features were part of a single construction. The bricks blocking the fire door, oven door and the iron plate forming the base of the flue were removed. The ironwork was rusty but intact and the interior of the oven was very clean. The only bricks bearing any kind of carbon deposit were confined to the fire box area. A slight degree of blackening suggested some coal had been used in starting the fire but the main fuel appears to have been coke. A few black, sooty pebbles were found amongst the ash and cinder debris of the firebox and one or two in the interior of the firebox; but what their purpose was is not known.

It will be seen from Fig. 3 that the fire box led directly into the oven. It seems that a fire was lit in the fire box and the recessed oven door was opened, allowing a through draught into the flue above. There must have been some means of blocking-off the front of the oven to prevent the heat and fumes entering the bakehouse. The heat was thus drawn through the entire oven. When the fire had burnt out the remains were raked out into the cavity beneath. The baking was done in the residual heat, which in this well-insulated oven would no doubt remain for a considerable time.

No. 2 Oven The left-hand side of the oven had been destroyed by the new house foundations but the firebox, ashbox and the oven door facing into the bakehouse had survived. Although domed, this oven was rectangular in shape. From the oven door to the back it measured 10 feet and the width was estimated about 8ft., making it about

⁵ 8.75 ins. x 4.25 ins. x 2.5 ins.; 1ft. x 1ft. x 6ins.; 1ft. x 1ft. x 2.5 ins.

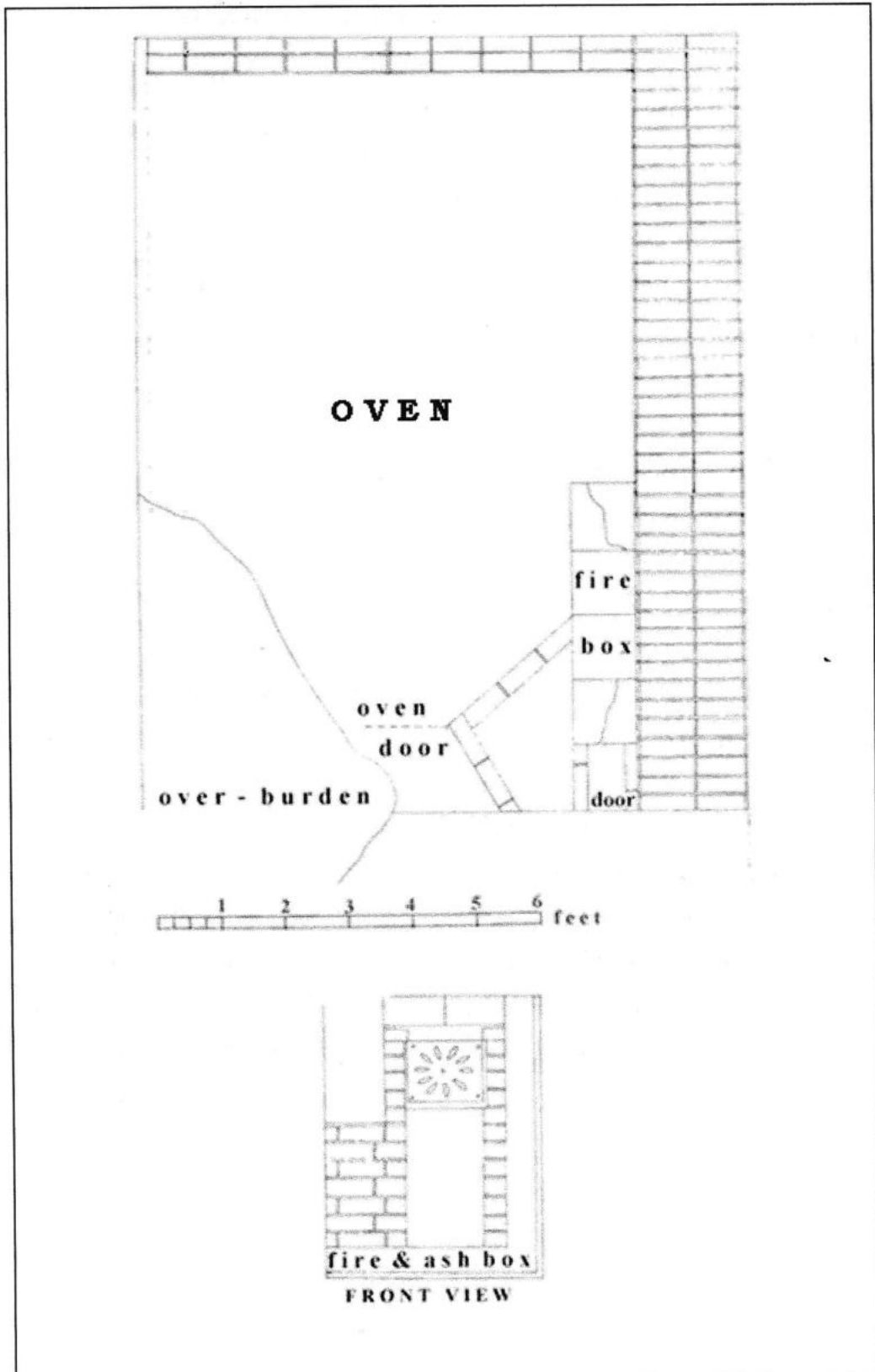


FIG. 3.

PLAN and SECTION of No. 2 OVEN

twice the size of No. 1. The oven entrance was sufficiently angled to give access to the long peels necessary for loading bread to the back of the oven.

The dome of the oven had collapsed under the weight of the bull-dozers on demolition work. In the far corner part of the dome was removed (Pl. 6) to examine the interior. The brickwork was found to be similar to that of No. 1.

End Result

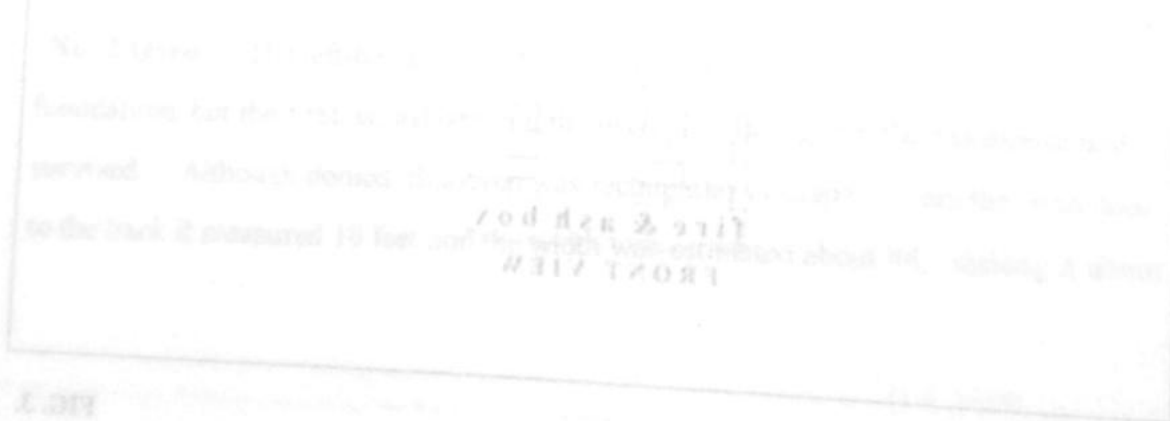
The excavation and the documentary research had been successful in identifying the brick structure found by the excavator driver and revealing an hitherto unknown feature of 19th century mill street architecture.

It is obvious from the excavation photographs that it was not possible to retain or preserve these remains, so they were filled in and left to be discovered again in time to come.

Search for the remains of other terraced-house communal ovens elsewhere could be directed towards end houses of early mill streets, or their sites. As we shall see from the next section, corner shops are also worthy of attention.

Although the Maudlands continued to be monitored after this discovery no further archaeological finds were reported and nothing was found of the mediaeval leper hospital or the friary. Urban development in other parts of Preston continued but no further remains of terraced-house communal bakehouses were reported.

After the excavation had finished, however, interest in the discovery continued through publicity in the local press, bringing in more information about communal ovens.



BRACKENBURY STREET, GALLOWS HILL.

The newspaper reports of the Peel Streets bakehouse attracted the attention of Mr. & Mrs. Livsey, owners of a shop at the corner of Brackenbury Street in the Gallows Hill area of Preston. They had a similar oven in a cellar beneath their house and invited us to see it.

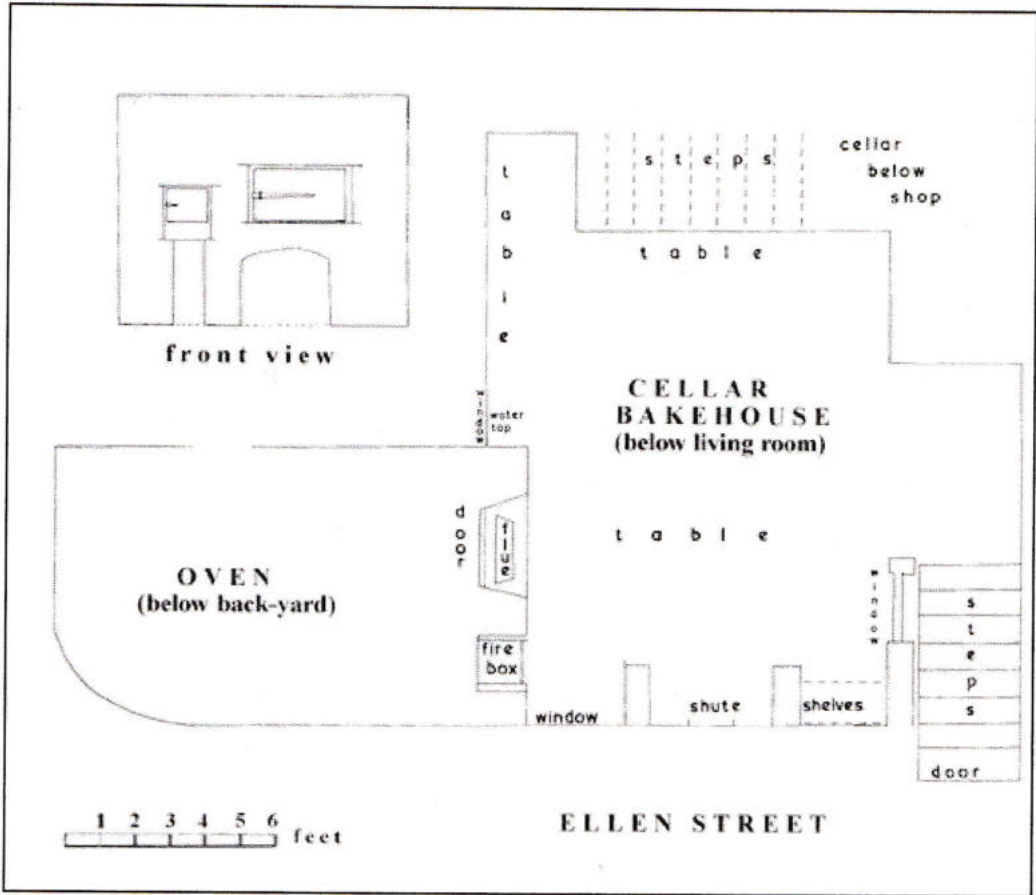
It was a typical corner shop with a diagonal door and a window in each street. The house was behind the shop with a yard at the rear (Pl. 1). On the Ellen Street side were three doors: the first gave access to the yard; the second, now bricked up, led into the living room and the third led to the cellar bakehouse (Pl. 2). This third door must have been related to the running of the bakehouse as the living room already had two doors: one to the shop and the other to the out-kitchen and yard.

The bakehouse cellar was beneath the house and a second cellar was below the shop, with access from the house. Although the two cellars were adjacent there was no connecting door or archway between them, making it clear that the bakehouse cellar, only accessible from outside, was separate from both the house and the shop. This arrangement would be in keeping with its role as a communal bakehouse in constant use by women from the surrounding streets. The linking of a communal bakehouse with a grocer's shop would no doubt be an advantage for both customers and shop-keeper. It is interesting to note that the bakehouse was not run from the shop but from the house, like the one at Peel Street.

The owners said that apart from peering down the steps the cellar had never been entered during the last thirty years and provided a good opportunity for archaeologists to clear it out. So work began in the April of 1979 on one of the filthiest jobs the Unit had ever undertaken.

In the centre of the floor beneath old wood and rubbish were found the remains of what must have been the original bakehouse table. It was so large it could not have been taken out of the cellar without dismantling.

The only other items of interest were fragments of a *Manchester Chronicle*, dated 3rd. January, 1905; a cod bottle and a pair of fustian trousers. The cod bottle, labelled "Wilkinsons Preston" still had some ginger beer remaining in the bottom. It had a machine-made body, a glass ball and a hand-applied lip, and was roughly contemporary with the newspaper.⁶ From the way they were found these finds appeared to have been left in the cellar rather than being thrown in as rubbish.



PLAN OF BRACKENBURY STREET BAKEHOUSE

FIG 4.

The Bakehouse

The bakehouse door on Ellen Street opened onto a flight of eight stone steps leading down to the bakehouse which measured approximately 14ft. square, slightly

larger than the one in Peel Street. When the door was open light entered the bakehouse through a window (6ft. by 4ft.) let into the staircase wall, making it possible to see anyone coming down the steps. It had also had two outside windows, now blocked. One (3ft by 2ft. 3ins.) was to the left of the oven and admitted light from the outside through a recess protected by a grill in the pavement on Ellen Street (Pl. 2). The second (2ft. 6ins. by 1ft. 6ins.) on the right of the oven was similar, admitting light from the backyard. All traces of the grills and openings had disappeared. These light sources were well placed: the Ellen Street window illumined the fire-box and oven, and the backyard one the water tap and large table to the right of the oven.

A shute for the coke, with the remains of some left in it (Pl. 7) had opened out onto the pavement in Ellen Street (Pl. 2). To the left of the shute were two brick pillars that had supported shelves.

The Oven This bakehouse had one oven extending almost to the end of the backyard, measuring 13ft long by 8ft. 8ins. wide and about 18ins high at the front. On the left was the fire-box and on the right the oven door. Beneath the oven door was an arched cavity (2ft. 6ins deep and 2ft. high) into which the remains of the fire were raked. The oven door was recessed about 16ins. and in the top of the recess was the opening for the flue. This flue, rhomboidal in shape and about 2ft. at the widest part, ran to the left and joined a circular-shaped flue about 4ins. wide which ran vertically from the front of the firebox and into the living room chimney.

The firebox, some 13.5ins. wide, 14ins. high and 3ft. 3ins deep, had 7 firebars running from front to back. At some stage the firebox had been blocked off with common bricks and pink "clog" mortar. This blocking was inset about 12ins. to avoid covering the flue opening above the fire-door. The oven was then heated by a charcoal fire moved about on a metal peel inside the oven.⁷

This change over to wood or charcoal must have happened late in the life of the bakehouse as some coke remained at the bottom of the shute.

Peels Altogether the remains of three peels were recovered from the oven. One, with a metal paddle, 24ins. long by 12ins wide with 3ins. flanges, was attached to a long handle. It contained lumps of charcoal and partly burned wood (Pl. 14) and was

⁶ the finds were retained by the Livseys

⁷ a visiting ex-naval rating of World War II said he had seen this method of heating bread ovens in some of the old ships.

the one used for heating the oven. The other two peels, rusted and decayed, were for sliding the loaf tins in and out of the oven. . The longest had a metal socket about 5ft.6ins. long with the paddle, 1ft. long by 8ins. wide, attached to one end. At the socket end, a wooden handle, estimated about 7ft. long had been inserted. The overall length of this peel was some 13 feet. The third peel was shorter, measuring nearly 4ft. in length with a paddle 8ins. long by 5ins. wide.

Loaf Tins (Pl. 5) The remains of over a hundred 1 lb. loaf tins were recovered from the interior of the oven and others amongst a pile of rubbish in a corner of the bakehouse. They had all been stacked and were so rusty they disintegrated when moved.

Blackened Cobbles (Pl. 4) In the ashpit and the cavity beneath the oven door were a number of blackened, sooty cobbles like those found at the Peel Street bakehouse. Once again, there was no indication of their purpose.

Documentary Evidence

The deeds of the property showed that Brackenbury Street had been built on Preston Moor which had been enclosed about 1847. Thomas Tomlinson, a well to do London barrister, acquired some of this land and leased a block to Henry Porter, bricksetter, on November 24th. 1860. He built the corner shop and three adjoining houses shortly after that date. An indenture dated 27th. September, 1871 describes the property as shop, dwelling house and bakehouse situated at the junction of Ellen Street and Brackenbury Street. Its number at that time was 142 and the adjacent houses 143 to 145.⁸ When the numbering changed was not discovered.

The deeds confirms the archaeological evidence that the bakehouse was part of the original building.

⁸ Changes in house numbers such as this are not uncommon and need to be watched for during property searches.



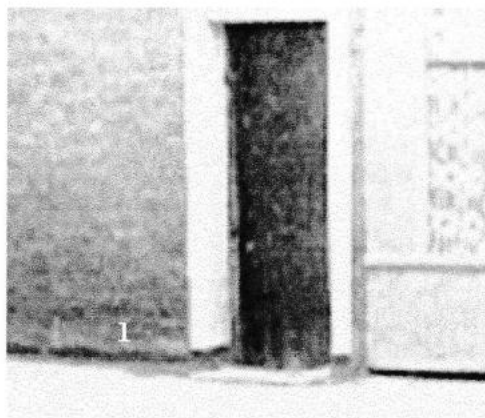
24, BRACKENBURY STREET
left: Ellen Street. right: Brackenbury Street.

PLATE 9



The 3 DOORS in ELLEN STREET.
1: yard door. 2: blocked doorway. 3: cellar door leading to bakehouse.
4: coke shute. 5: window -now paved over.

PLATE 10



BLOCKED DOORWAY.

1: Doorstep

PLATE 11

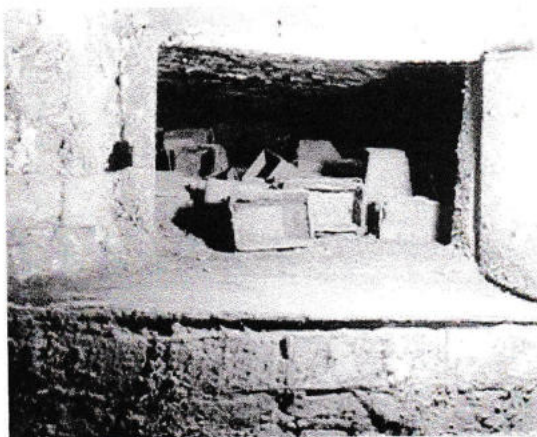


INTERIOR OF BAKEHOUSE

1: fire door. 2: ashpit. 3: oven with door open.

4: 11lb. loaf baking tin. 5: cavity for remains of fire. 6: blackened cobbles.

PLATE 12



INTERIOR of oven and baking tins.

PLATE 13

PEEL with remains of charcoal
and partly burnt wood.

PLATE 14



COKE SHUTE:

- 1: remains of coke;
- 2: tumbled bricks and stone.

PLATE 15

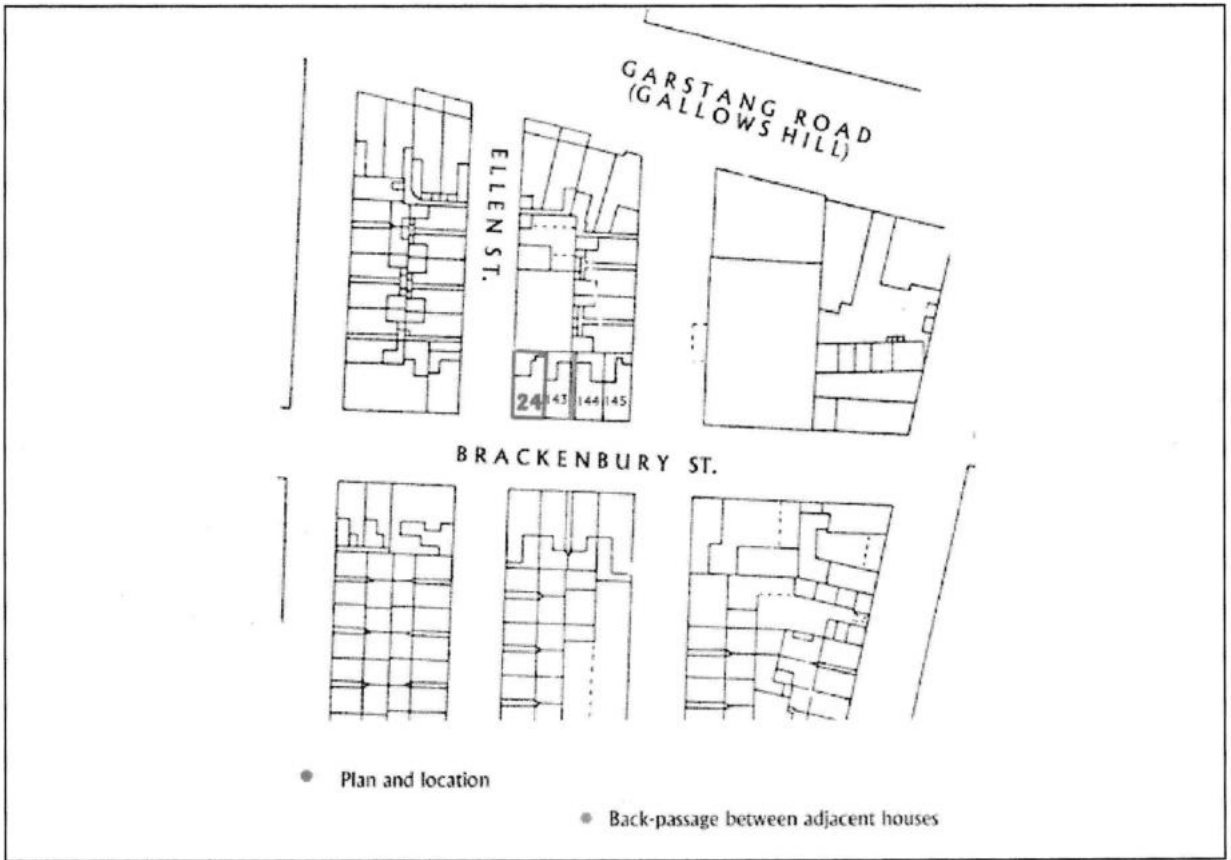


FIG. 5

PLAN of CORNER SHOP and THREE HOUSES.

Note: nothing, except the size, to indicate No.24 (142) is a corner shop.



CORNER SHOP AND THREE HOUSES,

originally numbered 142; 143; 144; and 145 – see plan below.

Blue: door to back passage leading to enclosed yards of Nos. 143 and 144.

An entry in the 1865 Directory of Preston gives:

*Thomas Entwistle 142, * Brackenbury Street*

1872 Census Return for 142,* Brackenbury Street show:

Ann Entwistle	widow	61	provision dealer
James Entwistle	son	20	mechanic
Robert March		37	Provision merchant's assistant
Mary March		29	Cotton weaver
George March		1	

* original number for 24, Brackenbury Street.

At the time of the investigation the property was up for sale and later enquiries revealed it was planned for demolition as part of an urban re-development scheme. Although strong representation was made for the shop and three houses to be preserved as an example of a 19th century mill street nothing came of it.

FURTHER COMMUNAL BAKEHOUSES.

During the search through old deeds and street plans of the Local Board details of further bakehouses emerged giving the impression they were a recognised part of street development. One plan, for example, for the corner of Fishwick Road and Birley Bank, dated 1863, was marked:

intended bakehouse at No. 1 Disraeli Street.

A further plan of the same location, dated twelve years later in 1875, marks the area of the 1863 plan as 'already built'. It is interesting that the dimensions for the bakehouse on the 1863 plan are approximately 10 feet square, almost identical to the one at Peel Street. Although not shown on the plan it can be supposed that these ovens would also extend beneath the backyards.

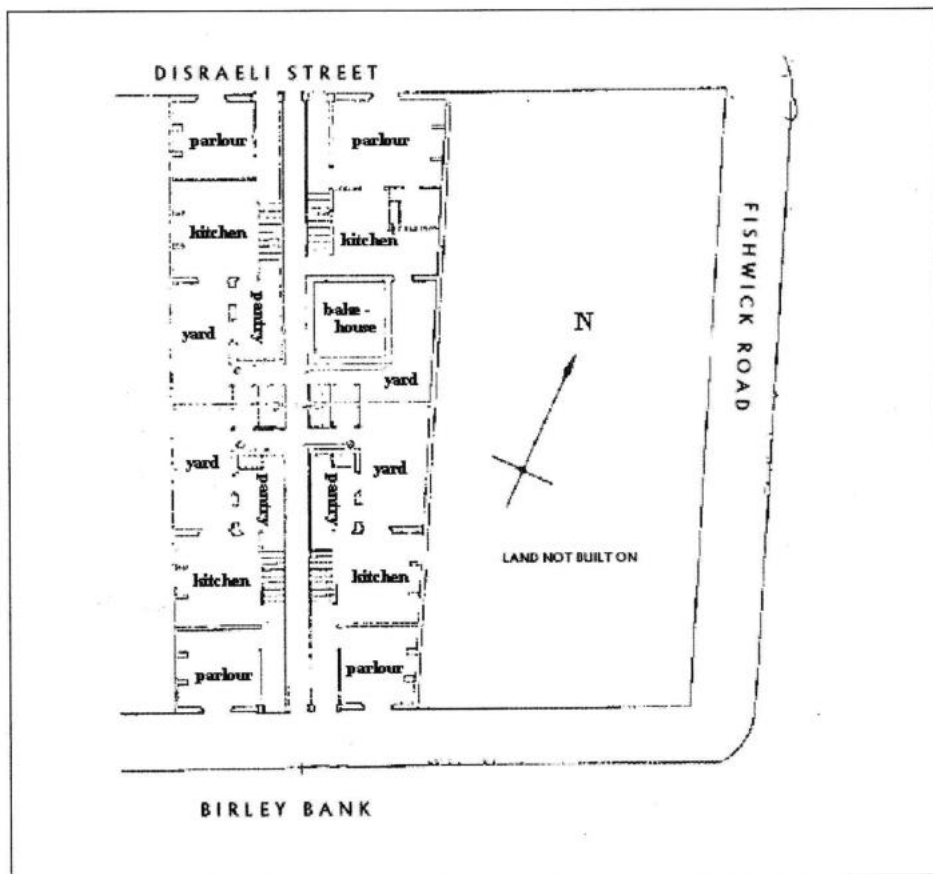


FIG. 6

1863 PLAN of intended BAKEHOUSE at No. 1 DISRAELI STREET.

HISTORY of COMMUNAL BAKEHOUSES

In many villages throughout the country communal bakehouses had a long history. Their beehive ovens were usually built under mounds or in the thick stone walls of barns or houses. A fire of wood or faggots was lit inside the oven. When it was hot enough the fire was raked out and the oven filled with the dough either in tins or directly onto the bottom of the oven. The bread was then left to bake in the residual heat. This form of baking continued down the centuries from mediaeval times to the end of the 19th century.

The unexpected discovery of beehive ovens built into the Victorian mill streets of Preston shows the close links between the early cotton towns and the rural traditions from which they sprang. Most of the families working in the mills came from different rural areas scattered about the country. Whilst their accents may have differed many of the women would have been familiar with baking their own bread in communal ovens, as was probably the case with Margaret Taylor who ran the Peel Street bakehouse.

The extract below gives a vivid description of their use in a Sussex village.

Many of the old brick ovens in which the bread was baked are still in existence in this village (Blaxhall, Sussex), but none of them is used now. In most cottages the brick oven is in the kitchen; but behind a group of cottages in one part of the village there is a small outhouse containing a large brick oven.....This outhouse was at one time undoubtedly used by more than one of the cottages.

.....The brick oven is beautifully constructed of a domed arch of bricks..... This had to be heated by burning the fuel inside it. Apart from the door there is no outlet in a brick oven: the chimney is at the front just outside the oven-door and when the fuel is burning the oven-door is left open and the smoke escapes through that. The fuel used was most commonly whin faggots-the bones of sere or dry gorse-bound with elm withes.The fuel was thrust into the oven with a long-handled fork kept specially for the purpose. This fork was also used to stir up the embers until they burned completely out, leaving no smoke at all. It took about an hour for a brick-oven to become properly heated for the dough. The bricks would change in colour from black to red as they got hotter; and when a handful of flour, thrown lightly against the side of the oven, burned up with sparks, the housewife knew that her oven was hot enough for baking. But before the dough went in the oven the ash would be scraped out and stowed in a hole beneath the oven. This was done with an ordinary garden-hoe or with the peel, a long handled spade-like tool used to slide in the tins of dough. While the oven was being heated the dough would have been rising in an earthenware pan covered with a cloth and placed near the oven. Just before the oven was ready the dough was placed in tins or kneaded into the shape of cottage loaves which were baked on the actual floor of the oven.

The actual placing of the dough into the oven was called a-settin'in. It was a job that had to be done quickly and smoothly so

that the oven-door was open for as little time as possible.....The bread would be done in about an hour. Often, however, the housewife took advantage of the heated oven to bake other things, risking the fact that by opening the door the bread might go dumpy or flat. Small pieces of charcoal - the embers left from the fuel often adhered to the loaves of bread that had not been baked in tins. These bits of charcoal gave an extra flavour to the bread⁹.

The ovens discovered in Peel Street and Brackenbury Street were basically similar but adapted for use in the new terraced mill streets of Preston. The oven could be heated by faggots or by coke burnt in a fire-box on one side of the oven. Coke was plentiful, whereas wood and faggots were not. Perhaps the most outstanding feature was the space-saving way the bakehouses, particularly the one in Peel Street, had been incorporated into the standard street-plan of the terraced houses.

As the 19th century progressed the use of communal ovens declined. The generation of women brought up to use them was passing and social changes made it possible for women to do more baking in the home using the increasingly popular kitchen ranges. But the tradition of communal baking and the supply of 'fast food' at dinner times continued on a diminished scale well into the middle of the twentieth century. During the 1930s a few small bakers' shops could still be found in the mill streets of Preston and other cotton towns where bread and muffins were baked in the old way. In some cases after the day's baking customers were allowed to bake in the shop's ovens. In other instances certain private terraced houses known only to local families sold potato-pie or steak puddings at dinner time, providing a similar service to that of the Peel Street ovens a hundred years before.

⁹ George Ewart Evans *"Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay"* Faber, 1956 pp 55 - 9.

**BACKYARD BUILDINGS
ASSOCIATED WITH TERRACED-HOUSES**

Communal bakehouses were not the only enterprises accommodated amongst the terraced rows of mill streets. Property deeds and Local Board plans for the centre of Preston revealed also a similar scatter of small stables and shippens representing local delivery businesses and milk rounds. The following are a few examples discovered during documentary search.

Stables

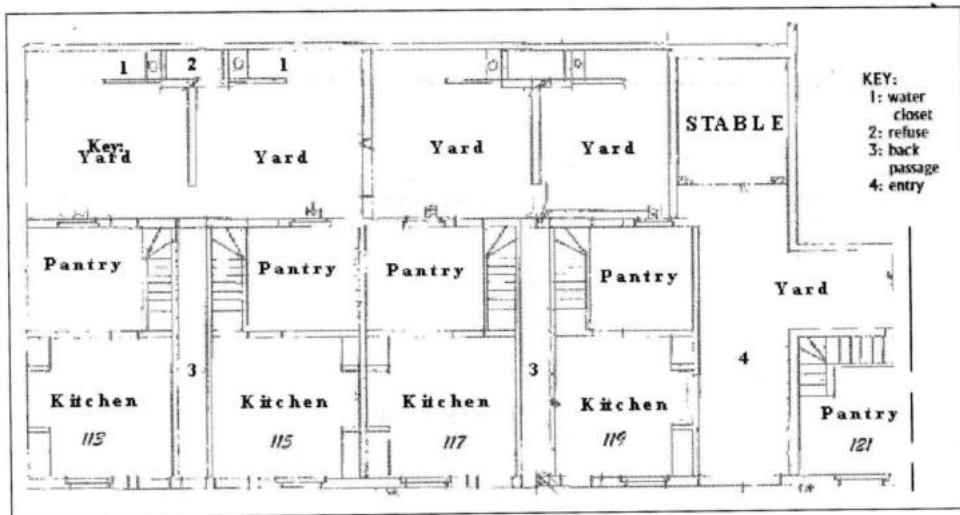


FIG.7

PLAN of SIX HOUSES in MILES STREET

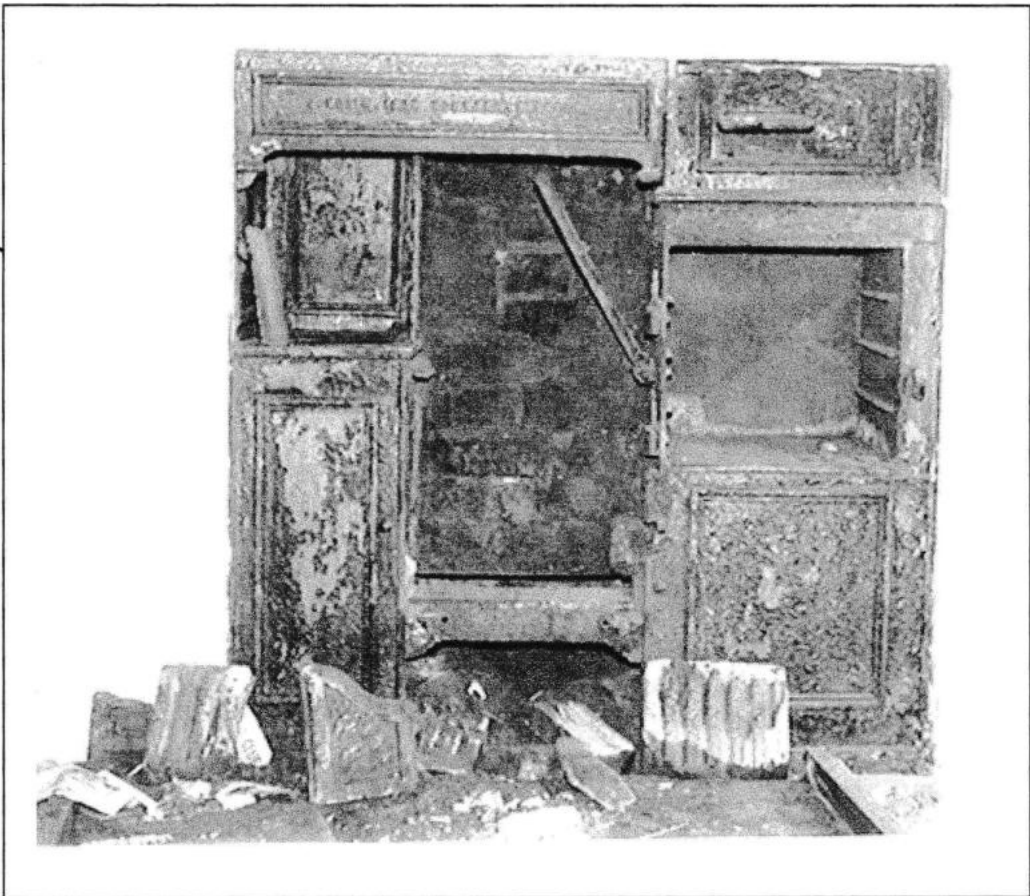
Stables like these were for horses, ponies or donkeys used for drawing greengrocers' carts, butchers' vans, and light carts. The stabling might or might not have been used by those living in the adjoining house.

Whilst no details of the interior arrangement of this stable in Miles Street are shown they were usually divided into two stalls with room for provender bins holding

A KITCHEN RANGE

Finally, it seems appropriate to close this account of mill street discoveries by recording a kitchen range which was 'rescued' to provide an example of the thousands installed in the terraced-houses. A kitchen range has, also, a symbolic significance insofar that this was the cooking method that replaced communal ovens.

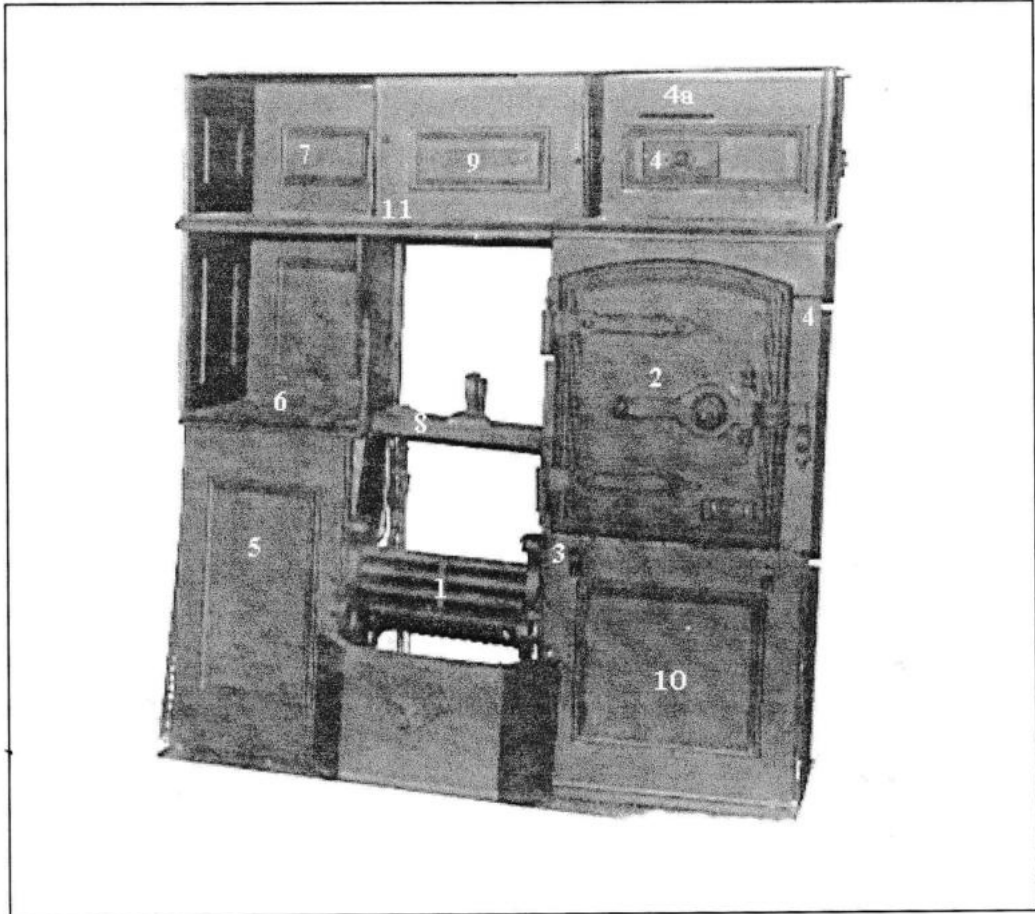
Open kitchen ranges fired by coal came in a wide variety of sizes and degrees of sophistication. In the mill streets throughout industrial Lancashire towards the end of the 19th century they became the main source of heating and cooking in the house. Many of the finer examples are displayed in museums throughout the country but comparatively few small ones have survived. Hence the attempt by Nigel Morgan of the Preston and South Ribble Civic Trust in the early 1980s to locate one during the demolition of some of Preston's mill streets.



**Blocked-up OVEN and BOILER exposed during demolition
DISRAELI STREET.
PLATE 17**

In most of the houses the kitchen ranges sooner or later became obsolete. Housewives were glad to have them removed and see an end to the days of black-leading. Tiled fireplaces with back-boilers to provide hot water succeeded them and gas ovens were usually installed in the out-kitchen. Their removal generally entailed lifting off the protruding oven doors and oven plates and leaving the rest of the range hidden behind the new fireplace. When these modern fireplaces were removed during demolition the remains of the old ranges were exposed, rusted and broken. Being of little value they were smashed up and removed for scrap. Arrangements were made with demolition contractors when a good one was found to carefully remove it for restoration as a museum exhibit.¹²

¹² removal of the range and its restoration were supervised by the Central Lancashire Archaeological Research Unit. The range is now in the Harris Museum, Preston.



OVEN and BOILER RESTORED.

1: fire grate with ash pan below; 2: oven; 3: oven fire-box;
4: oven flues; 4a: damper 5: boiler; 6: boiler lid; 7: boiler flue; 8 crow
9: name plate - "J. Booth, Ironfounder, Preston".
10: some ranges have a bottom oven here. 11: shelf

PLATE 18

The ovens, known as 'hot air' ovens, were heated by raising a plate at the side of the fire grate and pushing burning coals into the oven fire-box beneath (3). Hot air was thus drawn up the flue on the right-hand side of the oven door (4) and then round the top to join the main flue in the chimney. The rate of flow was controlled by the damper (4a) which was a flat plate drawn in and out to restrict the aperture of the flue. Skill and experience were required in stoking the fire and regulating the damper to achieve the right temperatures for different kinds of baking.

The lugs to the right of (3) were for an oven plate like the one shown in the illustration (Plate 19).

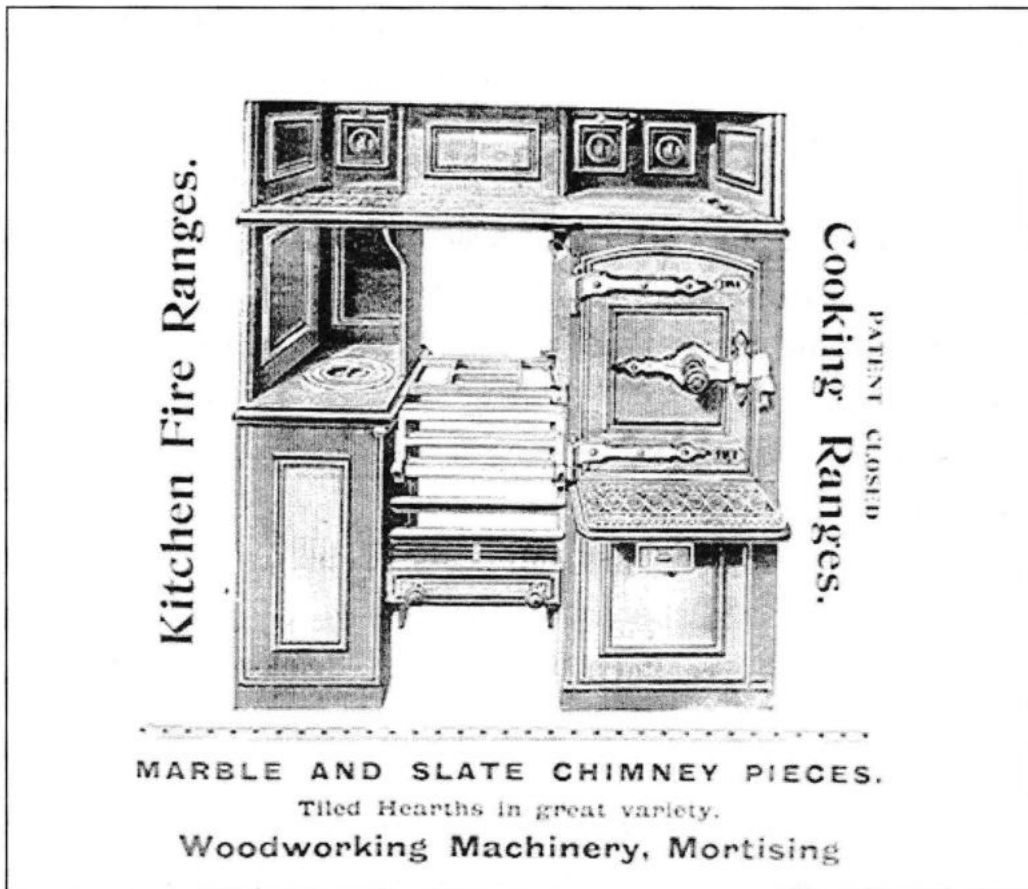
Some ranges had a bottom oven, also controlled by a damper. The top oven was used for roasting and the bottom was the 'slow oven'. Even when the dampers were closed and the oven not in use it remained pleasantly warm from the heat of fire. It then had a secondary purpose for such things as drying kindling wood, warming the family's night clothes and, when the need arose, providing warmth for orphan kittens and puppies. The shelf (No. 11) usually fretted and of burnished steel was also useful for drying things and provided a place for storing the big pan and the frying pan.

The hot-water boiler was heated directly from the fire. It consisted of a cast iron box with a lid at the top. Some of the luxury models had a tap through which the hot water could be drawn. The boiler was kept filled by using an enamel can with a handle at the side known as a 'ladling tin'. It was a strict family practise that when hot water was taken out the boiler it was immediately topped up again with cold, otherwise there would be a cracked boiler and a family crisis. This hot water was used for washing-up and family ablutions but hot water for washday was provided by a coal-fired set-pot in the back kitchen.

The crow (8)¹³ was a heavy iron gate-like stand, hinged on the oven side of the fire grate and resting on the side of the boiler. It was lowered for setting on the cast-iron kettle and pans. On baking day the one fire would heat the oven, boil the vegetables and provide a good supply of hot water for the washing up.

On the hearth in front of the ash pan cover was usually an enamel plate decorated with a colourful design. A cast iron fender, with steel or brass fittings for holding the poker, fire tongs and rake, would enclose this hearth plate. There was usually a hob for the kettle when not in use. In many houses a pair of pot dogs - now collectors items - were placed one on each side of the fire grate.

¹³ the lump of black metal to the right of (8) is a flat iron placed on the crow for exhibition purposes.



1890 ADVERTISEMENT by R. SLINGER & SON, Ironmongers, 164, Friargate, ⁸Leicester
PLATE 19

The kitchen fire range in the advertisement shows the details of small ranges quite clearly. The hinges and handle of the oven door were of steel and likewise the decorative plate beneath the oven door. The rest of the range being cast iron was black-leaded every week and the steel parts burnished.¹⁴ A well-kept kitchen range with a good firing burning was a great source of comfort after a day's work.

CONCLUSION

The discoveries at Maudlands and the other parts of Preston described here show that archaeological surveillance is not always a waste of time but can result in small but significant discoveries which can contribute to local archaeology and social history.

¹⁴ this was usually done on a Friday morning in time for the week-end and Sunday visitors.



Neville Williams

Demolition at Maudlands.