



THE ARCHAEOLOGY CO.

Arkholme, 1 Towncroft Avenue,
Middleton
Heritage Assessment

September 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Heritage Statement has been prepared by The Archaeology Co. on behalf of Liba Aysha to accompany a planning application. The building comprises a former photography studio, later converted to a house designed by Edgar Wood, erected in 1901. It is an example of his early use of flat concrete roofs and lies close to several other of his houses.

1.2 This statement has been prepared in accordance with the policies and procedures of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), in addition to an examination, analysis and assessment of available historic records and cartographic sources and consultation with the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record.

1.3 This statement includes:

- A description of the application site's location;
- A summary of the application site's archaeological and historical background;
- A summary of the heritage planning policy guidance context, and;
- An assessment of the relative archaeological potential of the application site and the impact of the development upon it

This statement is not intended to be a full or complete record of the site.

2. Site Location and Setting

2.1 The site is situated on south side of Towncroft Avenue, at its eastern end. The postal address is 1 Towncroft Avenue, Middleton M24 5DA and the National Grid Reference is SD 87073 06707. The site lies within the Middleton Town Centre Conservation Area and the building is Grade II Listed.

2.2 The conservation area comprises several historical buildings as well as many buildings by Edgar Wood, of which Arkholme is one. 36 Mellallieu Street, for example, is noticeable for having a modern flat roof and concrete construction, combined with traditional materials and roof. The Conservation Area Appraisal (2008, 32) mentions Arkholme only in passing, to note that it had been included to

an extension to the conservation area and subsequently listed. The English Heritage guide to appraisals notes that particular attention should be made to key buildings of the twentieth century as they are currently at their most vulnerable.

2.3 As noted, the building is grade II listed and is described thus:

Photographic Studio of 1901 by Edgar Wood, adapted to a house in 1905.

MATERIALS: brick and reinforced concrete construction with roof tiles; stone capping to parapet and chimneys; weather-boarded bay windows.

PLAN: east-west rectangular range with a projecting wing to the north and two to the south.

EXTERIOR: North Elevation: two storeys and three bays constructed of brick under a steeply pitched tiled roof. The entrance bay to the left is projecting with a flat roof of reinforced concrete. The stonecapped parapet has a pair of diaper crosses and it is slightly raised in the centre. The main entrance contains a boarded door with four-light panes above and is protected by a large wooden canopy with diagonal struts and a simple wrought iron stay. There is a small casement with a simple red brick arch to the left and a four-light first floor casement. A large ten-light casement window at ground level to the right lights the main studio, which would have relied on natural north light and above this, there are two three-light casements set immediately under the eaves; all windows are flush with the walls and all have leaded glass. A single storey garage attached to the right is a 1950s addition and is not of special interest.

South Elevation: formed by a full width flat roofed extension to the main house with a parapet wall capped in stone; brick chimney to the right hand bay. It has two storeys and two bays with a large ground floor canted bay and similar smaller bay to the right. At first floor there is a six-light oriel window and a three-light casement flush with the walls. Traces of an original, now blocked, first floor casement window are visible. The windows on this side are mostly 1950s insertions, intended to give the building a southerly aspect. A single storey flat roofed service range projects from the right with an original doorway, now blocked, and two inserted doorways. Attached to the south elevation there is a small terrace defined by low brick walls with brick pillars and stone cappings either side of a set of circular steps (not in situ) formed of paving slabs.

East Elevation: angular with a steeply pinched central gable and flat roofed extensions to either side; scattered leaded fenestration including a stair window and a double height canted bay window with art nouveau motifs.

West Elevation: angular with a pitched roof to the left and a flat roof to the right with a central chimney stack. A large external chimney obscures most original fenestration.

INTERIOR: the wall surfaces are mainly green distemper with cream ceilings, which is thought to be the original photographic studio décor. A small cloakroom immediately to the left of the entrance lobby contains an original toilet and cistern. The entrance hall retains the form of the former waiting area, now with full height lincrusta panelling, and the main studio is entered to the right through large double doors. A stair rises in the corner of the waiting area to the first floor and is also decorated with lincrusta panels. The main studio has a central fireplace in Sicilian black marble with an alcove to the right and a blocked alcove to the left containing a later cupboard. The present dining room has a simple plaster briar ceiling rose and modern fireplace. The kitchen and scullery in a single storey range to the rear retain what are considered original wooden cupboards with glass doors, which probably held photographic chemicals. A cellar below, now accessed from the understairs cupboard was heated and is believed to be the location of an original dark room. The first floor has four main rooms, accessed off a central narrow corridor with a partially coved ceiling; in the 1920s these rooms were used as two bedrooms, a maid's room and a dressing room. The smaller of the rooms have original corner fireplaces and coved ceilings. Documents show that a lavatory was added in c.1920; this has a wooden cistern and contemporary sanitary ware.

- 2.4 The building is recorded in the HER as entry no. 16191.1.0. On Rochdale Road, just north of the junction with Towncroft Avenue are the grade II Listed 51 and 53 Rochdale Road (HER No. 11606.1.0). This is a pair of semi-detached houses constructed in 1900, also by Edgar Wood. As noted above, 36 Mellalieu Street (HER No 11608.1.0) also lies close to the site to the south, likewise listed, and to the south, close to Middleton centre is the Listed Royal Bank of Scotland, also constructed by Edgar Wood in 1892. There are a further 6 buildings by Edgar Wood within 750m of the site.

- 2.5 A further 41 HER entries lie within 750m of the site unrelated to Wood. These include historic buildings, such as the Olde Boars Head Public House (HER No. 2361.1.0), a Grade II* listed building from the early 17th century and the Grade I listed Church of St Leonard (HER 2433.1.0), parts of which date from the 13th century.

3. The Heritage Planning Policy Context

- 3.1 The proposed scheme should be assessed against national planning policy framework which replaced Planning Policy Statement 5. The NPPF represents a significant overhaul of the planning system for the historic environment. Whilst the changes are intended to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary, the fundamental principle of conserving heritage as a precious, fragile and finite legacy remains at the heart of national policy.
- 3.2 At the core of NPPF is the principle of supporting appropriate development that delivers the long term viability of 'heritage assets' (defined in Annex 2: Terminology as: 'a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions') while conserving their significance for the benefit of generations to come.

4. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 Middleton formed part of the Montbegon fee of Tottington in the 12th century. The earliest tenant on record is Roger de Middleton, around 1180. A different Roger de Middleton was also listed as Lord of the Manor of Middleton later in around 1275. Over time the title passed through different families, and was inherited by Mary Assheaton, who married Harbord Harbord in the mid 1700's, who soon became Lord Suffield (Farrer & Brownbill 1911).

- 4.2 It was during this period that cotton manufacture took off in Middleton giving rise to a cottage industry and by 1770 there were approximately 20 habitations in the village (Farrer & Brownbill 1911). Silk weaving was introduced in 1778 which quickly boomed in the area. In 1791, in order to promote the accommodation of the rising population a grant for holding a weekly market and three annual fairs was obtained from the crown. Lord Suffield, the Lord of the Manor of Middleton also built the Shambles and the Market house at personal expense, while letting his manor house fall into disrepair (Baines 1925, 429).
- 4.3 There was a large silk weaving trade in Middleton in the early 1800's and many members of this co-operative were handloom silk weavers. Due to this, more houses were owned by their occupiers in Middleton during this period than in other similar sized towns in England (Haynes and Goldberg 1995, 31).
- 4.4 Edgar Wood was born into a wealthy Middleton family in 1860. He had a passion for art and was friends with Fred Jackson, who later became an artist. Wood himself trained as an architect, though he viewed architecture as an "art", and filled his buildings with beautiful furniture, stained glass and paintings, often of his own design and occasionally collaborated with Jackson. Wood rejected large scale commercial practices, instead working with only one assistant. Many commissions were from friends and family in Middleton, Huddersfield and Hale. Influenced by the artistic and socialist writings of William Morris, he saw himself as an artisan serving the people of these localities (Middleton Heritage).
- 4.5 At the beginning of the 20th century Wood had an international reputation and was regarded as the most important avant-garde architect in the north of England. The Victorian Gothic style was on the wane and architects were looking for a new way to design. Wood was influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, which revived traditional building techniques to create beautiful yet practical buildings, stressing honest craftsmanship, handmade quality and the importance of art in everyday life. He led the northern Arts & Crafts movement through vernacular, art nouveau and finally art deco phases – an evolution traced in his Middleton buildings. In doing so, he became England's uncontested pioneer of modern design. (Middleton Heritage).

- 4.6 Wood's very first pair of semi-detached houses was West Lea in Middleton in 1887. In 1901 he built a Photographic Studio on the site, for Charles Jackson, photographer and brother of his friend, the artist Fred W. Jackson. The studio was built with two flat concrete roofs covering 70% of the floor plan. It is generally believed that it was J. Henry Sellars that introduced Wood to concrete roofs, although the pair didn't meet until 1903, suggesting this was not the case. The building was adapted to a house in 1905 for Charles Jackson (Architects of Greater Manchester 1800 – 1940).
- 4.7 The rear extension appears to have been added by 1922, where it is shown on the OS map of that year. At the height of his fame, Wood worked with J. Henry Sellars and created a series of radical new buildings of a type unseen before. With their flat reinforced concrete roofs and sometimes geometric patterns, they were among the first examples of "modern architecture" in Europe. In the 1920's the Taylor family lived at Arkholme and remained there until 2007, making a few alterations during this time, including the rear extension and the garage, which replaced an earlier lean-to. The electrical system was modernised in the 1920's as well as panelling to the hall and stairs and a new first floor lavatory. In 1922 Wood retired and moved to Italy to paint, where died in 1935 (Manchester History). The 1934 OS map shows the same building footprint as previous and the garage extension appears to have been built between 1934 and 1955, first shown on mapping for that year. In the 1950's the south elevation was altered through the addition of two ground floor bay windows, the blocking of the first floor casement window and the insertion of the oriel window. A new projecting external stack was also added for the installation of a fireplace to what is now the living room.

5. Statement of Significance

- 5.1 The HER description lists the reason for the designation decision. These are:
- It displays a high level of architectural interest in terms of its form and materials
 - It is a transitional and early example of modernism by the celebrated architect Edgar Wood, which anticipates his later more developed work

- It has a virtually intact original interior and plan
- The early use of reinforced concrete flat roofs shows innovation in construction
- Relatively intact examples of photographic studios are not common and this is an interesting example
- It has group value with four adjacent houses also by Edgar Wood all of which are listed in Grade II

5.2 The Historic England Publication “Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets” (HE 2019) suggests three areas of interest for assessing a heritage assets significance. These are to be described, following which the level of the general significance of the heritage asset should be assessed, with the particular contribution of any described features. The three areas of interest are:

- Archaeological interest if it holds, or potentially holds, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point.
- Architectural and artistic interest which are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.
- Historic Interest which is an interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation’s history, but can also provide meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

Archaeological interest

The building was constructed as a photography studio in 1901 and converted to a house in 1905. It was extended to the rear soon afterwards with the rear extension and a garage and chimney stack constructed in the 1950's. As such the building has a medium archaeological value of local significance, related to the development of the building from photography studio to house.

Architectural and artistic interest

The building was designated partly because it displays a high level of architectural interest in terms of its form and materials and is a transitional and early example of modernism by the celebrated architect Edgar Wood, which anticipates his later more developed work. The architectural interest is therefore high for the exterior, although medium internally, due to the alterations and additions through the mid-20th century, and would be considered of local significance.

Historic interest

The building was constructed initially as a photography studio, and intact example of these are uncommon. The building is also an interesting example of this. The historic interest is therefore medium and of local significance.

6. Analysis and Proposals

- 6.1 The conversion of existing garage to living room / prayer room will have no impact on the heritage significance of the building. The garage is a later addition, first shown on the 1955 OS map, with a blocked window evident to the western internal wall, showing that this formerly looked out into the garden. The garage doors are to be retained and as such shall not impact the external appearance. The proposal will have no impact on the heritage significance of the building.
- 6.2 The insertion of a doorway from the living room into the garage is proposed to be inserted in place of the window into the living room. This will extend the original window opening, rather than creating a new opening entirely, which has been altered for the creation of a small cupboard. While this will have a minor negative

impact on the historic significance of the building, it will be less impactful than creating a new opening entirely, and will allow the space to be used.

- 6.3 The replacement of the external doorway in the existing garage with a window will have no impact of the heritage significance of the building as it is a later extension. The proposed window is to match the existing window to the south.
- 6.4 The removal of the existing fireplace from the ground floor living room will have no impact on the heritage significance of the building. The fireplace is a later addition from the 1950's, and the external chimney itself is likewise a later addition, butting up to the wall and of a different brick.
- 6.5 The removal of the chimney in the game room will likewise have no impact on the heritage significance of the building. This lies within the extension, which, although shown on the 1922 OS mapping, is a later addition, butting up against the house. No external stack is present, and the external appearance will not be impacted.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The building represents part of Edgar Woods early work, especially in terms of his use of concrete roofing and was built as a photography studio. The building has high significance in terms of its architectural interest and medium significance in terms of historical and archaeological significance. The majority of the proposed changes will see no impact on the heritage significance of the building. The exception to this is a minor negative impact through the insertion of a doorway between the present living room and garage. This has been further minimised, however, through the proposed utilisation of the existing window opening and arched alcove internally, and will not impact the external appearance. Mitigation may require a historic building survey prior to the works, in order to create an archive and preserve by record.

9. Statement of Indemnity

- 9.1 All statements and opinions contained within this report arising from the works undertaken are offered in good faith and compiled according to professional standards. No responsibility can be accepted by the author of the report for any errors of fact or opinion resulting from data supplied by any third party, or for loss or other consequence arising from decisions or actions made upon the basis of facts or opinions expressed in any such report, however such facts and opinions may have been derived.
- 9.2 The author will retain the copyright of all documentary and photographic material under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act (1988).

10. Bibliography

DCMS – Department for Culture, Media and Sport

GMAAS - Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service

HER – Historic Environment Record

NPPF – National Planning Policy Framework

OS – Ordnance Survey

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Maps

1851 OS map Middleton Town Plan Sheet 1

1893 OS map Lancashire Sheet XCVI.4

1922 OS map Lancashire Sheet XCVI.4

1934 OS map Lancashire Sheet XCVI.4

1955 OS map sheet SD8706

Appendix 1: Figures

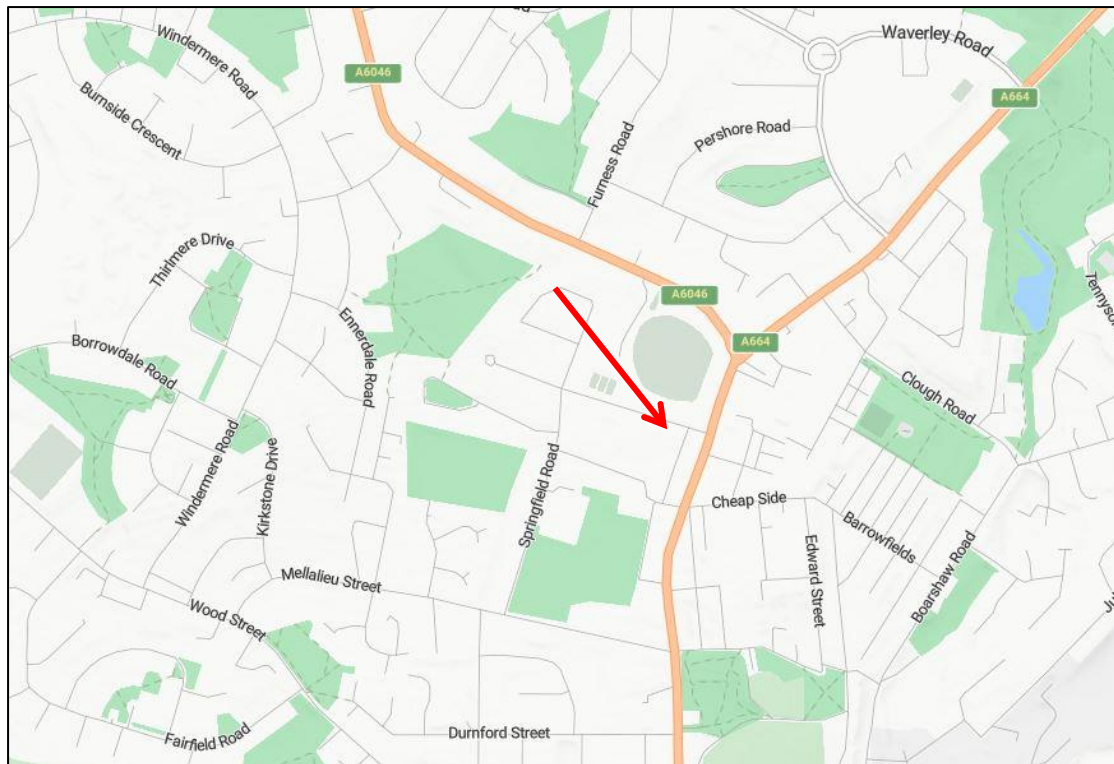


Figure 1: Location Plan (OS Licence Number: 100057911)

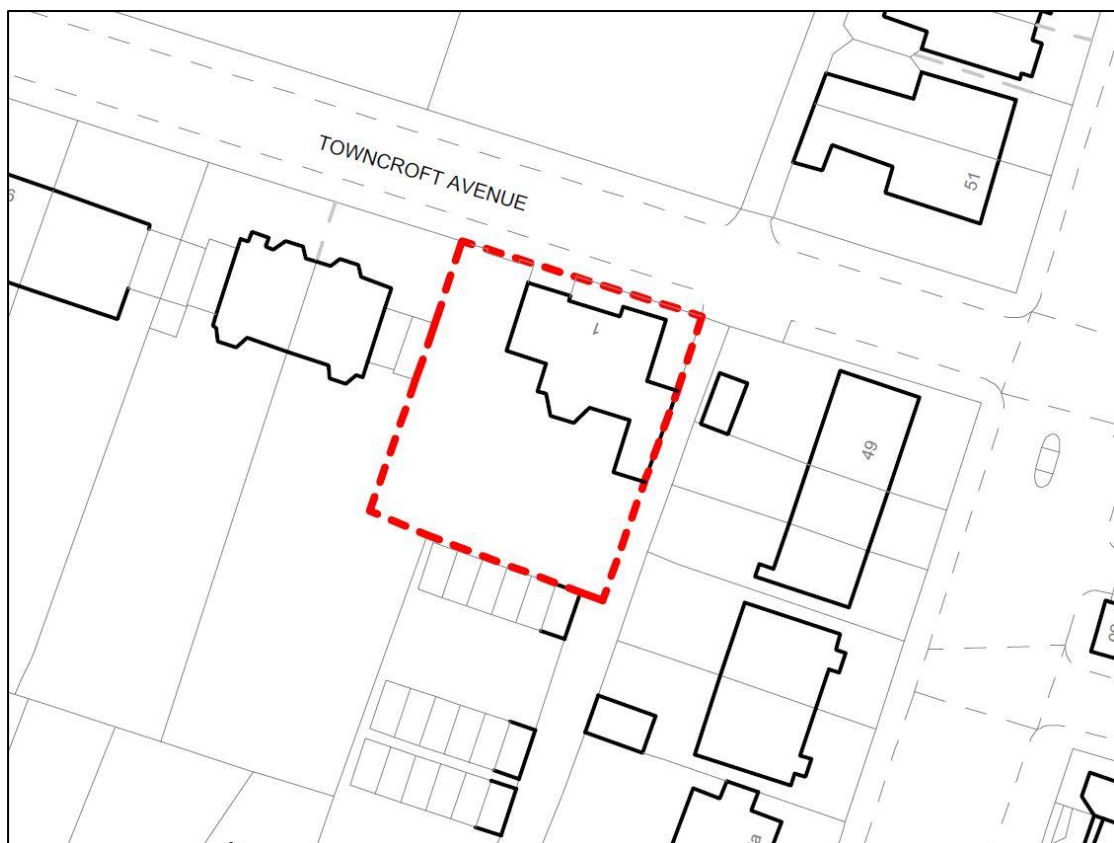


Figure 2: Site plan

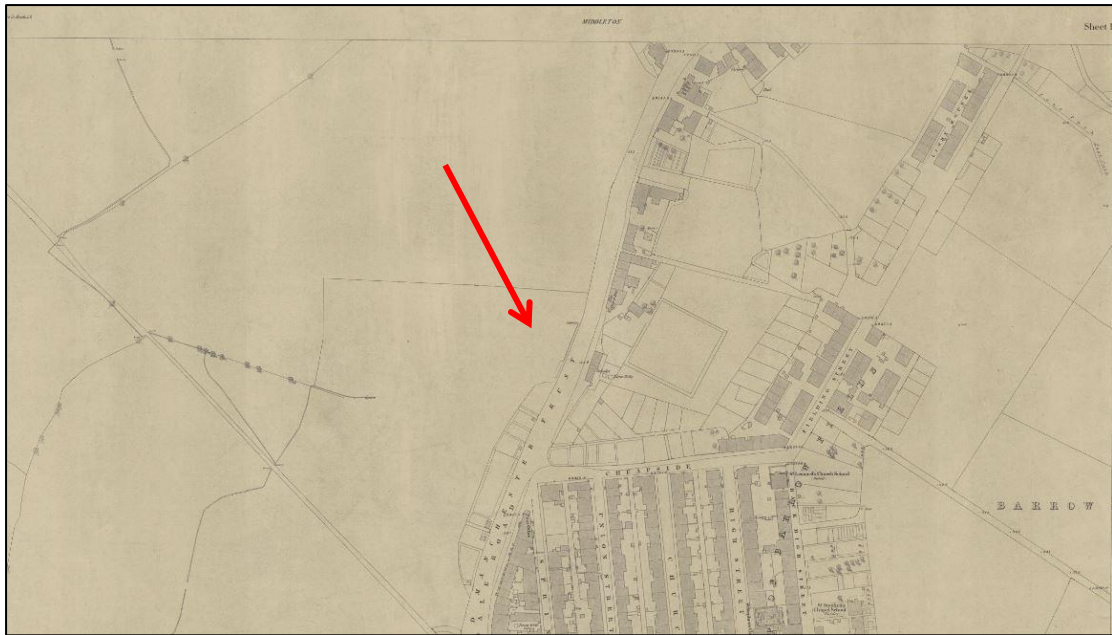


Figure 3: 1851 OS map Middleton Town Plan Sheet 1

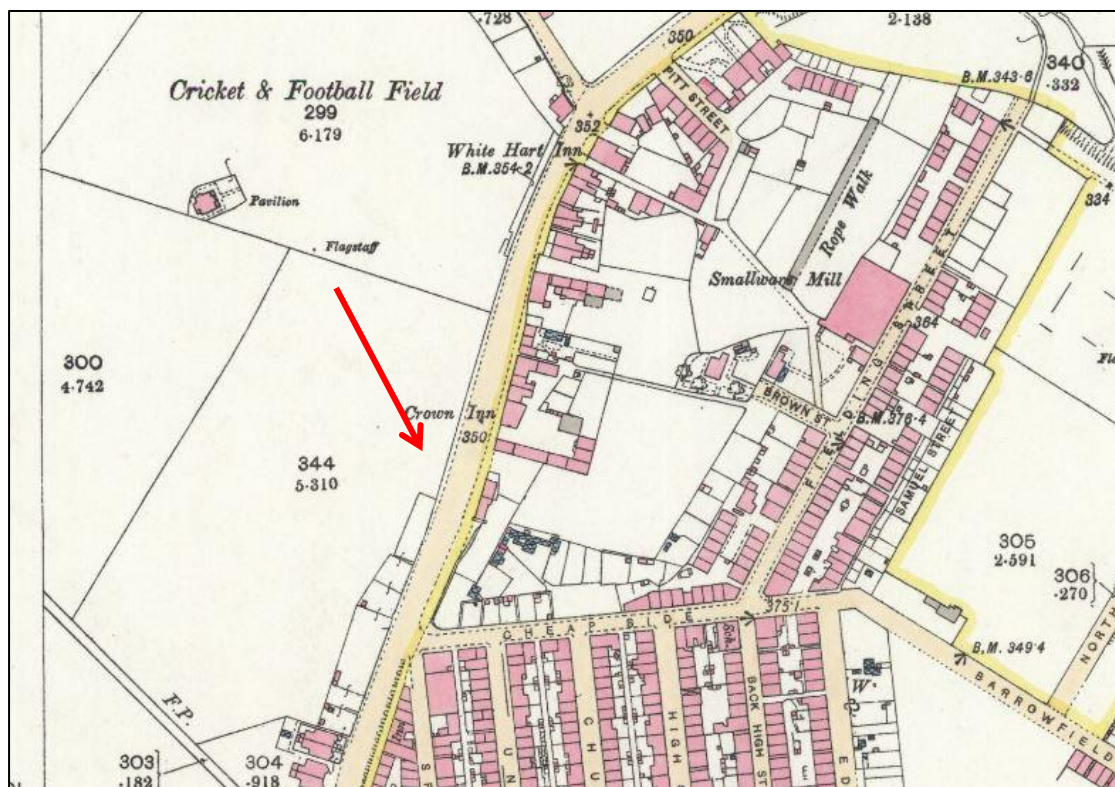


Figure 4: 1893 OS map Lancashire Sheet XCVI.4

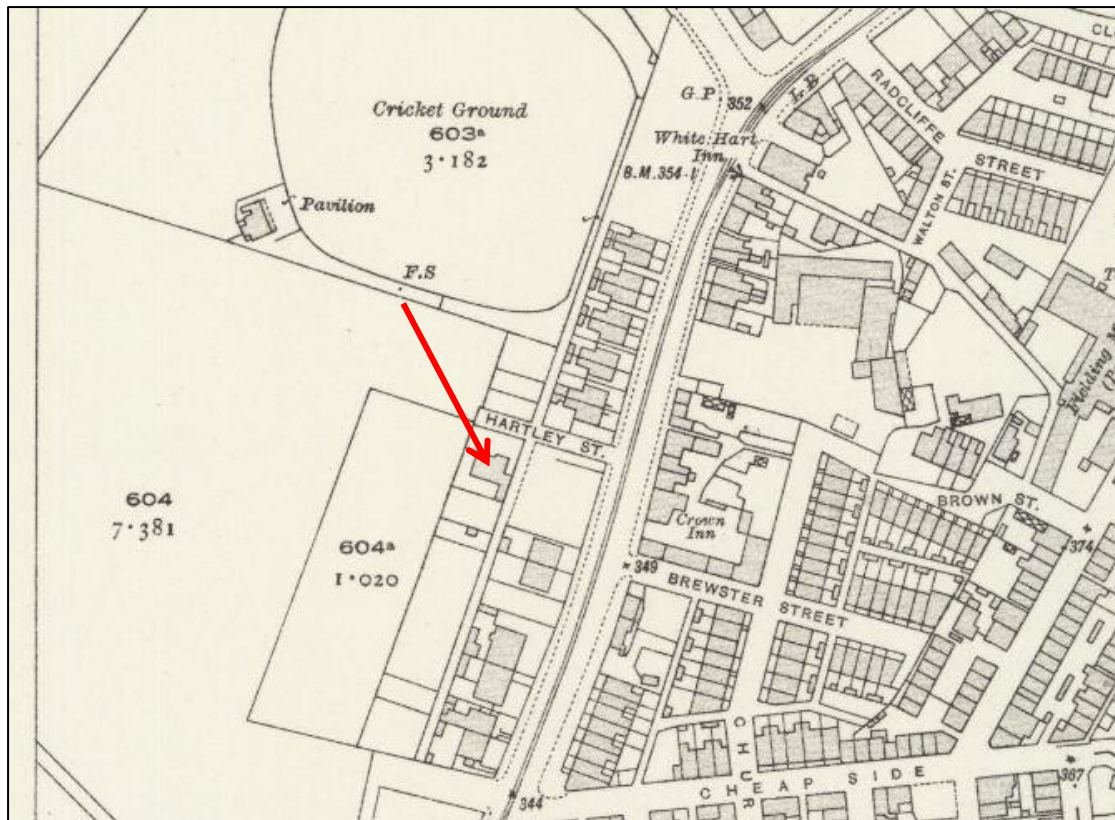


Figure 5: 1922 OS map Lancashire Sheet XCVI.4

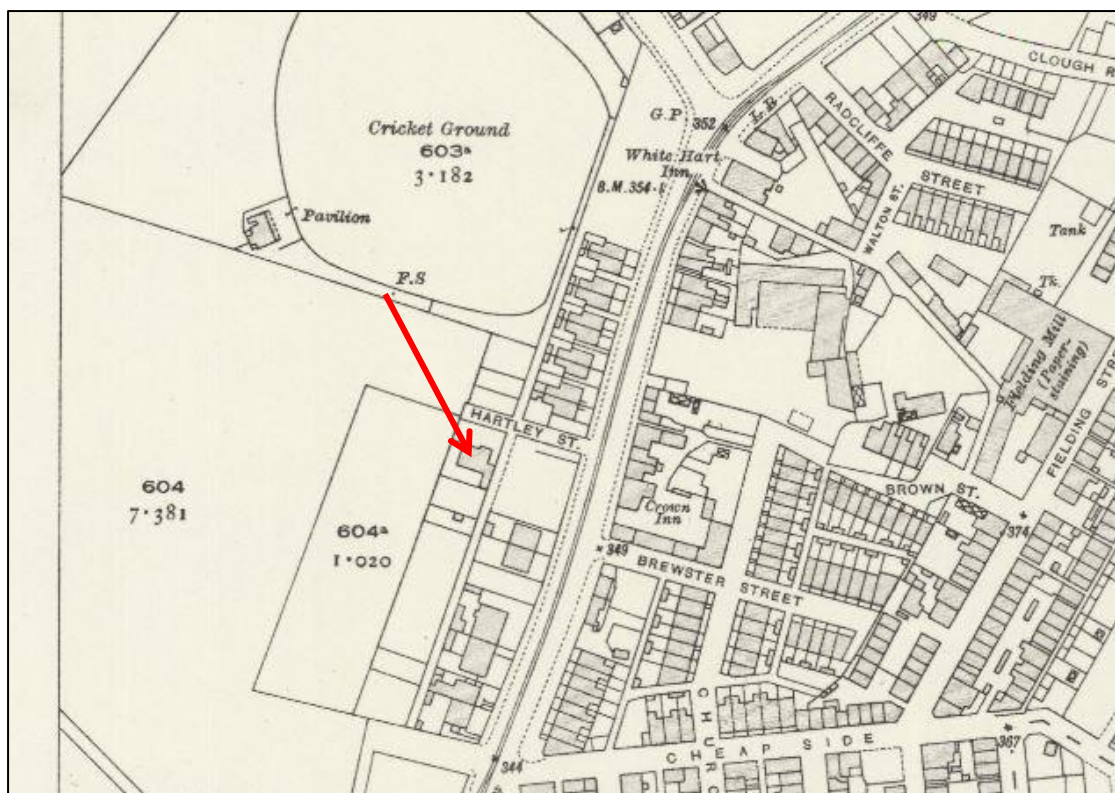


Figure 6: 1934 OS map Lancashire Sheet XCVI.4

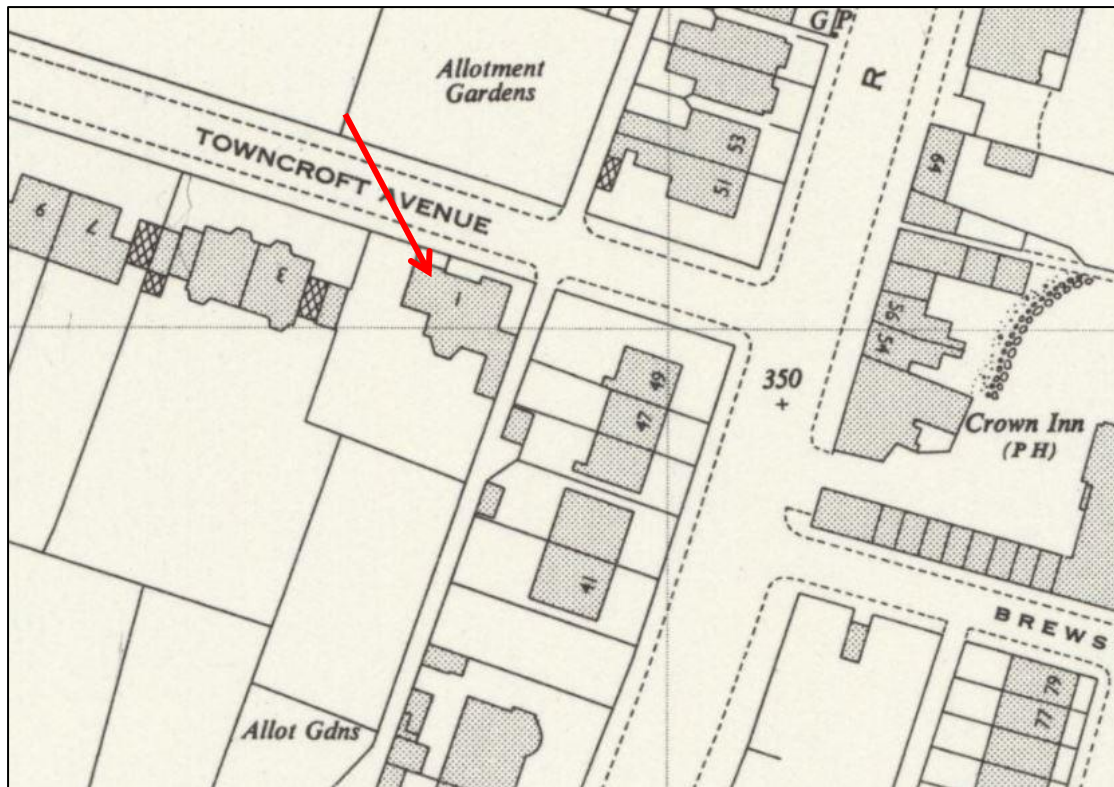


Figure 7: 1955 OS map sheet SD8706

Appendix 2: Plates



Plate 1: Main frontage to Arkholme



Plate 2: Garage interior

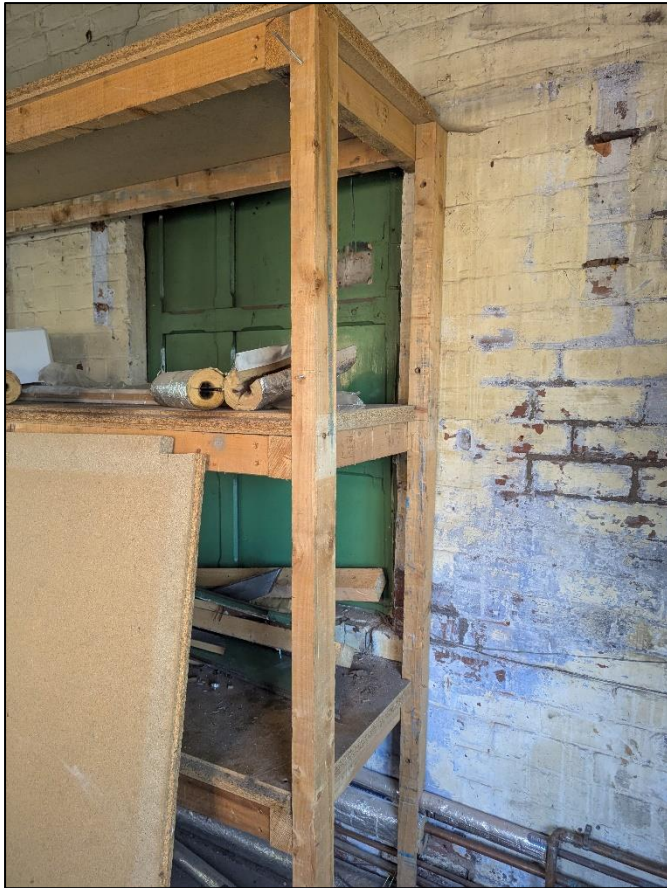


Plate 3: Blocked window to house



Plate 4: Northwest corner of garage



Plate 5: Interior arched opening to blocked window with cupboard inserted



Plate 6: External doorway to garage to be converted to window



Plate 7: Fireplace to living room to be removed



Plate 8: Detail of fireplace



Plate 9: Detail of brickwork to external stack



Plate 10: Comparison of brickwork of stack and house



Plate 11: Stack in games room to be removed



Plate 12: Extension



Plate 13: Brickwork of extension (right) butting against house (left)