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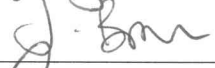


Site Name

10 – 18 YORK WAY, N1

Type of project

BUILDING ASSESSMENT

Quality Control

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**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RAPID ASSESSMENT OF BUILDINGS 10 – 18 YORK  
WAY, KING'S CROSS, LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON, N1**

**COMMISSIONING CLIENT: POETIC LAND ON BEHALF OF UK REAL ESTATE**

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## CONTENTS

1	NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	3
2	INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING BACKGROUND	5
3	METHOD	6
4	HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	7
5	BUILDING DESCRIPTION	12
6	DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND MITIGATION	20
7	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	22
8	BIBLIOGRAPHY	23

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Site Location	4
Figure 2	Ordnance Survey 1871-4	9
Figure 3	Ordnance Survey 1893	10
Figure 4	Ordnance Survey 1914	11

## **1 NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report was commissioned by Poetic Land on behalf of UK Real Estate, in advance of proposed development of 10 – 18 York Way, King’s Cross, London Borough of Islington, N1. The site’s location is shown on Figure 1.
- 1.2 The report presents the results of an archaeological rapid assessment of the site’s buildings, including a site walkover survey and an examination of available documentary records and historic maps.
- 1.3 The oldest surviving elements of the complex date from c.1853 with later additions also surviving.
- 1.4 The proposed development is not considered to affect any important historic buildings although further assessment of the buildings’ interiors is recommended alongside a photographic survey of some surviving historic building fabrics.

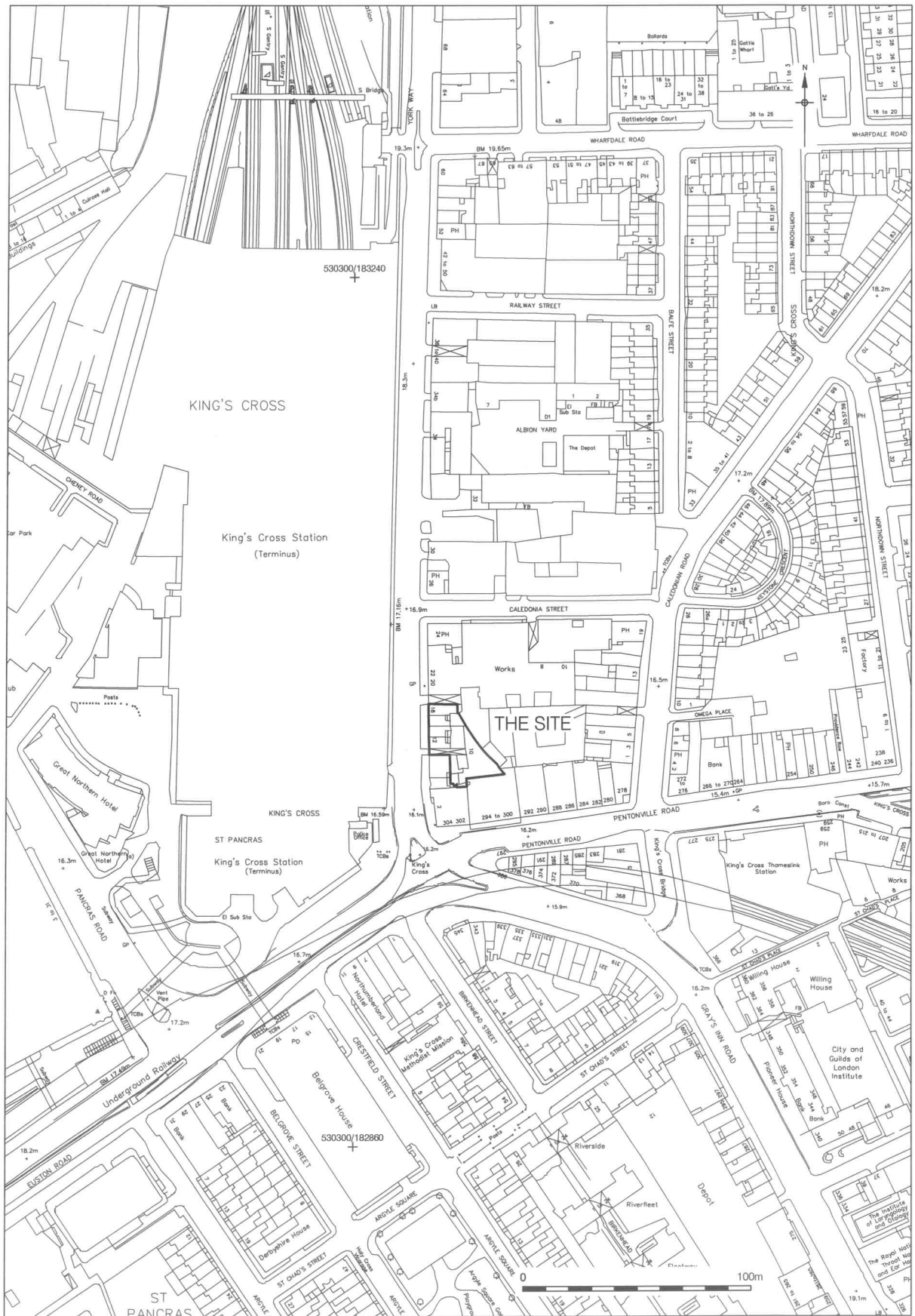


Figure 1  
 Site location  
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## **2 INTRODUCTION AND PLANNING BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Outline**

2.1.1 This Historic Building Assessment has been commissioned by Poetic Land on behalf of UK Real Estate in advance of proposed development of 10 – 18, York Way, N1. The development proposes the conversion of the buildings interiors for residential and recreational uses.

2.1.2 The planning consent includes a condition that a rapid building assessment is undertaken to determine the survival of structures of note and to inform the direction of any further work. This report evaluates the likely impact of the proposed alterations upon the historic building fabric and provides an aid to the formulation of a mitigation strategy as a preliminary step towards fulfilling the planning condition. The report details the results of an Historic Building Assessment undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd.

2.1.3 The National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is TQ 3034 8303.

2.1.4 The York Way frontage of numbers 12 – 18 is locally listed.

### **2.2 Report Objectives**

2.2.1 This report aims to identify and assess the architectural and historic significance of the building and its component parts and aid in the formulation of proposals for further works, as a step towards the fulfilment of the planning conditions imposed by the London Borough of Islington in conjunction with English Heritage. The assessment will identify the interest of the building and the need for any further archaeological work.

### **3 METHOD**

#### **3.1 General**

3.2 The Archaeological Rapid Assessment of 10 – 18 York Way was undertaken prior to refurbishment and was aimed at analysis to define the architectural and historic interest of the building prior to alteration. During the assessment plans provided by Poetic Land were used for baseline data, but has not been included as part of this document.

#### **3.3 Assessment**

3.4 The assessment consisted of background archival research at the Islington Local History Centre and the London Metropolitan Archive, and a site visit that was undertaken by the author on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2005. The report presents the results of this work. Recommendations for further work appear in **6 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND MITIGATION.**

## 4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 An examination of readily available documentary records and historic maps was undertaken to assess the likely development and historic functions of the building.
- 4.2 York Way is known to have been named York Road from 1853 to 1937 and Maiden Lane before this. Maiden Lane, Islington is mentioned by Charles Dickens in 'Our Mutual Friend' (1865-66)<sup>1</sup>. The buildings themselves were renumbered between 1880 and 1885.
- 4.3 The first mention of the buildings on the site is in the Post Office London directory of 1853 which lists number 5 ½ (later 10) as occupied by Joshua East, Job master. This also lists number 7 (16) as occupied by William Gaunt, beer seller, and number 8 (18) as the coffee and dining room of William Richardson. In 1855, 5 ½ is briefly doubly occupied, with Smith and Smith, pianoforte manufacturers listed alongside East. It is at this same time that the terminus at Kings Cross was completed, as well as the Great Northern Railway (now the London Underground Metropolitan Line), the line of which marks the eastern boundary of the site. The renaming of the road at this time makes reference to the Great Northern Railway's newly opened line from King's Cross to York via Peterborough.
- 4.4 By 1856, the whole row of buildings is occupied, with East still at 5 ½, John Groves, saddler and harness maker at 5 (12), Charles Case, wholesale butter dealer at 6 (14), John Bake, a coal merchant, at 7 and William Graves' coffee rooms at 8.
- 4.5 In 1860, the Great Northern Hospital is built at number 9, to the north and east of the current number 18, although this is not listed after 1864.
- 4.6 The Post Office London Directory of 1885 lists the buildings with their new number designations, showing Richard Argent, livery stables at 10, Ernest Lages, watchmaker at number 12 and Nathan Jared, a shoe manufacturer at 14. 16 was occupied by a hairdresser named William Fletcher and 18 remained a coffee room, now in the ownership of James Bennett.
- 4.7 By 1893, number 10 had been taken over by Charles Malvisi, listed as a veterinary surgeon, although a photograph exists showing 'The Great Northern Stables' listed under Malvisi's name. Numbers 12 – 18 briefly came under single ownership in 1912 when Charles Johnson ran a hairdressers at 12, a coffee room at 16, and converted 14 and 18 into a 'private hotel'.

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<sup>1</sup> Willats, p147



- 4.8.1 The next major alteration comes in the 1920s, when number 10 was in use by Wally Levy as a motorcar garage. Also by this time, number 18 had been taken over by the Times Laundry Co., which also occupied numbers 20 and 22, presumably buildings related to the old hospital.
- 4.9 The long-running Bravington's clock factory was in residence at number 10 by 1937 at the latest, it's workshops probably also producing jewellery for Bravington's Jewellers at 298 Pentonville Road. Until 1965, number 18 remained in the possession of the Times Laundry Co. Ltd, 16 was a café/dining room under various owners and 14 was an Italian-run refreshment rooms.
- 4.10 In 1965, number 12 was taken over by Samco-Strong, machinery manufacturers and the Times Laundry Co. moved on, its premises taken over by Thornhill Laundry, who remained resident until 1975 when number 18 was taken over by Bangladesh Overseas Express, travel agents, while the refreshment rooms at number 14 became a model railway manufacturers.
- 4.11 An interesting development of the buildings' uses comes in 1980, which sees number 12 converted for multiple occupancy by an electrical engineers, a publishers and an exhibition organisers. Bravington's remained at number 10 and the model railway manufacturers at 14. 16 and 18 had become the Goam Indian Restaurant and King's Cross Bookshop respectively, the latter becoming the Manzil Tandoori Restaurant by 1985.
- 4.12 By the late 1980s, the recently abandoned number 10 was taken over by the Court Theatre Company and became the Courtyard Theatre. After 1990, numbers 12 – 16 were gradually abandoned while number 18 became a specialist entertainment store that remains in operation.

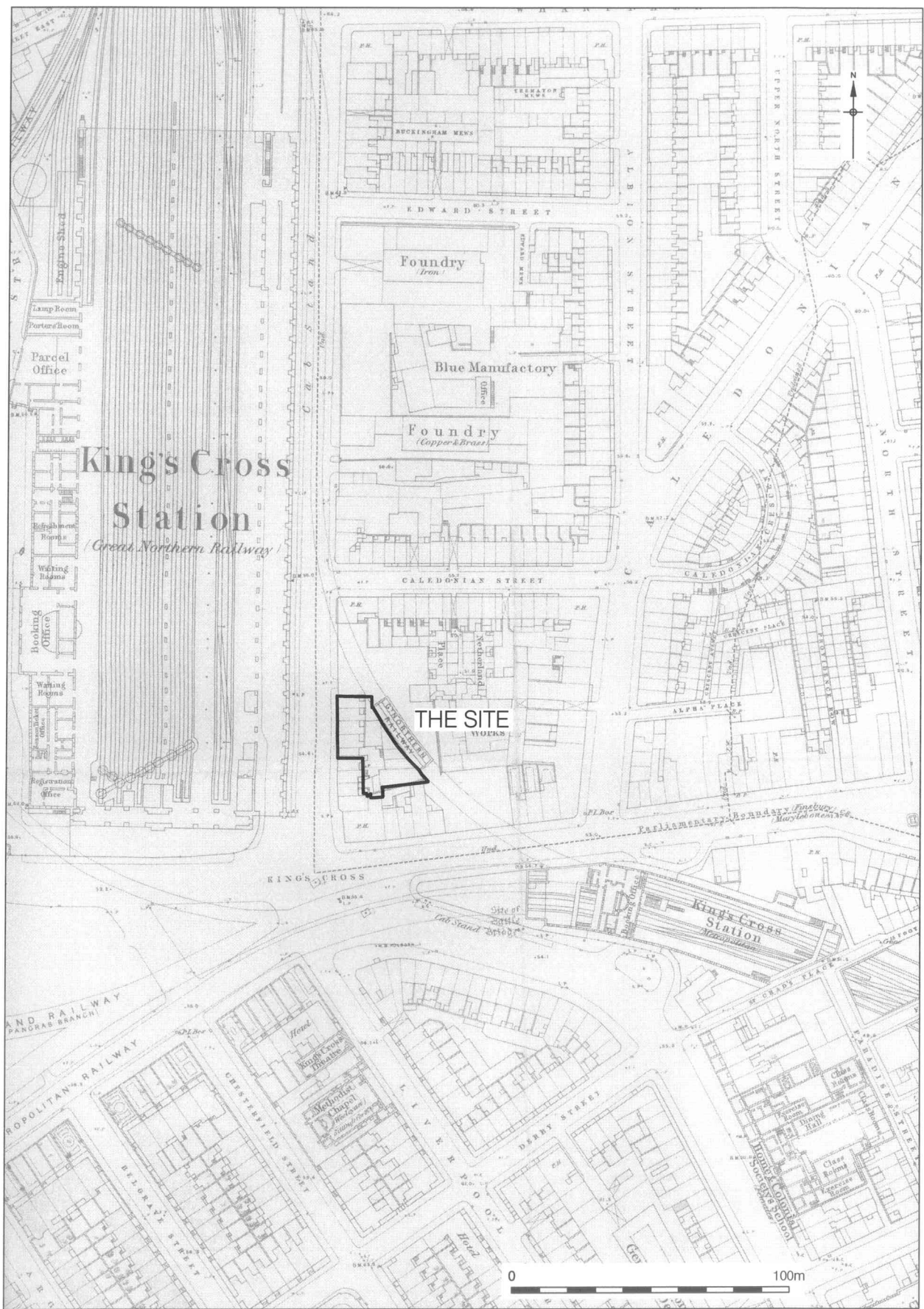


Figure 2  
 Ordnance Survey 1871-4  
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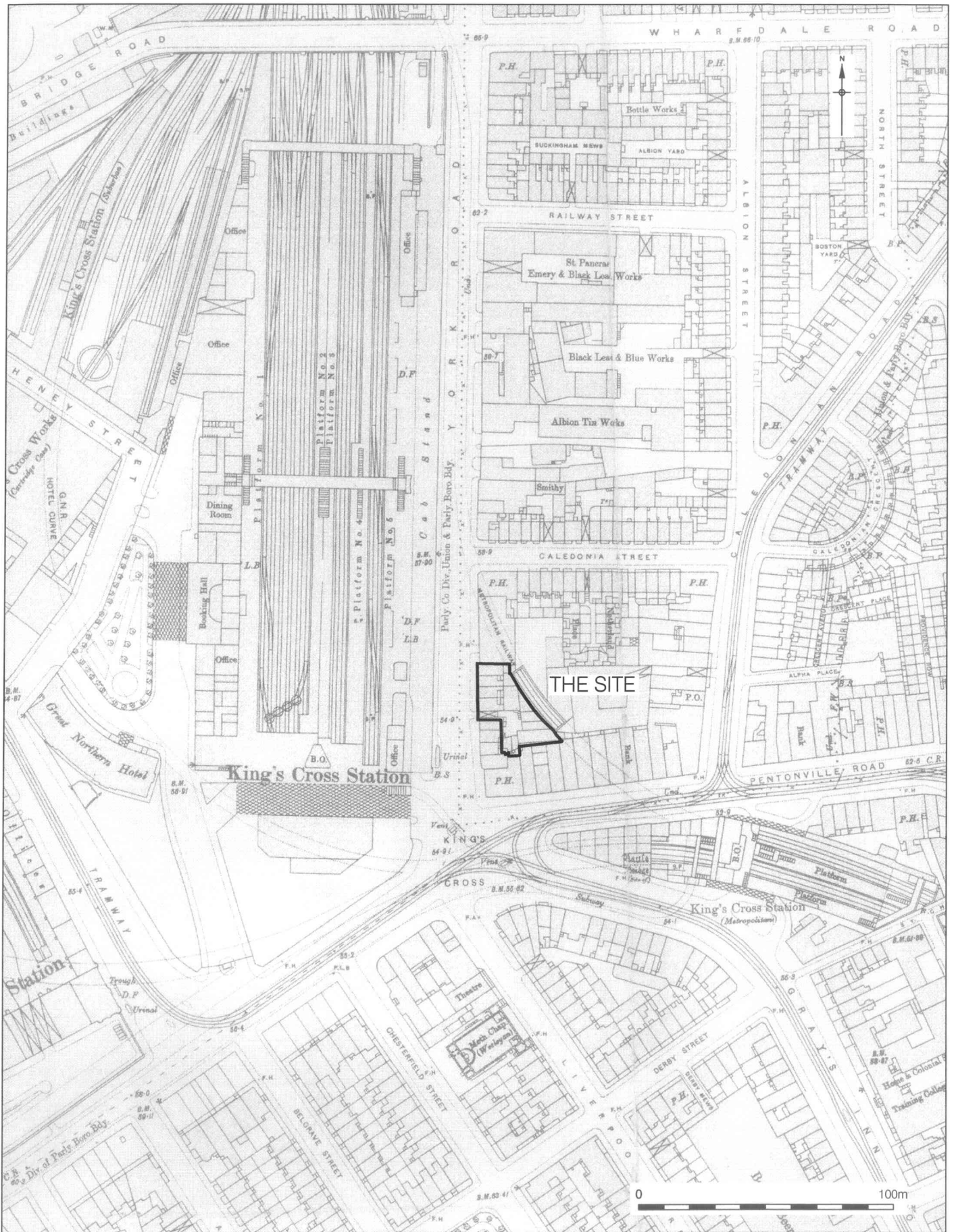


Figure 3  
 Ordnance Survey 1893  
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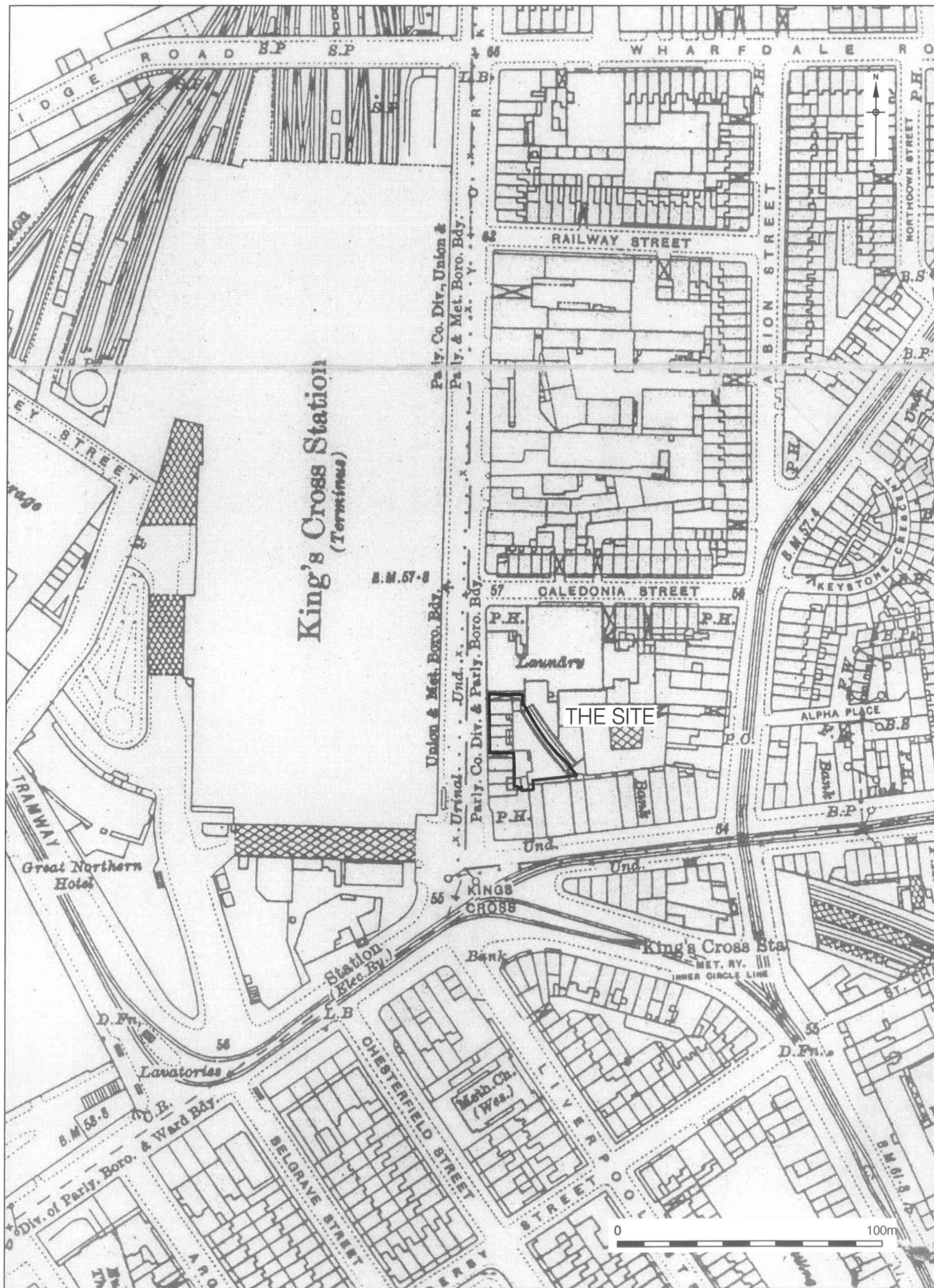


Figure 4  
 Ordnance Survey 1914  
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## 5 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

5.1 The buildings will be described as assessed, in number order. The aim of the archaeological rapid assessment is to determine the survival of original fabrics, the presence of other historically important alterations and any other significant aspects of the buildings. The base plans referred to were supplied to Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited by Poetic Land.

### 5.2 Number 10

5.2.1 Number 10 is accessed through an arched gateway underneath the northern end of number 8 York Way. Although all interconnected, number 10 is broadly divisible into four separate buildings, these arranged around a central courtyard.

5.2.2 In the southwest of the courtyard, there is a row of three WCs with, immediately to their north, a set of concrete steps rising to a balcony allowing access to the upper floor of one of the buildings. The balcony is built in brick with a central pediment and is supported on one of a series of steel 'I' section beams that run over the courtyard, these appearing to have supported a roof or building shown on early Ordnance Survey maps.

5.2.3 The building to the south of the courtyard had no access at ground level. The Poetic Land survey includes a car inspection pit at ground floor level in one of the rooms and that the other is for storage. The room marked storage has a low, plate wrought iron door, likely to be original to the courtyard's construction. On the exterior courtyard wall at this level, the painted-over blue brick edging shows that the entrance to the workshop and car pit, was originally wider. Above this, the wall appears to be laid in Flemish bond. There are three sash windows, one of which is lower than the other two and unevenly spaced. The 1894-96 Ordnance Survey map suggests that this window marks the position of a now removed stairway.

5.2.4 The room above is accessed via a stairway in the neighbouring building. The inside is plain and no original material could be closely observed. A pilaster had been added to the north of the room, in between the two original windows and a safe had been built into the southwest of the room.

5.2.5 At ground floor level, the buildings to the east of the courtyard had been joined to create one large area, now the stage and seating area of The Courtyard Theatre. This large area has been made larger by the roofing over of areas outside the main four buildings at ground/first floor level with the flat roof extending to the diagonal

northwest – southeast running wall that marks the line of the cut for the London Underground Metropolitan Line. This large area appears to mark the position of the stabling associated with most of the building's history.

- 5.2.6 The entrance to the east of the courtyard is a large double door with a similarly sized shuttered window above an inserted twentieth century wall to its north. An analysis of the brickwork here shows that this face originally held a double opening leading to the interior. Inside, there are a number of extant piers and walls mark the position of stabling bays. In the ceiling of the south of this area, there are a number of glazed panels that appear to be inserted to 'borrow' light from the room above.
- 5.2.7 Along the Metropolitan Line wall, there are a series of high-level windows that appear to date from the early-twentieth century and suggest that this back wall, with the roofed over single storey elements of the complex, was constructed in this period. There are two small rooms off of the main area to its southeast, each marking the position of the walls of the building above.
- 5.2.8 There are two rooms at first floor level above this area. The first is known as the Blue Room and is accessed via an internal staircase beyond a door in the southeast of the courtyard. At the top of the stairway, the door to the room is adjacent to that of the first floor room previously discussed in 5.2.4. The room is four bays long east – west with the south wall of fabric 3032 (using the Greater London archaeological system of building material classification) laid in English Garden Wall bond. The glazed roof is held by two different types of roof truss, timber queen-post trusses and arched steel trusses, that are not horizontally aligned. There is a dormer light in the southern pitch of the roof.
- 5.2.9 The first floor room of the building immediately north of the Blue Room is known as the Wood Room and is accessed through a door inserted into the Blue Room's north wall. The Wood Room is very irregularly laid in brick of type 3032 except where it meets the wall of the Blue Room and is laid in Flemish bond. It has segmental headed windows in the east and west walls and the gable ended roof is held by a single timber king-post truss supported on padstones. The roof is close-boarded from the walls to the first purlin and glazed from this point to the roof's apex.
- 5.2.10 The third building two-storey building is that to the north of the courtyard. At ground floor level, it is accessed through two modern double doors, each having a white painted blue-brick pilaster on either side. This is replicated in the north wall of the building, these openings marking the position of access points to and from the

courtyards. The access points in the north wall have steel 'I' section supporting beams over them, between the blue brick pilasters.

- 5.2.11 Inside the ground floor of the north building, there are two original walls projecting from the north and south walls, ending in corbelled pilasters supporting the chimneybreasts of the floor above. The room to the north of this is another area of enclosed and roofed courtyard, its east wall part of the Metropolitan Line boundary wall. It is divided in two by a lightweight partition wall.
- 5.2.12 The first floor of the north building is currently accessed by the concrete stairway in the west of the courtyard, but was historically accessed in the courtyard's northeast as demonstrated by the pre-twentieth century Ordnance Survey maps, prior to the addition of the current first-floor balcony.
- 5.2.13 To the south of the building (and, it is assumed, the north) the sash windows are headed by segmental arches. The building is divided into two down its centre, both halves having access to the south, and the eastern half also having access from a flat roof to its east. Each half is divided into a front and back room, each room containing an original fireplace, these with plain architraves and cast-iron mantles. To the north of the building is a door connecting its east and west halves.
- 5.2.14 The roof is gabled with its apex running north-south. It is held by timber trusses with raking braces. The two trusses on the centre of the roof, adjacent to the chimneys, have additional iron king-rods, each bracketed to the truss at its apex.

### **5.3 Street frontage**

- 5.3.1 The street frontage of numbers 12 – 18 is of uniform design and part of a single original build. At ground floor level, there appear modern shop-fronts that conceal at least two earlier phases of fascia including a moulded and dentilled cornice. Between each property are pilasters topped by decorative consoles that support a continuous narrow balcony with the remains of a cast iron balustrade. Number 18 also has ceramic tiles at ground level.
- 5.3.2 Above the balustrade, each house has paired arched sash windows with raised rendered surrounds and keystones at first floor level. The second floor has paired rectangular windows, each pair having a continuous sill with rendered surrounds and a half round rendered section above.

- 5.3.3 The top of the second floor level is marked by another dentilled cornice. The gabled roof is finished in ceramic tile, with the division between each property marked by a brick parapet. Between 12/14 and 16/18, there are brick chimney-stacks, each holding the outlets for between six and eight flues.
- 5.3.4 Each property is slightly differently decorated with, notably, number 16 painted red with the mortar picked out in white, and the old 'REFRESHMENT' sign painted onto the front of number 14, between the first and second floor windows. Beneath the paint, patches of cleaner brick reveal the road-facing façade to be built in yellow brick of type 3035 (using the Greater London archaeological system of building material classification).
- 5.3.5 The ground floor level shop-fronts, chimney-stacks and brick roof parapets had been omitted in the Poetic Land survey.

#### **5.4 Number 12**

- 5.4.1 The basement level of number 12 contained a number of 20<sup>th</sup> century additions including a timber beam and post in the centre of the room, marking the line of a previously removed dividing wall. The fireplaces of each of the original rooms appeared to be in place, but at the time of the visit were covered with plastic sheeting preventing any close analysis. This was also the case with the corridor and coalbunkers beneath York Way to the west. The window to the light-well in the east of the basement had been removed and replaced with a larger opening topped with a steel 'I' section beam that had been blocked up prior to the assessment.
- 5.4.2 In the south of the basement, the original flagstone flooring of a corridor remains and elements of the stairs in the southeast of the basement appear to be original, including the newel, close string and the stairs themselves.
- 5.4.3 The ground floors of numbers 12 and 14 had been joined as one property, possibly as part of the multiple occupancy period after 1980. In number 12, the two fireplaces had been removed and replaced with two small alcoves, either side of a blocked double width doorway leading to number 14. There was also access to the adjoining property to the east of the room. A modern room division visible in the Poetic Land survey had been removed prior to the assessment. The remainder of fittings were modern and the majority of elements of the staircase appeared to be replacements.
- 5.4.4 More original features remained at first floor level. The original floorboards and room division were in place although a door had been added to the north of this. In the



western room, original small cupboards were in place in the inglenooks of the fireplace. The skirting boards and cornices were also original. The fireplace in the eastern room had been blocked and a door had been added to the east of this leading through to number 14. Towards the stairs, the arch of the doorway leading east had been blocked and the timber of the stairway had been replaced.

5.4.5 The staircase at second floor level still retained its original strings and newels. The corridor had been removed, most likely as part of a conversion of the floor into a single-occupancy bedsit. The fireplaces had been blocked and the vast majority of the skirting was not original.

5.4.5 The base plans provided by Poetic Lands included a number of elements that had been removed prior to recording and a number of elements, notably the fireplaces, had been omitted from this survey.

## **5.5 Number 14**

5.5.1 The basement of number 14 demonstrated a number of details that had been omitted by the Poetic Land survey. The wall dividing the basement in two was still in situ, as was a wall dividing the eastern room into two further rooms. The floor of these two small rooms was tiled and to its south, the buttresses supporting the chimney above were visible. In the western room, the ceiling was of matchboard and the floor of concrete, with the original fireplace (evident in the detail of the moulded surround) plastered over. There were no skirting boards or cornices present.

5.5.2 To the west of the basement the original, horizontally proportioned, double-hung sash window remained, with its top above ceiling height. Above the window, beyond the western wall of the basement, was a brick segmental arch. Both of the coal bunker/vaults were accessible and both retained their central roof hole for the delivery of coal. The pavement between the building and the vaults was supported on wrought iron beams.

5.5.3 The base of the staircase appeared original with matchboarding to dado height. At ground floor level, there had been some replacement, including the addition of a recent square newel, but the matchboard ceiling leading to the front room was similar to that in the basement. To the south of the stairs, the lightwell had been knocked into and had a glazed roof inserted. It was open to the main room (with access to the front room of 12) in which the fireplaces had been plastered over and the bedding for lino tiles was evident.

- 5.5.4 To first floor level, the newels and banisters of the staircase were original features although the close string appeared a later addition or replacement. The original arch remained above the doorway leading into an original hallway with two rooms off.
- 5.5.5 The eastern room showed an early-twentieth century decorative scheme, including matchboarding to dado height. The room had been divided into two by a light wall running into the centre of a fireplace with a late-nineteenth century decorative surround. The room to the west of this wall had been converted into a bathroom. The skirting appeared original, but no cornices were evident. The room at the western end of the corridor contained its original skirting and cornices as well as the same inglenook cupboards observed in the corresponding room of number 12, and a lathe and plaster ceiling.
- 5.5.6 The rooms of the top floor each had their original skirting, but no cornices, and a lathe and plaster ceiling. The fireplaces appeared original, but undecorated. Elements of the staircase at this level were also original.

## **5.6 Number 16**

- 5.6.1 In the basement of number 16, a door had been added to provide access to the lightwell, at the north end of which a small cupboard had been inserted behind the WC. The smaller of the two rooms at this level contained its original matchboard ceiling and ceramic floor tiles, with light timber cupboards inserted. The larger, western room had demonstrated a long period of use as a kitchen. The fireplace and ceramic tile floor appeared to remain from the original build. A square flue, assumed to be a boiler, had been added, as had a dumb-waiter to the east of the fireplace, both presumably connected to an increase in commercial activity in the dining/coffee rooms above (see **4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**). There were also modern kitchen fittings and the room had been tiled to dado height. The window to the west had been tiled over and the ceiling had been plastered over (assuming the removal of matchboarding), both to comply with modern health and safety regulations on fire risks. Both of the brick vaults to the west were open and retained their original circular coal chutes.
- 5.6.2 The staircase at basement level retained most of its original timber and decoration. It was also largely original at ground floor level. The remainder of fittings at this level were modern although it is possible that the dumb-waiter remained in place, but obscured at this level.

5.6.3 The stairs at landing level on the first floor had had their newel replaced and the original doorway arch led to the two main rooms. Both of these appeared to have their original skirting, cornices and lathe and plaster ceiling, and were matched in the corridor. The floorboards at this level also appeared original.

5.6.4 By the time the stairs reach the second floor, the newels and banisters appear original although the stairs themselves appear to have been replaced and there is possible evidence of a different historic stair configuration. The room divisions at this level had been historically altered with two east-west running rooms above evidence for the north-south dividing wall observed in the second floor of the other buildings. There are original skirting boards at this level, but no cornices remained. Through a deteriorated area of the ceiling, it was possible to observe that the pitched roof was held by simple A-frame trusses.

## **5.7 Number 18**

5.7.1 Due to a lack of access, it was only possible to assess the basement and ground floor levels of number 18.

5.7.2 In the basement, the stairs appeared to be replacements, although the bannister and newels remained from the original build. The lightwell at this level had been converted into a WC. The eastern basement room had been converted into a modern kitchen, but retained a tiled 'boiler' of the type observed in number 16. The fireplace had been completely removed and the room had been tiled to dado height. The arched doorway to the stairs from this room remained although all other doorways in the basement were modern.

5.7.3 To the west of this kitchen, was a plain room with no surviving cornicing or skirting and a plasterboard ceiling. The fireplace had been blocked up, as had the window to the west. Of the two vaults to the west of this, below York Way, the southern was open and retained its central circular chute. The entrance to the northern vault had been blocked up with breeze blocks.

5.7.4 Rising to ground floor level, the stairs and their strings appeared original. A doorway had been inserted at the point that the stairs reached the ground floor, and another where they began to rise to the first floor. The corridor from this point, leading to the York Way door of the building, contained only modern fittings.

5.7.5 The front room at ground floor level was accessed through a modern doorway, inside and to the right of the main front door. In this room, although obscured by fittings

relating to the current use of the building as an adult video shop, the eastern fireplace appeared to be blocked while the western fireplace had been converted into a recessed niche of the type observed in number 12. A pilaster had been added between the two.

- 5.7.6 There was a raised area in the centre of the ceiling, but no function could be discerned. It did not contain a light fitting. Immediately to the east of this, a floor to ceiling pole had been added, possibly for ceiling support. The pole had been decorated, and it was not possible to observe the fabric behind. A small room had been created to the west of the room, although this contained no original fittings.
- 5.7.7 There was no access to the upper floors of the building, but it has been reported that the current owner has divided the rooms and added suitable amenities for short-term lodging.

## **6 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND MITIGATION**

- 6.1 Numbers 10 – 18 York Way, Kings Cross have a long history of relatively intense use, with only small periods of time in which any of the properties could be termed residential.
- 6.2 Built in 1853, numbers 12 – 18 host a variety of largely immigrant businesses, mostly based around hospitality, such as the hotels, dining rooms and coffee rooms. Original features relating to the construction of the building remain in each property and in some cases there are later alterations that can be directly related to different historic business occupancies.
- 6.3 It is possible that number 10, as originally a stable yard, may have been in existence marginally earlier than the street-fronting buildings although this cannot currently be proven. As with the other buildings, number 10 has a long chain of varying businesses associated with it and the legacies of a number of these appear in alterations to the historic fabric of the building, particularly in the conversions and extensions related to various periods of number 10's use as a stable and coach-yard.

### **6.2 Recommendations for further work**

- 6.2.1 Based upon the results of the archaeological rapid assessment of the buildings, a number of recommendations for further work can be made.
- 6.2.2 It is recommended that a comprehensive photographic survey be undertaken to record the survival of historic fabric in all of the buildings, focusing particularly on the stairs of numbers 12 – 18, the basements of the same properties and the ground floor interiors of number 10.
- 6.2.3 It is further recommended that hand-recording of certain elements of the buildings take place. An analysis of the skirting, cornices and decorative stair elements in numbers 12 – 18 will, aside the business occupancy dates above, serve to accurately date the various alterations and to provide information as to the social importance and functions of the various rooms.
- 6.2.4 Hand-recording is further recommended to amend the plans supplied to Pre-Construct Archaeology by Poetic Land, as these omitted a number of key historic features and included features that no longer exist.

6.2.5 Number 10 requires the production of a full set of plans with associated in-depth fabric and fitting analysis as this will provide a better chronology of the historic development of this relatively complex set of buildings.

## **7 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 7.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology would like to thank Poetic Land and Tim Meaker in particular for commissioning the work and for assistance on site.
  
- 7.2 In addition, the author would like to thank Islington Local History Centre and the London Metropolitan Archive for their assistance with the historical background research, to the Courtyard Theatre for allowing access to their offices, Ken Sabel for project management and Gary Brown for editing.

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