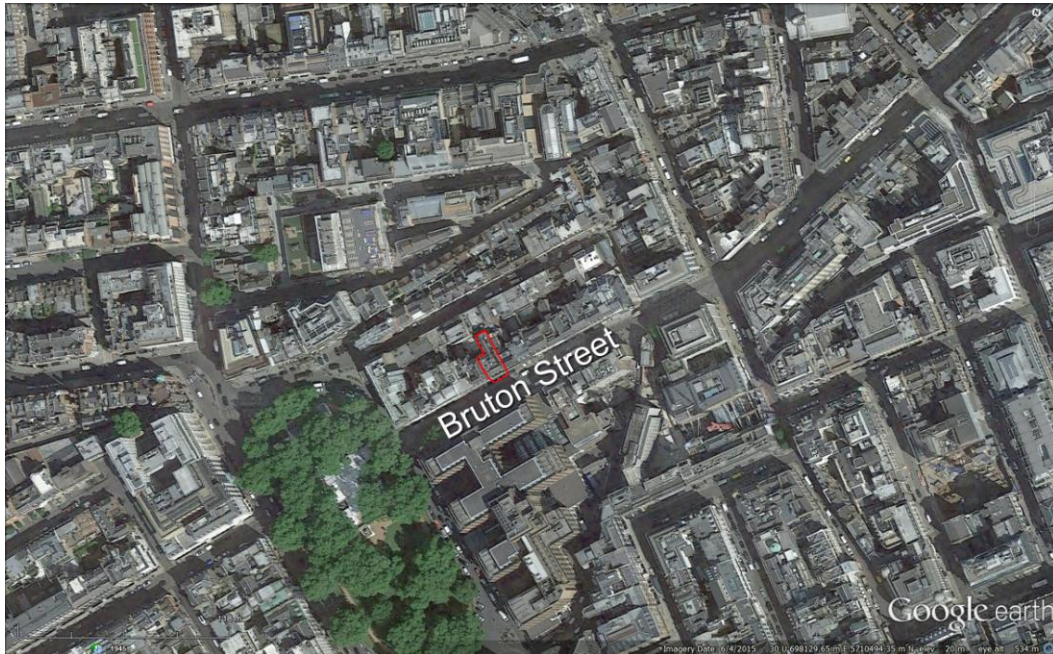


26 Bruton St, Mayfair, London W1J 6QL
Description and analysis of the 2nd floor flat. Surveyed 14 06 2016.



2006 Google earth. Location of 26 Bruton Street.



2006 Google earth. Detail of the site showing the building under study.

Location

26 Bruton St, Mayfair, London W1J 6QL. The building is on the NW side of the road, half way along the terrace. NGR: TQ2881980716.

Listing



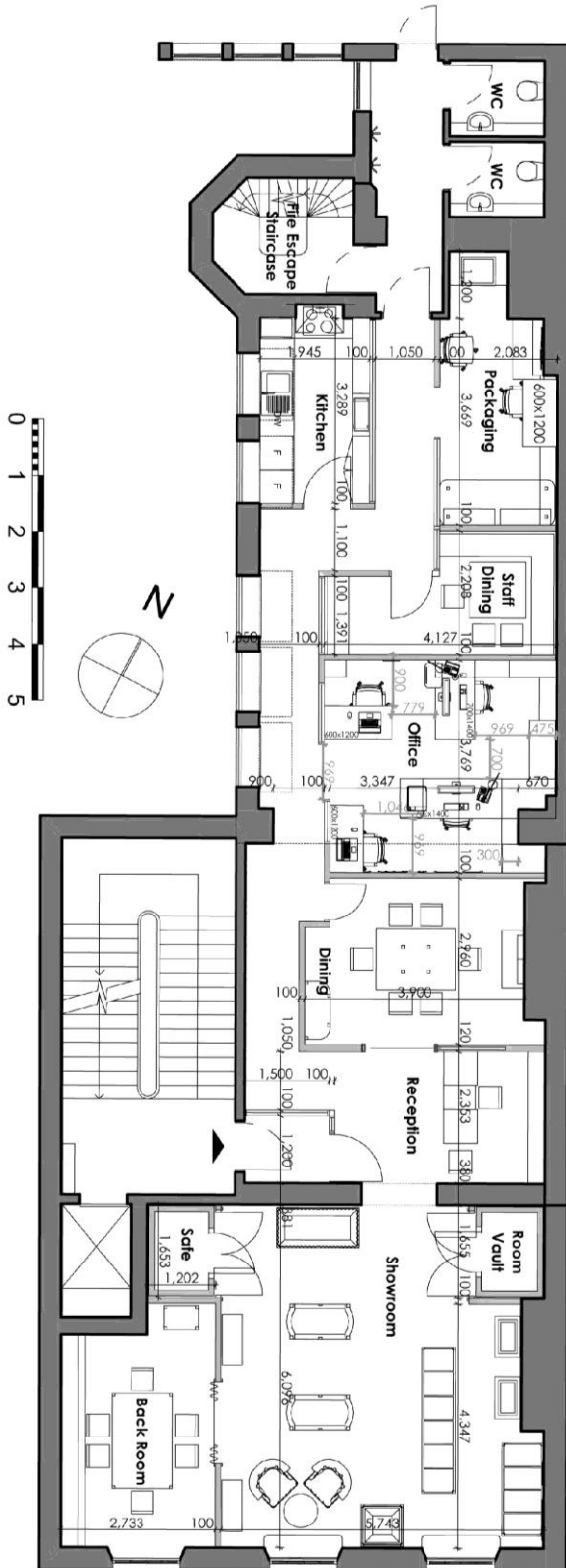
© Mr Adam Watson

IoE Number: 208872. Location: 26 BRUTON STREET W1 (north side)
WESTMINSTER, CITY OF WESTMINSTER, GREATER LONDON
Photographer: Mr Adam Watson. Date Photographed: 06 April 2002
Date listed: 25 May 1983. Date of last amendment: 25 May 1983
Grade II

TQ 2880 CITY OF WESTMINSTER BRUTON STREET W1
69/56 (north side) 25.5.83. No 26. GV II.

Terrace house. Mid C18, with 1930s alterations by Gerald Lacoste for the couturier Norman Hartnell's showrooms. Painted brick, slate roof. Three windows wide. Ground floor has display window of 1934 framed in polished granite and similarly framed doorway to left with a pair of marble obelisks flanking. Upper floors have 1934 sashes revealed under flat gauged arches with bowed wrought iron balconettes of 1934. Stone cornice at third floor level, parapet with blocking course. Interior redecorated in 1934 on ground and first floors for Norman Hartnell by Gerald Lacoste but retaining C18 cut string staircase with carved tread ends and lyre and anthemion wrought iron balustrade. The ground floor showroom has been altered but the front door and door to hall are of chromed steel and glass with lobby fittings etc all by Lacoste together with the half landing decor of marble half-columns capped by urns flanking mirror glazed door and the first floor showroom completely mirror glazed with vanity tables, moulded glass chimney piece, original purpose designed light fittings etc. the glass specially produced by Pilkington's. 1934 rear wing fitting rooms also retaining original light fittings. One room in original part of rear wing retains mid C18 Rococo plasterwork to ceiling. The Lacoste interiors are a rare survival. Thirties catalogue; Arts Council 1979 pp 101, 294. Architects Journal 1934.

Listing NGR: TQ2881980716



2016. Plan of Flat 2. The light grey elements are proposed not extant.

Scope of this Report

This report examines the fabric of the second floor apartment last used as a retail outlet for Diane von Furstenburg, fashion designer. The apartment consists of two large showrooms and a rear service area containing the WC's and fire escape. Also examined was the concierge desk on the ground floor.

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The report adheres to English Heritage Level 2 as outlined in English Heritage. Understanding Historic Buildings – A guide to good recording practice. 2006. Page 14.

Description – External



The southern elevation of 26 Bruton Street.

The building was Listed in 1983 and there are no discernible changes to the exterior description. The building has four floors with attic rooms above in a mansard roof with three small dormers. The two upper floors have casement windows emulating small pane 12/12 sashes. The first floor has similar but much deeper casements with paired top lights and large panes. Each window has a wrought iron basket flower box attributed to 1934 but the form and quality of the wrought ironwork is C18th in style.

Looking at the window reveals from inside on the second floor it can be seen that original sash windows have been removed and the guide runners filled with moulded battens. A blue plaque states that 'Sir Norman Hartnell. 1901-1979. Court Dressmaker. Lived and worked here 1935-1979'.

Description – internal.



The front door and the internal lobby doors.

Ground Floor Lobby and Concierge Hall

The ground floor is entered through the Lacoste designed double doors described in the Listing. The plain black doors have twin lions head knocker handles and period furniture alongside the modern locks. The paintwork is delaminating and will need addressing.

Inside the Lobby there is a mixture of period glass mirrors, notable for their chipped edges and delamination and much newer mirrors that are clear and unpatinated. There is a pair of chrome plated doors as noted in the Listing but these have a plate on them saying 'Dortech Ltd. Sales and Service 0895 842277'. The design and quality would indicate they are the original doors that have been refinished.



Looking into the Concierge Hall from the Lobby. Detail of the balustrade.

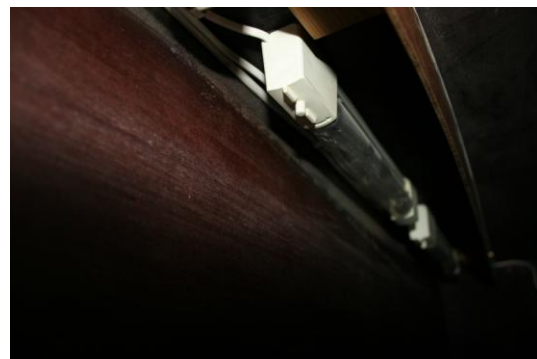
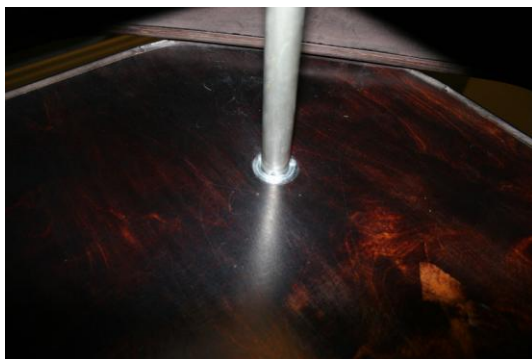
Passing through doors into the Concierge Hall the right hand wall has original mirrors that pass up the stairwell which has an EC18th style open tread stair with pairs of stick balusters alternating with wrought iron balusters decorated with anthemion flowers. The ridged handrail spirals on a wrought iron newel post over an elegant curtail step. Each tread has a decorative bracket with a rosette and anthemion emblem. In the entrance Lobby the ceiling retains a decorated modillioned cornice with the same rosettes as those on the staircase.



Looking down the stairs into the Lobby.



Plywood construction with hardboard and aluminium components.

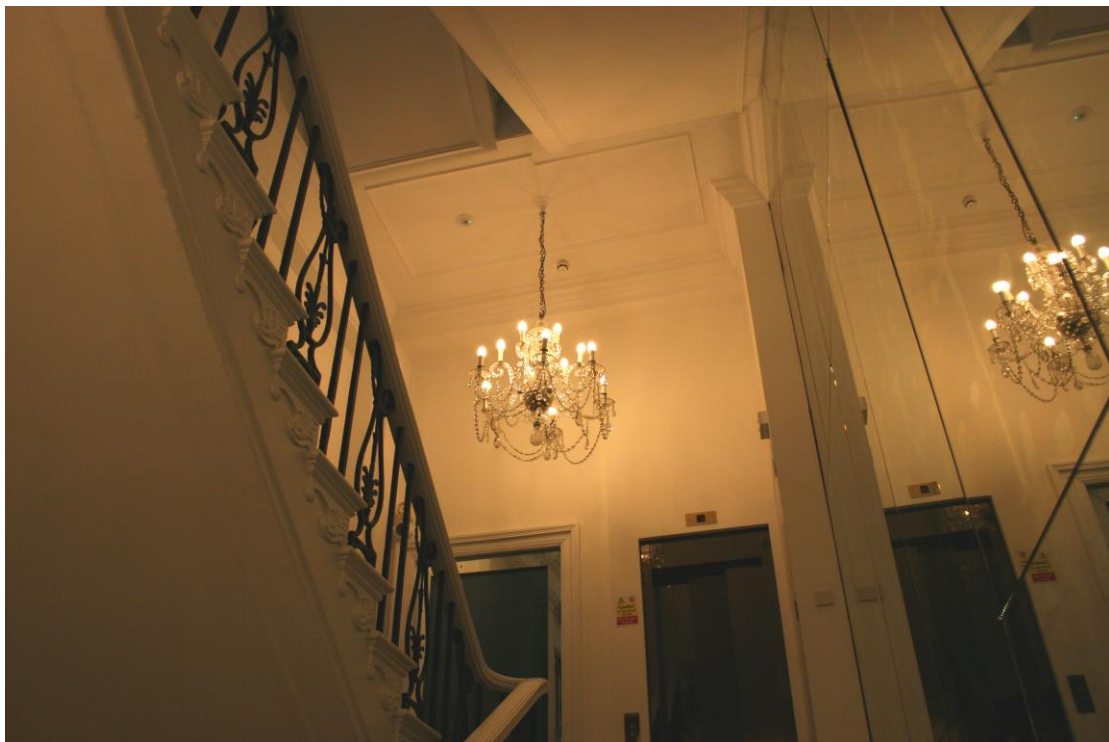


Recent fittings and light fixtures.

There is a mirrored concierge desk that has been made in the last 20 years or so using LC20th components. The carcass is of plywood and sheet veneer fastened with staples and aluminium brackets. There is a hardboard pelmet hiding plastic light fittings. The mirrors are in very good condition and do not share the patina of the original 1934 ones.



Looking up the staircase from the Ground Floor. The mirror has a door in it.



Looking up to the First Floor. Note the Lacoste door beside the lift.

On the half landing of the staircase is a very tall mirrored assembly incorporating a door. Above is a pelmet for long curtains and either side is a pair of pilasters with urns on the capitals. These tap hollow and are timber (not marble as stated in the Listing). They are not shown in a photograph of 1944 and so were not part on the Lacoste design.

Description - Flat 2 – interior.



There are two doors into Flat 2 from the landing.



Looking NW from the southern end of the Rear Room.

The Rear Room

Apart from some of the doors, which can be attributed to Lacoste, there is no historic decor present in Flat 2. The partition wall has been removed and the fireplaces blanked off.



Double glazed sash windows 1-3 have replaced single glazed ones which remain in 4 and 5.



Doorways to the fire escape and a tiny kitchenette.

The doors have applied battens which curve around the chrome door handles which operate recent Chubb and Laidlaw 5 lever locks installed with Pozidriv screws. The doors are part of a suite of doors present on every floor and those patinated and worn are the originals. The two WC cubicles have modern reproductions that are good but not entirely accurate.



Inside the Kitchenette.

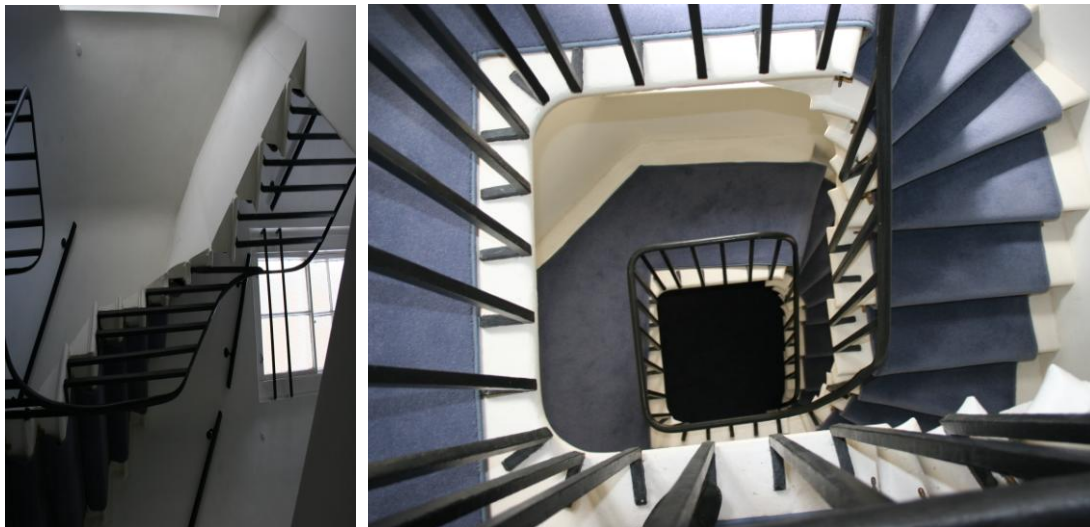


The ceiling and brickwork above the fire hatch

The Kitchenette has a fire hatch (dated 27.06.2001) into the suspended ceiling where the original red brickwork of the party wall can be seen heavily plastered with lime render and pink skim. Also visible is the soffit of the floor above which has slender 2in joists striped with plaster from where the laths have been removed. The nails left are C20th French nails.



The rear staircase used as a fire escape.



Details of the fire escape.

Fire Escape

The fire escape staircase is a very elegant structure with wrought iron stick balusters and open tread moulded stone stairs.

The 4/4sash window lighting the stairwell has had wired obscured glass panes inserted.



WC cubicles on the Landing near the fire escape. Looking N.



The cubicles are entirely modern inside.

The Landing

There are two WC cubicles on the Landing near the fire escape furnished to modern standards. There are two reproduction doors which are slightly taller than the originals. All the doors have recent chrome plated hinges fixed with Pozidriv screws.



Looking S in the Rear Room.



Double door entrance to the Front Room.

Front Room

The Front Room is connected through a double doorway where the frame shows the doors have been removed. The flooring runs through and is very recent with little wear. All the skirtings, which are electrical conduits, respect the laminated floor. There are recent suspended ceilings with concealed lighting in both rooms.



Looking S towards the front of the building. Note inspection cover in the floor.

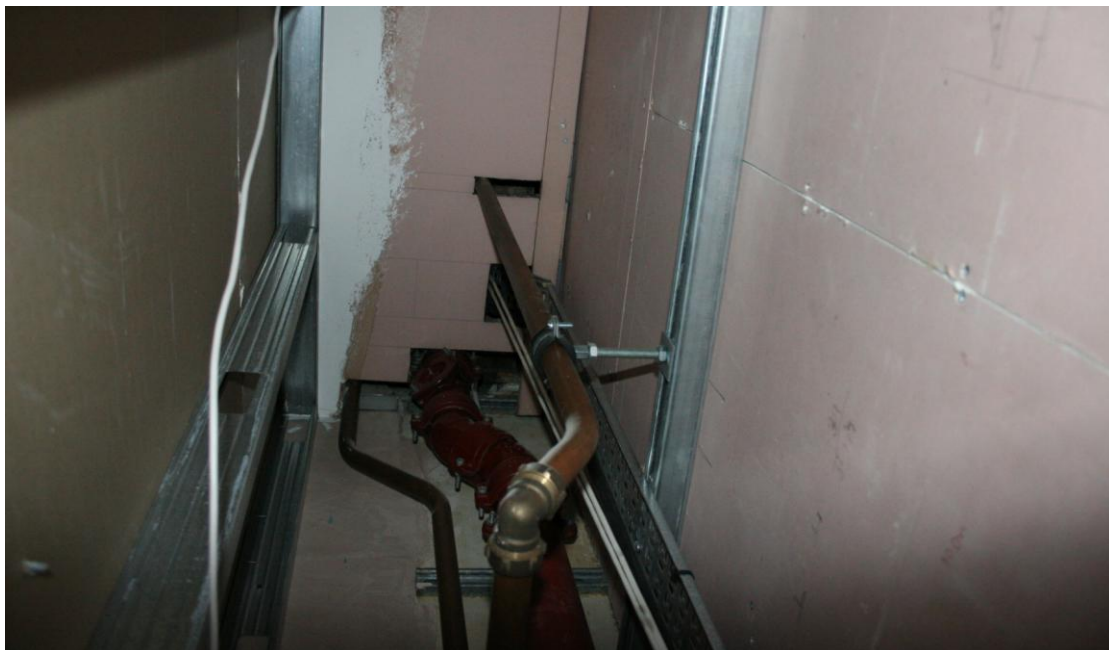


Looking W in the Front Room. The built out section houses the lift, pipes and ducting.

There is a suite of quick assembly cabinets against the western wall where there is also a plaster boarded enclosure that hides the lift shaft, pipes and air conditioning ducts. The access panel has a manufacturers date of 27.06.2001 printed on a label.



Looking down in the enclosure.



Looking up inside the enclosure.

Inside the enclosure can be seen some yellow and buff brickwork which must represent the party wall of the house. Again it is thickly lime plastered with a pink skim coat. The rest of the enclosure is made of Gyproc plasterboard and Gypframe metal studwork and must hide the lift shaft.



Looking N in the Front Room.



Inspection cover removed in the floor of the Front Room.

It was possible to remove the inspection covers in the Front and Rear Rooms to examine the structure of the floors. The sequence was the same in each. From the top there is the present laminated 25mm oak veneered floor on a plywood substrate. This lies on underlay on top of another layer of 20mm plywood.



Inspection port in the Rear Room near the double doorway.

The 20mm plywood sheathing lies on 30mm tanalised battens that are mostly offcuts to provide a void for the metal pipe conduits. There are a number of plastic shims manufactured by Prism Profiles used to level each layer.

There is a second layer of battens that then lie on top of the original common joists that are 2.5 x 7in deep. These are centre tenoned into the main joist which is 5 x 7in deep but is laid together with two 4x7in joists giving a width of 13in. Beneath these are 2x5in softwood battens to which the lath and plaster ceiling in the Front Room is affixed. In the Back Room the lower ceilings are of plasterboard.

In each inspection port is a large metal plate with a welded threaded rod that must be a fixture for a large light fitting below believed to be chandeliers in Hartnell's showroom

End of Descriptions.

Historic Photography

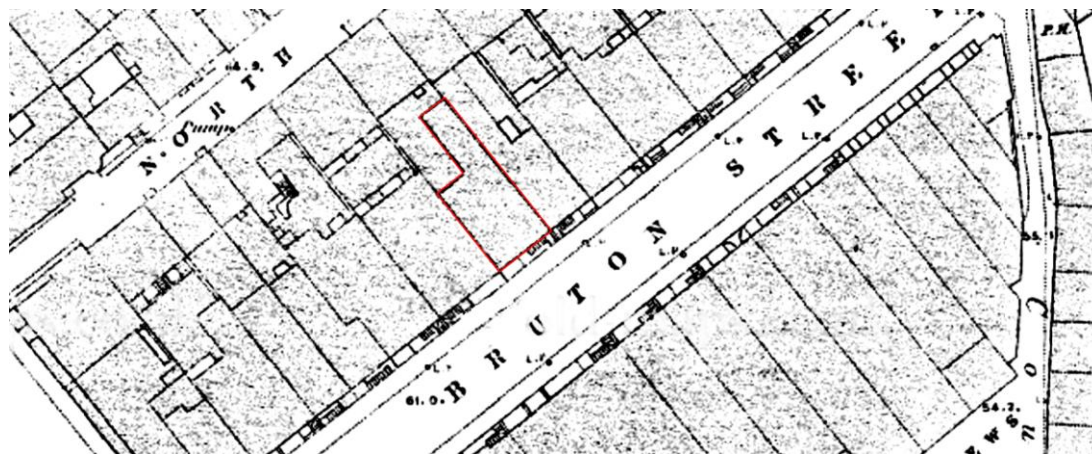


1944. The mirrored stairwell and staircase. From Wikipedia. The work of members of the Incorporated Society of Fashion Designers in wartime London 1944.

Topographical Survey from Maps



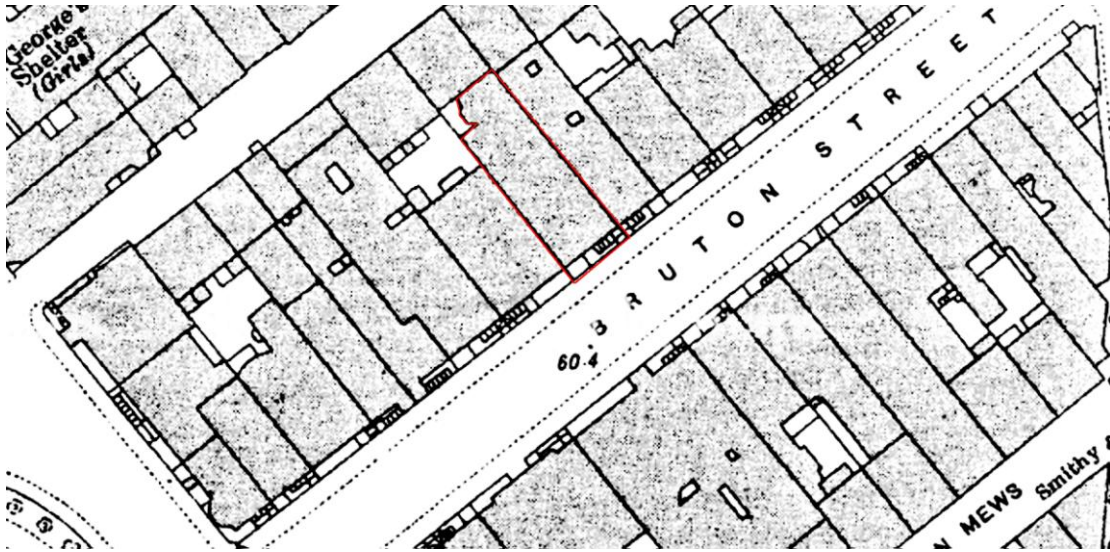
1851 Ordnance Survey. Bruton Street is shown but the buildings are not detailed.



1871 Ordnance Survey.



1896 Ordnance Survey.



1916 Ordnance Survey.



1952 Ordnance Survey.

The Ordnance Survey shows a change of curtilage in the C19th and C20th. Up until the 1916 edition each building is shown with an area and descending steps at the front. These are not shown in the 1952 edition where they have been built over.

For No 26, between 1871 and 1896 the shape of the rear fire escape stair-tower appears in the mapping showing it descended in that form all the way to the ground. The later mapping is less helpful simply showing the building as a lozenge from front to back.

Phasing and Discussion

Phase 1. MC18th.

No26 is Listed as a building of the MC18th. Externally this would appear correct with later alterations. Internally the only visible historic features are the superb staircases that pass right up through the house. The features of the main staircase with wrought iron balusters, open treads, curtail steps and anthemum motifs would be correct for the period c.1725 onwards. In the entrance Lobby on the Ground Floor the ceiling retains a decorated modillioned cornice with the same rosettes as those on the staircase.

The fire escape staircase has all the features of an C18th staircase and may well have been put in at the same time as the main staircase for the servant's to use. The map evidence shows the stair-tower in place in the 1896 and 1916 editions but the ever changing plan of the rear of the building may have masked it before then as it does afterwards.

Inside Flat 2 it is possible to see the party walls which are made of red or yellow buff brickwork thickly plastered with haired lime mortar but no real detail or period can be designated from the small sample.

Phase 2. Lacoste's refit in 1934.

It is extremely unlikely the building remained static up until Gerald Lacoste's work but there is no sign of earlier decorative schemes in the stair-well and Flat 2. The front of the building, the grand doorways, shop front and window baskets are attributed to Lacoste but the intricate wrought ironwork is an excellent replica of the C18th designs and manufacturing techniques if it is not original to that period. In order to build the shop front the previously sunken area would have had to be covered over and the staircase lost down to the basement.

Inside, the Lobby retains the chromium doors, which if original have been renovated by a specialist company, Dorteck Ltd. The mirrors on the wall of the Lobby appear too clean and undamaged to be of 1934 but those on the wall going up the stairs to the landing are chipped and patinated and correspond with those in the historic photograph of 1944. The same photograph does not show the pilasters and urns which were therefore not part of Lacoste's Art Deco scheme.

The only decorative element of Lacoste's scheme retained in Flat 2 is the panelled doors with chromium handles and these are seen on each floor as part of a comprehensive scheme for the house.

The floor was examined in detail and it is very likely it was replaced or at least remodelled by Lacoste to support the heavy chandeliers in the room below which are secured on screw threads welded to steel plates. The main joists are composites of three narrow section beams making refitting easier. Sections of lath and plaster are visible for decorative ceilings below the front room but the back room has modern plasterboard.



Phase 3. 2001 conversion to Offices.

An article in the Telegraph dated 24 Aug 1996 laments the conversion of the building into offices. (See Appendix 1). Virtually all of the visible fabric in the walls, floors and suspended ceilings and the new doors can be dated to 2001. The style and manufacture of the fabric all concurs with this period and there are two fire doors that are dated to 27.06.2001 in the Kitchenette and Lift enclosure. The present floor surface is more recent and shows no wear and tear but is a straight replacement for a previous surface.

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The implication of the building being turned into offices is that a concierge or security post would be required. The glass panelled concierge desk is made of modern materials and fixings including aluminium brackets, Pozidriv screws and plastic light fittings. The poor quality of the carcass, the use of plywood and hardboard would all point to it dating to 2001 or later.

Significance

Flat 2 retains no decor or fittings from the original build or from Lacoste's refit. The rooms were converted into offices in 2001. The floor has a super structure that may date to the Lacoste refit containing machined composite beams but most of the overbattening and the surfaces are C21st. Only the doors and front windows are from the Art Deco period. The room is part of a Listed building whose significance is mostly allied to Norman Hartnell and Gerald Lacoste and the showrooms associated with them.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to David Apthorpe of Levy for engaging me to record the building.

Bibliography

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Hall, Linda. Period House Fixtures and Fittings 1300-1900. Countryside Books. 2005.

Appendix 1

The Telegraph 12:00AM BST 24 Aug 1996.

Mayfair's Hidden Treasure.

Norman Hartnell's fashion studio is one of the great Art Deco interiors of London. But, as Kenneth Powell reveals, its future now looks bleak.

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FOR the vast majority of English women, Norman Hartnell argued, mini-skirts were a terrible mistake - "knees like rock cakes, dear". Hartnell disdained the fashion revolution of the 1960s. He did not need to set trends. As "the Royal dressmaker" and couturier to the establishment, his position was unchallengeable. The knighthood he received in 1977 - the first bestowed on a fashion designer - set the seal on his success, though he had long since ceased to be an innovator.

Forty years earlier, however, Hartnell was seen as a revolutionary figure, a brilliant young talent who dared to challenge the dominance of the Paris salons. More than anyone, Hartnell made London a centre of world fashion. The company he founded is now defunct, but the spirit of the man lives on in his extraordinary salon in Bruton Street, Mayfair, one of the most remarkable, if little-known, British interiors of the 1930s. Today it is closed up, dusty and dishevelled, strewn with rubbish and upturned chairs - and within months it could be dismantled and lost to London forever.

Michael Pick, a London dealer and design historian who is working on a biography of Hartnell, is determined to keep the Hartnell salon (located in a listed Georgian house) intact and in situ. "It's the finest commercial interior of its type and date still in existence," he says. "It epitomises a way of life, a culture, that no longer exists. It also shows what a progressive patron Hartnell was. In my view, its significance is international." Pick's campaign to save the salon is likely to be backed by English Heritage and Westminster City Council, with the Twentieth Century Society also weighing in to prevent BP Properties (who own the entire block) from stripping out the building to provide standard office space.

The salon epitomises a way of life, a culture, that no longer exists. It also shows what a progressive patron Norman Hartnell was.

Norman Hartnell (1901-79) had toyed with the idea of training as an architect but turned to dressmaking instead. He opened his first salon at 10 Bruton Street in 1923 and built up a dazzling clientele, including actresses Gertrude Lawrence and Evelyn Laye and members of society such as the Duchess of Argyll (whose wedding dress Hartnell designed). Noël Coward, a close friend, brought him in to work on set designs. Bruton Street between the wars was still largely residential. In the year that Hartnell opened his first salon, Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon married the Duke of York (later King George VI) from her parents' London home at number 17. (Three years later, their first child, the present Queen, was born in the house.)

Hartnell's breakthrough as a Royal designer came only in the mid-Thirties. He designed a wedding dress for the Duchess of Gloucester in 1935 and began working for the Duchess of York. Queen Elizabeth (as she became in 1937) was soon a regular customer. His greatest



triumph took place in 1938 with the state visit of the King and Queen to Paris. The Queen was in mourning for her mother and black was decreed - to Hartnell's despair. "Is not white a Royal prerogative for mourning, Your Majesty?" Hartnell reportedly asked. For the French visit, the Queen was dressed entirely in white. Paris, the fashion capital of the world, took both the Queen and Hartnell to its heart - Norman Hartnell's career was made.

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By this time, Hartnell had moved his salon across Bruton Street to number 26. A few doors down the road was the office of Gerald Lacoste, a talented young architect with a string of fashionable clients. Lacoste had wanted to become a fashion designer but was pushed towards a more "sensible" career. The two men became close friends, and Lacoste got the job of remodelling Hartnell's new premises. The objective was to create a sophisticated, cosmopolitan interior to rival anything in Paris. France supplied a good deal of the inspiration. The 1925 Paris Exhibition had inaugurated Art Deco, a style which - illusionistic, sensual, sometimes flashy, but always decorative - was regarded with suspicion in Britain and as suitable only for super-cinemas and cocktail bars. The use of glass was a key feature of Deco - plain, coloured, opaque or etched, the material was transforming architecture and design.

Though more interested in effect than innovation, Lacoste was something of a pioneer in the use of glass. Lacoste was not, however, a slavish follower of French taste. He was essentially an eclectic, in touch with the latest developments throughout Europe and equally enamoured of 18th-century architecture and design. Neither Lacoste nor Hartnell saw anything odd about mixing the old and the new, the antique and the ultra-modern. So the 18th-century staircase at 26 Bruton Street was completely lined with mirrors and illuminated by glittering chandeliers. Glass was used to clad columns and surround doors in the main, first-floor salon and even for tables.

The focus of the salon was the magnificent chimneypiece, a tour de force in moulded and faceted glass - and housing an up-to-date electric fire. More antique chandeliers and liberal use of "Hartnell green" (as it became known) in the walls and carpet completed the effect. Though more interested in effect than innovation, Lacoste was something of a pioneer in the use of glass - the frameless entrance doors to the salon were claimed as the first of their kind anywhere. Though luxurious to a degree, the salon was thoroughly modern, with none of the fussy elaboration favoured by less advanced fashion houses. It is a reminder, in Michael Pick's view, of Hartnell's innovative approach, before he became associated with a dull and conventional image of Royal dress.

Hartnell died in 1979. His close association with the Royal Family continued virtually to the end of his life. The present Queen commissioned him to design her wedding dress in 1947. For the 1953 Coronation, he designed not only the Queen's dress but also those for most of the other female royals. Hartnell's innumerable outfits for the Queen and Queen Mother were part of the established imagery of the monarchy, long before its younger members turned to Bruce Oldfield and Jasper Conran.

After Hartnell's death, the firm continued in existence for another decade, finally closing in 1990. Its premises have been empty ever since. The famous fireplace was taken out of the salon and shown in the 1979 Thirties exhibition at the Hayward Gallery. Stored for a time in the V & A, it was retrieved in 1982 and reinstated. In the same year, the Thirties Society,



established to promote interest in the period, were shown around the salon by the elderly Lacoste (who made alterations there as late as the 1960s).

Tim Jones of English Heritage does not envisage its ever being open to the public. For most Londoners, however, the salon remains a secret, one of the proverbial hidden treasures which so add to London's interest. Tim Jones of English Heritage, who has become a passionate defender of the Hartnell legacy, does not envisage its ever being open to the public. But it has enormous appeal, he says, for a younger generation of designers - "it would be a marvellous base for someone like Vivienne Westwood". Jones believes that the plan to turn the building into offices is "deeply unimaginative". The conversion scheme, Jones argues, will give it "a fictitious 18th-century identity". The building, he says, should be properly marketed with an eye to finding the right user.

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The building's owners, BP, are well aware that the interior cannot be simply destroyed. Magnanimously enough, they have offered it to the Bowes Museum in County Durham, which already has a collection of the Queen Mother's dresses and would use it to furnish a "Queen Mum room". Back in the 1930s, when the salon was created, it was a common practice to stuff salvaged period interiors, often the gift of conscience-stricken developers, into museums in Britain and the USA. The practice is now discouraged and the Bowes Museum, which seems to have been unaware of the full circumstances surrounding the BP gift, is apparently having second thoughts.

Even if consent is refused for the removal of the fittings, the owners may appeal, but the fight is on to save one of London's all-too-rare classic Thirties interiors, a taste of Beverly Hills and the Champs-Élysées in matter-of-fact Mayfair.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4703419/Mayfairs-hidden-treasure.html>