



Foley House 28 Worcester Road  
Malvern Upper Floor Staircase  
Assessment Addendum to June 2019  
Heritage Assessment Report

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## 1. Summary

Rock Davidson Associates Historic Building Consultants carried out a Heritage Assessment at Foley House 28, Worcester Road, Malvern WR14 4QW in May 2019. This is an addendum to this report and should be read in conjunction with the assessment dated June 2019. This report included some assessment of significance of the heritage asset and its surroundings and analysis of the historic fabric as found and could be seen on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2019, equivalent to a Level 2 Building Recording, [Ref *Understanding Historic Buildings A Guide to Good Recording Practice Historic England May 2016*]

*'Foley House [GDII listed], number 28 Worcester Road, in the town of Great Malvern Worcestershire is important architecturally and has original early 19<sup>th</sup> century features. To the elevations are the original stucco render, early 19<sup>th</sup> windows, front door surround with pilasters and a decorative overhead fanlight. To the rear are further early 19<sup>th</sup> century windows and an early fanlight to the rear door. There are small side early 19<sup>th</sup> century windows in the attic rooms. Later phasing has included dormer windows to the rear and two rear overhanging bays, one with 1930s- 40s Crittall windows, that have some historical and community significance. Later alterations have involved the removal of the front ground floor early 19<sup>th</sup> windows and the rather fine portico porch seen in historic photos, these alterations have not added to the significance of the building. Inside little remains that can be seen that is significant, apart from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century staircase, alcoves and a few timber doors, architraves and skirtings. Some earlier fabric maybe being concealed, e.g. fireplaces, original ceilings and cornices to the ground floor rooms. There is some historical and community significance with famous people and events when the building was used as a Marionette Theatre and its associations with the Malvern Festival in the 1930s and 40s.'*

[Ref RDA Heritage Assessment Foley House 28, Worcester Road, Malvern WR14 4QW. Statement of Significance pg 62]

No lifting of floor coverings was undertaken in May 2019 and so it was difficult to assess the upper staircase for its age and significance. In the report RDA said *"It is difficult without removing carpet to give a date to the stairs. The wall enclosing the stairs has been altered and opened up probably in the C20"* *"Further analysis needed"* [Ref RDA Heritage Assessment Foley House 28, Worcester Road Malvern WR14 4QW p55 ]

It was requested on December 7<sup>th</sup> 2019, that RDA now analyse the upper staircase historic fabric with the carpet and metal nosings having been removed from the box step to this staircase, and with some of the carpet and metal nosings removed from the stairs treads and risers.

This short addendum is therefore a recording of the findings on December 7<sup>th</sup> 2019 regarding this staircase to help inform the LPA on a proposal but is not an analysis of any proposed new works or the impact.

### 1.2 Copyright & Liability

No Liability to third parties is accepted for advice and statements made in this report.

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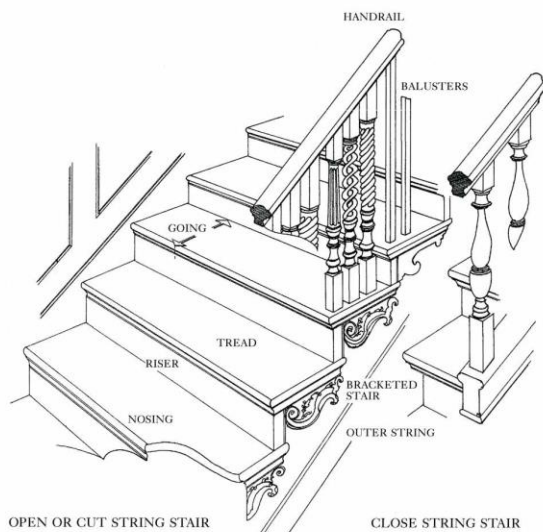
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## 2. Historical Background Georgian Staircases

### Glossary of staircase architectural terms

#### TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

A **staircase**, strictly-speaking, is the compartment in which the stair rises, although the word is often used loosely to denote the stair itself. **Stairs** are made up of individual steps. The horizontal part of a step is called the **tread**, the vertical part is the **riser**, the breadth or distance from riser to riser is called the **going**. Where the risers are parallel with each other the stairs are **straight**. Where the steps are narrowed at one end for turning a corner, they are called **winders**. The wide step introduced as a resting place in the ascent is a **landing**, and the top of a stair is called the same. Steps in a straight run are called **flyers**, hence the whole is known as a **flight of steps**. The outward edge of a step is called the **nosing**. The



sloping pieces which support the ends of the steps are called **strings**; the inner one, placed against the wall, is the **wall string**, the other the **outer string**. If the upper edge of the string is continuous, with the steps grooved into its sides, it is called a **close string**. If the upper edge is cut to the profile of the steps it is known as an **open string** or a **cut string**. When the front of the outer string is ornamented with carved brackets it is sometimes called a **bracketed stair**. Stairs in which the outer string of the upper flight stands directly above that of the lower flight are called **dog-legged stairs**, or **newel stairs**, after the **newel** or **newel post** which is an upright, usually wooden, which forms the axis of the stair. Where the upper and lower strings are separated by an interval the space is called the **well**, or **stair-well** and the stair itself an **open-well stair**. In such stairs there is often a newel post at the junction of each flight. Where there is a well-hole and no newel, and the string is continued in a curve, the stair is then a **geometrical stair**.

Besides the support afforded by the strings some timber stairs are sustained by timbers placed below the flyers called **rough strings**. The winders are supported by rough pieces called **bearers**. Many stone stairs have no such support but depend partly on the cantilever principle; the ends of the steps are set directly into the wall and each step bears on the one below. These are often called **cantilever stairs**.

Most stairs have a **handrail** at their outer edge and the handrail is usually secured to the newel posts and supported on **balusters** rising from the steps. Handrails can be of wood or stone, balusters can be of stone, wood or metal and come in an infinite variety of patterns. The word **banister** (presumably a corruption of baluster) is now sometimes used as a collective noun for both handrail and balusters.

Courtesy 'Georgian Stairs'. Neil Burton, The Georgian Group

#### Dimensions

The breadth of common stairs from this period is from 9" to 12"...

#### Materials

The two principal materials for English staircases during the Georgian period were stone and wood. Wood was far more common in ordinary houses and was used for steps, balusters and handrails. Pine was the cheapest wood for these purposes and elm and oak more expensive. Pine stairs were almost always painted. As early as 1720 mahogany began to be used for the handrails the favourite handrail material for the whole of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, later ones made with a softwood core and mahogany veneer.

#### Paints

Paint for stairs during the 18<sup>th</sup> century were drab 'stone' colours used for other joinery like panelling and dados.

## Parts & Uses

The main parts [see glossary of terms] of the principle staircase, linking the principal rooms, would be ornamental while the upper and lower parts serving bedrooms, attics and basements would be more simply treated. In early Georgian town houses the principal staircase ran from the ground floor to the first floor only and occupied a large staircase hall [**as at Foley House**] Much smaller and simpler stairs serving the other parts of the house were tucked away out of sight [**In Foley House under the main stairs to the basement and hidden on the landing to the attic rooms**] Both in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries the humblest houses had their stairs cramped into the smallest possible space, such stairs seldom had any balustrade or handrail, or any ornament at all [**as is the case in Foley House and its upper staircase**] Georgian and Regency staircases had open strings. They were commonly fitted with wood plain stick balusters and rail. The handrail was sometimes the only piece of precious mahogany or oak in the entire house and proudly left unpainted. In the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the majority of stairs had simple stick balusters of rectangular section wood or iron set 2 per tread on open strings with flat tread ends, usually mahogany handrail ending in a curve over the bottom newel [**As is the case for the principal staircase in Foley House**] [See RDA Heritage Assessment Foley House 28, Worcester Road Malvern WR14 4QW pg. 38-39 Principal Staircase [Ref 'Georgian Stairs'. Neil Burton, The Georgian Group]

## 3. Photographic/Written Record of the Upper Staircase Foley House

### Written Description Stairs and landing June 2019

The original open string staircase leads to a galleried landing with balustrade with plain stick bannisters. Two doorways lead to Rm 2 and 3. Both have original C19 architraves and jambs. Floors carpeted; solid walls to side walls intersected by a wired glass 5 panelled partition in the middle of the landing corridor; probably dating from mid C20. Ceilings mostly lath & plaster but no cornices. Landing lit by C19 sash windows either end to the rear and front. Two further doorways with original C19 architraves and jambs lead to toilets; Rm 4 and to Rm 1. Door to Rm 1 is a C19 panelled door covered in plywood. Others doors from landing are C20 replacements. By the front elevation window is a Mid C20 glass cabinet and a C20 box of x2 carpeted steps to gain access to the staircase to the Attic SF. [ref RDA Heritage Assessment Foley House 28, Worcester Road Malvern WR14 4QW pg. 48]

### Further Analysis December 2019

What was thought to be a C20 century box covered in carpet, metal nosings and plywood to gain access to the upper stairs, now appears with these materials removed, to be of original 19<sup>th</sup> century construction. It has been altered when a 2mm plywood panel was attached to the side and there may have been originally some sort of closed string and newel post.

**Photos of the ‘Two Riser Steps’ and ‘Landing/Platform’ access to upper staircase**



Box Construction as seen June 2019



Carpet , metal nosings and side plywood panel removed December 2019 [50cm scale pole]



Above side panel removed [50cm Scale pole] Below remaining closed string section removed



Underneath these 9”risers and 10” treads it is possible to see rough pieces called bearers supporting pine timber tongue in groove floor boards making up this platform that date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Any nails that were used are 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Underneath these risers, treads, and platform supported by bearers.



19<sup>th</sup> century nail from dismantled side closed string section removed when plywood removed [10cm Scale]

### Further Analysis December 2019

This upper staircase then consists of three winder pine timber treads/steps 10'' followed by a steeped raked straight run of eight risers 9''. With some of the carpet removed it was possible to see that the timber risers and treads are 19<sup>th</sup> century attached to pine timber 19<sup>th</sup> century closed inner strings, right hand side ascending into an original 19<sup>th</sup> lath & plaster wall as seen under the platform [now open to view]. The left hand ascending outer brick wall enclosing the stairs may have been opened up and has lost any newel post. The underside of staircase has a cupboard with 19<sup>th</sup> century 2 timber panelled door; a lath & plaster ceiling and an end 19<sup>th</sup> century lath and plaster wall supporting the stairs. This is all original to the original date, early 19<sup>th</sup> century, of the building.

### Photos 'The Upper Staircase'



Three winder treads/steps followed by a steeped raked straight run of eight risers. [50cm Scale pole]



Top Risers and landing Attic Floor [50cm Scale pole]



Original 19<sup>th</sup> lath & plaster wall seen under the platform, RH Front elevation brick wall