

Methodology

The fieldwork was undertaken by Chris Adams during December 2007 in good natural daylight. The warehouse was vacant at the time of survey and had remained unoccupied for 2 years.

The work was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (*55 Victoria Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire: A Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation and Historic Building Record*; AOC Archaeology Group, December 2007) and RCHME guidance.

The work comprised three main elements: a descriptive record, a drawn record (three scaled cad plans) and a photographic record (35mm black & white, 35mm colour slide and digital).

Site Description (Figures 1 – 2, Photo 1)

The building formed a freestanding warehouse, located 0.5 mile east of St Albans city centre on the northern side of Victoria Street and just east of the junction with Upper Marlborough Street. It had formerly been occupied by Majestic Wine Warehouses Ltd, having been used as one of their retail premises.

The Ordnance Survey Grid reference was 515083, 207172 and the site address 55–61 Victoria Street, St Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 3UW.

Building Description (Figures 3 – 4, Appendix 1)

For convenience of description and understanding, the site has been notionally rotated anti-clockwise making the front elevation south facing. The true orientation in relation to Ordnance Survey Grid North is shown on all the floor plans of the building.

Plan Form

The building formed a detached L-shape in plan with its own yard to the rear, and its frontage had a southerly aspect (no forecourt) abutting Victoria Street. It was aligned northeast / southwest and measured approximately 29.6m x 20.3m.

The building was 2 stories, had a tiled pitched roof with brick gable and parapet to the south, and a hipped roof to the north. A late 20th century 2 storey flat roof construction adjoined the main building to the south east.

External Elevations (Photos 2 – 12)

The south elevation comprised 2 bays and was dominated by the addition of late 20th century glass shop fronts with roller shutters at the ground floor level. The line of a former brick gable was visible in the western bay; this had been built upon in the late 20th century extending the elevation to form a brick parapet.

The west wall was absent of openings or fenestration, which could have been as a result of a planning regulation and proximity with the adjoining property.

The east (adjoining vehicle access) and north (rear) elevations were late 20th century stretcher bond, in a cheaper, lighter brick to that facing the road; largely unaltered with modern timber casements and metal fire escape to the first floor.

The eastern (rear) elevation, although having a very similar brick colour to the late 20th century elevations, was 1920's and Flemish bond. The ground floor had hinged timber doors, and Crittall windows (now blocked) while the first floor benefited from two large Crittall window (one obscured by ivy). A ground

floor service lift was accessed by double steel doors and a brick dormer with Crittall casement housed its mechanism. All windows and doors were under cast concrete lintels.

Internal Rooms (Photos 13 – 28, Figures 3 - 5)

Rooms 1 – 3 formed the ground floor of the original 1920's build. Together they formed 8 bays divided by 9 brick piers to the east. The west wall was absent of these piers; the difference in construction between these two elevations is likely that the east wall was designed to accommodate the structural beams while at the same time maximising space for the doors and windows.

These 3 rooms were latterly used by Majestic Wine Warehouses Ltd as retail and storage areas and as a result had been over boarded, timber stud partitions inserted and painted white throughout. It was not possible therefore to see much of the original fabric, which may have provided more information about their original use of these rooms.

However, Room 1 retained its original hinged doors with engineering brick threshold and there was a chimney centrally located on the east side. A service lift in Room 2 provided access to the floor above.

Room 4 was part of the late 20th century addition; it comprised a steel frame and glass shop fronts mentioned earlier. The open tread metal staircase with metal handrail and balusters (Room 5) provided access to Room 6 on the first floor.

The northern two thirds of Room 6 was open brickwork while southern third was rendered and had a simple rounded cornice moulding. An area to the north of the service lift was ceramic tiled. This implied Room 6 had a series of partitions to divide former room functions (i.e. works / storage, office space and washing area) and latterly these had been removed during Majestic's occupation to create a single space. Some original features in Room 6 remained (cast iron radiators, Crittall casement windows with window furniture) and there were some later insertions (such as the chute).

Room 7 was a late 20th century steel framed construction. The space had been sub-divided into a series small offices and toilets providing the main administration area for Majestic Wine Warehouses.

The ceiling in Room 6 created a loft space to the south (Room 8) while to the north it remained open and the timber trusses were visible. Four roof lights helped to light this northern area.

Phasing and Interpretation (Figure 5)

Phase I – 1920's

The earliest part of the building dates to 1920's. Due to the extent of over boarding on the ground floor it was hard to get a full idea of a former function. The first floor comprised offices, washing and works area. A suggestion would be a small retail unit with integral storage facility, perhaps with assembly or a low level of manufacture.

Phase II – Late 20th Century

During Phase II, a steel framed / flat roofed / cavity wall construction was added which allowed the rest of the building to be opened up and converted. Former partitions were removed while the shop fronts, casements and other partitions inserted to facilitate a retail / storage function for Majestic Wine Warehouses Ltd.

Digital Photographs

1. Victoria Street, looking west
2. South Elevation, looking north east
3. South Elevation (west bay), looking north west
4. South Elevation (east bay), looking north west
5. West Elevation, looking north
6. East Elevation (adjoining vehicle access), looking north west
7. North Elevation (rear), looking south
8. East Elevation (rear), looking west
9. East and North Elevations (rear), looking south east
10. Main hinged timber door, looking south west
11. Blocked ground floor Crittall window, looking west
12. Roof housing for service lift, looking south west
13. Room 1, looking north east
14. Room 1, looking south east
15. Room 1, rear of main door, looking south east
16. Room 2, sliding metal door, looking east
17. Room 3, looking south east
18. Room 4, looking south west
19. Room 6, looking north east
20. Room 6 (north), showing west wall and roof trusses, looking north west
21. Room 6, detail of cast iron radiator, looking north west
22. Room 6, showing east wall and reduced width Crittall window, looking east
23. Room 6, showing roof and loft space above, looking south west
24. Room 6, detail of window latch, looking north east
25. Room 6, detail of window stay, looking north east
26. Room 6 (south), looking north east
27. Room 6 (south), detail of cornicing and rounded brick piers, looking north east
28. Room 7, late C20th beams and fire exit, looking north

Figures

Figure 1 Site Location

Figure 2 Detailed Site and Works Layout Plan

Figure 3 Ground Floor Plan, Location of Elevations and Room Identification

Figure 4 First Floor and Reflected Ceiling Plan

Figure 5 Perspective Views and Ground Floor Phasing Plan

Appendices

Appendix 1 Description of Elevations and Rooms

Appendix 1

On Site Description of Elevations and Rooms

NB. The site has been notionally rotated clockwise to facilitate easier referencing, making the front of the building south and the rear north.

The descriptions are to be read in conjunction with Figures 3 and 4 which show the location of the elevations and room identification.

Exterior Elevations

1. South Elevation
2. West Elevation
3. East Elevation (adjoining vehicle access)
4. North Elevation (rear)
5. East Elevation (rear)

Interior – Ground Floor

6. Room 1
7. Room 2
8. Room 3
9. Room 4
10. Room 5

Interior – First Floor

11. Room 6
12. Room 7

Interior – Roof and loft spaces

13. Roof space above Room 6

1. South Elevation (photos 1 -4)

Original: 1920's	2 storey west bay in Flemish bond
Later: Late C20 th	Both bays of ground floor have glass shop fronts with roller shutters Inserted casement windows to first floor Brick parapet above 1 st floor of western bay continued in Flemish bond; the line of the former roof gable is visible from change in colour of brickwork Eastern bay in stretcher bond, with metal and glass door and frontage set back from western bay
Comment:	Heavily altered front elevation with the addition of the eastern wing, modern shop frontages, timber casements and brick parapet.

2. West Elevation (photos 5)

Original: 1920's	2 storey brick in Flemish bond
Later: Late C20 th	Return of 1 st floor brick parapet adjoining south elevation Possible re-tiled roof
Comment:	Absence of rainwater goods; guttering feeds to an angled drainpipe through the roof space of the building

3. East Elevation – adjoining vehicle access (photos 6)

Original: 1920's	
Later: Late C20 th	Stretcher bond – cavity wall 4 timber casement windows with clay tiled sills
Comment:	Lower quality bricks used in the construction of this elevation compared to the ones used for facing the road

4. North Elevation (photos 7)

Original: 1920's	
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Later: Late C20 th	<p>Stretcher bond – cavity wall</p> <p>5 timber casement windows with clay tiled sills</p> <p>Ground floor has roller shutter and metal framed / glass double swing doors leading to Room 7</p> <p>First floor has metal fire escape to first floor. Soil pipes from toilets</p>
Comment:	

5. East Elevation - rear (photos 8 - 12)

Original: 1920's	<p>2 storey brick in Flemish bond. Dark grey bullnose engineering bricks used for edging around entrances and structural brick piers</p> <p><u>Ground floor</u> 3 entrances Double metal doors to service lift 3 hinged timber doors (formerly 4) for main loading area into building 1x metal casement Crittall window with clay tiled sills (2 top hung openers. 6 panes total) Door to north currently used as a fire exit</p> <p><u>First floor</u> 2x metal casement Crittall windows (1x reduced width to north) both under concrete lintels Rain water goods and soil pipes</p>
Later: Late C20 th	<p><u>Ground floor</u> Formerly 4 timber doors into main loading area, 1 now reduced height and fixed shut 2x blocked windows Scar of a roof pitch of a former East / West building</p> <p><u>First floor</u> Reduced width casement to north</p>
Comment:	Largely original. Some window blockings. This elevation formed the main loading area

6. Room 1 (photos 13 - 15)

Original: 1920's	<p>4 bays separated by rectangular brick piers with bullnose brick edging to the east and rectangular ½ brick thick piers to the west</p> <p>Stepped footings to west wall</p> <p>Rain water pipe adjoining west wall</p> <p>Timber floor joists</p> <p>3x narrow timber doors to south for loading area, each having 2x glass panes to top 1/3. Now boarded up and painted red</p> <p>Large steel hinges and locking mechanism that secures all the doors shut from the inside</p> <p>Blocked up access to chimney</p>
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Later: Late C20 th	Chute from first floor Boxed in beams Small room in NW corner. timber stud and plasterboard construction White painted throughout Timber cladding N, S, and E internal walls Concrete scree forming new floor overlying original timber floor joists
Comment:	Likely to have formed one of the main storage areas for the former owners, Majestic Wines. Difficult to gain much understand of the original function of this principle room because of the later wall finishes obscuring any fabric

7. Room 2 (photos 16)

Original: 1920's	1 bay Service lift and sliding metal mesh door
Later: Late C20 th	Pine floorboards painted blue Timber stud partitions to north and south
Comment:	Hall area and service lift access to the first floor.

8. Room 3 (photos 17)

Original: 1920's	3 bays
Later: Late C20 th	Timber cladding to W wall Black and white painted walls Pine floorboards painted blue Boxing in of ceiling beams and brick piers 3 large glass windows to S, no doors or openers Inserted kitchen area for staff of Majestic to NE. Timber stud walls
Comment:	One of the main sales areas for the former Majestic Wines

9. Room 4 (photos 18)

Original: 1920's	
Later: Late C20 th	Metal framed construction Double doors and porch area to SW Modern concrete floor
Comment:	Main sales area for the former Majestic Wines. Uncertain of use prior to Majestic

10. Room 5

Original: 1920's	Metal framed stairs 17 steps with timber treads
Later: Late C20 th	Partition wall to east Timber cladding on west wall
Comment:	This staircase may have been open plan to the ground floor. i.e. no stud wall to east

11. Room 6 (photos 19 - 27)

Original: 1920's	East and West wall in Flemish bond North wall variation of Flemish bond 1x Crittall casement to E, reduced in width (see Fig 4) 9 bullnose brick piers creating 8 bays Cast iron radiators Chimney stack Ceramic tiled area and 1x Crittall windows (Fig 4) window stays and latch mechanism – removed partitions - former washing / toilet area? Lift shaft with sliding mesh door Iron staircase to ground floor; handrail has a raised profile and balusters are square in section Simple arched corning to S of Room 6 Timber floor boards Rendered to the south – open brickwork to the north
Later: Late C20 th	Removal of internal partitions to create a single space 3 fixed casements to the south elevation adjoining Victoria Street
Comment:	A storage area for Majestic Wines. Difficult to ascertain the original function

12. Room 7 (photos 28)

Original: 1920's	
Later: Late C20 th	Steel framed construction Fire exit to N A central room off which are:- <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 rooms (used as offices) to the S and E separated by timber stud and glass partitions• Male and female toilets to the N Wall mounted security alarm system
Comment:	Late C20 th – no features of merit

13. Room 8 (photos 20 & 23)

Original: 1920's	7 timber roof trusses 4 roof lights to north Loft space houses mechanism for service lift and storage (no access at time of survey) Square headed bolts to underside of king posts Tie beam dimensions in section 30.5cm x 11.0cm
Later: Late C20 th	
Comment:	A 15.0m long loft space which runs from the north side of the service lift to the south wall