

Historic Building Recording at

**55 - 57 TOWER BRIDGE RD  
BERMONDSEY**

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For 5557 TBR Ltd

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Kelly Madigan MA and Cornelius Barton BA MCIfA

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L~P:ARCHÆOLOGY

Historic Building Recording at

# 55-57 TOWER BRIDGE RD BERMONDSEY

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Client: 5557 TBR Ltd

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Local Authority: London Borough of Southwark

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NGR: 533124, 179164

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Planning App: TOR16

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Author: K. Madigan, C. Barton

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Site Code: TOR16

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## L-P:ARCHAEOLOGY

A trading name of the L - P : Heritage LLP

The Old Truman Brewery | 91 Brick Lane | London | E1 6QL | +44 [0]207 770 6045 | london@lparchaeology.com

**[www.lparchaeology.com](http://www.lparchaeology.com)**

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# Executive Summary

A Level 2 Historic Building Recording Survey was carried out at 55-57 Tower Bridge Road. This report has been prepared by Kelly Madigan and Cornelius Barton of L - P : Archaeology on behalf of 5557 TBR Ltd.

This survey was carried out by L - P : Archaeology following a condition placed upon the site by the Local Planning Authority although no specific brief for the work was prepared by them. As London Borough of Southwark was without an archaeological advisor at the time of the recording work, it was necessary to exercise professional judgement when determining the appropriate level of recording. In this instance, it was concluded that a descriptive record (Level II) would best satisfy the wishes of the local planning authority in imposing a condition. The requirements of the level of record are set out in an Historic England publication 'Understanding Historic Buildings.' In line with neighbouring London Borough's the photographic record was produced on digital media only but to the resolution equal or better than 35mm celluloid film. This was supplemented with architectural and archaeological detail. A written scheme of investigation (WSI) has been prepared and will form part of the submitted record.

The standing buildings were originally constructed as part of a three storey terrace of houses on the west side of Bermondsey New Road in the 1780s. They were constructed as part of a scheme for housing local artisans in the tanning industry. They were then significantly altered when shop fronts were built out over the gardens in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Each property has been subject to extensive remodelling and no original fabric survives. Some 'ghostings' of previous fabric such as fireplaces, and room shapes indicating the original layout of the structures do survive.

The historic building record, along with previous studies and reports, have provided sufficient information to preserve a building of this significance by record. The archive has been prepared in accordance with best practice and will be deposited at the Museum of London under the same site code (TOR16) as the archaeological archive generated by any below ground works.

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Level 2 Historic Building Report has been researched and prepared by Kelly Madigan of L - P : Archaeology on behalf of 5557 TBR Ltd. The fieldwork was carried out by Kelly Madigan and Cornelius Barton in June 2016.
- 1.2. The site consists of two adjacent properties numbers 55 and 57 Tower Bridge Road, Bermondsey, London, SE1 3LP. This is centred on NGR 533124, 179164 (FIGURE 1).
- 1.3. The site code allocated by Museum of London is TOR16.
- 1.4. The work was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by L - P : Archaeology. This was in response to a planning condition placed on the property prior to demolition by the Local Planning Authority. No Council Archaeologist was in post at the time of conducting the survey and initial consultations and thus no scope of works was provided by the Council. Consequently, it was necessary to exercise professional judgement when determining the level and extent of the survey.
- 1.5. The resulting archive will be submitted to Museum of London.

## 2. Site Background

### 2.1.PLANNING

- 2.1.1. In March 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government issued the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DCLG 2012). Section 12 of this document sets out planning policies on the conservation of the historic environment.
- 2.1.2. Planning consent has been granted with conditions for the demolition and redevelopment of 55-57 Tower Bridge Road 15/AP/4391. A WSI was submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved ahead of the scheduled works (CHARVET 2016).
- 2.1.3. On matters concerning archaeology and the historic environment the Local Authority take advice from their in house Senior Archaeology Advisor, Gillian King.
- 2.1.4. The condition attached to the development is:

#### **CONDITION 5**

Before any work, including demolition, hereby authorised begins, the applicant or his successors in title shall secure the implementation of a programme of archaeological building in accordance with a written scheme of investigation, which will be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:

In order that the archaeological operations are undertaken to a suitable standard as to the details of the programme of works for the archaeological building recording in accordance with PPS5, Strategic Policy 12 Design and Conservation of The Core Strategy 2011 and Saved Policy 3.19 Archaeology of the Southwark Local Plan 2007.

### 2.2.SITE CONDITIONS

- 2.2.1. The site consists of two narrow building plots each measuring approximately 4.75m by 31.75m that that front onto Tower Bridge Road. The structures are divided into three areas, the shop which fronts onto the street, the two storey building in the centre and the rear yards with outbuilding or extensions.
- 2.2.2. Number 55, to the south, was in recent use as a children's day nursery and



number 57 was in use as a takeaway with a residential floor above.

## **2.3.SITE HISTORY**

- 2.3.1. Until the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century the southern part of Bermondsey parish was largely open fields or market gardens. In the latter part of the century the area opened up to enterprising Georgian property developers who facilitated the formation of Bermondsey New Road around the 1770s which linked Bermondsey Street with Long Lane (ENGLISH HERITAGE 2001: 56).
- 2.3.2. Bermondsey New Road was in existence by 1773 when it was marked on a sewer map (ENGLISH HERITAGE 2001: 56). Development began on the west side of the road in 1785 when the first five houses of the row (numbers 25-71) were laid out, apparently complete, probably including numbers 55-57. When built they formed a part of a row of 21 houses. Each plot measures 140m<sup>2</sup>. They were set back from the road by front gardens. Most of these 21 houses have been reworked or rebuilt and all have lost their gardens to single-story extensions.
- 2.3.3. Research on the adjacent properties of 51 and 53 Tower Bridge Road, suggests that due to the size of the rooms, the properties were a speculative development, aiming to house artisans or tradespeople (GUILLERY 2004: 156).
- 2.3.4. The houses began as residential properties but commercial pressures came to bear. In 1879 the terrace was sold and it was noted that the long gardens or 'forecourts' were suitable for conversion into shops.
- 2.3.5. The new approach road to the newly constructed Tower Bridge, realigned Bermondsey New Road in 1902 which shortened the forecourts of the terrace and accelerated the commercial viability of the properties, with shops being built out over the forecourts in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (ENGLISH HERITAGE 2001: 58).
- 2.3.6. Building recording at the adjacent properties of 51-53 Tower Bridge Road indicated that the original terrace contained Moxon type house structures.
- 2.3.7. Joseph Moxon discussed the problems of incorporating the traditional central position of the staircase within a linear plan of an urban terrace house and

produced a plan in his publication “Plan of a Brick House, 1703.” His plan shows a chimney stack supporting a stairwell to one side (MCKELLAR 1999: 161).

### 3. Aims & Methodology

3.1. The general aims of the investigation were:

- ◆ To promote the understanding and appreciation of the structure.
- ◆ To secure an understanding of the structure and its significance.
- ◆ To adequately document the structure prior to material changes and to deposit a permanent record of the structure in a suitable archive.

3.2. For a full description of the methodology employed for this project please refer to the written scheme of investigation (CHARVET 2016).

## 4. Results

4.1.A Level 2 historic building survey was carried out at 55-57 Tower Bridge Road. The results of this survey have been divided into two sections below. Each building will be discussed separately and each building will be further subdivided into a discussion of internal and external survey results (Appendix 1, Appendix 2 and Appendix 3).

### 4.2.55 TOWER BRIDGE ROAD

#### EXTERNAL RESULTS

- 4.2.1. The front elevation of the building faces west on to Tower Bridge Road. The upper storey is just viewable from across the road. It has a flat roof and a stock brick elevation that appears to be a modern refronting. A large four panelled wooden framed window occupies the centre of the upper elevation and sits beneath a substantial concrete lintel.
- 4.2.2. The ground floor elevation is dominated by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century extension providing a 'shop front.' The flat roofed extension has a large window and doorway set in aluminium framing. It recently provided access to Smart Smart Day Nursery.
- 4.2.3. The rear elevation was difficult to view due to the lack of perspective available from the rear alley way. Limited examination concludes that the rear yard had been built over to two storeys in height by a brickwork extension with a gabled roof. This structure is in a poor state of repair .



Plate 1 - Front elevation of 55 (left) and 57 (right) Tower Bridge Road, facing west



Plate 2 - Rear elevation of number 55,

## INTERNAL RESULTS

- 4.2.4. The upper storey has 3 rooms, all of which have been heavily modified and are devoid of any original fixtures and fittings.
- 4.2.5. The east room fronts onto Tower Bridge Road and has two large, white painted wooden windows on the east and western elevations. Until recently it was divided by modern plasterboard partitions. The north and south elevations of room have supporting piers evenly spaced along each wall. Each wall was rendered and painted and it was not possible to ascertain further indications of age and construction.
- 4.2.6. The room is divided from the central room by two small steps that indicate a change in height from the central room on this floor. The change in height was also experienced during the survey of numbers 51 and 53 (MADIGAN 2015).
- 4.2.7. The central room on this floor occupies the rear of the original structure. No original materials, fixtures or fittings remain. The room now functions as a landing at the top of the staircase for access to the rear extension and the east room. The staircase is encircled by a steel balustrade (PLATE 4).



Plate 3 - Eastern room on first floor, facing east (2 x 1m scale)



Plate 4 - Eastern room on first floor, facing west (2 x 1 m scale)

4.2.8. A trace of the original layout of the original structure remains in the southeast corner of the room in that it possesses a short diagonal wall which mirrors the original shape of the chimney stack. The original chimney stack has since been removed.



Plate 5 - West room in first floor extension (unsurveyed)

4.2.9. The rear extension, or west room, is accessible via a small external bridge. It exists as a stand alone structure in what was the rear yard of the property. It is in poor condition and was not fully surveyed due to health and safety advice. It was possible to ascertain that this structure was built the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century based upon brick work and sawn wooden purlins within the roof structure, which are typical of the period. No covering of the roof remains and

the room is open to the elements.

4.2.10. The layout ground floor of number 55 has been significantly altered from its original state. The east room is an early 20<sup>th</sup> century build that is extended out over the original garden. It's street frontage is aluminium frame with toughened clear glass, allowing for a typical 'shop front'. The walls are rendered and painted and possess regular piers as does the floor above. Until recently this room contained partitions dividing the nursery rooms from staff rooms and a corridor. These partitions were removed in the soft strip.

4.2.11. The central area of this floor is the original core of the terraced house the used to be here. It has been extensively modified leaving only a trace of the original layout. Later walls have been constructed around the original chimney breast and the chimney breast demolished behind, a trace is left in the diagonal wall in the kitchen.

4.2.12. The western room on the ground floor is situated in what was formerly the rear yard of the property, within the early to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century extension.

#### **4.3.57 TOWER BRIDGE ROAD**

##### **EXTERNAL RESULTS**

4.3.1. The front elevation of the building faces west on to Tower Bridge Road. It has a flat roof and a stock brick elevation that appears to be a modern refronting. There is a clear 'join' in the coursing of the brickwork between 55 and 57 indicating that the elevations were not constructed concurrently.

4.3.2. The ground floor elevation is dominated by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century extension providing a 'shop front.' The level of this facade is higher than that of number 55 as to provide a screen for the hidden catering extraction fans that site on the roof behind.

4.3.3. The rear elevation of the building is viewable from the rear yard of the property which is surrounded by a high brick wall (PLATE 6). The elevation is rendered in a plain fashion with one large uPVC framed window occupying the centre of the upper story and a door way on the ground floor beneath a shallow cat-slide roof extension. The window is covered by security bars and



other elements of the elevation include vents relating to the buildings last use in the catering industry. Access to the first floor and living area is by means of a metal fire escape on the southern side of the property.



Plate 6 - Rear elevation of number 57, facing east (1m scale)

#### INTERNAL RESULTS

- 4.3.4. The upper storey consists of rooms that were residential in purpose, all of which have been heavily modified and are devoid of any original fixtures and fittings.
- 4.3.5. Until recently this storey was divided by modern plasterboard partitions, into distinct living areas. These partitions were removed in the soft strip (PLATE 7). Similar to number 55, there are windows at either end of the enlarged room, both constructed from modern materials. The change in floor level is also present, as was identified in the constructions of 51, 53 and 55.



Plate 7 - First floor of number 57, facing west 2 x 1m scale)

- 4.3.6. The access to this floor is gained via an external staircase from the rear yard. This is not an original access and the presumed original staircase access has been blocked and floored over.
- 4.3.7. The east room of the ground floor is situated within the early 20<sup>th</sup> century extension of the property over the original garden (PLATE 8). Until recently it held the restaurant of the kebab shop and remnants of the extraction fans associated with fast food restaurants are visible in the roof. No original fixtures or fittings remain but it does retain its 'shop-like' proportions.
- 4.3.8. A storage area on the internal side of the staircase to the residential unit above retains a ghosting on the floor of the original fireplace that once stood here (PLATE 9). The extensive alterations to the property removed all chimney stack material that may have been typical of a Moxon type house.



*Plate 8 - Ground floor of number 57, facing east (2 x 1m scale)*



*Plate 9 - Ghosting of original fireplace (1 x 1m scale)*

## 5. Analysis & Conclusions

- 5.1. The buildings' form suggest that they were indeed constructed as small 18<sup>th</sup> century residences with small rooms and a staircase constructed around a central chimney stack, with front and rear gardens. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century these buildings were repurposed with shop built out over the front gardens, to turn the main function of the properties into shops. This is symptomatic of neighbouring nos 49-53 within the terrace and nearby.
- 5.2. This study has confirmed that the structures have undergone extensive alteration since their construction, principally involving the removal of original features and later modification for use as businesses.
- 5.3. Archival research has established that the original buildings date to the 1780's and were probably constructed as Moxon-type houses for local artesans as part of speculative development in the area.
- 5.4. The historic building record, has provided sufficient information to preserve a building of this significance by record. The archive has been prepared in accordance with best practice and will be deposited at the Museum of London under the site code TOR16, along with the results of the below ground works. This will be accompanied by supporting documentation, such as historical research, site notes and a copy of the final report. This will form a permanent archive, detailing the condition of the hall prior to demolition.
- 5.5. In addition to the ordered archive, copies of this report will be submitted to the London Borough of Southwark and Greater London Historic Environment Records and the OASIS on-line entry will be completed for the project.

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