

THE GUN PUBLIC HOUSE  
Coldharbour  
London  
E14

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

A Standing Building Survey  
February 2002



**MUSEUM OF LONDON**

Archaeology Service

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London  
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An Standing Building Survey

National Grid Reference: 538380 179980

Project Manager	David Fell
Authors	Antony Francis Andrew Westman
Graphics	Maggie Foottit

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Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1  
7ED  
tel 020 7410 2200 fax 020 7410 2201

**SITE DATA**

MoLAS Project Number:	Tower Hamlets/1185		
District:	Tower Hamlets		
Area:	Isle of Dogs		
National Grid Reference:	538380 179980		
Present land use:	Public house		
Planning proposal:	No details at time of writing		
Planning application ref./date:	Pre-planning		
Client:	Latham Architects St Michael's Queen Street Derby. DE1 3SU.		
Contact name	Mr Roy M Lewis		
Tel:	01332 365777	Fax:	01332 290314

## **Non-Technical Summary**

*This report presents the results of a programme of standing building recording and historical research carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service on The Gun Public House, Coldharbour, London E14. The report was commissioned by Latham Architects and presents the results of the survey and offers conclusions and recommendations.*

*The project has demonstrated that a public house has existed on the site since at least 1722 and that the oldest part of the building is on the northern half of the site. The building is difficult to date precisely but it is likely to have been built during the late 18th or early 19th centuries. Earlier fabric may survive within the present building. The southern part of the building was constructed in 1875, demonstrating that the building has evolved considerably since the original construction.*

*The building is of considerable architectural merit, notably due to a large room on the first floor with plaster ceiling panelling and cornice.. This room is reputed to be associated with Lord Nelson and it may been used for the celebrated Whitebait Dinners during the late 18th and 19th centuries. A timber spiral staircase is also of architectural interest.*

*The building contributes significantly to the Coldharbour Conservation Area. It is a good example of an 18th-century public house and contributes to the historic appearance of the riverfront in this area. It forms part of a small group of 19th-century terraced houses at the south end of Coldharbour, in an area otherwise dominated by the late 20th and 21st-century development of the London docklands.*



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# **1 Introduction**

A development is proposed at the Gun public house, which is a Grade II listed building on the Isle of Dogs in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. A planning proposal may be put forward in support of the development and, in line with the guidance contained in the documents PPG15 *Planning and the Historic Environment* and PPG16 *Archaeology and Planning*, the developers architects, *Latham Architects*, have commissioned an *Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* and a *Standing Building Survey*.

The *Museum of London Archaeology Service* (MoLAS) has been commissioned to undertake the works and this document presents the results of the *Standing Building Survey*. The results of the *Desk-Based Assessment* are presented as a separate document, which forms a companion to the present volume (Francis and Westman 2001).

## **1.1 Background**

The Gun is situated on the east side of Coldharbour in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The back of the building faces on to the River Thames at Blackwall Reach and it is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 3838 7998 (Fig 1). The ground level in Coldharbour, to the north of the building is 4.2m OD. The Museum of London site code, by which the records are indexed and archived, is CBD01.

No descriptions or investigations of the building are known, except for its statutory listing as a building of architectural or historic interest (DoE 1973), and it is mentioned in passing in the relevant volume of the *Survey of London* (RCHME 1994, 623–4, 626n, plate 105c) and in the *Buildings of England* series (Williamson and Pevsner 1998, 130). Several press cuttings about it have been collected by Tower Hamlets Local History Library when, for example, it was used as a film location in the 1970s.

## **1.2 Organisation of the Report**

The results of the *Standing Building Survey* are presented in the following sections. The general background to the building, including planning and legislative constraints is discussed in Section 1. This section also includes a summary description of the building in sub-section 1.8. Section 2 provides a history of the building, and includes a detailed examination of the documentary background to the structure. This section should be read in conjunction with Section 3, which presents the results of the survey. An assessment of the potential of the building, with conclusions and recommendations is provided in Section 4.

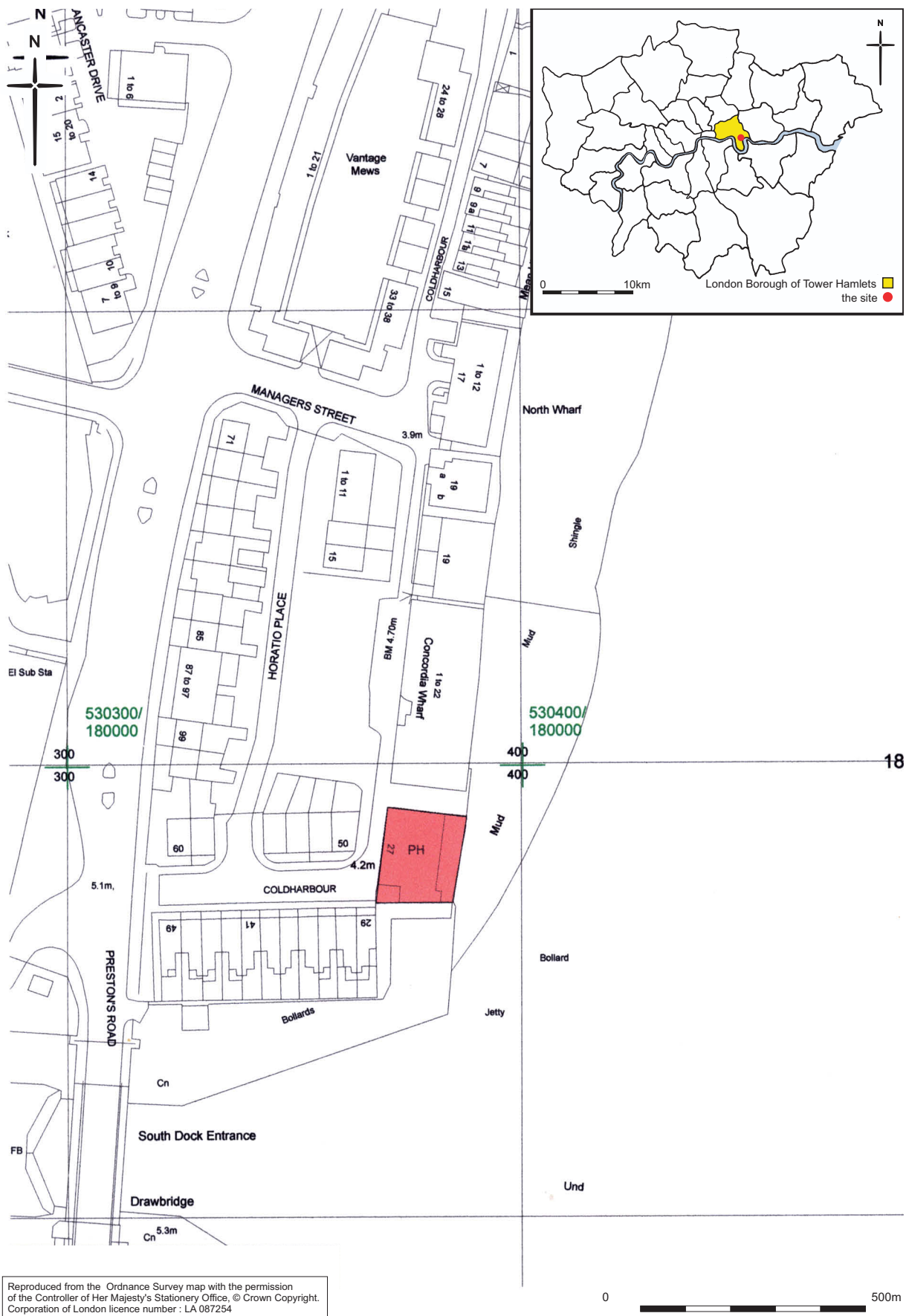


Figure 1. Site location

### **1.3 Planning and Legislative Framework**

The building is statutorily listed as being of special architectural or historic interest, Grade 2, and alterations to it would require *Listed Building Consent*, in addition to any planning consent that any other aspect of the redevelopment might require. The local planning authority, the *London Borough of Tower Hamlets*, would be advised by *English Heritage* with regard to listed building consent. In line with the guidance contained in the document PPG15 (DoE 1994) any listed building consent may include a condition that the existing fabric of the building should be examined and analysed before or during any alterations are made. A report would also be required. The present report would probably not suffice for this purpose because, as the building is still in use as a residence and public house, it has not been possible to examine and probe the fabric of the building in detail.

### **1.4 Planning Background**

Refurbishment of The Gun public or development of its site would affect the existing building. No application for planning consent has yet been made.

The description of the building in the statutory list of listed buildings, is intentionally brief. It reads as follows:

*'19th-century façade to earlier building. Street façade of painted brick with rusticated quoins. Heavy stuccoed eaves cornice with panelled frieze below. Sign board above cornice. Roof not visible. 2 storeys with 1 storey extension to north: – of 2 windows width. Main façade also 2 windows, those of 1st floor, sashes with segmental arched heads and keystones. Large sills with cast-iron window box guards. Above the ground floor, cornice of frieze carried over 1-storey extension. Ground floor façade, panelled wood with some tiling and painted brickwork.*

*'Side elevation [to the south] has painted weatherboarding to upper storey.*

*'River elevation [to the east] of 2 storeys, 4 bays has weatherboarding to upper storey of southern bay, otherwise channelled rendering.*

*'Interior has spiral staircase in plank panelling. Coved roof and moulding in upper room, originally more panelling. Said to be associated with Lord Nelson' (DoE 1973, TQ 3879/893).*

### **1.5 Origin and Scope of the Report**

The building survey has been commissioned from MoLAS by *Latham Architects*. The work was carried out in accordance with the terms of the relevant standards specified by the *Institute of Field Archaeologists* (IFA 1999) and corresponds approximately to the form of record and reporting at 'Level 1' and 'Level 2' in the specifications, *Recording historic buildings*, recommended by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (RCHME 1996).

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Within the limitations imposed by dealing with historical material and maps, the information in this document is, to the best knowledge of the author and MoLAS, correct at the time of writing. Further investigations, or more information

concerning the nature of the present buildings may require amendments to all or part of the document.

This report presents the results of the survey. The fieldwork took place over a period of three days in November 2001 and was supplemented with a specialist programme of documentary research.

## **1.6 Research Aims and Methods**

### **1.6.1 Research Aims**

A *Standing Building Survey*, as defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists will:

*‘Determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the nature of the archaeological resource associated with a specified building, structure or complex. It will draw on existing records (both archaeological and historical sources) and fieldwork. It will be undertaken using appropriate methods and practices which satisfy the stated aims of the project, and which comply with the Code of Conduct, Code of approved practice for the regulation of contractual arrangements in field archaeology, and other relevant by-laws of the IFA. The programme will result in the production of drawings, and an ordered accessible archive and a report’ (IFA 1999).*

The research aims also conform to applicable planning policies and English Heritage guidelines (Archaeological Guidance Paper No. 3, revised June 1998). The aims were to examine what was visible in the building and identify and describe what could be of architectural, archaeological and historical interest.

In addition, three research aims were specified by *Latham Architects*, namely:

- to ascertain what is architecturally important about the building
- to ascertain what is historically important about the building
- to assess the contribution the building makes to the Coldharbour Conservation Area

The applicable specifications, *Recording historic buildings* (RCHME 1996) require an accurate plan, supplemented by sectional elevations through the buildings as appropriate to convey three-dimensional information, as well as photographs, drawings of details and appropriate documentary evidence. The plans supplied by *Latham Architects* have proved suitable for this purpose, within the limitations of the present investigation.

### **1.6.2 Methodology**

Appropriate documentary sources have been consulted in order to furnish basic information on the social, economic and cultural context in which the buildings were constructed and used, and later modified in form and use. The most useful and easily available documentary evidence consists of trade directories and maps, notably Ordnance Survey plans and Goad insurance

plans. These, and other appropriate documents, publications and manuscripts were consulted in *Tower Hamlets Local History Library* and the *Museum of London Library*.

It must be emphasised that the present aims and scope of work are necessarily limited, and listed building consent for material alterations may require more intensive investigation (Section 1.3). As the building is statutorily listed such investigations may have to be conducted in accordance with a specific *Brief* issued by *English Heritage*.

## 1.7 Conventions used in the Report

Individual rooms and spaces in the building are identified in this report by letter and number, for ease of reference, *i.e.* basement ‘B1’ to ‘B4’, ground floor ‘G1’ to ‘G17’ and 1st floor ‘1F1’ to ‘1F8’ (Figs 2–4).

All dimensions are given in metres or millimetres, except possibly for certain brick and timber sizes, and heights are given where appropriate in metres above Ordnance Datum (mean sea level), abbreviated ‘m OD’.

BGS	British Geological Survey
CLRO	Corporation of London Record Office
DoE	Department of the Environment
EH	English Heritage
GLAAS	Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service
MoLAS	Museum of London Archaeology Service
OD	Ordnance Datum (mean sea level at Newlyn, Cornwall)
OS	Ordnance Survey
PFA	pulverised fly ash
RCHME	Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, England
RSJ	rolled steel joist
THLHL	Tower Hamlets Local History Library
VCH	Victoria County History

**Table 1:** Abbreviations used in this Report

## 1.8 Outline Description of the Standing Building

The following outline description should be read in conjunction with the plans and sectional elevations (Figs 2–6), and selected photographs (Figs 16–20).

In plan the area covered by the building measured *c* 14m from west to east and 22m from north to south, with a terrace overlooking the River Thames extending a further 3m to the east. The building consisted of a brick-walled block of two storeys to the south (the ‘1875 block’), combining a purpose-built public house on the ground floor with domestic rooms above. A brick-walled WC block extended further to the south on the ground floor only. On the ground floor other rooms extended to the north of the block, with brick external walls. On the 1st floor, however, only two rooms extended to the north, smaller in area than the ground-floor rooms, so that much of the northern half of the building was effectively on only one floor. One of the 1st-floor rooms (1F1) was brick-walled to the east, fronting on to the river, but possibly timber-framed on the other sides, where its walls were hung externally with slates. The other 1st-floor room (1F8) was detached from the first room, and apparently entirely timber-framed, clad externally with

timber boards and plastered internally. The exterior of the brick-walled two-storey block was faced with stucco and decorated to the west, facing the street, and clad at 1st-floor level with horizontal boards to the south and east.

Cellars extended underneath the ground-floor rooms to the north of the two-storey block, along the street frontage at least; part of the cellar extended an undetermined distance to the east, where access to it had been sealed up.

Four sets of double doors gave entrance to the building from the street, to the west, although two of these sets of doors were sealed. One set was at the west end of the WC block, set back from the street frontage. At the rear two doors gave on to the terrace over the river, to the east, and at 1st-floor level a door in the south front of the two-storey block gave on to a fire escape down to street level. Large sash windows lit the ground floor rooms to the west and east. On the ground floor to the east the windows were contained in large openings, possibly originally for bay windows. The 1st-floor rooms in the two-storey block were also lit by similarly large sash windows on all four sides, including one positioned between the two 1st-floor rooms that extended to the north. The larger of the latter rooms (1F1) was lit by a set of four symmetrical windows facing the river, the two windows at each end being full-length. The remaining 1st-floor room (1F8) was lit by very small windows to west and east.

The two-storey block contained three chimney stacks with single flues, of a uniform design, one projecting slightly from the north wall, to the west, and two along the south wall. A fourth stack in this block, situated in the north wall to the east, contained four flues set close together, with pots of a different type. The roofs of all the parts of the building were timber-framed and covered with slates, except for the flat concrete roof of the ground-floor WC to the extreme south. The roof of the two-storey block was a shallow hipped roof ranged west–east, and that of the larger 1st-floor room to the north, a half-hipped roof ranged north–south. The smaller room to the north had a simple double-pitched roof ranged west–east. The other ground-floor rooms to the north were roofed with shallow single-pitched roofs extending to west and north, largely hidden behind parapets. The northern edge of the site was formed by a party wall with another building originally adjoining but latterly demolished. The southern edge of the site was formed by the south wall of the WC block, which was blank, and relatively high brick walls with railings, beyond which was open ground.

## **2 Topographical and Historical Background**

The first parts of this section provide an overview of the topography, geology and early history of the site and summarise the relevant sections of the archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (Francis & Westman 2001). Section 2.3 provides a detailed account of the development of the building, drawn from documentary and archaeological sources and supplements the data provided in the Desk-Based Assessment.

### **2.1 Geology and Natural Topography**

The topographical background is detailed in Section 1.1 of the Desk-Based Assessment (Francis and Westman 2001, 4). The site is situated on the north bank of the River Thames, at Blackwall Reach on the east side of the Isle of Dogs. The river is tidal in this area and would formerly been liable to flood over its banks. The modern river banks are artificial, the result of embanking and reclamation. Within the site the ground sloped perceptibly from the west down to the east, towards the river, and slightly from the north down to the south. Ground level at the west edge of the site is at a height of *c* 4.2m OD.

### **2.2 The early History of the Site**

The early history of the site is summarised in the Desk-Based Assessment (ibid). Coldharbour, a narrow street parallel to the River Thames at the southern end of Blackwall, runs on the line of an embankment or river wall, probably of medieval origin. The origin of the tavern on this site is unknown and few houses were built in this area before the 17th century.

### **2.3 Development, Function and Occupants of the Standing Building**

The relevant volume of the *Survey of London* (RCHME 1994) states that a tavern, to be identified as the predecessor the present public house, stood on this site as early as 1722. The description may be quoted in full:

‘In 1722 it was called the King and Queen, by 1725 the Rose and Crown, and from about 1745 until 1770 the Ramsgate Pink [Footnote: ‘A pink was a type of sailing vessel, characterised by its narrow stern’]. It was renamed the Gun in 1771 [based on the evidence of rate books and licensed victuallers’ returns]. Daniell omitted the building from his view of Coldharbour in 1802 [Fig 9 in the present report]. A plan of about 1800 shows that it occupied the northern 35ft [10.5m] of the site and had two bay windows on the river front [Reference: CLRO, Plan B.1.D].

The description continues:

‘The present undistinguished structure appears to be predominantly nineteenth century in date, although vestiges of an earlier building may still be present. The oldest part is the slate-roofed northern end. This presents only a single-storey elevation to the street, but it rises to two storeys on the riverfront, where there is a large clubroom on the first floor, connected to the ground floor by an internal circular staircase. In 1875 a two-storey two-bay extension in brick with stucco dressings was added on the south side of the building, and the existing single-storey street elevation was refronted in the same style.



Frederick Holsworth of Kentish Town was the architect for this work, which was carried out by J H Johnson of Limehouse [the evidence for which is given as *The Builder*, 24 July 1875, 676, and district surveyors' returns]' (RCHME 1994, 622–3).

Elsewhere the *Survey of London* notes that spiral staircases of the type surviving in The Gun were once '...more widespread in Poplar than is now apparent. Some houses on the east side of Coldharbour, demolished in the 1930s, had circular staircases...' like that surviving at The Gun, although the latter is described as being 'of uncertain date' (RCHME 1994, 626n).

Names of the occupants of these taverns in the 18th and 19th centuries have been extracted from the ratebooks for the hamlet of Poplar and Blackwall (Table 2).

<b>Years</b>	<b>Occupiers</b>	<b>Rateable value</b>
1741	Edward Grisewold	£5
1742	Thomas Roberts	£5
1745–47	Francis Peacock	£5
1751	Francis Peacock	£8
1755–57	Francis Peacock	£10
1758–63	Francis Peacock	£12
1766–68	Francis Peacock	£20
1769	Charles Farndell	£20
1770–71	John Rumley	£20
1773	John Furnass	£30
1774	Empty	
1775–77	John Toole	£32
1778–87	John Rogers	
1788–1810	George North	
1811–13	'Widow North'	
1814–16	Mary North	£25
1817	Mary North	
1819	Reuben Pressman	
1820–36	John Ferguson	
1845	Robert Ambrose Hall	
1848	Thomas Jewiss	

**Table 2:** Occupiers of The Gun (THLHL, cuttings 653.2)

The rateable value generally corresponds to the value of the property, and sudden increases or decreases in value may be attributed to improvements or decay of the building. Some of the entries in the ratebooks apparently refer also to other property at the same time as to The Gun, such as 'wharf and warehouses, rigging house and loft, boat shed... and store yard', and some changes in rateable value could have been caused by including or excluding other property. The increase between the years 1763 and 1766, after Francis Peacock had been running the place for some time and perhaps had prospered, suggests the possibility that the building was rebuilt then and made larger. A bigger increase after 1771, coinciding with the change of name to The Gun, is an even likelier indication of structural change. It is not possible to give a definite date to the oldest fabric visible at present in the

standing building, except to say that it is probably late 18th or early 19th-century in date.

From 1775 to 1793 the property is said to have been owned by George Hodgson and Company, local brewers. In 1883 The Gun, with 15 other public houses and Bow Flour Mills and wharf, was included in a sale of the extensive local property of the Bow Brewery, Bow High Street (THLHL, Deeds 6310). The tenant at the time is given as Mr A J Hobbs, and a note in the particulars adds, 'A considerable outlay has been made on this House by the Tenant'. Unfortunately this says no more than do modern estate agents' descriptions, as other public houses are said to have been 'rebuilt a few years ago', and it is believed that The Gun had been substantially enlarged and improved only eight years before the sale. The conditions of sale add, however, that The Gun, or rather the land on which The Gun stood, had originally been part of extensive land leased in 1672 for 500 years. The original lessor was no longer known, and ground rent was evidently not collected. The latest previous sale of the property had been in 1811, when it had been owned by members of the Hodgson family.

The evidence of contemporary maps and plans is not clear, unfortunately. Successive maps, beginning with parish maps of St Dunstan, Stepney, by Gascoigne, 1703 and 1740, and Rocque's maps of London, 1746 (Fig 7), and of Middlesex, 1754, simply indicate that buildings existed along the riverside in the general area of Coldharbour. One of these was presumably The Gun, or its predecessors. The first edition of the Ordnance Survey, for which surveyor's drawings of 1799 survive, similarly show several buildings on both sides of Coldharbour (Fig 8). The proposed West India Dock and City Canal, the latter becoming in time the South Dock of the West India Docks, are shown in outline. The likely position of The Gun can thus be gauged roughly on this map in relation to the City Canal, the east end of which was situated a short distance to the south of the present site. A fairly prominent building is depicted in the right position, but whether this was The Gun is hard to be sure.

The panoramic view of the left bank of the River Thames at Blackwall, by William Daniell in 1802 (Fig 9), is regarded by the *Survey of London* as having omitted The Gun. The *Survey* reproduces both this view and another from a similar viewpoint and at a similar scale, made in the early 1880s. The latter shows The Gun very much as it exists now, with the addition of a small one-storey lean-to shed or similar structure next to the river front at the north end of the property. Comparison of the relative lengths of the river frontages ascribed to neighbouring properties on both panoramas suggests that in fact The Gun probably has been depicted in 1802; the only difficulty is that what is shown does not look at all like any part of The Gun now surviving. A large-scale map of 1813, by Horwood, shows two buildings in this position, one of which may be The Gun, but without a name.

The next piece of documentary evidence is a drawing by Thomas Rowlandson. This shows the east end of the City Canal, looking north (Fig 10). One of the nearest buildings on the riverfront should therefore correspond to The Gun, at some time between 1806, when the Canal opened, and 1827, when Rowlandson died, and probably nearer the former date, although none of the buildings shown is an obvious choice.

The first map that labels any building as The Gun is apparently Cruchley's of 1839. This shows the building quite clearly as the last in a row of buildings on the east side of Coldharbour, nearest the entrance to the City Canal. This position may be somewhat ambiguous, as other, minor buildings may not have been shown at the small scale of Cruchley's map. A small-scale map by Cross, of 1847, labels The Gun, and indicates that it is not the last building in the row, but probably second to last.

These maps would be of more value if they showed clearly how big The Gun was at any particular time. It is likely that rebuilding occurred more than once, and may have consisted of successive small additions and replacements. The best cartographic evidence for the building is the first edition of the large-scale Ordnance Survey plan 1867, its next edition of 1893, and the Goad insurance plan of 1930. The 1867 plan (Fig 11) shows The Gun before the addition of the substantial two-storey block to the south, documented as having been constructed in 1875. Before the addition, according to the Ordnance Survey, the building was almost square in plan, with a narrow terrace between its east wall and the river, as now, and a small extension to the south, along the street frontage. No other details are provided, and a search of contemporary drainage plans (THLHL Poplar drainage plans 1872–77) showed nothing. Presumably no new connections were made to the water supply or sewers, or connections were made but the plans have been lost. The revised large-scale plan of 1893 (Fig 12) shows the building much as now, again in outline only. By 1930 the Goad plan (Fig 13) shows the addition of a small one-storey brick structure to the north, next to the riverfront, and angled in order to admit light to the ground floor windows in the east wall of the public house. To the south a small timber structure is shown as projecting from part of the northern half of the east wall of the public house, and this was probably a balcony in front of the main 1st-floor room, 1F1, with its two full-length windows, which would have allowed access to a balcony. There is no other sign in this, or any of the plans, of bay windows on the east front of the building. The Goad plan is probably wrong to show the two northern 1st-floor rooms as joined together, and it fails to indicate the cellars.

The large room on the 1st floor, with a good view over the river, would have been a notable asset in a riverside tavern such as this building, and could have served as an attractive setting for dinners and similar functions. In fact, from about 1720 onwards public houses and taverns along this stretch of the river, in Blackwall and Greenwich, annually played host to so-called Whitebait Dinners (Weinreb and Hibbert 1983, 955). One dinner in the year was always attended by the prime minister of the day and members of the cabinet, a custom that died out towards the end of the 19th century, but the custom became very fashionable and many other similar fish dinners were held at different places at Whitsun, in early summer.

Less definitely The Gun is associated with Lord Nelson. He and his mistress, Emma Lady Hamilton, may have met in The Gun, under assumed names, and used an upstairs room, out of the public eye. The 1st-floor dining room might have been in existence early enough, although the date of the room is uncertain, and it can at present be dated no more precisely than to the late 18th or early 19th century. It is said that a tunnel ran north from The Gun to another building in Coldharbour, also associated with Nelson and Lady Hamilton, but this is unlikely to be true as different properties intervene, which may have had their own cellars.

### **3 The Standing Building Survey**

This survey was undertaken in line with the client's requirements, in order to understand the development of the building. Following a statement of the methods employed, the archaeological evidence for the development of the building is described chronologically, in five successive phases of development. An assessment of the architectural and historic significance of the building is offered in Section 4.

#### **3.1 Methodology**

All archaeological analysis and recording during the investigation on site was done in accordance with the Museum of London *Archaeological site manual* (1994) and MoLAS *Health and safety policy* (2000). The location of the standing building was determined in outline on the modern Ordnance Survey plan, in relation to the Ordnance Survey national grid and datum.

The architects supplied plans and a set of external elevations of the buildings at a scale of 1:50, prepared by Iffland and Associates in July 2001 (partly reproduced in Figs 2–4).

Two archaeologists investigated the visible structure of the building, over a period of three days, with a fourth day's extra visit, and an archaeological photographer took photographs on one day. The rooms and other spaces were identified by number (see 1.7 above). Part of the cellar (B4) was sealed shut, and direct access to the flat roof to the north was not feasible for safety reasons. Dimensioned sketches were drawn of selected elevations, sections and other details, with sufficient information to locate them accurately in plan, to produce two sectional elevations. These were positioned in order to show efficiently and clearly the structure and layout of the building (Figs 5 and 6). The original plots of these sectional elevations are at a scale of 1:50, with structural details resolvable at a scale of 1:100.

The site records comprise a total of 20 site drawings, the supplied plans and elevations, 17 photographic images in medium and 35mm format, both monochrome and colour, and notes on the documentary evidence. No objects or samples were collected.

#### **3.2 The Archaeology of the Building**

This section provides a description of the architectural features within the building and offers an interpretation of the development of the structure. The evidence and its interpretation are discussed in chronological order.

The survey has revealed that at least five successive phases of development can be distinguished in the visible fabric of the building, as follows:

- Phase 1: Room 1F1 (late 18th–early 19th century)
- Phase 2: Partial rebuilding of Room 1F1; possible rebuilding of ground-floor rooms to the north; possible addition of rooms to the south (19th century, before 1875)
- Phase 3: Construction of a two-storey block to the south (1875)
- Phase 4: Rebuilding of the north wall and internal alterations (late 19th–early 20th century)

- Phase 5: Subsequent minor modifications and additions (mid–late 20th century).

### **3.2.1 Phase 1: Room 1F1 and associated rooms (late 18th–early 19th century)**

The oldest visible parts of the building, designated here as belonging to Phase 1, comprise the following four elements:

- (1) A room on the 1st floor, designated 1F1, faces east towards the river and is probably late 18th or early 19th-century in date. This room is entered by a timber spiral staircase, possibly original, although not well planned.
- (2) A brick chimney stack at the south end of 1F1 was probably built at the same time as the room, if not before. This would originally have had fireplaces serving at least the two floors to its north. The spiral staircase was built to fit next to this stack.
- (3) Ground floor rooms are implied by the existence of Room 1F1 on the 1st floor. Originally these ground floor rooms probably extended to the street frontage to the west, but they would probably have differed in plan from the ground floor rooms now existing, designated as the northern part of G1, and G2 to G11.
- (4) Cellars under the street front to the north, designated B2 to B4, were probably contemporary with the earlier ground floor rooms. These cellars would have been entered originally by different stairs or a ladder, possibly in the area of B4 to the east (inaccessible at present).

The oldest building on this site, presumably early 18th century in date, may have been located at the street frontage, approximately over the area occupied by the present cellars, B2, B3 and possibly B4. None of this construction seems to have survived to the present day, although it may still have existed in Phase 1, as described here, and parts may have survived to Phase 2 or even Phase 3, in the 19th century.

The oldest visible part of the building is probably Room 1F1, facing the river on the 1st floor, and at least part of the brick chimney stack to its south. The west and north walls of this room in plan do not correspond to any of the walls of the rooms on the ground floor, directly underneath, which is structurally peculiar (Fig 14). This discrepancy suggests one or more explanations: either the 1st-floor room is an addition later than the ground-floor rooms but made without reference to them or, less expected although on balance more likely, the internal walls downstairs have been moved without regard to the walls above. It is possible that the room was originally longer and has been shortened, but there is no evidence for this. It would seem that some effort has been spent keeping this 1st-floor room intact and in its original state.

The decoration of Room 1F1 consists of large flat panels in a plastered ceiling, with simplified cornices at the base of relatively wide, shallow coving to the west and east only (Fig 18). This coving reflects the shape of the roof overhead, which is half-hipped to the north. In form the roof must therefore also be original to the room. The present roof covering of slates

may be later, but the pitch of the roof is shallow, and the roof is therefore unlikely to have been covered with tiles. The cornice at the base of the coving comprises wide cyma mouldings symmetrically above and below an indented roll, the lower cyma taking the place of a frieze. This arrangement is not classically correct and may best be described as an informal or home-made design. For this reason, if no other, the room is difficult to date, but it may be late 18th or early 19th-century in date.

The room is entered by a timber-framed and vertically boarded spiral staircase, which originally did not connect to the adjoining 1st-floor room to the south, 1F2, as it now does. A small squint in the south-west wall of this staircase may originally have been external, but not necessarily. The staircase lacks light, and a window of any kind, external or internal, would have been useful. The staircase runs directly to the ground floor where it is entered from G15, next to the chimney stack, and it encroaches slightly into G11. The head of the staircase enters 1F1 by a kind of internal porch, surmounted by a plain cornice (Fig 18). This is a further sign of the lack of architectural planning and pretension in the construction of this 1st-floor room. The stair head adjoins what would originally have been a fireplace: the chimney stack here is unlike the three other smaller stacks built as part of the 1875 block, and in origin presumably predates that development.

A brick wall runs to the west of this stack, visible with difficulty under floorboards to one side of the spiral staircase. This wall appears to run on an alignment different from that of other walls in the present building, and may mark the slightly different layout of an earlier building. This chimney stack now has four flues, two for the fireplaces to the north and two, presumably, for those to the south. Perhaps the chimney stack was enlarged in 1875; otherwise the flues and the fireplaces on the south face of this chimney stack would also predate the 1875 block, implying that there were already rooms on two floors to the south of the stack served by these fireplaces. Such rooms do not appear on the 1867 Ordnance Survey plan. It is possible that such rooms existed for only a short time, between 1867 and 1875, to be largely replaced by the present G15 and 1F2 in the 1875 block.

Room 1F1 was evidently important enough to be preserved intact when the remainder of the building was rebuilt from time to time. The room could have acquired its importance as a result of a possible association with Lord Nelson, but in any case a fine, large, high-ceilinged room on an upper floor, with a magnificent outlook over the river, would have been a natural venue for dinners and similar functions. Towards the end of the 18th century and during the 19th century so-called Whitebait Dinners were an important social event that took place in public houses and taverns along this stretch of the river, and this room would have been an excellent setting for them. In any case such a dining room would have required a suitable kitchen in the building and service access.

#### *The possible form of the building in Phase 1*

The only definite evidence for the original form of the building in Phase 1 is embodied in Room 1F1 and the cellars. None of the existing rooms on the

ground floor, in their present form, seems to be as old as Phase 1. The northern and western limits of the site, formed by an adjoining property and the street frontage respectively, were also presumably the same in Phase 1, but this is not certain. The form taken by the rest of the building can therefore only be conjectured.

In general the original building seems to have occupied the northern half of the site, running from the street frontage eastwards to the river, instead of along the street frontage southwards. There was no obvious impediment to building southwards, although direct access from street to river would always have been valuable, and there is documentary evidence for other uses of the site apart from a building. It is conceivable that when the cellars were built, at an uncertain but probably early date, the upcast was used to level up the site to the east, above the river bank, and form a building platform.

The Phase 1 building would probably have extended in plan from the street frontage to the east wall of 1F1, a distance of up to 14m, and from the northern property line to the chimney stack at the south end of 1F1, about 12m. The whole of this area need not have been built on, however, especially as construction would probably have been of vernacular type. The basic elements of the building would have consisted of single ranges, one room wide. The function of the building as a tavern might have prompted the addition of corridors or galleries to one side of a range of rooms, so that rooms used as sleeping quarters could be entered separately, although in the 18th and early 19th centuries this would not have been essential. Similarly, internal lightwells as well as inlets in any of the fronts could have admitted light, and the building need not have been, then as now, uniformly of two storeys. The building is likely to have developed in a rather incremental, irregular way, resulting in a structure resembling that drawn by Rowlandson in the early 19th century (Fig 10), although it is not certain that his drawing shows *The Gun*.

Room 1F1 may have been shortened to the north since it was originally constructed, although there is no clear evidence for this. Similarly it is possible that it was adjoined to its west by another range of rooms, although this is similarly hypothetical. There is no need to suppose that 1F1 ever had to be entered by another set of stairs, in addition to or instead of the circular stairs existing to the south.

The property immediately to the north of the site was also built on, although the earliest evidence to indicate clearly that the building next door adjoined this site directly, and that there was a party wall, is the map of 1867 (Fig 11). A contiguous building would not have allowed *The Gun* to be lit from the north, on the ground floor at least. Perhaps a cross-range ran originally to the north of 1F1, from west to east, comprising at least two rooms each lit from one end. This range may have existed only on the ground floor but could have existed on the 1st floor, perhaps with a top-lit staircase between the rooms. The east end of such a cross-range would be represented partly by Room G8; a chimney stack in the north wall of G8 may represent or encase the remains of an earlier stack in this party wall, and the present room may contain more elements of an earlier room, although these are not obvious.

The present south wall of G8 is very unlikely to be original, as it does not coincide with the north wall of 1F1 above but stands further to the south. The fittings in G8 are therefore also likely to belong to a later phase than Phase 1 (see Phase 2).

As to the date of the Phase 1 building, it should be noted that if Daniell is thought not to have simply omitted The Gun in his riverfront panorama of 1802 (Fig 9) but to have drawn the site accurately, his drawing would indicate that none of the structure visible at present was as old as this date.

### ***3.2.2 Phase 2: Partial rebuilding of Room 1F1; possible rebuilding of ground floor rooms to the north; possible addition of rooms to the south (19th century, before 1875)***

The visible fabric attributed to Phase 2 comprised:

- (1) The east wall of Room 1F1, containing four windows overlooking the river, and probably originally giving on to a balcony. This wall is thicker than the north and west walls of the room, and was constructed of different materials and in a different form (Fig 20); it is built of brick, with prominent windows and deep rolled chamfer mouldings on the window jambs, not matching in materials or style the internal decoration of the room. It is likely that this wall is later than the room behind it, and has therefore been rebuilt. If so, this would suggest again that considerable effort had been made to keep the interior of the 1st-floor room intact. The east wall of Room 1F1 may have been rebuilt with its set of four windows to take advantage of the view over the river. The windows are arranged symmetrically, the two outermost being full length. These probably gave on to a projecting timber balcony, perhaps on the roof of a bay window at ground-floor level.
- (2) The east front of the building contains a prominent cornice, built probably in brick and render, running under the windows of 1F1 (Fig 20). This cornice is assigned to Phase 2 because its deliberate southern end coincides with a very slight change of alignment in the face of the wall and the junction of the 1875 block with pre-existing buildings to the north. This junction has otherwise been concealed by render. This cornice may therefore have been built as part of a pre-1875 building, and the southern end of the cornice may mark the southern limit of this building. Alternatively the cornice may have been added to suit something like a balcony, already conjectured, or to go round a bay window.
- (3) The present layout of the ground floor rooms to the north and east may belong to this phase: to the north, G6 and G7, originally a single room, and G8, and to the south, G9 and G11; a cross-passage from west to east, G3, G4 and G5, originally a single space, separated these pairs of rooms. If this layout was created in Phase 2 it seems reasonable to suggest that the rooms existed only on the ground floor, and any previous 1st-floor rooms were dismantled except for 1F1. Note that the form and layout at this time of rooms further to the west is uncertain.



- (4) The chimney stack to the south-east, between rooms G11 and G15, and 1F1 and 1F2, has fireplaces to north and south that differ in size and shape, suggesting the likelihood that they were built at different dates. The fireplace visible on the ground floor to the south, in G15, is of 19th-century type, with a relatively wide, shallow arch supported by a curved iron bar. No rooms to the south of the stack are shown in the 1867 map, however, and the existence of a fireplace here suggests that such rooms may have been added to the south of the pre-existing stack shortly before the construction of the 1875 block (Phase 3). Bricks forming the south face of this chimney stack, visible in the roof space above 1F2, appear to have been external, and probably mark the limit of the previous building. The presence of an external face of brickwork at a high level does not rule out the existence of rooms at a slightly lower level, and certainly not at ground level.

The structures attributed to Phase 2 are difficult to date on their own, except to say that their form and materials are of 19th-century date. In the sequence of development of the building they would have been constructed before the more coherent additions made in 1875 (Phase 3).

The internal fittings of the ground-floor rooms to the north, G3–G8, are plainer and more varied than those in the later, 1875 block. Very plain panelling up to dado level on the west, north and east walls of G8 could in appearance be of practically any date from the late 17th to the late 19th centuries. If the timbers could be examined closely and proved to be machine-sawn, the panelling would definitely be dateable to the mid or late 19th century and at present, from other evidence, this is on balance likely to be its date. Panelling and other fixtures do not date the wall to which they are fixed, of course, which could be of earlier or later date. In a vernacular building, such as The Gun, older materials may well have been reused if they were available, especially in a rather utilitarian context. The window cases in G8 look of a piece with the plain panelling, which also argues for a relatively late date.

The relatively wide window openings in G11 and possibly also G8 may originally have incorporated projecting bay windows. The openings in the wall are large enough to have contained bay windows, the terrace in front contains enough space for such windows and most of the 18th and early 19th-century houses on the riverfront in this area had them (Figs 9 and 19). The 1930 Goad plan seems to show a bay window and balcony projecting from G11 (Fig 13), although earlier plans apparently do not.

The floors of the ground floor rooms to the north, notably G8, G4 and G5, and G11, slope markedly from west down to east, although the walls of these rooms seem vertical. The slope is attributable to the underlying slope of the ground, downwards to the riverbank. The fact that the walls do not exhibit the effects of subsidence or settlement suggest that they were built deliberately to incorporate these sloping floors, without any effort to level up the site, and were therefore probably built later, rather than earlier, in the history of the site. Note that the raised floor in G4 is temporary and recent (see Phase 5, Item 10).

The southern limit of this pre-1875 building is indicated on the ground floor by a slight change in the slope of the floor between G11 and G15, and another break running from west to east across the centre of G1. The external southern face of the earlier chimney stack is also visible in the roof space above 1F2.

In Phase 2 there would presumably have been rooms to the west, in the area now occupied by G1 and G2, as this was the street frontage. The form and layout of these rooms is uncertain, however. In date they may have been as old as 1F1 or even older.

### **3.2.3 Phase 3: Two-storey block constructed to the south (1875)**

In Phase 3 a two-storey block of rooms was added to the south of the then existing building, forming on the ground floor the southern half of Room G1 and Rooms G12–G15, and on the 1st floor Rooms 1F2–1F7 (Figs 16 and 17). Documentary evidence dates this development to 1875, and the form, materials and style of decoration of the new building are consistent with this date. The walls of the new block were of more uniform thickness, and slightly thicker, than the surviving walls of older date.

The street front of the pre-existing building to the north was rebuilt in the same materials and style, and afterwards this front contained rooms on the ground floor only, now G2 and the northern half of G1.

A staircase in the 1875 block gave access to the pre-existing cellars to the north, by a stairwell designated B1. There may have been a bay window projecting to the east from the 1875 block, and a small detached WC to the north-east, next to the riverfront. The small structure to the north-east was constructed between 1893 and 1930, as it appears on the 1930 Goad plan but not on the 1893 plan. The latter shows narrow structures against the southern limit of the site, which may have been earlier WCs.

The rooms on the ground floor to the north would have been rearranged in plan at this time, if they had not been rearranged before, and their roofs rebuilt and covered in slates, with skylights over the central rooms, G6 and G7 (subsequently subdivided) and G9. The construction of skylights over these rooms implies that they had no other natural light, and therefore that by this time there were no windows in the north wall of the building.

On the ground floor next to the street it is possible that when the 1875 block was added an internal wall separated a pre-existing ground-floor room to the north (G2), from the rooms to the south. Changes in floor and ceiling level at present between the areas designated G1 and G2 would support this, as would the existence of a suitable set of external double doors in the remade street front in the west wall of G2. If so, these ground floor rooms would have been thrown together more recently to form a single bar room. The separate room to the north, G2, may originally have had a fireplace in its north wall, since blocked up. There was apparently never a fireplace in G1, the single-flue chimney to the south-west in the 1875 block originally

serving only a 1st-floor room, 1F4. The fireplace in 1F4 has since been blocked.

The central rooms G6 and G7 were originally a single room, lit by a skylight positioned centrally overhead. This skylight, latterly sealed and partly obscured by the partitioning-up of the room, indicates that there was no 1st floor above this room, at least when the room was most recently roofed, and perhaps when all the ground floor rooms to the north were laid out in their present form. Possibly the roofs have been rebuilt, perhaps at the same time as the two-storey block was constructed in 1875, and covered with slates. The shallow pitch of these roofs would not permit tiles, and slates were an unusual roof covering in London before the late 18th century (it was not possible to investigate these roofs directly).

The ground-floor room G9 originally had a fireplace in its south wall, later blocked. This room may well have been built as a kitchen to serve the 1st-floor dining room, 1F1. Originally it could have been lit by a skylight in the roof overhead, since blocked by construction of 1F8 (Phase 5); in addition it could have received some light through two doorways, one to the bar in G1 and another to G10, opposite a door to G11. Note that any predecessor of G9 could have been lit from the south, but in that case the room would have had a fireplace in a different position, and might have had a different shape in plan.

The present cellars presumably predate the 1875 block, being confined to the area of the pre-existing building to the north (Fig 15). The present staircase to the cellars was built as part of the 1875 block, however, directly under the remainder of the staircase giving access to the 1st floor. Previously access to the cellars may have been by stairs or a ladder, of which no trace remains visible, and perhaps this access was in the area of the cellars that has been sealed off, to the east (not seen). The barrel chute to the cellar is accessed by raising a large sash panel in the front of the building, as well as opening a hatch in the pavement in front. Possibly another barrel chute existed in a bay to the north.

The 1875 block contains fine decoration externally and internally, in door frames and window surrounds, for instance. The mouldings of these latter fixtures are fairly uniform, and slightly more elaborate than those elsewhere in the building. The ground floor bar room contains 19th-century bar fittings, a mirrored glass advertisement for 'Mile End Distillery Company's Cream Gin' and engraved signs on its window glass, some of which slot into place.

#### **3.2.4 Phase 4: North wall rebuilt (late 19th–early 20th century)**

In Phase 4 the north wall of the building was rebuilt, at least in part, probably when a five-storey warehouse was built on the adjoining site at the end of the 19th or the beginning of the 20th century. The surviving brick wall at the north side of the building is heavily buttressed on both sides, including in the cellar of the present building, B3, although the present building is not high there, comprising only a ground floor and, to the west, a cellar. This

buttressing would therefore have been meant to support the adjoining building.

The full extent of this rebuilding is uncertain, although for the time being it is interpreted as having impinged severely on the interiors of B3 and G2, and perhaps less severely on G6–G8.

### **3.2.5 Phase 5: Latest minor additions and modifications (mid–late 20th century)**

The latest changes to the building include the following:

- (1) A possible barrel chute to the north in the cellars may have been blocked.
- (2) A possible internal west–east wall on the ground floor between G1 and G2 removed to make a single bar room.
- (3) A partition wall was inserted to divide G6 and G7, blocking a skylight. The north-west corner of 1F1, above the east wall of G6, may also have been reinforced at the same time, although the reinforcement is now slightly sagging.
- (4) The bay window to G11 was removed, leaving windows flush with the wall, and the balcony outside 1F1 was removed. Other bay windows, if they existed, were also removed and windows made flush.
- (5) The WC to the north-east was removed and replaced by a one-storey addition to the south of the 1875 block, after 1930 according to documentary evidence.
- (6) A fire escape was added to the south of the 1875 block, reached by a door cut through the south wall on the 1st-floor.
- (7) A small room (1F8) was added on the 1st floor to the north of the 1875 block, although it contained a fireplace in a chimney built as part of the 1875 block. This single-flue chimney would originally have connected to a fireplace on the ground floor in the south wall of the present kitchen, G9. The latter fireplace was probably blocked when Room 1F8 was added, and the flue diverted to serve a fireplace created in 1F8. The only door into Room 1F8 was not part of the original construction of the 1875 block but was cut through the north wall of this block at a later date. The floor level of this room is lower than that of the 1st floor in the 1875 block, as is also that of 1F1. The presence of a large window in the north wall of 1F3, over the staircase in the 1875 block, suggests that Rooms 1F8 and 1F1 were never linked directly to each other, contrary to the 1930 Goad plan, on which Room 1F8 appears.
- (8) The warehouse adjoining to the north, shown on the 1930 Goad insurance plan (Fig 13), was demolished probably in the 1980s.
- (9) The internal doors at the west and east ends of G4 appear to be relatively recent insertions. The latter door created a vestibule at the east end of the west–east passage through the building, and the

internal door between that vestibule and G11 to its south may be a relatively recent modification.

- (10) More recent alterations include construction of a timber platform to raise the floor level slightly in G4, presumably because the underlying floor (not seen) is uneven or damp, or both. Any local irregularity in floor level here may have been caused partly by the edge of the cellar, B4, directly below. This resembles a similar irregularity in the level of the floor near the north end of G1, which coincides with the south edge of B2, directly below.

## **4 The Potential of the Standing Building**

This section provides an assessment of the potential of the building.

Section 4.1 quantifies the building against the English Heritage guidance on the assessment of standing buildings. This is followed by an assessment of the architectural significance of the building (Section 4.2) and the historical significance (Section 4.3). An assessment of the contribution The Gun makes to the Coldharbour Conservation Area is offered in Section 4.4 and the final section provides conclusions and recommendations.

### **4.1 Introduction**

The results of the *Standing Building Survey* have successfully addressed the aims of the project and an outline history of the building has been reconstructed from an archaeological investigation of its fabric and from documentary sources. The research aims are thus fulfilled as far as the physical limitations of working within a functioning public house have allowed.

The architectural and historic significance of the building may be measured in relation to both the published criteria for statutory listing of buildings, contained in relevant planning policy guidance (*PPG15*, DoE 1994) and English Heritage guidance on the assessment of buildings, whether statutorily listed or not, in designated conservation areas (English Heritage 1995).

The criteria for statutory listing consider four main points, as follows:

- (1) ‘architectural interest:...of importance to the nation for...their architectural design, decoration and craftsmanship;...important examples of particular building types and techniques...and significant plan forms;
- (2) ‘historic interest:...illustrate important aspects of the nation’s social, economic, cultural or military history;
- (3) ‘close historical association with nationally important people or events;
- (4) ‘group value, especially where buildings comprise an important architectural or historic unity or a fine example of planning...’

The guidance for conservation areas asks a series of questions, to which answers can be suggested in the case of the present building, as follows:

- (5) ‘is the building the work of a particular architect of regional or local note?
- (6) ‘has it qualities of age, style, materials or any other characteristics which reflect those of... other buildings in the conservation area?
- (7) ‘does it relate by age, materials or in any other historically significant way to adjacent listed buildings, and contribute positively to their setting?
- (8) ‘does it, individually or as part of a group, serve as a reminder of the gradual development of the settlement in which it stands, or an earlier phase of growth?
- (9) ‘does it have a significant historic association with established features such as the road layout, burgage plots, a town park or a landscape feature?

- (10) 'does the building have landmark quality, or contribute to the quality of recognisable spaces, including exteriors or open spaces within a complex of public buildings?
- (11) 'does it reflect the traditional functional character of, or former uses within, the area?
- (12) 'has it significant historic associations with local people or past events?
- (13) 'does its use contribute to the character or appearance of the conservation area?'

This guidance continues, 'Any one of these characteristics could provide the basis for considering that a building makes a positive contribution...' and paragraph 4.27 of *PPG15* makes a presumption in favour of preserving unlisted buildings, as well as listed ones, that make a significant contribution to the character of a conservation area.

The building can be assessed in relation to the numbered points above.

## **4.2 The Architectural Significance of the Building**

- (1) The building is a good example of a late 19th-century purpose-built public house, incorporating an excellent example of a finely-decorated dining room originally belonging to a late 18th or early 19th-century tavern on the site. This 1st-floor dining room has been preserved despite substantial alterations and additions directly below it, on the ground floor, and next to it on the 1st floor.
- (4) The building has added architectural significance as part of a group of buildings at the south end of Coldharbour, and rarity value as one of the last, relatively unaltered examples of its type of building in this part of London. It contains a timber spiral staircase of a type formerly more common in Poplar and now rare.
- (5) The late 18th or early 19th-century 1st-floor dining room was probably built and decorated by a local builder, rather than by a professional architect. The late 19th-century addition was designed by F Frederick Holsworth of Kentish Town (RCHME 1994, 624).
- (6) The style of the building is in keeping with those in its immediate surroundings, in the conservation area, and contrasts markedly with the buildings erected in modern Docklands, to the west.
- (7) The nearest statutorily listed building is a river police station, built in 1893–4 on the riverfront a short distance to the north, and enlarged and converted into flats in 1982. Both buildings are of broadly similar scale, and reflect in different ways the importance of the riverfront.
- (10) and (13) The building is a local landmark, with a distinctive street front and an interesting mixture of elevation surfaces, roof lines and decoration. It effectively exploits an attractive position on the riverfront.

### **4.3 The Historical Significance of the Building**

- (2) The building, including its 1st-floor dining room, reflects the maritime character of this part of London, and its customs.
- (3) The building, especially its 1st-floor dining room, is reputedly associated with Horatio Lord Nelson. The dining room was almost certainly used for Whitebait Dinners and similar functions in the 18th and 19th centuries. The preservation of the 1st-floor dining room intact when surrounding parts of the building were substantially altered or added to suggests that the association and uses were considered very important at the time.
- (8) and (9) The building marks the southernmost point of the area that was built up along the riverfront from Blackwall southwards, from the late 17th century until the late 19th century. The riverfront was originally protected by Blackwall, a river wall now thought to run under Coldharbour. The Gun is, internally at least, one of the older buildings along this street marking the long-standing local utilisation of the riverfront.
- (11) The building, and its predecessors, traces of which may be preserved in the existing structure, has been a tavern or public house for approximately 180 years and perhaps longer.
- (12) The association with Lord Nelson is unproved, but the 1st-floor dining room was probably used for Whitebait Dinners in the 18th and 19th centuries, and for similar functions.

### **4.4 The Gun and the Coldharbour Conservation Area**

The site lies within the *Coldharbour Conservation Area*, designated by Tower Hamlets Borough Council in order to protect the character of this area of the Isle of Dogs (Tower Hamlets UDP 1994).

In general the building conforms to a type of public house that was common in the late 19th century and has survived, with relatively few alterations, to the present day.

The building occupies a prominent position by the River Thames and contributes significantly to the historic appearance of the riverfront in this area.

Much of Coldharbour has been extensively redeveloped in recent years, but a row of 19th-century terraced houses survive at the south end of Coldharbour. The Gun is situated adjacent to the east end of this row and contributes to the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area.

The Gun is one of the last public houses of its kind in the area and is one of a small number of 18th and 19th-century buildings to survive in this area of the Isle of Dogs. This area is now dominated by the late 20th and 21st-century development of the London Docklands Development and the Gun contributes significantly to the architectural diversity of the area.



## **4.5 Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **4.5.1 Conclusions**

The survey has demonstrated that the present building contains elements of previous buildings on the site, the oldest visible parts of which may date to the late 18th or early 19th century. The building is a fine example of an 18th and 19th-century public house. It contains a number of significant architectural features, notably the spiral staircase and, architecturally, is certainly of *Local Significance* and may even warrant consideration as of *Regional Significance*.

The oldest part of the building now visible is a 1st-floor room of considerable architectural interest. This has been carefully preserved intact while alterations were made around it. This fact alone is of interest. It is possible that this room was preserved due to its reputed association with Lord Nelson, as mentioned in the statutory listing description. If this is correct its preservation suggests that this is a long standing association. The association with Nelson should be considered to be of *National Significance*.

The 1st-floor dining room would have been very well suited to functions such as the Whitebait Dinners that were served annually in taverns and pubs in Blackwall and Greenwich from the early 18th century until the end of the 19th century. This would explain why the east wall of the room was rebuilt with a symmetrical arrangement of windows, originally giving on to a balcony overlooking the river. This is a consideration of *Local Significance*.

### **4.5.2 Recommendations**

The following recommendations are offered in good faith and, in the opinion of MoLAS present an appropriate strategy for research at The Gun. Ultimate responsibility for management of conservation and archaeological issues lie with the *Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service* acting on behalf of *Tower Hamlets Borough Council*.

The investigation has successfully addressed the research aims and demonstrated that the building has evolved since the 18th century. In addition, a number of areas of uncertainty have been identified, specifically:

- The origin and date of construction of the early part of the building
- The sequence of construction and date of the north walls on the ground floor.

Further information could be obtained after a full or partial soft strip of the interior of the building. It is recommended that a further programme of building recording should take place during any stripping, to address these questions. Sufficient time should be allowed in the redevelopment schedule, to allow such recording to take place.

Any alterations or refurbishment are likely to require *Listed Building Consent* from English Heritage. A requirement for a more intensive investigation of the building than hitherto been possible can be expected, as a

condition of granting of *Listed Building Consent*. Such works are likely to be conducted in accordance with a specific *Brief* issued by *English Heritage*.

In addition to above recommendations, a programme of archaeological evaluation may be required (Francis and Westman 2001, 19).

## **5 Publication and Archiving**

The original site records and subsequent analytical drawings, both pencil and digital, will be deposited in the Museum of London archaeological archive, indexed by the site code CBD01. Copies of the final report will be provided to the client, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (as local planning authority), Tower Hamlets Local History Library, the London Metropolitan Archives, English Heritage, Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service and the Museum of London.

The professional requirement to publish the results of the investigation will be met by reporting the results in summary form in appropriate professional journals and in the annual excavation round-up in the journal entitled *London Archaeologist*.

## **6 Acknowledgements**

The author is grateful to Mr Roy Lewis for commissioning the project on behalf of *Latham Architects*. Ms Suzie Wong of the *Angel Group* provided additional assistance. The landlady Ms Donna Burwood, with Ken and Ivor, provided access and offered practical assistance during the building recording. Mr David Rich provided access to documents and records in the *Tower Hamlets Local History Library*.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Westman and Antony Francis of MoLAS, who also prepared the drawings. Photographs were taken by Mr Edwin Baker of the MoLAS photographic department, assisted by Andrew Westman and the illustrations were prepared by Maggie Foottit. The project was managed by David Fell of MoLAS and this report was prepared by Andrew Westman.

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## Appendix: List of Archaeological Photographs

Image number	Location	Description
387/01/1	Exterior	W front, 1875 block, looking E
387/01/2	Exterior	W front, along street, looking E
387/01/3	Exterior	All of W front, looking NE
387/01/4	Exterior	E front, N half, looking NW
387/01/5	Exterior	E front, S half & centre, looking SW
387/01/6	Exterior	E front, detail of 1F1, looking SW
387/01/7	Exterior	E front, detail of 1F1 & N wall, looking SW
387/01/8	Exterior	E front, 1st floor, looking SW
387/01/9	Exterior	E front & River Thames, looking S
387/01/10	Exterior	E front, ground floor, looking NW
387/01/11	Exterior	E front & River Thames, looking N
387/01/12	G1	Looking S, flags on ceiling
387/01/13	G1	Looking S, mirrored sign on S wall
387/01/14	Exterior	All of W front, looking SE
387/01/15	1F1	Looking SW, head of spiral stairs, porch, ceiling decoration
387/01/16	B2	Looking NW, barrel chute, trap door in pavement open
387/01/17	Exterior	W front, looking E, sash panel raised & trap door open to barrel chute

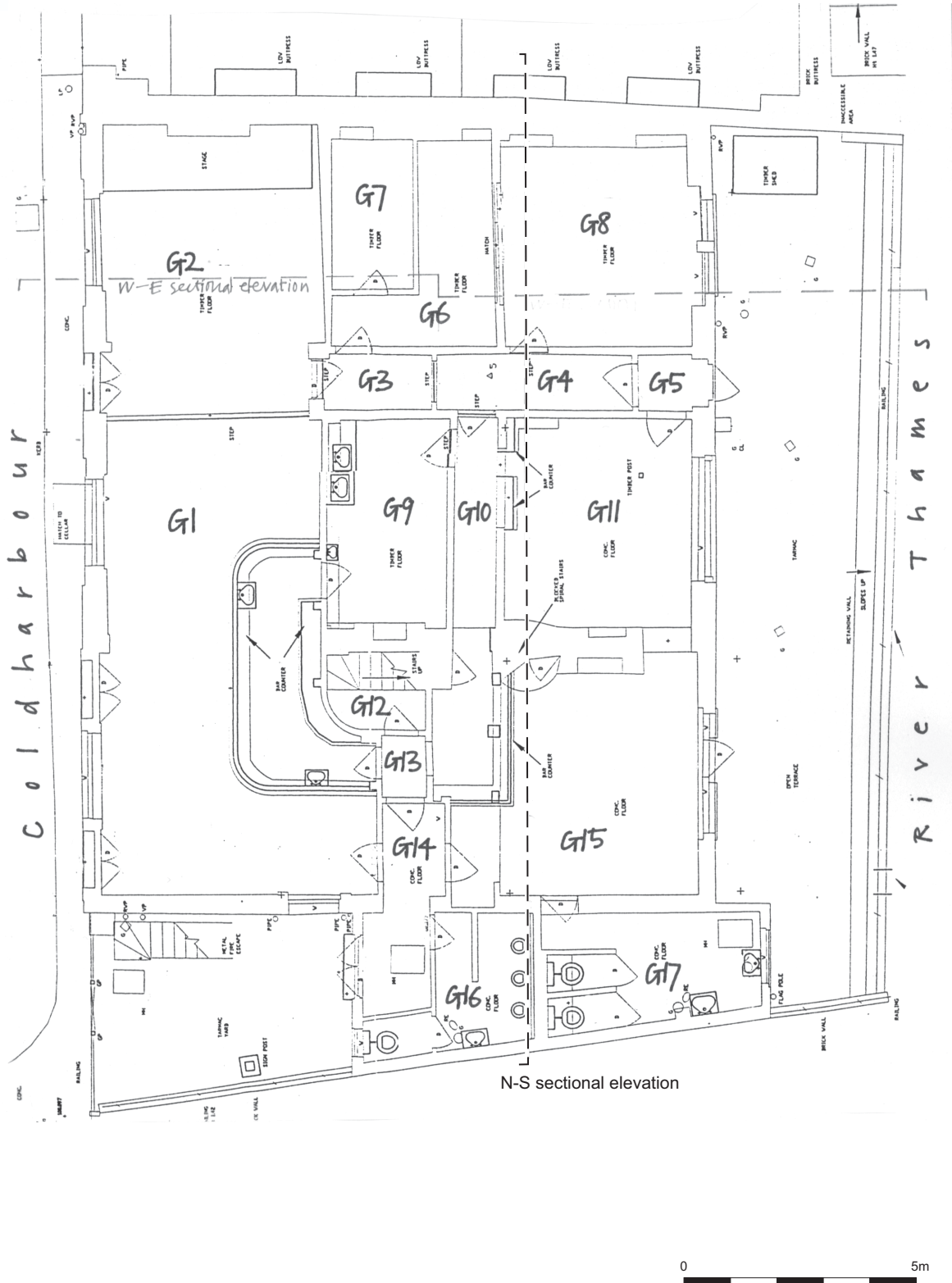
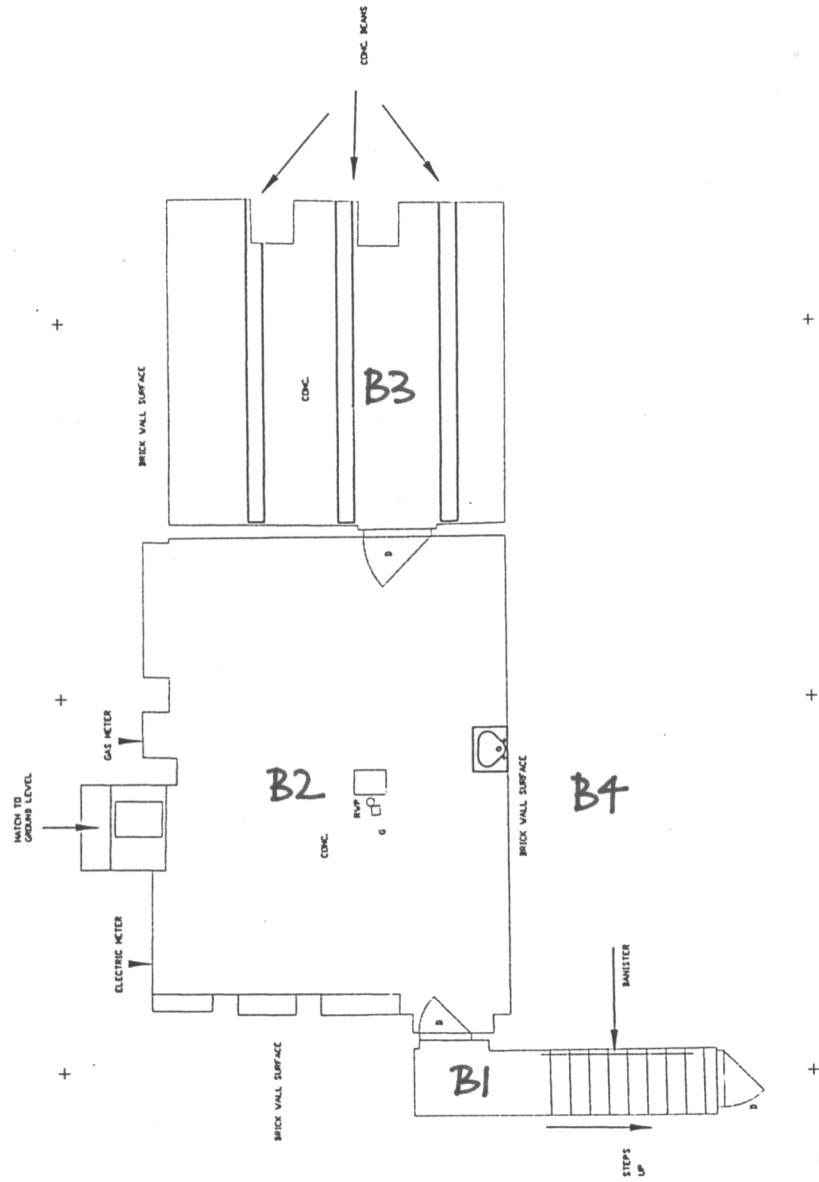


Figure 2. Plan of the standing building at ground level



0 5m

Figure 3. Plan of the standing building at cellar level



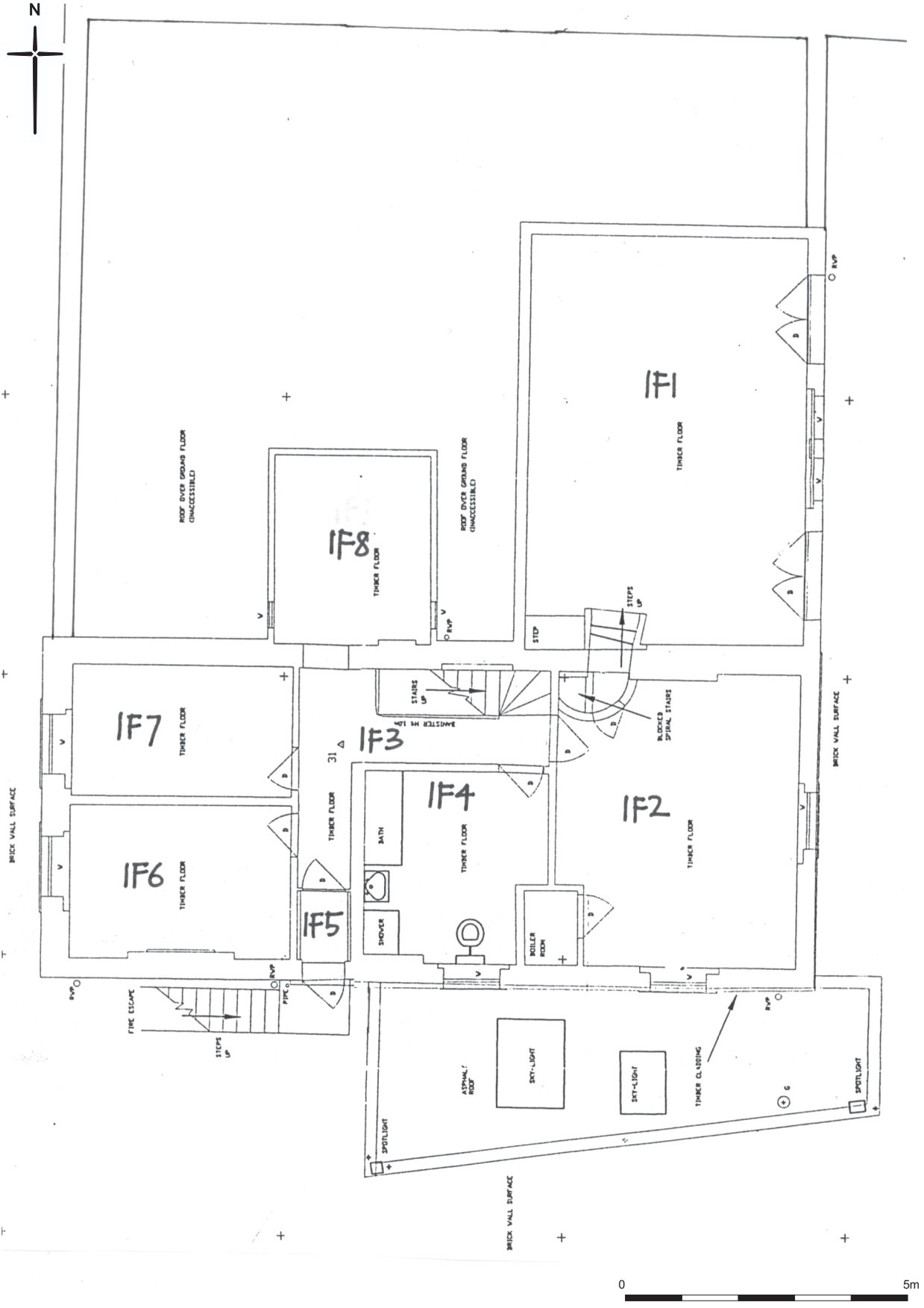


Figure 4. Plan of the standing building at first-floor level

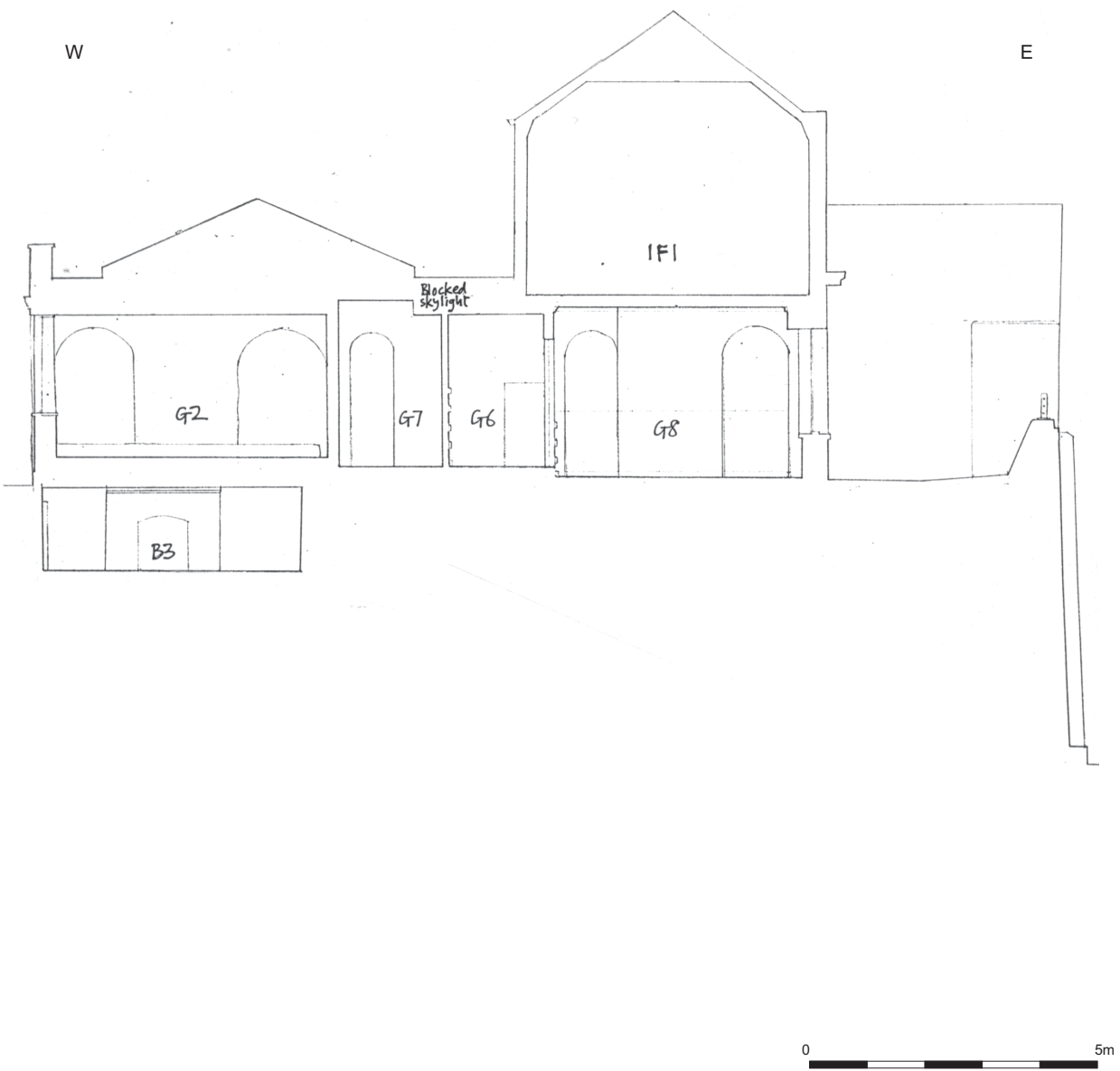


Figure 5. Sectional elevation west-east through the northern part of the standing building

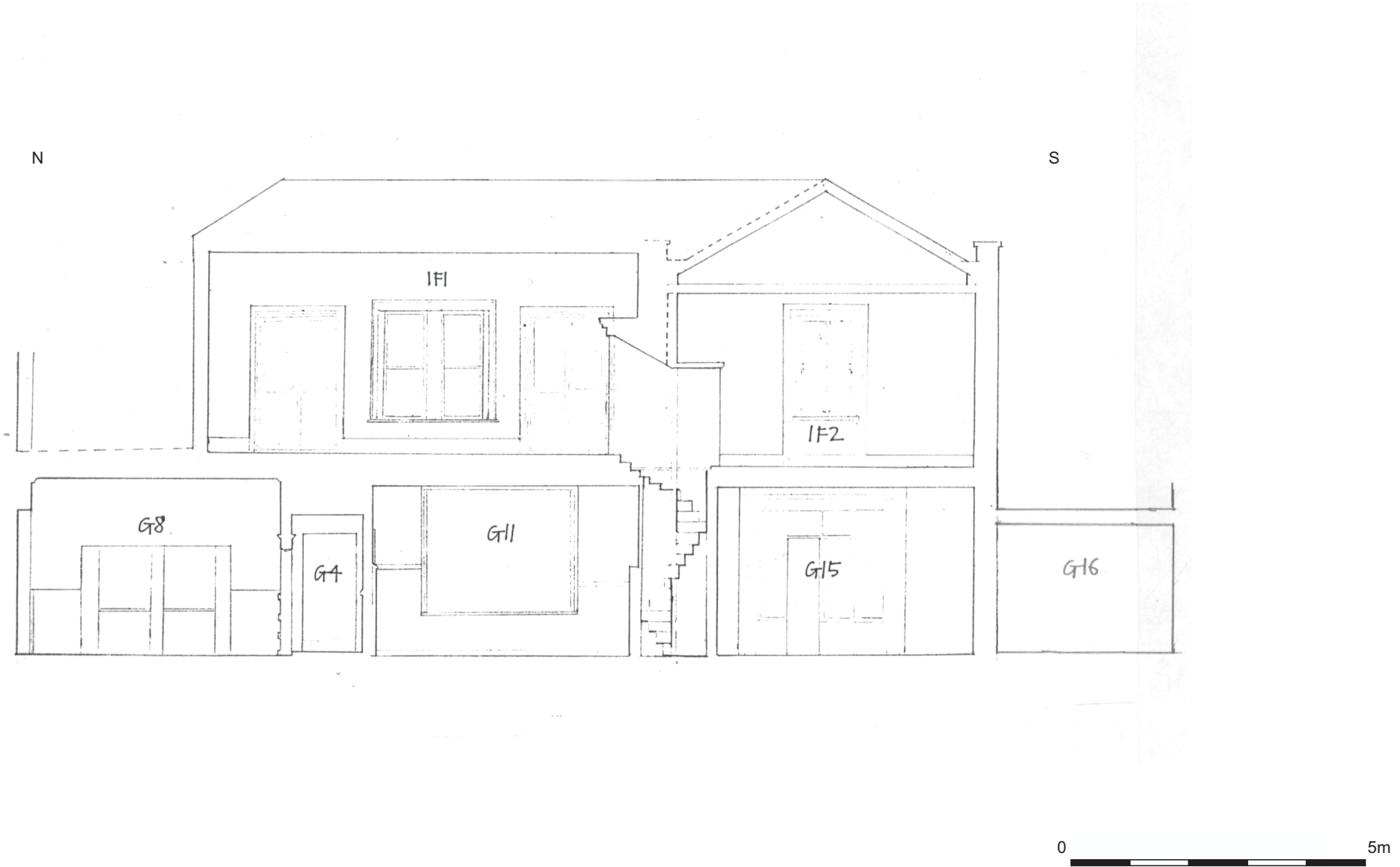


Figure 6. Sectional elevation north-south through the eastern half of the standing building



Figure 7. Map showing the site in 1746 (Rocque)

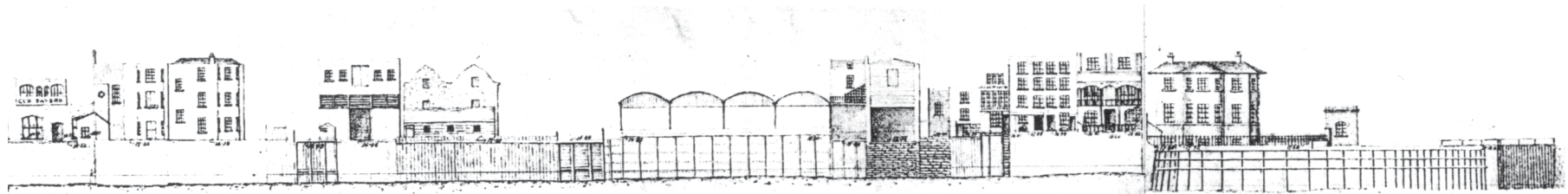




Figure 8. Map showing the site in 1799 (London Topographical society 1991)



Stewart family's house  
 Warehouses on site of No.19  
 Site of No.15  
 Fishing Smack PH  
 Site of No.3  
 Newte's Wharf, site of No.1  
 Stewart's Wharf



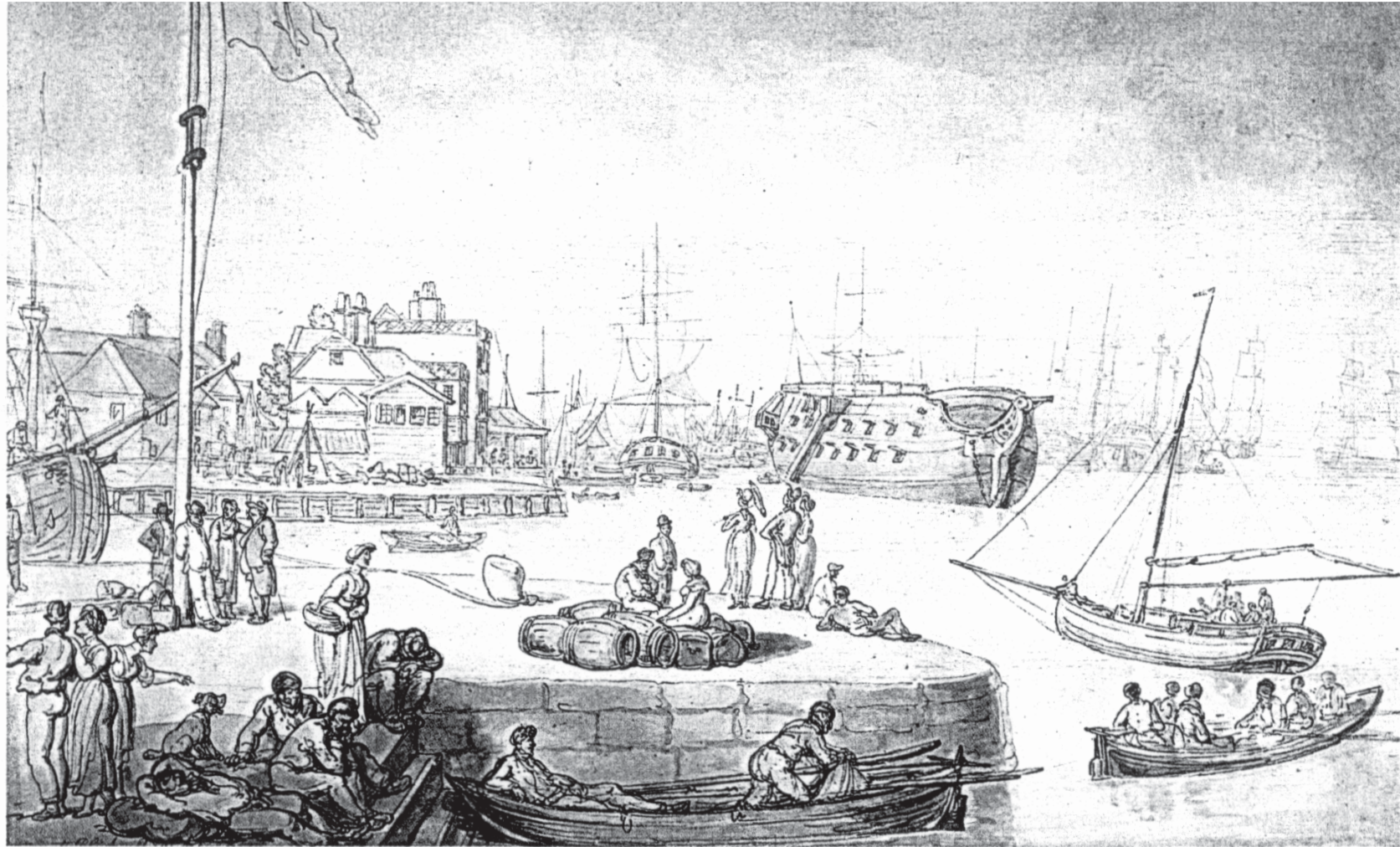
Gun PH No.25 Stewart family's house No.23  
 Warehouses on site of No.19  
 No. 15 Crown Wharf site No. 9 Nos 7,5 No. 3 No.1  
 Stewart's Wharf Cattle Wharf

COLDHARBOUR: RIVER FRONTAGE. Above, as depicted by William Daniell in 1802, and, below, as shown on the Thames Flood plans of the early 1880s (p. 609)

Figure 9. Views of the riverfront at Coldharbour, as depicted in 1802 and the 1880's (from the RCHME 1994, plate 100)

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a. 'Entrance to Blackwall Docks'. Watercolour by Thomas Rowlandson looking northwards in the early nineteenth century over the entrance to the City Canal to Coldharbour. The hulk *Chichester* is on the right (p. 619n)

Figure 10. The end of the City Canal, by Thomas Rowlandson (from RCHME 1994, plate 147A)

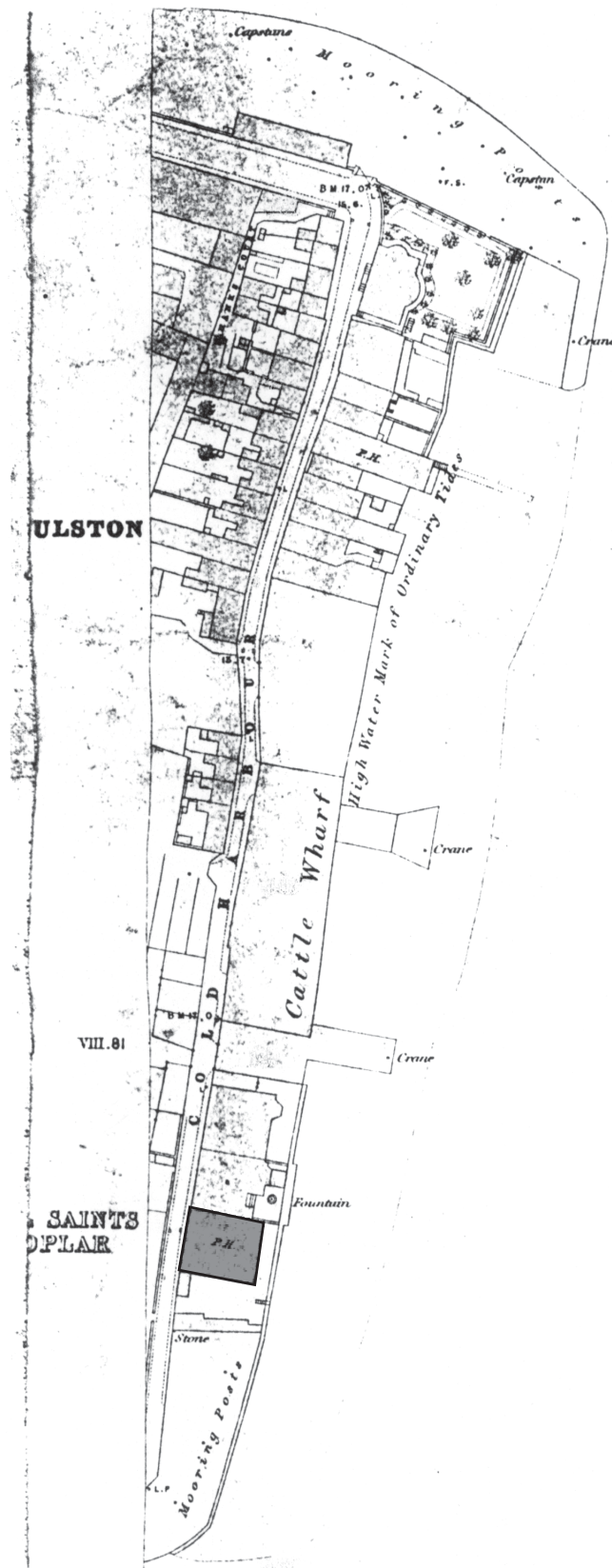


Figure 11. Map showing the site in 1867 (Ordnance Survey 1867)



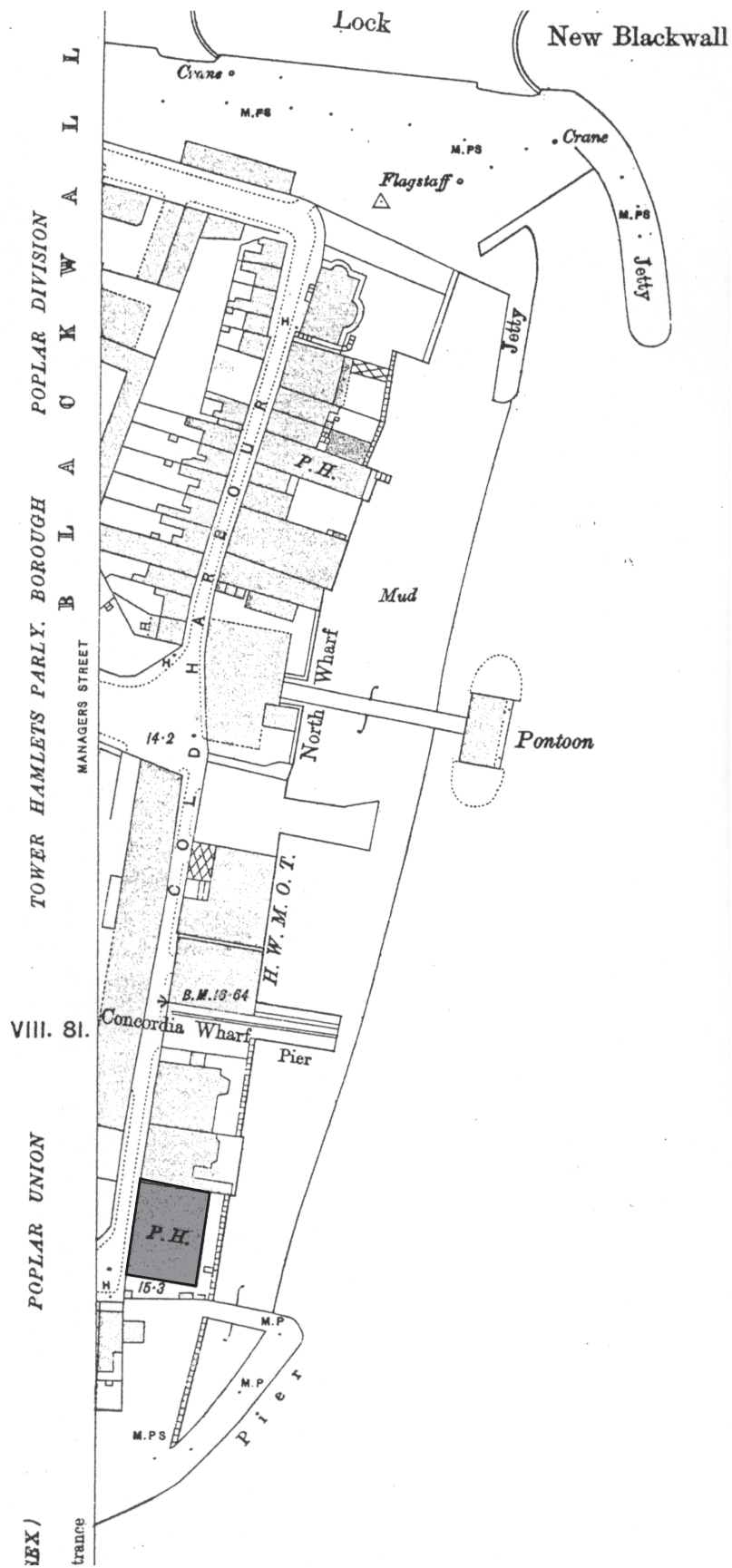


Figure 12. Map showing the site in 1893 (Ordnance Survey 1893)

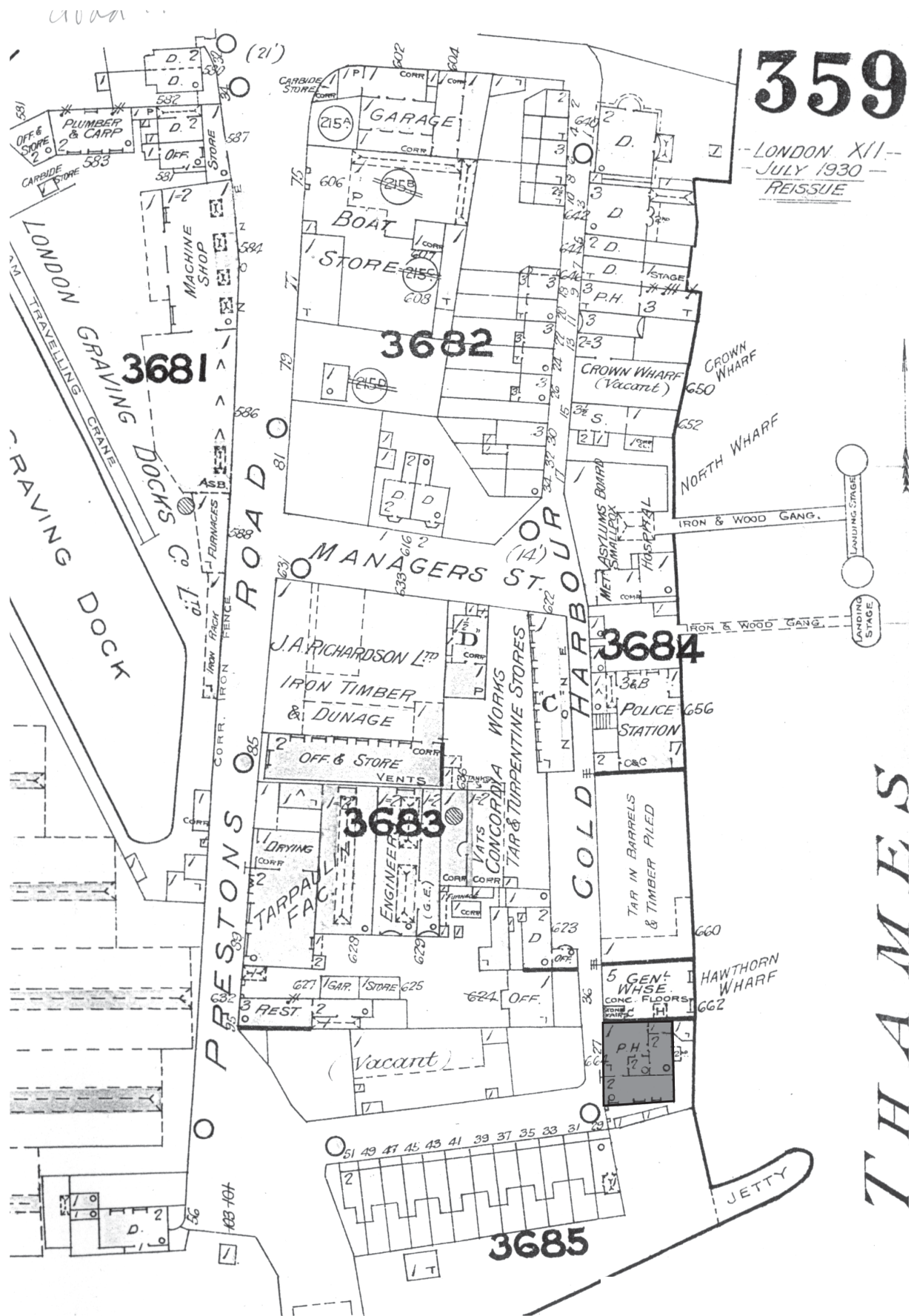


Figure 13. Goad insurance plan 1930 (volume 12, sheet 359)

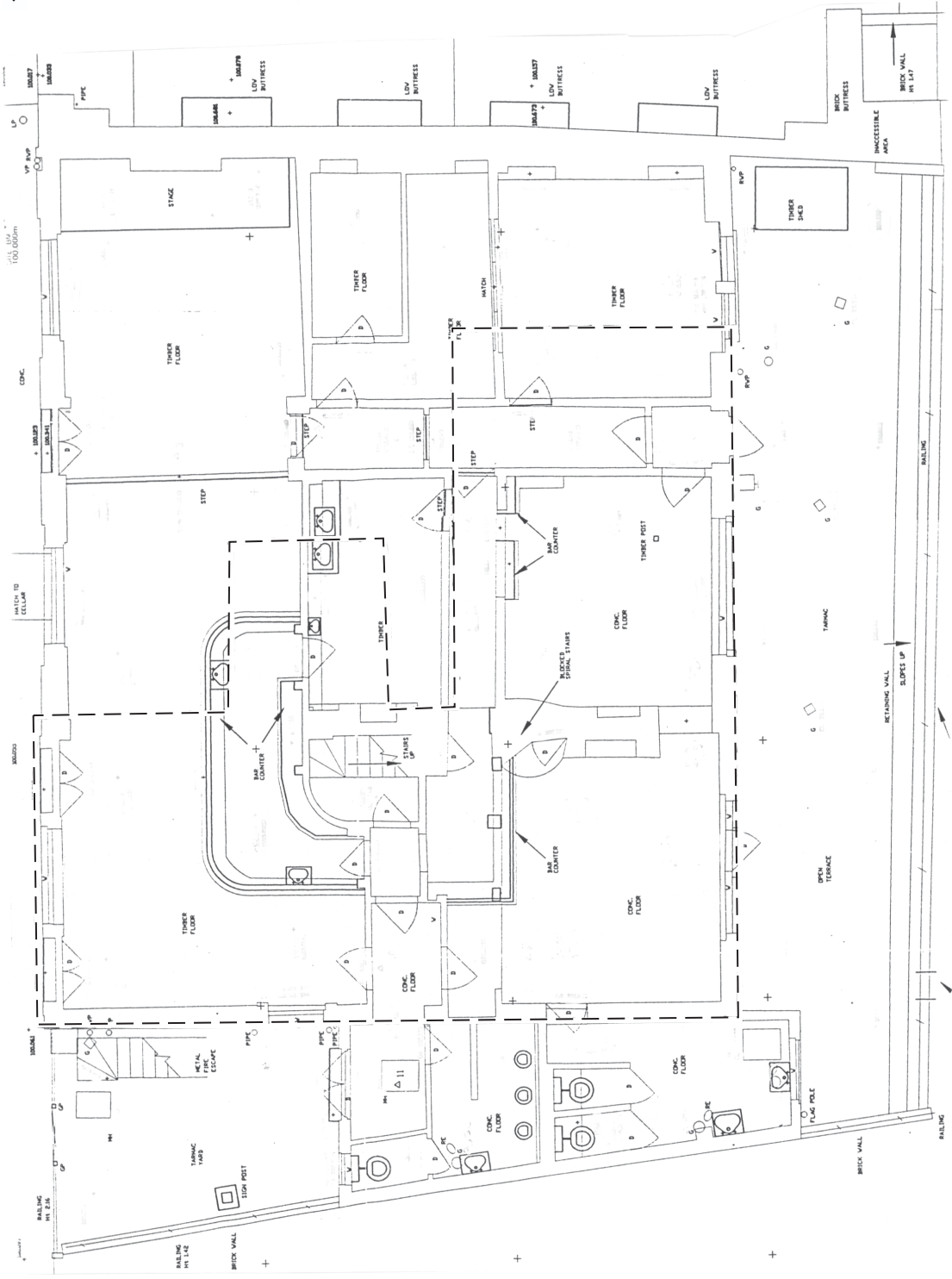


Figure 14. Plan of the ground floor of The Gun with a plan of the first floor superimposed in dashed outline

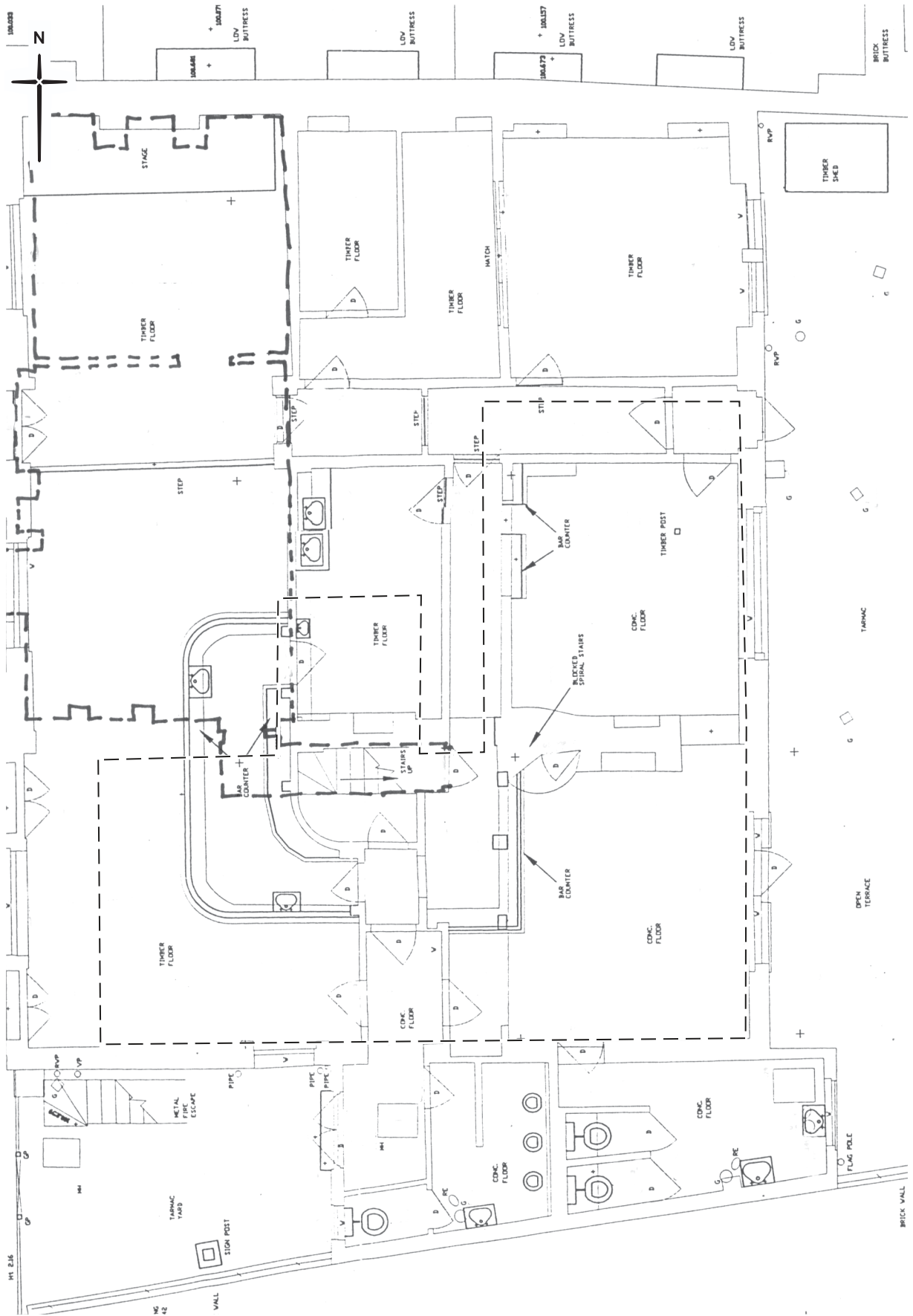


Figure 15. Plan of the ground floor of The Gun with a plan of the cellars superimposed in dashed outline





Figure 16. The street in front of The Gun, looking east (MoLAS 387/01/1)





Figure 17. The street front of The Gun, looking south-east (MoLAS 387/01/14)



Figure 18. The interior of a late eighteenth century first floor dining room in The Gun, Room 1FI, looking south-west to its entrance porch above a spiral staircase (MoLAS 387/01/15)





Figure 19. The riverfront of The Gun, looking south-west





Figure 20. The river front of The Gun, looking north-west (MoLAS 387/01/4)