

Site & Landscape Survey

92-112 John Street, Aberdeen **Standing Building Assessment**

Report No.3119







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1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of a standing building assessment carried out by CFA Archaeology Ltd in January 2014 on behalf of Granite City Assets Ltd at 92-112 John Street, Aberdeen (NGR:93729 06648, Fig 1). Two tenement buildings and a complex of disused single storey workshops and a former disused snooker hall are to be demolished. A 5% archaeological evaluation will be undertaken following site clearance and the results will be reported on under separate cover. A Written Scheme of Investigation for both aspects of the work was approved by Aberdeen City Council.

2. OBJECTIVES

The project's aims and objectives were:

• To carry out a historic building assessment within the proposed redevelopment boundary to determine the age, type, character and architectural significance of the buildings and whether further survey work is required prior to their demolition.

3. METHODOLOGY

General

CFA basis its methodology for historic building assessments on Guidance from ALGAO Scotland, and The Institute *for* Field Archaeologists.

Limitations to Study

For health and safety reasons there was no access to the rear of the street front properties or the property interiors.

Desk-based Assessment

Prior to the site visit a desk-based assessment was made of available on-line bibliographic sources relating to the history of the site. An examination of the first and second edition Ordnance Survey map sheets was made together with earlier map editions. Extracts from the map sheets have allowed map regression analysis to highlight the changes in historic development and layout of the buildings within the complex.

The structures to the rear of the frontage properties are given alphabetic descriptions (eg. Buildings A-F) to simplify the discussion of those buildings.

Photographic recording

CFA used a Nikon D300 camera (12 megapixals) to take high-resolution digital photographs of the buildings in their topographical setting.

A photographic location plan showing the orientation at which each shot was taken has been produced (Fig 3) and this is cross-referenced to the photographic register (Appendix 1). A set of thumbnail prints is also provided at the rear of the report.

4. DESK BASED ASSESSMENT RESULTS

4.1 Cartographic Sources

Alexander Milne's 1789 map of Aberdeen (Fig 2a) depicts a large area then known as the 'Loch lands' which takes its name from a loch that was infilled and subsequently cultivated. This area later became George St, Charlotte St, St. Andrew St and John St in the early 19th century.

John Wood's map of 1828 (Fig 2b) shows a rectilinear building(s) fronting John Street. A collection of detached buildings and an orchard are situated to the rear of this in what was mapped as largely an open area of land.

The Great Reform Act Plan of 1832 (Fig 2c) for Aberdeen shows less building detail, but shows a similar level of development with most of the site area shown as empty and undeveloped.

By the publication of the Ordnance Survey First Edition map in 1867 (Fig 2d) the site had been completely developed. John Street is fronted by buildings, the tenement buildings are represented. Property boundaries extend northwards from the frontage properties to the northern boundary of the site. The west side of the site is bounded by the rear of a row of properties possibly forming part of Wright's Granite Works. Small buildings project from the rear of these properties in to the development area. A number of smaller buildings occupy the rear plots with a number of them appearing to be subdivided in to small rectilinear units, possibly external toilets or wash houses.

The Ordnance Survey Second Edition 1902 map (Fig 2e) appears to contain a number of mapping inaccuracies with some of the building blocks shown not conforming to what earlier maps and later aerial photographs indicate must be the actuality of the situation. It is clear that a large amount of infilling had occurred in the rear plots by this time. The frontage is still a continuous row of buildings and the tenements are present but their plan is not clear due to mapping inaccuracies. A number of the buildings from the 1867 map are still present. A larger building partially on the footprint of Building A (See Fig. 2f) is now shown and another on the footprint of Building D (See Fig 2f) is now shown. One of the buildings along the western boundary is no longer shown and the other small structures along this boundary are still present but appear to have been extended.

The 1926 Ordnance Survey map which was revised in 1924 (not shown) shows the same level of detail as the 1902 map. The only significant change to the building layout is that Building E (Fig. 2f) is now shown as present.

Later map editions show the development area in block layout plan and are of little use in determining the individual character of the buildings within the proposed development site.

4.2 Aerial Photographs

Satellite imagery (Fig 2f) shows the most recent layout of the buildings to the rear of the street front properties. Since the 1902 map the plots to the rear of the frontage have been largely filled in with large industrial sheds.

The property that is currently Lumsden's and the tenement block are clearly visible.

What is thought to be the snooker hall complex of buildings (Building A) is made up of a series of buildings with pitched roofs. The recent entrance structure has an L-shaped flat roof (Plate 3). The majority of this complex of buildings post date 1924 (based on the OS mapping). However, it is possible that this complex retains elements of buildings shown on the 1902 and 1867 maps.

A building with a pitched roof (Building B) may be the surviving remains of a building mapped on the 1867 map.

The collection of pitched roof buildings (Building C) appear to have replaced smaller roofed structures and open yard areas shown on the 1902 map, one of these building is shown as roofless and the steel frame roof structure can be seen. These post date 1924 (based on the OS mapping)

Building D has a hipped slate roof with roof lights. It is probable that this structure is shown on the 1902 map but aforementioned mapping inaccuracies show this building as running up to the John Street frontage.

Building E is a flat-roofed building. A building in this location first appears on the 1926 Ordnance Survey map which was surveyed in 1924 so the surviving building potentially dates from between 1902 and 1924.

Building F appears to be a lean-to type building(s) which run along the western boundary of the site. It occupies a similar footprint to structures that appear on the 1867 map Ordnance Survey map and may incorporate elements of those structures.

4.3 RCAHMS

The RCAHMS database contained a single record (NJ90NW 244) for John Street which includes a photograph taken in 1989 of the then disused main office of the Royal Granite Works (Plate 11).

4.4 Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments

The proposed development site contains no Listed Building or Scheduled Ancient Monuments

4.5 Bibliographic

Examinations of the Post Office Directories of Aberdeen for the development area provide the names and occupations of some of the occupants.

Year	Street No.	Name and profession				
1856-57	No.92	James and Daniel Warwick, Builders				
	Nos. 95-96	David Cadenhead				
	No. 106	Nichol's Court (no names)				
	No. 112	James Wright's granite works				
1930-1931	No 94	William Centre, Cabinet Maker				
	No 98	Thomas Cox				
	No.108	Jas, R. Tough & Co Plasters				
	No. 112	James Wright's Royal Granite Works				
1940-1941	No 108	Jas, R. Tough, Carpenter				
	No. 112	James Wright's Royal Granite Works				
	No. 116	W.& T Avery Ltd Repair Depot				

Table 1 Post Office street directory entries with names and profession where known

James Wright (1810-76) started as a stone cutter in John Street in 1838, when he formed a partnership with James Petrie as Wright & Petrie (Doric Columns). By 1851, he operated on his own at the Polished Granite and Marble Works, John Street. In the 1870s, he received Letters Patent as a 'Manufacturer to Her Majesty', at 112 John Street, renaming his yard as the Royal Granite Works.

The trade indexes in the Post Office directory for 1940-41 mentions that W & T Avery Ltd (Birmingham) occupied 116 John Street. This was a local repair depot for weighing machinery. Their premises occupied the site of building group (C) in Fig 2f.

5. BUILDING ASSESSMENT RESULTS

5.1 Architectural descriptions of the street front buildings

An architectural drawing of the street front buildings within the proposed-development area has been produced as Fig 4.

Ambassador Snooker Hall 97-109 John Street

The former Ambassador Snooker Hall has been vacant since 2010 and it occupies an area of 0.19ha (Scottish Derelict Land Survey 2012). At the east end of the building a goods loading bay provided access to side doors and the buildings fire escape (Plate 1). The entrance / frontage building (Plate 2) is constructed of concrete mono-blocks and is clad with black-painted timber sheeting. Large widows have been blacked out. The north facing elevation is clad with steel (Plate 3). The style of the building suggests it was probably built in the 1970s.

Although the Ambassador Snooker Hall is a late 20th century development there could be late 19th and early 20th century structural elements surviving such as composite cast-iron roof trusses typical of industrial buildings. The 1902 Ordnance survey map

shows a composite collection of buildings with open ground between and it is possible that elements from these earlier structures survive within the current complex.

Tenement Building, No 122-126 John Street

The street frontage of the tenement building is constructed from ashlar blocks of grey granite (Plate 4). Three derelict shops occupy the ground floor. Two boarded-up doorways provided access to the flats above. A double-leafed gate provides access to Woolmanhill Court (Plate 5). This was the former Nichol's Court listed in Table 1 under the 1856-57 street directory (Table 1).

Above the shop signs, running the length of the building is a stone balustrade with ball finials at each end. The building has six bays glazed with modern PVC windows. A stringcourse is present at eaves level. The roof is pitched and slated. Four flat roofed dormers are a 20th century addition (Plate 6). Two original earlier 19th century pedimented dormers have ball finials and carved mouldings. Each dormer has a chimney stack rising above the pediment. The east-facing gable is constructed of coursed granite blocks and has an advanced chimney stack running its full height.

The lower half of the west-facing gable adjoins Lumsden's security shop (Plate 7). The gable is constructed of irregular shaped granite blocks laid in a crude Aberdeen bond and has granite ridge copings and ashlar quoins.

The rear north-facing elevation of the tenement (Plate 8) is constructed of random rubble and has two outshots with hipped slate roofs and cream-coloured brick dressings. These are both early 20th century additions and probably contain bathrooms.

The tenement building was probably constructed during the mid-19th century and is represented on the 1867 OS map. It is typical of this period and is not significant in historical terms although it contains some interesting architectural embellishments.

Lumsden's Security Shop No128-130 John Street

Lumsden's security shop comprises a granite-built building with a pitched corrugated steel-sheet covered roof. The street front elevation (Plate 7) has the main shop doorway and three windows. Another door presumably accesses a stairs to a first floor which is lit by two large rectangular windows. The attic space is lit by two square windows. All the windows are modern PVC inserts. The rear of the building is clad with steel sheeting (Plate 8).

The west-facing elevation (Plates 9 & 10) incorporates an earlier gable wall for what is presumed to be an earlier building that once occupied the footprint of Lumsden's. This earlier gable wall in turn contains evidence of the single storey office of the Royal Granite Works (Plate 11) which projected out from it and was present from the mid 19th century to 1989 when it was demolished. These remains include a blocked fireplace with a large lintel flanked on each side by a large press each of which contains shelving scars and original whitewashed plaster. The brickwork above and between is very crude and much repaired. The northern side of the gable is

constructed of random rubble. The roofline of the granite works office can be seen incised into the brickwork above the southernmost press.

Boundary Walls

The western boundary wall of the proposed re-development area continues northward for about 50m. This wall appears to have been reduced and capped with modern brickwork. This wall may be the remains of the rear wall of a row of buildings shown on the 1867 OS map that fronted on to the Royal Granite Works.

Buildings to the rear of the street front buildings

No access was available to the rear of the site as the buildings were deemed to be in a very dilapidated state so there were significant health and safety implications.

6. SUMMARY

The Post Office street directory (Table 1) shows that a number of buildings on the site were occupied by a variety of tradesmen during the late 19th and 20th centuries. The Royal Granite Works appears to have been the most consistent occupier. The other trades included builders and a carpenter. During the late 20th century some of the buildings to the rear of the tenement were in use as a business centre as the sign over the close running under the tenements advertises it as access to the the St Andrews Business Centre.

The tenement building has some interesting architectural embellishments including the balustrade and original pedimented dormer windows. However, the building is typical of the mid 19th century and is of no architectural or historical importance.

Lumsden's security shop was probably constructed some time in the mid 20th century and is of no historical or architectural importance. This building replaced an earlier building that had a pitched gable. Part of this gable still survives (Plate 10).

The Ambassador Snooker Hall occupies a large proportion of the site. Whilst elements of it are late 20th Century it incorporates a number of earlier industrial buildings some of which may retain late 19th and early 20th century structural elements. Although the majority of these buildings would appear to post date 1924.

Of the other buildings to the rear of the site Building B may be the surviving remains of a building mapped on the 1867 map. The collection of pitched roof buildings (Building C) would appear to post date 1924. Building D post dates 1867 and is probably late 19th century in date. Building E potentially dates from between 1902 and 1924 and Building F may incorporate mid 19th century and early 20th century elements.

7. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Whilst access to the rear of the street frontage was not possible the desk based assessment has provided a detailed assessment of the development of this part of the site. Most of the buildings in this part of the site are 20th century in date, (post dating 1924), with some limited potential for mid-late 19th century and early 20th century survival. These buildings would all appear to be light industrial buildings and are unlikely to be of sufficient architectural interest in their current form to merit recording. If any recording is required a photographic record of the buildings should be sufficient, but this could only be undertaken if the area was safe to enter, possibly during demolition.

No further recording work on the frontage buildings is considered necessary prior to the demolition of the buildings.

It is recognised that the decision for any additional work lies with Aberdeen Council.

An entry in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland* is considered sufficient to disseminate the results of the survey following the completion of all on site archaeological works. The project will also be reported through the OASIS protocol. The project archive, comprising all CFA record sheets, maps and reports, will be deposited with the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) and copies of reports will be lodged with the Aberdeen Council Sites and Monuments Record.

8. REFERENCES

Cartographic

Milne, A 1789 'A plan of the City of Aberdeen with all the inclosures surrounding the town to the adjacent country, from a survey taken 1789'.

Wood, J. 1828 'Plan of the Cities of Aberdeen'.

Great Reform Act Plans and Reports, 1832 Aberdeen.

Ordnance Survey First Edition 1867 Sheet LXXV.11.7 Aberdeen

Ordnance Survey First Edition Sheet LXXV.11 (Old Machar) colour copy

Ordnance Survey 1902 Second Edition, revised Aberdeenshire Sheet 075.11

Ordnance Survey 1926 revised 1924 Aberdeenshire Sheet 075.11

Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey, Aberdeen 2012 Site Map Ref. 18.

Bibliographic

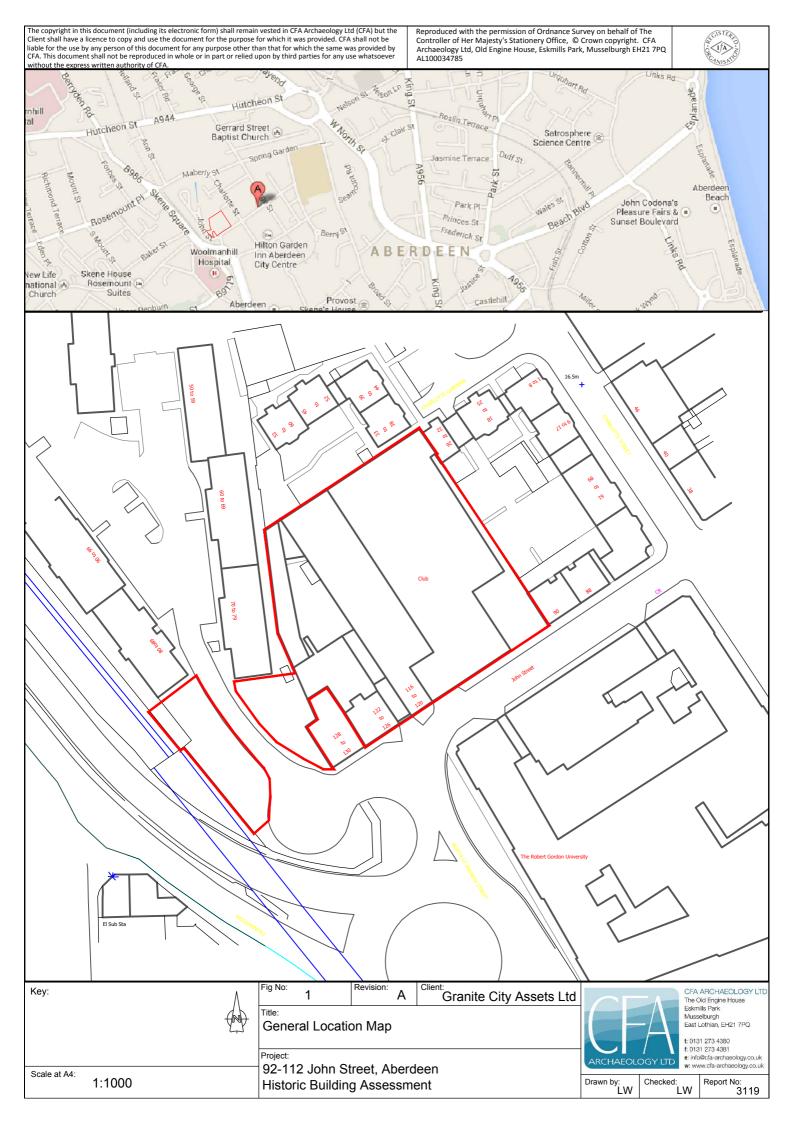
Doric Columns: Aberdeen the City http://www.mcjazz.f2s.com/District.htm

Post Office Directories for the City of Aberdeen. On-line through NLS

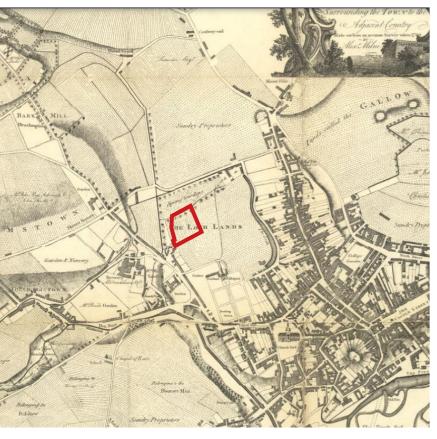
Scottish Vacant and Derelict Land Survey 2012, Aberdeen City Council.

APPENDIX 1: PHOTOGRAPHIC REGISTER

Shot No	Summary description	Facing			
1-2	Ambassador snooker hall goods entrance and fire escape	N			
3-4	Ambassador snooker hall east end, fire escape	SW			
5-6	Ambassador snooker hall east end, fire escape	W			
7-8	Ambassador snooker hall, street frontage	N			
9-10	Ambassador snooker hall, street frontage				
11-12	Ambassador snooker hall, roller door at west end				
13-15	Tenement block, street frontage				
16	Entrance gate into rear ally and shops				
17-18	General view of the tenement block				
19-20	Lumsden's security shop front, general view	N			
21-24	West-facing gable with exposed features	Е			
25-27	West-facing gable with exposed features, detailed shots	Е			
28	West-facing gable, with press and blocked fireplace	Е			
29-30	West-facing gable, earlier roof line	E			
31	West-facing gable, press and blocked fireplace	E			
32	Granite ashlar work and string courses on the SW corner of the	E			
J 2	gable				
33	General view of the SW facing gable	Е			
34-35	Brick repair and wall fabric on the N side of the gable	NE			
36	Detailed shot of a press on the W facing gable				
37-38	Rubble wall behind Lumsden's security shop				
39	Rear elevation of Lumsden's security shop and tenement				
40	Brick-capped wall behind Lumsden's security shop				
41	Base of the brick-capped wall behind Lumsden's security shop				
42	General shot of the tenement building				
43	Close up on the tenement dormers				
44	Boarded up shop doorway on the tenement street frontage				
45	Balustrade above the shop fronts, tenement building				
46	E-facing gable of the tenement building showing earlier pitched roofline				
47	E-facing rear wall of the Ambassador snooker hall	W			
48-49	E-facing rear wall of the Ambassador snooker hall and roof	W			
50-51	E-facing wall of the Ambassador snooker hall facing onto carpark	W			
52	E-facing wall of the Ambassador snooker hall facing onto carpark				
53	E-facing wall of the Ambassador snooker hall facing onto carpark				
54-55	Detail of the fenestration and dormers, tenement building	N			
56-58	Distant shots of the tenement building	N			
59	East end of the tenement building, showing fenestration				
60					
61-62	Distant shots of the tenement building	N N			
63-65	Street level passage below the tenement building and disused shops to the rear.	N			







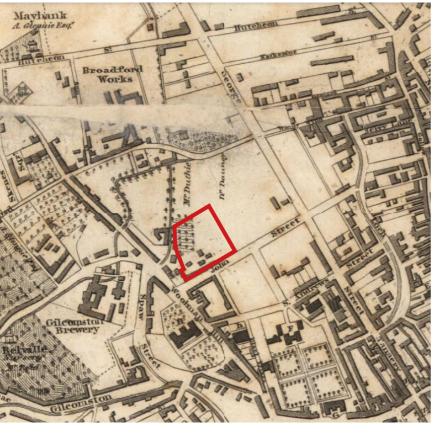




Fig. 2a - Alexander Milne's Map, 1789

Fig. 2d - Ordnance Survey 1867

Fig. 2b - John Wood, 1828

Fig. 2c - Reform Act 1832

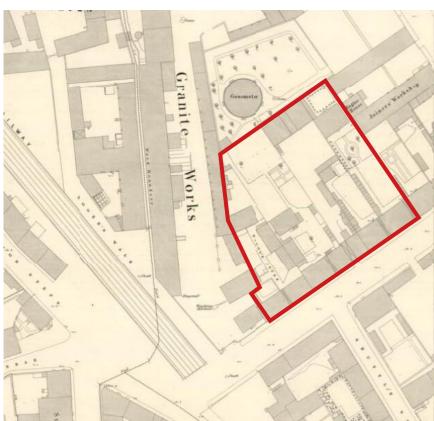


Fig. 2e - Ordnance Survey 1902



Fig. 2f - Aerial view (Buildings A-F)

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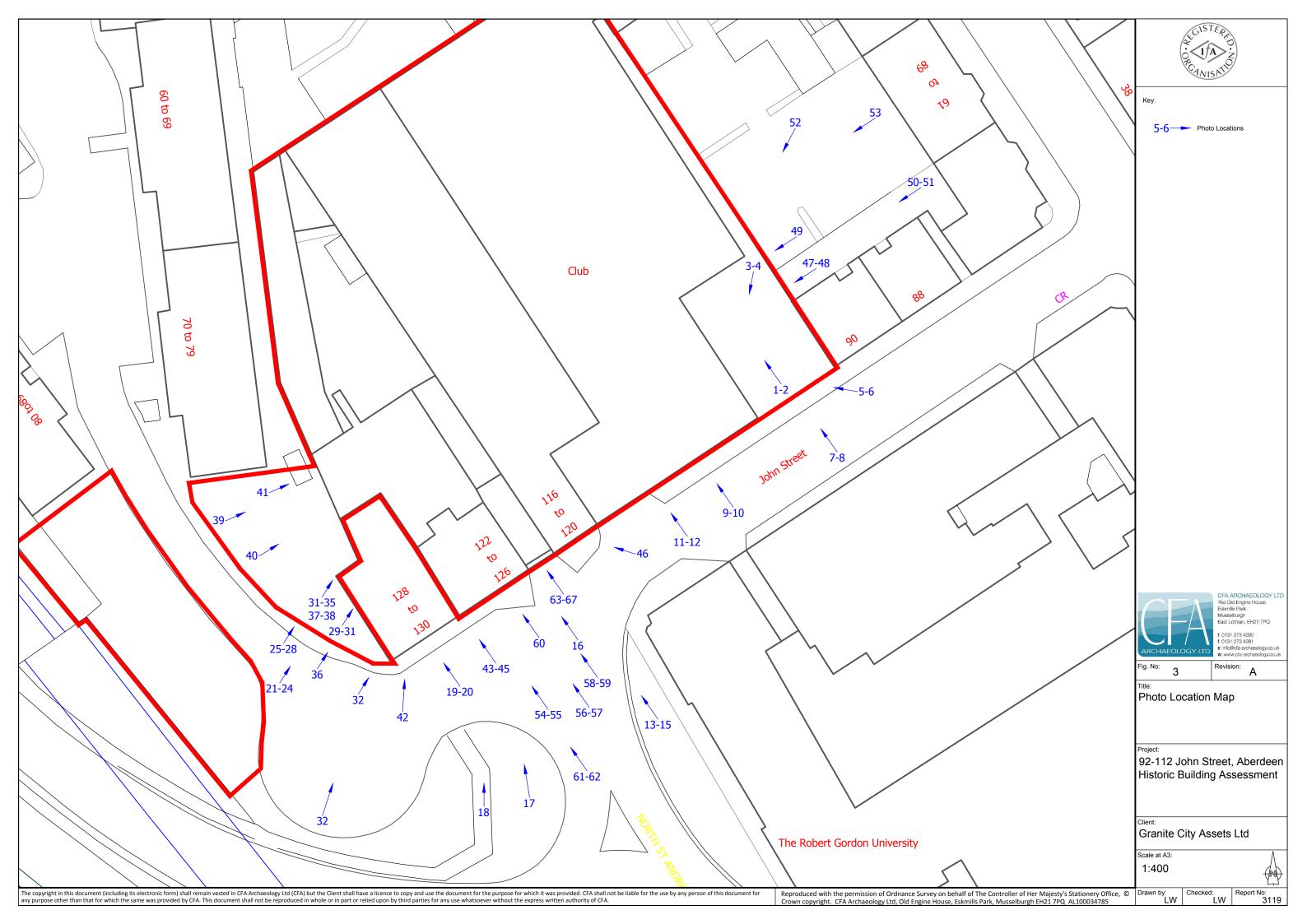
2a-f

Historic Map Regression

92-112 John Street, Aberdeen Historic Buildings Assessment

Granite City Assets Ltd





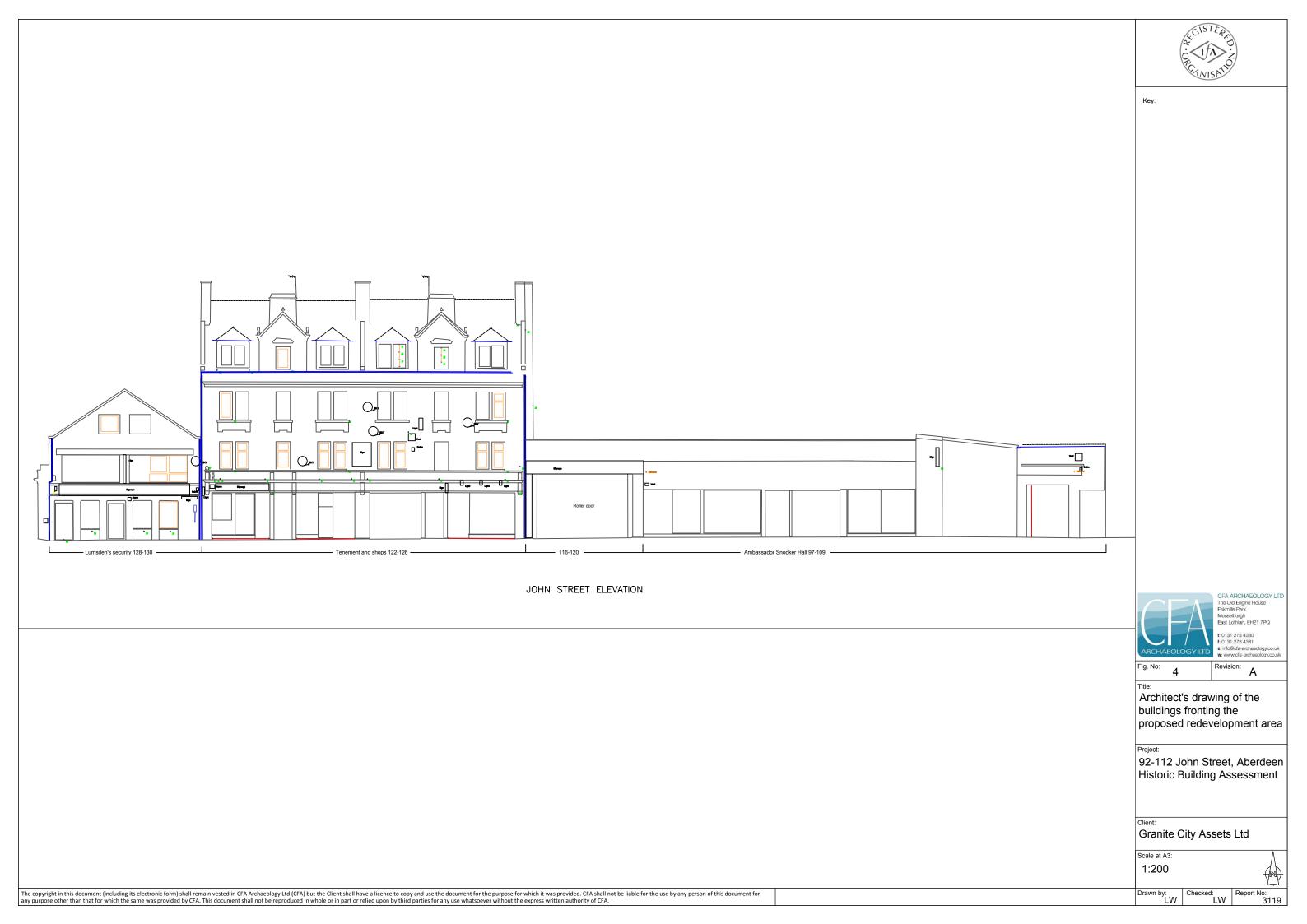




Plate 1 - Ambassador Snooker Hall, east-facing elevation and fire-escape



Plate 2 - Ambassador Snooker Hall, general view of the street frontage



Plate 3 - Ambassador Snooker Hall, rear north-facing elevation



Plate 4 - Tenement building and Lumsden Security, fronting John Street



Plate 5 - The close running between the two tenements



Plate 6 - Tenement building, general view of the dormers with pediment

Plates: 1-6		Revision:	Project:	92-112 John Street, Aberdeen Historic Buildings Assessment		
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Plate 7 - Lumsden Security, general view of the shop front



Plate 8 - North-facing (rear) elevation of the tenement building and Lumsden Security



Plate 9 - Lumsden Security, west facing elevation showing earlier building remains



Plate 10 - Lumsden Security, west-facing elevation with the building remains in more detail



Plate 11 - Historic photograph taken in 1989 of the demolished main office of the Royal Granite Works (Source Canmore) built against the earlier gable on Plate 10

Plate	Plates: 7-11		Revision:	Project:	92-112 John Street, Aberdeen Historic Buildings Assessment	& CISTER S	CFA ARCHAEOLOGY LTD The Old Engine House Eskmills Park, Musselburgh
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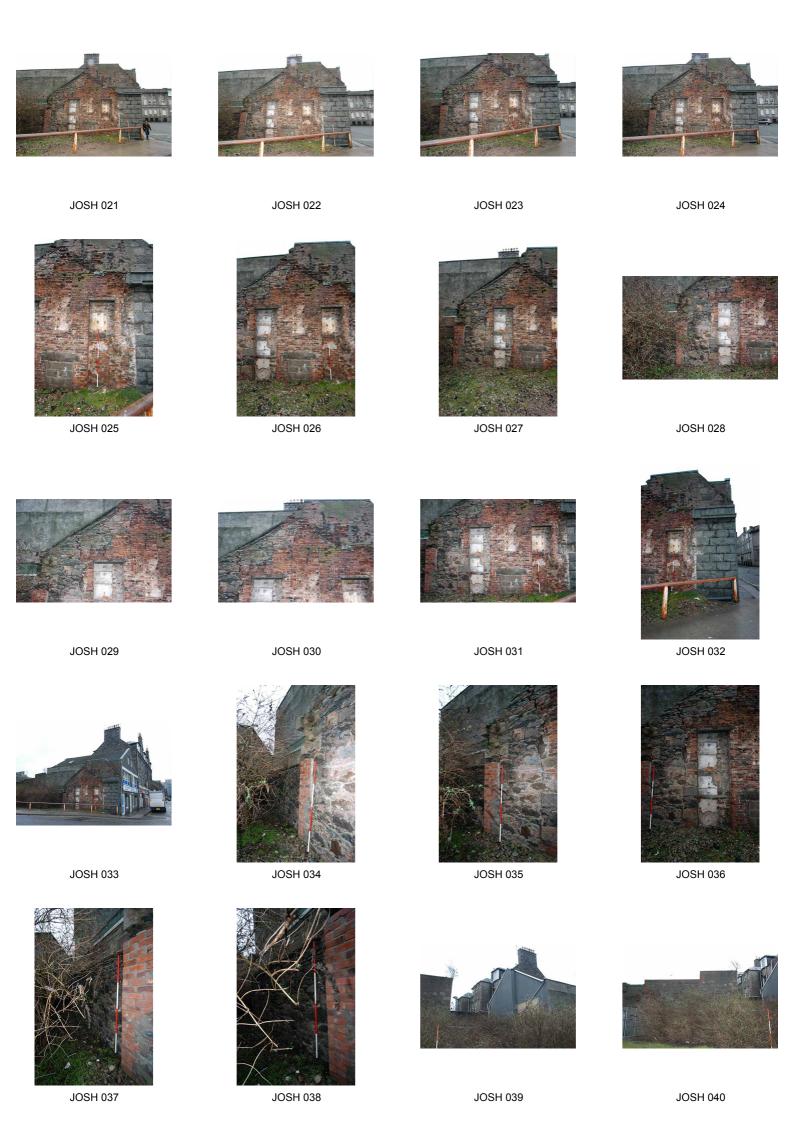








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