

JOHN MOORE HERITAGE SERVICES

16 TURL STREET,

OXFORD,

OX1 3DH

HISTORIC BUILDING RECORD

On behalf of

Quite Interesting (Oxford) Ltd

MAY 2004

REPORT FOR Quite Interesting (Oxford) Ltd
16 Turl Street
Oxford
OX1 3DH

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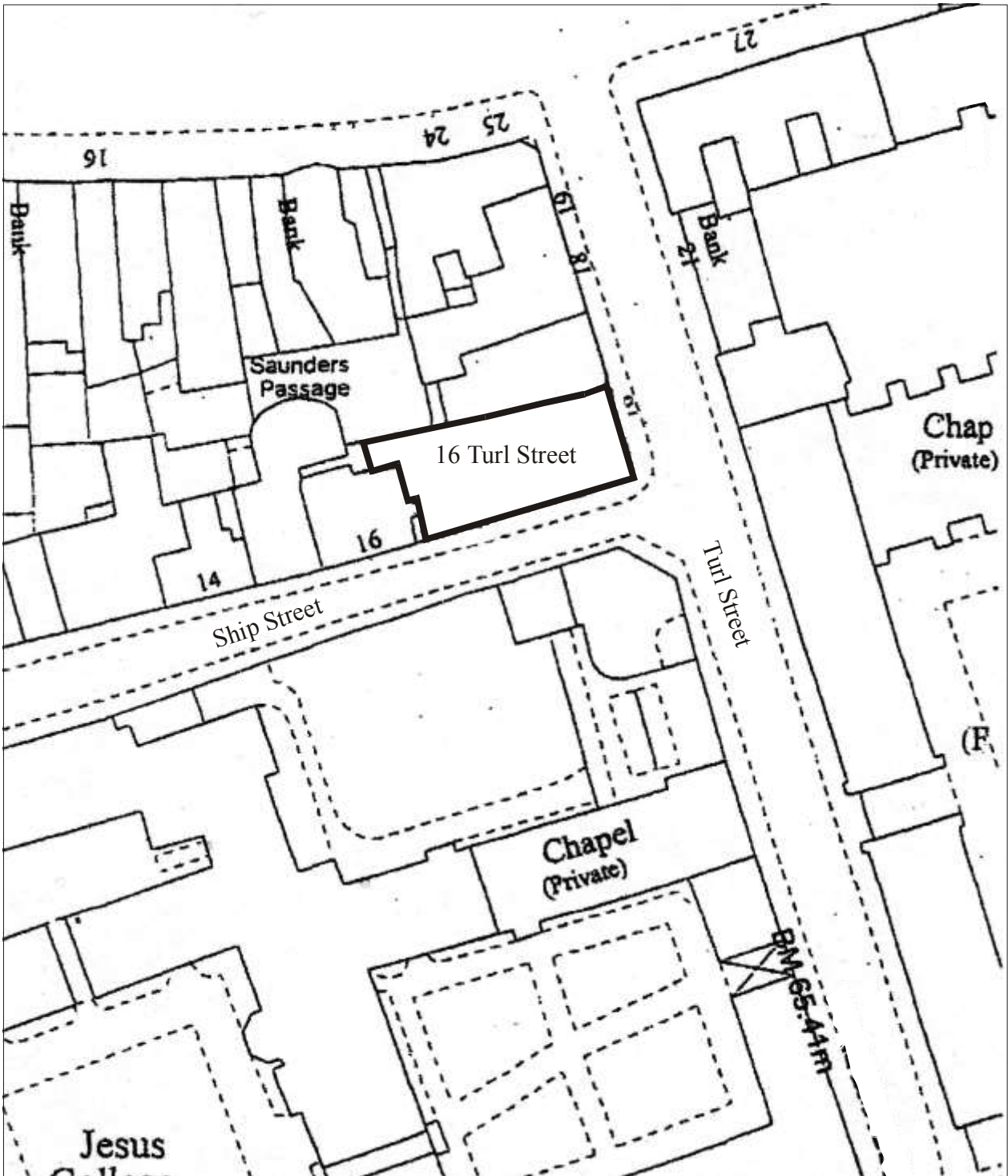


Figure 1: Site Location

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PLANNING BACKGROUND

Listed Building consent has been granted (03/01716/LBC) for a programme of internal alterations to be carried out at 16 Turl Street, Oxford, OX1 3DH. The consent is subject to conditions:

Condition 16 The internal walls on the second and third floors of the building shall not be removed until the applicant has:

(b) carried out an evaluation of the exposed structure of the walls to identify their age and whether they are structural; and

(c) secured the implementation of an agreed scheme of mitigation (to preserve or record the structures) if any of the walls are found to be historically significant or structural.

The Government, through the Department of Culture Media and Sport is responsible for protecting the historic environment. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides specific protection for buildings and areas of special architectural or historic interest. The Department monitors the effectiveness of the controls.

The Secretary of State has a duty under the Act to compile lists of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. There are three grades of listing:

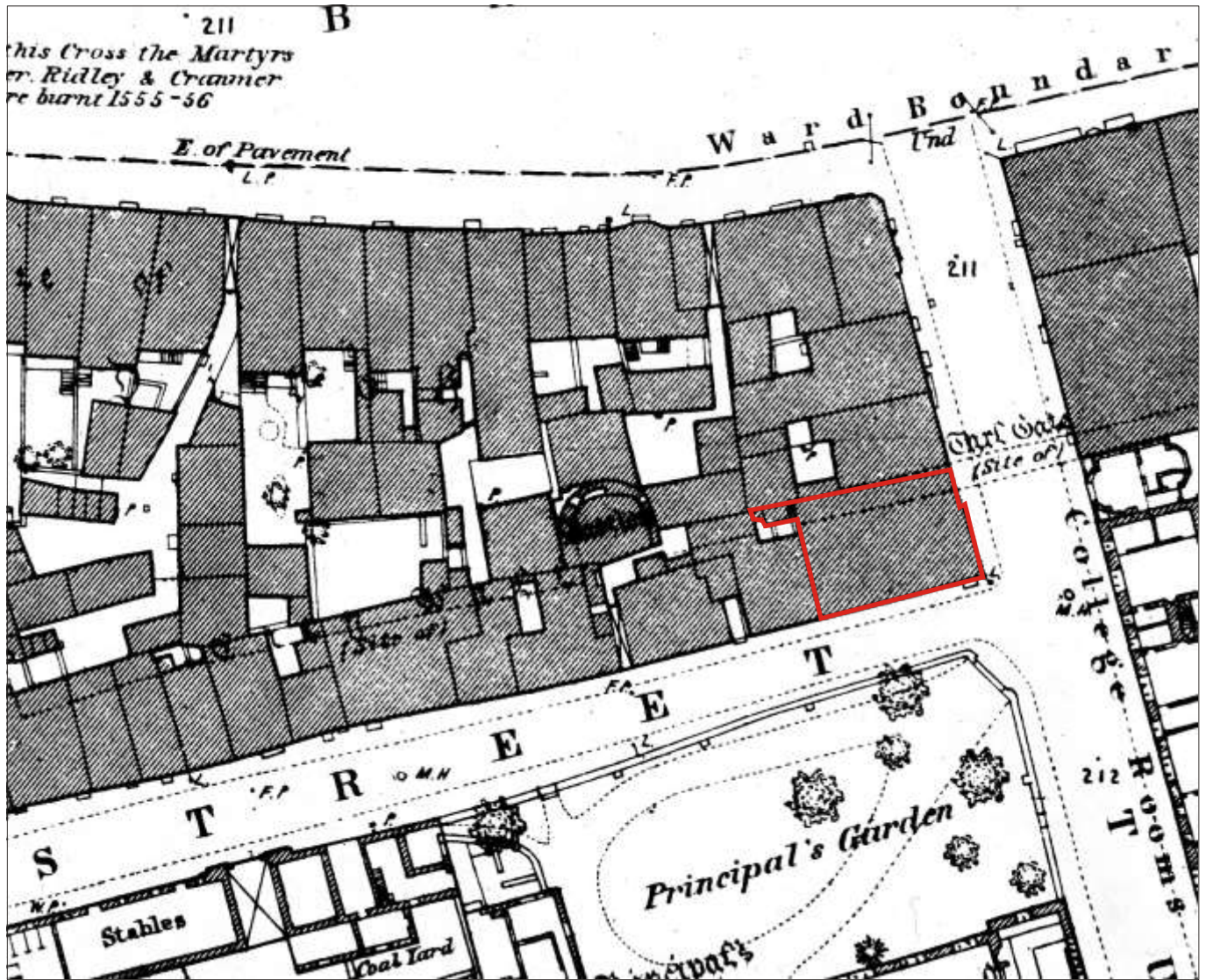
- Grade II are of special interest, warranting every effort to preserve them
- Grade II* are particularly important buildings of more than special interest
- Grade I buildings are those of exceptional interest

The house at 16 Turl Street has been listed as Grade II.

1.2 Location and Description:

Number 16 occupies a site on the corner of Turl Street and Ship Street (Figure 1). The entrance is on the Turl Street side and faces Exeter College, a college established in the 14th Century. Opposite the property on Ship Street is Jesus College, founded in the 16th century. Pevsner states that the buildings on Turl Street are ‘just a foil to the colleges’ (1966: 308).

The house is situated directly south of the former City Wall, and the projected line of the wall as shown on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map of 1876 (Figure 2) is situated along the line of the northern property wall between number 16 Turl Street and the adjacent property and possibly survives as part of the northern wall of the cellar. There are no buildings shown to occupy the current site on Wood’s map of 1661, which means that the property was constructed after that date.



 16 Turl Street

Figure 2: First Edition Ordnance Survey Map showing the Course of the City Wall

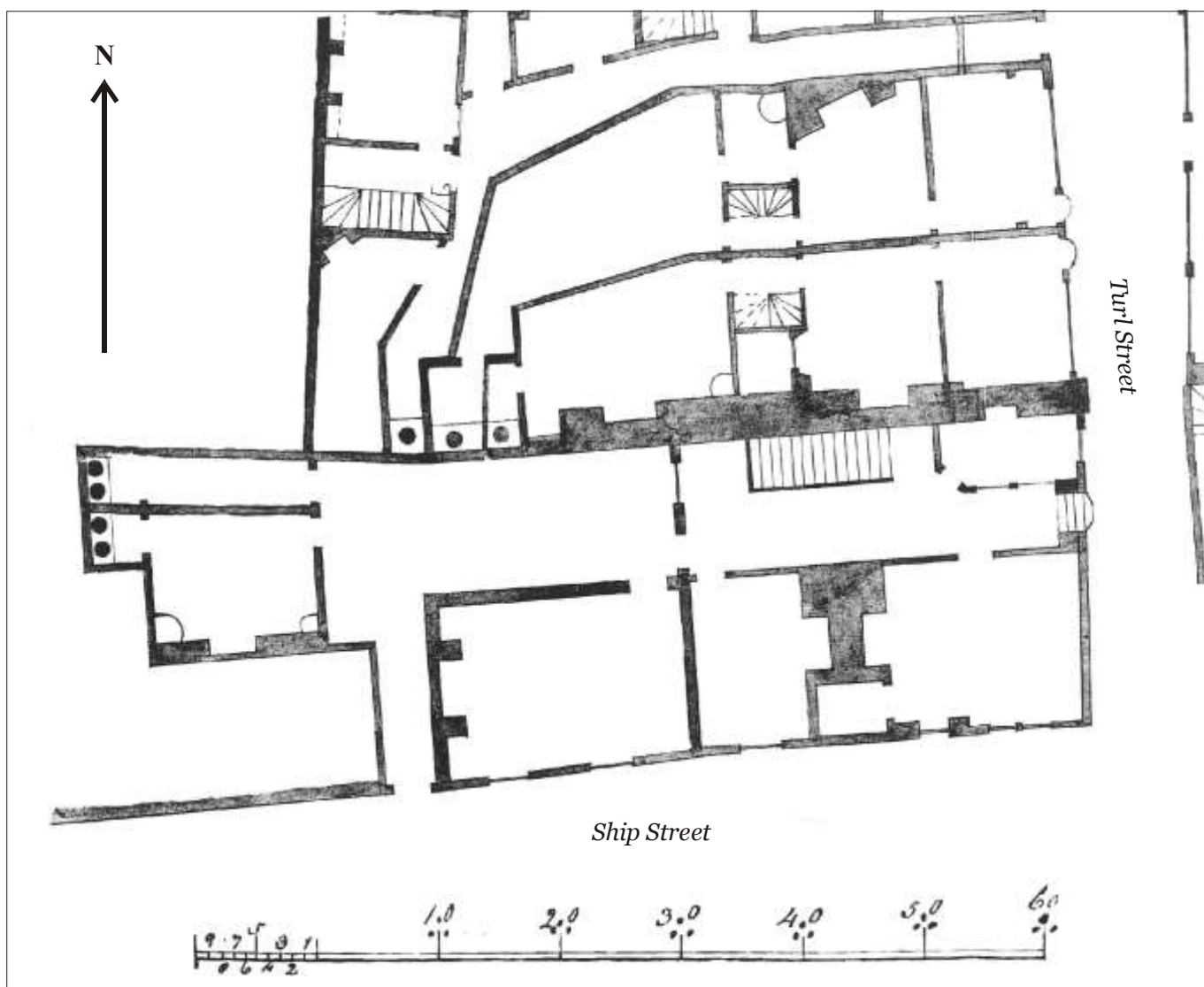


Figure 3: Latimer's Plan of c. 1780

The first available plan upon which the property is shown is Latimer's dating from the 1780s (Figure 3): a date supported by that given on the listing (of c. 1785), based on the building fabric, which as stands, can be dated on its external architectural features to the Georgian period (1714 to 1830).

The property has been listed as Grade II and the Listed Building description states that the property comprises a four-storey building, timber framed and rendered in keeping with the adjacent buildings. The ground floor is of rusticated stucco with a moulded cornice and parapet; the front doorway is of early 19th century date. In addition to this, the cellars are stone built vaults showing later modification in the form of brick infill to reduce the size of passages and more modern alterations in keeping with the recent function of the building as a restaurant.

1.3 Function

The first known function of the building comes from Latimer's Plan of c.1780 which attaches the name of Mr Pridys to the building and it is probable that the building was created to provide lodgings for the university. Kelly's directories support this in that the property was listed as lodgings from 1895 to 1944, and at one stage was attached to Exeter College. The Vellum Book (1832:125) noted the function of the large front ground floor room as a coffee shop at the same time as the upper floors were utilised for university lodgings. It is probable that the arrangements shown on Latimer's Plan with the doorway and double window on the Ship Street frontage are that of a coffee shop.

A change of function occurred in 1945 when the property became Turl House Private Hotel under S. Bahadur, proprietor. By 1947 and on until 1969, number 16 became the Taj Mahal Restaurant which had previously been housed at number 18 Turl Street, also under the ownership of S Bahadur. 1970 saw the continued function of the property as the Taj Mahal Restaurant, but additionally, the Oxford Arts Centre and Pradevaru Gallery had taken up residence, a situation that persisted until at least 1976. The building continued to house the Taj Mahal Restaurant in the early 1990s when planning applications were lodged for the insertion of an internal staircase. In the following decade, the property had become Shimla Pinks until it changed hands and was re-modelled as the seafood restaurant Livebait! owned by Group Chez Gerard. In 2000 and 2001 planning consent was again granted for alterations to the building. The property was still in use as Livebait! in October 2002 and it was not until November 2003 that planning applications were lodged by the current owners for a programme of works to convert the building to a coffee and book shop.



Figure 4: General Plans of all Floors

2 THE BUILDING FABRIC (Figure 4)

2.1 STONE

The core of the building is of limestone. The cellars extend under Turl Street and there are vents incorporated in the vaulted ceilings under the road. The walls are predominantly of rubble construction, particularly the north, east and south walls. It is probable that the northern wall of the property within the cellar, was part of the city wall, the building built up to incorporate it, and is therefore the earliest fabric utilised by the construction. The internal walls that divide the cellar space into separate vaults have a more uniform, coursed appearance comprising dressed blocks. The ceilings are of ashlar blocks, and the vents are brick lined. There is a straight-line joint visible where the eastern wall abuts the northern wall but the relationship of the west wall to the northern wall was not observed.

The chimneybreasts are also of stone construction, dressed blocks bearing chisel marks cut into the stone to provide a good 'key' for the application of plaster. The fireplaces on the ground, first and second floors are all housed within the stone chimneybreasts.

The boundary wall, at the north side of the property at first floor level is also of stone construction, although of a more regular, coursed nature comprising dressed blocks. The wall incorporates an additional fireplace in the position shown on figure 4. The west wall of the property, between number 16 Turl Street and the adjacent Ship Street properties is also of stone. There is a final stone built partition wall between the rear ground floor room and the passage. This wall has been subject to extensive remodelling and only partially survives in its original state.

2.2 TIMBER

The Turl Street and Ship Street frontages are of timber frame construction to the full four-storey height of the building. The ground and first floor frames where visible, comprise sill beam with studs and wall plate: in the ground floor, the sill beam rests directly on the wall head of the cellar below. The sill beam provides the base for a number of uprights (studs) fixed to the beam by mortise and tenon joints. Within the construction a number of up-braces fixed diagonally up from principal posts through the studs to the wall plate, or upper horizontal member of the frame serve to strengthen the structure.

Additional timber members comprise bridging beams stretching across the rooms from wall plate to wall plate. These heavy timbers provide support for ceilings and upper floors.

Joists are fixed to the larger beams and floorboards in turn, fixed to the joists. The joists are aligned north south for the most part within the property and the floorboards are overlain at right angles to the joists.

2.3 BRICK

On the second and third floors, the wall between number 16 and its neighbour to the north is of brick construction. In addition to this, the fireplaces on the third floor are within brick built chimneybreasts. The rear wall, on the third floor, at the western end of the property is also of brick construction.

2.4 WALL COVERINGS, FIXTURES AND FITTINGS

The external finish to the property is Stucco over riven oak laths. The ground and first floor on the ship street frontage have woven wire between the stucco and the laths; the purpose of which is to provide a better key for the plaster. The interiors of the majority of the rooms are also lath and plaster, occasionally with sawn laths in place of riven. On a few occasions traces of floral and plant motif wallpapers were observed.

The fireplaces still *in situ* within the property comprised Register Grates of Victorian origin and in a few cases in the upper floors, of Edwardian Hob Grates. No earlier fireplaces were observed.

3 DESIGN FEATURES

3.1 THE LAYOUT

The original layout of the property is in line with 18th Century ideas of architecture and design. The rooms were of near equal size arranged on one side of the entrance hall (in this case the south). A fanlight, typical of the period, lighted the narrow entrance hallway and the doorway was styled as a focal point.

The windows throughout the building are double hung sash with six, nine or twelve panes. The listed building description describes some of the Ship Street windows as blocked. A planning application lodged in 1989 (application 89/00752/NFH) addressed the unblocking of the windows with any replacement timbers and general repairs to be undertaken at the same time.

The symmetry desired in this period could be obtained from the terrace or tenement as a whole with unifying cornices, parapet and finish on the facade. This can be seen on the Turl Street frontage where numbers 16 to 18 have identical fanlights.

4 FLOOR BY FLOOR DISCUSSION

4.1 THE CELLARS

The cellars together with the other stone elements of the building form the core of the property. That the property is situated adjacent to the line of the

city wall raises the possibility that some of the standing masonry may be related to that monument.

The ashlar blocks (Plate 1) used in the vaulted ceilings appears to be of a different construction phase from the rubble constructed north and east walls. As mentioned above, the interior walls dividing the cellars are of a more coursed construction comprising dressed stone blocks. The access arch between the central and western chambers is also of dressed stone construction, although much brickwork is in evidence here to bring about a reduction in the size of the passage between the vaults (Plate 2).



Plate 1: Ashlar blocks in cellar



Plate 2: Re-used post

Further later additions are the jowled posts immediately to the east of the arch. The posts are re-used earlier timbers and are not *in situ*. The jowled shape of one of the posts indicates an original use in the corner of a timber frame; the numerous empty mortises also indicate a different original function. In this location the posts are probably props or supports.

4.2 THE GROUND FLOOR

The 1780's plan of the building shows no windows on the Turl Street frontage. The recent plan shows this area as jutting out a little from the line of the doorway; again this is not depicted on the 1780's plan.

The 1780s map shows the Ship Street frontage with a doorway and a large window on the western elevation of the property, providing access directly into the large front room, while access to the rear of the property and the rooms upstairs could be had from the Turl Street entrance: this layout would have corresponded well with the early function as a coffee house as noted in the Vellum Book. The current plan of the front room is four sash windows of uniform size and shape, two on the Turl Street elevation and two on the Ship Street side.

Some stripping of the internal finish on the inside of the Ship Street frontage revealed traces of repair in the form of brick infilled panels rather than lath

and plaster (Plate 3). Further indications of repair or indeed rebuilding of the Ship Street elevation were evident from the combination of earlier hewn timbers and sawn studs (plate 4). In addition to this, areas of woven wire used to key in the plaster finish were visible (plate 4). Woven wire was introduced in this manner after 1840, this suggests that the re-plastering took place after this date and may have included the remodelling of the elevations to produce the current fenestration.



Plate 4: Detail showing brick infill with original and later studs

Plate 3: The different materials used in re-building/ repairing the Ship Street Front at ground floor level

The remodelling of this front room may have involved its widening: on the 1780's plan the wall between the rooms and corridor lines up (Figure 3), on the recent plans it does not. It was originally suggested that the rear dividing wall had been re-located, but the substantial nature of the partition wall in the rear of the building and the construction materials used being the same as the other stone built areas of the building, suggest that it is original. The stone built dividing wall only partially survives, and it has been knocked through in recent years, built up with brick finish and reinforced with modern I-beams (plates 5 and 6).



Plate 5



Plate 6: Detail of Breach

Further internal modifications appear to consist of the creation of through access from the front to the back room through what was originally a cupboard adjacent to the large chimneybreast. By the time of the 2001 alterations, the access had been created, aided by the addition of a few steps up into the rear of the two rooms. A chamfer has also been taken off the chimneybreast to facilitate flow of access between the rooms (plate 7). The fireplaces were blocked and the whole plastered.



Plate 7: Chamfer on chimney breast and access to front room

The flooring in front of the rear fireplace has been replaced with sawn treated timbers overlain by panels of plywood. The ceiling at this end has been lowered, with laths visible above the lower layer of north-south orientated joists. Repairs to the ceiling here is evident in the use of I-beams and modern sawn timbers fixed to remaining originals to provide reinforcement.

4.3 THE FIRST FLOOR

The front of the first floor rooms was not examined in detail due to its function as site office: no stripping out had occurred at the time of the survey. The rear of the two rooms had a replacement floor of plywood panels as could be seen from the ceiling repairs made on the ground floor. The front room had north-south orientated floorboards consisting of wider boards 19 to 22 cm wide, the floorboards in the rear room, orientated east-west, were an average 10 cm wide. The front room flooring may be original: the varying widths of the boards cut from hardwood were laid so that the widest boards were in the middle of the floor, getting narrower towards the perimeter of the room. The

varying widths of the timber suggests original *in situ* flooring prior to the widespread availability of uniform cheap softwood boards.

Other features identified on the first floor include a fireplace situated within the north stone wall at the west end of the property; the fireplace had previously been blocked and plastered over.

A heavy bridging beam east-west orientated and extending from the rear stone fireplace to the fireplace between the rooms served to carry the north-south orientated floor joists of the floor above.

4.4 THE SECOND FLOOR

This area of the building has been altered in a more substantial manner than the rest of the build so far. The front room is largely an open area with timber frame partitions inserted to divide the space. A north-south orientated bridging beam was visible in the floor, located approximately mid-way between the two Ship Street windows, and extending out towards the north wall. However, the beam is truncated short of the north wall, a slot cut into the beam and a smaller rectangular section timber joist inserted to create an extension to the original beam. This inserted joist is the same in section as the adjacent floor joists in this area. The partition wall, closest to and parallel with the north wall has been built with the floor construction: the timber frame sill beam is housed in the floor, and the rest of the floorboards are cut to fit.

The partition wall enclosing the area containing the fireplace appears to have been a later insertion; the boards have been cut away, or recessed to house the framed partition. The wall plate is fixed to a plinth nailed to the underside of the ceiling joist above.

The floorboards are east-west oriented, single flooring c. 14 cm wide in the northern room (north of the housed partition). The floorboards in the southern rooms are more interesting in that the east-west orientated boards overlie wider north-south aligned boards an average 22 cm wide and similar in character to those seen in the ground and first floor front rooms. This suggests that the original boards were overlain with narrower boards on a different alignment at a later date.

A raised floor had been fitted to a softwood frame, sloping towards the door within the area bounded by the inserted partition adjacent to the fireplace. This floor is of a much later date and may be part of a programme of works carried out to rebuild the northern half of this floor.

The north wall between the Turl Street property and its neighbour is of brick construction on this floor.

4.5 THE THIRD FLOOR

The majority of this floor is a later addition: the north and west walls are brick built, the fireplace in the west wall and in the wall between the second and

third rooms are also brick construction. There is also a brick built chimney on the exterior northern wall. That the third floor was in place by 1865 is attested to by a photograph showing the building standing to the full four storeys in height (plate 8).

The partitions comprise those housed in the structure and are therefore with the construction of this floor. In addition, there are later insertions used to break up the space. The east-west orientated partitions placed to form a narrow corridor between the north and south rooms, are housed into the construction. The roof light above the corridor is supported on the wall plates of the partitions: the stud arrangement in the partition and the frame for the light line up and suggest single build.

The floorboards are single boards, east-west orientated over north-south joists. The heavy beam visible from the floor below supports the joists and carries the floor. The extent of the beam towards the north was not seen.

Further partitioning had been inserted at a later date: the east-west partition abutting the central window on the Turl Street front was recessed into the floor and it's location served to divide the light in the sash window.

4.6 THE ROOF

The building has a common rafter roof and where visible it was clear that the construction comprised re-used earlier timbers together with modern rectangular section sawn timbers. The earlier timbers may have come from the original roof structure, re-used when the second floor was modified and the third floor added.



Plate 8: Photograph of Ship Street taken in 1865 showing the full four storeys (Graham & Waters: 1997)

5 SUMMARY

From the above breakdown of the features observed in the property, it can be argued that the cellars are original incorporating the earlier masonry of the city wall. The ground and first floor rooms, taking into account minor modifications, broadly adhere to the original layout.

The Ship Street front has been altered, possibly as part of a general rebuild or re-modelling of the building as a whole. The woven wire used to provide a key for the re-plastering of the frontage gives a *terminus post quem* of 1844 for the reconstruction.

The flooring in the front rooms of the ground and first floor are good quality and probably original. The southern front room on the second floor appears to have had the original flooring covered by later narrow and uniform boards on a different alignment but in keeping with those visible in the northern of the two rooms.

The second floor on the south side appears to comprise some original building elements, however, much modification and partial rebuild is attested to in the truncated bridging beam that had been extended using a much narrower, rectangular section timber to reach the northern property wall. In addition to this, the northern property wall is of later brick construction. That the northern partition is housed in the later floor here, argues for a date contemporary with the rebuild for the internal arrangements of the rooms at this level.

The third floor is a wholly later event: the main walls are all of brick as are the chimneys and fireplaces. The roof light and partitions are contemporary, sharing principal timbers. An original girding beam gives support for the floor on the southern side, the internal arrangements are partially incorporated in the build but there are later elements.

A photograph showing the Ship Street frontage, taken in 1865 shows the building with the third floor in place (plate 9). This date gives a *terminus ante quem* for the construction of the third floor probably Victorian in date.

6 CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, the building was built during the 18th century in the Georgian style, but it is clear that the northern half of the property on the second floor is of a later date, probably rebuilt when the third floor was added. The exterior wall finish, where visible, was re-applied after 1844 with the addition of woven wire, and many replacement studs were incorporated in the frame alongside some of the original timbers. Part of the re-build and repair on the southern side of the building created a fenestration different to that of the original shown on Latimer's plan.

The rebuild and re-modelling took place prior to 1865 and included modifications to the interior, visible in the partition walls built with the floor

on the northern half of the second floor, creating new internal arrangements as well as providing support for the upper storey. Further internal modifications were carried out on a number of occasions during the 19th and 20th centuries including the insertion of partitions in the southern side of the second floor.

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