

C254 Archaeology West
Building Recording at No 5a Great Chapel Street,
Tottenham Court Road Station
Event Code XRY10
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Summary

A rapid programme of building recording has been undertaken at No 5a Great Chapel Street in Soho, London prior to its demolition as part of the redevelopment of Tottenham Court Road Station for Crossrail.

The building was unlisted and it was not initially proposed for recording but the staircase inside the structure was then identified as being of considerable interest, apparently dating from the 1730s and surviving within an almost entirely reconstructed building. A rapid phase of recording was then undertaken after the start of demolition/soft strip works, as part of a wider programme of archaeological and building recording at the Tottenham Court Road site.

The main building appears to be of probable later 19th century date and the floors incorporate scissors-brace struts as well as a 1.5 m² hatch for transferring goods or materials between floors. This suggests a light industrial or storehouse use for the building and this is supported by evidence in the 1895 Post Office Directory which shows that the building was used at this date by a building materials dealer.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In July 2010 Oxford Archaeology in partnership with Gifford (OA Gifford) carried out historic building recording at No.5a Great Chapel Street, prior to its demolition to allow the construction of a new Crossrail station at Tottenham Court Road (TCR), London.
- 1.1.2 The building was unlisted and during initial studies of heritage at the TCR site Number 5a Great Chapel Street was initially assessed as only making a neutral contribution to the Conservation Area and not requiring mitigation building recording (CR-SD-CTR-EN-OT-00001). A staircase inside the building was subsequently identified as apparently being a surviving structure from the 1730s and it was then requested that a rapid programme of recording be undertaken on the building as part of the overall programme of archaeological mitigation for Crossrail.
- 1.1.3 The work forms part of a wider programme of archaeological and building recording undertaken in areas to be impacted by the construction of the new station and the framework for this is outlined in the Environmental Minimum Requirements (EMR) for Crossrail. A site specific Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the wider archaeological works at the site, including non-listed built heritage recording, was initially produced by H Glass in January 2008 with several subsequent updates (Doc No: CR-SD-TCR-EM-OT-00001 Final version 10/9/09).
- 1.1.4 The programme of building recording at TCR also included work on Numbers 94 and 96 Dean Street. Number 96 Dean Street was also unlisted and was therefore undertaken under the same set of conditions at 5a Great Chapel Street but 94 Dean Street was listed and the recording of this structure was therefore required by a Heritage Agreement between the Statutory Undertaker the City of Westminster and English Heritage (Part 2, 1, of Schedule 5 of the Deed). The current document just covers the recording of 5a Great Chapel Street. Separate reports will be issued on 94 and 96 Dean Street. In October 2010 OA Gifford issued an Interim Statement on the recording of all three buildings, intended to quickly disseminate the outline results of the investigation.

1.1.5 **General aims**

1.1.6 The overall aim of the project was to produce for posterity an archive record of buildings which will be demolished or impacted by the TCR Crossrail site.

1.1.7 **Specific objectives**

1.1.8 Particular objectives of the project were:

- Undertake as comprehensive a photographic coverage as possible given the limited time available (1 day) and health and safety constraints
- produce a short written history of the building
- produce a short description of the staircase

1.2 **Methodology**

1.2.1 As outlined above the interest of No 5a Great Chapel Street was identified at a relatively late stage and by the time that the recording was agreed and commissioned site works had progressed significantly. The front of the building had been removed at ground floor, windows had also been removed and much of the soft-strip undertaken. T

1.2.2 Due to the need to fit into the project programme only a single day's on-site recording was possible. This work included as detailed a photographic/descriptive survey as was possible of surviving areas and the work particularly focused on the staircase. The site work was undertaken on 12 July 2010.

1.2.3 The project has also included a limited programme of documentary research, largely based on maps and easily available secondary sources.

1.2.4 The project archive will be submitted to the Museum of London (LAARC) under the site code XRY10.

2. **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

2.1.1 This historical background incorporates information from Scott Wilson's 2009 report on the initial recording of 94 Dean Street as well as the more detailed account of the development of the area included in Wessex Archaeology's May 2010 report on the recording of the Non-listed Built Heritage Recording (including 96 Dean Street) at Tottenham Court Road.

2.1.2 **General post-medieval development**

2.1.3 The part of London which later developed into Soho remained as farmland in the medieval period. It was owned by the Master of Burton Saint Lazar who was a custodian of the hospital of St Giles. In 1536 the area, then described as pasture was surrendered by the hospital to the Crown for the formation of the Baliwick of St. James and for use as a Royal park for the palace of Whitehall. Hogenberg's map of 1572 shows the area well outside the built-up city and confirms that in the later 16th century the area remained undeveloped (Wessex Archaeology, 2010). This situation does not appear to have greatly changed up until the last quarter of the 17th century.

2.1.4 The area which had by then become known as Soho Fields was granted to Henry Jermyn, the 1st Earl of St Albans in the 17th century and he then leased much of the land to Joseph Girle.

Girlle gained permission to build and in 1677 this was passed on to a bricklayer called Richard Frith. It appears that the area was then developed very rapidly (as was common in this period) because Morgan's map of 1682 shows much of Soho laid out with a network of streets and well developed frontages.

- 2.1.5 The street that became Great Chapel Street appears to have been laid out in the last decade of the 17th century, with the first ratepayers appearing in the parish books of 1694 and the number steadily increasing in the subsequent years (Survey of London).
- 2.1.6 In 1694 a French chapel was constructed as part of the general development of the area and this presumably gave the name to both Great Chapel and Little Chapel Streets. The existence of the chapel also resulted in Soho becoming home to a large number of French immigrants in the early 18th century. In 1707 ten of the 15 rate payers in Great Chapel Street had French names but this preponderance appears to have greatly reduced in the subsequent 20-30 years (Survey of London)
- 2.1.7 The first houses constructed on Great Chapel Street appear to have been on the west side and it may be that the site of the building in the current work remained undeveloped until the second quarter of the 18th century. There is known to have been vacant ground on the east side of Great Chapel Street into the 1730s and in c.1734 Titchfield (now Fareham) Street, just to the south of the current site, was laid out. In the mid 1730s Dean Street was also almost entirely rebuilt
- 2.1.8 By the mid-1800s many of the wealthy residents and respectable families who had been living in Soho had moved away and in their place, many artistic residences including music halls and theatres emerged. The 1900s saw many foreign nationals migrating to the area resulting in an influx of budget restaurants and cafes.
- 2.1.9 ***Evidence relating to Number 5a Great Chapel Street:*** Number 5a Great Chapel Street is shown on Horwood's map dated 1792 and it is also shown on the 1870 OS map with a similar footprint to that which survived into the 21st century.
- 2.1.10 The Post Office Directory of 1895 shows the building occupied by William Marriott 'Hy.bldg.matl.dlr' (Heavy building materials dealer?). The 1915 Post Office Directory has also been consulted but unfortunately No.5a Great Chapel Street is the only building in this block which is not listed. Presumably it was unoccupied at this date.
- 2.1.11 Goad's Fire Insurance Map of 1938 suggests that there was an electrician based on the first floor of the building and that there was an extension to the rear with two and a half storeys (presumably two storeys and an attic). The main roof was identified as being clad in slate and the building was three and a half storeys tall. The map also shows 'VAC over' labelled on 5a Great Chapel Street but it is unclear to what this refers.
- 2.1.12 The Bomb Damage map suggests that the building was not badly damaged during the Second World War

3. DESCRIPTION

3.1 Exterior

- 3.1.1 As outlined above there was initially no requirement to record 5a Great Chapel Street in the current TCR development and by the time that the building's interest had been identified and the recording commissioned the development works had commenced. Scaffolding with hoarding had been erected around the exterior of the building and the ground floor front had been entirely removed making it impossible to photograph or record the exterior. However at the time of writing this report it is possible to see the form of the front facade from Google Earth which shows the building before the erection of scaffolding.
- 3.1.2 This evidence shows that 5a Great Chapel Street was a four storey building, towards the centre of a terraced block and prior to its demolition in the current development the relatively plain front (west) elevation was clad in white-painted stucco with lines to imitate ashlar. The main walling beneath the stucco was of stock brick.
- 3.1.3 The building had three 2-over-2 timber sash windows at each of the upper floors. The windows all appear to have been of the same date (later 19th century), with horns to the sashes and timber sills. The windows diminished in height to the uppermost storey and each of the windows had a square head with a rendered gauged lintel. The fenestration was not quite symmetrical with the wall between the central and northern windows distinctly wider than that between the central and southern windows. The roof was hidden behind a parapet and the glazing was recessed behind the main plane of the wall.
- 3.1.4 The ground floor shop front comprised glazing to the central section divided by glazing bars and with a door to each end and roller shutters over. The doors were flanked by panelling and this continued beneath the glazing. The whole ground floor was painted a dark grey colour and within this was the lettering of the final tenant or company who occupied the building: '*Transferbay*'.

3.2 Interior

3.2.1 General description

- 3.2.2 The building had a rectangular plan, c.7 m wide (E-W; inner wall to inner wall) and the general layout was similar on each of the floors as well as with very similar floor construction visible from the underside. Each floor appears to have been very similar at first, second and third floors comprising tall joists of probable late 19th-century date, braced by scissors struts and with lath and plaster ceiling but no evidence of paintwork to the sides of the joists. The lack of paint to the joists is in contrast to adjacent buildings and it confirms that in 5a Great Chapel Street these joists would always have been hidden behind the joists.
- 3.2.3 There is evidence of a hatch at each floor level, towards the south-west corner of the building, which would have allowed vertical movement of goods/materials through the building (possibly the building materials dealer referred to above, listed here in 1895). This evidence comprises trimmers and distinct areas (c.1.5 m²) of slightly later joists without lath marks to their underside, within the area of the former hatch. There is a full line of scissors struts in the northern half of the building and a half line in the southern half interrupted by the hatch.
- 3.2.4 Each floor is supported by a rolled steel joist (N-S) contemporary with the main floor and supported on secondary brick piers against the older brick party walls of the adjacent buildings. At each level there is a blocked former fireplace in the eastern half of the south wall

as well as an area of concrete blocking in the west half of the south wall suggestive of a former doorway.

3.2.5 There appears to have been an extension to the rear (east) but the floors in this area had been removed prior to the current recording.

3.2.6 ***Staircase and stairwell***

3.2.7 The main focus of the work at 5a Great Chapel Street was the surviving staircase which has been dated by Charles Brooking of the Brooking Collection¹ to the 1730s and it either appears that the building was almost entirely reconstructed around it or the staircase was dismantled and re-erected within the late 19th-century building.

3.2.8 The surviving historic staircase had a half-turn with winders form and extended from ground floor up to third floor level. It had square section newel posts with a square cap and turned balusters to the main flights (see Fig 5).

3.2.9 The stairs were supported with a number of modern props and the plasterwork to the underside of the stairs was secondary, fixed with chicken wire, although it had a crumbly texture and it has a lime base.

3.2.10 The uppermost section of the staircase (up to 3rd floor) was plainer than the staircase below, presumably reflecting the lower status of the rooms in the upper part of the house (Plate 16). At this level the balusters had a square section unlike the turned balusters in the lower flights and it had a slightly smaller handrail although the whole structure appears integral and primary.

3.2.11 There was also an attractive and distinctive 'M' written on the uppermost side rail (Plate 17-18). This had been exposed by the removal of a covering board and it had an elaborate form with curled flourishes. The structural rail would have been behind a facing board and the letter would almost certainly never have been visible so it may well be that this 'M' is the initial of the original carpenter who wanted to add his signature.

3.2.12 Another interesting feature exposed by the works include fragments of an attractive floral wallpaper (acorns and oak leaves; see Plate 13), exposed by the removal of later abutting features (probably boxing to hide pipes/cables), at ground, first and second floor levels within the hall adjacent to the stairs. There is no evidence of the wallpaper continuing up to third floor which may again be evidence of the upper storey's relatively low status. The wall paper is more suggestive of a 19th-century date than a 20th century one or an 18th-century one and it is likely that it was part of an early decorative scheme after the major reconstruction of the building, probably undertaken in the later 19th century. The plaster on which the paper is set is contemporary with the reconstruction.

3.2.13 The stairwell was illuminated by a series of iron, 20-light segmental arch windows. The partitions which enclosed the staircase partially survived and were formed from studs (probably mid to later 19th century) with lath and plaster.

3.2.14 The basement was accessed by a modern spiral staircase located towards the front of the building.

1 The Brooking Collection of Architectural Detail is the only major national collection of its kind in the UK charting the evolution of British building details over the last 500 years.

3.2.15 Basement

3.2.16 The Basement extended across the northern two-thirds of 5a Great Chapel Street rather than the full footprint and it is interesting to note that in this area the joists were painted and visible from beneath rather than being hidden by a ceiling as on the other floors. The joists appear to be of the same date as the rest of the building however and incorporate similar scissors struts. The basement had plastered walls, painted red and no surviving features of interest.

3.2.17 Ground floor

3.2.18 The entrance to the ground floor was at the north end of the west elevation and prior to the current soft-strip works it would have led into a corridor from the street that provided access to the stairs. There was a small lobby at the bottom of the stairs with a WC under the stairs. The shop front had been removed prior to the current recording and this left two free-standing piers, encasing RSJs, supporting the lintel above. The underside of the first floor was visible and comprised the same tall joists with scissors-strut bracing as elsewhere in the building.

3.2.19 Upper floors

3.2.20 The first and second floors had a very similar layout to the other floors with joists (22 cm tall x 6 cm wide) braced by scissors struts and an RSJ spanning north-to-south supported by secondary brick piers. A ceiling had been recently removed but lath marks from it remained. These areas had modern floorboards, walls painted and plastered. There was a large 25-light segmental arch window in the rear wall with a row of three casement lights.

3.2.21 When the recording was undertaken the **Third floor** was open-plan and the roof above had been removed although a large RSJ spanned north-to-south (the opposite direction to those on lower floors) which it appears would have supported a former (modern) flat roof. There would formerly have been a fireplace in the south-east corner but this had been removed prior to the current work. Adjacent to this, in the east wall was a large opening which appears to have allowed access to a roof garden to the east which had been removed prior to the recording but from which some railings survived. Between this opening and the staircase at the north-eastern corner was a modern WC. The floorboards at 3rd floor were of 20th-century date.

4. CONCLUSION

4.1.1 No 5a Great Chapel Street was an unlisted building of moderate interest other than for a staircase which appears to be in-situ and to date from the 1730s. The rest of the building appears to have been reconstructed around this staircase, probably in the later 19th century. The 1730s date also corresponds with documentary evidence which suggests that sections of the east side of Great Chapel Street remained empty as late as the 1730s, some decades after most of Soho was laid out, so it is possible that this staircase survived from the original building on this site.

4.1.2 Although the current investigation was of a rapid, 'salvage' nature after the start of demolition works it was of considerable value in understanding the building and provided a good outline record. The work confirmed the probable later 19th-century date of much of the structure and it identified a hatch in each floor that could have been used for moving goods or materials around the building. This corresponds to the type of use of the building shown in a directory of 1895: a building materials dealer.

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- Crossrail 2010 Tottenham Court Road Station - Site-Specific Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation Document Number: CR-SD-TCR-EN-OT-00001
- Scott Wilson 2009 City of Westminster Heritage Agreement Building Recording of 94 Dean Street (Document Number: CR-DV-PAD-X-RT-00061)
- Wessex Archaeology 2010 Tottenham Court Road Station: Non-Listed Built Heritage Recording WA Document Number: 72213.07)
- Crossrail 2008 94 Dean Street: Specification for RCHME (English Heritage) Recordings: CR-SD-SES-CN-AE-000002, Version 4.0
- Oxford Archaeology 2010 Building Recording at Tottenham Court Road Station: Interim Report
- Survey of London 1966 Survey of London: Vol 33 & 34 St Anne Soho London

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Client name: Crossrail

Site name: Tottenham Court Road built heritage recording

Site code: XRY10

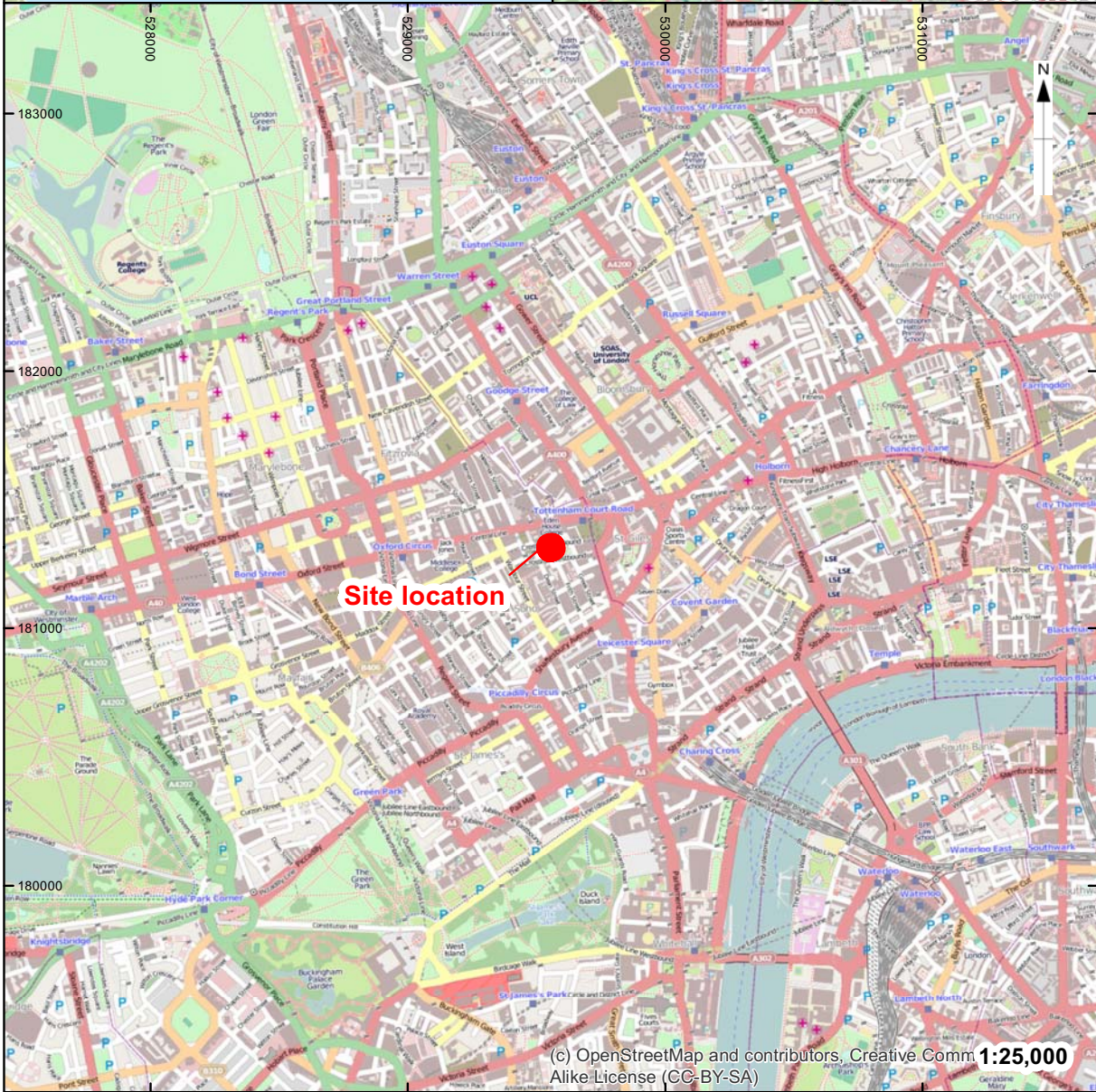
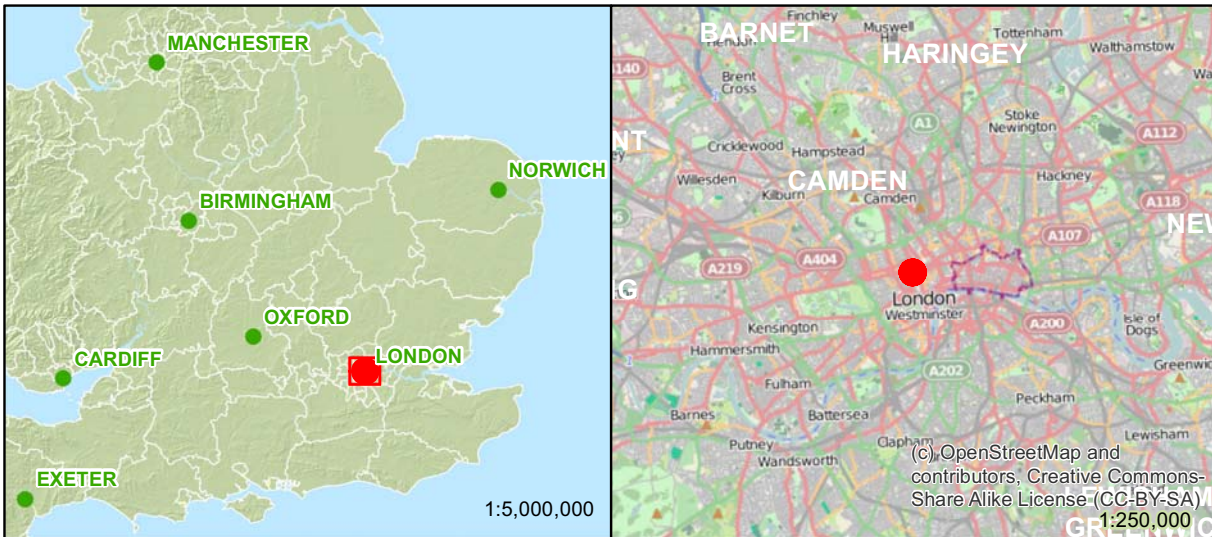
Grid reference: TQ 29550 81288 **Type of evaluation:** Historic Building Recording

Date and duration of project: The work was undertaken on 12 July 2010.

Area of site: 5a Great Chapel St, London. Work on 94 and 96 Dean St also undertaken as part of same works and with same site code.

Summary of results: 5a Great Chapel Street appears to have been an early Georgian building (1730s) which was almost entirely rebuilt in the later 19th century around the retained primary staircase.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Museum of London in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location

Server 10:/outpubs/_Rtcz*XRAILM_TCRBH*5 Great Chapel St, Tottenham Court Road (Crossrail)*jc*2,04,13



Figure 2: Site plan showing 5 Great Chapel Street within wider TCR development site



Figure 3: Horwood's plan of 1792



Figure 4: Goad's Insurance plan of 1938

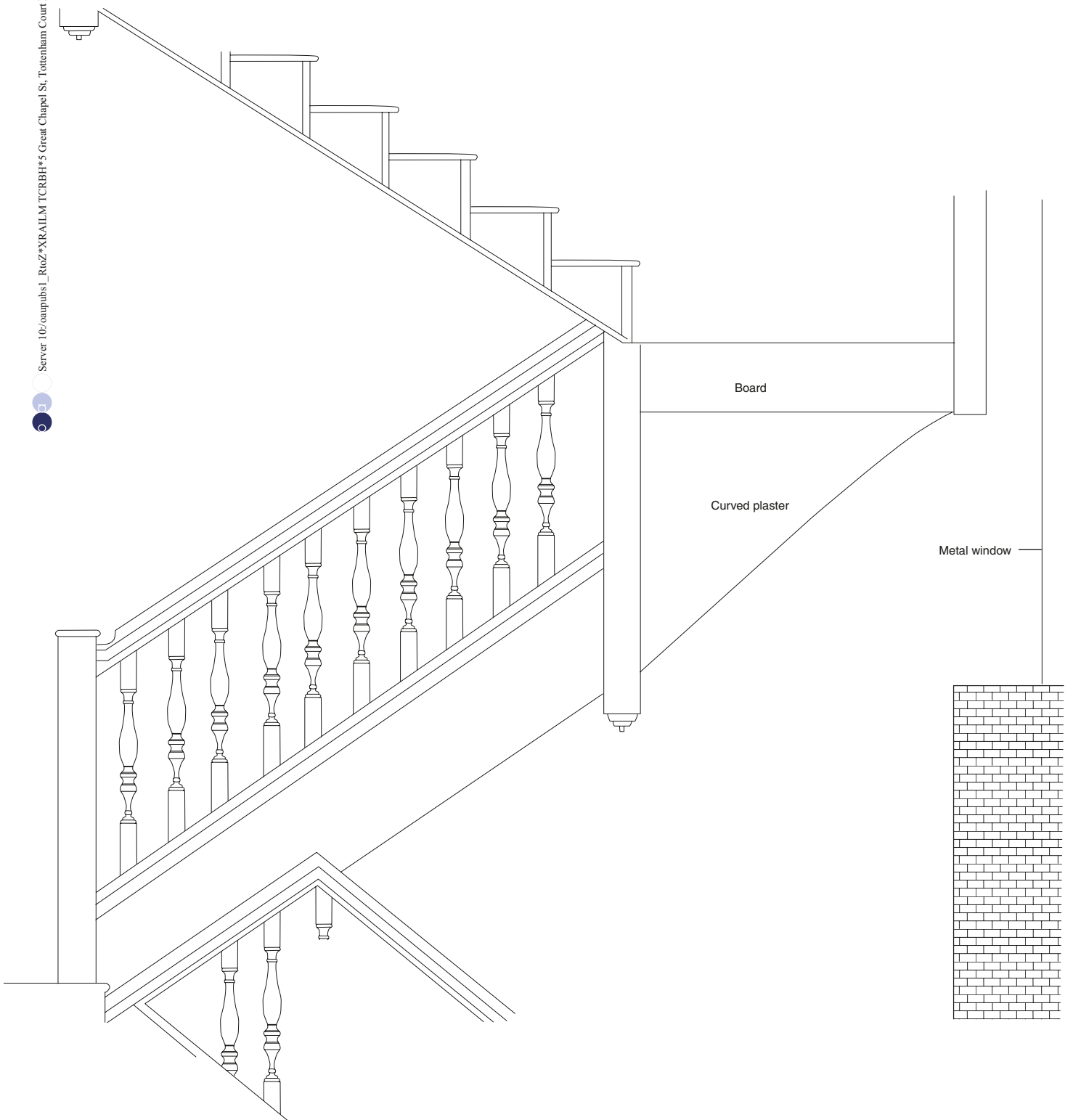


Figure 5: Section through staircase



Plate 1: Basement of 5 Great Chapel Street



Plate 2: Basement showing secondary spiral staircase



Plate 3: Ground floor after removal of front wall



Plate 4: Ground floor after softstrip



Plate 5: Underside of former hatch in floor joists



Plate 6: Underside of hearth in floor



Plate 7: General view of exposed floor joists



Plate 8: Rear of building



Plate 9: Plainer stairs rising up to 3rd floor



Plate 10: Drop detail to underside of stair post



Plate 11: Stairs detail



Plate 12: Stairs rising up to first floor level



Plate 13: Exposed floor fragment of wallpaper where stair partition removed



Plate 14: Stairs at first



Plate 15: Stairs rising up to first floor



Plate 16: Plainer stairs rising towards 3rd floor



Plate 17: Initial uncovered on board to side of stairs



Plate 18: Initial uncovered on board to side of stairs



Plate 19: Stairs rising towards 2nd floor



Plate 20: General view of 2nd floor



Plate 21: Removed windows at 2nd floor



Plate 22: General view at 2nd floor



Plate 23: View at first floor



Plate 24: Rear of building



Plate 25: Front wall at third floor



Plate 26: General view at third floor



Plate 27: General view at third floor



Plate 28: General view of south wall at third floor level