

Design and Access Statement for 32 Coptic St, London WC1A 1NP

Robert Barnes Architects 18th April 2023

Historical Background

The visitor to the British Museum in London, UK, often comes to a nearby street called Coptic Street. What is the history of this street, and how did it come to be called after the Coptic Christians of Egypt?

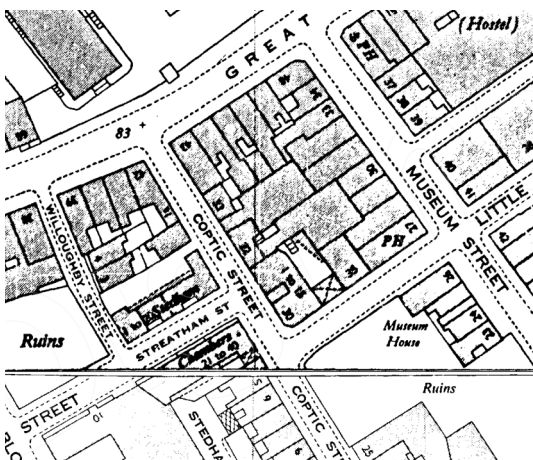
The London Encyclopaedia, 3rd ed. by Ben Weinreb et al (London, Macmillan, 2008, p. 207) tells us that it was originally built after the Great Fire of London in 1666, and was then called Duke Street after the ground landlords the Dukes of Bedford. Apparently there were many Duke Streets in London at the time, and therefore its name was changed to Coptic Street in 1894. The British were ruling Egypt then, and came into contact with the Copts as Egyptians. The event that occasioned the renaming of the street was the large and valuable collection of Coptic manuscripts which had been obtained by the British Museum a year earlier.



Map 1870



Map 1890



Map 1950



Map 1960

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Present Situation

The building is three stories at the front with a basement. At the rear of the building there is an artist gallery space/ studio with a library and self contained apartment beneath. It is brick built under a slate roof with an interior courtyard at the basement level between the front part of the building which is comprised of office spaces and living quarters and the rear part (the gallery / studio space). The two entrances to the property can be accessed via a front door as well as a large gate which is used for parking, deliveries and small vans.

Over the previous decades, the building has gone under numerous alterations and face lifts in the interior due it's constant multi use.



Access to the site and building remain as original front accesses

The layout of the private multi purpose building has mainly living (kitchen, dining sitting) rooms at the front with bedrooms and bathrooms in the centre of the building. This is shown on the existing floor plans attached.

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The Future

The proposals include the following elements for which we seek the Council Planning Department's support:-

1. Updated and new front entrance gate to improve accessibility and security. The design, look and aesthetic of the gate will remain largely the same as to stay in keeping with the streetscape.
2. Installation of new bathroom in the basement in order to allow better living standards and ease of access for inhabitants who are staying on that floor.

