

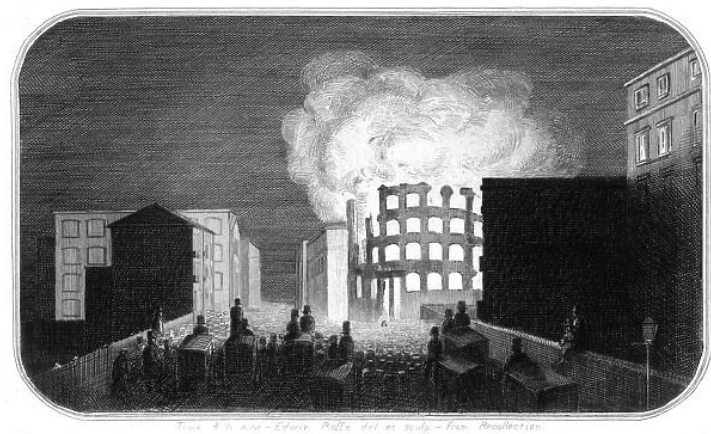
SITE HISTORY

CONSTRUCTION OF COLLARD & COLLARD FACTORY (1820s - 1852)

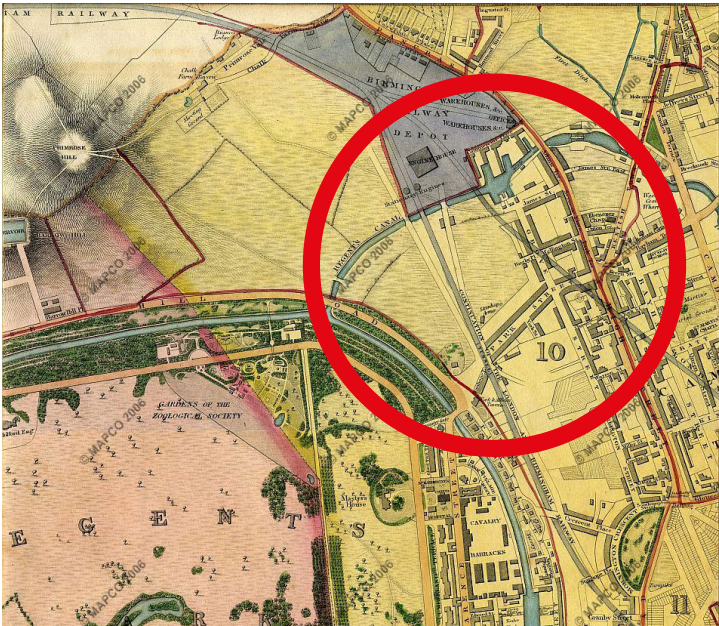
The 1934 Topographic Survey reveals that the site used to be farmland in the 1820s. Subsequent Ordnance Surveys depict the development of Gloucester Crescent, Oval Road and New Jamestown Road (or Upper James Street), which have maintained their layout until today. The Collard & Collard piano factory, designed by Thomas and William Piper, was constructed in 1852 after a fire destroyed the previous building. The piano factory and warehouse at 12 Oval Road has a unique shape that can be seen on most maps of that period, except for the one from the Stanford 1861 for unknown reasons.

THE WIDER SITE (1852 - 1890s)

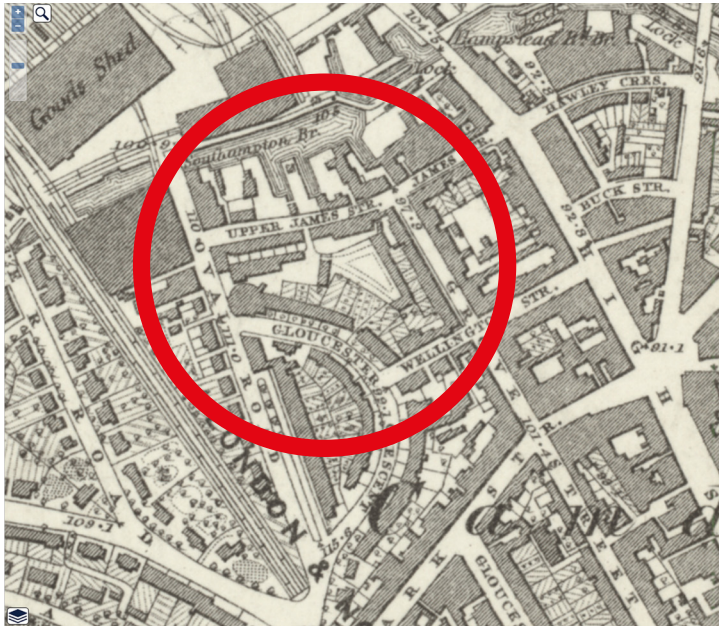
Maps from that period shows the site comprising of two industrial yards divided by a structure that corresponds to the present-day 57D. The Collard Piano factory occupied the western yard, as shown on the maps from 1877, 1889 and 1891. Adjacent to it was labelled a timber yard, which could be accessed via an archway corresponding to 57D. A road under an arch on Jamestown Street connected both industrial yards to the street. Analysis of historic maps indicates the Annexe was originally separate and was in existence by the 1870s. It has since been attached to the main building via a link corridor built in the 1890s.



Destruction by fire of Collards Piano-forte Manufactory - Oval Road, Camden, London on 19th December 1851. Date: 1851



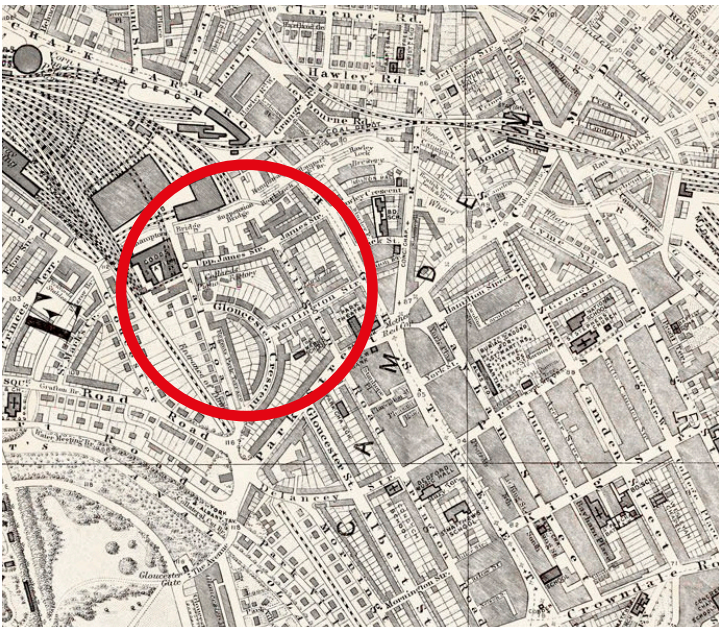
Topographical Survey Of The Borough Of St. Marylebone 1834



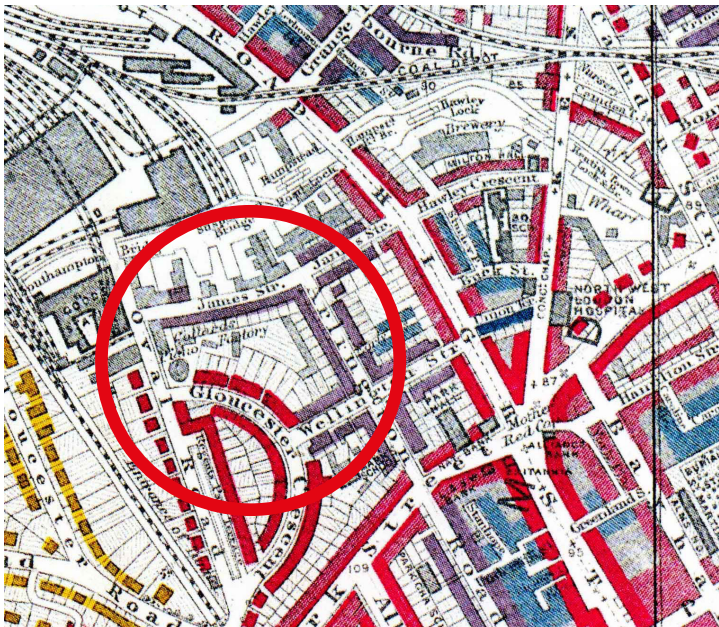
Ordnance Survey - 1830 - 1880s



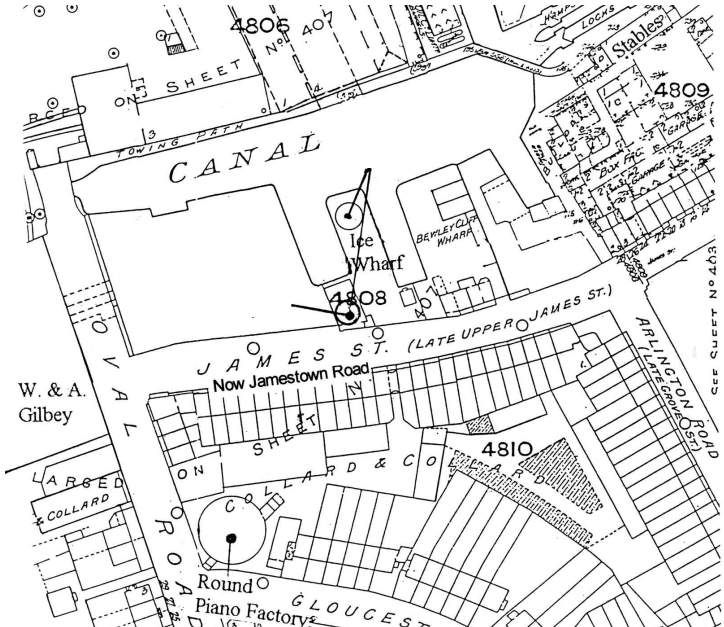
Stanford Map of 1861



Stanford Map of 1877



Descriptive Map of London Poverty Camden Town - Pentonville - Regents Park circa 1889



Goad Fire Insurance Map of 1891



CHANGES TO THE SITE (1890S - 1944)

Between 1892 and 1914, a new chimney and a smaller No. 12 warehouse appears on aerial photos from 1921. It is reported that Chappell, another piano maker, took over the site in 1929.

By 1944/1950, aerial photos and maps show a new Printing Works building at No.57C. The timber yard was relabelled as Corporation Yard, with potentially a new entrance at Arlington road as some of the residences were cleared (possibly as a result of bombing). At present, the shared access through 57D has been blocked by a new extension and the access through Jamestown Road leads to the western yard only.



Oval Road and the Pianoforte Manufactory, Camden Town, 1921



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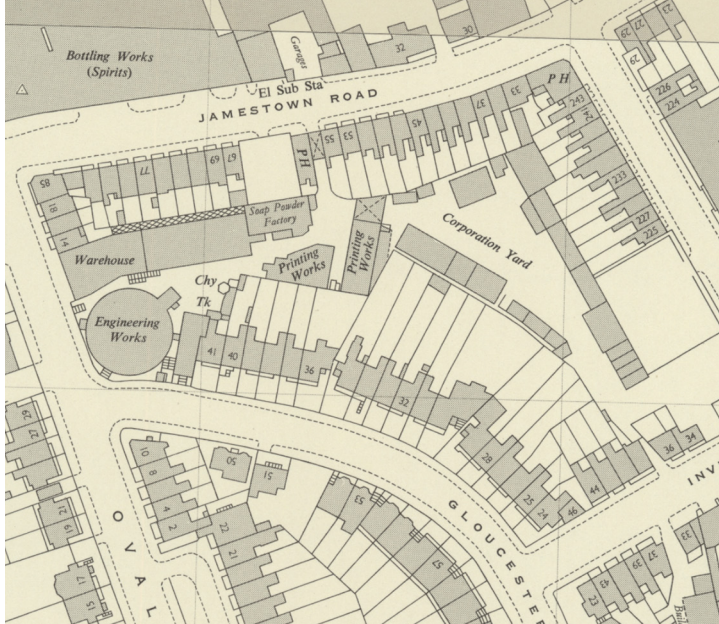
Ordnance Survey - 1840 - 1860s



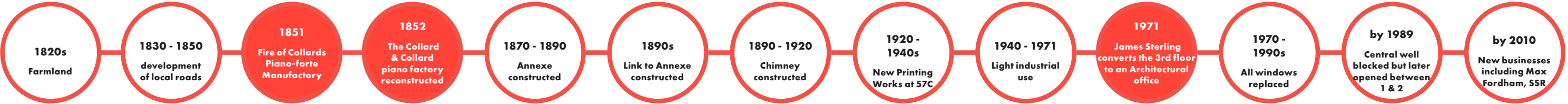
Ordnance Survey - 1892 - 1914



Ordnance Survey - Air Photos 1944 - 1950



Ordnance Survey - 1944 - 1972





PIANO MANUFACTURING

PIANO MANUFACTURING & CAMDEN TOWN

Camden Town became a major piano manufacturing centre in the nineteenth century, because of the easy transport of timber by canal, rail and road. Many streets in north London had a piano works, and Camden was the world’s leading piano maker from 1870 to 1914. The Regent’s Canal and the railways helped the piano industry thrive in Camden Town.

COLLARD & COLLARD

Collard & Collard was one of the leading piano firms, with the Rotunda circular factory. Collard & Collard site formed a complex of piano factories at the site, with each building dedicated to a specific part of the process. Other piano firms and small-part makers were scattered around Camden Town and along the Canal.

The British piano industry declined after 1900 due to competition from Germany. Collard & Collard left Camden Town and their factory was taken over by other businesses, and the wider factory site was redeveloped for housing and media businesses, reflecting the changing character of Camden Town.

THE PIANO MANUFACTURING PROCESS

With fifty-two bays, the Rotunda building was built around a central open well, to allow pianos to be hoisted from floor to floor during manufacture. The lowest floor was used for drying, the next for upright pianos, the one above for cleaning, then for polishing the cases and those above for ‘belly’ manufacture and finishing off.



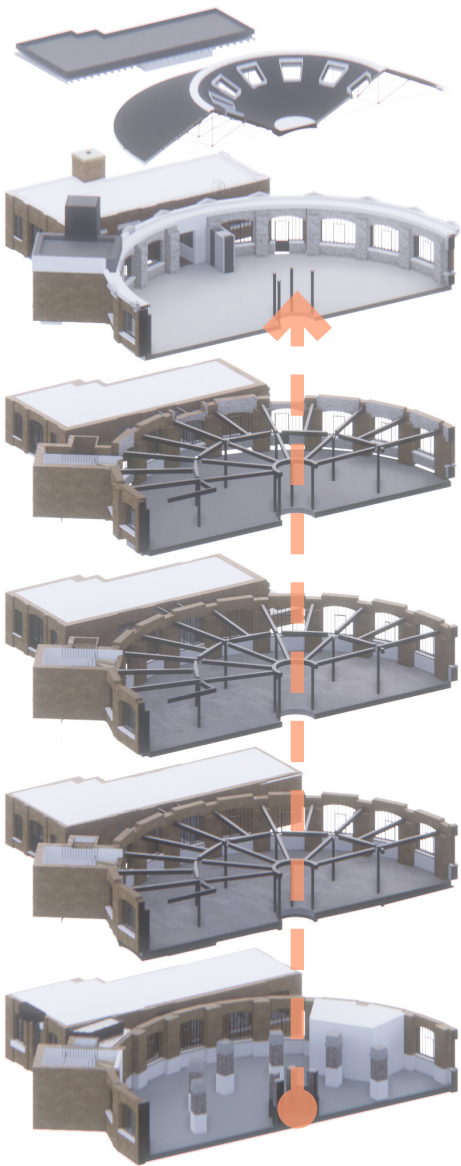
A Camden Town piano maker in the nineteen thirties



Collard & Collard Upright Piano



Piano manufacturers



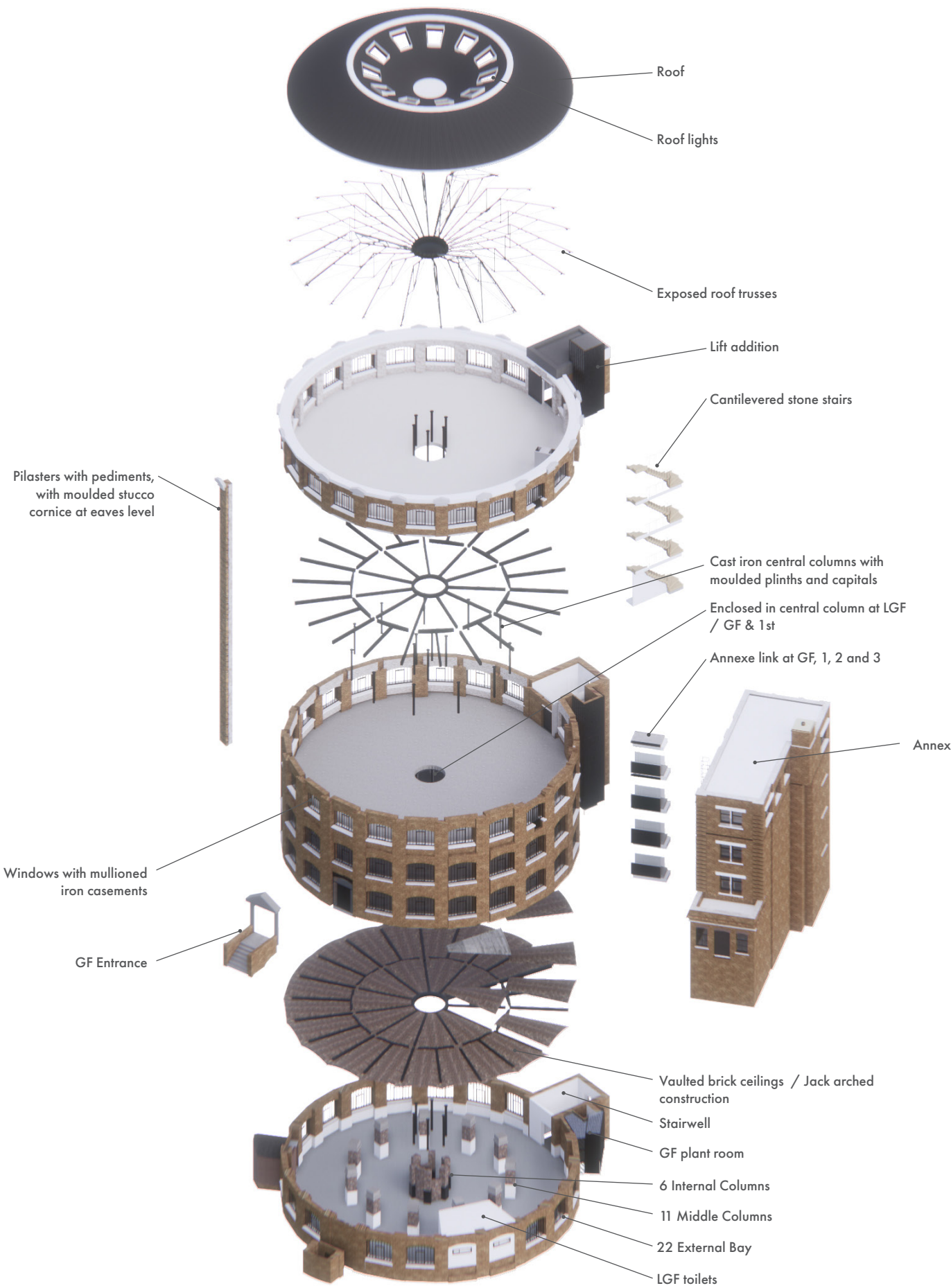
- Third Floor  
Belly manufacture & finishing off
- Second Floor  
Polishing Piano Cases
- First Floor  
Piano Cleaning
- Ground Floor  
Upright Piano Manufacturing
- Lower Ground Floor  
Piano Drying

ROTUNDA'S FORM AND STRUCTURE

OVERVIEW

The Rotunda, designed by William Piper, is a circular building with many architectural and historical features. Some of the primary features are:

- 1. The structure has five storeys and 22 bays, with 11 internal columns and six central columns in each level.
- 2. The external bays are marked by large pilasters with pediments, reaching the eaves level and joining a moulded stucco cornice.
- 3. The windows are mostly mullioned iron casements, set within segmental brick arches. Two windows on the lower ground floor have been modified for toilets.
- 4. The central columns are cast iron, with moulded plinths and capitals, enclosing a blocked-in central well. Three of the columns double as rainwater pipes for water drain off concave roof to lower ground level. The lower ground floor columns are covered in brickwork, likely serving a structural function at LGF. .
- 5. The ceilings are vaulted brick, forming jack arches.
- 6. The first, second and third floors have a walkway that connects to the Annex building.
- 7. The toilets are located within the lower ground floor rotunda plan, and in the Annex building for the other floors. WCs and toilets are not to modern standards and have poor finishes and wares.
- 8. The third floor roof has exposed roof trusses.
- 9. The staircase is an open-well type, with a simple iron balustrade and stone treads that are cantilevered. The flooring is stone flag.





## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE FORM AND STRUCTURE

### The Rotunda

A rotunda (from Latin rotundus) is a building with a circular ground plan, sometimes covered by a dome. This building form has long historical roots including ancient Greek and Roman architecture. Rotundas have been used for various purposes, such as temples, mausoleums, churches, and public halls. In England, the earliest examples of rotundas date back to the Roman period. Medieval rotundas include the Temple Church in London, consecrated in the 12th century. Rotundas are often regarded as architectural symbols of harmony, unity, and elegance.

Rotundas are not very common as industrial buildings, exceptions include the Round Foundry in Leeds, 1795, a circular engineering works that produced steam engines and locomotives. By late 19th century these circular plans were less common, and 42-43 Gloucester Crescent is one important example of an industrial rotunda.

### Assessment of The Form

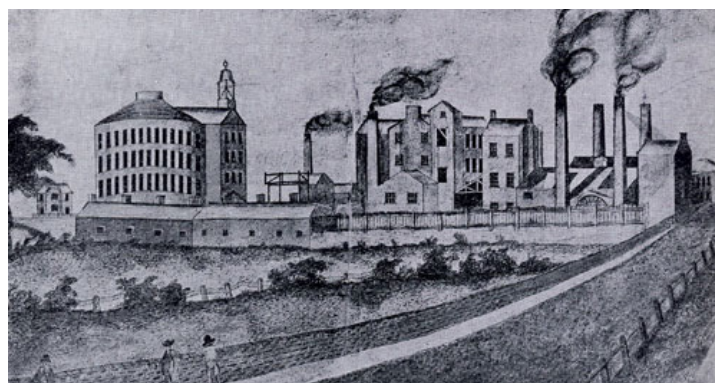
- **PROS:** A circle encloses the largest area for a given amount of perimeter
- **PROS:** The interior of round buildings boasts fantastic thermal dynamics. (Warm air rotates upwards and drops down in a central column beneath the ceiling independently circulating and maintaining its temperature).
- **CONS:** They are less compatible with standard equipment and furniture, because they have curved walls and floors
- **CONS:** They are less efficient in terms of space utilization, because they have more wasted space in the center and the corners



Temple of Hercules Victor, Rome, 2nd century BC



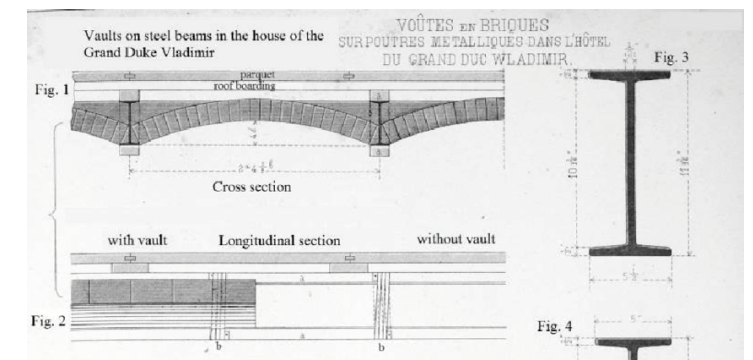
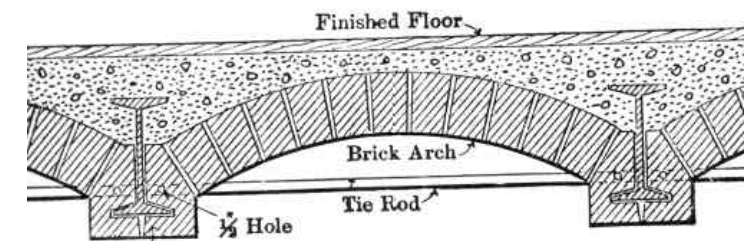
Temple Church in London, 12th Century onwards



Round Foundry, former engineering works, Leeds, 1795–1797

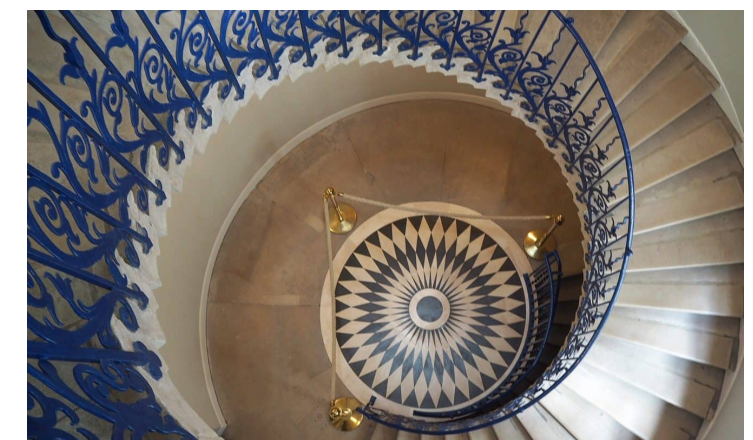
### The Jack Arch

The floor construction used is a jack arch, a type of flat arch that supports the masonry above, made of wedge-shaped bricks that are held together by compression. Jack arches were widely used in industrial buildings in the mid 19th century. One of the advantages of jack arches was thought to be their fire resistance, as they did not rely on wood or steel lintels that could burn or warp. Ironically, an earlier structure building had gone through a fire in the previous year that destroyed many finished instruments. The arch is supported on the lower flange of mild steel joists and the rolled steel joists are supported at their ends on the columns and walls.



### Stone Cantilevered Stairs

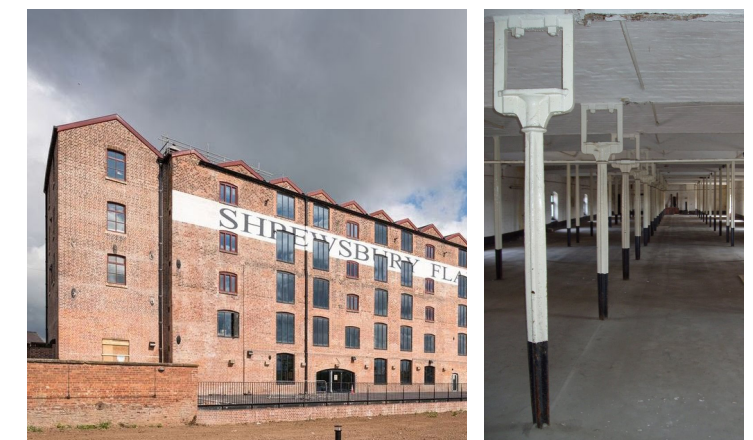
The stone stairs in the rotunda are also a unique feature with long architectural history. They are an example of stone cantilevered stairs, a type of staircase that have one end of each step fixed to the wall and the other end free, creating a floating effect. They were first introduced into England, in Queen's House in Greenwich, from Venice in the early 17th century by Inigo Jones, who was influenced by Palladio's work in Venice. They were also recognised for their fire-resistant properties. The stone cantilever stairs in the Rotunda are of a simplanature, utilitarian in appearance and functional.



The Tulip Stairs, built between 1616 and 1635, Queen's House, Greenwich

### Roof Truss & Cast Iron Columns

Cast iron and wrought iron are different types of iron used for building structures in the UK since the 1790s. Cast iron was strong and fireproof, but brittle and weak under tension. Wrought iron was introduced in 1850 and had more strength and ductility, allowing for longer and more complex spans. Wrought iron was often combined with cast iron or timber in composite trusses. Cast/wrought iron trusses were replaced by steel trusses in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but they are still valuable examples of historical ironwork.



Ditherington Mill (1796), the world's first multi-storey building with cast iron for both columns and beams



## RECENT HISTORY

In the 1980s and 1990s, Camden Town became a hub for TV companies, publishers, designers, and the media in general. The Rotunda and No 41a, the adjacent building, were both listed as Grade II in 1989, acknowledging their special architectural and historical interest.

The Rotunda has been subject to a number of alterations. The central well had been blocked by 1989; it was unblocked and a staircase inserted within it between 1996 and 2005, to improve navigation between different floors of the single office occupying multiple floors. All of the windows were replaced between 1976 and 1996.

The Rotunda remained in light industrial use until 1971, when the third floor was converted into an architectural office for James Stirling. In 1983 Max Fordham LLP took over the third floor offices. There were planning applications for the continued light industrial use of the rest of the building in 1973 and 1977; the planning history does not reveal when the rest of the building was converted, but it is now all in office use.

By 1994, the buildings had been renamed “The Rotunda”, and housed design consultants Jones, Knowles, Ritchie and the Virago Press. The lift was reclad in the early 2000s.

In 2011, Spirit Studios, formerly known as SSR and the School of Sound Recording, moved into the basement of the Rotunda. During this time, they undertook a variety of works to the lower ground floor, including its subdivision. Such work has since been removed and restored to its original open plan layout.

Between 2002 and 2007, alterations to the air conditioning on the ground floor were carried out. In 2012/2013, photovoltaic panels were installed on the roof of the annexe with planning permission from Camden Council [2012/3333/P].

Even though some of the conditions have deteriorated over the years, the Rotunda remains a cherished home for two creative and technical firms.

It remains as the head office of Max Fordham, an engineering consultancy that specialises in building design, environmental engineering and sustainability. Max Fordham have been active in improving its environmental performance with solar panels and secondary glazing.

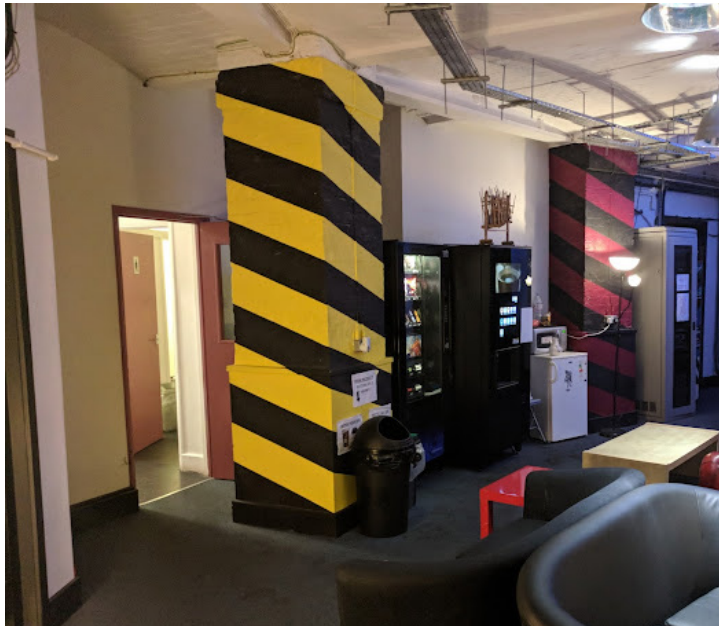
The ground floor is occupied by Acamar Films, an independent creative studio that produces children’s content, such as the animated series Bing.

Following the approval of the Certificate of Lawfulness for Proposed Works to a Listed Building in January 2022, the lower ground floor comprises an open-plan layout, where the original brick vaulted ceiling and general industrial character contributes to the overarching character and importance of the space. Solid brick columns provide a sense of robustness to this level, given its lowerground floor status, whilst large casement windows surrounding the space provide high levels of natural light throughout the space. Whilst utilitarian in character, such character continues the industrial appearance of the space and makes a positive contribution to the building’s significance.

The final refurbishment works overall aims to attract new businesses and retain existing ones to continue the amazing heritage of the building and breathe new life into it.



Collard & Collard’s piano factory, 43 Gloucester Crescent, London, 1976



The Lower Ground during occupation by SSR Studio



Max Fordham who occupy the 1st and 2nd floors



Acamar Films headquarters is based on the Ground Floor