

## 2.3 The Significance of the Architecture

The buildings of New Square (numbers 1-11) were listed Grade II\* in 1951 and have national importance as rare survivals of 17<sup>th</sup> century architecture put to business/commercial use. The houses which form New Square have of course been repaired and altered since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, but in many/most instances their original form is legible. The system of flying freeholds (see section 2.2) remains intact, also a survival from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The nature of the architecture of New Square is outlined below, and an assessment of the significance of the 17<sup>th</sup> century buildings drawing on most current scholarly comment forms a conclusion to this account.

### The Building of New Square

Henry Serle entered an agreement with the Inn to build three ranges of buildings, then called Serle's Court, in 1682. He had purchased the land three years earlier, in 1679<sup>1</sup>. The initial agreement struck between Serle and the Inn was that Serle would have the right to sell the chambers on his land and would maintain freehold. Any structure erected on the Inn's land was more restrictive in relation to Serle's power. With the exception of No. 11, all the chambers were built on Serle's land<sup>2</sup>. Both parties agreed that the chambers would be for the exclusive use of members of Lincoln's Inn and that the rules of the Society would apply. Serle and the Society disagreed over boundaries, other parties disputed their interests, and numerous legal and structural matters were left unresolved when Serle died in 1690. Tablets on the exterior of Nos. 1 and 11 relate how the boundaries were resolved. Mary Vitoria elaborates on dispute and its conclusion prior to Serle's death:

*...a dispute arose between Serle and the Society of Lincoln's Inn concerning the proposed erection of buildings which would have interfered with certain liberties and easements claimed by the Society over the land. A compromise was reached and Articles of Agreement were drawn up on July 11, 1682, between Sir Harbottle Grimston together with 11 other Masters of the Bench of the Society and Henry Serle. These Articles dealt not only with the proposed building plans but also how the land, thenceforth to be known as Serle's Court, was to be governed and regulated.<sup>3</sup>*

The Black Books entry on the seventeenth century delineates the square's proposed ground plan:

*One range was to extend southwards from the wall of the kitchen garden; another was to run from the North end of the gardener's house (which was to be pulled down) and to be in line with the Society's wall running southwards from the Turnstile; and the third was to join the first range to the second at the Southern end.<sup>4</sup>*

Nos. 1 to 11 were built between 1691 and 1693. The following year, a footpath leading to Serle Street, a carriage gateway leading into Carey Street, and the Terrace Walk's extension to No. 11, the only number built on Lincoln's Inn land, were

<sup>1</sup> A. Holdsworth (ed) 'A Portrait of Lincoln's Inn', 2006, p.28.

<sup>2</sup> The Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, The Black Books Vol 5 1845-1914, p.xxxiv.

<sup>3</sup> M. Vitoria "New Square, Lincoln's Inn and its Flying Freeholds" in The Conveyancer and Property Lawyer vol 4, 1977, p.11.

<sup>4</sup> The Black Books vol 5 op cit p.xxxiii.

completed. The Square was originally comprised of eleven double-fronted buildings in three ranges. Nos. 1-3 are on the southeast, 4-6 on the south and 7-11 are to the west. Each set of chambers was built with four rooms: a bedroom and three rooms for the barrister and his clerk. Communal lavatories were constructed behind No. 1. Nos. 3 and 7, the corner buildings, had three sets of chambers on each floor. New Square was essentially completed by 1697. Second-hand ships' timber provided much of the square's necessary building materials. The external and party walls are of solid brick construction, while the basement level is supported by brick spreaders with cellular, rubble-infill walls. Internally, the walls are timber frame lath and plaster. A small fragment of the original 1690s roof survives at No 5.

Professor Geoffrey Tyack's paper, given to the 2006 conference on the Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court, on the re-building undertaken by Inns between 1660 and 1700 is the most recent scholarly assessment of the importance of the architecture of this date.

Professor Tyack concludes that formal legal education was declining in post Restoration London, but there remained a demand for chambers for trainee and practising lawyers (and increasingly into the 18<sup>th</sup> century private individuals unconnected to the law). The Inns sought to build to meet this demand, but were constrained by their organisation and finances. Professor Tyack details the position of the Inns thus:

*... Chambers did not belong to an Inn as a corporate entity – the Inns were never technically incorporated – but to individual benchers, who could rebuild and sub-let them. In this sense the Inns, as organisations, were somewhat like the aristocratic landlords of the rapidly expanding western suburbs of London or the City livery companies (or guilds) who owned land in London; they wanted to profit from their land, but with minimal financial outlay. They did not have large landed endowments like the Oxford or Cambridge colleges, depending instead on rents and fees. And they could not rebuild without the consent of all of the benchers. All this implied an architecture in which the principles of commodity and firmness prevailed over that of delight...<sup>5</sup>*

Professor Tyack's account of the building undertaken by the Inns of Court in the years following the Great Fire focuses on the defining role of Nicholas Barbon and the restrained elegantly austere nature of the architecture chosen by the Benchers of the Inns during a period of expansion. The conclusion to this assertion is that:

*... The late seventeenth-century rebuilding of the Inns of Court is revealing not only for what it tells us about the Inns as institutions but also for the light it throws on post-Restoration London, and England. London was a city in which commerce flourished as part of a dynamic, globalizing economy. Old institutions such as the Inns of Court had to adapt to a new economic and cultural climate in order to survive. The livery companies became in essence charitable institutions, and as such they continue to flourish. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge increasingly took on the character of finishing schools for the aristocracy, assuming some of the*

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<sup>5</sup> G. Tyack "The Rebuilding of the Inns of Court 1660-1700" in "The Intellectual and Cultural World of the Early Modern Inns of Court" J. Archer, E. Goldring and S. Knight (eds) draft copy 2009.

functions that had been performed by the Inns in their sixteenth and early seventeenth-century heyday. The post-Restoration Inns became residential compounds for lawyers, and their changing functions and aspirations are echoed and displayed in their architecture. Avoiding grandiose Baroque planning gestures, they opted to rebuild on their old sites, retaining their existing halls and chapels and, as we have seen, their existing haphazard plans and their jealously preserved garden settings. Their new residential buildings did not follow the fashions of the Court, the Church, or the aristocracy. They were plainer and more utilitarian in appearance than most contemporary buildings in the universities [compared, for example, with the west range of Clare College, Cambridge of 1669], and less exuberantly decorated than the public buildings of the City, such as Temple Bar or the post-fire Royal Exchange. With their air of restraint and their sober, almost minimalist Classicism, the post-Restoration buildings of the Inns of Court spoke the language of sober calculation that made London one of the fastest-expanding cities of its time. In that sense the law – that most pragmatic of professions – found in the buildings of Barbon and his contemporaries its ideal architectural embodiment...<sup>6</sup>

The architecture at the Inner and Middle Temple put up in the two decades preceding New Square established the form used in such buildings until the nineteenth century. The Great fire had spread from Whitefriars to the Inner Temple and re-building became necessary in the late 1660s. Professor Tyack describes the order of new buildings thus:

*...The Master's House was rebuilt in 1667 as a neat brick Classically-proportioned box of the comfortable, instantly recognisable type that was to proliferate throughout England in succeeding decades. It was followed almost immediately by the Lamb Building, a severely plain four-storeyed block of chambers put up by the Middle Temple on a site between the church and Inner Temple Hall. Soon afterwards the fire-damaged buildings of the Inner Temple were rebuilt in a similar style, their frontages looking out onto the open spaces of Exchequer Court and King's Bench Walk, newly laid out with formal walks and avenues of Franco-Dutch inspiration, as shown in a birds-eye view of 1671... Of these buildings, the only survivor is Nos. 1-2 King's Bench Walk, possibly the block of chambers promoted in 1670 by Francis Phelips, a Bencher, and built by Edward Tasker, 'a skilful surveyor and contriver of buildings'. But no sooner were they completed than another fire of 1677 made it necessary to rebuild Nos. 3-6 King's Bench Walk again. The new buildings here were four rather than three storeys high, and their brickwork is of especially high quality, above all in the splendid Classical door-cases (i.e. frames) of specially cut gauged and rubbed red brick; they presumably reflect the tastes of the individual benchers who promoted the buildings, one of whom (at No.4) arranged to have the date, 1678, and the name of the Treasurer, Richard Powell, recorded over the doorway... The doorways lead to staircases which give access to the sets of chambers, the largest of which were made up of sets of four rooms – one for the clerk, an office/study, a sitting room, and a bedroom – panelled in wood, and with a heavy outer door for privacy.*

*The new buildings in the Temple established a new paradigm for architecture in the Inns of Court and Chancery, which remained unchallenged until the nineteenth century. Sober and undemonstrative, they showed the influence of the 1667*

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

*Rebuilding Act for the City of London, which stipulated the standardisation of façades and the external use of brick instead of timber to minimise fire risk. King's Bench Walk is the best example of post-Fire domestic architecture left in the City, its elevations anticipating later speculative developments such as Bedford Row on the fringe of Gray's Inn, begun circa 1690, and Queen Anne's Gate, Westminster (circa 1704). The staircase layout of the new buildings here and elsewhere in the Temple recalls the blocks for gentleman commoners that recently had been put up in Oxford and Cambridge colleges, such as the Fellows' Building at Christ's College, Cambridge (1640-43) and Sir Christopher Wren's new building at Trinity College, Oxford, of 1665-68. But the overall effect is generally more austere, and one early nineteenth-century writer on the buildings of the Inns was reminded not so much of the English universities as of the apartment buildings of Paris and Edinburgh.*

*We do not know who built most of the post-Restoration buildings in the Inner Temple, but we do know who was responsible for the exactly contemporary expansion of the Middle Temple. He was the most famous, or notorious, of all post-Restoration London builders: Nicholas Barbon. Born in about 1640, the son of the Puritan zealot Praise-God Barebones, who gave his name to one of Cromwell's short-lived parliaments, Barbon studied medicine at the University of Leiden before applying his talents to the development of fire insurance and, in the 1670s, to property development, especially around the fringes of the City. He lived in Crown Court, off Fleet Street, and in 1674 he began to plan the development of Essex Street on the site of Essex House and its garden, south of the Strand and immediately west of the Middle Temple. This led to an outcry from the benchers who feared the loss of amenity and 'the decay, if not the ruin, of the Society'. But Barbon was a persuasive and ruthless man – described by Roger North, one of the benchers of the Middle Temple, as 'full of law' – and the benchers clearly decided that if they could not beat him, they would do well to join him. So in 1676 Barbon was employed to build New Court, a detached four-storeyed block like the earlier Lamb Building, on part of Essex House garden, and this was followed in 1677 by Essex Court. Both have plainer elevations than Kings Bench Walk, though the external severity was belied by the elaborate decoration of some of the rooms...*

*Barbon was also responsible for re-building following a fire of 1679 which devastated large areas of the Middle Temple's older buildings. Barbon's re-building of Brick Court, Elm Court and Pump Court fell short of complete re-planning and 80 houses which ---- which followed the stipulations of the London Building Act of 1667 but followed the older ---- plan of the Inn.*

*Lincoln's Inn was alone amongst the Inns in that it did not suffer such disastrous fires in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, possibly because its older buildings were constructed of brick not timber. Demand for new chambers, as elsewhere, existed though and Henry Serle's original scheme of 1680 for a private development eventually came to fruition. The importance of the open square element of New Square is stressed by Professor Tyack. He observes that:*

*... The buildings are as plain as those of Gray's Inn, save for the inner face of the gateway to Carey Street, embellished like Temple Bar with a curved (segmental) pediment and scroll-like volutes: a far cry from the sober Classicism of the Middle Temple Gateway. The project was finished off by Barbon – yet again – after Serle's*

death in 1690, and the first chambers were occupied in 1692, but Barbon did not succeed in persuading the lawyers to let him build an office for the Six Clerks of the Court of Chancery in the middle of the square, and the integrity of the open space has been maintained ever since.

In some respects, Lincoln's New Square echoes the aristocratic squares of the burgeoning western and north-western parts of London, such as St James's Square and – closer at hand – Bloomsbury Square, both begun in the 1660s, though New Square is architecturally more uniform than they originally were. But a closer analogy is with the Garden Quadrangles at New College (1682-1707) and Trinity College, Oxford (1668), in both of which the buildings form three sides of a square. This was a different kind of urbanism to that espoused by Gray's Inn: less cellular and introverted, more attuned to the notion of an open, airy public space first formulated in the Renaissance. This effect is captured in the illustration in Strype's 1720 edition of John Stow's *A Survey of the Cities of London and Westminster*, showing a Corinthian column and sundial in the middle of the open space, with the Inn's formal garden to the north and the houses on the north side of Lincoln's Inn Fields in the distance...

### Subsequent Alterations to the Seventeenth Century Fabric

In the early eighteenth century two doors were inserted on the ground floor of Nos. 16 and 18 Old Buildings to connect them to the square; these were then renumbered as 12 and 13 New Square. From 1720 onwards a third storey was added to New Square. Much of the roofing dates from this period. The Black books note that New Square '*propounds a remarkable degree of architectural symmetry*'.<sup>7</sup> Going on to cite Ralph's 1734 description of the Square, the summary of the site notes its crisp, ordered structure:

*...though it is imperfect on one side, yet that very defect produces a beauty, by giving a prospect to the gardens, which fill the space to abundantly more advantage. I may safely add that no area anywhere is kept in better order, either for cleanliness and beauty by day, or illumination and decorum by night.*<sup>8</sup>

In 1752 a devastating fire began in No. 10, which belonged to the Hon. Charles Yorke, and spread to numerous adjacent chambers. Unfortunately this destroyed many of the interior features of the properties and also resulted in the loss of a large number of Lord Somers' papers<sup>9</sup>. No. 11 was rebuilt following a fire in 1787. Five years later, there was a serious fire at Nos. 3 and 4<sup>10</sup>.

In 1804 a lamp was mounted over the passage to Serle Street and gates were erected on each side of the passage '*in the same manner as the one erected at No. 4 in Serle Court*'<sup>11</sup>. In 1845 the shops in Serle Street bought by the Society forty years earlier were converted into Chambers. 1845 also saw the completion of No. 11a. The gateway was altered in 1818 and the Society modified the gateway to prevent traffic

<sup>7</sup> Ibid p.xxxiv.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid p.xxxiv.

<sup>9</sup> B. Chancellor 'The Romance of Lincoln's Inn', 1932 p.245.

<sup>10</sup> Black Books vol 5 op cit, p.xxxiii.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid p.xxxv.

in 1848, when the gateway from Lincoln's Inn Fields was erected as an element of the Great Hall and Library development. A serious fire struck at No. 2 New Square in 1849, though the safes in occupants' chambers ensured most documents survived. The rebuilding conformed to the original plan but replaced the wooden staircase with a stone one. No. 9 was partially rebuilt in the 1870s. Sometime in this period six buildings were given attic rooms via internal secondary staircases. In No. 3 alone there were seven of these stairways within the second, third, and fourth floors.

In 1860 Lincoln's Inn found they were so regularly inconvenienced by the necessary upkeep of New Square – which was still known as Serle's Court – that they promoted the Lincoln's Inn Act. As has been stated above, that nothing short of an Act of Parliament was necessary to streamline and restructure the management of the New Square chambers demonstrates the complexities and idiosyncrasies thrown up by the historic establishment of the flying freeholds, as discussed in the previous section of this document. The Black Books are once again illuminating on the contents and impact of the 1860 Act:

*The short effect of this Act was to vest all the Chambers built on land which had belonged to Serle in the persons who owned them in 1860, subject to rent charged in favour of the Society to cover paving, lighting and watching charges, and to vest the garden and the rest of the square in the Society's trustees.*

*Under this Act, which still constitutes a charter of the government for New Square, a Committee of Proprietors is appointed, which has the power to execute or direct repair and other building work in the Square, to charge and apportion the cost of such work and among the Proprietors, and to settle disputes arising out of such work.*

*Section 13 of the Act provides that the Society "shall at their own proper cost... pave, light, watch, drain, cleanse, keep, repair and maintain the said uncovered piece of ground (ie the uncovered space of ground within the Quadrangle: section 9), ornamental garden, and all existing ways, paths and passages... except the iron railings enclosing the areas, and the stone coping thereof, and the railings on the entrance steps and area steps to the said several sets of Chambers" (Nos. 1-11), which were to be repaired by the Society at the expense of the Proprietors. No alteration can be made to the exterior of any of the buildings without the consent of the Society.<sup>12</sup>*

The Act improved and simplified the regulation of New Square and protected it from future alterations which could interfere with the overall character of the site. Between 1887 and 1889 Arnold & Company built 'More's Passage', which connects the southwest corner of New Square (No 7) to George Edmund Street's recently-completed Law Courts. This was the same Arnold who built Nos. 51 and 52 Carey Street nearby; he was also responsible for erecting the statue of Thomas More in the same street<sup>13</sup>.

The Inn's policy increasingly came to be to purchase the flying freeholds in New Square as they become available. In 1924 the Inn managed to buy the freehold of No.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid p.xxxv.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid p.xxxv.

7 New Square from George Arnold, the Carey Street builder who had constructed More's Passage some forty years before<sup>14</sup>. In the same decade, the Black Books explain that,

*Between No. 13 and No. 1 there was a wooden Porter's Shelter and also a low building let as a stationer's shop. Part of it was used as the orderly room f the Inns of Court Rifle Volunteers... The shelter and the shop were pulled down in 1927, when 'Garden House', Nos. 14 and 15 were built on a new site at the back of the kitchen garden, and the Tomlin Gates and Railings were set up.<sup>15</sup>*

The Inn suffered from serious bomb damage in the 1940s. Additionally, during WWII railings around a large portion of the garden were melted down for ammunition. Only the filigree wrought iron work on the gates at the north end of the square survive. New panelling and doors for No. 11 were presented by the Canadian Bar Association in 1951 as part of a general rebuilding following extensive bombing<sup>16</sup>. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century an additional storey was added to five of the buildings and new Dormer windows were inserted in the rear elevations of Nos. 4-7 and 8. Since the 1980s five of New Square's eleven buildings have been extensively renovated and major structural refurbishment has been undertaken on a further two.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid p.xxxv.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid p.xxxiv.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid p.xxxiv.

## 2.4 The Significance of Historical Figures associated with New Square

Prominent figures associated with New Square include the original developers of the houses and subsequent occupants. The figures which may now be considered the most significant include:

### Henry Serle (? – c1690)

Very little is known about Henry Serle other than that he was a member of Lincoln's Inn and wealthy enough to purchase Fickett's Fields.

Beresford Chancellor looks to Sir John Bramston's autobiography, in which he only states that Serle died c.1690 and was heavily in debt. Additional biographical information has not come to light as yet, though his position as a benchman and his ambition in purchasing and developing the land to the south of the Inn in the midst of London's post-1666 property building and speculating boom does mean that Serle was certainly a notable figure whose influence probably stretched well beyond the life of Lincoln's Inn. Serle's coat of arms appears above the archway leading from Carey Street into New Square, and his name is also memorialised in a nearby street and an ancient coffee-house, which Andrew Goodman identifies as the site of the first informal establishment of what became the Law Society<sup>1</sup>.

### Nicholas Barbon (1637/40-1698/99)

Nicholas Barbon was a writer, doctor, economist, and builder whose extensive development of central London still characterises much of the urban environment. The Black Books explain how Nicholas Barbon came to be involved in the New Square development following Henry Serle's death: '*an Act of Parliament was carried in 1690 for the selling of Serle's estate and recognising the agreement between the Society and Serle. In the next year, Lord Chandos, Henry Vincent, and Dr. Barbon came before the Masters and it was agreed that Dr. Barbon should carry out Serle's agreement with the Society*'<sup>2</sup>. Known for his industrial ruthlessness and radical ideology, Barbon stands amongst seventeenth-century London's most notable architectural figures. In "The Tyranny of Taste: The Politics of Architecture and Design in Britain, 1550-1960", Jules Lubbock cites Barbon's description of desire from his 1690 book, "A Discourse of Trade":

*Wares that have their Value from supplying the Wants of the Mind, are all such things that can satisfy Desire: Desire implies Want; It is the Appetite of the Soul, and is as natural to the Soul as Hunger to the Body. The Wants of the Mind are infinite, Man naturally Aspires, and as his Mind is elevated, his Senses grew more refined, and more capable of Delight; his Desires are enlarged and his Wants increase with his Wishes, which is for everything that is rare, can gratify his Sense, adorn his Body, and promote the Ease, Pleasure, and Pomp of Life.*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A. Goodman, "The Walking Guide to Lawyers' London" (London: Blackstone, 2000), p184.

<sup>2</sup> The Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, The Black Books, Vol 3, 1660-1775 (London: Lincoln's Inn, 1899), p.xxx.

<sup>3</sup> N. Barbon, "A Discourse of Trade" 1690, pp.14-15, quoted in Jules Lubbock, "The Tyranny of Taste" (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), p.97.



Lubbock goes on to say that, *'This development in human wants and economic demand from the necessities of the body, such as basic food and shelter, to the Wants of the Mind in civilized nations is fundamental to subsequent theories of political economy, including William Jevon's theory of the diminishing marginal utility of goods'*<sup>4</sup>. "A Discourse on Trade" was published the same year that Barbon took over the development of what would become New Square. In total, he wrote three books: "An Apology for the Builder" (1685), "A Discourse on Trade" (1690) and "A Discourse Concerning Coining the New Money Lighter" (1696). He was also the MP for Bramber between 1690 and 1695<sup>5</sup>.

Nicholas Barbon was the son of the London leather merchant and politician, Praisegod Barbon. When parliament briefly sat in 1653, it was nicknamed 'Barebone's Parliament' as a play on Barbon's name. Educated at Leiden and Utrecht, Nicholas Barbon was admitted to the College of Physicians as an honorary fellow in 1664. However, the Great Fire of London in 1666 provided such lucrative and plentiful building opportunities that Barbon abandoned medicine in favour of rebuilding modern London. He was particularly active in the West End and the City and quickly gained the reputation for bypassing legislative obstacles and overvaluing his assets in radically optimistic speculation. Roger North claimed that Barbon's skill lay *'more in economising ground for advantage and the little contrivances of a family than the more noble aims of architecture, and all his aim was at profit'*<sup>6</sup>.

Lincoln's Inn may have considered Barbon's approach with some scepticism, as less than a decade earlier Barbon's workmen had been involved in a significant dispute with Gray's Inn over the development of Red Lion Fields. He had also been involved in structural additions to the Temple and was a force to be reckoned with in the London property world, often setting one group of creditors against another and employing whole teams of clerks and lawyers to ensure the success of his precarious business practices<sup>7</sup>. Barbon's first prominent home was one he built himself at nearby Crane Court; it exemplifies a type of seventeenth-century City house which was *'more richly ornamented than their plainer West End neighbours'*<sup>8</sup>. McKellar cites Summerson's assertion that City houses built after 1666 were *'rarely of a kind to satisfy educated taste'*, as they made florid, bold decorative statements over and above the seventeenth-century minimalist classical shell described above<sup>9</sup>. Later in life he moved to Osterley House, where he died in c.1699.

### Notable Occupants of New Square

New Square's first resident was Cavendish Weedon, who was admitted to the Inn in 1692. Chancellor notes that Weedon took a great interest in the architecture and landscaping of New Square and may be responsible for its initial garden plan. The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge met in New Square as early as 1714, and the Church Commissioners also held meetings there. In the 1740s Sir

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p.97.

<sup>5</sup> R Sheldon 'Nicholas Barbon', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography online version.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> E. McKellar, "The Birth of Modern London: The Redevelopment and Design of the City, 1660-1720", 1999, p.178.

<sup>9</sup> J. Summerson, "Architecture in Britain 1530-1830", p.59.

William Grant, Lord Advocate of Scotland and later Lord Prestongrange, occupied No. 3. From 1757 the writer Arthur Murray lived at No. 1. A friend of Samuel Johnson's, Walpole described Murray as '*very good company*'<sup>10</sup>. Sir Samuel Romilly was also resident at New Square in this period. Records from 1752 show that the Hon. Charles Yorke, who has the dubious distinction of holding the Lord Chancellorship for the shortest period in history – a single day – lived in No. 10. In 1794 Lord Eldon, formerly a Solicitor-General, lived in No. 11<sup>11</sup>. Beneath No. 4 is the passageway next to Wildy's one of the world's most famous legal bookshops. From 1766-70 Lord Camden, the Lord Chancellor, was resident at No. 4. No. 5 houses Robert Raymond, Chief Justice of the King's Bench, from 1710-33. In 1694 No. 7 was briefly the home of the Stamp Office. Famous nineteenth century occupants include Prime Minister William Lamb, Lord Westbury, and Viscount Selbourne.

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<sup>10</sup> B. Chancellor 'The Romance of Lincoln's Inn', 1932, p.245.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid p.246.

### **3.0 VULNERABILITY- New Square**

#### **3.1 Vulnerability Overview**

##### **3.1.1 Statutory Framework**

The buildings at New Square are listed Grade II\*; this includes all of the built fabric, inside and out of the buildings around New Square known as New Square 1-11. The Listing description is included in Appendix 1. Any alterations to the exterior fabric will require Planning Consent, irrespective of whether the alteration is to modern or historic fabric, and should be made to Camden Council, who is the Planning Authority. Listed Building Consent will also be required, and should be made to Camden Council of London for all works to the fabric, internal or external. They will notify English Heritage and with buildings of this importance, it would be prudent to have discussed proposals with them in advance.

Listed Building Consent procedures are subject to the advice set out in Planning Policy Guidance Statement 5, 2010 – Planning in the Historic Environment (PPS 5). The entire site lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area. A Conservation Area Appraisal was published in 1995, and is available from Camden Council, priced £5.00.

##### **3.1.2 Vulnerability Overview**

The chambers are set in a “U” shape around a central square, and were always conceived as eleven separate units, Nos 1-11. Each unit was arranged with a central entrance leading to a staircase with two chambers of four rooms, one each side of the landing. The chambers in New Square are well maintained, and are generally used as office accommodation for barristers’ chambers. As the sizes of the chambers increased the living accommodation has decreased to two flats only.

The buildings around New Square were enlarged over time, with floors added to the original three storey plus basement structure soon after they were built, to accommodate more chambers. With the more recent increase in chamber sizes the expansion has been lateral with party walls broken between Nos 4 and 5, 7 and 8, and 10 and 11, as well as major alterations within the attic and basement floor levels both to provide larger flexible space.

The lateral conversion of the buildings and the wider grander rooms of New Square Chambers have been successfully adapted to fulfil the needs of the contemporary chambers. However, the erosion of the cellular structure of the buildings to provide for larger rooms and horizontal circulation is a potential problem. There has also been an opposite tendency, particularly on second and third floors, to sub-divide larger rooms to provide more but smaller individual barrister’s office rooms.

Although many of the chambers now have lifts, there are potential problems in adapting the raised entrances of the buildings to provide improved disabled access for the chambers, although a successful hoist installation has been made at No 4.

Other regularly arising difficulties include periodic re-wiring, particularly IT, leading

to messy service installations, and the continuing expansion of some sets of chambers and the dissolution of others leading to illogical sub-division of buildings (eg No 7).

### **3.2 Vulnerability and Issues**

#### **3.2.1 The Setting of the Buildings**

The Buildings around New Square form three sides of the Square, built in brick as eleven individual units, and set back from the pavements behind wide areas which allow light to the basement rooms. The square is connected to the street behind with entrances cut through the buildings at the corners – shown in the attached plans (section 9). The garden in the centre, originally railed, has been recently landscaped.

The façades of the building are well looked after and retain much of their original fabric from the seventeenth century and later eighteenth century at higher levels. The façades are homogenous in appearance although numbers 2, 3, 4, 10 and 11 have been re-built after fires, and number 11 again after World War II. The occupation of the fourth floor attic levels in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, has necessitated the addition of dormer windows and skylights at roof level. These vary in design.

New Square numbers 1-3 have been expanded at basement and ground floor level to occupy extensions on their rear façades. A modern set of buildings has also been built behind numbers 1-3, and there is pressure to connect numbers 1-3 to these modern building with bridges at the upper levels.

There has also been some colonisation of buildings in Carey Street at ground and basement levels by numbers 4-6, and ugly bridges have been built across the basement areas.

As the chambers expand the appearance and potential alterations to the external elevations could be a potential problem.

The close proximity of Serle Street to the rear of numbers 7-11 has prevented any significant rearwards extension here.

#### **3.2.2 Legibility of the Building**

The numbers on each door clearly identify individual building, boards with the names of the chambers and tenants at each entrance further assist in locating the occupants.

Chambers often occupy different buildings which are not necessarily contiguous, and this may lead to problems of internal connections.

#### **3.2.3 Understanding the Buildings**

The history of the building's construction, later repairs and enlargement are fully recorded in the Inn's "Black Books".

No detailed drawings of New Square complex showing its historic fabric exist prior to the preparation of this conservation plan.

A lack of easily accessible plans showing the historical significance of the various parts of the building will have made protection of these significant parts more difficult, and will in large part be remedied by the present document.

#### **3.2.4 Uses of the Buildings**

- a) The New Square buildings remain in use for one of the purposes for which they were constructed. The size of the New Square "houses" has been successfully used to contain larger chambers which often occupy two units together.
- b) Increasing demand for larger chambers has resulted in the gradual decrease in living accommodation. This process has now almost reached its logical conclusion, with only two residential units remaining.
- c) The need for interconnection between the buildings occupied by one set of chambers has also resulted in circuitous and often not very sensitive alterations to forge lateral connections between two contiguous buildings. The essentially fluid nature of the sizes of chambers makes this process likely to continue, so it should be managed in such a way as to prevent the sub-division of the original structural compartments or the insertion of additional partitions.

#### **3.2.5 Presentation Issues**

Some of the refurbishments may be insensitively carried out, and may therefore adversely affect the interiors by the removal or covering up of historic fabric, or by its mutilation – previous examples of this are identified in the Gazetteers.

#### **3.2.6 Refurbishment**

The chambers are routinely refurbished, upgraded and modernised. This brings with it the risk of destruction of fabric and loss of significance where services are upgraded.

Some recent refurbishments (eg at number 6 and number 8) have been close to façade retention schemes, involving much loss of original structure.

#### **3.2.7 Conservation, Repair and Presentation**

##### **3.2.7.1 Generally**

All finishes, including robust fabric, are subject to wear and tear and will require repair and conservation, as indeed has already taken place in many areas. All such operations will involve risk to the fabric of the building and need to be properly managed by employing good conservation practice.

The gradual addition of floors above the original three storey plus basement seventeenth century structures also included extensive structural alteration, including the insertion of steel beams.

Under the recent bouts of torrential rain many of the gutters and rainwater pipes have overflowed and caused damage, exacerbated by the lack of overflows and flood alarm systems. With the current predictions for climate change this trend is bound to continue, and the roof drainage systems of the building will be placed under increasing pressure.

Alterations at roof level should consider carefully the impact of this on the increased and existing roof rainwater drainage systems.

#### 3.2.7.2 Stone Brickwork and Render Externally – Plain

The stonework brickwork is subject to weathering, impact damage at ground level, poor quality repairs in inappropriate materials and over-enthusiastic restoration.

#### 3.2.7.3 Roofing Materials

The roof slates are subject to weather and impact damage. The lead roofs, flashings and dressings are subject to decay, weather and impact damage, as well as thermal movement. The asphalt roofs are subject to damage from impact and heat. Roof lights are subject to weathering and impact damage. Unsightly and badly located units and support frames and fixings for air conditioning and other plants is potentially damaging to the roofing if not considered carefully.

#### 3.2.7.4 External Render and Paint in Basement External Areas and Third Floors at No 5 and 6 New Square

The render is subject to decay from salts leaching up from ground level, which may have been applied to melt snow and ice.

The render is also vulnerable to piecemeal repair in cement or other inappropriate materials.

#### 3.2.7.5 External Paving Materials

The external “street” paving is made up of an asphalt road and stone flags to the pavements, all in reasonable condition, but vulnerable to being re-laid in the wrong materials following any repairs to buried services.

The ‘bridges’ and the basement areas are generally paved with York stone flags, which have in part been repaired in cement. This process mars the overall appearance, and should be guarded against.

The square is well looked after and has been re-landscaped with a new central water feature; the landscaping is covered in a separate document.

#### 3.2.7.6 Non-Joinery Internal Wall and Ceiling Finishes

There is no high quality plasterwork in New Square, but some important contemporary cornicing is visible as noted in the Gazetteer. There is also some historic wall and ceiling plaster, all of which is vulnerable to damage or even total

loss during various programmes of refurbishment.

#### 3.2.6.7 Painted Decorations

Little, if anything, visible today dates from earlier than the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the majority of the surfaces have been repainted. Nevertheless, some of the rooms and common parts are of interest in that their panelling is contemporary with various periods of construction or post-fire repair of the buildings (eg number 11).

In the 1960-70s some of the original panelling (New Square 8) was stripped of its original paint and varnished. Although this is now part of the aesthetic of these chambers the pine-panelling would have been painted in the 17<sup>th</sup> C, and the interior would be closer to its original appearance if the panelling was repainted.

#### 3.2.7.8 Historic Metalwork – Painted and Polished

Very little of the original metal work survives, and this has been noted in the Gazetteer. Where hinges, locks and window fittings survive, it is likely to have become heavily overpainted (eg hinges to outer doors to sets of chambers at main stair floor landings), leading to the total loss of any detail. Surviving ironmongery is also liable to piecemeal replacement (particularly window catches and door knobs) in non-matching items leading to a loss of consistency.

#### 3.2.7.10 Floors

Stone floors are largely confined to re-built stairs (eg number 10) and to entrances, as described in the Gazetteer, and are vulnerable to non-matching repairs.

Boarded floors within chambers are almost everywhere fully carpeted in modern carpet, none of which is of any significance. Visible boards remain on main staircases and landings, and have often become worn. Some renewals have been made; as the timber is stained, these are not conspicuous; this process must be expected to continue.

#### 3.2.7.11 Windows

The majority of the windows in New Square are traditional timber sliding sash windows. Some timber casements also exist. All windows are in reasonable condition, as discussed in the Gazetteer. Modern metal skylights have been added.

Sash windows are vulnerable to broken sash cords. Poorly decorated and jammed sash windows are vulnerable to rot from trapped rainwater and should, therefore, be inspected regularly. Skylights require routine maintenance to ensure against leaks.

Windows generally are vulnerable to being painted up when re-decorated, and to being re-glazed in non-matching glass.

#### 3.2.7.12 Door Furniture

The door furniture is described in the Gazetteer. For the main entrance doors

replacement door furniture should be considered carefully to maintain consistency (see also item 3.2.7.8 above).

#### **3.2.7.13 Historic Wooden Joinery and Cornices**

The panelling and some of the doors and cornices which date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> C are of considerable historic interest and must be protected against loss or piecemeal renewal.

These elements have been identified in the gazetteers. Care must be taken to protect them from damage.

#### **3.2.8 Security**

The chambers are carefully monitored spaces but as requirements for security increase additional features to provide this should be considered carefully to avoid unsightly addition and loss of original historic fabric. The design of this should not compromise the architecture of the building.

#### **3.2.9 Lighting and Services**

Key issues in determining a better lighting strategy for the buildings are:-

- The appropriate temperature for the fittings: most modern 'low energy' fittings need shading to look in keeping with the interiors.
- Cabling should not require intrusive fittings and wiring.
- Cable routes should be considered in a manner which avoids surface run cables and large unsightly ducts.

#### **3.2.10 Fire Precautions**

Whilst fire precautions have an impact on the building, they are clearly of the utmost importance in the minimising the risk of losing the building in part or in whole.

Nevertheless, the installation of both active and passive measures can, if not carefully handled, involve irreversible loss or damage of historic fabric.

Implementation of the fire regulations should be carefully monitored to ensure that none of the architectural details are altered and provision made of placing signage etc in a sensitive manner suited for the building.

Materials such as intumescent paint, and perko door-closers should be considered, and fire compartments, if necessary, created sensitively.

#### **3.2.11 Accessibility**

Pressure to provide disabled access throughout the buildings is likely to remain, and unless carefully considered will be very disruptive of the historic plan layout; however, where the original set plan of four rooms plus a corridor on each side of the central stair has been preserved, there is a non-disruptive location available – as has been used at number 6.



The possibility of adapting the entrances to provide a chair lift or retractable ramp should be considered carefully to provide a cohesive solution, which would not distract from the uniformity of the buildings. An overall approach for this problem has to be considered to guard against haphazard and unsightly temporary solutions.

#### **3.2.12 Mechanical and Electrical Services**

In general the services within the recently upgraded buildings have been installed sensitively. This has not been achieved in the buildings which have been given piecemeal alterations – numbers 9 and 10 are obvious examples. The landings and corridors are particularly vulnerable to the unsightly addition of further wiring.

Some buildings (eg number 11) do not have full central heating, while others (number 9) have a partial installation; any new systems should not be put in at the expense of the historic fabric.

Windows are vulnerable to the installation of temporary free-standing air-conditioning units in some rooms, at the individual request of the occupant.

#### **3.2.13 Environmental Issues**

Over recent years there have been increasing calls for and legislation to ensure reduced energy consumption.

Pressure may be expected for implementation (or increasing the provision) in respect of the following:-

- Roof insulation.
- Secondary glazing / double glazing.
- Energy efficient lighting.
- Energy efficient heating.
- Insulated wall linings.

These measures will affect both the historic fabric and present – day appearance of interiors and indeed, the appearance of the buildings from the outside.

#### **3.2.14 Incremental Degradation**

Historic buildings suffer from degradation under the principles of 'death by a thousand cuts' or 'Chinese whispers'. These changes are often the result of a lack of continuous memory of a building, due to poor documentation and/or rapid staff turnover, the demands of aggressive individuals that the buildings should be altered to suit them, and the willingness of others to accommodate them.

#### **3.2.16 Disaster Planning**

Fire, flood and physical attack can all result in catastrophic destruction of the buildings, as witnessed at Hampton Court and Windsor Castle. A disaster plan should be prepared to enable recovery following any cataclysm.

### **3.3 Area by Area**

To avoid constant repetition, the general vulnerabilities described in section 3.2, above will not be repeated; this section will concentrate on the specific vulnerabilities of particular areas.

#### **3.3.1 The Exteriors**

The brick external walls of the buildings are at present well maintained, but are vulnerable to repairs in non-matching bricks, as may generally be seen at third floor level.

Increasing pressure for space has resulted in the occupation of the basement outhouses, light-wells and vaults in numbers 1-3, 6 and 8. Although these have to be considered on an individual basis, an overall policy should be in place to ensure a homogenous approach to the minimize damage to the historic fabric and overall appearance of the buildings as group.

#### **3.3.2 The Exteriors – Windows**

To improve thermal and sound insulation secondary glazing should be the preferred option for the windows. Any new double glazed windows should take into account the thickness of the glazing units, to ensure that the depth of the sashes and mullions do not have to be altered.

#### **3.3.3 The Interiors**

The buildings around New Square were enlarged incrementally with the addition of floors above, increasing from three to four floors with a basement.

Much of the interior panelling has been heavily restored, stripped of its patina and mixed in with new material so that it is often difficult to distinguish between the old and new. Many of the doors and some of the window frames (though not the sashes) are 18<sup>th</sup> C, the original casements having been renewed everywhere.

Many of the interiors of New Square have been re-built. Number 2 New Square was completely re-built after 1849, and although re-constructed in the original style there is very little of the earlier 17<sup>th</sup> /18<sup>th</sup> century historic interiors remaining.

The ground floor of 4-5 New Square has been altered to provide a larger entrance foyer for which much of the original cellular structure was lost. Although the first and second floors do retain the original 18<sup>th</sup> century configuration some of the earlier panelling and the lateral conversion of the units has resulted in considerable loss fabric.