

3.2 ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORIC APPRAISAL

Since its original conception in the 1870s, the former Prudential Assurance building has undergone frequent and protracted periods of redevelopment and alteration, as the company grew, and the leases of the buildings of Furnival’s Inn ran out. The most significant periods of reconstruction, and those most relevant to this application, have been expanded upon below.

In order to accommodate the ever-increasing requirements of the Prudential Assurance company, Alfred Waterhouse was employed in order to improve the facilities and use of space within the building, as well as to extend it beyond the original offices, firstly north, towards Greville Street, and then east, along Holborn, and towards Leather Lane. His designs were completed by 1906, five years after his death, by his son, Paul, and involved an almost fully comprehensive renovation of the interiors of the building in order to provide electricity and running water, technologies which were considered luxuries at the time. Other facilities included a chapel, separate libraries for both men and women and a theatre for company plays.

Brooke Street Extension and the addition of 17-19 Greville Street 1885-8

The Brooke Street Extension, the first stage of development beyond the original offices, went through various periods of revision. The final design for the extension of the Brooke Street elevation is shown in figure 15. While grander in scale and conception than what had gone before, this extension had a somewhat utilitarian approach built into it, providing straightforward office floorspace, with a greater number of windows than the original building to improve internal lighting, and a new constructional approach, being built with the new fire proof approach of steel decking covered by glazed arches. This system was to continue to be used throughout the later Waterhouse works, and led to the existence of the prominent arches within the Ridler’s Hotel block, visible in figures 4 and 5.

Wood’s Hotel 1895-6

This extension included a small rectangular projection into the court which mirrored the location of the former Wood’s Hotel (see figures 27 and 28, and set a new tone for the surrounding blocks.



Figure 14: Alfred Waterhouse’s design for the first Prudential building on the site, opened in 1879.



Figure 15: Waterhouse’s design for the Brooke Street extension of 1885, the most northerly section (left hand of this image) of which remains, and is incorporated within 2 Waterhouse Square.

Furnival’s Inn block 1897-1901

The dramatic Furnival’s Inn block, facing onto Holborn, is the most impressive and obvious part of the former Prudential Assurance Building, was developed following the purchase of the former main block of the law students’ dwellings. The design was originally intended to have an open forecourt but was in fact added to the original offices which remained in situ.

Dramatic externally and internally, it retains the most significant internal spaces, including faience and terracotta-lined halls, and stained glass windows. It completed the Waterhouse works to the Prudential Assurance Building, other than the still-extant addition of a double mansard roof, with additional office accommodation, in the 1920s. These can best be seen along Leather Lane, for example in figure 18, showing this façade in the 1950s, following the demolition of Gamage’s Department Store.



Figure 16: Waterhouse’s design for the Prudential offices on Holborn informed many other offices he built for the company, including (clockwise from left): those at Liverpool, Manchester, Bristol and Nottingham.

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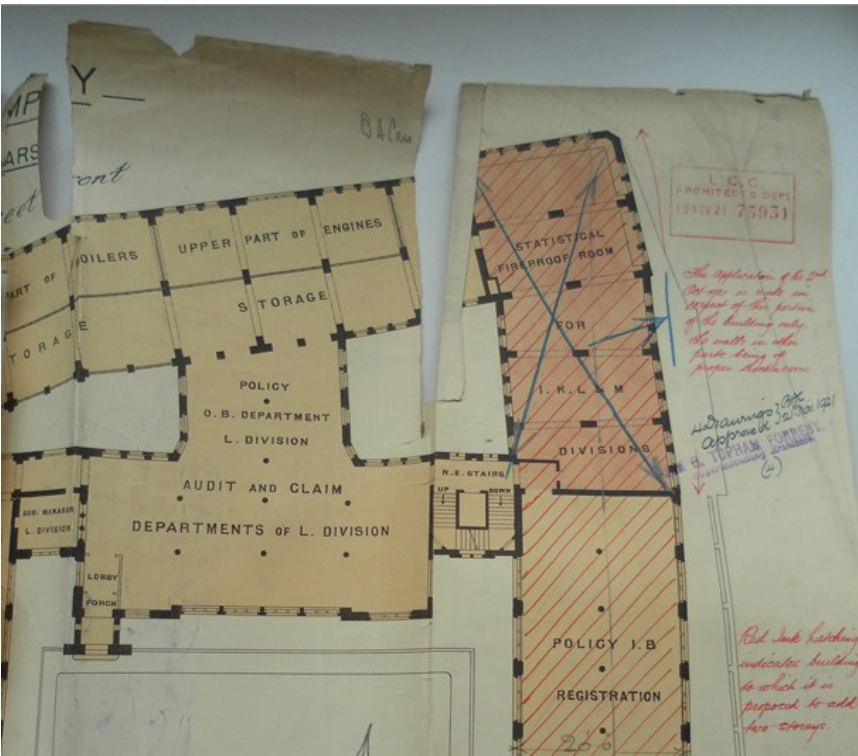


Figure 17: The plans drawn up by Alfred Waterhouse c. 1900 for the rear of the building to Greville Street as it existed at the time, and the suggestions made by his son Paul in the 1920s are shown in red ink.



Figure 18: The east elevation of the former Prudential Assurance building following the demolition of Gamage's Department Store, a site rarely seen due to the densely built surroundings in Holborn.

E. M. Joseph in the 1930s

By the 1930s, the 'mod-cons' of the late early twentieth century were already becoming outdated and were in need of repair or replacement. E. M. Joseph was therefore commissioned to carry out another comprehensive renovation of the building during which the original block to Brooke Street was demolished and rebuilt as a seven storey range, yet done in the old style to face Holborn. During this period of reconstruction, many of the Gothic Revival interiors were removed and replaced with Art Deco features.

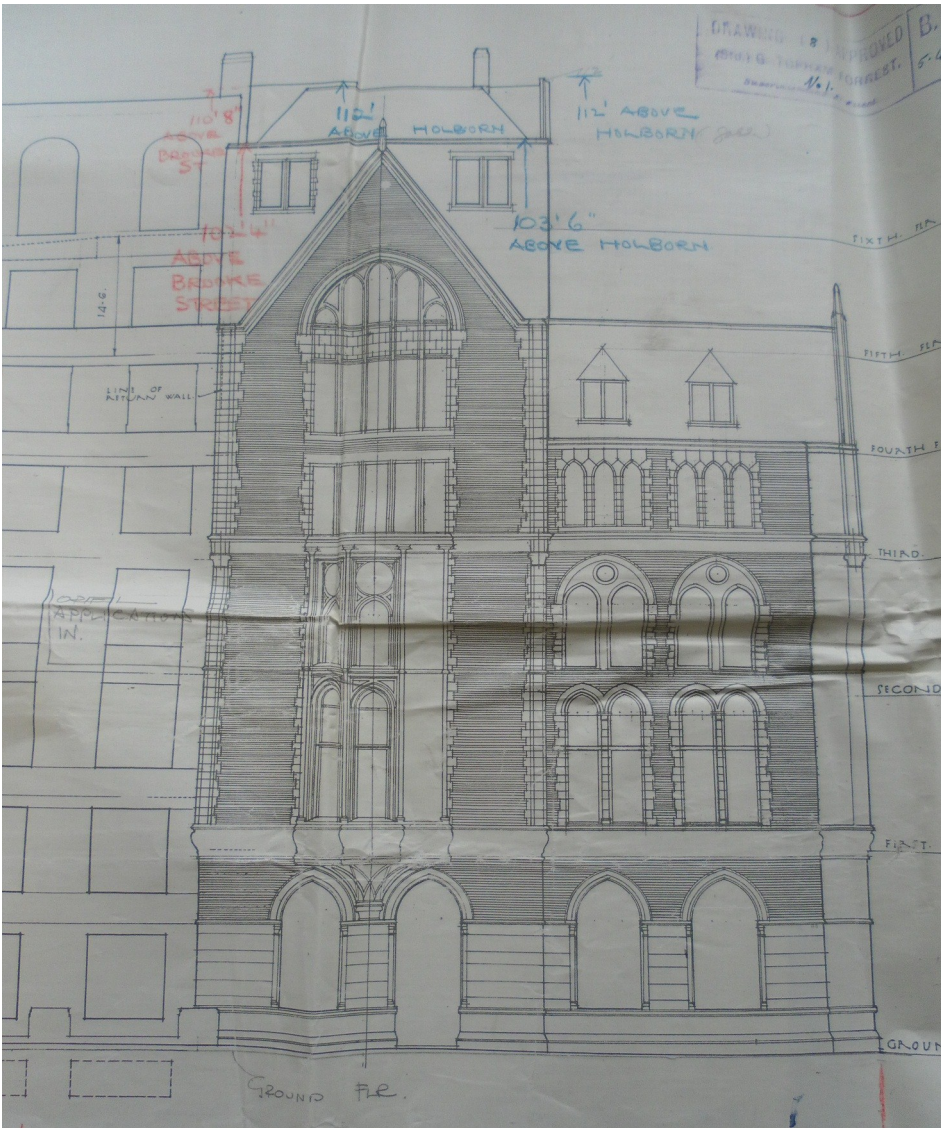


Figure 19: Plans for the rebuilding of the elevation to Brooke Street, as designed by E.M. Joseph. The extension was to incorporate a new seven storey office block, as can be seen to the left of this drawing.

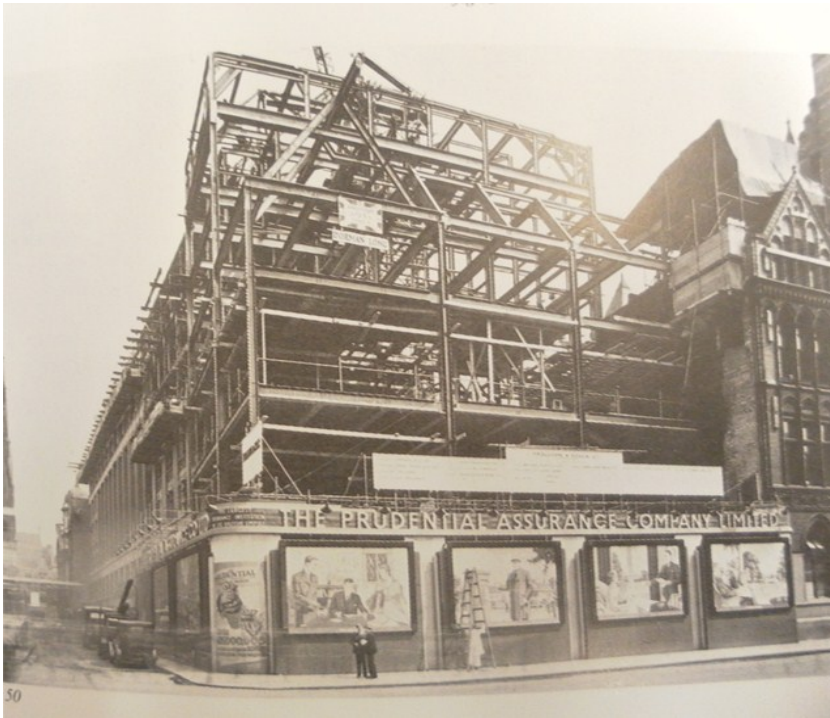


Figure 20: The extension to Brooke Street during the reconstruction works that were carried out in the early 1930s.



Figure 21: The extension to Brooke Street is plainly evident in this photograph of Holborn taken in 1933.