

No 8 Saint Katherine's Precinct, Regent's Park.

DESCRIPTION AND APPRAISAL

1 Exterior

(note - the terms 'left' and 'right' are as facing the building or elevation).

1.1 Front Elevation

Gault brick with stone dressings, the left hand house of the northern terrace of three Sisters' houses serving the religious community of St Katherine's. Three stories and attic above a basement lit from a railed lightwell. Four-centre headed doorway against party wall with No7, the apparent four-panel door externally (under a four-pane toplight) being a three-panel door and a fixed sidelight, the inner arch and entrance hall narrowing behind the toplight to match the door.

The ground, first and second floors have square-headed three-light mullioned windows with double-hung glazing bar sash windows: they have stone surrounds and mullions of simply-splayed stone. The first floor windows have hood mouldings and a continuous cill and string course: the second floor windows have a continuous hood moulding forming the parapet string course. Two-light casement-hung attic window in stepped gablet, moulded coping. Slate roof with lead ridge. Multi-flued chimney stacks either side, of castellated brick, the end flues set diagonally to the main flues. Stone front steps, decorative cast iron railings to basement light well. Plinth with splayed stone capping. Elevation unaltered.

1.2 Side Elevation

Detailing generally all as the front elevation, with first floor string course, parapet string course and moulded parapet coping carried round. At roof level the main roof finishes behind a gablet to the right, with attic window as before, and the chimney stacks to the left. The main wall below has a large oriel window to the right, having a two-tier three-light main window with single-light windows on the splayed sides to match: stone dressings, with a castellated stone parapet and on multi-tier stone corbelling. To the left, a carved stone tablet depicting two angels either side of a crowned shield and the inscription ELEANORA FOUNDAT'. Elevation unaltered.

1.3 Rear Elevation

Gault brick with stone dressings. Three stories above a modern lightwell serving the basement, and with a shallow full-height stair turret extending out to the left above a deeper two-storey extension. Main roof concealed behind parapets with moulded stone copings and string courses, and chimney stacks either side as before: flat lead roofs to extensions. Two-light windows to the right hand rooms, single-light elsewhere, windows having splayed stone mullions and dressings finishing flush. Elevations unaltered apart from at ground floor level where they have been enclosed by a modern timber and glass conservatory-type roof spanning the flank and party walls to form an extension; a light well has been formed within this extension by breaking out the cellar and creating a wide opening through the basement rear wall.

1.4 Rear Garden

The treatment is all modern, with areas of stone flags and shrub planting. Original gault brick party wall to right with brick-on-edge capping. Gault brick party wall to left with a later capping of red brick-on-edge on tile dpc. Rear wall a modern low wall with brick-on-edge capping on tile dpc, topped by fencing.

2 Interior

2.1 Ground Floor

Entrance hall original but with timber floor finished with modern oak laminate. Retains its moulded plaster cornice, skirtings, 4-panel doors and architraves. Timber beading to quadrant corner of living room. The door to the rear room has been fixed shut and the skirting carried across leaving a low plinth. The same original detailing continues in the rear (lower) passage but thereafter the interior is remodelled and modernised to accommodate storage, laundry room and toilet.

Front sitting room redecorated and partly altered. Original features include the moulded 4-panel door and architraves, the window (with discreet shutters in the reveals and moulded panelling below) and the white marble fireplace against the gable wall. Modern alterations include a large opening to the rear room, modern oak laminate floor finish, and modern shelving all round, having thin pilasters with Gothick trefoil heads: the original moulded skirtings and plaster cornice survive in part but have been heavily modified to suit the shelving.

Rear room redecorated and partly altered as front room. Modern alterations include oak laminate floor finish, and modern shelving all round: the original moulded skirtings and plaster cornice survive in part but have been heavily modified to suit the shelving. Window has discreet shutters in the reveals and moulded panelling below. Fireplace removed from against gable wall.

2.2 First Floor

Accessed by return staircase, redecorated and with the timber treads artificially grained in recent years. Mostly intact, retaining its moulded stringers and skirtings, moulded plaster cornice, and moulded hardwood handrail fully wreathed on stick balusters finishing at the bottom on a multi-faceted iron post. Landings finished in modern oak laminate.

Clothes storage room off half-landing fully redecorated and fitted out with no historic features apart from its moulded 4-panel door, architraves and panelled linings.

Front sitting room redecorated and with the floor re-finished in modern oak laminate. Otherwise original, retaining its moulded plaster cornice, moulded skirtings, and moulded 4-panel door in moulded architraves. The windows of the canted bay rise higher than the original ceiling and have discreet shutters in the reveals and moulded panelling below.

Fireplace against party wall with white marble surround, a decorative polished metal insert fireplace and modern slate hearth.

Rear study room redecorated and with the floor re-finished in modern oak laminate, but mostly original, with moulded plaster cornice, moulded skirtings, and moulded 4-panel door in moulded architraves. Decorative white marble fireplace against gable wall with black cast iron insert fireplace and modern slate hearth. Full height modern oak shelving has been installed against the sitting room wall, between thin pilasters with Gothick trefoil heads, and the cornice adjusted to match.

2.3 Second Floor

Accessed by return staircase, all as flight below (see above). Landings finished in modern oak laminate. Moulded 4-panel doors and architraves. Tank cupboard on landing is probably a later insertion, with cornice carried round to suit.

Front bedroom refurbished and redecorated, the fireplace on the party wall removed and a full room-width clothes cupboard installed. A doorway has been inserted into the rear room to provide an en-suite bathroom, with both doorways fitted with modern fluted architraves standing proud, and vented toplights. Fully carpeted timber floor. Some original features remain - the moulded 4-panel doors, moulded skirtings and moulded plaster cornice, but the skirtings and cornice have been heavily adapted to suite the conversion work.

Rear room heavily adapted to become a modern en-suite bathroom, with any fireplace obliterated and the former doorway blocked internally, leaving a shallow cupboard. No original features apart from the moulded plaster cornice, adapted to fit round the new shower cubicle. Timber floor finished in modern oak laminate.

2.4 Third (Attic) Floor

Accessed by winding tread staircase, redecorated and with the timber treads artificially grained in recent years. Mostly intact, retaining its moulded stringers and skirtings, moulded hardwood handrail, stick balusters and turned newel posts with square heads.

Front room only, a bedroom in the roof space. Dormer at the rear probably original, and also the inner room (now bathroom). Fully carpeted timber floor. The room has been refurbished and redecorated, and the inner room fitted out as a bathroom, but it retains its original moulded skirtings, plain 4-panel doors and architraves.

2.5 Basement

Accessed by straight flight, closed tread timber stair with top winders, redecorated but largely original. Upper part enclosed from hall by moulded handrail on stick balusters and with turned newel post to match main stair: lower balustrading of simpler design with square-section skirtings and newel post. Treads artificially grained in recent years.

Basement rooms mostly heavily upgraded and partly re-modelled to provide living accommodation, including full re-plastering, new moulded 4-panel doors in splayed or pencil-rounded architraves, moulded skirtings, stone-tiled floor etc. Fully fitted modern kitchen at the rear. Front room is least altered, retaining its moulded plaster cornice and a

fireplace with 1930's-style painted wood fire surround, cast iron grate and stone hearth. Otherwise the basement has no original features.

A large opening has been created through the rear wall to the base of the modern extension, with mirrored reveals and architraves of fluted timber. Beyond is a modern bedroom created from the original coal cellar, with related facilities.

3 Setting

No 8 St Katherine's Precinct forms part of a small and very attractive composition of buildings within the overall area of Regent's Park. The two short terraces of houses - the Brothers' to the south and the Sister's to the north - face each other across a lawned quadrangle which is closed on the east side by the Chapel, Hall and Pastor's House, linked by quadrant arcades with decorative cast iron railings. The whole Precinct is enclosed from the busy Outer Circle of Regents Park by decorative cast iron railings and gates, making it a quiet and special haven. It lies between two of the most impressive terraces in the city - the Grade I Gloucester Gate and Cumberland Terrace.

4. Appraisal

The special historic interest of No 8 St Katherine's Precinct lies principally in its role as part of the group of the former Royal Hospital of St Katherine's. All the domestic collegiate buildings (- the two terraces of houses facing each other -) are Listed Grade II* as a group and include the Porter's Lodge attached to No 8.

The interest of the group is both social and architectural. Although not the work of a leading architect it is an early and successful example of the gothic revival style in London, the style alluding to the antecedents of the building complex and its particular function. In terms of townscape the Precinct makes an important contribution to the character of the area (which is part of the Regent's Park Conservation Area) and there is an interesting juxtaposition with the two classical terraces either side. The rear garden has little intrinsic value and is not seen other than from the rear access path and from the houses themselves.

Internally the rooms are restrained in their decoration and fitting-out and many have experienced minor changes in taste over time (- the ground floor reception rooms -) or more major functional changes (- the upper floor en-suite bathrooms and storage provision, and the basement). The first floor front room is of particular quality due to its prime orientation towards Regent's Park via the impressive oriel bay window.