



30–32 GREAT QUEEN STREET, 26 AND 28 PARKER STREET
London
WC2

London Borough of Camden

Standing building assessment

November 2007



MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

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Museum of London Archaeology Service

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Summary

This report presents an assessment of the architectural and historic interest of buildings at Nos 30, 31 and 32 Great Queen Street, and 26 and 28 Parker Street, London WC2, carried out in November 2007 by the Museum of London Archaeology Service on behalf of Brimelow McSweeney Architects. Evidence has been found for the construction and use of the buildings. No 32 is in origin an 18th-century town house, refronted and possibly raised a storey in the 19th century, and refaced externally and refurbished internally at some time since 1904; it is not statutorily listed. Nos 30 and 31 were two 18th-century town houses, joined by the late 19th century with 26–28 Parker Street, to the north, as the single premises of a coach-builder and harness-maker. This latter property was redeveloped as a single building in 1923–4 by its new owners, the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls, whose headquarters were in offices on the 1st floor. The new building housed more offices on the upper floors, which, with the ground floor, could be rented out to other businesses, as well as a small caretaker's flat in the 4th-floor roof space. Subsequently this building was connected with No 32 on every floor, and a residential flat was created on the 2nd floor overlooking Parker Street. The building was statutorily listed (grade II) in 1973, mainly on account of its finely-modelled and well-proportioned classical-style front on Great Queen Street, in Bath stone. The front on Parker Street is of mixed brown-purple brick with fine red brick dressings above ground-floor shop fronts in Bath stone. The office and other fittings of the interior, which have been variously altered and are not worth preserving in situ in their entirety, are nevertheless of sufficient interest to be investigated and recorded before being altered or removed.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Origin and scope of the report

The Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) has been commissioned by Brimelow McSweeney Architects to carry out an assessment of standing buildings at Nos 30, 31 and 32 Great Queen Street, and 26 and 28 Parker Street, London WC2 (Fig 1); Ordnance Survey national grid reference to the approximate centre of the site: 530450 181300 or TQ 3045 8130. Proposed refurbishment of these buildings will entail the alteration of the internal layout of these buildings and alteration or removal of their fixtures and fittings.

This assessment forms an initial stage of investigation of the area of proposed development and may be required at a future date in relation to the listed building consent process in order that the local authority can formulate appropriate responses in the light of any identified historic building resource. The present document is an assessment of the architectural and historic interest of the buildings, both in general terms and specifically in relation to the published criteria used in deciding on the statutory listing of buildings. The archaeological potential of the site below ground is not considered here.

The standing building assessment has been carried out in accordance with the standards specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA 1999) and English Heritage: *Understanding Historic Buildings: a guide to good recording practices* (EH 2006). Under the Copyrights, Designs and Patents Act 1988 MoLAS retains the copyright to this document.

Note: within the limitations imposed by dealing with historical material and maps, the information in this document is, to the best knowledge of the authors and MoLAS, correct at the time of writing. Further investigation, more information about the nature of the buildings or more detailed proposals for redevelopment may require changes to all or parts of the document.

1.2 Site status

The building at Nos 30–32 Great Queen Street and 26 and 28 Parker Street was statutorily listed as being of special architectural or historic interest, grade II, in 1973 and is situated in Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area, designated by the local planning authority, Camden Council.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The main aim of the assessment is to make a considered statement as to the architectural and historic interest of the buildings at present on this site. This report therefore comprises:

- A description of the buildings as they now exists, referring to their location, method of construction, materials, character, appearance and setting.

- Consideration of the history of the buildings, determining the date (or dates) of their construction, original form and purpose, and the extent and purpose of subsequent changes, at least in outline.
- An account of the significance of these various aspects of the buildings.
- Recommendations aimed at mitigating, reducing or removing completely any adverse effects of current proposals for refurbishment.

2 Scope and method of assessment

The assessment included site visits on 1 and 15 November 2007. Examination of the physical fabric has been limited to exterior features and as much of the interior as could be seen easily. The buildings are currently used mainly as offices, with restaurants and retail premises on the ground floor and basement, and two apartments covering parts of the second and fourth floors at Nos 30–31 Great Queen Street.

The examination has resulted in notes and photographs which will be deposited in due course in the Museum of London archaeological archive.

2.1 Sources consulted

The historical information derives largely from documentary evidence, which can be qualified and augmented as a result of further physical examination of the fabric of the buildings (see 7, below). The most useful documentary evidence consists of street directories and maps, which have been consulted in the Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre (CLSAC) and Guildhall Library in the City of London, and the collections of the Library and Museum of Freemasonry, consulted at Freemason's Hall.

The building at Nos 30–31 is briefly mentioned in *The History of the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls, 1788–1974* (Handfield-Jones 1974), which was published by the predecessor organisation of the building's present owners, the Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys.

Several documents provide a framework within which to consider the significance of the buildings. *Planning Policy Guidance 15: planning and the historic environment* (DoE 1994) states the criteria used for statutory listing of buildings, as being of 'special architectural or historic interest', and indicates how they are to be applied. English Heritage also provides guidance with regard to the treatment of buildings in conservation areas, whether statutorily listed or not (EH 1995, 2006). The latest guidance on selection of buildings for designation as heritage assets deals explicitly with town houses and office buildings as specific building types (EH 2007a and 2007b). Camden Council's latest revised Unitary Development Plan contains relevant information and advice (2006, section 3).

3 Legislative and planning framework

3.1 National planning policy guidance

Built heritage

In 1994, the Department of the Environment published *Planning Policy Guidance Note 15: planning and the historic environment* (PPG15). This sets out national policy on the visible remains of historic buildings, spaces and structures, and provides recommendations many of which have been integrated into local development plans. The key points in PPG15 can be summarised as follows:

It is fundamental to national policies for environmental stewardship that there should be effective protection for all aspects of the historic environment. The physical survivals of our past are to be valued and protected for their own sake, as a central part of our cultural heritage and our sense of national identity. They are an irreplaceable record which contributes, through formal education and in many other ways, to our understanding of both the present and the past.

The government attaches particular importance to early consultation with the local planning authority on development proposals which would affect historic sites and structures, whether listed buildings, conservation areas, parks and gardens, battlefields or the wider historic landscape. There is likely to be much more scope for refinement and revision of proposals if consultation takes place before intentions become firm and timescales inflexible.

Local planning authorities should also consider, in all cases of alteration or demolition, whether it would be appropriate to make it a condition of consent that applicants arrange suitable programmes of recording of features that would be destroyed in the course of the works for which consent is being sought.

3.2 Local planning policy

Listed buildings

Buildings may be statutorily listed as being ‘of special architectural or historic interest.’ The built heritage of Camden; its historic buildings, monuments and street plan, are a unique and irreplaceable asset. One of the methods used to conserve important elements of the historic environment is the listing of buildings of special historic or architectural interest. This list is produced by English Heritage, and contains 5,645 buildings and other structures in Camden.

Buildings may be listed because of their historical importance, their quality of design, an association with a historic figure or event, or their contribution to a broader townscape or ensemble. When a building is listed it is given a grade to reflect its relative importance:

- Grade I – buildings of exceptional interest
- Grade II* – particularly important buildings of more than special interest

- Grade II – buildings of special interest

30–31 Great Queen Street is so listed, grade II, while 32 Great Queen Street is not listed.

The consent of Camden Council is required before demolition of all or part of a listed building, and for any alteration – internal or external – that would affect its architectural or historic interest.

The Camden Council Unitary Development Plan (UDP) sets out planning policies for developing land, improving transport and protecting the environment in Camden for the future. The plan includes policies for urban design and conservation, and makes reference to Camden Council's aim that 'there needs to be effective protection for all aspects of our historic environment. Listed buildings, conservation areas, our archaeological heritage and strategic and important local views require protection to ensure that the special values they bring to the Borough are not harmed or lost' (Camden 2006, paragraph 3.55).

Conservation areas

Conservation areas are 'areas of special architectural and historic interest, the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance'.

Thirty-nine areas in the London Borough of Camden have been designated as conservation areas. The site lies in Seven Dials (Covent Garden) Conservation Area. This means that special efforts should be made to retain the character and appearance of the area and its buildings.

4 Outline description of the building

This description should be read in conjunction with the plans of the buildings (Figs 3–8) and the photographs (Figs 9–19).

A single building at Nos 30 and 31 occupies a plot running from Great Queen Street, on the south, to Parker Street, on the north. The building at No 32 Great Queen Street, immediately to the west and connected to Nos 30 and 31 on the first floor, occupies a smaller plot, extending about half the distance to the north (Fig 1).

On the southern street frontage (see cover), Nos 30 and 31 is on four storeys and a basement, with a fifth storey concealed in the roof space and not otherwise visible from the street. Above the ground floor, which is uniformly high in most of the adjacent buildings on the north side of the street, the height of the upper floors are greater in this building than in the adjoining buildings. The 18th-century house at No 29 has two upper floors of very nearly the same height in a single brick front capped with a high parapet, and the dormer window for a 3rd floor in the roof is visible behind the parapet. The house at No 32 was probably rebuilt in the 19th century, adding a storey, and three upper floors are visible in its main front, which is rendered with stucco and capped by a substantial cornice at about the same level as the cornice in the main front of Nos 30 and 31. Dormers to light a fourth floor in the roof are just visible behind the parapet.

The southern part of Nos 30 and 31 forms a block of the same depth from the street frontage as the neighbouring buildings. Running northwards from this block, the building consists of a central block lit on each side by lightwells within the site. This central block meets a northern block, which is side-on to Parker Street (Fig 9). Both the central and northern blocks contain three upper floors. The street front of the northern block contains three storeys, the top floor being set back from the front within the steep slated sides of the roof space. Above this the roof is flat, as is the adjoining roof of the central block. The fourth floor in the southern block is lit by dormers and windows in the north side of the roof space.

Nos 30 and 31 is entered from the left-hand doorway in the front on Great Queen Street, which leads by a vestibule with two successive sets of doors and a hall to a large open-well staircase, with an open-sided lift-shaft in the well (Fig 10). An entrance at the left-hand end of the northern block on Parker Street leads by a passage to a second staircase, situated in the south-east corner of the northern block, which runs between the basement and the 3rd floor. No 32 Great Queen Street contains a staircase in its north-west quarter, which runs between the first and fourth floors. A small block projects from the rear of this building, immediately next to Nos 30 and 31, from the ground to the 3rd floors.

External form and decoration

The front of the building at No 32 Great Queen Street is on five storeys, as described above, and in three bays. The smooth stucco on the face, stucco architraves around the window openings, which are pedimented on the first floor, and the substantial cornice supported by brackets at each end, which in turn surmount slim plain pilasters marking the edges of the

front, are all characteristic of house-fronts constructed in London in about the middle years of the 19th century or slightly later. In fact, documentary evidence indicates that this front is a reconstruction carried out at some time after 1904, and possibly fairly recently (see below).

The basic form of this building is the same as that of the adjacent 18th-century houses, with segmentally-arched window openings on the first and second floors. The plan-form of this building closely follows the standard pattern of a London town house, and, like the other houses in the street, this has a cellar or basement below, indicated by trapdoors in the pavement. The main alteration when No 32 was rebuilt appears to have been the addition of another storey. Indeed, it is possible that the lower floors of No 32 may still be largely 18th-century in construction. The former roof was demolished, an additional storey constructed with its front flush with that of the floors below, and the roof was rebuilt above.

The front of Nos 30 and 31 Great Queen Street is given in the listing description. This building was statutorily listed in 1973, and the description notes, 'Interior not inspected'. The description states:

'Royal Masonic Institute for Girls. *c.*1923–4. By E R Barrow. Bath stone with rusticated front under steep slated roof with central pedimented dormer. Three storeys and attic. Five window bays. Classical style. Twentieth-century shop front. Recessed entrance bays at ends of building with console-bracketed cornices and balconies over. Over main left hand entrance, seated attendants [actually children] support coat of arms. Central three bays with Corinthian [engaged] columns in [antis] rising through 1st and 2nd floors, carrying entablature surmounted by four Portland-stone allegorical figures. Recessed windows: central three bays 1st floor with flanking pilasters carrying entablature with 'Royal Masonic Institute for Girls' inscribed on the frieze [this inscription now reads 'Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys', having been changed in 1989].

In both form and execution this front appears to be of very high quality. The addition of the sculpted figures above the main entablature, in front of an interesting attic structure, is especially noteworthy. In the centre of the attic is a large open-pedimented aedicule, containing a round-headed window. Two square windows to either side are regularly placed with respect to the central window and the sculpted figures, but the attic is shorter than the front below, its ends marked by large inverted scrolls. The steep roof is hipped towards the street front, with a flat top, and meets a pitched roof behind with its ridge running parallel to the street. The roof is covered with graduated green slates, with copper ridging and finials. Two substantial plain stone-faced chimney stacks form the gables of this pitched roof, and party walls with the adjoining buildings.

The north front of these premises constitutes Nos 26 and 28 Parker Street. The ground floor contains two shop fronts, faced in Portland or Bath stone; large windows or openings are flanked to their left by doorways, separated by simple pilasters. The upper floors are faced in well varied red, brown and purple brick, laid to Flemish bond, with red brick dressings. The windows form six regular bays, with a smaller bay to the extreme west. The dressings include narrow bands joining the windows in each bay at their outer edges, narrow aprons under the window sills and a plain cornice above. The red bricks are rubbed to form flat arches at the head of the window openings. The brickwork generally in this front is notably good. The third floor, behind a very steeply sloping slated roof, is lit by four dormers. This

floor is set back from the sides of the building by a greater distance than from the brick front. The roof above is flat and railed at the edges.

Interiors

In Nos 30 and 31 the basement is taken up by store rooms with plain brick walls (not seen) and most of the ground floor by a restaurant (not seen).

The main staircase serving the upper floors of both Nos 30 and 31, entered from No 31, is granolithic, with a dado of the same material in the wall next to the staircase (Fig 10). The entrance to the offices on the first-floor stair landing is formed by an elaborate vestibule in timber, carved and stained, with classical mouldings (Fig 11). The ceiling on this floor is notably high, from the front of the building on Great Queen Street northwards, and is supported by a series of wide semi-elliptical arches. The offices on this floor are laid out to either side of a wide passage running from south to north, and they are separated from the passage and from each other by timber partitions with classical mouldings, in the same style as the vestibule entrance (Fig 12). These partitions, which rise above head height, are furnished with doors and occasionally windows, and are surmounted in places by glazed screens up to the ceiling arches and the ceiling, effectively sound-proofing certain individual offices. Careful examination of the glazing, and how it relates to both the partitions and the decoration of the ceiling arches, suggests that the glazing to the north and west of the central passage is contemporary with the partitions and construction of the building, while the glazing further to the south, which is the major portion of it, has been inserted later. The windows high in the side-walls were originally clerestories under a lean-to roof, which have left scars in adjacent external buttresses, and these were replaced later by the present sloping skylights.

Timber partitions have been removed from the north and east of this floor, and replaced by more modern partitions (Fig 13). The probable position of the former partitions is suggested by, for instance, an intermediate pier in a window in the east wall of this floor, with skirting board cut and patched below it (Fig 14). None of the other windows on this floor is divided in this way, and the pier seems to have been built in order to receive the end of an internal partition, which formerly ran here at right angles from a partition continuing north along the east side of the passage. In the original partitions there are traces of at least three internal windows, with glazed leaves that originally folded open over sills or counters, allowing for communication between the central passage and different side-offices.

To the north, in the block fronting north on to Parker Street, are two large rooms with elaborate fire surrounds and mantelpieces, coved ceilings and moulded plaster frames on the ceilings (Fig 15). Both rooms communicate with the other offices and with each other; the larger room is evidently a board room, while the smaller room, presumably originally the office of the secretary of the Institute, also communicates with a small set of rooms to the west which at present contain a WC and may have been built to do so.

On this and the other upper floors, WCs are provided in the north-east corner of each floor, next to the secondary staircase in the Parker Street block. This arrangement is therefore presumably original, but on the 1st floor a mezzanine floor has been made here to provide WCs for women. It would throw interesting light on the original use of the building if it could be determined if this mezzanine were original or a later insertion.

The second and third floors of the main blocks at Nos 30 and 31 are both similar to each other and laid out rather like the first floor offices, although with much lower ceilings and completely separate rooms to either side of a central corridor. The fairly simple classical decoration of the doors, doorcases and other fixtures is consistent with their having been original (Fig 16).

The windows in the side and north of the building are steel-framed, with casement lower lights and bottom-pivoting upper lights worked by a screw handle. The rooms to the south are exceptions, being larger and lit by windows in the main front of the building on Great Queen Street (Fig 17). The windows here were replaced recently, possibly in 1983, and their previous form is not known, although on the upper floors the picture rail originally ran into the window reveals, and therefore these windows probably did not have shutters. A subtlety of the original design is that the central windows, between the columns in antis on the front, are set back from the front further than the windows to either side. The top floor of offices, on the 2nd floor, is lit also by skylights in the flat roof above, positioned over the corridor. The walls of these lightwells are lined with tongue-and-groove timbers, which may have been original, although the actual glazing, which was probably in the form of lanterns projecting above the roof, has been replaced by curved sheets of polycarbonate.

The topmost floor at Nos 30 and 31 is at 3rd-floor level in the roof space of the Great Queen Street block (Fig 18). This forms a series of three or four small interconnected rooms, lit by dormer windows to the north. Traces of fireplaces in chimney breasts in the end walls to west and east, where substantial chimney stacks form the gables of the roof, indicate that these rooms were built probably to be lived in. They are approached by a separate staircase from the main staircase, and the corresponding space above the main staircase is occupied by a lift motor room. This motor room appears from the outside to have been added, or at least rebuilt. The floor extends to the north in what also appears to be an addition, but this extension contains the head of the stairs up from below, and is covered to the north with the same graduated green slates as the rest of the sloping sides of the roof, so it may be original, although possibly altered, for instance by rebuilding a dormer window and other windows in it. Although these slates are on both the north and south sides of the roof, the copper ridge and finial decorations are intended only to be seen from the south, their place being taken by plain lead flashing to the north.

No 32 is much smaller and simpler in layout, conforming in essentials to the plan-form of a typical 18th-century London terraced house, although as mentioned another storey has been added to the building, probably in the 19th century, and the basement and ground floor are occupied by a shop (not seen). The first, second and third floors contain a stair compartment in one quarter of the plan to the rear, in this case to the north-west. This would originally have allowed the remainder of each floor to be divided between two rooms, to the front or the rear, or three rooms, if the three windows to the front served two rooms between them. A substantial chimney breast in the east wall, with nothing comparable in the west wall, would suggest that there may have been only one room in the front half of each of the upper floors, but on the third floor at least there is evidence in the ceiling and the south wall, between the easternmost and central windows, that a partition wall formerly ran from this position northwards, since removed.

The present staircase in the stair compartment (Fig 19) is very plain and probably of early 20th-century date. On the second floor a fine marble fire surround and decoratively

moulded cast-iron grate appear to be of late 19th or early 20th-century date. A wall cupboard in the space next to this fire surround, between the chimney breast and the south wall, appears to be of no later date than this, and possibly earlier. The roof space, lit by dormers to south and north and by skylights, is at the head of the staircase, which further suggests that the enlargement and commercial of the roof space perhaps dates from the same time as the renewal of the staircase.

The two buildings, Nos 30–31 and No 32, are connected on the first, second and third floors, and in the roof space. Except on the first floor, the floor levels in the two buildings do not match and steps are required on one side or the other to compensate.

5 Outline history of the site and buildings

In the medieval period the area of the present site consisted of fields and meadows, bisected by a country lane, the precursor of Drury Lane. The land was probably attached to a small medieval religious house and leper hospital, dedicated to St Giles. After the religious house was dissolved in the 16th century its chapel became a parish church, St Giles-in-the-Fields, serving a small village to the north of the site. The first houses in the immediate area were built fronting on to Drury Lane, around 1600. Great Queen Street is said to have been established as a route for James I (reigned 1603–1625) and his consort, Anne of Denmark, to take from the palace of Whitehall northwards to Theobalds, Hertfordshire, the king's favourite residence, by-passing the City of London (*Survey of London* 1914, 35–6). The street was presumably named after Anne. The first houses were built on its north side, during James's reign, and the best evidence for the street being completely built up appears in a bird's-eye view of the City of Westminster and its surroundings drawn by Hollar, c 1658 (*ibid*, plate 3). Parker Lane, later Street, was laid out and built on between 1615 and 1620 (*ibid*, 31).

With very few exceptions the 17th-century houses were all rebuilt in the 18th century, and several of these 18th-century houses survive to the west and east of the present site. At that time the street housed many artists, engravers, sculptors and so on, whose clients and patrons may have lived in the more fashionable and expensive areas nearby, such as St James's, to the south-west. No 31, for example, is documented as having been occupied by William Basire, an engraver, who in 1772 took on the young William Blake as an apprentice.

By the middle of the 19th century Long Acre, roughly a continuation of Great Queen Street to the west of Drury Lane, was known for its coach-builders, some of which are marked on the first large-scale Ordnance Survey map of the area, surveyed in 1871 and published in 1874 (Fig 2). Others, not identified as such on the map, must have existed nearby, such as 'C Corben and Sons, coach and harness makers' at Nos 30 and 31 Great Queen Street, in 1857 (Kelly's). The neighbouring building at No 32 housed 'James Bassett, pawnbroker'.

These buildings standing on the present site appear on the 1871 map, No 32 occupying a relatively narrow plot, with a small yard at one side, typical of many other houses in the area. The coach-maker's at Nos 30 and 31 was much larger. Besides occupying a house that was the width of three window bays, No 30, as well as another house that comprised the more usual two window bays at No 31, these workshops ran back to the next street, Parker Street, where they occupied an even longer frontage. A fairly wide gateway or opening is marked on the map giving access from Parker Street, presumably running into the large yard marked in the northern half of the premises.

The street fronts of the two buildings, at Nos 30 and 31, were evidently on slightly different alignments, and the change in the building line along the north side of the street at this point is clear in the plan of the present building; the front of the building on Great Queen Street is angled with respect to the sides of the building. This apparent error in laying out the building plots is probably to be attributed to the fact that the first houses on this site, at some time in the first half of the 17th century, may not have been built at the same time. Interestingly, the orientation of the yard shown on the 1871 map suggests that the interior of the building respected the markedly oblique front of No 30.

The front of all these buildings on Great Queen Street was photographed in September 1904 in connection with construction of what was to be the Piccadilly tube line directly underneath, which would certify the date (Figs 20 and 21). These photographs, taken before construction began in case claims were lodged for damage as a consequence of the tunnelling, show Nos 30 and 31 as unusually tall houses, comprising a ground floor and three upper floors. Their roofs are not visible, and there may have been more room in the roof space. No 32 similarly contained a ground floor and three upper floors, and a dormer appears in the centre of the roof, no doubt for a room in the roof space. By contrast, the house fronts further to the west and east are one storey shorter. The photographs make clear that Nos 30 and 31 had nevertheless been constructed as two separate houses, as their windows, and therefore their floor levels, nor the decorative bands and cornices on their fronts, do not exactly match.

The present front of No 32, although it resembles a house front of perhaps the third quarter of the 19th century, differs from its appearance in the photograph of 1904 (Fig 21), apart from the actual size and position of the windows and the fact that the front is rendered in stucco. In the photograph the first and second-floor window openings have segmental arched lintels, and all the window surrounds are similarly square-moulded, without further ornament; a plat-band runs across the front at the level of the second floor, and a plain cornice projects at third-floor level. The only explanation for this is that the building has been refronted or refaced at some time since 1904, although in what would by then have been an anachronistic style. No date for this has been determined. In particular, it is not known if these alterations were carried out in connection with the rebuilding of Nos 30 and 31. The ground floor and basement (not seen) now house a restaurant.

The latter redevelopment is documented as having been carried out in 1923–4, to designs by E R Barrow (EH listing description), for the Royal Masonic Institute for Girls (RMIG), dedicated to providing a good education for the daughters of freemasons. Their previous offices and headquarters had been at 16 Great Queen Street (Kelly's'), which must have been too small and perhaps not capable of being rebuilt. The new building was planned as offices, for which natural light was found in lightwells to either side. The layout of the offices is now much as it was originally, on every floor arranged to either side of a central passage or corridor, so that the actual work-spaces would be lit from the exterior. The first floor is slightly wider than the floors above, and the offices on this floor were reserved apparently for the use of the headquarters of the RMIG. The offices on the other floors, and the ground floor space and the basement, were to be rented out to other businesses. The ground floor is at present occupied by a champagne bar and restaurant.

On the first floor the more important rooms, the panelled board room and secretary's room, and the offices provided with sound-proof glazing, were at first all to the north, away from the front of the building and the front entrance. Only later were more offices sound-proofed and the more important offices put at the front. The building, although equipped with fireplaces, was apparently also provided with hot-water central heating from the beginning. Several rooms or spaces on all the floors are not heated in any way except by hot-water radiators. The boiler was, or evidence for it is probably to be found, in the basement. WCs, electricity and, probably, an electrically-powered lift were also installed from the first.

The RMIG was renamed the Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys in 1983 and the inscription on the front of the building at Nos 30 and 31 was altered accordingly in 1989. The Trust at some recent time took over the whole of Nos 30 and 31 for its own use, and possibly at the same time also took over No 32 and opened the doorways between the two buildings. Rooms on the second floor in the northern block of Nos 30 and 31 were

converted into a self-contained residential flat, accessible from the rear staircase, at some recent date. The ground-floor space to the north-east was made into a garage, perhaps at the same time.

6 The interest and significance of the buildings

6.1 Assessment by listed building criteria

Nos 30–31 Great Queen Street is statutorily listed; No. 32 is not listed. The significance of the architecture and history of both buildings can be considered in terms of the applicability of the criteria for statutory listing of buildings (DoE 1994, 26–7, paragraph 6.10).

These criteria are as follows:

‘architectural interest:... of importance to the nation for... their architectural design, decoration and craftsmanship;... important examples of particular building types and techniques... and significant plan forms;

‘historic interest:... illustrate important aspects of the nation’s social, economic, cultural or military history;

‘close historical association with nationally important people or events;

‘group value, especially where buildings comprise an important architectural or historic unity or a fine example of planning...’

The criteria include age and rarity as relevant considerations (ibid 27, paragraph 6.11). Thus ‘most buildings of about 1700 to 1840 are listed, though some selection is necessary.’ The criteria for such selection are specified with regard to buildings of later than 1840, although they are presumably relevant to buildings of before 1840: ‘the best examples of particular building types, and only buildings of definite quality and character.’ Selectivity applies if listing is primarily for historical reasons (ibid, 27, paragraph 6.13), ‘where a substantial number of buildings of a similar type and quality survive.’ Aesthetic merit is not all-important (ibid 27, paragraph 6.14): ‘The external appearance of a building... is a key consideration... but the special interest of a building will not always be reflected in obvious visual quality.’ In general these criteria emphasise national significance, ‘although this cannot be defined precisely. For instance, the best examples of local vernacular building types will normally be listed. But many buildings which are valued for their contribution to the local scene, or for local historical associations, will not merit listing’ (ibid 27, paragraph 6.16), and it is open to planning authorities to protect such buildings by other, lesser means.

English Heritage have recently published a series of documents outlining the principles of selection for the statutory listing of buildings (or designating them as historic assets); two such documents deals with the selection of commercial buildings (EH 2007a) and town houses (EH 2007b). With respect to altered buildings, ‘the key issue is whether the alterations have seriously undermined the special interest. Loss of major elements such as the staircase or the stripping out of all internal detailing is likely to render a house unlistable’ (EH 2007b, 8). ‘Commercial premises are intrinsically prone to change and alteration, and cannot be expected to survive in their original configuration. Careful assessment is needed as to whether enough survives of the special interest for designation to be warranted’ (EH 2007a). However, discretion will be required on a case-by case basis, and ‘the most skilfully composed set pieces from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century are likely to be listed in high grades for their architectural importance and picturesque use of their site. Even when individual houses have undergone some alteration,