

Condition Report

Railings at 7 Fitzroy Square W1T 5HL, London

Report requested by Clarke Design and Build

Prepared by Susan Cook Managing Director, The Great Gate Company Ltd. 3 April 2014

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1. Background to the Report

The report on the condition of the railings at the front of the property 7 Fitzroy Square was requested by Bill Hinsley of Clarke Design and Build for submission to English Heritage. The report was based upon a review of 20 detailed photos supplied by Clarke Design and Build and it was explained that English Heritage wished to conserve/restore as much of the original railing as possible.

2. Limitations

The report was based upon a review of the photos supplied. The photos were comprehensive enough to be able to comment on the general condition of the railings and form an opinion about the possibility of repair/restoration.

3. General construction of the railings.

The railings consists of a top rail and a second horizontal rail approximately 50mm wide, separated by a diamond shaped lozenge approximately 100mm x 100mm, made in four pieces. The palings are approximately 20mm square and topped with an arrowhead finial on a square base. Each of the palings on the front of the property is individually set into a dwarf wall. The palings on the entrance to the path appear to be set directly into a stone step. It is difficult to tell from the photos but the fixings do not appear to be the original lead fixings. The design is Victorian and the style of finial is available as a reproduction item. The original parts of the railing were made of puddled wrought iron and the finials were cast.

The photos supplied showed a section along the entrance to the property on the right hand side of approximately 2 metres in length and a section along the front of the property approximately 7 metres in length. This longer section includes a gate at one end. There is considerable variation in the condition of the short section and the long section, suggesting that some parts of the longer section may have previously been replaced.

4. Condition of the Railings

4.1. Short section on right hand side to the path.

There is substantial delayering of the wrought iron horizontal bars, which has caused them to split and rupture. This is particularly bad where water has puddled and in places, entire parts of the second horizontal rail are rusted through. The swelling and splitting of the wrought iron cross rails has split the stone on the house wall, where the railing was fixed into the wall. The general condition of the second horizontal rail is too poor to repair and this rail needs to be replaced.

Some parts of the lozenges are missing and others have split away from the horizontal rails.

The condition of the finials and the upright palings is fair. There are multiple layers of paint on the finials and the palings, and some of the palings are showing signs of waisting at the base.

4.2. Front Section - approximately 7 metres.

In general, the condition of this section is better than the short section and it is possible that the second horizontal rail on the front railing and some of the finials and palings have already been previously replaced. On this section, many of the lozenges appear to be held in place with wire looped around two lozenges either side of a paling. Some lozenges are missing one or more of their sides and some finials are missing. There is some variation in the condition of the palings and there is evidence of particular age and deterioration in the location of the gate and where the front railing joins the path at the entrance.

The front railings could, with care and time, be repaired/restored.

5. Repair/Restoration

1. The second horizontal rail on the side section needs to be replaced and cannot be restored.
2. The lozenges need to be repaired and replacement sections made to fit where they are missing.
3. The missing finials can be replaced with reproduction finials of the same casting.
4. Some palings need to be replaced.
5. All of the railings needs to be shot blasted either by a firm that specialises in on site shot blasting of wrought iron material or descaling with a needle gun.
6. Once shot blasted/descaled, the palings, finials and lozenges can be filled and restored using an epoxy filler and then primed and painted with a top coat.

6. Issues/Difficulties on Restoration.

One issue is whether the shot blasting and subsequent repairs are done on site or off site. It is a lot easier to repair/restore off site but if the repairs are to be done off site, a major consideration is the treatment of the bottom of the palings where these are leaded in. It may not be possible to extricate the palings without cutting either the palings or the horizontals.

It is possible that the paint is concealing very soft and degraded material and this may break/disintegrate under a descaling process.

It is possible that the amount of sound and re-usable material remaining after the descaling process is of insufficient quantity to justify the repair/restoration process.

The repair/restoration process is likely to take some considerable time.

Comment

The design and original styling of the railing could be replicated using mild steel, reproduction finials, traditional forging and rivet fixing where possible, and lead fixings.

7. Disclaimer.

The opinions and comments made in this report have been made in good faith and are the considered opinion of the author, supplied to assist Clarke Design and Build. The opinions are based upon an evaluation of the photos supplied, which have been reviewed in detail by the author and skilled blacksmith/restorer.

No liability can be accepted for the consequences of any actions taken as a result of this report

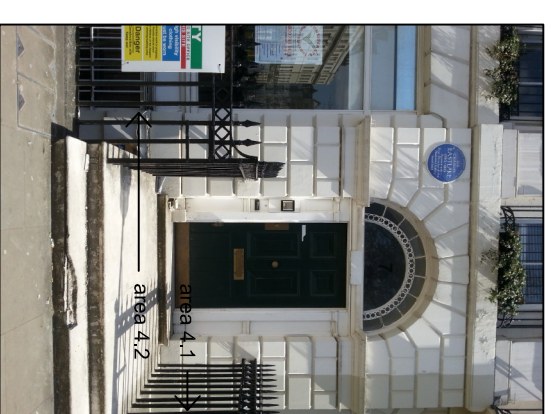
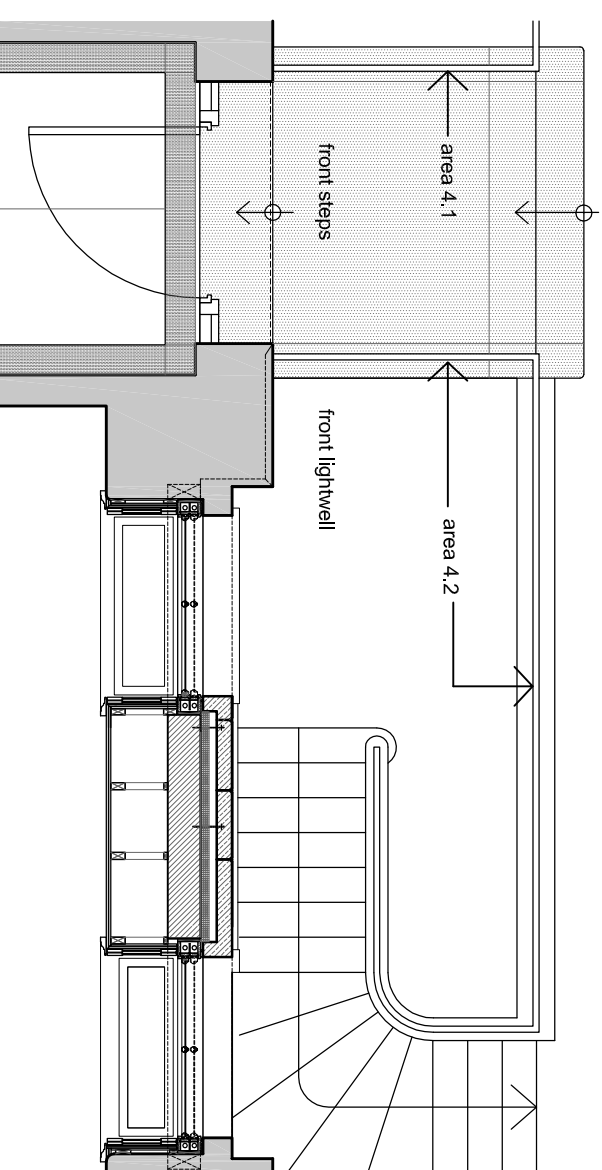
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Railing report and proposed repair