

Historic Buildings Report

61-65 (odd) SWINTON STREET

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN



Introduction

This short report was commissioned by Sanchit Patel of Amba Holdings Ltd. in June 2011 to inform proposals for 61-65 (odd) Swinton Street. The report was prepared by Neil Burton FSA IHBC, a director of The Architectural History Practice Ltd.

Background

Swinton Street was first laid out in the 1770s as part of a development by two brothers: James Swinton, described in documents as a builder and surveyor from Greenwich, and Peter Swinton, a doctor living in Salisbury Court off Fleet Street, who appears to have made his living selling a patent medicine called 'Daffy's Elixir'. In 1773 the two brothers purchased from Sir Henry Gough a field called Acton Meadow which lay between Gray's Inn Road and the Fleet River. A few years later they began to develop the land by letting house-sized plots to individual builders. Two new short streets called Acton Street and Swinton Street were laid out and building began at the west, or Gray's Inn Road, end of the two streets and along the frontage of Gray's Inn Road itself. The first building lease dates from 1776. Several of the plots were let to a carpenter named James Seager, who built himself a handsome house in Swinton Street (No. 69, now demolished).

By about 1780, nineteen houses had been built altogether in Swinton Street and Acton Street and along the frontage of Gray's Inn Road, then called Constitution Row. Development may have been halted by the death of James Swinton in the late 1770s and when his brother Peter died in 1785 the entire estate came to Peter's son Anthony Daffy Swinton. No further development took place during Anthony Swinton's ownership. Instead the estate was mortgaged several times and also put up for sale in 1801, but then withdrawn. Eventually the greater part of the Swinton Estate, including the existing buildings, was purchased in 1833 by John Huskisson, a manufacturing chemist. Huskisson was also a property speculator who employed a number of different local builders to complete Acton and Swinton Streets, which were both fully built up by 1844.

Street Numbering

The numbering of these properties is a little confusing. On all the early maps the houses on the south side of Swinton Street were numbered consecutively from Gray's

Inn Road, the house on the corner of Gray's Inn Road and Swinton Street being No.1. The present No. 65 was then No. 5 and the King's Head was No. 6. In 1886 Swinton Street was renumbered¹. No 5 became No 65 while the King's Head, formerly No 6 became No 61. A shop on the ground floor of No 5 numbered 5½ became No 63. There appears to have been another change in street numbers in the 1920s and in the Post Office directories No 63 became No 65a. The statutory list description published in 1971 shows yet another change, with the King's Head numbered 61-63.

61 Swinton Street (Swinton's, formerly The King's Head)

No 61 was originally No 6 Swinton Street. It was built in 1775 or 1776 by John Seager, the carpenter who built several of the earliest houses at the south-west end of Swinton Street. Seager was granted a lease of the property (described as 'now erected and built') by the Swinton brothers in 1776² and he retained the lease of the property until the early 19th century³. It seems clear from early maps that the house was always wider than its neighbours, and also that it was always a single building. There is no obvious foundation for the suggestion in the statutory list description that it was once two separate houses each three windows wide. The building was in use as a tavern or public house called The King's Head as early as the 1780s, when it is mentioned in a property deed⁴ and has been in that use ever since.

Rate books and Post Office directories record a succession of tenants. From the mid-1820s until the 1850s the publican was first a Mr Bloomfield and then his wife Mary. In 1856 the building was acquired by Charringtons the brewers and remained a tied house until the late 20th century.

It was during Charrington's ownership that the ground floor of the building was given its brown glazed faience fascia. The work was probably done in the mid 1930s when there appears to have been a re-fit of the public house carried out under the supervision of the architects Perry & Perry of Woodstock Street W.1. A drainage plan

¹ London Metropolitan Archives, MBW Street naming Plan no. 3637

² LMA, Middlesex Deeds Register 1776/5/293

³ Camden Local History Collection, Huskisson deposit, Box 1

⁴ LMA, Middlesex Deed Register 1785/1/621

of 1936, probably prepared in connection with the works, records the ground floor plan of the building at that date (fig.6).

The building is four storeys high and five windows wide. The main facade to the street was probably of brick originally, like all the other early houses in Swinton Street, but is now faced in stucco with raised window surrounds. The stucco facing is characteristic of the middle decades of the 19th century and may have been added when the eastern part of the street was built up in the late 1830s and early 1840s with houses with stucco-fronted ground floors.

63/5 Swinton Street

The present No. 65 Swinton Street was originally No. 5 Swinton Street. It was built in the mid 1770s and the first lessee was apparently Thomas Harder. It has not been possible to find the original building lease but Harder's name is mentioned in the building lease granted in 1776 to John Seager of No 6 Swinton Street, now the King's Head.

The original form of the building is unclear. Horwood's large scale map of London first published in 1799 (fig.1), shows that there was an open passageway between Nos. 5 and 6 Swinton Street (the present Nos. 61 and 65). This is confirmed by Thompson's large-scale map of the parish of St Pancras published in 1801 (fig.2), which also shows clearly that the frontage of No 5 was narrower than other houses in the street. The passage is still shown on Greenwood's map of London published in 1827 but not on the parish map of 1849 (fig.3). The obvious conclusion is that the building was enlarged at some time between 1827 and 1849 and the passage filled-in. The fact that the left-hand bay of the building is wider than the rest supports the deduction, as does the fact that the rateable value of the property increased substantially between 1820 and 1830. On the other hand, the present front shows no signs of such an enlargement and the brickwork is uniform across the front.

The opening between No 5 and 6 Swinton Street survived until the mid 1850s. A deed relating to the King's Head dated December 1856 mentions that the property then abutted to the west on 'a gateway to Acton Street'. But by the time of the first ordnance survey published in 1871 (fig.4) the passageway had been closed up,

presumably by the insertion of a shop-front. The Post Office street directories show that in the mid 1850s No 5 Swinton Street was occupied by Mr Archer, a plumber and painter. From 1873 the directories no longer show commercial occupation of No 5 but instead show a chandler's shop at No 5½ Swinton Street, which later became No. 63. The first shopkeeper was a Walter Bacchus. The premises was still a chandler's shop in 1931, when the proprietor was a Miss Bartlett.

The main front of the building is four storeys high and three plus one bays wide. With straight-headed window openings diminishing in size from ground floor to top floor. The facade is of brick and all the windows have rubbed-brick flat arches. The ground floor brickwork has been painted, as have all the window arches, and the remainder of the brickwork is heavily soot-stained.

At ground floor level there is an open area in front of the two right-hand bays enclosed by original 18th century wrought-iron railings with pain spears. The stub railing to the left of the front door retains its original cast iron urn finial. The door surround retains its original surround and timber overdoor with Doric triglyphs and a dentil cornice but the door itself appears to be modern. The left hand ground floor bay is filled with a shop-front with late 19th century brackets at each side.

The rear elevation of stock brick which could all be of 19th century date. Across the yard is a single-storey structure which was erected at some time between the first and second ordnance surveys of 1872 and 1894. The structure was presumably erected to serve as a workshop but a drainage plan of 1931 (fig.7) shows that it was then used for domestic purposes.

Internally, few original fittings or decorative elements survive, although the ground floor front room retains part of a simple moulded plaster cornice, parts of a chair-rail on the front and side walls and timber window linings with shutters. Both cornice and chair rail could be of 18th century date but the shutters look 19th century.

Conclusion

Nos 61-65 Swinton Street are basically two large houses built originally in the 1770s and part of the first phase of development on the Swinton estate. No.61-3, the

former King's Head now Swinton's, has been in continuous use as a public house or place of public refreshment since the 1780s. No. 65 was originally a tall private house with an open cartway on the east side. The cartway was built over in the 1820s or 1830s and later became a small shop.

Sources

Archive Sources

Camden Archives: John Huskisson's papers (unsorted), parish and ordnance survey maps, rate books and street directories.

London Metropolitan Archives: Middlesex Deeds Register, Street Naming Records

Published Sources

The Survey of London Vol. XXIV, chapter 9, The Swinton Estate.

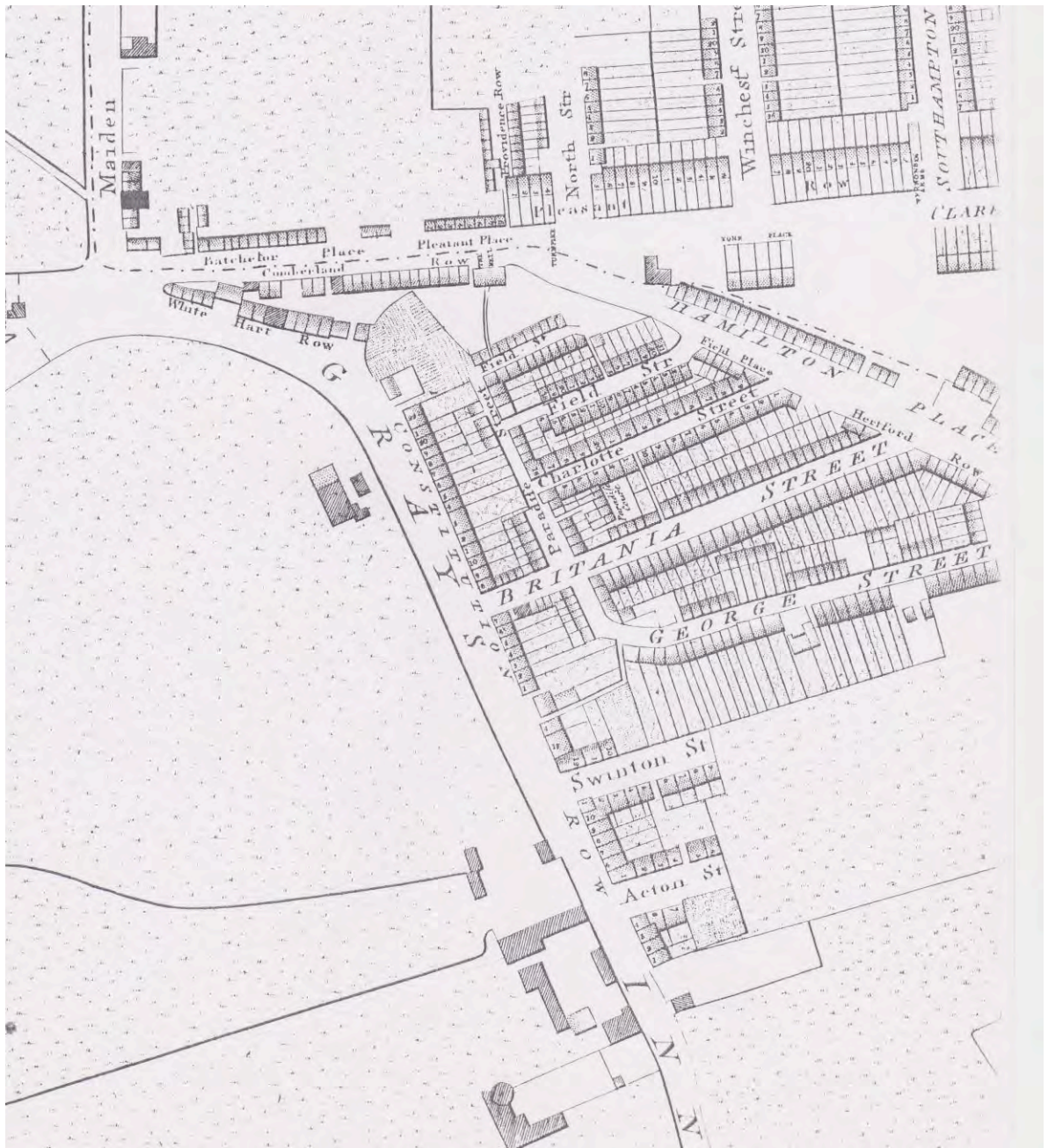


Fig.1 A detail from Horwood's 1799 map of London

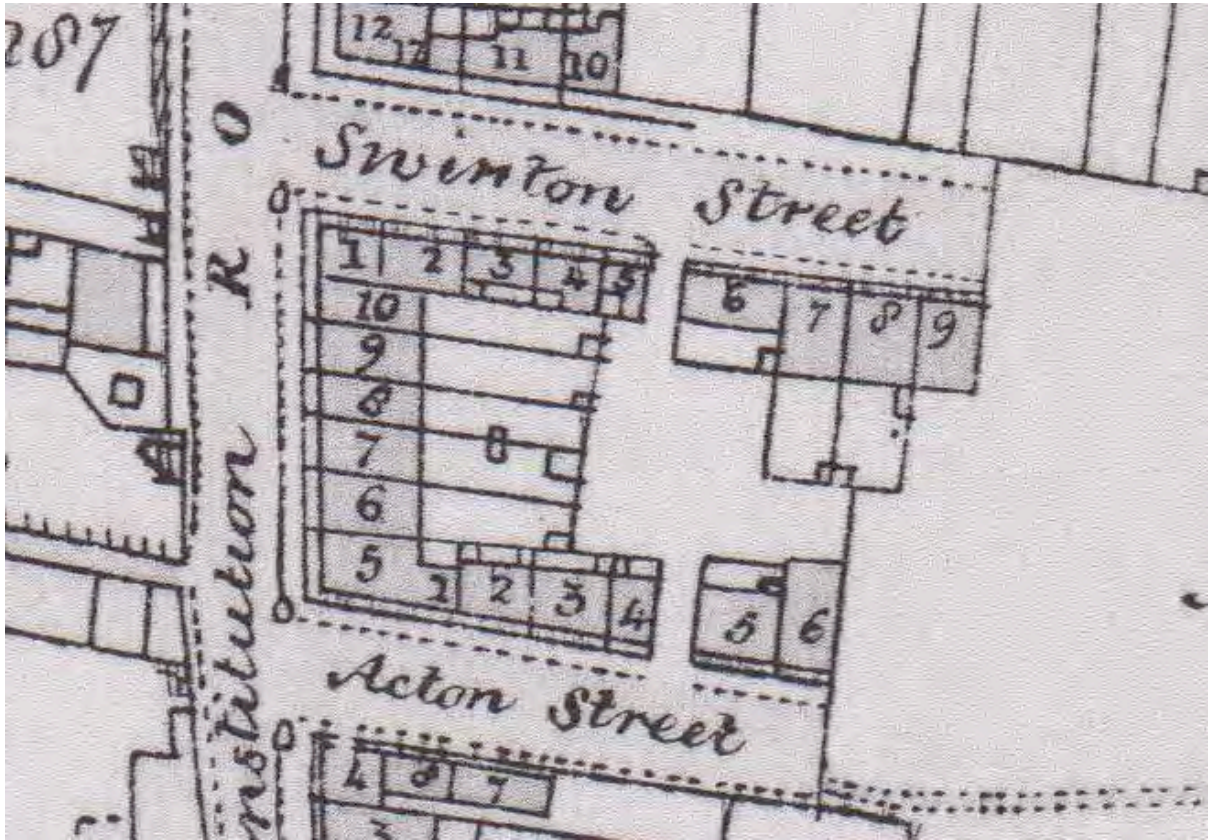


Fig. 2 A Detail from Thompson's 1801 map of St Pancras parish

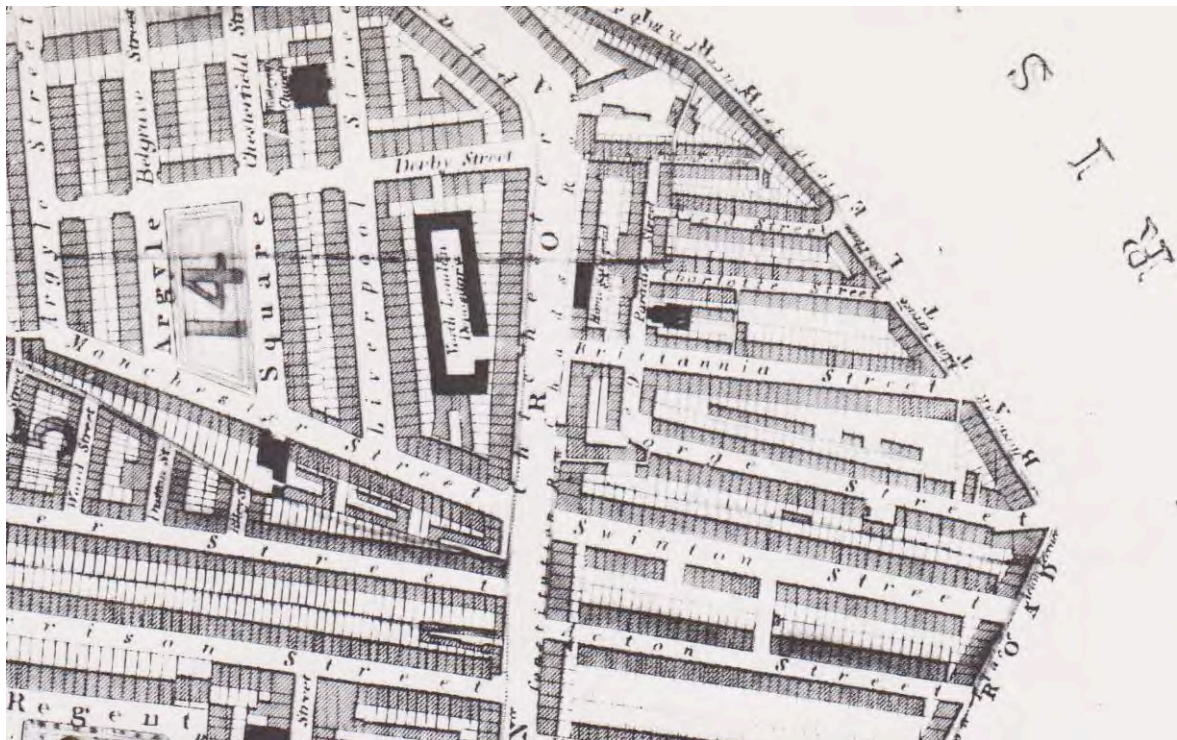


Fig.3 A detail from an 1849 map of St Pancras parish

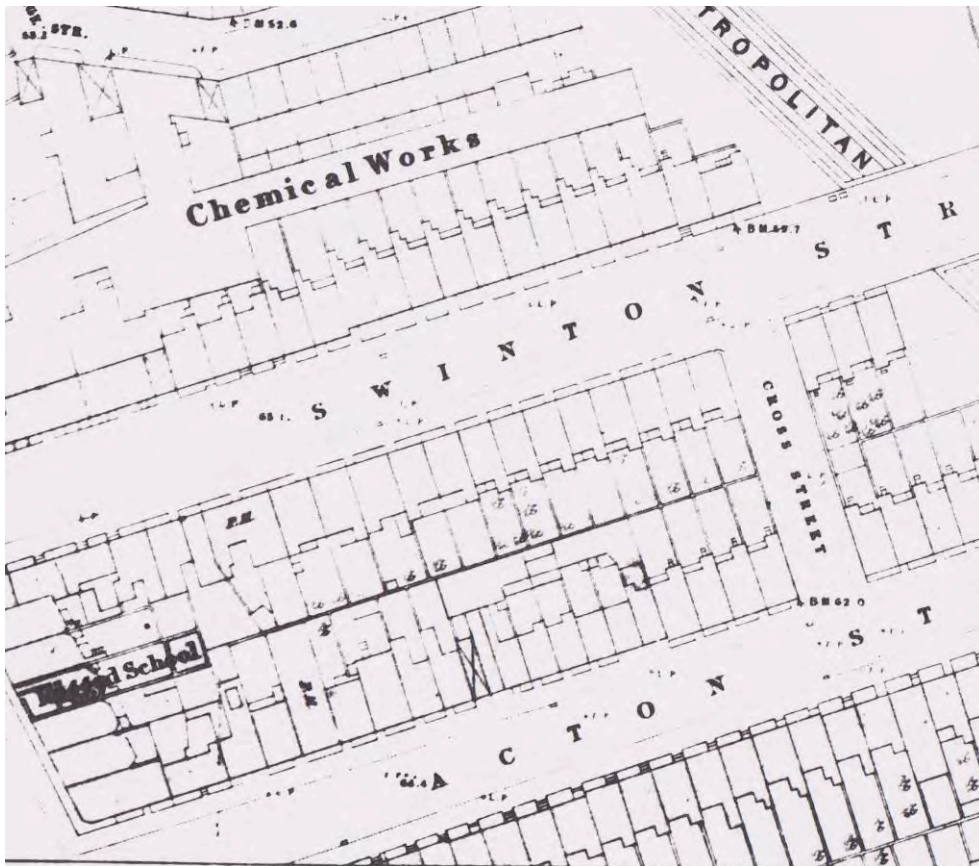


Fig.4 A detail from the 1st edn. Ordnance Survey of 1872

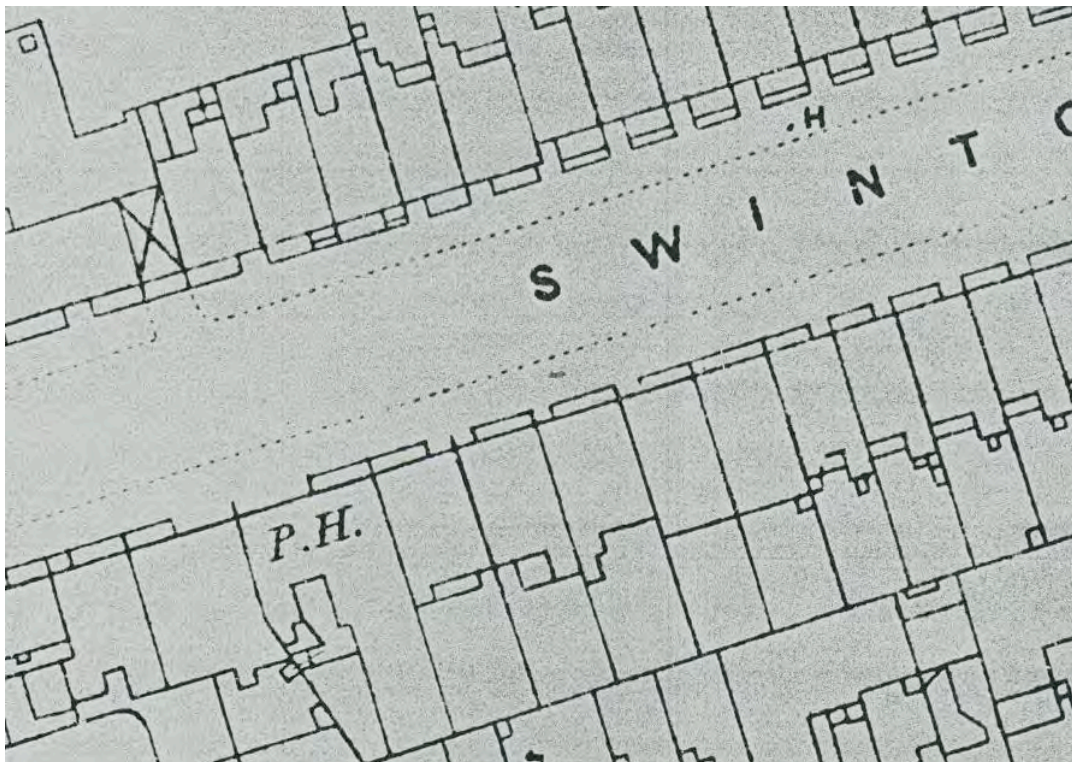
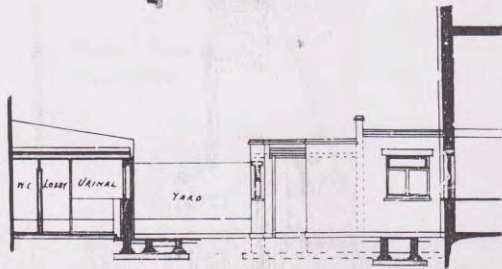
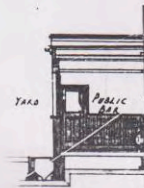


Fig.5 A detail from the 2nd edn Ordnance Survey of 1894

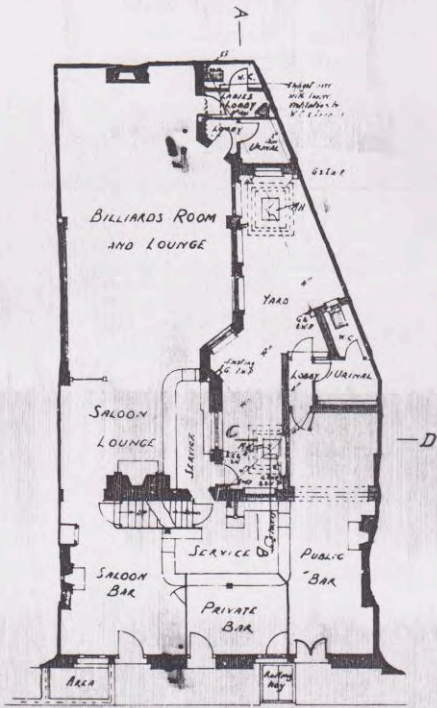
THE KINGS HEAD, P.H.
 61, SWINTON STREET, KINGS CROSS.
 — SCALE: 8 FEET TO 1 INCH. —



SECTION A-B.



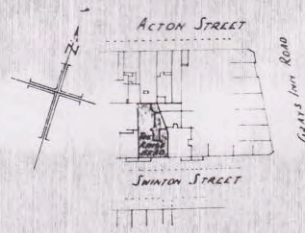
SECTION C-D.



SWINTON STREET

PLAN.

PLANS OF PROPOSED CHANGE APPROVED
 Approved & signed by the
 Municipal Engineer
 10th March 1936

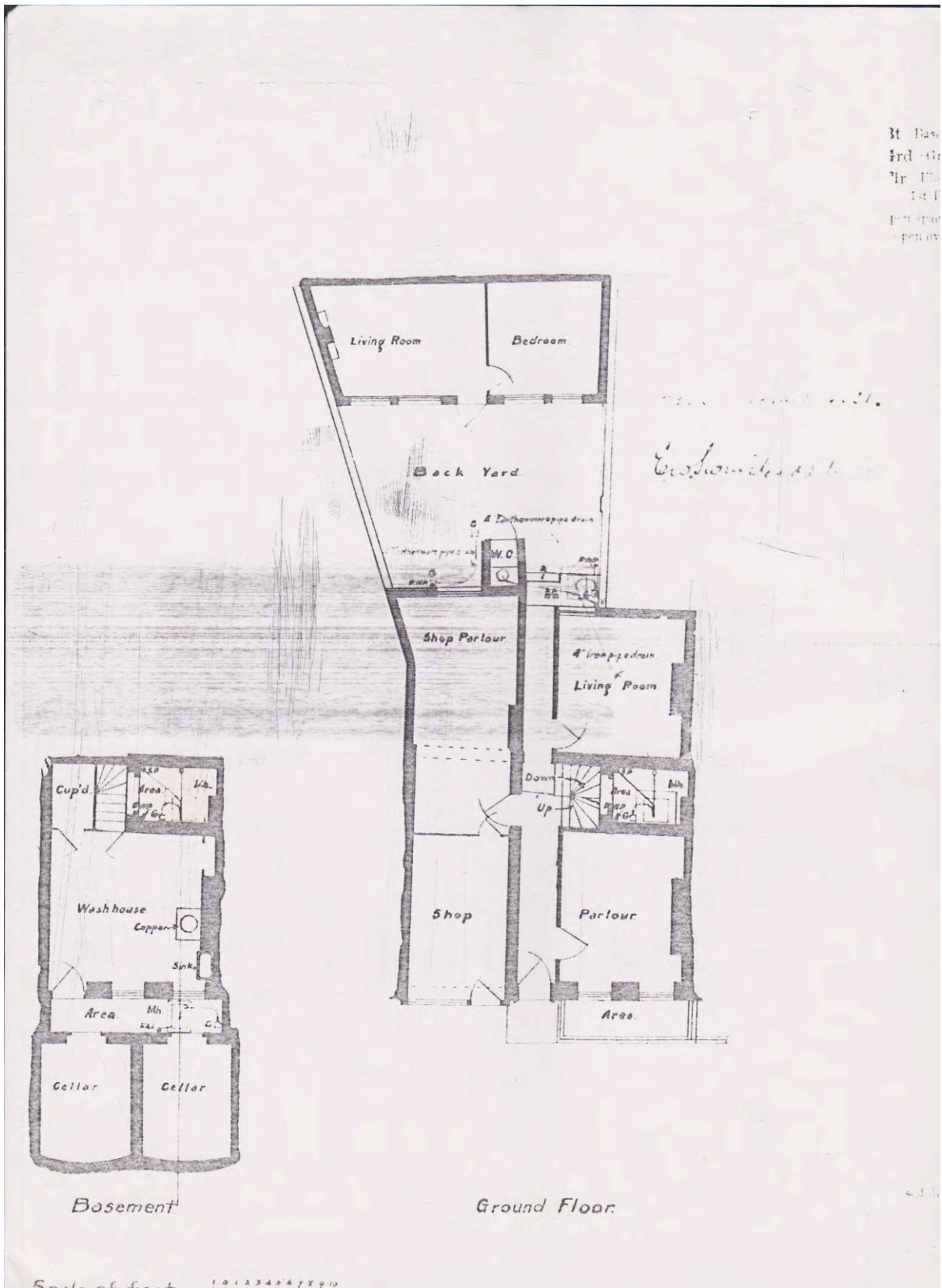


BLOCK PLAN

Scale 88 feet to 1 inch.

PERRY & PERRY,
 10, WOODSTOCK ST. W.I.

Fig.6 Ground floor plan of 61 Swinton Street in 1936
 (Camden archives, drainage records)



**Fig.7 Ground floor plan of 63-65 Swinton Street in 1931
(Camden Archives, drainage records)**

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