

Historical Context

section 1

Note: The section on Historical Context refers to both 14 and 15 Great James Street, due to these properties having been amalgamated in the mid-twentieth century.

1.1 Introduction

14 and 15 Great James Street are adjoining early eighteenth-century houses on the east side of Great James Street and within the London Borough of Camden. The houses are both listed Grade II* and lie within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

See Appendix 1: List Entry No. 1113197 Summary.

Note: Section 1.0 is extracted from the Building Report commissioned by Pollard Thomas Edwards architects in July 2012 and prepared by Kate Jefferson and Neil Burton of The Architectural History Practice Ltd.



1.2 Eighteenth Century

In the late 17th century the area north of Holborn and west of Gray's Inn Lane (later Gray's Inn Road) was predominately open space with very few buildings as shown on Morgan's map of 1681/2 (fig. 1). On 1st June 1716, Dame Margaret Skipwith (formerly Margaret Brownlow), who had inherited land from her late husband William Brownlow, let the Gravel Pit Field to the north of Theobald's Road to John Metcalfe, a lawyer who seems to have been the previous occupier on a shorter lease. It was Metcalfe who acted as developer and laid out Great James Street. Fourteen terraced houses, including Nos. 14 and 15, were built between April 1720 and September 1724. A stone cartouche with the name Great James Street the date 1721 is located on No. 16.

All of the first leases were taken by building tradesmen; among the lessees were carpenters, joiners, bricklayers and slaters. No. 14 was leased to Nicholas Snow, a carpenter, on 6th September 1720 and No. 15 was leased to Edward Dennis, Junior, a slater, on the same date. Two years later on 14th July, Dennis mortgaged the property to Thomas Dagley, citizen and draper, for £400.

During the latter part of the 18th century the area was fully-built-up and many of the present street names emerged. Rocque's map of 1746 shows the results of this later development (fig. 2). Despite the cartouche on No 16, Great James Street was first known as James Street and is shown between The King's Way/Theobald's Road and Dennis' Passage. South of Theobald's Row James Street is known as Bedford Row. Behind the terrace is Cockpit Yard. By the time of the 1787 Cary Map, Dennis' Passage had been renamed Cold Harbour. The 1794-99 Horwood map illustrates individual houses along with their house numbers, including Nos. 14 and 15. James Street has become Great James Street (fig. 3).

FIG 1. MORGAN'S MAP OF 1681-2 SHOWING LITTLE DEVELOPMENT NORTH OF THE KING'S WAY (NOW THEOBALD'S ROAD) AND WEST OF GRAY'S INN LANE (SOURCE: LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES).

From the time of building until the end of the century the houses were in residential occupation. The rate books show that Brook Bridges, Esq. occupied No. 14 from 1729-34 and Gillory Pigott occupied from 1778-89. Thomas Lloyd, Esq. is shown as the occupant of No. 15 Great James Street for most years between 1739-1794/95. This is not to say that each building was always occupied by a single family. Sub-letting was common in eighteenth century London.



FIG 2. ROCQUE'S MAP OF 1746 SHOWS THE AREA MUCH BUILT UP (SOURCE: LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES).



FIG 3. HORWOOD'S MAP OF 1799 - JAMES STREET HAS BECOME GREAT JAMES STREET AND THE STREET NUMBERS ARE SHOWN (SOURCE: LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES).

1.3 Nineteenth Century

Residential use of the houses in Great James Street continued in the first part of the nineteenth century. In 1841 Thomas Bloxham, Esq. occupied No. 14 and Miss Pink occupied No. 15. After about 1870 there was a gradual shift to commercial use. A contemporary report on land nearby noted that there had been “an increased demand for building land in this neighbourhood for warehouse and manufacturing premises.” Across the whole of this area there was a gradual but steady increase in the number of commercial uses, mostly small-scale, which changed its wholly residential character. Some of the new uses were accommodated in new buildings but existing buildings were also adapted to serve both trades whose activities could be housed in a small unit.

Great James Street seems to have been a popular address for architects, surveyors, and other associated building trade, as well as the solicitors for whom it was clearly advantageous to be near the Inns of Court. In May 1873 *The Builder* magazine carried a tender advert “for building studio, &c., at 14, Great James-street, Bedford-row. Messrs. Rogers and Shinn, architects”. In 1882 the occupants of No. 14 included two architects and three solicitors. No. 15 included one architect, one solicitor, and a collector of taxes.

In 1895 No. 14 was occupied by Creadee and Jones, business transfer agents, William Edward Goody, accountants, Edwin Smith, solicitor, John Taylor and Son, solicitors, and R.B. and H. Squire, solicitors, while Holcombe and Banks, solicitors, were the sole occupants of No. 15.

The 1873 first edition and 1873 five-foot Ordnance Survey maps show the outlines of the two houses (fig. 4). No. 14 has extensions off the main block at the southern end of the east elevation. No. 15 consists of one nearly rectangular block at the front and a second rectangular block at the rear, separated by an open yard. Nos. 14 and 15 Great James Street appear unchanged between the 1873 Ordnance Survey Maps and the 1894-96 second edition Ordnance Survey Map (fig. 5).

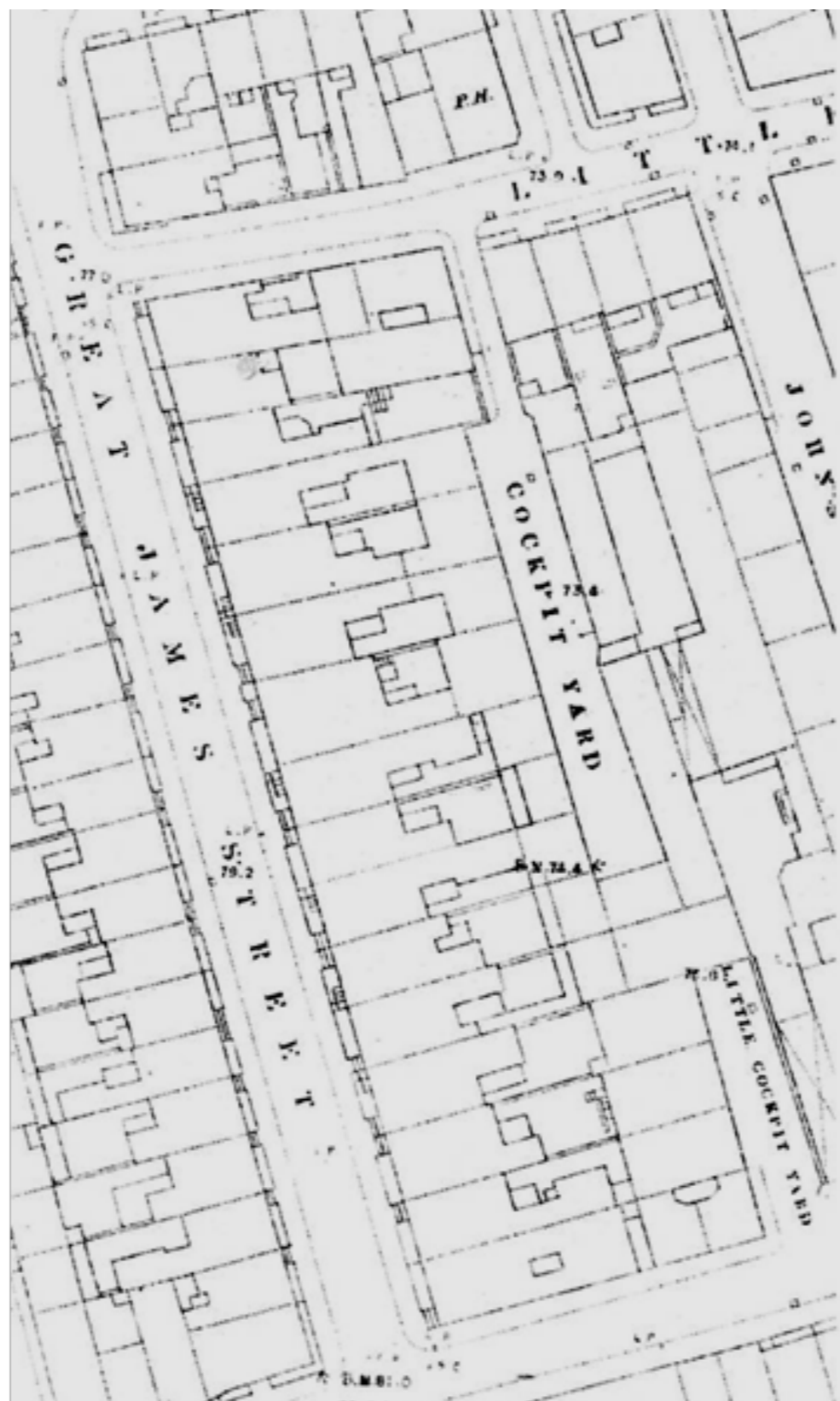


FIG 4. A DETAIL FROM THE 1873 FIVE-FOOT ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP SHOWING NOS. 14 AND 15 (SOURCE: LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES).

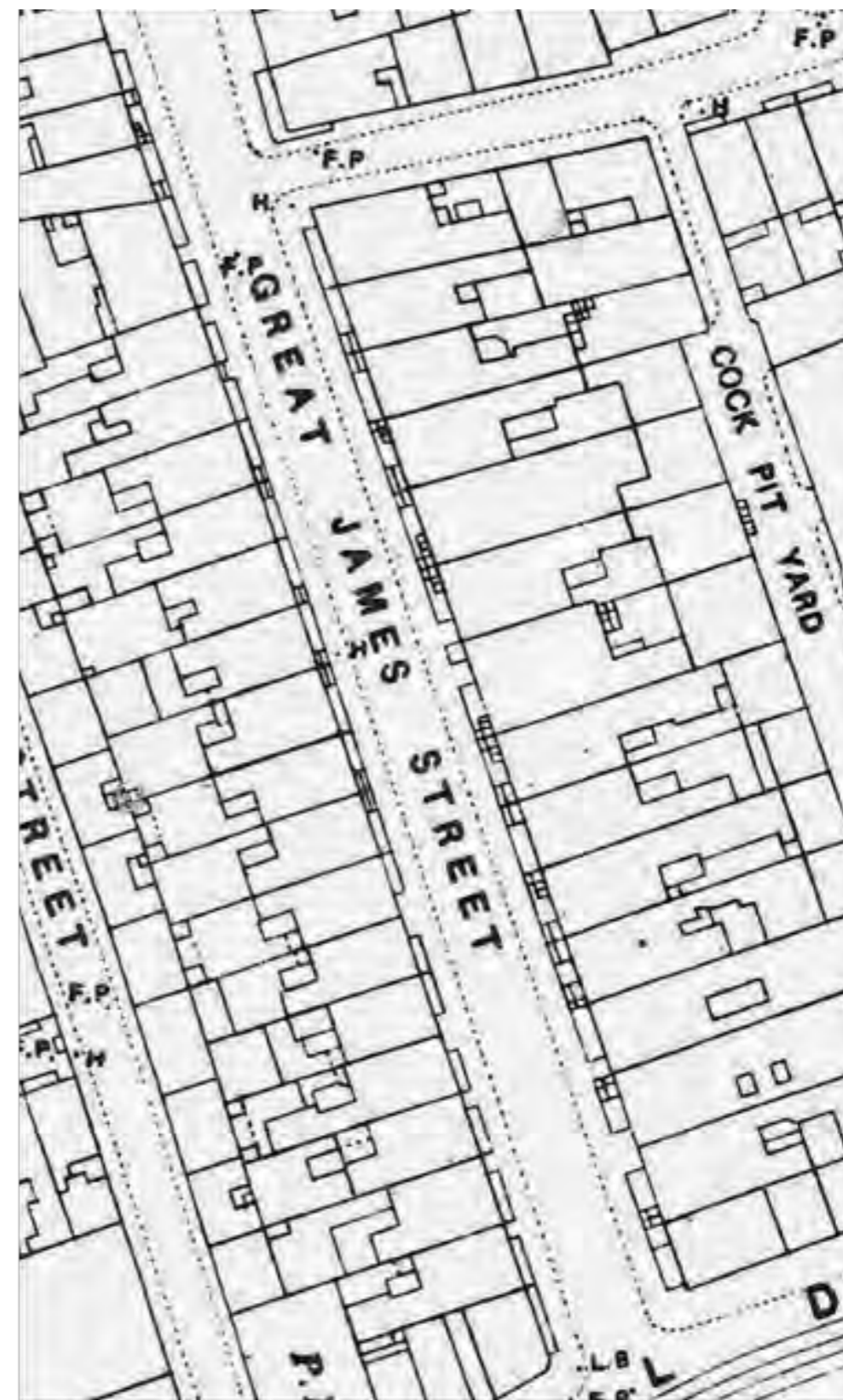


FIG 5. THE 1894-96 SECOND EDITION ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP (LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES)

1.4 Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

Both houses have been in some sort of commercial occupation since 1900. In that year the Post Office directories show No. 14 occupied by William Clare Eames, builder; (Edwin) Smith and Ellis, solicitors; and E.B. and H. Squire, solicitors. No. 15 was occupied by Appelbee, Horace, Ridley, architects; Holcombe and Banks, solicitors, and Miss Florence Kemp, typewriter. There were still many other solicitors and architects on the street, as well as the National Legal Aid and Co-operative Society, at No. 16, and the Old Age Pension and Relief Society.

In 1915 No 14 was occupied by Garrett and Son, solicitors, Herbert Kenchington, architect, and E.B. and H. Squire, solicitors. At No. 15 were the Amalgamated Society of Telephone Employees, Holcombe and Banks, solicitors, Salter, Issott and Salter, architects, Edwin George Salter, assessor and collector of king's taxes; Guy Charles Wallington, solicitor

Five years later, in 1920, Garrett and Son, solicitors and Herbert Kenchington, architect remained in No. 14 and No. 15 was shared by Colley, Meikle and Co., hot water engineers and Williams Woodward and Sons, architects.

By 1930 No 14 was shared by Wedderburn Ltd., law stationers and Richardson and Pottier, surveyors. No 15 had a large number of tenants, including Colley, Meikle and Co., hot water engineers and Williams Woodward and Sons, architects, May Oil Burner (England) Ltd.; and Jigs (1926) Ltd., jig makers. The building was apparently known as Colmec House. In 1940 Richardson and Pottier, surveyors, shared No. 14 with The Valuers Institution. At No 15 were The Spanish Young Committee; Samuel Lazarus, quantity surveyor; Lee and Dickens, surveyors; Phoenix Flooring Co., Ltd. and the London General Agency Services, advertising agents.

During the first part of the Twentieth Century various minor alterations were made to the interiors of the two buildings, mostly to do with improvements to amenities. The 1937 Ordnance Survey Map shows an addition in the middle yard of No. 15 (fig.6).

After the War, in 1950 A.J. Clements and Co., solicitors and Betts and Sons Ltd., law stationers shared No. 14. In No. 15 were Arnold Hertzberg and Co., solicitors, Sefton – Jones, O'Dell and Stephens, patent agents, Lee and Dickens, surveyors, Bouverie Estates, Ltd., property owners, and London General Agency Services, advertising agents.

In October 1951 Nos. 3-16 Great James Street were added to the statutory list at Grade II*. No. 14 was not included in this original listing, but was added to the list in May 1974, at Grade II*.

The London County Council Bomb Damage Map made in 1939-45 shows that No 14 Great James Street suffered some damage. The main house is coloured orange on the map (general blast damage – not structural).

In the mid 1960s both buildings were acquired by Haselemere Estates Ltd., a firm who made a speciality of restoring and upgrading historic buildings in London for commercial users. The firm had a good reputation and on the whole the restorations were usually carefully done. Haselmer carried out extensive works, especially at the rear of the buildings. Since 1965 the two properties have always been occupied together

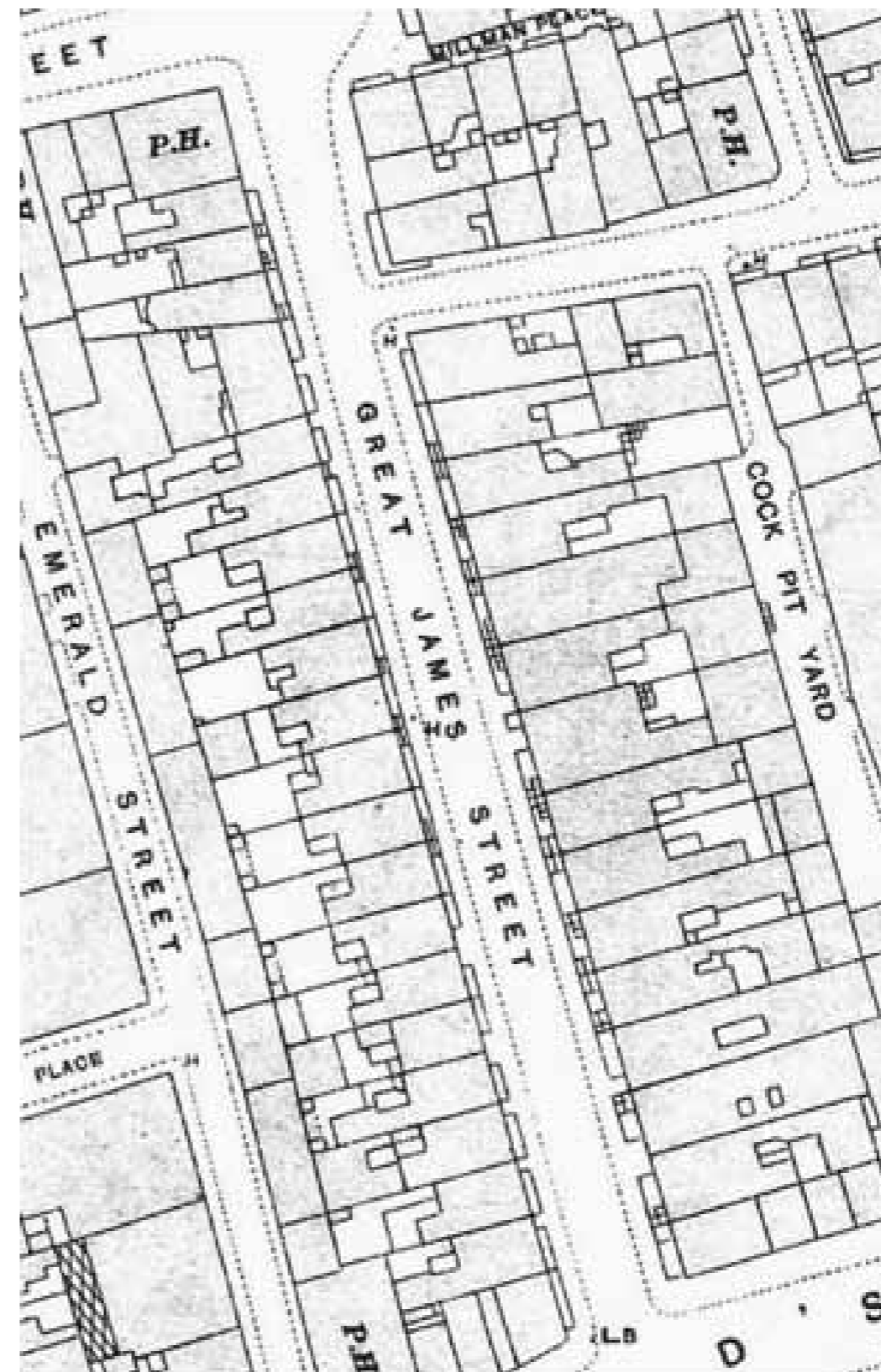


FIG 6. 1937 ORDNANCE SURVEY MAP
(SOURCE: LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES).

Development History

section 2



Note 1: The section on Development History refers to both 14 and 15 Great James Street, due to these properties having been amalgamated in the mid-twentieth century.

Note 2: Section 2.0 is extracted from the Building Report commissioned by Pollard Thomas Edwards architects in July 2012 and prepared by Kate Jefferson and Neil Burton of The Architectural History Practice Ltd.

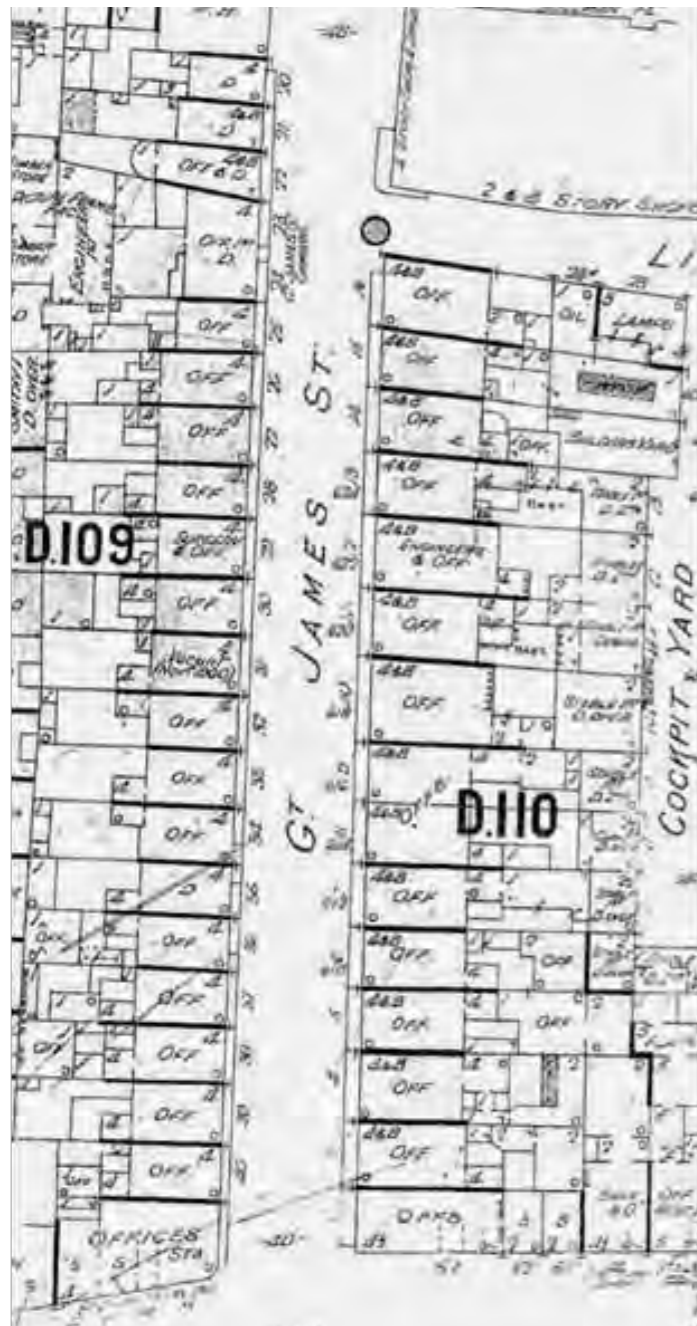


FIG 7. THE GOAD FIRE INSURANCE MAP OF 1901 (CAMDEN LOCAL HISTORY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE).

The two houses appear to have been in separate ownership from their construction in the early 1720s until the mid-1960s. In the following account, the development history is dealt with separately until 1964 and thenceforward as a single account.

2.1 1900-1964

The Goad fire insurance map of 1901 shows No. 14 in commercial use (fig. 7). Two extensions off the southern portion of the east elevation included a four-storey structure with a one-storey office beyond. Beyond a small rear yard steps led to a larger Builder's Yard.

Minor works were carried out twice at No. 14 Great James Street during the 1920s. Swann and Norman Architects gave notice that it planned to carry out the first set of work in April 1923 for M.C. Adamson (Reg. No. 3870) (fig.10). Interestingly, the work on the second floor included No. 13 Great James Street, where it appears that the two buildings were interconnected. No further information has been found regarding connection. The proposed work included constructing a water closet and bathroom on the second floor of No. 13 and 14 Great James Street and installing new pipes. A door in the connecting the front and rear rooms on the first floor of No 14 was to be sealed. Further alterations were made in 1927 (Reg. No. 4255) when a new water closet was installed.

The building apparently suffered some bomb damage in the Second World War but the exact nature of the damage is unclear. From observation it appears that the brickwork of the left side of the street front has been renewed, and this may have been a bomb damage repair, or may have been done in connection with the rebuilding of the front of No 15 (see below).

In April 1957 plans were submitted to the council by Gibbon and Rogers of 32 Great James Street in connection with an application to undertake rebuilding work at No. 14 Great James Street, which may have been consequent on war damage (plan. app. Ref 76665_NW). The work, on behalf of clients Syrett and Sons, focused on the rebuilding of the back addition, wing addition, and additional external W.C.s (figs. 11-12). A letter dated 25th April 1957 indicates that the drainage work arose after a Dangerous Structures Notice was served on the building. The notice brought attention to the dangerous condition of the two-storey wing building at the rear (it was only one-storey in 1923). The work required demolishing the existing external W.C. in the basement and rebuilding it in a new position. A reinforced steel joist was inserted over the smaller store area at the rear of the basement. On the ground floor the W.C. in the rear yard was to be rebuilt with an additional W.C. built adjacent and new drainage installed. The open space at the rear of the yard was used as a garden at the time.



FIG 8. FEBRUARY 1908 ANGOLD AND SON PROPOSED ALTERATIONS FOR NO. 15 GREAT JAMES STREET, BASEMENT (RIGHT) AND GROUND FLOOR (LEFT) (SOURCE: CAMDEN LOCAL HISTORY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE).



FIG 9. 1939-45 LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL BOMB DAMAGE MAP (SOURCE: LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES).

The Goad map of 1900 also shows No 15 in commercial use, with a one-storey extension located off of the southern section of the east elevation, and four-storey and one-storey extensions located off its northern section. To the rear of the property was a workshop with a skylight.

Between February and July 1908 Angold and Son of 13 Great James Street, produced a series of drawings for proposed work at No. 15, chiefly the addition of new lavatories on the basement and ground floors. (fig.8). The basement plan shows a large number of vaults to both the front and rear. On the ground floor was a small rear light well and a rear office lit from it. The drawing of Section A-B shows the original line of the floor and yard.

One puzzling feature of the house is that the front wall has clearly been rebuilt in the 20th century, using yellow stock brick as the main facing material instead of the original brown brick which can still be seen on No 14. The rebuilding may have been necessitated by war damage, although it is No 14 which is shown as damaged on the LCC war damage map (fig.9). A 1960 photograph showing the doorways of Nos. 14 and 15 Great James Street also shows that the front had been rebuilt by this time. On the whole, a rebuilding date in the late 1940s or early 1950s seems most likely, though no documentary record of the work has been found.

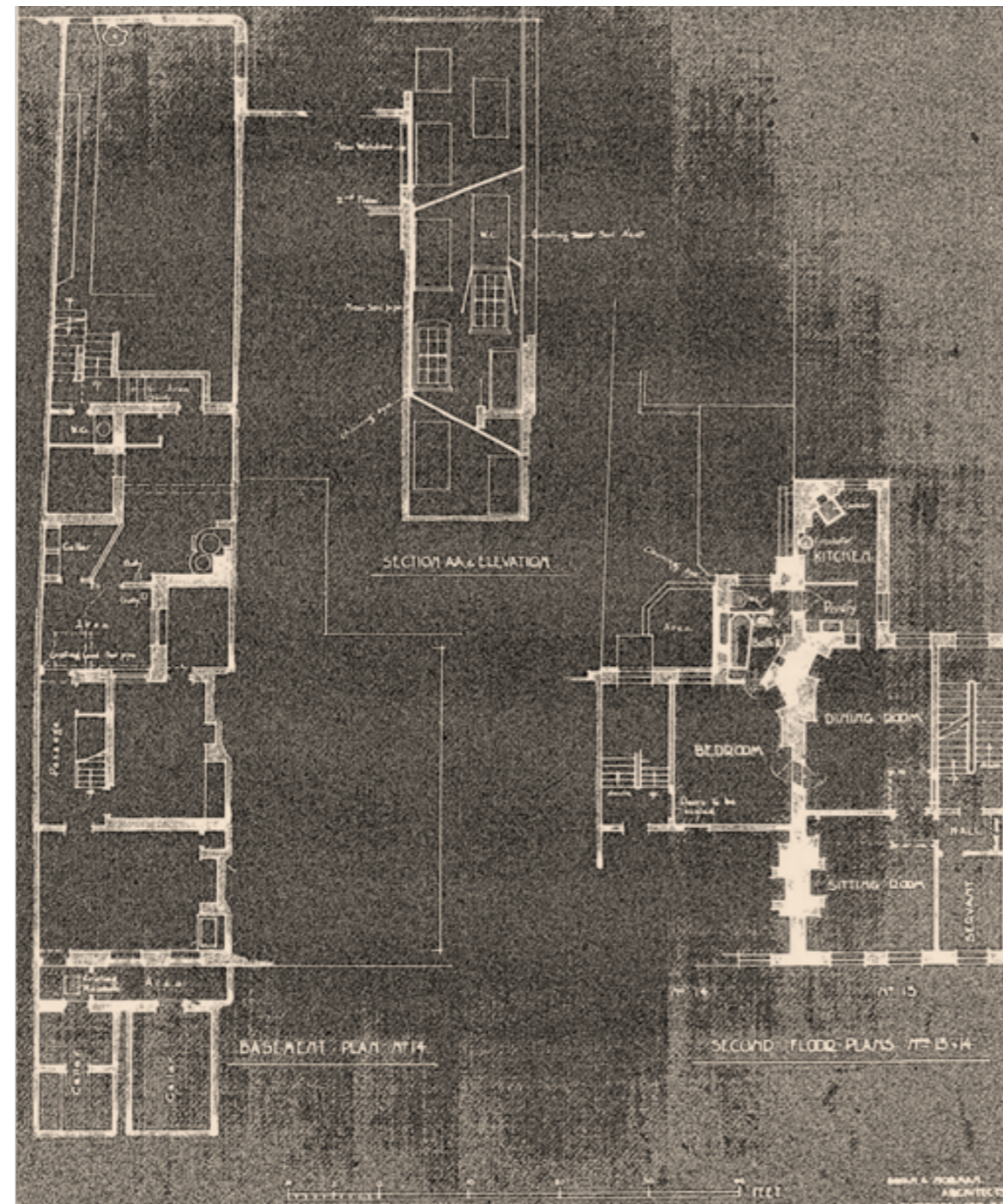


FIG 10. APRIL 1923 SWANN AND NORMAN ARCHITECTS PLAN ASSOCIATED WITH PROPOSED WORK AT NOS. 13 AND 14 GREAT JAMES STREET, BASEMENT, SECOND FLOOR PLANS, SECTION AA AND ELEVATION (SOURCE: CAMDEN LOCAL HISTORY LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE).

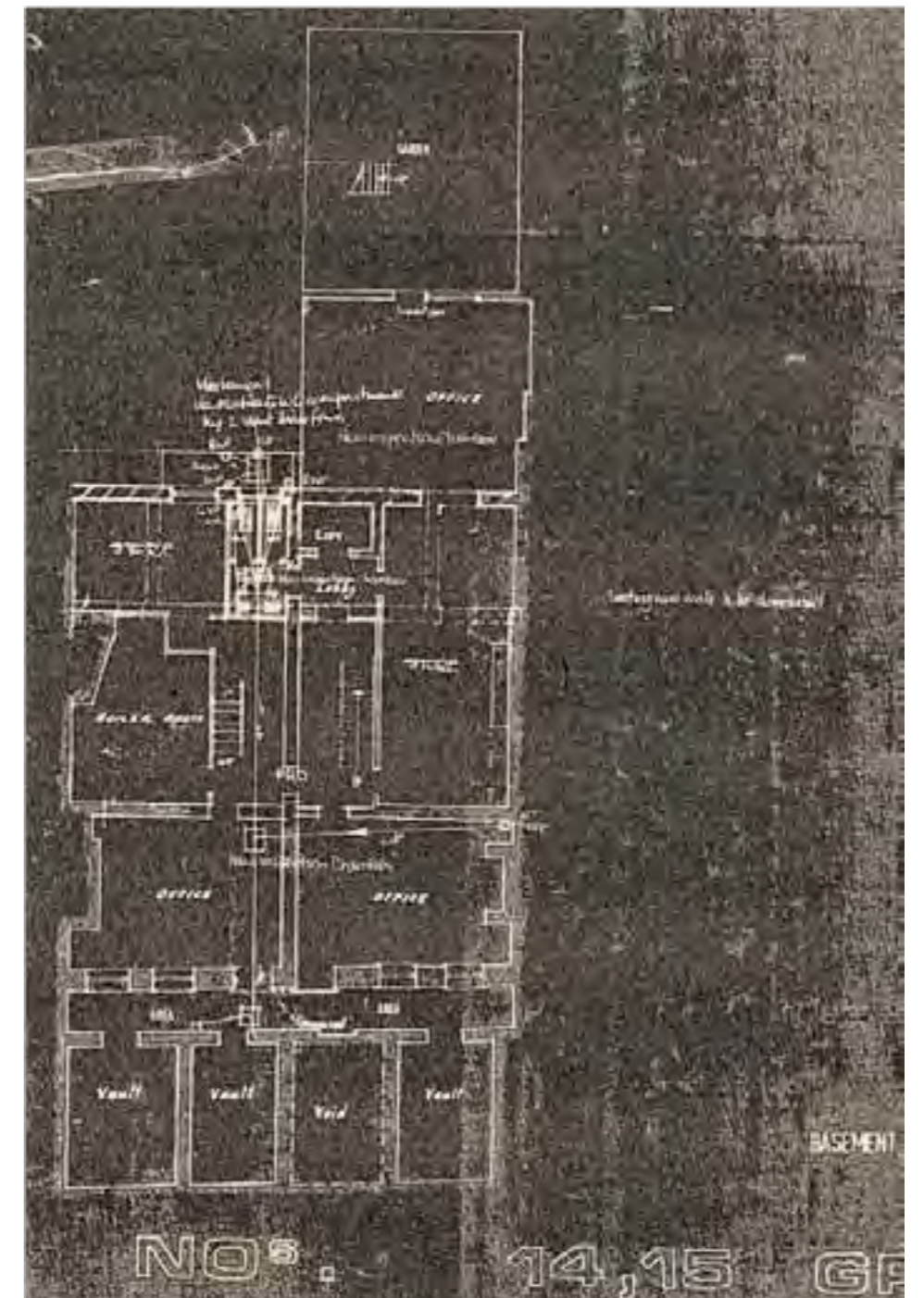


FIG 11. APRIL 1965 DRAWING FOR NOS. 14 AND 15 GREAT JAMES STREET, BASEMENT (SOURCE: CAMDEN LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE).

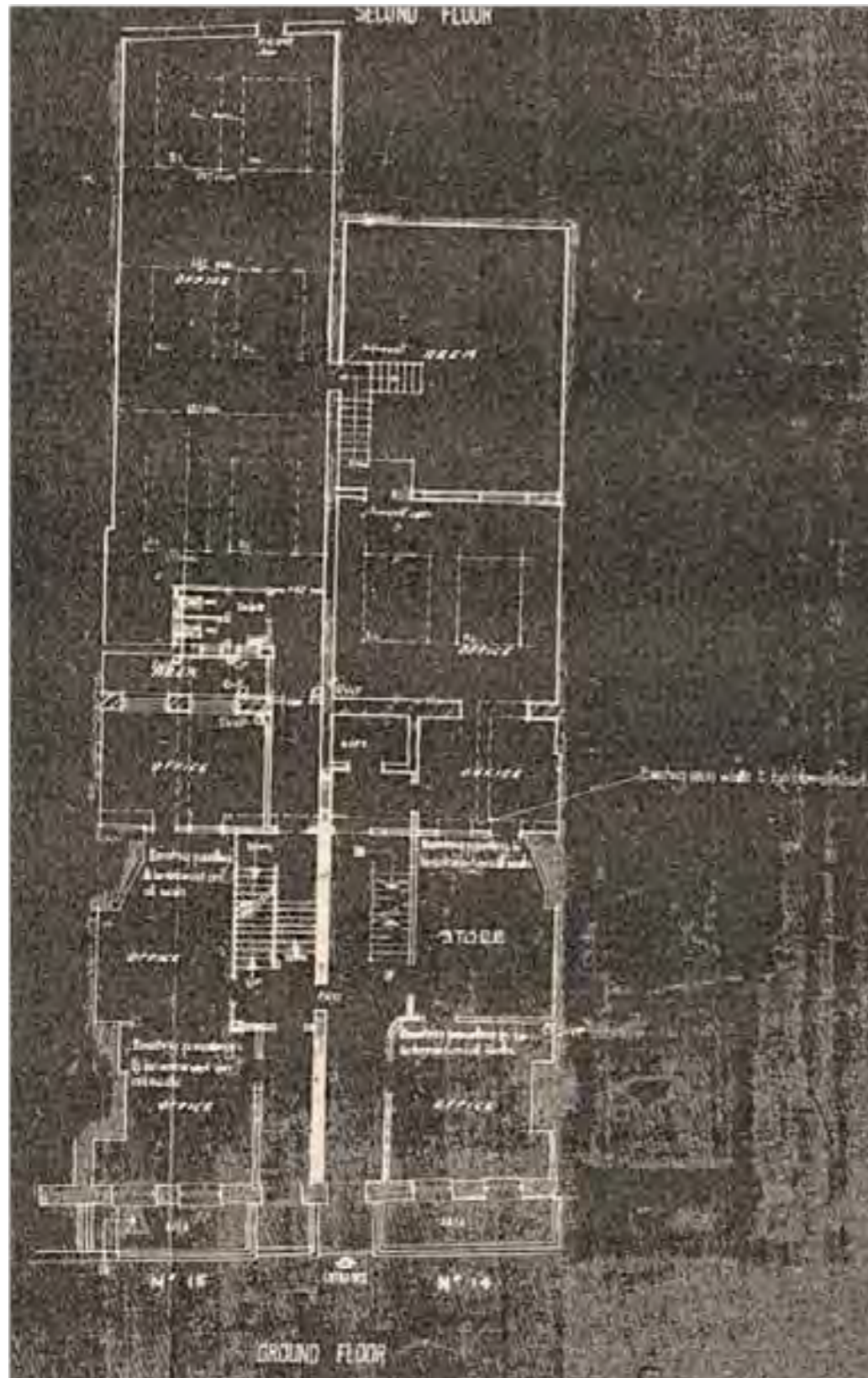


FIG 12. APRIL 1965 DRAWING FOR NOS. 14 AND 15 GREAT JAMES STREET, GROUND FLOOR (SOURCE: CAMDEN LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE).

2.2 1964 onwards

Camden Council's planning records contain a series of drawings relating to the alterations carried out to the buildings as part of the refurbishment by Haslemere Estates. The earliest drawings, issued in 1964, included Nos. 13 as well as Nos. 14 and 15 Great James Street (Drawing 64/13g; CTP N15/33/1A/P1) which suggests that it was originally intended to combine all three buildings but this scheme was soon abandoned and from 1965 the drawings relate only to Nos. 14 and 15. The drawings show both the proposed alterations (Drawing 64/13g; CTP N15/33/1A/P2) and also the upgrading of the services (Drawing No. 1965/97/1). Drawings relating to the latter were submitted by Gascoigne Heating and Sanitary Engineers.

The buildings were being then used as offices and storage, and a duplex residential flat was located on the second and third floors. The alterations proposed on the 1965 plans for Nos. 14 and 15 Great James Street were as follows (figs. 11-16): demolition of the rear walls behind the stairwell on the basement, ground, first, second, and third floor levels and extension outward, alterations to the W.C.s at the basement level, existing panelling to be retained on all walls on the ground floor, and removal of doors on the first floor. On the first, second and third floors an existing window to the toilet in No. 15 was to be sealed and panelled-in to match the existing panelling and in No. 14 a new door was to replace a window between the lobby and the stairwell with the panelling and moulding matched to the existing. Additional work on the second floor included removing the existing partition on the string of the stairs, removing other existing partitions, and inserting a new door between Nos. 14 and 15. A new one-storey extension appears to have been built off the rear elevation at No. 14. The Gascoigne drawing show proposed plumbing and drainage including typical toilets and pipe layouts.

A photograph taken in January 1965 before the start of works illustrates the front elevations of Nos. 14 and 15 Great James Street at that time (fig.18). No. 14 has double-hung windows with four-over-four sash on the ground, first, and third floors, and six-over-six sash on the second floor. The double-hung windows at No. 15 all have renewed one-over-one sashes. Part of No. 14s elevation may have been rebuilt. The Bloomsbury Conservation Area, of which Nos. 14 and 15 are a part, was initially designated in 1968 and extended numerous times since.

Another January 1965 photograph illustrates the rear elevations of Nos. 14 and 15 Great James Street at the time (fig.17). No. 14 appears to have a three-storey rear extension. The double-hung windows have six-over-six sashes. The top of the glazed roof lights on No. 15's one-storey rear extension may be seen as well.

No.14 was listed Grade II* on 14th May 1974. A photograph from the following year illustrates a small portion of the rear elevation of No. 15 (fig.20).

There have been a number of further alterations since the 1960s. In late 1979, Montague Evans and Son applied for a change of use on behalf of The Institute of Ismaili Studies, Ltd (Application number 29432(R)). The Institute received permission to use the ground floor for educational purposes for a period of eight years. Haselmere Estates continued to own the building.

In 1987-8 alterations were proposed which included internal works and a rear extension to accommodate a new lift and toilets (Application numbers 8703721/R1 and 8770535/R1). The applicants were Burnet Tait MWT Architects and Planning Consultants. The first (1987) scheme (Application numbers 8703722 and 8770536) sought to add a rear extension to accommodate a new lift and toilets, add a fourth floor to accommodate one flat and alter the rear elevation including the mansard roof to the main building and mansard roof to the rear two-storey building. The applicant withdrew these applications following the advice that they would not be approved.



FIG 13. APRIL 1965 DRAWING FOR NOS. 14 AND 15 GREAT JAMES STREET, FIRST FLOOR (SOURCE: CAMDEN LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE).

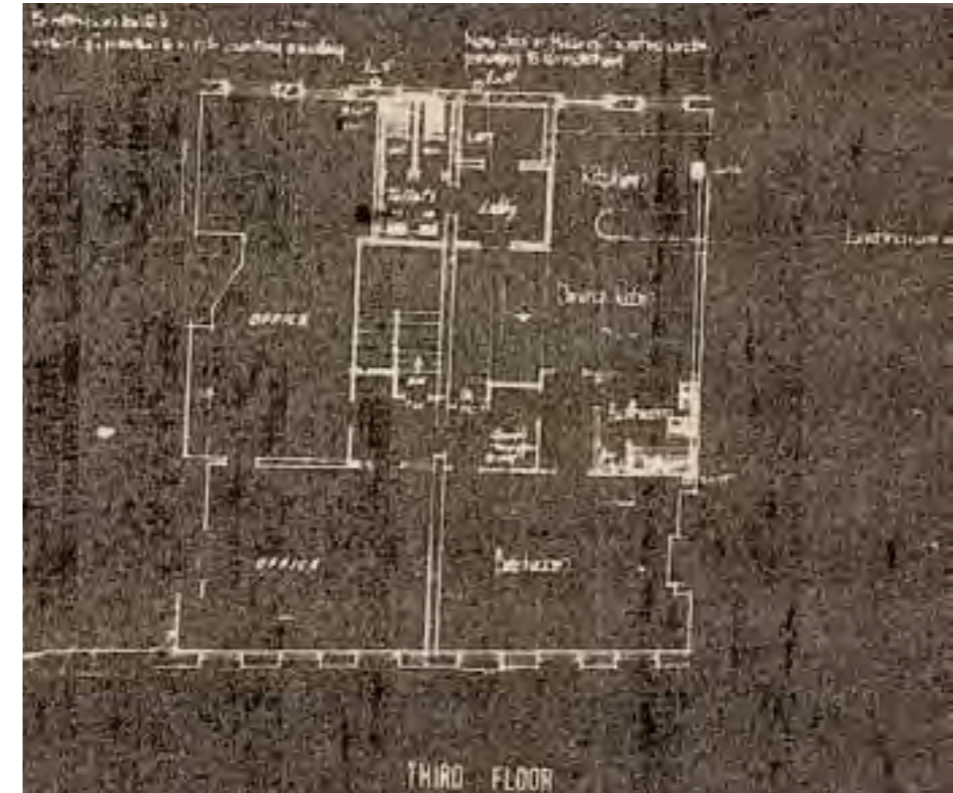


FIG 15. APRIL 1965 DRAWING FOR NOS. 14 AND 15 GREAT JAMES STREET, THIRD FLOOR (SOURCE: CAMDEN LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE).

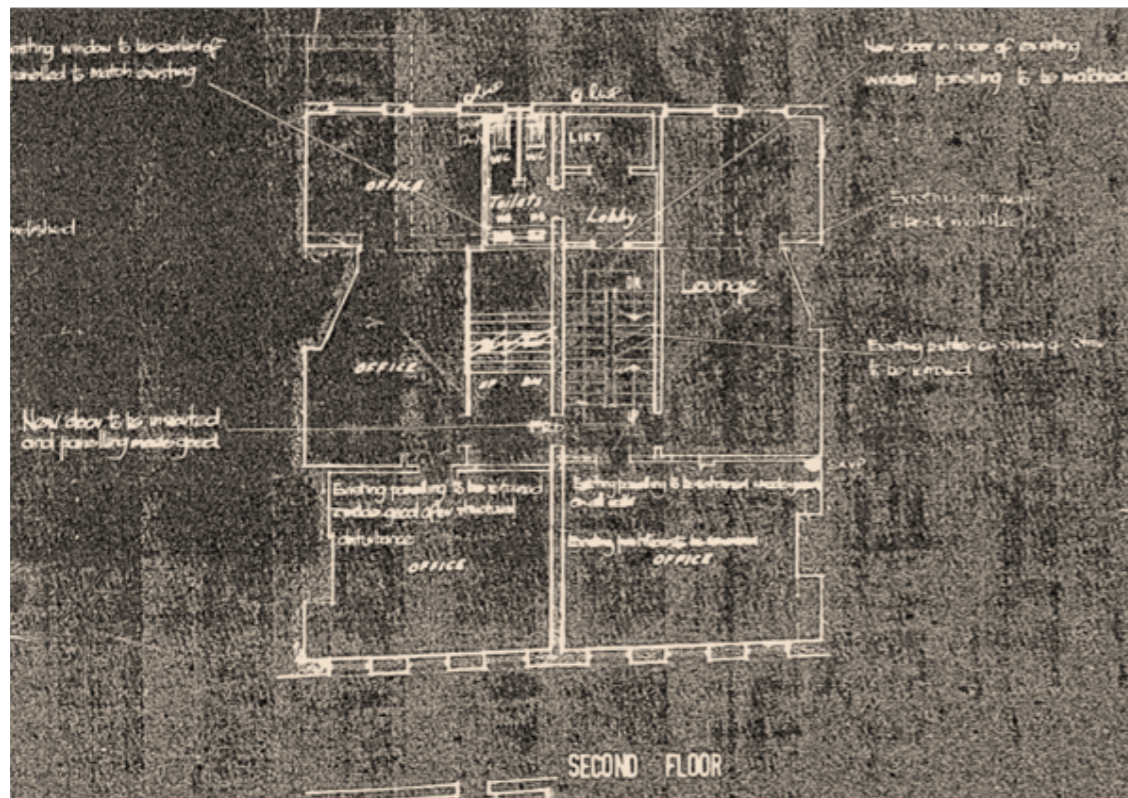


FIG 14. APRIL 1965 DRAWING FOR NOS. 14 AND 15 GREAT JAMES STREET, SECOND FLOOR (SOURCE: CAMDEN LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE).

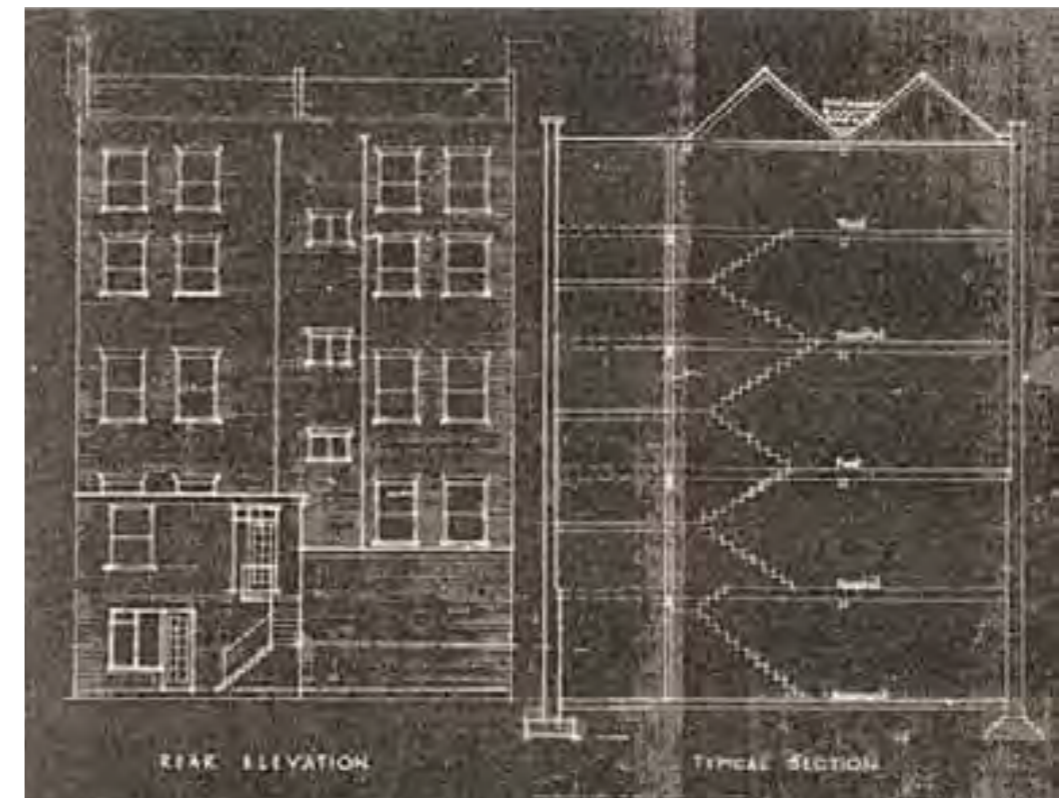


FIG 16. APRIL 1965 DRAWING FOR NOS. 14 AND 15 GREAT JAMES STREET, REAR ELEVATION AND TYPICAL SECTION B (SOURCE: CAMDEN LOCAL STUDIES LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE).

A second revised application submitted in April 1988 proposed to remove the residential use, to which English Heritage objected. Plans (TP01A) were then amended to retain the residential use and the application was conditionally approved on 28th July 1988. The basement plan shows the position of the new lift and toilets. The lift now has an east-west orientation and is located within No. 15. The toilets straddle the two buildings at the centre of the back wall, which has been extended out beyond the rear plane of the building, encroaching on the office in No. 14 behind it. There are no longer bathrooms on the ground floor of No. 15 and a void exists in No. 14 where the former lift was located. On the first floor the rear wall of the bathrooms extends over the ground floor office behind No. 14. The layout of offices and flat on the second and third floors is little changed. Section A-A shows the shaft of the new hydraulic lift. The rear elevation illustrates the centre back wall, where the toilets are located, extending outward in between the outer pairs of windows. It does not appear that these works were executed. The position of the list was not moved and the back wall was not pushed out.

A 1988 photograph shows the rear elevations of the two buildings (fig.21). The following year additional work was proposed for Nos. 14 and 15 Great James Street, with plans completed by Royce Hurley and Stewart (Application number 8970018 /R3). The 15 November 1989 Decision Notice gave conditional approval for the proposed work, which included internal alterations and a new rain water down pipe with hopper head (Drawing numbers 2484/1D and 4A 2484/A3/4 5 and 17). The work was revised via letter on several occasions, including 20th February 1989 (relating to the Fire Officer's requirements), 16th March 1989 (noting a brief description of proposed works), and 14th July 1989 (to show Room No. 1 on the Second Floor marked as residential use) and amended by letter on 9th October 1989 (showing details of doors and door openings).

The proposed works included the provision of ties to the front elevation brickwork at parapet level to No. 14 with the ties being concealed within the brickwork; re-roofing of the pitched roofs with plain clay; rebuilding of the existing party wall brickwork and chimney stacks to match the existing along with the installation of lead flashings to the roof; re-pointing part of the existing front elevation brickwork; and alterations to internal partitions and room arrangements. Other work included making new openings and closing existing ones, installing new doors, and removing the roof lights on the rear extension of No. 15, closing the opening, and mounting air conditioning plant on top. Detailed drawings were submitted for the new door opening, new doors, architraves, and surrounding panelling between Rooms 2A and 3 on the ground floor of No. 14. In addition, drawings were submitted for new door openings and door details on the second floor (see Section 3: Existing Properties).

In 2006 the Federation of Master Builders, Ltd. applied for consent to install a bracket and pole to display a flag on the front elevation of Nos. 14 and 15 Great James Street between the ground and first floor levels (Application numbers 2006/2588/L and 2006/2587/A). The flag advertisement, imprinted with the Federation's logo, was refused. It was considered that the size and location of the flag would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the conservation area.



FIG 17. JANUARY 1965 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE REAR ELEVATIONS OF NOS. 14 AND 15 (SOURCE: CAMDEN TOWN HALL, PLANNING DEPARTMENT)



FIG 18. 1965 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE FRONT ELEVATIONS OF NOS. 14 AND 15 GREAT JAMES STREET (SOURCE: CAMDEN TOWN HALL, PLANNING DEPARTMENT)



FIG 19. 1960 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE FRONT DOORS OF NOS. 14 AND 15
(SOURCE: LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES)



FIG 20. 1975 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE REAR ELEVATION OF NO. 16, SHOWING A SMALL PART OF NO.15
(SOURCE: LONDON METROPOLITAN ARCHIVES)

2.3 Summary

14 and 15 Great James Street are three-bay, four-storey-plus-basement early Georgian terrace houses, constructed in the early 1720s. The external walls were originally of brown brick with red brick surrounds to the segment-headed window openings. The front doors have timber surrounds with timber canopies supported on carved timber brackets. The front parapet conceals double pitched roofs. The houses were built on the 'standard' early Georgian terrace-house plan, with two rooms on each floor plus a small rear closet wing on the lower floors and with a single main stair rising against the party wall. All the principal rooms would originally have been panelled, probably with timber box cornices and flat plaster ceilings.

The houses were in residential use until the latter part of the 19th century and since about 1870 have been in commercial use, often with several different tenants in the same building. Alterations were made for several of these tenants, which entailed both additions at the rear and minor internal alterations. There was some bomb damage to No 14 in the Second World War, which may also have affected No 15. In 1964 both buildings were brought into the ownership of Haslemere Estates and in 1965/6 there was a major programme of alteration and refurbishment aimed at making the two houses into a single commercial unit. They have remained a single unit ever since.

The front of No 15 appears to have been completely rebuilt, probably in the mid-20th century, perhaps after war damage. The front of No 14 also has some later brickwork. While No. 14 retains many older sash windows, all of No. 15's have been renewed. No. 15 retains its decorative fanlight over the entrance door but No. 14 does not.

The rear elevations, which originally had two small closet wings, were altered repeatedly in the earlier 20th century and were completely rebuilt from the basement up in 1965/5 on a new line corresponding to the original rear elevations of the wings. A lift was installed at this time and a new meeting room was built behind No 15.

Internally, both the original stairs still survive, as does a considerable amount of the interior panelling though there has certainly been some replacement, door openings have been altered and some of the interior walls, ceilings and finishes have been renewed. Several of the main rooms have chimneypieces, but there is only one which might be original and most were probably installed by Haslemere as part of their refurbishment. The early (1951) listing of the houses has certainly helped to preserve the interiors, which still have an early 18th century character.

2.4 Sources

Camden Local Studies Library and Archive
Camden Town Hall, Planning Department
English Heritage Historians' Files
English Heritage Photography Library
Historical Directories, Searchable Library: A University of Leicester Project <http://www.historicaldirectories.org/hd/index.asp>
London Metropolitan Archives



FIG 21. MARCH 1988 PHOTOGRAPH OF REAR ELEVATION OF NOS. 14 AND 15 GREAT JAMES STREET (SOURCE: ENGLISH HERITAGE PHOTOGRAPHY LIBRARY).