

Heritage Statement

35 Great James Street London Borough of Camden



AHP Architectural
History
Practice

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1.0 Introduction

This Heritage Statement for 35 Great James Street was first commissioned in July 2015 by M W Architects on behalf of clients and adapted to suit amended proposals in November 2015. The report was prepared by Neil Burton BA FSA IHBC, a director of The Architectural History Practice Ltd.

35 Great James Street in the London Borough of Camden (Grid Reference TQ307819) is a terrace house built in the 1720s. It is a grade II* listed building, as are most of the other houses in the street, and was first listed in 1957. The whole of Great James Street lies within the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

2.0 Development History

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. Metcalfe acted as developer and laid out Great James Street. Most of the houses, including No. 35, were built between April 1720 and September 1724. A stone cartouche with the name Great James Street and the date 1721 is located on No. 16. The street is shown as fully built-up in the parish map published in Strype's edition of John Stow's *Survey of London*, published in 1720, (fig.2) but this may have been a little in advance of reality.

All of the first leases in Great James Street were taken by building tradesmen; among the lessees were carpenters, joiners, bricklayers and slaters. No. 35 was leased to Edward Dennis, a slater, who also took a lease of the site of No. 15 Great James Street. These were building leases and once the fabric of the house was completed the lease was sold on, usually to the first occupier.

During the later 18th century the area was fully-built-up and many of the present street names emerged. 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. Horwood's map of 1799 (fig.3) shows the individual houses with their house numbers, which have not changed since that time.

The first edition Ordnance Survey map (fig.4) at a scale of five feet to a mile shows the outline of the house with its closet wing at the south of the rear elevation and with a small detached structure at the western end of the garden plot. The second edition of 1894 (fig.5) shows a further small addition at the rear of the house which was doubtless a single-storey lavatory.

During the Second World War a bomb fell at the southern end of Lamb's Conduit Street, completely destroying the buildings there. The LCC Bomb damage map (fig.8) shows that buildings on the east side of Emerald Street were also destroyed. Number 35 is immediately adjacent to the destroyed buildings and it is possible that blast damage may have been the reason for replacing the pitched roof on number 35 with the present flat roof. A part-

elevation attached to a drainage application dated 1950 shows that the flat roof was already in place by this time.

By the time of the 1951 Ordnance Survey (fig.6), the lavatory extension on the rear of the house had been enlarged to link with a building at the rear of the plot. In 1980 the building was completely refurbished by T P Bennett & Partners. The footprint of the basement was enlarged at the rear to fill most of the plot and the ground floor enlarged to cover the same area. The later nineteenth century lavatory addition was completely rebuilt to the full height of the house, providing lavatories on all the half-landings. The plans attached to the drainage application show that new openings were formed between the front and rear rooms on the first and second floors and the plans are annotated to the effect that the partitions enclosing the staircase were upgraded on the room side to provide half-hour fire resistance. There is no information as to how this was done, or whether the panelling had to be removed as part of the upgrading process. A further listed building consent was given in 2000 for general refurbishment, including refurbishment of the sash windows.

2.1 History of Occupation

From the time of building c1720 until the end of the eighteenth century all the houses in Great James Street were in residential occupation. Residential use continued in the first part of the nineteenth century but there was a gradual but steady increase in the number of commercial uses, mostly small-scale, which changed the street's wholly residential character. Many of the houses were occupied by both private residents and commercial tenants at the same time.

The 1841 census shows that number 35 was occupied by a widow named Mary Roxburgh with her two young sons and a servant, but the earliest Post Office Directory for 1844 shows that the house was also used as offices by a Solicitor named William Buck and an auctioneer named Frederick Caitlin. The same pattern of occupation continued for most of the nineteenth century. The 1861 census shows a married couple named Bishop living in the house with their twelve year old daughter while the directories show three solicitors and an architect. The 1871 census shows two grooms and a female servant living in the house, while the directories show up to four commercial occupants who were variously solicitors, auctioneers and surveyors

Great James Street seems to have been a popular address for architects, surveyors, and other associated building trades, as well as the solicitors for whom it was clearly advantageous to be near the Inns of Court. In the early 1880s, besides Hannah Pearse with her family of four and three lodgers who are shown in the census, there were two solicitors and two architects.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century the house appears to have reverted to residential occupation. The 1891 census shows John Bannon, a rate collector, with his wife and three lodgers and Bannon also appears in the directories as sole occupant. The 1901 Goad insurance plan (fig.7) shows number 35 marked 'D' for dwelling, while almost all the properties in Great James Street are shown as offices. The house appears to have remained in predominantly residential use until 1939 but from the 1950s it reverted to use as offices, with a period between 1965 and 1974 when it was architects' offices.



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).

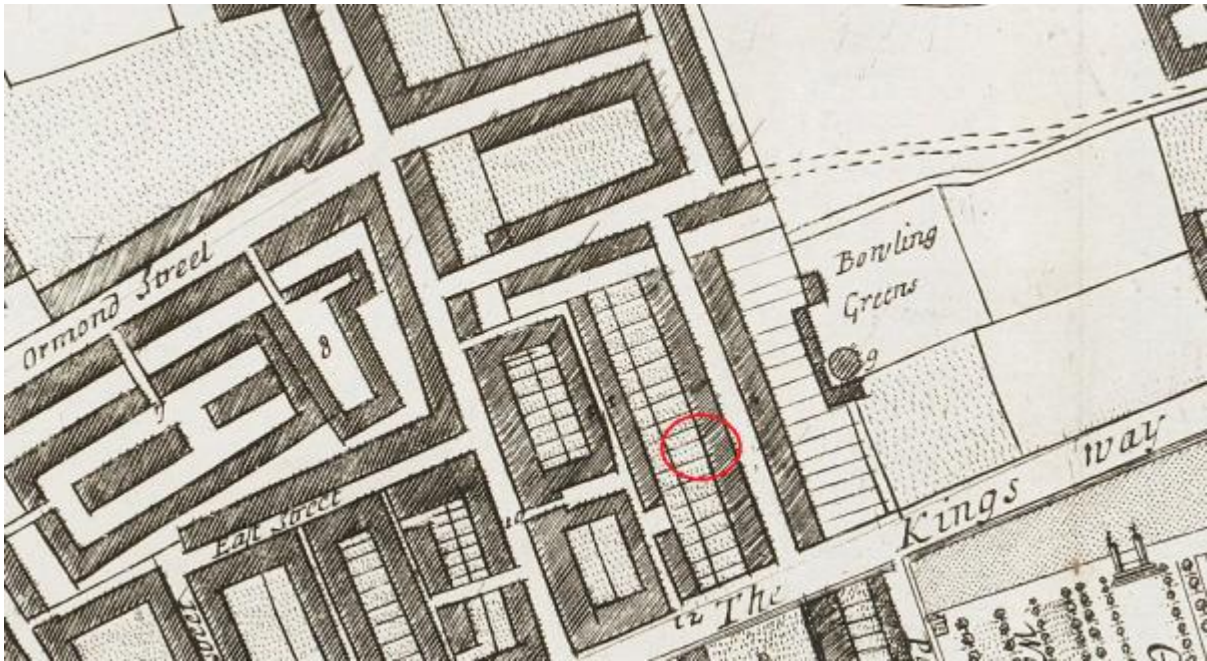


Fig.2 A detail from the parish map of St Andrew Holborn in Strype's 1720 edition of John Stow's *Survey of London*, which shows the new Great James Street fully built-up

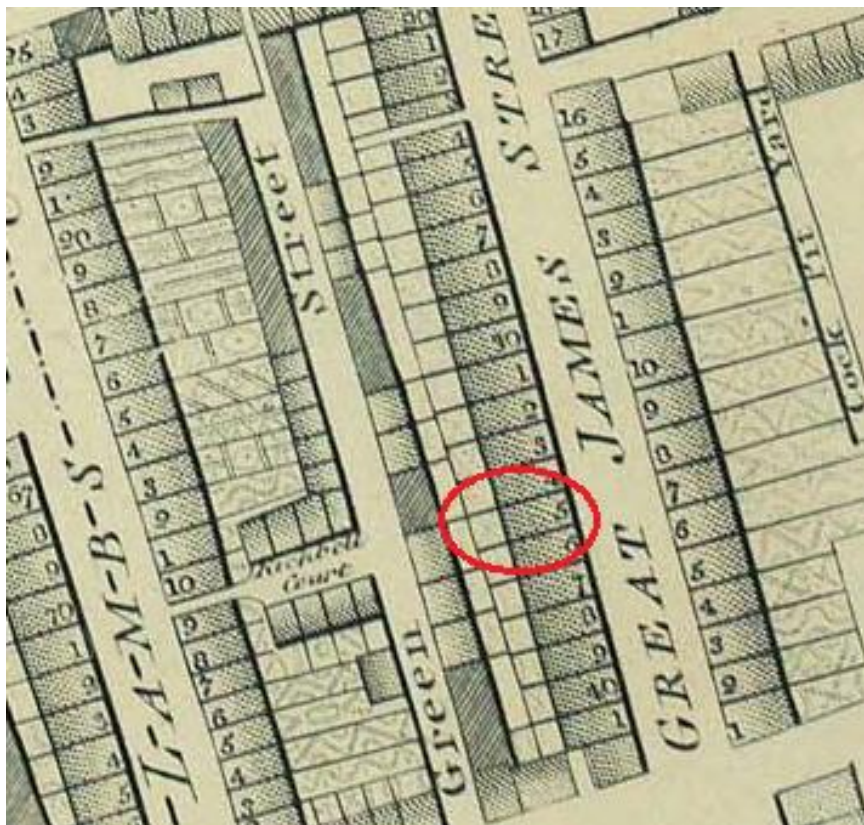


Fig.3 On Horwood's map of 1799 James Street has become Great James Street and the street numbers are shown (Source: London Metropolitan Archives).



Figs 4 & 5 details from the 1872 and 1894 Ordnance Survey, (London VII.54)

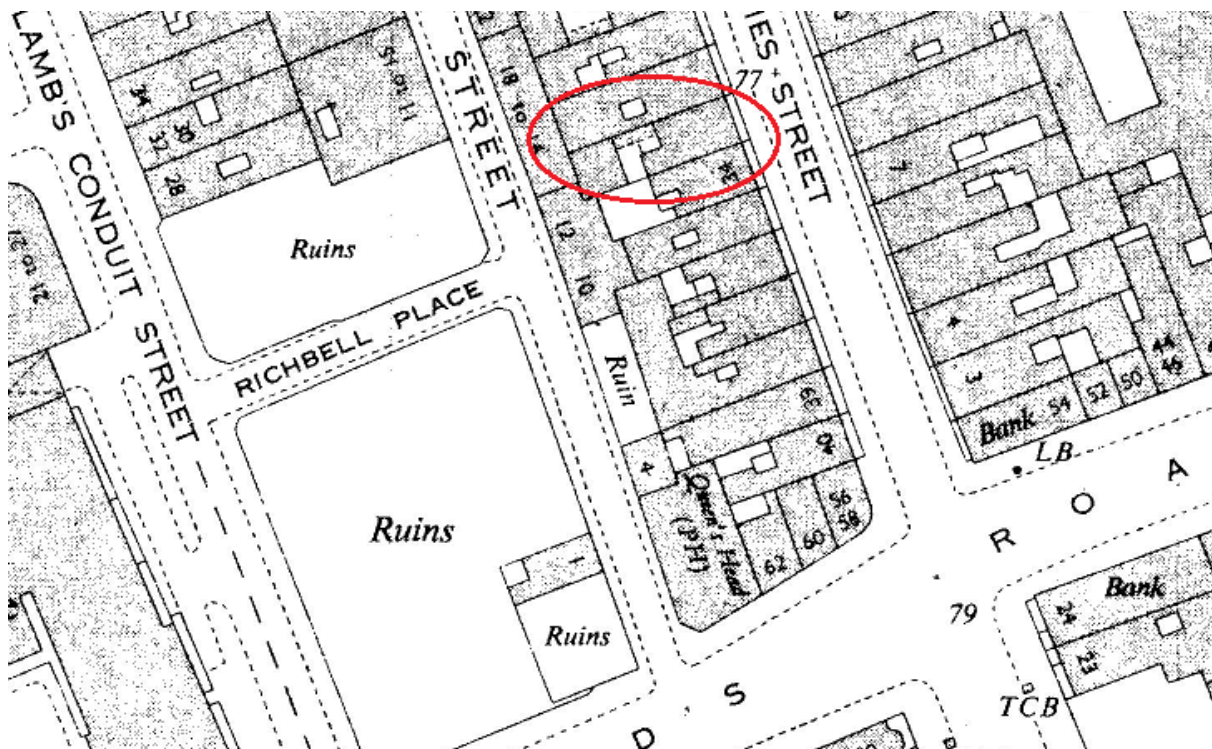


Fig.6 A detail from the 1951 Ordnance Survey (TQ 3081 NE)



Fig.8 The LCC Bomb Damage Map; the areas shaded black were totally destroyed by bombing.

3.0 Brief Description & Analysis

Number 35 Great James Street is a substantial early-eighteenth century terraced house. The plan of the building is characteristic of the first half of the eighteenth century, with two main rooms on each floor, and a small closet wing opening off the rear room and rising to second floor level. The entrance hall and staircase is set against one party wall and the chimneystacks against the other. The rear rooms and the rear closet are heated by corner hearths served by single substantial chimney-stack. The original plan is still clearly evident on all floors, although the rear additions have swallowed the closet wing at basement and ground floor level.

The main front is four storeys high above the basement and three bays wide. The main entrance door has a projecting timber canopy on handsome carved brackets similar to others in the street. The windows have segmental heads with red brick arches. Up to the level of the first floor windows the wall-facing is red brick laid in Flemish bond; from the first floor to the head of the second floor windows the facing is red brick laid in header bond; above this level the facing has been renewed in yellow stock brick. The change of bond in the lower part of the facade may indicate an early rebuilding. The yellow stock brick at upper level is clearly part of a post-war repair.

The windows are all sashes, with the sash-boxes set flush with the facade, an early feature. The sash boxes of the ground floor windows have reeded surrounds. This detail is shared by many of the other houses in the street. Reeding is a decorative motif characteristic of the later eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. In this case it may be result of general refurbishment carried out when the original 56-year leases expired in the late 1770s. The ground floor windows have two-paned sashes while the upper windows have six-paned sashes. All the sashes are relatively modern. Listed Building Consent for window refurbishment was given in 2000.

The rear elevation is not easily visible. The left-hand (north) side of the elevation is hidden by the red-brick lavatory wing added in 1980. The rear wall of the main house appears to be of grey brick laid in Flemish bond, with segmental window arches of the same colour. The closet wing on the right-hand (south) side of the elevation is also of grey brick, with clear signs of patching and repair. The closet wing has windows on its north side on each floor.

When first built the house would have had an 'M'-shaped roof with two ridges parallel to the street. It presently has a flat roof, which is clearly a twentieth century alteration and may be the result of bomb-damage.

The interior has retained an early eighteenth century character, largely thanks to the panelling which lines the walls of most of the principal spaces, but it is clear that there has been a considerable amount of alteration.

The basement rooms, originally the kitchen and scullery, probably never had panelling and are now modern office spaces. The panelling in the ground floor front room has been removed, but the ground floor rear room and all the rooms on the first and second floors are fully panelled. The panelling is made of painted softwood and is of typical early eighteenth century pattern, with a square-panelled dado beneath a moulded chair-rail and taller panels above the rail rising to a timber box-cornice. The individual panels have simple quarter-round beading and the gap between the panelling and the cornice is filled by a simple plaster

moulding. In most rooms the panelling has some irregularities, which suggests that it has been re-configured over the years to accommodate new door openings or for other reasons.

There has been the usual erosion of original fittings. No original chimneypieces survive in the house and those chimneypieces that do exist are probably modern introductions. All the doors throughout the house are of the four-panel type, and appear to be relatively modern, and with modern door-furniture.

The stair and staircase is something of a puzzle. The stair itself is a good deal simpler, and later, in its details than the stairs in the other houses in the street. Most of them have twisted balusters, usually three to a tread, and carved tread-ends to the cut strings of the lower flights. The stair in number 35 has plain tread-ends and turned balusters of a type more typical of the later eighteenth century, though the moulded timber handrail. could be original. It is possible that the original stair has been replaced. This possibility is supported by the uncomfortable arrangement of the panelling which lines the staircase. In all the other staircases in Great James Street, the panelling is shaped to follow the rise of the stair. In number 35 the panelling in many places takes no account of the stair and looks as though it has been brought-in from elsewhere and belongs in a room rather than a staircase. Unfortunately, alterations to panelling and other interior elements are hardly ever documented before the twentieth century, and then only rarely.

The upper part of the staircase and the third floor rooms have no panelling. The walls are plain plastered, probably on plasterboard, and the rooms have simple coved cornices. It seems likely that they were reconstructed when the front wall was rebuilt, perhaps in the late 1940s.



Fig.9 The main front to Great James Street



Fig.10 The rear elevation from basement level, with the closet wing to the right



Fig.11 The ground floor front room with no panelling and a modern fire-surround



Fig.12 The fully-panelled first floor front room



Fig.13 The panelling between the first floor rear room and the staircase



Fig.14 The panelled entrance hall with its modern tile floor



Fig.15 Panelling on the staircase taking no account of the rise of the stair

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The assessment of the significance of historic buildings and their settings is not an exact science. The assessment of the significance of buildings is based on detailed knowledge of the building type, a comparison with what exists elsewhere, and the extent to which it may be distinctive or have special meaning for different groups of people.

Statutory designations provide some guide to the importance of historic buildings. Number 35 Great James Street, like the other houses in the street, is listed II*, meaning it is a building of national importance and of more than special interest. The list description is included in Appendix 1.

In 2008 English Heritage published *Conservation Principles*, which identified four principal heritage values which might be taken into account when assessing significance and which can be used to amplify the assessments in the statutory lists. These values are *Evidential*, deriving from the potential of a place to yield (mainly archaeological) evidence about past human activity; *Historical*, deriving from the ways in which past people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present; *Aesthetic*, deriving from the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place; *Communal*, deriving from the meaning of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience and memory.

Evidential value

The building is clearly of considerable evidential value because of the good survival rate of interior panelling, although the evidence is difficult to interpret.

Historical value

The house is of exceptional historical value as part of a well-documented early eighteenth century building development, where the land owner, the principal developer and the building craftsmen are all known. The later history is less well-documented and of lesser value. It does not appear that the building has any associations with well-known persons of historic significance.

Aesthetic value

The house is of exceptional aesthetic value as part of one of the best-preserved early-Georgian streets surviving in London

Communal value

The house has little communal value, except as a valued part of the street scene and an important element in the Bloomsbury Conservation Area.

In 2012 the Department of Communities and Local Government issued the National Policy Planning Framework which suggests that for planning purposes, the significance of historic buildings should be assessed under the headings of *archaeological*, *architectural*, *artistic or historic* (which are closely related to the English Heritage values) and points out that significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence but also from its setting.

Archaeological Significance

The house is of Medium Archaeological Significance for the survival of some of its original internal decoration. There is probably little below-ground archaeology of any value.

Architectural Significance

35 Great James Street is a relatively well-preserved example of a typical early eighteenth century London building type and for this reason can be considered as being of High Architectural Significance.

Artistic Significance

Despite evidence of some rebuilding to the front elevation, the house is part of an important ensemble which is one of the best-preserved early Georgian streets in central London and of High Artistic Significance on that account.

Historic Significance

Great James Street is a very well-documented building project undertaken during the London building boom of the 1720s and can be considered as of High Historical Significance.

Setting

The setting of number 35 is in many respects almost unchanged since it was built nearly 300 years ago and is on that account of High Significance.

5.0 THE PROPOSED WORKS AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE BUILT HERITAGE

The proposed works are fully set out in the drawings and statements prepared by Marek Wojciechowski Architects. In sum, they comprise the re-conversion of the whole building from offices into a single family dwelling. The front elevation of the building will remain unaltered. There will be some minor alteration to the rear facade, chiefly the conversion of the existing 1980s WC extension to a lift-tower and the raising of the existing closet wing to third floor level. Internally, there will be minor modifications to the existing spaces on all floors, but no surviving original fabric will be lost. The proposals are here described under the headings of external and internal works.

External Works

The street front of the house will remain unaltered. The space beneath the front steps will be enclosed to provide enclosed access from the house to the front cellars, one of which will be converted as a shower room.

On the rear elevation, the 1980s WC extension will be altered to accommodate a lift rising to third floor level and serving the half-landings between the floors. The raised skylight above the modern ground floor addition will be replaced by a flat skylight. The original closet wing will be raised by one storey to match the height of the adjoining closet wing belonging to No 36 Great James Street with a new window on the north side..

The present modern flat roof will be modified. A new pitched roof corresponding to the front range of the original 'M' profile roof will be re-instated. The new roof will be covered in slate. The rear part of the roof will remain flat and will be adapted to serve as a roof terrace.

Internal Works

Entrance Hall and Staircase

The panelled entrance hall and staircase compartment will be retained unaltered.

Basement

The existing concrete slab beneath the front area and cellars and beneath the modern rear extension will be removed and the floor lowered to provide additional headroom. The present office space at the rear will be reconfigured to form a large family room.

Ground Floor

The main rooms will remain unaltered. The original rear closet opening off the rear room will become a lobby leading to a large kitchen formed in the existing rear office space. The modern circular stair between the two rear wings leading down to the basement will be removed and replaced by a lightwell.

First Floor

The main rooms in the house will remain unchanged. The front room will become a bedroom, the rear room a dressing room and the closet wing space, which is presently a kitchen, will become a shower room.

Second Floor

The main rooms in the house will remain unaltered. A shower room will be formed in the rear closet wing, which is presently a kitchen. It is likely that this space has timber wall-panelling currently concealed behind modern boarding. The panelling will be suitably protected.

Third floor

The rooms on this floor will be formed into a suite consisting of a bedroom in the main front room, a dressing room in the rear room and a shower room in the newly-raised original closet wing. It is proposed to remove the modern ceiling in the front room to give increased headroom into the newly-formed roof-space. A new flight of stairs will be formed to continue the existing stair up to the new roof terrace on the rear portion of the existing flat roof.

Conclusion

The proposed development will return the house to its original use as a single family dwelling and will have no adverse effect on the identified significance(s) of the building.

The front elevations of the building will remain unaltered, apart from the reinstatement of the front range of the roof to the original profile, which will improve the appearance of the building and enhance the Conservation Area. At the rear, which is wholly hidden from public view, there will be some minor modifications, principally the raising of the closet wing to the height of the adjoining closet wing.

Internally, all the main spaces on all floors will be retained, with their panelled walls where these exist. There will be some minor modifications to allow the creation of new bathrooms and other modern conveniences, but there will be no loss of historic fabric, or of any feature which contributes positively to the character and special interest of the listed building.

6.0 Bibliography and Sources

Camden Local Studies Library & Archive

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

APPENDIX

List entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: NUMBERS 26 TO 37 AND 39 TO 40 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS

List entry Number: 1113203

Location

NUMBERS 26 TO 37 AND 39 TO 40 AND ATTACHED RAILINGS, 26-37 AND 39-40, GREAT JAMES STREET

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County	District	District Type	Parish
Greater London Authority	Camden	London Borough	

Grade: II*

Date first listed: 24-Oct-1957

Date of most recent amendment: 11-Jan-1999

List entry Description

Details

CAMDEN

TQ3081NE GREAT JAMES STREET 798-1/101/662 (West side) 24/10/57 Nos.26-37 AND 39-40 (Consecutive) and attached railings (Formerly Listed as: GREAT JAMES STREET Nos.26-37, 38, 39 & 40 (Consecutive))

GV II*

14 terraced houses. 1720-24. For J Metcalfe. Brown brick, upper storeys with some refacing in multi-coloured, yellow (Nos 28, 34 & 40) and brown stock brick (1st floor and above of No.30). 4 storeys and basements. 3 windows each. Nos 27-38 and 40, good wood architraved doorcases with enriched, carved brackets carrying hoods with panelled soffits, most with patterned fanlights and panelled doors. No.27, C20 hood with shaped brackets; No.39, architraved doorcase with pilasters, plain cornice, radial fanlight and panelled door. Red segmental arches and dressings to flush framed windows, No.35 upper storeys with glazing bars. Some frames reeded with roundels. Parapets. Some original lead rainwater heads with lion masks.

INTERIORS: mostly having fine panelling. Staircases mostly with twisted balusters, column newels and carved brackets to treads. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with urn or torch flambe finials to areas.

Listing NGR: TQ3071881985



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