Listed Building Description: Grand Connaught Rooms (sourced from the Historic England National Heritage List online)

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

Name: GRAND CONNAUGHT ROOMS

List entry Number: 1393970

Location

GRAND CONNAUGHT ROOMS, 61-63, GREAT QUEEN STREET

County: Greater London Authority

District: Camden

District Type: London Borough

Grade: II\*

Date first listed: 17-Sep-2010

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 507823

List entry Description

Reasons for Designation

The Grand Connaught Rooms, Nos. 61-63 Great Queen Street, is recommended for designation for the following principal reasons: \* Architectural: for the façade of the former Freemasons' Tavern, a good example of a mid-C19 Italianate commercial frontage, and for the surviving section of Cockerell's elaborate Freemasons' Hall with figures by a notable sculptor. \* Interiors: a unique ensemble of spaces, comprising elements of the 1774 Tavern, a series of ornate rooms dating from 1863-64 and 1905-10, most notably the Great Hall, and a virtually complete suite of 1933-36 interiors. \* Historic: the successor of the original Freemasons' Tavern, the site of Britain's first Grand Lodge, and for the numerous events that took place there including the founding of the Anti-Slavery Society and the Football Association. \* Group value: with the adjoining Masonic Hall, listed Grade II\*.

History

798/0/10235 GREAT QUEEN STREET 17-SEP-10 Holborn 61-63 Grand Connaught Rooms

GV II\* Former Freemasons' Tavern, including part of façade of the Freemasons' Hall (demolished 1927). 1863-64 by Frederick Pepys Cockerell, retaining structure from the preceding Freemasons' Tavern of 1774. Figure sculpture by William Grinsell Nicholl. Enlarged and remodelled 1905-10 as the Connaught Rooms, a suite of dining, meeting and entertainment rooms, under Alexander Brown and Ernest Barrow, detailed design by Crickmay & Sons. Extended 1933-36 to the design of HV Ashley and Winton Newman. Extension to E (formerly Nos. 64 and 65), built 1956-57, is not of special interest.

EXTERIOR: The 1863-64 façade of the former Freemasons' Tavern (Nos. 62-63): brick with Portland stone dressings (now painted). Two main storeys plus basement and attic storey; five bays. Recessed end bays with an entrance to the W and a window in the E, each with a swan-neck-pediment and balustraded balconet above. The three central ground-floor windows were altered in 1905-10 to form the main entrance to the Connaught Rooms. Central first-floor windows have stone architraves, central window pedimented. Second-floor bays are pilastered; each has an oval oeil-de-boeuf above the window. Parapet has piers to each bay and a cast-iron balustrade. Entrance canopy added 1933, much altered.

To the W is the surviving three-bay section of Cockerell's Portland stone Freemasons' Hall facade (No. 61) plus small section of the central pedimented bay. Two storeys above basement, plus main attic storey and mansard attic above. Ground and first floors are framed by rusticated pilasters with Composite capitals. First floor has French windows with cast-iron balconets, the bays separated by composite columns in antis. Above the windows is a frieze carved with three faces, one between each column, representing the sun, moon and stars. Above the dentilled cornice, the attic storey has three windows behind a balustrade, framed by niches containing female statues representing Wisdom and Fidelity. A deep bracketed cornice supports a scrolled parapet; to the right, a section of the pediment survives. Cast-iron area railings with ball finials.

Rear elevation comprises (E-W) post-war extension to Great Hall annexe (not of special interest); rear of Great Hall in red brick with Portland stone dressings with blocked Serlian window, and rear of 1933 extension faced in red brick with stone dressings.

INTERIOR: The layout is complex, but room alignment essentially conforms to the former plots of Nos. 61-61, and is described accordingly:

1. Nos. 62-63 (behind 1863-64 Tavern facade): comprises a large entrance hall and stair from ground to first floor, the Drawing Room at first, the Crown and Coronet Rooms at second, and Grand Hall at the rear accessed at first-floor level via a lobby. Entrance hall and stair in opulent Edwardian Baroque manner with elaborate plaster enrichment. Black-and-white chequered marble floor and paired columns on the left (E) side. Imperial stair with a heavy marble balustrade and vase balusters. First-floor landing has elaborate coved ceiling, swagged decoration above fielded panels on W wall and windows (now doors) on E wall. At the N end a doorway with an enriched architrave leads through to the Drawing Room, dating from 1863-64, embellished 1905-10 when it was combined with an ante-room on the S side. Enriched coffered ceiling with central square compartment carried on four columns. To S of landing, an arch flanked by paired columns leads to a lobby through to the Grand Hall. No interior views of Cockerell's original hall are known to exist, but embellishments were clearly made in 1905-10 when it was extended. The hall is of ten pilastered bays, originally six, with an elaborate cornice and barrel-vaulted ceiling with roundels inset with cast-iron decorative ventilation grilles. Large Serlian window to S end, now blocked. Balcony to N end, added in 1905-10, with bronze balustrade; above is a small upper gallery beneath a segmental swagged pediment supported on caryatids. E wall was removed when the annex was created; this area is decorated in a similar manner, while the W wall had doors inserted in each bay. The Crown Room (second floor) is mainly by Cockerell, and has an elaborate deep coved ceiling with lattice plasterwork and a lantern dome, carried on paired Corinthian columns and pilasters; a door with an elaborate architrave leads through to the Coronet Room to the rear, which also has an enriched coved ceiling.

2. No. 61: incorporating the remodelled 1788 Tavern behind the retained portion of Cockerell's Freemasons' Hall façade. Elements of C18 plan and structure survive, comprising a front room, a square-plan, open-well stair (the West Stair) behind with a small room to the E, and larger room to the rear alongside lightwell. At ground floor a segmental barrel-vaulted lobby of 1905-10 leads from the entrance hall to the Lounge Bar, which has a dentilled cornice, again Edwardian. To the rear is the Champagne Bar created in 1963 in a neo-Edwardian style, timber panelled with alcoves. West Stair has moulded inner string. Doorways leading off the stair at first and second-floor levels have panelled linings, bolection-moulded architraves and splayed plinth blocks, probably dating from 1788. A lift shaft has been inserted into the well, and the balustrade removed. Rooms at upper levels refurbished 1933-36 and later. The Ampthill Room (third floor), remodelled 1905-10, has barrel-vaulted ceiling with enriched plaster ribs.

3. 1933-36 five-storey block to the rear of No. 61: at ground floor is a cloakroom with some original fittings. Above is a series of large and small rooms with interconnecting corridors and lobbies, accessed at first floor via a lobby aligned with the Grand Hall lobby. The large open-well stair in cast stone has a geometrical-pattern bronze balustrade; the landings interconnect on the west side with the Freemasons' Hall. Many rooms and lobby areas retain original fittings and decorative features incorporating Masonic symbols, including coffered ceilings, plasterwork with stylised classical and Art Deco motifs, steel-frame windows with stained glass, secondary stairs, doors and architraves, and a few mirrors. Doors to several rooms have raised rhomboid and diamond panels, and handles or knobs decorated with six-pointed stars; there is a large uplighter on the landing with brass candelbra. The Balmoral and Devon Rooms are panelled, the latter with decorative inlay. The Ulster Room is decorated in an in Egyptian Art Deco manner.

Post-war additions, including extension to Grand Hall annexe, are not of special interest. Not all rooms were inspected.

HISTORY: The evolution of the Grand Connaught Rooms is complex, dating from 1774 when the street's association with freemasonry began. Regularly organised freemasonry in England is considered to have begun on 24 June 1717 when four lodges met at the Goose and Gridiron alehouse in St Paul's Churchyard, Covent Garden, to found the Grand Lodge of England (GLE), the world's first grand masonic lodge. This was an intinerant body meeting at inns, taverns and livery halls, but by 1768 there were almost 400 masonic lodges nationally, all of whose masters were eligible to attend GLE meetings, and funds were raised to build a new hall. In 1774, the GLE acquired No. 61 Great Queen Street, a five-bay house of 1637, to the rear of which had been added a second dwelling. The GLE occupied the rear building while the front house was leased to Luke Reilly, who opened it as the Freemasons' Tavern. The Tavern was an important asset to the GLE both as a source of income and for the servicing of masonic meetings. In 1775-76 the GLE built a hall on the land at the rear of No. 61, to the design of Thomas Sandby, Grand Architect to the GLE. Believed to be the first purpose-built masonic hall in England, it was entered at first-floor level, and had an elaborate deep coved ceiling embellished with Masonic symbols, lit by clerestorey windows. The hall was rented out for non-masonic events such as concerts and fundraising dinners. The Anti-Slavery Society was founded there in 1807, and in 1839 Daniel O'Connell addressed a meeting in support of Catholic Emancipation.

In 1787 the GLE acquired Reilly's lease and rebuilt the Tavern in 1788-89, to the design of William Tyler. This four-storey building housed the Freemasons' Tavern on the ground floor and masonic rooms above. In 1790, the GLE purchased the lease of No. 62, the adjacent house to the east, as an annex. The GLE merged with its rival, the Antient Grand Lodge (founded 1751), as the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) in 1813, the year in which (Sir) John Soane became a freemason and Grand Superintendent of Works to the UGLE. Soane was duly engaged to design a second hall, exclusively for masonic use, which was built on the rear gardens of the adjacent houses to the east, Nos. 62-63, whose freeholds were acquired in 1815 by John Cuff, then leaseholder of the Tavern (Cuff sold the freeholds to the UGLE in 1838). Soane's hall, named the Temple, was one of his most complex and refined late interiors, lit by clerestorey windows with a central pendant dome. It was enlarged by Philip Hardwick in 1838, but was apparently never held in great regard. The Tavern was a popular meeting place: in 1807 the Geological Society was founded there, and in 1863 the Football Association of England. In 1867 a banquet was held there in honour of Charles Dickens prior to his departure on a reading tour of the USA.

Between 1848-58 the UGLE acquired Nos. 59-60 to the west and Nos. 64-65 to the east. The latter were leased separately as a hotel and from 1899-1939 to the Grand Lodge of the Mark Master Masons. In 1864-5 a new Tavern and Freemasons' Hall were built on the site of Nos. 59-63, retaining Sandby's hall, to the design of FP Cockerell (1833-78), son of the architect CR Cockerell. The Tavern and UGLE premises were henceforth separated functionally, while interlinked, and visually by the design of their façades. The Freemasons' Hall to the west, corresponding with the plots of Nos. 59-61, had an imposing classical façade of three storeys and nine bays, with statues in niches symbolising the four Masonic virtues: Wisdom, Fidelity, Charity and Unity, by William Grinsell Nicholl (1796-1871). The Tavern façade to the east, corresponding with the plots of Nos. 62-63, was designed in a more reticent classical manner. Behind these two discrete façades however the demarcation lines were less clear since No. 61 (behind the eastern portion of the Freemasons' Hall façade), remained part of the Tavern, hence the survival of this part of the building. This arrangement arose from Cockerell's desire to give the hall a longer street elevation than the Tavern. Moreover, a substantial part of the C18 fabric of No. 61 was retained behind the new façade, and still survives in altered form.

By the mid C19, the catering sector was becoming increasingly commercialised: dining halls, restaurants and refreshment rooms, often connected to hotels and railway stations, proliferated, while continental chefs introduced more elaborate cusine. The Tavern improvements were clearly aimed at exploiting this niche in the market, and in 1864 a new company was formed to run the Tavern, which in the 1870s employed the former royal chef Francatelli as manager. The Tavern had a morning room and dining rooms; at first floor a domed and columned vestibule and grand stair, leading through to the Great Hall, which was placed to the east of Sandby's hall (the latter, on the demise of Soane's building, was renamed the Temple). The Freemasons' Hall comprised a series of offices, a grand stair, and lodge and ante rooms, plus Sandby's Temple at the rear of the Tavern. In 1880 the UGLE acquired Nos. 57-58, which were rebuilt in 1899 as a library and museum, replicating Cockerell's Tavern façade.

The next major phase was from 1905-10, following the expiry of the Tavern's lease and acquisition of property in Wild Court and Middle Court to the rear. Architects Alexander Brown (Grand Superintendent of Works to the UGLE) and Ernest Barrow were appointed to extend and remodel the Tavern, to be named thereafter the 'Connaught Rooms' in honour of the Grand Master, the Duke of Connaught. The detailed design however appears to have been by Crickmay & Sons. A large entrance hall was created and the grand stair rebuilt. The Great Hall was lengthened and given an annex on the east side (behind Nos. 64-65); it now seated 800 and was hailed as the largest of its kind in London. The building offered a suite of newly refurbished rooms for hire for social and corporate events, and a grill room, buffet, American bar and smoking room at basement level.

In 1915, Nos. 55-56, the last surviving C17 house in Great Queen Street, was demolished to make way for an extension to the Freemasons' Hall, but this plan was superseded by a scheme for a new building to commemorate the freemasons killed in World War I. Cockerell's Freemasons' Hall was demolished (with the exception of the E portion of the façade) and the new Masonic Hall was completed in 1933 to the design of Ashley & Newman. The Connaught Rooms were further aggrandised in 1933-36 when Sandby's Temple was deemed unstable and demolished to make way for a five-storey extension, designed by Ashley & Newman. The last phase of expansion was in 1956-57 when Nos. 64-65 were rebuilt to the design of Ashley & Newman.

SOURCES: The Builder, 18 August 1866, 611-613 Survey of London, Vol 5: St Giles in the Fields, pt II (1914), The Architecture and History of the Grand Connaught Rooms, English Heritage unpublished report (2010)

REASON FOR DESIGNATION: The Grand Connaught Rooms, Nos. 61-63 Great Queen Street, is designated at Grade II\* for the following principal reasons: \* Architectural: for the façade of the former Freemasons' Tavern, a good example of a mid-C19 classical commercial frontage, and for the surviving section of Cockerell's elaborate Freemasons' Hall with figures by a notable sculptor. \* Interiors: a unique ensemble of spaces, comprising elements of the 1774 Tavern, a series of ornate rooms dating from 1863-64 and 1905-10, most notably the Great Hall, and a virtually complete suite of 1933-36 interiors. \* Historic: the successor of the original Freemasons' Tavern, the site of Britain's first Grand Lodge, and for the numerous events that took place there including the founding of the the Anti-Slavery Society and the Football Association. \* Group value: with the adjoining Masonic Hall, listed Grade II\*.

National Grid Reference: TQ 30527 81284