

Design and Access Statement
for
Jarndyce Antiquarian Booksellers
at
46 Great Russell Street London WC1B
by
Robert Barnes Architects
of
4 Cedar House, Ancastle Green
Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire
RG9 1UN Tel 07968 726654
in
January 2021



Background to the application

Following works to the adjoining studio roof at 32 Coptic Street in 2019, arrangements were made to visit 46 Great Russell Street to inspect the party wall between the two properties. During this visit the owners of 46 Great Russell Street asked the Architect Robert Barnes to investigate the possibility of replacing a leaking and degrading glass roof that had been inserted during the 1970s to cover in a courtyard at the back of the property this application is the result of that request.

Summary.

The proposal is to remove the inverted pitched glazed roof between the rear elevation of the main body of the house and a ground floor top lit reading room at the rear, with a new flat roof drained to the existing drainage system but incorporating a rectangular glazed hipped roof light to provide similar natural lighting conditions.

The local context

No. 46 Great Russell Street is occupied by Jarndyce Antiquarian Booksellers, established in 1969, they have since published over 200 catalogues. They are the leading specialists in 18th and, particularly, 19th century English Literature & History. Recent catalogues have included: Dickens, 17th & 18th Century Books & Pamphlets, London, Women Writers, Language and Education, Economic, Social & Political History (including Philosophy), Books in Translation, Bloods and Penny Dreadfuls, Chapbooks & Broad-sides, Yellowback novels, Plays & Theatre, and Newspapers.

No. 46 Great Russell Street was built c.1735 as part of a development by the Duke of Bedford and stood opposite the late 17th century Montagu (or Montague) House, the site of the present British Museum.

At the time of its construction, it was on the edge of Central London; to the north there was little development. A map of 1755 shows 'Southampton Fields' surrounding Montagu House. No. 46, like its neighbours, was built as a private house; change of the ground floor to shop use took place in the 19th century.

During 1825-1850, the new British Museum building was under construction and No. 46, along with its neighbours, was given a face-lift. The fronts were rebuilt and stuccoed to make them uniform and fitting neighbours for the new building opposite, but the interiors remained untouched, retaining the original panelling and other features.

Caldecott Cartoon Randolph Caldecott (1846-1886) the illustrator, lived in rooms here during 1872-79. He had a habit of illuminating his letters with sketches incorporating the address - often showing him in a state of ease with a bottle (or two) of wine. The Randolph Caldecott Medal is now awarded annually to the most distinguished American picture books for children.

No. 46 has been a bookshop since at least 1890, when the firm of Luzac & Co., founded in Holland by Jean Luzac in the early 18th century, selling and publishing books about the Middle and Far East, moved to London. About 1900, the Bedford Estate sold the freehold. Luzac & Co. survived until 1986, when Jarndyce purchased the building - having started as antiquarian booksellers in 1969 with premises in James Street and Neal Street, Covent Garden. The property was in a run-down state following a period in the 1960s-70s when the whole area south of the British Museum was designated for demolition to create space for the proposed new British Library. This plan was abandoned in 1974.

A programme of renovation for No.46 began with the first floor, followed by re-roofing the back extension (coinciding with the renovation of the old milk depot to the rear as a studio for the painter Howard Hodgkin). The shop followed, with repair & replacement of panelling, shelving and the

fireplace to recreate a 19th century bookshop in which to sell 18th and 19th century books. The final phase was renovation of the 2nd and 3rd floors; the 2nd floor retains all its panelling behind the book shelves.

Design

The new flat roof will be constructed using traditional timber joists with plywood decking insulated to the underside. Freestanding timber kerbs are used at the perimeter of the roof, with a timber upstand to support the new 3600 x 1350 mm wide hipped glazed roof light. No additional floor space is to be created, and there is no change to the layout of the building interior.

Access

Street access to the bookshop is retained through the existing front door into the ground floor. The access is level through the shop as far as the small step down into the top lit courtyard and then up again to the rear top lit reading room.