

# The Hall and attached railings, South Square

## Overview

Heritage Category:  
Listed Building

Grade:  
I

List Entry Number:  
1322154

Date first listed:  
24-Oct-1951

Date of most recent amendment:  
14-Jun-2010

Statutory Address:  
The Hall and attached railings, South Square, Gray's Inn

## Map



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## Location

Statutory Address:  
The Hall and attached railings, South Square, Gray's Inn

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

County:  
Greater London Authority

District:  
Camden (London Borough)

Parish:

Non Civil Parish

National Grid Reference:

TQ 31037 81727

## Details

798-1/102/640

GRAY'S INN (North side) THE HALL AND ATTACHED RAILINGS SOUTH SQUARE 24/10/1951

GV I Banqueting hall. Rebuilt 1556-58, retaining earlier fabric. Externally remodelled 1826 and 1897. Restored 1948-51 under Sir Edward Maufe, following major WWII bomb damage. Buttery added to W end 1971-72, to the design of Erith and Terry.

MATERIALS: Red brick laid in English bond with darker burnt bricks; some traces of diapering. Portland stone dressings. Clay tile roof.

PLAN: The hall stands above an undercroft. Five bays externally, six bays internally; screens passage to W end with gallery above. Porches to westernmost bays on N and S sides. Buttery (kitchen) to W end is single storey above basement.

EXTERIOR: The facing brickwork has been restored, particularly at the upper levels. It is of five bays divided by offset buttresses. The crow-stepped gables, although restored, are an early feature; the plain parapets date from Maufe's restoration, replacing an eaves cornice. Porch on the S side, much restored, with stone tablet carved with a griffin, the badge of Gray's Inn, above door. On the N side is a porch with a keyed round-arched doorway, built as a servery by Maufe on the site of a porch removed in the 1930s, and adapted again as a porch. E bay of the north elevation has large bay window of four transomed lights on the face and two on the canted sides, all with cinquefoiled heads and three-centred heads to the lower lights. The other windows are three-over-three light mullion-and-transom with drip moulds. The windows are described by RCHME (1925) as 'restored'; the stonework may date from the 1826 remodelling or later. E and W gables each have large four-centred arched window of five pointed lights and two transoms. The bay window on the south side was added by Maufe. Stone mullioned windows to basement date from post-war restoration. Roof has a hexagonal lead lantern with pinnacles. Area railings on N side with Gothic pattern heads.

Buttery in a Georgian Gothick style, in red brick with Portland stone dressings and crenellations. Two-inch bricks for the main structure and three-inch bricks for the parapet and blind windows, to suggest a C16 building gothicised in the early C19. Broad ogee windows of three lights with Y tracery; that on the W elevation is flanked by blind ogee windows. The three pinnacles along the west parapet were designed on those of the Abbot's Lodging at Combermere Abbey, Cheshire (remodelled 1814-20).

INTERIOR: On N side of screens passage is a C16 doorway with moulded jambs and four-centred arch set in a square head. Left-hand spandrel is carved with the arms of Charles Brandon, 1st Duke of Suffolk (1484-1545), brother-in-law to Henry VIII. On S side is a similar arch, without carving. Hall has dais at the high (E) end. The oak hammer-beam truss roof follows the form of the original, of six bays with carved drop finials set diagonally; the spandrels below the hammer beam with Gothic tracery. At W end is an elaborately carved C16 oak screen of five bays divided by Ionic columns whose shafts are enriched with strapwork relief. Each bay has a round arch with a scrolled key; the second and fourth bays have panelled double doors with strapwork decoration and glazed radial fanlights; the others have panelling of similar decoration and carved lunettes in the tympana. The spandrels are carved with recumbent figures of Victory. The entablature is enriched with strapwork and jewel ornaments; above the cornice is a second enriched frieze; above each column a terminal figure supports the gallery rail; above each bay is a separate entablature and scrolled pediment. The screen is believed to post-date the 1556-58 rebuilding, although stylistically it could belong to that date. According to tradition, it was a gift of Elizabeth I, the Inn's patron.

N, S and E walls are lined with timber panelling to cill level, replacing panelling of 1706 destroyed in the bombing. The panels are hung with the armorial bearings of successive Treasurers. The windows have extensive heraldic stained glass, the earliest dating from 1476, reinstated after the war. The undercroft has been adapted for services and storage, and is clad in modern finishes. The Buttery is entered from the screens passage via a modern four-centred arch. The interior serves as a kitchen and has no decorative treatment.

HISTORY: Gray's Inn is one of the four Inns of Court, the principal legal societies of England and Wales. The Inns' dates of origin are obscure, but they are thought to have emerged in the later C14. Gray's Inn stands on the site of the Manor of Purpoole, the property of the de Grey family. The hall was 're-edified' in 1556-58, at a cost of £863 10s 8d. The medieval Inn was progressively rebuilt from the late C17, hastened by a series of fires in the 1680s, and the hall is the only building with earlier fabric to survive. Students resided in the Inn and attendance at Dinner (lunch) and Supper in Hall was compulsory. Among the many prominent C16 Inn members were Thomas Cromwell, Sir William Cecil and Francis Bacon, who became Treasurer and Dean of the Chapel, and who laid out the garden Walks to the north west. Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors was first staged in the hall on 28 December 1594.

The hall was remodelled and stuccoed in the Gothick style in 1826, with a crenellated parapet. In 1897 the stucco and crenellations were removed. Gray's Inn suffered extensive damage in an incendiary bomb attack on 11 May 1941, which left the hall in ruins. Its magnificent hammer-beam roof was destroyed, but a number of fittings including heraldic glass and coats of arms had been removed for safekeeping; the C16 screen, already dismantled, was rescued as the building burned. A set of detailed drawings of the roof, undertaken as a precaution in WWI, provided the basis for its reconstruction under Sir Edward Maufe (1883-1974), who undertook extensive restoration work at Gray's Inn. In 1971-72 the Buttery was added to the west end of Gray's Inn Hall to the design of Erith and Terry.

SOURCES: Cherry B and Pevsner N, The Buildings of England, London 4: North (1998), 203 Cowper F, A Prospect of Gray's Inn (second revised edition) (1985) Douthwaite WR, Gray's Inn: its History & Associations (1886) Erith R - Progressive Classicist, 1904-73. Sir John Soane's Museum exhibition catalogue (2004), 66-7 Graya (magazine for Gray's Inn members), No. 10 (1931), 14-17; No. 29 (1949), 48-9; No. 32 (1950), 58-50 Lucy Archer, Raymond Erith Architect (1985) Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in London, Vol II: West London (1925) 52-55 REASONS FOR DESIGNATION: Gray's Inn Hall is listed Grade I for the following principal reasons: \* Architectural: outstanding historic interest as the hall of Gray's Inn, rebuilt 1556-58 retaining earlier fabric. Restored by the distinguished architect Sir Edward Maufe following grievous bomb damage. \* Later Architectural Work: while the buttery does not share the interest of the hall, it is an elegant adjunct designed by Raymond Erith (1904-1973), one of the principal British architects to continue working in the traditional idiom after the Second World War, which illustrates his playful use of style and meticulous attention to detail. \* Historic: It is the oldest surviving building of Gray's Inn, one London's four Inns of Court, which rank among England's most important historic institutions. \* Fittings: the screen is an outstanding example of English Mannerist carving; a wealth of heraldic glass dating back to the C15; armorial bearings \* Group value: in particular with the Grade I listed chapel and Grade II\* chambers in Gray's Inn Square, and with other listed buildings in the Inn.

## Legacy

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Legacy System number:

477465

Legacy System:

LBS

# Legal

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End of official listing

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