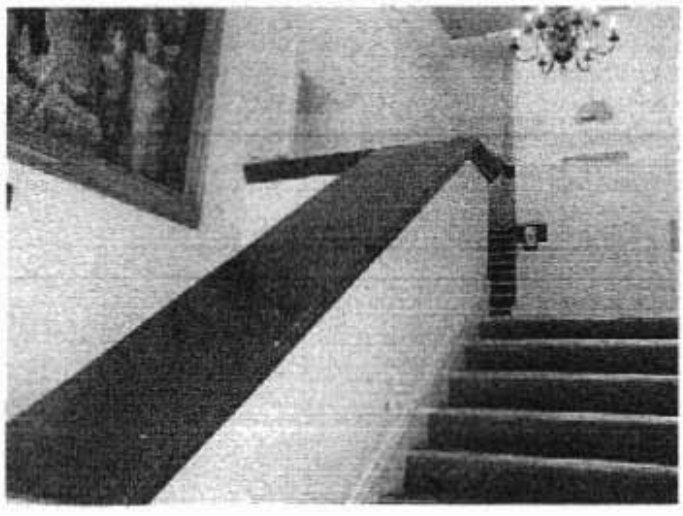
GREG'S BUILDINGS
1, BOOTH STREET, MANCHESTER
NEW POWER SUPPLY AND REFURBISHMENT OF ENTRANCE
PPG15 STATEMENT

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Greg's Buildings
1, Booth Street, Manchester

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1 INTRODUCTION....4

Section 2 HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE....5

2.1 History and Development of the Site....5
2.2 Description of the Building....19
2.3 Character of Conservation Area & Setting of Building 27
2.4 Significance of the Building....32

Section 3 PROPOSED WORKS....33

3.1 Description of Proposed Works....33
3.2 Impact Assessment....38

Section 4 CONCLUSIONS....39

4.1 The Existing Building....39
4.2 The Proposals....39
4.3 Listed Building and Conservation Area Considerations40
4.4 Benefits of the Proposed Development....42

Section 5 SOURCES....43

Section 1 INTRODUCTION

This Statement accompanies the applications for Listed Building Consent and Building Regulations for Greg's Buildings, No. 1 Booth Street, Manchester, within the Upper King Street Conservation Area.

The proposals for refurbishment of the entrance hall of Greg's Buildings include structural works necessary for replacing and upgrading the building's power supply and restoration of important historical elements. The refurbishment of the entrance hall is necessary for the building to remain competitive in the commercial market. The replacement and upgrading of the power supply is both essential and urgent: the main cable failed recently, resulting in a complete loss of power to the entire building for two days until a temporary repair could be effected. Unless the electricity supply to and within the building is renewed within a very short period to prevent any recurrence of the problem the tenants will be able to claim "derogation from grant", with the result that the leases will be voided and, in the current climate of the Manchester property market, the building will become economically unviable.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the drawings of the existing and proposed alterations prepared by the architects, Cartwright and Gross. This statement is prepared in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance Note 15, 1995 (PPG15).

Section 2 HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE



Samuel Greg (c. 1800)

2.1 History and Development of the Site

The Greg Family and the Manchester Cotton Industry

Samuel Greg was born in 1758 and at the age of eight was sent to live with his maternal uncles of the Hyde family who were weavers. Their home and workshop was at 35 King Street in Manchester. This fits with a contemporary description of the textile business:

> "Most of the late eighteenth-century business premises and warehouses of consequence were located close to the exchange, in King Street, St. Ann's Square and St. James's Square"[1]

In 1782 Samuel Greg inherited the Hydes' business, worth £26,000. This coincided with the expiry in the mid 1780s of Arkwright's patent for his spinning mule, along with those on other industrial inventions. Many Manchester merchants invested heavily in mechanisation in the 1780s resulting in a massive expansion of the cotton industry. Greg built the large water-powered spinning mill at Styal in 1784 (known as Quarry Bank Mill and now an industrial museum). During this time British exports of cotton rose sharply and these developments led to a growing demand for warehouse space. Rose summarises this development as follows:

> "The British domestic market for cotton cloth was comparatively small and the Lancashire cotton industry would never subsequently have achieved the scale it did without a rapid expansion of exports ... The growth in exports stemmed from the increasing price competitiveness and quality of British cotton goods."[2]

The Development of the Manchester Warehouse

The first warehouses were converted dwelling houses, such as the Hydes' at 35 King Street. The early merchants used the premises for storing yarn and finished cloth; they made arrangements with the weavers, dyers, printers and finishers.

> "This process is illustrated by the development of Mosley Street. It was once the most fashionable residential street in Manchester, lined with18th century houses; later virtually all the houses were converted into warehouses before finally

[1] Joseph Alston, *A picture of Manchester* (1816, reprinted 1969) 221
[2] Mary B. Rose, *The Lancashire Cotton Industry: a history since 1700* (Preston: Lancashire County Books, 1996) 8.

being demolished and replaced by purpose-built structures in the 1820s and 1830s."[3]

In a retrospective article in the Builder in 1860, Robertson describes the development and its geographical focus as follows:

> "During the early 1820s these new purpose-built warehouses spread to High Street, Church Street ...New Brown Street, Palace Street and Spring Gardens ... The sites which they occupied were still cramped and by the end of the 1830s even these were deemed inadequate."[4]

Cotton was still shipped in by water and bulk storage of the raw cotton was handled by the warehouses of the ports, river navigations and canals until auctioned or required. The subsequent railway warehouses complemented these. Styal Mill received its raw cotton direct from such warehouses by road.

The warehouses of the cotton manufacturers in the city centre were of a different type. Their functions included storage, handling, sorting, packaging and stock control around the different processes of weaving, dying, printing and finishing, but in addition provided a convenient place for the display of goods.[5] The growth in the export market resulted in a further sub-division of these warehouses between the warehouse for the domestic market, the "home-trade warehouses", and those for the export market, the "packing and shipping warehouses" A few were built and occupied by single manufacturers but the specialisation of warehousing functions and the dynamic nature of the industry also led to much space being available for rent, with multi-occupancy being the norm.

The growing Greg family business required a Manchester warehouse. By the time Samuel Greg died the business comprised five mills, at Styal, Lancaster, Caton, Bury and Bollington. There was also a warehouse in Manchester, cited in a valuation document commissioned in connection with his estate. The original Hyde warehouse in Chancery Lane would have been round the corner from 35 King Street. It appears that the family had the forethought to purchase a sufficiently large site to build a second warehouse on the site, probably in the 1820s, since this is in the area described by Robertson in The Builder (cited above). The site appears in Pigot's 1824 map of Manchester.

> "Valuation of New and Old Warehouse in Chancery Lane belonging to late Samuel Greg & Co., taken 1st December, 1834, by James Frost:
>
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | New and Old Warehouse | £1,706.6s 6d |
> | Small warehouse adjoining in the backyard with coach | |

[3] Taylor, Cooper and Barnwell, *Manchester: The Warehouse Legacy* (London: English Heritage, 2002) 24.
[4] J. Robertson, "A model warehouse", *The Builder* (18) 459-46 (1860) 521-523.
[5] R. McNeil and A.D. George, *The Heritage Atlas 3: Warehouse Album* (The Field Archaeology Centre, University of Manchester) 9.

house and stables and offices over	£78 0s 0d
4-stalled stables	£40 0s 0d[6]

These early warehouses were plain and utilitarian in style.

> "They had all the necessary service facilities but little or no embellishment. As trade further accelerated, merchants aspired to premises of more impressive appearance to reflect their growing stature and credit worthiness and to impress potential customers." [7]

The local inspiration for the new warehouses, which became known as "Manchester warehouses", was the 1837 Athenaeum Club, designed by Charles Barry in an Italian palazzo style. This style was first adapted to a warehouse by Edmund Walters in his 1839 design for a warehouse on Mosley Street commissioned by Richard Cobden (now called Cobden House following a recent refurbishment). Edmund Walters built over 18 warehouses in the palazzo style between 1839 and 1865 and another Manchester architect, J.E. Gregan, built more than six between 1845 and 1849.[8]

The design was suitable because it reflected the grandeur of the Italian merchant towns of Florence and Venice but was economically advantageous because it could be used to 'face' the brick boxes that were relatively cheap to build. It did not waste space like the porticos of the classical style or have the 'needless' pinnacles and spires of the Gothic.

The Builder in 1847 provides a contemporary description of the impact of this new style, in some cases applied to almost whole streets:

> "For the proof that warehouses may be designed of a character in accordance with their purpose, and yet without any absence of the graces of art, we need not now point exclusively to the commercial cities of Italy. It has been manifested in Manchester, that a town where large warehouses are constantly being commenced, is indeed in a favourable position for acquiring an appearance of elegance in its "street architecture" – a department of the art respecting which we once intimated that correct principles had yet to be discovered, supplementary to the merit of particular buildings."[9]

A further influence on the structural design was the risk of fire. Between 1839 and 1841 a series of serious fires occurred in Manchester warehouses and losses from six of these totalled £56,000. This attracted the attention of the Fire Officers Committee and as a result a new insurance tariff for the category of "brick-built

[6] Archives of Quarry Bank Mill, Styal
[7] Taylor, Cooper and Barnwell, *Manchester: The Warehouse Legacy* (London: English Heritage, 2002) 24.
[8] A.V. Cooper, *The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse, 1780-1914* (Manchester Polytechnic, 1991).
[9] *The Builder* (6 November 1847) 526.

and slated warehouses" of two shillings per annum was introduced in 1842 and doubled in 1844, with incremental premiums for plurality of use, hazardous goods and manufacturing.[10]

The warehouses generally had a timber floor and timber in the roof and parapets. This, together with the inherent functional need for large open spaces (which allowed fires, once started, to spread quickly), flammable materials and the need to provide some heating, resulted in a very real risk of fires developing quickly into conflagrations.

The New Owner of the Warehouse at 1 Booth Street

Robert Hyde Greg was the most able of Samuel Greg's four sons. In 1824 he had married Mary Philips, whose elder brother Mark was Manchester's first Member of Parliament. The Greg family were Unitarian and foremost among the Manchester liberals. Robert Hyde Greg, in addition to his business interests, wrote widely on subjects of economic and political interest. He was a founder member, with Cobden, of the Anti-Corn Law League and was an M.P. for Manchester from 1839-1841. From this year business pressures mounted and due to this and particularly after the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 his political activities waned. He dissolved the partnership between the four brothers and took responsibility for Quarry Bank Mill, considerably expanding its capacity.



Robert Hyde Greg as a Young Man (c. 1810)



Robert Hyde Greg (c. 1860)

Location of the Warehouse

The building is located on an island site at 1 Booth Street, bordered by Pall Mall to the west, Tib Lane to the south-west and Booth Street to the south and south-east, Chancery Place to the east and Chancery Lane to the north. The building can be seen from Albert Square up Clarence Street.

[10] A.V. Cooper, *The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse, 1780-1914* (Manchester Polytechnic, 1991).



Greg's Buildings, No. 1 Booth Street



From 1956 Map: No. 1 Booth St, Incorporating 31 Pall Mall

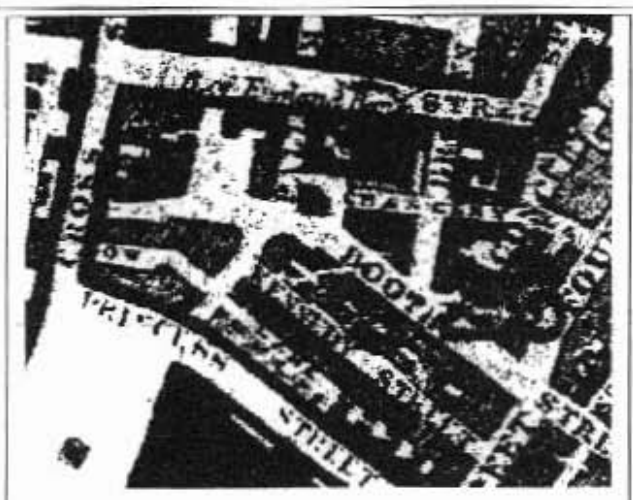
Sequential Development of Greg's Buildings



1824



1832



1871



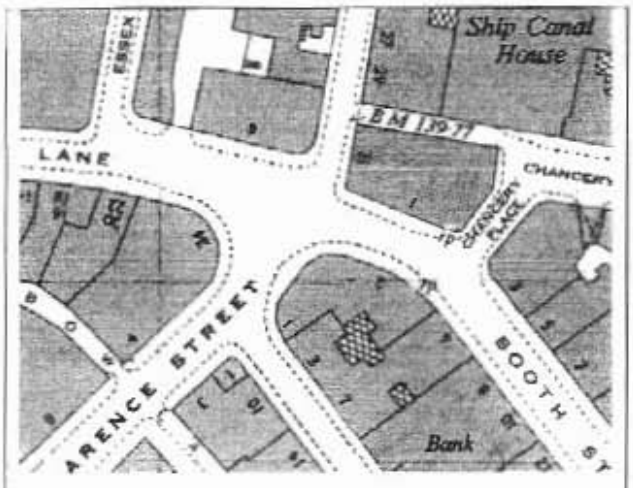
1881



1896



1956



1970

Design and Construction

Thus it was as the head of a growing business and as a leading citizen that Robert Hyde Greg commissioned R.E. Whittaker to build his new warehouse. Whittaker had, in 1845, built a new, fireproof cotton warehouse in Church Street, Manchester, which has subsequently been demolished. No 1 Booth Street was completed in 1846 at a cost of £8,000 and was considered state of the art in respect of fire safety. It was described as follows in The Builder in 1847:

> "Messrs. Greg's warehouse, near the back of the Branch Bank of England, is also worthy of examination, and its internal arrangements have been referred to, as presenting a model for this class of buildings. It has iron columns and girders, with brick arches; and, as a provision against fire, there is a cistern occupying the whole area at the top of the building, from which a pipe is carried down the staircase, having a canvas hose and mouth-piece at each landing. The cistern is lined with a composition of the nature of asphalte, termed "Paraqua", which, we believe, was used at the theatre in Manchester, but in the present instance has not been quite efficient. The building contains many contrivances which might be advantageously consulted in arranging similar buildings, amongst which is an ingenious apparatus for shooting the pieces of calico from top to bottom of the building, or, by an arrangement of doors, from one floor to another."[11]



Vermiculated Rustic Stonework at Basement



1900 View of Chancery Lane, with Warehouse Hoists

Description of the Original Building and Uses of the Interior

The original building comprised a basement with some natural light, a ground floor reached by a flight of steps and four upper floors. The height of the Manchester warehouse was fairly uniform until the widespread introduction of the passenger lift from the 1870s, and most warehouses were between four and five storeys high From the relative height of the windows it can be seen that the top floor had a lower ceiling than those below. It was fitted with sash windows throughout, providing good light and ventilation. It is an early example of the Italian palazzo style, given that the first building in Manchester in this style was in 1839. It has an irregular five-sided plan due to its island site and the slope of the land means that the basement on the west façade is almost fully above ground level.

The primary façade, with the main entrance, is on the south. The sandstone of the basement is vermiculated rustic in design; the ground floor has a smooth rustic face. The upper floors are of light red brick, with sandstone quoined corners. The building is surmounted by a moulded frieze and prominent modillioned cornice. These decorative elements are continued on the west and east façades, but the north side, giving on to Chancery Lane, has no decoration. Here there were wide double-bayed doors allowing goods to be brought in from the street and moved between floors by

[11] "Architectural Notes in Manchester", *The Builder* (6 November 1847) 527.

means of hoists, something which The Builder thought "ingenious". A 1900 photo of Chancery Lane gives an impression of what this would have been like.

The entrance is in the third bay and is reached by a short flight of stairs; the round-headed doorway is recessed into the bay. The ground floor windows are surmounted by keystones on the frieze which in turn is surmounted by a raised sandstone band balancing the cornice four floors higher. The main façade has seven sash windows per floor on the upper floors, with dressed sandstone surrounds and moulded architraves.

As a single-owner warehouse, the building was relatively uncommon: most warehouses were subdivided internally. A.V. Cooper wrote of such warehouses:

> The Manchester warehouses, described in contemporary architectural periodicals and local journals, were usually substantial buildings in which well-established firms had made a considerable investment. These tended to be the more important warehouses, often specifically designed for the trade conducted in them, and in terms of the building type, they were the elite."[12]

In most warehouses the main entrance and staircase were for customers, with a separate entrance and staircase for staff. This does not appear to have been the case with Greg's Buildings, probably due to its relatively small size, as there is no evidence of a separate door on the existing building nor in the detailed 1905 plans by J. Beaumont & Sons for the remodelling of the warehouse into offices. A.V. Cooper notes that in general

> "the main staircase, which was used by the customers, was located close to the entrance and main offices and was required to be wide to accommodate a large number of visitors. It was well lit, normally by top lighting."[13]

The original entrance was remodelled in1905; no records remain of the appearance of the earlier one. It can be assumed that it would have had a glazed light-well.

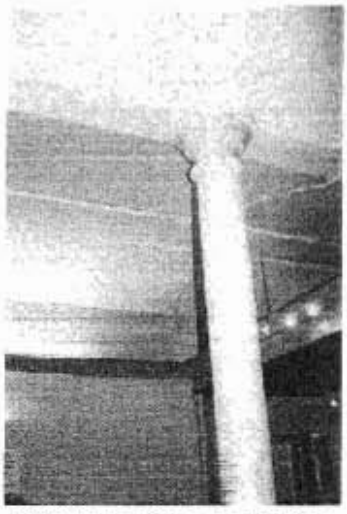
Generally the heaviest goods were stored in the basement, where the floor loading would be greatest. The basement was also used for packing, hence the need for good lighting. Later this was where the machinery was located, comprising the steam engine, boilers, pumps, packing presses and so on. The showrooms, customer consulting rooms, cashiers' rooms and the principals' offices would have been on the upper ground floor and the lighter goods were stored on the upper floors.

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[12] A.V. Cooper, *The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse, 1780-1914* (Manchester Polytechnic, 1991) 90.
[13] A.V. Cooper, *The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse, 1780-1914* (Manchester Polytechnic, 1991) 91.

Whereas in many warehouses there was glazing on the roof to maximise light in the top floor workshops, the whole of the roof of Greg's Buildings initially constituted a cistern; lined with "paraqua", a form of asphalt. Although the lining was noted as failing one year later, this was one of the warehouse's revolutionary fire prevention features. A pipe was installed in the central staircase area connecting to the rooftop cistern, with taps and hoses on each floor, in case of fire.

Due to its island site and consequential lack of party walls, there were no constraints on the positioning of the chimneys, unlike with the more normal terraced blocks of warehouses of the 1830s and 1840s, which incorporated the axial chimney stacks in the party walls. The original chimneys appear to have been adjacent to the central stairway, thus maximising space in the working areas, and were relatively low.

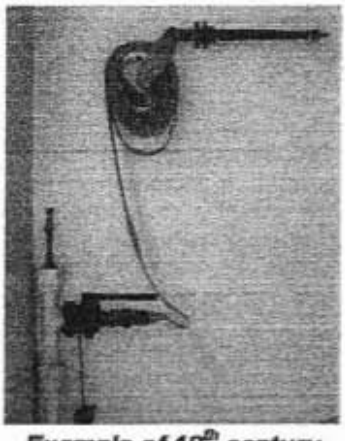


Cast Iron Pillar and Brick Jack-arch

The basic internal structure of the building was another revolutionary fire-prevention measure. The Builder stated:

> "It has iron columns and girders, with brick arches; and, as a provision against fire there is a cistern occupying the whole area at the top of the building, from which a pipe is carried down the staircase, having a canvas hose and mouth-piece at each landing."[14]

This was the early jack-arch system, which was extremely expensive and required walls and beams of substantial strength to withstand both the dead weight of the floor and the outward thrust produced by the vaults. It also increased the building's cost by extending its height on account of the depth of floor. For these reasons its use in Manchester warehouses was soon limited to the basements. J.E.Gregan, in his 1849 warehouse in Parker Street, introduced an alternative system for the upper floors:



Example of 19th century staircase water pipes and firehose (Calke Abbey)

> "a grid of cast-iron columns supported the floor which comprised tongued and grooved three inch thick timber planks, strengthened with strong hoop irons. These were laid on timber beams, of fourteen by ten inch section at seven to eight feet centres. This produced an exceptionally strong floor."[15]

The Declining Fortunes of the Greg Family

Robert Hyde Greg died in 1875 leaving his business empire to his three sons. Not only were they less committed and able than their father, but they had to contend with the effects of the Great Depression of 1873-96. During this period there was a rise in tariffs for imported goods in the US and in several European countries which were seeking to encourage their local industry. Secondly, there was a development of the local spinning and weaving industries in India, Brazil and Japan which not only reduced their

[14] "Architectural Notes in Manchester", *The Builder* (6 November 1847) 527.
[15] A.V. Cooper, *The Manchester Commercial Textile Warehouse, 1780-1914* (Manchester Polytechnic, 1991) 131.

demand for British manufactured goods but then came to offer competition. Thus an industry which exported 80% of its output was faced with both falling prices and higher tariffs, squeezing margins which in turn constricted capital investment.[16]

These developments obviously had implications for the utilization level of the Manchester warehouses. This was pressure compounded for the home market warehouses by competition from by the growing ready-to-wear sector and for the export market by the growing specialisation of the shipping demands which had led to the increasing importance of specialist shipping warehouses.

The Gregs' business made losses from 1880-1900. The most able of Robert Hyde's sons, Edward Hyde Greg, was succeeded by his son Robert Alexander Greg in 1900. However he was away serving in the Boer War at the turn of the century.

Conversion of 1 Booth Street to Offices in 1906

It is against this background of declining demand, greater specialisation of the packing and shipping warehouses and weaker, less committed commercial leadership in the family that the decision to convert the warehouse to offices was made. The well-known Manchester architects, J.W. Beaumont and Son, were commissioned to design the conversion in 1905. Deeds from 1905 refer to the incorporation of Greg's Buildings Ltd. as a new company to which ownership of the land, "that edifice warehouse or building erected and now standing theron,"[17] was transferred.

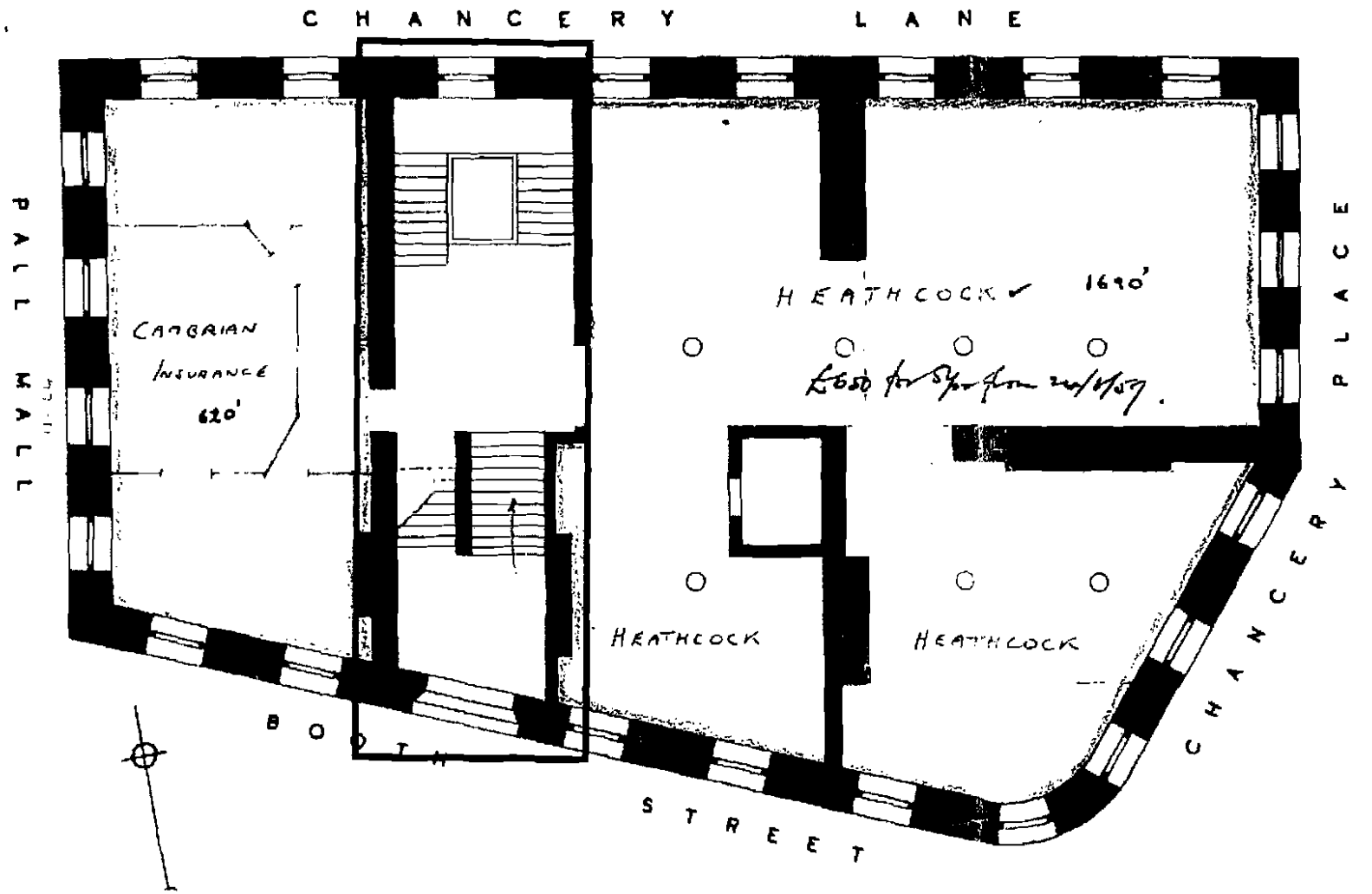
These plans show that the front entrance was remodelled. Impressive wrought-iron gates which include the words "Gregs Buildings" opened onto a small trapezoid-shaped lobby which was decorated with green tiled walls and a mosaic floor. It is likely that there were inner doors: the upper part of the frame with a semi-circular window flanked by two narrow rectangular windows remains. The basement and mezzanine were accessed by a split staircase with a tiled masonry central balustrade and the mezzanine floor was also mosaic. The upper balustrade is not marked on the plans, indicating that it was not masonry; it may have been cast iron. A lift was incorporated into the central stairwell, necessitating changes to the lobby and landing on each floor (and presumably the elimination of the firehose system in the stairwell). This was also accompanied by an extension on the roof to accommodate the lift machinery.

The change of use to offices meant a much higher number of people on the premises and therefore a large single-storey lavatory block was also built on the roof, with the lift and motor room above. This comprised a single lavatory for ladies and an area with urinals and 17 lavatories for men. In addition, the plans show other lavatories in the basement. The new construction on the roof required the

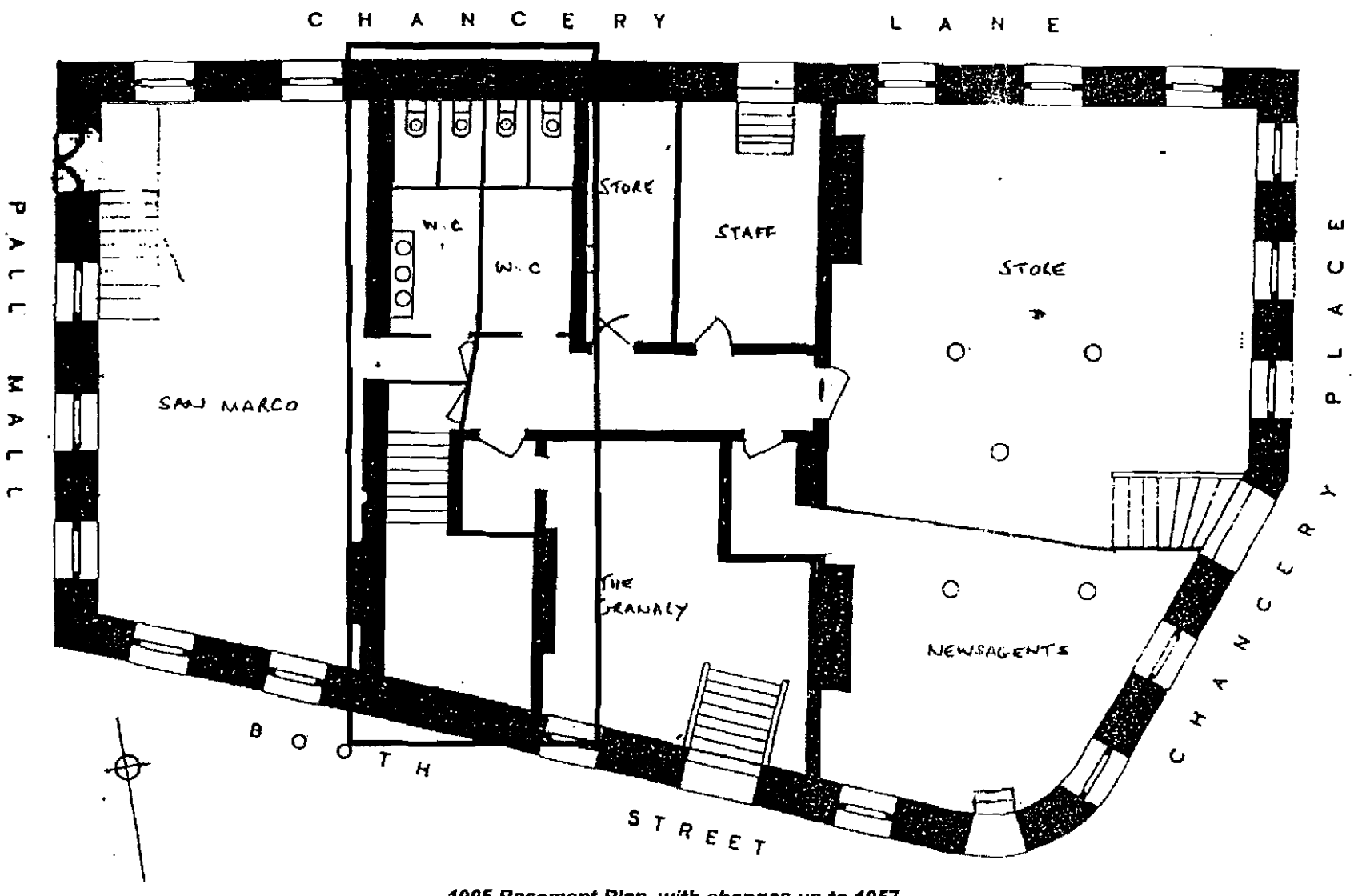
[16] Mary B. Rose, *The Lancashire Cotton Industry: a history since 1700* (Preston: Lancashire County Books, 1996).
[17] Indenture of 27 October 1905 between Hugh Stuart Greg and Greg's Buildings Limited.

original chimneys to be raised in height. New chimneys may also have been added at this time to improve the heating provision, with fireplaces in most rooms. The double loading doors on each floor at the rear of the building were replaced with a pair of windows on each floor. Office suites were created on each of the floors, including the basement. There was a strong room on each floor and a combination of open-plan and individual office accommodation.

These plans were revised in early 1906 to include a kitchen and bedroom for a caretaker on the fourth floor and a special lavatory for him on the fifth floor (roof extension) which was created at the expense of the some of the men's lavatories.



1905 Ground Floor Plan, with changes up to 1957



1905 Basement Plan, with changes up to 1957

Subsequent Alterations and Changes of Ownership

No. 1 Booth Street was further altered in 1914 when the existing caretaker's accommodation on the fourth floor was changed to additional office space and a new caretaker's flat, by Beaumont & Sons, was built between the roof toilet block and the parapet.

At this time the building was still owned by the Greg family. However, in 1930 the Manchester Commercial Buildings Co. Ltd. instructed a valuation of the property. This may have related to their purchase at or around this time. It details the tenants: two insurance companies on the ground floor; four tenants on the first floor; Greg Bros. & Co. on the second floor; single tenants on each of the third, fourth and basement floors. The higher the floor, the lower the rent – the second floor rent was £380 (Gregs Bros.) and the third floor was £375 (Kidsons Taylor & Co.). The valuation includes the detail that electric lighting had been installed throughout.

At any rate, by 1938 the building was owned by The Manchester Commercial Buildings Company who commissioned a Sale Building Contractor, E.E. Coleman, to carry out a further extension to the caretaker's accommodation. A valuation dated 1930 refers to a stone staircase from the basement to the top floor.

Plans relating to a further valuation in 1957 show that the Greg family are no longer a tenant. The suite on the Pall Mall side was let to Cambrian Insurance and the larger Chancery Place suite was let to Heathcock. The basement comprised a number of self-contained units. At a later date during the 20th century Manchester Commercial Buildings Company was absorbed into MEPC plc, one of the UK's major commercial property companies.

Since then the caretaker's accommodation has been converted to offices but no structural alterations have been made. At some point, probably mid 20th century, the lift was replaced and a two-storey lift-house extension was constructed on the roof.

During the 20th century renovations to the entrance hall appear to have occurred in several phases. During the late 1960s/early 1970s it appears to have been painted with yellow epoxy paint.[18] According to lease evidence, by 1975 the refurbishment of the entrance hall had taken place: the walls were covered with plasterboard; the central masonry balustrade and the upper balustrade were boarded in such that the boxing of the upper balustrade appears to be narrower than that of the central balustrade; and reproduction plaster dado rails and ceiling decoration were added. The wooden stairs are thought to date from this time. The only changes since this time have involved repainting.

During work to the basement area in 2006, with its conversion to a dental surgery, the Building Regulations Inspector required the permanent closing up of the door from the bottom of the steps to the basement, making the staircase from the entrance to the basement redundant. In spring 2008 the electricity supply to the building failed; the under-street supply cable to the building was patch repaired but needs replacing immediately, requiring the installation of new switching equipment in two substantial boxes.

[18] Lesley Durbin, conversation, November 2007

2.2 Description of the Building

2.2.1 Exterior

Plan, Form and Materials

The plot on which Greg's Buildings is built is an irregular five-sided island site. The main façade with the entrance is on Booth Street to the South-west. The west façade is on Pall Mall, Chancery Place is to the east and the plain rear façade to the north faces a much narrowed section of Chancery Lane. The building can be seen from Albert Square up Clarence Street. The site slopes downwards from west to east.

Greg's Buildings is a five-storey building with a basement which is partially above ground and a ground floor that is reached by a flight of stairs. The walls are a combination of ashlar sandstone and local red brick. The ashlar sandstone of the basement is detailed in a vermiculated rustic style while the ground floor is of smooth rustic; the upper floors are of light-red brick, with sandstone quoined corners. The building is surmounted by a moulded frieze and prominent modillioned cornice. The windows are rectangular sash windows (except on the fourth floor where they are square). The buildings on the roof are a mixture: the 1906 lavatory block is brick with a flat roof; the 1914 caretaker's flat is rendered, with a pitched slate roof; its 1938 extension has slate-covered mansard walls and roof. The two-storey brick lift-house has a flat roof and dates from the mid 20th century.



Booth Street Elevation



Main Entrance, Booth St. Elevation



Pall Mall Elevation/Corner Booth Street



Chancery Lane Elevation/Section of Chancery Place Elevation

Pall Mall Elevation

This elevation has four bays. The ashlar sandstone at the basement level is vermiculated rustic of a darker colour, while that at first floor level is smooth rustic in a lighter colour. There are three windows and a door at the basement level (partially above ground), the entrance to what was once 31 Pall Mall. At first floor level, below the moulded frieze, there are large four-paned sash windows, surmounted by keystones in the lower section of the frieze. The four upper floors are of brick, with stone quoins and architraves. There are four sash windows on each floor. The fourth floor is surmounted by an elaborate cornice

Booth Street Elevation

There is continuation in the visual appearance and horizontal banding of the building on this seven-bay elevation. The street level descends slightly so that the height of the window and door apertures increases from left to right. The main entrance to the building is not central to the façade but asymmetrically positioned, with two windows to the left and four to the right, and breaks through the basement and ground floor division. An arch is created in the rectangular aperture, which has decorated wrought iron gates, giving access to the entrance hall. To the right of the front entrance the basement has a window and a door reached by a couple of stone steps, giving access to the sandwich shop. Further to the right is another window and, in the obtuse angle of the corner with the Chancery Place elevation, the door to the newsagent.

Chancery Place Elevation

This diagonal three-bay elevation faces Chancery Place. The curved angle with the Booth Street elevation at the upper brick levels is not repeated at the much more obtuse angle of the corner with the Chancery Lane elevation. Instead the asymmetrical quoins provide an abrupt vertical line. There are three apertures at basement level: two windows and a door.

Chancery Lane Elevation

This three-bay elevation completes the public façades of Greg's Buildings. At the level of the brick upper floors it is visually defined by the quoins and the angles of the cornice and decorative frieze between the first and second floors. At basement level the apertures are all windows. The rear façade overlooking a narrow alley connecting Chancery Lane with Pall Mall is of undecorated brick.

2.2.2 Entrance Hall

The entrance hall comprises three spaces: the lobby, a lower hall with stairs and a mezzanine hall.

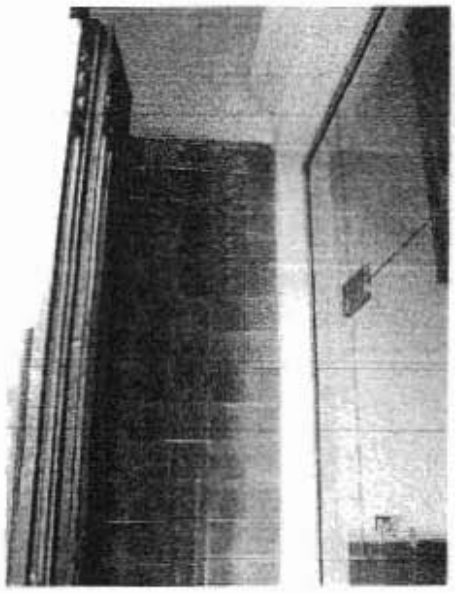
The Lobby



Entrance Lobby

The lobby is trapezoid in plan. The floor is mosaic with a central fantail design in cream and a border in green, light blue and pale yellow. The border shows a wave motif and the words "Greg's Buildings Ltd", referring to the company incorporated in 1905 as a vehicle for the conversion to offices. There is evidence of damage to the mosaic where brass plates around the bolts for the gates are missing. The ceiling has a moulded cornice. The west wall is dominated by the double-height archway with cast-iron gates. The decorative upper fixed section includes the words "Greg's Buildings" The double gates fold back against the wall which is of painted ashlar.

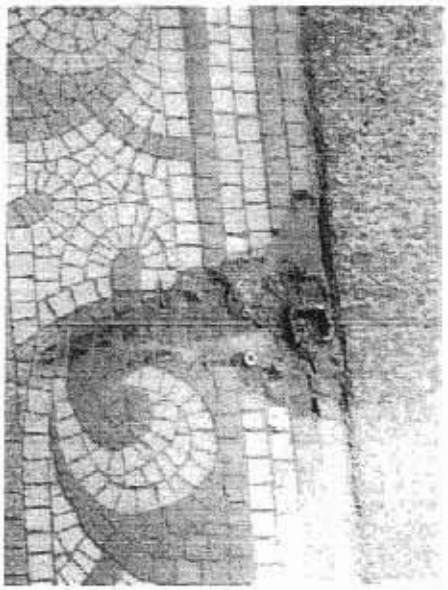
The north wall is dominated by a tall green tiled panel with a decorative moulded pendular floral design which extends up the moulded picture rail, above which the wall is painted. This is almost certainly by Pilkington's and is typical of their 1905 work in colour and decoration. The south wall accommodates a tall cupboard housing meters, the door entry phone and the fire alarm system. The wall behind the cupboard has been boxed in up to picture rail height, above which it is painted. To the east is a 1970s glazed partition comprising double doors and glazed panels with brass fittings, up to picture rail height. Above this is the 1905 timber partition with a semi-circular light between two narrow rectangular llights, all with chamfered glass.



Tiled Panel in Lobby



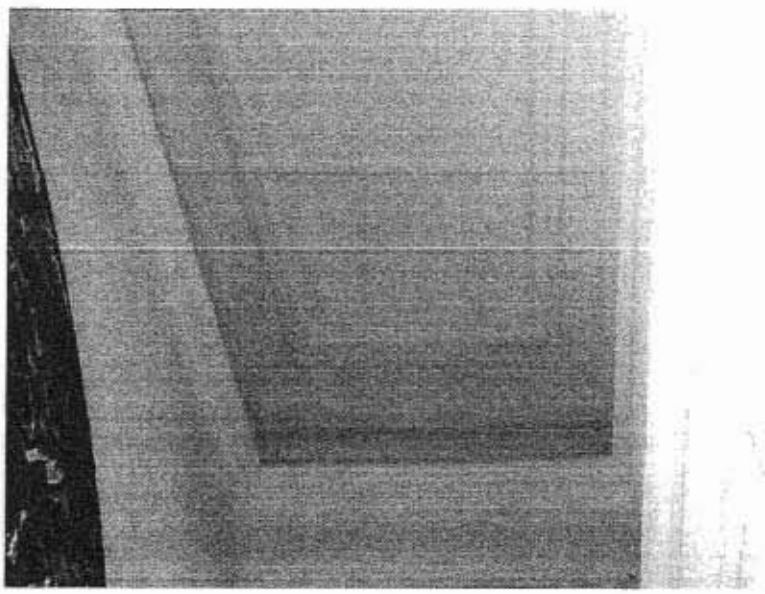
Detail of Tiled Panel and Architrave



Damage to Lobby Mosaic



Lobby Mosaic Floor and Glass Doors to Lower hall

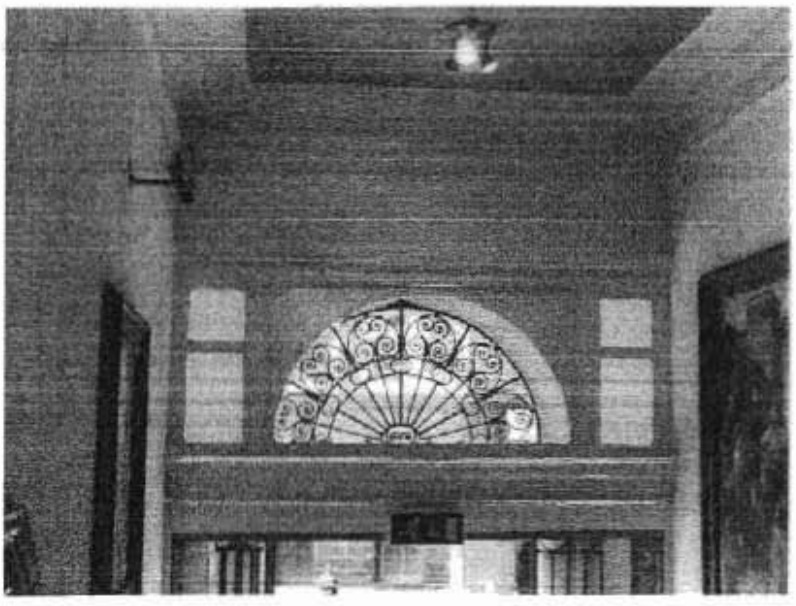


Lobby Ceiling

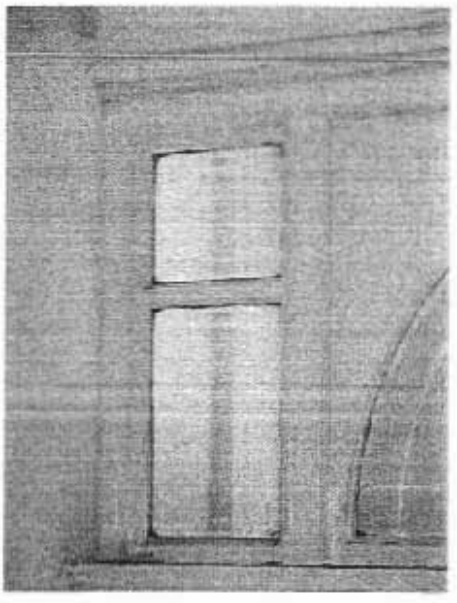
The Lower Hall with Stairs

The lower hall is rectangular. The ceiling has a moulded cornice above the timber and glazed partition; the cornice on the north and south walls is simpler. There is a rectangular mosaic floor between the glass doors and the steps with a fan design and wave border; a mat well fills the central space. This shows signs of settlement in some areas. To the north a narrower set of eight steps descends to a blocked and plastered up basement door. The stairs are modern, carpeted over timber with nosings, and there is a modern brass handrail on the north wall.

A large central balustrade separates these steps from the wider flight of 11 steps on the south side leading up to the mezzanine hall. The original tiled masonry structure, which is visible on the 1905 plans, was green in colour (presumably designed to match the tiled panel in the lobby). It has since been painted over in yellow epoxy resin, prior to being boxed in the 1970s. Its sides are now papered and there is a bulky wooden upper surface.



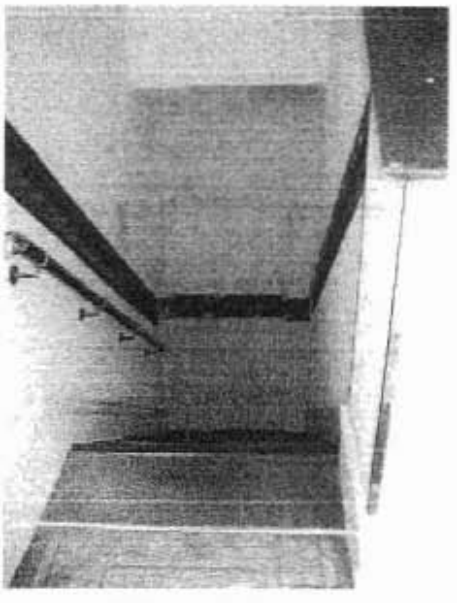
Partition between Lobby and Lower Hall



Detail of Partition



Steps to Mezzanine with Current Décor and Plaster Mouldings



Steps to Basement and Blocked Door

The north and south walls of the lower hall and stairs are covered in plasterboard and patterned embossed paper to the dado rail, with a plainer paper above. The moulded plaster dado rail is reproduction, echoing the pattern of the moulded picture rail in the lobby, probably dating from the 1970s. The walls are light green below the darker green dado rail and cream above. Behind the plasterboard appears