

ST JAMES'S BUILDING MANCHESTER

GENERAL PRINCIPLES DOCUMENT

TURLEYASSOCIATES
PLANNING ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

Our ref : KM/HSB/BRUM1001

Martin Gizzie
Bruntwood Estates Limited
St James' Buildings
Oxford Road
Manchester

24 May 2004

22 JUN 2004

Dear Martin

St James's Building – 6th Floor

I have enclosed the loose leaf copy of the report from Lindsay Cowle, I used this to copy the additional reports for the 4th floor application. Lindsay has had problems putting the A3 plans onto disc, he will therefore forward the electronic copy as soon as it is ready.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

K. MacDonald

Karen MacDonald
kmacdonald@rta.co.uk

Enc.

TURLEYASSOCIATES
PLANNING · ENVIRONMENT DESIGN

Our ref : KM/BRUM1001

Angela Leckie
Manchester Planning Department
PO Box 463
Town Hall Extension
Manchester
M60 3NY

24 May 2004

Dear Angela

St. James's Building, Oxford Street, Manchester

Further to our meeting of the 17th May, I am writing to request a formal written response to the General Principles Document and the proposed Management Plan for the St James's Building, which have been submitted under separate cover to accompany the applications for Listed Building Consent for internal alterations to the 2nd floor and 4th floor of the building.

I have also enclosed as requested two sets of the architects drawings, dated 1912, of the building.

I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

K. MacDonald

Karen MacDonald
kmacdonald@rta.co.uk

Enc.

cc. Martin Gizzie, Bruntwood

ST JAMES'S BUILDING

OXFORD STREET, MANCHESTER

GENERAL PRINCIPLES DOCUMENT

Prepared on behalf of Bruntwood Estates Ltd

by

LINDSAY COWLE B Arch Dip Cons (Dist) RIBA IHBC AABC

(Conservation Consultant)

April 2004

ST JAMES'S BUILDING, OXFORD STREET, MANCHESTER

GENERAL PRINCIPLES DOCUMENT

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SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared by Lindsay Cowle (Conservation Consultant) on behalf of Bruntwood Estates Ltd of Manchester (the owners and managers of the building) and at the direction of Robert Turley Associates Ltd (Planning Consultants and agents for the owners).

The St James's Building is 'listed' (Grade II) as being a building of 'special architectural or historic interest'. It was originally built in 1912 as a mixture of offices, shops, work studios, storage and exhibition areas but is now largely occupied by rented office suites of various sizes, and by shops and a night club on the ground floor.

The listing of the building in 1988 imposed planning controls over alterations to the building, and any substantial alterations since then have been made with listed building consent. However, it is understood that, because of the diversity of tenants, listed building applications have been approved on a piecemeal basis, and both the owners and the planning authority now wish further applications to be processed with a better understanding of the building and in the context of an agreed set of principles.

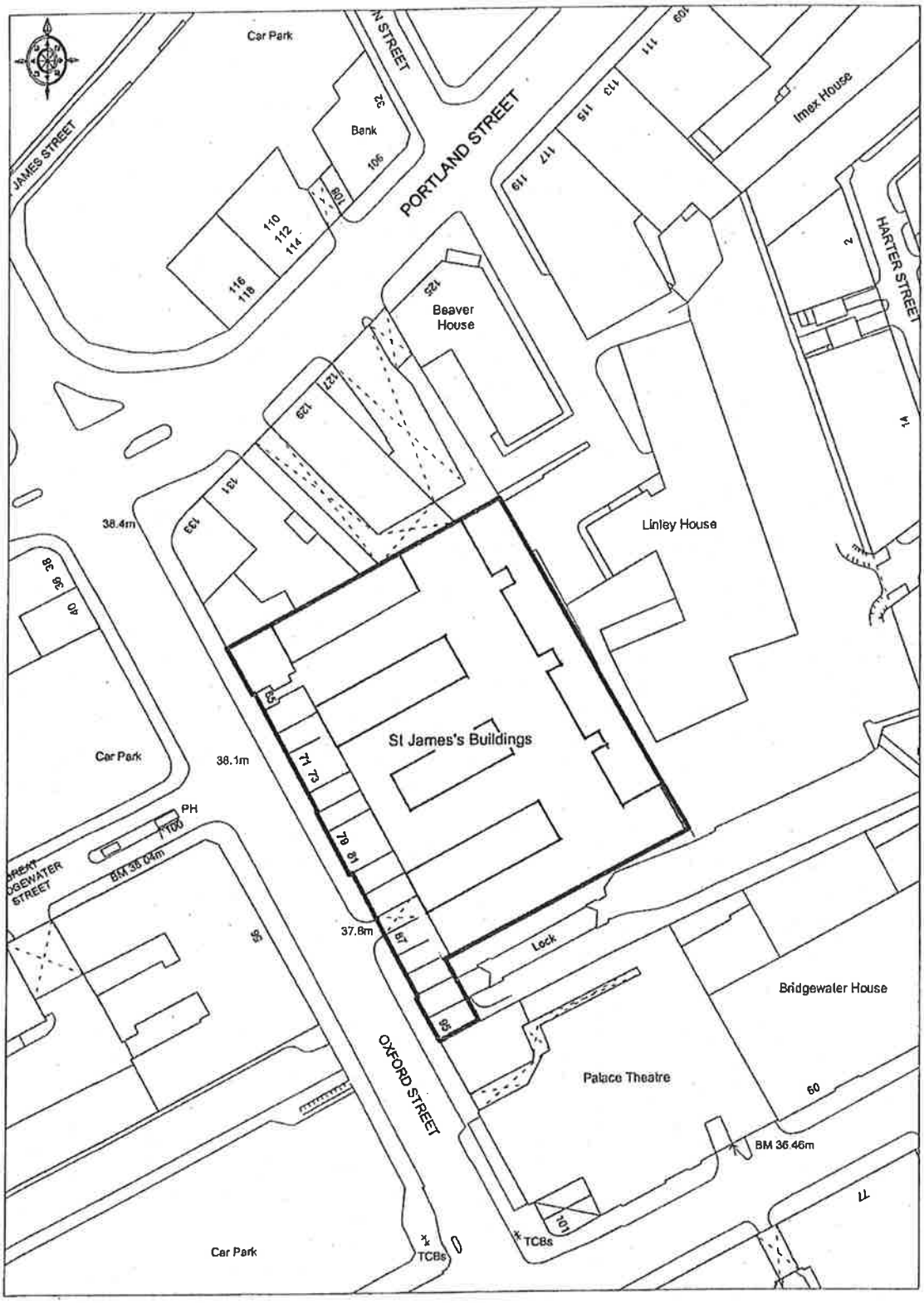
The intention of the report is therefore to examine the history of the building, make an evaluation of it as a listed building, and establish broad principles to control its alteration in future.

Several inspections of the building were made during March 2004, the last visit being a joint visit with Colin Briden (Consultant Archaeologist and Historic Building Researcher). Due to the intensive tenancy of the building and security issues it was not possible to inspect all the tenanted areas, but any areas missed were in areas of a repetitive nature. Access to the basement safety vault was made courtesy of the St James's Safe Deposit Company.

Documentary research was carried out at the Local Studies Section of Manchester City Library and greatly helped by prior research carried out by the owners, including details of the previous buildings, copies of the original architects' drawings and recollections of a former employee. The owners also provided several recent photographs, some of which are reproduced in the report.

Lindsay Cowle B Arch Dip Con (Dist) RIBA IHBC AABC

April 2004.



Location Plan

SECTION 2 THE HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

2.1 Site History

St James's Building in Manchester, completed in 1912, stands prominently on the east side of Oxford Street, close to the City centre, with a long and imposing frontage to the street (see frontispiece). At the right hand (south) end the site abuts the Rochdale Canal, with the frontage building actually spanning the canal. To the north, the building adjoins late Victorian and early 20th century commercial buildings extending up to Portland Street, and to the rear (east) the site is adjoined by the open car parks and courtyards of other new and old commercial properties related to Princess Street.

Vehicular access to the rear of the building is either via a passageway on the Oxford Street frontage or (more intensively) via a broader passage under one of the Portland Street properties.

In respect of this report the previous history of the site is of little relevance, as it appears to have little influence on the design of the existing building. However, research into the late 19th century status of the site shows that it is an amalgamation of two earlier sites fronting onto Oxford Street, of roughly equal width, divided by a side street called Atlas Street (see **illustration**).

The southern site was occupied by a four-storey commercial building called 'Esdaile's Buildings', which appears to have stopped at the canal. The northern site was occupied by St. James's Hall (from which the present building derives its name), which was a much grander exhibition and assembly hall built in 1884 in French Renaissance style. As well as being a venue for concerts and serious public events it was home to the John Tiller school of dancing, later famous for producing the 'Tiller Girls'. It also housed a restaurant and 17 shops.

To the north of the St. James's Hall a short lane known as Gilbert Street led to the 'St. James's Theatre', also built in 1884 as part of St James's Hall but set well back from Oxford Street and of very different design. It was built as a theatre for heavy drama, but declined in popularity due to the change in public taste in the Edwardian period.

The St James's Hall and Theatre were sold by auction in 1906, probably to the Calico Printers Association in readiness for redevelopment. The theatre was closed in 1907, but re-opened temporarily in 1908 as the 'New Pavilion Picture House': the Hall appears to have been used mainly as a skating rink.

In 1909, only a short time after the re-opening of the Hall and Theatre, the site was cleared to allow the construction of a new Head Office for the Calico Printers Association Ltd, to replace their existing offices at 56 Mosley Street. The site included 'Esdaile's Buildings' to the south, which the CPA appears to have purchased in readiness ten years earlier. Both Atlas Street and Gilbert Street were extinguished as highways and their sites incorporated to allow a building of prodigious length, made even longer by the extension of the frontage southwards by spanning over the Rochdale Canal.

2.2 The Calico Printers' Association

Calico printing (- roughly defined as the decoration of cloth and especially linen by mechanical means, originating in blocking by hand -) appears to have emerged as an industry in Britain in the 18th century, based in Derbyshire, Lancashire and the west of Scotland. The industry boomed in the later part of the 19th century, centred especially on Manchester and Glasgow presumably because of their role as importers and exporters of cloth.

However, the fierceness of competition led to a decline in quality and demand, in response to which the Calico Printers' Association was established in 1899 'to preserve the tradition and standing of calico printing and to produce textiles of a high standard at reasonable prices'. The Association amalgamated 46 firms (32 in England and 14 in Scotland) and comprised 85% of the British calico printing industry. It also included 13 merchants based in Manchester and Glasgow.

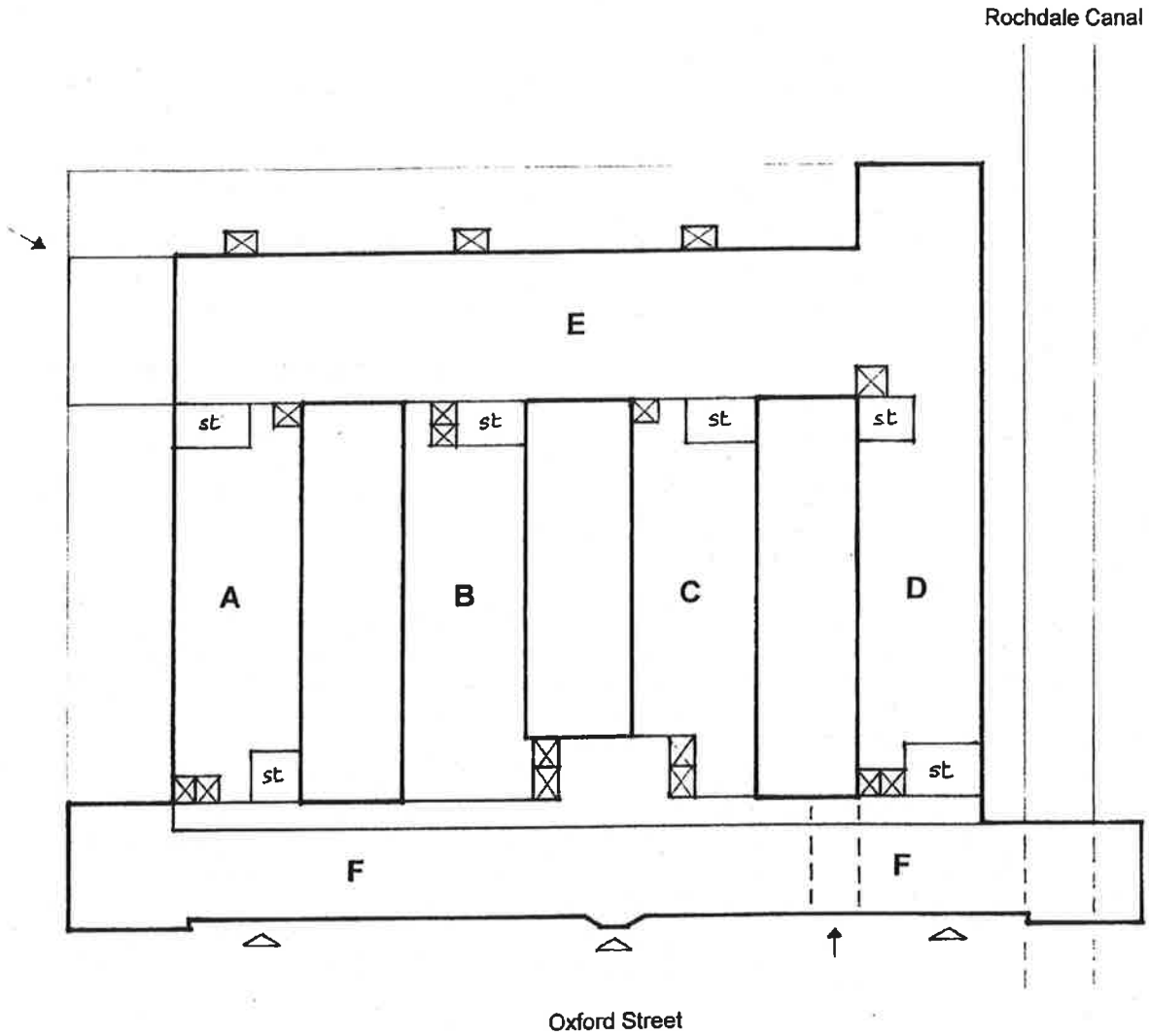
By 1906 the Association had overcome some initial teething troubles and was beginning to show stability and a good financial return, which no doubt provided the confidence needed to invest in new premises. The new Head Office in Oxford Street was built to house the Association, provide research facilities and include space for Association members (presumably on a rented basis) in a building clearly designed to impress by its size and appearance. Even in 1926 the building was described as being the largest commercial building in Manchester, and the Association the largest of its kind in the world.



VIEW of St. James's Hall, St. James's Theatre, and Esdaile's Buildings, MANCHESTER.

Late 19th or early 20th century print showing (from left to right) Gilbert Street, with the St James's Theatre at the rear: St James's Hall: Atlas Street: Esdaile's Buildings: and (at extreme right) the wall of the road bridge crossing the Rochdale Canal

Site prior to construction



Key:

passenger or goods lift

pedestrian access (ground level)

vehicular access (ground level)

Reference Plan

SECTION 3 DESCRIPTION

3.1 The Design of the St James's Building

As constructed, the new building consisted of two sections of very different use and character. The front section (Block F on the reference plan) contained the offices of the Association and consisted of a building rising ten storeys above street level, faced in stone and of classical design. The rear section contained rented offices, showrooms, research laboratories and work spaces rising eight or nine floors above street level and consisting of five blocks (Blocks A-E) arranged around three narrow light wells. The rear section was of much simpler and more modern design, with its elevations extensively glazed. Access between the front and rear sections appears to have been carefully controlled.

The adoption of two different architectural styles within the same building (- traditional classical for the public elevation, and simpler industrial for the rear -) was common in commercial buildings of the time, but the exceptional feature of the St. James's Building was its size. The frontage building was 306 feet long and 166 feet in height, the floor area was 450,000 square feet, and in 1949 there were reported to be 1000 rooms and one mile of corridors. The building must have dwarfed everything else in the locality.

Despite the enormous size and significance of the building remarkably little seems to have been reported in the technical press, and in the absence of the usual review and contract details in '*The Builder*' the contractors remain unknown. However, the architect's drawings survive, although there are some differences between the drawings and the building as completed.

The joint architects for the building were Charles Clegg & Son and Fryers & Penman. Charles Clegg (1828-1922) was born and practised in Manchester, taking his son Charles Theodore Clegg (b 1861) into partnership in 1882. Douglas Larmont Penman (1868-1931) appears to have been the main partner in Fryers and Penman, and to have practised (at least in the latter part of his life) in Largs near Glasgow. Little more is known about the firms, who were not prominent in the architectural field.

The use of two architects was unusual and may reflect the sheer size of the building and the urgency of the client's programme. It is not known how the work was apportioned: but bearing in mind the very different demands and aesthetics of the front and rear sections it is likely that the design was split between the two. It is interesting to speculate on whether the two firms of architects were chosen purely for their ability, or to symbolise equality between the English and Scottish members of the Association.

3.2 Structure

The entire building was constructed as a steel frame encased in concrete (-the Goad Plan describes it as 'reinforced concrete'-), including the frontage building despite its outward appearance as a traditional masonry building. The steel frame may have been adopted for the sake of speed, but more probably to allow the open plan floors and intensive fenestration of the rear blocks, together with the need for tall and relatively narrow blocks which may otherwise have pushed masonry construction beyond the limit.

The St James's Building was one of the earliest steel-framed buildings in the country, comparable in this respect with the innovative Tower Building in Liverpool completed in 1908. It also bears comparison with The Royal Liver Building in Liverpool (completed in 1910) and invites speculation as to whether the architects of Manchester had one eye on their more progressive rivals in Liverpool.

Unlike the Liverpool buildings however, the blocks comprising the St James's Building were more tall and slender, and nervousness as to the stability of the structure may account for the exposed steel lattice beams which tie the rear blocks together at various levels across the open light wells (see 4th Floor Plan). It may also explain why the rear corners of Block E are braced with huge diagonal ties just behind the elevation. On the other hand, some of the spans of the individual steel beams are extremely daring, notably those carrying the building over the Rochdale canal, and at the north end of Block E.

As an essential requirement for a building to be used for the storage and display of cloth the building was of fire-proof construction, the steel frame being entirely encased in concrete poured 'in-situ' and the floors also of concrete (described on the 1913 Goad Insurance Plans as 'Kleine' floors). Apart from one or two panelled rooms in the frontage block, combustible materials were limited to doors, joinery trimmings, stair handrails, and the herringbone oak block finishes applied to nearly all the floors.

3.3 The Frontage Block - External

Block F (the frontage block) is faced in Portland Stone and is of neo-classical design. At ground floor level the arched main entrance is placed centrally in a bay which stands slightly proud of the main elevation, embellished on the upper floors with bay windows between pedimented columns (see **Photo 1**). At roof level the bay becomes the base of a short and rather stubby tower with columned and pedimented openings on all four sides

The façade terminates at each end with another projecting bay which is also embellished, but to a smaller scale. Giant arches form a rusticated plinth for the facade, spanning the ground and first floor (mezzanine) levels, and above them windows of diminishing stature lead up to a recessed band of windows under the roof cornice. The roof itself is a half-mansard roof, with a slated slope above the street façade punctuated by dormer windows.

The return gables at each end of the frontage are relatively plain but relieved by projecting decorative chimney breasts leading up to tall, eye-catching chimneys with classical dressings. It appears that at least the northern chimney is false, as the internal layout did not permit fireplaces in the end gable.

At street level the giant arches contain secondary office entrances towards each end, and a vehicular entrance to the servicing area at the rear. Otherwise, they house a range of shops, originally with attractive curved display windows, with basement storage etc below. The inclusion of purpose-built shops in a commercial building of this date was unusual, and it is not known whether they were intended for the benefit of the building users or merely to generate income. More unusual still was the inclusion of the St James's Safe Deposit in the basement: this is a rare survival and is entered via its own secure doorway and marble-clad stair lobby next to the main entrance.

At the northern end of the frontage another entrance in the end bay led to a long, narrow café at the rear, occupying what was once Gilbert Street (see Ground and Basement Floor Plans). This appears to have been a single-storey building, top-lit and with a basement used as a billiard room. Again it is not known whether this was intended for building users or (as its independent access would suggest) as another speculative source of income.

3.4 The Frontage Block - Internal

Internally, the main entrance leads to a highly decorative marble-clad lobby with lifts to the upper floors, and a polished marble stair which originally led only up to the Association's principal rooms on the 2nd floor (see **Photos 2 and 3**). On the half landing of the stair an arched window presumably with obscure glazing (now converted into an access archway to the first floor offices behind) provided light from the rear light well.

The 2nd floor landing is again marble-clad and leads to the mahogany-panelled board room via a reception lobby. The other rooms on this floor share a continuous neo-classical plaster cornice and joinery decoration on the west (street) wall, but are otherwise relatively plain and seem designed to allow partitioning up at the structural bays as required (see **Photo 8**).

The circulation route is simple and identical on all levels, consisting of a corridor along the east wall with a lift lobby in the centre, and lifts and escape stairs to the street at each end.

The original layout of the office space is unknown: the architects' drawings for each floor typically show a range of separate identical rooms each having a gas or coal fire on one of 12 flue stacks ranged along the corridor wall. However, in some areas the room partition walls are omitted to give an open-plan layout, facilitated by the steel frame construction (see **Photo 8**).

It is interesting to note that the flues are discreetly terminated at roof level, and that the flues in the centre of the building are led out ingeniously within the heavily modelled masonry of the central tower. As stated earlier, the chimney stack on the north gable wall appears to be false, and the stack on the south gable may also be false as there is another stack on the east wall adjoining which seems to have served the area.

3.5 The Rear Blocks – External

To the rear of the frontage block four equally spaced extensions (Blocks A –D) strike off eastwards and are linked by another Block (Block E) on the east side of the site, enclosing three narrow light wells. The blocks are essentially nine storeys high above ground level, with flat roofs, although Blocks A-D have smaller penthouses on the roof.

The plan arrangement is symmetrical, but on a slightly different axis to the frontage block, which extends further southwards over the canal: as a consequence the front and rear blocks make an awkward junction in the centre, with the window of the main stair hall tucked into one corner of the central light well (see Second Floor Plan).



View looking down into light well from roof of Block F, showing glazed curtain walling to Rear Blocks, lattice beams spanning well at Eighth Floor Level, and (at foot of photo) floors extended out at First and Second Floor levels under continuous clerestory lights.

Typical Rear Light Well

The rear blocks are characterised by simple, honest expression of the structure and large areas of glazing (see **Photo 4**). Within the rooms the floor and roof beams are exposed to view, the junctions with the verticals being stiffened at 8th and 9th floor levels by large angled joints (see **Photo 5**).

In the elevations of the light wells the verticals of the steel frame are exposed to full height and their concrete casing is rebated at intervals to simulate ashlar. Between the verticals the elevations are almost totally glazed with steel windows which can be seen as an early example of 'curtain-walling', with hollow or delicately profiled solid mullions (see **illustration**).

The width of the glazing is particularly striking in the north elevation of Block E, where the structural frame spans the full depth of the block in order to avoid a column in the ground floor servicing area: the visual effect is 50 years ahead of its time and comparable with an office block of the 1960's (see **Photo 7**).

The east elevation of Block E is also strikingly modern for its day: as a contrast to the large areas of glazing the three goods hoists stand proud of the façade and are treated as pure shafts of brick without any relief. The concept is a fore-runner of 1930's Modern Movement design (see **Photo 7**).

In some areas the concrete floors extend to the external elevation and carry spandrel walls under the cills of the windows above: but in most cases the floors stop short, and carry a sloping spandrel, allowing the glazing to continue up and finish at a cill beam (see **Photo 4**). This dramatic effect was presumably intended to allow maximum day lighting, especially in the confined light wells, but it may also have provided a neat solution to the heating and ventilation system. (see Section 3.7 below).

To compensate for the reduced lighting towards the bottoms of the light wells (and to further increase floor space) the 2nd and 1st floors of Blocks A-D were extended out progressively beyond the general elevation and top-lit with strips of continuous glazing. The floor slabs appear to be cantilevered out for this purpose.

As mentioned earlier, the structural daring shown in some areas seems to have been offset by caution in others, for example the steel lattice beams spanning the light wells at 4th and 8th levels to connect the blocks together.

Other features are less easy to explain. The columns on the south side of Block D (nearest the canal) are doubled up from 2nd floor level downwards (and heavily braced at one point) but not for the full length of the elevation (see Second Floor Plan and **Photo 9**). This is anticipated in the architects' drawings and may imply foreknowledge of poor ground conditions and the need to spread the structural loads.

The steel frame in the north-east and south-east corners of Block E is also braced by diagonal ties just behind the glazing line, consisting of steel rods tensioned by huge turnbuckles (see **Photos 6 and 7**). The specific locations of the ties suggest that they were used as a precaution against poor ground conditions and settlement. Intentionally or not, the clear exposure of these ties is prophetic of late 20th century design.

3.6 The Rear Blocks - Internal

The penthouses on the roofs of Blocks A-D were set back from edge of the roof and although steel-framed were of more traditional brick construction, with brick walls, timber casement windows and pitched roofs with continuous top lights. If the architects' drawings are to be believed, those above Blocks B-D were fully occupied by staff toilets: their floors are raised compared with Block A, perhaps to allow for the under-floor pipework.

This apparently odd and inconvenient piece of planning may have had some logic to it, since if the toilets were to be naturally ventilated it would have been difficult to reconcile this with the curtain walling of the elevations below, and ventilating in the depths of the confined light wells may have been seen as a health hazard.

Otherwise the floors above ground level were used as research laboratories, typists' offices, lettable offices, printing studios, showrooms (in Block E) and storage. The architects' drawings show every permutation of subdivision, from fully open plan (especially Block E) to small cellular rooms, with no apparent patterns or constraints. None of the original partition walls appear to have survived.

For access, Blocks A and D may have shared with Block F the use of the street stairs and lifts at the north and south ends of the building, but otherwise the Blocks were reached by independent stairs and passenger lifts from the ground floor servicing area at the rear. Seven hoists were provided in Block E for heavier goods.

The clarity of the block arrangement disappears at ground floor level, where the entire space is enclosed and put to use for servicing and storage. The rather less obstructed space under Block E was used as a delivery and dispatch bay, accessed partly from Oxford Street but principally from Portland Street, via a broad passage under buildings which the Association perhaps also owned. The delivery bay rose through two floors to allow a travelling gantry and good lighting from the light wells, and a top-glazed storage area was provided to the east, outside the main perimeter of the building.

The rest of the ground floor space was largely given over to circulation and top-lit storage space worked in amongst a forest of columns.

The basement occupied the full area of the site and was originally only accessible by stair or lift, the present vehicle ramp being a recent insertion. The basement contained the heating and services plant, sorting rooms, circulation areas, and secure storage for the building tenants - the original Ratner safe doors and security grilles for these are still in situ see Basement Plan). The architects' drawings also show 6 large 'presses' under Block E, which in this location are more likely to have been used for packing materials than for printing.

3.7 Building Services

The building was primarily heated by hot water radiators, served by a central heating source in the basement. The method of heating the water is unknown: the architects' drawings show a 'heating chamber' (-the present boiler room -) but no flue or air supply, and the Goad Insurance Plan of 1913 (intended to record all sources of fire risk) shows nothing. It is tempting to think that the power source was electrical, from

the Manchester Corporation Electricity Station on the adjoining site to the east, but if so this would be an extraordinarily early use of electricity for space heating.

As described above, the offices in Block F appear to have been also provided with gas (or possibly coal) fires, whose stacks are aligned at regular intervals along the length of the building. Heating for the main entrance hall and staircase was provided by 'heating batteries' on either side of the stair, which appear to be combined hot water and fresh air inlets.

In the rear blocks the hot water radiators were placed against the external walls, and (following well established principles) were placed against fresh air grilles so that fresh pre-warmed air was drawn into the interior. However in most cases the external walls were sloping spandrels, to allow the maximum amount of glazing (see Section 3.5). At each radiator position a vertical bulkhead was therefore formed in the spandrel to carry the radiator, and discreet ducting was installed behind the spandrel to bring fresh air through the glazing. This was an ingenious way of combining established practice with 'state of the art' design.

To ensure healthy air circulation much of the building was also ventilated to draw out vitiated air, thus providing an elementary air conditioning system. Large ceiling ducts, evidently of fire-proof steel mesh and mortar construction, were provided centrally along Blocks A-D and above the corridor of Block F both to withdraw air from the rooms and carry service pipes. The ducts connected with vertical air shafts next to the lifts and staircases, and the rising heat no doubt created a 'chimney' effect to create a 'draw' (-these air shafts have since been extinguished). The architects' drawings suggest that the ducts in Block F were split to separate them from the rear blocks.

The height of the building was only made possible by the extensive use of electric lifts – 17 for passengers and 7 for goods. Whilst electric lifts had been used for some time in Britain the scale of use is remarkable. For some unknown reason, a small hydraulic passenger lift was also included in the Block D. The electric hoists were fitted with fire-proof 'concertina' doors, and in the delivery bay with hinged doors of rolled or pressed iron perhaps to simulate timber boarding.

A sprinkler system was installed throughout, served by an impressive array of control valves under the landing of the main staircase. Otherwise the building made full use of the technology of the day, with electric lighting and power, telephones, and 'Lamson' tubes to convey paperwork between sections of the building by vacuum power.

3.8 Staircases

The building is served by six stair flights which rise the full height of the building and are of differing character.

The most important stair was (and still is) the stair rising from the southern street entrance and serving **Blocks D&F**. It is of concrete construction with a continuous hardwood handrail on decorative steel balusters of strikingly modern design. The stairwell has flat plastered walls except for the south wall which is almost fully glazed to dramatic effect (see **Photo 10**). The ceilings of the landings may have been originally crossed by the services and ventilation ducts and therefore lower, but they are now full height.

The open well contains a single vertical 'dry riser' pipe for fire-fighting purposes: this is quite deliberately exposed for visual effect, and illustrates a very modern approach to design.

The stair rising from the northern street entrance and serving **Blocks A&F** is similar design but is a dog-leg stair of less quality and poorer aspect. At top floor level it is constricted by an unsightly (original) bulkhead containing a toilet block, and various service pipes pass through the open well to untidy effect. On some floors the landings (-which form part of the circulation system-) have been separated off and new access points improvised. At 1st floor level the stair is divided by an original security grille consisting of iron bars and (since removed) an iron gate or door.

The stairs at the junctions of **Blocks A&E, B&E and C&E** are all identical and are of a much more robust industrial character. They are of similar construction to the others but in narrower stairwells, with decorative cast iron newel posts at the ends of each flight (see **Photo 11**). The walls are of white glazed brick (since painted over) and the door openings have bull-nosed brick jambs to resist wear. At 1st floor level the stairs are divided by original security grilles consisting of iron bars and (in the case of Block B) a surviving huge iron door.

Each stair was originally complemented by a pair of lifts opening onto the landing. In stairs A&E and C&E the lifts have been extinguished and the space partitioned off on a random basis to provide an independent access route between the blocks. In one case the top flight has been removed and floored over. The stairs have suffered from neglect, although in the case of Block A this has also resulted in preservation of the original finishes at basement level.

The stair at the junction of **Blocks D&E** is unusual as it appears to be a much simpler service stair. An ornamented iron grille around the open well originally contained a small hydraulically operated passenger lift of which the pipework still survives, and an ornamental iron gate protects the stair at low level.

3.9 Subsequent Alterations

The absence of accurate architectural drawings or contemporary accounts makes it difficult to know the precise form of the building on completion, but it is clear that several unrecorded changes have occurred over time, and several alterations have been made with planning consent since the building was listed in 1988. The main changes appear to be as follows:

<u>Roof</u>

- Additional storey added to Block E to make it the same height as Blocks A – D.

- Various plant rooms etc added, and southern stacks of Block F removed.

- Perimeter rails added for maintenance cradles for elevations.

- Block D penthouse possibly rebuilt.

- Corridor added to north side of Block B penthouse.

Elevations

- Shop windows on Oxford Street replaced with modern shopfronts.
- Some window panes in rear elevations closed up to receive vents or false ceilings.
- Some small areas of glazing replaced (Block B, north elevation).

Block F Internal

- Many shops converted to fewer, larger units.
- North office entrance disused as access.
- Main entrance hall refurbished.
- Archway on half-landing of main stair converted to access to offices at rear.
- Layout of most offices re-ordered and offices re-furbished with new services.
- Original gas or coal fires removed.
- Corridors upgraded, with fire doors, and most lift lobbies re-modelled.

Blocks A - E Internal

- Blocks re-ordered or converted to modern office use.
- Hoists on east side of Block E extinguished.
- Secondary stairs downgraded to escape stairs and modified to suit tenants' needs.
- First floor offices inter-linked and extended with new patent-glazed extensions.

Ground Floor and Basement

- Café extinguished, night club created in most of northern part.
- Vehicle ramp formed down to Basement.
- More secure storage areas provided in Basement.
- Car-parking areas created.
- Previous heating plant replaced by new boilers.

SECTION 4 ASPECTS OF VALUE

St James's Building was 'listed' as a building of architectural or historic interest in 1988 and the formal listing description is included in the Appendix. It was not inspected internally, and the rear blocks do not appear to have been assessed at all. Listing is an indication of value but in many cases (and in the case of St James's Building in particular) the value of the building needs to be assessed by further research before its true value can be revealed.

One of the purposes of this report is therefore to establish the historic value of the building, which can be summarised as follows:

1. Building Type. St James's Building was designed for a specific high-profile client and for a specific purpose, rather than speculatively or for a standard function such as textile manufacture or storage. As well as being impressive for its sheer size at the time of construction it therefore had some highly individual features eg the grand front façade, entrance hall and staircase. The inclusion of (speculative?) shop units on such a large scale is notable, and the highly ornate and intact safe deposit store in the basement is a rare feature.

2. Basic Structure. The adoption of a concrete-clad steel frame to provide flexible or clear floor space was not in itself innovative, but it was used here to create an unusually large building. Some exceptional spans were achieved eg over the canal and over the vehicular entrance at the north end of Block E. On the other hand some aspects of the design suggest nervousness about the rigidity of a frame of this size, and it appears that the structural engineers were 'feeling their way' in this relatively new medium.

3. Plan Form. There is nothing exceptional about the plan form in principle, and indeed there is an unhappy clash between the front and rear buildings where they meet. But the intense vertical development of the site is notable, and the very tall and narrow rear blocks and light wells. The 1st and 2nd floors of the Blocks A-D at the bottoms of the light wells are of particular interest in that their floors are cantilevered out and widened, allowing their day-lighting to be boosted by clerestory glazing.

4. Elevations / architectural style. The combination of fine traditional offices on the public frontage and more functional modern buildings at the rear was commonplace. However the rear elevations of the St James's Building are of remarkably modern design because of their curtain wall glazing, which also manages to incorporate very discreetly the air inlets for the ventilation system. The stark exposure of the goods hoist shafts on the east elevation is also forward-looking.

5. Architects. The design appears to be the product of 2 architectural firms working together, which is unusual and of interest. It is not known how or why they collaborated on the building and more research could be rewarding.

6. Technology. As highlighted above, the large areas of glazing on the rear elevations are adventurous. In other respects the building is not technically innovative but it brings together all the latest technology of the day (electric lighting, electric lifts, sprinklers, telephones, etc) on an impressive scale in order to produce one of the earliest multi-storey buildings in the country.

7. Heating and Ventilation. The provision of separate room fires in the frontage building was conventional, although the secret integration of 8 flues within rear of central tower is ingenious and noteworthy. At the rear, the combination of heated fresh air inlets at the perimeter and internal extract ducts 'drawn' by air shafts marks an early step towards air conditioning.

8. Internal Detailing. The main entrance hall, staircase and second floor landing are sumptuous and carefully detailed in various colours of marble, and the entrance to the safe deposit store is also clad in marble. The boardroom is traditionally and lavishly ornamented and there are other rooms of lesser quality on the same floor. Various corridors in the frontage block retain original doors and joinery details. The staircases have decorative cast iron newel posts and more modern baluster details.

9. Internal features. To the rear, the rolled/pressed iron doors to the hoists etc are interesting, as are the grilles and security doors guarding the stairs at 1st floor level, and the original safe doors and grilles to the secure storage in the basement. The stairs to the frontage block have deliberately exposed dry risers and service pipes, showing a remarkably modern approach to design and aesthetics.

SECTION 5 CONSERVATION PRINCIPLES

St James's Building was designed for flexible usage and has been modernised and adapted several times in the passage of time. It is natural that this process should continue, but certain constraints need to be imposed so that the features of the building which give it special architectural or historic interest are not damaged, and are not altered without proper consideration.

The principles of conservation are well established in the ICOMOS Charter of Venice 1966, British Standard 7913 1998 (A Guide to the Principles of the Conservation of Historic Buildings) and Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) 1994, together with less formalised conservation philosophy.

The principles cover historic structures of all ages, and of all degrees of sensitivity and value: many do not apply to this particular building, but the following principles (which are a synthesis of the various documents) are of relevance:

the objective of conservation is to safeguard the building in the long-term, including provision for its security, maintenance and future viability. Any repair or adaptation work to the building should be of long-term rather than short-term benefit and durability.

conservation decisions should be based on a proper analysis of the building so that its history, structural condition and value are clearly understood.

conservation should be based on respect for the existing fabric, and should involve the least possible interference to those aspects which are of historic value.

conservation policy should give due regard to the quality and nature of previous repairs and alterations to the building, which may be of historic or technical interest in their own right.

there should be no significant alterations to the fabric unless carefully justified, and consistent with the overall conservation policy.

alterations should be reversible in future as far as possible, with minimal damage to the fabric.

restoration should only be carried out if there is conclusive evidence of the original state of the fabric and should not be based on conjecture.

features of historic interest should remain visible wherever possible. If any such features cannot remain visible they should not be removed or permanently obscured but should be capable of being re-exposed later.

any new material introduced into the fabric should be identifiable as such, to a degree dependent on the circumstances.

all alterations to the building should be recorded in documentary form and placed in an archive accessible to the public.

Two of the guiding principles of particular relevance to the St James's building are the avoidance of speculative restoration (where the exact nature of the original is unknown), and the need to distinguish new interventions from the original, in order to avoid confusing the historic evidence. All alterations should also be easily reversible to minimise cumulative damage.

In the case of the St James's Building (which is heavily tenanted) the successful conservation of the building will depend on its management. It would, for example, be acceptable for features repeated throughout the building (eg the structural beams, ducts and spandrels in the rear blocks) to be retained but encased or obscured from view, provided that some typical examples are left exposed in selected areas. These areas should preferably be under the exclusive control of the building management, but otherwise agreements with individual tenants will be required.

The following principles should therefore be followed:

1. Structure. Some representative samples of the structural frame should be left exposed to view internally. This should include a typical area in Blocks A-D and an area at high level (Floors 8 or 9) where there are large angled joints between the floor beams and verticals. (see also items 13 and 17 below).

2. Structure. Specific features identified in this report as being of structural interest ie the lattice beams crossing the light wells (see 4th and 8th Floor Plans), tie rods and braced columns (see 2nd Floor Plan) should be retained and left exposed.

3. Structure. The removal of the fire-proof concrete casings from the columns in the lift lobby of Floor 8 should not be repeated elsewhere unless essential to assist structural repair.

4. Plan Form. The clarity of the blocks should not be eroded by the removal of strong dividing walls, and should preferably be reinstated where the removal is known to be modern (notably the 4th floor junction of Blocks B and F). Any new links between blocks (eg from Block E to Blocks ABC or D) should be of limited size and preferably make use of existing openings. The access to the1st floor from the half-landing of the main staircase has confused interpretation of the building.

5. Plan Form. There is no requirement to reproduce the original internal layouts in Blocks ABCDE, since these are not known and the building was intended for flexible planning. Some totally undivided spaces would be an asset: otherwise, glazed screens, or lightweight partitions should be used, to show that they are non-structural and 'temporary'. Decorative finishes may also help to differentiate between original and modern.

6. Plan Form. There is no requirement to reproduce the original room layouts within Block F, since these are not known and the building was intended for flexible planning. Some large spaces would be acceptable but cellular division would be more appropriate here, with partitions again designed as modern insertions. On the 2nd floor the boardroom should be retained unaltered, and the original decorative plaster and joinery work of the other rooms.

7. Plan Form. Within Block F, the central chimney stacks along the corridor wall should be retained, and the existing room doorways in the corridor should be retained rather than new openings created.

8. Plan Form. The corridor on each floor of Block F should be maintained as a continuous route north-south serving Block F as its first priority, connecting the end stairs and the central lift lobby. The modern stair lobbies which now split some corridors at the north stair (Floors 5, 7 and 8) should be removed, and the stair accessed from Block A as originally. (see also item 23 below).

9. Elevations. The existing glazed curtain walls to the rear blocks should be retained for as long as possible, and any services etc penetrating the glazing should be confined to existing single panes. Any areas of the curtain walling to be replaced should repeat the previous pattern rather than differ (cf Block B, north east corner).

10. Elevations. The existing clear glazing to the rear blocks should be preserved. Solar heat gain or privacy should be provided by removable internal film rather than re-glazing in obscure glass.

11. Elevations. Double glazing is acceptable if by secondary internal glazing. Pane sizes should be as large as possible, with any sub-dividing frames coinciding with existing.

12. Heating and Ventilation. The ceiling ducts above the corridors of Block F should be retained. They should also be retained selectively in Blocks ABCD, and logically they should be retained and displayed in conjunction with the evidence of the heating system (see item 13 below).

13. Heating and Ventilation. The inclined spandrel walls and radiator bulkheads in the rear blocks should be retained, although enclosing in continuous ducting is acceptable. At some location the original fabric should be left exposed so that evidence of the structural / ventilation arrangement is visible. (see also item 12 above).

14. Heating and Ventilation. Heating installations should be discreet and not obtrude physically or visually in sensitive areas. The old convector heaters in some corridors of Block F are too obtrusive and should ideally be replaced.

15. Air conditioning. Unless controlled, the mixed occupancy of the building could lead to the random installation of local inlet and extract points on the elevations, which could damage the appearance of the building. Air conditioning on a local basis is not appropriate for Block F due to the historic sensitivity and masonry construction of the front and return elevations. It is acceptable in principle for Blocks ABCDE provided the inlet/extract points are discreetly located and rationalised so as to avoid disrupting the appearance of the elevations. It is suggested that specific bays on the elevations be allocated for this purpose.

16. Floors. Representative areas of the original hardwood block floors should be retained and displayed selectively in all blocks where they are of suitable quality. Raised floors are acceptable within Blocks ABCDE provided they revert to original levels at entrance doors, lifts etc. Raised floors within the Block F circulation areas are not acceptable. Raised floors within the Block F offices should not be inserted in Floor 2, and otherwise should only be inserted if original features (skirtings etc) are left intact.

17. Ceilings. Suspended ceilings are acceptable in Blocks ABCDE provided they stop short of the windows, with a sufficient space left for maintenance, and do not significantly affect the external appearance. They may be hung continuously below the cross beams but in selected spaces they should be omitted or inserted as 'floating' ceilings between the cross beams so as to leave historic evidence of the structure and original ducting exposed to view (see also items 1 and 12 above).

18. Services. The exposure of service pipes and ducts within Blocks ABCDE is in keeping with their historic and industrial character and is acceptable. It is not in keeping with Block F.

19. Internal features. The various features in Section 4.9 above should be retained. All original features eg doors, skirtings, architraves should be retained where possible.

20. Internal Interpretation. New insertions (fire doors, partitions, joinery trimmings) should be subtly or clearly contemporary in order to avoid confusion with the original. Replica joinery (eg north end of Block F corridor, Floor 2) causes confusion and should be replaced as opportunities arise..

21. Internal Interpretation. The Block F corridor is a major feeder and reference point on all floors. It requires uniform presentation on each floor, and variations in finishes and colour schemes (eg within Floor 2) should be eliminated. Although there is no case for treating all the corridors identically there is a case for harmonising the corridors throughout the Block, to reduce some of the present contrast.

22. Internal Interpretation. The clear difference in character and quality between Block F and the rear Blocks should be reflected in the interior design and fit-out. The materials and details used in Block F may not be appropriate in the simpler rear Blocks. The occupation of entire floors by one tenant may result in pressure for a unified treatment between Block F and the others, which should be resisted.

23. Staircases. The north stair of Block F has been downgraded with the abandonment of the north street entrance. It was originally a major vertical access route and should be fitted out and presented consistently through the height of the building. (see also item 8 above).

24. Staircases. The staircases at the east ends of Blocks ABCD are important vertical routes from the basement car parks etc, particularly since many of the rear offices have no direct access from within Block F. They require upgrading and uniform treatment through the building, especially where the lifts have been removed and closed off from the landings. If possible, one representative area should be retained in its original state (basement level?) with the white glazed tiles re-exposed.

25. Internal Decoration. The main entrance hall, main staircase, second floor landing / lift lobby, boardroom, and entrance hall / staircase to the Safe Deposit Store are all highly decorated in valuable materials: they should not be altered and any repair / restoration work should be done using specialist advice. This also applies to a lesser degree to the decorative features in other rooms on the 2nd floor of Block F. Otherwise the building is robust, and decorative features in the rooms of the building and the corridors of Block F would be compatible with the original status of the building as a prestige office and showroom.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Listed Building Entry

MANCHESTER

SJ8497NW
698-1/32/267
20/06/88

OXFORD STREET
(East side)
Nos.65 TO 95 (Odd)
St James's Buildings

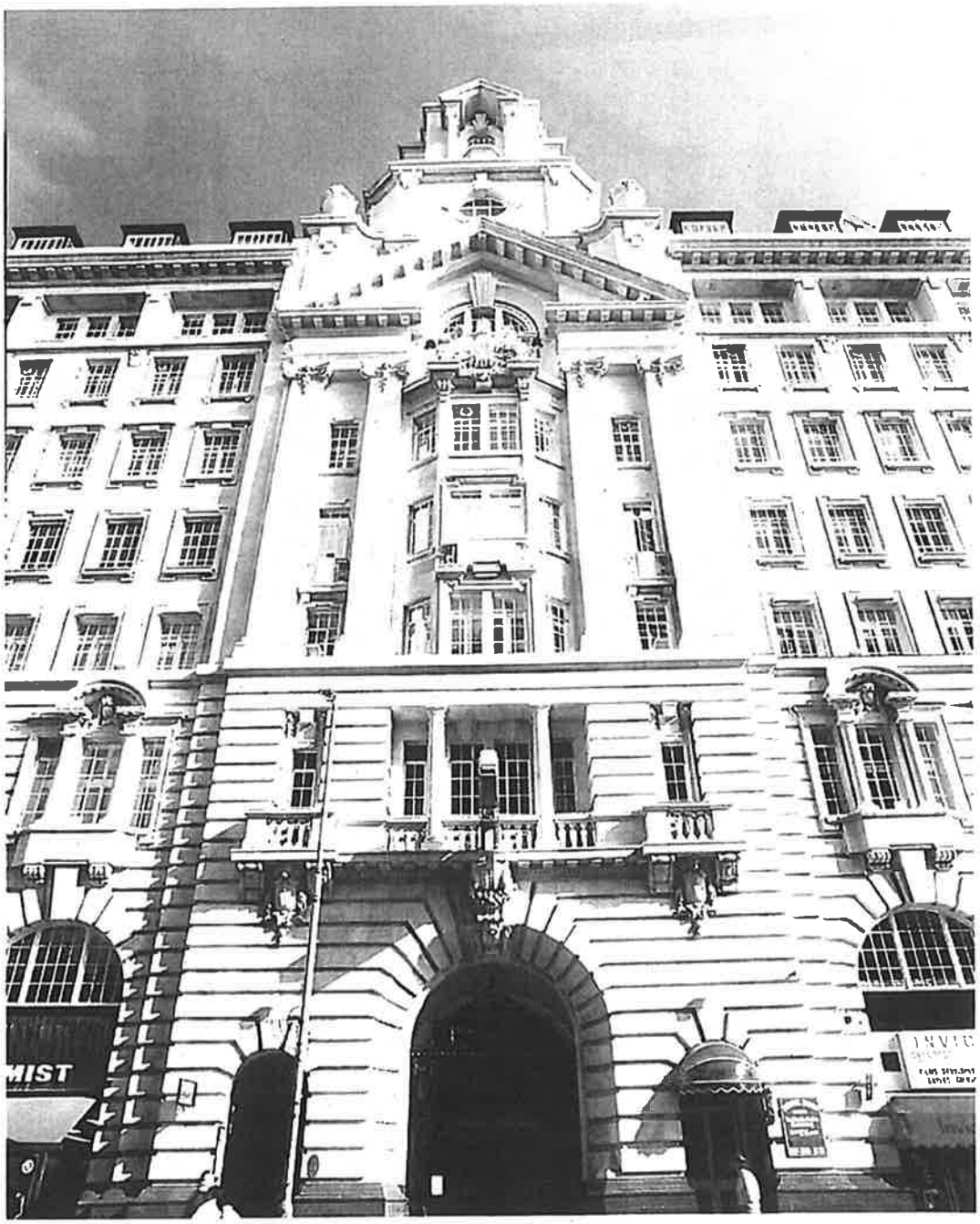
GV

II

Commercial building. 1912, by Clegg, Fryer and Penman. Steel frame with facade of Portland stone; green slated mansard roof. Very large rectangular plan. Neo-Baroque style. Eight storeys plus dormers, 3:6:3:6:3 bays, symmetrical, the centre and the ends breaking forwards slightly; ground to 2nd floors treated as rustic, with channelled masonry, ground and 1st floors set in arcaded round-headed openings with massive polished granite plinths to the piers, shops at ground floor and lunettes at 1st floor, triple keystones to the arches. The centre and ends have balustraded balconies to recessed 2nd-floor windows, and above this level are treated as giant pedimented aedicules (to the 7th and 6th floors respectively), with paired Ionic pilasters framing the windows (projected canted bay windows in the centre at the 1st level), and open pediments (triangular in the centre and segmental at the ends); and the centre has a square tower with stepped Baroque spire. Main entrance in centre bay, with massive round-headed archway. Otherwise, the 2nd floor window of the main ranges have aedicules with small balconies, engaged columns and alternating triangular and segmental pediments, and the other floors have 2 smaller windows per bay, all with architraves. Dormer windows to 7th floor. Moulded chimney stacks. Rear and interior not inspected.

APPENDIX 2

Photographs



Central Bay, Tower and Entrance on Oxford Street Elevation **Photo 1**



Main staircase from half-landing **Photo 2**



Main Entrance Hall **Photo 3**



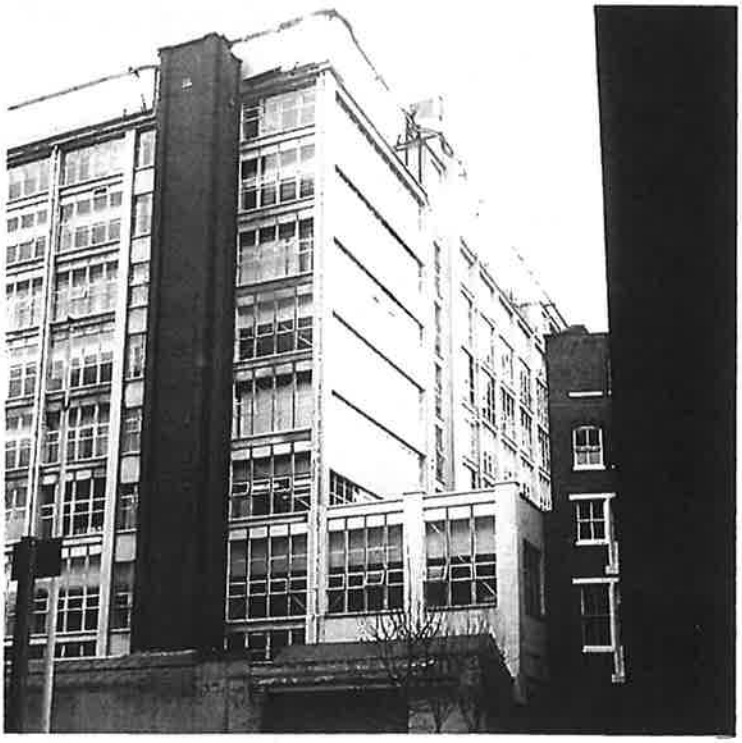
Typical Floor in Rear Block (Block E, 5th Floor) **Photo 4**



Block B, 9th Floor **Photo 5**



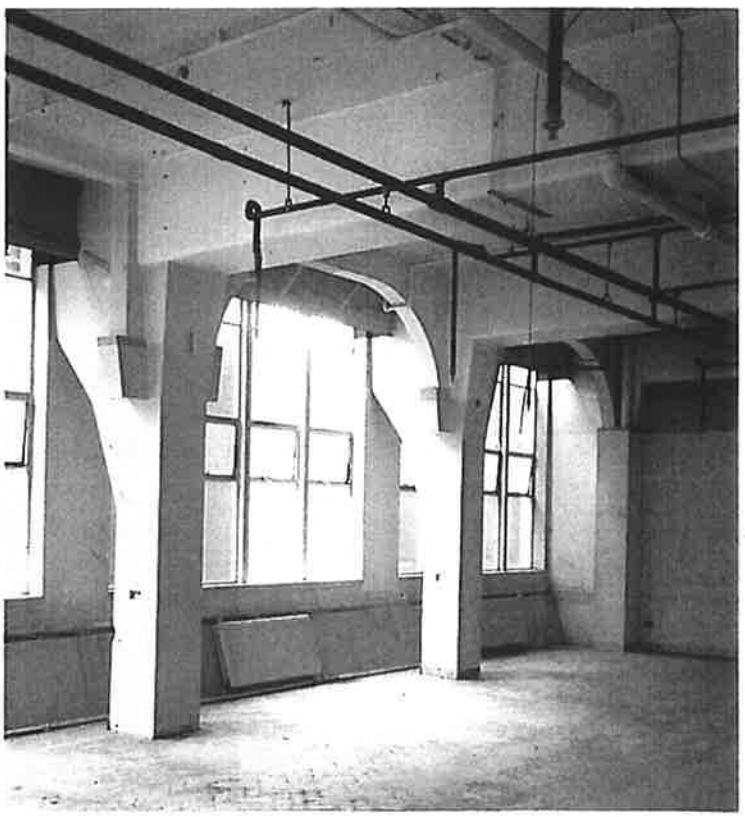
Rear view from canal **Photo 6**



Rear view from north-east **Photo 7**



Typical 2nd Floor room in Block F **Photo 8**



Block D, double and braced columns **Photo 9**



Stair between Blocks D and F **Photo 10**



Typical stair in Rear Block **Photo 11**

APPENDIX 3

Floor Plans