

Historic Building Watching Brief

33 Thomas Street
Manchester
M4 1NA

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Summary

This report was requested to monitor the opening out of historic elements prior to renovation of 33 Thomas Street, Manchester, in order to fulfil conditions listed in both the Planning Consent and Listed Building Consent. 33 Thomas Street is Grade II listed and also falls within the Smithfield Conservation Area.

Information

33 Thomas Street lies within the heart of Manchester City Centre. The building had been used as a jewellery shop since 1952 and has undergone some modernising to the ground floor, including an extension to the rear of the building. A full heritage report was carried out by Lee Hutchings from Stephen Levrant and submitted alongside the planning application.

Method

All alterations to the building that impacted on the historic fabric or exposed previously hidden structural material were monitored and photographed and the basement oven recorded at Historic England Level 3. The Watching brief was carried out between July 2023 to February 2024 this length of time allowed for materials to be very carefully removed and recorded photographically at every stage.



Basement

Rear Storeroom

This room at the back of the building was filled to ceiling level with rubble and bricks. Due to the area being overly congested material had to be removed from above. On excavating it appeared that the rubble may have come from previous building work as most of the materials were modern, perhaps from the extension on the ground floor. The floor of this space was filled with concrete and the walls are constructed from breeze block. The only find was two old safes possibly used for the jewellery shop. (Fig.1 and Fig.2)

Basement oven

The history of the oven can be found on the heritage statement produced by Lee Hutchings from Stephen Levrant. A level 3 recording for the oven was done by Christians Ltd on advice from L. Hutchings.

Stephen Levrant heritage consultants identified this precarious structure as a blacksmiths oven. A measured survey and laser scan of the oven were taken by Christians Ltd. The hazardous nature of the oven meant this had to be carried out first as it was being propped up by timber struts and a large fracture in the brick work was developing. (Fig. 4 and Fig. 5)

A separate .pdf and .dwgs of the survey have been attached, these have been produced by Christians Ltd.

Floor

The floor was partially covered by red solid bricks. The bricks were very soft and crumbling when being lifted by hand. Any lifted whole have been saved to be reused. Underneath the bricks virgin clay was exposed.



Fig.1 Opening in Ground floor, floor boards lifted to remove material from rear storeroom in basement. Breeze block walls and concrete visible.



Fig.2 Two old safes found in basement rear storeroom.



Fig.3 View into cleared rear store room. Salvaged bricks stacked on left side.



Fig.4 Basement oven being propped up due to unstable nature.



Fig 5. Side of Basement oven showing large fissure and movement away from the structure.

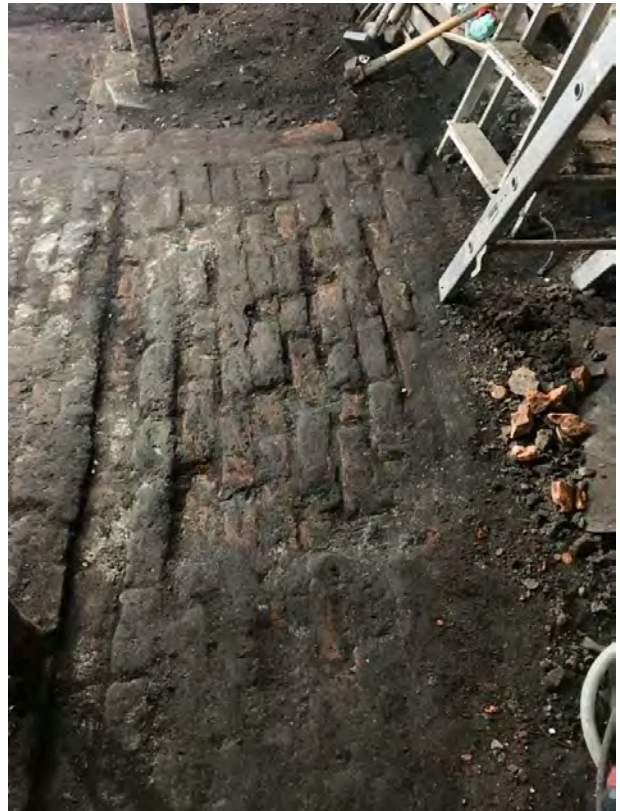


Fig 6. Recording of the pattern of brick flooring so it can be relayed in the same pattern.



Fig 9. Bricks lifted by hand.

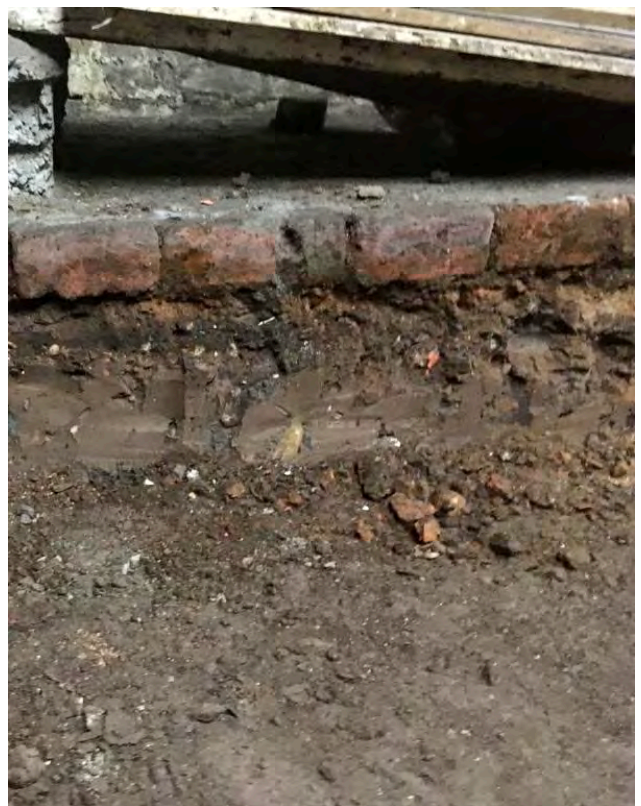


Fig 8. Virgin clay below bricks.

Ground Floor

Rear Fireplace

Upon removing modern plaster and bricks the exposed fireplace revealed breeze blocks at the back of the chimney, which is the wall of The Bay Horse Public House.

Front Fireplace

Removing the modern plaster exposed the original brick arch and a smaller infill. No other findings.

Beam and Pillar

An investigation into the pillar revealed a boxed in metal column holding the beam above. Exposing the original wooden beam, which had also been boxed in, revealed that perhaps it had been recycled from another building as the hand painted lettering on the front of the beam

revealed a sign for a 'cabinet furniture warehouse' which is part concealed by the bracket attaching pillar to beam. (Fig. 15)

Shop Front

It was suggested by the previous owner that the original signage was under the current facade, but exploration only uncovered the metal box which houses the roller shutter mechanism and a steel beam.

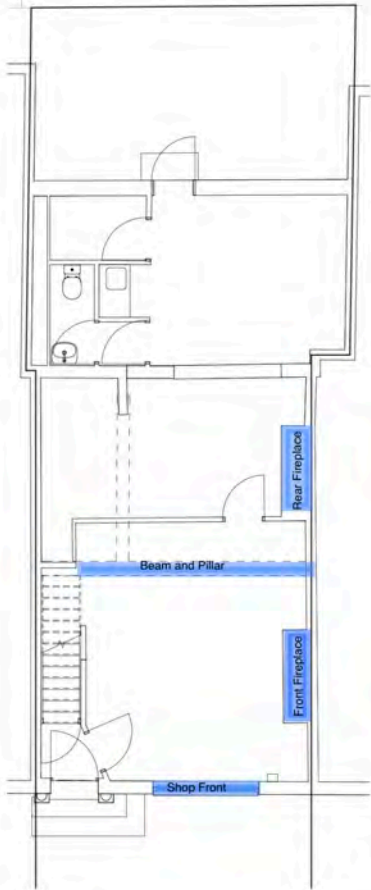




Fig 9. Rear Fireplace
modern plaster removed.



Fig 10. Back of rear fireplace
showing broken chimney and
breeze block work from The
Bay Horse Public house.



Fig 11. View inside rear Fireplace



Fig 11. Front Fireplace modern plaster removed



Fig 12. Small fireplace exposed, larger arch can be seen.



Fig 13. Ground floor aspect now fireplaces are open.



Fig 14. Exploring pillar

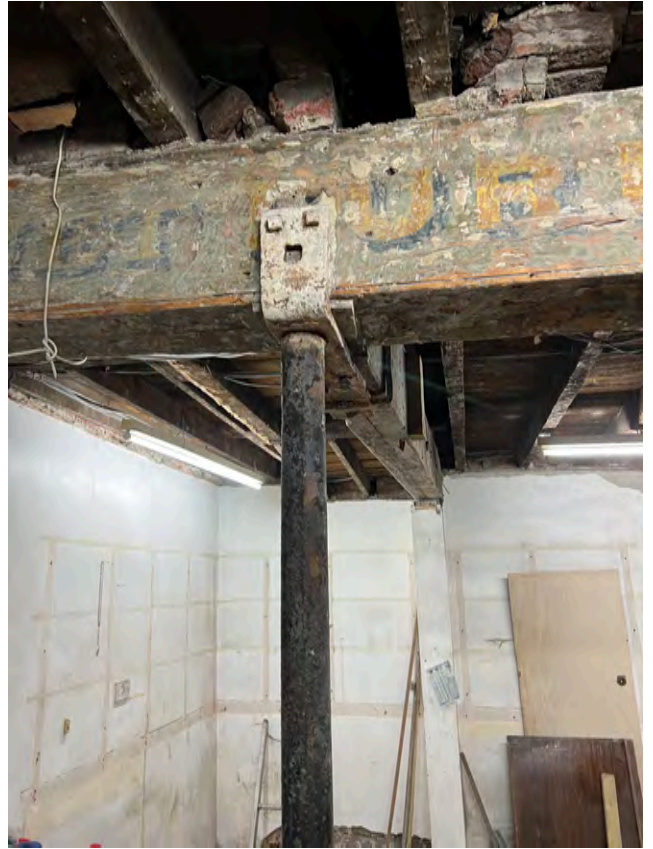


Fig 15. Pillar exposed meeting beam above



Fig 16. Original signage of suspected recycled beam. 'Cabinet furniture warehouse' Bracket covering part of original lettering.



Fig 17. Shop Front



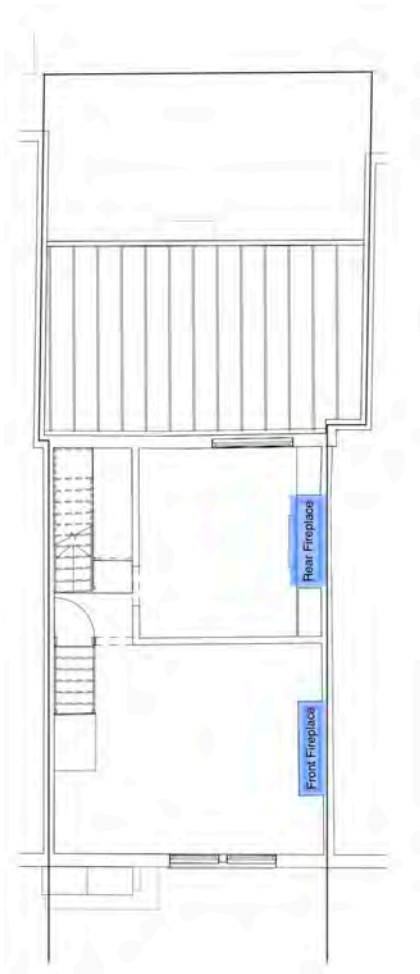
Fig 18. Close up of moulding revealed it was stuck onto new signage and not original.



Fig 18. Behind the signage the metal housing of the roller shutter was revealed.



Fig 19. Above the metal roller shutter is a steel lintel, unfortunately no original signage found.



First Floor

Rear Fireplace

Opening this fireplace revealed a brick arch and the original cast iron grate, part of which is broken.

Front Fireplace

This fireplace was more difficult to expose as the lintel had been removed and there is a crack in the brickwork travelling up the chimney breast. A temporary wooden beam was inserted to allow it to be exposed. Unfortunately the cavity was fill with bricks and soot, no original ironwork was found.



Fig 20. Rear fireplace with 1950's fire surround.



Fig 21. Rear fireplace opened to reveal broken iron grate.



Fig 22. Front Fireplace, very loose plaster.



Fig 23. Removal of plaster revealed missing lintel, temporary one put in place for support.

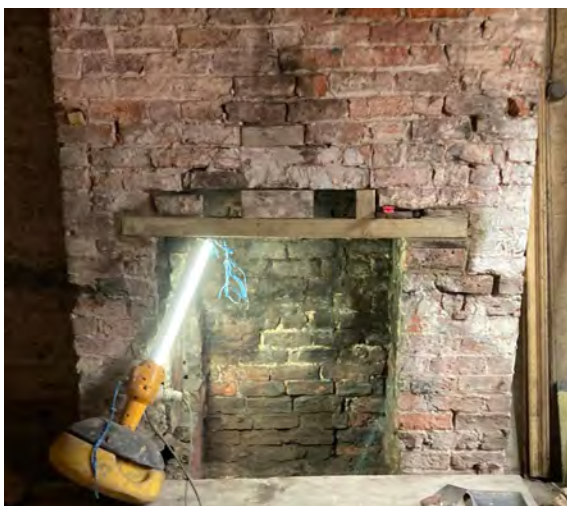
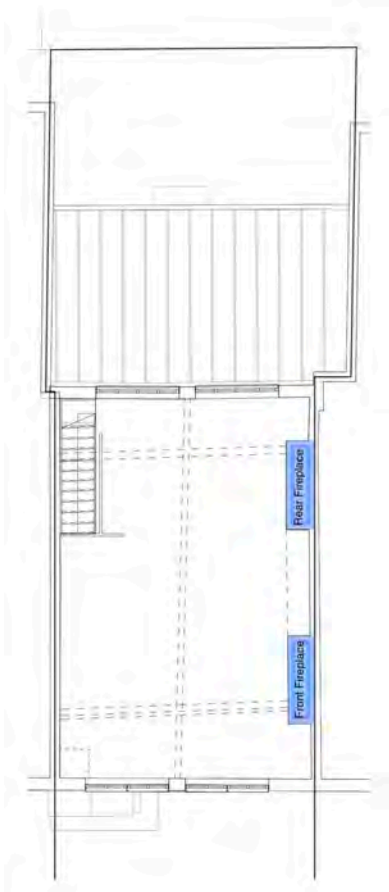


Fig 24. Front Fireplace, unfortunately no original findings.



Second Floor

Rear Fireplace

Small Fireplace opened to find original broken cast iron grate and slate tiles. An angle iron was placed below the brick arch.

Front Fireplace

Small Fireplace only revealed the chimney breast full of bricks and slate.



Fig 25. Rear Fireplace behind Painted brickwork.



Fig 26. opening up of rear Fireplace



Fig 27. Angle iron from rear fireplace.



Fig 28. Finds from inside rear fireplace, slates and broken iron grate.



Fig 29. Front Fireplace



Fig 30. The brick arch steadied with timber packers as it was in a delicate state. Repair required.



Fig 31. Photo of inside chimney of front fireplace filled with bricks



Fig 32. Removal of bricks exposed slates placed at the top.

Conclusion

The opening out works to 33 Thomas Street has allowed for original features to be exposed and some discoveries made, such as hand painted lettering on the beam situated on the ground floor. Unfortunately the basement oven can't be saved as the structure is too insecure and hazardous. All other openings and findings will remain exposed and conscientiously repaired and restored to allow for future enjoyment of the historic building.