



University of
Salford
MANCHESTER

Historic Building Investigation

The Island- Old
Colony House, South
King Street,
Manchester

Client:

Bowmer and Kirkland

Planning Ref:

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Technical Report:

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Summary

Bowmer and Kirkland has obtained planning consent from Manchester City Council to carry out the demolition of the existing buildings and structures (centred at NGR 383715 398251) and the erection of a 10-storey plus basement office building (Use Class E(g)), with flexible ground floor and basement uses (Use Class E) and rooftop amenity space, works to facilitate the pedestrianisation of the southern part of Ridgefield and other associated works (Planning Ref: 130553/FO/2021).

In order to secure archaeological interests and offset the harm of any impact on internal and external features of the building during demolition, Manchester City Council attached a condition to planning consent that required a scheme of archaeological investigation to be undertaken as part of the development. Following consultation with the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service, it was recommended that an appropriate scheme of archaeological works would comprise Level 1-type historic building investigation of the Old Colony House.

Salford Archaeology was commissioned by Bowmer and Kirkland to undertake the recommended investigation and fulfil the archaeological planning obligations. This concluded the Old Colony House was built in c.1924-1925, comprising a seven-storey building with a basement, of Portland stone. The building contained retail units to the ground-floor, offices to the first to third floor while the fourth and fifth floors were reserved for Old Colony Club. The building had continued to be used as offices during the 20th-century with a restaurant to the ground-floor until the early 21st-century

The archaeological investigation of Old Colony House had provided a valuable opportunity to record an example of a 20th-century office and retail building to mitigate any loss of historic fabric as part of the redevelopment. It has also enabled a review of the available documentary material to be combined with the physical evidence embedded in the historic fabric to produce a narrative of the building's development.

1. Introduction

Bowmer and Kirkland has obtained planning consent from Manchester City Council to carry out the demolition of the existing buildings and structures (centred at NGR 383715 398251) and for the erection of a 10-storey plus basement office building (Use Class E(g)), with flexible ground floor and basement uses (Use Class E) and rooftop amenity space, works to facilitate the pedestrianisation of the southern part of Ridgfield and other associated works (Planning Ref: 130553/FO/2021).

The site contains three extant buildings, Old Colony House, Grange House and 5 Ridgfield. Grange House and 5 Ridgfield were constructed in the 1960s and 70s and yield no historical significance. However, Old Colony House was constructed in the early 1920s and forms the basis of this report.

Old Colony House was built in c.1924-1925 comprising a seven-storey building with a basement, of Portland stone. The building contained retail units to the ground-floor, offices to the first to third floor while the fourth and fifth floors were reserved for Old Colony Club. The building had continued to be used as offices during the 20th-century with a restaurant to the ground-floor until the early 21st-century. The buildings are set to the southern extent of the St Ann's Square Conservation Area and adjacent to the Albert Square Conservation Area. None of the buildings are listed but form part of the setting of several Listed Buildings.

In view of the historic interest of the building, the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service (GMAAS), in their capacity as Archaeological Advisors to Manchester City Council, recommended that a historic building investigation of Old Colony House is carried out in advance of any development works. It was also recommended that a condition be attached to planning consent (Condition 16) that advised:

1. *'No development shall take place until the applicant or their agents or their successors in title has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works. The works are to be undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI)*
 1. *Informed by the updated North West Regional Research Framework, a phased programme methodology of investigation and recording to include:*
 - a) *a historic building recording of Old Colony House to Historic England Level 1, inclusive of a rapid internal survey and investigation of the extant basements.*
 - b) *Informed by the above, a watching brief undertaken during the removal of foundation slabs over un-basemented areas, to allow for observation of earlier structures.*
 - c) *Informed by above, targeted evaluation trenching to inform extant and survival of earlier structures.*
 2. *A programme for post-investigation assessment to include:*
 - a) *analysis of the site investigation records and finds*
 - b) *production of a final report(s) on the investigation results.*
 3. *Deposition of the final report(s) with the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record.*
 4. *Dissemination of the results of the site investigations commensurate with their significance.*

5. *Provision for archive deposition of the report, finds and records of the site investigation.*
6. *Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the approved WSI.*

Reason: In accordance with NPPF Section 16, Paragraph 199- To record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible.

In order to address this recommendation, Bowmer and Kirkland commissioned Salford Archaeology within the University of Salford to undertake the recommended Level 1 historic building investigation in accordance with the approved Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by L-P Archaeology.

1.2 Research Aims and Objectives

The principal aim of the historic building investigation, given the commercial nature of the project, was to provide a detailed record of Old Colony House prior to its demolition.

The stated objectives of the archaeological investigation included:

- to carry out an archaeological survey commensurate with an Historic England Level 1-type historic building investigation of the early 20th-century building known as Old Colony House. This will comprise a comprehensive photographic record and a written description;
- pending the results drawn from the historic building survey investigation, a watching brief may be required to monitor and record any hidden fabric during aspects of the stripping out and demolition of the buildings;
- to produce an archive for the project;
- to make the results of the work publicly available via the deposition of the final digital report with the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record and OASIS.

In addition, it was anticipated that the historic building investigation may inform some of the research questions presented in the current North West Archaeological Research Framework (<https://researchframeworks.org/nwrf/>):

Ind21: How did industrial period towns affect the pre-existing historic landscape?

Ind37: What do we understand about the historic development and character of retail outlets?

Ind108: What are the key buildings and styles associated with the evolution and growth of financial institutions?

1.3 *Historic Building Investigation Methodology*

The historic building investigation of Old Colony House was conducted following the ClfA Standards and guidance for archaeological building surveys (updated 2020), and was commensurate with a Historic England Level 1-type survey (Historic England 2016).

Level 1 Recording

Photographic Archive: a comprehensive photographic archive of the historic elements of Old Colony House was produced utilising a high-resolution digital camera. All frames, excluding general contextual views, incorporated a graduated metric scale.

Written Description: a description of the historic structures will be maintained to Historic England Level 1 standard. The records will essentially form a summary statement of the exterior and interior of the buildings.

In February 2022, Salford Archaeology was commissioned by Bowmer and Kirkland to undertake the recommended investigation and fulfil the archaeological planning obligations. This report presents the findings of the historic building investigation coupled with a summary of the documentary evidence.

2. The Setting

2.1 Location

Old Colony House (centred on NGR 383715 398251) is located within the centre of Manchester. The Site is bounded by John Dalton Street to the south, Bow Street to the east, South King Street to the north and Ridgefield to the west (Plate 1; Fig 1). The Site currently comprises three structures, Old Colony House, Grange House and 5 Ridgefield, however, Old Colony House forms the basis of this report.



Plate 1: Recent aerial shot of the site looking south

2.2 Geology and Topography

The underlying solid geology of the site comprises Sandstone of Cheshire Formation, with sedimentary bedrock formed 247 to 250 million years ago. The superficial deposits consist of Glaciofluvial Sheet Deposits of Devensian sand and gravel (British Geological Survey, 2018).

Topographically, the Manchester conurbation as a region lies within an undulating lowland basin, which is bounded by the Pennine uplands to the east and to the north. The region as a whole comprises the Mersey river valley, whilst the rivers Irwell, Medlock, and Irk represent the principal watercourses in Manchester and Salford (Countryside Commission 1998, 125). The Site area occupies relatively flat ground at a height of 37m above Ordnance Datum.

3. Historical Background

3.1 Old Colony House

A more detailed historical background was undertaken within the Heritage Statement (Levrant 2021). This section summarises its findings.

Old Colony House was constructed in 1924-25 and was designed by the prolific inter-war architect Charles Swain. The location of the building was located close to the Royal Exchange and Stock Exchange buildings and was the centre point between the railway stations of Victoria, Exchange, Central (now Manchester Central conference centre) and London Road (now Piccadilly). The site was previously occupied by a series of buildings that contained shops to the ground-floor and offices above (Levrant 2021).

The newly constructed building was a seven-storey structure with a basement and was built of Portland stone with bronze shop fronts to the ground-floor. The upper floors had been reserved for the Old Colony Club, which the building takes its name from. The club was an exclusive club for business and commerce, allowing businessmen across the world to engage and interact. The building served as the club headquarters for the north of England and by 1925 the club had 45 premises across the world.

The ground-floor of the building was used as retail units with bronze shop fronts and offered a wide range of luxury goods from prams to luxurious gowns (The Manchester Guardian 1927). The floors between the shops and the exclusive club were offices with the General Accident, Fire and Life Assurance Corporation located on the first-floor.

The building continued to be used as offices throughout the 20th-century, along with retail units to the ground floor. By the early 21-century the western section of the ground-floor had been altered and was in use as a restaurant.

4. Historic Building Investigation

4.1 Introduction

The programme of historic building investigation undertaken at Old Colony House on South King Street, Manchester was carried out to Historic England Level 1 standard. The site comprises a single building of seven-storeys plus a basement. The building was constructed during the early-20th century using Portland Stone to the north, east and west elevations and brick facing the southern elevation, below a flat roof.

4.2 External Description

The north elevation: the north elevation of the building, is constructed from Portland Stone from the ground-floor rising to the third floor (Plate 2). Two protruding Portland stone string courses were situated at sill height of the first and third floors. The fourth and fifth floors are set back and are faced in brick. The ground floor consists of 10 large shop front windows and three doorways. The location of the windows relates to the position of the original bronze shop fronts, now removed (Plate 2). The two outer doorways have been inserted into earlier window openings. The principal entry into the building was afforded by the central doorway. This had retained its original Art Deco style moulded Portland stone architrave with a protruding keystone. Etched into the centre of the keystone was 'OLD COLONY HOUSE' (Plate 3). The first-floor windows comprised panelled Portland stone lintels, while those to the second and third floors had flush lintels (Plate 4). The piers to the third-floor apertures contain recessed vertical panels.

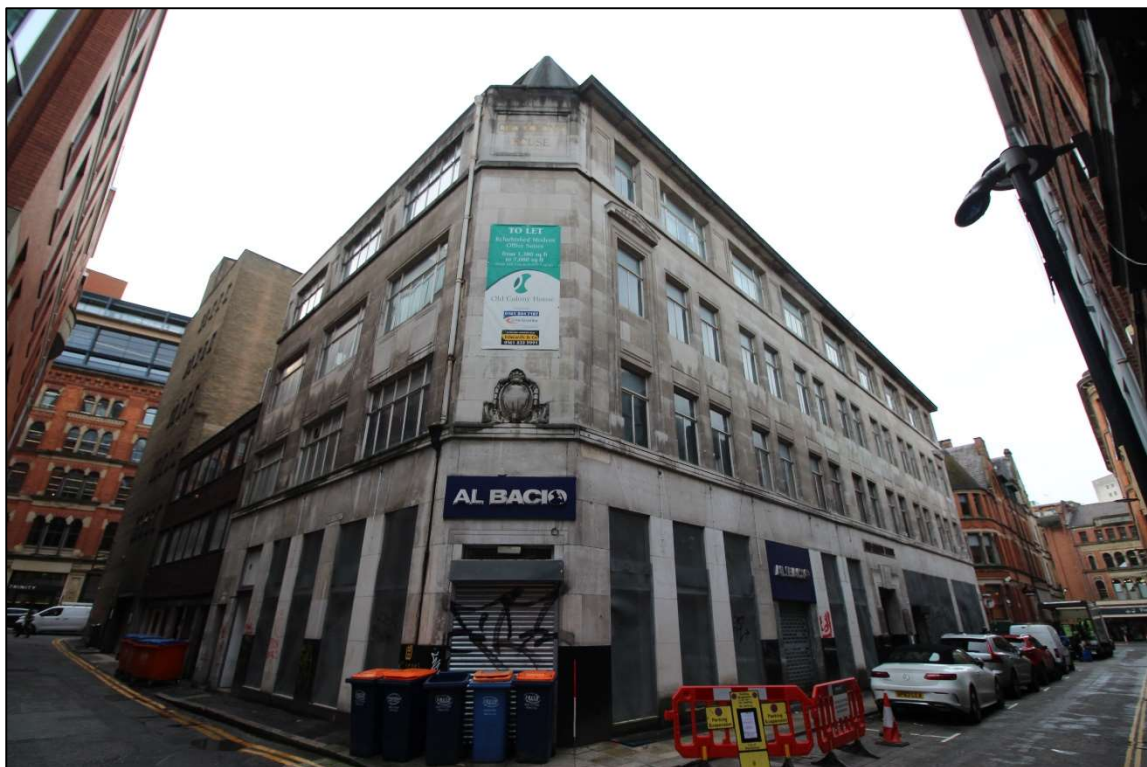


Plate 2: General view of the northern elevation of the Old Colony House



Plate 3: Detail of the Art Deco keystone to the central doorway within the northern elevation



Plate 4: Detail of the upper floor apertures to the northern elevation

The east and west elevations: these were also constructed in Portland stone from ground-floor rising to the third floor (Plate 5). The two string courses at sill height of the first and third floors of the northern elevation continue around to these elevations (Plate 5 and 6). The ground-floor had comprised of five large vertical shop windows with a doorway to the southern end of each elevation. The first, second and third floors contained horizontal apertures with the original steel framed casement window frames having been retained. The piers to the third floor and the lintels to the first floor had contained moulded recessed panels (Plates 5 and 6). As with the northern elevation, the fourth and fifth floors were set back. The fourth floor contained three dormer windows to the elevations. The north-east and north-west corners to the building contain a doorway to the ground-floor with stone detail above the projecting string course (Plates 2 and 6).



Plate 5: General view of the eastern elevation of Old Colony House



Plate 6: General view of the western elevation of Old Colony House

4.3 Internal Description

Internally, the building had been largely stripped of the original fixtures and fittings however, some had been retained to the upper-floors.

The central doorway to the ground-floor entered the former entrance hallway that had retained the original coffered plaster ceiling and cornice (Plate 7). The walls had been divided by a moulded timber dado rail, however the painted upper fill and the wallpaper to the lower fill are modern additions. The joinery, flooring and light fittings are all replacements.



Plate 7: The entrance hallway at the centre of the ground floor

Vertical access to the upper floors was gained via the central staircase which was located at the southern end of the hallway. This had retained the moulded timber dado rail and moulded handrail (Plate 8). The windows to each of the landings had been replaced with late 20th-century timber casement windows but several of the original steel frames had been retained to the upper floors (Plate 9).

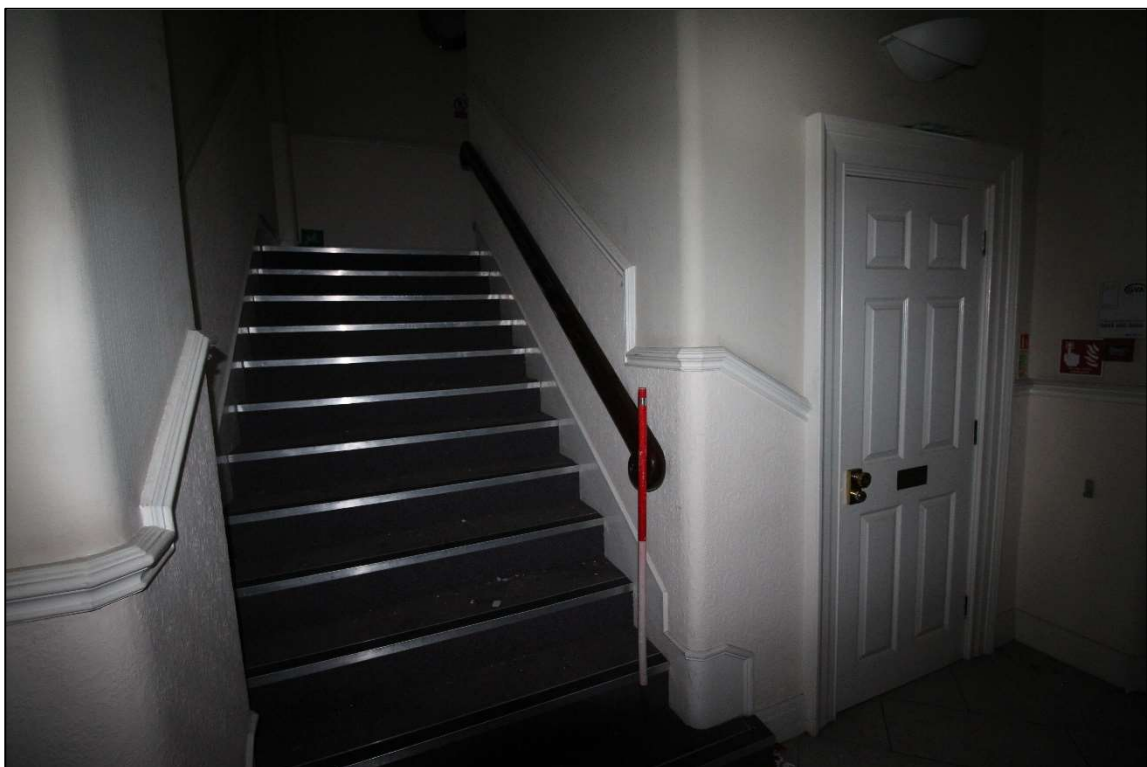


Plate 8: The central staircase with the retained moulded handrail and dado rail



Plate 9: The original steel casement window to the fourth floor landing

The layout of the building had been heavily altered, with the ground-floor having been divided into several commercial units including a restaurant at the western end. The upper floors had been converted into multiple offices with painted walls, false suspended ceilings and carpet covered floor. The two levels that were originally reserved for the Colony Club, had retained some of the original features. The rooms contained the original timber dado rails and the plain pilasters/curved beams to the walls and ceilings (Plate 10). The false suspended ceilings had obscured the coffered ceilings and coving above (Plate 11). The modern carpet tiles on the floors had been laid directly on top of the timber herringbone flooring (Plate 12).



Plate 10: Detail of one of the offices on the fifth floor



Plate 11: The original coffer ceiling to one of the rooms on the fourth floor



Plate 12: The timber herringbone floor below the modern carpet floor on the fifth floor

The basement was also accessed from the central staircase. The stairs comprised concrete risers and treads and had retained the original moulded timber handrail (Plate 13). The basement below the restaurant at the western end of the building had been used as a toilet area, while several offices with modern timber partition walls had been situated to the eastern side. These modern interventions had obscured or removed historical features. The northern central room was the exception. This room had retained the original white glazed bricks, laid in a three stretcher English Garden Wall bond (Plate 14).

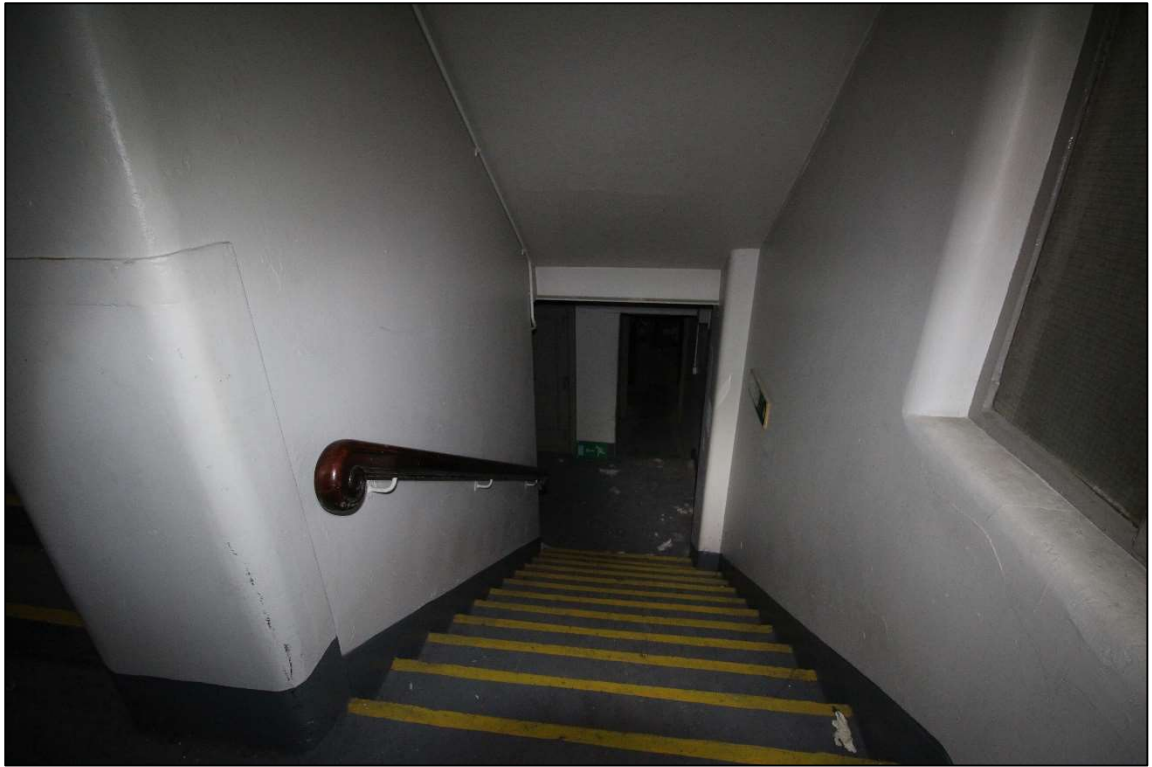


Plate 13: The concrete staircase leading to the basement of Old Colony House



Plate 14: The central room to the basement, detailing the white glazed bricks to the northern wall

5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The archaeological building investigation of Old Colony House has provided a valuable opportunity to record an example of an early-20th-century building, built to provide high-end retail units to King Street South with offices to the upper floors.

Old Colony House was constructed in the early 1920s, designed by the architect Charles Swain, a prolific inter-war architect. The building was built using Portland stone to the north, east and west elevations and brick to the south. The majority of the fixtures and fittings relating to the early use have been removed or obscured. However, some had been retained. This included the central staircase with some steel casement windows to the upper landings and the coffered ceilings and moulded dado rails to the rooms to the former Old Colony Club.

5.2 Conclusion

The conclusion drawn by the archaeological building survey has found that due to modern interventions the majority of the historical features have been removed during the building's time as modern units, a restaurant and offices, including the original bronze shop fronts. However, those original features that survive have been recorded by the Historical Building Inspection. The loss of these features has been adequately mitigated by this survey. Accordingly, it is recommended that no further archaeological work be undertaken ahead of the demolition of Old Colony House.

6. Archive

6.1 Archive

The results of the archaeological investigation form the basis of a full archive that has been prepared to professional standards, in accordance with current Historic England guidelines, the *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long Term Storage* (UKIC 1990), and current ClfA standards and guidance for the creation, compilation, transportation and deposition of archaeological archive. The project archive represents the collation and indexing of all the data and material gathered during the course of the project. The deposition of a properly ordered and indexed project archive in an appropriate repository is considered an essential and integral element of all archaeological projects by the ClfA in that organisation's code of conduct.

The documentary and digital archive generated from the historic building investigation is currently in the possession of Salford Archaeology. A copy of this report will be submitted to the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record in digital and hard copy formats. A digital copy of the report will be publicly available on the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) website.

Sources

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Acknowledgements

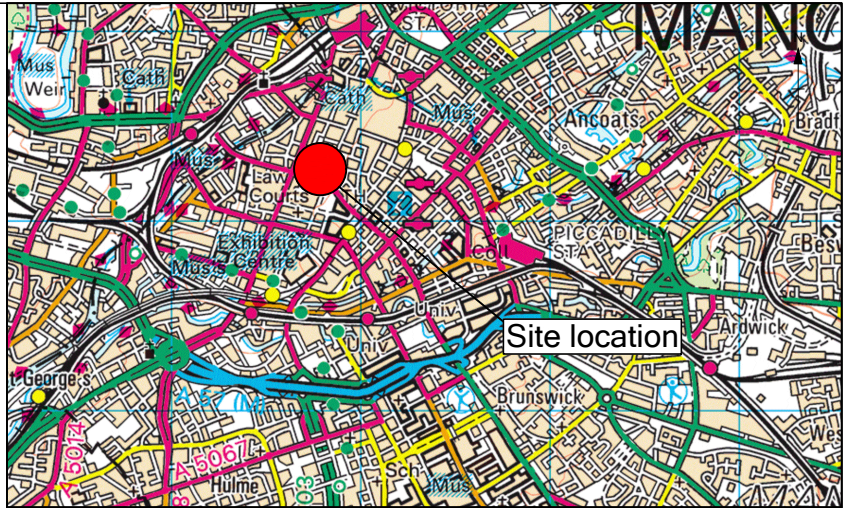
Salford Archaeology would like to thank Dan Jamison of Bowmer and Kirkland, for commissioning and supporting the historic building investigation. Salford Archaeology would also like to thank Ian Miller for providing monitoring support and advice through GMAAS.

The historic building investigation was undertaken by Lewis Stitt, who also compiled the technical report and accompanying illustrations. The report was edited by Kate Spencer, who also was responsible for the project management.



Appendix 1: Illustrations

Figure 1: Site location plan



The Island- Old Colony House, South King Street
Manchester.
Figure 1: Site Location

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