

THE THEATRE ROYAL, ST LEONARD'S PLACE, YORK

HERITAGE STATEMENT



for The Theatre Royal, York

By James Edgar and Glyn Coppack

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THEATRE ROYAL, ST. LEONARD'S PLACE, YORK

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 De Matos Ryan, Architects, have commissioned James Edgar, historic buildings consultant, and Glyn Coppack, archaeologist, to prepare a 'Statement of Significance' for the statutorily listed Theatre Royal, York. The buildings are listed at grade II* (the theatre) and grade II (the theatre offices or former manager's house) and within the basement of each property is a scheduled ancient monument). The buildings are located at National Grid Reference SE 6013452120. The local planning authority is The City of York Council.

1.2 As required by the National Planning Policy Framework ("NPPF") published in March 2012, applications concerning proposals affecting a designated heritage asset must be accompanied by a statement that describes;

'the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary' (para. 128).

1.3 This report, which is based on a site inspection and research, has been prepared by James Edgar and Glyn Coppack. It provides the information required to inform the repair and proposed alteration of the parts of the theatre. The work has included research in the York City Archives, the York Minster Library, the RIBA Drawings & Archives Collection, using online sources and reading of secondary sources. The site was visited November 2013 and an investigation and appraisal of the buildings undertaken.

1.4 The report is a brief statement of the history and significance of the buildings, their site and the setting. In this respect it fulfils the requirements of the first stage of a heritage statement by providing a thorough understanding of the areas to be altered and enabling a rigorous assessment of the significance of the parts (and the whole) of the heritage assets. It should therefore guide proposals for change. The

latter part of the report provides an assessment of the likely impact of the potential alterations on the significance of the heritage assets.

1.5 The authors would like to acknowledge Richard Taylor and Joy Cann, York City Archives, Vicky Wilson and Charles Hind, RIBA Drawings & Archives Collection, the York City Historic Environment Record, Nigel Wilkins, English Heritage Archives, Ian Drake, the Evelyn Collection, Angus Morrogh-Ryan and Raquel Borges for assistance with research and analysis. The most important work on the history of the Theatre Royal remains Sybil Rosenfeld's *The York Theatre*, completed in 1948 and published in 2001 by the Society for Theatre Research. Dr Rosenfeld's volume is a mine of information painstakingly compiled from playbills, newspaper reports, corporation minutes and the sometimes verbose writings and speeches of those who were there.

1.6 The York City Archives, the Evelyn Collection, the York Museums Trust [York Art Gallery] and the English Heritage Archives, Swindon have kindly given permission for the reproduction of images, photographs and drawings.

2 HISTORY OF THE MEDIAEVAL BUILDING AND ITS SETTING

2.1 *The archaeological and topographical setting of the Theatre Royal*

2.1.1 The Theatre Royal is a composite structure which retains medieval, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century elements and associated archaeological deposits within its current fabric, the national significance of which accounts for its Grade II* Listing and partial Scheduling as an Ancient Monument. Additionally it lies in an area of nationally, and arguably internationally significant archaeology, the Roman legionary fortress of *Eboracum*, the Anglo-Scandinavian city of *Jorvic*, and the walled medieval and post-medieval City of York, all of which provide and have influenced its setting.

2.1.2 Although limited excavation has recovered evidence for Iron Age settlement and field systems in this part of York, the first major development was the creation of a Roman legionary fortress for *Legio IX Hispana* when it moved north from Lincoln in c. 71 AD. Originally a timber and earthwork structure, it was replaced by a stone fortress and permanent stone buildings from c. 120 AD, and continued to be occupied until c. 400 AD, with substantial evidence of rebuilding and modification in the fourth century. The Theatre Royal lies in the *praetentura* of the fortress, the forward area that contained the tribunes' houses and the barracks of the leading

cohorts. Significant late-Roman and sub-Roman levels are likely to survive, on the evidence of excavation at 8 Blake Street to the south of the theatre, at c. 2 to 2.5 m. below current street level.¹

2.1.3 While Anglo-Saxon occupation within the fortress area is generally noticeable by its absence, it cannot be discounted. Excavation at Blake Street indicated that the first re-occupation began in the early tenth century, and this is supported by the evidence of Anglo-Scandinavian place-names in this part of York. However, the recovery of two fragments of Middle Anglo-Saxon cross-shafts from St Leonard's Place close to the Theatre Royal, dated by the late Jim Lang to the late seventh and ninth century suggest a Middle Anglo-Saxon church close by, in an area which was otherwise largely open, and which has been suggested to be an elite or religious space.² By the early seventh century, the city, now called *Eoforwic* and developing around the enclosure of the Roman fortress, had become an important royal settlement in the Kingdom of Northumbria. The first church to be built in York, still unlocated, is the church built and extended by St Paulinus for King Edwin of Northumbria after c. 625.

2.1.4 *Eoforwic* was taken by Viking settlers in 866 and, renamed *Jorvic*, and was to remain a focus of Anglo-Scandinavian influence in England until 1069. Settlement began to spread into the fortress area, including the vicinity of the Theatre Royal, by the beginning of the tenth century. In c. 937, a hospital was supposedly founded by King Athelstan on a site to the west of the contemporary cathedral (the site of which is currently unlocated) and associated with the Culdees who served that church. Patricia Cullum suggests that this was a preserved memory of a tenth century foundation, known only from a thirteenth century source.³ Nicolas Orme, however, has clearly demonstrated that no firm documentary evidence exists for the establishment of any hospital in England as a free-standing independent organisation before the Norman Conquest, and suggests that the apparent endowment by Athelstan should be seen as a source of income used to support the

¹ R A Hall, 'Excavations in the Praetentura: 9 Blake Street', *The Archaeology of York*, 3/4 (1997).

² J T Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Sculpture VI: Northern Yorkshire* (Oxford 2002), ?pp; see also RCHM(E) *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the City of York V: The Central Area* (London 1981), 95.

³ P Cullum, *Cremetts and Corrodies: Care of the Poor and Sick at St Leonard's Hospital, York in the Middle Ages*, *Borthwick Papers* 79 (1991); and 'St Leonard's Hospital. York: The spatial and social analysis of an Augustinian Hospital', in R Gilchrist and H Mytum (eds) *Advances in Monastic Archaeology* BAR British Series 227 (1993), 11-18.

needy informally.⁴ The existence of this endowment was confirmed without mention of a hospital by William I.⁵

2.1.5 William II Rufus granted a site for a new hospital in York before 1100, an area of about 4 acres, and built a chapel of St Peter there from which it took its dedication, and to which he transferred the endowment held by the Chapter of St Peter of York. The hospital was to be served by Augustinian canons and sisters. Excavation has revealed two or more phases of major timber buildings along the south-west fortress wall that indicate its development in the late 11th and early 12th century and which might suggest similar development elsewhere. The boundaries of this hospital are known from later documents. The north-west and south-east boundaries were the surviving walls of the Roman fortress to either side of the Multangular Tower, the south-east boundary lies below the present Museum Street (originally Footless Lane, more recently Finkle Lane) with the hospital's principal gate opposite the end of Blake Street, with the north-eastern boundary returning along the north-eastern boundary of the Theatre Royal, turning west on the north side of a road immediately north of the twelfth century undercroft within the Theatre Royal and continuing to the midline line of the present St Leonard's Place and following the curve of that road towards Bootham Bar. This area is shown to be extra-parochial on the 1852 Ordnance Survey map of York, and includes the ditch outside the city wall.

⁴ N Orme & M Webster, *The English Hospital, 1070-1570* (London 1995).

⁵ W. Dugdale, J. Caley, H. Ellis, and B. Bandinel, (and R. Taylor) (eds), *Monasticon Anglicanum: A History of the Abbeys and Other Monasteries, Hospitals, Friaries, and Cathedrals and Collegiate Churches of England and Wales*, 6 Vols. in 8 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1817-31), VI, 601.



1852. Ordnance Survey Town Plan showing the extra parochial landholding of St Leonard's Hospital at its greatest extent: parish boundary in green.

There was a water gate to the river inserted through the fortress wall close to the south-east corner of the enclosure. The Theatre Royal therefore lies within the northern half of the late eleventh century St Peter's Hospital, and in fact is built on top of two of its known buildings.

2.1.6 The first documentary evidence of building actually comes between 1119-33 when Henry I issued instructions to the Sheriff and Royal Foresters of Yorkshire regarding a grant of building materials towards the construction of the hospital, probably the latest timber phase before building in stone began.⁶

2.1.7 King Stephen built a church dedicated to St Leonard 'in the high street adjoining the hospital',⁷ allegedly after the hospital was destroyed by fire in 1137, though evidence for this fire is now known to result from a mistranslation (C. Norton, pers comm). The site of the church is not known but may be a rebuilding on the site of an earlier church. It was from this church that the hospital was renamed as St

⁶ W. Farrar (ed) *Early Yorkshire Charters I* (Edinburgh 1914), 142.

⁷ Calendar of Patent Rolls 1542-47, 405).

Leonard's Hospital. From evidence of surviving structures, Stephen's work is likely to have been considerable, and to have included a two-storey infirmary range along the south-west fortress wall and the twelfth century structures incorporated in the Theatre Royal.

2.1.8 Letters of protection issued in c. 1150-61 because the hospital 'could not give support to the sick because of the destruction of their house and the plunder of their animals'. This suggests either that Stephen's building campaign was left incomplete or more likely something had gone badly wrong in the last years of his reign.⁸ St Leonard's Church was not consecrated until 1153.⁹

2.1.9 A major building campaign is marked by John le Romeyne's extension of the hospital infirmary in the second quarter of the thirteenth century (see below), and a further campaign is evident in 1292¹⁰ and 1309¹¹, but there is no evidence of work of that period in the surviving structures of the hospital. In 1299, however, the hospital was licensed to stop up a lane from Blake Street to Petergate and enclose it with a wall to enlarge the hospital court.¹²

2.1.10 There is evidence that the hospital was in decline in the later Middle Ages. In 1350 its buildings were in great disrepair,¹³ and in 1515 the church and other buildings were again dilapidated.¹⁴ The hospital was suppressed in 1540, and was held by its last master Thomas Magnus as part of his pension until 1544, when it was granted to Sir George Darcy.¹⁵

2.2 *The Hospital of St Peter, later St Leonard: surviving and documented buildings*

2.2.1 Though the site of the hospital is known and has been studied since the early 19th century, it remains little understood as an entity. Recent research, some of it unpublished, has done little to resolve its interpretation, and in some areas confused the situation.

2.2.2 The stone south-west range of the hospital built over the levelled rampart of the Roman fortress replaced an earlier timber building of uncertain extent, and

⁸ W. Farrar (ed) *Early Yorkshire Charters* I (Edinburgh 1914), 153.

⁹ Christopher Norton, pers comm via Stuart Harrison.

¹⁰ Calendar of Patent Rolls 1292-1301, 402.

¹¹ Calendar of Chantry Warrants 1244-1306, 297.

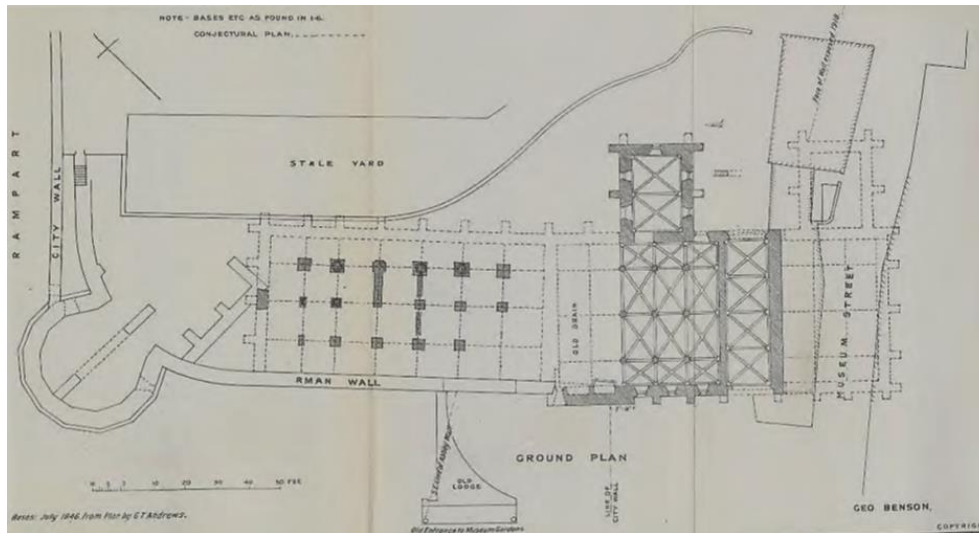
¹² Calendar of Patent Rolls 1292-1301, 402.

¹³ Calendar of Patent Rolls 1348-50, 518

¹⁴ W. Page (ed) *Victoria History of the County of York*, 3 (London 1913), 343.

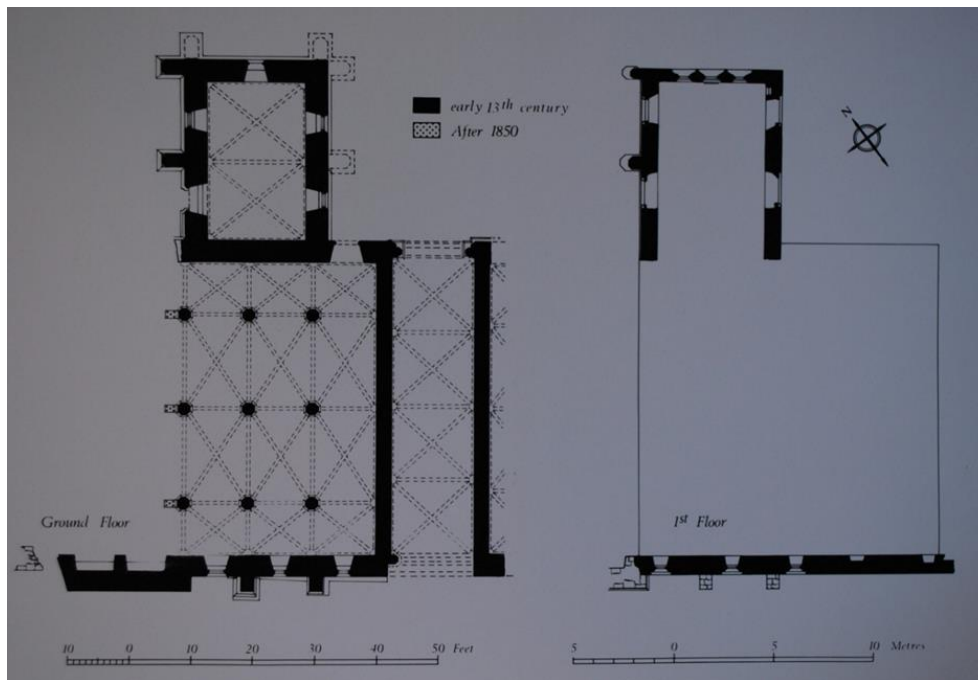
¹⁵ *Ibid.*

known only from unpublished excavations by the York Archaeological Trust in 2001-04. This timber building itself replaced an earlier timber structure at the foot of the Roman rampart. The stone range, four bays wide and eleven bays long, is normally interpreted as the Infirmary Hall, known to have been built on the city wall. Loose architectural detail would suggest that it dates to the late 1130s or 40s, and that the ground floor was vaulted. The building extended from the Roman Multangular Tower on the west corner of the fortress to Interval Tower SW6, and later extended to include that tower, which itself was demolished.



Benson's plan of the Infirmary Range taken from *An Account of the City and County of York, pt. 2, Later Medieval York (1100-1603)*, York 1919, Fig. 12. The undercroft is now known to be 11 bays long.

2.2.3 John le Romeyne, Treasurer of the Cathedral and active 1130-55, extended the building by five bays, with a chapel of two bays over an undercroft to the north east, the four-bay lower or water-gate, and a further building to the south east four bays wide and of uncertain length and of uncertain length now lying below Museum Street. With the exception of this last part, these buildings survive to first floor level or just below. Architecturally, these buildings must date to the 1230s or 40s but their date has been questioned on the basis of pottery recovered from construction deposits (unpublished). As the closest comparable buildings are the north transept of York Minster and the eastern transept of Fountains Abbey, these buildings must have been completed in Romeyne's life time, that is before 1255, the suggested archaeological date of the early fourteenth century cannot be seriously entertained.



RCHM(E) survey of John le Romeyne's extension of the 1240s and 50s to the Infirmary Range.

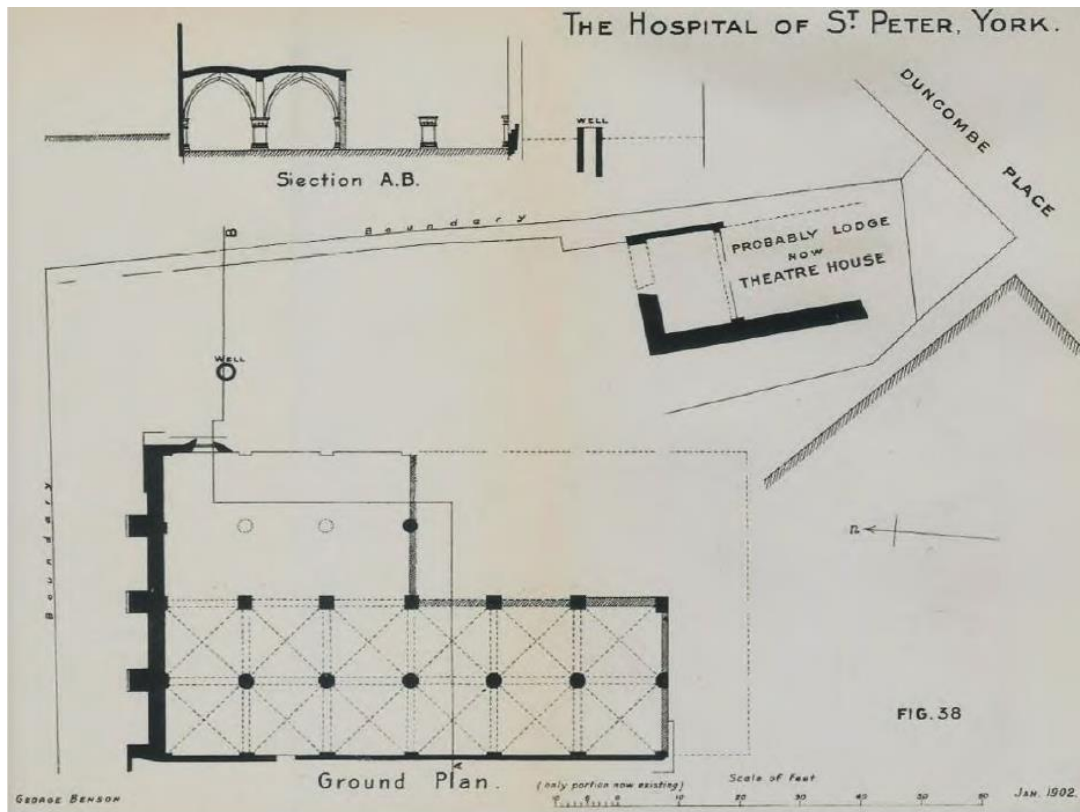
2.2.4 These buildings along the south-west fortress wall are usually referred to as the Hospital of St Leonard.

2.2.5 There are three further structures in the northern part of the hospital enclosure, of which the most significant is the undercroft below the Theatre Royal, together with the ground and first floor of the former manager's house, both again buildings of the 1130s or 40s, and a late medieval building incorporated in the cellarge of the Red House which has not previously been identified.

2.2.6 The mid-twelfth century building below the Theatre Royal has been traditionally identified with St Peter's Hospital since at least the early nineteenth century. Unlike the buildings along the south-west fortress wall, this building is on the alignment of the 11th century and later Minster which would suggest it is one of the buildings of the Augustinian canons rather than an Infirmary building. Its original form can be recovered from George Benson's plan of before 1901, and further detail recovered from Joseph Halfpenny's view of the western part in 1807.¹⁶ Its approximate elevation, to roughly eaves level is apparent from G H Brown's watercolour painting of 1865-70. Parts of the west wall can still be identified in the western facade of the current theatre. Benson was able to demonstrate that the

¹⁶ Joseph Halfpenny, *Fragmenta Vetusta or The Remains Of Ancient Buildings In York*, 1807.

building was 4 bays wide and six bays long, and that the north wall was an external wall with deep buttresses (probably extended to add support) and shallow clasping buttresses at the north-east and north-west angles. This latter buttress apparently contained a spiral stair, and Brown actually shows one of its loops. Benson was unable to access the outer faces of the side walls and it is uncertain that they were buttressed. This is significant because it is uncertain whether this building had any lateral attachments or was free-standing. Halfpenny indicates a door in the second bay from the north in the west wall, and a window in the north wall of the second aisle from the west. Benson adds a window in the northernmost bay of the east wall, with a stepped internal spay, but does not show the one recorded by Halfpenny, indicating that the north wall must have been reduced to below cill level when he saw it. The vault, a groined vault carried on slightly pointed square-sectioned transverse arches, is supported by rectangular responds against the aisle walls, round piers marking the outer bays, and square piers along the centre line of the building. All the surviving capitals and those shown by Halfpenny are plain scalloped capitals, with three scallops to a face. A loose capital and part of a pier re-erected in the surviving part of Romeyne's undercroft is reputed to come from this building, and that has fine reeds between the scallops, suggesting that some parts of the vault were more decorated and that the building was partitioned into a number of rooms, some more elaborate than others. This building is contemporary with the building along the Fortress wall.



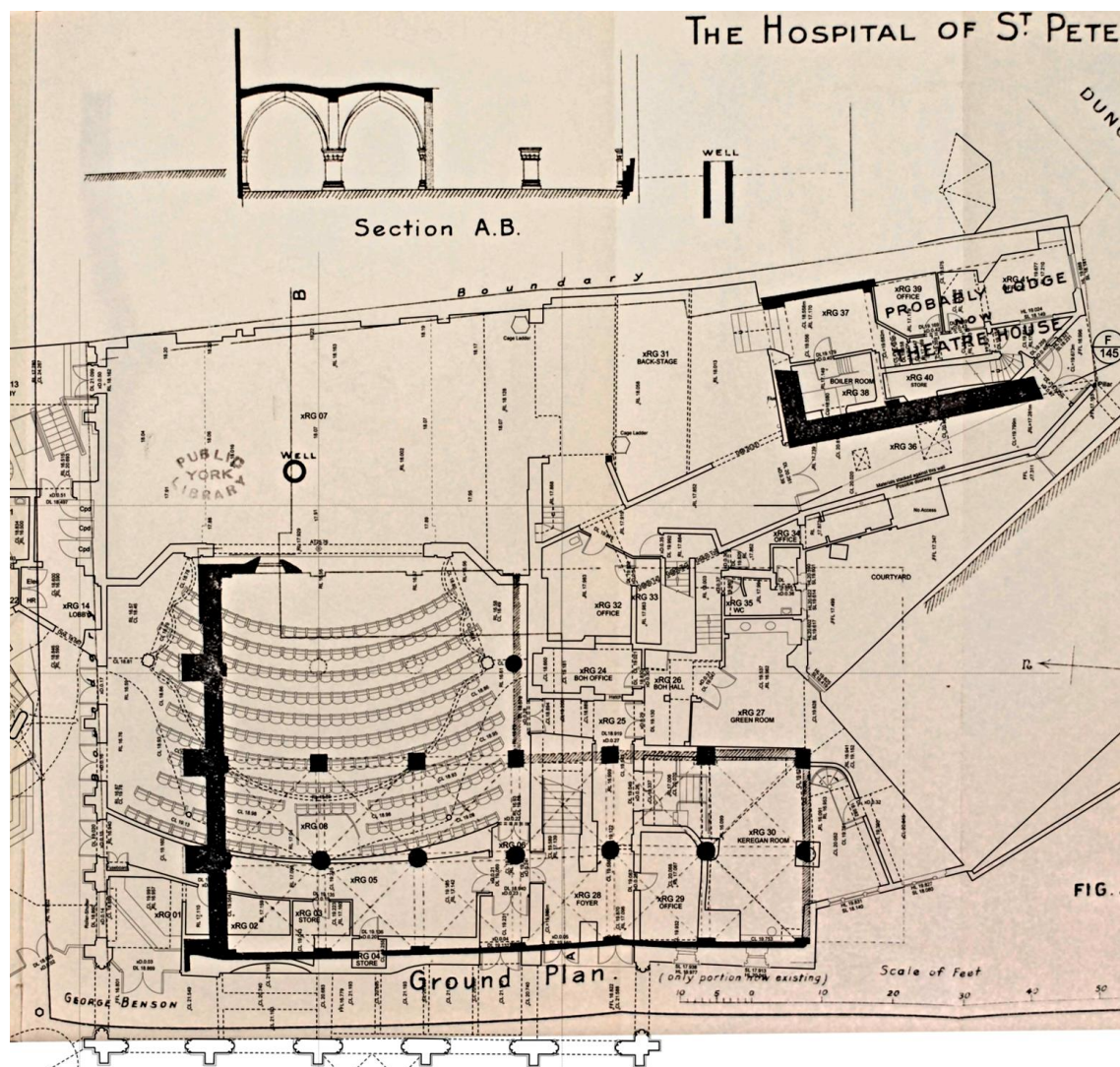
Plan of mediaeval in the undercroft at the Theatre Royal, drawn 1902. (Benson, 1911, Fig.38)



1807. The 'Cloister'. Joseph Halfpenny

2.2.7 Halfpenny described the view (Plate XVI) as follows:

the Cloister to St. Peter's Hospital in the Mint-Yard, represents the whole length, which is at present divided; one half of which is used for a spirit vault and the other for a stable. The pillars are five feet in height, and two feet and six inches in diameter: from the level of the top capitals to the point of the arches, seven feet and two inches; and at the intersection of the diagonal arches, it rises two feet and six inches higher than the other, so as to form a dome between the pillars. The whole length of the cloister is eighty feet, and the width twenty-five feet wide: part of which is under the Theatre.



Overlay of 1902 Benson on present plan. Raquel Borges, De Matos Ryan, Architects.

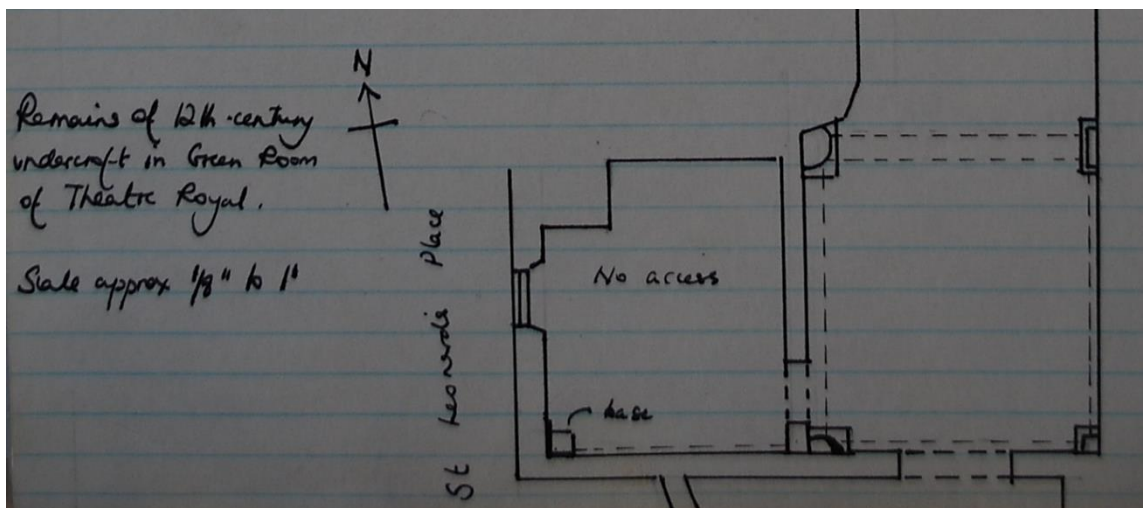
2.2.8 One bay of a vaulted compartment originally at least two bays wide and six long is preserved as a semi-basement meeting room in the Theatre Royal.



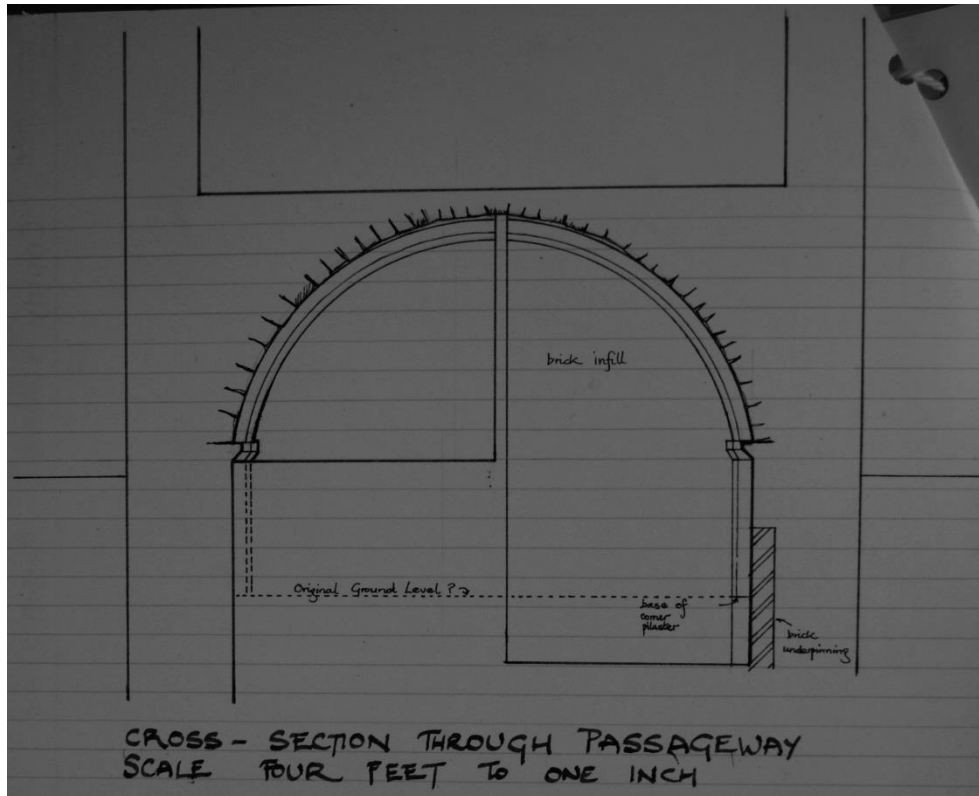
Photographs accompanying RCHM investigator's notes, 1974. (English Heritage Archives, Swindon).



2.2.9 A plan, of what remained in 1974, and a section were included in the notes by the investigator from the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England). The remaining parts was measured as 11 ft 5 ins long and 10 ft 1 in wide. 'Part of one column and a pilaster can be seen at the south end, and to the north is a full pilaster, with a scalloped capital, and part of a column. Part of another pilaster is in the bay to the west.'



Plan from RCHM investigator's notes, 1974. (English Heritage Archives, Swindon)



Section from RCHM investigator's notes, 1974. (English Heritage Archives, Swindon)

2.2.10 The investigator's notes state that the voussoirs of the pointed arch are later, possibly in the middle period of the second half of the 12th century, and were part of a phase of remodelling or repair. This is certainly not the case and the transverse arches and groined vault are contemporary with the piers and capitals. It was also noted that

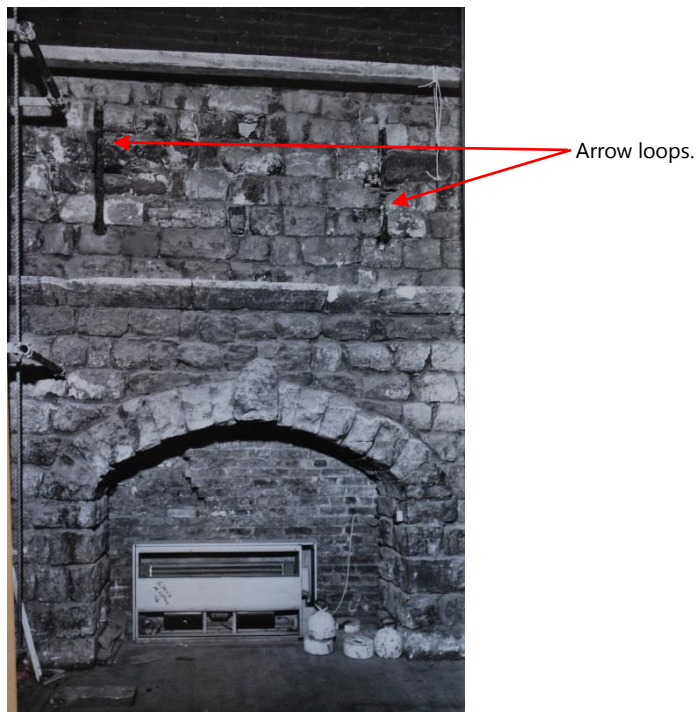
Behind the present stage is a wall of coursed rough masonry with an arched opening, an offset with chamfered string and two loops. The wall is about 16' 3" long and rises to a height of approximately 17'. ... In the W wall of the theatre offices some mediaeval masonry remains, with the top of a 13th-century lancet window therein.

2.2.11 To the east of the undercroft, and probably enclosed on its north side by a wall, was a yard, in which Benson recorded a well which is still extant below the theatre stage, together with what appears to be part of an enclosing well-house.

2.2.12 There have been two modern archaeological interventions by the York Archaeological Trust associated with the building. The first in 1998 examined the south-western bays of the undercroft that survived the early twentieth century redevelopment of the theatre (see below). It was primarily concerned with the

reduction of post-medieval floors and identified probably post-suppression partitioning not shown on Halfpenny's view of 1807.¹⁷ The second in 2003 recorded the excavation of a pit to take a disabled ramp some 4m north of the north wall and 2.25m east of the east wall of the undercroft recorded by Benson.¹⁸ This is now known to lie outside the hospital precinct as recorded on the 1852 Ordnance Survey map of York.

2.2.13 To the east of the yard, and surviving as the rear wall of the theatre is a section of magnesian limestone wall, approximately 5.5 m. high, with a gate opening westwards in it immediately to the north of the undercroft. This must be an unrecorded length of the Minster precinct wall, for the wall visible in the rear wall of the theatre is the external face with two cruciform arrow loops clearly visible. The RCHM(E) recorded this gate but failed to realise it was the external face.



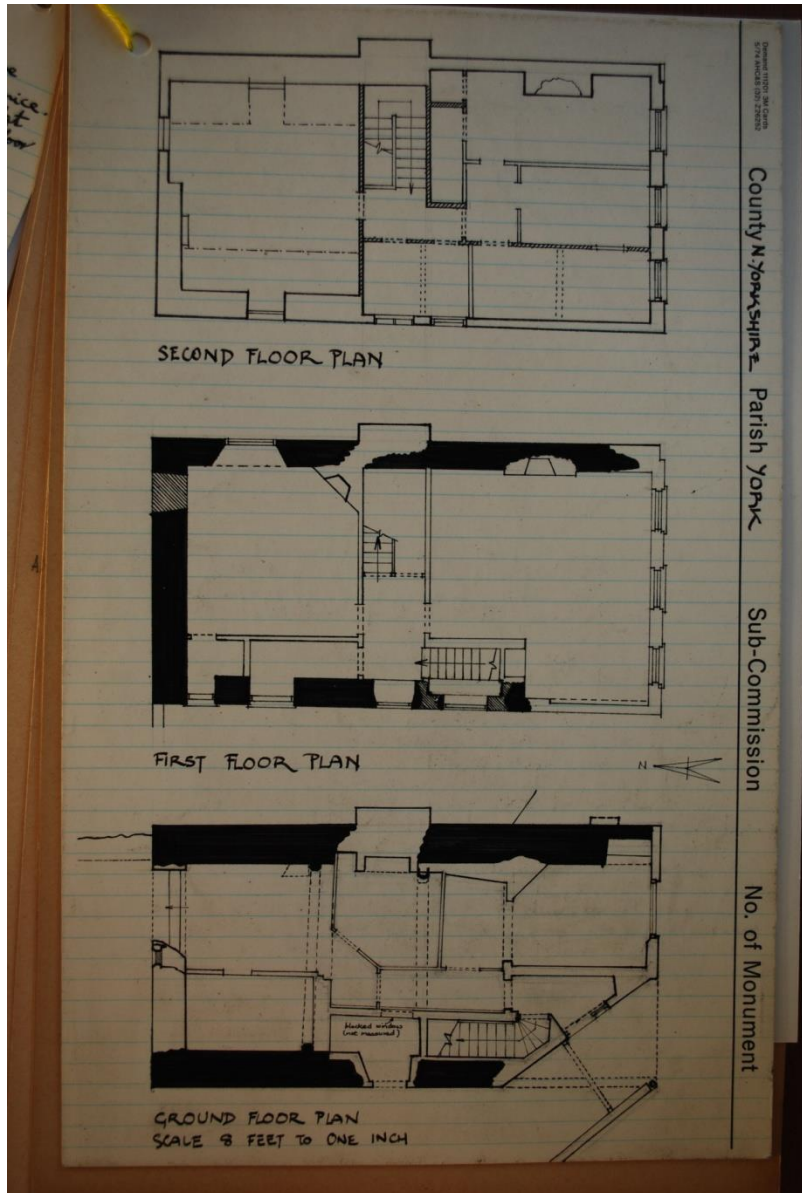
Blocked gate with two cruciform arrow loops above in the precinct wall of York Minster surviving in the east wall of the Theatre Royal. Photograph accompanying RCHM investigator's notes, 1974. (English Heritage Archives, Swindon)

¹⁷ York Archaeological Trust, *Theatre Royal, St Leonard's Place, York: Report on an Archaeological Investigation*, Field report 1988 No. 53.

¹⁸ York Archaeological Trust, *Theatre Royal, St Leonard's Place, York: Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief*, Field Report 2003, No. 9.

2.2.14 The former manager's house, now theatre offices, is in origin contemporary with the undercroft below the theatre itself, a second building of the 1130s or 40s. Patricia Cullum has suggested it may have been the main gateway to the hospital,¹⁹ though its scale is domestic and it have led only to the yard between the building to the north and the eastern boundary of the hospital. Its east, north and west walls, though refaced in places in brick, remain substantially to first floor level. The ground floor of the building was vaulted in three slightly irregular bays marked by transverse arches that carried the barrel vault, of which only the northern bay survives. The two southern bays have lost their vault and are inaccessible below ground level. The northern bay, however, retains most of the vault and a single transverse rib of square section, now badly abraded. The rib is carried on the west wall on a conical corbel and above the corbel is a double chamfered string course. This building lies against eastern boundary of the hospital precinct, and its east wall comprised the precinct boundary. There is the scar of a narrow buttress towards the south end of the east wall. In the west wall is the monolithic head and partial blocking of a late twelfth century lancet window. The wall face is too disturbed to tell whether it is inserted or if the upper part of the building was rebuilt. The southern end of the building now lies below Duncombe Place and its extent is uncertain.

¹⁹ P Cullum, 'St Leonard's Hospital. York: The spatial and social analysis of an Augustinian Hospital', in R Gilchrist and H Mytum (eds) *Advances in Monastic Archaeology* BAR British Series 227 (1993), 11-18.



RCHM(E) Survey of the Theatre Offices building, showing twelfth century fabric in black. (English Heritage Archives, Swindon)



Blocked lancet window.

West wall of former Manager's House showing blocked lancet window.

2.2.15 A rapid examination of the north and west walls of the adjacent Red House, built in 1714 allegedly on the site of the hospital's main or east gate, indicates that the plinth and much of the ground-floor wall along its east side and south along the street front is retained from a late fourteenth or early fifteenth century hospital building.²⁰ There is a blocked door visible in the plinth of the east wall towards its northern end. The hospital's east gate must in fact lie below the southern end of St Leonards Crescent, opposite Blake Street, and it is not certain why the gate is supposed to be on the site of the Red House, for documentary evidence tells that the Mint Yard Gate, that is the gate into the former hospital enclosure, was not demolished until 1782.²¹

2.2.16 As well as the standing buildings, in 1289 there were the refectory, a kitchen, a hall of the guests, a granary, a bakery, the infirmary of the brothers, the malt house, bake house and brew house, a smithy, a stable, and the children's house, all of which must lie within the hospital enclosure. While the development of the infirmary range along the precinct wall follows the general layout of many larger medieval hospitals and is unexceptional apart from its scale, the same cannot be said for the monastic

²⁰ The List Description makes no mention of the fact that there is a considerable amount of *in situ* medieval masonry in this building, though it was first identified by Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England, Yorkshire: York and the East Riding* (Harmondsworth 1972), 143.

²¹ York Cathedral Archives, Housebook 45, 72 and 78.

ranges of the house and how they were arranged. Clearly they were separate from the infirmary buildings and on a radically different alignment. There is no structural or documentary evidence for a cloister, though one has long been assumed. The church of St Leonard is only located by the 'high street' which is not named, and no obvious use can be identified for the known buildings. Only the north - south axis of the undercroft identifies it as being associated with the canons and sisters.

3 THE 'MODERN' BUILDING

3.1 *Post-Dissolution*

3.1.1 The hospital was surrendered, as part of the Dissolution, on 1 December 1540. It was first held by the former master, Tomas Magnus, but by 1544 it became the possession of Sir Arthur Darcy but was sold to the Crown in 1546. Later the mint was built on a site lying south-west of St. Leonard's Place. The site was granted to Robert, Lord Dudley, in 1564, and sold to Sir Henry Savile by in 1566. There was an attempt to turn the area into a market in 1637 but the Corporation took legal action to crush the idea. During the 17th and 18th centuries the site was occupied by houses, gardens, wood-yards, stables (a capacity of 200 horses for local public houses) and the Hawker and Pedlars Office. Some of the undercrofts of the former hospital were used as wine vaults occupied by Mr Richard Lawson, wine merchant. The Corporation bought the property from George Savile, 1st Viscount Halifax, in 1675.²²

3.2 *18th century*

3.2.1 The Hall of the Merchant Taylors had been hired by performers from the 1690s. Thomas Keregan's (or Kerrigan) players²³ - 'Mr Keregan's Company of Comedians' - performed there nearly every year from 1720 to 1733 but his lease

²² P.M. Tillott (ed.), Victoria County History, 'Places of entertainment', *A History of the County of York: the City of York*, 1961, pp. 531-535. Francis Drake, *Eboracum: or The history and antiquities of the city of York, from its original to the present times*, 1736, p. 337; later editions printed in 1785 and 1788.

²³ Sybil Rosenfeld, *The York Theatre*, 2001, p 3. Keregan's players took over from the 'Duke of Norfolk's Servants'.

expired in 1733.^{24 25} Early newspapers record the company travelling to Newcastle in 1728 and 1733 and Hull, Leeds and Beverley. At this early period, there was no fixed theatre building for the players but Southey (2006, p 48) suggests that York was their base. In October 1734 Keregan obtained permission to open a theatre in the tennis court of the former Ingram property that lay to the north-west of the Minster.²⁶ The 'New Theatre' opened in October 1734.

3.2.2 Keregan died in 1740 and his trustees had the task of disposing of his malt and brewing utensils –he had also owned the Billiard Table Inn in Stonegate; enquiries were to be made of Mrs Keregan 'on the Lord Irvine's Walk'.²⁷ The 'Playhouse' with costumes, scenery etc was left to his widow who, in 1744, leased the 'cloisters' of the former mediaeval hospital of St Leonard, Mint Yard, and built York's first permanent home – the 'New Theatre' - for theatrical performance.²⁸ The site of the theatre was recorded on the *Plan of the City and Suburbs of York* published in 1750.

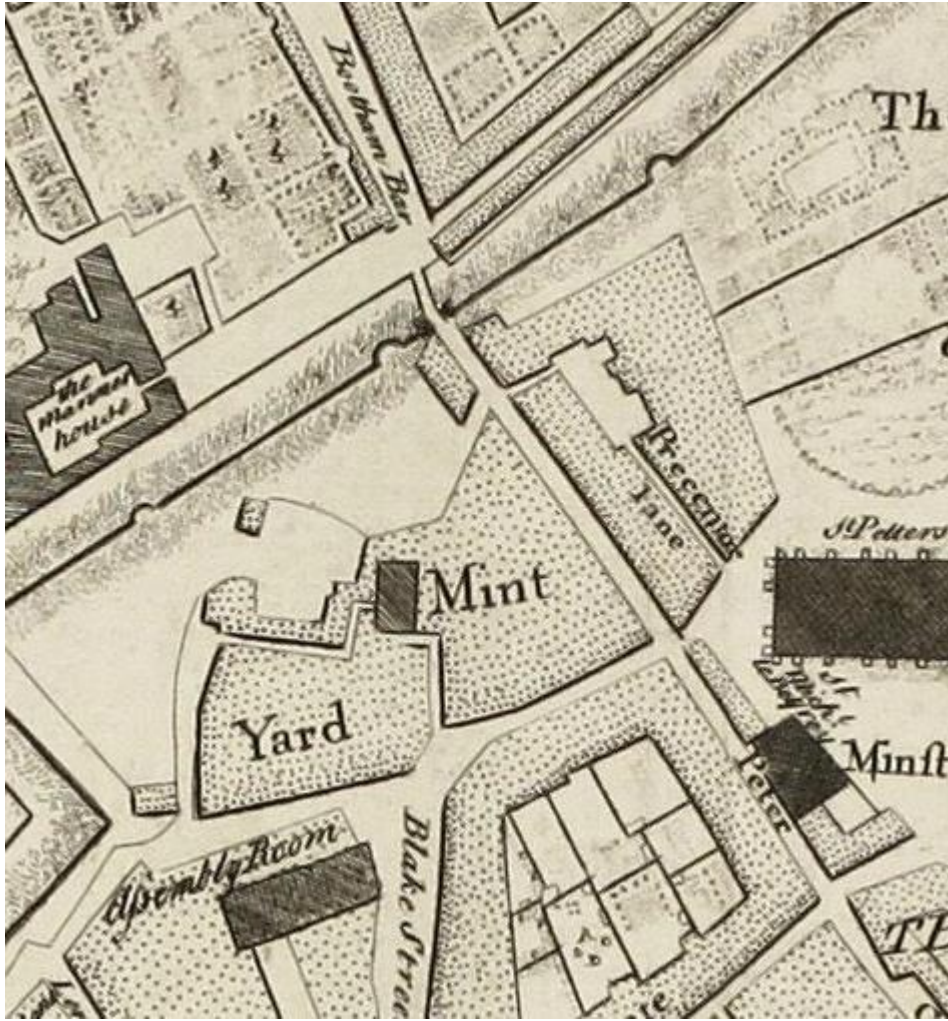
²⁴ Richard Barrie Dobson & David Michael Smith, *The Merchant Taylors of York: A History of the Craft and Company from the fourteenth to the twentieth centuries*, 2006, p. 96.

²⁵ Tate Wilkinson, *The Wandering Patentee; or, A History of the Yorkshire Theatres from 1770 to the Present Time* (1795). This work includes a playbill, dated 1727, for Keregan's company. The memoirs are important as they provide a detailed history of the theatre. Another playbill, dated 1744, is in the Minster Library.

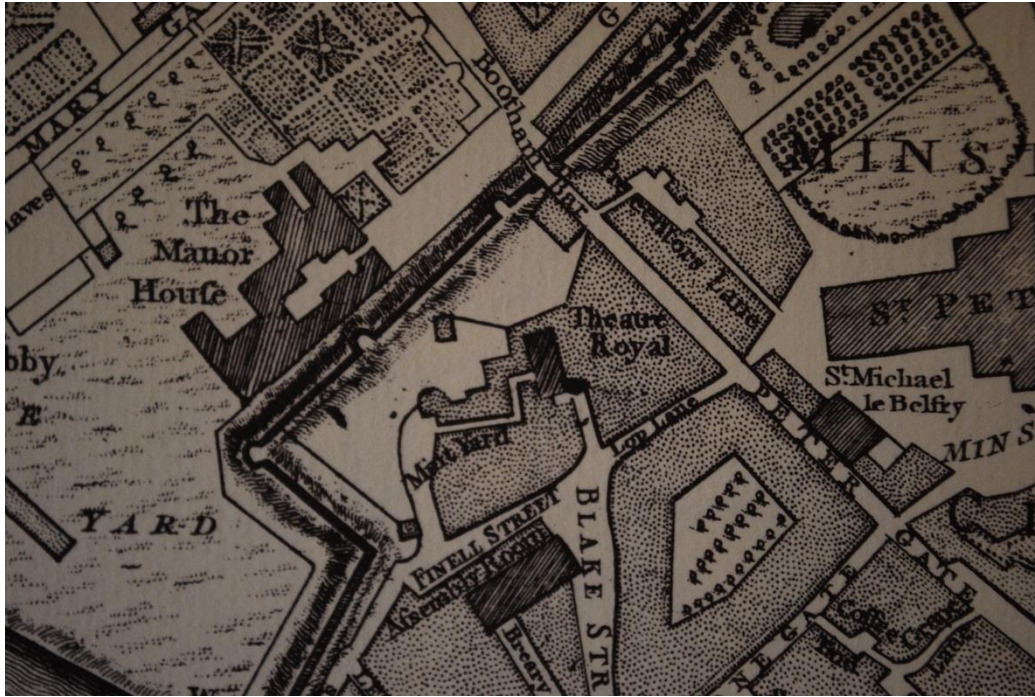
²⁶ Tillott, *op. cit.* Hornby, *op. cit.* describes it the 'new theatre in my Lord Irwin's yard, and by the new residence'.

²⁷ Rosenfeld, *op. cit.* pp. 17-18.

²⁸ 'A playbill, dated 1744, in the Minster Library describes the venue as 'At the New Theatre in the Mint Yard'; quoted in Sybil Marion Rosenfeld, *Strolling Players & Drama in the Provinces, 1660-1765*, 1939, p. 134.



1750. Extract from *Plan of the City and Suburbs of York*, surveyed by Peter Chassereau, published by John Rocque.



1775. Thomas Jeffreys' plan of York bearing the annotation 'Theatre Royal'.

3.2.3 The building was remodelled, and enlarged to seat 550, in 1763-5 by Joseph Baker, manager and lessee who was also an actor as well as a painter of church interiors and theatrical scenery.²⁹ He had acquired the lease in 1761 – a dwelling house in Blake Street and 'the tenement used as a playhouse near the same' - on the condition that he would spend the large sum of £500 on improving the building.³⁰

3.2.4 On visiting York in April 1764 Tate Wilkinson³¹ - a theatre entrepreneur and the most important lessee-manager in the early history of theatre in York - found that Baker was 'busy with bricks and mortar, and in his high glory, giving directions to workmen, who were erecting part of a new theatre at York, at a great, and his sole expence. ... It was intended to be (as it now actually is) in a much more capacious scale than the old one, thought nearly on the same spot, as he was then finishing the tail of the new, while the players were employed in the head of the old.'³² Baker was heavily in debt, partly due to investment in the improvements and he took on

²⁹ Some accounts suggest that it was 'erected' at this date – see 1885 and 1788 editions of Drake, *op. cit.* and Edward Baines, *History, Directory & Gazetteer, of the County of York*, 1823, p 62.

³⁰ Rosenfeld, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

³¹ Eric Prince, 'Wilkinson, Tate (1739–1803)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

³² *Ibid.*

Wilkinson (aged 26) as a business partner. Wilkinson invested approximately £1400 over the years and attended to refurbishment, ordering new costumes and generally improving the theatrical enterprise. He was the manager from 1766 until 1803, from 1770 he was also the lessee.

3.2.5 Two, similar watercolour views of around 1870 show that the north and west walls (and probably the other walls) were raised in brickwork, apparently off the mediaeval walls. There were two entrances: one was from Duncombe Place – known until after 1852 as Blake Street – but before 1818 there was a ‘principal’ external staircase on the west elevation; the head of the larger arch, blocked with brickwork, seen on the 1870s’ images might be the remains of the former Mint Yard entrance. Internally the theatre had a square pit lined by a tier of boxes and two galleries. A brick projection on the north or garden elevation was added to provide a corridor a corridor to the private boxes in the Dress Circle. The theatre became, by royal patent, the Theatre Royal in 1769; Wilkinson also had the patent for the Theatre Royal, Hull.



c. 1870. View of the Theatre Royal by G H Brown.



c. 1870. View of the Theatre Royal by G Ball. (York Museums Trust [York Art Gallery])

3.2.6 Wilkinson enhanced the prestige of York to approach that of the London scene. He tamed the audience, extended the repertoire and improved the esteem of the acting profession. An advertisement for performances in 1769 of Handel's *Messiah* and *Judas Maccabeus* describes the outline layout of the interior as having 'Boxes and Pit' (tickets to be bought from Mr Haxby's in Blake-street) and 'First Galleries' and Upper Galleries' (tickets to had at Mr Shaw's in Coney-street and Mt Thackray's in Skeldergate).³³ The building was altered by him, the sides of the first gallery partitioned off and converted into green boxes in 1780.³⁴

³³ 1769, March 7, *Leeds Intelligencer*.

³⁴ Rosenfeld, *op. cit.*, p 100. There are numerous references to minor internal alterations and improvements. Heavy wear meant that redecoration and the recovering of seats took place on a frequent basis, in some cases as regularly as every three years for decorations. There were also various trials with seating arrangements to deal with social matters such as separating 'polite' society from the 'lesser orders' and for economic reasons related to attracting different audience types and profitability. As an example, under the Wilkinsons (father and son), such works are recorded to have been undertaken in 1780, 1783, 1786, 1789, 1793, 1805, 1810-11 and 1814. Similarly, in 1837, 1838-9, 1844, 1847-8, 1850 and 1853, there were redecorations and minor alterations such as new chandeliers in 1853 – some re-slating of the roof took place in 1839 and 1848. *Ibid. passim*. Not all of these 'alterations' require comment.

3.2.7 On his death in 1803 Tate's son, John, became manager but he became bankrupt in 1814 placing the administration of the circuit in the hands of trustees at York and at Hull, where they represented the interests of the shareholders in the new theatre. During the period 1761-1814 therefore there was direct continuity in the lease and management arrangements and it is probable that there was little incentive, or perceived need, to alter the structural fabric of the building.³⁵

3.2.8 Halfpenny's notes that the vault was, in 1807, 'divided; one half of which is used for a spirit vault and the other for a stable' and that 'part of which is under the Theatre' demonstrates that at this date the southern section – the Keregan Room and the spaces above – had not been yet been incorporated into theatre use.

3.3 1818: Robert Fitzgerald

3.3.1 An early description is given by Hargrove (1818):

The principal entrance to it is from the *Mint-Yard*, though the more general one is in *Blake-Street*, fronting which the manager's dwelling-house now stands.

A small theatre was, however, early built in the *Mint-Yard*: but Mr Baker, the predecessor, and afterwards the partner of Tate Wilkinson, esquire, having procured a lease of the premises, erected the present theatre; and it was first opened in January, 1765. Mr. Wilkinson afterwards procured a *patent* for it; and the concern, in time devolving to his son, the present Mr. Wilkinson, he obtained a renewal of the patent; but having involved his affairs, by building a theatre at Hull, his creditors let the York concern for a certain period, to the present manager, Mr. Fitzgerald.

The theatre is spacious, very handsomely fitted up, and brilliantly lighted with wax candles, in splendid glass chandeliers. The scenery and dresses are valuable, elegant, and exhibit considerable variety.

3.3.2 After this date there was a succession of short-term managers, possibly the Corporation had decided to let the enterprise on short-term leases and to extract

³⁵ The Wilkinson family held the head lease until 1860. Rosenfeld, *op. cit.*, p 269.

promises of investment in improvements and alterations from potential leaseholders.³⁶

3.4 1820-22: Robert Mansel

3.4.1 'Such persons as are willing to Contract for improving the Avenues and Staircases to the Theatre-Royal, York, may see Plans and Specifications at the Offices of Messrs. Atkinson and Sharpe, Architects.'³⁷ So, read a notice for the first major alterations to the building since its erection in the mid-18th century.³⁸ On Monday 20th August 1821 the Corporation of York agreed that the intended improvements to the theatre were to include the addition of a Saloon. The additional cost, estimated at £100, was to be shared - £50 to the Corporation, £25 to Mr Mansel (the manager and member of the company since 1812) and £25 to the trustees of Mr Wilkinson.³⁹

3.4.2 Mansel was tireless in raising funds and 'determined to wipe off the stigma which has been cast upon us, on account of not having had a Theatre characteristic of so distinguished a place.'⁴⁰ It was believed that 'The alterations and improvements that are now making in the Theatre manifest great taste and spirit, and promise to render it also a place proper for the most enlightened entertainment.'

3.4.3 Increasing costs forced the ambitious Mansel to raise additional funds to meet the workmen's estimates of more than £500. Appeals were published in the newspapers and a committee established to promote the cause.⁴¹ All those who gave three guineas or more were publicly acknowledged – Lord Dundas gave £50,

³⁶ In the 1850s the building was, ideally, let on a fourteen year lease, but shorter terms –ten seven and years – were considered; it was advertised for 14 years in 1900. Business was so precarious in the mid-19th century that there were actually nine lessees in a ten year period. *Ibid.*

³⁷ Peter Atkinson and Richard Hey Sharp were important and prolific architects in York and Yorkshire in the first thirty years of the 19th century. Atkinson was the surveyor and steward to the Corporation and was responsible for the City Gaol, extensions to the Female Prison, the Council Chamber at the Guildhall, the Ouse, Foss and Layerthorpe Bridges, the Subscription Library, the House of Correction and the Concert Room. Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*, 2008, p 77-8; Colvin does not include the Theatre Royal in the list of Atkinson and Sharp's projects.

³⁸ 1821, 12 July, *York Chronicle*, quoted in Rosenfeld, *op. cit.*, p 211-216.

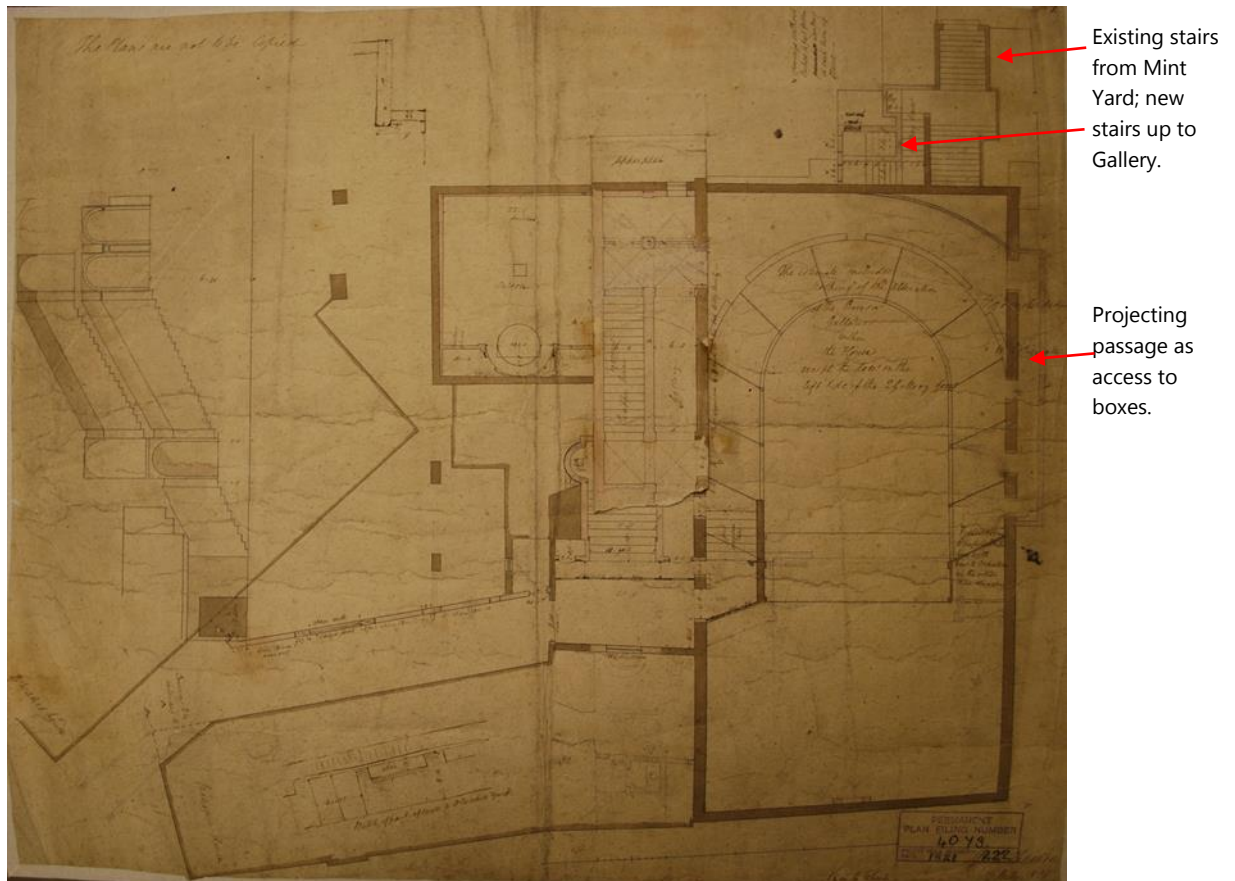
³⁹ 1821, 25 August, *Yorkshire Gazette*.

⁴⁰ 1821, 27 October, *Yorkshire Gazette*.

⁴¹ 1821, 24 November, *Yorkshire Gazette*.

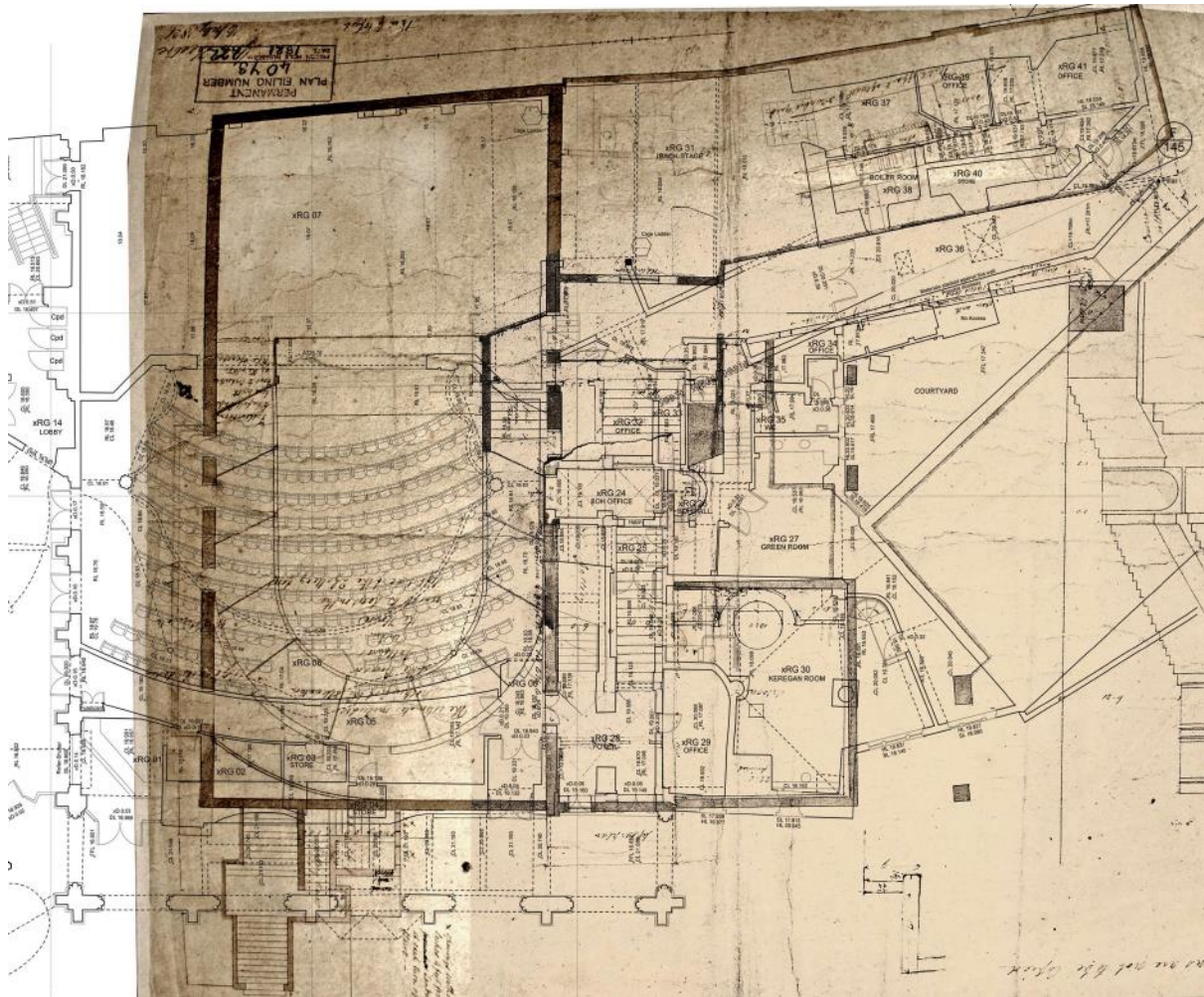
Robert Chaloner, MP, £25 and Messrs. Raper, Swann and Co. £30. His efforts proved worthwhile and the theatre was re-opened on 14 February 1822.⁴²

3.4.4 Fortunately six of Atkinson and Sharp's drawings were preserved in the City Surveyor's office and are now in the City Archives. They are rare examples of drawings of the Georgian theatre, showing (in pink wash) not only the works undertaken in 1821-2 but also the theatre (in grey or ochre wash) of the Baker-Wilkinson theatre.



July 16 1821. Plan and section by Atkinson & Sharp (York City Archives)

⁴² 1822, 9 February, *Yorkshire Gazette*.



Overlay of 1821 Atkinson & Sharp plan on present plan. Raquel Borges, De Matos Ryan, Architects.

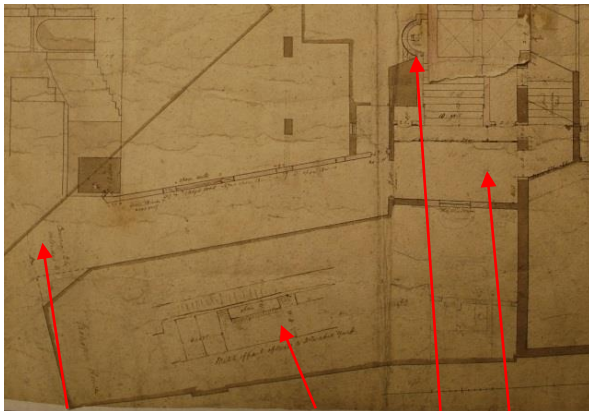
3.4.5 Mansel advertised that he 'begs leave to lay before his Friends and Supporters, the magnitude of the improvements'.⁴³ They were as follows:

In the first place, the Entrance from Blake-Street [Duncombe Place] is considerably widened, and leads to a spacious Hall, ornamented by a very elegant Stove, which imparts a warmth through the whole House. Through this Hall the audience will pass to the Boxes and the Pit: the approach to the former is by flights of Stone Stairs, connected with a Lobby that leads to the upper Tier. Both Lobbies and Steps are FIRE PROOF. The Entrance to the Pit is immediately opposite the Hall Door, and from thence up a short convenient Staircase. The Boxes and Gallery being now of a circular form, and supported by light Iron Pillars, will most considerable improve the view of the Stage. On

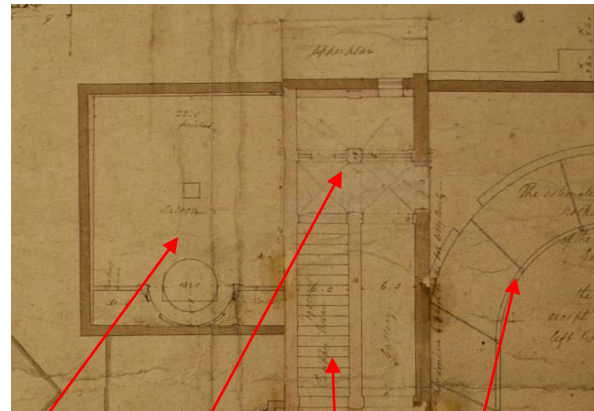
⁴³ *Ibid.*

surmounting the Stone Stairs, the road to the Lower Boxes will lie through some beautiful groin Arches on the right hand; the way to the Upper Boxes is by a Stone Lobby on the right. On the left, is a large Apartment termed a SALOON, which will perhaps be found one of the most material improvements of all, and completely puts the YORK THEATRE upon a par with all the principal Theatres in the kingdom; unless, indeed, those are to be excepted that have two Saloons, one for each tier. From this room, Ladies and Gentlemen may have the refreshments of Tea, Coffee, Ices, Fruit, &c. brought to them into their boxes; and those Gentlemen who may wish for a promenade during the intervals when there is no performance on the Stage, will find it in the Saloon, which will be well lighted, and in cold weather, a handsome Stove, with a good fire to render the place sufficiently warm. The Pit is increased in depth, and the objectionable nooks on each side removed.

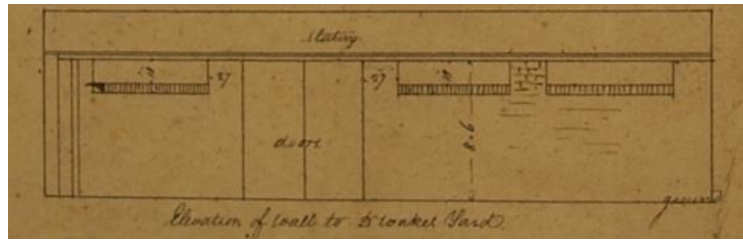
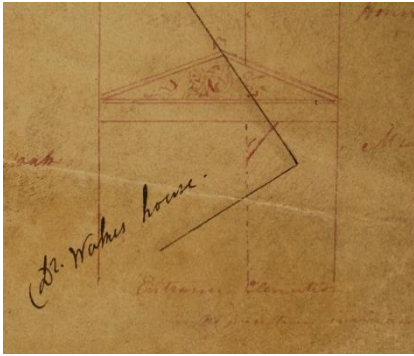
To all these improvements Mr. Mansel is happy to add there is one of the best, one of the most commodious, and one of the most desirable Galleries to any Theatre in the Empire, to which there will be a distinct entrance in the Mint Yard; thus giving a facility to the arrival and to the departure of the different Visitants to the several parts of the House.



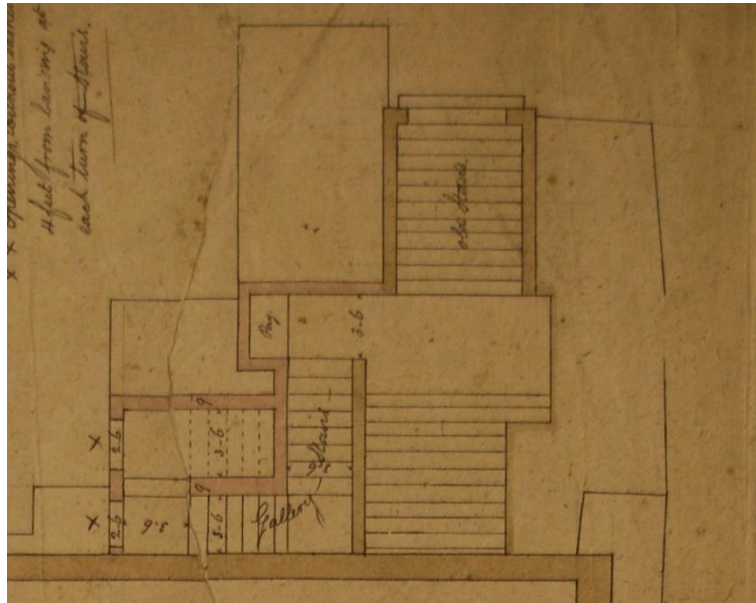
Widened entrance: Yard elevation: Stove: Hall:



Saloon: Groin arches: Stone stairs: Iron pillars



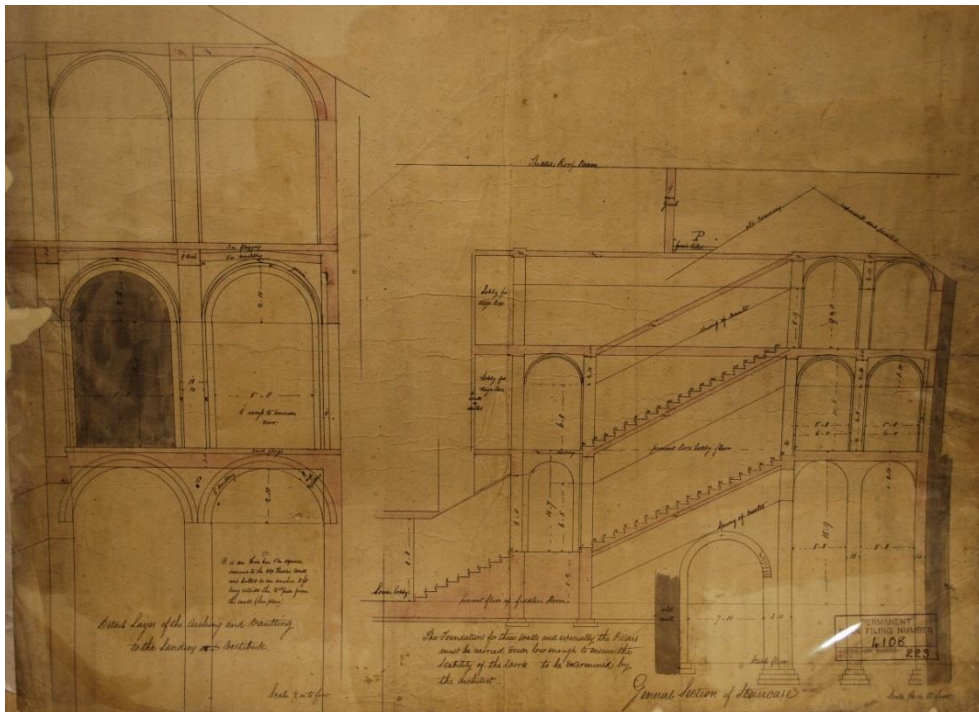
The entrance from Blake Street/Duncombe Place & elevation to 'Dr Wake's Yard'.



'Old stairs' and new 'Gallery stairs' (pink) to west elevation.



1821. Plans of 'The Manager's Floor' with (upper) dressing rooms, green room, wardrobe etc. Atkinson & Sharp (York City Archives)



1821. Sections through new staircase. Atkinson & Sharp (York City Archives)

3.4.6 Baines *History, Directory* etc. (1823) adds more details of the 1821-2 works. The rectangular form of the interior was changed to a semi-circular arrangement; instead of the row of boxes there were two tiers with lobbies. The most significant alteration was to the entrance, replacing the narrow tortuous passage with a new entrance from Mint Yard leading into a spacious hall from which visitants were then divided and directed in two different directions. The saloon, and new dressing rooms, were also vital to the accommodation of playgoers and actors. The handsome glass chandeliers and wax candles remained, although gas lighting was also introduced; new decorations included the 'pannels round the theatre, which are in *basso relievo*', by Mr Rhodes of Leeds. An extension for a scene was 'projected' at the north east corner of the building but it would not appear that it was constructed.

3.5 1834-35: Thomas James Downe⁴⁴

3.5.1 In 1832 the general committee of the Corporation advised that the houses in the Mint Yard area should be taken down and a new street from 'Etridge's [hotel] to Bootham Bar' be formed.⁴⁵ The initial plan did not meet public approval. An alternative scheme therefore was devised early in 1834; the land was divided into nine plots and building leases let subject to a plan and elevation prepared by Mr. John Harper.⁴⁶ The Corporation cleared the site, including the destruction of about 100 metres of the mediaeval city wall south-west of Bootham Bar in preparation for the formation of St. Leonard's Place in the form of a crescent.

⁴⁴ Thomas James Downe had been the lessee in 1824-28.

⁴⁵ 1835, 7 February, *Yorkshire Gazette*.

⁴⁶ John Harper (1809-1842) was a pupil of Benjamin and Philip Wyatt and assisted them in the design of Apsley House, York House and the Duke of York's column, all in Westminster. In his own practice he was employed by Yorkshire land owners including the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Lonsborough. Notable projects included work at Bolton Abbey, Shibden Hall, Everingham Park and St Peter's School. Colvin, *op. cit.*, p 483.



1832. P Atkinson's unexecuted plan for St Leonard's Place

3.5.2 The Corporation determined that the ground on the north side of the theatre should not be built upon but that it should be laid out as 'a pleasure ground' and that the exterior of the theatre and adjoining buildings should be improved. The street was formed and many of the houses covered in by early 1835 (Harper was one of the speculators). The improvement of the exterior of the theatre was undertaken under the superintendence of Harper. From this date the St. Leonard's Place elevation was to become more important than the theatre's aspect to the south.

3.5.3 Harper's design was not executed in its entirety. He had intended

to convert an ugly and unsightly pile, into an extremely ornamental edifice. The projection at the gable-end of the building, and the staircase, which used to be the grand-entrance, will be removed; the front stuccoed to about half the height, and three windows, in the Elizabethan style, inserted. The angles will be terminated with pinnacles. The building which now forms the saloon of the theatre, and presents a dead wall to the street, will also be stuccoed; three windows, one at the bottom, and two at the top, will also be inserted, and the city arms placed over the centre of the latter. An arcade, in the Elizabethan style is proposed to be erected along the front; with turreted

pinnacles, which will be not only ornamental, but a great accommodation to the company visiting the theatre, in wet weather. An old building at the North-end of the theatre, -which is terminated by an Elizabethan tower, will remain; but it will be renovated, and repaired; and the out-buildings to Dr. Wake's house, will be inclosed with a wall; and terminated with a carved gable, to correspond with the theatre in its altered state.

About 200 square yards of ground, at the North end of the theatre, will be laid out in gardens; and between those gardens and the bar, three houses will be erected, on the same elevations as those on the opposite side. A stone screen, with palisades, will be erected at this end of the street; and when the whole is completed, it promises to form one of the most ornamental piles of building in the city.⁴⁷

3.5.4 The following works to the interior were carried out:

The first step was to remove the gallery staircase, and the theatrical wardrobe, near Dr. Wake's. The main walls of the theatre were then found to be in a very poor state. The interior was next examined, and the requisite alterations and repairs calculated to cost £500, besides the expense of a new stage, and an apparatus to warm the house with hot water. The passages to the boxes, will hence, be from the crescent, and those to the pit and galleries, from Blakestreet.⁴⁸

3.5.5 On 21 March 1835 the reopening was announced in the press.

The Public is respectfully informed that the Theatre having undergone various Alterations and Improvements, blending taste with comfort and accommodation, WILL OPEN FOR THE SEASON, on MONDAY, March 23, 1835.

The NEW FRONT, in the Elizabethan style of Architecture, in St. LEONARD'S PLACE, *appropriated exclusively*, to the BOX Entrance; the PITT and GALLERY Entrance will be in Blake-street. The Box Seats will be newly covered, the theatre WARMED by STEAM, a NEW STAGE laid by Messrs. Munro and Jordan,

⁴⁷ 1834, August 30, *Yorkshire Gazette*.

⁴⁸ 1835, February 7, *Yorkshire Gazette*.

upon the most appropriate principles. Neither pains nor expenses have been spared to render the Theatre worthy of public patronage.⁴⁹

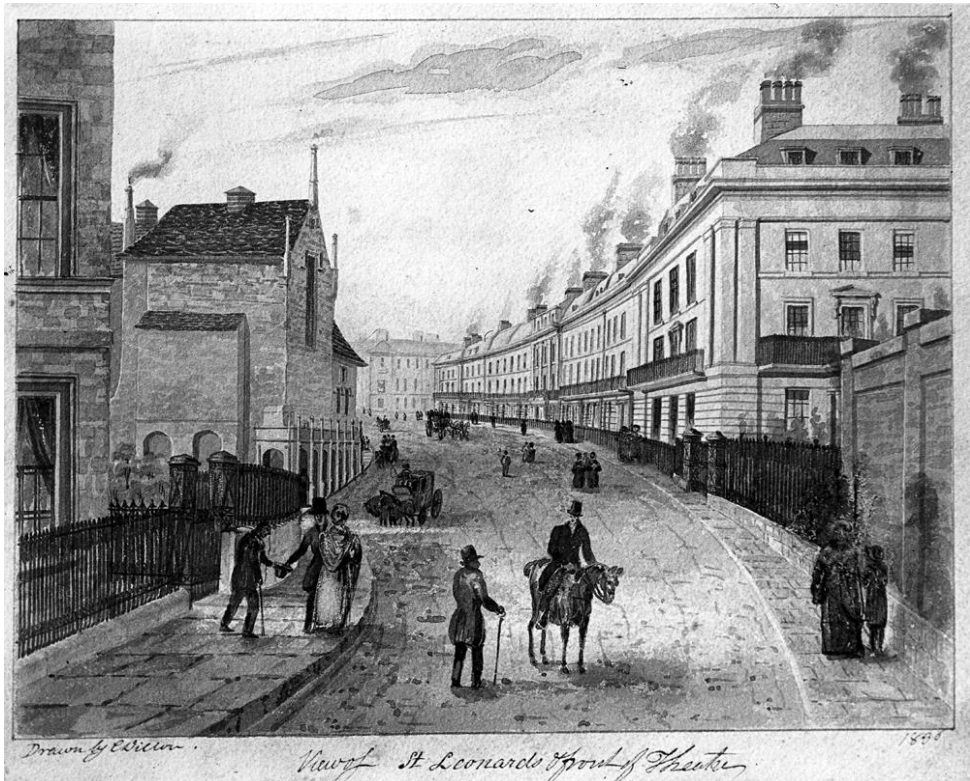


1836. C Dillon, 'A View of York Minster & Theatre Royal'. Showing Harper's new 'piazza'.

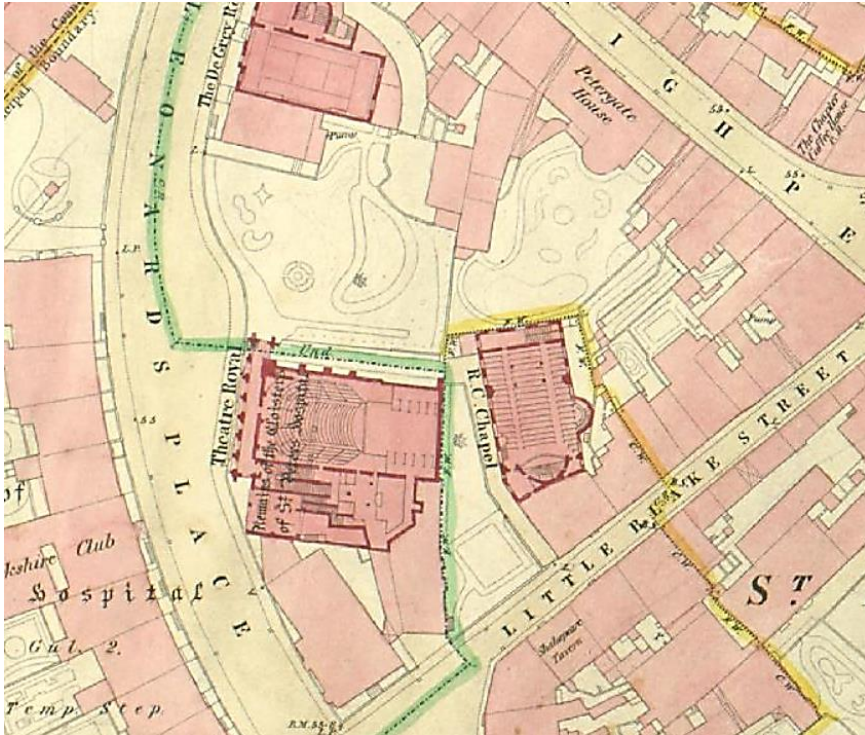
⁴⁹ 1835, 21 March, *Yorkshire Gazette*. York City Archives, M17/A. Part of the arcaded front – the 'piazza' – was re-located to no. 73 Fulford Road in 1879.



1836. C Dillon, 'A View of York Minster & Theatre Royal'.



1836. C Dillon, 'View of St Leonards Front of Theatre'.

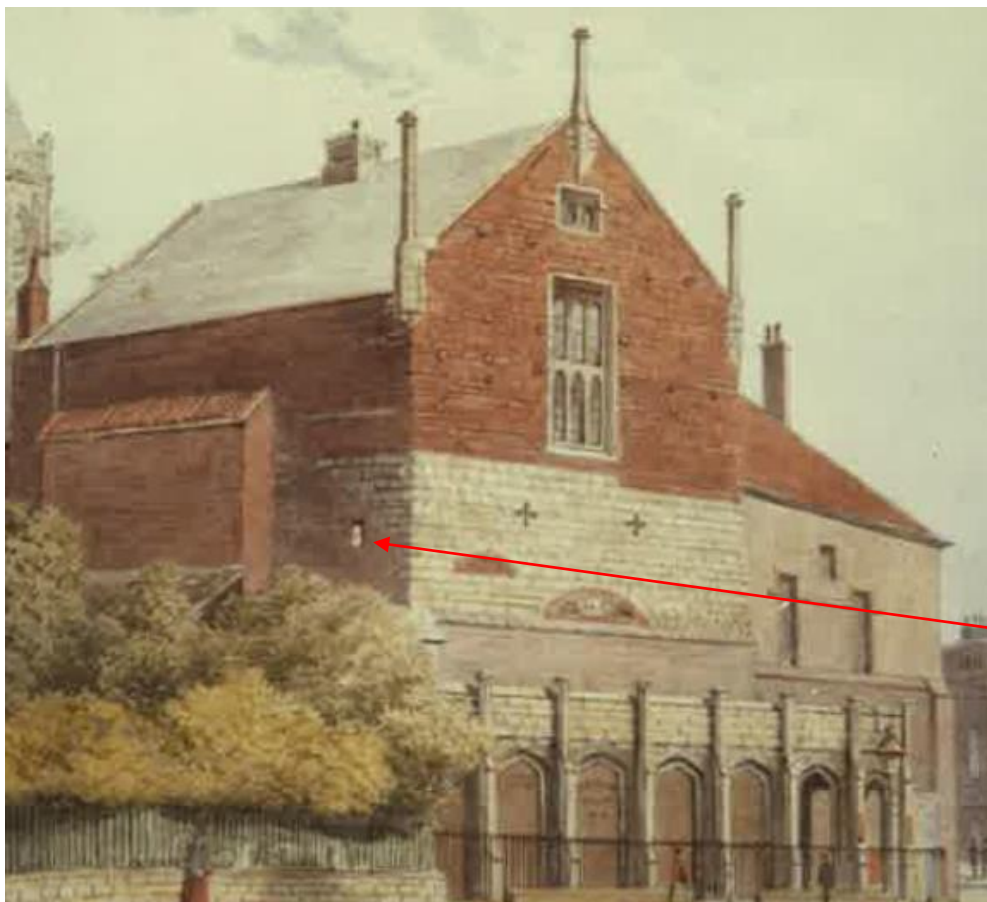


Surveyed 1849-51, published 1852 (York City Archives)



Detail of above showing plan of theatre.

3.5.6 It is evident from the above illustrations, plans and newspaper accounts that a considerable amount of mediaeval fabric was retained.



Pinnacles and windows – 1835.

Red brick – mid 18th century.

Stonework – 12th century - and staircase window.

Arcade or 'piazza' – 1835.

3.6 *Threatened sale: Satan's synagogue*

3.6.1 In November and December 1852 the Corporation considered, and voted on, the potential sale of the theatre, as some members of the Corporation had objected to the renewal of the lease despite the recommendation of the Finance Committee that the agreement represented a good rent.⁵⁰ The objections appear primarily to have been about money, including a concern that the Corporation was being asked to spend £500 on works to the 'old ruinous property' that was in 'an awful state' - £430 had been spent on repairs and alterations over the past twelve months. But there was also a moral consideration – one member of the Corporation called the

⁵⁰ 1852, 13 November & 18 December, *York Herald*.

theatre 'Satan's synagogue' and there was a notion that the site should be sold to the Roman Catholic Church.

3.6.2 The sale was not approved and early in 1853 the building had been repaired, improved and re-decorated in a Louis Quatorze-style by Messrs H Gilbert and J H Johnson, of London. Alterations included the conversion of dress circle boxes into private boxes; the refurbishment of seats the stage boxes were given projecting balconies; a new chandelier, with a ventilating apparatus, was hung;

3.7 1860-75: Thorne and Coleman

3.7.1 W S Thorne, the manager of a Leeds theatre, became lessee in 1860; the Corporation was, once again, able to extract a pledge for improvements on offering the lease. He had the interior cleansed and decorated so that 'a degree of comfort now pervades what formerly had about it an air of desolation. The stage arrangements are greatly improved, an additional flood of gas light is thrown upon it, and the new scenery presents fine artistic effects.'⁵¹ Further unspecified works were being carried out later in the year enabling the *Leeds Intelligencer* to comment that 'York may now just be said to be very fortunate in possessing a remarkably clean, pretty, comfortable little theatre and a liberal, enterprising manager.'⁵²

3.7.2 But Thorne's enterprise was short lived partly because the old circuit of theatres, centred upon York, had collapsed by 1860. In January 1865 the lease, at a rent of £150 per annum, was taken over by John Coleman, the lessee of the Theatre Royal, Leeds. He built up a 'Great Northern' circuit of York, Leeds, Hull, Doncaster, Liverpool, and Glasgow, and who made alterations and improvements at the Theatre Royal.⁵³ In an address to the audience he said the he found 'two tiers of boxes, a lower an upper circle, a small but admirably contrived pit, a badly constructed and vilely ventilated gallery'. He undertook to dispense with a tier of boxes, demolish the upper circle and throw the space, with that of the old gallery, into 'a large and commodious gallery'.⁵⁴

⁵¹ 1860, 8 April & 13 May, *Yorkshire Gazette*.

⁵² 1860, 11 August and 1 September, *The Leeds Intelligencer*.

⁵³ 1865, 13 May, *Yorkshire Gazette*. The newspaper report states that it was the Finance Committee of the Corporation that 'incurred a very great outlay in making numerous and important alterations and structural improvements.

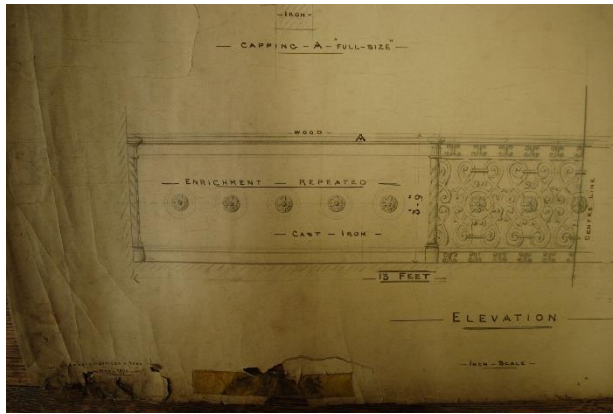
⁵⁴ 1875, 29 December, *York Herald*.

3.7.3 The works were suggested and superintended by Coleman's 'excellent friend Mr Watson, the architect'. The building work was undertaken by Mr Walker, Stonegate and Mr Dennison, Marygate.⁵⁵ Decorations were undertaken by Mr Perfect, Micklegate; the whole house was cleansed and redecorated in 'tastefully blended' colours – white, light yellow, salmon, green, crimson and gold - producing 'a most charming and elegant appearance'. Mr Smith, the gas superintendent from Birmingham's Prince of Wales Theatre fitted up the stage with 36 new gas lights, all controlled by apparatus adjoining the prompter's box; a pendant star with 40 jets light the auditorium. New heating and ventilation, designed by William Walker (author of *Useful Hints on Ventilation*, 1859), was installed.

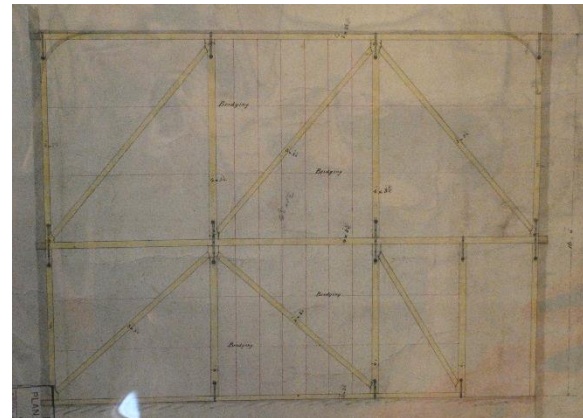


c. 1865. New stage, orchestra pit and seating. (York City Archives)

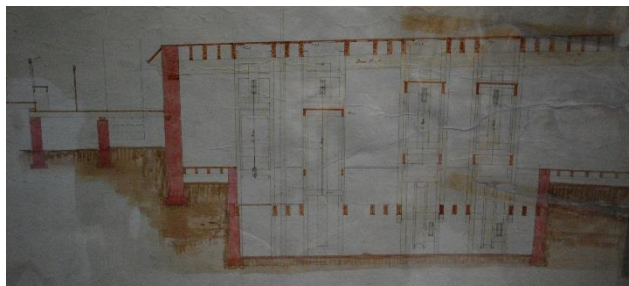
⁵⁵ The Dennisons were a family of builders and joiners of Monk Bridge Works, Lord Mayor's Walk and Marygate, York. The partnership of Thomas Wall Dennison and William Dennison the younger was dissolved in 1883, with William the younger continuing at the Marygate premises. William died in 1895.



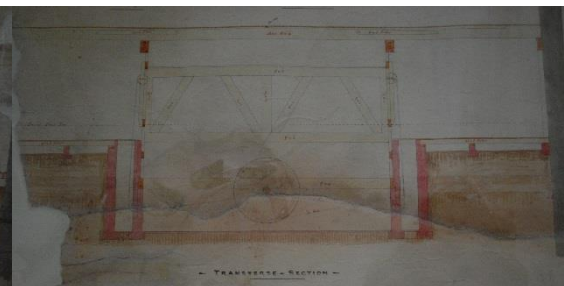
Railing to orchestra pit (detail)



Stoothed partition in saloon



New stage (detail)



New stage (detail)

c. 1865. Drawings for works for John Coleman; endorsed by William Dennison. (York City Archives)

3.7.4 The stage was renovated with 'old cumbrous and obstructive lumber removed'. The unoccupied saloon in the dress circle – an important part of Mansel's works – was divided to form a ladies' cloak room and a refreshment room contiguous to the boxes. Seats and boxes were refurbished and the pit underneath the boxes extended. He would have liked to 'have made the pit half as large again' but was prevented by 'those confounded Norman arches in the vaults below'. (It was also proposed to improve the stage entrance by the introduction of two large folding doors in the passage that lead from St Leonard's Place to the Catholic chapel.)

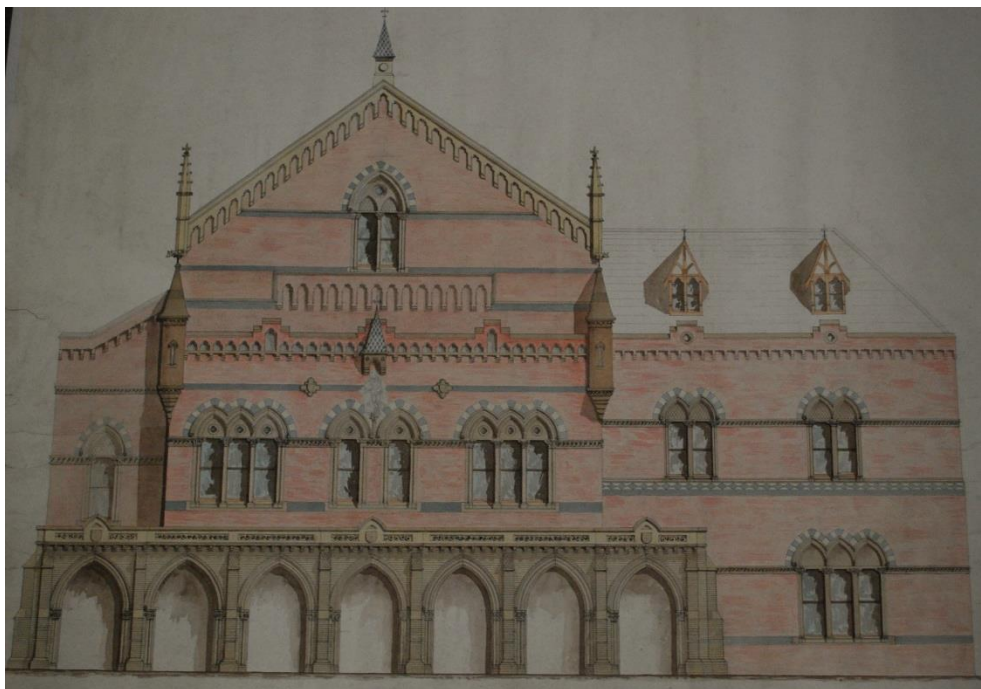


c. 1870. The interior of Coleman's theatre.
(Evelyn Collection; Yorkshire Architectural and York Archaeological Society)

3.7.5 Initially, Coleman enjoyed considerable success based upon spectacular productions, particularly of pantomimes and melodramas. He spent much on further alterations 'to make the theatre worthy of the city and of my own reputation' but eventually the theatre struggled financially and Coleman went bankrupt in November 1876; William Alfred Waddington, a pianoforte manufacture of York, had engaged in proceedings to secure an interest in the theatre.⁵⁶

3.8 *The last quarter of the 19th century: William Alfred Waddington & William Henry Waddington*

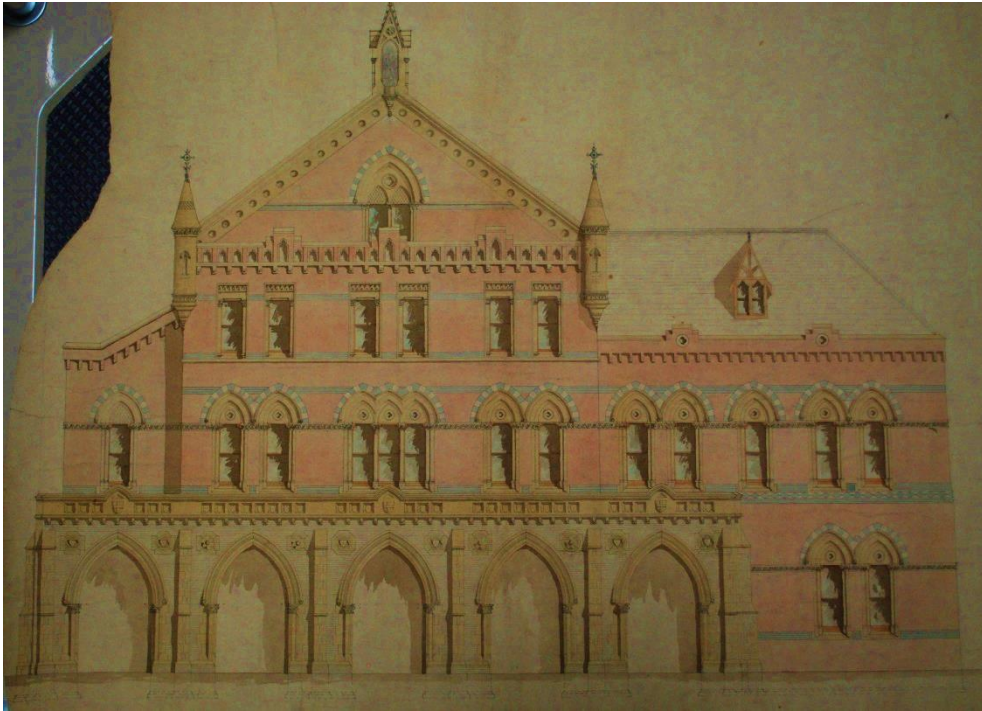
3.8.1 Even more 'extensive improvements and alterations' were carried out in the last quarter of the 19th century.⁵⁷ Finished drawings, dated June 1876, indicate that two versions of a polychromatic brick, gothic style building were being considered. The final design with the stone elevation was not prepared until 1878, although the detailed treatment of the front gable is dated 17th November 1879.



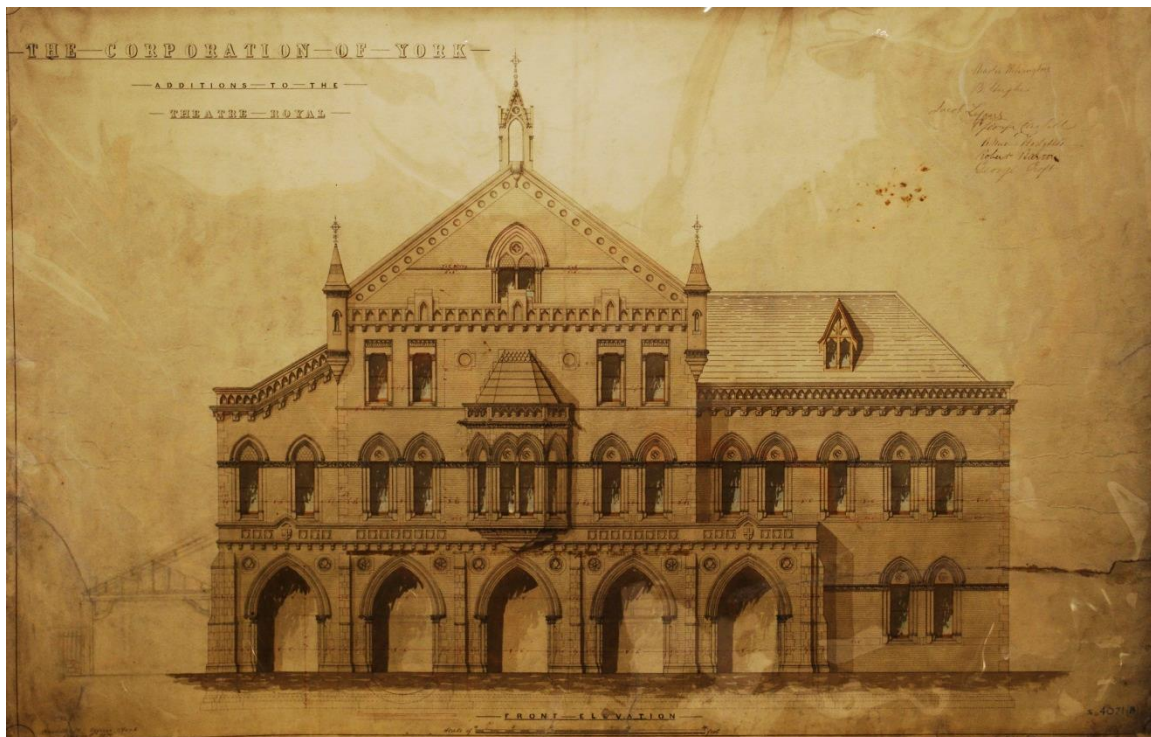
1876. Polychromatic brick, version 1.

⁵⁶ 1877, 25 March, *The Era*.

⁵⁷ 1880, 6 November, *York Herald*.



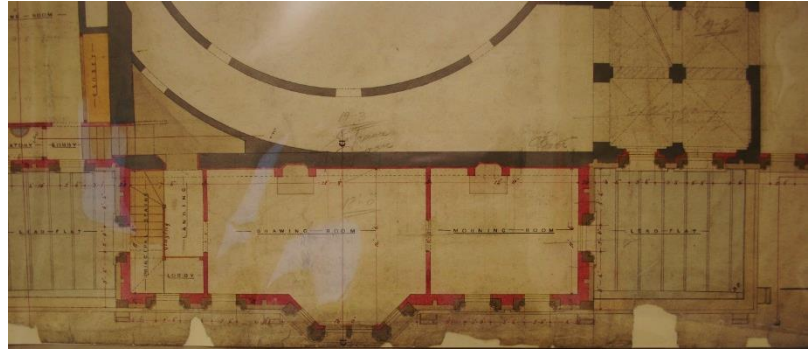
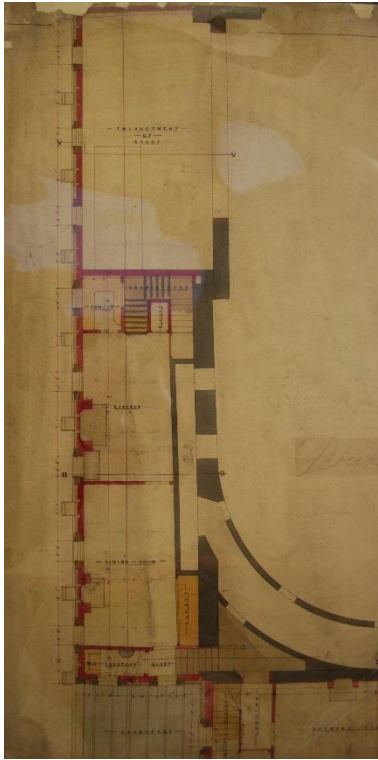
1876. Polychromatic brick, version 2.



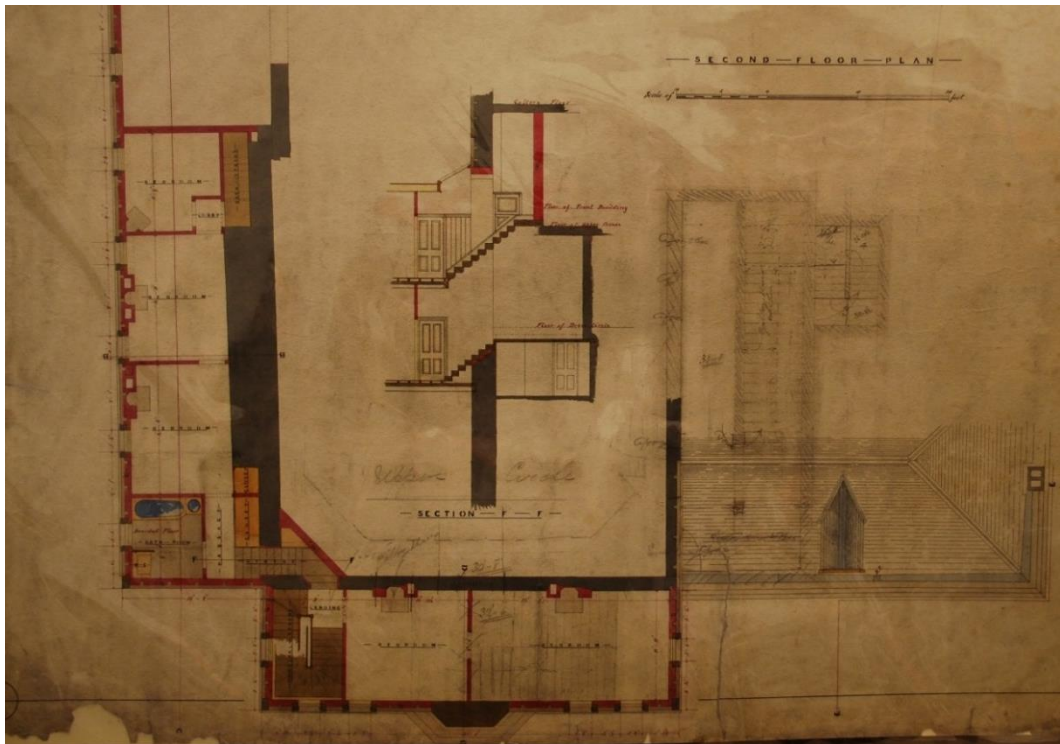
1878. The final design.

3.8.2 During works executed in 1879-80 the Elizabethan-style 'piazza' was removed and the north and east elevations rebuilt and/or refaced of in sandstone in a domestic Gothic (Early English) style. A new open 'piazza of five arches – 74 ft long and 9 ft deep - was formed and above it was suite of rooms for each floor. A new wing was added to the north side to provide a scene dock. The archway at the right end of the piazza – the one formed in 1835 as the box entrance – was given a large, new doorway. The new elevation was decorated with busts of Elizabeth I, Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra and Titania. The principal feature is the projection oriel, 26 ft high, lighting the first floor drawing room; it was embellished with moulded and fringed carved work and gargoyles. Flanking the roof of the oriel are circular panels with the heads of Hamlet and Falstaff; Shakespeare, carved by the sculptor, Mark Hessey, is in the bartizan on the apex of the gable.

3.8.3 Internally, new windows provided light to the corridor behind the dress circle; other windows on the elevation, in the gables and in dormer windows lit the upper levels. Within the 'piazza' an ornamental iron staircase led up to the first floor rooms which was residential accommodation, probably for the manager: a drawing room (21½ ft X 14½ ft), and morning room (14 ft X 11½ ft) – and a short flight of steps led down to a lobby to the side wing and the dining room (20½ ft X 13½ ft) with kitchen (19 ft X 13½ ft), pantry and lavatory. A covered way (30ft X 10 ft) gave access to the 26 ft high scene dock. At second floor level there were two bedrooms with another three and a bathroom over the side wing and two more at top floor level at the front. In case of fire the new staircase at the front could be used by all; the new structure had fireproof concrete floors laid on iron girders and a hydrant was fixed in the gallery. A new exit was made from the pit by way of the road from the scene dock.

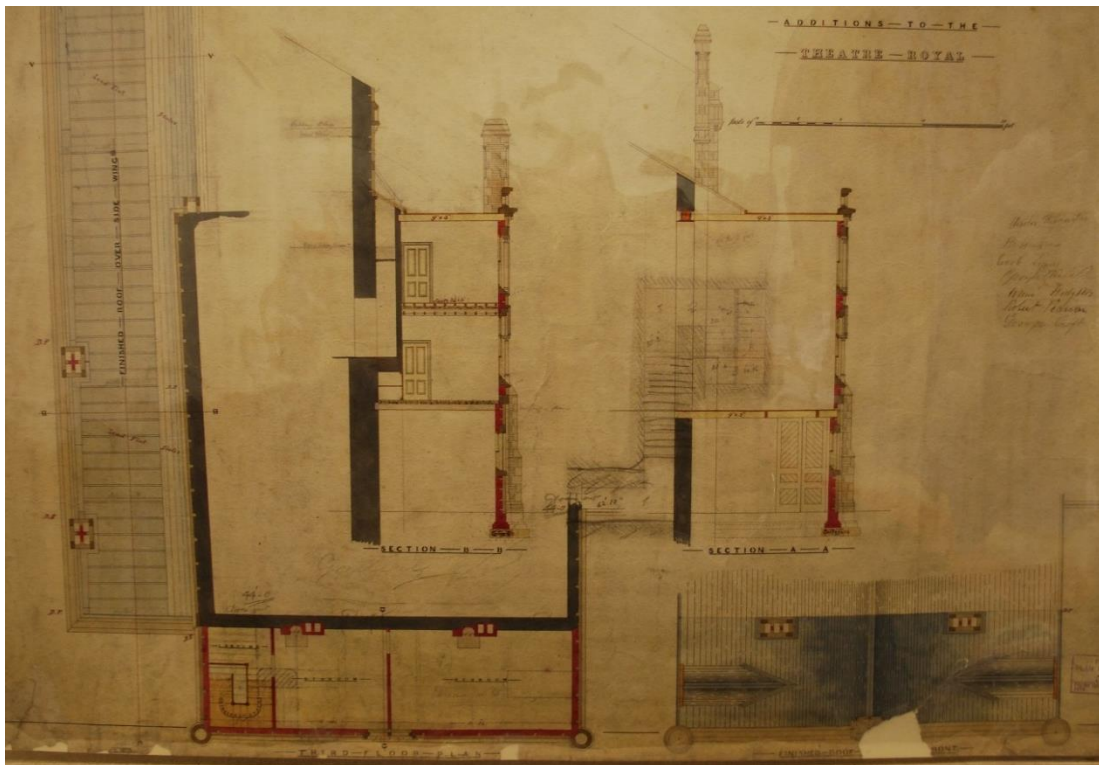


Undated but 1878/9. Extracts from first floor plan. (York City Archives)⁵⁸

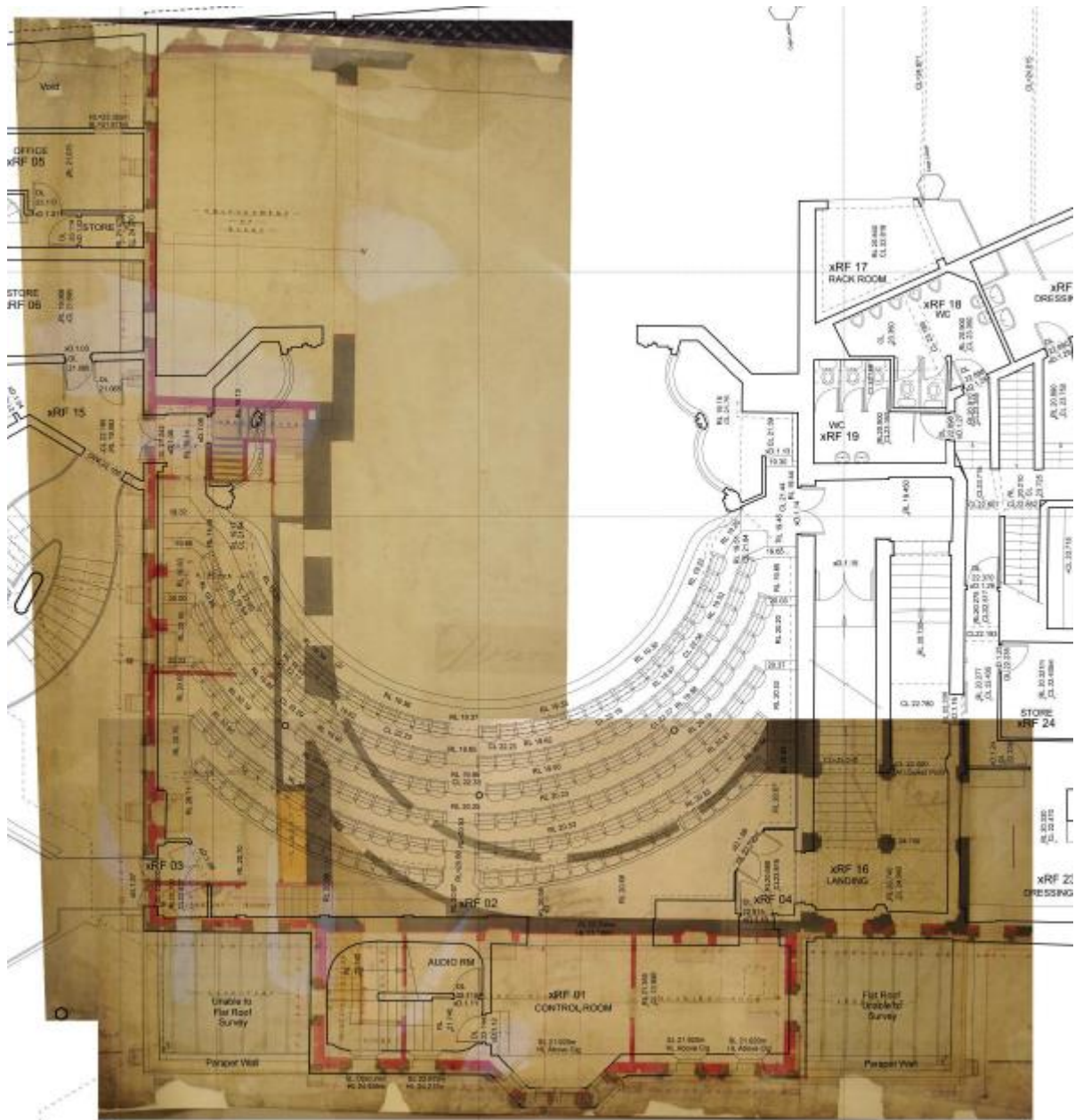


Undated but 1878/9. Second floor plan. (York City Archives)

⁵⁸ Not all the relevant plans have been reproduced as conditions for photography were poor.



Undated but 1878/9. Third floor plan. (York City Archives)



Overlay of 1878/9 plan on present plan. Raquel Borges, De Matos Ryan, Architects.

3.8.4 The work cost £3,000 and was carried out under the supervision of George Styan, the City Surveyor.^{59 60}

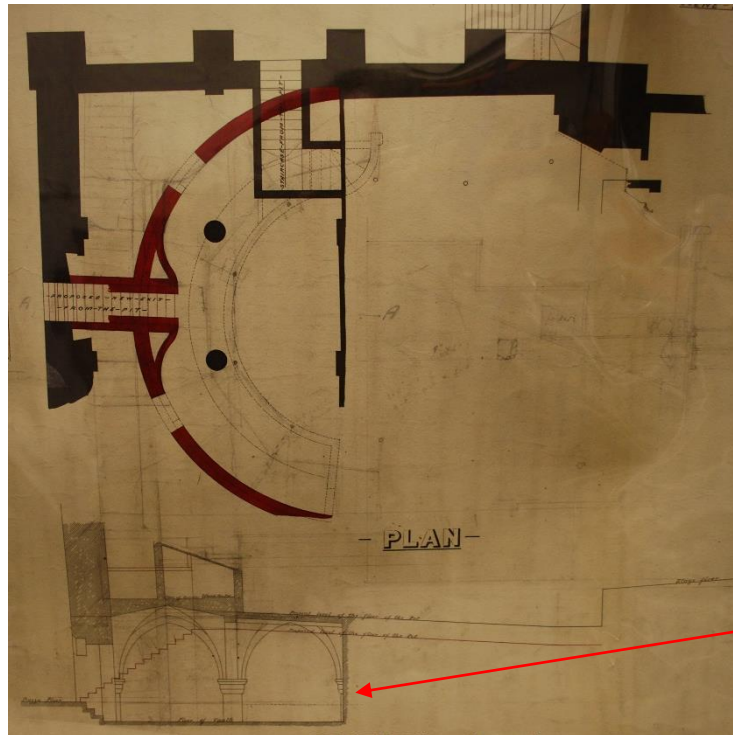
⁵⁹ Pevsner and Neave, 1995, p 198.

⁶⁰ George Styan (c 1823-1900) became Clerk to the City Surveyor in 1854 but resigned in 1860 after a scandal concerning payments on contracts. Although he was a salaried employee he was entitled to and had received £100 for the Lendal Bridge contract and smaller amounts for other projects. But in 1869 he was reinstated in the Corporation's employment and succeeded the post of Surveyor and

3.8.5 In 1880 the former Saloon was divided and converted into rooms for Ladies and Gentlemen and a urinal was installed for the use of pit and gallery users. The next two saw the erection of new cast and wrought iron gates and then new lamps, projecting on cast iron bracket for the front elevation. The dressing room area and dock and property areas to the side were altered and provided with WCs in 1885 – drawings for all these alterations are in the City Archives. But the most significant alterations were undertaken in 1883 and 1888. In 1883 a new exit for the pit necessitated the removal of the large sections of the vault of the mediaeval undercroft. Three years later more of the ancient hospital went when new structure was inserted to support the rear of the Dress Circle and new seating in the pit underneath. It was reported, however, that ‘Much of the old crypt remains, every desire having been manifested not to disturb those relics of the ancient past. The little iron gate leading into the crypt still remains facing the middle arch, and during the past few days many persons have availed themselves of the opportunity of catching a glimpse into the sacred vaulted chambers.’⁶¹

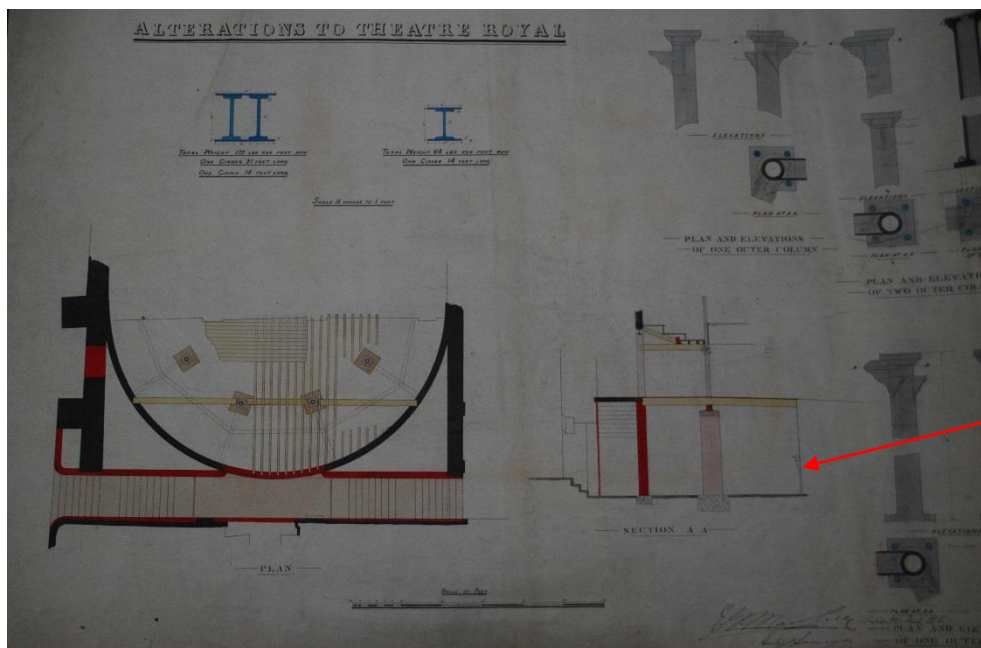
continued until ill health brought about retirement in 1887. He was responsible for much of the mid-late 19th century municipal building work including extensive repair of the city walls and the construction of the Skeldergate Bridge. Other works included the Bonding Warehouse, Skeldergate (1872, extended 1875) and the tower (1878) at the junction of Cromwell Road and Skeldergate. His office was at 100, Micklegate, York.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*



Norman columns and mediaeval vaults.

1883. New exit from pit. (York City Archives)



Norman column.

1888. Alterations and structural works at the rear of the Dress Circle. (York City Archives)

3.8.6 For the years 1887 and 1888 the British newspapers carried numerous reports on fires in theatres – the Grand, London, the Theatre Royal, Bolton, the Theatre des Bouffes Bordelaise, Bordeaux and theatres in Birmingham, Belfast, Canterbury,

Grantham and Oporto. One of the worst had been in Exeter where more than 150 people lost their lives. The main thrust of the works in 1888 therefore was the Corporation's response to the issue. Fire precaution measures were introduced and the means of escape improved.

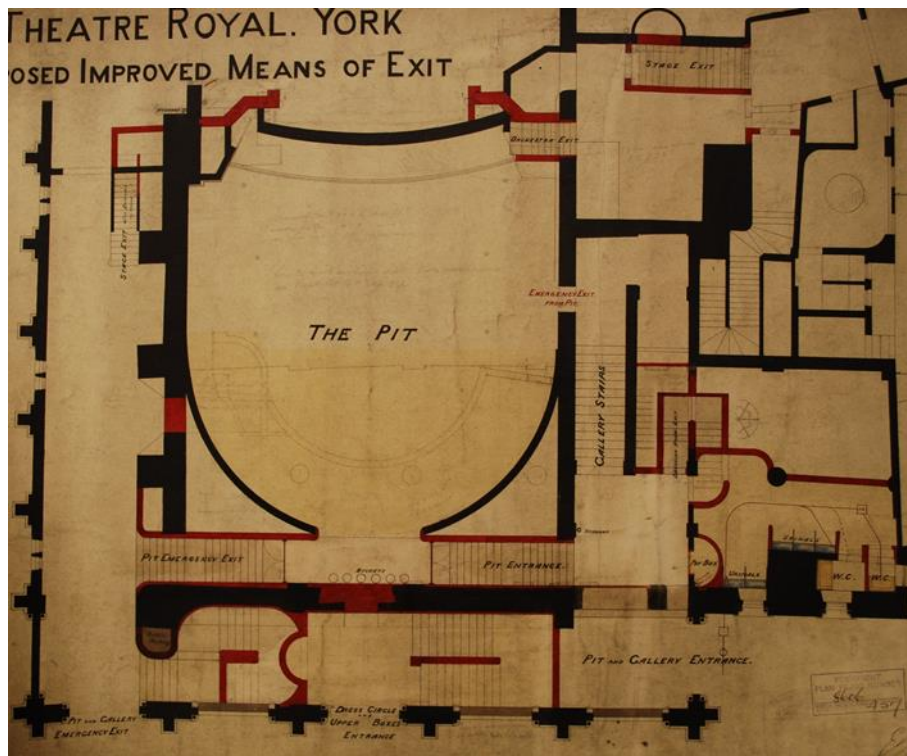
3.8.7 Two of the front arches were filled with Potternewton stone and the entrances to the pit and gallery were relocated to the St Leonard's Place side, without 'interfering with the comfort of ladies and gentlemen'. The iron gates to the arch to the box entrance was to be kept closed. Entrance to the upper boxes and dress circle was by the central arch and then up a new main staircase to the right. Exit from the gallery was by way of the existing stairs and another one formed on the south side, and the pit was also provided with two exits allowing egress in two minutes. The former manager's house which was 'removed' to enable the new staircase to dress circle to be built. All the staircases were fireproof and the dress circle and upper boxes fitted with Chubb's patent safety glass doors. Accommodation in the pit was increased but reduced elsewhere to accommodate the new means of escape; the stairs and corridors were provided with lighting independent of the proscenium.

3.8.8 A vertical hydrant mains was installed to the front elevation and more than 125 'Grinnell Patent Auto Sprinklers' were fitted throughout. The sprinklers were tested on Friday 22nd February 1889 by the lighting 'controlled' fires in the stone passages with members of the Estates Committee and the head officials of the Corporation present.⁶² An asbestos curtain separated the stage from the auditorium and there were major alterations to provide new staircases and additional exits – shown in red in the plans below. Fire extinguishers were installed and the staff were to be regularly drilled 'in the duties of firemen'. The aim was to be able to clear the house within two minutes of the alarm being raised.

3.8.9 The Duncombe Place entrance was made redundant by the provision of an entrance to the Pit and Gallery at the south end of the arcade. There were other improvements such as the provision of a gentlemen's smoke room and a promenade outside the Dress Circle and the re-arrangement of the green room with a new corridor and emergency exit. The works were undertaken under the supervision of the City Surveyor, Mr E G Mawbey. The fine drawings from his office not only describe the means of escape work but provide a clear understanding of the

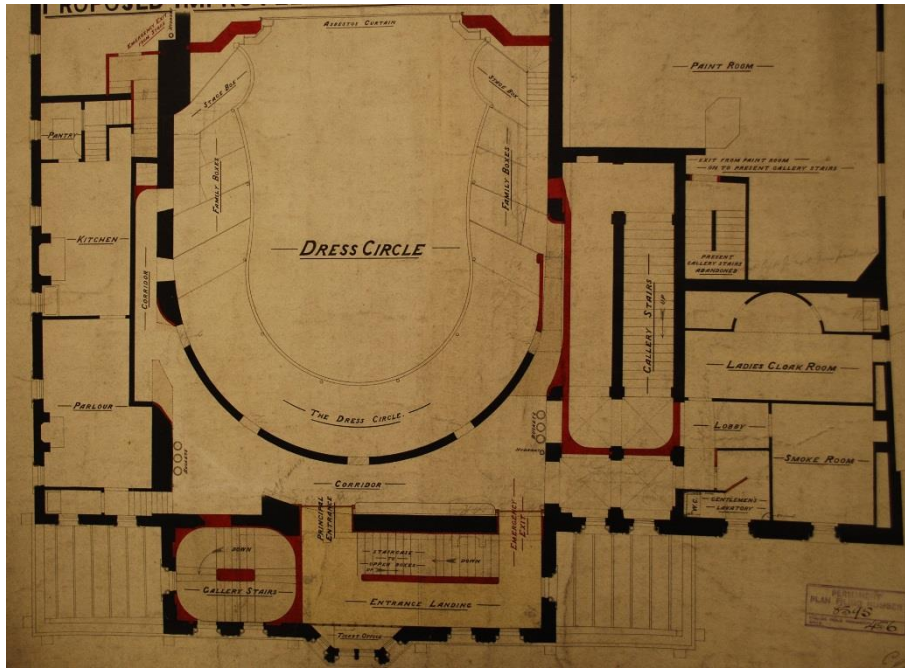
⁶² 1889, 23 February, *Yorkshire Gazette & York Herald*.

arrangements of the building.⁶³ The contractors were Messrs. Parker and Sharpe and Mr William Jenkins on was the clerk of works. On 15 January some materials removed from the building were sold.

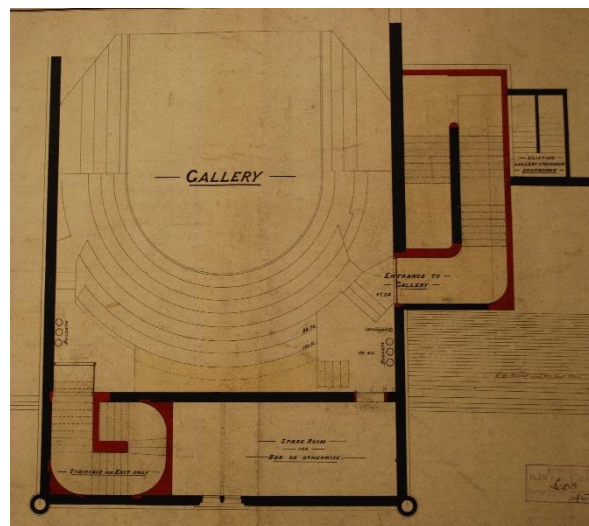
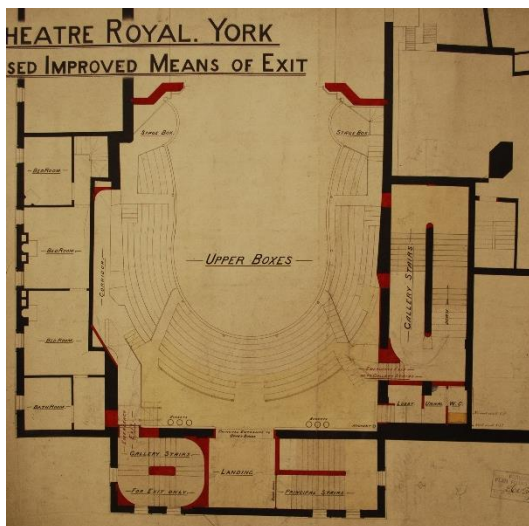


1888. Means of escape plans: Pit. (York City Archives)

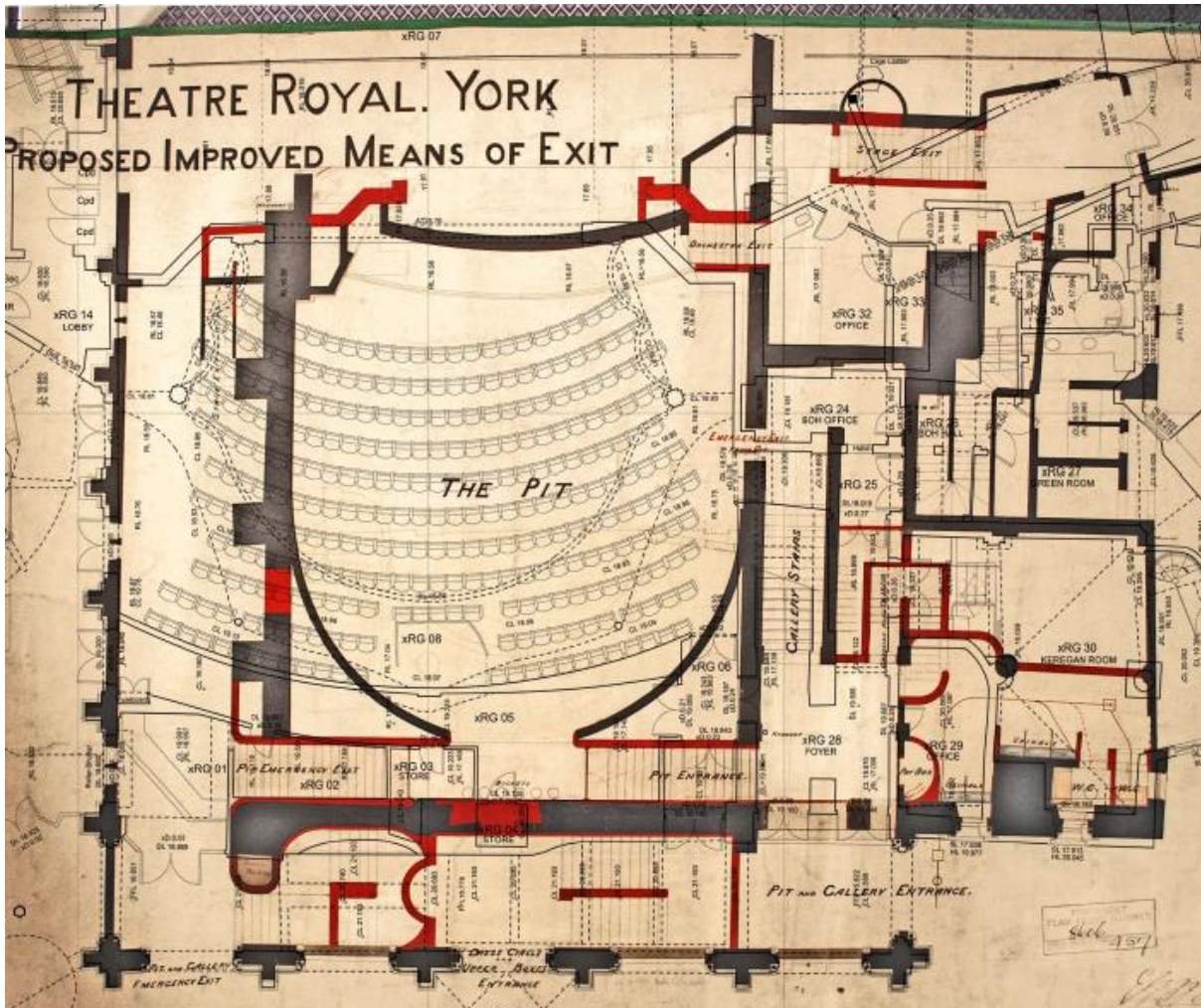
⁶³ 1888, 24 November, *York Herald*.



1888. Means of escape plans: Dress circle. (York City Archives)



1888. Means of escape plans: Upper Boxes & Gallery. (York City Archives)



Overlay of 1888 escape plan on present plan. Raquel Borges, De Matos Ryan, Architects.

3.9 At the turn of the 20th century the Theatre Royal was to undergo a radical transformation resulting, in respect of the auditorium and the stage, in today's building. It has been suggested that the transformation was in response to the perceived potential rivalry from the new Grand Opera House. The first drawings for the proposed works at the older establishment are dated March 1901 and new enterprise opened on January 20th 1902; the name was changed to The Grand Opera House in 1903. The drawings dated March 1901 were prepared by in the City Engineer's Office and although extensive alterations were proposed, the scheme was essentially one of retention of the earlier auditorium. Clearly this proposal was rejected in favour of a much more ambitious scheme prepared by a 'theatre architect'

whose proposal drawings bear the City Engineer's Office stamp 'APPROVED 3 SEP 1901'.⁶⁴

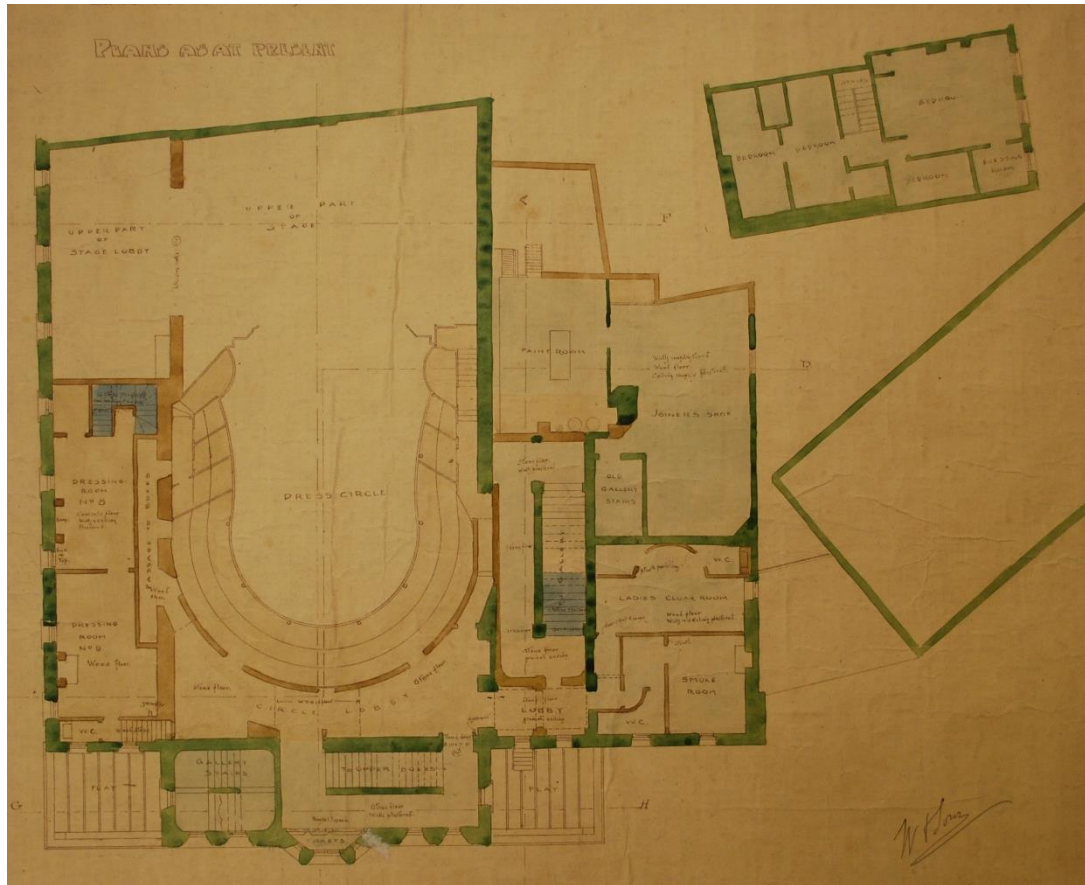
3.10 The key alterations to the exterior were the blocking of many of the windows of the 1878-80 manager's house and the addition of the somewhat ungainly second storey on the north (garden) elevation. But the real change was to the interior: 'Except for the outer walls the theatre was rebuilt in 1901-2 by Frank Alfred Tugwell of Scarborough. His charming auditorium – with more than a touch of Art Nouveau – is still in existence.'⁶⁵ The new auditorium had a capacity of 1,300 – 'the capacity of the dress circle doubled'⁶⁶ – and was built on four levels with three shallow balconies of only six rows each; the stage also dates from this period. The plasterwork is mostly in the Art Nouveau style with some baroque features on the lower boxes. The gallery, now consisting of fourteen rows of seats, will be one of the largest in the North of England – in fact in the country. There are four tiers of boxes on either side of the stage. Archaeologists will be tickled to know that the Norman crypt is to be transformed into a smoke room.'⁶⁷ Electricity was installed replacing the former gas lighting.

⁶⁴ The 1901 survey drawings indicate that further alterations had taken place in the last 10-15 years of the 19th century: the lower storey of the manager's house had been converted to dressing rooms 8 & 9.

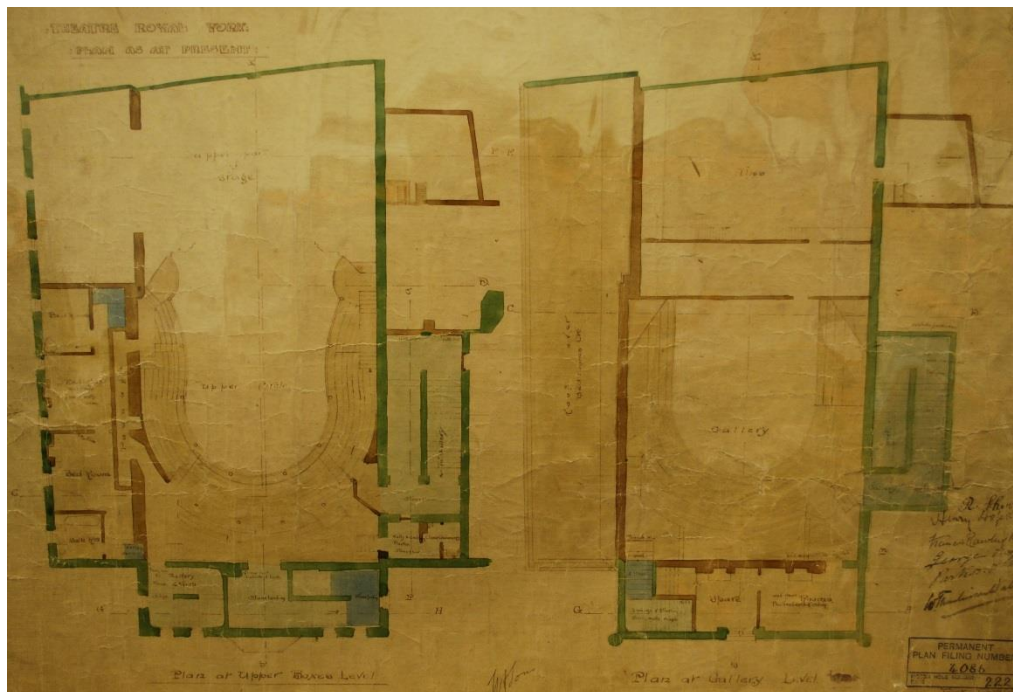
⁶⁵ Pevsner and Neave, *op.cit.* Some of Tugwell's (1862-1940) other theatres include the Scarborough Opera House, 1876-7, demolished 2004; the Grand Opera House, Harrogate, 1900; and the Futurist Theatre, Scarborough, 1921. *Obit., The Builder*, 1940, 29 March, vol 158, p 394. The Harrogate theatre opened on 11 January 1900 incorporated many of the latest safety features and was lavishly decorated with gilded plasterwork mouldings; it had hot and cold running water in the dressing rooms. The 'client' was William Peacock who bought the buildings that were to become the York Opera House.

⁶⁶ 1901, 7 December, *Yorkshire Evening Post*.

⁶⁷ 1902, 22 February, *Yorkshire Evening Post*.



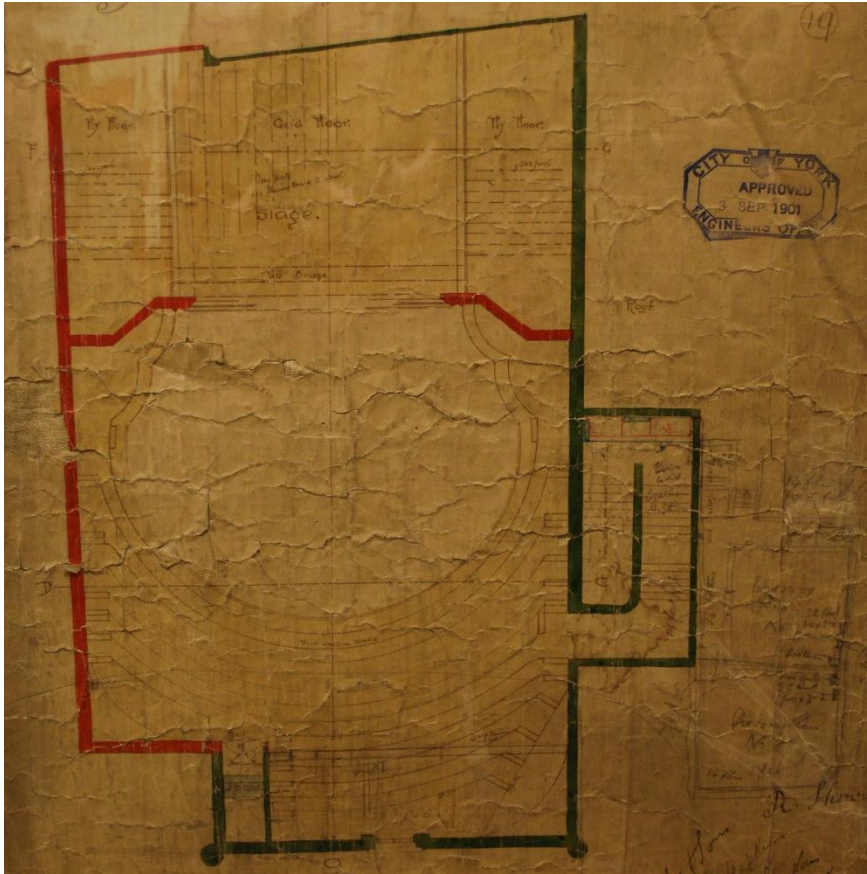
1901. 'PLAN AS AT PRESENT': Dress Circle. Frank A Tugwell, ARIBA. (York City Archives.)



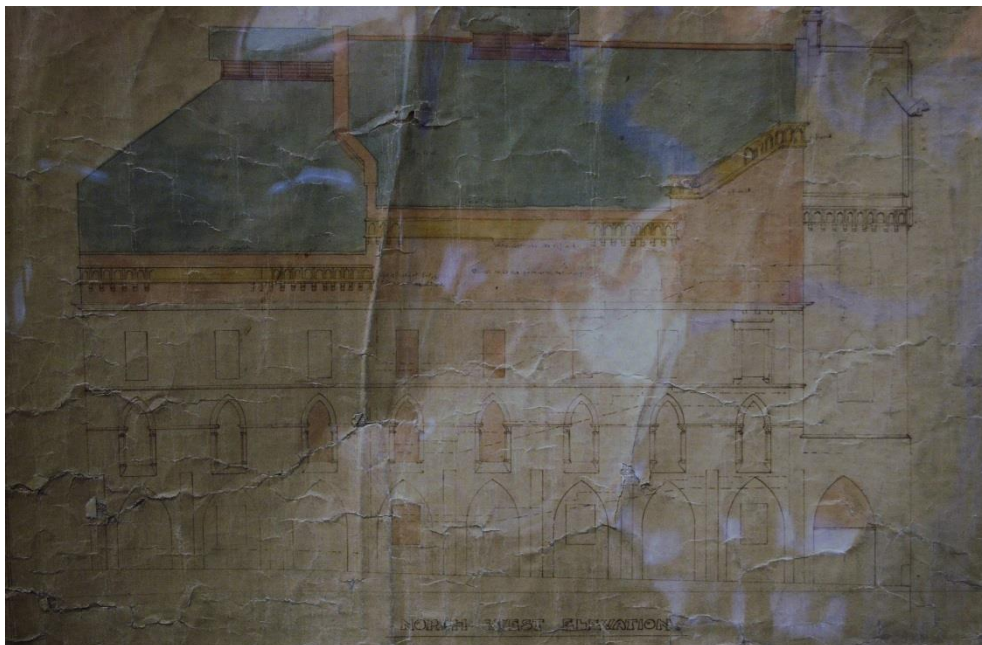
1901. 'PLAN AS AT PRESENT': Upper Circle & Gallery. Frank A Tugwell, ARIBA. (York City Archives.)



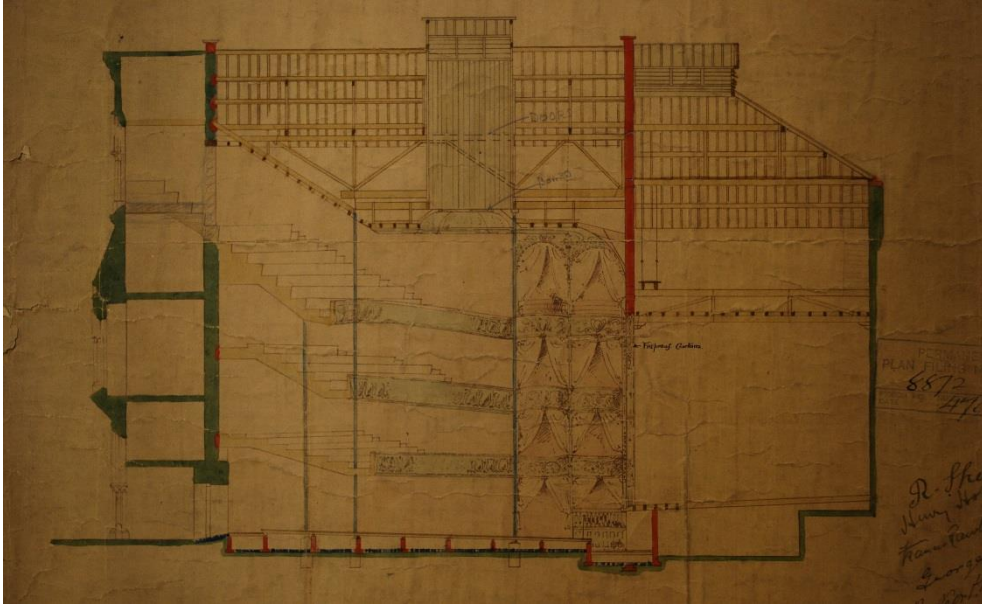
1901. 'PROPOSED RECONSTRUCTION'. Pit area. Frank A Tugwell, ARIBA. (York City Archives.)



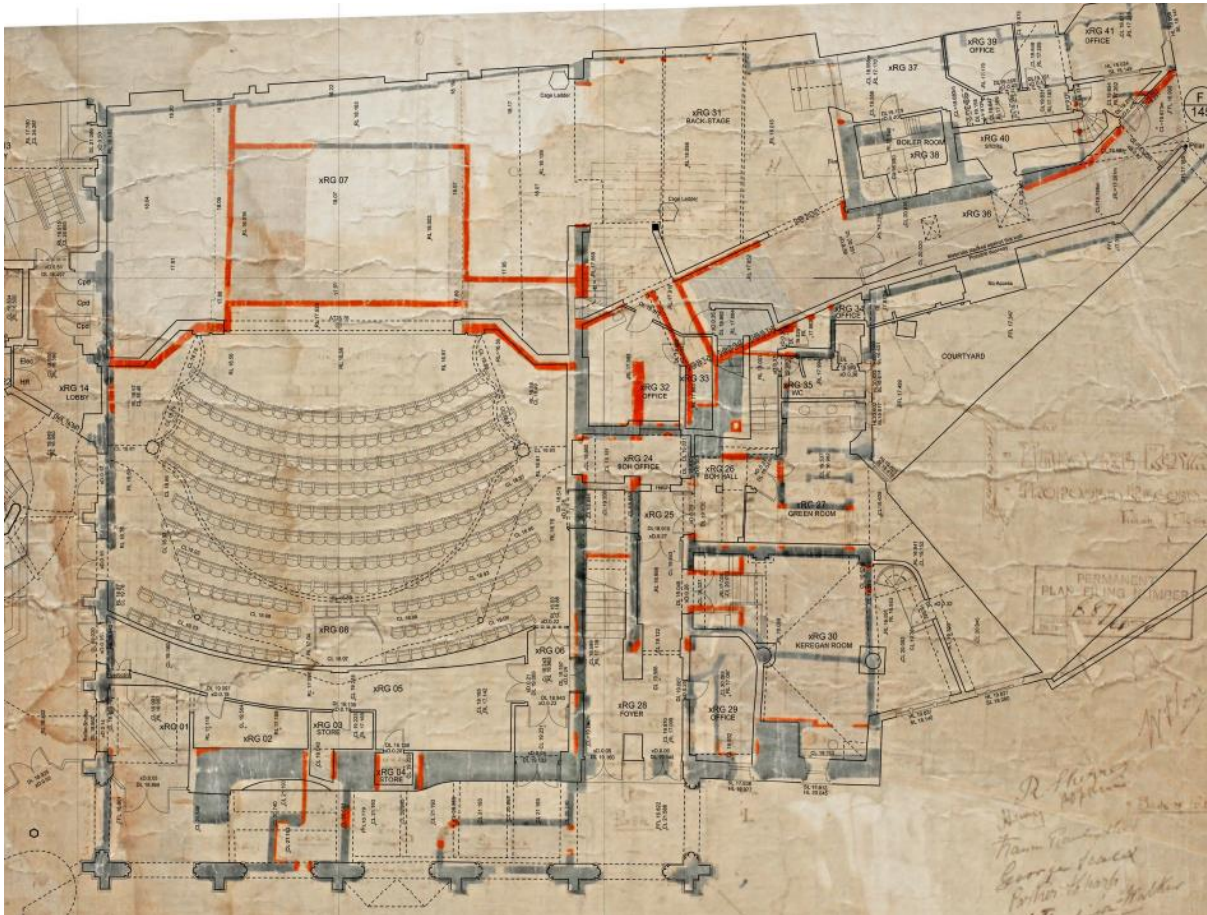
1901. 'PROPOSED RECONSTRUCTION'. Gallery. Frank A Tugwell, ARIBA. (York City Archives.)



1901. 'PROPOSED RECONSTRUCTION'. North elevation. Frank A Tugwell, ARIBA. (York City Archives.)

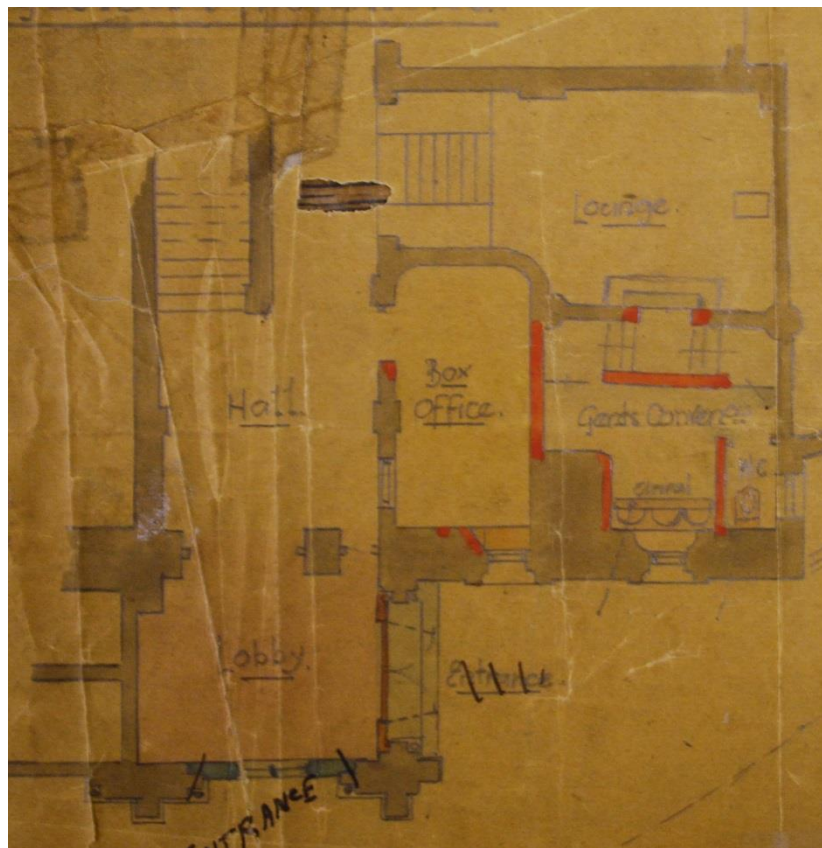


1901. 'PROPOSED RECONSTRUCTION'. Section. Frank A Tugwell, ARIBA. (York City Archives.)

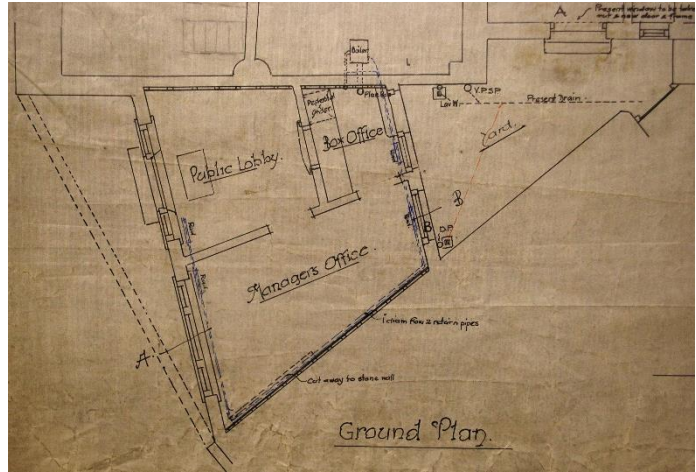
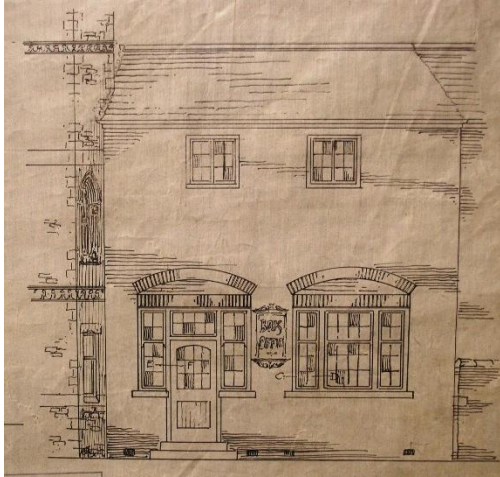


Overlay of 1901 Tugwell plan on present plan. Raquel Borges, De Matos Ryan, Architects.

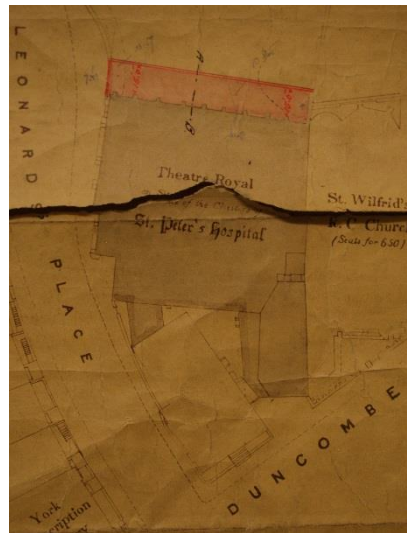
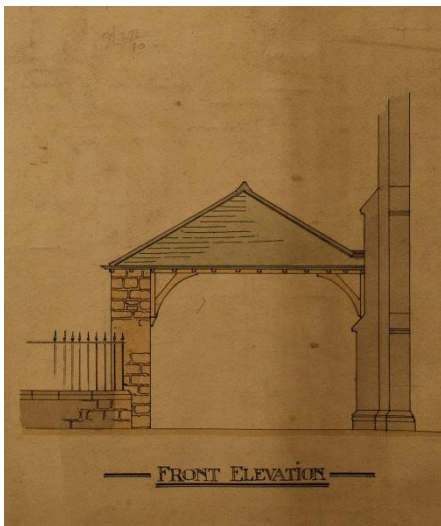
3.10.1 The increasing popularity of music halls caused W. H. Waddington to give up the theatre in 1911. It was then taken over by Percy Hutchison who continued to use touring companies against the growing competition of the cinema. Plans dated 1910, 1911, 1912, 1914, 1920, 1921, 1923, 1929 and 1936-8 in the York City Archives show that the 'continuous change' that characterised the building in the 19th century continued until the mid-1930s. Before the Great War the entrance at the south end of the 'piazza' was re-located and remodelled; single-storey, flat-roofed extensions were added to the front elevation at first floor level; a new manager's office (now the Green Room) and box office were formed in the area adjoining the rear of the Red House; to the garden elevation a full-depth passage and a new entrance off St Leonard's Place were formed; new lavatories were erected at Gallery level above the main staircase; and a full-width glass-roofed canopy was erected across the ground floor arcade.



1910. New entrance and lobby.

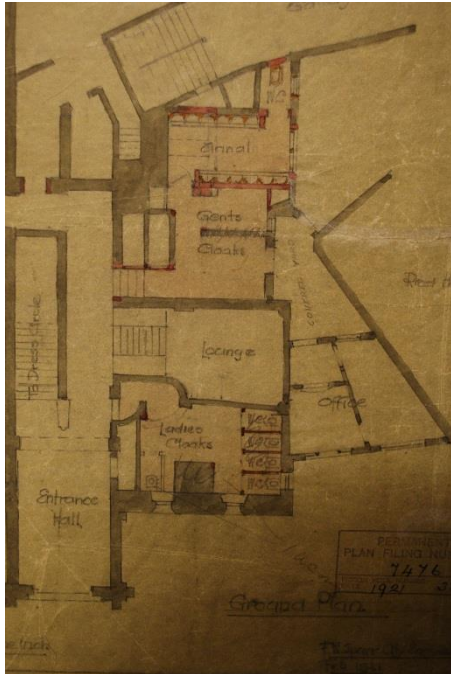


1911. New lobby, box office and manager's office



1910-12. Side extension: section, elevation and block plan. (York City Archives)

3.10.2 After the War, in 1921-2, the lavatory arrangements in the areas of the Keregan room and the rooms behind to the east were remodelled. And sometime between 1929 and 1936 a glazed canopy erected to project forward of 'piazza'.



1921. New 'conveniences'.

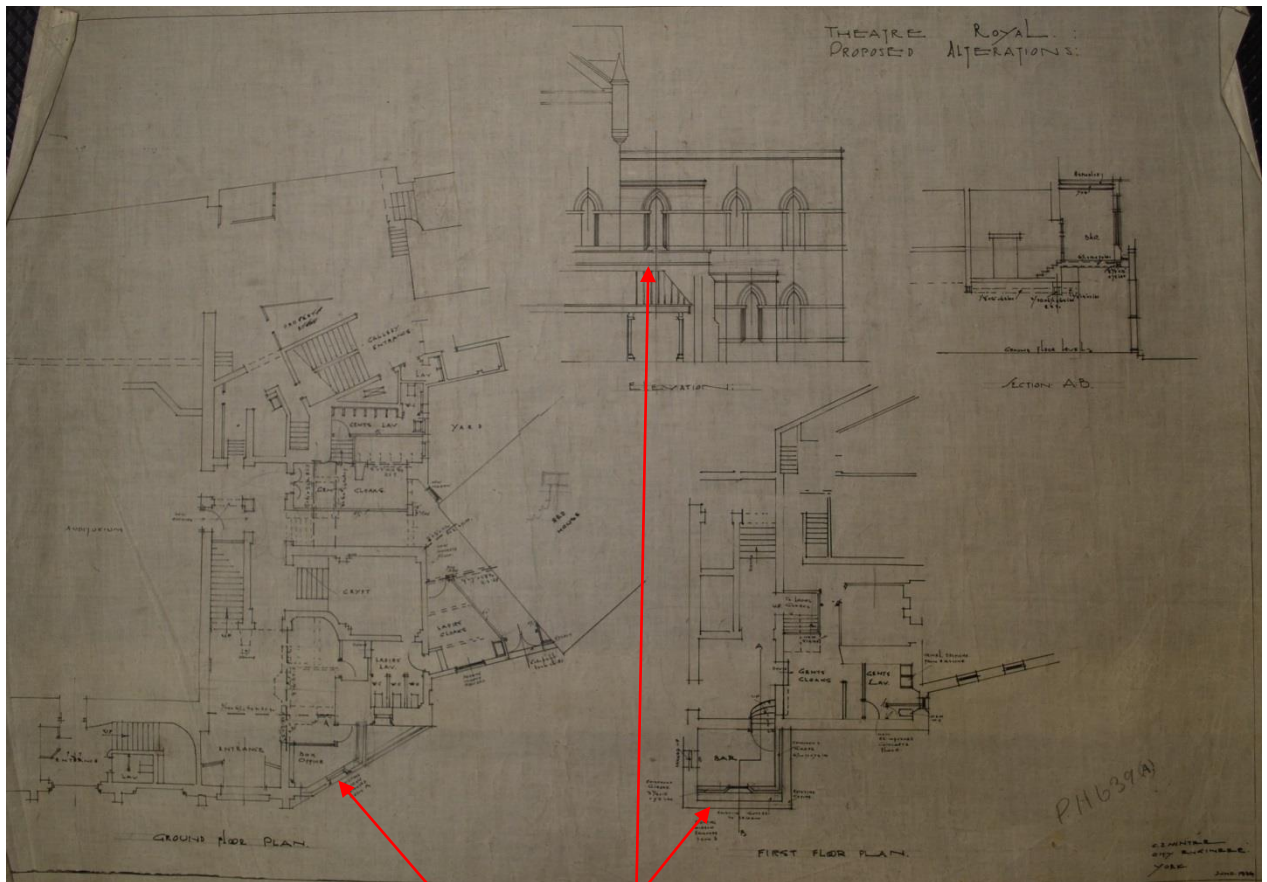


1929. WC extension on front elevation.

(York City Archives)

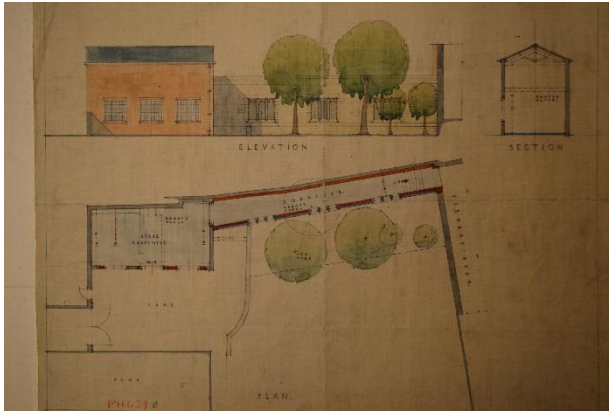
3.10.3 In 1933 Hutchinson was declared bankrupt. Since 1935 the theatre has been managed by the York Citizens' Theatre Trust established by a group of leading citizens with a capital of £2,300 subscribed in £1 shares. The aim was to establish a repertory company in the theatre; performances began in February 1935. After reorganisation as a non-profit-making trust and reduction in seat prices the repertory system became established and flourished.

3.10.4 The last series of alterations, as recorded in the City Archives, included the addition of a bar at first floor level at the south end of the entrance arcade and the formation of a new box office in the re-entrant angle at the south end of the arcade.

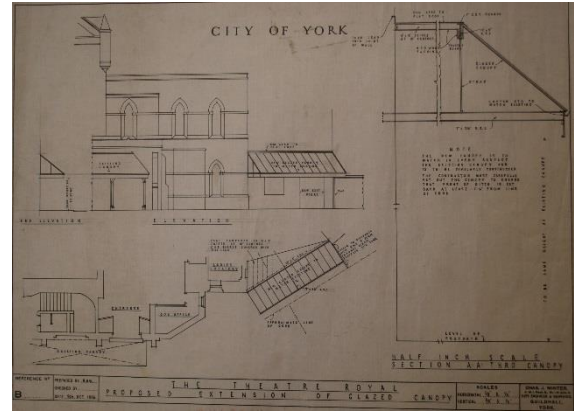


1936. New box office and bar at first floor level.

3.10.5 In the same year a new carpenter's shop was erected in the garden with a long, connecting passage built against the boundary wall with the Roman Catholic Church. Later in the year a glazed canopy, to match that projecting from the arcaded front, over the angular external area adjoining the rear of the Red House. In 1937 new doors were installed in the wall between the yard and the working areas south of the stage.



1936. New carpenter's shop and passage in garden.

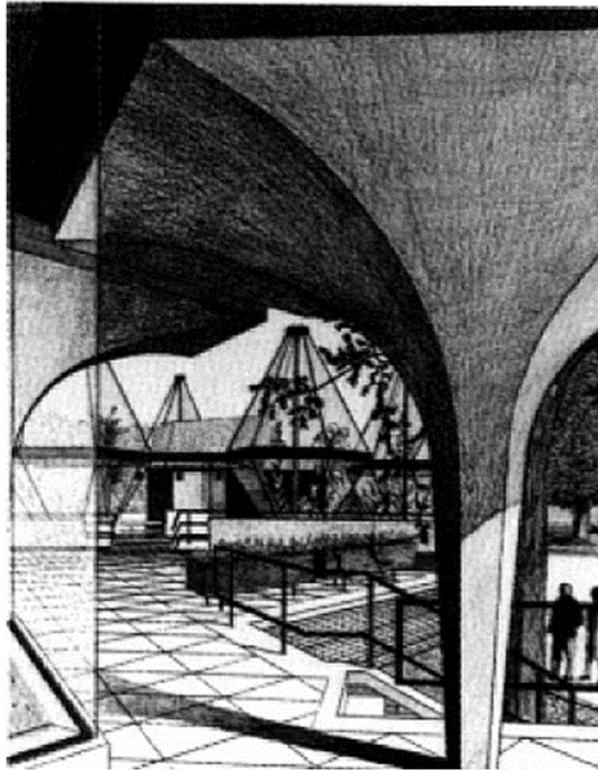


Glazed canopy to south.



Before 1967. *Architectural Review*, CXLIV, Sept. 1968.

3.10.6 In July 1965 the director of the theatre, Donald Bodley, wrote to the architect, Patrick Gwynne, inviting him to visit York to discuss a potential project. Bodley had seen Gwynne's restaurant in Hyde Park; both the Serpentine Restaurant and the Dell Restaurant, designed for Forte's, were completed by 1965. Gwynne designed garden pavilion-type buildings with umbrella-like 'mushrooms', inspired by the sight of people walking in the rain, for roofs. The architect was also responsible for all the interior fittings and furniture.⁶⁸



The Serpentine Restaurant, Hyde Park, London. Drawing by Patrick Gwynne.

3.10.7 The Corporation had offered the garden to the north of the theatre. The work consisted of several alterations: a new wing, reworking of the dressing rooms, reseating of the auditorium some re-working of the Gothic Revival facade. There was

⁶⁸ Gwynne (1913-2003) had trained with of John Coleridge, a former assistant of Edwin Lutyens, and later was an assistant of Wells Coates where he worked alongside Denys Lasdun. His first commission was for The Homewood, completed in 1938, for his family. He designed every aspect including the furnishings and produced one of the best examples of the type of domestic architecture inspired by the ideas and work of the French architect, Le Corbusier. He built up a practice of private house commissions, including a house for Charles Forte, and other structures including medical centres, shops, apartments and a motorway service station for Forte. Sarah C. Howard, 'Gwynne, (Alban) Patrick (1913–2003)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2011.

a budget of £140,000.⁶⁹ Gwynne worked fast and the basic design was completed by the end of August 1965; drawings and a model were produced through late 1965 and early 1966. After discussions about the need to remove items to keep to the original budget, all arrangements were confirmed and planning approval received by April 1966. Work did not commence, however, until February 1967, but the theatre was able to re-open in December that year. The correspondence between the theatre and the architect continues until May 1970: there were with the carpets, the glass and the skylights.

3.10.8 The *Architectural Review* published a sheet of four plans and two sections and five, high contrast, black and white photographs by Henk Snoek.⁷⁰ The brief article, entitled 'YORK FOYER ROYAL', read as follows:

RESTAURANT, BAR AND FOYER,
THEATRE ROYAL, YORK
ARCHITECT: PATRICK GWYNNE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY HENK SNOEK

The Theatre Royal, York, until recently, was 1880 Gothic with a bold exterior marred by piecemeal additions, including a ponderous and forbidding steel and glass canopy. The delightful auditorium was excellent theatrically and acoustically. The seating itself was due for renewal and redecoration was overdue. The entrances for each part of the house were separate and only the stalls and dress circle were allowed the luxury of a foyer—small and unattractive at that. The rest of the theatre was characterized by very small bars, antiquated cloakrooms, inadequate dressing rooms and back stage area. In 1964, the City Corporation made available a garden to one side of the building and on this now stands a new wing, housing an entrance foyer leading to all parts of the house, new bars, cloakrooms, the box office, a shop and a restaurant.

The area freed on the other side of the theatre has been remodelled to provide dressing rooms for 60, ample showers and cloakrooms, as well as a much needed green room. The later additions to the exterior have been

⁶⁹ RIBA Drawings & Archives Collection: Gw p/1 is Gwynnes' correspondence and file; the drawings are numbered PB 1/ 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 15, 16, 18 and 19, and PB/1/ (1), (10), (11), (13), (14), (17), (19), (20), (21), (22), (23), (24), and (25).

⁷⁰ *Architectural Review*, CXLIV, Sept. 1968, pp 187-191.

removed and a blocked Gothic arch has been opened to form a colonnade to the street linked to the new wing.

A transparent building was reckoned to provide the best marriage between old and new, and it also brings into full public view, particularly at night, the activities of the theatre and allows those inside to enjoy views up and down the street. Two tier concrete mushrooms free the perimeter for walls of glass and allow the extension to be separated visually from the main building. The upper mushrooms are wider so that they oversail the lower ones and this allows the glazing to be full height, uninterrupted by the first floor.

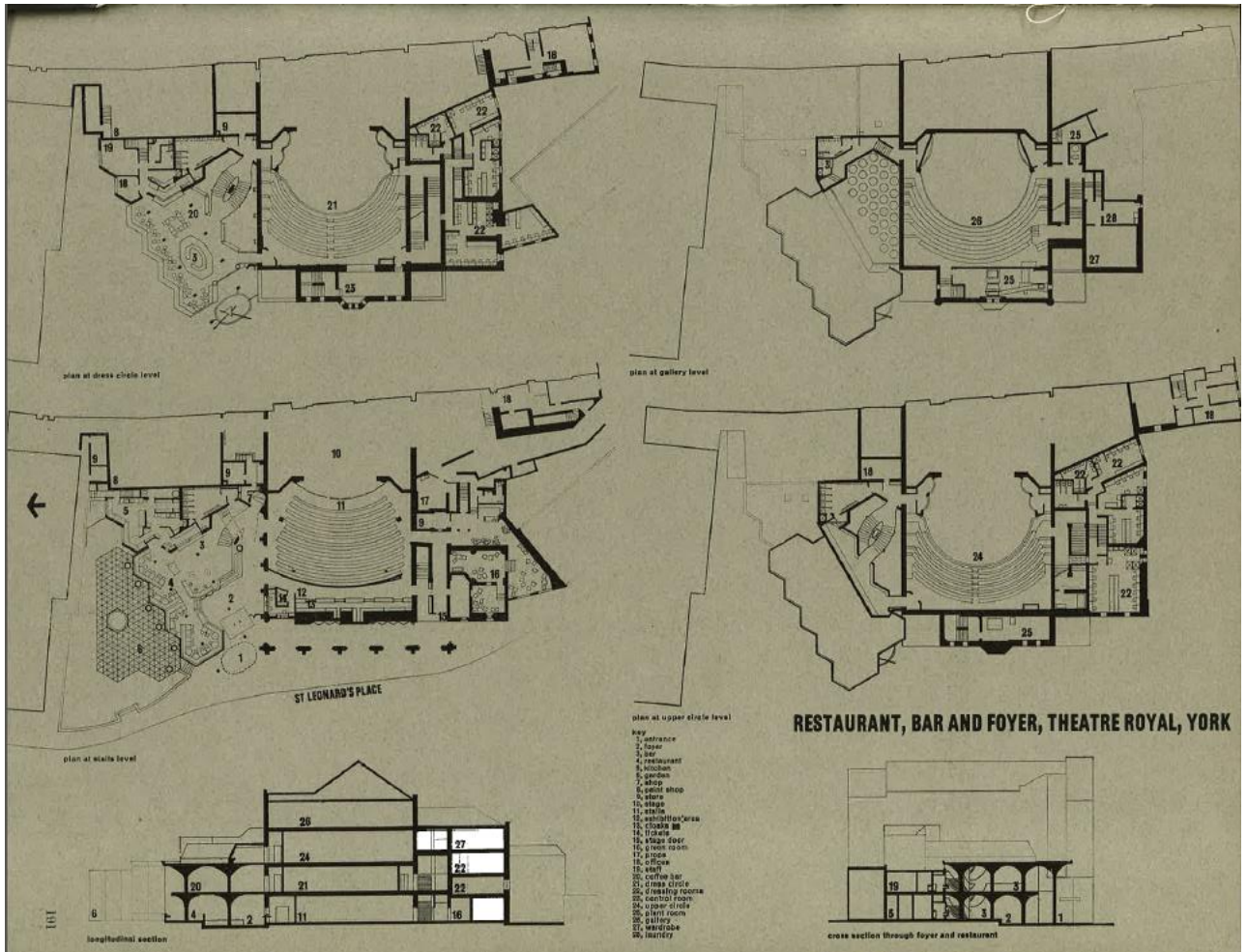
The profiles of these mushrooms are designed so that seen in perspective two together produce the form of a Gothic arch. More than anything this unites the new with the old. The interior space is undivided apart from the occasional screen and the seven columns of the mushrooms used in the interior. Strongly lit by day by the glass walls and the domelights of the top roof, at night the interior is brilliantly lit by spotlights and the roof is illuminated by outside lights.

The mushrooms containing local aggregate were formed in melamine lined moulds and grit blasted. In colour they match the York stone of the theatre.

The rear wall is faced with dark bronze slate planks.

Consulting engineers, Jenkinson and Potter.

Quantity surveyors, Monk and Dunstone.



1969. Plans and sections by Patrick Gwynne. *Architectural Review*, CXLIV, Sept. 1968, p 191.

3.11 There have been other, unrecorded alterations since 1968 particularly in the areas behind and to the south of the stage - the dressing rooms and green room. The most significant was the removal of the dividing wall in Norman vault to create the Keregan Room at a date after 1974.

4 DESCRIPTION

Exterior

4.1 The building is asymmetrical, in an Early English, Gothic revival style, and built of rock-faced sandstone with Welsh slate roofs. Pevsner & Neave observe that it 'looks exactly as if it were the town hall.' There are three 3 storeys, over a basement, and an attic to the central section. The centre has a three bay wide, gabled front that projects forward of the main building line. To the right is a similar two-storey, two-bay section that masks the former salon and present dressing rooms. Further to the right is the low, two storey, two bay former box office (1911) formed of red brick. Blocked doorways can be seen in both of the right hand wings. To the left the third storey of the 1901 extension terminates in an awkward ramp upwards. Both flanking sections have blocked windows of the former residential accommodation. Across the elevation is an open five-bay buttressed arcade broken in the centre by the projecting, canted bay window at first floor level. The bay has four lancet windows with clustered shafts: above is a half hexagonal with gargoyles and arcaded band. The arcade has two-centred arches of 2 orders, inner order chamfered, on responds and shafts with stiff-leaf capitals. Above the arches are hoodmoulds on head or foliate stops, with spandrels containing roundels, carved in low relief with female heads and shields on trefoils. Above is corbel cornice and parapet with a band of heraldic shields set in sunk panels, two carved with a cross. At the upper levels are two pane sash windows, in lancet surrounds with clustered shafts at first floor level and beneath lintels enriched with foliage at second floor level. The gable has bartizans at each side linked by trefoiled band which is broken by a central two-light window with two-centred arches on paired shafts; a quatrefoil decorates the tympanum. Trefoiled arcades support the copings of the gable meeting under a figure of Shakespeare in a gabled niche with crockets and finials. The roof, of Welsh slate, has steep gabled dormer windows.



4.2 Patrick Gwynne's extension is of reinforced concrete and glass. The full height curtain walls of glass appear to float in front of the structure but are fixed to the leading edges of the concrete hexagonal 'mushrooms' which rising into vaulted canopies.





4.3 The three storey rear elevation is formed of a mixture of brickwork but the section to the left, with 12 pane sash windows under segmental arches, would appear to be part of Mansel's alterations of 1821: the left hand window was for the ladies' dressing room and the right hand window was the manager's room. The large beam above the ground floor indicates that the area was open as yard space. ground floor



Interior

4.4 Tugwell's 1901-2 auditorium, of with stalls, dress circle, upper circle and gallery, has a proscenium arch with shield motif flanked by three tiers of bowed boxes set beneath segmental arches. The balcony fronts have scallop and shell decoration. There is little elsewhere – decorated ceiling, entrance lobbies, staircase etc – to rival the best theatrical buildings of the early 20th century. To the rear of the is part of the former Minster precinct wall with a four-centred gate arch of voussoirs (remodelled); above is a section of wall pierced by two cruciform arrow slits. The gateway and wall continue down under the stage where there is also a mediaeval well. At right end of building towards the front is the Keregan Room: a semi-basement with two bays of the Norman vaulted undercroft with groined semicircular arches springing from squat cylindrical columns and square piers or responds with scalloped capitals.



Auditorium.



Auditorium, boxes and proscenium arch.



Arrow loop.

Blocked gateway and former precinct wall with arrow loops above.

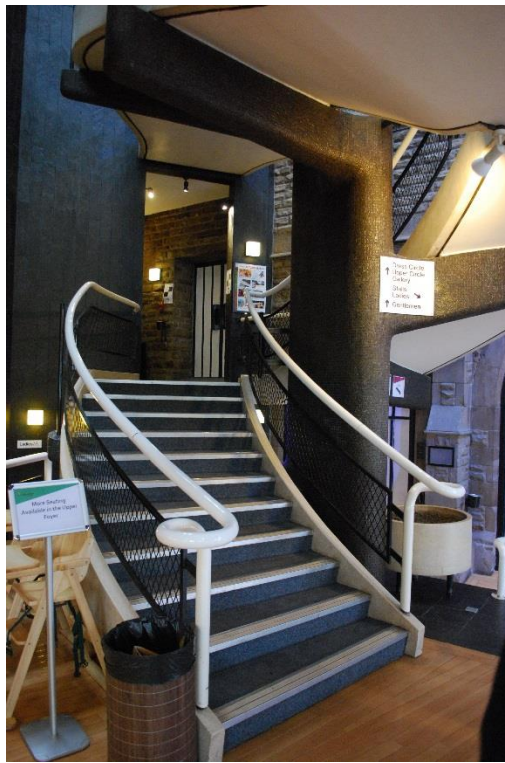
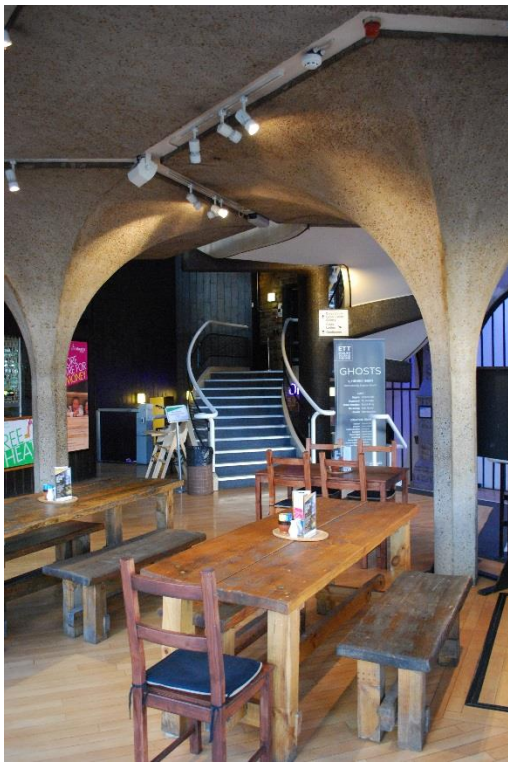


Keregan Room with mid-12th century columns and vaulting.

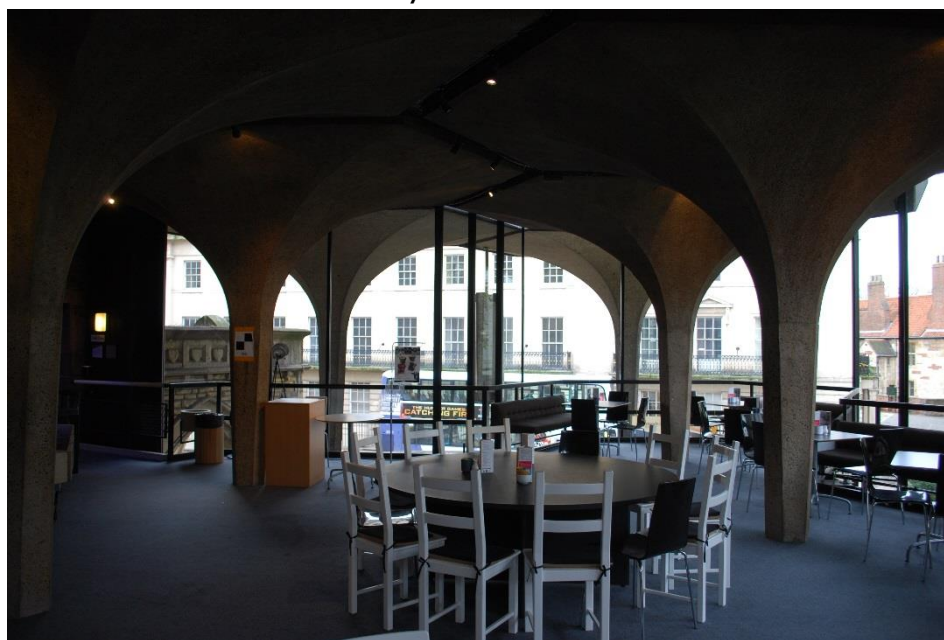


4.5 Gwynne's foyer is formed of two tiers of mushroom columns, those to upper floor oversailing to permit full-height glazing. The columns are made of with grit-blasted, exposed aggregate (local) finish. Their profiles are designed so that seen in perspective together they produce the form of a Gothic arch. Towards the rear is a serpentine, cantilevered staircase with marble edging to sides and metal handrail. The rear wall of the foyer is clad with tall, thin, dark bronze slate planks. There is mosaic walling to upper floors. Unfortunately

original lighting, seating, tables, carpets and planting have been replaced. Behind the foyer are utilitarian toilet, service and workshop spaces.



Gwynne interiors.





4.6 In the area of the dressing rooms, performers' toilets, the green room, reception etc, there have been so many alterations that, without further investigation, it is difficult to produce phasing plans and to assess significance. It is evident, however, that some of the earlier (1821) arrangements and fabric survives.



Dressing rooms 4 & 5, with elements of earlier room arrangements.



Blocked opening/window in rear office.



Groined vaulting on main stair.

4.7 *The manager's house*

4.7.1 Attached to the south side of the theatre is a three-storey house, formerly occupied by the manager, incorporating the remains of a mid-12th century and later stone building surviving to first-floor level and altered c 1700. The three-bay south elevation, of pink and grey brick in Flemish bond, with red brick dressings, has double hung sash windows under flat arches. The east and west elevations retain large areas of coursed magnesian limestone from the mediaeval structure, and first varied brickwork in random and stretcher bonds.



The former Manager's House, front and west elevations.

Mediaeval masonry.

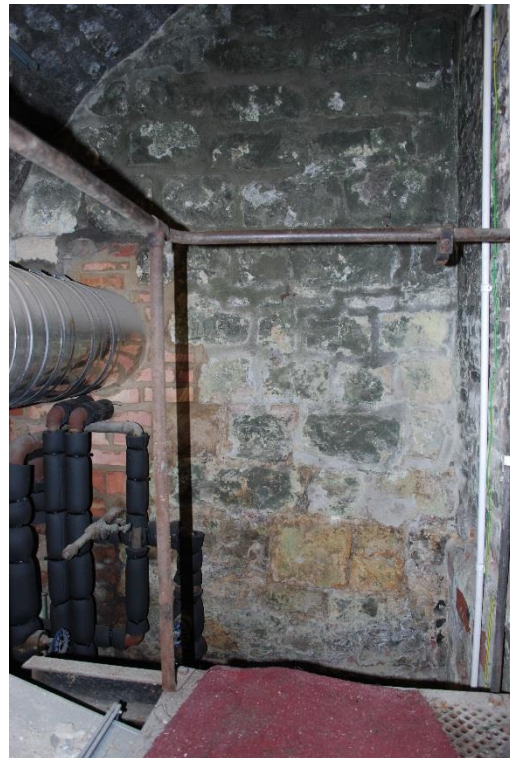
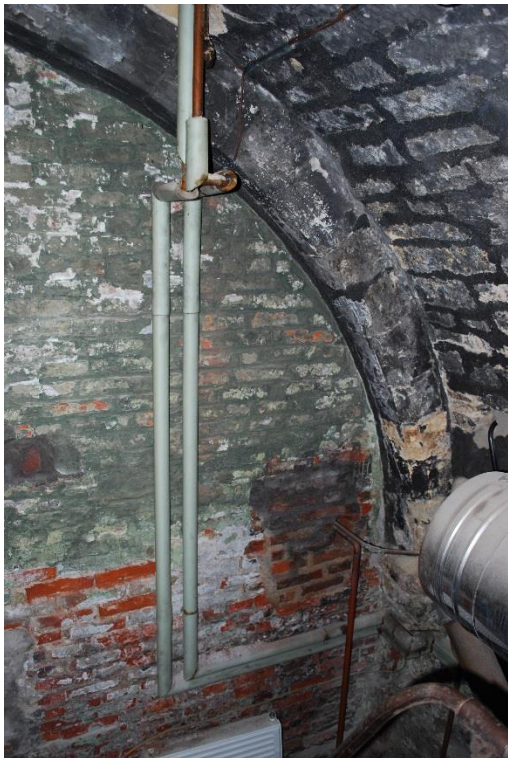


The former Manager's House, east elevation.

4.7.2 The front elevation is three storeys with three bays. Patress plates indicate that tie bars have been inserted through the structure. The ground floor has been altered to provide the passage entrance to the theatre: it has a flat lintel supported at left side on cast-iron column. The elevation has a bracketed timber cornice with a hipped tiled roof, with brick stacks, above. The windows are 12-pane double-hung, sashes with stone cills, some

painted and renewed. At ground floor level is a 16-pane fixed window. The west elevation retains parts of a blocked mediaeval, lancet window at first floor level.

4.7.3 Inside, there is a late 18th century staircase (remodelled) leading up to the first floor and, between first and second floors, a staircase of c 1700 with bulbous balusters. In the cellar at the rear are sections of a barrel-vaulted bay, with a chamfered round arch and parts of a capital: the vault is divided by later wall containing a blocked window. The front room has a pair of early 18th century cupboard doors, with raised and fielded panelling in a keyed, round-arched architrave. In the back room is a plain fireplace with hob-grate. At top floor level the front room retains a bed recess. Other panelled doors and fragments of panelling survive on first floor.



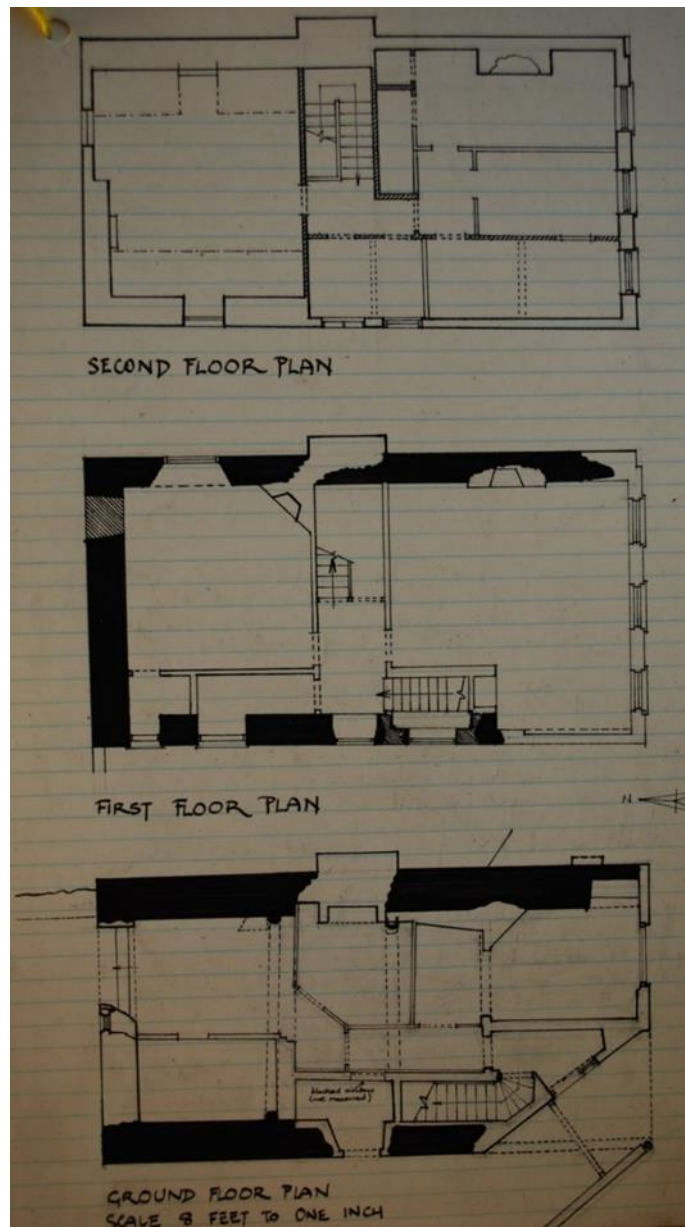
Medieval vaulted chamber: cellar.



Early-mid 18th century panelled doors and staircase.



Bed recess: front room, top floor.



Plan from RCHM investigator's notes, 1974. (English Heritage Archives, Swindon.)

5. SIGNIFICANCE

5.1. Introduction: significance and values

5.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) defines significance as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic.'⁷¹ Understanding the values that

⁷¹National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), Annex 2: Glossary.

contribute to that significance, and how they relate to the fabric of the place, is vital to understanding the best means of conservation of the heritage asset.

5.1.2 **Archaeological interest:** There will be archaeological interest in a heritage asset if it holds, or potentially may hold, evidence of past human activity worthy of expert investigation at some point. Heritage assets with archaeological interest are the primary source of evidence about the substance and evolution of places, and of the people and cultures that made them.

5.1.3 **Architectural and artistic interest:** These are interests in the design and general aesthetics of a place. They can arise from conscious design or fortuitously from the way the heritage asset has evolved. More specifically, architectural interest is an interest in the art or science of the design, construction, craftsmanship and decoration of buildings and structures of all types. Artistic interest is an interest in other human creative skills, like sculpture.

5.1.4 **Historic interest:** An interest in past lives and events (including pre-historic). Heritage assets can illustrate or be associated with them. Heritage assets with historic interest not only provide a material record of our nation's history, but can also provide an emotional meaning for communities derived from their collective experience of a place and can symbolise wider values such as faith and cultural identity.

5.2. *Grading significance*

5.2.1 The following grading system (used by English Heritage in the preparation of its own conservation plans and statements) has been adopted to enable the relative weight of the values contributing to the significance of the place and its setting to be compared:

A - *Exceptional significance:* Elements whose values are both unique to the place and relevant to our perception and understanding of architectural and social history in a national and international context. These are the qualities that, for buildings, warrant listing in grade I and II*. Many Scheduled Ancient Monuments would also be placed in this category although there are a number that do not warrant such a high ranking and should be in the next grade (B).

B - *Considerable significance:* Elements whose values contribute to the place's status as a nationally important place. These are the qualities that justify statutory protection at national level.

C - *Some significance:* Elements whose values make a positive contribution to the way the place is understood and perceived, primarily in a local context.

D - *Little significance:* Elements whose values contribute to the way the place is perceived in a very limited but positive way.

N - *Neutral significance:* Elements which neither add to nor detract from the significance of the place.

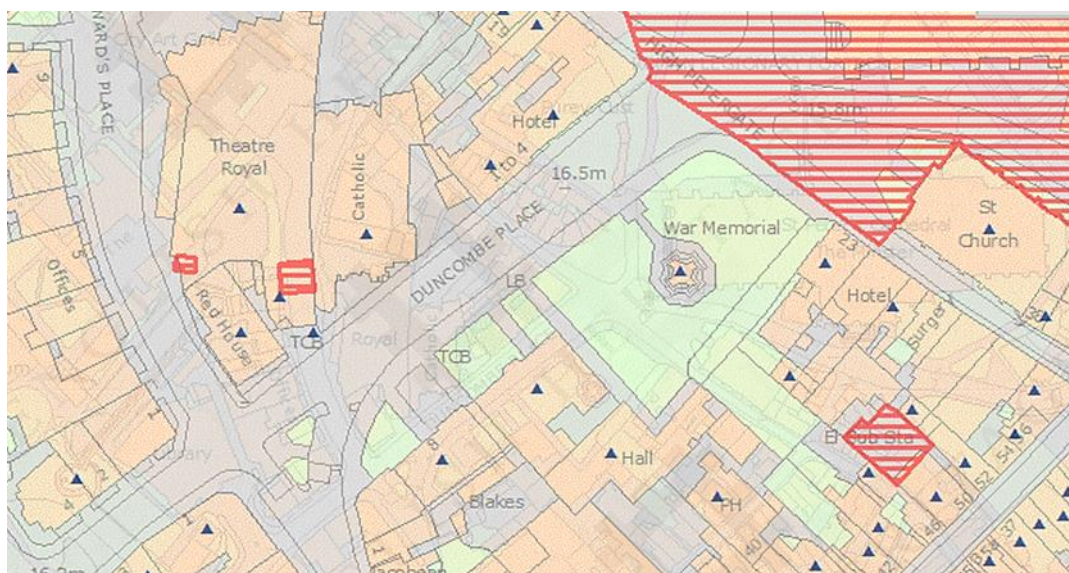
INT - *Intrusive*: Elements of no historic interest or aesthetic or architectural merit that detract from the appearance of the place, or mask the understanding of significant elements.

5.3 Statutory designations

Scheduled ancient monument

5.3.1 The two elements of the scheduled monument 'St Peter's Hospital, part of undercroft beneath the Theatre Royal', [YO 279], English Heritage List Entry No. 1005475, are included on the national Schedule of Ancient Monuments. In common with some early schedulings there is no formal description of the monument

5.3.2 They have yet to be reviewed against current day criteria but there is no doubt that they would meet it, and are by definition of national significance. Their extent is recorded on the map extract below.



Extract from National Heritage List designation map. Scheduled Ancient Monuments hatched red; listed buildings are blue triangles.

Listed building

5.3.3 The undercroft of the theatre was added to the Secretary of State's list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest on; the theatre building was first listed on 24th June 1983. It is listed at grade II*. The former manager's house – now the theatre's offices – was also listed on 14th June 1954; it is listed at grade II.

5.3.4 Grade II* listed structures fall within the top 8% of the nation's stock of historic buildings and can be defined as being particularly important and as of more than special interest. Listed buildings account for about 2% of English building stock. In March 2010, there were approximately 374,000 list entries (many including multiple buildings) of which 92% were Grade II, 5.5% were Grade II* and 2.5% were grade I.

5.3.5 The Secretary of State's list entries are usually descriptive and until recently have made no mention of the specific reasons for designation. The list description is at Appendix 2.

5.3.6 The Secretary of State uses the following criteria when assessing whether a building is of special interest and therefore should be included in the statutory list:

Architectural interest. To be of special architectural interest a building must be of importance in its architectural design, decoration or craftsmanship; special interest may also apply to nationally important examples of particular building types and techniques (e.g. buildings displaying technological innovation or virtuosity) and significant plan forms.

Historic interest. To be of special historic interest a building must illustrate important aspects of the nation's social, economic, cultural, or military history and/or have close historical associations with nationally important people. There should normally be some quality of interest in the physical fabric of the building itself to justify the statutory protection afforded by listing.⁷²

5.3.7 The general principles with regard to selection state that

Age and rarity. The older a building is, and the fewer the surviving examples of its kind, the more likely it is to have special interest. ... The relevance of age and rarity will vary according to the particular type of building ... However, the general principles used are that:

- before 1700, all buildings that contain a significant proportion of their original fabric are listed;
- from 1700 to 1840, most buildings are listed;
- after 1840, because of the greatly increased number of buildings erected and the much larger numbers that have survived, progressively greater selection is necessary;

Aesthetic merits. The appearance of a building – both its intrinsic architectural merit and any group value – is a key consideration in judging listing proposals, but the special interest of a building will not always be reflected in obvious external visual quality. Buildings that are important for reasons of technological innovation, or as illustrating particular aspects of social or economic history, may have little external visual quality.

Selectivity. Where a building qualifies for listing primarily on the strength of its special architectural interest, the fact that there are other buildings of similar quality elsewhere is not likely to be a major consideration. However, a building may be listed primarily because it represents a particular historical type in order to ensure

⁷² Department for Culture, Media and Sport, *Principles of selection for Listing Buildings*, March 2010.

that examples of such a type are preserved. Listing in these circumstances is largely a comparative exercise and needs to be selective where a substantial number of buildings of a similar type and quality survive. In such cases, the Secretary of State's policy is to list only the most representative or most significant examples of the type.

National interest. The emphasis in these criteria is to establish consistency of selection to ensure that not only are all buildings of strong intrinsic architectural interest included on the list, but also the most significant or distinctive regional buildings that together make a major contribution to the national historic stock. For instance, the best examples of local vernacular buildings will normally be listed because together they illustrate the importance of distinctive local and regional traditions.

5.3.8 English Heritage has amplified the selection criteria for late Victorian and Edwardian theatres, as follows:

Late nineteenth-century entrepreneurs invested in large new variety theatres that are for many the epitome of Victorian and Edwardian theatres. Surviving examples are generally of the most decorative sorts, and very plain auditoria for entirely working-class audiences, are exceptionally rare. There was a great remodelling of theatres, too, at this time, as the introduction of steel and cantilevers eliminated the need for columns and made gallery sightlines much better.

Completeness of design enhances the case for listing – the survival of a proscenium arch where there was one is generally essential – and it is worth checking the degree of alteration carefully, especially of foyers, as theatres of this era may have been opened up to achieve movement between levels that was not originally possible. The architectural quality of the exterior was often elaborate; ... Internally, a theatre should retain a palpable sense of space. Theatres from the 1860s and 1870s were relatively modest in scale. The rich and fruity interiors of the years 1890-1914 survive disproportionately and the best, such as those by Frank Matcham, W. G. R. Sprague, and Bertie Crewe, the three leading theatre architects of the period, will most likely be listed in a high grade. ... Credit should be given to minor decorative elements within the auditoria and foyers. Survival of stage equipment is always significant.⁷³

Conservation area

5.3.9 The Theatre Royal is included in the York Central Historic Core Conservation Area as designated by York City Council in 1968. An appraisal of the conservation area was adopted on 24 November 2012. The Theatre Royal site is included in Character Area Four: Museum Gardens and Exhibition Square. The character area has been devised 'for the practical purpose of analysing it and developing policies to conserve and improve it. Unlike

⁷³ English Heritage, *Designation Listing Selection Guide: Culture and Entertainment*, 2011.

the overall boundary of the conservation area, these areas have no legal basis. They exist solely to help us understand and manage the conservation area.'

5.3.10 The overview of the character of the area is as follows:

This area has a very rich history sometimes only hinted at by ruins or fragments of buildings. It did not evolve in the same way as other areas of the city centre as there was not a compact network of ancient streets that became densely built up. Rather, there were several medieval institutions which meant that most land remained in the same ownership until the mid-18th century.

A very important group of ecclesiastical and civic buildings were built over 1000 years in and around what is now Museum Gardens. This open space is the largest and most pleasant in the city providing a quiet refuge away from the traffic noise and pollution of the inner ring road. This area still provides much of York's cultural attractions including the Theatre Royal, City Art Gallery and Yorkshire Museum.

5.3.11 The Theatre Royal is identified as a 'Landmark'. The word 'landmark' is used in a non-technical sense - taken to mean a conspicuous building in the townscape. It is described as follows:

The Theatre Royal was built in five phases to account for both changing functional needs and architectural preferences. The first building dated from 1744 but the façade was re-built in 1834-5 by John Harper in a Tudor style. The building was re-built again in 1877-9 by George Styan, the city engineer, in a Gothic style using limestone. This is the exterior as seen today although the interior was re-built again in 1901-2 by F.A. Tugwell of Scarborough. A concrete and glass side extension was added in 1967-8 by Patrick Gwynne and R.A. Sefton to house a foyer and café. It received a Civic Trust award.

The Theatre Royal was built in several sequences and is therefore composed of a variety of distinct architectural styles, including a modern concrete and glass extension.

5.4 *Archaeological significance*

5.4.1 The Theatre Royal lies in the designated Archaeological Area as defined in the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act, which comprises the historic core of York and which implies that it lies within an area of national significance. In reality, the archaeology of the historic centre of York in the Roman, post-Roman, Anglian, Anglo-Scandinavian and Medieval periods is arguably of *exceptional (A)* or international significance. The visible and buried remains of St Leonard's Hospital themselves are of at least National Significance regardless of the fact that they are only partially scheduled or Listed. It is interesting to observe that the fact that there is so much doubt about the function of

individual building within the medieval hospital that the importance of the remaining archaeological resource is of increased significance.

5.4.2 The extent of surviving medieval fabric within the existing theatre is unknown, but it is safe to assume that some elements of the previously destroyed undercroft do in fact survive, either encased or buried, and that any disturbance of existing fabric should be undertaken under archaeological supervision. Hidden elements share the significance of exposed fragments of the medieval buildings.

5.4.3 The archaeological significance of the Theatre Royal is *exceptional* as it has elements whose values are both unique to the place and relevant to our perception and understanding of archaeology in a national and international context.

5.5 *Architectural and artistic significance*

5.5.1 The Theatre Royal retains elements from its main phases of construction. The exterior is a good example of Gothic-revival architecture designed under the auspices of the City Surveyor, George Styan. The structure does, however, incorporate mediaeval and 18th century fabric. The interior was re-built in 1901-2 by F.A. Tugwell of Scarborough. While neither of these two designers can be assessed as being in the 'first rank' of architects and surveyors their work is competent and attractive. It is interesting to note that the theatre building was not added to the list until 1983. This would appear to be a reflection of the fact that the Gothic building, with a Baroque/Art Nouveau was not considered to be of the highest order and cannot be ranked with some of the truly great Victorian Gothic-revival structures or Baroque/Art Nouveau structures in the country. In other words the building is really of *considerable* rather than *exceptional* architectural and artistic significance.

5.5.2 The concrete and glass side extension was added in 1967-8 by Patrick Gwynne to house a foyer and café. It received a Civic Trust award. It is an eye-catching work and, although it is a variation on his earlier designs for the structures in Hyde Park, London, it is a rare example of his work. It is unlikely in 1983 that the II* grade was awarded on the basis of Gwynne's contribution, but today he is recognised as an important architect of the 20th century.

5.5.3 The high grading is justified, however, on the basis that the sum of parts and phases of the structure, and in particular the mediaeval elements, adds up to a structure of *exceptional* architectural and artistic significance as it has elements whose values are both unique to the place and relevant to our perception and understanding of architectural and social history in a national and international context. The remaining 12th century, and later mediaeval work, carries the whole building into the highest category of significance.

5.6 *Historic significance*

5.6.1 The York theatre building has been in continuous use since 1744. It is therefore one of the most historic theatres in the land and it illustrates important aspects of the nation's cultural, social and economic history.

5.6.2 The excellent archive of architects' and surveyors' drawings, the Corporation records, the extensive collection of playbills, the reports in local newspapers and the association with the 'Wandering Patentee', Tate Wilkinson, and his four volume memoirs, combine to provide the potential for the preparation of an excellent further insight into the history of the provincial theatre over the past 270 years. This would supplement the excellent work of Sybil Rosenfeld whose publication remains a model of scholarship.

5.6.3 The Theatre Royal, York has *considerable* historic significance as it has elements whose values contribute to the place's status as a nationally important place.

Group value/townscape contribution

5.6.4 The City Council has identified the Theatre Royal as a 'Landmark' or a conspicuous building in the townscape. It is indeed a distinctive and prominent feature, located on an important route, in the townscape especially when viewed from the north and from the other side of St Leonard's Place. It is not, however, one of the most important landmark buildings in the city. By having other listed buildings around, it is judged as having 'group value'. It is not the case, however, that the building 'groups' well with its neighbours which are all examples of neo-classical, stucco formed buildings. And the Gwynne building intrudes into what appears to have been a deliberately-designed view of the Minster.

5.6.5 Any landmark in a city of the importance of York is arguably of more than *some* significance. The group value/townscape significance of the Theatre Royal is therefore assessed as *considerable* as it has elements whose values make a positive contribution to the way the place is understood and perceived, primarily in a local context.

5.7 *Communal value*

5.7.1 The Theatre Royal is a cultural venue in the city and is much-loved and patronised by the citizens. It will also have an appeal to a wider geographical area. The institution and building figures in the collective experience or memory of all of these people and it is part of their identity, distinctiveness, social interaction and coherence and pride.

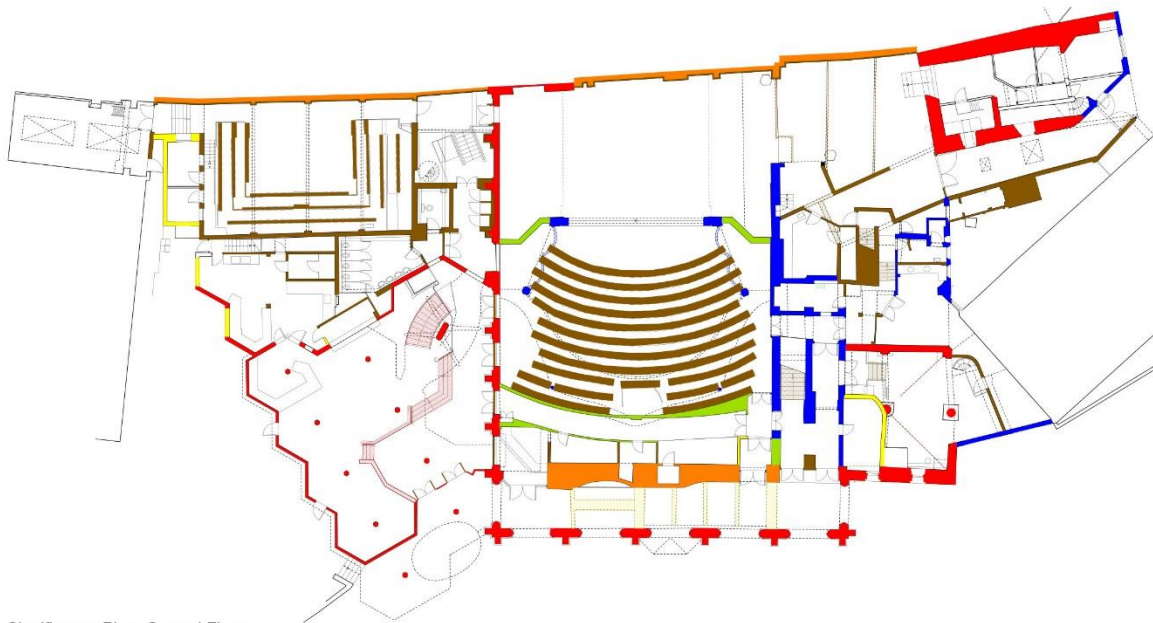
5.7.2 The communal value of the Theatre Royal is assessed as *some* as it has elements whose values make a positive contribution to the way the place is understood and perceived, primarily in a local context.

5.8 *Summary of significance*

	SIGNIFICANCE GRADE
Archaeological significance	<i>Exceptional</i>
Architectural and artistic significance	<i>Exceptional</i>
Historic significance	<i>Considerable</i>
Group value/townscape contribution	<i>Considerable</i>
Communal value	<i>Some</i>
OVERALL	EXCEPTIONAL

5.8.1 It is not the case that the whole of the buildings, however, are of exceptional significance. A detailed survey is required to plan out those area of lesser significance. These would include, however, parts of the dressing rooms and back stage areas which have been radically altered, the south range (the 1911 Box Office) and the rear parts of the Gwynne building.

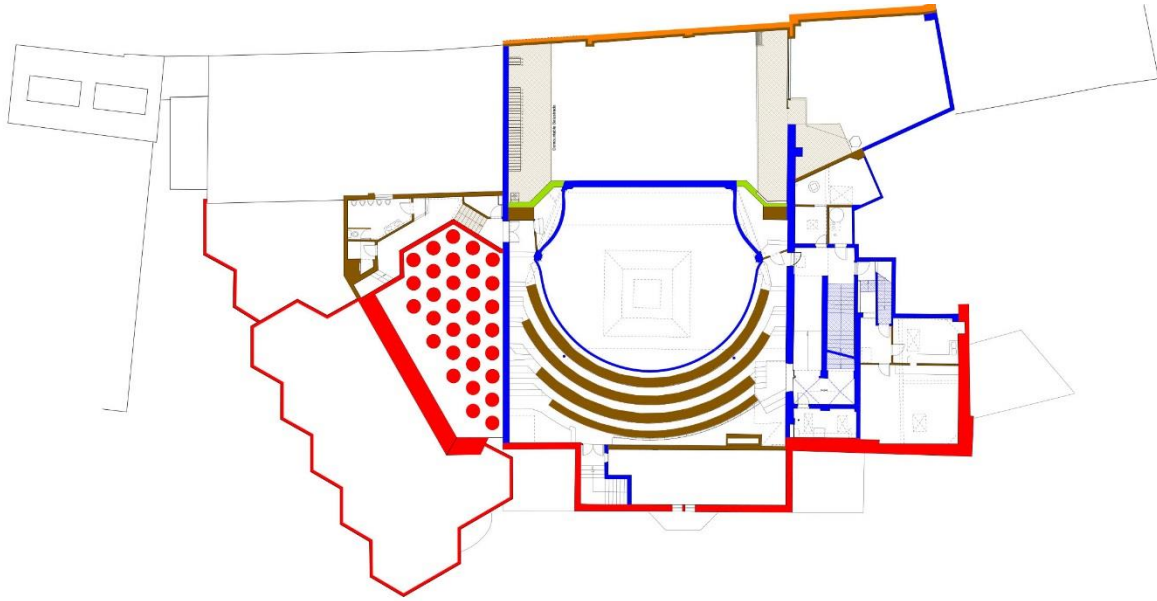
5.8.2 The following draft significance plans provide an initial assessment of the various elements of the building. These can be revised following further investigation.



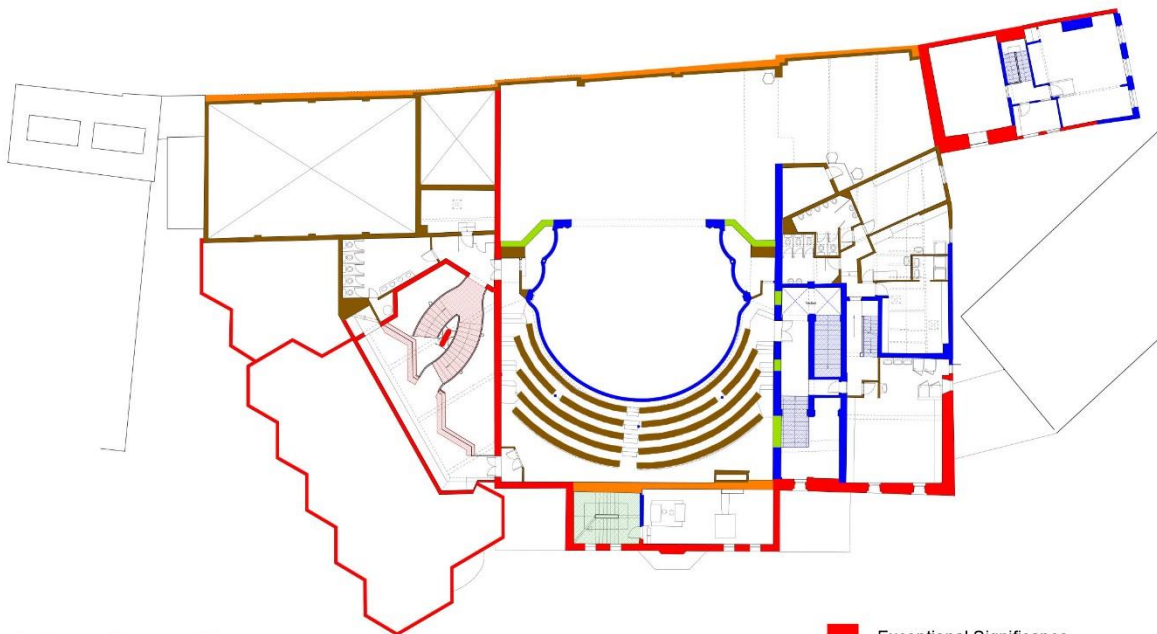
Significance Plan, Ground Floor

Significance Plan, Basement (under stage)

- Exceptional Significance
- Hidden fabric, probably Exceptional Significance behind facing
- Considerable Significance
- Some Significance
- Little Significance
- Neutral Significance
- Intrusive



Significance Plan, Third Floor



Significance Plan, Second Floor

- Exceptional Significance
- Hidden fabric, probably Exceptional Significance behind facing
- Considerable Significance
- Some Significance
- Little Significance
- Neutral Significance
- Intrusive

6. HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 The status of the Theatre Royal as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, a grade II* listed building and a landmark in the conservation area imposes constraints. Best preservation of the character of the building would be secured by ensuring that it continues to prosper and develop as a theatre home, with the significant elements carefully conserved and reinstated. There is scope for change as not all areas of the building are of *exceptional* or *considerable* significance.

6.2 The relevant proposal drawings have been prepared by De Matos Ryan, Architects (YTR 110 D, 111 D, 112 D and 113 D). A brief description of the principal proposed alterations is as follows:

1. Enclose the colonnade;
2. Enlarge the existing openings on the external wall (we assume that we are just removing one layer of brick and we might see the medieval wall in the reveals – see attached);
3. Provide new structural slab to all colonnade, foyer, stalls and understage;
4. Open up the new foyer under the dress circle and remove the doors into the 1967's foyer;
5. Floor finishes of the new foyer: terrazzo floor with pattern showing the columns and arches of the old medieval hospital;
6. Excavate part of the understage to improve the headroom and provide structural slab for new modular stage;
7. New flattened stage with modular section;
8. New raked stalls;
9. New lift behind the slatted wall (complete demolish the existing ancillary rooms between the studio and the stage);
10. Remove bar on 1st floor and lower the sill to achieve a level access from the lift to the first floor foyer and the rear dress circle;
11. Alterations to existing openings on the slatted wall to ground floor kitchen to improve the connection between kitchen and front of house (done in conjunction with catering specialists);
12. Refurbish existing and add new WCs to house left;
13. Add new WCs to house right (dress and gallery level);
14. Provide sound and light lobbies to all entrances to the main house
15. Improve finishes of existing stairs to house right;

16. Replace existing air handling unit in third floor plant room. Re-use most of existing ducts except from dress boxes down to stalls (all new) and route at gallery level into roof void. To achieve this, we need to demolish and rebuild the wall between the gallery and the plant room. This wall is made of modern brick and Gwynne's drawings suggest that he has done the same (and probably how the existing plant has gone in);

17. New seats to all house except upper circle (keep existing seats, rake and carpet).

6.3 Legislative and planning policy context

6.3.1 Relevant legislation

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

6.3.1.1 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (hereafter the 1990 Act) is the primary legislation providing for the protection of historic buildings. Section 16(2) of the 1990 Act places a duty on local planning authorities and the Secretary of State 'to have special regard to the desirability of preserving [a listed building] or its setting, or any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses'.

6.3.1.2 With regard to conservation areas the 1990 Act [section 72 (1)] states that 'In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of conservation preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

6.3.1.3 In considering change to listed buildings and in conservation areas, the 1990 Act demands special attention and special regard, reinforcing the importance of conservation to the nation.

6.3.2 National planning policy

6.3.2.1 National planning policy, for plan- and decision-making affecting designated heritage assets and their settings (as well as undesignated heritage assets) is set out in the NPPF, published in March 2012. This cancelled its immediate and short-lived predecessor Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 5, Planning and the historic environment (March 2010). The NPPF did not, however, include amongst the documents that it replaced the PPS5 Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide produced by English Heritage to accompany PPS5, so it can be assumed that the Guide still has some weight.

6.3.2.2 The Government's over-arching aim, as set out in the NPPF, is that there should be 'a presumption in favour of sustainable development' (paragraph 14). One of the three dimensions of sustainable development is environmental and this includes 'protecting and enhancing ... the built and historic environment' (paragraph 7).

6.3.2.3 Included in the NPPF's core planning principles is the statement that planning should 'conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations' (paragraph

17). In order to achieve this, their significance, or heritage interest, must be understood at the outset. This clearly requires expert assessment of significance, proportionate to the interest of the asset and the extent of the intervention proposed, which this heritage impact assessment seeks to provide.

6.3.2.4 Applications affecting heritage assets

The NPPF advises local planning authorities that they should require applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected; ‘The level of detail [required in describing the significance of a heritage asset affected by development] should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance’ (paragraph 128). Authorities are advised to identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal, taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise and to seek to avoid or minimise conflict between a heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal (paragraph 129).

6.3.2.5 The NPPF also states that ‘When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation. Significance can be harmed or lost through alteration or destruction of the heritage asset or development within its setting.’

6.3.2.6 As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 132 of the NPPF states that any substantial harm to or loss of a scheduled monument or grade II* listed building, park or garden should be wholly exceptional.

6.3.2.7 Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, authorities are advised to weigh this harm against the public benefit of the proposal, including securing the heritage asset’s optimum viable use.

6.3.3 English Heritage guidance

PPS5 Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide

6.3.3.1 In March 2010, English Heritage produced a PPS5 Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide to support the implementation of policies in PPS5 Planning for the Historic Environment and help with their interpretation. PPS5 was replaced by the NPPF earlier this year, but the Practice Guide was not. English Heritage therefore advises that, for the time being, it remains a valid Government-endorsed document pending the Government's review of all guidance supporting national planning policy, as stated in its response (March 2012) to the DCLG Select Committee’s report on the draft NPPF. The references in the Practice Guide to PPS5 policies are now redundant, but policies in the NPPF are similar, as is their intent. Insofar as it applies to those policies, the Practice Guide remains relevant in the application of the NPPF.

6.3.3.2 In Section 5, which provides generic guidance on decision-making relating to applications for change affecting the historic environment, the Practice Guide emphasises the need properly to assess the ‘nature, extent and importance of the significance of a heritage asset’ to provide an informed basis for decision-making. It encourages early pre-application engagement with the local planning authority, and national and local amenity societies and other relevant groups. It emphasises that the level of information provided with applications should be proportionate to the significance of the heritage assets(s) concerned: the involvement of expert specialist advisors in this process is strongly recommended.

6.3.3.3 The Practice Guide offers guidance (aimed principally at local planning authorities) on assessing applications and weighing-up the proposals. The need to identify and understand the differing, and perhaps conflicting, heritage impacts accruing from the proposals and how they need to be weighed against each other, and any other relevant material planning considerations, is considered key to sound decision-making. The Guide advises that ‘.. finding optimum uses for [a heritage] asset may require the local planning authority to apply other development control policies flexibly and imaginatively to achieve long-term conservation.’ Authorities are also advised to take into account the likely longevity or otherwise of any public benefits claimed for a proposed scheme.

6.3.3.4 Paragraph 79 of the Practice Guide provides examples of heritage benefits that could weigh in favour of a proposed scheme, including those that;

- sustain or enhance the significance of a heritage asset and the contribution made by its setting;
- reduce or remove a risk to a heritage asset;
- secure the optimum viable use of a heritage asset in support of its long-term conservation;
- are of an appropriate design for the context and make a positive contribution to the appearance, character, quality and local distinctiveness of the historic environment;
- better reveals the significance of a heritage asset and therefore enhance our enjoyment of it and the sense of place.

6.4 Impact Assessment

6.4.1 A re-assessment has been made of the importance of the building - its intrinsic archaeological, architectural and historic interest and rarity and its contribution to the conservation area. It is concluded that the Theatre Royal is of *exceptional* significance and properly designated as an asset of the highest significance. The particular physical features of the building (including its design, plan, materials or location) that are of this level of significance include the front elevations, all surviving medieval fabric and the main interiors of the Gwynne extension. Other parts, including the Tugwell interior of 1901, are of *considerable*, or lower grades of, significance. A very important aspect is the ‘contribution to the local scene.’

6.4.2 The question of benefits to the community is highly relevant in this case as the Theatre is a major and much-loved asset in the city. Its success and prosperity are therefore critical to York life and to cultural ‘health’ in the north of England. Investment in new and improved facilities will secure optimum viable use of the heritage asset in support of its long-term conservation and reduce or remove any risk to the heritage asset. Periodic investment and alterations, for a variety of reasons, are part of the history of theatre buildings.

6.4.3 In the context of the above the principle, the proposed alterations can be justified as, although there would be change, there would be no adverse impact on, or harm to, the interest or significance of the scheduled ancient monument, the listed building or the conservation area. The principal works to the ‘exteriors’ would be glazing-in of the 19th century arcade, the enlargement of the openings between the main front wall and the inside of the arcade and the removal of doors from the internal wall between the Gwynne extension and the auditorium. Given that the arcade was designed to be partly blocked and that the present internal space is rather coarsely detailed, and indeed is a rather unwelcoming space, the proposed glazing-in should enhance the appearance of the building and the character of the conservation area. It would be achieved by the installation of a well-designed, minimal glass screen that would permit internal users and external viewers to interact, without causing any harm to Styan’s architecture. In some respects the alteration would be a continuation of the spirit of Gwynne.



Impression of proposed front alteration.

6.4.4 The enlargement of the openings between the main front wall would only be undertaken where the fabric is demonstrated to be of low, if any, significance. The auditorium doors are part of the 1967 alterations but they are arguably not of the highest significance and some have been altered. More importantly, their retention would prevent

the achievement of the highly desirable improvement in circulation, the creation of a more enjoyable and visually impressive space. Such benefits to the community are important for any building but perhaps are essential in the context of a cultural building that has to provide entertainment and is subject to crushes.



Impression of proposed reception area.

6.4.5 In terms of the interior there are two proposals that require scrutiny. First, the remodelling of the ground floor of the auditorium is based on the removal of Gwynnes' curving corridor linking his new wing with the dressing room and office area. But this is not a pleasing feature of the design even if it can be demonstrated to be unaltered. (The seating in the auditorium was renewed in the 1990s and it and the floor are little, if any, significance.) The main point, however, is as set out above: retention would prevent highly desirable improvements and public benefit. Second, for performance reasons it is proposed to renew the stage to a new level and to install new traps and other features. These are deemed by the Theatre to be essential in order to meet performance requirements. The present stage cannot date from before 1901 and it is probable that it has been renewed at a later date. It is not considered to be of high significance but if it were to be retained the operational ability of the Theatre would be compromised and, conversely, the public benefit would not be achieved.

6.4.6 Elsewhere, such as in the area behind the principal internal wall in the Gwynne extension and in the changing room areas, the significance is low and therefore the installation of a lift and new WCs would not cause any harm. Similarly the proposed alterations at upper level in the auditorium would cause no harm.

6.5 Conclusion

The proposed alterations to the Theatre Royal, York could be recommended for approval as they would not cause substantial harm to the identified significance of the listed buildings, or to the settings of the nearby listed buildings or to the conservation area. Any harm that would be caused would be outweighed by the public benefit of the proposal, including

securing the heritage asset's optimum viable use and enjoyment. The proposed alterations are of an appropriate design for the context and would make a positive contribution to the appearance, character, quality and local distinctiveness of the historic environment. They would also better reveal elements of the significance of a heritage asset and therefore enhance our enjoyment of it and the sense of place.

James Edgar, BA, MSc, MA, Dip Archaeol, IHBC, MRTPI

24 February 2014

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LIST OF MANAGERS & LESSEES

THE LESSEES AND MANAGERS OF THE THEATRE ROYAL

- 1744 – :Mrs Keregan
- 1761 - 1770 : Joseph Baker – 1766 partnered in management by Tate Wilkinson
- 1770 - 1803 : Tate Wilkinson
- 1803 - 1814 : John Wilkinson (son of Tate)
- 1814 - 1818 : Robert J Fitzgerald
- 1818 - 1820 : Robert Mansel
- 1820 - 1821 : Frederick B Calvert
- 1821 - 1821 : Mrs. Fitzgerald
- 1821 - 1824 : Robert Mansel
- 1824 - 1826 : Thomas James Downe and Samuel Faulkner
- 1826 - 1828 : Thomas James Downe
- 1828 - 1830 : Charles Cummins
- 1830 - 1830 : Samuel Butler
- 1830 - 1832 : William John Hammond
- 1832 - 1834 : OE Read
- 1834 - 1839 : Thomas James Downe
- 1839 - 1842 : Mr. Hooper
- 1842 - 1850 : John Langford Pritchard
- 1850 - 1851 : John Caple
- 1851 - 1851 : Harry Roxby Beverley
- 1851 - 1854 : John Caple, manager; Misses Wilkinson, lessees
- 1854 - 1855 : George Owen
- 1855 - 1855 : Sheridan Smith
- 1855 - 1856 : Edward Addison
- 1856 - 1857 : Thomas Cooper Clifford
- 1857 - 1858 : John Bellair
- 1858 - 1859 : JL Pritchard
- 1859 - 1860 : Frederick B Egan
- 1860 - 1864 : WS Thorne
- 1864 - 1876 : John Coleman
- 1876 - 1901 : William Alfred Waddington
- 1901 - 1911 : William Henry Waddington
- 1911 - 1933 : Percy Hutchinson
- 1933 - 1934 : S Weetman Crawshay
- 1935 - Under the management of the York Citizens' Theatre Trust

THEATRE ROYAL AND UNDERCROFT, ST LEONARDS PLACE

List entry Number: 1256767

Grade: II*; Group Value

Date first listed: 14-Jun-1954

UID: 464568

Formerly known as: Remains of St Peter's Hospital ST LEONARD'S PLACE. Theatre, incorporating part of an undercroft of former St Leonard's Hospital in basement. Undercroft C12; original theatre on site 1744; theatre rebuilt 1879-80, interior remodelled 1901-2, extended 1967; refurbished in late C20. Rebuild of 1879 by G Styan, City Engineer; 1902 interior by FA Tugwell of Scarborough; extension by Patrick Gwynne and RA Sefton. MATERIALS: rock-faced sandstone with slate roofs; extension of reinforced concrete and glass. STYLE: Gothic Revival. EXTERIOR: 3 storeys and attic; 3-bay gabled front projects over 5-bay buttressed arcade between set back 3-storey bay to left, two similar 2-storey bays to right: further left is 2-storied extension. Entrance in extension which has full height curtain walls of glass carried on hexagonal concrete columns rising into vaulted canopies. Arcade is of 2-centred arches of 2 orders, inner order chamfered, on responds and shafts with stiff-leaf capitals; arches beneath hoodmoulds on head or foliate stops, with spandrels containing roundels, some carved in low relief with female heads. Above is corbel cornice and parapet incorporating band of heraldic shields set in sunk panels, blank except for one at each end carved with cross of St George. In centre of first floor is a canted oriel window with four 2-centred arched lights between clustered shafts: steep roof is half hexagonal with gargoyles and blind trefoiled band at the base. On first and second floors, windows flanking oriel are narrow paired 1-pane sashes; on first floor, in 2-centred arches of 2 orders with sunk quatrefoils in the tympana, on second floor, beneath lintels carved in relief with stiff leaf foliage. Foliate capitals on first floor are extended to form full-width carved impost band returned at both ends: second floor windows have sill string. Attic window is of 2 square-headed louvred lights in blind 2-centred arches on coupled shafts within single 2-centred arch with blind sunk quatrefoil in tympanum. Gable has bartizan at each side and is edged with blind trefoiled band over corbelled eaves string. Each side has steeply gabled dormer with plain bargeboards and windows of paired trefoil-headed lights, 1-pane sashes to left, louvred to right. Gable is crowned with a standing figure in cross-gabled niche with crockets and finials. End left bay has two blind window arches on first floor, blank second floor, and pierced parapet. Right end bays have two square-headed sash windows in 2-centred arches of 2 orders with waterleaf capitals, blind tympanum containing sunk quatrefoil and hoodmoulds on head or grotesque stops on ground floor. On first floor, windows repeat

those of gabled front. Coved impost band on ground floor returns at right end carved with stiff leaf. INTERIOR: Rear of stage is formed by length of medieval wall incorporating towards left end springing of 4-centred gate arch of voussoirs; above is flat cornice and high wall pierced by two cruciform arrow slits. At right end of building semi-basement is located in two visible bays of vaulted undercroft with groined semicircular arches springing from squat cylindrical columns and square piers or responds with scalloped capitals. 1901-2 auditorium with stalls, dress circle, upper circle and gallery. Proscenium arch with shield motif flanked by three tiers of bowed boxes set beneath segmental arches. Columns on dress circle box fronts, the others with scallop and shell decoration. 1967 foyer formed of two storeys of mushroom columns, those to upper floor oversailing to permit full-height glazing. Concrete with exposed aggregate finish. Serpentine cantilevered staircase with marble edging to sides and metal handrail. Slate rear wall. Mosaic walling to upper floors. Workshop added behind foyer.

HISTORICAL NOTE: the first theatre on the site was opened in 1744. This was rebuilt, reorientated and enlarged at various dates before the present building was constructed. It was granted the Royal patent in 1769 when Tate Wilkinson was manager and lessee. The theatre was first listed 24/06/83.

An Inventory of the City of York V Central - Date: 1981 - Page References: 94, 103

H Murray - Title: Nathaniel Whittocks Birds Eye View of the City of York in 1850 - Date: 1988 - Page References: 11

J Hutchinson and DM Palliser - Title: York - Date: 1980 - Journal Title: Bartholomew City Guides - Page References: 163

Pevsner, N. - Title: Yorkshire: York and the East Riding - Date: 1972 - Journal Title: The Buildings of England - Page References: 139

THEATRE HOUSE, DUNCOMBE PLACE

Grade: II

Date first listed: 14-Jun- 1954

UID: 463355

GV II

House, incorporating St Leonard's Hospital (Museum Street, qv) remains in cellar; now theatre offices. Late C18 rebuild of earlier house with C13 masonry in the basement. MATERIALS: house fronted in pink-grey brick in Flemish bond with red brick dressings; right return of coursed magnesian limestone on ground and first floors, second floor of varied brick in random and stretcher bonds; left side of orange-brown brick in random bond; timber cornice to hipped tiled roof with brick stacks. EXTERIOR: 3-storey 3-bay front. Ground floor altered to provide rear passage entrance with flat lintel supported at left side

on cast-iron column: house entrance is C20 door in right wall of passage: further right is 16-pane fixed window. On first and second floors, windows are 12-pane sashes with stone sills, some painted, some renewed: all have brick quoined openings and flat arches of gauged brick. Moulded modillioned eaves cornice returned at each end.

INTERIOR: in cellar at rear are remains of one barrel vaulted bay in a chamfered round arch with vestiges of one capital: vault closed by later wall containing blocked window. Ground floor: reset late C18 staircase survives to first floor with close string, slender turned balusters and moulded ramped-up handrail. First floor: early C18 staircase to second floor has close string, bulbous balusters, square newels with attached half balusters and moulded flat handrail. Front room has pair of early C18 cupboard doors of raised and fielded panelling in keyed round-arched architrave. In back room is plain fireplace with hob-grate. Various panelled doors and fragments of panelling survive on first floor. The house was built to provide accommodation for the Manager and Lessee of The Theatre Royal, St Leonard's Place (qv) and may have been occupied by Tate Wilkinson before 1803.

RCHME: The Central Area: HMSO: 1981-: 95; p103).
National Grid Reference: SE 60133 52114