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The Assembly Rooms, Blake Street, York

Statement of Significance

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Statement of Significance for The Assembly Rooms, Blake Street, York

Note: This Statement of Significance is focused on the clerestory lantern of the Great Assembly Room, and is intended to form part of a forthcoming wider Statement of Significance on the whole site of the Assembly Rooms, Blake Street, York.

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1 Context

1.1 Site location and designations

The Assembly Rooms is located on Blake Street, York, (SE 60123 52039). The building is located on the south-west side of Blake Street, near the junction with Museum St, Duncombe Pl and St Leonard's Pl.

The Assembly Rooms were designated at Grade I on 14 June 1954 (UID: 462808). Located within the historic core of York, it is surrounded by numerous historic buildings, including Grade II listed buildings immediately opposite and to the immediate north. In the vicinity are also a number of Grade II* listed structures, such as the Judge's Lodgings to the rear, and the Red House, diagonally opposite. The site lies within the York Central Core Conservation Area, and the Assembly Rooms is visible from the processional route formed by Duncombe Place towards York Minster.

The Assembly Rooms is amongst the first neo-classical buildings constructed and is noted in the list description as being "of seminal importance in the history of English architecture".

1.2 Building Context

This section outlines the historical and landscape context of the Assembly Rooms, York.

1.2.1 Site Context

The present Assembly Rooms are sited on the original location of St Wilfrid's Church. According to Francis Drake (antiquary), St Wilfrid's was a pre-Conquest foundation and mentioned in the Domesday Book. The parish was merged with St Michael le Belfry in 1585, after which the church was demolished to be replaced by housing and the Old Boar Inn. Major dwellings on the site included the house of a former mayor, Wyvill, and the home of Dr Wintringham (in the former churchyard), all of which were demolished for the construction of the Assembly Rooms. See map regression (Appendix 2) for further details of site context.

The Assembly Rooms had a significant impact on the public realm in York, particularly on Blake Street and nearby St Helen's Square. Regarding Blake Street, Drake noted in 1736 "Before the building of these rooms the street ran up near parallel with the great house facing it; but the proprietors have lately purchased all the houses from the new building to the end of the street; and by pulling them all down a handsome area is now made before it. Towards which good work, a thing much wanted in several other parts of the city, the lord-mayor and commonalty gave fifty

pounds.” It has also been suggested the opposing houses on Blake Street (No.1-5; Grade II, UID 462081) were remodelled and re-fronted in brick contemporaneously with the construction of the Assembly Rooms to improve access to the latter. The Committee of the Assembly Rooms were also instrumental in the creation of St Helen’s Square to facilitate carriage access from Coney Street to the Assembly Rooms.

1.2.2 Historic Context

The Assembly Rooms form part of a range of major civic developments during the C18, reflecting York’s status as one of the country’s key social and cultural hubs. Other important C18 buildings in York include: The Mansion House (1725-32), York Racecourse Grandstand (1755-6), The Assizes Court [York Crown Court] (1773-7), York County Lunatic Asylum [Bootham Hospital] (1774-7), and The New Walk (1752-5). Many of these buildings, including the Assembly Rooms, reflect the wealthy of C18 York (and surrounding area) at play. The C18 also saw the construction and re-modelling of numerous private residences in the city and its developing suburbs, including Fairfax House by John Carr (1755-62).

Following a tradition established during a visit by King Charles I in 1633, gatherings of the local aristocracy and gentry were held in the King’s Manor, York. In the later C17, these assemblies moved to a residence within the remains of Archbishop Thomas’ C11 palace in the present Dean’s Park. By the start of the C18 these had become so ruinous that the assemblies were returned to the King’s Manor. However, these were no longer able to properly cater for the large gatherings visiting York for the Assizes and the horse races. This lack of adequate facilities for the social gatherings of the aristocracy and gentry in early C18 York resulted in a proposal – on 1 March 1730 and led by Sir William Wentworth – to raise £3000 for the creation of purpose built Assembly Rooms.

It was originally intended that the gentleman architect William Wakefield (a subscriber to the new rooms) would provide the design. However, following Wakefield’s death in April 1730, Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington, was approached. Burlington was at that time engaged in relaying the floor of York Minster. A very loose brief was given and Burlington, a subscriber himself, helped to raise additional funds amongst his friends, with the total fund eventually coming to around £8000.

1.3 Building History and Description

This section aims only to provide a basic overview of the form and development of The Assembly Rooms, York. A detailed architectural description has been produced by the RCHME (Vol.5), amongst others. A more detailed study will be subsequently carried out on the whole site, but Appendix 4 records the known dates of construction, repair and alteration from 1730 to present. See also Appendix 5 (phased plan) for main phases and room labels.

- The Assembly Rooms was designed by the 3RD Earl of Burlington in 1730, and is adapted from Vitruvius' Egyptian Hall. The Foundation Stone was laid on 1st March 1731 (the birthday of Queen Caroline) and the principal construction was completed in 1732, although alterations and decoration continued until at least 1735.
- Following a minor fire in 1773, Sir John O'Corran remodelled the Lesser Assembly Room, including the replacement of the ceiling and creation of the organ niche.
- The projection of the portico into Blake Street caused congestion, prompting John Carr to move the exterior stairs to within the portico in 1791, and for the portico itself to be replaced and the building re-fronted in 1828 by J.P. Pritchett.
- J.B. and W Atkinson undertook roof repairs and alterations in 1843, including the likely insertion of a major ventilation system and clerestory dormer.
- In 1859 J.B. and W Atkinson remodelled the interior, including removing the side walls of the Great Assembly Rooms thus connecting it to the Lesser Assembly Room (north) and Recess (south).
- The C20 saw a number of major restoration schemes, including in 1939-40, 1950-1, 1971-3, 1981, and 1990.

2 Assessment of Significance

The focus of this report is the clerestory lantern structure of the Great Assembly Room. Below is a detailed description and analysis of the main components of this clerestory, including its ceiling ventilation system and roof structure, along with an assessment of their significance, based on Historic England's (2008) *Conservation Principles*.

Please note communal significance has not been assessed for individual elements, and that a wider assessment of communal significance is given in Section 3.

2.1 Clerestory Walls

The clerestory of the Great Assembly Room is a rendered timber frame with moulded cornice and contains 44 windows. The walls measure 31.2m long by 7.15m high from the column capitals to the roof tie beams, and are 350mm thick. Internally the frame sits above the peristyle columns and features lath and plaster walls, composite pilasters with swagged capitals, enriched frieze and cornice.

- It's not known how Burlington intended the clerestory lantern to be constructed, with the City Engineer suggesting in 1940 it was likely intended be in brick or stone.
- However in Sept 1731 William Etty and John Terry (carpenters) were asked to construct the clerestory as an oak timber frame to a design by Mr Travers. It consists of three distinct heights, being: sole plate to sill level, window height, and window head to truss, without continuous full-height posts. This design may reflect a difficulty in securing suitable timber.
- The decision to construct the clerestory as a timber frame may have been a response to subsidence of the columns occurring during construction of the hall.
- Interior scaffolding was ordered to allow the clerestory frame assembly in Jan 1732, and exterior scaffolding for the frame and setting out the roof in Feb 1732.
- A letter of 22 Jan 1734 requested John Bagnall to finish the outside plastering of the clerestory as soon as was proper. The interior and exterior stucco on the clerestorey walls was stone coloured.
- In 1755 John Staveley added a number of decorations of gilded and painted plaster to the interior walls of the clerestory, included scallops above the end windows and oval mouldings below. Removed in 1950-1, these are partially visible in photographs on c.1940 (see fig. 9).
- In the C19, the coat of arms of Queen Victoria was added above the entablature in the centre of the western end, and the feathers of the Prince of Wales opposed it on the eastern end. Queen Victoria's arms survive, but the emblem of the Prince of Wales (visible in fig. 9) was removed in 1950-1.

- In 1939 the frame was noted to be out of true and the largest bulge (in the NE wall of the clerestory wall) was opened up for inspection. A C19 framed ventilation duct, which circled the exterior of the clerestory nearly up to window sill level, was found to be contributing to the internal deflection of the walls at sill height by up to 4”(10cm).
- As a response in 1950-1 a 4ft x 5ft box girder frame was inserted at the base of the clerestory frame, replacing the ventilation duct. The clerestory walls, pilasters and decorative plaster were all pinned back onto the steel framework.
- Following the bracing of the clerestory structure in 1950-1, work included “the decorative plaster in cornices, string courses, mouldings and capitals being re-moulded and replaced where excessively damaged or perished” (Firth 1951, 52).
- The external render was replaced in 1940 with a sand and cement mix, and both the external render and corncicing were replaced in 1973, apparently with a lime render.

In summary the clerestory walls and their internal decoration have seen numerous changes since their construction in 1731-2, from minor decorative changes and repairs through to major structural interventions. Despite these, the clerestory walls retain their original design and decoration including both the massive timber frame construction and Bagnall’s internal plaster decoration to Burlington’s design. The most significant intervention was the 1950 installation of the steel girder framework, but this is entirely hidden within the roof structure. Later accretions from the mid C18 and C19 were mostly removed in the 1950-1 works, largely restoring the original interior design. The walls of the clerestory lantern are of high value, as defined below:

Evidential Value	Historical Value	Aesthetic Value	Communal Value
High. The oak frame by Eddy & Terry dates to 1732 and is of quality craftsmanship but poor structural design. Its design and construction materials may reflect early subsidence of the columns, and difficulty sourcing appropriate timber. Despite some repairs, the decorative plasterwork remains substantially original.	High. The design and internal decoration of the clerestory walls form a major element of Burlington’s C18 neo-classical design for the Great Assembly Room.	High. The clerestory interior features composite pilasters with swagged capitals, enriched frieze and cornice. These are all of high design value and represent the quality C18 craftsmanship of John Bagnall.	N/A

2.2 Clerestory Windows

The clerestory contains 44 top-hinged casement windows (17 on each long side and 5 on each end), all with thick section glazing bars, and which alternate with the internal pilasters. As well as providing ventilation, during the C18 members of the public could pay 1p to climb the circular stairs onto the leads in order to look down through the clerestory windows onto the gentry dancing below.

- It was initially planned for all 44 clerestory windows to be iron casements, but on 3 March 1731 it was decided to fit casements to only every other window. These were made by George Allanson.
- John Carr altered the windows in 1752 when he secured the window bottoms with lead through the walls.
- In 1766 the clerestorey casements were made watertight, and all bar 4 on each side was made fast.
- In 1805 the original clerestory windows were replaced.
- In 1840 the clerestorey windows were again altered with iron frames to allow the opening of 2 at each end and 5 on each side.
- A report dated 01/04/1940 noted the clerestory windows would “probably need overhauling and a good deal of reglazing”, but that they were not fully inspected as blackout curtains had been nailed across their exterior.
- A nearby incendiary bomb caused minor damage in 1942 particularly to the glazing, and the 17 windows on the south side of the clerestory had to be re-glazed.
- The present windows are top-hinged casements and likely all to date from 1950-1.

Evidential Value	Historical Value	Aesthetic Value	Communal Value
Medium. Despite being altered and replaced numerous times, the windows retain their original locations and proportions, and thus form an important part of Burlington’s original design.	Medium. The clerestory windows illustrate the way in which members of the public were able to view the C18 entertainments of the aristocracy and gentry.	High. The even spacing of the 44 clerestory windows represent an important part of framing and lighting the grand interior space of the Great Assembly Room.	N/A

2.3 Clerestory Roof Structure and Roof Covering

The clerestory has a low-pitched roof structure with hips at each end. The roof structure comprises 7 trusses of unequal distance, rather than the 9 trusses shown on the design drawings (see fig. 1). Evidence of earlier chandelier mounting points are preserved in the ceiling timbers, and the main roof timbers feature construction marks and graffiti from subsequent repairs.

- On 27 Jan 1731 agreement was reached with ETTY, Terry, and Raison "for sawing, framing and setting out the Main Roof".
- The exterior scaffolding for setting out the clerestory roof was ordered in Feb 1732, and the roof was completed by 1 April 1732.
- The roof was initially covered with flat tiles. However, the low-pitch of the roof caused concern from the outset and by May 1732 the roof was leaking, after which Dutch glazed red pantiles were ordered to replace the flat tiles.
- In March 1752 John Carr was asked to view the roofs with a view to raising their pitch.
- Carr instead carried out a series of repairs, costing £118 4s 0d, and which involved taking the bottom part of the tiles off the roof to secure the braces, replacing them with 'Pudsey or Eland edge slates', and using 28 bars of iron to strap the framing from pillars to beams and to strap the ceiling joists to the wallplate and to the roof trusses.
- In the mid-C19 (likely 1843) a dormer was inserted near the eastern end of the north fall of the roof. This small dormer features a shallow segmental arch, is sprung from existing rafters and is covered with lead.
- The installation of the ventilation system (see 1.2.6 below) saw the insertion of the cupola at the roof ridge and alterations to the roof bracing. This included the removal of horizontal braces between the truss rafters (mortise holes now filled with plaster) and the insertion of softwood angle braces at the purlin.
- The present roof covering is of Westmorland slate and dates to 1950-1, when the roof was made level and the failing pantiles were replaced.
- Another repair scheme in the early 1970s saw the plating of the central kingpost (which had suffered historic fire damage), the plating of some of the ceiling joists to the wallplate, and a fungicidal treatment of the roof timbers.

In summary, the clerestory roof structure preserves much of the original design and materials, but also catalogues a history of minor change and repair, from John Carr's strapping work in 1752 through to modern steel plating repairs.

Evidential Value	Historical Value	Aesthetic Value	Communal Value
<p>High. The low-pitched hipped roof structure dates from 1732. Iron ties by John Carr have a high evidential value of C18 repairs. The mid C19 removal of oak longitudinal braces and insertion of softwood angle braces provide evidence of the ventilation system installation. The roof and ceiling timbers preserve evidence of changing lighting schemes in the Great Assembly Room, and the names of workmen involved in repair work. The C19 dormer and C20 roof covering are not unique and are not of significant value.</p>	<p>High. The design of the roof has associative historical value with Burlington's neo-classical design, and the 1752 repairs have historical association with John Carr, being amongst the most influential architects of their time.</p>	<p>Medium. The roof structure and its covering is visible at a distance from both Duncombe Place and Lendal, and externally presents a Neo-Classical structure – the only publically visible part of Burlington's original design. The C19 dormer is simple and of comparatively low aesthetic value.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

2.4 Ventilation System

In the mid C19 a large ventilation system was introduced into the clerestory that included 3 circular ceiling vents in the ceiling, connected to a sizeable duct system in the roof space and leading up to a louvered cupola at the roof ridge. The ventilation duct runs the full length of the 7 roof trusses, and is accessed by a door in each of three pots over the vent locations. The duct itself is of timber framed construction and is covered by lath and plaster.

- There is no definitive evidence for when the ventilation system was installed, but it first appears on drawings by J.B. & W. Atkinson from 1843 (see figs. 3&4). The works involved alterations to the roofs and are the likely date for installation of this ventilation system.
- The ceiling vents, were described as being “open centre flowers... and of open metalwork” (*York Herald* 21/04/1860, 10). In 1860 as part of a major redecoration scheme by Mr Owen Jones (author of *The Grammar of Ornament*) the ceiling vents were gilded, with surrounding paintwork ornamentation in red. This decoration is visible in an 1864 etching (see figs. 7&8).
- Although the rich Victorian decorative scheme was later removed, one of the ceiling vents is visible in a photograph of c.1940 (see fig. 9).
- In 1950-1 the 3 ceiling vents were removed (see fig. 10).

In summary the ventilation duct and louvered cupola are now redundant and the duct system is hidden from the public. The duct represents an impressively scaled and relatively early example of ventilation for such a space.

Evidential Value	Historical Value	Aesthetic Value	Communal Value
Medium. The c.1843 ventilation system has lost its 3 circular openings and therefore its purpose. The lath and plaster covered duct system survives relatively intact, and one of the access doors records the name 'F.Hall'. The lower ventilation system that surrounded the clerestory has been completely removed.	Medium. The ventilation system was likely designed by J.B. & W. Atkinson, the third generation of the family to practice as architects in York. Little research has been published on historic ventilation systems, but this appears to be a comparatively large and early, but not unique, example of ventilation for a major space.	Low. The lath and plaster duct system is of utilitarian design, although impressive in scale, and is not publically accessible.	N/A

2.5 Ceiling

The clerestory of the Great Assembly Room has a flat white ceiling of lath and plaster above a richly decorated entablature. Versions of Charles Lindley's 1760 etching (fig. 2) show the ceiling with Rococo embellishments, but it was almost certainly always an adorned ceiling.

- On 21/12/1731 the estimated the cost for making the clerestory ceiling was given as "ceiling with all materials at 12d per yard". This is less than for the fretwork ceiling in the Lesser Assembly Room (at 16d), supporting the notion the Great Assembly Room ceiling was always plain.
- The hair and laths were bought for John Bagnall in April 1732, who was employed to execute the "entablature, capitals and all plaster work of the Great Room".
- On 25 July 1732 John Bagnall was instructed to set out and finish the clerestory ceiling.
- John Bagnall was sent for on the 28 June 1734 to alter the ceiling to allow the disposition of the chandeliers as 4 new ones were being added.
- In c.1843 the 3 large vents of approx. 2.2m diameter were installed equidistant in the ceiling.
- In 1950-1, a major repair scheme included the removal of the vents, their openings covered by expamet, and the whole ceiling re-skimmed and redecorated.
- The laths below in the eastern hip bay appear newer than elsewhere in the ceiling, suggesting this area has been replaced at some stage, possibly as part of the 1950s repair scheme.
- The 11 ceiling roses appear to be fibrous plaster and likely date from 1951 when the reproduction chandeliers were installed.

In summary the ceiling of the Great Assembly Room comprises several layers, including the original 1752 lath and hair plaster. This has been renewed in several places, including the eastern bay (with lath and plaster) and the 3 circular vents (with expamet).

Evidential Value	Historical Value	Aesthetic Value	Communal Value
High. Although far from unique, the unadorned lath and plaster ceiling dates from 1732. Largely complete, areas have been replaced (some with inappropriate materials) and the whole re-skimmed at least once.	Medium. The plain ceiling has some associative value as part of Burlington's original design for the building.	Low. The plain white ceiling is 12m above floor level and currently features 4 redundant modern smoke detectors and 11 small fibrous plaster ceiling roses dating from the 1950s.	N/A

2.6 Chandeliers

- An initial order of 6 lustres of crinkled glass was placed in 1731, although this was soon raised to 12 (although only 9 are readily identifiable on the 1760 etching – see fig. 2).
- These have been described as amongst the earliest glass chandeliers in England.
- The Venetian glass chandeliers were often repaired and replaced and between 1745-8 there are numerous notes of breakages following games of battledore and shuttlecock.
- Lord Burlington gifted a large chandelier to the Assembly Rooms, which reportedly held 50 candles and was hung in pride of place within the centre of the Great Assembly Room.
- By 1818 Burlington’s grand chandelier had been “removed [to] near the principal entrance” (Hargrove 1818, 471).
- The chandeliers, along with the organ, were sold in 1860. The 1864 etching of a gathering for the Social Science Congress shows the room instead lit by hundreds of candles placed along the moulded entablature (see fig. 7).
- The present chandeliers date from 1951 (fig.10), and were made by Messrs Venini of Venice, who is believed to have made the originals. These are based on the original design, modelled from the one surviving original hanging in the Treasurer’s House, York.

Evidential Value	Historical Value	Aesthetic Value	Communal Value
Medium. Despite dating from 1951, the Venetian glass chandeliers are faithful copies of the originals, and are thought to have been made by the same family as the original C18 chandeliers.	High. The hanging of glass chandeliers to this design marks one of the first known uses of glass for this purpose in England, giving them a high associative historical value. Despite being reproductions, the chandeliers have illustrative value in evoking and replicating the original grand decoration and lighting of the Great Assembly Room.	High. The chandeliers are of high design value and make an important positive contribution to the grand space of the Grand Assembly Rooms.	N/A

3 Conclusions

3.1 Summary of Values outlined above

	Evidential Value	Historical Value	Aesthetic Value	Communal Value
Clerestory Walls	High	High	High	N/A
Windows	Medium	Medium	High	N/A
Roof Structure	High	High	Medium	N/A
Ventilation	Medium	Medium	Low	N/A
Ceiling	High	Medium	Low	N/A
Chandeliers	Medium	High	High	N/A

- Lord Burlington was one of the most influential architects of the C18, and the Assembly Rooms, York, is one of his most significant pieces of work.
- As one of the first neo-classical buildings in Europe, the Assembly Rooms can be regarded as being a seminal important piece of architecture.
- The clerestory lantern structure has suffered structural issues since its construction and there have been numerous alterations and interventions (sympathetic and less so) to address these from the mid C18 to the late C20. Despite these interventions, both the interior and exterior of the clerestory lantern retain much of the original design and materials.
- The exterior proportions of the clerestory are the only visible part of Burlington's original design (following the refronting of 1828).
- Although repaired and replaced in areas, the interior of the clerestory retains Burlington's design in full, and much of John Bagnall's plasterwork of 1732, presenting high evidential, associative historic, and aesthetic value.
- The roof structure is of high evidential and associative historic value, preserving as it does the high quality oak frame, and numerous repair schemes, including that by John Carr in 1752.
- The 1732 clerestory ceiling is one of the more altered elements of the structure but is largely complete, with much of the original surviving beneath a later skim.
- The c.1843 ventilation system is of low aesthetic value, but does have some evidential and historic value as an example of its type, despite the loss of its original ceiling vents.

3.2 Evidential Value

- 3.2.1 The Great Assembly Room clerestory lantern has high evidential value, as it retains much of the original material of Lord Burlington's 1730-2 building.
- 3.2.2 The clerestory walls, with their unusual structural design likely offers evidence of difficulty sourcing appropriate timber, and the choice to build in timber may offer evidence of early subsidence or loading issues during construction.
- 3.2.3 The roof structure contains evidence of numerous repair schemes, including that of John Carr in 1752, and graffiti marking later repairs.
- 3.2.4 Evidence of earlier chandelier mounting points is preserved in the ceiling timbers.
- 3.2.5 The duct system provides evidence of mid-C19 approaches to ventilation, and changes to the roof bracing system reflect the installation of the ducts.
- 3.2.6 The lath and plaster ceiling has evidential value, despite substantial areas being replaced, and the surviving original work being obscured by later skims.

3.3 Historical Value

- 3.3.1 The form and space of the Assembly Rooms has illustrative historical value as a focal point of social gatherings and entertainments of elite society in C18 York.
- 3.3.2 The Assembly Rooms was one of the first neo-classical buildings in Europe and was hugely influential in both Britain and on the Continent.
- 3.3.3 The clerestory lantern has high associative historical value through its original design by Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington. Lord Burlington was one of the most influential architects of the C18, and the Assembly Rooms is one of his most significant pieces of work.
- 3.3.4 The associative value is also represented through later repair schemes and alterations by both John Carr (1752), and J.B. and W Atkinson (1843 and 1859-60). John Carr was the leading C18 architect in the north of England and was particularly prolific in and around York.
- 3.3.5 The brothers John Bownas and William Atkinson were third generation architects to work in York. Their grandfather, Peter Atkinson Snr, was the successor to John Carr's practice, and the brothers have been credited with returning their father's practice to a successful concern. J.B Atkinson was the surveyor to the Corporation of York, and with his brother designed numerous churches and the York County Hospital.

3.4 Aesthetic Value

- 3.4.1 The Great Assembly Room and its clerestory lantern are of high aesthetic value, presenting high quality C18 design and craftsmanship.
- 3.4.2 The 1951 reproduction chandeliers are of high design value, and draw the eyes upwards towards the rich decorative plasterwork.
- 3.4.3 The aesthetic value of the clerestory structure is slightly reduced by the 4 redundant smoke detectors in the ceiling, and by the partial obfuscation of the full depth of the 1732 cornice by later ceiling layers.
- 3.4.4 The ventilation duct system within the roof structure is not publically visible and is of low aesthetic quality.
- 3.4.5 The roof covering in Westmorland slate is of medium value, reduced by the remains of flash banding.
- 3.4.6 Despite being deformed, the C19 dormer window is covered in lead and is only visible at distance, giving it low to medium aesthetic value.

3.5 Communal Value

- 3.5.1 The Assembly Rooms have high communal value, as a popular venue for people to meet.
- 3.5.2 The venue also hosts civic functions, including the Lord Mayor's Luncheon.
- 3.5.3 The grand architectural space of the Assembly Rooms has communal value in its association with York as a hub for social activities from the C18 through to today; particularly through the celebratory atmosphere of the annual horse races, such as the Ebor Festival.
- 3.5.4 The Assembly Rooms also have communal value through forming part of the historic streetscapes that define the central core of York, and for which residents take immense pride, and which make York a popular tourist destination.

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York Herald (1827) *York Assembly Rooms* 14/04/1827, p.2.

York Herald (1844) *The Annual Full Dress Ball* 21/12/1844, p.5.

York Herald (1855) *The Portico of the York Assembly Rooms* 15/12/1855, p.7.

York Herald (1860) *York Assembly Rooms* 21/04/1860, p.10.

5 Appendixes

Appendix 1: List Description

THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS

List Entry Summary

This building is listed under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended for its special architectural or historic interest.

Name: THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS

List entry Number: 1259521

Location

THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS, BLAKE STREET

The building may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.

County:

District: York

District Type: Unitary Authority

Parish:

National Park: Not applicable to this List entry.

Grade: I

Date first listed: 14-Jun-1954

Date of most recent amendment: Not applicable to this List entry.

Legacy System Information

The contents of this record have been generated from a legacy data system.

Legacy System: LBS

UID: 462808

Asset Groupings

This list entry does not comprise part of an Asset Grouping. Asset Groupings are not part of the official record but are added later for information.

List entry Description

Summary of Building

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Reasons for Designation

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

History

Legacy Record - This information may be included in the List Entry Details.

Details

YORK

SE6052SW BLAKE STREET 1112-1/27/48 (South West side) 14/06/54 The Assembly Rooms

GV I

Assembly Rooms. 1730; Lesser Assembly Room screen and decoration 1773; building refronted and portico added 1828; interior opened up in 1859. Major restoration and refurbishment 1990. Assembly Rooms by Lord Burlington; portico by JB Pritchett; 1859 alterations by JB and W Atkinson. MATERIALS: front and portico of ashlar; left return of orange-buff brick in English garden-wall bond; clerestory of stuccoed timber. Slate roofs with brick stack, main roof hipped above prominent eaves cornice. PLAN: a basilica enclosed by suite of inter-connecting rooms. EXTERIOR: 1 storey and attic; 5-bay front. Centre bays fronted by pedimented tetrastyle Ionic portico. Flight of steps leads to central double doors each of 4 raised and fielded panels recessed in fasciated architrave with cornice hood on foliated volutes; wrought-iron lamp bracket above. Outer bays have 18-pane sash windows in similar architraves with cornices set in square-headed recesses between attached Ionic columns. Full-width entablature supports balustraded parapet on each side of pediment and breaks forward over portico. Attic has five 24-pane windows. INTERIOR: vestibule and anterooms: stone flagged floors. Main doorcase with enriched architrave and bayleaf garland frieze; curved subsidiary doorcases of painted stone with pulvinated friezes: all have moulded cornice overdoors. 3-panel double doors. Moulded skirtings and cornices. Anteroom to left has stone chimneypiece with eared surround and moulded cornice shelf on grooved brackets; C19 alcove cupboards with bordered glazing; plaster roundel over inner door. Anteroom to right has fireplace in eared and enriched architrave with pulvinated frieze and moulded cornice shelf. Circular Room: lined with wall paintings of 1951. Painted stone fireplace in eared and fasciated surround with pulvinated frieze and cornice shelf. Curved enriched doorcases. Domed ceiling lit by octagonal lantern. Assembly Room: peristyle of Corinthian columns supporting full entablature of garlanded bayleaf frieze and dentilled and modillioned cornice. Walls behind broken by alternately rectangular and semicircular niches over raised band. Clerestory of Composite pilasters with swagged capitals, enriched frieze and cornice. Venetian glass chandeliers. Lesser Assembly Room: two marble chimneypieces with eared fasciated surrounds, pulvinated friezes and cornice shelves. Venetian arch screen contains entrance to Cube Room with round-arched recess enriched with guilloche mouldings flanked by 2-leaved 3-panelled doors in enriched doorcases: plaster ornament

above of medallions and musical instruments entwined with ribbons. Original lunette window; coved ceiling of 1859 with central lantern encircled by flutes within rectangular frame with angle mouldings. Cube Room: painted stone fireplace with enriched eared surround and dentilled cornice shelf breaking forward over grooved scroll brackets. Coved ceiling with square lantern in border of rosettes. Recess: lunette window. Moulded cornice to ceiling lit by domed oculus in dentilled surround encircled by guilloche mouldings, and in surround of guilloche mouldings with angle rosettes. HISTORICAL NOTE: the Assembly Rooms are of seminal importance in the history of English architecture. They were designed by Lord Burlington in 1730. The foundation stone was laid on 1st March 1731 and the building was completed by August 1732. The building cost »5,000. (City of York: RCHME: The Central Area: HMSO: 1981-: 100-2; Studies in Architectural History : Vol.1: Wittkower R: Burlington and his Work in York: York: 1954-: 47-66).

Listing NGR: SE6012452048

Selected Sources

Books and journals

An Inventory of the City of York V Central, (1981), 100-2

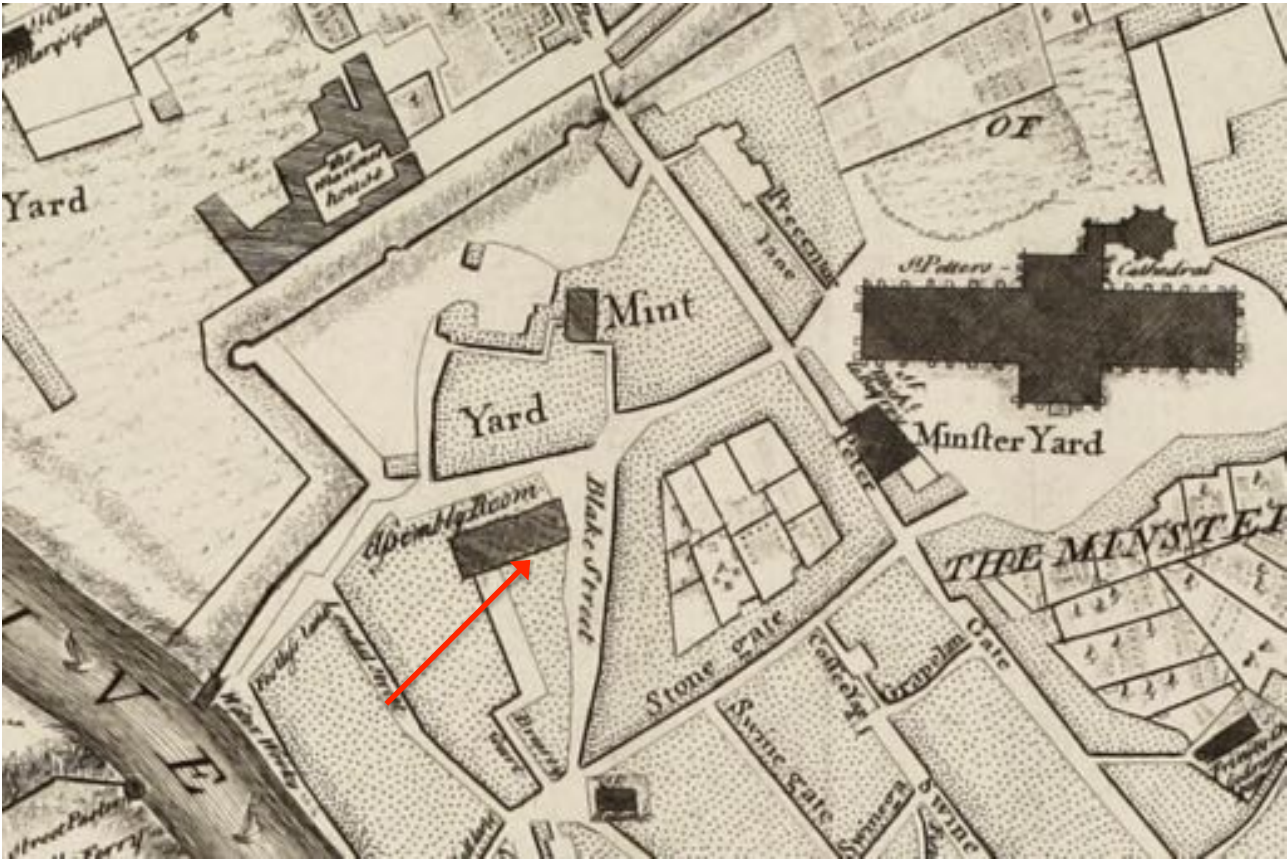
Wittkower, R, 'Studies in Architectural History' in Burlington And His Work in York, (1954), 100

National Grid Reference: SE 60123 52039

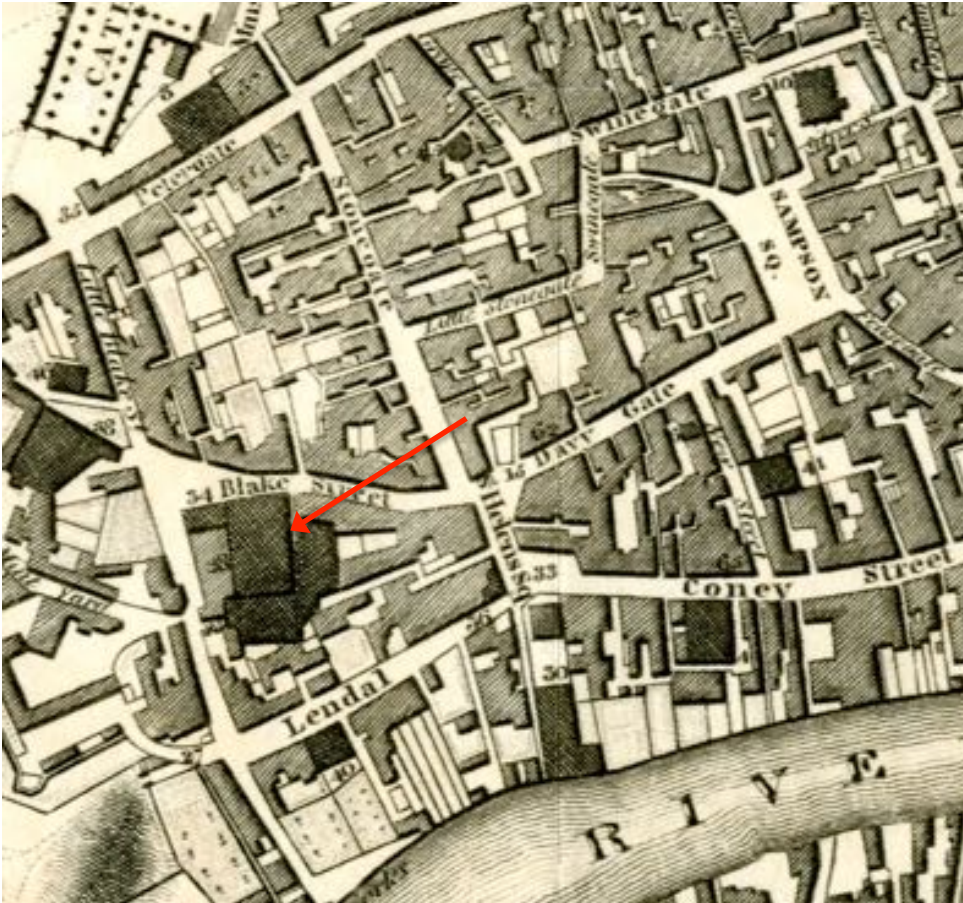
Appendix 2: Mapping Exercise



1610 Detail from John Speed's map of York



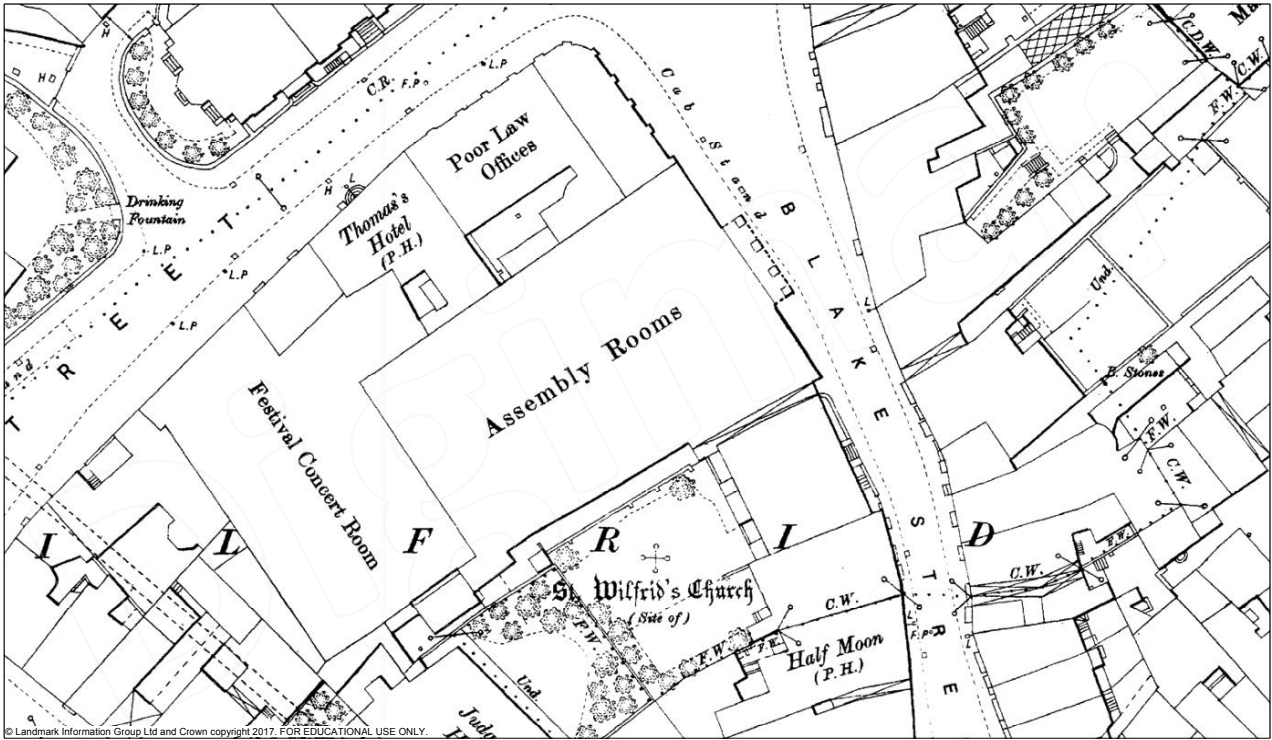
1750 Detail from John Roque's Map of York, based on Peter Chassereau's survey.



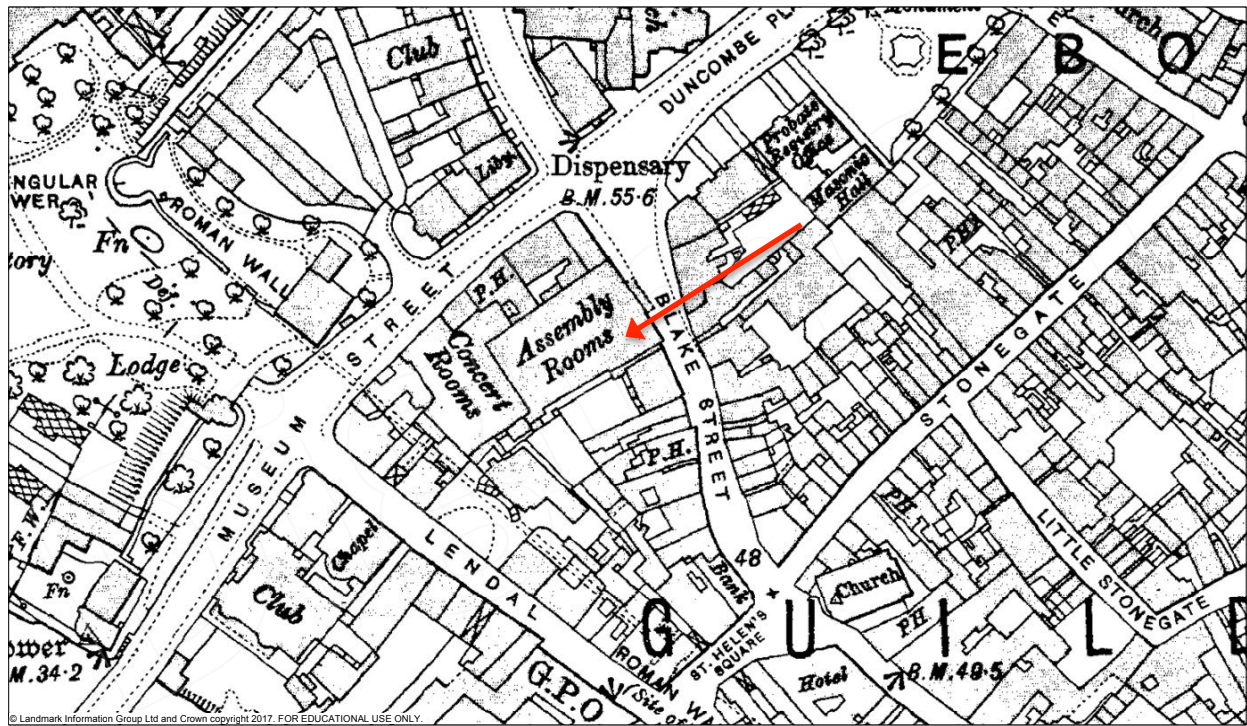
1829 Detail from H. Bellerby Map of York, dated 9th June 1829.



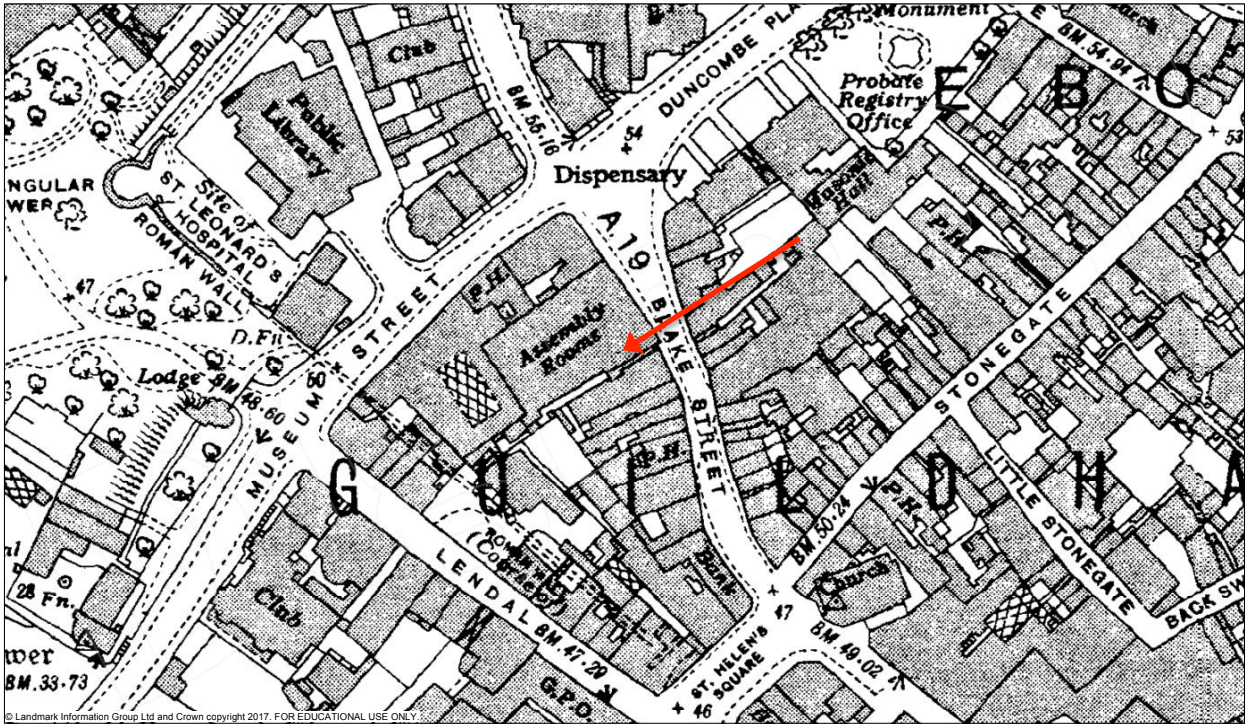
1852 OS Town Plan



1891 OS Map



1909 OS Map



1937 OS Map



1961 OS Map

Appendix 3: Illustrations

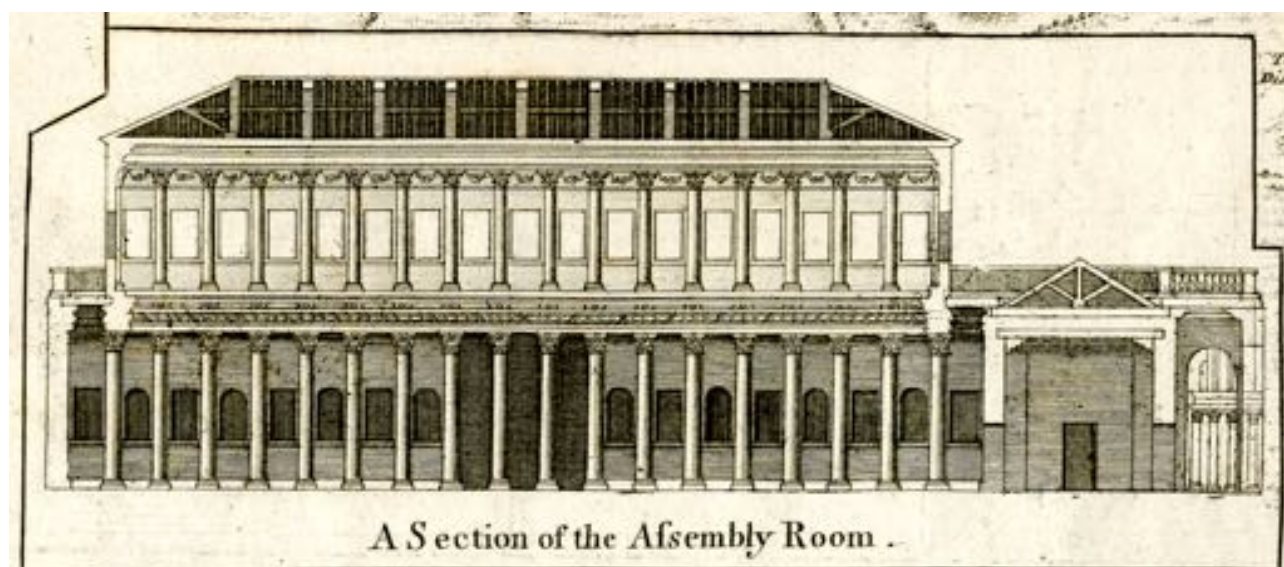
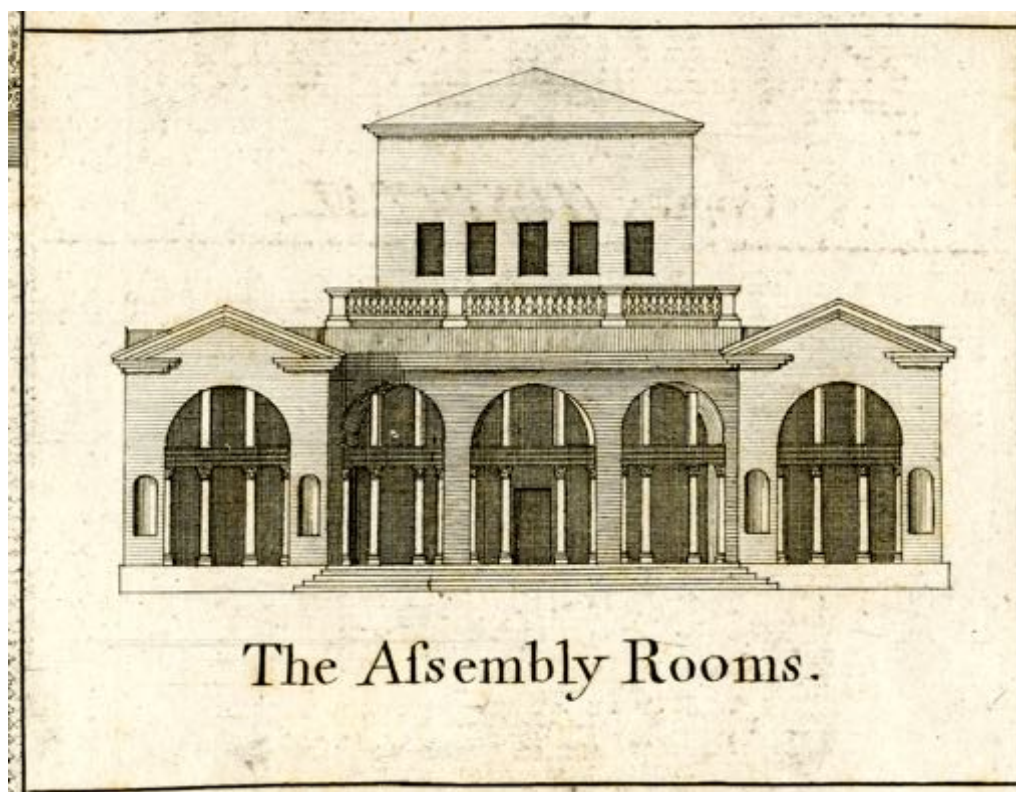


Fig. 1. Principle elevation and cross section of the Assembly Rooms, reproduced in 1750 but likely representing Burlington's original design.



Fig. 2. 1760 Engraving by W. Lindley showing the Great Assembly Room with its plain ceiling.
?? Altered version of the Lindley's 1760 etching including a fanciful Rococo ceiling design.

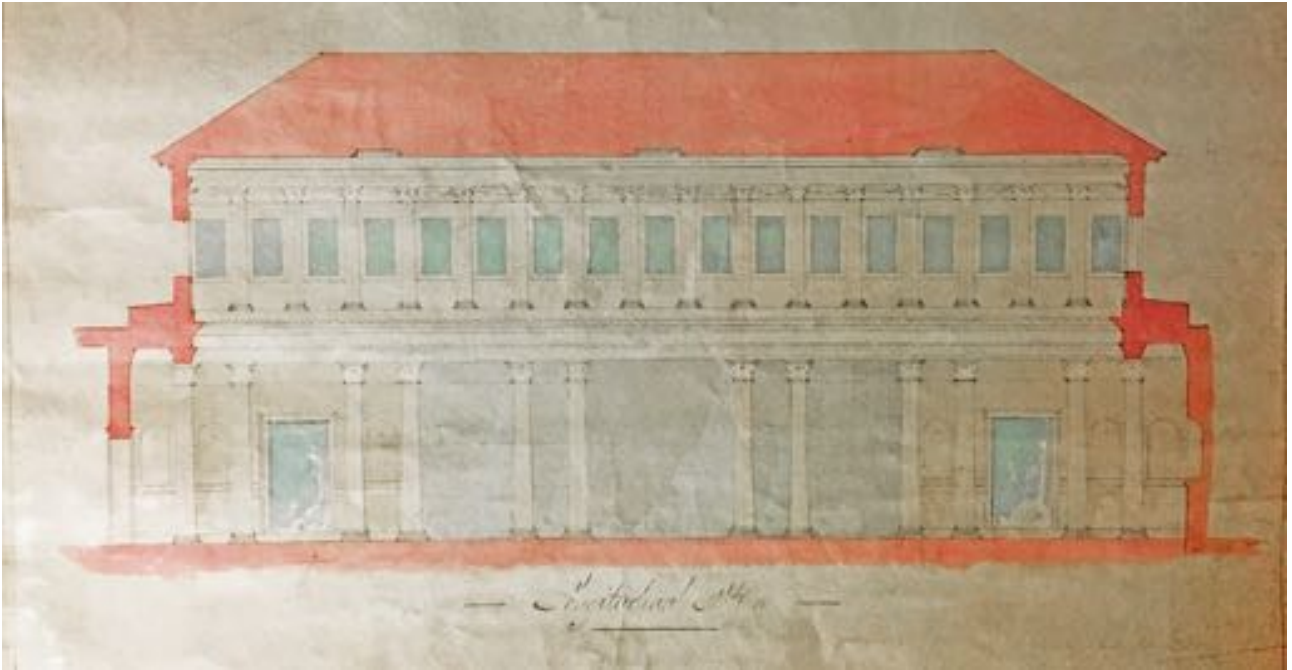


Fig. 3. 1843 Cross Section by J.B. & W. Atkinson – note the presence of the 3 ceiling vents. [© Borthwick Archives]

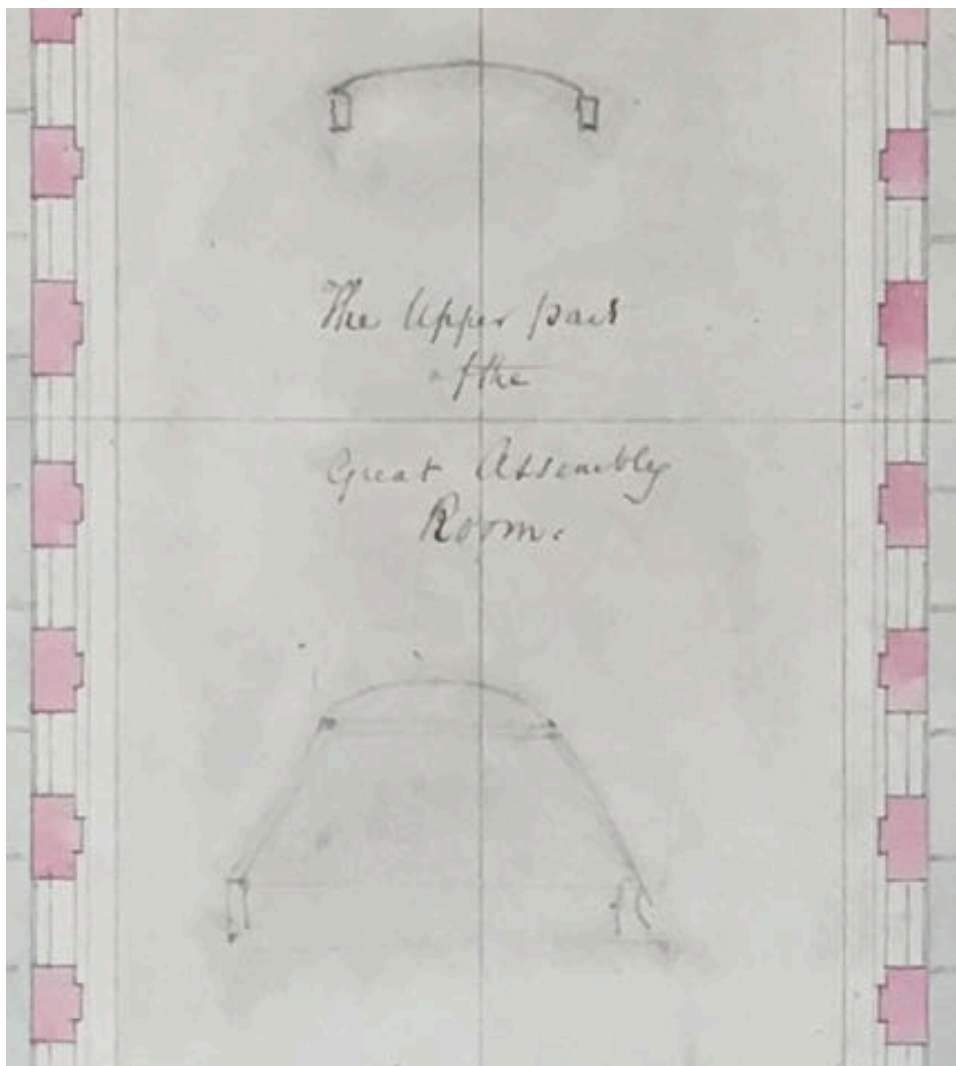


Fig. 4. 1843 Plan by J.B. & W. Atkinson – note the likely design sketch for the ventilation ducts. [© Borthwick Archives]



Fig. 5. Nathaniel Whittock's c.1850 view of York, showing the cupola in place - seemingly not in its current position, although this may simply be a perspective error (Murray 1988)

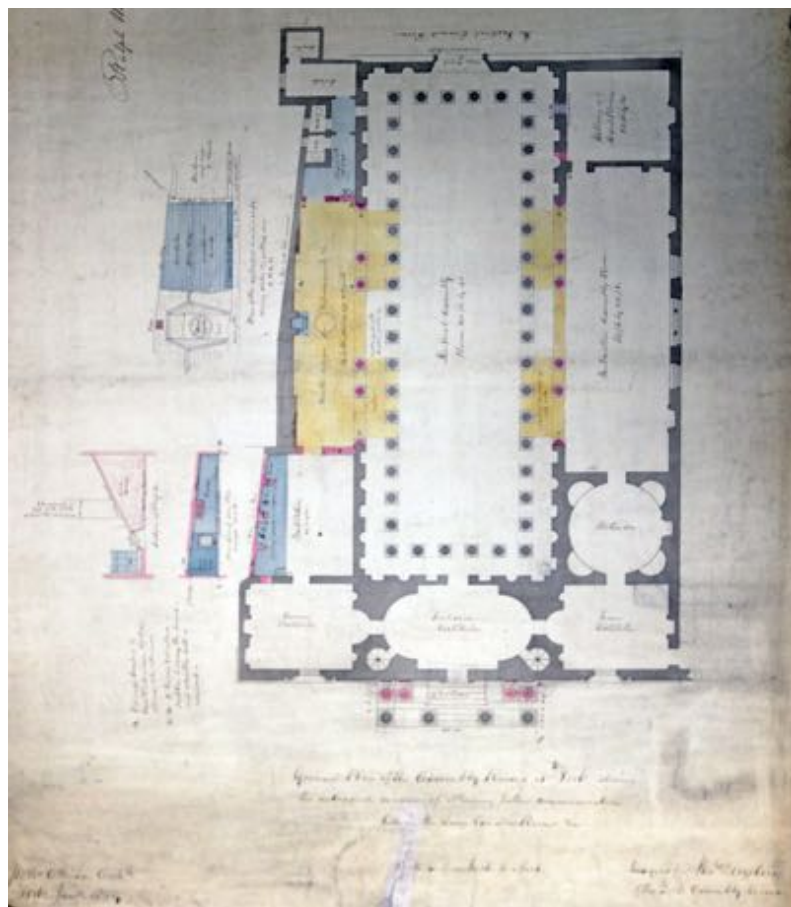


Fig. 6. 1859 Plan by J.B & W. Atkinson, showing the opening up of the interior circulation [© Borthwick Archives].



Fig. 7. Image of Assembly Rooms from the *London Illustrated News* (08/10/1864, 20) - note the presence of the vent at the far end of the ceiling, and its surrounding decoration.

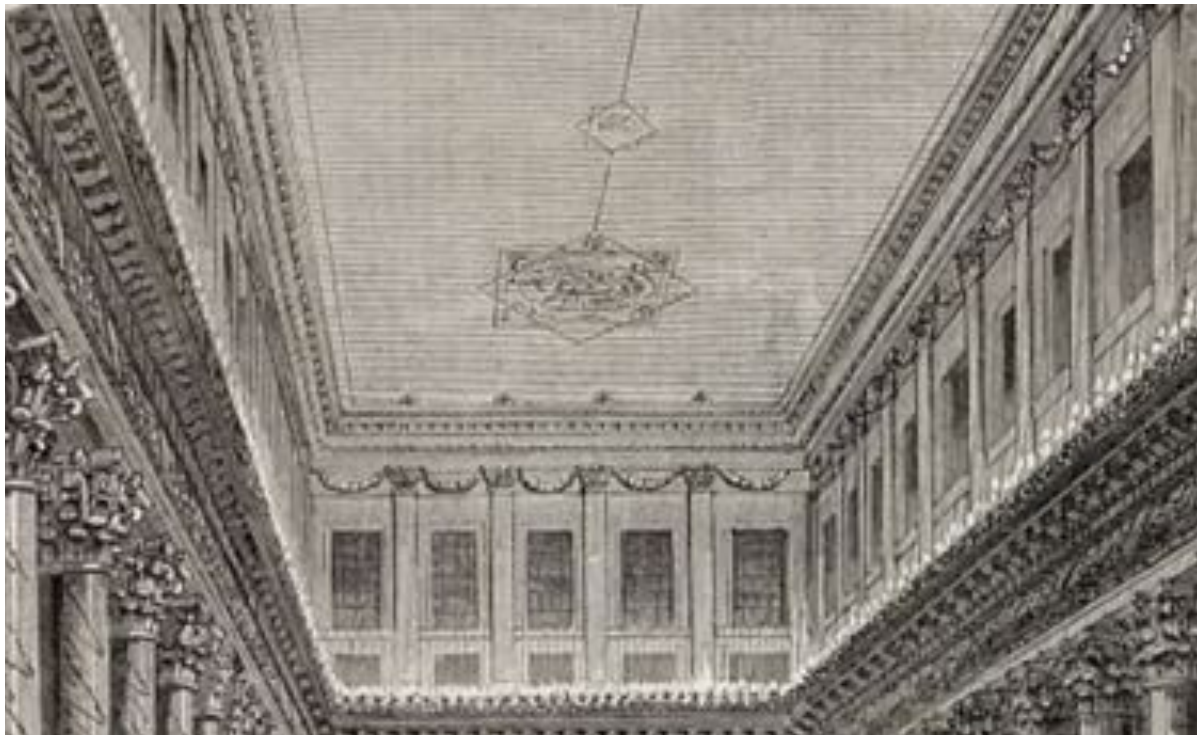


Fig. 8. Detail of the *London Illustrated News* 1864 etching, showing the decoration of the ceiling vent, which ties with the 1860 description of the new decorative scheme. Note also the honeysuckle motif on the ceiling above each pilaster, and the candles lining the entablature.



Fig. 9. c1940 photograph of Great Assembly Room interior (looking east) showing the ceiling vent.

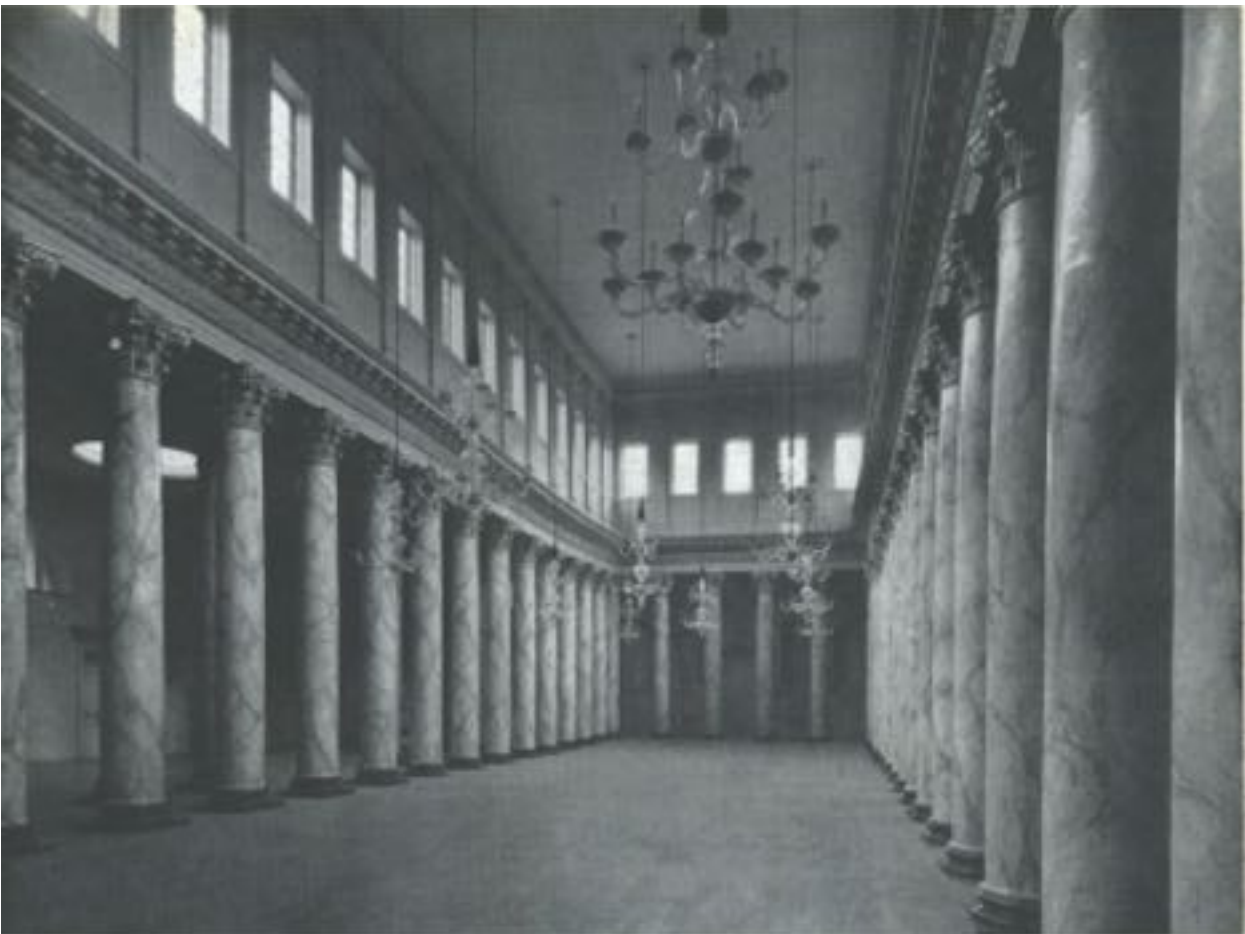


Fig. 10. 1950 photograph of the Great Assembly Room immediately following the major restoration campaign – note the loss of the ceiling vents and re-skimming of the lantern ceiling.

Appendix 4: Phasing & Alteration of The Assembly Rooms, York

Abbreviations:

GAR Great Assembly Room

LAR Lesser Assembly Room

Date	Architect / Designer	Principal Work(s)
1730		- Proposal made on 01/03/1730 to raise £3000 for construction of Assembly Rooms – led by Yorkshire Gentry including Sir William Wentworth (also a subscriber). Commission of Richard Boyle (3 rd Lord Burlington) following the death of Wakefield in April 1730.
1731-2	Richard Boyle (3 rd Earl of Burlington)	- Construction of Assembly Rooms, based on the design of the Egyptian Hall by Vitruvius.
1732		- Replacement of flat roof tiles with Dutch glazed pantiles to GAR roof.
1734		- George Gibson's house (to the NW of Assembly Rooms) was purchased and demolished to allow the construction of a single storey servant's room (completed 1738).
1738		- Closet (SW) roof replaced and retiled
1741		- GAR floor re-laid
1744		- Portico balustrade made good in Roche Abbey stone
1751		- GAR seats moved forwards from the rear of the peristyle into the main space, flush with the columns, and made moveable. Later removed.
Unknown mid C18		- Gates added to the gangway at the rear of the GAR. Gates and gangway later removed at an unknown date.

1752	John Carr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repairs to the GAR roofs, including the replacement of the lower pantiles with slates. Carr was asked to look at them with an eye to raising their pitch (as low pitch had caused issues since construction). - Lead secured through the wall below the clerestory windows.
1755	John Staveley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addition of gilded and painted plaster scallops and mouldings around clerestory end windows
1766		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clerestorey windows were made watertight, and all bar 4 on each side was made fast.
1773	Sir John O'Corrall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repairs and alterations to LAR following a minor fire in Jan 1773, including changes to access the Cube Room.
1791	John Carr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The projecting exterior portico stairs were removed and new stairs added within the portico.
1805		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Iron casement windows to GAR clerestory replaced.
1825	P. Atkinson & W.R. Sharp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Construction of York Concert Room immediately to the west of the Assembly Rooms, with connections made into the GAR and Cube Room.
1827 (March – Oct)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Redecoration scheme? Carpenter's work by C.R.Maile; painting etc. by D.Allen; repairs to hearth by T.C.Payne (see Huntingdon Archives Ref: H/9/52)
1828	J.P. Pritchett	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Re-fronting of the principal facade to accommodate the widening of Blake Street.

1840		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clerestorey windows were altered with iron frames to allow the opening of 2 at each end and 5 on each side.
1843	J.B. and W. Atkinson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alterations to roofs, including construction of slated pitched roofs to sides, with addition of skylights, including main rooflight in LAR. - Probable insertion of ceiling vents, duct system and cupola. - Cleaning, repainting and redecoration of interiors, presumably including lantern. - Probable insertion of the entry dormer at the north-east corner of the lantern roof.
1858-9	J.B. and W. Atkinson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Removal of the side walls separating the GAR from the subsidiary rooms. - Creation of Kitchen, including removal of wall and infilling of court on S side. - Alterations to roofs on S side. - Lowered ceilings and cornices added in Recess, LAR and GAR aisles. - Major redecoration scheme under the guidance of Mr Owen Jones (author of <i>The Grammar of Ornament</i>), including gilding of the ceiling vents with surrounding ornamentation in red.
1859	J.B. and W. Atkinson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New orchestra gallery added on side of GAR into recess/refreshment room. Removed at unknown date.
1860		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Chandeliers and organ sold
1867	J.B. and W. Atkinson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposed removal of portico and replacement by glazed canopy. Not completed.

1885	J. Demaine	- Change to portico base to create footpath on Blake Street, including the removal of the iron gates and railings around the portico.
1906		- A fundraising ball was held in 1904 towards the restoration of the Assembly Rooms. Although there are no formal records of the work carried out, there is graffiti dated 1906 in the roof, suggesting some work took place that year.
1913	Tomlinson-Walker Foundry	- Addition of a cast iron canopy above the main entrance. Present in 1940 – removed in 1950 restoration?
1939-40	Corporation of York	- Major underpinning of columns. Further planned work halted by WWII.
1941	Corporation of York	- Removal of railings from front elevation for salvage (possibly C19 replacements of original).
1942	Corporation of York	- Repairs and re-glazing of windows following incendiary bomb damage. Many of the lantern windows (including all of the south side) were replaced following this incident.
1950-1	Corporation of York / Arthur Boys	- Repairs and major redecoration of interior spaces, including the insertion of box girder frame above the aisle, and the removal of ceiling vents in the GAR. - Reconstruction of kitchen and offices at the south west corner. - Blocking of 4 windows in north wall of LAR.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Removal of a roundel over the Vestibule door. - Removal of 1755 plaster decorations around clerestory windows. - Roof timber repairs and replacement of the pantile roof covering to the lantern with Westmorland slate. - Re-skimming of the ceiling in the Great Assembly Room. - Lead and slate replacement on side roofs.
1971-3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Major roof repairs, including: - Repairs to the LAR walls and roof timbers following discovery of dry rot, and subsequent replacement of the ceiling. - Re-rendering of the clerestory exterior and cornice. - Lead and slate replacements on side roofs. - Fungicidal treatment of roof timbers, and strapping of central kingpost.
1981		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internal redecoration and plaster repairs.

Appendix 5: Phased Plan

