

Tate Wilkinson House | York

Building History

2022



Tate Wilkinson House (centre) in c.1880 (York Explore y1_stwil_614)

File: 3210-2021-001

Date: 16 February 2022

Revision: FINAL

Maybank Building Conservation LLP

1.0 Designations

- Listed: Grade II (UID 1257877) and SAM (1005475)
- Central Core Conservation Area (Museum Gardens and Exhibition Square character area)
- Area of Archaeological Importance
- Associated designated structures (fig. 1.1):

UID	GRADE	SITE
1257870	II	Telephone Box Adjoining St Wilfrids Church
1256767	II*	Theatre Royal And Undercroft
1257875	II*	The Red House And Railings Attached At Front
1005475	SAM	St Peter's Hospital, part of undercroft beneath the Theatre Royal



Fig. 1.1 Historic England designation map with the site outlined in blue © Historic England

2.0 Historical Background

The listed and scheduled Tate Wilkinson House (TWH), Duncombe Place, York, is an C18th townhouse incorporating C13th and later fabric. The house sits within the former precinct of the medieval St Peter's Hospital - later renamed St Leonard's - and evolved from one of its structures. The site is located in close proximity to York Minster, within the core of the historic city of York.

2.1 HISTORICAL SITE CONTEXT

Limited archaeological excavation has found evidence for Iron Age settlement and field systems in the general vicinity of the site. The first known major development on the site was the construction of a Roman legionary fortress for the Legio IX Hispana in c.71AD (Edgar & Coppack 2014, 4). The site partially lies on a known road within the legionary fortress, which separated the barracks from the Praetentura (forward extent of the camp facing the Via Principalis) (fig. 2.1). Excavations nearby at no.9 Blake Street in the mid 1970s found evidence of timber structures from the late C1st, which were replaced by stone buildings the following century (Hall 1997).



Fig. 2.1 Detail from reconstructed c.200 AD map showing the legionary fortress, with the site highlighted in blue over the known Roman road © Addyman 2015

The history of the site following the Roman withdrawal is not well understood, with limited archaeological evidence for occupation prior to the C10th. Limited evidence for a church nearby has been interpreted as suggesting the area became a largely open elite or religious space (Edgar & Coppack 2014, 5).

Blake Street is believed to have developed during the Anglian period (C6th-C9th), providing a connection between the former fortress gates located near St Helens Square and Bootham Bar. Today Blake Street ends in front of the site at the junction with Duncombe Place/Museum Street. Originally however, it continued through to High Petergate, and its original curved route remains visible in the surrounding land boundaries, including that of the site.

2.2 MEDIEVAL HISTORY

The core of TWH is a limestone masonry structure containing a barrel vault, stylistically dating to the 1130s or 1140s. This structure, which survives in part to first floor height, is associated with the medieval hospital of St Peter's, remains of which also survive within the Theatre Royal.

It has long been held that St Peter's Hospital was destroyed by fire in 1137, however Norton (1998, 201) argues cogently that this is a mistranslation and the date more likely reflects a rededication of the hospital. Therefore 1137 may mark the date when St Peter's became an independent institution (from York Minster) and was rededicated to St Leonard.

The medieval structure within TWH is shown on a reconstruction plan of the hospital site by Addyman Archaeology, showing known and surviving elements of the hospital and adjacent abbey (fig. 2.2).



Fig. 2.2 Reconstruction map of the Mint Yard showing the medieval hospital overlaying a modern map (site circled in red) © Addyman Archaeology.

The orientation of the site aligns with the former route of Blake Street prior to its truncation (before 1545), along the line of the hospital precinct wall.

The original purpose of the C12th structure partially surviving within TWH is unknown. Benson (1902) interpreted it in his reconstruction plans as a probable 'lodge' (fig. 2.3). This interpretation is presumably based solely on its proximity to the former east gate, which is believed to have existed near the site of the present Red House. Cullum (1993, 11-18) suggests the site may be the remains of a gatehouse itself, although this interpretation is disputed convincingly by Edgar & Coppack (2014, 18).

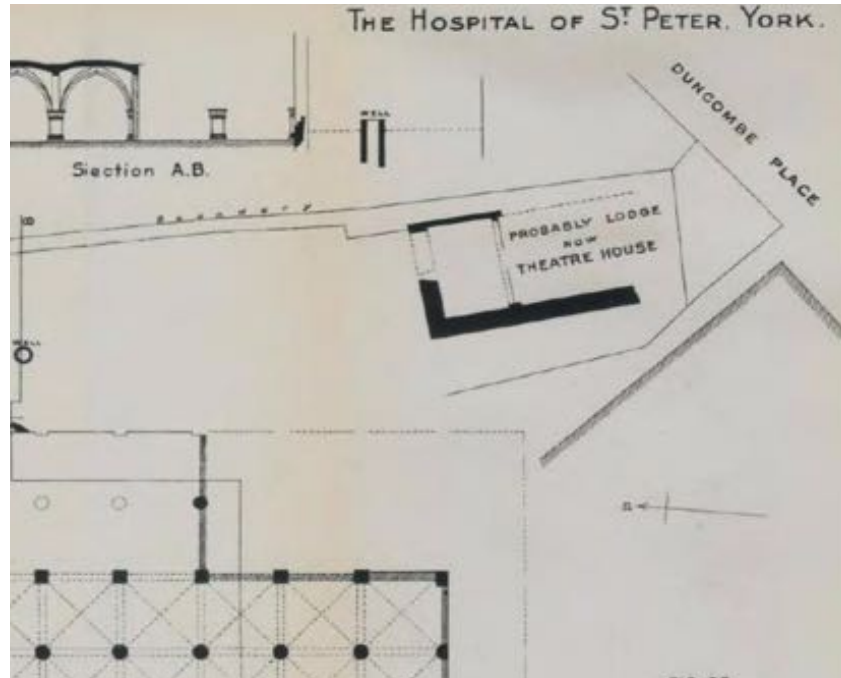


Fig. 2.3 Detail from Benson's 1902 reconstruction plans of the medieval remnants of St Peter's, with the structure in TWH labelled as "Probably Lodge now Theatre House" (Benson 1911, fig.38).

The surviving C12th fabric is much disturbed and is difficult to read, with only a single vaulted bay with transverse rib surviving internally. More magnesian limestone masonry survives externally, including a late C12th or early C13th head of a lancet window in the western wall. It is unclear if this was inserted or the upper part of the wall rebuilt.

2.3 POST-MEDIEVAL HISTORY

As part of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, St Leonard's Hospital was surrendered to the Crown in 1540, and many of the hospital buildings appear to have been subsequently dismantled and robbed. That the medieval masonry in TWH survives to first floor level suggests the building was instead retained and repurposed following the hospital's suppression.

The post-medieval history of the site is not presently well understood, however there is evidence of multiple phases of development and change from an early date.

There are a number of large, chamfered ceiling joists on the ground floor that suggest a post medieval phase of alteration, as do a pair of roof trusses visible above the second floor staircase. These are of uncertain date, however the staircase to the second floor features bulbous balusters and square newels with attached half balusters, stylistically dating it to c.1700. Two cupboards on the first floor are also stylistically indicative of an early C18th phase of alteration to the property.

This early C18th phase at TWH predates the construction of the adjacent theatre, which was first constructed on its present site in 1744. It seems likely that TWH was already a residential property of some quality at this time. In 1701 Sir William Robinson, baronet, MP and at the time Lord Mayor of York, leased the plot immediately adjacent. In 1714 the Red House was constructed as Robnison's townhouse, likely to a design by William Etty. In 1723, the York Corporation requested that Sir William surrender the Red House for use by the city (Robinson refused and so the Mansion House was instead

constructed). That Sir William would build the Red House next to TWH and that the York Corporation desired it as the Lord Mayor's residence both imply the area was desirable in the early C18th. This may suggest that TWH was at least not a detracting structure, and was certainly not a ruined medieval building in the early C18th.

2.3 THEATRE CONNECTIONS

The site is named after its most famous occupant, Tate Wilkinson (1739-1803) (fig. 2.4), the actor and theatre manager who bought a royal patent for York's theatre in 1769.



Fig. 2.4 Portrait of Tate Wilkinson © National Portrait Gallery

In Tate Wilkinson's memoirs he mentions staying in 1764 with his "good friend, Mr Baker of the York Theatre" (1790, 224). Joseph Baker was the manager and subsequently owner of the theatre (following the death of Mrs Keregan, who constructed the 1744 theatre). In 1761 Mr Baker had acquired the lease for a house in Blake St and the nearby playhouse (Rosenfield 2001, 39). It is therefore very likely that Joseph Baker's residence was TWH, and that the property was already associated with the theatre behind. It is possible the property was previously held by Mrs Keregan, perhaps from as early as 1744, although no evidence has been found to confirm this. Tate Wilkinson's memoirs later confirm that he took over Joseph Baker's house as his own residence when he became manager of the theatre (after 1766), corroborating that TWH was Joseph Baker's 'Blake Street' residence.

The principal southern elevation facing Little Blake Street (sometimes called Lop Lane and today called Duncombe Place) was remodelled in the late C18th, and the reset staircase from ground to first floor is of similar date, suggesting a corresponding internal remodelling. The upper floors and roof structure survive from this period. It is possible that this remodelling was undertaken some time after 1770, when

Tate Wilkinson became the lessee (Edgar & Coppack 2014, 25). Rosenfeld records Wilkinson undertaking regular minor alterations to the associated theatre from 1780 onwards.

The occupation by first Baker and then Tate Wilkinson appear to establish the label for TWH as the 'manager's house'. Describing the theatre in 1818, William Hargrove wrote the theatre's general entrance was "in Blake-Street, fronting which the manager's dwelling-house now stands." (Hargrove 1818, 465).

The theatre was altered in 1821-22 to designs by renowned architects, Atkinson & Sharp. The Yorkshire Gazette (09/02/1822) records that the "entrance from Blake Street is greatly widened", suggesting that the ground floor corner of TWH was removed as part of these works. This is supported by an 1821 floor plan, which shows the south-west corner removed (fig. 2.5).

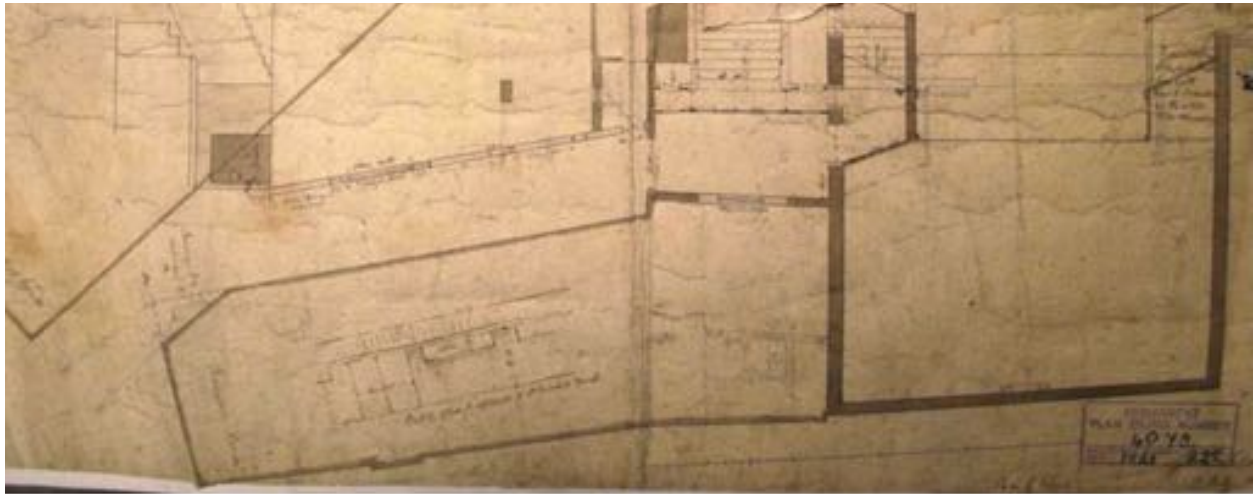


Fig. 2.5 Plan of 1821 by Atkinson & Sharp, showing the outline of TWH with the ground floor corner removed © York Explore.

It appears that a new pedimented entrance arch was added into the widened opening between TWH and the adjacent Red House as part of the 1821-22 works. This is depicted on one of the Atkinson and Sharp drawings (fig. 2.6).



Fig. 2.6 Detail from an 1821 drawing by Atkinson & Sharp, showing the Blake Street entrance beside TWH, the removed corner of which is indicated by a vertical dotted line © York Explore.

The site context of TWH changed significantly in the C19th, initially through the creation of St Leonard's Place through the former Mint Yard in the early 1830s. The creation of St Leonard's prompted further development of a nascent cultural quarter, further elevating the status of the area. In 1864 Little Blake Street was widened to create Duncombe Place, with most of the buildings of the southern side being demolished (fig. 2.7).



Fig. 2.7 Early c19th drawing of Little Blake Street prior to widening, appearing to show a wall and double gates (blue) in front of TWH (red) © YAYAS not for reproduction.

Although the principal entrance of the theatre had long since moved to Mint Yard and then St Leonard's Place, the general entrance beside TWH remained, providing access to the "pitt and gallery" (Yorkshire Gazette 21/03/1835). Figure 2.7 appears to show TWH in the early C19th walled off from the street with the house and theatre accessed through a pair of gates.

By 1831, it appears that the lean to structure had been constructed against the western side of TWH, providing a covered entrance into the theatre (fig. 2.8).



Fig. 2.8 C.1831 plan for the construction of St Leonard's Place with TWH in red. Note the angled structure abutting the left wall of the site © YAYAS (not to be reproduced).

Photographs from the 1880s show the wall separating the site from Duncombe Place had been removed, and the theatre entrance was marked by a pair of flanking gas lights (fig. 2.9). The Duncombe Place entrance to the theatre was made redundant by the end of that decade, following major alterations in 1888 to improve safety (Edgar & Coppack 2014, 53).



Fig. 2.9 Photograph of TWH and the entrance gas lighting in c.1880 © York Explore

By 1885, the site was listed as no.7 Duncombe Place, and was at that time occupied by Mr George Crumbie (french polisher) and his family. In 1891, the occupants were listed as Mr & Mrs Crumbie, their 2 children, and a lodger. The Crumbie's remained at TWH until c.1911 (George died 1900 after which his widow, Sarah, remained at the property). Little is known about the Crumbies, but it is assumed that they

had some association with the Theatre Royal. On the 1901 census, the property is listed as 'theatre house', suggesting it remained connected to the Theatre throughout the Crumbie's tenure.

TWH was altered as part of a major scheme of remodelling at the Theatre in 1901. The most significant change was the increased angled recess in the south-west corner of the ground floor, which was changed to its present form, with the upper floors supported on a cast-iron column (fig. 2.10). It is likely that the late C18th staircase was also reset as part of these works. Other minor alterations (in red) are visible on this plan, including to the archway connecting the barrel vault to the stage at the rear of the site.



Fig. 2.10 1901 Ground Floor Plan by Frank A Tugwell, ARIBA, showing the changes to the angled ground floor recess in TWH (new 1901 work shown in red) © YorkExplore Archives

Exterior changes to the principal facade of TWH are evident through the historical photograph evidence, including various signage. A photo from 1943 also shows a projecting canopy had been added between the entrance and the Red House (fig. 2.11). Based on the photographic evidence, this was in place into the 1960s but had been removed by 1973.



Fig. 2.11 Photo of 1943 from the Northern Echo, showing the entrance canopy and signage © Historic England no: 6530_125

A comparison of floor plans between 1901, 1969 and 1974 reveal significant changes to the interior arrangement across the C20th (see Appendix C), presumably undertaken in association with Patrick Gwynne's 1967 remodelling of the theatre. In particular the addition of partitions on the ground floor, and removal and addition of partitions on the second floor, significantly change how these spaces are understood. The 1901 plans show the second floor then contained multiple small bedrooms with a single large bedroom at the front. During the C20th, the front bedroom is subdivided into three rooms, while at the rear partitions were removed to merge two bedrooms into a single room. These changes presumably reflect the change of the site from domestic residence to office space. It is interesting to note small changes in the plan between the 1969 and 1974 plans, suggesting regular small adaptations of the internal spaces.

3.0 CONCLUSION

The RCHME description of the present TWH as “constructed” in the late C18th (RCHME 1981, 103), does not reflect the complex historical development of this site from the mid C12th onwards. Beyond its medieval foundation, TWH has been significantly altered and redeveloped on multiple occasions to reflect the domestic requirements of the day. This continued through the C18th, at which point TWH became inextricably connected to the adjacent Theatre Royal as the ‘manager’s house’. While significant medieval fabric survives to the side walls and northern ground floor vault, most of the building today reflects alterations in the C18th, C19th, and C20th. This includes the internal floor plans which are largely the product of C20th changes.

Bibliography

Benson, G (1902) *The Hospital of St Peter, York*. York: Coultas and Volans.

Benson, G (1919) *Later Medieval York*. York: Coultas and Volnas.

Benson, G (1925) *An account of the city and county of the city of York: from the reformation to the year 1925, being a continuation of "Later mediaeval York"*. York: Cooper & Swan.

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Hargrove, W.M (1818) *History and description of the ancient city of York....* York: W.M Alexander.

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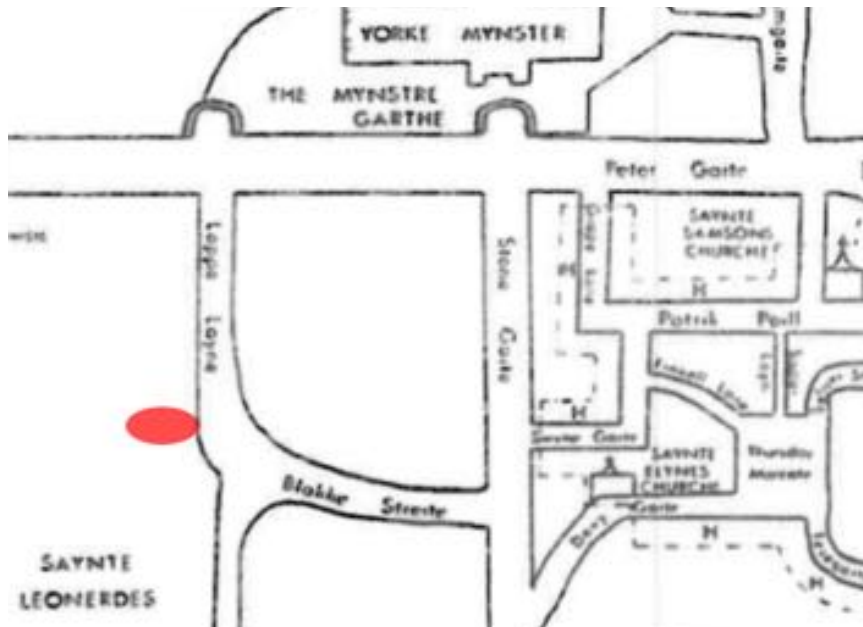
Tillott, P.M. (1961). 'Places of Entertainment' in *A History of the County of York: the City of York*.

Wilkinson, T (1790) *Memoirs of His Own Life, by Tate Wilkinson, Patentee of the Theatres-Royal, York & Hull*. In *Four Volumes*. York: Wilson, Spence and Mawman.

York Archaeological Trust (2000) *St Leonard's at the Theatre*. *Archaeology in York*. 23 (2), 9-16.

Appendix A | Map Regression

1545 Map



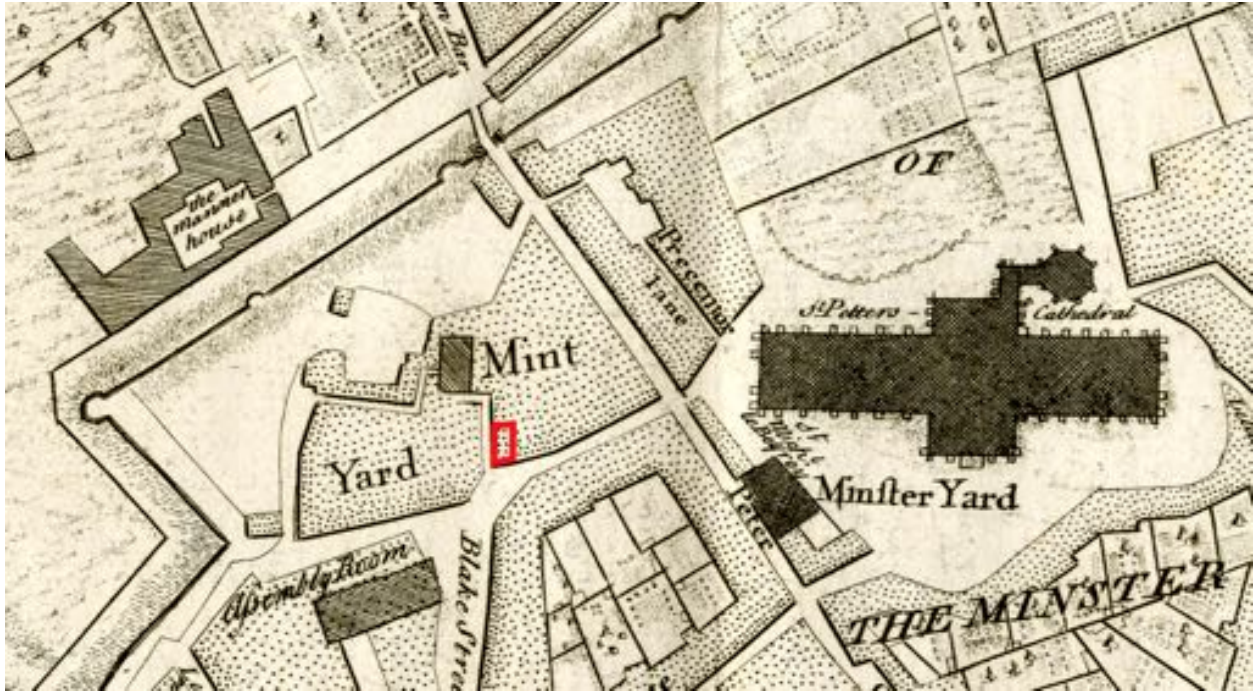
Approximate site location in red. The earliest map of York, this shows that Blake St had already been truncated at Loppe (Lop) Layne.

1610 Map - John Speed



Detail from Speed's map, with the site in red. The large building depicted may be the ruins of the structure today incorporated into the theatre.

1750 Map - Peter Chassereau



Detail from Chassereau's map, which is the earliest to show the theatre and its entrance from Blake St. Site in red.

1829 Map - Bellerby



Detail from Bellerby's 1829 plan of York showing TWH connected to the theatre. Site in red.

1831 Map - St Leonard's Place



A c.1831 plan for the development of St Leonard's Place through the Mint Yard. Site in red.

1852 Map - Ordnance Survey (1st ed.)



© David Rumsey Historical Map Collection.

Appendix B | Illustrations



Plate 1 c. 1880 © York Explore, y1_stwil_614



Plate 2 TWH in the 1880s © York Explore 1001661



Plate 3 Details of photos from the 1900s © York Explore 1001256

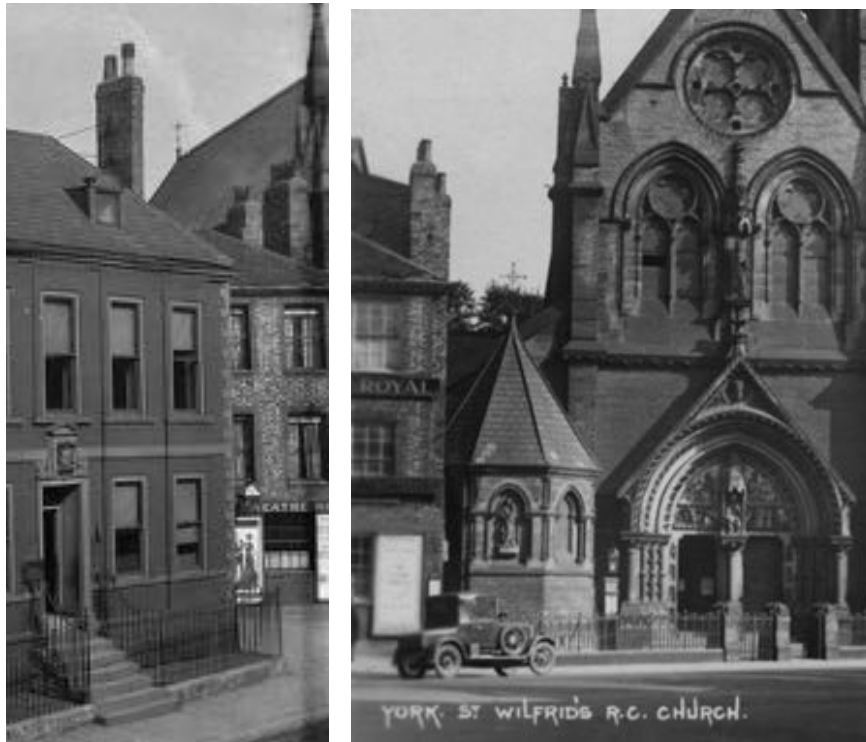


Plate 4 Details of photos from the 1910s © York Explore 1002338 & 1004796



Plate 5 Drawing, showing TWH in the early C20th, from Heape (1937) *Georgian York*



Plate 6 1903 photo with TWH mostly hidden behind a tree that once stood TWH and St Wilfrid's, but advertising hoardings can be seen © Historic England no: 6513_150



Plate 7 Photo of 1943 from the Northern Echo, showing the entrance canopy and signage. Th © Historic England no: 6530_125



Plate 8 The canopy over the theatre entrance was still present in 1962 © Historic England no: 6530_139



Plate 9 TWH and theatre entrance, May 1973 © Historic England no: 6530_127 & 6530_129



Plate 10 Detail from photo of 1974, showing a different sign in the south-east recess © Historic England no: 6513_152



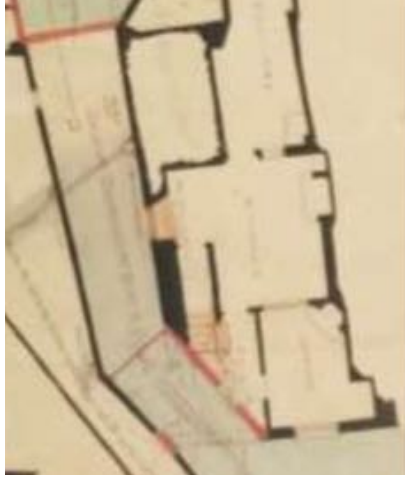
Plate 11

Late 1970s photos © RCHME 1981

Appendix C | Historic Floor Plans

GROUND FLOOR

1901



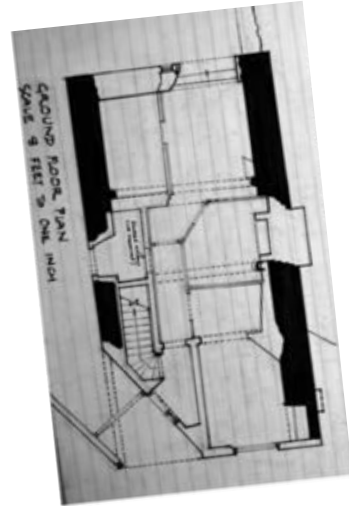
(Frank A Tugwell, ARIBA)

1969



(Patrick Gwynne)

1974



(RCHME)

FIRST FLOOR

1901



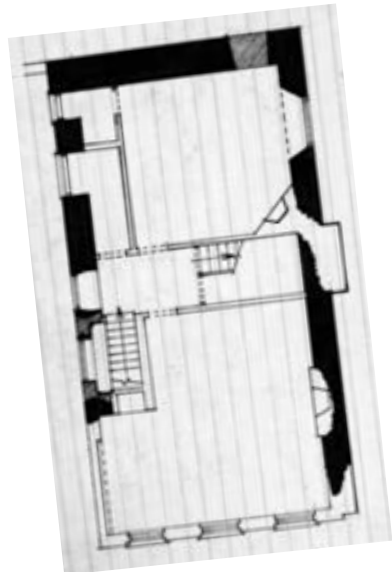
(Frank A Tugwell, ARIBA)

1969



(Patrick Gwynne)

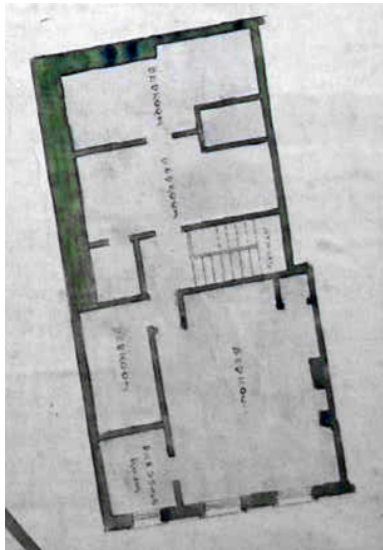
1974



(RCHME)

SECOND FLOOR

1901



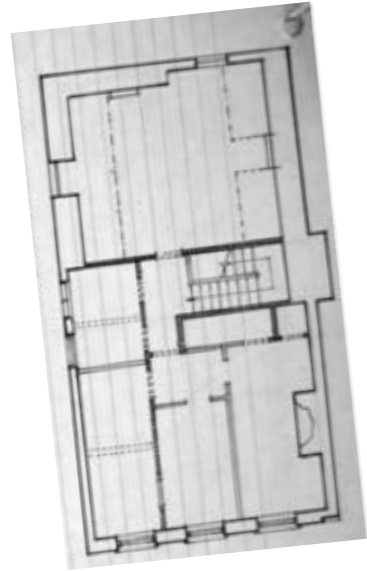
(Frank A Tugwell, ARIBA)

1969



(Patrick Gwynne)

1974



(RCHME)

1901 First Floor Plan © York Explore.

1969 Floor Plans from *Architectural Review* CXLIV, Sept 1968, 191.

1974 Floor Plans from (RCHM(E) red box notes 1974) © Historic England Archives.

Appendix D | Designations

THEATRE HOUSE

THEATRE HOUSE, DUNCOMBE PLACE

Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1257877

Date first listed: 14-Jun-1954

Statutory Address 1: THEATRE HOUSE, DUNCOMBE PLACE

Location

Statutory Address:

THEATRE HOUSE, DUNCOMBE PLACE

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

District: York (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

National Grid Reference: SE 60133 52114

Details

YORK

SE6052SW DUNCOMBE PLACE 1112-1/27/308 (North West side) 14/06/54 Theatre House

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. (City of York: RCHME: The Central Area: HMSO: 1981-: 95; 103).

Listing NGR: SE6013352114

Legacy

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

Legacy System number: 463355

Legacy System: LBS

Sources

Books and journals

An Inventory of the City of York V Central, (1981), 103

Legal

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

End of official list entry

St Peter's Hospital, part of undercroft beneath the Theatre Royal

Official list entry

Heritage Category: Scheduled Monument
List Entry Number: 1005475
Location: The building or site itself may lie within the boundary of more than one authority.
District: York (Unitary Authority)
Parish: Non Civil Parish
National Grid Reference: SE 60113 52121, SE 60136 52118

Summary

Not currently available for this entry.

Reasons for Designation

Not currently available for this entry.

History

Not currently available for this entry.

Details

This record has been generated from an "old county number" (OCN) scheduling record. These are monuments that were not reviewed under the Monuments Protection Programme and are some of our oldest designation records. As such they do not yet have the full descriptions of their modernised counterparts available. Please contact us if you would like further information.

Legacy

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

Legacy System number: YO 279

Legacy System: RSM - OCN

Legal

This monument is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as amended as it appears to the Secretary of State to be of national importance. This entry is a copy, the original is held by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

End of official list entry

TELEPHONE BOX ADJOINING ST WILFRIDS CHURCH

TELEPHONE BOX ADJOINING ST WILFRIDS CHURCH, DUNCOMBE PLACE

Official list entry

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1257870

Date first listed: 03-Sep-1987

Date of most recent amendment: 14-Mar-1997

Location

Statutory Address:

TELEPHONE BOX ADJOINING ST WILFRIDS CHURCH, DUNCOMBE PLACE

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

District: York (Unitary Authority)

Parish: Non Civil Parish

National Grid Reference: SE 60140 52107

Details

YORK

SE6052SW DUNCOMBE PLACE 1112-1/27/306 Telephone box adjoining St Wilfrid's 03/09/87 Church (Formerly Listed as: DUNCOMBE PLACE K6 Telephone Kiosk)

GV II

Telephone box. Type K6. Design 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Cast-iron. Square kiosk with dome roof.

Unperforated Elizabethan crowns to top panels and margin glazing to windows and door.

Listing NGR: SE6014052107

Legacy

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

Legacy System number: 463341

Legacy System: LBS

Legal

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