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ANOTHER GEORGIAN SPITALFIELDS:

18th-CENTURY HOUSES IN BETHNAL GREEN'S SILK-WEAVING DISTRICT

SURVEY REPORT

JULY 2000

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ARCHITECTURAL SURVEY REPORT

Surveyed: March 1999 to March 2000
Report by Peter Guillery
Drawings by Andrew Donald
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SCLATER ST. E.1.


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PREFACE: SCOPE AND METHOD

This survey report has a dual purpose. It aims to inform regeneration and it is part of a wider survey project investigating London's smaller 18th-century houses.

One starting point, therefore, is present local circumstance which finds the area around the north end of Brick Lane in East London at the threshold of what is likely to be major regenerative change. English Heritage is committed to conservation-led regeneration, the *sine qua non* of which is an understanding of the history of the area that is subject to regeneration. In drawing attention to the heretofore poorly understood architectural history of Bethnal Green's 18th-century silk-weaving district this report is offered in a spirit of co-operative support, taking impetus and encouragement from local initiatives and aspirations, ranging from those of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Cityside Regeneration, and the Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust, to those of numerous individual local people.

English Heritage has as one of its primary purposes a responsibility for increasing understanding of the historic environment. This is in large measure inherited from the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, which merged with English Heritage in April 1999. The organisation's work in this area targets both conservation and educational priorities through exemplary research into sites that manifest aspects of the historic environment that are poorly understood and more than usually threatened by change. Increasingly, this work addresses not so much isolated artefacts as historical context. It is important to understand the historic environment as comprising all the interconnected buildings and spaces that make up our built surroundings, whether or not they warrant designation or preservation. Under the heading 'London's Smaller Eighteenth-Century Houses' English Heritage Architectural Survey has inherited from RCHME a project undertaking the investigation of a highly vulnerable building type the significance of which has not been widely recognised.

This report is thus both an attempt to characterise a fundamental aspect of the distinctive historic environment of Bethnal Green's former weaving district, to inform the process of regenerative investment, and a partial exploration of the nature of lower-status housing in and around London in the 18th century. In terms of method it is necessary to address the history of the place as a whole in attempting to understand any one or more of its buildings. The silk industry, land tenure and occupancy are all crucial to interpretation of the buildings. So this is less an archaeological survey than it is a topographical history. Measured survey and fabric analysis have played an important part. However, relatively little 'original' fabric survives, though its full extent remains unknown as internal access to many properties has not been possible. Documentary research has been central to the elucidation of particular buildings as well as the broader context. This research has included use of land tax assessments. This is a source that in many places is found wanting by comparison with ratebooks, but here it is clear that in conjunction with other standard sources the land tax assessments do allow particular houses to be accurately traced. They record all the buildings along each street, the valuations are broadly indicative of house size, and the names are those of head tenants, occasionally supplemented with those of 'proprietors' (landowners).

The survey area eludes easy definition. It is not what is generally understood to be Spitalfields; even less is it where most people would place Bethnal Green. Spitalfields and Bethnal Green are two of Stepney's historic 'hamlets', now the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, both of which became parishes in the course of the 18th century. The buildings considered here are in a corner of the parish of St Matthew, Bethnal Green, just to the north of the boundary with the parish of Christ Church, Spitalfields. The area was developed as part of

London's silk-weaving district, all of which was known as Spitalfields, even when it spread into other 'hamlets'. From the standpoint of historic meaning the survey area is therefore best considered to have been a part of Spitalfields. However, in the interests of topographical accuracy it is here designated Bethnal Green, qualified as being its 18th-century silk-weaving district. The survey area is defined by the parish boundary to the west and south-west, staying north of 19th-century railway lines to the south-east, and extending as far east and north-east as there was dense development in the 18th century. To the north-west it excludes the Boundary Street Estate, wholly redeveloped in the 1890s. The buildings that have been recorded within this area are those where surviving evidence of the buildings that existed prior to 1800 has been identified.

The first part of the report sets the scene with a general historical overview of the area and the silk trade, followed by an account of its estate development. The twenty or so building records that make up the second part of the report can stand on their own as site reports, but they are brought together here as a tool to a synthetic end rather than as an end in themselves. The final part of the report is a contextual discussion that attempts to characterise the builders and occupancy of the district in the 18th century before drawing out some of the distinctive qualities and significance of buildings that were at once domestic and industrial, urban and vernacular.

Photographs and research notes are available for consultation through the National Monuments Record, 55 Blandford Street, London W1U 7HN (tel: 020 7208 8200).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

English Heritage is grateful to M. A. Boshor, Tiffany Fraser-Steele, Furlong Homes, Yvonne Gregory, Jane Holbury, A. P. Kirby, Mrs Krieger, Gwendolin Leick, Moosa and Hanif Loonat, Mohammed Rajani, Gundi Royle, and Aleks and staff at The Owl and The Pussycat Public House, for granting access to their homes, shops and other private properties.

Thanks are also due to others. Andrew Byrne of the Spitalfields Historic Buildings Trust was instrumental in initiating the work on which this report is based, first drawing our attention to the area. Professor Bernard Herman of the University of Delaware assisted with some of the site survey, providing valuable insights. Helpful advice and information has also been provided by Neil Burton of the Georgian Group, Dan Cruickshank, James Howett, Dr Elizabeth McKellar of the University of London (Birkbeck College), Charles O'Brien of The Buildings of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, Will Palin of Sir John Soane's Museum, and Chris Thomas of the Museum of London Archaeology Service. Philip Roys, architect, has kindly permitted the use of his drawings and provided other assistance. Mark Hutton and Jonathan Nicholls at the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, and Andrew Bramidge at Cityside Regeneration, have all been supportive. The assistance of staff at Tower Hamlets Local History Library, the Bishopsgate Institute, London Metropolitan Archives and the Guildhall Library is also gratefully acknowledged.

For English Heritage Peter Guillery was responsible for the building recording, including documentary research and some measured survey, as well as for the text and preparation of this report. Susanne Larsen assisted with some of the archival research. Much of the measured survey and all of the drawings are by Andrew Donald, and the large- and medium-format photographs are by Derek Kendall and James O. Davies.

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INTRODUCTION

It may be doubted that the buildings that are the subject of this report warrant close attention from English Heritage They are nearly all unlisted, invariably extensively altered, sometimes wholly rebuilt, and at best fragmentary as survivors. Certainly their interest is not conventionally aesthetic. They are important because they are rare standing evidence for the nature of houses built for working-class occupation in 18th-century London. Lower-status 18th-century metropolitan houses are much less well documented than the more commonly surviving higher-status houses of the period. Accounts of the great 'modern' city's 18th-century housing have tended to overlook the smaller houses in which much of the great industrial city's population lived. This matters because these buildings are likely to offer fresh insights into aspects of London's 'modernity', as well as into contrary forces. Their study is one of relatively few avenues into understanding how life was lived by many in what was then western Europe's biggest city and greatest centre of manufacturing and commerce.

Reasons for our lack of knowledge about London's smaller 18th-century houses are readily grasped. Raphael Samuel has explained: 'As with any other form of historical record, the built environment is apt to give a privileged place to the powerful, and indeed very often to leave them as the only presence in the field. Thus when we think of the "Georgian" town house we do not think of the one-room weaver's cabin, but of the more imposing three- and four-storey residences of business and the professions.'[1] 'Taste' has been another dominant factor. Architectural history as a discipline has retained a Whiggish tendency to revolve around aesthetic valuations of artefacts as being stylistically progressive or otherwise. Classical ideals of urban space have been extraordinarily pervasive and their deep influence has steered our gaze away from disorder and diversity in Georgian London. J. P. Malcolm described the East London district of Shadwell in 1807, 'we search in vain on the surface for antiquity or modern objects of interest. Thousands of useful tradesmen, artizans, and mechanicks, and numerous watermen inhabit it, but their houses and workshops will not bear description; nor are the streets, courts, lanes, and alleys, by any means inviting.'[2] Two hundred years on we have more excuse for ignorance, because so little of this uninviting Georgian London survives. But there has been little recognition that our perceptions of the historical environment are skewed as a result. The point was made with more pertinently local reference by Millicent Rose a half century ago. 'In the history of Spitalfields, the poor journeymen, makers of plain silks, of ribbons and handkerchiefs, the immigrant Irish and all who failed to attain any high degree of skill, have been forgotten with the hovels in which they lived. It is the craftsmen who specialized in figured silks and fine velvets, the professional designers of patterns, the master-weavers and middle-men, who survive in memory as their houses have survived in fact.'[3] This remains true.

The buildings studied here were not London's smallest houses, but an intermediate class. The one-room cabins are not there to be studied. Even at the lower end of the social scale the surviving buildings tend to be the bigger ones. This survey presents a random sample, simply the handful which happens to survive. This is a limitation, but it does not undermine the validity of the study. It is clear that there are important untold stories. One of the most interesting findings of the survey is the evidence that many poor weavers did, in fact, live in 'imposing three- and four-storey residences', a family to a room in purpose-built tenement workshop houses the like of which are unknown anywhere else around London, apparently being peculiar to the silk-weaving district. In considering lower-status housing in London it is clear that there is not a single alternative model to the familiar linear story of the emulative spread of the 'Palladian' Georgian terrace that derives from high-status housing, but rather variety across a wide spectrum, the local essences of which are essentially vernacular.

As the silk industry spread from Spitalfields and Shoreditch into Bethnal Green in the late 17th century, so regeneration now has a similar centrifugal dynamic. And as 'work/live space' homes in industrial buildings form a part of this dynamic it seems timely to rediscover the tenement houses where journeymen weavers and their families worked and slept. This is not to romanticise poverty, nor to advocate a return to one-room family homes. Rather it is to insist on the value of buildings as historical documents, and to urge that the historic character of the place, in other words its 'local distinctiveness' or *genius loci*, should be well understood if regeneration is not to be artificial and alienating.

PART ONE: THE LOCAL CONTEXT

BETHNAL GREEN, SPITALFIELDS AND SILK

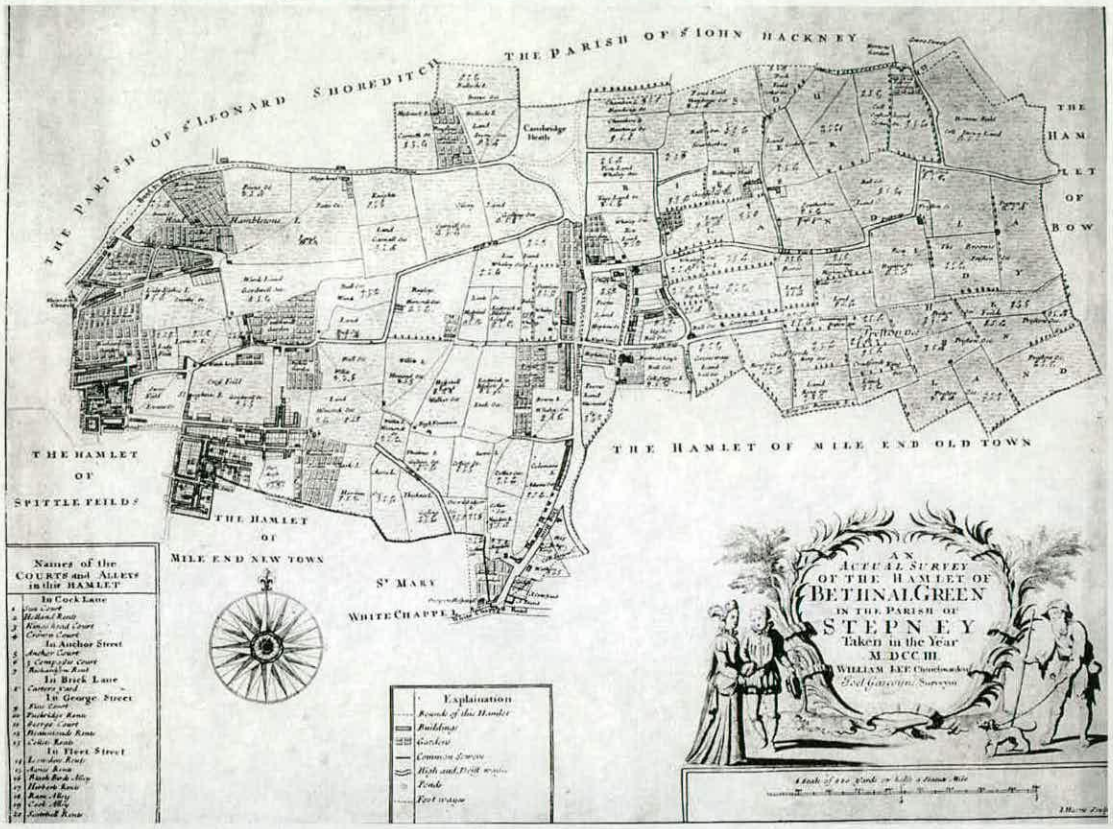

Fig. 1 - The hamlet of Bethnal Green in 1703 (J. Gascoyne).

The hamlet of Bethnal Green as a whole was sparsely built up at the beginning of the 18th century, remaining among the most open parts of the parish of Stepney, latterly Tower Hamlets (Fig. 1). Yet the number of houses in the hamlet rose from 215 in 1664 to perhaps *c.*1000 in 1711, up to 1800 in 1743, the vast majority of these concentrated in the south-west part of the hamlet bordering Spitalfields, the area with which this report concerns itself. When the boundaries of the hamlets are disregarded it is clear that the area's development was simply growth outwards from Spitalfields, part of which it was understood as being at the time (Figs 2 and 3). Though only peripheral overspill in London terms, Bethnal Green's population, estimated as being about 8496 in 1711 and more than 15000 in 1743, was, by the standards of the time, the equivalent of that of one of England's larger towns.[1] The inhabitants of Bethnal Green pleaded for a church in 1711, but the 'Fifty Churches' Commission formed in that year did not oblige.[2] The population continued to grow and it was represented that 'Dissoluteness of Morals, and a Disregard for Religion, have greatly increased; too apparent in great Numbers of the younger and poorer Sort of the Inhabitants'.[3] Parish status was granted in 1743, and the Church of St Matthew, Bethnal Green, had been built by 1746, close to the 'Spitalfields' population in the south-west part of the parish (Fig. 3).[4] Thereafter, and in step with broader trends, housebuilding slowed down for about twenty years.

Through the 18th century silk dominated Spitalfields, and with it Bethnal Green. Weavers were present on Brick Lane and Cock Lane by the 1640s, and an ever greater silkworking population spread north from Spitalfields as the district grew in the late 17th century. A pamphlet of 1684 characterised the population of the Tower Hamlets as a whole; 'the people

for the most part consist of weavers and other manufacturers and of seamen and such who relate to shipping and are generally very factious and poore'.[5] Bethnal Green, away from the river, was all the more dominated by weaving. In 1743 it was attested that its 'Inhabitants. . . consist chiefly of Journeymen Weavers, and other inferior Artificers, belonging to the Weaving Trade, who, by hard Labour and Industry can scarcely, in the most frugal Way of Life, maintain themselves and Families'.[6] It has been estimated that 59% of adult males in the parish of Bethnal Green as a whole in 1770 were silkworkers (of 68% in clothing trades) - comparative percentages for Christ Church, Spitalfields, being 43% (and 53%). This represents a clear-cut industrial monoculture when it is taken into account that of the remainder in Bethnal Green 20% were in the

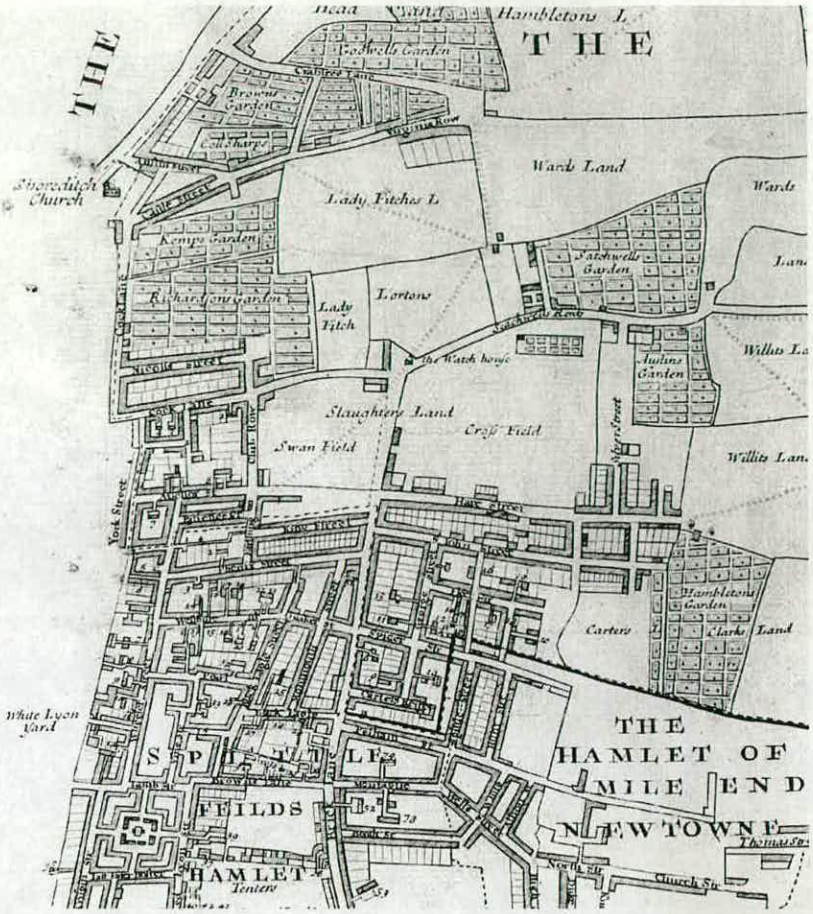

Fig. 2 – Spitalfields and Bethnal Green's silk-weaving district in 1703 (J. Gascoyne, Survey of the Parish of St Dunstan, Stepney, *1703).*

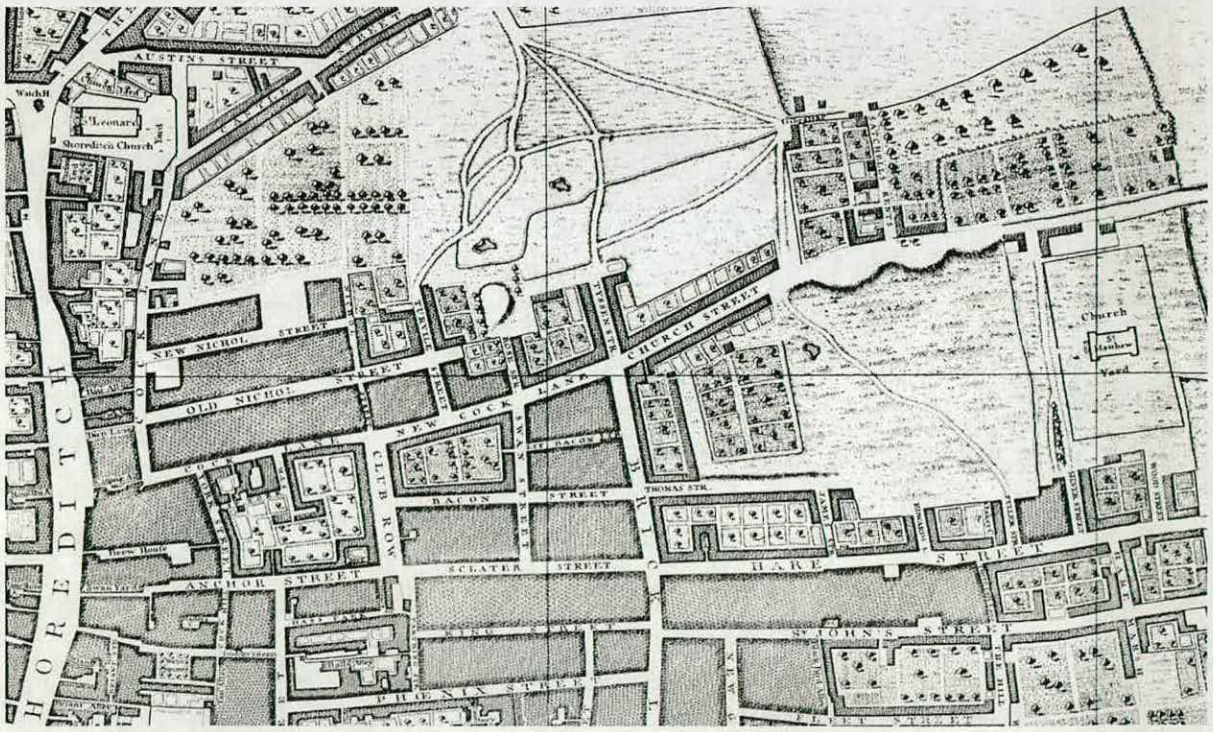

Fig. 3 – Bethnal Green's silk-weaving district in 1746 (J. Rocque, Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster and Borough of Southwark, *1746).*

dependent service sectors of building, provisioning and general labour.[7] Other industry in the area included framework knitting (stocking making), its circumstances much like those of silk weaving. Truman's Brewery became an ever larger local employer through the 18th century, and there were other small breweries. Cabinet making and other timber-based furniture trades, as well as the wider spread of garment trades, were not a significant part of the local economy until well into the 19th century.[8]

Silkworking was one of London's major industries in the 18th century, perhaps accounting for about 10% of London's working class. Weavers were far and away the largest group in the industry, but there were related trades, notably silk throwsters or silkwinders (those who twisted raw silk into thread, often women) and dyers. Imported raw silk was thrown then dyed, bought by a master weaver and 'put out' to journeymen for weaving. Once woven the silk masters sold the silk to mercers as elaborate brocades, damasks, velvets, satins, serges, mantuas, etc. The industry was capitalistic in its organisation, increasingly so through the century, with numerous masters paying wages to the very much more numerous artisan weavers. The weaving was invariably carried out in houses in areas that were first developed in association with the growth of the industry, largely for occupation by weavers whose home lives were dominated by work (Fig. 4). In more central areas many poor people could be accommodated in old buildings, but that was not a possibility in Bethnal Green so there was a need for housing purpose-built for the poor. The houses need to be considered not simply as domestic architecture, but must equally be understood as industrial buildings. The domestic or putting-out system should not be romanticised as a pre-industrial idyll of happy homeworkers; pay was poor and the living conditions were not good. Men, women and children all worked - when there was work; the trade was subject to huge fluctuations, being easily affected by both fashion and war, dependent as it was on imports.[9]

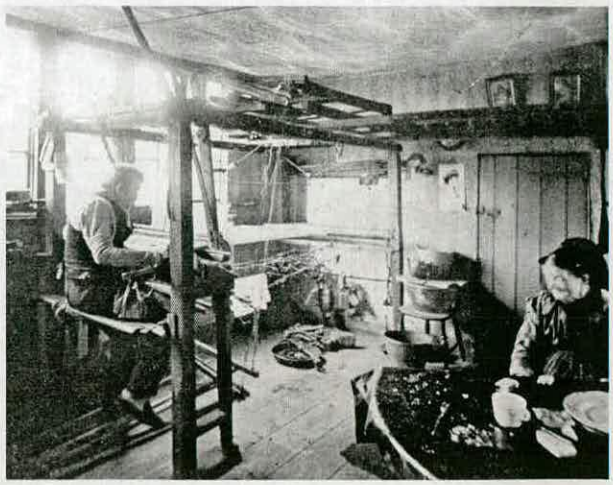

Fig. 4 – Weaving in a Spitalfields house in 1894 (Tower Hamlets Local History Library).

After the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 Huguenot immigration was an important factor in Bethnal Green's growth and demography. About 15-20% of the names in the land tax assessments for the streets considered in this report appear to be of French origin, a figure that is consistent with other estimates for Spitalfields more generally. Overwhelmingly dependent on silk, Huguenots appear to have mixed with the English, their addresses perhaps determined principally by wealth or by trade speciality rather than by ethnicity.[10]

The 18th-century population of Bethnal Green was industrial, but it was not one homogenous 'working class'. Silkweavers were classified as 'inferior artificers', an intermediate group, below artisans and above labourers.[11] However, this disguises great variability of status within the trade. At the top, leaving aside the silk masters, who had for the most part moved away from the area by mid century, and who had anyway left their looms behind them, there were highly skilled artisans, literate and self improving, with strong traditions of horticulture and bird fancying, 'to cheer their quiet hours when at the loom'.[12] These weavers, who probably owned their own looms and kept their own households, 'formed an intensely orthodox community, intelligent, skilled and enlightened within limits but, on the whole, generally anxious to be accepted as "gentlemen"'.[13] The Spitalfields Mathematical Society, founded in 1717, flourished, and many other societies (historical, floricultural, entomological and musical) grew up out of the weaving monoculture. This intriguing mix of civilised pursuits on the part of those whose life was otherwise a loom-bound drudge has been explained:

'Patience, intricacy, concentration were alike the qualities of their labour and their idleness'.[14] This artisan respectability has been much emphasised, having been documented by Henry Mayhew, among others.[15] Dorothy George long ago provided a corrective, as, in a sense, did Hogarth in *Industry and Idleness* with his contrasting apprentices, Francis Goodchild and Tom Idle (Fig. 5). Beside the elite there were many others of whom we know less, skilled only in throwing a shuttle, illiterate, vagrant and desperately poor. Bullock hunting rather than flower tending would have been a favoured pursuit.[16] In considering the surviving housing it is important to retain a sense of this social mix. It is equally worth remembering the glaring contrast between the silk producer of whatever level and the consumer, the former eking out a subsistence living, the latter devoted to conspicuous consumption. Materials for a silk dress might cost about £50 - more than two year's earnings for many weavers.[17]

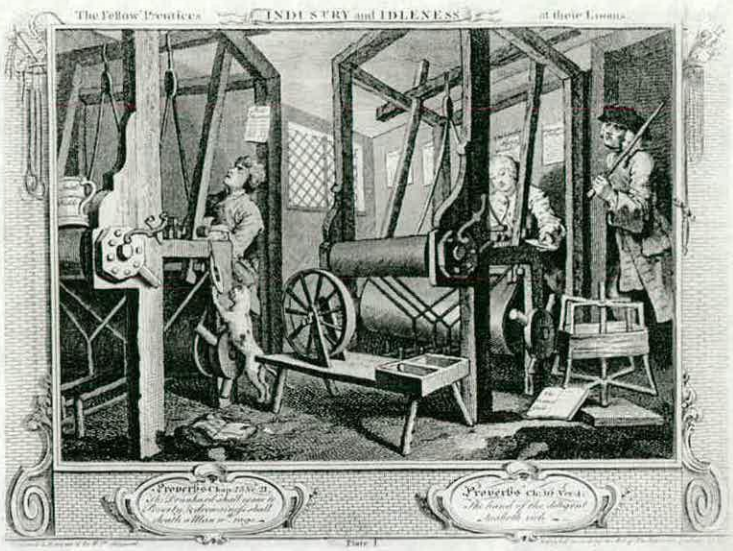

Fig. 5 – Apprentices and a master in a Spitalfields silk-weaving workshop (W. Hogarth, Industry and Idleness, *1747).*

Along with extreme poverty Bethnal Green was characterised by social unrest and religious nonconformity. The rebelliousness of the area was rooted in anti-papist sentiment which merged with trade-based dissent that rose and fell with the fluctuations of the silk industry. There were several outbursts in the late 17th century, including riots against machinery (engine looms) in 1675. The silk boom of 1715 had fallen off to the point that in 1719-20 silkweavers, whose numbers had greatly increased, were rioting in protest against the fashion for wearing printed calicoes and were said to be 'in a starving condition'.[18] The calico riots were successful, leading to legislation in 1721 stopping its production.[19] A housing boom that brought about 200 new houses to Bethnal Green in 1719-24 did not, therefore, coincide with prosperity in the silk industry. In London generally this was a time of great building activity, excepting a lull in 1720-1 following the bursting of the South Sea bubble. In local terms the depression in the silk trade may actually have encouraged rather than prevented investment in building, one of the few alternative outlets for capital; despite the poverty there would have been a demand for housing.[20] There were more riots in the 1730s and attempts to prohibit the retention of silk waste, seen by the silkworkers as legitimate customary income, but increasingly stigmatised by those with authority as 'embezzlement', were a constant undercurrent.[21] However, disorder was not endemic; there was 'beneath the turbulence, an essential orderliness'.[22]

This broke down in the 1760s. Trade expanded during the Seven Years' War when French foreign trade was temporarily captured. In 1762 the Spitalfields weavers agreed a 'Book' of prices, to resist undercutting through the use of cheap 'unlawful' labour. For a decade after the war, up to 1773, the silk trade was depressed. The workforce was reduced by 50% in the period 1762-8, bringing real distress, with impoverishment to the point of starvation.[23] This coincided with another London-wide housing boom that was not without echoes in Bethnal Green. Peaks in London's building cycles in 1720, 1735 and 1766 were all reflected by activity in Bethnal Green, all at times of depression in the silk trade.[24] Riots in 1763, 1765 and 1766 in which the sabotaging of woven cloth played a part were based in grievances against the introduction of labour-saving machinery, and the shifting of silkweaving to locations outside London. In 1766 the weavers' campaign succeeded in achieving a prohibition of

French silks, reducing competition. However, the Act also made it a felony without benefit of clergy to cut work from a loom.[25] Further confrontation ensued. Journeymen organised themselves and carried out further sabotage, of both cloth and machines, in reaction to low pay and the breaking down of established piece-work rates. A memorandum to William Petty, Lord Shelburne, documents the view of the situation in 1768 from within the government:

'The Workmen have united into Combinations of a very dangerous & alarming Nature, they have form'd a Plan of greater Extent and More Singularity than ever has been yet done in Cases of Combinations of this kind. They amount to several thousands and are reduc'd to the most exact Discipline under their Leaders, they plant Centinels in all ye Neighbourhoods of Spital Fields and are ready to collect themselves upon any Alarm. They disguise themselves with Crapes and are arm'd with Cutlasses and other Weapons. They write threatening Letters in the form of humble Petitions to the Master Manufacturers and they deter by Threats those labourers from working at an under Price who would be otherwise glad to be employ'd. They enter in the Night such Houses where they have Intelligence any Work is carried on at an under Price and cut and destroy the Looms to the Damage often of several hundred pounds. It is said they are learning the discipline of regular Troops . . . The few Persons who have occasionally been taken up and confin'd for Disorders and Assaults in the Streets have been immediately rescued. They have their Watch Words and a cant Language understood only by themselves.'[26]

Two leaders, John Doyle and John Valloine, were arrested in 1769 at the headquarters of what was termed 'Bold Defiance', the Dolphin in New Cock Lane (now Redchurch Street). They were executed, not, as was usual, at Tyburn but at Bethnal Green in order 'to strike Terror into the Rioters'. In 1771 Daniel Clarke, who had been a witness against Doyle and Valloine, was stoned to death in a Bethnal Green brick field by way of revenge. David Wilmot, the parish treasurer and a magistrate then busy speculatively developing his Bethnal Green estate, helped apprehend two men for this murder. They too were executed, hanged in Hare Street (Cheshire Street), 'the very heart of the residence of the perpetrators', and Wilmot was given a guard back to his house off Bethnal Green Road.[27]

In 1773 an alliance of the insurrectionary weavers with coal heavers in Shadwell to push for lower food prices took affairs closer to a revolutionary edge, and to a denouement through the passage of the first Spitalfields Act.[28] This provided the trade with internal price regulation and settled piece rates.[29] The fight that had begun with the 'Book' in 1762 and brought an extraordinary reign of terror to Bethnal Green had been won. The Spitalfields Act was long recognised as a monument to the power the weavers had managed to wield, though it also forbade 'combination'. Given its stabilising impact on the local economy it was perhaps not coincidental that 400 new houses were built in the parish of Bethnal Green in 1774-8, twice the total for the period 1743-1774. Some of this expansion and most subsequent growth was to the east of the present area of study.[30]

Stability did not mean wealth. Poverty and radicalism, 'embezzlement' and combination remained local leitmotifs through the 1790s.[31] Further Acts in 1792 and 1811 extended protective regulations and riots subsided.[32] Poverty among the weavers extended to the wider population. In 1797 48% of the shopkeepers in the parish of Bethnal Green had an annual income of £40 or less, in common with journeymen, another 30% of £60 or less, placing them on a par with artisan masters. Further, of 81 public houses in the parish only 14 could 'get a decent Livelihood the rest can scarce live'.[33] The population was overwhelmingly working class, the upper and middle classes of Bethnal Green in 1770 comprising only about 3% of adult males.[34]

In 1788 Wilmot, a 'gentleman', was displaced by Joseph Merceron (1764-1839), probably the son of James and Ann Merceron, weavers, pawnbrokers (a flourishing line in an area so

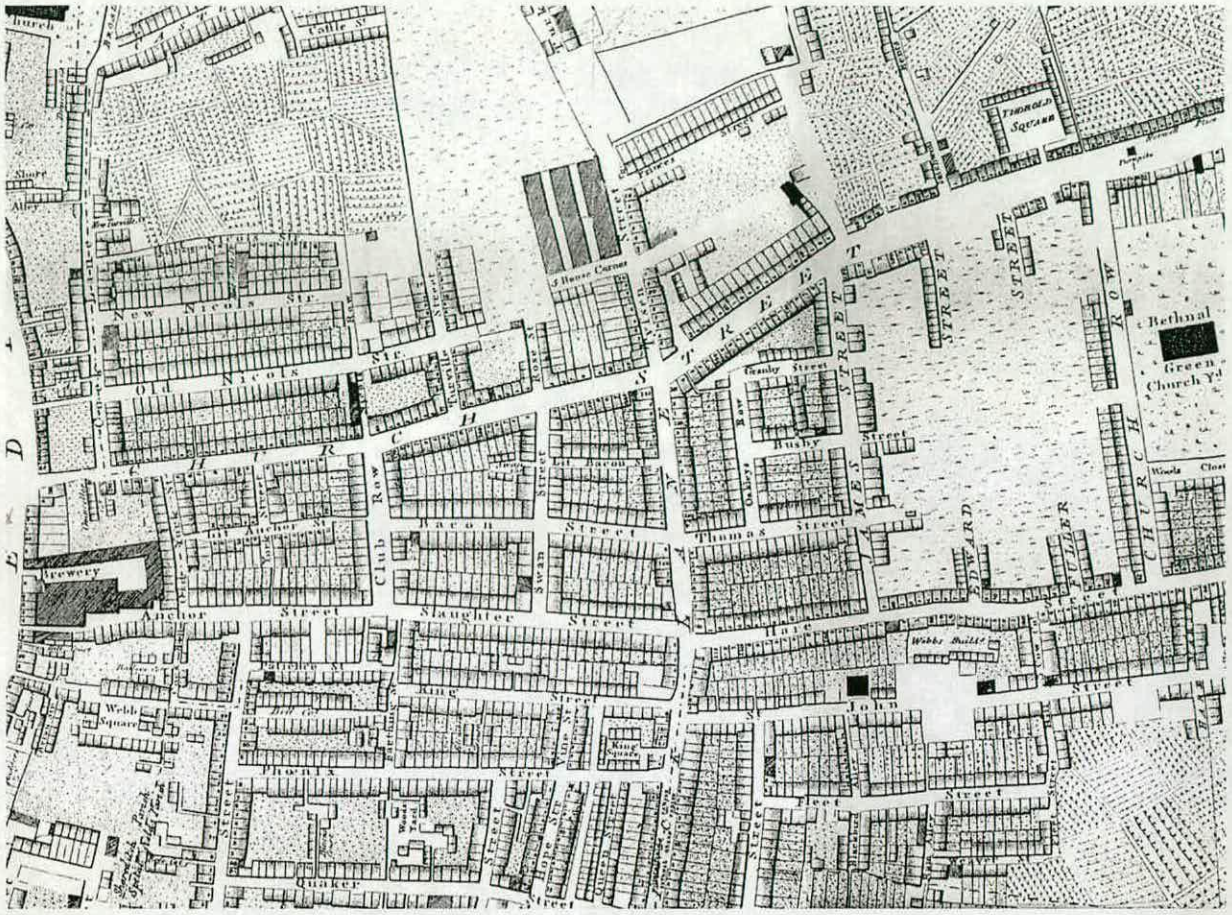

Fig. 6 – Bethnal Green's silk-weaving district in 1799 (R. Horwood, Plan of London, *1799).*

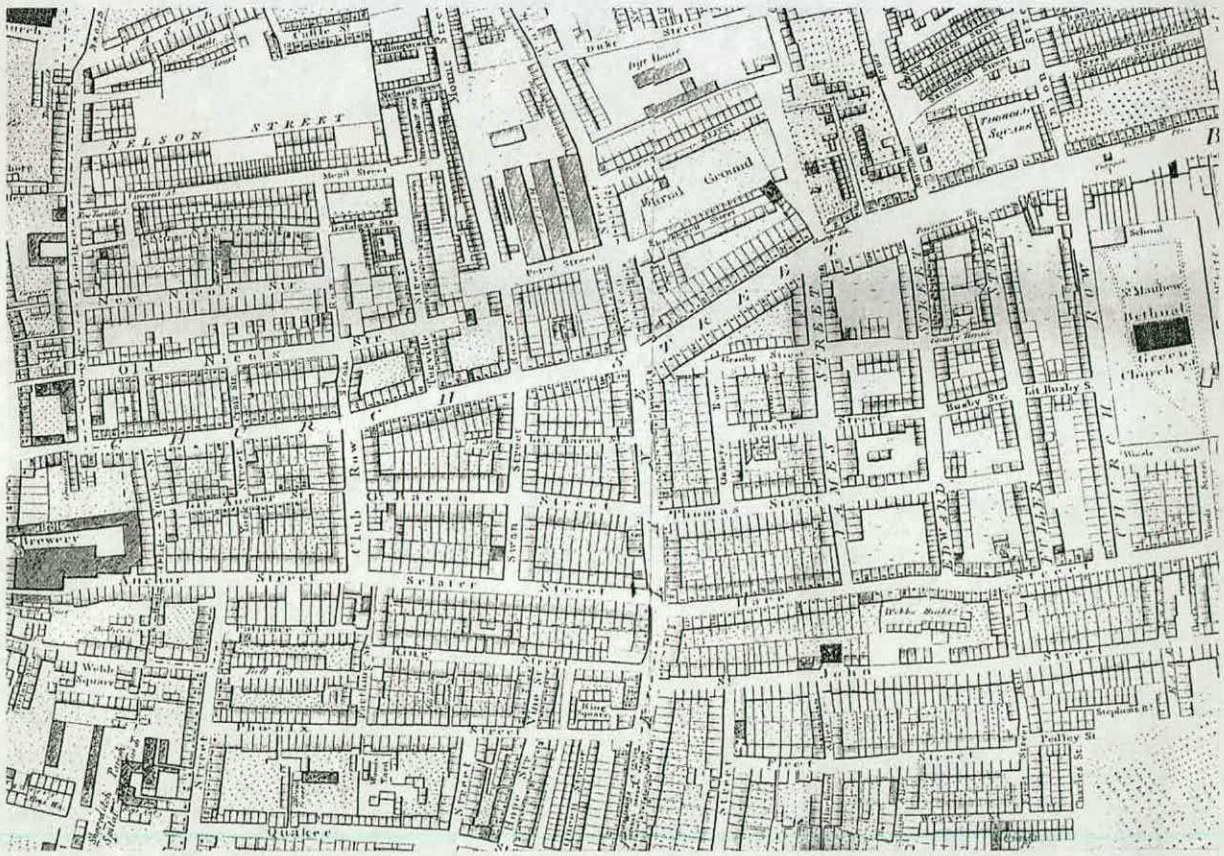

Fig. 7 – Bethnal green's silk-weaving district in 1819 (R. Horwood, Plan of London, *1819).*

subject to dramatic fluctuations in prosperity), landlords and builders. Joseph became a leading local politician by the 1790s, notorious for corruption and jailed in 1818 for misappropriation of funds and the licensing of public houses used for debauchery, most in Bethnal Green's weaving district. Though a magistrate he refused to conform to notions of law-abiding respectability. He was imprisoned again for encouraging bullock hunting in St Matthew's churchyard. He returned and retained his popularity locally.[35]

In fact, the Spitalfields Acts were a factor in the decline of local industry, as the silk trade did not adapt to new technology and business was driven out of London. By 1813 only 39% of Bethnal Green's adult males were employed in the silk trade.[36] But in an ever larger overall population this still meant a large number of weavers. Many new streets of houses for weavers were built in Bethnal Green in the early 19th century, in the London silk industry's last boom during which living conditions have been judged to have improved.[37] It has been estimated that, after St Pancras, Bethnal Green gained more new houses (2882) in the period 1799-1819 than any other parish in London (1537 in 1807-13), though not all were in the silk district (Figs 6 and 7).[38]

Independent weavers declined, becoming dependent on factors, and the trade was increasingly dominated by City men who bought silk wholesale, and who were not based in Spitalfields. They were hostile to the Acts as anti-competitive and encouraging a 'spirit of combination'.[39] In 1824 the Spitalfields Acts were repealed. Wages declined, new machinery (notably the Jacquard loom) came in, poverty spread and dissent was resurgent. The 'distress' of the Spitalfields' weavers caught the nation's attention from 1837 onwards as part of rising awareness of the 'East End'. At this time Bethnal Green was overwhelmingly dominant in what was left of the Spitalfields weaving industry, still housing 7847 working looms, as opposed to only 669 in Spitalfields, though only 11% of the population were silkweavers. Reform-minded surveys found that Bethnal Green was London's poorest district, with the highest concentration of low-rent houses, many tenants driven here by 'improvements' elsewhere. Weavers were largely still earning £25 and less a year, the average annual rental of a house remaining under £10. The poverty of Spitalfields weavers was again a focus for investigating reformers in the years around 1850, including Henry Mayhew, and George Godwin of *The Builder*, which published descriptions of unending filth and squalor (Fig. 8). The silk industry continued to decline, gradually but steadily, final extinction coming in 1940.[40]

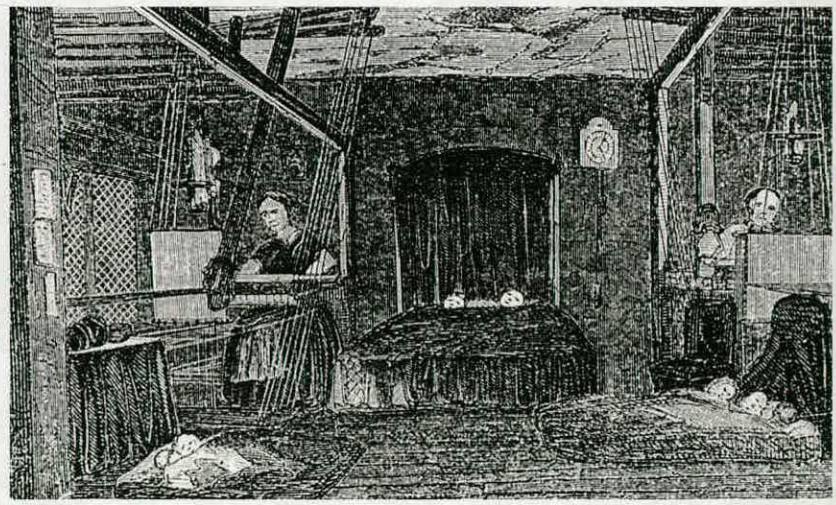

*Fig. 8 – Weaving in a Spitalfields house in 1853 (*The Builder*).*

Bethnal Green was topographically severed from Spitalfields when the Eastern Counties Railway was whacked through in 1839-42.[41] Further transformation was wrought in 1878-9 when the Metropolitan Board of Works rerouted Bethnal Green Road diagonally across the existing grid of streets north of Sclater Street. Then, in the 1890s, the reforming zeal of the London County Council was made manifest in the Boundary Street Estate, an important early

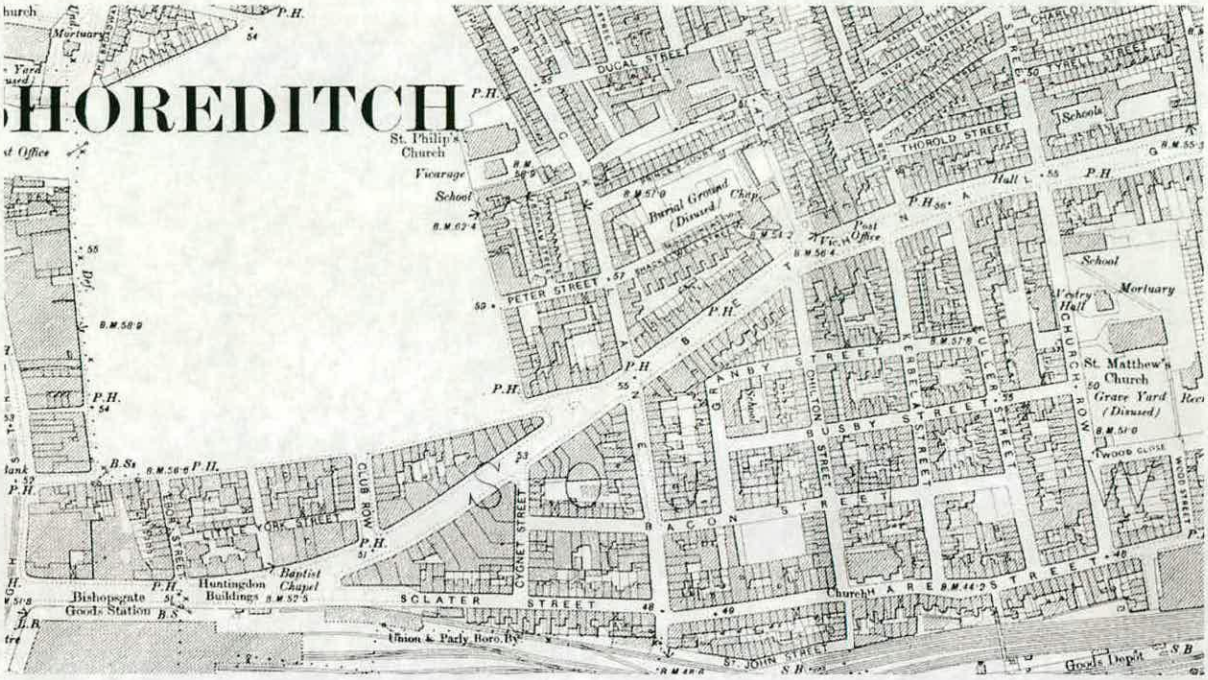

Fig. 9 – Bethnal Green's former silk-weaving district in 1893 (Ordnance Survey).

municipal housing scheme that followed clearance of a large area to the north of what is now Redchurch Street that had been the notoriously poor and lawless 'Old Nichol' slum. (Fig. 9).

As silk receded the clothing and furniture industries grew to dominate the area. Immigration of Jewish refugees from eastern Europe in the late 19th century changed the area's population mix. Amid continuing desperate poverty and ill health street markets developed and thrived, on Club Row, Sclater Street, Hare Street and Brick Lane, the latter already in 1871 'sacred to costers' barrows and street stalls'.[42] This is not the place for an account of the area's recent history, but relative poverty and domestic industry have remained constants. In the late 20th century Bengali immigration brought a new population to the district, though many essentials of the *genius loci* did not change. Continuing dependence on clothing trades and associated poverty are still bound up with enormous vitality and a strong sense of identity deriving from the cultural coherence of life in a separate and in many ways socially excluded group. Factors of this nature have been at the root of the area's 'local distinctiveness' since the 17th century.

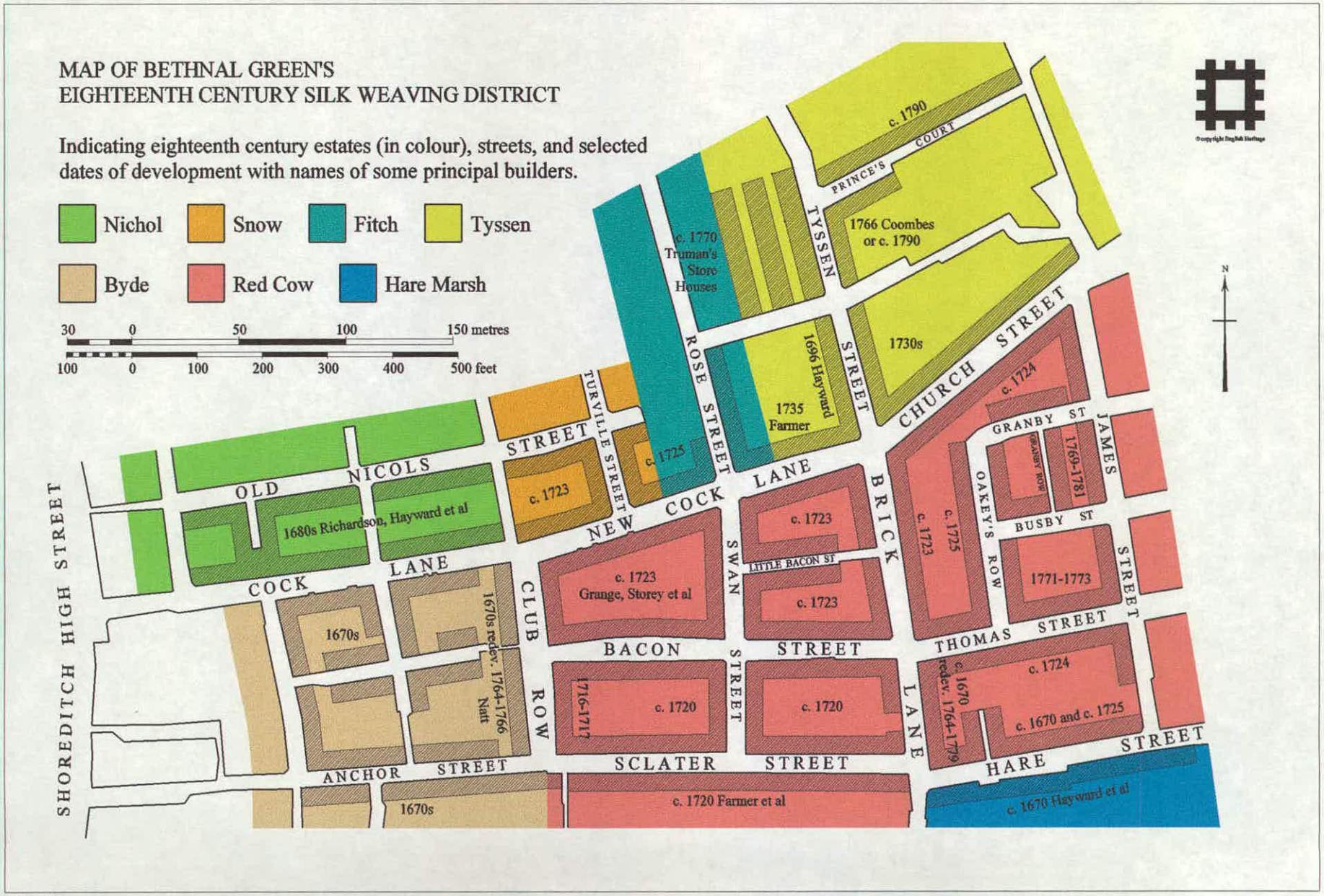
MAP OF BETHNAL GREEN'S
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SILK WEAVING DISTRICT
Indicating eighteenth century estates (in colour), streets, and selected dates of development with names of some principal builders.
Nichol
Snow
Fitch
Tyssen
Byde
Red Cow
Hare Marsh
30 0 50 100 150 metres
100 0 100 200 300 400 500 feet
N
c. 1790
PRINCE'S COURT
1766 Coombes or c. 1790
c. 1770 Truman's Store Houses
TYSSEN
1730s
1696 Hayward
1735 Farmer
ROSE STREET
CHURCH STREET
c. 1724
GRANBY ST
JAMES
1769-1781
GRANBY ROW
BUSBY ST
OAKEY'S ROW
c. 1725
c. 1723
TURVILLE STREET
c. 1725
STREET
c. 1723
OLD NICOLS
1680s Richardson, Hayward et al
NEW COCK LANE
BRICK LANE
SHOREDITCH HIGH STREET
COCK LANE
1670s
1670s redev. 1764-1766
Natt
CLUB ROW
c. 1723 Grange, Storey et al
SWAN
LITTLE BACON ST
c. 1723
c. 1723
1771-1773
STREET
THOMAS STREET
BACON STREET
1716-1717
c. 1720
c. 1720
c. 1670 redev. 1764-1769
c. 1724
c. 1670 and c. 1725
LANE
ANCHOR STREET
SCLATER STREET
HARE STREET
1670s
c. 1720 Farmer et al
c. 1670 Hayward et al

Fig. 10

ESTATE DEVELOPMENT

The framework of building development is set out here without particular or extensive reference to surviving buildings (Fig. 10). These are dealt with separately and in greater detail in the second part of the report. This section is intended simply to set the scene. It therefore focusses on the first developments of the early 18th century from which relatively little survives, presenting estates in a sequence that runs broadly from the south and west to the north and east - the general direction of growth outwards from London and Spitalfields. Late-18th-century rebuilding is also important in relation to surviving early houses, but second-phase and subsequent redevelopment is less coherent than what preceded. It is more readily discussed as and when it is relevant either to particular estates or surviving buildings.

Shoreditch High Street was part of the main route north from Roman London, and a major road through the medieval period. Brick Lane was the first large road to run through land to the east, brick earth being dug in the fields around by 1550.[43] In 1598 Stow complained that from St Mary Spital to Shoreditch there was 'a continuous building of small and base tenements for the most part lately erected'.[44] This baseness was not surprising as any house building in the area was in the teeth of proclamations against new buildings in the suburbs - laws that were never zealously prosecuted and which had certainly fallen into desuetude by the late 17th century.[45] Elsewhere 'East London grew obscurely',[46] copyhold tenure working against concerted development. However, in the western parts of Bethnal Green the land was sufficiently close to London that its attractions for speculative development were obvious at an early date. As in Spitalfields the land was parcelled up into estates. Sales of sequestered demesne lands in the 1650s created several large freeholds, the larger properties purchased by London merchants and lawyers rather than local men.[47] This created the conditions for coherent development spreading broadly and in small steps from the south and west to the north and east, but following the vagaries of estate boundaries and road frontages in its topographical lines, and the ups and downs of building cycles in its temporal lines. By 1700 dense urban development had extended north to Hare Street (renamed Cheshire Street in 1937), and beyond to the west of Club Row as far north as Nicolls Street (latterly Old Nichol Street) (Figs 1 and 2). In 1725 Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) remembered that, 'Brick-Lane, which is now a long well-paved street, was a deep dirty road, frequented by carts fetching bricks that way into White-Chapel from Brick-Kilns in those fields.'[48]

Most housing development took place in the period 1670 to 1740, with peaks of activity around 1680 and 1720. About 200 houses were built in Bethnal Green in the years 1719-24, most of these on the Red Cow estate near the top end of Brick Lane. These were boom years for London as a whole. Advances onto the Tyssen estate in the 1730s were more desultory. Relative inactivity thereafter until the mid 1760s is also consistent with London-wide building patterns, as were sporadic revivals in the building of new houses from the 1760s to the 1780s.[49]

Hare Marsh Estate

The south side of Hare Street was the northern edge of the Hare Marsh estate, largely in Spitalfields and built up by the 1660s, as was the Wheler estate to the west. The Hare Street frontage was being developed in 1669-71, through leases given by John Carter, the landowner, to builders who included John Hayward (sometimes Hayword or Haywood) (d.1719), a speculating tiler/bricklayer/builder and 'citizen', that is a member of the Bricklayer's Company, who ended up resident in Bethnal Green in a six-room house (see below for Hayward's probate inventory). Hare Street was more or less continuously built up along its south side by 1681, with much open land to the north; in 1708 Edward Hatton described it as 'a considerable, pleasant street'.[50] The first houses have long since gone and little evidence as to their nature survives. Photographs of early buildings give some clues, though they may well show 18th-century refacing if not rebuilding (Fig. 11).[51] Abundant local clay makes it likely that the early houses were brick built, though it is possible that some may have been timber built. The approximately 15ft (4.7m) frontages to later buildings on

Cheshire Street do reflect the size of early house plots and there are other faint echoes of early development on this estate (see No. 46 Cheshire Street).

Byde Estate

The approximately 400ft- (120m) square area within the hamlet of Bethnal Green to the west of Club Row and south of Cock Lane (Redchurch Street) was part of the Byde estate, a larger holding that extended into adjoining parishes. The land was used as garden ground before it was partially built up in the late 17th century, probably in the 1670s. Maps indicate no coherent laying out of new streets, with an irregular and gappy array of closely-packed buildings, presumably arising from piecemeal development in brick and/or timber, with courts to public houses along Cock Lane (see The Owl and The Pussycat Public House, No. 34 Redchurch Street). There was a continuous row of houses on the west side of Club Row by 1681-2 (Figs 1 and 2).[52]

Fig. 11 – No. 57 Hare Street (Nos 74 and 76 Cheshire Street) in c.1925 (London Metropolitan Archives).

In 1736 John Byde demised the whole of this property to Anthony Natt, a successful carpenter, in three 80-year leases stipulating new building.[53] Natt, the son of Samuel Natt, a carpenter of Bexley, Kent, completed his carpentry apprenticeship in 1705 and rose to be a Liveryman in the Carpenters' Company in 1727; he was a Warden in 1747. Resident in Bishopsgate Street and/or Anchor Street, the eastwards continuation of Sclater Street and part of the Byde estate, he was also building on the Hare Marsh estate in the 1720s and 1730s.[54]

It is not clear what Natt built on the Byde estate in the 1730s (Figs 1-3). However, improvement of Cock Lane following an Act of 1756[55] may have necessitated rebuilding along that road. Certainly the whole west side of Club Row was redeveloped in 1764-6 (see Nos 3 and 5 Club Row), perhaps coincident with the ends of the first late-17th-century leases. Reverend Anthony Natt was now the property owner. He was probably the son of the carpenter, his status as a clergyman seemingly a reflection of his father's success and social mobility. In 1779, when he was said to be of Nettswell, Essex, the younger Natt also held property on Turville Street (see below). He was still locally involved in 1793 as a Commissioner for the widening of Church Street (latterly Redchurch Street and Bethnal Green Road).[56]

Small plots reflecting early development endured on what had been the Byde estate into the 1960s, with frontages of 15ft and less, but late-20th-century redevelopment left little untouched.

Nichol Estate

Immediately north of the Byde estate the Nichol estate was also garden ground until it was made brickfields by Jon Richardson, a London mason, and gradually built up with houses via sub-leases, from 1680 into the early 18th century (Figs 1-3). Old Nichol Street existed in the 1680s, and New Nichol Street in 1705-8. John Hayward was a major housebuilder here in 1684-8 and again in 1706-8.[57] There are no early survivors, but frontages of about 15ft

endure, as at Nos 15-17 and 53-65 Redchurch Street, three-storey yellow-stock-brick rebuilds of *c.*1900 that bear witness to the scale of early development.

Outside the present area of study to the north there was late-17th-century development eastwards from the crossroads and church that formed the nucleus of Shoreditch (Figs 1-3). On Castle Street and Austin Street, on the Austen estate, houses were going up in the 1670s. A view of the north side of Castle Street in 1890, shortly before redevelopment, provides a valuable and rare insight into the nature of the area's modest late-17th-century brick houses (Fig. 12). John Hayward died holding a lease of nine houses on Castle Street dating from 1675. Perhaps he had built them and perhaps they were like these.[58]

Fig. 12 – Late-17th-century houses on Castle Street (latterly the site of Nos 5-17 Virginia Road), watercolour by Appleton, 1890 (Hackney Archives Department).

The intervening garden ground remained largely undeveloped through the 18th century. It was built up in the early 19th century in densely-packed rows of small houses, generally meaner than neighbouring antecedents, including the replacement of 17th-century houses on Old Nichol Street with what appear to have been smaller buildings (Figs 6, 7 and 13).[59] Already in the 1840s the population and housing density of what was called the 'Old Nichol' was being cited by Friedrich Engels as exceeding that found in northern industrial areas. The district became an appalling and notorious slum, known locally as the 'Jago'.[60] It was redeveloped in the 1890s by the London County Council as the Boundary Street Estate, early large-scale municipal housing for more than 5000 people, though not those whose houses had been cleared, who went 'to infect the neighbourhoods across the border' in preference to living in the new 'barracks'.[61] In the context of this study it is notable that the late-19th-century clearance was very largely of early-19th-century rather than of 18th-century development.

Fig. 13 – Early-19th-century houses in the 'Old Nichol' or 'Jago' (latterly the site of the Boundary Street Estate), c.1890 (London Metropolitan Archives).

Red Cow Estate

The greater part of the area with which this survey is concerned was demesne lands sold in the 1650s. It became the Red Cow estate, named after a house that stood at the top end of Brick Lane in the 17th century. The freehold estate comprised Swan Field to the west of Brick Lane, and Cross Field to the east, bounded by Club Row to the west, Sclater Street (including the south side) and Hare (Cheshire) Street to the south, Cock Lane and the road to Bethnal Green (later Church Street, then Redchurch Street and Bethnal Green Road) to the north, and Fuller Street to the east. It was largely undeveloped at the beginning of the 18th century, when it was held by Thomas Sclater or Slaughter (d.1736), of Gray's Inn and later of Catley, Cambridgeshire (Figs 1, 2 and 11).

Swan Field was used for brickmaking in the late 17th century, and perhaps only developed in the early 18th century once its brickmaking potential had been exhausted.[62] Another factor that may have induced Sclater to start house building to realise the value of his investment in land may have been the interest in the acquisition of Cross Field that was being shown by the Commissioners for Building New Churches in 1711, Sclater demanding £300 for his land.[63] By this date Sclater Lane had been laid out along the south side of Swan Field, between Club Row and Brick Lane. This was referred to in 1718, by when Sclater had adopted his wife's surname Bacon, as the 'new intended street called Sclater Street', and was paved by 1723 (Fig. 3).[64] Other streets were regularly laid out across the field, with Swan Street (later Cygnet Street) and Bacon Street present by 1720, and Little Bacon Street by 1723. The north side became New Cock Lane (Redchurch Street), linking Cock Lane to the road to Bethnal Green. Rerouting of Bethnal Green Road in 1878-9 scythed diagonally through what had been Swan Field, in part as deliberate slum clearance.[65]

House building proceeded in the usual way, Sclater/Bacon granting 61-year leases of small parcels to carpenters and other builders, among whom some were nominally weavers. By 1751 there were about 300 houses on the estate, virtually all of which had been built in the period 1716-40, greatly concentrated in the early 1720s.[66] One of the earliest developments was along the east side of Club Row, continuously built up with twelve properties, including three small brick houses on a 35ft6in. (10.6m) frontage, built in 1716-17 under a lease to Jaconias Mills, a weaver.[67]

Sclater Street was fully built up with around 27 houses along the north side and about the same number along the south side, perhaps all present by 1728, certainly so by 1745.[68] These were evidently brick built, though a few late-17th-century buildings to the west on the south side appear to have been timber built. The leading early-18th-century builder here was William Farmer junior (d.1742), a 'citizen' carpenter who may also have been a weaver. Probably the son of William Farmer of Stepney, 'yeoman', he had completed his seven-year carpenter's apprenticeship in 1712.[69] From at least June 1718 Farmer was taking 61-year leases of small parcels on both sides of Sclater Street and building or having built tall brick houses that were about 17ft (5.1m) square on plan with part-width timber back buildings on 60ft- (18m) deep plots. These may have included Nos 72-74 (see below) and others opposite to the west of Swan (Cygnet) Street (Nos 71-79). In 1719 the head tenant for both these groups was Richard Hatt, a local weaver. In 1728 Farmer was himself living on Brick Lane at the corner of Sclater Street (on the site of No. 123 Brick Lane), in a house that was 17ft by 19ft (5.1m by 5.7m) on plan. Other builders on Sclater Street in 1719-20 included Robert Hugall, a Whitechapel bricklayer, and William Smith, a 'citizen' joiner, and other building plots were being leased in 1721. Richard Storey, a carpenter (to whom Anthony Natt had been apprenticed in 1702-5), additionally identified as a weaver, was also present at No. 73 on the north side in 1719.[70] There was much redevelopment on Sclater Street *c.*1780 when leases were being renewed (see Nos 70-76 and 97-99 Sclater Street and No. 125 Brick Lane). The landlord of Nos 72-74 and 71-79 Sclater Street at this time was James Merceron, a weaver of Huguenot descent who was also a pawnbroker and major local property owner.[71]

William Farmer's influence over the development of the estate extended to Edward Grange, another carpenter and an immigrant from Yorkshire who had been apprenticed to Farmer from December 1712 until January 1719(20), and who was immediately thereafter building on the south side of Bacon Street towards Brick Lane (see No. 16 Bacon Street), taking 61-year leases of multiple plots in 1720, again with 17ft (5.1m) house frontages. Grange was probably also responsible for houses on the east side of Swan Street between Sclater Street and Bacon Street. He remained locally active as a builder into the 1740s, also being responsible for Nos 20-22 Fournier Street, Fleur-de-Lis Street, and Blossom Terrace, all in Spitalfields, and holding property in Mile End New Town.[72] On the north side of Bacon Street there were four new houses in 1723, probably built by William Turner, a 'citizen' carpenter, and/or Daniel Marsillat, a Spitalfields carpenter; a tablet dated 1723 was recorded in Bacon Street in 1871.[73] The west side of Brick Lane was also being built up in the early 1720s (see Nos 133, 149 and 161 Brick Lane), involving Richard Storey.[74] Along the north side of Swan Field houses on what became Redchurch Street appear also to have had origins in the 1720s as tall buildings of comparable scale and design to what was built on Sclater Street (Fig. 14).

Cross Field, the eastern part of the Red Cow estate, was alternatively known as Hare Field or Goodwell's Field. A Commissioners' Church was projected here in 1711, designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor to be a 'Basilica after the Primitive Christians', but this came to nothing in 1715-16 as Sclater could not prove his title.[75] There were a few late-17th-century buildings on the west side of Brick Lane, extending at least as far as the corner with Thomas Street (Bacon Street) (see Nos 190-198 Brick Lane), and scattered along the north side of Hare Street (see No. 21 Cheshire Street) (Figs 1 and 2).[76] Concerted development appears to have started in 1723 following on from the work already underway on Swan Field through the granting of similar leases by Sclater/Bacon. Much of the new building was along pre-existing routes, that is on Brick Lane, Hare Street, and the road that became Bethnal Green Road (Fig. 3). The south side of Bethnal Green Road (Nos 120-160) was apparently all leased if not built up by 1724, with James Smith, a 'citizen' carpenter, responsible for at least four houses. This row was made up of houses like those built on Sclater Street, that is four-storey brick main blocks about 17ft (5.1m) square with smaller back buildings on 60ft- (18m) deep plots (see Nos 122 and 130-140 Bethnal Green Road). The houses of the 1720s at Nos 200-228 Brick Lane were probably similar. Infilling along the north side of Hare Street was complete at least as far as Edward Street by 1728. This is likely to have included Hare Court (see Nos 3-9 Cheshire Street).[77]

Fig. 14 – Nos 74 and 76 Redchurch Street, houses of c.1723 in 1969 (London Metropolitan Archives).

Development spread tentatively from the south and the west, and new roads began to be laid out across the field - James Street (Chilton Street) in 1723, Thomas Street (the east part of Bacon Street) in 1724, Fuller Street by 1725, and Edward Street (Kerbala Street) by 1732. The south side of Thomas Street was built up as far as James Street in 1724 (see No. 24 Bacon Street), as was the west side of Oakey Street (the west arm of Granby Street) by 1732, the corner with Thomas Street probably being developed *c.*1725. John Oakey (d.1732) was a

wealthy local silk throwster, a merchant and a justice, who was leasing Sclater's land here and evidently engaging in speculative development.[78] Nos 7 and 9 Granby Street were two of the houses of the 1720s here, recorded in 1960 prior to their clearance (Fig. 15).

William Farmer was also active on this side of Brick Lane, taking a standard 61-year lease of a house plot on the west side of the projected Fuller Street in 1725, but this remained empty.[79] His former apprentice Edward Grange developed a small parcel on the east side of James Street and south side of Thomas Street pushing the estate eastwards in 1736-9.[80] Little was done on the Red Cow estate after this through the mid century despite the building of the Church of St Matthew in the open land to the east following the grant of parish status to Bethnal Green in 1743 (Figs 3 and 6).

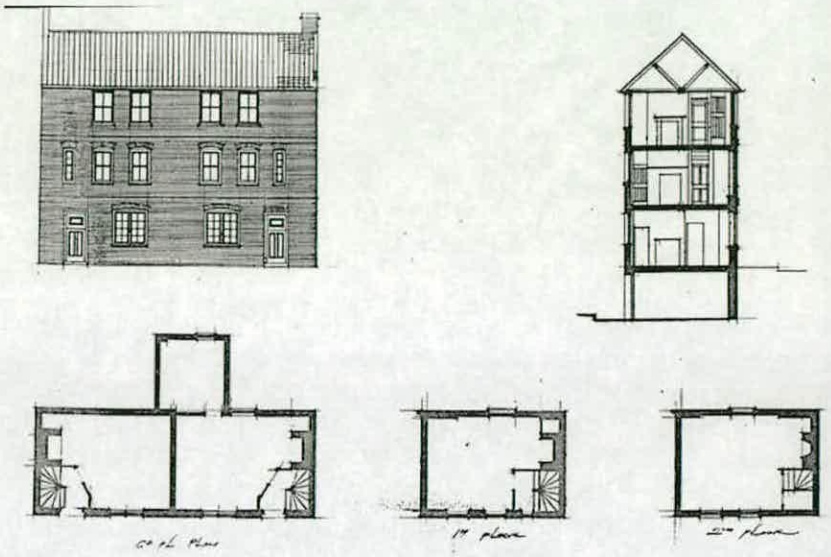

Fig. 15 – Nos 7 and 9 Granby Street, houses of c.*1725 recorded in 1960 (National Monuments Record).*

New building on the east part of the Red Cow estate picked up in the 1760s through to the early 1780s (Fig. 6), with 99-year leases having become the rule, reflecting the wider economics and practices of the house-building market.[81] There was also scattered rebuilding activity, often stimulated by the need to negotiate new leases (see Nos 190-198 Brick Lane).[82] At least one new house was built on the north side of Thomas Street in 1765-6, and two more went up on the south side in 1770, built by John Fellows, perhaps the bricklayer who in 1784-5 built his own house in a humble yard between Blossom Street and Elder Street.[83] More ambitious intentions are revealed in a building lease of 1769 granted to Thomas Green, a Petticoat Lane baker, who took large plots on the west side of James Street on 99-year leases.[84] By 1774 there were fifteen houses on the street. Granby Street was formed to link the top end of Oakey Street to James Street, and New King Street (Busby Street) was laid out. John Price, a Petticoat Lane plasterer and builder, and Jonathan Gee, a Bethnal Green carpenter, put up houses on Granby Street and on the east side of Oakey Street in 1771-3, including a three-storey row of four that was later Nos 2-8 Granby Street (Fig. 16),

Fig. 16 – Nos 2-8 Granby Street, houses of 1771-3 in 1955 (London Metropolitan Archives).

and other houses with generous frontages of about 20ft (6m). Price also built at least four houses on James Street, two on either side in 1771-2.[85] David Wilmot was associated with Price here in 1772, as was Thomas Munday, an East Smithfield pewterer who had an intermediate interest in much property in the area at this time. The same group was speculating together elsewhere in Bethnal Green, notably Wilmot Street, in this period.[86]

Development spluttered on with other builders becoming involved. A Mr Walling built two houses near Granby Row in 1777, Ann Merceron (the wife of James) was building in Thomas Street in 1778, and a Mr Cotterell was building in James Street and Thomas Street in 1779. Nos 84-96 Cheshire Street, on the Hare Marsh estate south of Fuller Street, and known as Cottrell's Buildings, may have been put up by the same man at about the same time (Fig. 17). A number of other new houses were built in Hare Street in 1778-9 and 1782, by a Mr Cashbolt and John Evans,[87] the latter probably identifiable as John May Evans, a Spitalfields bricklayer who also built some very small houses around a court called King Square, just west of Brick Lane and south of King Street near the parish boundary.[88] In 1781 building work was continuing on Granby Street, Busby Street and, squeezed between, Granby Row, modest two-storey two-room houses on land that Price had leased in 1770 (Fig. 18). The area to the west of James Street had filled out by the 1790s (Fig. 6).[89] Compared to what had happened in the early 18th century expansion in the late 18th century was halting and modest. Edward Street and Fuller Street remained aspirations until the whole area west of the church was completed in the period 1813-19, when much other development along and behind Bethnal Green Road was also taking place (Fig. 7).[90]

Fig. 17 – 'Cottrell's Buildings', Nos 84-96 Cheshire Street, houses of c.*1780 in 1952 (London Metropolitan Archives).*

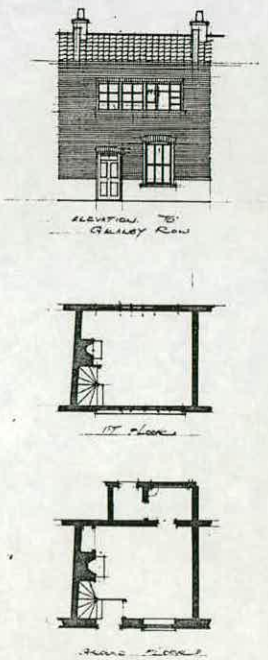

Fig. 18 – No. 9 Granby Row, house of c.*1780 recorded in 1958 (National Monuments Record).*

Snow Estate

The north side of Redchurch Street from Club Row east across Turville Street to No. 91, and land to the north, was the south end of the Snow estate, gardens that were developed from 1723 with 61-year leases, following on from the Red Cow estate developments immediately to the south (Figs 1-3). A plot on the west side of Turville Street with a 48ft (14.4m) frontage and three houses was leased to Robert Howard, 'citizen and joyner', in 1728, and traces of early development remain (see No. 83 Redchurch Street and No. 2 Turville Street).[91] As on the Nichol estate little was built to the north of Old Nichol Street until the early 19th century, subsequently redeveloped as part of the Boundary Street Estate (Figs 6 and 7).

Fitch Estate
Adjoining to the east the Fitch estate took in Nos 93 to 107 Redchurch Street at its south end with what has become Swanfield Street (formerly Rose Street, extended to the north as Mount Street). There was 'an old sculptured tablet dating from 1725', at which date Rose Street was probably laid out as a continuation of Swan Street; houses followed on by the 1740s (Figs 1-3).[92] No. 2 Swanfield Street retains an early frontage of about 15ft, with what appears to be an early-19th-century brick face to what may be an earlier three-storey building with a single window bay.

Saunderson Turner Sturtevant, a soap maker/tallow chandler, bought up much of the Fitch esate and built on it in the period 1804-19, giving leases for varied tight arrays of small houses around what had been laid out as Mount Street, some of the meanest developments in the area that was to be cleared for the Boundary Street Estate in the 1890s (Figs 6 and 7).[93] No. 74 Swanfield Street is an interesting curiosity – a house of *c.*1900 that reflects the area's earlier local traditions so well that it has been mistaken for a remodelled 18th-century 'weaver's house'.[94] It is a tall building that originally had a single large room on each floor heated from the back wall with a full-width first-floor casement window.

Tyssen Estate
North of Bethnal Green Road the land was the Tyssen estate in the 18th century. The eastern part of this estate was a field held by Ralph Lawton at the beginning of the century (Figs 1 and 2). This was empty save for 'Jamaica House', near a watch-house at the top of Brick Lane, and a row of eight east-facing houses that had been first leased in 1696. Samuel Tyssen started to lease plots for further development in 1724, taking a lead from activity to the south on the Red Cow estate. The northern extension of Brick Lane was known as Tyssen Street from the 1720s until the late 19th century (Fig. 3). Tyssen generally gave 80-year leases.[95]

The isolated early row stood on a large plot corresponding to the latterday frontages of Nos 109-121 Bethnal Green Road, 140ft (42m), and Nos 167-175 Brick Lane, 120ft (36m), all leased to John Hayward in 1696 for 50 years at £10 annual ground rent. Hayward probably built the eight houses, seven along what became Tyssen Street and one facing south to New Cock Lane, each with a 15ft (4.5m) frontage, leaving the south frontage largely empty. William Farmer had been assigned Hayward's lease by February 1734(5) when he was granted a 60-year extension, the rent rising to £13.[96] By 1745 there were eight properties along New Cock Lane between Rose Street and Tyssen Street, all but those at the ends comparably scaled.[97] It is likely that Farmer himself built five houses on the sites of Nos 109-117 Bethnal Green Road soon after his 1735 lease (see Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road). He also took an 80-year lease of a smaller plot on the other side of Tyssen Street on the same day, 'in order to build four houses' on a 60ft (18m) frontage.[98]

In the meantime development on the north side of the road to Bethnal Green east of Tyssen Street had begun, proceeding from the west. By 1732 small parcels had been leased to Robert Cosell, a carpenter, to Farmer, who took a 36ft (10.8m) frontage, and to Samuel Vevers (d.1737), a local bricklayer (see below for his probate inventory), whose land was then 'marked out for building on'. In 1735 John Woolveridge, a plasterer, and Matthew Wright, a gentleman, and both local, took other plots. By the 1740s development extended as far as the present site of No. 161 Bethnal Green Road (Fig. 3). All these early houses were lost to road widening in 1878-9. The beginnings of Shacklewell Street existed by 1732.[99]

Growth to the north was set to take place in 1766 when the Tyssen family leased three plots to Samuel Coombes, a Spitalfields carpenter. The leases included provision for an 'intended street', probably Coomb or Prince's Street (latterly Padbury Court), Coombes agreeing to build two houses a year on each plot until they were 'regularly built upon'.[100] Two of these plots are identifiable as the sites of Nos 230-240 Brick Lane and Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court

(see below). It is not clear that Coombes did meet his commitment, but these and adjoining sites, including the whole north side of Prince's Street, had certainly been developed by the 1790s (Fig. 6). Storehouses for Truman, Hanbury, Buxton & Company's Brewery stood just to the west by 1775.[101]

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PART TWO: THE SURVIVING EARLY BUILDINGS

This part of the report presents histories and analyses of the sites where some fabric from late-17th- and 18th-century houses appears still to stand, organised chronologically by the date of first relevant building work on the site (Fig. 19). In some cases the accounts include room-by-room descriptions with plans and sections based on new measured survey. However, internal investigation has not always been possible, and a number of the buildings described here are mentioned only briefly and speculatively on the basis of external inspection. There are other reasons why the information assembled under this heading should not be considered to be a definitive representation of the area's early houses. Other early buildings may survive in part, unrecognised behind later fronts. More fundamentally, the surviving houses are so few in proportion to their former numbers as to need to be set against evidence relating to demolished buildings if a reasonably whole picture is to be formed. In themselves isolated site reports are of limited value.

SUMMARY BUILDING ACCOUNTS
(with National Monuments Record Buildings Index Numbers)

Nos 19 and 21 Cheshire Street (98914) - late-17th-century origins as three three-storey brick houses, each with a frontage of about 14ft (4.2m), No. 19 largely rebuilt in 1872 and demolished in the 1990s; No. 21 largely rebuilt *c.*1914 as a single house in front of the United Workers and Wlodowa Synagogue.

No. 46 Cheshire Street (98915) - origins in 1670s, a one-room-plan house, perhaps with a 14ft (4.2m) frontage, rebuilt in the late 18th century across a 20ft (6m) frontage as a three-storey and garret brick house with wide workshop windows, extended to rear.

The Owl and the Pussycat Public House, No. 34 Redchurch Street (103224) - origins in the 1670s, perhaps always a public house, a double-fronted block with a 43ft (13m) frontage, the five-bay front range being an addition, perhaps of the 1760s, refronted with classical dressings in the 1890s; earlier rear range reordered internally in the late 18th century and enlarged in the late 19th century; interior retains two 18th-century staircases indicating separate public and private circulation, remnants of 18th-cenury panelling, and built-in settles in the ground-floor bar.

Nos 70-74 Sclater Street (98913) - origins *c.*1719 as weavers' tenement houses, No. 70 refronted *c.*1777, Nos 72-74 largely rebuilt in the early/mid 19th century following original forms; three-storey and cellar brick houses with 17ft (5.2m) frontages, one-room-plan main blocks with winder staircases in front of party-wall chimneystacks, front-staircase windows, refitted internally; rebuilt back buildings also reflect an original arrangement.

Nos 97 and 99 Sclater Street (105796) - origins *c.*1720 as a four-storey mirrored pair of brick weavers' tenement houses with 18ft (5.4m) frontages, refronted in the late 18th century, rebuilt internally *c.*1930 with removal of the party wall, chimneystack and front staircases; front-staircase windows survive.

No. 102 Sclater Street (105797) - origins *c.*1720 as a one-room-plan weavers' tenement house with a 15ft (4.5m) front, surviving as a three-storey brick building, outwardly 19th century; interior not inspected.

No. 16 Bacon Street (105798) - *c.*1720 as a three-storey brick weavers' tenement house, probably built by Edward Grange, carpenter, a one-room-plan building with a 19ft (5.7m) frontage, probably originally with a front-staircase layout, refronted in the early 19th century; interior not inspected.

Nos 125 and 127 Brick Lane (98916) - origins in 1720 as a large house with a 30ft (9m) front to Sclater Street, probably built by Richard Howland, joiner, and occupied by Pierre Fromaget, a weaver; wholly rebuilt in 1778 for Daniel Delacourt, a distiller, with workshops for weavers in the upper storeys, and the addition of a smaller house at No. 127 having a 15ft (4.5m) frontage, the whole being a three-storey and cellars brick building, No. 125 having had a double-fronted central-staircase plan, No. 127 a two-room rear-staircase plan; No. 125 retains broad 'weavers' windows' for the upper-storey workshops, and a fine sculpted strreet-name plaque with a cartouche inscribed 'THIS IS SCLATER Street 1778' in an aedicular surround.

No. 133 Brick Lane (105799) - origins 1720-3 as a four-storey brick weavers' tenement house with a frontage of about 15ft (4.5m), perhaps retaining a one-room plan and front-staircase layout; outwardly 20th century; interior not inspected.

No. 149 Brick Lane (105800) - origins *c.*1723 as a three-storey brick weavers' tenement house, rebuilt after a fire *c.*1987; a one-room-plan building with a 17ft6in. (5.4m) frontage, upper-storey six-light workshop window reinstated.

No. 161 Brick Lane (105801) - origins *c.*1723 as a three-storey brick weavers' tenement house, perhaps built by Richard Storey, carpenter, about 17ft (5.1m) square on plan, refronted in 19th century; interior not inspected.

No. 83 Redchurch Street and No. 2 Turville Street (105802) - origins *c.*1723 perhaps as four four-storey one-room-plan brick weavers' tenement houses, one to Redchurch Street with a 19ft (5.7m) frontage, three to Turville Street, remnants of upper-storey workshop windows to rear, all refronted; interiors not inspected.

No. 87 Redchurch Street (105803) - origins *c.*1723 as a three-storey, one-room-plan brick weavers' tenement house with a frontage of about 15ft (4.5m); outwardly 19th century; interior not inspected.

Nos 122 and 130-140 Bethnal Green Road (105804) - *c.*1723-4, four-storey one-room-plan brick weavers' tenement houses with frontages of 17-18ft (5.1-5.4m), late-18th- and early-19th-century refrontings with some upper-storey 'weaver's windows' to workshops and small windows indicating front-staircase layouts; interiors not inspected.

No. 24 Bacon Street (105805) - origins *c.*1724 as a brick weavers' tenement house, four storeys, probably a one-room plan building with a frontage of about 15ft (4.5m) and a front-staircase layout, refronted and perhaps raised; interior not inspected.

Nos 3-9 Cheshire Street (105806) - origins *c.*1725 as a group of eight brick weavers' tenement houses, four to the street being of four storeys, four to Hare Court to the rear being three storeys, all with 17ft (5.1m) frontages, one-room plans, upper-storey 'weavers' windows' and front-staircase layouts, all demolished though No. 3 may retain parts of the early building; interiors not inspected.

No. 2 Swanfield Street (105807) - origins *c.*1725 as a house with a frontage of about 15ft (4.5m); surviving as a three-storey brick building with an early-19th-century front wall with a single window bay; interior not inspected.

Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road (98912) - *c.*1735, probably built by William Farmer, carpenter, as three-storey brick weavers' houses with 16ft6in. (5m) frontages and one-room plans with front-staircase layouts at the upper levels, 'long light' weaving workshop fenestration survives at No. 113 to front and rear, with evidence of same to rear at No. 115, internally some early panelling and parts of winder staircases survive; lean-to back buildings rebuilt and raised *c.*1773 at No. 113 and *c.*1820-4 at No. 115; No. 115 refronted in 20th century.

Nos 194-198 Brick Lane (105808) - 1763-5 as a four-storey brick weavers' tenement block, for Peter Mansell, tallow chandler, replacing late-17th-century buildings, about 17ft (5.1m) and one room deep across a frontage of about 50ft (15m), having had 'long light' workshop windows and perhaps just one front staircase, largely rebuilt in the late 20th century; interiors not inspected.

Nos 3 and 5 Club Row (98918) - 1764-6 as part of a row of six weavers' houses built for Reverend Anthony Natt, replacing houses of the 1680s, three-storey one-room-plan brick houses, with upper-storey workshop windows, front-staircase layouts and lean-to back buildings; interiors not inspected.

Nos 190 and 192 Brick Lane (105809) - 1778-9, built by James Laverdure (Green), carpenter, replacing late-17th-century houses, three-storey brick houses with 17ft (5.1m) frontages, perhaps always with two-room plans; interiors not inspected.

Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court (98917) - probably *c.*1790, though perhaps built *c.*1766 by Samuel Coombes, carpenter, three-storey brick houses with 18ft (5.4m) frontages, regular two-bay fronts, one-room plans with rear-staircase layouts and cellars.

Nos 232-238 Brick Lane (105810) – probably *c.*1790, though perhaps built *c.*1766 by Samuel Coombes, carpenter, three-storey brick houses with 18ft (5.4m) frontages, originally with regular two-bay fronts and one-room plans, refronted since the 1950s.

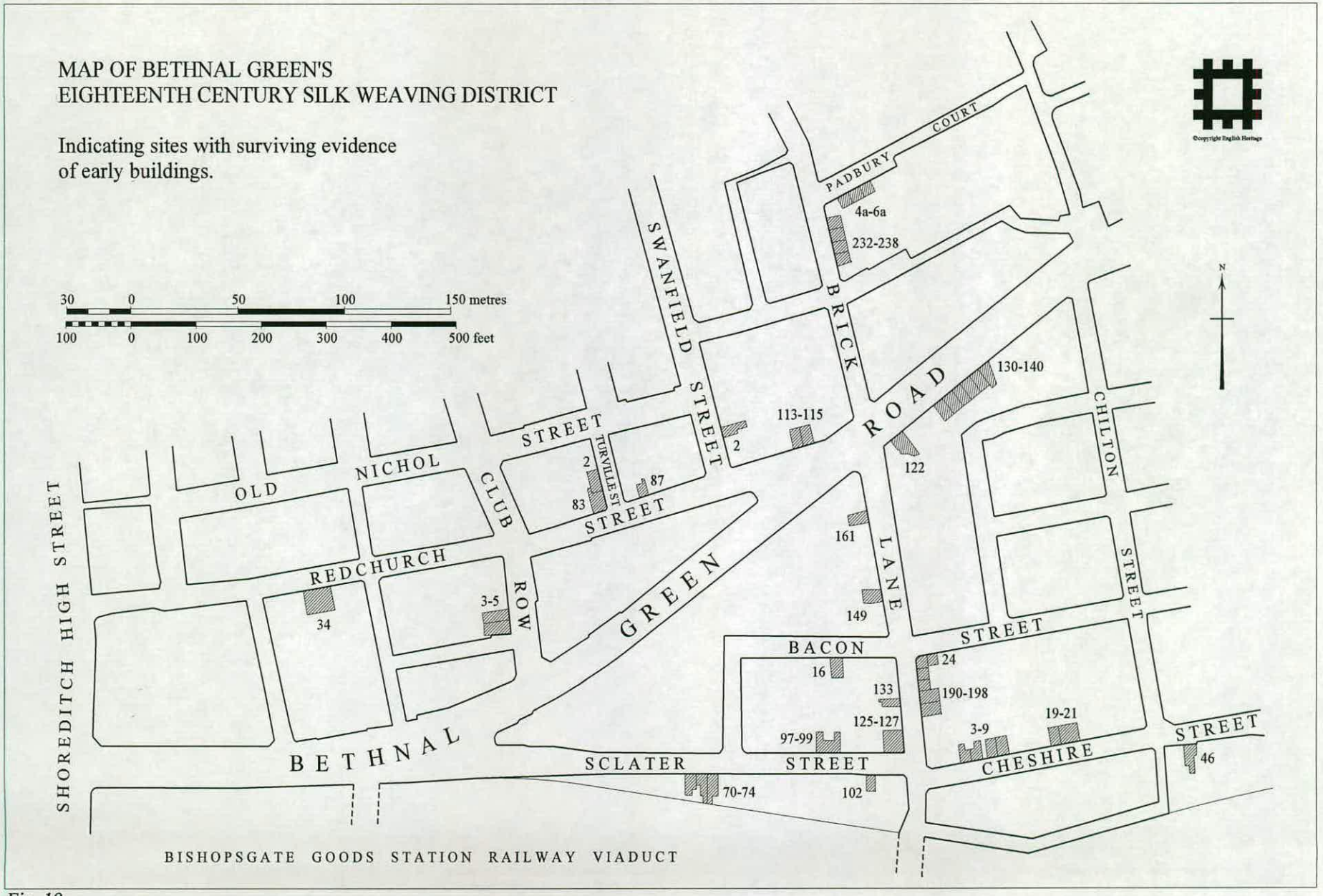

MAP OF BETHNAL GREEN'S
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY SILK WEAVING DISTRICT
Indicating sites with surviving evidence
of early buildings.
30 0 50 100 150 metres
100 0 100 200 300 400 500 feet
©copyright English Heritage
N
PADBURY COURT
4a-6a
232-238
SWANFIELD STREET
BRICK ROAD
130-140
113-115
2
122
CHILTON STREET
OLD NICHOL STREET
TURVILLE ST
2
83
87
CLUB ROW
REDCHURCH STREET
SHOREDITCH HIGH STREET
34
3-5
GREEN LANE
161
149
BACON STREET
16
133
125-127
97-99
24
190-198
3-9
19-21
CHESHIRE STREET
46
BETHNAL
SCLATER STREET
70-74
102
BISHOPSGATE GOODS STATION RAILWAY VIADUCT

Fig. 19

SITE REPORTS

Nos 19 and 21 Cheshire Street

The front building at No. 21 Cheshire Street has early origins, perhaps from the late-17th-century development of this side of the street (Fig. 20). It would originally have been two houses. These were joined as a single property by the 19th century, for use as the Red Cross Public House, one of Joseph Merceron's public houses.[1] The front building was largely rebuilt, probably in association with the rebuilding of a large back range as a workmen's synagogue or shtiebl, the United Workers and Wlodowa Synagogue, founded in 1914, known as the 'cabinet makers' shul', and closed in the 1970s.[2]

The frontage is 27ft6in. (8.4m), corresponding to two narrow plots that are typical of late-17th-century development, 18th-century house plots tending to be wider. The building is about 17ft (5.3m) deep. It is of brick, rising three storeys with a mansard garret storey and no cellar. The shape of the standing building clearly reflects that of its predecessor - tall and shallow (Fig. 21).

The stock-brick front wall has two widely-spaced window bays with tripartite sash windows and the roof is slate covered. In the exposed west flank wall early brick is visible, as it is in the back wall and in the east flank wall chimneystack. This spread of early fabric confirms that the footprint of the building is early. To the rear there is mixed brickwork, with some early red bricks and a substantial piece of structural timber visible. Openings have been altered. A straight joint near the east end and a narrowing of the back wall in the equivalent position to the west may reflect the blocking up of former wide workshop windows on the upper storeys (Fig. 22). There is no trace of the median wall that would have separated the early houses, perhaps in timber.

Fig. 20 – No. 21 Cheshire Street in 2000 (English Heritage, AA00/4713).

Recently demolished, No. 19 stood into the 1990s as a single-bay house of comparable form in a frontage of about 14ft (4.2m). It had been refronted and otherwise rebuilt in 1872 in stock brick with eight-pane sashes. The 'mansard' roof had pantiles on its upper slopes, with weatherboarding around a six-light 'weavers' window' to the rear. Inside there was a stone fireplace surround with a keystone, typical of the early 18th century in its appearance.[3]

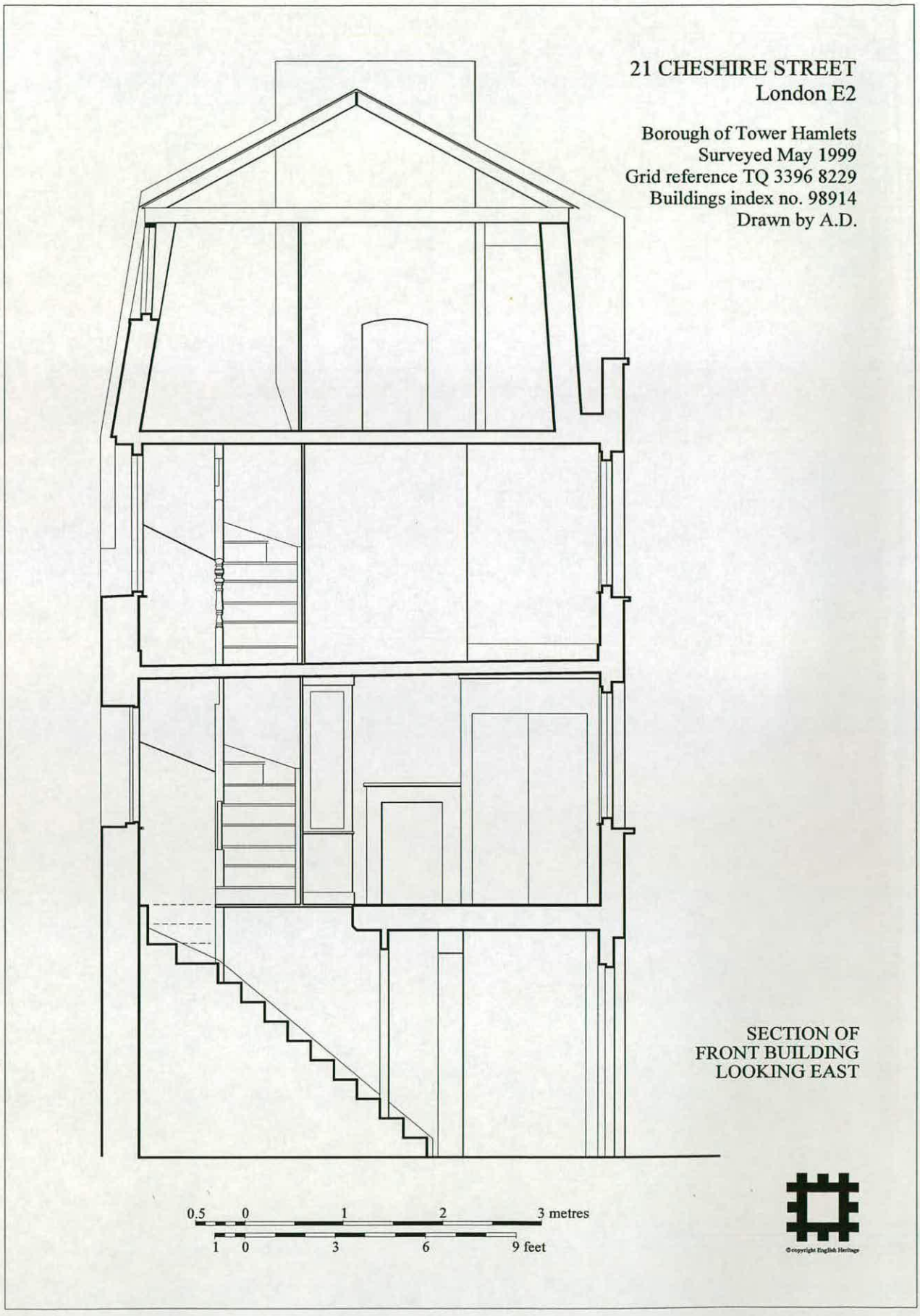
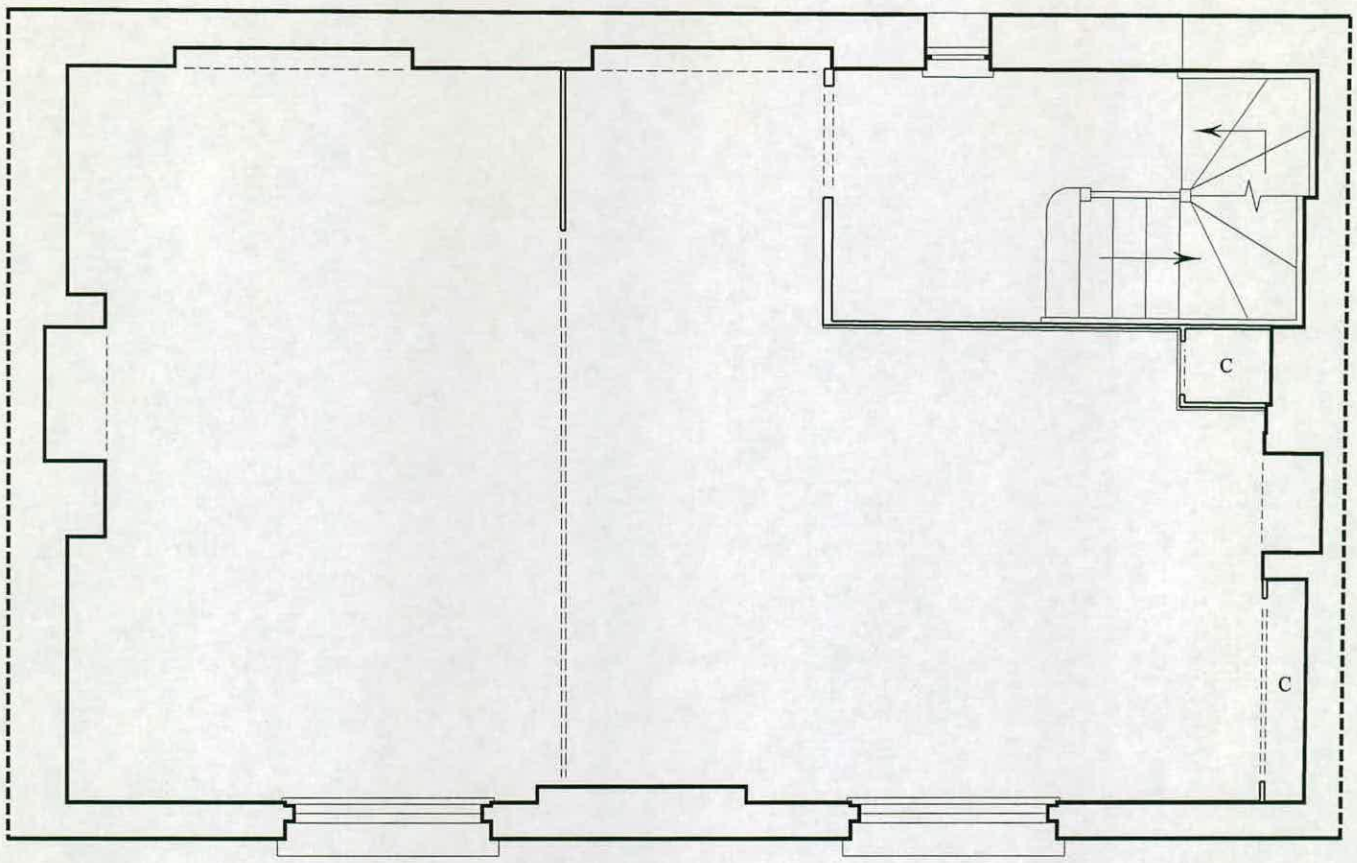

21 CHESHIRE STREET
London E2
Borough of Tower Hamlets
Surveyed May 1999
Grid reference TQ 3396 8229
Buildings index no. 98914
Drawn by A.D.
SECTION OF
FRONT BUILDING
LOOKING EAST
0.5 0 1 2 3 metres
1 0 3 6 9 feet
©copyright English Heritage

Fig. 21



21 CHESHIRE STREET
London E2

Borough of Tower Hamlets
Surveyed May 1999
Grid reference TQ 3396 8229
Buildings index no. 98914
Drawn by A.D.

FIRST FLOOR PLAN
OF FRONT BUILDING

0.5 0 1 2 3 metres
1 0 3 6 9 feet

N

Fig. 22

No. 46 Cheshire Street

The south side of Hare Street was developed in 1669-71 by John Hayward among others, and more or less continuously built up by 1681-2.[4] The approximately 15ft- (4.5m)-wide frontages to the later buildings at Nos 2-40 Cheshire Street reflect the early plots, at first very irregularly laid out in terms of front-wall alignment. The whole row was wholly redeveloped in the 1870s as a uniform terrace with shops.[5] The first houses may have been timber built.

No. 46 is a faint reminder of these early buildings (Fig. 23). It has a 20ft (6m) frontage, but there is evidence internally that the building may have been only about 14ft (4.2m) wide originally, perhaps having been extended to the east across an open passage (Fig. 24). The building is of three storeys with a garret. Its stock-brick front wall is late 18th century in appearance, with gauged-brick flat-arched heads over tripartite sash windows on the upper storeys. The horizontally divided outer lights of the first-floor window have what may be original late-18th-century lamb's-tongue glazing bars. These wide 'workshop' openings are set asymmetrically in the façade, though they were centred to the internal space, a telling lack of concern for outward appearance. A small window has been inserted on the second storey; despite appearances this was never a stair window. There is a later-19th-century shopfront. The slate-covered gambrel roof has a dormer, and the chimneystack rises in front of the ridge to the west. This main roof extends only over the front part of the building.

The interior has been much altered, though a change in levels on the ground floor, corresponding with other breaks in flooring and the details of internal joinery, indicates that the rear part of the house is a late-19th-century addition. The stack position suggests that the earlier staircase rose in the south-west corner of the 18ft- (5.4m)-deep one-room-plan building. The back addition has a cellar in which early brickwork to the east may pertain to the formerly adjoining building at No. 48. A 12in.- (30cm)-square timber beam runs between the two rooms in the cellar, across the 14ft (4.2m) that may be the building's original width. This beam may have been the base plate for an early timber back wall.

From *c.*1860 to the 1890s the occupant of No. 46 was Benjamin Copeland, a rabbit and pigeon dealer. A variety of shop uses followed, and from the 1930s to 1960s the property was that of Alfred Arthur Crispin, cardboard box manufacturer. The adjoining property to the west was long a public house, the White Horse Public House since at least the early 19th century.[6]

Fig. 23 – No. 46 Cheshire Street in 2000 (English Heritage, AA00/4712).

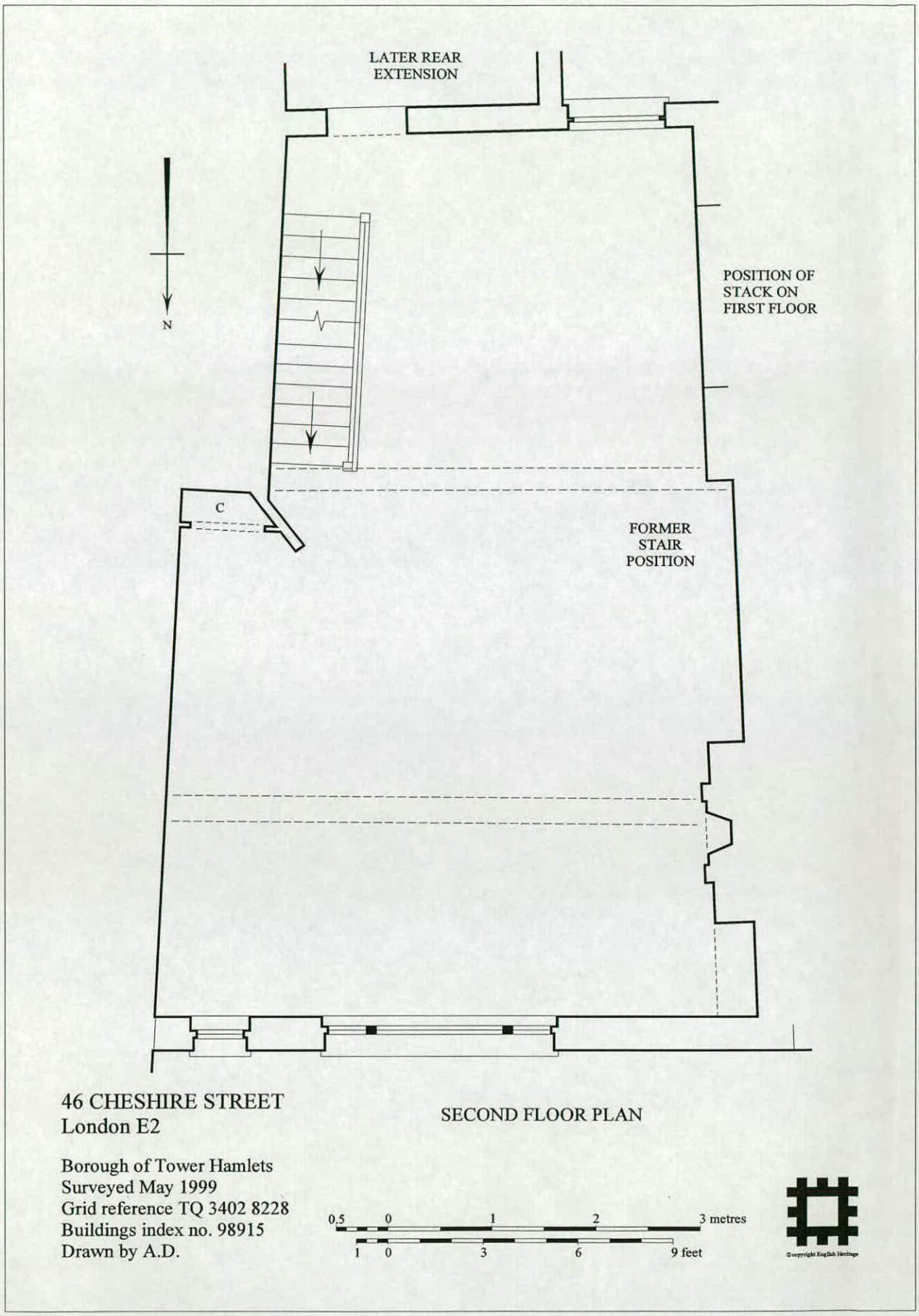

LATER REAR
EXTENSION
N
POSITION OF
STACK ON
FIRST FLOOR
C
FORMER
STAIR
POSITION
46 CHESHIRE STREET
London E2
SECOND FLOOR PLAN
Borough of Tower Hamlets
Surveyed May 1999
Grid reference TQ 3402 8228
Buildings index no. 98915
Drawn by A.D.
0.5 0 1 2 3 metres
1 0 3 6 9 feet

Fig 24

The Owl and the Pussycat Public House, No. 34 Redchurch Street

This property has been a public house for more than 300 years, always the Crown until it was renamed in the 1990s. Its origins lie in the first development of the Byde estate in the late 17th century, probably in the 1670s.[7] The surviving public house is a complex palimpsest of multiple dates, a clear understanding of which may be irretrievably elusive. A limited assessment suggests that the building may retain only fragmentary cellar-level fabric from the late 17th century, but there are significant parts of an 18th-century rebuilding, exceptional survivals in London in so much as they were parts of a Georgian pub interior.

Into the 1740s the Redchurch Street (Cock Lane) frontage between Ebor (York) Street and what has become Chance Street was incompletely built up (Figs 1-3), with gaps for access to Crown Court (to the west) and King's Head Court, which may have provided access to public houses set back from what was one of the area's larger through roads. By the end of the 18th century the frontage had been filled in with the Crown having become a large building across the existing frontage (Fig. 6). It may be relevant that Cock Lane was improved following an Act of 1756, perhaps necessitating or encouraging rebuilding along its south side, as well as that other properties on the Byde estate were being redeveloped in the 1760s, perhaps when the first leases were falling in (see Nos 3-5 Club Row). The Reverend Anthony Natt held the head lease at this time, but by the end of the 18th century the Crown was reportedly owned by Joseph Merceron.[8]

The building has an approximately 43ft (13m) frontage with a three-storey, five-bay front block. The upper-storey façade is surprisingly elaborate for the locality, stuccoed and classically articulated with quoins and pedimented architraves in a style reminiscent of a Victorian bank (Fig. 25). This front is plausibly said to have been made, perhaps simply refaced, in the 1890s when the 'Jago' slums to the north were being cleared for redevelopment as the Boundary Street Estate.[9] The front range is about 18ft (5.5m) deep under a steeply-pitched roof. Behind there is a separate range across the full width of the plot, extending back a further 18ft (5.5m). The back or south wall of this slightly lower three-storey block is of stock brick with segment-arch headed openings under a slate roof of shallow pitch and queen-post construction, all characteristically late. Internal details and map evidence confirm that the external appearance of this range arises from enlargement southwards in the late 19th century. Early brick walling in the cellar shows that the south range was originally only 13ft (3.9m) deep.[10] To the south there is still a small stone-paved yard.

Fig. 25 – The Owl and the Pussycat Public House, No. 34 Redchurch Street, in 2000 (English Heritage, AA00/4714).

The outwardly late appearance of the building is belied internally where there are significant remains of the 18th-century public house. The ground-floor lounge bar retains sections of dado panelling along the west wall, ovolo-moulded to a former parlour to the north, plain to the smaller south room, where there are also the ends of built-in settles flanking an end-wall fireplace with large quadrant stone corbels. An inserted section of panelling that lacks early pegs confirms the 19th-century enlargement of the south range. At this level there are no traces of the median wall that would have separated the north and south ranges.

More substantially there is a mirrored pair of 18th-century staircases in the south range, sited against what would have been the north wall of the range, slightly to the east of centre. These are both twin-newel closed-string staircases, wholly separated and enclosed by plain-panelled partitions. They rise from north to south on the ground floor, suggesting that the front of the building was to the north, and rise up to the second floor, confirming that in the 18th century the south range at least had three storeys. The west stair has columnar newel posts (a lower one having been replaced) and stick balusters, detailing that is not inconsistent with a date in the mid-to-late 18th century (Fig. 26). The east stair has been more altered. It was probably similarly constructed, perhaps always somewhat simpler as it served the private or domestic side of the building, as opposed to the public rooms that were accessible from the west staircase. The 18th-century building was clearly laid out with independent and differentiated private and public circulation.

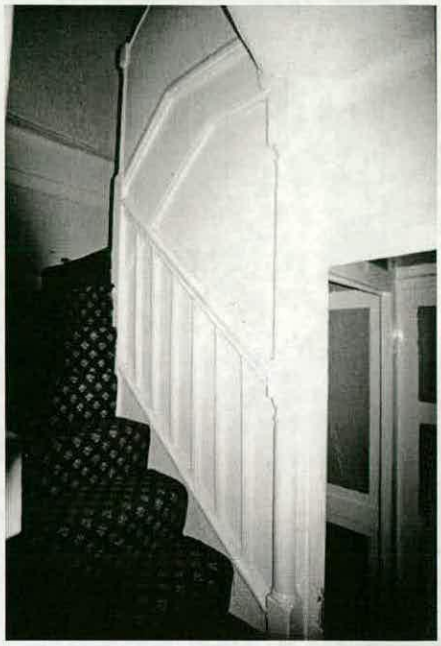


Fig. 26 – The Owl and the Pussycat Public House, No. 34 Redchurch Street, west staircase in 2000 (English Heritage, MF000010/7).

In the ceiling of the ground-floor lounge bar there are traces of partitioning for a passage that would have run through the whole building, from north to south between the west rooms and the west staircase, thus defining the extent of the parlour and showing that circulation to the upper-storey public rooms was independent of access to the ground-floor rooms. The west staircase appears always to have extended down to the cellar; it is not clear that this can be said of the east staircase.

The first-floor rooms retain some 18th-century plain panelling, possibly reset, as well as some 19th-century half-height beaded panelling. Here, as on the ground floor, the space flanking the staircases is about 16ft (5m) to the west, and 13ft (3.9m) to the east, consistent with the west side being the parlour or 'upper' end, the east side the service or 'lower' end. The second-floor room interiors could not be inspected.

The cellars clarify the development of the building in so much as the median wall between the ranges is still present and the early south wall endures. The south range is only 36ft (11m) wide in the cellar, extending less far to the west. Massive arched chimneystack supports project into both rooms of the south range cellar from its north wall, that to the west doubled in depth. Of these stacks nothing survives on the upper levels, and they make no sense in conjunction with the end-wall chimneystacks which they probably antedate.

Conclusions about this building can only be provisional and speculative. Perhaps the late-17th-century building corresponded to the south range as it is evident in the cellar. It may have faced south to a yard as a shallow double-fronted single-pile building with back-wall stacks and central stairs, a layout that was widespread in early-18th-century Spitafields (see No. 125 Brick Lane). In the mid-to-late 18th century this building may have been substantially enlarged to the north and west, with the front moving round to the north accompanied by internal remodelling that would have included removal of the former back wall, all to form a double-pile double-fronted building with end-wall stacks and separate public/private circulation via the surviving pair of staircases. This building was then refronted and enlarged to the rear in the late 19th century.[11]

Sclater Street: introduction

There may have been a few late-17th-century buildings (not necessarily houses) along a short stretch of what had not yet then become Sclater Street - on the south side to the east of the bottom end of Club Row, that is on the approximate sites of No. 68 Sclater Street and eastwards (Figs 1 and 2).[12] Concerted development did not occur until *c.*1720 soon after which the street came to be solidly lined with about 27 houses on each side. From at least June 1718 to 1721 William Farmer and other builders were taking 61-year leases from Thomas Sclater/Bacon and building or having built brick houses (typically in small lots for two houses at a time) on both sides of Sclater Street. The houses were evidently mostly of brick with 17ft or 17ft6in. (5.1m or 5.25m) frontages and squarish plans, house depths of from 17ft6in to 20ft (5.1m to 6m) indicating one-room layouts. Nos 66 and 68, and others perhaps, possibly those built between 1682 and 1703, were evidently wholly timber built, but comparably dimensioned and valued. The house plots were 60ft (18m) deep and back buildings, probably of timber, appear to have been usual, varying in size from about 10ft (3m) square to 22ft (6.6m) long, with uses ranging from silk dyehouses to carpenter's yards.[13] Very little early fabric survives on Sclater Street. The group of houses at Nos 70-74 are the last substantial reminder of the nature of 18th-century development here; the adjoining building at Nos 66 and 68 was entirely rebuilt in 1877. In addition fragmentary early remains at Nos 97 and 99 are helpful in reconstructing early house form, and the building at No. 102 may provide further echoes.

Nos 70-74 Sclater Street

Nos 70-74 Sclater Street are much rebuilt, but they do retain the essential form of the early buildings (Fig. 27). This is evident from fabric analysis, but also from comparison with

Fig. 27 – Nos 70-74 Sclater Street in 2000 (English Heritage, AA00/4718).

Fig. 28 – Nos 78-88 Sclater Street in 1955 (London Metropolitan Archives).

photographs of buildings now demolished (Figs 28 and 29), as well as from documentary evidence. Insurance policies of September 1719 taken out by Richard Hatt, a Stepney weaver (Bethnal Green was still part of the parish of Stepney at this date), for brick houses that are identifiable as Nos 72 and 74 specify two 17ft6in by 18ft (5.25m by 5.4m) houses with 15ft by 9ft (4.5m by 2.7m) back buildings. The surviving buildings at Nos 70-74 are each about 17ft (5.2m) square, with back buildings to Nos 72 and 74 that are about 15ft by 9ft (4.6m by 3m). The policies suggest that the back buildings were originally of timber; the surviving structures are of brick, but it is in any case evident that they have been rebuilt.[14]

Sclater Street was undoubtedly a centre of the weaving industry in the 18th century. The trades of early occupants are not readily established, but French surnames indicating Huguenot weavers are not unusual - of 42 names listed in a rating valuation of 1728, nine seem to be of French origin.[15] Nos 70-76 were 'in possession of' John Darby, John Rayne, Mary Thenvois and William Dicks, respectively, in 1719.[16]

The front elevations of Nos 70-74 appear to be the result of rebuilding in two phases (Fig. 27). Their original form is likely to have been close to that which survived, though perhaps also rebuilt, at Nos 84-88 until about 1980 (Fig. 28), that is with 'weavers' windows' - single broad first-floor windows and long north-facing top-floor mullioned casements, separated by plat bands. The positions of the entrances and the staircase windows over the latter but not directly above the former, remain essentially unchanged. The existing front walls are of mixed brown stock brick with segment-arch headed openings. There is a straight joint between Nos 70 and 72 indicating the two builds. No. 70 is more uniformly of brown brick, Nos 72 and 74 having red-brick window heads. There are sash windows, but only those on the upper storey might be pre-Victorian, being of 12 panes each with lamb's-tongue glazing bars. The stair window on No. 70 is small, comparable to that formerly at No. 84. There are elongated stair windows on Nos 72 and 74. No. 76 was evidently a mirror image of No. 74 and similarly fronted as part of the same rebuild (Fig. 31). These differences tend to suggest that the refronting of No. 70 antedates that of Nos 72-76. Perhaps No. 70 was improved in the late 18th century, around the time when leases were being

Fig. 29 – Nos 71-79 Sclater Street in the early 20th century (Tower Hamlets Local History Library).

renewed; indeed a new 61-year lease of Nos 66-70 was granted to Thomas Bainbridge in 1777. James Merceron took a new 31-year lease of Nos 72 and 74 in 1778; refronting here is likely to relate to subsequent 19th-century transactions.[17]

No. 74 incorporated premises designated as a shop by 1774.[18] The large windows on the ground floor of Nos 72 and 74 may have been late remakings of what would have been typical of the 18th-century buildings, that is ground-floor fenestration that allowed for either commercial or domestic use. No. 70 has what appears to be a mid-19th-century shopfront, much larger, but not full width because of the stair position. Looked at square on the fenestration of these houses is fascinating for its irregularity. On all levels the windows fail to align, in some cases only fractionally. There are also occasional absences of closing bricks and, in general, the brickwork is rough and crudely finished. This is all evidence of low-grade construction and of a lack of concern for proportionality or classicism, unsurprising given the relatively low status of these buildings, but not what we are used to seeing survive.

The pantiled roofs have been renewed, on machine-sawn rafters, but they may follow early lines. The chimneystacks rise behind the ridge, as dictated by the front-staircase layout in one-room-plan main blocks. Contravening the London Building Act of 1707 there are open eaves, as there were on the evidently less comprehensively reconstructed Nos 84-88, as well as on other houses opposite (Figs 28 and 29). Only Nos 78-82 can be seen to have had front parapets. Party-wall parapets were another legal requirement frequently overlooked. They do occur between Nos 70-76, perhaps as part of the 19th-century rebuild. Nos 78-84 and 86-88 had none. Taken with breaks in the front walls these party-wall parapets may indicate the extent of development

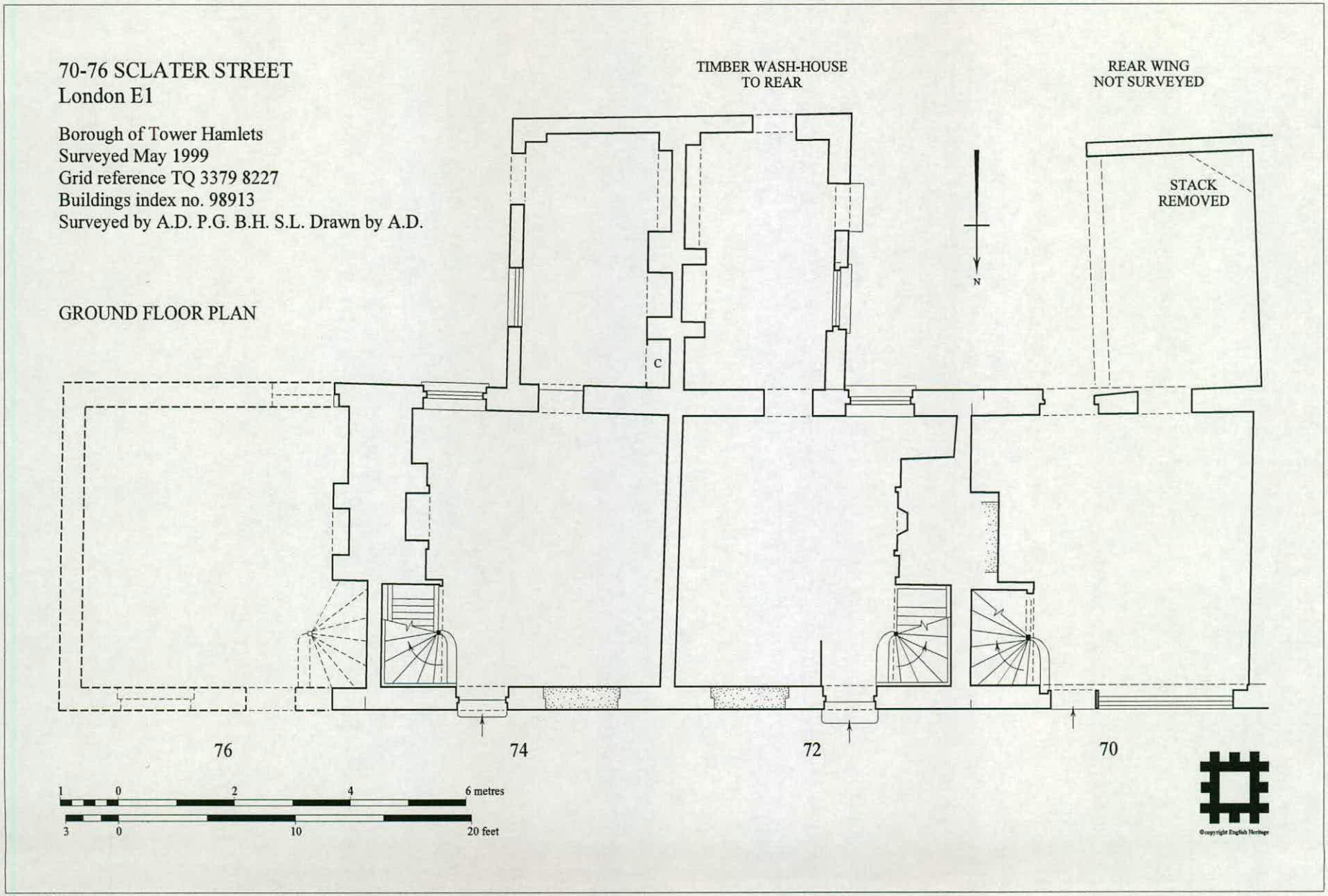

70-76 SCLATER STREET
London E1
Borough of Tower Hamlets
Surveyed May 1999
Grid reference TQ 3379 8227
Buildings index no. 98913
Surveyed by A.D. P.G. B.H. S.L. Drawn by A.D.
GROUND FLOOR PLAN
TIMBER WASH-HOUSE
TO REAR
REAR WING
NOT SURVEYED
STACK
REMOVED
N
C
76
74
72
70
1 0 2 4 6 metres
3 0 10 20 feet
©copyright English Heritage

Fig. 30

Fig. 31 – Nos 70-88 Sclater Street in 1973 (London Metropolitan Archives).

parcels. Perhaps Nos 70-76 were built together as two pairs, mirrored around their shared chimneystacks, ownership of No. 70 becoming and remaining separate from an early date. Nos 78-84 might have been a comparable development of two mirrored pairs, where No. 84 was not party to later improvements. As photographed when still extant Nos 86 and 88 read as a pair, but No. 88 appears to have shared its stack with No. 90, No. 86 having a stack of its own; perhaps this was a three-house development. The late-18th-century refrontings appear generally to have made the upper-storey elevations more regular two-bay fronts, retaining the small stair windows that, it seems clear, are an original feature.

The back walls of the Sclater Street houses from No. 70 eastwards were probably always of brick (Figs 32 and 33). There is another partial straight joint between Nos 70 and 72 separating brickwork of differing characters. No. 70 again has browner brick, irregularly bonded and without closers to the window openings. There is a 24-pane horizontal sliding sash on the first floor. Nos 72 and 74 show Flemish-bond yellow-stock brick to the rear, with some early redder brickwork surviving at ground-floor level.

The main blocks of the surviving houses are of three storeys with cellars, and are thus tall in their proportions (Fig. 34). The one-room-plan main blocks all have their staircases to the front beside the chimneystacks (Fig. 30). There are six flues to each stack suggesting three fireplaces to each house and unheated cellars. The cellars could not be adequately investigated, but no clear evidence of fireplaces was seen, though No. 74 has a timber bressumer in its chimneystack over brick infill. Where the buildings were not multiply occupied cooking was probably done in the

Fig. 32 – No. 74 Sclater Street in 2000, showing back building (English Heritage, AA004722).

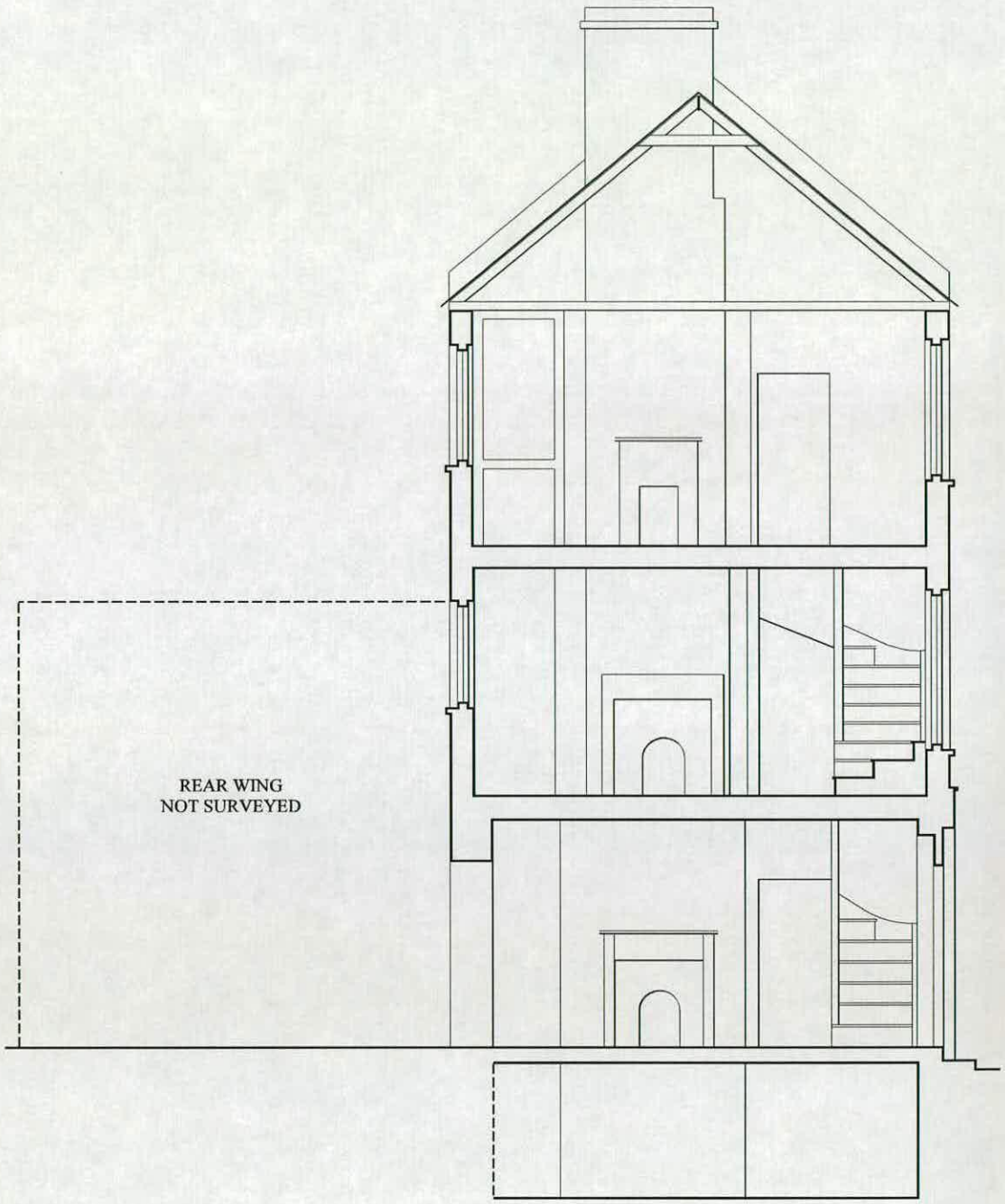
Fig. 33 – No. 70 Sclater Street from the back in 1973 (London Metropolitan Archives).

ground-floor rooms until the 19th century when the back buildings were rebuilt to incorporate kitchens. However, other houses in the street may well have had heated basement rooms that could have been kitchens; there were chimneystacks with four flues per house at Nos 78-80 and 86-90 (Fig. 28).

Inside No. 70 the ground floor has been stripped of its linings exposing much early brick to the sides and back, that is east, west and south. This is largely red and nearly laid to English bond, Disjunction between this walling and the front wall in the north-west corner is indicative of the refronting. The back door into the yard appears to be an alteration. The winder staircase in No. 70 has been remade, and first- and second-floor beaded matchboard partitions enclosing the staircase look to be of the 19th century, as do fireplaces with craddle bars, and fitted cupboards to the south of these fireplaces. The upper-storey front-wall sash windows have no internal embrasures, just simple timber architraves.

Nos 72 and 74 have been similarly refitted with matchboarded stair partitions and, on the ground floor of No. 72, a matchboarded dado and ceiling. A single plain half-height panel on the back wall on the ground floor of No. 74 might survive from the 18th century. Exposed walling in the cellars appears to be consistent with the early brickwork seen in No. 70. A blocked arch in the back wall of No. 74 must have served a storage space under the back building. In No. 74 there are 19th-century cast-iron fireplaces, and the upper-storey back-wall rebuilding incorporated roofing tiles, another indicator of low-grade construction. More early orange/red brick can be seen in the party wall between Nos 74 and 76, where there is also a scar of the staircase in No. 76.

The back buildings are of considerable interest, both in relation to their predecessors and the original layout of these properties, as well as in terms of later use. The two-storey block to the rear of Nos 72 and 74 is built of yellow stock brick with red-brick window heads. There is a straight joint where the back building joins to early walling on No. 72, and clean bonding with the rebuilt upper parts of the back wall on No. 74



SECTION LOOKING WEST

72 SCLATER STREET
London E1

Borough of Tower Hamlets
Surveyed May 1999
Grid reference TQ 3379 8227
Buildings index no. 98913
Drawn by A.D.

0.5 0 1 2 3 metres
1 0 3 6 9 feet

Fig. 34

suggests a single date for the rebuilding of both main block and back building, perhaps *c.*1840. This back building probably replaced a timber building of one or two storeys with the same footprint. The ground-floor rooms in the later back building were kitchens. That in No. 72 retains a big stone fireplace with shaped brackets to its mantel shelf, beyond which there are fitted cupboards under a flue arch, for the copper that survives in the north-east corner of a timber-built and board-lined lean-to wash-house, a rare and fragile survival. The upper rooms in the back buildings were also heated. There are remnants of a similarly extensive single-storey back building to the rear of No. 70 that had an angle stack (Fig. 30). This was perhaps a 19th-century replacement of an earlier low two-storey timber building. A partially closed-up but blocked doorway in the back wall of the main block at first-floor level rises above the roof line of the later back building. The other houses in the row had a variety of back buildings of similar extent, but different form.[19]

By 1841 only slightly more than half of Sclater Street's tradespeople were silk dependent, and the street had become lined with shops,[20] many shopkeepers and traders occupying ground-floor rooms. No. 84 had seventeen people in four households, the families headed by a cabinet maker and three weavers. This was typical, the upper storeys still given over to silk weavers or winders, and multiple occupancy invariable. There were rarely fewer than 10 in each three- or four-room house. No. 76 had eleven people in four households, a tailor's and three weaving homes. Ten people in No. 74 formed three households, including those of James Burn and William Yardley, weavers. No. 72 had sixteen inhabitants - Letitia Gough, an old clothes dealer and her four daughters in one room, George Veneil, a weaver, with a family of four in another, and seven single adults, including a gold beater, a baker, a shoemaker, a weaver and a labourer, somehow accommodated elsewhere; No. 70 was comparatively roomy with only two households, Henry Semkins, carpenter, and family of four, and Henry Ballard, spinner, and his two children. No. 68 had twenty people in four households - a butcher, and three weavers; No. 66 had a broker on the ground floor, with a weaver's family of eight in one upper room, and two elderly female silk winders above.[21]

There were no bird dealers in Sclater Street in 1841, but there was at least one by 1846.[22] By the 1890s the street, still impoverished, had become the heart of a thriving song-bird market. There were at least thirteen bird or bird-cage dealers, in a solid group at Nos 63-79 on the north side, with others at Nos 97 and 99 and Nos 70 and 88; other properties had a mix of rag-trade dependent occupancies. Charles Palmer and Sons, bird and birdfood dealers and birdcage makers, were at Nos 66-74 from *c.*1910 until recently, to judge from the detritus in the disused buildings in 1999 (Fig. 31).[23]

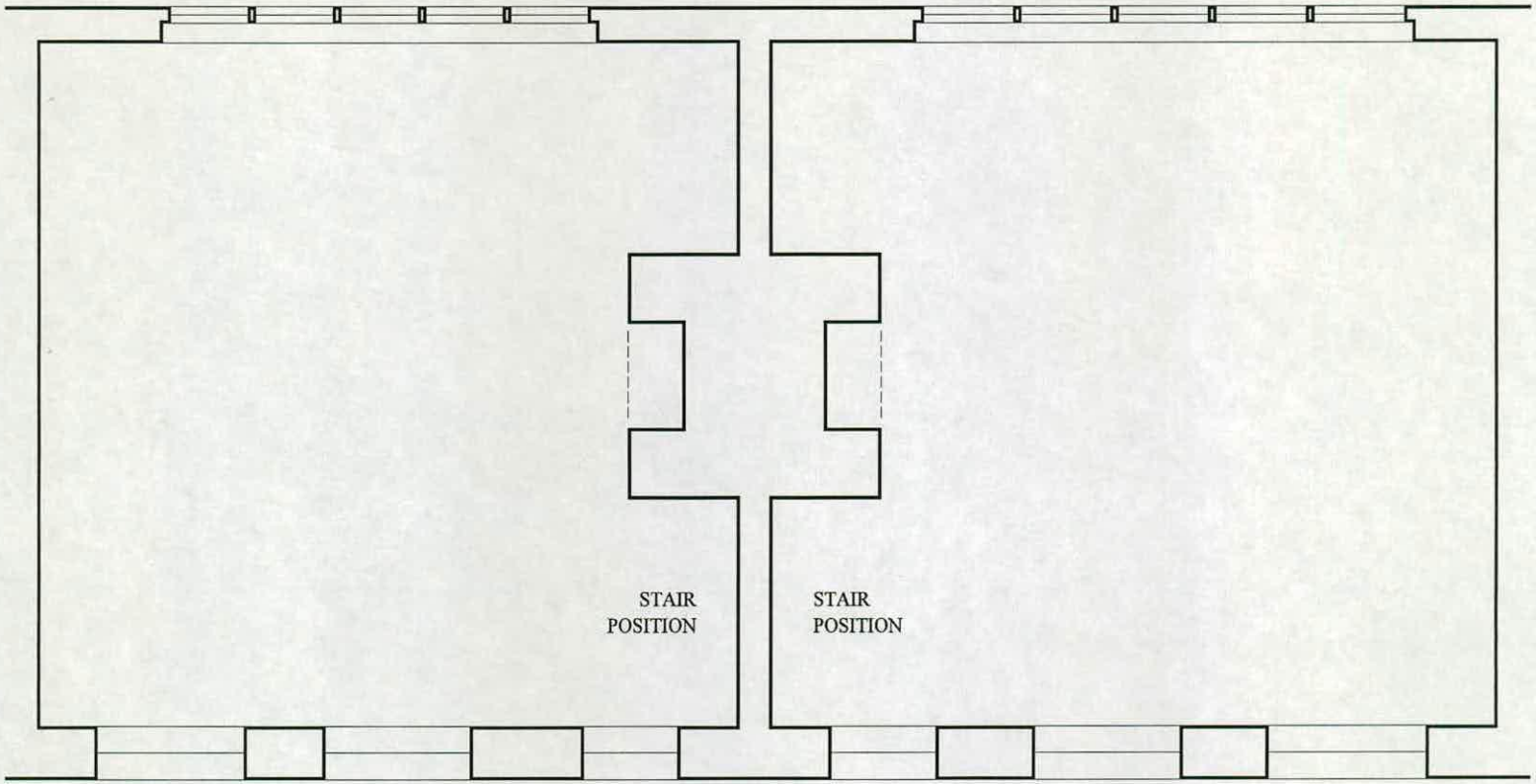
Nos 97 and 99 Sclater Street

Nos 97 and 99 Sclater Street is a single property, a four-storey brick building with a four-bay front (Fig. 35). It has been extensively rebuilt, but its origins are as a mirrored pair of houses of *c.*1720 (see above). A tell-tale 18th-century feature in the front wall are two former front-staircase windows on the first floor. The building has a frontage of about 36ft (10.8m), with its main block being about 18ft (5.4m) deep (Fig. 36). This accords well with evidence for the scale of the early houses along this side of Sclater Street. Nos 101 and 103 were 17ft (5.1m) square, Nos 105 and 107 were 18ft (5.4m) square, and Nos 71-79) were 17ft by 18ft (5.1m by 5.4m). Their back buildings were about 10ft to12ft (3m to 3.6m) square.[24] These houses were of similar general form to those opposite at Nos 70-74. To the west Nos 71-79 were all either of three full storeys with garrets, or four full storeys, with wide segment-headed tripartite sashes, and continuous mullioned top-storey windows (Fig. 29).

Fig. 35 – Nos 97 and 99 Sclater Street in 2000 (English Heritage, AA004710).

The front wall of Nos 97 and 99 looks to have been rebuilt in the late 18th century, possibly in association with a new lease of 1777, or perhaps somewhat later as in 1783 the houses were assessed as having 11 windows each, a number that would be exceeded by the existing building with the inclusion of any back buildings.[25] The front wall is of uniform brown stock brick laid to Flemish bond, with two regularly spaced windows and the stair lights on the first floor, and two wide segment-headed windows on the second floor. The upper storey had comparable windows, though their heads and the coped parapet have been entirely renewed (Fig. 38). There is a four-light horizontal sliding sash in the stair window of No. 97, other windows have been renewed. No. 99 retains typically early-19th-century timber brackets to its shopfront, characteristically set to the right so as to allow entry beside the former front staircase. There is a pantiled roof. A stack would have risen between the two houses, but this, the party wall and its dependent staircases were entirely removed in an early-20th-century reconstruction for warehouse/workshop use that introduced structural steel and a concrete staircase to the east, perhaps *c.*1930 for Harris Hyman & Sons, wholesale cabinet makers.[26] In 1841 No. 99 accommodated 15 people in five households, one a chair maker's and the others silk dependent; No. 97 had the households of an upholsterer and two weavers. In the 1890s bird dealers occupied the houses.[27]

To the rear there has also been much alteration, but the brown stock-brick walling is laid to English bond and it may be of the 18th century, possibly even of the first build. A wide first-floor window on No. 99 has been part blocked by the rebuilding and raising of the back building. What remains has soldier-course bricks at its head, conceivably original construction of a low-grade type that does not usually survive. The five-light upper-storey rear windows on No. 99 remain of a width befitting origins as north-lights to weaving workshops, that on the second floor flanked by early closing bricks. From the head of this window upwards the walling has been renewed, the window heads reinforced with steel lintels. On No. 97 the windows have been remade with



97-99 SCLATER STREET
London E1

Borough of Tower Hamlets
Based on drawings provided by G.Leick, May 1999
Grid reference TQ 3385 8228
Buildings index no. 105796
Drawn by A.D.

RECONSTRUCTION
FIRST FLOOR PLAN

Fig 36

concrete lintels, though a timber plate survives at eaves level, perhaps indicating that the building has always had four full storeys.

Internally the houses have been gutted of 18th-century fabric, though two early adzed timber panels have been reset at the head of the 20th-century staircase on the third floor. A cellar has been excavated, suggesting that it was not habitable space originally. Some early brickwork is exposed at this level.

No. 102 Sclater Street

No. 102 Sclater Street is a three-storey brick building with a frontage of only about 15ft (4.5m). Its two-bay front wall is probably from the 19th century. To the rear under a tiled roof there is stock brick fenestrated so as to suggest a staircase at the back of what is probably deep enough to be a two-room plan building. Rebuilding here may be total, though the interior has not been seen. Nevertheless, the shape of the building remains a faint echo of the street's early houses. In 1841 the property housed twelve people, eleven being the family of Joseph English, undertaker, three of whose sons were weavers, the twelfth person being another weaver.[28]

No. 16 Bacon Street

This building may be datable to 1720 when Edward Grange, citizen and carpenter of Spitalfields, was building on the south side of Bacon Street towards Brick Lane, taking 61-year leases of multiple plots with 17ft (5.1m) frontages. Early named occupants on Bacon Street were mostly weavers. Others were Thomas Miller, a dyer who built a house, and James Whitlock, a writing master.[29] No. 16 Bacon Street is a three-storey brick building that appears to be only one room deep in its main block (Fig. 37). The site has an overall frontage of about 19ft (5.7m). The front wall is of good-quality white brick over a shopfront, with two regularly spaced bays and gauged-brick flat-arched heads to recessed sash windows. This is likely to be the result of an early-19th-century refronting. The exposed east flank is cement rendered, but it is clear that the roof is steeply pitched and that the single chimney stack rises behind the ridge, as is typical in Bethnal Green's one-room-plan 18th-century houses where staircases were placed in front of stacks. To the rear there is a pantiled roof that continues over a two-storey lean-to back building on the west side.

Fig. 37 – No. 16 Bacon Street in 1999 (English Heritage, MF99/01286/9).

Nos 125 and 127 Brick Lane

Development and Occupancy

The plot now identified by the addresses Nos 125-131 Brick Lane was first built on as part of the development of Sclater Street on Swan Field, the west part of the Red Cow estate that was held by Thomas Sclater or Slaughter (d.1736). He had laid out Sclater Lane by 1711 and in 1718, when he adopted his wife's surname Bacon, the road was referred to as the 'new intended street called Sclater Street' and 61-year leases of house plots were being granted. The street was paved by 1723.[30]

Fig. 38 – View down Sclater Street showing No. 125 Brick Lane (to the right) in the early 20th century (Tower Hamlets Local History Library).

On 20 February 1719(20) Richard Howland, a joiner and 'citizen', that is apprenticed in the City, took the easternmost plot on the north side of Sclater Street from Thomas Bacon, with a 61-year lease at a ground rent of £1.18.0/year, the Sclater Street frontage being 30ft (9m), the depth to Brick Lane 63ft (19m). Howland then built a single large house facing Sclater Street that was double the taxable valuation of neighbouring houses in the new street. By 1728 this house was occupied by Pierre Fromaget, the lease having been mortgaged.[31] In 1701 Pierre Fromaget, a weaver, then resident in King Street, Spitalfields, had a son, also Pierre; it is unclear whether it was father, son or both who lived in the Sclater Street house.[32] However, by 1745 the house was occupied by Daniel De La Cour (b.1708), who had married Marie Anne Fromaget some time prior to 1733 when their eldest son Daniel Fromaget Delacourt was born. The family continued in occupation, but in 1770 a new lease of the property was negotiated by Thomas Munday, an East Smithfield pewterer with investments in many Bethnal Green properties.[33] Munday's lease was to run for 88 years from 1781 when the first lease expired (giving a tenure of 99 years from 1770). In 1776 Munday was bankrupted and forced by a Court judgement to pay outstanding rents. The younger Delacourt (Daniel Fromaget), who was a distiller, took over the lease of the whole plot with its single house in October 1777. Another house, latterly No. 127 Brick Lane, had been added by 1799 (Fig. 6). Delacourt was evidently resident and paying taxes on the house at No. 125 continuously until at least 1804, after which Elizabeth Delacourt, presumably his widow, remained in occupation until at least 1824. The valuation relative to neighbouring properties was negotiated downwards in two phases in the period 1777-1783, falling to 1.5 times rather than double that of neighbouring properties, the first adjustment being part of a general revaluation between 1777 and 1780.[34]

In 1841 No. 125 Brick Lane, then known as No. 53 Sclater Street, housed Joseph and Mary Martin and their adult children, John and Sarah, all silk weavers, James Platt, a chair stuffer, his wife and five children, Henry Cleeves, a cabinet maker, and his daughter, and Jane Ladline, a female servant -- that is 14 people in three households with a single servant, perhaps translating as one household on each main storey with a servant in the garret, each family probably using the premises as both home and workshops. No. 127 Brick Lane had become a pawnbroker's premises.[35] In the period 1841-6 Nos 129 and 131 Brick Lane (latterly demolished) were built on the vacant 30ft (9m) frontage of the original plot. The earlier buildings at Nos 125 and 127 Brick Lane were taken during this time by James Henry Watherston, a pawnbroker, as No. 155 Brick Lane. Pawnbroking continued here into the 1880s. By 1890 Joseph Fleming, a bootmaker, had the corner property, his wares displayed in the earliest known photograph of the building (Fig. 38).[36]

Building Description

No. 125 Brick Lane is a three-storey brick building occupying a prominent corner site (Figs 39 and 40). It has frontages of 30ft (9m) to Sclater Street and 18ft (5.4m) to Brick Lane. There is a basement and there were previously probably garret rooms in a roof that has been lost. Render applied *c.*1980 has obscured the brickwork, which earlier photographs show to have been of good quality (Fig. 41). The former and now wholly blocked entrance to the house was midway along the south front, through a simple round-headed opening with a fanlight over the door. A recent (*c.*1980) entrance at the west end of the south front leads directly onto a modern staircase, the insertion of which is probably associated with the blocking of the ground-floor window here. There is a ground-floor shop, entered at

Fig. 39 – Nos 125 and 127 Brick Lane in 1993 (National Monuments Record, AA93/05341).

Fig. 40 – View down Brick Lane showing Nos 125-133 Brick Lane in 1993 (National Monuments Record, AA93/05733).

Fig. 41 – Nos 125 and 127 Brick Lane in 1971 (London Metropolitan Archives).

the corner on chequerwork flooring (Fig. 42). The origins of the large shopfront, remade in the 20th century, and the corner access should probably be associated with the changes of the 1840s that included the reorientation of the building's address to Brick Lane and the arrival of pawnbroking.[37] On the upper storeys there are segment-headed openings with modern casement windows. The fenestration is notable for its distinctively asymmetrical and functional arrangement, the broad openings being a clear indicator of workshop use, in this area in the Georgian period all but certainly for silk weaving. The windows were formerly all recessed sashes, tripartite in the west bay to Sclater Street and to Brick Lane on the first floor. The second storey has two very wide (about 12ft or 3m) windows that had quadruple sashes. A scar on the party wall to the building formerly at No. 107 Sclater Street and internal evidence taken together suggest that there was a steeply-pitched roof behind the surviving stone-coped parapet that would have contained habitable garret rooms. The roof, destroyed before 1971 and replaced with a flat roof, was probably pantiled and hipped with dormer windows.

Fig. 42 – Mr M. A. Boshor at the entrance to his shop at No. 125 Brick Lane in 1993 (National Monuments Record, AA93/05342).

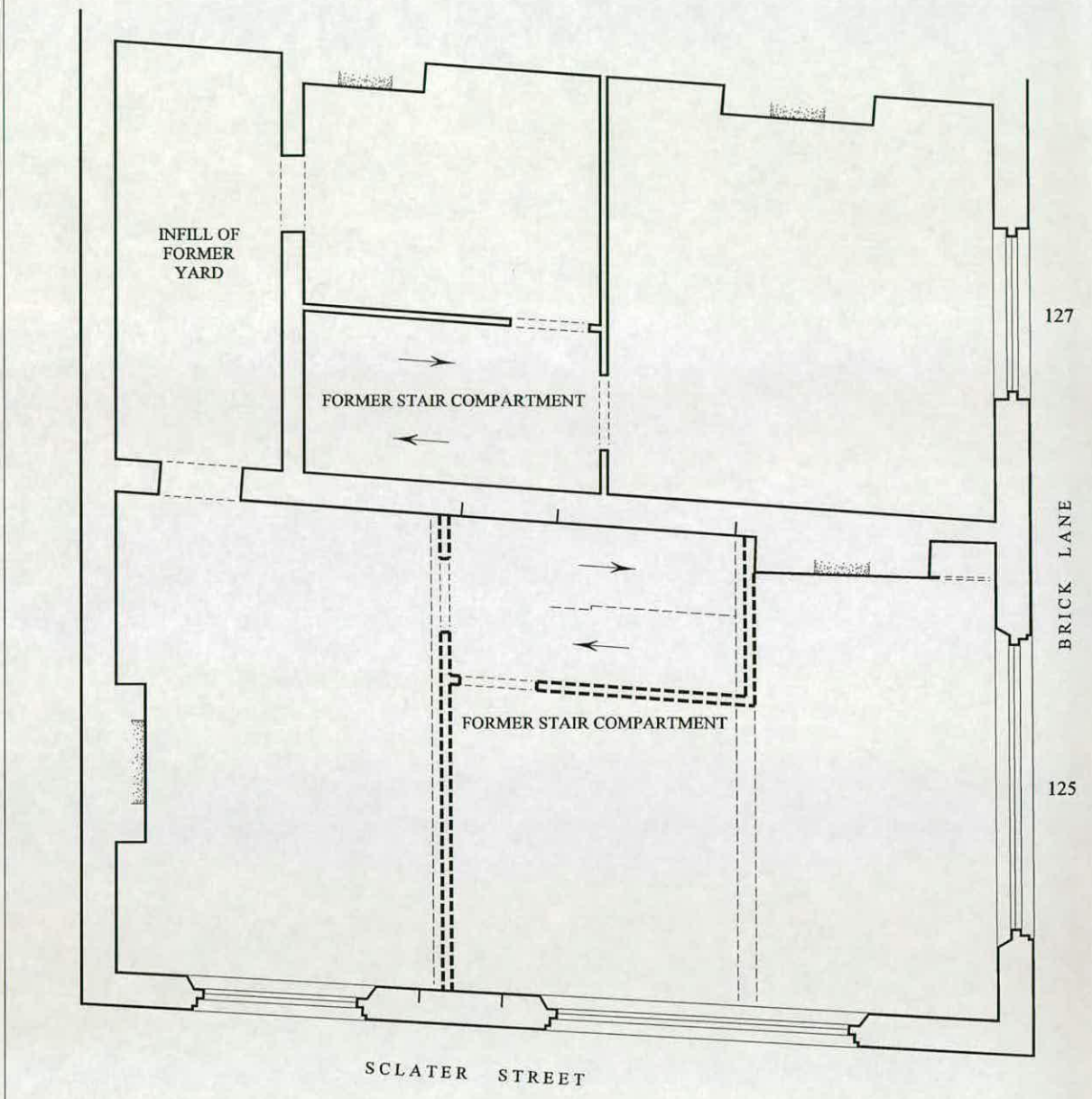
The most distinctive feature of the building is the street-name plaque at first-floor level in the east bay on the south front (Fig. 43 and frontispiece), one of London's finest early street signs, unique in its sculptural quality, and all the more engaging for the proximity of later street signs, the most recent in Bengali script. The early sign has a cartouche with an inscription in weathered lettering that seems to read 'THIS IS SCLATER Street 1778'. However, the date at the end of the inscription, which with the passage of time becomes increasingly illegible, has previously been read otherwise. This is worth discussing as various interpretations of the date have implications beyond the understanding of No. 125 Brick Lane. Best seen in early morning light, it seems clear that the last numeral in the date is rounded so as to suggest an 8. It might thus be argued that the date is 1718, or '17-18' as it was transcribed in 1871 and as befits its style.[38] Against this the second and third numerals are identical, and unlike the first. The cartouche is set in a scrolled acanthus frame surmounted by a smaller oval cartouche, all contained in a finely moulded, rubbed and cut red-brick pilastered aedicule. The first-floor window openings, which have not been altered, are disposed so as to accommodate the plaque, and the brickwork to either side closes up to it. The plaque is therefore

Fig. 43 – Street-name plaque on No. 125 Brick Lane, inscribed 'THIS IS SCLATER Street 1778' (English Heritage, AA004727).

either of the same date as the walling, or earlier and reset in this position when the walls were built. The relatively quotidian nature of the object, its fragility, particularly the fine brickwork, and its enduring integrity all seem to argue against the latter possibility. In addition it must be recalled that there was nothing on this site before 1720. If the inscribed date is 1718 then the plaque must either be reset from another site altogether or be an oddly retrospective commemoration of slightly earlier development elsewhere on Sclater Street, a road that had been named by 1711 after a man who by 1718 was calling himself Bacon. Stylistically, the sign certainly does appear more typical of 1718 than 1778, but only if fashionability is taken to be a reliable dating criterion. It is far from clear that it should be in a milieu such as that of Bethnal Green in the 18th century where classicism in architecture appears to have been not so much out of touch with fashion as altogether absent. Chance survival and relative prominence aside, it is unclear why such a humble location as this should have such a finely-wrought sign. The descent of Thomas Sclater's estate might be relevant. His illegitimate son and heir, Thomas Sclater King, died in 1777 by when the estate was held by the latter's son-in-law Henry Busby. Busby's wife and Thomas Sclater King's daugher, Elizabeth, died in 1778.[39] The plaque is more of a monumental mnemonic than it is a simple finding aid. Could it be that Busby had it made by way of being a kind of memorial to his father-in-law and wife, through whom he held the estate?

Returning to the house, it has a double-fronted, single-pile plan, asymmetrical in so far as the west rooms were heated from a party-wall stack and the corner site dictated that the east rooms had to be heated from the rear (Fig. 44). The double-fronted single-pile plan was not uncommon in Spitalfields in comparably substantial houses, as at No. 36 Elder Street of 1725 or Nos 22-26 Folgate Street.[40] This variant of the plan has also been recorded at other corner sites, No. 29 Folgate Street, of 1727, and No. 40 Brushfield Street, a building remodelled *c.*1784-5.[41] On the ground floor of No. 125 a central entrance hall would have led to a dog-leg or twin-newel staircase framed at right angles to the hall against the back wall. This stair has been entirely removed, though its position remained evident in 1999. This staircase position dictated an irregular L shape for the larger east rooms. Scars of partitions on the first floor suggest that at this level there was an unheated closet with its own small window, above the entrance hall and between two heated rooms, thus reducing the irregularity of the east room. The second floor appears always to have been two rooms, the larger irregular one to the east evidently always a workshop lit by the two 12ft- (3.6m)-wide windows.

Comprehensive reworking of the interior has left only a few details that can be associated with the Georgian period. Confirmation that all the upper-storey windows retain their early shape comes in the survival around all of them of un-shuttered splayed embrasures with plain panelling under the sills. The first-floor fireplace to the east room retains a reeded 19th-century iron grate within a plain timber surround, its inner edges beaded. On the second floor part of a low two-shelved cupboard survives between the fireplace and the external wall in the east room. This room has a beaded matchboard ceiling under which waney-edged binding beams about 8in. (20cm) square are exposed. Above this ceiling floorboards for the garret have been recorded.[42] In the basement there is a winder stair in the northeast corner, possibly inserted in association with 19th-century shop use, though perhaps earlier. There is a remnant of stone paving in this corner, and the east stack has a fireplace with a segmental brick head. This fireplace is too small to suggest that the room was a kitchen for a large house, though it was apparently lined out and ceiled. The absence of evidence for a large kitchen fireplace may reflect design for multiple occupancy. There was no basement fireplace to the west, where there is a relieving arch under the stack. The basement was formerly lit by three windows, probably all full-size sashes, one to the east, and two to the south, that in the west bay having splayed embrasures. There were presumably areas under grilles on the pavement.



RECONSTRUCTED
SECOND FLOOR PLAN

125 -127 BRICK LANE
London E1

Borough of Tower Hamlets
Surveyed 1999
Grid reference TQ 3388 8228
Buildings index no. 98916
Drawn by A.D.

0.5 0 1 2 3 metres
1 0 3 6 9 feet

Fig. 44

No. 127 Brick Lane is a much smaller house with an approximately 15ft (4.5m) front. It stands three storeys with a basement, and perhaps also had a garret, now lost. It has a single-bay front and the front-wall brickwork appears to have been continuous with that of No. 125. Above a modern shopfront the unaltered upper-storey window openings have gauged-brick flat-arched heads, hidden behind render. Recessed tripartite sashes like those on No. 125 have also been removed. Internally the house has a two-room plan, originally only about 24ft (6m) deep, allowing for a small yard, across which the building has latterly been extended. There was a dog-leg staircase alongside the back room and opposite party-wall chimneystacks in the standard layout for higher-status town houses in 18th-century London. This is an awkward plan in a small house - here it leaves the back rooms as only about 8-9ft (2.6m) wide. The staircase has been removed, though its compartment survives on the first floor and parts of its panelled partition down to the basement also remain. There are cyma-moulded door architraves on the former stair landing on the first floor and in the basement, and these certainly look 18th century. The first-floor back room has a plain timber fireplace surround with a beaded edge, and no mantel shelf, with a reeded inner hob of a 19th-century type. The basement had a window to Brick Lane.

To return to the problem of dating No. 125 Brick Lane there is nothing in its visible fabric that is clearly indicative of the first build of 1720. Some of the internal joinery, and more particularly that in No. 127, does seem characteristically 18th century, and the house at No. 127 is known to have been built between 1777 and 1799. Perhaps Daniel Fromaget Delacourt redeveloped the whole property after his acquisition in October 1777 of the lease which still had 91 years to run. A reading of the date on the plaque as 1778 conforms with this notion, as does the continuous brick walling of Nos 125 and 127; if the plaque is of 1718 it must be reset. Valuations do indicate change *c.*1780, though not improvement, and since there is no evidence for subsequent enlargement it may be significant that Delacourt was taxed for 15 windows in 1783.[43] This would correspond well with No. 125 as existing and reconstructable, with three windows on each of five levels.

In so far as the few extant features in No. 125 are only loosely and unreliably datable by conventional stylistic criteria an additional possibility suggests itself, that is cosmetic improvements in the early 19th century. The simple round-headed entrance on Sclater Street (from around which a doorcase might have been removed) and the three- and four-part sash windows would fit this later date more comfortably. Even a double rebuilding, in 1778 and again in the early 19th century, can not be ruled out, especially given the by no means uncommon eventualities of fire damage and poor construction. However, a post-1778 rebuilding would have necessitated an unlikely resiting of the street-name plaque. If the building is accepted as being of 1778 then the plaque can be interpreted as of a piece. The balance of probability seems to point to rebuilding in 1778 and subsequent alterations.

Comparison with other local buildings extant and demolished does not resolve the ambiguities. The essentially conservative nature of house building below the social levels where fashionability was a major factor does not assist historical clarity. There are many houses in Spitalfields with broad windows under segmental arches, in many cases in rear elevations, and variously datable. In Mile End New Town No. 27 Spital Street, on the corner with Buxton Street, was a house of somewhat analogous form that has been dated to the late 17th or early 18th century, though for no compelling reason. No. 16 Elder Street of 1724 had such wide upper-storey windows to the front, irregularly disposed.[44] Closer to hand Nos 194-198 Brick Lane of 1764-5 (Fig. 64), lately all but completely rebuilt, was comparably irregular in its fenestration, but with mullioned casements under open eaves, as was evidently also the case in the early-18th-century houses along Sclater Street (Fig. 28). Nos 190 and 192 Brick Lane were rebuilt in 1778-9 (Fig. 69), apparently with regular two-bay parapetted fronts, and to the south in Spitalfields at Nos 114-122 Brick Lane a

refronting of *c.*1795 resulted in a regular façade with flat-arched windows. Further east and into Bethnal Green houses from the late Georgian period were more closely comparable. Nos 2-8 Granby Street were built in 1771-3 with wide and regularly spaced tripartite segment-headed workshop windows under a coped parapet (Fig. 16). Nos 34 and 36 Florida Street were typical of numerous early-19th-century weavers' houses built in Bethnal Green (Fig. 45). After 1800 weavers' houses were invariably no higher than two storeys, many built in large and regular speculations with round-headed entrances and segment-headed tripartite upper-storey workshop windows.

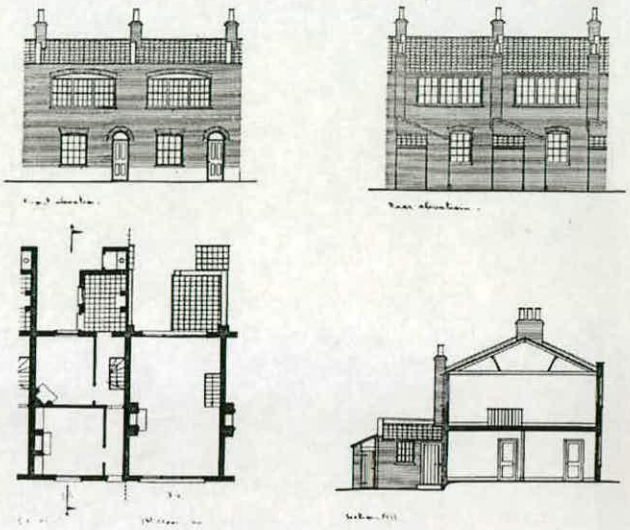


Fig. 45 – Nos 34 and 36 Florida Street, Bethnal Green, houses of c.*1815 recorded in 1955 (National Monuments Record).*

The building history of No. 125 Brick Lane is complex and its interpretation is made the more difficult by the extent of 20th-century alteration. Firm dating of the house, even of the 'dated' plaque, remains elusive. Nevertheless the lack of certainty does not make the building any less fascinating or less important, as it is one of the few surviving reminders of the early domestic architecture of this part of Spitalfields, very different to the bulk of what survives in what were more prosperous areas further south, where many 'weavers' lofts' were probably alterations to houses built for well-to-do occupancy but come on to harder times. The plaque is of great interest in its own right, whether as a fashionable relic of first-phase development from 1718, or as an intriguingly retardataire work of 1778. The asymmetry of the elevations is dictated not just by the plaque, but also by a functionality characteristic of this area, the upper storeys clearly having been used for workshops, and parts of the property, at least, for silk weaving. No. 125 Brick Lane is a big house, yet it can not be understood simply as a house. It appears to have been designed for multiple occupation. Daniel Delacourt was a distiller, and thus probably carried out his business elsewhere. Parts of No. 125 were probably always lettable workshop homes for journeymen weavers. Evidence of such designedly multi-purpose 18th-century 'domestic' architecture is elusive anywhere in London.

No. 133 Brick Lane

This is a four-storey brick building, apparently one room deep, with a frontage of about 15ft (4.5m). The front-wall brickwork is of the 20th century and the roof appears to have been renewed (Fig. 40). However, the origins of development here are traceable to 1720-3. The possibility that there may be at least traces of an earlier building within is suggested both by the tall shallow shape of the house and by the front elevation which has a single bay of wide tripartite windows set off-centre to the north, with a single small light, presumably for a front staircase, above the entrance to the south. This is suggestive of the typical house form of 18th-century Bethnal Green. In 1841 there were 12 people in three households in this property - a plumber and painter with the ground-floor shop, and two weavers' families above.[45]

No. 149 Brick Lane

This is a three-storey brick building that was wholly rebuilt after a fire *c.*1987 (Fig. 46). It was and remains a Listed Building. Despite the rebuilding it still retains some historic interest as a house with form and dimensions typical of the development of Swan Field in the 1720s, the first buildings along this section of Brick Lane probably dating to 1723. The three-room main block of the house is essentially square on plan, with an 18ft (5.4m) frontage and 16ft6in. (5m) internal depth, dimensions typical of the early houses in the area. The front wall has been rebuilt in brick with openings in positions as previously.[46] The first floor has and had segmental-headed windows, that to the south a narrow slit, probably reflecting the original staircase position. Above a plat band the upper storey has and had a long six-light workshop window. To the rear there was evidence of another wide window across the upper storey. A two-storey rear wing with a hipped roof may have been an early wash-house range.

The early house was occupied by Anthony Farmer from at least 1745 up to *c.*1770-3, then by Elizabeth and Mary Farmer until *c.*1783-7. Anthony Farmer was a member of the Carpenters' Company who had been apprenticed to his father William from 1714 to 1721. Confusingly this may not have been the William Farmer who was a leading builder in the area in the 1720s and 1730s living on the corner of Brick Lane and Sclater Street, but another man who was described as a weaver. Elsewhere the William Farmer who was a builder was described as having only one child, John Farmer (d.1748), who was himself apprenticed to his father from 1735.[47] Whatever the relationships if any between the various Brick Lane Farmers this is further evidence of the intersections between weavers and carpenters and the looseness and ambiguity of trade designations. By 1809 the house was let in tenements with Nos 145 and 147, comparably scaled and valued properties, all insured by James Pemell, a baker at No. 206 Brick Lane, immediately opposite.[48]

Fig. 46 – No. 149 Brick Lane in 1993 (National Monuments Record, AA93/05335).

No. 161 Brick Lane

A group of four houses at Nos 157-163 Brick Lane, immediately north of the no longer extant Little Bacon Street, was built in about 1723, perhaps by Richard Storey, a carpenter, who then leased the properties (Fig. 47).[49] No. 157 has been rebuilt as the Jolly Butchers Public House, extending across a carriageway that marks the site of Little Bacon Street. The pub was previously the Turkish Slave, which, like many other local pubs, was owned by Joseph Merceron around 1800.[50] In 1878-9 the rerouting of Bethnal Green Road did for Little Bacon Street as well as No. 163. No. 159 appears to be a 20th-century building, home of the renowned Beigel Bake. No. 161 houses the Jafflong Balti House, successor to Sonar Gaon, the main block being a three-storey brick building, about 17ft (5.1m) square. It has a steeply-pitched roof and may retain its shape and internal elements from the first-phase development. The front is a regular parapetted two-bay elevation that is probably a refronting datable to the 19th century. Huguenot presence here through the later 18th century seems to be reflected not only by Merceron, but also by the occupancies of J. Louis Prevost at No. 157 and Boniface Class at No. 161 from the 1770s to the 1790s. No. 161 housed a grocer's shop through the Victorian period.[51]

Fig. 47 – Nos 149-161 Brick Lane in 1993 (National Monuments Record (AA93/05334).

No. 83 Redchurch Street and No. 2 Turville Street

The north side of Redchurch Street from No. 71 to No. 91 and land to the north including Turville Street was developed as the Snow estate from 1723. In 1779 brick houses on the sites of No. 83 Redchurch Street and No. 2 Turville Street with overall plan dimensions that correspond to those still existing were insured by the Reverend Anthony Natt, probably the son of the carpenter of the same name who had built locally and who held the nearby Byde estate.

No. 83 was a single large house with a 19ft (5.7m) south front and 29ft (8.7m) depth. No. 2 Turville Street was two smaller houses with fronts of 22ft (6.6m) and 16ft (4.8m), both 15-16ft (4.5-4.8m) deep.[52] No. 2 Turville Street has been much remade, but the four-storey one-room-plan building retains indications that its origins are in the 18th century. The front wall is tiled and stuccoed, but odd window rhythms seem to reflect the two unequal early houses. To the rear there appears to be some early brick at lower levels above single-storey lean-tos; apparently later brickwork above has wide segmental arches for workshop windows that have been subdivided. No. 83 Redchurch Street has probably been refronted, but exposure of its west flank shows that the main block is comparably tall and shallow, evidently one room deep. The return to Turville Street has three unevenly spaced window bays that read as if this address may have been two houses, though perhaps already one by 1799 (Fig. 6). There is a steeply-pitched roof, hipped at the corner.

Fig. 48 – No. 75 Redchurch Street in 1999, showing the scar of the demolished building at No. 77 Redchurch Street (English Heritage, BB99/09163).

Nos 71-91 Redchurch Street was a run of similar houses, three or four storeys tall and one room deep, to judge from map evidence and what may be comparably-scaled replacement buildings at Nos 71 and 87, and flank-wall scars of Nos 77 and 81 (Fig. 48). Opposite, on what had been the north part of Swan Field on the Red Cow estate Nos 74 and 76 Redchurch Street stood until *c.*1970 (Fig. 14). Though probably refronted these houses would have had origins in the 1720s. They rose four storeys and had the locally distinctive small windows to light front staircases in a one-room layout.

Nos 122 and 130-140 Bethnal Green Road

On the south side of Bethnal Green Road Nos 122 and 130-140 are relics of a continuous run of 21 early-18th-century houses (Nos 120-160) that ran from Brick Lane to James Street (now Chilton Street), interrupted only by a passageway between Nos 122 and 124 (Fig. 3). This was part of the Cross Field, the development of which by Thomas Bacon did not apparently commence until 1723. Leases from Bacon to James Smith, citizen and carpenter, in March 1723(4) of plots with houses already on them immediately west of the corner with James Street, that is the sites of Nos 154-160, suggest that the rest of the row is likely to have been leased if not built by 1724.[53] Smith's 71ft (21.3m) frontage for four houses with 60ft (18m) plot depths appears to have been standard, each house in the row having a frontage of about 17-18ft (5.1-5.4m). The houses were let in tenements by 1809.[54]

Fig. 49 – Nos 130-140 Bethnal Green Road in 2000 (English Heritage, AA004723).

These houses are all of four full storeys, variously refronted, all with parapets that sometimes hide what may be early steeply-pitched roofs (Fig. 49). No. 122 has a white-painted brick front, perhaps of the early 19th century, with two regularly-spaced window bays with gauged-brick flat-arched heads and 12-pane sashes, giving no hint of the early building. A coped parapet conceals a steeply-pitched tiled roof and there is a large chimneystack behind the ridge to the west, set at an angle that reflects the irregular property boundary with the adjoining corner property. The back

wall is of brown stock-brick. Nos 130-134 and 138 retain what look like late-Georgian or early-Victorian yellow-stock-brick fronts with segmental window heads, fenestrated so as to suggest front-staircase layouts, with narrow stair windows now or formerly in front of party-wall chimneystacks, that between Nos 130 and 132 surviving. No. 136 may have been wholly rebuilt, as it has higher floor levels and a regular three-bay front with gauged-brick flat-arched heads. No. 138 has wide workshop window openings with gauged-brick segmental heads, the upper storey completely rebuilt. No. 140 was wholly refronted in the 20th century. There are diverse low additions to the rear, but the continuity of the main back wall endures despite more yellow-stock-brick rebuilding. It is clear that these houses were typical of the locality in being one-room deep and tall, for four rooms vertically arranged. There are no signs of staircase windows to the rear, tending to confirm the impression that the houses were built with front-staircase layouts; perhaps the first back walls were of timber with large window openings. The interiors have not been inspected.

Nos 124-128 and 142-160 were wholly rebuilt in two developments in the late 19th century, probably *c.*1880 following the widening of the road.[55]

No. 24 Bacon Street

This house is attached to No. 198 Brick Lane, and stands on the south side of what was formerly Thomas Street, begun in 1724, with this section built up soon thereafter (Fig. 63). This is a four-storey house with a frontage of about 15ft (4.5m). It appears to have been refronted, and perhaps raised, with two bays of recessed sashes in what may be 19th-century stock brick. An indication that there might be early-18th-century fabric within is the presence of a staircase to the front immediately inside the entrance to the west, lit by a small window on the first floor, an arrangement typical of the area's 18th-century houses.

Nos 3-9 Cheshire Street

Four houses at Nos 3-9 Cheshire Street were the front part of an interesting early-18th-century development of eight one-room-plan 17ft- (5.1m)-square houses that comprehended Hare Court (later Cheshire Place), four more houses to the rear, to which access was gained through a passage between Nos 5 and 7 (Fig. 3). Hare Court was demolished *c.*1960, but recorded in 1928 and 1944. The larger front houses have also seemingly gone, though parts of No. 3 Hare Street may survive behind a 20th-century refronting. It still has a 17ft (5.1m) frontage and is shown as remaining essentially square on plan on recent maps. These houses were perhaps not there in 1711, but were certainly present in 1728 when the whole frontage up to James Street was solidly built up. They were probably infilling of *c.*1725 following the laying out of James Street in 1723. They represent unusually dense land use in the area, the more interesting in that these were not particularly small houses.[56] By 1770 the landlord of the group was James Merceron, weaver and pawnbroker.[57]

Fig. 50 – Nos 3-9 Hare (Cheshire) Street in 1928 (National Monuments Record, AP 248).

Nos 3-9 Hare Street were four-storey brick houses with pantiled roofs, regular in their front-wall fenestration, with segmental-arch window heads, and narrow first-floor windows reflecting front- staircase layouts (Fig. 50). There were three- and four-light casement windows for workshops on the upper storeys. Nos 7 and 9 had timber lintels to these windows, and retained what was probably an original oversailing eaves cornice. Internally there were canted staircase partitions, and exposed cross beams bearing onto the side-wall stacks. Above small back buildings there was two-bay fenestration to the rear.[58]

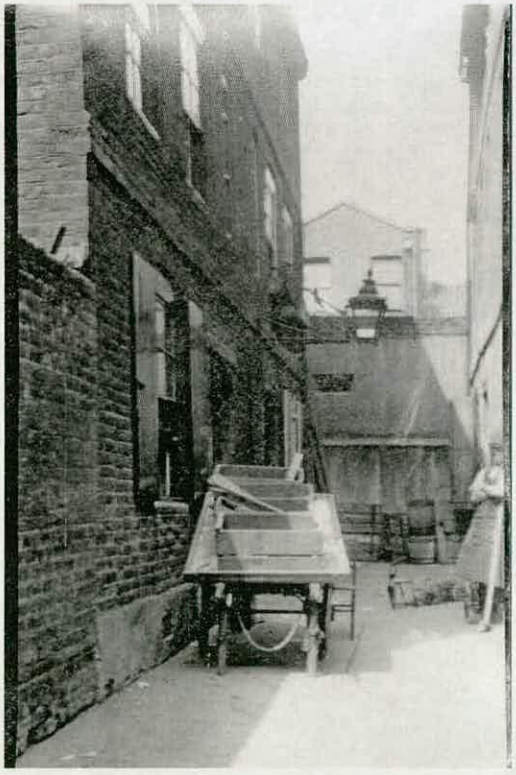


Fig. 51 – Nos 3 and 4 Hare Court in 1928 (National Monuments Record, AP 247).

The Hare Court houses were only slightly smaller, rising three full storeys, but they were also about 17ft (5.1m) square, and so were not overly modest in scale, despite having been built in such tight proximity (Fig. 51). There were first-floor front-staircase windows, second-floor full-width four-light casement 'workshop' windows and projecting eaves.[59]

These houses are of interest as well recorded early-18th-century houses of good size, probably built for multiple occupation by journeymen weavers. Court development with houses of these proportions contrasts dramatically with the mean and low cottages of early-19th-century courts (Figs 7 and 13). In 1841 the Hare Court houses each had three or four households. One house accommodated a mother and daughter, laundress and silk winder, with a family of four, headed by a silk weaver, and four young adult women, also all in the silk trade; another house was lived in by a young weaver and his wife, an elderly woman silk winder, and a wine cooper; another by two families with children, one headed by a silk weaver, a single elderly male silk weaver and a customs' officer; the last house being occupied by a chair maker and his wife, an old weaver and her son, and a family of weavers with six children.[60]

Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road

In 1696 John Hayward took a 50-year lease of a large plot on the north side of Cock Lane, across from the north-east corner of Swan Field, paying £10 annual ground rent. The plot had a 140ft (42m) south frontage and returned 120ft (36m) to what was later to become the northern extension of Brick Lane, the whole plot corresponding to the latter-day sites of Nos 109-121 Bethnal Green Road and Nos 167-175 Brick Lane. A row of seven houses was built along the east side of the plot with one house facing Cock Lane (Figs 1 and 2). Hayward's lease had been assigned to William Farmer by February 1734(5) when the latter took a new lease from Samuel Tyssen, extending his tenure by 60 years at a ground rent of £13 a year.[61] Farmer (d.1742) was an active local builder who had put up houses on Sclater Street in 1718-20 (see above). On the same day in 1734(5) he also took an 80-year lease on a smaller plot on the other side of what had become Tyssen Street (Brick Lane) 'in order to build four houses' on a 60ft (18m) frontage. By 1745 there were eight properties along Farmer's Cock Lane frontage, all but those at the ends comparably valued and probably of comparable size. It is likely that Farmer himself built five new houses at Nos 109-117 soon after his 1735 lease (Fig. 3).[62]

Fig. 52 – Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road in 2000 (English Heritage, AA004726).

Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road survive from Farmer's development of *c.*1735, much altered, but essentially intact (Fig. 52). They are three-storey brick houses with frontages of about 16ft6in. (5m). There are garrets to the one-room-deep main blocks which are essentially square on plan. Winder staircases in front of party-wall chimneystacks and full-width rear 'weavers' windows' survive in part. Lower back buildings have been rebuilt and enlarged, but probably have origins as part of the original ground-floor layout. Nos 109 and 111 were wholly rebuilt in the 19th century, and No. 117 in the 20th century, the latter retaining its early scale. Nos 119 and 121 were rebuilt on a setback frontage as a consequence of the widening and rerouting of Bethnal Green Road in 1878-9. The seven houses of 1696 along Brick Lane appear to have endured until recently, though perhaps in rebuilt form. There were still

five small houses at Nos 167-175 behind the Public House at No. 121 Bethnal Green Road in the 1950s, gone by 1993.[63] A scar of No. 167 Brick Lane was visible in 1999 on the north flank wall of No. 121 Bethnal Green Road (Fig. 53). This showed the demolished house to have been of comparable form to that of Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road, that is with a main block one room deep rising through three low storeys, with a garret room in a steeply-pitched roof, behind which there was a two-storey back building with a shallower pitch to its roof.

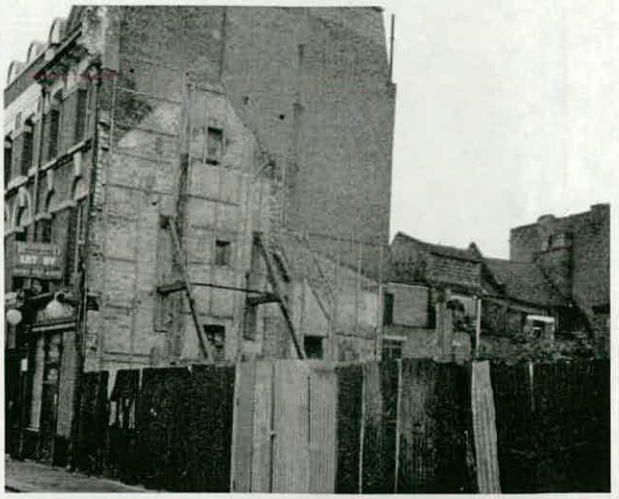


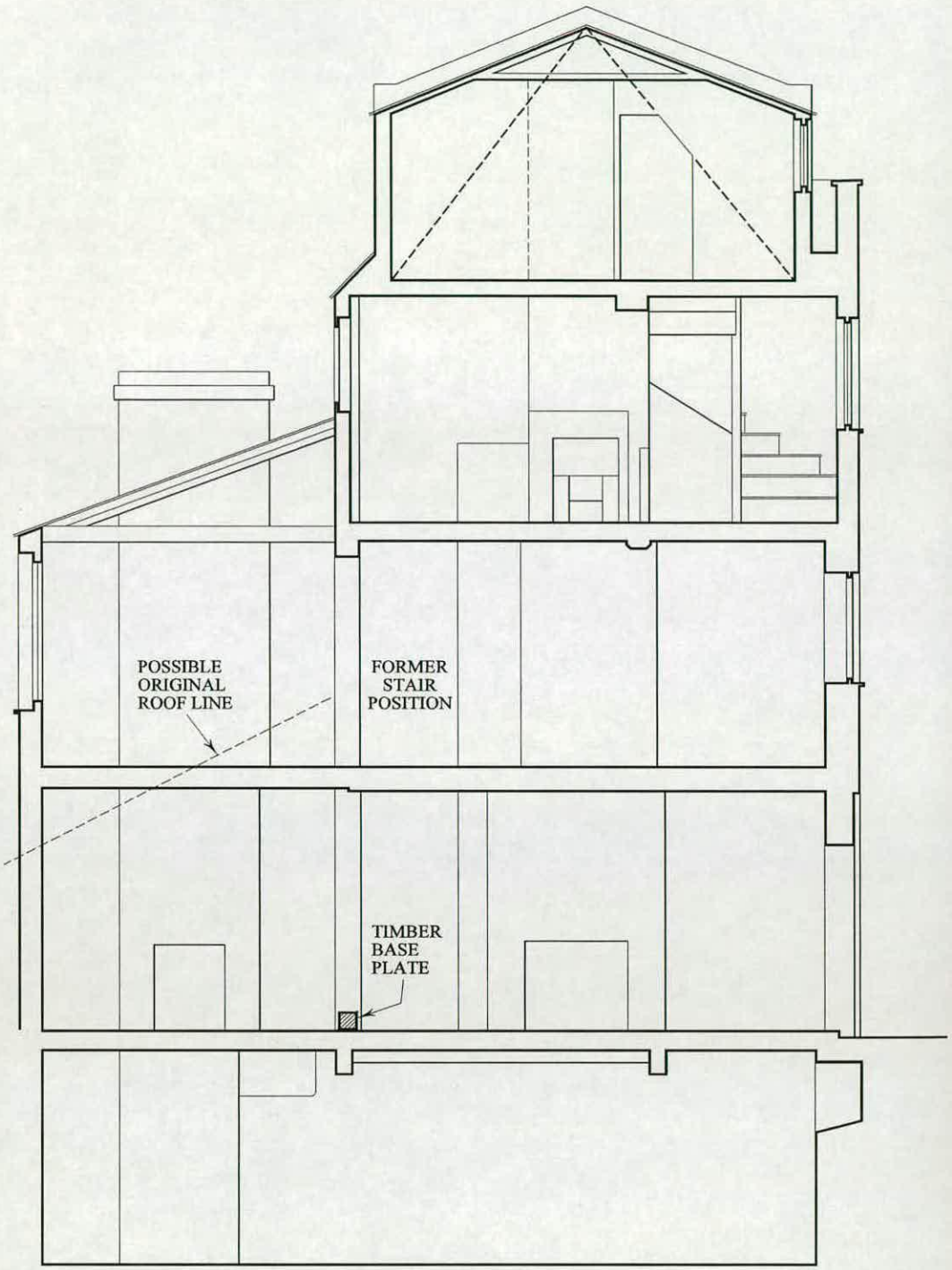
Fig. 53 – View from Brick Lane in 1999 showing the backs of Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road and the flank-wall scar of No. 167 Brick Lane (English Heritage, MF99/01234/10).

To the front No. 113 shows cement-rendered brick over a 20th-century shopfront. There are segment-arch headed upper-storey openings and a fenestration pattern that suggests that the front wall is likely to be early, exposed brick visible internally being consistent with this inference. On the first floor there are three openings asymmetrically arranged, two sash windows with a narrow window to the west to light a staircase. The second floor has a single wide tripartite sash, off-centre on account of the stair position. There is a cornice to a parapet. The front wall of No. 115 was wholly rebuilt over a shopfront in the 20th century, with outer pilaster strips and concrete window lintels. Both houses have relatively unaltered steeply-pitched roofs, covered with a mixture of tiles, including some pantiles. There are broad two-light dormers of recent form.

To the rear the main blocks retain their original roof profiles, with a wide slate-hung 'dormer' projection on No. 115 (Fig. 54). The party-wall chimneystacks rose behind the ridge to east and west, as necessitated by the positioning of stairs to the front. The stack survives on No. 113, but that on No. 115 has been truncated. Originally these stacks were probably shared with Nos 111 and 117. Below the eaves No. 113 retains a full-width north-facing six-light-casement workshop window on the second floor. A similar window on No. 115 has been blocked in part by the raising of a staircase on the west side above the two-storey back building that has a stack to the east and a shallow-pitched roof. No. 113 has a comparable two-storey back building without a stack, but with another blocked full-width workshop window on the first floor. A straight joint suggests that the back wall of No. 113 antedates that of No. 115. There are further single-storey extensions behind the two-storey back buildings.

Fig. 54 – Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road from the back in 1999 (English Heritage, MF99/01258/33).

Internally the ground floor of No. 115 has been opened out for shop use, the main room knocked through into the back building. There is a deep stack to the former front room with a fireplace that is largely obscured, and probably remade, but big enough to suggest that the room may have been used as a kitchen (Fig. 55). There is no trace of an early staircase and there seems to be insufficient space in front of the stack for a winder stair. A setback behind the stack might have had a constructional purpose as an aid to the framing of a stair in this position, though the available depth would mean that it would have to have risen from west to east across the back of the room, rather than winding round a newel post. Such an arrangement has been recorded in early-18th-century timber houses of a comparable scale at Nos 72-78 Colombo Street, Southwark, now demolished (Fig. 56).



115 BETHNAL GREEN ROAD
London E2

SECTION LOOKING EAST

Borough of Tower Hamlets
Surveyed April 1999
Grid referenceTQ 3384 8242
Buildings index no. 98912
Drawn by A.D.

0.5 0 1 2 3 metres

1 0 3 6 9 feet

Fig. 55

The line of the former partition between the front and back rooms is marked by a change in the flooring, substantial joists under the front room stopping and meeting thinner joists for the back room. The east part of the partition between the rooms does survive, as an approximately 2ft (60cm) spur of 9in. (23cm) thick brick walling that rises through the whole building. At the base of this wall there is an approximately 8-9in. (20-23cm) square timber beam. This short beam probably once extended across the back of the ground-floor front room as a base plate to a substantial timber partition. Taken with the change in the joists it does seem to suggest that the back part of the building has been rebuilt if not added. The fireplace in the back room is significantly smaller than that to the front, and an early-18th-century siting of such a fireplace would more typically be in the rear angle.

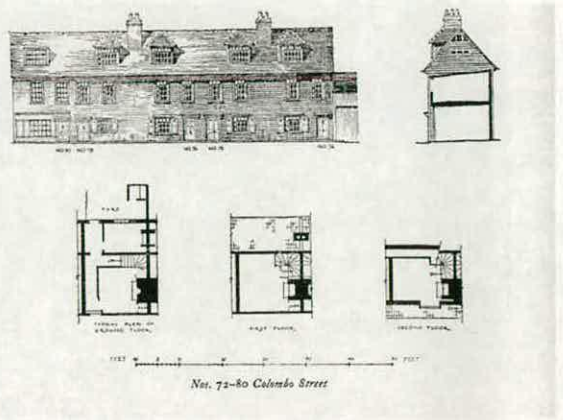


*Fig. 56 – Nos 72-78 Colombo Street, Bankside, Southwark, early-18th-century houses recorded in 1942 (*Survey of London*).*

On the first floor in No. 115 the main stack is narrower than below, with the setback correspondingly wider, perhaps because a winder staircase may have risen to the second floor here. Some irregularly bonded early red brick is exposed in the east wall and chimneystack, as well as in the spur wall behind the front room, closing bricks in the exposed upper part of the spur's back face showing that it never extended any further (Fig. 57). A ceiling beam, remade but in its early position, runs across the front room bearing onto the front part of the stack. Another beam runs from the spur wall along the line of the partition between the front and back rooms. Of this partition there survives a small section of plain panelling. Above the beam the roof of the back building is supported on a trussed timber frame that is distinct from and behind remains of boarding behind the second-floor front room. This trussed frame and the back-building roof construction incorporate sawn timbers and look more likely to be early 19th century than 18th century. Exposed brickwork in the east flank wall of the back room does not look homogenous with that of the front block. The rear chimneystack is of yellow stock bricks at this level, appearing to be an insertion. It may be contemporary with the dog-leg staircase that rises to the second floor on the west side of the back building, and which formerly extended down to the cellar. Stylistically this stair is unlikely to be pre-Victorian; the stair and stack together make the back room awkwardly narrow.

On the second floor there is a boxed beam, as below, and the stack has again narrowed; here it retains a small fireplace with a 19th-century iron grate (Fig. 58). What appears to be an early winder staircase rises steeply to the garret in front of the stack, and the setback behind the stack disappears into the wall just above floor level. The recess behind the stack has matchboarded panelling in the ceiling, perhaps corresponding to the head of a former cupboard. The later dogleg staircase rises to the rear, but there is no back room. The spur wall to the east and a corresponding upper remnant of an answering spur to the west define the width of what would have been an 8ft6in. (2.6m) wide workshop window. The presence of such a window explains both the forward staircase position and the spur-wall construction. The prevalence of the front staircase in 18th-century Bethnal Green in general is probably partially explained by a preference for keeping back walls unencumbered to allow for full-width workshop windows.

The garret room has a timber partition closing off the front stair, with a plank door on strap hinges. The stack is yet narrower, and the garret may well not have been heated. The roof has been partially raised to both front and back, but the confined nature of the original space is still evident.

The cellar shows no evidence of early origins and may have been excavated latterly. The presence of the substantial base plate on the ground floor suggests that any early cellar would only have been one room deep. Even so it is not clear that the chimneystack continued down. Irregularities on the east wall seem to relate to support for the brick spur wall behind the main block.

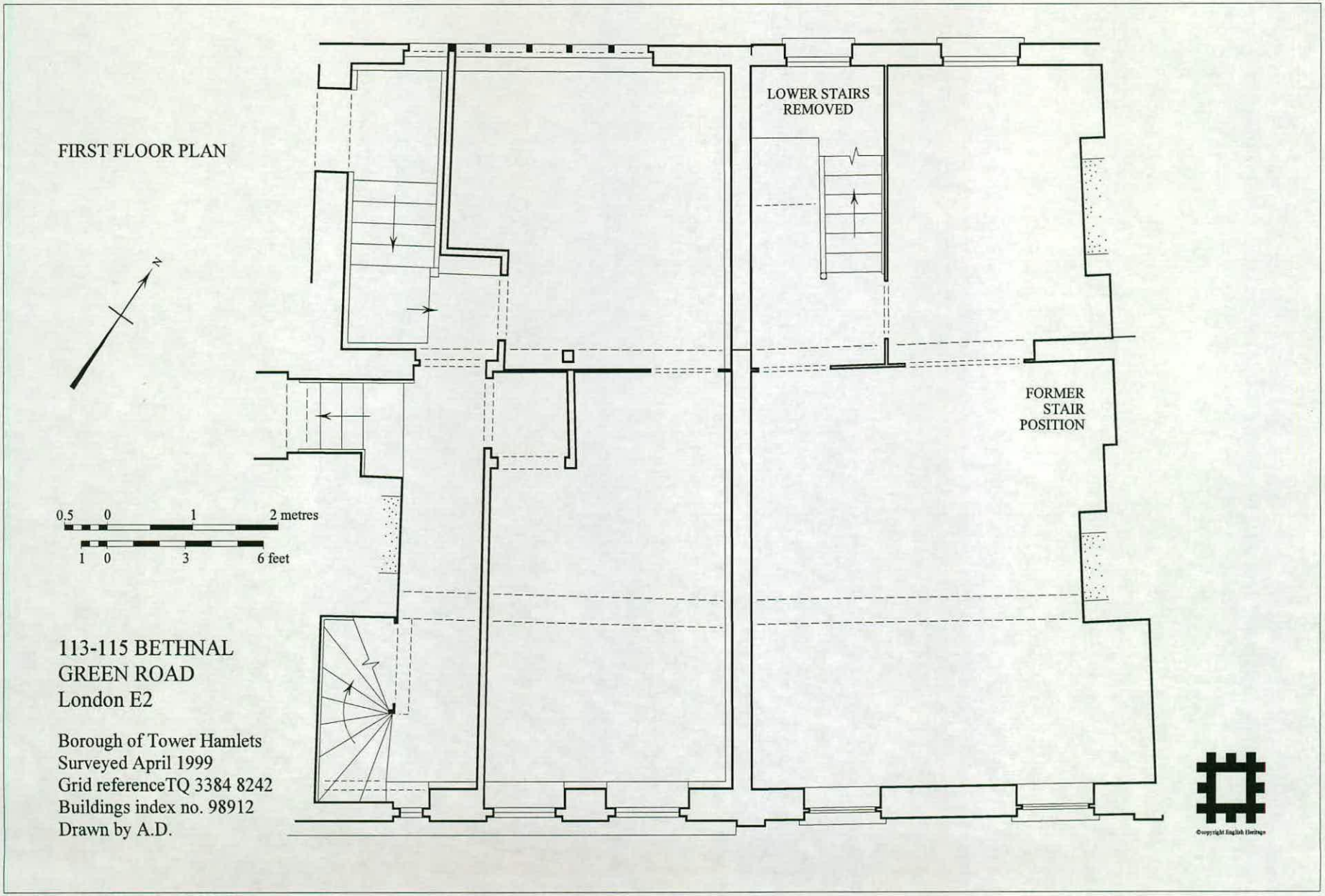
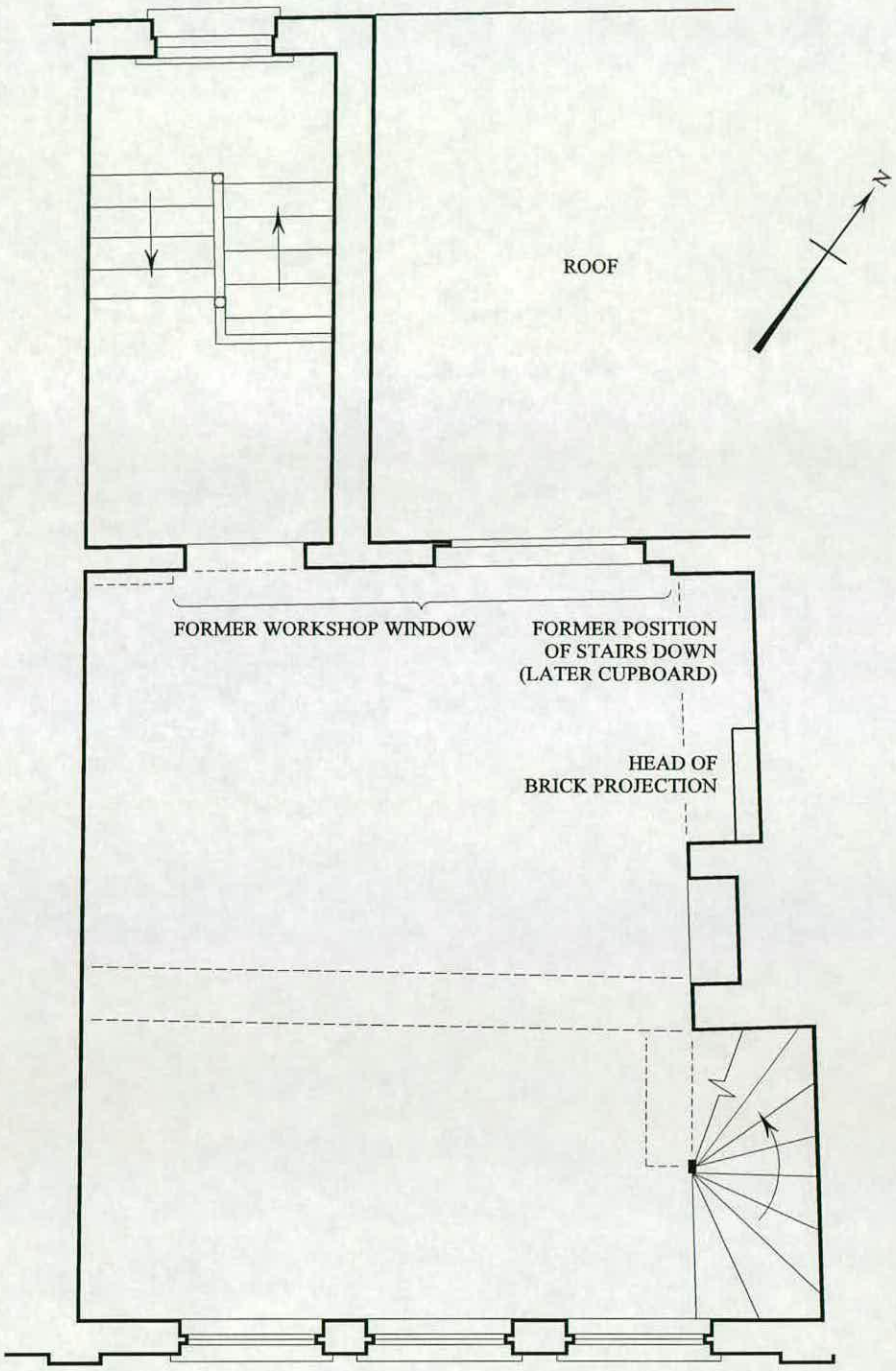

FIRST FLOOR PLAN
LOWER STAIRS REMOVED
FORMER STAIR POSITION
N
0.5 0 1 2 metres
1 0 3 6 feet
113-115 BETHNAL GREEN ROAD
London E2
Borough of Tower Hamlets
Surveyed April 1999
Grid referenceTQ 3384 8242
Buildings index no. 98912
Drawn by A.D.
©copyright English Heritage

Fig. 57



115 BETHNAL GREEN ROAD
London E2

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

Borough of Tower Hamlets
Surveyed April 1999
Grid reference TQ 3384 8242
Buildings index no. 98912
Drawn by A.D.

0.5 0 1 2 3 metres

1 0 3 6 9 feet

Fig. 58

The ground floor of No. 113 has been relined as a shop. There are remnants of what appears to be a Victorian or later staircase on the west side, but there is no longer internal access to the upper storeys. The first floor has a front-staircase layout. A boxed beam aligns with that in No. 115, suggesting contemporaneity, but there is slightly more space between the front wall and the stack in No. 113; the two houses need not have been identically laid out even if built together. Exposed early red brick in the south and east walls includes closing bricks that tend to confirm that the fenestration is essentially unaltered; there are window seats. Half-height panelling that looks to be post-1800 in date returns to the east (Fig. 59). An inserted partition of recent date separates the first-floor front room from the chimneystack and staircase to which it formerly related. A late ornamental iron fireplace has been concealed with concrete (Fig. 60). Behind the stack there is an opening into No. 111, knocked through perhaps *c.*1920 when the two properties came into single occupancy. The partition between the front and back rooms to the north looks like early adzed plain panelling, with a later cornice. It appears to have lost a panel to the east, where a spur wall comparable to that in No. 115 has been removed, necessitating the insertion of a post to hold up the rearward ceiling beam, which also lines through with its equivalent in No. 115. The panelling below perhaps never extended further west, leaving room for a doorway next to the surviving west spur wall. This panelling does seem to indicate that there were two first-floor rooms here from an early date.

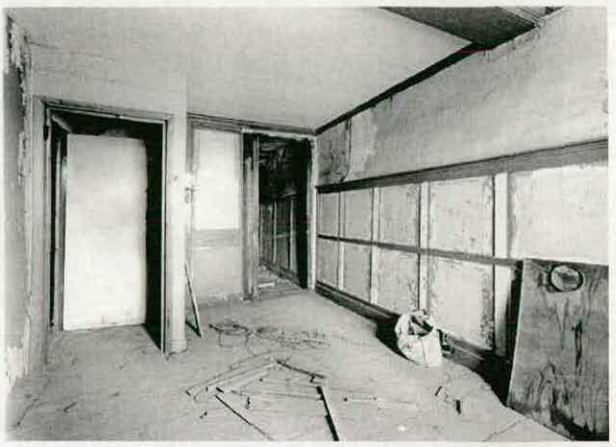


Fig. 59 – No. 113 Bethnal Green Road, first-floor front room, view from the south in 1999 (English Heritage, BB99/09147).

Fig. 60 – No. 113 Bethnal Green Road, first-floor fireplace with front staircase beyond in 1999 (English Heritage, BB99/09148).

The first-floor back room has half-height panelling to the east and north with an ogee cornice, again perhaps post 1800. There is no evidence that the back rooms ever had their own fireplaces. To the rear there is a six-light workshop window under a timber lintel, with beaded mullions and crudely chamfered glazing bars (Fig. 61), interrupted by a partition to the inserted staircase down to the ground floor. Above the beam between the front and back rooms there is timber construction like that in No. 115 to support the back roof, that is a trussed timber frame between the brick spur walls, the brick courses of which do not line through with those of the back room's party wall to the east. Here the framing is clearly behind lath and plaster for the second-floor room's back wall that must be contemporary with or later than the roof. The framing incorporates some sawn timbers and regular bracing, unlikely to be of the first phase. There are waney-edged rafters to the lean-to roof that could be earlier, suggesting the possibility that the roof has been raised and reset.

The front winder staircase up to the second floor appears to be early in construction, its soffit being made with plaster incorporating horse hair. There was a small understair cupboard, above the doorway to which there is an early adzed panel. This suggests that the staircase did not continue down to the ground floor in this position. Perhaps the lower stair was as that posited for No. 115. The first-floor stair window is in a section of wall that has late panelling and is only about 4-5in.(11cm) thick, presumably sacrificing sound construction to make space for the stair which has a very slight newel post.

Fig. 61 – No. 113 Bethnal Green Road, first-floor back room, view from the south in 1999 (English Heritage, BB99/09150).

The single second-floor room has been repartitioned, but the timber ceiling beam survives unboxed, 9in. (23cm) wide and roughly chamfered. The fireplace has been remade with a segmental head and a 19th-century grate. Behind the stack there was a cupboard. In the rear wall between the brick spurs is the six-light workshop window, with beaded mullions.

The front stair continues up to the garret, which is entered via a plank door. This room was evidently unheated originally, a small stack having been added. The dormer window opens behind a rebuilt parapet (Fig. 62). No evidence of a cellar was seen in No. 113.

Fig. 62 – No. 113 Bethnal Green Road, garret, view from the east in 1999 (English Heritage, BB99/09152).

The form of the original houses at Nos 113 and 115 emerges as one-room-plan main blocks with back buildings more modest than those now existing. There may have been no more than single-storey timber outshuts, perhaps unheated wash-houses. The houses might thus have comprised two rooms on the ground floor, that to the front used as a kitchen, and single rooms on the three floors above, those on the first and second floors being workshops lit by full-width north windows. This would mean the houses were of comparable extent to those on Sclater Street, and they were comparably valued. Their layout makes them more suited to single occupancy, but the upper-storey workshops may always have been separately tenanted.

No. 115 was occupied by Jacob Dawes from at least 1744, No. 113 by John Horscorn. William Whitwell lived in No. 115 from *c.*1775 to *c.*1784 when he died. Whitwell was a Whitechapel cabinet maker whose wife Susannah was the daughter of John Farmer (d.1748), a carpenter of Brick Lane and the only child of the William Farmer who probably built these houses. William Howard was in No. 113 from *c.*1770-3 until *c.*1800-04.[64] The land-tax valuation of No. 113 increased slightly in 1770-3 when Howard moved in, and in 1783 his house was assessed for 11 windows, No. 115 only for eight.[65] Perhaps No. 113 was improved and somewhat enlarged *c.*1773; the back building perhaps then raised to its present two storeys to provide additional unheated workshop space. At the same time the front may have been refenestrated. Relatively little apart from surface renewal and the insertion of the back staircase has happened since. No. 115 remained of lower value until 1820-4 when it was brought back into line with No. 113. The raising of the back building at No. 115 might thus be of the 1820s, perhaps with the addition of a chimneystack, though that may have followed with the subsequent insertion of the back staircase.

From *c.*1810-15 the occupant of No. 113 was William Monks, a rope manufacturer. In 1841 Monks, his wife and son had the whole house. Next door at No. 115 was William Hutchins, a coal dealer, with his wife and daughter, who was a shoe binder. Two silk weaveresses also lived in the house.[66] The Monks family stayed in No. 113 until *c.*1900 and No. 115 was occupied by George Mark Louis Pottier, a birch broom maker, in the late 19th century. William Fox, who held Nos 109 and 111 through this period, took No. 113 as well *c.*1920, perhaps renting out the upper storeys as boarding-house rooms. William Fox and Sons, chemists, remained at No. 113 in the 1960s. No. 115 was occupied by timber merchants for much of the 20th century.[67]

Nos 194-198 Brick Lane

This fascinating building was largely rebuilt in the 1980s and 1990s. Nevertheless it retains its overall scale, and fragments of early fabric (Figs 63, 64 and 69). The first late-17th-century properties on the approximately 50ft (15m) frontage were evidently wholly replaced in 1764-5, when their land tax valuations jumped up. In 1763 a new 99-year lease had been granted to Peter Mansell, a local tallow chandler with interests in numerous local properties.[68] This four-storey stock-brick block, ostensibly three houses, was unified under a single hipped pantiled roof with open eaves and no party-wall parapets, blatantly contravening the London Building Acts. The block appears to have been only about 17ft (5.1m) deep and thus one room on plan to each nominal house. No. 194 was two-bays wide, regularly fenestrated with recessed sash windows on the first floor that survive, with full-width casements on the upper storeys, divided into two pairs of three lights, perhaps by the insertion of secondary intermediate support. No. 196 was less regularly fenestrated in two bays, the first and second-storey brick walling surviving. First-floor sash windows are set off centre under a single sash flanked by a small staircase light, indicating the presence of the front-staircase plan that was typical of the area. The upper storey had full-width casements as on No. 194. The corner building at No. 198 had two flush-frame sashes to Brick Lane on the first floor, and recessed tripartite sashes elsewhere, save on the top storey where there were long casements as on the other addresses. This fenestration indicates workshop use, but it also suggests multiple occupancy. More regular and fashionable fenestration might have been expected on such large properties on Brick Lane in the 1760s had they been intended as single-occupancy houses. To the rear there is a segmental arch on the second storey of No. 196 that suggests a wide workshop window. There are dormers in the pantiled roof. Perhaps the block as a whole was always intended for tenemental occupation, possibly with a single staircase in No. 196 serving the whole group. The houses were certainly let in tenements in 1809.[69]

Fig. 63 – Nos 190-198 Brick Lane and No. 24 Bacon Street in 2000 (English Heritage, AA004728).

Fig. 64 – Nos 194-198 Brick Lane in 1956 (London Metropolitan Archives).

Nos 3 and 5 Club Row

The west side of Club Row was the easternmost extent of the Byde estate, developed in the late 17th century, perhaps in the 1680s (Figs 1 and 2). The unusual width of the road probably reflects no more than the fact that this was the edge of Swan Field and the boundary between two estates. The whole of this west side of Club Row was redeveloped in 1764-6, a row of six to the north that included Nos 3 and 5 going up by 1765, another group of five to the south of Little York Street (Whitby Street) being added by 1766. An early registration of a surveyor's affidavit under the Building Act of 1764, documents the certification of a party wall on Club Row in November 1764, identifying Reverend Anthony Natt as the property owner.[70] It is unclear whether Natt was himself a builder, though it seems likely that his father had been (see above). Land tax on the new houses at Nos 3 and 5 was paid in 1765 by James Morriss and John Baker. As they were gone in 1766 they may have been builders.[71]

Fig. 65 – Nos 3 and 5 Club Row in 2000 (English Heritage, AA004729).

Considered externally Nos 3 and 5 Club Row are an extraordinarily little-altered survival, a valuable indicator of the nature of humble town-house building in the 1760s (Fig. 65). They have three full storeys, and no evidence of garrets or basements has been seen. Their front walls are of low-grade brown stock brick, painted on No. 3 but still to be seen on No. 5 where the upper parts have been rebuilt. The 19ft (5.8m) and 17ft9in (5.4m) frontages (No. 3 being slightly wider) each have a single window bay, asymmetrically positioned to align with ground-floor windows. These had to be positioned well to one side to allow for entrances, but these in turn could not be placed right at the other end of the frontage to allow for front-corner staircases that rose immediately from the entrance hall. Rather than there being small windows for these staircases, as was common in this locally typical house type, there are simply vast blank expanses of wall resulting in façades that are highly asymmetrical, disconcertingly so to an observer conditioned to expect classical proportioning in 18th-century house elevations. In so far as there is balance it is an effect of the mirroring of the elevations. When new Nos 3 and 5 were part of a row with one more house to the south and three more to the north. It seems likely that these were put up as three pairs, mirrored around party-wall chimneystacks, a logical and common constructional economy. The survivors are therefore not strictly a pair, but adjoining halves of two pairs. The ground-floor window openings were replaced by modest timber shopfronts in the 19th century, their fascia boards with cornices surviving, with reeding on No. 3 and a box cornice on No. 5. On the upper storeys the single window openings are large, to light what were probably workshops, with segmental heads that lack the refinement of gauged bricks. Into the 1950s there were tripartite sashes, glazed 4:12:4 (Fig. 66). The windows on No.

5 are somewhat wider with lower sills. The change in levels is also reflected in a step down in the coped parapets, though this could be due to rebuilding, and the upper window on No. 5 has probably had its sill lowered. While partly attributable to alteration the irregularity between the houses does seem to be another indicator of their humble nature. Different builders may have been responsible for the adjoining pairs and at this social level there was evident insouciance in respect of classical proportion and regularity. Steeply-pitched roofs retain pantiles with the chimneystacks behind the ridge, an arrangement that was typical of local houses in the 18th century, to allow staircases to be placed in front of the chimneystack, perhaps to suit multiple occupation, perhaps also to allow for full-width fenestration to the rear. A party-wall parapet between the houses may n ot be an original feature, though the wall seems to belong with No. 3 and may reflect the original pairing, suggesting that No. 3 was built before No. 5 (Fig. 67).

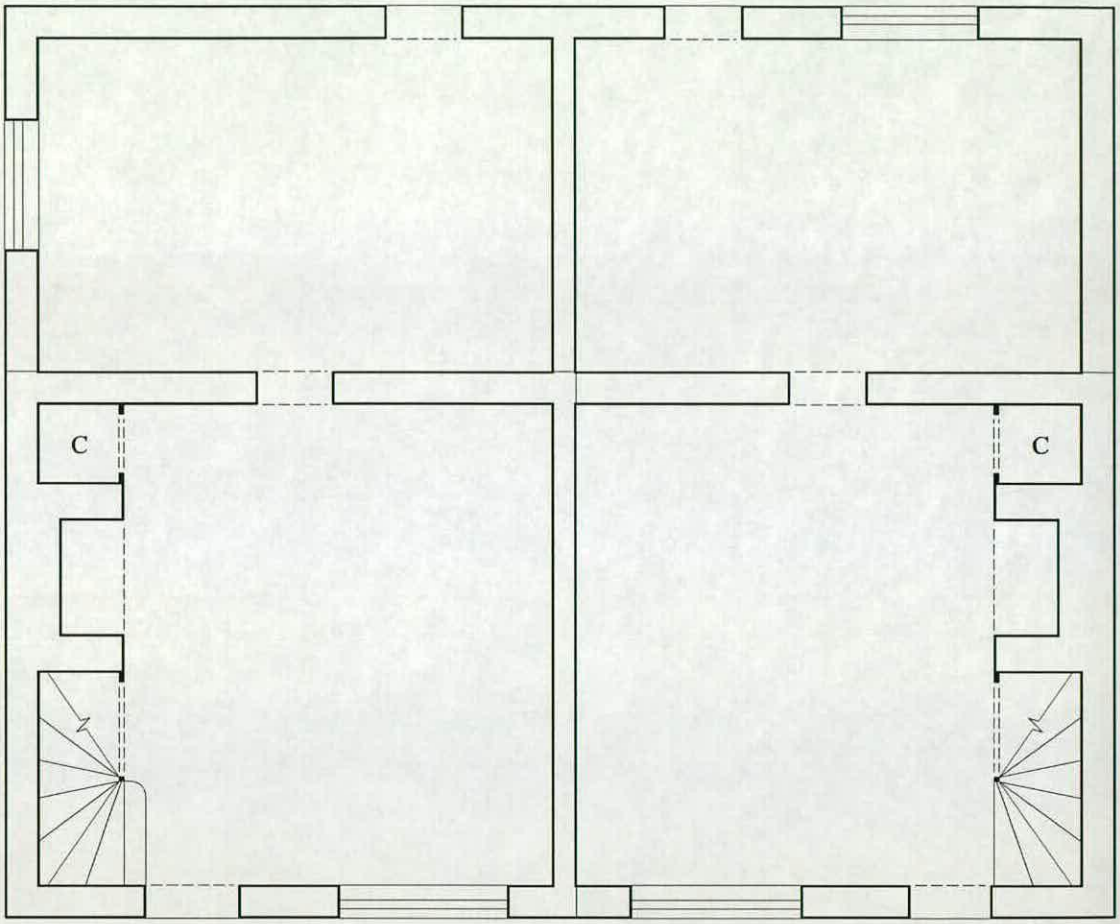
Fig. 66 – Nos 3 and 5 Club Row in 1953 (London Metropolitan Archives).

To the rear there are two-storey unheated lean-to outshuts, possibly always part of the building, though perhaps brick replacements of earlier timber structures that may originally have had steeper roofs giving ground-floor rooms below smaller rooms in roofspaces. The upper-storey rear windows of the main block appear to be remakings of full-width workshop windows.

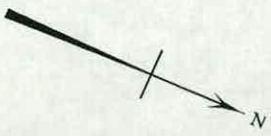
The interiors have not been fully inspected. No. 3 appears to have been substantially rebuilt internally, at least at ground-floor level, and No. 5 seems to retain a staircase in the original forward position behind the front door.

Built to replace smaller houses that were about 80 years old the redevelopment of this side of Club Row led to a doubling in the land-tax valuations.[72] By local standards these were not small houses, perhaps with five rooms each in total, the three-room main blocks being about 19ft (5.7m) square. Each of the houses in the row was taxed for seven windows in 1783.[73] There can only have been three to the front wall (unless fanlights were counted) so this implies either that there were four to the rear, possible but unlikely, or that there were dormer windows in the roofs for garrets traces of which are not externally discernible.

In the 1840s No. 3 Club Row housed a painter/glazier, William Knope, whose daughter was a silk weaver, with an elderly woman weaver also resident, in all only five people. No. 5 Club Row had a building materials' broker/dealer, Edward Mannakey, his wife and five children, with a young married couple, both silk weavers, also resident.[74] Such occupancy at this date may indicate that when new the houses were either in single occupancy, or largely so, though the front-staircase house type was, in general, designed for multiple occupation. The early occupants are likely to have been employed in the silk trade, using their homes as workshops. Club Row has always been a wide street (Figs 1-3), perhaps always put to use for open-air markets, as was certainly the case latterly. In the 1840s it was not a shopping street, but it was far from being a weavers' ghetto, diversification having come with the decline of the silk trade.[75]



GROUND FLOOR PLAN
RECONSTRUCTED SKETCH



3-5 CLUB ROW
London E1

Borough of Tower Hamlets
Surveyed June 1999
Grid reference TQ 3369 8234
Buildings index no. 98918
Drawn by A.D.

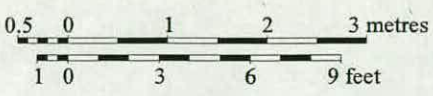


Fig. 67

The southern part of Club Row was obliterated for the rerouting of Bethnal Green Road in 1878-9, and the house immediately south of No. 3 was demolished at some time between 1872 and 1894, to improve access to Little York Street (Fig. 9).[76] Nos 7 and 9 were apparently redeveloped in the early years of the 20th century.

It is not clear that formally designated commercial use was established before the 1890s when Mrs Fanny Hayes ran a coffee room from No. 5 and Francis Reeves was dealing in birds from No. 3.[77] With Sclater Street, Club Row became famous as the heart of London's song-bird and pet market. 'Anyone who spends a Sunday morning in Club Row will notice that besides the outstanding and more miserable objects for sale in the market, its mongrels of doubtful origin and gummy-eyed little kittens, there are many handsome pets, in particular the racing pigeons.'[78] This has formed a locus for nostalgia in more recent times - the trade's origins said to lie in a passion for bird keeping among Spitalfields weavers (Fig. 68).[79] From at least 1951 No. 5 has been owned and occupied by the Stoll family, with Abraham Stoll, a cane furniture manufacturer, succeeded by Neville Stoll. Remarkably, therefore, the building continues to be used in much the manner for which it was built.[80]

Fig. 68 – Club Row in ye Olden Time, *late-19th-century panel in the porch of the Well and Bucket Public House, No. 143 Bethnal Green Road, in 1972 (London Metropolitan Archives).*

Nos 190 and 192 Brick Lane

When the eastward section of Bacon Street was laid out as Thomas Street in 1724 there were already buildings to the south along Brick Lane, present since the late 17th century, evidently partly built up between 1681 and 1703 (Figs 1 and 2).[81] These sites seem to have come round for redevelopment in the later 18th century (see Nos 194-198 Brick Lane). Nos 190 and 192 Brick Lane were rebuilt in 1778-9, following the granting of a 61-year lease to James Green in February 1778, after which their valuations jumped up, Abraham Bourdon and Isaac Casson, being early occupants.[82] Green was the builder, and he is probably identifiable as James Laverdure (d *c.*1784), a carpenter of King Street, Spitalfields, who was also building houses on the south side of King Street near Brick Lane in 1778, and who is otherwise known to have anglicized his name to Green.[83] Laverdure's houses appear to survive as a modest pair of three-storey brick buildings with frontages of about 17ft (5.1m) and parapets concealing steeply pitched roofs (Figs 63 and 69). The fronts have been stuccoed, disguising any alterations, but the regular two-bay fenestration may well survive from 1778, though later refronting is a possibility. The interiors have not been inspected, but the houses are likely to have been built with two-room plans to judge from early valuations and maps. The pair had been unified as Charles Gold's grocer's premises by 1809.[84]

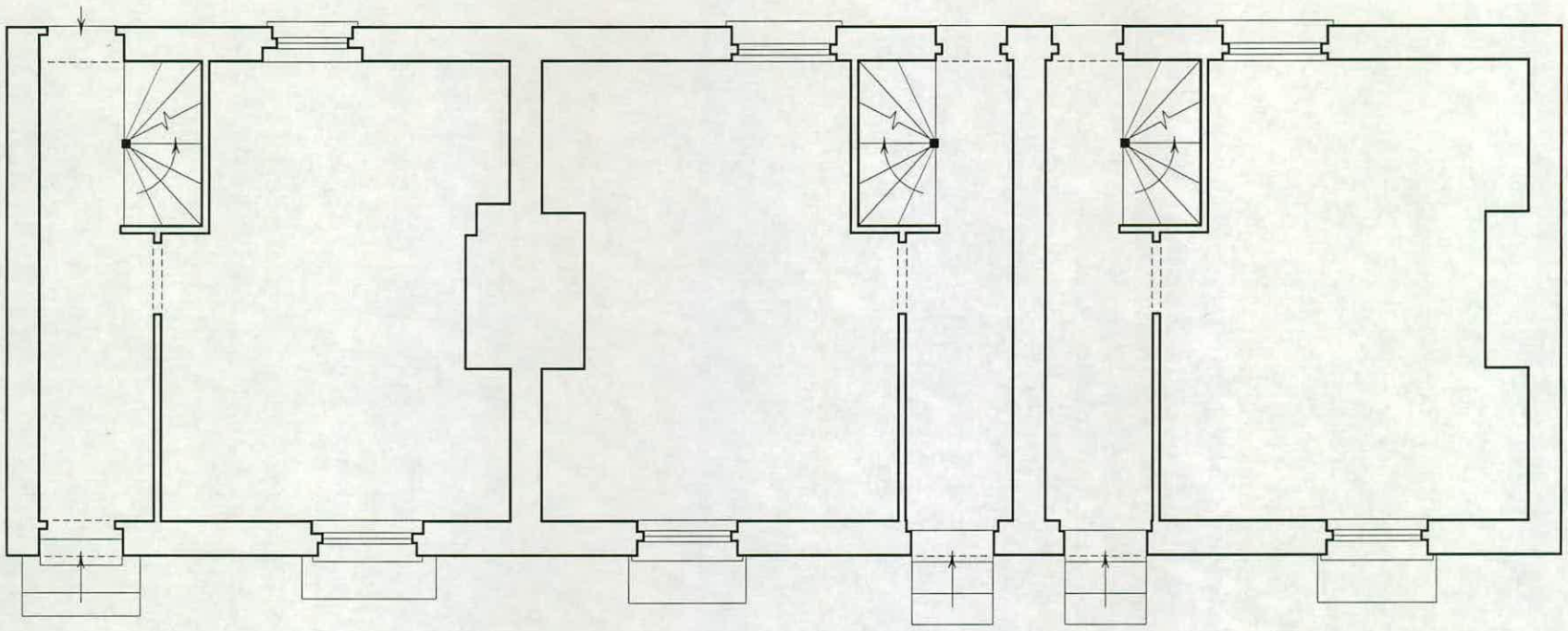
Fig. 69 – Nos 190-198 Brick Lane in 1993(National Monuments Record, AA9305196).

Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court

The three houses at Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court have their origins in late-18th-century development on the Tyssen estate, on the northern fringe of the built-up area of the Spitalfields silk-weaving district, just beyond where growth had stopped in the 1730s (Figs 1-3). In July 1766 the Tyssen family leased three plots to Samuel Coombes, a Spitalfields carpenter, giving 81-year leases. Coombes agreed to build two houses a year on each of the plots until they were 'regularly built upon'. Two of the plots are identifiable as the latter-day sites of Nos 230-240 Brick Lane, a 120ft (36m) frontage developed with six houses, and of Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court, with a 55ft (16.5m) north frontage to what was referred to as the 'intended street', to be 30ft (9m) wide. This street was evidently first known as Coomb or Prince's Street, which latter name was changed to Prince's Court in the 19th century, and then to Padbury Court in 1937. The plot for Nos 4A-6A is 60ft (18m) deep, the same depth as that of the third plot leased in 1766, which had a 66ft6in. (20m) north front to the 'common footpath', it being perhaps either the former site of the three houses immediately east of No. 4A Padbury Court or across the new road.[85] It might be inferred that the houses at Nos 230-240 Brick Lane and Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court were built by Coombes in the late 1760s, but it is not absolutely clear that this was so. Coombes had been taken to law over his debts in 1765. No surveyor's certificate was registered in the 1760s or 1770s and the houses are not obviously listed in land tax assessments before 1796.[86] Perhaps Coombes' intentions remained unfulfilled until *c.*1790 with which date the appearance of the houses seems to be more consistent. All the sites he had leased had certainly been developed by 1799 (Fig. 6), with six houses along Tyssen Street, six more on the south side of Prince's Street, and 22 in a row on the north side. A large area south-east of Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court was a burial ground and by 1775 there were storehouses and stables for Truman, Hanbury, Buxton and Company's brewery across the road from Nos 230-240 Brick Lane. As a residential district this was marginal.

Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court have an overall existing frontage of about 16.6m (55ft), each house being about 18ft (5.4m) square. They are three-storey brick houses with raised ground floors over basements. The front walls appear to be essentially original, each house with a two-bay fenestration pattern giving the group a regular appearance, though far from classical in its proportioning of solid to void (Fig. 70); no early windows survive and most of the sills have been replaced in concrete. In keeping with this regularity the single ground-floor and basement windows line up under one bay - raised entrances being set at the end of each elevation furthest from the party walls that carried the chimneys. The window heights step up on No. 6A in what is a reflection of a slight rise in the ground level. Despite this there is a continuous parapet, though the upper sections of brickwork on all the houses are rebuilt. No. 4A has a cement-rendered plinth, as did Nos 5A and 6A in 1987, since when the ground floors of Nos 5A and 6A have been treated with stucco rustication, giving the houses the semblance of a gentility they did not previously have.[87] The regularity of the fenestration and the raising of the ground floor can be interpreted as 'standardizing' gestures looking towards higher-status or polite house architecture and away from vernacular tradition, but the real status of the houses is betrayed by the quality of the brickwork, an interesting example of poor 18th-century construction the like of

Fig. 70 – Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court in 1999 (English Heritage, BB99/09160).



4A-6A PADBURY COURT
London E2

Borough of Tower Hamlets
Grid reference TQ 3387 8259
Buildings index no. 98917
Based on survey drawings by
Philip Roys Architect, RIBA, October 1998
and Stephen C Fletcher, RIBA, June 1987.

GROUND FLOOR PLAN
RECONSTRUCTION

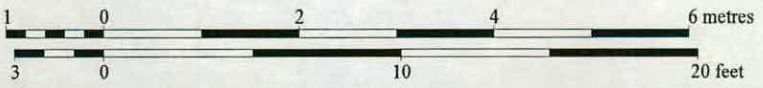


Fig. 71

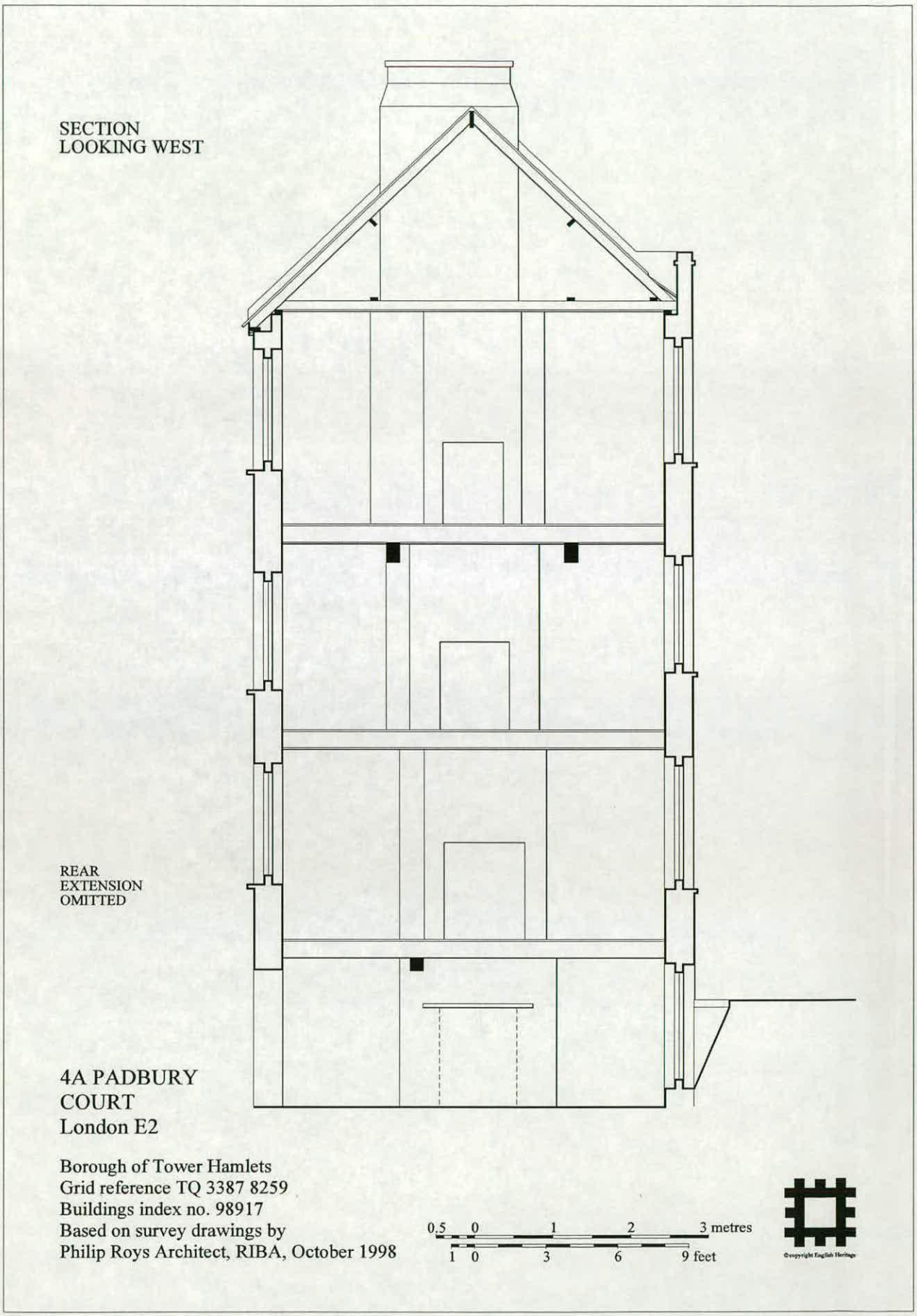

SECTION
LOOKING WEST
REAR
EXTENSION
OMITTED
4A PADBURY
COURT
London E2
Borough of Tower Hamlets
Grid reference TQ 3387 8259
Buildings index no. 98917
Based on survey drawings by
Philip Roys Architect, RIBA, October 1998
0.5 0 1 2 3 metres
1 0 3 6 9 feet
©copyright English Heritage

Fig. 72

which survives far less widely than better work, for obvious reasons. Throughout, the slightly segmental window heads are made with ungauged bricks. No. 4A in particular has low-grade brickwork in its front wall - irregularly bonded, incorporating 1/2 and 3/4 bricks, failing to close up to openings properly, and mixed in colour from brown to orange to yellow. No. 5A has slightly more regular Flemish-bond brickwork. Closing bricks to the west on No. 6A confirm that it was not built with No. 240 Brick Lane. The east return or flank wall to No. 4A was rebuilt in Fletton bricks in the 20th century. The steeply-pitched roofs would originally have been tile covered. Nos 5A and 6A now have slate roofs, and No. 4A, with a hip to the east, has machine-made tiles. There is no evidence that there were ever garret rooms.

To the rear the original back walls have been stuccoed and cement rendered, obscuring what is probably early brickwork, except at the head of the top-storey window on No. 4A. The rear elevations each had a single window bay near the fireplaces, with small staircase windows away from the stacks, as survive in part on No. 4A, and as existed in Nos 5A and 6A in 1987 around when they gave way to a full-height extension across the party wall of Nos 5A and 6A.[88] There is a single-storey flat-roofed 20th-century workshop extension behind No. 4A.

Despite the many alterations the essential shape of the early houses survives. They are like earlier 'weavers' houses in Bethnal Green in being square on plan, with four rooms vertically arranged, making them tall in section (Figs 71 and 72). However, the original layout differed from that of many of the other early houses in the locality, exceptions being Nos 5 and 7 Elder Street of 1725-7.[89] Winder staircases rose at the back on the sides away from the party-wall fireplaces.[90] This layout made the regular fenestration of the fronts possible, dictated a loss of space to ground-floor passages, and took away the possibility of full-width 'weavers' windows' across the south-facing back walls. This does not necessarily mean that the houses were not intended for occupation by weavers, though they are unlike other houses of comparable date that more visibly were.

Internally there is little evidence of the original houses. All the winder staircases have gone, No. 4A having been largely gutted internally with its floors and roof largely remade, and Nos 5A and 6A having been extensively renovated *c.*1987 with the removal of their chimneystacks and extension to the rear.[91] No. 4A does retain its stack, with fireplaces that have iron craddle bars. There is a replacement staircase rising across the back wall, with access to the rear addition on the ground floor through the original back door, formerly at the end of a through passage.

The basement rooms were probably kitchens, appearing always to have had good head height, access from the main winder stairs, and lighting from windows to front and back.[92] In No. 4A there is evidence for a fireplace with remnants of beaded matchboarding that lined the room.

No information has been traced to indicate 18th-century occupancy of these houses. The 1841 census has an infant teacher, Ester Rixen, and her five children, the eldest daughter a silk winder, in No. 6A, along with John and Mary West, silk weavers. No. 5A had the silk-weaving Quanqueteaux family of eight. No. 4A had 14 occupants, the families of Joseph Bedworth, silk weaver, and Harry Jones, labourer, with John Norris, another silk weaver.[93] The preponderance of the silk trade here at this late date tends to indicate that the houses would always have been comparably occupied. Perhaps they were initially intended for single-family occupation but always tenemented.

A group of three late-18th-century houses immediately east of No. 4A Padbury Court, smaller properties with 15ft (4.5m) fronts, was demolished in the late 19th century.[94] The north side of Prince's Street, perhaps also built up *c.*1790, was cleared in the 1950s. The houses here had irregularly fenestrated three-storey fronts, perhaps with front staircase windows on the first floors alongside wide tripartite sashes (Fig. 73).

Fig. 73 – The north side of Padbury Court in 1951 (London Metropolitan Archives).

Nos 232-238 Brick Lane

The plots with a 120ft (36m) frontage that are now the sites of Nos 232-238 Brick Lane were leased by the Tyssen family to Samuel Coombes in July 1766. He may have built houses here thereafter, but more probably the property was not developed until *c.*1790 (see above). First development of the parcel evidently included three-storey brick houses with regular two-bay fronts at Nos 232-238 (Fig. 74), apparently square on plan originally, and closely comparable to the houses at Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court. No. 238 departed from this regularity with a single wide window on its top storey.[95] Wholly refronted since the 1950s, they have not been inspected internally, but their storey heights, rooflines and plot widths correspond with those on Padbury Court. The corner buildings at Nos 230 and 240 may always have been larger. No. 240 appears to have been remade externally in the early 19th century with a recessed quadrant corner and gauged-brick flat-arched window heads. No. 230 was a public house in the late 19th century around when it was rebuilt.

Fig. 74 – Nos 230-240 Brick Lane in 1993 (National Monuments Record, AA93/05191).

NOTES

1. THLHL, LT; *Post Office Directories* (hereafter *POD*); OS 1872; Vale, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
2. English Heritage (hereafter EH), HART report, R. Bowdler, 1992.
3. Ibid.
4. VCH, p. 104; Morgan, *loc. cit.*; PRO, PROB 3/18/267.
5. EH, HART report.
6. POD.
7. Morgan, *loc. cit.*; VCH, pp. 104, 172.
8. 'History of the Owl & Pussycat' in *The Owl and The Pussycat Newsletter*, 1, Oct. 1999.
9. Ibid.
10. OS 1872, 1894.
11. I am indebted to Dan Cruickshank and Bernard Herman for help with this recording and interpretation.
12. Morgan, *loc. cit.*
13. THLHL, LT; TH 2891; MDR 1719/6/270-1; MDR 1728/2/181 & 446; MDR 1771/1/20; GL, H-H, MS 8674/20, 38214-6, 3 Feb 1718(19); MS 8674/21, 39383-4, 40013, 3 Sept and 29 Dec 1719; MS 8674/121, 38214, 39383, 16 Dec 1778; MS 8674/144, 40013, 95811, 97666; MS 8675/3, 97211, 97721.
14. GL, H-H, MS 8674/21, 39383-4.
15. THLHL, LT and BG257.
16. GL, H-H, MS 8674/21, 39383-4.
17. TH 2906.
18. TH 2891.
19. LMA Photographs, 73/5/35/224/6A-12A.
20. THLHL, map from Edwin Chadwick's *Report of the Commission on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population*, 1842.
21. THLHL, 1841 census (PRO, HO 107/694).
22. POD.
23. POD; VCH, p. 190; *The Builder*, 28 Jan. 1871, p. 69.
24. GL, H-H, MS 8674, loc. cit., Nos 38214 and 97666; MS 8675/3, 97721.
25. THLHL, TH 2906; BG 258.
26. POD.
27. THLHL, 1841 census (PRO, HO 107/694); POD.
28. THLHL, 1841 census (PRO, HO 107/694).
29. MDR 1728/2/124, 181; THLHL, TH 2895.
30. VCH, pp. 105-6, 160; MDR 1719/6/271.
31. MDR 1754/2/299; THLHL, BG 257.
32. Publications of the Huguenot Society, xxiii, *The Registers of the French Church, Threadneedle Street, London*, iii (London, 1906), p. 352.
33. In 1766-72 Munday was a partner in the development of Wilmot Street, Bethnal Green, by David Wilmot, the magistrate who helped hang insurrectionary weavers in 1771.[VCH, pp. 92, 114; MDR 1771/6/86).]
34. There was another temporary relative drop in the valuation around 1815, the earlier ratio being re-established by 1820.[THLHL, LT; TH 2893, TH 2906; Publications of the Huguenot Society, *op. cit.*, iii, p. 290, iv, p. 163; MDR, 1771/6/42-3, 86; MDR 1776/6/240-1; MDR 1777/5/525; 1779/4/189.]
35. THLHL, 1841 census (PRO, HO 107/694).
36. POD.
37. An otherwise unreliable view of 1868 of which there is a copy in the Bishopsgate Institute Library shows the building as having a shopfront. I am grateful to James Howett for drawing this view to my attention.
38. *The Builder*, 28 Jan. 1871, p. 69.
39. VCH, p. 160.
40. SoL, pp. 75, 83-4; D. Cruickshank and N. Burton, *Life in the Georgian City* (London, 1990), p. 55.
41. SoL, p. 86; Information kindly supplied by Dan Cruickshank.
42. Information kindly supplied by James Howett.
43. THLHL, BG258.
44. SoL, pp. 81, 275-6.
45. THLHL, 1841 census (PRO, HO 107/694).
46. THLHL, Photographs 031187/69, 300485/32.
47. THLHL, LT; GL, MS 21742/2; MDR 1771/3/126; PRO, PROB 6/118 & 124.
48. THLHL, TH 2906; GL, H-H, MS 8675/3, 98304, 98800.
49. MDR, 1723/6/276.
50. Vale, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
51. THLHL, LT; POD.

52. GL, H-H, MS 8674/121, 61106.
53. MDR 1765/5/555.
54. THLHL, TH 2906.
55. OS 1872 and 1894.
56. Lambeth Palace Library, MS 27250/15; THLHL, BG 257.
57. THLHL, LT.
58. RCHM(E), *London V: East London* (London, 1930), p. 9, with supporting inventory card in National Monuments Record (Bethnal Green 5), 1928. Nos 11 and 13 Hare Street were remade as saw mills in the 1870s, and the site of Nos 11-17 was redeveloped *c.*1900.[POD; OS 1872, 1894.]
59. Ibid; LMA, photograph F2307, 1944; OS 1872.
60. THLHL, 1841 census (PRO, HO 107/694).
61. MDR 1737/5/215; PRO, PROB 3/18/267.
62. THLHL, LT; MDR 1737/5/216; 1793/7/57.
63. OS 1960.
64. MDR, 1771/3/126; THLHL, LT and BG 257 and BG258, 1783 window tax; POD; GL, MS 21742/2; PRO, PROB 6/118 & 124.
65. THLHL, LT; BG 258.
66. THLHL, LT, 1841 census (PRO, HO 107/694); POD.
67. POD.
68. THLHL, TH2906; LT.
69. THLHL, TH 2906.
70. THLHL, LT; LMA, MR/B/R/1.
71. THLHL, LT.
72. THLHL, LT.
73. THLHL, BG 258.
74. THLHL, 1841 census (PRO, HO 107/694); POD.
75. THLHL, E. Chadwick, *loc. cit.*
76. OS 1872.
77. POD.
78. M. Rose, *op. cit.,* p. 104.
79. Tesco's in Bethnal Green Road formerly had a mural of a Club Row street scene with the open-air pet market, based on a photograph taken in 1930.[R. Samuel, *Theatres of Memory, Volume 1: Past and Present in Contemporary Culture* (London, 1994), p. 355).]
80. POD.
81. Morgan, *loc. cit.*
82. THLHL, LT; TH 2906.
83. LMA, MR/B/R/3, Register of Surveyors' Affidavits and Certificates, 1776-1784, Nos 123-4, 15 June 1778; GL, H-H, MS 8674/121, 82794, 83085; SoL, pp. 111-2.
84. THLHL, TH 2906; 1841 census (PRO, HO 107/694); POD; OS 1872.
85. MDR 1766/6/183-4; 1766/7/236; 1808/5/780; VCH, p. 108; London County Council, *Names of Streets and Places in the Administrative County of London* (London, 1955).
86. THLHL, LT; LMA, MR/B/R/1; PRO, E140/21/3.
87. Stephen C. Fletcher, RIBA, Drawing Nos 147/1-3, 1987.
88. Ibid.
89. SoL, p. 84: D. Cruickshank, *A Guide to the Georgian Buildings of Britain and Ireland* (London, 1985), pp. 46-7.
90. Stephen C. Fletcher, RIBA, Drawing No. 147/1, 1987.
91. Ibid.
92. Stephen C. Fletcher, RIBA, Drawing Nos 147/1-3, 1987.
93. THLHL, 1841 census (PRO, HO 107/694).
94. OS 1872 and 1894.
95. LMA Photograph F9331; OS 1872.

PART THREE: ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

BUILDERS AND OCCUPANTS

Builders

1670 to 1740

In the late 17th and early 18th centuries house building in and around London was most commonly piecemeal leasehold development, that is the leasing by remote landowners of relatively small parcels to speculative builders who put up a few houses at a time. Bethnal Green was no exception. Here, as elsewhere, the transfer of whole estates or large parts thereof for freehold development by large-scale speculators operating in the manner of Nicholas Barbon, late-17th-century London's greatest house builder, was unusual, local exceptions being Jon Richardson on the Nichol estate and possibly Anthony Natt on the Byde estate. Few people were house builders and nothing else. There was movement between trades and many people from various backgrounds made themselves master builders, perhaps holding more than one job. Those artisans who became builders were most often carpenters, even when the external walls of the houses they put up were of brick. In this context being a 'builder' meant acting as designer, surveyor, contractor and construction manager. Even for the large houses of Spitalfields, let alone the humbler dwellings of Bethnal Green, there was no need for, or prospect of, the involvement of 'architects'.[1]

In Bethnal Green, again typically, numerous carpenters and a wide range of other tradesmen used house building as a means of earning from property rather than simply from a trade skill, sometimes becoming landlords, many of the houses being tenanted by poor weavers. The development of Mile End New Town in the 1680s, which was comparable to that of much of Bethnal Green in that it comprised small houses largely for occupation by weavers, has been characterized as 'slow and spasmodic, . . .carried out to a large extent by jobbing builders with limited resources. They relied heavily on mortgages to raise the necessary capital, and were often unable to complete more than a few houses.'[2] Intermediaries were common and small-time speculative builders in this period could set up with virtually no ready cash, raising money on a building agreement with a landlord, or by mortgage. Typical development parcels in Bethnal Green were for one to three houses at a time, occasionally more up to rows of eight. Building leases sometimes went to merchants or 'gentlemen' who took them on as speculations with the intention of subcontracting. John Oakey, a wealthy silk throwster and justice, after whom a street was named, appears to be an example of this in the 1720s. In the same way artisans, whether those with building trade identities or others, perhaps ambitious weavers, might have taken on small building leases, contracting 'by the great' and working with fellow tradesmen. The involvement of a weaver in the building process does not imply a self-build for occupation by a master weaver, with or without journeymen tenants. Some of those principally encountered as speculating 'carpenters', William Farmer and Richard Storey, seem to be alternatively identified as weavers, and it should be noted that the Carpenters' Company did admit non-carpenters up to 1727. It is likely that there were ambiguities in and loose boundaries between trade designations - building being one of the principal alternative economic activities to weaving in the area when the silk industry was depressed.[3]

Most of the builders in Bethnal Green up to the 1720s were 'citizens', that is 'freemen' of the City of London, a status acquired through the guilds after a seven-year apprenticeship in the City. In the mid 17th century about 3/4 of adult male householders in the City were 'citizens', so 'freemen' were not an elite and not necessarily well off. Post-Fire reconstruction legislation allowed 'foreigners' to build in the City and thereby to become 'freemen'. By the end of the 17th century many 'citizens' were living and trading in suburbs, and company membership soon become an irrelevance. Yet the trade companies did not entirely give up their supervisory and standard-setting roles. Of course, proximity to the City may have been a factor in the predominance of 'citizens' in the development of Bethnal Green. In addition freeholders like Thomas Sclater/Bacon may have been keen to consolidate their investment in land by ensuring a relatively good standard of building, seeing to it that the builders to whom they gave leases were, if not master carpenters, at least City men and traditionally qualified, rather than suburban 'cowboys' such as those non-affiliated tradesmen who would have been responsible for much

housebuilding in less coherently developed parts of East London. This degree of quality control is notable given that much of the development appears to have been designedly for habitation by 'inferior artificers'.[4]

The early builders of Bethnal Green can thus be characterised as modest but reputable entrepreneurs. William Farmer was the son of a local 'yeoman' (freeholder), so perhaps never a humble artisan. That he and others took out insurance policies on some of the houses they built in Bethnal Green indicates that they were wealthy enough to protect their investments. Men such as Farmer, Anthony Natt or John Hayward were clearly substantial operators who needed to, and evidently knew how to, sustain credit, a difficult trick in this period. We should think of them and their counterparts as businessmen who were involved in building not simply or even primarily as 'craftsmen', but for profit.

It is also clear that many of these 'citizen' artificers had settled in Bethnal Green and that they were essentially local. With the exception of Edward Grange there is little evidence that the leading early-18th-century builders in Bethnal Green were active elsewhere, even in adjoining Spitalfields. They were also, it seems, an interconnected group, sometimes linked through apprenticeship, Grange to Farmer, Natt to Storey, with origins both near and far - Farmer from Stepney, Grange from Yorkshire.

It is possible to flesh out a picture of these local builders as moderately affluent people who lived in houses comparable to those they built. In this impoverished weaving district they would have been among the wealthier inhabitants. An insight into their own domestic spaces is a significant guide in attempting to assess the status and occupancy of the houses as a whole. In 1728, when he was investing in much building in the area, Farmer was living on the corner of Sclater Street and Brick Lane (on the site of No. 123 Brick Lane), in a house that, like most of the others he built, was 17ft by 19ft (5.1m by 5.7m) on plan. Anthony Natt had an address on Anchor Street while rising to prominence in the Carpenters' Company.

Two probate inventories provide more vivid evidence. John Hayward, the 'citizen' bricklayer and house builder, died in 1719, resident in Bethnal Green. He had a substantial leasehold estate worth about £800, comprising 64 houses, essentially probably those he had built, and other land taken on in leases with start dates spanning from 1669 to 1708. Hayward had leases on houses in Hare Street from 1670-1, Castle Street (Virginia Road) from 1675, and Old Nichol Street from 1684-8. He was also probably responsible for the eight-house row of 1696 on the site of Nos 167-175 Brick Lane and No. 121 Bethnal Green Road, as well as for houses in Wapping of 1701, and others on Cock Lane and New Nichol Street of 1705-8. His inventory shows that his own house had three storeys and six rooms, with two rooms on the first floor lit by three windows (perhaps two to the front and one to the back), and one room above in what may have been a garret. Below there were two parlours and a kitchen, the latter perhaps in a cellar with a wash-house. The value of his household goods was £133.14.0 of which almost half was made up by building materials, stored wood and miscellaneous garden items. His upper-storey chambers all contained pictures and looking glasses. There were no beds in the parlours in which there was a clock and a spice box. Hayward left his wife Mary £500 in his will. He appears to have prospered, living comfortably, but by no means grandly.[5]

Samuel Vevers, the bricklayer who in 1732 had taken a development plot on the north side of Bethnal Green Road from the Tyssen estate, died in 1737. He was then described as of St Leonard, Shoreditch, but he may at an earlier time have lived in one of the houses that Hayward had built at the top end of Brick Lane in 1696. Vevers' inventory indicates that his house at the time of his death was comparable in scale to those in the Brick Lane row, the scar of No. 167 Brick Lane having revealed their essential similarity to the surviving houses at Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road that were probably built by William Farmer in or soon after 1735 (Figs 53 and 55). These houses were standard in the area in the early 18th century, comprising five rooms, with a main block one room deep rising through three low storeys, a garret room in a steeply-pitched roof, and a small back building. It is interesting to find a modest builder like Vevers' occupying a whole house of this nature. His house also comprised five rooms, though with less height, the main block being two rooms in two storeys under a garret; behind there was a wash house with a room above. There was no designated parlour, but the ground-floor kitchen had a clock, and the bedchamber above had a peer glass and five small pictures. The garret contained another bed and two birdcages, and

the room over the wash house also had a bed. Vevers' household goods, including timber and other building equipment on two sites in Bethnal Green, were altogether only worth about £50. However, he too owned property, two houses in Shoreditch High Street, and land in Camberwell, and his whole estate was valued at £716.8.6.[6] Vevers was a step down from Hayward in terms of affluence, yet he was neither poor nor narrowly based. Nor was he poorly housed, occupying all of a five-room house in an area where few can have been so amply accommodated.

1760 to 1820

In so far as there was concerted housing development in Bethnal Green in the late 18th century the picture does not change dramatically, nor did it more widely, until the 1790s. It is evident from the scale of their operations that many London housebuilders remained 'un-Barbonized'. It has been calculated that in 1775 nearly 77% of London builders built five houses or less, and that only 9% erected more than ten in that year.[7] Accordingly many of Bethnal Green's builders in the 1760s and 1770s were still essentially local artisans from a range of building trades operating on a small scale - Samuel Coombes, John Fellows, John May Evans, James Laverdure, and Jonathan Gee were all bricklayers or carpenters from either Bethnal Green or Spitalfields.

At the same time there are instances of more ambitious entrepreneurship based in property in an intermediate class of locally prominent figures with varied backgrounds. David Wilmot 'Esquire', the parish treasurer and magistrate at the centre of the uproar that led to the public hangings on Hare Street in 1771, began locally as a labourer and rose through property dealings and speculative building in the 1760s, working with Thomas Munday, an East Smithfield pewterer, and John Wilmot, probably his son and a bricklayer. Also linked to this group was John Price, a Petticoat Lane plasterer, who was building on the Red Cow estate around Granby Street in the 1770s. Following the improvement of Bethnal Green Road these people laid out Wilmot Street in 1766-72 (redeveloped in the late 19th century) and Wilmot Square from 1777, creating a new residential enclave well to the east of the Church of St Matthew amid open fields and away from the weaving district. David Wilmot's own large house, 'Wilmot's Folly', stood at the north end of this 'suburban' island. Wilmot was the landowner so this was 'freehold development' of land and houses *à la* Barbon, not the more typical small-scale 'leasehold development' by artisans who were speculating only in houses.[8]

Others surely aspired to Wilmot's levels of enterprise. Ann Merceron, the wife of James Merceron, a Brick Lane pawnbroker (the ultimate intermediary trade), was identified as a builder.[9] James Merceron may have started as a weaver, but by the 1770s he had become a major local landlord. In owning property he was not simply operating as a master with resident journeymen. The Mercerons had clearly worked out how to use other people's property as a route to wealth. Their son Joseph gained local standing, displacing Wilmot (see above). Thomas Green, a Petticoat Lane baker, and Peter Mansell, a local tallow chandler, were similarly involved in property speculation, the latter as another major landlord. In redeveloping the site of Nos 125 and 127 Brick Lane in 1778 Daniel Delacourt, a distiller, appears to have provided both a house for himself and lettable workshop floors.

Towards the end of the 18th century ambitious carpenters or others styling themselves 'builders' increasingly undertook the building of whole streets in London's suburban areas, committing themselves to the significant additional costs of paving and drainage, spreading risks by letting house plots to other artisan builders. A credit squeeze brought on by the outbreak of war in 1793 finished off many small entrepreneurs. The decline of small-scale speculation at the end of the 18th century has been documented in the context of Somers Town and interpreted as a function of the rise of capitalism, 'the traditional organization of the building process collapsed as piece-rates and the measure and value system could no longer be upheld and craftsmen lost their independence. Throughout the decade of the 1790s disparities in production became more and more pronounced with the emergence of an unregulated housing market, sharp price fluctuations and the use of different wage forms.'[10]

After 1800 the need to speculate on a large scale to find even small profit brought a marked lowering of standards at the bottom end of the market. In Bethnal Green this can be represented by Saunderson Turner Sturtevant. He was a soap maker/tallow chandler who bought a large plot of land on the Fitch estate in

1804 for freehold development. In the next fifteen years this was built over with very poor quality housing. A survey of the weaving district published in 1840 focussed on this and other poor housing built since 1800 'by speculative builders of the most scampy class'.[11] Bethnal Green had housed the poor throughout, but the areas that needed clearance at the end of the 19th century were those that had been developed more recently. The area's 18th-century houses were not necessarily superior, of the smallest and worst we have no evidence, and by the 19th century they had certainly become overcrowded, but the greater part were not so poorly made nor so small.[12] The survival of a handful of these 18th-century buildings, as compared with the utter disappearance of the early-19th-century 'weavers' cottages', is significant. Alienation between the producer and the consumer was not so entire in the 18th century. The 18th-century artisan builders had an engagement that their successors lost.

Occupancy

In considering who lived in the 18th-century houses of Bethnal Green and how, the principal difficulty is ambiguity regarding the nature of multiple occupation. There can be no doubt that very many London houses were multiply occupied in the 18th century. Occupation of a single storey as what we would now call a 'flat' was common, and many families lived in single rooms.[13] The difficulty lies in ascertaining to what degree, if at all, houses were built with the knowledge that they would be multiply occupied from the outset and how, if at all, this influenced their design. Almshouses aside, physical evidence for purpose-built divided houses in 18th-century London is elusive, something that is not true elsewhere in England and Europe. Multiple occupation has been interpreted as having been exceptional in 17th-century East London.[14] If this is accurate and it became more common in the 18th century perhaps it remained something avoided where possible. Though some old houses in the City had different freeholders on different floors,[15] the leasehold system conventionally worked so that whole new houses were in single ownership and sublet. 'A dwelling-house in England means everything that is contained under the same roof. In France, Scotland, and, many other parts of Europe, it frequently means no more than a single story. A tradesman in London . . . expects to maintain his family by his trade, and not by his lodgers. Whereas at Paris and Edinburgh, the people who let lodgings have commonly no other means of subsistence.'[16] Even so, by the end of the century one family per room was widespread, shopkeepers and other small landlords typically occupying the ground floor and letting off the other rooms, cellars and unheated garret rooms being the least desirable.[17] Multiple occupation in London was certainly associated with poverty. Louis Simond's claim that 'Each family occupies a whole house, unless very poor' needs to be taken with a grain of salt, but other early-19th-century commentators confirm the essential, indeed obvious, point: 'in a large proportion of the dwellings of the poor a house contains as many families as rooms', and 'Persons with small incomes [are] compelled by great rents and heavy taxes, to occupy furnished and unfurnished first and second floors'.[18]

Late-Georgian literary anecdote is of limited relevance in assessing early-18th-century Bethnal Green. This was a place that was not closely comparable to other localities in the metropolis. Its domestic-industrial weaving monoculture and the rapid growth thereof are likely to have created particular housing needs. There is straight-forward evidence of multiple occupation in a petition of 1743 against making Bethnal Green a parish, for fear of higher rates. Despite its tendentious purpose, the testimony is credible and worth quoting at length: 'by far the greatest Part of the Houses in the said Hamlet are lett at Ten Pounds *per Annum*, and under; and are mostly lett out by the Owners of such Houses, in Two or Three distinct Parts or Tenements, by reason of the Great Poverty of the Inhabitants, who are unable to take a whole House upon themselves, and the chief Part of the parochial Taxes for such Houses is now paid or allowed by the Landlords thereof, otherwise few Tenants could be found to inhabit therein, which is a sensible Hardship to such Landlords; and that several of the Petitioners, who are Artificers in Building, have very lately taken long Leases of a great Number of Houses within the said Hamlet, at certain yearly Rents, and have laid out upon such Houses, very large Sums of Money, in order to make the same tenantable. . .'.[19] The plausibility of this can be confirmed through statistics. Allowing anything around usually accepted measures of about 4-6 people per household, it is clear that in 1743 there were in Bethnal Green more households (about 2500-3750 for about 15000 people) than there were houses (about 1800). This ratio is not exceptional in relation to other parts of London, but here there were no large old houses to be divided. Single-family occupation of the houses built since *c.*1670 could not have been the rule in the 1740s. Late-17th-century houses may have been designed for single-family occupation and

converted to multiple occupation with population growth and a decline into poverty. However, such a pattern seems unlikely to apply to the many houses built in Bethnal Green after 1700. There was already a population of *c.*8500 in the hamlet in 1711, and map evidence is sufficient to indicate that the number of houses at that date can have been scarcely half that of the 1740s (Figs 1-3). Multiple occupation must have been widespread already by *c.*1710. With this as the *status quo*, a large number of houses were built in the years following 1719, in the face of what would have been obvious and intensifying local poverty. It may be inferred that houses built in Bethnal Green after *c.*1710 were designed knowing that a high proportion of them were destined for multiple occupation, though this may not have been true of the area's earlier houses which were, on the whole, smaller. By the 1740s many houses in Spitalfields proper were being divided into lodgings.[20]

Further insight into who might have lived in what space may be gained through comparison of rents and incomes. Sales of houses in Sclater Street in 1729 and Bacon Street in 1745 suggest annual rents for whole houses of £7.10.0 and £9 respectively.[21] This conforms with the claim made in the petition of 1743 that houses were rentable at £10 and less, and evidence that two more houses in Sclater Street were being rented for £7 each in 1752.[22] A group of somewhat larger houses on Oakey Street appear each to have had an annual rentable value of about £7 in 1773.[23] These were three- or four-room houses, so a typical room rental of about £2 to £3 a year or about 1s a week can be deduced, rather less than was typical elsewhere in London, as is to be expected.[24] As late as 1853 Bethnal Green weavers still typically paid 1s6d/week room rent.[25]

To assess who could afford a room or a house it is necessary to consider incomes. Journeymen weavers earned up to 15s a week in the 1760s, but there were often periods of unemployment, so this is not necessarily translatable as an income of £37.10.0 a year. Incomes of £20 a year and less were widespread. Calculating an average expenditure of about an eighth of income on rent, a room in a Sclater Street house would have been affordable with an income of £20 a year and thus within reach of typical journeymen weavers.[26] Two rooms would have been possible only for those fully employed or artisans of higher standing, and whole three-room houses would have called for an annual income of about £60, unimaginable to all but a few in Bethnal Green, those such as Samuel Vevers. Only affluent artisan masters would have been able to afford to occupy a whole house, and there is no evidence to suggest that this class was ever numerous in Bethnal Green. These calculations do tend to indicate that the houses of *c.*1720 and later on the Red Cow and Tyssen estates were always predominantly multiply occupied. The house builders of the 1720s and 1730s would have been aware that there was not a substantial local market for single-family houses.

The domestic topography of the Spitalfields silk industry up to the early 18th century has been characterised as 'small scale and paternalistic', masters and journeymen living together in the masters' houses, set among smaller houses inhabited by other journeymen.[27] While there was such a mix of small houses around big houses in Spitalfields proper, this description does not fit Bethnal Green so well. From about 1716 into the 1730s estates in Spitalfields (Wood-Michell and Tillard) were being built up with many big merchant's or master's houses, whereas in Bethnal Green little apart from distinctly smaller houses were being built from *c.*1720 up to about 1740. Topographically and typologically Elder Street perhaps represents the meeting point or merging of the two classes of housing. There were undoubtedly small houses in Spitalfields, though few are still extant, but there was never a significant number of big houses in Bethnal Green. Many silk masters were probably small operators employing only two or three journeymen at a time. Perhaps some of the early-18th-century occupants of Sclater Street and environs were such small masters holding whole houses for themselves, with adjoining houses of comparable size subdivided for the journeymen they employed, but this is neither the co-habitational weavers-in-the-garret nor the big house/little house relationship that might have held in Spitalfields. Bethnal Green was overwhelmingly populated by journeymen and 'inferior artificers' and there were not great variations in house size. Silk masters were already moving away from Spitalfields to more salubrious surrounds in the 1720s. What few masters there might have been in Bethnal Green had probably emigrated by the 1740s.[28] This picture reinforces the numerically derived impression that Bethnal Green's houses of the 1720s and 1730s were designed in the knowledge that most would be used for multiple occupation, as workshop homes for a floating population of short-term tenant journeymen. Those who could have afforded long-

term tenancies of whole houses were few, likely to have preferred to live elsewhere, and anyway decreasing in their numbers.

Later in the 18th century there was not a great deal of new building and single-family occupation became progressively more exceptional. In 1763 about one in three houses was leased to a local entrepreneurial oligarchy (building tradesmen and others) who let their properties out as lodgings to journeymen weavers.[29] One of these oligarchs, Peter Mansell, appears to have been responsible for building Nos 194-198 Brick Lane in 1763-5 as a large tenement block (Figs 63 and 64). By 1788 there were reputedly no silk masters or manufacturers resident in Bethnal Green, houses that had possibly been those of masters being subdivided for weavers.[30] Growing distress in the silk industry towards the end of the century meant that there was 'very generally a family in every room',[31] Daniel Lysons reporting that 'The town part of this parish is extremely populous; being inhabited principally by journeymen weavers, who live three or four families in a house, and work at their looms and reels for the master weavers in Spitalfields.'[32] During the early 19th century the number of people per house in the parish declined, probably as a result of the numerous new streets of two-storey cottages. The older houses remained multiply occupied, and it was still usual that 'among the weavers of Spitalfields a man has a loom in his room and sleeps in it with all his family' (Figs 4 and 8).[33] In 1809 a rent schedule lists eleven Sclater Street houses as 'let in tenements' by the leaseholders, but this can not be taken to be the full extent of multiple occupancy, more its minimum extent. Nos 130-140 Bethnal Green Road were also then explicitly let in tenements, as were Nos 145-149, 163-165, 192-198, and 210-216 Brick Lane and Nos 1-7 Hare Street.[34]

Evidence as to what these 18th-century weavers' tenements were like as homes is elusive. Pictorial representations of the interiors of weavers' houses in the 18th century are, unsurprisingly, lacking. The first plate from William Hogarth's 'Industry and Idleness' of 1747 famously shows the industrious and idle apprentices in an improbably poorly-fenestrated room into which the master has entered (Fig. 5). It is not evident that this is anyone's living space, though the interpenetration of working and domestic uses would have been general. 'Long lights' were widespread as good lighting was important in these workshop spaces, but this should not give rise to an image of salubrity. Weaving looms were very noisy and 'The work was done in small, crowded rooms in horribly insanitary dwellings, and the air was carefully excluded by paper pasted over the cracks of the windows, to prevent the silk from losing weight and so making the weaver liable to deductions from his earnings'.[35] Weaving workshops may also have been in back buildings, and the use of ground-floor rooms as warehouses would have been common.[36] Room use in analogous buildings would have been variable; the likelihood of great flexibility of use within the same architectural form must be recognised.

Direct evidence for the occupation of particular buildings by people firmly identifiable as weavers in the 18th century is comparably difficult to find. Probate inventories rarely make it possible to place people at particular addresses, but, as those of John Hayward and Samuel Vevers have already shown, they are of great value in depicting how houses were occupied and, something for which there is little other evidence below the highest social levels, how rooms were furnished and used. In bringing forward inventories the usual caveats about their usefulness in reconstructing house form need to be applied - it is sometimes unclear whether one is dealing with a house or merely a household, rooms may be left out, and spatial relationships are often ambiguous. In Bethnal Green another general qualification, that is that inventories exclude the poorest, renders the source even more partially useful. No exhaustive inventory research has been attempted as any quantitative evidence derived therefrom would be highly likely to be misleading in this social milieu. Nonetheless, for a pictorial evocation of house interiors in the late 17th and early 18th centuries probate inventories are unrivalled. Michael Power's research into 17th-century East London inventories in general has provided a general picture of crowded spaces, much overfurnished. Cramped living conditions across 18th-century London, even for the better off, have been documented as being usual elsewhere.[37]

The description of a few arbitrarily selected sample inventories will give an impression of a range of house occupancy in early-to-mid-18th-century Bethnal Green. Luke Miller, a relatively affluent weaver, evidently a master, died in 1735, apparently in single occupation of his house, which comprised five rooms stacked vertically from a cellar to a garret; it could have been one of those built in Sclater Street

*c.*1720. The ground-floor room was the kitchen and the cellar was no more than a coal store. The first-floor room contained a bed, with some silver including a watch, silk clothing and wigs. The second-floor room had two beds and some books, and the garret no beds, but working tools and spice boxes. Miller was doing well enough not to have weaving looms in his own house, though he was still in a one-room-plan house. His household goods were worth £48.8.0, with the goods of his weaving trade worth another £126.15.0.[38]

Susannah Lermigne, was a silk windstress and widow who lived simply in two rooms in Bethnal Green, the contents of which were valued at only £1.16.8 when she died in 1740. Both rooms contained 'engines' as well as beds, one room also serving for cooking, with kettles, pans and bottles stowed away in a closet.[39] Tenancy of a single room did not necessarily mean poverty, as is shown in the inventory of the room occupied by Anne Minier, another Bethnal Green widow, who died in 1752. She was not evidently a weaver, and the inventory gives no obvious indication of trade. Her room had two windows, two beds, a looking glass, an easy chair, and a tea table. Her cooking equipment included a tea kettle and a coffee pot. Her goods were worth £18.2.9.[40]

The indexing of some of the Sun Fire Insurance records makes it practicable to put particular weavers into particular houses in the 1770s and 1780s - Mary Emms and Isaac Stevens as tenants of Peter Mansell on the south side of Sclater Street in 1777 and 1780, James Prouteaux and John Levesque in Nos 143 and 145 Brick Lane in 1776-7, Paul Batteux and Ann Cobbeal, a loom broker and silk windster, in two of the houses of the 1760s on the west side of Club Row, their valuations of household goods, stock and apparel ranging from £100 to £500.[41] Clearly, nearby houses of comparable size could accommodate head tenants with fairly divergent levels of insurable assets. There are certainly limitations to what house size reveals about the status of house occupants. Even the most modest of the houses for which we have records were not necessarily for the very poor. John Willock, a weaver who lived in one of the new two-room houses in Granby Row in 1776 (Fig. 18), was himself the owner of a small tenanted house in Ratcliff.[42]

The 1841 census confirms the continuing use of many 18th-century buildings for the silk trade even at that late date. The three- or four-room early-18th-century houses, as on Sclater Street, all had at least two households, many three or four. Of 230 tradespeople identified as living on Sclater Street in 1841, 130 were in the silk trade, mostly weavers, with some winders; many of the others were shopkeepers. On Club Row the equivalent figures were 145 tradespeople of whom 54 were in the silk trade.[43]

DOMESTIC-INDUSTRIAL URBAN-VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

In so far as there are accepted images of weavers' housing in Spitalfields and Bethnal Green they tend to arise from two places - the attics of early-18th-century merchant's houses in Spitalfields proper, as in Fournier Street,[44] or the no-longer extant rows of two-storey early-19th-century cottages that stood well to the east of the present area of study, as along the eastern parts of Cheshire Street and streets to the north.[45] There are important gaps in such representations. In particular there is an entire class of 18th-century weavers' tenement houses, scarcely surviving, that has been all but forgotten. Sometimes it has perhaps been hinted at, as in this account from 1853, 'Some of the streets are composed of well-built houses, from three to four stories high, having, in the upper rooms, glazed windows extending the whole length of the houses, which gives them a peculiar appearance.'[46]

'Peculiar Appearance': Layout, Light and 'Live/Work Spaces'

The 18th-century streets of Bethnal Green's weaving district bore little resemblance to those of Spitalfields (Figs 11, 12, 28, 29, 41, 64 and 65). The irregular and functional elevations of the houses are alien to our understandings of London's Georgian domestic architecture. Certainly Spitalfields' 18th-century houses used to be more varied than they are now, but, compared to Bethnal Green, Spitalfields would have seemed strikingly regular and classical, reflecting higher-status occupation, as in the fine houses of Fournier Street, Wilkes Street, Princelet Street, Hanbury Street, Folgate Street and Elder Street. The early buildings on the northern stretches of Brick Lane were evidently not like those to the south on the same road.

The disdain for elevational symmetry and classical regularity that is such a striking quality of the Bethnal Green weavers' houses needs to be understood in functional terms, both in relation to multiple occupation by journeymen weavers, and in terms of the exigencies of workshop use. Fenestration patterns are the key, most obviously through the wide windows that were traditionally known locally as 'long lights', later as 'weavers' windows'.[47] The maximising of light in rooms used for intricate weaving was an architectural priority from at least the 17th century, antedating the Huguenot influx with which the 'long light' is sometimes mistakenly associated. Broad windows in the main body of the house, especially to the front, are clear indicators that the houses were designed for workshop use. Brick front walls made segmentally-arched heads to wide windows a structural necessity, flat-arched heads to such broad openings being technically difficult. Segment-headed windows were generally fashionable in the 1720s, but not later. In Bethnal Green they occur through the century without regard to fashion, for what are clearly practical reasons. Very wide windows were more readily achieved in timber back walls (Fig. 54), or just below the timber eaves to the front, where many houses had mullioned casements with six or more panes (Figs 29, 50, 64).

Of course, 'weavers' windows' were not exclusive to Bethnal Green. They were widespread in 'mansard' attics around Spitalfields, possibly the product of early adaptations to merchants' houses. They have also been recorded as integral features in the upper-storey front walls of late-17th-century houses on White's Row, at No. 5 Elder Street of 1725-7 (perhaps in rebuilt walling), and in the two upper storeys of No. 16 Elder Street of 1724.[48] But these were exceptions; the front elevation dominated by 'weavers' windows' was a locally distinctive characteristic of Bethnal Green.

The big 'weavers' window' is only part of the 'peculiar appearance' of the fenestration. The other, and more significant, part is the small staircase window. Set alongside the big windows at landing levels these tiny openings blatantly defy proportionality. When Isaac Ware, the influential exponent of Palladian symmetry, wrote in the 1740s about his ideal of the 'common house' in London, we can be sure that he did not have the tenement houses of Bethnal Green in mind. The small windows invariably occur in entrance bays, lighting winder staircases that rose in the front corners of one-room-plan houses. The placing of staircases at the front of the house just inside the front door is an unusual layout in town houses of any period. It is inconvenient in a multi-storey home where mediation of circulation between the storeys would have been conventional. However, it is entirely appropriate to multiple occupation, as it allows ingress and egress for the upper-storey tenants without intrusion across or into the ground-floor tenant's space, as in almshouses, for example at the Geffrye Almshouses of 1712 in Shoreditch.[49] The layout is also efficient in relation to the comings and goings of industrial use; 18th-century warehouses

often had front staircases lit by small windows.[50] The front staircase was additionally advantageous in terms of lighting from the rear. These houses were brick fronted, in conformity with the London Building Acts, but many would originally have had timber back walls, so full-width fenestration was more readily achieved to the rear. This potential would have been compromised if the staircases had been framed against the back walls. So the front-staircase layout was determined by functional considerations. These staircases were sometimes unlit, as at Nos 3 and 5 Club Row (Fig. 65), but this was unusual. More typically they were given the distinctive small windows that are so indicative of indifference to classical proportion.

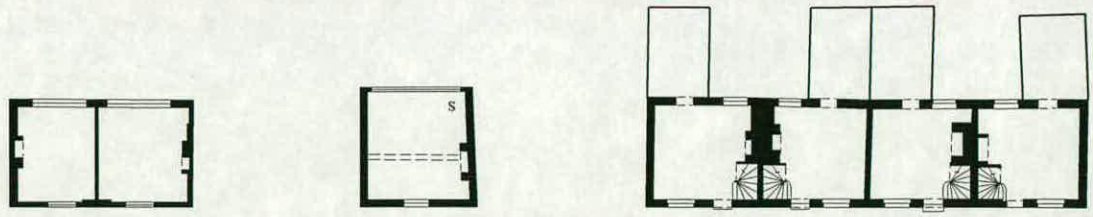
There are scattered instances of front staircases from more genteel late-18th-century contexts around London, as in Colebrooke Row, Islington, or on the New Kent Road, Southwark, where a desire for unimpeded views from the backs led to the use of front staircases, but these higher-status houses do not have winder staircases rising directly from inside the front door, nor are the proportions of their fronts compromised by small windows.[51] A closer and more local parallel occurs at No. 28 Elder Street, Spitalfields, of *c.*1724, which has a winder staircase inside its front door, but it too lacks the small windows.[52] This distinction is telling. Elder Street was a high-status development that was undoubtedly intended as single-occupation houses. A degree of elevational proportionality probably mattered here. More significant, given the general formal comparability of many of the one-room-plan houses in Elder Street to contemporary houses in Bethnal Green, No. 28 seems to be the exception that proves the rule, as none of the other houses in Elder Street appear to have been given the 'multiple occupation' front-staircase layout. There are examples of front-staircase windows occurring outside Bethnal Green, as in the one-room-plan houses at No. 45 Crispin Street, Spitalfields,[53] and No. 12 Hunton Street, Mile End New Town (demolished),[54] as well as in a bigger mid-18th-century house at No. 19 Redmans Road, Stepney. Again, however, the feature is overwhelmingly characteristic of Bethnal Green, where it occurred consistently and purposefully.

The origins of the front-staircase tenement house may be in the late 17th century when the type occurred on Castle Street (Fig. 12). Nearby contemporary development on Austin Street was recorded as having had similar fenestration (Fig. 75). Away to the east, a humble late-17th-century row on Cambridge Heath Road (Dog Row) was also recorded as having had stairs in front of its stacks, though no small windows (Fig. 76).[55] The form occurs consistently thereafter in Bethnal Green until at least the 1760s, in some cases persisting through refrontings (Figs 14 and 27). It was a vernacular building habit that endured because it was functionally appropriate.

Fig. 75 – Nos 13-25 Austin Street in 1928 (National Monuments Record, AP 249).

The one-room plan was all but universal in 18th-century Bethnal Green (Fig. 77). This is explicable in relation to multiple occupation and one-room tenancies, but it is probably above all

Fig. 76 – 'Dog Row', Nos 65-76 Cambridge (Heath) Road in 1928 (National Monuments Record, AP 246).



TWO HOUSES AT
21 CHESHIRE STREET
FIRST FLOOR
LATE 17th CENTURY

46 CHESHIRE STREET
SECOND FLOOR
1670s

70-76 SCLATER STREET
GROUND FLOOR
c.1719

97-99 SCLATER STREET
FIRST FLOOR
c.1720

113-115 BETHNAL GREEN ROAD
FIRST FLOOR
c.1735

3-5 CLUB ROW
GROUND FLOOR
1764-1766

125-127 BRICK LANE
SECOND FLOOR
1778

4a-6a PADBURY COURT
GROUND FLOOR
c.1790

S = FORMER STAIR POSITION

1 0 5 10 15 20 metres
5 0 30 60 feet

21 CHESHIRE STREET
LATE 17th CENTURY

72 SCLATER STREET
c.1719

115 BETHNAL GREEN ROAD
c.1735

4a PADBURY COURT
c.1790

Reconstructed plans and sections of early houses in Bethnal Green

Fig. 77

a function of the need for good light in the room interiors, deriving from the silk industry and workshop use of most of the rooms. Any front-back two-room layout in a narrow-fronted town house leaves the inner parts of the rooms without good natural light. Some looms would have been in back-building workshops, as along Sclater Street, but many would have been in the main living spaces. Their size must have dictated the minimum dimensions for the rooms. Frontages of about 14-15ft (4.2-4.5m) were usual in the late 17th century, in the relatively low one-room-plan houses that may have been built for single-family occupation, as on Castle Street and Austin Street. The upper rooms would have accommodated looms, but probably left little space for circulation. The taller early-18th-century houses tend to have 17-18ft (5.1-5.4m) frontages, which, in the event of multiple occupation and use of a single room as a family home, would have allowed a loom and a small amount of living space.

The one-room-plan house was not a rarity in Spitalfields, though surviving 18th-century buildings are disproportionately larger houses.[56] Examples on Elder Street and Crispin Street have already been cited, and others survive at Nos 4-7 Puma Court, houses of *c.*1740 on the last of Spitalfields' 18th-century alleys to remain, refronted in the early 19th century and extended. Further away, an early-18th-century row of tall one-room-plan houses stood on Braham Street, Whitechapel, the stairs in separate blocks to the rear, making this quite another class of housing.[57] Another Spitalfields' type, the double-fronted single-pile plan, of which No. 125 Brick Lane is an example only just inside Bethnal Green, may to some degree reflect the importance of good indoor light, though the need for mortgaging based on ground rents deriving from width of frontages is an alternative and more credible explanation given the costs and status of such large houses.[58]

From the 1770s onwards weavers' houses were given more regular elevations, in both new houses and refrontings, sometimes without 'weavers' windows, but more usually retaining large windows, usually segment headed and vertically aligned in single bays under parapets. In new houses the small staircase windows were generally absent and fronts were sometimes back down to about 15ft (4.5m), suggesting they were being built for single occupation. As a consequence of the Building Act of 1774 they no longer rose above three storeys, though the main blocks were still always one-room deep (Figs 16-17, 27 and 78). Perhaps the regular fenestration and back-stair position of Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court indicate that the houses were designed to exhibit a modicum of 'politeness', possibly aiming for single occupation by non weavers (Fig. 70).

Fig. 78 – Nos 59-65 Cheshire Street, houses of c.*1780 in 1946 (London Metropolitan Archives).*

In the early 19th century the 'weaver's house' was more or less codified as an architectural type, boiled down to two storeys with big windows over round-headed entrances and conventional sash windows, reverting on the whole to narrower frontages, with living space below first-floor workshops (Figs 13 and 45). These entirely brick buildings, which sometimes had back rooms on the ground floor, were probably intended for single-family occupation. The rationale for the front staircase was no longer operative.

To some degree the house type continued to be built locally right through the 19th century, as at Nos 222-226 Brick Lane and No. 74 Swanfield Street, the latter of the 1890s, where there are upper-storey 'long-light' windows. One-room-plan houses continued to be built widely in many towns well into the 19th century, typically around courts in dense agglomerations that were never anything but poor workers' housing.

'Short-Life Housing': Materials, Surfaces and the absence of 'Craft'

Brick building was already widespread in late-17th-century Bethnal Green, more perhaps than in other parts of East London nearer the river - Wapping, Shadwell, Ratcliff, Limehouse and Poplar, where timber house construction remained part of the local vernacular architecture well into the 18th century.[59] But even in Bethnal Green, where there was a readily available local supply of brick earth, there were houses with timber external walls; 'old weather-boarded houses on the front, and half-timbered ones, are numerous in the district'.[60] Nos 66 and 68 Sclater Street, rebuilt in the 1870s, were previously timber built, perhaps in the late 17th century. Many other back walls and back buildings would have been built of timber well after the Building Act of 1707 theoretically forbade such construction, as at Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road of *c.*1735. This was also true of the better houses of the 1720s on Elder Street.[61] The need for wide workshop windows, more readily achieved in a timber frame than in a brick wall, may to some degree have caused the perpetuation of timber house building. It is worth noting in this context that open eaves and party walls without parapets, also forbidden by the Act of 1707, also continued to be built up to the 1760s, when legislation was tightened (Figs 28, 29, 50 and 64). It is not in the least surprising that the Acts were poorly observed in Bethnal Green; they were poorly enforced and blatantly disregarded in many speculative developments around London.[62]

One of the leading reasons that so few of Bethnal Green's early houses survive is that they were not, in the first place, built to last. This, in fact, is generally true of London's 18th-century houses which were built to stand only as long as the leases ran, that is 61 or at most 99 years - 'The agreement made, the solidity of the building is measured by the duration of the lease, as the shoe by the foot',[63] and 'few houses at the common rate of Building last longer than the Ground-lease, and that is about fifty or sixty years'.[64] As Elizabeth McKellar puts it in relation to London's late-17th-century speculative developments as a whole, 'We might get nearer to the spirit in which these houses were conceived if we consider them as temporary or short-life housing for an unstable and uncertain market.'[65]

Given such origins rebuilding at the end of the first lease is not to be wondered at. Refronting might have been a minimum necessity, not a matter of fashionability as is sometimes taken to be the case in an architectural historical framework where 'façade' style is assumed to be important. Where rebuilding was not complete, as it was on the west side of Club Row, or at Nos 125 and 190-198 Brick Lane, it was often extensive, as along Sclater Street, but sufficiently conservative as to preserve original overall form, that is scale, plan form and massing. This was also commonly the case in Spitalfields and Mile End New Town, where replacements also often perpetuated early scale.[66]

Poor-quality bricks and brickwork would have been widespread, especially as the price of bricks rose during building booms. Naturally, compared to the better quality work that is more familiar because it survives more readily, little of this remains evident. Yet, at Nos 3 and 5 Club Row, Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court and Nos 70 and 97-99 Sclater Street, there survives low-grade brickwork much of which can be associated with the 18th century (Figs 27, 35, 65 and 70). There are failures to close up to openings the jambs of which sometimes do not align vertically from storey to storey. Bonding and brick colour are irregular, window heads ungauged and 'place', 1/2 and 3/4 bricks, that is those normally kept out of sight, are out in the open. The existence of such workmanship in humble buildings such as this is not surprising, but seeing such exceptional survivals and recognising that they were not unusual when new heightens an awareness that the absence of information about lower-status housing has led to skewed representations of the house-building world of 18th-century London. Inevitably, such a huge, dynamic and industrious city was not a place of all-pervading craftsmanship. These buildings are important evidence of an all but 'craft'-less vernacular building tradition in the metropolis.

In alluding to craftsmanship it should be emphasised that in none of the early Bethnal Green houses for which there are records is there evidence pointing to internal use of even the meanest classical vocabulary or, more loosely, 'craft finish'. The apparently moulded eaves cornices at Nos 7 and 9 Hare Street and Hare Court may be evidence of the fullest extent of classical mouldings on the outside of weavers' tenement houses (Figs 50 and 51). The Owl and the Pussycat Public House at No. 34 Redchurch Street has 18th-century staircases with columnar newel posts and ovolo-moulded panelling, but it was always a public house. The street-name plaque on No. 125 Brick Lane, is, of course, a more decisive exception, all

the more interesting for the local particularity and evident stylistic 'backwardness' of its classicism. Given the scarcity of survivors and of early views this absence of evidence is not, of course, sufficient proof that the tenement houses did not have ornamentally-wrought surfaces, but it is suggestive. If they had been more finely finished they might more likely have survived. Perhaps classicism was an alien world to the builders and journeymen weavers of 18th-century Bethnal Green. This would be in stark contrast to Spitalfields, where there is so much surviving evidence of high-quality classical craftsmanship, especially internal joinery.[67]

As has already become clear from other perspectives the differences between the houses of the two areas cast the Spitalfields houses in a new light. Elements of the 'vernacular' or the anti-classical in Spitalfields houses that have heretofore seemed surprising or inconsistent when compared to the West End or other fashionable metropolitan districts need also to be related to house-building practices in adjoining Bethnal Green. Similarly, small late-Georgian houses, in Spitalfields or further afield, that do not exhibit classical finish, need not be understood as the decline of a craft tradition, but as examples from above the 'vernacular threshold' (the concept that the earlier the historical period being considered the higher the quality of the lowest grade of housing of which we have historical knowledge) the earlier correspondents of which have disappeared without record.

The houses of Bethnal Green's 18th-century weaving district seem exceptional in a wider context. They stand apart not just from Spitalfields, but from other areas as well. The absence of classicism in Bethnal Green contrasts markedly with evidence of its presence in smaller-scale housing in other 18th-century working-class suburbs, from other parts of East London and south of the river from Southwark to Deptford and beyond. In these places three- or four-room artisan's houses of the late 17th and 18th centuries, often timber built, do engage with classicism in doorcases, chimneypiece mantels, door architraves, etc. Bethnal Green seems to retain evidence of a distinctive and even lower-status class of housing that was perhaps peculiar to the silk trade and not built more widely. Additionally, the Bethnal Green buildings were rather bigger than their more decorated counterparts in other districts, further comparative confirmation that, unlike south London's three-room houses, they were indeed built for multiple occupation by the poor.[68]

Tenement Houses: Scale, Density and Proportions

The 17th-century housing developments of London's eastern suburbs have been characterised as having been largely timber built along regular streets, sometimes in rows, but various in their external appearances and internal layouts, with an average of four rooms to a house, and fewer hearths.[69] Bethnal Green's weaving district appears to have been more uniform, even from the late 17th century. The spread of 'modern' (that is heated) housing in late-17th-century Bethnal Green is evident from hearth tax returns. In 1664 the hamlet had 215 houses of which nearly 60% had only one or two hearths. By 1674 there were 280 houses of which nearly 60% had three to ten hearths.[70] This implies that virtually all the new houses of 1664-74 had three or more hearths, even though many of them would have been small, perhaps only three rooms. Unheated rooms were becoming unusual.

Bethnal Green did not have much of a housing mix, with very few big houses. Through the 18th century the land-tax assessments of the principal roads in the area covered by this study (which assessments seem in essence to be valuations of the buildings), indicate a narrow range of house sizes. Comparison with surviving buildings suggests that the valuations correspond roughly to the number of rooms, and that four to six rooms to each house was usual. Very few buildings had as many as ten rooms, most of those that did were probably public houses. Equally there were relatively few smaller houses, despite the area's poverty.[71] Undoubtedly there was some squalid and very low-grade infill, as Dorothy George put it 'courts within courts and alleys behind alleys forming perfect labyrinths. . . A temporary stall or shed would imperceptibly grow into a permanent building'.[72] Of this, naturally, there is no surviving evidence. Even so, while always acknowledging that the absence of evidence in this context is not conclusive proof that something was not present, there is little indication that this sort of overly-dense development was all that widespread in 18th-century Bethnal Green, Hare Court and Granby Row being examples of something that may have been more characteristic of Spitalfields (Figs 6 and 18); the three-storey houses of Hare Court were unlikely to have been built for single occupation given the mean-ness of their

location. At the edge of town there was generally room to build along relatively evenly-spaced road frontages. Densities were dictated more by the low rents that the market could bear than by any strong centripetal force.

The consistently tall shallow proportions of many of Bethnal Green's 18th-century houses is evident in sections (Fig. 77), as well as in the scars of No. 77 Redchurch Street, latterly replaced by space for two cars to park (Fig. 48). The three- or four-storey one-room-deep main block was the local standard, probably often accompanied by a single-storey outshut or back building of which evidence is even more fragmentary. This contrasts with Shadwell in the mid 17th century where only about 4% of the houses were taller than two storeys, yet about 30% had four or more rooms, indicating that the one-room-plan was not so widespread in this riverine working-class community where there were few tenements.[73]

In these tall houses there was no obvious heirarchy in terms of storey heights, neither the ground or first floors being given emphasis. In some cases cellars were not obviously intended for habitation, and there were often no garrets, that is habitable rooms in roofspaces. Like the front-staircase layout, the vertical separation of three or four equivalent spaces in the one-room deep main blocks reflects a deliberate architectural provision for multiple occupation. At the same time there would have been allowance for the possibility of single occupation. The house form therefore reflects the likelihood of division without betraying it as a certainty.

The Spitalfields silk industry's last flourish in the early 19th century was associated with a change in housing form. Along new streets to the east towards Bethnal Green proper weavers' houses were more horizontally laid out, in long uniform rows rising only two storeys. Better examples had two rooms on the ground floor, with single-storey service 'Ls' to the rear and amply fenestrated first-floor workshops, as at Nos 34 and 36 Florida Street (Fig. 45) or Nos 198 and 200 Cheshire Street (Fig. 79), often only with ladder access and trap-doors to maximise the workshop floor space. These were single-family 'live/work' houses, not tenement houses.[74]

An intriguing coda is provided by a limited local revival of the tall tenement houses at the end of the 19th century, as recorded on Rampart Street, Whitechapel, in four-storey one-room-plan buildings of 1893, designed for multiple occupation under a top-floor common workshop.[75]

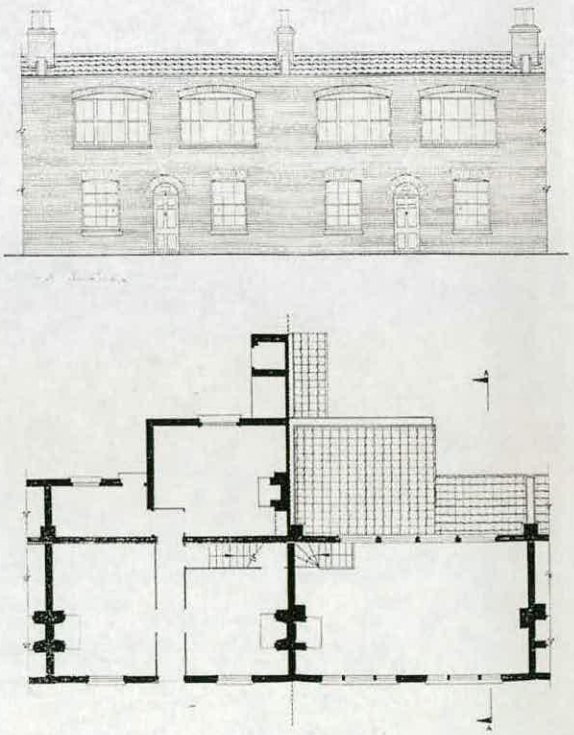


Fig. 79 – Nos 198 and 200 Cheshire Street, houses of c.1820 recorded in 1955 (National Monuments Record).

Conclusions: Combination, Legislation and Weavers' Housing Transformed

The history of housing in the Bethnal Green silk-weaving district in the period 1660 to 1820 falls into four broad phases. The earliest houses, of which we know least, appear all to have been small and often, but perhaps not always, designed for single occupation (Fig. 12). By 1720 a distinctive new house type had emerged, evidently deriving from the smaller local antecedents. These houses were bigger in terms of both frontage and height, though not deeper, good indoor light remaining crucial. Vertically laid out they were designed for dense multiple occupation by poor journeymen weavers (Figs 28, 29 and 50). This broad type continued to be built into the 1760s, sometimes as large tenement blocks (Figs 64 and 65). After 1770 and up to about 1800 there was greater discontinuity, with a shift away from high-density tall tenement houses towards a more horizontal distribution of workshop homes that brought with it greater external regularity. This transition was inchoate and highly variable in its architecture (Figs 16-18, 41, 70, 78), resolving itself in the early years of the 19th century in a standard small single-occupation house type that was widely adopted and debased in a revival of high-density development in a low-rise form (Figs 13 and 45).

This crude typology prompts two main questions - why did the 'vertical' multiple-occupation houses appear when they did, and why were they succeeded by 'horizontal' single-occupation houses when they were? House-building patterns are determined by numerous factors, not least by wider economies of supply and demand, and the availability of money. In 18th-century London legislation had a significant impact on the physical appearance of houses, and appearance was often also influenced by considerations of 'style', emulation or social aspiration growing out of national or trans-national cultural developments. However, the local context was always crucial. The first thing that can be said about Bethnal Green's housing is that aspirational emulation can, unusually, be dismissed as insignificant. Population growth, the small-scale nature of building enterprise, and widespread poverty among weavers were all important local factors in the early 18th century. Poor weavers needed to be housed locally, and, in the absence of both existing houses available for conversion and other routes to prosperity for those who could engage in house building, it was worthwhile building for this market, but in as economic a manner as possible, that is with high densities. This was markedly so in the years around 1720, when a housing boom coincided with a depression in the silk trade following years during which the numbers of weavers in the area had increased. In this period and into the 1730s domestic architecture, though based in the leasehold development of large estates, was vernacular in nature, the houses being functional reflections of industrial habitation. Bethnal Green's tenement houses were a local solution to a local problem. The vertical living conditions would have encouraged the unusual solidarity and tendency to 'combination' that characterised the weavers, providing 'live/work' domestic environments that would have emphasised common status as mutually interdependent equals within an exploited economic group, rather than separate status as atomised and competing families.

The period from 1763 was one of great trauma locally, dominated by increased poverty and riots, leading up to the cathartic settlement of the first Spitalfields Act in 1773 which created the conditions for short-term stability and long-term decline, peace but not prosperity, fixing prices but forbidding 'combination'. A revival in house building in the 1760s, both new houses and rebuildings, brought displacement, immigration, and loss of tenure - upheavals that would have contributed to a climate of insecurity and change, underpinning the trade-based fears that caused rioting. The local economic circumstances still favoured high-density housing and Bethnal Green's houses of the 1760s remained very much in and of the local vernacular. Nos 194-198 Brick Lane of 1764-5 was a building the architecture of which seems a telling mirror of the chaotic tumult amid which it was built.

In the 1760s there were London-wide moves for urban 'improvements' that in many other respects and in other places were motivated by a desire to bring order and regularity to a metropolis that was growing to seem frighteningly out of control.[76] These initiatives ran from the Paving Act of 1762 to John Gwynn's influential *London and Westminster Improved* of 1766, through to the Building Acts of 1772 and 1774. From about 1766 there were incipient changes in the nature and scale of building speculation in Bethnal Green, and new approaches to house architecture after 1770 are evident; compare the scale of Nos 190 and 192 Brick Lane of 1778-9 to that of their neighbour of the 1760s (Fig. 63). The Building Acts were, of course, a primary factor, though the tendency of builders to ignore legislation should not be

underestimated. The Act of 1774 effectively legislated against the building of tall low-status houses, stipulating a link between heights and values. 'Third-rate' houses were to be no more than £300 in value and three storeys in height, 'fourth-rate' houses no more than £150 in value and two storeys in height.[77]

To a limited extent, the relative stability of the silk trade after 1773 may have enabled a small building boom, with some lower-density development for those just able to begin to climb out of poverty, at the same time diminishing the speculative appeal of high-density housing, particularly for those larger building operators who had risen out of the locality and become responsible for containing its volatility. David Wilmot, the magistrate who helped hang rioting weavers in 1771, experimented with 'suburban' freehold development away from the weaving district from 1766 onwards, from 1771 becoming involved in extending the old district eastwards in rows of smaller houses, perhaps intended for single occupation. The scale of No. 9 Granby Row of *c.*1780 might be taken as simply reflecting legislation, but the regularity of Nos 2-8 Granby Street of 1771-3 (Figs 16 and 18) indicates a more deliberate and subtler move away from the local vernacular architecture. The expression of function is contained by arbitrarily imposed order and uniformity at precisely the time when the oppositional nature of local relationships had become alarmingly manifest.

In spite of the Building Act of 1774 it is striking how slowly externally derived standardisation took hold in Bethnal Green. 'Non-standard' architectural form endured much longer in lower-status contexts, and the withering of local vernacular practices was slow and partial where fashionability and emulation were side issues. Asymmetrical fenestration continued, as in No. 125 Brick Lane of 1778, the street-name plaque on which is a proud affirmation of place that is both vernacular and classical, on Hare Street and, into the 1790s, on Padbury Court (Figs 17, 23, 41, 43 and 73).[78] The sub-Palladian consensus that dictated elevational regularity in town houses seems not to have reached Bethnal Green until after 1790 when traditional vertical organisation of interior space still endured (Figs 70 and 77). As in other lower-status areas, there were strongly conservative forces for which 'improvements' represented a threat, so a gradual move away from traditional practices was negotiated.[79] Rebuilds on Sclater Street and Bethnal Green Road (Figs 27 and 49) were regularising to a limited degree, but more remarkable for the way that they perpetuated earlier asymmetry and verticality. The functional necessity of the 'weavers' window' meant that a vernacular element endured in the area's domestic architecture well into the 19th century, long after town-house building elsewhere around London had been wholly wrestled away from its vernacular roots.

By 1800 small-scale artisan house building had collapsed and 'classical' regularity accompanied large-scale speculative development in penetrating to the bottom of the social scale to provide mean houses for the poor, high-density but low-rise. It is no coincidence that those who at this time had choices were yearning for the 'picturesque'. Uniform 'classical' architecture had come to connote a kind of domestic repression. In Bethnal Green the architecture of working-class housing had become a calming instrument of order and hierarchical control, providing what were intended as small single-family homes firmly separated by brick walls, with workrooms distinct from living spaces. These succeeded tenement houses that provided indoor lives of work and sleep in the same room, among peers up and down stairs whose equivalent lives would have been intimately familiar. This was not a premeditated or concerted programme of housing reform; the consequences of the Act of 1774 would not have been thought through in these terms, and there were not major clearances of the existing tenement houses. However, given the events of the 1760s the local elite in the silk district would not have had difficulty perceiving the desirability of 'regeneration' in the local built environment to defuse trouble. This played out in the context of London-wide 'improvements' as the unpicking of the local vernacular architecture and the introduction of housing forms of polite derivation. A move away from the purpose-built tenement houses that had typified local domestic architecture from *c.*1720 to *c.*1770 paralleled the Spitalfields Acts in offering short-term improvements to living conditions to bring relative tranquillity, with the longer-term and underlying purpose of preventing 'combination' among Bethnal Green's weavers.

NOTES

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17. Schwarz, 1972, *loc cit.*; Cruickshank and Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 62; George, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-9.
18. L. Simond (1810-11), T. A. Murray (1801), and J. P. Malcolm (1808), all as quoted in Cruickshank and Burton, *op. cit.*, pp. 51, 61-2.
19. *Commons' Journal,* xxiv, 3 March 1742(3), p. 448.
20. VCH, pp. 94-5; George, *op. cit.*, pp. 412-14; SoL, p. 6.
21. MDR, 1728/2/446, 1745/2/255; Cruickshank and Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
22. PRO, PROB 3/51/31.
23. THLHL, TH 2887.
24. Cruickshank and Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 62; George, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-4.
25. *Builder*, 28 May 1853, p. 337.
26. George, *op. cit.*, p. 179; Schwarz, 1972, *loc. cit.*, pp. 87-100; Cruickshank and Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 219.
27. VCH, p. 177; N. K. A. Rothstein, 'The Silk Industry in London, 1702-1766' (London, MA thesis, 1961); M. Berg, *The Age of Manufactures, Industry, Innovation and Work in Britain 1700-1820* (Oxford, 1985), p. 213; Clapham, *loc. cit.,* pp. 461-2.
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52. SoL, p. 82.
53. Information kindly supplied by Andrew Byrne.
54. SoL, p. 276.
55. RCHM(E), 1930, *op. cit.*, p. 9 and supporting inventory card; VCH, pp. 111-3 and plate 24.
56. SoL, pp. 81-7, 198.
57. NMR, GLC Drawings Collection 96/7266.
58. Cruickshank and Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
59. Power, *loc. cit.*, pp. 237-262.
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62. Cruickshank and Burton, pp. 99-102.
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64. R. Neve (1703), as quoted in McKellar, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
65. McKellar, *op. cit.*, p. 85.
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69. Power, *loc. cit.*, pp. 237-262.
70. VCH, p. 94.
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73. Power, *loc. cit.*, pp. 249-53.
74. See also No. 28 Moss Street in NMR, GLC Drawings Collection 96/07420; LMA photographs; THLHL photographs; Rose, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-60; Yeo and Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 108.
75. EH, HART file, TH177, 1992.
76. J. Summerson, *Georgian London* (London, 1945), pp. 103-114.
77. 14 Geo III, cap. 78; C. C. Knowles and P. H. Pitt, *The History of Building Regulation in London, 1189-1972* (London, 1972), pp. 49-50. Further research into the enforcement and effectiveness of the Building Acts is needed.
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79. P. Guillery and B. Herman, 'Deptford Houses: 1650 to 1800', RCHME survey report, 1998.

APPENDIX: LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 26 – The Owl and the Pussycat Public House, No. 34 Redchurch Street, west staircase in 2000 (English Heritage, MF000010/7).

Fig. 27 - Nos 70-74 Sclater Street in 2000 (English Heritage, AA004718).

Fig. 28 - Nos 78-88 Sclater Street in 1955 (London Metropolitan Archives, 55/7/HB/46F/1532).

Fig. 29 - Nos 71-79 Sclater Street in the early 20th century (Tower Hamlets Local History Library).

Fig. 30 - Nos 70-76 Sclater Street, ground-floor plan (English Heritage).

Fig. 31 – Nos 70-88 Sclater Street in 1973 (London Metropolitan Archives, 2000/29).

Fig. 32 – No. 74 Sclater Street in 2000, showing back building (English Heritage, AA004722).

Fig. 33 – No. 70 Sclater Street from the back in 1973 (London Metropolitan Archives, 73/35/224/13A).

Fig. 34 – No. 72 Sclater Street, section looking west (English Heritage).

Fig. 35 - Nos 97 and 99 Sclater Street in 2000 (English Heritage, AA004710).

Fig. 36 – Nos 97 and 99 Sclater Street, reconstruction first-floor plan (English Heritage).

Fig. 37 – No. 16 Bacon Street in 1999 (English Heritage, MF99/01286/9).

Fig. 38 – View down Sclater Street showing No. 125 Brick Lane (to the right) in the early 20th century (Tower Hamlets Local History Library).

Fig. 39 – Nos 125 and 127 Brick Lane in 1993 (National Monuments Record, AA93/05341).

Fig. 40 – View down Brick Lane showing Nos 125-133 Brick Lane in 1993 (National Monuments Record, AA93/05733).

Fig. 41 – Nos 125 and 127 Brick Lane in 1971 (London Metropolitan Archives, 71/8432).

Fig. 42 – Mr M. A. Boshor at the entrance to his shop at No. 125 Brick Lane in 1993 (National Monuments Record, AA93/05342).

Fig. 43 – Street-name plaque on No. 125 Brick Lane, inscrtibed 'THIS IS SCLATER Street 1778' (English Heritage, AA004727).

Fig. 44 – Nos 125 and 127 Brick Lane, reconstructed second-floor plan (English Heritage).

Fig. 45 – Nos 34 and 36 Florida Street, Bethnal Green, houses of c.1815 recorded in 1955 (NMR, GLC 96/2095).

Fig. 46 – No. 149 Brick Lane in 1993 (National Monuments Record, AA93/05335).

Fig. 47 – Nos 149-161 Brick Lane in 1993 (National Monuments Record, AA93/05334).

Fig. 48 - No. 75 Redchurch Street in 1999, showing the scar of the demolished building at No. 77 Redchurch Street (English Heritage, BB99/09163).

Fig. 49 – Nos 130-140 Bethnal Green Road in 2000 (English Heritage, AA004723).

Fig. 50 – Nos 3-9 Hare (Cheshire) Street in 1928 (National Monuments Record, AP 248).

Fig. 51 – Nos 3 and 4 Hare Court in 1928 (National Monuments Record, AP 247).

Fig. 52 – Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road in 2000 (English Heritage, AA004726).

Fig. 53 – View from Brick Lane in 1999 showing the backs of Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road and the flank-wall scar of No. 167 Brick Lane (English Heritage, MF99/01234/10).

Fig. 54 – Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road from the back in 1999 (English Heritage, MF99/01258/33).

Fig. 55 – No. 115 Bethnal Green Road, section looking east (English Heritage).

*Fig. 56 – Nos 72-78 Colombo Street, Bankside, Southwark, early-18th-century houses recorded in 1942 (*Survey of London, *xxii, 1950, p. 126).*

Fig. 57 – Nos 113 and 115 Bethnal Green Road, first-floor plan (English Heritage).

Fig. 58 – No. 115 Bethnal Green Road, second- floor plan (English Heritage).

Fig. 59 – No. 113 Bethnal Green Road, first-floor front room, view from the south in 1999 (English Heritage, BB99/09147).

Fig. 60 – No. 113 Bethnal Green Road, first-floor fireplace with front staircase beyond in 1999 (English Heritage, BB99/09148).

Fig. 61 – No. 113 Bethnal Green Road, first-floor back room, view from the south in 1999 (English Heritage, BB99/09150).

Fig. 62 – No. 113 Bethnal Green Road, garret, view from the east in 1999 (English Heritage, BB99/09152).

Fig. 63 – Nos 190-198 Brick Lane and No. 24 Bacon Street in 2000 (English Heritage, AA004728).

Fig. 64 – Nos 194-198 Brick Lane in 1956 (London Metropolitan Archives, 56/0830).

Fig. 65 - Nos 3 and 5 Club Row in 2000 (English Heritage, AA004729).

Fig. 66 – Nos 3 and 5 Club Row in 1953 (London Metropolitan Archives, Whiffin 299).

Fig. 67 – Nos 3 and 5 Club Row, ground-floor plan, reconstructed sketch (English Heritage).

Fig. 68 – Club Row in ye Olden Time, *late-19th-century panel in the porch of the Well and Bucket Public House, No. 143 Bethnal Green Road, in 1972 (London Metropolitan Archives, 72/03597).*

Fig. 69 – Nos 190-198 Brick Lane in 1993(National Monuments Record, AA93/05196).

Fig. 70 - Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court in 1999 (English Heritage, BB99/09160).

Fig. 71 – Nos 4A-6A Padbury Court, ground-floor plan reconstruction (English Heritage).

Fig. 72 – No. 4A Padbury Court, section looking west (English Heritage).

Fig. 73 – The north side of Padbury Court in 1951 (London Metropolitan Archives).

Fig. 74 – Nos 230-240 Brick Lane in 1993 (National Monuments Record, AA93/05191).

Fig. 75 - Nos 13-25 Austin Street in 1928 (National Monuments Record, AP 249).

Fig. 76 – 'Dog Row', Nos 65-76 Cambridge (Heath) Road in 1928 (National Monuments Record, AP 246).

Fig. 77 – Reconstructed plans and sections of early houses in Bethnal Green (English Heritage).

Fig. 78 – Nos 59-65 Cheshire Street, houses of c.*1780 in 1946 (London Metropolitan Archives, F3457).*

Fig. 79 – Nos 198 and 200 Cheshire Street, houses of c.*1820 recorded in 1955 (NMR, GLC 96/1886).*