



**Donald Insall Associates**  
Chartered Architects and Historic Building Consultants

**52-54 and 56 Davies Street, London, W1**

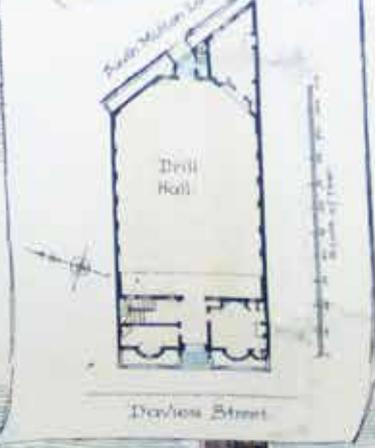
Historic Building Report  
For Hartshorn Hook

April 2021

Sketch of Hall



Ground Plan



Lead Quarters · St Georges Rifles · Davies St · W · *Herbert Shoppes Arch*

# Contents

1.0	Summary of Historic Building Report	1
2.0	Historical Background	4
3.0	Site Survey Descriptions	14
4.0	Commentary on the Proposals	16
	Appendix I - Statutory List Description	17

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## 1.0 Summary of Historic Building Report

### 1.1 Introduction

Donald Insall Associates was commissioned by Hartshorn Hook in April 2021 to assist them in preparing an application for works at 52-54 and 56 Davies Street, London W1. The proposals for advertising consent and listed building consent are of a temporary nature and associated with a meanwhile theatre use.

The investigation has comprised historical research, using both archival and secondary material, and a site inspection. A brief illustrated history of the site and building, with sources of reference and bibliography, is in Section 2; the site survey findings are in Section 3. The investigation has established the significance of the site/building, which is set out below. Section 4 describes, assesses and justifies the proposals according to the relevant legislation, planning policy and guidance.

### 1.2 The Building and its Legal Status

52-54 Davies Street are Grade II-listed buildings located in the Mayfair Conservation Area in the City of Westminster. 56 Davies Street is unlisted. Alterations to a listed building generally require listed building consent; development in conservation areas or within the setting of a listed building or conservation area requires local authorities to assess the implications of proposals on built heritage.

Planning permission and listed building consent were granted in December 2020 for these buildings and a wider site known as the South Molton Triangle. The consents for a mixed use development include the dismantling and re-erection of the façade of 56 Davies Street on a new building line, and the partial demolition and conversion for modern office and 'A' type uses of 52-54 Davies Street with a taller building behind.

The statutory list description of the listed building is included in Appendix I.

The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 is the legislative basis for decision-making on applications that relate to the historic environment. Sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Act impose statutory duties upon local planning authorities which, with regard to listed buildings, require the planning authority to have *'special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses'* and, in respect of conservation areas, that *'special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'*.

In considering applications for listed building consent or planning permission, local authorities are also required to consider the policies on the historic environment set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2019. At the heart of the Framework is 'a presumption in favour of sustainable development' and there are also specific policies relating to the historic environment. The Framework states that heritage assets

are 'an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations'.

The Framework, in paragraph 189, states that:

*In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.*

Section 1.3 of this report – the assessment of significance – meets this requirement and is based on the research and site surveys presented in sections 2 and 3, which are of a sufficient level of detail to understand the potential impact of the proposals.

The Framework also, in paragraph 193, requires that:

*When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.*

The Framework goes on to state at paragraph 194 that:

*Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification.*

Section 4 of this report provides this clear and convincing justification.

Westminster's local plan reflects the provisions of the Act. Policy 39 of the City Plan asks that heritage assets be conserved or enhanced, and listed buildings preserved.

### **1.3 Assessment of Significance**

#### **1.3.1 52-54 Davies Street**

Grade-II listed. Constructed in 1839-40 by Joshua Higgs as two terraced town houses, including also no. 50, a public house. Nos. 50-54 are typical of the Italianate terraces of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century with brick frontages and stucco dressings. The buildings form an attractive group on the east side of Davies Street and their principal significance resides in their front elevations.

The interiors of Nos. 52 and 54 were heavily reconfigured after the Second World War when the buildings were combined and initially converted for office use in 1947, and then linked to No. 56 Davies Street in 1950 to become part of the Territorial Army building at that address. The interiors are largely without significance, with the exception of one surviving staircase in No. 52. The buildings have a modern flat roof and a wide modern mansard, and extended and modernised rear elevations and both detract from the buildings' overall significance.

### **1.3.2 The former TA Building (originally headquarters of Queen Victoria's Rifles), 56 Davies Street**

Certificate of Immunity from listing (issued 30 August 2016).

No. 56 Davies Street was built for the Queen's Victoria Rifle Club in 1950 by architect Trenwith Wills on the site of a previous regimental building of 1889 designed by Charles Herbert Shoppee for the St George's Rifle Club. The Rifles originated in the Napoleonic era and was a regiment that was considered to be pioneering in terms of its organisation and development of training facilities.

Shoppee's building was heavily bombed during WWII, but Trenwith Wills incorporated fragments of the original drill hall in the new building, with a new steel-and-concrete first floor which horizontally divided the drill hall, and a new roof. Plaques and other regimental memorabilia from the original building, too, were incorporated into the new, neo-Classical building, and most have since been removed. Neo-Classical styling would have been considered old-fashioned in 1950.

The building has a well-designed main elevation, though its relationship with the adjoining listed buildings to the north and south is unsatisfactory. Because of the quality of materials and its competent design the street elevation does however make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The rear elevation in stock brick is very plain and makes a neutral contribution. The building is occupied by temporary uses, and its interior is unprotected. The memorials previously inside this building have been removed when the TA vacated the building in 2018.

### **1.3.3 The Mayfair Conservation Area**

The site is located within the Mayfair Conservation Area. The conservation area contains a high concentration of listed buildings (of all grades) with periods of construction from 18<sup>th</sup> century to present day. Much of Mayfair, namely the area west of South Molton Lane, was initially developed from c1720 for the Grosvenor family as residential streets of terraced houses on a grid pattern centred on a new large urban landscaped square, Grosvenor Square. South Molton Street was developed by the City Corporation as a residential street from c1780, but from the 19<sup>th</sup> century became commercialised with shops on the ground floor and flats above.

Whilst some of this early building stock and most of the Georgian street pattern survive, redevelopment on the Grosvenor Estate and elsewhere in Mayfair reshaped many of the buildings. It took place in three main phases from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In general this pattern of development can be found across the Mayfair Conservation Area; in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century houses were re-clad or redeveloped in the stuccoed Italianate style, from the 1870s the Queen Anne and later Renaissance and Arts and Crafts styles became popular, and in the years after the First World War, neo-Georgian became the dominant style. Some Modern style redevelopment took place after the Second World War in a further wave of development. Despite this extensive amount of redevelopment the architectural quality of the conservation area is high, and predominantly residential in character, but at its perimeter, particularly to the north near Oxford Street and the west by Park Lane, buildings have a more overtly commercial character and include buildings of greater height.

## 2.0 Historical Background

### 2.1 Davies Street

The Grosvenor Estate in Mayfair was developed with an emphasis on the east-west streets which were divided into wide plots and built up with grand houses, whilst the north-south streets, including Davies Street, typically had lesser houses. Davies Street was developed in the 1720s by several builders. The Survey of London notes that Davies Street only had two houses of note, Bourdon House and the house at No. 48 on the east side of Davies Street. Other houses were built on slim plots and were mostly occupied by tradesmen **[Plate 2.1]**.

A large triangular site at Davies Street and South Molton Lane was established as the Grosvenor Market in 1785, following the demolition of a number of small houses and stables **[Plate 2.2]**. The market was enclosed by houses, a pub and a slaughter-house to the south and west, and shops to the northeast. It was set up as a food market but was not successful, and by the 1840 the buildings on the site were occupied by workers rather than shops. In 1889 the buildings of Grosvenor Market were demolished, including a short-lived block of 'model' workers flats of 1858.

Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century several of the leases along Davies Street fell in and plots were redeveloped by a variety of builders. The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw more significant replacements of Georgian plots with buildings, mostly offices, on wider footprint, and the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century survivals are now rare.

### 2.2 52 and 54 Davies Street

Nos. 52 and 54 Davies Street, as well as No. 50, were constructed by Joshua Higgs in 1839-40. The buildings were of four stories and attics over a basement and faced in stucco at the ground floor and stock brick and stucco dressings on the floors above. The lease plans for the buildings suggest that the closet wings differed in height, as No. 52 only had a single storey wing but No. 54 had a two storey wing **[see Plates 2.3a-b]**. No. 52 appears to have been occupied as a townhouse but No. 54 was apparently intended to be used as offices by the builder Joshua Higgs for his building business which he established in 1839. It appears that Higgs had some success: his nephew William joined the business, they left for larger premises in 1861 and William founded the contracting firm of Higgs and Hill in 1874.

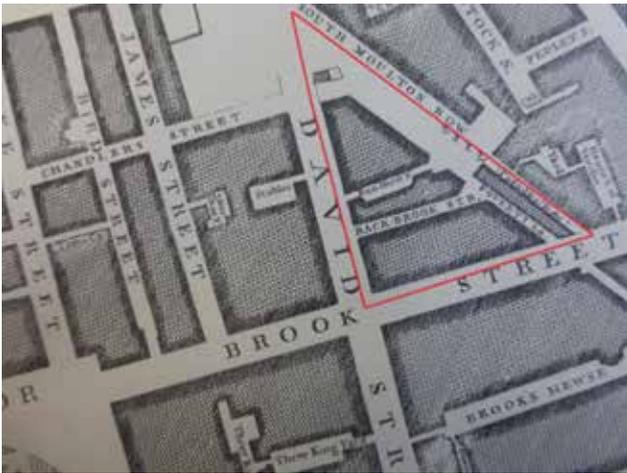


Plate 2.1 Rocque's Map of London, 1746, study site outlined in red.



Plate 2.2 Horwood, Map of London Westminster and Southwark, 1799, study site outlined in red.

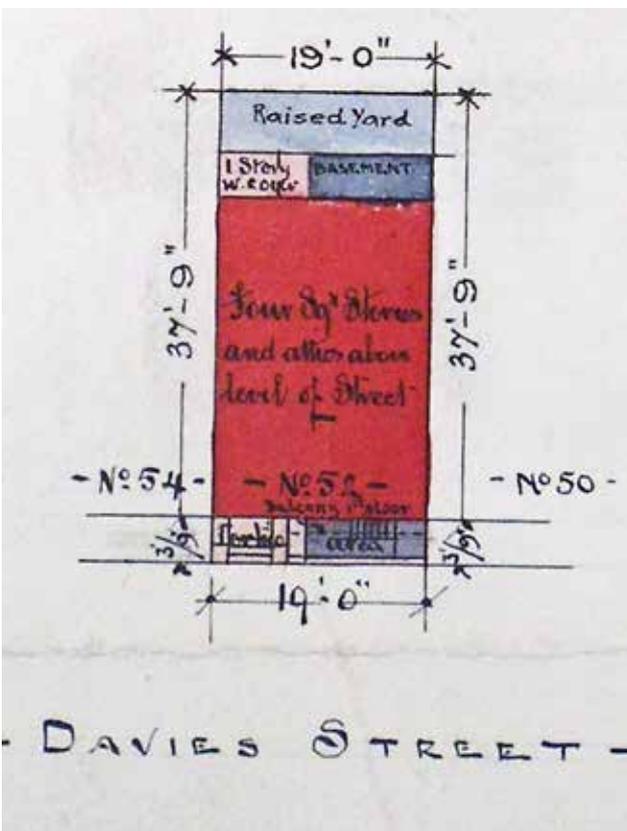


Plate 2.3a Lease plan of 52 Davies Street showing single storey closet wing extension (Grosvenor Archive).

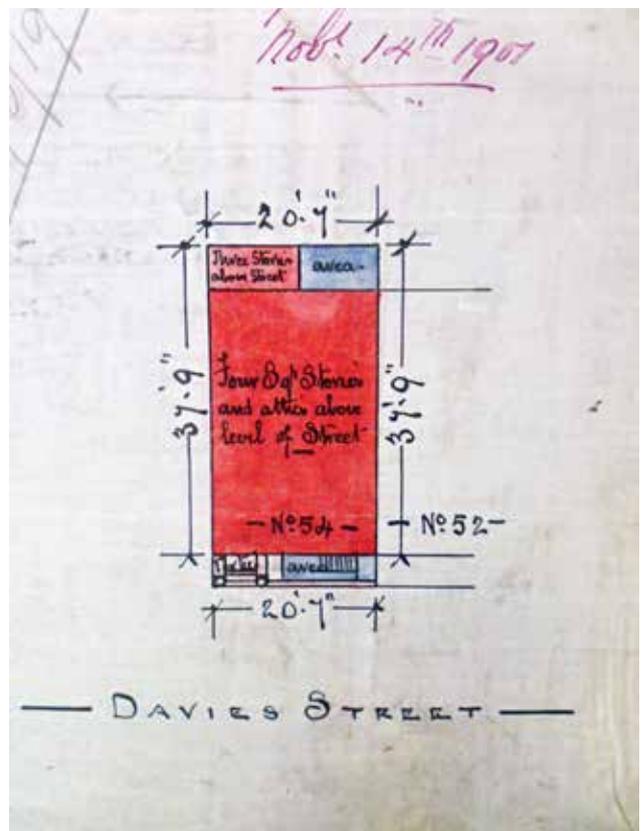


Plate 2.3b Lease plan of 54 Davies Street showing three storey closet wing extension (Grosvenor Archive).

After the departure of Higgs, No. 52 was used as a dwelling. During the Second World War, No. 54 was badly damaged as a result of the direct bomb hit to No. 56 Davies Street, the St. George's Rifle Club. **[Plate 2.4]** illustrates the damage to the house, which included the destruction of the north end of the roof and all of the glass in the windows. No. 52 is also likely to have suffered from blast damage, which probably blew out all of the glass from the windows panes. The buildings remained derelict until the end of the war, when in 1947 an application was approved to convert the terraces into a single building for office use. The plans for the alterations are reproduced in **[Plate 2.5]** and show that the front portico to No. 54 as well as the internal staircase were removed, whilst the rooms were extensively subdivided and laterally linked.

When the Queen Victoria Rifle Club (no. 56) was re-built in 1950, this new building was connected at first floor level to no. 54, and nos. 52 and 54 were used as offices for the officers and sergeants of the club. Very little appears to have changed in the building since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, aside from the further subdivision of rooms.



**Plate 2.4** Photograph showing bomb damage to 54 and 56 Davies Street, 1940 (Westminster Archive).



### 2.3 56 Davies Street

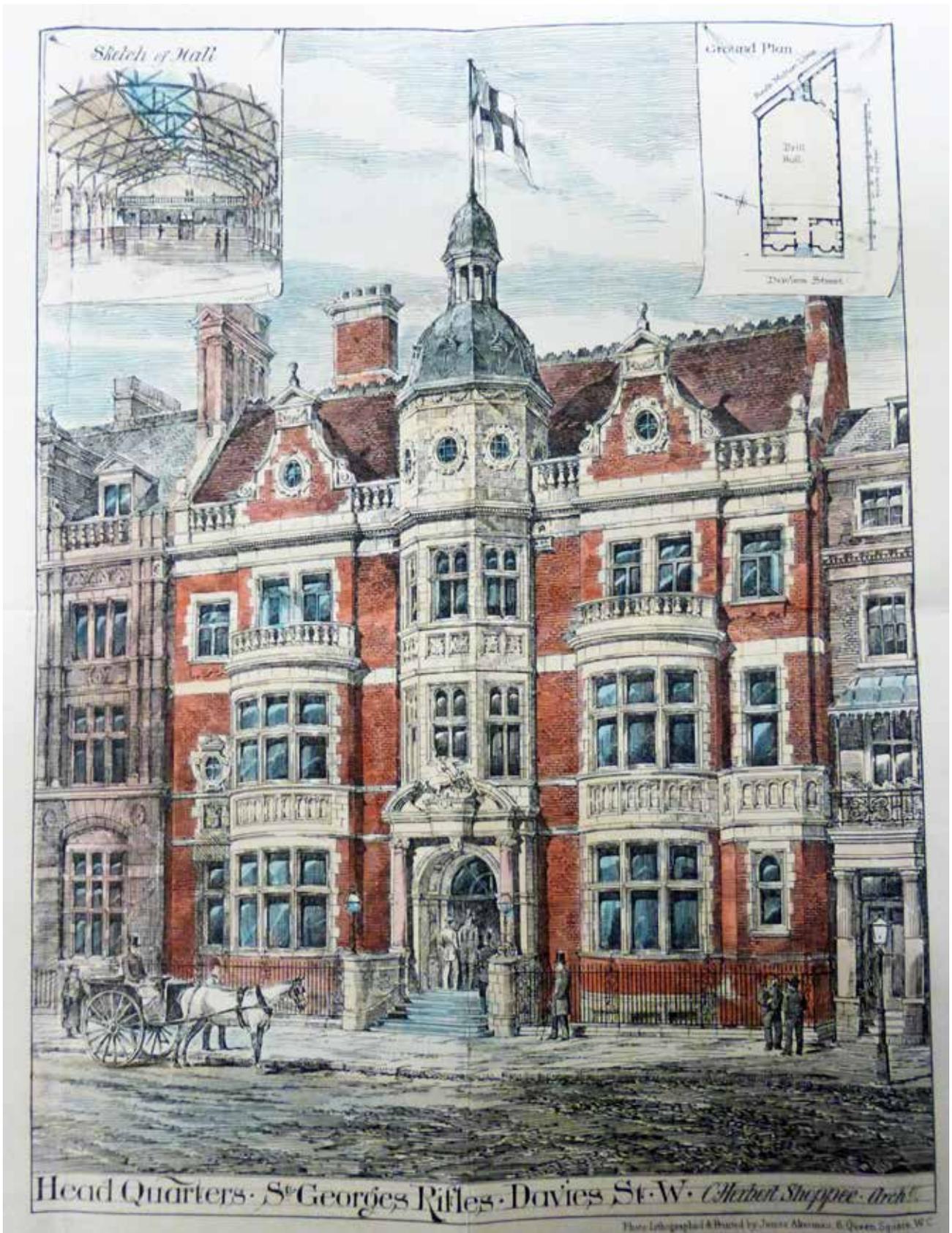
56 Davies Street was until recently the home to Queen Victoria Rifles (QVRs), a prominent rifle regiment with a history dating back over two centuries to the Napoleonic era. The QVR's roots can be traced back to The Victoria Rifles and the St George's Hanover Square Volunteers, who amalgamated in 1908. The Victoria Rifles descended from The Duke of Cumberland's famous Corps of Rifleman known as the Sharpshooters, who formed in 1803 and acquired a name for skill and efficiency with a rifle, unsurpassed by all others. By 1835 they had become known as the Royal Victoria Rifle Company (RVR), after Queen Victoria accepted the offer to become patron of the club. The RVR's were unique in the early-19<sup>th</sup> century for possessing a drill ground, rifle range and an organisational structure that influenced many other corps. The company had several prominent members, including the Earl of Ellesmere, Lord Garvagh, Viscount Hinton and Sir John Philipart, who was editor of the Naval and Military Gazette. By 1859 they were a two-hundred strong company and were the 1<sup>st</sup> Middlesex Royal Victoria Corps.

St George's Hanover Square Volunteers initially formed as a rifle club to assist the 'civil magistrates in suppressing any riot or hostile force within the Parish of St George'. The rifle club was active throughout the Napoleonic era and the vast numbers of members were made up of the gentry and nobility. The club disbanded 1814 following the abdication of Napoleon but were revived in 1859 as the St George's Rifles, 11<sup>th</sup> Middlesex RVC, and initially met and trained in the grounds of Burlington House. In 1889, after a lengthy search for permanent headquarters, the Duke of Westminster offered the company a site in Davies Street, at a peppercorn rent lasting ninety nine years.

The regimental headquarters were designed by Charles Herbert Shoppee in a Tudorbethan style, with the principal elevation fronting onto Davies Street and the rear elevation fronting onto South Molton Lane **[Plate 2.6]**. Shoppee tailored the building for the St George's Rifles and it was considered to be one of the best equipped sites in England, complete with a Morris Tube range and a revolver range **[Plate 2.7]**. There was also a large drill hall to the rear, a mess room, officers' rooms, armoury and even a gymnasium. Following the passing of the 1908 Territorial and Reserve Forces Act the Royal Victoria Rifle Company and the St George's Rifles eventually amalgamated to form the 1<sup>st</sup> Middlesex Victoria and St George's Rifle Volunteer Corps.

In 1920 the Territorial Forces were reconstituted as the Territorial Army, and the regiment was reformed as the 9<sup>th</sup> London Regiment, Queen Victoria Rifles.

The regiment was in active service during the beginning of the Second World War, but was later disbanded so men could join other battalions. This decision was partly prompted by the loss of the regimental headquarters on Davies Street, which suffered a direct bomb hit completely destroying the upper floors of the building. The building was photographed in its derelict state in late 1940, and the photographs are reproduced in **[see Plates 2.4 and 2.8]**.



**Plate 2.6** Front elevation of 56 Davies Street, St Georges Rifles Club, with an internal view of the drill hall, printed by James Alberman, 1890 (Westminster Archives).

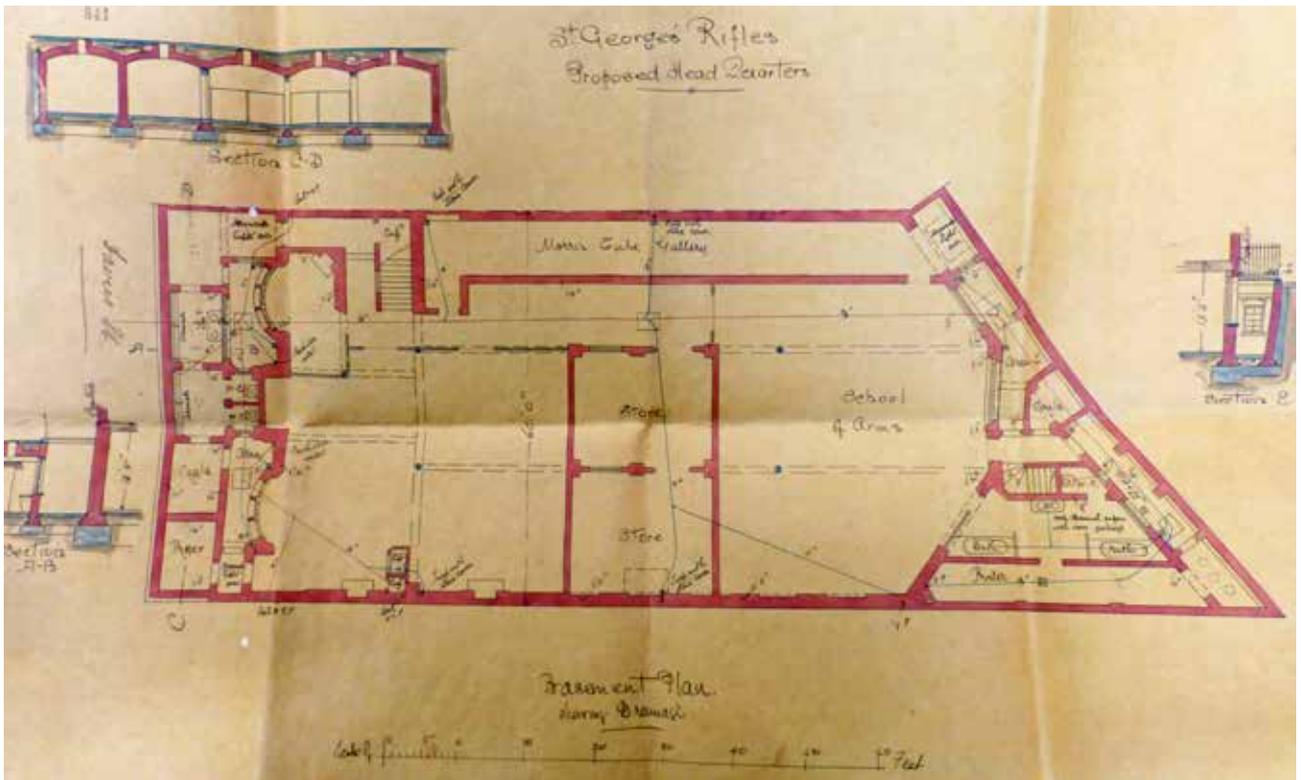


Plate 2.7 Basement plan of 56 Davies Street showing proposed layout and uses, drawn by Charles Herbert Shoppee, 1889 (Westminster Archive).



Plate 2.8 Photograph showing the bomb damaged drill hall in 56 Davies Street, 1940 (Westminster Archive).

At the end of the Second World War the regiment reformed as the Queen Victoria Rifles and by 1950 the regimental headquarters were being rebuilt **[Plate 2.9]**. The headquarters were commissioned by the War Department for the Territorial and Auxiliary Forces Association and were designed by Trenwith Wills, who was a prominent architect working in the early-to-mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Wills studied architecture at the Liverpool School and won the Tite Prize in 1914, followed by the RIBA Victory Scholarship in 1920. During the interwar years he formed a partnership with Gerald Wellesley, the future 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Wellington. Wills and Wellesley were known for their alterations to large country houses and had a shared fondness of classical architecture. After Wellesley retired to become the 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Wellington in 1943, Wills formed his own firm Trenwith Wills & Wills and continued to work until his death in 1973.

The regimental headquarters are described by Pevsner as a 'civilized latter day neo-classical building', typical of Wills' favoured architectural style. The size and layout of the building was dictated by Wills' decision to re-use the remaining outer walls of the drill hall from the original late-19<sup>th</sup> century building, which had survived the extensive bomb damage of WW2 **[see Plate 2.4]**. The hall was, however, subdivided with a new concrete and steel framed floor inserted at first floor level, which created a garage on the ground floor with a new, smaller drill hall above.

The street-facing rooms of the building, and the whole of the second and third floors, were re-built to Wills' designs; however, the way in which the building was occupied remained largely as it had done in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the QVR were governed by the hierarchical organisation of the Territorial Army. At basement level he provided a new armoury, rifle range and 'other ranks' mess, and at ground floor level, as noted above, there was a new mess and servery together with a formal entrance hall and cantilevered staircase. At first floor level there was an ante room, officers' mess and drill hall, at second floor level there were several lecture rooms for the on-going training of the QVRs and at third floor level bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen were provided for the Officers. Wills also connected the building to 52-54 Davies Street through new openings in the party wall at first and second floor levels.



**Plate 2.9** Photograph of the front elevation of 56 Davies Street by Trenwith Wills, 1954 (Collage, City of London).

## **2.4 Sources and Bibliography**

London Metropolitan Archives:

GLC Photographs Collection

Westminster Local Archives:

Grosvenor Records

### **Published Sources**

Survey of London, vols. 39 and 40: The Grosvenor Estate in Mayfair.  
London County Council, London, 1977.

N. Pevsner, Buildings of England: London, Westminster (New Haven  
and London, 2003).

## 3.0 Site Survey Descriptions

### 3.1 52-54 Davies Street (Grade II Listed): Front Elevation

Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century pair of Italianate terraced houses, rooms that were used by the TA who were previously in 56 Davies Street and laterally connected to no. 56 Davies Street [Plate 3.1]. Identical on all but the ground floor, each building is of two bays and four storeys over a basement and is faced in stock brick with stucco dressings. Both buildings are set back from the pavement and framed by lightwells with spear-headed railings, the railings to no. 52 are original but the railings to no. 54 are replacements in the original design. The lightwell to no. 52 is accessed via a gated entrance from the pavement and has original stone stairs but the lightwell to no. 54 is enclosed with detracting modern glazing.

Above ground floor each house is two bays wide and fronted in brick. To the north no. 54 has a short rendered and painted return elevation; the adjoining no. 56 was set back from the Georgian building line and so exposed what was originally a party wall.

### 3.2 56 Davies Street

#### 3.2.1 Front Elevation

The building is of three bays and four storeys over a basement and is faced in Portland stone [Plate 3.2]. It is set back from the pavement by a basement lightwell which is framed by a stone-bottle balustrade. The lightwells are concealed by modern glazed roofs.

The ground floor is faced in rusticated stone with stone steps leading to an arched entrance in the central bay with a regimental cartouche acting as a key stone. Original eight-panelled doors and a glazed fanlight. Flanking the main entrance are two narrow metal-framed casement windows with simple stone cills and two larger arched windows with metal glazing bars. There are two roundels at the very north and south of the elevation detailing the building as the 'Queen Victoria's Rifles K.R.R.C'. The ground and first floor are separated by a band of plain stone. The upper floors of the building are faced in ashlar with rusticated quoins. At first floor level there is a central full-height metal-framed window with a stone-bracketed cornice. This window is flanked by two metal-framed windows with stone architraves and small keystones. At second floor level there are three metal-framed casement windows, all with simple stone architraves and small keystones. The third floor or attic storey is faced with seven metal-framed casement windows, and at roof level there is a dentilled cornice.

#### 3.2.2 Rear Elevation

The elevation fronts onto South Molton Lane and is plain [Plate 3.3]. It consists of two stock-brick ranges, the range to the south is of four bays and three storeys over a basement and the range to the north is also of four bays but is only two storeys tall. The range to the north has a large vehicular entrance to a garage with a roller shutter and concrete lintel. To the south there are two door entrances, the one to the north with a cantilevered porch. To the upper floors of both ranges there are metal framed windows with straight brick headers. The rear is enclosed from the pavement by metal railings.



**Plate 3.1** 52-54 Davies Street, front elevation



**Plate 3.3** 56 Davies Street, rear elevation, 2016, Donald Insall Associates.



**Plate 3.2** 56 Davies Street, front elevation

## 4.0 Commentary on the Proposals

### 4.1 Description of the Proposals and their Heritage Impact

The proposals are shown on drawings that accompany this application. They entail the application of temporary advertising to the front and rear elevations of 56 Davies Street and to the blind north return of 54 Davies Street.

On the unlisted building at 56 Davies Street it is proposed to affix two horizontal flagpoles to the stone façade at first floor level either side the central window, and two similar banners to the brick rear elevation. These would have anchors set into the elevation and additionally a plate held in place by four screws. There would also be two small frames displaying menus affixed to the front elevation by the entrance door, held in place by wall-plugged screws.

*The utilitarian rear elevation is consented for demolition, and no heritage harm would occur to neither sensitive fabric nor significance otherwise though the proposals. The façade is to be dismantled and reconstructed. The fixings would cause some small scale localised physical damage to the stone work; this can be made good to be near invisible once the temporary use has ceased, and therefore it is expected that no harm to the heritage significance of the unlisted building overall would be caused.*

The blind northern flank elevation of 54 Davies Street would be fitted with a banner, 3.5 by 1.5 metres large, on a custom clip frame with wall anchors.

*This banner would be located on a blind element of return elevation that was historically not exposed and only became an elevation when the neighbouring building was set back from the historic building line. Small fixings into this elevation can be made good easily and would not disturb sensitive fabric.*

*The larger advertising elements are either of a traditional form (at 56 Davies Street) or placed away from sensitive elevations, and are all temporary, and would therefore on balance not harm the settings of listed buildings nor the character or appearance of the conservation area. They would, however, support the meanwhile use of these buildings which will in turn allow their upkeep in the short term.*

### 4.2 Justification of the Proposals & Conclusion

Overall, the proposals have given 'great weight' to the conservation of heritage assets (in this case, the listed building, unlisted building and the Mayfair Conservation Area), satisfying paragraph 193 of the NPPF, and no harm would be caused to any asset, meaning that paragraphs 195 and 196 of the NPPF are not engaged. The listed building and the conservation area would be preserved, in line with sections 16, 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and policy 39 of Westminster's local plan. For these reasons the applications should be approved.

## Appendix I - Statutory List Description

TQ 2880 NE, 2881 SE  
CITY OF WESTMINSTER DAVIES STREET W1  
17.1.75

No 50 (Running Horse Public House) and Nos 52-54 (even)

- II

Three houses 1839-40, Joshua Higgs builder. Stuccoed, slate roofs. Four storeys and basement. No 50, the pub, has 3 window front with 4 window return. First floor windows have cornices on consoles with pediment over central one. Dentilled main and original course over second floor; parapet with stuccoed blocking course and scrolled upstand. Nos 52 and 54 also have cornices on consoles to first floor windows with early C19 cast iron balconettes. Original main cornice modillioned and dentilled, over second floor. No 52 has Greek Doric columned porch. All upper floor windows retain glazing bar sashes. c.1840 cast iron area railings. Survey of London Vol XL.

Listing NGR: TQ2858080989

