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# DOWNING SQUARE IN THE 1770s AND 1780s

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Downing Street, Westminster (Fig. 1), mostly on the site formerly occupied by Hampden House,<sup>1</sup> was developed by Sir George Downing, 1st baronet, in the 1680s.<sup>2</sup> Fifteen houses were built along the north side and west end of the street. A 1749 plan of the street (Fig 2) shows these numbered from west to east, starting from the south-west corner of the wider (west) end of the street, then known as Downing Square, the reverse of what later became current. However, the sequential numbering from the King Street (now Whitehall) end of the street has thrice altered since first established by 1789<sup>3</sup> (Appendix 1). For the sake of clarity, the 1797 numbering will be used throughout in this article, as it was not only current for longer than any of those before or after in the history of the street, but also takes account of those individual houses that during the 19th century were either subsumed in others and lost their own identity, or were demolished and so disappeared completely.<sup>4</sup>

The *Survey of London* hints that the tenure of the street descended to the first baronet's third son, Charles, as it was he who was re-assigning leases in the street in the 1720s, on the expiry of the 40 year leases given out by his father, Sir George Downing.<sup>5</sup> A James Steadman, 'carpenter', took leases on the four large houses fronting Downing Square, three being those houses marked 1-3 on the 1749 plan and the fourth effectively occupying the area covered by 4 and 5 on the same plan. Steadman's leases were to expire in 1760 and the *Survey of London* makes clear he must have partially or completely rebuilt the four houses.<sup>6</sup>

By the mid-18th century the Downing family were fast running short of heirs, either male or female. Despite this, Charles Downing's son, Sir Jacob Garrard Downing (the fourth and last baronet) in 1751-2 secured an extension to 1803 of the crown lease that had been due to expire in 1763, which was followed in 1772 by a further (reversionary) extension to 1820 granted to his widow's trustees.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, in 1764 the last baronet had died childless,<sup>8</sup> like his predecessor the third baronet, Sir George Downing, who had died in 1749.<sup>9</sup> Sir Jacob had succeeded in the normal way to the entailed family estate, but the third baronet had also made provision, in the event of the lack of subsequent heirs, for a residual legatee. This was to be the University of Cambridge to found a new college.<sup>10</sup> However, following the fourth baronet's death, the provision for his widow and various legal wrangles prevented the passing over of the estate to Cambridge until 1800.<sup>11</sup> It is the circumstances of this delay and the possible involvement of Kenton Couse and (Sir) Robert Taylor in the alterations to the four houses in Downing Square at the west end of the street, consequent on their sale by the Downing trustees in 1772, that are the subject of this article. These houses, No 11, 12, 13 & 14 in the 1797 numbering, are those numbered 1, 2, 3 & 4 on the 1749 plan (Fig. 2).

In the year of the last baronet's death, the University of Cambridge had sued his heirs-at-law in the court of Chancery for the legacy due to them. The Lord Chancellor found in the university's favour, but unfortunately for them, this judgement

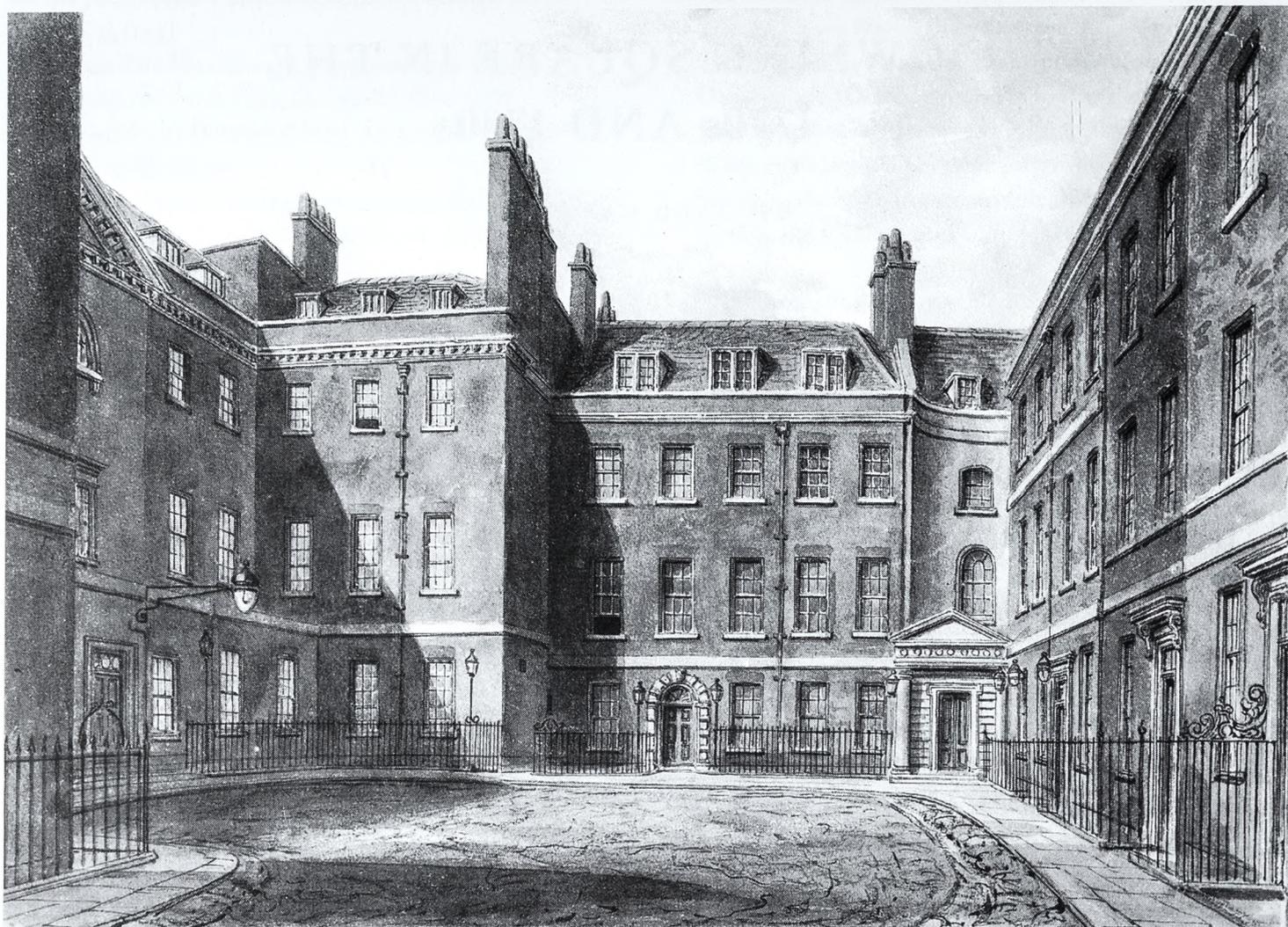


Figure 1. J.C. Buckler, Downing Square, the western termination of Downing Street, showing (from left to right) houses No 10–16 from the south-east in 1827.

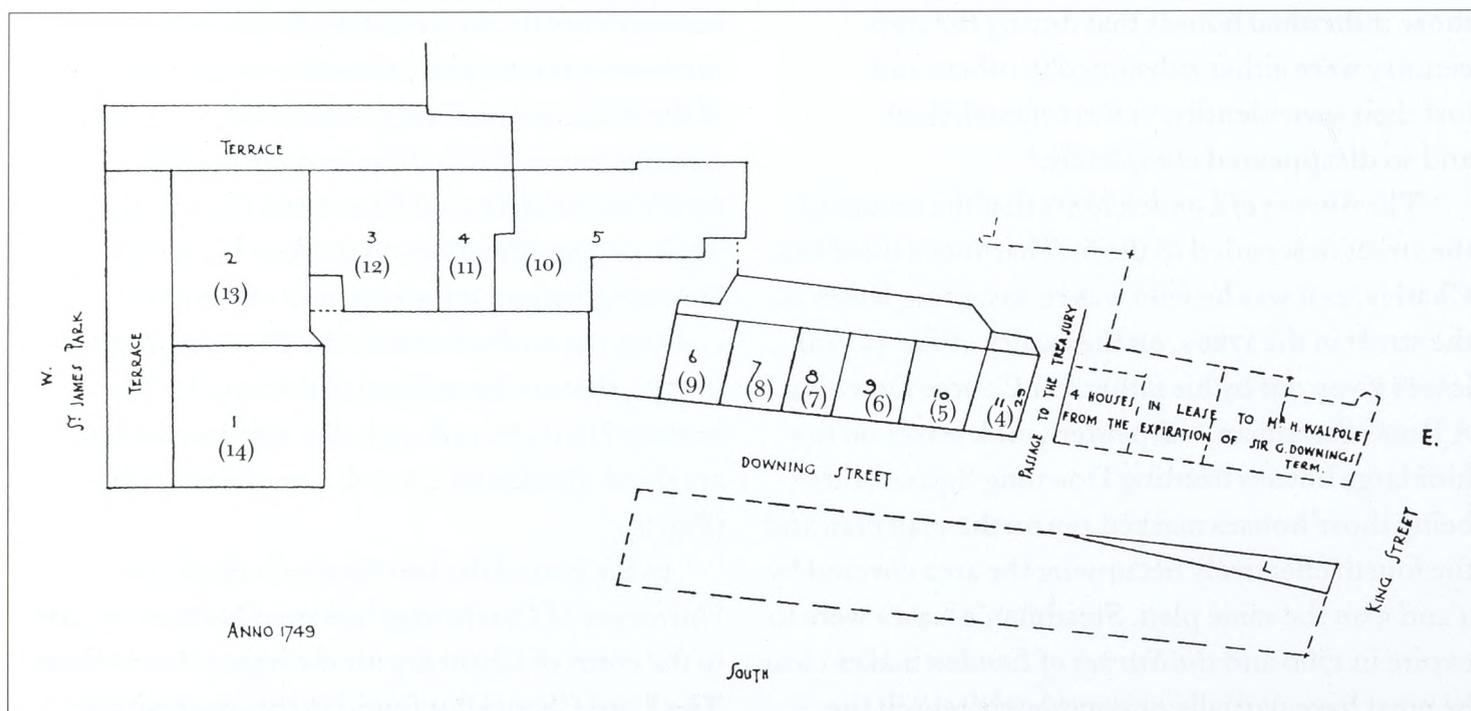


Figure 2. Plan of Crown property in Downing Street in 1749. *Survey of London*.

was not handed down until July 1769, by which time not only were the estates in Lady Downing's possession, but she had remarried in November of the previous year, complicating and drawing out matters even further. Her second husband was George Bowyer, a naval officer, and the estates remained with him after her death in 1778, without any real title, as her devisee. Thus Cambridge University only came into possession of the legacy in 1800, the year immediately following Bowyer's death on 6 December, 1799.<sup>12</sup>

Both Bowyer and his wife, the sole executrix of Sir Jacob's will, were parties to the subsequent sale to William Maseres by Dame Margaret's trustees, on 24 November 1772, of all the remaining properties in the street still held by them for £10,500.<sup>13</sup> Maseres thus acquired the Crown leases of No 11–14 at the west end of the street, No 4–9 (the next six houses east of No 10) and the houses built on the triangular segment of land on the south side of the street at its entrance from King Street. The other houses in the original Downing development of the street had already passed out of the family's possession as follows: the first four houses on the north side had been bought from Charles Downing by Horatio Walpole, 1st Lord Walpole, in the late 1720s,<sup>14</sup> and No 10 was excluded from the 1751 extension of the crown lease granted to Sir Jacob Garrard Downing, as it was by then the official residence of the first lord of the Treasury, and was left to revert to the Crown at the expiry of the lease in 1763.<sup>15</sup>

Maseres proceeded to divide his newly acquired properties into at least two parcels. The first comprised No 12–14, which (it will be shown) he proposed to redevelop or update, in the process weaving the most complicated web of encumbrances on his equity in the street (Appendix 2). The second parcel comprised No 11 and the next six houses east of No 10, that is 4–9 and (it will be argued) was to be used to part finance the costs of his redevelopment. No 11 (it will be shown) was structurally repaired because of related work that was on-going at No 10, next-door, whereas 4–9 and

the houses on the south side of the street seem to have been left untouched. All the sitting tenants of No 11–14 had already been moved out, the rate books showing the four houses as falling vacant between 1769 and 1771.<sup>16</sup>

The day following his purchase of the Downing properties, presumably in order to fund the running costs of his building works, Maseres obtained two mortgages from Samuel Gardiner of Wanstead of £1,000 each, secured on No 4–9 (insured for £1,600) and 11 (insured for £1,000), respectively.<sup>17</sup> The loans from Gardiner were envisaged as short term, as he was to be repaid in May and November the following year. However, Maseres never achieved this, instead using the same properties in September 1777 to raise a further £1,680 from one Hugh James, in exchange for an annuity of £210 payable to John Antrobus and Emily James during their lifetimes.<sup>18</sup>

On the same day as he borrowed from Gardiner, Maseres had also raised additional monies by mortgaging three houses (those marked 1–3 on the 1749 plan, ie No 14, 13 and 12) back to George Bowyer for £2,500.<sup>19</sup> Within a few months, on 25 March 1773, Maseres had sold No 12 to Thomas Somers Cocks for £2,700, at the same time obtaining Bowyer's agreement that the two remaining of the three houses on which he had a charge were sufficient security in themselves for the money he had advanced.<sup>20</sup> These two houses, nos. 14 and 13, were then let by Maseres in October 1774 and May 1775, for terms of 31 and 30 years respectively, to Henry Hunt, in the case of No 13 for a single payment of £210 only.<sup>21</sup>

Such a low figure speaks of a debt owing from Maseres to Hunt, and indeed Hunt's profession is described as 'builder' in the indenture. That he must also have been the contractor for the building works on the three houses mortgaged by Maseres back to Bowyer is suggested by the combined facts that Hunt is not shown in the rate books, paid so little for his lease of No 13, and then in under a month was able to sell it on for the considerably greater sum of £2,100 to Simon Fraser, the next occupant,

who was already in residence.<sup>22</sup> Fraser, likewise, on the day that he bought the house, mortgaged £1,500 of the purchase price back to Hunt, who in August, two months later, re-mortgaged on to Elizabeth Chase with the proviso that either Fraser or Hunt were to redeem a year later in August 1776.<sup>23</sup> Instead, in May 1777, Fraser redeemed £700 of Bowyer's mortgage to Maseres, also paying £2,800 to Fraser, being the remainder of the purchase price of £3,500.<sup>24</sup> Bowyer was therefore owed a balance of £1,800 by Maseres, now secured on No 14 only. Meanwhile, Elizabeth Chase was still owed her £1,500 at Fraser's death in 1783 and had to be paid out of the sale by his executors to the next occupant, James Martin, for £2,992-10s.<sup>25</sup>

Hunt, meanwhile, also extricated himself from No 14 by mortgaging it in two tranches to Walter Scot, 'plasterer'. Having first obtained one mortgage from Scot, earlier in the same month of June 1775 that he had sold No 13 to Fraser, a second advance from Scot was negotiated in July.<sup>26</sup> Hunt and Scot were clearly associated, as on the same day as this second mortgage was sealed, the two parties endorsed an earlier mortgage between them of 1772 (when Hunt is described as 'carpenter') on two houses in Union Street, Marylebone, suggesting that Scot may have been the plasterer for Maseres's campaign, as a fellow- or sub-contractor to Hunt.<sup>27</sup> Scot was bought out of No 14 by the sitting tenant, Sir John Eden, only in May 1782, slightly over a year after Maseres's death in 1781, but Eden's purchase of Maseres's interest awaited the unravelling of the dead man's financial liabilities some six years later.<sup>28</sup>

Few personal details are known of Maseres, save that he lived in Hertford Street, in the parish of St George, Hanover Square and also that when he died intestate on 11 April 1781, his immediate family (his mother Magdalen and brothers Francis and John) all renounced the administration of his effects.<sup>29</sup> Clearly, they were renouncing his debts, which had spun out of control as the encumbrances on his properties piled up. Events had seemingly passed a point of no return for Maseres when Samuel

Gardiner filed a bill to foreclose on his mortgage and obtained an absolute decree to that effect.<sup>30</sup> Both Maseres's still comparatively young age (he must have been in his forties) and the fact that he died intestate, coupled with Gardiner's foreclosure, suggest that he may have taken his own life.

Indeed, the prerogative court of Canterbury on 15 November 1781 appointed his creditors, the upholsterers cum cabinet makers John Mayhew and William Ince,<sup>31</sup> along with Hugh James, esq. of Enfield, Middlesex, William Bent, ironmonger, and Charles Kirshaw, carpenter, as administrators of 'the goods chattels and credit of William Maseres late of the parish of St George Hanover Square esquire.'<sup>32</sup>

These administrators proceeded to sell Maseres's remaining interest in the Downing street properties, but did not manage to extricate themselves before 1789.<sup>33</sup> The process was immensely complicated by the financial web he had spun, potentially leaving uncovered the liability for ground rent to the Crown, and it took seven years to unravel. One of the creditors, Hugh James, and one of the tenants, Simon Fraser, died in the meantime. By March 1788, the assembled parties or their heirs had apportioned the respective order of precedence of the various creditors and so vested No 11 and the six houses east of No 10 in one Richard Shaw, as trustee to sell 'or contract for the best price that could be obtained . . . to retain and reimburse himself all such costs . . . as he . . . should be put to about such sale and in the next place to pay the said Thos. James [executor of Hugh James] the sum of £2,555 together with the interest for the sum [at 5%] and in case there should be a surplus after such payments to pay the same to the said John Mayhew William Ince William Bent and Charles Kirshaw.'<sup>34</sup> In May of the same year, Eden's purchase of Maseres's interest in the lease of No 14 enabled Bowyer to be paid off the outstanding £1,800 from the 1772 mortgage to Maseres, while No 11 was vacated by Morse and sold in June 1789 to Daniel Dulany, whose residence in the house is noted in the rate books from then.<sup>35</sup>

The Crown office which granted the reversionary extension of the Downing lease to Dame Margaret's trustees, had noted in 1770 that the houses in question were 'in but indifferent repair.'<sup>36</sup> Of these houses, the four vacant at the time of the 1772 sale to Maseres, namely the three houses immediately mortgaged back to Bowyer (No 12-14) and the adjoining house (No 11), are all shown in the rate books leading up to their vacancy with declining rateable values.<sup>37</sup> They were then reoccupied in chronological order as follows: No 12 in 1773, 13 in 1774, 14 in 1775, in every case with a higher rateable value.<sup>38</sup> This last fact alone, after such extended vacancies, suggests considerable alterations were made to the houses. The relative increases may give a clue as to the degree of work done on each house and, in ascending order, were as follows: No 11, from £75 to £90; No 12, £98 to £115; No 13, £165 to £225; and No 14, £113 to £225.<sup>39</sup> Previously, the highest rated house in the street had been No 16 on the south side of the square, initially assessed at £300 and then in 1770 reduced to £225, meaning that two of Maseres's houses were now rated equally with it. However, three of Maseres's houses were subsequently reduced in value, significantly (in two cases) following their occupation or purchase by the tenants: No 11 in 1780 back to its former value of £75, No 12 in 1774 by the comparatively insignificant amount of £2 and No 13 in 1777 down to £207, still appreciably more than it was under Downing ownership.<sup>40</sup>

Although the Survey of London suggests that the then surviving [1931] front elevations of No 11, 12 and 13 (and thus by implication No 14) with their plat bands and narrower-barred sashes, probably dated from 1772 or shortly thereafter (Fig. 1), it curiously glosses over the possibility of an actual building campaign by Maseres.<sup>41</sup> This is despite the historical evidence cited above and various elements in the houses which fit stylistically with the 1770s. These features cannot date from the houses's previous alteration or rebuilding in the 1720s, and they are recorded in the early 19th century, in most

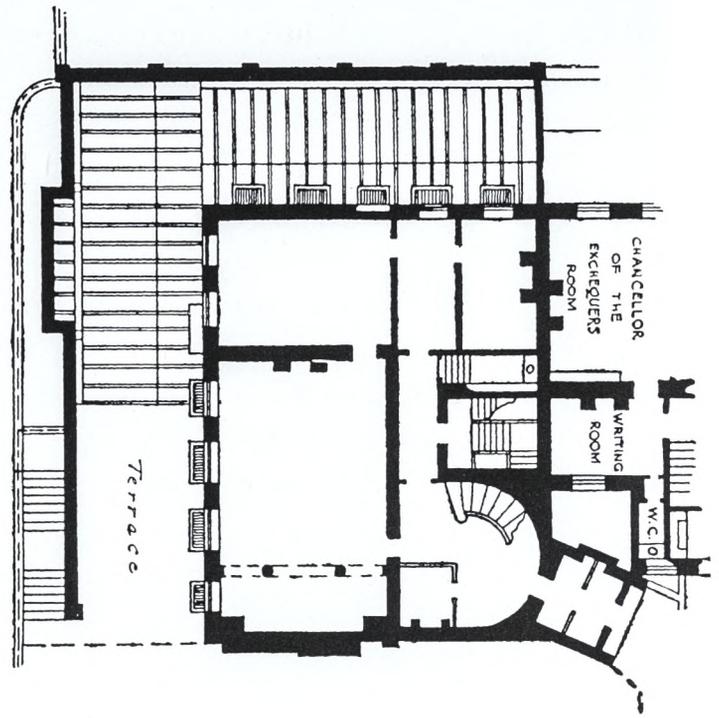


Figure 3. Plan of ground floor of 13 Downing Street circa 1879. *Survey of London*.

instances before the houses were next altered. Immediately of note, although no longer extant, are the block-rusticated (possibly vermiculated Coade stone) arched door to No 14, shown in Buckler's view;<sup>42</sup> the semi-circular, geometrical stone stairs (Fig. 3), rising one floor only over the front door at No 13, as mentioned in an estimate for repairs and alterations by Henry Holland in 1800 and first shown in a plan made before further alterations were made around 1857;<sup>43</sup> and the cross-vaulted space of square plan giving onto the secondary stairs of No 12, as shown on Sir John Soane's survey plan of 1825 (Fig. 4), preparatory to his alterations to the house of that date.<sup>44</sup> Of the fabric still surviving in situ in 1931, No 12 exhibits a conforming door-head, dado rail and cornice round the room of plausible 1770s date in the first floor drawing room (Fig. 5) all with a fluted frieze or band interspersed with paterae, as previously illustrated in the *Survey of London* volume.<sup>45</sup> Finally, there survive today various chimneypieces (Fig. 6 *et seq.*) that, stylistically, must date from Maseres's time: three



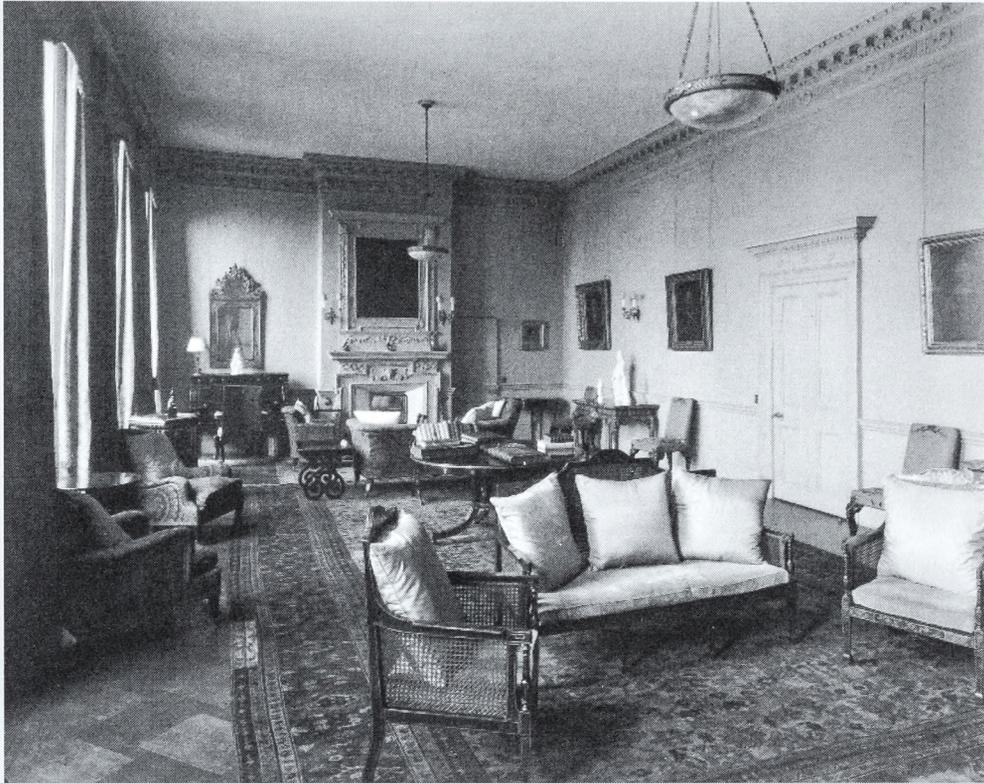


Figure 5. First floor drawing room, 12 Downing Street in 1879. *Survey of London*.



Figure 6. Chimney piece in back section of first floor dining room, 12 Downing Street in 1927, here attributed to (Sir) Robert Taylor. *Survey of London*.



Figure 7. 10–13 Downing Street, from the south-east, at a less oblique angle than in Figure 1. *Survey of London*.

still in situ at Nos. 11 and 12 and at least five others, salvaged when No 14 was demolished and reused in Scott's Colonial Office.<sup>46</sup>

To sum up, the financing undertaken by Maseres, the 'rebuilding' leases taken on two houses by Hunt, the evidence from the 19th century survey plans and the surviving fabric, whether a complete house or the reused chimneypieces, coupled with the vacancies noted in the rate books, the date at which each house was re-occupied and the amount the rateable values went up against their previously declining valuations, combine to give a compelling corroboration of the extent to which each house was worked on.

The exception is No 11, which was re-occupied last, despite the comparatively small amount that was done to it, but this may well be accounted for by the already on-going work at No 10, next door. The First Lord of the Treasury's house was undergoing 'the great repair', started in 1766 under the direction of Kenton Couse of the Office of Works, but then carried on interminably, as it seemed to the Government. On the basis of an estimate for £950, he had been directed to 'take down the front next the Street & also the East Flank Wall of the Hall, to build a Party Wall on the West side', that is between No 10 and 11.<sup>47</sup> Progress was painfully slow, dragging on for eight years; indeed in September, 1774



Figure 8. 10–12 Downing Street, from the south-west.

‘Mr Couse acquainted the Board that Lord North desired to have the front part of the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s house in Downing St finished which was begun by a Warrant from the Treasury dated 9 August, 1766. Order’d the same be done with all speed.’<sup>48</sup>

It will be readily seen that the extant facades of No 10 and 11 (Figs. 7 & 8), dating from this campaign in the mid-1770s, are basically a uniformly articulated pair, despite present differences of detail such as the cornice, and are distinct from the houses numbered 12, onwards (Fig. 1). Both houses have a running cill under the first floor windows, contrasting with 12–14, and their doorcases are similar. The

natural supposition is that No 11, even though it was in private ownership, was handled as an extension of the building works already going on at the Government owned house next door, No 10. Strength is lent to this surmise by the fact that the two houses had previously been created out of one – hence the kinked division between them and the lack of a party wall on that line – and that the decision was taken now to rectify this lack of a party wall.<sup>49</sup> Under this argument, the facade and doorcase of No 11 should therefore be ascribed to Couse and the rateable value of the house was so soon afterwards reduced to its previous level because very little else was done to the house.



Figure 9. Library chimney piece, 12 Downing Street, in 1927, here attributed to (Sir) Robert Taylor. *Survey of London*.

In conclusion, while in the 1770s all the four houses No 11–14 Downing Street were probably refronted and refenestrated, it was only the three higher numbered houses that were significantly altered internally. The work from this campaign that can be divined has been outlined above, although in each of the three houses more was probably done, for instance at No 13 the columned screen at the southern end of the dining room next to the hall may also have been introduced at the same time. Again, the massive amount that the rates were increased by at No 14, an effective doubling that was maintained without subsequent reduction, suggests even greater changes, as yet unknown.

The surviving 1770s chimneypieces from these four houses furnish the first links with (Sir) Robert Taylor: in one instance a direct link. The chimneypiece in the library of 12 Downing street (Fig. 9) is composed of a pair of attenuated consoles or volutes, fronted by a guilloche motif, forming the jambs supporting an entablature with a deeply fluted frieze that breaks forward over the volutes.<sup>50</sup> Nearly identical chimneypieces are also found at Asgill House, Richmond (1761–4), No 4 Grafton Street (1771–5) (Fig. 10) and Ely House, Dover Street (1772–6), all houses documented as by Sir Robert Taylor.<sup>51</sup> Such a direct parallel allows the search for other, less obvious, parallels between individual motifs on some of the Downing street chimneypieces with others elsewhere in Taylor's documented commissions and are as follows.

Turning briefly to No, 11, even though the external alterations to that house may have been in the hands of Taylor's colleague in the office of works, Kenton Couse, the central motif of crossed quiver and torch on the tablet of the chimneypiece in Figure 11 (front portion of the first floor dining room) is found at either end of the frieze of a chimneypiece at No 3 Grafton street, built by Taylor for Lord Howe and occupied in 1771. The repeated acanthus-leaf motif forming lozenge-shaped reserves in the frieze of this chimneypiece is

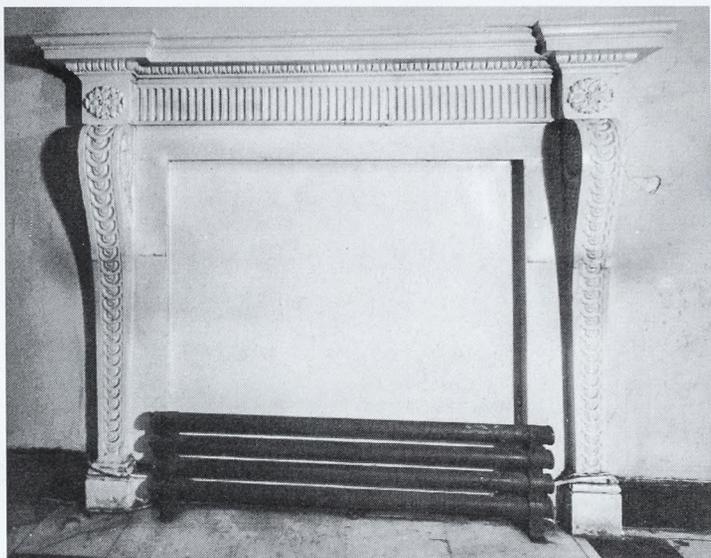


Figure 10. Chimney piece by (Sir) Robert Taylor at 4 Grafton Street; circa 1775.



Figure 11. Chimney piece in front section of first floor dining room, 12 Downing Street, in 1927, here attributed to (Sir) Robert Taylor. *Survey of London*.



Figure 12. Chimney piece by (Sir) Robert Taylor at Ely House, Dover Street; circa 1775.

likewise reminiscent of similarly composed, but circular, reserves in the frieze of a chimney piece at Ely House (Fig. 12). Next, the somewhat idiosyncratic interruption of the fluted frieze by circular paterae on the chimney piece from No. 14 in Figure 13 (now in room 55 of Scott's Colonial Office) is paralleled at Taylor's Sharpham House, Devon (1770), where the chimney piece in the first floor octagonal saloon has ovals with carved urns in bas relief interrupting the frieze in a comparable fashion. Finally, the husked swag and patera motif of the central tablet of the mantelpiece also from No. 14 in Figure 14 (now in room 53 of the Colonial Office) is found frequently in Taylor's work, for instance decorating the over-door tablets or labels of the staircase at Sharpham.

Edmund Keene, Bishop of Ely, provides the next connection with Taylor. It has been commonly assumed that Keene built a new town house in 1772 because the old Ely palace premises off Holborn were unsuitable, as long subdivided and let. It would now appear that the catalyst was his suddenly finding himself without his Downing Street house *only sometime after his translation to Ely*.<sup>52</sup> It was a common enough practice in eighteenth-century England for an indenture selling a property to be dated a good year after the intention to buy had been agreed; by the time the legal documents were

signed and sealed any building works would be well under way. Keene had lived at 12 Downing street since 1758 and it would seem, therefore, that Maseres's scheme as likely as not precipitated the bishop's move from the street in the second quarter of 1771.<sup>53</sup> In support of this suggestion, it has been seen already that the next occupant, Somers Cocks, had moved in within four months of the conveyance of the house to Maseres, despite the amount of work that must have been carried out on it.

Just as Marcus Binney has argued that Taylor may well have negotiated the purchase of the site in Dover street on which his house for the bishop was built in 1772–6,<sup>54</sup> it is plausible that he was similarly involved in the 1772 sale of the Downing Street houses. The nature of Taylor's clientele is by now sufficiently rehearsed to be familiar, being typically composed of the newly or recently moneyed: city merchants, bankers or financiers and those who had made money from government or military service or contracts. The father of Sir George Garrard Downing, the last baronet, was comptroller of customs at Salem and had died in 1740 'vastly rich'.<sup>55</sup> Dame Margaret's second husband, George Bowyer, was at the time of their marriage a captain, but by 1799 was to rise to full admiral, having been created a baronet in 1794 on account of the 'gallantry he displayed in the memorable victory achieved by Lord Howe on 1 June of that year', the battle of Ushant.<sup>56</sup> He was therefore later to serve under a patron of Taylor, but before this his membership of inner Admiralty circles is confirmed by his being an MP for Queenborough 1784–1790 'in the Admiralty interest'.<sup>57</sup> In addition, his father had in 1718 inherited as residual legatee the estate of a very distant (eighth) cousin, Edmund Bowyer of Camberwell,<sup>58</sup> whose own mother was to be commemorated by a monument, closely following a drawing by Taylor,<sup>59</sup> on the north side of St Mary Magdalene church, Richmond, Surrey, erected following her granddaughter's death in 1753. The connection may seem convoluted, but it does show the circles from which Bowyer sprang.

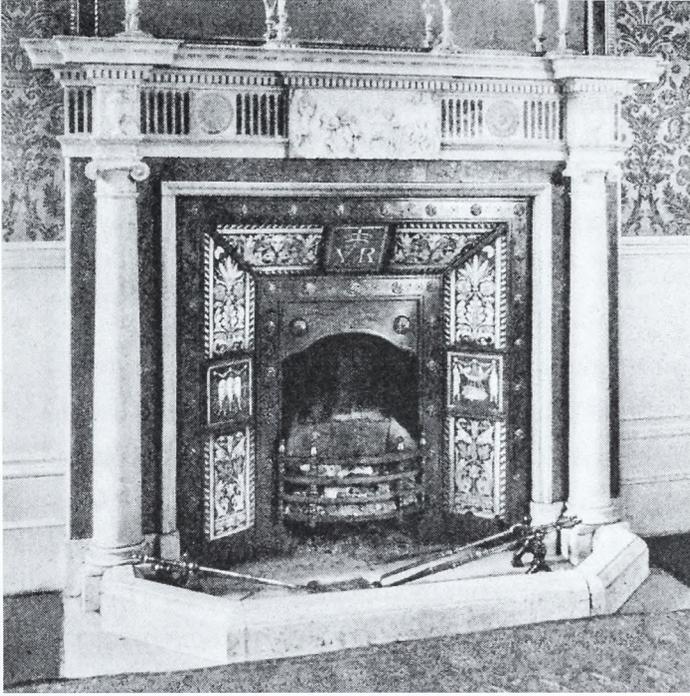


Figure 13. Chimney piece from 14 Downing Street, here attributed to (Sir) Robert Taylor, now in room 55, former Colonial Office, Whitehall. *Survey of London*.

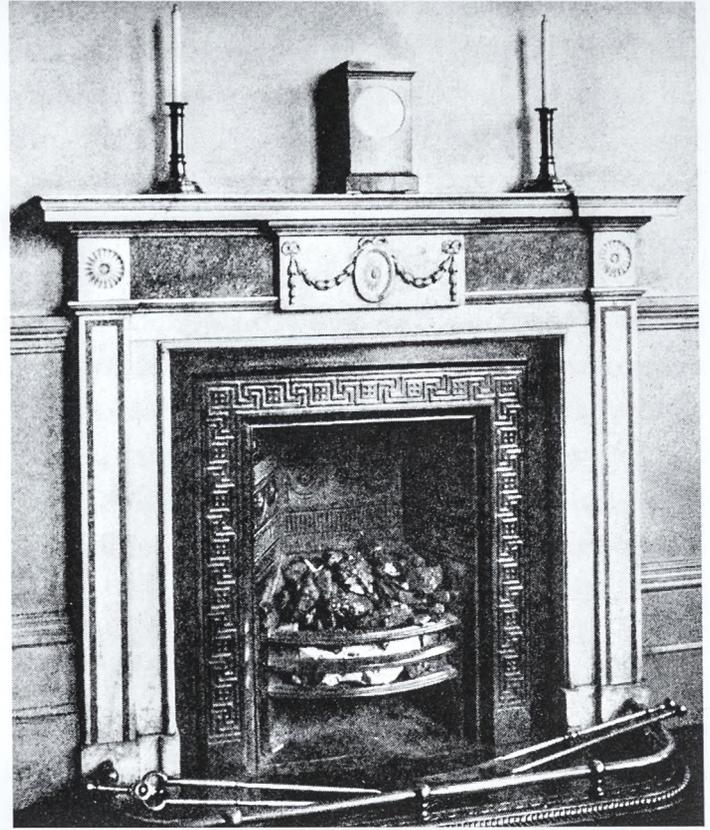


Figure 14. Chimney piece from 14 Downing Street, here attributed to (Sir) Robert Taylor, now in room 53, former Colonial Office, Whitehall. *Survey of London*.

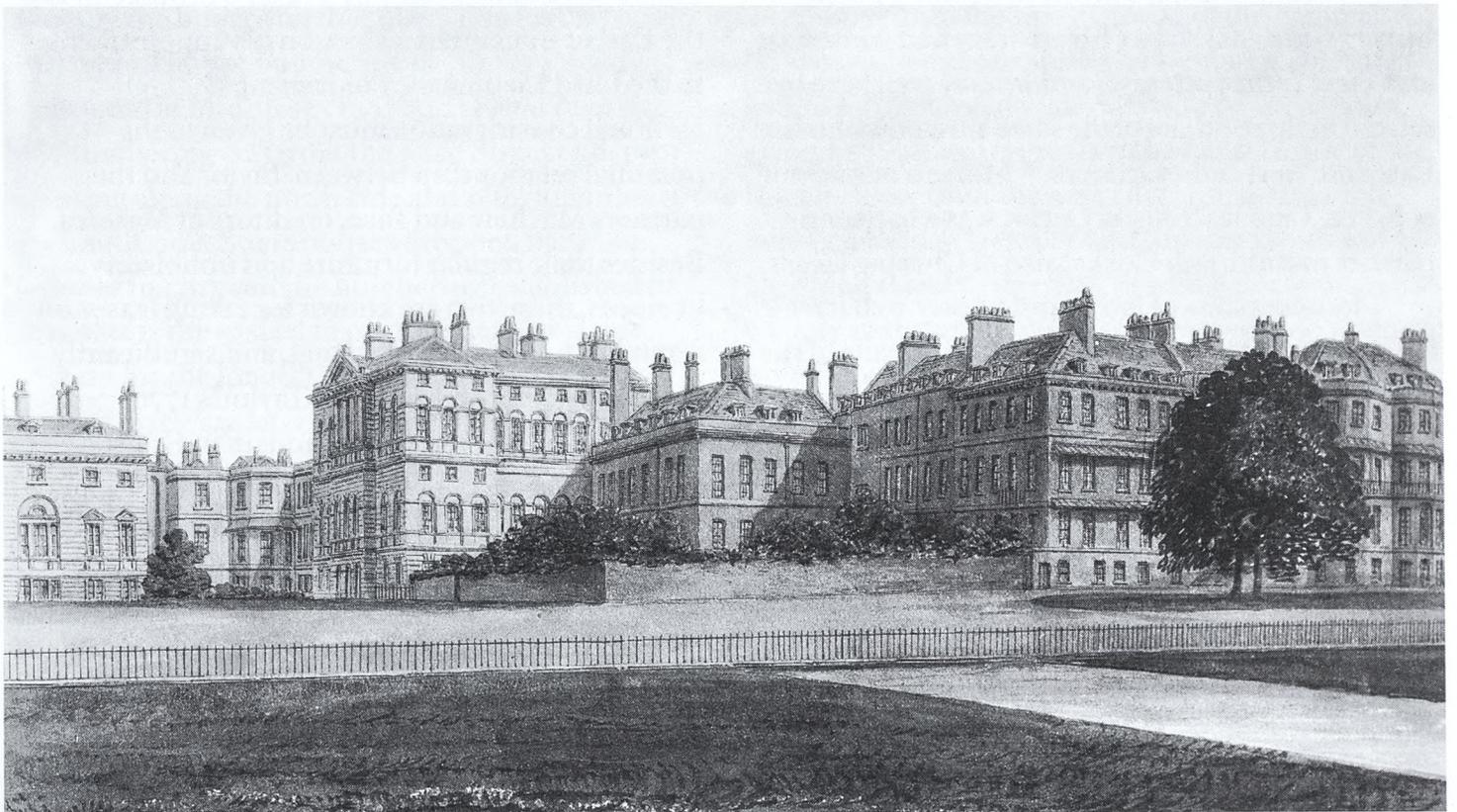


Figure 15. J.C. Buckler, the Treasury and houses in Downing Street from Saint James's Park, from the north-west, in 1827.

Likewise the Maseres family, which was of Huguenot origin. While William Maseres remains a shadowy figure, rather more is known of his brother, Francis (1731–1824). He inherited great wealth, partly from his father, a physician, and partly from his bachelor brother (seemingly another than William). Francis was already of comfortable means while a student and young fellow at Cambridge and went on to become a barrister, of the Inner Temple from 1750, where he was later a bencher and treasurer, and progressed to attorney-general of Quebec (1766–69), followed by appointments as cursitor-baron of the exchequer (1773–1824) and senior judge of the London sheriffs' court (1780).<sup>60</sup>

Consideration must also be given to the character of the new tenants following Maseres's alterations. Leonard Morse, the occupant of No 11, is the most difficult to fix; he seems never to have acquired its lease, presumably living there under a renewable short term tenancy.<sup>61</sup> He is described in another volume of the *Survey of London* as 'of the War Office',<sup>62</sup> but his bank account at Drummond's in Charing Cross (within a stone's throw of Taylor's house in Spring Gardens) shows him to have had some East and West Indies interests and he may well have been related to three others of the same surname who had East and West Indies careers.<sup>63</sup> Morse's neighbour at No 12, Thomas Somers Cocks, was a banker, a partner in Biddulph Cocks, also of Charing Cross.

The occupants of No 13 and 14 may well have been associates, as they were both adherents of the politician Alexander Wedderburn. No 13 was taken by General Simon Fraser, sometime Master of Lovat and son of the attainted 12th Lord Lovat. He was himself convicted of treason over the 1745 rebellion but was pardoned and proceeded to give loyal and valuable service in the American wars and was an MP from 1761 to 82, when he took an active interest in Indian affairs. Of even greater significance to the present argument, his father-in-law, John Bristow, has been described by Namier and Brooke as

The foremost British merchant in the Portugal trade, which through Lisbon extended to Spain, South

America, and the West Indies, and was one of the leading figures in the South Sea Company. In partnership with Peter (I) Burrell he held important Government contracts; 1740–56 for remitting money for the forces at Gibraltar and in Minorca (generally about £200,000 p. a.); and 1741–56 for provisioning the troops in Minorca. He was also a considerable underwriter of Government loans... In 1761 he was returned for Arundel with Government support, jointly with Sir George Colebrooke.<sup>64</sup>

Such a sketch places Bristow firmly in Taylor's circle, as he not only fits the cast of the architect's typical patrons (his brother was both a Bank and East India director),<sup>65</sup> but his fellow MP, Sir George Colebrooke, is himself well documented as employing Taylor on repeated occasions.<sup>66</sup>

Lastly, Sir John Eden at No 14 stems from a rapidly rising family described by a brother as having extensive North American interests.<sup>67</sup> Sir John himself was an MP, while, of his brothers, one was Governor of Maryland and another, married to the sister of a Governor of Madras, was a barrister, an MP, government minister and diplomatist, finally being created Lord Auckland.<sup>68</sup> And Auckland had been sought as secretary by Fraser's brother-in-law the Earl of Buckinghamshire on his appointment to the Lord Lieutenancy of Ireland.<sup>69</sup>

Final consideration must be given to the potential relationship between Taylor and the partners Mayhew and Ince, creditors of Maseres. Besides their regular furniture and upholstery business, these two are known for taking leases on a number of houses for subletting, and significantly those included two houses in Taylor's 1770s development of some fifteen houses in Grafton Street for the Duke of Grafton.<sup>70</sup>

Although there is yet no proven link between William Maseres and Robert Taylor, it seems clear that Maseres modernised and improved the four Downing Square houses he acquired in 1772. Notwithstanding Couse's suggested role, the existence of fittings demonstrably or plausibly by Taylor in these houses suggests that he was the author of their alteration, while the character and connections of the parties to the sale similarly urge

that the actual negotiation of that sale may well have been due to him as well. Whether or not he was the agent through whom the houses were relet, Taylor certainly proceeded to rehouse one of the former tenants, in the process designing one of his best known works, Ely House, Dover Street. Although much of the argument stemming from these events is at the tentative stage, it would certainly fit with and flesh out Taylor's known practice of combining architecture and estate agency.

Meanwhile, the way in which Maseres financed his building campaign and the evident pitfalls he encountered provide an unusual insight into how speculative developers operated in the eighteenth century, especially under a lack of fluid capital and when the commonly accepted security was in real

estate. The financial difficulties Maseres encountered in the process recall the huge overspend of the Office of Works in dealing with the structural problems at No 10 Downing Street that in its turn caused such concern to the Government, even with infinitely greater resources than a private speculator could attempt to muster. The tenor of the *Morning Herald* comment on the spiralling cost of repairs at No 10, on the strength of the evidence set out above, might just as well be applied to Maseres's predicament:

Five hundred pounds per annum preceding the great repair, and eleven thousand pounds the great repair itself! So much has this extraordinary edifice cost the country! – For one moiety of which sum a much better dwelling might have been purchased, even supposing the government to have been the purchaser.<sup>71</sup>

#### APPENDIX 1: NOTE ON THE STREET NUMBERING

The 1749 plan (Fig. 3) shows the houses in Downing Street identified by numbers running from west to east, towards Whitehall, or King Street as it was then. However, these numbers were purely to identify the houses on that plan. The first recorded instance of house numbering occurs in a deed registered at Middlesex in 1789.<sup>72</sup> From then on, the numbering was from the King Street end, progressing along the north side and returning along the south side. Some houses dropped back one number in 1797 and the numbering established at that date is the easiest to comprehend, as it was current for the longest period and encompasses houses that were later either merged or demolished by the time of the numbering adopted in 1883, which (with slight alterations) is still current today.

Thus, in 1846 No 11 was effectively subsumed in No 12, the combined house being renumbered No 11 in 1883, so that the subsequent numbers all dropped back one,<sup>73</sup> and then again, as part of Raymond Erith's great reconstruction that took place in 1959–63,<sup>74</sup> the original portion of the enlarged 'No 11' was taken into No 10, so that the current No 11 now comprises only the house originally numbered 12.<sup>75</sup> In this article, the 1797 numbering is used through-

out, and for clarity is added (in brackets) on the 1749 plan reproduced in Figure 3.

An additional confusion lies in the history of the portion of No 10 actually fronting the street – as distinct from the vast majority of the Prime Minister's house extending far behind it and originally a separate mansion, clearly to be seen with a glancing shadow across its right-hand facade in the Buckler view from the park (Fig. 15), in the angle between Kent's Treasury and the rear facades of Downing street to its right, to which it was connected only in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>76</sup> At some point in the second quarter of the eighteenth century, the No 10 segment of the Downing Street terrace was itself divided off from the adjoining house (No 11) that it had been part of, and while the dividing line between them followed the cranked rather than straight line of an internal partition, after the split there was initially no party wall between the two houses so created.<sup>77</sup> Thus the houses marked 4 and 5 on the 1749 plan were originally built as one house of much the same size as the houses marked 1–3 on that plan, all this taking place before the numbering from the Whitehall end of the street was established towards the end of the century.<sup>78</sup>

APPENDIX 2: TABULAR REPRESENTATION OF THE OWNERSHIP OF AND MORTGAGES ON SOME OF MASERES'S HOUSES IN DOWNING STREET

Date/House No [East-West]	14	13	12	11	9-4
1772, Nov 24	Crown leases sold to Maseres @ £10,500				
1772, Nov 25	Maseres mortgages £2,500 back to Bowyer			Maseres mort gages £1,000 to Saml.	Maseres mortgages £1,000 to Saml.
1773, March 25	Bowyer accepts 14 & 13 as sufficient security for his mortgage		Maseres sells to Somers Cocks @ £2,700	Gardiner; to be repaired by May 1773	Gardner; to be repaid Nov. 1773
1774, Oct	Maseres lets to Hunt for 31 years	Maseres lets to Hunt for 30 years			
1775, May					
1775, June		Hunt sells to Fraser @ £2,100			
1775, June	Maseres obtains 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> mortgage from Scot	Fraser mortgages £1,500 back to Hunt			
1775, July					
1775, August		Hunt re-mortgages on to Eliz.			
1777, May		Fraser buys out Maseres @ £3,500			
1777, Sept		paying £700 to Bowyer to clear mortgage on No.13,		Maseres further mortgages @ £1,680 to Hugh James in exchange for £210 annuity payable by Maseres	
1782, May	Eden buys out Scot	balance of £2,800 to Fraser			
1783		Fraser's executors sell to Jas. Martin for £292-10s and clear Chase mortgage			
1788, March				Vested in R. Shaw, as trustee, for sale to repay creditors	
1788, May	Eden buys out administrators and pays off Bowyer				
1789, June				Shaw sell No.11 to Dulany & pays off James annuity & Gardiner mortgages	

## APPENDIX 3: HISTORICAL POSTSCRIPT

The four houses modernised by Maseres in the 1770s have suffered varying fates in the intervening period down to today. Soane's 1825–6 alterations to No 11, including a new dining room with an elliptically vaulted ceiling added at the back of the house are well celebrated.<sup>79</sup> He also proposed knocking through connecting doorways between No 11 and 12, but this does not seem to have been done until 1846. Soane had previously worked as surveyor for John Eliot, 2nd. Lord Eliot, at No 12 during the years 1797–1805, supervising repairs and decorations, as recently described by Richard Hewlings.<sup>80</sup> Hewlings at the same time mentioned Holland's works on No 13, in so far as they touched on No 12. A transcribed estimate from Holland dated 29 August 1800 in the Survey of London files sets out exactly what work was carried out by him and is worth quoting in full:

The Roof of the House. To take down & rebuild the Chimney shafts, to repair Slating, Gutters & Dormers & to make new sashes to the Dormer Windows. The Fronts to the Park being much out of repair to be partly underpinned, repaired and fresh pointed; as also the front below the Terrace. The Drains cleaned and the paving repaired. The Windows, Doors, Floors, & Staircases thoroughly repaired, as well as all the Joiner's work – the locks & fastenings cleaned, the

plaistering repaired, and white washed, and the whole of the inside and outside works new pointed. Estimate of these works amounts to £1,650

The following alterations are necessary & would improve the Property:

To continue the Great Staircase one Storey higher to fit up in the two pairs of stairs a Bedchamber Apartment, in the one pair of stairs some doorways & chimneypieces to alter – One the Hall Story to make some alterations to the Doors and Partitions. In the Basement Story to make some alterations for improving the offices.

These works will amount to £650.<sup>81</sup>

This work, which included the pedimented porch visible in Buckler's view, was carried out for the East India Company, ostensibly in connection with the scheme of their President to secure an official residence for himself.<sup>82</sup> The Company in 1803 sold the house on for £9,000, plus £433 for fixtures, to the Governement for office use.<sup>83</sup> By 1827 it was appropriated by the Colonial Office, which already occupied No. 14, the next house south, and connecting doors were inserted between the two.<sup>84</sup> No. 14 was later so weakened by the building of Scott's new Colonial Office adjacent, that much of it was taken down in 1861–2; complete clearance occurred in 1876 when the fabric of No. 13 was also reduced to the ground floor and basement only.<sup>85</sup>

## NOTES

1 The name refers to the occupancy (1622/3–1665) of Elizabeth Hampden, mother of John Hampden of 'Ship Money' fame and aunt to both Oliver Cromwell, the Protector, and Col. Whalley, the regicide. She had been left the lease of the house by her aunt, the widow of Thomas, Lord Knyvet, Keeper of the Palace under Elizabeth I, who had granted him the right for his life to occupy the house without rent. Subsequently, in respect of the repairs Knyvet had carried out on the house, James I granted him a 60 year lease to commence at his death, which occurred 1622, meaning the the lease was to expire

in 1682. The property largely lay within the curtilage of old Whitehall Palace but also included land pertaining to Westminster Abbey. [London County Council, *Survey of London* (hereafter *SOL*), xiv, London, 1931, 107–8].

2 Downing had originally, in 1654, purchased an interest in the property from the survivor of the two partners who had acquired the Crown's interest from the Parliamentary Commissioners in 1651, but the transaction was rendered void by the Restoration. Not one to be deterred easily, Downing petitioned Charles II and was granted a reversion of the remaining Knyvet lease along

- with an extension to make up the remainder of the existing term to 99 years and the right to rebuild. Thus, even though he had obtained a convoluted series of leases from both the Crown and the Dean and Chapter of the Abbey, he only came into possession in 1682, on the expiry of the pre-existing crown lease originally granted Knyvet, and in March that year he was giving out building leases of 40 years. The rate books show the street in course of construction over the next few years. [SOL, XIV, 1931, 109–11].
- 3 London, London Metropolitan Archives (hereafter LMA), MDR, 1789/IV/476, refers to 'No 12' by its street number; the previously accepted date for the establishment of the street numbering was 1797 [as in Richard Hewlings, '11 Downing Street: John Soane's Work for John Eliot (1797–1805)', *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society*, 1995, 51].
  - 4 See Appendix I, *infra*.
  - 5 SOL, XIV, 1931, 119.
  - 6 *Ibid.*, 145, 156 & 160.
  - 7 *Ibid.*, 112
  - 8 John Burke, *Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies*, London, 1841, 164, Downing.
  - 9 *Idem*.
  - 10 *Idem*.
  - 11 *Idem*.
  - 12 Sir Leslie Stephen & Sir Sidney Lee (eds.), *Dictionary of National Biography* (hereafter *DNB*), Oxford, 1917, xv, 401.
  - 13 LMA, MDR, 1772/VII/292.
  - 14 SOL, 1931, XVI, 91.
  - 15 *Ibid.*, 120
  - 16 No 14 is shown falling vacant first, between Midsummer and Michaelmass, 1769; next 11, between Christmas, 1770 and Lady Day (25 March), 1771, and finally 12 & 13, between Lady Day and Midsummer, 1771 [London, City of Westminster Archives Centre (henceforth LWAC), rate books, Parish of St Margaret's, Westminster.
  - 17 LMA, MDR, 1772/VII/314–5.
  - 18 LMA, MDR, 1777/V/518.
  - 19 LMA, MDR, 1772/VII/288.
  - 20 LMA, MDR, 1772/IV/159.; London, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), T64/134; recited in PRO, T64/135.
  - 21 LMA, MDR, 1775/III/371.
  - 22 LMA, MDR, 1775/IV/358.
  - 23 LMA, MDR, 1775/IV/359; 1775/V/445; recited in PRO, T64/131.
  - 24 PRO, T64/131, reciting the indenture registered in Middlesex.
  - 25 *Idem*.
  - 26 LMA, MDR, 1775/IV/161 & 467.
  - 27 LMA, MDR, 1775/IV/468.
  - 28 LMA, MDR, 1782/II/366; MDR, 1788/III/481–2.
  - 29 PRO, PROB, 6/157/314 left.
  - 30 LMA, MDR, 1789/IV/303.
  - 31 Mayhew and Ince, in additions to their mainstream cabinet making and upholstery business, ran a sideline in taking house leases for sub-letting to short-term tenants. However, as they do not appear in the rate books as liable for paying the rates, unlike in Grafton Street where they are noted as responsible for three houses in Taylor's 1770s development for the Duke of Grafton, it would seem that the debt owed them by Maseres was for furnishings which presumably they were able to re-possess for resale to their own account; see Geoffrey Beard and Christopher Gilbert (eds.), *Dictionary of English Furniture Makers, 1660–1840*, 1986 (hereafter *Dict. of Furniture Makers*), 591.
  - 32 *Idem.*, which merely names them, whereas the conveyances in the Middlesex land registry give the professions of each administrator, as in LMA, MDR, 1788/III/481.
  - 33 LMA, MDR, 1788/III/481–2.
  - 34 LMA, MDR, 1789/IV/303.
  - 35 LMA, MDR, 1789/IV/476; LWA, Rate Books, St Margaret, Westminster.
  - 36 London, English Heritage, Survey of London files, xiv, Downing St. box, transcription of Crown Lease Book, xv/484 (original not traced at PRO).
  - 37 In 1763 the values had been: No 11 @ £70, 12 @ £100, 13 & 14 @ £220; by 1768 £75, £98, £165 respectively [LWAC, *loc. cit.*].
  - 38 LWAC, *loc. cit.*; No 11 may have been reoccupied so much later on account of the very extensive works going on at No 10 between 1766 and 1774 [SOL, XIV, 121]; see *infra.*, page 155.
  - 39 LWAC., *loc. cit.*
  - 40 *Idem*.
  - 41 SOL, XIV, 1931, 145, 155–6.
  - 42 The pedimented porch to No 13 was added by Holland in 1800–01, as is discussed in Historical Postscript, *infra.*, page 155.
  - 43 See *infra.*, page 155; SOL, 1931, xiv, 160 illustrates the plan.
  - 44 London, Soane Museum, Misc. Surveys Book, 1825–9, 51/9
  - 45 SOL., XIV, 1931, pl. 139
  - 46 *Ibid.*, pl. 143, 144 (right), 145.
  - 47 PRO, WORK, 6/19/141.
  - 48 PRO, WORK, 4/15: 30 Sept<sup>r</sup>., 1774.
  - 49 See Appendix I, *infra*.
  - 50 It will be noted that the earliest of these mantelpieces, that at Asgill, dates from before No 12 Downing Street

- was vacated by its occupant, Edmund Keene, Bishop of Chester and then Ely, and so the one at No 12 could have been installed by him, especially as a similar model was fitted up in his subsequent house, Ely House, Dover Street. However, the facts that Bishop Keene had occupied No 12 from 1758 and that its rateable value was declining from 1768 would together suggest he were unlikely to have embarked on improvements towards the end of his tenure.
- 51 Howard Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1850* (hereafter *Dictionary*), New Haven and London, 1995, 956–6.
- 52 The rate books note his change of title, confirming that his translation was not the reason for his need of a new house [LWAC, *loc. cit.*].
- 53 No 14 had already fallen vacant by the end of 1770 [*idem*].
- 54 Marcus Binney, *Sir Robert Taylor*, London, 1984, 66.
- 55 *Gentleman's Magazine* (hereafter *Gent. Mag.*), 1740, 204
- 56 L. G. Pine (ed.), *Burke's Peerage*, London, 1954, 621, Denham
- 57 Sir Lewis Namier & John Brooke (eds.), *History of Parliament, The House of Commons, 1754–90* (hereafter Namier & Brooke), London, 1964, II, 109.
- 58 Information from John Cloake, local historian of Richmond-on-Thames, Surrey.
- 59 Oxford, Taylorian Institute, volume of monumental designs by Taylor; other monuments attributed to Taylor based on this drawing are (or were) at All Hallows by the Tower, London (destroyed in the Blitz); St Mary's, Thorpe, Surrey (+1754), St Nicholas's, Rochester, Kent (+1759), St Lawrence's Ludlow, Shropshire (+1760); and St All Saints, Honington, Warwickshire (+1763).
- 60 *DNB*, xxxvi, 407–10.
- 61 No conveyances to him have been traced in the Middlesex deeds registry, although in LMA, MDR, 1789/IV 303, 476, he is stated to be 'in possession' and 'in . . . possession . . . late of Leonard Morse, esq.'
- 62 SOL, II, 1913, 43–44; additionally, for Morse's residence in Great George Street, see SOL, X, I, 1926, 42; a codicil to his will states he possesses a house in Lincoln's Inn Fields [PRO, PROB 11/1808/315], which was No 43, where he was sometime landlord to Johan Zoffany, the painter. Morse, whose son was called Leonard Becher Morse, presumably (it is here argued) inherited the house from his mother-in-law, 'Madame Becher', a previous resident [SOL, III, I, 1912, 53, 58].
- 63 London, Royal Bank of Scotland, archives dept., Drummond's ledgers; David Morse, West Indies merchant; Nicholas Morse, governor of Fort St George [*Gent. Mag.*, 1780, 446 & 102]; John Morse, Jamaica planter [PRO, PROB, 11/1781/204].
- 64 Namier & Brooke, II, 118
- 65 The Bristow family's fortunes were established by John's grandfather, who emigrated to Virginia circa 1660, where he made a great fortune, later returning to England to set up a mercantile house and served as a Bank director 1697–1707 [Romney Sedwick, *History of Parliament, House of Commons, 1715–54*, London, 1970, I, 478–8].
- 66 Colvin, *Dictionary*, 956–7; Richard Garnier, 'Arno's Grove, Southgate', *Georgian Group Journal*, VIII, 1998, 122–34
- 67 Namier & Brooke, II, 375–9
- 68 *Idem*.
- 69 *Idem*.
- 70 See footnote 31, *supra.*; LWAC, rate books, St George's, Hanover Square; *Dictionary of Furniture Makers, loc. cit.*
- 71 SOL, XIV, 1931, 121 [*Morning Herald*, 21 June, 1783].
- 72 LMA, MDR, 1789/IV/476.
- 73 SOL, XIV, 1931, 151.
- 74 Lucy Archer, *Raymond Erith, Architect*, Burford, 1985, 153–155.
- 75 Hewlings, *loc. cit.*; his use of the post-1883 numbering has inadvertently caused a confusion over which house it was that Soane worked on for Eliot, hence the duplication of this commission in Dorothy Stroud, *Sir John Soane, Architect*, 2nd. ed., London, 1996, 260 and Addendum, 281.
- 76 SOL, XIV, 1931, 118.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 121.
- 78 *Ibid.*, 118–9.
- 79 SOL, XIV, 1931, 144, 145–6.
- 80 Hewlings, *op. cit.*, 51–71.
- 81 London, British Museum, Add. MS. 38759, fo. 81 [transcription in Survey of London files].
- 82 Hewlings, *loc. cit.*
- 83 SOL, XIV, 1931, 155.
- 84 *Idem*.
- 85 *Idem*.