

# CAMBERWELL STABLES, CARTER PATERSON'S DEPOT

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*Until World War Two there would have been thousands of depots throughout London for carters and other such businesses. Most would have included stabling for the company's horses and wagons. This article describes such a stables complex recorded by GLIAS in 1982. Since then the buildings have been redeveloped as an award winning housing complex (described on p.17).*



*Fig. 1. 'Tack' Room, next to Sick Bay N. side (Photo Peter Skilton, c.1982).*

## BACKGROUND

Camberwell, then on the outskirts of SE London, was developed during the 19th Century. The streets in the vicinity of the stables site had been laid out by 1842. The block containing the stables was bounded by Chiswell Street to the west, Martha Street to the north, Cork Street to the east and Waterloo Street to the south. Fronting these were a few cottages, but at the centre of the block where the stables would be built, there were still fields. By 1870 almost all the immediate area, apart from the stables site itself, had been developed and was occupied by small narrow domestic dwellings with back gardens or yards. On

the stables site, a long irregular building had been erected at the northern side, which could have been stabling, but the rest had not been built on. The 1894/96 map shows that the irregular building had gone and the stables site and whole surrounding area were fully developed. The main entrance to the stables was at 25 Chiswell Street and there was access at the back from Cork Street until the 1930s.

Over the years the names of all four bordering streets changed. From the late 1930s names were as follows :

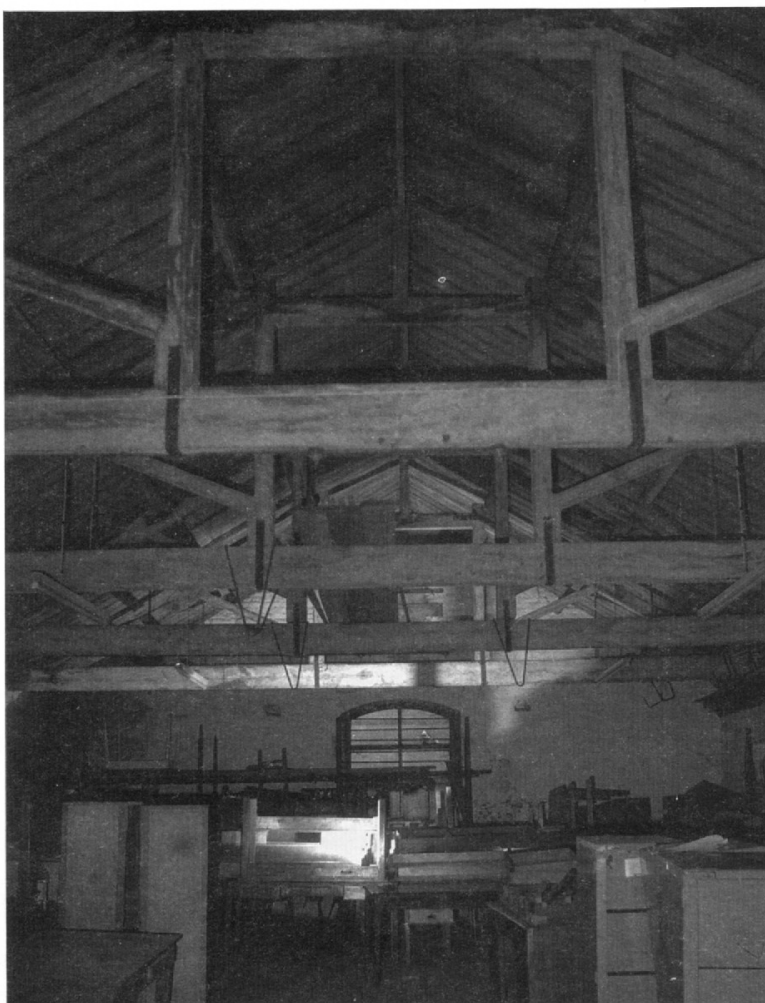
Chiswell Street (west) became Hopewell Street

Martha Street (north) became Picton Street

Cork Street (east) became Bantry Street

Waterloo Street (south) became Elmington Road

By the 1960s most of the 19th century development, except the stables complex, had been swept away and the immediate area redeveloped with multi-storey blocks of flats and a large primary school. Bantry Street no longer connected with Elmington Road but stopped short near the NE corner of the stables, joining Houseman Way. This was a new footway running along the eastern and southern boundaries of the stables, connecting with Hopewell Street.



*Fig. 2. Roof truss, central stable, 1st Floor, north side. (Photo Peter Skilton, July 1982).*

## EXTERIOR

The stables site was roughly rectangular. The complex consisted of a courtyard with buildings on the west, north and east sides, each having two floors plus roof space. The western facade on Chiswell Street was of three bays, built in yellow brick with rectangular windows and some blind windows, behind which was storage space. Access from Chiswell Street to the courtyard and so to the site, was by a stone-way through an arch in the northern bay. Two windows to the north of the courtyard entrance and four windows above belonged to a self-contained flat. Access to the flat was by an internal staircase from a front door opening from the street to the south of the courtyard entrance and numbered 25a. Along the front elevation was a decorative strip at first floor level in grey, cream and red tiles and below each of the three roof ridges was a circular window. The roofs were of slate with decorative red ridge tiles. On the north elevation, where outside access was difficult, fenestration appeared irregular. On the eastern elevation each bay of the three-bay stables had three windows at ground floor

level, one larger window on the first floor and a circular opening above. There were no windows on the south side, which still showed a sloping line marking the former horse ramp inside the yard. At some time this wall had been heightened in red brick. High on the south wall at the Chiswell Street end could be discerned a legend in faded paintwork : 'CP & COS DEPOT'. For fifty years the stables were used by the carriers Carter Paterson & Co. Ltd.

## Courtyard and Ramp

The courtyard was paved with granite setts and the two storey three bay building on the east side opposite the entrance was stabling on both floors. The ramp giving horses access to the first floor did not survive the 1930s. Its line could be seen in the brickwork along the southern wall, and it is shown on the 1894/96 OS map. The ramp started about halfway along the yard following two right angle bends in the wall, taking a left then a right turn as it ascended. In 1982 a supporting wall could still be seen at the left turn and a

water-tap there could have been contemporary with the original building. The ramp led up to a covered walkway across the front of the stable building at first floor level. The courtyard was bounded to the north by a multi-use building and to the west by storage space and the living accommodation fronting onto Chiswell Street.

### The stables. Main structure

The stable building housed six stables. It was of brick and roofed with slate. Like the yard, the three ground floor stables were paved with granite setts, the first floor stables and walkway had heavy duty tiles. Each stable had a central door, flanked by windows. At the back, ground floor stables had three windows each and first floor stables one window. Unglazed semi-circular openings connected adjacent stables and there were unglazed circular windows to the outside at both ends of the upper stables below the roof ridge in each bay. Otherwise all windows were glazed and all doorways fitted with heavy wooden sliding doors, each with two glazed windows. Stable doorways and glazed windows to the courtyard and at the back had shallow rounded tops and were framed with bull-nosed bricks.

### The stables. Interior.

On the lower floor the central and right-hand stables were similar, each measured 30 ft by 54 ft and had two

rows of eight cast iron columns. These columns supported the upper floor on girders and held the ends of the stall dividers. Cast into them was the legend 'DURHAM BROS 205 BOW RD., LONDON N.E.' Not all the columns remained and some had been repositioned, but the original locations of columns and stalls could be inferred from grooves in the floor, slots in the columns and battens and rings on the walls. Each stable had eighteen stalls 6 ft by 9 ft, nine each against north and south walls with a central passage. Drainage channels enabled stalls to be washed out. The left-hand stable was of similar design but was shorter to accommodate a forge behind in the NE corner of the building, where traces of hearths and chimneys remained. This indicates that shoeing may have been done by farriers on the premises. Access to the forge was through the left-hand stable, which contained twelve stalls. The the ground floor stables had accommodation for forty-eight horses.

The three stables on the upper floor followed a similar pattern. Each had stalls for eighteen horses, fifty-four in all. Instead of cast iron columns the stall dividers ended in square wooden posts attached at the top to beams which ran the length of the stables, supporting the roof beams. Altogether the stables could accommodate 102 horses.

### Multi-use building on north side of courtyard

The ground floor rooms of the two-storey building on the north side of the courtyard were used as offices, storerooms and workshops. One of these had an outside door, formerly giving access to Cork Street.

The upper floor housed, from the west, a tack-room with harness hooks and work bench, then a stable for sick horses. This contained 7 stalls against the northern wall each 6 ft by 10 ft, and a possible larger stall in the SW corner by a door. This led to a large room which was used for preparation of feed and treatments. From here was a connecting



Fig.3. Upper Floor Stable, east side, roof truss. (Photo Peter Skilton, Summer 1982).

door to the scullery of the first floor flat, where feed and medication for sick horses were heated.

### Building on west side of courtyard

On the west side of the courtyard was the entrance from Chiswell Street, next to which was a small office backing onto the flat access. This had a window opening just inside the yard, for issuing paper work and instructions and controlling drivers. Next to the office was covered storage space for carts and goods. The first floor above was supported on the inner side by arches on six brick piers. This storage space extended into the yard by an awning whose flashing crossed the arch tops. In the SW corner was a staircase to the first floor. At first floor level, the flat extended over the entrance and small office. Above the storage area, were narrow workshops and store rooms.

## OCCUPANCY OF THE SITE

Carter Paterson had twenty depots in London with head offices at 122-128 Goswell Road EC1. They occupied the Chiswell Street depot, which may have been purpose-built, from the early 1880s until 1933. Trade directories and rates records show that Carter Paterson were present in Chiswell Street in 1883 but not in 1880. The parcel post service started in 1883 and at that time the only means of transporting parcels in the London area was by public carrier. In 1883 Chiswell Street was widened after Carter Paterson surrendered some projecting property, so the street frontage of the depot post-dated this. In 1902, 13a Waterloo Street was also occupied by Carter Paterson. The address 25a Chiswell Street was mentioned in 1905. From 1906 the addresses are listed as 25 Chiswell Street and 13 Waterloo Street. The description 'stables' was given to 13 Waterloo Street in 1911 and 1913 but this address was not mentioned again. In 1913, 25 Chiswell Street was listed as 'depot', in 1914 it was described as warehouses, rooms and stables. Carter Paterson were then also using 36 Cork Street. This was next to the rear access to the stables, and south of it. In 1933 Carter Paterson were taken over by the four main-line railway companies. After more than fifty years the Chiswell Street depot was closed and the site taken over by Houlding Brothers Ltd., manufacturers of jam. From 1956 the premises were occupied by G W Wallis & Sons Ltd., builders and contractors. This company, which did specialist decorating and restoration work, had head offices in Bromley and was using the Camberwell Stables as a store. Most of the stables complex was demolished in the late 1980s and the whole site redeveloped as apartments in about 1990.

### Alterations to the fabric

Most of the alterations to the stables were made in the 1930s by Houlding Bros. These included heightening and widening the courtyard entrance, removal of the horse ramp against the southern wall of the yard and the raising of this wall, possibly in two stages. A concrete staircase and lift near the southern end of the yard were put in to give access to the first floor. First floor walkways were added on the west and south sides and the eastern one across the stables front widened. The awning on the west side was removed and steel roller shutters fitted to secure the ground floor storage space. The stairway in the SW corner went out of use.

Usage of the ground floor rooms on the north side changed over the years, one was later used as a kitchen. There was war-time bomb damage to cottages in the area but the stables were almost untouched. Some of the slate roofs were replaced with corrugated roofing at some time.

In the early 1980s, after a hundred years in the hands of three very different companies, most of the original structure remained. Its changing use as stables, factory and store was easy to trace. In the most recent changes, the buildings on Hopewell Street, and the north and south sides of the courtyard have been swept away. All that remains of the 19th century development is the ground plan of the site and the shell of the stables building with some alteration to fenestration and some loss of bull-nosed bricks in window widening. The gloom and grime of a hundred years has gone. Hopewell Yard, a startling multi-coloured four storey Egyptianesque apartment block, has been built on the stables site. This extends on to the narrow site adjacent to the north, once 23 and 23a Chiswell Street. The 19th century stable walls have been incorporated into the development and so gained another lease of useful life. But, after surviving for more than a century, the rest has disappeared.

## REFERENCES

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