

# Maple Design

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## HERITAGE STATEMENT

### THE REAL ALE TAVERN

**67, Load Street, Bewdley, Worcestershire. DY12 2AW.**

1 The Lode Street (now officially spelled as Load Street) area developed in the later medieval and post medieval period as a result of quayside and bridge-head development to the west of the original settlement of Bewdley. The first bridge across the Severn was stone and built in 1447 in the same place as the present bridge. During the Wars of the Roses this was destroyed by the Lancastrians. It was rebuilt in timber, but in 1483 a new stone bridge was constructed a little further downstream. A market place was established in Lode Street by 1539 and the area regained prominence with the replacement of Bewdley Bridge in 1798 at the eastern end of the street. The area flourished in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries with extensive river trade, Bewdley being the head of navigation for medium sized vessels.

2 Whilst there is little published archaeological evidence it is likely that the present site was formally developed by the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The development of the present building in the early-mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century was a little unusual as it retained an empty plot to the east (now occupied by a modern access road) – this garden area does not seem to have been formally developed, but the form of the present building (without east facing windows) suggests that development of the “garden plot” was originally intended.



*A small single storey structure with twin pitched roof is shown next to the present 67 Load Street in this late 18<sup>th</sup> Century engraving - the artist has compressed the upper part of the street making No 67 appear closer to the church than it actually is (image courtesy of Stephen Price)*



3 Listing description: SO 7875 SE BEWDLEY CP LOAD STREET (north street)  
13/129 No 67 22.4.50

*GV II - House, now bank. Late C18 with late C19 and some late C20 alterations. Brick with tile*

*roof, stack to rear. Three storeys, stone coped parapet; three windows: glazing bar sashes with plastered wedge lintels and stone sills, second floor: similar to first floor; ground floor: moulded cornice over signboard across whole-front, pilastered multi-pane shop window to left; to right-hand corner entrance has a doorcase with fluted pilasters to open pediment, door of six raised and fielded panels, upper two glazed.*

4 The cartographic evidence adds little to the interpretation of the site – the present frontage building footprint having been unaltered since the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey, with later additions at the back of the plot being clearly 20<sup>th</sup> Century in date, and replacing former outbuildings.

## 5 BUILDING DESCRIPTION

5 The standing building consists of the much altered remains of a mid-late 18<sup>th</sup> Century townhouse. On initial recording very little original fabric was visible internally, finishes throughout being of 20<sup>th</sup> Century date and reflecting usage as a banking branch. Subsequent opening up work, particularly on the ground floor involved demolition of the former bank vault and stripping of plaster/new openings. These revealed sufficient earlier fabric to broadly indicate the original building form.

6 There appears to have originally been an open passageway on the eastern side of the property (later converted to a hallway and enclosed with a front door). The stairwell and lobby occupied the central portion of the building with the principal rooms to the south (fronting Load Street) and secondary rooms to the north facing over the back yard. The kitchen and scullery lay to the rear on the ground floor. The cellarage was at the front of the building only, and does not extend under the side-passage/hallway. Access to the cellar was from beneath the central stairwell (now replaced by hatch and ladder). At ground floor level very little evidence of these arrangements survives but they may be deduced from the other floor plans and the presence of two 18<sup>th</sup> door openings of generous width between the former side passage and former stairwell lobby. There is also evidence of former oblique corner chimney stacks in both front and rear rooms, backing onto the stairwell as is commonly the case in early-mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century town-houses. The plan-form is one used commonly both for private residences and houses of business – the central stairwell serving as a lobby for visitors and the further end of the side passage giving access to the kitchen and service areas for tradesmen.

➔ Loss of the principal staircase and almost all original joinery makes precise dating of the building rather difficult – the plan-form is one used throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, but more fashionable in the first half of the century – by the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century centrally placed rectangular chimney breasts were more common. Externally the brickwork of the facade lacks the projecting “plat bands” that mark the storey-divisions of late 17<sup>th</sup> and earlier 18<sup>th</sup> Century brick houses, and the upper window openings are proportioned for vertical sliding sash windows rather than transom windows (which are generally taller in proportion to width). The upper windows to the front elevation appear to be of later 18<sup>th</sup> Century date – the glazing bars are slender with lamb's tongue moulding, the panes are relatively small and the sashes have no horns. The window heads are mid-late 18<sup>th</sup> C in style, projecting slightly from the wall face rather than being flush gauged brick. The ground floor window opening has been enlarged and the present window appears to be a concoction of later 19<sup>th</sup> and early-mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century elements, possibly based on an earlier retail facade. Windows to the side and rear elevations are all secondary insertions of relatively recent date.

8 The internal arrangements of the former bank branch had largely been stripped out prior to the start of recording works. The remaining bank related fabric all appeared to be of late 20<sup>th</sup> Century date. The principal remaining structure was the brick built bank vault in the rear part of the premises. Demolition of the vault proved it to be built of a particularly hard fired engineering brick laid in a very tenacious cement based mortar. The vault resisted usual demolition techniques and was eventually removed by a specialist contractor. The vault door and interior security gate appeared to be of 1960s date. The only other structural element relating to the bank was a fully glazed motorized sliding doorway to the side elevation – presumably relating to disabled access provision in the 1980s. It is of note that there was no sign that the original brick vaulted cellarage had been ever used for banking purposes.

9 No physical evidence was found relating to previous commercial use of the site, which through the 1841, 1851, 1861 and 1871 Census was occupied by a butcher John Forsbrook. At the 1881 Census the house had been left in the charge of a servant and the householder was absent. The 1891 and 1901 Census both list No 67 as unoccupied. The upper floors of the building remained in residential use into the 1940s at least – a Mr Penn advertised the services of his Dalmation for stud at this address in 1941 (18th January 1941 - Evesham Standard). The 1939 Census reveals that Edward Penn was a metal polisher by trade.