

# Heritage, Design & Access Statement

- **Site name:** St Thomas' Church
- **Address of site:** 9A St Thomas Street, London, SE1 9RY
- **Grid Reference:** TQ 32763 80190
- **Listing Status:** Grade II\* under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990
- **Listing Reference:** 1385873, listed on 6 December 1949 and updated on 17 September 1999.

## 1. Introduction

This Heritage, Design and Access Statement has been written by Sarah Corn, Museum Director of the Old Operating Theatre Museum & Herb Garret, governed by the Lord Brock Trust (registered charity number 1155078).

The Museum is located in the roofspace and part of the tower of the deconsecrated St Thomas' Church, and is submitted in support of a listed building consent submission to Southwark Council.

## 2. Significance: Brief History and Description

St Thomas' Church which houses the Old Operating Theatre & Herb Garret was built between 1698 and 1702 in the Queen Anne Style. The roof space was purposely built with a barn-like roof as part of St Thomas' Hospital redevelopment works. The roofspace was soon fitted out as a Garret to be used by the apothecaries of St Thomas' Hospital to dry herbs and store medicines.

The church is the oldest surviving part of St Thomas' Hospital's Southwark site. The adjoining buildings on St Thomas' Street; houses for the Hospital Treasurer; the Receiver of the Rents; the Apothecary and the Minister of the Church, were begun in 1704. In 1822, part of the Garret was converted into an operating theatre for the female patients of St Thomas Hospital. They were brought into the theatre from the Dorcas Ward, which was located in the adjacent building on the same level so the ward and new operating theatre could be easily linked. In the 19th-century the church was made redundant and became the Chapter House of Southwark Cathedral.

In 1862, St Thomas' Hospital moved to a new site in Lambeth. The Operating Theatre was partly dismantled and the entrances from the Hospital into the Garret were blocked up. In 1956, historian and antiquarian Raymond Russell was researching the history of St Thomas' Hospital and discovered what remained of the partially removed operating theatre and Garret.

In 2008/9 the church was converted by the Cathedral Group into their offices. Following which, in 2017-2018 the tower was converted into a residential apartment, a lift was added to provide access to the Museum and apartment, the main church space was converted to a restaurant and alterations were made to the Museum spaces to create a new office and improve the shop/welcome area. In early 2023, the Museum replaced its skylight and smaller rooflight, repaired 5 dormer sash windows and replaced all its electrics and lighting.

### **3. Proposed Works**

The proposed works are to add an external sign to denote the Museum's entrance (via a shared church foyer) to the black iron railings that sit in front of the church building. The sign would be affixed to the railings in a secure but reversible manner meaning they are not a permanent fixture to the building and can be removed at a later date if necessary.

The sign will be approximately 30 inches wide by 46 inches high, be made of a sturdy metal and sprayed black to match the black finish on the railings. It will also include a lockable sign holder. The sign hooks will have padding and additional support on the reverse of the sign where required so as to not cause damage to the railings and to provide additional weight and stability to stop it being knocked. By keeping the sign affixed to the railings this also ensures the pavement remains clear and free of any hazards, and be presented at eye level.

We have sought advice from Tracy Chapman from Southwark Council who advised that LBC would be required for this work, and that consideration needs to be given to the size of the signage and how it will have an overall impact on the façade of the building as a whole, which we have considered and addressed in this application. Overall, we do not feel the new signage will have a negative impact on the significance of the historic asset.

#### **4. Design Statement**

The design of the signage has been considered in line with the existing railings so as not to either damage them or detract from the presentation of the building itself. The colours used will be black and white and therefore will complement the railings themselves and not detract from the appearance of the building. The location of the signage will not impede the opening and closing of the main gates themselves.

#### **5. Access Statement**

No physical changes are proposed to the existing access arrangements. There are limitations on how the Museum, set in an historic structure, can provide physical access to all. The main access is via a 52-step narrow spiral staircase and adaptation is not possible. There is a small lift that can provide access for those with mobility issues although it only provides access to the museum shop. Access into the Museum itself is difficult, with narrow spaces and tight turns within the Museum. There is Access Information provided on the Museum's website <https://oldoperatingtheatre.com/visiting-us/access/>.

#### **6. Tree Survey**

The proposed works do not impact on any trees within the local vicinity.