
# THE MOORES PROJECT

## Conservation of The Moores Complex of Buildings

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# Introduction

The successful completion of the Moores Building project represents a high point in the field of heritage conservation in Western Australia. The building, which is in fact a complex of buildings consisting of a town house, warehouse, factory and office facilities, represents one of the oldest surviving groups of merchant buildings in the metropolitan area.

The building was restored in two separate stages over a period of eight years in accordance with the spirit of the Burra Charter, a document which has set the standard for conservation practice in Australia. This process has facilitated the long term economic use of the complex, while at the same time enabling its cultural significance to be retained. The history and growth of the building complex has now been revealed in an innovative yet meaningful way.

This project demonstrates the continuous commitment of the City of Fremantle to the protection of the heritage assets of the city and for the work to be conducted in accordance with national conservation standards. Through the dedicated work of the Council's staff, its team of consultants, and skilled trades practitioners, the city has not only acquired a significant addition to its list of heritage buildings, but has also proved how conservation values and sound economic principles can be successfully integrated.

A model has now been set for future practical application of the Burra Charter to conservation works in Fremantle and elsewhere.


*Figure 1: The Moores Building facade in 1986*


*Figure 2: The restored Moores Building facade in 1994*

# History of the Project

In 1868 William Dalgety Moore acquired lots 89 and 90 Henry Street from the beneficiaries of his father Samuel's estate. The property, which had seen earlier occupancy, was a short distance from the port city's shipping facilities which were then located at South Bay, or where the Esplanade Reserve is today. This was an ideal location for the entrepreneurial William whose general merchandising business grew and flourished along with the colony of Fremantle. The firm's activities rapidly expanded to include the milling of flour, shipping and exporting pearl shell, timber, wool, and other interests throughout Western Australia. W.D. Moore was also an explorer and represented Fremantle in the Legislative Council. He became the inaugural treasurer of the Fremantle Town Council and the first president of the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce.

The Moores Building complex largely developed over the thirty year period of William's ownership with the last major addition being the fine classical facade which was added in 1899. This elegant addition reflected the general prosperity of the city which flourished during the 1890s gold rush. Behind the facade the simple uncompromising structures of the warehouses, factory, offices and residence are testament to the commercial activities, building styles and construction techniques of earlier times. The use of locally available materials such as jarrah timber, rough hewn limestone blocks, sandstock bricks, sawn shingles and corrugated iron for the roofing, results in a textural fabric highly characteristic of Fremantle's older building stock and evocative of a by-gone era.

In 1900 William Moore sold the business to his son George Fredrick Moore. Since that time the building remained essentially unchanged, while the business, together with many other traditional trading companies in central Fremantle gradually declined. Their method of operating had changed and the firm was relocated to the newly created industrial area of O'Connor.

The building's survival today has been largely due to chance. During 1965 the Metropolitan Region Scheme's proposed route of a highway through the West End was shifted to go along Henry Street which involved the widening of the existing street. The new owner of the Moores Building who had intended to demolish the complex was understandably reluctant to part with the front section of the site and refused to sell. The impasse meant the building remained and the owner's plans shelved. Plans for the proposed highway were also shelved largely due to the change in community and government attitudes to development in favour of conserving the city's heritage. Various attempts by the Fremantle Council to purchase the rapidly deteriorating building proved unsuccessful. Fate then intervened in 1986 by way of the America's Cup with funds being made available by the Commonwealth Government for conservation of National Estate properties in the West End of Fremantle.

After purchasing the Moores Building complex, the City of Fremantle stabilised the structure, made it watertight and safe - thus creating rentable spaces for public use during the staging of the yachting race. The warehouse provided exciting and unusual spaces for contemporary art exhibitions, functions and commercial activities until 1993 when Council allocated further funds to complete the full restoration of the complex.

Today the building houses the residence and a commercial space, the Artists Foundation of Western Australia, and, at the rear of the site, workshops for community artists (figs 3 & 4).

*Figure 3: The former derelict rear Warehouse and Workshop*

*Figure 4: Clearly new buildings within the former building envelopes used as a community arts facility*

*Figure 5: Debris in the front room of the former Residence in 1986*

*Figure 6: The front room of the former Residence in 1994*

# THE CONSERVATION PROCESS

Researching the site involved six stages of investigation.

**1. Site preparation** - years of accumulated debris had to be removed, old stockpiles, rubbish, weeds, and rotting timbers which were affected by termites. The site was then made safe, and examples of building materials such as bricks, mortar, joinery and shingles were put to one side (fig 5).

**2. Documentary research** - of the building's history and the history of its owners and occupiers. Archival materials, old photographs and newspaper clippings were examined to understand how the building worked and evolved into its current form.

**3. Archaeological investigation** - areas where earlier structures had once stood were located using old plans and these were drawn to the scale of the measured drawings. Footings and soil strata under rooms 5 and 3 were investigated, and the area of the first 1840's building on the site excavated. Remnants were recorded and sealed in plastic sheeting and covered with clean sand.

**4. Physical investigation** - a thorough and systematic study of the building was undertaken so that the maximum information could be gained with minimum interference to its fabric. Paint layers and render were stripped back to reveal the construction of the wall itself, while test strips were made at strategic locations to reveal alterations and structural problems. Samples of the building materials were analysed. The outcome of the investigative work was documented on the building's plans. The exterior and interior of the building was measured and photographed recording the floor layout, elevations and

sections, as well as all the important features such as details of architraves and skirting boards. Visual inspection involved detailed recording of all aspects of the building fabric, for example the different sizes and patterns of bricks, varying methods of construction, the measuring of joinery elements, and the recording of any unusual building practices.

**5. Assessment of evidence** - site works and the investigation of the site combined with the archival research was completed over a three month period and enabled the team to identify, date and document twelve stages of development as well as record the remains of former structures. It also allowed the team to acquire an in-depth understanding of both the cultural significance of the place and the extent of its structural and material deterioration.

**6. Conservation Plan** - all gathered information formed the basis of the conservation plan and allowed the design process and construction works to be implemented in an informed and competent manner.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The City of Fremantle's 1988 report defines the high cultural significance of the place in terms of the National Estate criteria. In essence the progressive development of the W.D. Moore & Co. building accurately reflects the evolving nature of Fremantle's built environment between 1844 and 1900. The building also records and reflects the period of physical and economic development of this eminent and successful merchant family business, as well as the general economic and cultural development of the Swan River Colony to its status as the independent state of Western Australia. Building methods, building materials and the architecture from

this period of time are clearly represented in their original condition. The complex is also an outstanding example of the earlier composite nature of such buildings in the West End where residential, warehousing and merchandising facilities are combined on one site.

In view of the importance of the role of general merchants during early settlement and in particular the entrepreneurial enterprise of W.D. Moore, a former explorer, Member of state and local Government, a community leader and prominent businessman, this building represents a foundation stone of colonial Fremantle as well as reflecting the most prosperous period of Western Australian history - the gold rush.

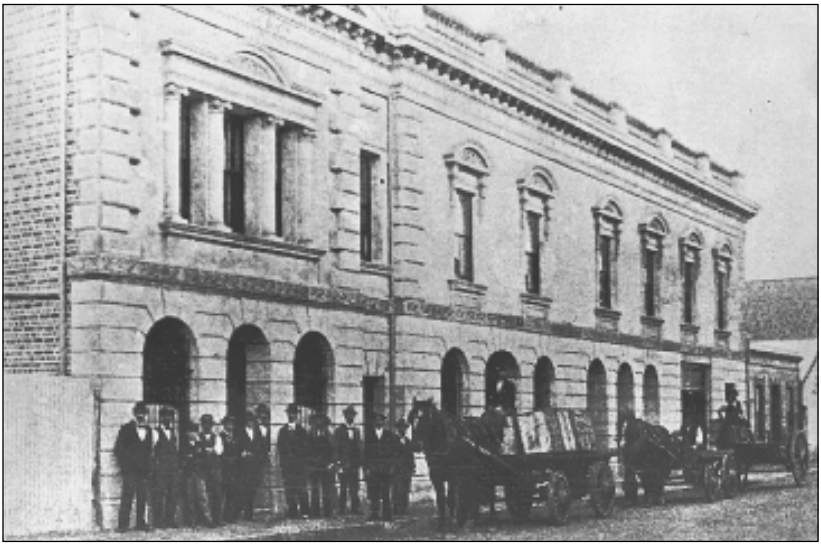


*Figure 7: The Moores Building in 1901*

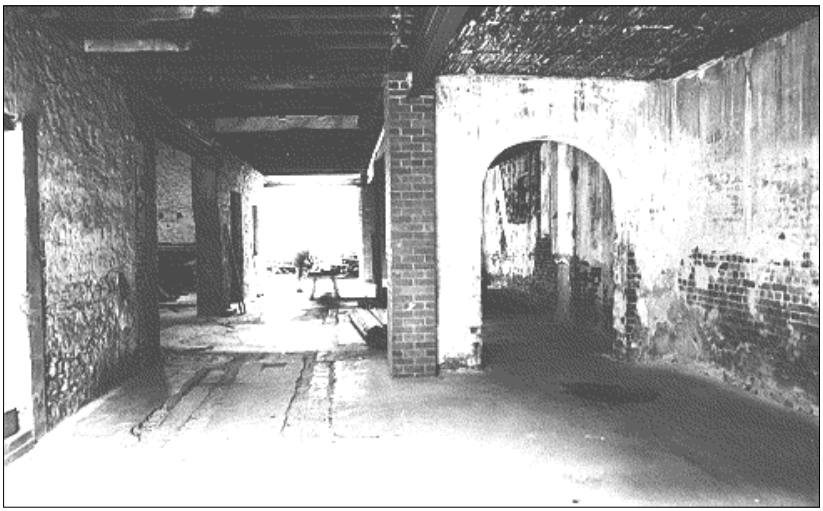


*Figure 8: The Cartway prior to restoration*

*Figure 9: A new wall for the modern facilities constructed on the same plan as a former office wall in the Cartway.*

# Design Challenges & Solutions

Within the guidelines of the Burra Charter it is acceptable to make alterations and new additions to a historic building as long as they do not reduce or obscure the cultural significance of the place. This was the guiding principle behind the innovative design solutions used to make the Moores Building suitable for modern use.

The initial investigative process, in particular the in-depth understanding of the building and its cultural significance provided the foundation from which all design decisions were subsequently made. This included aesthetic decisions which were both generated and inspired by the building's fabric. For example the red brick outline of a former archway in one of the main rooms had been bricked in and plastered over to become part of the wall (see inside back cover photograph). This detail was discovered during the investigative process, conserved and revealed. This not only gives a clue about the building's history, but also provides an aesthetic feature that could not have been designed on purpose.

Each design decision had to be taken on the merit of its particular case. For example the requirements of the client for toilet facilities inside the building demanded a subdivision of existing room(s). A judgement had to be made about where the toilets could be placed so that they would neither conceal nor obstruct the appreciation of the original spaces. In this instance the toilets were constructed in what used to be the former office space by reinstating the wall once dividing the cartway (figs 8 & 9). The reinstatement was carried out in modern materials because there was no physical evidence of the original wall. Therefore the original spatial arrangement has been

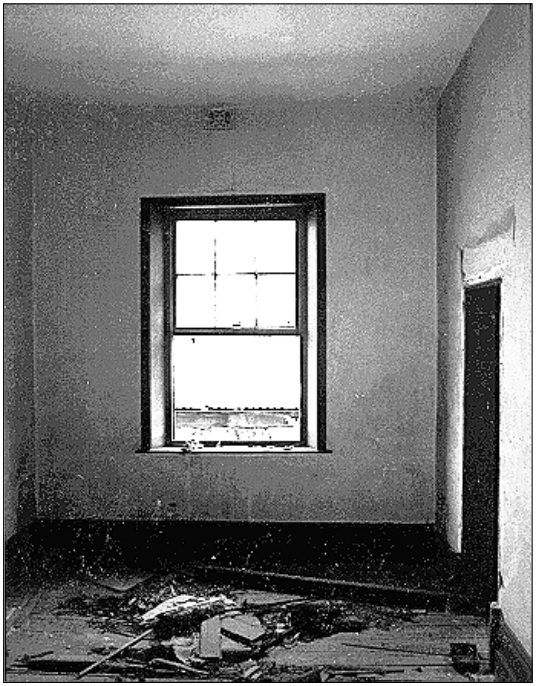


*Figure 10: The first floor landing in the former Residence in 1986*

*Figure 11: New bathroom facilities which allow the original space and character of the room to be appreciated*

reconstructed while the aesthetics were resolved in a creative and modern yet complimentary way. Thus the aesthetic, design and functional decisions were firmly rooted in the former history of the building, adding to the significance and ambience of the existing spaces.

Functional requirements created many more opportunities for innovative design work. Another example was the adaptation of the former residence to modern standards including satisfying requirements for internal bathrooms and toilets. Originally these were housed in out-buildings. This requirement produced a real challenge because dividing any space by the small cubicles needed for these facilities could obscure or obstruct the original walls, decorative details or spaces. The solution was to create a glass wall in a steel frame with narrow slatted venetian blinds for privacy (figs 10 & 11). Thus the original space and character of that part of the building can still be appreciated, while creating a bold but sympathetic juxtaposition between modern fixtures and fittings and the character of the original hallway.

Another decision involved the addition to the townhouse of a conservatory so that extra living space could flow on from the kitchen. As this was a completely new structure it had to be sympathetic to the main building without mimicking its colonial style. The resulting design is totally modern yet it succeeds in contributing to the character of the whole space. Even though the architect took the old building as a generator of ideas he came up with a creative modern solution (figs 12 & 13).

At the same time where there was scientific evidence of a former structure the team endeavoured a faithful reconstruction, if it was appropriate or required to satisfy the

*Figure 12: The rear to the former Residence in 1986*

*Figure 13: The addition of a modern and sympathetic conservatory provides required living space*

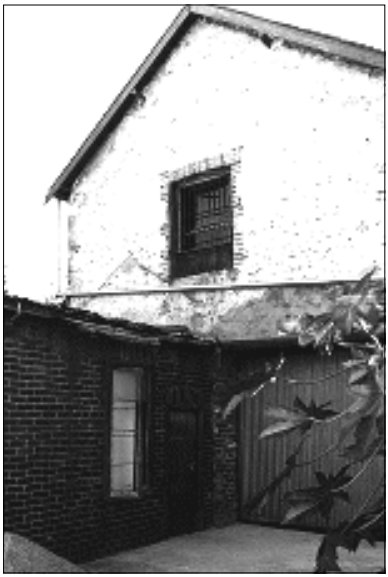


*Figure 14: The flashing line of the former Stable roof was evident on the rear wall of the warehouse*

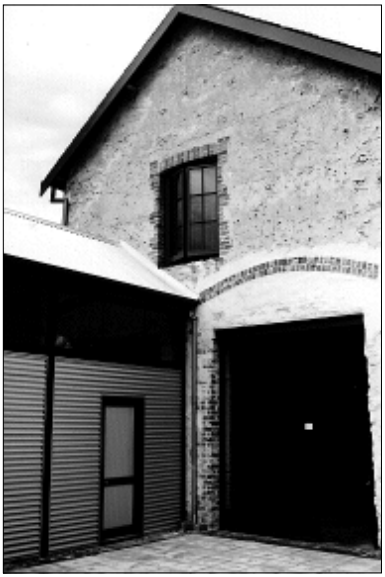


*Figure 15: The form of the former Stables is interpreted by the new building. The elevation and details are clearly modern*

needs of the client. In the absence of full physical evidence, decisions were made based on a thorough knowledge of what existed before. Clearly stated modern design solutions were used when insufficient information was available. This assists in the interpretation of the building's evolution and form, while avoiding confusion between the restored or reconstructed work and any new work. For example, the overall form of the former stables was reconstructed in accordance with the flashing line on the main building which indicated the height of the original building and the pitch of its former roof (figs 14 & 15). But the former stables' facade, for which no evidence could be found concerning its details, was expressed in a modern style and materials to indicate that it is a 1990's addition.

An interesting aspect of the design process relates to the structural problems which normally present a real challenge in the restoration of old buildings. A knowledge of the building enabled the team to come up with the correct structural solutions to stop the deterioration of the building without compromising its cultural significance or the nature of its internal spaces. Thus the former shingled roof was reconstructed over the early buildings and the corrugated iron over the remaining structures as indicated by the evidence (figs 16 & 17). An example of a major structural problem was the facade. This was the last major significant addition to the complex and was in danger of becoming detached from the main building and falling into the street (figs 18 & 19). The facade was stabilised by implementing the modern solution of introducing post-tensioned metal ties which fixed the facade to concrete anchors within the cross walls (figs 20 & 21). The anchors would normally have been plastered over to make them invisible but in some justified instances they were

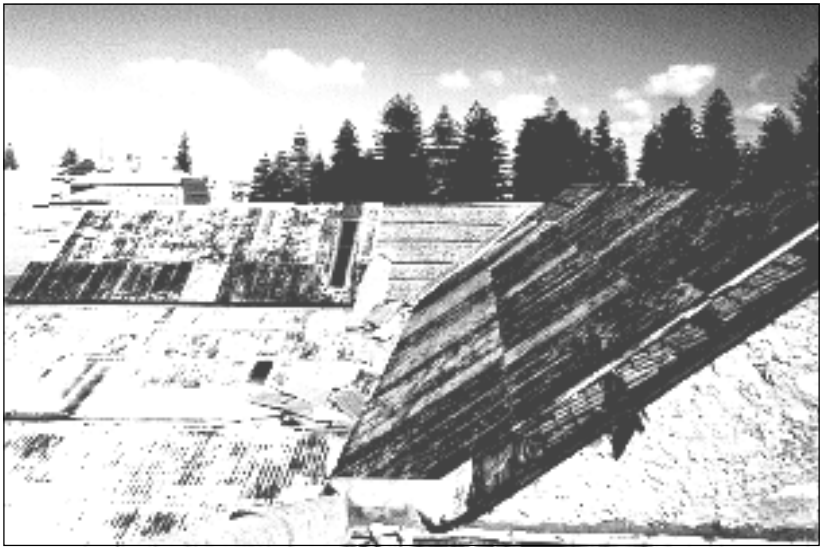


*Figure 16: The former Warehouse roof before renovation*

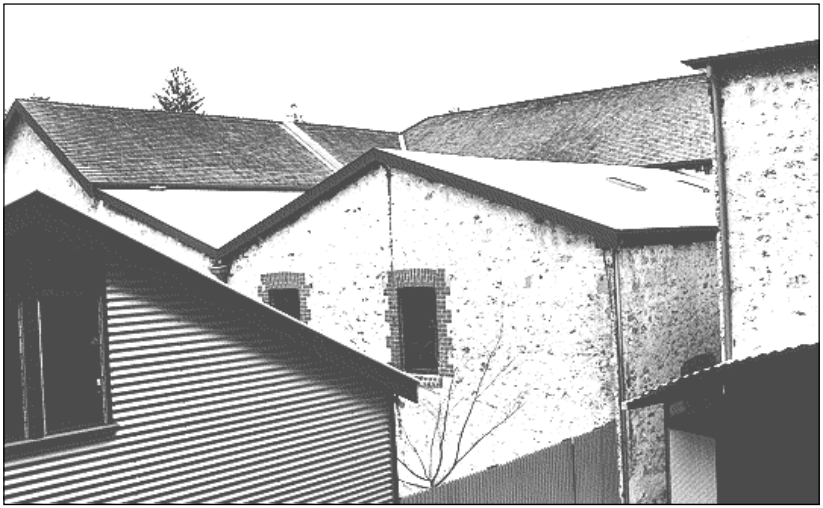


*Figure 17: The former Warehouse roof was renovated using materials indicated by the evidence*

exposed and used to reconstruct former openings in the walls.

A thorough knowledge of the building invariably has economic implications when time and money is saved through making the right decisions at the beginning of the construction process. Many architects/developers make the mistake of starting work when they have a very superficial knowledge of a building. It can be costly when unforeseen problems are discovered during the construction stage and in order to address a problem which had not been anticipated, consultants have to be brought in to redesign structural or architectural components. New or more materials have to be urgently ordered or other hasty decisions made under pressure of construction deadlines. The delays cost time and money and decisions are often a compromise rather than an optimal solution.

When undertaking the conservation process of the Moores Building, considerable time and effort was expended on the initial investigative stages. This commitment to a thorough understanding has paid dividends not only in terms of the successful restoration of the building but also, in the end, time and money saved in achieving a desirable outcome.

*Figure 18: The front facade coming away from the side walls*

*Figure 19: The side walls after repair*

*Figure 20: One of the walls which were used to anchor the facade*

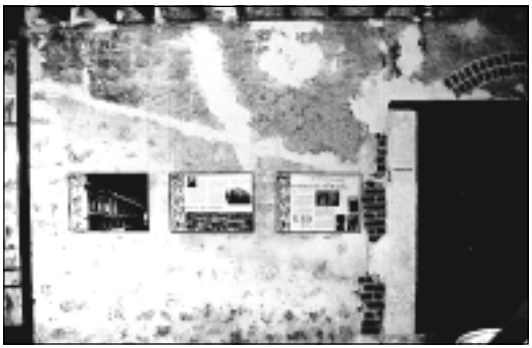


*Figure 21: The position of metal ties in the wall and the concrete anchor against the door jam can clearly be seen. Also note the brick quoins and arch to the former doorway*

# Heritage and Economic Values

The restoration of the Moores Building is part of the City of Fremantle's wider strategic plan for its heritage buildings in Henry Street. The project has been of particular value because it has shown how a financial liability can be turned into a valuable public asset.

From a dilapidated, under-used building which was a constant drain on the Council purse, the building now provides a largely self sustaining investment with increasing capital value (figs 22 & 23). The overall average cost of restoration was $720 per square metre in 1994. This was approximately half of the cost of constructing a new building for similar uses.

The Council's economic approach was to treat the two sections of the complex separately. The residence which had not been used at all is now restored to a standard that can attract rents at commercial rates. The cost of restoration will be recovered through the annual rental with a net yield of 16% being achieved. Added to this is the increased capital value, the rates income, and the Council's release from on-going maintenance costs. This effectively provides the Council with an investment which out performs other alternative investment mediums while providing the city with a new residence/ business of considerable heritage and cultural value.

The warehouse continues its function as a public facility providing exhibition spaces for the arts community. Income has been generated by providing the city's community artists with new premises at the rear of the warehouse, thus allowing their former workspaces in Henry Street to be rented out at commercial rates. Of considerable benefit has been the

leasing of the balance of the space to the Artists Foundation of Western Australia. The Foundation ensures that the building realises the Council's objectives for a full and varied use of the facilities by the arts community. Thus, holding costs including rates and maintenance are recovered which will ensure the ongoing life and upkeep of the building.

The benefits achieved through added value, savings on recurrent expenditure, and increased returns, have been demonstrated to be clearly achievable when investing in the sensitive restoration of historically significant buildings. The Council successfully utilised the opportunity offered by the purchase of a significant heritage building to not only enrich the community's cultural needs, but to convert this heritage into an economic product, which benefits everyone.

*Figure 22: The front room of the former Residence in 1986*

*Figure 23: The same room after restoration used as an office*

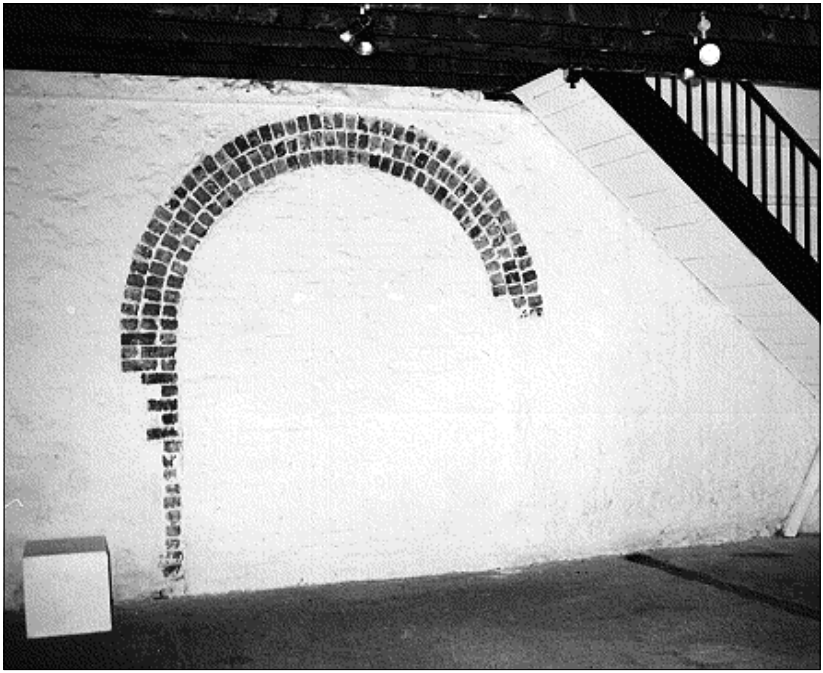
# PROJECT TEAM

## 1986/1987 PROJECT TEAM

| | |
|---|---|
| Agnieshka Kiera | *City Architect (CofF)* |
| Jack Kent | *Research Architect* |
| Frank Rennie | *Construction Management* |
| Tom Birt | *Shingle Roofer* |
| Terry Iverson | *Carpenter* |
| Fred Strotheter | *Roof Plumber* |
| Albert Faux | *Site Research Assistant* |
| Booth and Partners | *Structural Engineers* |
| Scotford, Cameron and Middleton | *Quantity Surveyors* |

## 1993/1994 PROJECT TEAM

| | |
|---|---|
| Agnieshka Kiera | *City Architect (CofF)* |
| James Vincent | *Project Architect* |
| Russell Kingdom | *Design (CofF)* |
| David Moylan | *Project Feasibility (CofF)* |
| Ian Silver Partnership | *Quantity Surveyors* |
| G.B. Hill and Partners | *Structural Engineers* |
| Martin Colgan for W. Isherwood and Co | *Builder* |



*The original brick arch to this former opening in the Warehouse is revealed (see page 11)*