

Hi Scott and Louise

A good question and, as you say, one that is bound to be asked many times. The first thing to say is that the original plans of the building have never come to light (the only sighting of them is the unfurling plans on the lap of John Carr in his portrait by William Beechey). However, I commissioned a very detailed survey and report of the building in 1996 which was undertaken by the Royal Commission for Historic Buildings (now part of Historic England). From that, and see attached, it is evident that, on the ground floor, the VE straggles part of Lodging House 6 and part of the Great Hotel. In the basement, we occupy two rooms of the Great Hotel and the whole of the basement of Lodging House 6.

### **The Blue Room (Rm 020)**

This was part of the Lodging House 6 and, like all of the lodging houses, each front door enters into an entrance lobby from which you could turn right or left into a shop. Rm 020 was definitely one of the shops.

### **Restoration and Touch Table Room (Rm 022)**

Our new double leaf door breaks through a former party wall into the Great Hotel. Ignoring our new partition, it is thought that the first part of the room would have been two bays (ie incorporating two windows). The existing door by the side of the restoration graphic into the corridor would not have existed and the room would have been reached via a door (now gone) from the lobby at the foot of the stairs behind it. The remaining smaller room would have been reached via the doorway, now blocked, where the Duke's talking portrait is. You can imagine this room with our fireplace positioned centrally on its wall. The other entrance from the lobby at the foot of the main stairs up to the Assembly Rooms may be original but it looks oddly small to have been expected to be used by guests. There are archive references to one of these rooms being referred to as a "parlour".

### **Visitors Room (Rm 021)**

Another public room of the Hotel, precise use unspecified, but originally accessed directly from the stairs lobby. The corridors only appeared when the Great Hotel started to expand and take over the adjoining lodging houses by knocking through the party walls.

### **Balloon Room (Rm 018)**

This is easier as we are back in the Lodging House 6. As with Room 021, it would have been larger as it would have been accessed directly off the stairs lobby and, as with the other lodging houses, this room was used the principal living quarters for the lodging house keeper. The other ground floor room on the other side of the stair lobby would have been used as the communal dining room (but this room is outside the space occupied by the VE).

### **Basement Rooms**

Again, these straggle the former hotel and lodging house but would all have been used as ancillary accommodation – either as storage (mainly the two front basement rooms – the ailment room and the apothecary), for the hotel staff to use (the VE storage room) or the lodgekeeper (the treatments room and the Nestle film room). The VE treatments room is likely to have been the lodgekeeper's kitchen as, elsewhere in the building, there is a surviving range. The other rear lodging house basement room (ie the Nestle film room) would have also been used for activities as there is a fireplace.

Hope that that helps – any further queries, let me know.

Richard

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