

# Sir John Soane and the Design of the New State Paper Office, 1829–1834\*

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**RÉSUMÉ** Cet article se penche sur le design et la construction du New State Paper Office sur la rue Duke à Londres. Conçu par l'architecte Sir John Soane (1753–1837), cet édifice est le seul bâtiment construit pour servir de dépôt d'archives en Angleterre, avant que le Public Record Office de Sir James Pennethorne se soit ouvert sur Chancery Lane en 1856. L'auteure se base sur les publications, les documents du ministère des Travaux publics et des Finances aux Archives nationales, ainsi que sur les archives d'entreprise considérables et les dessins de Sir John Soane laissés après sa mort en 1837 et conservés dans son musée. Le design de Soane pour cet édifice est examiné particulièrement du point de vue de la protection du feu et de la sécurité, et est aussi comparé aux pratiques contemporaines et aux solutions adoptées pour la construction du Public Record Office vingt ans plus tard. Dans une dernière partie, l'auteure aborde l'édifice tel qu'il a été utilisé après 1834, sa fusion avec le Public Record Office en 1854 et sa démolition en 1862.

**ABSTRACT** This paper examines the design and building of the New State Paper Office in Duke Street, London by the architect Sir John Soane (1753–1837), the only purpose-built repository for national records in England before Sir James Pennethorne's Public Record Office Building opened in Chancery Lane in 1856. It draws on published accounts, material in the Office of Works, and Treasury papers in The National Archives, and on Sir John Soane's extensive business archive and office drawings preserved in his House-Museum, which he left to the nation on his death in 1837. Soane's design for the building is examined particularly in respect to his solutions for fire-proofing and security, and compared with contemporary practice and the solutions adopted in the Public Record Office building of twenty years later. The final section deals with the building in use from 1834, its amalgamation with the Public Record Office in 1854, and its demolition in 1862.

## **The State Paper Office**

The State Paper Office was founded in 1578 to house the records of the Secretaries of State, the predecessors of the ministers at the Home Office and For-

\* I am most grateful to Ptolemy Dean, Will Palin, Margaret Richardson, and Elizabeth Shepherd for reading this paper in draft and discussing various aspects of it with me.

eign Office, which were not established as government departments until 1782. The records consisted of correspondence between English ambassadors and agents at foreign courts, original treaties between Great Britain and foreign powers, and correspondence with sovereigns, ministers of state, and the Privy Council in England from the time of Henry VIII.

In the eighteenth century, the question of where and how to house these increasingly voluminous records became a continuing problem.<sup>1</sup> In 1759, Holbein Gate (the gatehouse of the Palace of Whitehall) where the records had been housed from 1619, became so dilapidated that it had to be demolished. In the 1780s, the records were moved to a house in Middle Scotland Yard, later described as “a very old and ruinous building.” A 1786 Commission of found that the records in Scotland Yard and a further group of the oldest papers kept, mainly unarranged, in a Gallery over the Treasury Chambers, should be brought under one roof, together with the offices of the two Secretaries of State; the building was also to contain a residence for one of the Clerks so that the Secretaries and Under Secretaries of State could have access to the records at all times, “[the location of the building in] a variety of instances having been found extremely inconvenient, particularly at hours when the officers belonging to the Paper Office have not been in attendance.” Despite this recommendation having been approved by an Order in Council on 27 February 1795 and endorsed by a House of Commons Committee on Finance in 1797, nothing was done until nearly thirty years later. In 1819, the house in Scotland Yard became so ruinous that it had to be abandoned, and the records were moved to a private house in Great George Street. Reporting in 1826, Henry Hobhouse, newly appointed Keeper of the State Papers, described this house as even more inconvenient for the Secretaries of State, more exposed to fire with dwelling houses on either side, and, most importantly, not adequate to the weight of the records so that “a settlement... has taken place in the walls from top to bottom” and the house was inclining towards the east. When in 1824, nearly six hundred volumes from the Colonial Department and, in 1825, 1,340 volumes from the Foreign Department were transferred, they could not be put in the upper part of the house where they belonged but had to be stored on the ground floor or in the Treasury Gallery, where they were difficult to access.<sup>2</sup>

Sir Robert Peel, Home Secretary, had been urging action since 1824 and now called the “serious and immediate attention” of the Treasury to his pre-

1 For an interesting account of the State Paper Office in the early eighteenth century, and in particular storage of the records, see Elizabeth M. Hallam, “Problems with Record Keeping in Early Eighteenth Century London: Some Pictorial Representations of the State Paper Office, 1705–1706,” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* VI (1979), pp. 219–26.

2 The National Archives (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO) T1/4257 (hereafter TNA: PRO).

vious reports.<sup>3</sup> A plan to take over Westminster Sessions House proved unworkable, and a survey of the late Dowager Countess Suffolk's house on the corner of Duke and Delahay Streets on the east side of St James's Park, the lease of which had just fallen to the Crown, showed it to be old and unsuitable. In April 1829, John Soane<sup>4</sup> (Figure 1), one of three Attached Architects to the Board of Works, responsible for the Westminster Department, was asked by the Surveyor General, Sir Benjamin Stephenson, to "prepare a plan and estimate for ... "A New State Paper Office" to be erected on the site of Lady Suffolk's house, "the elevation to be of brick with stone dressings, one entrance to lead from Duke Street and the other from St James's Park."<sup>5</sup> This building was to be the first purpose-designed national record repository in England.<sup>6</sup>

### The Brief

In his commissioning letter, Stephenson informed Soane that "Mr Lemon of

3 The State Papers were not the only records over which there was concern. By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the national records deriving from the actions of central government and the courts of law dating back to the Norman Conquest, were scattered among some 50 different buildings, including the Tower of London, the Rolls Chapel, the Treasuries at Westminster, Westminster Abbey Chapter House, and the State Paper Office. A Record Commission of 1807 described them as "unarranged, undescribed and unascertained ... exposed to erasure, alienation and embezzlement ... lodged in buildings uncommodious and insecure ..." Until the *Public Record Office Act* of 1838 there was no central organization of these various government departments. This Act was the culmination of a long period of concern about the state in which public records were kept. The House of Lords appointed a number of committees between 1703 and 1729 to examine record-keeping practice and the repositories where public records were stored, the printed reports of which revealed serious neglect. In 1800 a Select Committee "to enquire into the State of the Public Records" reported on about 80 repositories. It concluded that "the most essential of all the measures recommended by them for the purpose of laying open to the public a full knowledge of the contents of our various and extensive record repositories would be unquestionably to print some of the calendars and indexes." This led to the appointment of a Record Commission, the first of six appointed between 1800 and 1831. This Commission spent over £400,000 on the publication of record texts, but little on proper storage, arrangement, and indexing of the records themselves. In 1836 a Select Committee of the House of Commons wound up the Record Commission and recommended that the public records be brought together into one general repository under a single custody, thus paving the way for the 1838 Act and the development of the Public Record Office at Chancery Lane. See John D. Cantwell, *The Public Record Office 1838–1958* (London, 1991) and Aidan Lawes, *Chancery Lane 1377–1977 "The Strong Box of the Empire"* (London, 1996).

4 John Soane (1753–1837) was knighted in 1831. See Dorothy Stroud, *Sir John Soane Architect* (London, 1996), for a good, concise introduction to Soane's life and work.

5 Sir John Soane's Museum (hereafter SM), Private Correspondence XI.K.1.6; TNA: PRO WORK 1/17 p. 266, letter dated 18 April 1829. See J. Mordaunt Crook, M.H. Port, eds., *The History of the King's Works Vol VI 1782–1851* (London, 1973), pp. 567–70 for an account of the building of the New State Paper Office.

6 See Margaret Sanderson, "A Proper Repository" *The Building of the General Register House* (Edinburgh, 1992) for an account of Robert Adam's 1774 design for Register House in Edinburgh.



**Figure 1** Portrait of John Soane by Sir Thomas Lawrence, 1828 (SM P 11). Courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.

the State Paper Office will afford you all the necessary information regarding the wants of the department” and in fact Robert Lemon, who was Deputy Keeper of the State Papers, may already have been known to Soane as he was a fellow Freemason.<sup>7</sup> Sir Henry Hobhouse had defined the necessary accommodation in a letter to the Surveyor General of 12 March 1828 thus:

<sup>7</sup> See *The Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 1975) for biographies of Robert Lemon (1779–1835) and Henry Hobhouse (1776–1854), both of whom are described as “archivist.”



**Figure 2** View of the entrance front of the New State Paper Office. Watercolour pasted on to the back of a model of the building (see Fig. 3) (SM XP19). Courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.

The official rooms necessary for the business of the Office, exclusive of the space required for the books and papers<sup>8</sup> in this house [19 Great George Street] and those at present deposited in the old Treasury Gallery, and excluding apartments for a Resident Officer and for the Official Servants: One room for the Keeper of the State Papers, One ditto for the Deputy Keeper, Two Rooms for the Clerks, One room for a Reading Room, one room for a waiting room, one room for the use of the bookbinder.<sup>9</sup>

### The Design Process

Soane sent his first designs to Stephenson on 16 May 1829, together with an

<sup>8</sup> Eighty-five hundred (8,500) volumes, plus a mass of unbound papers equal to about 1,500 volumes, and "a great number of Original Treaties, which from their shape and size require presses of a different construction from that usually adopted for books."

<sup>9</sup> The papers once arranged were bound into volumes of various sizes. This was not necessarily a finite process – the report on the work of the State Paper Office for January to September 1861 (TNA: PRO SP 45/47 p.96) reads: "33 volumes of State Papers have been bound. The binders have been engaged in mending and inserting in bound volumes numerous additional papers. Many old bound volumes of State Papers have been partially rebound ..."



**Figure 3** Plaster model of the New State Paper Office, almost as executed (SM MR18). Courtesy of Sir John Soane’s Museum.

estimate of £12,850 exclusive of fittings, stating in the accompanying letter<sup>10</sup>: “It is proposed to insulate the building and to make it fireproof. The drawings have been made under the directions of the Keeper and Deputy Keeper, to whom they have been submitted and approved.” This rather terse statement reflects Soane’s bitter struggles with government over a series of public building commissions in the 1820s, most notably the Law Courts, and the Privy Council and Board of Trade Offices.<sup>11</sup> It also belies the innovative nature of Soane’s design, which is remarkable in that it represents a complete departure from his previous work. The seventy-six-year-old architect took his inspiration from Vignola’s Villa Farnese at Caprarola and came up with a completely

<sup>10</sup> TNA: PRO WORK 1/17, p. 323.

<sup>11</sup> See Crook and Port, *The History of the King’s Works*, passim; Ptolemy Dean, *Sir John Soane and London* (Aldershot, forthcoming 2006).



**Figure 4** View of the New State Paper Office from St James's Park, 18 August 1833 (SM Vol.61/81). Courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.

astylar building, with two principal floors, an attic storey surmounted by an entablature ornamented with Greek fret pattern in the frieze and channelled quoins. “The most obvious debt to the Villa was the bracket cornice with wide eaves, creating the illusion of a pantiled roof. In fact they merely screened the flat roof behind, in which were set a number of glazed lanterns. From the same source came the rusticated treatment of the end bays of the west elevation [to the Park], and the main entrance in Duke Street, which was Soane's version of Vignola's famous doorway.”<sup>12</sup> The architect Charles Barry (1795–1860) also employed this style in his Travellers' Club, Pall Mall of 1829–1832, and the two buildings almost contemporaneously introduced this new *palazzo* style to London, where it was very much taken up for the design of banks, clubs, and libraries in the 1830s.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Dorothy Stroud, *The Architecture of Sir John Soane* (London, 1961), pp. 135–36. SM 82/1/50, a design for the main entrance doorway is annotated by Soane “This door &c is in its proportions like Vignola's book.”

<sup>13</sup> I am indebted to Margaret Richardson, former Curator of Sir John Soane's Museum, for discussion of Barry's design. There seems little doubt that Barry's Travellers' Club was the first building to be designed in this style, but Margaret drew my attention to the fact that Soane already had the Villa Farnese in his mind when in 1828 he exhibited at the annual Royal Academy Exhibition a “View of one of the courts of a royal palace,” the first line of the lengthy description of which reads: “Vignola's celebrated palace at Caprarola determined the general outline of the plan ...” [Catalogue of] *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy, MDCCCXXVIII, The Sixtieth*, No. 1033.

At this point the Treasury decided, probably for the sake of form, to ask the other two Attached Architects, John Nash (1752–1835) and Robert Smirke (1780–1867) also to submit plans and estimates.<sup>14</sup> The building was “to be fire proof and it is proposed to have one large room upon the upper floor fitted up with a gallery, as a library for depositing all books, papers and official documents, allowing a proper space for future accumulations; this room, if necessary to be lighted from the roof.”<sup>15</sup> These instructions were slightly different from those originally given to Soane, and on the same day he was informed by letter that his plans had been returned from the Treasury with directions for an alteration to be made in the upper storey.<sup>16</sup>

Nash and Smirke duly submitted proposals,<sup>17</sup> but Soane’s revised design, estimated at £17,600 was the one chosen.<sup>18</sup> However, despite this official approval, in September 1829 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Henry Goulburn, intervened with a request for alterations to the exterior. Disapproving of Soane’s rusticated quoins, he also proposed two orders of pilasters for the elevation, something like the Banqueting House in Whitehall. Soane felt that this would be absurd, given the different scales of the two buildings, and defended his position fiercely.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, in November he produced a new design incorporating the pilasters, estimated at a further £3,000. In December, requested to estimate for fronting the whole building in ashlar, Soane sent in an estimate of £900, together with an impassioned private letter to the Surveyor General:

I enclose you under circumstances of no common feeling, an estimate of the expense for embellishing with small pilasters, and stone ashlar, the exterior of the New State Paper Office according to the *fancy* of the Chancellor of the Exchequer at an increased expense: —let me conjure you my Dear Sir to exert all your power to prevent the erection of such a monument of folly ... from disgracing the Metropolis of the Empire. I

14 It had not been normal practice to require the Attached Architects to compete, but the possibility was envisaged in the 1828 Select Committee into the conduct of the Office of Works. See Crook and Port, *The History of the King’s Works*, p.164.

15 TNA PRO WORK 1/17, p. 339, letter dated 1 June 1829.

16 SM Priv.Corr. XI.K.1.10 and TNA PRO WORK 1/17, p. 340. Soane later recorded in his *Memoirs* (Joan Soane, *Memoirs of the Professional Life of an Architect*, privately printed, 1835) that he was “much astonished at being required to make another design in competition with Messrs. Nash and Smirke.”

17 TNA: PRO T1/4257. No drawings survive. Smirke’s estimate of 29 Aug 1829 for £26,000 and a further £3–4,000 for cases is very brief and uninformative. Nash’s estimate of 22 Sep 1829 for £18,500 with a reduction to £16,000 with the use of old materials, will be considered in more detail below.

18 “4 plans, 1 elevation, 2 perspectives of the exterior and 1 view of the interior of the Library,” SM 82/1/17–22; Priv.Corr. XI.K.1.11, 2 Sep 1829.

19 John Soane, *Designs of Public and Private Buildings* 2nd ed. (London, 1832), pp. 65–66; [Catalogue of] *The Exhibition of the Royal Academy MDCCCXXXI, The Sixty-Third*, No. 997.

trust you will listen to my prayer which is for the cause of Architecture and to prevent the reproach of foreigners on our National taste.<sup>20</sup>

On 28 January 1830, the Surveyor General wrote to Soane to inform him that the Treasury had approved his design and had given the order for Suffolk House to be demolished.<sup>21</sup> Even then the debate about the design was not over, Henry Bankes MP intervening with the suggestion of an alternative treatment of the façade. However, on 19 June 1830 Stephenson wrote to Soane: “I have just received orders from the Chancellor of the Exchequer to commence without further delay upon building the New State Paper Office which is to be erected upon the plans last approved by the Lords of the Treasury without any reference to the alterations you have recently made in those plans upon the suggestion of Mr Bankes.”<sup>22</sup> This was followed on 26 June by a rather charming note from the Keeper of the State Papers, Henry Hobhouse: “I hope our Anchor is now heaved, and we are under way. I hope too the Gales will be favourable ...”<sup>23</sup>

In brief, Soane’s design consisted of a four-storey building with residential accommodation and a room for book-binding in the basement (Figure 5), offices on the ground floor (Figure 6) and a double-height, top-lit Library on the first floor (Figure 7) extending to the attic storey (which also included bedrooms) (Figure 8). A principal staircase served the offices and Library and a subsidiary staircase the domestic quarters. The main entrance was on Duke Street with a separate side entrance for the Keeper’s Apartments, and to the rear the building overlooked St. James’s Park.

### Construction

Problems with the foundations caused considerable delays because of the low-lying site and the need to ensure a damp-proof building, and it was not until 28 May 1831 that the first four courses of the rusticated basement were complete.<sup>24</sup> By August 1831 progress was sufficient for a rumour to reach the Surveyor General that the west elevation of the State Paper Office was “not in

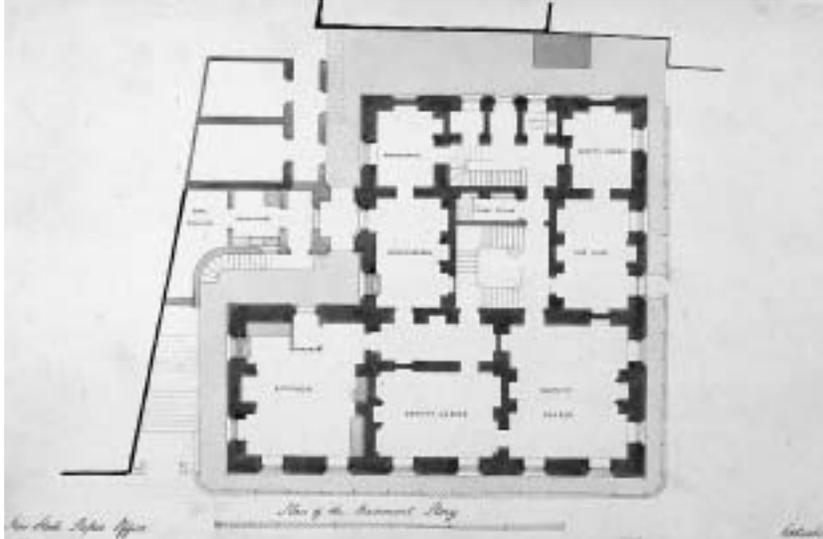
20 SM Priv.Corr. XI.K.1.19. Soane had revealed in his lectures as Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy a preoccupation with the importance of the creation of monumental public buildings in London which would be appropriate to its status as the capital city of a modern world power and as the seat of a historic monarchy. He had designed a whole sequence of dream buildings for St James’s Park and the surrounding area (see Sean Sawyer, “Sir John Soane’s Symbolic Westminster: The Apotheosis of George IV,” *Architectural History* 39 (1996), pp. 54–76.

21 SM Priv.Corr. XI.K.1.22.

22 SM Priv.Corr. XI.K.1.30; TNA: PRO WORK 1/18 p. 151.

23 SM Priv.Corr. XI.K.1.31.

24 SM 82/1/55.



**Figure 5** Plan of the basement storey of the New State Paper Office, September 1833 (SM Vol.61/82). Courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.

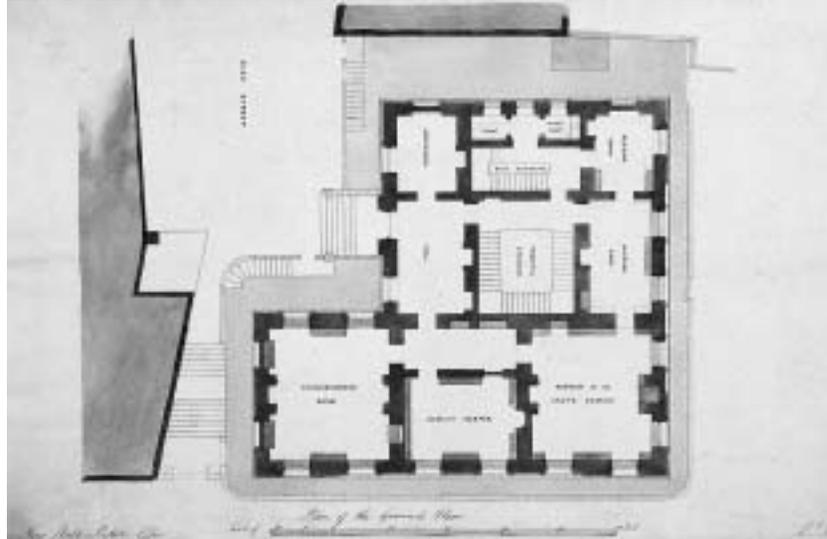
conformity with the plan approved of." Stephenson's warning note to Soane is not specific, but clearly it had been realized that the elevation nearing completion was astylar without the pilasters Soane had been forced to include. Soane extricated himself on the grounds of cost, and the matter does not seem to have been mentioned again. Thus he succeeded in getting his own way.

By January 1833 the necessary fittings for the records were being considered in detail<sup>25</sup> and on 10 September 1833 (Soane's eightieth birthday) Robert Lemon was able to write that Sir Benjamin Stephenson was anxious for him to take possession of the new building as soon as possible and that the Treasury were going to authorize the estimate for furniture that day if possible. He went on to express his admiration for the new building: "Nothing can be more complete and perfect than it is ..."<sup>26</sup> By November 1833 he was clearly in residence, as letters on 16 and 18 November request extra shelves for his printed books and some alterations in the disposition of the bells<sup>27</sup> and complain of

<sup>25</sup> Hobhouse to Soane, 31 January 1833, SM 8/53/10.

<sup>26</sup> SM Priv.Corr. XI.K.1.63.

<sup>27</sup> "... if he would have the kindness to give directions that two Bells which are at present on the outside of the Upper Landing Place may be transferred *inside*, as, in the night, his servants could not hear them, when Mr Lemon was suddenly taken ill, about a fortnight ago, with Spasms." SM Priv.Corr. XI.K.1.64, 16 November 1833.



**Figure 6** Plan of the ground floor of the New State Paper Office, October 1833 (SM Vol.61/83). Courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.

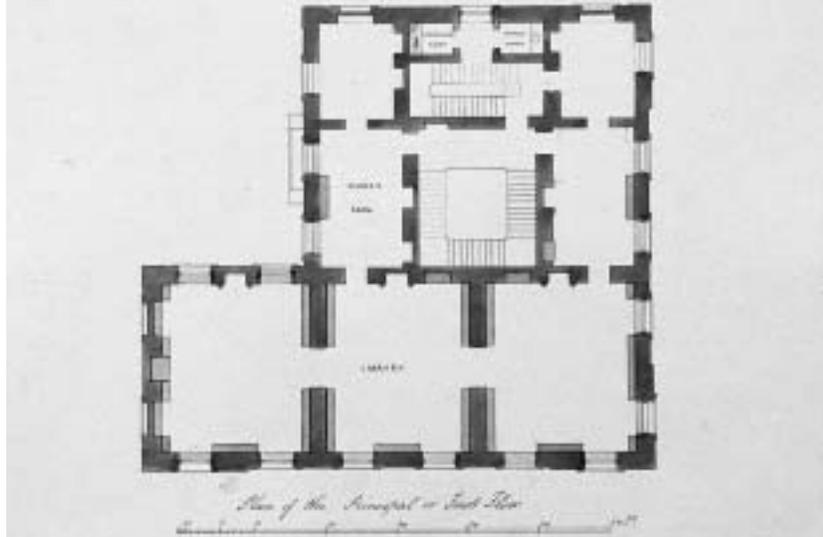
badly smoking chimneys.<sup>28</sup> W. & M. Feetham, the stove-makers, made some modifications, but in the end, in September 1834, the chimneys had to be rebuilt<sup>29</sup> (see Figures 2 through 10).

*Pinnock's Guide to Knowledge* of 18 January 1834 published a wood engraving of the completed building and reported:

The parade ground in St. James's Park has been recently embellished by the erection of a new building, after the design of Sir John Soane, for the reception of His Majesty's State Papers. It forms two sides of a square, having a right-angled elevation fronting Duke-street, as represented in our Engraving. Externally it consists of a neatly rusticated basement, with two plain stories, the whole crowned with a bold cornice. The entrance is perhaps the most effective part of the building, which is generally rather of a tame and insipid character. The depth of the windows is so shallow, and the projection of the mouldings so small, that, at the distance of a few yards, the effect is that of

28 SM Priv.Corr. XI.K.1.66, 22 November 1833. The detailed report of a test carried out on all the chimneys a few days later includes a description of one of the attic bedrooms as "Absolutely suffocating, the Bed being *literally* invisible at three yards distance, and the whole Room & Furniture covered with Soot."

29 SM *Cost Book New State Paper Office &c 1832-4*, p. 167.



**Figure 7** Plan of the first floor of the New State Paper Office, September 1833 (SM Vol.61/84). Courtesy of Sir John Soane’s Museum.

plain surfaces, scored with a few lines. The interior arrangements are commodious and elegant, and reflect great credit on the tact of the architect.<sup>30</sup>

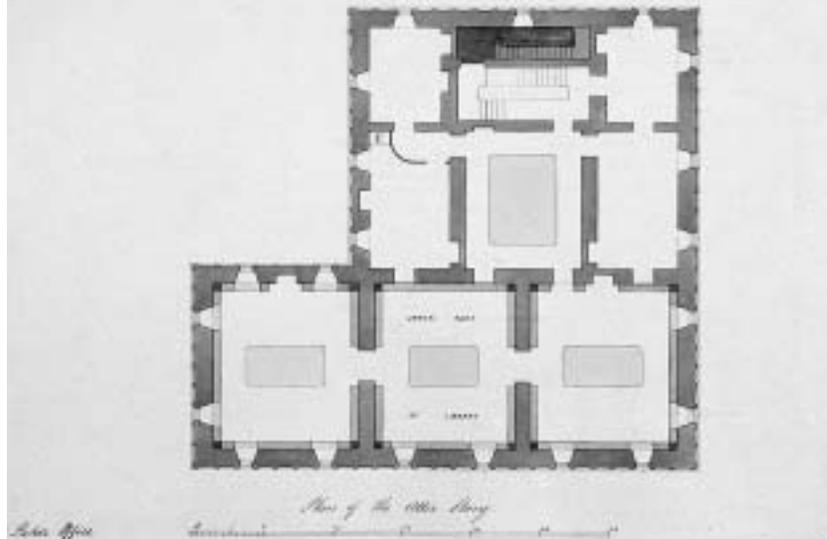
Soane had, as had been his practice with most of his major public works, kept the design in the public eye, exhibiting it in a variety of forms at the annual exhibition of the Royal Academy from 1831 to 1834.<sup>31</sup>

### Designing a Record Repository

It has already been stated that in designing the New State Paper Office, Soane was designing the first purpose-built national record repository in England. This section of the paper will look more closely at how he dealt with the specific requirements of record storage – damp- and fire-proof construction and

30 A month earlier an anonymous letter published in the *True Sun* newspaper of 6 December 1833, had railed against the luxury of the “Office Keeper to the State Paper Office with a suit [sic] of Apartments of nine Rooms exclusive of those occupied by the Housekeeper,” and had gone on to denigrate the practice of having Office Keepers and Housekeepers in Government Offices, and of furnishing the apartments of Office Keepers with “Turkey carpets.” SM Priv.Corr. XI.K.1.67.

31 1831 RA exhibition nos 981 and 997; 1833 no. 996 and 1834 no. 871. See David Solkin, ed., *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House 1780–1836* (New Haven and London, 2001), in particular chapter 14, Nicholas Savage, “Exhibiting Architecture: Strategies of Representation in English Architectural Exhibition Drawings, 1760–1836.”



**Figure 8** Plan of the attic storey of the New State Paper Office, September 1833 (SM Vol.61/85). Courtesy of Sir John Soane’s Museum.

secure storage. It will look in some detail at the construction of the presses (or bookcases) in which the records were housed, and will note briefly the evidence of other furniture and equipment specific to record storage introduced into the finished building. Comparisons will be made with the solutions proposed by John Nash in his proposed design<sup>32</sup> and with those adopted by James Pennethorne in his building for the Public Record Office in Chancery Lane of 1851–1856.

### *Damp-proofing*

The very low-lying nature of the site on which the New State Paper Office was to be constructed and the particular need for a damp-proof building obliged Soane to pay meticulous attention to the foundations, problems with which delayed the start of construction, as noted above. As Soane told the Select Committee on House of Commons Buildings on 13 May 1833, “[i]t was necessary to sink below the level of the street at least 20 feet, to the bed of gravel, to remove the loose earth and mud, and to form foundations for the walls of solid materials.” Broken granite, laid in layers and grouted, formed the bottom three feet of foundation.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See footnote 17.

<sup>33</sup> Crook and Port, *The History of the King’s Works*, p. 570, footnote 6.



**Figure 9** Longitudinal section through the New State Paper Office, September 1833 (SM Vol.61/98). Courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.

### *Fire-proof Construction: Disposition of Rooms*

With foundations constructed so as to avoid damp, fire prevention was Soane's next major preoccupation. He was able to design the building to be detached, which obviously rendered it much safer than the previous homes of the State Papers; but the requirement that apartments for a live-in member of staff be provided as part of the building introduced a very obvious risk, with the need for ranges for cooking and coppers for heating water and for washing. However, the perceived need for someone to be on the spot at all times to provide information for government officials overrode these concerns.<sup>34</sup>

Soane put the residential apartments in the basement, with a separate entrance off steps leading down from the front entrance on Duke Street (see Figure 11), together with rooms for the housekeeper and the bookbinder. He did not go so far as Nash, who proposed<sup>35</sup> keeping "the domestic apartments for the family of the resident officers as separate and as distinct as possible from those appropriated to public purposes and the servants who look after them – and this principle will be found to be accomplished by appropriating

<sup>34</sup> It is interesting to note that right up until 1977 (the year in which the new Public Record Office building at Kew was opened) an Assistant Keeper remained on site overnight at the Public Record Office building in Chancery Lane in case any documents were urgently required.

<sup>35</sup> See footnote 17.



**Figure 10** The imposing front entrance of the New State Paper Office, October 1833 (SM Vol.61/91). Courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.

that side of the building next the passage from Duke Street into the park exclusively to the private apartments of the resident Officer." Nash went on to describe the arrangements over two stories linked by a private staircase: "The private Establishment of the Resident Officer is by this arrangement as distinct and separate from the public Establishment as if they were in separate streets although under the same roof."



**Figure 11** The separate entrance to the Keeper's Apartments, New State Paper Office (SM Vol.61/95). Courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.

Soane's first design for the building had featured on the first floor a Library composed of three separate rooms, but new instructions had forced him to design this as one long room. Soane was very concerned about this, since fire is much less controllable in larger spaces. On 7 February 1831, he wrote to Henry Hobhouse, Keeper of the State Papers<sup>36</sup>: "... I take leave to remind you that the plan now proposed to be carried into execution differs most materially from the plan formed under your directions and approved by you. In the *first* place these alterations render the building *not* fire-proof and the two upper stories in your plan consisting of several Rooms in each Story are now changed into a large library embracing the two Stories ...". Hobhouse responded on 30 March 1831<sup>37</sup>: "I have not forgotten your friendly hint, but when men's minds are full of politics, it is in vain to attempt to draw them to matters of lesser importance. I therefore have not deemed it prudent to make the attempt at present." Nevertheless, as with the astylar façade, Soane quietly got his way, or at least effected a compromise, for in the finished building the Library is divided into three separate compartments, each opening into the other, though remaining a double-height space.

#### ***Fire-proof Construction: Use of Suitable Materials***

In a note made early in the design process, Soane wrote: "My plan is to insulate the buildg. & to make it fire proof in all its parts."<sup>38</sup> As a founder member of the Architects' Club<sup>39</sup> he was involved in their debates about fire prevention, and his library includes a number of volumes and pamphlets on the subject, including the report of the Committee appointed by the Architects' Club: *Resolutions of the Associated Architects, with the Report of a Committee by them appointed to consider the Causes of the frequent Fires, and the best means of preventing the like in future*, London, 26 July 1793.<sup>40</sup>

At the Bank of England, to which Soane was appointed Architect in 1787 and which was the largest building project of his career, obvious concerns about fire-proofing resulted in some innovative solutions, including the use of lightweight hollow terracotta cones or "pots" in the construction of the domes.

The need for fire-proof materials was stressed by Soane in his lectures given as Professor of Architecture to the students at the Royal Academy.<sup>41</sup> In Lecture

36 SM Memoranda relating to the Several Public buildings in the Westminster Department 1825–1832, p. 98.

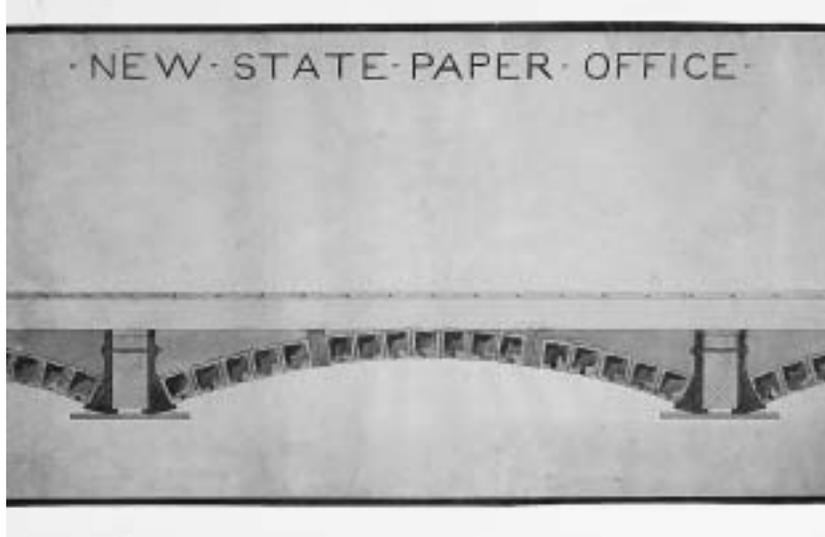
37 SM Priv.Corr. XI.K.1.48.

38 SM Memoranda, p. 15.

39 Founded 1791. See Angela Mace, *The Royal Institute of British Architects: A Guide to its Archive and History* (London, 1986), pp. 301–303.

40 SM PC98/1.

41 David Watkin, *Sir John Soane: Enlightenment Thought and the Royal Academy Lectures* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 393–94.



**Figure 12** Illustration made for Soane’s lectures as Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy, to show fireproof construction at the New State Paper Office (SM 26/6/1). Courtesy of Sir John Soane’s Museum.

12 he advises in particular<sup>42</sup> the use of incombustible materials, flat roofs, iron cradles and columns to support the walls, and floors formed of flat arches composed of bricks or cones, rather than solely of timber. The floors of his new building were all supported on iron girders<sup>43</sup> and a wooden model of one of these survives in his Museum today.<sup>44</sup> One of the large-scale drawings made to illustrate his lectures displays a sectional detail of the New State Paper Office to show fireproof floor construction,<sup>45</sup> with timber laid over arches of hollow bricks (see Figure 12). The floors in the basement were paved, the landings were all of stone and the staircases of Portland stone. Robert Adam’s earlier Register House in Edinburgh, built from 1774, was constructed entirely of stone (except for the floor of the Clerk Register’s room) with brick vaults.<sup>46</sup>

Figure 9 – a section through the completed building – shows clearly Soane’s use of solid wall construction. There are no studwork partitions and the walls are almost like walls between terraced houses, thus compartmentalizing the building.

42 Ibid., p. 658.

43 See SM 82/1/68, 97, 98.

44 SM M654.

45 SM 26/6/1.

46 Sanderson, *A Proper Repository*, p. 10. Note that “vault” in this context means an arched roof or ceiling.

Another fireproofing device Soane employed elsewhere was iron doors. On one plan of the Library of 1829<sup>47</sup> Soane has annotated both entrances to the Library with “Iron Door,” although there is no evidence that these were ever put in. In his annual survey as one of the three Attached Architects for the Westminster Department he had, in 1817, recommended that at the House of Lords Record Office, “[f]or the greater security of this Office an Iron door and Stone Jambs should be put up between the North [and South] Office[s] and the Record Room.”<sup>48</sup> In the survey for the following year he had recommended at the Westminster Abbey Chapter House that:

There should be an Iron door from the Clerk’s Office into the Record Room, and another Iron door into the Record Office from Poets Corner. Doomsday Book and other valuable Records are deposited near the Window between the Record Room and the Abbey next Poets Corner in a very unsafe situation. Iron Shutters should be put to the window of the Chief Clerk’s Office and the Window reduced. The safety of the Building requires another Iron door from the Record Office into the Cloister, now a Glass door.<sup>49</sup>

By the time James Pennethorne came to design the new Public Record Office in Chancery Lane in 1850, the disastrous fire at the Houses of Parliament in 1834 had made security from fire a paramount concern. The floors of his building were formed of fireproof brick arches, and were supported by massive walls of brick clad in stone. Taking advice from James Braidwood, Superintendent of the London Fire Brigade, all the ironwork was clad in brick or stone, iron being a material rapidly and seriously affected by fire. Again on Braidwood’s advice the repository area was divided up into small self-contained fire-proof strong rooms with iron doors, each room 25 feet deep and 15 feet 6 inches high, divided into two equal parts by a floor with gratings.<sup>50</sup>

### ***Fire-proof Construction: The Problem of Heating***

Soane’s State Paper Office was heated by iron stoves in fireplaces throughout the building (see Figure 13). Soane employed systems of warm air central

47 SM 82/1/27.

48 SM Priv.Corr. XII.G.1.5.

49 SM Priv.Corr. XII.G.1.6. Similarly, in 1788, after the destruction by fire of the Ordnance Office, to strengthen the security of the Wakefield Tower and adjacent Record Office at the Tower of London, the architect Sir William Chambers (1723–1796), as Surveyor General at the Office of Works, had removed the wooden staircase and wainscot, placed an iron door at the entrance to the room, and plated the roof and insides of the window shutters with iron. See Crook and Port, *The History of the King’s Works*, p. 489.

50 Lawes, *Chancery Lane 1377–1977*, pp. 30–31; Geoffrey Tyack, *Sir James Pennethorne and the Making of Victorian London* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 148–51.



**Figure 13** View of the Board Room, New State Paper Office. Note the fireplace to warm the room (SM Vol.61/101). Courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.

heating in various of his buildings, including in his own house in Lincoln's Inn Fields,<sup>51</sup> and an estimate for warming the building by warm air central heating survives in the archive.<sup>52</sup> The scheme was clearly rejected, though no evidence of the reasons for this have come to light. Nash<sup>53</sup> had suggested a means by which the centrally-placed Library could be warmed without the presence of any fire, by placing a steam heated air stove in the basement, whence warm air could be emitted in an air receptacle in the centre of the gallery. A somewhat similar system had been designed at Adam's Register House in Edinburgh, with four stoves in the centre of the basement from which hot air was circulated by flues and grilles in the floor, with the stoves kept burning all year to protect the records from damp.<sup>54</sup> When the new Public Record Office in Chancery Lane was built there was no provision for heating, it being held that apart from the fire-risk, circulating warm air was "positively injurious to the health of those employed!"<sup>55</sup>

51 See Todd Wilmert, "Heating Methods and Their Impact on Soane's Work: Lincoln's Inn Fields and Dulwich Picture Gallery," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* LII (March 1993), pp. 26–58.

52 SM Archives 8/74/46, May 1833.

53 See footnote 17.

54 Sanderson, *A Proper Repository*, p. 12.

55 Lawes, *Chancery Lane 1377–1977*, p. 34.

***Fire-proof Construction: The Problem of Lighting***

The Library where the State Papers were consulted was top-lit by skylights, to make the most of the natural daylight. Other rooms had windows, as in a domestic house. Once completed, the hours of opening were 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., roughly the span of daylight hours in an English winter. Nevertheless, oil lamps and candles must have been required at times in the offices and certainly were used in the residential quarters, thus increasing the risk of fire. As with heating, lighting was considered too great a risk at Pennethorne's new Public Record Office, where there was no artificial lighting. The strongrooms each had large windows, with small thick panes of glass in cast-iron frames. Nevertheless, Colza oil lanterns often had to be used in the strongrooms when documents were being fetched. Until electric lighting was installed in 1889 there was no artificial lighting in the search rooms, which had to close at dusk.<sup>56</sup>

**Storage of Records**

The one area where it is perhaps most surprising that Soane was not more innovative is the design of the presses (or bookcases) in which the records were to be housed. The 1786 Commission had commented on the arrangement of the State Papers in Scotland Yard that "placed in cases of wood they are not secure against Fire ... Indeed, unless the papers themselves could be placed in Stone Recesses, with such precautions as are usually taken by Individuals for the preservation of what they deem valuable, even the protection which could be given by the constant residence of one of the officers in the house, would be attended with additional dangers of another sort."<sup>57</sup>

Nash in his estimate<sup>58</sup> had proposed:

The Bookcases to be formed of Bath Stone and the shelves and doors of wrought Iron formed in open framings to circulate the air ... It is proposed that there should be no wood work whatsoever in the formation of the cases; that the shelves should slide in grooves formed in the side of the stone cases; that they as well as the doors should be formed of copper plates framed in pannels & fitted in with thinner plates perforated so that the evaporation from the paper may find a vent and the Air circulate throughout the whole Case.

He proposed similar stone cases to be inserted in the walls of the Book-

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., pp. 33–34.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Henry Hobhouse's *Report on the State Paper Office, 8 June 1826*, TNA: PRO T1/4257.

<sup>58</sup> See footnote 17.

binder's apartment in the basement and for the room for keeping original Treaties etc.<sup>59</sup>

Soane's bookcases were much more conventional, being constructed of deal, faced with wainscot (see Figure 14). Some of them had solid doors, whilst others had grille fronts of brass trellis work. The tone seems to have been set in a letter from Henry Hobhouse to Benjamin Stephenson dated 17 November 1828,<sup>60</sup> in which he wrote: "For the whole of the documents it will be necessary to provide immediate security in locked Cases, or Presses, similar to those in the new Manuscript Library in the British Museum." The King's Library, constructed as part of the East wing of the British Museum by Robert Smirke in 1823–1827, to house the gift to the nation by George IV of his father's library of over 65,000 volumes and 19,000 unbound tracts, and the adjoining Manuscripts Saloon, had book presses of oak with protective brass trellis.<sup>61</sup> Soane had used a similar arrangement in his new libraries for the Houses of Lords and Commons in 1824 and 1826 (see Figure 15).<sup>62</sup>

Two hundred and fifty (250) separate panels of the brass trellis work for the fronts of the presses had to be supplied for the State Paper Office, to a variety of different measurements (see Figure 16), and the commission obviously caused the coppersmith, Richard Kepp, some difficulty, as he wrote to Soane on 22 November 1833 apologizing for the delay in completing the work: he had to send to "a distant part of the country" for "that quantity of wire" and now has "twenty two men at work upon them early and late."<sup>63</sup> With security considerations paramount a range of different suites of locks was devised for various rooms and ranges of presses.<sup>64</sup> The system was not, however, as com-

59 Slate was used at the new Public Record Office building in Chancery Lane. See Tyack, *Sir James Pennethorne and the Making of Victorian London*, p. 155. It is interesting to note that Pennethorne was a pupil of John Nash.

60 SM Memoranda, p. 49.

61 Marjorie Caygill and Christopher Dean, *Building the British Museum* (London, 1999), pp. 21–23; Tim Knox, "The King's Library and Its Architectural Genesis," in Kim Sloan, ed., *Enlightenment: Discovering the World in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2003), p. 53. The cases can be seen in the newly-re-opened (December 2003) Enlightenment Gallery at the British Museum, but they are now glass-fronted, the brass trellis having been replaced in both the King's Library and the Manuscripts Saloon in the 1850s, for the greater protection of the contents of the cases. The 1834 issue of *Gentleman's Magazine* described how the grilles were equipped with "locks of a new and singular construction by Barrow. The key which locks each case, shoots at the same time bolts above and below the 'door'."

62 Soane, *Designs*, plate 28. It was also the preferred method of storage of Thomas Astle, Keeper of Records at the Tower, who, asked to report to the 1800 Committee to enquire into the State of the Public Records, preferred "presses, set 3" from the wall, with air holes front and back," cited in Peter Walne, "The Record Commissions, 1800–1837," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* II (1960), p. 10.

63 SM Archive 8/73/44.

64 Tender for the supply of locks and hinges for the presses, 18 September 1833, SM Archive 8/74/39.



**Figure 14** Design for the Library, New State Paper Office. Here the presses are all shown with closed doors. Note the tables, presumably designed to facilitate the consultation of bound volumes (SM 82/1/14). Courtesy of Sir John Soane’s Museum.

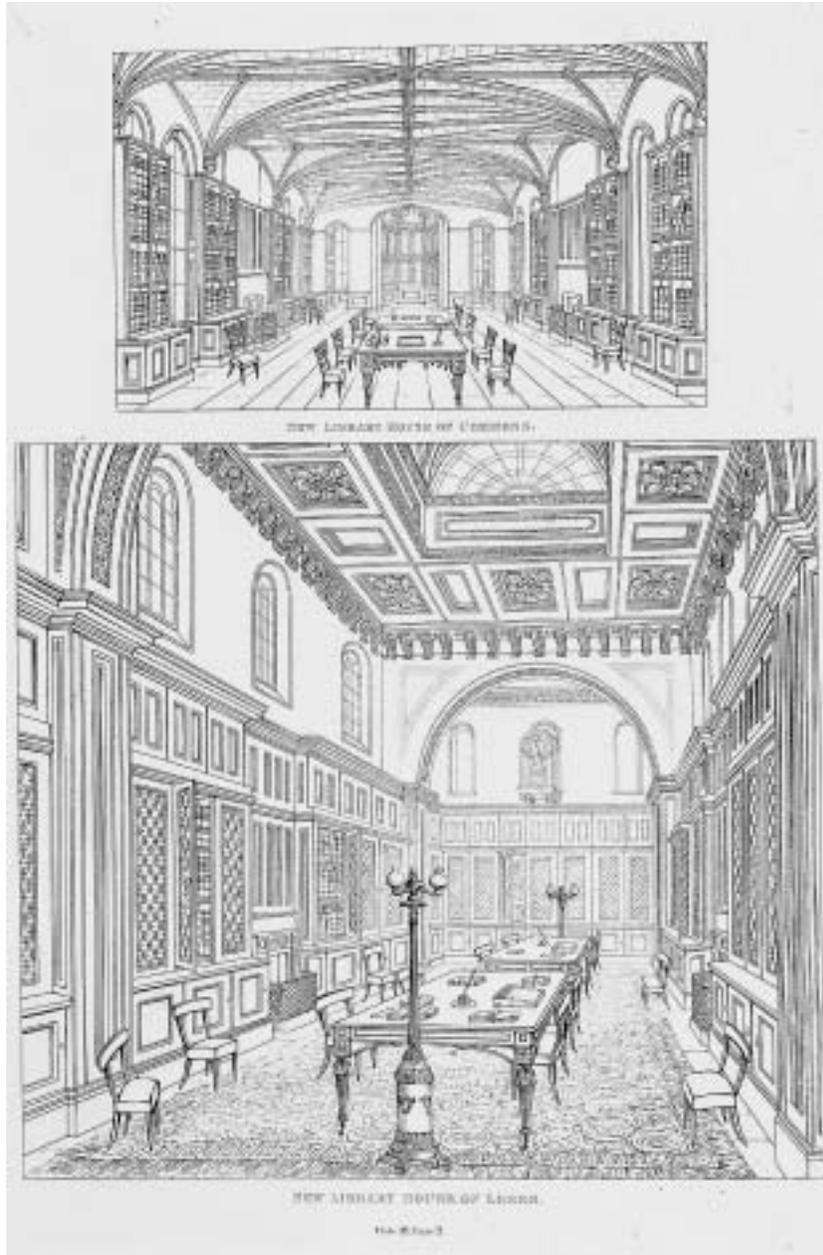
plex as that devised for the new Public Record Office building, where 4,000 keys were required, and the system had to be simplified in 1859, three years after the building had been opened.<sup>65</sup>

Much ink was expended in calculating the foot-run of shelves needed in the new State Paper Office, and in a letter to Soane of 31 January 1833<sup>66</sup> Henry Hobhouse reminded him that: “large additions will, from time to time, be made, so that it is necessary to construct the first Presses in such a manner as readily to permit others to be added to them when occasion shall arise.” He continued:

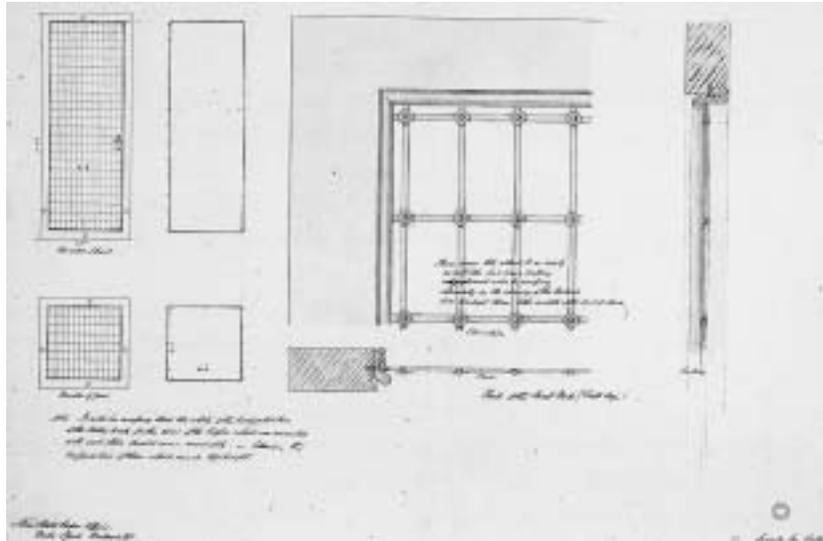
I compute the length of Shelf necessary for holding our present Deposits at 2,500 feet, and the mean distance between the shelves at 16 inches. The new Library is the first room to be attended to. In this I propose to construct the Presses so as to admit of their receiving seven rows of Books, viz. two below and five above the division of the Doors; all the shelves to be moveable, and supported by Pegs, except the second from the Bottom [Figure 17]. This will require 9ft 10in for the interior height of each Press (that is, seven spaces of 16in each, and 6 inches for the thickness of the shelves) besides the skirting and the cornice. The height of the Gallery will not admit of more

<sup>65</sup> Lawes, *Chancery Lane 1377–1977*, p. 31.

<sup>66</sup> SM Archive 8/53/10.



**Figure 15** The Libraries of the House of Commons and House of Lords, designed by Soane. Plate 28 from Soane *Designs for Public and Private Buildings*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1832. Courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.



**Figure 16** Elevation and details of the brass grilles for the doors of the presses, New State Paper Office, September 1833 (SM 82/2/38). Courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.

than six rows of Books, requiring the interior height of the Press to be 8ft 5in ... Here I think the doors need not be divided.

He added that: "It will also be necessary to have one Press differently constructed for the reception of Treaties." On 23 May 1833 Robert Lemon wrote to Soane with useful information about the sizes of the books to be accommodated.<sup>67</sup> The largest publications were those of the Record Commissioners, being 1 foot 10 inches high and 1 foot 2 inches deep. The Manuscript Calendars, he says, are Demy size (1 foot 3 inches high by 10½ inches deep), and the majority of the bound volumes of manuscripts Foolscap size (1 foot 1½ inches high by 10 inches deep).

However, despite these careful calculations, by 1845 the State Paper Office was seriously overcrowded and seeking to enlarge its accommodation.<sup>68</sup> An Inventory of Furniture of 1856<sup>69</sup> lists 174 presses for State Papers in the Attics, 142 on the First Floor, and 88 on the Ground Floor, together with a further 15 on the ground floor landing of the stairs and in the adjacent passage: a grand total of 419.

<sup>67</sup> SM Archive 8/53/7.

<sup>68</sup> Cantwell, *The Public Record Office 1838–1958*, p. 107.

<sup>69</sup> *Inventories of Furniture in various Public Offices 1856*, TNA: PRO WORK 6/380/1.



**Figure 17** View in the New State Paper Office. Note the adjustable book shelves (SM Vol.61/100). Courtesy of Sir John Soane's Museum.



**Figure 18** ST[ATE] PA[PER] OF[FICE] stamp on a table designed for the New State Paper Office, now at the National Archives, Kew. By kind permission of The National Archives.

### Other Furniture

The other furniture for the New State Paper Office was supplied by J.R.S. Cox of the Office of Woods and Forests.<sup>70</sup> Items of interest include several wainscot writing tables, with drawers, covered with black leather; “4 pair wainscot Library Steps, the treads covered with Carpet,” and wainscot washhand stands in the Library and other rooms where the papers were consulted. Much of the furniture was ordered to be transferred from the Old State Paper Office in Great George Street. An Inventory of the Furniture there taken in May 1828<sup>71</sup> includes the following: in the Keeper’s room a large mahogany writing table with a green cloth top, a mahogany pedestal desk with a black leather top and mahogany slope for the same, a mahogany secretary, and a high standing writing desk of mahogany on four legs with castors with a green cloth top; and elsewhere a pair of mahogany steps for the presses and three mahogany sorting boxes, lettered. A similar Inventory for the New State Paper Office taken in 1856<sup>72</sup> includes: Holland covers for State Papers, several tables and slides; and, in a room on the ground floor, “Bookbinders Bin with working Tops and

70 Estimate dated 23 July 1833, TNA: PRO T1/4257.

71 TNA: PRO WORK 6/379/1.

72 TNA: PRO WORK 6/380/1.

Cutting Presses with Ploughs and Pins, Bookbinders Iron Screw standing Press and 3 doz. Pressing Boards, fitted shelves, and 2 presses for binding materials." Two writing tables stamped "ST[ATE] PA[PER] OF[FICE]" have recently been identified in the National Archives building at Kew (see Figure 18), together with five other items (tables and chairs) which probably also, judging by their similarity in style, came from the same source.<sup>73</sup>

### The State Paper Office 1834–1862

The *Public Record Office Act* of 1838 enshrined the principle of a general repository under a single custody and enabled the building of the first Public Record Office Building in Chancery Lane, designed by James Pennethorne, the foundation stone of which was laid on 24 May 1851.<sup>74</sup> The Act did not cover the State Papers or the records of "modern government departments, but once established, certain departments, including the Treasury, saw the convenience of having a central repository for their own non-current records and began to transfer large quantities of records to it."<sup>75</sup> The position of the State Paper Office became increasingly isolated, and eventually, after much politicizing<sup>76</sup> the State Paper Office became a branch of the Public Record Office on the death of Henry Hobhouse, Keeper of the State Papers, in April 1854.

From 1838 the new Public Record Office based at Rolls House, Chancery Lane, and the six branch Record Offices had been open to searchers from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day except Sundays and public holidays. The fees payable for searching, about which there had been much previous complaint, were reduced by 80 per cent. Searches were divided into professional use of the records for legal purposes and "literary inquiries," that is to say general historical research, local and family history, biography, and genealogy. Writing in 1934 of the Public Record Office in Chancery Lane, V. H. Galbraith still referred to "the Literary Search Room" [the Round Room] and "the Legal Search Room."<sup>77</sup> "Literary" enquirers paid one shilling per week to consult the finding aids and a further shilling for the consultation of each record, or five

73 I am most grateful to Meryl Foster and her colleagues at The National Archives for help in identifying these and for allowing me to photograph them. The two writing tables were clearly made for Soane's New State Paper Office as they also bear a crown and WR IV for William IV who only reigned between 1831 and 1837. The practice of stamping furniture in government offices in this way was uniform and there is similarly stamped furniture at the Privy Council Offices in Whitehall, for instance. It no doubt relates to the system of central supply of furniture for buildings under the superintendence of the Office of Works, the furniture being inventoried and checked annually and occasionally (TNA: PRO WORK 1/18 p. 502).

74 Tyack, *Sir James Pennethorne and the Making of Victorian London*, pp. 145–62.

75 Lawes, *Chancery Lane 1377–1977*, p. 21.

76 Described in fascinating detail by Cantwell in *The Public Record Office 1838–1958*.

77 V. H. Galbraith, *An Introduction to the Use of the Public Records* (Oxford, 1934), p. 79.



**Figure 19** The Antiquarian Room at New Register House, Edinburgh, in the nineteenth century. Engraving in James Grant *Old and New Edinburgh*. (Private Collection).

shillings per week for searches on one family, place or subject. Following a petition of 1851 signed by eminent writers such as Carlyle, Dickens, Hallam, and Macaulay, new rules were introduced in 1852 and literary searchers could consult indexes and original records without charge and make copies or extracts of them in pencil, though no help was to be given by the officers beyond producing the documents and giving a general explanation of their character and nature if required. All applicants were to state the reason for their search in writing, and cards of admission were issued and a register kept of all documents produced.<sup>78</sup> In Scotland the Antiquarian Room (now the Historical Search Room) at Register House in Edinburgh was opened up to the public free of charge for historical and literary searches in 1847 (see Figure 19).<sup>79</sup>

Unrestricted access was not, however, allowed to the State Papers in London. Well might D’Israeli remark, “Unsunned Treasures lie in the State Paper Office.”<sup>80</sup> Readers at Soane’s new State Paper Office had to apply for permits, and the number issued was small – an annual average of eighteen in the 1830s,

<sup>78</sup> Lawes, *Chancery Lane 1377–1977*, pp. 25–26; Cantwell, *The Public Record Office 1838–1958*, p. 141.

<sup>79</sup> Sanderson, *A Proper Repository*, p. 14.

<sup>80</sup> Quoted on the title page of Francis Sheppard Thomas, *A History of the State Paper Office* (London, 1849).

with a gradual increase thereafter.<sup>81</sup> Amalgamation with the Public Record Office brought some relaxation in 1858, but even then there was only unrestricted access to pre-1688 material, and where permission was given to consult later material any copies or notes taken were vetted. Material felt to be particularly sensitive were papers bearing on current negotiations with foreign governments; papers whose publication might damage foreign relations; accounts of the domestic lives of members of the English or foreign royal families; and names of persons who may have been involved in foreign political intrigues, the disclosure of which might wound the feelings of their relatives or descendants.<sup>82</sup>

Amalgamation also resulted in a rearrangement of the facilities at the State Paper Office to allow for up to 12 searchers a day, and, from the beginning of 1855, an increase in the hours from 5 to 6 daily, to bring it into line with other branch Record Offices. By 1860 there were about 150 Literary readers per annum to the new Public Record Office and State Paper Branch Office together, each making on average 15 visits. The number of Legal searchers was roughly two or three times greater.<sup>83</sup>

### **Demolition of Soane's State Paper Office**

The State Paper Branch Record Office remained in the Duke Street building until 1862 when the contents, with the exception of post-1760 Foreign Office material and ratifications of treaties, were transferred to the Public Record Office in Chancery Lane.<sup>84</sup> Planning had been in train for this move since 1861. Asked in a letter of 3 June 1861 to furnish measurements of the documents in the State Paper Branch Office as soon as possible,<sup>85</sup> Robert Lemon<sup>86</sup> had proceeded to give the measurements, including the presses, from the commencement of each series to the end of 1750, from 1751–1760 and from 1760 onwards, in the categories “Foreign, Colonial, Home, Miscellaneous and Printed Books, Board of Trade Papers, Maps, including Ordnance Survey, and Naval Papers.” He went on to remark:

81 Cantwell, *The Public Record Office 1838–1958*, p. 184, footnote 20.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 184.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 183.

84 TNA: PRO SP 45/47, *Orders and Reports* Aug 1860 – Jan 1862, contains a detailed series of exchanges about the estimation of the space needed and the planning of the operation during 1861.

85 TNA: PRO SP 45/47, p. 58.

86 Robert Lemon (1800–1867), son of Robert Lemon (1779–1835) who was Deputy Keeper of the State Papers. Robert Lemon junior is also described as “archivist” in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (see footnote 7 above).

Many of the Board of Trade Papers are in very large volumes and could not easily be separately described in the divisions of time. The Maps are also very large in cases. Those of the ordnance series are in bound volumes. The Treaties, which are contained in three large presses, are not included in the above measurements and are purposefully omitted as they must be specially dealt with. Two of the presses measure 5 x 12 each and the third one 12 x 6 and each is two feet deep.

A letter from T. Duffus Hardy, Deputy Keeper of the Public Records, to Charles Lechmere dated 16 November 1861<sup>87</sup> related that he has arranged for the removal of the State Papers to the Repository to begin the following Monday. A list of the contents of each van-load should be sent in advance. A further request followed on 11 December 1861<sup>88</sup> that the Press Lists formerly in use at the State Paper Branch to the records already transmitted to the Repository be sent. The last entry<sup>89</sup> is dated 28 January 1862.<sup>90</sup>

A few months later in May 1862, only twenty-eight years after its completion, Soane's New State Paper Office was demolished to make way for new Foreign and India Offices.<sup>91</sup>

### Conclusion

Soane's New State Paper Office fulfilled its brief and was in construction a sensible, expedient and cost-effective fire-proof building. Despite his reputation as a technical innovator, here Soane reserved his innovation for the exterior of the building, employing the cutting-edge new "palazzo" style for the first time in his long career. When it came to the fitting-out of the building he relied on tried and tested methods, unlike the more radical and innovative solutions proposed by John Nash and put into practice with further embellishments by Nash's pupil James Pennethorne in his new Public Record Office building of 1856.

This was the last public building designed by the octogenarian architect and the process of design had been fraught with interference and indecision on the part of his client, the government, no less than in his other major public buildings of the 1820s. Exasperated though he might be, he had developed strategies for combating this and in the case of the State Paper Office quietly

87 TNA: PRO SP 45/47, p. 184.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid., p. 117.

90 It is clear that the records were transferred to Chancery Lane in their presses. No surviving presses from Soane's State Paper Office have, however, yet been identified either at Chancery Lane (now part of King's College, London, Library) or at the National Archives at Kew.

91 See TNA: PRO WORK 12/62/7 for *Catalogue of the Building Materials of the State Paper Office, St James's Park*, sold by auction on 16 May 1862.

managed to get his own way in two major respects: the astylar design of the front façade and the compartmentalizing of the Library.

In the end Soane's building was a victim of progress – the achievement of the *Public Record Office Act* of 1838, the subsequent amalgamation of the State Paper Office as a branch of the Public Record Office in 1854, and the opening of Pennethorne's Public Record Office building in Chancery Lane in 1856.