

ADDRESS

Premises of Thanet Press (formerly Eyre & Spottiswoode), UNION
CRESCENT, MARGATE

Parish MARGATE
District THANET
County KENT

Case UID: 168978

Date First Listed:

Formerly Listed As:

RECOMMENDATION

Outcome: No, do not list

Recommended Grade: NL

15-MAR-2010

BACKGROUND:

After examining all the papers on this file and other relevant information and having carefully considered the architectural and historic interest of this case, the criteria for listing are not fulfilled.

HISTORY

Kelly's Directory of Margate records the Bobby and Co. printing works on Union Crescent for the first time in 1920. The 1:2500 Ordnance Survey map of 1936 identifies a printing works on part of the site now occupied by Thanet Press, suggesting that Thanet Press took over this pre-existing printing works. Other buildings, which are also now included as part of the Thanet Press complex, are shown on this map, however they are not at this date identified as part of the printing works. By 1948, Kelly's Directory records Thanet Press (Eyre and Spottiswoode Ltd. proprietors) on Union Crescent.

The printing firm, Eyre and Strahan, was established in 1766 by Charles Eyre and William Strahan, following their purchase of the patent of King's Printer. In the early C19, the company became Eyre and Spottiswoode (brothers Andrew and Robert Spottiswoode having taken over from their uncle, Andrew Strahan, son of William Strahan, following his retirement). The firm was based in London, but by the mid C20 they had a number of printing outlets, of which the Thanet Press, Margate, was one. In 1995, Thanet Press was acquired by the Baird Group, who sold the company in 2009, but retained ownership of the buildings.

DESCRIPTION

The Thanet Press printing works occupies a substantial site between Union Crescent and Prince's Street. The premises comprise a number of blocks of various date, most of which are directly adjacent to one another, forming a single foot-print. The earliest phases of the complex are mainly to the north, fronting onto Union Crescent, and date from the late C19 and early C20. To the south are two mid-C20 blocks separated by two late-C19, early-C20 blocks, which front onto Prince's Street.

To the north the complex comprises four blocks. At the east end of this frontage is a nine-bay, two-storey block of brick construction. A brick cornice runs beneath the parapet, and at first-floor the bays are expressed with brick pilasters. The large first-floor windows have gauged brick segmental arches with expressed keystones. The windows are multi-light steel casements. A deep rendered fascia divides the ground and first floor openings. Ground-floor fenestration comprises steel-framed multi-light casements with curved transoms. The sill height of some of the windows

appears to have been lifted and the brick-work beneath re-built. The 1936 Ordnance Survey map suggests this block was the original early-C20 printing works.

The adjacent block is a single-bay-wide with a Dutch-gable. There is a single window at first-floor and some elements of a heavily altered shopfront at ground-floor. Adjacent to this is a nine-bay two-storey corner block with a pitched slate roof. The first floor windows are generally two-over-two or three-over-three sliding sashes, at ground floor are some elements of a heavily altered shopfront. To the west this block turns to the south, facing the loading-bay entrance. On this corner, at ground-floor level, is a late-C20 shopfront. Maps suggest that these blocks are of late-C19 date; subsumed into the printing works after 1936. To the west, across from the loading bay, is an early-C20 single-storey building of red brick construction with clerestory windows and two large blocked openings.

To the south elevation, the two mid-C20 blocks are two-storey and of red brick construction. Fenestration is arranged in long bands of horizontally orientated steel casement windows. The two late-C19, early-C20 blocks are of yellow stock brick construction; one is a single-bay-wide, of three-storeys with a ground floor door and sash windows above, the other is three-bays wide, of two-storeys with steel casement windows.

The building which formed the original printing works houses large modern printing equipment in an open-plan space on the ground-floor, with office accommodation above. Generally the interiors are very simple, housing machinery, or providing storage; offices and staff communal areas have utilitarian fittings dating from the mid-C20 to early C21.

ASSESSMENT:

CONTEXT

Thanet Press, Union Crescent, Margate, is one of a number of buildings being assessed for designation as part of phase II of the Margate Defined Area Survey. This work is being undertaken by English Heritage, not as a complete review of the statutory list, but rather a review of a defined area where designation, or the absence of it, has proved to be problematic in the area's management. Phase I focused on specifically seaside buildings, whereas phase II has generally focussed on the town centre.

CONSULTATION

The owners and the Local Authority (Thanet District Council) were consulted on the Initial Report. Neither party made representations relating to the architectural or historic interest of the building.

ASSESSMENT

Britain was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, and her industrial pre-eminence in the C19 and early C20 mean that some industrial buildings from this time will possess a strong historic and cultural significance, as well as, in some cases, high architectural merit. However, large numbers of industrial buildings survive, and therefore great care needs to be taken when establishing whether a building is of special architectural or historic interest. Factors relevant in assessing printing works for designation, as our Industrial Buildings Selection Guide sets out, will include: technological innovation (where the building is the site of an early use of a particular process, or if the building itself is of technological significance); historic interest (where the building or site provides physical evidence of important elements of industrial history, through associations with important people or products); architectural quality; rebuilding and repair: a high level of reconstruction can be a reason not to designate, however it can also reflect the evolution of industrial process, and can therefore sometimes add to the historic value of a site.

The simple internal requirements of printing works: large spaces to house machinery, and office accommodation, mean that purpose-built printing works of the late C19, early C20 are not generally of architectural interest internally. However, the external elevations of these buildings do in some cases display a great deal of virtuosity and panache. Although consistent in the use of large and numerous windows, stylistically, the buildings often vary widely. In 1900-1901 Henry Williams used the Romanesque Revival style for 1 John Street, Bristol, for the printer Edward Everard (listed Grade II), whilst the late-C19 print works at 42-48 Bethel Street, Norwich, employs an elaborate Tudor Revival style (listed Grade II*). The most architecturally interesting element of the Thanet Press complex is the most easterly block to the north, which was the original early-C20 printing works for Bobby and Co. The extensive fenestration is indicative of its function, and its use of classical detail demonstrates a level of architectural ambition. However, the elevation has undergone alteration, and it is not of special architectural interest at a national level.

Historically, the building is of some interest as a former printing outlet of Eyre and Spottiswoode; an important and renowned printing firm from the C18 through to the C20. Nevertheless, Thanet Press was just one of several outlets which Eyre and Spottiswoode were operating in the mid-C20. Only part of the complex was built for the firm, the rest was a pre-existing print-works or earlier buildings later subsumed into the site, and there is no direct association with the company expressed in the fabric of the complex.

Thanet Press is of some local interest as an early-C20 print works, and for its association with Eyre and Spottiswoode, however it is not of sufficient architectural or historic interest at a national level to merit designation.

SOURCES

Austen-Leigh, R. A., *The Story of a Printing House* (1912).

CONCLUSION

Thanet Press, Union Crescent, Margate, is not recommended for listing.

REASONS FOR DESIGNATION DECISION:

Thanet Press, a late C19- early C20 printing works formerly owned by Eyre and Spottiswoode, Union Crescent, Margate, is not recommended for listing for the following principal reasons:

- * Architectural Interest: the original early-C20 printing works demonstrates a modest level of architectural ambition; however it is not of sufficient quality to merit designation.
- * Historic Interest: Thanet Press was one of several outlets for Eyre and Spottiswoode in the mid-C20 and much of the site predates their ownership, this gives limited historic interest to the association of the buildings with the company.

VISITS

22-OCT-2009 Full inspection

COUNTERSIGNING

Countersigning Comments: The former premises of Thanet Press is a large complex of buildings either constructed accretively over time or added to the company's portfolio but built for other purposes. The buildings are not of a quality and do have the technological or historic interest claims to merit listing.

19-May-2010

Second Countersigning Comments: Agreed also.

19-May-2010

HP Director Comments: