

History, Alteration Chronology and Significance of 93 – 96 Greendale Road

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LEVER FREE LIBRARY, SAVINGS BANK, AND ENTRANCE TO GENERAL OFFICES

Figure 1: View from the *Lever Brothers and Some of Their Associated Companies* (1923). Lever Brothers: Port Sunlight. From Port Sunlight Village Trust's collections, PS239.

Summary

This report examines the history, significance and alteration chronology of 93-96 Greendale Road, a building designed by Maxwell & Tuke in 1891. Initially intended as a lodging house for girls, the building has undergone numerous transformations over the years, serving as a restaurant, a school, a library and museum, a bank, an information centre, and currently office spaces. The report details these various changes of use, highlighting the building's adaptability while still maintaining its heritage character from the exterior. It draws on a variety of sources, including architectural plans, historical photographs, newspaper articles, and estate records, to reconstruct the building's development and alteration chronology.

Introduction

This report builds on the work of a former Port Sunlight Village Trust (PSVT) employee, Stuart Irwin (2014), the writing of Michael Shippobottom (*A Guide to Port Sunlight Village*, 3rd edition, 2019), and the official listing descriptions from Historic England. The information was collected by reviewing architectural plans, street directories, estate records, Unilever's in-house magazines including *Port Sunlight News* and *Progress*, newspaper articles, and historic photographs. The research was done to support plans for the adaptive use of the building.

93-96 Greendale Road exemplifies Port Sunlight's remarkable absorption capacity – the ability for a heritage asset to change, but without significant adverse impact to its exterior character and quality of the setting and the conservation area. The building has had many changes of use over its 131-year history. It has also been heavily altered at its interior, far more altered than what would be considered appropriate for a heritage building today (2024).

93-96 Greendale Road began as four separate lodging houses for girls. When this use failed, it was adapted for use as a restaurant for the female employees at the Lever Brothers soap works, a tearoom (open to the public), reading room and confectionary shop. For a time, this terrace block housed estate offices, the Boys' Brigade, the girls' club, a primary school, museum, library, banks, information centre for tourists and visitors, accountant's offices and Port Sunlight Village Trust's collections, archives and administrative offices.

As new facilities were built elsewhere in the village or on the Sunlight soap works site and demand for uses changed, 93-96 Greendale Road changed too. Most, but not all, of these changes were absorbed through interior alterations. The interior spaces are heavily altered from their original form. Remnants of its original design and significant alterations remain, and these, due to their rarity and remarkable survival, are an important part of the building's heritage and Port Sunlight's history.

Knowledge is not finite. This report should be revised as new information becomes available, particularly if the works proposed uncover original or historic features. One of the most significant gaps in our current understanding of the building is the existing conditions (2024) at the ground floor spaces of 95-96 Greendale Road. These spaces were tenanted when the research took place, and PSVT's staff did not have access.

The report is presented chronologically. Please note that all images in this report are subject to copyright and permission from the original holder or collection must be obtained before the images are reproduced.

History and Significance

Design phase – 1891-92

93-96 Greendale Road was designed by architects Maxwell & Tuke (James Maxwell and Charles Tuke) in April 1891. The architects' landmark Blackpool Tower went into construction in September 1891, so their Port Sunlight building was designed during a late, but significant phase in their careers.

For perspective on how the design of this building fits into Port Sunlight's development, William Owen's plans for Gladstone Hall, the first public building in the village, are dated March 1891, just one month earlier. This is significant since both Maxwell and Tuke were alive when the building was designed, and they were likely to have been involved in its design. This finding differs from Historic England, Irwin, and Shippobottom's understanding of the building. They all date its design and construction to 1896, after both architects had died and the practice was managed by Maxwell's son, Francis William (Frank) Maxwell (1863-1941).¹

The drawings filed with the local authority include floor plans, elevations, and sections on two sheets. These plans illustrate a building designed to be four dormitories, or lodging houses, disguised as large terrace houses.

The ground floor plan shows a living room and kitchen for each unit with a scullery in a two storey extension to the rear. A staircase to the first floor divides the main rooms of the ground floor from the scullery. Each unit was also designed with a yard entered off the ground floor stair hall with a coal shed and two water closets in one outhouse. This was unusual for Port Sunlight's terrace houses, where even the largest homes with outside toilets only had one. This detail, along with the layout shown on the plans for the first floor, indicates that the units were originally designed for multiple occupancy, such as a dormitory or lodging house, rather than individual cottage homes.

On the first floor, the spaces in each unit were set out as dormitories, with twelve 'cells' containing a bed. The section view shows six interior doors set in full height walls, which implies that the 'cells' had full-height partition walls. There was a central corridor diving the 'cells' with skylights above but otherwise five of the six 'cells' lining the party wall would not have had access to natural light or ventilation. Most of the 'cells' were also designed to have what appears to be a sink or small grate or "copper" for heat. The first-floor space over the scullery served as a bedroom, possibly for a house matron. This was the only space with a clearly discernible fireplace drawn on the plans. A bathroom was located at the top of the stairs with a bathtub and a double sink.

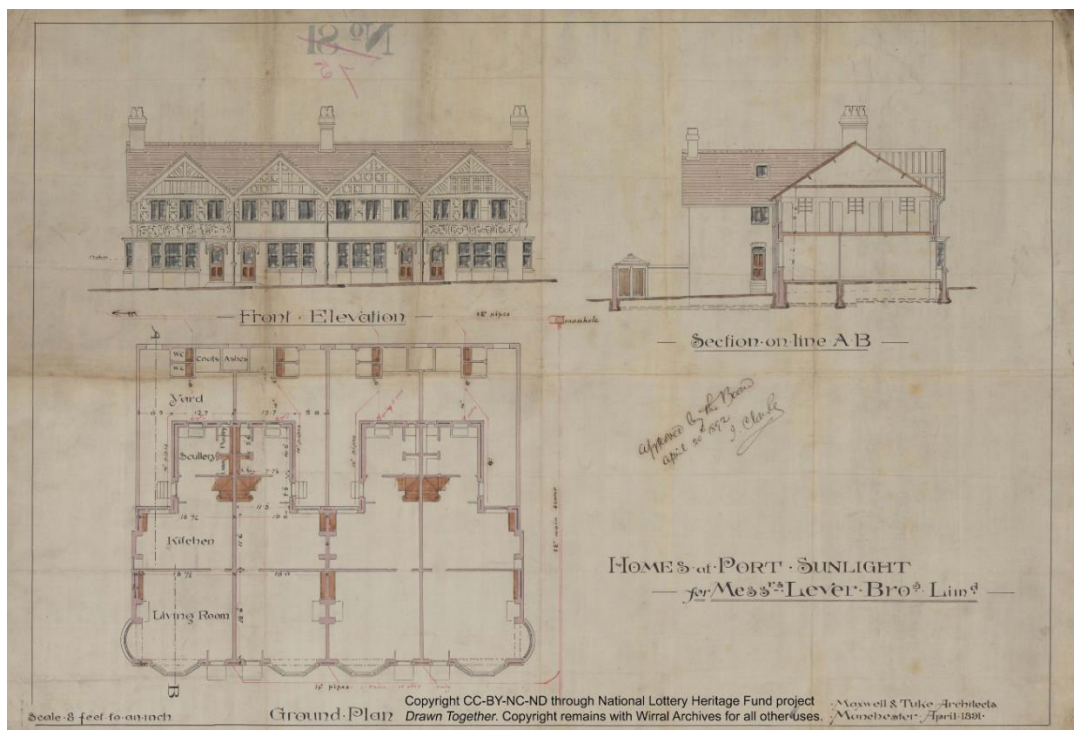
The intended use of the building was later clarified by founder William Lever in his Architectural Association lecture (1902), where he described the building as one with a past – originally built to be a Girls' Home.

¹ Francis Maxwell was responsible for the firm's New Brighton Tower and Ballroom (demolished), which was built between 1896 and 1900.

...the building was designed and built... to provide a series of four homes, each with twelve cubicle bedrooms and with bathrooms, parlour, living-room, kitchen and all the necessary equipment for accommodating a total of forty-eight girls, being twelve girls in each of the four homes, with provision also for matrons and staff for each house.²

In his lecture, Lever also described the charges for accommodation (2 s 6d a week), which were set to align with ‘cheapest and usually very inferior lodgings to be obtained in the worst and most crowded adjoining districts’.³ Despite the affordability of the housing, Lever admits that the Girls’ Home was never successful, only attracting at most twelve girls at a time. Therefore, the building was adapted, piecemeal, for new uses. This is confirmed through newspaper articles and street directories (see below), where the use of the four units gradually transitions from Girls’ Home to other uses over time.

The original use for 93-96 Greendale was atypical for Port Sunlight. It was designed and built as a lodging house – a working-class housing type that is otherwise absent from Port Sunlight until the Nurses’ Residence is developed in 1939.⁴ In fact, the typology goes against the vision and values represented by Port Sunlight – which Lever developed to provide single-family homes for working-class people in cottage dwellings. The intended use and occupants (young women or girls) connect Port Sunlight more closely to paternalistic practices of early mill settlements than previously considered by village historians.



² Lever, W. H. (1902). “Port Sunlight and Thornton Hough”. *British Architect*, 4th April, 1902, 248.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ James Lomax Simpson designed the Nurses’ Residence in 1939 to accommodate sixteen people – nurses who worked at the adjacent Cottage Hospital, and a house manager. After the 1947 founding of the National Health Service (and the eventual closure of the Cottage Hospital), the building was used as a dormitory for apprentices and other young single people employed by Unilever.

Figure 2: 93-96 Greendale Road, Maxwell & Tuke Architects, April 1891. Reproduced with kind permission from Wirral Archives Service. Digitised through *Drawn Together*, WAS, Greendale Road, 1892, Lower Beb no. 75.2, 400dpi.jpg. Copyright CC-BY-NC-ND. Copyright remains with Wirral Archives for all other uses.

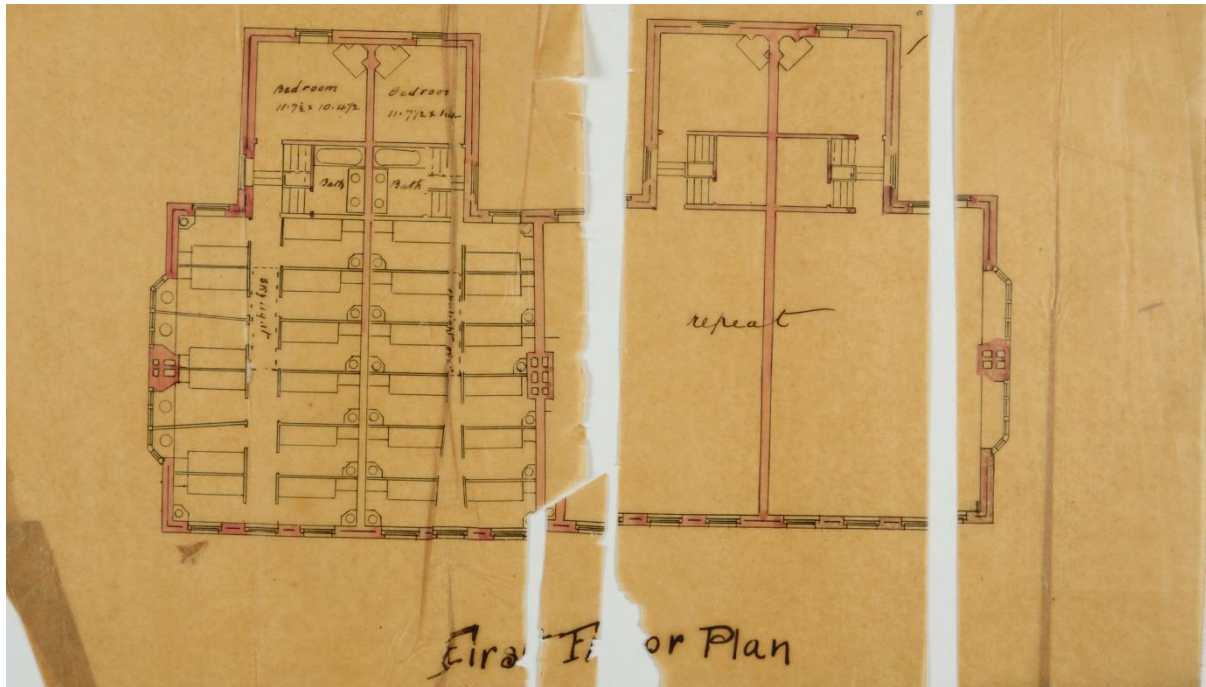


Figure 3: 93-96 Greendale Road, Maxwell & Tuke Architects. No date. Reproduced with kind permission from Wirral Archive Service. Digitised through *Drawn Together*, Image Ref: WAS, Greendale Road, 1892, Lower Beb no. 75.1, 200dpi.jpg. Copyright CC-BY-NC-ND. Copyright remains with Wirral Archives for all other uses.

Construction and early years – 1892-1895

Lever Brothers submitted their plans for the site to the local authority, and they were approved in April 1892. Although no maps for the period between 1892 and 1895 have been found and *Gore's Liverpool and environs* street directories do not include Port Sunlight's streets until 1896, a newspaper article establishes that the building was completed and opened by 1893.

In "Charles Thompson's Dorcas Society at Port Sunlight", *The Birkenhead News* reports that a group of widows and workers from the Society visited Port Sunlight, where they toured the works first and then the "Girls' Home, and the pretty little red brick workmen's cottages were next visited".⁵ Also, 93-96 Greendale Road is shown in early renderings for Port Sunlight, including one dated 1892 and one dated 1895. See below.

⁵ Charles Thompson's Dorcas Society at Port Sunlight', *The Birkenhead News*, 24th June 1893, 2.

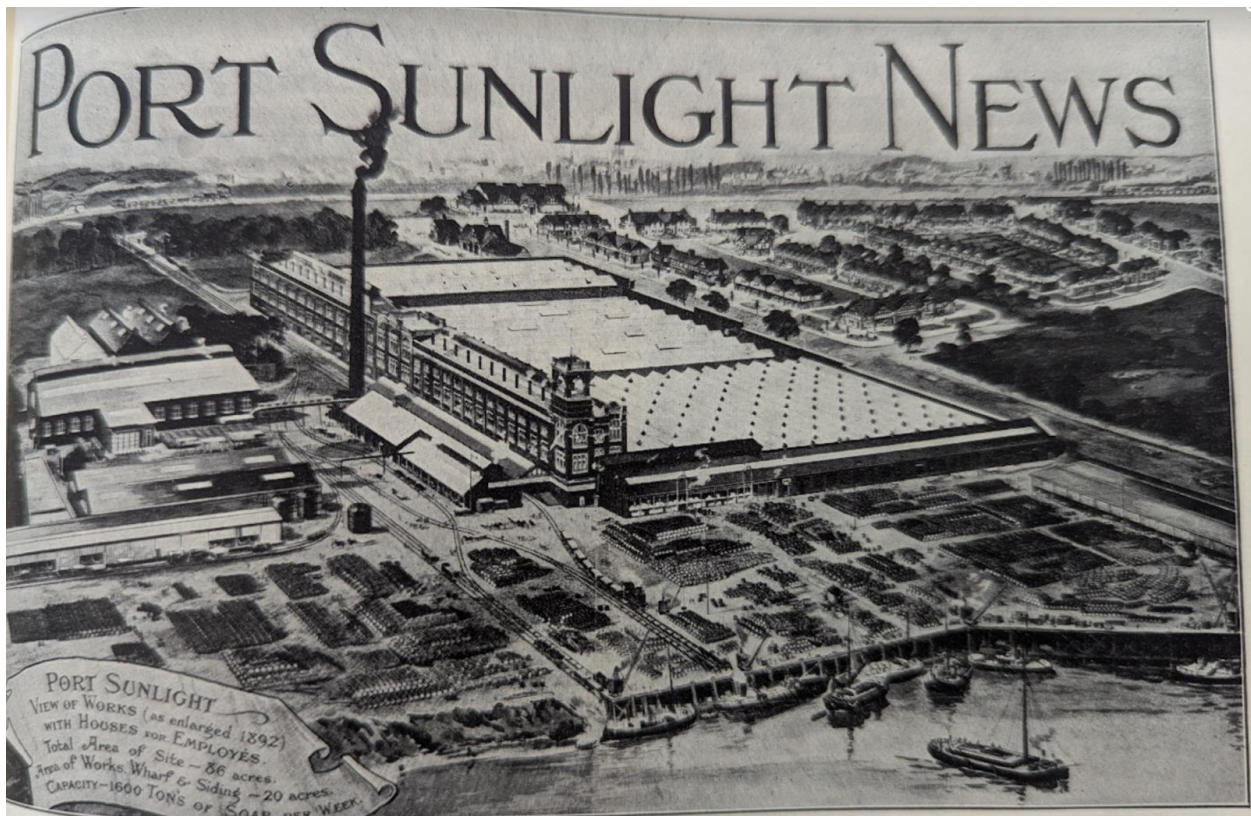


Figure 4: Rendering showing Port Sunlight estate in 1892. Reproduced in the *Port Sunlight News*, Vol 4, No. 3, 8th December 1926, title page.

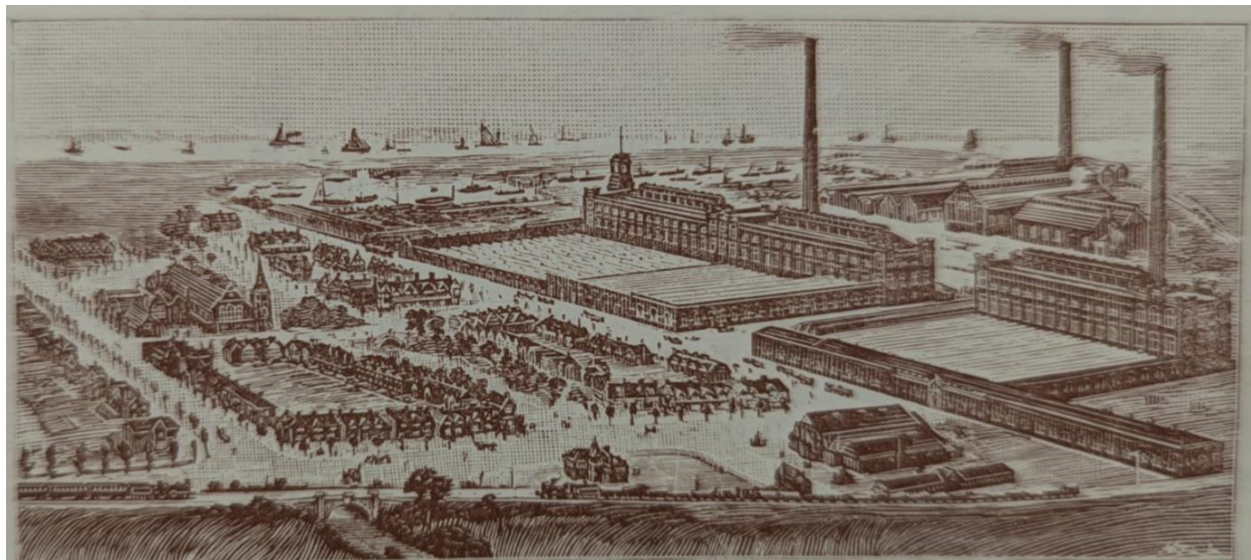


Figure 5: Port Sunlight, Vol 1, 1895 issue of the *Port Sunlight Monthly Journal*, index page.

Architectural renderings are not necessarily accurate representations, so they are not solid proof for the date of completion. However, using evidence from *The Birkenhead News* article we have established that 93-96 Greendale Road was completed as the “Girls’ Home” and ready to admit visitors by 24th June 1893.

Girls’ Restaurant and the start of a reading room – 1896-1897

The first adaptive uses for 93-96 Greendale Road were recorded in 1896. In the September 1896 issue (Vol. 2, No. 9, p. 259) of the *Port Sunlight Monthly Journal*, (which was “an amateur magazine written by and for the employees of Messrs Lever Brothers Limited, Port Sunlight, London, New York, and Sydney”) it was reported that the ‘Girls Restaurant was ready to open on 1st September’ 1896.

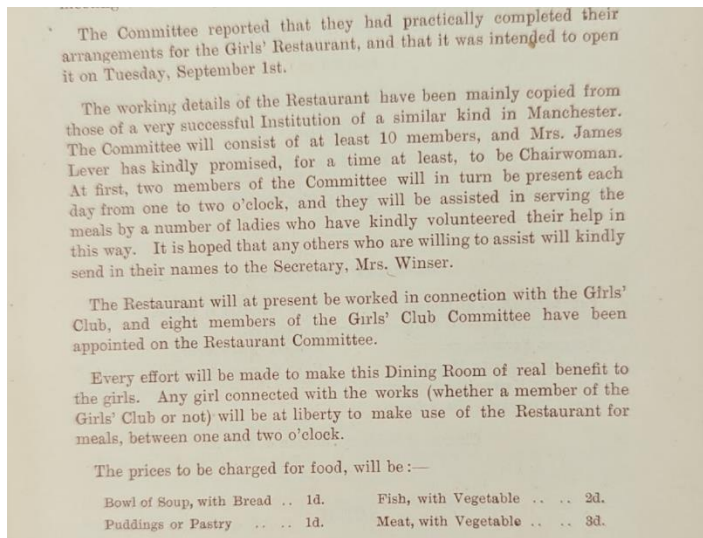


Figure 6: *Port Sunlight Monthly Journal*, September 1896, Vol 2, No. 9, Page 259

The Maxwell and Tuke building was ideally situated for the ‘Girls’ Restaurant’, since it was near the entrance to the soap works (and therefore convenient for the lunch break) and opposite the much larger men’s dining hall at Gladstone Hall.

The operation of the restaurant was managed temporarily by Mrs James Lever and the Girls’ Club committee’s secretary, Mrs Winsor, the wife of Percy J. Winsor. James Lever was William’s brother and a founding partner for Lever Brothers. Percy Winsor was a Lever Brothers works manager who moved from Warrington to Port Sunlight in 1888. Winsor became a director of the company (alongside James and William Lever) when it went

public in 1894. He served as a vice chairman from 1897 until his retirement in 1901.

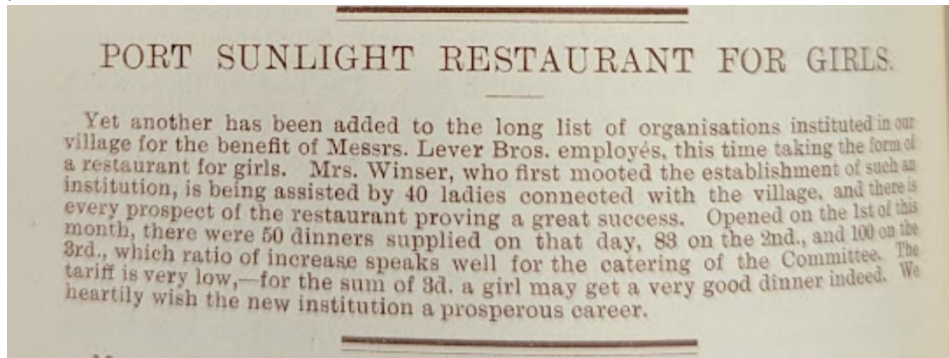


Figure 7: *Port Sunlight Monthly Journal*, September 1896, Vol 2, No. 9, Page 284

Port Sunlight's streets are first listed in *Gore's Street Directory for Liverpool and Environs* in 1897. At this time in village history, the address for the village shop (currently 88 Greendale Road) at the corner of Greendale Road and Park Road was 37 Greendale Road. The street addresses for Greendale Road were odd numbers, instead of consecutive numbers as they are today. The 1897 street directory notes the varied uses for the Maxwell and Tuke building at the time, including a reading room (precursor to the library), tea room, Girls' Home and girls' club. At this point, just 51 Greendale Road (today, 95 Greendale Road) was in use for its original purpose – the Girls' Home. It is notable that each unit of the development had a separate and independent use and exterior entrance at this time. Therefore, structural and interior circulation alterations were probably not required for these uses.

- 47 Greendale (93 Greendale) – Port Sunlight Reading Room
- 49 Greendale (94 Greendale) - Sarah Holmes confectioner and tea room
- 51 Greendale (95 Greendale) - Girls' Home, Emily Shirley, manageress
- 53 Greendale (96 Greendale) - Girls' Club, Margaret MacVean caretaker

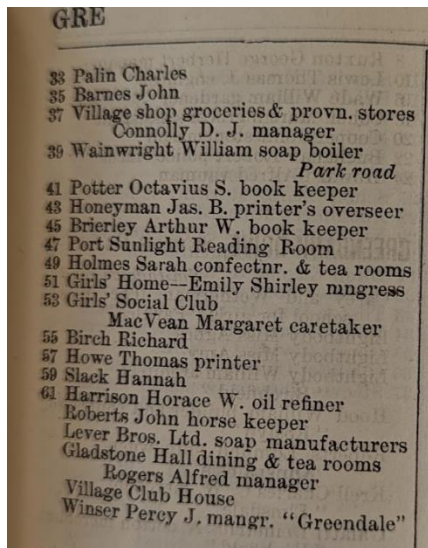


Figure 8: Detail view of *Gore's Street Directory for Liverpool and Environs* in 1897

A search of Unilever Archives' online catalogue for the names or key words listed in the street directory failed to provide more information. However, we know that the Girls' Restaurant was a new feature for both the village and the building.

An oblique photograph of the building was included in the February 1897 issue of the *Port Sunlight Monthly Journal*.



Figure 9: Greendale Road (Opposite the Pavilion). *Port Sunlight Monthly Journal*, February 1897, Vol 3, No. 2, page 46.

Alteration Chronology

The alteration chronology for this terrace block begins in 1898 as this is the most likely time that interior spaces for the separate terrace buildings were connected.

The Sunlight Restaurant expands – 1898

In 1898, the *Gore's Street Directory for Liverpool and Environs* indicates that the space previously occupied (51 Greendale, aka 95 Greendale) by the Girls' Home is taken over by the expanding girls' restaurant, then known as 'Sunlight Restaurant'. According to William Lever (see Architectural Association (1902) lecture below), the restaurant was located on the first floor only, with estate offices, caretaker's rooms, and a small confectionery shop at the ground floor spaces.

The reading room and tearoom remained in 1898. It is possible that interior connections and new circulation (stairs) were made to accommodate the expanded restaurant and the different ground, and first floor uses. This might involve cutting openings in the party wall and possibly alterations to the entrance doors and/or stairs. No drawings or photographs have been found to date to illustrate structural or interior changes.

The street directory summarises the uses.

- 47 Greendale Road (now known as 93 Greendale Road) – Port Sunlight reading room

- 49 Greendale Road (now known as 94 Greendale Road) - Sarah Holmes, Confectioner and Tea Room
- 51-53 Greendale Road (now known as 95-96 Greendale Road) - Sunlight Restaurant.

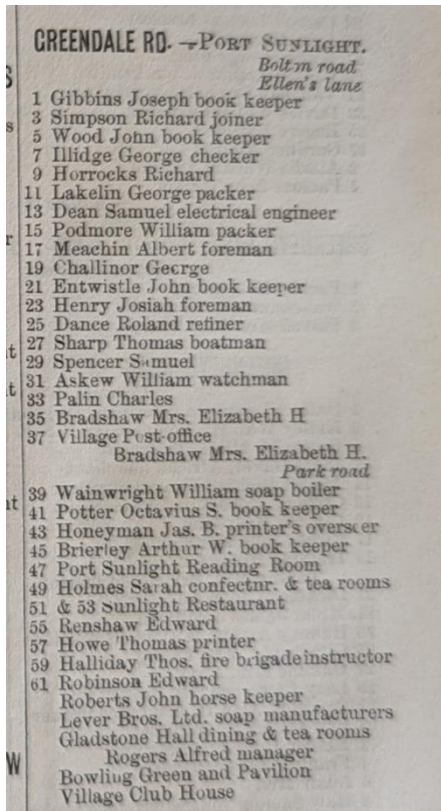


Figure 10: *Gore's Street Directory for Liverpool and Environs* for Greendale Road.

A temporary school, but still a girls' restaurant - 1902

As previously mentioned, in his 1902 address to the Architectural Association, William Lever describes 93-96 Greendale Road as a 'building with a past'. At the time of his lecture, the building was being used as a temporary school building while the Church Drive Schools were under construction.

"Its present use is as an addition to the school accommodation of the village. Prior to that it was used as a girls' restaurant on the first floor, with small confectionery shop, estate office and caretaker's rooms on the ground floor. Earlier again the first floor had been divided, as in those early days one half was found to provide ample accommodation for the girls' restaurant, and the other half was available for, and was used as a junior social club."⁶

The Gore's Directory of Liverpool and its environs corroborates Lever's description. (Note, the Directory lists street numbers that align with the current situation from this point forward. 88 Greendale Road is the Post Office, under the care of Mrs. Elizabeth H. Bradshaw.) The biggest change of use shown through the street directory is that 93-94 Greendale Road served as a temporary school while the Church Drive Schools were being built. The other half of the block (95-96 Greendale) remained in use for the girls' restaurant. These uses

⁶ Lever, 1902, 248.

change once the large women's restaurant at Hulme Hall (29th July 1901) and Church Drive Schools (5th January 1903) opened. (NOTE: Hulme Hall only served as the women's restaurant until 1911, when new dining facilities were built adjacent to No 3 Soapery.)

- 92(?), 93, & 94 Greendale Road, Port Sunlight Schools
- 95-96 Greendale Road, Sunlight restaurant

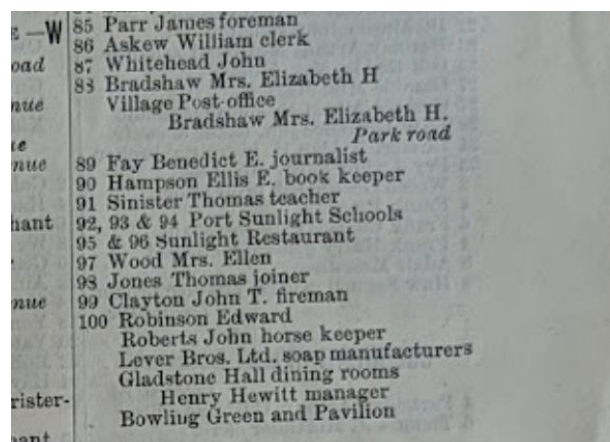


Figure 11: *The Gore's Directory of Liverpool and its environs* listing for Greendale Road.

Lever Free Library and Museum Open – 1903

William Lever personally funded the Lever Free Library and Museum at 93-96 Greendale Road and endowed it with an annual budget to improve both the holdings and facilities.⁷ (The village reverend was appointed to be the Chairman of the Library and approved annual purchases for it.) Lever Brothers 'gave' the library building to the village, and the company no longer required the building to contribute rental income for its maintenance or rates.⁸

When it opened, the library had a reference section, periodicals section and fiction section, in total comprising over 3500 volumes. It had two reading rooms at opposite ends of the first-floor spaces it occupied – one for women and the other for men. The facilities were available to both village residents (including pensioners, women and children) and employees at the works site.

In Lever's address at the opening ceremony he noted:

"I think you will agree with me, ladies and gentlemen, that the working men of this country are exactly the same flesh and blood and have exactly the same intelligence and have exactly the same instincts as any other class of the community. That being so, any attempt at patronage or philanthropy in connection with them would not only be a piece of absurdity but it would be

⁷ "The Lever Free Library and Museum", *Progress*, Vol. 4, No. 49, October 1903, 373.

⁸ *Ibid*, 376.

an insult to them in addition. ... We believe that this Library is merely a key; we present the key to our workpeople, and we hope that they will make good use of it.”⁹

The Museum held examples of Lever’s collection – artifacts and works of art.

“The articles are descriptive of life in various parts of the British Colonies, as also of trades and industries; and in addition, there are examples of fine art shown in furniture, bric-a-brac, etc.”¹⁰

Little was said of the museum during the extensive opening ceremonies for the Library and Museum. We do know that the artifacts on display in the Museum were transferred to either Hulme Hall for display in 1911 (before Lady Lever Art Gallery was built) or dispersed by loan or gift to other galleries and museums.

The Museum moves to Hulme Hall: 1911

In 1911, many of the artifacts on display at the Museum (95-96 Greendale Road) were moved along with additional collections of fine art and furniture to Hulme Hall for the Port Sunlight Art Exhibition.¹¹ Mrs Lever hosted the opening ceremony in April 1911. Hulme Hall was altered for this purpose, with new interior walls introduced to the West Wing to divide it into four connected rooms to hang pictures.¹² The interior finishes were also changed at Hulme Hall during these works – from white and red tones to brown and white.¹³ Unlike the free museum at the Maxwell and Tuke building on Greendale Road, visitors to the Exhibition at Hulme Hall were charged a penny for their visit.

A bank and library – 1913 - 1923

According to a “History of Port Sunlight, etc.” document found in PSVT’s collection the Port Sunlight Savings Bank (no location indicated) opened in 1890. There is no citation to verify this information, but as it was written by Unilever’s archivists, it is a reasonably reliable source.

By 1913, the *Gore’s Directory of Liverpool and its environs* lists the full development at 93-96 Greendale Road as a library and savings bank. John Dearnley is listed as the Librarian, but no mention is made of the cashier or other bank personnel.

⁹ Ibid, 383.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ “Port Sunlight Fine Art Collection”, *Progress*, Vol 11, No. 103, July, 1911, 104.

¹² Ibid, 105.

¹³ Ibid.

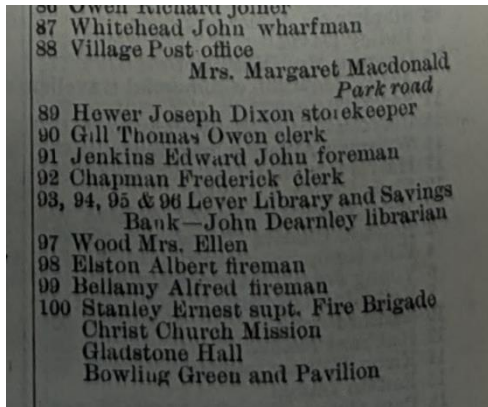


Figure 13: *Gore's Directory of Liverpool and its environs* listing in 1913 for Greendale Road.

According to the “History of Port Sunlight and etc.”, in November 1919, bank accounts for works employees (accounts had been opened earlier for clerical and managerial staff) were introduced. In the 1920 edition of *Gore's Directory of Liverpool and its environs*, 93-95 Greendale Road were listed as the Lever Library and Saving Bank, with librarian, Miss Agnes Cowper, specifically named. 96 Greendale Road was listed as the Lever Savings Bank, with A.E. Hough named as the cashier.

This implies that there were internal connections and circulation between 93-95 Greendale Road, but that perhaps 96 Greendale Road retained its party walls and a separate entrance. To date, no drawings have been found to illustrate the layout of the site for this time.

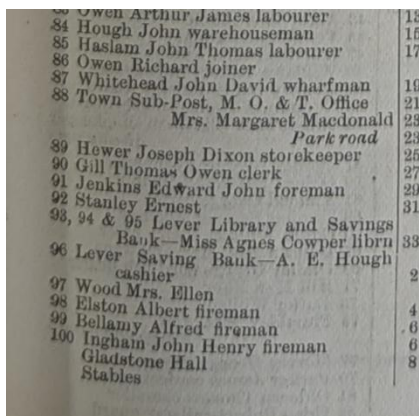


Figure 14: *Gore's Directory of Liverpool and its environs* listing in 1920 for Greendale Road.

This arrangement is more explicitly described in an article published in *Progress* in 1921.

We are glad to say that the scheme of paying wages to our employees through local banks is making good progress, so much so in Port Sunlight that it has become necessary to increase the bank accommodation. Until this can be otherwise provided, there has been temporary encroachment on the Lever Free Library. The number of employees whose wages are paid weekly through local banks represents 18 percent of the works staff, 25 per cent of the works clerical staff, and 30 percent of the head office clerical staff.

The Manchester and Liverpool District Banking Company have a branch in Port Sunlight, in which our employees have, so far, opened over 1500 accounts, 1200 of them being for members of the works staff; some employees have also opened wage accounts with the Port Sunlight Savings Bank and some hundreds who reside outside the Village have accounts at their local banks.¹⁴

The Library was also gaining momentum at this time, with the *Port Sunlight News* reporting library membership had grown to 1245 people and its stock of books numbered 6087.¹⁵ The 1923 *Gore's Directory of Liverpool and Environs* confirms this dual arrangement for the site and the expansion of the banking provisions with an outside firm occupying one of the units. 93 Greendale Road is listed as the Manchester and Liverpool District Banking Co., with George Walker named as the manager. 93-95 Greendale Road are listed as the Lever Library (at the first floor), with Miss Agnes Cowper listed as the librarian. Lastly, 96 Greendale Road is listed as the Lever Savings Bank, with A.E. Hough named as the cashier. Again, this implies interior connections and altered circulation for 93-95 Greendale Road at the first floor, but retention of party walls and original circulation for 96 Greendale Road and possibly 93 Greendale Road.

clrk	84 Hough John Holling warehouseman
der	85 Haslam John Thomas labourer
	86 Owen Richard joiner
	87 Whitehead John David wharfman
	88 Town Sub-Post, M. O. & T. Office
	Mrs. Margaret Macdonald
ctor	88 Slimond Mrs. Anna R. stationer
	Park road
	89 Hower Joseph Dixon storekeeper
fficial	90 Gill Mrs. Emma J.
	91 Jenkins Mrs. Amelia
eeper	92 Stanley Ernest
ist	93 Manchester & Liverpool District Banking Co. Ltd.
	George Walker manager
oad	93, 94 & 95 Lever Library—Miss Agnes Cowper librarian
	96 Lever Saving Bank—A. E. Hough cashier
HT.	97 Lowry Mrs. Margaret
oad	98 Elston Albert fireman
	99 Bellamy Alired fireman
	100 Middleton Mrs. Catherine Maria
board	RIGHT SIDE.
	Gladstone Hall
	Stables
	Goodacre Henry stable foreman
	Bowling Green and Pavilion
	Social Club Hall
	Wood st

Figure 15: *Gore's Directory of Liverpool and its environs* listing in 1923 for Greendale Road

1927 – Structural Alterations

The Editorial for *Port Sunlight News* from 7th December 1927 (Vol 5, No. 23) describes a Lever Brothers ambition to make ‘some improvement ...in organization and administration in factory or office, frequently due to collaboration of management and staff’. One of the many examples cited relates to 93-96 Greendale Road.

Another alteration, which suggests an advance in the business of the Savings Bank, and therefore a growth of thrift, is the extension of the Bank premises, the rooms occupied by the Free Library having been allotted for that purpose. This again involves a transfer of the Library, which now occupies part of the Progress Club, rooms immediately above those it

¹⁴ “Wages through Bank Accounts”, *Progress*, Vol. 21 January 1921, No 148, page 9.

¹⁵ “Lever Free Library”, *Port Sunlight News*, November 1922, Vol 1, No, page 6.

recently vacated. The structural alterations in the Bank premises are still in progress, and it will be some little time before this building of varying fortunes appears complete in its new role.¹⁶

Drawings for these alterations have been found in the *Drawn Together* collection. The drawing was drafted by the “Port Sunlight Repairs Department” and dated 10th May 1927.

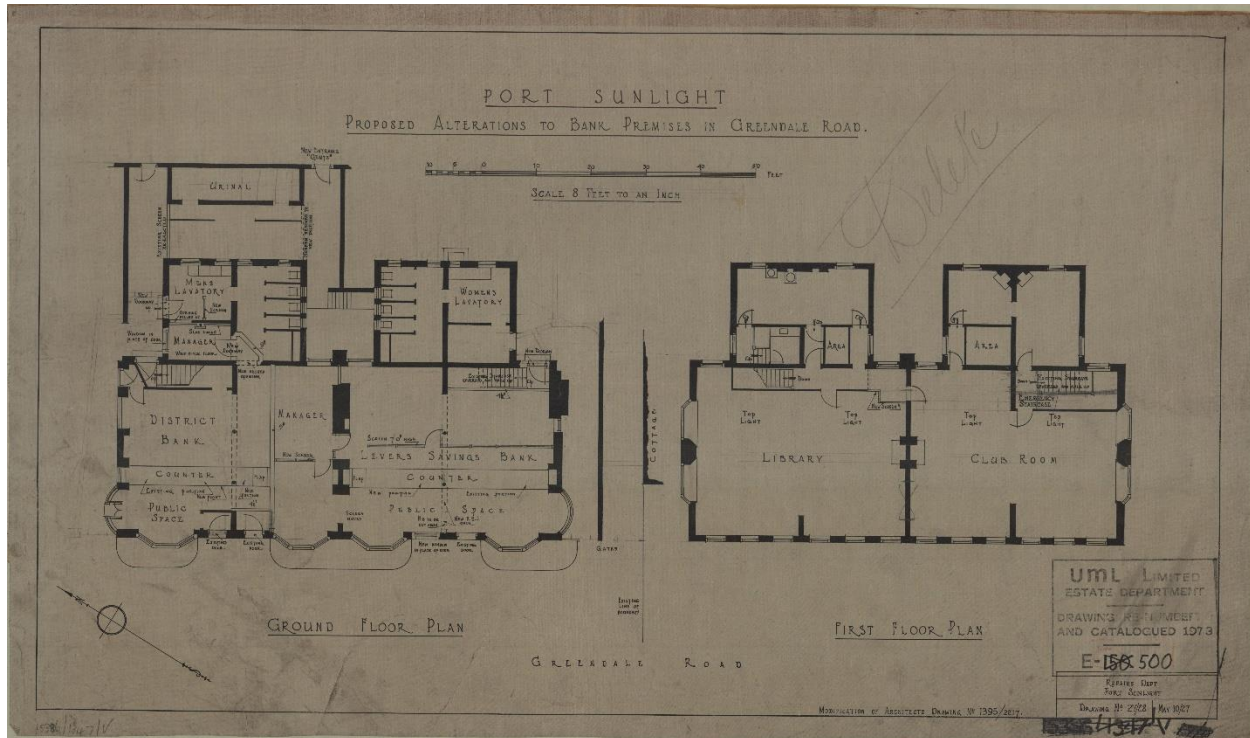


Figure 16: This drawing was digitised through *Drawn Together*, from an original held by Unilever Art, Archives and Records Management. Image Reference: GB1752.LBL-4-1-PE500-1 The Bank on Greendale Road 1927 200dpi. Copyright CC-BY-NC-ND. Copyright remains with Unilever, plc for all other uses.

Ground floor:

The drawing shows that a new entrance door was introduced at the east end of the north facade, in the first bay. Evidence of this door and its subsequent infill remains today.

The drawing also shows large sections of the party wall between 93-94 Greendale Road were removed and replaced by a rolled steel joist. 94 Greendale Road was divided into spaces for the District Bank (93 and part of 94 Greendale Road) and the Lever Savings Bank (94, 95 and 96 Greendale Road). The existing bank counter at 93 Greendale Road was extended (into 94 Greendale Road) and a short new partition wall was built to direct the entry door to 94 Greendale Road to open into new spaces created for the adjacent Lever Savings Bank. A back door on the north facade of 93 Greendale Road remained in use for the District Bank. An entrance door at the rear facade of 93 Greendale Road opens immediately into the stair hall, going up to the first-floor spaces. The original yard door for 93 Greendale Road was replaced with masonry and a window to create a manager's office. A new exterior door was introduced off the side yard for 93 Greendale Road to provide access to the

¹⁶ “Editorial”, *Port Sunlight News*, (Port Sunlight: Lever Brothers, Ltd), 7th December 1927, Vol. 5, No. 23.

Men's toilets and urinals in the (original) extension to the building. A new gate is cut into the boundary wall (in the yard) to serve as the "New Entrance for the 'Gents' toilet block".

New partition walls were introduced to 94, 95 and 96 Greendale Road to extend the banking provision there. The front entrance door to 95 Greendale Road was replaced by a window.

The new (larger) Lever Savings Bank was primarily entered through the original entrance door for 96 Greendale Road, with a secondary entrance from the front door for 94 Greendale Road (see above).

The party wall between 95 and 96 Greendale Road was removed and replaced by a rolled steel joist. A new back door was introduced for 96 Greendale Road to directly access the stair hall up to the first floor. The existing staircase 'was reversed and made up' to provide first floor access.

The original extension between 95/96 Greendale Road was used for a woman's toilet block.

First Floor:

Party walls between 93 - 94 Greendale Road and 95 - 96 Greendale Road were removed. There is no indication on the drawings that structural elements were installed in place of the party walls, but they were either introduced or not necessary since the roofs are still in place. A single door opening was made between 93 and 94 Greendale Road and 95 and 96 Greendale Road, presumably for an emergency exit.

93-94 Greendale Road served as the Lever Library. 95-96 Greendale Road served as the Club Room. A door had been introduced to the party wall in the extension for 95-96 Greendale Road.

At the extension for 93-94 Greendale Road, half of the party wall was removed, but the original stair appeared to remain in situ.

Architectural drawings 1934

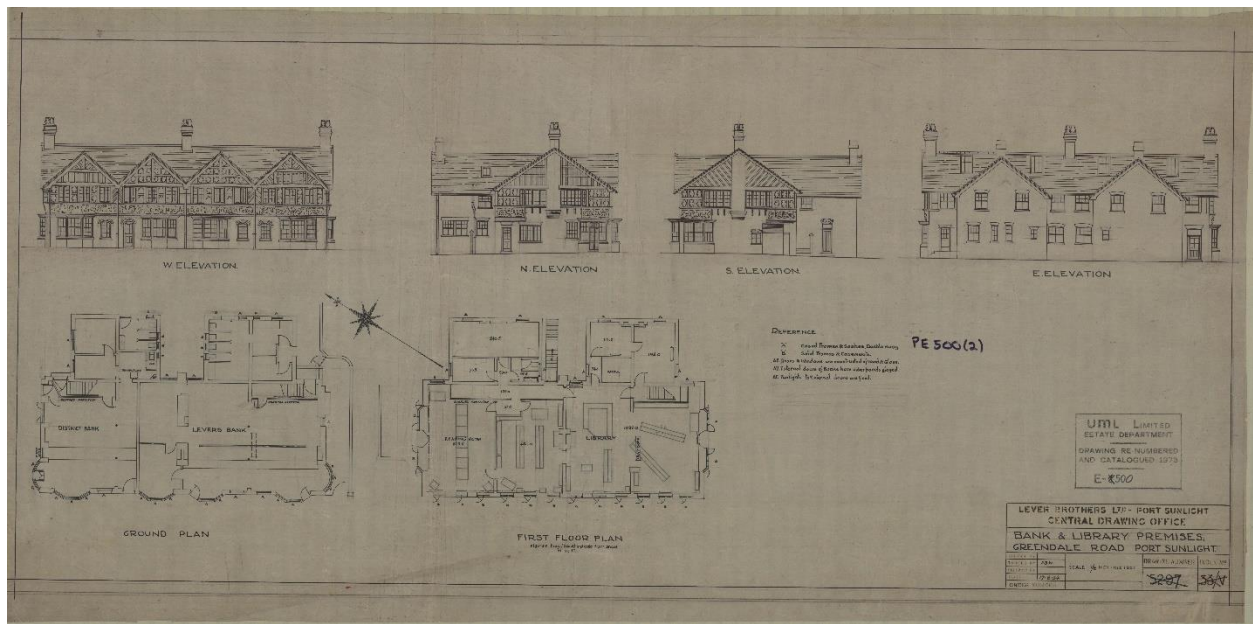


Figure 17: This drawing was digitised through *Drawn Together*, from an original held by Unilever Art, Archives

and Records Management. Image Reference: GB1752.LBL-4-1-PE500-2 The Bank Plans 1934 200dpi. Copyright CC-BY-NC-ND. Copyright remains with Unilever, plc for all other uses.

Drawn Together includes a second set of plans for alterations to 93-96 Greendale Road. Elevation drawings clearly show the original front entrance doors to 93, 95 and 96 Greendale Road replaced by brick infill and sliding sash windows set in the original arched lintels for the doors. The ground floor plan shows new entrance (exterior) doors made from one of the bay windows at the front of both 95 and 96 Greendale Road. I do not believe that this work was ever done.

The ground floor plan shows the exterior stair, entrance door, and interior stairs up to the first floor, which represent the existing conditions for 96 Greendale Road today. No alterations appear to be proposed for the ground floor.

The first floor shows stacks, the layout of the reading room and new minor interior partition walls to be built.

1948 – Extension to the Library

The September 1948 issue of *Port Sunlight News* reported on works to extend and improve the Lever Library. The building work changed the entrance to the Library to the one presently in use on the ground floor, south side of 96 Greendale Road. The ground floor was to house fiction and the first floor was to house non-fiction (in the ‘first room’) and the Commercial and Technical Library (in the ‘second room’). The Reading Room was to remain in the third room along on the first floor (at 93 Greendale Road).

“Decorations in a Library must of necessity be neutral to form background for books in their vari-coloured bindings but in contrast to woodwork and walls we have chosen bright curtains.”¹⁷

The October 1948 issue of *Port Sunlight News* reported on the 5th October 1948 reopening of the Lever Library. The Second Lord Leverhulme presided over the festivities. The article notes that the Library began in 1903 in “one room and now it occupies practically the whole block and has even swallowed up what was formerly the Progress club”.¹⁸ For the books, the holdings grew from 3500 volumes to over 14,000. Describing the decor, the article states that it ‘strikes an entirely new note in library decor. Features are its spacious airiness, its mellow lighting and its modern – one might almost call it futuristic – simplicity.’¹⁹

This article also reports that the Lever Brothers Bank and Cash office had vacated the space (to make this extension to allow the Commercial and Technical reference sections to be introduced) and moved to the General Offices.²⁰

¹⁷ *Port Sunlight News*, September 1948, 124.

¹⁸ *Port Sunlight News*, October 1948, 136.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 136.

1949 – More work on the library

According to *Port Sunlight News*, non-fiction books were moved to ‘their new shelves’ and the first-floor rooms (reading room and two rooms with shelves) were closed while work took place. The Dewey decimal system was introduced at this time.²¹

1953 – Anniversaries and celebrations

Port Sunlight News reported on celebrations held at Gladstone Hall and the Lever Library to mark the centenary of the abolition of the soap tax. Mr. C.A. Gladstone, grandson of the former Prime Minister, was the guest of honour.²² A new sign for Gladstone Hall was revealed in the centenary celebrations, bearing the Gladstone family’s coat of arms.

After unveiling the new sign, the party visited the Lever Library where there was an exhibition of artifacts about the soap tax and former Prime Minister Gladstone was on display. *Port Sunlight News* reports that the items on display were from Unilever’s collections, the Lady Lever Art Gallery, and the Gladstone family home in Hawarden Castle, Flintshire. The BBC reported on the celebration and the exhibition in their evening broadcast and in the press. Port Sunlight film footage from this event is also available on the North West Film Archive.²³

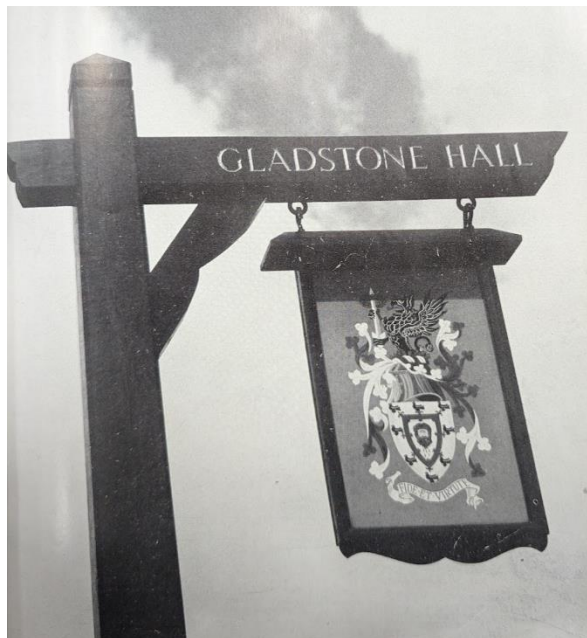


Figure 25: Front Cover, *Port Sunlight News*, July 1953.

A new sign, with the Leverhulme family coat of arms, was installed for the Lever Library to mark its 50th anniversary on 27th August 1953.

²¹ *Port Sunlight News*, September 1949, page 301.

²² *Port Sunlight News*, July 1953, pages 199-203.

²³ See <https://vimeo.com/805870004>. This information is password protected.

Mr. Nairn, Chairman of the company, presided over the proceedings. *Port Sunlight News* reports that Nairn was instrumental in overseeing the extension of the library in 1948 and that his daughter, Heather had decided to become a librarian, working at Lever Library.

Unilever Art, Archives and Records Management holds many photographs of both celebrations and the exhibit.

The Library and Bank remained active uses for the building through the 1970s. *Port Sunlight News* regularly featured new books or promoted the welcoming and casual atmosphere for the Library. (Dogs and smoking were both welcome in the reading rooms.)

1980 – Designing an Information Centre

In 1960, Unilever created a separate (associated) company called Unilever Merseyside Limited (UML) to manage the Port Sunlight estate (factory site and village), and the company's other local industrial, commercial and residential developments. This includes significant land holdings along the Wirral side of the River Mersey, stretching from Bromborough Pool to Ellesmere Port.

Drawings held in PSVT's collections ('hanging files', stored in the plan chest in the Greendale Road meeting room) illustrate UML's plans to transform the first floor (93-96 Greendale Road) and ground floor (94-96 Greendale) spaces of the terrace into an Information Centre. This follows Unilever's decision to divest itself of non-essential business assets, including the Port Sunlight houses which were first sold to sitting tenants in 1979. While the company sold off its heritage village, it also recognised the value of its heritage and its history.

The "Information Centre" at 93-96 Greendale Road was to be used to tell the story of Unilever and Port Sunlight village.

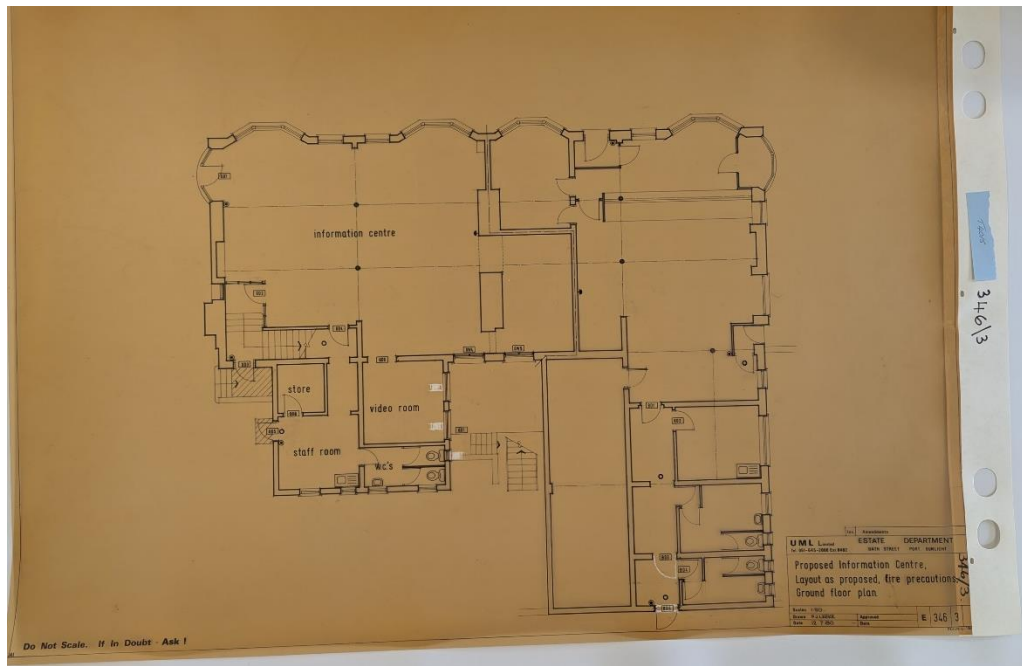


Figure 29: Ground floor existing conditions plans, 1980. Created by UML Estate Department ahead of the adaptive use of the spaces at 94-96 Greendale Road for the Information Centre. This drawing is held in the collections of Port Sunlight Village Trust, Accession Number 346/3.

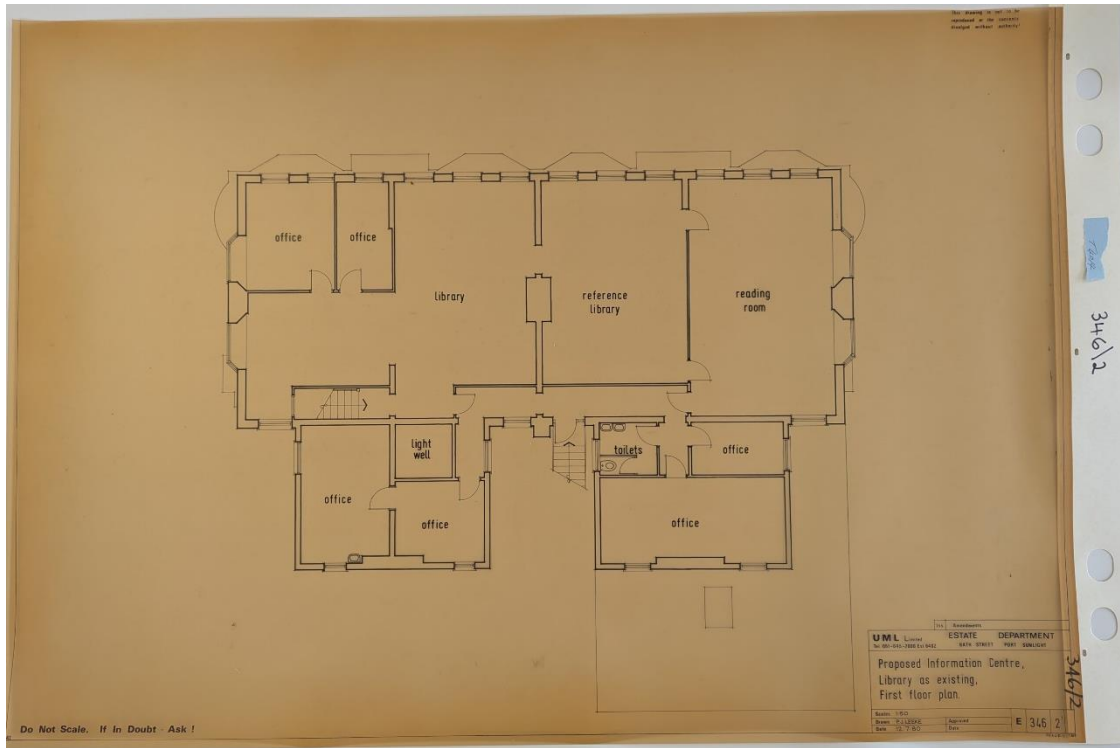


Figure 30: First floor existing conditions plans, 1980. Created by UML Estate Department ahead of the adaptive use of the spaces at 93-96 Greendale Road for the Heritage Centre. This drawing is held in the collections of Port Sunlight Village Trust, Accession Number 346/2.

Drawings held in the collection of Port Sunlight Village Trust (PSVT Ref: T4013 and T4014 (both dated 12th July 1980 and drawn by PJ Leeke from the UML Estate Department (which at the time was in the Lyceum)) illustrate the existing conditions for the Ground Floor and First Floor spaces of the terrace at the time. These plans follow what was illustrated in the 1934 drawings, but without the stacks and library furniture. There was one difference – two offices were drawn at the southwest corner of the first floor of 96 Greendale Road (which had previously been open for stacks).

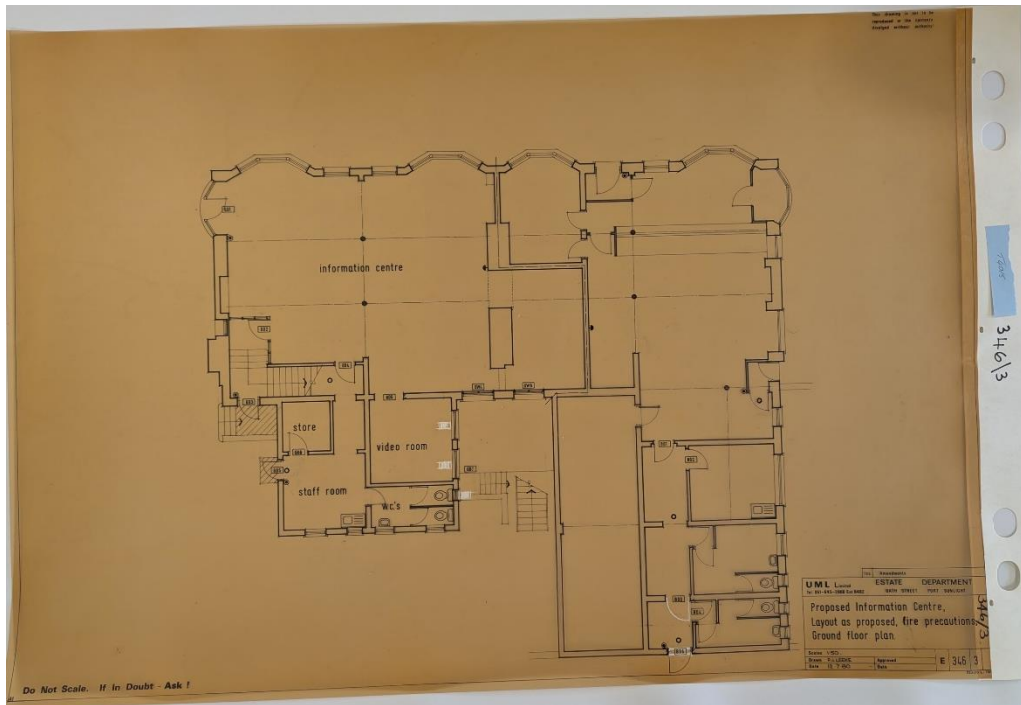


Figure 31: Plans showing the proposed work for the ground floor spaces of 94-96 Greendale Road. Prepared by the UML Estate Department ahead of the adaptive use of the spaces for an Information Centre. This drawing is held in the collections of Port Sunlight Village Trust, Accession Number 346/2.

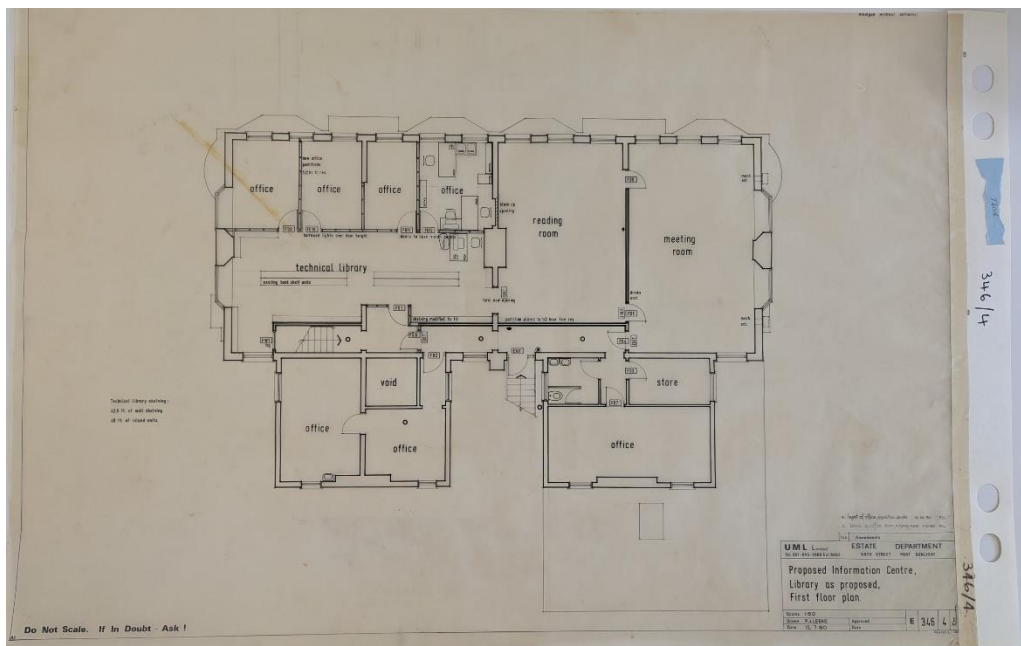


Figure 32: Plans showing the proposed work for the first floor spaces of 93-96 Greendale Road. Prepared by the UML Estate Department ahead of the adaptive use of the spaces for an Information Centre. This drawing is held in the collections of Port Sunlight Village Trust, Accession Number 346/2.

2005 – Changes to the Bank (93-94 (partial) Greendale Road

In 2005 the Royal Bank of Scotland proposed changes to its leased spaces at 93 and 94 Greendale Road. There are several drawings that show this work, including demolition plans, existing conditions plans, reflected ceiling plans, proposed floor plans and interior elevation drawings. These are held in binders currently (November 2024) stored in PSVT's offices on the first floor of 23 King George's Drive.

The existing conditions drawings show changes from the 1980 plans for the block.

An interview room had been built in the northwest corner of the ground floor of 93 Greendale Road and a staircase (in a space formerly used for a small room and corridor) built to reconnect the ground floor to the first floor. (NOTE: Perhaps this was always there, but sealed off?) This staircase is not shown on the ground floor or first floor plans from 1980.

At the first floor, the large meeting room at 93 Greendale Road had been subdivided into two spaces and the introduction of the staircase altered the layout of the extension.

For the proposed work, this involved removing existing built-in and free-standing furniture or non-load bearing interior walls on the ground floor. However, two small sections of the original party wall (of which very little remained) between 93 and 94 Greendale Road were also removed on the ground floor. Only cosmetic work and changes to furniture were proposed for the first floor.

2007 – Change of Use from Information Centre to Office Spaces

In 2007, Paddock Johnson Partnership prepared drawings, a Listed Building Consent, and planning application to change the use of 95-96 Greendale Road from Exhibition and Retail to Office space. This involved very minor work.

For the ground floor, this involved separating the interior stairs that connected the ground floor of 96 Greendale Road to the first-floor spaces. The existing interior door was removed and the opening filled. Otherwise, no changes were proposed to the ground floor.

On the first floor, two doors connecting the first-floor spaces of 93 and 94 Greendale Road were infilled to separate the spaces from the bank's premises at 93 Greendale Road.

The drawings and application materials are held in binders currently (November 2024) stored in PSVT's offices at the first floor of 23 King George's Drive.

2014 – Minor Works, 93-94 Greendale Road

In 2017 Royal Bank of Scotland completed minor works to update the built-in and free-standing furniture at the ground floor of 93 Greendale Road. This involved introducing a new interior partition wall (running north-to-south) at the back of the open banking hall.

See plans prepared by Michael Laird Architects on the planning portal, dated 17.06.14. These conditions are shown in the Building Survey, Ground Floor completed by Survey Operations for Paddock Johnson Partnership in February 2024.

Significance of 93-96 Greendale Road

The significance of 93-96 Greendale Road is primarily architectural, highlighting the quality materials, artistic details (particularly the half-timbering, figurative pargetting, formed brickwork, and multi-light casement windows) and character that Lever Brothers invested in the built environment they created for working-class people. Its historical or social significance relates to its atypical original, intended use as boarding house for girls, and its longer use as a library, museum, and bank for village residents and Lever Brothers employees.

The terrace block has retained its architectural significance (exterior) and its aesthetic character while adapting to changing needs and new uses.

- The building has gone through many changes of use over its 131-year history. It was originally designed as four separate lodging houses for girls. This is significant as it reflects a working-class housing type otherwise absent from Port Sunlight and connects Port Sunlight to paternalistic practices of early mill settlements.
- After failing as lodging houses, 93-96 Greendale Road was adapted to house:
 - A restaurant for female employees at the Lever Brothers soap works
 - A tearoom and confectionery shop open to the public
 - A reading room
 - Estate offices
 - The Boys' Brigade
 - A girls' club
 - A primary school
 - A museum
 - A library
 - Banks
 - An information centre
 - Accountant's offices
 - Port Sunlight Village Trust's collections, archives, and administrative offices.
- Most of the changes were achieved through interior alterations, leaving the exterior relatively unchanged.
- The building exemplifies Port Sunlight's absorption capacity – its ability to change without significantly impacting the character and quality of the conservation area.
- However, the building also demonstrates how fragile Port Sunlight's interior spaces are, with extant historic material being of exceptional significance considering its rarity.

Official listing description

First listed on 20th December 1965, as the “National Westminster Bank (93-94 Greendale) and Heritage Centre (95-96 Greendale)”.

Architects: Maxwell and Tuke

Date attributed in the HE listing description: 1896

Official listing description: Four hostels for girls, now bank and heritage centre. 1896. By Maxwell and Tuke. Brick with timber-framed canopy to ground floor. First floor has pargetted frieze with strapwork, decorative timbering above with jettied gables. Ground floor has sashed windows with glazing bars, three-light canted bay windows and elliptical-headed windows, originally entrances, one now remains to second bay, with plank door. First floor has three small-paned casements of two lights to each bay. Inserted cash-point in bay window of first bay. Cross-axial and gable-end stack. Returns have bow windows, that to right return with inserted entrance, stacks project with flanking half-canted oriels. Rear has large projections with rear blocks, that to left with hipped roof, that to right mid C20.

Additional information by Crispin Edwards: Maxwell and Tuke designed several listed buildings, the most famous of which is probably Tower Buildings at Blackpool (Grade I, List entry 1205810). They also designed a United Methodist Church with Sunday School at Southport (1879, List entry 1379581) and a public assembly hall and theatre also in Southport (1874, List entry 1379674). In 1892 they had also designed a new Working Girls' Home and Ragged School at Charter Street, Manchester, which was then extended by them in 1900 to replace the adjacent original Ragged School of 1867. Although both partners died in 1893, the firm continued under Maxwell's son, Francis William (Frank) Maxwell (1863-1941).

IMPORTANT NOTE: The additional information by Crispin Edwards is incorrect. The drawings filed at Wirral Archives (see WAS, 75.1 and 75.2, 93-96 Greendale Road, Maxwell and Tuke) were dated April 1891, and approved in 1892. This is when both partners were still alive and actively practicing as architects. Also, the building was complete and occupied by 1893.