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CHAPTER 6

Stratford Place

The short street and diminutive square comprising Stratford Place were laid out in 1772 on land belonging to the City of London Corporation, called the Lord Mayor's Banqueting House Ground. The developer was a young Anglo-Irish aristocrat and aspiring politician, the Hon. Edward Augustus Stratford of Baltinglass, Co. Wicklow, from 1777 the second Earl of Aldborough. Building was not complete until 1792 or 1793. There were twenty-two houses, of which thirteen are left including Stratford House, the stone-faced mansion closing the north end, originally Stratford's residence. Besides these, the development included shops in Oxford Street, mews, and buildings in Marylebone Lane and Wigmore Street, all now gone. It was built up on perpetually renewable leases, most of the freehold being sold to the lessees by the Corporation between 1930 and 1943.¹ Long before that time, almost all the houses had ceased to be family residences and gone into business use, with some multiple letting as professional or residential 'chambers'. Several were demolished between the wars, two more were left in ruins by the Blitz.

As a planned cul-de-sac of superior Georgian houses, culminating in a single grand mansion at the end, Stratford Place is unique in London. There was nothing about the site to dictate such an arrangement, but on the contrary Stratford Place perversely blocked the long-intended western continuation of Henrietta Street (now Henrietta Place) to join up with Somerset Street, ruining the development of Sir Thomas Edwardes' estate, where a very poor neighbourhood long endured around the dead end of Barrett Street, Gee's Court and Barrett's Court (now St Christopher's Place).²

Months before Stratford came on the scene a plan for building on the ground had been devised by the younger George Dance as architect to the Corporation, on instruction of the City Lands Committee. It would be

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remarkable if this plan was set aside in favour of a radically different one without debate as to their respective merits, but there is no hint of any in the records, and discussion of Stratford's scheme evidently focused on elevational design, not layout. It seems likely therefore that the cul-de-sac idea originated with Dance.

Early on Stratford Place was grouped with Portland Place and the Adelphi Terrace in a trio of London's finest showpiece developments. By the late nineteenth century it was believed to be an Adam creation itself. In 1916 Arthur Bolton showed that it should be attributed instead to an obscure Marylebone architect and surveyor, Richard Edwin. Dying young in 1778, Edwin did not see the scheme to completion, and the full extent of his role as architect is unknown.³

Stratford is remembered today as that 'spendthrift nobleman' (as Joyce calls him in *Ulysses*) who built Aldborough House in Dublin, the last mansion built there for the Protestant ascendancy before the Act of Union. In some respects Stratford House was the prototype of the grander Dublin house. Little altered if at all until the late nineteenth century, it was drastically enlarged around 1909 by the Earl of Derby, becoming a full-blown private palace. This proved unsustainable and changes of use followed. Since the early 1960s, with some interior remodelling, it has been occupied by the Oriental Club.

Origins and development, 1770–92

The Banqueting House Ground was the northernmost part of the City's Conduit Mead estate, from the bulk of which it was separated by Oxford Street (Ill. 6.01). Bounded east by Marylebone Lane, west by the Ay Brook (as this stretch of the Tyburn was known), it was crossed from north to south by the City's aqueduct from Paddington and Marylebone to Cornhill, dating

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back to the early thirteenth century. This was fed by the Tyburn and various springs. As well as the main pipeline through the site, there were several conduits or cisterns and subsidiary pipes and drains. Historically, hunting and feasting accompanied the mayor's periodic inspections of the conduits, so a banqueting house was built at the Oxford Street end of the ground in 1565, above two cisterns (Ill. 6.02). Eventually this became redundant and derelict and in 1736 a contractor undertook to arch over the cisterns, demolishing the house to leave just the cut-down external walls as abutments to the new vaults.⁴

With the development of the greater part of Conduit Mead and the general spread of building north of Oxford Street the potential of the Banqueting House Ground, bringing in £14 a year as pasture, was obvious. In autumn 1770, as the current lease neared its end, George Dance prepared his plan for 'laying it out to Build on'. According to a story published in 1783, Stratford learned of the site from the Irish painter the elder George Barret, then resident in Orchard Street, whom he had consulted 'about purchasing or building a town house'.⁵

Stratford was living in Dean Street, Soho, when in June 1771 his petition for a renewable building lease (the type favoured by the Corporation) came before the Common Council and was referred to the City Lands Committee. Negotiations shortly opened with a sub-committee, Stratford proposing a £40,000 development for which he produced architectural sketches and offered £130 a year, on the basis of about 9s a foot for the Oxford Street frontage, plus £650 (five times the rent) on each renewal. The sub-committee, 'considering the greatness of the depth of the site', asked £200 rent and £1,000 fine, but this was 'far more than he could with prudence engage to give'. Talks went on, with Stratford himself or Edwin as his agent. Dance, consulted as to the cost, thought the houses proposed could not be completed for under £50,000. They would, felt the sub-committee, 'be equal to if not exceed most of the magnificent Structures in Europe'. Stratford refers to a 'contract' of 31 July, but it was not until November that he formally agreed to

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take a lease. It was for the City's standard term of 61 years, at £160 rent after two peppercorn years, renewable every fourteen years at a fine of £800.⁶

Agreement was reached with the parish Paving Commissioners for small exchanges of ground along Marylebone Lane to improve the site at the Oxford Street junction, where a carriage-sweep had taken off the corner. This was part of a quid pro quo arrangement whereby the City agreed to the Commissioners cutting down and arching over a conduit in Oxford Street which obstructed traffic. At the corner of Oxford Street and Gee's Court a scrap of City ground intended to have been let to John Jee or Gee for widening the entry was added to Stratford's holding, Jee having died. More important was Stratford's securing a lease of ground held by Edmund Pepys, a Bloomsbury lawyer, on Sir Thomas Edwardes' estate west of the river, a substantial strip which gave scope for a more spaciouly planned development. Some deal with Edwardes was evidently struck, but Stratford does not seem to have acquired the freehold. Possibly this was to do with alleged encroachment by the City on Edwardes' ground along the Ay Brook, complained of by him in 1765 but seemingly left unresolved – Thomas Smith referred in 1833 to Edwardes' 'unaccountable apathy' over this encroachment, for which compensation 'has recently been made'.⁷

Leases from the City and Pepys were signed in May 1772. A series of building under-leases followed immediately for the seven houses in the eastern terrace in 'Stratford Street', at rents amounting to £1 2s 3d per foot frontage. The takers were: Stephen Sayre of Oxford Street (No. 1, plus two plots for shops in Oxford Street); William and Thomas Lyster, father and son, of Bloomsbury (Nos 2 and 3); Sir George Yonge, Bt, of Pall Mall (No. 4); Edwin, then of Great Castle Street (No. 5); Henry Sperling of Dynes Hall, Essex (No. 6); Thomas Selby of Harley Street (No. 7). Two plots on the west side were let in early June, No. 16 to the Lysters, No. 19 to Earl Poulett of Hinton St George, Somerset. Later that month, Yonge and Selby together leased most of the ground north and east of the Stratford House site, fronting Marylebone Lane, and a plot for a shop adjoining the entrance to Gee's Court

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was let, to Daniel Barnes, a distiller. Stratford also acquired on lease (at Edwardes' direction) the very end of Barrett Street, against the Ay Brook, adding this to the plots on the west side of the square.⁸

The lessees made up a mixed bag, some probably social or other contacts of Stratford's – Sperling's country seat was not far from Great Glemham, the Herbert stronghold in Suffolk where Stratford spent much time with his in-laws, and Stratford was briefly an MP in Poulett's home county. Only the Lysters were professional builders, taking their ground as a speculation. Edwin too presumably built No. 5 speculatively, and did not live there.

Building was delayed, at first because the outgoing lessee, the Oxford Street carpenter-builder George Shakespear, had ('out of pique', claimed Stratford) removed the boundary fence, so that building materials could not safely be left on the ground. Its reinstatement was held up while Shakespear was sued for this and another breach of his lease. Stratford and his lessees agreed to arch in the Ay Brook and lay drains to it from the houses at their own expense. Covering-in of the brook does not seem to have been completed until 1779.⁹

Meanwhile the Corporation got on with re-routing the aqueduct so as not to interfere unduly with the houses. In July 1773 Stratford and the lessees complained that it had not been possible to start building because of this work, asking (unsuccessfully) for another peppercorn year so that rent would start at Christmas 1774, 'though that is before any of the intended buildings can be completed'. When the ground was inspected a year later 'several Capital Houses' were going up, and it was found that Sayre had begun building as far back as July 1772, Yonge in March 1773. Probably the first buildings finished were on Oxford Street: 1 and 22 Stratford Place and the shops between 22 and Gee's Court. Sayre's bank was operating by February 1773 at what was then 160 Oxford Street, the shop adjoining No. 22, which incorporated the entrance to what was to become Stratford Place Mews. Both these last buildings were erected by Stratford himself. In addition to 1

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Stratford Place, complete or nearly complete by the summer of 1774, Sayre built the two shops west of Stratford Place Mews (161 and 162 Oxford Street), plus a warehouse behind. At the back of Poulett's No. 19, an underground vaulted passage 12ft high and wide connected the two parts of the mews, which together followed the line of the Ay Brook.¹⁰

The ground taken jointly by Yonge and Selby was built up over a number of years, before Selby assigned his interest to Yonge in 1779, with stables and coach-houses in Stratford Mews and small houses on Marylebone Lane, including what became the Prince of Wales or Wigmore pub at the corner of the mews. The builders here included William Arrow, carpenter, who set up his yard and workshop at the back of the houses. Some remaining ground at the irregular north end of the estate, partly abutting Wigmore Street, was let by Stratford in 1775 to the Danish sculptor Lauritz or Lawrence Anderson Holm, then of Castle Street, for a house and workshop. The rest was absorbed into Wigmore Street plots off the estate developed by the Piccadilly violin-maker Thomas Smith, one at least also leased to Holm.¹¹

Stratford Place must have cost much more to build than the £40,000 stipulated, and in the absence of sufficient takers much of the cost fell on Stratford himself. He put the building cost of one of the houses at '£5,000, or more'. A £4,000 loan secured from his father in 1771 may have helped finance the project. In 1775 he raised £2,000 by the first of several mortgages to Ann Wood, a widow in St George's, Hanover Square, and as more houses were built he made out mortgages to her amounting to another £7,500. In 1782 he mortgaged Stratford House to his mother-in-law Ann Herbert for £10,000. A further £2,000 came in 1786 from mortgaging 22 Stratford Place and 160 Oxford Street to his agent Daniel Robinson of Gray's Inn.¹²

Two costly Irish projects coinciding with Stratford Place help explain the delay in completion. First was Stratford's philanthropic venture, the textile town of Stratford-on-Slaney, near Baltinglass. The little town, in modern times reduced to a small village, was begun as far back as 1774, but advertisements put out from mid 1780 appealing for manufacturers to set up

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there show that it was then still at a rudimentary stage, 'several Houses ready for immediate Occupancy' but nothing else yet built. From 1777 his attention and resources were also being directed towards improvements to his Irish seat, Belan House. By autumn 1786 he had spent £10,000 building at Stratford-on-Slaney. Building there continued beyond 1786, but from May 1787 his coffers were replenished by marriage to the heiress Anne Henniker, which made possible the resumption of building in London. The mortgages on Stratford Place were paid off and that September he was reserving £5,000 for completion of Stratford House and 12 Stratford Place.¹³

If building projects were absorbing Stratford's funds, his time was also taken up with other interests, including politics. October 1774 saw him returned in the Whig interest at Taunton. But he was unseated on petition in March 1775. More than a year later he had high hopes of shortly returning to Parliament, drawing up proposals for a Bill to reform the penal system, including abolition of public executions, but to no avail.¹⁴

The first houses in Stratford Place came into occupation from 1774, all nine of the first batch being occupied by the late 1770s. At No. 6, a man had been employed by Selby hanging bells and doing 'other smith's work' for near on five months when in October 1775 he was prosecuted for theft from there and from Yonge's house. Earl Poulett's grand house (No. 19) was signed off under the Building Act in April 1778, but almost a year later he was still living in Mayfair, which he was to leave 'as soon as Stratford Place is finished' (see Ill. 6.06).¹⁵

After the first nine no further plots were taken until April 1776, when the portrait painter Edmund Francis Calze agreed to build the houses on the east and west sides of the square. Born Cunningham, he was the son of a Scottish Jacobite exile and grew up in Italy, where he took the name Calze, a corruption of Kelso. He worked for the Duke of Parma until 1763 or 1764 when he met the infamous Lord Lyttelton and left with him for London. Calze found it too expensive to remain part of Lyttelton's set, but their acquaintance was renewed by chance some years later at the Oxford Street Pantheon. This

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soon landed Calze in trouble, in the shape of financial disputes with Lyttelton and a libel action. In 1774 he was still calling himself a portrait painter but soon had gone into building, developing a place of entertainment in Great Marlborough Street, the Casino, in association with another dubious figure, the Italian-born singer Theresa Cornelys. This too brought financial problems.¹⁶

In December 1776 Daniel Robinson reported to Stratford that ‘the Buildings on the West Side of the Square go on but slow, the Ground Floors not being laid, nor is there a Slate put on the East Side’ – so the eastern houses (Nos 8–10) cannot have been covered in when Calze received the leases a couple of months earlier.¹⁷ From Robinson’s letter it appears that Stratford was hoping the western houses would be covered in by January so they could be mortgaged to Ann Wood, a further £2,000 being needed then. Mrs Wood’s loan had to wait until June, and in the meantime Calze raised the £2,000 by mortgaging his interest in No. 10 to Anne Bontine, widow, of Great Marlborough Street. She and Calze seemingly had a close relationship, for she left him her estate when she died in 1778, cutting off her daughter with a shilling. Her will describes him as ‘painter and architect’. That June the sale took place of a large quantity of building materials and equipment at Stratford Place, including fir, oak and mahogany, moulds for plasterwork, and quantities of veined and statuary marble and other stone. That presumably marked the end of Calze’s activities there. Described now as a builder, in July he was bankrupt, leaving Nos 8 and 9 still in carcase, and ‘three foundations carried parlor high’ on the west side of the square. It seems likely that it was Stratford Place rather than the Casino that bankrupted Calze, and a large claim against his estate by his bricklayer at the Casino was dismissed by the bankruptcy court. Payments made to him by Stratford in 1776–7 were probably all advances for the houses in the square, and the likelihood is that he failed when Stratford could not continue them.¹⁸

No. 8 and the three started houses opposite were transferred by Calze’s assignees (the builder-architect Samuel Wyatt and William Leckie, a City

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warehouseman) to Charles Heath, builder, of Bentinck Street, No. 9 to the surveyor John Hele. Seemingly these houses came back into Stratford's possession, for in April 1780 they were offered for sale through Robinson together with No. 22 (built by Stratford) and the last four vacant plots. Later in the year, No. 9 was mortgaged to Robinson by direction of Stratford and William Gosling, carpenter, who may have been completing it.¹⁹

In the end, six or seven years later, four houses rose on the west side of the square. No. 12 has a narrow, two-bay front, its true size now concealed by the enlarged Stratford House. It and No. 13 were described in May 1787 as having been built by Stratford and meant for letting, but still unfinished. His contractor may have been John Herring of Bentinck Street, who took out a building agreement on Nos 14 and 15 in July 1786, getting his leases the following May. Herring was also the builder of the last four houses (17, 18, 20 and 21), in 1792. During the hiatus one or other of these plots had been bruited as the site for a projected Marylebone chapel of ease.²⁰

Given the self-containment of Stratford Place, it was natural that Stratford and his tenants should try to emulate Berkeley and Grosvenor Squares with an Act for taking into their own hands the management of their street. Yonge urged on the Corporation that covenants in the leases as to the water supply would be 'destroyed' if the local Paving Commissioners took control. But the Bill failed under the Commissioners' opposition in 1775.²¹

In 1781 a scheme was reported for a 'grand opening... directly in a straight line' from Stratford Place to Berkeley Square, straightening out and widening the crooked north end of Davies Street. This was an acknowledgement that Stratford Place occupied a somewhat isolated position, cut off from the most fashionable addresses in the West End north and south of Oxford Street. The project was mentioned again a year later, but nothing came of it. Joshua Higgs junior put forward the same idea in 1839, and the realignment was eventually carried out in 1898–1900.²²

Even without the improved vista this improvement would have opened up, the opportunity to embellish the view up Stratford Place was not

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to be missed. The earliest plan of the development includes a circular feature of 20ft diameter in the middle of the square (Ill. 6.03). Whatever this was, in 1775 a 'grand fountain' was reportedly in prospect. No fountain materialized, but in 1799–1800 Lord Aldborough put up a monument in the square 'to British glory and the heroes of its empire'. This was a Corinthian column on a pedestal carved with trophies, more than 20ft high and topped by a statue of George III. One side commemorated the storming of Seringapatam, another naval victories against Continental powers. The idea, and probably the design – dismissed by (Sir) Richard Phillips in *Modern London* (1804) as 'inelegant and puerile' – came from the antiquary and topographer James Peller Malcolm, who proposed a countrywide series of such monuments. Built of artificial stone, it was so decayed and out of plumb by 1805 that the parish surveyors declared it unsafe and it was taken down.²³

Work on the City aqueduct

Alterations to the City aqueduct in connection with Stratford Place were made in 1772–4, along with improvements to the system further north, and south of Oxford Street through Conduit Mead. Overseen by Dance, they were mostly carried out by Jeremiah Carr, a paviour long employed on the system, and individual contractors for brickwork, masonry, carpentry and plumbing.²⁴

Originally it was intended to build a reservoir in Stratford Place to replace the old conduits. Stratford was enthusiastic, provided he could have free water, seeing its potential for fire-fighting. But it was found that the water would not rise nearly high enough. One conduit was retained. As this lay under the intended front walls of 1 and 2 Stratford Place it was cut down below basement level and arched over. A new underground pipeline, mostly wooden, was laid to it, running down Marylebone Lane from the 'Breakfasting Conduit' on the east side, with a branch serving Stratford Mews. Turning west to the middle of the square, the pipe led down Stratford Place to

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the old conduit, from which another pipe was laid to the Ay Brook. Because this last was deep and passed under the buildings, consideration was given to enclosing it in a culvert big enough for repairmen to work in. This cost was not justified, given the diminishing volume of water, the consequence of so much building development and resultant damage to the springs and drains feeding the conduits. But it was decided 'for the honor and interest of the City to preserve the Aquaeduct as long as possible', and a lead pipe was laid. In 1773 this was arched over in brick by Richard Edwin, but supply pipes to individual houses were laid under his supervision without protective brickwork, a cause of concern to the Corporation, who feared 'the worst consequences to those Buildings'. In 1774, at the City's request, Edwin built a protective 'dry drain' for the pipe between the square and Marylebone Lane, in consultation with Dance. At the end of the work, the volume of water was doubled, and Carr was confident that there would be takers for the whole supply.²⁵

Design and authorship

Stratford Place promised to be 'the compleatest set of buildings in this metropolis', and despite much demolition it is still this quality of completeness that impresses – more so perhaps than the architecture of the façades, 'accomplished quasi-Adam' though it is.²⁶ The smallness of the space gives a sense of intimacy, while the opening up of the north end as a square avoids the spatial deadness of a merely truncated street, as at contemporary Ely Place and Frederick's Place. Even so, the effect is somewhat spoiled by the Edwardian enlargement of Stratford House, which now fills the end like a cliff instead of simply closing the vista. The original elevation of the houses along the sides survives more or less intact on the east, and several houses retain original fanlights and railings with lamp standards and snuffers.

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From the start, Stratford was anxious to get the design right, and avoid being tied to any particular scheme. In February 1772 he explained to the City Lands Committee that he had had 'several Plans of the whole & particular Parts taken in order to see which is most likely to succeed, which Plans are to be exhibited for Public approbation at the opening of the Royal Academy'. He hoped to be 'left at large as to the Plan from the inexpediency & impossibility of fixing upon any of those now drawn, & which he is ready to shew this Committee when they please, till the Taste of Gentlemen who may become Occupiers is known'. The designs do not seem to have been exhibited as intended.²⁷

The only surviving design drawings are the elevations of the west side and Oxford Street front, copied by Dance and signed by Stratford when his lease was granted in May 1772 (Ills 6.04a-b). This was presumably the same scheme as that produced by him a month earlier, when it was noted that the design, although not 'strictly agreeable to that produced to the Sub Committee on his treating for the Ground yet he observed would produce a very elegant appearance and be as substantial and useful Buildings as the other'. It was, the committee decided, largely immaterial what the elevations were, so long as £40,000 were spent in building.²⁸ Although the lease required him to build according to the two elevations (a clause he ignored), there was nothing in it concerning the design of Stratford House or any of the buildings in Marylebone Lane or the mews.

The designs are different from the executed buildings in several respects, including the number of houses along each side of the 'street' and the architectural treatment of the three houses on each side of the square (Ills 6.04a-b, 6.06-07). The biggest differences are to do with the Oxford Street frontage. In the approved drawing, there are two sets of gates for entry and exit, flanking a porter's lodge or pedestrian entrance, a domed structure surmounted by a statue. This assemblage is flanked by the return fronts of the two end houses, which have neither doors nor windows to Oxford Street. This aspect of the design was to be heavily revised.

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Stratford's lease included only an outline plan of the ground, but the Corporation records contain an undated, unsigned block plan of the proposed development which accords with the signed elevations as regards the number and size of the houses (Ill. 6.03). It places the square which forms a *cour d'honneur* to Stratford House at the top of a street 165ft long instead of the later 228ft. Plots are shown accordingly for five houses on each side, not seven as in the final scheme. They have frontages of 30ft each apart from the slightly projecting middle houses, of 45ft. On both sides of the square, the plan shows 45ft-wide houses flanked by houses of 27ft 6in; Stratford House itself is a square block without wings. The street is narrower than built, and tilted north-east so that it is not quite perpendicular to the Henrietta Place-Barrett Street axis.

The houses built along the street varied in width. They were graduated symmetrically on the west side but rather irregularly on the east side, though this was disguised by the unified elevational design (Ills 6.06-07). The southern frontage was modified so that the end houses had windows and their front doors on Oxford Street, while the scheme also incorporated commercial premises fronting Oxford Street between Stratford Place and Gee's Court, plus the additional Stratford Place Mews. All these changes followed Stratford's acquisition from Pepys of the additional ground some 300ft long between Barrett's Court and the Ay Brook. He referred in February 1772 to the great effort he had put into securing this and other improvements to the estate and so probably knew when he signed the elevations in May that they were already rendered obsolete. In 1774 the City found the houses being built to new designs, which Stratford described as 'superior'. As built, the main 1772 elements remain: symmetrical palace fronts, with round-arched openings on the ground floor, and centre and end pavilions with a giant pilaster order. Besides the number of houses in the two terraces the main points of difference are in the order employed, the use of pediments, and inclusion of attics. Away went the domed lodge and gate piers of 1772, and in their place came a neat pair of watchmen's boxes with, if an early illustration

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can be believed, an ironwork screen incorporating two sets of personal and carriage gates (Ill. 6.05). Later views, by Ackermann and Tallis, do not show gates, and other discrepancies suggest that the illustration shows the buildings as proposed, not as completed.²⁹ It was usual for City-land developments to be designed by the City architect, and apart from the sketches produced by Stratford in June 1771 the first to be heard of design drawings is in Dance's 1771-2 bill, where under 31 July 1771 (the date of Stratford's 'contract') he lists 'a Design for an Elevation of the intended Buildings upon the Banqueting House Grounds'. Under May 1772 he includes making 'a fair Drawing of the Elevations of Mr Stratford's Buildings' and (referring to the signed elevations) 'Copping 2 designs of Elevations propos'd by Mr Stratford'. This might seem to show that Dance designed the buildings, or at least drew up an early scheme. Edwin is not credited with their design in the City Lands records, or even described as Stratford's architect; Dance refers to him merely as 'Mr Stratford's Surveyor'. But there is an explicit attribution to Edwin in a press report of February 1772, stating that the Banqueting House Ground was to be covered with 'a number of magnificent houses, upon a most elegant plan, designed by, and under the Direction of, Mr Edwin, Architect'. Two years later, he exhibited an elevation of the west side at the Royal Academy. Whatever his role as designer, Edwin's central place in the building of Stratford Place is confirmed by Stratford's recorded payments to him in 1772-6, and the many references to him in the City Lands records.³⁰

A pupil of the younger Matthew Brettingham, Edwin was involved in development elsewhere in the West End, including Great Portland Street (page ###). He served on a supervisory committee of the British Lying-in Hospital in Brownlow Street, and his last major project was probably the design he made for rebuilding the hospital on a site in Marylebone offered in 1777 by its patron the Duke of Portland. This came to nothing, but Edwin's design was seen in 1787 by the French hospital investigators Tenon and Coulomb, who were sufficiently impressed to request a copy.³¹

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There is some similarity between the use of rusticated Coade-stone blocks for window and door openings at Stratford Place and at John Johnson's houses of a few years later at 61–63 New Cavendish Street. However, the Stratford Place arches, identified as such in the Coade catalogue, were available to anyone; even so, payments by Stratford to 'Johnson', £300 in April 1774 and £258 16s 5d in June 1774, raise the possibility of his involvement at Stratford Place. Payments to 'Coade' in 1774–6 amounted to £131 8s. As well as on the house fronts, Coade stone was used on the watchmen's boxes – a handed pair of couchant lions with heads turned, and small griffin plaques taken from a standard Coade frieze (see Ills 6.05, 6.29). Stratford's lease required the City arms to be put 'on some Public and Visible parts' of all the buildings, but there is no evidence that this was done.³²

While Edwin was probably responsible for the executed design of the main terraces, the façades of the terraces in the square are more likely by Calze, who described himself in the leases as architect. Their fully stuccoed fronts, with pediments over the windows, are stylistically distinct from the rest. Questions remain over the authorship of Stratford House itself, as of the cul-de-sac layout in the first place. Stratford House is considered separately below. As for the layout, it is suggestive that Dance had experimented with an innovative variety of shapes at Circus, Crescent and America Square in the Minories, the development of which continued in parallel with Stratford Place.³³ The immediate inspiration there was Bath, but it is the small scale of the Minories experiment which particularly corresponds to Stratford Place, showing Dance's readiness to avoid a conventional solution to an apparently straightforward street-planning exercise.

The houses varied in plan as in width, and the survivors have been variously altered. They had fittings and decorations of the highest quality: mahogany joinery; stone staircases with metalwork balustrades; sculpted marble chimneypieces, some with coloured inlays; enriched geometric plaster ceilings, often incorporating a major square with a central motif and narrow oblong panels with repeat patterns taking up the remaining space (Ills 6.09–

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13). Most if not all had two staircases. A plan of 1883 shows thirteen (plus Stratford House) with top-lit stairs, six of these having skylights over both main and back stairs (see Ill. 6.08). In most cases, stairs were conventionally placed at one side. No. 2 has what would have been an old-fashioned arrangement for the 1770s in which the principal staircase, serving the first floor only, starts at the back of the entrance hall, turning to rise over the front door. This was perhaps because the house was comparatively narrow. At No. 3 the large entrance hall gives on to a parlour at one side, and at the rear to the large open-well staircase. The back stairs are behind this, beyond which a small hexagonal room projects into the back yard. The remainder of the ground floor is taken up by the dining room, entered at the corner from the staircase compartment. This end is screened off by Ionic columns, and has a lower ceiling. At No. 4, broadly similar in plan to No. 3, the staircase starts with a short freestanding flight on the main axis of the hallway, with a gallery at second-floor level.³⁴

Artists and craftsmen

Apart from the Lysters, Herring and Calze, the only builder definitely associated with developing Stratford Place is the mason John Devall II, to whom Sayre assigned his lease of the new house No. 1 in December 1773. Few of the surnames given in the surviving notes of Stratford's transactions with Mayne's bank in 1771-8 can be confidently linked to work at Stratford Place. An exception is 'Holm' - Stratford's lessee Lauritz Holm the sculptor. Payments to him between June 1774 and December 1777 amounted to £470. Very few pieces by him are known, though he was a significant figure in his day. That Stratford seems to have owned his masterpiece *Sophonisba with the cup of poison* (see below) could point to him as the author of some of the Stratford House chimneypieces and the carving in the pediment. Among others, 'Westmacott' must be the sculptor Richard Westmacott I. He was paid

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£40 in February 1774: an early date, perhaps relating to 22 Stratford Place or 160 Oxford Street rather than Stratford House. 'Wallis', paid £334 4s in March 1775, may be the stone-carver John Wallis, while 'Rhodes', paid £100 in December 1774, may be the plasterer William Rhodes, a subscriber to George Richardson's 1776 *Book of Ceilings*.³⁵

Another name that can definitely be associated with Stratford House is that of Sir William Hamilton. Inviting the painter James Barry to visit 'Aldborough House' in 1783, Stratford commented that there 'you will see some of your friend Hamilton's performances'. None of the paintings there has been linked to Hamilton, a pupil of Zucchi, to whom ceiling paintings in the present Bar have been attributed (see below).³⁶

NO. 11 (STRATFORD HOUSE)

Several years elapsed before Stratford's mansion was built, and meanwhile he occupied a succession of West End addresses, latterly in Upper Brook Street (where his father-in-law Nicholas Herbert had a house). He also stayed at Nightingale Hall in Isleworth, which he acquired in 1773 from (Sir) Henry Thomas Gott and retained until 1788. In March 1775 it was reported that the house in Stratford Place was to be faced in stone, so work on it may then have been starting, or the brick carcass may have been standing. Calze's lease of No. 10, in October 1776, describes the stone house as Stratford's intended residence. It may still have been unfinished when Stratford returned to Ireland in 1777 on the death of his father, recently raised from Viscount to Earl of Aldborough.³⁷

Stratford used the house for a few years only. In 1780 he advertised from 'Aldborough-House, Stratford-Place' for business proposals at Stratford-on-Slaney, and in 1781 he was visited there by the royal family. His invitation to James Barry to visit was made after he had seen the Irish painter's mural

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series 'Progress of Human Knowledge and Culture' at the Society of Arts in the Adelphi in 1783.³⁸

In August 1784 the contents of a nobleman's mansion in Stratford Place were advertised for sale, the owner having 'gone abroad'. As these included a large garden roller, this must have been Stratford House, the only house with a garden. This was well before the death of his first wife Barbara Herbert in April 1785, once thought to have prompted his departure. Stratford House was let to the Hon. Catherine Talbot, widowed daughter and heiress of the second Viscount Chetwynd. She died there in January 1785, and the house passed to her lawyer son John, newly created Earl Talbot in the Irish peerage. Shortly after disposing of his mother's furniture, Talbot put his Middlesex seat, Hillingdon Hall, on the market and took up residence at Stratford Place.³⁹

It was not long before Stratford came up with the idea of taking one of the smaller houses for himself. He is said to have built No. 12 as his new London home after marrying Anne Henniker in 1787. Their marriage settlement, however, shows that the house was already substantially built and intended for letting. It was still unfinished in October 1791 but Stratford seems to have occupied it some two years earlier, when it was reported that he had returned to Stratford Place to 'become a sort of *satellite*, who was originally the Prime Luminary'. The first Lady Aldborough, it was said, 'would not have submitted to such a degradation; her ideas were too exalted. She kept a kind of Court at Aldborough House, sitting under a canopy with a coronet over it and receiving company in state'.⁴⁰

Before taking up residence at No. 12, Stratford had a theatre built at the back of the house, a project announced in January 1788 when he was seemingly still living elsewhere. There in 1791 he staged John Home's tragedy *Douglas*. How large it was may be gauged by the fact that he distributed 80 tickets among friends, but 'it is supposed a greater latitude of admission will take place'. It was re-erected at Belan in 1794 by the scene-painter and architect William Capon, who painted some of the scenery and may have designed the theatre in the first place. In 1795 Aldborough again left for

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Ireland, leaving No. 12 with a woman caretaker. Nearly two years later complaints by neighbours led to the discovery that pigs were being kept inside the house and a still had been set up.⁴¹

In 1793 Earl Talbot died, leaving his lease to his eldest son Charles Chetwynd-Talbot, second Earl Talbot. The diplomatist (Sir) Robert Adair, whose father Robert (army surgeon-general) had lived at 22 Stratford Place, was in residence briefly in the late 1790s. In the summer of 1799 the house was let to the Earl and Countess of Jersey, following the break-up of Lady Jersey's relationship with the Prince of Wales, which obliged her and her husband to leave the house the Prince had provided for them adjoining Carlton House. The Jerseys were succeeded at the end of 1803 by the sixth Duke and Duchess of St Albans.⁴² 'St Albans House' was the scene of extravagant entertainment, such as a masquerade reported in 1804 along with an impression of the interior:

On the ground floor there are three elegant apartments, and on the drawing-room story the same number of rooms, but on a more extensive scale. The whole were thrown open upon this occasion, and they exhibited the most brilliant appearance possible, being illuminated by a vast number of chrysal lights and lustres. Transparent alabaster vases of uncommon size, with wax lights in their centre, were placed in the different anti-rooms, and on the ... geometrical stairs, which form a double flight from the centre ... At the foot of the stairs were stationed a chosen band of music similar to the Milanese Minstrels, and an excellent one for country dances ... in the middle drawing room.⁴³

In October 1815, not long after the duke's sudden death, the house was taken by the government, at the Regent's behest, to accommodate Archdukes John and Louis of Austria. Their extended visit to England was made at short notice, and the house 'was the most likely one that offered': but a factor may have been the presence at No. 7 of the Austrian ambassador Prince Esterházy, whose occupation followed the sudden death there that July of his predecessor Count Meerveldt. The house was hurriedly decorated and fitted out by C. H. Tatham – one report mentions golden pilasters and furniture of

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burnished gold in the state apartments. In the following year, it was put into service for the visit to England of Prince Nicholas, later Tsar Nicholas I. It was retained for his brother John's visit in 1817, and Grand Duke Michael was quartered there when he came in 1818. With these precedents in mind, Queen Caroline thought it was government property and reportedly suggested it to the Prime Minister for herself on returning to England in 1820.⁴⁴

Instead, the next occupants were Aldborough's nephew and heir, Col. John Wingfield-Stratford and his family. He is said to have stayed there until three years after his wife's death in 1829, but the long occupancy of the lawyer and Tory politician Sir John Beckett, 2nd Bt, seems to have begun as early as 1828. Beckett's widow stayed until her death there in 1871, leaving it to her nephew George Bentinck, who seems to have let it to his brother-in-law John Leslie (from 1876 Sir John, 2nd Bt), Irish landowner and amateur artist. Leslie lived there until 1894, when he let it to his son-in-law Walter Murray Guthrie, merchant banker, City alderman and later Tory MP for Tower Hamlets (brother of Lady Rodd, wife of the diplomat Rennell Rodd, who bought 17 Stratford Place in 1897). Guthrie seems to have subsequently acquired the head lease, but his residence was curtailed by illness and in 1902 he sold the house to the courtier and minor Liberal politician Sir Edward Colebrooke, 5th Bt (from 1906 Baron Colebrooke). In 1908 the Royal Society of Medicine tried and failed to buy the house, which was sold that year to the newly acceded seventeenth Earl of Derby and renamed Derby House.⁴⁵

A significant politician, who served as Secretary of State for War in 1916–18 and 1922–4, he both enlarged and aggrandized the house. During his occupancy, the dinner and ball held on Derby night, attended by the Queen, was 'one of the outstanding events of the London Season'. But in 1931 he followed other West End mansion-owners in putting it up for sale. No buyer was found and, having obtained the freehold in 1932, he again offered it for sale in 1941. The furniture was destroyed by bombing while in storage, but his art collection, taken to the country with the help of Sir Alec Martin of

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Christies, survived. After Christies' King Street saleroom was destroyed, Derby let them occupy the house, rent-free.⁴⁶

In 1946 Derby House was bought by speculators, then sold on to the publisher Walter Hutchinson as offices and a public gallery for his collection of sporting pictures (Ill. 6.22). The National Gallery of Sports and Pastimes opened at 'Hutchinson House' in February 1949, under the direction of the artist John Wheatley. Constable's *Stratford Mill* was hung in the ballroom, where it had been bought in 1946. With Hutchinson's death in 1950 the gallery closed and in 1951 the collection was dispersed, Hutchinson & Co. remaining at the house until its sale to an investment company in 1955. In 1956 it was bought by the engineering group Birfield Industries Ltd as corporate headquarters, and in 1960 was sold to the Oriental Club to replace its old home in Hanover Square. After partial internal remodelling (under Daydon Griffiths, architect), the new clubhouse opened on 1 January 1962.⁴⁷

Design and planning

The exterior design of Stratford House probably owed something to the Berkeley Square house designed by Robert Adam in the early 1760s for Lord Bute, and sold in 1765, before completion, to the Irish Whig Lord Shelburne, later Marquess of Lansdowne. Stratford had approached Shelburne as a potential patron in 1767 when he was trying to establish himself in English politics, and besides their common Irish background there was much about Shelburne to appeal to his progressive and patriotic outlook and polymathic interests. Moving in Shelburne's circle, he would obviously have become familiar with the Berkeley Square house.⁴⁸

Stratford House resembled a condensed version of Lansdowne House, a five- instead of seven-bay pedimented central block, with minimal low wings screened by colonnades in place of the prominent side pavilions of the Adam building (Ill. 6.14). Stratford's admiration for the prototype is evident

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from a painting showing him and countess Anne in the grounds of Belan House in the late 1780s or early 90s, Belan having been rebuilt in imagination as something like Stratford House with the wings of Lansdowne House. In the 1790s Stratford again took inspiration from a house he knew well for the design of Aldborough House in Dublin – Gumley Hall in Leicestershire. Even so, the Dublin house shows some influence still from Lansdowne House and Stratford House. It has a strong vertical emphasis, which is a common feature of both the May 1772 and the executed designs for Stratford Place and must have been Stratford's personal taste. The prominent use of vases to adorn Stratford House is also attributable to Stratford, who seems to have had a near-mania for ornamental urns and vases.⁴⁹

Who designed and built Stratford House is unrecorded. The initial design may have been by Edwin, but he was dead well before it was completed. Stratford's transactions with Robert Mayne's bank included 24 payments to Edwin totalling £2,920 6s between 1772 and 1776, mostly round sums, all of which might be accounted for by preliminary designs and surveying for the Stratford Place development, ground works, and the building of 22 Stratford Place and the adjoining shop. A payment of £50 to 'Architect' in January 1773 may point to the employment of another designer after Stratford had secured his lease. Stratford's own input was probably considerable. There is nothing to support the long-held attribution to Robert Adam, though there was an Adam connection. Robert Mayne was the brother of Sir William Mayne, later Lord Newhaven, a family friend of the Adams. Through Sir William, John Adam's son William was able to enter the Commons in 1774 as one of two members for the rotten borough of Gatton in Surrey. The other was Robert Mayne. Newhaven, who represented Gatton in 1780–90, became the first occupant of 16 Stratford Place in 1776.⁵⁰

It is unlikely that Edmund Calze had a hand in the house. He took 33 payments amounting to £5,400 between May 1776 and February 1777, overlapping with Edwin for a few months. But these were most probably advances for Calze's own houses, and in any case, his claim to the profession

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of architect is questionable. Who built it is no clearer. The Lysters were paid £1,780 16s through Mayne & Co. between June 1774 and May 1776, but again this may have been loans for their houses.⁵¹

Externally, Stratford House was faced in Portland stone on the street front, brick on the garden front. When the stone on the upper floors was renewed in the 1920s it was found to be inch-thick cladding only, secured with dowels, rather than blocks or slabs bonded or cramped to the brickwork. It has been assumed that this was for economy, but may have been because the stone was an afterthought.⁵²

The earliest room plan, of the ground floor, dates from 1840, but there is no reason to suppose the house had been significantly altered by that date: it shows the entrance hall and three rooms mentioned in 1804, and the overall footprint, including an addition to the west, was unaltered since it was drawn for a new lease in 1787. The plan itself is compact, with no remarkable features. In 1884 the ground floor was described as comprising the entrance hall, two libraries (the rooms at the back), a gentleman's room (presumably in the west wing), and domestic offices. On the first floor, as in 1804, were four rooms: a large and three smaller drawing rooms. This arrangement survives mainly intact in the enlarged house today (Ill. 6.16).⁵³

Augustus Hare, visiting in 1875, found the house 'beautiful because all the colour is subdued, no new gilding or smartness'.⁵⁴ Sir John Leslie's son Shane, the writer and Irish nationalist, born there in 1885, described it as 'absurdly magnificent and uncomfortable'; cold, dingy, neglected and insanitary. In the hall, thought to be relics of Stratford's time, stood an ancient porter's chair and a smoke-blackened Venus de Milo in one of the shallow niches. 'It was discreetly asserted that she had risen not from the sea but from the greasy waters which ran under the House'.⁵⁵

This was a reference to a 'vast cess-pit' beneath the grand staircase, its odour pervading the building. According to Leslie it was sealed by Murray Guthrie. If the cess-pit was the origin of the 15ft-diameter round hall shown

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on a basement plan made in connection with Murray Guthrie's alterations in 1896, it would seem extraordinarily vast.⁵⁶

Interior decoration

Advertisements in 1784 give some idea of the original furnishings. They included drawing-room suites finished in burnished gold with crimson silk taberet and green silk damask; sideboards with plate-glass doors; library fittings with mirrored panels; clocks in ormolu cases; cut-crystal lustres and highly polished steel stoves. Art works included paintings attributed to Andrea del Sarto, Canaletto, Carracci, Rubens and Titian; bronzes; marble busts; and a marble nude statue of Sophonisba, 'elaborate and singularly fine'. This last was possibly the prize-winning work of 1767 by Lauritz Holm depicting the Carthaginian suicide, Holm being one of the most important craftsmen employed by Stratford.⁵⁷

Several chimneypieces at Stratford House have excellent carving, in particular that in the front drawing room with its figures of Fame and Mars, the supporters of the Stratford arms (Ill. 6.17). They appear too in the pediment over the entrance to the house, where their treatment is animated (Ill. 6.15). The library chimneypiece, with its frieze representing branches of art and science, is also of high quality (Ill. 6.18). These and some ceiling paintings of Classical mythology in the drawing room and former dining room are the chief fittings which appear to be original. An unidentified music-room, cited in 1911 as a 'very good example' of the Adam-initiated vogue for shades of pink, grey and green, may possibly have been a relic of the original decoration.⁵⁸

Alterations since the 1890s

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No major changes were made until the 1890s, when, according to Shane Leslie, Murray Guthrie became engaged to Shane's aunt Olive (they married in 1894) and persuaded Sir John to let him have the great cess-pit sealed. It was then that new foundations had to be put in, replacing timber piles. Guthrie also added a first floor to the wings, colonnaded to match the ground floor. Plans in 1896 (by A. William West, architect) for extending the west wing with new service rooms, plus a separate larder beneath the lawn, show that while the wing had already been raised the east (stable) wing had not. However, their reliability is uncertain as they also show a single new staircase replacing the original main and back stairs, whereas in fact the original stairs seem to have survived until Lord Derby's alterations.⁵⁹

Notwithstanding Shane Leslie's recollections, there was probably a stronger reason than reluctance to change for the lack of improvements before 1894, which was that the house was held on a short tenancy lease.⁶⁰ It was only when this expired that year that things began to happen, presumably because Leslie had now acquired the head lease. He left for Manchester Square, leaving Guthrie in occupation.

Sir Edward Colebrooke made interior alterations, notably fitting up the library in the opulent Edwardian version of the Adam style, with ormolu-trimmed bookshelves.⁶¹

The changes made by Lord Derby in 1909–10 involved reconstruction of the wings, producing the broad front as it is today (Ill. 6.07). Most important was the large east range, extending north along Marylebone Lane and built to a lower ground level to avoid issues of ancient light. An approach corridor was made from the screened end of the dining room, subsequently Derby's study (now Bar). On the ground floor this range comprised a banqueting room (Ill. 6.24), smaller dining room with access to the garden, and back staircase. Above was a vast ballroom with a vaulted ceiling decorated by Sir Charles Allom, and a domed conservatory reached by the back stairs (Ill. 6.23). The architects were W. H. Romaine-Walker & Besant, whose designs replaced a scheme prepared in 1908 by J. Macvicar Anderson,

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in which another floor was to have been added to the wings, preserving the double colonnades.⁶² The front was extensively refaced in 1926–7 where the original cladding had failed.

Derby's alterations were typically Edwardian in extravagance: considered vulgar by those with earlier family links to the house. The elaborate Louis XVI staircase, lined with mirrored panels, with a balustrade by the art-metalworkers J. Starkie Gardner & Co. (Ills 6.20, 6.21), was particularly regretted in view of the loss of the original twin-branched stairs, apostrophized by Disraeli with the exclamation 'What perspective! What perspective!' The back staircase is also elaborate, the walls lined with eighteenth-century Italian landscapes and capricci, by Antonio Jolli and others. Other painting was by the Parisian decorative artist Marcel Boulanger, who in 1910 painted a bedroom with *trompe-l'oeil* ruins. The principal loss through the Oriental Club conversion was the ballroom, subdivided into two floors of bedrooms.⁶³

Notes on individual rooms ⁶⁴

Entrance hall. White marble chimneypiece with veiled terms and panel of Venus with attendants, moved here from a bedroom by the Oriental Club. Said possibly to be an Adam piece brought by Lord Derby from The Oaks, Epsom, perhaps originally from Derby House in Grosvenor Square.

Bar (formerly dining room). Original fireplace with coloured marble inlay and relief of sacrificial or funerary procession. Ceiling with circular paintings of Bacchus and Ariadne, traditionally ascribed to Angelica Kauffmann but re-attributed by Edward Croft-Murray to Antonio Zucchi (Ill. 6.19).

Dining room. 1908–9. Lord Derby's banqueting hall, based on Robert Adam's temporary banqueting room at The Oaks, created for the wedding of the tenth Earl of Derby in 1774. The original pillars screening the apses at either end were removed as part of the Oriental Club's alterations (Ill. 6.24). The ceiling

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paintings of Greek mythology, brought from The Oaks, are by Giovanni Francesco Romanelli.

Garden room. Fireplace with carved wooden overmantel, probably French.

Drawing Room (Ill. 6.22). Doorcases raised in height by Romaine-Walker & Besant to match the staircase panels. Ceiling with painted roundels and half-roundels of Cupid and Psyche, attributed by Croft-Murray to Biagio Rebecca. White marble chimneypiece with relief of Apollo and the Muses with Pegasus, the mantle-shelf supported by Fame and Mars. Attributed to Thomas Banks, but if so a late commission as Banks was in Rome until 1779.

Writing Room (former Small Drawing Room). Barrel ceiling with mythological scenes attributed by Croft-Murray to Biagio Rebecca.

Smoking Room. Panelling with painted fêtes champêtres and conversation pieces, all in Central European rococo style, possibly one of Lord Colebrooke's alterations.⁶⁵

Stratford Place since the eighteenth century

Social and commercial character

Stratford Place was mainly residential until the late nineteenth century, mainly a business address after the First World War. There was much overlap, with dentists and medical practitioners coming in from the 1850s–60s, reaching a peak about the 1920s, while Stratford House remained a private residence until the Second World War. From the beginning, Stratford Place had an exclusive character, as the seasonal abode of members of high society. The Roman Catholic peer Lord Belfort and his 'splendid mansion in Stratford Place' were fictional, but had many real-life rivals in swank.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, from an early date the residents always included some in trade,

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banking, professions or the armed forces. As a professional actor and theatre manager, married to a dance teacher, Robert Elliston was a social interloper at No. 9 in the early nineteenth century. A friend advised against taking the house:

I think there would be a discretion in your not taking the exact ground with families of rank and title. The very people who might become patrons of yourself and wife, would look coldly, disdainfully, on you, as next-door neighbours.

... in plain English, you have no business in Stratford Place... I would suggest Bedford Place to you; the houses are spacious and convenient; but for God's sake, do not let any duke overhear the fiddle of a dancing school, or your neighbour the countess observe the actor stepping into a hackney-coach'.⁶⁷

Elliston could never afford to furnish his house properly, but the dancing school continued until bankruptcy forced the family's departure in 1826.

Of the first lessees and residents Sir George Yonge, corrupt and incompetent, was the most prominent in public life, serving as Secretary at War in the 1780s–90s under Pitt, before becoming Governor of the Cape in 1799. He built No. 4 immediately following his sale of Foots Cray Place, the Palladian mansion built by his late father-in-law Bouchier Cleeve, from whom he inherited an important art collection displayed at the new house. As Secretary at War, Yonge held weekly levees. Stratford Place, it was noted during their temporary discontinuance, 'if it values *quiet*, will have to rejoice at this'.⁶⁸

Another of the first lessees, Stephen Sayre, a radical closely associated with John Wilkes, was elected as a sheriff of London in 1773 as part of the pro-Wilkes campaign. In partnership with Bartholomew Coote Purdon, a well-connected Anglo-Irish Protestant, he ran a bank at what was then 160 Oxford Street, adjoining 22 Stratford Place. He himself seems to have lived briefly in 1775 at No. 1, where he was arrested over the alleged 'Sayre Plot' to kidnap George III, an episode which led to the failure of the bank.⁶⁹

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Henry Addington, then Speaker of the Commons, lived at No. 3 from 1791 till 1795, when an official Speaker's residence was provided at Whitehall.⁷⁰

Distinguished long-term residents included the architect Robert Smirke, who acquired No. 5 about the time of his marriage in 1819, a daughter being born there in early 1820. It remained his home for over twenty years. Alterations made before the Smirkes took up residence included the building of a clerks' office at the back. A workman employed on it recalled that there was no chimney, as it was to be heated by pipes, but to dry the plaster Smirke ordered him to burn charcoal, keeping the windows closed. He eventually collapsed with carbon monoxide poisoning, only to be accused of insolence for mentioning this to Smirke on his return to work.⁷¹

There was some commercial occupancy in the late eighteenth century, with the London and Middlesex Bank (Edwards, Templer & Co.) opening in 1792 at the newly built No. 18, the house of one of the partners, Richard Johnson. The bank moved to Pall Mall in 1803. Probably because of traffic the two houses fronting Oxford Street were not long used as private residences. No. 1 was occupied from 1800 by the new Equitable Annuity Society (Lord Aldborough and the nabob Major Marsack of No. 16 were directors), trading life annuities. It was later occupied by the Portland (till 1825 Stratford) Club, the world's oldest bridge club, founded there c.1815. The club replaced the stables on Marylebone Lane adjoining with a top-lit billiard room. When the club moved to St James's Square in 1890, the house was acquired by the London & Westminster Bank for the branch which had occupied No. 4 since the mid 1840s, and rebuilt. The other Oxford Street house was taken in 1791 by the miniaturist and art-collector Richard Cosway, who in 1793 leased the new, more quietly situated house No. 20, where he lived for almost the rest of his life. Nos 21 and 22 were for very many years occupied by the Burgoyne family, solicitors, as residential and business premises respectively.⁷²

Though the picture was always mixed, there are some themes in occupation, including art, music and politics. Besides some distinguished

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artist residents (see select list of occupants below), several private art collections have been housed there, and art dealerships run. Cosway was succeeded at No. 20 by the art collector Thomas Emmerson (husband of John Clare's friend Eliza Emmerson), who lived there until his death in 1854. In the late 1840s John Millais worked at No. 15 doing small paintings and 'backgrounds' for the occupant, Ralph Thomas, then a junior barrister supplementing his income by dealing in pictures and violins. The Savile Gallery, the dealership particularly associated with Walter Sickert and his wife Thérèse Lessore, occupied No. 7 in 1927-9, 'rooms of admirable visibility and architectural charm'.⁷³

No. 10 has been occupied by the Royal Society of Music of Great Britain since 1931, and the record companies Polydor and Chrysalis have also been based in Stratford Place. Nos 12 and 13 were leased to Chrysalis in 1977 – an extension was built so that there would be room for the producer George Martin's grand piano. In 1980 Chrysalis put up a three-storey office extension over a covered car-park at 12A, demolished a few years later for the Aldburgh Mews development (page ###).⁷⁴

Corporate and institutional occupancy increased greatly after the First World War. Much of the west side was redeveloped by Lilley & Skinner, to extend their Oxford Street shop and provide premises for letting. Their tenants included the dance teacher Grace Cone at No. 20, whose school merged in 1939 with the Ripman dance school to form the Arts Educational Schools. On the east side, Apollinaris and associated mineral-water companies at No. 4 were joined in the 1920s by the perfume manufacturer Coty, and in the 1930s by the Davis Gas Stove Company at No. 7. By the Second World War, Stratford Place had become mainly a business address, and many of the houses were subdivided. Occupants included advertising agents, architects, art dealers, publishers (including for many years the Folio Society at No. 6) and manufacturers of women's clothing and hats.⁷⁵

No. 14 was briefly a social club in the early 1880s, but subsequently occupied by dentists and doctors. The German Athenaeum Club, at No. 19

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from 1906 till 1914, was an altogether grander affair. The club itself was set up in 1869 at 93 Mortimer Street by members of the German artistic and literary community, but was put on a new footing with the incorporation of the German Athenaeum Ltd in 1905, and the acquisition and extension of No. 19. Members included many of the great Anglo-German names – Beit, Cassel, Meyer and von Schroeder among them. The engineer Alexander Siemens and underground-railway promoter Sir Edgar Speyer were among the directors; subscribers included Carl Deichmann, Frederick Delius’s violin teacher. The architect for the works, which included the addition of a galleried concert room, was Lewis Solomon, in whose private opinion ‘we are retaining a building not of the best style of architecture’.⁷⁶

The new premises were visited in 1907 by Kaiser Wilhelm II, who went on to Lady Rodd’s house, No. 17, for tea with her brother-in-law Edward Montagu-Stuart-Wortley, at whose country house Highcliffe the Kaiser was staying. The German Athenaeum was ‘one of the most beautifully decorated club-houses in London’. When it had to close in 1914, it was let by the German Athenaeum Ltd to the Services Club, open to commissioned officers and ‘gentlemen who have seen active service’. This failed to pay the rent, leading to a farcical stand-off in 1916 when the house was festooned with barbed wire and a fire-hose got ready to repel an anticipated assault by German shareholders wielding wire-cutters. The Services Club carried on under new management, expanding to take over the whole of Nos 17 and 18 and part of No. 6. In 1921 it was succeeded by the Stratford Club, with No. 17 reserved for women’s use. Three years later Nos 17–19 were taken over by the Ladies’ Athenaeum Club, previously in Dover Street, before being sold to Lilley & Skinner and demolished. Photographs of 1915–22 show a number of rooms decorated in a range of styles from what are probably original Adam-period schemes to others more obviously done for club use (Ills 6.25–28).⁷⁷

Since the Second World War, Stratford Place has overwhelmingly been occupied as offices by professional, commercial, charitable or governmental organizations. In the 1950s–60s the Starlite Club or Room at No. 5 was the

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haunt of East End gangsters and minor celebrities. No. 12 was acquired in 2003 as the London centre of the 'New Age' spiritual movement the Kabbalah, with money from the singer Madonna.⁷⁸

Interiors

A few houses retain some original interior features, notably Stratford House and No. 3, but many of the most interesting interiors have entirely vanished. No. 7 was the home from 1780 or thereabouts of Charlotte Boyle Walsingham and her daughter Charlotte Boyle, who married Lord Henry Fitzgerald and later won her claim to the barony of de Ros. Both women were accomplished artists. Fanny Burney, who recorded visits in 1782-3, described the house as being 'elegantly fitted up', chiefly with Mrs Walsingham's 'own paintings and drawings, which are reckoned extremely clever'. Her daughter was 'considered the eldest amateur rival' to the celebrated sculptress Anne Damer, and by the time of her marriage in 1791 had reportedly executed all the marble chimneypieces at No. 7, as well as those at the family's country seat, Boyle Farm, where she also created work in *verre églomisé*.⁷⁹

On the other side of Stratford Place, No. 20 was done up from the 1790s by the artist and collector Richard Cosway, in a style 'so picturesque ... so princely' that 'many of the rooms were more like scenes of enchantment, pencilled by a poet's fancy, than any thing, perhaps, before displayed in a domestic habitation'. The contents of the house in 1820 are recorded in a detailed room-by-room inventory. Besides a large collection of paintings there was an eclectic profusion of objects, art-works and furniture, European and Oriental. Cosway's library contained 'a vast number of Books on Conjuring, the Black Art, Sorcery, Divining, Apparitions, Witchcraft, Ghosts, Demons, and the Invisible World', and in keeping with this Gothic taste he for some time kept the embalmed body of his daughter in a sarcophagus in the drawing room - she was later buried at Bunhill Fields. Maria Cosway's

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second-floor room at No. 20 is the setting for the first of her illustrations to Mary Robinson's poem 'The Winter's Day'.⁸⁰

At No. 19, the future home of the German Athenaeum (see above), the four drawing rooms were hyperbolized in the 1820s as 'a suite of the finest apartments in the universe, their proportions ... grand beyond description'. The house, by some way the largest after Stratford House, was then occupied by the Countess of Wemyss and Charteris. Several characterful interiors were created nearly a century later for the German Athenaeum and successor clubs here and at No. 18 (see below).

No. 16 was occupied from 1853 to 1888 by Louis Desanges, famous for his paintings of deeds that won the Victoria Cross. His family had long owned the house, but had not lived there for many years when it was refurbished and offered for sale in 1853. The most noteworthy rooms were then the communicating library and dining room in the 'Elizabethan' style, with a geometrically panelled ceiling, carved oak chimneypiece, and walls covered in 'costly ancient stamped leather' and old panelling with emblazoned shields along the cornice.⁸¹

A later decorative scheme of some elaboration was that at No. 9, where the first and second floors were refitted in the French rococo manner. This was probably done for Viscount and Viscountess Galway, who occupied the house for several years to 1910 and were connected with the Francophile circle around Edward VII; or for Josephine Williams, widow of the South Wales coal baron Morgan Williams of Aberpergwm, who next occupied the house until her death in 1928. Mrs Williams, born in Paris, was the daughter of the Monmouthshire landowner and art collector William Herbert of Clytha.⁸²

Redevelopment since the 1890s

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In 1892–3, following the departure of the Portland Club, No. 1 Stratford Place was rebuilt by the London and Westminster Bank to house the branch hitherto at No. 4. The replacement – ‘a typical bank building in Portland stone and polished pink granite’, but at the City’s insistence incorporating the 1770s watchman’s box – was designed by F. W. Hunt (Ill. 6.29). This rebuilding was later singled out by Sir Laurence Gomme of the LCC as demonstrating London’s need for a proper system of architectural control. In 1897 the replacement of the attic at No. 6 with a full third floor and new attic was condemned by Murray Guthrie of Stratford House as ‘a most deplorable step’. Guthrie’s architect A. W. West and others weighed in with letters of support, while the architect for the work, William G. Bartleet, dismissed the houses as architecturally of not much interest, with insufficient bedrooms. Similar additions were soon made at other houses.⁸³

In 1916 Nos 21 and 22 were demolished by Lilley & Skinner for a new shop, designed by Arthur Sykes. Rebuilding, delayed by war, was completed in 1921. It was probably at the Corporation’s insistence that the new ‘Cosway House’ was broadly in the style of its predecessor, as with Lilley & Skinner’s further reconstruction, of No. 20, in 1923. An *Observer* correspondent coined the phrase “‘As You Were’ Architecture” to describe what he saw as a welcome development in London’s piecemeal rebuilding, and the architect Maurice Adams approved the new building’s good taste, while deploring the mirror-lined showcases of the shopfront, which reduced the stone piers to the appearance of a ‘thin paltry veneer’, a defect he thought ‘must have struck thousands of passers by’. Preservation of the adjoining watchman’s box was written into the specification of works. Still standing in 1931, this was demolished soon after by Lilley & Skinner, probably when the company’s new extension at 17–19 Stratford Place was completed.⁸⁴

There was no question of replicas when this building was planned, presumably because the City no longer had the freehold. Gordon Jeeves, who had earlier worked on Lilley & Skinner’s Pentonville Road headquarters, designed ‘a really modern building ... something which really represents the

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feeling of the moment'. The stone-faced front to Stratford Place is in the monumental, stripped-Classical manner, with vaguely Art Deco ornamentation (Ill. 6.30). Lavishly fitted up, it was claimed when new to be the largest ladies' shoe shop in the world.⁸⁵

In contrast, No. 2 was preserved essentially intact when it was adapted in 1923 as an extension to the bank at No. 1. This restraint was reportedly due to pressure from Lady Mayo next door at No. 3. In the early 1930s, No. 7 was 'skilfully reconstructed' behind the façade by Sir Walter and Michael Tapper as offices and showrooms for the Davis Gas Stove Company. Nos 7 and 8 were later united and partly rebuilt about 1964. After twenty years as the head office (with Nos 6 and 9 also) of the Grand Metropolitan Hotels group, the building was further altered and refurbished as offices by Touche Remnant Property Investment Trust.⁸⁶

On the west side, the bombed-out 14 and 15 were rebuilt in 1954 as Weavers House, 'magnificent' offices and showrooms for the sales department of the carpet and moquette manufacturer Associated Weavers Limited. The building, designed by Ronald Ward & Partners, has a stone Neo-Classical front, with ram's-head ornaments suggesting the company's raw material, wool.⁸⁷

In 1961 a scheme by the Westminster Bank was announced for redeveloping the Victorian building at No. 1 and the Georgian No. 2 with a bank, shops, offices and flats, to designs by Richard Seifert & Partners. This scheme led to the issue by the London County Council of a Building Preservation Order on all the old houses in Stratford Place (listed in 1954), confirmed by the Ministry of Housing after a public inquiry. No. 1 was subsequently redeveloped. The new building, numbered 354–358 Oxford Street, did not appear until about 1969; the banking hall was upstairs, a novelty in the UK. A typical Seifert block, faced in pre-cast concrete panels, it was demolished c.2012 for replacement with a brick-faced building (by Fletcher Priest Architects) incorporating a new ticket hall for Bond Street Station, to cope with the forthcoming Crossrail interchange.⁸⁸

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The remainder of Edward Stratford's development, in Marylebone Lane, Wigmore Street and the two mews, has gone. Part of Stratford Mews was cleared for car-parking by Debenhams in 1938, and the entire mews has been redeveloped with housing, as Aldbrough Mews (page ###). Stratford Place Mews has been completely obliterated. It was here, where a urinal was built on to the back wall of 21 Stratford Place, that the painter Simeon Solomon was arrested in 1873 for attempted buggery, the incident which destroyed his career.⁸⁹

SOME NOTABLE OCCUPANTS ⁹⁰

Artists

Carl Wilhelm Bøckmann Barth, maritime painter. *No. 15*, 1889

Richard Cosway, painter and collector, *and* **Maria Cosway**, miniature painter and illustrator. *No. 22*, 1791–3; *No. 20*, 1793–1821

Montague Dawson, maritime painter. *No. 19*, early 1920s

Louis William Desanges, painter. *No. 16*, 1854–89

William Gush, portraitist. *No. 17*, 1847–50; *No. 15*, 1850–82

Sir George Hayter, painter. *No. 9*, 1830–6

Edward Lear, painter and writer. *No. 17*, 1850–1; *No. 15*, 1861–9

B. Manfredi, painter. *No. 14*, 1807

Henry Tanworth Wells, painter. *No. 17*, 1870s

Henry William Pickersgill, painter. *No. 14*, 1851–66

Henry Hall Pickersgill, painter. *No. 14*, 1854–7

Peter Edward Stroehling, portraitist and historical painter. *No. 18*, c.1821–7

Charlotte Boyle Walsingham, painter (d. 1790), and her daughter **Charlotte** (Lady Fitzgerald, later Baroness de Ros), sculptress etc. *No. 7*, c.1780–1815

Politicians and diplomats

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Henry Addington (later Viscount Sidmouth), Speaker of the Commons and future Prime Minister. *No. 2*, 1791–5

1st Baron Amphill, diplomatist, *No. 19*, 1882–4

James Colquhoun, chargé d'affaires for Saxony and Oldenburg, and diplomatic agent for Lubeck, Bremen and Hamburg. *No. 3*, 1851–4, 1861–5

Sir Patrick Macchombaich Colquhoun, diplomatist and legal writer. *No. 3*, 1868, 1873–88

17th Earl of Derby, Conservative politician and ambassador to France. *No. 11*, 1908–c.1939

Paul Anton III Prince Esterházy, Austrian ambassador. *No. 7*, 1815–16

Sir William Vernon-Harcourt, future Chancellor of the Exchequer. *No. 14*, 1868–78

Sir John McTaggart, Liberal MP. *No. 1*, 1850–8

3rd Earl of Malmesbury, politician. *No. 19*, 1862–76

7th Earl of Mayo. Member of the Senate of Southern Ireland and later the Sinead of the Irish Free State. *No. 3*, 1894–1921

Count Meerveldt, Austrian ambassador. *No. 7*, 1815

Lt.-Gen. Sir William Henry Pringle, MP for St Germans and Liskeard. *No. 17*, 1810s–40

1st Baron Rennell, diplomatist and classical scholar. *No. 17*, 1897–c.1914

Stephen Sayre, American revolutionary. *No. 1*, 1775

Lord Dudley Coutts Stuart, Liberal MP, latterly for Marylebone; supporter of Polish and Hungarian independence. *No. 6*, 1851–4

Baron Teignmouth, governor-general of Bengal; first president of the British & Foreign Bible Society. Unidentified house, 1798–9 ⁹¹

Martin Van Buren, future US president. *No. 7*, 1831

Sir George Yonge, Secretary at War. *No. 4*, 1775–1806

Others

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William Frederick Beadon, senior magistrate at Marlborough Street court, No. 9, c.1849–62

Joseph Clarke, architect. No. 13, 1851–88

William Harrison Cripps, rectal surgeon, a founder of the Metropolitan Electric Supply Co. Ltd of 16 Stratford Place; No. 2, 1882–c.1920

Robert William Elliston, comedian and theatre manager. No. 9, 1807–26

John Frere, antiquary; proprietor of Albion Mill (the first steam-powered flour mill). No. 1, 1791–9

Thomas Emmerson, art collector, and his wife **Eliza Louisa Emmerson**, poet, friend and editor of John Clare, who stayed at their house on several occasions. No. 20, 1820–54 ⁹²

Field Marshall Francis Wallace Grenfell, 1st Baron Grenfell. Veteran of the Anglo-Zulu war and Sirdar of the Egyptian army. No. 16, 1891–9

Gustav Hamel, physician to Edward VII. No. 1, c.1920

Quintin Hogg, founder of Regent Street Polytechnic. No. 10, 1902–3 ⁹³

Sir John Humphreys, Middlesex coroner. No. 13, 1873–85

Richard Johnson, East India Company servant, banker, and collector of oriental art and manuscripts. No. 18, 1792–1803

Sir William Knighton, Bt, court physician. No. 14, 1834–6 ⁹⁴

Sir George Richard Brooke Pechell, 4th Bt, naval officer and Whig MP. No. 6, late 1840s–early 50s

Frederic Hervey Foster Quin, physician, founder of the British Homoeopathic Society. No. 13, 1833–40

Gen. Henry Robinson-Montagu, 6th Baron Rokeby. Veteran of Waterloo and the Crimea. No. 7, 1872–83

Henry Cadogan Rothery, ecclesiastical and Admiralty courts lawyer; wreck commissioner. No. 10, 1850–2

William Rothery, Admiralty court lawyer, Treasury adviser on Slave Trade bounties. No. 10, 1830s–1864

Sir Robert Smirke, architect. No. 5, 1820–c.1842

Sir Thomas Smith, Bt, surgeon to Queen Victoria. No. 5, 1868–1909

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Sir George William Tapps-Gervis, developer of Bournemouth, and Conservative MP. *No. 4*, 1820s–42

Rear Admiral Marquess Townshend. *No. 6*, 1858–63

Sir Edward Thomas Troubridge, 2nd Bt, rear-admiral, Lord of the Admiralty, East India Co. proprietor and Radical MP. *No. 6*, early 1840s

Sir Giffin Wilson, Master in Ordinary, High Court of Chancery. *No. 2*, 1820s–48

Sir Richard Worsley, Bt, antiquary and collector of Greek marbles. *No. 3*, 1779–91