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EPILOGUE

The British Academy's home at 10–11 Carlton House Terrace: a history

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ABSTRACT

Built on the site of a princely palace and intended to house aristocrats in almost equally impressive accommodation, Carlton House Terrace is in many respects an unlikely home for a learned society. This article traces the history of two houses: numbers 10 and 11, exploring their architecture and the lives of those who occupied them from their construction in the early 19th century until the present day. It seeks to show how shifting fashions and changing functions shaped the fabric that we now encounter. This building biography reveals a palimpsest in which each generation has reinvented the site—a process that continues with the recent work to refurbish the basement and open the British Academy's home to the public. The text is accompanied by an Appendix of Plates.

Keywords architecture, interior design, London, John Nash, William Gladstone, George IV

Filled with fine furniture and works of art, and with a façade no less than 220 feet (67 metres) in length, by 1820 Carlton House was one of the grandest and most impressive buildings in London (Plate 1). As Prince of Wales and then Prince Regent, the newly crowned George IV had devoted untold riches to the place, with a galaxy of front-rank architects—William Chambers, Henry Holland, Thomas Hopper, James Wyatt, John Nash, and half-a-dozen others—employed to expand, extend, and elaborate the edifice. Dating back to the 17th century, it had been a royal residence since 1733 and was given to the young prince for a birthday present as he reached his majority in 1783. It soon became the centre of a rival court intended to challenge his father. Carlton House was also where he (illegally) married and then installed his Roman Catholic mistress, Mrs Fitzherbert.

When presenting him with the place, George III had urged his son to confine himself to redecoration, 'only painting it and putting [in] handsome furniture when necessary' (Smith 1999: 25). Prince George did nothing of the sort, and the debts he racked up in his architectural experiments there were soon enormous. To widen the frontage, he bought—and demolished—thirteen houses. To ornament the rooms, he acquired Van Dycks and Claudes and what was reputed to be the finest collection of armour in Europe. In 1783, parliament provided £60,000 to refurbish the building. Following a financial crisis in 1785, it approved another grant of £60,000. Yet, however much was proffered, it never seemed enough. Between 1811 and 1816 alone, he spent £160,000 on

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further work. The building became synonymous with wasteful expenditure—and it was, indeed, the cost of all this that finally forced him into a disastrous if legitimate marriage with Caroline of Brunswick, an arrangement which included another £27,500 to spend on the building.

Carlton House was not universally loved. Association with the profligate prince cannot have helped endear it to his very many critics. But its grandeur could not be denied. One visitor declared that it was 'finer than anything in England and not inferior to Versailles or Saint Cloud' (Smith 1999: 30). Henry Holland brought order to the old building with the strict application of French-inspired classicism, including an Ionic screen to the street and the first *porte-cochère* in England. Inside he created a series of interlocking rooms—again in the French manner—and a dramatic, soaring staircase (Plate 1b). Visiting as the initial works were underway, Horace Walpole observed that the whole ensemble would be 'the most perfect in Europe' (Lewis 1965: 499).

George, nonetheless, always thought it could be improved still further. Thomas Hopper's additions included an extraordinary Gothic conservatory (Plate 1c). John Nash was employed to produce plans for complete rebuilding on a massive scale. In the end, he spent thousands on a succession of smaller but still cripplingly expensive projects, including a great Gothic dining room. Outside, to the south, one contemporary recalled that the 'green sward, stately trees (probably two hundred years old), and beds of the choicest flowers, gave to the grounds a picturesque attraction perhaps unequalled' (Walford 1878: 98). Nightingales sang and a rookery remained until as late as 1827. So keen were people to see the site that, when it was opened up to the public in 1811, several were seriously injured in the crush.

On his accession to the throne, George IV abandoned Carlton House, moving up the Mall to live in what is now Buckingham Palace. In 1825, he ordered that his old home should be demolished and, a year later, by Act of Parliament it was. Chimney pieces were reused at Windsor Castle; furniture and other details—including Holland's Ionic screen—were stripped out and employed in Buckingham Palace. Some sense of the scale of the loss can be gleaned by a visit to the National Gallery, where the porticos to the east and west entrances are supported by salvaged columns. They comprise, in John Summerson's words, 'probably the most refined specimen of the Corinthian order ever built in London' (Summerson 1980: 97). Carlton House also continues to exert a spectral influence on the capital. It was intended to be the terminus of John Nash's 'New Street' leading from Regent's Park to Westminster. Regent's Street curves and Piccadilly Circus were perfectly placed to ensure that the portico of Carlton House would face travellers as they headed south.

The destruction of Carlton House provided an opportunity as well as producing an obvious gap in the streetscape. Its front courtyard was replaced by two new institutions: the Athenaeum and the United Service Club (now the Institute of Directors); the building itself was succeeded by Waterloo Place. The garden in turn was slated to provide space for 'dwelling-houses of the First

Class' (Gater & Hiorns 1940). John Nash drew up the plans, conceiving these homes for the rich as twin terraces, modelled after Ange-Jacques Gabriel's two palaces overlooking the Place de la Concorde in Paris. As built between 1827 and 1831, they produced a truly monumental impression. Viewed from the north, eighteen houses were intended to form two monolithic blocks faced in stucco, rusticated to the ground floor with Ionic-columned entrances, and ornamented with pedimented windows to the *piano nobile*. Seen from the Mall, which had become a newly important processional route, the effect was still more impressive. At the base were Doric columns made of iron that supported a gravelled terrace. Above that was bay after bay—thirty one in each range—of giant-order Corinthian columns beneath a massive entablature. The capitals were based on those of the Pantheon. It was an undeniably (and appropriately) majestic sight.

Nash did not have it all his own way. His plan to place a domed temple housing a fountain between the two terraces was summarily dismissed. A grand stairway, now the Duke of York Steps, was built instead. In 1834, it was topped off with a rather different centrepiece: a huge Tuscan granite column designed by Benjamin Wyatt and surmounted with a bronze statue by Sir Richard Westmacott. Nor initially did all of the eighteen houses go up; it was not until the 1860s that Sir Samuel Peto completed the range. And Nash was never in total control of the construction process. Partly because he was preoccupied by other projects, and partly because of how the scheme was set up, he had to work in partnership. The site of Carlton House Terrace was sold as a series of building leases to be developed by the owners. Decimus Burton was employed to fit out number 3, and Tyack (1992) makes a good case that number 10 was overseen by James Pennethorne, who also assisted Nash in the five houses—numbers 11 to 15—that the architect developed directly. Emblematically, Nash sold each of them at a loss.

His scheme as a whole, however, was an undeniable success. It attracted the smart, the rich, and the respectable. First to take a lease was Lord Kensington (at number 2) in 1829. He was swiftly followed by Lord de Clifford (number 3), the Duke of Leinster (number 6), the Marquess and Dowager Marchioness of Cholmondeley (at numbers 12 and 13 respectively), and Lord Brudenell (at number 17). At number 5 was the Earl of Caledon; at number 8, Lord Wenlock. Not everyone was titled. There was a baronet—Sir Michael Shaw-Stewart—at number 4, and a smattering of commoners at other addresses. But even they were seriously wealthy. William Hannington (at number 7), for instance, was a substantial Somerset landowner. His son would employ Pennethorne to develop the family's country home, Dillington House, towards the end of the 1830s. The sale of all these leases in turn helped pay for Nash's redevelopment of Buckingham Palace for George IV.

Carlton House Terrace relied for its architectural effect on two key elements. First, there was the uniformity of material and ornamentation, the fine stucco and considered use of the Classical orders. Secondly, there was the massing of the buildings. The centre of both blocks was expressed with a pediment. At each end, the houses were treated as pavilions, with a double attic storey above.

This meant that numbers 10 and 11—the future home of the British Academy—were somewhat larger than the regular run of houses (Plate 2). It also made them more prominent, attracting occupants who wanted to make something of a statement. In 1831, two moved in: Sir Matthew White Ridley, the third baronet of that name, to number 10; Frederick John, fifth Baron Monson, to the neighbouring number 11.

With a family seat in the House of Commons and 30,000 acres in Northumberland, Ridley was, in the words of one contemporary, 'an opulent man with moderate talents, labouring to be thought a person of consequence' (Escott 2009). His wife—known to their Northumbrian tenants as 'The Proud Lady'—was believed to suffer still more from *folie de grandeur*. A later Lady Ridley observed that the pair found their previous townhouse in Portland Place 'too small or too unpretentious for their needs' (Ridley 1958: 46–7). The stately end-of-terrace pavilion provided by number 10 offered more imposing accommodation—especially with interiors designed by another Northumberland man, the architect Ignatius Bonomi, who also worked at the Ridley country house, Blagdon Hall. Carlton House Terrace gave Sir Matthew a convenient base for his parliamentary operations while he (as a convinced Whig) voted for Parliamentary Reform and (as a keen huntsman) voted against legislation on animal cruelty. A commissioner for the rebuilding of Windsor Castle, he had already worked with Nash and he fought fiercely to preserve Nash's vision for the development. Number 10 would remain the home of successive Ridleys—one Matthew after another, like a line of French monarchs—from 1831 until 1924.

Next door, at number 11, things were somewhat different. The shy and sensitive Lord Monson was the antithesis of his expansive, progressive neighbour; intensely private and a committed Tory, he was among the last to vote against Reform. He was also fated to remain in Carlton House Terrace for a fraction of the time that the Ridleys did. It was there he brought his wife Theodosia on their marriage in 1832 and there—following, by some accounts, a mere week of cohabitation—that they separated. Their differences were philosophical, interpersonal, and sexual. Theodosia, to be sure, suited the house. She was, commented a contemporary, a 'most unhappy woman whose head and neck were so strangely the human representation of the Ionic column'. She did not, however, suit married life. 'Sex with her determined everything', her critical acquaintance went on. 'To be a man was to be a monster; to be a woman was to be probably a saint and certainly a victim' (Waddington 2005).

Theodosia left for a life of impassioned relationships with a long succession of other women. She secured a part in wider history by hosting the Langham Place group, which became the forcing ground of the Victorian feminist movement. Her unfortunate husband, by contrast, would achieve very little on his own. He wrote on suffering, travelled Europe, collected art, and eventually died in his mother's arms in Brighton. Number 11 remained empty from 1834 until 1842 when it was acquired by even more unlikely owner, William Crockford.

Crockford was neither smart nor respectable. He was frankly disreputable: 'He looked not unlike a country farmer, and poor at that' (Humphreys 1953: 74), He was in fact very rich, having made his fortune running a high-class gambling establishment in St James's. So many of the very wealthiest racked up debts there that when he announced he was retiring from Crockford's Club in 1840 Disraeli compared the news to a famous bank failure. 'Tis a thunderbolt, and nothing else is talked of', he observed. 'Tis the greatest shock to domestic credit since Howard and Gibbs. … The consternation is general' (Humphreys 1953: 199). Crockford's move, first to Sussex Place and then to Carlton House Terrace, was intended to establish his respectability on retirement and, in that respect, was only a limited success. No matter how grand his address, no one forgot the story that his second wife had been a governess employed by a society lady whom Crockford had seduced. At his death in 1844, it was falsely alleged that his corpse had been propped up for public display in order to secure a winning bet on a race at the Derby: 'There he sits, in the window, as four-year-old fresh; / Rather paler than usual, but still in the flesh … And the papers ne'er knew, till a twelvemonth had sped, / That the man in the window was "CROCKY" but—dead' (Humphreys 1953: 202).

In his will, Crockford left the house to his wife, 'trusting her to do what is right' (McConnell 2008). She sold the place and in 1846 respectability returned to number 11. For the next eleven years, until he succeeded his father as fourteenth Duke of Norfolk, it was the home of Henry Fitzalan-Howard, Earl of Arundel and Surrey: a Roman Catholic so devout that even his confessor considered him a virtual saint. In 1857, the house came into the hands of William Ewart Gladstone and his wife, Catherine. The gifted son of a wealthy man, Gladstone owed his first seat as an MP and his financial security to his father. Much of the Gladstone fortune came from slavery and William was involved in both securing compensation and trying to conceal the more than £100,000 his family received in return for manumission. He would later regret his own defence of slavery, but it is true that his house was in large part purchased through its profits.

It was to be the Gladstones' home—and political base of operations—for the best part of two decades. Two years after they moved in, he became Chancellor of the Exchequer; nine years after that he was appointed Prime Minister. Although entitled to live in Downing Street, he preferred to remain in Carlton House Terrace, which he filled with dozens of paintings, drawings, classical medals, and a notable collection of China. A devotee of early Renaissance art and a significant patron of contemporary painters as well as a public figure, his loss of office in 1875 brought with it a precipitous decline in income and the Gladstones were forced to give up their lease. Leaving number 11 was, he wrote, 'like a little death … I had grown to the house, having lived more time in it than any other since I was born; and mainly by reason of all that was done in it' (Cannadine 2012: 54).

Number 11 had indeed witnessed much. It had hosted cabinet meetings and serious political decisions. It was also often the location for Gladstone's famous Thursday breakfasts, which saw eight to ten important figures summoned to

share meat and wine and discuss the state of the nation between 10 o'clock and noon. Charles Adams, the American minister, described one such occasion in 1866, where he found the Duke and Duchess of Argyll, Lord Lyttleton, Lord Dufferin, Lord Houghton, Lord Frederick Cavendish and his wife, as well as Gladstone himself. Choreographed by their host, the conversation 'passed from politics, to the House of Commons, and Mr Mill, to English prose as illustrated from the time of Milton and Bacon down to this day, and contrasted with the German, which has little of good, and French' (Jenkins 1995: 258). Two years later, in 1866, number 11 became the focus for a rather different sort of gathering, as pro-Reform protestors assembled outside the house demanding a speech from Gladstone—who was out. The police were anxious to disperse the crowd, and Catherine Gladstone was persuaded on to the balcony to encourage them to go home, 'inadvertently drawing upon herself, as his representative, the passionate enthusiasm of the people' (Drew 1920: 256), as her daughter later wrote.

With the lease valued at no less than £23,500 in 1875, it needed someone of ample means to take it on. Enter, Sir Arthur Guinness, from 1880 the first and only Lord Ardilaun, an individual whose assets and idiosyncratic approach to philanthropy helped provoke Yeats's poem 'To a Wealthy Man' (1913). Ardilaun had inherited the family brewing business. After taking a small fortune from it, in 1876 he sold his shares for a still larger sum. Seriously rich, the owner of 50,000 acres of land, and with an aristocratic wife who disapproved of any connection to trade, he devoted himself to politics, the public good, field sports, and his own architectural legacy. He completed the restoration of St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, where he also bought and laid out St Stephen's Green as a public park. He lavished money on his Irish houses, too. St Anne's, Clontarf, in the north of Dublin Bay, was transformed into an Italianate palace. Mark Bence-Jones describes it as 'the most palatial house built in Ireland during the second half of the nineteenth century' (Sharkey 2002: 46) At Ashford, on the border of Galway and Cork, Ardilaun created a baronial castle for the princely sum of almost £2 million.

Neither Gladstone nor Lord Ardilaun can have been unaware of the irony that 11 Carlton House Terrace had been handed from the man who disestablished the Irish Church and would come out in favour of Irish Home Rule to an individual utterly opposed to all of this. Ardilaun was a pious Anglican and passionate Unionist. He came to regard Gladstone as 'one of the worst enemies my country ever had' and he fiercely opposed any attempt to commemorate his association with the property. A decade after Gladstone's death, he refused permission for a memorial plaque to be affixed to the façade because 'I should have seen it from my study window' (*Catholic Press* 4 February 1909: 3). Yet number 11 remained Gladstone's in all sorts of ways. His was the conservatory built over the porch in 1862 (Plate 2a). At least initially, his was much of the furniture, too. Gladstone wrote that the house contained 'the chairs and sofa on which we sat when we resolved on the disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1868' (Cannadine 2012: 54).

Ardilaun's building work can, in that sense, be seen as much as an exorcism as a form of refurbishment. Certainly, the first-floor stateroom, scene of so many of Gladstone's social and political triumphs, was left unrecognisable by its transformation in the style of Louis XVI (Plate 13). Its decoration echoed the treatment applied to another Guinness property, Farmleigh House, in 1886 and reflected Ardilaun's overripe aesthetic preferences. He was, after all, immortalised in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) as a man who had 'to change his shirt four times a day' (Joyce 1922: 76). Although the marriage was childless—and, if the rumours are true, platonic—there was a host of godchildren. On visiting in 1915, one of them found number 11 'in the very grand style, with marble staircases and marble statues, French furniture, much gilding, brocade hangings in strong yellow and many mirrors; not altogether in good taste, but opulent' (Everett 1951: 155–6).

At number 10, meanwhile, the first half of the 20th century was marked by still greater change. In 1900, the latest Matthew Ridley was elevated to the peerage after several decades as a Conservative frontbencher. Inheriting this title from his father in 1904, the second Viscount Ridley—another Conservative politician called Matthew—decided to turn the house into a more suitable home for someone of his station. In the years after 1905, the building was transformed by the fashionable society firm of Detmar Blow and Fernand Billerey. Blow was a product of the arts and crafts movement; his French-born partner had trained in Paris and Rome. Together, they offered the very wealthy an eclectic range of architecture. For the Ridleys they built a smart new porch surmounted by a cabin in a sort of Baroque take on Soane. The first-floor staterooms they reimagined as a grand Parisian suite, with elaborate gilded cornices and ceilings (Plates 6a, 7a, 9a). More strikingly still, they gutted the old staircase, replacing it by an imposing set of marble steps, complete with a bronze balustrade by Bainbridge Reynolds, with the whole topped off by a rotunda (Plates 4a, 5). The effect was breathtakingly opulent and its purpose made apparent by the Ridley coat of arms set into the black-and-white marble floor at the entrance (Plate 3). Here, it announced, was the home of a wealthy aristocrat.

In their work at number 10, Blow and Billerey drew immediate inspiration from another modish firm, Mewès and Davies, who had recently designed the Ritz Hotel in similarly extravagant style. They, in turn, were indebted to the example of the 18th-century architect Ange-Jacques Gabriel, whose Place de la Concorde had, after all, been the model for Carlton House Terrace. And the revival of French influences on the house did not end with the architecture. The ballroom acquired a *trompe l'oeil* ceiling in the manner of Delacroix by the Parisian partnership of Henry Brémond and Maurice Tastemain, who had been brought to Britain by Blow and Billerey to ornament the Playhouse Theatre in Northumberland Avenue (Plate 8). Gossips suggested that the painting was left unfinished because one of the artists was found to be having an affair with Lady Ridley. The pair, in truth, probably just returned to Paris before the work was done. In any event, Viscount Ridley did not long enjoy his expensively remodelled home. Never well, and aged only 41, he died of complications from duodenal ulcers in 1916. He left behind two daughters, a 14-year-old son and

heir—another Matthew, of course—and a remarkable widow, Lady Rosamond, who was overseeing a new and surprising chapter in the history of the house.

On the outbreak of war in 1914, Lady Ridley turned the extravagantly appointed number 10 into a hospital (Plate 7b). Technically, a branch of Queen Alexandra's Military Hospital in Millbank, it was described as 'by far the most fashionable hospital for officers in the war' (Syrett 2014: 22). It attracted concerned peeresses, including Lady Rothschild, who sent flowers. It also, somewhat unfortunately, attracted Queen Alexandra who made herself a nuisance by visiting. Completely deaf, almost wholly blind, her accent was unintelligible and her ministrations unwanted by the subjects of her attention. 'Sometimes', it was recorded, 'when they know she's coming they pretend to sleep' (Syrett 2014: 22). But Lady Ridley's Hospital was a serious enterprise. In 1917, there were sixty beds and even an operating theatre on the ground floor. The victims of gas attacks were accommodated in huts on the gravelled terrace, and admirers would congregate in the Mall to see them being shaved. By the time it closed in 1919, Lady Ridley had been made a dame.

In the aftermath of conflict, new priorities reshaped the neighbourhood. Between 1919 and 1920, number 11 and the neighbouring number 12 were taken over by the army as the London District Headquarters established a 'Spy School' in the premises. The merging of the two properties seems to have encouraged the Guinnesses into expansion. From 1922, they employed the architect Edwin Lutyens to link numbers 11 and 12, and his work can still be seen in the staircase of number 11. At the same time, Gladstone finally got his Blue Plaque outside the front door. In 1924, Viscount Ridley left number 10. The house that his father had so lavishly transformed, but he (as Lutyens' son-in-law) could not have conceivably liked, was converted into the Union Club.

Employing the architect Ernest Turner Powell to oversee the work, the Club assimilated parts of the neighbouring property, too. The main stair of number 11 was retained by the Guinnesses, but the front ground-floor room was sealed off from their home and absorbed into number 10 (Plate 3c). Refitted to echo Billeray and Blow's grandiloquent entrance, it was just part of an incredibly complex interlocking set of spaces. The Club came to include all the basement cellars and top floors of both number 10 and number 11 as well as much of the ground floor in what had been Gladstone's home (Plate 11). That the Grand Old Man's beloved residence should have partially housed an institution founded in 1799 to celebrate the Act of Union with Ireland was an irony even Lord Ardilaun might have found amusing.

It was also a sign of the times. As early as 1904 the journalist T.H.S. Escott had pointed to the changing character of Carlton House Terrace, where old families were increasingly displaced by new money. 'The trans-Atlantic Midases—peltry or pork kings—have established themselves on the site once consecrated by Carlton House', he wrote. 'Their rivals from the Antipodes are coming over' (Crook 1999: 161). Ten years later, as if to prove the point, James Horlick, the malted milk magnate, moved into number 2. Institutions were also attracted by the area. In 1935, Crockford's Club arrived at number 16 and the

Royal Empire Society at number 17. Attending a ball at number 11 hosted by Loel Guinness in December that year, Chips Channon found 150 guests—'all buddies'—but little joy. 'The party had no *Stimmung*', he recorded; 'there were not enough men and too many bores' (Heffer 2021: 489).

The Second World War compounded the problem. A direct hit in the Blitz seriously ravaged number 10 and destroyed Gladstone's conservatory at number 11 (Plate 2b). Rising costs, rising taxes, the problem of securing staff: all this made Carlton House Terrace a burden for its occupants. The Guinnesses moved out in 1946. The Union Club left in 1951. The two houses became government offices, hosting such varied institutions as the Royal Commission on Capital Punishment in 1950 and an international exhibition on crime prevention and prisoner welfare in 1960. In 1932, *Country Life* had expressed doubts about the future of these buildings. 'Carlton House Terrace acquires half its significance from representing the aristocratic ideal', it observed. That ideal, it went on, 'is passing away' (*Country Life* 8 October 1932: 392). The post-war settlement left the terrace down at heel, dingy, and damaged, the isolated relic of an apparently lost age. Small wonder the whole eastern block was scheduled to be replaced with a new home for the Foreign Office. Not until 1960 was that plan abandoned and not until a year later was a positive future for the area envisaged. It was then that the Crown Estate announced plans to fill both terraces with residences, 'Embassies, Clubs, Learned Societies or analogous organizations employing comparatively small staff' (Clark 1993: 299).

Six years later, in 1967, the Royal Society moved to numbers 6–9. At about the same time, the Commonwealth Secretariat relocated to number 10, with the Foreign Press Association at number 11. Both installed offices in the state rooms and transformed the attic storeys from bedrooms into places of work. In 1970, the Industrial Society became the first post-war tenants of the previously derelict 3–4 Carlton House Terrace (which became home to the Royal Academy of Engineering in 2007). The British Academy moved to number 10 in 1998, employing Feilden and Mawson to take on what was described as a 'badly neglected' building (British Academy 2018: 42). Originally accommodated at Burlington House, where a ghostly inscription survives, the Academy had relocated to the outer circle of Regent's Park in 1982 but now needed yet more room.

At number 10, the existing arrangement of offices around a corridor in the attics was preserved, but the staterooms were handsomely restored. The goal was not simply to acquire capacious and attractive new accommodation; it was, as the President, Tony Wrigley, put it, 'to transform the Academy and its activities beyond recognition' (British Academy 2018: 43). In 2009, as the Foreign Press Association moved out, the British Academy moved in, completing the fusion between numbers 10 and 11 first begun nearly a century before. New doors were knocked between them: sometimes necessitating a small change of level, occasionally requiring connections set at an unexpected angles, generally making navigation through the building a baffling affair (Plates 6c, 9b, 13, 14).

Originally, the plans had included the creation of a restaurant in the basement, but this was never done. In 2022, it was announced that Wright & Wright (2022) had been selected to take on the job of converting 'a warren of corridors and rooms in the Academy's lower floors into three, double-height event spaces technologically equipped for conferences, lectures, workshops, festivals, and performances' (British Academy 2022). The architects were well experienced in this sort of project, having undertaken somewhat similar work at both the Architectural Association and the Paul Mellon Centre in Bedford Square. Their proposals also had the effect of returning much of the basement to the plan it had possessed before the Union Club intervened in the 1920s, with doors blocked, corridors closed, and double-height spaces reinstated.

But still, it is a big job and it will be transformative: not only for the building, nor even just for the British Academy, but for Carlton House Terrace itself. If the project is successful, if it draws all the people—and all the very many different types of people—intended, then it will give new purpose to a place that perhaps rather lacks it. Remarkably enough, it may even help re-establish this location as a focus for attention and public attraction just as Carlton House itself was intended to be.

However large, the project is also of course just the latest change to be experienced here. To look at successive plans of the two houses is to realise how much they have been altered since they were first built (Figure 1). On the ground floor alone, the great staircase Pennethorne planned for number 10 is no more. It was swept away by Blow and Billerey in 1905. At number 11, Nash's stair was probably never built—or, at any rate, was very swiftly altered. Instead of the U-shaped stairway specified in the building lease, we now encounter something very different: a much grander bifurcated stair, which was subsequently adapted and further embellished by the architects T. Roger Smith in 1875 and Edwin Lutyens in 1924 (Plate 10). On the first floor, successive remodellings would render the rooms unrecognisable to their original inhabitants. The way in which spaces were swapped between numbers 10 and 11 and in which number 11 was briefly grafted onto number 12 makes the 20th-century history of the site exceptionally difficult to follow. The loss of the cellars on the Mall to form the Institute of Contemporary Arts leaves it equally difficult to envisage the original arrangement of spaces there.

Perhaps this complexity is apt for the home of a learned society. Certainly, it creates welcome work for historians as they attempt to untangle the social and architectural history of the site. Erected on the ruins of a princely folly, originally intended to accommodate the aristocracy, and then reshaped by successive generations, the story of Carlton House Terrace is undoubtedly a rich one. Its past has left each house a palimpsest, in which the whims of the rich or the needs of very varied institutions have all left their mark. Its present sees the place in almost certainly the best condition it has ever been—and numbers 10 and 11 are no exception to that. Restored, refurbished (Plate 15), and now reimagined, the Academy's home has never had it so good. As for the future? Well, only time will tell.

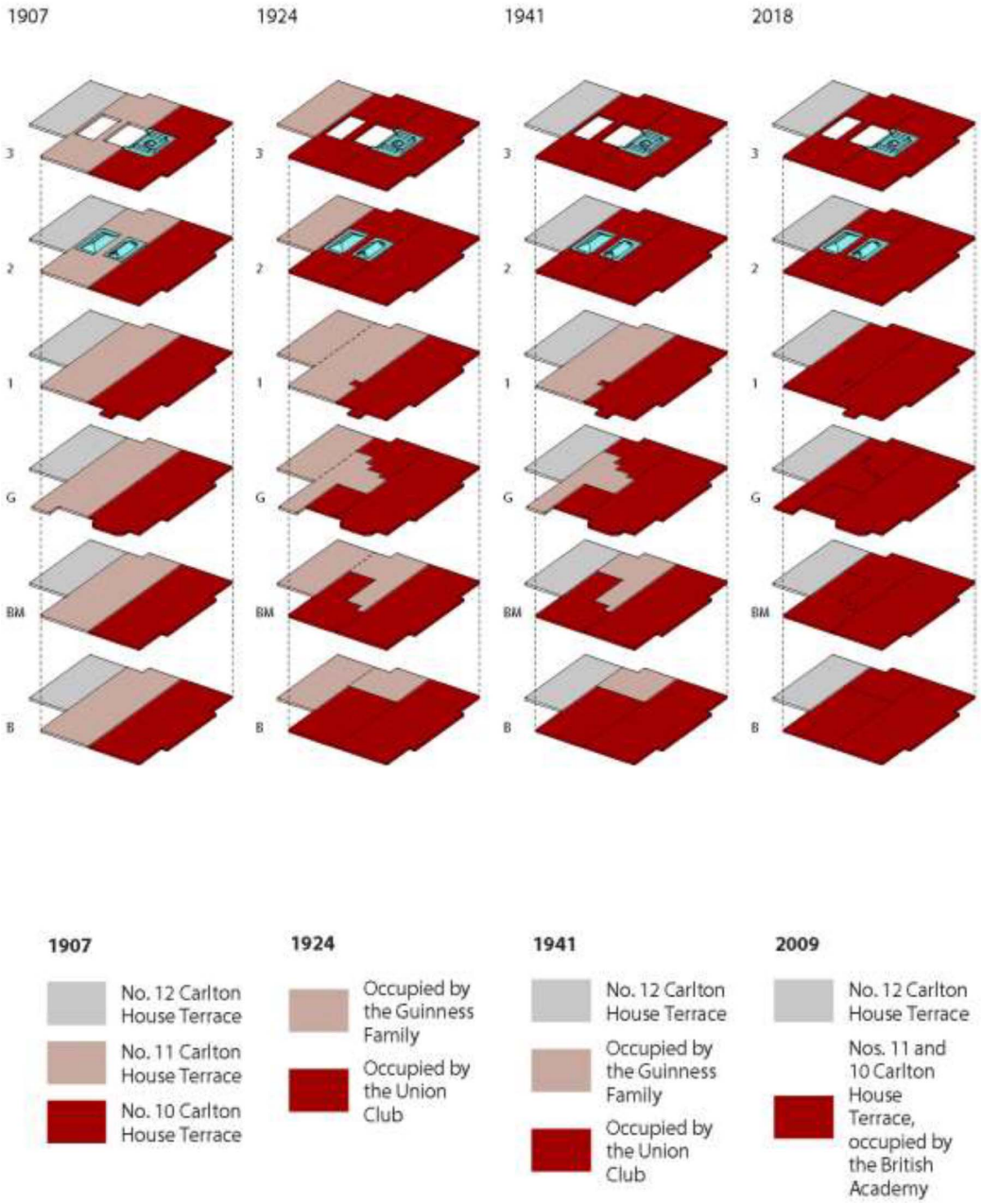

Figure 1. Diagram of changes in occupation of Nos. 10–12 Carlton House Terrace between 1907 and 2009, by Alan Baxter Associates.

Appendix of Plates

An Appendix of 15 Plates (containing 38 images) is at https://doi.org/10.5871/jba/012.a23.plates.

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