

NO. 3 HENRIETTA STREET: THE HISTORY OF A HOUSE

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Henrietta Street, which takes its name from the Queen Consort of Charles I, was laid out in 1631. The street has never been widened but none of the 17th century fabric now remains. Most of the present buildings date from the 19th century and even the few surviving 18th century houses are distinguished by fronts of mid-Victorian stucco.

During the 17th century the site of No. 3 Henrietta Street abutted directly on to the garden wall of Bedford House, the London mansion of the ground landlords of much of this area, the Earls and Dukes of Bedford. About 1705 the land was developed; and in 1709 a lease of the newly-erected No.3 was granted to one 'Henry Emmerson, gent'. At this date inhabitants of the street were predominantly tradesmen and by 1718 No. 3 had become the White Bear Tavern, a favourite halfway-house for the rakes who patronised Tom King's, further down the street, one of the most celebrated disorderly houses of 18th century London. In 1780 the White Bear Tavern was destroyed by fire. The lessee at this date was John Bellamy, a mercer.

After rebuilding, the present house was occupied firstly by Herbert Laurence, who remained here until 1793, and then by Henry Townley Ward, a descendant of Ned Ward, the 'Grub Street' satirical writer, who in 1705 was pilloried for attacking the Whigs. Ward disliked the area and in consequence the house was frequently sub-let, on one occasion, it is said, to the Countess of Mornington, the mother of the great Duke of Wellington. Despite an undeniably sweet disposition, Lady Mornington lacked insight and once described her son as 'the fool of the family'.

By 1815 - the year 'the fool of the family' was thrashing Napoleon at Waterloo - No. 3 had passed into the hands of Charles Few, a solicitor. The firm which he founded remained here until 1856. Three years later the house was leased to George Beaman, an impoverished surgeon who lived here with his wife and three young children, supplementing his income by taking in boarders - of which in 1861 there were three. A decade later the house had passed to a rather more successful medical man, George Vine, whose household, in addition to three marriageable daughters, boasted a cook, a butler, a housemaid and a footman.

On Vine's vacation in 1897, No. 3 Henrietta Street became the offices of the publishers, Duckworth & Co., whose most famous reader was Edward Garnett, discoverer and encourager of many writers including John Galsworthy, the author of 'The Forsyte Saga', who in 1918 became one of the very few writers ever to decline a knighthood. His second and third novels were both published from here.

Another frequent visitor to No. 3 was D.H. Lawrence, whom Garnett had also encouraged to take up writing. Despite - or perhaps because of - 'Lady Chatterley's Lover', Lawrence was not a commercial success. Socially he held himself somewhat aloof; and once said his favourite recreation was removing his clothes and climbing mulberry trees. He left a mere £2,500.

Since the Second World War No. 3 has had a number of arts-related tenants including the National Book Council and the publishers, MacGibbon and Kee. In 1971 Alfred Hitchcock shot here some of the scenes for the film, 'Frenzy'. For the last fifteen years the building has been occupied by the Eurospan Group of Publishers whose clients, staff and suppliers might feel some pleasure from their association with a historic, cultural and literary tradition that stretches back on this site for nearly three hundred years.

