Fig. 1

163 EVERSHOLT STREET LONDON NW1 1BU

HERITAGE STATEMENT

199-2015-03-27

The Stephen Gray Consultancy

Consultancy on Historic Buildings and Places

163 EVERSHOLT STREET LONDON NW1 1BU

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Fig. 2 view along Eversholt Street from south

1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.1 The Stephen Gray Consultancy was appointed to make a Heritage Statement for pre-application enquiry for proposed alterations to this grade 2 listed building. That statement is now reissued with additions to reflect pre-application advice and design development.

1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework includes that plan-making and decision-taking on proposals which will affect heritage assets, should only be made following an evidence-based assessment of the factors that confer significance upon such assets.

1.3 The author's credentials to make such assessment are appended.

1.4 The building's Heritage Asset is at Section 2, the Evidence-base at Section 3, Assessment of Significance at Section 4 and Impact Assessment at Section 5

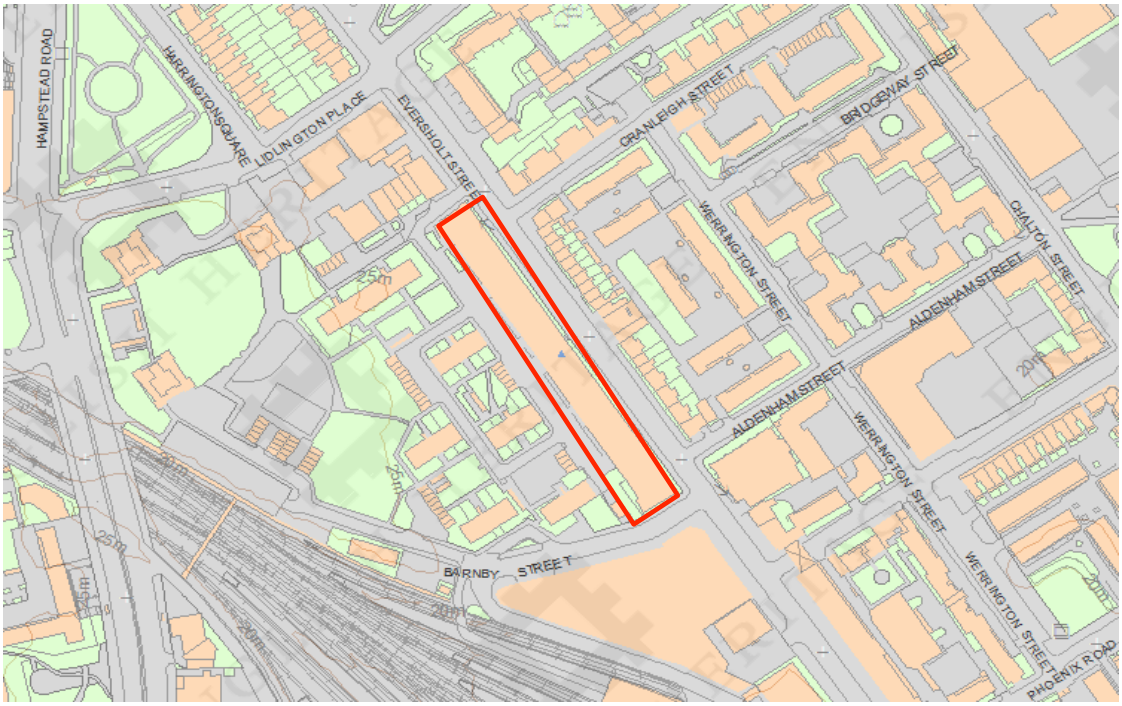

Fig. 3 Current Ordnance Survey Map – Nos. 163-203 (odd) outlined in red

2 HERITAGE ASSET STATUS

2.1 No. 163 Eversholt Street is part of Eversholt House (Nos. 163-203 (odd), listed Grade 2, with Group Value on 14 May 1974.

2.2 LIST ENTRY

TQ2983SW EVERSHOLT STREET 798-1/83/426 (West side) 14/05/74
Nos.163-203 (Odd) Eversholt House and attached railings
GV II
The London & North-Western Region Railway Clearing House, now office block. c1846-8, with additions northwards in 1850 (south corner of Barnby Street) and 1874-1902, renovated late C20. Designed by JB Stansby, company engineer. Interior remodelled late C20. Irregular block in Classical style. Yellow stock brick. Stone cornice and blocking course. 3 storeys and basements, 4 storeys at north end. 53 windows. Facade broken up by slightly recessed bays and changes of cornice height. Round-arched entrances with stucco block dressings, keystones and fanlights; architraved doorways with cornices and panelled doors; doorways flanked by architraved windows with cornices. Gauged brick flat arches to recessed sash windows with glazing bars; 3 light windows above entrances. Main stone cornice at 2nd floor level. INTERIOR: not inspected. SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: attached cast-iron railings with urn finials.

2.3 The site is not within a conservation area.

2.4 The listing cites Group Value but the only listed building adjacent is the Church of St Mary The Virgin (1824-7 H and HW Inwood) on the opposite side of Eversholt Street. There is no immediately obvious group in that relationship, but there is with the much altered early 19thC terrace on the opposite side of the street.

3 EVIDENCE-BASE

3.1 THE RAILWAY CLEARING HOUSE

Eversholt House was part of the Railway Clearing House. This was not a particular building but an organisation, set up to allocate the evenue of railway companies. When passenger or goods made journeys on lines or trains owned by two or more railway companies, each was entitled to a proportion of the fare or fee. The Railway Clearing House was the organisation that apportioned the receipts fairly. It was founded in January 1842 with premises at 111 Drummond Street opposite Euston Station. It was given legal status by a private act of Parliament, the Railway Clearing Act of 25 June 1850.

The Clearing House expanded and in early 1849 had to move to larger purpose-built premises in Seymour Street (renamed Eversholt Street in 1938). These 1849 premises comprised part of the present Eversholt House, the building being extended in 1850, 1874 and 1902.

3.2 THE BUILDING

The 1849 building, and probably the 1850 and 1874 extensions, were designed by *James B Stansby*. The list description describes him as *Chief Engineer to the London and North Western Railway* and the *Illustrated London News* of 8th October 1870 [pp. 386- 388] described him as the Company's assistant engineer. However he was an architect not an engineer. As the Company's architect he was responsible for all its building work but after the collapse of the new station roof at Huddersfield in the 1870s, the Company's building work was placed in the hands of a chief engineer. Stansby was then retained as Architectural Assistant to the Chief Engineer, a position he held until 1886. He designed the Comany's headquarters building and various others, including the lodges at Euston Station.

A photograph of the earliest part of the building shows the principal elements of the architectural composition that were completed as the building was extended. It was of three storeys above a basement. The ground floor was raised above the pavement and of equal height to the first floor. a cornice and second floor of slightly reduced height and eaves cornice with concealed roof. Entrances were articulated with rusticated ashlar quoins and steps from the pavement and the basement Area was railed with cast iron. Fenestration was of tall sashes with three bay sashes to the centre of irregular spaced bays. It was an architecture that readily facilitated extension of the basic design and variations in parapet and roofline as the building progresses north, attests to the phases of extension.

3.3 A PURPOSE BUILT OFFICE

Offices had been built for the Admiralty and the East India Company in the 18thC but the Clearing House represented a new building type for the Victorian era, a purpose-built office block.

Although the street elevations used the menu of mid 19thC urban architecture, it was not of domestic character, as seen in the equal storey heights.

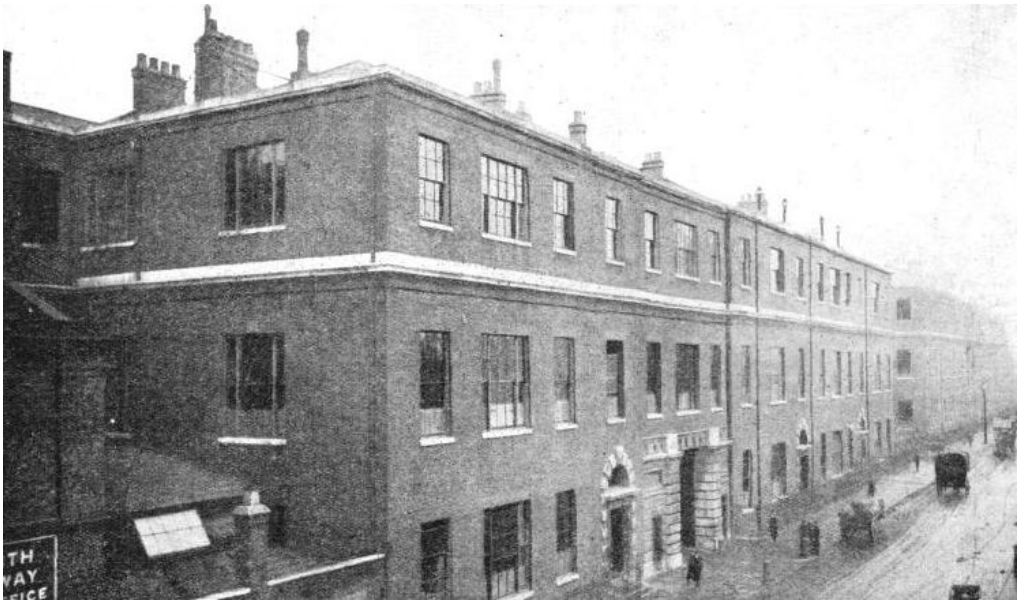

Fig. 4 Early photograph from south

The Clearing House was divided into three main departments, the Secretarial, Merchandise, and Coaching sections. Photographs of the Secretarial section show female clerks at rows of large tables, sorting used tickets. Basement rooms were Muniment rooms for storage of documents. Nowadays no doubt it could all be done on a computer, but the increasing size of the building was proportional to the increasing scale of the clerical tasks.

Fig. 5 The Secretarial Section in operation in the 1920s

3.4 20TH CENTURY ALTERATIONS

1895 and 1954 Ordnance Survey maps show both an increase in length of the building and, as blank patches, cleared bombsites. Civil Defence records detail high explosive bombs dropped in Eversholt Street and to the rear of the building. [Aggregate night time bomb census 1940-41]

fig. 6 1895 Ordnance Survey map

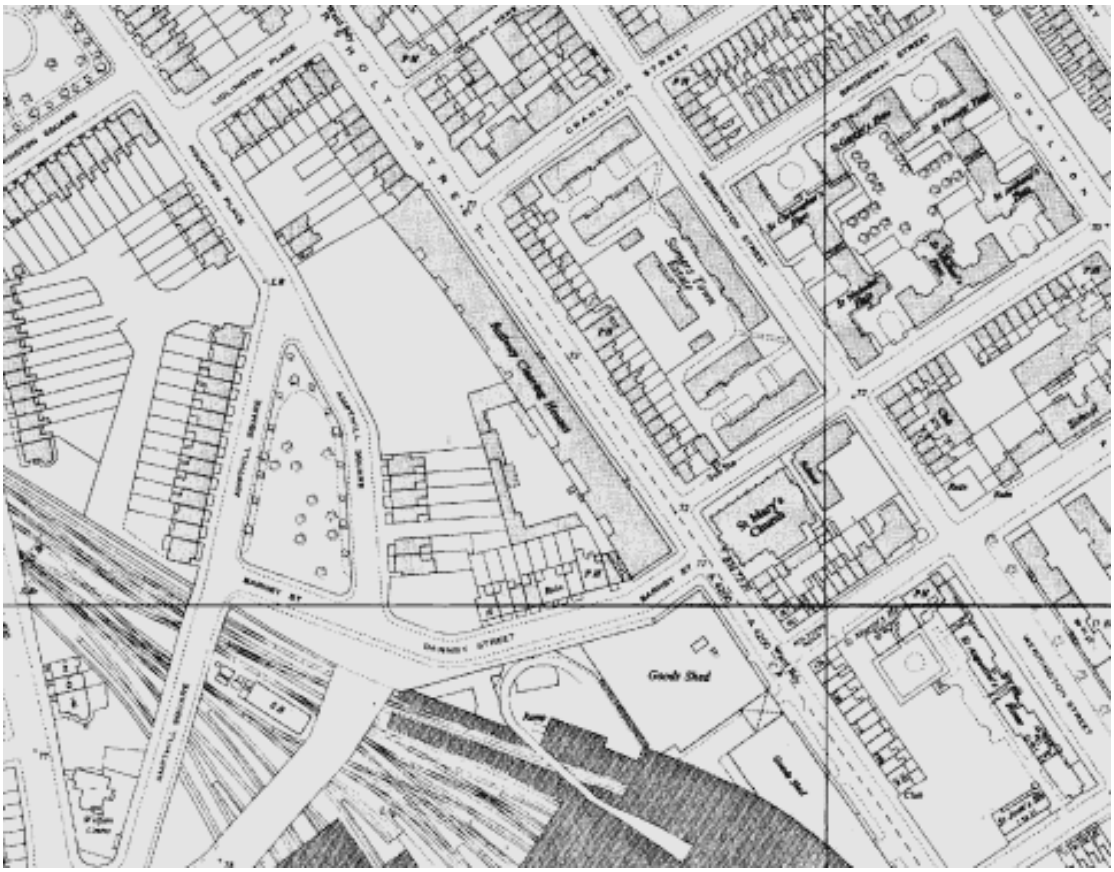

Fig. 7 1954 Ordnance Survey map

Post war alterations to the building included conversion of the basement rooms to a car park, and rear extension with floors of lesser clear height that at the front and an elevation in 1980s Post-Modern style. The effect of this was to remove historic character from all except some rooms facing Eversholt Street and the front and end elevations.

Fig. 8 Rear elevation

3.5 GROUND FLOOR FRONT ROOM

The room that is the subject of the pre-app enquiry is one of the Long Offices of the building. It has a rear gallery (as was general) of thick timber decking on cast iron brackets, the moulding of the cross section profile of the cast iron brackets is returned in timber along the rare soffit of the gallery. The gallery was reached by a vertiginous narrow spiral stair but recent alteration was the installation of a safer, wider, spiral stair to access the centre of the gallery and thus through to a first floor room in the rear extension, above an extended ground floor room. The iron gallery railing remains in place, now with additional metal braces.

Paneled painted deal doors line the back of the gallery, below a coved timber moulding. Another simple moulding dresses the top of wainscott paneling. Three sash windows appear to be the mid-19thC originals, un-horned and with lambs' tongue glazing bars. The sash boxes are framed by moulded timber architraves.

An early photograph of a typical room (possibly that in question) and a modern photograph show both original survival and alteration.

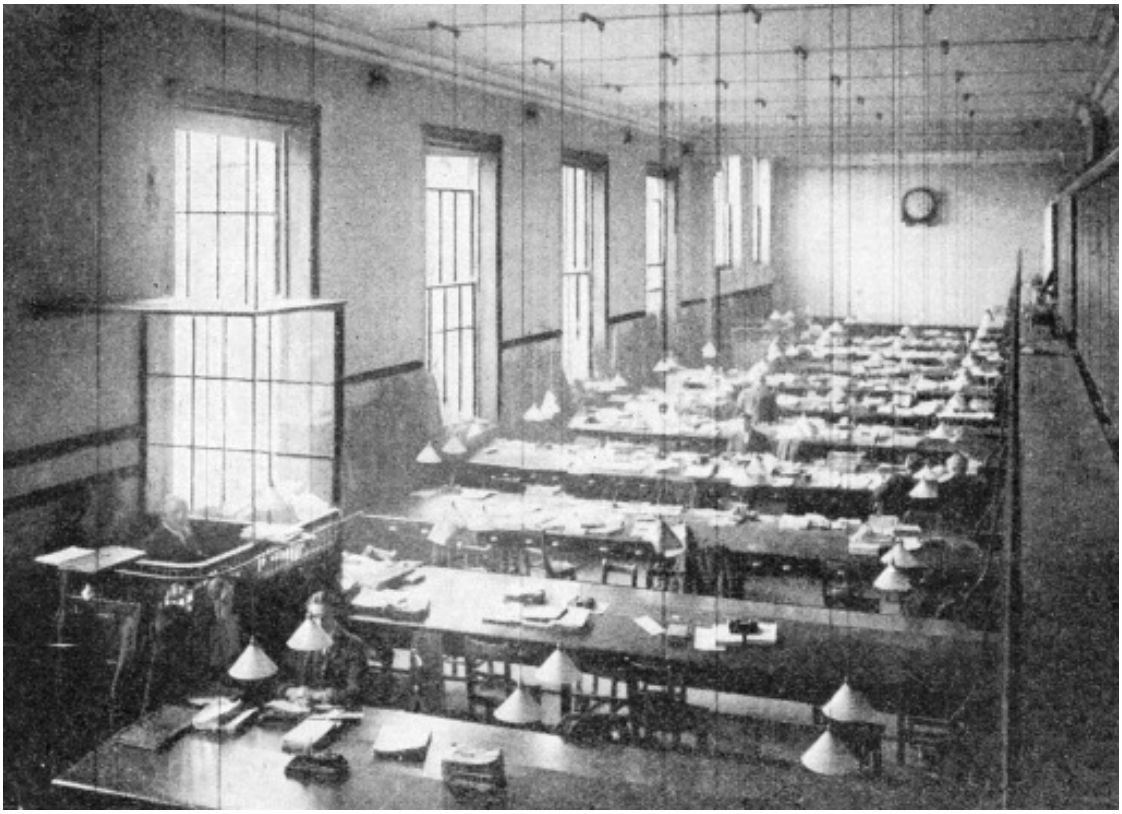

Fig. 9 Early photograph from rear gallery

Fig. 10 Current photograph from rear gallery

Fig. 11 Current photograph of rear gallery and recently installed spiral stair

Fig. 12 Original coved cornice

The room was well lit by tall windows and gas mantels. This was different from the early Victorian candle-lit offices where clerks such as Dickens' *Bob Cratchet* laboured over ledgers on high stools. Whilst the clerks' tasks may have been repetitive early 20thC photographs show women workers with fashionable *bobbed* hairstyles, not the image of downtrodden workers.

In addition to the wide spiral staircase to the gallery, other recent interventions to the room include a run of ceiling-mounted fan-coil units for comfort cooling, concealed by a curved raft, wall-mounted uplighters (original lighting having been pendant fittings with exposed conduit) and a raised access floor.

The relative plainness of the interior has perhaps obviated any apparent need to bring the 'room up to date' so although it retains historic authenticity, it does not appear overly historic in character.

3.6 CONSTRUCTION: Examination by lifting tiles in the raised floor suggests that the structural floor is concrete. Given the age of the part of the building, that could be assumed to be unreinforced concrete between iron filler joists.

3.7 GMT: Apart from the building in Eversholt Street, perhaps the most enduring legacy of the Railway Clearing House was its recommendation of 22 September 1847 that Greenwich Mean Time should be adopted as the standard time for all railways in the United Kingdom *in lieu* of several minutes' difference of local times by the sun.

REFERENCES

Centre for Metropolitan History: 'Somers Town and Euston Square', *Old and New London*: Volume 5: 1878: Edward Walford: pp. 340-355.

'The Railway Clearing House': *The Railway Magazine*: Cooke BWC ed.:December 1954: Tothill Press: 100 (644): p. 81, 101 and p. 212

4 ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

4.1 The Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide advises that significance is not uniform but is variable between different heritage assets of broadly similar types and between different parts and elements of the same asset. By the same token it advises that not all designated assets are of equal significance or sensitivity to change.

4.2 The establishment of the Railway Clearing House has very great historic importance in the making of modern Britain, coordinating the new railway network to facilitate communication and transport of goods and people, and establishing standard time throughout the country. This is historic importance perhaps greater than for the building itself.

4.3 Of the building that was built over a period of years for the Railway Clearing House. the basic criterion for listing is that it must hold special historic or architectural interest, and thus significance, and it must be tested for such significance.

4.4 There is primary architectural and historic significance in the building being one of the earliest examples of a purpose built office block. The architectural manifestation drew on the language of the domestic London terrace in the evenly spaced repetition of elements along the principal elevation but differed from the domestic model in abandoning the hierarchy of vertical elements by having ground and first floors of equal height. The plan form of the building also departed from domestic models that might have been drawn upon. Unlike domestic models which were cellular, narrow and deep, the Long Offices were wide, about double square in plan and square in section, with one aspect, to the east.

4.5 Those significant elements of the architectural composition of the building were dressed in the common design language of mid 19thC London which is secondary to that higher significance. The building's yellow stock brickwork, with tall sash windows set recessed in gauged brick arched openings, and doorways, arched and square topped having rusticated ashlar quoins, was polite to the established street architecture and allowed repetition without the need for any complicated compositional articulation.

4.6 To the rear, significance has been entirely replaced by late 20thC construction and inarticulate use of Post Modern elements of no significance.

4.7 As noted, the volume and plan of the Long Office has high significance matched by the rear gallery, form following function. The fabric and details of the gallery share that high significance.

4.8 Other features of the Long Office, mouldings, windows, wainscotts and original plaster have only medium instrinsic significance. However paragraph 179 of the National Planning Policy Framework advises *The fabric will always be an important part of the asset's significance. Retention of as much historic fabric as possible is therefore a fundamental part of any good alteration or conversion, together with the use of appropriate materials and methods of repair. It is not appropriate to sacrifice old work simply to accommodate the new.*

5 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 At pre-application stage the following assessments were made:

5.2 Elements of the proposals within the 20thC built rear rooms and installation of ductwork within the substantially altered basement space have no harmful impact on heritage significance.

5.3 Removal of the recently installed spiral stair and reinstatement of the gallery railing would bring modest heritage gain by restoration. This gain is balanced against impact from the configuration and detail design of the proposed new stair to the gallery.

5.4 The proposed display kitchen units are furniture movable and removable and without the prospect of harm to the significance of the room or the building.

5.5 Functional planning of the proposed use requires subdivision of the Long Office and therefore risk of harm to significance. The proposed glazed screen will allow the room's present single volume to remain evident. There is obvious similarity between the example shown by the architects and the supervisor's screen in the early photograph. And like the supervisor's desk screen the new glass partition would be reversible.

5.6 The proposals for which consent are now sought were developed from those submitted for pre-application enquiry and to which Camden Borough Council commented under reference 2014/7582/PRE on 16 January 2015.

5.7 That pre-application advice was that the proposed room divider should be detailed to replicate the screen seen in the historic photograph [fig. 9] and should not extend to the ceiling, to allow the volume and proportion of the historic room to continue to be appreciated.

Advice continued that the kitchen units should not be overly elaborate, and be simple in appearance, so as not to complete with the primary visual significance of the historic room.

5.8 Pre-application advice expressed caution on the impact of new pipe runs for water, waste and ducted extract ventilation on historic fabric. It advised investigation works on floor structure and the panelling on the mezzanine level.

5.9 Investigation (3.6) shows that the proposed room divider can be floor fixed without harm to significant historic fabric. With careful machine cutting, the assumed floor construction can also accommodate the proposed penetration for the extract ventilation duct (approximately 500mm square) without loss of structural integrity.

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199-2015-03-26

Research Jan Gray MSc BEd Dip DHE

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In 40 years of practice Stephen Gray's career has ranged across both public and private sectors and has gone beyond his first discipline of Architecture, to include and often combine, the disciplines of Project Management and Historic Building Conservation, as a practitioner, consultant and lecturer. His Master of Science degree is in Historic Building Conservation and he is a full Member of the Institute of Historic Building Conservation.

With the *Department of the Environment PSA*, he carried out projects for the *Directorate of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings* (the precursor to *English Heritage*), as well being architect for many buildings for the *RAF*. Subsequently he was appointed as multi-disciplinary group leader in the PSA *Student Training Office*. On promotion to Principal Architect he was project manager for *United States Air Force* projects in the UK.

With the APP Partnership he was design team leader for the *Cornmill Shopping Centre*, the insertion of a major new retail development into the Central Darlington Conservation Area, behind 65 retained historic buildings.

For 20 years with Belgravia based *Weldon Walshe*, to whom he remains a consultant, he was project director for many residential and commercial projects, mainly in Central London's Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. During this time he established his reputation as a heritage consultant to other practices and planning consultants as well as to his own practice. On retirement he established his consultancy practice.

Appointed as a preferred trainer by the *Grosvenor Estate*, to train the Estate's staff in heritage issues, he has also been a consultant trainer to professional staff of *The National Trust* Building Department. He was a visiting lecturer to the *School of Conservation Science* at *Bournemouth University,* and external tutor for post-graduate architecture students at *Oxford Brookes University* and practice-based mentor for undergraduate students of *Brighton University School of Architecture*.

For four years until last year he served as the Institute of Historic Building Conservation's appointed Trustee to the *Covent Garden Area Trust* and on retirement was made a life member of the Trust.

He has undertaken *pro bono* work for local planning authorities and community associations, including drafting the *Hurstpierpoint Village Design Statement,* the first such document to be accepted as a Supplementary Planning Document by Mid Sussex District Council. In *James and Decimus Burton's* Regency town, St Leonard's-on-Sea, on the South coast, he assisted the Save the Archery Ground (STAG) campaign and Hastings Borough Council in giving evidence to successfully defend an appeal inquiry.

Stephen Gray's experience of the historic environment has included work to a medieval castle and royal residences. It ranges from Medieval buildings to those of the 20th Century Modern Movement, including many listed at Grades 1 and 2*. These have included the Whitbread stables, Waterloo Fire Station and the Royal Artillery HQ Mess at Larkhill mentioned in the text, and buildings and interiors by artists, designers and architects such as: *Colin Campbell, Isaac Ware, James and Robert Adam, Angelika Kaufmann, James Wyatt, and Sir Jeffry Wyattville, John Nash, Sir John Soane, Thomas Cubitt, James and Decimus Burton, George Basevi, Owen Jones, Thomas Cundy III, Philip Webb, CFA Voysey, Norman Shaw, Sir Edwin Lutyens, Sir Aston Webb, H P Berlage, Bart Van Der Leck and Oliver Hill.*