

## NO.1 GOLDEN SQUARE

**GOLDEN SQUARE** covers the site of a communal grave dug for victims of the Great Plague in 1665. At that time it was known as Gelding Close, possibly from being the site of a stable, possibly from a tavern called the *Gelding*. Because of fear of lingering contamination, the land was not developed for nearly a decade after the Great Plague. When it was, the residents deciding the old name was too unrefined, exchanged 'Gelding' for 'Golden', 'Close' for 'Square'. In 1720 the historian, Strype, described it as 'a very handsome place railed round and gravelled with many very good houses inhabited by gentry on all sides'.

No.1 Golden Square was one of the last sites to be developed. On the partition of Gelding Close in 1675 it formed part of the moiety allocated to Isaac Symball, but was still vacant at his death in 1695. In June 1697 the freehold of this site, of the adjoining sites of Nos.2-4 Golden Square and all the land on the east side of what is now Upper James Street, were sold by Symball's widow and son to Stephen Quynes, tailor, who constructed the house in or before 1705/1706. The first occupant was Lord Mordaunt, who could not have spent much time here, being occupied with the Duke of Marlborough's armies in the Low Countries until June 1706. He then spent only a few months in England before being sent to serve in Spain. In 1707 the house was taken by the 4th Lord Byron - an ancestor of the poet - who was newly married. In October 1709 the land which Stephen Quynes had bought in 1697, together with No.1 Golden Square, was sold by his widow and children for £1,276 10s to the parish vestry of St. Sepulchre's, Holborn, to which Richard Reeve had left a bequest for the education of the poor. Thereafter, Nos.1-4 Golden Square and the adjoining houses on the east side of Upper James Street, formed part of the estate of Reeve's Foundation, which provides scholarships for the children of the parish of St. Sepulchre's.

Later occupants of No.1 Golden Square included William Talbot, Bishop of Salisbury, [1659c-1730] here from 1716 to 1721; and Sir Francis St. John and his son-in-law, Sir John Barnard, here between 1751 and 1756.

There is little indication that the house erected in 1706 was ever radically altered or rebuilt. From 1794 to 1861 it was occupied by the well-known firm of harpsichord and piano-makers founded by William Stodart. In 1795 Stodart secured his place in history by patenting the upright piano described by Broadwood, Stodart's rival and contemporary, as 'a new mechanism which combined the utility of a bookcase with the musical use of this odd piece of furniture'. After 1861 the premises were used as a plate-glass warehouse with Ravenscroft & Co. Much of the property was sub-let and at the end of the Edwardian era in 1910 it was accommodating no less than seventy-two employees. The vast majority of these were in the textile trades, for which the Square had become something of a focus. When the first World War broke out in 1914 there were only four buildings in the Square which were not connected in some way with the trade. Post-war this tradition was maintained at No.1 by the Scotch tweed manufacturers, Henry Ballantyne & Sons. In October 1913 the ancient house on this site was badly damaged by fire. It was demolished in 1927. The present building, erected to the designs of R.H. Kerr & Son, is currently owned by Golden Square Investments