

M338 Studio-house for Harold Squire

Introduction

This combined studio and dwelling is one of several schemes by Mackintosh intended to occupy different parts of the same large site in Chelsea. It is the only one that was built. The design evolved through three different versions, of which the final executed one is the simplest. The building has been much altered.

Authorship: There are numerous signed and unsigned drawings by Mackintosh for this scheme, and his diary provides a detailed record of his involvement.

Cost from other sources: Estimated cost, excluding heating and ventilation: £4353 0s 0d; estimated cost of rooftop addition: £650 0s 0d

Status: Standing building; altered

Current use: Residential (2014)

Grid reference: TQ 27180 77841

Chronology

1920

8 January: Harold Squire instructs Mackintosh 'to prepare sketch plans of proposed Studio and dwelling in Glebe Place'. ¹

12–26 January: Squire considers initial sketch plans and asks Mackintosh 'to proceed with necessary drawings'. ²

23 March: Plans given to quantity surveyor. ³

12 May–1 June: After consultation with his sister, Mrs Evelyn Claude, Squire asks Mackintosh to reduce the cost of the studio to £6000. ⁴

12–14 June: Squire asks for a one-storey building costing £4000. ⁵

15–16 June: One-storey scheme costing £4353 approved by Squire. ⁶

23 June: Permission received from Borough Surveyor to demolish old buildings on site. ⁷

25 June: 'Work started on Squire's studio.' ⁸

5 July: Work halted until purchase of site is finalised. ⁹

16 September: Mackintosh records in his diary that plans have been approved by London County Council. ¹⁰

27 September: Work has started on clearing site. ¹¹

7 October: Plans approved by Special (Building Control) Committee of London County Council. ¹²

20 October: Sheet of plans, sections and elevations stamped by Holloway Brothers, builders. ¹³

20–24 November: Squire asks Mackintosh to add an upper storey to the studio, at a cost of about £650. ¹⁴

8 December: Drawing of roof-top addition approved by William E. Clifton, Surveyor to the Glebe of Chelsea. ¹⁵

1921

Autumn: Squire first appears in the Voters' Register at this address, indicating that the building was completed earlier the same year. ¹⁶

1924

Upper floor added to front block by Ruscoe Bros & Co., builders, not to Mackintosh's design. ¹⁷

Description

Background

This studio-house for the painter Harold Squire is closely associated with several other schemes: a block of studios and studio-flats for the Arts League of Service, a second studio block for the League in Glebe Place, a building containing studios for Francis Derwent Wood and a studio-house for Arthur Cadogan Blunt. All were intended to stand on a site in Chelsea bounded by Glebe Place, Oakley Street and Upper Cheyne Row, but in the end only Squire's studio was built.

Site

The site had been owned until his death in 1912 by the architect and collector Dr John Samuel Phené.¹ It had been the garden of Old Cheyne House, a dilapidated 18th-century dwelling that still stood at its W. end. At the opposite end, on the corner of Oakley Street and Upper Cheyne Row, was the eccentric Mystery House, and along the N. edge, facing Glebe Place, were some cottages. The site was offered for sale in July 1914, divided into 17 lots, but some or all of it was on the market again in October 1919.²

Commission

Mackintosh had a studio at 43A Glebe Place, and had made friends among the artistic set of Chelsea since moving to London in 1915. Harold Squire, who lived a short distance away in Church Street, was a Council member of the Arts League of Service, Mackintosh's most promising client at this date, and it was through the League that he and Mackintosh met.³

Mackintosh kept a diary during 1920, which makes it possible to trace his work on the various Chelsea projects in some detail. On 8 January 1920, he recorded that Squire had instructed him to make sketch plans for a 'proposed studio and dwelling in Glebe Place', his first definite commission for the Cheyne House site.

Design

The numerous surviving drawings show three distinct versions of Mackintosh's design for Squire's house and studio, but few are dated, making it difficult to reconstruct the exact chronology of the project. The following description relies heavily on Alan Crawford's analysis.⁴

First scheme

The most elaborate scheme is probably the earliest, dating from January–February 1920. In this, the house is a separate structure at the front of the site. It has a gabled elevation to Glebe Place, with a cat-slide roof. The much higher studio is set behind it, with a huge N.-facing window. This is the scheme shown in Mackintosh's drawings of *Three Chelsea Studios*, exhibited at the Royal Institute of British Architects in December 1922 (by which date it had been long abandoned), and in an undated pencil sketch in The Hunterian, University of Glasgow.⁵

Second scheme

By far the greatest number of surviving drawings relate to what is probably the second scheme. In this, the house and studio are combined in a single building with living accommodation mostly on the ground floor and the studio above. A stepped architrave frames the big, balconied studio window, echoed inside by the stepped surround of the living room fireplace. These features may reflect the influence on Mackintosh of early 20th-century Viennese architecture.⁶ The three-storey rear elevation is Georgian in style with shuttered windows, apparently taking its cue from 18th-century houses in neighbouring Chelsea streets. There is a roof garden with a pavilion-like shelter.

Mackintosh's diary records that between 12 and 30 March he paid a draughtsman to make tracings and prints on linen of Squire's plans, which may indicate when the second scheme reached its fully developed form.

Third scheme

It appears from Mackintosh's diary that the studio was to be paid for by Squire's sister, a Mrs Claude. On 12 May, Squire asked Mackintosh to send her plans and estimates, a meeting followed, and the result was a severe reduction in the scale and cost of the project. On 12 June Squire asked Mackintosh to make new plans for a single-storey studio, and two days later the budget was set at 'as near £4000 as possible'.⁷

This resulted in a third scheme, the one that was eventually built. Mackintosh reverted to the original idea of a residential block facing the street and a separate studio behind, with a yard between. This time, however, the residential part is extremely simple. Mostly single-storey, it has a lean-to roof which is invisible from the street.⁸ The only remarkable thing about its blank facade is the use of two contrasting materials. The lower part is white stucco, the upper part brick, and the two surfaces are divided by a flat band that forms the sills of a pair of central windows then steps up and over two flanking doors. The right-hand door opens into a living room and kitchen, the left-hand one leads (via a maid's room with a bathroom over) to the studio.

The studio is flat-roofed, with a floor-to-ceiling N. window overlooking the front courtyard and a gallery bedroom at the back. Some drawings also show a small bedroom or additional studio on the roof. This recalls the roof shelter of the second scheme, and it was evidently something Squire did not want to give up: on one sheet it has been crossed out by Mackintosh and inscribed 'omit but allow for'.⁹

A small yard at the back is shown paved with stone and brick salvaged from buildings formerly on the site.¹⁰ The yard between the front block and the studio is similarly paved, and has a small fountain.¹¹

Planning permission

To further the post-war goal of increasing the national housing stock, the Housing (Additional Powers) Act of 1919 prohibited any building operations that would divert materials and tradesmen away from housing schemes. To deal with cases arising under this legislation, the London County Council set up a Special (Building Control) Committee, and Mackintosh had to obtain approval for Squire's studio from this body.¹²

The Committee seems to have favoured the use of concrete rather than brick, because bricks and bricklayers were in short supply. Mackintosh informed the Committee via the LCC's Architect that the Chelsea Glebe estate 'declined to allow any buildings in concrete', and he therefore proposed to use brick for the external walls of the studio and concrete supported on iron beams for the floors and roof.¹³ He had nevertheless obtained two estimates for building in concrete, but 'in both cases the cost was more than for brick'. In further justification of his scheme he pointed out that the building would provide accommodation for both Squire and his housekeeper, and would therefore 'release a working-man's house at 36 Church Street, Chelsea, now occupied by them'.¹⁴

On 11 September the chairman of the Committee decided to take no action in the case, and on 16 September Mackintosh recorded in his diary that the LCC had notified him the building could go ahead.¹⁵ The plans were officially approved by the Committee on 7 October.¹⁶

Progress of work

A start had been made on 25 June, but work stopped on 5 July because the purchase of the land was not complete.¹⁷ On 27 September, following the LCC's approval of the plans, Mackintosh recorded that the contractors Holloway Brothers had resumed clearing the site.¹⁸

Between 20 and 24 November, Squire asked Mackintosh to add an upper storey to the studio. The plans for this roof-top addition containing two bedrooms were approved on 8 December by William E. Clifton, Surveyor to the Glebe of Chelsea.¹⁹

Squire first appears in the Voters' Register at this address in autumn 1921, so the building was presumably completed earlier the same year.²⁰

Later history

As early as 1924 Mackintosh's front building was radically altered. The builders Ruscoe Bros & Co., of 27 Farm Street, raised it to two storeys, adding a sitting room and W.C. on the first floor and finishing off the facade with a cornice.²¹ Further external and internal changes have since been made. The flat band between the stucco and brick is still visible (2012), but both parts have been painted, obscuring the different materials.

People

Clients:

- Harold Squire

Contractors:

- Holloway Brothers
- H. J. Cash & Co., electrical engineers

Documents

Images



Bibliography

Published

- Alan Crawford, 'Lost and found: architectural projects after Glasgow', in Pamela Robertson, ed., *C. R. Mackintosh: The Chelsea Years, 1915–1923*,

- exhibition catalogue, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, 1994, pp. 9–10
- Alan Crawford, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1995, pp. 179–183
- Thomas Howarth, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Modern Movement*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd edn, 1977, pp. 207–210
- Gavin Stamp, 'The London Years', in Wendy Kaplan, *Charles Rennie Mackintosh*, New York and London: Abbeville Press, 1996, pp. 213–18

Unpublished

- Hiroaki Kimura, 'Charles Rennie Mackintosh: Architectural Drawings', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 1982, p. 63
- The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408
- London Metropolitan Archives: LCC Special (Building Control) Committee presented papers, October 1920, LCC/MIN/12583

Notes:

- 1: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 2: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 3: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
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- 5: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
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- 7: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 8: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 9: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 10: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 11: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 12: London Metropolitan Archives: LCC/MIN/12576.
- 13: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41655 (M338-023).
- 14: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 15: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41659 (M338-028).
- 16: Alan Crawford, 'Lost and found: architectural projects after Glasgow', in Pamela Robertson, ed., *C. R. Mackintosh: The Chelsea Years, 1915–1923*, exhibition catalogue, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, 1994, p. 10 and n. 29.
- 17: London, Kensington Central Library: original drainage plan for 49 Glebe Place, BE/A1054.
- 18: Alan Crawford, 'Lost and found: architectural projects after Glasgow', in Pamela Robertson, ed., *C. R. Mackintosh: The Chelsea Years, 1915–1923*, exhibition catalogue, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, 1994, pp. 8–9.
- 19: Alan Crawford, 'Lost and found: architectural projects after Glasgow', in Pamela Robertson, ed., *C. R. Mackintosh: The Chelsea Years, 1915–1923*, exhibition catalogue, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, 1994, pp. 8–9.
- 20: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: photocopy of letter from Harold Squire to Thomas Howarth, 26 January 1946 (not accessioned).
- 21: Alan Crawford, 'Lost and found: architectural projects after Glasgow', in Pamela Robertson, ed., *C. R. Mackintosh: The Chelsea Years, 1915–1923*, exhibition catalogue, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, 1994, pp. 9–10. A drawing for an unidentified studio in The Hunterian, University of Glasgow (GLAHA 41629, M338-006), is the same width as Squire's studio at 27ft 6ins, and may show another stage in the development of the design.
- 22: London, British Museum: Department of Prints and Drawings, 1981-12-12-22 (M338-004), 1981-12-12-23 (M339-005) and 1981-12-12-24 (M339-043); The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41099 (M338-002). In the Hunterian drawing the studio window is lower, and the brickwork of the parapet has tree motifs reminiscent of the Daily Record Building in Glasgow.
- 23: Alan Crawford cites the example of a reception room designed by Josef Hoffmann, which Mackintosh could have known through an illustration published in Charles Holme ed., *The Art-Revival in Austria*, London: The Studio, 1906, illustration C18.
- 24: The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.

- 25:** Mackintosh produced an even simpler alternative design (The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41579 (M338-012) and 41634 (M338-029)). It has a pitched roof with eaves just above door-height.
- 26:** The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41642 (M338-021).
- 27:** The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41640 (M338-033).
- 28:** The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41641 (M338-032).
- 29:** London Metropolitan Archives: London County Council minutes, 10 February 1920.
- 30:** London Metropolitan Archives: LCC Special (Building Control) Committee presented papers, October 1920, LCC/MIN/12583.
- 31:** London Metropolitan Archives: LCC Special (Building Control) Committee presented papers, October 1920, LCC/MIN/12583.
- 32:** London Metropolitan Archives: LCC Special (Building Control) Committee presented papers, October 1920, LCC/MIN/12583; The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 33:** London Metropolitan Archives: LCC Special (Building Control) Committee minutes, LCC/MIN/12576.
- 34:** The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 35:** The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: Mackintosh's diary for 1920, GLAHA 52408.
- 36:** The Hunterian, University of Glasgow: GLAHA 41659 (M338-028).
- 37:** Alan Crawford, 'Lost and found: architectural projects after Glasgow', in Pamela Robertson, ed., *C. R. Mackintosh: The Chelsea Years, 1915–1923*, exhibition catalogue, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, 1994, p. 10 and n. 29.
- 38:** Kensington Central Library: original drainage plan for 49 Glebe Place, BE/A1054.

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