

STRATFORD ROAD (AREA 3)

PRUE EVANS

1 - Stratford House, on Stratford Place, isolated on a small island of land by the Middleway, not quite Stratford road although very close by. A beautiful building, used by Age UK now but with a slightly nefarious past. Built in 1601 it was in a farm of 20 acres, with livestock. In 1840, the Midland Railway opened a goods yard at nearby Camp Hill. In 1926, the company's successor, the London, Midland and Scottish railway purchased the house with a view to demolishing it, but thanks to local opposition, it was saved. By the 50's it fell in to disrepair, however it was bought in 1954 by Ivon Adams who restored it. It has since been used by Network Records, one of the leading UK exponents of techno music; and as a swingers' club, the Tudor lounge, until it was damaged by fire in 2015. In 2016 it was extensively restored.

2 - The Holy Trinity Church, Bordesley. Again, close by but not actually on, the Stratford Road, but Old Camp Hill, which looks as if it may once have been the start of the Stratford Road. This striking building, from 1822 in the "decorated perpendicular Gothic style", Holy Trinity was important in reflecting the High Church movement of the Anglican Church at the time. The first vicar was succeeded by Rev Dr Joseph Oldknow who was Birmingham's first Ritualist priest. He in turn was succeeded in 1874 by Richard William Enraght who was imprisoned in 1880 when the church became the centre of a battle over high church practices. Enraght was prosecuted in 1880 in a trial which was known nationally as the Bordesley Wafer Case. In autumn 1875 a group of cricketers from the church formed an Association football team, Small Heath Alliance, which became Birmingham City F.C. The church closed in 1968 and an arts centre was proposed, which I remember as the Arts Lab had just started and we hoped for a similar venue. It was deconsecrated in the late 60's and served as a homeless shelter. Both these lovely buildings represent the start of the A 34, Stratford Road, for me, despite the enormous traffic island that is the actual beginning.

3 - Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee! A car wash, typical of the first mile or so, Sparkbrook is crammed with scruffy cafés, shops and lovely buildings; all manner of small businesses thrive here.

4 - Once known as Ty's Jazz and Spice, an excellent jazz venue and Balti restaurant, the Yamani Corner now occupies this lovely house.

5 - Jams! Why a bus can take 15 minutes to go 1 mile.

6 - Attractive new flats, probably a housing association, showing the variety of styles along the road.

7 - The Stratford Road Baptist Church, where I suspect my mother was hastily christened as a sickly child, according to my Nan's tales. They lived opposite, in Mole Street.

8 - Smarter shops, colourful cafés and restaurants now populate the route, past Walford Road, into Sparkhill.

9 - Some very glamorous clothing shops congregate on this section.

10-The long view of this more affluent area.

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