



The Old War Office penthouse is set over 7,700 sq ft on the seventh floor of the residential wing of the building  
DARREN CHUNG

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When, in the late 19th century, the government commissioned architects to design a War Office on Whitehall, the winning building was not only practical — a solid HQ containing a warren of over a thousand offices linked by two and a half miles of corridors — but it was also sumptuous. Like several other buildings created during that period — the Victoria and Albert Museum, Westminster Cathedral, the Old Bailey, the London Coliseum — it was a physical representation of the might of the empire. A 580,000 sq ft place in which spies and commanders, politicians and strategists like Kitchener and Churchill could in time come together and determine the course of history.

Today, walking into the building through the rear “Spies Entrance” once used by Sir Mansfield Cumming, the first chief of the Secret Service Bureau, it seems extraordinary that this magnificent Portland stone edifice was abandoned by the government in 1964. With pretty turrets towering on corners, sculptures adorning its walls and triple-height arches at its entrances, it’s one of London’s most handsome buildings. Which is presumably why, when it came up for sale in 2014, the Hinduja family (who this year topped [The Sunday Times Rich List](#)) decided to buy it. And which is how, after almost six years of renovation, I can step into the building’s once-secret spaces, to see its crowning glory: the penthouse that goes on sale this week.