Strathdee, Ernest (‘Ernie’) (1920–71), rugby international and broadcaster, was born in Belfast, the son of Ernest Strathdee and his wife Nellie (née Moore). Educated at Belfast High School and QUB, he was a talented scrum-half throughout the ‘golden era’ of Irish rugby, playing for High School, QUB (winning an Ulster senior cup medal, 1947), Ulster, Ireland, and the Barbarians. After appearing in two post-war unofficial victory internationals (1946), he won nine full international caps, making his debut in the stunning 22–0 victory over England at Lansdowne Road in 1947 while he was still a university student. He captained Ireland twice, v. Australia (December 1947) – when he was one of the top performers despite a 16–3 defeat – and in the 13–6 upset of France (January 1948) that began Ireland’s first grand slam. Surprisingly dropped for the matches against England and Scotland, he lost the captaincy to hooker Karl Mullen. Returning for the grand-slam finale, a 6–3 victory over Wales at Ravenhill, with a characteristically accurate pass he sent away half-back partner Jack Kyle on a dazzling run that produced Ireland’s first try. Absent from the 1949 championship opener v. France, he was recalled for the three remaining matches as Ireland completed successive triple crowns. A shrewd kicker at the base of the scrum, he partnered Kyle at club, provincial, and international levels, servicing the great fly-half with long raking passes, while also adept at drawing markers away from Kyle with subtle kicks from the blind side.

Licensed a minister of the presbyterian church by the Belfast presbytery (December 1947), and appointed to Newtownbreda church, Strathdee pursued a career in the ministry coinciding with his years as a rugby international. Leaving the ministry without receiving ordination, he served five years as Belfast health education officer, and later worked as a medical firm representative. Entering television broadcasting, he specialised initially in sport commentary. A familiar personality on Ulster Television, he was an able interviewer of figures across a broad range of interest. For three years before his death he chaired the popular late-night weekly programme ‘What's it all about?’ In 1971 he hosted on UTV an historic discussion on the troubles, featuring the leaders of the four main churches in Northern Ireland.

He married first (1950) Patricia Hunter, who died in 1966; they had one daughter and one son. He married secondly Jocelyn ‘Joy’ Phillips, who had been widowed when her husband was killed in a road accident; they had no children. Strathdee was one of three persons killed in the early morning of 17 July 1971 in a fire – deemed accidental by police forensic investigators – that gutted the top floor of the Regency Hotel, Lower Crescent, Belfast.