

CHAPTER 14

Welbeck Street

Welbeck Street, named after Welbeck Abbey, the Cavendish seat in Nottinghamshire, runs between Henrietta Place and New Cavendish Street. Just a quarter mile in length, it divides visually today into three sections. Having lost all its old buildings, the southernmost third between Henrietta Place and Wigmore Street lacks individuality except for the arresting multi-storey car park at the very bottom. The middle third between Wigmore Street and Queen Anne Street on the east and Bentinck Street on the west retains more character but is tormented during the working week by traffic funnelling down to the lights at Wigmore Street; the street hereabouts is overshadowed by the lofty Edwardian flats and hotel along its west side. Only its northern third, approaching New Cavendish Street, feels like an integral part of the residential Howard de Walden grid. For all that, Welbeck Street can still boast a few fine houses, notably along its east side (Nos 11, 14 and 28–32), along with some former residents of distinction or notoriety. It is also host to two sizeable hotels on the west side: the Holiday Inn, previously the Welbeck Palace Hotel; and the Marylebone, previously Clinton-Ford Hotel.

This chapter is in two parts. The first covers the repeatedly rebuilt southern portion of Welbeck Street, where several institutions of historical interest were based. Debenhams, as owners of Debenham & Freebody in Wigmore Street and after 1919 of Marshall & Snelgrove in Oxford Street, was for long the determining influence on this portion of the street. The second part describes the area north of Wigmore Street, where development took

place between the late 1750s and the early 1770s, and a fair amount of the older fabric survives, as do many of the old plot divisions. So here the blocks and buildings are covered individually and in numerical sequence, taking the east side first, south to north, and then returning along the west side, north to south.

Between Henrietta Place and Wigmore Street

Welbeck Street was the westernmost street of the main Harley-Cavendish estate grid. The Prince plan of 1719 shows it as extending no further south than Wigmore Street, but in the event it acquired an extra leg running down to Henrietta Street (now Place), and this was the portion first built up (Ills ###, 14.02). For much of the nineteenth century this was a street of medium-sized shops interspersed with a few institutions. After 1960 commercial redevelopments led by Debenhams started to break up the scale. The process is now complete. The freeholds here on both sides were sold off by the Howard de Walden Estate in the early 1920s.

Development began in the 1720s on the east side. Midway along, Mill Hill Mews (later Place) ran through to Wimpole Street. South of this, the frontage belonged to the flank of houses in Henrietta Street, for which agreements were made in 1727–8. Around 1817, an auction room was inserted here for the firm of Haydon & Hendy, becoming 1 Welbeck Street; sometimes known as the Egyptian Rooms and used for meetings and entertainment as well as sales, it passed through various hands before coming into the ownership of Marshall & Snelgrove.¹ North of the mews, Thomas Gladwin leased the frontage up to Wigmore Street in 1726. The houses were built up over a number of years, and No. 5 at the north end did not appear until 1765. On the north corner of the mews was a public house, known by the early

nineteenth century as the Coach and Horses; it was rebuilt in 1846. The others, shops by the mid nineteenth century, were gradually taken over from 1852 by Debenham & Co. of Wigmore Street and the site subsequently redeveloped as part of Debenham & Freebody (page ###).² After 1960 commercial redevelopment led by Debenhams completed the break-up of the former scale of the east side; Mill Hill Place disappeared as part of this process.

The west was the better side of early Welbeck Street. The first plot developed here was by William Langford, clerk of Marylebone Vestry, just north of the junction with Henrietta Street. Concerted development of this side did not take off until 1735–8, when various speculators took one or occasionally two plots between Henrietta and Wigmore Streets, some reaching back to Marylebone Lane. Investors and lessees ranged from the usual building craftsmen to Israel Russell, painter, and Knightley Danvers, a barrister and author who had interests in several houses hereabouts.³

This side of the street is well depicted on a Portland estate map as it was in the first years of the nineteenth century, when it was quite evenly shared between private residents and shops or other institutions (Ill. 14.03).⁴ A pub, the White Hart, occupied the Wigmore Street corner (No. 66). At No. 68 was the lace ‘warehouse’ of Hillyard & Vores. Next door at No. 69 were the stove grate manufacturers Dowson & Co., at whose premises the émigré dilettante and inventor the Marquis de Chabannes had in 1799–1801 shown his stove for heating the whole house from the kitchen alone, using methods probably copied from Count Rumford.⁵ Further south No. 76, the highest-rated house on the block, appears to have had money spent on it for the 5th Earl of Dysart, who lived here between about 1772 and 1786. At the time of the map it was the home of the hospitable William Bosville, socialite and radical sympathizer, who on every weekday down to his death ‘received no more than twelve guests to dine with him at 5 p.m. precisely’. Next to him were the Marylebone Dispensary at No. 77, a house previously occupied by John Soane between about 1786 and 1790; and then at No. 78 on the Henrietta

Street corner came the premises of James Boyd, the Sandemanian ironmonger and brazier who employed Michael Faraday's father.⁶

In 1860 a congregation of Plymouth Brethren meeting in Orchard Street moved to No. 71, in conjunction with the transfer of the religious book and tract publisher William Yapp from New Cavendish Street to No. 70. Yapp, an early member of the Brethren, invented the floppy oversize cover known as a yapp binding, originally for pocket bibles. The Welbeck Street Assembly was not without social standing, its members including the 8th Earl of Cavan and the missionary 3rd Baron Radstock. 'Welbeck Hall', perhaps adapted from old manufacturing premises at the rear, continued in use for Brethren services and missionary meetings until 1909, when it was absorbed into the premises of J. R. Collett & Co., ball-gown makers at No. 72, the Brethren meeting subsequently in Great Portland Street.⁷

By this time both houses at Nos 70 and 71 had become the premises of the high-class furnishers and decorators Hindley & Wilkinson, who also took over and rebuilt No. 68 in 1899–1900 (No. 69 had by this time become part of Marylebone Lane police station). This venerable business had originated in Berners Street in 1817 as Charles Hindley's carpet warehouse, expanding in 1844 with the acquisition of the Oxford Street soft-furnishers Miles & Edwards. The firm of Charles Hindley & Sons came to an end in 1892, but the founder's grandson Charles Albert Hindley started afresh at 70–71 Welbeck Street that year, advertising as upholsterer, decorator, cabinet-maker, chintz printer and carpet warehouseman. A few years later Hindley took over or went into partnership with the old-established furnishers W. & C. Wilkinson of Old Bond Street. The Old Bond Street premises were given up in 1909, and Hindley & Wilkinson continued principally at Welbeck Street until absorbed by Marshall & Snelgrove around 1918.⁸

From 1878 to 1919, No. 73 was occupied by the **West End Hospital for Nervous Diseases**, founded by Dr Herbert Tibbits. The hospital was among those that experimented with electrical cures, espoused by some, suspect to

others. Tibbits attracted the patronage of the Princess of Wales and other notables through imaginative fund-raising events at the Albert Hall and elsewhere. On that basis he arranged to rebuild the hospital in two stages in 1890–1, extending the premises back to Marylebone Lane to designs by George Blizard, architect.⁹ But Tibbits overreached himself in March 1891 with a costly fancy fair on the theme of Lord Lytton’s novel *The Coming Race*. It turned out a complete flop; subsequently Tibbits went bankrupt and lost his job as director of the hospital amid a flurry of lawsuits and recriminations. He briefly set up an alternative London Massage and Galvanic Hospital in Weymouth Street, but that cannot have lasted long and Tibbits ended up a prison surgeon. The Welbeck Street hospital survived the crisis and was sufficiently flourishing to take over two Bulstrode Street houses in 1906 and acquire a chapel in 1911. It moved away to St Katharine’s Lodge, Regent’s Park, in 1919, leaving an outpatients’ department behind at No. 73, since redeveloped.¹⁰

St Marylebone Savings Bank started in 1830 at 14 Henrietta Street but had moved to 76 Welbeck Street by 1839. In about 1841 the premises were rebuilt to designs by the young Ewan Christian, who had been brought up in Wigmore Street and lived there till about that year; this may have been his first independent work. He was involved when changes were made in 1864. The bank grew rapidly, and in 1842 reportedly had funds of £262,000 and was taking in ‘a constant stream of gold’. It closed in about 1892.¹¹

The **Marylebone Dispensary**, in full the St Marylebone General Dispensary, was founded in 1785 to serve the local poor and dedicated in its early years particularly to childbirth. Starting out in Queen Anne Street, it occupied a succession of addresses before settling in 1804 at 77 Welbeck Street, a shallow house with three ground-floor rooms.¹² There was then a resident apothecary who dispensed the drugs prescribed by physicians or house-visitors.

By 1888 the dispensary's work had grown greatly. With its Portland lease close to expiry the directors applied for rebuilding terms, hoping to extend the premises back to Marylebone Lane. A negotiation ensued with Charles Fowler, the estate surveyor, who offered the dispensary special terms on specific stipulations, chiefly that there had to be a smart, full-height elevation to Welbeck Street faced in best malms or Fareham red bricks with stone or terracotta facings, and that patients could enter only from Marylebone Lane. The directors meanwhile put out feelers via the Estate's solicitor, E. Horsman Bailey, to the freeholders, Lady Ossington and Lady Howard de Walden, who contributed £250 and £1,500 respectively towards a building cost estimated at about £4,000 all told. Several architects associated with the dispensary tried to get the job, including Christopher Eales of Welbeck Street, but in May 1889 it was finally awarded to Arthur Beresford Pite. This, his first Marylebone commission, led to others, notably 83 Mortimer Street for one of the physicians on the dispensary's rota.¹³

The single-storey Marylebone Lane side went ahead first, built by John Hooper in 1891–2. It contained a waiting hall, partitioned between the sexes, with a dispensing room behind. The front, simple and robust, was crowned by an open pediment over a large window and wide balcony covering an inset porch. The Welbeck Street side was built by T. H. Adamson & Son in 1892–3, Hooper having failed to supply the required guarantees. Thoughts of selling off the upper floors as flats had been abandoned in favour of a board room and committee room on the first floor and accommodation for medical staff above. In revision, the front elevation underwent interesting changes of detail. The design approved early in 1890 shows the young Pite at his most eclectic, balancing Jacobethan bay windows to the first-floor rooms with a baroque frontispiece above, seemingly based on the Italian and Spanish sources he studied around this time for the detailing of Belcher's Institute of Chartered Accountants. The executed version became more Italian (Ill. 14.04); the frontispiece to the upper storeys was simplified and flattened, the first-

floor bays grew larger and stronger, while the entrance was moved to one side, and turned together with the answering window to its left into tripartite compositions crowned by small atlantes carrying the base of the bays, foreshadowing the Michelangelesque frontage of 83 Mortimer Street. The carving was by Farmer & Brindley, and the lively ironwork supplied by the local firm of T. J. Boulting & Sons.¹⁴

The rebuilt dispensary was opened on 16 March 1894 with some ceremony by the Duke and Duchess of Fife. After the First World War its work was on a diminished scale, and it seems to have closed in the mid 1930s.¹⁵

Today the west side is taken up by a mixed-use development of the 1970s with its principal frontage at 39–49 Wigmore Street (page ###), and by the **Welbeck Street Car Park**. Occupying the sites of Nos 74–78, the car park was part of the extensive redevelopment undertaken locally by Debenhams in the 1960s and 70s, beginning with head offices at 1 Welbeck Street opposite in 1962–4 (page ###). Multi-storey car parks were not then new, but they still carried an air of novelty and offered scope for experimentation in design. Such a building fitted well into the modernization and rationalization of Debenhams overseen by the chairman and managing director John Bedford. Car parks, said Bedford, were ‘essential to the profitability of modern stores’, and lack of parking was behind the closure of a number of the groups’ provincial stores including that of Marshall & Snelgrove in his native Birmingham. Debenhams had in fact provided some parking before the war, at Mill Hill Place and Stratford Mews, but in any case the new car park was insisted upon by Westminster Council. Intended particularly for shoppers at Debenham & Freebody, Bradleys the furriers at 2 Welbeck Street, and Marshall & Snelgrove in Oxford Street, the project for 400-plus cars was announced at the end of 1963, but there was then a long delay before construction was carried out in 1970, to be completed the next year after

Bedford retired. Initially it seems to have been under-used despite the intensive local deployment of meters.¹⁶

The building was designed by Michael Blampied & Partners (F. D. Kahn and R. R. Le Duc being the architects in charge), with John de Bremaeker & Partners, structural engineers; the contractor was Cementation Construction Ltd. Though small, it is justly regarded as one of the most aesthetically accomplished buildings of its kind. Often described as Brutalist, it has little or nothing of that style. The exterior walls above the ground floor are built using triangular precast concrete units, carrying floors made up of precast concrete beams and slabs with a topping of reinforced concrete poured in situ. Split-level throughout on account of the sloping site, with a mezzanine over part of the ground floor, it has eight full upper floors for parking, including the rooftop. Most of the ground floor not required for vehicle entry and exit was given over to a restaurant, while most of the basement was designed as a cold store for Debenham & Freebody, to which it was linked by tunnel.

The obvious appeal is in the bright modular geometry of the wall units, enhanced by their load-bearing status; the disjunction caused by the split level, and the conventional colonnaded ground floor, show the practical limitations of the essentially sculptural approach (Ill. 14.05). To save drawing time, the design of the modules was worked out with carved polystyrene blocks, and a full-size mock-up was used to test their draining and staining characteristics. The final units, made by the Atlas Stone Co. Ltd, incorporate drainage grooves at the junctions of the facets. Their overall scale is large, and the safety aspect of the openings is addressed by means of stainless steel wires threaded vertically through the building as a barrier, unseen from outside.¹⁷

Between Wigmore Street and New Cavendish Street

Building agreements for this part of the street were made between 1756 and 1766, all the houses being complete and fully occupied around 1772. In some cases agreements were made well before development took place and later renewed, doubtless with changes. That was the case with the first section on the west side, from Wigmore Street most of the way up to Bentinck Street, with frontages also to Wigmore Street and Marylebone Lane. This was agreed for as early as 1749 by Abraham Easley, but nothing then happened till 1758 when Easley appears to have renewed his agreement, going on to build Nos 57–64 with James Fisher, carpenter. The northern end of this block (sites of Nos 55, 55A & 56) was leased to Joseph Watkins, carpenter, in 1763. Most of the rest of this side up to what is now New Cavendish Street (Nos 36–54), was leased the same year to William Franks.¹⁸

On the east side the first lessee was Thomas Huddle, who in one of the last of his many takes in Marylebone, agreed in 1756 to develop the frontage between Wigmore Street and present-day Welbeck Way (sites of Nos 6–11). The builders were John Johnson and William Lloyd, plasterers. The next block, north to Queen Anne Street (Nos 11A–18) was split between them and Franks. Most of the frontage north of Queen Anne Street (Nos 19–35) was first agreed for by the mason and surveyor George Mercer in 1761, who had built nothing by 1766 when he took out a fresh agreement.¹⁹

The largest entrepreneur in these sections of the street was therefore William Franks, who had an interest in some twenty-six houses. Franks is known to have acted as a surveyor, so he may have designed the rudiments of the houses on his land but did not always take charge of building them. Johnson the plasterer is better known as a carpenter and later an architect, and these houses are among the earliest that can be associated with him. His partner Lloyd went bankrupt in 1767.²⁰ Nos 14 and 15, subcontracted to them by Franks, have staircases reminiscent of some of Johnson's later work (Ill.

14.08a). On Mercer's ground, the surviving buildings at Nos 28–32 are spacious houses with stone staircases, not elaborate but lending themselves to later embellishment, as happened at No. 28.

In all, twenty-six Georgian houses survive, in various states of preservation (Nos 7–9, 11A–15, 17, 20–26, 28–32, 43–45, 47, 48 and 55A). All have been heightened and many had their ground storeys stuccoed in the nineteenth century.

This section of Welbeck Street was largely high-class residential from the start, with gentry and the occasional nobleman along with merchants among the first occupants. But there were always a few shops at the corners and a pub, the Edinburgh Castle, at No. 11. The street kept its tone till about 1830, after which trade encroached at the north end and subdivisions started to appear. The first doctor recorded as practising from Welbeck Street was Thomas Young, at No. 48 from 1800, as much a scientist as a medic. By 1829 four addresses are marked in *Boyle's Court Guide* as occupied by surgeons, and one by a medical doctor; the true complement may already have been higher.

Welbeck Street's absorption into the burgeoning 'Harley Street' nexus accelerated the shift to multi-occupation. By the 1880s some houses had been converted into nursing homes, others into private hotels – categories with some overlap. Regular rebuildings began in the early 1890s, at first usually in the Queen Anne style, with C. H. Worley (based at No. 62) a favoured choice of architect. As elsewhere the Portland, later Howard de Walden Estate's strong preference was for rebuilding as private houses, but this proved increasingly difficult to sustain and in several instances plans had to be recast for flats. By 1927 Welbeck Street had 'practically passed to professional or semi-professional' use, but the rearguard action went on. When four doctors requested a licence for No. 21, Colonel Blount, the estate surveyor, ruled that as a 'small private house' it should not be occupied by more than one practitioner. Yet by 1933 permission had been given for four licences, after a

request to let it as 'furnished flatlets' – suggesting difficulty in finding medical tenants at all. When No. 53 was rebuilt as a private house in 1935, it was entirely against the grain. Determined to maintain the medical character of the street, in 1954 the Estate turned down a firm of antique dealers and decorators for the shop at No. 20, insisting that retail use should be allied to the medical profession; by 1961 this stance had changed, and another decorating firm, Keeble Ltd, was found acceptable, trading there for some years.²¹

Medical professions and services have become less and less dominant, and today the houses are as likely to be occupied as offices by property firms, accountants, fashionable retailers or artists as by dentists or doctors, but there is still a strong residential element together with two large hotels.

EAST SIDE

Wigmore Street to Welbeck Way

In January 1756 Thomas Huddle took a lease of the block of ground between Wigmore Street and the intended mews to the north (first known as Welbeck Mews, then Little Welbeck Street, now Welbeck Way). He proceeded in 1757–8 to lease or sell on these plots in two parts to John Johnson and William Lloyd, described as plasterers of Marylebone. They built one house on the corner fronting Wigmore Street and, north of a passageway, five smallish houses (Nos 7–11) which were auctioned in 1760 and variously occupied between then and 1767. The Wigmore Street house, originally numbered 6 Welbeck Street, was reputedly where in 1834 Don Carlos had his hair dyed and moustache shaved before travelling incognito through France to Spain.²²

The present **No. 5** (replacing the former No. 6), with a short frontage to Wigmore Street, was built in 1885–6 by Thomas Boyce as his own speculation, to designs by John Norton (Ill. 14.06a). The building is faced in red brick attractively ornamented with yellow terracotta. Its long, narrow footprint lent itself to deep shop premises at 48 Wigmore Street, and a suite of rooms for a doctor in Welbeck Street, with a grand entrance in the middle to apartments on the upper floors. These were at first called Wigmore Chambers and fitted up as suites of furnished rooms let by the day or week, ‘for families only’. Their proprietor was Arthur Flatman, butler turned hotelier, owner also of lodging houses in Henrietta Place and Chapel Place, and later of the Clifton Hotel further up the street – but above all of the prestigious Norfolk Hotel in Harrington Road, South Kensington, which he had built in 1888–9. In 1889 Wigmore Chambers became Somerset Mansions, under the management or ownership of Flatman’s brother-in-law William Collison. The building was redeveloped behind the façade as offices in 2000.²³

Nos 7 and 8 are the only ones of the five houses built here by Johnson and Lloyd around 1760 to retain a semblance of their original appearance. They comprise a matching pair each three bays wide with doors at opposite ends, both of which retain simple hood-moulds (see Ill. 14.09). The stucco at ground-floor level was added in the early 1850s. After some years of interconnection and multi-occupation the pair were divided again in 1881, and raised by a storey in accordance with Portland Estate policy at that time. David Porter, chimneysweep turned Marylebone property developer, lived at No. 7 from about 1795 when his fortunes were on the rise, having previously occupied humbler quarters round the corner in Little Welbeck Street. Like Nos 7 and 8, **No. 9** is three bays wide. Though basically of c.1760, it was partially refronted in 1854 and further altered in 1884–5 when the architect Christopher Eales took the ground floor as his office and converted the rest into flats, introducing balconettes and arched windows with red-brick hood moulds. After the Eales firm had gone, it was acquired by Edwin Bechstein of

Bechstein (later Wigmore) Hall, for whom 'sundry alterations' were made in 1905 under Walter Cave's architectural guidance.²⁴

On a slightly deeper plot than Nos 7-9, **No. 10** was completely rebuilt in 1891-2. Here too the architect and head lessee was Christopher Eales. A central ground-floor window is divided by a stone balcony from a shallow, canted bay running through the first and second storeys, while in the top storeys moulded brick shafts rise to a gable. In the 1950s the house was rented out as furnished flats. Complaints from neighbours about 'rowdy parties' and 'noisy brawls and scenes' resulted in the conviction of the tenant for keeping a 'disorderly house'. After a period in office use, No. 10 became a single dwelling house again in 2008.²⁵

No. 11 is one of the livelier houses designed on the Howard de Walden estate by F. M. Elgood (Ill. 14.06b). It dates from 1905-6, when it was completely rebuilt together with 1 Little Welbeck Street by J. W. Falkner & Son for W. Hughes Payne.²⁶ It is eclectic in style, of red brick but with the lower front faced in stone and the upper half enlivened with flush stone quoins and string course. Beneath the cranked gable, an oculus and carved-stone swag along with the hood-moulds to the doorway and lower windows strike a Wrenaissance note, yet the railings lean towards Art Nouveau (Ill. 14.14). The all-brick flank facing Welbeck Way drops down, then rises to a two-storey extension at the back. The previous building here was generally numbered in the cross street, originally Welbeck Mews, later Little Welbeck Street and now Welbeck Way. It had been the Edinburgh Castle public house from at least the mid nineteenth century.

Welbeck Way to Queen Anne Street

The plots for the first three houses north of Welbeck Way (Nos 11A-13) were taken in 1758 by Johnson and Lloyd; then in 1763 they took assignments from

Franks of the remaining ground up to Queen Anne Street (Nos 14–18). The houses were occupied by c.1767. Several were mortgaged to the eccentric John Elwes (page #), who following Lloyd's bankruptcy in 1767 took possession of some, and lived at No. 18 from about 1780 until his death in 1789.²⁷

Of these houses, the first four survive. The corner house **No. 11A** (at first numbered in Welbeck Mews, and also known at one time as 11 Welbeck Street) was partly rebuilt and remodelled in 1854 (Ill. 14.07).²⁸ Hence probably the chunky moulded parapet, arched upper-storey windows and plaited string course, ground-floor canted bay and porch. The thin stucco pilasters, friezes and cornices on the upper façade appear to post-date these alterations. The three-storey houses abutting at the back, formerly 3–6 Little Welbeck Street, now **21–24 Welbeck Way**, occupy small plots first leased simultaneously with the house in front to Johnson and Lloyd, but their general appearance is early Victorian, possibly of 1854.

Nos 12 and 13 have undergone alterations but were probably devised as a pair (Ill. 14.08). No. 12 was first occupied from 1766 until the mid 1770s by Marmaduke Tunstall, who amassed a natural history collection of live and dead specimens, later moved to Mansfield Street (see page ###) and thence to Wycliffe Hall, Yorkshire. He was succeeded by Dr Johnson's close friend, Bennet Langton; perhaps by coincidence Johnson's protégée Hester Maria ('Queeney') Thrale was living there in 1792. Eales & Son were responsible for alterations in 1889 when both houses were raised in height and received their current stone balconies, Christopher Eales becoming head lessee of No. 12.²⁹

No. 14 was the southernmost of six houses leased in 1763 by William Franks to Johnson and Lloyd. Albeit an original house of high standing, it has an ungainly front with a blunt Doric porch just right of centre, and asymmetrically placed windows in the upper storeys. Inside, a staircase with S-shaped iron railings rises on the right of a spacious hall occupying the whole front. A single room with a bay takes up the full width at the rear, an arrangement echoed on the first floor. The house's second occupant was the

classical and literary scholar Thomas Tyrwhitt, editor of *The Canterbury Tales*, who died here in 1786. A later occupant, up to his death in 1879, was Sir William Boxall, painter and sometime director of the National Gallery. In 1979 building work uncovered a well containing a flagon dated to the second century, possible evidence of a Roman settlement, perhaps an isolated farmhouse.³⁰

Despite its Victorian façade, the core of **No. 15** is another of the Johnson-Lloyd houses of the 1760s. Dr George Roupell, physician and expert on typhus, died here of cholera in 1854. The house was refronted in 1884 as part of substantial works designed by Augustus E. Hughes for Dr D. Jones involving both this house and No. 14, which were in joint use as a nursing home in the early twentieth century. The builders were Simpson & Co. The upshot was a costly-looking Queen Anne elevation in strong red brick divided by pilasters into two bays each containing a pair of windows, with an awkwardly inset angled bay on the first floor. Yet there are surviving Georgian elements within, including a front-compartment stair with S-shaped railings identical to those at No. 14 (Ill. 14.08a).³¹

No. 16 was rebuilt in 1892 by J. Edgar for J. T. Bedford & Co. to designs by L. W. Goodwyn. It has a pared-down façade with an inset, angled bay to the first floor, as at No. 15. Edward Mapother, dermatologist and medical writer, died here in 1908. At the behest of the Howard de Walden Estate the architect Lionel Barrett converted the premises into seven residential suites, completed in 1938. The previous No. 16 was the home of the controversial Rev. H. R. Haweis of St James, Westmoreland Street, and his wife Mary Haweis, writer on aesthetic decoration. She recorded that in 1873 they painted their house ‘moss-green, relieved by red and black in the reveals of the windows and the balcony ... The shock was at first so great to the popular mind, that little groups would collect and stare opposite, as if expecting a raree-show to emerge’.³²

The narrowest of the six houses leased by Franks to Johnson and Lloyd survives at **No. 17**, with alterations of 1894 including a rear bay window. No. 18 was rebuilt with 59–61 Queen Anne Street (page ###).³³

Queen Anne Street to New Cavendish Street

The first buildings on this stretch were two shops at Nos 19–20, erected around 1764 by William Lloyd. The remaining houses at Nos 21–35 went up in the later 1760s, all involving the mason-builder George Mercer. Those at Nos 21–27 were built under lease from him by the Bloomsbury lawyer Edmund Pepys and his father-in-law Thomas Triquet of Spitalfields with the help of the bricklayer John Winstanley. Similarly Mercer underlet Nos 28–31 to Thomas Chandless and the carpenter Edward Wales, though these houses were delayed by Wales's bankruptcy.³⁴

No. 19, a bakery, was rebuilt in 1892 as 62 Queen Anne Street (page #). **No. 20**, sold by Lloyd to a carpenter, William Major, became a stationer's shop. It was raised in height in 1891 and in 1928 was re-fronted by Searle & Searle, architects, for C. W. Dixey & Son, opticians, in an early Georgian style, with sand-faced red bricks; it has a good, period-type shopfront (Ill. 14.14a).³⁵

Nos 21–26 are fundamentally houses leased to John Winstanley in 1768. All have been much altered. Nos 21 and 22 are only two bays wide and have had had their fronts substantially rebuilt. The wider Nos 23–26 mostly succumbed to multi-occupation in the inter-war years, the last to go being No. 25, which after the war was split into multiple consulting rooms.³⁶ Between about 1776 and 1785 No. 23 housed the General Medical Asylum, a forerunner of the Marylebone Dispensary under the patronage of the Duke of Portland. Reputable doctors attended to give advice and dispense medicine to the poor, and undertook 'the relief of the indigent under sickness at their own houses, if not able to attend the Asylum'. From about 1790 to 1804 it was the home of

Admiral Sir Thomas Pasley; subsequently part of the house was occupied by the topographical artist J. C. Nattes between about 1804 and 1819. No. 26 was the home of the army surgeon and physiologist Sir David Barry, who died here in 1835.³⁷

No 27 was rebuilt in 1893 by J. Simpson & Son to designs by C. H. Worley, lessee and architect, replacing the original house built by George Mercer, which was advertised in 1772 as having ‘a genteel plastered Cornish, ornamental Cielings &c’. The façade features a canted bay through all five floors, with a gabled attic. The detailing is straightforward except for an oversize hooded front door. Worley expended about £4,000 on the project, only to find that the premises were ‘much too large to let as a whole’ and he therefore decided to rearrange them as ‘Residential Chambers’, for a further £500. A licence was granted for the establishment of a nursing home in 1926 for Miss Simpson who had already run a successful nursing home in Wigmore Street, ‘used by the highest ranks of the profession in this quarter’. That was the origin of the Welbeck Street Nursing Home, which in recent years became the London Welbeck Hospital, specializing in cosmetic surgery.³⁸

Nos 28–31, completed and first occupied in 1770–2, are among the best houses in Welbeck Street.³⁹ They retain their original external form with typical updatings; the interiors conform to what is known of Mercer’s sober, dignified style, so it is plausible that he designed them.

No. 28 has a handsome Doric doorcase with attached fluted columns and a frieze with paterae (Ill. 14.10). The main staircase in the front compartment has an iron balustrade, more curious than elegant, in which the common lyre shape is squeezed and given frond-like detailing. It may date from the 1780s or 90s. That tallies with an elegant fireplace in the back ground-floor room, somewhat in Henry Holland’s French style, though the ornamental ceiling here may well be Mercer’s (Ills 14.15, 14.16). A possible client for the changes is Sir John Dalling, who took the house in about 1782 on

his return from the governorship of Jamaica.⁴⁰ A photograph of 1950 shows some sketchy Rex Whistler-style mural painting in the entrance hall, since abolished.

Nos 29 and 30 constitute a handed pair, with plain fronts, simple juxtaposed entrances and good original front railings – rare in Welbeck Street (Ill. 14.13). The interiors, spacious but not now otherwise distinguished, have back-compartment staircases rising in parallel, with plain balusters. Following Edward Wales's bankruptcy the house was sold to the sculptor J. F. Moore, probably just as an investment. It was first occupied in about 1770 by Peter Beckford, writer on hunting and cousin of William Beckford.⁴¹

For thirty years from 1862 No. 29 was the home of the sculptor Thomas Woolner. 'You know that one of the dearest wishes of my soul was to get a house in town where I could also have my studios', he wrote to Emily Tennyson before moving in:

this has at last been accomplished: I have paid the whole of the money £1200 and now you may regard me as a Nabob swelling with importance. [F. T.] Palgrave is now living in the house but I shall not be able to do so until the studios are finished building, which will be in about 2 months. I think it will be a most beautiful place, with five rooms for workshops besides a large kitchen below in which I can stow away things not in immediate use, and this advantage is equal to another shop ... Now I suppose I shall be always tormented with servants.⁴²

The new studio building at the back, 4 Marylebone Mews, was designed by the young R. W. Edis, in a plain but tough brick Gothic style contrasting with the house (Ills 14.17, 14.18). A well-lit modelling studio occupies the eastern half, besides which is a delivery bay with a drawing office above. The roof trusses are supported on corbels carved with flowers by James O'Shea, who had met Woolner in connection with the Oxford Museum. Woolner continued

at No. 29 until his death in 1892. In 1881 a bay window was extended on the ground and first floors at the rear, and new 'French casements' were added to the drawing room. There is nothing personal about the interior today, though in 1974 a second-floor bathroom survived which was probably Woolner's (Ill. 14.19). The memorial plaque on the front was unveiled in 1948 by Sir William Goscombe John, though perhaps not his work. It features a copy of the sculptor's profile, made by a fellow-student in 1852.⁴³

No. 30 has an interior corresponding in essentials to No. 29 but stripped out and modernized. It was one of several Marylebone addresses occupied in his old age by the former Russian ambassador Count Simon Woronzow, in this case around 1829, the house being conveniently close to the Russian chaplaincy at No. 32. Between 1849 and 1874 it was the home and workplace of the unscrupulous publisher Thomas Cautley Newby, who moved here from Mortimer Street where he had published *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*. In 1905 Sir Arthur Blomfield & Sons converted the stabling into a billiard room and smoking room, linked to the house by a new staircase.⁴⁴

No. 31 was first occupied about 1772–3. It has some good internal features, including a cantilevered staircase in the front compartment with more elaborate iron balustrading than at Nos 29 and 30 (Ill. 14.20), and bayed rooms at the back extending the full width of the house. Two handsome marble fireplaces also remain. From an early date the kitchen was under the garden. John Morris, builder, of Mayfair, bought a new lease of the house and mews behind and undertook alterations in 1889, subsequently subletting. In the inter-war period No. 31 was partly used as a school, entailing some subdivision, before the solicitors Saxton & Morgan took it over. Subsequently the marine archaeologist Honor Frost lived here for many years.⁴⁵

No. 32 and former **Russian Chapel**. This house was originally leased to George Mercer in 1766, but probably not first occupied until about 1770, the approximate date of the outlines of a rococo plaster ceiling on the first floor.⁴⁶

In 1813 the house became the residence of the chaplain to the Russian ambassador, and a makeshift chapel was created at the back. This and its surviving replacement of 1864–5 functioned successively as the leading Russian Orthodox place of worship in London until 1921.

From 1756 the Russian Church in London was at Clifford Street, Burlington Gardens, probably behind No. 6, in the 1760s the seat of the Russian legation. It seems to have remained there after the embassy moved in 1780 to 86 Harley Street. In 1807 the long-serving ambassador Count Simon Woronzow (Semen Romanovich Vorontsov) lost his accreditation as a result of shifting alliances during the Napoleonic Wars but remained in London. His even longer-serving chaplain, Father James Smirnov (Iakov Ivanovich Smirnov), at first looked after the Harley Street house, but had to leave when the British and Russians struck a new alliance and a fresh ambassador, Prince Lieven, reclaimed it. At that point, in 1813, Smirnov found the nearby 32 Welbeck Street and secured it for his own residence, with the aim of using the stable block at the back ‘for establishing a chapel of the Greek Rite’. The house’s lessee was dubious, but the project was secured once Count Woronzow and the 4th Duke of Portland had exchanged courteous letters in French, in which they congratulated one another on the recent successes of Russian arms. Within the house, the four fetching low-relief scenes of generic Russian buildings slipped into the corners of the ceiling of the first-floor front room were presumably the pious but genial Smirnov’s insertions of this date (Ills 14.21a, 14.21b); he had been chaplain since 1780 and lived here with his family till his death in 1840.⁴⁷

The original chapel was simple, as the Portland Estate stipulated that it must be convertible back to a stable and could only be entered through the house and not separately from Marylebone Mews. Smirnov’s successor, Father Eugene Popoff, reported in 1842 that its iconostasis was ‘of the portable type’ and that there was just a single altar. Despite this modesty the Church of the Dormition of the Most Holy Mother of God (its formal title)

was attended by Russians of all ranks, notably Nicholas I on 2 June 1844 during his visit to London.⁴⁸

The growing numbers of Russians in London after the Crimean War made changes needful. In 1856–7 Father Popoff secured a new lease from the Portland Estate and consulted the architect James Thomson, who first advised on some repairs and embellishments. Then in his sixties, Thomson had designed the main buildings for the Polytechnic in Regent Street and lived close by in Devonshire Street. Later, after the promise of some funding from St Petersburg came through, it was decided to build a fresh chapel. Thomson was investigating possible new sites in June 1863, one in nearby Westmoreland Street, but Popoff quickly fell back on Welbeck Street. Construction took place in 1864–5; the builder was ‘Mr Howard’, probably William Howard of Covent Garden.⁴⁹

The new chapel was restricted on plan to the 24ft width of the site, but extended further westwards back towards the house, giving it a 50ft length, preceded by a vestibule in the form of a rotunda (Ills 14.22, 14.23). The tripartite arrangement of auditorium, dome on a square plan and short apse cut off by an iconostasis, was conventional for a small Russian church, as was the simple round-arched or Byzantine style. According to *The Builder* the chaste but effective design was ‘due to a suggestion received from St Petersburg’ which ‘Mr Thomson embraced’.⁵⁰ The dome rises to 40ft high at its apex, and consists of an octagonal drum at the lower stage carried across the corners by squinches and surmounted by a hemisphere 21ft in diameter, pierced by twelve arched lunettes and topped by a ventilating cupola. The dome, arches and roof construction throughout are probably of wrought iron (supplied by Daniel & Edward Bailey). Externally the only embellishment other than the lead-covered dome is a western bellcote, all the walls including the frontage to the mews being of plain brick.

The surviving ornamentation of the drum with tightly spaced Romanesque arcading was said to have been inspired by ‘the celebrated

Baptistery at Ani' (apparently a monument from Northern Greece illustrated at the Great Exhibition, not the Armenian Ani in Anatolia). This may have been among the contributions of John James Thomson, the architect's son, who helped with the interior.⁵¹ Other features, all now gone, emanated in part from high-placed patrons dedicated to upholding traditional Russian styles. Pride of place went to the iconostasis, made by the London statuary and marble importer William Field from a 'general idea' put forward by Prince Grigory Gagarin. It was in stone with six side arches divided by marble pillars and filled with paintings over base-panels of mosaic. In the centre were heavy doors, inlaid and painted, and cresting the screen was a depiction of the Last Supper within a carved surround. Most of the saints on the iconostasis were reduced-scale versions of images in St Isaac's Cathedral and in the Chapel of the Grand Duchess Maria Nikolaevna's Mariinsky Palace both in St Petersburg; they were attributed to a young Russian artist, Matvey Varukhin, but the Last Supper was said to be after a painting by Alexander Bruloff or Brullov. The iconostasis was preceded by steps and a low gated railing, made by Potter, bronzed and gilt. Full-length figures intended for the windows of the dome were probably never executed; instead, heads of the apostles were added at an upper level by William Cave Thomas, a painter then living at 53 Welbeck Street.⁵²

The rebuilt chapel continued to function as the main religious centre for Russians in England, and was attended by Alexander II on his state visit to London in 1874. Following the 1917 Revolution, the influx of émigrés made it too small. After some temporary arrangements the congregation moved in 1921 to St Philip's, Buckingham Palace Road, taking the iconostasis and other fittings with them. Later again, in 1956, the congregation transferred to All Saints, Ennismore Gardens, where the doors and paintings of the iconostasis are now in safe keeping, though its sculptural elements have been lost.⁵³

The Rev. Eugene Smirnoff, last of the old Russian embassy chaplains, continued living at 32 Welbeck Street till his death in 1923. The premises were

afterwards taken by the Society of Radiographers, who used the chapel as a lecture theatre. In 1956 the architects Farms & Partners created ‘a more spacious approach’ to the former chapel and a new circular stairway to the basement. Later tenants, the Variety Club of Great Britain, having been refused planning permission in the 1980s to turn the chapel into offices, restored it as a meeting room with financial support from Westminster Council. The artist Helen Grunwald was commissioned to decorate it with murals and repaint the roundels of the Apostles in the dome. Grunwald’s Byzantine-style biblical scenes, on the theme of human suffering and healing through the resurrection, made specific reference to Nazi persecution. But the imagery, including women and children in a gas chamber, proved too much for the Variety Club and was subsequently painted over.⁵⁴ The premises are now occupied by a health-care company.

Nos 33–35 consist of an office building of 1959 erected to designs by W. J. Bonfield. This was the first purpose-built office block to be erected in Welbeck Street. Redevelopment of the old houses had been in mind as early as 1941, when a lease was granted to the developer Henry Brandon. Work was repeatedly postponed because of building restrictions, and in the interim occupants included the architects Sir Patrick Abercrombie and Richard Nickson, with a joint office at No. 33; and Yorke, Rosenberg & Sjöström (later Mardall) at No. 35. The building’s unobtrusiveness reflects the LCC’s requirement that it should blend in with the existing character of the street. In a nursing home occupying the previous No. 34, Anthony Trollope the novelist died in 1882.⁵⁵

WEST SIDE

New Cavendish Street to Bulstrode Street

The frontage here was let in 1763, two plots (No. 47, and 1 Bulstrode Street) to William Weston; the rest to William Franks, whose plots were mostly built up by William Gosling, carpenter.⁵⁶

Nos 36–37, together with 36–40 New Cavendish Street, comprise Gordon House, a block of flats with shops fronted in brick with artificial stone dressings and built by Bovis Ltd to designs by Elgood & Hastie in 1928–9; F. M. Elgood was himself the developer. The previous Welbeck Street houses on these sites were modest ones, complete by 1769. No. 36 (the corner site) housed a stove-maker and ironmonger's shop from the early nineteenth century, at first run by William King, then from 1827 by Henry Crassweller and his family, who rebuilt the house with a new shopfront in 1861.⁵⁷

Nos 38 and 39, two of the houses built by William Gosling, date from 1769. No. 38 was in commercial use by 1833, when Vincent Robinson here established his well-known India matting warehouse, later moved to Wigmore Street. The present front, of strong red brick with orange dressings over a stuccoed ground floor, belongs to a remodelling of 1896 by the decorators Shuffrey & Co., who had been based at No. 38 for some years. The staircase at No. 39 was removed, and the upper floors converted laterally into flats. This work may have been designed by the head of the firm, Leonard Atkinson Shuffrey, trained as an architect, and author of *The English Fireplace*. Shuffrey & Co. continued at No. 38 into the 1920s, latterly as chimney-piece manufacturers, but probably came to an end after Shuffrey's death in 1926. In the 1950s his son Paul edited and published the *Church Quarterly Review* from his flat at No. 39. Part of the ground-floor premises, No. 39A, was occupied in the 1920s–40s by the wireless makers Rees, Mace Manufacturing Co. Ltd, later part of Pye.⁵⁸

No. 40, in a solid neo-Georgian style, dates from 1907–8, when Leonard Shuffrey, whose interior design practice had already redeveloped Nos 38 and 39, rebuilt it to designs by George Sherrin. The previous house, built like its neighbours by William Gosling and rated by 1769, was the London house of George Pelham, Bishop first of Bristol, later of Exeter, in the 1800s. Latterly it had been leased to brush manufacturers, but for a rebuilding lease the Howard de Walden Estate insisted on a private residence ‘of superior character’, the ground-floor front to be faced in Portland stone. The house was taken by (Sir) William Henry Willcox, specialist in forensic medicine.⁵⁹

Nos 41 and 42, though rebuilt at the same time, 1900–1, are instructively different, their architects having struggled to communicate efficiently regarding storey heights and string courses. No. 41, built for the leaseholder, Dr E. A. Snape, by Rawlings Brothers to a design by W. H. Romaine-Walker & Besant, combines refined neo-Georgian proportions with insistent stone detailing, notably a full Gibbs surround to the door (Ill. 14.11) and a deep balustrade cornice carried out on carved consoles. No. 42, a coarser performance, was built by E. A. Roome & Co. to designs by W. Henry White, acting as often for the developer James Boyton. The front bow perpetuates a feature of the previous house, dating from re-fronting in 1860. Boyton found it difficult to find a single lessee, concluding that ‘private individuals no longer take houses of this stamp’. Both houses were rebuilt behind the façades in 2014. The original houses were among those built by William Gosling; No. 42 was first rated in 1770 to the then Captain Samuel Barrington, famed for his capture of St Lucia from the French in 1778, whose house it remained until at least 1785.⁶⁰

Only **Nos 43, 44 and 45**, completed by Gosling in the late 1760s, survive in anything like their Georgian form. No. 44 was bought by Marmaduke Teasdale, a money scrivener, but tenanted between about 1770 and 1774 by Captain Stephen Riou of the Grenadier Guards, architect and writer on fortification, who purchased the lease when Teasdale was bankrupted. Riou

subsequently moved round the corner to Bentinck Street, where he died in 1780. No. 45 has a rich doorcase with attached fluted Doric columns similar to that of No. 28 across the road; there are also voussoirs to the ground-floor windows carrying bearded heads in high relief. In 1896 No. 44 acquired a new rear wing, built by Luscombe & Son to designs by the architect Frank Pearson.⁶¹

The sites of Nos 46, 47 and 47A and the north side of Bulstrode Street are taken up by the **Marylebone Hotel**, built in three phases in 1962–9 to designs by Katz, Vaughan and Partners as the Clifton-Ford Hotel. No. 47A, on the corner, also known as 1 Bulstrode Street, had been rebuilt for James Boyton in 1896–7, to designs by W. Henry White. Intended provisionally as flats, this had been let to the hotel proprietor Arthur Flatman, lessee of 2 and 3 Bulstrode Street which he went on to rebuild in 1898, opening all three as a private hotel, the Clifton Hotel. By 1917 the Clifton was owned by Flint House Ltd, which was negotiating terms for 46 and 47 Welbeck Street with an eye to expansion and rebuilding. In the event only a portion of No. 46 was taken in.⁶²

In 1955 the Clifton was sold to the Washington Group controlled by Maxwell Joseph, becoming the Clifton-Ford, and four years later was acquired by Joseph's Grand Hotels (Mayfair) Ltd, subsequently Grand Metropolitan Hotels. It was one of several Mayfair and Marylebone acquisitions (including the Welbeck Hotel, below) which Joseph hastened to modernize or rebuild. Total rebuilding of the Clifton-Ford was decreed, incorporating No. 47. S. H. Moore, the Howard de Walden surveyor, asked for brick or brick and stone elevations of domestic scale: 'I do not want a slavish copy of an outmoded style but I would not approve a purely functional statement'.⁶³ To judge from the present framed structure with curtain walling and spandrel panels, Moore's views proved unavailing.

In 1983 the Clifton-Ford was bought by the Jurys Hotel Group (Jurys Doyle from 1999). A 69-room extension, opened in 2000, took the hotel up to Marylebone Lane where a new block was built at No. 108, and the adjoining

Edwardian building at 8–10 Bulstrode Street was rebuilt behind the façade. The ground floor of the new building became a restaurant, while the former basement car park, entered from Bulstrode Place, was extended to 8–10 Bulstrode Street, and fitted up as a health club. A new glass front was installed along Bulstrode Place in 2010. In a rebranding exercise of 2008, the hotel became part of the Doyle Collection of hotels and was renamed the Marylebone Hotel.⁶⁴

The original No. 46 was part of the large take originally leased by William Franks in 1763, while Nos. 47 and 47A, formerly 1 Bulstrode Street, were built on land taken by William Weston in the same year. No. 47 was touted for sale in 1773 as having ‘a noble Portague entrance’, ‘magnificent Pier-Glasses’ and a four-post Gothick bedstead. Later it was the home of the pianist Arabella Goddard, who lived here with her parents between about 1848 and her marriage in 1859 to the music critic J. W. Davison, the period of her rise to fame.⁶⁵

Bulstrode Street to Bentinck Street

This block was taken for development in 1763 by William Franks, who retained several plots, leasing the rest to the builders Thomas Bird, William Cobbett and William Weston. Their houses were under construction c.1765, completed and occupied c.1767. The corner plots were developed as part of the cross streets. Some of these houses attracted high-class occupants in their early years; the 2nd Earl of Pomfret was rated for No. 51 in 1767–8, the 4th Duke of Manchester for No. 52 in 1770–4.⁶⁶

No. 47B, formerly 16 and 16A Bulstrode Street, was rebuilt as flats in 1897–8 by J. Smith & Sons to plans by Robert Willey, architect. The Bulstrode Street frontage is symmetrical, with two four-storey, shallow canted bays,

decorative gables, a piled-up mansard roof and a central porch. The Welbeck Street front appears to have lost its crowning gable.⁶⁷

Nos 48 and 49 survive substantially in their Georgian form. Both suffered substantial war damage in 1941. A blue plaque on No. 48 commemorates the prodigious Thomas Young, ‘man of science’ and medical doctor, who lived there in 1800–26; mounted in 1951, it replaced a 1905 green plaque.⁶⁸ This house has original front railings, and a good front-compartment staircase with triple turned wooden balusters on each tread. No. 49 has the remnants of a Doric doorcase with attached, unfluted columns.

Nos 50, 51 and 52 were all being reconstructed internally for the Howard de Walden Estate in 2015 by Corrigan Soundy Kilaiditi (CSK), architects. No. 50 has a front of 1907–9 in red brick and Portland stone with a square, stone bay rising through four stories, and flush quoining to the window surrounds. It was built by C. F. Kearley to designs by Alfred Burr for W. A. Poole. A blue plaque records the residence of Sir Patrick Manson, pioneer of tropical medicine, who lived here in 1910–12.⁶⁹ The architect T. Talbot Bury died at the preceding No. 50 in 1877 after many years’ residence; he was succeeded by T. Lauder Brunton, consulting physician and pharmacologist. No. 51 dates from 1893–4, when it was rebuilt by John Greenwood Ltd for L. W. Thomas to plain Queen Anne designs by C. H. Worley. Lord Rookwood (H. J. Selwyn-Ibbetson), Conservative politician, died here in 1902. In the previous house the novelist and socialite Maria Louise Ramé, known as Ouida, took ‘fine apartments’ in 1867, but after the success that year of her bestseller *Under Two Flags* she transferred to a suite in the Langham Hotel.⁷⁰

No. 52, of 1891–2, has an anomalous, faintly French front in red brick with linear stone dressings to the large windows, betraying that it was designed ‘for purely business purposes’. The rebuilding, including a substantial workshop extension facing Bentinck Mews, was undertaken by Robert Cruwys of Brixton, architect, and Patman & Fotheringham, builders,

for Madame Gabrielle Jinks, wholesale mantle manufacturer and jet embroiderer. The entrance bears a date-stone and the name Ashton House. Madame Jinks went into receivership in 1894, but her firm survived elsewhere on a reduced scale. Subsequently the premises were leased to Debenhams, who occupied the lower portion and workshops.⁷¹

In the early twentieth century Ethel McCaul, Boer War nurse and founder of the Union Jack Club, established a private nursing home at No. 51. McCaul's nurses attended King Edward VII after his emergency operation for appendicitis on the eve of his coronation, but the operation (under Frederick Treves) took place at Buckingham Palace, not Welbeck Street, as some sources relay. During the First World War the home was extended into No. 52 as the McCaul Hospital for Officers, with 46 beds. In 1917 a 'colour cure' ward was fitted up there for shell-shock and neurasthenia cases by the decorator and designer Howard Kemp Prossor, at his own expense. Decorated with ceiling and frieze of 'firmament blue' and walls of 'Sunlight Primrose', it was intended to evoke the life-affirming feelings associated with early Spring; the furniture, soft furnishings and crockery were colour-coordinated in the same vein. Prossor's system was subsequently used for several wards at the Maudsley and some other hospitals.⁷²

No. 53 is unusual in having been rebuilt as a house for single occupation as late as 1935. It is a neat piece of neo-Georgian architecture, in brown brick enlivened by a stone ground-floor façade and cornice and tile lintels. The architects, Stanley Hall and Easton & Robertson, working for Bovis & Co., devised these 'small touches' to mark the building as new while still conforming to the street's character. The Howard de Walden Estate specified that any period mantelpieces from the old building should be refixed in the new building or otherwise dealt with as required by the Estate surveyor, Colonel Blount, who also offered two or three marble mantelpieces from his salvage store. The previous house here was between about 1862 and 1911 the residence of the Welsh harpist and composer, John Thomas.⁷³

No. 54 has an all-terracotta front in neo-Jacobean ornamental taste, culminating in a mini-gable with the date 1896. It was built by Frederick Mark for Clarkson, Greenwell & Co., solicitors, to the designs of Christopher Eales & Son.⁷⁴

Bentinck Street to Wigmore Street

The greater part of this block (Nos 57–65) was built up from 1758, when it was leased by Abraham Easley to James Fisher, carpenter; the northern end (sites of Nos 55, 55A and 56) followed in 1763, when it was leased to Joseph Watkins, carpenter.⁷⁵

Two early occupants were Commodore John Byron, naval officer and grandfather of the poet, at No. 56 from about 1770; and the fanatical Lord George Gordon, president of the Protestant Association, at No. 64 between about 1779 and 1784. During the 1780 riots named after him plunder from Catholic chapels and private houses was burned before his door. But the scene in Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge* in which he addressed crowds from his balcony is not authentic. Later, Gordon was arrested at the house while neighbours remonstrated, and conveyed to the Tower; following his acquittal and return, there is evidence that he was spied on, but the story that a neighbouring house was taken by conspirators to kill him is probably a canard. The architect Edward Blore lived at No. 62 between at least 1828 and 1836.⁷⁶

No. 55A at the corner is the only Georgian house left in this stretch. It originally fronted Bentinck Street, in which it was No. 24. Its reorientation was carried out by James Boyton in 1898, when the Bentinck Street entrance was blocked up and a window facing Welbeck Street converted into a doorway. Internal alterations included removal of the original stone staircase and the creation of new rooms. In the early part of the twentieth century it

was, together with No. 55, a nursing home. An inspection found it an 'old house of poor type' with 'very poor' sanitation and recommended rebuilding. Nevertheless in the mid 1940s Lady Howard de Walden used a maisonette here as her London base.⁷⁷

Nos 55 and 56 were built by Bovis & Co. in 1893–4 to typically robust designs by C. H. Worley. They have identical fronts faced in red brick, with Portland stone window frames, canted bays, steep gables and scrolled broken pediments above the front doors. Though both were intended as private houses, by 1908 No. 55 was being used (in conjunction with 55A) as a nursing home, prompting complaints from C. J. Hinsley, who had almost completed his redevelopment of the adjoining houses with shops, flats and a hotel (Ill. 14.24). The flow of nurses and doctors, not to mention the 'frequent fatal terminations of cases', he argued, were deterring guests and tenants alike.⁷⁸

The present **Nos 57–65**, together with 60–65 Wigmore Street, are taken up by a bulky Edwardian block that forms the largest single element in Welbeck Street, rising to five high, stone-clad storeys above ground with a thrusting lead-covered dome at the angle (Ill. 14.25) It consists of shops, flats and a hotel, created by the developer-builder C. J. Hinsley in 1907–9 to designs by Boehmer & Gibbs, who may have clothed plans devised by a lesser-known architect working for Hinsley, (Samuel) Hoult Horton.⁷⁹ The Wigmore Street front of this hearty composition is happier than its Welbeck Street counterpart, which is too long, strong and unrelieved for its narrow setting.

Hinsley had been building in Marylebone in a small way since the 1890s, but achieved prominence as the developer of Harley House, Marylebone Road, whose original section was also designed by Boehmer & Gibbs (1903–4). Having proved himself an efficient operator, he was able to secure an agreement from the Howard de Walden Estate for redeveloping this prominent site, and commissioned designs from the architect (Samuel) Hoult Horton. These were duly accepted (with minor changes) by the estate

surveyor and passed by the District Surveyor, with the LCC giving consent to projecting windows and porches in June 1907. Sometime later Horton fell out with Hinsley over modifications and was sacked. By late September work was going on at the cleared site under Boehmer & Gibbs; whether to new or the old plans is unrecorded. Horton, whose competence had been challenged by Hinsley, successfully sued for compensation. ‘I have no doubt’, concluded the Official Referee, ‘that the plaintiff would have altered the design to conform to his wishes, though reluctantly, just as he conformed to the requirements of that autocratic magnate the estate architect, though he neither liked his suggestions nor approved of them’.⁸⁰

The development comprised a hotel at the north end of the Welbeck Street frontage, doctors’ consulting rooms and high-class flats also entered from that side, and five shops facing Wigmore Street. Flats and shops were advertised from early 1908 and the building was nearly completed by March 1909 when it was sold to the Law Land Company Ltd (purchasers also of Harley House). The flats, known as Welbeck House, had a Wigmore Street address until the late 1930s, despite the Welbeck Street entrance. Among the first residents was the barrister Edward Marshall Hall, not yet knighted but already famous through the Camden Town Murder trial.⁸¹

The hotel, also advertised in early 1908, was let to Philip Henry Bayer. Occupying the site of Nos 57-59 and containing about 200 rooms, it was at first designated the Welbeck Private Residential Hotel, but became the Welbeck Palace Hotel, a more public-sounding establishment which soon grew popular for the dances held in its basement ballroom. This had been a last-minute substitution by Hinsley for a smoking room and billiard room, and led to an action for breach of contract. The Law Land Company sued Bayer following complaints from neighbours in the Welbeck House flats and beyond about noise during and after the end of dances, such as ‘a full chorus by mixed voices of “Yip-i-addy” at 2.30 a.m.’ The judge opined that the lease permitted the hotel to hold dances, even though the Howard de Walden

Estate had not been alerted to the change of plan, but allowed an injunction for the restraint of noise. Despite this inhibition the ballroom at the Welbeck Palace remained popular for dances and occasional theatricals during the inter-war years. In 1923 the hotel sought to regularize the position by asking the Estate for a music and dancing licence, claiming that 'nine out of ten of our neighbours are dancing people' and promising to engage only string bands, 'no "musicians" making jazz or farmyard noises being allowed'.⁸²

A central porch and pedimented gable distinguishes the hotel from the rest of the block. The frontages to the flats carry pilasters running through the upper storeys. Welbeck House originally contained around twenty suites, and the communal marble entrance hall and staircase were of 'noble proportions, and well and artistically appointed': this space remains well preserved (Ill. 14.26). Each flat had eight to nine 'large, light, bright rooms and offices, with lounge halls of unusual size.' On the lower floors were two three-bedroom maisonettes with separate street entrances from Welbeck Street. These occupied the ground and lower ground floors and included consulting rooms 'particularly suitable for Physician, Surgeon, or Dentist'.⁸³

Shortly before his death in 1958, Bayer sold what was now the Welbeck Hotel to Maxwell Joseph on behalf of the Hotel York company; this was sold following Joseph's acquisition of the hugely expensive Dolphin Square development, but in 1959 the Welbeck was acquired back by his company Grand Hotels (Mayfair). Guttled, it was reopened in 1960 as The Londoner, part of the Washington Group of London hotels, with 130 en suite rooms and public interiors by Glen Rees, an in-house designer. More recently it was again radically refurbished as a Holiday Inn.⁸⁴