

CHAPTER 19

Langham Place area

Few people today are probably aware of Langham Place other than as the address of All Souls Church, assuming a simple transition from Regent Street to Portland Place. Even the Langham Hotel, which takes up most of its west side, has acquired a Portland Place address as No. 1C. Yet this short, connecting bend between the two great thoroughfares has a notable history of its own, with much of architectural and wider cultural interest. With All Souls and the Langham, Broadcasting House completes the triumvirate of contrasting monumental buildings that face it – though it properly belongs with Portland Place and is covered with the rest of that street in Chapter 17. Other noteworthy buildings in this vicinity have long disappeared, among them the mid-Georgian villa Foley House, on the hotel site; stuccoed Regency townhouses by John Nash and others; and two of late Victorian London's foremost music venues, Queen's Hall and St George's Hall.

Langham Place owes its sinuous configuration as a linking device to Nash. But he was famously making the most of a bad job, the legacy of the mishandled eighteenth-century planning of this area, where the urban street-grid had given way in the 1750s to Foley House and its gardens, an obstructive presence which nevertheless dictated the spectacular width of Portland Place.

Most of the chapter is arranged in broadly chronological sections. It begins with Foley House and development in Edward Street, the north-south street from which much of Upper Regent Street was created, including the house and architect's office built for himself by James Wyatt – somewhat

confusingly known in its latter days as Foley House too. This is followed by an account of the Nash development, including All Souls, then by Victorian and later buildings, including redevelopment on the east side of Langham Place north of All Souls, in All Souls Place and the west end of Langham Street; the John Peel Wing of Broadcasting House which replaces it is described in Chapter 17. The chapter concludes with an account of Cavendish Place, connecting Langham Place with Cavendish Square.

Early development

Bolsover Street and Edward Street

Regent Street was laid out largely on the line of existing streets. North of Oxford Street, the route followed two dating from the early development of the Harley–Cavendish estate in the 1720s: Bolsover Street, which ran from Oxford Street as far as Margaret Street; and Edward Street, longer and slightly wider, which carried on north of Margaret Street as far as present-day Langham Street. They are shown as projected on John Prince’s plan of 1719, when it was anticipated that Edward Street would run right up to the estate’s northern boundary as ‘Ogle Street’, which never happened. Rocque, in his map of 1746, picked up the name Ogle Street and erroneously applied it to Edward Street, then still only half built up. The names Ogle Street and Bolsover Street were later applied to streets further east.

Bolsover Street had fewer than twenty houses, mostly built in the 1720s or early 1730s, around the same time as the western end of Great Castle Street; being near Oxford Street, they soon became largely commercial. Edward Street had a more involved history. Its name, presumably honouring Edward

Harley, first appears in a deed of 1726.¹ The top of the street enjoyed some independent development, with houses on the east side being built as late as the 1750s. The rest of both frontages was much given over to stables or yards connected to the cross-streets.

Chief among these were the properties along the west side of Edward Street between Margaret Street and Mortimer Street (now Cavendish Place). Most were connected with the large houses on the east side of Cavendish Square. At the north end of this stretch in 1744 the entrepreneurial plasterer and veteran Marylebone developer William Wilton built three houses with a factory to the south. The houses were of good quality but lacked gardens; two were numbered in Mortimer Street (Nos 38 and 39), and the corner house was known as 20 Edward Street. A plan survives among James Gibbs's drawings for this house, much as built, labelled 'Mr Hanbury's house' – referring to William Hanbury, for whom Gibbs had worked at Kelmarsh Hall, Northamptonshire. Gibbs was old by 1744 but still working, and would have known Wilton, since both were associated with Henrietta Place near by. It is plausible that he was consulted by his old client over the house's plan or fitting-out. The property was not assigned to Hanbury until 1758. The leases of 38 and 39 Mortimer Street descended to Wilton's grand-daughter Lady Frances Chambers, who, widowed, lived in one of them in the early nineteenth century. Minor alterations may have been made to No. 39 by Soane in 1798.²

The factory was of peculiar interest, for it was here, if J. T. Smith can be credited, that Wilton set up a plant 'in imitation of that in France' to make '*papier maché* ornaments for chimney-pieces, and frames for looking-glasses', employing 'hundreds of people, including children as well as grown persons' and thereby gaining 'a vast increase of income'. No more is known of this operation, except that Thomas Collins, Wilton's nephew and latterly another successful high-class plasterer, was apprenticed to him in 1750 and worked at Edward Street, perhaps as manager, paying the rates till 1767, when the plant

may have closed. Papier mâché was an innovation of these years, coming into fashion for furniture and interiors. The works seem to have occupied premises about 100ft deep, entered from Edward Street. Behind them to the west was a separate large yard reached from Mortimer Street and occupied from around 1800 by a succession of coach and harness makers. Eventually the Wilton works became a horse infirmary and stabling. Later there was some amalgamation of the premises, so that when the stained-glass makers Clayton & Bell came here after the creation of Regent Street (page ###), they had a greater depth of plot than Wilton had enjoyed.³

One effect of the Foley House development described in the following section was to stop the northwards extension of Edward Street, while in 1762 what would have been its western junction with Queen Anne Street was walled off by Lord Foley. Some building was later permitted on the west side of this end of Edward Street, including a house for the architect James Wyatt, described separately below. The fate of the east side is also discussed below, in the context of buildings in All Souls Place and the west end of Langham Street, with which the top of Edward Street was eventually merged.

Foley House (demolished)

The building of Foley House in 1755 as a detached villa in the fields north-east of Cavendish Square would have been impossible had the regular grid of streets intended for the Cavendish–Harley estate been completed successfully. But building slowed in the slump that followed the South Sea Bubble, and had stopped by around 1740.

Queen Anne Street, planned to cross the estate from west to east, had not yet been laid out by the time of John Roque's map in 1746, though some piecemeal early development respected its anticipated route – notably Marylebone Basin and the Queen's Head opposite, at the corners of the

intended northward continuation of Chandos Street (Ills ###, ###, Prince and Rocque excerpts). Building was still in the doldrums when in 1749 Lady Harley reacquired ground north of Cavendish Square, sold in 1724 to the Duke of Chandos (page ###).

In these circumstances, development of any sort was welcome and in October 1753 she agreed to grant a long building lease to her late husband's cousin, the politician Thomas Foley, 2nd Baron Foley, of a rectangle 304ft by 190ft, south-east of the basin between Edward and Chandos Streets. It had already been let to the mason George Mercer, who had built just two houses at either end of what is now Cavendish Place and was willing to sell the intervening frontage and backland to Foley. By 1757 Foley had erected what was described as a 'large residence in the suburbs for part of the year' – a good-sized villa if not a mansion. It seems likely that Foley, whose money mostly derived from the iron industry and government contracts, was prompted as much by the land's potential value as by a desire to live there.⁴

Foley House was a late-Palladian edifice faced in plain brick, whose north-facing pavilions with canted fronts made the most of unobstructed views north to Hampstead and Highgate (Ills 19.1, 19.2). Typically for villas of the 1750s, it had a centralized plan, with the main rooms, including a 62ft-long north-facing double drawing room, arranged around a central top-lit staircase. It was entered from a western courtyard off Chandos Street (where 1-1A Portland Place and the roadway to their south are now); a quadrangular stable yard occupied a counterpart court to the east. The architect was Stiff Leadbetter. Little is known of the interior decoration, but an arabesque ceiling design for the house, dated to 1762, survives among the Adam drawings collection at Sir John Soane's Museum (Ill. 19.3).⁵

Following the completion of Foley House, a dispute arose that was to have long-lasting consequences. Foley, who undoubtedly appreciated the value of the surrounding land, obtained an informal right of veto over adjacent developments. Advancement of the Cavendish–Harley grid having

been sluggish for some time, Foley believed (or claimed to believe) that Lady Harley and her daughter and heir the Duchess of Portland had abandoned the old plan, their land having lain 'vacant and neglected for above 25 years'. In his view they accepted his proposals, which outlined only limited new building and otherwise generally protected the air and prospects around Foley House.⁶

But the property market was reviving. In March 1758 the Portland steward Thomas Isatt granted the bricklayer John Corsar a lease of land on the north side of Queen Anne Street, part of what Foley now claimed for himself. Thus provoked, Foley sent Leadbetter to Bulstrode in July to visit the 2nd Duke and Duchess of Portland – whom Leadbetter knew, having worked for them in 1753–4 at Portland House, Whitehall. Leadbetter negotiated an agreement for a long lease to Foley of a great deal more land north of Foley House at a rent of up to £800 a year. Extending for over 38 acres, this land reached well beyond the line of present-day Marylebone Road to the estate boundary, and east to west from Great Portland Street almost as far as the future line of Wimpole Street–Devonshire Place. Foley secured signatures without consulting Isatt, whom the Duchess disliked. The following year he also secured a 99-year peppercorn lease of 170ft of intermediate ground immediately north of Foley House, much of it on the intended route of Queen Anne Street, which allowed him to clear away the Queen's Head and enhance the grounds of his house.

On Portland's death in May 1762, William Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, the future prime minister, became the 3rd Duke. Foley soon sought the execution of a lease as agreed in 1758. The Dowager Duchess was ready to comply but the young duke saw how ill-advised it was to relinquish control over so much of his London estate. He joined Isatt and James West, a lawyer and long-standing Estate's trustee, to contradict his mother and stand in Foley's way. Piqued, in November 1762 Foley built 8ft walls across the line of Queen Anne Street on either side of his ground, to safeguard the frontages he

had secured in 1759. Cut in two, Queen Anne Street was rendered 'melancholy, inelegant and inconvenient to the greatest degree . . . no private gentleman, much less a nobleman, (notwithstanding the ground was his own property,) would have done so ungenerous and ungentle a thing, as to build a garden-wall directly through the center of so fine a street merely for the sake of extending a London garden'.⁷

Foley did indeed create large gardens, front and back of his house. By 1764 he was employing the surveyor and canal engineer Thomas Yeoman to prepare a development plan for the rest of his ground. Possibly initiated by Leadbetter, this revisited the old idea of a second major residential square on the estate (page ###). This 'Queen Ann's Square' was to stand immediately north of Foley House but without spoiling the view (Ill. 19.4). To advance it Foley tried to gain control of the Vestry, which strongly deprecated the Queen Anne Street walls. In 1765 he took Portland to law and began to permit limited development to the north of his stables, granting leases for at least two houses fronting Edward Street. Portland consulted Henry Keene about the layout of streets, as well as about plans for a house for himself.⁸

Foley died in January 1766. His heir was a distant cousin, another Thomas Foley (1716–77), of Stoke Court, Herefordshire, who became 1st Baron Foley of the 2nd creation in 1776. Much indebted to his predecessor, 'my most worthy Relation Friend and benefactor', Foley persevered with the lawsuit. A compromise of January 1767 allowed him to keep his house and garden freehold, confirmed his possession of the large rectangular site by means of a new 99-year lease, and guaranteed the preservation of the prospect north to the full width of Foley House – which explains why the Adam brothers had to make Portland Place so wide. The blockage of Queen Anne Street became irrevocable with the building of 2–6 Chandos Street in 1769–70 on the west side and a house for himself by the architect James Wyatt in 1774 on the east.⁹

Later residents of Foley House included the banker Peter Isaac Thellusson (d. 1808), 1st Baron Rendlesham, in 1805–6. He was followed in 1806–9 by Prince Frederick William, 2nd Duke of Gloucester and Edinburgh, who planned to improve the interior with fixtures and fittings ‘*a-la-grec*’ and to add a ‘magnificent’ conservatory and aquarium, but it is not known how much of this was carried out.¹⁰ The house was acquired by John Nash in 1811 and demolished for the creation of Langham Place.

James Wyatt’s house (demolished)

On the eastern side of Foley House, the Foleys allowed a ribbon of development in the form of two small houses, built in 1765, and to their north an exceptionally fine house. This was the home and office of the architect James Wyatt, built to his own designs in 1774, the year of his marriage. Aged only 29, he had shot to fame and fortune with the success of his Oxford Street Pantheon, and had developed a flourishing country house practice.

Known at first as Foley Place, Wyatt’s was a substantial three-storey house of nine bedrooms, with clear prospects front and back, along Queen Anne Street East and over the front garden of Foley House. The principal elevation was dominated by three tripartite ground-floor windows and was innovative for being entirely stuccoed (in ‘Higgins’s Calcareous Cement’). There were also several Coade-stone ornaments designed by Wyatt, such as door and window consoles and paterae (Ill. 19.5). The interior was technologically advanced in terms of its kitchen and other domestic facilities, and there was much fine neoclassical plasterwork, executed by Joseph Rose & Co. to Wyatt’s designs (Ill. 19.6). Adjoining the house to its south was an annexe for Wyatt’s architectural office and staff of clerks and assistants, also a full three storeys tall but with no rear garden.¹¹

Wyatt remained at the house until his death in 1813 and it was sold the following year to clear his debts. The demolition of Foley House at around the same time allowed it to be reorientated towards the new Langham Place, with a sweeping entrance forecourt, portico and large front garden facing Portland Place. At that stage it became known as Foley House, or 8 Portland Place. Along with the 1760s houses at 1 and 3 Langham Street, it was demolished in 1928 for the erection of Broadcasting House, when decorative fragments were rescued and given to the Victoria & Albert Museum. One of its last residents in the 1910s–20s was the financier and politician Edgar Vincent, Baron (later Viscount) D'Abernon of Esher, ambassador to Berlin in the early 1920s.¹²

John Nash and the development of Langham Place

Anticipating plans for the Crown's processional new street from Carlton House to Marylebone Park early in 1810, John Nash astutely acquired an interest in Foley House and its grounds. The seller was the third Thomas Foley to feature in the story – the 3rd Baron (of the 2nd creation) – who granted the house to Nash as security for a £24,000 loan. Foley had offered to sell to the Marylebone Vestry in 1806 and had mortgaged the house to Lady Mary Bowlby for £10,000 in 1807. By that time Nash had serendipitously become one of Foley's creditors by virtue of unpaid improvement works at the Foley seat in Worcestershire, Witley Court. By early 1808 Foley was considering disposing of his London property on building leases. John White valued the site for the Duke of Portland at £24,000 plus £6,000 for materials. At some point, Nash later claimed, the Duke offered Foley £42,000, perhaps as a means of safeguarding Portland Place in its existing form.¹³

In July 1811, Foley's debt to Nash was renegotiated as a conditional sale of the Foley House freehold, permitting Nash to demolish the house, sell

the line of the new road to the Crown and himself develop adjacent building plots. Nash had, it seems, put in enough of his own money to outbid Portland, thereby saving the road scheme. This was one of several instances in the larger new street project where Nash mixed personal speculation with and to the benefit of his public role.¹⁴

Langham Place, as the short stretch of new road linking Upper Regent Street with Portland Place was known, took its name from Sir James Langham, whom Nash secured in 1813 as client for the biggest house to be erected on the surplus Foley House plots that he had set aside for building on. Thwarted in his original scheme to take a straight route south from Portland Place through the Foley House site (page ###), Nash was obliged to bend the road eastwards and amalgamate it into a widened Edward Street. This also helped to head off an alternative line for the road improvement being advanced by John White and James Wyatt, which would have taken it down Great Portland Street, leaving Portland Place a dead end and Nash's Foley House property less valuable. As J. Mordaunt Crook put it: 'The sinuous path of Regent Street was not Hogarth's Line of Beauty but the developer's line of maximum profit'.¹⁵ At first the curve to reconcile the lines of Regent Street and Portland Place was planned to begin immediately north of Mortimer Street, so as to maintain a carriageway as wide as Portland Place, but in the event Nash had to move Regent Street yet further east. He maintained its straight line almost as far north as Riding House Lane (now Street), where the portico of All Souls Church was to project into a narrower and more sharply turned roadway (page ###). The last transactions to clear the way were sealed in 1815.¹⁶

The final configuration left Nash a good deal of the former Foley House property available for development. At first, the name Foley Gardens was applied to houses built by Nash and others on both sides of the road; later they were numbered in Langham Place, and subsequently most were twice renumbered (in 1865 and 1871) as part of Portland Place. Now long-

demolished, these Regency and early Victorian houses were varied in size and style, making with All Souls Church an engagingly heterogeneous link between the two more architecturally unified streets. The following account begins on the east side, running south to north, then continues down the west side in the other direction.

South of the church, the new roadway required the demolition in 1821 of the small houses along the east side of Edward Street south of Riding House Lane (now Street). At the bottom corner, beside Mortimer Street, two standard stucco-fronted houses, **Nos 1 and 2 Langham Place**, were built by John Woodward in 1822–3 (Ill. 19.9). Not surprisingly given their proximity to Regent Street these were in use as shops by 1847.¹⁷

To their north, the survival of an extensive livery stables and coach repository on the site of the former Horse Grenadier Guards' riding house (page ###) left little depth of frontage for rebuilding. The Edward Street demolitions had left the repository vulnerable to theft, so Nash agreed with its lessee, John Marks, that a new show front to Langham Place could be created, at Crown expense – to be used as a pedestrian entrance only, 'though he may be permitted to exhibit the objects of his business, through windows or grated arcades'.¹⁸ Nash's partner James Morgan designed this set-piece, numbered **3 Langham Place** and built in 1822–4. It was quite a pompous affair, with three sets of windows either side of a raised centre with doubled Ionic pilasters (Ill. 19.8). A vignette of the 'London Carriage Repository' as it was in the 1830s–40s is given in the memoirs of Marks's son, the artist H. Stacy Marks, who worked there reluctantly for a spell.¹⁹

It was soon apparent that more remunerative use could be made of this frontage. In December 1841 the Office of Woods received a proposal from James Fergusson offering to erect four houses facing Langham Place next to Nos 1 and 2, and to completely rebuild Marks & Son's repository on a

reduced site behind, all to David Mocatta's designs. The 33-year-old Fergusson, later a historian of architecture, had not then long returned from India, where he had made a fortune as an indigo planter. His Langham Place venture, duly built in 1842, was a speculation, but Fergusson lived and worked until his death in 1886 in the largest of the four houses which extended over the central entrance to the rebuilt repository, known after a later renumbering as **20 Langham Place**. Mocatta's range represented a typical early Victorian enhancement of the Nash stucco style, with mezzanine windows contained within blank arches, lively balconies, a beefily bracketted cornice and parapets made up from a honeycomb of tiles (Ill. 19.9). It was at **No. 19**, the next house south to Fergusson's, that the circle of middle-class women known as the Langham Place group found a home in 1859, moving from (John) Prince's Street to open a coffee shop and reading room. The group published the *English Woman's Journal*, ran the Society for the Promotion of the Employment of Women and began influentially to explore liberal feminist politics.²⁰

Beyond All Souls Church, to its north-west, was a curving triangle of land backing onto Edward (now Langham) Street, today occupied by Broadcasting House. At the south end of this ground, Samuel Baxter erected an imposing pair of semi-detached villas to Nash's designs in 1814-15, first known as 4 and 5 Langham Place, latterly as 2 and 4 Portland Place. They were designed to look like one larger house, sharing a central Ionic portico (Ill. 19.8). One of them was built specifically for Col. Thomas Stanley (d. 1816), MP, of Cross Hall, Lancashire, in lieu of his former townhouse in Pall Mall, demolished as part of Nash's street improvement. From 1819 to 1841 the southern house (No. 4) was occupied by George Law, Bishop of Chester then of Bath and Wells. William Mountford Nurse, another of Nash's builders and financier of the Regent Street Polytechnic, took No. 5 in 1835. The open space to the north of these houses seems to have been jealously guarded, yet a small bow-windowed house had been added there by 1820 and before long

extended to abut Baxter's pair. This was No. 6 (later 6 Portland Place), home to Sir Anthony Carlisle, surgeon and anatomist, until his death in 1840.²¹

Further north, beyond James Wyatt's house, a large Foley Gardens plot was granted by Nash in 1812 to Sir James Graham, MP, who owned and occupied the southernmost house on the east side of Portland Place. This ground was maintained as a private garden until 1828–30, when Graham's son, Sir Sandford Graham, MP, Lord Byron's college crony and travelling companion, allowed development with a terrace of five houses by the builder John Mackell Aitkens, who had worked on Hanover Terrace at Regent's Park for Nash and then moved on to Belgravia. Their brick fronts and applied giant-order Ionic pilasters were presumably intended to complement the Adam architecture further along the street, and at the north end a curved corner softened the necessary step back in the building line. Always numbered in Portland Place (latterly as 10–18), this terrace was cleared for the extension of Broadcasting House in 1938.²²

There was more space and therefore more variety of scale and type in the buildings erected on the west side of Langham Place. Nash's revised street plan included a short spur road connecting the upper part of Langham Place with Chandos Street to the west. To the north of this, Nash began from 1813 to develop a group of houses on the sites of the present 1–11 Portland Place, but with a building line advanced from the main body of that street to the north. The southernmost corner plot was sold to Sir Thomas Bernard, the social reformer who was otherwise collaborating with Nash on the Regent's Canal. Here a large stuccoed house, comprising three main storeys and a dormer attic, with a three-bay frontage to the main road but with its entrance in the side flank, was built by Charles Mayor, with whom Nash was also involved at Park Crescent. It had been completed in carcass by 1814 and soon after was let to Sir Gilbert Heathcote, MP, 4th Bt; from 1871 this house was known as 1 Portland Place. However, Mayor's bankruptcy in 1815 caused further work on Foley Gardens to stall, as at Park Crescent. To the north of Heathcote's house,

Nash himself undertook the completion of three further stuccoed houses in 1818–19 (later 3–7 Portland Place), which he himself described as ‘very large and expensive’. Back parts of the northernmost of these survive at the present 7 Portland Place. The largest of the group, to the north (on the site of the present Nos 9 and 11), was added in 1820–2. Double-fronted and set well back from the street with a large garden to its north, it came to be known as Langham House.²³

South of the spur road connecting with Chandos Street was a long, rectangular plot of ground, where the Langham Hotel now stands, which had formerly comprised the southern gardens of Foley House. Here Nash built the large detached house confusingly called **Langham Place** for Sir James Langham (d. 1833), 10th Bt, of Cottesbrooke, Northamptonshire, son and heir of a previous Sir James Langham who had acquired 14 Cavendish Square in the 1770s (page ###). At first, in September 1813, Nash sold Langham only the western portion of this plot, some 160ft by 71ft, as the new road was then still planned to continue southwards alongside it, running in a straight line from Portland Place. Only days later Langham was able to purchase the two adjoining freehold plots to the east for a garden, as by then the road had been realigned to run further east.

One of the conditions of the sale was that Nash should design and build the house, which was complete and in Langham’s occupation by 1815. Seven chimneypieces carved by Frederick Christian Breamer and six Coade-stone statues were fitted in 1816–17. It was a two-storey stuccoed villa, with Nash’s characteristic asymmetry, a canted bay and pediment facing east and a muscular octastyle Ionic portico facing south, similar to those by Nash at Park Crescent and 29 Dover Street (Ill. 19.10). Langham sold a north-eastern triangle of his garden to the Crown for the main roadway, which Nash lined with ornamental iron railings in 1816. After Langham’s death in 1833 the elderly Countess of Mansfield took the house, which remained in her and her family’s possession (occasionally going by the name of Mansfield House)

until 1860, being sold shortly afterwards for the construction of the Langham Hotel.²⁴

To the south of Langham's house and garden was ground fronting the north side of Mortimer Street (now Cavendish Place). The Regent Street improvement had swept away a stone-fronted house at its east end, adjoining Edward Street, leaving a vacant site. The redevelopment of this corner plot was undertaken by Decimus Burton, who in 1822 informed Langham that he intended to put up a house overlooking the east end of his garden. Langham invoked a covenant to prevent this, so reducing the extent of Burton's building frontage. **Nos 14 and 15 Langham Place** had been erected on the main, southern part of this site by 1825. They were two big, stuccoed houses with Greek Doric porticoes in antis and first-floor pedimented architraves (Ill. 19.11). No. 15 was the home in the 1850s of the chemist Jacob Bell, founder of the Pharmaceutical Society and a notable art patron. They were demolished in the late 1920s for the present Nos 14 and 15 (page ###).²⁵

All Souls Church

The piquant portico and spire of All Souls, Langham Place, are familiar the world over. A landmark in the West End and a vista-stopper at the top of Regent Street, they are among the deftest scenic improvisations of John Nash, whose bust overlooks Langham Place from the colonnade. This public frontispiece and the accompanying hall-church, angled off behind and less well preserved, were built in 1822-4.²⁶

The creation of All Souls was the outcome of a juggling act between St Marylebone Vestry, eager to secure new churches for its populous parish, the Church Building Commission set up by Government in 1818, and the Crown-appointed authorities entrusted with creating Regent Street and Regent's Park, notably Nash himself. The idea of a church on or near the present site

goes back to at least 1811, when the Vestry was urgently seeking a new location for the parish church and Nash's plans for Regent Street were being formulated. Lord Foley first offered to sell his freeholds here to the Vestry for twelve thousand guineas. That price proved prohibitive; but after Nash himself bought the Foley property, the Vestry considered taking the site of Foley's stable buildings for a free-standing church with an advanced portico facing west, not unlike All Souls. The idea came to naught and the parish church was duly rebuilt on Marylebone Road. But it left both Nash and the Vestry with the idea that hereabouts would make an excellent site for a church.²⁷

The opportunity returned after the 1818 Commission made available subsidies for more churches. Having spent largely on erecting the St John's Wood Chapel and rebuilding the parish church, the Vestry felt that the Commission and the Crown should bear the financial brunt for the further four churches or chapels still required. After some skirmishing, a committee was convened of all interested parties. Nash suggested in May 1820 that two of the churches should be sited on Crown developments, one in the park at the top of Baker Street, the other on the present site of All Souls. In these dealings he wore two hats, as architect-planner for the street and park, and as one of three consultant architects to the Church Building Commissioners. That month Nash was confirmed as architect for the future All Souls, while another of the consultants, Smirke, was allotted St Mary's, Wyndham Place. Soane, the third, later acquired Holy Trinity, Marylebone Road, after the Baker Street site had been dropped.²⁸

By 1820 Regent Street and Langham Place were well advanced. So Nash already had a clear sense of how the new church should stand, 'facing the entrance to Langham Place and central to Chandos Street the Portico advancing westward from the East side of the New Street so that it be a central Object from Oxford Street along the New Street'. To reconcile these axes, he first proposed a square tower set off-centre from the body of the

church, and surrounded by an unorthodox hexastyle portico running round the south and west sides. When detailed plans came forward in May 1821 Nash had a better idea, but it was again the setting which he stressed. 'From the nature of the bend of the Street', he wrote, 'the portico and Spire will together form an object terminating the vista from the Circus in Oxford Street - the Spire (I submit) as the most beautiful of forms is most peculiarly appropriate to a Church - the Portico I have made circular as taking up less of the passage of the Street at the same time that it is most consonant to the shape of the Spire'. The change from square to circular tower and portico he presented as the choice of the parishioners, but it was evidently his own preference.²⁹

At one point Nash suggested a roof of iron and brick, covered with Dehl's mastic: 'the Church would never require repair, there would be no slates to be blown off no gutters to mend, the whole would be one entire Incrustation'. Luckily he had second thoughts, and went on to build the roof conventionally with slates over stout timber trusses. Another change was made during construction. Nash first designed the spire to have 'the appearance of shingles' (in what material is unrecorded), but he became worried that people would take them for real and insubstantial wooden shingles. He therefore in September 1823 substituted 'a polygon of 14 sides discriminated by grooves at their junction, working the sides into a faint hollow to diversify the light of the face'. He also added almost six feet to the spire without permission from the Commissioners, with the insouciant excuse that 'your assent would not have been withheld from anything which could have contributed to improvement in the appearance of the building ... it was careless conduct and not intentional disrespect'. The total height from street level to apex turned out at 145ft 6in.³⁰

The main contract was taken early in 1822 on a low competitive tender of just under £16,000 by Robert Streater, a builder not then known to Nash, who went on to erect further Commissioners' churches. Nash's trusted

lieutenant W. J. Browne acted as clerk of works. Streater soon found the site 'intersected by old drains sewers and cesspools and bogs in every part'. This caused changes to the foundations, but the inverted or 'reverted' arches supporting the internal colonnade and now exposed in the crypt formed part of the original specification.³¹ The site also proved so tight that encroachments were made on to neighbouring Portland property. Streater completed the contract in 1824 to Nash's satisfaction and abstained from claiming extras, 'notwithstanding a loss to no inconsiderable amount which I am certain he must have sustained'. Consecration took place on 25 November 1824, when the Rev. Dr John Hume Spry, the first-appointed rector for the district, preached. The name All Souls is said to have been chosen in part because it offered a measure of 'gratuitous accommodation' for the whole parish, the poor included.³² The total cost was not much short of £20,000, of which the parish found a little under half including the extra cost for the foundations. The Commissioners paid the rest, while the Crown donated the site.

By the time of its consecration the church had achieved notoriety, when a Radical Whig MP, Gray Bennet, complained in the Commons about the execrable taste of the spire, likening it to 'an extinguisher on a flat candlestick', asking with false naivety who its architect might be and proposing it be pulled down.³³ Bennet's question belonged to the gathering campaign of attack on George IV and the Tories via his favourite architect. Satirical verses in the *New Monthly Magazine* followed, and then the celebrated cartoon of Nash impaled on the point of the steeple. Nash of course knew well that he was mixing styles theatrically. Georgian churches had often set tapering, Gothic-type spires over classical frontispieces, but a spire narrowing and bursting forth from within a peristyle was new and blatant. He had tried out such a composition in one of his model designs for the New Church Commissioners, and was evidently keen to venture its effect. The floor of the bell chamber was constructed of cast-iron beams set in concrete. As for the circular portico turning the corner below, John Summerson believed Nash

cribbed the idea from C. R. Cockerell's then-recent Bristol Institution for the Advancement of Science, Literature and the Arts, but the context and scale of that building were quite different.³⁴ The whole composition was faced in the fashionable Bath stone except for the capitals of the portico and upper peristyle, which were of Coade stone, modelled by William Croggon. The Ionic portico capitals, incorporating tiny winged cherubs between the volutes (compared by James Elmes to 'owls displayed on the posts of a Dutch barn') are specially fetching and remain in fine repair (Ill. 19.14).³⁵ As an afterthought Nash added a tightly drawn circle of railings to protect the portico steps, taken away in the 1920s when an extra step was added.

The body of the church, set back at an angle, was at first largely hidden by buildings and so left plain, allowing *The Mirror* to liken it to 'a manufactory, or warehouse'.³⁶ It was faced in Bath stone and capped by a balustrade part-disguising the roof, also removed in the 1920s. Inside, the impression is of a lush Roman auditorium, with high galleries on all four sides fronted by Corinthian columns (twinned at the ends) and supported below on stubby piers with chamfered corners (Ills 19.16, 19.17). The central span between the columns measures about 70ft by 42ft in the clear, and is finished off by a deep cove. No early view of the interior seems to remain. Its grandeur impressed Sophia Baillie, who at the time of opening pronounced it 'handsomer ... in its internal decorations than in its outward appearance'. 'The church is always well filled', she added, 'and the whole duty conducted with great propriety'.³⁷ Nash took some typical shortcuts in the decoration; a century later it was said that 'the architraves of the internal order consisted of, and still consist of, nothing better than the lower surface of cast-iron bressumers with plaster fillets stuck on the iron'.³⁸ It is likely that the gallery columns were hard plaster over an iron core; their capitals were certainly of Coade stone. The pews were of deal, painted and varnished, and there was a profusion of crimson drapery against stone-coloured walls. The side galleries held the best of the 1,439 fixed seats, and so were allotted at high rents to

wealthy parishioners, including the Duke of Portland; 322 free sittings were also provided, on movable benches. Some of this furniture was allegedly made in the parish workhouse.³⁹ Charles Sylvester's heating system was employed to keep the congregation snug.

The organ, by James Bishop, had a handsome mahogany case 'agreeable to the designs of the architect', with side turrets linked by a pediment. Beneath this, on the west gallery front, were the royal arms, modelled by W. Wheeler in artificial stone from a design made for Nash by E. H. Baily, meant at one stage to be the basis for further such arms in Commissioners' churches. At the east end the altar recess was flanked by the pulpit and the clerk's desk, again of painted deal, at first attached to brackets on the large piers and probably entered from the galleries. The font stood in front of the convex altar rails, which had 'rather grotesque' balusters, an upholstered red velvet top, and figurework in Coade stone, long lost.⁴⁰ At the back of the recess, draped in red curtains, was the altarpiece, *Christ Crowned with Thorns*. A late painting by Richard Westall, this was offered to the Vestry in 1823 via the Bishop of Chester and the British Institution, where it was on exhibition, with the discreet intimation that the real donor was George IV. It was framed by Joseph Green, carver and gilder, just in time for the consecration.⁴¹

The roll of notables who passed the portals of All Souls is long, ranging from all four children of Gabriel Rossetti, baptized in the building's early years, to Rudyard Kipling, married there in 1892. But in other respects the nineteenth-century record of All Souls is unremarkable. Spry, the first rector, soon transferred to Marylebone parish church, to be succeeded by Dr George Chandler, who from 1830 combined the post with the deanery of Chichester and in due course veered towards the new High Churchmanship. With his support the Cambridge Camden Society got a foothold in the parish, whence first St Andrew's, Wells Street, and then All Saints, Margaret Street, were

carved out. By the late 1840s the canard spread about that 'All Souls Church was teaching next to popery'.⁴²

That did not at first affect the fabric, except that stained-glass windows began to be preferred to wall memorials. The pulpit descended to ground level in 1831. As early as 1844 the external balustrading was reported to be 'in an exceedingly defective state'. Arthur Blomfield superintended further repair of the exterior in 1870. The school started behind the church after the opening expanded. In 1858 came a drama when the Westall altarpiece was severely cut up by a madman.⁴³

The inevitable Victorian reordering took place in 1876 during the short incumbency of the Rev. J. M. Freshfield. The painted pews were discarded for open mahogany seats, choir stalls were introduced (given by Lord Grimthorpe, a regular worshipper), the pulpit and reading desk replaced, and the walls coloured pale green. There is contradictory evidence as to the architect responsible; some sources name Blomfield, others J. Oldrid Scott, while Thomas Gambier-Parry is supposed to have designed the pulpit. Around this time much stencilling was applied to the walls. In 1877 Scott produced a scheme for an apse which cannot have been proceeded with, though he did install a new altar table.⁴⁴ These changes made the church murkier. From 1879 a Low-Church tradition was reconfirmed at All Souls by the Rev. Sholto Douglas, who cast out Freshfield's super-altar and cross and threatened to dispense with the surpliced choir. Douglas attracted large congregations and channelled effort towards charities and schools in the poor eastern districts of his parish. Under Prebendary F. S. Webster (rector, 1898–1920), the parish was allegedly organized as two distinct parts, bifurcated by Portland Place. The clergy visited the western portion 'in frock coats and silk hats, changing into lounge suits for the east end'.⁴⁵

Two architects of note were involved with All Souls in the first half of the twentieth century. The first was Beresford Pite, active in the congregation and the author of several fine buildings for the parish. His certain work in the

body of the church was confined to new choir stalls, made by Maples in 1910 to replace Grimthorpe's 'high-backed and very uncomfortable' predecessors. Possibly he was also behind the replacement of all the windows that same year, starting the process of lightening the church, and in extending the organ case when the instrument was replaced by Hunter & Son in 1912–13. In 1920 Pite converted the round porch into an elegant war memorial. His handsome mosaic floor (in Rust's vitreous mosaic) and miniature stained glass windows (by Lowndes & Drury) survive, but the screen and lobby beyond have been removed (Ill. 19.18).⁴⁶

Under a new-broom incumbent, Arthur Buxton, Pite yielded place in 1923 to H. S. Goodhart-Rendel, one of three architects asked to submit improvement plans to coincide with the church's centenary. A surprising choice for an evangelical church (he became a Catholic around this time), Goodhart-Rendel presided over two major campaigns at All Souls. The first came in 1924–5, when much money was devoted 'simply to make the buildings safe'. Goodhart-Rendel respected Nash's taste but was contemptuous of his construction, diagnosing the principal cornice and the floor of the altar recess as dangerous. Apart from setting these things right, he stopped up the east gallery windows left and right of the altar recess and recast the choir and sanctuary, paving them in stone and mosaic, lengthening the altar table, installing a new altar cross by the Birmingham Guild, and straightening the communion rail. He wanted to remove the choir stalls, but had to be content with lowering them. The colour scheme for the refurbished church was a strong green for all the walls, with gilded ornaments. In 1927 he went on to create a baptistery at the west end of the south aisle, complete with handsome high font cover and lifting crane.⁴⁷ A chapel at the other end of the same aisle followed around 1931, with relief panels of David and Jonathan by Gilbert Bayes in memory of a battalion of the Royal Fusiliers. Many of the difficulties at the east end were due to lack of space for vestries, which until this time were confined to a semi-circular 'robing room' behind the altar

recess. This was replaced in 1933–5 by a multi-storey ‘church house’ entered from All Souls Place, designed by Harriss & Harriss, architects, in a plain neo-Georgian style, with flats over two floors of vestries and a meeting room. All these changes suggested confidence in the church’s future, scotching rumours of closure and even demolition in 1929, when a commission had looked into amalgamating the parish with St Andrew’s, Wells Street, in view of declining population and attendances.⁴⁸

On 8 December 1940 a land mine blew out all the doors and windows, lifted the roof and caused the main ceiling to collapse, smashing most of the choir stalls and pews. The congregation moved to St Peter’s, Vere Street, for the next decade. In 1944 much of the spire was taken down for safety’s sake. Goodhart-Rendel was commissioned that year to restore All Souls, but the work had to be postponed till 1948–51, with Ward & Paterson as the builders. Much exterior replacement in new Bath stone then took place, and some of the main roof beams were strengthened. The internal restoration was largely a reinstatement, but the organ (which had escaped serious damage) was again rebuilt and the console brought down to ground level. Goodhart-Rendel replaced all the windows in ground glass with yellow borders, aping Regency taste. The new wall colour was a lighter green, while the internal columns were then first painted in imitation of Sienna marble. This time Goodhart-Rendel got his way with the choir stalls, replacing them in dark wood with touches of gilding, somewhat in Thomas Hope’s Greek taste.⁴⁹ As a finishing touch to his work for the church, he positioned and designed the pedestal for the bust of Nash in the portico following a suggestion from the St Marylebone Society. An enlarged freestone copy by Cecil Thomas of a marble bust by William Behnes, it was unveiled by Patrick Buchan-Hepburn, the Minister of Works, in 1956 (Ill. 19.13).⁵⁰

In 1950 the Rev. John Stott advanced from the curacy of All Souls to take over as rector. By then the relationship with the BBC at neighbouring Broadcasting House, instigated in 1930 when services were first broadcast

from the church, had become regular and close, helping turn the charismatic Stott into a national figure. As to the fabric of his church, he put up with what he inherited. But the lack of a hall was a growing irritant, leading in 1969 to tentative plans to demolish and rebuild All Souls, leaving only the portico and spire. The historic buildings authorities blocked this approach. By 1971 the newspapers were reporting Stott under the headline 'Rector Says Bomb Church'.⁵¹

By then he had effectively handed over his dream of a 'biblical church' to the Rev. Michael Baughen, under whom an alternative scheme took shape. Largely on the strength of Robert Potter's work at the Millmead Baptist Centre, Guildford, the scheme was entrusted to Brandt, Potter & Partners, architects.⁵² It matured in 1975-6, with J. W. Falkner & Sons as builders and Poull Beckmann and Andrew Dekany of Ove Arup & Partners as engineers. This time the make-over was radical. The main innovation was the new Waldegrave Hall in the basement, made feasible by the depth of Nash's foundations, reached down a pair of curving stairs from a new foyer space, and exposing the old inverted brick arches supporting the columns and roof above. Upstairs all the Goodhart-Rendel and other fittings were swept away, leaving only the Westall picture in its niche; even the war memorial went, the Bayes panels being sold.⁵³ Potter regarded the interior as an 'ornate but ordinary galleried hall', and so felt no compunction in turning it into 'a square amphitheatre more in keeping with Sir Christopher Wren's functional ideals'.⁵⁴ The floor was raised and replaced in concrete; the west gallery was advanced; the organ was again rebuilt (by Harrison & Harrison) with a front redesigned by Leslie Bevis-Smith; the windows were again reglazed; the east end was reconfigured as a dais with a floor of afromosia wood; and all the permanent seats were taken out. Also from this time date the cast-aluminium communion table, pulpit and font, hefty-looking but readily moved, made by Herbert Read Ltd of Exeter to designs by the sculptor Geoffrey Clarke.

Externally there has been some patching since the 1970s, sometimes in Clipsham rather than Bath stone.⁵⁵

Since the 1920s All Souls has been the sole surviving Nash composition to perpetuate the scale, wit and verve of the old Regent Street. Many writers have admired its presence of mind, but none so memorably as Ian Nairn. 'Like Offenbach,' wrote Nairn in 1961, 'he [Nash] is one of the great liberators, who if we don't fight them, can make nonsense of our absurd prejudices about high and low brows. And who would want to fight All Souls, Langham Place? The way the spire ends the view up Regent Street and enables the axis to shift a few yards farther west to become Portland Place is well known: but the inside is just as successful, helped by a beautiful restoration [this was before the 1975-6 alterations]. With a big flat room and wide arches and galleries, he simply wrapped marbled columns round the lot, doubled them at either end, and, hey presto! the conjuring trick is performed'.⁵⁶

Later development of Langham Place

From the mid nineteenth century onwards the Langham Place area saw a succession of new buildings, mostly on a large scale. The Langham Hotel, opened in 1865 on the Foley House site, was a landmark in London hotel development. In the same decade was established the first of two famous music venues, St George's Hall, followed in the 1890s by what was to become London's premier concert room, Queen's Hall. Both were bombed in the Second World War, and their sites redeveloped in the 1960s with offices and a hotel.

Further south, **Nos 1-2** belong to the story of Regent Street's rebuilding. Replacing houses of 1822-3, they date from 1925 and share the

restrained manner of the similarly Portland-stone-clad blocks along Regent Street itself. The architect was Delissa Joseph.⁵⁷ **Nos 14–15**, between the Langham Hotel and Cavendish Place, followed in 1929–31. This was built as a branch of Barclays Bank with classrooms above for the Regent Street Polytechnic, which had for some time occupied the 1820s houses on the site for teaching and social purposes. It was designed by Alexander T. Scott for Sir Herbert Baker (with whom Scott was not yet formally a partner) in a dry version of the Portland stone classical manner of Crown rebuilding along Regent Street. The building has been used as a part of the Langham since 1998–2000, latterly housing a health club.⁵⁸

Langham Hotel

When it opened in 1865, the Langham was London's largest hotel and among its biggest buildings – a prime example of what at the time were dubbed 'monster' or (more kindly) 'grand' hotels.⁵⁹ Following the railway station hotel boom of the 1850s, the Langham was a significant novelty in that it was not associated with a London terminus, a severance untried before save at the Westminster Palace Hotel of 1858, near Parliament, which was not a success. The Langham's site – formerly occupied by the Nash mansion known as Langham Place or Mansfield House, with gardens fronting the open vista of Portland Place – must have excited developers for some time, and was generally regarded as suitable for a hotel for its qualities of openness and healthfulness. Distance from a railway station could be a virtue, but this was still a bold speculation that looked to American rather than local precedents.

A new company, The Langham Hotel Co. Ltd, was formed in June 1862 specifically to acquire a lease of Mansfield House and build in its place a hotel 'on a scale of comfort and magnificence not hitherto attained in London'.⁶⁰ Its

'very respectable' directors were solid mercantile men, nominally led by an aristocratic president and vice president: respectively Henry Chetwynd-Talbot, 18th Earl of Shrewsbury & Talbot, and William Coutts Keppel, Viscount Bury (later 7th Earl of Albemarle) – one a naval commander, the other a soldier. Directors included Peter Graham of Jackson & Graham, the high-class Oxford Street furnishing firm. The proximity of several embassies, including the American Consulate, inspired hope of accommodating diplomats, and the opening of the Metropolitan Railway in 1863 with a station on Great Portland Street would, it was claimed, compensate for the absence of a main-line terminus.⁶¹

A competition for a suitable design was won that October by John Giles, a novice architect – possibly a protégé of Sydney Smirke, developer in 1859–60 of the site immediately to the hotel's south and one of the competition assessors, who subsequently proposed Giles for RIBA membership. In the end Giles was persuaded to work with a more experienced fellow competitor, James Murray, whose designs for the interiors were thought to be especially fine. (Murray had planned the Westminster Palace Hotel and had been an assistant of Charles Barry's in the 1840s, tracing drawings for the Houses of Parliament.) Giles was probably responsible for the floor plan and exterior, Murray for details of the internal layout, but their forced partnership ended in court proceedings over ownership of the drawings. Lucas Brothers, who had recently finished the London Bridge Railway Terminus Hotel, were the contractors and major shareholders. Iron was supplied by the Butterley Company, and Alfred Meeson, who had been Barry's chief assistant at the Houses of Parliament and had worked with Lucas Brothers before, was employed by Murray to size the beams. Jackson & Graham supplied the furniture and brought in Owen Jones to design interiors. A similar group – Murray, Lucas Brothers and Jackson & Graham with Jones, also worked at 12A Kensington Palace Gardens for Sir Samuel Morton Peto in 1863–5.⁶²

Lord Shrewsbury laid the foundation stone in July 1863 and the walls had reached third-floor level by December. The company easily overcame opposition from James Stephen Wickens at 14 Cavendish Place, who went to court over obstruction of light and air. The hotel opened in June 1865 with the Prince of Wales and 2,000 others in attendance to see London's most splendid hotel: spread over ten floors, 156ft in height, and half as big again as the Grosvenor Hotel of 1862 (Ills 19,20, 19.22). It aimed 'to suit all from princes to the middle-classes'.⁶³

The *Illustrated London News* described the new hotel as being in a style that 'would be called Italian; it is, however, plain, simple, and substantial, and singularly free from meretricious ornament'.⁶⁴ Faced in yellow-white Suffolk bricks with Portland stone dressings, the building is heavily indebted to the Grosvenor. It is Italianate, but picturesquely so, with consciously eclectic Gothic elements and an eventful skyline with French pavilion roofs. The odd shape of the site was a gift, allowing, even forcing, some break-up of the cuboid massing to the east, the locus for an asymmetrical *parti* (immediately opposite All Souls) with a pointily domed tower and a big two-storey bow. In the architectural press the building was praised for 'the union of regularity with picturesqueness, so desirable in town architecture; the subordination, at least in the side, of detail to general effect, and the reserve and simplicity which are manifest in a great part of the work'.⁶⁵ Many have since disagreed, but a century later Henry-Russell Hitchcock judged the building 'a rich and powerfully plastic composition, most skilfully adapted to a special site, and more original than most of what was produced in the sixties in Paris'.⁶⁶

The sculptural detail repays examination (Ills 19.23–19.26). Below the heavy eaves cornice are griffins and sphinxes made of moulded cement on slate armatures. Livelier and lither stone-carved creatures – more griffins, lions and lizards – grace the impostes of lower-storey window arches. At the time these 'semi-Gothic Grotesques' were harshly judged: 'Their antics ... have an artificial and done-to-order look about them, very different from the

grim humour of ancient work'.⁶⁷ Hitchcock, who suspected the influence of Viollet-le-Duc, saw instead 'elephantine playfulness'.

The hotel's internal circulation was straightforward and dictated by its courtyard form (Ill. 19.21). Spacious, full-height cantilevered staircases with monogrammed iron balustrades were arranged either side of a square, columnar entrance hall. There were thirty suites of apartments, each with its own bathroom and WC, and more than two hundred bedrooms, for which there were originally thirty-six baths, fourteen lavatories, and around a hundred WCs, all connected by tile-paved corridors. Biggest of the ground-floor reception rooms was a 120ft-long *salle à manger*, or coffee room, designed to seat around two hundred people. *The Times* reported that, at the opening, this room's size and accommodation were appreciated, but 'the miserable ill taste which disfigured the room with rows of massive chocolate-coloured columns was almost as universally condemned'.⁶⁸ The bay-windowed rooms flanking the entrance hall were sitting rooms (a projected 'ambassadors' audience room' did not materialize). That to the east, initially a gentlemen's smoking room, was later equipped with a grand piano and became a ladies' music-room. The large bow room to the east, with views across Langham Place, began as the ladies' general sitting room. Jones's décor, long gone and seemingly unrecorded, was described as 'late Mooresque'. In contrast, the west wing had a number of chambers 'for persons not of an aspiring character'.⁶⁹ The central courtyard, intended for a winter garden, was left open.

On the first floor the bow-windowed room at the east end was used for wedding receptions. The principal suites elsewhere on this floor were 'elaborately fitted up' and 'absolutely superb in the costly style of their decorations, the leading colours being white, scarlet, and gold'. There were more suites, less opulent, on the second and third floors. The top three storeys comprised mostly single bedrooms.⁷⁰

Structurally and technologically the Langham was fully up-to-date, with iron beams, and jack-arch and concrete floors throughout, making the building entirely fireproof. Iron columns rose from the basement floors into the grand reception rooms above; here they were generally concealed – though, unusually, riveted girders with ornamentally plastered webs were left exposed in what became the Steward’s Room behind the west staircase. Adjoining was a hydraulic lift for up to six people (‘little less than a well-furnished room’); there were service lifts too, but as yet no exploitation of the possibilities offered by lifts for placing prestige spaces at the top of a building. Ventilation was state-of-the-art and the water supply drew on an artesian well – high-level tanks held nearly 40,000 gallons. The double-height kitchen under the eastern bow room was said to be the largest in London. It was shown to the Prince of Wales at the opening and was specially written up in *The Builder*. A hydraulic roasting jack could cook up to sixty joints at once and roast oxen whole. A laundry, and post, parcel and telegraph offices added to the hotel’s air of self-containment.⁷¹

Under the first manager, Charles Schumann, formerly of the Great Northern Hotel, the Langham seemed a success. But it was unlucky in its timing. The crash of 1866 squeezed credit and the company had to be wound up and re-launched by its creditors in 1868 as a new entity, though with the same name and many of the old shareholders among some ‘new blood’ on the Board. This time profit and handsome dividends ensued.⁷² The new chairman was Henry James Rouse, and the manager was an American, James M. Sanderson, who helped attract an American clientele, for whom, it was said the hotel was a reminder of their own country. Americans, including luminaries such as Longfellow, feted in 1868, and Mark Twain who came later, remained a mainstay of the business. The staff included ‘persons qualified to converse in every language, from pure “Yankee” to “High Dutch”’.⁷³ The most famous early resident was Marie Louise de la Ramée, the novelist Ouida, who held such extravagant court without paying her bill that

she was evicted in 1870. There have been many other notable literary clients. Later, musicians were attracted by the proximity of the Queen's Hall. Visiting composers included Dvořák, Sibelius, Janáček and Delius.⁷⁴

Alterations and improvements were more or less continuous. By 1866 an iron canopy had been added in front of the open stone portico.⁷⁵ In 1870–1 a westward extension was built along Chandos Street on the site of the rear wing, coach-house and stables of the adjoining house at 14 Cavendish Place (page ###), in which the hotel held an interest. Designed by the architect W. J. Green and known initially as the Chandos Wing (now 1-1A Chandos Street), this accommodated the hotel's offices in front of a two-storey range comprising new smoking and billiard rooms, along with improved laundry provision and more bedrooms. 'Ye Fernerie', a rustic adornment of a fashionable kind, was put up in 1871 straddling the area at the south-west corner of the main hotel behind 12 Cavendish Place. A folly of sandstone, red brick and tiles enclosing a planted grotto, it was demolished in 1987.⁷⁶

Electricity was installed and redecoration may already have obliterated Owen Jones's decor by the early 1890s when the freehold was acquired and the central courtyard was at last built over to form the winter garden, or vestibule lounge. There C. W. Burge built a cruciform conservatory with a roof of iron and glass, used as a coffee and smoking room and for chamber music.⁷⁷

In 1907–8 the rear range was raised in height, increasing capacity to more than 300 bedrooms, thereby reducing the need for shared WCs and baths on the humbler upper levels (Ills 19.21, 19.22). J. Macvicar Anderson was the architect and Walter Lawrence & Son were the builders, using sanitary fittings supplied by Doultons. The same architect with Waring & Gillow oversaw the joining together of the north-east sitting rooms in 1910–11.⁷⁸

More improvements came after the First World War. In 1919–20 the old courtyard lounge was replaced by a neoclassical foyer, built by J. Simpson & Son and J. Jarvis & Son to the design of J. J. Joass, of Belcher & Joass. Now

known as the Palm Court, this has a coved ceiling, originally lantern-lit, on square key-patterned piers (Ill. 19.23). Like its predecessor, it was used as a coffee and smoking room, but also for concerts by the resident Langham Hotel Orchestra.⁷⁹ Then in the late 20s and early 30s the architect W. Ernest Lord oversaw further extensive modernization, with Holland & Hannen and Cubitt as contractors, including an overhaul of the basements and kitchen, redecoration of the entrance hall (where two more steel columns were added), and enlargement of the first-floor wedding reception room as a dance floor. The Chandos Wing was adapted to house a restaurant (the Bolivar, Ill. 19.24), with access via a new canopied entrance in Chandos Street. Finally, in 1934 stylish lifts with inlaid woodwork were inserted into the west stairwell.

In 1928 the BBC became the Langham's neighbour across Portland Place, and to cope with rapid expansion considered buying the hotel in 1934 before deciding instead to enlarge Broadcasting House. That same year the London Opera Company also contemplated its purchase, along with the other properties on the north side of Cavendish Place, for redevelopment as a British Empire Music Centre and National Theatre, which, with the Queen's Hall and Broadcasting House opposite would form an imperial arts and sports centre. Oliver Bernard was the architect for this still-born scheme.⁸⁰

Broadcasting House was an obvious wartime target, and the Langham was badly damaged by raids in September and December 1940. The north-east corner behind the tower was destroyed and much of the rest flooded, forcing the hotel to close.⁸¹ In 1941 the BBC took over parts as offices and a canteen. Until 1956 the Metal Box Company was also present, and the Langham Hotel Company kept the Bolivar Restaurant going until 1955, after which 1-1A Chandos Street became the BBC Club. The *salle à manger* became the BBC Reference Library, the Palm Court a conference hall, the ground-floor bow-windowed room a self-service staff canteen, and the kitchen a carpentry workshop. Redevelopment was again in the offing, the Land Securities

Investment Trust having a scheme in hand for the whole block in 1953–51; demolition was still intended in 1959.⁸²

The BBC finally bought the Langham in 1965 and kept it fully occupied until the 1980s, when redevelopment was deemed the best means of funding a new BBC Radio Centre. George Howard, the BBC chairman, backed by the managing director of Radio, Sir Dick Francis, launched a limited competition in 1982 to select an architect for the redevelopment. The field comprised six British and two Canadian firms: Arup Associates, the Terry Farrell Partnership, Foster Associates, Powell & Moya, Richard Rogers & Partners, Sebire Allsopp, Arthur Erickson Associates & Webb Zerafa, and Menkes & Housden. Norman Foster impressed most and his firm began work on designs. Conservation-oriented opposition, spearheaded by Simon Jenkins, favoured keeping the hotel, a listed building since 1973.⁸³

The Foster Associates' Langham scheme of 1983–4 incorporated inflections from their own Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank Headquarters, of 1979. Low in profile next to Cavendish Square, the building stepped up gradually to a cluster of tall lift towers facing Portland Place, and had a glazed atrium running diagonally through the centre to a seven-storey glazed entrance opposite All Souls Church (Ill. 19.25). To the dismay of many, the scheme was deemed too costly and cancelled in 1985 following a change of management, after which came further reforms and Francis's dismissal in 1986. The BBC then sold the hotel and adjacent buildings to Ladbroke Group Properties and bought the White City greyhound stadium as the site for its new centre, BBC White City. The loss of enlightened architectural patronage was lamented.⁸⁴

Reconversion to hotel use by Hilton International followed in 1987–91 under the Halpern Partnership as architects, Bovis Ltd as contractors, and Arup Associates as engineers. Progress was hindered by three fires. The south and west ranges and all but the north end of the Chandos Street range were demolished and replaced by taller, brown-brick clad Postmodernist bedroom

blocks that ape the round-headed fenestration of the Victorian building. The patched-up bomb-damaged corner was fully restored, the sides of the entrance porch re-opened and ground-floor reception rooms smartly refurbished by the Richmond Design Group. The former dining room became the ballroom, and the bow-window room a 'Memories of the Empire' restaurant in the spirit of Owen Jones. The Palm Court was demolished to allow room for cranes but was later replaced by a modern equivalent, and the former wedding-reception room on the first floor was reconstructed as a premium suite. The reopened Langham or Langham Hilton had more than 400 rooms, with lettable offices at 1-1A Chandos Street. Jonathan Meades assessed the refurbishment as 'not neo-Victorian, but Victoriana, a stage set achieved with a breathtaking disregard for archaeological accuracy. It is enough to give vulgarity a bad name. It is only – only! – in scale that it differs from a commonplace public-house makeover'.⁸⁵

Great Eagle Hotels International, part of a Hong Kong based property company, acquired the Langham in 1998, extending it into the adjoining building at 14-15 Langham Place (see below). Further refurbishment has reduced the number of rooms to 380. North-eastern rooms on the ground floor were recast as the Postillion, a private dining room, and the Artesian bar, designed by David Collins in 2006-7. The eastern bow-windowed room has become the Roux at The Landau restaurant, opened in 2010. Great Eagle Holdings established Langham Hotels International and there are now hotels named The Langham and Langham Place in many cities, mainly in east Asia and the USA.⁸⁶

Portland Bazaar and St George's Hall (demolished)

In 1851 the London Carriage Repository on Langham Place succumbed to the craze for shopping bazaars elicited by the Great Exhibition when its owner

John Isaac Marks sold his interest to William Walker, an exchange agent who had made money from the Pantheon Bazaar in Oxford Street. With the consent of James Fergusson, Marks's co-owner, who lived in the frontage buildings at 20 Langham Place, Walker reconstructed the repository as the Langham Bazaar, to designs by Samuel Beazley. Drawings show a deep main entrance from Langham Place leading to stairs left and right and thence to the main bazaar space behind, on two floors, top-lit and divided along its length on the ground floor by a spine wall. Later descriptions mention cast-iron roofs, and separate stalls all round.⁸⁷

Despite a change of name to the Portland Bazaar and a brief period of popularity in the 1850s as a venue for seasonal German fairs, Walker's venture was not a success, and in 1862 the buildings were acquired by the Prince of Wales' Hall & Club Company for redevelopment as a hall for musical entertainments, again with Fergusson's approval. But this scheme was thwarted when most of the bazaar was destroyed by fire in July 1863. Rebuilding took place in 1863-4, with James Edmeston as architect.⁸⁸

It took till 1866 for the rebuilt bazaar's future as a music venue to be secured. On this occasion it was the composer and impresario Dr Henry Wylde, Gresham Professor of Music, who was behind a scheme to convert the southern half of the bazaar to a concert room and teaching accommodation for his London Academy of Music, founded a few years before at St James's Hall in Piccadilly. The conversion, overseen by the architect John Taylor junior, removed some structural columns to allow space for a 45ft-high auditorium, 50ft by 110ft, with a new elliptical timber roof (Ills 19.32, 19.33). Narrow balconies ran around three sides and the orchestra could be converted to a stage. A new main entrance was made at 19 Langham Place, and there were exits also to Mortimer and Great Portland Streets.⁸⁹ Billed in advance as the Langham Concert Room, the venture opened in April 1867 as St George's Hall, to acclaim for its acoustics. The New Philharmonic Society used it for concerts, sharing it from time to time with operatic performances

put on by German Reed. The first such evening, in December 1867, featured Offenbach's *Puss in Petticoats* and *Ching-Chew-Hi*, and the premiere of *The Contrabandista*, an operetta by F. C. Burnand and Arthur Sullivan. From 1874 the hall became the regular venue for German Reed's popular classical concerts and in due course he acquired a lengthy sublease. But it was also a general-purpose hall; Ernest Renan, for instance, gave his famous Hibbert lectures there in 1880.⁹⁰

A proscenium wall was installed in 1882 and thereafter St George's Hall functioned chiefly as a theatre. Wylde, who lived over the Mortimer Street exit, had withdrawn from concert promotion but continued to run his academy until his death in 1890. The next lessees were German Reed's son Alfred and Richmond Corney Grain. By the end of the century the era of the Reed classical entertainments was over and St George's Hall felt like a scruffy neighbour to the spick and span Queen's Hall that had since gone up next door. From this fate it was rescued by J. N. Maskelyne, the magician, who at the age of 63 transferred his famous show from the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, to Langham Place. J. G. Buckle, his architect, presided over a full reconstruction in 1903–4, bringing forward the proscenium, giving the stage a proper fly tower and realigning the seating, reducing capacity to a modest 553 as against the jam-packed 1,500 or so claimed for Taylor's original conversion.⁹¹

Further alterations and abortive schemes for improvement followed in the 1920s and early 30s, and by 1938 the hall had been sublet to the BBC. Severe damage in air-raids of 24 and 25 September 1940 put paid to its further use and linked its fate to that of the Queen's Hall adjoining to its north. Demolition finally took place in 1952.⁹²

Queen's Hall (demolished)

Rebuilding the Portland Bazaar's southern half as St George's Hall left its surviving northern portion ripe for redevelopment. In 1876 it was linked with the stabling in the old riding house adjoining (page ###) in a heavily promoted project for London's biggest skating rink – The Langham Skating Rink and Club. Grand designs for a double rink under a lantern-dome with a French-style club in front were commissioned from the architects Archer & Green but the project collapsed.⁹³

The Birkbeck Bank, one of the club's mortgagees, gradually assumed a controlling interest in both buildings. The bank had been developed by Francis Ravenscroft, originally of the robe-making firm of Ede & Ravenscroft and an alumnus and supporter of George Birkbeck's London Mechanics' Institution (now Birkbeck College). Ravenscroft and the bank's chairman, John Runtz, initially viewed the Langham Place property as an asset before being persuaded of its cultural potential. One early scheme for redevelopment, of 1880, was for a panorama and block of flats (by Charles Barry junior); another, of 1885, was for French-style mansion flats (by T. E. Knightley, the bank's regular architect).⁹⁴

Such proposals were soon superseded by the striking scheme that eventually came to fruition as the Queen's Hall. The idea is said to have originated with Walter Southwick Rogers, new lessee in 1885 of the Portland Bazaar, which with the help of the theatre architect C. J. Phipps he refurbished as a new venue, the Portland Hall or Langham Exhibition. An Indian native village and bazaar was mounted in emulation of the successful Japanese village at Humphreys' Hall, Knightsbridge, featuring 'Tiffins and Afternoon Tea in Bungalow', curries, condiments and music. But the Board of Works thought the venue dangerous and in 1886 brought the venture to an abrupt close.⁹⁵

In the meantime Ravenscroft appears to have acquired the remaining interests in the bazaar and the associated Langham Place houses. An agreement between him and Rogers in June 1886 was presumably the catalyst for a scheme for a grand concert hall covering the whole site north of St George's Hall. Initial plans were drawn up by Knightley, and by April 1887 Ravenscroft had secured a new 80-year Crown lease and approval for an elaborated scheme, designed in collaboration with Rogers's architect C. J. Phipps, for 'The Queen's Concert Hall'. Then came changes in management. Rogers lost his central role (though Phipps continued to be involved), and a new company, the Victoria Concert Hall Ltd, was floated to take on the agreement and raise capital. This was unsuccessful, and it seems that Ravenscroft financed the whole lavish project via the Birkbeck Bank. He remained behind the scenes, operating through his solicitors, Leggatt, Rubinstein & Company. J. S. Rubinstein, a passionate devotee of both opera and music hall, may have been as important a force behind the Queen's Hall as Ravenscroft himself.⁹⁶

Behind the promotion lay years of dissatisfaction with the premises available for London's burgeoning musical life. Several previous schemes for the site, including St George's Hall, had tried to address this want, but all were vulnerable to uncertainties about public taste for the staging of ambitious or sustained classical music. For orchestral concerts the favourite venue was St James's Hall, Piccadilly (of 1857–8), tucked like many such halls behind the street frontage. It was in strong demand, and according to the new company's prospectus paid seven per cent on its shares. The Queen's Hall was planned to have almost twice the capacity of St James's Hall, aiming at 4,000 seats at the outset, later reduced, but with the bonus of a separate smaller hall to hold 800–1,000. The project went to tender in 1887 but was delayed by complaints from All Souls Church about the building's height (which as a result was dropped by several feet) and the departure of Phipps. Knightley overhauled the plans in 1890 and the builder Charles Wall was at

work late that year. The Queen's Hall finally opened in November 1893, after an alleged expenditure of nearly £200,000.⁹⁷

The hall's success owed much to its architects' experience. Phipps had a track record in designing auditoria, while Knightley, a veteran commercial architect in his sixties, rose to the two munificent opportunities afforded him by Ravenscroft's patronage, the Queen's Hall and the Birkbeck Bank, Holborn (of 1896–7). As to the planning, from the first the site dictated the hall's alignment along an east–west axis parallel to Riding House Street (Ills 19.34, 19.35). There were two balcony levels, entrances to the lower one being at street level, thus pushing the stalls underground. Earlier plans had been deficient in terms of circulation space but with more money becoming available for an expensive, stylish frontage, and extra space, Phipps was able to provide a suaver and safer circulation route, with continuous corridors behind the balconies on the Albert Hall model, mosaic-floored vestibules, and the copious stairs and exits that the authorities insisted on. Surmounting the front of the building was the smaller hall, able to hold 600, and likened by Bernard Shaw to a cigar-shaped steamer saloon. The basement included a restaurant and grill room.

The main auditorium, 115ft at its longest by 87ft, and 57ft high, could accommodate 3,000 people (Ill. 19.36). Phipps at first designed a simple horseshoe, which Knightley then adjusted, apparently on advice from H. H. Statham, editor of *The Builder* and an accomplished musician, to improve acoustics.⁹⁸ Using his knowledge of the structure of wind instruments, Knightley added curves left and right of the orchestra, and bellied out the deep cove to the ceiling, which was pierced by large oval lunettes, opening out as windows to the sides and so offering ventilation and clerestory lighting. The roof principals were of steel, while modern metal technology also allowed the balconies to be cantilevered out without supports. To enhance resonance, the walls were battened and stretched with rough canvas clad in a rich decorative skin featuring much relief modelling: against a

background of Doulton's brown terracotta, carried out in the Franco-Spanish idiom popularized by T. E. Collcutt, the original colours were light blue and sage green enriched by gilding. The dominant tone however was brown; in his memoirs, Henry Wood remembered his first glance down 'into the arena with its brownish carpet that blended with the dull-fawnish colour of the walls'.⁹⁹

The authorship of the interior decoration is opaque. Knightley had intended to entrust the 'raised ornament' to Noel Quillet of Paris, designer and decorator in *carton pierre*, whom he had known since 1871, when Quillet was working briefly in London following the Paris commune.¹⁰⁰ However, the obscure Chelsea firm of Sidney W. Elmes & Son was later attributed with much of the modelling, while the decorators Campbell, Smith & Co. also played a part. A dominant feature was the grand organ by Hill & Sons. The ceiling painting was by Eugène Carpezat, a French stage-painter who had also worked on the central dome at the 1889 Paris Exposition. According to the mischievous description of the hall in E. M. Forster's *Howards End*, it depicted 'attenuated Cupids ... clad in sallow pantaloons'.¹⁰¹

The show front was exceptionally festive and costly, in token of its aim to raise the art and dignity of music in London. A long, gradual curve recalled Peruzzi's Palazzo Massimi alle Colonne in Rome, but also blended sundry Parisian sources, notably the Cour Carrée and the Perrault colonnade at the Louvre, and the Opéra (Ill. 19.37). There was space enough for four open balconies, accessible through large tripartite windows and enveloped by three-dimensional and relief sculpture. The paired and fluted columns of the piano nobile, repeated as three-quarter columns against the back wall, emphasized the building's unusual depth of frontage. The proportions of the storeys were a little stunted, perhaps because of the constraints on height. Above a massive entablature, the recessed third storey took the form of a blank panelled wall, surmounted by tall piers which acted as buttressing counterweights for the roof principals. Above and further back again, a line of

temple fronts demarcating the small hall could just be glimpsed from street level. The whole of the curve, conspicuous from Langham Place, was executed in Portland stone. Less visible Riding House Street acquired a further hundred feet of straight elevation, composed as a two-storey colonnade in simpler style and materials.

The sumptuous iconography of the front followed the fashion of Belle Epoque public buildings. Though some of the intended sculptural groups shown on Knightley's 1891 perspective drawing were omitted, the carvers still enjoyed rich pickings. The second-floor windows under the entablature had reliefs left and right, the windows on the piano nobile were set off by male and female herms, and the principal entrance was flanked by caryatids and surmounted by a group of cherubs. Some of these features may have been repeated. Closer to street level came busts of composers, arranged in two rows. The upper row, consisting of complete busts in shell niches tucked between the columns, depicted Tchaikovsky (who died as the hall was opened), Purcell, Bach, Beethoven, Mozart and Haydn; the lower row, in high relief against round niches, showed Weber, Handel, Gluck, Mendelssohn, Brahms and Wagner. Five of the full busts were rescued by the Royal Academy of Music when the Queen's Hall was demolished (Ill. 19.38). After some years in the garden of Sir Thomas Armstrong, they were returned to the Academy in 2001 and are now on display there.

The crowning pediment over the entrance carried carving showing a sheep beneath a crown, and under it a rambling Latin motto: *'Discissa quidem pellicula e theologiae jurisprudentiae medicinae faucibus evasi tandem salvus'*: roughly, 'I managed to break out of my skin, I escaped the jaws of theology, law and medicine, and finally emerged in safety'. This original tag is likely to be a recondite reference to Francis Ravenscroft's personal career; the sheep could just be an inside joke about the wig-making of Ede & Ravenscroft.

Shortly before the hall was completed, the 'vocalist and concert agent' Robert Newman was appointed full-time manager. Its early history is bound

up with his scrupulous and popular regime there. The introduction of promenade concerts under Henry Wood in 1895 was Newman's most famous innovation, but displeased Ravenscroft, who is said to have vowed not to set subsequent foot in the hall following the removal of seats for the accommodation of promenaders. This may have been bound up with the widespread opposition to Sunday concerts, which plagued Newman's early management.¹⁰² Knightley however remained involved. One grand but abortive scheme of 1899 to his designs was for a 'Queen's Hall Opera Syndicate', backed by the suspect musical entrepreneur J. H. Mapleson, to acquire more property, including St George's Hall, and turn the extended venue into an opera house.¹⁰³

In 1902 Newman was declared bankrupt and Francis Ravenscroft died. Following negotiations with J. S. Rubinstein, the lease and direction of the hall passed to the musical publishers Chappell & Co., who needed a venue for their popular concerts, hitherto at St James's Hall, then being sold for redevelopment. Under the new regime Newman's role was increasingly restricted to managing musical events and the resident orchestra, the business side falling to other hands.¹⁰⁴

The musical life of the Queen's Hall is fully documented in Robert Elkin's book of 1944, written shortly after its destruction. Both halls were in constant demand, successful and profitable, and after the demise of St James's Hall became the unquestioned centre of London's orchestral life and the scene of many premières and débuts. Various refurbishments took place, including in 1908 an overhaul of the heating and ventilation arrangements, following complaints from the king, whom, J. S. Rubinstein told the Office of Woods, 'intimated that unless some material improvements were made in these respects he would refuse to go to the Hall again'.¹⁰⁵ Chappells, having purchased the Crown lease from Ravenscrofts' sons, then set about further improvements under their regular architect Walter Cave and his wife Jessica, in 1919–20. These reduced the capacity to 2,400 and resulted in a 'rather cold

bluish-green' colour scheme, which, Elkin felt, 'found few admirers'. Later, the BBC began to use the hall regularly and became its dominant patron after moving to Broadcasting House. The Corporation sponsored a campaign of de-Victorianization in 1937 under Joseph Emberton and Oswin Bateman Brown (of Lenygon & Morant). Spotlights supplanted chandeliers, Carpezat's cupids were blotted out, the walls turned 'putty colour', and a complete reseating took place: 'In the stalls and grand circle Dunlopillo spring seats, covered with rust-red velvet, were installed, with carpets to match.' Once again, too, the ventilation was overhauled.¹⁰⁶

Such was the décor of the Queen's Hall when the Second World War broke out. Concerts continued, surviving two episodes of blast damage, but on 10 May 1941 an incendiary bomb lodged on the roof. With limited water supply, the fire could not be contained and gutted the interior. The surviving carcass, James Agate's diary recorded, 'now presents the appearance of a Roman arena, and should be left as a memorial to Hitler'.¹⁰⁷

In the post-war aftermath there seemed every prospect that the Queen's Hall would be rebuilt on a larger scale, encompassing the St George's Hall site, as both were held on a Crown lease by Chappells. Plans for this were prepared in 1948 by Joseph Emberton. For a while a rebuilt Queen's Hall was also mooted as a possible musical centre for the 1951 Festival of Britain, until the LCC decided to build the Royal Festival Hall as a permanent feature of the South Bank site. All the same, a venue was still needed for the popular Proms concerts, which were not to be accommodated at the South Bank, and so the government acquired the lease and responsibility for the Queen's Hall project. By 1954, though, with the Festival Hall well established and the future of the Albert Hall as a new venue for the Proms looking assured, the redevelopment potential of the Queen's Hall site, now finally cleared, was becoming evident. Despite continuing enthusiasm in the musical world (and a revised scheme by Emberton, influenced by the Festival Hall), the economic argument for commercial redevelopment prevailed.¹⁰⁸

Henry Wood House and St George's Hotel. Developers were already badgering the Crown to build on the site, and the years 1955–7 saw a crescendo of applications, many from established figures in London property and architecture, including Emberton, Franck & Tardrew. But the Crown held back until the LCC had set a planning policy for the site. It did so in July 1958, judging that the context was wrong for a very high building, and that the incorporation of a small concert hall should be encouraged but not insisted upon. The Crown officers then whittled down the development bids to five. Four of them included some kind of hall for rehearsal or concerts, but it was the fifth scheme, devised for the builders John Laing & Sons by Sir John Burnet, Tait, Wilson & Partners (job architect, Eric A. Blade), which the Crown surveyor, L. E. C. Osborne, recommended as taking best advantage of the LCC's plot-ratio rules. It combined a 140ft tower of fifteen storeys at the rear of the site, with six-storey blocks facing Langham Place in front and Great Portland Street at the back. Most of this accommodation was destined for offices, but a small hotel for Trust Houses Ltd took up the tower's top storeys.¹⁰⁹

This complex was duly built in 1961–3 by John Laing Construction, working for the Laing Development Company and Pearl Assurance. It was a standard prestige development for its day, with an exposed concrete frame, generous fenestration, mosaic cladding, and Portland stone on the ends. The offices, in what was called Henry Wood House, were pre-let to the BBC. At the top of the tower, the reception and restaurant of St George's Hotel were styled by Denis Lennon in association with Trust Houses' architect D. G. Millett, while the Burnet firm designed the bedrooms on the floors immediately below.¹¹⁰

All Souls Place and west end of Langham Street

All Souls Place, a short cul-de-sac in the shadow of All Souls Church, originated in the eighteenth century as a mews or back-way off Edward Street. Early on it was called Edward Yard or Court and later, until 1879, Edward or Edwards Place. Edward Street was largely subsumed into the creation of Upper Regent Street in the 1810s, but the top end, north of Edward Place, kept its name until 1858 when it was renumbered as part of Langham Street. The houses on the east side of this remnant were replaced in the late nineteenth century by Cavendish Mansions and a studio-house for the painter Lowes Dickinson, adjoining earlier artists' studios in All Souls Place. These 'Langham Chambers' were built in 1854, together with a small Congregational place of worship, Edwards Place Chapel, later Langham Chapel, which opened that year and remained in religious use until at least 1869; later a carriage store, it eventually became All Souls Church Hall and then BBC studios.¹¹¹ The south side of All Souls Place, largely taken up by the backs of buildings in Riding House Street, was mostly redeveloped in the early twentieth century for the Radium Institute (page ###).

A very early purpose-built studio block, **Langham Chambers** was also designed as a new home for the Artists' Society of Clipstone Street (page ###). It was to provide work or live-work accommodation for a number of distinguished artists, and the society's life class became a valued alternative to training at the hidebound Royal Academy Schools. In the 1860s a 'Langham Chambers group' of painters was recognized, alongside the more famous groups associated with Fitzroy Square, South Kensington and St John's Wood.¹¹² But Langham Chambers was to become best known for the society's off-shoot the Langham Sketching Club, whose weekly meetings combined conviviality with virtuosity. Among many well-known names associated with the society and sketching club at Langham Chambers are Sir John Tenniel, W. S. Gilbert and Edward Linley Sambourne.

To some extent Langham Chambers seems to have operated similarly to a hotel, with transient as well as fixed occupants. How it came to be designed and built remains hazy. The society's move there at Christmas 1854 followed 'negotiations spread over some years'.¹¹³ The building lessee of the main range, from the Portland Estate, was Jonathan Soden, an undertaker, who lived behind at 18 Langham Street and was prominent in parish affairs as a vestryman and churchwarden; he has been confused with the apparently unrelated John Edward Soden, an artist and author remembered for his 1870s verse diatribe, *A Rap at the RA*. It was as a lodger at Soden's house that the illustrator and painter Henry Morten, then working for Lowes Dickinson, was found hanged in 1866. Dickinson was probably a major force behind Langham Chambers, and his association with F. D. Maurice at All Souls (who officiated at his marriage there in 1857) may have been behind the choice of locale, where he lived for many years. His sons the historian Goldsworthy and accountant Sir Arthur were both born at 1 Langham Chambers.¹¹⁴

Soden's building was designed by William Wood Deane and Alfred Bailey, whose partnership was dissolved soon after in 1855. Deane was perhaps chiefly responsible. According to H. Stacy Marks, a regular at the Artists' Society, he 'arranged all with due regard to economy of space and constructive simplicity', while George Aitchison recalled that his brother-in-law Deane's work at Langham Chambers won praise from Owen Jones – doubtless this referred to the interior decoration.¹¹⁵ The street front was austere – according to a contemporary critic, 'bald and ponderous-looking ... we are at a loss to know why artists should be lodged in so jail-like a looking structure'. A later account speaks of it as 'a doubtful, white-faced erection, which might be considered as baths and washhouse, a mechanics' institution, or a private theatre'.¹¹⁶ As for the inside, in January 1855 Ford Madox Brown recorded that Dickinson's 'new gorgeous [sic] rooms' were even more handsome than Millais's, which he attributed to Dickinson having got in early and taken his pick; but for himself he preferred his studio with a view to their

'indoor magnificence'. Millais's studio was shared for some years with his friend the painter J. D. Luard, and was later occupied by the landscape painter Sir David Murray for half a century till his death in 1933.¹¹⁷

The main two-storey range (1 Langham Chambers), originally with a frontage of 91ft, contained several studios besides Millais's, and the Artists' Society's premises which chiefly comprised two ground-floor rooms. One, towards the street, furnished with a long table, forms and plaster casts, was hung on two sides with blackboards for resting pictures and contained the society's library. The room beyond, twice as big, had two tiers of seats and rails with gas-lights, in a semi-circle facing a floodlit dais (Ill. 19.40). Upstairs there was a store-room for props.¹¹⁸

East of No. 1 was a narrow three-storey range, or pair of houses (Nos 2-3), let on a building lease about the same time as Soden's to Joseph Watson, a builder, who also lived behind in Langham Street. Whether this was designed and built independently of No. 1 is not known. It was occupied for many years from new by the Wyons, the medallists and die-engravers: Benjamin, and his sons Joseph S., Alfred B. and Allan. Nos 4 and 5, probably another phase still and perhaps neither new nor purpose-built, were separated from the rest by Langham Chapel, and stood at the end of the cul-de-sac behind houses in Great Portland Street. No. 5 took in an adjoining former stable at the corner opposite the chapel, which had been converted to a house by C. E. and J. W. Heinke, the diving-equipment makers based in Great Portland Street, about the time that 1-3 Langham Chambers were built. A shallow building, it abutted Rehoboth Chapel in Riding House Street, also built about this time (see Ill. 19.39).¹¹⁹

In 1877-9 Nos 2 and 4 Langham Street were rebuilt, along with the west end of 1 Langham Chambers adjoining, to provide a separate house and studio for Lowes Dickinson. The full extent of the work, by the local architects Eales & Son, is uncertain but it may account for Aitchison's comment in 1888 that Langham Chambers had been 'lately defaced'.¹²⁰ The red-brick corner

house, always known as **1 All Souls Place**, was the model for 2 Wickham Place in E. M. Forster's *Howard's End*, in which the Schlegel sisters were partly based on Dickinson's daughters. Dickinson died at the house in 1908, and it was subsequently occupied by the actor-manager Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree till his death in 1917.¹²¹

Langham Chambers was not all occupied by artists. Besides private residents there were, from 1885, the headquarters of the Home Arts and Industries Association, which taught handicrafts to the working-class; a fencing academy, set up in the 1890s by Philippe Bourgeois, 'one of the three French fencing professors of eminence in London'; and from the 1890s the Institute of Dental Technology at No. 4, running courses in manual skills and science.¹²²

No. 4 was rebuilt in 1893–4 as their own venture by the builders Watson Brothers (Joseph Watson's sons), together with 87 Great Portland Street. In 1908–9 No. 5 was also rebuilt, together with 85 Great Portland Street; the new building, with large tripartite windows seemingly intended as fabric workshops, was designed by F. M. Elgood.¹²³ Thirty years later, 1 All Souls Place and 1–3 Langham Chambers were replaced by **Egton House** (2–4 Langham Street), an office development by John Laing & Son, designed by Beresford Marshall of Marshall & Tweedy and soon occupied by the BBC.¹²⁴ This was not quite the end of fine art in the cul-de-sac. For about ten years until 1952, Michael Ayrton and his partner Joan Walsh occupied 4 All Souls Place, otherwise 4 Langham Chambers, which they shared with the composer Constant Lambert, and it became a meeting place for an artistic and bohemian circle including Margot Fonteyn, Dylan Thomas and Norman Douglas. It was demolished in the later 1950s for the redevelopment of 87–93 Great Portland Street.¹²⁵

Some artists and others based at Langham Chambers not mentioned above include:¹²⁶

- Rupert Bunny**, Australian painter. *No. 1, 1902–4* ¹²⁷
- James Moulton Burfield**, painter. *No. 4, 1880s*
- Charles Cattermole**, painter. Secretary of the Artists' Society, 1870s–90s
- Edward Charles Clifford**, painter and illustrator; secretary of the Artists' Society and Langham Sketching Club, 1900s
- Val Davis**, painter and draughtsman. *No. 5, 1890s–1900s*
- William C. T. Dobson**, painter. *No. 1, late 1850s*
- Edward Duncan**, engraver and watercolour painter; treasurer of the Artists' Society, 1860s
- Horace Field**, architect. *No. 1, late 1890s–1915* (from c.1905 in partnership with C. E. Symmons); the architectural illustrator **Cyril Farey** was Field's pupil here
- John Fulleylove**, landscape painter. *No. 1, 1900s*
- William Gale**, painter. *No. 1, late 1850s–60s*
- Michael Frederick Halliday**, painter. *No. 4, 1860s*
- Arnold Helcké**, marine and landscape painter. *No. 1, 1880s–90s*
- William Lee**, watercolour painter; secretary of the Artists' Society, 1850s–60s
- Raffaelle Monti**, sculptor. *No. 4, 1870s*
- Eugène and Philippe Pavy**, Orientalist painters. *No. 1, 1879–84* ¹²⁸
- Annie Louisa Robinson** (later Swynnerton), painter. *No. 5, 1880s*
- Cecil Sharp**, folk song and dance collector. *No. 5, 1890s* ¹²⁹
- Arthur James Stark**, landscape and animal painter. *No. 1, 1850s–60s*
- Marcus Clayton Stone**, painter and illustrator. *No. 1, 1870s*
- Joseph William Swynnerton**, sculptor. *No. 5, after marriage to Annie Robinson, 1883*
- William James Webb(e)**, Pre-Raphaelite painter. *No. 1(?)*, late 1850s–early 1860s ¹³⁰

Cavendish Mansions, designed in a mansarded French style by Davis & Emanuel, replaced the houses north of 1 All Souls Place in 1889 (Ill. 19.41). Although seriously damaged by bombing in the Second World War it survived until the early 1960s, when the site and that of the adjoining houses were redeveloped as offices by the Bernard Sunley Investment Trust; the new block, 16–28 Langham Street, was let in its entirety to the BBC. It and Egton House, which had been partly rebuilt or remodelled after the war, were demolished in the early 2000s for the construction of the Egton (now John Peel) Wing of Broadcasting House (page ###).¹³¹

Cavendish Place

Cavendish Place today is a short, rather anonymous road linking Regent Street with Wigmore Street via the north side of Cavendish Square. It was laid out as part of Mortimer Street, but this far end was cut off psychologically when Regent Street was created in the 1810s–20s. The present name was chosen in 1859 to articulate its comparatively high status and residential character adjacent to Cavendish Square. The south side had been built up in the 1760s with houses (later numbered 1–11) but none survive and the present fabric there is entirely twentieth-century and commercial. The north side was open ground until 1751, when George Mercer built large corner houses at either end, stone-fronted with pediments, as if aspiring to be on Cavendish Square, which they almost were (see Ill. 7.21). At the corner with Edward Street, the eastern house was lost to the formation of Regent Street but its western equivalent survives as No. 14. Lord Foley acquired the intervening frontage from Mercer in 1753, to add to the grounds of Foley House and with the intention of developing along the street front. But only one house with a large garden went up (the present No. 12), and not until 1768–70, after Foley's

death. Another house (No. 2) had been added by 1790 and from around 1800 the remaining frontage was clogged up by warehousing, workshops and stables associated with a coach-making yard run by the Thomson family on the south side of the street. These were replaced in the 1850s by the present Nos 4–10.¹³²

South side

Nos 7–11. In 1894–6 the builder Thomas Boyce erected a block of flats and consulting rooms on the site of the Georgian houses here, but this was replaced in 1963–4 by the present concrete-framed office block, designed by Guy Morgan & Partners for the West End Property Investment Co. Ltd. Its first occupants were the High Commission for the Republic of Zambia, newly independent in 1964.¹³³

Nos 15–19 were rebuilt in 1927 to designs by Bomer & Gibbs as business premises in the stripped-classical Regent Street manner, with shops and showrooms on the ground floor, offices and flats above. Edward Bomer was co-developer with David Isaacs of Davis & Co., surveyors, having acquired the lease from the Regent Street Polytechnic. Gown-makers were among the early occupants.¹³⁴

North side

No. 2. The late Georgian house here numbered Quintin Hogg among its later residents (in 1901). In 1927 it became the showroom and offices of the Leeds Fireclay Company, who added the present suavely ornamented faience shopfront (by Yates, Cook & Darbyshire). A matching shopfront was inserted

next door after the company expanded into No. 4 in 1928. Bombing in 1940 destroyed most of No. 2, which was rebuilt in the early 1950s using faience to match the surviving shopfronts (Ill. 19.42), but with cruder angularity and a late-Moderne elevation (by Walter H. Ford, architect). The building was extended and reconstructed internally in 1998–2000 for the Langham Hotel.¹³⁵

The terrace at **Nos 4–10** was a speculation of 1858–9 by the architect Sydney Smirke, presumably to his own designs. There have been few alterations, most of the houses retaining iron staircase balustrades as well as their original stone porticoes and balconies – though those at No. 4 are 1990s facsimiles. The first householders were a physician, surgeon, railway director and dental surgeon. No. 4 was where the obstetric physician Henry Oldham practised from c.1870 to 1899; this house acquired a new staircase in 1912. Nos 6–10 had by then become flats and consulting rooms and the whole group was in office use by the 1960s.¹³⁶

No. 12 was among the largest early houses in this area. It was built in 1768–70 for Lieut.- Gen. Lord Robert Bertie, MP, youngest son of the Duke of Ancaster and a Lord of the King's Bedchamber. A loosely Palladian design was overseen by Charles Ross, a carpenter-joiner serving as an architect, perhaps with the help of his nephew and heir William Gowan. The surveyor Benjamin Pujolas (d. 1779) was among those who signed off the accounts. Bertie took the whole 239ft of frontage between Nos 2 and 14 from Thomas Foley and used the land east of the house for a garden and outbuildings, an unusual and extravagant arrangement for a 1770s townhouse. As a result, the east or garden front is awkwardly asymmetrical, with an off-centre projection comprising ground-floor Doric and first-floor Ionic Venetian windows under a pediment (Ills 19.43, 19.44). Inside is an open-well, top-lit cantilevered stone staircase with iron stick balusters.¹³⁷

The elderly John Jervis, Earl of St Vincent, maintained this property as a little-used townhouse for the last twenty years of his life. After his death in 1823 it belonged to Col. Hugh Duncan Baillie, MP, son of a Bristol West India merchant and recipient around 1835 of some £60,000 compensation for freed slaves; an iron balcony on the garden side, which once supported a first-floor conservatory, is probably due to him. Further improvements were made by a new lessee in 1858, Philip Patton Blyth (of Blyth Brothers, a trading company based in Mauritius), who added the stucco facing to the lower floor and a balustraded wall in front of the garden. Blyth seems also to have been responsible for the Corinthian entrance porch and stucco embellishments to the Venetian window above (see Ill. 19.43).¹³⁸

The Langham Hotel Company acquired this house in 1867 and continued to let it. Later residents included Geoffrey Browne, 3rd Baron Oranmore, in the years up to the First World War, followed from 1922 till 1939 by the Pioneer Club for progressive women; by 1951 it had become BBC offices. In what may have been an attempt to thwart redevelopment, in 1955 the garden at No. 12 became the Middleton Memorial Garden, commemorating Cecil Henry Middleton (d. 1945), a radio broadcaster popular for his pre-war weekly BBC gardening series, *In The Garden*. Public subscription funded a wrought-iron gate, designed by O. H. Parry of the BBC Building Department. When the BBC left around 1990, the Middleton Gate was removed to its Written Archives Centre at Caversham, Berkshire. Its replacement for the Langham Hotel, which now uses the garden as a terrace, is near-identical.¹³⁹

No. 14 was the work of the developer-architect George Mercer, a bold speculation of 1751–3. Mercer was a mason, but even so it is striking that the broad façade, originally pedimented, and mirrored by a matching house at the opposite end of Cavendish Place, should be of Portland stone – at that time Cavendish Square’s façades were all brick (Ills 19.43, 7.??). The brick-

built return to Chandos Street, irregular and much altered, is stuccoed. Original internal features include an open-well, open-string stone staircase with a scroll-pattern wrought-iron balustrade (Ill. 19.45). The 200ft-deep plot allowed for an independent stabling complex to the rear. Mercer had found an occupant for the house by 1755: Daniel Mathew (d. 1777) of Felix Hall, Essex, an Antiguan heir to a fortune amassed from Caribbean sugar plantations. In 1774 the house was sold to the landowner and politician Beilby Thompson, of Escrick, Yorkshire, a Rockingham Whig.¹⁴⁰

The Langham Hotel Company took the rear part of this property in 1863 and had gained a controlling interest of the whole by 1869, when the house was leased to the architect George Edmund Street, then at the peak of his reputation. The stables and garden were replaced by a hotel annexe, and by 1872 extensive improvements had been made to the house by the builder Charles Fish. Their design must to some extent be due to Street, though they are uncharacteristically eclectic. A balconied portico and a full extra storey were added, the entrance hall was tile-paved, the rear wing reconfigured, and the stucco to the Chandos Street elevation 'rearranged in a neat architectural style with new windows', in part to compensate for the loss of top-lighting to the staircase. An Adamesque chimneypiece in the front drawing room incorporated Street's monogram.¹⁴¹ He lived here until his death in 1881, a residence commemorated by a GLC blue plaque in 1980. By the 1880s the rear wing of the house had been partitioned off as a separate dwelling, No. 14A, entered from Chandos Street (see Ill. 19.44). Street's son, Arthur Edmund, lived and continued his father's practice here until 1896, and the prolific Marylebone architect W. Henry White also had his family home and practice here, from 1894 until his death in 1949.¹⁴²

After the war, No. 14 became a gown factory, and 14A BBC offices. Land Securities acquired the buildings in 1954 as part of its comprehensive plan for the redevelopment of Nos 8-14 but this was avoided, and in 1987-8

Ladbroke Group Properties refurbished 14 and 14A as part of its Langham Hotel extension scheme (page ###).¹⁴³