

## CHAPTER 22

## Great Portland Street

Straight and by London standards very long, Great Portland Street has considerable variety of building, almost all of which dates from the second half of the nineteenth century or later: of its original, eighteenth-century development almost nothing remains. When building began at the south end – as John Street – in the 1720s, there was no thought that it would reach so far north as it does, and the wider portion north of Clipstone Street only came into being in the 1750s – with a separate identity as Portland Road – so as to make a direct communication between Oxford Street and the New (i.e. Marylebone) Road (Ill. 22/1). It was more than half a century before that link was superseded by Regent Street and its northern continuation. Another half-century later, the opening at the top end of one of the earliest Underground stations restored some status to Great Portland Street from a transport point of view; another, and it was becoming famous as the London centre of the motor-car trade. When the station was rebuilt in the late 1920s it was with a motor showroom above the ticket hall. That trade has long gone, along with most of the rag trade, the other major commercial presence of the twentieth century. Business use along the street today is, like the buildings, too mixed for useful generalization.

For brevity, street numbers given in the following account are those of the sites at the present day, and are not therefore those which applied to the buildings before street renaming and renumbering in 1858 and 1863. The chapter also includes Little Portland Street, a minor cross street which Great Portland Street bisects.

## Development and history to c.1900

The 'design' for the Cavendish-Harley estate, published by John Prince in 1719, shows the future Great Portland Street as the major north-south road on the east side of the estate. North of Mortimer Street it is shown as Bramton Street, after Brampton Bryan in Herefordshire, a Harley property (Ill. ### - xref Prince plan). The south end, named John Street in honour of John Holles, Duke of Newcastle, is shown interrupted by a grand market square ('Marybone Place'). In the event this was scaled down and sited further east, as Oxford Market, leaving the street open on that side (page ###). On the west side the joiner John Lane was involved with the early development. Others who built and lived here from 1722 included Matthew Bloom, painter, south of Castle Street; and Luke Hepworth, brewer, who had a large house on the site of Nos 19-21, built about 1730. The east side of John Street was partly built up in the 1730s but the area in front of the market stayed open until 1754-5 when Thomas Huddle and others built there.<sup>1</sup>

As the street was extended north of Margaret Street from 1734, it was under the new name Great Portland Street, reflecting the marriage that year of Margaret Cavendish Harley to William Bentinck, 2nd Duke of Portland (see page ###). Little Portland Street was laid out at the same time. The south end remained John Street until merged with Great Portland Street in 1858. By 1738 plots in Great Portland Street had been let as far north as Riding House Lane. John Lane had developed the whole west side, including the ground in front of the Horse Grenadier Guards' riding house built in the 1720s (page ###). The east side, as far as Mortimer Street, was divided south and north of Little Portland Street respectively between the elder John Devall, mason - his first engagement on the estate - and William Wilton, plasterer, active on the estate since 1724. These takes were promptly built over. Devall lived on Margaret Street, probably in a big house on the corner (No. 26). Workshops off Little Portland Street were maintained by his son John until late in the century. The

next section north, cut in two by Little Titchfield Street, was shared by a consortium of less prominent tradesmen seemingly led by George Collings, carpenter, who built the southern block around 1740, going bankrupt in 1742. The northern plots were unoccupied until around 1755.<sup>2</sup>

Although it had always been intended to take the street further north across Dung Field, where the former house of John Steele and its walled garden stood in its path, for the time being nothing was done (Ill. ### – xref Rocque). Steele, tenant of more than 120 acres in Marybone Fields, occupied the house up to his death in 1714, since when the ground to its north had been dug for brick earth and kilns set up, probably by Thomas Huddle.<sup>3</sup> But in 1756 the Act for building the New Road from Paddington to Islington gave the St Marylebone Turnpike Trust responsibility not just for that section of the road from Paddington to Tottenham Court but for a side road to connect it with Great Portland Street (Ill. 22/2). ‘Portland Road’ was promptly laid out and in 1757 a toll-house and turnpike were erected at the south end, just north of the present-day junction with Clipstone Street. They were soon removed. As with the New Road, the Act forbade building within 50ft of the roadway, a prohibition enforced for many years but gradually flouted with impunity, so that by the late nineteenth century only a few plots remained unbuilt on.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the opening of Portland Road, the development of Great Portland Street beyond Riding House Lane was slow. Huddle took a lease of most of the east side up to what is now Langham Street and in 1759 began to sublet: first to Joseph Wilton, the statuary son of William Wilton, who took the northernmost Great Portland Street frontage together with ground to the east for a yard and corner house (No. 94); then to Richard Maile, chimneypiece mason (who had the Riding House Lane corner in his own right), Nathaniel Maycock, bricklayer, and James Spiller, carpenter (probably grandfather of the James Spiller who worked with Soane and James Wyatt). Wilton’s house aside these plots appear to have remained vacant until the mid to late 1760s. Spiller was the ratepayer at the now demolished house at

No. 85 up to his death around 1775. The west-side block opposite was divided in the mid 1750s by another consortium that included Edward Gray, bricklayer, and Conquest Jones, agent of John Elwes (page ###), with William Wilton also involved, though nothing seems to have been built for a decade. Giacomo Leoni's son Philip was present hereabouts, perhaps involved in building work on or around Riding House Lane in the early 1760s, and Joseph Leoni, another son or perhaps a grandson, was at 93 Great Portland Street in the 1790s.<sup>5</sup>

The probable cause of the hiatus was Thomas Foley's claim to a large tract of land to the west, including frontage to Great Portland Street, under his disputed agreement of 1758 with the 2nd Duke of Portland (page ###). This was not resolved until 1767, by which time the duke had been dead for several years. In the meantime the Portland Chapel, started by him in 1760, had been built fronting Great Portland Street. More houses had been built on the east side of the street, beginning with the Horse and Groom (No. 128) in 1759–61, and continuing all the way up to the turnpike in 1762–8. The mason George Mercer, John Mandell, carpenter, and Thomas Huddle were among those chiefly involved, along with Daniel Foulston, painter, John Edwards and Joseph Reynolds, bricklayers, and Anthony Maderni or Maderin, plasterer.<sup>6</sup>

North of the chapel, further building on this west side was deferred until 1774–8. The three blocks there as far north as Devonshire Street were included in the ground taken by the Adam brothers for their Portland Place improvement, and were developed under them (see Ill. 17/3). The Adams let much of the middle block to Hepburn and James Hastie, who occupied houses at Nos 117–119 and 147. A large site further north went to Mercer. At the top end of Portland Road, the remaining block on the west side, north of Devonshire Street, was developed under a building agreement made with John White in 1776.<sup>7</sup>

Because building within 50ft of Portland Road was prohibited, most of the ground there became the back gardens of houses in Norton and Charlotte Streets (now Bolsover and Hallam Streets, see Ill. 22/2). The east side was taken up in this way from the late 1760s into the 1780s under leases to John Devall senior. The chimneypiece maker Richard Maile had the northernmost plot where he had a house in Norton Street and workshops behind (page ###).<sup>8</sup> Most of the west side was treated similarly, but there was some attempt to exploit the ground more fully by erecting houses one-room deep, back to back, by which means it was still possible to comply with the 50ft rule (see Ill. 22/25). On his block north of Devonshire Street, White planned back-to-back houses from the outset. Subletting the southern part to John Douglass and Anthony Maderni, he kept the rest, working there with the architect Richard Edwin (d. 1778), who lived at 84 Great Portland Street. By 1779 there were three shallow four-storey houses facing Charlotte Street (on the site of 106–110 Hallam Street) and, backing on to them, two facing Portland Road – one behind 36 Charlotte Street, the other extending across two plots, 37–38 Charlotte Street. Numbered 10 Portland Road, later 207 Great Portland Street, the wider house had a neoclassical façade of Adamesque character incorporating figurative bas-relief panels (Ill. 22/3). These panels, if not original, were present early on, going by a view of 1808. White's lease passed to Sir William Chambers, but the developed ground was transferred to Joseph Rose junior and John Dotchen, architect, one of Edwin's executors. The undeveloped ground left at the north end remained untouched until 1783–4 when it was given over to a single house for the art dealer Noel Desenfans – 39 Charlotte Street (site of 112 Hallam Street).<sup>9</sup>

From the start, Great Portland Street was mainly a shopping and business street, with buildings of correspondingly modest size and architectural character (see Ills 22/10, 22/11, 22/31). At the south end, Oxford Market and the riding house set the tone, but further north the Portland Chapel and the more aspiring development by Joseph Wilton and the Adams

raised it somewhat from the 1760s. Georgian Great Portland Street had numerous pubs. Shops were varied along typical high-street lines. Building and related trades were particularly well represented, at least in the eighteenth century, with various craftsmen resident there or near by, including some involved in the street's development such as Devall, Maile, Mercer and Wilton. John Dowyer, stone-carver, lived at the corner of John Street and Margaret Street in the late 1730s. David Ross, maker of chimneypieces and picture frames, occupied No. 57 and then No. 84 from the 1780s into the early nineteenth century, manufacturing composition ornament. Richard Ripley, an assistant to Sir William Chambers, lived at No. 88 around 1780 and Chambers himself lived on Norton Street in the 1790s. His favoured stuccoist John Papworth was at 86 Great Portland Street in the late 1790s, his last years, with his son J. B. Papworth, then embarking on his architectural career. Noel Desenfans occupied the new house at No. 153 in 1779–84, moving from there to Charlotte Street and then to No. 207 (see page ###). Joseph Wilton's house (No. 94) was later occupied by the architect Charles Barry, in 1827–41.<sup>10</sup>

Coach-making, well represented in Great Portland Street, may have been introduced in the early 1760s by Joseph Wilton, who was commissioned to produce the carvings for George III's new state coach (see page ###). Within a decade George Myers was making coaches further south (at Nos 19–21), and when the riding house closed in 1788 the site was given over to coaches and coach-making (page ###). There was another short-lived coach-works at No. 29 by 1791 and across the road William Harman was making coaches north of Market Place by 1800. To the north, Maile's yard (Nos 240–248) had been taken over for coach-making by the 1820s.<sup>11</sup>

The long-drawn-out process of first development was reflected in similarly protracted rebuilding as leases expired. Where houses were not rebuilt they were often raised and embellished with stucco. Nos 70 and 74, survivors from 1838–9, and the Horse and Groom suggest that in the early

Victorian period the Portland Estate countenanced no major change of scale or character. The 1890s, as elsewhere on the estate, saw a good deal of rebuilding in a Domestic Revival vein, much of it for flats. Two pub rebuilds, the George (No. 55) in 1878 and Cock (No. 27) in 1896–7, illustrate the shifts through the stylistic gears.

The presence from the 1850s of what was to become the Central Synagogue had brought a ‘considerable influx’ of Jewish families to the vicinity, part of a trend towards a more cosmopolitan population. The last vestiges of gentility disappeared, and the prevalence of prostitution and co-habitation prompted the opening in 1855 of a reformatory by Trinity Church, next door to its clergy house – ‘in the very centre of a neighbourhood that has long been notorious for the fearful number of disreputable houses with which it is infested’ (see Nos 205–207, page ###).<sup>12</sup> By the 1880s most of the best of the remaining houses were let in apartments, had become boarding houses or fallen to use as brothels. There was some trend towards the picture, curio and antiquity trades, with several dealers present by the 1890s. George Gissing’s *The Odd Women* (1893) placed an establishment for training single middle-class women in secretarial skills in Great Portland Street, in ‘workrooms’ above a picture-cleaner’s shop, perhaps a fictional translation of Izod & Co., at No. 220 in the 1890s.

The great concert halls to the west, St George’s Hall and the Queen’s Hall (page ###) were supplemented in Great Portland Street from the 1870s by Langham Hall (later Mortimer Halls), behind No. 43, and briefly from 1908 by St James’s (later the Philharmonic) Hall at No. 97. There were Italian restaurants, most famously Pagani’s, fantastically remodelled by Beresford Pite in 1900–1 and frequented by musicians and artists.

Meanwhile Portland Road had undergone complete transformation. The establishment there in 1849 of Bloomsbury County Court was a significant encroachment on its open frontages, and the presence of the Metropolitan Railway’s Portland Road Station from 1863 led swiftly to the

building up of the once-protected ground – though nothing more than two-storey shops was permitted (see Ill. 22/25). Amid them was a small fire station (No. 171), and a pub, the Albany (Nos 240–242). The name Portland Road was finally abolished in 1863 (though the station was not renamed until 1917), and in the same decade Great Portland Street began to attract small specialist dispensaries and hospitals. These took root at the north end, where premises dedicated to the blind were also established. However, in the early twentieth century the spread of medical occupancy on Great Portland Street was resisted by the Howard de Walden Estate.

*St Paul's Chapel (demolished)*

St Paul's Chapel was built privately in 1760–6 as the Portland Chapel, and was one of several proprietary churches in the parish purchased by the Crown in 1817–24. Its origins went back to 1758, when the 2nd Duke of Portland determined to provide a church for the developing locality, shortly before giving his promise to Thomas Foley that the ground to the west and north would remain open to safeguard the view from Foley's new house. Stiff Leadbetter, who had served both men, was brought in as architect. Foundations were laid in 1760, but the duke died in 1762 and perhaps because of disagreement between his successor and Foley over the area's development, it was not completed until 1766.<sup>13</sup>

The Portland Chapel was the first building in Great Portland Street north of Riding House Lane, but it was entered from Duke (now part of Hallam) Street on what remains an island site. It was a plain red-brick preaching box, stone-dressed and with a Doric entrance surround, stone-faced clock-stage and open belfry (Ill. 22/4). At the east end, fronting Great Portland Street, was a Venetian window. The interior, with box-pews and galleries on three sides, had seating for more than 600.



When the Crown bought the building it was in fairly poor condition, and thanks to a lack of railings other than at the east end had been disfigured by graffiti and urination. Thomas Chawner and Henry Rhodes, for the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, oversaw repairs and the installation of an organ, and in 1831 the building was consecrated and dedicated to St Paul.<sup>14</sup>

Faced with a declining congregation and an increasingly less genteel environment, the Rev. Charles G. Williamson sought Crown aid in 1883 for refurbishment to plans by A. W. Blomfield. Help was refused and it is unclear how much work was done. Williamson did insert some stained glass at his own expense, possibly including a Crucifixion at the east end, and then in the 1890s saw through a redecoration by Paul Waterhouse that included a new pulpit. Further decline in pew rents and Williamson's resignation in 1904 led State and Church to agree that the chapel should close. The Howard de Walden Estate bought it back and the building was demolished in 1906. Williamson saw to the transfer of his Crucifixion to St Mary, Bryanston Square; the reredos and sanctuary panelling went to St Martin in the Fields, and suburban churches in the course of being built also benefited: choir stalls, pulpit, altar rails, lectern and other fittings went to St Gabriel, Bounds Green; a marble chancel step and the organ to Bodley's St Faith, Brentford; other glass of the 1880s to St Paul, Clerkenwell; vestments and hangings to St John, Palmers Green.<sup>15</sup> The site is now occupied by the Brock House office block (see No. 97, below).

## Since 1900

The scale of Great Portland Street's north end was transformed by ambitious speculative developments, beginning with Portland Court (Nos 160–202), a block of shops and flats built in 1905–11. That seems to have sated the market for flats, but in short order comparably scaled commercial blocks followed

across the street, the main developer being Charles Edward Peczenik, who inherited an estate from Leon Peczenik in 1911 and went on to specialize in mansion blocks (page ###), sometimes styling himself civil engineer, at other times architect. Harold Clunn, remembering the ‘inferior character’ of the old shops, welcomed these ‘magnificent’, Continental-style developments.<sup>16</sup>

The twentieth century saw Great Portland Street excised entirely from the Howard de Walden estate, beginning in 1911 with the sale to the Crown of the Queen’s Hall block including Nos 55–77. In 1925 the remainder formed the core of a 40-acre tranche of the estate purchased by Sir John Ellerman’s Audley Trust, about half of which passed in stages after the Second World War to Basil and Howard Samuel, whose interests were consolidated from the late 1950s in their company Great Portland Estates Ltd (see page ###).

The origins of Great Portland Street’s famous association with the motor trade are traditionally linked with Rhoda Mebes & Co., bicycle makers with modest premises at No. 214 in the 1890s, who developed a sideline dealing in motorcycles and Benz cars.<sup>17</sup> More important was continuity with coach-making, which several firms had perpetuated. Thorns, who had been making coaches at Nos 19–21 since 1824, switched to the manufacture of car bodies by 1905 and in 1907–8 rebuilt their premises in an eye-catching form. By 1910 there was Overland House at Nos 151–153 and eight motor-trade tenancies in Portland Court, including Benz Motors and Vauxhall Motors. In 1911 it was reported that ‘Great Portland Street continues to increase in popularity as a motor mart, and, at the present rate of progress, looks like being shortly devoted to the motor and allied trades exclusively’.<sup>18</sup> Firms transferred from the larger coach-making centre of Long Acre and by 1914 a piano showroom below the Philharmonic Hall was given up to cars; S. Smith and Son’s Speedometer House at Nos 179–185 anchored the trade at the street’s modernized north end, and the Great Portland Street Motor Club (later Motor Trade Association) was established at No. 157.<sup>19</sup>

In 1921 Great Portland Street was claimed as 'the Motor Market of the World', where any make of car in existence might be obtained. The trade ranged from the shabbiest of premises with stock to match to some of the finest showrooms in London.<sup>20</sup> There were attempts to stimulate co-operative marketing as rents increased, but decline was already perceived in the late 1920s. Even so, when Great Portland Street Station was rebuilt in 1929–30 it was given an upper-storey motor showroom. Around fifty of the street's seventy-seven motor-trade firms came together in 1933 to promote a 'gala' shopping week – the banners, bunting and garlands no doubt signs of an ebbing tide. There were further attempts at collaboration, and in 1935 Patrick Hamilton could still refer to 'the motor-salesman's paradise in Great Portland Street'. With the Second World War the trade collapsed. In 1946 there were thirty-one firms left, in 1959 just thirteen.<sup>21</sup>

By this time the garment trade had long since been established in Great Portland Street, responding to the proximity of the Oxford Street department stores and more specifically to the redevelopment of the south end for J. P. (Peter) Robinson in 1884–5 (east side) and c.1920 (west). There had already been some redevelopment for the trade, as at Nos 12–16 and 15–17, and that end was increasingly given over to all manner of textile businesses. After 1945 and the demise of the motor trade, wholesale dress showrooms dominated. In 1949 *The Builder* noted the 'lively atmosphere' of Great Portland Street, 'a thoroughfare which has certainly changed its character in a comparatively short span of years'.<sup>22</sup>

Speculative office space above retail premises, purpose-built or converted, has been part of the Great Portland Street scene since the 1890s, but it never caught on as an office location. Portland House (No. 4), intended as offices in 1923, found no takers; at Nos 71–73 in the mid 1930s proposed office use was abandoned for lack of interest when the Crown Commissioners judged Great Portland Street as 'doubtless a second-rate Street'.<sup>23</sup> Taking advantage of the weak market for office space the BBC took over Brock House

(No. 97) in 1933 and by the early 1960s had offices and studios along much of central Great Portland Street, from Henry Wood House (Nos 75–77) north to Portland Court. At that point major rebuilding was intended on the street's east side, on Great Portland Estates properties flanking Langham Street. Commercial use below tall residential blocks was envisaged, the garment trade to be protected and rents for flats to be kept at a level to maintain 'a satisfactory social structure'. That did not happen, though across the road two blocks of flats over shops did go up at Nos 87–93 and 187–193. Late 1960s Great Portland Street was 'modest and unspectacular, dotted with clothing businesses, betting shops, luncheon voucher cafés ... straightforward grocers' and greengrocers' shops'.<sup>24</sup> Today the wholesale garment trade has largely gone, displaced by cheap imports. Amid the mostly small shops latest arrivals include bicycle shops, art galleries and special-effects studios.

## Individual buildings

### WEST SIDE

Nos 1–13 are part of the north-east quadrant block at Oxford Circus, to be described in a forthcoming Oxford Street volume.

**Nos 15–17.** Bank with garment-trade workrooms above of 1910–12 for James Boyton's West End Property Investment Company; Lionel Barrett, architect.<sup>25</sup>

**Nos 19–21.** This site was first developed in 1729–33 with one large house by Luke Hepworth, a brewer. George Myers was making coaches here by the late 1760s, and the house was replaced with workshops. Thorn, Randall and Lloyd

took a lease in 1824, and William Thorn's family firm continued in occupation making coaches throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>26</sup> By 1905 Thorns, who had acquired additional premises in Little Portland Street, had made the jump to motor bodies, for Daimler and others, but still made horse-drawn carriages, including landaus used by royalty. Fire gutted the Little Portland Street factory in 1906 and the Great Portland Street site was redeveloped with the present building in 1907–8, designed as showrooms with offices for let above (Ills 22/5, 22/5a). The architect was F. M. Elgood, whose conventionally grand upper floors of brick and stone are perched atop a double-height arcade of grey granite (now painted over), with plate glass revealing the steel-framed structure within and affording the prominent display of five vehicles to passers-by. The showrooms, with a sumptuously sinuous staircase, were reckoned unsurpassed in the motor trade. For a time there were 'horse vehicles' on the first floor.<sup>27</sup> Julius Turner (see Nos 71–73, below), who gained control of the company, was responsible for changes including the opening up of the shopfront in 1925 for cars to drive in and out, and the replacement of the staircase in 1939. Motor-trade use did not survive the war. Thereafter the premises were wholly occupied by dressmakers, supplemented by public-relations firms and such like in the 1970s. In 1997 Oliver Peyton converted the lower storeys to a restaurant, Mash, with Andrew Martin as architect. 'Supercool' features included a 'Love Machine' consisting of an airport-style rotating sign displaying messages of love changing whenever the door opened, and a mirrored urinal, curved to make 'willies look bigger'.<sup>28</sup>

**Nos 23–25** (incorporating 54–55 Margaret Street). Shop and flats of 1896–7, designed by W. Henry White for William A. Poole. The shop, first occupied by a decorator, Thomas Hall, was adapted as a branch of the London Joint City & Midland Bank in 1923–5 with alterations including the present arcaded ground-floor (Whinney Son & Austen Hall, architects).<sup>29</sup>

**No. 27, The Cock.** A public house of that name has occupied this site since the eighteenth century. The rebuilt Cock Tavern, of 1896–7, addresses the corner with a lively panache characteristic of its architects, Bird & Walters, acting here for the licensed victualler William Bignell Elliott. The façade was altered in 1934 in a neo-Georgian style, retaining the polished granite columns, work largely eradicated by plate glass in the late 1980s when replicas of four original lamps were also fitted. The interior retains much Victorian fabric; Victorianizing alterations in the 1980s included floor tiles and bar screens.<sup>30</sup>

**Nos 29–35.** Nineteenth-century shops and residential buildings here were all in use by the garment trade by the turn of the century. In the 1980s No. 35 housed Nico Ladenis’s celebrated restaurant Chez Nico. The group was replaced around 1990 with a brick-fronted office block, substantially altered and enlarged in 2014–15, with a recladding of the front and the removal of a thinly Postmodern pedimental emphasis over the entrance bay. A tall mansard conceals a dramatic aluminium-clad roof pavilion, and the upper-floor offices have an entirely glazed rear wall. The architects were Ben Adams Architects (for Alaska Development Consultants Ltd and the Harmsworth Pooled Property Unit Trust).<sup>31</sup>

**No. 37** was the site from the 1890s of Percy Webster’s watchmaking and antique clock shop, famous in its day, displaced for speculative redevelopment as workrooms in 1938–9. The resultant suave essay in brown brick was designed by H. Courtenay Constantine for Oxford Circus Estates Ltd, and built by Truman Stevens (Ill. 22/6).<sup>32</sup>

**No. 39.** The present building replaces a commercial-residential development of 1871–2, designed by William Arthur Baker for William F. Thomas, which served as a model for that still standing at Nos 51–53. It was built in 1971–2 for A. Sclare Ltd to the characteristically assertive and strongly horizontal

designs of Richard Seifert & Partners. Called Mayfair House, it has been used by various fashion-trade firms.<sup>33</sup>

**No. 41** is a shop, showroom and residence of 1891–2, built for Thomas Elsley, a wholesale ironmonger of 32 Great Portland Street and Great Titchfield Street (page ###); the architect was Augustus E. Hughes. Its originally uniform red-brick façade has been painted to create the impression of an earlier Italianate style. Past commercial occupants included music publishers in 1902–3, piano-makers, and the Klaxon Co. Ltd in 1911.<sup>34</sup>

For No. 43 see page ###.

**Nos 45–49.** Red brick-faced block of 1981–3 by Elsom Pack & Roberts, architects, occupied as the Embassy of the Democratic Republic of Congo. It replaced buildings of the 1890s (Nos 45–47) and 1935–6 (No. 49, a development by C. E. Peczenik).<sup>35</sup>

**Nos 51–53** (and 91 Mortimer Street). Plain stock-brick block of shops, showrooms and flats, built in 1873 for William F. Thomas. The architect was Augustus E. Hughes, who was directed by the Portland Estate to model it on Thomas's new building at No. 39 (above).<sup>36</sup>

**Nos 55–57, The George.** The original public house at No. 55 was built in 1736–8 and refronted in 1834–5. Its successor is a rebuilding of 1878, enlarged in 1905–6 when No. 57 was rebuilt as shop premises with an extension of the saloon bar behind. Bird & Walters were the architects on both occasions, for the same client, Thomas Howland, and deployed the same Italianate style each time, already becoming old-fashioned in the 1870s. Despite wartime bomb damage much of the Edwardian interior survives, including a fine bar-back, mirrored panels and painted tiles depicting riders and hounds. The

George is said to have been such a favoured retreat of musicians playing at Queen's Hall that it was nicknamed 'the Gluepot' by Henry Wood, who arranged for post-interval hand-bell summonses. After the Second World War it was a haunt of BBC producers and associated figures from the world of writing, theatre and music, such as Dylan Thomas and Louis MacNeice.<sup>37</sup>

**Nos 59–65.** Gabled red-brick group of shops and flats in two pairs: Nos 63–65 of 1894, an early surviving speculative project by the builders C. W. Bovis & Company; Nos 59–61 of 1895, somewhat more decorative, built by A. A. Webber for John Rintoul, a baker. The yard north of No. 65 occupies the site of a passage which from the 1730s led to the Horse Grenadier Guards' riding house. From the 1820s this was known as Marks Yard, after John Marks, the coach-maker who held the riding-house site; it later gave access to the Portland Bazaar and Queen's Hall.<sup>38</sup>

**Nos 71–73.** Following the sale of the block between Mortimer Street and Riding House Street to the Crown, Nos 71–73 – shop rebuildings of 1874 by the architect Augustus E. Hughes – were acquired by Julius Turner of 58 Portland Place, who from 1920 converted the ground floors and basements into showrooms for Crown Motors.<sup>39</sup>

Turner was a major figure in the Great Portland Street motor trade through his control of Thorns (see Nos 19–21, above). In 1927 he sought a building lease for a 'magnificent' motor showroom at 71–77 Great Portland Street but was rebuffed – trouble had been caused by the parking and washing of cars in Marks Yard, while Turner, as 'a naturalized Polish Jew', was thought 'not a particularly desirable tenant'. A second approach in 1929 also failed, but a more modest proposal for refurbishment of Nos 71–73 for Thorns gained approval in 1931. Turner became ill, but returned to the fray in 1934, submitting new plans for rebuilding Nos 71–73 as motor showrooms with workrooms and offices above. His architect was Joseph Emberton,



whose bold Modernist scheme (Ill. 22/7) with continuous bands of plate-glass window, found no favour with the Crown Commissioners' architect H. Meadows. He deplored its violation, as he saw it, of 'the canons of good architectural composition ... failing to satisfy the eye that the structure is self-supporting and therefore structurally sound'. The project, which proposed a dark vitrolite cladding, like that of Fleet Street's Daily Express building, anticipated by a year Emberton's designs for Simpsons in Piccadilly. In 1935, with Emberton ready to compromise on the design, Turner, his brother and an associate were fined for defrauding the Customs over imported cars. However, the Crown Lands Advisory Committee, which included Raymond Unwin and Frank Pick, made no objections to Emberton's scheme other than to a proposed seventh storey and to the vitrolite cladding, suggesting stone (or reconstituted stone) instead. Meadows urged Portland stone cladding, but as Great Portland Street was 'mostly a brick street' Emberton suggested yellow brick, with artificial Portland stone for the shopfront. Construction, by John Knox (Bristol) Ltd, with steelwork by Dorman Long & Co., took place in 1937. The bricks used were Hunzikers, then new to the UK.<sup>40</sup>

The building's period as motor-showrooms was short, and after the war it stood empty. Subsequent occupants have included garment firms, artificial-flower makers and, in the early 1970s, Hermes Computing Services Ltd's punched-card service bureau. The ground floor has been reshaped and in 2014 the building is occupied by Motel, a fashion label.<sup>41</sup>

**Nos 75–77**, where the original 1730s houses were rebuilt around 1870, are part of the early 1960s development Henry Wood House, described on page ###.

**Nos 79–83** (with 5–11 Riding House Street). Brown-brick and concrete block of offices and shops, mid 1970s, by Sir John Burnet Tait & Partners. The original corner house (then No. 103, rebuilt 1904) was where Felix

Mendelssohn regularly lodged from 1829, the house then being occupied by a German ironmonger.<sup>42</sup>

**No. 85** (and Swan House, 5 Langham Chambers). Building of 1908–9, erected by T. H. Kingerlee & Sons for Frank M. Elgood, lessee and architect (Ill. 22/8). It extends back to what was All Souls Place where a return elevation has large tripartite windows, seemingly for fabric workshops.<sup>43</sup>

**Nos 87–93.** Flats and shops of 1959–63 designed by Richard Seifert & Partners. The White Swan public house was at No. 91 till about 1886, within a few years of which this whole frontage had been redeveloped in separate stages, Nos 89–91 becoming a YWCA home. Shops were given up to the British Detrouer Co. and Automobile Exchange Ltd shortly before the First World War.<sup>44</sup>

**No. 95** (with 30–34 Langham Street). Principally facing Langham Street with a not-quite symmetrical eight-bay façade, this speculative commercial block of 1926–8 was erected by Perry & Perry for the Freehold and Leasehold Investment Co. Ltd, with W. A. Lewis as architect. Its open floors were given over to garment makers, above ground-floor motor agents.<sup>45</sup>

**No. 97** (now Brock House, 19 Langham Street). The site of St Paul's Chapel (see page ###, above) was redeveloped in 1907–8 with the present building, originally a concert hall. At first it was known as St James's Hall, being intended as a successor to the Regent Street building of that name – late-Victorian London's principal concert venue – which had been demolished in 1905, its primacy passing to the nearby Queen's Hall. The Howard de Walden Estate leased the ground here to the estate agent James Boyton, but it was Edgar S. Perry who was given the project to build a concert hall above ground-floor showrooms, through his firm Perry Brothers, to plans by the architects Joseph & Smithem. The scheme was revised to meet certain LCC

objections, toning down richly fenestrated Baroque elevations to leave largely blind flank walls (Ill. 22/9). Arthur Blomfield Jackson, C. J. Phipps's former partner and son-in-law, also drew plans (of the lower floors), and is sometimes credited as architect of the building. There was seating for 882 in the stalls and balcony, and standing room for another 106. Below was a piano showroom and basement restaurant. The west end had a projecting bow behind the stage.

The hall, which opened with a series of promenade concerts by the newly formed St James's Hall Orchestra, was not a success. Despite a flirtation with cinema use in 1912 the auditorium remained largely unused. H. Cluett Lock, the hall's manager, then applied for a renewed music licence, and made adaptations in 1913–14 (with W. A. Lewis as architect) for a re-opening as the Philharmonic Hall. The ground floor became a motor showroom for Watkins & Doncaster Ltd, the basement a garage and tea-room. Despite its new name, the auditorium was still used mainly as a cinema (Lock was secretary of the Kinematograph Renters Society) and also as a 'lantern hall' for illustrated lectures. It opened with a talk about Scott's Antarctic Expedition and it was here in 1919–20 that Sir Ernest Shackleton lectured with slides and films about the Imperial Trans-Antarctic or *Endurance* expedition. During the same period the black American band, the Southern Syncopated Orchestra, managed by George Lattimore, gave regular twice-daily performances. A new proprietor, Arthur St Hill Brock, then kept the cinema going, specializing in travel films. In 1929–30 he employed the architects Yates Cook & Derbyshire to oversee a thorough reconstruction of the building as Brock House. The upper storeys were wholly rebuilt internally as offices, and were given new fenestration, an attic storey and a flat west end. The ground floor was opened up further with more shop windows. The Women's League of Health and Beauty was briefly present in 1932–3 before the BBC began its still continuing occupation of the upper storeys. The ground floor was

occupied by the Automotive Products Group as Automotive House until the 1970s.<sup>46</sup>

**No. 99** (Western House). This 1930s commercial block replaces a hotel begun by the 1820s in a single house on the Chapel (now Gildea) Street corner. Known usually as the Portland, or Great Portland Hotel, it later expanded into adjoining houses on both streets. It was reconfigured in 1858 by Augustus Hullock Morant, architect, and in 1907–8 was extended with an annexe at Nos 101–105 by another architect, George Vernon, who in the following year prepared a scheme for a grand refronting in Portland stone, with a giant Ionic order. This came to nothing, however, and in 1912 a soberer stone refronting went ahead under Frank T. Verity, with further expansion along Chapel Street. By 1921 the hotel also encompassed 8–10 Hallam Street (page ###).<sup>47</sup>

The hotel had closed by 1933, and soon afterwards C. E. Peczenik and his Alliance Properties company asked their in-house architects, headed by Robert W. Barton, to prepare a redevelopment scheme. Initially they planned a reinforced-concrete structure with a giant Corinthian order, but eventually settled on a building with a steel frame (designed by Rubery Owen & Co. Ltd) and a more restrained exterior treatment with panelled pilasters. Construction was carried out in 1935–6 by Bovis Ltd. Though intended as open workrooms and showrooms above ground-floor shops, the new building was occupied mostly by garment traders, and had a short-lived ground-floor motor showroom. The west side was reconstructed in 1949–51 following bomb damage. Thereafter the British Council was briefly resident, followed in 1953–87 by the BBC's Engineering Designs Department, and since 2006 by Radio 2 and Radio 6 Music.<sup>48</sup>

**Nos 101–105** (Harford House). As a plaque put up by the Incorporated Society of Musicians records, it was in the house at No. 105 that the tubercular

Carl Maria von Weber died in 1826 while a guest of Sir George Thomas Smart, conductor and organist (Ill. 22/10). Next door, at No. 103, the artist Henry Stacy Marks was born in 1829. These and No. 101 were replaced in 1907–8 by the present building, principally an annexe to the Portland Hotel (see above), which picked up its levels and Ionic order from Nos 107–113. The BBC had offices here after the hotel's closure in the 1930s.<sup>49</sup>

**Nos 107–113.** This gabled, bow-fronted range was built in 1904–7 as shops and showrooms for James Windus, a piano-maker, who had premises at No. 107 in what had been an unadorned row of the 1770s (Ill. 22/11). The architect was W. Henry White. The motor trade was present from 1914 when the Hillman Motor Car Co. took No. 107, and Maples fitted out No. 111 in a Jacobean style for the Warland Dual Rim Co., who had occupied the whole row of shops by the late 1920s.<sup>50</sup>

**No. 115.** The original house here was built by the Hastie brothers in the 1770s; Hepburn Hastie lived in a larger house next door at Nos 117–119, where a later resident was the Scottish painter Sir David Wilkie (in 1808–9). No. 115 was a poulterer's shop for a good half-century before it was rebuilt in 1897–8 as their own speculation by the South Molton Street builder-developers Truman Stevens, with C. H. Worley as their architect. The shop was first occupied by Benjamin Brooks & Sons, fine art publishers, becoming a motor showroom by 1920.<sup>51</sup>

**Nos 117–123.** This substantial block was built in 1912–13 by Rice & Son for the developer G. S. Ferdinando, who employed H. O. Cresswell as architect, having abandoned an earlier scheme by W. Henry White. Lindsay's Paddington Ironworks Ltd made the steel frame, which is curtain-walled in Portland stone, with unpolished grey Cornish granite on the ground floor. The lower floors were taken by the Studebaker Motor-Car Company, whose

ground-floor showroom was walnut-panelled, with bronze light fittings, and had a car lift to the basement. The British Petroleum Co. Ltd had offices above. Shaw & Kilburn sold Hudson-Essex cars here for a decade from 1929 when the upper storeys were occupied by piano-makers' and gramophone dealers' associations and other music-trade institutions. Thereafter garment firms took over, the ground floor becoming a bank branch towards the end of the twentieth century.<sup>52</sup>

**Nos 125–129** (De Walden Court). Mansion flats and shops, including 85–89 New Cavendish Street and 28–34 Hallam Street (Ill. 22/12). There has been some uncertainty as to the architect of this block. A James Prior was certifying plans of the old buildings on the site in 1904, and John Dunn (d. 1932) has been credited with its design on the strength of his commissioning photographs of the completed flats from Bedford Lemere in 1908. Dunn's involvement seems unlikely, however, given his position as architect to the Duke of Norfolk's London estate and is explained by his professional association with his brother William Henry Dunn's firm of auctioneers and surveyors (Dunn, Soman & Coverdale), which was handling the promotion and sale of apartments.<sup>53</sup>

Aptly, given the building's situation next door to one of his father's synagogues, the likeliest candidate is Delissa Joseph (of Joseph & Smithem), a stalwart of mansion-flat design, who provided plans of the block to the London County Council in 1906 with regard to a projecting porch and balconies.<sup>54</sup> J. & A. Carters Ltd, invalid-furniture manufacturers, were based here until the 1960s, when much of the ground floor became a bank. Other commercial tenants of that time included the Australian-born music entrepreneur and manager Robert Stigwood, whose agency was based at De Walden Court in the 1960s.<sup>55</sup>

**Nos 131–141, The Central Synagogue.** The present synagogue was built to designs by C. Edmund Wilford & Sons in 1956–8, replacing its bomb-damaged predecessor of 1869–70 (Ill. 22/13).

Jewish West Enders were obliged until well into the nineteenth century to attend long-established places of worship in the City of London, notably the Great Synagogue in Duke's Place, Aldgate. In 1842 the Reform congregation broke this tradition with a modest synagogue in Burton Street, Bloomsbury, moving to Margaret Street in 1849 (page ###). Fearing loss of worshippers to this convenient address, the Committee of the Great Synagogue agreed in 1850 to vote £6,000 towards a new branch synagogue 'a quarter of a mile west of Regent Circus'.<sup>56</sup> In the event the new synagogue lay north of the circus, behind 43–47 Great Portland Street, but soon proved too small and could not be extended (page ###). In 1866 a Great Synagogue subcommittee headed by Sir Anthony de Rothschild was appointed to find a new site nearby and build afresh for 800 worshippers, with two ministers' houses attached. They promptly secured the houses at Nos 133–141. The budget was ample, as the synagogue was prospering; Messrs Rothschild had promised £4,000. The committee decided against a competition and chose as architect N. S. Joseph, son-in-law to Nathan Marcus Adler, Chief Rabbi and creator of the United Synagogue, the federation to which the Central, as the congregation was by now called, adhered from 1870. Joseph presented a Moorish design in 1867, arguing that Gothic and Classical styles were both unsuitable, whereas the Moresque was well adapted to an 'ecclesiastical' building yet had advantages of 'elasticity' and economy. He was asked to present an alternative Italianate version, but the original was preferred, with modifications. That design was built by J. Perry & Company in 1869–70, at a total cost (including site) of £37,284. The seats and the almehar (or bimah) from the old building were given to a synagogue in Brighton.<sup>57</sup>

Sharman Kadish has described the Central as the first thoroughly Oriental-style synagogue, not just in Britain but beyond.<sup>58</sup> The Great Portland

Street front was an eccentric confection in brick and two types of stone, culminating at the north end in a tower-like feature over an entrance porch with a horseshoe arch. The interior, spacious, high and light, faced south like the present building, culminating in a richly decorated apsidal space for the ark. Windows and arches were round-headed, with an orientalizing horseshoe profile above the arches over the galleries, and round clerestory lights incorporating Star-of-David tracery. Cast-iron columns, painted at first, marble-clad from 1876, carried the galleries and roof, which was divided by ribs. The rabbis' houses at the back along Hallam Street (Nos 36–40) survive, their two-tone brickwork and Moorish detail having a hint of the Great Mosque at Cordoba (Ill. 22/14).

Embellishments took place over the years, the grandest being the replacement of the central almemar with an elaborate new one in marble, presented in 1928 by the 2nd Lord Bearsted in memory of his parents; Joseph's original almemar was relegated to the Margate synagogue. But the building was burnt out by a fire bomb on 10 May 1941, the congregation returning to a temporary building on the site in 1948.<sup>59</sup>

Meanwhile plans for a full rebuilding were hatching. The architects Shaw & Lloyd worked up a radical proposal in 1947, with the synagogue turned across the axis from Great Portland Street to Hallam Street, set over social space and flanked by narrow courts, with a taller block at the back facing Hallam Street, presumably for letting. Having done all the war-damage costings and negotiations, in 1954 S. John Lloyd presented a fresh scheme for a 1,028-seater, to be built of reinforced concrete with a Portland stone front to Great Portland Street.<sup>60</sup>

There were tensions at this juncture, as the United Synagogue authorities were pressing for a fresh place of worship at Marble Arch and the abandonment of the Central. Isaac Wolfson and his son Leonard, resident in Portland Place, resolved things by offering £25,000 towards rebuilding the Central, which meant that, with war-damage compensation, rebuilding



would cost the congregation little. The United Synagogue sent a long list of possible architects to the building committee, who shortlisted three, not including Shaw & Lloyd, and at Leonard Wolfson's request an outsider was then added, C. Edmund Wilford. It seems that Wilford had shown him some sketches which, United's president Ewan Montague agreed, showed 'a most interesting approach to the theme of Synagogue architecture which hitherto in our experience has tended to be somewhat hackneyed'. But when Wilford was confirmed and met the building committee, he was told that the external elevation 'should be on traditional lines'.<sup>61</sup>

Wilford had made a name with cinemas before the war. He had no known connection with the Jewish community, but may have worked for the Wolfsons' company, Great Universal Stores. He and his assistants were directed to look at synagogues in London and perhaps also Venice. The result, built by Tersons Ltd in 1956–8, was a conventional, dignified building with close correspondences to its predecessor but an internal touch of cinematic glamour. The Great Portland Street façade is mainly clad in Portland stone, but the plinth and the columns flanking the high and hooded windows are of red Swedish granite. At the north end the entrance doors are set back in a high frame clad in gold mosaic. There is also a subsidiary entrance from Hallam Street. The galleried interior gives a powerful impression of height and restrained opulence (Ill. 22/15). The focus is on the ark at the south end, which stands in an outer surround of red mosaic embellished by flanking lions on tall pillars of gold and an inner frame of Sienna marble. The bronze metalwork to the ark doors and elsewhere, made by the Brent Metal Company, is strong, spiky and characteristically 1950s (Ill. 22/16).<sup>62</sup> The other main feature is the almemar, clad in red marble, with attached panels carved in low relief. After completion, the synagogue windows were filled over a fifteen-year period with colourful glass made by Lowndes & Drury to designs by David Hillman (Ill. 22/17).<sup>63</sup> There is a hall below the worship area, and the circulation spaces including the stairs to the galleries are generous.

**Nos 143–149.** The original houses here were built in the 1770s. No. 145 was held around 1780 by the courtesan and actress Gertrude Mahon (known as the ‘Bird of Paradise’ for her colourful plumed hats). No. 147, with a yard to the rear, was occupied by the builder James Hastie, then, from about 1816 until his death in 1838, the architect William Richardson (see also page ###). By 1904 it was a ‘foreign’ disorderly house. No. 149 was occupied by another Hastie, the carpenter Francis, in 1801–4, and from the 1840s by Benoit Auguste Bertini, composer for piano. In 1861 it was taken by George Derby Waite and Samuel Lee Rymer, dental reformers, whose National Dental Hospital remained here until 1893. The houses were replaced for the developer G. S. Ferdinando in 1907–10 by one of the street’s most sophisticated and handsome commercial blocks, designed by John W. Simpson and Maxwell Ayrton (Ill. 22/18). Early occupants included Vinot Cars Ltd, with motor showrooms, and departments of the National Institute for the Blind. Bombed in the war, the building was redeveloped in 1957–9 by Joe Levy’s Stock Conversion and Investment Trust Ltd with a concrete-framed block designed by Dyneley Luker & Moore. Known as Newmark House, after Louis Newmark Ltd, watch distributors, it has been used latterly as studios and laboratories for the independent Portland Place School.<sup>64</sup>

**Nos 151–153.** The original house at No. 153 was first occupied from 1779 by the collector and picture dealer Noel Joseph Desenfans, who lived here with his wife Margaret and Sir Peter Francis Bourgeois until their move to Charlotte (now Hallam) Street in 1784 (page ###). No. 153 was a dressmaker’s around 1860, followed in the 1870s and 80s by the Portland Academy girls’ school. The present building, of 1908–10, was designed by R. Frank Atkinson as Newton House for Kate Newton, costumier, but was soon afterwards taken by the motor-car dealers Willys–Overland Ltd and renamed Overland House (Ill. 22/19). Reinstatement of the bomb-damaged upper levels was carried out

in 1950–1 for Richard Crittall & Co., heating and marine engineers, by the architects Mewès and Davis.<sup>65</sup>

**Nos 155–157** (Northumberland House). Archibald Hurley, a builder and engineer, put up single-storey buildings here in the 1860s; occupants included the western dispensary of the German Hospital in the 1890s. The present building was erected in 1913–14 by a Paddington builder, W. J. Fryer, who obtained a lease of the site and engaged Robert Angell as architect (Ill. 22/20). Commercial tenants followed the typical local pattern: the ground floor was at first taken by Bayard Cars Ltd, and in 1914 the Great Portland Street Motor Club was established on an upper floor, soon to become the headquarters of the Motor Trade Association. Glaxo and the Chartered Society of Massage & Medical Gymnastics were also tenants at this time. Henlys Ltd, another car dealership, took the place of Bayard in the 1920s–30s. After the war the garment trade and commerce predominated, to be followed later by offices, including those of the architects Newman Levinson & Partners in the 1970s.<sup>66</sup>

For Nos 157A–C *see* Weymouth Court, page ###.

**Nos 159–185.** This long, stone-faced commercial block presents a step up in scale and pretension north of Weymouth Street, where the roadway widens (Ill. 22/21). It was developed by C. E. Peczenik in three phases in 1911–13, all with Robert Angell as architect.

Assorted two-storey buildings filled all but two of the previously empty frontages after 1860, including buildings of 1865 and 1869 by R. L. Roumieu at Nos 167 and 169, and the Portland Road Fire Brigade Station of 1866–7 at No. 171 (Ill. 22/22). The latter was typical of the stations designed by Edward Cresy for the newly formed Metropolitan Fire Brigade, and perhaps designedly close to the new Metropolitan Railway station. The Western Dispensary for Diseases of the Skin (later Western Skin Hospital)

was at No. 179 from the 1870s, and the Inland Revenue had offices at No. 183 in the 1860s–80s; a brothel was operating here in 1906.<sup>67</sup>

The Howard De Walden Estate wanted the whole block rebuilt in a single scheme, as was happening across the road at Portland Court, and in 1907 Bywaters & Sons Ltd took a lease of a large site at Nos 159–177, extending along Weymouth Street to 66–82 Hallam Street, with the intention of rebuilding by 1909. This did not happen, however, and in 1911 Peczenik started the redevelopment at Nos 167–169, with the builders E. & A. Roome & Co. The blocks either side followed in 1912–13, through Peczenik but with Bywaters & Sons Ltd as lessees. George Neal, of Tennyson Works, Kilburn, built Nos 159–163 (Tennyson House) and 165; Patman & Fotheringham Ltd were responsible for Nos 171–177; Bovis Ltd for Nos 179–185. Stone carving was by E. J. & A. T. Bradford.<sup>68</sup>

The earliest building at Nos 167–169 is as stately as its later neighbours, but not quite as tall. Unlike them it is not faced in Portland stone and lacks a Giant Ionic Order. With flat roofs above mansards these blocks made maximum allowable use of the site, with ample fenestration to light shops, showrooms, factories or offices. The London Joint City & Midland Bank Ltd took the southern corner, and other early occupants of the southern section included the Singer Sewing Machine Co. Ltd, the Pictorial Review Co. Inc., and Morris, Russell & Co. Ltd, agricultural motor-tractor makers. Further north the motor trade was dominant from the start. S. Smith & Son Ltd had been lined up in advance to take the whole of Nos 179–185. Previously based on the Strand, this firm, founded by a clock and watchmaker, Samuel Smith, had diversified into the outsourced manufacture of motor accessories – from speedometers to carburettors, lamps and horns – while still also making clocks and watches. The firm decided to bring production in-house in their new premises, integrating manufacturing, sales and fitting. Dubbed Speedometer House, the building soon bore SMITH'S PERFECT SPEEDOMETER & MOTOR ACCESSORIES across the frieze. Cars could be driven on to a lift for

access to the basement fitting shop. There was a ground-floor showroom and the storeys above accommodated offices and stock, with manufacturing uppermost where light was needed for the fine work of making 'Perfect' speedometers (Ill. 22/23). As business grew, manufacturing moved to Cricklewood and some space was given over to garment merchants. Smith's motor-accessories business continued here into the 1950s, and Smith's English Clocks Ltd until 1969. Nos 179–185 were then refurbished for Time Sharing Ltd, 'on-line computer services'.<sup>69</sup>

In the 1930s (Sir) Arthur Gilbert set up a wholesale dressmaking business at Nos 167–169, supplying wedding dresses and ball gowns to Selfridges and others, and from the 1940s until the 1970s Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons Ltd ran shorthand classes in the upper storeys at Nos 171–177. In 1987–8 the lower levels of Nos 175–177 were glamorously converted by Colin Gold of Aukett for the Efes Kebab House chain as The Manhattan restaurant, but 'on the whim' of its owner had been restyled again as Efes II by 1991.<sup>70</sup>

**Nos 187–193** (and 59 Devonshire Street). Flats and showrooms of 1963, with a basement car park, designed by W. Russell Orme & Partners for Site Improvements Ltd and now called Sofia House, after the company holding the flats. The site was previously occupied by the dental department of University College Hospital (formerly the National Dental Hospital), which moved here in 1893 from No. 149. An Italianate style brick building of three storeys, the hospital was designed by Arthur E. Thompson and paid for by Lucy, Dowager Lady Howard de Walden.<sup>71</sup>

**Nos 195–201** (and 1 Devonshire Street). This stone-faced corner block was built in two phases, interrupted by the First World War, for George Paxton of the opticians Curry & Paxton, who had occupied premises here since the 1890s (Ills 22/24, 22/25). Building began at the north end (No. 201) in 1914–15, the rest following in 1920–1. The architect throughout was E. Frazer

Tomlins. Paxton took the penthouse floor, with a top-lit billiard room, as his own flat, but died in 1922. Curry & Paxton remained at Nos 195–199 until the end of the twentieth century. At No. 201, the shop was taken in the 1920s by the Pytchley Autocar Company, and since the 1930s the offices there have been occupied by the Motor Agents Association (from 1990 the Retail Motor Industry Federation) – now the last remnant of the motor trade in Great Portland Street.<sup>72</sup>

**Nos 205–207.** The house at No. 207, which had belonged to Noel Desenfans (formerly No. 10 Portland Road, see above), was occupied from 1843 until the 1880s as a Clergy House for curates at Trinity Church, Marylebone Road. In 1855 the adjoining house at No. 205 (9 Portland Road) became the Trinity Home and Reformatory for prostitutes. In contrast to more traditional penitentiary institutions, this was run on ‘cheerful and domestic’ lines under the guidance of the church’s energetic rector, the Rev. Thomas Garnier.<sup>73</sup> The house was later occupied by the Female Servants Home Society and other philanthropic or missionary institutions. In 1914–15 the site of both buildings, together with that of 106–110 Hallam Street behind, was cleared for redevelopment, but this was delayed until 1926–7. The lessee Sidney Oldridge had given the project to Bertrand Charles Wotton, a Thornton Heath builder, for whom the W. V. Hotels Syndicate erected the present building, designed as flats by Frank W. Foster. A plaque on the old house at 110 Hallam Street, erected by the LCC in 1906 to commemorate the birth there of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was re-mounted on the new building, with an explanatory tablet, and for some years the flats were known as Rossetti House (Ill. 22/25a). A ground-floor showroom with retractable windows for cars to pass through was taken by William Whiteley Ltd for Coppen Allen & Company. Much of the 1920s shopfront survives at what has become the Portland Hospital Consulting Suite. An air-raid shelter for 273 people was installed in 1941. The

building, where the novelist William Gerhardie occupied a flat in 1931–77, was converted to hospital use in the mid 1980s.<sup>74</sup>

**Bloomsbury County Court** (demolished). The County Courts Act of 1846 divided England into sixty districts for a new network of courts to deal with small debts and civil claims, London beyond the City being covered by ten new courts. Charles Reeves was appointed Surveyor of County Courts and *inter alia* was responsible for the new Marylebone County Court on the Marylebone Road, opposite the bottom end of Lisson Grove. Despite its name, Bloomsbury County Court was also situated in Marylebone, initially at 28 Berners Street, where it opened in March 1847, and from 1850 at rebuilt premises on the site of Noel Desenfans' house and garden at 39 Charlotte Street.<sup>75</sup>

Retaining and extending the old house as offices, Reeves added single-storey buildings around what had been the garden, latterly occupied by livery stables, with the new court-room alongside Charlotte Street. The existing street-side wall, probably belonging to the original ancillary range which had been partly adapted as a private chapel and mausoleum, was incorporated into the new building (Ill. 22/26). The main entrance gate to the complex was on Portland Road, for which Reeves designed a double-height pedimented surround, perhaps not executed, with the Royal Arms in the tympanum. An office range was added along the north side of the site in 1857, and a jury room in 1863, again to designs by Reeves.<sup>76</sup> The south-east corner of the site was redeveloped in 1907–8 for a Registrar's Court, a single-storey block in a neo-Georgian style with a cupola, designed in the Office of Works. The north range was used as a Customs and Excise office from the 1920s until 1965 when the County Court moved to Park Crescent (page ###).<sup>77</sup>

The site of Bloomsbury County Court (No. 209) was redeveloped in 1980–4 by HDC Ltd as the **Portland Hospital for Women and Children**, a seven-storey

block of uncompromisingly utilitarian appearance by Troup, Steele & Scott, clad in reconstituted stone, with a drive-through entrance bay. A recess over the plinth at the south end contains a bronze statue of 1982, *Mother and Child*, by David Norris. This is said to be London's only private hospital entirely dedicated to women and children, and is well known as the birthplace of children of princes, princesses and other celebrities. Having become a part of the Hospital Corporation of America International Ltd, its public face was altered in 2010, when a water feature was added in front of the entrance and the recess with the sculpture was glazed in.<sup>78</sup>

**Nos 215–227 (Argosy House).** Office block of 1964–5, occupying the back gardens of 4–6 Park Crescent and built to help finance the International Students' House there (page ###). The architects were T. P. Bennett & Son, the contractors Taylor Woodrow – the same team that designed and built the student hostel. In 2005–8 a new, glazed top floor was added as part of an overhaul by Lord Sugar's company Amsprop, and the ground floor was given over to retail use. Part is occupied by the Portland Hospital, and at the time of writing (2016) plans were in progress for a glazed footbridge between it and the main hospital building. This steel-lattice and laminated-timber structure has been designed by William Matthews Associates, architects emanating from the Renzo Piano Building Workshop.<sup>79</sup> On the site to the north is a ventilation shaft for Great Portland Street Station (see below).

#### EAST SIDE

No. 2 forms part of the block at 200 Oxford Street, to be described in a future volume.



**No. 4** (Portland House). During the early phase of development on the Cavendish–Harley estate around 1720, the block between Market Place and Great Castle Street was left an open space, and was not built up until the mid 1750s. Coach-making was established here on the south side on the corner of Great Portland Street by 1800 and continued into the 1860s, latterly under Solomon Willoughby, making coaches for invalids. Later there was some redevelopment with small shops, and in 1921–3 the tall, L-shaped Portland House was built by the developer-builder Frank Linzell; its architects were Trehearne & Norman. The new building was intended as both showrooms and offices but for many years there were no takers for office use. A post office occupied the Great Portland Street corner until around 1970.<sup>80</sup>

**Nos 6–10.** The corner premises here (No. 10) was an undertaker’s for much of the nineteenth century. All three houses were separately rebuilt in 1888–9, and Henry John Ryman, the manufacturing stationer, opened his first shop at No. 8 in 1893. H. J. Ryman Ltd had spread to No. 10 by around 1900 and to No. 6 in 1912.<sup>81</sup> The firm opened many other shops in and around London and in 1950–1 began rebuilding its Great Portland Street premises. As completed in 1955 (to designs by H. Courtenay Constantine), these comprised three upper floors of stationery, office machinery and furniture, with stylish showrooms designed by George Collett beneath. Ryman Ltd continued here (latterly as part of the Burton Group) until the 1980s.<sup>82</sup>

**No. 12** (and 1–3 Great Castle Street, Ashley House). The sites of 12–20 Great Portland Street were first built up with shops and houses in the late 1760s. The present No. 12 was erected in 1906 for Bastin, Merryfield & Cracknell, designers and manufacturers of ladies’ fashion clothing and accessories, who were based here till around 1940. The architect was Ernest Flint, and Hall Beddall & Company were the contractors. The building’s present name

derives from J. & B. Ashley Ltd, ladies' fashion merchants, who arrived here in the 1970s.<sup>83</sup>

**Nos 14–16.** John and William Vokins, art dealers, valuers, carvers and gilders, had this site from the 1820s, rebuilding in 1864. David F. Cocks & Co. Ltd, dealers in dresses, feathers and furs, moved in during the 1890s and rebuilt again in 1913. As at No. 12 the architect was Ernest Flint and the builders Hall Beddall & Company. Limits having been eased in the meantime the building is impressive in its height, as well as in its wholly Portland stone front. There is also a large back building to Margaret Court.<sup>84</sup>

**No. 18** was built in 1892 for James Boyton by H. & E. Lea, builders. Its shop was a motor showroom in the 1920s.<sup>85</sup>

**No. 20** was built in 1908 for Sidney Oldridge to designs by F. M. Elgood.<sup>86</sup>

For Nos 22–24 see 57 Margaret Street (page ###).

**Nos 26–28** (with Nos 21–22 Margaret Street) incorporate the site of John Devall's corner house and yard of the 1730s. The present building is Julco House of 1955, designed by Newman Levinson & Partners for the dressmakers J. Julius & Co. Ltd. The De Havilland Aircraft Company was an early tenant.<sup>87</sup>

**No. 30.** Brick building, of 1885, lately painted white; T. G. Langridge, architect, for Kettle & Messenger, jewellers.<sup>88</sup>

**Nos 32–36.** There were several rebuildings here before bomb damage led to the erection of the present shop, showroom and office block in 1959–60: No. 36 in 1891 by T. G. Langridge; Nos 32–34 in 1885 by Augustus E. Hughes for

Thomas Elsley, ironmonger (later at Great Titchfield Street, page ###), and again in 1926–7 as garment workrooms for Luisa and Arturo Meschini of Pagani’s Restaurant. The redevelopment was carried out by the Samuel brothers’ Collins Estates Ltd, with Fitzroy Robinson & Partners as architects and Thomas & Edge Ltd of Woolwich as builders.<sup>89</sup>

**No. 38.** J. T. Smith, the printmaker and chronicler of local history, spent the early years of his life in a house on this site, from 1766 to 1779. Thomas Spencer, a taxidermist who exhibited at the Great Exhibition, was here in the 1840s–70s, followed by Thomas Elsley, at that time operating as an art metal worker. The present dark-brick showroom and studio building was built in 1977–80 to plans by Goldfader Associates, architects.<sup>90</sup>

**Pagani’s restaurant** (demolished). The dull, brick-faced 1950s building at **Nos 40–48** occupies the site of Pagani’s, one of the most celebrated pre-war London restaurants and a tour-de-force of coloured ceramic work, designed by the architect A. Beresford Pite.

Around 1872 Mario Pagani, a Ticinese restaurateur, took over a confectioner’s shop at No. 54, converting it into a restaurant in the late 1870s. From there, presumably on account of imminent redevelopment, he moved in about 1884 to No. 48. Pagani’s became a popular meeting place for musicians, many of them Italian, present in quantity after the opening of the Queen’s Hall in 1893. The restaurant expanded into Nos 44–46, then to No. 42 and 7 Little Portland Street in 1899.<sup>91</sup>

By then Pagani’s had already been extended at the rear and the ground floor at 44–48 had been refronted by the architect C. H. Worley with deep arcading in coloured terracotta (mainly grey and blue). The addition of No. 42 and a new lease opened up more ambitious possibilities. Arthur Beresford Pite was retained for a thorough remodelling and opening up of the interior, carried out in 1901. Taking his cue from Worley and making use of a favourite

motif, the Diocletian window, he added a second, mezzanine arcade, again in coloured terracotta, across the whole façade (Ill. 22/27, 22/27a). The ground floor at No. 42 was given a trabeated treatment, decorated with busts in roundels. The red-brick upper storeys were unified by the application of coloured glass mosaic decoration, ornately floral patterned around allegorical roundels and figures with a coved cornice of black-and-white basket-work. The influence of Otto Wagner's work in Vienna, in particular perhaps the Majolika Haus of 1898–9, is apparent. Inside, the restaurant was much enlarged with dining halls on the upper storeys for the first time, and a mock-medieval banqueting room called the 'King's Hall', double-height, with a lantern-light roof.<sup>92</sup>

After this unique refurbishment Pagani's became a yet more fashionable meeting place for literati, artists, sportsmen and club gatherings, as well as musicians – Sir Henry Wood was a regular. Of special note during this period was the Artists' Room on the second floor, where the brown plaster walls were covered with drawings and signatures made by the illustrious clientele, covered with glass for protection – sketches and caricatures by Phil May, Dudley Hardy and Enrico Caruso; the opening bars of an air from *Cavalleria Rusticana*, scribbled by Pietro Mascagni; Luigi Denza had done the same for *Funiculì, Funiculà*; and there were the signatures of Paderewski, Puccini, Tosti and Tchaikovsky, among others.<sup>93</sup> Under Linda (sometimes Luisa) Meschini, widow of one of the partners in the firm, and her son Arturo, Pagani's continued to grow, annexing No. 40 (the Portland Arms, a rebuilding of 1879 by the architect Augustus E. Hughes) and 8 Little Portland Street in 1910. The Unitarian Chapel at 6 Little Portland Street was rebuilt for Pagani's in 1910–11, to provide dining and banqueting rooms below another double-height hall, this one vaulted and designed for use as a Masonic Temple. The building, designed by Frank T. Verity in a Neo-Grec style in keeping with its ritual purpose, survives as Alexandra House. **No. 50**, acquired in 1914, did not become part of the restaurant, but was rebuilt for the

Meschinis in 1929–30, with Elgood & Hastie as the architects, and sublet as garment workrooms (Ill. 22/28). Pite's terracotta mezzanine was carefully copied across, though for the upper storeys plain cream faience was deemed sufficient.<sup>94</sup>

Bomb damage in early 1941 left Pagani's ruinous. Arturo's daughter, Catherine Meschini, carried the business into the 1950s as no more than the Portland Buffet at No. 40. J. A. Meschini proposed a reinstatement of the restaurant in 1949–52, but this was abandoned. A somewhat ornamental scheme of 1954 by A. G. Porri & Partners was also superseded, and in 1955–6 Nos 40–48 were rebuilt for Meschini by Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons Ltd as offices and work or showrooms with 'penthouse flats' above; the architect was Maurice H. J. Bebb.<sup>95</sup>

**Nos 52–56** (including 87–89 Mortimer Street). This ebullient red-brick and Portland stone corner building, lately taken up by a post office, began as the London & South Western Banking Company's St Marylebone branch at Nos 54–56 (and 89 Mortimer Street), of 1890. The architect was Walter J. Miller. In 1914–15 the architects Freeman & Hodgson oversaw the bank's extension into 87 Mortimer Street, a rebuilding of 1893. Further extension into 52 Great Portland Street was handled by R. Allsebrooke Hinds, architect, in 1921–2. No. 52 was rebuilt in 1955–7, in plain buff brick with a ground-floor front matching the rest of the block, the architects being E. A. Stone, Toms & Partners.<sup>96</sup>

**No. 60** occupies the sites of Nos 58–66 Great Portland Street, first developed around 1740 and all rebuilt in the course of the nineteenth century. The whole group, together with 52–66 Mortimer Street and 5–17 Little Titchfield Street, was replaced in 1960–2 by the present building, originally comprising garment showrooms and named Knighton House. It was undertaken by Knighton Estates Ltd, for which Basil and Howard Samuel of Great Portland

Estates were the managing agents, in partnership with Hockley Modes Ltd, dressmakers. Fitzroy Robinson & Partners were the architects. In 2007 Archer Architects oversaw an extensive refurbishment for Great Portland Estates. The building was raised a storey, remodelled internally by filling in a lightwell and modifying the position of columns, and wholly reclad for office use. It was pre-let as headquarters for the marketing communications agency the Engine Group.<sup>97</sup>

**No. 68.** Speculative shop and showrooms of 1931–3, designed by Augustus E. Hughes & Son.<sup>98</sup>

**No. 70** was built in 1838–9 for Richard Stone, a furrier and straw-hat maker, to match the building then at No. 68. The plain stock-brick elevations here and at No. 74 are now among the oldest fronts on Great Portland Street, and owe their survival to the failure of plans by the Polytechnic for redevelopment of this whole frontage at various points in the twentieth century (page ###).<sup>99</sup>

**No. 72.** Rebuilding of 1894 by J. Stevens of South Molton Street, for Thomas Griffin, fruiterer.<sup>100</sup>

**No. 74.** Rebuilding of 1838 for William Gotobed, corn dealer; the Portland Estate specified the stucco window architraves and cornice.<sup>101</sup>

**No. 76,** with its boldly projecting semi-octagonal cupola corner, was designed by W. Henry White for William Green, stationer, and built in 1897–8.<sup>102</sup>

**Nos 78–80,** built in 1903–4 for George J. Taylor of James Taylor & Son, bootmakers at No. 82. It is also by W. Henry White, who acknowledged his earlier building across Riding House Street with another corner turret; a full-height canted bay on the return maintains the lines of an earlier building. Nos

78–80 were listed in 1980, thwarting redevelopment plans for Knighton Estates by the Elsom Pack & Roberts Partnership. In a compromise scheme, **No. 82**, of 1888, was replaced in 1986–7 by the present red-brick fronted offices. In 2015–16 Great Portland Estates refurbished the whole group as far as No. 92 with some conversion for residential use.<sup>103</sup>

**Nos 84–86.** The first houses here, of 1766–8, were built by Joseph Wilton, James Spiller (who lived at No. 82) and Nathaniel Maycock. The architect Richard Edwin lived at No. 84 in the 1770s, and George Papworth and his son J. B. Papworth at No. 86 in the 1790s. No. 84 was rebuilt in 1848 as offices for William Henry Clapham, a solicitor, then again in 1887 to become Lawrence Morganti’s restaurant; No. 86 was rebuilt in 1894. Both buildings were replaced again in 1959–61 for G. E. Wallis, to designs by Newman, Levinson & Partners.<sup>104</sup>

**Nos 88–92.** The original houses of the late 1760s were replaced with the present buildings, erected by Perry & Perry (through Edgar S. Perry) to plans by W. A. Lewis & Partners – Nos 90–92 in 1934–5, No. 88 following in 1936 for Perry’s associate W. S. Hoare (Ill. 22/30).<sup>105</sup>

**No. 94.** Though much rebuilt, this corner house is a last remnant of eighteenth-century Great Portland Street and a reminder of the original scale of building. It also has associations with several distinguished figures. The site was part of a large plot extending 130ft along Langham Street (originally Queen Anne Street East), leased in 1759 by Thomas Huddle to Joseph Wilton, son of William Wilton and the pre-eminent sculptor in founding the Royal Academy. The involved history of the workshops and other houses that Wilton built here is given on page ###. The house on the Great Portland Street corner, at first known as 53 Queen Anne Street East (as its entrance faced that street), was occupied by 1763. Here Wilton lived, entertained in

style, and held some of the preliminary meetings for founding the Royal Academy.<sup>106</sup>

In 1779 Wilton briefly moved a few doors along, to the present 38 Langham Street, but financial misfortunes soon forced him to give up all his properties. His immediate successor in the corner house in 1784 was Lady Jane Mathew, the wife of Brigadier General Edward Mathew, commander-in-chief in the West Indies. For a while the house reverted to Wilton's daughter, Fanny, Lady Chambers by her marriage to Sir Robert Chambers. On Sir Robert's death in 1803 it passed to their son-in-law, Lt-Col. John Macdonald, a noted military engineer and cartographer. Redesignated 27 Foley Place, from 1827 to 1841 it became the home and office of Charles Barry. It was here that plans for the Houses of Parliament were generated, and no doubt mulled over with A. W. N. Pugin, and his trendsetting Travellers' and Reform Clubs devised. Upstairs, E. M. Barry was born in 1830. In 1841 the property was taken by another architect, Joseph Aloysius Hansom, already the inventor of the 'patent safety cab', who in 1842 founded *The Builder* magazine. Foley Place became Langham Street in 1858 and the corner house, which by this time had a second entrance on its west front, was given a Great Portland Street address. By 1870 it was occupied in part by a dentist, Henry Canton, and from around 1877 the telegraph engineer David Edward Hughes was also resident. He invented the microphone here in 1878 and experimented with radio communication before moving to 108 Great Portland Street in 1881. Hughes's residence is commemorated by an English Heritage blue plaque.

By the early twentieth century the upper floors (designated No. 94A and entered from Langham Street) comprised an 'inferior' boarding-house, Charles Canton maintaining a dental surgery below. The house was extensively altered and reconstructed for him by Bovis in 1919–20 as car showrooms and offices. Conservative for its date, the work included a neo-Georgian refronting to Great Portland Street, with a decorative shopfront. It retained what may well have been the original layout, an old-fashioned one



for the 1760s, with the staircase in an entrance hall off Langham Street. The original staircase, with ornamental wrought-iron balusters on stone treads, remained in place until the early 1980s, when the house was listed and it and the adjoining properties in Langham Street escaped proposed redevelopment by Knighton Estates. In 2015 the Central London Property Trust secured planning permission to demolish No. 94 and 36 Langham Street behind retained façades as part of a redevelopment scheme also involving the eighteenth-century remnants at 38–40 Langham Street (page ###).<sup>107</sup>

The original buildings in the stretch between Langham Street and the Horse and Groom pub at No. 128 – good-sized houses of the 1760s – were nearly all replaced piecemeal with flats and shops in the later 1890s, or showrooms a decade later (as at Nos 112–114). Also, a small school was erected at the north end of this group, at No. 126, in the late 1890s. Altogether this is an attractively harmonious yet varied row, mostly of red brick, that has seen the rag and motor trades come and go, and then survived the threat of redevelopment by Great Portland Estates in the early 1960s. Its shops at the time of writing (in 2015) still hang on to everyday uses (Ill. 22/31). James Boswell lived in a house on the site of No. 122 from 1791 (when his *Life of Johnson* was published) until his death in 1795. All the other London buildings inhabited by Boswell having gone, the LCC placed a blue plaque on the present building in 1936.

The corner block, Rembrandt House at Nos 96–100, is described on page ### along with its neighbours on Langham Street (Holbein and Van Dyck Mansions). **Nos 102–104** were built by Lidstone & Son in 1897–9, No. 102 for Joseph Stockford, a grocer and colonial importer who had been based here since the 1860s, No. 104 (to designs by T. H. Smith) for J. A. Michell, a local JP and estate agent (see page ##), who developed several of the sites in this row; No. 104 was the Honduran Embassy in the 1960s. **No. 106**, faced in

stock brick, was built in 1896; Dale, Forty & Co., piano-makers, had the shop from 1921 to the 1950s, with a warehouse to the rear. **No. 108**, of 1895–6, also of stock brick, was designed by William Woodward for the builder and lessee, Thomas Herbert Griffiths. The original shopfront survives, with polished granite columns. Habra Brothers, makers of ‘oriental goods’, were based here until the 1920s. **No. 110** was built in 1897–9 for Sir Henry Edmund Knight, a former Lord Mayor of London; his son Herbert Edmund Knight (d. 1948) was probably the architect. Sir Henry’s brother, John William Knight, an assessor and collector of taxes in Marylebone, had lived with his wife in the 1860s and 70s in the house previously on the site. The showroom block at **Nos 112–114**, built by T. H. Kinglerlee & Sons in 1907–10 for J. A. Michell, was designed by Frank M. Elgood and is differentiated from its residential neighbours by its first-floor arcade, giant order pilasters and flat front. **No. 116**, of 1895–6, was built by H. L. Holloway, again for Michell to designs by T. H. Smith. The pair at **Nos 118–122** (James Boswell House) are the work of the architect Augustus E. Hughes, and were built in 1898–9 for a piano-maker, James Windus, the lessee of No. 120 since 1857 (Ill. 22/32). Charles Hickman, a piano tuner, was at **No. 124** from the 1870s; the present building, designed by T. E. and R. G. Bare, was built in 1894–5 for one Annie M. Hickman. The shop’s first occupant was a clothier, David Lewis, who in the 1920s came to specialize in clothing for motorists, motor cyclists and aviators. The firm moved to No. 122 in 1973 where it continued until 1993 as Lewis Leathers.<sup>108</sup>

**No. 126**, a narrow building of 1898–9, angular, asymmetrical and stylishly reminiscent of Philip Webb, was designed for All Souls Girls’ and Infants’ Schools by Arthur Beresford Pite, a member of the All Souls congregation and of the schools’ management committee (Ill. 22/33). The infant school had occupied the former stabling of the Horse and Groom next door since 1836 and soon took over the Great Portland Street house. The rebuilding, undertaken by A. A. Webber, provided accommodation for teachers, clergy and a caretaker. The schools closed in 1908 and in 1910 the

premises were converted to private medicinal baths as the Alexandra Institute, but this was short-lived. From 1919 to 1969 a firm of dental-material makers, S. S. White & Co., had a depot here, with a top-lit 'museum' at the back on the old schoolroom site. Another conversion followed, to recording studios for Advision Ltd.<sup>109</sup>

**No. 128, Horse and Groom.** This pub has its origins in the earliest development this far north on Great Portland Street. Its 32ft frontage, along with that of No. 126 and the land reaching back to Gosfield (formerly George) Street, was leased in 1759 by George Mercer to Philip Keys for an inn with a stable yard. Built by the bricklayer John Winstanley, perhaps in consort with Keys (a carpenter-builder) and Mercer (a mason), the inn was narrower than the present pub, having a passage to the yard between it and the house at No. 126. It was in operation as the New Inn in 1761 but soon afterwards became the Horse and Groom. The associated stabling was given up in the 1830s. Having fallen into disrepair, the pub was rebuilt in the late 1840s for its landlord Samuel Blake, extending across the passage with a gault-brick façade. It was gutted by fire in 1859 and reconstructed, and then in 1895–6 the architect W. Henry White was employed by the landlady, Annie Dewsbury, to design a new ground-floor front and bar interior, and to knock some upstairs rooms together. Further alterations followed in 1960 and again in 1994, when the pub was returned to something akin to its 1890s appearance. The Manic Street Preachers' first London gig was held here in 1989.<sup>110</sup>

**No. 130.** 1905–6, shop and showrooms; Frank Foster, architect.<sup>111</sup>

**No. 132.** 1893–4, house and shop for John Barker, tailor.<sup>112</sup>

**No. 134.** 1893–4, shop and flats (Cavendish House) for William Leader, portmanteau and umbrella maker. W. Henry White, architect; Patman & Fotheringham, builders.<sup>113</sup>

For Nos 136–138, see page ###.

**Nos 140–142** (and 109–110 Bolsover Street). 1930–1, twin showroom and warehouse blocks for William Lee’s Tressco Ltd, ladies’ sportswear manufacturers; Yates Cook & Darbyshire, architects.<sup>114</sup>

**Nos 144–146.** Shops and flats of 1908–9; W. Henry White, architect, for the developer W. S. Hoare.<sup>115</sup>

**Nos 148–150.** 1915–16, speculative business premises, designed by F. M. Elgood for Sidney Oldridge.<sup>116</sup>

**Nos 152–156** (Yalding House, including 1–4 Clipstone Street and 103 Bolsover Street). Yalding House was occupied by the BBC from the early 1950s until 2013. Since their departure it has been given a two-storey roof extension and fitted out as modern offices for British Land (by BuckleyGrayYeoman, architects). It originated in 1929–30 as a speculation by the builders G. E. Wallis & Sons Ltd, comprising shops and showrooms designed by Robert Angell & Curtis. The developer and speculator G. S. Ferdinando immediately acquired the new block, which proved popular with the motor and garment trades. During the war it served as an ARP depot. The name Yalding House is first recorded in the 1950s when the BBC’s music division took up residence, along with the BBC Central Music Library – the Third Programme (later Radio 3) was based here, followed from 1996 to 2012 by Radio 1.<sup>117</sup>

**Nos 160–202** (Portland Court), occupies the whole block between Clipstone and Carburton Streets, reaching back to Bolsover Street. It is Great Portland Street's most ambitious speculation, of flats and shops, dating from two phases of construction in the early 1900s and 1949–50.

Early development of the site was limited by the Portland Road trustees' prohibition on building within 50ft of the roadside (page ###). By the 1820s public houses stood at either end of the block – the Bay Malton to the south, the Colosseum Tavern to the north, the latter extended in the 1840s towards Portland Road as the Colosseum Hotel and Baths (Ill. 22/34). A double-fronted house called Portland Cottage was built in the 1820s, on the site of No. 190. Single-storey shops were eventually built over the whole of the previously open frontage in the 1860s, their motley character suggested by tenants such as Count Stefen Pongracz, an importer of Hungarian products, and Seraphicus F. Pichler, harmonium manufacturer (both at No. 172), and the Blenheim Free Dispensary (at No. 178).<sup>118</sup>

The origins of Portland Court go back to 1901, when William Cleland, a fruiterer at No. 166 who had come to London from Huddersfield having failed as a woollen manufacturer, began assembling the site with a view to rebuilding. Helped by an architect friend from Huddersfield, John Henry Hanson, Cleland managed, through a firm of solicitors (Donald McMillan & Mott), to secure backing for what was a very ambitious project from Thomas Wharrie, a retired surveyor and engineer, and Alexander MacMillan. Wharrie, former head of the Glaswegian engineering firm Wharrie & Colledge and once a Burgh Surveyor in Hillhead, was the more substantial figure. Now a director of the Prudential Assurance Company, he was married to the daughter and heir of Sir Henry Harben, the man largely responsible for the Prudential's enormous success and the commissioning of Alfred Waterhouse as architect of the company's offices at Holborn Bars.

All the leases but those of the expensive pubs were assembled, and McMillan & Mott introduced the Wolverhampton contractor Henry Lovatt as

a prospective builder. He proposed employing Boehmer & Gibbs as architects and helped arrange a loan from the Sun Life Assurance Company before withdrawing. In late 1902 Cleland and MacMillan teamed up with Boehmer to negotiate a building agreement with the Howard De Walden Estate, and in 1903 the whole site between the pubs was leased to Cleland, MacMillan and Wharrie. Boehmer's designs of January 1904 for the proposed Portland Court envisaged four unified blocks of flats with shops, of red brick and Portland stone, neo-Baroque with twin domes and end turrets (Ill. 22/35). But with Cleland and MacMillan under financial strain, Wharrie took over the scheme himself. The Estate and Sun Life anxiously asked him to bring in the builder-developer C. J. Hinsley to advise – Hinsley and Boehmer's newly completed Harley House, a major, stone-fronted development on the north side of the Marylebone Road being seen as a potential model for Portland Court. Clearance began, and the designs were recast with Portland and Bath-stone elevations. A steelwork contract went to Drew Bear Perkins & Co., and builders were invited to tender in August 1904. But on the advice of a fellow director at the Prudential, William Edgar Horne, Wharrie decided to sub-let the whole project to a substantial builder. Agreement was reached through a Scottish architect, Durward Brown, with Robert and Thomas Mickel of Glasgow, whose arrangement with Brown was that he should be employed as architect. When the Estate insisted on Boehmer, Wharrie found himself having to pay both architects, with Brown taking over the responsibility of executing Boehmer's designs. The Mickels began building in 1905, went to court to face down LCC demands to set the building line further back from Great Portland Street, and had completed all but the northern block by 1909. Wharrie acquired the lease of the Colosseum in 1907, and the final block was completed in 1911 when new leases were granted to Wharrie, with underleases to the Mickels (Ill. 22/36).<sup>119</sup>

Early commercial occupants included several representatives of the motor trade. Lloyds Bank opened a branch at Nos 190–192 in 1920, and there

was a post office on Carburton Street from the 1930s. In 1948 the new British Electricity Authority took most of the southern half of Portland Court (at Nos 160–172) for its administrative headquarters – Electricity House, renamed Generation House under the later Central Electricity Generating Board. The bombed south-west corner where the Bay Malton pub had been was rebuilt in 1949–50 to designs by Lewis Solomon & Son, stone-faced like the rest but plainer, and with a more forward building line, marking the point where historically Great Portland Street became Portland Road. The more northerly flats were converted to office and commercial use in the 1950s by companies owned by Basil and Howard Samuel of Great Portland Estates. There was a small garment-trade presence, a number of publishers (including the BBC) and the Office of the Commissioner of the Western Region of Nigeria (later the Nigerian Education Attaché). Generation House, refurbished in 1968, was still occupied by government agencies in the 1980s. Further north, architectural practices moved in: Fitzroy Robinson & Partners in the 1970s, and Foster & Partners, who had smart offices in the 1980s with the firm’s first computer at Nos 172–182, where Villandry now has a large restaurant, above which are the offices of the BBC Trust. Great Portland Estates rebuilt the south end of the block behind retained facades in the early 1990s. The north end was remodelled internally in 2005–7 (by Lifschutz Davidson Sandilands, architects, and WSP Cantor Seinuk) to create open floor plans. Another update of the south end followed in 2011–12, the offices there being pre-let to Double Negative, specialists in visual effects for the film industry.<sup>120</sup>

**No. 204** (with 73 Bolsover Street) dates from the early 1970s, when it replaced a mission hall and clergy house of the late 1890s, built for the parish of Holy Trinity, Marylebone. The hall, with a gabled front and portico to Great Portland Street, and a house behind in Bolsover Street, was designed by W. Henry White. Prior to this, the site had been occupied in part by the modest Marylebone and West London School of Art, built in 1863 to designs by Owen

Jones on a site acquired by Peter Graham, of the Oxford Street furnishers Jackson & Graham, the founder and treasurer of the art school. It was 'essentially an artisan school', most of the students being employed in all sorts of crafts and trades, and in 1868 was said to take more than a quarter of the artisan students in all ten London art schools. Student numbers rose from around a hundred in 1863 to five hundred from 1864. The school moved to larger premises in Great Titchfield Street in 1879 (page ###).<sup>121</sup>

Redevelopment with a furniture warehouse followed, and in 1897 the site was acquired for the new mission. Trinity Church House saw use as a gymnasium and cinema, later as a rag-trade warehouse. Its replacement in 1972–4 was a speculative development for the church undertaken by Taylor Woodrow Property Co. Ltd, with Chapman Taylor & Partners as architects. Red-brick faced, on a reinforced-concrete frame, the building was designed as showrooms, offices and six luxury flats, but after standing empty was let in 1976 entirely as offices above a bathroom fittings showroom.<sup>122</sup>

The two matching Portland stone-faced buildings at **Nos 206 and 224–228** (which extend back to incorporate 71–72 and 59–61 Bolsover Street) were built in 1920–1 and 1911–14 respectively for what was to become the Royal National Institute for the Blind. Both were designed by the architect Claude Ferrier, and both have now been converted to flats, No. 206 under the name The Armitage, commemorating the organization's founder Dr Thomas Rhodes Armitage. The Armitage also takes in one of the intervening buildings, Nos 220–222 (and 62–64 Bolsover Street), formerly Seaford Court.

The Institute's occupation here began in 1902 when, as the British and Foreign Blind Association for Improving the Embossed Literature of the Blind and Promoting their Employment, it took over a former antique-furniture warehouse on part of the site of No. 206. This was not the first establishment for the blind in Great Portland Street, for in the early 1890s Dr John Fletcher



Little had set up the London School of Massage, for training blind masseurs, in a new building at No. 211, adjoining the Metropolitan Railway ventilator behind Park Crescent. The Blind Association's own Institute for Massage by the Blind was also based at the former warehouse. In 1917 the adjoining premises, formerly occupied as the London Throat Hospital, were taken over in response to the increase in work brought about by the world war. Meanwhile Nos 224–228 had been acquired and rebuilt as headquarters for the Association (from 1914 the National Institute for the Blind). The subsequent redevelopment of the whole site at No. 206 was intended to comprise offices above a showroom for products made by the blind, but ended up let to multiple commercial tenants, many from the motor and garment trades. In 1933–4 the second floor was adapted for the NIB, to plans by Joseph Emberton, as the Alfred Eichholz Memorial Clinic and Institute of Massage and Physiotherapy. Eventually the Institute, by then the Royal National Institute for the Blind, occupied the whole building. In 2001–3, following the RNIB's departure, it was converted to luxury flats by Gildredge Properties Ltd.<sup>123</sup>

The headquarters building at Nos 224–228 accommodated the Institute's own shop and showroom on the ground floor (Ills 22/37, 22/38, 22/39). At the front on the second floor was Armitage Hall, a double-height assembly room with an organ, above which were offices, reached via a tactile 'Museum on the Stairs' (Ill. 22/40). To the rear facing Bolsover Street were embossing rooms for printing Braille, and a library. Ferrier's partner William B. Binnie oversaw the addition of a storey here in 1930–2. The RNIB moved out and Goldbrand Properties Ltd converted the building to flats in 2001–3, retaining Armitage Hall as a reception room in a £9m flat.<sup>124</sup>

The pedestrian street crossing between Nos 197 and 220 Great Portland Street was among the first three sites in London to be specially paved for the benefit of the blind and partially sighted, with pink slabs textured with round bumps – an initiative developed in the early 1980s by the Transport and Road

Research Laboratory in consultation with the RNIB and others including the Cement and Concrete Association. This paving remains in situ in 2014.<sup>125</sup>

**Nos 208–210** (with 69–70 Bolsover Street, Devonshire Mansions). This block of flats, in stately red brick with a lyrical array of balconies, was built by W. Johnson & Co. in 1905–8 to designs by the architects Lanchester & Rickards (Ill. 22/41). The setting back of the upper storeys behind shops was stipulated in developments along here, an echo of the preceding arrangement of single-storey shops on what had been gardens. The lessee at the time of the rebuilding was Walter Tustin of 69 Bolsover Street, a manager for the brushmakers G. B. Kent & Sons Ltd.<sup>126</sup>

**Nos 212–218** (and 65–68 Bolsover Street). A hefty, stone-faced commercial block, built in stages in 1910–16 as a speculation by G. S. Ferdinando (Ill. 22/42). Frank T. Verity was the architect. Nos 212–214 were built first by Brand Pettit & Co., Nos 216 and 218 separately after 1912 by Rice & Son. The Pytchley Autocar Company had showrooms, workshops and stores here from 1913, fitted out by the architect Paul Waterhouse. Nos 212–216 were converted to offices and medical consulting rooms in the late 1990s and No. 218 was made into flats in 2005–6.<sup>127</sup>

**Nos 220–222** (and 62–64 Bolsover Street). This frontage was built up in the late 1850s with a shop and warehouse for a dealer in marine animals. It was occupied from the 1870s by Thomas Simpson Knight, gas and hot-water engineer, and in 1909–10 the whole block was rebuilt by Patman & Fotheringham for his firm T. S. Knight & Sons; the architect was Claude W. Ferrier. The new building comprised flats in two blocks with a communal staircase between light wells, and shops, at one of which Knight & Sons continued to trade into the 1960s. The original name Seaford Court, presumably an echo of Lord Howard de Walden's town mansion Seaford

House, was dropped when the building became part of The Armitage (see No. 206, above).<sup>128</sup>

**Nos 230–232.** Gable-fronted pair, since 2015 housing a fertility clinic, built as his own speculation by Alfred Baker in 1903.<sup>129</sup>

**No. 234,** now occupied as the Portland Hospital Consulting Suite, was built in 1907–9 as the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, to designs by Rowland Plumbe. The premises, extending to Bolsover Street, replaced the smaller National Orthopaedic Hospital of 1881–91 (see Ill. 24/10). The rebuilding followed the amalgamation of the National (at this site since 1864) with two other orthopaedic hospitals. An account of the hospital and its buildings in Great Portland and Bolsover Street is given on page #####.

**Nos 240–248.** The first occupant, to 1787, of the northernmost house on the west side of Norton Street was the chimneypiece mason Richard Maile (see 53 Bolsover Street, page ###). The yard to the west and north was perhaps shared with another mason, John Devall II, who was the head leaseholder. Later the yard became a coach works, run by John King into the 1860s. The arrival of the Metropolitan Railway portended a change in local character but the MBW rejected a scheme for shops on the site in 1863. A year later Edwin Tarnier, owner of Tilbury's furniture repository in Marylebone High Street, secured new 67-year leases for the whole property, and in 1865 a development scheme by John Gravett Hilton, acting as King's architect, went ahead. Completed by 1869, this comprised a public house (the Albany Hotel and Tavern) and shops in a workaday round-arched style typical of its time (Ill. 22/43). No. 244 was a Lyons corner house from 1901 to c.1970.<sup>130</sup>

*Great Portland Street Station*

This insular building of 1929–30, with its distinctive elliptical plan and faience elevations, is the successor to one of London Underground's oldest stations, opened in 1863 as the Metropolitan Railway's Portland Road Station. It was listed and restored in 1987.

The site was a triangle of waste ground belonging to the Crown, left over when the New Road was created in the 1750s. Although contemplated as the site for a new parish church around 1820 when Park Crescent was laid out, it remained unused until about 1830, when it was enclosed by the Vestry as a green, rounded to an oval.<sup>131</sup> From 1853 the promoters of what was to become the Metropolitan Railway intended to connect Paddington to the City with a line under the New Road, promising stations at principal crossing streets. It was late 1859 before the company's engineer John Fowler was able to prepare detailed plans and fix sites for stations. Thomas Marr Johnson was the resident engineer, John Hargrave Stevens the architect. Notions of a station in Park Square Gardens were abandoned in favour of what the Crown saw as the less contentious green in early 1860. This involved a slight southerly deviation of the railway and the rebuilding of 1–2 Park Crescent (page ###). Works were carried out in 1861–2 and the world's first public passenger underground railway opened in January 1863. The name Portland Road Station was soon an anachronism, as Portland Road was renumbered that year as part of Great Portland Street, but it was not changed until 1917.<sup>132</sup>

The green dictated the shape of Portland Road Station and it was laid out on cruciform lines within the oval (Ill. 22/44). The original single-storey, rusticated Italianate building, typical of those along the line, was entered from the south where there was a booking office and access to staircases for the southern platform. The north arm of the cross bridged the line and its elliptical brick vault, for access to and from the other platform (Ill. 22/45). A serious problem for the western underground parts of this steam railway was

the disposal of smoke. For the sake of ventilation the station's north arm was flanked by large fenestrated, domed rotundas – in effect chimneys – the grandest architectural feature anywhere on the Metropolitan Railway. There was another vent above the west end of the platforms, though this was simply a hole in the ground on the west side of Portland Road, to the rear of 2 Park Crescent. The chimney domes proved unsatisfactory and were taken down in 1870 in favour of more holes in the ground.<sup>133</sup>

The Metropolitan Railway line became part of the Inner Circle in 1884. Smoke problems intensified and the western ventilator was enlarged behind 1 Park Crescent in 1889–90. Even so, this remained the most smoke-bedevelled section of the line until electrification in 1905.<sup>134</sup>

The lack of access to the station from Marylebone Road, a deficit in the face of bus competition, pushed the Metropolitan Railway to consider rebuilding. In 1922 the recently appointed company architect Charles Walter Clark prepared a scheme for an elliptical-shaped building with entrances north, east and west. It was to be faced in faience, and to contain a tea-room above a booking hall and shops (the station had accommodated a W. H. Smith bookstall since at least 1917). The scheme was temporarily withdrawn when the Crown demanded £4,000 for lifting covenants against ancillary uses. Another approach in 1928 was more sympathetically received. This time alternative uses were advanced for the upper storey. A motor showroom, backed by E. A. Wilson, the company engineer, won out over the tea-shop or offices. In haste, to pre-empt plans for widening Marylebone Road, the railway company awarded the contract without tender to the Pitcher Construction Company, on the basis of similar work at Swiss Cottage; this resulted in costs twenty-eight per cent higher than authorized. Building took place in 1929–30. The motor showroom was let to Stanley Hunt Ltd, as interior windows still testify.<sup>135</sup>

Clarke's building is typical of his work for the Metropolitan Railway in the 1920s (Ill. 22/46). However, the island site gave him a unique opportunity

for rationalized circulation (see Ill. 22/44). He had tweaked the plans of 1922, providing entrances in projecting flat-fronted 'pavilions' at all four cardinal points, that to the south for the lift, flanking which underground public lavatories were retained. The Classicism of the cream-faience elevations is emphasized by Doric columns framing the principal shop windows. Inside, the shops range around the top-lit booking-hall concourse, which originally had mahogany fittings. The geometrically patterned tile paving survives.

The platforms were extended eastwards under steel girders as far as Cleveland Street in 1932, and the vent over the west end of the platforms (on Great Portland Street's west side) was floored over for a single-storey garage in 1931–2 for Stanley Hunt Ltd. The station motor showroom did not reopen after the war, but became an Express Dairy restaurant and, from 1979, offices. The Great Portland Street 'service station', adapted for wartime use as a Westland Aircraft depot, survived as a garage into the 1960s when London Transport cleared the site to reinstate a vent, concealed by a walled enclosure.<sup>136</sup>

Immediately north-east of the station a granite fountain, erected by the Metropolitan Free Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association in the late nineteenth century, has been moved to Park Crescent Gardens (page ###).

## Little Portland Street

Little Portland Street originated in the late 1730s, when the neighbourhood all round was being assigned between developers and leased out. Stables are shown covering most of the frontages on the various versions of Horwood's map, with a couple of large yards off the north side. Some of the larger Marylebone craftsman-builders had bases in this back street, including the

joiner John Lane, and the John Devalls senior and junior, masons.<sup>137</sup> Around 1815, Sebastian Erard had his harp manufactory at No. 3 on the north side, towards the Great Titchfield Street end. Here doubtless were made early examples of his double-action harp, patented in 1810 and effectively the first successful concert harp.<sup>138</sup>

The most significant building was **Little Portland Street Unitarian Chapel**, built in 1832–3 and demolished in 1910. It occupied a position slightly west of the Erard shop, where No. 6 now stands, previously the site of some small houses and a yard called Spikeman’s Court. The congregation had started out in 1824 under the auspices of the barrister William Agar.<sup>139</sup> When its rented rooms in York (later Duke of York) Street, St James’s, had to be given up, the minister, Edward Tagart, took charge and raised subscriptions for the Little Portland Street Chapel. Surviving drawings show a severe-looking structure in the Greek style, with full Doric columns either side of the entrance, tapering windows, and galleries round three sides of the top-lit interior, also carried on full columns: its architect is not known.<sup>140</sup> Though never large, the congregation included people of distinction, notably Charles Dickens, whose family had a pew here in the early 1840s. The intellectual trend grew under Tagart’s successors from 1859, J. J. Tayler and James Martineau, principal and chair of theology respectively at Manchester New College, then newly relocated in Gordon Square, Bloomsbury. Tayler soon resigned, but the eminent Martineau’s preaching from the chapel’s ‘tall pulpit, reared on Ionic columns’, attracted a range of sermon-tasters and regular attenders, including the geologist Charles Lyell and the feminist Frances Power Cobbe. Martineau also helped found the non-denominational Portland British Schools in Little Titchfield Street (page ###).<sup>141</sup> In 1859–60 one of his occasional auditors, the young William Hale White, rented a room next door to the chapel in the premises of his brother-in-law, John Arthur, a dress and mantle trimming manufacturer, ‘for people in need of Sunday rest and home-made pious reflection’ – an experience later recast in fictional form in Hale

White's autobiographical *Mark Rutherford's Deliverance*. Martineau was succeeded in 1874 by Philip Wicksteed, an economist and social thinker. Shoolbred & Co. undertook improvements to the chapel under Edward Martineau, an architect-cousin of James, in 1900.<sup>142</sup> These were not enough to halt its decline, and the congregation moved away in 1909 to University Hall, Gordon Square, which had been vacated when Manchester New College moved to Oxford. After the chapel's demolition the site was taken over for an extension of Pagani's Restaurant in neighbouring Great Portland Street, the handsome Alexandra House (No. 6).

Pagani's (under the ownership of the Meschini family) were also responsible for the other surviving Little Portland Street building of interest. That is **No. 21** on the south side, a narrow warehouse in two tones of brickwork built for the firm in 1903–4 by A. A. Webber to designs by Beresford Pite, with all that architect's stringency of expression. It replaced a minor hall, the Fitzroy Temperance Hall, which had been in use for meetings of one sort or another since at least 1860, and substantially enlarged by Bywaters the builders in 1865.<sup>143</sup> Similar warehouse or industrial users around 1900 had given way to offices or studios all along the street by the end of the century.

**No. 20**, adjoining, is a commercial block of 1923–5 by Elgood and Hastie, architects.<sup>144</sup>