

Riding House Street to New Cavendish Street

This chapter covers the whole of Riding House Street, New Cavendish Street east of Great Portland Street, and the area between, excluding Great Titchfield Street. South of Riding House Street, Little Titchfield Street is also included. This tract of Portland land filled up with houses between about 1740 and 1780, with building going forward fastest after 1760. The survivals from those years, few and far between, have been much updated, including a notable row at 38–42 Langham Street half-concealed behind later fronts. Isolated older houses remain elsewhere. Middleton Place, a paved alleyway lined with cottages between Riding House and Langham Streets, is a relic of a once-common London planning type, but its houses are not the originals.

Much of the present fabric derives from a rebuilding campaign which started around 1885 and ran on until 1914. Its staple consists of small shops, workaday blocks of flats and a smattering of workshops, these last mostly of early twentieth-century date. They cater today for a smarter class of residents, workers and visitors than when built, for this area has come slowly but steadily up in the world since 1890, when Hanson and Ogle Streets, for instance, were entrenched in poverty. Restaurants, art galleries and boutiques have taken over many smaller shops and garment trade outlets. Nevertheless social housing and protected tenancies remain strong. Changes in ownership and social character are considered at the end of the chapter.

There are few major buildings. The one church, St Charles Borromeo, Ogle Street (1862–3), lacks ambition. All Souls' School, Foley Street (1907–8),

by Beresford Pite, supplies some sturdy street architecture, while the former premises of Boultings the smiths and sanitary engineers (1903–4), on the corner of Candover and Riding House Streets, cut a colourful, near-Art Nouveau, caper. The buildings in this eastern sector are somewhat bigger, in part due to outliers of the now-departed Middlesex Hospital. Modern buildings, mainly replacements for bombed predecessors, seldom disrupt the scale, though for a time in the 1970s major office development seemed to be in the offing.

The end of New Cavendish Street covered here, which for long had a separate identity as Upper Marylebone Street, underwent extensive large-scale rebuilding after the Second World War, partly in response to bombing. What was claimed as the first truly curtain-walled office block in London was built there in the 1950s. The most important development, buildings for Regent Street Polytechnic of the late 1960s, are described in Chapter 32.

Langham Street and Foley Street

Langham Street and Foley Street began as Queen Anne Street East. The name and alignment show that it was meant to continue present-day Queen Anne Street eastwards without a break, but that intention was foiled when Thomas Foley interposed to protect the view northwards from his Foley House in the early 1760s (page ###). The name Queen Anne Street East was dropped in 1809, when that part of the road west of Great Titchfield Street became Foley Place, that to the east Foley Street. Foley Place was renamed Langham Street in 1858. The far west end of Langham Street, tied up with the development of Langham Place, All Souls Place and Broadcasting House, is dealt with in Chapter 19.¹

Langham Street

These are broad streets by local cross-street standards, and Langham Street at least was well inhabited in its Queen Anne Street East years. Development on the south side took place following a head lease to Thomas Huddle of 1758, on the north side following similar leases of 1761–2 to George Mercer and Thomas Bird.²

The south side between Great Portland Street and Middleton Place is of particular interest (Ill. 25/01). A frontage of 130ft length eastwards of Great Portland Street, with an equivalent depth behind, was sublet in 1759 by Huddle to Joseph Wilton, the eminent sculptor. Wilton will have known the area well, as his father William Wilton was a high-class plasterer who had extensive speculative interests in Marylebone and a workshop making papier mâché ornaments close by in Edward Street.

Around 1760 Wilton built and occupied the corner house, originally 53 Queen Anne Street East and now 94 Great Portland Street; this house is described on page ###. About the same time he also erected 'extensive workshops' on the back land to the east, round a yard accessible from a passage (later covered by 36 Langham Street); the panels for George III's state coach, still used today, were carved there. After an interval, in about 1776–7 Wilton proceeded to build three fine houses along the frontage, now numbered 38–42 Langham Street. The widest, No. 38, was evidently destined by Wilton for himself, and in 1779 he briefly moved there from the corner house.³

However he had overcommitted himself on this and perhaps other speculations and extravagances. With heavy mortgages on his hands, his affairs took a downturn and by 1784 he had left Marylebone for Hammersmith. The workshops behind seem to have been auctioned in 1786, in which year Wilton's son-in-law, the judge Sir Robert Chambers, absent in India, brought a suit against him for over £30,000, probably as a device to

salvage some of the assets. As a result Wilton's properties here were taken under the control of Chambers and trustees, and in 1793 he was declared bankrupt, being then still described as 'of Queen Ann-street East, statuary'. The workshops were for a time in the hands of the plasterer John Papworth, and in due course, around 1820, an infill house, the present No. 36, was built to cover the passage-gap between No. 38 and the corner house.⁴

The façades of these houses as seen today are misleading, as Nos 36–40 were coarsely refronted and heightened in 1904 by James MacIntosh, a local speculator-builder then based at No. 38, perhaps to designs by F. W. Foster. The interiors of Nos 38–42 tell a different story, retaining traces of high-class Georgian craftsmanship, depleted since photographed in 1982 (Ill. 25/02). These fragments strongly suggest the manner of the architect William Chambers, an intimate of the Wiltons, father and son, and indeed the planning and remaining details of the three houses are reminiscent of authenticated Chambers houses in Berners Street. No. 40 has additional interest as the home in 1778–1812 of Edmond Malone, Shakespearean editor and collaborator on Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, to whom a blue plaque was erected in 1962 at the instigation of the Yale scholar and bibliophile James M. Osborn. No. 42 was originally leased to Thomas Bates, carpenter, who it may be guessed was involved in building all three houses. Unlike its neighbours, it retains its front, smartened up in recent years; it has a central stair across the house, formerly with a closet passage behind. This was the home and office of the architect Benjamin Dean Wyatt between about 1810 and 1833.⁵

Nos 44 and 46 belonged originally to a take passed by Thomas Huddle to John Middleton, bricklayer, in 1759. No. 44 was rebuilt in 1894 as a speculation by James Boyton. On the corner with Middleton Place at No. 46 is the well-preserved Yorkshire Grey, long-established on the site but rebuilt in 1882–3 to designs by George Treacher, a pub specialist (builder, John Beale). On the opposite corner, No. 48 (where the young Ezra Pound lodged in 1908–

9) is also vestigially an original house. Nos 50–52, with 69 Great Titchfield Street, are five-storey flats of 1900–2, once again due to MacIntosh.⁶

He and his unknown architect were also largely responsible for Langham Street's present north frontage either side of Gosfield Street. Here Holbein and Van Dyck Mansions at Nos 25–27, and Rembrandt House adjoining at 96–100 Great Portland Street, are again five-storey flats, of 1898–9. Beyond Gosfield Street the narrower No. 29 (Hogarth Mansion) probably goes with MacIntosh's rebuildings of 1897 at the bottom of that street; it replaced a corner house inhabited by the American loyalist general Benedict Arnold in the 1790s. Then comes a startling interloper, the white-tiled and round-arched No. 35, built in 1899–1900 by Jonathan Andrews of Mount Street to designs by Arthur E. Thompson as the Howard de Walden Nurses Home and Club (Ill. 25/03).⁷

This was the fruit of efforts by the Nurses' Co-operation, founded in 1891 to promote the supply of private nurses at fair rates of pay and conditions. From its original premises in New Cavendish Street, the organization attracted patronage from society ladies, including the Dowager Lady Howard de Walden; this was probably the last of her charitable gifts to the district before her death in 1899. The year before she had agreed to present the leasehold of the Langham Street site and pay half the costs of a new building, leaving the Nurses' Co-operation to find the rest by subscription. Essentially a hostel with clubrooms, it was visited by the organization's patron, Princess Louise, just after completion. The choice of architect and of the obsessively sanitary idiom for the exterior, erected by Doultons using glazed bricks supplied by the Farnley Iron Company, seems to have been Lady Howard de Walden's. The interior as first finished enjoyed a pleasantly domestic hall with a bronze cast of the famous Graeco-Roman statue the *Spinario* (or *Boy with Thorn*) opposite the base of the stairs. The Nurses' Co-operation enjoyed uneven fortunes and gradually dwindled, moving to Bayswater in 1966. The building then became the Langham Street Clinic,

notorious in some circles during the 1970s as ‘Britain’s largest and busiest private abortorium’, allegedly carrying out almost 7,000 terminations per year.⁸ It is now a hotel.

Foley Street

Beyond Great Titchfield Street, Foley Street carries Langham Street’s alignment on up to Hanson Street, then twists away slightly so as to meet Cleveland Street at right angles. East of that shift the Georgian houses of Queen Anne Street East (to use its original name) seem to have been humbler than those to its west, where there are two survivors on the south side, now 30 and 37 Foley Street. Though plain-fronted, heightened and battered by change, both were once good houses, three windows wide with a fair depth of plot. They were probably built soon after 1766, when the blocks on either side of this part of the street were leased to William Franks, the head lessee for the ground all along the street’s frontage. No. 37 bears a blue plaque to the painter Henry Fuseli, who moved into the house on his marriage in 1788, staying till 1803. His successor there was the Duc de Lorges, a high-ranking French exile. Among other artists living in the street the Landseer family stands out. J. G. Landseer, the engraver and author, seems on his marriage in 1794 to have taken a house near the Cleveland Street end, moving in 1803 to No. 33. Most of his fourteen children were born in the street, including the printmaker Thomas, painter Charles, and the future Sir Edwin, whose address this was until 1823. J. M. Gandy, the architectural artist, lived at 47 Foley Street in his declining years, c.1831–8.⁹

By the 1850s estate maps show trade workshops in many of Foley Street’s back yards. Most of the trades hereabouts were commonplace. Fuseli’s house, for instance, was a bootmaker’s in 1841 and a beer shop by 1858. Mid-Victorian rebuildings were few, but included the pub-like house at

the east corner with Candover Street, now No. 3 in that street (J. B. Benwell, architect, 1863).¹⁰ In the late 1850s a place of assembly known as the Portland Rooms was tucked behind 32 Foley Street. Its chequered history over some four decades of existence embraced dancing entertainments, prosecutions for harbouring prostitutes, and meetings of many kinds, notably by labour groups and the short-lived Deutscher Club.¹¹

A general reconstruction began in the centre of Foley Street around 1897, when the York Minster at No. 17 on the west corner of Ogle Street was rebuilt to the designs of C. H. Worley. This was followed by rebuilding at Nos 18–20; on the Hanson Street corner (No. 21); across the road at the west corner with Candover Street (Nos 38 and 39); and at No. 40, a building discussed below with the Boultings' development on the corner of Riding House and Candover Streets. The best of these projects, designed by Beresford Pite, was Nos 18–20 of 1899, a block of flats on an awkward site. It was seemingly shared between Debenham & Freebody, who perhaps used Nos 18 and 19 (Dunkerry House) as a staff hostel, and the builders Matthews Brothers, who linked their portion, No. 20 (Quantock House), with other flats of theirs in Hanson Street behind.¹² Pite's role here was more pronounced than in the Matthews' Hanson Street developments, at least as regards the front (Ill. 25/04). In red brick with plain sash windows surmounted by curious keystones and one big off-centre gable, it showed how indebted his architecture could be to Philip Webb's. Unluckily a bomb put paid to Nos 18 and 19 along with the York Minster. The replacement down to the Ogle Street corner was Nos 17–19, formerly Britalian House, a good-quality brick office building of 1956, designed by C. H. Elsom.¹³

Most other rebuildings in Foley Street are Edwardian or later. Nos 24–25 beside the Crown & Sceptre are of 1904–5. Opposite stands the heftiest building in the street's western sector, Nos 31–36, replacing six houses and the Portland Rooms. The original intention was for flats with workshops behind, but in a sign of the times the owners set that scheme aside when it ran

into difficulties and hired the builder A. A. Webber in 1905 to construct only the speculative workspaces, in three divisions. Here for some years were the headquarters of the Austrian Daimler Motor Company. The building has been heavily worked over since, and at one time bore the name Foley House.¹⁴

Outside the Crown & Sceptre, the underground men's conveniences, disused for many years, were reopened in 2013 as a coffee shop, The Attendant (No. 27A). The conveniences, which replaced a surface urinal in the middle of the road, were built in 1906 under the Borough Surveyor, J. P. Waddington. The ornate iron cage over the entrance was made by Gomme's Forge, Princes Risborough; the sanitary ware, slightly Art Nouveau in style, by Doulton & Co. (see Ill. 23/09).¹⁵

East of Ogle and Candover Streets, Foley Street assumes a larger scale. All the buildings are post-Victorian apart from the King & Queen at Nos 1-2 on the Cleveland Street corner, a cheerful Gothic pub probably dating from c.1879-80, its outbuildings occupying the site of a former engraver's shop at No. 2 (Ill. 25/04a). The pub is well-known as the first music venue in England where Bob Dylan performed, impromptu, as one of the audience at a folk club session in December 1962. The north side of the street is dominated by the neo-Georgian bulk of John Astor House, built as a nurses' home for the Middlesex Hospital in 1929-31 and extended in 1937. It was designed by the hospital's architect Alner Hall. Much of the cost was met by the hospital chairman J. J. Astor (Lord Astor of Hever), after whom the building was named in 1948. The nurses' rooms were in the main range facing the street, while a lower rear block provided a recreation room and dining rooms and a roof-top badminton court. Other facilities included a large indoor swimming bath, a tennis court, and a hairdressing salon.¹⁶

More rewarding is a clutch of commercial buildings of 1912-14 on the south side. All of framed construction, they include Nos 41-42 (by F. Taperell & Haase, architects, 1914), first occupied by a valve manufacturer; Nos 43-45, for Jennens, Welch & Co., cloth shrinkers with mills in Yorkshire and

premises in the City (by Naylor & Sale of Derby, 1913–14); and Nos 46–48, for J. R. Foster & Co., upholsterers' warehousemen (by Frank Foster, 1912–13).¹⁷

Beyond these come All Souls' Schools of 1907–8, Beresford Pite's last and most powerful legacy to Marylebone's architecture (Ills 25/5–6). The project came about under pressure, after the LCC, newly empowered as London's education authority, condemned the state of many voluntary schools, including All Souls' two in Riding House Street beside the church and in Great Portland Street. Both premises were 'altogether unsuitable', the managers were warned in 1905. A threat to close them followed in 1907: 'nothing short of complete rebuilding will be satisfactory'.¹⁸ The rector and churchwarden now besought the LCC for remission, while a site was found (on the eastern edge of All Souls' parish), money raised and Pite briefed. Some of the funds came from selling the Great Portland Street and Gosfield Street site.¹⁹

The new school, built by W. J. Maddison and opened in 1908, was of the three-decker board-school type with a rooftop playground, in token of the tight site.²⁰ Further play space was provided behind a high wall on the Riding House Street side. Where Pite scored over this archaic arrangement was in providing elevations which showed up the coarseness of comparable LCC schools. The main front to Foley Street, of stock brick with insistent bands of Luton purple, now faded, breaks into three sections, the centre displaying wider windows and piers with a pair of unusual capitals each incorporating a shell surmounted by a cross. On the simpler back elevation, no less striking, the storeys are embraced within three high blank arches betraying the influence of Bentley's Westminster Cathedral.

The original planned complement was 688 children. Closure was narrowly avoided when falling local population reduced the roll to 150 in the mid 1960s, and the encroachment of Middlesex Hospital annexes all round caused a sense of beleaguerment. But after an attempt to move to a site further north failed in the early 1970s (page ###), numbers rose and the

school consolidated, eventually outlasting the hospital. The ‘exceptionally close links between Church and school and school and neighbourhood’ noted by an inspector in 1973, are still evident.²¹

Riding House Street and Candover Street

In its original form, Riding House Street (originally Lane) was straight and narrow, extending from Edward Street at its western end only as far east as Great Titchfield Street. Edward Street largely disappeared for the creation of Regent Street and Langham Place in the early nineteenth century, All Souls Church taking the site of the original junction. The angled west arm of the street, alongside the church, dates from this time. East of Great Titchfield Street was Union Street, which became part of Riding House Street in 1937. York Street, linking Union Street with Foley Street, was renamed Candover Street in 1886.

The riding house from which Riding House Street takes its name was one of a number of such buildings to appear on the margins of London’s western suburbs in the early eighteenth century, covered spaces for military officers and gentlemen to learn equine comportment. In 1726 the Cavendish-Harley Estate granted John Wood a lease to build a riding house and barracks for the First Troop of Horse Grenadier Guards on what was then quite open ground north of the present line of Mortimer Street. Completed the following year, it stood immediately south of what soon became Riding House Lane and set back from the west side of Great Portland Street, off which a passage gave access to the barrack block at the back of the site. The riding house was about 120ft long, plain and barn-like with a high-pitched roof. In 1736 John Lane, Surveyor of the Horse Guards, added a stable range on its south side, leaving room for houses along Mortimer Street. The Troop was disbanded in

1788, and in the following year Isaac Stacey replaced the barracks and stables with a coach repository, while the riding house itself was subsequently adapted for use as livery stables.²² The later history of the site belongs with that of Langham Place, and is discussed in Chapter 19.

On the north side of Riding House Street, abutting All Souls Church, is the former **Radium Institute** at Nos 1–3, a handsome stone-faced building designed by T. Phillips Figgis (Ill. 25/08). It was built in two phases, in 1910 (No. 1, the short wing next to the church) and 1913–14 (No. 3).²³ The building displays touches of mannerist detailing, with excellent relief carving below the frieze at both ends, while the rear elevation facing All Souls' Place is faced in glazed white brick set off by mosaic work in blank arches.

The Radium Institute was founded in 1909 at the direct instigation of Edward VII and wholly funded in the first instance by Sir Ernest Cassel, his close financial adviser, and Lord Iveagh. Modelled on the pioneering methods of the Curies in Paris, it followed hard on the heels of similar institutes in Vienna and New York. All offered outpatient treatment only for sufferers from malignant diseases. The cost of the building was small compared to that of the tiny quantities of radium used in the treatment. The site had been bought and Figgis commissioned by March 1909, but the institute did not open till August 1911.²⁴ The original accommodation was divided between a front section for the well-to-do, and a back section entered from All Souls' Place for the 'necessitous', though the internal arrangements seem to have been on a par, with waiting and consulting rooms at ground level and treatment cubicles on the first floor; above were technical facilities plus a board room and staff room. The extension, again largely paid for by Cassel and Iveagh, more than doubled the accommodation and added research facilities. The Radium Institute was amalgamated with Mount Vernon Hospital in 1938, the Riding House Street building becoming the central offices and outpatients' department of the new body. After the Second World War it was sold and new offices were opened at 59 Portland Place in 1947.

The old building was occupied for many years by the NSPCC, and is now the Algerian Embassy.²⁵

The original wing of the Radium Institute replaced the first All Souls' School, erected in 1824 or shortly afterwards on a leasehold site behind the church to accommodate poor children and at first known as Marylebone's Eastern National School. It went on in various school uses until 1909, when the new parish school in Foley Street opened. Among the buildings destroyed by the 1913–14 extension was the tiny Rehoboth Chapel, built in 1853 for a Baptist congregation which had had a succession of local addresses.²⁶

From Great Portland Street to Great Titchfield Street, Riding House Street is narrow and nondescript. The south frontage was first built up with minor houses under a head lease granted to George Collings in 1740, the north side following a corresponding lease to Thomas Huddle in 1757. West of the entrance to Middleton Place, an early Victorian estate map depicts an irregular frontage with workshops and some bay windows towards the street.²⁷ The present houses, mostly of three storeys plus roof extensions, are Victorian or later, the best preserved being No. 31. The south side is dominated by former Polytechnic buildings (page ###).

There is more to say about the former Union Street end of Riding House Street. The original name, first cited in 1764, probably reflects an accord between the Portland and Berners Estates, whose boundary line the street followed. Its layout must go back at least to 1759, when James Lovell, a middle-ranking sculptor and mason, signed agreements with William Berners to develop the south side between Wells Street and what is now Bourlet Close (Union Mews until 1938). Similar agreements ensued in 1763 with John Middelton, bricklayer, to develop frontages either side of Suffolk (now Nassau) Street. The north (Portland) side came a little later, following head leases to William Franks of c.1765–6. On neither frontage were the houses large. Behind or on the north side near Cleveland Street stood a sculpture studio tenanted first by Giuseppe Angelini and then till about 1783 by

Giovanni Battista Locatelli and his pupil J. C. F. Rossi. Opposite, houses were not built across the back garden of the Middlesex Hospital till about 1800; these were in due course gobbled up by hospital extensions.²⁸

The frontage on the north side of Riding House Street west of Candover and Nassau Streets includes one old house at the west end, No. 35, and at the other end a much renovated and modernized group, Nos 55 and 57 with 7 Candover Street at the corner. All have been shops at one time or another: their details suggest early nineteenth-century dates. Between them at Nos 51 and 53 are good-quality, five-storey flats of 1900 (Napier and Lyon Houses), by W. Henry White, and at Nos 37–49 an office and showroom block of 1964 by Newman, Levinson & Partners.²⁹

The south or Berners side opposite was reconstructed between 1896 and 1900 under John Slater's supervision. West of Bourlet Close a factory or warehouse was built for the cigarette makers Abdulla & Co., and extended in 1913; this and the shops along the frontage have long gone, and the site now belongs with West One House, Wells Street (page ###). Bourlet Close itself is dealt with under Nassau Street (page ###). Beyond it come the Green Man pub and its neighbour (Nos 36–38), rebuilt in 1897–8 (W. M. Brutton, architect), and Nos 40–46, which were reconstructed along with 15–16 Nassau Street.³⁰

Along the easternmost stretch on the north side (Nos 59–79) most of the current buildings run through to Foley Street and are discussed there. That leaves the striking Boultings group at the Candover Street corner and its outliers (Nos 59 and 61, with Tower House and Belmont House, Candover Street, and 40 Foley Street). The Sir Isaac Newton pub, recorded by 1777, long stood on this corner. In the two houses next east (16 and 17 Union Street) the furnishing ironmongers John Boulting & Son had established themselves perhaps as early as 1808, the firm's foundation date inscribed on the present building. Successive John Boultings died in 1863 and 1873, and the dissolution

of a partnership between a third John and Thomas John Boulting was announced in 1879. Thereafter the firm was known as T. J. Boulting (& Sons).³¹

Among these sons was Percy Boulting, born around 1876 and seemingly architect-trained, to whose youthful aspirations the present buildings may well have been due. The firm had done well enough for members of the family, at first the father and then Percy's brothers, to branch out into small property dealings on the Portland estate from the late 1890s. Naturally they took a special interest in rebuilding around their works, behind which 40 Foley Street, a five-storey block of flats built by John Anley in 1898, appears to have been their first venture. Its designers were then described as Clark & Hutchinson with Percy A. Boulting, in other words H. Fuller Clark and C. E. Hutchinson, two architects aged about 28 who had met in the office of Rowland Plumbe, plus the even younger Boulting. Later No. 40 was ascribed to Clark alone, and it is to him that the flamboyance of the Boultings' cluster is usually credited. Clark's masterpiece is the recasting of the Black Friar pub in the City; otherwise his work is little known, though he claimed to have a substantial practice. Architecturally, No. 40 is an up-to-date but not eccentric performance which breaks into roughcast at second-floor level and terminates in two shaped gables (see Ill. 25/20). The plan follows the standard late-Victorian arrangement in this quarter of two flats per floor, originally with a sanitary projection at the back in the form of a central stack of bays shared between two flats. Clark & Hutchinson followed up in 1899 with a second block of flats opposite, Belmont House, 5–6 Candover Street, built by A. A. Webber. Here a similar plan is fronted in a weightier, fussier idiom, with a great belt of purple brickwork enveloping the first floor and a dab of Art Nouveau lettering.³²

Tower House, York House and Oakley House, encompassing the Boultings' former premises and the Sir Isaac Newton, followed in 1903–4 (Ills 25/9–11). This time the architects were described as Fuller Clark and Percy Boulting, without Hutchinson: the builders were Smith & Co. of Mount Street.

Again these are essentially five-storey flats, though the backs go one storey higher; here too were originally bare sanitary stacks of bay windows. The fronts are the reverse of bare. Among the tricks set to work are brickwork bands of startling hues, bay projections both canted and square, a bristling roofline and three separate fancily lettered mosaic panels with the firm's name and descriptions of its business ('gas and electrical engineers'; 'sanitary and hot water engineers'; 'appliance and stove manufactory'). Colour was an evident preoccupation; originally three different cements were used, while the window joinery was all white apart from the bay windows, finished in stained oak. Despite the hint of Voysey about these elevations, they are entirely individual and indeed this building too was attributed to Clark alone when it was republished. Boultings survived at 59 Riding House Street until the 1960s. In 1978 the freehold of all their flats passed to the Community Housing Association, which employed Pollard, Thomas & Edwards, architects, to update them over the subsequent decade. Their changes included enlarging the rear bays to form more generous kitchens.³³

Little Titchfield Street

Little Titchfield Street, unlike the other minor east-west streets of this area, runs for only one block. It divides two parcels of land leased to George Collings in 1738 (south) and 1740 (north). Today it is mostly represented by the backs of buildings in other streets, but the outsized Regent Street Polytechnic extension of 1928-9, separately discussed on page ###, dominates the north side at Nos 4-12. It now belongs to the University of Westminster.

Just two former buildings, both short-lived and long gone, should be mentioned. One was Providence Chapel, which occupied roughly the site of the present Nos 14-16 on the north side. The chapel was the creation and

power-base of William Huntington, charismatic, prophet and former coalheaver. After years as an itinerant preacher, including the Margaret Street Chapel in his circuit, Huntington gathered enough money to build the independent Little Titchfield Street chapel, opened in 1783. Here for 27 years he preached to a large and fashionable congregation which included Princess Amelia. In July 1810 a fire in a neighbouring floorcloth factory burnt the chapel to the ground, along with five houses. Huntington moved with his followers to Gray's Inn Road, but died in 1813. A coach manufactory and timber yard replaced the chapel.³⁴

The other institution formerly in Little Titchfield Street was the Portland British Schools, which occupied part of the Regent Street Polytechnic annexe's site. This non-denominational school was founded by James Martineau and J. J. Tayler, fellow ministers at the Unitarian chapel in Little Portland Street from 1859. It was one of their conditions for taking on the chapel that they should make 'some systematic provision of helpfulness for the neighbourhood' to balance the intellectual tenor of the congregation. The school picked up from classes held since 1855 in Newman Street. It began in workshops behind premises in Riding House Street, then in 1866 a legacy of £1,000 allowed a three-storey building to be erected (J. C. Clarke, architect), stretching right through the block with its main entrance at 10-12 Little Titchfield Street. Martineau, by then sole minister, was thoroughly involved in all the minutiae: as one of his biographers quaintly remarks, 'The architectonic faculty in his mind required for its exercise complete mastery of detail'.³⁵

These schools garnered a high reputation and an excellent attendance record, exercising 'a great influence for good, not only on its scholars but also through them on the whole neighbourhood'.³⁶ But the premises were always cramped and soon outdated, so the trustees were content to pass the school over to the School Board for London in 1898. Alterations of 1901-2 failed to cure the deficiencies. With the local population in decline, the London County

Council as the Board's successor tried in 1909 to shut the school and transfer its pupils to Barrett Street School much further west. Protests ensued, parliamentary questions were asked by Ramsay MacDonald, and the Board of Education held a public enquiry which forced the LCC to back down. That was only a reprieve: the LCC decided to build a new school instead between New Cavendish Street and Clipstone Street. When that opened in 1914 (page ###), the Portland British Schools closed. The premises had then already long been in evening use by the Regent Street Polytechnic, an arrangement formalized as far back as 1894. The Polytechnic obtained an underlease in 1915 and used the school buildings for teaching until they were replaced in 1929–30.³⁷

Middleton Place

This fetching alleyway runs between Riding House Street and Langham Street. The middle portion is lined on either side by cottages of standard type, with stuccoed and channelled bases, two upper storeys, garrets but no basement (Ill. 25/12). They are Victorian replacements of the original cottages built here around 1759 under the direction of John Middelton (or Middleton), bricklayer, who had taken this strip from a larger area of land leased to Thomas Huddle the previous year. Middelton subcontracted at least some of the sites to Robert Winkworth, a fellow bricklayer. The central footpath's width was stipulated as 8ft, broader than many such alleyways; the entrance ends were narrower. The original twelve cottages (plus two extra at the north end) were probably not unlike those extant today, but a storey lower and less sanitary. Rebuilding was doubtless thought necessary by the Portland Estate when the original leases ran out, but details of who carried it out, on new leases running from 1856, have proved elusive. Census returns show that the

rebuilt cottages were no less densely occupied than their predecessors: the 1861 enumerator distinguished up to seven heads of household in each cottage, but noted some more specialized trade-skills among them; hitherto, tailors and needlewomen had been particularly plentiful. The name Middleton (sometimes Middleton's) Buildings was changed to Middleton Place only in recent years.³⁸

New Cavendish Street

New Cavendish Street east of Great Portland Street was called Upper Marylebone Street until 1937. The old name, often abbreviated to Upper Marybone Street, first featured in the press in the mid 1770s, as building development took a fresh leap northwards and gave the street two proper sides. Around then Howland Street was laid out to the east, taking the street line on to St Pancras and Tottenham Court Road. Ever since, this end of New Cavendish Street has been a busy thoroughfare, lined with minor houses often given over to trades and shops. Only the south side (Nos 108–168) retains some of the original small plots, with a few vestigially Georgian houses.

The five surviving houses there (Nos 150–154 and 164–166), between Ogle and Cleveland Streets, were built on ground leased to William Franks in 1773. Much battered, heightened by a storey, they do not greatly differ from their smarter neighbours, Nos 156–160, probably rebuilt in 1898 (Ill. 25/13). The numbering of Upper Marylebone Street changed at an early date, causing problems of interpretation, but it seems likely that No. 154 was the home, from 1798 till his death in 1834, of Thomas Clio Rickman, radical bookseller and stalwart supporter of Tom Paine.³⁹

Of three former pubs on this side – the Globe at the west corner with Great Titchfield Street, the Ship at the west corner with Hanson Street and the Wheatsheaf on the site of the present No. 162 – only the Ship (No. 134) survives (Ill. 25/14). It was rebuilt, along with No. 132, in 1886–7, in an old-fashioned style with Italianate attached columns and pediments to the windows and a crowning balustrade. Alfred J. Hopkins was the architect. Regular commercial replacement of old houses took place thereafter, as at Nos 108–116 between Great Portland and Gosfield Streets, at various dates between 1886 and 1893, and next eastwards at Nos 118–126 between Gosfield and Great Titchfield Streets (1892 and 1900), the latter block since demolished. Around 1900 larger-scale flats with a neater quality of architecture prevailed, as at Nos 128–130 and 148 (Highwood House). Both adopt an up-to-date neo-Georgian style, bastardized only by shallow bay windows; the former may be an early (1899) block by Lanchester & Rickards; Highwood House (1902) is an accomplished composition, designed by John C. Stockdale and built by A. J. Best for J. E. Jacobs, whose initials appear on a cartouche with the date (Ill. 25/15). Good smallish commercial buildings of the twentieth century on this side include Nos 142–144 (Evelyn House) of 1915 (A. E. McEwan Waghorn and Aylwin O. Cave, joint architects), and 146 (with 2–6 Ogle Street) of 1955–6 (Ronald S. Morris, architect). Nos 136–138 probably also dates from the 1950s.⁴⁰

This end of New Cavendish Street was the site of two five-storey office blocks of the mid 1950s, often cited as among the first true curtain-walled buildings in London, the precursors of a once-ubiquitous type now invariably remodelled, as here, if not demolished (Ill. 25/16). Built for Great Portland Estates, both were designed by Gollins, Melvin, Ward & Partners. First, in 1953–6, was Electrin House at Nos 93–97, with light grey-blue ‘vitroslab’ panels set in white-painted aluminium channelling. It was followed in 1956–7 by Nos 118–126 opposite. This had white ‘vitrolite’ panels and black-painted channelling (reversed for a lower wing along Gosfield Street). Bemoaning the

typical new office building, externally pretentious but with exposed services and ‘other symptoms of sheer inefficiency’ within, *Architectural Design* hailed Electrin House as ‘the first completely anonymous piece of machine architecture to appear in London’, and applauded the architects for using up-to-date techniques ‘with precision and without remorse’. Anonymity was to some extent off-set by the treatment of the entrances, in the case of Nos 118–126 with a decorative panel built up of coloured glass oblongs to create a Mondrian-like abstract composition (executed by the London Sand Blast & Decorative Glass Works Ltd).⁴¹

Early occupants at Electrin House included the BBC, John Lewis, Littlewoods Mail Order, Calor Gas and, presumably inspiring its name, the Central Electricity Authority. Electrin House became Zeiss England House in 1965, when the UK distributors of Carl Zeiss Jena scientific and photographic equipment opened a showroom and sales and repair departments there. It has since been reclad twice, in the late 1970s in then fashionable dark brown, and in the late 1990s in grey with white pilaster strips to the ground floor. Now known as No. 95, it has been occupied since 2004 by the property consultants Gleeds. Nos 118–126, which housed the offices of the architects Nicholas Grimshaw & Partners through the 1980s, was replaced by the present postmodern block (No. 120) in 1991–4. First let to Allied Dunbar Assurance, this has now been acquired by the University of Westminster.⁴²

West of Electrin House, No. 101 (formerly known as No. 111, Collingwood House) was originally designed as a speculation combining showrooms, offices, shops and flats by Stone, Toms & Partners in 1956, whose revised scheme was built in 1961–2. The building extends back to Clipstone Street (No. 10). There are five main storeys round the perimeter, four more in the centre. The original dour façades of concrete and brick were replaced with more vigorous terracotta cladding and aluminium windows by Sturgis Associates in 2007–8, when the building was stripped back to the frame and refurbished for City Offices (Ill. 25/17). Carbon-saving from retention of the

frame allowed infilling of original recesses and set-backs to increase the floor area.⁴³

The frontage between Bolsover Street and Great Portland Street is occupied by a single block, designed by W. Henry White and built in two phases in 1904 and 1908–10. The earlier phase comprised two shops at 136 and 138 Great Portland Street and a small private hotel above called the Redbourne, the building lessee being William Green, stationer at No. 138. The greater part, now 91 New Cavendish Street, was built by J. Chessum & Sons for the developer James Boyton as an extension to the hotel, raising the number of bedrooms to 75, with adjuncts including a ‘noble’ dining room. After the hotel’s closure before or during the Second World War the building was acquired by the BBC for staff accommodation, as Redbourne Hostel. At the time of writing (2015) it has recently been raised a storey and remodelled internally by Oakmayne Bespoke as eight apartments, including two penthouses with roof terraces, and renamed The Fitzbourne.⁴⁴

The University of Westminster buildings at the east end of New Cavendish Street are described in Chapter 32.

Gosfield, Hanson and Ogle Streets

These north–south streets connecting Langham and Foley Streets with New Cavendish Street share a common ambience. Five-storey blocks of flats, built between 1895 and 1905, make canyons of Gosfield and Hanson Streets despite their modest pretensions and scale. Ogle Street, shorter and messier, attracted no such flats, but acquired a Catholic church, St Charles Borromeo.

Gosfield Street began as George Street, so called either after its main builder, George Mercer, or in honour of the Hanoverians, perhaps both. The present name was substituted in 1886. Leases were being issued in 1762 for

houses along both sides to Mercer and his coadjutor, Philip Keys (landlord of the Horse and Groom in Great Portland Street and widely active as a speculative builder). A few houses along the east side retain some vestiges of originality, and one (No. 16), has a good doorcase, but all have been thoroughly rebuilt and heightened. The west side was once less regular than the east, with several breaks between the houses. The present No. 23, long and low (suggesting the street's original scale), seems to have started off as stabling for the Horse and Groom (page ###). It became a school in 1836, originally for the girls of All Souls and Trinity parishes. A large top-lit schoolroom behind was probably added then, access remaining via a passage from Great Portland Street. The school, which served 442 girls and infants in 1871, closed in 1908. Further down the street cowsheds occupied the site of the present Nos 32–33 in the 1840s, no doubt serving a dairy; in due course they gave way to the warehouse of a chutney importer. The majority of the Gosfield Street houses were rebuilt in 1896–8 as flats (see below).⁴⁵

Hanson Street and **Ogle Street** have a confusing history of nomenclature. The section of Hanson Street south of New Cavendish Street began in the 1760s as Ogle Street (after the Cavendish earldom of Ogle), while present-day Ogle Street was called Ogle Court or occasionally Ogle Square until about 1820, when it became Upper Ogle Street. Ogle Street was renamed Saville Street in the 1840s. That allowed the old name to slip along one block east after the Portland Estate undertook street-widening there, so that Upper Ogle Street around 1865 became plain Ogle Street (though the LCC did not formalize the change till 1904).⁴⁶ Saville Street and its continuation north of New Cavendish Street, hitherto Charlton Street (see page ###), were merged under the name Hanson Street in 1935.

The two ends of Hanson Street, running between Foley Street (formerly Queen Anne Street East) and New Cavendish Street (Upper Marylebone Street) were in existence by 1763–4, but it was mainly built up a little later. Several new houses were advertised for sale in 1772–3, often involving the

local carpenter-builder William Woolcott, who had premises on the east side, where, as in Gosfield Street, a few houses survive (Nos 8, 16–20 & 24) but so thoroughly gone over as hardly to be classed as original (Ill. 25/18). Ogle Court, cranked sharply midway, and Ogle Mews running off it to the east were both being built up in the 1770s, in part again by Woolcott.⁴⁷ No first-generation houses survive here. Between the two streets lay a tiny court known as Brothers Buildings.

While Gosfield Street kept its head up, Hanson and Ogle Streets declined into the worst housing of south-east Marylebone. Five deaths reported during an epidemic in the former street in 1793 may have been due to mischance, but by the 1840s the evils of multi-occupation by ‘poor people from top to bottom’ in both streets were commanding the efforts of competing church missions. The 1851 census offers thumbnail sketches of bleak lives in Ogle Street and Mews, e. g. ‘keeps a little chandler’s shop’; ‘sells fruit in the street’; ‘porter and draws parish water truck’; ‘disabled tailor does a little work’; ‘plasterer partially paralysed’. Starting a Sunday school was one standard response; less usual was the opening in 1844 of the Western Asylum for the Houseless Poor in two houses on the west side of Upper Ogle Street. This refuge, an offshoot of a City-based charity, elicited rapid opposition. The Portland Estate lawyer warned that it would cause ‘serious depreciation’ of property, while ratepayers memorialized the Vestry, alleging that ‘the poor congregated around their houses from all parts of the metropolis ... they were obliged to shut their shops, and the majority of their lodgers had given them notice to quit’, and asking for the refuge to be shut down. Douglas Jerrold responded with a satirical article in *Punch*, ‘The Wrongs of “Ogle-Square”’. The refuge survived the brouhaha and continued for some years, admitting applicants for warm shelter and a bed for the night without ticket.⁴⁸

In 1862 Ogle Mews acquired a ragged school, designed by W. P. Griffith and probably paid for by the banker Sir R. W. Carden of Wimpole Street, who participated in the ‘Ogle Mission’.⁴⁹ At the same time the Catholics

were building the church of St Charles Borromeo, separately noticed below. In 1871 they went on to adapt a warehouse on the east side of Ogle Street into a boys' 'grammar school', with J. F. Bentley as architect; the premises had previously been a lithographic manufactory and a gas-meter factory, both of which enterprises had failed. Space for girls was added over the boys later. On LCC advice, the ragged school and Catholic schools were all closed in 1905–6 as inadequate.⁵⁰

All these schools were overshadowed by the Ogle Works, industrial premises on the north side of the mews used for mineral water manufacture from at least 1841 up to the Edwardian period, when they were partly taken over as car-repair shops (Ill. 25/19 or INTRO). The buildings disappeared together with the mews when John Astor House (see Foley Street above) took up most of the east side of Ogle Street in 1937, to which the Macdonald Buchanan School of Nursing was added after the war. In 2012–13 the nursing school was replaced by subsidised housing designed for the Peabody Trust by Peter Taylor Associates.⁵¹

The old Saville Street enjoyed no such institutions as Ogle Street, normally appearing in Victorian newspapers only as the locus of crime, ranging from stabbing, theft and indecent assault to suicide. A climax of a kind to these reports came in 1893 when a tenant sent his daughter out to buy carbolic acid, and drank it, shouting from the window 'I'm not dead but I soon will be'.⁵² Shortly after that began the systematic rebuilding of Gosfield and Hanson Streets with small blocks of flats, a policy no doubt long meditated by the Portland Estate. Though technically described as flats not for the working classes, there is a definite economy and uniformity in arrangement to the blocks. All have a central entrance, two flats per floor, four main storeys above ground, and another at basement level, while some have a further storey in the roof (Ill. 25/18, 20). Nearly all were built privately by local builders or speculators. In Hanson Street, where the main campaign took place in 1898–1900, Matthews Brothers undertook five such blocks (Nos 4, 10,

12, 14 & 22), Alfred Barber & Son two (Nos 21 and 23). In Gosfield Street the undertakers were more varied, but Matthews were again active here at No. 13.⁵³

There is modest variety to the design of these fronts. In Gosfield Street some of the blocks look solid and old-fashioned for the 1890s, redolent of industrial dwellings; others have a hint of Queen Anne detail in brighter brick (Ill. 25/21). Only in a few cases have their architects come to light. Alfred J. Hopkins appears to have designed 15 Gosfield Street (1897) and Seymour House, 19 Hanson Street (1906) for different private clients. Robert Willey's name appears in connection with 11-12 Gosfield Street, one of the old-fashioned fronts in malm brick, and essentially the same design as No. 29. John Murray was responsible for Dudley Mansions, 17 Hanson Street (1900-1), for the builders and decorators Campbell Smith & Co., and W. Henry White for the Barbers' 21 and 23 Hanson Street. In the case of the Matthews Brothers' flats in Hanson Street, Beresford Pite twice appears in the district surveyor's returns as having certified plans of the old buildings to be replaced. Their lively fronts betray no obvious trace of his hand, but he may have looked them over or offered a preliminary sketch design. The same flat-types were being built elsewhere around this time, but Gosfield and Hanson Streets represent their local stronghold.⁵⁴

The 1901 census reveals immigrants a-plenty in these streets, in the rebuilt and older properties alike. Gosfield Street was reported as containing 26 German-born residents, 19 born in France, 9 in Austria-Hungary, 5 each in the United States and Switzerland, 4 in Italy, and 3 each in Russia, Belgium and the Argentine. In the slightly longer Saville Street, as it then was, lived 30 people born in France, 15 in Germany, 9 in Russia, 6 in Belgium. Many of the Germans were tailors or waiters in hotels and restaurants, a trade favoured also by the Swiss and Italians, some doubtless employed at Pagani's in Great Portland Street. There was a wider spread of skills among the French, dressmakers and hairdressers being among the commonest employments; all

the Russians and most of the Austrians were tailors. The stage was also well represented, with musicians, comedians, actresses and a stage manager close together in Gosfield Street, all British-born.

If the regular Edwardian reports to St Marylebone Borough Council on 'disorderly houses' are a guide, the rebuildings failed to lift the tone of these streets. The name Saville Street features often, most of the brothels complained of being in the new flats.⁵⁵ Nor was Gosfield Street exempt. Here a hint of eroticism emerged in 1980 at No. 6, one of the surviving older houses, in the guise of a damaged Victorian wall-painting depicting a sleeping cupid with what looks like a half-drunk glass of porter underneath; it was then transferred to the Museum of London.⁵⁶ To judge from the spread of addresses, this area was much in mind when local churchmen and tradesmen petitioned in 1902 about the 'increase in the number of residences used for immoral purposes in certain streets in East Marylebone', and the 'rapid increase of foreign prostitutes' on the streets.⁵⁷ This reputation hung on. Looking for rooms in 'the region about Titchfield Street', Ann Veronica in H. G. Wells's 1909 novel of that name encountered apartments 'either scandalously dirty or unaccountably dear', some decorated with 'pictures that did but insist coarsely upon the roundness of women's bodies', others touched with 'a mysterious taint as of something weakly and commonly and dustily evil', and staffed by women who 'looked out through a friendly manner as though it was a mask, with hard defiant eyes'. The implications would have been clear to Wells's readers.⁵⁸

Church of St Charles Borromeo, Ogle Street

This unassuming church dates from 1862–3. Its architects were T. J. Willson and S. J. Nicholl, authors presumably also of the adjoining brick presbytery at

8 Ogle Street, dated 1867. Its conventional Gothic interior is lifted by a noble altar and reredos by J. F. Bentley (Ills 25/22–25).

The founder of St Charles Borromeo was Father Cornelius James Keens, a prolific instigator of London mission churches. Keens had started his career in the slums of Saffron Hill, and this was his second foundation. Eastern Marylebone and Western St Pancras had been identified by Cardinal Wiseman in 1861 as ‘isolated’ from a Catholic standpoint. Keens began by attaching himself to a community of nuns in Little Albany Street north of Euston Road, but soon found Catholics further south, ‘plentiful as rabbits, burrowing in every court and alley, from the Euston Road as far south as Goodge Street and Chenies Street, as far west as Portland Place, and as far east as Gower Street’.⁵⁹ The mission’s first base was in Little Howland Street (now Cypress Place) close to Tottenham Court Road, where Keens opened a school and temporary chapel. At the end of 1861 he found the present site for his church in Upper Ogle Street, which the Portland Estate had in view to straighten and widen. An anonymous donor took an 80-year lease of a plot 90ft by 60ft on the amended west side, and offered £500 towards the building fund.⁶⁰

Meanwhile Keens, based now in Great Portland Street, set about raising the balance of the £4,000 he reckoned was needed. Patman & Fotheringham ran the building up in 1862–3. Willson & Nicholl, based locally in Marylebone Road, were recently authors of the St James’s Catholic Schools in Bentinck Mews (page ###). As funds were short, only the northern two-thirds were built initially, leaving the southern entrance, gable, and stump of the tower to follow soon after. The church was in use by February 1863, as Keens wanted to vacate Little Howland Street for school use as fast as possible. At the formal inauguration by Wiseman that May, attendance by the laity was reported as thin.⁶¹

The church so created is embedded in the fabric of Ogle Street. Only its eastern flank is fully exposed, but because the twist in the street was not quite

eradicated, the lean-to south end and staircase turret jut out to effect. The style is a conventional thirteenth-century Gothic, and the facing material Kentish ragstone. The interior, orientated north–south, is more harmonious, though over-painted and otherwise updated. The enclosed site elicited a tall clerestory, carried on generous arcades with robust stiff-leaf capitals and flanked by aisles; these are wider on the west than on the east and supported by vigorous trusses. The nave roof, by contrast, is boarded, angular and corbelled out from the wall plate.

The first fittings were temporary, apart from the altar and gradine in the west or Sacred Heart Chapel, the latter given in memory of George Mivart, brother of the biologist St George Jackson Mivart, by their mother. In 1901 S. J. Nicholl designed a canopied reredos in white stone for this chapel, made by A. B. Wall of Cheltenham with a central figure of Christ by Theodore Phylffers.⁶² More significant are the high altar and reredos by J. F. Bentley. A scheme existed for them in Keens' time, but could not be afforded. After he left to start a new mission in 1868, his successor, Father Canty, brought in Bentley, apparently with Willson & Nicholl's approval.

The high altar and 30ft reredos, erected in 1872–3, represent Bentley's second design, a first, more 'insular' scheme probably having been rejected as too costly. The composition offers a colourful balance of tile, marble and paintings on slate, these last by Bentley's friend and regular collaborator Nathaniel Westlake. Detached columns at the ends of the altar flank large quatrefoils set against a tiled ground and depicting two scenes from the life of St Charles Borromeo. The gradine and step above it are of green marble surmounted by canopy work in alabaster. The reredos proper, spanning the width of the sanctuary, displays two rows of five painted figures within alabaster arches, with further arches on each side inset with motifs. The lower walls are covered by lively tilework depicting stylized lions and birds. The tiling and marblework on the floor also belong to Bentley's scheme. The sanctuary formerly contained stalls made by J. E. Knox and was defined by an

alabaster rail made by Henry McCarthy and gates by Hart, Son & Peard.⁶³ All that remains of these are some remnants of rail, reused round the Sacred Heart Chapel. On the other side is the squashed-up Lady Chapel. Its flamboyant finishing is of uncertain authorship but perhaps of the mid 1860s and by Willson & Nicholl. An angled and crocketed arch with the inscription 'Humilitas' (emblem of St Charles Borromeo) flanks a statue of the Virgin in a tall niche, beyond which some elaborate canopy work constitutes the reredos. The marble altar front is by Bentley, of 1879.

At the north end of the church a small Gothic addition for a vestry dates perhaps from *c.*1900. With commerce in the ascendant, the local population declining and the Ogle Street schools closing in 1906 (see above), the church faced difficulties in the early twentieth century. Anxieties that the Howard de Walden Estate might take back the leasehold site and even replace the church with a factory were alleviated in 1921 when Linda Meschini, widow of the proprietor of Pagani's Restaurant in Great Portland Street, together with her son Arthur (or Arturo), purchased and donated the freehold, allowing St Charles Borromeo to be dedicated, followed by a good lunch at Pagani's.⁶⁴

War damage was slight, and for some time the church remained much as it had been. The installation in 1973 of some curious and short-lived perspex church furniture designed by Arthur J. Fleischmann was the first sign of restlessness. A major repair and redecoration in 1978–80 saw the church lightened, the old pews replaced, and a very deep forward altar installed in the nave. This was supplemented in 1984 by the nave's dominant feature today, a total immersion baptistery in the form of a cross inscribed within an octagon, with symbols of the Evangelists in mosaic in the interstices. These arrangements, designed by Michael Anderson, were carried out largely at the instigation of Fr Alan Fudge, who in 1978 introduced to St Charles's the Neo-Catechuminal Way, with its emphasis on the reinstruction and re-baptism of adult Catholics. The pews have now been replaced by chairs ranged on three

sides, so that the congregation focuses on this central area. In recent years a crypt has also been dug out below the church, furnishing meeting rooms.⁶⁵

Changes in ownership and management

Up until 1920 the whole area covered by this and the previous chapter belonged to the Howard de Walden Estate; then followed fragmentation, as properties east of Portland Place were sold off pell-mell. The climax came in 1925, when the accountant and shipowner Sir John Ellerman purchased 'Block 2' between Great Titchfield and Hallam Streets, vesting it in his Audley Trust. The impression given by newspaper reports was that the forty acres or so covered by this sale comprised the whole of the estate from Great Portland Street eastwards, but in the district covered by this chapter previous piecemeal sales and 999-year leases had by then made inroads.⁶⁶ These sales had little immediate effect on the area, which between the wars was fairly stagnant. The Audley Trust for the time being was content to rely on continued management by Col. Blount, the Howard de Walden surveyor.

In the post-war period the ownership pattern becomes harder to follow. West of Great Titchfield Street the Audley Trust came to an arrangement with Basil and Howard Samuel, the Mortimer Street estate agents and developers, and its various assets were distributed among subsidiary companies such as Cranleigh Estates (in existence by 1946), Knighton Estates and Collin Estates, eventually absorbed into Great Portland Estates. The Samuels were evidently nurturing plans for large-scale commercial redevelopment, but in the 1960s the only major rebuilding that took place on Audley property was at 43-51 Great Titchfield Street. As for the many rented flats and houses in the district, some were in Samuel-company ownership, others not. In Hanson Street, for instance, St Marylebone Borough

Council had by 1960 acquired several blocks for council housing. These were in due course passed on to Westminster City Council before being either transferred to the Peabody Trust or sold off in later privatizations.⁶⁷

Conflict arose in the 1970s between local community groups and the Samuel companies over empty flats and lack of maintenance. 'Woe to thee, Basil Samuel, thou art weighed in the balance and found wanting', inveighed Don Collis of the East Marylebone Tenants Association in 1974. A new pressure group, the East Marylebone United Residents Self-Preservation Society (East Marylebone United for short) now took up the cudgels. Its principal champions were Barry Wolfin, a Great Titchfield shopkeeper, and Collis. They pointed to the halving of the local population over the previous twenty years, and the 'gradual disintegration' of the community, as flats gave way to illegal offices which could command far higher rents. Neglect was particularly complained of in Middleton Place and Gosfield Street, with the suspicion that they were being softened up for redevelopment by Great Portland Estates. The agitation gained wide sympathy, including that of the local MP, Kenneth Baker, putting the developers on the back foot.⁶⁸

In 1978 Great Portland Estates gave ground by selling off thirteen blocks of flats to the Community Housing Association. The first of a series of much-needed renovations followed. In 1981 Knighton Estates announced plans to redevelop three large sites, encompassing 94 Great Portland Street and 36–46 Langham Street; 78–82 Great Portland Street and 15–19 Riding House Street; and 73–79 Great Titchfield Street. But the initiative came in a climate different from that of the 1960s, and could not prevail, given the tenacity of local opposition. Two years later Great Portland Estates sold off many of their remaining assets in the area, leaving the Fitzrovia community groups victorious. Not a little of the strong local character of the area today is owed to their efforts. At the time of writing the Langham Estate, the eventual successor to the Audley Trust, owns just a few freeholds in the area of this

chapter, including the University of Westminster's site in Little Titchfield Street.⁶⁹