

University of Westminster

South-east Marylebone is the home of the University of Westminster, founded in 1992. Though dispersed, its four main sites all fall within the area covered by these volumes and are grouped together here for reasons of coherence. They were inherited by the new university from the Regent Street Polytechnic via the Polytechnic of Central London (1970–92) and were purpose-built at various stages in that institution’s development. The Regent Street site goes back to the 1830s and the very beginnings of the polytechnic name and movement in England; the Little Titchfield Street site to the first separate purpose-built expansion of the Regent Street Polytechnic in the 1920s; and the New Cavendish Street and Marylebone Road sites, planned simultaneously, to the great expansion of British higher education facilities in the 1960s, when the purposes of polytechnics were being reviewed and enlarged.

The University of Westminster owns or rents various other properties in Marylebone which were not purpose-built for its occupation, and are excluded from the present chapter.

Regent Street buildings

The University of Westminster’s building at 307–311 Regent Street has the most venerable pedigree of its four major West End sites, for it was from the Polytechnic Institution founded here in 1838 that the university emanated, after many vicissitudes. The arresting classical façade seen on Regent Street

today (Ill. 32/4), designed by Frank Verity, fronts a block rebuilt to plans by George A. Mitchell in 1910–11. But the outlines of the two large spaces created for the original Polytechnic, its exhibition hall of 1838 and theatre of 1847–8, remain embedded within, along with fragments of decoration dating from the 1880s, when Quintin Hogg turned the Polytechnic into a vehicle for artisan education. The current internal décor of the Polytechnic Theatre, famous in cinema history as the place where the Lumière brothers first showed films in London, dates mainly from 1926–7, when the architect F. J. Wills added accommodation over it.

The Royal Polytechnic Institution, 1837–81

The idea for the Polytechnic Institution came from Charles Payne, manager of the Gallery of Practical Science or Adelaide Gallery, opened in the Lowther Arcade off the Strand in 1832.¹ This modest but popular display, blending scientific novelties with amusement, prompted Payne to seek a larger venue. Hearing in 1837 that Lord William Bentinck's house at 5 Cavendish Square was for sale, he tried but failed to raise the money to buy the lease. He next turned to the entrepreneur William Mountford Nurse, then living in Langham Place. Nurse had been among the leading undertakers of Nash's London projects, building much in Regent's Park including the grand Cumberland Terrace, and sections of the Strand improvements. At this juncture he was diversifying into bank and railway directorships, and in 1838 came close to election as a Radical MP for Norwich. Nurse offered to acquire a new Portland lease of the property, build a gallery on the back of the house facing Regent Street and sell the whole back to Payne once the latter had formed his society or company.²

So it was Nurse who erected the original Polytechnic building at 309 Regent Street in 1837–8, at a cost of over £15,000. Its designer was James

Thomson, previously Nurse's architect (under Nash) at Cumberland Terrace and later his executor, so a close associate. Nurse and Thomson fell in with the brief given by Payne and his coadjutors, most prominently the gentleman-scientist Sir George Cayley. But when the building was finished, differences arose. Through an intermediary, Jeremiah Olive, Nurse eventually granted a lease to the new body which Payne had managed to set up, while retaining a sizeable shareholding. He had no direct managerial control, but was able to put in his brother-in-law Robert Longbottom as secretary in Payne's place.³

The new attraction opened in August 1838 as the Polytechnic Institution, incorporated that month by royal charter. The name, deriving from the respected *Ecole Polytechnique* in Paris, had come into fashion during the 1830s, but in the British context did not connote a formal teaching programme. As at the Adelaide Gallery, the displays united the latest technical marvels with first-class lecturing and showmanship. Thomson's stuccoed front, the first to break into the low screen Nash had devised for this block of Regent Street, rose to three commanding storeys, with a protruding central porch topped by pilasters and a crowning terracotta figure of Minerva made by Edgar Papworth (Ills 32/2, 3).⁴

Entering the deep, narrow site, the visitor proceeded first through a 'hall of manufactures', equipped with steam engines, pumps and other machinery, and hence beyond an elaborate branching staircase to a great hall, 120ft long and 40ft high, with narrow galleries all round. The brief for fitting out this room was communicated to Nurse late on, after the committee had decided to make a show of the shipping industry. Along its length ran parallel miniature canals featuring model ships. At the far end a deep pool going down into the basement housed the most memorable attraction, an operating diving bell with resident diver. Showcases filled up the rest of the space in the great hall and its galleries (Ill. 32/5). Beyond again were some small rooms, one in the early days marked 'weaving', another 'daguerrotypes', and the smaller of two lecture rooms. Subscribers could also

enter from the back at 5 Cavendish Square, where some rooms were reserved for the institution and the rest let. In the Regent Street building the basement was occupied by workshops and a laboratory, while the first floor housed the main lecture theatre and the London Benevolent Repository, ‘an association of ladies of distinction, who have humanely undertaken to dispose of works of ingenuity for benevolent purposes’. Comparing the new foundation with the Adelaide Gallery, the *Morning Post* found that ‘its show room is less and its workshop space more’. Some of the displays had been cribbed from its predecessor, and there were criticisms of gimcrack or even dangerous features and displays, and poor provisions for ventilation.⁵

Nevertheless the Polytechnic – or Royal Polytechnic Institution as it often termed itself – was an instant success. ‘In the 1840s no country-man cared to omit it from his itinerary, least of all the experience of descending, at the cost of earache, in its diving bell’. Extra attractions and lecturers were soon added. By 1845 there were said to be 34 rooms open to the public, many of them in the basement. Advances in electricity, cosmography and photography featured strongly, and in March 1841 Robert Beard opened what is claimed as Europe’s first public photographic studio on the roof.⁶

In 1846 the shareholders decided to expand by building a theatre on the next plot southwards, behind what was to become No. 307. Nurse now acquired this site too in his own right, but opted to retain the front portion. So Thomson recast the whole front in 1847–8, with Mortimore Timpson as builder. The result was an 86ft ‘Italian composition of the Palazzi kind’, with aedicules round the first-floor windows and the Minerva figure repositioned over the new centre.⁷ A second porch may have been intended at No. 307 to balance that at No. 309, but most views suggest that it was never built (Ills 32/2, 3).

The front portion of No. 307 opened in 1850 as the Polyorama – entirely distinct from the Polytechnic – showing scenic, diorama-style paintings of Constantinople and the Dardanelles by the architect-artist Thomas Allom.

Though well reviewed, the exhibition caused Allom's bankruptcy. Another diorama display of Canada and the Niagara Falls followed in 1854, just before the premises were let to the Cavendish Club, founded or refounded as a literary club by Lionel Booth, bookseller.⁸

Behind came the Polytechnic's theatre, reached only via No. 309. It consisted of an auditorium about 120ft by 40ft on plan, and as much as 50ft high, facing towards a marbled proscenium arch. Balconies ran along the sides, and to maximize capacity there were two deep galleries at the back. The elliptical ceiling was covered in 'marine metal', a composition for sheathing ships patented by Baron Charles Wetterstedt, which Thomson had tried out previously for the roof of the hall next door. The whole was carried by arched cast-iron beams in one piece made by Bramah & Robinson, and topped by a long central skylight (Ill. 32/13). At the back was a spacious optical room, equipped with projection facilities for the famous magic lantern or 'dissolving view' lectures given by J. H. Pepper, the Polytechnic's star showman. Nurse at first rented the theatre to the Polytechnic directors, but after his death in 1855 his executors sold them a long lease.⁹

During the 1850s the cavil that amusement was being put above education at the Polytechnic gained ground. Then on 3 January 1859 one whole flight of Thomson's cantilevered or 'geometrical' stone staircase sheered off and collapsed as the late leavers were departing, killing a young girl and injuring many others. At the inquest it transpired that because of wear the steps had recently been reinforced with iron bar and mesh and filled in with Portland cement under Thomson's direction. The expert witnesses (the local architects Christopher Eales and T. Marsh Nelson, along with C. H. Smith, the mason who had selected the stone for the Houses of Parliament) differed on the cause of the disaster, though Smith's diagnosis of a defective joggle joint on the top landing was much favoured. Thomson escaped without censure, but the accident marked the end of his connection with the Polytechnic. Worse, there was no money to meet the ensuing lawsuits, and on

inspection the premises turned out to be riddled with unprotected fires and wooden floors.¹⁰

The fall-out from these events caused the subscribers to throw in the towel. But the Polytechnic survived, thanks to a mortgage from James Benham, the Wigmore Street heating engineer. A limited company established itself after a shaky start in December 1859. A clear-out of old equipment ensued, followed by major alterations under the architect T. H. Wyatt and builders Longmire & Burge. The front porch disappeared, shops were inserted in the entrance hall, the main floors were fireproofed using the Fox & Barrett patent, and an overhaul took place of the staircase arrangements. New coloured decorations were supervised by the Chelsea architect and eccentric John Samuel Phené, briefly managing director.¹¹

Showmanship and education both featured again in the Polytechnic's second incarnation but were now uneasy allies, while original science enjoyed less of a look-in. The future lay increasingly with organized teaching through evening classes, formalized from 1872 through a body called the Polytechnic College, in which the influence of Nonconformist educational reformers began to be felt. The philanthropist Samuel Morley became a force on the board at this time.¹²

Quintin Hogg and the Polytechnic, 1882–1909

Again a mishap revealed the Polytechnic's fragility, this time a fire in the smaller of its two lecture theatres (on the third floor of the front block) in March 1879. As the company could not afford the rebuilding costs, the premises were auctioned at the end of 1881.¹³ The purchaser was Quintin Hogg, a wealthy merchant and ally of Morley. Hogg had already made his mark as the founder of a Youths' (later Young Men's) Christian Institute in Covent Garden, aimed at practical instruction and healthy recreation for the

poor and artisan classes. He was all for respectable entertainments, but less concerned with advancing science or art than with the humane development of his students, following the strategy favoured by liberal reformers of his day for balancing training with 'rational recreation'. So his takeover of the Polytechnic College and transfer from Covent Garden to Regent Street represented the convergence of two separate missions.

Hogg, seconded after 1885 by his lieutenant (Sir) Kynaston Studd – a similar compound of privilege, drive and evangelical faith – fast set about converting the Polytechnic to further these ends. In November 1882, a few weeks after the opening, 500 students were said to be attending evening classes. Soon, *The Times* said, the premises had become 'a great social club for young lads of the artisan class, a great institute of technical education, {and} a day school for middle class boys'. The institution's name now became the Polytechnic Young Men's Christian Institute, or Polytechnic Institute for short. In the 1890s the term polytechnic was borrowed for the cluster of London colleges for artisans set up in imitation of Hogg's model. Thereafter the original was known formally as the Regent Street Polytechnic Institute, but always called itself simply the Polytechnic or Poly.¹⁴

Under Spencer Chadwick, Hogg's architect-surveyor, the old great hall was quickly converted into a gymnasium, used also for Hogg's Sunday addresses. The theatre's floor level was raised to the same level as the gym, and a number of new classrooms were created. A swimming bath followed in 1884, next to the gym on the site behind 311 Regent Street, with separate access from Cavendish Place (Ill. 32/11). Fragments of the tiling and ironwork for this space survive. Hogg moved his family into 5 Cavendish Square in 1885, living there for thirteen years. Next year he started a separate day school for boys beyond the board school stage; that in due course moved away from Regent Street and became the Polytechnic Secondary School. Hogg and Studd also promoted sport on the grounds of Merton Hall, Wimbledon. By 1888

Hogg was supposed to have spent some £100,000 of his own money on the venture.¹⁵

Next year the Polytechnic took over the ailing West London School of Art in Great Titchfield Street. Increasingly it became drawn into London's emerging subsidized system for technical education. Apart from the day school, Regent Street continued to host science and art classes preparing entrants for exams under the South Kensington system, and industrial trade classes under the City and Guilds. Photographs of around 1900 show young men and women learning a gamut of skills, from carriage-building to typewriting (Ills 32/9, 10). Though youths were Hogg's main preoccupation, the young girls and women had their own annexe for work and recreation from 1888 at 15 Langham Place.¹⁶

The emphasis on sports and pastimes as part of a rounded education prevailed up to and beyond Hogg's death in 1903. In this regard special interest attaches to the theatre behind 307 Regent Street. The front building here had passed from the Cavendish Club to the Marlborough Rooms, a venue for parties, recitals and lectures in about 1880, which may be when a Venetian window appeared in the centre of the façade (Ill. 32/3a). In 1892 Hogg acquired the front so as to improve access to the theatre behind, as the London County Council insisted must be done if Chadwick's proposed further recasting of the auditorium was to be sanctioned. For some years the Marlborough Rooms continued upstairs. Meanwhile in 1892–3 the theatre was radically reconstructed and the floor again raised. Hogg regarded the result as a general-purpose 'New Great Hall'. It was here that in February 1896 Félicien Trewey showed the 'cinematographe' of the brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière to the English public for the first time, as part of its world tour. The initial showings continued for five months, so successfully that the hall or theatre was thereafter let as a public cinema for intermittent evening performances.¹⁷

Reconstruction of 1910–11 and later history

With the various leases under which 307–311 Regent Street were held soon to expire, the Howard de Walden Estate made rebuilding a condition of renewal in 1909. For the whole frontage between Nos 289 and 319, the Estate selected Frank Verity as their architect, a choice no doubt made after conferring with the Crown authorities, for whom Verity was just then designing similar elevations at 169–201 Regent Street further south. The rebuilding was made possible by the forcefulness and fund-raising skills of Kynaston Studd, president of the Polytechnic from 1903 until his death in 1944. To plan and construct the new building, the governors turned to George A. Mitchell, head master of their architecture school. He was the youngest of a band of brothers long involved as managers, builders and teachers at the Polytechnic. Robert Mitchell had been Hogg's main administrator since 1871; a builder brother, T. E. Mitchell, had erected most of the extensions at Regent Street, while Charles F. and George A. Mitchell played leading roles in teaching at Regent Street and were the authors of *Building Construction*, a text that has gone through multiple editions since first appearing in 1888.¹⁸

The brief was divided into five portions, because the site was fragmented and teaching had to continue during the works. Entirely new was the steel-framed front block, at first meant to contain just five storeys above ground but soon raised to seven with an extra sub-basement. Behind No. 311, the ceremonial Fyvie Hall was also new, with laboratories above and below. The rest of the site underwent many modifications but not complete rebuilding, so that the configuration of the old institution's hall and theatre remained (Ill. 32/7). The theatre itself, nominally still the Great Hall or Marlborough Hall, changed little.¹⁹

Holloway Brothers carried out these works in 1910–11. The architectural high points were three. The Verity front (Ill. 32/4) featured a giant Ionic order with fluted columns in Portland stone over a granite base,

and then a very tall French roof to soak up the extra storeys. It has been claimed as the first such front to be passed under the LCC's General Powers Act of 1909 permitting steel-framed buildings to have thinner masonry skins. The chaste capitals of the order were specially modelled by E. J. & A. T. Bradford, while Walter Macfarlane & Co. supplied the ornamental cast-iron spandrel panels to the second and third storeys, bearing the Polytechnic motif of St George and the Dragon. The overall effect is grandiose but disjointed. Inside, Mitchell's expansive marble-lined hall replicated the welcoming aura of the previous narrower entrance (Ills 32/6, 8). Over the main stair a commemorative tablet honours Edward VII, a supporter of the Polytechnic. To one side at the back is the Fyvie Hall, a function room named in honour of Lord Leith of Fyvie, the main private donor for the rebuilding. It is oak-panelled, and has stained-glass roundels by Campbell & Christmas. In 1923 the young artist Delmar Banner added a series of eight paintings on panels round the upper walls depicting the history of the crafts in London from the Middle Ages to around 1700 (Ill. 32/12).²⁰

As the Polytechnic continued to grow, it soon required further space. By the early 1920s there were annexes at 14 and 15 Langham Place, 40 Mortimer Street, and 16 Balderton Street, Mayfair. Additions were therefore proposed at Regent Street, and a large new building for a separate site at Little Titchfield Street. Two local architects, A. E. Hughes and F. J. Wills, were invited to submit sketch plans for the Regent Street additions, Wills (architect to the Lyons Corner House chain) being appointed to design both schemes in September 1925. To minimize difficulties with neighbours over light and air the Regent Street proposal, which went forward in 1926–7, took the form of extra storeys squeezed on top of the Polytechnic Theatre.²¹ That entailed a reconstruction and redecoration of the auditorium itself but not the loss of the old cast-iron arch roof beams, which remain embedded in the ceiling. Regular public film performances in this space had become formalized during the First World War, and over time the auditorium became virtually separated

from the everyday life of the Polytechnic. After a short closure during the Second World War, it reopened first as the Cameo News Theatre and then from 1953 as the Cameo-Poly, for which the cinema architect George Coles fitted a modest new outside canopy and showcases. Later it was called the Classic-Poly, before closing and reverting to educational use in 1980. It was reopened as a cinema in 2015 following restoration by Tim Ronalds Architects.²²

After the Regent Street Polytechnic was merged in 1970 into the new Polytechnic of Central London, funded by the Inner London Education Authority, a complete rebuilding of the front block was proposed by the architects Lyons, Israel & Ellis, who had undertaken the design of the New Cavendish Street site and of enlarging the Little Titchfield Street building (see below). This did not proceed. Nor did the internal reconstruction proposed in 1982 by the GMW Partnership, which would also have destroyed the theatre and the Fyvie Hall. Instead the Sheppard Robson Partnership oversaw a simpler refitting in 1994–5.²³

Little Titchfield Street building

This was built as an annexe to the Regent Street Polytechnic in 1928–9 to designs by F. J. Wills. It was extended at the back towards Riding House Street and radically refurbished in 1971–5.

The Polytechnic's interest in Little Titchfield Street went back to the 1880s, when it began using the premises of the Portland British Schools (page ###) for evening classes, an arrangement formalized in 1894. When the school closed in 1914, the Polytechnic authorities obtained an underlease. After the First World War they made some changes and began teaching motor-body building here. In 1922 they bought the main lease with a view to rebuilding

this and adjoining premises. The Polytechnic was then very short of space, with some two-fifths of its activities taking place outside the main Regent Street building. The project was called the Great Portland Street Extension, as a frontage to that street was the ultimate aim, and that is the name inscribed over the entrance of the Little Titchfield Street building. It proceeded in tandem with additions to the Polytechnic's Regent Street building (see above). A larger site was gradually assembled with help from Edward Blount, the Howard de Walden Estate's surveyor; in 1925, during the negotiations the freeholds were transferred to Sir John Ellerman's Audley Trust, for whom Blount continued to act. Eight houses were cleared eastwards of the school, comprising altogether 90 rooms occupied by 40 tenants protected under the Rent Restriction Act.²⁴

F. J. Wills, the architect appointed to carry out the extensions at Regent Street, started working up designs in 1927. The task was hard, as Blount was vigilant over rights of light in these narrow streets and insisted on a 50ft height limit to the cornice, entailing deep basement storeys to cram all the accommodation in. Construction was carried out by Bovis Ltd in 1928–9. A masonic ceremony to lay the foundation stone took place in November 1928 and the new building was opened by Queen Mary in October 1929.²⁵

Wills's personal style was weightily classical, and the impression given by the front is of a building too ponderous for its context. The composition is notionally symmetrical, with an implied classical order and stone ends and centrepiece projecting forward of the main plane; but the left-hand end of the elevation, part of the unbuilt Great Portland Street extension, is missing. Over the doors come mighty dollops of stone-carving, contributed by L. F. Roslyn (Ill. 32/14). The building is steel-framed and steel-windowed, with three main storeys above ground towards Little Titchfield Street, four more in the set-back roof, and two basement levels. The plainer Riding House Street elevation originally had an open light-well in the centre above ground-storey level. An

unexecuted alternative elevation by Wills had a central entrance and set-back tower towards Great Portland Street (Ill. 32/15).²⁶

Internally the plan focuses upon a deep, double-height hall in the centre, originally a gymnasium, now a lecture theatre. This hall could be opened up on its eastern side to join up with a lower and smaller hall with a stage at its north end, sometimes called the Portland Hall and adapted for theatrical or cinematic events. The main circulation passages run around the upper levels of the large hall, with views down. At the back was originally a restaurant, above which at ground level were rooms for the Young Women's Institute previously in Langham Place. The main educational activities first housed here were the schools of motor engineering, motor-body and carriage building, hairdressing, tailoring, commerce, architecture (on the fourth floor), and domestic science. The flat roof on top could serve for recreation. The Polytechnic was specially proud of the motor engineering school; Quintin Hogg's son Lord Hailsham claimed it as 'the first complete school of the kind, I believe, in England, which could not surely find a more fitting home than Great Portland Street, which is the great centre of the motor industry in London'.²⁷

In the 1970s the Inner London Education Authority undertook a complete refurbishment of the building on behalf of the Polytechnic of Central London, chiefly with the aim of installing its School of Photography and Communication Studies. Lyons, Israel, Ellis & Partners, who had just finished the College of Engineering and Science in New Cavendish Street, were retained as designers. The main external change was the architects' insertion of a high staircase tower, in their forceful concrete idiom, within the light-well towards Riding House Street. Like many contracts of the early 1970s this one (allotted to Dove Brothers) went awry, the work dragging on from May 1971 to November 1975. Litigation was still pending years later. Lyons, Israel & Ellis also produced a design in 1974 for extending the college westwards to Great Portland Street, but that never happened.²⁸ Only minor changes have

been made since the University of Westminster inherited the premises in 1992.

Marylebone Road and New Cavendish Street sites

Planned and built in tandem in the late 1960s, the University of Westminster's two concrete campuses in Marylebone Road and New Cavendish Street belong to the heroic period of post-war higher education expansion in Britain and the forthright or brutalist manner of architecture in which that ebullience was often expressed. Both projects were funded and managed by the London County (later Greater London) Council on behalf of the Regent Street Polytechnic, and completed just as that body became part of the Polytechnic of Central London.

The two projects emanated from a grand plan, concocted between the Regent Street Polytechnic's governors and administrators, the LCC and the Ministry of Education, to turn it into a federal body with constituent colleges. In 1957 the Polytechnic had been faced with the prospect of decline, after it failed to meet the Government's criteria for turning institutions of its kind into 'colleges of advanced technology' on the pretext that the social component to its programmes, inherited from Quintin Hogg, made its teaching and research insufficiently advanced. J. Eric Richardson, the new director of education appointed that year, took up the challenge vigorously, refusing to reduce his student intake. Some dispersal did take place; it was agreed that the dwindling course for motor-building would move from Little Titchfield Street to Willesden, and that the Polytechnic's School of Art would amalgamate with Chelsea Polytechnic's and move to the latter site. But by

1960 Richardson had secured agreement in principle among the various interests to create three separate colleges or faculties, for Architecture (or 'Advanced Building Technology'), Science and Engineering, and Commerce and Management Studies.²⁹

Much of the thrust behind this plan came from a technocratic lobby, then strong in educational and architectural circles, for a new, integrated college to address the weakness of skills in the construction trades and professions. The Royal Institute of British Architects had convened a conference on the topic in 1956, and the following year a government-sponsored study group under D. E. Woodbine Parish, chairman of the builders Bovis Ltd, recommended creating a London college which would bring together architecture, building technology and administration, surveying, structural engineering and town planning. These recommendations found widespread support, not least within the LCC, whose in-house Architect's Department was in the throes of expansion and looking for better recruits with wider and more integrated skills. Since the LCC as the local education authority for inner London was already largely funding the Regent Street Polytechnic, it made sense for any rescue plan to incorporate the idea of this new college and recast the Polytechnic's architecture and building schools to that end. In the words of Antony Part, the relevant senior policy maker in the Ministry of Education, combining the reorganization of the Regent Street Polytechnic with the creation of the new college under the LCC's aegis 'kills two birds with one stone'.³⁰

Responsibility for formulating the overall plan fell to Richardson, guided by the council's chief education officer, W. F. Houghton. To house all three faculties on a single site, eyes turned to Luxborough Lodge, the former workhouse, run by the LCC as a home for the old and infirm. But such was the pressure on housing that Isaac Hayward, the LCC's Leader, felt unable to pledge the whole of that site for educational use. A departmental battle within the LCC ensued, ending in November 1960 with a compromise whereby only

the front two-thirds, facing Marylebone Road, was to be devoted to the Polytechnic. Architecture and Management Studies would take up all the space there, it was agreed, while the College of Science and Engineering would be relegated to the Little Titchfield Street site, which had been designed with a view to expansion (see above).

At this stage responsibility for developing sketch designs for the whole Polytechnic project lay with the education section of the LCC Architect's Department. To that end Michael Powell, the chief education architect and a senior assistant, Peter Jones, drew up a plan for extending the Little Titchfield Street building at both ends, and joining it via a bridge to the north side of Riding House Street, where a tower was to go. The scheme stalled because of the cost of the extra land, which both the LCC and Ministry of Education thought exorbitant.³¹

'The LCC are, frankly, beginning to despair of ever reconciling all these divergent claims', minuted a civil servant in November 1961.³² Then, late in the day, the site of the redundant Upper Marylebone Street or Clipstone School at the easternmost end of New Cavendish Street came into the equation. Underused as an extension to Barrett Street Technical College, it occupied just over half an acre; if to that could be added about another half-acre around it, there would be space for the 160,000sq.ft building required by Science and Engineering. The school site had been half-promised to the College for the Distributive Trades, tightly housed in Charing Cross Road, but the promise proved retractable. From early 1962 the two projects could therefore proceed in parallel, and from here on this account of their procurement divides.

Faculty of Science and Engineering, 115 New Cavendish Street

A striking composition in a brutalist idiom, the Science and Engineering building at 115 New Cavendish Street was erected in 1966–70 to the designs of Lyons, Israel, Ellis & Partners. The Copland Building, a large extension to the north, fronting Clipstone and Hanson Streets, was completed in 2005 as part of a programme of alteration and improvement pursued since 2002 under the architects Rock Townsend (GHM Rock Townsend to 2012).

As explained above, the opportunity of building on this site came up only at the last minute, after plans to locate the new faculty first in Marylebone Road and then in Little Titchfield Street fell through. In March 1962 W. F. Houghton, the LCC's chief education officer, brought forward a report thoroughly exploring the new proposal's parameters. Houghton's colleagues in the Architect's Department, Michael Powell and Peter Jones, had by then already set out the main dispositions, with a podium facing New Cavendish Street, a 160ft tower on the east side to contain the science departments, an engineering block with heavier loadings to the west, and a lower connection between them. Concentrating the massing in a north–south block and offering a degree of external open space was better, argued the report's authors, than building to the perimeter all round, not least because of the looming proximity of the Post Office Tower, then being built.³³

That was as far as the in-house architects took the project. With the bigger and equally prestigious Luxborough Lodge project also to design against a tight timetable, Powell decided that the LCC would have to farm out the Science and Engineering building. There was a brief wobble, when Quintin Hogg's grandson, Lord Hailsham (then the Government's 'minister for science' and previously a Minister of Education), suggested that it be taken on as an experimental project by the Development Group of the Ministry's Architects and Building Branch. That passed, and Lyons, Israel & Ellis were appointed. They must have been awarded the job on the strength of

their previous educational work, but it doubtless helped that Frank Israel and Tom Ellis were graduates of the Polytechnic's school of architecture.³⁴

In an era of obsession with cost limits in educational buildings, hard bargaining between the LCC and the Ministry of Education ensued. Yet because of rising traffic levels, it proved possible to add in double glazing and mechanical ventilation.³⁵ Before the project could start, a public enquiry had to be held to justify the compulsory purchase of the extra buildings round the school and the change of use for a block which had been zoned for residential development. On that point the proponents got rapped over the knuckles by the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, where Sir Keith Joseph and Dame Evelyn Sharp were fighting for their housing empire. Memoranda supporting 'a project of national and even international importance' had to be fired across from County Hall and Curzon Street. The MHLG officials relented, but not without a Parthian shot: 'we hope that this will make the LCC think extra hard before getting so far with a similar proposition in the future, on residential land'. The public enquiry, held in February 1964, went smoothly. The one firm gravely affected was J. D. Beardmore & Co., architectural ironmongers, who had been in Cleveland Street since 1860 but had recently been obliged to move across the road because of the Post Office Tower scheme. The upshot was that the building could go ahead. As anticipated, space had to be found on the site for rebuilding the Fitzroy Arms near the corner of Clipstone and Cleveland Streets.³⁶

Tenders were delayed till late 1966, when a bid of a little under £2m from Token Construction of Croydon was accepted. The figure had risen modestly by the time the buildings came into use.³⁷ By then all the participants had different names, the LCC turning into the GLC and the Ministry of Education the Department of Education and Science in 1965, while the Regent Street Polytechnic became part of the Polytechnic of Central London in 1970.

In broad terms the *parti* worked out by Powell and Jones was faithfully followed by the Lyons, Israel & Ellis assistants under Tom Ellis at New Cavendish Street, down to the breaking-away from the building line along Cleveland Street, where a scruffy 'piazzetta' emerged on empty space at the street corner. Their triumph was to turn the Science and Engineering Building into something 'powerful, idiosyncratic, angular, uncompromising and intense', to quote Patrick Nuttgens.³⁸ The New Cavendish Street front in particular manifests a forthright play of contrast between solids and voids, expressed in terms of setting cool, volumetric concrete against dark, flat curtains of glass (their bronze frames now obscured by brown paint). Preliminary sketches betray that this frontage owed much to Sant'Elia's drawings, fashionable in the sixties. In the event the upper storeys of the lower engineering building ramped back less than as first designed (Ills 32/16, 17). The finished building shows too the influence of the Department of Engineering building at Leicester University, designed in 1959 and opened in 1963, whose architects James Stirling and James Gowan were formerly with Lyons, Israel & Ellis.

Altogether the sense is of a monumental composition too bracing for its tight street-enclosure and begging for more space around it (as at Leicester). Nevertheless the drama of the central area is memorable, with its raised podium and cantilevered lecture theatre over the entrance subtly linked to a service tower on one side and a deep courtyard recess on the other. As Lyons, Israel & Ellis's axonometric drawings betray, the other sides are less studied, and subservient to the New Cavendish Street arrangement. The science laboratory block flanks Cleveland Street in the form of two overlapping, overbearing eight-storey towers with concrete service stairs hooking over at the top. At the Clipstone Street corner the scale comes sharply down to take in the rebuilt Fitzroy Arms (the Tower House, now Tower Tavern), which inhabits a tile-faced enclosure of no marked character. The rest of the Clipstone Street front and the return to Hanson Street up to Latimer House

are taken up by Rock Townsend's Copland Building, which respects the language of the 1960s building without its sense of movement and drama.

The Copland Building, named after the physicist Geoffrey Copland, then Vice-Chancellor and Rector, replaces Edwardian and later commercial buildings, Medway and Medford Houses, bought by the university in 1993. On New Cavendish Street, the same architects have overseen alterations to the 1960s building, including (2009) the addition of a fifth floor to the western wing. The access ramp, added in 2003, was followed over the next few years by a glass entrance lobby and the installation on the adjacent courtyard of a 'still-life' sculpture group by Ben Joiner, semi-abstract representations in stainless steel and phosphor bronze of scientific apparatus (2004). Plans for partial infilling of the courtyard by a glass-fronted extension to give extra accommodation on four storeys and a roof terrace have not (2016) been implemented.³⁹

The interior of the 1960s building (occupied by what is now Science and Technology) has been a good deal altered over the years. Its structure, designed by Frank Newby of F. J. Samuely & Partners, combined in situ and precast concrete elements, with prestressed floor beams coming regularly through the building at 4ft centres. Suspended bridges crossed the central area connecting the science and engineering blocks.⁴⁰

In the recent changes, original voids below the lecture theatre have been reopened and a corridor has been formed between New Cavendish Street and the Copland Building, accompanied by remodelling and reconstruction to either side. The 'lantern building' with its tall flue behind the Cleveland Street Science wing, formerly housing engineering laboratories, has been replaced by a social facilities 'hub' on three floors, complemented by the conversion of the 'podium building' west of the corridor for the students' union and shops, with exhibition space above in a new 'winter garden pavilion'.⁴¹

Marylebone Road

When the Regent Street Polytechnic's science and engineering buildings in New Cavendish Street were farmed out to private architects in 1962, the task of building the reformed polytechnic's other two new faculties on the former Marylebone Workhouse or Luxborough Lodge site, was left to the LCC's in-house staff. By the time this even grander project started on site, the LCC had become the Greater London Council and its education powers for central London had passed to the Inner London Education Authority. So the official credits for the buildings as erected in 1966–70 were as follows: designers, the GLC Architect's Department, Education Section, with Michael Powell as chief education architect, Ron Ringshall as job architect and Frank Kinder and J. Buckrell as principal assistants; builders, Taylor Woodrow Ltd; client, the ILEA on behalf of Regent Street Polytechnic, from 1970 the Polytechnic of Central London.

The nearly four-acre site consisted of an extensive frontage to Marylebone Road, with a fair depth of land behind accessible on the east from Luxborough Street. It dropped down at the back, tapering slightly towards Paddington Street Gardens. The southernmost portion, furthest from the noisy main road, was reserved for the public housing that the LCC politicians had insisted must form part of the redevelopment. This was conceived as a single tower block (Luxborough Tower), standing directly behind a thinner second tower to its north designated as a student hall of residence (Ill. 32/19). The educational buildings were divided by the architects into three, all set over a continuous concrete podium 3ft above Marylebone Road, allowing a deep basement at the back where ground levels were lower. The main road frontage was entirely taken up by a long, linear teaching building, reserved in the first place for the college of architecture and advanced building technology. At a central point the lower storeys of this monumental frontispiece opened up into a courtyard, backed by a T-shaped building

dedicated to communal and service facilities of various kinds ranging from lecture theatres and a library to engineering construction halls underneath. The third element, the college of management, occupied a simple north-south block parallel to the western boundary, defined by the rear of flats in Chiltern Street. These latter blocks were linked by covered ways at first-floor level to the student hostel at the back, which comprised 178 study-bedrooms and 40 larger bed-sitting rooms for management students – many of whom were expected to be mature, short-course students on release from industry. Under the lee of the T-shaped block and facing Luxborough Street an extra single-storey building was slipped in, a local office for district surveyors.

The setting of these separate elements round paved open space, sturdily shielded from the main road, offered the Polytechnic a campus air it had not previously enjoyed. On the other hand the frontage itself struck an urban and triumphalist note, not rare in public-sector architecture of the 1960s. The concept was of a concrete megastructure, forceful enough to command attention on a major traffic artery, articulated by insistent horizontals for the accommodation against verticals for the circulation, bristling with expressed escape stairs at the two ends, and crowned by a hefty overhang along its full length (Ill. 32/18). The priority given to the overhang, which straddles both sides of the front building, was symbolic, for here were located the architectural studios. The teaching of architecture had been to the fore throughout the pre-planning process. The section of these rooftop studios, taking up the fifth to seventh floors, therefore received the designers' best attention; along each of the frontage's four divisions between the circulation towers and stairs ran three interconnected levels, with spaces of differing length, width and height, and sundry provisions for side and top lighting. Unlike the New Cavendish Street spaces, they were neither double-glazed nor mechanically ventilated, and so were subject to road noise and pollution.

By the time of the opening in 1970 of 35 Marylebone Road, as the complex was first formally known, the Polytechnic of Central London had just come into being. So long had elapsed since the early enthusiasm with which it had been planned that it was received with some weariness, reflected in the equivocal reviews of the buildings. The thirteen-year gestation ought to have resulted in a 'singularly beautiful birth. In the event it could be said to have been multiple and unadorned.' So wrote Alan Diprose, a senior lecturer in building technology at the Polytechnic, in a scathing appraisal for the *Architects' Journal*. He found fault with many features from the disposition of the library and the canteens to the blatant separation of the educational buildings from the council housing by means of a '70 metre high air gap ... the two towers present their backsides to each other in a permanently rude gesture of disgust'.⁴² Patrick Nuttgens in the *Architectural Review* admired the strength and clarity of the design, but he too criticised the crudely 'functional' division between the front and back blocks of the architectural college. He latched in particular on to the first-floor pedestrian link between them:

This is where the principle of functional separation and grouping first begins to look inappropriate. For the pedestrian link is not limited to that use; it is in fact the main student publicity room, lined with pin board and littered with the paper and attempts to organize information of all kinds that express the contemporary student's predicament. It may be characteristic of this country that much of the real education happens in a corridor. Certainly the separation of the social and unifying activities, such as the library, into a different block suggests the deadening effect of Jane Jacobs' 'decontaminated cultural district'. That is the principal weakness of the design.⁴³

Some of these difficulties sprang from cost constraints. But the root of the issues lay, as often in architecture, in the brief. Marylebone Road had been first conceived as a monument to the integration of construction skills; the grandiose title 'College of Architecture and Advanced Building Technology',

which survived till the opening, reflected that. But the removal of science and much of engineering from the project and the substitution of management studies undermined that technocratic purpose. The whole vision of a superschool in construction – a ‘National College of Architecture’ – was already fading when the LCC became the GLC in 1965, and was to vanish entirely as the public sector lost glamour. Certainly the facilities which the Regent Street Polytechnic’s School of Architecture inherited when it moved to Marylebone Road in 1970 were far superior to those it had enjoyed in Little Titchfield Street; it was probably the best equipped such school in Britain. But the final organization and remit of the college of architecture remained unsettled till the last moment, and left critics with a sense of fragmentation rather than the promised integration. Already it was being hinted at the time of the opening that polytechnic schools of architecture and construction had failed to differentiate themselves from their university counterparts, except by the lower pay of their staff.⁴⁴

Since 1970 the site has seen both diversification and intensification of use. Architecture, construction and management are now among many topics taught at Marylebone Road under the University of Westminster, and the buildings have been several times altered and expanded to accommodate the various changes. The permeable front and paved court have disappeared, leaving very little of the site open to the elements. The most significant such changes were the infilling of the entrance void and erection of a canopy in 2002 by Dannatt, Johnson Architects, and their creation of the Hogg Lecture Theatre in the back block.⁴⁵ In the words of John Bold, lamenting further changes of 2012 by GHM Rock Townsend, architects:

although the Hogg Lecture Theatre and other teaching spaces survive, the nursery has gone and the accommodation of a greater number of business students has resulted in the recent loss of the open courtyard, in works completed in 2012, to create a fully-roofed ‘learning platform’ which has

much in common with an airport lounge. The transparency which marked the transition from pavement to courtyard, already eroded by the now inevitable front-of-house security concerns, has gone entirely – it is no longer possible even to be disappointed.⁴⁶