

## Chapter 6

### 278–306 Oxford Street

#### Holles Street to Old Cavendish Street

This block is entirely taken up today by the well-known John Lewis store, which grew up from a single shop established on the Oxford Street frontage in 1864, until it finally took over the whole just before the Second World War. Most of the store dates from a post-war reconstruction of 1955–60, following destruction of the Oxford Street building during the Second World War, but the Cavendish Square front is of 1938–9.

#### *Early development*

This was among the first pieces of land developed for building in the early days of the Cavendish-Harley estate. Head agreements subdividing the property between various building tradesmen are dated 1722, though there is evidence that work had started before then, probably in 1719.<sup>1</sup> As first set out, the block was slightly deeper than the length of its frontage, and had good houses at the back facing Cavendish Square. It was bisected laterally by Red Lion Yard, generous in width and accessible from the west, via an opening beside the Red Lion pub in Old Cavendish Street. South of this yard, most of the houses on the side streets (Holles Street and Old Cavendish Street) were in trade use by 1800, as were all those facing Oxford Street.<sup>2</sup> Tallis shows fourteen houses fronting this block in the late 1830s, all equipped with shopfronts at ground level, as they probably had been since the 1770s. Until 1880 the numbers ran from 130 to 140, but there was muddle in the

numbering, since Nos 130–133 recurred both west and east of Holles Street, and No. 134 is shown as covering three separate fronts on Tallis's elevation. The present numbering of the block, though little used, runs from 278 to 306.

The former shops of most interest were as follows, running westwards to Old Cavendish Street from the Holles Street corner. The numbering before 1880 is used.

**No. 132** was from about 1809 to the 1840s the 'cigar divan' of Joseph Hudson, who after serving as a midshipman under Lord Howe (as his grand monument in Kensal Green Cemetery proclaims) opened his tobacconist's shop in Oxford Street, popular with a sporting clientele. Litigious but tenacious like his eventual successor on the site, John Lewis, Hudson recovered completely from a bankruptcy in 1816 and held a royal warrant.<sup>3</sup>

**No. 134** – perhaps all of the addresses so numbered – was occupied for most of the nineteenth century by firms in the furniture trade, first between about 1822 and 1844 Henry Miles and John Edwards, usually described as furniture printers, and then their successors, Charles Hindley & Sons, well-known cabinet makers. A blurred photograph of 1874 shows the Oxford Street front of their establishment decorated for the parade of welcome for the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh; the premises are shown as covering six windows of a block eight windows wide altogether and look substantially higher than its neighbours, suggesting a recent rebuilding. The Hindleys certainly altered their shops to designs by Lander & Bedells, architects, in 1869, and again in 1877–8, when they had taken over all or parts of No. 136. Descriptions of the layout of the premises exist; the main rooms open to the public were known as the Chintz Room, the Front Room and the Mahogany Room. 'The Chintz Room appears to have been the principal showroom of the premises, with "large fireplaces on the east and west sides," and in the centre specimen chairs and sofas, arranged for clients to examine before placing their customer

orders for upholstery'. There were substantial workshops in the yards behind, some facing Red Lion Yard. The firm closed in 1892 because of competition from department stores. Their premises, by then numbered 290–294, were taken over as an adjunct to nearby D. H. Evans & Co.<sup>4</sup>

**No. 135** was the first shop of the china and glass merchant George Phillips, otherwise 'pot seller', who is listed at this address in 1784 and remained there till 1806, when he moved to a site next to the Pantheon.<sup>5</sup>

**No. 137** was the shop from about 1780 of Shepperson & Reynolds, booksellers and stationers, later until about 1826 of Thomas Reynolds alone. They issued and sold mainly light literature.<sup>6</sup>

**No. 140** at the Old Cavendish Street corner was the establishment of the Churton family, hosiers and glovers, present here between about 1781 and 1841, when they moved east to No. 91. About that time No. 139 became Thomas Brandon's lace, mourning and millinery warehouse, and in the early 1850s he took over No. 140, describing it as a 'French flower warehouse', in other words a shop where ladies could choose artificial flowerpieces attachable to the bonnets sold by his wife Anna Brandon, now separately listed at No. 139. Brandon evidently became ambitious to expand or at least amass Oxford Street property, as Portland leases along the frontage were renewed. Having just rebuilt the farther Nos 132 & 133 (later Nos 274–276), at the eastern corner with Holles Street, in 1876–7 he undertook the rebuilding of Nos 138–140 and perhaps also No. 137, together with the first house in Old Cavendish Street. This was carried out to designs by John Giles & Gough in 1876–7 (Alexander Thorn, builder). Brandon died during that process, so the scheme had to be finished off by his executors.<sup>7</sup> The finished building featured narrow, repetitive bays in the Italian style, seemingly stone-faced to meet Portland estate requirements.

The rebuilt Nos 137 and 138 were tenanted by the firm of Rodolphe Helbronner (1813–86), described at the time as ‘the well-known decorator’. Born Rudolph Heilbronner in Bavaria, this versatile figure spent the early part of his career in Paris where in 1835 he and his older brother Maurice (Moritz) established a smart furnishings business. After his first wife’s death in 1849 Rodolphe migrated to London, where he published a manual on artificial flower-making in 1858 – which may suggest a connection with Brandon. Another brother, Leopold, also lived in Clerkenwell around then, working as an artificial flower-maker. Rodolphe was described as a Berlin wool man in 1861, meaning a carpet dealer, but he also held a patent for floor coverings and dealt increasingly in soft furnishings for chic clients including the Princess of Wales from his previous shop at 265 Regent Street near the Polytechnic, while his niece Sophie continued to run the equally fashionable Paris business under the Second Empire.<sup>8</sup> Helbronner expended much effort and ingenuity on replanning his new Oxford Street premises to his own designs. Special attention was paid to improving light and air in the basement. The public part of the shop was equipped with mahogany fittings whose drawers and doors all slid sideways flush with the framing, noted by the *Building News* as an innovation. On the upper floors, where much of Helbronner’s workforce specialized in ecclesiastical embroidery, the same journal remarked ‘some very unique cases or chimney-piece fittings of the “Queen Anne” design, simple and quiet in treatment, and of excellent workmanship ... the door knobs, gas brackets and other fittings throughout are in good taste’.<sup>9</sup> Helbronner did not live long to enjoy these premises. Some years after his death in 1886 the firm incorporated as Maison Helbronner, moved away to New Bond Street and eventually became a dependency of Debenham & Freebody. By the late 1890s the whole of Nos 137–140, by then Nos 300–304, had been occupied by D. H. Evans & Co., consolidating their premises on either side.<sup>10</sup>

1 Old Cavendish Street, next to the Oxford Street corner of this block, was between 1828 and 1831 the flash-in-the-pan emporium of J. J. Vallotton, importer and promoter of French novelty goods. He was the second son of a Bond Street trader of the same name who had prospered selling similar wares but died in 1828. Vallotton junior opened in Old Cavendish Street offering a splendid display of French goods, and for three years advertised volubly in the *Morning Post*, enticing visitors with such attractions as Italian moving figures and fountains, evening raffles, items from a Dutch fair promoted by him, and ornaments made from a patent 'mosaic gold'. He also touted his wares at such places of resort as Brighton, Cheltenham and Leamington. Soon after the sober reign of William IV succeeded the extravagance of his predecessor, Vallotton crashed into bankruptcy, to be heard of no more.<sup>11</sup>

## **John Lewis**

### *The growth of the store*

John Lewis (1836–1928) came to London from his native Somerset in 1856.<sup>12</sup> He worked as a buyer for Peter Robinson, before leasing 132 (later 286) Oxford Street, a few doors west from Holles Street, in 1864 on his own account. By 1870 he had premises also in Holles Street, while along Oxford Street the next shop west was added in 1878 with the architectural assistance of Augustus E. Hughes. His firm then expanded rapidly, until by 1892 he commanded not only the whole 97ft front to the corner, by then Nos 278–288, but a depth of 283ft along the west side of Holles Street, stopping just short of the houses on the south side of Cavendish Square. These properties included 24 Holles Street, the supposed site of Lord Byron's birthplace.<sup>13</sup>

Lewis's primary trade was in silks, the 'long silk shop' being the great feature of the early store, but linen drapery soon followed on. He did not advertise; the key to his early success in Alison Adburgham's view was his greater willingness than other competitors 'to offer a wide assortment of sizes and colours in the goods that he stocked'.<sup>14</sup> By 1895 the shop was well on the way to becoming a full department store. There had been various reconstructions to unite and expand the premises, involving minor architects and surveyors.<sup>15</sup> In 1897 the reputable T. E. Collcutt was hired to rebuild the whole Oxford Street frontage, using John Mowlem & Co. as builders. The upshot was a front of four main storeys, with mini-domes at the end and an open gallery to the fourth-floor tea-room.<sup>16</sup> Despite a reputation for niggardliness, John Lewis was proud of this front, which he regarded as money well spent.<sup>17</sup>

*The row with the Howard de Walden Estate*

Lewis's plan for a complete rebuilding appears to have gone back to 1887, when he began negotiating with the Portland Estate for new leases. The Estate was worried that the presence of trade at the top of Holles Street would lessen the amenity and value of Cavendish Square. Encouraged by the attitude of Charles Fowler, the estate surveyor, Lewis agreed to a covenant of 1892 whereby the northernmost houses in Holles Street, Nos 16–17, would be converted internally but not yet used for trade and would retain the appearance of a house. So things stood until 1897, when Lewis obtained Cavendish Buildings, a block behind, and prepared to connect it to Nos 16–17 by a bridge. Over objections from F. J. Stevenson, Fowler's successor, Lewis pressed ahead in 1900 with the bridge and the conversion of Nos 16–17. The Howard de Walden Estate (as the Portland Estate became known from 1901) therefore started an action against him for breach of covenant. So began one of the most celebrated quarrels between landlord and tenant in London,

lasting on and off for the next eleven years. Throughout, 16–17 Holles Street were left unused and boarded up.<sup>18</sup>

Lewis lost the initial court battle but, obdurate and litigious, still refused to undo the work. A long-serving St Marylebone vestryman and councillor and in 1901–7 also an LCC councillor in the Progressive interest, he argued that since his shop's success raised values and enriched his landlord, it was outrageous that his building scheme should be obstructed. He clearly pictured himself as an outsider and rebel; not coincidentally, in 1900 he replaced the plaque to Lord Byron's birthplace at 24 Holles Street with a bronze relief of the poet (by John Taylerson, a minor sculptor who worked with Collcutt) in a stone niche, and around this time included a portrait of Byron on the firm's letterhead.<sup>19</sup> An interview with Stevenson in 1902 failed to produce a compromise. So next year Lewis was committed to Brixton Prison, a willing martyr to exposing, in his words, 'how far our land laws may be abused by the unscrupulous'. After three weeks he reluctantly ordered Collcutt to carry out the reinstatement and was released. Even so, part of the work did not take place. The Court therefore appointed the surveyor Alexander Stenning to superintend further alterations at Lewis's expense.<sup>20</sup>

A lull ensued, though Lewis took to displaying placards along the walls of Holles Street with quotations from John Morley, John Bright and others 'to the effect that property had its duties as well as its rights'.<sup>21</sup> The Estate under its independent young Edwardian figurehead, the 8<sup>th</sup> Lord Howard de Walden, ignored these provocations, and indeed on a personal level Lewis and he got on cordially. In 1909, however, as Lloyd George's land and tax reform campaigns gathered pace, Lewis returned to the attack, substituting more offensive placards. The most notorious pair read: '16–17 Holles Street – Lord Howard de Walden's monument of iniquity' and: 'In the Holles Street drama the young baron is discovered behind the curtain pulling the wires for the imprisonment of his old tenant'. The young baron felt he had no alternative but to sue. The case came forward in March 1911 with tip-top

barristers on either side, affording high public entertainment. Howard de Walden, forced to admit he had never visited the property in question, was awarded damages of a farthing. So Lewis won a moral victory, enhanced when the Estate announced later that year it was introducing a 999-year lease system, to Lewis's approval.<sup>22</sup> The hatchet was buried at last; and in 1921 Lewis was able to buy the freehold of his site.<sup>23</sup>

All this while Lewis and his store continued to prosper. In 1906 he made his two sons John Spedan Lewis (1885–1963) and Oswald Lewis (1887–1966) co-owners, and purchased the loss-making Peter Jones, Sloane Square. It was at Peter Jones that Spedan Lewis, as he was always called, the founder of the John Lewis Partnership, made his independent début in 1914. That year a new staff hostel, called 'Chadwickham' after the famous Victorian reformer, was built in Bolsover Street, replacing a predecessor in Weymouth Street.<sup>24</sup> But the older Lewis's relations with his employees were generally poor, precipitating a bitter and damaging strike in 1920. After a wartime breach between father and son had been made up, Spedan Lewis was drawn back into Oxford Street, eventually buying out his brother. But the father remained in undisputed charge and omnipresent in the store until about two years before his death in 1928, aged 92.<sup>25</sup>

### *Spedan Lewis in charge*

Spedan Lewis had introduced a profit-sharing partnership scheme at Peter Jones and started publishing a regular gazette, open to contributions from all employees or 'partners'. These innovations were now extended to Oxford Street, where an increasingly open and adventurous style of management prevailed. The new chairman, a hyperactive idealist with interests ranging from angling and chess to architecture, enjoyed luring clever young men and women, many of them graduates, into the firm; some of them stayed, notably Metford Watkins and Bernard Miller, but many did not. The impression of



John Lewis between the wars is of a dynamic but disturbing fluidity. Though Lewis loved to consult and debate, he inherited his father's autocratic streak, wrote much of the gazette himself, and made all major decisions. Money was freely spent in the late 1920s. The partnership bought the Odney estate on the Thames at Cookham as a country resort for its members, while Lewis acquired the Leckford estate in Hampshire for himself but soon shared its amenities with senior members of the partnership.<sup>26</sup>

As for the expanding shop, in 1928 the firm took in much of the Oxford Street frontage east of Holles Street, with Phoenix Yard behind, when it absorbed the drapers T. J. Harries & Co. at Nos 258–266.<sup>27</sup> Harries had a floor space no smaller than the existing John Lewis, but the tenure of the properties was involved.<sup>28</sup> Later the firm added possession of Nos 268–274 up to the Holles Street corner. Expansion westwards to take in the frontage up to Old Cavendish Street was secured when in 1935 Lewis, fulfilling an old ambition of his father's, bought premises being vacated here by D. H. Evans, which consolidated west of Old Cavendish Street in 1937–8. These acquisitions briefly split John Lewis's departments into two large blocks divided by Holles Street and known respectively as the West Island and East Island.<sup>29</sup> The division was far from satisfactory and spurred long-meditated plans for rebuilding.

Spedan Lewis was probably drawn into architecture by his wife Beatrice, née Hunter, an architect's daughter, who had worked in the store and had refined tastes. Rebuilding Peter Jones was the more urgent task. Guy Dawber had briefly been the partnership's consultant architect. But around 1928 Lewis wooed C. H. Reilly, the ebullient professor of architecture at Liverpool University. Reilly was just then shedding his taste for American Beaux-Arts in favour of continental modernism.<sup>30</sup> He came on to the firm's board and soon recommended to Lewis a protégé, William Crabtree, who had submitted a final-year project at Liverpool for a department store. Joining the partnership in 1930, Crabtree first spent time investigating London stores

before undertaking minor jobs at Oxford Street. He became friendly with the Lewises and accompanied them on a visit to Paris in connection with refurbishing the fur department.<sup>31</sup> But he was not employed as the primary architect for reconstructing Peter Jones.

That task fell in 1933 to Slater & Moberly, rebuilders of Bourne & Hollingsworth further east in Oxford Street, after Lewis had solicited advice from Howard Hollingsworth.<sup>32</sup> The layout of the new Peter Jones (1933–5) was largely due to Slater & Moberly, while the credit for the suave, curvaceous but not altogether practical curtain wall belonged to Crabtree, egged on by Reilly but modified with vertical mullions at Spedan Lewis's insistence. Though keen to have a fresh, exciting building, Lewis shunned advanced modernism and rejected the horizontality of Crabtree's first design (influenced by Mendelsohn's Columbushaus in Berlin). Peter Jones, and indeed other buildings erected by the partnership in the 1930s, including 'Clearings', a set of plain brick warehouses in Draycott Avenue, Chelsea, designed by A. H. Moberly, were credited to Slater & Moberly with Reilly and Crabtree as consultants.<sup>33</sup> That formula concealed much friction. In their long, amicably fencing exchanges, Reilly persistently advanced Crabtree's claims and denigrated Slater & Moberly, while Lewis replied that Crabtree had done less than Reilly alleged and was difficult to work with.<sup>34</sup> A brittle tolerance developed between Slater and Crabtree; there was even abortive talk of the latter joining the Slater & Moberly firm. Spedan Lewis for his part remained friends with both, but on a more equal footing with Alan Slater, who was invited to Leckford to fish and tried to interest Lewis in Richard Acland's Common Wealth Party during the war.<sup>35</sup>

### *Rebuilding plans*

By 1935 the focus had moved to Oxford Street. How complete a rebuilding was envisaged is unclear, but there were certainly broad proposals for

tackling the whole of the West and the East Islands.<sup>36</sup> Crabtree was still being pressed by Reilly as the man for the job, though at one stage he had to fend off Erich Mendelsohn himself, by then an exile in Britain and hungry for work. Lewis clearly wished to retain his father's Oxford Street front as long as possible.<sup>37</sup>

The first site to be addressed in detail was the south side of Cavendish Square at the north end of the West Island, where the large houses had been purchased on long lease from the Howard de Walden Estate, by now reconciled to trade. In May 1935 the Building Committee noted 'that the policy of the Partnership would probably be to ask for the greatest amount of glass on every floor, that would be sanctioned by the County Council, and to resist extremely any attempt of the freeholder to interfere further with the use of the site'.<sup>38</sup> This bold stance was not maintained. Competing projects by Crabtree and by Slater & Moberly were being touted in 1936. The latter, more pliant, won out because they made full use of the Portland stone which the Howard de Walden Estate showed signs of preferring, against Reilly's objection. Recalling his father's battles, Spedan Lewis had to remind him: 'my particular objective in life is not to hasten the deplorably slow but inevitable process of the reform of our land laws but to promote the prosperity of the John Lewis Partnership'.<sup>39</sup> Crabtree continued to tinker with the layout, disputing through his mouthpiece Reilly the scale of the grid set out by Moberly. A further design by him for the Cavendish Square front survives through a perspective by Myerscough-Walker dated 1937, showing multi-storey square-bayed projections with Portland stone cladding.<sup>40</sup> As Lewis and his main lieutenant, Watkins, would have none of this, Slater & Moberly were confirmed in the job; Crabtree was reduced to some internal suggestions and to designing the rooftop restaurant in tandem with Franz Singer, one of several refugee architects patronized by the partnership.

The Cavendish Square block of John Lewis, as erected in 1938-9 by the partnership's in-house building department, was a well-proportioned but

old-fashioned building, designed on a steel grid heavily clad in fine Portland stone with deep-set windows in tiers. Of six main storeys with two receding attics, it was thinner than it is today, only half the present depth towards Holles Street.<sup>41</sup> Curving display windows and black-glass cladding to the columns, designed by René Coulon, noted for his glass structures and décor at the 1937 Paris Exhibition, imparted chic to the ground floor.<sup>42</sup> Crabtree & Singer's restaurant, on the fifth storey, enjoyed panoramic fenestration set back from the façades, and a large mural of unattributed authorship beneath the company motto, 'Here is partnership on the scale of modern industry'.<sup>43</sup>

An oil bomb completely gutted the West House on 18 September 1940, destroying inter alia the Byron bas relief at 24 Holles Street. For the firm it spelt less than complete disaster, as damage to the East House was lighter and the Cavendish Square block proved repairable. The partnership had also recently diversified, purchasing the Waitrose grocery chain in 1937 and Selfridge's Provincial Stores in the year of the bomb, so its eggs were not all in the Oxford Street and Sloane Square baskets. Once cleared, the blitzed site played host to various structures and uses, including an army equipment exhibition in 1943.<sup>44</sup>

Meanwhile the rebuilding saga and its rivalries recommenced. The first plan, of 1941, was to concentrate retailing in the West House and rebuild the East House for wholesaling. Because of the exigencies of call-up, the early replanning work fell to Singer, assisted by another refugee, Jacques Groag (whose wife designed fabrics for the store); to his discontent, Slater's firm was named for the time being only as consulting architects. Lewis never liked the austere touch and, as he believed, excessive natural lighting suggested by the refugee designers. By late 1943 Singer had faded from the picture (perhaps due to illness) and Groag had been dismissed.<sup>45</sup>

Crabtree now took over the lead for the future John Lewis and worked up Singer's sketch plans, latterly in partnership with H. A. Johnson as Johnson & Crabtree. Two perspectives of different schemes by him for the

Oxford Street front probably date from around 1943–5.<sup>46</sup> The crisper and probably later version shows an exposed steel frame emerging at the top of the building, alternating horizontal bands of glass and spandrel panels, two storeys of display windows separated by a valanced canopy, and a multi-storey bridge over Holles Street. By the summer of 1945 differences had arisen over the façade, lighting and other issues between Crabtree and the partnership, chiefly Lewis, his main lieutenant Watkins, and his director of building, F. D. C. Allen.<sup>47</sup> Lewis later referred to Crabtree’s design as ‘the bird-cage idea carried to a preposterous extreme’.<sup>48</sup> In October Crabtree finally got the sack (‘I suspect that genuine team-work is too alien to your temperament’, Lewis told him);<sup>49</sup> Slater, Moberly & Uren were now reinstated. In a briefing note for Alan Slater, Lewis elaborated his views anew: ‘We shall be anxious to have as before [at Peter Jones] a general impression of vertical rather than of horizontal lines. And for my part I should like an impression of lightness rather than weight ... A certain solidity is obviously not inappropriate ... but it seems to me that it should be most, if I may so express it, Quaker-like, dignified but unpretentious, something quite different from the note, that Woolland and Selfridge and Peter Robinson and the designers of Regent Street seem to have wished to strike, of heavy grandeur’.<sup>50</sup>

### *Rebuilding achieved*

Thereafter Reginald Uren took architectural control of the project. A New Zealander, Uren came to prominence when he won the Hornsey Town Hall competition in 1933, joining Slater & Moberly three years later as a partner. After the war he replaced the declining Moberly as the lead designer for the Oxford Street store. In 1946 Uren was hard at work on new designs for the frontage, one of which involved a series of bays.<sup>51</sup> Because of objections from the LCC and the impossibility of getting an early building licence, these plans proved abortive.<sup>52</sup> Better temporary shops were built on the West Island in

two stages during 1949–50 under R. H. Pearson of John Lewis's Directorate of Building, latterly incorporating a second-hand 'blister hangar'.<sup>53</sup> In 1951 things seemed to be moving again, and Uren received a 45-paragraph homily from Spedan Lewis.<sup>54</sup> But by this stage Lewis was gradually being supplanted by Bernard Miller, before formally retiring in 1955. Under a fresh building committee the scheme progressed to complete sixteenth-scale plans by early 1953. Still there was no hope of a building licence, so the committee concentrated on phasing and a debate about whether trading would extend above the second floor. There were many alterations to the plans and elevations over the next two years, particularly to the alignment and height of the upper storeys facing Oxford and Holles Street.<sup>55</sup> In 1955 construction at last began in the south-west corner, with Rush & Tompkins as builders. The four phases of construction lasted up until 1960, when the Cavendish Square block was refurbished. The sequential opening of portions of the new store permitted the sale of the East House in 1955 and its closure in 1959.<sup>56</sup>

The completed John Lewis, designed by Slater & Uren, with Hurst, Peirce & Malcolm as engineers, represented an orderly, inextravagant modernism with a hint of Scandinavian influence. The Portland stone façades opt for the modelled grid relieved by sub-frames, often regarded during the 1950s as preferable to the flatness and slickness of curtain-wall treatment. The Oxford Street frontage is just six storeys high, including the recessed top floor. It consists of eleven divisions, each five windows wide, with a narrower division west of centre to break up the pattern. Two outer sub-frames define the larger units, enlivened by yellow tiling on the jambs and soffits, while the mullions themselves are clad in a mauve-grey faience. In each division the mullions are set well back within the sub-frame, and the windows and spandrel panels are further recessed, confirming that the upper windows have no role in display. The Holles Street front and, to a lesser depth, the Old Cavendish Street front follow this scheme. Further back the height rises to eight storeys, in line with the Cavendish Square block.

The store's planning came in for criticism. The partnership had insisted on excessive natural light down to the ground floor, argued the *Financial Times*, entailing two large old-fashioned light wells and sterilizing much of the floor area.<sup>57</sup> There were eight lifts but just one bank of escalators, positioned across the Oxford Street axis in line with the central Holles Street entrance and rising to the second floor only. The loading bay and car parking above – insisted on by the LCC – took up much of the north-west sector, while the partnership's offices at 22A Cavendish Square and Medway House at the Old Cavendish Street corner remained for the time untouched. The upper floors had various special spaces (since eliminated), such as an auditorium, conference room and library, textile laboratory, social club, partners' dining room and a hairdressing saloon. There was also a roof terrace.<sup>58</sup>

The insipid interior styling was entrusted to the Raymond Loewy Corporation of New York and their retailing specialist William T. Snaith; some paintings were contributed by Ethelwyn Baker.<sup>59</sup> Uren was particularly dismayed by the treatment of the Byron Room Restaurant. Here the idea was broached in 1958 of a foyer mural representing Byron's life or spirit, based on a sketch by Snaith. At Mary Adshead's instigation John Piper was unsuccessfully approached. She next suggested Hans Tisdall, but this too was rejected in favour of an enlargement of Snaith's sketch by a minor artist, Alex Bilibin, to Adshead's disgust.<sup>60</sup>

Better success attended art on the exterior. Spedan Lewis had in 1951 advocated metal sculptures in shallow recesses at both ends of the frontage, but Uren preferred them to stand proud of the surfaces.<sup>61</sup> Then the focus became the west end, Uren suggesting Arthur Ayers as the sculptor;<sup>62</sup> later, Epstein allegedly declined for lack of time. In 1960, with the building complete, six artists were approached for ideas for a sculpture for the prominent blank plane of Portland stone at the bottom of Holles Street. As the results were inconclusive, the partnership approached Barbara Hepworth.

She accepted the commission in May 1961 and her aluminium sculpture, *Winged Figure*, made by Morris Singer of Lambeth, was installed in April 1963. Questioned about her inspiration, the artist remarked 'I think one of our universal dreams is to move in air and water without the resistance of our human legs, I wanted to evoke this sensation of freedom'.<sup>63</sup> Of the many changes since the store's completion in 1960, the most important took place in 2006–7 when new escalator banks, aligned north–south were formed within generous light wells. These now define the interior circulation and character of the shop. At the same time a Waitrose-style supermarket for food was opened in the basement at the back.<sup>64</sup> At the north-west corner, 22A Cavendish Square was completely rebuilt and Medway House (11–12 Old Cavendish Street) reconstructed behind the old facades in 1970.<sup>65</sup> In 2018, when the name of the firm was changed from the John Lewis Partnership to John Lewis & Partners, the main fronts of the store were spruced up and given a new fascia.