

Chapter 11

456–556 Oxford Street and 1–7 Marble Arch Orchard Street to Edgware Road

This chapter covers the western extremity of Oxford Street's northern frontage. It was originally built up from the late 1750s onwards on land owned by the Portman family, but today consists exclusively of multi-storey buildings erected from the 1930s onwards. The northern side of the street extends further west than its southern counterpart. The Oxford Street numbering stops at Great Cumberland Place, beyond which comes a final block looking over the open space in front of the Marble Arch and running up to the Edgware Road corner. That block now has the address 1–7 Marble Arch, but was originally numbered in Oxford Street, and so is included here. The chapter is divided into four main sections, running from east to west in correspondence with the blocks.

The whole of the land behind this part of the frontage was known before development as the Home Barn Field. It was leased in 1755 by Henry William Portman to William Baker, who then sublet it in smaller parcels for building. Along Oxford Street the houses were smaller than the better properties of the Portman estate's hinterland, comprising terraces, mostly of third-rate houses, which went up slowly from the mid 1750s.

How many of these houses had shops or were in commercial use from the start is difficult to establish. There were certainly public houses, and some of the first leaseholders of the newly built houses suggest the presence of shops: a baker and a tobacconist were granted leases of houses in the stretch between Orchard Street and Portman Street in 1760.¹ By the time that Tallis

produced his strip elevations in the 1830s, the only houses without shops on the ground floor were at the far western end, which, as if to distance itself from trade, had been renamed Hyde Park Place around 1820.

Redevelopment was minimal until the late 1920s. By that date the Portman Estate was firmly in favour of large blocks replacing the worn-out Georgian terraces. Nearly the whole of the stretch between Orchard Street and Edgware Road was rebuilt in this manner. Most of it was instigated by one man – Henry (Harry) Salmon, director of J. Lyons & Co. – either on behalf of Lyons or another of their subsidiary companies. The huge financial success of the Salmon & Gluckstein empire, and of Lyons in particular, gave Salmon unprecedented bargaining power. The company proclaimed that it was ‘always on the look out for commanding positions with an eye to future developments’; the possession of contiguous sites on such an important shopping street made sound investment sense, and allowed them to develop ‘unhampered by certain restrictions from adjoining properties’.² They must have been aware, however, that restrictions would be, and were, imposed by the Portman Estate, which required plans to be modified and dictated the uses to which the building could and could not be put.

Before the end of the First World War, Gordon Selfridge, Samuel Waring, and Holland & Hannen were all actively seeking development opportunities in this part of Oxford Street, and were encouraged (after the war, in 1921, Waring was granted a lease of the stables behind No. 512). Other offers were unsuccessful, such as proposals either to develop small blocks of flats, or, even worse, open a grocery store, as a Mr Sykes discovered when he applied for a lease of 8 Marble Arch on behalf of Sainsburys.³

After the war, and following the death of William Henry Berkeley Portman, 2nd Viscount Portman, in October 1919, and the imposition of hefty death duties, the Estate looked with increasing favour on large-scale commercial redevelopment, even at the Marble Arch end. In June 1920 Selfridges were still negotiating for a site to the west of Orchard Street, at the

same time as Harry Salmon first appeared on the scene, representing Lyons, initially with a proposal to redevelop the entire Marble Arch block, comprising 4-8 Marble Arch, with the stables and premises to the rear and 1, 3 and 5 Great Cumberland Place. This was soon followed by a proposal, made by Salmon acting for the Strand Hotel company, to take the next block eastwards, between Great Cumberland Place and Old Quebec Street, for shops with a hotel above. By June 1921 Salmon had gained provisional approval to take the Old Quebec Street to Portman Street block.⁴ Less than a year later he had finalized arrangements to acquire part of the next block eastwards.

In January 1923 Henry Berkeley Portman, 3rd Viscount Portman, died. The London Portman estate now passed to his brother Captain Portman, who, facing yet more punitive death duties, decided to end negotiations with Selfridge over the site west of Orchard Street. Harry Salmon wasted little time in capitalizing on Selfridge's withdrawal and his offer for the block was accepted in March.⁵

Although the redevelopment here was largely in the hands of one company and controlled by one landowner, homogeneity was oddly lacking. It is true that the two western blocks on either side of Great Cumberland Place were designed as a matching pair by Lyons' architect F. J. Wills, in a slightly ponderous and over-scaled neo-Classical manner, and on the eastern block the surviving Georgian houses were book-ended by a pair of not dissimilar commercial buildings – here more obviously in tune with the Selfridges model. But then there comes the blip of Burnet, Tait & Lorne's Mount Royal flats – a slice of northern European brick-faced modernism amidst the Portland stone. Tantalizingly, only passing references to the planning process survive from the Estate side. The original plans for the Cumberland Hotel staff annexe, submitted for approval in October 1929, were rejected and elevations 'more in character with Great Cumberland Place' requested.⁶ In the case of the Mount Royal Hotel, an elevation submitted in January 1932 was

considered too low and lacking in character compared with the adjoining approved elevations. A revised plan presented in March 1933, which now incorporated a garage on the northern front, was approved, and the plans and elevation of the new building agreed soon afterwards, apparently without further comment from the Estate.⁷

Nos 456–504: Orchard Street to Portman Street

Today there are just three large buildings that take up this frontage, the oldest being Orchard House of 1929–30 at the corner with Orchard Street. In the middle is a 1980s red brick interloper, and at the western end is Portman House, built in 2001–2 on the foundations of a 1950s office and retail block.

Early History

Development was undertaken here between 1755 and 1765, when a terrace of 23 houses was built fronting Oxford Street, originally numbered 198 to 220. They were not grand: all were of three storeys plus attic, most two bays wide.⁸

This was part of the large grant of land from Henry William Portman to William Baker made in 1755. Brick earth had already been dug on some of the ground hereabouts at that time. Portman's agreement with Baker allowed him to enter into building agreements for the development of up to five acres of the south-east part of the land, part of the Home Barn Field. This was where the White Hart alehouse stood, described in the agreement as a decayed former farmhouse. Baker's lease for the entire land was £600 a year; if he entered into building agreements he was to be allowed 40 years' peppercorn rent, and then an annual rent of £5 for the last 59 years.⁹

Baker leased out the Oxford Street frontage and its backland to William Brown and Francis Hurlbatt, carpenters, who were behind the consortium of local builders and tradesmen that built the houses. These included the bricklayer John Corsar, who was granted leases of four of the houses in the middle of the terrace (Nos 208–211); William Callcott, bricklayer; William Glanvell and Robert Lee, plumbers; Thomas Booth and John Devall, masons; Thomas Vials and William How, carvers; and Richard Wellington and Richard Skeet, plasterers.¹⁰ The corner plot with Portman Street was leased to William Green, a Kensington brewer, so presumably intended as a pub from the start. It was also the first to be completed in about 1757–8. Its first name may have been the Jolly Trooper. Soon afterwards, at the height of the Seven Years' War, it was renamed the King of Prussia, but by 1772 it was known as the Delaware Arms. It was then said to have been built as a 'suttlng house' for the nearby Horseguards' barracks.¹¹

The barracks referred to, together with stables and a riding house, had been built on the backland, with access from Portman Street, for the First Troop of the Life Guards. Known as the Portman Barracks, these will be discussed in a forthcoming volume of the *Survey*. All these developments preceded the building of houses in Portman Square, not begun until 1764.¹² There were three pubs within a stone's throw – the Delaware Arms as mentioned above, and two more in Portman Mews.¹³

By the 1830s all the Oxford Street houses had shops on the ground floor, and many probably had small businesses operating on the first floor. An advertisement in the *Morning Post* in 1830 to let the first floor of No. 203 was addressed to milliners and dressmakers, suggesting that this was already common.¹⁴ Shops at that time included Morgan's, a chemist and druggist, at No. 198, on the corner of Orchard Street; Calder's, a stationer and bookseller, next door at No. 199 and Joseph Clements, jeweller, at No. 214. By 1838 the royal arms were displayed above the fascia of No. 203, occupied by Richard Patterson, confectioner to the new Queen – he also had an ice-house,

supplying ice to his customers in the West End. None of these businesses remained for particularly long periods, nor, despite Patterson's pretensions, were they particularly high-class establishments. Whilst individual shop owners came and went, businesses were often bought as going concerns. There was still a chemist on the Orchard Street corner in the early 1900s, but by the 1920s it had become a branch of W. Barratt & Co. Ltd, bootmakers.

Although the majority of the shopkeepers were drapers and other manufacturers and dealers in articles of dress, the largest and most fashionable store was Mortlock's china and glass warehouse. The company moved to No. 204 (later 470) from the south side around 1860. Their nearby presence may have attracted others in the same line. By 1824 W. G. Cave had a china and glass warehouse at No. 209. There were also Soane & Smith, the china and glass manufacturers, at No. 462 from at least 1880 to the mid 1920s. By then Mortlocks had expanded to occupy Nos 466–470 and had a showroom and gallery to the rear at 31 Orchard Street.

A fine new shop front by Frederick Sage & Co was put up at No. 500 in 1909 for the Savoy Tailors Guild. Established in 1906 in premises by the Savoy Hotel on the Strand, promising quality at moderate prices, they sold ready to wear and made to measure.¹⁵ Their Oxford Street shop featured a central free-standing showcase, set in a deep U-shaped lobby; above was a mezzanine display window. It was swept away when Portman House was built in 1929 on the site of Nos 494–504 (see below). The erection of Portman House also saw the demise of the Delaware Arms on the corner of Portman Street¹⁶

During the 1920s a Lyons café opened up at No. 474, and, briefly, a Lipton's restaurant at No. 484, later taken over by the Carlton Shoe Company, which already had the shop next door. A branch of the shoe shop Dolcis took over part of Mortlocks premises and there was an Etam for many years at No. 488. Another name still familiar today, Dr Scholl, had opened a shop at No. 490 by 1929.

Marks & Spencer (Orchard House): Nos 456–464 with 28–32 Orchard Street
Orchard House, erected in 1929–30 by Thomas & Edge Ltd to designs by Trehearne & Norman, is best known today as the flagship London store of Marks & Spencer. But it was not built expressly for the firm, nor was it intended as its primary West End outlet. That role was reserved for the later Pantheon store at 169–171 Oxford Street.

The original promoters of Orchard House were J. Lyons & Company, who built Orchard House through Maxwell & Ponting Ltd, a company they had lately acquired. The original lease of the site to Harry and Julius Salmon, directors at Lyons, dated from midsummer 1923 but was assigned to the subsidiary company in October 1924. The first sketch elevation submitted by Harry Salmon had been approved by the Portman Estate back in March 1923.¹⁷ As existing sub-leases were not due to expire for some years Trehearne & Norman did not submit plans to the LCC until early in 1928. These were for a speculative six-storey block of shops and offices, in which Lyons & Co. intended to take the upper three floors.¹⁸ The design featured the orthodox stone-faced classicism common to major London buildings of its type and time. But a curiosity of the façades was a series of sculpted heads adorning keystones and balconies based on characters from *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice through the Looking Glass*, carved by A. T. Bradford. Most have since been removed, but the White Knight remains above the first-floor window on the Orchard Street corner, just visible beneath the projecting clock.¹⁹

At the point when the construction of Orchard House began in 1929, Marks & Spencer were actively seeking to establish a new store in the West End. From humble beginnings, the company founded by Michael Marks in the north of England had expanded steadily from market stalls to shops, with its trademark penny bazaars. The first London store had opened in 1899 in Southwark, and by the outbreak of the First World War a third of branches were in the metropolitan area.²⁰ After the First World War, Marks & Spencer

was expanded and modernized under the direction of Simon Marks, the founder's son. Marks was determined to open a store in Oxford Street, assuring his financial advisers that 'even if it never makes a profit, it will be a good advertisement for the business'.²¹

The company duly took space in the completed Orchard House, opening in November 1930 but occupying at first only the major portion of the ground floor and the basement; the Orchard Street corner was originally taken by a branch of the National Provincial Bank. The company's preferred builder Bovis Ltd fitted out the store in a record time of seventeen days, and the shopfront was completed by Holttum & Green. On the opening day, the press noted that the decoration and lighting were 'simple and artistic', and 'the display counters leave plenty of room to move about'.²² The company employed a staff of 250 assistants, primarily young women dressed in the uniform of a green dress. The store sold an assortment of goods, including clothing, household items, stationery and haberdashery, all priced at less than five shillings. It contained approximately 20,000 square feet of retail space, furnished with 4,250 square feet of polished mahogany counters. The success of the store was assured by 1932, when it was expanded eastwards to provide a basement café-bar for customers and a larger sales floor with four entrances in Oxford Street.²³

Lyons & Co. occupied the upper floors of Orchard House as their training centre until 1967. After that Marks & Spencer took over the entire building and acquired premises to the rear in Orchard Street for a major extension. The new block was constructed in 1968-70 by Bovis Ltd to plans by Lewis & Hickey, the company's consultant architects. A three-storey podium supports a four-storey block, a large and utilitarian steel-framed structure with an austere front clad with Portland stone. This allowed the sales area to be doubled as well as providing ample stockrooms and staff quarters, including a cafeteria, welfare facilities, flats and a car park. Around a dozen properties, including the Three Compasses pub tucked away in Portman

Mews, were demolished and a new link road was opened between Granville Place and the mews to provide access to a goods receiving bay at the back. Around this time the bank was relocated from the corner to the west end of the block, and the ground floor of the store was recessed to facilitate the widening of Orchard Street.²⁴

This significant extension did not accommodate the growth of Marks & Spencer for long. 'The Arch', as it was known to the company's employees, came to exceed the Pantheon branch in size. Selling space was increased gradually to five separate floors. The first floor opened in 1976, while the second and third floors followed in 1988 and 1996. Marks & Spencer expanded westwards into 466 Oxford Street in 1979, and acquired the premises of the National Provincial Bank in 1994. After this steady expansion, the store had a sales area of more than 174,000 square feet.²⁵

Portman House (Nos 480–504)

The present Portman House is an almost complete reconstruction of the previous 1950s building on these sites, carried out in 2001–2 for Land Securities to designs by Sheppard Robson.

There had been a previous Portman House on the western part of this block at Nos 496–504, built in 1929–30 to designs by W. Henry White & Sons on behalf of the Portman Estate and the Gas Light & Coke Company. That company, which held an existing sublease of No. 502, had in 1927 been offered a long lease of all five Oxford Street premises here, including the former Delaware Arms at the corner with Portman Street, but decided to rebuild on the basis of a shorter term only. The block, which was built by Higgs & Hill, was planned as a steel-framed building with the usual division between ground-floor shops and commercial premises over. The crash of 1929 appears to have affected the letting of the premises, as the costumer expected to take a large portion, Nathaniel Messer, went bankrupt. In the event

Buszards, the established cake-making firm whose main premises were further east at No. 197, took No. 504 where they opened a restaurant, but sold out soon afterwards to the Aerated Bread Company.²⁶

This first Portman House had been demolished by the end of 1954, when a company called Hesketh Estates had acquired this and the adjoining site to the east at Nos 480–494 with the intention of replacing the whole with a large office and retail unit. In due course Hesketh Estates sold out to the Land Securities Investment Trust, whose regular architects around that time, Fitzroy Robinson, designed the new building. This was erected in 1956–8 and rechristened Gulf House, after the Gulf Eastern Company, a subsidiary of the Gulf Oil Corporation, which leased the main commercial element. The shops were largely allocated to the usual mixture of shoe firms predominant in Oxford Street at that date.²⁷

The reconstruction of the block in 2001–2 involved a new structural steel frame and composite floor, clad largely in glass curtain walling with some reconstituted Portland Stone. Intended for multiple letting, it provides office space over retail units and underground parking.²⁸

Nos 506–540: Portman Street to Old Quebec Street

This block, stretching back to Bryanston Street, is entirely taken up by the handsome Amba (formerly Mount Royal) Hotel, an orange-red brick building of 1933–4 designed by Francis Lorne of Sir John Burnet, Tait and Lorne, in the streamlined moderne idiom they then favoured for public buildings in London.

Early History

The first development on this block took place in the 1760s. Seventeen houses were built fronting Oxford Street (numbered 221–237) with entrances interspersed to three separate stable yards behind. The houses were not particularly large or grand, most having frontages of between 18ft and 20ft.

The largest of the stable yards lay behind Nos 224–231 (later 512–526) and was still operating as livery stables in the late nineteenth century, including a smithy. The former livery stables to the west, located behind the General Townsend pub, had become W. Clark's harness-polish factory and Edwards & Roberts antique furniture warehouse.²⁹ For much of the nineteenth century there was a remarkable degree of continuity in the businesses operating here, some being handed down from father to son, others taken over as a going concern. Not all the businesses were entirely respectable. By 1830 Edward Dalby had set up a billiard room above a cheesemongers at No. 230 and not long after established Dalby's Carminative Warehouse here. Dalby's Carminative was a well-known patent medicine for colic patented by his father – a concoction of digestive herbs and a small amount of opium.³⁰

The present City of Quebec pub, at the corner of Old Quebec Street, is a recent renaming of the former Quebec or Quebec Arms. There may have been a pub on this corner as early as 1770 when this stretch of the street was first built up, and it was certainly in existence by 1808.³¹ It was rebuilt as part of the Mount Royal development.

Electric Palace. This cinema opened at No. 532 in November 1908, in a converted garage with an iron and glass roof. The glass was painted over, and a sloping wooden floor installed with fauteuils for 600–700 people. William Hancock, architect, a specialist in cinema design much sought after for this kind of work during the pre-First World War cinema boom (the Gate Cinema

at Notting Hill, of 1911, was another conversion by him) drew up the plans for the conversion. The impresario appears to have been Horace Sedger. By January 1909 the Electric Palace had come under the ownership of a specially formed company, Electric Palaces Ltd, as the first and foremost in a fast-growing chain of such cinemas across London. Advertised as 'the Premier Cinematograph Theatre in the world', its exterior was described at the time as 'white and beflagged ... decorated with electric lights and garnished with big commissionaires'. Its auditorium was some 150ft in length but only 30ft wide and 14ft high. Programmes ran from 2pm until 10pm, with prices for seats at 1s 6d or 3s, and comprised mostly 'humorous sketches, pictorial presentments of journeys by land and water, athletic competitions, and so on'.³²

A Japanese-style tearoom and a smoking lounge were added in 1909–10. More extensive alterations were carried out to designs by Gilbert W. Booth in 1921, increasing the seating capacity to nearer 800, but by then Electric Palaces Ltd had effectively ceased to operate. The cinema was demolished in 1933 to make way for the Mount Royal flats development.³³

Mount Royal

Arguably the best inter-war building on Oxford Street, Mount Royal was built in 1933–4 to designs by Francis Lorne of Sir John Burnet, Tait & Lorne, for Lyons & Co., with Holland & Hannen and Cubitts Ltd as building contractors. The site, comprising 506–540 Oxford Street, 1–31 Bryanston St, 1–8 Old Quebec Street and 20–27 Portman Street, had been leased by the Portman Estate to J. Lyons & Co. from Midsummer 1932 for a term of 88³/₄ years at a hefty £13,100 rent p.a. and a fine of £94,468.³⁴

Lyons had acquired an interest in the site in 1921, entering into a building agreement with the Portman Estate. Having already begun their corner house and hotel on the adjacent plot to the west, Lyons sub-leased roughly two thirds of the site to the Titchfield Syndicate Ltd, a subsidiary of

Waring & Gillow, in 1929; the Syndicate and the Midland Bank were to provide the finance for the development. However, in October 1932 Waring & Gillow went into receivership, citing amongst the causes obligations and contingent liabilities in connection with this site. After Waring & Gillow's failure, the Portman Trustees seem to have effectively bought out Lyons, assuming the Titchfield Syndicate's agreement and contracting with Cubitts to take over the management and maintenance of the property during and after completion. But Lyons remained the head lessees, and under the guidance of Harry Salmon were responsible for the development's design and planning.³⁵

Plans and elevations were agreed with the Portman Estate in May–June 1933, and the demolition of the existing buildings commenced. Progress was brisk, largely due to some pioneering construction methods. The steelwork for the frame was pre-drilled off site for the maze of pipework to take the heating, lighting and sprinkler systems. It took only eight weeks for the 3,000 tons of structural steel to be erected. The specifications for the prefabricated elements were worked out by J. Stinton Jones, consultant mechanical engineer. The consultant structural engineer was John F. Farquharson and the steelwork was fabricated and erected by Redpath, Brown & Co. Ltd. The floors and roof were constructed of precast units, brought to site and laid in position, the roof having an inch of cork for extra insulation, wooden battens clipped beneath the concrete floors to which insulation sheets of 'Celotex' were fixed. The steel frame was encased with 9-in brick walls, treated on the inside with a waterproof compound and lined with pumice insulation blocks. Windows were standardized excepting the distinctive curved corner windows, all supplied by Frederick Braby and Co Ltd.³⁶

As originally designed, this was a composite building, with shops on the ground floor, a restaurant and bars, and 'all the amenities of a first-class hotel' on the second floor, with small one- and two-bed service flats above. All this was built around a multi-storey garage at the rear on Bryanston

Street, intended to serve the Cumberland Hotel next door. The ocean-liner *moderne* style was set off by sun decks on the two top floors. Emergency stairs were set at five points, rising up through the façades to diving-board-style cantilevered canopies.

The main entrance for the flats was on Bryanston Street, leading to a marble-lined vestibule, with a marble staircase of three flights leading to the hotel floor. Above were 650 flats on seven floors, reached by four high-speed electric lifts. The single flats measured a compact 17ft by 18ft and comprised a living room with bed recess, bathroom, kitchenette and entrance lobby, while the doubles were more generous in layout. Mount Royal thus combined all the services offered in a hotel with the privacy and self-catering possibilities of a flat, at a fraction of the price of a comparable hotel suite. 'At Mount Royal you can be as independent as you like: you can cook for yourself in the ingeniously equipped kitchenette, you can purchase cooked foods in great variety most economically on the premises, or you can have meals sent up from the restaurant'. Dental and medical services were also provided on the premises, adding to the self-sufficiency of the development. The shops below were laid out on 20ft units, necessitating a different steel grid from the upper floors. These too were allegedly selected with a view to supplying the needs and 'customary luxuries' of the tenants.³⁷

The distinctive red brick facings of Mount Royal were supplied by the Basildon Brick Works. A strong emphasis on the quality of the styling and equipment meant that the interiors were just as striking as the exterior. Burnet, Tait and Lorne designed the furniture for the main public rooms, coloured in shades of peach, pastel greys and blues to create interiors that were bright, light and functional – Marion Dorn's rugs providing the main, sometimes only, accent of colour or pattern.³⁸

After the building was completed in 1934 the Mount Royal Marble Arch Company was incorporated to acquire the leasehold interest. Following the Second World War the serviced flats became a hotel. In 1957 Maxwell

Joseph bought the company for £1m.³⁹ He instigated alterations, constructing an additional 44 new rooms on the eighth floor. Thereafter the hotel comprised 714 bedrooms, each with a private bathroom, the majority also with a dressing room. The second floor continued to host the bars and restaurant, as well as a lounge, cocktail bar and grill room. Mount Royal Limited was floated as a public company in 1961, and the following year merged with Grand Hotels (Mayfair) Ltd, which Joseph had formed with associates in 1957, to create Grand Metropolitan Hotels Limited. Joseph's partner, Eileen Olive Simpson, designed the interiors of many of Grand Metropolitan's hotels and restaurants.⁴⁰ At the time of writing the hotel belonged to the same group that owns the Cumberland next door.

Among the shops that occupied the ground floor of the Mount Royal development, mention should be made of the venerable drapery store Thomas Wallis & Co., which moved here promptly in 1941 after being bombed out of the firm's long-established Holborn Circus premises. They first occupied Nos 514–516, gradually expanding to take in the whole of Nos 508–520. Wallis's closed in the early 1970s, to be succeeded by a branch of Littlewoods, already present at Nos 207–213 further east.⁴¹

Nos 542–556: Old Quebec Street to Great Cumberland Place

The Cumberland Hotel occupies the entire island site between Old Quebec Street and Great Cumberland Place to the east and west, with Bryanston Street on the north side, and sits above Marble Arch Station, accessed from about half-way along the Oxford Street frontage. The hotel was built in the 1930s to designs by F. J. Wills for J. Lyons & Company Ltd and incorporated a Maison Lyons corner house, run as a separate establishment from the hotel.

The underground station was rebuilt by the Central London Railway Company as part of the same development.

Early history of the site

The development of this stretch of Oxford Street was well under way by 1762, when five houses were already completed and occupied, the earliest Portman leases dating to 1759. By 1769 there were nine houses facing Oxford Street itself, originally numbered 237 to 245, with 1 Great Cumberland Street making a tenth at the west corner. In the early nineteenth century this row of houses was known as Oxford Street Terrace. Stables behind the houses were reached via two passageways giving out on to the main road. In about 1768–9 No. 245 became a lying-in hospital, ancestor of the late Queen Charlotte's Lying-in Hospital in Marylebone Road. The establishment had started in Duke Street near by but was in Oxford Street until the 1790s, though its address is sometimes given as Quebec Street. One of the earlier residents of note in this terrace was the music publisher Vincent Novello, who was born at No. 240 in 1781, the son of an Italian pastry cook. He took the house over from his parents, and raised his own family there. His son (Joseph) Alfred Novello, who followed his father into music publishing, and his daughter Clara Anastasia, an accomplished soprano, were both born here.⁴²

In the early nineteenth century the numbering was revised. The smarter houses on the west side of the block became a continuation of Hyde Park Place, the name attached to the next block west, and were numbered 5, 6 and 7. The numbering was reversed in the 1870s so that No. 7 became No. 1. They remained as private houses into the 1890s, apart from No. 7 (later No. 1), which had for many decades until then functioned as the Hyde Park Hotel. This establishment (unconnected with the better-known hotel of the same name in Knightsbridge) had grown out of the General Wolfe inn or coffee house, present at 242 Oxford Street from at least the late eighteenth century

and associated with livery stables in the yard behind. By 1818 the inn had become the Hyde Park Hotel. As such it enjoyed a good reputation, until growing competition from more modern establishments and improved transport into central London rendered hotels of this kind obsolete in the 1890s.⁴³ In 1889 the name Hyde Park Place was dropped and this end of Oxford Street was renamed Marble Arch.

Marble Arch Station and Hotel. The original Marble Arch station opened on 30 July 1900. It was sited a little further east along Oxford Street from the current station entrance, towards the corner of Old Quebec Street. Built by the Central London Railway Company, it was the westernmost of the four Oxford Street stations on the line. It was designed by Harry B. Measures and had a surface ticket hall served by lifts to the platforms. Some extra works took place in 1905 to improve the station's ventilation.⁴⁴

The Marble Arch Hotel was designed by Delissa Joseph for the Central London Railway Company in 1907. It formed the superstructure of the station, and occupied the corner plot, Nos 542–548, with entrances from Oxford Street and Old Quebec Street. It survived only until the construction of the Cumberland Hotel (see below). The underground station was reconstructed in the early 1930s to accommodate escalators. In 1985 the plain white tiles that lined the platforms were enlivened by a series of decorative vitreous enamel panels representing fantasy arches designed by Annabel Grey. Some of these were lost when the station was modernized in 2010.⁴⁵

Cumberland Hotel and Maison Lyons

When it opened on 12 December 1933 the Cumberland was hailed as the most modern hotel in Europe. A tour of inspection was given by George V and Queen Mary the day before the public opening. A souvenir booklet was published with a foreword by John Drinkwater, a review of the new hotel by

‘Cosmopolis’, that was effulgent in its praises, and a history of the area by Philip Page.⁴⁶ The buildings it replaced were not lamented here, and elsewhere, too, there was little sign that any value was placed on what was being swept away. ‘Another great strip of dingy mean brick in Oxford Street is being fast rent to pieces’ announced *The Times of India*, adding, for good measure, ‘Oxford Street except in patches is the worst as it is the busiest thoroughfare in London and I rejoice to see this mean yellow brick tumbling into dust’.⁴⁷

The Cumberland was among the fruits of a policy initiated by the Portman Estate as far back as 1912 to encourage the rebuilding of its Oxford Street properties in large blocks. Estate policy from then on was to look preferentially on proposals for rebuilding in large blocks. Together with the adjoining development to its west, it was intended to create a formal setting at the foot of Great Cumberland Place to frame Marble Arch.⁴⁸

The Cumberland was the third of the large West End hotels built by Lyons, following on from the Strand Palace (opened in 1909, then reconstructed in 1928), and the Regent Palace (opened in 1915). Lyons also acquired the Royal Palace Hotel in Kensington High Street in 1919. As well as the hotel, the building incorporated a new and separately managed Maison Lyons, which replaced the earlier Maison Lyons at Nos 362–366.⁴⁹

Construction posed a number of engineering difficulties, not the least of which was the need to bridge over the tube station. During excavations some high-tension electric cables were uncovered at a depth of 30ft crossing the south-west angle of the site, and the site also lay on one of the courses of the old Tyburn brook, necessitating reinforcements and additional tanking in the basement. Vibration and noise from the tube trains were deadened by sheet lead and asbestos pads, while the potential noise and disturbance of the hotel’s own plant was removed altogether by locating most of it in the basement of the staff annex on the other side of Bryanston Street.

The Cumberland is steel-framed, but unlike its near contemporary next door at Mount Royal, the ground floor was designed to comprise large open public rooms rather than regular and relatively small compartments for shops. The similarly large and recently built Dorchester Hotel had opted for reinforced concrete construction, allowing the suites of large rooms of the ground floor to be topped by a concrete raft to support the frame for the bedrooms above. For the Cumberland, massive girders were used, causing a sensation and considerable disruption when the largest (68ft by 10ft 4in) was transported the short distance from Marylebone Goods Station.

Eight floors of bedrooms rose above the ground floor, basement and sub-basement. An annexe for the staff was built at the same time on the opposite side of Bryanston Street; this was connected to the hotel at basement level, and in addition to staff accommodation contained the boiler house. Ventilating and heating plant, workshops and stores occupied the sub-basement of the hotel, except below the Lyons corner house where a chocolate factory was proposed, with packing and dispatch rooms. The chief technical innovations were the en suite bathrooms for every room, together with an air-conditioning and heating system that could be individually operated by the guests.

The architect, F. J. Wills, presumably began drawing up the plans for the hotel in about 1927–8, at the same time as the block of shops and flats on the opposite corner of Great Cumberland Place. Both are faced with Portland stone on their Oxford Street fronts, while the flanks are finished in brick with stone dressings. The entire hotel block rests on a granite podium, but Hopton Wood stone was used for the ground-floor piers and entrance facings. Holloway Brothers (London) Ltd were the general building contractors, and Reade Jackson & Parry the consulting engineers. The sculptural elements on the façade were carried out by L. F. Roslyn, a regular collaborator with Wills.⁵⁰

While the external treatment of the hotel was staid and restrained in style, the interiors were anything but. Here the architect-decorator Oliver Bernard, following on the success of his interior designs for the company's Strand Palace Hotel and Oxford Corner House at the other end of the street, was given free rein to produce lavish and modish settings for both the hotel and corner house.⁵¹ The process of design was exceptionally detailed in the research conducted into the subconscious likes and dislikes of potential guests, from lighting to the time people tended to take their baths. The latter was of particular significance given the number of bathrooms that had to be supplied with hot water on demand. The earliest plans were for 950 bedrooms, all en suite, later extended to 1,000.

For the hotel, the colour schemes were peach, salmon-pink and pale pea-green, with gazelle-tinted carpets covering the floors and the windows curtained with dawn blush silk moiré. The lighting system was referred to by the management as 'potted sunshine'. Publicity for the hotel was not restricted to the home press, with articles published world-wide both during construction and afterwards, from Cairo to the Cape, Bombay, New York and Melbourne. The *Cape Times* speculated that the large flat roof might be laid out as a garden or sports ground: 'It is probable that in later years it will be adapted as a landing stage for aircraft'.⁵²

The contrast between the new Maison Lyons, an Art Deco *tour de force*, and the café style of its predecessor at 362-366 Oxford Street was startling. Close to the Oxford Street entrance lay the Park Café, part of the shopping hall, with 'Melenite' (Australian walnut veneered) wall linings, counter-fronts and enclosures. Here the finishes were Roman mosaic floor in soft greys, buffs and browns, and tubular steel cane-seated chairs and glass-topped tables. The larger Bryanston Café behind was carpeted 'suggesting a meal rather than a snack'. The largest restaurant was the Quebec Café in the basement. The staircase and foyer had dados of a French marble called Caroline, strongly striated in grain. Wall recesses contained seating upholstered in soft green

Rexine. The subdued decoration of these areas contrasted with the ‘mild shock of the café itself ... all hackneyed architectural commonplaces such as walls and pillars have been jettisoned’. Here Bernard’s skill in making use of the lines of the ventilation ducts and flues produced striking visual effect. A certain starkness in the marble dado and vitrolite above was offset by a carpet with a bold geometric design, redolent of the Jazz age, and glass mosaic panels by Ludwig Oppenheimer. Frederick Sage & Co. supplied many of the shop fittings, as well as cash desks and doors.⁵³

In 2003–4 the hotel was refurbished by Reardon Smith, architects, for the Meridien Group, with an emphasis on new lighting and audio systems, and the introduction of an exhibition space in the hotel lobby.⁵⁴ Since the refurbishment there have been numerous further alterations, with the bars and restaurants refitted to reflect the changing fashions of the day. In 2005 the chef Gary Rhodes opened a brasserie that was decorated in the style of a Jack Vettriano painting, and two years later the Carbon Bar was done out with an industrial look with exposed concrete and brick, with steel chains decorating the walls.⁵⁵ In 2010 the hotel was sold by its then owners, the Royal Bank of Scotland.⁵⁶ In 2016 plans were announced to refurbish the hotel as the first ‘Hard Rock Hotel’ in Britain, with work scheduled to commence later that year and the hotel to re-open in 2018.⁵⁷

Great Cumberland Place to Edgware Road (1–7 Marble Arch)

Oxford Street numbering stops at Great Cumberland Place, and this westernmost block has the address Marble Arch. The difference in name reflects an historic difference in character from the adjoining eastern part of Oxford Street, dating back long before the erection of the Marble Arch

opposite in 1851 but lost with large-scale commercial rebuilding in the 1920s. Part of that rebuilding remains, but the visually important corner site has been subject to two later redevelopments, the second still in progress at the time of writing (2018).

For centuries, this corner was inevitably associated with the gallows which faced it at the junction of Edgware Road and Bayswater Road. It was here, in the yard of a public house called Tyburn House, and on the other side of Edgware Road, that in the eighteenth century grandstands were erected for the accommodation of the better-off among the often thousands of spectators. When executions at Tyburn ceased in 1759, the gallows were removed and the site covered by a polygonal turnpike house with gates to the three roads, replacing the Oxford Street bar at the top of Park Lane shown on Rocque's map. A demountable gallows was thereafter set up as required at varying points further north in Edgware Road until its final use in 1783. Hangings now less in view, the Tyburn House property was redeveloped in the 1760s–80s. The house itself was replaced by the New Inn in Edgware Road, with Cumberland Mews behind and small houses adjoining to the south. The Oxford Street frontage, with its view over Hyde Park, was built up with large and fashionable private houses, part of a row of such houses extending from just east of Great Cumberland Place.

The site of the row is shown on a Portman Estate plan of 1771 as Portman Terrace, but this name may never have had real currency.⁵⁸ Instead plain 'Terrace', often without the definite article, was used for many years to designate a long stretch of houses towards the west end of the road, though these had Oxford Street numbers too. By the early 1820s the most select houses – those far enough west to face the park directly – were called Hyde Park Place. The corner houses on Great Cumberland Place were always numbered in that street. At first, the houses looked towards the brick wall enclosing Hyde Park, but by the mid 1790s an entrance had been made into the park opposite Great Cumberland Place. This became known as

Cumberland Gate after a carriage gate, wide enough only for single-file traffic, was installed in 1799.⁵⁹ The gate was aggrandized in 1851 when the Marble Arch, surplus to requirements in front of Buckingham Palace, was re-erected at that spot.

Hyde Park Place was redesignated Marble Arch in 1889, since when 'Hyde Park Place' has been the address of properties west of Marble Arch in Bayswater Road, previously Hyde Park Place West.

Surrey House and Hyde Park Place

Development was started in the mid to late 1760s by David Gall, a carpenter-builder whose ambitious undertakings in this vicinity ended with bankruptcy in 1770. As well as Oxford Street, where he built his own house east of Great Cumberland Place, Gall was building in Bryanston Street and along both sides of Great Cumberland Place, in Edgware Road (notably the New Inn) and Cumberland Mews. Much remained incomplete when he failed, so that relatively little was actually leased to him by Henry Portman and Portman's head lessee William Baker.⁶⁰

In Oxford Street, the house on the west corner of Great Cumberland Place (or Street, as this end originally was), and the house adjoining, had been built up to second-floor level only when they were offered for sale by Gall's assignees in 1771.⁶¹ The Oxford Street house was at first No. 246 but later became 4 Hyde Park Place, finally 4 Marble Arch. The next two along, originally 247 and 248 Oxford Street, were 5 and 6 Hyde Park Place. They were probably both built by the mason Edmund Rush, who took the first lease of No. 247 while 248 went to John Carter Pollard, 'a Gentleman of considerable fortune' of Weston Colville, Cambridgeshire. Pollard lived latterly in Paris and let the house to Lady Essex Ker, a duke's daughter who had been one of Queen Caroline's bridesmaids.⁶²

The adjoining ground, on the Edgware Road corner, was advertised in 1785 as suitable for the erection of a 'noble mansion' or pair of 'spacious houses'. Vaults, stabling and coach-houses were already built, along with the outer party walls – on the west side, the plot abutted an awkwardly triangular house built by Rush which fronted Edgware Road with a bow window in its deceptively grand front (rebuilt c.1911 as flats and shops numbered 9 and 10 Marble Arch).⁶³ The site was taken on by Edward Gray Saunders and his brother the architect George Saunders, nephews of the bricklayer and builder Edward Gray. Their established family building business was based close by on the south side of Oxford Street at No. 252.⁶⁴ Two houses were built, set back from the rest of the terrace. The larger, eastern house was leased to the Rev. Frederick Hamilton, brother of Sir William Hamilton, and the western house to the former's nephew Charles Greville, but in 1790 they were both acquired by their mutual friend John Pryse Campbell, who set about turning them into one. The resulting mansion, numbered 1 in Hyde Park Place and later, as two houses again, 7 and 8 Marble Arch, was known as Surrey House from around 1838, when it was briefly the London home of the Earl of Surrey, later 13th Duke of Norfolk.

Hamilton had realised that his house was an extravagance: 'As my plan is to pass five months every summer at Stanton... I judged that I shou'd be paying a most enormous price for the pleasure of inhabiting my House in Oxford Street for seven months only'. He sold it to Campbell, with all the furniture, for £9,000.⁶⁵

Campbell derived enormous wealth from his family's Welsh and Scottish estates. He undertook a grand tour in the 1780s, and became an avid art collector and patron. In 1789 he married Isabelle Caroline Howard, daughter of the 5th Earl of Carlisle; they had two children, John Frederick Campbell, 1st Earl Cawdor, and Rear Admiral the Hon. George Pryse Campbell.

By November 1790 he was discussing alterations to create a museum, entrusting the work to George Saunders, who was very likely the architect of the two houses to begin with, and had been in Italy at the same time as Campbell (1787–8, visiting Rome and Naples).⁶⁶ The museum had an art-historical rather than decorative intention, and was hailed by the sculptor, John Flaxman, as ‘excellent news for the arts’. In 1796 Campbell was made a peer with the title Baron Cawdor, and a few years later disposed of the house. He sold the contents of his museum in 1800, several items being bought by John Soane.⁶⁷

After Campbell’s departure the house became the London residence of Sir William Manners, later Lord Huntingtower. In 1837 it was bought by Henry Charles Howard, Earl of Surrey, who had already rented this or another house in Hyde Park Place for the past two or three seasons.⁶⁸ It thence became known as Surrey House. After the Earl became the 13th Duke of Norfolk in 1842 he decamped to the more fashionable St James’s Square. Surrey House was sold in 1845 and divided into two once more, the larger eastern house retaining the name. In 1846 it was taken by the socially ambitious Lady William MacNaghton, who moved there in 1846 a year after her return from India.⁶⁹

By the 1870s Surrey House was in the hands of the Hon. Caroline Georgiana Hope and it was from her that it was acquired in 1877–8 by Cyril Flower, later Lord Battersea, and his wife Constance, the daughter of Sir Anthony de Rothschild. They were married in 1877, when Cyril Flower was taking the first steps in his political career. He became Liberal MP for Brecon in 1880. Surrey House was, as Constance recalled, ‘admirably situated’, overlooking Hyde Park. With its fine reception rooms and broad staircase, it was ideally situated for the social functions that were a part and parcel of an ambitious politician’s life. Surrey House became the venue for political dinners, lectures, charitable meetings, receptions and concerts. Gladstone was

a frequent visitor, as was Princess Louise in the course of her many charitable works.⁷⁰

Cyril Flower was an inveterate builder: wherever they lived, he added and built to accommodate furniture, statuary, pictures and books. 'Surrey House had to be beautiful and attractive, as well as spacious, and Cyril spared no pains in its decoration.' There was space at the back of the house 'that allowed the necessary scope for the many additions – not always improvements - which it gave my husband the most intense satisfaction to invent and construct'.⁷¹ The work was supervised by J. S. Cooper, who had been assistant to the talented architect and decorator Thomas Jeckyll. Both had been involved in the development of the Park Town estate in Battersea, as had been the builder, William H. Holland, whom Cooper brought in for the works at Surrey House. Priscilla Metcalf noted that 'the expansion of the building-programme at Battersea in 1877–8 paralleled the pouring of silver leaf and Italian marble into Surrey House'.⁷² Amongst alterations made to the house by Flower was a conservatory, built in 1882 by George Jackson & Sons of Rathbone Place.⁷³ Who was responsible for the lavish interior decorative work seems not to be known; it dates from after Jeckyll's death.

The couple lived at Surrey House for thirty years. Cyril Flower died in 1907, by then elevated to the peerage as Lord Battersea; not long after that Lady Constance moved out of Surrey House, though she seems to have retained ownership, as it was presumably due to her that it hosted the war library run jointly by the Red Cross and the Order of St John to supply library books to military hospitals, and the RAF Comforts Fund which occupied the upper floors as a collection and distribution centre.⁷⁴

From the start Hyde Park Place was an integral part of the fashionable West End, attracting a range of titled, plutocratic, political and professional inhabitants. When the Flowers acquired Surrey House, No. 3 was already occupied by the wealthy radical politician Thomas Milner Gibson, whose London home it remained until his death in 1884. No. 4, whose ample

accommodation included a ball-room or picture gallery, was advertised in 1894 as 'eminently suitable for an embassy', but was to be next occupied by the Irish peer Lord Garvagh and his wife Florence de Bretton, daughter of a Danish baron. A fairly prominent society figure, Lady Garvagh was honoured in 1918 for her work on behalf of wounded soldiers and prisoners of war.⁷⁵ At No. 5 residents included Sir Charles Grant, former foreign secretary to the Indian government, who died there in 1903. In the 1890s-1900s, illustrating the influx of new money and the 'Judaising of the West End' (distinct from Constance Flower's presence at Surrey House), No. 6 was the home of Kate Joel, sister of the diamond king Barney Barnato whose mansion was in Park Lane. It was from here that Barnato's funeral procession set off after his suicide in 1897, as did that of his nephew Woolf Joel, murdered in South Africa the following year. The house was put up for sale in 1909 and subsequently occupied by Admiral Sir Albert and Lady Markham.⁷⁶

The previous buildings on these sites were all demolished when the blocks described below were erected.

1 - 4 Marble Arch

The current block of shops and flats on the corner of Great Cumberland Place was built in 1928-30 to designs by F. J. Wills for J. Lyons and Co Ltd, the fruition of proposals to redevelop this site made in 1922. It was designed to match the Cumberland Hotel to its east, so as to create a mirror image across Great Cumberland Place framing the approach to the Marble Arch and Hyde Park.

The building rises to eight storeys in all, with a deep cornice above the fifth floor. This partially obscures the set-back attic storey, while a further set back is a prelude to a tall top storey - rather more than a mansard. The façade towards Marble Arch is all stone, but to the side brick is introduced, as at the Cumberland Hotel, across the second to fifth floors. The main entrance for the

flats is in Great Cumberland Street so as not to interfere with the commercial shops on Oxford Street – all small units. Gee, Walker and Slater Ltd were the general building contractors, Rubery, Owen Co. providing the steelwork.⁷⁷

Originally, the interiors of the flats were smartly tricked out, with marble work around stairs and doorways (supplied by the Art Marble, Stone and Mosaic Co.), geometric patterned bronze doors (Cashmore Art Workers), and jazz-modern metal work on the stairs and light fittings, in a toned down version of Maison Lyons-style interiors. Twenty-five quite spacious flats were provided on the upper floors, perhaps a little old-fashioned, harking back to pre-war mansion flats, with drawing and dining rooms, two bedrooms bathroom and dressing room, and separate servants' quarters. The original shop at the Great Cumberland Place corner, opened in 1930, was an early design by Joseph Emberton for the couture chain Style and Mantle, but it did not last long.⁷⁸

The Regal (later Odeon) Cinema

The first cinema on this site was the Regal, built in 1927–8, which had a gala opening attended by royalty with 2,400 guests. It was the creation of A. E. Abrahams, who produced a 'vision of luxury and comfort',⁷⁹ to designs by Clifford Aish and Frederick Bromige. These architects must have either worked with or been obliged to conform to elevations drawn up by F. J. Wills, architect to Lyons & Co., which held the lease of this and the adjoining block next eastwards (see above). Wills had produced an elevation of this and the adjoining flats by June 1927.⁸⁰

For the interior, a decorative scheme was devised by Charles Muggeridge in the briefly fashionable 'atmospheric' style, which aimed to create an illusion of a classical open-air theatre. For musical accompaniment the cinema boasted a four-manual Christie unit organ designed by Hill Norman & Beard, the largest type in Europe, which featured the innovation of

a carillon amongst its special effects.⁸¹ The first film shown was 'The Singing Fool', starring Al Jolson, followed by a film of the audience arriving at the beginning of the performance.⁸²

The Regal cinema group was taken over by Associated British Cinemas in 1928 and then by Odeon Theatres in 1945. Although the cinema had been refurbished before the end of the war, it suffered damage from a flying bomb before it re-opened. Following repairs, it opened as the Odeon Marble Arch in September that same year. The last performance there was in March 1964, following which the building made way for a new cinema as part of a wider development providing shops, offices and parking in an adjacent 23-storey tower to designs by T. P. Bennett & Sons. Work was completed in 1967. The new Odeon boasted a screen 75ft wide and 30ft high, and seating for 1,360. The first show was 'A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum'. The auditorium was at first-floor level over shops, accessed via escalators from the ground-floor box office. In 1996, towards the end of the slump in cinema attendances, the decision was taken to convert the cinema into a multi-screen venue, carving up the interior to create five small screens.⁸³

In 2014 plans were drawn up to redevelop the site yet again. Following planning approval in 2016 the Odeon closed in May 2016. By November 2016 the site had been cleared. ('We will demolish everything there, because it's not a very loved building', declared the developer's property manager, Kathrin Hersel.⁸⁴) The master-plan for the new development by Almacantar, the property company which bought the site in 2011, was produced by Rafael Viñoly. Rechristened Marble Arch Place, it will include a cinema, office and retail space, but the new 18-storey tower will be primarily residential, with about 54 apartments, while the offices will occupy a seven-storey commercial block. All the street elevations and the entirety of the tower are to be clad in Portland stone, There will also be an element of public open space, with a new pedestrian route between Marble Arch and Bryanston Street. The building contract was awarded to Brookfield Multiplex.⁸⁵