

Chapter 20

257–373 Oxford Street

Swallow Place to South Molton Street

At first sight, the south side of Oxford Street between Oxford Circus and Bond Street underground station has little to recommend it, dominated by bland commercial buildings of the later twentieth century onwards. On closer inspection the heart warms a little. Next to nothing of the original Georgian fabric remains, but there are sundry survivors of the Victorian and Edwardian eras: the former Noah's Ark pub at No. 313 with its curious pair of sculpted figures high up in niches; the crisp red brick of the former bank on the corner of Harewood Place and the answering corner block opposite faced in stone, have a wealth of surface detail, bows and bays, gables and turrets. Further west, Nos 353 and 369–373, both designed by the prolific E. Keynes Purchase, are characteristic of the large and confident buildings that began to appear in Oxford Street around 1900.

From the inter-war years two buildings stand out, the former Woolworth store at 311, and the HMV shop at 363–367, the latter still surviving in its original use at the time of writing, though Joseph Emberton's architectural panache has suffered from unsympathetic alterations and its exciting interior has long since been ripped out.

Early history and landownership

The few early maps that show this area in any detail suggest that the first buildings to go up here were erected shortly before 1720, coinciding with the

development of Hanover Square. Until then the whole frontage of Tyburn Road or Oxford Street west of Swallow Street (the predecessor to Regent Street) belonged to the parish of St Martin in the Fields, but to cater for the rapid pace of building south of the road in northern Mayfair the new parish of St George's, Hanover Square, was created in 1724.

The large houses on the north side of that square, started around 1715, and in the streets that led off it on the north side (Princes Street to the east and Tenterden Street to the west), backed on to Oxford Street, their gardens screened from the road by stables and coach houses. This meant that the number of houses actually fronting Oxford Street itself was small in the first place. Harewood Place, the approach road to Hanover Square, was originally named Roxburgh Place after the house on the corner with Hanover Square built for the Duke of Roxburgh, and known as Roxburgh House until the early nineteenth century when it was acquired by Edward Lascelles, first Earl of Harewood. The freeholds along this part of the Oxford Street frontage, in modern terms roughly between Nos 265 and 311 inclusive, were broken up from an early date.

A small warren of low-status buildings existed west of Swallow Street by the 1720s. Among them were Oxford Court and Dolphin Court. Oxford Court is first attested in print in 1728 and probably the ancestor of the present Swallow Place.¹ Here too was the original Hog in the Pound alehouse, which stood opposite Nibbs's Pound on the other side of the main road. This was the scene in 1726 of the notorious murder of the landlord John Hayes by his wife Catherine and her two lovers. A little before the laying out of Regent Street the pub relocated westwards to the corner of South Molton Street, where it was in business by July 1806.²

Further west (between the present Nos 313 and 379) the land belonged to the City of London, being part of the City Corporation's Conduit Mead Estate. This holding centred upon New Bond Street, with irregular boundaries east and west; a small section extended north of Oxford Street,

covering the site of the present Stratford Place. In 1666 the fields and meadows covering the southern portion of Conduit Mead were let to the Earl of Clarendon, and over the next fifty years they were much built up, with little interference from the Corporation. Thereafter, several reports were made by the City Lands Committee on the continuing development of the Mead, prompted by concerns that the boundaries of their estate were in danger of being lost and forgotten. Profits from improved rents were lining pockets other than the Corporation's, but it was many years before the City took any active interest in managing its estate. By the 1740s 'large houses, mostly inhabited by persons of considerable Rank' were reported as having been built on parts of the estate, but along Tyburn Road 'Slight Houses, Coach houses etc of moderate Rents were erected for the use and accommodation of the said buildings'. These last were poorly built and likely to need rebuilding when the leases fell in.³

In 1716 just four lessees were noted on the City's section of the Oxford Road. A rental drawn up in 1743 noted around fourteen houses that fronted the road. This number had risen to twenty-five by the 1790s, partly by filling up gaps, but sometimes by replacing one large building with a number of small ones. When the house on the corner of Bond Street burned down, four houses were built on the site: two in Bond Street and two in Oxford Road.⁴ By the time of Rocque's map (1746) several streets debouching into Oxford Street on City territory were well established beside the estate's backbone of New Bond Street. To that street's east ran Dering Street, known as Shepherd Street till about 1860; and to its west Woodstock Street, followed by South Molton Street with a parallel lane behind. Between Woodstock and South Molton Streets a slummy back area developed, marked by Rocque as Silver Court, but known by the 1790s as Oxford Buildings.

Nineteenth-century businesses and institutions

This section covers a selection of significant shops, businesses and institutions which grew up along the frontage in the nineteenth century, mostly between Harewood Place and Dering Street. Several were industrial enterprises of note, but other activities found a home here, including a college of chemistry and a hospital. Many started out in former stables and coachhouses attached to the north side of Hanover Square, which lost residential status after 1800, leading to gardens and outbuildings behind the square's big houses being taken over for commercial use. From at least the 1770s Harewood Place was gated at the Oxford Street junction, in order to protect Harewood House and Hanover Square from trade vehicles and other commercial incursions. A simple wooden barrier was replaced in the nineteenth century by iron gates. These were removed in 1893 by the London County Council and sold or given to Sir Walter Gilbey.⁵

Though *Tallis's Street Views* show that shop windows had sprung up along most of this frontage by the 1830s, the presence of industrial trades gave a masculine character to this section of Oxford Street's south side. In contrast to the preponderance of drapers and shoe shops opposite, only a few hosiers, outfitters and jewellers had shops here, amidst mangle makers, oil and colourmen, tobacconists, stationers, a piano maker, tallow chandler and seed merchant. This character persisted into the second half of the nineteenth century. To give one such example, 'five doors west of Hanover Square gates' the former No. 315c, later 301-303, was the home in the mid 1850s of George Simpson & Co., whip manufacturers and agents for patent freezing machines. This firm marketed the domestic inventions of the Piston Freezing Machine and Ice Company, which showed devices patented by Henry Clark Ash at the

1862 International Exhibition. The Piston name eventually supplanted that of Simpson, and stayed in Oxford Street till about 1899, when the company moved to Wigmore Street.⁶

In this section the businesses are discussed in order from east to west, followed by the two institutions. Numbers along this section of Oxford Street were exceptionally confusing before 1880, since several different premises carved out of former coachhouses and stables adopted the numbers 313, 314 and 315, with little regard for logic or neighbours.

James Purdey & Son

The name Purdey has worldwide renown in gun making and the firm continues to this day. James Purdey acquired the business of an earlier gunmaker of repute, Joseph Manton who had moved to 11 Hanover Square and 315 (old numbering) Oxford Street in 1820, a little east of Harewood Place. At that time Manton was known as the 'king of the gun makers'; the high cost of his pieces, an expensive habit of bringing law suits for infringements of his patents and some unhappy property speculation all contributed to his bankruptcy in 1826, when Purdey bought him out. James Purdey was born in 1784 in Whitechapel, the son of a blacksmith. He worked for Manton between 1805 and 1808, then for David Forsyth, before setting up on his own account in 1814.⁷

Purdey initially took a fourteen-year lease from John Hulme of Perry Hill, Cliffe, near Rochester, Kent, but the freehold probably belonged to trustees acting for the Tirel-Martin family, John Tirel-Martin having owned a house on the north side of Hanover Square.⁸ The Oxford Street premises consisted of a shop at No. 315 and a workshop next door at 314; because of much confusion in the street-numbering Purdey quickly adopted the address 314¹/₂ Oxford Street. His firm soon advanced to a reputation equal to that of Manton's, and he had numerous high-ranking customers, though he also

began the manufacture and sale of lower-quality guns to the trade. His best-quality pieces enjoyed royal patronage, and he was given a royal warrant in 1857 as gunmaker to the Prince of Wales. In 1858 James's son, also James, took over the business which by then had been supplemented by shotgun-testing fields at Hornsey Wood, and a six-acre shooting ground and rifle-testing site known as Foxholes, near Harrow. The firm moved to South Audley Street on the expiration of a lease on the Oxford Street premises, latterly described as 'a dark and inconvenient place, somewhat confined in space'.⁹

Duppa & Collins, later Cowtans

The decorating and wallpaper manufacturing concern of Cowtans, formerly Duppa & Collins, went back to 1791, when James Duppa opened a paper-hanging warehouse on Cheapside. The move to Oxford Street came in about 1805 when a branch was opened some yards to the west of Harewood Place, and in due course the business relocated here in its entirety. Mawer Cowtan joined the firm in 1833. By the time that the building on Oxford Street was depicted in Tallis's street views the company had become Duppa & Collins and was on two and a half storeys, with a shop window. The address was No. 314 (old numbering).

In 1843 J. B. Papworth refronted the premises, adapting the asymmetrical elevation to his mixed Italian-Grecian idiom. A surviving drawing may not show the exact version implemented, as a complimentary description in the *British Almanac* mentions segmental arches over the shop front. 'Taken as a whole,' pronounces the reviewer, 'it shows well – certainly quite eclipses the neighbouring College of Agricultural Chemistry [Royal College of Chemistry], which it causes to look more puny and insignificant than ever.' From 1862 the firm became Purdie, Cowtan & Co, then Cowtan & Manooch and finally Cowtan & Sons in 1872. As the century progressed the company expanded from wallpaper to include interior decoration and

upholstery. Cowtans continued at this address (renumbered in 1880 as 309 Oxford Street) until 1921 when the business transferred to Grosvenor Gardens.¹⁰

George Bullock, and Walter & Whitehurst

The sculptor and marble mason George Bullock first established his reputation in Liverpool, then followed his better-known brother William to London where the latter opened his famous Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, in 1812. In the following year, with a business partner, Colonel Charles Fraser, he took a lease of 4 Tenterden Street together with the workshops at the foot of its garden that had a frontage on Oxford Street, somewhat to the west of Harewood Place and next but one beyond Duppa's premises. Known as George Bullock's Mona Marble Works, these were intended to exploit the marble of that name from the Maes Mawr quarry on Anglesey, where Bullock had bought the rights to mine in 1806. Bullock lived lavishly and entertained hospitably, for instance inviting Canova to dine during the latter's visit to England. His enterprises appear to have flourished, but he died suddenly in Tenterden Street in May 1818, allegedly in part because Fraser mishandled his affairs and his outgoings exceeded his capital.¹¹

In 1820 the coach builders Walter & Whitehurst moved from Margaret Street near by to Bullock's former premises, which then had a frontage of about 150ft and were on more than one storey. A major fire gutted the building in 1833 and destroyed their large stock of new and second-hand carriages.¹² Despite their losses Walter & Whitehurst rebuilt, and continued their coach factory. The building shown in Tallis's view (then not uniquely numbered 313) must be the replacement – a four-storey factory or industrial warehouse, never typical for Oxford Street. It cannot have been well built, for in July 1847 the whole of one side of the factory collapsed and fell into the street.¹³ This may have been the final blow to the company. The following

year a firm of window-blind manufacturers, Tylor and Pace, were operating from this address.¹⁴

Laurie & Marner

The manufactory of the saddlers and carriage makers Laurie & Marner was founded by Peter Laurie in 1801, first at No. 293 and later at 296 Oxford Street (old numbering), just east of South Molton Street. By about 1809 Laurie, who at first lived on the premises, was advertising as harness maker to the Prince of Wales, the household cavalry and the East India Company. After having served just three years of an apprenticeship as a saddler in Edinburgh, Peter Laurie's quick temper had resulted in a hasty departure for London. Here he worked for David Pollock, saddler to George III, before setting up in business on his own account. Laurie combined his business activities with a keen interest in politics and amateur dramatics. He was knighted in 1824 and became Lord Mayor eight years later. His nephew John Laurie took over the business in 1820.¹⁵ By 1840 Laurie & Company occupied Nos 296 and 297; Tallis's street view indicates the royal arms rising above the fascia. By 1841 Richard Goodwin Marner joined the company, which for most of the next two decades was run by him and John Laurie.

In 1851 the partners acquired No. 313, the former site of Walter & Whitehurst's factory,¹⁶ giving up their earlier premises further west soon afterwards. Then in 1862 they undertook a major rebuilding to designs by C. O. Parnell, with Myers & Son, builders. Parnell designed a grand palazzo front, with giant Corinthian columns resting on massive rusticated piers and supporting a bold entablature.¹⁷ A dramatic fire destroyed the workshops to the rear in 1866 and burnt out the upper floor of the main building. It was impressive enough to command the presence of the Prince of Wales and attendant noblemen, who enjoyed themselves giving instructions to the firemen.¹⁸ But business continued as usual and Parnell's grandiose façade

survived until it was replaced in the 1880s by a new building for another coach manufactory on the current HMV site at Nos 363–367.

Royal College of Chemistry

The presence just west of Harewood Place between 1846 and 1872 of the Royal College of Chemistry and of its neighbour, the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital, was more a symptom of the Victorian institutionalization of Hanover Square than of any shift away from commercial character in Oxford Street itself.

The college, which stood on the site of the present No. 299 (formerly 315), was founded with the encouragement of Prince Albert in emulation of Justus Liebig's Department of Chemistry at the University of Giessen.¹⁹ John Lloyd Bullock, pharmacist and drugs manufacturer, and John Gardner, medical practitioner, were former students of Liebig and keen to establish a college of chemistry in England, both for the wider benefits to medicine, arts, and agriculture and to the more particular benefits of advancement for themselves. They canvassed support, publishing a proposal for establishing a college in 1844. Hopes for the college to be attached to the Royal Institution and to bear the name 'Davy College of Chemistry' were dashed when the Institution declined, on the grounds of lack of space. Instead a lease of 16 Hanover Square was purchased, and with Prince Albert's support the title Royal College of Chemistry was adopted in 1845. It was promoted by a number of senior establishment figures including many agricultural landlords such as William Baring, the first Chairman of the council. Interest in chemistry as applied to improved agricultural methods provided a vested interest. Others were medical men, chief of whom were Sir James Clark, physician to Queen Victoria, also Henry Bence Jones, Professor of Chemistry at St George's Hospital.

In 1846–7 laboratories were built on the site of the coach-house and stables, fronting Oxford Street (latterly these had been converted or rebuilt as a shop with living accommodation over, James Purdey the gun maker having been here briefly in 1827). Plans were drawn up by James Lockyer, and the foundation stone was laid by Prince Albert who contributed to the building fund and was instrumental in bringing in August Wilhelm Hofmann as the first Professor. The new building was of two storeys over a basement and of five bays, in an Italian palazzo style, with rusticated ground storey framing tall round-arched windows on either side of the central entrance, and a piano nobile with ionic pilasters framing large sash windows. It cost more to build than the original estimates had promised, coming in at around £5,000 and leaving the college chronically in debt – a circumstance not helped by the exceptionally generous sums offered to Professor Hofmann.

In 1849 the Hanover Square house was disposed of, and two years later the Government purchased the college, amalgamating it with the School of Mines to create the Metropolitan School of Science Applied to Mining and the Arts. But the name of the Royal College of Chemistry continued to be used, and Hofmann remained at its head, on a considerably reduced salary. The new financial security allowed for a lecture theatre to be built to the rear of the laboratories – always intended, and the foundations had been laid in anticipation. It was more urgently required, with the increase in student numbers from the School of Mines.²⁰

The College remained in Oxford Street until 1872 when it relocated to Exhibition Road. The General Medical Council took over No. 299, but by 1913, with the view that the premises needed rebuilding, it decided to sell up and moved to Hallam Street.

Royal Orthopaedic Hospital

Next east of the College of Chemistry, at No. 297 (previously 315) the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital from 1856 to 1904 occupied a site extending back to 15 Hanover Square. The hospital was founded in 1838 and began to treat patients two years later from a house in Bloomsbury Square. Originally known as the Infirmary for the Cure of Club Foot and other Contractions, its establishment was largely due to Dr William John Little, who wished to employ new surgical treatment for club foot pioneered by Louis Stromeyer in Germany. Little himself had a club foot that was successfully operated on by Stromeyer, following which he studied under the surgeon.

The hospital's directors purchased the freehold of the house, its garden and the former stables fronting Oxford Street for £6,000 in 1856, after the Duke of Bedford refused to renew their lease in Bloomsbury Square. The house in Hanover Square was large enough to accommodate twice as many patients as the Bloomsbury house, and the frontage to Oxford Street was appreciated for keeping the hospital in the public eye. Alterations were carried out by the builders Piper & Son, to designs by the architect William Beck. They were speedily completed and the hospital was opened in June 1856 by Prince Albert.²¹

The house in Hanover Square provided rooms for in-patients. The Oxford Street frontage where the stables and laundry had previously stood was adapted as a public entrance, reception and waiting rooms, and an out-patients' department. It was described as of two stories only in height with a central arched entrance 'somewhat singular in design' and having 'Roma-Italian peculiarities, finished at top with an imposing cornice, beneath which was a blank space intended 'for the purpose of indicating the nomenclature of the building and its purposes, in sunken lettering'.²² No picture is known, but the overall effect must have been like an updated version of its neighbour, the College of Chemistry.

The hospital continued on this spot until 1904. Ambitions to rebuild, under discussion in the late 1890s, split the directors on the matter of relocating to a new site or rebuilding on their existing site. Matters dragged on into the new century, but the arguments in favour of removal won in the end. The site in Oxford Street was just too constricted. A special grant from the Prince of Wales's Fund to assist with removal and rebuilding costs was probably the tipping point. In the end, the Royal merged with the National Orthopaedic Hospital and the new hospital was built in Great Portland Street.²³

Gazetteer

In this section the addresses on this part of the frontage are covered running east to west. The main emphasis is on buildings currently on the sites, with reference back to earlier history where it is of particular interest. The intermediate streets are indicated.

Swallow Place to Harewood Place

Nos 257–261. Though west of Swallow Place, these sites belonged to the Crown land purchased for the development of Regent Street. The original three minor stucco-faced buildings erected here in the 1820s were replaced first by a small stone-faced building designed by E. J. Tanner of Henry Tanner junior's practice in 1915, and then again in 1960 by a small curtain-walled block of offices and shops designed by Anderson, Forster & Wilcox, architects. Plans were in hand to redevelop and combine the block with 255–259 Regent Street in 2019, obliterating Swallow Place in the process.²⁴

Nos 263–269, with 3–5 Swallow Place, may be the ugliest building in Oxford Street. In 1961 the freeholds of these sites were divided between the Crown and the Legal and General Assurance. Company. Prices Tailors, a subsidiary of United Drapery Stores, negotiated a lease to rebuild, once again using Anderson, Forster & Wilcox as architects, and their glass-fronted building, similar to that at Nos 257–261, was erected in 1962–3. The crude prefabricated fronts of c.1990 at these addresses line up with Nos 257–261 and probably represent a reworking of the previous Nos 263–269, not a wholly new building. Along with Nos 257–261, these buildings may be demolished under a reconstruction plan before Westminster Council in 2018–9.²⁵

A previous No. 263 was the address of Herbert Barraud’s photographic studio, which he operated from 1882 to c.1891. Barraud was born in London, the eldest son of the artist Henry Barraud. He claimed his Oxford Street premises as the largest and best-fitted studio in Europe, according to an early advertisement. It was situated on the top floor of the building, where a purpose-built glass house was constructed to maximize natural light. A lift was installed so that his clients need not use the stairs. His society portraits were published as *Men and Women of the Day*, produced each year from 1888 to 1891. Barraud’s business then became a limited company, but he was struggling financially, his income seemingly insufficient to support an extravagant lifestyle. The Oxford Street studio had to be given up, and Barraud became the manager for another photographic firm in New Bond Street, Mayall & Co.²⁶

Nos 271–273 were built as a pair, perhaps in the 1860s, as the stuccoed window surrounds suggest. Among the many and various occupiers of the shops here was the Aerated Bread Company, which occupied both premises in 1894.²⁷

Regent Hall at Nos 275–279 was originally built as an ice rink and taken over by the Salvation Army in 1882. The present frontage dates from 1959-60, when the previous building of 1876 was rebuilt along with its neighbours.

Originally the former consisted of a narrow front to the street at No. 275, a Tudorish confection of red brick with stone mullioned and transomed windows, leading to a wider hall at the back. The whole had been erected on the site of a former stable yard and entrance at the then 316–317 Oxford Street, which had been sold at auction in 1875.²⁸

The Oxford Circus Rink was one of many short-lived products of an ice-skating craze which hit London in the 1870s. In March 1876 *The Era* announced:

Rinks are growing like mushrooms. Bazaars where people will no longer purchase toys and fancy articles, chapels when the congregations have departed, furniture warehouses long disused, livery stables and picture galleries yield to the fashion of the day, and are transformed into skating Rinks.²⁹

No expense seems to have been spared for the Oxford Street enterprise, which was designed by Edward Paraire.³⁰ It opened in February 1876, and was advertised as having been equipped with all the latest improvements. The large hall had an ornamental roof, with a chandelier in the shape of crystal feathers. Refreshments ‘supplied by a Parisienne patissier of celebrity’ were offered. Other novelties included illuminated skating fancy dress balls and concerts. The whole was highly decorated with statuary, mirrors and illuminations designed by J. Defries and Sons. There was also an associated restaurant boasting ‘the latest discoveries in culinary art’, in Russian and French cuisine.³¹ An early visitor noted: ‘There are large mirrors, and beautiful figures of every kind, and soft sofas to recline and flirt on. A gallery above to look down on the throng, and, not last, a first rate buffet’.³²

The vogue for ice-skating soon passed. By July 1879 the rink had closed and the premises had been sold to General Food Stores Ltd. But large grocery

or food stores never seem to have fared well on Oxford Street, so this proved to be a flash in the pan.³³ The hall was then acquired by the Salvation Army and opened by General Booth on 18 March 1882 as its first central London venue.³⁴

According to the Salvation Army's records the Regent Hall or Rink, as it often continued to be called, was taken largely on the initiative of the 'Army Mother', Catherine Booth, who had begun missions and marches in the poorer parts of London's West End to complement those in the East End. The Army was never an institution to be reticent about its activities. At the opening the General declared 'this heavy piece of siege artillery' in working order. 'A noisy contingent' of the so-called Skeleton Army, which had been created to disrupt the Booths' organization, was reported to be present outside in the street on this occasion, but caused no serious disturbance.³⁵

The early history of the 258th Corps, as the Regent Hall establishment came to be called, concentrated on relieving distress, on street missions and marches, often rowdy because of the hostility the Army provoked, and on the creation of a high-class band. The blatancy of its publicity also caused local friction. After alterations had been made to the hall in 1886 by the Army's regular architect, E. J. Sherwood,³⁶ its neighbour at No. 277, the gunmaker E. M. Reilly, objected to the use of the entrance passageway. At the time of the opening this had been lined with 'rows of gas jets burning with a seductive glare, enough to make the gin palaces look to their laurels', while further prominent lamps and a large 'transparency' at the gateway proclaimed 'Salvation Full and Free' and 'Salvation Here and Now'. In 1889-90 Reilly took the Army to Court, claiming without success that under the original lease of the stables which the hall had replaced the passageway could only be used as such.³⁷

Few alterations seem to have been made to the hall over the next sixty years, though amateur murals may have been contributed in 1893 by J. Earle Morrell.³⁸ The appearance of the interior is poorly recorded, but there were

side galleries and open iron columns, doubtless dating back to the skating rink. As to the frontage, by 1909 there was a Lyons café at Nos 277–279, though that later retrenched into just 277. In 1959–60 frontage and hall were both rebuilt to the designs of Ernest J. Lipscomb, surveyor to the Salvation Army Trustees. The hall now appears entirely of that date, but the columns lining the walls in supporting the ends of roof trusses probably go back to the skating rink. The roof is coved, and lighting comes mainly from a clerestory on either side.³⁹ The elevation at Nos 277–281 is in very plain brickwork.

No. 283. Above the replaced shop front is a lively Venetian Gothic stone façade of the 1880s, currently painted white. For much of that decade the occupants were the Oxford Club (a sporting club offering billiard rooms and musical evenings), along with the booking office for the Great Northern Railway Company. Alterations were made around 1894 for the Aerated Bread Company by their architect G. Edwards, and the ABC was still operating a café here in the mid 1950s.⁴⁰

No. 285 was reclad and refurbished in about 2007–8 for the Italian retail chain Carpisa (selling luggage, hand-bags and fashion accessories).⁴¹ In the mid 1950s it was occupied by ladies' outfitters, Mary Parque, a modish Art Deco shop front having just about survived the war years.⁴² *Tallis's Street Views* of c.1839 depict a similar four-bay property, then occupied by a seed merchant, Henry Clarke, and numbered 315. But it is unlikely that any vestige of that building remains.

Nos 287–291 were built in 2016–17 (Campbell Architects), together with 11 and 12 Hanover Square. The development, sponsored by Aviva Investors, has double-height shop windows and patterned faience cladding. It replaces two predecessors. At No. 287 was a red-brick Queen Anne-style building of 1884 designed by C. N. Beazley, into which had been inserted a Bata shoe shop by

Katz & Vaughan in 1961. To its west at Nos 289–291 was a plain commercial block stretching through to a larger office element facing Hanover Square, planned by Denis Edmund Harrington, architect, in 1968 but not completed till 1971. The previous No. 289, photographed in 1954, may have been largely a Georgian survival, judging by its diminutive scale compared to its neighbours.⁴³

Nos 291A–B, with a deep return at 1–5 Harewood Place, replaced the stables of the former Harewood House, which lay immediately to its south at the corner of Hanover Square. After the fourth Earl of Harewood's death in 1892, the property was not wanted by the Lascelles family and was bought jointly in 1893 by the Duke of Westminster and Sir Walter Gilbey on behalf of the Royal Agricultural Society of England, then occupants of the neighbouring house in the square, so that the Society could expand into the corner house. The stables at the back facing Oxford Street were sold for redevelopment as bank and office premises to help pay for the purchase.⁴⁴ The new building, erected by J. Grover & Son, forms a strong composition of 1894 to designs by R. J. Worley in his customary Northern Renaissance brick style, forcefully red all over. Rising to five storeys, it is topped by sharply gabled attics and towering chimney stacks. The corner (No. 291B) housed a branch of the National Provincial Bank. The rhythmic bay windows that play over the upper storeys are here forsaken for a beefier frontage at ground and first-floor levels with chunky rusticated pilasters; this is one of the few nineteenth-century shopfronts on Oxford Street to have survived in anything like its original form, with rich terracotta detailing and railings above shop level. The bank left in the early 1980s, to be replaced by a series of cheap restaurants.⁴⁵

Harewood Place to Dering Street

Nos 293–295 are Oxford Street shops attached to Hanover House, a very large block of flats which stretches all the way down the west side of Harewood Place and just round into Hanover Square. The original name of the block was Harewood House, but it soon became Hanover House, 14 Hanover Square. It was first designed by the architect Paul Hoffmann in 1900, but the construction may have been delayed; the builder was Henry Lovatt. The style is a loose Renaissance, with plentiful oriels, gables, doubled corner turrets and some indifferent passages of decorative carving. As the ground level drops between Oxford Street and the square, an extra mezzanine level was inserted at the lower end of the block. In 1900 the prospective cladding material was said to be Portland stone, but the building's appearance suggests that Bath stone may have been used instead.⁴⁶

No. 297 with 15 Hanover Square, the former Royal Orthopaedic Hospital, were demolished after the relocation of the hospital in 1905. In its place, offices and residential flats were designed by Paul Hoffmann and built by Henry Lovatt, to add to the equally elongated building they had recently finished to its east. The court dressmakers, Reville & Rossiter, took leases of shops in both buildings from the Prudential Assurance Company in 1907. The Hanover Square building is the more appealing of the two fronts, No. 297 being rather pedestrian, in Portland stone lifted by pink granite pilasters.⁴⁷

No. 299 was designed in 1916 and built between then and 1920 as a narrow block of shops and offices in the disciplined American-classical idiom of the time, fronted in Portland stone and seven storeys high above pavement level. The architect was Delissa Joseph and the contractors, at least for the finishing stages, were George Munday & Sons. The building replaced the General Medical Council (see above), which in 1913 sold its premises to a speculative

builder, Mr Rice. Complications later emerged over claims to the lease by Delissa Joseph, who took it over when the building was completed. The delay in construction followed from wartime restrictions which led to a change of design from a steel frame to ferro-concrete, and then to an embargo on general building works enforced by the Ministry of Munitions. The building appears to have been completed up to third-floor level by 1919, and was finished early in 1920.

The main tenants on the lower floors were the shop fitters E. Pollard & Co., who made this their West End showrooms. They installed an elegant double-height bronze shop window, long since gone, but the rest of the front, including Luxfer Co's steel casement windows, is much as designed. The floors were all open-plan, with an electric passenger lift in addition to the stairs. The main entrance was paved with mosaic and had marble-lined walls, carried out by Boulton and Co.⁴⁸

In 1927 Pollards commissioned Frank Brangwyn to design a series of domestic rooms – including furniture – for an exhibition eventually opened in 1930 by Sir John Lavery. The style was rather old-fashioned Arts and Crafts, celebrating natural materials in an age increasingly in love with the possibilities of plastics. This and the timing, at the height – or depths – of the Depression, combined to make the exhibition a flop.⁴⁹

Nos 301–307 is a 1970s concrete-framed-and-faced block built as offices over tall ground-floor shops. It replaced an ungainly classical building of c.1906 designed by Withers & Meredith, in which a heavy superstructure with higher ends and an arched centre carrying paired columns at an upper level oversailed two storeys of glass fronts. There were originally four separate shops below, but the branch of Flemings Restaurants, already at No. 307 in 1910, became the dominant tenant. By 1931 the restaurant occupied most of the block, though there was still then a silk shop at No. 301 running through to Tenterden Street behind. In 1938 the architects Hood & Huggins installed a

smart new shop front. This branch of Flemings outlasted their other outlet further east at 68 Oxford Street. But by 1956 it had been supplanted at shop level by a branch of the shoe store Dolcis, designed by the company's architect Ellis E. Somake and his assistant Geoffrey Uffindell; it was then claimed as 'the 48th shoe shop in this busy thoroughfare'.⁵⁰

No. 309 stretches back to include 3 Tenterden Street. This plain, well-organized building appears to have been built c.1958–60 by Aslan & Freeman, architects, working for Woolworth next door, who were probably interested in using the upper floors for extra office accommodation. It became known as Berkertex House after the first company to occupy the shop, the Bond Street firm established by Leslie Berker in 1936 for manufacturing mid-priced clothing. Norman Hartnell designed ready-to-wear dresses for Berkertex in 1942 until c.1952; wedding dresses began to feature in the 1960s. The company went into receivership in 1992.⁵¹

No. 311 is the former Woolworth store of 1924–5, designed by that firm's chief architect, William Priddle. Its construction was preceded by an application for a Capitol Theatre for this site, proposed in 1920–1 by the architects Peter Dollar and Andrew Mather in association with Bertie Crewe. The promoter of this project is likely to have been Sir Walter Gibbons, a former music-hall proprietor and consulting engineer who was active in cinema schemes around this time and went on to build the Capitol Theatre in the Haymarket to Mather's designs. Plans show that the building was to run through to Tenterden Street and to comprise a stalls level at ground floor with a double-height ballroom underneath. In 1921 Dollar and Mather applied for the LCC for projecting columns and entablature at the adjacent property, No. 309, for C. H. Baber Ltd, an importer of American and Canadian shoes, suggesting that the cinema frontage was to have included shops. Nothing came of the cinema proposal, but Babers did indeed trade for a time from No. 309.⁵²

The Woolworth branch was that firm's first foray into London's West End, presenting a challenge to John Lewis and D. H. Evans directly opposite.⁵³ The first drawings of December 1923 show a curved-off back to the building facing Tenterden Street, but in revision this was simplified. The store's plan filled the whole width of the site up to ground level, but for the upper floors a dumb-bell shape was adopted, allowing light wells for the side aisles at ground-floor level. Trading took place initially at ground and basement levels only. The upper floors were mainly occupied by Woolworth's administrative staff, hitherto housed in Kingsway. The firm's construction department worked from this address through the inter-war years and beyond.⁵⁴

The main elevation survives largely as designed – at least above the shop-front itself. Over the central windows on the first floor are lion heads. Originally there were also lion heads carrying shields at either end of the fascia, but these, along with the rest of the fine shop-front, are long gone. These were architectural motifs much used on Woolworth stores of the mid 1920s and '30s. The lion was symbolic of the company's commitment to stock British-made goods.

The final design of the elevation with its strong dividing piers seems to have been due to criticisms by S. Gordon Jeeves on behalf of the freeholder of an earlier scheme. Instead of the large, recessed steel-framed window treatment at Priddle's earlier Woolworth store in Liverpool, the Oxford Street building has a more old-fashioned division of the windows by tall faence pilasters and entablature. Jeeves wrote to Priddle in September 1923 suggesting alterations on the grounds that 'a building of this magnitude, with such a frontage on to one of the most important streets in London, must of necessity be imposing, and no expense spared in the designing of the Elevation'. He recognized that introducing piers between the windows was not necessary in terms of construction, but 'from a Shopman's and Architect's point of view ... these piers would be a necessity'.⁵⁵

During the 1960s Woolworth's fortunes began to wane, and the company began to close and sell off some of its High Street stores, where they were less profitable or were on valuable sites. Buyers for some of their large branches, including No. 311, were actively sought in the early 1970s; their later store at 150–154 Oxford Street was sold in 1977 and No. 311 followed in 1984.⁵⁶

In 1993 the building was acquired by Tesco and converted into one of their earliest Tesco Metro format stores. Since 2004 it has been the flagship store of, firstly, the booksellers, Waterstones, and since 2007 of Uniqlo, the Japanese clothing company. Uniqlo relaunched in 2016 after a two-year closure for a comprehensive refurbishment, doubling the size of its selling space which now spreads over five floors. New features include a roof terrace, and interiors designed by Japanese consultancy Wonderwall. A 'concept area' with a private entrance from Oxford Street is intended to be used to host events as the store's owners aim to 'embrace London's creativity' with monthly events in partnership with NTS, the East London radio station, and quarterly events with Tate Modern. The main store uses technology such as rotating mannequins and LED ticker displays.⁵⁷

No. 313 was formerly the Noah's Ark pub, situated at the eastern extremity of the City Corporation's landholdings. The pub is recorded by 1789. In the mid 1830s it offered a tap room, public parlour, bar and bar parlour and a small kitchen on the ground floor, with 'spacious and dry' cellars.⁵⁸ A pretty drawing shows the pub not long after railings in front had been removed and the ground storey altered by Russell B. Bell, architect, in 1874; it was then dwarfed by its neighbours on both sides.⁵⁹

The present building on the site, a very jolly façade of red brick and stucco, now much over-painted, dates from a costly rebuilding of the Noah's Ark in 1890 by the builder John Anley, to designs by J. T. Alexander. The bumptious elevation was originally even more comic, as it was crowned by an

oversailing topknot housing a miniature ark. But the pub was always restricted in depth. It was replanned for Meux's Brewery by their architect W. F. Beer in 1925 but shut probably in 1959. It was converted into a cut-price jewellery showroom for the firm of Ratners in 1975. The two delightful statues in the niches at second-floor level are of uncertain date; Alexander's drawing for the front shows urns.⁶⁰

Nos 315–319 were gutted in 2008 by the developers Squire and Partners, only the façades being retained.⁶¹ Those at Nos 315–317 are the remnants of a once-handsome front in a conservative stuccoed idiom, perhaps of the 1860s, with attached pilasters and a central pediment containing a large shell, perhaps a later addition made to carry a company name; these buildings were heavily altered in 1884 by the architect R. T. H. Stoneham. No. 319, with a little dome at the corner with Dering Street, was originally separate, built to designs by W. Henry White as late as 1908.⁶²

The Burlington Carriage Company, one of the early British manufacturers of automobile bodies, occupied Nos 315–317 as a showroom in the early years of the twentieth century. Here, according to *The Car* in 1904, there was always 'an interesting stock of cars on view'. Plans were prepared by the architects Withers & Meredith in 1908 to reconstruct these premises on behalf of O. Owen, but they seem to have hung fire, leaving the Burlington company still in possession in 1910. Soon afterwards it left, allowing Nos 315–317 to be united with premises in Dering Street behind in 1912, probably to plans by R. Langton Cole.⁶³

In 1913 Thomas Parsons and Sons, paint and varnish manufacturers, leased Nos 315–317 and the rear buildings in Dering Street. This firm had long been established in the Covent Garden area as part of the coach trade there, latterly specializing in japanning and colour manufacturing for coaches. It became one of several London firms turned into limited companies and made publicity-conscious by the City promoter Sir Alfred Newton, best known for his involvement with Harrods and D. H. Evans. The ground and first floor

became showrooms, decorated in period and modern schemes, with painted panels, models and 'colour meter' machines on display. Such lavish showrooms were a new departure in the paint manufacturing trade. In 1920 the firm held a competition for repainting the front, which was duly executed in garish colours. A second competition followed in 1923, when generous prizes were offered for painting a connecting vestibule through to the Dering Street showrooms. The judges, who included Sir John Lavery, Frank Brangwyn and E. Guy Dawber, appear to have been less keen on the results than the sponsors. In 1924 a Society of Independent Artists held its first exhibition of paintings on the premises. After Parsons departed, a branch of the shoe shop Manfield took over the ground floor.⁶⁴

Dering Street to New Bond Street

Nos 321–331. The short block between Dering and New Bond Streets is divided between two ungainly buildings. At the Dering Street corner, with a deepish return to that street, is Nos 321–323, a stunted building of four storeys, with tiers of residually Tudor windows. The top has been shaved flat, while the façades, now stuccoed, look as though they may once have been of brick. The architect H. H. Collins procured tenders for rebuilding No. 321 in 1881, but this may not have gone forward. Then in 1905–6 the architects Gordon & Gunton applied to rebuild Nos 321 and 323 for Hitchings Ltd, perambulator makers; the builder was James Carmichael. This was one of many Oxford Street properties to house a long-lasting Lyons teashop, at No. 321 and 2 Dering Street from about 1907 till the 1970s.⁶⁵

Quite how the properties in this block interconnected and overlapped is not clear. But Hitchings also had an interest in the sites adjacent to the west. The firm appears to have arrived around 1901, when it applied to rebuild Nos 325–327 along with New Bond Street addresses behind. They were then trading from Nos 329–331 at the New Bond Street corner, which had been

rebuilt in 1890 by Thomas Harris for the chemists Corbyn, Stacey & Co. together with 85 and 86 New Bond Street. There had then been a chemist's shop at this strategic corner site for many years.⁶⁶ Photographs show that Nos 329–331 was a robust terracotta-fronted building with mullioned windows. It vanished in 1970–2, when the present Nos 325–329 together with 80–86 New Bond Street and 3–4 Dering Street were reconstructed to designs by Fitzroy Robinson & Partners, acting for the Land Securities Investment Trust. Since then the building has been overclad.⁶⁷

New Bond Street to Woodstock Street

Nos 333–337 is a branch of the fashion shop Zara, built in 2000–2 by Allies & Morrison. A strongly expressed frame with pale stone cladding gives way to metalwork before the top. The building wraps round to include a good front along the east side of Woodstock Street behind, which is of cheerful red brick and glass in the manner typical of these architects. It replaces the previous 333 Oxford Street with a narrower main street frontage, built to designs by Katz & Vaughan in 1954–5 and subsequently known as Dolcis House, as it contained one of the Dolcis shoe shops.⁶⁸

No. 339 is an oddity. Its low height, and single-bay width suggest that somewhere behind the 1950s cladding may be vestiges of an earlier building.

Nos 341–349, with 8–9 Woodstock Street, is Barratt House, built in Festival of Britain style for the shoe retailers W. Barratt & Co. Ltd by Higgs & Hill to designs by Lionel H. Fewster & Partners in 1955–6. Of six storeys, it has a strong L-shaped frame around the grid of windows marking the stairs and attic storey and further defined by carved coat of arms at the top corner. The composition includes the Spread Eagle pub, formerly at 349 Oxford Street but relocated round the corner at 8 Woodstock Street. The India Tea Centre was

an early occupier of the Oxford Street shop. Photographs of the pre-1955 buildings on these sites suggest they may have been Georgian survivals.⁶⁹

Woodstock Street to South Molton Street

No. 351, with a return at 10 Woodstock Street, is a warehouse-style block of 1937–8 in the plainest brick style. The builder and architect was William Pye, acting for Brigadier-General Walter Allason and others.⁷⁰

No. 353 is a stone-fronted block of shops and offices dated 1905, and designed by E. Keynes Purchase on behalf of the builders H. & E. Lea. The building is much shallower than its six storeys and varied outline suggest. It replaced the former Horse and Groom pub.⁷¹

Nos 355–361, Sedley Place and 13–16 Woodstock Street. The frontage here is occupied by Boots the chemists, as the main retailing elements of a major development built on behalf of Welbeck Land and the City Corporation, to heavily glazed designs by Fletcher Priest, architects. The plans were approved in principle in 2000, and built in 2003–5.⁷² Near its eastern end a series of bridges mask the opening into Sedley Place, a passage with a short east-west return at the back to meet Woodstock Street. At the L-shaped angle is a semi-public space sometimes known as Sedley Square.

The present Sedley Place replaces a passage of the same name previously sited a little further westwards. That earlier passage is marked as Silver Court on Rocque's map (1746) but as Oxford Buildings on Horwood's map of the 1790s, which shows the short return to Woodstock Street as Woodstock Court. By the early nineteenth century this was perhaps the worst slum along Oxford Street, packed with Irish poor living in rundown tenements. In 1822 the military was called out following a mass fight or riot which emanated from Oxford Buildings, and a subsequent litany of police

and court reports alluded to the court's bad housing and Irish inhabitants. Around 1850 a name-change ensued to Hanover Court (later Place), but to little social avail.⁷³

By 1865 the City Lands Committee had decided to clear and rebuild the whole slum area. Demolitions of the old tenements followed, leaving a vacant site for some years, while a series of proposals for rebuilding, including one for a Congregational church, came to nothing. Eventually Angelo Sedley, a furniture dealer with premises in Conduit Street further south on the Conduit Mead estate, agreed to take on both the main lots and totally reconstructed the area in 1872-3.⁷⁴ Sedley, an entrepreneur of some spirit who had patented an iron bridge design, commissioned Richard Bell as his architect for the redevelopment. As built by the firm of Bywaters, it consisted of symmetrical blocks of four-storey shops and tenements either side of the passage and facing Oxford Street, with further showrooms, warehouses and tenements in lower blocks lining the passage behind. To complete the undertaking, Sedley persuaded the Metropolitan Board of Works to allow him to fix an iron grille or façade over the entry to the rebuilt passage, incorporating the new name, Sedley Place, instead of Hanover Place. This grille was made by Messrs Potter, the well-known engineers and ironworkers of South Molton Street adjacent.⁷⁵

Nos 363-367. Despite serious alterations, including the loss of the interior, Joseph Emberton's store for His Master's Voice (HMV), built in 1938-9, is still one of the architectural highlights of Oxford Street. It represents Emberton's second effort on this site, after fire destroyed his previous remodelling of the shop, carried out in 1935.

The Gramophone Company, owners of the brand known as His Master's Voice, arrived on this site in 1921, when they took over a tall building that had been erected in 1883 to designs by H. H. Collins for a coach-building firm, Israel Rogers & Son. Before the 1880s this had been the site of

the premises of the coach-builders Laurie & Marner, but it was then under long lease to Mark Marcus. It had a pillared open frontispiece rising through two storeys, with two further storeys over and a crowning pediment. Behind came a warehouse of typical mixed construction, partly carried on iron columns and tapering off sharply in plan towards the back. This was the Gramophone Company's first dedicated retailing outlet in London. Its Constructional and Maintenance Department, based at the firm's headquarters in Hayes, Middlesex, entirely replanned the building. Behind a deep foyer on the ground floor, a central staircase separated a 'salon' on the right for the sale of gramophones and other equipment and spaces on the left for audition rooms either side of a corridor. The basement included a lecture room, a repair room and further audition rooms. Some of the upper spaces were dedicated to the Zonophone label, also owned by the Gramophone Company.⁷⁶ Sir Edward Elgar opened the shop on 20 July 1921.

In 1935 Joseph Emberton, then at the height of his reputation as a practical modernist architect who could deal efficiently and strikingly with commercial London premises, undertook a radical reworking of the premises. Carried out by the builders Holland & Hannen and Cubitts, this first effort of Emberton's was not a total reconstruction, but he recast the whole interior in his idiom and imposed a new curtain wall on the front. This included a prominent curved glass non-reflecting shop window of the type then fashionable, and further display windows on the first floor – perhaps the earliest of their kind in Oxford Street. The open design and neon-lit signage were calculated to attract sightseers after dark.⁷⁷

This reconstruction enjoyed only a short life, for on 28 December 1937, when the shop was shut in the lull after Christmas, the HMV building was irreversibly damaged by a fire which cost the life of a caretaker and destroyed some 100,000 records, as well as electrical goods ranging from radios and television sets to refrigerators. Among the few survivals was the famous HMV trademark on the front, described as 'a terrier listening to a

phonograph'.⁷⁸ This symbol, based on a painting of 1899 by Francis Barraud of his dog Nipper, had appeared in relief both over the doorway and in the building's pediment before 1935. In the reconstruction of that date it took the fresh form of an illuminated cut-out on the front.

The shop took temporary premises while Emberton came back to reconstruct the premises in their entirety. Surviving working drawings date from between May 1938 and January 1939, Emberton and his assistants providing details for all the fixed and some movable furnishings.⁷⁹

Emberton's second design was a total reconstruction on a new reinforced concrete frame. But he was as constrained as ever by the enclosed and tapering site and by legal considerations about light, leaving only the front for external expression. This was once again strictly flat-fronted above the ground storey and clad in black vitrolite interspersed with tiers of glass-block fenestration in which opening casements were embedded. The glass blocks, said to have been their most extensive use in London, were rationalized as a means of insulating the interior against street noise. At the top came a projecting canopy with a prickly mast for television reception rising centrally. A deep fascia took up the whole of the first floor, with the shop's name inscribed on a light background in large capitals, and the rescued Nipper symbol at one end, once again illuminable by night. The phrase 'Home Entertainment and Electric Housekeeping' spelt out along the fascia succinctly advertised the contents of the store. The ground floor front was left boldly open; windows slanted asymmetrically back from both ends, leaving space in front for a free-standing polygonal showcase right of centre.

The interior was mostly open-planned with partitions and lit by artificial light. A circular stair of the type then fashionable led up to the first floor, from which a second such stair, cantilevered off a side wall and lit by neon tubes strung vertically up the open well, carried on upwards. Both the ground and first floors had central open areas where demonstrations and recitals could take place; audition, recording rooms and other facilities were

mostly set against the external walls. There was a boardroom on the fourth floor. This time the main contractor was Griggs & Son, but there were many specialist subcontractors; the windows were supplied by Crittalls.⁸⁰

Following a decline in the company's fortunes it moved out of No. 363 in 1986, retaining its Oxford Street presence further east at No. 150. In 2012–13 EMI, HMV's parent company, fell into administration and was bought by Hilco Capital, which reopened No. 363. By then the original shop window had long disappeared, the fascia had been altered and the interior of the store irreversibly changed. So the current upper part of the fascia with the famous neon illuminated sign is a scholarly recreation of the original dating from 2013⁸¹

Despite this return to its old headquarters, the future of HMV and its Oxford Street store was once more in doubt in 2017 when Hilco announced the closure of its HMV stores in Canada, and the owners of the building, Hong Kong's Glory Step Investments, were negotiating with the company for a surrender of the lease. At the end of 2018 HMV again collapsed into administration, following the sharp decline in sales of physical recordings in favour of digital access to music.⁸²

Nos 369–373, with 35 and 36 South Molton Street, is another block designed by E. Keynes Purchase, this time faced in red brick with stone dressings. Rising to five storeys above ground, it is topped off by gables towards Oxford Street and an effective small domical cupola over the rounded corner at the angle with South Molton Street. It was built in 1900–1 as a development financed by Arthur du Cros, the Irish-born businessman who with his father made a fortune by promoting Dunlop's pneumatic tyres. The solicitors involved were the architects' brothers John B. and Frank Purchase, suggesting close family involvement in the scheme; their law firm enjoyed links with the component trades for motor and cycle manufacture. Appropriately, the first tenants of the shop at No. 369 were motorists' outfitters. The Hog in the

Pound occupied the corner plot (No. 373) up until 1960, when it moved westwards into the flat-iron corner between South Molton Street and South Molton Lane – until that building was demolished in 2011.⁸³