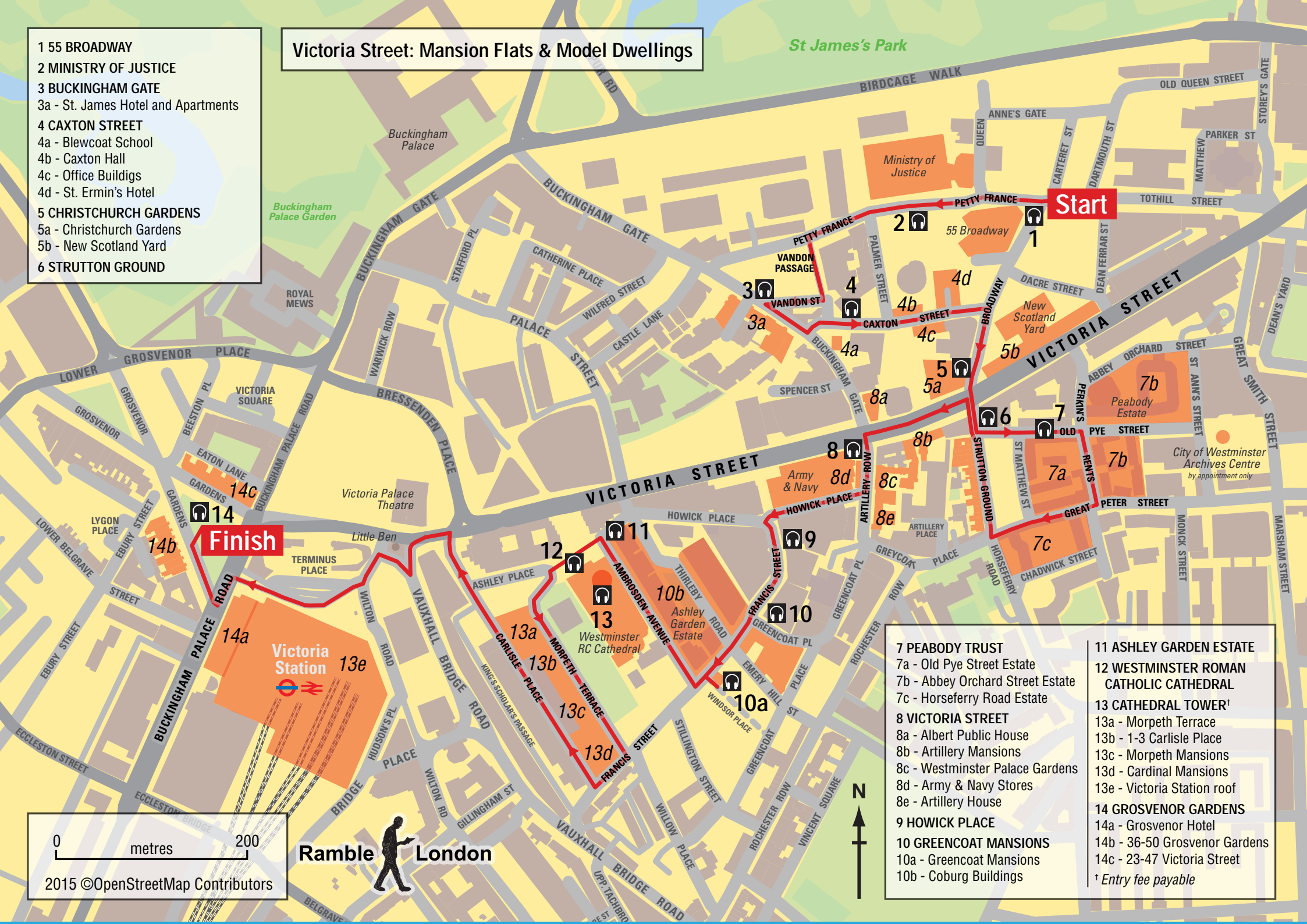


- 1 55 BROADWAY
- 2 MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
- 3 BUCKINGHAM GATE
- 3a - St. James Hotel and Apartments
- 4 CAXTON STREET
- 4a - Blewcoat School
- 4b - Caxton Hall
- 4c - Office Buildings
- 4d - St. Ermin's Hotel
- 5 CHRISTCHURCH GARDENS
- 5a - Christchurch Gardens
- 5b - New Scotland Yard
- 6 STRUTTON GROUND

Victoria Street: Mansion Flats & Model Dwellings



- | | |
|---|--|
| 7 PEABODY TRUST 7a - Old Pye Street Estate 7b - Abbey Orchard Street Estate 7c - Horseferry Road Estate | 11 ASHLEY GARDEN ESTATE 12 WESTMINSTER ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL 13 CATHEDRAL TOWER[†] 13a - Morpeth Terrace 13b - 1-3 Carlisle Place 13c - Morpeth Mansions 13d - Cardinal Mansions 13e - Victoria Station roof |
| 8 VICTORIA STREET 8a - Albert Public House 8b - Artillery Mansions 8c - Westminster Palace Gardens 8d - Army & Navy Stores 8e - Artillery House | 14 GROSVENOR GARDENS 14a - Grosvenor Hotel 14b - 36-50 Grosvenor Gardens 14c - 23-47 Victoria Street |
| 9 HOWICK PLACE 10 GREENCOAT MANSIONS 10a - Greencoat Mansions 10b - Coburg Buildings | † Entry fee payable |

Further Reading

Local histories

Barker, Felix and Jackson, Peter, *The History of London in Maps* (Barrie & Jenkins, 1990).

Bradley, Simon and Pevsner, Nikolaus, *Buildings of England*, London 6: Westminster (Penguin, 2003).

Watson, Isobel, *Westminster and Pimlico Past* (Historical Publications Ltd, 1993).

Classic social histories

Doré, Gustave and Jerrold, Blanchard, (1872) *London: A Pilgrimage* (search for the title at gallica.bnf.fr)

Hollingshead, John, (1861) *Ragged London in 1861* (archive.org/details/raggedlondonin00hollgoog)

Mayhew, Henry, (1865) *London Labour and the London Poor* (archive.org/details/londonlabourand01mayhgoog)

Note on online book archives: the links given are suggestions found at the time of this leaflet's preparation (July 2015). No guarantee can be given for their accuracy or the longevity of the links. The material is out of copyright and may be available elsewhere online.

Novels

Gissing, George, (1884) *The Unclassed* (First Edition) (in the 1895 revised and abridged edition, Gissing moves the slums from Westminster to the East End)

Gissing, George, (1893) *The Odd Women*

Wilde, Oscar, (1895) *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Woolf, Virginia, (1925) *Mrs Dalloway*

Key websites

History of Peabody housing and the trust: www.peabody.org.uk/about-us/our-story/our-history

Information on 55 Broadway from Transport for London: tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/research-guide-8-55-broadway.pdf

City of Westminster Archives Centre: www.westminster.gov.uk/archives. Much of the original research material that underpins this walk was found here. The archives are open to the public, though membership is required and items must be located using the catalogue. It is advisable to check the website before visiting.

Walk information

Distance: 1.7 miles / 2.7 km • Time to complete walk: 1.5 to 2 hours

The walk starts at the Broadway exit to **St James' Park** Underground Station and finishes at Grosvenor Gardens, adjacent to **Victoria** Underground and mainline Station.

In order to gain access to the Westminster RC Cathedral Tower an entry fee of £5 is to be paid. An optional audio commentary by Richard Dennis also accompanies this walk, and can be downloaded as an MP3 from the Ramble London website.

Victoria Street and its surrounding area epitomises the way London was developed into a modern city in the late 19th and early 20th century. Its construction, carved through slums and marshes, sought to bring with it the characteristics associated with modernisation: economic development, new styles of living for both rich and poor, and a new arterial road for London's communication network.

The walk explores how Victorian modernisation took place, and witnesses the marks it has left on the contemporary city. As buildings grew taller, the walk examines how this was disputed by the city's residents; it looks at the new styles of living, from apartment blocks for the wealthy to slum clearances by philanthropists; it passes the city's emerging shopping culture; and, it considers the place of the city's new transport infrastructure.

Mixing historical detail and literary references, this walk around Victoria Street shows how the city we know today came into being.



Ramble London is a project celebrating the contribution of Richard Dennis, who joined UCL in 1974 and retired as Professor of Historical Geography in 2014. Continuing his research as Professor Emeritus, Dennis investigates the modernisation of cities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

A passionate communicator, Dennis used walking tours to engage students in teaching beyond the lecture theatre. The Ramble London project aims to bring his research and teaching beyond the university and out to a wider public. As the project develops, additional walks will be developed by other members of UCL Geography academics, allowing everyone to access the latest in urban social science research.



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For more information, visit Ramble London

www.ucl.ac.uk/ramble-london

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A SELF-GUIDED TOUR OF

VICTORIA STREET

Mansion Flats & Model Dwellings



Victoria Street in 1944



Walk with me, reader...

www.ucl.ac.uk/ramble-london

VICTORIA STREET

Mansion Flats & Model Dwellings

1 The walk begins at, **55 Broadway** (1927-1929), the headquarters of Transport for London until residential conversion in 2015. It was designed by Charles Holden, who created many modernist Tube stations in 1920s and 1930s. When new, it was London's tallest building, showing how important transportation was to the modernising city. The sculptures of the four winds on the building's faces were designed by leading artists of the time including Jacob Epstein, Eric Gill, and Henry Moore. The building increases in height in a stepped fashion to conform, in a way adapted to modernist style, to the London Building Act of 1894. This Act (discussed below) limited the height of new buildings, but allowed extra storeys and dormer windows in a mansard roof.

2 The **Ministry of Justice building** is an appropriately awful 1970s replacement for the apartment block formerly on the site, Queen Anne's Mansions (1889), which was often regarded as the ugliest Victorian building in London. Its architecture was, according to Pevsner, "rudely bare... nothing but sheer grimy brick walls and uniform windows."



Queen Anne's Mansions

new rules limiting the height of London buildings were written, setting limits of 90 feet from ground to parapet in 1890 and 80 feet in 1894 – though in each case, two additional storeys in the roof were allowed (hence 55 Broadway's stepped design).

3 **St James' Hotel and Apartments** (1896-1905) on Buckingham Gate was converted from eight blocks of serviced flats previously called St James' Court. Like most luxury flats of the time they were built as rooms without facilities. Residents would eat in the extravagant communal dining rooms or have meals brought in. As this style of living became less common,

many blocks like this were converted into hotels as the cost of installing kitchen plumbing and related amenities was high. The central courtyard can be visited and includes a spectacular terracotta frieze of scenes from Shakespearean works, while entrances to individual staircases are guarded by female atlantes. The cast iron fountain dates from the construction of the building.

4 Caxton Street's **Blewcoat School** (1709) **[4a]** closed in 1926. The building housed the National Trust from 1954 and is now used for retail. Blewcoat, like Greycoat and Greencoat, were charities which provided welfare in this part of Westminster. **Caxton Hall**, formerly Westminster Town Hall, (1882-3) **[4b]**, was more recently famous for the Registry Office weddings of celebrities including Elizabeth Taylor, Joan Collins and Ringo Star. The two modern office buildings opposite **[4c]** stand on the site of flats for the working poor, philanthropically funded by the **Peabody Trust** (on which more below). Their proximity to **St Ermin's Hotel** (1887) **[4d]**, another block of serviced flats for wealthy Londoners, demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between the rich and the working poor in Victorian London. Historian, Isobel Watson, notes that St Ermin's had "their own livery stables, division bell [an alert for MPs to attend parliament and vote] and private entrance to St James's Park Station".



Blewcoat School

5 **Christchurch Gardens** **[5a]** is an oasis of green is on the site of Christchurch (1841-4), destroyed during World War II. Before Victoria Street was constructed, there was some debate about the layout it should take. A straight boulevard was chosen, but the demolition of what was then a new church was opposed. Standing on the traffic island in the middle of the road, the compromise is visible. Note the straight line the road follows in each direction, with a slight turn at this junction to accommodate Christchurch. Opposite, stands the current Metropolitan Police headquarters at **New Scotland Yard** (1962-6) **[5b]** which superseded the old 'New Scotland Yard' on Victoria Embankment.

6 The street market on **Strutton Ground** today is small compared to that present before the construction of Victoria Street. The Victorians were wary of street markets, seeing them as disordered spaces where petty crime flourished. The regulation, if not elimination, of street-trading was a universal element of Victorian modernisation.

7 Steps from the wealth of St James' Court and Queen Anne's Mansions, this area housed a slum which Dickens called **the Devil's Acre**. Philanthropy as well as government and private wealth modernised the Victorian city, and here slums were cleared and replaced by new housing. In 1862, businessman and philanthropist William Gibbs erected **Rochester Buildings** **[7a]** on the south side of Old Pye Street. They appear in the stylised depiction of the Devil's Acre by Doré and Jerrold in the book, *London: A Pilgrimage* (1872). Rochester Buildings were sold to the Peabody Trust in 1877 when further slum clearances were authorised and the surrounding land was redeveloped by Peabody into the **Abbey Orchard Street** **[7b]** and **Horseferry Road** **[7c]** estates. The Peabody Trust was founded in 1862 on the donation and, later, bequest of the American banker, George Peabody, to provide housing 'for the London poor'. In practice it accommodated the 'deserving', mostly regularly employed, poor rather than the very poorest. Peabody remains one of the largest providers of social housing in London.



The Devil's Acre

8 Of the original buildings lining **Victoria Street**, including many luxury apartment buildings dating from the 1880s, few remain. All the buildings on its north side, and many on the south, were demolished and replaced by glass-and-concrete modernism in a second round of modernity that began in the 1960s and is still continuing. These few surviving buildings give a sense of Victoria Street's original architecture. These include **The Albert pub** (1862) **[8a]** and **Artillery Mansions** (1895) **[8b]**, the building with the arched entrance to an internal courtyard.

Planned in the 1830s and authorised in the 1840s, it wasn't until 1851 that Victoria Street formally opened. It was another forty years before the street was fully developed. The street's aims were sanitary improvement – it was raised several feet above its marshy surroundings – and real estate speculation. All the north side was originally apartment blocks, known in London as mansion flats. In one block, Queen's Mansions, lived Sir Arthur Sullivan of Gilbert & Sullivan. The Mike Leigh film, *Topsy-Turvy* (1999), has an imaginative reconstruction of Sullivan's flat. Around the corner, **Westminster Palace Gardens** **[8c]** had the same designer as St James' Court and boasts similar terracotta friezes.

Modern consumerism, and department store shopping in particular, emerged in the Victorian era. **The Army & Navy Stores** (1872, rebuilt 1977 as House of Fraser) **[8d]** was a kind of upper-class co-operative store for the military and gentry, especially catering for those on their way to or from the colonies. It features in Mrs Dalloway where Miss Kilman, accompanied by Elizabeth, purchases a petticoat and takes tea before getting lost amongst the array of goods for sale.

Artillery Row is so called because it was once the artillery range where Henry VIII's guards would practice their archery. This is commemorated in the street name and the 1920s apartment building, **Artillery House** **[8e]**.

9 Army & Navy was famous for its mail-order catalogues, and the buildings on **Francis Street**, dating from the 1880s and now refurbished for offices, were originally its extensive storage warehouses and workshops for making and altering clothing. Bradley and Pevsner comment that "the chain of huge warehouses for the Army & Navy Stores in Francis Street and Greycoat Place is in its way as impressive a relic of maritime empire as the Chatham boatyards".

10 **Greencoat Mansions** (1892) **[10a]** was originally built by the philanthropic capitalism of the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company. It provided working-class flats that were a bit smarter and more expensive than Peabody. There is a statue to the Company's founder, Sir Sydney Waterlow, in the grounds of a school on nearby Palace Street. Waterlow was also at various times Lord Mayor of the City of London, a Liberal MP, and a leading businessman who owned Waterlow's, the stationers and printers.



Ashley Gardens Estate

stores, the same design repeated fivefold". Ashley Gardens was sufficiently fashionable to feature in the stage directions for the George Bernard Shaw play, *The Philanderer*, which opens with the direction: "A lady and gentleman are making love to one another in the drawing room of a flat in Ashley Gardens in the Victoria district of London. It is past ten at night." A slightly postmodern touch is added by the fact that Shaw's leading lady,

the actress Mrs Patrick Campbell, really did live in a flat in Ashley Gardens! The Victorian novelist George Gissing also set one of his more risqué characters in a flat in Victoria Street, a young widow in the novel *The Odd Women*.

11 **Coburg Buildings** (1875) is another Improved Industrial Dwellings Company block, as the large sign on the side of the building indicates.

12 The architect of **Westminster Roman Catholic Cathedral** (1895-1903), John Francis Bentley, originally proposed a Gothic cathedral reflecting the taste for neo-Gothic in other mid and late-Victorian buildings. The Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Vaughan, wanted "an Early Christian basilica, partly in order not to compete with Westminster Abbey, partly because it could be built in one rush and ornamented at leisure, and partly for its clear lines of sight inside".

The compromise was Byzantine, very different and more obviously modern in appearance than the neo-Gothic style. It also fulfils Vaughan's ideas and, as a look inside reveals, it is still being "ornamented at leisure". Note the contrast between the finished, sometimes highly decorated side-chapels and the bare unfinished brick of the nave ceiling. The piazza to Victoria Street was created in 1975; before then, the Cathedral was hidden away on a narrow side street behind the flats and offices that still lined Victoria Street.

13 From the **Cathedral Tower** the views are excellent in all directions, and give a different angle to the sites seen so far on this walk. Viewed from the tower to the west, **Morpeth Terrace** **[13a]** and **1-3 Carlisle Place** (1860-1) **[13b]** are the oldest surviving purpose-built flats in London. Farther along, in **Morpeth Mansions** **[13c]**, is where Winston Churchill lived in the 1930s. On the corner is **Cardinal Mansions** (1897-8) **[13d]**.



View from Westminster RC Cathedral Tower

Beyond the flats you can see **Victoria Station roof** **[13e]**, which was opened in 1860, nine years *after* the formal opening of Victoria Street. It served as the terminus of both the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway and the London, Chatham &

Dover Railway. It was effectively two stations side-by-side, even when refronted in 1908-09, and this is obvious when viewed from above. The Chatham side of the station has a modest, arched roof, while the Brighton side has an elaborate saw-tooth roof, now mostly covered by Victoria Place Shopping Centre. In 1923 the two companies merged forming the Southern Railway, after which, in 1924, the stations were joined.

In Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the character Jack Worthing recounts that he was found in a Gladstone bag deposited in the left-luggage office of Victoria Station. He adds "the Brighton line", partly to explain how he got his surname – Worthing was a destination for London, Brighton & South Coast Railway trains – but also to indicate respectability: the Chatham & Dover line was a much more ramshackle affair, forever on the verge of bankruptcy. None of this impresses Lady Bracknell for whom "the line is immaterial"! Now descend the tower and continue the walk.

14 **The Grosvenor Hotel** (1860) **[14a]** is one of the grandest of 19th-century hotels, designed by J.T. Knowles and his son, James Knowles. James Knowles was the editor of a leading Victorian periodical, the *Nineteenth Century* and had the misfortune to occupy a house in the shadow of Queen Anne's Mansions, the massive block of flats near St James's Park Station encountered at the beginning of this walk. The architectural historian, Donald Olsen quotes *The Builder* magazine's description of the hotel's opulence: "seven stories above the ground floor, the two first containing suites of drawing, dining and bedrooms, and other accommodation for separate families." There was a bathroom on every floor, "except the topmost one for the servants." On the ground floor were private sitting rooms, a large dining room, and separate ladies' and gentlemen's coffee rooms, the latter adjoining a smoking room. Altogether, "almost a little town under one roof."

The buildings overlooking Grosvenor Gardens are in the style of a Parisian boulevard, a style Victoria Street attempted – but never quite managed – to imitate. **36-50 Grosvenor Gardens** **[14b]** echo French renaissance architecture and were built in the late 1860s, while **23-47 Victoria Street** **[14c]** are examples of early mansion flats in London. In some ways, Victoria Street was seen as a failed attempt at a boulevard, not wide enough for its buildings and, over time, seen as dirty and unappealing. The later attempts at modernisation, first in the 1960s and again today, can be seen as efforts to finally create that sought after style.



Grosvenor Hotel