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CHAPTER 22

Great Portland Street

Straight and by London standards very long, Great Portland Street has considerable variety of building, almost all of which dates from the second half of the nineteenth century or later: of its original, eighteenth-century development almost nothing remains. When building began at the south end – as John Street – in the 1720s, there was no thought that it would reach so far north as it does, and the wider portion north of Clipstone Street only came into being in the 1750s – with a separate identity as Portland Road – so as to make a direct communication between Oxford Street and the New (i.e. Marylebone) Road (III. 22/1). It was more than half a century before that link was superseded by Regent Street and its northern continuation. Another half-century later, the opening at the top end of one of the earliest Underground stations restored some status to Great Portland Street from a transport point of view; another, and it was becoming famous as the London centre of the motor-car trade. When the station was rebuilt in the late 1920s it was with a motor showroom above the ticket hall. That trade has long gone, along with most of the rag trade, the other major commercial presence of the twentieth century. Business use along the street today is, like the buildings, too mixed for useful generalization.

For brevity, street numbers given in the following account are those of the sites at the present day, and are not therefore those which applied to the buildings before street renaming and renumbering in 1858 and 1863. The chapter also includes Little Portland Street, a minor cross street which Great Portland Street bisects.

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next section north, cut in two by Little Titchfield Street, was shared by a consortium of less prominent tradesmen seemingly led by George Collings, carpenter, who built the southern block around 1740, going bankrupt in 1742. The northern plots were unoccupied until around 1755.²

Although it had always been intended to take the street further north across Dung Field, where the former house of John Steele and its walled garden stood in its path, for the time being nothing was done (III. ### – xref Rocque). Steele, tenant of more than 120 acres in Marybone Fields, occupied the house up to his death in 1714, since when the ground to its north had been dug for brick earth and kilns set up, probably by Thomas Huddle.³ But in 1756 the Act for building the New Road from Paddington to Islington gave the St Marylebone Turnpike Trust responsibility not just for that section of the road from Paddington to Tottenham Court but for a side road to connect it with Great Portland Street (III. 22/2). 'Portland Road' was promptly laid out and in 1757 a toll-house and turnpike were erected at the

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No. 85 up to his death around 1775. The west-side block opposite was divided in the mid 1750s by another consortium that included Edward Gray, bricklayer, and Conquest Jones, agent of John Elwes (page ###), with William Wilton also involved, though nothing seems to have been built for a decade. Giacomo Leoni's son Philip was present hereabouts, perhaps involved in building work on or around Riding House Lane in the early 1760s, and Joseph Leoni, another son or perhaps a grandson, was at 93 Great Portland Street in the 1790s.⁵

The probable cause of the hiatus was Thomas Foley's claim to a large tract of land to the west, including frontage to Great Portland Street, under his disputed agreement of 1758 with the 2nd Duke of Portland (page ###). This was not resolved until 1767, by which time the duke had been dead for several years. In the meantime the Portland Chapel, started by him in 1760, had been built fronting Great Portland Street. More houses had been built on the east side of the street, beginning with the Horse and Groom (No. 128) in 1759–61, and continuing all the way up to the turnpike in 1762–8. The mason George Mercer, John Mandell, carpenter, and Thomas Huddle were among those chiefly involved, along with Daniel Foulston, painter, John Edwards and Joseph Reynolds, bricklayers, and Anthony Maderni or Maderin, plasterer.⁶

North of the chapel, further building on this west side was deferred until 1774–8. The three blocks there as far north as Devonshire Street were included in the ground taken by the Adam brothers for their Portland Place improvement, and were developed under them (see III. 17/3). The Adams let

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Because building within 50ft of Portland Road was prohibited, most of the ground there became the back gardens of houses in Norton and Charlotte Streets (now Bolsover and Hallam Streets, see III. 22/2). The east side was taken up in this way from the late 1760s into the 1780s under leases to John Devall senior. The chimneypiece maker Richard Maile had the northernmost plot where he had a house in Norton Street and workshops behind (page ###).⁸ Most of the west side was treated similarly, but there was some attempt to exploit the ground more fully by erecting houses one-room deep

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raised it somewhat from the 1760s. Georgian Great Portland Street had numerous pubs. Shops were varied along typical high-street lines. Building and related trades were particularly well represented, at least in the eighteenth century, with various craftsmen resident there or near by, including some involved in the street's development such as Devall, Maile, Mercer and Wilton. John Dowyer, stone-carver, lived at the corner of John Street and Margaret Street in the late 1730s. David Ross, maker of

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Victorian period the Portland Estate countenanced no major change of scale or character. The 1890s, as elsewhere on the estate, saw a good deal of rebuilding in a Domestic Revival vein, much of it for flats. Two pub rebuilds, the George (No. 55) in 1878 and Cock (No. 27) in 1896–7, illustrate the shifts

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building up of the once-protected ground – though nothing more than two-storey shops was permitted (see III. 22/25). Amid them was a small fire station (No. 171), and a pub, the Albany (Nos 240–242). The name Portland Road was finally abolished in 1863 (though the station was not renamed until 1917), and in the same decade Great Portland Street began to attract small

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When the Crown bought the building it was in fairly poor condition, and thanks to a lack of railings other than at the east end had been disfigured by graffiti and urination. Thomas Chawner and Henry Rhodes, for the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, oversaw repairs and the installation of an organ, and in 1831 the building was consecrated and dedicated to St Paul.¹⁴

Faced with a declining congregation and an increasingly less genteel environment, the Rev. Charles G. Williamson sought Crown aid in 1883 for refurbishment to plans by A. W. Blomfield. Help was refused and it is unclear how much work was done. Williamson did insert some stained glass at his own expense, possibly including a Crucifixion at the east end, and then in the 1890s saw through a redecoration by Paul Waterhouse that included a new pulpit. Further decline in pew rents and Williamson's resignation in 1904 led State and Church to agree that the chapel should close. The Howard de Walden Estate bought it back and the building was demolished in 1906. Williamson saw to the transfer of his Crucifixion to St Mary, Bryanston Square; the reredos and sanctuary panelling went to St Martin in the Fields, and suburban churches in the course of being built also benefited: choir stalls, pulpit, altar rails, lectern and other fittings went to St Gabriel, Bounds Green; a marble chancel step and the organ to Bodley's St Faith, Brentford; other glass of the 1880s to St Paul, Clerkenwell; vestments and hangings to St John, Palmers Green.¹⁵ The site is now occupied by the Brock House office block (see No. 97, below).

Since 1900

The scale of Great Portland Street's north end was transformed by ambitious speculative developments, beginning with Portland Court (Nos 160–202), a block of shops and flats built in 1905–11. That seems to have sated the market for flats, but in short order comparably scaled commercial blocks followed

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In 1921 Great Portland Street was claimed as 'the Motor Market of the World', where any make of car in existence might be obtained. The trade ranged from the shabbiest of premises with stock to match to some of the finest showrooms in London.²⁰ There were attempts to stimulate co-operative marketing as rents increased, but decline was already perceived in the late 1920s. Even so, when Great Portland Street Station was rebuilt in 1929–30 it was given an upper-storey motor showroom. Around fifty of the street's seventy-seven motor-trade firms came together in 1933 to promote a 'gala' shopping week – the banners, bunting and garlands no doubt signs of an ebbing tide. There were further attempts at collaboration, and in 1935 Patrick Hamilton could still refer to 'the motor-salesman's paradise in Great Portland Street'. Witf50 0 Tm /TT1 1 Tf [(7T 50 0 0 54hf D)]TJ ET Qq 0.24 0 0 0.7 0.24 0 0 0.24 149.4202 56

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(No. 97) in 1933 and by the early 1960s had offices and studios along much of central Great Portland Street, from Henry Wood House (Nos 75–77) north to Portland Court. At that point major rebuilding was intended on the street's east side, on Great Portland Estates properties flanking Langham Street. Commercial use below tall residential blocks was envisaged, the garment trade to be protected and rents for flats to be kept at a level to maintain 'a satisfactory social structure'. That did not happen, though across the road two blocks of flats over shops did go up at Nos 87–93 and 187–193. Late 1960s Great Portland Street was 'modest and unspectacular, dotted with clothing businesses, betting shops, luncheon voucher cafés ... straightforward grocers' and greengrocers' shops'.²⁴ Today the wholesale garment trade has largely gone, displaced by cheap imports. Amid the mostly small shops latest arrivals include bicycle shops, art galleries and special

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took a lease in 1824, and William Thorn's family firm continued in occupation making coaches throughout the nineteenth century.²⁶ By 1905 Thorns, who had acquired additional premises in Little Portland Street, had made the jump to motor bodies, for Daimler and others, but still made horse-drawn carriages, including landaus used by royalty. Fire gutted the Little Portland Street factory in 1906 and the Great Portland Street site was redeveloped with the present building in 1907–8, designed as showrooms with offices for let above (ILs 22/5, 22/5a). The architect was F. M. Elgood, whose conventionally grand upper floors of brick and stone are perched atop a double-height arcade of grey granite (now painted over), with plate glass revealing the steel-framed structure within and affording the prominent display of five vehicles to passers-by. The showrooms, with a sumptuously sinuous staircase, were reckoned unsurpassed in the motor trade. For a time there were 'horse vehicles' on the first floor.²⁷ Julius Turner (see Nos 71–73, below), who gained

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designs of Richard Seifert & Partners. Called Mayfair House, it has been used by various fashion-trade firms.³³

No. 41 is a shop, showroom and residence of 1891–2, built for Thomas Elsley, a wholesale ironmonger of 32 Great Portland Street and Great Titchfield Street (page ###); the architect was Augustus E. Hughes. Its originally uniform red-brick façade has been painted to create the impression of an earlier Italianate style. Past commercial occupants include

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George is said to have been such a favoured retreat of musicians playing at Queen's Hall that it was nicknamed 'the Gluepot' by Henry Wood, who arranged for post-interval hand-bell summonses. After the Second World War it was a haunt of BBC producers and associated figures from the world of writing, theatre and music, such as Dylan Thomas and Louis MacNeice.³⁷

Nos 59–65. Gabled red-brick group of shops and flats in two pairs: Nos 63–65 of 1894, an early surviving speculative project by the builders C. W. Bovis & Company; Nos 59–61 of 1895, somewhat more decorative, built by A. A. Webber for John Rintoul, a baker. The yard north of No. 65 occupies the site of a passage which from the 1730s led to the Horse Grenadier Guards' riding house. From the 1820s this was known as Marks Yard, after John Marks, the coach-maker who held the riding-house site; it later gave access to the Portland Bazaar and Queen's Hall.³⁸

Nos 71–73. Following the sale of the block between Mortimer Street and Riding House Street to the Crown, Nos 71–73 – shop rebuildings of 1874 by the architect Augustus E. Hughes – were acquired by Julius Turner of 58 Portland Place, who from 1920 converted the ground floors and basements into showrooms for Crown Motors.³⁹

Turner was a major figure in the Great Portland Street motor trade through his control of Thorns (see Nos 19–21, above). In 1927 he sought a building lease for a 'magnificent' motor showroom at 71–77 Great Portland Street but was rebuffed – trouble had been caused by the parking and washing of cars in Marks Yard, while Turner, as 'a naturalized Polish Jew', was thought 'not a particularly desirable tenant'. A second approach in 1929 also failed, but a more modest proposal for refurbishment of Nos 71–73 for Thorns gained approval in 1931. Turner became ill, but returned to the fray in 1934, submitting new plans for rebuilding Nos 71–73 as motor showrooms with

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Mendelssohn regularly lodged from 1829, the house then being occupied by a German ironmonger.⁴²

No. 85 (and Swan House, 5 Langham Chambers). Building of 1908–9, erected by T. H. Kinglerlee & Sons for Frank M. Elgood, lessee and architect (III. 22/8). It extends back to what was All Souls Place where a return elevation has large tripartite windows, seemingly for fabric workshops.⁴³

Nos 87–93. Flats and shops of 1959–63 designed by Richard Seifert & Partners. The White Swan public house was at No. 91 till about 1886, within a few years of which this whole frontage had been redeveloped in separate stages, Nos 89–91 becoming a YWCA home. Shops were given up to the British Detrouiter Co. and Automobile Exchange Ltd shortly before the First World War.⁴⁴

No. 95 (with 30–34 Langham Street). Principally facing Langham Street with a not-quite symmetrical eight-

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occupied by the Automotive Products Group as Automotive House until the 1970s.⁴⁶

No. 99 (Western House). This 1930s commercial block replaces a hotel begun by the 1820s in a single house on the Chapel (now Gildea) Street corner. Known usually as the Portland, or Great Portland Hotel, it later expanded into adjoining houses on both streets. It was reconfigured in 1858 by Augustus Hullock Morant, architect, and in 1907–8 was extended with an annexe at Nos 101–105 by another architect, George Vernon, who in the following year prepared a scheme for a grand refronting in Portland stone, with a giant Ionic order. This came to nothing, however, and in 1912 a soberer stone refronting went ahead under Frank T. Verity, with further expansion along Chapel Street. By 1921 the hotel also encompassed 8–10 Hallam Street (page ###).⁴⁷

The hotel had closed by 1933, and soon afterwards C. E. Peczenik and his Alliance Properties company asked their in-house architects, headed by Robert W. Barton, to prepare a redevelopment scheme. Initially they planned a reinforced-concrete structure with a giant Corinthian order, but 5.8088 43340 0 50 008(iant) -

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Carl Maria von Weber died in 1826 while a guest of Sir George Thomas Smart, conductor and organist (III. 22/10). Next door, at No. 103, the artist Henry Stacy Marks was born in 1829. These and No. 101 were replaced in 1907–8 by the present building, principally an annexe to the Portland Hotel (see above), which picked up its levels and Ionic order from Nos 107–113. The BBC had offices here after the hotel's closure in the 1930s.⁴⁹

Nos 107–113. This gabled, bow-fronted range was built in 1904–7 as shops and showrooms for James Windus, a piano-maker, who had premises at No. 107 in what had been an unadorned row of the 1770s (III. 22/11). The architect was W. Henry White. The motor trade was present from 1914 when the Hillman Motor Car Co. took No. 107, and Maples fitted out No. 111 in a Jacobean style for the Warland Dual Rim Co., who had occupied the whole row of shops by the late 1920s.⁵⁰

No. 115. The original house here was built by the Hastie brothers in the 1770s; Hepburn Hastie lived in a larger house next door at Nos 117–119, where a later resident was the Scottish painter Sir David Wilkie (in 1808–9). No. 115 was a poulterer's shop for a good half-century before it was rebuilt in 1897–8 as their own speculation by the South Molton Street builder-developers Truman Stevens, with C. H. Worley as their architect. The shop was first occupied by Benjamin Brooks & Sons, fine art publishers, becoming a motor showroom by 1920.⁵¹

Nos 117–123. This substantial block was built in 1912–13 by Rice & Son for the developer G. S. Ferdinando, who employ1 Tf µ0.24 89.7.249.7.249.71hermfor

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Nos 131–141, The Central Synagogue. The present synagogue was built to designs by C. Edmund Wilford & Sons in 1956–8, replacing its bomb-damaged predecessor of 1869–70 (III. 22/13).

Jewish West Enders were obliged until well into the nineteenth century to attend long-established places of worship in the City of London, notably the Great Synagogue in Duke's Place, Aldgate. In 1842 the Reform congregation broke this tradition with a modest synagogue in Burton Street, Bloomsbury, moving to Margaret Street in 1849 (page ###). Fearing loss of worshippers to this convenient address, the Committee of the Great Synagogue agreed in 1850 to vote £6,000 towards a new branch synagogue 'a quarter of a mile west of Regent Circus'.⁵⁶ In the event the new synagogue lay north of the circus, behind 43–47 Great Portland Street, but soon proved too small and could not be extended (page ###). In 1866 a Great Synagogue subcommittee headed by Sir Anthony de Rothschild was appointed to find a new site nearby and build afresh for 800 worshippers, with two ministers' houses attached. They promptly secured the houses at Nos 133–141. The budget was ample, as the synagogue was prospering; Messrs Rothschild had promised £4,000. The committee decided against a competition and chose as architect N. S. Joseph, son-in-law to Nathan Marcus Adler, Chief Rabbi and creator of the United Synagogue, the federation to which the Central, as the congregation was by now called, adhered from 1870. Joseph presented a Moorish design in 1867, arguing that Gothic and Classical styles were both unsuitable, whereas the Moresque was well adapted to an 'ecclesiastical' building yet had advantages of 'elasticity' and economy. He was asked to present an alternative Italianate version, but the original was preferred, with

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would cost the congregation little. The United Synagogue sent a long list of possible architects to the building committee, who shortlisted three, not including Shaw & Lloyd, and at Leonard Wolfson's request an outsider was then added, C. Edmund Wilford. It seems that Wilford had shown him some sketches which, United's president Ewan Montague agreed, showed 'a most interesting approach to the theme of Synagogue architecture which hitherto in our experience has tended to be somewhat hackneyed'. But when Wilford was confirmed and met the building committee, he was told that the external elevation 'should be on traditional lines'.⁶¹

Wilford had made a name with cinemas before the war. He had no known connection with the Jewish community, but may have worked for the Wolfsons' company, Great Universal Stores. He and his assistants were directed to look at synagogues in London and perhaps also Venice. The result, built by Tersons Ltd in 1956–8, was a conventional, dignified building with close correspondences to its predecessor but an internal touch of cinematic glamour. The Great Portland Street façade is mainly clad in Portland stone, but the plinth and the columns flanking the high and hooded windows are of red Swedish granite. At the north end the entrance doors are set back in a high frame clad in gold mosaic. There is also a subsidiary entrance from Hallam Street. The galleried interior gives a powerful impression of height and restrained opulence (III. 22/15). The focus is on the ark at the south end, which stands in an outer surround of red mosaic embellished by flanking lions on tall pillars of gold and an inner frame of Sienna marble. The bronze metalwork to the ark doors and elsewhere, made by the Brent Metal Company, is strong, spiky and characteristically 1950s (III. 22/16).⁶² The other main feature is the almemar, clad in red marble, with attached panels carved in low relief. After completion, the synagogue windows were filled over a fifteen-year period with colourful glass made by Lowndes & Drury to designs by David Hillman (III. 22/17).⁶³ There is a hall below the worship area, and the circulation spaces including the stairs to the galleries are generous.

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Nos 143–149. The original houses here were built in the 1770s. No. 145 was held around 1780 by the courtesan and actress Gertrude Mahon (known as the 'Bird of Paradise' for her colourful plumed hats). No. 147, with a yard to the rear, was occupied by the builder James Hastie, then, from about 1816 until his death in 1838, the architect William Richardson (see also page ###).

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was at No. 179 from the 1870s, and the Inland Revenue had offices at No. 183 in the 1860s–80s; a brothel was operating here in 1906.⁶⁷

The Howard De Walden Estate wanted the whole block rebuilt in a single scheme, as was happening across the road at Portland Court, and in 1907 Bywaters & Sons Ltd took a lease of a large site at Nos 159–177, extending along Weymouth Street to 66–82 Hallam Street, with the intention of rebuilding by 1909. This did not happen, however, and in 1911 Peczenik started the redevelopment at Nos 167–169, with the builders E. & A. Roome & Co. The blocks either side followed in 1912–13, through Peczenik but with Bywaters & Sons Ltd as lessees. George Neal, of Tennyson Works, Kilburn, built Nos 159–163 (Tennyson House) and 165; Patman & Fotheringham Ltd were responsible for Nos 171–177; Bovis Ltd for Nos 179–185. Stone carving was by E. J. & A. T. Bradford.⁶⁸

The earliest building at Nos 167–169 is as stately as its later neighbours, but not quite as tall. Unlike them it is not faced in Portland stone and lacks a Giant Ionic Order. With flat roofs above mansards these blocks made maximum allowable use of the site, with ample fenestration to light shops, showrooms, factories or offices. The London Joint City & Midland Bank Ltd took the southern corner, and other early occupants of the southern section included the Singer Sewing Machine Co. Ltd, the Pictorial Review Co. Inc., and Morris, Russell & Co. Ltd, agricultural motor-

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building, where the novelist William Gerhardie occupied a flat in 1931–77, was converted to hospital use in the mid 1980s.⁷⁴

Bloomsbury County Court (demolished). The County Courts Act of 1846 divided England into sixty districts for a new network of courts to deal with small debts and civil claims, London beyond the City being covered by ten new courts. Charles Reeves was appointed Surveyor of County Courts and *inter alia* was responsible for the new Marylebone County Court on the Marylebone Road, opposite the bottom end of Lisson Grove. Despite its name, Bloomsbury County Court was also situated in Marylebone, initially at 28 Berners Street, where it opened in March 1847, and from 1850 at rebuilt premises on the site of Noel Desenfans' house and garden at 39 Charlotte Street.⁷⁵

Retaining and extending the old house as offices, Reeves added single-storey buildings around what had been the garden, latterly occupied by livery stables, with the new court-room alongside Charlotte Street. The existing street-side wall, probably belonging to the original ancillary range which had been partly adapted as a private chapel and mausoleum, was incorporated into the new building (III. 22/26). The main entrance gate to the complex was on Portland Road, for which Reeves designed a double-height pedimented surround, perhaps not executed, with the Royal Arms in the tympanum. An office range was added along the north side of the site in 1857, and a jury room in 1863, again to designs by Reeves.⁷⁶ The south-east corner of the site was redeveloped in 1907–8 for a Registrar's Court, a single-storey block in a neo-Georgian style with a cupola, designed in the Office of Works. The north range was used as a Customs and Excise office from the 1920s until 1965 when the County Court moved to Park Crescent (page ###).⁷⁷

The site of Bloomsbury County Court (No. 209) was redeveloped in 1980–4 by HDC Ltd as the Portland Hospital for Women and Children, a seven-storey

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derives from J. & B. Ashley Ltd, ladies' fashion merchants, who arrived here in the 1970s.⁸³

Nos 14–16. John and William Vokins, art dealers, valuers, carvers and gilders, had this site from the 1820s, rebuilding in 1864. David F. Cocks & Co. Ltd, dealers in dresses, feathers and furs, moved in during the 1890s and rebuilt again in 1913. As at No. 12 the architect was Ernest Flint and the builders Hall Beddall & Company. Limits having been eased in the meantime the building is impressive in its height, as well as in its wholly Portland stone front. There is also a large back building to Margaret Court.⁸⁴

No. 18 was built in 1892 for James Boyton by H. & E. Lea, builders. Its shop was a motor showroom in the 1920s.⁸⁵

No. 20 was built in 1908 for Sidney Oldridge to designs by F. M. Elgood.⁸⁶

For Nos 22–24 see 57 Margaret Street (page ###).

Nos 26–28 (with Nos 21–22 Margaret Street) incorporate the site of John Devall's corner house and yard of the 1730s. The present building is Julco House of

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motif, the Diocletian window, he added a second, mezzanine arcade, again in

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Meschinis in 1929–30, with Elgood & Hastie as the architects, and sublet as garment workrooms (III. 22/28). Pite's terracotta mezzanine was carefully copied across, though for the upper storeys plain cream faience was deemed sufficient.⁹⁴

Bomb damage in early 1941 left Pagani's ruinous. Arturo's daughter, Catherine Meschini, carried the business into the 1950s as no more than the Portland Buffet at No. 40. J. A. Meschini proposed a reinstatement of the restaurant in 1949–52, but this was abandoned. A somewhat ornamental scheme of 1954 by A. G. Porri & Partners was also superseded, and in 1955–6 Nos 40–48 were rebuilt for Meschini by Sir Robert McAlpine & Sons Ltd as offices and work or showrooms with 'penthouse flats' above; the architect was Maurice H. J. Bebb.⁹⁵

Nos 52–56 (including 87–89 Mortimer Street). This ebullient red-brick and Portland stone corner building, lately taken up by a post office, began as the London & South Western Banking Company's St Marylebone branch at Nos 54–56 (and 89 Mortimer Street), of 1890. The architect was Walter J. Miller. In 1914–15 the architects Freeman & Hodgson oversaw the bank's extension into 87 Mortimer Street, a rebuilding of 1893. Further extension into 52 Great Portland Street was handled by R. Allsebrooke Hinds, architect, in 1921–2. No. 52 was rebuilt in 1955–7, in plain buff brick with a ground-floor front matching the rest of the block, the architects being E. A. Stone, Toms & Partners.⁹⁶

No. 60 occupies the sites of Nos 58–66 Great Portland Street, first developed around 1740 and all rebuilt in the course of the nineteenth century. The whole group, together with 52–66 Mortimer Street and 5–17 Little Titchfield Street, was replaced in 1960–2 by the present building, originally comprising garment showrooms and named Knighton House. It was undertaken by Knighton Estates Ltd, for which Basil and Howard Samuel of Great Portland

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Estates were the managing agents

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78–80 were listed in 1980, thwarting redevelopment plans for Knighton Estates by the Elsom Pack & Roberts Partnership. In a compromise scheme, No. 82, of 1888, was replaced in 1986–7 by the present red-brick fronted offices. In 2015–16 Great Portland Estates refurbished the whole group as far as No. 92 with some conversion for residential use.¹⁰³

Nos 84–86. The first houses here, of 1766–8, were built by Joseph Wilton, James Spiller (who lived at No. 82) and Nathaniel Maycock. The architect Richard Edwin lived at No. 84 in the 1770s, and George Papworth and his son J. B. Papworth at No. 86 in the 1790s. No. 84 was rebuilt in 1848 as offices for

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for the 1760s, with the staircase in an entrance hall off Langham Street. The original staircase, with ornamental wrought-iron balusters on stone treads, remained in place until the early 1980s, when the house was listed and it and the adjoining properties in Langham Street escaped proposed redevelopment by Knighton Estates. In 2015 the Central London Property Trust secured planning permission to demolish No. 94 and 36 Langham Street behind retained façades as part of a redevelopment scheme also involving the eighteenth-century remnants at 38–40 Langham Street (page ###).¹⁰⁷

The original buildings in the stretch between Langham Street and the Horse and Groom pub at No. 128 – good-sized houses of the 1760s – were nearly all replaced piecemeal with flats and shops in the later 1890s, or showrooms a decade later (as at Nos 112–114). Also, a small school was erected at the north end of this group, at No. 126, in the late 1890s. Altogether this is an attractively harmonious yet varied row, mostly of red brick, that has seen the rag and motor trades come and go, and then survived the threat of redevelopment by Great Portland Estates in the early 1960s. Its shops at the time of writing (in 2015) still hang on to everyday uses (III. 22/31). James Boswell lived in a house on the site of No. 122 from 1791 (when his *Life of Johnson* was published) until his death in 1795. All the other London buildings inhabited by Boswell having gone, the LCC placed a

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stock brick, was built in 1896; Dale, Forty & Co., piano-makers, had the shop from 1921 to the 1950s, with a warehouse to the rear. No. 108, of 1895–6, also of stock brick, was designed by William Woodward for the builder and lessee, Thomas Herbert Griffiths. The original shopfront survives, with polished granite columns. Habra Brothers, makers of 'oriental goods', were based here

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premises were converted to private medicinal baths as the Alexandra Institute, but this was short-lived. From 1919 to 1969 a firm of dental-material makers, S. S. White & Co., had a depot here, with a top-lit 'museum' at the back on the old schoolroom site. Another conversion followed, to recording studios for Advision Ltd.¹⁰⁹

No. 128, Horse and Groom. This pub has its origins in the earliest

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No. 134. 1893–4, shop and flats (Cavendish House) for William Leader, portmanteau and umbrella maker. W. Henry White, architect; Patman & Fotheringham, builders.¹¹³

For Nos 136–138, see page ###.

Nos 140–142 (and 109–110 Bolsover Street). 1930–1, twin showroom and warehouse blocks for William Lee’s Tressco Ltd, ladies’ sportswear manufacturers; Yates Cook & Darbyshire, architects.¹¹⁴

Nos 144–146. Shops and flats of 1908–9; W. Henry White, architect, for the developer W. S. Hoare.¹¹⁵

Nos 148–150. 1915–

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Nos 160–202 (Portland Court), occupies the whole block between Clipstone and Carburton Streets, reaching back to Bolsover Street. It is Great Portland Street's most ambitious speculation, of flats and shops, dating from two phases of construction in the early 1900s and 1949–50.

Early development of the site was limited by the Portland Road trustees' prohibition on building within 50ft of the roadside (page ###). By the 1820s public houses stood at either end of the block – the Bay Malton to the south, the Colosseum Tavern to the north, the latter extended in the 1840s towards Portland Road as the Colosseum Hotel and Baths (III. 22/34). A double-fronted house called Portland Cottage was built in the 1820s, on the site of No. 190. Single-storey shops were eventually built over the whole of the previously open frontage in the 1860s, their motley character suggested by tenants such as Count Stefen Pongracz, an importer of Hungarian products, and Seraphicus F. Pichler, harmonium manufacturer (both at No. 172), and the Blenheim Free Dispensary (at No. 178).¹¹⁸

The origins of Portland Court go back to 1901, when William Cleland, a fruiterer at No. 166 who had come to London from Huddersfield having failed as a woollen manufacturer, began assembling the site with a view to rebuilding. Helped by an architect friend from Huddersfield, John Henry Hanson, Cleland managed, through a firm of solicitors (Donald McMillan & Mott), to secure backing for what was a very ambitious project from Thomas

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Jones on a site acquired by Peter Graham, of the Oxford Street furnishers Jackson & Graham, the founder and treasurer of the art school. It was 'essentially an artisan school', most of the students being employed in all sorts of crafts and trades, and in 1868 was said to take more than a quarter of the artisan students in all ten London art schools. Student numbers rose from around a hundred in 1863 to five hundred from 1864. The school moved to larger premises in Great Titchfield Street in 1879 (page ###).¹²¹

Redevelopment with a furniture warehouse followed, and in 1897 the site was acquired for the new mission. Trinity Church House saw use as a gymnasium and cinema, later as a rag-trade warehouse. Its replacement in 1972–4 was a speculative development for the church undertaken by Taylor Woodrow Property Co. Ltd, with Chapman Taylor & Partners as architects. Red-brick faced, on a reinforced-concrete frame, the building was designed as showrooms, offices and six luxury flats, but after standing empty was let in 1976 entirely as offices above a bathroom fittings showroom.¹²²

The two matching Portland stone-faced buildings at Nos 206 and 224–228 (which extend back to incorporate 71–72 and 59–61 Bolsover Street) were built in 1920–1 and 1911–14 respectively for what was to become the Royal National Institute for the Blind. Both were designed by the architect Claude Ferrier, and both have now been converted to flats, No. 206 under the name The Armitage, commemorating the organization's founder Dr Thomas Rhodes Armitage. The Armitage also takes in one of the intervening buildings, Nos 220–222 (and 62–64 Bolsover Street), formerly Seaford Court.

The Institute's occupation here began in 1902 when, as the British and Foreign Blind Association for Improving the Embossed Literature of the Blind

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Research Laboratory in consultation with the RNIB and others including the Cement and Concrete Association. This paving remains in situ in 2014.¹²⁵

Nos 208–210 (with 69–70 Bolsover Street, Devonshire Mansions). This block of flats, in stately red brick with a lyrical array of balconies, was built by W. Johnson & Co. in 1905–8 to designs by the architects Lanchester & Rickards (III. 22/41). The setting back of the upper storeys behind shops was stipulated in developments along here, an echo of the preceding arrangement of single-storey shops on what had been gardens. The lessee at the time of the rebuilding was Walter Tustin of 69 Bolsover Street, a manager for the brushmakers G. B. Kent & Sons Ltd.¹²⁶

Nos 212–218 (and 65–68 Bolsover Street). A hefty, stone-faced

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House, was dropped when the building became part of The Armitage (see No. 206, above).¹²⁸

Nos 230–232. Gable-fronted pair, since 2015 housing a fertility clinic, built as his own speculation by Alfred Baker in 1903.¹²⁹

No. 234, now occupied as the Portland Hospital Consulting Suite, was built in 1907–9 as the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, to designs by Rowland Plumbe. The premises, extending to Bolsover Street, replaced the smaller National Orthopaedic Hospital of 1881–91 (see III. 24/10). The rebuilding followed the amalgamation of the National (at this site since 1864) with two other orthopaedic hospitals. An account of the hospital and its buildings in Great Portland and Bolsover Street is given on page ####.

Nos 240–248. The first occupant, to 1787, of the northernmost house on the west side of Norton Street was the chimneypiece mason Richard Maile (see 53 Bolsover Street, page ###). The yard to the west and north was perhaps shared with another mason, John Devall II, who was the head leaseholder. Later the yard became a coach works, run by John King into the 1860s. The arrival of the Metropolitan Railway portended a change in local character but the MBW rejected a scheme for shops on the site in 1863. A year later Edwin Turner, owner of Tilbury's furniture repository in Marylebone High Street, secured new 67-year leases for the whole property, and in 1865 a development scheme by John Gravett Hilton, acting as King's architect, went ahead. Completed by 1869, this comprised a public house (the Albany Hotel and Tavern) and shops in a workaday round-arched style typical of its time (III. 22/43). No. 244 was a Lyons corner house from 1901 to c.1970.¹³⁰

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Great Portland Street Station

This insular building of 1929–30, with its distinctive elliptical plan and faience elevations, is the successor to one of London Underground's oldest stations, opened in 1863 as the Metropolitan Railway's Portland Road Station. It was listed and restored in 1987.

The site was a triangle of waste ground belonging to the Crown, left over when the New Road was created in the 1750s. Although contemplated as the site for a new parish church around 1820 when Park Crescent was laid out, it remained unused

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the disposal of smoke. For the sake of ventilation the station's north arm was flanked by large fenestrated, domed rotundas – in effect chimneys – the grandest architectural feature anywhere on the Metropolitan Railway. There was another vent above the west end of the platforms, though this was simply a hole in the ground on the west side of Portland Road, to the rear of 2 Park Crescent. The chimney domes proved unsatisfactory and were taken down in 1870 in favour of more holes in the ground.¹³³

The Metropolitan Railway line became part of the Inner Circle in 1884. Smoke problems intensified and the western ventilator was enlarged behind 1 Park Crescent in 1889–90. Even so, this remained the most smoke-bedevelled section of the line until electrification in 1905.¹³⁴

The lack of access to the station from Marylebone Road, a deficit in the face of bus competition, pushed the Metropolitan Railway to consider rebuilding. In 1922 the recently appointed company architect Charles Walter Clark prepared a scheme for an elliptical-shaped building with entrances north, east and west. It was to be faced in faience, and to contain a tea-room above a booking hall and shops (the station had accommodated a W. H. Smith bookstall since at least 1917). The scheme was temporarily withdrawn when the Crown demanded £4,000 for lifting covenants against ancillary uses. Another approach in 1928 was more sympathetically received. This time alternative uses were advanced for the upper storey. A motor showroom, backed by E. A. Wilson, the company engineer, won out over the tea-shop or offices. In haste, to pre-empt plans for widening Marylebone Road, the railway company awarded the contract without tender to the Pitcher Construction Company, on the basis of similar work at Swiss Cottage; this resulted in costs twenty-eight per cent higher than authorized. Building took place in 1929–30. The motor showroom was let to Stanley Hunt Ltd, as interior windows still testify.¹³⁵

Clarke's building is typ0.2 (k) -0.

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for rationalized circulation (see III. 22/44

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White's autobiographical *Mark Rutherford's Deliverance*. Martineau was succeeded in 1874 by Philip Wicksteed, an economist and social thinker. Shoolbred & Co. undertook improvements to the chapel under Edward Martineau, an architect-cousin of James, in 1900.¹⁴² These were not enough to halt its decline, and the congregation moved away in 1909 to University Hall, Gordon Square, which had been vacated when Manchester New College moved to Oxford. After the chapel's demolition the site was taken over for an extension of Pagani's Restaurant in neighbouring Great Portland Street, the handsome Alexandra House (No. 6).

Pagani's (under the ownership of the Meschini family) were also responsible for the other surviving Little Portland Street building of interest. That is No. 21 on the south side, a narrow warehouse in two tones of brickwork built for the firm in 1903–4 by A. A. Webber to designs by Beresford Pite, with all that architect's stringency of expression. It replaced a minor hall, the Fitzroy Temperance Hall, which had been in use for meetings of one sort or another since at least 1860, and substantially enlarged by Bywaters the builders in 1865.¹⁴³ Similar warehouse or industrial users around 1900 had given way to offices or studios all along the street by the end of the century.

No. 20, adjoining, is a commercial block of 1923–5 by Elgood and Hastie, architects.¹⁴⁴

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