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Chapter 14
61–101 Oxford Street

These buildings were occupied over the years by the mixture of trades typical for this part of Oxford Street. For a period from 1817, No. 401 (later 87) near the Dean Street corner was the shop of the cousins Thomas & Joshua Thomas, men's mercers or woollen drapers. The future Lord Justice Sir John Rolt was apprenticed in 1818 to the Thomases, 'as honourable and high minded men as are to be found in any class of Society', he remembered. Besides training him in their trade, they encouraged him to read and better himself. After starting 'on the lowest round of the ladder of such a business with corresponding wages', Rolt 'soon gained the confidence of T. & J. Thomas; was gradually released from the worst of the drudgery, and being somewhat of an adept in figures was much employed in the Counting House'.² Next door, No. 400 (later 89) on the Dean Street corner, was a pub, the Old Black Horse.³

Soho Street to Dean Street: Nos 61–89

The following is a summary of what is known of the buildings on these sites before 1930, all now gone.

(formerly 412) was probably always a pub, known originally as the Queen's Head but from the 1860s as the Old Queen's Head. In 1880 it was rebuilt in a costly but clumsy Italian style with a stone front and quirky corner turret. It dropped out of pub use in 1959.⁴

. These houses fronted workshops at the back. From 1793 onwards cabinetmakers operated from No. 63 (formerly 410): first Adam or Abraham White, then Francis and William Wright (1803–25). Tallis (c.1839) lists auction rooms at No. 410, and gives 'Bonham Water Closet Maker to Her Majesty' at the then No. 408¹/₂, i.e. behind the frontage. This was Thomas Bonham, an engineer who had been in a short-lived partnership with John

Chalklen in the 1830s. Both premises seem to have been reconstructed in 1861 when the auctioneers Jones & Bonham, hitherto in Leicester Square, built new auction rooms; the architect was Henry Baker, surveyor to the freeholders, the Glossop Estate, and Richard Batterbury was the builder. Later the firm became W. & F. C. Bonham & Sons, who used No. 65 as a shop or offices and ran auctions for furniture from the rooms behind. In the twentieth century the lower floors of Nos 63 & 65 became a second-rate restaurant, Slaters, undergoing sundry alterations including a measure of refronting. In 1971–3 the hall at the back had a brief incarnation as the Pleasurama Leisure Group's London Dolphinarium, designed by Jack Kinnair, and featuring two dancing dolphins called Bonnie and Clyde.⁵

were rebuilt in 1892 to designs by R. J. Worley as Valdeck Mansions, with flats over a shop and the entry way to Bonham's auction rooms. The building was completely refronted and turned into commercial premises after suffering war damage.⁶

. Behind the frontage of the former No. 406 (later 75) lay for a time the Soho Chapel, home to a Particular Baptist congregation between 1825 and 1885. This congregation had previously worshipped in Lisle Street near Leicester Square before moving to Oxford Street under their pastor, George Comb. The small building they took may have been the former chapel of the Spanish Embassy behind 7 Soho Square, but Comb had it reconstructed in 1835. Fifty years later the congregation was forced to leave because the freeholder wished to build business premises; they then transferred to a new chapel in Shaftesbury Avenue.⁷

In the early twentieth century the miscellaneous houses at were largely in the hands of Gill & Reigate Ltd, antique dealers and upholsterers, whose main base was the premises of the former Soho Bazaar just behind, entered from Soho Square and Dean Street.⁸

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furniture and other equipment. French decorators, Marc Henri & Lavardet, best known for their theatre interiors, added Art Deco touches of chrome and colour to the salesrooms, foyers and light fittings. The sweeping style of the façade, clad in slabs of polished Swedish granite interspersed with strips of stainless steel 'silveroid', probably came from Jeeves; he had recently been the executant architect on Raymond Hood's Ideal House in Great Marlborough Street, a building with a similar finish but far subtler than 'Everyman House', as the new Drages was dubbed. Up-lighters below the tiers of windows gave the front a finishing dab of flashiness.¹⁶

But 1930 was not a good moment to open a store reliant on large reserves of capital. Drages struggled on for just seven years until 1937, when it was sold by Debenhams to Isaac Wolfson's Great Universal Stores and the Oxford Street shop closed.¹⁷ Wolfson in due course passed the building on to the Leeds-based chain of Montague Burton, tailors. Before much could be done with the site, war intervened, causing damage to Drages' premises but even more to its western neighbour, the Dean Hotel. That extensive site now came into Montague Burton's hands, and in 1949–50 the chain's in-house architects in Leeds under N. Martin produced drawings to extend the Drages elevation to the same design down to the corner with Dean Street, along which the return front of the hotel was retained in simplified form. The result, built in two phases using different tones of granite cladding and completed in 1952, was unfortunate, as it exaggerated the mass of the original Drages without its brio. The 1929–30 building was largely let out to the Polytechnic Touring Association of London with a large Burtons outlet at shop level, while the new Nos 79–89 became separate shops and offices.¹⁸ All these buildings, by then known as Gainsborough House, were demolished in 2015.

Dean Street to Great Chapel Street: Nos 91–101

This short block is shown by Horwood (1799) as comprising just four houses, Nos 396–398 running east from Great Chapel Street, then a stable yard, and then 77 Dean Street on the next corner. There is no sign at that date of the White Horse Inn marked here earlier by Rocque. No. 396 at the Great Chapel Street corner was a pub, latterly the Bird in Hand. Tallis shows 77 Dean Street as 400 Oxford Street, with 399 Oxford Street to its west over the entry to the yard behind. The latter, having been in 1822 the address of a chairmaking firm, Graves & Hull,¹⁹ was taken over in 1838 by the Nosottis, looking-glass

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The main building facing Oxford Street is heavily glazed with details of stainless steel emphasized. The return to Dean Street incorporates surviving elements of the old flank of the former Tudor Hotel dating back to 1898–9, which have been raised to make the floor levels compatible with the new building.²⁴

. This site has been developed in 2015–17 along with the new western entry and concourse to Tottenham Court Road Station. The development is divided between two buildings north and south of Fareham Street, both designed by Hawkins Brown, architects. The larger building fronting Oxford Street has shops at lower levels and flats above. It is to be fronted in polished black concrete with 'reference to the Art-Deco glamour of the Marks & Spencer Pantheon building further along Oxford Street'.²⁵