Chapter 21
381–451 Oxford Street
Davies Street to North Audley Street

From Davies Street westwards to Park Lane, the freehold of the Oxford Street frontage mostly belongs to the Grosvenor Estate. It therefore differs from the rest of the south side in having been under the continuous control of one of the great London estates since it was first developed from the 1720s onwards. The history of the Grosvenor estate in Mayfair is covered in Volumes 39 and 40 of the *Survey of London*, Chapter Nine of Volume 40 being devoted to Oxford Street. So this and the succeeding chapter reprise that account, with appropriate additions and changes. They omit an extended discussion of Grosvenor policy in respect of their Oxford Street holdings, for which readers are referred to those earlier volumes. The chapters are divided into two to reflect the distinct nature of the frontages, past and present, east and west of North Audley Street.

Despite the controlling hand of a single ownership, the frontage here is no less mixed than elsewhere along the street. Buildings of all dates from the 1870s onwards survive, from specimens of lively late Victorian brick architecture for shops, now looking almost petite, to the monumental blocks of Park House and Hereford House west of North Audley Street.

The Grosvenor Estate and Oxford Street

Building development on the Grosvenor estate in Mayfair started in the early 1720s, working generally westwards until Park Lane was built up some thirty

or forty years later. But the main period of construction on the estate, including that of the central Grosvenor Square, took place in the 1720s and ’30s. Oxford Street was fringe territory on the estate’s northern edge. It was neither attractive nor valuable so long as executions continued to be held at Tyburn and before the second resurfacing of the turnpike road in the early 1770s ushered in the beginnings of fashionable shopping. Another inhibition to development was an old water pipe running parallel to the road a little to its south, from the corner with Tyburn (later Park) Lane. This carried water to the City of London from springs at Paddington; there were conduit heads at two points, just east of the corners with North Audley Street and Park Street, and tenants of the buildings eventually erected along its length were obliged to allow access to the system.[1]

For such reasons the original takers of plots with frontages towards the future Oxford Street in the 1720s were inclined to view this district as back land and let it out for building gradually and piecemeal. The background to Sutton Nicholls's engraving of Grosvenor Square, which offers a rough indication of progress in the 1730s, presents a piecemeal appearance along the main road. Rocque's map of 1746 shows that building had then progressed only as far as North Audley Street; but there was still a large gap at the corner with Davies Street, where buildings were not erected until the 1750s.[2] Nor were the Oxford Street block sizes generous. Five minor north–south streets intervene between Davies Street and North Audley Street – from east to west, originally James, Bird, Duke, Queen and George Streets (now Gilbert, Binney, Duke, Lumley and Balderton Streets). The frontage between Gilbert and Binney Streets is little more than 70ft, and from Lumley to Balderton Street about 90ft, making these blocks among the shortest along the length of Oxford Street.

One hint of the frontage’s humble quality in the eighteenth century was the creation of St George’s Market on part of the present Bond Street Station site. This butchers' market was founded in 1785–6 without sanction

from Earl Grosvenor in a yard between James (now Gilbert) Street and Davies Street, with access at either end from Oxford Street and Chandler (now Weighhouse) Street. It was the project of Henry Tomlinson, a plumber and glazier of Marylebone with interests in the development of Hans Town, Chelsea. Tomlinson took a 35-year lease of the ground and erected what must have been twenty very small houses.[3] Complaints soon arose from the inhabitants of the Grosvenor Market, which was erected at just this time close by in Davies Street and was officially supported by Earl Grosvenor; and in 1791, when St George's Market was put up for sale, they petitioned the Earl to suppress it.[4] Nevertheless the market continued until the original lease ran out, at which time Tomlinson's houses disappeared. Even then St George's Market did not die out; butchers and cheesemongers clustered in this part of Oxford Street and stalls encumbered passers-by for many years, attracting unfavourable comment from *The Builder* as late as 1867.[5]

By then the Grosvenor Estate had decided on something like a comprehensive plan for rebuilding its Oxford Street frontage – the first such coherent policy for any portion of its Mayfair estate or indeed for anywhere in Oxford Street. The policy first made its mark west of Park Street (see Chapter 22). Here the Grosvenor surveyors Thomas Cundy II and III completely replanned and rebuilt the frontage between 1865 and 1874 in the vigorous Second Empire Renaissance style they also deployed for the extant Grosvenor Gardens near Victoria Station.

In the more commercial territory east of Park Street this strategy took longer to implement, but it was in contemplation as early as 1863–4 at Nos 411–413, at the eastern corner with Duke Street. The tenant here was Peter Squire, a high-class chemist who previously had premises on the site, and his correspondence with the second Marquess of Westminster explains why an initiative was so urgently needed in this part of Oxford Street. Squire was keen to carry out Thomas Cundy III's design, 'notwithstanding that it far exceeds the expence originally contemplated', but added: 'it must be

remembered that such a handsome and costly edifice will for many years be surrounded by a filthy market, fostered by the neighbouring householders, and the stall people, protected as they are by the Magistrates, set you at bold defiance to remove them'. Later, Squire reminded the Marquess that because of this overspill from St George's Market he could not expect adequate rent, 'nor can it be supposed that the Public, which has for so many years been accustomed to walk on the North side of the Street, will be induced to change the route until the Street on the South side is rebuilt'.[6]

Thomas Cundy III's contributions to Oxford Street were confined to the elevations, so that lessees were allowed to have their own architects to plan their premises. But the fronts were carefully worked out. In the course of negotiations over Squire's premises, entresols like those used over shops in Regent Street were considered and rejected. Terracotta was also prescribed for some of the cornice details (as at Grosvenor Gardens). More significant on all these buildings was the use of red brick, which was to become virtually compulsory after the death of the second Marquess in 1869. Another provision for Squire's building, eventually not insisted upon, was that the brickwork should have five courses to the foot instead of the orthodox four. At shop level, the facing material for the fronts was to be red granite, a specification that remained standard for Grosvenor estate rebuildings along Oxford Street after Cundy had been supplanted.[7]

Had the third Marquess of Westminster allowed Thomas Cundy III to continue with this scheme of rebuilding, a uniform frontage might have become a reality. But over the years after his accession in 1869 the new Marquess came to favour greater variety, though at first he allowed Cundy to continue designing the new fronts. Circumstances delayed the execution of Nos 411–413, so that the other corner block with Duke Street, Nos 415–417 (now demolished), was carried out at much the same time, 1870–4. Here again Cundy supplied red-brick elevations, but the ornamental elements were reduced and bay windows – alien to the tenor of the previous designs – were

allowed. Next door, the Deaf and Dumb Church (St Saviour's) was erected in the same years by Arthur Blomfield; this was naturally Gothic and contributed to the growing discrepancy in style of the new Oxford Street. Cundy's Parisian approach was now doomed. The next opportunity for rebuilding was in 1875–6 at Nos 431–433, when Cundy seems to have been asked to supply something Jacobean or Queen Anne. But the result was so unconvincing that after this he retired from the architectural fray and acted solely as the Estate's surveyor. It was, however, probably Cundy who recommended J. T. Wimperis as architect in 1876–8 for Nos 443–451, the first fully Queen Anne range on the estate. Though its architectural merits were moderate, Wimperis was careful not to depart too far in his proportions and details from Cundy's lead near by, showing that Queen Anne and Second Empire were not always poles apart.

Queen Anne remained more or less the style for the rest of the rebuildings in Oxford Street, though the first Duke of Westminster (as the third Marquess became in 1874) permitted a divergence of approaches. The biggest contribution came from Thomas Chatfeild Clarke, who with his son Howard designed no fewer than seven buildings in Oxford Street. The six built west of North Audley Street have all been demolished, but the ebullient Nos 385–397 (of 1887–9) remain east of Gilbert Street.

By 1890 most of the commercial frontage west of Davies Street had been rebuilt. The reconstruction seems to have had no marked effect on the commercial character of the street. A reduction in the number of food shops was greatest in the St George's Market district close to Davies Street; but this decline, from eight butchers recorded in the estate's sector of Oxford Street in 1841 to one in the directories fifty years later, and from six cheesemongers to two over the same period, had begun before rebuilding got under way. The better-capitalized trades naturally had greater powers of survival, partly because their workshops were rarely located along the street itself. They were often restricted by rebuildings in the smaller streets behind. Yet as late as

1884–6 the coach-builders Thrupp & Maberly did not seize the opportunity of rebuilding to move their workshops to some less constricted faraway site, preferring still to concentrate their showrooms and works on the ground offered by the Estate at 421–429 Oxford Street. On the whole the scatter of trades in this part of the street was not so different in 1890 from what it had been fifty years before. The only speciality discernible besides coaches was leather goods; the 1890 directory records two leather-breeches-makers, four bootmakers, and one saddler.

Bond Street Station, West One Shopping Centre and 385–397 Oxford Street

This site has a complicated history. The original alignment of the top of Davies Street did not follow the main course of that street but was skewed back north-westwards along the line of South Molton Lane. Only a small part of the Oxford Street frontage here was on Grosvenor land.

When the Central London Railway from Bayswater to the City was first proposed in 1890, the Grosvenor Estate was among the opponents who helped scotch the original Bill. A revival of the scheme was soon mooted, and this time the promoters took care to consult the Duke of Westminster's interests by enquiring as to his 'wishes in improving the northern end of Davies Street', with a view to siting a station here. After some hesitation the Duke acceded, but a clause was inserted into the Act which became law in August 1891 protecting the Estate. It provided *inter alia* that if the Central London Railway Company decided to build a station near Davies Street, it should be obliged to straighten the top of the street.[8]

The siting of Bond Street Station was the only one of its four Oxford Street stations to encounter major difficulties. After appointing a new board in 1895, the company on the advice of the Electric Traction Company, the subsidiary created to build the line, considered excluding the station at Davies Street and the street improvements there from their programme of

works, and to shift the station to the opposite side of Oxford Street at the foot of Marylebone Lane. Then after pressure from the Vestry, a new agreement was negotiated in June 1897. By this arrangement the Duke of Westminster presented to the company his part of the site scheduled for purchase under the Act of 1891, together with an additional small piece of land between that and the Westminster Electric Supply Corporation's premises in Davies Street; in return, the company agreed to carry out the street improvements and build the station. Work began in 1898 and was still not quite finished when the Prince of Wales opened the Central London Railway in the summer of 1900. That was partly because the London County Council objected to a slight narrowing of the proposed width at the top of Davies Street. The new Bond Street Station finally opened just a few months late. Like other stations along the route, it was at the outset a single-storey structure in brick and terracotta, designed by Harry Measures. An electricity sub-station was added at the rear in 1903–4.[9]

The surplus land between the station and Davies Street was sold in 1906 to Henry Bailey, from whom the builders Perry Brothers took a lease of the site with an option to purchase and erect shops with chambers over. A prominent but undistinguished building in red brick and terracotta (with a Lyons tea room on the ground floor) was duly erected at the Davies Street corner in 1906–8 to designs by the City-based architect W. A. Lewis. The upper storeys, which extended over the tube station, became the Grosvenor Court Hotel. In 1961–2 this was acquired and renovated by Maxwell Joseph's Grand Hotels (afterwards Grand Metropolitan Hotels), only to be demolished in the early 1970s.[10]

Bond Street Station itself was largely rebuilt in the 1920s. In 1923 escalators were installed and in 1926–7 a new booking hall was built. A low but distinctive fascia towards Oxford Street was also erected to the design of Charles Holden of Adams, Holden and Pearson, with a plain facing of Portland stone and an overhanging canopy sporting the typical broad blue

band later so common on Underground stations; this was among the earliest of the works carried out by Holden for the Underground Group, contemporary with his new stations on the Northern Line extension in South London. At the end of the 1920s, Gordon Selfridge raised the idea of connecting the rebuilt station by means of a tunnel to a ticket office in the basement of his recently completed store. Lord Ashfield and Frank Pick of the Underground Group went some way along with this proposal but were always reluctant, and the idea had fallen through by the time that London Transport came into existence in 1933.[11]

The station was again rebuilt in the 1970s to accommodate the Jubilee Line. This new tube railway was planned in the first instance as a means of relieving the congested Metropolitan and Bakerloo Lines in north-west London. By 1965 it had been agreed that the Fleet Line, as it was at first called, would be extended southwards from Baker Street by means of new tunnelling via Bond Street and Green Park to Charing Cross, but its route further east and south had yet to be settled. Parliamentary permission to build the Baker Street to Charing Cross section was sought in 1965 and obtained in 1968, and work began in 1971.

Coinciding with these developments, the Grosvenor Estate in 1967 commissioned a study by Chapman Taylor Partners, architects, for a new strategy for its Mayfair and Belgravia properties. The most radical proposal under this plan, published in 1971, was the comprehensive redevelopment of the Estate's Oxford Street frontage. In the event little of that took place. The exception was at the Davies Street corner, where the interchange between the Central Line and the Jubilee Line (as the Fleet Line was renamed in 1977) in any case entailed the reconstruction of Bond Street Station. Above that, Chapman Taylor suggested a complex of shops and offices, envisaged at first as the principal entrance to a longitudinal shopping mall of the kind then fashionable.[12]

The below-ground works for the deep foundations, which had to work

around existing and new station tunnels, passages and escalators, took place from 1974 onwards (Ove Arup & Partners, engineers). The booking hall and shopping centre followed on after an interval, and were not fully finished when the Jubilee Line opened in May 1979. Most of the new station was at sub-basement level, but a new subway connected to an entrance on the north side of Oxford Street at Stratford Place. The shopping centre and offices over, named the West One Centre, were designed in association with the property developers MEPC Ltd; the partner in charge for Chapman Taylor was Nigel Woolner. As well as the old station, the development took in the site of the former offices of the Westminster Electric Supply Corporation facing Davies and Weighhouse Streets behind. The complex is clad in aluminium towards Oxford Street, but finished in modulated brickwork towards Davies and Weighhouse Streets. Internally there are three levels of shopping connected by escalator. Above these, the offices were let in the first instance to Max Factor & Kerr-McGee Oil, at an estimated total annual rent of £750,000.[13]

Further changes have taken place to accommodate the Elizabeth Line, formerly Crossrail, which is to open in 2019. This has involved the creation of two entirely new station entrances and concourses at ground level, the eastern one as far away as Hanover Square and the western one south of the West One centre on the site of the former British Council building at 65 Davies Street. There is also a subsidiary entrance in the western arm of Marylebone Lane. The architectural aspects of the new station have been assigned to Hawkins Brown and John McAslan & Partners.[14]

Nos 385–397 were rebuilt as a range of shops with four storeys above in 1887–9 to designs by T. Chatfeild Clarke and Son. The leases here having expired in 1886, the Chatfeild Clarkes were chosen as architects for three sets of rebuilding tenants co-ordinated by the Grosvenor Estate. The Clarkes' design was soon approved, and building took place under E. Lawrance and Sons for two of the tenants, and Charles Cox of Hackney for the third. The range has early French Renaissance detail, especially at roof level, and is built

of bright red Bracknell bricks with dressings of Ancaster stone. For many years from 1915 Nos 391–393 housed an Aerated Bread Company café.[15]

Of previous buildings on this part of the frontage, two were of minor note. At the old No. 290 (later 387), was Richard Goodhue's 'eating-house', puffed in a guide of 1815 for its 'really wonderful display … It is not uncommon to see among this tempting assemblage, a whole jury of roasting pigs, all ready, not to be impanelled but impaled on the spit. Mr Goodhugh [sic] provides daily for three hundred customers within and without'.[16] Further west was the Rose and Crown at the corner with Gilbert Street, No. 287 before 1880, then No. 397. This was rebuilt around 1837 to designs by Newman & Hallett 'in a most gorgeous style, and at a vast expense, for what is generally termed "a gin palace"'. The bar was a full 30ft high, and had large vats of spirits ranged around it. Tallis's sketch duly shows the front as ornate, with pilasters between the bar windows and the upper storeys set within arches. But in 1844 it was engulfed by a calamitous fire which claimed six lives, including the licensee's wife and two of her children. Gin, which was being pumped into one of the spirit vats, got into the gas and set the Rose and Crown ablaze.[17]

The pub survived, but in 1876 it became the object of an attempt by the Rev. J. W. Ayre of St Mark's, North Audley Street, supported by the Duke of Westminster, to establish a public house 'on the Gothenburg principle'. Under this system, private profits on spirits were to be strictly limited, so that managers were inhibited from pushing sales. But the initiative turned into a débâcle. One of the prospective trustees, the builder John Finch of Duke Street, fell under the imputation 'that his mother was kept on the Sacramental Alms list of the parish during his Churchwardenship, and that he denies that she is his mother', so he had to be passed over. When the 'Gothenburg Refreshment House' was opened in October 1876 the working man refused to be enticed into it, and after only four months the trustees were wanting to transfer the lease to the People's Café Company, which would pay the full

rent.[18]

Gilbert Street to Binney Street

This short block, Nos 399–405, covering the Oxford Street frontage between Gilbert Street and Binney Street, consists of a compact block of offices and flats designed for Lloyds Bank by Sir John Burnet, Tait & Partners. Built in 1967–70, it is square in outline and faced in concrete panels, but relieved from monotony by a first floor of unusual height with a recessed storey immediately above.[19] The previous building on the site was a range of shops with chambers above leased to Edwin Hollis, a pork butcher, designed by his architect, Joseph S. Moye, and built by H. Saala in 1880–2. The elevations were in an elaborate Queen Anne style, with granite piers between the shops and plenty of ornament on the red-brick upper storeys.[20]

Binney Street to Duke Street

This block, Nos 407–413**,** constitutes the sole survivor from Thomas Cundy III's considerable contributions to Oxford Street. The history of rebuilding here goes back to 1861, when Peter Squire wished to reconstruct his chemist's shop at the corner with Duke Street. His application was deferred by the Grosvenor Estate until 1863, and in the following year Cundy produced an elevation, details of which were settled after prolonged negotiation with Squire and his architect George Lansdown. Then Squire was granted a postponement, so that he could include the next-door premises in his rebuilding. Contracts for the enlarged site, covering the present Nos 411 and 413 Oxford Street, were finally exchanged in October 1869 and Cundy's design for this part was built without significant alteration in 1870–2. Squire's builder was J. Morter, and the materials were red Essex bricks, with some dressings in Portland stone and othersin Doulton's terracotta; the carver was

James Estcourt.[21] On the eastern half of the site (Nos 407 and 409) Samuel Mart, a fruiterer, applied for rebuilding terms in March 1872. Later in the year Cundy submitted an elevation extending the fronts of Nos 411 and 413, to which Mart's architects Tolley & Dale (who had already built at Nos 415 and 417) had to conform. Alfred Thomas of New Cross undertook the construction in 1873–4.[22]

Cundy's design for this short range was similar to that for the larger 489–497 Oxford Street and his purely residential range at Hereford Gardens. Since these have now been demolished, Nos 407–413 has an interest disproportionate to its present appearance. Its display of red brick, terracotta dressings and prominent roofs heralded the kind of treatment that was to prevail on the Grosvenor estate throughout the first Duke of Westminster's day, even if Cundy's French and Italian detailing was to be jettisoned.

Duke Street to Lumley Street

This block is occupied by Nos. 415–419, a commercial building erected in stages between 1923 and 1935. It replaced two previous buildings. Nearer Duke Street, at Nos 415–417, was a group of shops with chambers over, designed by Tolley & Dale with fronts by Thomas Cundy III, and erected by J. M. Macey in 1870–1. The corner site was the responsibility of Thomas B. Linscott, a baker, but there was some difficulty with No. 417, which Macey eventually built on his own account. Cundy's elevations and materials were similar to those at Nos 407–413, but less ornamental.[23] Gordon Selfridge occupied an office at No. 415 in the Edwardian years, while his great store opposite was rising.

The other building to occupy this site was St Saviour's Church for the Deaf and Dumb. This unusual church, built in 1870–4 and demolished in 1923, replaced *inter alia* the White Hart tavern.[24] It owed its existence entirely to the exertions of one of the most active Victorian charitable societies, the (Royal)

Association in Aid of the Deaf and Dumb. The Association had been founded in 1854 to systematize works of assistance and education begun in 1841 by the Institution for the Employment, Relief and Religious Instruction of the Adult Deaf and Dumb. By 1870, under the guidance of the Rev. Samuel Smith, for many years chaplain and secretary to the Association, it ministered to some two thousand deaf and dumb people living in London and needed a permanent centre. In 1860 an informal committee began to propagandize for the erection of the church, on the grounds that the secular character of the rooms used for services led to a 'want of proper reverence' on the part of some of those attending. The Association at first opposed this suggestion, but soon fell in with it and set up a building fund.[25] By 1867 over £2,500 had been received and sites began to be considered. One in the Somers Town district was being negotiated for in 1869, when it was announced that the Marquess of Westminster was prepared to offer the plot at the corner of Oxford Street and Lumley (then Queen) Street for sixty years at a nominal rent of ten shillings per year.[26]

The principal intermediary between the Association and the Estate in this negotiation had been Lord Ebury, brother of the second Marquess of Westminster and for many years a prominent trustee and vice-president of the Association. Favourable terms were ratified on behalf of the Estate by Earl Grosvenor, who after succeeding his father in October 1869 continued to interest himself in the project. His request that the church should be 'a Gothic building of red brick with black lines, terra cotta etc.' with 'a suitable sloping roof' was largely heeded by the Association's architect, Arthur Blomfield, who had been chosen by December 1869.[27] Blomfield was doubtless appointed because he was brother-in-law of one of the Association's most active trustees, Arthur Henry Bather, who was the deaf husband of Lucy Elizabeth Blomfield ('Aunt Lucy'), the writer of children's books and daughter of the famous Bishop Blomfield of London. The choice of architect was a good one, since Arthur Blomfield was adept at the planning of cheap or special churches and

showed his originality more often in these instances than in his run-of-the-mill ecclesiastical practice. For him, the commission led to further work on the Grosvenor estate, at St Peter's, Eaton Square, St Mark's, North Audley Street and St Mary's, Bourdon Street.

The building was to occupy a frontage of fifty feet to Oxford Street and some seventy-five feet stretching back into Lumley Street; a small site to its south was reserved for the erection of a chaplain's residence. The plans, authorized in January 1870, included a lecture hall and committee room in the basement. The church itself was to hold 250 deaf and dumb, but could accommodate a rather bigger ordinary congregation, since it was agreed with the Rev. J. W. Ayre of St Mark's that it should come under his jurisdiction and be available also for the poor of his parish.[28] In June 1870 an appeal for further funds was published in *The Times* over the names of several eminent clerics, peers and politicians, and on 5 July the foundation stone was laid by the Prince of Wales at the north end of the building facing Oxford Street. Present on this occasion were the third Marquess and Marchioness of Westminster and Lord and Lady Ebury, while the Archbishop of York conducted the service.[29]

Visibility and light were the prime requirements for this unique church. To supply these, Blomfield took a leaf from the book of Victorian Nonconformist church-planning. Discarding strict orientation, he produced a centralized plan surmounted by a lofty octagon with a pitched roof, and a small attached apsidal chancel to the north. The roof structure of the octagon was concealed by an elegant stellar vault in wood; the apse was also vaulted, but in stone. The main vault was to have been also of stone, but for this as for other more costly features funds did not suffice. The exterior formed an imposing if slightly disjointed design in red brick with Bath stone dressings. The narrow apse projected abruptly in the centre of the Oxford Street front, with a slim bell turret close by in the north-west position, on which was a niche filled in 1877 with a statue of the Good Shepherd by Joseph Gawen, a

deaf and dumb sculptor who had worked under E. H. Baily and William Behnes. In style, the church adhered to a strict thirteenth-century Gothic, with lancets, simple tracery and high tile roofs. The builder, J. M. Macey, began work in 1870 but was delayed by lack of funds, and St Saviour's was not formally opened until 1873 or 1874; the final cost came to something over £7,500.[30]

A small piece of land to the south of the church had been reserved for a clergy house, but because the Royal Association (as it became in 1874) lacked money, Blomfield's simple design for the site could not be carried out until 1876–8, the builder again being Macey & Son. The lease of church and residence, running from 1871, was finally exchanged in 1880.[31]

At first the church had few fittings of note, but there were three stained-glass windows in the lancets of the apse by Heaton, Butler & Bayne. The tall reredos in mosaic, depicting the Crucifixion with St Mary and St. John, was a memorial to A. H. Bather; by the time of the church's demolition it was flanked on either side by formalized representations of trees, painted on gold grounds. The other chief feature of the chancel was the pair of ambones which Blomfield built into the dwarf screen beneath the chancel arch instead of a formal pulpit and lectern. The upper walls of the body of the church were left in plain brick. An early gift (1872) was a large painting of Christ healing the deaf and dumb ('Ephphatha') by the deaf artist Thomas Davidson. Later it was intended that Frank Ross Maguire should fresco the bare lower walls. The scheme did not proceed, but a Last Supper painting by Maguire was installed, probably in 1916.. At the south (liturgically west) end, a vestibule and small baptistry with permanent font dating from 1893 were surmounted by a deep raked gallery. In the lecture room below was a statuary group of Sir Arthur Fairbairn and his sister by Thomas Woolner.[32]

The church continued its work without interruption until 1920, when it was made plain to the Royal Association that its lease would not be renewed in 1931. The Grosvenor Estate was in fact anxious to get possession of the site

for redevelopment and offered £10,000 for surrender of the lease at the end of 1920. This was refused, and in March 1921 the Association enquired what the cost of the freehold might be under the recent Act for Enfranchisement of Sites of Public Worship. An impossibly high price of £60,000 was suggested by the Estate's solicitors. The only alternative accommodation offered was St Philip's, Buckingham Palace Road, which the Association thought unsuitable. But the Estate remained intransigent on the questions of renewal or of the cheap sale of the freehold. In July 1922 the Association therefore agreed to surrender their lease for £15,000 and to move out at the end of the year.[33] The last service was held on 31 December 1922.

The Royal Association kept a centre in Oxford Street, but its new purpose-built church, designed by Edward Maufe, was constructed at Acton. St Saviour's, Armstrong Road, Acton, was opened in 1925 and contained a number of the fittings from the old church in Oxford Street. These, including Gawen's Good Shepherd figure and Maguire's Last Supper painting, were transferred to the British Deaf History Society's Deaf Museum and Art Gallery in Warrington when the building closed in 2014. Davidson's Ephphatha painting may also be seen there. The Acton building became St Thomas's Syrian Orthodox Cathedral in 2016.[34]

The church site (No. 419) was the first to fall vacant, and in April 1923 G. Thrale Jell produced designs for steel-framed shops, showrooms and offices here for Wotton and Son. The elevation that he submitted to the LCC was substantially different from that built by F. D. Huntington Limited in 1923–4, but both were meant to be part of a scheme for the whole block. No. 419 came into use as Selfridges' wholesale department.[35] At the other end of the site, No. 415 was rebuilt for the outfitters Horne Brothers in 1925, but the linking portion at No. 417 had to wait until 1935.[36] In both cases the architects were Wimperis, Simpson & Guthrie, but so far as is known they carried out Jell's elevations. The range forms one homogeneous block, with well-disposed metal windows between stone-fronted piers and rounded corners, and

showing in a pared-down version the influence of Frank Verity. In 1930–2 the freehold of the building was sold by the Grosvenor Estate.

Lumley Street to Balderton Street

Another short block, this is now entirely occupied by Keysign House, 421–429 Oxford Street, of 1937–8. The dominant occupier of this site in the nineteenth century was the coach-building business of Thrupp & Maberly, descended from a firm started around 1765 by Joseph Thrupp in George (later Balderton) Street just behind, where open space allowed for workshops and storing carriages. Early in the nineteenth century the Thrupps inserted a showroom at 269 (later 425) Oxford Street in place of a simple archway leading into their works. As illustrated by Tallis, this shows a central entrance, three giant arches rising through generously spaced upper storeys and a handsome crowning pediment. In 1857–8 the building was extended upwards by a storey and given a weighty Italianate treatment by the architects F. J. & H. Francis, who replaced the pediment with a heavy cornice. The change coincided with a merger with George Maberly, a Welbeck Street coachmaker.[37]

The block (by then Nos 421–429) was rebuilt in 1884–6 by William Brass and Perry & Company to designs by Henry S. Legg and Arthur Kinder, in a lumpy Tudor style faced in red brick with terracotta dressings. The Thrupp & Maberly showroom now occupied the complete frontage, with a consolidated manufactory behind.[38] The firm remained at this address until 1914, when they sold out to Gordon Selfridge. Latterly their main business was body-building for motor cars and vans, which they carried on thereafter first at 475 Oxford Street and then at 20 North Audley Street. In 1924 the works moved to Cricklewood.[39] After making alterations to the designs of H. O. Ellis & Clark, Selfridges opened Nos 421–429 as its first provision store in the autumn of 1914. Food of every kind was available from 'hygienic white marble halls'. For most of the inter-war period, Selfridges therefore operated

from both sides of Oxford Street.[40]

Keysign House is a plain office building with shops below, erected to designs by Trehearne & Norman, Preston & Company for London County Freehold & Leasehold Properties Limited; Trollope & Colls were the builders. The lessees were a property company specializing in renting middle-class flats, commonly called 'key flats' – hence the name Keysign House. Originally they occupied most of the office space, entered from Balderton Street, though some space was sublet.[41]

Balderton Street to North Audley Street

From Balderton Street westwards to Park Lane, the frontage had – unusually for Oxford Street – a well-organized mews or service street running close behind in approximate parallel. The whole of that back street is now called North Row, but at the time of Rocque's map (1746) the stretch between George (later Balderton) and North Audley Streets was known as Mason's Yard. At that date building development had proceeded no further west than North Audley Street. Tallis shows fifteen properties of sundry shapes and sizes along the Oxford Street frontage at the end of the 1830s. The numbering was then in a confused state, running west–east from 263 to 270 but with various reversions and repetitions along the way, so that three houses were numbered 265; this was sorted out in 1880, when the sequence became Nos 431–451 (odd), running east–west. Two of the old houses here were pubs: the King's Arms, numbered 264 at the George Street corner, and the Swan, later the White Swan, at 268, one house east of the North Audley Street junction. Both had been suppressed by 1876, when the Grosvenor Estate was in the process of rebuilding the block piecemeal.[42]

At **Nos 431–433**, the Balderton Street corner site, the old leases fell out in 1874, and William Adkins, a linen-draper, was enticed from a nearby site to build

houses with shops here. These were agreed for around 1875 but apparently not erected until 1882 by William Macey. Adkins' architect was F. Boreham, but Thomas Cundy III may have intervened with the elevations. These, according to the Duke's decree, were to be 'red brick but somewhat different from the rest of Oxford Street'. The result is a not very confident essay in a gabled Jacobean style.[43]

Nos 435 and 437 were rebuilt in 1889–90 for the National Penny Bank, an institution devoted to 'the promotion of thrift among the working classes' which had in 1875 been allowed to occupy premises on this site at a low rent as a short-term measure. Eventually the bank authorities were asked to vacate or rebuild. They chose the latter course, and the present building was erected in a style approximating to that of Nos 431 and 433, in the usual red brick with stone dressings. The builder was William Scrivener.[44]

Nos 439 and 441 occupy one of only two sites on the Grosvenor estate's Oxford Street frontage to be rebuilt between 1890 and 1914. The site has a narrow front but is broader at the back towards North Row. In October 1903 John Wells, a silversmith, was permitted by the Grosvenor Board to rebuild on his own account, using Balfour & Turner as his architects – Eustace Balfour being the Grosvenor Estate's surveyor at the time. Wells assigned his building agreement to George Neal, a contractor of Kilburn. Under Neal's auspices, the building was erected in 1907–8 and occupied by the National Radiator Company.[45] T Towards North Row the building has a pleasing, simple brick character, but the Oxford Street elevation is an interesting example of Balfour & Turner's later work. It is faced entirely in stone and relieved by arches to the main windows carried on granite columns. There is a small pediment over the centre at attic level. The ground floor has suffered from an inappropriate shop front, while the stonework of the upper storeys has been recently defaced with paint.

Nos 443–451 (odd) Oxford Street and No. 21 North Audley Street, the first speculative range of shops and chambers in the Queen Anne style to be built on the Grosvenors' Mayfair estate, were erected in 1876–8 by Thomas Patrick to the designs of J. T. Wimperis. Thomas Patrick had with his father, Mark Patrick, previously built 489–497 Oxford Street 'and lost money on one house', so he was offered these five sites in compensation.[46] Wimperis was perhaps chosen as architect for this, his first work on the Grosvenor estate, because of connexions with Thomas Cundy III over projects in South Kensington.[47] The elements of his design, though parading the Queen Anne and red-brick motifs of which the Duke approved, were not in essence far removed from Cundy's own earlier designs for Oxford Street. The granite facing which characterized the original shop fronts along this part of the street may still be seen at the corner with North Audley Street, which is also marked by a sharp tourelle.

The range can boast artistic occupants of distinction. At No. 449 William Morris and Company had their showrooms from 1878 until 1918, while No. 447 was the office of the architect John Dando Sedding from 1886 until his death in 1891, and then of his assistant and successor Henry Wilson until 1898. Also at No. 447 between about 1878 and 1910 was the London office and showroom of the Sheffield ironfounders Longden & Co., described in the directories as 'cooking apparatus manufacturers' but among the leading makers of artistic grates.[48]

William Morris himself was less present in Oxford Street than at his firm's former premises in Red Lion Square, but one anecdote has been handed down about his handling of clients there:

> A person of importance called to discuss the carpeting of his new house. The best specimens of the Hammersmith carpets, then produced in a complete range of pure bright colour, were submitted to his inspection. He gave to them a somewhat impatient and wandering attention. 'Are these all?' he asked. He was told yes. 'But I thought', he went on, 'your colours were subdued?' At this Morris, who had been gradually boiling up during the interview, boiled over.

'If you want dirt,' he broke out, 'you can find that in the street.' To the street the offended customer turned, and that was the end of his dealings with Morris & Company.[49]