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CHAPTER 24

Bolsover Street to Cleveland Street

The sense of backwater permeating the district between Great Portland Street and Cleveland Street is strongest

boundary along Cleveland Street in St Pancras. This boundary, today the demarcation between the City of Westminster and the London Borough of Camden, was never a meaningful barrier, despite changes of landownership and a shift in axis of the street grid at that point. Similar developments have occurred at similar dates on both sides of the line. The term 'Fitzrovia', recorded as early as 1940 and widespread today, originated with literary and artistic bohemians. It derived not from the square but from the Fitzroy Tavern in Charlotte Street (not to be confused with the Fitzroy Arms, another pub formerly in Clipstone Street) and was at first applied to a knot of streets and pubs close by, all in St Pancras.¹ Later, losing its ironical flavour, it got rolled thin and eked out by estate agents and community groups from about 1970 to take in the whole area between Great Portland Street (and even further west), Euston Road, Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street, regardless of borough boundaries. Today the area described in this chapter may fairly be thought of as north-western Fitzrovia.

Of the several streets covered in this chapter, only Cleveland Street calls for detailed separate consideration, and is described after more general accounts of the area's development and redevelopment. Apart from a short frontage at the south end, only the west side of Cleveland Street falls within the parish of Marylebone and thus within the scope of the present study.

First development

The outline of the street pattern was probably arrived at in the 1760s, when building on Portland-owned land began creeping east from Great Portland Street and north from Upper Marylebone Street, as this end of New Cavendish Street was known. Its eastern limit was set by a strip of Berners property along the west side of Wrastling or Green Lane, the future Cleveland

standing based in Great Portland Street, took a set of plots on the north side of Clipstone Street with returns to Great Titchfield Street and Upper Charlton Street. Of some two dozen houses built here, the brothers took leases of less

the 1770s. Around the Carburton Street junction the ground was developed under the Hasties and the stonemason John Devall the younger. Sometimes divided into Upper Norton Street above Carburton Street and plain Norton Street below it, but always numbered together, the street attracted a few minor fashionables, some exiles from revolutionary France, and a medley of artists, sculptors and craftsmen. Here Sir William Chambers spent his last years between 1790 and 1796 at No. 75 (later 76). The house was subsequently occupied by a Mrs Flowers who left in 1799, then by J. M. W. Turner and his mistress Sarah Danby until 1803 or 1804. The sculptor James Smith II lived at No. 57, where in 1813 he produced after several sittings a full-sized bust of Sarah Siddons.⁶

The upper section of Great Titchfield Street, next eastwards, also drew artists and craftsmen; it was a1 () -0.2 (was) 0.2 (a1 ((b) -0.2)]TJ full) JT (in 179 -0 -0.2 reat)

its eastern end; Ford Madox Brown had a studio here in 1847–9, in an old workshop. In late 1854 the Artists' Society and the associated sketching club transferred to purpose-built rooms at Langham Chambers in Langham Street (see page ###), while their old premises became the studio of one of the members, the illustrator Charles Keene.

and 184–190 Great Titchfield Street); Thomas Piper (192 and 194 Great Titchfield Street); and William Doncom (196–200 Great Titchfield Street and 5–7 Greenwell Street). Completion of the Carburton Street frontage was delayed, probably because of John Reid's death, Nos 19–24 being added by the Great Portland Street builder William Richardson around 1810 with a stable yard behind, later Blackhorse Yard.¹⁰

In Cleveland Street the main element was the terrace now numbered 139–151, originally Buckingham Place (III. 24/4). This had been built around 1792–3, involving Doncom and another builder, Thomas Parting, lessee and doubtless developer of the Rose and Crown in Clipstone Street. Nos 139 and 141 are unusually well documented. Parting agreed to fit up No. 139 as a bakery for James Gifford, building him an oven with a 'compleat iron door' and a floor of 'Chalfont tiles' and fitting up the back kitchen with shelves, a flap to bring flour up from the basement. An inventory of 1800 mentions a bow-fronted shop front and a staircase 'skirted and papered' up to the second floor but no higher. Next door at No. 141, a blue plaque commemorates the residence in 1812–15 at what was then 8 Buckingham Place of the future American inventor Samuel Morse; he shared lodgings here with C. R. Leslie, when both were budding artists taking lessons from Benjamin West in Newman Street.¹¹

The George and Dragon at the north end of this terrace, No. 151, is festively stuccoed, an embellishment that may date from alterations in 1861 or 1879. It retains its original Georgian height, its neighbours having probably all been raised a storey in the later nineteenth century. At that time the George and Dragon changed hands frequently, often for large sums, as was then common for pubs: £5,600 was paid for an 18-year term in 1872, while figures of around £15,000 were exchanged in 1897–8, when it had the asset of a new Berners lease. At the southern end of this terrace, a block of Berners estate artisan flats dating from 1891 at 127–133 Cleveland Street and 17–18

Notable residents in this area before 1850 include the following:¹⁷

Norton Street (numbering as revised .1800). David Wilkie, painter, .1806; Frederick Lee, painter, .1822–41; James Malton, architect and topographical artist, .1794–1803; Richard Wilson, painter, .1775–8; G. F. Watts, painter, 1837; Charlotte, Fanny, and Ramsay Reinagle, artists, .1799–1808; Peter Mathias Vangelder, mason and sculptor, .1795–1809; James Smith II, sculptor, .1813; George Robert Lewis, painter and engraver, .1835–45; Richard, Michael and Matthias Crake, masons and sculptors, .1795–1830; Thomas Hardwick, architect, 1800–5; Thomas Grotorex, conductor and organist, .1810–31; J. M. W. Turner, painter, 1799–1803; Ignaz Moscheles, pianist, , c.1825–30; Henry Rouw and Peter Rouw I & II,

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place, particularly along the west side of Bolsover Street, as the former Portland Road back gardens were allowed to be redeveloped. From about 1890 there was a change of policy, houses being generally replaced on sites not assigned to trade by small, symmetrical blocks of flats, of a type commoner further south (see page ###).

In Gissing's (1891), the home of the impoverished writer Harold Biffen was a lodging house garret in squalid 1880s Clipstone Street, from which he manages to rescue the manuscript of his novel as the building burns.

Once-artistic Bolsover Street was dismissed by an Edwardian commentator as 'now a dull macadamised street in whose houses upholstery, steel-cutting, etc., are carried on'.²¹ Much of the west side became back premises of addresses in Great Portland Street, notably the massive Portland Court of 1905–11 between Clipstone and Carburton Street (pages ###), while the east side was restored to some dignity and respectability in the early years of George V's reign by a group of neo-Georgian hostels for working women, Bentinck House, Chadwickham (III 24/6–7) and St Clement's House (see Select Gazetteer below). In

rehousing the dwindling population. On those grounds one commercial application for planning consent was refused in 1949.²³ Redevelopment, much of it for the Holcroft Court housing scheme, transformed the area in the 1960s

various church schools or the Portland British Schools, Little Titchfield Street (page ###). In 1909 the London County Council tried to close the Portland school on the grounds of its inadequacies and transfer its pupils to Barrett Street much further west. After failing to win support for this move, the authority had to rethink school accommodation against the background of a falling local population. Its response was to plan a new school closer to the St Pancras border, shut the Portland School and convert Barrett Street into a trade school. A site between Clipstone Street and Upper Marylebone (now New Cavendish) Street, occupied mainly by the Fitzroy Works (furniture workshops), was duly earmarked in 1911 for a three-storey elementary school plus handicraft centre, for 768 children.²⁵

Erected by Henry Lovatt Ltd and opened in August 1914, the school took in children from the Portland, Barrett Street and Trinity Church of England schools, all of which closed for elementary teaching. Some forty per cent of the intake were said to have been oure

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blocked by permanently locked gates, turning what was intended as a public amenity into a fortress. In Cleveland Street distinguishably local shops and workshops have largely been replaced by small electronics firms, and the pub in the prow has gone. Gold remains proud of the design, but says that he soon

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Portland Street, formerly 16 Portland Road and in fact the back garden of 56 Bolsover Street. Designed by George Vigers in what was described as French Renaissance style, this provided 39 children's beds in two wards, plus kitchens, nurses' dining room, gymnasium, consulting and other rooms (Ill., from Builder). A memorial stone was laid in April 1891 and the building was completed in 1894.³⁷

Amalgamation of the three London orthopaedic hospitals was proposed by the King's Fund in 1903, and in 1905 the National and Royal

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adjoining ground was built up, which took place gradually in the 1760s–90s. Over that time agreements must be presumed between the Portland and the Berners representatives, allowing the various new east–west Portland streets – Union (Riding House) Street, Queen Anne Street East (Foley Street), Upper Marylebone Street (New Cavendish Street), Clipstone Street, Carburton Street, and Buckingham (now Greenwell) Street – to open into the lane. The

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acquired a plaque in 2013 after Ruth Richardson demonstrated its identity. In 1843–4 this was the address of Francis Danby, the landscapist, by then experiencing hard times.⁴⁷

Cleveland Street was always a street of small shops and trades. Among the sprinkling of artists like Danby who lived on the Marylebone side, the most interesting was the landscapist and engraver William Daniell, occupant of a demolished house south of New Cavendish Street between at least 1802 and 1825.⁴⁸ Generally the south end of the street was low. Seven of the 35 Marylebone prostitutes in

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Yalding House (1–4 Clipstone Street, 103 Bolsover Street and 152–156 Great Portland Street), see page ###

Threeways House (40–44 Clipstone Street, 127–129 Great Titchfield Street, and 11–12 Bolsover Street). Offices/workshops of 1930–2; designed by Waite & Waite, architects and surveyors, for D. G. Somerville & Co.⁷⁰

EUSTON ROAD

No. 379 (Grafton House). Early 1970s office building, first occupied 1973 as banking group headquarters.

No. 383 (Green Man). Spacious pub with flats over, built in 1938–9 to designs by Watneys' in-house architect Alfred W. Blomfield; may incorporate vestiges of the Georgian building of the same name, successor to the Farthing Pye House (Ills 24/15–16). Its neighbour, Nos 385–387, with a return at 52–52A Bolsover Street, was built in 1927 as a car showroom with offices for Henlys Ltd; the architects were Constantine & Vernon.⁷¹

HANSON STREET (NORTH END)

Nos 44–48, Latimer House, enveloped today by the University of Westminster's New Cavendish Street site and now in National Health Service use, is an austere brick dormitory built in 1938 to designs by Seth-Smith, Monro & Matthew. It was intended for boys who, previously taken from disadvantaged London homes to board at Kingham Hill School, Oxfordshire, were brought back to learn trades but continued to be housed during the process. It replaced a smaller hostel in Fitzroy Square employed for the same purposes by Kingham Hill's founder, C. E. Baring Young, from 1894. It did not long continue in its original use.⁷²