



THE STORY OF  
**MAYFAIR**

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FROM 1664 ONWARDS

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CELEBRATING 350 YEARS OF  
**MAYFAIR**

# FOREWORD

Three years ago I took a call from Grosvenor asking me to prepare a report for the board on the values of residential Mayfair property and for Wetherell's predictions on where we thought the market was going. As I prepared my evidence of comparable sales, market strength and predictions for the future I came to the conclusion that not only was Mayfair to continue in its rise but that it was significantly undervalued and that the market was set to undergo a "Step Change" in values. Mayfair would not only catch up with other PCL (prime central London) areas but blast through those values to reclaim once again the position of London's number one residential area.

To paraphrase Sir Winston Churchill – the further ahead you need to look then the further back you need to go – I was led into a research project that would take me back through 350 years of Mayfair history.

WHAT BECAME APPARENT TO ME WAS THAT MY PREDICTION OF A STEP CHANGE TODAY WAS NOTHING NEW IN THE HISTORY OF MAYFAIR AND IT SHONE OUT TO ME THAT SINCE 1664 THERE HAVE BEEN SEVEN SIGNIFICANT STEP CHANGES. THIS LED ME TO PRODUCE THIS BOOK.

The project has not been one of my fastest as the day job of selling Mayfair property has been extremely busy over the last few years. Indeed, my predictions of price rises have been proven over many occasions and each one at even higher record-breaking prices.

My belief is that Mayfair is a worldwide brand that offers its aficionados a world-beating menu of facilities, not only in residential, but also in the fields of commercial, retail, leisure and culture – and all a secure stroll away. None of this is new to the walls of Mayfair – it was said that in the mid 1800s that the world was run from the houses of Mayfair. Nothing changes – except today the rulers of the world in business, as well as nations, want to live in Mayfair.

A researcher named Oliver Bradbury approached me about eight years ago to help and collaborate with him on a book he wanted to write on the all the magnificent buildings that had been demolished in Mayfair. With my assistance and with historical articles in The Mayfair Times, plus support from Grosvenor, he

published "The Lost Mansions of Mayfair" on the day Lehman Brothers collapsed in September 2008. I therefore turned to Oliver to help me research 350 years of Mayfair history with a brief to look at the significant Step Changes through our area's history for this book.

Six years ago I celebrated 25 years of Wetherell and commissioned a publication of my vision for Mayfair and highlights of a quarter of a century selling property in one of the world's greatest and most historic areas. For this commission, I turned to Erik Brown, a well-known journalist and publisher in Mayfair. The result – "All Roads Lead to Mayfair" – is a publication I am extremely proud of. So two years ago I asked Erik to write the last chapters of this book on the next "Step Change" in Mayfair's long history.

I would like to thank Michael Malley of Twentyonefifty who has created the design layout and kept a constant enthusiasm for the project throughout the three years that this publication has been in the melting pot, just as he did for our 25 years publication. Michael "just gets" the Wetherell style throughout all my printed media.


Martin Millard is a former barrister, now famous for his paintings and cartoons on both sides of the Atlantic. It is his intelligent wit and artful hand that has brought the "Step Changes" of Mayfair to life in an amusing graphical way that creates a visual metaphor for chunks of Mayfair history.

I would also like to thank Jamie Downham for his sub editing and also Lucy Brown for final proofing.

Congratulations also to my PA and Brand & Marketing Coordinator, Jayne Weldon, for bringing it all together within a final tight deadline.

Lastly and by no means least I would like to thank my wife Julie for her patience and understanding as I took the manuscript with me on holidays and weekends to distil 350 years of Mayfair history into bite-sized chunks. It has been my pool-side reading for the last two years.

Therefore, with the help of researchers, journalists, cartoonists and considerable time in development, I have finally delivered "The Story of Mayfair From 1664 Onwards". I hope that you find the changes that have occurred in Mayfair's past as fascinating as I have and that you share my view that the next decade will be its most exciting for nearly a century.



Founder & Chairman of Wetherell



*Peter Wetherell overlooking Mayfair from Galvin at Windows at the top of the Park Lane Hilton*





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ESTABLISHED 1875

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PARMIGIANI  
ESTABLISHED 1875





## INTRODUCTION

While stately Mayfair might not seem like the sort of place where anything happens especially quickly, its rich history is full of moments in which change has taken place in the blink of an eye.

In the 18th century, Mayfair went from fields spattered with mud to streets glittering with mansions in just a few short decades. Then, just as the aristocrats were getting comfortable in their new stomping ground, the winds of change saw high-flying businessmen taking over their palaces. Later still, war would bring another revolution, driving out families and transforming the area from London's best residential address to the headquarters of Britain's biggest companies. It is step changes like these that have shaken up and shaped the area.

In the pages that follow, the history of Mayfair will unfold through seven major changes – plus an eighth: Wetherell's vision for the area's future, informed by a thorough understanding of its past. It is a story of hard-partying aristocrats, hard-working plutocrats, a group of mighty estates with grand visions, and a certain May Fair that got out of hand. And it starts more than 300 years ago, when the area was just another piece of countryside to the west of 17th-century London.



MY MAN,  
I WILL OFFER YOU  
TWO SOVEREIGNS FOR  
YOUR ENTIRE  
FARM

THANK  
YOU  
SIR

Martin Millard



STEP CHANGE 1: 1660s-1720s

# FROM MUD TO MANSIONS





CENTURIES BEFORE IT BECAME THE HOME OF BRITAIN'S BIGGEST BUSINESSES, AND LONG BEFORE ARISTOCRATS WALKED ITS STREETS LOOKING FOR THEIR NEXT GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE, ALL OF MAYFAIR WAS FIELDS. AND NOT PARTICULARLY LOVELY FIELDS, EITHER.

The River Tyburn, which still runs under the area today, meant Mayfair was a patch of boggy land to the west of London. Although private houses could be found dotted around the countryside in the mid 17th century, a passing peasant would scarcely have believed the muddy fields would one day be home to much of the world's wealth. In fact, the place was not even known as Mayfair until after 1686, when King James II granted permission for a fair in the first two weeks of May on the site of what is now Shepherd Market.

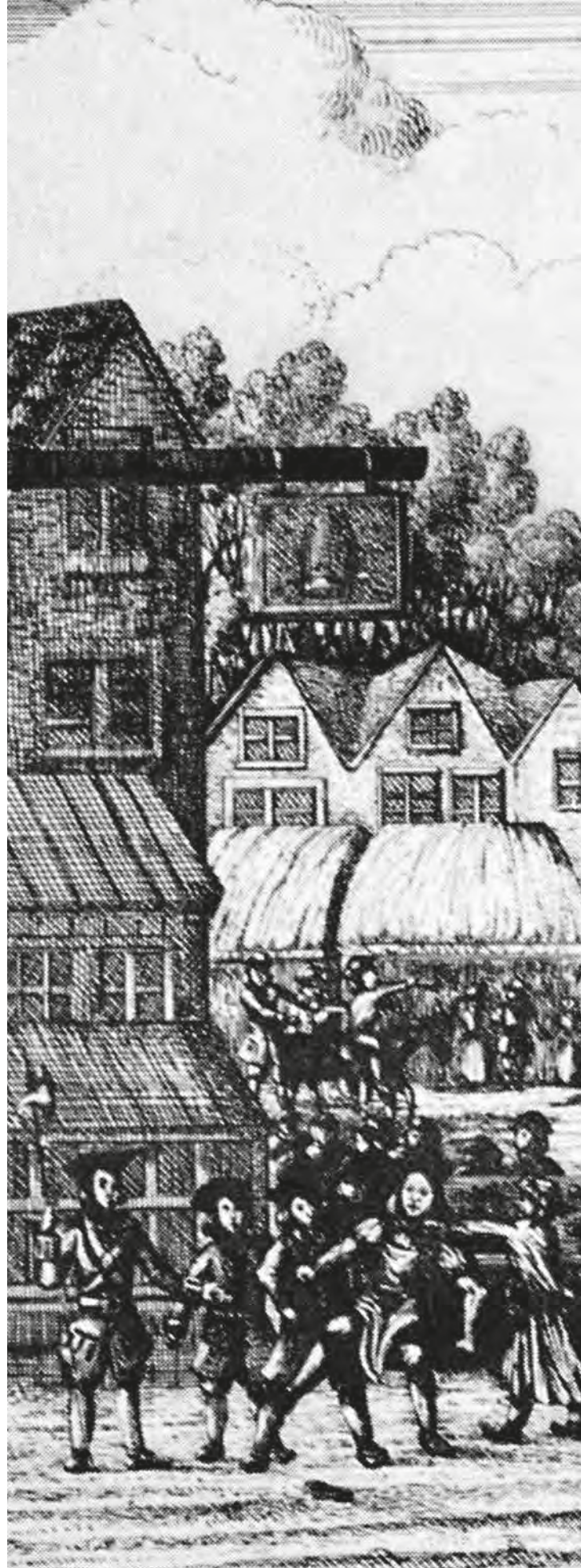
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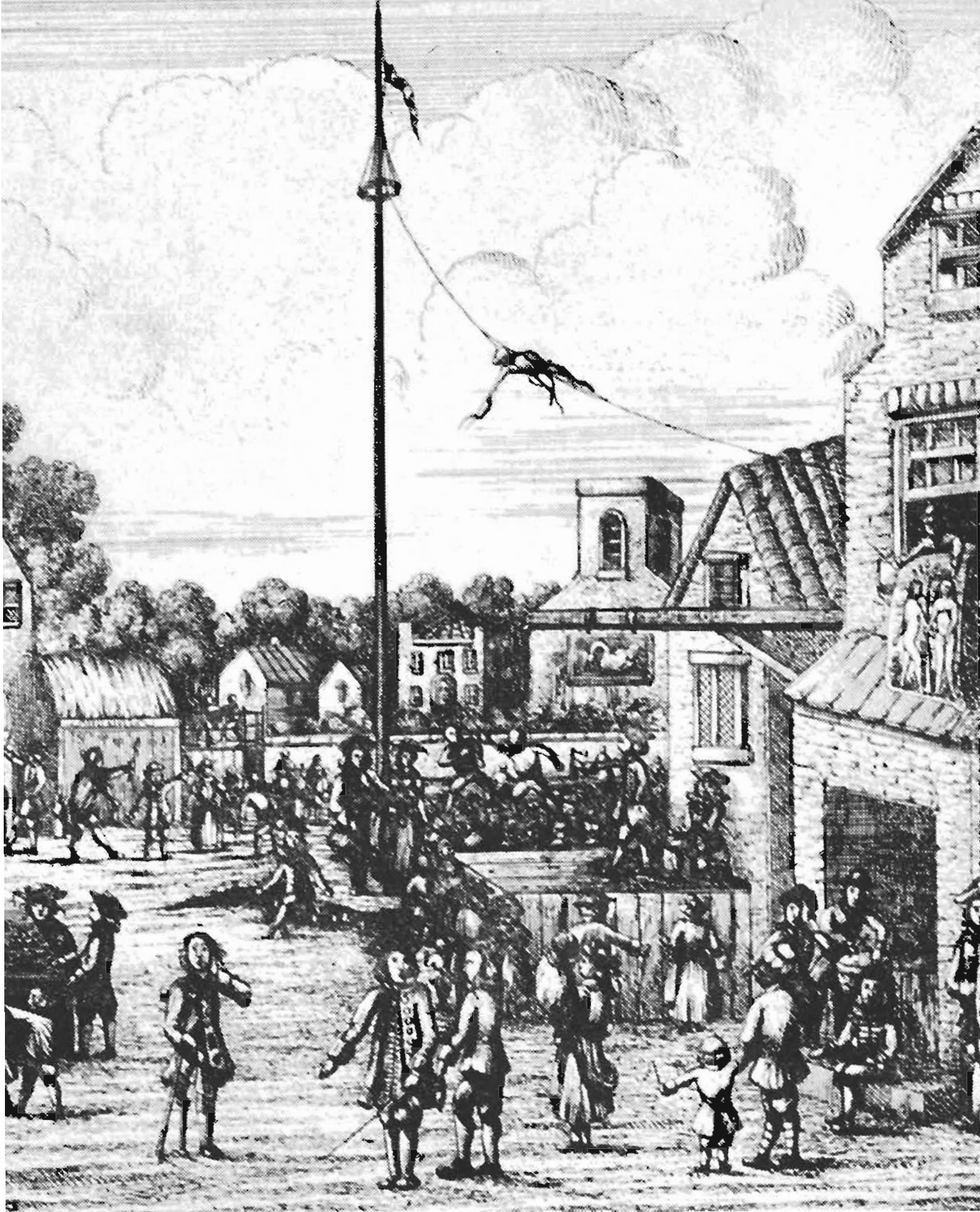
*Left: Tyburn during the reign of King Charles I. Site near Marble Arch, London, notorious for its gallows which could be used for mass hangings. (Image by Culture Club/Getty Images)*

UNSURPRISINGLY AFTER THE BLACK DEATH, THE GREAT FIRE AND OLIVER CROMWELL'S PURITANS, WHEN IT CAME TO HAVING FUN, THE PEOPLE DID NOT NEED TO BE ASKED TWICE. RICH AND POOR FLOCKED TO THE AREA TO ENJOY MUSIC, DANCING, GAMBLING AND SHOWS. THE MAY FAIR QUICKLY GAINED A REPUTATION FOR RAUCOUSNESS AND TROUBLE, AS JUGGLING AND MERRIMENT GAVE WAY TO WHAT THE AUTHORITIES TERMED "LEWD AND DISORDERLY PRACTICES".

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*Right: The May Fair*





But just a few fields over, gentrification was already afoot. Restoration grandees had begun building an exclusive residential district along Piccadilly, which at the time was just a simple country lane known as Portugal Street. The rolling fields were perfect for large town palaces with even larger gardens and Clarendon House, Berkeley House and Burlington House were all developed in that period. The latter, finished in 1668, is the only one of the three still standing, in the form of the Royal Academy of Arts. Not that its creator, the First Earl Burlington, would recognise it after centuries of remodelling. The classical Clarendon House, built on eight acres of land, was the most striking of the trio. However, it was pulled down in 1683 when a band of developers led by Sir Thomas Bond bought the place from Christopher Monck, the Second Duke of Albemarle, a young statesman who had become an MP aged just 13. In its place they built Dover, Bond and – as a tribute to the Duke – Albemarle Streets.

Soon, smart residences were being built on new roads all over the area. In 1708, Bolton Street was the most westerly edge of London, but it failed to hold on to that title for

long, with Clarges Street arriving alongside it. Brook Street – named after the Tyburn – and George Street were also built. George Street was the plan of aristocratic soldier Richard Lumley, the First Earl of Scarborough, who designed it to have a funnel-like opening into his other creation: Hanover Square. Lumley finished the four-acre square in 1719 and named it after the new king, George I, who was also Elector of Hanover in Germany. He even went so far as to give many of the buildings there, and in George Street, a Germanic style.

Hanover Square quickly became one of London's most fashionable addresses, packed with aristocrats from the ruling Whig Party. Mayfair historian B H Johnson described the area as "a stronghold of military Whigs who had served under Marlborough". Glamorous though his creation was, Lumley already had a rival in the 18th-century luxury stakes. The formidable Grosvenor family of Cheshire, whose name would become synonymous with Mayfair, had designs for a square of their own. The family's role as a property powerhouse began in 1677, when Mary Davies, the 12-year-old heiress of a City of London scrivener, married the 21-year-old Sir Thomas Grosvenor. It turned out to be a powerful match.

**1664**

Clarendon House, one of Mayfair's first palaces, is built. It turns out to also be one of the shortest-lived, demolished just 19 years later to build rows of houses including Bond Street.

**1664**

The British seize the US port of New Amsterdam from the Dutch without firing a single shot. They swiftly rename it New York in honour of the Duke of York, who would become James II.

**1677**

Mary Davies marries Sir Thomas Grosvenor, bringing the 12-year-old heiress's 500 acres of fields into the powerful family. The land would later form Mayfair and Belgravia.

**1660****1660**

England is a republic no more, as support for Oliver Cromwell's son, Richard, crumbles and Charles II returns to take the throne, marking the start of the Restoration.

**1666**

The Great Fire of London begins at the king's baker's home on Pudding Lane. It rages for three days, killing six, and burning down 10,000 buildings, including St Paul's Cathedral.

**1672**

Berkeley House is built on Piccadilly, with extensive grounds. These gardens would eventually house Berkeley and Stratton Streets, as well as Berkeley Square.





The wedding brought Mary's 500-acre inheritance, including a certain 100-acre estate of "swampy meads" just south of Oxford Street and east of Park Lane, into the Grosvenor family. Their idea to turn this hinterland of London into an area of large plots and grand homes was put into action and the rest, as they say, is history.

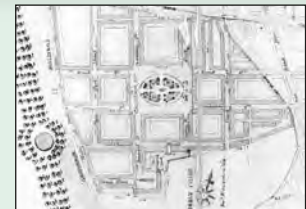
In 1710, Mary and Thomas's eldest son, Sir Richard, gained a licence to develop a square of his own. Grosvenor Square was built little over a decade later on a site just five minutes to the east of Lumley's creation. The development enhanced Mayfair's reputation as a playground for the aristocracy and laid the foundations of the Grosvenor Estate. Grosvenor Group still pays tribute to Mary's part in their fortunes – an oil portrait of her greets visitors in the lobby of the company's offices at 70 Grosvenor Street. And rightly so. Development of the land would cement the area in the affections of the wealthy and make it – and the family – famous around the world. No doubt about it, the aristocracy was becoming hooked on Mayfair.



**1686**  
The Mayfair name is born, as the first May Fair takes place in Brook Field. However, it is not a high-class event, featuring fighting and bear-baiting.



**1690**  
The Battle of the Boyne rages in Ireland. Richard Lumley, the First Earl of Scarborough is in the thick of it, fighting for William III. He plans and builds Hanover Square on his return.



**1703**  
Britain's worst ever storm lashes the country, killing tens of thousands of people. Queen Anne is forced to hide in a cellar as winds destroy the roof of St James's Palace.

**1720**  
The Grosvenors decide to build a lavish new square on the north part of the family's land, and the Grosvenor Estate is born.

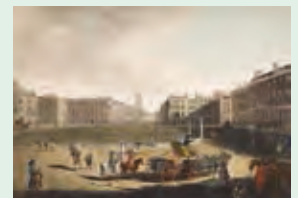
1680

**1682**  
William Morgan publishes his ground-breaking map of London, showing the birth of Mayfair along Piccadilly. The area is surrounded by fields.



**1697**  
The first recorded game of professional cricket takes place in Sussex.

**1719**  
Hanover Square is finished after five years of building work. Named in honour of the new German-born king, George I, military aristocrats flock to live there.



*His Highness  
Prince of Orange*

*To the Lady Anne  
2<sup>d</sup> Dau<sup>r</sup> to his Royall Highness*

*To Her Highness  
The Princess of Ora*

*To His Highness  
Prince Rupert etc<sup>a</sup>*

*To His Highness  
The Prince Palatine etc<sup>a</sup>*

*Lords Commissioners of  
the Exchequer*

*To the Lords Commissioners of  
the Admiralty*

*Lord Vicount Hyde  
Genelworth  
Ernley  
Lord Dering  
Godolphin Esq<sup>r</sup>  
John Fox.*

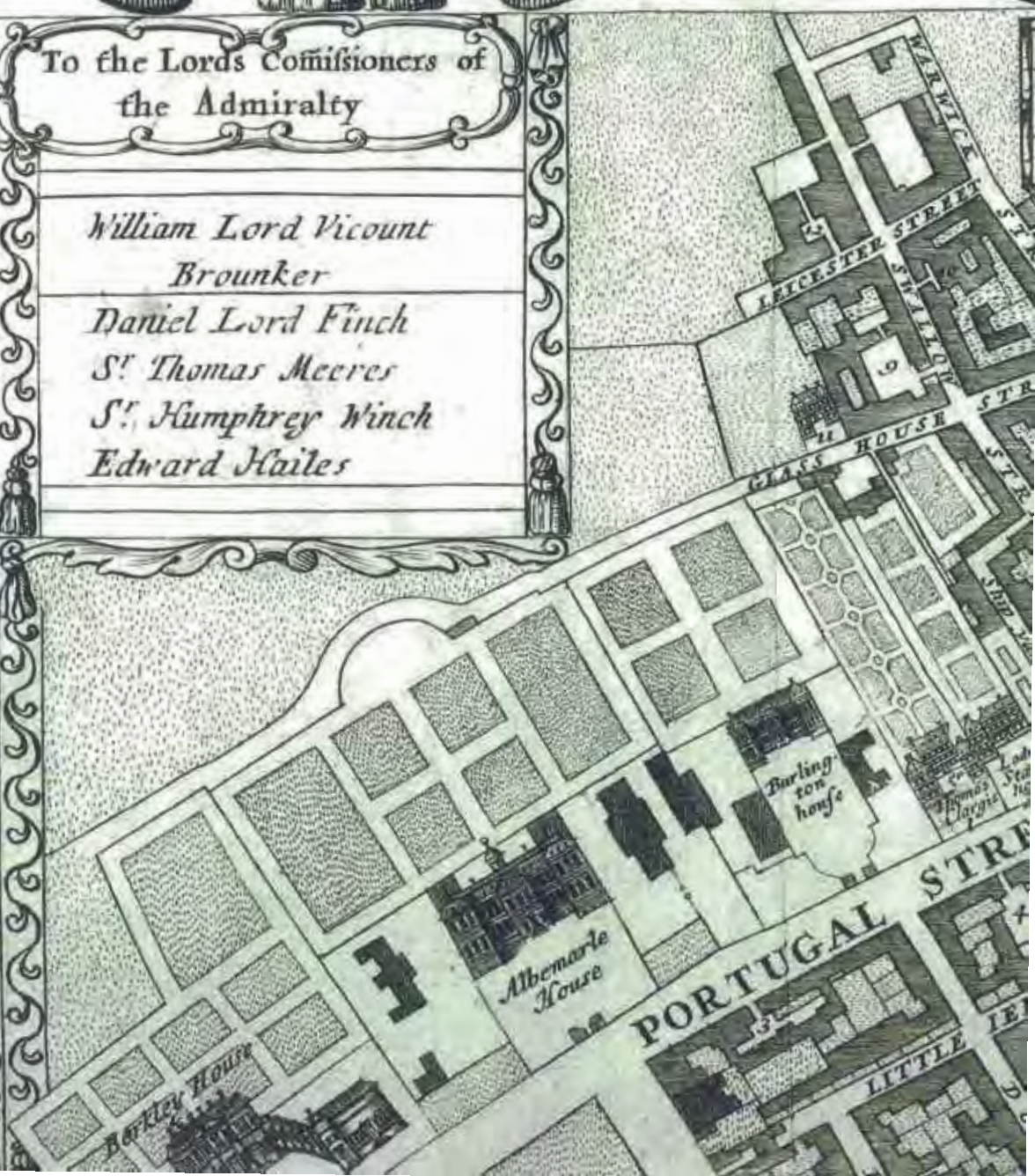
*William Lord Vicount  
Broucker  
Daniel Lord Finch  
S<sup>r</sup> Thomas Meeres  
S<sup>r</sup> Humphrey Winch  
Edward Hailes*

*Commissioners of his Ma<sup>ty</sup>  
Revenue, and Customs*

*Esq<sup>r</sup> S<sup>r</sup> John Lippetts  
S<sup>r</sup> Jo. Narborough  
S<sup>r</sup> John Godwin  
Jam<sup>s</sup>. Sotherne Esq<sup>r</sup>*

*of the Commissioners of the  
Customs*

*Charl<sup>l</sup> L. Cheyne &  
S<sup>r</sup> Richard Temple  
S<sup>r</sup> Geor Downins  
And Newport Esq<sup>r</sup>*



and Fellows,  
of the  
Royal Society

To the Hon<sup>ble</sup> the  
President Fellows  
& Corporation  
of the Kings College  
of Physicians  
in London



MAYFAIR 1682



Martin Millard



STEP CHANGE 2: 1721-1850

# HEYDAY OF THE ARISTOCRATS





THE GENTRY'S TRADITIONAL STOMPING GROUNDS OF COVENT GARDEN AND SOHO WERE STARTING TO LOOK LIGHT ON ARISTOCRATS IN THE 1720s, AS THE SPACIOUS NEW TOWNHOUSES OF MAYFAIR DREW THE WELL-TO-DO TO "THE HUNDRED ACRES".

The social scene whirled into Sir Richard's new developments, with the old haunts in the middle of London soon being dismissed as overcrowded and unfashionable – not to mention, unsanitary. The spread of disease in the capital's cramped centre only hastened the flow of aristocrats packing up their periwigs and moving to the spacious new area. When it was built, Grosvenor Square was the capital's second largest after Lincoln's Inn Fields but had no equal in grandeur or popularity, putting everything that came before it in the shade. Grosvenor surveyor Thomas Barlow had designed the development on an ambitiously grand scale: a grid of straight, wide streets that meet at the centre at a noble square – a marked contrast to the smaller plots of Soho. It was revered as 18th-century London's "innermost social sanctuary", and was a magnet for dukes, earls, viscounts and marquises. Of the initial 277 houses, 117 had titled owners. Rev Sydney Smith, Resident Canon of St Paul's and something of a period wit, said the area contained "more intelligence and human ability – to say nothing of wealth and beauty – than the world has ever collected in one space before".

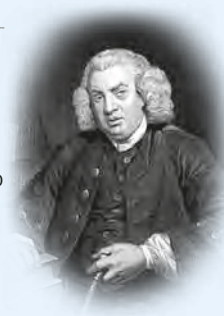


**1735**

Local builder Edward Shepherd designs the Shepherd Market layout we know today on the site of the May Fair, finishing it around a decade later.

**1755**

Samuel Johnson unveils the dictionary he has spent the previous nine years writing single-handedly. It is wildly popular and features 40,000 words – some he is thought to have invented.



**1759**

The great composer George Frideric Handel dies in his home on Brook Street aged 74, leaving behind a house filled with his enormous collection of fine art.

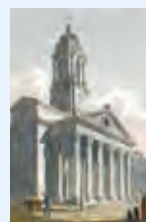


**1700**



**1749**

The Bow Street Runners, London's first police force, begins apprehending criminals. Founded by author and magistrate Henry Fielding, they get to work with just six officers.



**1759**

Building work is finished at the west end of Upper Brook Street, completing one of the Grosvenor Estate's most important roads. It has been 38 years in the making.



“I PASSED AN AMAZING SCENE OF NEW FOUNDATIONS, NOT OF HOUSES ONLY, BUT AS I MIGHT SAY OF NEW CITIES, NEW TOWNS, NEW SQUARES, AND FINE BUILDINGS, THE LIKE OF WHICH NO CITY, NO TOWN, NAY, NO PLACE IN THE WORLD CAN SHEW [SHOW].” *Daniel Defoe*

Grosvenor, leaving nothing to chance, had also built homes on nearby streets for a community of tradesmen and workers to service their affluent neighbours. Pubs, shops and stables were all constructed on backstreets and the communities grew to depend on one another. So while the first tenants of Grosvenor Square included the Earl of Coventry, the Bishop of Durham and the Duke of Norfolk, the streets to its north were full of builders, blacksmiths, fishmongers and greengrocers with businesses on one of the estate’s two markets.

of houses only, but as I might say of new cities, new towns, new squares, and fine buildings, the like of which no city, no town, nay, no place in the world can shew [show].” In fact, the Grosvenors viewed their development very much as a new town, with all the facilities a community might need. Shops and commercial premises were built into the plans for Oxford Street, but they quickly spread to the new North Audley Street and South Audley Streets. Soon, the area was bustling with the fun-loving wealthy. Mayfair hosted the “London season” – an annual four-month parade of dinners, balls and parties for Britain’s elite – right up until the First World War.

The scale of the building work was impressive. Daniel Defoe wrote: “I passed an amazing scene of new foundations, not



**1764**

Closing time is called on the May Fair, which by now has developed a reputation for disorder and is banned after local residents complain about the noise.



**1773**

Americans in Boston, furious at King George’s tea tax, hurl 342 boxes of British tea into the harbour. The fallout from the Boston Tea Party helps start the US War of Independence.

1760

**1760**

George III becomes monarch after his grandfather, George II, dies. On the lookout for a family retreat, he buys Buckingham House, which would one day become Buckingham Palace.



**1783**

Iceland’s Laki volcano erupts, killing tens of thousands of people across Europe and wiping out a fifth of the country’s population.



**1787**

Britain ships its first convicts to Australia. A census of the country the following year reports a population of six rabbits, seven cattle, 29 sheep, 74 swine and 736 criminals.

One famous resident of the time was George Frideric Handel, who moved into 25 Brook Street in the summer of 1723, the same year he was appointed Court composer, and spent the rest of his days there, writing some of his most famous work. His house, next door to the flat Jimi Hendrix would live in during the late 1960s, is now open to the public in all its 18th-century glory and stands as a good example of what early Mayfair looked like.



Grosvenor Square Circa 1740

The Grosvenor Estate's expansion continued throughout the 1730s and for decades to come, with more roads being built around their magnificent square. Upper Brook Street and Upper Grosvenor Street were snapped up by aristocrats, but a harder sell for the Wetherell of the time were the areas in the north-west. Here, Oxford Street met Tyburn Lane – home to the notorious hanging gallows. The stigma of the baying crowds who flocked to watch the grisly spectacle of 18th-century criminal justice meant these properties were the last to be let.

However, it was not just the Grosvenors of Cheshire who had seen the value in turning their land into luxury streets. Other aristocratic families were also getting in on the action. The Berkeleys of Stratton started work on their Mayfair estate in 1736, building on the extensive grounds of Berkeley House. Lady Berkeley, clearly not a fan of the great outdoors, allowed the property's gardens to be cut down to just the width of the house so Berkeley and Stratton Streets could be built on either side. Sir Nathaniel Curzon and his heirs, who hailed from Kedleston in Derbyshire, were responsible for building activity on Curzon Street until around 1765. They also built houses near the famous fair, which ultimately led to it moving on.



**1784**

The Daily Universal Register – the newspaper that would become The Times – publishes its first copy. Not everyone is a fan: the Duke of York sues for libel, and founder John Walter ends up in Newgate jail.



**1795**

Jane Austen writes *Pride and Prejudice*, which would go on to sell 200 million copies worldwide. Originally called *First Impressions*, she had to wait until 1813 to find a publisher.

**1804**

Napoleon Bonaparte is crowned Emperor of the French, and his armies go on to conquer much of Europe. The Napoleonic Wars end in 1815 when he is defeated at Waterloo.



**1812**

The US declares war on Britain, sparking two years of fighting, during which the Brits burn down the White House. A peace treaty is signed in 1814, but it takes weeks for the news to reach the warring troops.

**1780**

**1792**

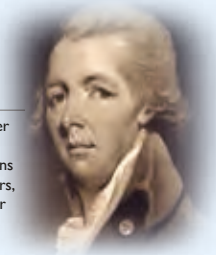
The bloodshed of the French Revolution produces the guillotine. Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette are among its victims, and the head-chopping contraption stays in use until 1977.



**1810**

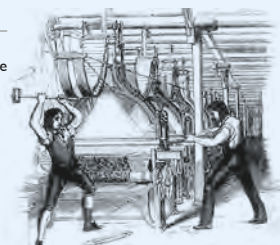
**1798**

William Pitt the Younger introduces income tax. The levy, to buy weapons for the Napoleonic Wars, has a top rate of ten per cent – for people with incomes over £200.



**1811**

The Industrial Revolution gains some powerful enemies in a group of furious textile workers. The Luddites destroy many cotton and wool mills in a bid to protect their jobs.





The May Fair was still being held each year, and had found a new lease of life under George I, but it was becoming increasingly rowdy and considered something of a stain on an area, which now had such an upper-crust reputation. The noise of bear-baiting and fighting from events frequented by what the Grand Jury of Westminster termed "disorderly persons" sparked complaints from residents who had moved in nearby during the 18th century – and sure enough the event was banned in 1764. But the fun was not over for the 78-year-old fair: it moved to Fair Fields in Bow.

Local architect Edward Shepherd had already been brought in to convert the seasonal market into the layout that still stands. Many of his elegant three-storey homes can be found in the area's side streets today. He also built paved alleyways, a pond, and a two-storey market topped with a theatre, which opened during May. Residents would have no doubt been pleased to note that the crowds flocking to the area during May were now more interested in theatre than fighting. Residential roads such as Derby Street also appeared on

Curzon-owned land and soon enough the famous Brook Field, where the May Fair was held, and others had been entirely built over. However, the fair's bawdy reputation lived on, as Shepherd Market maintained an often seedy reputation over the years as Mayfair's red-light district. Several of Shepherd's townhouses have acted as brothels, and a number of open doors still lead into lurid Soho-style hallways to this day.

The only clue that remains of the fair that raged there for 78 years, however, is a blue plaque above a Lebanese restaurant on Trebeck Street.



By the mid 18th century, most of Mayfair was covered in houses, almost all of them owned by one of the big estates, and the majority by the biggest estate of all: Grosvenor. It was a great time to be an aristocrat, with gambling, drinking, dining and gossiping about politics the order of the day. There was Burlington Arcade to shop for your finery and a variety of fine clubs in which to while away the hours. But their fun was about to be disturbed by some nouveau-riche arrivals – ones who knew a lot about this mysterious thing called "hard work".

**1814**

A flood of beer from a Tottenham Court Road brewery demolishes houses and kills nine when a series of vats rupture, spilling 1.4 million litres of beer onto the streets of London.

**1819**

The world's first shopping centre, Burlington Arcade, opens. It is built by Lord George Cavendish along the side of Burlington House, reputedly to stop the public throwing rubbish over his wall.



**1840**

The world's first stamp is introduced. The Penny Black, which features a profile of Queen Victoria, goes on sale in Britain. Today one is worth up to £4,000.

**1845**

The spread of potato blight sees Ireland's crops devastated. The Potato Famine, which lasts seven years, sees the country's population fall by around a quarter.

**1812**

Pall Mall is lit up at night as the world's first gas street lighting is unveiled by one of the new technology's pioneers, German-born inventor Frederick Albert Winsor.



**1836**

Charles Dickens publishes the first instalment of The Pickwick Papers under his pen name of 'Boz'. The serial, which is published in 20 parts, becomes a publishing phenomenon.







The Grosvenor Family at Grosvenor House by Charles Robert Leslie - 1831



I FIND  
OUR HOST  
A LITTLE  
VULGAR

GOOD  
CHAMPAGNE  
THOUGH!

Martin  
Millard



STEP CHANGE 3: 1851-1914

# FROM ARISTOCRATS TO PLUTOCRATS

BY NOW, HIGH SOCIETY HAD SANDWICHED ITSELF TIGHTLY AROUND BUCKINGHAM PALACE BY SATURATING MAYFAIR AND THE LESS TRENDY BELGRAVIA. AS ONE WRITER REMARKED, LONDON'S DIFFERENT AREAS HAD A SET SOCIAL CHARACTER THAT WAS "AS FIXED AS IF IT HAD BEEN DETERMINED BY SOME INIMITABLE LAW OF THE UNIVERSE".





Brook House, Park Lane. 1870



The original courtyard of Grosvenor House prior to demolition in 1927

**1853**

The Crimean War begins as the British, French and Ottoman empires, plus Sardinia, take on the might of the Russian Empire.



**1861**

Slavery reformer Abraham Lincoln is elected US President, causing 11 Southern states to leave the union. The resulting American Civil War rages for four years, but results in the abolition of slavery.



**1906**

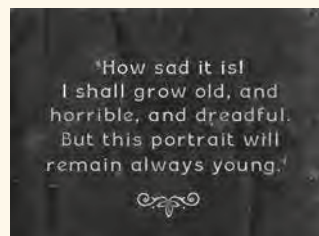
The Ritz Hotel welcomes its first visitors to 105 Piccadilly. Opened by Swiss hotelier Cesar Ritz, it introduces the Edwardians to a standard and style never before seen in London hotels.

**1850**



**1858**

A transatlantic telegraph cable between America and Europe cuts the times it takes to send a message from ten days to a matter of minutes. Queen Victoria receives the first message.



**1890**

Oscar Wilde publishes his Mayfair-set novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in the literary journal Lippincott's Monthly. The story proves so controversial WH Smith pulls it from its shelves.



You would be instantly judged on your social cachet depending on where in the capital you lived. Mayfair? You were very rich and fashionable. Chelsea or Bloomsbury? You were some kind of arty bohemian, or a writer. Hampstead, Hammersmith or St John's Wood? Hold your nose, sir: definitely middle-class.

However, the aristocrats who had made Mayfair their own were about to gain some new neighbours who generated their money not from land, but business. And these modern arrivals were about to change the appearance of the area dramatically – for the better. While the gentry were happy to live in plain, understated Georgian properties, the Empire's business kings were not. Many formal-looking buildings once owned by aristocrats were pulled down to be replaced by lavish mansions, dubbed "plutocrat palaces" and built in a range of dazzling styles. On many occasions, when a townhouse was not deemed big enough, two would be combined to form one massive building. The grand 46 Grosvenor Street, built for globe-trotting banker Sir Edgar Speyer, is a good example. Mayfair's new breed were

not afraid to show off their power, control and, above all, wealth – as can be seen today in some of the opulent late 19th-century mansions on Park Lane.

As the more wealthy residents moved in, the more daring the look of the area became, with serious redevelopment taking place as leases from the 18th century expired. The Italianate look of the 1840s and 50s gave way to the French Renaissance style of the 1860s, followed in the 1870s by, well, anything and everything. An explosion of styles saw the terracotta and ornamental sunflowers of the Queen Anne movement take hold on South Audley Street. The Arts and Crafts movement can still be seen on Brook Street and New Bond Street, and the eclectic Free Renaissance look is in evidence on North Audley Street. The aristocrats may not have liked their nouveau neighbours, but much of Mayfair's character today comes from this explosion of styles in the late 19th century. You only need walk down Green Street or Upper Brook Street to see the range of architecture jostling for attention.



**1910**

George V becomes king, later changing the name of his dynasty from Saxe-Coburg and Gotha to Windsor to avoid becoming the target of anti-German feelings during the war.

**1912**

The largest ship of its time, Titanic, sinks on its maiden voyage from Southampton to New York after striking an iceberg. The disaster claims the lives of 1,517 passengers.



**1900**



**1900**

105 Mount Street is leased by Winston Churchill; his first bachelor flat.

**1908**

The Ford Motor Company produces the world's first mass-production car, the Model T. The car, famously driven by Laurel and Hardy, outsells all its rivals put together.



**1914**

High tensions turn into conflict following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the First World War begins. A devastating conflict involving the globe's great powers rages for four years.



During this period, Mayfair's reputation as a fashionable social destination only grew. The comings and goings of the upper classes of the time are captured spectacularly in the work of Oscar Wilde, who lived at 9 Charles Place (now Carlos Place). His 1892 play *Lady Windermere's Fan, A Play About a Good Woman* delighted audiences when it debuted at the St James's Theatre, featuring locations such as Grosvenor Square and Curzon Street. Wilde's only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, also features the square. It is where Gray lives while his life descends into hedonism.

Eventually, Mayfair's new crowd took over. By the Edwardian period, the plutocrats and the newly titled outnumbered the landed gentry and aristocracy. The arrival of the Ritz Hotel at 105 Piccadilly is a good metaphor for what was going on in Mayfair at the time. Built in a fancy Parisian style by Cesar Ritz, the Swiss former manager of the Savoy, it showed London the sort of lavish opulence new money can deliver when it opened its doors in 1906. The hotel, built on the site of famous coaching tavern the Old White Horse Cellar, was packed with nobility and businessmen alike. There was even a special bell in the entrance that the doormen would ring to alert staff inside that royalty were on their way into the building.

HOWEVER, WITH WAR ON THE WAY, MAYFAIR'S REPUTATION AS LONDON'S TOP RESIDENTIAL AREA WAS ABOUT TO CHANGE FOR EVERYONE. BEFORE LONG, IT WOULD NOT BE RECOGNISED AS A RESIDENTIAL AREA AT ALL.

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*Horse-drawn omnibuses and cabs pass the Ritz Hotel, Piccadilly, London, 1906  
Reproduced by permission of English Heritage / Heritage-Images*







OXFORD





Martin Millard



STEP CHANGE 4: 1918-1939

# ARISTOCRACY IN DECLINE

THE WINDS OF CHANGE TORE THROUGH MAYFAIR ONCE MORE AFTER THE HORRORS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR, WITH THE COUNTRY REELING FROM AN ECONOMIC HAMMERBLOW – THE WELL-OFF BEING NO EXCEPTION.

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*Right: Hyde Park and environs including Dorchester House being demolished, Mayfair, 1929*  
© Copyright English Heritage









A sharp decline in English wealth meant the owners of many grand mansions could no longer afford to live in them. When they failed to sell, some were simply demolished, with many of Mayfair's jewels ending up victims of the wrecking ball.

Others were transformed into offices, with parts of Thomas Barlow's residential community being converted into the business space London so desperately needed. Streets such as Grafton Street, with its large redundant houses, were turned over to the commercial sector from the 1920s onwards. Grand ballrooms were now boardrooms, and the drawing rooms were packed with desks. By 1939, only a quarter of the houses on Brook Street were in private residential use. But the buildings taken over by businesses could be considered the lucky ones. The post-war periods saw the demolition of some of the previous century's grandest buildings, with Devonshire House, Chesterfield House, Grosvenor House, Dorchester House and Londonderry House all destroyed during the 20th century.

Today, the only aristocratic palaces that have survived are Dudley House at 100 Park Lane, Egremont House – better known as the In and Out building – at 94 Piccadilly, and Crewe House – now the Saudi Embassy – on Curzon Street. One reason so many disappeared is because they were so easy to demolish, a freestanding palace being far simpler to pull down than properties in a terrace. In their place rose American-style hotels and pile-em-high apartment blocks like Park Lane's Aldford House, which was finished in 1932.



Left: *The Demolition of the east side of Berkeley Square. Sir Muirhead Bone. 1938*

Above: *The Demolition of 9-10 Berkeley Square. 1937*

# MAYFAIR'S LOST



6 Curzon Place



25 Grosvenor Square



25 Hanover Square



Dorchester House, 1905



76 South Audley Street, 1943



27 Grosvenor Square



22 Hanover Square



33 Grosvenor Square

# MANSIONS



18 Hanover Square



Chesterfield House. 1931



21-24 Park Lane



21-19 Grosvenor Square. 1927



Londonderry House, 19 Park Lane



49-57 Brook Street. 1870



Aldford House, 26 Park Lane



17 Bruton Street. 1810

The Grosvenor House, Park Lane and Dorchester hotels all sprung up on the site of former aristocratic palaces. Claridge's had been in business on Brook Street since the mid 19th century, but this was the start of a building scheme that would make Mayfair famous for luxury hotels the world over. When Lord Morely put Dorchester House up for sale in 1929, Sir Malcolm McAlpine pulled it down, and built the Park Lane hotel that still bears the palace's name. However, even for the era's construction king, the task was a tough one. He lamented that it was "unpleasant to all concerned". Sir Malcolm wrote: "When Dorchester House was built, a wide gulf existed between the classes and the masses, and the rich, with ample leisure and unlimited attendants, could enjoy their peaceful era without thought of super-tax or the servant problem. Since then the conditions of life have so altered that even for such a mansion such as Dorchester House, no useful purpose could be found, and the changed conditions of the period are exemplified by the destruction of this great house which was designed and built regardless of cost." Nonetheless, few tears were shed for the aristocrats forced into more modest lodgings, and in a few short years, the Dorchester and Grosvenor hotels had become London institutions.

But even the effects of the First World War and the start of the Great Depression could not stop the music in Mayfair, with socialites continuing to party hard from the 1920s right up to the outbreak of the Second World War. This was the socially-glamorous golden era of the Bright Young Things – the nickname given by the press to the young aristocrats and bohemians of the time. Their legendary fancy-dress parties, heavy drinking and drug use, and late-night treasure hunts through the capital were a source of fascination to the public in the 1920s and 1930s. The set, whose ranks included Evelyn Waugh and John Betjeman, even invented a clipped, grand Mayfair accent, which survived until the 1960s and can still be heard in British films of the time.

The glamour of the inter-war period in Mayfair also saw Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel open a boutique in Davies Street. Little wonder as it turned out – she was the lover of the second Duke of Westminster, Hugh "Bend'Or" Grosvenor, whose curious nickname was bestowed upon him by his grandfather, after the old man's favourite Derby winner. However, the party came to an abrupt halt in 1939 with the outbreak of the Second World War, and the lavish, carefree balls would not return to Mayfair for many years.

**1917**

Russia takes its first steps towards Communism as Bolshevik Red Guards take over government buildings in Petrograd, the then capital. The country would be Soviet until 1993.



**1922**

Ireland gains independence from Britain as the Irish Free State is established under the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Northern Ireland removes itself from the new state almost immediately.

**1929**

The Wall Street Crash sees the US stock market go into freefall, signalling the start of the Great Depression. Almost every country in the world suffers a decade of economic hardship.



**1917**



**1918**

A breakthrough for the female suffrage movement sees around 8.4 million women win the vote in Britain. However, it was not until 1928 that women gained the same voting rights as men.

**1925**

John Logie Baird amazes crowds at Selfridges with the first public demonstration of his television set. He starts with moving silhouettes and later transmits the first picture: an eerie dummy called Stooky Bill.





**1931**

Park Lane hotel The Dorchester opens on the site of Dorchester House. Built by the firm run by Sir Robert 'Concrete Bob' McAlpine, it is one of the safest places in London during the war.



**1936**

Stammering royal George VI becomes king to everyone's surprise – including his own – when elder brother Edward VIII abdicates in order to marry divorced socialite Wallis Simpson.

1930



**1933**

Adolf Hitler and his fascist National Socialist German Workers Party seize power in Germany, turning the Weimar Republic into single-party dictatorship the Third Reich.

**1939**

The rise of the Nazi party terrifies a war-weary world, but as Hitler invades Poland, the Second World War begins. With up to 70 million casualties, it is the deadliest conflict in history.



ONE OF THE ICONIC IMAGES OF THE 1930s IS OF A YOUNG QUEEN ELIZABETH II AND HER SISTER PRINCESS MARGARET PLAYING WITH THEIR CORGIS IN THE GARDEN OF THEIR PICCADILLY TOWN HOUSE OVERLOOKING GREEN PARK.

The house – a Victorian mansion at 145 Piccadilly – was badly damaged in the Blitz and has now disappeared, as has the Queen’s birthplace in Bruton Street. Both sites have since been redeveloped, although 48 Berkeley Square where Sir Winston Churchill spent part of his unhappy childhood still stands. Bombs also fell on Savile Row, New Bond Street and the Albany just off Piccadilly. Selfridges and John Lewis on Oxford Street were hit – John Lewis was destroyed – and Grosvenor Square took “a terrible hammering”, according to the Duke of Westminster. But if the Blitz played a part in the transformation and subsequent commercialization of Mayfair, it was not the only driver for change.

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*(Photo by Time Life Pictures/Pictures Inc./Time Life Pictures/Getty Images)*











STEP CHANGE 5: 1945-1990

# FROM BALLROOMS TO BOARDROOMS

IF THE FIRST WORLD WAR DEALT A BLOW TO MAYFAIR AS A RESIDENTIAL AREA, THE SECOND WORLD WAR ALL BUT FINISHED IT OFF. MUCH OF THE CITY OF LONDON WAS RUBBLE FOLLOWING AERIAL BOMBING BY THE LUFTWAFFE, AND BRITISH BUSINESSES DESPERATELY NEEDED SOMEWHERE TO WORK.

Before the Second World War, Grosvenor had been against converting homes into offices, but there was no option now. The authorities allowed firms to take over townhouses using new Temporary Office Permissions (TOPs). During and immediately after the war, local planning authorities granted TOPs on 1.2 million sq ft of Mayfair residential property, turning the area into a massive office location at a stroke.

The invasion of the bowler hats and typewriters saw many Mayfair families leave the area – but that wasn't the only reason for them to depart. Punishing levels of post-war taxation meant that few families living on inherited wealth could afford to stay. Mayfair and Belgravia were holding their positions as the place to find the rich and fashionable, but the old rigid rules that dictated which areas were socially acceptable loosened slightly. Many aristocrats who found themselves constrained by money moved out to other parts of London, as the lord and lady who once would not have dreamt of living in Pimlico suddenly seemed to think that perhaps the place had its good points. Of all the areas owned by the Grosvenor Estate, Pimlico was thought to be the most downmarket, and the area was mostly sold off in 1953 to pay the Second Duke of Westminster's £19 million death duties. It was a move that did not help the area get any smarter. Belgravia was another destination for many departing Mayfair residents. Built by the Grosvenors in the 19th century, the near neighbour had always come second to Mayfair in the style stakes. But with so much of Mayfair being turned into offices, Belgravia suddenly became a more desirable place to live for the first time.



**1953**

The key to life is unlocked when James Watson and Francis Crick discover DNA, the molecule at the centre of the cells of all living things.

**1961**

The Soviets make Yuri Gagarin the first man in outer space. John F Kennedy responds by setting America the goal of putting a man on the moon by the end of the decade.



**1966**

The Playboy Club opens at 45 Park Lane and soon becomes a favourite of Swinging London. At one point the most profitable casino in the world, it closes in 1981 when its licence is revoked.



1950

**1960**

The present US Embassy opens on the west side of Grosvenor Square. The 600-room building, which includes three stories underground, goes on to win a Grade II listing.



**1969**

Sure enough, the astronauts of Apollo 11 land on the moon, making Neil 'one giant leap for mankind' Armstrong the first person to step foot on the lunar surface.



In 1960, a third of Mayfair's total floor space was being used by business. Just ten years later, the figures had been flipped, with the level of residential property comprising less than a third. The grand houses once inhabited by aristocrats, plutocrats and playboys were now embassies or company headquarters. Even the Fourth Duke of Westminster, Gerald Hugh Grosvenor, wanted a more modest home. He planned to move into 23 St Anselm's Place, a tiny two-storey mews house tucked away in a low-key corner of north Mayfair. Unfortunately, he died in 1967, just before his dinky dwelling was completed. The conversion of former stable blocks into homes was one example of the Grosvenor Estate moving with leaner times, realising that houses such as those in Grosvenor Square had become too large and expensive for a single family to occupy.

Around half of the TOPs that opened the floodgates and allowed companies into the area in huge numbers expired in 1973, but the commercial market in Mayfair was about to soar anyway. The office boom was on its way – and so was a scramble for companies to bag themselves the best remaining addresses in London's most prestigious area. Foreign wealth had its sights set on Mayfair in the 1970s, when for-sale signs

on buildings were often written in two languages: English and Arabic. Estate agent Peter Wetherell remembers: "When I started working in Mayfair during the early 1970s, the boom times ended, while oil prices doubled and doubled again, creating an economic downturn. This 'new money' was then invested in Mayfair and central London as the newly-enriched Middle Eastern purchasers bought up from the Brits, who moved to south and south-west London. This period and the 1980s office boom gave Mayfair a more commercial feel and were probably the autumn and winter seasons for the area."

The scarcity of residential property was a hot topic in the late 1980s, with the *Mayfair Times* suggesting: "The decline in the population of Mayfair since the war may have been as great as 90 per cent." And the locals were fed up with the demise of their communities, with the Residents' Association of Mayfair insisting: "Too many flats and houses have suffered the tragic fate of being granted permanent office use. The time has now come to put an end to this scandal." But if the Mayfair community was beginning to feel a little neglected, it need not have worried, because a new step change in the area was about to send the businesses packing – and bring in a new wave of residential wealth.



**1982**

Peter Wetherell founds his estate agency in the heart of Mayfair. The first Wetherell office is opposite the US Embassy at 47 Upper Grosvenor Street.



**1989**

The Berlin Wall dividing East and West Germany is torn down to widespread celebration. The introduction of crossings paves the way for the country's reunification.

**1979**

**1979**

Margaret Thatcher becomes the first female leader of a Western country when she is elected prime minister of Britain. She stays in office for 11 years, then spends her retirement in Belgravia.



**1985**

Wetherell launches *Mayfair Times*. The magazine, which is bought by Publishing Business in 2005, goes on to reach 80,000 readers a month in Mayfair and St James's.

I AM  
SELLING.  
THIS HOUSE IS  
NO LONGER SUITABLE  
FOR MY OFFICE, AND  
I CANNOT  
DEMOLISH!

WE ARE BUYING.  
LOVELY HOUSE,  
GREAT LOCATION,  
NOT RIDICULOUSLY  
EXPENSIVE

Martin  
Millard





STEP CHANGE 6: 1990-2008

# FROM OFFICES TO HOMES AGAIN

THE LAST OF THE TEMPORARY OFFICE PERMISSIONS EXPIRED IN 1990, AND GROSVENOR, WHICH HAD BEEN WORKING TO INCREASE RESIDENTIAL BUILDING STOCK, FORMED A NEW POLICY. OFFICES IN WEST MAYFAIR WOULD BE TURNED BACK INTO HOMES, AND THE BUSINESSES RELOCATED TO THE AREA'S BUSIER, MORE COMMERCIAL CENTRAL HUB.

But in fact businesses were starting to leave of their own accord. Listed Georgian and Victorian buildings had become a headache for employers, who found that their workplaces were starting to look outdated. The vogue for large, air-conditioned, open-plan offices was on the rise and the idea of warrens of private rooms had fallen out of favour in the business world. Many firms said goodbye to central London in the coming decades, moving to cheaper locations where they could have the buildings they needed. After all, no company could knock a Mayfair townhouse down to build a cutting-edge workplace, but in Uxbridge – where Cadbury headed after leaving its Berkeley Square HQ – and areas like it, there was plenty of room.

And lots of home-buyers were queuing up to take the place of office workers. As the new millennium came along, so did fresh investment in Mayfair as many of the office workers who had ousted the aristocracy packed their bags and moved on. In their place came lawyers, bankers, Harley Street doctors, gallery owners, property developers and journalists. The revitalisation of the area earned an admiring article in *Country Life* which told its well-to-do readers in 2004: "Welcome home to Mayfair." In the same year, Wetherell announced that residential property was now more valuable than office space for the first time in years.

### 1991

Most of the temporary office permissions that allowed businesses to take over Mayfair following the Second World War expire. Many buildings are returned to residential use.



### 1995

Nick and Christian Candy enter the property market with a loan from their grandmother. A couple of decades later, they develop the iconic One Hyde Park, a £1.15 billion project on Knightsbridge.

### 2001

Hijackers crash four passenger jets into US targets on September 11, killing nearly 3,000 people. The terrorist suicide attacks lead to Anglo-American troops going into Afghanistan and Iraq.



## 1990

### 1992

Production of the Mini Mayfair – a more luxurious model of the Mini City – comes to an end after ten years. Its original price in 1982 was £3,363.



### 2000

Alexander Litvinenko, a Russian FSB fugitive, flees to London with his family where he works as a journalist, writer and consultant to British intelligence. Six years later he is poisoned in Mayfair with radioactive polonium-210, creating an international incident.





21 Davies Street

This was music to the ears of English Heritage, which has long been keen to see historic buildings returned to their original domestic use. After all, reverting a building to its original use makes much more of the original features. Lifts, wall partitions and suspended ceilings get removed, shedding light on features that may not have been seen since wartime. Shortly after residential property became top dog once more, a new benchmark was set. A 3,000 sq ft penthouse at 21 Davies Street sold for £1,750 per sq ft in 2004. Astonishingly, it would go on to fetch double that just four years later.



**2009**

A conditional agreement is reached to sell the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square to Qatari Diar. The Embassy will move to Battersea in 2017.

**2012**

Londoners – and Mayfair hoteliers – rejoice as the Olympic Games come to the capital for the first time since 1948. The triathlon and marathon swimming takes place in Hyde Park.



**2012**

The Financial Times reports on the hedge funds quitting Mayfair for “more modest” parts of London. Investors don’t want to see hedge funds – especially the smaller ones – spending money on “swanky offices”, a partner at Cushman and Wakefield said.



**2012**

Westminster City Council leader Colin Barrow steps down after a row over plans to impose new parking charges sparks widespread opposition from businesses in the Central Activities Zone. An independent West End Commission is set up to look at the “unique operational and strategic challenges” of the local economy.



**2012**

The former US naval HQ in Grosvenor Square comes back onto the market after a project to redevelop it for residential stalled. It is eventually bought for £250 million by the Abu Dhabi Investment Council and luxury residential developer Finchatton.

# FORMER OFFICES SOLD AND RETURNED



Balfour Place



Aldford Street



Park Street



Park Street



Mount Street



Mount Street



Balfour Place



Park Street



Upper Grosvenor Street

# TO THEIR ORIGINAL RESIDENTIAL USE



Binney Street



Upper Brook Street



Binney Street



Brook Street

Between  
2001 and 2012,  
**5.22 Million  
Square Feet**  
of offices were  
converted to homes  
in the West End



Upper Grosvenor Street



South Street



Brook Street



Upper Grosvenor Street





STEP CHANGE 7: 2008-2014

# FROM BUST TO BOOM







IN 2011 THE REUBEN BROTHERS – BILLIONAIRE BUSINESSMEN AND PHILANTHROPISTS – PAID £130 MILLION FOR THE PICCADILLY ESTATE, A 1.3 ACRE SLICE OF MAYFAIR WITH THE FORMER HOME OF THE IN & OUT CLUB AT ITS CENTRE. PLANNING PERMISSION HAS SINCE BEEN GRANTED FOR A 45-ROOM “PALACE ON PICCADILLY” WITH AN UNDERGROUND SWIMMING POOL, A GYM AND A 35,000 BOTTLE WINE CELLAR.

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94 Piccadilly

IN JUST A FEW YEARS, THE UNTHINKABLE HAD HAPPENED. OFFICE PROPERTY VALUES IN MAYFAIR HAD SUNK TO HALF THOSE OF RESIDENTIAL – AND THE GENTLE DRIFT BACK TO RESIDENTIAL THAT BEGAN WITH THE ENDING OF TEMPORARY OFFICE CONSENTS IN 1990 HAD BECOME A TIDAL WAVE.



Clarges Estate

Huge deals were being done all over the place. The Abu Dhabi Investment Council, working with luxury residential developer Finchatton, paid £250m for the 100,000 sq ft former US Navy Building at 20 Grosvenor Square. The Reuben Brothers – billionaire businessmen and philanthropists – paid £130 million for The Piccadilly Estate, a 1.3 acre slice of Mayfair with the former home of the In & Out Club at its centre. Planning permission has since been granted for a 45-room “palace on Piccadilly” with an underground swimming pool, a gym and a 35,000 bottle wine cellar. Shortly afterwards, British Land paid £129.6 million for the Clarges Estate, a significant if dated cluster of buildings on the corner of Clarges Street and Piccadilly overlooking Green Park. Architect Squire & Partners has drawn up plans for a high-quality ten storey residential building, an office building at the centre of the site, new affordable housing on Clarges Street, a new home for the Kennel Club, which is a sitting tenant, and a new mews street between the office and the residential building.

**2009**

Country Life award Peter Wetherell the title of “Mayfair Property Guru” and at the end of the year The Sunday Times “Estate Agency of the Year Awards” gave a winning Gold medal to Wetherell for Prestige Property.

**2013**

Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky is found dead at his home at Sunninghill in Berkshire. He was well-known in Mayfair, and had offices in Down Street.



**2013**

Phones 4 U co-founder John Caudwell buys a five-bedroom Mayfair mansion that once belonged to Prince Jefri, the brother of the Sultan of Brunei, for a rumoured £81 million. There are plans to extend the property to a 50,000 sq ft home.

**2009**

**2013**

The West End Commission’s final report is completed in April. It argues that the West End is a key national and regional asset without a naturally coherent governance and incentive system. This was “the single biggest weakness” and a consistent concern raised by business leaders, it said.



**2013**

Constellation Hotels – ultimately owned by the Qatari sovereign wealth fund – buys the five-star InterContinental on Park Lane for more than £400 million.



The 160,000 sq ft Canadian Embassy – which failed to sell for £50 million in 1999 – was snapped up late in 2013 for £306 million by the Indian Lodah Group. There were reports that even at that price, the sale had attracted around 20 bidders. Research for Wetherell by data loft, published in the spring of 2014, revealed that 61 new residential development schemes were planned for Mayfair, which would deliver – at a minimum – 401 private units and an additional 1.1 million sq ft of residential space.

So, what happened to effect such sweeping change in such a short time? Take a deep breath. The sub-prime crisis, toxic debt, the collapse of Lehman Brothers, the biggest run on a UK bank for more than a century and its subsequent nationalisation, the credit crunch, the collapse of the Icelandic banking system, the collapse of General Motors, and a warning from the OECD that “the world economy is near the bottom of the worst recession in post-war history”. All of that happened in the two years between April 2007 and August 2009. As if that wasn’t enough,

the global fallout continued with problems in the Eurozone, a tsunami and nuclear meltdown in Japan, the Arabian Spring that led to conflict throughout the Middle East, a bitter war in Syria and political crisis in Ukraine.

Property in Mayfair has always been a pretty safe place to sink your cash and with a weak pound making Mayfair property look cheap, demand from overseas buyers soared. Prices followed. Commercial agent H2SO reckoned that between 2001 and 2012, 5.22 million sq ft of offices were converted to homes in the wider West End. Office rents were still rising, and London was still one of the most expensive office locations in the world – but that didn’t stem the flow of conversions. Paul Smith, head of office agency at H2SO, observed in the autumn of 2013: “Even though prime office rents are now moving up to around £120 per sq ft, residential capital values remain well above the commercial use equivalent in most sub-markets, and so the conversion trend looks set to continue.”

## MAYFAIR IS NOW SEEING THE BIGGEST RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT BOOM IN MORE THAN A CENTURY

### 2013

Wetherell reports on the Mayfair residential development boom. 401 units in 61 schemes totalling 1.1 million sq ft with an estimated value of £840 million.



### 2013

Property consultancy H2SO reveals that in 2012 1.23 million sq ft of offices in the wider West End were converted to residential - bringing the total for the 11 years from 2001 to 2012 to 5.22 million sq ft.



### 2013

The Canadian High Commission at Grosvenor Square sells to Indian developer the Lodah Group for £306 million for conversion into luxury apartments.



### 2013

LVMH consolidates its Mount Street holdings with the purchase of a majority stake in footwear designer Nicholas Kirkwood. LVMH brands Mark Jacobs, Céline and Bernard Arnault (chairman of LVMH) are neighbours of Kirkwood in Mount Street.

### 2013

The newsletter Westminster Planning reports that Westminster City Council officers have drafted a new policy aimed at preserving mixed uses in the Central Activities Zone. Developers of office to residential conversions could be required to provide an equivalent amount of office space on-site or nearby in the CAZ, or make a “payment in lieu”.



## OFFICES TO RESIDENTIAL AND PUBS TO HOMES



The Red Lion Public House. 1880s. H and R Stiles © English Heritage

A NEW HOUSE WITH MORE THAN 8,500 SQUARE FEET OF ACCOMMODATION AND MORE THAN 1,000 SQUARE FEET OF OUTSIDE SPACE IS CREATED ON THE SITE OF ONE OF MAYFAIR'S OLDEST PUBS.

The Red Lion pub in this quiet corner of Mayfair opened for business in the late 1700s and called last orders in 2009. Given that buildings in Mayfair are protected by being within a conservation area, brand new homes are few and far between so it was rare that planning was granted for its demolition – with the exception of its façade – and a new home was created with cutting-edge architecture and design. Westminster Planning Committee described it as 'striking' and 'raising the bar for design within the borough'.



CLERMONT CRECHE

ANNABELS KITCHEN SHOP

BERKELEY SQUARE PRIMARY SCHOOL

WETHERELS TUTORS - WE GET YOU THROUGH!

MAGGS GYM

I REMEMBER WHEN THE CLERMONT WAS A RATHER GOOD CLUB

Martin Millard



2014-2030

# THE FUTURE



Mount Street, Mayfair. 2014

## DO YOU REMEMBER THE DAYS BEFORE GOOGLE? NO? THEN YOU'RE VERY YOUNG INDEED.

Google was launched just 15 years ago in 1999. Apple's iPhone – the device that helped make “googling” a verb, and put a world of information in our pockets – emerged in 2007, a mere seven years ago. Things move fast in the world of technology. Places move more slowly, but they do move: they ebb and flow in response to demand for offices, shops and homes and the investment that follows.

In the past 16 years, the Crown Estate has transformed Regent Street – committing £1 billion to that one project alone – and it has now begun the transformation of St James's, with £450 million pledged to its St James's Market project. The Grosvenor Estate has spent £80 million turning Mount Street into a retail destination recognised worldwide. In one of the more obvious changes to the local landscape, Mount Street now has a “gateway” water feature by the internationally renowned sculptor Tadao Ando – and the Connaught Hotel has a new forecourt as a result.



*Regent Street*

The little streets and alleyways bounded by New Bond Street, Oxford Street, Davis Street and Grosvenor Street have been reinvented as The Lanes of Mayfair and the New West End Company and the Heart of London Business Alliance – two business improvement districts – have branded 42 streets and arcades in Mayfair as “London’s Luxury Quarter”. Even Shepherd Market, for so long the seedy side of Mayfair, is being reshaped into a boutique retail destination with unique shops opening alongside local restaurants and pubs. The launch of Robin Birley’s superb private members’ club at 5 Hertford Street was a very evident catalyst. In fact, the whole of Mayfair looks as if it has been given a wash and brush up. “It’s looking very fresh,” says estate agent Peter Wetherell. And the transformation is set to continue. The residential development pipeline – those 401 units identified by dataLoft – is worth £840 million at 2013 prices, and includes some vast schemes.

The recreation of the former home of the In & Out Club on Piccadilly, to designs by Paul Davis + Partners, and the development by British Land of the nearby Clarges Estate will put luxury homes on Piccadilly and revitalise the area between Piccadilly and Curzon Street. On Curzon Street itself, Brockton Capital – a real-estate focused private equity group – has spent four years buying up the 40 flats in the ugly red-brick block containing the former Mirabelle restaurant, and now plans to redevelop the site to include 18 “ultra prime” apartments. Property specialists are also

tipping Lansdowne House, on the south side of Berkeley Square, and Leconfield House (the former home of M15) on Curzon Street for redevelopment. The 1.1 million sq ft of new residential space planned for Mayfair in the spring of 2014 is to be delivered in large, luxury units. The dataLoft research revealed that the average size of schemes under construction was 13,328 sq ft, for those at the application stage 22,443 sq ft and for those with planning consent 32,983 sq ft – for comparison, that’s the size of a decent supermarket. If all of these developments go ahead, Mayfair will see a significant uplift in its resident population – perhaps by as much as 20 per cent.

The real game changer, though, is Crossrail – the £14.8 billion infrastructure project that will bring an extra 1.5 million people within 45 minutes of the West End on its completion in 2018. Crossrail stations are under construction at Bond Street and Tottenham Court Road, and the reinvention of Oxford Street has already begun.

All of this is happening in a West End that is already booming. In 2013, Bond Street shop rents soared by 30 per cent, tourists spent £10.8 billion and the area recorded its highest ever office investment volume – a record £6.4 billion. In its West End Review and Outlook report, international real estate adviser Jones Lang LaSalle forecast a further ten per cent growth in Bond Street rents in 2014 and a jump in overseas visitor numbers to a startling 18.4 million by 2015.



*The In & Out Club on Piccadilly*



# THE REAL GAME CHANGER IS CROSSRAIL

THE £14.8 BILLION INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT THAT WILL BRING AN EXTRA 1.5 MILLION PEOPLE WITHIN 45 MINUTES OF THE WEST END ON ITS COMPLETION IN 2018



*New ticket hall and offices. Hanover Square*

Seven years ago Wetherell produced a book, *All Roads Lead to Mayfair*, which closed with a tongue-in-cheek collection of predictions for the way Mayfair might look in the 2030s. Among the more far-fetched was that Mayfair's PAs would be replaced by virtual assistants or avatars. Since then Apple has bought "Siri", a virtual assistant now resident in its iPhone software – and advances in speech recognition, semantic web natural language processing and artificial intelligence have brought the concept of a virtual PA closer to reality. Developers are already working on systems that can "perceive, respond and act" like a human.

A forecast that "edgy" fashion designers would move into Dover Street and Albemarle Street has turned out to be true too, as has the exodus of office occupiers from Mayfair – although for rather different reasons to those predicted. But there are, so far, no plans to demolish the Hilton hotel on Park Lane: perhaps the revitalisation of Shepherd Market and Curzon Street will make it more likely as values rise.



One or two of the predictions made in 2007 for the 2030s have already turned out to be spookily close to the truth. Wetherell forecast a Mayfair residential development boom, driven by a shift in values and encouragement from Westminster City Council. The accompanying prediction that “The residential population [of Mayfair] doubles as empty office space is converted to apartments...” seems more likely given a potential 20 per cent uplift in the population is already visible. And even the bullish “Grosvenor Square becomes the world’s most desirable address...” looks more realistic given the sale of the Canadian Embassy to Lodah and the former US Navy HQ to the Abu Dhabi Investment Council. The weight of money that has been ploughed into Mayfair during the crash is incredible and seems unlikely to diminish. As Peter Wetherell pointed out: “We haven’t even seen the Chinese yet.”



## SO, WHAT WILL MAYFAIR LOOK LIKE IN 2030? HERE ARE THE SAFE BETS:

- The residential population will have increased, bringing vitality to the area especially at weekends.
- Mayfair will still be in mixed use. With retail rents rocketing, Bond Street will never return to residential – at least not at ground level – and there are strong vested interests among landlords in maintaining the mix of office and hospitality uses.
- The population of office workers will decrease. That’s just part of the ebb and flow of a city. Mayfair began life as a residential area, after all.
- The urban fabric will be continually upgraded to reflect demand from tenants, especially upmarket retailers and incoming residents.
- Visitor numbers will increase. So will the number of hotel bedrooms in the wider West End.
- The principal owners – the Grosvenor, Lancer, Motcomb and Crown Estates, the Sultan of Brunei, the Saudis and Qataris – will hang on to their Mayfair assets, although new developers will emerge in response to demand.
- The development boom will continue, and Mayfair will continue to be a safe haven for overseas investors.

All of which is good for the London economy and therefore for the UK. As the economic consultancy Ramidus revealed at the beginning of 2014, London’s super rich are major contributors to the capital’s economy, spending an estimated £4 billion a year on goods and services.

And to live in Mayfair – where an entry-level, one-bedroom flat on Berkeley Street sold for just short of £1 million in 2014 – you have to be wealthy.

It’s not much of a prediction to point out that that will always be true.

*Left: Artist Tom Hoar’s vision of Grosvenor Square circa 2030*

# WHAT WILL MAYFAIR BE LIKE



Grosvenor has exercised a stewardship role in the Mayfair community throughout the ups and downs of three centuries, ever since the estate was first master-planned and developed in the 1720s. The estate has been through wars, many recessions, complete social change after the First World War followed by the internationalisation we have seen throughout London. The estate has shown itself to be remarkably resilient in the face of such radical change. In fact constant renewal and adaptation means that only four original buildings remain. Welcoming change, caring about quality and encouraging innovation are all part of making great places. We look forward to helping Mayfair remain a thriving, mixed use community in the future.

**Peter Vernon**  
CEO, Grosvenor Britain & Ireland



By 2030, I would envisage that Mayfair will be the thriving residential and cultural hub that it is today, but with an even enhanced blend of residential, hotels, boutique retailers, restaurants and private clubs, as well as art galleries, auction houses and offices. Mount Street has already been transformed and other streets will follow. What will be needed are small supermarkets to provide a more comprehensive retail offering, and facilities for children within the gardens of Grosvenor and Berkeley Squares, so that young families will contemplate making Mayfair their preferred home.

**Simon Reuben**  
Entrepreneur & Philanthropist



Mayfair's importance as a hub for restaurants, clubs, hotels, business, finance, galleries and fashion has been steadily growing, particularly over the last decade. I have no doubt that this will continue over the next 20 years, further cementing its role on an international scale. The extraordinary thing about Mayfair is the wealth of variety, which makes it unique in its ability to service so many industries and audiences in one go.

**Richard Caring**  
Chairman, Caprice Holdings  
& The Birley Group

# IN 2030?

WE PUT THIS QUESTION  
TO SIX OF MAYFAIR'S  
KEY AMBASSADORS

Photographed by Jonathan Becker



What will Mayfair be like in 2030?  
Very much like in 2014 but maybe less  
traffic and cleaner!

**Sir John Ritblat**  
Honorary President British Land Plc



Mayfair has previously deteriorated over  
the last 100 years, especially in residential  
terms. This is about to end and Mayfair  
will, once again, resume its rightful place  
on the top of the Monopoly Board.

**John Caudwell**  
Entrepreneur & Philanthropist

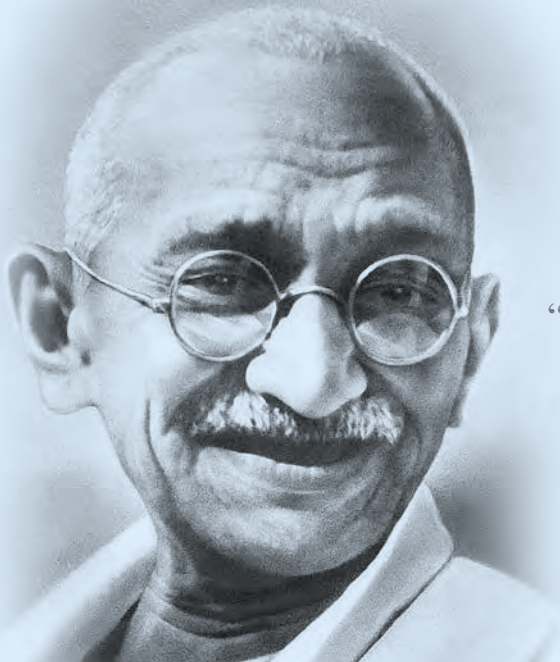


I've worked in Mayfair for over 40 years  
and I feel that all of this time that I spent  
in the area is but a dress rehearsal for the  
most exciting 10 years ahead. I believe  
that the next decade will be the biggest  
step change in residential for nearly  
a century and am thoroughly looking  
forward to increasing the percentage  
of residents in the area to complement  
what already is the number one location  
for all leisure and cultural facilities.

**Peter Wetherell**  
CEO, Wetherell

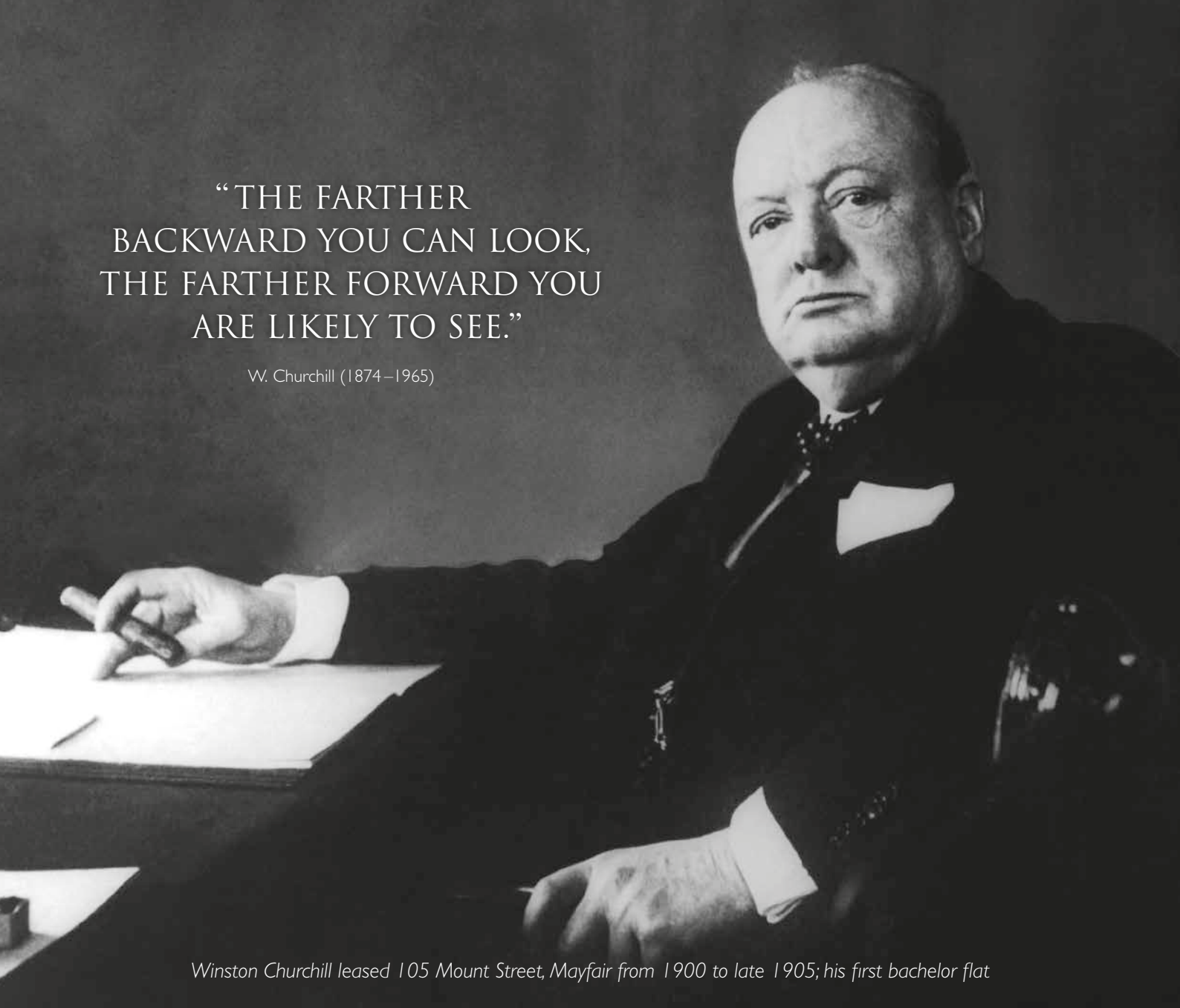
“THE FUTURE DEPENDS ON  
WHAT YOU DO TODAY.”

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)



“THE FARTHER  
BACKWARD YOU CAN LOOK,  
THE FARTHER FORWARD YOU  
ARE LIKELY TO SEE.”

W. Churchill (1874–1965)



*Winston Churchill leased 105 Mount Street, Mayfair from 1900 to late 1905; his first bachelor flat*



102 Mount Street, London W1K 2TH  
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NO-ONE KNOWS MAYFAIR BETTER THAN WETHERELL





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