

A festive night scene featuring a building facade covered in red lights. A large, intricate blue light sculpture is visible in the foreground. A white box with purple text is centered on the image.

**PARK
HOUSE
W1
WINTER
2008**

Revealing Views

As the last of the old Park House buildings are demolished, there is a window of opportunity to explore the unique views that are revealed before the new structure starts to emerge in the springtime. All the neighbouring buildings, long-standing and more recent, can be seen from fresh vantage points.

The eastern façade of New Hereford House, for example, stands proudly in the morning sun. Concierge Joe McCafferty has a wealth of knowledge about the building. Designed under the direction of renowned architect Sir Edwin Lutyens, Hereford House had a rocky initiation. Completed in 1930, just as the Great

Depression took hold, the building housed Gamages department store at ground level and luxury flats above. But Gamages only lasted a few months and was replaced with an exhibition and trade centre for British industry. In 1938, it reverted to its original function as a store when C&A moved in. It is now home to Primark.

The apartments above have also had some interesting tenants in their day. It was home to Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands when she took exile from Nazi Germany in the Second World War. Joe recalls the visit of an elderly gentleman some years ago who had come back to see his old apartment. Apparently he had lived in what was once the Queen's bathroom.



Recollections

Interview with a local resident

As we wait to see who the tenants will be at the new Park House, we meet with one of the first tenants of the previous building, local resident Roland Lançon.

Roland, a retired architect, moved into the old building in 1964 as part of Bernard Engle Architects & Planners. Roland remembers the area as being somewhat quieter in those days. "You could even drive up to town at the weekend and park right outside Selfridges." Bernard Engle specialised in commercial work, including the redevelopment of Bradford City Centre and the first major edge-of-town retail complex at Brent Cross. While most of their work was outside central London, clients expected them to have a West End address and Park House served them well.

One incident that Roland is not likely to forget is the introduction of the Building Control Act of 1965. This aimed to regulate the starting date of certain large private projects by requiring a license before work could commence. Harold Wilson, Prime Minister at the time, was trying to manage supply and demand, so that urgent and socially important projects had priority over the labour that was available. "Lawyers, surveyors and architects of that period will remember the night of the long pens," recounts Roland. "Everyone was going around every site of every project not yet started, with a shovel in one hand and a pen in the other, to dig a hole and register that the work had started before the legislation deadline." Roland himself spent two nights digging holes on 15 sites.

Roland's work has since taken him all over the world, but today he lives a stone's throw from Park House and is watching with interest as the new building takes shape.



Expanding West

Local history

“New squares and new streets rising up every day to such a prodigy that nothing in the world does, or ever did, equal it, except old Rome in Trajan’s time.” Daniel Defoe, writer and journalist, 1720

In the 1700s, London flourished and expanded. The growth was visibly evident in the demand for housing and it became popular to move out of the city to the more pleasant surroundings of the West End. Either side of Oxford Street, construction began in earnest. Uniquely in Europe, the building was financed not by royalty or the church, but by the aristocracy. To the north, the Cavendish estate was begun in 1717 by the second Earl of Oxford and named after his wife Lady Henrietta Cavendish Holles. To the south, the Grosvenor family started developing their estate in the 1720s.

The area became favoured by high society who had acquired a taste for town houses. “Oh how I long to be transported to the dear regions of Grosvenor Square!” sighs Miss Sterling in George Colman’s popular comedy ‘The Clandestine Marriage’ (1766). The new residents also wanted reminders of the rural idyll so the estates that sprung up centred round landscaped squares. Cavendish Square even had sheep grazing on it.

The new town houses had princely price tags attached. 19 Grosvenor Square was sold for £7,500 in 1730. However, in 1739 the wife of a grocer in Piccadilly found herself the proud owner of 4 Grosvenor Square for the small sum of 5s 3d. She had won a raffle run by the widow of John Simmons, the man who had built the mansion. The grocer’s wife sold the house on to the Duke of Norfolk for £7,000.



Above: Grosvenor Square, 1746 © Mary Evans Picture Library

Below right: A few of the original Grosvenor Estate town houses are still standing today

The area around Grosvenor Square became known as Mayfair, named after the annual fair held nearby every May. However, as the upper classes moved in, its debauchery was not thought to be a suitable sight for the new residents and the fair was suppressed. Certain less desirable trades – butchers, soapmakers, tobacco-pipe makers, brewers, distillers and blacksmiths – were also forced out through increased ground rents.

Fashionable stores moved in to take their place and soon Oxford Street was making its mark as *the* place to shop. Next time we’ll delve more into what it was like to shop in that era.





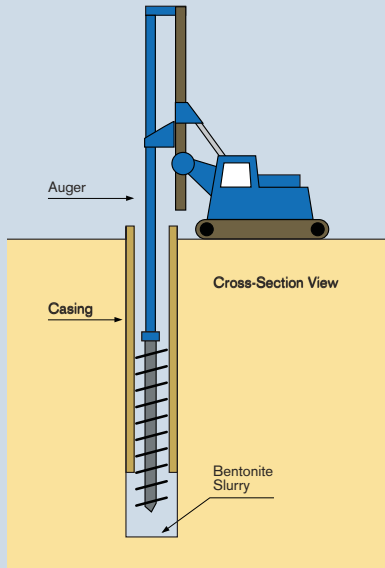
Animals in War

Lucy Jackson, accompanied by Zuleika and Princess Beega, visits the Animals in War memorial on Park Lane to lay a wreath for Remembrance Day. The memorial, unveiled in 2004, depicts all the animals that have been used by troops in wartime, from horses and mules to dogs, elephants, camels, canaries and even glow worms. Zuli and Beegie will also spot a brethren Irish Terrier carved into the Portland stone. Dogs were valued in the conflicts of the 20th century for their intelligence and faithfulness. They kept guard, ran messages, detected mines and dug out bomb victims.

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Pile It On

News from the site



Above ground level, the last of the old buildings have been demolished. The emphasis has now turned to what is below ground as piles are bored and excavation of the basement is due to commence.

“Progress is going really well,” notes Jonathan Emmines, project manager for the construction team at Mace. Demolition finished several weeks ahead of schedule, allowing Mace to carry on in earnest with the secant piling. Secant piling is a series of intersecting concrete posts that together will eventually form the retaining walls of the two-storey basement. The piling rig starts



by boring holes in a line with a gap between each. The holes, each up to 25 metres deep, are then filled with concrete to create 'female' piles. Before the concrete is set, the 'male' piles are then bored into the gaps and through the female ones, such that together they form an interlocking chain-link pattern if viewed from above.

The piling on the western end, along Park Street, was completed in early November. A second rig arrived in the middle of the month and the two rigs are now moving steadily east in parallel, one along Oxford Street, the other along North Row. They aim to have completed their work by May next year. In all, there will be 482 piles. If laid end to end, these would stretch for over 10 kilometres, or about five



times the length of Oxford Street.

As trade contractors Stent continue with the piling, Byrne Bros will start constructing the capping beam in December. This concrete beam sits on top of the piles, helping to hold them together. Props will then be put between the beams so that Keltbray can start to excavate out the basement levels in January. In the words of Jonathan Emmines, “We’ve got to go down to come back up again.” From the pavements outside, except for the piling rigs, all the machinery will disappear below the hoardings and for a short period there will be uninterrupted views of the surrounding area.

Turning a Corner

Park House Newsletter Issue 03



PARK HOUSE W1 WINTER 2008

Welcome to the Winter edition of the Park House newsletter.

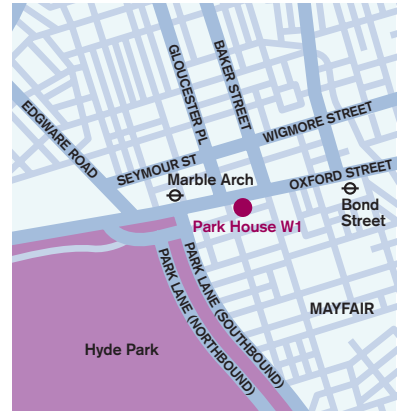
Now that Park House has been under way for most of the year the project is about to turn a corner. The demolition process is almost finished and the realisation of the build through construction can begin. I'm looking forward to seeing the building rise up over the course of the coming year, but in this issue we discover that first, they have to dig down before they can build up.

Thanks for the feedback cards that have been returned to us. To respond to a question we've been asked more than once; newly planted trees will be a feature in the pavements surrounding Park House. This will be done

during the final stages of the project and will include both Oxford Street and North Row, where significant improvements will be made to the pavements.

I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate Kenny Fisher and the rest of the team from Keltbray, who have been carrying out the demolition work on site. Their efforts have been recognised by the shortlisting of the project for this year's judging for the Considerate Builders Awards 2008. This is a significant achievement, particularly when considering some of the restrictions of this sensitively located site.

In the interests of sustainability, we are to



reduce the number of hard copies of the Park House newsletter that we print and distribute. If in the future you do not receive a hard copy, please take a look at the project web site: www.parkhousew1.co.uk where all future issues of the newsletters will be available to read or download as a PDF.

I hope you have a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Jack Lawrence
Community Liaison Officer
Land Securities

