



THE  
PORTMAN  
ESTATE

## St Marylebone Society Newsletter The Refurbishment of The Portman Estate

The great London Estates have become more professional, more commercially minded and more intimately involved in the life of the areas they have owned for so many centuries. This has involved a shift in attitudes resulting in a highly engaged and active approach to the property that is owned by the Estates and the community that enjoy them.

The Portman Estate is no exception to these changes and it is, as a result, in the midst of the largest refurbishment programme of its history.

The Portman Estate is 470 years old this year, its original 270 acres having been acquired by Sir William Portman of Somerset, Lord Chief Justice to Henry VIII, in 1533. Today, it is bounded by Oxford Street and Edgware Road to the south and west respectively, extending east just beyond Baker Street and north almost to Crawford Street.

The Portman approach can be seen in two key areas. Firstly, a desire to be open and accessible, which is evidenced by its website and quarterly magazine, which encourage feedback and input from tenants and residents alike. This is a progressive approach as even today, many large landlords seek to limit the costly task of tenant contact.

Secondly, the Estate is in the process of investing heavily in maintenance and renovation programmes, with the aim of ensuring that repairs are resolved swiftly and buildings requiring more major attention are refurbished to a high standard.

One of the larger examples of this approach is the renovation activity that is underway on Gloucester Place, which is defined by the distinctive blue hoardings and extensive scaffolding. This represents the first of two phases of extensive refurbishment activity. When complete the properties will provide 55 flats and 75,000 sq ft of office space. The first phase, approximately half of the accommodation, was due to be finished and available to let by Christmas 2003.

Gloucester Place is an example of concentrated refurbishment activity. There is a similar example in respect of Seymour Place and New Quebec Street where The Portman Estate is seeking to recapture the character and colour of these Georgian shopping streets in order to attract small, good quality shops to serve local residents. Hugh Seaborn, Chief Executive of The Portman Estate, explained:-

*"Our vision is to create a village atmosphere with enriched street character and real shops such as butchers and fishmongers. If we can achieve this vision - and get it right - more people will enjoy being here and want to come here, adding value for all our residents and occupants of the Estate and so, ultimately adding value to the Estate itself."*

It is refreshing to see The Portman Estate taking an active role in improving this part of London in order to create a prosperous environment for itself and its tenants, presumably in order to still be here in another 470 years.

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