

### **4-12 Little Titchfield Street**

Today 4-12 Little Titchfield Street forms part of the University of Westminster's Regent campus. This is fitting, as it was originally built as an 'Extension' or 'Annexe' to the 309 Regent Street building, primarily to accommodate the young women of the Polytechnic. They had previously used a variety of premises, first at Langham Place, and then a gymnasium and additional classrooms in Balderton Street, as well as the buildings on the site where 4-12 Little Titchfield Street now stands.

The money for the Great Portland Street Extension was raised through a combination of public money and private donations, from both wealthy individuals and members of the Polytechnic, as part of a large scheme of building works that included additions to 309 Regent Street.

The Great Portland Street Extension brought together all the activities happening at sites away from 309 Regent Street. As well as the women's social spaces and gymnasium, this also included classrooms for Hairdressing, Tailoring, Carriage Building, Architecture, Matriculation, Commerce and Speech Training. The new building housed state of the art facilities for the Domestic Science department, such as kitchens, and gave opportunities to use new labour-saving devices like electric irons and vacuum cleaners.

The Extension building was opened in October 1929 by Her Majesty, Queen Mary, who had also opened 309 Regent Street in 1912. The scheme had originally visualised a much larger building, extending onto Great Portland Street itself, but it proved difficult to purchase the additional land from the leaseholders.

During the Second World War, the day students based at Little Titchfield Street were initially evacuated to Winscombe in Somerset, although evening classes continued in the building. By 1942 all the classes had returned to London except the Carriage Building and preliminary Architecture students, who stayed in the country for the duration of the war. The building was regularly used for dances and other social events during the Second World War. This continued throughout the 1950s and 60s, with many well-known bands playing in the Portland Hall including Jimi Hendrix's debut UK performance, with Cream.

By the 1960s, the teaching at the Regent Street Polytechnic had moved away from trade and technical classes to degree-level work, and the classes taught at the Little Titchfield Street building changed accordingly. The Architecture students moved to their new building in Marylebone Road in 1971 and Little Titchfield Street was redeveloped for use solely by the School of Communication, including the Photography and Film students.

The re-development was carried out by architects Lyons, Israel, Ellis, Gray who had also designed the Polytechnic's New Cavendish Street building. The entrance was moved and the building became known as 18-22 Riding House Street.

The Little Titchfield Street building was again refurbished in the 1990s to accommodate the School of Law and its Library, after Photography and Film moved to Harrow.

Between 2012 and 2014 a further programme of work saw new developments to the Library, Archive and social spaces within the building, as well as the creation of a new lecture theatre in the space originally occupied by the ladies' gymnasium.

### **Relevant sources available in the University of Westminster Archives**

#### Legal records and plans

The Archive holds large numbers of leases and deeds for the properties on the site of 4-12 Little Titchfield Street prior to its construction. Many of these are leases to garment factories. There are also licences for cinema screenings, plays and dances from 1929 onwards. There are also architectural diagrams and plans relating to the initial building, and various refurbishments of the premises.

#### Opening Ceremony

The Great Portland Street Extension was opened by HM Queen Mary (patron of The Polytechnic) on 10 Oct 1929. The Archive holds the commemorative programme for this event as well as a number of photographs. There are also reports of the visit in the *Polytechnic Magazine*.

#### Photographs

The University Archives holds photographs of the interior and exterior of the 4-12 Little Titchfield Street, mostly in black and white, as well as photographs of the opening ceremony (see above). There are also many photographs showing classes and sport taking place in the building in from the 1920s to the 1950s, and another set documenting the School of Photography's activities in the 1990s.

Concerts and dances

The Portland Hall was a popular venue for dances in the 1930s-1950s and the Archive holds a few photographs and programmes for these events, which were also reported in the *Polytechnic Magazine*. The Students Union was formed in 1965, and began to organise regular gigs by folk and blues bands. The University Archive holds posters for events from 1965-1972, the majority of which were designed by students and screen-printed. They include a poster for the Cream gig during which Jimi Hendrix first performed in the UK (unfortunately there are no photographs of this event).

Administrative papers

Construction and refurbishment of the building is regularly mentioned in the Board of Governors Minutes and the Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes. There are also more detailed files discussing the changes to national educational policy which impact on the trade classes taught at 4-12 Little Titchfield Street.