

= Northumberland Avenue =

Northumberland Avenue is a street in the City of Westminster , Central London , running from Trafalgar Square in the west to the Thames Embankment in the east . The road was built on the site of Northumberland House , the London home of the Percy family , the Dukes of Northumberland between 1874 and 1876 , and on part of the parallel Northumberland Street .

When built , the street was designed for luxury accommodation , including the seven @-@ storey Grand Hotel , the Victoria and the Metropole . The Playhouse Theatre opened in 1882 and become a significant venue in London . From the 1930s onwards , hotels disappeared from Northumberland Avenue and were replaced by offices used by departments of the British Government , including the War Office and Air Ministry , later the Ministry of Defence . The street has been commemorated in the Sherlock Holmes novels including The Hound of the Baskervilles , and is a square on the British Monopoly board .

= = Geography = =

The street is around 0 @.@ 2 miles (320 m) long and part of the A400 , a local road connecting Westminster to Camden Town . It runs from Trafalgar Square eastwards towards the Thames Embankment . At the eastern end are the Whitehall Gardens and the Golden Jubilee Bridges over the River Thames .

The nearest bus route is London Bus Route 91 and the nearest tube stations are Charing Cross and Embankment .

= = History = =

The area which is now occupied by Northumberland Avenue was originally called Hartshorn Lane . It was formed around 1491 after the Abbott of Westminster granted land to the grocer , Thomas Walker , including an inn known as the Christopher and stables . The land was sold to Humfrey Cooke in 1516 , then to John Russell in 1531 . In 1546 , it was sold back to Henry VIII .

In 1608 ? 09 , Henry Howard , 1st Earl of Northampton built a house on the eastern side of the former Chapel and Hospital of St. Mary Rounceval , at Charing Cross , including gardens running to the River Thames and adjoining Scotland Yard to the west . The estate became the property of Algernon Percy , 10th Earl of Northumberland when he married Howard 's great @-@ great niece , Lady Elizabeth , in 1642 , whereupon it was known as Northumberland House . In turn , the street was named Northumberland Street . The house was damaged in the Wilkes ' election riots of 1768 , but was saved after its owner , Hugh Percy , 1st Duke of Northumberland opened the nearby Ship Ale House , driving off rioters .

By the 18th century , Northumberland Street was primarily used as a thoroughfare between markets in the West End of London and the wharfs along the Thames . In 1720 , historian John Strype wrote that Northumberland Street was " much clogged and pestered with Carts repairing to the Wharfs " .

In June 1874 , the whole of Northumberland House was purchased by the Metropolitan Board of Works and demolished to form Northumberland Avenue , which would accommodate hotels . Contemporary planning permissions forbade hotels to be taller than the width of the road they were on ; consequently Northumberland Avenue was built with a wide carriageway . Part of the parallel Northumberland Street was demolished in order to make way for the avenue 's eastern end . The street was open by 1876 . The hotels were popular for American visitors as they were near to the West End , government buildings on Whitehall and all the mainline stations .

By the 1930s , accommodation on Park Lane and Piccadilly was more popular , leading to closures on Northumberland Avenue . The seven floor Grand Hotel at No. 8 became a retail headquarters . It is now an events venue for corporations including Marks & Spencer . The venue is the first in Europe to install amBX lighting .

= = Properties = =

Several British government departments have been located in buildings on Northumberland Avenue ; the Ministry of Defence and the Air Ministry formerly occupied the triangular @-@ shaped Hotel Metropole on the street . Other buildings include the Nigerian High Commission at No. 9 and a London School of Economics halls of residence .

The Playhouse Theatre on Northumberland Avenue was built by Sefton Parry and opened in 1882 as the Avenue Theatre . George Alexander produced his first play here . In 1905 , the theatre was destroyed after part of Charing Cross Station fell on it , and was rebuilt two years later . Alec Guinness first performed on stage at the theatre . It was used for BBC broadcasts from 1951 to 1975 , broadcasting radio comedies such as The Goon Show and several sessions by the Beatles .

The Grand Hotel was built between 1882 and 1887 . It had seven floors , 500 rooms and a large ballroom which has largely survived intact from its original design . The original reception room was renamed the Mayflower Room in 1923 , and is now called the Salon . Unlike other hotels on Northumberland Avenue that were taken over by the War Office , the Grand has survived as an entertainment and exhibition venue .

The Hotel Metropole was designed by Frederick Gordon and constructed between 1883 and 1885 . Prince Albert , later King Edward VII , was a regular visitor to the hotel , entertaining guests in its Royal Suite . It had become one of the most popular hotels in London by the turn of the 20th century , being described by the War Office in 1914 as " of world @-@ wide reputation " , and was the original location of the Aero Club and Alpine Club . In 1936 , it was leased to the Government for £ 300 @,@ 000 (now £ 18 @,@ 400 @,@ 000) to provide temporary accommodation for various departments . During World War II , room 424 was used as the headquarters of MI9 , the principal section of military intelligence supporting Allied prisoners of war . The hotel continued to be operated as a government building after the war , and began to be used by the Air Ministry in 1951 .

The Hotel Victoria opened in 1887 , its name commemorating the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria held that year . It held 500 bedrooms and was the second largest hotel in London of its type on opening , overrunning its budget by around £ 520 @,@ 000 (now £ 44 @,@ 100 @,@ 000) . The hotel was self @-@ powered , generating its own electricity from dynamos . It was bought by Frederick Gordon in 1893 , giving him a monopoly on all hotels on Northumberland Avenue . A refurbishment was started in 1911 , though delayed due to the First World War , which resulted in a new annexe , the Edward VII Rooms . It closed in 1940 and was used by the War Office in need of extra accommodation . The War Office bought the building outright in 1951 , renaming it the Victoria Buildings . It was subsequently renamed Northumberland House .

Thomas Edison 's British headquarters , Edison House , was situated on the road . Several prominent personalities of the late 19th century had their voices recorded there by phonograph , including Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone and poet Robert Browning . Mary Helen Ferguson , the first English female audio typist , worked at Edison House and supervised all musical recordings . In 1890 , retired military trumpeter Martin Lanfried recorded at Edison House using a bugle he believed to have been sounded at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 and the Charge of the Light Brigade in 1854 .

The Royal Commonwealth Society is at No. 18 Northumberland Avenue . It was founded in 1868 as the Colonial Society to improve relationships with colonies in the British Empire including Canada and Australia , and moved to its current premises in 1885 . The current name dates from 1958 , reflecting the change from the Empire to the Commonwealth of Nations . The Commonwealth Club opened on the premises in 1998 and features the only suspended glass dining room in London . The Royal African Society was based at the same location , before moving to the School of Oriental and African Studies in Russell Square .

= = Cultural references = =

Northumberland Avenue is referenced several times in Arthur Conan Doyle 's Sherlock Holmes novels , including The Greek Interpreter and The Hound of the Baskervilles . The stories refer to wealthy Oriental visitors staying in hotels along the avenue , including the Grand , the Metropole and

the Victoria . The Northumberland Arms , at the junction of Northumberland Street and Northumberland Avenue , a public house , was renamed the Sherlock Holmes in 1957 , and contains numerous Holmes @-@ related exhibits from the 1951 Festival of London .

The street is part of a group of three on the London Monopoly board , with Pall Mall and Whitehall . All three streets connect at Trafalgar Square .

Northumberland Avenue formed part of the marathon course of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games . The women 's Olympic marathon took place on 5 August and the men 's Olympic marathon on 12 August , with the Paralympics following on 9 September .