

## **The Hercules Pillars Inn, Hyde Park Corner**



This article is made up of a series of screen captures from the Douglas DNA discussion group. It was prepared by John Bridger in 2009 and was in danger of being lost when the group closed all hosting of documents and photographs.

John Douglas, 'an innkeeper in Hyde Park Road, London', of St. George's Square, Middlesex, was "Recorded in Burke's commoners as having lived in the parish of St. George's Hanover Square, and John Warburton, Somerset Herald recognised him in 1754 as a "gentleman".

He was a descendant of Alexander Douglas, 1585 - 1661, a cadet in the service of King James 6th of Scotland. He was the first of the family to settle in England. Descended from the Morton line of Douglas. Came in the retinue of James 6th/1st in 1603 on his accession to the English throne. The King granted possession of land near Reath in Yorkshire.

Where Apsley House now stands, if we may accept the statement of Charles Knight, was the tavern called the "Hercules' Pillars," "the same at which the redoubted Squire Western, with his clerical satellite, is represented as taking up his abode on his arrival in London, and conveying the fair Sophia." The sign of the "Hercules' Pillars" was given to the tavern probably as marking, at that time, the extreme "west-end" of London. Its name is recorded by Wycherley, in his Plain Dealer, and is said to have been a haunt of the Marquis of Granby, and of other members of the titled classes. The character of the house in Fielding's time may be gathered from the following quotation from "Tom Jones," touching Squire Western's arrival in London:—"The squire sat down to regale himself over a bottle of wine, with his parson and the landlord of the 'Hercules' Pillars,' who, as the squire said, would make an excellent third man, and would inform them of the news of the town; for, to be sure, says he, he knows a good deal, since the horses of many of 'the quality' stand at his door."

Mr. J. H. Jesse tells us that the tavern in question stood between Apsley House and Hamilton Place, and that, on account of its situation, it was much frequented by gentlemen from the West of England. Wherever may have been the exact spot on which the house stood, it seems at best to have been a comfortable but low inn on the outskirts of the town, where gentlemen's horses and grooms were put up, and farmers and graziers resorted.

William Douglas  
The Douglas Archives  
December 2019

## THE HERCULES PILLARS INN at HYDE PARK CORNER,LONDON

Here is a picture of the establishment known as THE HERCULES PILLARS INN at Hyde Park Corner. The building shown has been recorded in many novels and publications about London of old. Described as an ale-house in the early 1700's, in later years it became the haunt of many notable persons and the well-to-do. The site of the Inn was on the eastern side, next to where APSLEY HOUSE stands. The Inn was standing in 1797 and is thought to have been demolished in that year.



I began researching the subject because of the connection my family had with the Hercules Pillars back in the 1700's but the more I learnt of the 18th century and Picadilly in particular the more interesting the subject of life in the 18th century became. So, perhaps the reader will excuse me if I have wandered off the main subject now and again. !



This scene of the Hercules Pillars Inn in 1756 is from a painting by T.H.Jones.

TO START THIS STORY.....

**A bit of imagination is required initially so that the scene can be set for this story.**

**Imagine you have just completed a long hot car drive to London and have arrived at Hyde Park corner**

**somewhat tired and needing some refreshment. It wasn't such a bad journey though, as had the air conditioning on and a C.D. playing soothing music. The traffic is chaotic and finding somewhere to park is almost impossible but there is a car park on Park Lane so let's get there. Now for that refreshment. There are of course the major hotels but for something relaxed.**

**There is the Black Rock cafe in Piccadilly, just a short walk away which is just what you need. This could well be repeated many times over for travellers coming into London from the Knightsbridge direction and even with all our modern aids to driving going into London it is to be relished.....and this is year 2009!**

**Now, tax the imagination a little further and set the date back some 250 or so years. This time you have again just completed a long, hot, uncomfortable and tiring journey in from say, Oxford, stopping overnight at High Wycombe, then via Uxbridge to London. Thus the journey had taken the best of two days. The coach had only basic springing and the narrow wheels frequently got stuck in the rutted track. Roads? What were they? Only recently were the turnpikes being developed so most of the journey was not too pleasant an experience. In 1742 the reverse journey from London to Oxford meant leaving London at 7 a.m. reaching Uxbridge at mid day and arriving at High Wycombe at five in the evening for an overnight stay. Oxford was reached the next day at say five p.m. (This was contained in an article in the Quarterly Review of 1832 p347.)**

**So, the date is circa 1750 and we have just arrived at Hyde Park Corner which is the outer limit of western London. The need for refreshment and rest is so pressing that the coach stops at the first inn we come across. We, as almost every traveller arriving from the west had done before, descend from the coach and enter the welcoming sanctuary of the HERCULES PILLARS INN.**

**The landlord seems to be a sociable fellow and seemingly used to welcoming travellers of all social standing. I feel we shall be well cared for here.**

**.....000.....**

**This prelude may seem appropriate as an introduction to a novel about Georgian London but it has another motive. It sets the scene to what follows.**

**The Hercules Pillars Inn did in fact exist in the 1700's and stood at Hyde Park corner until it was demolished in 1797. If you were to go to Apsley House today, it would have been on the eastern side. In many accounts of the building of Apsley House it has been said that it was built on the site of the Hercules Pillars but I believe this is not truly the case as we will find out in due course since what wasn't said above was that it was only after the original Apsley House was built in 1778 on the site of the Ranger's cottages that Lord Apsley managed to acquire some land which had been granted to the Duke of Hamilton in the 17th century on which**

stood the old inn Hercules Pillars, which was as late as 1797 .

I was extremely fortunate in finding a picture of Hyde Park corner as it was in 1756 .This shows quite clearly the entrance to Hyde Park through the wooden gates ,a row of cottages, then Hercules Pillars and other buildings.It is my belief that Apsley house was built on the site of the cottages .Indeed,Apsley House was built between 1771 and 1778 but the Hercules Pillars was not demolished until 1797.In an article in " Victorian London"(1872) the writer says"Apsley House,the site of which occupied by the old Ranger's Lodge and an apple stall..." and this is repeated in many other publications.

There is a quaint story about this apple stall .

This quote from Familiar London Painted by Rose Burton (1904).

"Apsley House, which stands near the corner of Hyde Park, has a curious history. The site is said to have been given by George II to an old soldier named Allen, who fought under the king at Dettingen. Allen's wife kept an apple stall, which in course of time, and thrift of its owners, became a small cottage. Riding out one morning, the King met Allen, and, evidently thinking he looked like an old soldier, stopped and spoke to him. Allen, it seems, told the King his means of gaining a living. The King asked him what he could do for him. "Please, your Majesty, to give me a grant of the bit of ground on which my hut stands, and I shall be happy." Be happy, said the King and he ordered the grant to be made .In course of time Allen died, leaving a son who became an attorney. The then Chancellor gave the lease of the ground to a nobleman - the apple stall having vanished, neighbours thought that the site had lapsed to the Crown .A stately home was built thereon, and the young attorney put in a claim. After some negotiations, a sum of £450 a year ground rent was settled upon to be paid to Allen. He or one of his family sold the ground to Earl Bathurst who became Lord Apsley."

The sale of the ground is said to have been in 1784.

In the painting we can see the apple stall at the entrance to Hyde Park and Mrs. Allen standing there.



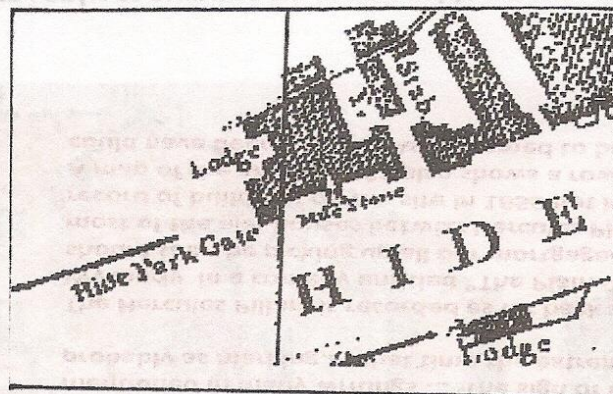
This story about the Allens has been repeated many times over the years but essentially has not changed perhaps ,except, for an author's particular presentation and style of wording.



Here we have the Hercules Pillars Inn Both this and the picture of the apple stall, above ,are taken from the painting By T.H.Jones below.

An interesting feature is the pyramidal column in front of the Hercules Pillars. It is a distance post stating the distance from there to the "Standard" in Cornhill, London\*. This column is clearly shown on an 1746 map of the area by John Rouque with the annotation "Mile Stone". The map also shows the extensive stabling behind the Hercules Pillars. Roque's map is shown below.

\* This was contained in "Thoughts of London" vol 1, p312.



The picture below shows a view of the Hyde Park Corner gates ,Mrs.Allen's apple stall, the Hercules Pillars Inn with its sign at the kerb and on to other buildings which haven't been identified. In the background is Hyde Park.



## Picture of Hyde Park Gate 1756

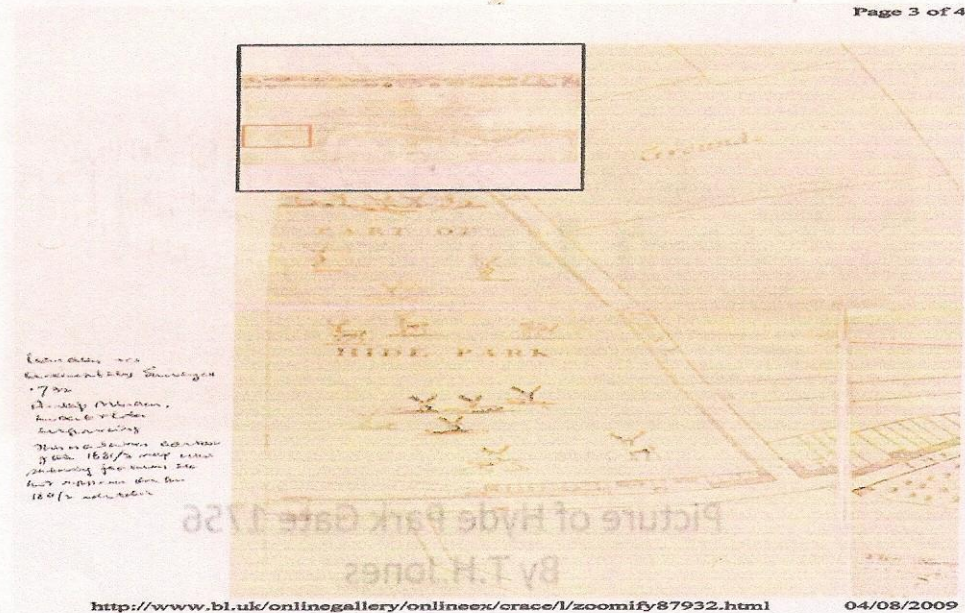
By T.H.Jones

This picture is held by the British Museum. It was painted by T.H. Jones and shows Hyde Park Gate as it was in 1756. We can see quite clearly the apple seller's stall at the gate, the row of cottages and then the Hercules Pillars Inn. It was a substantial building providing accommodation and refreshments and on the other (London) side there was said to be "a row of low and mean tenements". In the forecourt of the Hercules Pillars we can see the Inn sign which may have shown a symbolic representation of the original Pillars of Hercules of Greek mythology, and also was the name given to the Straits of Gibraltar by sailors of that time. The straits represented the end of the world as far as they were concerned. The term "Hercules Pillars" was used in the past to describe the outermost limits of something e.g. in this case the most western outskirts of London, or, perhaps a person reaching the "Hercules Pillars" of his ambitions. This has been mentioned in many writings ... "The sign of the Hercules Pillars was given to the tavern probably as marking, at that time, the extreme 'west end' of London" (Charles Knight).

The Hercules Pillars is recorded as far back as 1676 in a play by playwright William Wycherly in a comedy entitled "The Plain Dealer". In Act 2 scene 1 a character says "I should soon be picking up all our mortgaged apostle-spoons, bowls, and beakers, out of most of the ale-houses betwixt Hercules Pillars and the Boatswain in Wapping". There is record of buildings on the site in 1655 but it is not certain which could have been the H.P. A map of the area in 1681 also shows a row of buildings but again it is not certain which could have been the H.P. As it seemed to be a substantial building, it might be the detached building shown on the map mid way between the two rows of cottages. Of course, the H.P. may well have been a more lowly Alehouse when Fielding wrote his play and also a less substantial building but I have not come across any mention of a rebuilding. The description as an alehouse in 1676 does

conjure up a picture of a half timbered type of building and not the brick construction with a classical portico that we see in the painting of 1756.

An Inn is an establishment recognised as a "large establishment offering food, drink, be it wine, ale or beer and accommodation for wealthier travellers"



Map of Hyde park Corner 1681/2  
an engraving by Philip Mordeh, Robert & Lea

...ooo...

Although the H.P. was described above as an ale house at that time, it became more respectable as time went on. Horace Walpole (1731-1797), son of the famous prime minister, wrote in 1740 in a letter to Richard West during travels on his Grand Tour of Europe with his friend, poet Thomas Grey, that he had grown tired of foreign lands and looked forward to returning to England. To quote him... "I shall be mighty apt to set up my staff at Hyde Park Corner, the alehouseman there at the Hercules Pillars was certainly returned from his travels into foreign parts....."

A note by the book's editor comments..... "Walpole calls the Hercules Pillars an ale-house. Whatever it might have been at the period he wrote, it is very certain that in twenty-four years after that time it laid claim to a higher appellation. After the peace of 1762, it was a respectable tavern, where the Marquis of Granby, and other persons of rank, particularly military men, had frequent dinner parties, which were then fashionable. It was also an inn of great repute among the West Country gentlemen coming to London for a few weeks, who thought themselves fortunate if they could secure accommodation for their families at the Hercules Pillars. Hotels at that time were unknown. It was in this tavern that the Duke of Athol sheltered his family when the house which he inhabited in South Audley Street was burnt to the ground."

...ooo...

The Marquis of Granby.....

**John Manners ,the eldest son of the 3rd Duke of Rutland , was born in Kelham in 1721, he became an M.P. in 1741 and in 1745 was commissioned as colonel in the Rutland and Liecester corps.His military career attained great heights and in 1762 as commander-in chief of English forces defeated the French army.After the war he entered politics but seemingly was not too happy in those surroundings and,it is said,retired and without any further personal ambitions and became rather too fond of his wine. At one time he had a reputation principally as a freespending,gambling,sporting man.The country recognised him as an accomplished soldier and a very popular figure of that time. In recognition of his popularity many inns around the country were named after him.He died in Scarborough in 1770. And, as said above, he frequented the Hercules Pillars.The clientele were thus above the average"Ale house" regulars! The Marquis often headed dinner parties of military officers at the H.P.**



...000...

**It seems that those whose Tours took them away from England had not overcome a touch of homesickness. In his book "A short tour of the Ionian Islands,Athens and the Morea" Edward Giffard writes....."The sergeant had ,to our great satisfaction,some excellent bread,cheese and porter;and after a regale on those truly English dainties which we thought never tasted better than under Squire Western's favourite sign of the Hercules Pillars,we descended in the opposite direction,that is,towards Europa Point...."**

...000...

**There is another reference in literature to the H.P.inn.In a story written in 1749 by Henry Fielding (1707-1754) entitled "The History of Tom Jones,a Foundling"a whimsical adventure which befell the Squire Western. The relevant passages are quoted here..... "We must now convey the reader to Mr.Western's lodgings,which were in Picadilly,where he was placed by the recommendation of the landlord at the Hercules Pillars at Hyde Park Corner,for there at the inn,which was the first he saw on his arrival in town,he placed his horses,and in those lodgings,which were the first he heard of,he deposited himself".**

In a following passage "the squire sat down to regale himself over a bottle of wine, with his person and the landlord of the Hercules Pillars, who, as the squire said, would make an excellent third man, and could inform them of the news of the town, and how affairs went, for to be sure says he, he knows a great deal, since the horses of many of the quality stand at his house".

Almost eighty years before Fielding's story and not long before Wycherly's play in 1676 it seems that Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) also called at an establishment called the Hercules Pillars for refreshment. In his diaries for April 1668 there are several references to his calling at the H.P. for to dine (20th) with a friend, on the 22nd he dined there alone and on the 28th .. "thence with Creed to Hercules Pillars.....". Later that year in Sept (4th) .... "and here Knepp come to us, and sat with us, and thence took coach in two coaches, and loosing one another, my wife, and Knepp, and to Hercules Pillars, and there supped.....".

NOTE. I have some doubt that it is our H.P. he called at. In 1658 he and his wife moved into Axe Yard near the Palace of Westminster. There was also a tavern called Hercules Pillars, it seems, in Fleet Street which would tie in with an entry in his diary of 30 July 1661 which reads..... "So in Fleet Street I met Mr. Salisbury..... I took him to the Hercules Pillars to drink....." ..... Also, in a publication "Taverns and Coffee-houses of Fleet Street" published back in the early 1900's, it says that during the 18th century there were numerous "Hercules Pillars" in London, and refers particularly to the one in Fleet St., which was a favourite resort of Pepys. This revelation means that I can't truthfully lay claim Pepys' patronage at our Hercules Pillars. However! There are references in his diaries of 31 March 1668 and 3 June 1668 to his visits to Hyde Park in a hackney (coach).

So, there is a possibility that he could also have taken refreshment at the H.P., but it is a matter of conjecture that he did so.

A most unusual mention of H.P. is found in a record of the trial of Stephen Colledge for Treason at Oxford on 17th August 1681. He was accused of plotting to execute the King (Charles II) and install a new government. A witness, Mr. Haynes, states..... and so went all along till we came to the Hercules Pillars and we had some discourse there; we went up some stairs and called for some beef; and all this discourse was in that very place of the Hercules Pillars." Was this our Hercules Pillars? The background of the case suggests not..... but an interesting trial none the less..... College was condemned and paid the ultimate price.

References to the H.P. have come from any number of sources..... here is an unusual one. It is by Thomas Carlyle in his writings in the Fraser's Magazine, of January 1845 Vol 31 pp 534/5. The article is entitled "A holiday trip to Gravesend and Rochester", which describes a typical city apprentice boy's holiday outing down the Thames. He compares the current times holiday with what a city apprentice boy might have done in Queen Anne's time..... "and play his brace of cocks at the Hercules Pillars at Hyde Park. (note.. Queen Anne reigned 1702 to 1714).

My search for references to the H.P. led me to a serialised article in the Times of 5th and 6th October 1825 of "Mr. Moore's - The Life of Sheridan" which not only mentions the H.P. but also describes the interrupted duel between Sheridan and Captain Matthews over the

beautiful Miss Linley. They had met at the "ring" in Hyde Park for the duel but...."Mr. Matthews objected to the observations of some people at a great distance and proposed to retire to the H.P. till the park should be clear: we did go." The duel did not take place there, but at the Bedford Coffee House the two pulled their swords and Sheridan won the day. This was not the only duel to be fought in that part of the park. A very popular spot for such was the "ring," a circle of trees not far from the Gate and the H.P.



Hyde Park...a well known place to hold a duel.

Some of the duelling encounters were.....

1685 The Duke of Grafton v Hon John Talbot, who was killed.

1712 The Duke of Hamilton v Lord Mohun....both died on the ground but there was doubt over the manner of the Duke's death. It appears that the duel with Lord Mohun arose because of a dispute regarding the division of the Gorsworth estate, to which Hamilton's wife and Lady Mohun were coheirs. This duel was a particularly violent and bloody and well worth reading the contemporary accounts to appreciate the hatred these two men had for one another.

1763 John Wilkes was wounded by Mr. Samuel Martin, M.P.

1770 Lord Thurloe v Mr. Andrew Stewart.

1777 Charles James Fox v Mr. William Adam, M.P.

1780 Colonel Fullerton, M.P. wounded the Earl of Shelburne.

1792 A duel known as the *petticoat duel* between Lady Bradock and Mrs.

Elphinstone took place over a dispute about the Lady's age !

A hat was blown off with a pistol shot.....

and an arm wounded with a sword before the ladies apologised..... and retired for a cup of tea ! (It is said !)

After 1803 the practice of duelling gradually fell into disuse.

These were prominent gentlemen whose dexterity with the sword may be queried but there is no doubt that they were very elegantly dressed as, I suspect, were the gentry visiting the H.P. So I have taken a brief look at some of the fashions of the 1700s.

Below is Hogarth's "The marriage contract" 1743 but could easily have been the scene at the Hercules Pillars. It gives some idea of what "Gents" were wearing.



But if you had been of lesser birth.....



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Full resolution (1,603 x 1,959 pixels, file size: 5.42 MB, MIME t



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its description page there is shown below.  
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This is Henry Singleton's "The alehouse door"

1790

Here we can see the difference between a typical alehouse and the rather grander building of

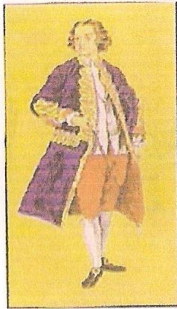
the Hercules Pillars.

Perhaps now it is timely to look at the different types of transport that visitors to the H.P. might have used. The premise is that this was more a coaching inn than an ale house. I haven't looked at the implications of the care of the horses but thought this section simply to describe the vehicles.

Here are some other styles....

The 1700's

Man's Day Clothes



about 1738

Man's Day Clothes



about 1770

Lady's Day Dress



about 1750

Lady's Day Dress



about 1780

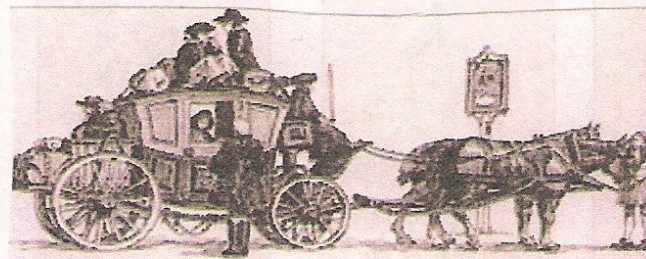
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A scene with military men entitled "Modern love-The Elopement" by John Collett 1764



This picture shows some of the fashions of the times

Perhaps now it is timely to look at the different types of transport that visitors to the H.P. might have used. The premises had apparently stabling of 30 plus stalls which again suggests that this was more a coaching inn than an ale house. I haven't looked at the implications of the care of the horses but thought to restrict this section simply to describe the vehicles.



**Stage coach with basket**



**The Park Dray**



**A typical carriage**

### A note on the Stage Coach - 17th/18th century.

Travel between towns by public transport in the 17th and 18th centuries was a slow process. The stage coach was introduced in England in circa 1640 and was a heavy, cumbersome carriage and often without any form of springing. It could hold up to eight better-off passengers who would be installed in the coach. Second class passengers could take seats in a large open basket attached to the back of the coach. Lastly, the least privileged passengers sat on the roof with the luggage and having only a handrail to stop them sliding off!

These coaches were heavy and unwieldy and drawn by either four or six horses. The average speed on the rutted and unmade roads was about 4 miles per hour. That is, if you didn't get stuck in the mud or break a wheel or even held up by highwaymen. It is interesting to see how journey times improved over the 1700's. There were not many turnpikes in 1720 and only a few more by 1740/50. However, by 1770 there had been a

vast expansion and some 500 trusts had been formed giving about 1300 miles of turnpike roads. Some idea of times to London by coach.....

From.	time/date	time/date
BATH	50hrs 1750	16hrs 1800
BRISTOL	2 days 1754	less than 12 hrs 1800
EDINBURGH	256 hrs 1700	60 hrs 1800
MANCHESTER	90 hrs 1700	28 hrs 1788
NEWCASTLE	6 days 1754	3 days 1783
NORWICH	50 hrs 1700	19 hrs 1800

Here are a few examples of the coach fares.....

- \* Highflyer from London to York in 1790 £2.10s inside the coach, £1 5s outside.
- \* Post Chaise from Oxford to Castle Cary, Somerset in 1774 £4 8s.
- \* Post Coach from London to Exeter in 1781 £1 18s.
- \* Stage Coach measured by distance 2d-3d per mile plus tips for guards and coachmen.

These charges, however, have to be put in context to the earnings of the time. For instance,....it was estimated that the average labouring couple in 1737 earned 7s 3d per week and by 1777 their earnings had risen only to 8s 3d. This left such folk with almost nothing to spend on non-essentials let alone journeying in a coach. For those that did, the introduction of springs for stagecoaches in about 1760 made them more comfortable for those inside and acceptable for outside passenger - with this development and the extension of turnpikes over the country journeys were more comfortable and speedier.

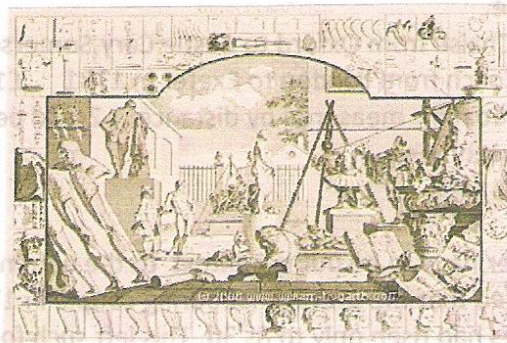
An interesting aside is the fact that inflation existed in those days. Between 1750 and 1790 prices rose as much as 50%. Inflation was particularly steep during the 1780-1790 period apparently without any balancing rise in wages. Times were tough for the less well-off.

The situation was made worse by the reckless financial policy of the government which drew heavily on the nation's gold reserves, ultimately resulting in the financial crisis of 1797.

Your imagination must now be re ignited for the following description of the last part of the street leading to Hyde Park corner from Picadilly. In addition to the H.P. Inn there were a great many other "houses" of similar description in that neighbourhood. These were..... The H.P., the Red Lion, the Swan, the Golden Lion, the Horse Shoe, the Running Horse the Barleymow, the White Horse and the Half-Moon. There was also the Triumphal Car. A quote from The History of Signboards by Jacob Larwood and John Camden Hotton describes another type of visitor to these establishments..... "These public houses about the middle of the last century were much visited on Sundays, but those contiguous to Hyde Park were chiefly resorted to by soldiers, particularly on review days, when there were long wooden seats fixed in the streets before the houses for the accommodation of six or seven barbers, who were employed on field days in powdering those youths who were not adroit enough to dress each other's hair. Yet it was not unusual for twenty or thirty of the older soldiers to bestride a form in the open air, where each combed, soaped, powdered and tied the hair of his comrade, and afterwards underwent the same operation himself"

But there was also another aspect to that part of the street. Quoting from an old text we see .... "the line, from Devonshire House, was also, before 1740, remarkable for a succession of shops of statuaries, 'where' says Malcolm, 'numberless wretched figures were manufactured in lead for gardens'. The buildings from Hamilton Place to the H.P. have been described as "low, mean tenements" but this is hard to see from the picture.

These statuary yards gave Hogarth inspiration for some of his pictures and his writings on grace and beauty published in 1753. with two illustrations. The one that interests us is "The Statuary Yard"



the STATUARY YARD by William Hogarth

1753

## THE DENOUEMENT !

I think it is now time to show why all the above is connected with my FAMILY History.

The connection ,naturally, is some way back as we can see from the dates above,so let me explain.

My paternal great grandmother was Lucy Ann Douglas who married my g.grandfather Harry Wm.Bridger in Swansea in 1866 and it is through her that the connection is made. Her great great grandfather,John Douglas, was landlord of the Hercules Pillars Inn at Hyde Park Corner from 1736 until his death in 1762 . Records show that "widow Douglas" was responsible for payment of the Poor & highways rates until 1772.

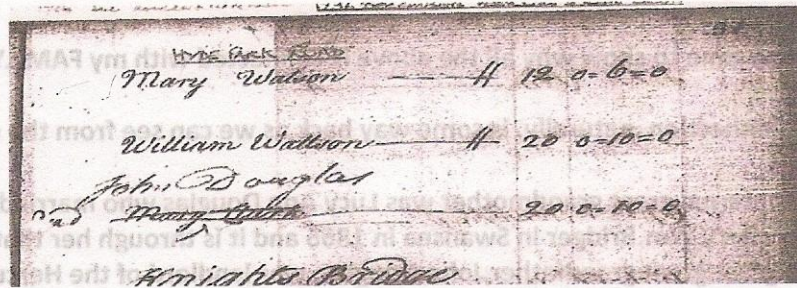
Here is a short background .

John Douglas was the fourth son of Thomas and Martha Douglas and born in Grinton,N.Yorkshire in 1707 and married Mary Gardiner in London in 1731. An entry in Burke's Commoners states..."John Douglas ,Esq.,settled in London and lived in the parish of St.George,Hanover Square.He possessed the estate of Caldicott Hill,near Harrow,where he died in 1762 .He m.29th April 1731,Mary,daughter of William Gardiner of Haling near Croydon and Send Place near Dorking,Surrey.....". Here is a copy of the marriage entry in the parish records of St.Benet Paul Wharf,London on 29th April 1731

John Douglas's own ancestry is interesting as he is descended from an Alexander Douglas who came to England in 1603 in the retinue of King James when he took the English throne. John's wife,Mary ,also has an interesting background. She was the daughter of William Gardiner who....."fell heir to and possessed the family seat of Haling,near Croydon,which was built by Stephen Gardiner,Bishop of Winchester,and Lord Chancellor of England temp Henry V111."

It is thought that whilst being landlord of the H.P.he lived at nearby Half Moon Street,Picadilly,London but at the same time owned his Caldicott property.

His tenure of the H.P.is confirmed by the entries found in the Poor Law Rate books of that era and also his payment to the Highways levy.The entries begin with that of the 1736 December quarter in the Poor Law Rate book.He apparently took over from a Mary Clark who is shown on the page as "Dead".The rate book commences in 1725 when the landlord was Wm.Clarke who continued until 1729 (presumed died) when his wife Mary became responsible for the rate payment until her death in 1736. The Poor Law rate records are at WESTMINSTER City archives,London.



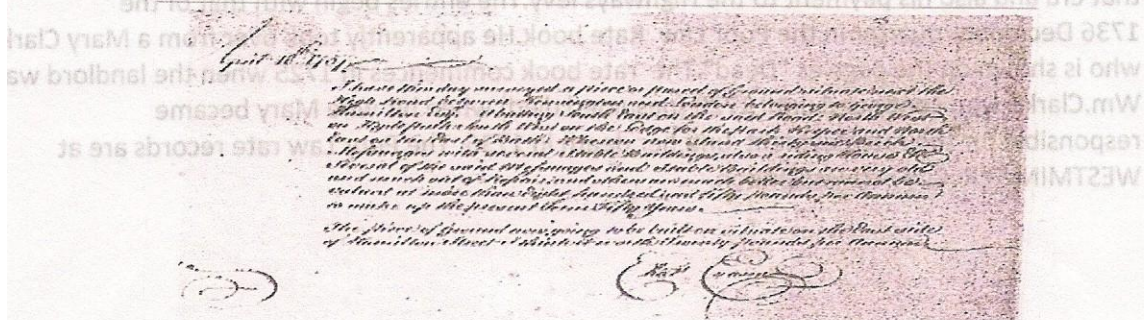
The entries are continuous until 1762. In 1763 it shows John Douglas and Thomas Douglas (the son who had a premises next to the H.P., and in 1768 the name of "Widow Douglas appears until 1772.

There is another reference to John Douglas and the H.P. in a book "Mid-Georgian London by Hugh Phillips.....".....is the Hercules Pillars Inn, conspicuous by its portico and signpost on the kerb" ..... "The landlord in 1748 was John Douglas".....

By a stroke of luck I found a surveyor's plan of that area of Hyde Park which had been drawn up by Chas. Evans on April 18th 1757 for George Hamilton and assessing the rental values of properties thereon. Referring back to the painting above, the plan extends from the Hercules Pillars eastwards. Also clearly written is the name of John Douglas inserted in the plot which undoubtedly is the Hercules Pillars. In the plan the next premises is the name of Thomas Douglas which also has the appearance of being some type of vending establishment with stabling. It probably is part of the H.P. curtilage since the inscription reads "Thomas Douglas under tenant to John Douglas". The western side of the H.P. on the plan is described as "His Majesty's Lodge for the Park Ranger. This must be the row of cottages we can see in the painting and the site of APSLEY house.

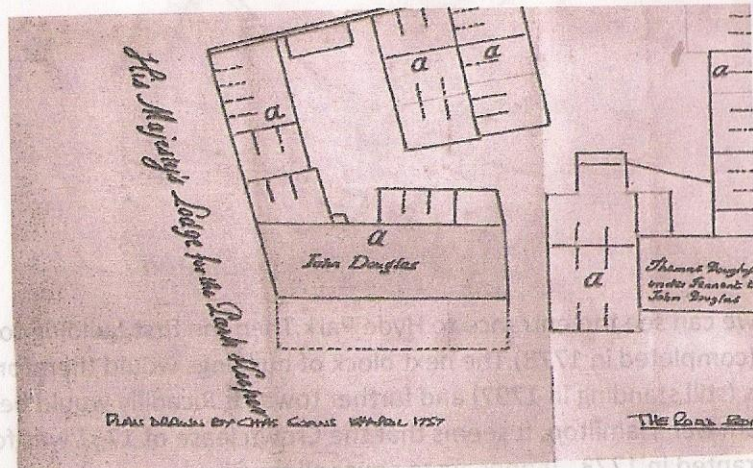
A search of Crown leases does, indeed, include a 1757 lease to the Hon. George Hamilton and in describing the land and properties in the lease includes the names of both John Douglas and Thomas Douglas as occupiers of properties within the lease. This is yet further confirmation of John Douglas' tenancy of the Hercules Pillars.

Below is shown the surveyor's description of the area surveyed and that it was undertaken for George Hamilton Esq. and dated 1757.



The survey relates to a piece of ground situated near the High Road between Kensington and

London belonging to George Hamilton Esq. dated 18th April 1757. It so happened that George Hamilton had been leased a large tract of land there earlier that year and so we might now be allowed to think that John Douglas had become a tenant of Geo. Hamilton (see above)



My guess is that John Douglas had a lease on the H.P. since in his will, whilst mentioning bequests of other property, only mentions H.P. in respect of legacies to be taken funded from the profits of the H.P.

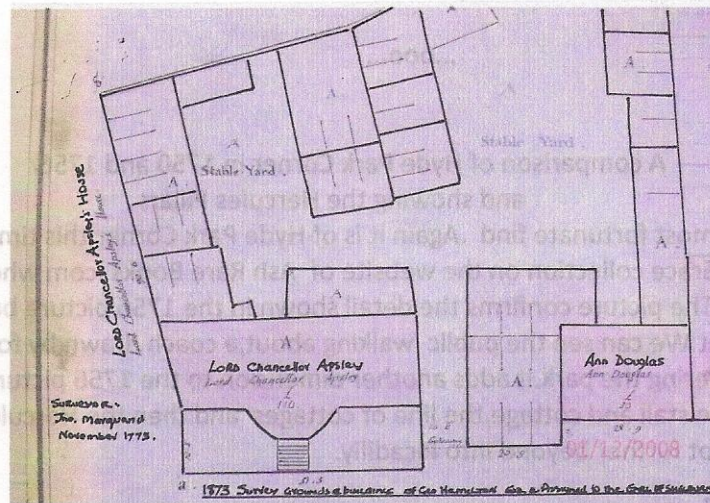
In a further reference to the H.P.

I came across an interesting reference in a book entitled "An inquiry into the authenticity of certain miscellaneous papers and legal....." by Edmund Maloney.

Here he talks of the accuracy of ancient records deeds, things sold, demised or granted and I quote "...which is about as good a description, as if the ground on which the house of the present Earl Barthurst is built had been conveyed to the late Earl, a certain piece of ground containing in front ninety feet, and in depth one hundred and twenty feet, on which the INN known by the name of the HERCULES PILLARS now stands, abutting close to Hyde Park Corner by **Whitechapel**". Interesting, is it not, but not clearly comprehensible as a straight forward statement! Do the measurements relate to Apsley House or to the Hercules Pillars?

...ooo...

There were many maps of London produced in the 1700's, all of them show the row of buildings from Hyde P. Gate to Park Lane. Here is a section of a map of 1785 when both Apsley House and the Hercules Pillars would have stood side by side. It is taken from an engraving by Wm. Fadden and can be viewed with others on the British Library on-line map gallery.

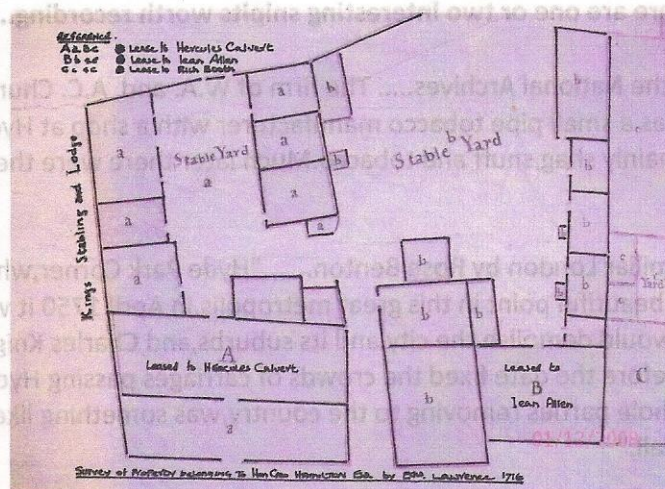


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The land at Hyde Park corner had been leased to the Hamilton family since the 1600's when James Hamilton, the second Park ranger to take the office under Charles II granted him a large plot at Hyde Park Corner and bordering on the old Park Lane. Hamilton Place is named after him.

I haven't inspected the original lease or could I locate any plan associated with it but I did find the surveyor's report of 1716 when...."A draught of the whole grounds,houfes,outHoufes,Yards, at Hyde Park Corner,belonging to ye Honourable George Hamilton Esq" was surveyed by Edw.Lawrence in 1716. I was surprised to find that the plan showed the same layout of properties as both the plans of 1757 and 1773. So now we have a confirmation that a building existed at the begining of the 1700's and was most likely to be the Hercules Pillars referred to by Wycherly and Fielding in their writings..The occupant in 1716 was ,believe it or not,Hercules Calvert and the land adjoining to the west in Hyde Park is described "King's Stabling and Lodge"

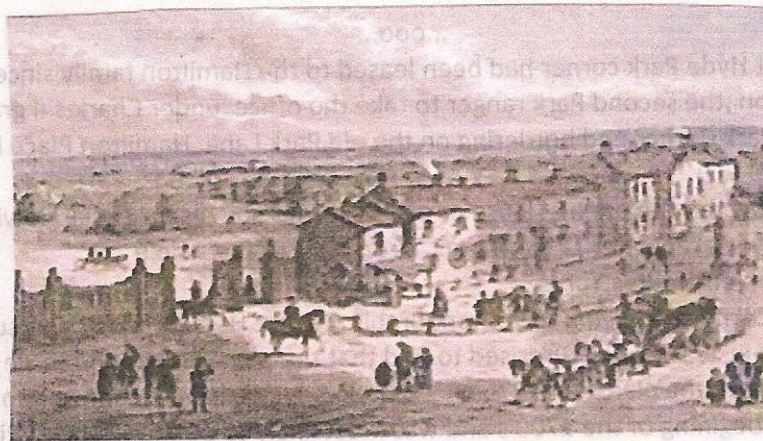
Here is the 1716 plan.....



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### A comparison of Hyde Park Corner in 1750 and 1756 and showing the Hercules Pillars.

Another most fortunate find .Again it is of Hyde Park Corner, this time as seen in 1750. I found it in The Grace collection on the website of Ash Rare Books .com who will supply prints of this picture. The picture confirms the detail shown in the 1756 picture but now includes some movement. We can see the public walking about, a coach drawn by four horses, horsemen and persons entering the park. It adds another dimension to the 1756 picture. Again we can see Mrs. Allen's apple stall and cottage, the line of cottages and then the Hercules Pillars .But unfortunately, not further beyond into Picadilly.



**HYDE PARK CORNER in 1750**  
**Henry William Prior**

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### There are one or two interesting snippets worth recording.....

1. From the National Archives..... The firm of W.A. and A.C. Churchman was founded in 1790, beginning as a small pipe tobacco manufacturer with a shop at Hyde Park Corner. At that time output was mainly shag, snuff and tobacco. Much later there were the Churchman cigarettes.

2. From Familiar London by Rose Benton..... "Hyde Park Corner, where stood the old toll gate is now a very beautiful point in this great metropolis. In April 1750 it was prophesied that a great earthquake would demolish the city and its suburbs, and Charles Knight tells us that for some three days before the date fixed the crowds of carriages passing Hyde Park Corner westwards, with whole parties removing to the country, was something like a procession to Ranelagh or Vauxhall."

3. From the TIMES 5th Nov. 1930..... Old site of Bachelors Club..... Picadilly Sale.

".....Near Hamilton Place stood a noted Inn,the Hercules Pillars until about the end of the eighteenth century.Wycherly alluded to the inn in "The Plain Dealer",and to it Sheridan retired after an interrupted duel with Captain Matthews about Miss Linley.

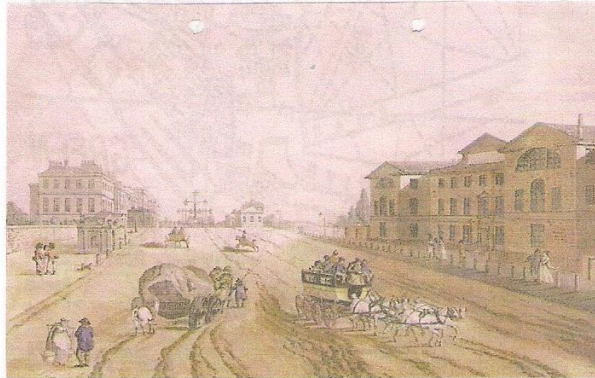
An \*advertisement ,dated 1713,offered 'six sorts of wine and brandy all out of one barrel, with biskets and spaw water to drink the Queen's health' to be enjoyed at 'Winstanley's Water Theatre, Hyde Park Corner.Hamilton place,wherein are some of the largest town mansions and the offices of Messrs.Wm.Gregson and Boyd,was named after Colonel James Hamilton,a boon companion of Charles 11,who granted him a large area of land for redevelopment"

**NOTE.** The\* advertisement is for an attraction at Winstanley's water theatre at the lower end of Picadilly which opened in 1690 and ran until 1720. His wife carried on after his death in 1703.This theatre was a sort of theme/amusement of that time.Winstanley invented all sorts of mechanical , hydro , automata and ingenious mechanisms of all kinds,which in those days were held in awe by the public .There were also fireworks , perpetual fountains and other devices.Wynstanley is also famous as the builder of the Eddystone Lighthouse where,in the great storm of 1703 he lost his life.

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#### **And a later view of HYDE PARK CORNER in 1797....**

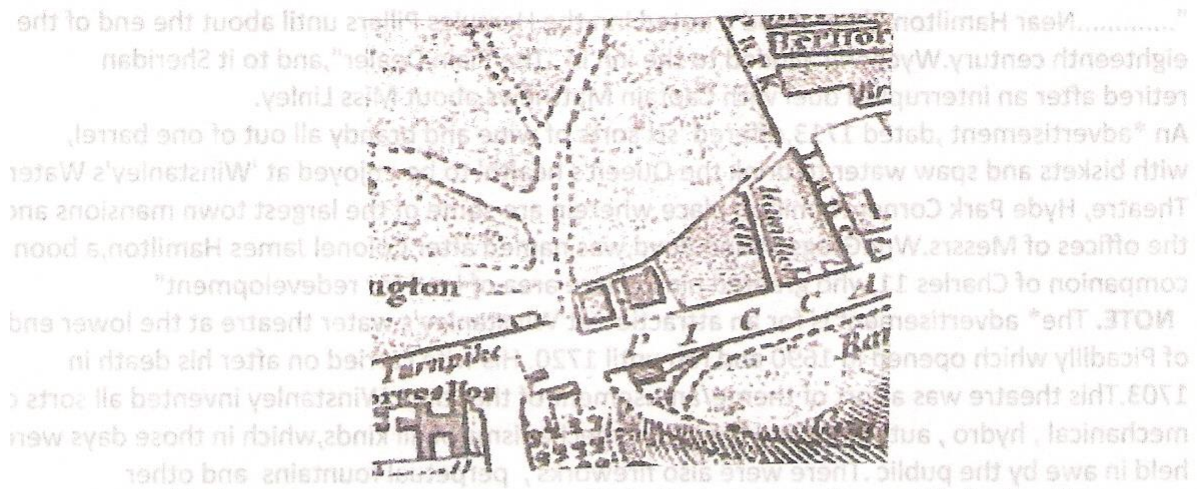
"Approaching No.1 Picadilly " from British Library on-line gallery.



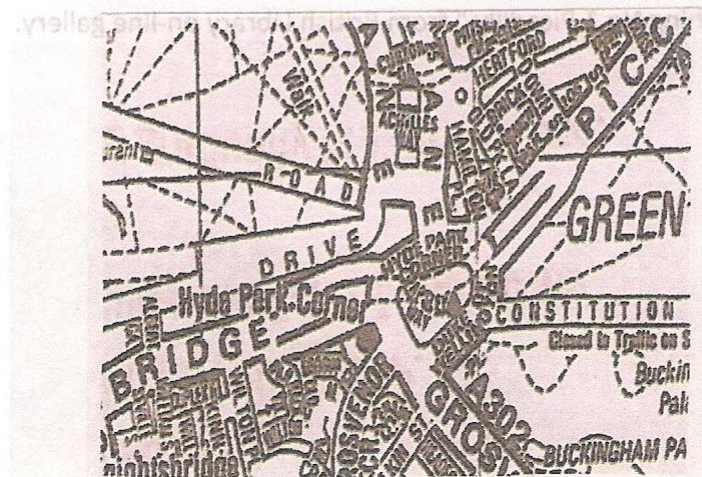
In this picture we are approaching Hyde Park Corner from the western outskirts and if this is an actual portrayal of 1797 then the building adjoining Apsley House on its eastern side must be H.P. It was said to be still standing in 1797 since after that date Lord Apsley had acquired the site for stabling..The building in the foreground is St.Georges Hospital.

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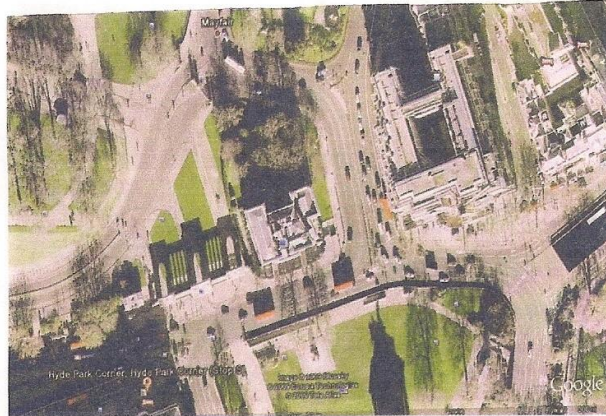
What changes there have been since the 17/1800's ! To show this here are some illustrations. First we have the map of Hyde Park Corner as it was in 1785....



and in it we can see the entrance to Hyde Park ,then to the east is Apsley House and alongside will be the Hercules Pillars Inn.To the east of H.P. will be the ground leased to Geo.Hamilton and also (old) Park lane.Now we contrast this with a current A to Z map of that very area.....



A better illustration is that from Google Earth which shows quite clearly how this area appeared in very recent times.....

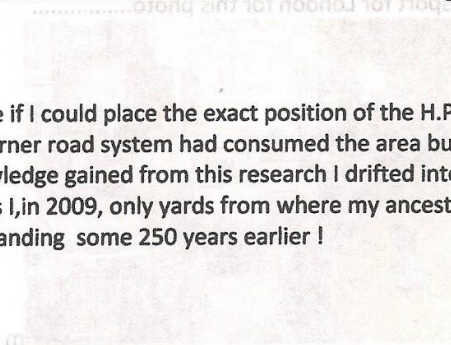


.....and again we can see the entrance to Hyde Park (note the magnificent entrance - long gone are the wooden gates of the 1700's), then Apsley House then a roadway, Park Lane, where our Hercules Pillars would have stood, then more buildings, then Hamilton Place and in the very top left hand corner is the OLD Park Lane.

Below is a recent picture of Apsley House. When it was built it did not resemble today's building. Originally Robert Adam designed a rather plain red brick house of no architectural merit. The current appearance of Apsley House is the result of alterations made by the Wellesley family, who twice extended the Adam brick house and encased it in stone. The two bays of the west wing were added in 1828 and the main entrance realigned to be under the new central Corinthian portico.

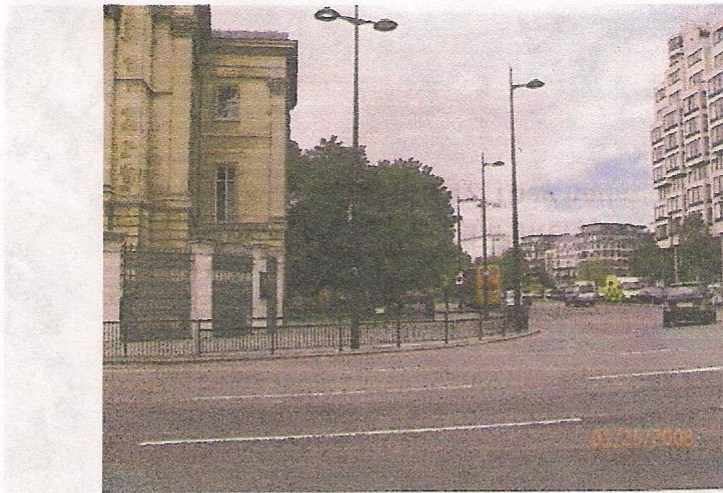
So, if we cast our minds back to the placing of Mrs Allen's apple stall in the picture it probably stood on the land, or near, on which the west two bay extension was built, and the Hercules Pillars inn would have been on the immediate right of the original Adam red brick house.

I visited the site to see if I could place the exact position of the H.P. site. Somewhat difficult as the busy Hyde Park Corner road system had consumed the area but with the aid of the 1756 painting and the knowledge gained from this research I drifted into a mental reverie of those bygone days. Here was I, in 2009, only yards from where my ancestor, John Douglas, himself, could well have been standing some 250 years earlier!



This photo gives a better idea of where the H.P. would have been on the right hand side of Apsley House .....

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email: jbrdger@myway.com



So, perhaps, a fitting end to this comparison with times of yesteryear at Hyde Park Corner is a snapshot of modern traffic conditions compared with the 17/1800's when the Hercules Pillars would have received the horse drawn coaches of travellers. But I suspect that the multiplication in the number and variety of horse-drawn vehicles created its own problems. In 1750 there were some 7,250 private coaches and carriages in London. By 1765 the number had DOUBLED and, yes, there were complaints about the congestion in London, even in those days!

Slow Progress ! Traffic in Park Lane/Hyde Park Corner  
2009

Acknowledgement to Transport for London for this photo.....



**THE END**

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September 2009

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