We often pay little regard to the street names around us as we make our way back and forth; many changes have taken place to our thoroughfares especially around City Campus. In the 1960s and 1970s many disappeared altogether, others were transformed and renamed. More recently the buildings around City Campus have themselves undergone something of a transformation. The demolition of A Building in 2008 heralded some major changes.

This was the former Leeds College of Technology opened in 1957, the first college building on the Central Colleges Site. The art studios adjacent to H Building, originally created to rehouse the Leeds College of Art in 1969, have also been demolished and in their place a new building emerges. The former H and F Buildings are slowly being transformed into new student accommodation. The remaining core University buildings of B, C and D have been renamed Woodhouse, Portland and Calverley, respectively, reflecting the surrounding street names. Keith Rowntree delves into the origin of these names and their distinct history that we are often unaware of.

Woodhouse Lane is an old road connecting the settlements of Woodhouse with the town of Leeds. Several 18th-century merchants moved to this area escaping the dirt and noise of central Leeds for the relatively clean air and rural calm of Woodhouse Lane. Two of these mansions have some connection with our University. Carlton House once stood on the site of Broadcasting Place, built originally for Richard Bramley, a merchant of Leeds. In the mid-1850s it was taken over by the Society of Friends as their Meeting House but in 1866 a new structure was begun on this site designed by Edward Birchall, a merchant of Leeds. The street name Portland actually stems from a largely forgotten house that once stood on Woodhouse Lane in front of what is now our Rose Bowl. Portland House was built by the Elam family, Quakers and prosperous Leeds merchants who were active in the cloth and tobacco markets and had lucrative dealings with America. It was a substantial house with extensive gardens at the rear and was described by the Leeds Intelligencer in 1777 as: “A Good and Commodious Dwelling-house pleasantly situate by the Road Side leading from Leeds to Woodhouse…”

In 1841 the house belonged to Mr James Robinson and the contents were sold at auction, a contemporary advertisement gives a fascinating list of furniture, pictures, plate and textiles and includes the sale of, ‘a few dozens of old port wine’. During the nineteenth century Portland House became commercial premises including a Dancing School, an Academy and the premises