

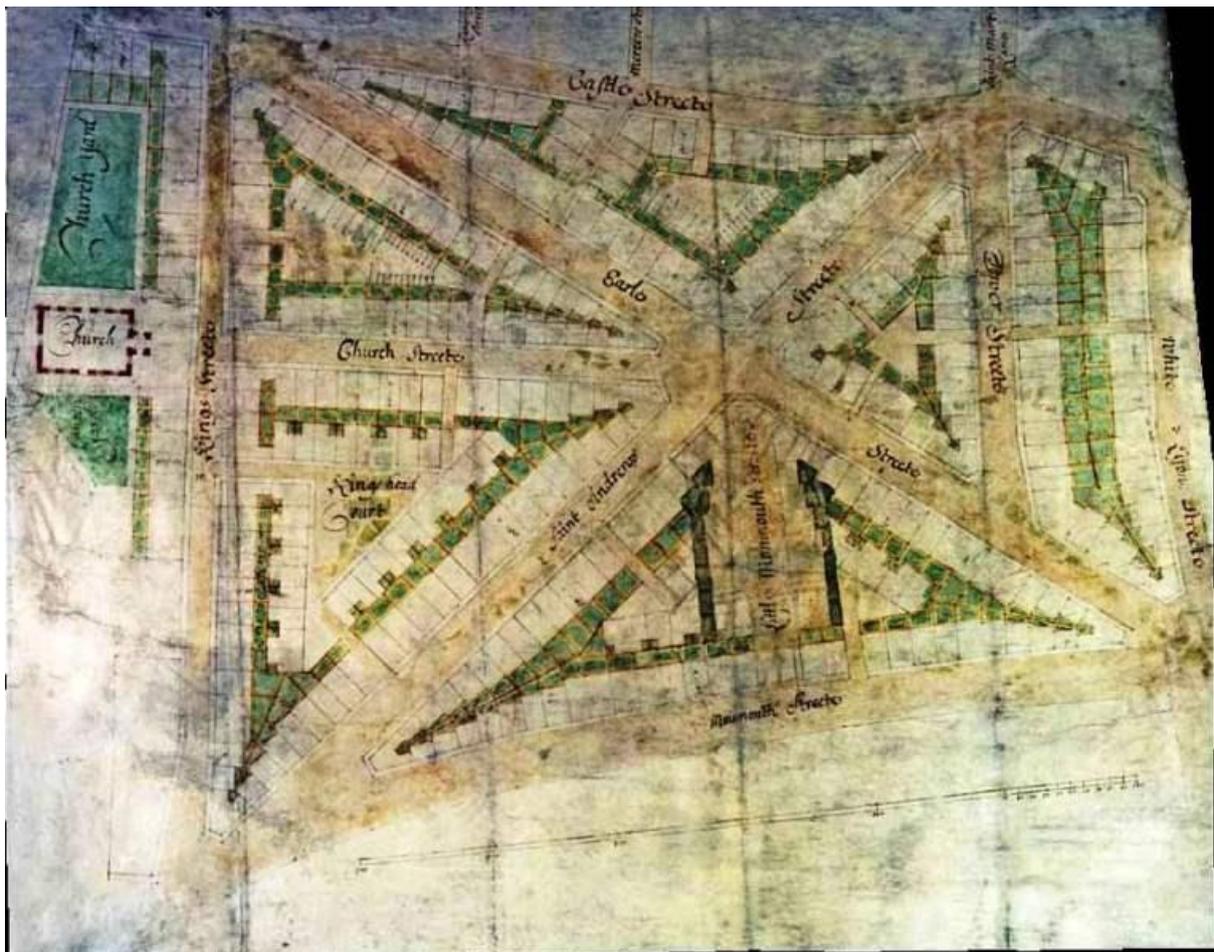
FROM THE SEVEN DIALS RENAISSANCE STUDY 1990 SUPPLEMENTARY VOLUME

SEVEN DIALS History of the Area

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To assist reading there is a table of street name changes below:

1691 PLAN	C18-C19	NOW
Castle Street	Castle Street	Shelton Street (1938-)
Church Street	Queen Street	Short's Gardens (1906-)
Earle Street	Earl Street Great & Little	Earlham Street (1938-)
King Street	King Street	Neal Street (1877-)
Little Monmouth St	White Lion Street Great & Little	Mercer Street (1938-)
Monmouth Street	{Monmouth Street {Dudley Street (1845-)	Shaftesbury Avenue (1886-)
St. Andrew's Street	{St. Andrew's Street {Great (N) & Little (South)	Monmouth Street (1938-)
Great & Little Spring Head Court	Neal's Yard	Neal's Yard
<i>(Note - this should have read King's Head Court)</i>		
White Lyon Street	West Street	West Street
White Lyon Street	Cucumber Alley	Cucumber Alley in
White Lyon Street	Neal's Passage	<i>Thomas Neal's Shopping Centre</i>
White Lyon Street	Lombard/Lumber Court	Tower Court (1938-)



Seven Dials is unique in London town planning. It is the only one of the seventeenth and eighteenth century estate developments in the West End which departs from a grid plan and, in the more important examples, a square, in favour of a radiating plan of streets with a small central circus

containing a sundial column. It is of great interest as a small-scale reflection of Wren's unexecuted plan for rebuilding the City after the Great Fire, which contained several set-pieces with radiating streets and where the columnar monument was intended as the centre piece of a formal layout. Wren's inspiration in turn was the France of Louis XIV where Le Notre's garden layouts contained rondpoints and radiating allees flanked by clipped hedges, or Mansart's town planning schemes in Paris where the Place des Victoires was a much grander example of a circus and radiating streets.

As is well known, Wren's plan for the City proved impractical and was not executed; the medieval layout was retained much as it was. But Wren's proposals were greatly admired at Court and would have been known to Thomas Neale, the developer of Seven Dials. He must have been influenced to carry out some of Wren's ideas in the more constricted circumstances of the site he acquired for development in the Parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields in the 1690s.

The history of the Seven Dials area goes back long before the seventeenth century, however. The Severn port of London is now known to have been situated in and around the Strand, west of the Roman City. Archaeological excavations undertaken between Shorts Gardens and Earlham Street from June to October 1989 uncovered much evidence of occupation in the eighteenth century by artisans, mainly working in iron, who lived in small wattle and dirt houses. From the ninth century London moved back to the Roman City and the Covent Garden area reverted to countryside.

In the Middle Ages the ground belonged to the Hospital of St. Giles whose estate was surrendered to Henry VIII in 1537 and then let by the Crown on various leases, under which a few houses were built including one called the Cock and Pye Inn. From this the estate, usually called Marsh Close or Marshland, was also sometimes known as Cock and Pye Fields.

In 1594, Queen Elizabeth leased the area to Thomas Stydolph, his wife, and his son, Francis, for the life of the longest liver, and in 1598 she leased it for the sixty years following the death of the longest lived of the three to Nicholas Morgan and Thomas Horne. The latter immediately conveyed their interest to James White, and subsequently it came into the hands of Sir Francis for sixty years afterwards. In 1650, while he was still in possession of the close, it was surveyed by Commissioners appointed by Parliament. In their report, the close is described as "all y peice or parcell of pasture ground comonly called ... Marsh close alias Marshland ... on the north side of Long Acre, and ... between a way leadinge from Drury Lane to St. Martin's Lane on the north, and a way leadinge from St. Gyles to Knightsbridge, and a way leadinge from Hogg Lane into St. Martin's Lane on the west; and Bennet's Garden and Sir John Bromley and Mr. Short on the east."

These boundaries are in accord with Faithorne's Map of 1658.

The Parliamentary Commissioners' Survey indicates that, in 1650, the buildings in the Marsh Close were:

(i) The Cock and Pye Inn - A brick building of two storeys and garret, standing on ground 117 feet from north to south, with a breadth of 48 feet from the north end. This is probably the building shown on Hollar's Plan of 1658, at this southern angle of the close.

(ii) A house with wheelwright's shop and shed attached, covering with yards, gardens, etc. 3 roods.

(iii) A shed of timber and Flemish wall, with tiled roof, containing two small dwelling rooms, occupying, with a garden, half an acre.

(iv) A piece of ground, half an acre in extent, "late converted into a garden, beinge very well planted wth roots".

(v) Three tenements of timber and Flemish wall, with thatched roof, on the north side of what was afterwards Castle Street, occupying, with gardens, etc. half an acre.

(vi) "All that conduit scituate and adjoynge to the aforesaid 3 tenements, and standeth on the soutest corner of the aforesaid Marsh Close, consisting of one roome heirtofore used to convey water to the Excheqr Office, but of late not used."

Sir Francis Stydolph died on the 12th March, 1655-6 and his successor, Sir Richard, at once entered on the remaining 60 years' term and in 1672 obtained an extension of this for 15 years. Morden and Lea's Map of 1682 shows that by that date a considerable amount of building had taken place on the close, though the details are not clear. This is probably to be connected with the lease which James Kendrick obtained for 31 years as from Michaelmas, 1660. In 1693 Thomas Neale, "intending to improve the saide premisses by building" obtained a lease of the close until 10th March, 1731-2.

Thomas Neale, 'The Great Projector' of Seven Dials, was a characteristic Restoration figure. He was an M.P. for thirty years, Master of the Mint and of the Transfer Office and Groom Porter as well as a gambler and an entrepreneur with many projects as well as speculative building to his credit. These ranged from brewing and Navy victualling to land drainage, steel and papermaking, mining in Maryland and Virginia, raising shipwrecks, and developing a dice to check cheating at gaming. He was also the author of numerous tracts on coinage and fund-raising, and was involved in the idea of a National Land Bank, the precursor of the Bank of England.

He was known as 'Golden Neal', as a result of his marriage to Lady Gould. Reputed to be worth £80,000, she in fact brought him £120,000. Samuel Pepys described their marriage:

"the rich widow, my Lady Gould, is married to one Neale, after he had received a box on the eare by her brother. .at the door, but made him draw, and wounded him.. She called Neale up to her and sent for a priest, married presently and went to bed. Her brother sent to the Court and had a Serjeant sent for Neale; but Neale sent for him up to be seen in bed, and she owned him for her husband and so all is past."

From 1668 Neale developed his interests as a Member of Parliament sitting on no less than 62 Committees and gaining the confidence of the Court party. By the early 1670s he was considered:

"A person of Vast Estate of great Interest as well at Court as in the city and Country..."

In February 1678 Neale was appointed Groom Porter to Charles II, a post which he also held under James II and William III. He valued it because it gave an entree to the Court and a range of valuable contacts.

In July 1678 Neale was granted the office of Master of the Mint for life. He took up the appointment in July 1686 and was responsible for producing numerous proposals including for 'The National Land Bank, together with Money...' (1696), and 'The best way of disposing of Hammer'd Money and Plate...As for Raising One Million of Money in...1697 by Way of a Lottery' (1697).

In 1694 he introduced 'lotteries after the Venetian manner' to raise further funds for the Crown. A hundred thousand shares were sold for £10 each. A prize fund of £40,000 was distributed annually to the fortunate shareholders whose tickets were drawn from a hat. John Evelyn records that his coachman won £40, and Samuel Pepys that the lotteries became "the talk of the Town."

The Crown, in return for services rendered, influenced the grant to Neale of 'Marshland' or 'Cock & Pye Fields'. He commenced large-scale building development of Marshland in the early 1690s immediately after acquiring the leasehold of the area. As there were two subsisting leases of Marshland, one expiring in 1716 and the other a reversionary term expiring in 1732, which were not sufficiently long to promote building, the assembly of an adequate title cost Neale a considerable amount of time and money.

An early plan for Marshland is said to date from 1691 and a layout of six rather than seven radiating streets. It is probably but not necessarily connected with Neale, and can probably be associated with his acquisition of a further reversionary Crown lease in November 1690. In 1692 Neale extended this by the outright purchase of the freehold of the area, but before he could begin to build he had to deal with the existing leaseholders. This leasehold interest had become divided between the two daughters of Sir Richard Stydolfe, but eventually Neale bought them out by offering £4000 cash and a rent of £800 p.a. for a lease expiring on 10 March 1731/2, two days before Neale's own unencumbered title began.

Building on Marshland began under a building agreement made on 24 March 1692. By this Neale agreed to build, within two years, substantial brick houses at total ground rents of not less than £1200 p.a. A plan was attached to this agreement but no copy is known to survive. Building began soon afterwards and most building leases in the area date from the autumn of 1694. In January 1693/4 Neale applied to the Westminster Commissioners of Sewers for leave to lay his drains in Cock & Pye Fields into a new sewer to join the existing sewer at the north end of St. Martin's Lane; he claimed to be building not more than 150 houses, though the eventual total was much higher; this application was approved shortly afterwards for payment of £50.

By October 1694 the full scheme of seven radiating streets was established, for John Evelyn records a visit to the site and his inspection of the Doric Column designed by Edward Pearce in 1692 at the centre. This column had only six faces and so apparently related to the very earliest scheme for development. Every book in London refers to the story that the column was pulled down in 1773 by a mob in search of buried gold. David Bieda has discovered that the column was in fact deliberately pulled down by order of the Paving Commissioners in 1773 in an attempt to rid the area of the undesirables who congregated around it. The remains of the column were later moved to the garden of the architect James Paine (Junior) at Sayes Court, Addlestone, but not re-erected.

In 1820, Frederica Ulrica, Duchess of York (widow of the Commander in Chief of the British Army ('the Grand old Duke of York')) died at Oatlands in Surrey. The nearby town of Weybridge acquired the remains of the column and re-erected them as a memorial to her, the Dials being replaced with a stone coronet.

Attempts were made at various dates from 1905 onwards to have the column returned to Seven Dials. But all failed until the Seven Dials Monument Committee (now the Seven Dials Trust) was set up in 1984 to raise money for the construction of an accurate copy of Pearce's column. This proved triumphantly successful and the Seven Dials column was re-erected in 1989 to the design of 'Red' Mason of Whitfield and Partners working from the evidence of the old column at Weybridge and Pearce's own original design in the British Library. The bulk of the masonry work was executed by trainees at Vauxhall College and Ashby and Mason Stonemasonry Ltd. So the Dials column now presides once more at the centre of Thomas Neale's star-shaped layout, and makes sense of the plan of radiating streets, all meeting at this one point.

Apart from the restored column, much of the character of Neale's development survives. The scale of the original domestic construction is still apparent today in several of the surrounding streets.

Many houses occupy the original Neale building plots and a number retain late seventeenth or early eighteenth century fabric behind remodelled or rebuilt facades.

The building agreements imposed by Thomas Neale specified that the houses should be constructed of brick with tiled roofs and proper glazing in the windows, the houses to be two or three storeys high with attics and cellars. At least fourteen different builders were involved, each taking one or two plots as was the usual practice in London building in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was only with the rise of Cubitt in the early nineteenth century that it became common for one large contractor to develop a whole area himself.

In Seven Dials the plots, which varied considerably in size, were taken by a mixture of building tradesmen and other speculators. They included George Dorrell, Robert Geary and Ambrose Searles, all bricklayers, Ralph Swain, a carpenter, and James Sellway, a joiner, William Buckland, a scrivener, Morgan Pierce, a baker, Edward Rathband, Bartholomew Rowland, John Synett, Sampson Strode, Alexander Williams, John Stephens and a Mr. Broadhurst.

Neale imposed stringent conditions to maintain the tone of his new development. The builders were not permitted to lease their houses 'to any person ... who shall exercise therein ... the trades or misteries of a Common Brewer, Butcher, Melter of tallow, Soapboyler or a tobacco pipe maker...!', the activities of whom might create noise, smell and risk of fire and thus deter genteel occupants.

The original residents were all men of substance, though not drawn from the highest ranks of society. Seven Dials was never an aristocratic neighbourhood catering for courtiers, foreign ministers or the leaders of fashion; the original intake, however, was a worthy cross-section of merchants, gentlemen and better-off tradesmen. The first batch of occupants included, in Queen Street (now Shorts Gardens): Thomas Matthews, merchant, Roger Reeve, Captain John Cannon and Edward Kinaston, all described as gentlemen; in Monmouth Street (now Shaftesbury Avenue), Giles Riddle, grocer, William Phillips, distiller and Richard Edds, victualler; in King Street (now Neal Street) George Cox, victualler, Matthew Hopkinson, a lawyer of the Middle Temple, John Fowell, gunsmith, Charles Armitstead, haberdasher, and William Wheatley, carpenter. In St. Andrews Street (now Monmouth Street) were: William Wells, gentleman and Thomas Thompson, timber merchant.

Some of the houses were taken in groups as investments. For instance, Robert Winter, a wax chandler, took five houses in St. Andrew Street and five in King Street (now Neal Street) which he sub-let.

The social respectability of Seven Dials was short-lived, as fashion marched steadily westwards and the star-shaped layout came to be seen as confused and cramped rather than novel. The houses were progressively divided into lodgings and the area became increasingly commercialized from the 1730s and the 1740s. At least three buildings had become public houses by that date.

Various incidents are recorded which suggests a fairly rough local population. In June 1732, for instance, John Waller, a perjurer, was stripped of all his clothes by a mob and beaten to death in the stocks at Seven Dials. The parish minutes record that by 1773 the area employed the unusually large number of thirty-nine watchmen. The arguments used by the Paving Commissioners show that by that date the Seven Dials Column acted as a magnet for undesirables.

The original leases in Seven Dials (all dated between 1693 and 1700) were for a period of sixty-one years. New repairing leases for a period of thirty years were granted in the 1750s and on their expiring there was considerable rebuilding and re-facing in the 1790s when the Rate Books record a leap in rateable values.

By the nineteenth century the originally domestic appearance of Seven Dials had given way to a predominantly commercial and industrial character. The brewing industry for instance had become established in Seven Dials in 1740, contrary to Neale's original specifications. The Woodyard Brewery eventually filled the whole area between Long Acre and Shorts Gardens with large handsome stock brick buildings linked by high level cast iron bridges, built between 1796 and the 1880s. Comyn Ching, the architectural ironmongers, whose deeds date back to June 1736, came to own all the triangle between Shelton Street, Mercer Street and Monmouth Street. The north western part of Seven Dials, however, continued to provide residential accommodation, albeit mainly subdivided and not all that different from the notorious slums of St. Giles to the North West immortalized in Hogarth's Gin Lane, where a sizeable portion of the London Mob resided.

In 1842 Knight wrote: *'With the progress of education, printing presses have found their way into St. Giles's and it is now no exaggeration to say that, compared with the rest of the metropolis, the streets radiating from Seven Dials, and intersecting the diamond-shaped space included by Monmouth Street (Shaftesbury Avenue), West Street, Castle Street (Shelton Street) and King Street (Neal Street), display more than the average allowance of booksellers' and stationers' shops, circulating libraries, and the like.*

It was here - in Monmouth Court, a thoroughfare connecting Monmouth Street (Shaftesbury Avenue) with Little Earl Street (Earlham Street) - that the late eminent Mr. Catnach developed the resources of his genius and trade. It was he who first availed himself of greater mechanical skill and larger capital than had previously been employed in that department of THE TRADE, to substitute for the inexorable tea-paper, blotched with lamp-black and oil which characterised the old broadside and ballad printing, tolerable white paper and real printer's ink.

But more than that, it was he who first conceived and carried into effect the idea of publishing collections of songs by the yard, and giving to purchasers, for the small price of one penny (in the former days the cost of a single ballad), strings of poetry, resembling the shape and length the list of Don Juan's mistresses, which Leporello unrolls on the stage before Donna Anna. He was no ordinary man, Catnach: he patronised original talents in many a bard of St. Giles's, and is understood to have accumulated the largest store of broadsides, last-dying speeches, ballads, and other stock-in-trade of the flying stationers, upon record.'

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Golding and Plummer, who printed the election leaflets for Conservative Central Office, had their premises at 6 and 7 Little White Lion Street (now Mercer Street).

Knight, writing in 1842 painted a picturesque impression of the poverty in and around Monmouth Street with its immigrant population of Spanish Jews and Irish Catholics crammed into single room lodgings and cellars. In Monmouth Street he found *'cellars serving whole families for "kitchen and parlour and bed-room and all"... it is curious and interesting to watch the habits of these human moles when they emerge or half emerge from their activities'*. The shops reflected the needs of the inhabitants, many of them selling second-hand clothes. But there were also sign-writers, printers, book-dealers and theatrical costumiers.

"In Monmouth Street, we find one of the great ateliers from which the milk-shops, ginger-beer stalls, green groceries and pot-houses of the suburbs are supplied with sign-boards. Theatrical amateurs appear to abound; at least the ample store of tin daggers, blunt cutlasses, banners, halberds, battle-axes, &c., constantly exposed for sale at a cellar in Monmouth Street, indicate a steady demand. Nor is this all: in no part of the town do we find singing birds in greater numbers and variety, and as most

of the houses being of an old fashion, have broad ledges of lead over the shop windows, these are frequently converted into hanging gardens, not so extensive as those of Babylon, but possibly yielding as much pleasure to their occupants.

In short, what with literature and a taste for flowers and birds, there is much of the 'sweet south' about St. Giles's harmonising with the out-of-door habits of its occupants; and one could almost fancy that, amid the groups so easily and picturesquely disposed round each of the seven angles which abut upon the central circle, Sir Edward Lytton Bulmer had there found many of those exquisite pictures which he had so felicitously introduced into his 'Last days of Pompeii'. Flower (or vegetable) girls (some times blind of one eye) meet you at every corner, and the baths are to be found in Little Earl Street with the inscription, 'A shave and a wash for 1d'".

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Seven Dials area was favoured by printers producing songs and ballads, theatre programmes, political tracts, pamphlets and books, including James Catnach, Ryle & Co., C. Paul and T. Birt.

Earlham Street, by contrast, was largely given over to food shops and those serving domestic needs. Apart from Portwines' - butchers (founded in the 1760's and on this site since 1830) and Collins' - ironmongers (founded in 1835) – both of whom continued trading into the new millennium, there were in the 1890s Mead - pastrycook, Elmes - butcher, Embay - grocer, Langland - dairy, Shendon - grocer and Buckingham - grocer.

There were also two public houses, the Marquis of Granby on the south side and the Rose and Three Tuns on the north side. In the 1860s there was a total of thirteen pubs in Seven Dials as a whole, of which only four now remain. The census returns for 1841-1881 give a clear indication of the local population at that time and in Appendix V.

The streets were not gloomy, but enlivened by song birds in cages hanging on the walls, and abundant pot plants on the ledges above the shop front entablatures. 'This part of the parish has ever "worn its dirt with a difference"'. There is an air of shabby gentility about it', to quote Knight again.

Shaftesbury Avenue was cut through along the north west side of Seven Dials in 1889; as a combined work of slum clearance and traffic improvement, and the Shaftesbury Hotel and French Hospital were built in the 1890s, filling most of the triangle between Monmouth Street and Shaftesbury Avenue.

Woodyard Brewery closed in 1905 when the business moved out to Mortlake. The old premises in Seven Dials were largely converted to warehouses. The street names were changed and the properties renumbered in 1937-8.

The Seven Dials area survived the Second World War largely unscathed. It was declared a Conservation Area in 1974 and from the mid-1970s onwards the fabric of the area has been substantially restored and upgraded.

Thomas Neale's Marshland estate was not the only important element in the Seven Dials area. The land along the south side of Shelton Street belonged to the Mercers' Company, and it was the industrial and commercial development of that area, especially coach works and breweries, which had such an impact on Seven Dials as a whole. The Woodyard Brewery, which became the largest business in the area in the nineteenth century, spread from the Mercers' estate to occupy much of Shelton Street, Earlham Street and Shorts Gardens in Seven Dials proper.

The Mercers' estate between Shelton Street and Long Acre has belonged to the company since 1530. It is a field of ten acres, the remnant of a larger bequest to the Company comprising some 149 acres of pasture and arable in what were then the rural Middlesex parishes of St. Martins-in-the-Fields and St. Margaret's Westminster and Marylebone, from 'Lady' Bradbury, the pious and wealthy widow of Thomas Bradbury (citizen, mercer and Lord Mayor). In return for this bequest, which also included Lady Bradbury's mansion house in the City, the Mercers' Company was entrusted with the provision of free coals for the poor of St. Stephen's along with the maintenance of a chantry priest to make perpetual prayers for the souls of herself and her husband Thomas as well as her first husband, Thomas Bodley, citizen and Merchant-Taylor.

In 1542 Henry VIII forced the company to relinquish the ownership of most of this estate leaving them with only the field of ten acres, known as the Elm Field, situated between Drury Lane on the east and St. Martin's Lane on the west just to the north of the Earl of Bedford's Covent Garden estate. The boundary between the two properties was a foot-path known as the Long Acre.

The Company, during its first 200 years of ownership of Long Acre enjoyed very little direct benefit from what remained of Lady Bradbury's 'greate graunte' as it was all let on long lease to prominent courtiers. Thus, in 1578, Sir William Cecil, Lord Burghley, principal minister to Elizabeth I, who was then enlarging his residence in the Strand, requested and obtained from the company a 21 year lease of the entire site. This lease was renewed for a further term in 1598 and was demised to Burghley's son, Thomas, Earl of Exeter, in 1614 for another 30 years. Under the Earl of Exeter's tenure Long Acre began to be developed for building on a piecemeal basis by the Earl's assignee, Sir William Slingsby (whose name is commemorated in Slingsby Place).

The pattern was set for the development of the area under the auspices of a series of aristocratic tenants who held the whole of the Mercers' estate on a long lease, to begin in 1644 for 77 years (to 1721). This passed in 1653 to Henry, Earl of Monmouth, (whose nearby residence is commemorated in present day Monmouth Street in Seven Dials). After Monmouth the leasehold interest passed in 1662 to the Earl of Clarendon whose lease was extended for a further 39 years from 1721 to 1760.

The estate developed rapidly at this time as a result of the seventeenth century speculative building boom. The Earl of Bedford's great venture to the south in Covent Garden, elegantly laid out as a continental 'piazza' by Inigo Jones, set the pattern for the whole of the West End. Beginning in 1614 the Long Acre was rapidly transformed from pasture and meadow into a cosmopolitan thoroughfare, with mansion houses 'fit for the habitations of Gentlemen & men of ability'.

As the value of the land grew with the construction of new mansion houses, gardens and tenements the Mercers' Company increasingly came to regret that it did not control the site directly. By 1650 the estate contained some 300 houses and other buildings producing £2123 annual rental income which went, of course, to the leaseholder rather than to the Company. The Clerk to the Company in the late seventeenth century, John Godfrey, wrote of the need to rectify the arrangement by which 'the best jewel in their estate' was allowed to become 'a morsel fitted for the mouth of some powerful and greedy courtier...'

Something of the Company's frustration over its lack of control of the site may be gauged from a complaint to the Earl of Clarendon about his failure to maintain the Company's maiden head crest as property marks on buildings in Long Acre.

This situation was only resolved after the Company's near financial collapse in 1747 which was occasioned by involvement in a disastrous scheme for providing annuities to the widows of

clergymen. Unable to meet its commitments under this scheme (to which estates such as Long Acre had been settled as security) the Company was forced to procure the help of Parliament, two Acts of which, dated 21 and 24 George II, allowed the company to grant leases of estates which had been settled under the failed annuity scheme. Under these two Acts the Company was authorised to grant building leases on 61 year terms and repairing leases on 41 year terms, which were scheduled to coincide with the end of the Earl of Clarendon's lease of the whole estate in 1760.

In the run up to the expiration of Clarendon's term in 1760, the Company made preparations for taking over direct management of Long Acre. In 1755 the Company's surveyor, William Robinson, was directed to draw up a comprehensive survey of the estate. His detailed plan and written description provide a vivid record of the multiplicity of uses to which the estate was put in the mid-eighteenth century.

Long Acre was already dominated by the coach building industry; Pepys had bought a coach there in the seventeenth century. Robinson's plan shows the larger workshops of master coach builders intermingled with smaller workshops for ancillary crafts such as harness makers, joiners and wheelwrights. There was a high proportion of small specialist retail shops selling items such as toys, books, musical instruments, 'perruques' or wigs. A shopkeeper in Cross Lane, later renamed Neal Street, was specified by Robinson as a 'gingerbreadman'. The presence of two large breweries, a Quaker burial ground, a non-conformist meeting house, and an infamous 'bagnio' (or bath house) testifies to the variety and vitality of life in the area at that date.

As Robinson's plan shows, the narrow alleys which ran off Long Acre and which correspond to the modern streets had different names from today. Neal Street was known as Cross Lane; Shelton Street was originally Castle Street (after the line of earthwork defences built around London during the civil war). Arne Street, though originally christened Charles Street, was popularly known as Dirty Lane and was shown as such by Robinson. As the name implies parts of the estate away from the main street were less than salubrious. A contemporary description of the various streets said of Mercer Street that it was 'of no great account for building or inhabitants, who are a great part FRENCH.' (Voltaire spent his years of exile in lodgings above the sign of 'The White Peruke' in Maiden lane). Though still residential in character, Long Acre was no longer the fashionable suburb its original developers had intended in the seventeenth century.

By the early nineteenth century the area between Shelton Street and Long Acre was largely commercial with the expanding Woodyard Brewery gradually pushing out the smaller workshops, though coachbuilders continued to occupy most of the premises in Long Acre itself. Early nineteenth century directories list 30 coachbuilders' premises.

THE WOODYARD BREWERY SITE

The southeast part of the present day Seven Dials Conservation Area, including the triangles between Shorts Gardens and Earlham Street, and Mercer Street and Shelton Street, as well as the Mercers' estate south of Shelton Street on either side of Langley Street, is in its present form substantially a creation of the brewing industry. Although brewing ceased over a hundred years ago, the buildings have nearly all survived and still have a commanding presence in the Conservation Area.

A brewery was established in 1740 on a site between Long Acre and Shelton Street (then Castle Street), named the Woodyard Brewery after its founder Thomas Shackle who was a timber

merchant. After his death, it was owned for a time by Mr. Gyfford. In 1787 the Brewery was acquired by a partnership headed by Harvey Christian Combe, MP, Alderman and sometime Lord Mayor of London. It remained a Combe family business till 1898 when it was amalgamated with Watney and Co. and Reid & Co. to form Watney, Combe, Reid & Co.

By the late nineteenth century, the Brewery buildings had expanded northwards as far as Shorts Gardens and covered an area of four acres. The firm by then employed 450 people and produced 500,000 barrels of beer a year. It was one of the largest industries in the Covent Garden area and the second most productive brewery in London.

Many of the Brewery buildings were reconstructed between 1880 and 1886. The parish rate books, for instance, record that properties in Queen Street (now the site of Shorts Gardens) were demolished in 1882. The following year five freehold properties in Earl Street (now Earlham Street) were acquired by Combe & Co., and also demolished.

The new stables occupying these two sites were completed by 1886. Nos. 41 and 43 were rebuilt as stores by Combe & Co. in 1880-2. Much of the main quadrangle, south of Shelton Street, was rebuilt between 1876 and 1882 to the design of E. J. Wilson, architect, at a cost of £50,000 following the renewal of the lease from the Mercers' Company. in November 1876.

The whole Brewery in its completed form is described in some detail in Alfred Barnard's *Noted Breweries of Great Britain and Ireland* 1889.

The original Brewery building was erected by Harvey Christian Combe circa 1790 and is recorded in a painting of the Brew House Yard in 1798 by the horse-painter Sartorius. Though heightened, this building remained the nucleus of the Brewery as reconstructed in the 1880s with 'noble blocks of London stock brick' connected above the streets by elegant cast iron bridges and below ground by three acres of subterranean store houses.

Brewhouse Yard, south of Shelton Street, contained the Brew House, the Malthouse, the Fermenting Department and the administrative offices, all on an heroic scale. The large hall in the Brew House was 240 feet long and ninety feet wide. The Malt Measuring Room formed a gallery 171 feet long and 52 feet wide. The malt stores themselves were tubs 50 feet deep filled from the top, the malt being hauled from street level by cranes. The Brewery had three wells of its own, bored 522 feet deep into the chalk to produce water suitable for brewing. It also consumed 57,356,000 gallons of water a year from the new River Supply in the 1890s.

The triangle containing No. 24 Shelton Street and Nos. 25-33 Earlham Street was occupied by the Ice Machine House for cooling the porter. It contained a 'Pontifex-Reece Ammonia Ice Machine' as well as a 25 horsepower Boulton and Watt steam engine to drive the machinery, and the Brewery's own building department (masons and bricklayers) on the ground floor.

Nos. 29-43 Earlham Street and 8-20 Shorts Gardens, as rebuilt between 1880 and 1886, comprised the stables with stalls for 121 horses arranged on two levels around a stone-paved inner yard. In materials and design, all these buildings are characteristic of the brewery tradition in architecture which hardly changed through the nineteenth century. The austere brick facades are enlivened only by thin brick string courses, stone window cills, segmental gauged arches, and minimal crowning cornice. The interior construction with cast iron columns, rivetted beams and jack arches is equally consistent. The courtyards are robustly paved with granite setts and stone flags.

In its heyday the Brewery was much visited by English and foreign royalty and other notables who considered it a spectacular example of a large industrial undertaking, unequalled on the continent of Europe. Harvey Christian Combe, in particular, was a great showman. A man of intelligence as well as business capacity, he was a Whig and member of Brooks's Club, a friend of Sheridan and Beau Brummel. On 7 June 1807 he gave at the Brewery a much publicised 'Royal Brewhouse Dinner' which was attended by the Duke and Duchess of York and the Duke of Cambridge who, after touring the premises, sat down to a repast of rump steaks grilled on malt shovels by the Brewery staff, washed down with Combe's porter. As late as 1888 Prince Oscar of Sweden paid a special visit to the Brewery while staying in London.

In 1905 Watney Combe Reid closed the Covent Garden premises in order to concentrate production at its Mortlake Brewery. The old buildings in Seven Dials were not demolished, however, but mainly converted to warehouses. Adaptation works included the installation of new floors and staircases.

The blocks south of Shelton Street were taken over by fruit and vegetable wholesalers as they were convenient for Covent Garden Market. By 1930 most of them were occupied by T. J. Poupart Ltd., fruit salesmen at ~~Covent Garden Market~~. In 1930 Poupart's were granted a new 50-year lease of the premises for an annual rent of £6,000.

The stable block in Earlham Street became a box factory for Messrs. J. Lyons & Co. (whose name can still be seen above the archway at No. 37 Earlham Street). No. 33 Shelton Street became the works of Smith & Leppard, Printers, and was part reconstructed for them in 1906. Externally some of the storage apparatus, used by both the Brewery and the later warehouses, still survives, notably the hoists and hoist doors in the flanks of the Earlham Street and Shelton Street buildings.

THE COMYN CHING TRIANGLE

This was the best preserved of the triangular sections making up the original layout and contained the greatest number of listed buildings. Its reconstruction by Terry Farrell & Partners between 1982 and 1988 is in many ways a model conservation area development, retaining and restoring parts of the old buildings and adding an original yet sympathetic new architectural dimension.

There is no doubt, however, that this scheme was a very drastic one, and much original fabric has been lost. The whole of the block belonged to Comyn Ching & Co., the architectural ironmongers. They are one of the oldest Ironmonger, Metal Working and Domestic Engineering businesses in the country, and are known to be over 200 years old. They claim to have begun business in Seven Dials in 1723. Their title deeds date back to June 1736 and their account books to 1816. Sadly they no longer exist as ironmongers.

About 1800 the Partnership traded as Gostling and Maynard; and in those days when businesses changed hands and partners altered, the trading names changed often. There were eight changes of names between 1800 and 1857 when the name became Huxley & Ching then Comyn Ching & Co. in 1859. It was formed into a Private Limited Company in 1902 and subject to minor alterations in the capital structure, has remained trading under the same name since the beginning of the twentieth century.

The firm always took an active part in the building industry, working for architects, builders, government departments and other public authorities. Records show that they were pioneers in gas lighting and installed the original gas lighting at Buckingham Palace about 1835, together with lamp posts, railings, gates, etc. to the Royal Parks. Until recently the name 'Comyn Ching' appeared on the bases of many of the lamp posts and bollards in the Mall, St. James's Park; many of these old

Victorian metal fittings have now disappeared, unfortunately. The firm obtained a Royal Warrant to Queen Victoria in 1884 and to King Edward VII in 1902.

The ledgers show accounts to many royal and distinguished people: King William IV, Queen Adelaide, The Duke of Cambridge, the Duke of Wellington, the Duke of Devonshire. A few trade names occurring over 100 years ago are still known today: Thomas Cubitt, Gillow & Co., Holland & Sons, George Trollope & Sons, and J. S. Nettlefold. The firm took over the business of J. N. Boobyer & Son, of Drury Lane, ~~another old ironmonger~~, in 1933, and absorbed their stocks and some of their staff.

During the two World Wars the company was employed entirely on war work of various kinds including the supply of fittings to camps, R.A.F. stations, ordnance factories and the Admiralty. At one time during the last war approximately 100 hands were employed, mostly women, making Air Sea Rescue Equipment for the R.A.F., and special equipment for the Combined Operation Command.

During the London Blitz in 1940, the premises in Seven Dials had several narrow escapes from destruction. They were once set on fire by incendiary bombs, but the fire was put out promptly and very little damage done; a large unexploded bomb was removed from the warehouse on another occasion.

From 1945 the premises and staff expanded to meet the demands of building works of all types, in the UK and overseas. After the redevelopment of the site in the 1980s, for sometime Comyn Ching retained a show room in Shelton Street, **before moving out of the area altogether the late 1990's.**

Over the years Comyn Ching had acquired the whole triangular site which enabled it to be redeveloped as a whole rather than in a piecemeal manner. The result is a scheme which was much praised on completion as an example of sympathetic urban renewal. Comyn Ching appointed Terry Farrell as the architect for the whole development carrying out the projects themselves apart from the three new corner buildings which were sold to Taylor Woodrow for development.

The first phase comprised the clearing of accretions and additions from the centre of the site to create a new semi-public space - Ching Court - and the restoration of the listed buildings as offices, shops and flats. This was conceived in 1977, begun in 1982 and completed in 1985. The second phase carried out between 1986 and 1988 was the re-development of the three corner buildings to contain offices and residential, and to provide new architectural landmarks.

The whole scheme was evolved in close consultation with the (then) G.L.C. Historic Buildings Division and the Camden Planning Department. The results are distinguished for their successful combination of correct, self-effacing, repair of the exteriors of the listed buildings, and the distinctive, almost flamboyant design of the new work such as the Vanbrughian inspired 'Baroque' new office entrance-porches in Ching Court, and the glazed 'light columns' in the three corners of the court.

In the words of Ashley Barker, then the G.L.C. Surveyor of Historic Buildings:

'At one level this is architects' architecture and some may criticise the new design as wilful and mannered - but it operates on many levels and certainly it has been minutely and freshly considered. The ordinary Londoner who needs the reassurance of the familiar scene will still know where he is and will, without doubt, enjoy something of the novelty that has been added to his town. The connoisseur of architecture will find it well worth a detour, and the character and history of Seven Dials will have been enriched instead of eroded. But, above all, the self-consciousness of conservation has been washed away by the assurance of the architecture.' The Comyn Ching Triangle retains the following buildings of historic interest:

Nos. 1-5, 9, 11-15, 17-19 Shelton Street all appear to have been rebuilt in the 1790s, when the mid-eighteenth century leases of Seven Dials fell in. Nos. 1-9 were reconstructed in replica by Terry Farrell. Nos. 11-15 have particularly good contemporary shop fronts which were restored by Terry Farrell.

Nos. 21, 25 and 27 Mercer Street still form a group of late seventeenth century three-storeyed brick houses. The shop fronts with characteristic reeded architraves were added in the early nineteenth century. No. 23 is a warehouse of yellow stock brick with red brick dressings. It was built in 1894 by the builders Killby & Gayford for Messrs. Pankhurst & Co.

Nos. 53 and 55 Monmouth Street were built circa 1720 and refronted and the shopfronts introduced in the early nineteenth century. The interior of No. 53 contains late seventeenth century panelling and staircase salvaged from No. 49 Monmouth Street when it was demolished in 1984. Nos. 57 and 59 Monmouth Street also date from the early eighteenth century, but were refronted in the early nineteenth century. The wrought iron Art Nouveau screen in the shop entrance was made by Comyn Ching and this was until recently the main entrance to their premises.

Nos. 61 and 63 occupy plots sixteen feet wide and were built in 1699 by Samuel Chase as part of Thomas Neale's development. The former (apart from the later shop front) retains the original treatment of the upper part of the elevation; two and a half windows wide, with flush-framed sashes. No. 63 also retains its original seventeenth century T-plan roof structure, making this pair a very rare survival. Few examples of seventeenth century domestic architecture in London survive in anything like original condition.

Nos. 65-71 were also early eighteenth century houses, surviving from the original development of the area but refronted and with shop fronts installed in the early nineteenth century. Very little now survives internally. No. 73 is a modern replica rebuilding.

MONMOUTH STREET

Apart from the Comyn Ching Triangle, Monmouth Street retains three other groups of basically seventeenth century or eighteenth century houses, though all refaced and with late eighteenth or nineteenth century shop fronts. Its original name of Great and Little St. Andrew Street made reference to the street plan of Seven Dials where the diagonal cross of St. Andrew was a feature of the layout.

The original plot sizes, plan-form and even some of the late seventeenth century fabric survive at Nos. 42-50, 1418 21-27, 35, 37, and 39 Monmouth Street. Nos. 42-50 (originally numbered 5-12 Little St. Andrew Street) form a group of brown stock brick houses, mostly of 2-bays and 3-storeys, plus attic and basement. They occupy the site of part of the Seven Dials development begun by Thomas Neale in the 1690s, but none of the buildings left today is of that date. The earliest buildings in the group, Nos. 42, 44, 46 and 48, date from the 1790s. They closely follow the form and internal arrangement of the original buildings however, and re-use earlier features such as angle flues and sash windows with gate stops on the rear elevations.

No. 38 is a 1958 rebuilding of its Georgian predecessor; No. 52 on the corner with Tower Street was rebuilt in the late nineteenth century, and neither of these are of special architectural merit. No. 50 was also thoroughly refurbished internally and externally in the nineteenth century, although remnants of the staircase and the lining up of windows with late Georgian neighbours suggests an earlier date for the core of the building.

James Joye, who acquired the whole of Thomas Neale's former freehold interest in Seven Dials in the early eighteenth century, sold off the estate in sections from the 1730s to different investors. The block containing 38-52 Monmouth Street (then number 5-12 Little St. Andrew Street) was among the group of properties sold by Joye to Moses Strafton, joiner, in 1736/7. It is clear from the entries in the Deeds Registers that the houses had only just been completed at this date.

Nos. 14-18 Monmouth Street are also part of the seventeenth century Seven Dials development. Until 1938 they were numbered 37, 38 and 39 Great St. Andrews Street. Built by Thomas Neale in 1694, they passed to James Joye in the 1720s, but remained unsold by him at the time of his death. In 1753 they were bought from his heirs by Harry Spencer, then of Richmond Buildings in Soho, but soon after of Great Russell Street. As the original building leases fell in, Spencer made repairing leases and, in at least one case in White Lyon Street (now Mercer Street), a new building lease.

Nos. 14 and 16 Monmouth Street were granted on a 30-year repairing lease in 1757 to James Whittle and Samuel Norman. They were described as carvers and were leading members of their profession, being responsible for instance for fitting up the state rooms at Woburn Abbey in the 1750s. Samuel Norman was also the associate of Paul Saunders, proprietor of the Royal Tapestry Works in Soho Square. The lease included a considerable amount of property to the rear, including a builder's yard. The rate books show that Whittle and Norman's occupation of the premises was not very long standing but presumably the building yard was an attraction to them as a place to store timber and other materials.

In the mid-eighteenth century, St. Martin's Lane was the centre of the fashionable English furniture-making industry, Chippendale himself having his workshop there, and it is interesting that similar high quality craftsmen were also established in Seven Dials at that time. Whittle and Norman were particularly noted for their magnificent carved and gilded looking glasses, pier tables and architectural furnishings.

After Whittle and Norman, the premises continued to be occupied mainly by craftsmen and tradesmen, but in the nineteenth century even this single occupation may have been broken up. St. Giles was a notorious slum area, although Seven Dials was probably not as bad as the area to the north subsequently cleared by the formation of New Oxford Street and Shaftesbury Avenue. For some time Nos. 14-18 Monmouth Street may have been divided up into lodgings. They were the only three old houses on the west side of Great St. Andrew Street to survive the Shaftesbury Avenue slum clearance development in the 1880s.

No. 14 retains an unusual mid-seventeenth century plan form, which was already somewhat old-fashioned by the 1690s, with the staircase centrally placed between the front and back rooms at right angles to the entrance passage, and dimly lit from above by a narrow light well against the party wall. No. 14 also has interesting mid-eighteenth joinery including part of a 'Chinese Chippendale' stair balustrade, and timber dado and chimney pieces in the main rooms. The three (restored) gothic shop fronts were installed in the late eighteenth century.

Nos. 21, 27, and 29 Monmouth Street are a group of three-storeyed houses dating from the late seventeenth century, but No. 29 was demolished and poorly reconstructed in replica by Levitt-Bernstein in 1983 as part of their Neal's Yard redevelopment. The Neo-Georgian infill building at Nos. 31-33 was designed by them at that time as part of the same development. It was described by the Architect's Journal as a good architectural solution to the problem of fitting a new building into a conservation area, plugging an unsightly gap in the street-line.

No. 21, Mon Plaisir Restaurant, was built in the 1690s by Thomas Neale and retains a good original staircase and some panelling in the upstairs rooms. The shop front with reeded pilasters carrying an entablature and projecting frieze dates from the early nineteenth century. The brickwork of the upper part of the facade has been rebuilt recently and the sashes restored. Mon Plaisir has been in the Good Food Guide since the 1950s.

No. 27 is also basically a house of the 1690s, but was altered later, and the shop front is early nineteenth century. The original T-shaped seventeenth century roof structure survived into the 1970s, one of only three in Seven Dials, but it has recently been reconstructed, destroying the original profile.

Nos. 35, 37, and 39 also form a group of original homes, probably early eighteenth century rather than 1690s. The elevations were refaced and shop fronts installed in the early nineteenth century. Nothing of interest survives inside now.

Fresh repairing leases were granted in the Seven Dials area from 1755 onwards, for a period of thirty years. The Middlesex Deeds Registers of the late 1780s record a further transfer of the property from Strafton to a Mr. Wigstead. A leap in rateable value of this particular group of buildings between 1792-3 to almost double the previous value, with new occupants after a gap, suggests that the group was rebuilt at that date, like other houses in the area.

Threatened with demolition, Nos. 44-48 Monmouth Street were spot-listed Grade II in 1990. Though by no means an untouched, homogeneous block of the original Seven Dials development, the houses are substantially of the late Georgian period and retain the scale and plot sizes of Neale's earlier houses, of which only a few now remain (21, 25 and 27 Mercer Street, 14-18 Monmouth Street). They form an important part of the architectural character of the area.

Nos 42-48 still have some internal features dating from the late eighteenth century. These include closed string staircases with square section balusters, moulded handrails and simple Doric newels. On the top landing, the newel post has an extra Doric colonette where the handrails intersect. Late eighteenth stacks on the back wall, two with angled flues and chimney surrounds, are another apparently early feature.

No. 46 has plain dado panelling with matching door architrave, and a late eighteenth century moulded plaster cornice in the front room on the first floor. Glazed china cabinets survive in the front room of No. 42. No. 50 has remnants of the standard staircase but has a late Victorian front. No. 40, the Two Brewers Pub, retains the original plan but has been thoroughly done over in the nineteenth century, and refronted in the 1930s.

The pub called the Two Brewers, though refaced in the 1930s, has existed on the site since the 1740s, and can be traced back to the 1840s in the Post Office Directories, when all the houses had their ground floors given over to commercial uses. The present shopfronts were added in the later nineteenth century; earlier examples can be seen on the buildings in Tower Court behind this block.

Nos. 5-8 Tower Court are probably contemporary with the Monmouth Street houses, and enjoy listed building status Grade II. They were listed for group value in 1973, without internal inspection, but are well-preserved 1790s houses with a row of contemporary shop fronts, a comparatively rare survival in London.

NEAL STREET

Neal Street, like Monmouth Street, despite later rebuilding and infill, retains substantial proportions of the original 1690s-early 1700s layout and fabric, with three-storeyed brick houses and several with panelled interiors and good staircases. All have late-eighteenth or early-nineteenth century shop fronts reflecting the commercialization of the area at the time.

Though remodelled externally in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, Nos. 27-37 Neal Street form part of the late seventeenth century Seven Dials development. Until 1877 they were numbered 36 to 46 King Street; from 1877 until 1908, when the present numbers were assigned, they were known as 11-21 Neal Street.

The block, bounded by Neal Street, Shorts Gardens and Earlham Street, was sold by James Joye, who had acquired the estate from Neale's mortgages, to Samuel Towers in November 1737. Any opportunity for overall redevelopment of the Triangle had, however, been prejudiced by Joye a year before, for in November 1736 he had made a lease of No. 35 Neal Street to John Justamond, an apothecary, for 2000 years from Lady Day 1754 when the first building lease was due to expire. From this document it appears that No. 35 was built, like most of the other first houses in Seven Dials, in the mid-1690s, the lease was granted on 20 March 1694/5 to Daniel Winterborne, a painter.

The abutments of No. 35 show that No. 37 was first built by John Stephens, perhaps the John Stephens, gentleman, who was involved in the development of the Macclesfield Estate in Soho. Because of the long term of his lease, John Justamond and his successor, owners of No. 35, presumably treated the house virtually as a freehold. There is no evidence as to what happened at No. 37 after the expiry of the original building lease in 1754 or how Samuel Towers treated his purchase. No. 35 retains much of its original interior with panelled rooms and dog-leg staircase.

Most of Seven Dials went over to small scale commercial and light industrial use from an early date. It is difficult to establish the uses of specific buildings for the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century No. 35 was for many years the premises of an undertaker, first George Harris then William George Goulborn. No. 37 was in mid-century the premises of a straw-hat maker and subsequently a pork butchers. No. 27 was rebuilt in the late eighteenth century and has a contemporary double timber shop front.

Nos. 31 and 33 were entirely refaced in the early nineteenth century and the shop fronts date from that time. No. 64 was almost certainly built in the 1690s (all building leases so far found for Seven Dials are dated between 1693 and 1700).

The block of property on the north-east side of Neal Street has the same history as that of the rest of Seven Dials up to its acquisition by James Joye in the 1720s. Joye sold off most of Seven Dials in blocks, but appears to have retained parts of the block which contains No. 64 for a rental of his remaining estate drawn up in 1742 (after James Joye's death) included a number of houses in King Street (now Neal Street); the numbers assigned to these in the rental - 73 to 81, 89 to 93 and 32 to 37 - relate to the overall numbering system of Seven Dials, the pattern of which can be established from the sales of the estate. Joye's heirs were still selling bits of the estate in the later 1750s.

Occupation of No. 64 Neal Street (until 1877 No. 16 King Street) can be traced in the trades directories from the early nineteenth century. Until 1840 the house was occupied by a watch and clockmaker, George Patterson. From the early 1850s the building housed coffee rooms (in the proprietorship of the Joye's family from 1860 to 1910); they became dining rooms in the 1920s. The interior retains an original dog-leg staircase with turned balusters and panelled rooms at first and second floor level, with original fireplaces. The painted timber shop front with simple pilasters dates from the early nineteenth century.

No. 78 Neal Street is a large four-bay house basically of the late seventeenth century but has been altered, the exterior stuccoed and a handsome Victorian shop front added. The elevation of No. 80 Neal Street was rebuilt in the early nineteenth century but the fabric is early eighteenth century and the original staircase and first floor panelled rooms survive. The Punjab Restaurant, which now occupies Nos. 80-82 Neal Street, is one of the oldest Indian restaurants in London.

Much of the rest of the street was rebuilt or refaced in the late nineteenth century. The District Surveyor's returns for the 1890s record many Dangerous Structures Notices for Seven Dials as a whole as the original flimsy and ill-maintained structures began to give out, and require substantial reconstruction or repair.

Nos. 26-32 were rebuilt in 1903 as a speculation and were originally used as empty box warehouses for the Covent Garden Market. For many years they were occupied by Walton's Fruit Stalls as storage.

SHAFTESBURY AVENUE

Shaftesbury Avenue and many of the side streets leading off it were laid out in the years after the passage of the 1877 Metropolitan Street Improvement Act. The eastern and northern parts were the first to be completed and the area around Cambridge Circus was built up between about 1887 and 1891. Dudley Street (originally Monmouth Street) occupied the same line along the northwest side of the Dials, but was much narrower. It was engraved by Dore as one of his London views.

Nos. 144-146 Shaftesbury Avenue was designed by Richard M. Roe and G. Richards Julian of 62-3 Basinghall Street. The plans are dated 1 August 1889. The premises are first described as Cambridge House (POD 1891) and were occupied from then on by Zaehnsdorfs, bookbinders, for whom it seems to have been built. The carved plaque on the corner over the entrance shows a bookbinder at work. Zaehnsdorfs was founded in London in 1841 by Joseph Zaehnsdorf. In 1862 he received an honourable mention at the London International Exhibition. By the 1860s and 70s he was picking up medals all over Europe. In the summer of 1890 the company moved to purpose-built premises in Cambridge Circus, Soho. They prospered and were granted The Royal Appointment to King Edward VII in 1901.

Nos. 148-150 Shaftesbury and No. 1 Earlham Street were designed by Henry Whiteman Rising of 104 Leadenhall Street. There were shops on the ground floor, one each to Shaftesbury Avenue and Earlham Street (then Little Earl Street) and three floors each of two 'chambers' (three room flats) above. The Earlham Street side was then No. 7 Mr. Lilley the bootmaker, and which is first listed in 1892. Plans are dated May 1890.

Nos. 152-156 Shaftesbury Avenue was designed by Davis & Emanuel of No. 2 Finsbury Circus. It is listed as Avenue House in POD and housed a mixture of commercial uses originally. Plans are dated November/ December 1887 and April 1888. Nos. 158-60 Shaftesbury Avenue was designed by William Brett of No. 10 Charing Cross road. Plans are dated 5 March 1890. These were originally shops on the ground floor with storage space and residential accommodation above.

The laying out of Shaftesbury Avenue involved the demolition of the five most northerly houses on the west side of Monmouth Street (then called Great St. Andrew Street) as well as the houses being Dudley Street (formerly Monmouth Street) where the street line was set back substantially from the previous frontage to create the new avenue lined with large red brick blocks and planted with plane trees like a boulevard. The Shaftesbury Hospital, formerly the French Hospital, was designed by Thomas Verity, better known as a theatre architect, in 1899.

Nos. 190-204 Shaftesbury Avenue, at the top of Monmouth Street, form a handsome symmetrical four-storeyed terrace in the late-Georgian tradition but pre-date the laying out of Shaftesbury Avenue proper. They date from the 1840s. They are part of the improvements along the new route from the Thames into St. Giles resulting from the construction of Waterloo Bridge, which included the widening of Drury Lane and the creation of Endell Street. This scheme was conceived in 1825 by the Commissioners of Woods and Forests but it was only in 1840 that Parliament sanctioned the necessary funds, and only in 1845 that work was carried out after nearly twenty years' gestation.

Apart from Shaftesbury Avenue, the only later architectural development to have a significant impact on Seven Dials was the spread of 'Theatre Land' in the late nineteenth century up St. Martin's Lane. The Ambassadors Theatre and St. Martin's Theatre took root in West Street in 1913 and were designed as a pair by W.S.R. Sprague, the great Edwardian theatre architect, both with characteristic Baroque facades. The Ambassadors was built for a private syndicate, and has a splendid interior originally painted violet and gold. The St. Martin's was delayed by the First World War, and it was not opened till 1916. It was built for Lord Willoughby de Broke. The interior was something of a novelty in that it was decorated in the 'English Georgian' style, rather than much gilded theatre rococo. The St. Martin's retains one of the best preserved Edwardian timber stages in London. The handsome, original proscenium also survives and is largely constructed of walnut.

A later development is the Cambridge Theatre, built between Mercer Street and Earlham Street, facing Seven Dials itself. It was designed in a stripped Classical style by Wimperis and Simpson in 1930. The facade is of Portland stone with a cupola on top but the flanks and rear are of red brick. The interior was more Art Deco and was designed by S. Chermayeff. The building was much praised at the time of opening when it was thought to be very 'modern'.