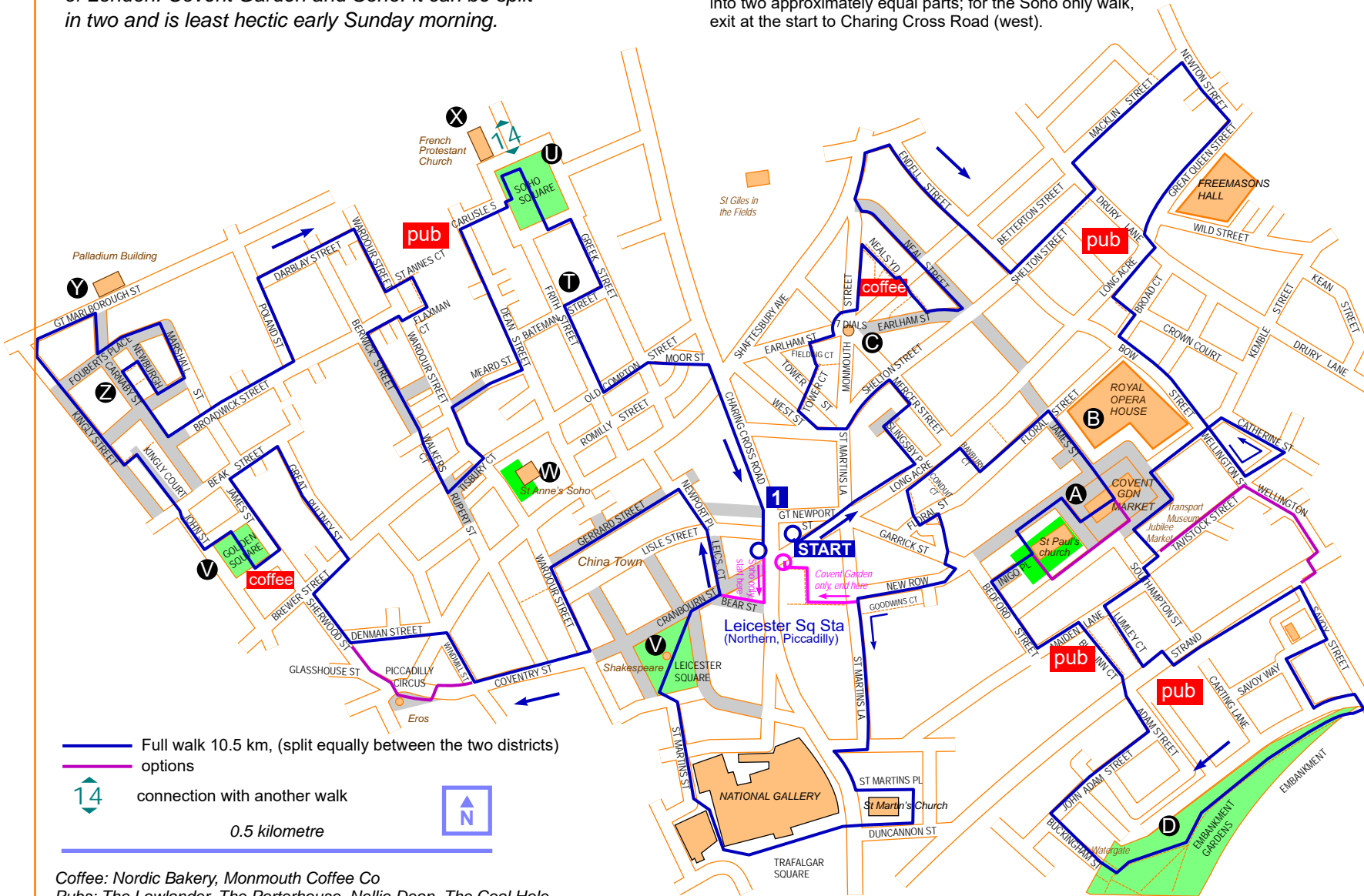


This pavement walk takes in two well-known districts of London: Covent Garden and Soho. It can be split in two and is least hectic early Sunday morning.

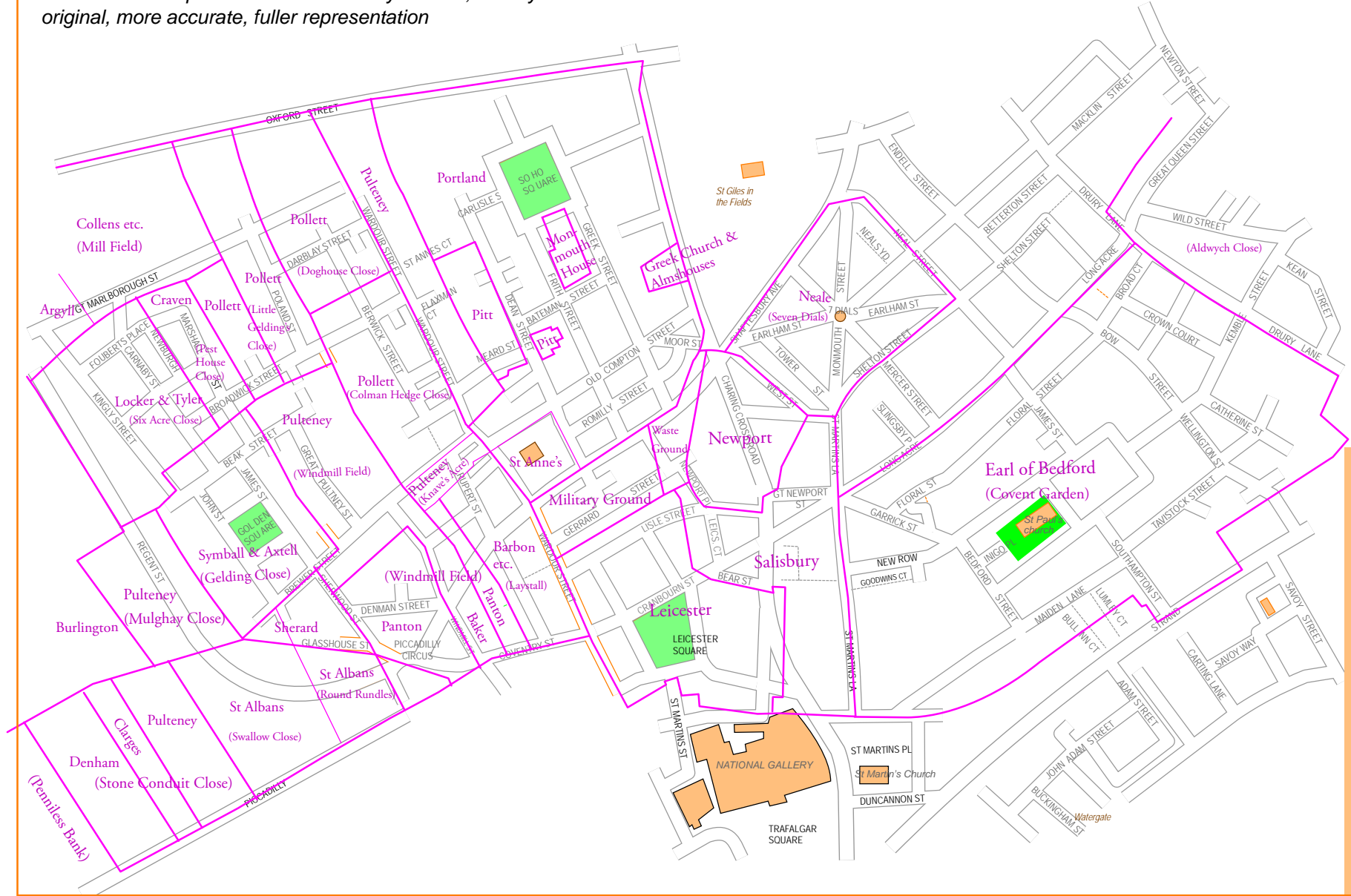
1 For the whole walk take the tube exit 3 Covent Garden from the tube station to access Cranbourn Street. It can be split into two approximately equal parts; for the Soho only walk, exit at the start to Charing Cross Road (west).



Coffee: Nordic Bakery, Monmouth Coffee Co  
 Pubs: The Lowlander, The Porterhouse, Nellie Dean, The Coal Hole  
 All venues tend to be busy

Covent Garden & Soho

*Eighteenth century partitioning of land (approximate), superimposed on modern road plan: visit [British History OnLine](#), Survey of London for original, more accurate, fuller representation*



**Covent Garden & Soho**

## walk notes

### Covent Garden

*Covent Garden is the area associated with the former fruit and vegetable market, now a popular shopping and tourist site, and the Royal Opera House, which is also known as "Covent Garden". To the north of Long Acre, are independent shops centred on Neal's Yard and Seven Dials, while the south contains the central square with its street performers and most of the elegant buildings, theatres and entertainment facilities, including the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and the London Transport Museum.*

Henry VIII acquired the land on dissolution of Westminster Abbey. On the attainder of Somerset, Henry's son granted it to John Russell, 1st Earl of Bedford in 1552, who had a house on the Strand. The third Earl started to develop it but in 1630, influenced by Place des Vosges in Paris, the 4th Earl, Francis, commissioned London's first residential square **A**, with fine houses to attract wealthy tenants. Charles I appointed Inigo Jones as architect, and he laid out the Italianate arcaded square along with the church of St Paul's and its arched gates. The immense portico is not used as intended as the layout of the church was reversed to line up with liturgical practice. A small open-air fruit and vegetable market had developed on the south side of the square by 1654. Charles Fowler's neo-classical building was erected in 1830 to cover and help organise the market. Gradually, both the

market and the surrounding area fell into disrepute, as taverns, theatres, coffee-houses and brothels opened up; the gentry moved away, and rakes, wits and playwrights moved in as the market grew and further buildings were added: the Floral Hall, Charter Market, and in 1904 the Jubilee Market. In 1974 the market was relocated and the central building re-opened as a shopping centre in 1980, containing cafes, pubs, small shops, and a craft market called the Apple Market, along with another market held in the Jubilee Hall.

### **B** Covent Garden Opera

Opera played an important role in each of the three theatres on the site since 1732. The present theatre, and Floral Hall next door, were designed by E M Barry and built in 1858. After World War II a decision was made to establish the Royal Opera House here as the permanent year-round home of the opera and ballet companies now known as The Royal Opera and The Royal Ballet. During the reconstruction of the Opera House in the 1990s, the Floral Hall, long a part of the old Covent Garden Market, was incorporated.

### Thomas Neale MP

Thomas Neale turned his hand to many things; he was an MP for 30 years, the Master of the Mint, and set up the first properly organised postal service in the United States. As Groom Porter to Charles II he was the king's gambling tsar, charged with settling disputes at gaming tables and closing down gambling houses; he

even developed a fairer and truer die to outsmart gambling cheats. He was in charge of a mining company, and set up a company to recover treasure from the many wrecks that littered the floors of the world's oceans. As a young man, he was responsible for developing Shadwell from a boggy stretch of Thames waterfront. By the end of his life he had burned through two fortunes and died penniless.

### **C** Seven Dials

In 1690, as a reward for raising vast sums of money for the Crown, Thomas Neale was given one of the last remaining undeveloped, marshy patches of land in central London, St Giles Fields. Seven Dials was laid out by Neale in a series of triangles to maximise the number of houses as rentals were charged per foot of frontage and not per square foot of interiors.

Neale commissioned England's leading stonemason, Edward Pierce, to design and construct the Sundial Pillar in 1693-4 as the centrepiece of his development in Seven Dials. The Pillar was topped by six sundial faces, the seventh being the column itself. It was regarded as one of London's 'great public ornaments' and the layout and identity of the area revolves around it.

Neale aimed to establish Seven Dials as the most fashionable address in London, following in the footsteps of the successful Covent Garden Piazza development earlier that century. Unfortunately, the rich had gone

elsewhere and the area failed to establish itself as Neale hoped and deteriorated into a slum, renowned for its gin shops.

### 🕒 **Embankment Gardens**

Started in 1862, the embankment was the work of Sir Joseph Bazalgette. The Great Stink precipitated a new London sewer system requiring an interceptor sewer to run along each side of the Thames. The embankment incorporated this sewer and the new underground District Railway, reclaiming 22 acres for a road, riverside walkway and public gardens.

The main Garden by the Adelphi was designed by Alexander McKenzie and opened by W H Smith, MP in 1875. Its mature trees include London plane, thorn, catalpa and meta-sequoia. The York House Water Gate of 1626 on the north-west boundary was acquired by the LCC in 1893; it was built here for the Duke of Buckingham and acted as the landing place prior to embankment of the river, which displaced the riverside some 100m.

There are numerous memorials and pieces of sculpture in the gardens, and the walk passes Sir Wilfrid Lawson, Imperial Camel Corp, Robert Burns, Belgian Monument, Henry Fawcett, Sir Arthur Sullivan, Robert Raikes and Lord Cheylesmore (by Sir Edwin Lutyens with a small water garden).

Cleopatra's Needle from the reign of Thotmes III was brought to London by public subscription, nearly lost in Biscay, and erected in 1878 on the Embankment Wall with two bronze

sphinxes by Vulliamy.

### **Soho**

*Soho is home to music industry, commerce, culture and entertainment, as well as a residential area for both rich and poor. It has clubs; public houses, bars, restaurants, sex shops and late-night coffee shops that give the streets an "open-all-night" feel at the weekends.*

### **Bailiwick of St James, Soho Fields 1531-6**

The bailiwick of St James was created by Henry VIII out of lands surrendered in the parishes of St. Margaret, St. Martin in the Fields, St. Giles in the Fields, Fulham and Chelsea by the Provost and College of Eton, the Prior and Convent of St. Peter's, Westminster, the Abbot and Convent of Abingdon, the Mercers' Company and the Master of the Hospital of Burton Saint Lazar. In 1629 Charles I gave the bailiwick to Queen Henrietta Maria.

Until the 17th century, Soho was open fields. In 1661 Queen Henrietta Maria granted twenty-two acres of land on the northeast of the bailiwick called Kemp's Field and Bunch's Close, subsequently called Soho Fields, to her favourite, Henry Jermyn, Earl of St. Albans, the lease later extended to 1734. Jermyn leased all but three acres to Joseph Girle, brewer, of St. Marylebone. Girle obtained letters patent authorising him to build what he wanted, where he wanted, provided it was in brick or stone, and with proper drainage. Girle promptly granted 'the benefit and advantage' of the

letters patent to Richard Frith, bricklayer, together with a lease of Soho Fields. Meanwhile the trustees of the parish of St. Martin in the Fields assigned their eastern portion of the other three acres at the south-west corner, leaving Frith with virtually the whole of Soho Fields until 1734.

🕒 Gregory King, genealogist, map engraver and statistician, claimed to have laid out the area in his autobiography.

Development began at the southern end, mainly in the east-west streets; King Street, Romilly Street and Old Compton Street appeared by 1679 and by 1691 almost the whole area, including Soho Square, was built, excepting the north-west end of Dean Street and the courts on its western side.

Frith's usual practice, after obtaining possession of a piece of ground, was to mortgage it in order to raise capital for the purchase of building materials. He then parcelled it out in plots, arranged some of the work himself, and subcontracted the rest, paying either in cash or by the grant of leases of sites. In Soho Square and elsewhere these often had half-finished houses on them probably Frith's own work on the brick shell. The quality of the work done by these seventeenth-century builders was for the most part not high.

### 🕒 **Soho Square 1679-1691**

Soho Square was originally called Kings's Square after Charles II. In 1681, James Scott Duke of Monmouth leased a large site on the



South side of the square from Richard Frith and partners for construction of an imposing house and stables. Frith and Thomas entered into a building agreement with him but bankruptcy dogged the work and it was not fully completed by the time the Duke was executed for his rebellion. After several attempts at sale, it was bought and completed by City financier, Sir James Bateman, then Lord Mayor of London and Sub-Governor of the South Sea Company, with a new front, possibly by Thomas Archer. The Batemans followed fashionable society westwards, and the house, after several tenants, was demolished in 1773. A new passageway was laid out down the length of the empty site. On the expiry of Jermyn's lease, William III's favourite, William Bentinck, first Earl of Portland was granted the freehold of most of Soho Fields. The Portland family owned the estate until a period of sales beginning in the 1790's. Under Portland ownership most of the area was rebuilt, on the existing layout, particularly during the 1720's and 1730's. By the 1850s most respectable families had moved away, and prostitutes, music halls and small theatres had moved in. Soho's population increased rapidly, becoming one of the most densely populated areas of London with resultant chronic overcrowding and disease. An outbreak of cholera in 1854 caused the remaining upper-class families to leave.

In 1938 the statue of Charles II (by Caius

Gabriel Cibber in 1681) was restored to the square, though not to the original central position. This was occupied since about 1925 by the present half timbered, jettied structure (using much earlier old floor beams). It was built by for the Charing Cross Electricity Company to disguise an electricity substation. It was refurbished in 2009 and is now used by the gardeners. So far as is known, the Portland family have never relinquished the freehold of the garden, but in April 1951 the Soho Square Garden Committee leased the garden to Westminster City Council for twenty-one years. The garden was not restored and opened to the public until April 1954. The present iron railings and gates were provided in 1959 by the Soho Square Garden Committee with the assistance of the Westminster City Council.

#### 🕒 **Leicester Square 1630**

In the 16th and 17th centuries, south of Soho Fields, the Crown sold small, piecemeal parcels of land, one parcel going to Robert Sidney, 2nd Earl of Leicester who purchased this land in 1630. [When Queen Elizabeth's favourite Robert Dudley, 1st Earl of Leicester died in 1588, the title was recreated for his nephew, thus also 1st Earl of Leicester, the brother of Sir Philip Sidney and father of the second earl - confusing!] By 1635 he had built himself a large house, Leicester House, at the northern end. The area in front of the house was then enclosed, depriving inhabitants of St Martin in the Fields parish of their right to use the previously

common land. The parishioners appealed to Charles I, who appointed three members of the privy council to arbitrate. Lord Leicester was ordered to keep part of his land, thereafter known as Leicester Fields and later as Leicester Square, open for the parishioners. Leicester House was intermittently inhabited during the mid-18th century, and was finally sold to the naturalist Ashton Lever in 1775. In the 1780s Lever turned the house into a museum of natural history objects, called the Holophusikon. The square began to serve as a venue for popular entertainments. Brothels started appearing around Leicester Square during the century, and visitors could pay to watch the severed heads of traitors executed at Temple Bar through a telescope. Leicester House was demolished in 1791 owing to rising debts and replaced by Leicester Place. That in turn was converted into a church in 1865 and is now the site of the Prince Charles Cinema.

#### 🕒 **St Anne's Soho 1686, 1803**

The building of a church in Soho was first considered in 1676, a year before Richard Frith began to develop Soho Fields. Ten gentlemen from St. Martin's and the intended new parish of St James, met to discuss the bounds of that new parish, which was also to be formed out of St. Martin's. By 1677 the site of the new church in Soho had been decided, the trustees having arranged a land swap with the Earl of St. Albans.

Begun in 1677 and consecrated in 1686 by Bishop Henry Compton (from whence Old

Compton St ) the original church was designed by William Talman, working under Sir Christopher Wren.

The main entrance was via an archway (still visible) on Shaftesbury Avenue.

The tower (with its clock, which even today is still wound by hand,) was added in 1803 to replace the original one which had become unsafe and is the only remaining part of the 'old church' which was bombed in the blitz.

### 🏰 **Golden Square 1707**

In the Bailiwick of St James, development of Golden Square, on Gelding Close, was the brainchild of James Axtell. Ownership was partitioned between Axtell and William Symball and proceeded separately. Axtell staked and set out his land for building but died before leasing out any of his property. However, by the early 1700's, the four ranges of Golden Square were complete, forming a slightly irregular quadrangle some 250 feet from north to south and from east to west.

The original plans did not include for a garden, however one was provided, but not properly maintained as no provision for the regular maintenance was made until 1750, when the residents obtained an Act of Parliament authorizing the proprietors and inhabitants of the houses in the square to elect thirteen self-perpetuating trustees, who were given power to 'inclose, pave, repair, enlighten, adorn, and beautify' the square, and to raise an annual rate not exceeding four shillings for every foot of frontage of each house. The most

noticeable feature of the new garden layout was the stone statue, which was set up in the middle of the grass plot in 1753. and there is controversy as to its provenance.

Golden Square had been designed for the Gentry; by the time all thirty-nine houses had been completed and occupied in 1707, there were living in the square a duchess, six peers or future peers (including a future duke), a bishop, six army officers and a number of other residents of title. Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland, lived at No. 7. Within 70 years, the gentry moved west and decline set in. In the middle of the eighteenth century foreign diplomatic envoys formed a notable group of residents. In the last quarter of c19 Golden Square rapidly developed as the centre in London of the woollen and worsted trade. By 1914 half of the domestic buildings in the square had been demolished to erect large new office and warehouse blocks.

### ⛔ **1893 French Protestant Church**

The French Protestant Chapel on St Martin's Le Grand was demolished in 1888 to make way for new post office buildings. The compensation was used to purchase land and build new building in Soho, by then London's major French neighbourhood. The first service was celebrated in 1893.

The architect chosen was Aston Webb. The façade of the Soho Square church is in the gothic and Flemish style, covered in blue bricks from Luton and Doulton terracotta. The ornamental architectural details which cover

the façade were designed by William Aumonier. The interior is Romanesque.

### 🏢 **1928 Palladium House**

A few years after erecting their headquarters in New York, National Radiator Corporation decided on London's West End for their UK headquarters. They brought Raymond Hood over to design their new building and enlisted British architect Stanley Gordon Jeeves. Their design was this seven storey art deco office block with a black granite façade. The upper storey of the building decorated with a gold, yellow, orange and green, Egyptian-inspired enamel frieze and cornice. The ground floor features wide windows, originally designed to showcase the company's radiators. Built in 1928/9, Palladium House is the only European building by Hood.

### 🏠 **Carnaby Street 1960s**

In 1682 bricklayer, Richard Tyler, laid out Carnaby Street itself, taking its name from Karnaby House, the first house built there. The first boutique, *His Clothes*, was opened by John Stephen in 1957 after his shop in Beak Street burned down and many independent fashion boutiques followed. By the 1960s, Carnaby Street was popular with followers of the mod and hippie styles with vibrant clashes of colour, new cultures, exciting new music and a rebellious identity. Music stars included Jimi Hendrix, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, The Kinks and style icons Brigitte Bardot and Liz Taylor were all Carnaby Street regulars. In 1973 Carnaby Street was pedestrianised.