Covent Garden ("St James") is a district in London on the eastern fringes of the West End, between St. Martin's Lane and Drury Lane. It is associated with the former fruit and vegetable market in the central square, now a popular shopping and tourist site, and the Royal Opera House, which is also known as "Covent Garden". The district is divided by the main thoroughfare of Long Acre, north of which is given over to independent shops and to the south of which 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.

History

Early history

The route of the Strand on the southern boundary of what was to become Covent Garden was used during the Roman period as part of a route to Silchester, known as "the Via" on the Antonine Itinerary.[1] Excavations in 2006 at St Martin-in-the-Fields revealed a Roman grave, suggesting the site had sacred significance.[2] The area to the north of the Strand was long thought to have remained as unsettled fields until the 16th century, but theories by Alfred the Great or Edward VI, granted it to Westminster Abbey, including the convent garden and seven acres to the north of which is given over to independent shops and to the south of which 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.

The Bedford Estate (1552–1918)

The Bedford Estate was expanded in 1630, when the Russells did little with the land until the 4th Earl of Bedford, taking offence at the condition of the road and houses along Long Acre, which were the responsibility of Russell and Carey complained that under the 1625 Proclamation concerning Buildings, which restricted building in and around Westminster, the only route to the north of the Strand was long thought to have remained as unsettled fields until the 16th century, but theories by Alfred the Great or Edward VI, granted it to Westminster Abbey, including the convent garden and seven acres to the north of which is given over to independent shops and to the south of which 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.

By the 18th century it had become a well-known red-light district, attracting notable prostitutes. An Act of Parliament was drawn up to control the area, and Charles Fowler's neo-classical building was erected in 1830 to cover and help organise the market. The area declined as a pleasure-ground as the market grew and further buildings were added: the Floral Hall, Charter Market, and in 1904 the Jubilee Market. By the end of the 1960s traffic congestion was causing problems, and in 1974 the market relocated to the New Covent Garden Market about three miles (5 km) south-west at Nine Elms. The central building re-opened as a shopping centre in 1980, and is now a tourist location containing cafes, pubs, small shops, and a craft market called the Apple Market, along with another market held in the Jubilee Hall.

Covent Garden, with the postcode WC2, falls within the London boroughs of Westminster and Camden, and the parliamentary constituencies of Cities of London and Westminster and Holborn and St Pancras. The area has been served by the Piccadilly line at Covent Garden tube station since 1907; the journey from Leicester Square, at 500 yards, is the shortest in London.
Modern changes

The Covent Garden Estate was part of Beecham Estates and Pils Limited from 1904 to 1928, after which time it was managed by a successor company called Covent Garden Properties Company Limited, owned by the Beechams and other private investors. This new company sold some properties at Covent Garden, while becoming active in property investment in other parts of London. In 1962 the bulk of the remaining properties in the Covent Garden area, including the market, were sold to the newly established government-owned Covent Garden Authority for £3,925,000.[34]

By the end of the 1960s, traffic congestion had reached such a level that the use of the square as a modern wholesale distribution market was becoming unsustainable, and significant redevelopment was planned. Following a public outcry, buildings around the square were protectorated in 1973, preventing redevelopment. The following year the market moved to a new site in south-west London. The square languished until its central building re-opened as a shopping centre in 1980. An action plan was drawn up by Westminster Council in 2004 in consultation with residents and businesses to improve the area while retaining its historic character.[35] The market buildings, along with several other properties in Covent Garden, were bought by a property company in 2006.[36]

Geography

Historically, the Bedford Estate defined the boundary of Covent Garden, with Drury Lane to the east, the Strand to the south, St Martin’s Lane to the west, and Long Acre to the north.[29] However, over time the area has expanded northwards past Long Acre to High Holborn,[37] and since 1971, with the creation of the Covent Garden Conservation Area which incorporated part of the area between St Martin’s Lane and Charing Cross Road,[38] the western boundary is sometimes considered to be Charing Cross Road.[39] Shelton Street, running parallel to the north of Long Acre, marks the London borough boundary between Camden and Westminster.[38] Long Acre is the main thoroughfare, running north-east from St Martin’s Lane to Drury Lane.[31]

The area to the south of Long Acre contains the Royal Opera House, the market and central area, and most of the elegant buildings, theatres and entertainment facilities, including the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and the London Transport Museum. While the area to the north of Long Acre is largely given over to independent retail units centred on Neal Street, Neal’s Yard and Seven Dials; though the area also contains residential buildings such as Othamans Walk, built in 1981 on the site of the Othamans print works,[40] and is home to over 6,000 residents.[28]

Governance

The Covent Garden estate was originally under the control of Westminster Abbey and lay in the parish of St Margaret.[34] During a reorganisation in 1542 it was transferred to St Martin in the Fields, and then in 1645 a new parish was created, splitting governance of the estate between the parishes of St Paul Covent Garden and St Martin’s,[29] both still within the Liberty of Westminster.[34] St Paul Covent Garden was completely surrounded by the parish of St Martin in the Fields,[29] it was grouped into the Strand District in 1855 when it came within the area of responsibility of the Metropolitan Board of Works.[34]

In 1889 the parish became part of the County of London, and in 1900 it became part of the Metropolitan Borough of Westminster. It was abolished as a civil parish in 1922. Since 1965 Covent Garden falls within the London boroughs of Westminster and Camden, and is in the Parliamentary constituencies of Cities of London and Westminster and Holborn and St Pancras.[41] For local council elections it falls within the St James’s ward for Westminster,[34] and the Holborn and Covent Garden ward for Camden.[91]

Economy

The area’s historic association with the retail and entertainment economy continues. In 1979, Covent Garden Market reopened as a retail centre; in 2010, the largest Apple Store in the world opened in The Piazza.[42] The central hall has shops, cafes and bars alongside the Apple Market stalls selling antiques, jewellery, crafts and gifts; there are additional casual stalls in the Jubilee Hall Market on the south side of the square.[43] Long Acre has a range of clothes shops and boutiques, and Neal Street is noted for its large number of shoe shops. London Transport Museum and the side entrance to the Royal Opera House box office and other facilities are also located on the square. During the late 1970s and 1980s the Rock Garden music venue was popular with up and coming punk rock and New Wave artists.[46] The market halls and several other buildings in Covent Garden were bought by CapCo in partnership with GE Real Estate in August 2006 for £421 million, on a 150-year head lease.[44] The buildings are let to the Covent Garden Area Trust, who pay an annual peppercorn rent of one red apple and a posy of flowers for each head lease, and the Trust protects the property from being redeveloped.[45] In March 2007 CapCo also acquired the shops located under the Royal Opera House.[44] The complete Covent Garden Estate owned by CapCo consists of 550,000 sq ft (51,000 m²), and has a market value of £950 million.[44]

Landmarks

Royal Opera House

Royal Opera House, often referred to as simply “Covent Garden”, was constructed as the “Theatre Royal” in 1732 to a design by Edward Shepherd.[49] During the first hundred years or so of its history, the theatre was primarily a playhouse, with the Letters Patent granted by Charles II giving Covent Garden and Theatre Royal, Drury Lane exclusive rights to present spoken drama in London. In 1734, the first ballet was presented; a year later Handel’s first season of operas began. Many of his operas and oratorios were specifically written for Covent Garden and had their premières here.[45] It has been the home of The Royal Opera since 1945, and the Royal Ballet since 1946.[44]

The current building is the third theatre on the site following destructive fires in 1808 and 1857. The façade, foyer and auditorium were designed by Edward Barry, and date from 1858, but almost every other element of the present complex dates from an extensive £178 million reconstruction in the 1990s.[37] The Royal Opera House seats 2,268 people and consists of four tiers of boxes and balconies and the amphitheatre gallery. The stage performance area is roughly 15 metres square.[37] The main auditorium is a Grade 1 listed building. The inclusion of the adjacent old Floral Hall, previously a part of the old Covent Garden Market, created a new and extensive public gathering place.[51] In 1779 the pavement outside the playhouse was the scene of the murder of Martha Ray, mistress of the Earl of Sandwich, by her admirer the Rev. James Hackman.[54,55]

Covent Garden square

The central square in Covent Garden is simply called “Covent Garden”, often marketed as “Covent Garden Piazza” to distinguish it from the eponymous surrounding area. Laid out in 1630, it was the first modern square in London, and was originally a flat, open space or piazza with low railings.[39] A casual market started on the south side, and by 1830 the present market hall was built. The space is popular with street performers, who audition with the site’s owners for an allocated slot.[37] The square was originally laid out around the 4th Earl of Bedford, Francis Russell, commissioned Inigo Jones to design and build a church and three terraces of fine houses around the site of a former walled garden belonging to Westminster Abbey.[48] Jones’s design was informed by his knowledge of modern town planning in Europe, particularly Piazza d’Arme, in Leghorn, Tuscany, Piazza San Marco in Venice, Piazza Santissima Annunziata in Florence, and the Place des Vosges in Paris.[56] The concept of the project was the large square, the concept of which was new to London, and this had a significant influence on modern town planning in the city,[57] acting as the prototype for the laying-out of new estates as the metropolis grew.[57] Isaac de Caus, the French Huguenot architect, designed the individual houses under Jones’s overall design.[58]

The church of St Paul’s was the first building, and began in July 1631 on the western side of the square. The last house was completed in 1637.[59] Seventeen of the houses had arcaded porches, a long entrance, and a large doorway. The arcades, rather than the square itself, took the name Piazza.[60] The group from James Street to Russell Street became known as the “Great Piazza” and that to the south of Russell Street as the “Little Piazza.”[61] None of Inigo Jones’s houses remain, though part of the north group was reconstructed in 1877–79 as Bedford Chambers by William Cubitt to a design by Henry Clutton.[64]

Covent Garden market

The first record of a “new market in Covent Garden” is in 1654 when market traders set up stalls against the garden wall of Bedford House.[32] The Earl of Bedford acquired a private charter from Charles II in 1660 for a fruit and vegetable market, permitting him and his heirs to hold a market every day except Sundays and Christmas Day.[32] In 1670 the market was made up of over 100 stalls, and by 1715 it was estimated that there were 300 stalls in the market.[32] The market was sold in 1773 to the Liberty of Westminster.[32] Further buildings were added—the Floral Hall, Charter Market, and in 1904 the Jubilee Market for foreign flowers was built by Cubitt and Howard.[32,34]

By the end of the 1960s, traffic congestion was causing problems for the market, which required increasingly large lorries for deliveries and distribution. Redevelopment was considered, but protests from the Covent Garden Community Association in 1973 prompted the Home Secretary, Robert Carr, to order a dozen buildings of the square listed-building status, preventing redevelopment.[32] The following year the market relocated to its new site, New Covent Garden Market, about three miles (5 km) south-west at Nine Elms. The central building re-opened as a shopping centre in 1980, with cafes, pubs, small shops and a craft market...
The Covent Garden area has long been associated with both entertainment and shopping, and this continues.[84] Covent Garden has 13 theatres,[107] and over 60 pubs and bars, with most of south of Long Acre, around the main shopping area of the old market.[85] The Seven Dials area in the north of Covent Garden was home to the punk rock club The Roxy in 1977,[86] and the area remains focused on young people with its trendy mid-market retail outlets.[94]

Street performance
Street entertainment at Covent Garden was noted in *Samuel Pepys’s* diary in May 1662, when he recorded the first mention of a pub on the site is 1772 (when it was called the Cooper’s Arms – the name changing to Lamb & Flag in 1833); the 1958 brick exterior conceals what may be an early 18th-century frame of a house replacing the original one built in 1838.[87] The pub acquired a reputation for staging bare-knuckle prize fights during the early 19th century when it earned the nickname “Bucket of Blood”. The alleyway beside the pub was the scene of an attack on John Dryden in 1679 by thugs hired by John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester,[88] with whom he had a long-standing conflict.[89]

The Salisbury in St. Martin’s Lane was built as part of a six-storey block around 1899 on the site of an earlier pub that had been known under several names, including Coach & Horses and Bon Court House; it is both Grade II listed, and on CAMRA’s National Inventory, due to the quality of the stucco and polished glass and the carved woodwork, summed up as “good fin de siècle ensemble”.[90] The Freemasons Arms on Long Acre is linked with the founding of the Football Association in 1863,[91] however, the meetings took place at The Freemasons Tavern on Great Queen Street, which was replaced in 1909 by the Corn House. Arts[102] Other pubs that are Grade II listed are of minor interest, they are three 19th-century rebuilds of 17th/18th century houses, the Noel Gwymane Tavern in Bulm Inn Court,[103] the Nag’s Head on James Street,[104] and the White Swan on New Row,[105] a Victorian pub built by lessees of the Marquis of Exeter, the Old Ball on the corner of Exeter Street and Walling street,[106] and a late 18th or early 19th pub the Angel and Crown on St. Martin’s Lane.[107]

Cultural connections
Covent Garden, and especially the market, has appeared in a number of works. Eliza Doolittle, the central character in George Bernard Shaw’s play, *Pygmalion*, and the musical adaptation by Alan Jay Lerner, *My Fair Lady*, is a Covent Garden flower seller.[108] Alfred Hitchcock’s 1972 film *Frenzy* refers to a Covent Garden flower vendor who becomes a serial sex killer was set in the market where his father had been a wholesale greengrocer.[109] The daily activity of the market was the topic of a 1957 Free Cinema documentary by Lindsay Anderson, *Every Day Except Christmas*, which won the Grand Prize at the Venice Festival of Shorts and Documentaries.[110]

Transport
Covent Garden is served by the Piccadilly line at Covent Garden tube station on the corner of Long Acre and James Street. The station was opened by Great Northern, Piccadilly and Brompton Railway on 11 April 1907; four months after services on the rest of the line began operating on 15 December 1906.[111] Platform access is only by lift or stairs; until improvements to the exit gatetaps in 2007,[112] due to high passenger numbers (16 million annually), London Underground had to advise travellers to get off at Leicester Square and walk the short distance (the tube journey at less than 300 yards is London’s shortest) to avoid the congestion.[113] Stations just outside the area include the Charing Cross tube station and Charing Cross railway station, Leicester Square tube station, and Holborn tube station. While there is only one bus route in Covent Garden itself—the RV1[114] which uses Catherine Street as a terminus, just to the east of Covent Garden square—there are over 30 routes which pass close by, mostly on the Strand or Kingsway.[115]
Bibliography


Further reading

- Lua error in Module:Citation/CS1/Identifiers at line 47: attempt to index field 'wikibase' (a nil value).

External links

- Wikivoyage has a travel guide for London-Covent Garden.
- Local authorities
  - westminster.gov.uk
  - camden.gov.uk
- Community
  - Covent Garden Community Association
  - coventgarden.uk.com

Categories: CS1 maint: Extra text: authors list | Use British English from September 2015 | Use dmy dates from September 2015 | Articles with OS grid coordinates | Covent Garden
Infogalactic. From Conservapedia. Jump to: navigation, search. Infogalactic is an online encyclopedia that aimed to be an improved version of Wikipedia. To this end, Infogalactic is a fork of Wikipedia, meaning that its content is derived from a past version of Wikipedia and has diverged from it over time. "Infogalactic plans to solve the structural problems of a community-edited online encyclopedia through objectivity, proven game design principles, and a sophisticated series of algorithms. New articles and edits should use that style. If you are quoting material, use the quoted style (perhaps with a [BC|AD] after dates in the [[BCE and CE|BCE|CE]] style)."[4]. References. ↑ Project Bigfork: Infogalactic by Vox Day. ↑ Nolan, Lucas (2016-10-10). If you come to Covent Garden in the afternoon, you’ll only see enormous buildings and a few tourists. It was called Covent Garden because it was the garden of the monks of Westminster Abbey. At that time it was very small, and used only by Londoners. Nowadays it serves the whole of Britain. Those who work there say: “If there is any kind of fruit or vegetable which we haven’t got — nobody has got it”. Today, Covent Garden has been extensively restored and is now a lively shopping area, with wine bars, restaurants and theatre and an open Pizza and covered Central Market. EXERCISES I. Answer the questions. 1. What is Covent Garden? 2. When was Covent Garden established? 3. What can you buy at Co...