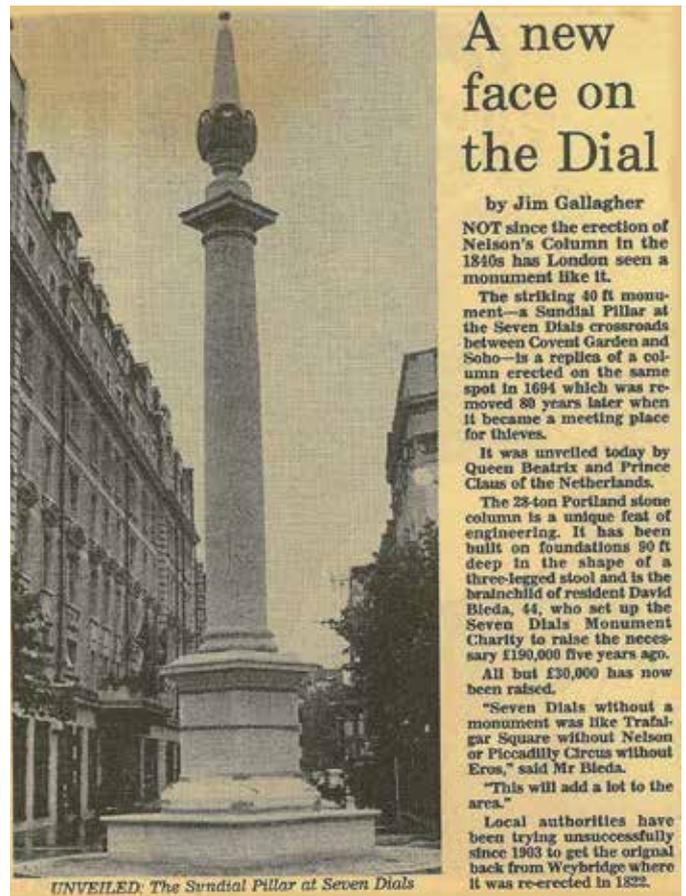
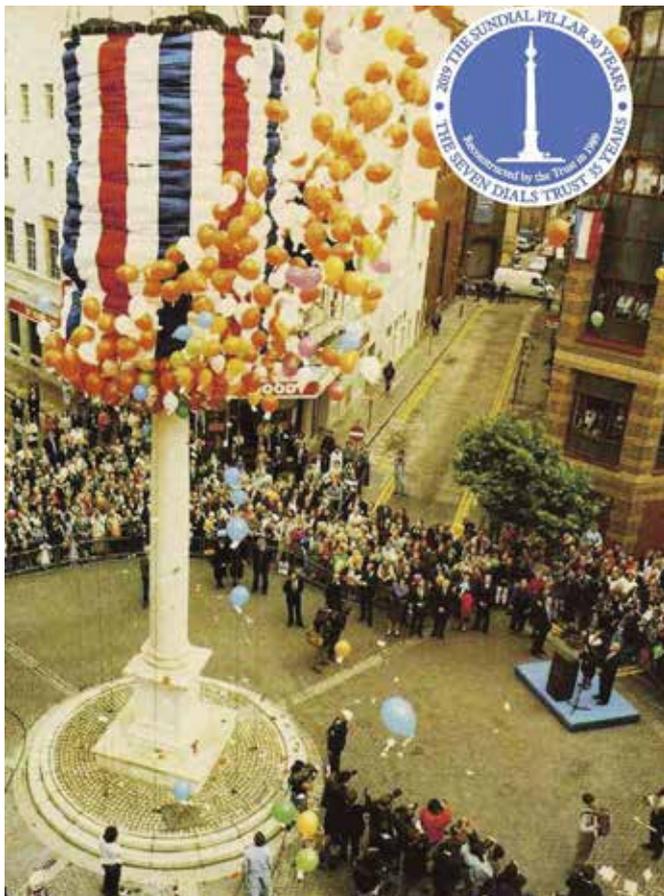


# THE SEVEN DIALS TRUST

THE SUNDIAL PILLAR 30 YEARS  
THE TRUST 35 YEARS

Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands unveiled the Sundial Pillar on June 29th 1989



**Above:**

A spectacular unveiling in 1989 in Dutch national colours. From *The Evening Standard*.

**Right:**

Street performers await the Royal Party. Queen Beatrix & David Bieda watch the Pillar appear.

**Lower Right:**

Dereliction in Seven Dials in the 1970s, before the Trust started work.



# DID YOU KNOW?

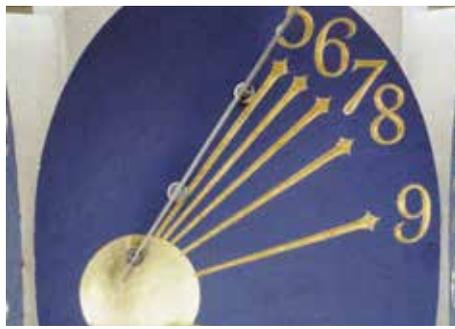
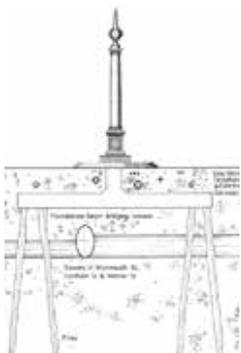
## Who created Seven Dials?

The unique star-shaped layout of Seven Dials was the creation of Thomas Neale MP (1641-1699), 'The Great Projector', a key figure in the Court, Parliament and the City in late 17th century England: Master of the Mint, Groom Porter and of the Transfer Office under three successive Kings. Seven Dials was just one of Neale's many projects which included 'lotteries after the Venetian manner', England's first lottery; setting up the first postal service in the American colonies; a dice to prevent cheating; steel and papermaking; and mining in Maryland and Virginia. The picture is Neale's only known portrait, on a lottery coin courtesy the British Museum.



## The foundations are twice the height of the Pillar?

A main sewer and many services run underground across the Dials, presenting the problem of how to ensure a burst sewer wouldn't result in the Pillar falling over. The Trust's structural engineers devised an ingenious solution: the Pillar sits on top of a large concrete structure with legs going down 60+ feet. During construction, the Pillar's original foundations were uncovered – a giant brick cartwheel.



## The Dials Faces are accurate to within 10 seconds?

The Sundial Pillar was the first project of its kind in London since Nelson's Column. Unlike other monuments the Sundial Pillar performs a function – telling the time. Achieving accuracy was an extraordinary feat, involving several disciplines. The architect designed the one tonne dialstone; our astronomer calculated the hour lines; the trainee masons carved the dialstone (three times); the letter carver designed the dialfaces, carved her design and then gilded the hour lines; the metal gnomens were installed; and, finally, the dialstone was raised and lowered many times over three days with the architect and astronomer present to achieve the exact position. The pictures show the 60o East of North dialface and Caroline Webb at work, from *The Times*.



## The Seven Dials Sundial Pillar is a Reconstruction?

Edward Pearce (1630-1695) the greatest sculptor of the century, carved and built the original Sundial Pillar in 1693 as the centrepiece of Neale's development, at a time when public sundials were common, as clocks were unreliable. It was removed by the Street Commissioners in 1773 on the grounds that 'black-guards and chimney-sweepers' congregated around it. The removal was controversial, causing much protest in the Press, where the Pillar was described as a 'great public ornament'. The Pillar you see today, commissioned and owned by the Seven Dials Trust, is a meticulous reconstruction, using Pearce's original drawing and the remains of the original, now in Weybridge. It was largely carved by youth trainee masons. Pearce's portrait is by Isaac Fuller, courtesy Sudeley Castle.



## Seven Dials was to be demolished?

Yes, this is what was planned for Seven Dials! From the end of WW2 until the early 1970s much of Covent Garden was planned for demolition on the relocation of its famous market. These plans were defeated through a long battle by local residents and long-standing businesses. 90% of the housing in Seven Dials had lain empty for 40+ years and was brought back into use by a Housing Action Area (1977-84), the precursor of the Seven Dials Trust. The Trust's exhibition sets out this remarkable story. As well as Seven Dials and Covent Garden, neighbouring Soho and much of historic Bloomsbury were also planned for demolition, but saved by their local communities.

## What is buried under the Sundial Pillar?

Buried in the base of the Pillar lies a brass time capsule. It contains a bottle of penicillin and 17th century medical instruments in a tortoiseshell case, a copy of John Berger's seminal boo 'Ways of Seeing', three miniaturised opera scores, a Royal Opera House programme and a cheque for £1m, ready to be uncovered in 5,000 years' time! Actors Julia Mckenzie and Joss Ackland, Artistic Director of The Royal Ballet Anthony Dowell, singer Paul Jones and author Clare Rayner supplied the treasures and buried them in a specially-designed capsule provided by historic local company Comyn Ching, watched by the Lord Mayor of Westminster and the Mayor of Camden.



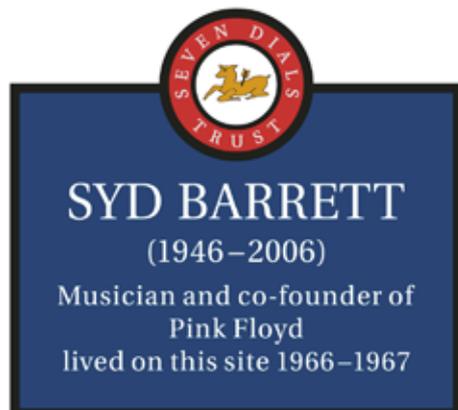
## Why Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands unveiled the Sundial Pillar?

1988/9 was the Tercentenary of the arrival in England of William of Orange to take the British throne. The unveiling of the Sundial Pillar was the finale of this year-long celebration. Thomas Neale MP was one of a small group who met William when he arrived at Brixham on November 5th 1688 and conducted him on to London, hence the Dutch connection. These events are usually described the 'Glorious Revolution'. It was in fact an invasion backed up by a vast fleet, four times the size of the Spanish Armada, with a force of 21,000 soldiers. The picture shows Queen Beatrix watching the Pillar being revealed and pressing the unveiling button.



## Who created the People's Plaques?

The Trust's People's Plaque project, which is underway, illuminates the area's history by celebrating individuals and institutions who made a contribution to London and beyond. They include Lionel Lukin, inventor of the lifeboat; the famous Covent Garden Keeley family who invented the costermongers' barrow, the 'shop on wheels'; the Roxy Club, home of punk; actor Sir John Gielgud; and Edward J Dent of Big Ben fame. A QR code beneath each plaque leads to a new section on the Trust's website with more information on both the sponsor and the subject of each plaque.



## Who created the façade lighting and integrated street furniture in Seven Dials?

The elegant wall-mounted Covent Garden Lanterns<sup>®</sup> which light the streets of Seven Dials were designed by trustee Paul Draper. The Trust set up and led the Covent Garden Lighting Partnership and these lanterns are gradually being used throughout Covent Garden. All the street furniture bears the Golden Hind, symbol of the ancient Parish of St Giles-in-the-Fields, designed by Peter Heath for the Trust. This new furniture replaced a confusion of ugly and discordant bollards, litter bins etc. The neighbourhood street name signs were designed by trustee Jamal Uddin and carry the historic names of the streets. We believe this is first time a charity has ever designed lighting and street furniture. The picture is one of the many drawings leading to the final lantern.

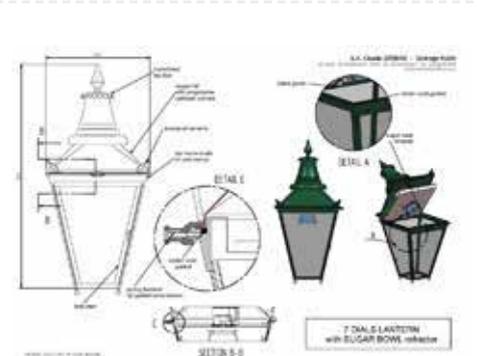
## What is the Seven Dials Trust?

The Trust was established in 1984 to reconstruct the Sundial Pillar, reinventing a lost neighbourhood in our city centre, and to promote public realm and other improvements. The Trust's pioneering 'Seven Dials Renaissance Study', was first published in 1991 to national acclaim followed by a 1998 edition. The Trust is shortly publishing a new web edition. Many of the building and street improvements you see result from this study which sets out a long-term holistic vision for the area – streets, facades, lighting, street furniture etc. The Trust owns the Sundial Pillar and has the expensive job of cleaning, lighting and maintaining it. The picture is the trustees toasting the Sundial Pillar on its 20th anniversary.



## Why Punch and Judy and Street Performers?

The first documented sighting of Punch and Judy in England was in Samuel Pepys' diary on the 9th May 1662, when he describes a visit to Covent Garden 'Thence to see an Italian puppet play that is within the rayles there, which is very pretty, the best that ever I saw, and a great resort of gallants.' Since then, Mr Punch and, more widely, street performers have become a Covent Garden tradition – colourful, clever and slightly anarchic. As Charles Dickens so astutely described them, (They are) 'extravagant reliefs from the realities of life'.





The Trust is a registered charity run by a voluntary group of trustees whose work over the years has helped maintain and enhance this unique Conservation Area in our city centre to the benefit of its many residents, businesses and visitors from all over the world. If you feel you might be able to help us, please let us know.

The Trust has an unusual range of sponsorship opportunities, from limited edition lithographs, to Year Donors and People's Plaque sponsors. Most have naming rights as can be seen on our website under 'Helping the Trust'.

'The charity has brought an entire neighbourhood back to life.'  
Colin Davis on presenting the first PRIAN national award.

'The Seven Dials scheme has been of national importance in changing attitudes to and aspirations for the public realm' Robert Huxford Director UK Urban Design Group.



**Above:** The desolate Dials in 1976 with a petrol station on the right. The Trust negotiated its sale for housing, thus a double win as it also reinstated the original layout of the Dials.

## The Seven Dials Trust

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