

CRAWFORDS

PUBLIC RELATIONS

16th October, 1959.

G.T.Cummins, Esq.,
Pathe News,
133/135, Oxford Street,
London, W.1.

*Yes, we will go for this
Can we get it earlier
than T.V. We exhibit worldwide
& in over 80 countries*

Dear Sir,

Almost unchanged for half a century, except for the multiplicity of electric advertising signs that have made it the nightly gathering place of thousands of sightseers, Piccadilly Circus is about to undergo a series of major developments.

Ten years from now "the Heart of the British Commonwealth" will not be recognisable as the place we know today. As a first step the old Monico site on the north-east side of the Circus is being demolished, to be replaced by a new multi-storey office building which will combine modern architectural design with illuminated sign advertising in the true Piccadilly Circus tradition. This will set the pattern for further major developments. The area affected comprises all the buildings bounded by Shaftesbury Avenue, Glasshouse Street, Denman Street and Sherwood Street.

Full details of this important project will be announced by Mr. P.R. Cahill O.B.E., General Manager of the Legal & General Assurance Society Ltd., and Mr. Jack Cotton, Chairman of City Centre Properties Limited, at a Press Conference to be held at the Criterion (Victoria Room), Piccadilly, London, W.1. on Tuesday, 27th October, 1959, at 4.45 p.m.

Models of the new building, and other visual material will be on view, and full background and technical information and photographs will be available.

I very much hope that you will be able to be represented on this occasion and should much appreciate hearing from you. Photographers will be welcomed. Stamped addressed post card for reply enclosed.

*May David
Hickinson*

*Facilities Prior
to Press Conference.*

Demolition going on now.

Yours faithfully,

2-models:

John Drabble

JOHN DRABBLE
(News Editor)

*Monico photos
1-model facility
Hideo for alteration
- Deal of Date*

Division of W. S. Crawford Ltd.

Directors: H.A.W. Oughton (Chairman) F.A. Sangster (Vice-Chairman)

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FROM PICKADILLEY HALLE, 1615, TO PICCADILLY CIRCUS 1959

The oldest extant record of Piccadilly's world-famous name is contained in a note dated 1623 in which one Robert Baker bequeathed a legacy of £3 to the poor of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields:

"Of Robte Baeker of Pickadilley Halle
gewen by will iij^{li} " (£3)

Eight years earlier Baker had built a few houses, which were given the name of Pickadilley Halle, alongside the bridlepath that became Great Windmill Street. In all that green and pleasant country only two other buildings were within contemporary gunshot: the windmill itself, just to the north, and a small powder-magazine behind the hedgerow on the south side of The Way to Reading where it crossed the top of the hay-market (now the Haymarket) in the lane from Charing Cross.

Why Pickadilley - in that or any other of its variegated spellings? Almost certainly because Robert Baker, a prosperous tailor in the Strand, was noted for the piccadilles or pickadils (embryo or finished ruffs) that he made for his fashionable customers. It was a habit of those days to label tradesmen's houses according to their wares or services. Thus when Simon Osbaldeston, the Bakers' first considerable neighbour, established his famous house and grounds for gaming, dining, wining, bowls and tennis in the big field where the little powder-magazine had been, his property was called Shaver's Hall because he was Gentleman Barber to the Lord Chamberlain. Shaver's Hall has often been confused with the Bakers' place because by the 1650s the enterprise of Robert's widow Mary had made "Piccadilly" the common name for a tiny but promising suburb. If you

went to Shaver's Hall for fun and games or to meet your friends in its shady walks, or if you lodged at the brand-new White Bear Inn where the Criterion now houses its nominal successor, you were said to have gone to Piccadilly. The Puritan Parliament named it disapprovingly with "other nurseries of vice".

A few yards west of Windmill Street another lane branched off The Way to Reading. This was Shug Lane, later Tichborne Street, and when the neighbourhood was built-up at the end of the 17th century it was the best, if not only, way from Coventry Street to Glasshouse or Marybone Street and so the Marylebone Village. A confused jumble of houses and "courts" grew up on either side of Tichborne Street, but one of them, Mary Baker's Black Horse Yard, was to become the London Pavilion, and another the sumptuous Cafe Monico, on a site of special importance to Piccadilly's history.

By 1673 The Way to Reading had become "Piccadilly Street", and by 1720 it was "a large Street and great thoroughfare" beginning to burgeon with palaces, but Tichborne Street and the many other narrow alleys like it were no compensation for the lack of any north-south highway. On the contrary, they were a vexation to the "nobility and gentry" who in later Georgian times inhabited the new squares north of Piccadilly or the oddly-isolated Portland Place, and had business with Parliament, Whitehall or the Court. And how was the Prince Regent to travel with stately directness between his Carlton House and the Regent's Park, where he fancied but never built a suitable country house?

His architect, John Nash, provided the answer. Sweeping away more than 700 houses, he drove his splendid Regent Street through from Carlton House to its kinked junction with Portland Place. The grace and space he gave

to Regent Circus, as it was called for many years, "prevented the sensation of crossing Piccadilly from being perceived"; and Oxford Circus served a similar purpose further on. The two Circuses were so much alike that if you want to see in your mind's eye what Nash made of the one on Piccadilly you should go to the other on Oxford Street and imagine something built on the same exactly circular pattern but slightly smaller, with its four corner "blocks" more neatly proportioned, more precisely symmetrical, much more elegant: "a halo of exquisite architecture linking the four arms of the cross". The short northern arm of the cross continued Nash's Regent Street to his County Fire Office. There he turned the street sharp left, to begin the glorious curve of his Quadrant.

The great undertaking was completed early in the 1820s. Sixty years later Nash's Regent Circus was "brutally transmogrified", became Piccadilly Circus, and as such began to achieve an extraordinary fame in its own right.

Smaller than today's Oxford Circus, it was too small for the volume of horse-drawn traffic it had, let alone the sudden increase that was now to come. If Eros could have stood in 1880 exactly where he stands today he would have been aiming his arrow out through an upper window of Nash's north-east block. By 1885 the whole of this north-east arc, architecturally a quarter of the entire circle, had been razed to the ground and the Circus extended outwards to meet a busy new tributary, Shaftesbury Avenue. So grotesque was the mutilation of Nash's design that his memory was more honoured than insulted when the last of his graceful curved "corners" was rebuilt square in the 1920s. In all other respects the effect was dynamic.

Re-named and doubled in area, Piccadilly Circus reached out to the very source of its name -- to the site of

Robert Baker's Pickadilly Halle. It absorbed Tichborne Street, ex-Shug Lane, and so released the Cafe Monico from the unmerited obscurity it had suffered there for its first ten years. The London Pavilion also emerged, much enlarged, on what had now become its own island site with a frontage on the Circus, looking across at the Criterion. Swan & Edgar's remained (and are) where they had been almost from the first. And when ornament was sought for the newly-cleared space at the end of the new Shaftesbury Avenue, none seemed fitter than the monument to the Avenue's eponymous hero. So in 1893 the Shaftesbury Memorial Fountain arrived. Why and how the boy atop of it came to be called Eros is of an inconsequence equalling his own. He has lost his gay Guard-of-Honour of flower girls, but still gains or reunites countless friends. To them he represents and communicates the blithe spirit that for millions of people, all over the world, has made Piccadilly Circus the heart and centre of wonderland.

Other things gave the Circus much and owe much to it: for instance, the Trocadero and its Long Bar, opened in 1896, and the huge Regent Palace Hotel, built in 1912-15. Possibly "the Avenue" would have had its array of theatres anyhow, but they do make the Circus "the centre of theatre-land". And for many the place itself is a free theatrical spectacle, thanks to its lights. The first illuminated signs appeared on the London Pavilion in 1907: they became so essential a part of the Circus's life that their future is assured. Yet perhaps the most astonishing proof of its spell was the magnetism it held for at least a thousand nights of its black-out in World War II. You could "see nothing and nobody" -- and Eros, anyhow, had retired to the country -- but you could feel and hear that the Circus was more habitually crowded than ever, and we joked about the unusual sound of an English voice. Literally millions of

ex-G.I.s probably remember the Cafe Monico as Rainbow Corner, biggest and busiest of American Red Cross clubs. Goebbels paid the Circus the compliment of destroying it now and again "on the air", but his bombers treated it with uncommon respect.

And that is what Authority at home intends now. According to the latest traffic census nearly 55,000 road vehicles, including 6,000 buses and coaches, pass through Piccadilly Circus in the 12 busy hours of every working day, and 168,000 passengers use its double Underground station every day. They need more room. Writing his London Perambulator thirty-five years ago, James Bone said that with the undoing of Nash's design the Circus became "confusion artfully obtained". Let today's worse confusion now be artfully cured. Opportunity begins where the Circus's first extension ended 75 years ago, leaving an untidy muddle between the new Shaftesbury Avenue and the narrow defile of Sherwood Street. In The Face of London Harold Clunn inveighed against that "row of mean houses", though among them the Cafe Monico once glittered with the stars of every human firmament. It could be a site in a million. Let's see it glitter again, built worthier of the world's most famous, best-loved rendezvous: worthier of Piccadilly Circus.

THE CHANGING FACE OF PICCADILLY CIRCUS

Almost unchanged for half a century, except for the multiplicity of electric advertising signs that have made it the nightly gathering place of thousands of sightseers, Piccadilly Circus, London, is about to undergo a series of major developments.

Ten years from now the "Heart of the British Commonwealth" will not be recognisable as the place we know today. As a first step the Monico site at the north-east side of the Circus is now being demolished, to be replaced by a new multi-storey building providing shopping, restaurant, exhibition, and office accommodation, and car parking facilities. The building will combine modern architectural design with illuminated sign advertising in the true Piccadilly Circus tradition and thereby retain the lively character of the area. This will set the pattern for further developments forming part of an overall plan contemplated by the London County Council.

The area affected by the Monico site developments includes all the buildings bounded by Piccadilly Circus, Glasshouse Street, Denman Street, Sherwood Street and Shaftesbury Avenue. This includes the famous war-time "Rainbow Corner" - biggest and busiest of American Red Cross Clubs. Situated at one of London's focal points, traditionally recognised throughout the world by its central statue of Eros and surrounding frame of electric animated signs, which compare with New York's Times Square, it was considered essential to retain the character of the original Monico site in the new building.

It was decided to make a special feature of the electric display signs and use them as an integral part of the design. The signs will provide the fullest and most effective display without impairing the normal usage of the building. These signs will be carried on one main vertical panel rising ten storeys from the restaurant level facing the Circus, and flanked by two vertical panels and one horizontal panel on each side.

The project is being carried out by the Legal & General Assurance Society Ltd., (General Manager, Mr. P.R. Cahill O.B.E.) and City Centre Properties Ltd., (Chairman, Mr. Jack Cotton), through a development company, Island (Piccadilly) Development Ltd. Properties and interests concerned have been the subject of purchases dating back to 1952. Some 150 interests have been purchased, and as the scheme progressed it became apparent that a site of this outstanding importance should be redeveloped as one comprehensive unit, a proposal which received the full encouragement of the London County Council.

The Island site building will cover an area of 31,032 square feet, which is 5,472 square feet less than that of the existing site. The smaller area will be surrendered for road widening purposes, a first step toward the L.C.C. scheme for the replanning of Piccadilly. On the eventual removal of the London Pavilion the redeveloped Monico building will overlook an enlarged Piccadilly Circus extending from Regent Street to the Haymarket. The present irregular rectangle of the Circus will assume a more uniform shape, but

whatever other alterations are made the famous statue of Eros, unveiled in 1853 in memory of the Earl of Shaftesbury, prominent social reformer and friend of the poor, will remain.

The new building will present an entirely new concept, not only in architecture and design, but also in the variety and novelty of the features and facilities offered by a major building of this kind in the West End of London. It will be faced with Portland stone, will rise some 172 feet in thirteen storeys above ground, and will comprise about 200,000 square feet in area. There will be stores and retail shops on the lower ground, ground and first floors, a restaurant and garden terrace on the second floor, exhibition halls and assembly rooms on the third floor, and office accommodation on the fourth-eleventh floors. The garden terrace will provide facilities for building ornamental pools and fountains, while a novel feature will be the islands of warmth around the terrace tables, achieved by fitting black radiant heat units immediately beneath the canopies of the table umbrellas. The basement will be reserved for services; on the twelfth floor there will be caretaker's and resident engineer's flats, boilers and other plant.

Stair and lift shafts will provide vertical circulation from basement to roof. Of the seven lifts two will terminate at the exhibitions floor, four at the twelfth and one at the thirteenth. Two entrances have been provided to the building from Denman Street, one of which is in the form of a lay-by or loop roadway by which lorries and taxis can enter the building

without causing street congestion. Lorries arriving in Denman Street will drive on to a hoist platform of 20-tons capacity, and be taken down to the basement; at the foot of the hoist they drive to a turntable which directs them to the appropriate unloading bay. It will take no more than two minutes for a lorry to be taken from road level to unloading station, and the basement will accommodate six large lorries at a time. Electrically operated trucks will take the loads from the discharge points, through trucking roads to goods lifts which can be sited to suit the tenants' requirements.

The design of the lorry hoist is such that in the evenings, when lorry unloading will not take place, it will provide turn-round space for taxis serving the restaurant and exhibition floors.

An innovation of great interest will be the incorporation into the building of a rotating crane with retractable arms placed at roof level. This 5-ton crane, which will rotate through 360° , will extend 93 feet to pick up fully prefabricated sign panels from Denman Street and place them in position. In this way an entire display can be changed in 24 hours.

The crane will also position large cleaning and maintenance cradles serving the sign faces and smaller cradles for cleaning the outside of the building. Full safety devices will be incorporated. Yet another facility is that the crane will hoist plant and equipment to the roof top plant rooms. The crane structure has been so designed that it gives another illuminated feature to the building.

The problem of car parking has been met by the

purchase of Moon's garage on the north side of Denman Street where ample accommodation to meet the full needs of the building will be available.

Among the many properties that have been bought to enable the improvements to be carried out are the Devonshire Arms and Snows' Chop House. The Devonshire Arms will eventually be closed, but Snows' will move over in the near future to "The Standard" public house on the opposite side in Piccadilly, and will be renamed "Snows".