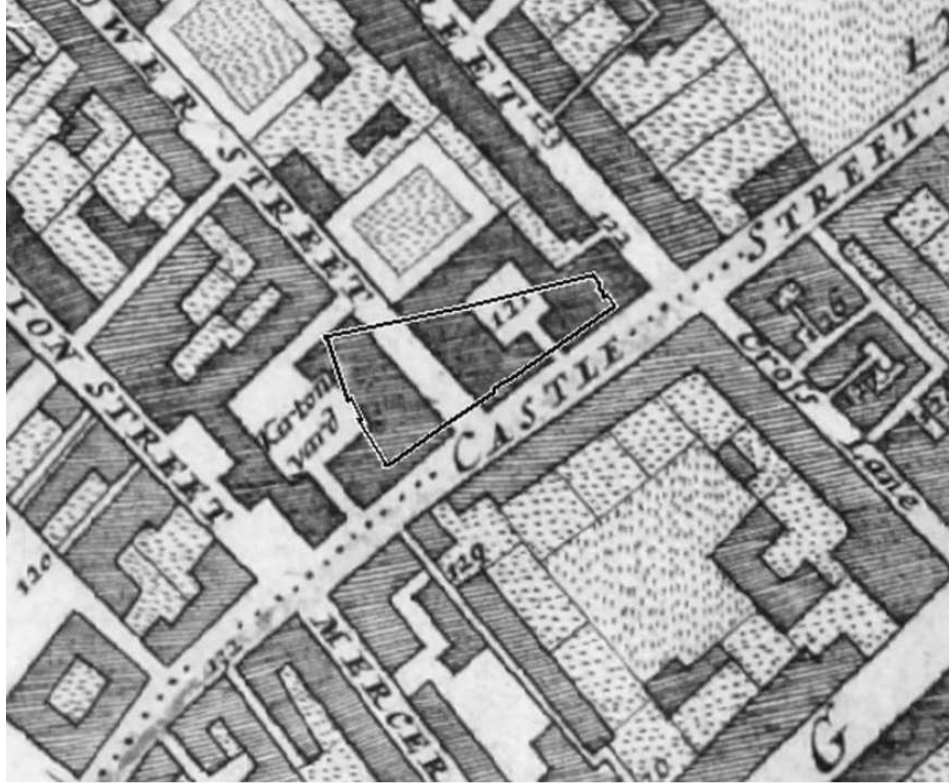


Seven Dials Warehouse

The wedge-shaped building at 42-56 Earlham Street was constructed in the mid-19th century as an extension to the Combe & Co brewery but the architect of the building is not known. It is situated in the Seven Dials Conservation Area which contains an eclectic mix of buildings including a number of 18th and 19th century terraces juxtaposed against larger mid-to-late-19th century warehouses. The Seven Dials Warehouse has strong group value with these neighbouring buildings, which display similar architectural characteristics including a shared scale and materiality. In September 1999 a fire destroyed the interiors of the third, fourth and fifth floor and the entire roof structure of the Seven Dials Warehouse. In addition, most of the windows were also blown out. In 2001 a scheme was approved to restore and alter the interior of the building. It was rebuilt internally from the third floor upwards with modern floors, columns, double glazed windows and a flat roof. Sections of the façade were also rebuilt, particularly along Shelton Street. In 2017 approval was granted to re-fit the interior with an industrially-inspired fit-out and the ground, mezzanine, third, fourth and fifth floors are currently in use as an office.

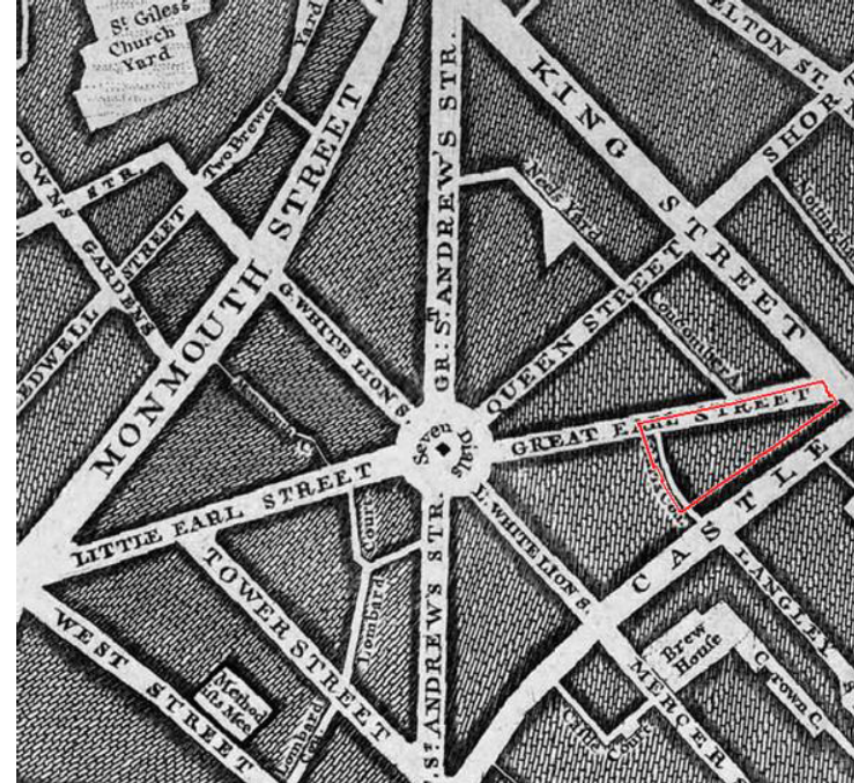


Map 1



The area to the north of Covent Garden was once a narrow strip of market gardens owned by the monks of Westminster Abbey. In 1552 the land was granted to the 1st Earl of Bedford and by 1631 the gardens had been developed with shops, workers buildings and houses. William Morgan's map of London, published in 1682, illustrates the streets and buildings that first occupied the area (Map 1) and that the site has changed significantly. St Giles's Fields has been developed to the north and a tighter street grid laid out; Castle Street (now Shelton Street), King Street (now Neal Street) are visible but Earlham Street has not been laid down yet. The site is occupied by a large building entered off Castle Street with a central courtyard and a large garden to the rear, the southern end of Tower Street and part of another building centred around Karton Yard.

Map 2



Rocque's map of 1746 (Map 2) shows further change as the area is beginning to acquire its current layout. Thomas Neal redesigned the area west of the site with a plan of seven roads connecting the main thoroughfares, converging at a central crossroads, known as Seven Dials. This necessitated the demolition of many of the buildings noted in previous maps including those that once occupied the site. The site appears as a triangular plot of land at the south-eastern end of the new quarter leading to Seven Dials, with the western boundary of the site a small alley called Earl's Court.

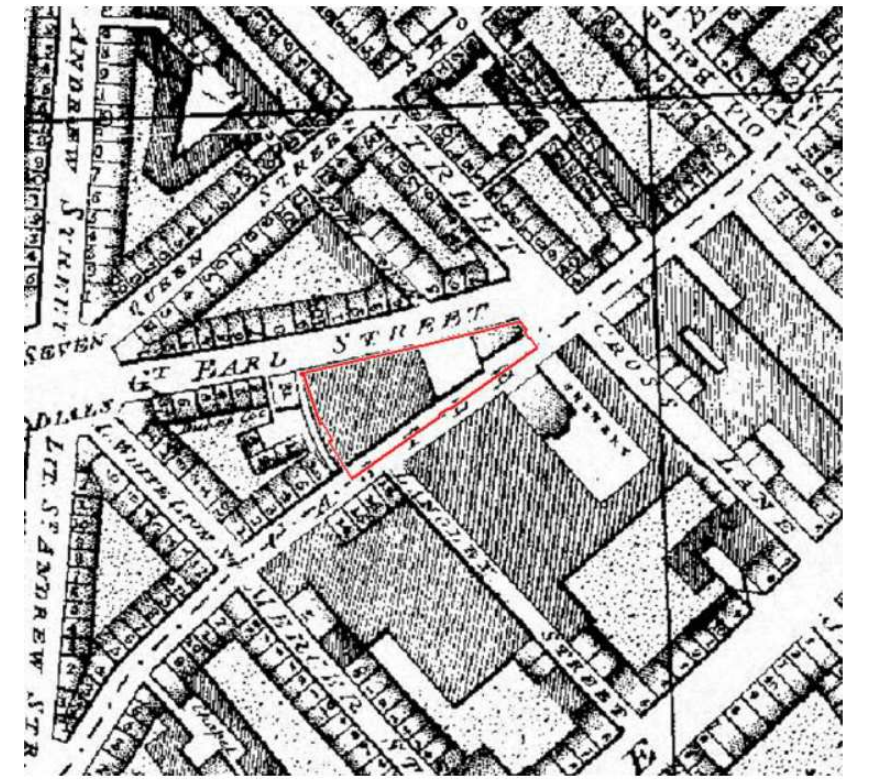
To the south of the site, on the opposite side of Castle Street, a small brewery had been established by John Shackley in the 'Wood Yard' in 1722, on land leased from the Mercers Company. This brewery grew when in 1739 it was acquired by William Gyfford; by 1787 it was the fifth largest porter brewery in London and was now owned by Harvey Christian Combe.8 who enlarged the premises and traded as Gyfford and Co.

Map 3



Horwood's map of 1799 (Map 3) shows the site in greater detail and in the drawing, it is possible to see that the site is occupied by a number of small buildings, with the ones in the western half backing on to an open courtyard and an alley giving access to Earl's Court with buildings north and south of it.

Map 4

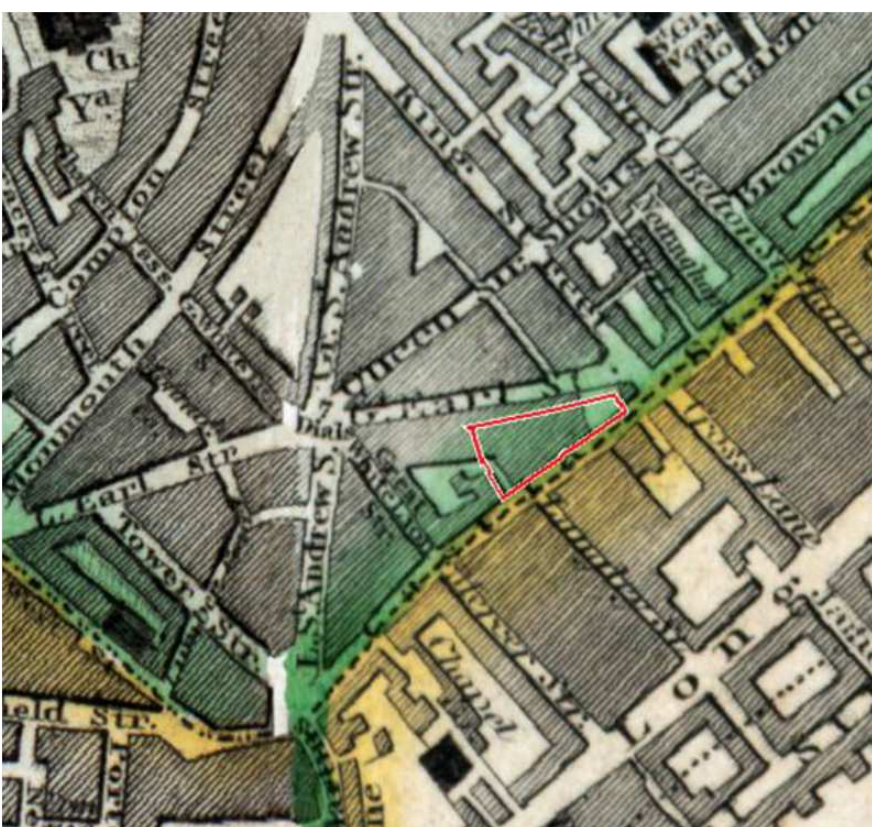


The brewery was extended in the early part of the 19th century through the acquisition of the freehold of the area occupied by the site, though the main part of the brewery was leased from the Mercers Company. Faden's 1813 revision of Horwood's map (Map 4) shows the beginning of this extension with the western part of the site redeveloped.

The Victoria County History states that under the management of Harvey Christian Combe the brewery prospered, with Combe & Co spending a considerable amount on the repair, rebuilding and extension of the brewery premises. On Combe's death in 1818, the brewery passed to his son, Harvey Combe and his brother-in-law, Joseph Delafield, who further enlarged the premises.

Gyfford and Co appears to have acquired the freehold of the site though the rest of the brewery was leased from the Mercers Company Archive. Horwood's map shows the site during its development, with only a small block on the west side of the plot having been constructed.

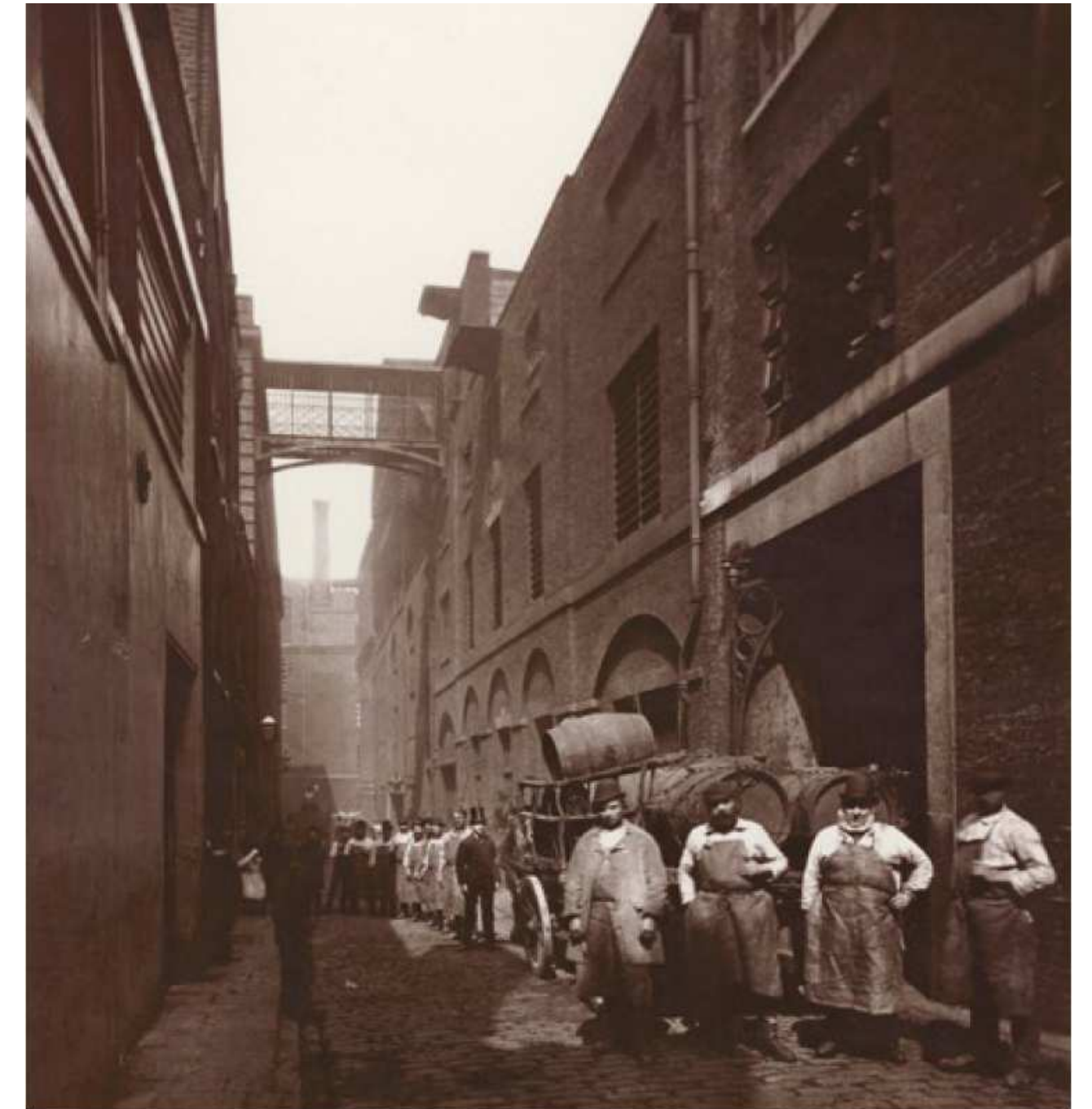
Map 5



Redevelopment and extension continued throughout the 19th century and in 1839 the brewery began trading as Combe & Co. Greenwood's map of 1828 (Map 5) shows the progress of the redevelopment of the brewery building with the front part of the building facing the square with a large open square behind it and a large building west of the open square.



The brewery underwent a major single phase of rebuilding in c.1830. A contemporary illustration of the Brewery was produced in the same year, illustrating the site from the corner of Castle Street and Neal Street. Later rebuilding work included a small corner redevelopment in c. 1850 and further partial rebuilding in 1872. The site also expanded in 1839 when the brewery bought the neighbouring 'Richard Meux Brewery' on the west side of Langley Street, and it was after this purchase the company began trading as 'Combe & Co.'

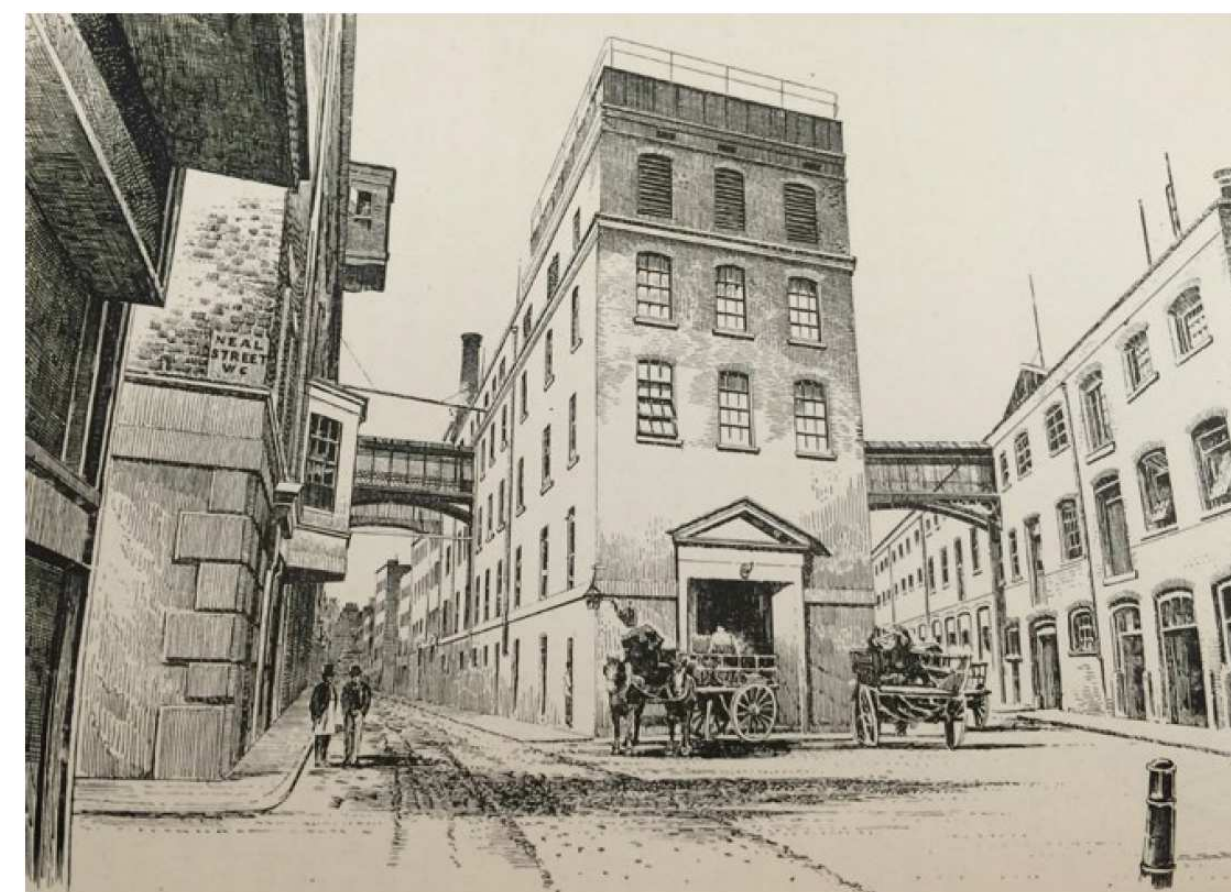


The 1830 redevelopment resulted in the rebuilding of all of the buildings surrounding the yard and the expansion of the site to the south, behind the terraced row fronting Long Acre. The 1872 works were undertaken by the architect E J Wilson and involved the substantial rebuilding of the buildings on Langley Street and also partial rebuilding of those fronting Shelton Street. A photograph dating to c.1875 shows the site looking north from Langley Street, with the former Richard Meux Brewery connected to Combe & Co by an overhead hop bridge and the Seven Dials Warehouse is visible in the distance on Castle Street. Information on how the brewery buildings were used is shown on Goad's

Map 6



The 1874 first edition Ordnance Survey map (Fig 10) shows the site occupied by one large building. The present building is very different to that depicted in the 1830 illustration suggesting a rebuilding took place sometime in the mid-19th century.

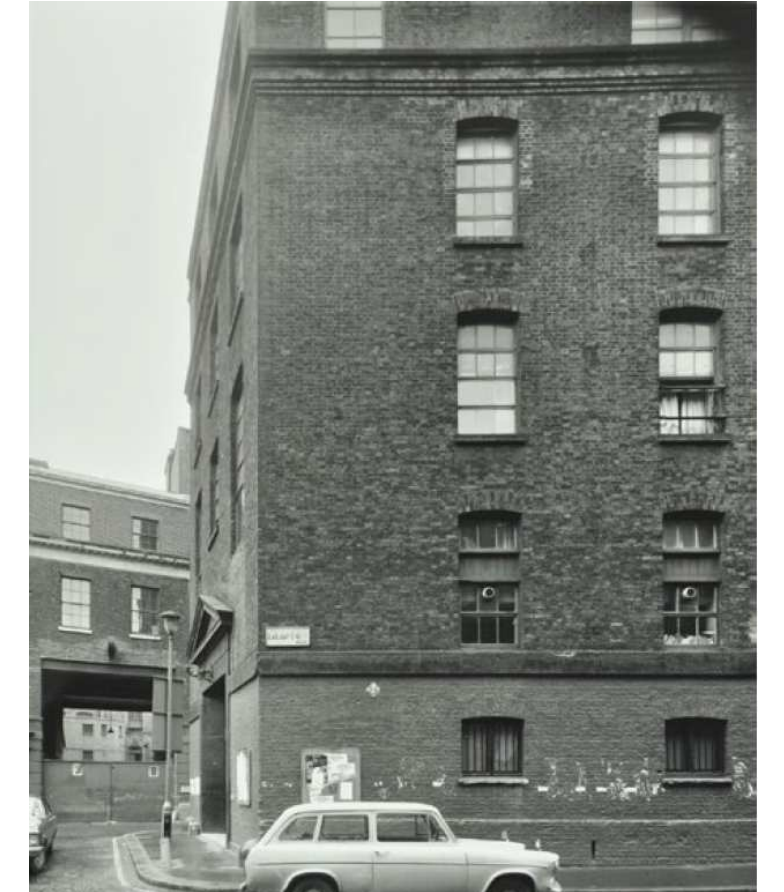


The 1888 engraving shows the front elevation of the site in a very similar manner as to how it now appears - the building is very narrow at this point, is five storeys high with a double height entrance permitting the loading of barrels. A gas lamp is above the entrance. There is a tall parapet with what appears to be a fenced enclosure which is probably part of the access provided by the visible cast-iron hop-bridges.12 The Victoria County History records that 450 people were employed on the site, with annual output of over 500,000 barrels. The Combe & Co. brewery was acquired in 1898 by the Watney & Co. brewery and renamed Watney, Combe, Reid & Co. The brewery site closed in 1905.

Map 7



The 1951 Ordnance Survey (Map 7) shows the west part of the site as labelled as a warehouse while the east part has no label and is shown as no. 31 Shelton Street.



Photograph of the building from 1975 show that while the brickwork at ground floor level was painted, many original features of the building are retained. Changes to the building visible in the images include the enlarging of first floor windows and the adding of several entrances added at ground floor level. The high-level railing on the roof and hop bridges have been removed.15