


EC1 ECHO

APR/MAY 2020 • N°.3 FREE

 EC1Echo.co.uk	NEWS Heating London from the underground up P.3	FEATURE Cabin fever: EC1's hotel- building boom P.8-9	HISTORY Pictures of Clerkenwell at war 75 years after VE-day P.12	 @EC1Echo
 /EC1Echo				 EC1Echo@ peelinstitute.org.uk



Credit Rob Baker Ashton

Clerkenwell suffers under Covid-19

For such a busy area, the EC1 district is currently and alarmingly empty. This is of course due to the extraordinary strictures that have been imposed following the coronavirus and Covid-19 pandemic.

The 'lockdown' announced on 23 March urged us all to stay at home with the public only allowed to go out once a day to do one of a handful of activities: to exercise, buy food; get medical necessities, provide care or to help a vulnerable person, and to undertake essential work such as the NHS workers and the police.

Most importantly, many people in the area will be suffering. As well as keeping an eye on television and listening to the radio, those with internet access can look out for mutual support groups on Social Media. Islington's Facebook group is called Islington COVID 19 Mutual Aid, the City's is City of London Covid 19 Mutual Aid and there is Camden COVID-19 Mutual Aid.

The three councils in the area – Islington, Camden and the City of London – have extensive advice on their websites, aimed at containing the virus.

At present, the advice includes:

- to shop for basic essentials
- to do one form of exercise a day
- visit a pharmacy or deliver essential supplies to a vulnerable person
- to travel to and from work – but only where this is absolutely necessary

Stay at home if you have either:

- a temperature
- a new, continuous cough

To protect others, do not go to places like a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. Stay at home. Use the 111 online coronavirus service to find out what to do.

These measures will not last forever, but all advice should be taken seriously. Meanwhile, we hope that the *EC1 Echo* will give you some reading pleasure during this time of enforced isolation.

Meet Harriette Ashcroft, whose musical ensemble Mrs H and The Sing-along Band has entranced children and parents at the church of Our Most Holy Redeemer in Exmouth Market for many years

Credit Rob Baker Ashton

• Turn to page 7

N°.3

APR /
MAY
20201st AprFirst
Quarter
51% / 0.5231st MayWaxing
Gibbous
65% / 0.55

EC1 Echo is the area's free community newspaper. We publish bi-monthly and distribute 5,000 free copies door-to-door in Clerkenwell as well as 500 copies to cafés, pubs, community centres, libraries and other venues

Publisher

David Floyd

Editor

Oliver Bennett

Designer

Jonathan Duncan

Head of Operations

Paige Ballmi

Contributors

David Wilcox, Carla Manso, Bruno Healy, Ed Sheridan, Yvonne Courtney, Nicola Baird, Mark Aston, Rashida Taylor, Grace Roach, Chris Walker, Lisa Burrell, Alan Wylie, Mark Aston, Tom Currie, Leo Hamburger, Rob la Frenais, Matthew Baust, Holly Maltby

CONTACT**Email**EC1Echo@
peelinstitute.org.uk**Post**7-11 Coppermill Lane,
Walthamstow E17 7HA**ADVERTISING****Contact Klaudia Kiss:****Call** 020 8521 7956**Email**

klaudia@socialspider.com

**EC1 Echo is a member of IMPRESS:**

The Independent Monitor of The Press. For more information on the EC1 Echo's complaints policy and how to make a complaint visit:

EC1Echo.co.uk/complaints

NEWS



Clerkenwell says no to single- use plastic

The first "Low Plastic Zone" or LPZ recently launched in Clerkenwell.

After finding that 95 per cent of consumers want local businesses to reduce plastics, North London Waste Authority (NLWA) in partnership with Islington Council and six other north London boroughs, debuted the initiative in Cowcross Street, with a view to reducing the single-use plastic given to customers and to take forward a Charter of Commitment.

The LPZ aims to encourage and support local businesses to reduce the amount of single-use plastic used – a particular challenge in EC1 where street markets like Leather Lane and Exmouth Market cater for the lunchtime takeaway diners. A recent survey showed public demand, with 95 percent of respondents wanting local businesses to cut out single-

use plastic, with some buyers refusing to use businesses that don't take action.

The LPZ launched at the Lazybones restaurant in Cowcross Street. As Cllr Clyde Loakes of the North London Waste Authority said: "Our research shows that the majority of people are try-

"[It] will be a win-win-win; for businesses, for consumers and of course, for the planet"

ing hard to reduce their use of single-use plastic but are frustrated at how difficult it is to avoid when shopping or eating and drinking on-the-go. Reducing the amount of waste we all create, and single-use

plastics in particular, is essential for helping tackle the climate emergency.

"We know that businesses want to reduce their environmental impact, not only because it's the right thing to do, but because it's good for business. People are telling us that they are more likely to use companies who are taking action in this area so we are confident that this flagship initiative will be a win-win-win; for businesses, for consumers and of course, for the planet." Increasing numbers of cafes and takeaways allow customers to bring their own containers and refuse the plastic knife and fork. Shopping areas at Haringey, Camden, Barnet, Enfield, Hackney and Waltham Forest are also attaining, or have attained, Low Plastic Zone status.

More information:

Visit wiseuptowaste.org.uk/businesses/low-plastic-zones

2

Way to go

*Major new
cycleways
planned in EC1*

Work on Cycleway 38 – due eventually to connect Farringdon to Palmers Green in Enfield – is to gain a significant link this year with a new cycleway between Finsbury Park and Highbury Fields. When complete, Cycleway 38 will offer protected cycle tracks the length of the borough and is being planned in line with Vision Zero: the goal of which is to eliminate all deaths and serious injuries on London roads by 2041.

"Ensuring that people in the borough are able to enjoy an active, healthy lifestyle is one of our main priorities," said Cllr Rowena Champion, Islington Council's executive member for environment and transport. "By encouraging more active ways of transport, we can enable Islington residents and visitors to enjoy the beauty of our borough in a way that reduces unnecessary car journeys and therefore cuts down on air pollution and congestion." She added that Islington hopes to become a net zero carbon borough by 2030.

The news follows Camden Council's consultation last winter to provide protected cycleways on Gray's Inn Road. When implemented, these cycleways will provide safe cycling on the north-south route from King's Cross and East Bloomsbury to Holborn – although like the Farringdon Road cycle lanes they have not been without controversy, with critics arguing that the lanes will slow buses and other traffic, adding to pollution.

An unexpected boost to cycling has come from the Covid-19 outbreak, as people try to avoid tubes and buses, and to exercise in isolation after spending time at home. Although Italy and Spain have imposed restrictions on leisure cycling – in part to prevent the potential of people needing hospitalisation – some countries have encouraged cycling including Germany, to the point of advocating an emergency expansion of the cycle network. If you are getting back on your bike following the Covid-19 epidemic check the advice from the London Cycling Campaign at lcc.org.uk

Public gives housing managers a pasting

BY ED SHERIDAN,
LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

The company responsible for managing Islington's council homes has once again faced the wrath of residents at a meeting in which housing bosses were directly confronted and heckled by their tenants.

Partners for Improvement looks after over 6,000 properties through a PFI scheme set up by the former Lib Dem administration. Many of these are in the EC1 area.

As the organisation prepares to hand over 4,100 properties held under one of Islington Council's controversial PFI contracts set to expire in the next couple of years, Tom Irvine, Partners' CEO, and Neal Ackcral, chief property officer at Hyde Housing Association, which provides Partners' housing management service, were challenged by councillors once again on the level of complaints.

Cllr Sue Lukes (Lab, Highbury East), said: "In terms of objective external measurements, the figures I've got show that in terms of complaints upheld by the housing ombudsman in relation Islington homes, 28 per cent of those related to PFI homes, and you only manage 19 per cent of our homes.

"Clearly the rate of upheld complaints at the housing ombudsman is much higher than the proportion of the homes. The ombudsman is upholding many more complaints than they are against us as a borough.

"That is an objective assessment of what we're seeing in the room. We're very much aware that Islington council tenants have lots of complaints about the council, but generally we get them resolved inhouse before they hit the ombudsman."

When Irvine responded that the figures behind those statistics would be quite low, he was heckled from the crowd, who invited him to imagine how many cases would not reach the ombudsman stage.

Lukes went on to address the involvement of Rydon, which carries out day to day services for Partners, pointing out that it has been specifically asked not to bid for any government contracts until its role in the Grenfell fire had been fully investigated.

The Highbury councillor added that this was an "uneasy and difficult" relationship for the council, and when she asked about the possibility of re-examining it, the crowd applauded.

Despite Partners' attempts to only hear the details of individual cases in a separate room, saying that it was unwilling to share "personal and sensi-

tive" information in public, many residents continued to heckle and berate the housing boss over issues including antisocial behaviour, lack of engagement, increased scaffolding charges and delayed or botched repairs with frequent

“*We want to make sure that we deliver the requirements of those contracts and provide good service*”

calls of 'Bring it in-house'.

Irvine said that one of the challenges PFI has is the need to prepare to hand over properties to the council, to which the crowd responded 'Oh, great' and 'Can't wait, hurry up'.

Despite repeated pressing from both members of the housing scrutiny com-

mission and watching residents, neither Irvine or Ackcral would be persuaded to reveal the value of the contract held with the borough in public.

Irvine said: "I think it's probably right to acknowledge that there are a large number of people in this room who are in principle opposed to private finance initiatives.

"There are probably many who would point out that the housing PFI contracts here in Islington were entered into by a previous administration. This is a matter of fact.

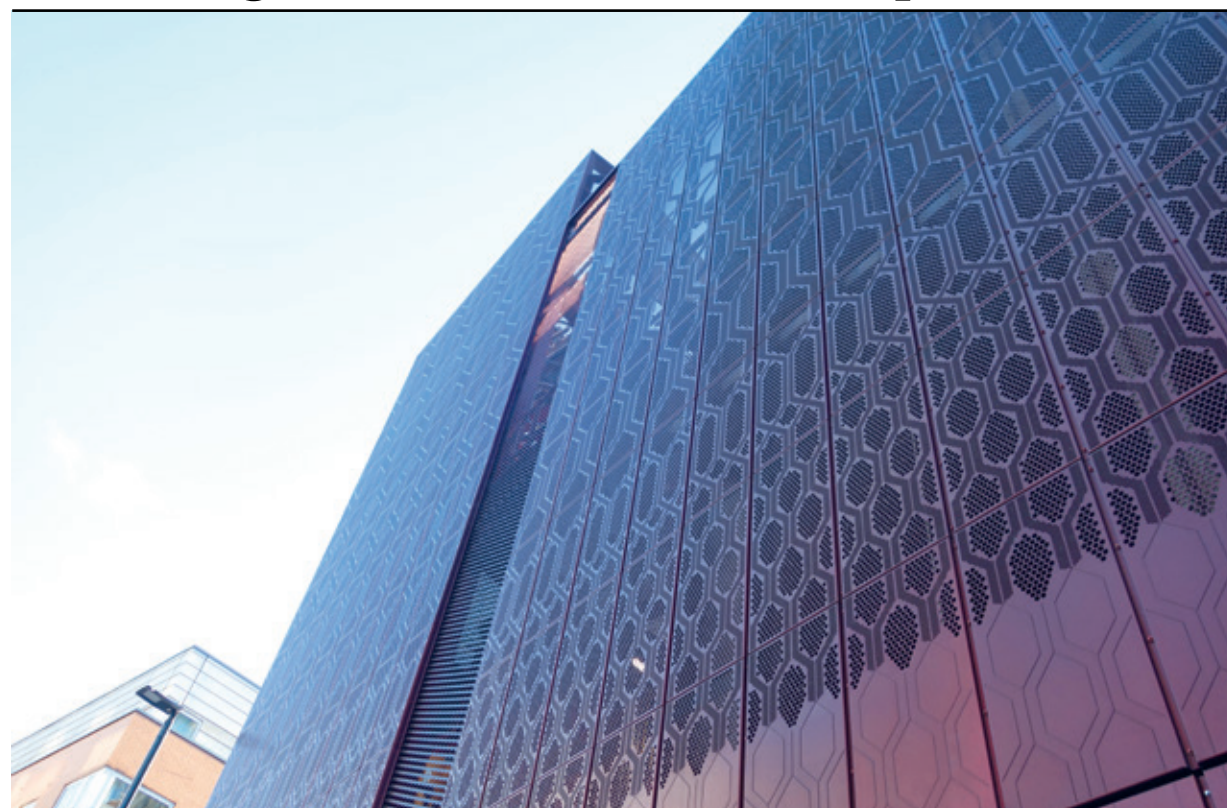
"What is also a matter of fact is that these contracts exist, and Islington Council and Partners are in them. We want to make sure that we deliver the requirements of those contracts and provide good service.

"We will work with Islington and with Islington Council to achieve those aims. It's absolutely fine to say that you hate PFI in principle, that's absolutely fine, no problem at all. Let's keep working together for the good of the residents and communities we serve."

Islington Council has two contracts with Partners for Improvement in Islington to manage and maintain some of our street properties homes. PFI 1 covers approximately 2,000 homes. This contract ends in 2033. The second contract, PFI 2, covers 4,042 properties. This contract ends in April 2022.

Underground, overground... “

The first scheme in the world using waste heat from an underground rail network has opened in EC1



In a startling rust-coloured building where Moreland Street meets Central Street and City Road, is an innovative energy scheme.

Using waste heat from the Tube, the scheme brings heat to over 1,350 homes, the Ironmonger Row Baths, Finsbury Leisure Centre and Moreland Primary School – and is a world-first.

The Bunhill 2 Energy Centre sits on top of the old City Road underground station. Beneath it is a huge two-metre underground fan, installed in an existing six-storey London Underground ventilation shaft, which extracts warm air from the Northern line tunnels below. This air is used to heat water that is then pumped to nearby buildings.

It is hoped that the ground-

London has set the target of being carbon neutral by 2030

breaking centre will set the agenda for decarbonising heat in future schemes in London and elsewhere, reducing carbon emissions while improving air quality. The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: "It's great to see this highly innovative project up and running." I've set London the target of being carbon-neutral by 2030... an ambition that will require innovative projects like Bunhill to help deliver it." Cllr Rowena Champion, Islington Council's executive member for Environment and Transport, said: "This pioneering project recycles heat that was simply being lost to the environment." She added that it also reduces people's energy bills.

The centre also boasts a public artwork one of its sides by Scottish artist Toby Paterson.

FEATURE



Going for a song

Listen out for Antonio’s musical masterwork this May

The organist of St Peter’s Italian Church in Clerkenwell is staging a major concert of Italian 20th century popular music at the end of May – and he hopes it will be the first of many. Antonio Pappano Riccio (above), 51, who has acted as both choirmaster and organist at the church, says the show is a labour of love that is finally making its debut. The seed of this project started in 2013. “I was approached by

someone who wanted to fund my idea of creating a repertoire of Italian pop songs to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the church that year,” says Antonio. “It’s something I’ve been working on for a long time.” Antonio developed his vision to make a “celebration of Italian song”, with a repertoire

from across the 20th century for 21st century audiences, took hold. He devised new orchestral arrangements with a 21st century sensibility and this year he bit the bullet and May’s concert is the result. It will not take place at St Peter’s, but at St Andrew in Holborn, where it will feature the might of the St Mary-le-Bow orchestra from Cheapside. From a London-Italian background, Antonio grew up in

Oval as part of a musical family. “My uncle trained as an opera singer with Pavarotti,” he says. After taking up the piano at eight years old, Antonio then embarked on a career in music working in every style from classical to dance music. The songs he has chosen go back as far as the early 20th century: “hidden gems” which only Italians are likely to know. For Antonio it’s meaningful that 60 per cent of his repertoire hails from the Neapolitan area, as it’s his ancestral home and as he puts it, “The undisputed birthplace of European music”. As well as the acclaimed orchestra he’s pleased to have signed up four top singers including Madelena Alberto, who has played the lead role in the musical Evita in the West End. There’s another aspect of the show, which is that it aims to celebrate the Italian presence in Clerkenwell – and to smooth out tensions attributed to Brexit with a touch of bel canto. “Italians have had a strong presence in London since the 1850s and will continue to do so,” says Antonio, who says it’s also a tribute to the Italian history of Clerkenwell. “I love this area so it’s good that it’s starting here. Although some of the older people now live far away, it’s still the headquarters of the Italian community.” Antonio would like to play other venues such as the Cadogan Hall, and perhaps tour the show to other places in the UK noted for their Italian populations – Glasgow, Manchester, Bedford – in time possibly taking it to Italian cities such as Milan. “It’s very powerful for the Italian community, particularly those first-generation Italians who have left their homeland, and are full of nostalgia and emotion.” But he also wants it to be universal: to bring the music of Italy to the world via a corner of London where he has personally presided over many weddings and baptisms. Covid-19 permitting, ‘The Italian Songbook – A Cultural Soundscape’ will be performed at St Andrew Church, 5 St Andrew Street, Holborn, EC4A 3AF at 8pm on 30 May. Further info and tasters of the songs can be found at: Visit theitaliansongbook.com

FEATURE

Paddli Nicola Baird Boat Club’s a

The City Road basin has been a magnet for canoeists for half a century thanks to Islington Boat Club. This April, members and the club’s current fans, both young and old, will be meeting at Graham Street for its golden celebration. “It has to be hundreds of thousands of Islingtonians who have used Islington Boat Club over the past 50 years,” says administrator Jan Dorling from the club’s offices overlooking Regent’s Canal. It might have been different. “Islington Boat Club was founded by Crystal Hale who lived in Islington overlooking the City Road Basin,” says Filippo Gaddo, chair of the club’s trustees. “In the 1960s Crystal was so alarmed at plans for the basin to be filled and built over, that she organised and led a campaign to save it. “Against all the odds she succeeded and, as a result of her victory, she founded Islington Boat Club in 1970.” She also set up the annual Angel Canal Festival in 1975 as a fundraising event for the narrow boat Angel, which was used to give inner city children boat rides and trips into the countryside. At first Islington Boat Club was funded by Islington Council, as

Rashida Ta the concept



With concerns for mental health on the rise – and the effects of Coronavirus causing us to rethink

ng into a half-century

looks forward to Islington anniversary celebrations



SAVED The City Road Basin, home to the boat club, was once to have been filled in

part of its overall youth provision, but it is now a registered charity reliant upon fundraising, grants and donations. Its aim is still to inspire learning, improve health, promote socialisation and strengthen the Islington community by providing a wide range of fun, safe and affordable water-based activities for everyone – with a focus on young people, the over-50s and people with additional needs.

The youth club runs three times a week and throughout the school

holidays for nine to 19-year-olds. The school sessions – which began in 1972 – are hugely popular, but if you are over 50 you can try learning water skills at the weekly UpperDeckers club.

“Come ready to have a paddle or just drop in on Sunday 26 April from 11am–5pm at the boat club’s base, 16-35 Graham Street, N1,” says Jan. “We’ll have free tasters in the morning on the water, kayak skills demonstrations and we are planning the biggest flotilla of boats and

stand-up paddleboards on the water at the same time.”

The Mayor of Islington plus Crystal Hale’s son and daughter, all big supporters of the Boat Club, will be joining the celebration on Sunday 26 April. Come and join them.

Ever been on a canoe at the boat club? To see a collection of photos from 1970 onwards:
Facebook /vintageibc

For more up-to-date information:
Visit islingtonboatclub.com
Twitter @IslingtonBoatCl

ylor of Stillpoint Spaces explains behind “psychological co-working”



how we approach life – people are starting to think of alternative ways to work. Boxed in, poorly lit, isolated cubicle-style workplaces

have long been on the way out, replaced by more social, open-plan spaces, which have been found to increase productivity and wellbeing. There has also been a huge shift in working styles, with more people working remotely from coworking spaces instead of traditional office environments.

Stillpoint Spaces London, a coworking, events and therapy space in Clerkenwell, has taken this several steps further, becoming London’s first “psychological co-working” space. Its main aim is to encourage the exploration of psychology in depth, not just

within the four walls of therapy and its psychological co-working space – flooded with natural light and with bright yellow walls – was carefully designed by therapists to create a calming and creative environment.

During the current coronavirus pandemic where a lot of people are self-isolating, Stillpoint Spaces has a series of online events dedicated to maintaining their sense of community and care for mental health in this uncertain time. Head to their website to see what’s on, and book your free visit when their doors open again. stillpointspaces.com

Facing up to grief



Clerkenwell woman Grace Roach is aiming to set up a new service for anyone interested in bereavement counselling.

Already qualified as a counsellor and working on person-centred art therapy skills with visually impaired people in a groups, Grace is now setting up a bereavement support group.

After a bereavement, we often don’t take enough care of ourselves, she says. “People express anger, frustration and rage without knowing why they are being this, but it is sometimes traceable to a loss.” And that loss doesn’t necessarily have to be recent, either. “It can be a historic loss of say ten years ago as much as a present loss,” says Grace. “The feelings don’t necessarily go away – and if you haven’t dealt with them properly then they may return.”

Sometimes friends, colleagues and even family members can be sympathetic for two months then expect you to be over it – but it doesn’t always work like that, and the loss of their attention can leave you in a kind of limbo. “Say something,” says Grace, “even if you’re worried that you might say the wrong thing. It’s better than nothing.” Also, she adds, we should also consider counselling against “future loss”: that is, the expected death of an aged parent or a person with a terminal illness.



Say something even if you’re worried that you might say the wrong thing



Bereavement counselling gives you a safe and confidential space to discuss your feelings and it can take different forms. Some choose one-to-one counselling, for example, while others prefer a group where the support of others can be of great value. “It depends on each individual,” says Grace, who during almost two decades as a humanistic and integrative counsellor has seen a shift in attitudes. “There’s certainly a greater interest in bereavement counselling and people understand it better,” she says. “But there’s still a lot of room for improvement. I expect it to explode in the coming years as it can be really beneficial for people who are suffering.”

If you’re interested in discussing bereavement support with Grace Roach:
Email grace.bereavement@outlook.com

FEATURE

What is to be done?

Celebrated by some and reviled by others, Lenin has been one of EC1's most divisive denizens. On his 150th birthday, the Echo follows his revolutionary traces in Clerkenwell

WORDS • CHRIS WALKER

He's a contentious figure but Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov – better known as Lenin – is one of Clerkenwell's most famous past residents. And as his 150th birthday approaches on 22 April, it's well worth a look at the footprint he left in the area.

Having fled Tsarist Russia in 1900, Lenin spent the next 17 years in Europe, coming to London five times. During his first visit from 1902 to 1903 he was based in Clerkenwell where wrote many revolutionary articles and edited his newspaper *Iskra* (The Spark) from 37a Clerkenwell Green. The paper was also printed here, then smuggled into Russia to explain Marxist ideas, expose the brutal Tsarist autocracy and ultimately help spark the revolution. That building is now The Marx Memorial Library, a museum that has Lenin's original desk as well as original copies of the paper itself. Its door is

The bust of Lenin can be found at Islington Museum in St John Street

red, naturally, and it has been visited by Soviet luminaries such as Mikhail Gorbachev and Nikita Khrushchev. Lenin used to enjoy a pint in the nearby Crown and Anchor (now known as the Crown Tavern) on Clerkenwell Green. During his second visit, he stayed at a safe house at 16 Percy Circus, which now has a blue plaque outside. A bust of Lenin was the centrepiece of a monument unveiled on the revolutionary's birthday in 1942.



A plaque marks the place in Percy Circus where Lenin lived



It was designed by the Russian émigré architect Berthold Lubetkin and presented by the Soviet Embassy. The monument stood in bomb-damaged Holford Square, looking towards number 30, where Lenin had lived during his first visit in 1902-3. Lubetkin was also commissioned for a housing project named after Lenin, which would stand on the old Holford Square site and was to be called Lenin Court. But by the time the project was completed, in the early 1950s, it was the peak of the Cold War. As a result, the name of the building was changed to Bevin Court, honouring Britain's Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin. Bevin was firmly anti-communist. Meanwhile Lubetkin's memorial was repeatedly attacked and eventually was removed and put in storage. It is now on show at the Islington Museum on St John Street – the perfect place to drop in and wish him a happy birthday.

On 23rd and 30th April the Marx Memorial Library is holding lectures marking Lenin's 150th birthday. For more information: Visit marx-memorial-library.org.uk

Chris Walker is the author of '101 Moderately Interesting Facts about Clerkenwell'. Available from Space in Exmouth Market, MagCulture on St John Street, I Just (formerly Sublime) on St John Street, and Charterhouse Museum

She's te Come and w

Harriette Ashcroft's musical ensemble – called Mrs H and The Sing-along Band – has long been a fixture in the church hall attached to Our Most Holy Redeemer in Exmouth Market. Indeed, so long has it been treading the hall's boards that Harriette herself can't quite remember. "I think it's about 15 years," she says. "Maybe more." At present about 350 children and their parents come through her sing-alongs, which take place two or three times a week. That adds up to a lot of singers – hence the *Evening Standard* calling her "The Gareth Malone for under-fives." And it's such fun that on occasion, the child has moved on while the parent has stayed.

Walk o Help join Cle dots with loc

A group of local residents has started a deeper "timeline" exploration into the past, present and future of the Smithfield and south Clerkenwell areas, following our story by Peter Bill. Market buildings will be turned into a venue for exhibitions and events, the Museum of London will move to the long-empty western end of the market, and a new Centre for Music (impression of the proposed centre, pictured) is planned on the former Museum site. Stretching back 1,000 years to the beginnings of the livestock market, the timeline will take in the 12th-century foundation of London's oldest surviving church, St Bartholomew the Great, and Barts Hospital. It then stretches through the 16th-century executions and burning of martyrs in west Smithfield – right through to recent developments in Smithfield such as the Culture Mile programme. The exploration, led by former *Evening Standard* planning corre-

aching the world to sing

atch Mrs H in action at Exmouth Market

Harriette, who trained as an actor and is a guitarist, started the group in the early 2000s as part of the Sure Start programme.

“The idea was that it would be a free drop-in session to encourage children to sing,” she says. “This gave it a freedom to develop – it didn’t have to be designed to bring in money.” From the start Harriette ensured that the group only sings original, self-composed songs, rather than a typical children’s repertoire of Wheels on the Bus et al.

Harriette – by then a single parent – developed the Sing-along class as it went along. It became a charity, and is now a Community Interest Company or CIC. At one point it became inter-generational. “I started to work with older people and the young together,” she says. “But the core audience is the under-five age group.”

With new impetus from top banjo player and band member Ted Barnes, now Harriette’s partner in the business, the Sing-along group expanded to also include Ali Friend on double bass, Gill Sandell on accordion and Sebastian Hankins on drums. You may also have seen the group perform at the Exmouth Market Street Festival.

As an outfit, Mrs H and The Sing-along Band has now enjoyed many credits. It has released four albums – including the latest, *Starlight Dance* – and played several festivals, including Latitude and Camp Bestival, as well as venues including the National Theatre and Queen Elizabeth Hall in London, and has outlasted many bands.

Harriette thinks its durability with her young audiences is to do with several developmental factors. “Singing builds up skills and confidence and

with us there’s no ‘sit still and listen’ stuff,” she says. “Children can move around to the music in a safe environment and they’re not made to feel silly.” And most importantly, “It takes them away from all these screens.”

“Singing builds up skills and confidence and with us there’s no ‘sit still and listen’ stuff”

During a recent fundraiser, donations were sent from Singapore and Australia. Musicians of the calibre of Johnny Flynn, with whom Harriette has sung a duet, have endorsed the band, which on 3 May plays Islington’s Union Chapel, the fourth gig the band has done in that big venue.

But the real Sing-along business remains on Exmouth Market church hall, where at 10–11am and 11am–12 noon on Wednesday, and Thursday at 10–11am, you’ll find a lot of youthful exuberance. And true to the accent on informality there’s no need to book, adds Harriette. “If you’re interested, just drop in.”

Covid-19 permitting, on 3rd May Mrs H and The Sing-along Band is playing at Islington’s Union Chapel, 19b Compton Terrace, London N1. Check first on: Visit singalongsongs.co.uk

f ages

rkenwell and Smithfield’s historical

al writer David Wilcox

spondent David Wilcox, also covers aspects of Clerkenwell and Smithfield’s history such as the area’s crafts activities from watchmaking right through to the new creative industries in the neighbourhood.

Said David: “Last year I really enjoyed developing an online map of the 1977 heritage trail for Clerkenwell, originally created by local resident Mike Franks. Researching the trail revealed to me the many linkages between City and Clerkenwell. I think there’s scope to re-establish connections, and help both residents and visitors explore the area.

“The new Barts Square development has brought several hundred new residents to Smithfield, and the Elizabeth Line station at Farringdon (Crossrail) – coupled with Thameslink – will make this one of the most accessible areas in London.”

David hopes that these improvements will benefit all the area’s communities. “In many ways the planned developments are good news,” he says. “But I do think it’s important



A cutaway image of the proposed Centre for Music Credit Uniform, Visualisation Studio

to explore whether local residents will benefit from these changes.

“Therefore our first task will be to pull together existing information about the area, and then start explorations led by people’s particular enthusiasms – such as the green spaces we need to cherish and the music available in the many local venues.”

“We’ve already had offers of help from London Metropolitan Archive, and the Layers of London project which displays maps from 1270 to the present day, enabling people to add their own photos and stories. The Culture Mile team are very encouraging.”

David hopes to aggregate people’s ideas and build up a huge, living picture of the area. “Today anyone with a smartphone can be a reporter – so we want to use a mix of print, thanks to the *Echo*, a website and social media to help people start their own explorations, and bring the results together.”

You will be able to see links to existing information and maps plus the evolving exploration at: commons.london

F
E
A
T
U
R
E
S

Cabin fever

The EC1 area is having an unprecedented hotel building spree – but will they bring benefits to locals?



Citicape House

A hotel yet to be built at Citi-cape House by Holborn Viaduct, in 61-65 Holborn Viaduct, will be close to West Smithfield. To designs by architects Sheppard Robson, the building is aiming to be the “greenest building in London” – its most arresting feature is the proposed 3,700sqm green

“living wall”, one of the largest in the world, which will capture carbon and feature wild planting. Atop it all will be a high-end 382-bed hotel with restaurant, bar and 11th floor rooftop terrace – open to the public and with views onto the church of the Holy Sepulchre and over to St Paul’s Cathedral.

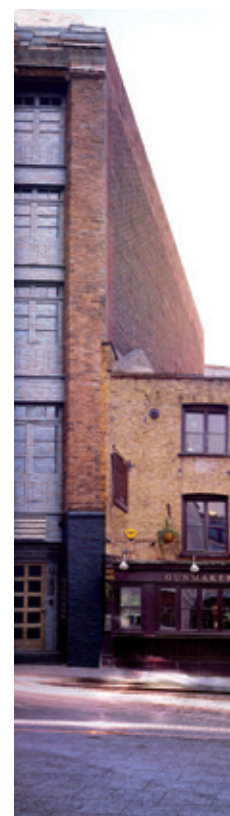


Clerkenwell is experiencing a hotel building boom. Several major hotels are planned in and around the area, pegged in large part to the expected tourist growth as a result of Crossrail, which is set to ensure that this will be one of the best-connected areas in London.

The hotel boom will of course, increase footfall in the area – a boon to many restaurants and cafes – and make Clerkenwell a tourism destination akin to Covent Garden, bringing employment in its wake. The flipside is that it will raise the area's transient population, which could aggravate those who preferred Clerkenwell's aura of quiet secrecy at weekends. If you have strong feelings about this read on – then get in touch with us at the EC1 Echo.

Ruby Stella

A hotel called R Street Hill in 20 Gunmakers pub Hotels, the eighth of the site that was School building, Vine Hill. There housing as part of by architect Pier programme of compact and affordable housing guitar amp in every group dubs a “le





Snow Hill

With the new Museum of London set to land nearby, the West Smithfield site is becoming a high-value zone – and the Snow Hill Police Station just to its south is set to become another Premier Inn hotel. The handsome five-storey Grade II-listed building, of 1926 vintage, occupies a picturesque spot on this gently sloping street.

YOTEL

A new 212-room hotel in the YOTEL chain – from the same source as restaurant chain Yo! Sushi – is being developed on the site of the old Texaco garage on Clerkenwell Road. The YOTEL group is best known for its compact “cabins” and tech including its “signature SmartBed” and will have a Club Lounge offering “flexible meeting and co-working spaces...in keeping with the surrounding area”. It is said to be introducing a link to St John’s Square, currently a dead end on its western margins.

Ruby Stella is set to open in Eyre 2021, on the car park next to The 5. From German company Ruby 11-storey hotel is set to occupy part of the site and will also have an entrance on the street. The deal has been designed by the architect as a “complex complementary uses of hotel, workspace and homes.” There will be a Marshall Street room – part of what the hotel has a “luxury” ethos.



Farringdon Road Premier Inn

The NCP car park on Farringdon Road, on the corner of Pine Street and Bowling Green Lane, is to become a Premier Inn hotel. The 180-room hotel site has been beset by problems such as objections from the Clerkenwell Community Tenants and Residents’ Association, which led to Islington Council refusing planning permission. But the government’s Planning Inspectorate passed the plans on appeal and the £35million project is set to start shortly.



Nhow, City Road

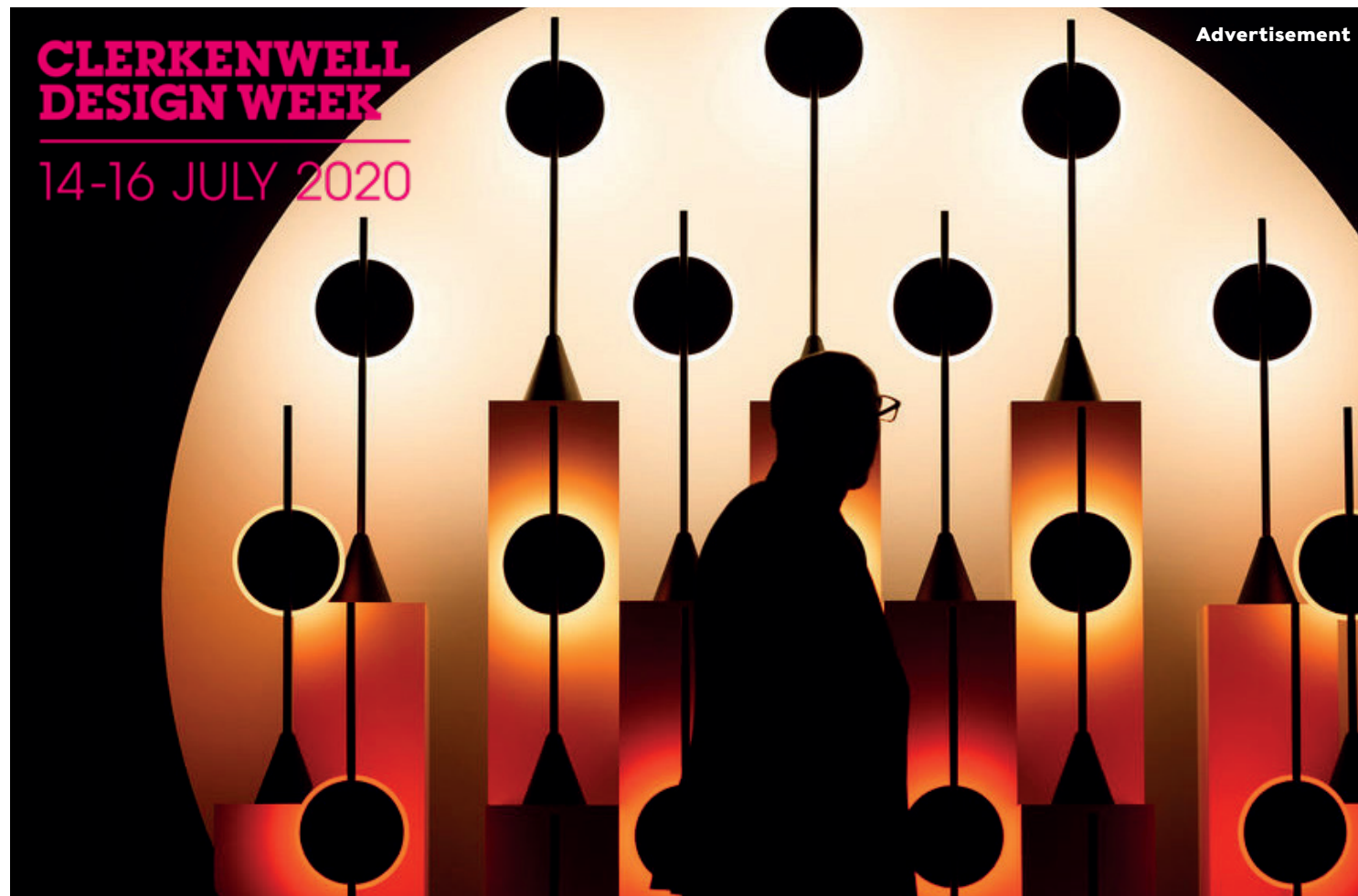
An eight-storey hotel in a dramatic Fosters & Partners building, the Nhow hotel has already opened. Once past the slick exterior you’ll find playful interiors designed by architect James Soane including a sculpture of Big Ben as a rocket in the lobby and a pub called the Bell and Whistle offering “modern British comfort food”. There is also a robot concierge called Henry.

Hotel Indigo

The lonesome Hat and Feathers pub on the corner of Clerkenwell and Goswell roads is to have company. The fifth Hotel Indigo property in London is expected to land by 2021 – and the boutique hotel will incorporate the listed pub as well as make use of the old car park behind. The hotel’s interior designer 3Stories has said that the hotel’s interior takes its “lead from the area’s architectural and design heritage”.

DESIGN WEEK

10



London's creative heart



“We are encouraging local residents to attend”

We all love Clerkenwell. Very few places allow you to walk through physical history like it, with the stories and fables leaving their mark on the architecture.

Clerkenwell represents London's Creative Heart; boasting more architects and designers per square mile than anywhere else on the planet, this congregation of so many creatives has been organic and naturally forming – a story which takes centre stage for the hosting of Clerkenwell Design Week (CDW).

There is so much to see and do at the three day festival, from a series of street sculptures and art installations, local restaurants offering large discounts and even revealing what's behind the otherwise locked doors of some of Clerkenwell's most secret spaces.

It's these spaces that allow world-wide product manufacturers and emerging design talent to showcase their wares in Clerkenwell, by offering them a form of pop-up shopfront.

Clerkenwell has some of London's most historic and interesting spaces; generally, these spaces are 'off-limits' to all residents; but CDW has the key.

For instance, a stand-alone door on Sans Walk (by Kingsway House) is the access point to one of Clerkenwell's best kept secrets: a hidden, under-

ground, abandoned, prison! The utterly secretive and unexpected House of Detention is thrilling to explore.

Having been used to hold prisoners awaiting trial at Sessions House; the prison is pretty much untouched and oozes history and charm. Each cell offers a backdrop to the 'Platform' exhibition – a collection of emerging designers that have formed a business in the last five years. Some of the product on display is utterly thought provoking and fresh.

If you have ever enjoyed Fabricnightclub after dark, you must see Fabricby

day! It plays host to the 'Light' exhibition at CDW. Bringing together the most beautiful lighting installations and products from across the globe.

This subterranean space is rich in Clerkenwell history too; as it was built to hang the meat that was being sold at Smithfield Market. And for the art lovers out there, there's also an original Banksy on display which has its own story to tell.

When the nightclub was undergoing its initial renovations, it's reported that Banksy 'accessed' the venue and installed the artwork – only to have it painted over by an unaware contractor a few days later! The piece on display now is the second Banksy – and has been protected by a piece of glass to stop the trigger-happy painters in their tracks!

CDW thrives on the unconventional space, occupying prisons, churches and nightclubs and offering access to them all free of charge.

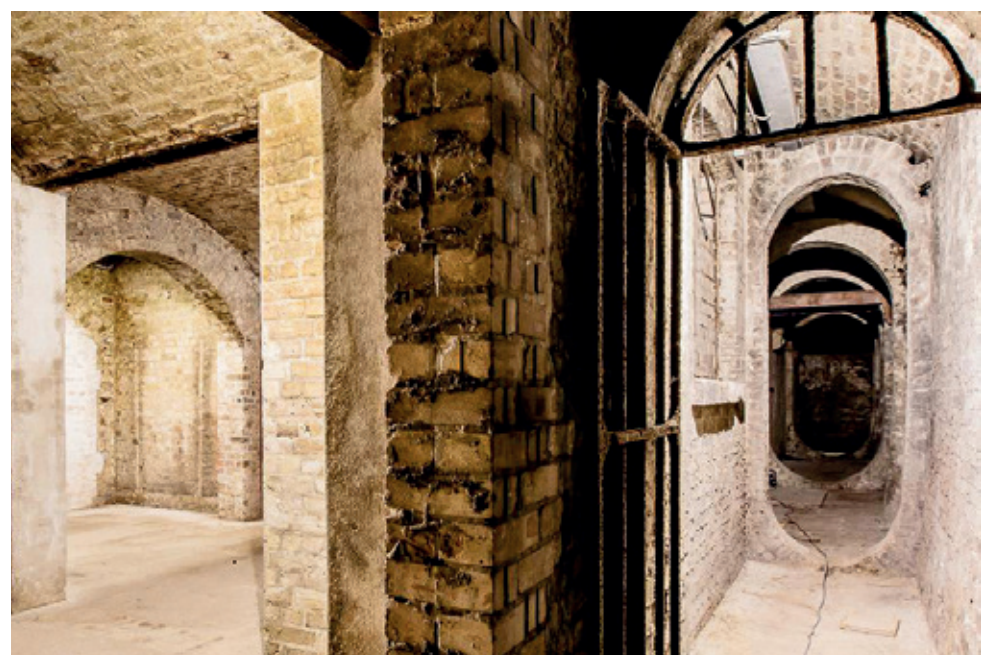
There's so much to see and do at CDW 2020; we are encouraging local residents to benefit from our food and drink programme – where we have established exclusive discounts with local restaurants and bars. All you need to do is show your CDW badge (which you can register for online).

For the first time, CDW is set to partner CALM (Campaign against living miserably) – a mental health charity that encourage everyone to take a moment for themselves. As part of a wider Clerkenwell' campaign there's a whole host of activity that's open to everyone. From meditation, breathing masterclasses and even free yoga! *Check the website to find out more.*

Linking Farringdon Station to Spa Fields Park; CDW returns on the 14th – 16th July; and is free to attend.

Residents can benefit from a quick registration process:

Visit clerkenwelldesignweek.com.



COMMUNITY

11

Mosaic movements

It's time to get your gardening gloves on at St Luke's



► MUCKING IN Lending hands to the community garden

The St Luke's Community Centre in Central Street EC1 has launched a 'Mosaic Trail': a self-guided walk around its Edible Yard marked with handmade mosaic tiles. A map will help guide visitors around the yard, which has large raised beds with edible plants, greenhouses, sheds, a wormery, a wildlife patch and a pizza oven, as well as five loud hens.

"Spring is the perfect time to come to our Edible Yard with the kids and see how the garden is coming to life," says St Luke's community gardening manager Poppy Fishman. "Our Mosaic Trail guides you past the pizza oven and pergola, through the herbs and salads, to our vegetables and soft fruits and round to our hen house, composting and greenhouse. This area has been brought to life by our volunteers and we'd love the EC1 community to enjoy it and the health benefits of gardening."

"This has been such an exciting project to work on," says Tessa Hunkin from Hackney Mosaic Project. "We started off putting mosaic tiles on the pizza oven, and the idea then came for mosaic insects. They add another dimension to the growing areas and are easy to follow so we hope it encourages more locals to use this hidden urban oasis."

Lifetime membership costs £5 and registration is free for anyone under 18 years of age whose parent/carer is also registering. For more information:

Visit slpt.org.uk/gardening-activities

Triple word score

BY ALAN WYLIE,
LIBRARIAN AT FINSBURY LIBRARY

The Finsbury Library in St John Street opened in 1967. Since then it's become home to the Local History Centre and Islington Museum and Learning Centre, and over the years a host of famous faces have been spotted browsing its shelves. Broadcaster and local Janet Street-Porter dropped in as did cult author Douglas Adams, who used to regularly borrow BBC sound effect LPs – and whose play *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* has just reached 42 years old (42 being the galaxy's significant number).

What they found, and more, is still here – a wide selection of the latest bestsellers, classics,

contemporary fiction, non-fiction, books for children and young people. We have audio books, books in large print and newspapers, and digital resources including e-magazines, e-books and e-audio. We provide free PC use, wifi and free beginners IT training. Our Learning Centre offers a wide range of courses too.

It's not just about media. We run Baby Bounce and Under Fives sessions, school class visits, Summer and Winter reading challenges, a Toy Library, Homework Club, as well as a Lego Club, crafts/arts events and lots of other monthly activities.

It holds the area's heritage too. The Islington Local History Centre and Islington Museum has the archives for the borough from Elizabethan times and



BOOKISH Islington's library isn't just for reading

has a changing programme of events and exhibitions.

If you want to know more about what's going on, pop in and pick

up a brochure which lists all the activities for the forthcoming month. And don't forget to join the library – it's free!

For more details:

Visit islington.gov.uk/libraries-arts-and-heritage/libraries/your-local-libraries/finsbury-library

The blitz spirit returns

Mark Aston looks forward to the 75th anniversary of VE Day in May – and looks back at EC1 under attack



▲ **Finsbury Square, 15 October 1941.** Firefighters bravely tackling a fire during the Luftwaffe's 'Tip and Run' raids (1941–43) that followed the Blitz

All photographs courtesy of Islington Local History Centre

Friday 8 May witnesses the 75th anniversary of a joyous occasion – the end of the Second World War in Europe, known as Victory in Europe or VE Day. There will be street parties and other celebrations – but what was the extent of the physical damage inflicted on the EC1 area of Finsbury, and how did the area recover?

Like many parts of inner London, Finsbury suffered badly from bombings during the Blitz (1940–41) and, again later, as part of the V1 and V2 rocket attacks on the capital from the summer of 1944 onwards. Citizens lived with the threat of bombing, invasion and untimely death. However, in spite of fatalities, an uncertain future and much hardship, Finsburyites kept calm and carried on. The constant bombings were designed to break morale but conversely brought people together.

The London Blitz inflicted major damage on EC1's historic buildings, including the Charterhouse, the Priory Church of St John and the Church of the Holy Redeemer. However, not all was ruined. The 17th-century Oak Room at New River Head was removed to safety "for the duration".

In 1943, the parcels depot at Mount Pleasant Post Office was destroyed. It relocated to the Royal Agricultural Hall in Upper Street, where it remained until the 1970s. Sadler's Wells Theatre in Rosebery Avenue was requisitioned in 1940 to serve as a rest centre for bombed-out local families, while the cast and company went on tour.

One of the cruellest losses of life occurred on 15 October 1940 when the deep-basement shelter at Dame Alice Owen's School in Goswell Road received a direct hit. Many families were taking refuge when damage caused to a large New River water pipe resulted in many drowning. A total of 109 people out of the 143 people in the shelter perished – rescuers took weeks to recover the casualties.

The number of bombs dropped on Finsbury during the London Blitz amounted to 175 high explosive bombs and four parachute mines. In addition, further bombs landed during the 'Baby Blitz' of early 1944, as did the fearsome V1 and V2 Vergeltungswaffe, or 'vengeance weapons', rockets during 1944 and 1945.

Five days after the first V1 rocket or 'Doodlebug' hit London at Bow on 13

June 1944, it was Finsbury's turn. A V1 rocket landed in Spencer Street and Wynyatt Street resulting in 13 people losing their lives, with a further 83 injured. Six more V1 and V2 strikes were to follow, culminating in the devastating V2 attack on Charterhouse Street and Smithfield Market in the morning of 8 March 1945. A huge explosion caused massive damage to the railway tunnel structure below, into which many victims fell. In all, 110 people died and 340 were injured.

Of the borough's 9,899 houses and flats, no less than 9,015 were damaged during the war: 983 were totally demolished, another 23 virtually so, and 642 hit badly enough to force the residents to evacuate. This left more than 11 per cent

“Of the borough's 9,899 houses and flats, no less than 9,015 were damaged

▼ **Hugh Myddelton School, Clerkenwell, 4 September 1940.** The school's pupils reading comics and playing cards in their basement shelter during an air-raid drill



▲ **Finsbury Town Hall, Garnault Place, After 15 August 1940.** A 'downed' German Messerschmitt BF110 on display outside Finsbury Town Hall, as part of a 'victory tour' during the Battle of Britain

of the population needing re-accommodation. Although the population more than halved, from approximately 60,000 in 1939 to 27,000 by 1945, it was estimated at the end of the war that some 5,000 new housing units were needed. In the meantime, prefabricated houses rehoused the displaced in various parts of EC1, including Farringdon Road, Gee Street, Hermes Street, Ironmonger Street and King's Square.

The severe housing shortage was recognised by the new Labour government, and Finsbury Council could now realise several housing plans that had been decided in its mid-1930s' 'Finsbury Plan'. The borough's rebuild ensured that housing catered for its working-class – the majority of its population. This began with the Berthold Lubetkin-designed Spa Green Estate on St John Street/Rosebery Avenue (1946-50) which embodied the promise of post-war housing: a pleasant life, well-equipped flats and careful design.

It was to be a while before the council's fuller realisation of a better residential post-war future was accomplished by building among others: the King Square Estate (1961), the Brunswick Estate (1949-62) and the Finsbury Estate (1967). These schemes were truly born out of the rubble and wreckage created by the 'terror from the skies' some quarter of a century or so earlier – a rebuilding of Finsbury in the hope that the post-war era would serve to symbolise a brighter and safer future.

'We'll Meet Again: Islington on the Home Front in photographs (1939-45)' an exhibition commemorating the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe. For more information:

Visit islington.gov.uk/heritage



Leo with his unusual item of culinary history – a shellfish boiler

Winkle pickers

Clerkenwell man Leo is seeking a home for a piece of London's culinary history

Clerkenwell man Leo Hamburger is seeking a taker for an unusual appliance – a winkle boiler. Leo, who has to move from his old family home in Farringdon Road, following the death of his mother last year, is keen that the boiler finds a good home, as from the 1950s until 1981 the house contained what was once a thriving and well-loved winkle and shellfish shop run by the Parris family.

"Mr Parris kept his barrow here and served winkles and shellfish through a hatch in the window or off the Barrow" says Leo, now

a nurse working locally, who recalls him from childhood. "It's a part of London's culinary history, when shellfish like winkles, jellied eels and whelks were East End street food."

This legacy no longer exists. With the demise of Clarke's Pie and Mash shop in Exmouth Market a few years ago, and the shellfish stall by the old Penny Black Pub closed pre the millennium, old favourites like Eel Pie and Liquor with mash and parsley sauce are no longer available in Clerkenwell.

Also in the substantial Victorian property are the original sinks in which the

shellfish were washed and prepared, as well as an old gas cooker. Sunday was apparently an important sales day, when local Lon-

doners would queue for winkles and shellfish as a special Sunday snack. On other days the barrow would ply its traditional trade in various local street markets.

In its other bay window downstairs the property was once an art materials outlet and some locals still know it as "The Art Shop". In the 1970s it housed Farringdon Tools: one of the very few retail shops that still have survived for so long.

Leo hasn't found much interest from heritage bodies in the winkle boiler and hasn't yet located a committed taker. "Some were

"Some were interested but the trouble is that it's quite a big artefact"

interested but the trouble is that it's quite a big artefact," he says. "It may just have to be left behind to its fate." Some other items found when sorting through the house have already been taken up by historic archives, including the contents of an early 20th-century steamer trunk containing the life effects and documents of Mr Rossi, an Italian man who emigrated to London in 1919 after WW1 at a time when Clerkenwell was nicknamed "Little Italy".

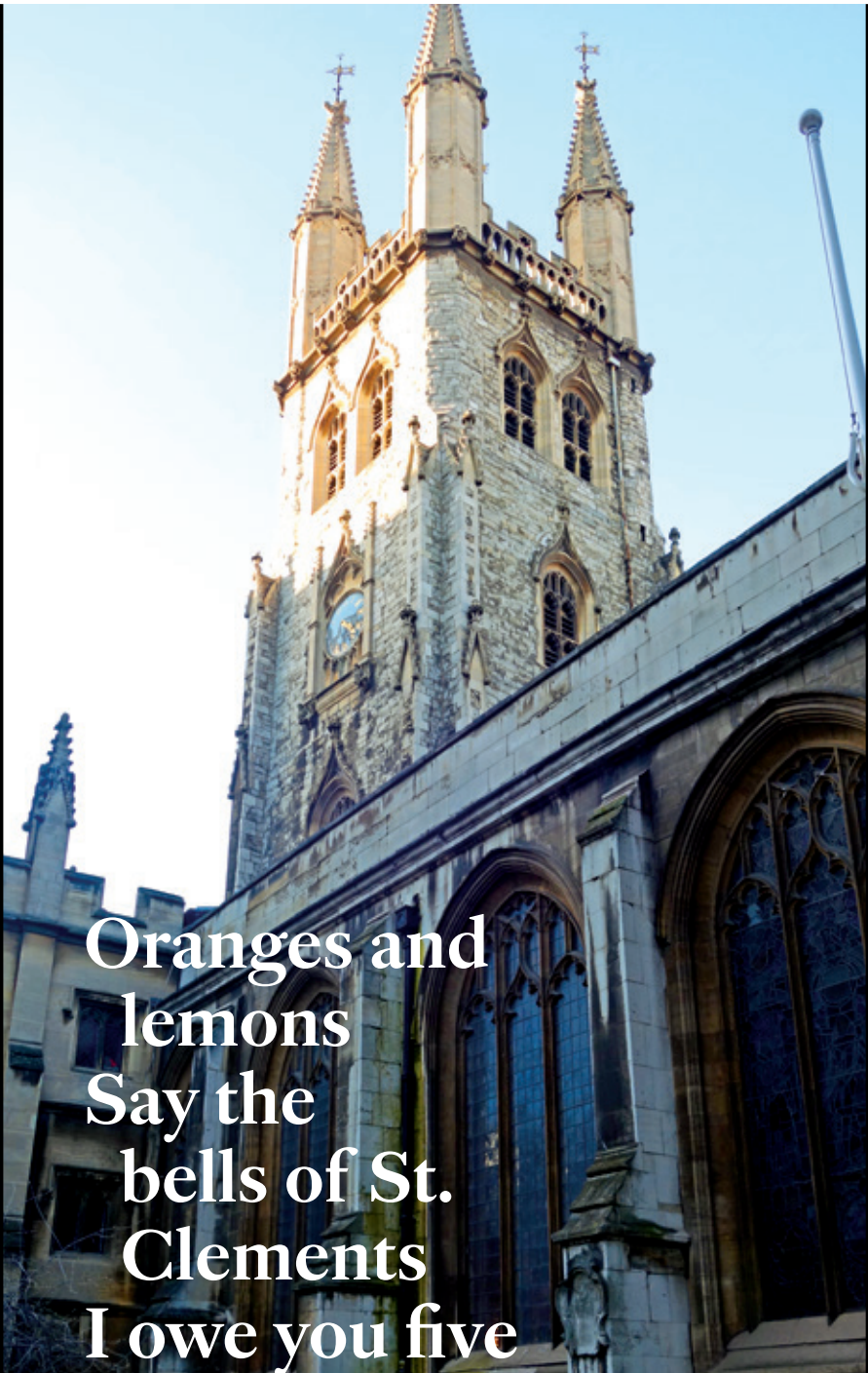
The unusual property has now been sold privately with an understanding that it is to be sensitively renovated and retained as a large family home and studio.



Leo with Mr Rossi's papers

The bloody code

Tour guide Tom Currie takes us beyond Smithfield to a lovely church with a grisly history



Oranges and
lemons
Say the
bells of St.
Clements
I owe you five
farthings
Say the bells
of St. Martins
When will you
pay me?
Say the bells
at Old Bailey

The bells of Old Bailey are those of St Sepulchre-without-Newgate on Holborn Viaduct, so named because the church stands just outside (“without”) the old City walls next to the Newgate, on the corner of the road called Old Bailey. A bailey was a defensive wall cast your minds back to your school history lessons, you may recall hearing about a motte and bailey castle.

St Sepulchre’s is the City’s largest surviving parish church, and there’s been a church on the site since at least Saxon times. Buried within the graveyard is John Smith, the governor of Virginia and friend of Pocahontas in the eponymous Disney film – he also got a mention in Peggy Lee’s classic song *Fever*: “Captain Smith and Pocahontas/Had a very mad affair...”

St Sepulchre’s stands on the opposite corner to the Central Criminal Court – better known as the Old Bailey. This was opened in 1907, but for centuries prior this was the site of Newgate Prison.

Newgate was a name that filled generations of Londoners with dread: it was a by-word for squalor, overcrowding, and death. By the end of the 18th century there were a total of 220 offences for which you could be executed in England, which has since been dubbed “the Bloody Code”.

The bells of St Sepulchre’s would toll whenever a prisoner was being taken by cart from his Newgate prison cell to his death at the end of a rope at Tyburn, near what is now Marble Arch.

In 1605 a handbell was purchased, which was to be rung outside the condemned man’s cell in Newgate Prison the night before his execution, while the church’s clerk read aloud the Newgate Prayer:

*All you that in the condemned hole do lie,
Prepare you for to-morrow you shall die;
Watch all and pray: the hour is drawing near
That you before the Almighty must appear;
Examine well yourselves in time repent,
That you may not to eternal flames be sent.
And when St. Sepulchre’s Bell to-morrow tolls
The Lord above have mercy on your souls.
The handbell is now on display within a
glass case within the church, for any who
wish to view it...*

Newgate was also the site of the country’s last public execution. In 1868, an Irish Republican called Michael Barrett had attempted to free one of his comrades from the Clerkenwell House of Detention by blowing up the prison walls using gunpowder. But he seriously misjudged how much explosive should be used, and he ended up taking down several neighbouring houses and killing 12 innocent people in the blast. Just five years earlier in 1863, the first Underground Line had opened at Farringdon, a ten-minute walk away – and many of those spectators would have caught the Tube in order to watch Barrett being executed. A case of the old world massively colliding with the new.

To join Tom Currie on a tour:
Visit historiclondontours.com
For further information about tours that include St Sepulchre’s:
Visit islingtonguidedwalks.com

Help independent shops

Matthew Baust

I’m writing after hearing the sad news that the coffee and bagel shop Brill on Exmouth Market has closed. This is the most recent in a string of closures on the street where stores now sit empty and large chain businesses have grown in their predominance.

I read that Brill closed primarily due to increases in rent – a problem that many independent businesses have suffered from over the last decade as chains with large profit margins have driven up cost competition for space and property prices as a whole have grown at exponential rates.

Brill was a community hub for the area, providing not just coffee and bagels but a place for locals to feel welcome and part of society. Brill was also a leading business in the area for generating LGBT social awareness and creating a friendly and welcoming environment for all members of Clerkenwell’s society.

These are “intangibles” that large chains do not care about. However, they are in my opinion crucially important to positive societal function and can only be brought by local people running local businesses that have a broader motivation beyond profit goals. There is a place for both to co-exist but we are moving toward a scenario where independent businesses are infeasible.

For the future, the opportunity to start and build a business is clearly being crushed by the exorbitant cost of property, leaving a generation with no alternative but to get a job and try to cover their monthly rent. Should people not have the same chance to build something for themselves and contribute something positive to the local area that previous generations have had? Are we really striving for coffee that costs £1 less, or should we be focussed on what impact this is having on the economic diversity of the area, social integration and general life experience?

There obviously isn’t an easy solution to this, particularly in a free-market capital driven city.

Submit your letter

Got an opinion on something in Clerkenwell? We accept letters of up to 200 words from people and organisations in the area. Email info@EC1Echo.com before the next deadline 16th March.

One thing I was thinking about recently though was the focus on creating more affordable housing in London. Landowners are being asked to extract slightly less wealth so that some affordable housing can be provided for the benefit of society. I don't see why this principle shouldn't also be applied to commercial property. A step in the right direction could be to ask commercial property developers and landowners to provide at least a proportion of rent-capped affordable space for small and independent businesses. I hope that in government there can be found a way of addressing this social issue.

Edge of an era

Art curator Rob La Frenais recalls when Clerkenwell really was London's "hidden village" and a place of artistic discovery

In 1988 there existed a very different Clerkenwell of abandoned buildings up for sale and rent, used as artists studios with art events at places at places like The Slaughterhouse in Smithfield.

There was also a very large festival of performance and installation art called Edge 88, of which I was the director. One of the most significant projects that we did was with artist Helen Chadwick who died in 1996. It was my great privilege to work with her in 1988 on a project in an extraordinary place – the Clerkenwell Medical Mission – which is still here today.

The interesting thing about

this place is that it goes back to the Victorian era, prior to the National Health Service. Instead the less wealthy of Clerkenwell could go and listen to a sermon to improve themselves and then afterwards the

priest, who had also been trained as a doctor, would open the surgery and offer treatment. This practice apparently goes on to this day.

Helen Chadwick found this medical mission and to our amazement managed to persuade them, after attending several of their services and meetings, to host an art installation. That became one of Helen's most famous works, called Blood Hyphen. In order to view her installation you had to go into the church and climb up a pulpit then, standing in the pulpit, put your head through a hole in the ceiling. You could then see a laser beam coming through a cloud of smoke from the church window crossing the outline of the organ – which had been hidden by the false ceiling – and hit a photograph of cells, apparently cervical cells. This work culminated in discussions between the artist and the priest-doctors at the mission. The same installation was almost exactly recreated by the Whitechapel Art Gallery in the mid 2000s and people were able to see it again.

Last year I gave a guided tour of all the sites in Edge 88 (see pic below), as part of the 'Edge of an Era' project, including Alastair MacLennan's work in the Victorian 'House of Correction', now a film location adjoining luxury

residential accommodation and EDGE 88 in the *Financial Times*, the writer Deanna Petherbridge wrote "Clerkenwell, the inner city village with its secret squares, unexpected alleys,

bosky churchyards and good pubs is pleasurable enough on a mild Autumn evening. To also discover curious installations and obsessive activities along the way makes

for a rich and very metropolitan experience". As our tour came to an end at twilight at the Garden of the Museum St John, where German performance artist Ulrike Rosenbach whirled like a dervish in a bright red dress in 1988, it was still possible to feel the magic of '80s London's 'hidden village'.

The documentation for 'Edge of An Era' can be seen at: edgeofanera.co.uk

Leave our parks alone

Holly Maltby

Our parks and green spaces are where we go to play, relax and escape. But with councils facing ever bigger cuts in funding, the fight to keep our public parks open and accessible to everyone has never been more important. The health benefits – both physical and mental – to having free access to green space are priceless. As is the value it brings to all of our lives and communities.

I started a petition to stop Clerkenwell Design Week from taking over the public parks in the Clerkenwell area – specifically Spa Fields – because we have to stand up for our public space. Every spring, the festival takes over our parks for weeks. But now over 330 people around the area have signed the petition to put an end to it. It's time Clerkenwell Design Week listens and moves to another location – so our park is always open to the public, all year long.

Agree or disagree? Write to us with your views at EC1Echo@peelinstitute.org.uk



Yvonne Goff Courtney

EC1 means entrepreneurial craftswomen

Yvonne Goff Courtney celebrates the businesswomen of the 18th century on the City's borders

Following in the fashion footsteps of my grandfather – a fur trader who was based St Paul's Cathedral – I was fascinated to learn that the Square Mile hasn't always been a man's world. In the 18th century the City (and its nearby environs) was, in fact, a hub for an extraordinary number of women who ran manufacturing and commercial businesses selling luxury goods.

Picture Smithfield, Little Britain, what is now

Paternoster Square and along Cheapside towards the Royal Exchange (originally founded for the 'start-ups' of the day), and you'll see an area that was positively humming with women's businesses trading as goldsmiths and silversmiths, milliners, haberdashers, fan and trunk makers, stationers and printers.

Unlike on today's high streets, goods were made on the premises. The shop would be located on the ground floor while the upper floors housed workshops, storerooms and owners, together with their family, servants and apprentices.

At that time, there was nothing unusual about these businesswomen. As members of trade

families, it was perfectly normal for these women to be in charge yet until very recently, this history has been completely overlooked. Now the notion that women didn't enter the labour force until the 20th century has been shattered.

These women traders prospered and practiced a range of occupations in a way that

would have been inconceivable in the mid-20th century. Unfortunately, historians still don't clearly understand exactly

"Until recently this history has been completely overlooked"

how or why women dropped out of the management of manufacturing and commerce. These 'foremothers' serve as a reminder that power can be lost as easily as gained – and perhaps, as we learn to work at home again, it's time to rekindle this model.

Yvonne Goff Courtney is the EC3-based founder of repurposed hybrid clothing label @CollageLondon and a writer and marketing consultant for publishers, retailers and creative agencies.

- A collection of 18th-century women's ornate trade cards can be viewed at the British Museum's archives
- London Craft Week is an annual showcase of exceptional craftsmanship. Due to Covid-19 it has been moved from April to 30 September – 8 October. The Barbican Shop will feature a "STORE STORE" takeover, selling pieces by contemporary designers, craftmakers and artisans.

Visit londoncraftweek.com



Support local independent journalism



What we do

Here at *EC1 Echo* we do things differently. We combine professional journalism with voluntary contributions from people who live and work in the area and create content which is responsive to and reflective of the community.

These are challenging times for print media with many newspapers closing and advertising revenue in decline, but our not-for-profit model offers a new approach to creating local journalism which is inclusive and accountable.

How you can help

As a not-for-profit publication, started by The Peel, a longstanding Clerkenwell charity, we rely on the generous support of our community. We look to our readers, who recognise the value of independent journalism, to help support us.

You can do this by becoming a member either as an individual or as an organisation. See the rewards opposite and once you've decided what package you would like, visit EC1Echo.co.uk/join

Individual rewards

£3 per month upwards:

Name in print and online, pin badge

£5 per month upwards:

Name in print and online, pin badge, tote bag, paper posted to you every month

Organisational rewards

£10 per month:

Name in print and online, 10% discount on advertising

£20 per month:

Name and logo in print and online, 20% discount on advertising

£50 per month:

Name and logo in print and online, 40% discount, six free small adverts per year

**We would like to say thank you to our first two members:
CDJ Wilcox & Daniel Winn**