

EC1 ECHO

JUNE/JULY 2020 • N°.4 FREE


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An artist's memorial to her son that has captured the public's imagination

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COMMUNITY

Clerkenwell's powerful response to the pandemic

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On the floor at Fabric - Credit Fabric

On the house

EC1 Echo talks to Keith Reilly, the owner of Fabric nightclub about lockdown, music and his battle with the authorities

● BY OLIVER BENNETT ●

The future of the nightlife industry, post-coronavirus, is clearly uncertain and Fabric has no idea when it will get the green light to reopen following the closure in March.

"We get very little information, and the information we get is convoluted and

changes all the time," says Keith Reilly, who co-founded the club. "For example: masks or no masks? They'll probably say in a nightclub you'll be too close together but look at the tubes every day. Nightclubs are always singled out."

Indeed, bars, nightclubs and restaurants will be in the last phase of businesses to re-open, says Reilly, which

is "understandable. Let's say we're forced to stay closed till the summer of 2021. But at some point the economy – the life force itself – will have to get moving. There are risks to everything but we have excellent air-con, high ceilings – it's got to be safer than being on a tube." His workers, some of whom have worked there for

20 years, are on standby.

Fabric is 21 this year. It started in October 1999 in the renovated Metropolitan Cold Stores in Farringdon with three separate rooms and over the next two decades, has become one of the biggest nightlife brands in the world.

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N°.4

JUNE /
JULY
20201st JuneWaxing
Gibbous
76% / 0.5531st JulyWaxing
Gibbous
89% / 0.53

EC1 Echo is the area's free community newspaper. We publish bi-monthly and distribute 5,000 free copies each issue – and we will continue to do so during the ongoing public health crisis.

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NEWS



▶ The famous street needs attention, claim residents

Call to clean up Leather Lane

Residents and retailers in Leather Lane are up in arms. Once business resumes in the famous street market street after lockdown, a recently convened group called Clean Up Leather Lane is starting a campaign.

Their concern is mostly the lack of hygiene. "It is truly one of the most disgusting streets in London," says resident Debby Lee, a spokesperson for the group. "Of course we enjoy the benefits of being in a central London shopping street, so we're not complaining about noise or footfall – in fact, the busier the better."

"But if this is to remain a food market, Camden need to raise their game and clean the place. We have a major vermin problem, stinking drains, poorly managed market traders and a very limited street cleaning facility."

She compares Leather Lane unfavourably with nearby

Exmouth Market and Whitecross Street markets, both of which have "immaculate streets after their traders pack up". Instead, Leather Lane, she claims, does not have a proper strategy for rubbish collection and cleaning.

"We have individually complained about traders leaving their food debris and rubbish in the street, attracting pigeons, seagulls, foxes and rats." The group also has concerns about fatty waste being tipped down rainwater drains.

So far, the group says their complaints have fallen on deaf ears. "No amount of complaining seems to change anything," says Lee. "But we couldn't imagine prestigious Camden shopping locations such as Hampstead, Primrose Hill, Brunswick Centre or Belsize Village being left like this each evening. So why Leather Lane?"

Lee argues that Leather Lane should be a jewel in Camden's

conservation crown. It is one of England's most historical landmark retail areas with an extraordinary history, apocryphally borne from a bad gambling debt owed by King Charles I who owed £500 on two horses to a Leather Lane merchant. Rather than pay, he gave a license for the merchant to start a street market.

The lane has evolved since then, with Georgian merchant's shops built in the early 18th Century and a 19th century role as the centre of London's 'Little Italy'. In the 20th century it was the lunch and shopping destination for Fleet Street's journalists. Now Leather Lane has some of the best street food stalls in the capital. But for all its popularity and heritage, Clean Up Leather Lane says it has "no heritage signage, no festive or seasonal lights and little or no investment. But the main thing is basic health and hygiene for the people who live and work around here."

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EC1 Echo moves forward

We hope you're enjoying the fourth issue of the free EC1 Echo. Within, you'll find reportage, news and comment about our area – of particular interest in these difficult times.

The non-profit EC1 Echo received funding from The Peel's Connecting Clerkenwell project to help get up and running, with the long-term plan to fund the newspaper largely from advertising.

But while we're at the point where we would be moving towards this more sustainable model, it's a difficult time for a new publication like ours to find advertisers – despite a door-to-door circulation of 5,500

Therefore, on top of our existing membership scheme we are running a Crowdfunding scheme to help ensure our future. We're inviting our readers – both local residents and local businesses – to help us get funding in place to guarantee the publication of at least six more issues of EC1 Echo over the next year.

The aim is raise at least £5,000 by 15 July in time for our August–September issue and includes several rewards including our new tote bags (pictured below).

Go to www.crowdfunder.co.uk/ec1-echo--making-local-news-that-matters to contribute and to see updates on the campaign

Rewards include:**£5 or more****THANK YOU**

A mention on our website and in the August–September issue of the newspaper.

£20 or more**BAG AND BADGE**

An EC1 Echo Tote bag, badge and the August/September issue of EC1 Echo posted to you. Plus a big THANK YOU on our website and in the August/September issue of the newspaper.

£50 or more**EC1 ECHO BY POST**

An EC1 Echo Tote bag, badge, and the next six issues of EC1 Echo posted to you. Plus a big THANK YOU on our website and in the August/September issue of the newspaper.

£100 or more (organisations)**LOGO IN THE PAPER**

Your logo in the next six issues of EC1 Echo plus a big THANK YOU on our website.

£360 or more (organisations)**SMALL ADVERT**

An eighth-page advert in the next six issues of EC1 Echo plus a big THANK YOU on our website.

£600 or more (organisations)**BIGGER ADVERT**

A quarter-page advert in the next six issues of EC1 Echo plus a big THANK YOU on our website.

£1,100 or more (organisations)**QUITE BIG ADVERT**

A half-page advert in the next six issues of EC1 Echo plus a big THANK YOU on our website.

£2,000 or more (organisations)**BIG ADVERT**

A full-page advert in the next six issues of EC1 Echo plus a big THANK YOU on our website.



● Continued from page-1

A huge hit came in 2016 when Fabric was shut after the death of Jack Crossley, 18, from an MDMA overdose. But Reilly says that it gave the police an unfair excuse to close the club. "I'm still incredibly angry about it," he says of the six-month enforced closure. "It was nothing to do with that poor boy dying. It was revenge."



Fabric does not yet have a date to reopen Credit Krhis Cowley

Two years before, he says, the police asked Fabric to pilot a new strategy. "Until this point Fabric had been the golden boy of club management," says Reilly. "Then the police came up with an idea that they use dogs outside Fabric to go up and down the queues." These dogs would locate anyone in contact with drugs. "They would be taken from the queue, their name placed on database, and they'd be banned from venues across the UK. Really draconian."

Reilly resisted on two grounds: accuracy and illegality. But the police forced their hand, Islington Council agreed with them, and it went to court.

"In reality, more deaths would be caused by the dogs," says Reilly. "Young people see the dogs, panic and take any drugs they had."

In the event Reilly says they "got a drubbing in court. Our figures showed that we were serious about the problem. We'd apprehended 81 dealers but only one was prosecuted."

The drugs issue is an excuse, he believes. "We earn money two ways: tickets and beverages. The more drugs, the less drinking. It's bad for us. This club is a £10m investment – why would we jeopardise our license by allowing drugs in the club? Again, clubs are an easy target. What the police did to us was unforgivable." It needs a rethink about the drugs debate which has gone on for ever and as Reilly says, "Despite billions of taxpayers cash spent

on drug prevention, The problem has got worse. Keeping things illegal seems to drive it to crime cartels.

Fabric, adds Reilly, is also a "loved and respected brand. We don't get any help, only hindrance, but in normal times we bring lots of visitors to London. I've known people to come from Japan for the weekend to go to Fabric. People travel to

football and festivals and to nightclubs – look at Ibiza, although I'm not a fan as it's so tied up in that 'ave it' culture."

"We're passionate about what we do and we'll never give up. We've won best club in the world several times. But we get no support from the police or the Arts Council where most of the money goes to opera. It's so weird.

The GLA hasn't really helped, he says. Although London Mayor Sadiq Khan tweeted that Fabric should be saved, it was "an illusion. I asked the GLA if we reopen could we have support from the police? No commitment came."

All of this obscures Fabric's purpose, which is to bring music to its audiences. "The market changes all the time," says



The club is in the heart of Smithfield Credit Krhis Cowley

Reilly. "That's the beautiful thing about music. There are changes and trends. People now like going out to day parties on Saturdays and Sundays. But the point is that people will always want to go out and listen to music and why shouldn't they allowed to do so?"

There'll always have variance in the market, but Reilly says that the big change could now be in content and the way we participate with artists. "You go to see an artist – PJ Harvey, Madonna or a DJ, say – and nothing's really changed in production values.

"But there's so much more to do with the technology. So I'm bringing 20 venues in 20 cities around the world together – in each place collaborating with the best and highest-tech venue and linked to creative communities in each city: Buenos Aires, Moscow, Beijing. For DJ's musicians, sculptors, artists, technicians and digital mappers – this is their natural home all linked via a computer system. They'll become a celebration – a global arts community with an open dialogue and a shared platform." The working title is FCAL – Fabric Creative Arts Laboratory – but Reilly might change it as he's "never been about just sticking the name above the door." He has a proposed site in Silvertown.

With Crossrail and the changes at

"People will always go out and listen to music"

Smithfield, Fabric now finds itself in the hub of London – but Reilly hopes attitudes will change towards the club he helped found 21 years ago. "We'll fight on but I'm heartbroken at the way we've been treated. An institution like Fabric should be treasured by Islington and the country."

Keith Reilly tells *EC1 Echo* about his favourite ever night at Fabric



It was the John Peel night in 2002. I was a massive fan and he was a good friend. It took me two years to convince him to DJ and he'd always say no because he wasn't a club DJ.

Because we're known for drum and bass, techno and minimal house it may seem surprising but I listen to everything from opera to jazz and was weaned on David Bowie and the Velvet Underground. I argued that Fabric wasn't just some rave venue. We've had classical pianists, Isaac Hayes, Jarvis Cocker and Dizzee Rascal perform in the club – a lot of incredible content – but John was steadfast.

I have an immense music archive of vinyl and all kinds of recordings – including every show John made. We had a disagreement over a track that I heard on his show, but he couldn't remember playing. So I dug it out for him. He said "You're collecting obsession is worse than mine" and it finally convinced him to play. It was the most amazing night. Of course he finished with the Undertones' *Teenage Kicks*, and when it finished the people carried him out on their shoulders like Emperor Nero.



B-l-o-c-k c-h-a-i-n

A Clerkenwell artist's conceptual memorials have captured the public's imagination

Emma Douglas' life changed when her son Cato – one of three children she bought up in Clerkenwell – died in 2010 at the age of 21. A well-known artist, Emma had cared for Cato throughout his life and had to an extent retreated from a more public life.

"When Cato was poorly it was very difficult," she says. "I had no interest in going to the studio." She carried on her work in what she calls "a quieter, more personal way".

But when a friend, the artist Ben Pulsford, proposed a joint exhibition, she forged the idea to mark Cato's life in her own, conceptual way.

"I began painting rectangles of colour with each one representing a day in Cato's life," she says. "Dark grey denoted the hospital days and dark blue the consultant's days. Bright colours represented happy days. As I painted, it became a comfort to see so many bright days."

After developing this theme in her studio, Emma decided she wanted to paint each of the 8025 days of Cato's life and show the work in public, in places of sig-

nificance to Cato. These evolved into the murals each representing a year in his life.

She painted the first one in 2015 at Treloar College in Hampshire which Cato attended, and has now painted eight more, including four in the Clerkenwell vicinity, from St John's Gardens EC1 (where Emma runs the community gardening club), Coram Fields and Westminster Kingsway College in WC1, and last year, in Fortune Street Park – bright murals in public places that have a cheerful rather than sombre atmosphere. She has also completed paintings at a village hall in Dorset, at Freshford Station in Somerset, and in two places in the Isle of Barra, Outer Hebrides – all places with resonance to the family.

Each painting carries a plaque to explain its purpose. "It's about recording the marks he made, the places that we all visited and the images that linger after someone has left," she says. "People seem to want to know the story behind them."

Indeed, Emma's project is more wide-reaching than acting as a memorial to Cato, as she acknowledges the responses she receives when she paints or attends her artworks.

"I have all these conversations and people come up with incredible messages," she says. "Some really open up to me. It's important to me that the artworks are in the public domain, as interaction with passers-by forms a part of the project, and will be the basis for a publication when the project is finished."

Not all the sites she has approached have welcomed a mural, which she understands, but she intends to paint 22 in all, marking the number of years Cato lived. "I'm keen to find more wall space in the Clerkenwell area as this is where he spent most of his life," she says.

As she continues, Emma's project will likely last for a few more years, and in her undertaking she has redefined the idea of a memorial.

"I see it as a collective project in articulating grief," she says. "It explores how we can express our own tragedies."

To see more of Emma's work:
Visit emmadouglas.com

If you have access to a wall with public space:
Email emma@emmadouglas.com
Instagram [@emmadouglas_a_tender_walk](https://www.instagram.com/emmadouglas_a_tender_walk)

Ciao, It The Barbican b last month – a

Of all the local Covid-19 casualties, the loss of the junior school in the Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts – which claims to be the world's oldest theatre training academy – has been felt the keenest.

In a modern building in Goswell Road, close to the Barbican, the school – which took 95 children aged 10 to 16 – closed in May, a situation attributed to the financial problems bought on by the coronavirus. The principal Samantha Newton broke the news to parents in an email, saying "...it is with regret that we have had to take the heartbreaking decision to close the Junior School at the Italia Conti Academy at the end of July 2021... Please be assured that we have explored all options to avoid this outcome with great urgency." A petition and fundraising campaign aiming to raise £3m has begun, with the most urgency given to the 27 students due to take GCSE's next year.

Although there have been other stresses on the school, including a well-publicised feud in 2018 and an attempt to sell the Barbican site – not to mention a changed educational market – the school continued until the stress of the Covid-19 forced its hand. The academy exists on other sites in Clapham and Guildford and will still offer further and higher education, but the junior school is a significant loss.

Wheels

We've known for a while that the name 'Clerkenwell' has become a way of suggesting quality – and now the car manufacturer Bentley has proved our point with its Bentley Bacalar. A small production of 12 open-topped cars, one is called The Clerkenwell, in a luxurious contrast of dark green and browns.

The Clerkenwell specification, says Bentley,

Italia Conti

ranch of the famous drama school shut closure attributed to the coronavirus



Italia Conti school, exterior

Clerkenwell parent Sophie Kerttu Scott, whose son Hector, 13 was a pupil at Italia Conti, was taken by surprise at the school's closure. "We had no idea at all and didn't see it coming," she says. "Hector was very happy there and it genuinely had a special atmosphere – with boys doing ballet, everyone doing musical theatre and great staff. "The hope is obviously that someone will come and buy it – after all, it is a nationally known name. Until its closure, children from across the country would attend and it was incredibly competitive to get in."

"The hope is obviously that someone will come and buy it"

The Italia Conti school was founded in 1911 by Italian actress Italia Emily Stella Conti, who based an early version in Conduit Street, in the West End. With that site bombed in World War II, it

relocated to Clapham and then expanded to Goswell Road in 1981 – the site in question. Over the course of the last century the school has built a very high profile, and is internationally known. A century of alumni include Noel Coward (whose Noel Coward Room archive is based in nearby Smithfield), Carry On star Charles Hawtrey, Olivia Hussey, Patsy Kensit, Pixie Lott, Martine McCutcheon, Louise Redknapp, Tracey Ullman and the late Jill Gascoine, who recently died aged 83. "It is a great loss," says the actor Leslie Ash.

on fire

"encapsulates a modern, effortless style accentuated by British racing heritage. The name refers to the Central London borough of Clerkenwell, home to a collection of the city's oldest architecture, as well as some of its finest creative minds." It's £1.5 million, so might not suit the post-Covid-19 pocket – but credit to the name.



Leslie Ash's dramatic schooldays



Leslie Ash

Actor Leslie Ash, the star of Quadrophenia and Men Behaving Badly, remembers her time at Italia Conti, then in Clapham, as a time of great fun and creativity

Actor Leslie Ash, the star of many film and television credits including *Quadrophenia* and *Men Behaving Badly*, remembers her time at Italia Conti, when her age group was based in Clapham. "I was very sad to read about the closure of the Italia Conti school," she says. "I went when I was 11 in 1971. It was based in Clapham, not far from where my parents ran a shop and was in a beautiful building called the Avondale Building. It was a creative place with great characters around like [choreographer] Dougie Squires. "As a proper old stage school we did music and dance lessons, including ballet

with a male teacher who chain-smoked throughout. Perhaps the educational side wasn't then the best, but it changed and raised its game. "At school I remember pictures up of alumni including Charles Hawtrey and Joan Collins – and our lovely matron called Mrs Eldridge. Sneaking out to the pub wasn't easy with her around.

"Italia Conti made the transition from a leading stage school to an academy and moved with the times. Back then, when we left we had to get an equity card the hard way on cruise ships and rep. "But it was a good time and Italia Conti was at the heart of it all – as a theatrical school it was the biggest name in the country and elsewhere. Italia Conti was up there with all of the world's stage schools and I'm shocked the school has gone."

As a theatrical school it was the biggest name in the country

Clerkenwell under Coronavirus

The lockdown on March 23 changed the character of EC1 and its neighbouring areas immeasurably. Normally a busy central district with a thriving mix of residential and commercial interests, EC1 rapidly hollowed out and started to resemble a ghost town. But as volunteers stepped up to help isolated and vulnerable people, delivering food, talking to neighbours and offering classes and online link-ups, a new kind of life started to emerge. In the next four pages you'll find several impressions of Clerkenwell in the age of coronavirus



St Luke's workers and volunteers made a huge effort

Checking in

Lisa Burrell of St Luke's explains how the centre has kept in touch during lockdown

We closed the doors to our Community Centre on Central Street on 20 March, but wanted to come up with ways of helping our community and regulars who would be isolated in lockdown. Many of our older members visit St Luke's daily for a freshly cooked lunch and social interaction and for many local families St Luke's is a lifeline.

We needed to continue to help these people to stay safe and keep our community who needed to isolate in touch, while prioritising safety. Working with several organisations and with donations of time, money and resources we came up with a list of ways we could help, including delivering meals and food parcels, telephone befriending for those feeling

isolated, use of computer and telephone to apply for benefits or for other uses; essential printing and photocopying, volunteering opportunities for locals and access to Cloudesley welfare grants.

Organisations we are working with in lockdown include Fare-Share and The Felix Project, redistributing food; organisations like Bill's Restaurants and the Barbican donated excess stock, and the London Borough of Islington. Our minibus, which normally helps people with mobility issues get to and from the Centre every day, is now being used for daily deliveries in south Islington.

Helpline 020 7549 8181 open from 9am-3pm, Monday to Friday www.slpt.org.uk

The pleasure of volunteering

Louise Lilja explains how she helped – and how it helped her

It feels like months ago when I saw the first flyer from Clerkenwell Mutual Aid. In the midst of all the chaos around us, here was an organisation who'd already managed to organise themselves to help their neighbours out. I signed up to help immediately.

Within a day or so, I was already assigned to my first task – dog walking! This was followed by gro-

cery shopping, hot meal delivery, medication pick up and bin duty. There wasn't anything the organisation wouldn't try to help with.

Then a month ago, I got furloughed from my day job. Having worked full-time my entire adult life, it was a shock to the system. Living by myself in an area I had only just moved to, I feared the isolation. This is when the volunteering really started to become a

daily need for my own health too.

It's said that one of the best ways to help yourself is by helping others and it's never been truer. Seeing the neighbourhood come together, support and comfort each other, my faith in humanity grew. Now, when I clap for the NHS and other essential workers every Thursday, I also clap for myself and other volunteers. And I feel proud, very proud.

Blooming heaven

Islington needs your green fingers

Clerkenwell residents are invited to share their horticultural creations for Islington in Bloom 2020. Like the Chelsea Flower Show, the borough's annual gardening competition has been moved online due to the coronavirus.

There's another factor to this year's competition – the positive effect of gardening on mental health. This competition, organised by Islington Council and Islington Gardeners, offers an opportunity for this therapeutic pastime and those without gardens are not excluded. All residents are encouraged to take part with window displays and house plants. It is hoped that this year's gardening entrants will last, like last year's winner Lever Street gardens (pictured).

Launched in late May, the competition runs until 5 July and the winners will be announced in September.

For more information on entering: visit www.islington.gov.uk/inbloom, or email inbloom@islington.gov.uk.



Lever Street Community Garden won Best Community Park in last year's competition

A view from isolation, by social worker Nick Wild

I've been in lockdown since a few days before we were officially told to do so. I knew my health conditions and disabilities would make me more at risk than most people. It took a few weeks to get confirmation from the NHS and I actually found out from Sainsbury's before the government informed me as they contacted me to tell me that I was eligible for priority deliveries, after not being able to get any shopping for three weeks.

I work as a social worker for people with learning disabilities, and have been working from home since the lockdown. There are times that this job can't be done remotely but due to my health, I can't do the face-to-face work. So if there are safeguarding cases that need that, a few colleagues are able to carry out that work with PPE.

As I'm one of the 'shielders' it has been quite stressful dealing with service

users and the impact of the coronavirus every day. It's relentless because my whole life revolves around the virus and its impacts.

Of course I still have to deal with the other issues that service users faced before the virus, such as finding service providers, setting up and arranging care, dealing with everything from abuse, neglect, and deprivation to supporting families and carers, and liaising with other professionals. It's just that the virus has changed a lot of that work. For example, finding emergency support can be more difficult due changes to care services and their ability to take in more people.

I have found it difficult because my partner also works in the same area of work as me – although for a different local authority – and this makes it seem that our lives are now just eat, sleep, work, and repeat.

I did leave the house a few

times, early on in the lockdown, to get essentials and to walk the dog. But I was more and more anxious each time I did so, as if I was playing Russian roulette.

And then I reached out to the Mutual Aid group for support with our dog. On top of Sainsbury's now offering regular deliveries, it meant that I could stay indoors and protect myself and my partner.

The volunteer dog walkers have really made a massive difference. My partner walks the dog early in the morning and late at night, and while we are working during the day the volunteers do a lunchtime walk.

I also live with depression and am able to manage it quite well usually, however since my life became so much smaller and focused almost entirely around the virus, it has become more difficult. I am still holding on and my manager has been pretty supportive.

I know that I will be one of the last people that is allowed

outside again safely, so I really am thankful for the support that I am getting. I do feel uncomfortable managing a rota for my dog though as the people doing the walks are volunteers and I like delegating the work.

It is quite funny that I am now the social secretary for a labradoodle. And he's getting so many visitors that if the doorbell goes, he knows it's for him now. He gets

really excited when someone comes to get him. I love him to bits and he helped me through my depression so he's very special to me. I was never a dog person until we got him, but he's such a strong character that he won me over. It's just a shame that we named him Boris! It was eight years ago and he isn't named after the other one. But everyday we walk him we have to point that out.



Boris has had lots of local walks

Domestic abuse has been an unfortunate effect of lockdown. Bella Saltiel talks to Solace Women's Aid

A woman's abuser is monitoring her social media activity, asking who she is messaging, stalking her around her house before attacking her.

This is just one of the cases that Solace Women's Aid refuge in Islington has been dealing with since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Marie, the refuge manager for Islington, says that since the start of quarantine she's taken in three women and three children. Lockdown makes women particularly vulnerable if they are in isolation with an abuser and cut off from their support networks. Marie adds that in lockdown, women have to come up with "creative reasons" to leave the house if they are forced to flee home.

As Fiona Dwyer, the CEO of Solace said, "We saw a 49 per cent rise in calls to our London Advice Line the week before lockdown" and by 24 April police sanctions and detections for domestic abuse had increased, "meaning that more alleged perpetrators of domestic abuse are being charged or cautioned." Meanwhile, the Met Police answers roughly 100 domestic abuse calls per day.

For many women, being trapped at home with an abuser could be a death sentence and Solace says that since the

start of quarantine, 19 women and two children have died as a result of domestic abuse across the UK. However, refuges are overstretched and women could fall through the cracks.

Solace and the organisation Southall Black Sisters are addressing this need by launching a Covid-19 Crisis Project offering safe crisis accommodation with specialist support to women and children fleeing domestic abuse and other forms of violence. They have secured 70 units for women and children, providing three months of free accommodation, and will then run a resettlement support programme to help women to move onto appropriate accommodation at the end of the crisis period.

It's a welcome move. In refuges like Islington families there is little space and vulnerable women face financial pressures as well as a heightened sense of what Marie calls "their isolation in refuge".

Solace is open to any woman in London and referrals can be taken from organisations or individuals.

The referrals line is open Monday to Friday, 10am-4pm. Call 0808 801 0650 or email: covidcrisisproject@solacewomensaid.org

The Mutual Aid groups have been instrumental to the Covid-19 effort but their lessons need to live on, writes Bella Saltiel

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, Clerkenwell Mutual Aid Group assembled a network of volunteers to help people in self-isolation. They run a helpline for those in need and organise phone buddies so that lonely people, or anyone wanting to meet their neighbour has an opportunity to speak with someone. The network creates points of contact that connect the community. Beyond this, they are organising 500 hot meals a week for vulnerable households.

In this way Clerkenwell Mutual Aid Group is also addressing the polarisation in Islington by getting "communities to engage with each other, and support each other where needed, on a street-level, grassroots basis". Rather than a great leveler, Covid-19 has thrown systems of inequality into stark relief.

The pandemic has highlighted this state of precariousness for many households. For instance, gig economy workers have been forced to choose between their health and livelihoods while renters who are "shielding" might

lose their income altogether and face eviction.

The Clerkenwell Mutual Aid Group coordinators said they recognise that these "financial problems, food poverty and mental health... will continue a long time after many of the lockdown restrictions have been eased." This crisis is highlighting and worsening critically-underfunded mental health support. Many food banks were forced to close because of this crisis, and as a result, the existing ones are increasingly over capacity making the food programmes and make-shift food banks that have sprung up around the borough essential. Taking into account the spike in unemployment, it is likely these services will need to continue in some capacity into the near future.

Clerkenwell Mutual Aid Group therefore "serves a purpose that extends past this crisis". There will be many people having to shield long after the lockdown restrictions have been eased. We need to take the lessons forward as the need for extra support is unlikely to change quickly.

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The Great Lockdown Bake-Off

A Clerkenwell couple have created the idea of 'Bake Buddies' – and hope to extend it way beyond lockdown

During the lockdown local residents Chris and Hobie Walker had an idea – to connect people by way of a baking group.



► Hobie delivering bakes

"I felt it would be an easy and fun way of bringing locals together, even if it had to take place over the internet using something like Zoom," said Hobie, a counsellor. "It could also provide a good excuse to chat about whatever is on their minds, assuming they felt like it, without feeling forced."

Hobie and Chris also decided it would be good to extend the idea of creating connections by taking their own bakes to anyone who felt isolated – therefore combining a socially-distanced visit with some baked goodies. The long-term idea would be that these 'Bake Buddies' could then be matched with up one of a network of bakers who live nearby.

For safety's sake, all bakers obviously make sure that all their handling would be done with thoroughly washed hands, with bakes placed in a provided

and sealed cardboard container less likely to carry any germs. And because the bakers know exactly what ingredients have gone into their bakes, they'll be able to check in person with their Bake Buddies about any allergy issues. The wider intention was to maximise the stronger feeling of community that seems to have emerged during the current crisis and enhance and maintain it beyond the crisis, bringing together people who may never have met under "normal" circumstances. And for bakers, it would be an excuse to share new recipes and bakes, as well have a good chat and regular catch up once the bakes are in the oven. Then, over the next day or two, they'd deliver them to their assigned Bake Buddy who'd appreciate a visit, a chat and of course, the bakes.

After spreading the word on



social media, and by placing a few posters around Clerkenwell, Chris and Hobie had enough people for their first bake and through local organisations like The Peel and Clerkenwell Mutual Aid (Clerkenwell & Bunhill Volunteers), some locals who were either isolated, lonely or just loved eating home-baked goodies were located.

The first bake was in mid-May. "It was great," said Hobie. "We had five sets of bakers, including two mother-and-daughter com-

bos, plus me as the baking host. We made simple Anzac biscuits from an old recipe book of mine. It was great to see each batch come out looking slightly different – but all delicious looking."

And the feedback from the Bake Buddies has been really positive. "The cookies were scrummy, so more-ish," wrote one local senior citizen who is currently self-isolating. "It was also lovely to have a good chat about Clerkenwell and its history. I can't wait for the next exciting delivery."

Bake and Take bakes every two weeks or so. Anyone interested in either baking or having the bakes brought to them – Bake Buddies – can get in contact either through the Facebook site www.facebook.com/BakeandTakeClerkenwell, emailing bakeandtake@peelinstitute.org.uk, or simply by phoning Hobie on 07971 209175

Voice power

Bella Saltiel meets Gisela Meyer, who invites us all to make music for healing

Gisela Meyer is using the 'uplifting' power of music to conduct sing-alongs with the EC1 community. She believes that music has the power to "move us into a spot that we haven't got access to verbally": particularly those powerful songs that "release some of the feelings of anxiety we

have at this time".

She also hopes that her community sing-along will be an opportunity for 'healing' especially given evidence that music can help to reduce anxiety – a fact noted in a 2015 study from Queen Mary University that looked at the effects of music in adult patients undergoing surgery.

The findings suggested that under such stressful conditions, music might reduce pain and anxiety. In similar spirit, Gisela hopes that her sing-along will be an opportunity for anyone in the community to feel the benefits of singing to release tension and anxiety – and also alleviate loneliness.

For Gisela, music has been a

fixture in her life since she was 12. Growing up in Frankfurt, she participated in orchestras then became a professional pianist. She now plays and teaches piano as well as singing regularly in concerts as a soloist, and is also member of several chamber ensembles.

When the EC1 community was hit with Covid-19 Gisela

considered the ways in which she could help vulnerable people and those self-isolating. Now, after joining a few volunteer initiatives she believes that with music, she has a unique way of communicating with people during and after the pandemic.

Gisela's next singalong is on 2 June. See giselameyer.me.uk

Kicking off

Garath Kerr, operations director of Café Kick in Exmouth Market, is like many in the hospitality industry, unsure of the future. His bar and restaurant, Café Kick, is a busy and thriving place where people mostly gather to drink and play table football in the atmosphere of a Mediterranean bar.

"We have no social distancing here," he says, gesturing at the football tables. "It's going to be



► Garath inside Café Kick

difficult to know what to do."

Garath is currently exploring ideas such as an oyster bar and picnics – and ways of raising each personal spend, such as a bigger food offering – but nothing is established yet.

"It's the unknown, and we're all feeling it," he says. "Rents are being deferred but how are people going to pay it back, when business is likely to be slow and only half the numbers of people will be able to get in? Few traders

will get back to being profitable and frankly it was hard enough already." Tables outside are one option he is exploring but the two-metre rule will still be hard to enforce.

The crunch will come, says Garath, when the furlough scheme comes to an end and the employer has to contribute. "There is a campaign being led to extend the furlough scheme – but at some point it's got to stop and that's when it will be difficult."

Herbal thrill

Milda Nae has been bringing the community together by conducting socially distanced Indoor Gardening Classes over online meetings platform Zoom. Milda had seven people attend her first class, where she explained how to plant edible indoor herbs even without a garden.

She believes it's an important initiative: not just to connect the community and allow people to stay in touch with each other, but also because people living in the city without a garden should have the opportunity to grow something. In this way, anyone can garden inside their home and have the pleasure of watching something grow that they can – hopefully – even eat themselves.

The Peel has provided anyone who wants to get involved in Milda's classes with growing packs which include seeds, planters and compost. Milda says that anyone can get involved if they would like to, even those without internet as she is happy to conduct a class over the phone.

To request a free herb garden pack and to get in touch with Milda email clerkenwellgarden@peelinstitute.org.uk



Milda's homegrowing classes

Mixed blessings

Bernard O'Brien finds lockdown a way to 'give back'

Some weeks ago when we all had to change our behaviour, some stricter than others, we received the flyer that Mutual Aid distributed. Given that my partner and I both now have to work from home (even though our offices are only a five minutes walk way), we now had a bit more time on our hands, and thought that this would be a great way to give a little back to the community. We aren't alone, as the wonderful coordinators have now

assembled an enthusiastic group of volunteers. Whenever they post a request, you have to be quick to respond on SLACK, otherwise one of the other volunteers 'grabs' the delivery slot. It's like trying to get tickets for Wimbledon!

I get to walk Cha Cha (a little Shih Tzu) and Boris (a big Labradoodle, who has a similar hairstyle to his namesake) as well as delivering medicine, hot food, and donated food.

It's great to get out and about, and meet some people in the neighbourhood that I otherwise would never have met.

Home truths

Alex Childs, who has an estate agency MW Childs on Farringdon Road, is relatively buoyant about business despite the fact that social distancing has stopped viewings and that, as

he puts it, "everything is likely to change".

"The lettings side has been busy," says Alex. "Although people wanting to buy and sell are frustrated, there's a bit of pent-up demand."

Alex has also noted a tendency for people in lockdown assessing whether their homes are really where they want to live.

"People have told me, 'I realise I don't like where I live'," he says. "Or they're more appreciative. Either way, people have had a long time to really think about where they live and whether it works for them."

Part of the changed environment will be driven by tech. "We've been doing VR (Virtual Reality) tours for over two years so we're onto that," says Alex. "Certainly, the idea of the accompanied viewing won't be very attractive – although a physical look is obviously still the best way to view."



EC1 estate agent Alex Childs

Terry O'Donnell is retired and lives on the Golden Lane Estate



As self-isolation is slowly being relaxed and most of us have started to venture out, we've all been pleasantly surprised at the clean air, bird song and empty pavements. Unfortunately some people remain inside and because of existing medical conditions are obliged to stay within their homes. Our help and encouragement should continue to be directed at them.

I don't think I am alone in thinking that during the past five or six weeks, I have found pleasure walking around the local streets and remembering the old poem by William Henry Davies, "What is life if full of care, we have no time to stand and stare". That is what I've been trying to do, without having to worry about bumping into fellow pedestrians – although the danger from cyclists "working from home" is always a hazard – then on returning to my flat, researching how this lovely little part of the world has evolved.

Walking along Farringdon Road a couple of weeks ago, I reminded myself that I was walking past the place where once stood Fleet Prison. I consoled myself regarding our instructions to stay indoors that I could exercise near my home, but the poor souls incarcerated in the Fleet did not have that option.

I decided to do a little research and discovered that our little part of London was in the 18th and 19th century almost a world

leader in penal establishments and punishment.

Apart from the Fleet Prison we had at various times Newgate, Wood Street, Clerkenwell Bridewell, Whitecross Street, New Prison, and the icing on the penal cake – Cold Bath Fields prison, infamous for its industrialised treadmills.

Clerkenwell also provided a great many of the incumbents of these penal warehouses. Many readers will be aware that the area along the banks of the Fleet ditch was a criminal hotbed full of poverty – and hence criminality – housed in appalling conditions.

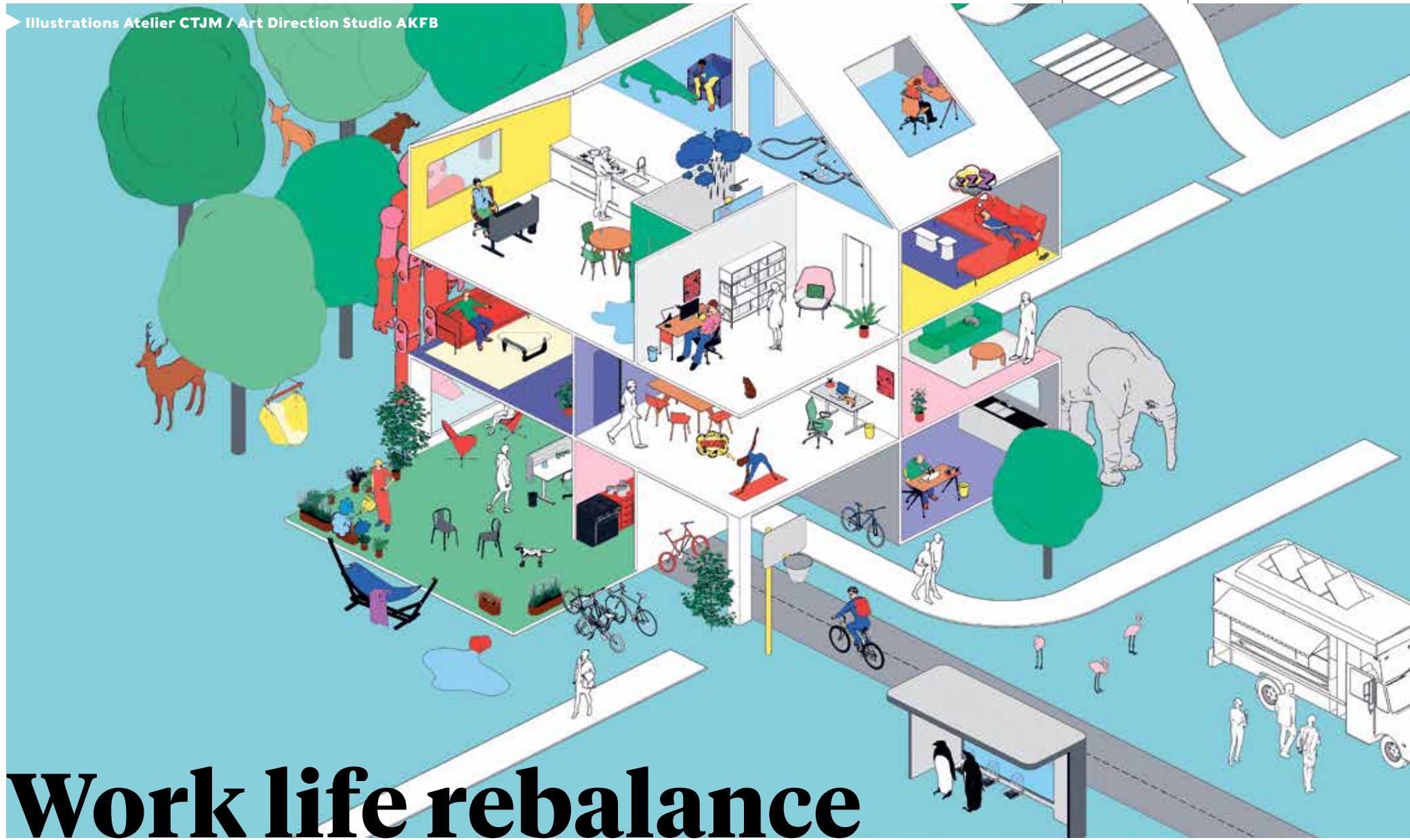
Perhaps it was not surprising that crime was the quick way out if you wanted a sovereign or two, although many of the more serious crimes they committed ended with a cart ride from Newgate to Tyburn there to be "turned off", or a long boat ride to the Americas and later Australia, to do seven years of slavery.

However, many of the prisoners were incarcerated for mere non-payment of debt, and some of the above prisons were solely for these type of unfortunates including the Fleet and Whitecross Street prisons. It's hard to imagine what it would have been like to go into unauthorised overdraft in those days.

All these prisons were eventually closed, the last big prison in Cold Bath Fields (where Mount Pleasant postal centre now stands) closing in 1885. The Middlesex House of Detention eventually became Hugh Myddleton school and this site is now private flats, although there are still some subterranean cells in the basement.

So, when we sit indoors thinking how boring life is, compare yourself to the unfortunates above and pour yourself another Chardonnay or latte. Also let's celebrate Clerkenwell today, for being such a wonderful diverse area – and let's soon get back to normal.

Illustrations Atelier CTJM / Art Direction Studio AKFB



Work life rebalance

Back to business.... but what will differ in the workplace after Covid-19? Here, Clerkenwell-based company Vitra offers six ways our working lives might change

Increased hygiene

Employee health will now be critical. New precautionary measures in communal spaces will help prevent infection. Surfaces, handles, bathrooms and even frequent contact areas on chairs will be cleaned daily and textiles and upholstery may lose out to leathers/faux leathers, plastics and wood: natural, comforting to touch, yet easy to clean. Disinfectants will be provided in all entry halls and bathrooms – and in some places, temperature checks and the wearing of masks will be demanded. Going to work while sick will not be considered brave – it will be unacceptable.

Working remotely stays

Many people are working from home – an involuntary experiment that has demonstrated that functioning technology is available, productive work is possible and

that teamwork can thrive. Remote working also gives a company access to global employees and reduces its carbon footprint, as well as reducing the density in the office.

Not allowing employees to work from home if they want will no longer be okay.

Meetings will wither

Many meetings and events will be transferred to digital platforms. The frequency of meetings will decline and we'll only meet when we must – with physical distancing in conference rooms or while standing.

Rituals such as handshakes, hugs or cheek kissing will no longer be deemed appropriate.

Office layouts will adapt

Crowded workspaces and working in close proximity to others will be called into question. However, this does not necessarily mean the revival of compartments or cubicles.

Companies will have to ensure there is physical distancing between employees and reduce the shared use of objects and spaces.

Self-opening doors and lifts that respond to voice prompts instead of touch buttons will be installed. Zero-touch coffee zones and canteen areas with pick up only and badge payment will be offered.

A good physical office environment gains importance in a time of crisis: it becomes a place of gathering and social interaction

Nora Fehlbaum, CEO, Vitra

The physical workspace's mood-change

Physical offices will remain unavoidable for those companies where labour or direct interaction with clients or machines is required. But Covid-19 has confirmed that many employees actually enjoy working in the office and missed their work environment and social interaction. In the new era of social distancing, 'humanness' needs to be re-injected into the environments where we spend so many hours, providing a sense of physical and psychological comfort, protection and safety.

Travel less, trust more

Companies may establish more restrictive travel guidelines – for example, banning travel for internal meetings. But with both remote working and fears of interaction in the workplace, companies and employees will need to gain a level of mutual trust.

Visit: vitra.com/backtotheoffice

FEATURES

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Venture forth

A bit nervous about going back into the real world and the workplace?

Here are some tips on managing the transition from therapists at Stillpoint Spaces London

As countries across the world relax lockdown measures, our team at Stillpoint Spaces London is excited but also nervous about getting back into our Clerkenwell space. Here, some of our therapists offer their advice for managing the transition out of lockdown.

Helen Cordery

- “It’s likely we’ll be giving ourselves a lot of mixed messages about meeting others – we are social creatures, designed to interact with others. So mixing with people in these strange new ways will feel strange and new. It’s really important to talk kindly to ourselves if and when we make a blunder. Think of it as a learning opportunity, not a ‘crime’.

- “Set yourself realistic targets. A whole day in the office (for example) might feel overwhelming, whereas a few hours might be easier. It’s better to manage a small target well than feel like you’ve failed because you haven’t met a larger target.
- “Talk to your employer about how to manage the transition in a way that works for both. Think about what works for you, and don’t feel pushed to do stuff that doesn’t feel right.”

Emma Bradshaw

- “Focus on the present moment rather than getting caught up in an endless stream of ‘what ifs’”
- “Explore your feelings – in therapy, alone or with a trusted listener – and then reflect on how to respond, making decisions consciously rather than reacting from a place of fear and panic.”
- “Try and take some time to walk each day and pay attention to your surroundings, especially nature.”



Flandina Rigamonte

- “The loosening of restrictions means more individual responsibility. More thought is required, which takes time, yet gives us more control. It’s important not to lose one’s voice, especially when negotiating with employers, landlords and flatmates. Try to be clear – discuss your concerns and get your queries answered before agreeing to anything.
- “Pay attention to your anxiety levels when suggestions are made and trust your intuition. Experiment and monitor how you felt before, during and after a new situation – for example going to meet a friend outside. Remember you have the right to change your mind if something makes you feel unsafe.”

Sissy Lykou

- “While the world might seem unknown or threatening, spend time connecting to your breathing and presence with the ground – in other words, mindfulness.”

You can find Stillpoint Spaces therapists on the Stillpoint Spaces directory. For more information: Visit stillpointspaces.com/find-a-counsellor

Nature's way

If nothing else, the coronavirus has reconnected us with urban wildlife



London Plane, Brunswick Square Gardens, WC1



Fig tree, Amwell Street, EC1



Willow tree, Colebrooke Row, N1

It’s difficult and possibly even inappropriate to find any benefit to the coronavirus, which has been so savage in its effects. But Clerkenwell resident Janet Dowling, on her lockdown walks, took advantage of the clear atmosphere to take photographs of the mature trees in and around Clerkenwell. “I made them into slideshows with music,” she says. With lowered pollution and traffic stress, it’s easy to imagine that these trees were themselves enjoying something of a break.

Barge board

Regent’s Canal is 200 years old this year. Mark Aston explains its significance

Clerkenwell and the wider EC1 district are no strangers to water. For centuries, the River Fleet flowed south towards the Thames and the area’s springs have provided drinking water and entertainment. The 17th-century New River brought fresh drinking water to the City of London from Hertfordshire, via Islington and Clerkenwell, and still supplies London with much of its water. However, two centuries ago a new water feature appeared on the area’s fringes, along City Road – the Regent’s Canal.

London’s Hidden Waterway
Once described as ‘London’s Hidden Waterway’, this year celebrates the bicentenary of the canal’s opening on 1 August 1820. Although passing through a well-populated area, much of the canal was initially hidden behind wharves and waterside warehouses. In recent times, the canal has emerged from its veiled existence with pleasure craft and a towpath enjoyed by walkers and cyclists.

Beginnings
Called after the Prince Regent (later George IV), the Regent’s Canal Company

Thornhill Bridge from the west mouth of the Islington Tunnel, 1973
All photographs courtesy of Islington Local History Centre



Western end (Battlebridge) of the Islington Tunnel by T H Shepherd, 1822
All photographs courtesy of Islington Local History Centre

began constructing the £772,000 waterway on 14 October 1812 and completed it eight years later. Its aim was to link the Grand Junction Canal’s Paddington Arm with the Thames at Limehouse and its 8.6 mile course would take goods to Islington and beyond. The Regent’s Canal boasted 40 bridges, 12 locks and a number of basins, two in Islington: City Road Basin (1820) and Battlebridge Basin (1822).

Islington Tunnel
Two major tunnels along the canal were also constructed. One of these, the Islington Tunnel, is the major engineering work of the waterway. At 878m long, and running from Muriel Street to Colbrooke Row, the celebrated civil engineer Thomas Telford inspected the tunnel in 1818 and described it as “perfect, the materials and workmanship excellent, and its direction perfectly straight.”

With no internal towpath, and room for one craft only, the tunnel was at first operated by ‘legging’: men lying on their backs aboard the boat walking the vessel through against the side walls. In 1826 a steam-chain tug was introduced, one of the earliest uses of steam power on the canals.

City Road Basin
The main centre of trade was the Regent’s Canal Dock – now the Limehouse Basin – a point for sea-borne cargo to be unloaded onto horse-drawn canal boats. Cargo was unloaded en-route in warehouses constructed by canal basins. City Road Basin made a huge contribution to the prosperity of the canal and soon became a distribution centre for goods into London. Due to its convenient location, several firms moved to City Road Basin, including the carriers Pickfords. There was also growing traffic in coal, timber, bricks, sand and other building

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City Road Basin, 1980s

“The canal continues to be an oasis of relative calm”

City Road Basin published by R Ackermann, 1822



materials and it is likely many residents of the St Luke's parish area in EC1 would have gained employment with the Regent's Canal Company and other businesses at City Road basin.

Coming of the railways

Following the early success, the canal hit the buffers in the 1840s, when railways began taking its business away. There were even (unsuccessful) attempts to turn the canal into a railway. The canal's fortunes ebbed and flowed but cargo did increase between the 1850s and 1880s. The Northern Underground line, started 1901, saw tunnelling underneath City Road Basin, and the canal removed excavated spoil.

Second World War and after

During the Second World War traffic increased on the canal as an alternative to the busy railways. A number of canal-side buildings were hit by enemy bombs, including some on City Road Basin. Along with other transport systems the canal was nationalised in 1948, trading as British Waterways and the towpaths were used as underground conduits for electricity cables. The last horse-drawn commercial traffic was in 1956 and by the late 1960s business traffic had almost vanished.

Regent's Canal 2000s

The Canal and River Trust took over guardianship of the canals in England and Wales from British Waterways in 2012, along with many heritage buildings and structures. Since then the Islington stretch of the Regent's Canal has been gradually re-energised. While the canal continues to be an oasis of relative calm, businesses have sprung up along its historic basins. Work completed in 2009 to City Basin included a new public open space, a landscaped park, and facilities for the Islington Boat Club. The basin is now also home to the Islington's tallest building, the 36-storey, 115m-tall Lexicon Tower, a residential building of 146 apartments. At its Battlebridge 'sister' basin at King's Cross the London Canal Museum has a fascinating history of the Regent's Canal – London's rediscovered waterway.

Regent's Canal 200: Voices from Islington
Islington Museum, 27th July – 25th October
Visit islington.gov.uk/heritage



Unions agitated to better protect staff from infectious disease

Keeping us posted

Postal services kept us connected during lockdown and the Mount Pleasant hub in EC1 was vital. In this guest article, Professor David Green and Dr Laura Newman, of King's College London, look at the role of these key workers

Much has been written during the lockdown about how best to protect the health of postal workers during a pandemic. At a time when we're reconsidering what or who constitutes a 'vital' worker, it's increasingly apparent just how critical Royal Mail workers are, and they have been rightfully designated as an essential service by the government.

But Royal Mail workers today face a difficult job, and not just because of traffic in parcels of essential goods — such as medicine — when people self-isolate. Recently, Communication Workers Union (CWU) members staged walkouts following complaints about a lack of personal protective equipment

(PPE), and insufficient working space. Dave Ward of the CWU expressed fears over the effects this might have: "many of our members [...] [worry] they could become 'super-spreaders'".

These are not recent concerns. Because of the public-facing nature of much employment in the Victorian Post Office, and the handling of letters and parcels in London that circulated throughout the entire country, there has always been disquiet about the spread of infectious disease through the mail.

Much of this focused on the dangers such diseases posed to staff. The Victorian Post Office provided relatively generous rates of sick pay and free medical care — the former to encourage workers to report sickness earlier and the latter to check against malingering. Postal staff were expected to quarantine themselves if they or a family member became sick from diseases such as scarlet fever, for example, and the Post Office Medical Service provided

free vaccinations for all staff for diseases such as smallpox.

At the same time, there were often complaints that the working conditions of the Post Office were responsible for the spread of diseases. These concerns became very apparent during the 1889–90 influenza epidemic, where postal workers were among the first reported to have contracted the illness.

At the General Post Office in London a third of the staff were reported as having contracted the flu. Telegraphists, who worked in two large rooms at the General Post Office building in St Martin's le Grand, were severely affected, with over 38 per cent of the workforce contracting the disease.

Commentators were aware of how the cramped conditions might have encouraged flu to spread through the workforce. Unions agitated for conditions to better protect staff from infectious disease: in the interwar period, for example, workers complained frequently about the 'death germs' they encountered when handling damaged parcels.

This new phase in the medical history of the Post Office reminds us that these are not new problems: rather, managing the spread of disease has been an issue for plagued postal employers, employees, and the public. With coronavirus there is the justifiable fear that all kinds of physical communication — including the postal kind — leave us vulnerable in a pandemic.

At the same time, however, that communication is critical to our collective physical and mental well-being. As a project, we will be spending the next few years thinking about how Post Office employers tried — and often failed — to articulate and resolve such tensions in ways that pleased both its workers and its public. In the meantime, perhaps consider putting up a note to your postie to say thanks.

David Green is Professor of Human Geography at King's College London and the Principal Investigator on the Wellcome-funded project 'Addressing Health: Morbidity, Mortality and Occupational Health in the Victorian and Edwardian Post Office'. Laura Newman is the project's Postdoctoral Research Associate and is also based at King's. See addressinghealth.org.uk

Do you work for the Post Office, or have postal ancestors? If so the Addressing Health project team would love to hear from you. You can reach us at addressinghealth@gmail.com or on Twitter @postalhealth

LETTERS •

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 8th July.

Life after lockdown

David Wilcox
Smithfield, EC1

In coming months our streets and buildings should begin to come alive again. But not everyone will be able to leave their homes and not every shop and business will re-open.

All over the world cities are re-balancing space for walking, cycling, and driving, and rethinking how we can connect while keeping some distance. The Mayor of London recently announced sweeping changes, and we can expect more.

But how can we make an input to the way that our neighbourhoods develop – and also support those places and organisations we have come to value most during the emergency?

I am inspired by an experiment in Leeds where the organisation Create Streets has published an

interactive map allowing people to say what they like, dislike or wish to see improved. With encouragement from the *EC1 Echo*, I'm planning a similar map covering its distribution area from Old Street roundabout to Grays Inn Road, Angel to Smithfield.

You can find more about the map – and some earlier maps – at clerkenwellcommons.london with contact details, if you would like to help take the idea forward.

Remove the bollards

Mike Franks, EC1
Director of The Clerkenwell Commons

The pavements in the medieval core of Clerkenwell are so narrow that young and old alike often move into the

road to pass one another. This situation is made worse by bollards designed to prevent illegal parking but often seriously reducing pavement widths.

The government wants to encourage walking but many of Clerkenwell's streets discourage this and an increase in cycling without commensurate pavement widening will make this worse.

Please remove the bollards, widen our pavements and increase the penalties for pavement parking.

Local tale

Steph Bruce-Smith
Goswell Road, EC1

Absolutely loving reading the April-May edition of *EC1 Echo*. I find it quite difficult sometimes feeling a sense of community in Clerkenwell, but shows I just didn't know where to look! Very interesting read, thank you.

The family way

Writer John Medhurst is examining the working class history of Clerkenwell



One of the benefits of lockdown has been extra time to do things like research family ancestry. As I'm currently writing a book for Repeater Books on the North London Working Class 1950–2020, I delved into my own north and north-east London family tree, with some interesting results that shine a light into the history of Clerkenwell and its surrounding areas.

I started with my dad, Edward, born in St Pancras in 1938. Through him the family traces back to Hoxton and Shoreditch (the infamous 'Jago' of Arthur Morrison's 1896 memoir *A Child of the Jago*), Clerkenwell, Finsbury

and St Luke's.

My grandfather, Edward, born 1904 in Shoreditch, was a commercial driver who lived with my grandmother Edith, a warehouse cleaner, in Kings Cross while my great-grandfather Edward had been a "Carman" – a driver of horse-drawn delivery vehicles – and was born and died in Shoreditch.

Great-grandfather Edward's dad, William, a "horse hair dresser", was born in 1851 in St Luke's, here in Clerkenwell. In 1872 he married Emma Hooson of Clerkenwell, a machinist, whose parents were George Hooson and Mathilda Mitchell, born in Clerkenwell in 1834.

The Mitchells, who came from Farnham, lived in Buck Lane, St Luke's, a street that no longer exists. I was shocked to discover that William's father – also William but this time a "horse hair curler" – went to prison in 1861 for embezzlement, and with no means of support his wife Ellen went into the Workhouse. By the 1871 census Ellen was dead, so that clearly did for her.

Their son William must have been left to survive in the rookeries of Clerkenwell as best he could.

On the other side my grandmother Edith's family, the Byfords, moved to London from Ipswich. Her mother Phoebe is remembered by my Dad and even by me as she lived until 1972 when I was 10. Phoebe's father Alf Buck, a warehouseman, was born in 1854 in St Pancras and died in 1893 in Holborn, but his father, Stephen Buck, a shoemaker, was born in Yarmouth in 1810 and moved to Clerkenwell. By 1861 he and his family, including young Alf, were living in Yardley St, off Farringdon Rd.

Like the Bucks, Mitchells and Byfords, many others during the 19th century migrated to London as it seemed to offer better prospects. That they ended up instead in the Jago and the rookeries of Clerkenwell shows how migratory fortunes can be mixed.

John is seeking the personal memories and reminiscences of those who grew up and worked in working class housing and jobs since 1950. So if you lived and worked, or still live and work, in the general area of Hoxton, Clerkenwell, St Pancras and Camden, and would like to tell him your story, email: jm45@btinternet.com

COLUMN



Will we need so many offices in the future? Yvonne Goff Courtney would prefer workshops and home-working

Clerkenwell's craftsmanship heritage is well known, but the most important aspect of the area over the ages has been its networks: the multitude of makers facilitating a wealth of production.

So precious has been this hive of activity that in the 1970s, policy-makers recognised the value of this skilled artisan community and initiated tax breaks for workshops comprising up to 2,500 square feet. Long-time local planner (and *EC1 Echo* contributor) Mike Franks initiated the pioneering

Workshops “Workshops will be the catalyst for the future”

which featured over 140 workshops housing over 70 different trades including instrument, silk rope and clock-makers – fostering the last of Clerkenwell's artisan networks.

Nowadays Clerkenwell's contemporary workers are predominantly geared to developing virtual products and services than tangible objects, but unlike their artisan predecessors, commute to Clerkenwell from London's outer zones.

But will this now change, post-coronavirus?

No one could have imagined that a pandemic would change the working status quo. Yet with the end of the crisis nowhere in sight and our newfound ability to work from anywhere, workers will seek to attain a more balanced lifestyle: perhaps permanently working

from or near their home; perhaps living and operating from the same building.

The culture of the office dominates our working lives and the development of our city (over 15 million square feet of office space is currently under construction in central London), yet in a few short months, the coronavirus-induced lockdown has seriously imperilled the era of the office.

It's expected that many city spaces will struggle to adapt, and rents will plummet. People will return to the office, but not as often. Should home-working fail to foster the flexible col-

laboration on which much of the economy relies, companies such as architectural practices

anticipate offices to no longer be places where individuals congregate to work daily, but instead visit to collaborate.

Which brings us back to Clerkenwell. The area's enclave of furniture showrooms will likely survive, being an established agglomeration in the interiors industry. But other interesting opportunities will arise – and it is hoped that workshops will again be the catalyst for the area's future. A new generation of talent could flourish and energise Clerkenwell and further afield – and Londoners could at last get their city back from the ravages of speculative property developers.

Yvonne Goff Courtney is the founder of bespoke repurposed clothing label @CollageLondon and a writer and communications consultant

Support independent local journalism

An appeal for help

EC1 Echo was launched in 2019 with funding from Peel Institute as part of its Connecting Clerkenwell project, and since then we have tried to do things differently. We combine professional journalism with voluntary contributions from people who live and work in EC1 to create content which is responsive to, and reflective of, the community it serves.

As a not-for-profit, hyper-local newspaper we currently publish bi-monthly and are the only newspaper solely dedicated to the EC1 postal district and its nearby neighbours. These are challenging times for print media and we are now at the point where we need to begin to move towards a more sustainable model – and we need your help.

As part of our long-term plan we would like to generate the income required to keep publishing from advertising, but due to the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, this is a particularly difficult for a new publication to find advertisers. That's why we're asking you, the people of Clerkenwell – local residents and businesses alike – to help us get the funding in place to guarantee the publication of at least six more issues over the course of a year.

We believe that our not-for-profit model offers a new approach to creating local journalism which is both inclusive and accountable and at times such as these essential. But we need your support to keep going.

By the 15th of July we are hoping to raise at least £5,000 because we want everyone in EC1 to be able to access local news for free. Please support us so we can continue to do so.

Individual rewards

£5 or more – THANK YOU

A mention on our website and in the August–September issue of the newspaper.

£20 or more – BAG AND BADGE

An EC1 Echo Tote bag, badge and the August/September issue of EC1 Echo posted to you. Plus a big THANK YOU on our website and in the August/September issue of the newspaper.

£50 or more – EC1 ECHO BY POST

An EC1 Echo Tote bag, badge, and the next six issues of EC1 Echo posted to you. Plus a big THANK YOU on our website and in the August/September issue of the newspaper.

Organisational rewards

£100 or more – LOGO IN THE PAPER

Your logo in the next six issues of EC1 Echo plus a big THANK YOU on our website.

£360 or more – SMALL ADVERT

An eighth-page advert in the next six issues of EC1 Echo plus a big THANK YOU on our website.

£600 or more – BIGGER ADVERT

A quarter-page advert in the next six issues of EC1 Echo plus a big THANK YOU on our website.

£1,100 or more – QUITE BIG ADVERT

A half-page advert in the next six issues of EC1 Echo plus a big THANK YOU on our website.

£2,000 or more – BIG ADVERT

A full-page advert in the next six issues of EC1 Echo plus a big THANK YOU on our website.

Visit crowdfunder.co.uk/ec1-echo--making-local-news-that-matters