

EC1 ECHO

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Credit Central District Alliance



In recovery

Trees, tourists, jobs and apps: Debbie Akehurst of the Central District Alliance talks about its plans for EC1

● BY OLIVER BENNETT ●

Some may have noticed the first Christmas lights in Farringdon this year – lamppost decorations on Clerkenwell Road and a star outside Farringdon Station.

These decorations are the work of the Central District Alliance, a body that aims to knit together all the central parts of London – Clerkenwell, Farringdon, Holborn, Bloomsbury and St Giles – so as to “create a destination or a collection of villages,” as the CDA’s CEO Debbie Akehurst puts it. As we emerge fitfully

from Covid-19, which has devastated central London, the CDA hopes for a reboot with plans that include tree planting, local apprenticeships, support for smaller charities and a digital app for visitors and residents alike.

Some might remember “Midtown”, the CDA’s previous name and a phase in its two-decade plus history. “It was too Americanised and the public didn’t get it,” says Akehurst, who joined the CDA during the pandemic. Hence the renaming of the Alliance, a BID (Business Improvement District) supported by 400 businesses from across the area.

BIDs are an American innovation that are now established here. “We have 70 in London alone and I think they will keep on growing,” she says. “BIDs are a force for good. But it’s important to remember that we work in partnership with local authorities and businesses – the wider community has to be at the forefront of our thinking.”

Since the pandemic, a big question has been about how central areas like Clerkenwell can come back to life.

“In terms of the recovery, the emphasis is not how to survive, but how to thrive,” says Akehurst. “It’s very important that

we deliver social value to support communities – and one of the priorities is employment, skills and training.

“We know that young people suffered terrible effects from Covid-19 so on 8 February, as part of National Apprenticeship Week, we’re launching a new programme called Your Future Talent. Working with local authorities, we’ll act as a conduit for young people to businesses. As we’ve got over 400 business connections, we can make links between the business community and people looking for employment.”

● Continued on Page-15

EC1 Echo is the area's free community newspaper. We publish bi-monthly and distribute 7,500 free copies of each issue – and we will continue to do so during the ongoing public health crisis.

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NEWS

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Arsenal kicks off anti-knife crime campaign

BY KENDALL BROWN

Islington parents who have lost their children to knife crime attended Emirates Stadium to stand in solidarity with Arsenal's No More Red campaign, which is a campaign that strives to tackle the root causes of youth violence and provide safe spaces and more opportunities for our young people.

Gathered at Emirates Stadium were parent champions from the Violence Reduction Unit-funded Islington, Camden Parent Champions Support Project and the parent support group: Love and Loss. Also in attendance were Cllr Kaya Comer-Schwartz, Leader of the Islington Council, and Linzi Roberts-Egan, the council's Chief Executive.

Cllr Comer-Schwartz said: "I was humbled and honoured to see – and be part of – this important show of unity at The Emirates yesterday, alongside local people who have personal experience of the devastating effects of knife crime and who have gone on to support other parents affected by it."

"It was an especially poignant moment as this month also marks the first and third anniversaries of the deaths of two of our young people due to knife crime."

Islington Council works closely with Arsenal in the Community and with the Arsenal Foundation, which has funded a knife bin near



Cllr Kaya Comer-Schwartz with members of the Love and Loss group at Emirates Stadium

“It was an especially poignant moment as this month also marks the first and third anniversaries of the deaths of two of our young people”

the stadium in Hornsey Road. The knife bin is one of eight across the borough that has taken more than 1,000 knives and other bladed items off the streets since October 2020.

No More Red campaign has already seen positive impacts, such as in Islington with the refurbishment of the much-loved football pitch on the Harvist

Estate, near Emirates Stadium.

Freddie Hudson, Head of Community, Arsenal in the Community, said: "The No More Red campaign launched by Arsenal and Adidas builds on our long-standing work by investing in more quality, safe spaces and educational opportunities that help individuals make better, informed choices about their future."



The bench has been graffitied as an example of 'hostile design' Credit Bruno Healy

Bench
mark

This bench at Farringdon Station has started an online debate about 'hostile design'

A bench by Farringdon Station has bought the ire of those who see it as an anti-rough sleeping design. With stonework dividing the seating area, rendering the possibility of stretching out impossible, the idea that it was an example of what is known as 'hostile architecture' was raised on the social media platform Reddit last Autumn. Since then it has been the subject of angry graffiti. Intentional or not? Write in your thoughts to ec1echo@peelinstitute.org.uk

Health into homes

New plans for Finsbury Leisure Centre

BY JULIA GREGORY,
LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

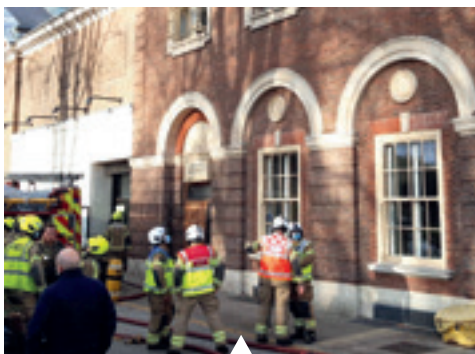
A new leisure centre in Islington is a step closer after politicians agreed to ask designers to come up with a vision for the venue near Old Street.

The scheme will see the ageing Finsbury Leisure Centre replaced and is part of a masterplan for 100 “genuinely affordable homes”, a new medical centre and public open spaces nearby.

The current leisure centre on Norman Street has four outdoor football pitches, four squash courts, a six-court multi-sports hall, and fitness class studios and activity rooms.

It is one of eight council-owned leisure centres and in November 2020 acted as a walk-through Covid-19 testing centre.

Cllr Satnam Gill, executive member for finance and performance, said the council did not have the expertise in-house to design a modern leisure centre. The design team is likely to be appointed by March. It needs architectural, engineering and landscaping skills and the contract is expected to come in at under £5m.



Firefighters tackling the blaze at Ironmonger Row in January

In 2016, the council held a competition for the new leisure centre and the winning designer will be invited to tender for the contract.

According to a report for the council's executive, it is looking at two draft schemes, one predicting a £589,000 deficit, based on 165 homes, and the other at £1m, based on including 178 homes.

In 2016, the council estimated the building project would cost £49m.

The council aims to invest money in the Ironmonger Row Baths, which have already had £17m of improvements, the nearby Toffee Park Adventure Playground, and Radnor Street Gardens, which were redesigned

in 2006/7 with input from children from Richard Cloudesley School.

Cllr Una O'Halloran, executive member for community development and who grew up in Bunhill, said: “I remember when the leisure centre was built, it is very out of date.”

She welcomed the plan to build new homes as part of the scheme.

The council's executives have agreed the procurement strategy.

EC1 Echo adds:

Ironmonger Row baths on Norman Road EC1 has reopened after a fire on 6 January. Ten fire engines and 70 firefighters were called to a fierce blaze that began in the basement sauna and spa.

Station Commander David Reed, who was at the scene, said: “Around nine members of staff and 15 customers left the building uninjured before the Brigade arrived.

Ironmonger Row Baths is part of a leisure centre run by the company GLL. It was reopened in 2012 after a £16.5million restoration project, including the spa where the fire is thought to have started.

Visit: better.org.uk/leisure-centre/london/islington/ironmonger-row-baths.



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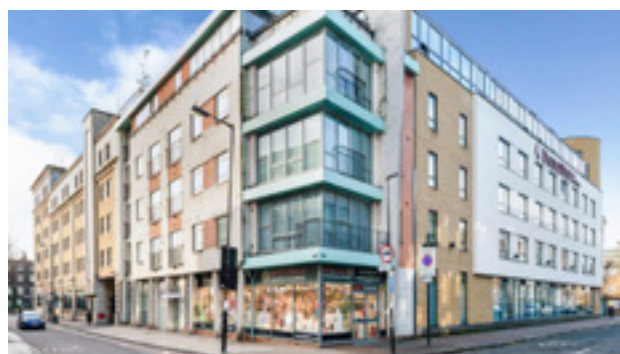


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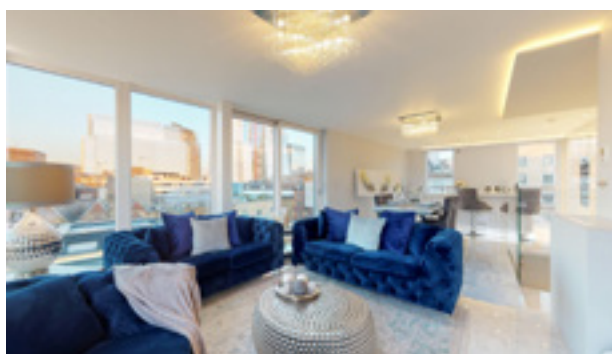
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BOROUGH HIGH STREET, SE1

Far above the hustle and bustle of lively Borough High Street and ideally situated to allow for a leisurely walk to the heart of the City is this quite outstanding three bedroom penthouse apartment. £2,350,000



SOTHEBY ROAD, N5

Set on the picturesque tree lined Sotheby Road is this wonderful two bedroom split level garden flat, presented in immaculate order throughout. £900,000

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Short te
Airbnb's susta
central London
revives calls for

BY NICK WARREN

Airbnb's dominance of short-term lettings in London continues to impact the rental sector across the capital, prompting fresh calls for government to intervene and introduce further regulation.

Data presented by short-term let analysts AirDNA reveals that in the last quarter of 2021, the number of listed short-term let rentals in London was over 41,000. An indication of their market control, 79 per cent of all active short-term lets in the capital can be found as Airbnb listings. In 2020, there were 5179 Airbnb listings in Islington.

Although Airbnb has existed since it was founded in San Francisco in 2008, the explosion of Airbnb listings in London is more of a recent trend. Since 2014, 'entire home' listings on the site grew by 571 per cent over the next five years according to Edge Hill University. Airbnb still does not make any monthly or annual breakdown of their data publicly available.

From one perspective, Airbnb is a welcome addition to London's diverse rental market, particularly for holidaymakers. A pioneer of a 'sharing economy', Airbnb-style enables homeowners to open up their spare rooms or entire homes to those in need of a quick stay at short notice. Visitors can circumvent the need for an expensive hotel or corporate contract. It can also be lucrative for would-be landlords, dubbed "rentalpreneurs." Short stays make quick profits. Using ONS statistics from 2021, while the average yearly income from long-term tenants in London was £17,000, the potential annual income from an Airbnb listing, if booked for the same amount of time, would be £27,000.

However, trust-based peer-to-peer letting may be too good to be true. Airbnb has come under significant criticism since breaking into London's rental sector. As landlords transition to short-term letting, London's already tight property pool is squeezed, making it even more problematic for long-term renters to settle in the capital.

Due to the revolving door of short-term properties, there is also a problem of anti-social tenants becoming overnight noisy neighbours. The lack of regulation for short-term letting means that the safety of the occupants and the property itself cannot be guaranteed in the same way that regulated long-term lets can – especially not by the Airbnb-style companies themselves.



Rents in central London continue to rise Credit Nick Warren

Room with a screw

Rents in central London are continuing to rise in central London

BY NICK WARREN

At the end of last year, rent prices in London topped pre-pandemic levels for the first time. According to the latest market report from Zoopla, average rents in central London rose by 4.7 percent in the third quarter of 2021 alone, and the latest data from Savills indicates that prime London rental values were up 6.6 percent in the fourth quarter compared to last year – their highest level of quarterly growth since 2010.

This surge in rental prices is a stark reversal on trends brought in by the pandemic two years ago. Then, uncertainty hit the rental sector as people flooded out of the capital. The population of London actually fell for the first time in 30 years as the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence estimated that as much as 8 per cent of the capital's population left the city. Faced with low demand, landlords were forced to cut prices to secure tenancies and in the 12 months since October 2019, average rents in London fell dramatically by 6.9 percent. In the

City of London, close to EC1, it was as much as a 15 percent drop. But the reason for the reversal of this trend is a case of high demand and low supply. The lifting of tight Covid-19 restrictions has seen tenants flooding back into London in a surge of demand for an ever increasingly limited number of available homes and rooms. On the demand side, much of this surge can be attributed

to returning tenants who moved out of their London accommodation, either moving in with friends or family or international tenants returning to their homes abroad. Arriving students from both in and outside of the UK also make a significant contribution as they settle for in person teaching.

London estate agents Benham and Reeves recently reported that the number of applicants they were reporting at the end of the year was up over 150 per cent in comparison to the same period in 2020.

Although demand is certainly extremely strong in the capital, these figures should be slightly moderated by seasonal trends. It is common that estate agents, not just in London but across the UK, do a large portion of their business in the later months such as August and September.

Supply of housing and rooms is also major factor towards rising rents. Analysis by City Hall revealed that "a significant fall in the availability of rooms has occurred in central London, where demand for rooms is more than double the supply."

Aside from short-term pressures, the supply of housing is likely to be a long-term issue for the capital. Although low mortgage rates and higher rates may be an incentive for the buy-to-let market, the 3 percent stamp duty on buy-to-let properties introduced in 2016 has slowed investment.

In the public sector, the government is struggling to reach its building targets for affordable homes across the country. Damaged supply chains have led to rising costs for building materials – the BCIS Materials Cost Index reveals that the cost of construction materials reached a 40 year high in the third quarter of last year – and there is also a shortage of skilled labour in the construction industry.

Due to strong demand for housing and a structural under-supply of new homes – that will take years to overcome – expect to see rents in London continue to rise into 2022. Zoopla estimates the rise will be sustained at 3.5 percent.

"The supply of housing is a long-term issue for the capital"

rm pain

ined impact on housing market tighter regulation

Airbnb’s terms of service state: “While we work hard to ensure our Members have great experiences using Airbnb, we do not and cannot control the conduct or performance of Guests and Hosts and do not guarantee (i) the existence, quality, safety, suitability, or legality of any Listings or Host Services or (ii) the truth or accuracy of any Listing descriptions, Reviews, or other Content provided by Members.”

Many have and continue to call for tighter regulation on short-term lets in London and across the UK. Charles Peerless, Clerkenwell-based estate agent at Winkworth, says there are “double standards” in the industry. “While estate agents are held accountable, for short-term lets,” he says, “there doesn’t seem to be any regulation for Airbnb landlords.”

““
*There doesn’t seem to
be any regulation for
Airbnb landlords*
””

The law states that London landlords are only allowed to let short-term if letting does not exceed more than 90 days in a year. This law was initially passed in 2015 to de-regulate the industry and encourage homesharing, but not at the expense of long-term lets. However, there is evidence that thousands of properties have been in breach of this 90-day rule. In one such case in 2019 Toby Harman, 37, was fined £100,000 for illegally subletting his central London flat using Airbnb. He had taken in 300 separate bookings on the property since 2013. Pressure continues for greater government action into the problem. The London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, has called on the government to introduce a short-term property registration list to help enforce the 90-day rule.

London also appears to lag behind the rest of the UK. In Scotland for example, the Local Government Planning and Housing Committee has already approved short-term let licensing – to come into force in 2024.

Although Airbnb-style lets can provide a welcome boost to London tourism and allow responsible homeowners to make a little extra income, further regulation and transparency are needed to make the model work for all Londoners.

5 NEWS



Crossrail to open in March

Crossrail is on track to open the Elizabeth Line in the first half of 2022. The railway, which has a hub station at Farringdon, is set to take passengers this spring after last-minute trials that have taken place since November. A third of the trials were completed before Christmas the line open potentially as soon as Sunday 6th March.

Eight of the 10 new central stations have now been commissioned and transferred to Transport for London. The line will launch with a new passenger service between

Paddington and Abbey Wood, through new tunnels under central London, offering passengers travelling between these stations 12 trains per hour in each direction. When the other two branches of Crossrail join up this year, it will rise to 24 trains per hour.

““
*The opening of the new line
has always been planned to
take place in stages*
””

The opening of the new line has always been planned to take place in stages to ensure the new central London stations, signalling and infrastructure can run safely and reliably before linking in with services out to the east and west. Direct services from Reading and Heathrow are expected to connect with the central section by autumn.

The key central section of the scheme is due to open some time between next month and this June. It was originally due to finish in December 2018. Full services are expected to start by May 2023.

Clerkenwell has had low booster jab rate

BY ALASTAIR LOCKHART,
LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

London has the lowest vaccine uptake in the country, with East London seeing the fewest people vaccinated.

Out of the bottom 10 authorities for vaccinations, eight are in London with a number of other boroughs in the capital with unusually low uptake. Tower Hamlets in East London has the lowest proportion of people with three jabs in the whole country with a mere

14.6 per cent had the booster as of December 13. Newham was the second-worst in the UK – the borough has long lagged behind the rest of the country with just 16.3 per cent of people there having had all three doses.

Recently, Islington was also among six other London boroughs among the 10 worst for booster vaccine uptake with Islington at 21.1 per cent and Camden at 23.1 per cent when the UK average of triple jabs stood at 41.1 per cent Last November, Clerkenwell showed a poor performance

within the borough, with just 56 per cent having had one jab against 70 per cent of people in Highbury East.

But figures in mid-January showed an improvement at 40 per cent of people in Islington having now received booster jabs – still lower than the rest of England, at 60 per cent. There have been 409 Covid-19 deaths reported among Islington residents.

The UK government has continued to urge everyone over the age of 18 to get their booster vaccines.

News from The Peel



Peel designers show off their maps Credit Anthony Tam

The Peel is your local community centre, based in the heart of Clerkenwell since 1898. We offer classes and activities for all ages and assist local people to set-up projects which benefit the whole community.

From the archives



The Peel 1953–54 annual report

The Peel is fortunate to have original copies of annual reports dating back as far as 1906. In the 1950s The Peel still primarily offered services for men and boys. Here we share a snapshot of Peel life from our 1953–54 report when the Men’s Club was reported as having, ‘...probably the most successful year in its history,’ with a range of activities including football, indoor games and ‘social gatherings...to which

men could bring their wives’. The Boys Club enjoyed a trip to a youth club at the Bournville complex in Birmingham, where the accommodation was described as having, ‘...all that one can wish for in social pleasures’. Back in Clerkenwell, those lucky boys enjoyed Physical Training and Shoe Repairing classes, amongst others. Meanwhile the Women’s Fellowship enjoyed visits from speakers who had lived in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and Persia (Iran), as well as talks about the ‘Coronation’ and ‘Old People’s Homes’. There were also reports on the Schoolboys’ Club and The Peel Players Dramatic Group, whose production of *Queen Elizabeth Slept Here* raised enough money to pay for, ‘...the children of a Cripple-age Home to have a jolly fine day at the seaside’.

Winter highlights



Social Club Christmas Party

Without doubt, our various festive celebrations were the absolute highlight of the winter months. We were determined to make-up for a



Volunteer Shanaz & team member Nermin

lack of Christmas celebrations in 2020 and by pure good luck our festive events took place just before the new government Covid-19 guidance was introduced in mid-December. Our biggest event was the Social Club’s festive party, for the older adults who regularly attend activities at The Peel. Lunch, crackers, dancing, live music, Christmas jumpers and more than one silly hat brought smiles to everyone’s faces. It was a joyous and uplifting day. Of course, Covid-19-safe restrictions were in place, but it takes more than lateral flow tests, restricted numbers and ventilation to stop our older members from having a good time!

Royal inspiration



Youth Club Xmas outing

At the start of December, we took our young people to see *King Richard*, the film about tennis stars Venus and Serena Williams and their dad, followed by a slap-up dinner at Nandos. A really enjoyable evening was had by all and some of our young people found the film really inspirational. One told us, “It was nice to see how a young Black girl like me can have such a high dream and make it happen.” Whilst another of our young people said she had been encouraged to, “Believe in yourself, even when others give up on you.”

Festive thanks

Christmas might seem like an age ago, but we would like to say huge thanks to the East London Business Alliance (@oureiba) for once again giving our children and young people high quality presents. Headphones, games, study lamps, clothes, beauty products and more – our children and young people

received really great gifts which they were hugely thankful for. Support from local businesses means a great deal to small, community-based charities like ourselves, so it’s a thank you from the staff team too!

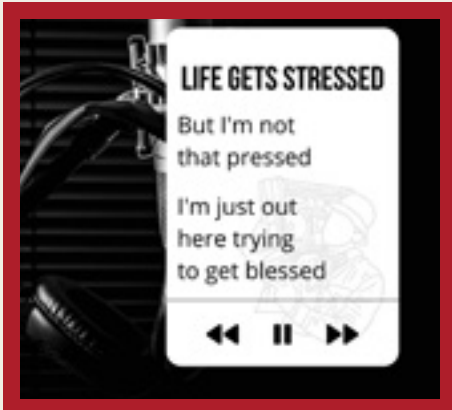


Young people with their Christmas gifts

Clerkenwell Community Survey – the results are in!

Thank you to everyone who took part in our community survey at the end of last year. 67 people responded, a number which we were very pleased with. The great news is that nearly everyone who responded feels positively about our local area and many people indicated that they feel pride in Clerkenwell. In particular, people enjoy the great sense of community here. Survey respondents also like that Clerkenwell is a friendly and socially diverse area. Encouragingly, the overwhelming majority of respondents told us they feel part of a local community, however many also indicated they do not know how to make positive changes and that there are not enough activities on offer which they are interested in. Overall, the survey results indicated that many people would like to see more activities for local people offered at evenings and weekends, particularly in sports and leisure. A desire to see local businesses benefiting the local community was also clearly indicated. If you would like to read the results in more detail please let us know. We are studying the responses carefully and will use them to inform our strategic plans and service developments for the next 3 years. Thank you to our friends at community organisation Renaisi for facilitating the survey. **Goodness, we’re old!** Next year The Peel will be 125 years old and we plan to celebrate in style! Would you like to help us plan our milestone birthday celebrations, to mark how we’ve supported and connected Clerkenwell since 1898? We would love local residents to help plan our special birthday. Drop us a line if you would like to be involved.

Stress busting beats



Our Direct Action Project is a mental health awareness project which works across Islington. At the end of last term the team enjoyed a great day with Year 10 classes at City of London Highgate Hill secondary school. We joined forces with musician and rapper *@MisterLeesMusic* to lead lessons which discussed stress and ways to reduce it. The students then collectively wrote rap lyrics, inspired by their discussions. Our Direct Action Team is now working with a different group of young people, in collaboration with LBI's Targeted Youth Service, Music Education Islington and the amazing Breakin Convention (based at Clerkenwell's Sadler's Wells Theatre) to write, record and film tracks and music videos.

If you work with young people in Islington, please drop us a line to see how we can work with you!

Coming up at The Peel



Seated exercise class

- Dancing Through the Ages classes. Move with Karen to beats of the '70s, '80s and beyond. It's so much fun! This is for movers and groovers age 55 and above.
- Our weekly fitness class with Winston Jean-Charles from Pineapple Studios, for older residents. That's right, a dancer from one of London's top studios is one of our regular Peel tutors!
- The return of our popular weekly art classes with Andrew.
- The Peel choir is set to make a comeback! New members welcome.
- More classes and activities for families and the wider Clerkenwell community.

Soup with Soul



Kimberley serving soup with soul
Credit Chris Walker



Delicious Soup & Soul lunch
Credit Chris Walker

During the final week of January community centres across Islington celebrated Super Soup Week, a borough-wide initiative to bring people together for hearty bowls of soup and chat. At Peel we organised our own take on the week and hosted a 'Soup & Soul' event.

It was wonderful to welcome over 40 people through our doors, a combination of new faces and regulars. People learnt relaxing self-massage techniques, courtesy of massage therapist Micha and contributed to lively discussions about managing stress, facilitated by our very own Direct Action Project team. Little ones made simple puppets and everyone enjoyed a choice of four delicious, homemade soups. There was even a spot of adult storytelling to round off the day.

Is soup good for the soul? It certainly is, especially when it's part of Soup & Soul! Many thanks to Octopus Communities for coordinating Super Soup Week and everyone who came along and made it a great event.

Clerkenwell's new map revealed

In the last edition of this paper we wrote about a wonderful project which recently took place at Peel between ourselves, our neighbours at

London Metropolitan Archives and the House of Illustration. Working with a professional illustrator the project participants created a new illustrated map of Clerkenwell, based on their own EC1 life stories, favourite places and memories. The map was launched at a lunch event attended by the Peel's map team and our project partners. We are over the moon with it! Many thanks to everyone involved in this project.

The map is free and available from The Peel, Finsbury Library and local GP surgeries. Available only whilst stocks last, so make sure you grab yourself a beautiful new map of your favourite part of London.

The Peel's map design team, under expert guidance from the London Metropolitan Archives and House of Illustration professionals, are Selma Atasoy, Sheila Collins, Vivienne Evans, Bill Gilliam, Marilyn Gilliam, Josie Hadley, Michael Janule-Wicz, Maria Mansfield, Jill Putland, Ray Rich and Mary Smith.



Design team with their original illustrations
Credit Antony Tam



House of Illustration, London Metropolitan Archives & The Peel
Credit Antony Tam

The Interview

We managed to catch up with 91 year-old Edna, one of our regular Social Club members, in between bingo and making other people roar with laughter, to ask her a few important questions.

Q: How long have you been coming to The Peel?

A: About 12 years, but I've lived in Clerkenwell since 1959 when I moved from Preston, Lancashire, because my husband was from around here. We met at a RAF base in the north, but he wanted to move back down south and I've been here ever since.

Q: That sounds like a big change. How did you find London to start with?

A: It was very strange at first! My husband's family lived in a small house, which was demolished when the slums were cleared around here. There was no water and the toilet was outside. To begin with, me and my husband had a bedsit to ourselves, but then we moved in with his family.

Q: What do you enjoy most about The Peel?

A: Everyone is friendly, with no airs, graces or toffee noses! No one thinks they're better than anyone else, which I like. I've got children and grandsons. They come to visit but none of them live in London, so coming here is very important.

Q: Do you do any of the classes here?

A: I used to enjoy drawing class, even though I can't draw for toffee! Also the fitness classes, but I'm too old for that now. Exercise is hard work, you know! I'm 91 and you've got to slow down sometime. But I enjoy the craft workshops and the parties are great. I also love outings, especially to Southend which is a nice working class place.

Q: What did you miss most about The Peel during the long lockdowns?

A: Chatting! I missed seeing the others here and talking. Kimberley (Social Club Coordinator) kept an eye on us all with phone calls though.

Q: If you could be anywhere in the world right now, where would you be?

A: Right here!



Edna (in foreground)

Spring Resolutions?

It is well known that January is a terrible time to make resolutions or to try to change behaviour. Instead, why not make a spring resolution instead? Perhaps you fancy volunteering with older adults or young people? If so, we might have the perfect volunteering opportunity for you. Or perhaps you fancy starting a class or activity for the local community here in Clerkenwell, which we can support you with. We would love to hear from you, so drop us a line.

Keep up with our news with our digital newsletter. Sign up from our website home page.

For more information about The Peel

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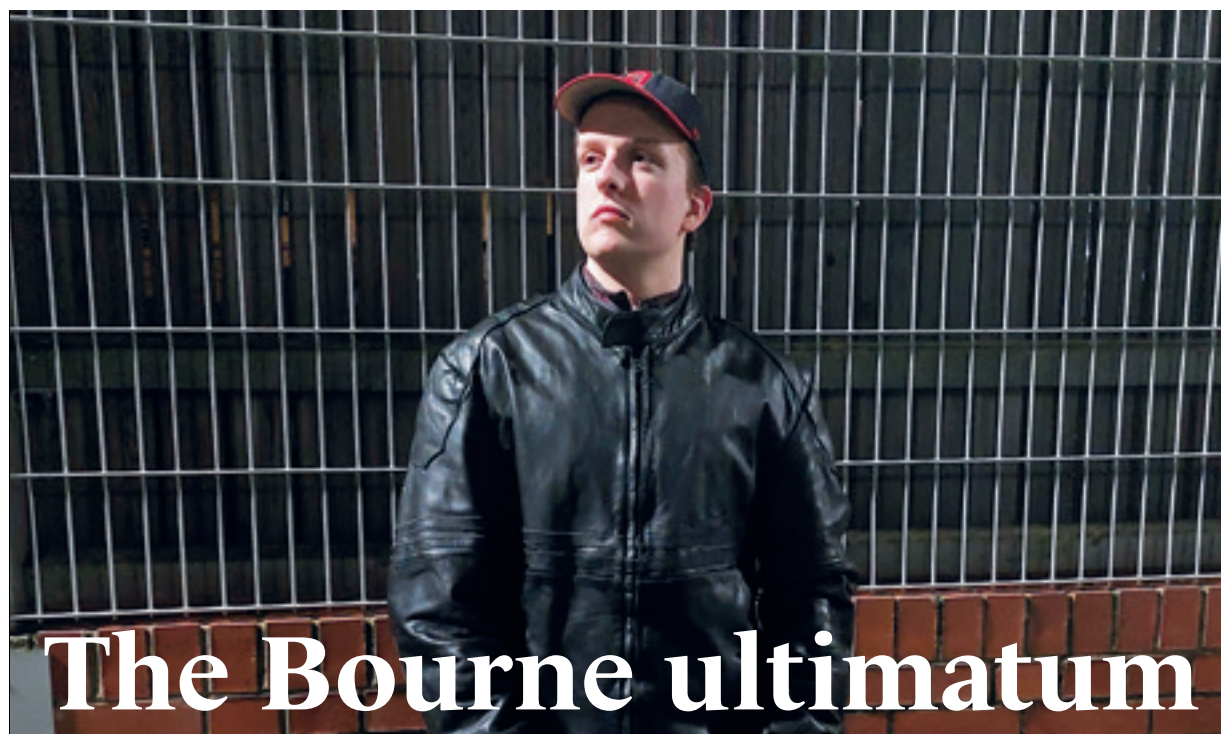
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From the Bourne Estate near Leather Lane, “conscious rapper” Gabriel Rogers-Mullen, 21 – aka Solar Flight – wants to use the medium of music to make a positive script. “I’m into lyrical content that gives a positive message to young people,” he says. “That’s important for my area of EC1, but also in London in general.” And after 2021, when the teen homicide in London reached an all-time high of 30, the mood is right for harm reduction.

Gabriel, who has been rapping since he was 14, now takes part in a variety of live events, from open mic nights in pubs to open air sessions in King’s Cross – including sharing a stage recently with rocker Pete Doherty. “I freestyle over old funk and famous rap beats” he says. From a musical background, his father is a musician and he believes that his work should send positive messages. “I’m trying to give young people a message,” says Gabriel. “I’m trying to portray an ordinary person’s perspective rather than any kind of gangster perspective, because I’m not like that.” Influenced by grime as well as US rappers like Tupac and KRS One, Gabriel says



The Bourne ultimatum

Young rapper Gabriel Rogers-Mullen hopes to bring a socially conscious message to represent his home area EC1

that the perception of rap and drill as violent is out there and while it may be unfairly blamed for violence, the content has a degree of responsibility for negative messages.

“I think it should. I’m not actually a drill rapper myself. If you listen to a song which promotes drug use, objectifies women and talks about violence it can have a negative

impact.” It’s partly a function of age, he says. “If you’re grown up you can separate fact from fiction – but if you’re a teenager, especially in the inner city, it could become glamorous and then you get into songs about your rivals and it all moves on from there.”

Because of this, Gabriel wants to talk about his area, and instil a positive message and try give something back via his lyrics. “I want to put my area on a map too, because even though it’s in the centre of London, not many people know that so many people live here and there’s a lot of estates.” And he wants to have a career as a musician. “I’m honing my craft right now and learning how to network. I’m talking to rappers, sometimes in different countries and trying to build connections.” On Zoom, Gabriel has connected with rappers in Beirut, Dublin, New York and Detroit and has learned about connecting people on social media, which is important nowadays.

Interacting with artists enables Gabriel to spread his positive outlook, with his music and to spread the message “that with peace, you can be whatever you want to be in life.”

See Gabriel on his Instagram: @solar.flight

Advertisement

LSO St Luke's

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Curious about classical music? Try a short, concert with introductions and Q+A. Free entry, just turn up!
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COLUMN

9

The Apple Tree pub in Mount Pleasant has been hoarded up for a while – but its owners have taken an innovative response to its temporary closure by setting up a pop-up pub of the same name in Clerkenwell Green.

“When Covid-19 happened we decided to do some overdue building work,” says Lucy Fenton, the co-owner of the Apple Tree, which is known for its busy events programme. This continued, she says, and the original pub will now reopen at the end of this year.

But as it was taking longer than expected, and wishing to start trading again, the Apple Tree recently opened a “pop up” pub in Clerkenwell Green, in the space left by the now-closed restaurant Dans Le Noir.

“We’ve done a bit of cosmetic work and moved some of our own furniture in,” says Fenton of the pop-up, which opened in mid-January.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been very difficult for the pub trade, adds Fenton. “A real problem has been the uncertainty of it all,” she says. “This still continues in the Omicron



The Apple Tree's pop up pub

How the Apple Tree pub is pioneering a new model – pop-up hospitality

“*The pandemic has been very difficult for the pub trade*”

variant days. If we know one way or the other that we should either be open or closed, then it gives us the ability to judge whether to buy in stock and food and book people for events.

“Instead, there’s been real uncertainty: a sense of ‘should we or shouldn’t we’ reopen, and that has impacted our ability to plan anything in advance – and on people booking.”



While the area has been quieter following the pandemic, Fenton believes it hasn’t lost its sense of being a London destination. “Clerkenwell still feels quiet in terms of the offices,” she says. “After Christmas is always slow and it’s currently difficult with the Omicron variant going up.

“But as we’ve got a new space, we can open up again to the local community and we’d love to do more stuff in the daytimes as well.

“We’ve had lots of enquiries and it’s been great to have our favourite performers and core team come back, but we’re always happy to hear from people who may have new ideas for workshops or events.”

During Covid-19, Fenton also co-founded Bohemia Media – a film distribution company for marginalised voices and Bohemia Euphoria – a film-streaming platform, again for films and stories told by and for people whose voices are underrepresented.

The Apple Tree pop-up can be found at:
30 Clerkenwell Green EC1
Call 020 7209 1785
Visit theappletreelondon.com

Lucy Fenton is offering Echo readers interested in trying the film-streaming platform Bohemia Euphoria at a reduced price code. Check in at www.bohemiaeuphoria.com and put in code ECHO1. Although you have to register there will be no spam emails.

The EC1 Echo lifts the lid on Age UK’s EC1 charity shop

The charity shop has changed – at least if the Age UK Camden store on Leather Lane is anything to go by. Firstly, it calls itself a boutique – not so strange, perhaps. But this Aladdin’s Cave of cast-offs attracts a huge number of people from all walks of life seeking bargains and company as well as life’s necessities.

While it makes money, there are fewer people shopping from dire need as there were in the past. “For some people, it’s not a financial choice, but they they’re looking for nice things and that’s how charity shops have changed,” says manager Lee Miller, who thinks that that shops like TK Maxx and Primark have siphoned off some of the trade. For some, there’s a stigma around buying second-hand clothes but as Lee says, that contributes to the way that charity shops are now labelled as

Vintage tales

‘vintage’ boutiques “to attract people who don’t want to admit that they go second-hand shopping.”

As one of the few charity shops in the EC1 area, the Age UK Camden store has become a target for all kinds of people seeking the ‘vintage’ and the ‘pre-loved’. Known for its surreal window dressing – for example, mannequins with prints where the heads should be – Lee has made the shop a busy retail hub.

“It’s all about presentation,” says Lee, from a retail background, who has worked across the fashion and jewellery industries. “If you’ve got a boxful of postcards, nothing’s likely to happen but get a washing line and hang them with pegs and they’ll sell. It’s like all retail – it’s about the creation of desire. Charity shopping is the same.”

Although affiliated with the national charity Age UK, Age UK Camden on Leather Lane is a standalone shop for the borough of Camden, and the money raised helps to support and maintain their crucial community services that

provide, in many cases, a life-line for vulnerable older people, providing some of the fundamentals of health and wellbeing, human interaction, friendship and activity. Shopping there raises money for the older people of Camden – a bracket that now includes anyone over 50. So it’s important to have good stock and as well as second-hand items, Lee gets over-stock, samples and old lines, including from rag trade neighbours like Ted Baker and Fred Perry and many items from the furniture store Habitat before it collapsed.

But there’s also been a huge influx of items following the Covid-19 lockdowns. “People were at home,



started to look at their lives and thought, ‘do I need this?’” says Lee. “There’s also the influence of decluttering TV shows like Marie Kondo – people’s relationship to stuff has changed during Covid-19 and it’s a bit like shedding your skin.” The digital world has had an influence too, he says. “After all, do you need all those DVDs and videos when you’ve Netflix and Amazon?” As not all will have that luxury, Covid-19 has changed buying patterns too. Clothes are down, which Lee attributes to the “decline of going to workplaces” while homework is up.

A big part of a charity shop inevitably, is that people want to find bargains, which can lead to a sense of feeding frenzy. “I was recently saying that when people come in a charity shop, they lose all rationale,” says Lee. “It’s the greed factor and their eyes become bigger than their bellies. Their nervous systems go into overload in their search for a rare 1940s teacup or whatever. The thrill of discovery is massive.”

Some have spoken about the

“premiumisation” of charity shops. “Some are really expensive,” says Lee. “We’re not that way, and we’re not antique dealers but we are here for the community.” Because of the kinds of people attracted to the shop Lee has extraordinary conversations. “They’re quite a colourful crowd,” he says. “But there’s a lot of loneliness too, which I think people avoid with retail.” And this, says Lee, is part of living in central London, that there are a lot of social housing and small flats, and a village feel where people come out every day to go to their local shops.

There are customers who re-sell on platforms like eBay and Depop. “Lots of people do sell on,” says Lee, who takes a ‘good luck to them’ stance. “I look everything up online,” he says. “There’s an app called Ziffit that I look at for books and if it’s rare pottery it can go for a lot of money. But as everything, you have to find the buyer.” And they constantly need items. So Lee hardly ever turns things away. “You should try not to say ‘no’ because someone’s giving you something. If somebody comes in with a ball of string, I’ll still be very grateful.”

Estate of the art

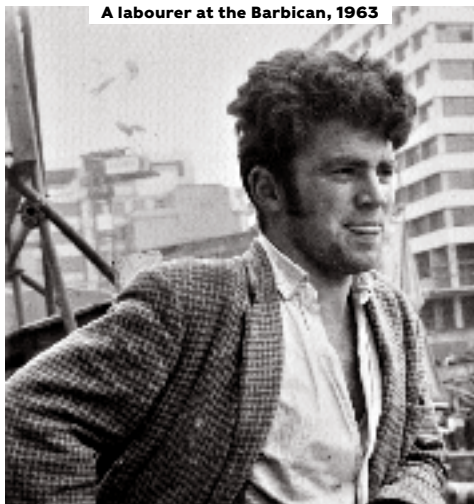
The site that would become the Barbican, seen devastated after the Blitz in 1942



BY OLIVER BENNETT

As the 40th anniversary of the Barbican Centre gets underway, these dramatic photographs show how the surrounding estate's huge blocks emerged from London's bomb sites

A labourer at the Barbican, 1963



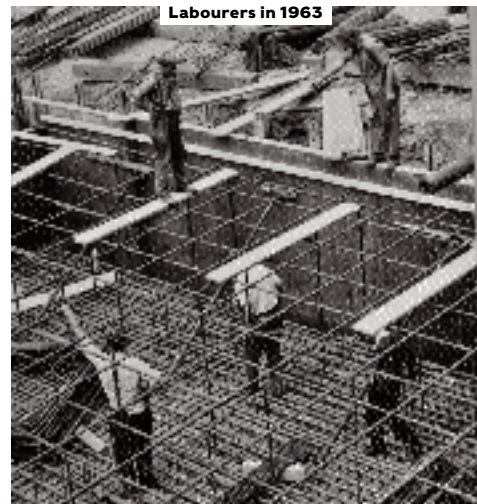
To see these archive photographs of the building site for the Barbican is to marvel at the size of the site and the breadth of the task. Pre hi-vis and hardhat, the builders wore tweeds, boots and jeans as they took girders from one place to another and sawed, chiselled and hammered the extraordinary estate into existence.

It was very much a spirit of the post-war times, and it had a political purpose, too. As Sir Nicholas Kenyon, the last Barbican director, said in a recent Gresham lecture: "On the simplest level, it [the Barbican] was created from the devastation of the Blitz in order to ensure that the City Corporation

had a future." The City's residential population had fallen dramatically and there was a fear in the Corporation that it would become folded into the wider London County Council. By bringing an infusion of residents, the Barbican bolstered – and possibly even saved – the City as a self-managing entity. The chosen architects, Chamberlin Powell and Bon, stepped up to the task and its first scheme for the Barbican area in 1955 had schools, shops, open spaces – and six pubs.

The Barbican also contained a visionary sense of the future arising Phoenix-like from the ashes of war. Rather than be built on the old City street plan, the Barbican

Labourers in 1963



Looking north to London Wall. A man was tragically killed in this site accident



A labourer using a chisel, 1963



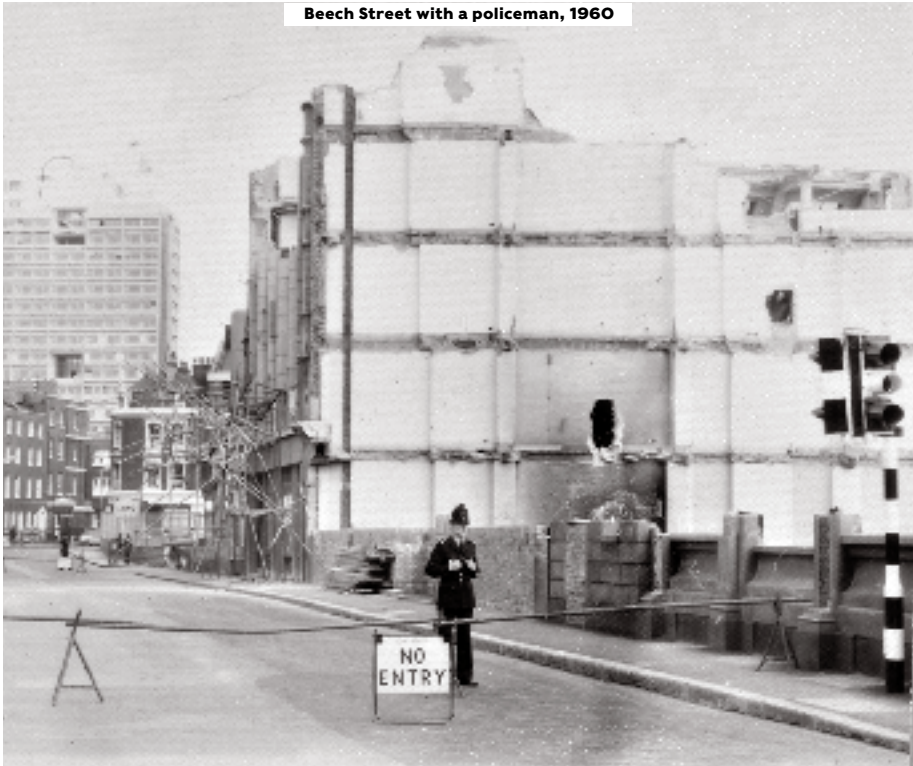
Two men survey the clearance of the site, 1960



Aldersgate Street in 1958



Beech Street with a policeman, 1960



took the futuristic idiom of ‘cities in the sky’, then fashionable, and in its detailing bought in a space-age urban aesthetic that has mostly aged well – indeed, after a fashion lapse in the 1980s the Barbican’s adherents now include an influx of younger fans.

Forty years ago the Barbican Centre became part of the estate with the Queen opening it on 27 November 1972 as The Barbican Centre for the Arts and Conferences. This year will see many events celebrating the anniversary, as well as a £150m overhaul that chimes with the City’s cultural ambitions, including Culture Mile (see p.17) given greater urgency in the post-pandemic era. The *EC1 Echo* will continue to cover this incredible feat of post-war planning – and anyone who

wants to see the estate as a building site must watch the video for Unit 4 + 2’s 1965 classic *Concrete and Clay*, shot on the building site itself and the beginning of a vibrant tradition of music videos at the Barbican.

View the Unit 4 + 2 video here: britishpathe.com/video/unit-four-plus-two-concrete-and-clay

The photographs are courtesy of London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) and available to view on the London Picture Archive website along with 250,000 historical images and maps of the capital londonpicturearchive.org.uk. Located in the heart of Clerkenwell, LMA is London’s historical archive, providing free access to millions of documents, films, maps and images from 1067 to the present day. LMA is open to everyone, whether you’re researching your family tree or interested in the history your street. Visit the LMA website to find out more www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma.

From 3 March, the Barbican Centre will celebrate its 40th birthday with many events. See barbican.org.uk

“On the simplest level, it [the Barbican] was created from the devastation of the Blitz”

HISTORY

Meet the time team

Based in Finsbury Business Centre, Mills Whipp Projects are London’s foremost archaeologists. Here, Peter Mills talks about their latest project – to turn up the 17th century remnants of the Civil War in modern EC1

Wander around the EC1 area you’ll see history all around you from Smithfield Market to St James’s Church. However, and less obviously, there are still traces of another period of EC1’s history when the country’s future swayed in the balance, as the struggle between an autocratic king and a determined Parliament led to England’s bloodiest conflict ever fought – the English Civil War of 1642–51.

Trouble brewing

In the Middle Ages across most of Europe there were parliaments of one sort or another. Gradually powerful monarchies, notably in France and Spain, crushed these parliaments or reduced them to impotent meeting groups. But for complex reasons in England the parliament managed to survive and by the 17th century had increased control over the tax-raising powers of the king.



Archeologists Mike Hutchinson and author Peter Mills



“If you know where to look in EC1 you can still see traces of that struggle that changed world history”

To the throne came a king, Charles I, convinced that he was literally appointed by God and thus had the right to tax and rule. In parallel, Parliament had become dominated by men of a particularly harsh form of Protestantism who rejected the king’s claims. The king needed money for a war – Parliament would not grant it. With both sides claiming God was with them, conflict was inevitable.

The Civil War

The Civil War broke out in the summer of 1642 – 480 years ago – and the Battle of Edgehill was fought on 23 October. Described as ‘inconclusive’ by historians there followed a pause.

The City of London and Parliament

in Westminster were united against the King, now residing in Oxford. Following the battle, the threat of Royalist attacks on London suddenly became a real possibility. Recent brutality in Ireland and the Wars of Religion in continental Europe had shocked England and in late 1642 it became a real possibility that Prince Rupert of the Rhine would fulfil his boast to sack the city. A series of small ad hoc forts and roadblocks were thrown up to defend London.

That threat subsided, but more organised defences were erected from 1643 onwards: a series of substantial forts linked by trenches and ramparts known as the ‘Lines of Communication’. To the amusement of the Royalists the

King Square Gardens – site of a fort in the Civil War?

A map showing assumed and revised Civil War defences



● Civil War defences previous

defences were built not just by men but women too. They were completed in around four months.

The defences were never tested; at least by the Royalists. Following the defeat of Charles I, the New Model Army (Cromwell's mailed fist) and Parliament became increasingly hostile and suspicious of each other. In late 1647 the New Model Army under General Fairfax marched into London unopposed after which he ordered the flattening of the defences to prevent independent action by London or Parliament. Soon afterwards Cromwell established a military dictatorship, euphemistically called the Protectorate, and in 1649 Charles lost his crown – and his head.

The defences were built

The defences were enormous – some 12 miles in length, 10ft wide and 10ft deep. North of the Thames they ran from Wapping to Whitechapel, Shoreditch, Clerkenwell, Bloomsbury, Mayfair and Westminster. It seems strange but no map of the defences appears to have been made so the locations were lost. A bogus 1738 plan produced by a rogue called George Vertue, taken as accurate for 300 years, has now been revealed as a clever falsehood.

Now Mike Hutchinson and I at Mills Whipp Projects have been generously funded by Historic England to research the exact location of the defences. To that end, we have been carefully studying archaeological archives and ancient maps. As a result of our investigations, the Civil War Defences are now thought to lie in totally different locations – which explains why archaeologists couldn't find them.

Walk the lines in EC1

In our area the Lines of Communication led from a fort at Hoxton, crossed City Road near Peerless Street by Moorfields Hospital, and ran to an enormous defensive work called Mount Mill Fort on the east side of Goswell Road by Lever Street. The fort was built on a vast medieval rubbish dump where archaeological excavations have uncovered fascinating details of 15th century garbage – but sadly no traces of the fort itself.

However, this huge fort had minor forts attached on both sides of Goswell Road. Excavations entirely funded by the City University on Sebastian Street, site of the new City Law School Building, uncovered traces of a fort. On the east side of Goswell Road, where King Square now stands, excavations have revealed possible parts of another fort. If you go to Lever Street you will find a strange little road called Mount Mills, where odd angles in the street may reflect the bastions of the fort. You may also notice if you stand on the junction of Goswell Road and Sebastian Street and look south, that the ground rises slightly at the corner of Lever Street and Goswell Road – part of the mound used as the fort.

From there the Lines went northwest to the former New River Head reservoir. The alignment of the defences has been preserved in Sebastian Street: walk here and you are following the tramp of sturdy Cromwellian boots uphill towards Islington.

If you make your way towards Rosebery Avenue you come to the former HQ of Thames Water,

now residential. Look through the gates and you can just see the upright remains of the old circular reservoir, originally built in 1613. In 1643 the New River Head Fort was built to defend the reservoir as a valuable asset.

The next fort, called Gray's Inn Lane Fort, lay at the junction with Calthorpe Street and Gray's Inn Road, joined to the New River Head Fort by defences crossing the valley of the River Fleet. Although most of the Fleet Valley has been levelled you can get an idea of the landscape if you go to Mount Pleasant Post Office and look down Mount Pleasant towards Gray's Inn Road.

The last fort in the area is at the top of the hill near the Angel. At the junction of Pentonville Road and Claremont Square, just where the strange grassy mound of a covered reservoir stands, there was another major defence, Angel Fort, outside the main circuit. This fort was a powerful visual reminder of Parliament's strength. No remains can be seen but if you look west towards St Pancras Station you get an idea of the height of the hill (130 ft) and appreciate that a 17th century cannon could have hit St Paul's Cathedral from this vantage point.

Unique remains in EC1

The English Civil War defined many of the modern political structures of England, particularly the concept that the people should have a say in how they are ruled and by whom. These revolutionary ideas spread to the American colonies, reaching a climax there in 1776 (with a little French help), and from there were taken to Paris by returning French soldiers who came to their own political conclusions in 1789.

However, in London after the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660 and the arrival of Charles II, a convenient amnesia arose, to the extent that physical reminders of the Civil War were deliberately omitted from maps until the 18th century. Nobody wanted to remind Charles II that London had played such a major role in the execution of his father. Across London forts, ramparts and ditches were speedily backfilled.

But EC1 appears to be unique. Now, if you know where to look you can still see traces of a struggle that changed world history.

Mills Whipp Projects, Finsbury Business Centre, 40 Bowling Green Lane, EC1R 1NE
Email contact@millswhipp.com

Tracks in the attic

In his new book about folk music, local author Michael Church laments the loss of musical traditions

Is folk music dying? In my new book I suggest that it is, at least in Europe and North America, thanks to the globalisation, urbanisation, and industrialisation that is now eroding the world's musical diversity. *Entitled Musics Lost and Found: Song Collectors and the Life and Death of Folk Tradition*, and published by the Boydell Press, the book is intended as a wake-up call.

Its original purpose was to celebrate the work of song collectors, whom I regard as music's unsung heroes. The obvious suspects in music lore are there – Cecil Sharp, Percy Grainger, John and Alan Lomax, Bela Bartok – but so are many others who are less well known.

These include Komitas, who gave his life for Armenian music in the face of the Turkish genocide of the Armenian people in 1915; Colin McPhee, who helped save Balinese Gamelan music from dying; and Theodor Strehlow, whose life-work was the support and chronicling of 'secret' Aboriginal musical forms in Australia.

But in the course of writing this book, I found myself stressing a fear which all these people shared: that time was running out for traditional music everywhere, and that it should be documented before it goes. When a village dies – when its population departs to the cities – its music dies too.

Folk music does not thrive in cities, because city conditions are not right for it. It's not a performance: it's an art in which everyone participates, and it can only be sustained if it remains a communal activity. Just as the world's spoken languages are disappearing, so are its musical languages. This is the musical equivalent of climate change.

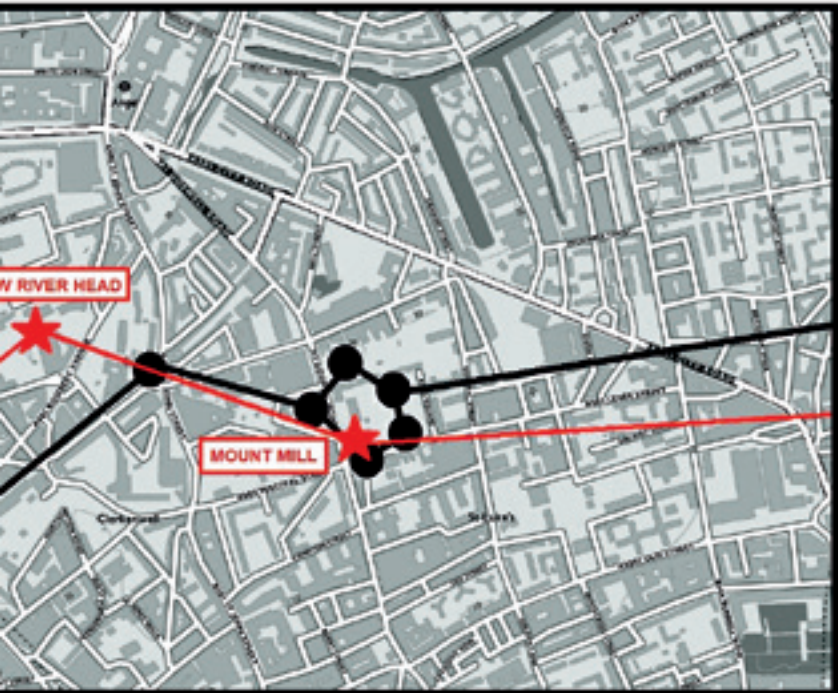
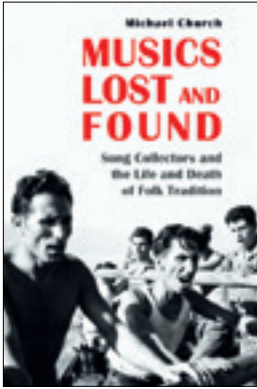
Traditionally, every society has its work songs and its calendar songs, its healing and mourning songs, and its songs to mark births, marriages, and deaths. Take away the work – automate it, industrialise it – and you take away the point of the work songs; reduce the members of your community

to faceless numbers in a computerised state, and you remove their ability to make their own music about their own lives. There's a Japanese saying which neatly summarises this truth: 'Folk music is the heart's home town'. It's the heartbeat of every true community.

But we shouldn't concede defeat: in this book I look for hopeful signs in the situation, and at what is being done to arrest this process, primarily by the song collectors who are heroically striving to preserve today's endangered musics.

For more details of Michael's book, see theotherclassicalmusics.org/musics_lost_and_found.html

Alongside the book, Topic Records is re-releasing Michael's field recordings of folk music in strife-torn Chechnya. Called 'Songs of Defiance: Music of Chechnya and the North Caucasus', it was originally released in 2007.



assumed locations ★ Civil War defences revised locations

From cows to culture

Academic Tom Butler’s work is on Smithfield and its future – and you can have your say

What constitutes a sense of place? It’s an experience that can be elusive, one that varies from person to person, and from day to night. For some, Smithfield is a run-down and forgotten corner of London, a curious remnant of the City’s past due for transformation; for others it’s a vibrant working district, a hive of night-time activity for the meat trade and more.

Over the next five years, Smithfield’s sense of place may be about to change. New transport infrastructure, cultural re-use schemes and the proposed transformation of its public realm suggest an alternative future for this distinctive and varied area.

My doctoral research project with Brunel University London is focused on Smithfield, its fascinating context, experience of urban change, and the stories that are told about it. I want to understand Smithfield peoples’ perspectives and experiences and see how this changes over time.

The area we know as Smithfield today originally stood outside London’s Roman and later medieval city walls and alongside the River Fleet. This location gave “Smooth Field” a unique constellation of uses, from a livestock market to a staging area for public executions. It fostered a culture of dissent and debauchery. Smithfield saw the culmination of the Peasants’ Revolt in 1381 – and the murder of leader

Wat Tyler – as rebels gathered outside the city walls, and was the site for the Bartholomew Fair, a sprawling carnival held every summer for over 700 years until it was suppressed in 1855. Smithfield’s open spaces also offered sacred spaces including London’s oldest parish church, St Bartholomew-the-Great, from 1123, and the former Carthusian monastery at The Charterhouse. Today, Smithfield is largely defined by its wholesale meat market with roots that go back 800 years. You can still



► Clockwise from right: Smithfield Market from above; the area at night; the Ambulance Station on Giltspur Street; West Smithfield, due to host the relocated Museum of London
Credit Tom Butler

see images of livestock carved into the friezes and keystones of building facades on Charterhouse Street.

“The Elizabeth Line hints at the changes to come”

The market’s nocturnal rhythms support an ecosystem of 24-hour cafes catering to market traders and their customers, and London’s cabbies throughout the day. For me, Smithfield’s varied timescapes are its most interesting feature: at night, before the market stirs into action, Smithfield re-lives its revelrous past with late night pubs, bars and music venues; during the day, Smithfield’s population changes again, with doctors and nurses from St Bart’s Hospital, construction workers from building sites, and queues outside the cluster of hairdressing schools along West Smithfield. To visit Smithfield today, at any time of the day or night, is to experience a unique assemblage of atmospheres and activities.

But what of the future of Smithfield? To many, it feels like an area that has been on the brink of change for decades, whether

the failed Henderson Global Investors’ redevelopment of the General Market, the (temporary) closure of Fabric nightclub, or the long-delayed Farringdon Elizabeth Line station opening on Long Lane.

It’s fair to say that Smithfield’s future remains contested. The City of London Corporation has proposed the relocation of the wholesale meat market to Dagenham Dock. Concept designs by Studio Egret West for the vacated Central Market Building – if it goes ahead – show a “24-hour campus” and 7,200 square metres of flexible space, with uses ranging from sustainable food production to multi-media experiences. A proposed redesign of the public realm, led by Hawkins\Brown, also under discussion, would transform the streets surrounding the market into pedestrian-friendly areas. As well as complementing the City’s “Culture Mile” initiative, this scheme would connect to the relocated Museum of London, which plans to occupy the restored Poultry Market and General Market buildings in Smithfield’s south west and due to open in three to four years’ time – aiming to bring new life to the market buildings while rethinking what a museum’s role could be.

Some fear what these developments will mean for Smithfield, wonder who they’re for, and argue that there’s still a place for the working wholesale market to co-exist alongside other uses. Today, Smithfield still seems far removed from any of these futures, with construction work and the Elizabeth Line TfL roundel hinting at the changes to come. But everyone is keen to avoid another gentrified London ‘blandscape’. Times may be changing in Smithfield, but how much and how fast remains to be seen.



As part of his studies, Tom invites local people to form part of his research. He is looking for participants to take part in interviews and walkalongs in the area. If you live or work in Smithfield or have a connection and would like to participate, Tom would love to hear from you. Please email tom.butler@brunel.ac.uk or via @OfSmithfield on Twitter.



● Continued from Page-1

These jobs could be in all kinds of businesses – law, finance, design, construction creative, lots of digital, hospitality – but will, says Akehurst, be predominantly office-based.

Another aspect of the recovery, she says, is to draw people back to central London. “The pandemic has highlighted the need for local services and there’s a lot of talk about the ‘15 minute city,’” says Akehurst. “But I commute and we need to encourage people like me to return to central London as we’ve seen how working from home has affected hospitality and retail. It’s critical people come back into central London as we don’t want empty streets, so we’re working with landlords and property owners to activate those spaces.” But this may take a while. “I think hybrid working will continue for at least 12 months.”



Another priority is to draw tourists to Clerkenwell and other CDA ‘villages’. “We used to get quite a lot of business and international travel, which has stemmed for obvious reasons,” says Akehurst. “But this feeds into our aim to create a destination. Take the British Museum. In normal times it has over six and a half million visitors a year. When they return we don’t want them just to visit the BM – we want them to have a ‘staycation’ in areas like Clerkenwell.” Supporting this should be an ecosystem of shops, hotels and restaurant, as well as information to help visitors and residents alike. “So we’re developing an app for the area,” says Akehurst. “If you are coming into Farringdon Station and you want to find out what how get directions, or a restaurant, check in.” Keep an eye on the CDA for announcement of its launch.

The opening of the Elizabeth Line, part-opening this spring (see p.5), will help immeasurably. “A hinterland of 1.5 million people will have far shorter journeys into London which will bring inward investment,” says Akehurst. “But the Elizabeth Line will also serve five airports to hook tourism.” This year the CDA is supporting is London Festival of Architecture. Still in planning, it will link up the “villages” of the CDA and draw people into Clerkenwell this summer.

The CDA is also seeking to help the community with other initiatives,

including a new charitable grants programme to support grassroots charities. “They could be local football or cricket initiatives working with young people, or residents’ groups,” says Akehurst. “Homelessness too is a priority as are safer streets. We now have a security and cleaning teams to make the BID clean, green, safe and welcoming.” To the reproach that this is public sector work, Akehurst says: “This is not replicating – it’s enhancing.” Supporting this should be a mixed transport policy.

“We cannot live without a transport system,” says Akehurst. “It’s so important, not just for business, but tourists, residents, everyone.

“If you don’t want people to drive in central London, then you have to have a reliable public transport system alongside pedestrianisation, cycleways and healthy streets. Our idea is that all of those elements should be brought together to make the city work – and that TfL should be supported.”

An unfortunate feature of our part of central London has been its lack of greenery. Here, the CDA is bringing on the Green Tree project this year, set to bring more foliage to Farringdon.

“It will be a mix of planted trees, potted trees and possibly ‘parklets’, all done in three phases,” says Akehurst. “It’s worthwhile because it’s still quite a grey, built-up area and although there are six roof gardens in our footprint nobody can see them. We need planting at street level and welcoming greenery – Covid-19 showed us how important it is to get open-air places to sit.” A company called Scotscape is designing the scheme.

Thus, the wider purpose of the CDA is to engender a sense of place. “The identity of a place is so important, so that people start feeling a sense of belonging,” says Akehurst. “This can be helped by developing a vibrant day and night-time economy: for people to live, work and enjoy the area.”

This year there’s much to play for but Akehurst is optimistic. “I think we’re in really interesting times in the future of our cities and we’re always talking to other cities like Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, who have the same priorities. We all want to come out of the pandemic as better places – and here, I think we will.”

Visit centraldistrictalliance.com



Credit Lagos Techie

15

Firm foundation

Islington race equality charity BTEG is set to have a busy year

Alongside Islington Council, a local charity has launched a business support scheme to help entrepreneurs from underrepresented groups. Partnering with Pentonville-based race equality organisation, the Black Training and Enterprise Group (BTEG), Islington Council’s Inclusive Entrepreneurship Programme is set to support entrepreneurs and their business ideas, with the aim to help start-ups after the Covid-19 pandemic. Predominantly aimed at those from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds, women and those with disabilities, the support given will include business advice and peer-to-peer learning groups as well as a funding pot of £136,000 for original ideas.

Said Cllr Asima Shaikh, Islington Council’s Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs: “We have partnered with BTEG to manage the programme on our behalf because we know they share our determination to address this inequality and help our communities build back differently in the midst of the pandemic.” It is expected to create jobs for local people.

In tandem with the scheme, BTEG is rebranding an

changing its name to Action for Race Equality.

“We had our 30th anniversary last year,” says Indra Nauth, BTEG’s programme director. “Originally, we were a training and enterprise programme, but more recently the name BTEG has led people to think that we’re only a training organisation – and we do so much more than that.”

”
The conversation around equality has changed
“

Following the advent of Black Lives Matter a couple of years ago, Nauth says that the conversation about equality changed. “A lot of people wanted to contribute and do something around the inequalities that existed. Now we’ve been through Covid-19, and inequalities have also emerged from that experience.

“Our focus is around young people particularly, BAME or black, Asian mixed heritage backgrounds, and to ensure positive opportunities and outcomes in three core areas: education, employment and criminal justice.”

As London has diversified further, BTEG has also changed. It started out with Black, African-Caribbean and South Asian groups – Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi – but its work has moved forward to include other groups and demographics. Its programmes provide role models to young people in schools, one-to-one mentoring, and focussed programmes such as raising the aspirations of girls and addressing high levels of school exclusion.

As Nauth says, the small charity also works with employers who want to recruit a more inclusive and diverse workforce and organisations impacted by Covid-19, who want to strengthen and develop and build their resilience, particularly in mixed areas like EC1

“It isn’t just about preparing young people, for employment and for them understanding what it is they need to do to be the best they can be to get a job in for example, a white collar office,” says Nauth. “It’s also about talking to employers and understanding what barriers they may have to recruit in a more inclusive and diverse workforce.”

For more information visit BTEG’s new website: actionforraceequality.co.uk

LETTERS 16

Morning has broken

Tony Mills | N1

I wanted to say thank you for your feature on my original painting of the former Ingersoll building in Clerkenwell. After showcasing my art to its community a resident of the Ingersoll building purchased the original painting on New Year's Eve, which for us both was a very nice way to finish 2021. It's lovely to think the painting is now warmly inside the building that I painted on a cold and crisp early morning at 5:47AM.

The best of times

Ann Pembroke | EC1

It was a delight to read in *EC1 Echo* of Charles Dickens Museum at Christmas. My close relationship with the House goes back to 2007, when as Chair of the Corporation of London's

Culture, Heritage & Libraries Committee in Guildhall, the Corporation asked me to become their representative on the Museum's Board of Trustees. At that time it was called Dickens House Museum and I put the emphasis back on making Dickens' Doughty Street residence his home, where his young children were brought up. In 2007 the Trustees were considering selling 49 Doughty Street to 'save Gads Hill.' I spoke against the sale of neighbouring 49 Doughty Street, as I respected the gift from the Dickens Fellowship of this large adjacent building, which I could see adding purpose, and prosperity, to the Museum. It is a pleasure that the result enhances the knowledge of Charles Dickens, his family and works, not only literary, but charitable. Clerkenwell played a large part in Dickens' life and works. He would walk down from his artist's studio to cross Clerkenwell Green. When I moved there the Old Bookshop was still working

in Clerkenwell Close, which Dickens used for Oliver picking Mr Brownlow's pocket, before scampering with the Artful Dodger to "when ancients can remember the Green being grassed!" The Bookshop owner would trundle his books down to the Charterhouse Street's stalls, which I plundered in the late 1950s for a leather-bound pair of Byron's poems. The Bookshop became 'Grub' Cafe, now closed. Would an antiquarian bookshop adorn, and reinstate, this literary site? Today, I focus on restoring the historic public open space of Clerkenwell Green to its original size and status as the origin of free speech in this country. The Clerkenwell Green Preservation Society has the Notice Board for news and events, which we share with the Blue Badge Guides of Clerkenwell.

Send us your letters
We accept letters of up to 150 words from people and organisations in the area:
Email ec1echo@peelinstitute.org.uk

NEWS



Hip pocket

Work is about to begin on a new park in Mount Pleasant that traces the Fleet valley

Work is set to start on the new Fleet Valley Pocket Park in Mount Pleasant. To include planted areas, trees and seating – as well as a blue brick 'explorer path' and features for children going to Christopher Hatton Primary School including stepping stones – it is so called as it references the route of the now-culverted River Fleet's valley floor. The idea for the pocket park came from the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood Forum (see the obituary for Judy Dainton, p.18). Construction is taking place from February to April, and the design is by Land Use Consultants (LUC). The planting design maximises biodiversity using pollinator friendly plant species. "The name Fleet Valley Pocket Park reflects the aspiration of the Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood Forum to make a stronger local connection to the historic route of the River Fleet that used to run directly through the site," said a spokesperson for Camden Council.

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CULTURE MILE

17

The Culture Mile Business Partnership launched recently to champion the creation of a new Business Improvement District in the area.

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A Culture Mile for the future

Culture Mile is the City of London's cultural district, stretching from Farringdon to Moorgate. Led by the City of London Corporation, with the Barbican, Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London Symphony Orchestra and the Museum of London, its five core partners work together on creating a vibrant, creative area in the north-west corner of the Square Mile.

The Culture Mile Business Partnership

The Culture Mile Business Partnership recently launched to support the Square Mile's economic recovery from the pandemic. The launch was the first step in establishing a uniquely cultural Business Improvement District (BID) within the Culture Mile area.

Over the last five years, Culture Mile has championed creativity in the Square Mile by holding events that bring people into the City, celebrate the City's existing creativity, and bring the cultural and commercial sectors closer together.

A BID would capitalise on this work but also enable businesses to have a greater voice and influence over their local area, create a sense of pride and community for office workers and the people who live in the Square Mile, as well as bring investment in and greater return on investment by working together.

Over the next year, four strategic themes will frame the work of the Culture

Mile Business Partnership and a series of Demonstration Projects will be delivered to address these. This work will include promoting the area as a major cultural destination for creativity, innovation and learning as well as delivering a high-quality placemaking programme to bring vibrancy to the streetscape and enrich the everyday experience of the area. It will also focus on unlocking huge potential for collaboration and innovation within the area's business community and enabling local businesses to prioritise

planetary health and take collective action in response to the climate emergency.

The proposed Business Improvement District will not only deliver the services businesses should expect, but also capitalises on Culture Mile's strengths and work to date, creating a place where the value of creativity is harnessed and experienced by all businesses within the area.

To find out more about the Culture Mile Business Partnership or get involved by joining a steering group, visit www.culturemile.london/the-business-partnership.



Take a digital journey through Culture Mile courtesy of The Commuter Club. Podcasts, playlists and an informative long read on the rich history of Smithfield. © Odera Okoye / Culture Mile

The Commuter Club

If you're looking for something to keep you entertained on your commute, then look no further. In the latest edition of The Commuter Club, the spotlight is on Culture Mile and there's plenty of art, anecdotes, history, and culture to explore as you take a digital journey through the home of contemporary culture in the ancient heart of London's working capital.

Want to find Shakespeare's London home? Fancy meeting the first violinist in the London Symphony Orchestra? Or just want to know where to find a peaceful park in the City? The podcast has you covered. Meet Tom Bolton (Culture Mile Nights Tour Guide), who details the fascinating history of the Barbican and beyond and hear from Maxine Kwok (First Violinist, London Symphony Orchestra). Visit Details. on Long Lane with Rashmi and Fabiana who tell us the story behind their business and learn more about what makes Culture Mile so special with Andrew Smith (Managing Partner at BDB Pitmans and Vice-Chair of the Culture Mile Business Partnership). Plus, enjoy a special mindfulness exercise brought to you by Maggie's Barts.

This work will include promoting the area as a major cultural destination for creativity, innovation and learning as well as delivering a high-quality placemaking programme

If that wasn't enough, there's a fascinating long read by the Museum of London focusing on the rich history of the Smithfield area, from monks to meat markets, including the magnificent Victorian market buildings of West Smithfield. There's even a specially curated playlist by composer, artist, and creator Nicola Perikhanyan that you can listen to while reading.

To find out more about the above projects and to explore what's happening in and around Culture Mile, simply visit www.culturemile.london or follow @CultureMileLDN on social media.

CULTURE
mile
SPONSORED CONTENT

IN MEMORIAM 18

Judy Dainton of Calthorpe Street WC1, journalist, planner, campaigner and conservationist, died in January. Here, friends and fellow campaigners on Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood Forum pay tribute



Judy Dainton
1.2.1942 – 11.1.2022

Years before I came to work alongside her I would see Judy sitting outside the Pakenham Arms and the Calthorpe Arms – always with her small dog and always smoking. She was the epitome of an old-school Fleet Street hack and one of her first jobs had been as a journalist for The Lady.

In October 2014 I heard her speak at the Mount Pleasant Forum deputation to Boris Johnson at GLA and became aware of her eloquence and community activism dating back to the 1970s, when she stood against the overdevelopment of Gray’s Inn Rd, Covent Garden and Fitzrovia. Judy was feisty which didn’t go down well with some, but in return she did not expect anything from anyone. She was incredibly knowledgeable about planning as well as many other things. It was a huge pleasure and privilege to work with Judy. She was empathetic, funny, witty, sharp, passionate, dedicated, hard working and inspirational, a neighbour and a good friend, and she will be sorely missed.

Julie Riley

Judy was special. I feel blessed to have worked closely with her over the last decade at Mount Pleasant. The debacle precipitated by Boris Johnson, then Mayor, brought us together, as it did so many in the local community, and gave us all a grim foretaste of things to come. Driven by an unflinching sense of social responsibility, Judy was

the antithesis of the entitled ruling class. Challenging Johnson with Judy during a public hearing at the GLA was an absolute privilege. She never tired of fighting on behalf of the community against impossible odds, whether from avaricious developers, pompous politicians, or the stultifying bureaucracy of local planning. And she continued this fight to the very end. I will miss Judy terribly – her rallying and badgering, her brilliant wit and intellect, but above all I will miss her camaraderie and that inimitable rasping voice. “C’m on folks. Onwards and upwards!”

Ed Denison

I first met Judy when she co-opted me on to the Mount Pleasant Forum committee to help oppose the proposed development of the Royal Mail sorting office site, having heard about a successful campaign to save the line of plane trees outside the then-offices of the Guardian in Farringdon Road. Judy was a law unto herself, and totally lacking in self-pity. She will be missed.

Meg Howarth

Robert Chenciner, an expert on the Caucasus died on 30 October, 2021 at home in Clerkenwell



Bob Chenciner

Bob Chenciner was a scholar, a dealer (antiques as well as business to business acquisitions), a Caucasian traveller, a lecturer and a freelance legal caseworker, specialising in writing reports for asylum appeal cases. He could appear somewhat vague, if not eccentric, but this was mere social camouflage that allowed him to survive a difficult childhood and then determinedly lead a life of his choice. He worked from home off Amwell Street.

Bob always looked healthy and happy, like a well-fed monk from England’s golden past. His eyes

glowed and his mouth was always curved in a wide smile, all framed by a mane of wind-blown white hair. His dress sense was erratic: some days squeezed into shorts for a game of squash, or dressed for a roller-blading circuit of Hyde Park, now and then in a well-tailored tweed suit. He was a regular fixture at Vienna, Oxford and the former Soviet Union, at gatherings of textile historians, food history conferences and anything to do with the Caucasus, of which he was an authority. Bob was made a Senior Associate Member of St Antony’s College Oxford in 1987 and an Honorary Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Dagestan Scientific Centre in 1990.

On the streets of Islington Bob could be a liability, for he did not so much dominate conversations but annex them, but as his many interests were fascinating, I never left off without learning something. The titles of his dozen books were often wilfully whimsical, for he loved provoking as well as engaging with academic life. But *Dagestan: Traditional and Survival* (1997), *Madder Red: A History of Luxury and Trade* (2011), *Kaitag: Daghestani Silk Embroidery* (2007), and *Tattooed Mountain Women and Spoonboxes of Dagestan* (2006). *Dragons, Padlocks and Tamerlane’s Balls: A Material Cultural Memoir of Textiles, Art, Metals and Myths* (2013) were all profoundly centred on a tangible thing. He had a genius for taking some tiny material object (say, key guards or wooden spoons) and using it as a device to explore thousands of years of culture.

With his house in Clerkenwell and scholarly publications, Bob could seem a card-carrying English eccentric as depicted by Hollywood. But like many an English gentleman-scholar, he was a luxury import, an only child of a Polish Jewish father and a German Jewish mother. Both of Bob’s parents died before he was eight, after which his Canadian uncle packed Bob off to a succession of English boarding schools. Instead of destroying him, this lonely childhood somehow empowered Bob to become a generous host, a trusted friend and a totally brilliant father. The last third of his life turned out to be the best, for with his wife Marian he delighted in bringing up two confident, outgoing daughters (Isobel and Bella) over the last 27 years.

Remembered by publisher Barnaby Rogerson, who knew Bob as a neighbour and as a writer.

LISTINGS

EXHIBITS

Technicolour Dickens: The Living Image of Charles Dickens
Until Sun 25 April
Charles Dickens Museum,
48–49 Doughty St WC1N 2LX

Marking the 150th anniversary of Dickens’s death, this exhibition shows how the writer’s image has been used in popular culture.

£7.50–£9.50
Visit dickensmuseum.com

Sorting Britain:
The Power of Postcodes
30 March 2022, 1 Jan 2023
The Postal Museum, 15-20
Phoenix Place WC1X ODA

A journey from the 1850s postal districts of London, Liverpool and Manchester to the modern coding of today.

Included in Museum ticket price
Visit postalmuseum.org

ART

Art Workshop
23 March, 10am–4pm
The Drawing Studio, 1st Floor
26 Exmouth Market EC1R 4QE

Architect Philip Meadowcroft (who designed the new Coram Fields Centre) leads a sketching workshop

Visit eyetopencil.art

Barbican: Postwar Modern
New Art in Britain 1945–1965
Thursday 3 Mar, Sun 26 Jun
Barbican Centre, Silk
Street EC2Y 8DS

Postwar Modern explores the art produced in Britain in the wake of war.

£18.00
Visit barbican.org.uk

MUSIC

Beethoven Violin Concerto
Sat 12 Mar, 6.30pm–8.00pm
Jerwood Hall, LSO St. Luke’s,
161 Old Street EC1V 9NG

Exploring Beethoven’s Violin Concertos with Veronica Eberle and conductor Sir Simon Rattle.

£35
Visit iso.co.uk

Camden Spring Music Festival
Sun 27 Mar, 1.00pm–9.30pm
Jerwood Hall, LSO St. Luke’s,
161 Old Street EC1V 9NG

Young musicians from Camden share the result of their hard work in a concert featuring a range of styles and ensembles.

£10
Visit iso.co.uk

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DANCE

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9 to 12 February, 7.30pm
Sadlers Wells EC1R 4TN

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£15–£75
Visit sadlerswells.com

KIDS

Three Corners Has Been
Invaded By One Giant Robot
3 Corners Centre,
Northampton Road EC1R OHU

Play is free for six to thirteen-year-olds and supervised by playworkers – all you have to do is register and book

Visit awesomeadventureplay.org

LGBT

The Log Books Live: The Complete History of Switchboard
Tue 8 February, 18.30–19.30
Finsbury Library, 245 Saint John Street EC1V 4NB

Return to Islington’s Pride to celebrate the shared local history, as part of LGBT+ History Month chaired by Tash Walker, co-host of The Log Books and co-chair of Switchboard.

Visit bit.ly/346QgPC

LGBT+ History Month: Zine Making with Rachael House
Sat 26 Feb, 14.15–16.15
Finsbury Library, 245 Saint John Street EC1V 4NB

Islington’s Pride is presenting a series of creative activities that explore Politics in Art including a structured zine-workshop by acclaimed artist and creator Rachael House.

Visit bit.ly/3GmjwyO

Listings compiled by Kendall Brown

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