

# EC1 ECHO

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Director of the Museum of the Order of St John, Anna Mason (centre right), with the team at the historic Gate



## Good knight out

### With a new director and fresh ideas, the Museum of the Order of St John is entering a new era

● BY OLIVER BENNETT ●

**T**he Gatehouse at the Museum of the Order of St John is one of Clerkenwell's most picturesque sights. With a gothic arch and stern crenellations, dating from the early 16th century, it comes across as part-castle, part-church – and in a way, it's both.

In the museum, you'll find out about the old religious military order of St John, the Hospitallers who

looked after pilgrims to Jerusalem in the 11th century, and the charity St John Ambulance, formed in the 19th century in their name – bringing the eight-pointed St John cross on a black background up to date, and capping a millennium's worth of history.

With all this, you'd think the Museum of the Order of St John would be on every tourist's list, but it remains a bit of a secret and has, one might say, hidden its light under a bushel. Also, like many visitor attractions, it has suffered from

being mothballed during Covid. The intention is now to lure more visitors and really put it on the map.

Anna Mason, who has been the museum's director since last autumn, has several initiatives afoot that will put the museum centre stage in London, as well as link it up with the soon-to-be-relocated Museum of London as part of a vibrant Clerkenwell culture cluster.

"We want to present a more open face for the museum and the collections," says Anna. "We've got 60,000

objects but currently only one per cent on display at any time. We're planning new ways to share more of the collection and greater opportunities to experience the whole site, including the church, the garden, and historic interiors."

The church Anna refers to is the Priory Church in the northern part of St John Square. It contains some fine paintings and just outside is a peaceful Cloister Garden – now open all week round except Sundays, free to enter

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**To find details of all the new tours and attractions at the museum see the website at [museumstjohn.org.uk](http://museumstjohn.org.uk)**

NEWS

LTNs set to be key issue in local elections

The launch of seven experimental low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) during the pandemic has had a mixed response – and they are now a key part of the local election battle to be held in Islington 5 May.

Islington Conservatives are now campaigning on a platform to repeal LTNs, although LTNs are a central government policy. Islington Liberal Democrats, campaigning under the banner of ‘Labour Isn’t Listening’, has said that it would hold ‘Citizens’ Assemblies’ to allow resident views to be properly assessed before LTN schemes are brought in.

“Cutting air pollution is particularly important in Islington because the additional traffic was exacerbating the problem and has serious impact on health and wellbeing”

Of the seven LTNs the council has announced that the Clerkenwell Green scheme will be permanent. But anti-LTN campaigners say that the policy has been pushed through without due consultation and has displaced traffic onto arterial roads where lower-income residents are more likely to live, leaving richer home-owners with quieter streets. Rowena Champion, Islington Council’s executive member for environment and transport, said that “cutting air pollution is particularly important in Islington because the additional traffic



was exacerbating the problem and had a serious impact on health and wellbeing”, adding that, LTNs are “transforming our streets, making things better.”

Independent Gary Poole, who is standing down as a St Mary’s ward councillor in May, said: “This city is being strangled by the impact of unnecessary car journeys, it is a public health crisis.”

Recently Islington Council was forced to apologise after its publicity suggested that pollution levels were falling in LTN areas when the levels were in reality rising. In a survey in October last year contractor Project Centre published data showing that Islington Council’s six month review for the trial of the eight Highbury

schemes reported air pollution had fallen, but an audit by Project Centre’s successor company Systra found pollution had actually risen 26 per cent in Highbury West and Fields neighbourhoods, where feelings run high about LTNs. Islington Council’s statement read: “We ended the contract with [contractors] Project Centre due to concerns about the general quality of work.”

“Therefore, we have commissioned independent consultants Systra to produce the monitoring reports for our programme going forward. We are confident their methodologies, presentation and interpretation of the available data is accurate and in line with industry best-practice.”

New tune at the Bowler

The Bowler pub on Bowling Green Lane has changed hands and is set to reopen this spring as the Marian Anderson. Local entrepreneur David Lonsdale, who owns the Sekforde in Sekforde Street, has acquired the pub and is to open up for a few months before a major refurbishment, set to bring out the pub’s Art Deco architecture.

“Marian Anderson was a famous 20th-century black American contralto who studied in Germany in the early 1930s. The famous conductor Arturo Toscanini said that hers was a voice heard once in a hundred years and she sang at



the Wignore Hall in 1933 which was about the time the pub was built,” said Lonsdale. “She played a huge part in the early civil rights movement and was denied the right to sing at Constitutional Hall in Washington DC in 1939 on account of the trustees operating a policy of segregation. An outdoor concert was arranged instead at the Lincoln Memorial and was broadcast to millions around the country. She deserves to have a British pub named after her” says Lonsdale.

The Marian Anderson will pursue the Sekforde’s policy of selling most pints for £5.

4

Margery Street office block rejected

An application to turn Edward Rudolf House on Margery Street – which runs from Amwell Street to King’s Cross Road – into a five-storey office block has been turned down. After an earlier planning application to demolish the existing building and erect the workspace in its place was turned down by Islington Council’s planning committee, the developer Royal UK Properties III appealed to the Planning Inspectorate – and the appeal has been dismissed.

It is a victory for the community effort, says campaigner Gail Sulkes: “We argued that the combination of incoherence with local heritage architecture, poor general design and impact on light and view meant this building should be denied as planned. It shows how community action can work.”

The local campaigners now hope that a new planning application could be more architecturally sensitive and enhance its community input – particularly as the huge and locally contentious Mount Pleasant development is so dominant in the area.

“The developers lost twice and deservedly so,” said local resident Francois Smit. “They discovered that the local community does have a voice and will use it when they are not properly consulted. “We hope there

are lessons learned. Whoever wishes to take this development forward would be advised to learn from this costly mistake.”

Edward Rudolf House, currently shuttered, is lower-rise than the proposed office block. It was sold by The Children’s Society in 2019 for a reported £17m after having served as the charity’s head office since 1986. As with other charities that have suffered losses, The Children’s Society is moving to new head offices.



BY OLIVER BENNETT

Many will know Antoni & Alison, the fashion designers in Rosebery Avenue, Clerkenwell. After meeting in 1987 at London’s Saint Martins School of Art – Antoni Burakowski studying fashion textiles and Alison Roberts’ fine art – they set up the shop on August 1997 and since have built up a loyal clientele from across the world, showing collections twice a year. Their archive is in the Victoria and Albert Museum and in 2008 they gained a dual MBE for services to fashion and photography.

But Burakowski has another thing on his mind at present – Russia’s war on Ukraine. From Anglo-Polish heritage, he has relatives in Ukraine, both near to and in Lviv, and is intensely concerned about the war. “It’s very personal for me,” he says.

Burakowski’s extraordinary background is like a living history of the 20th century.

“My grandmother was Ukrainian and my grandfather Polish,” he says. “My father Antoni was born in what was Poland but is now Ukraine – the borders changed after WWII – in a small village called Berezhivzi close to Lviv.

“When dad was 19 he was arrested for singing anti-Stalin songs and sent to a gulag in Siberia. He never saw his parents or home again”

“He was there for approximately a year,” adds Antoni. “In June 1941 Germany invaded Russia, and Stalin needed help to fight this new enemy. A Polish-Soviet treaty was agreed allowing the release of Poles held in labour camps to help form of a new Polish army. Dad was released and walked back from Siberia to Poland along the railway tracks to join that army.”

Antoni Snr then fought in the 3rd Carpathian rifle division – including at Monte Cassino in 1944 – before being ‘demobbed’ in London. He met Antoni’s mother Ivy who was originally from Poplar: she was 16 and worked in the local sweet shop in Ilford; he was 28 an ex-Polish soldier. They became a cleaner and a builder respectively and moved from London to Harlow new town in Essex where Antoni and his three sisters were brought up.

During his life, Antoni Snr was



Life and fate  
Russia’s war in Ukraine has a bitter personal resonance for Clerkenwell fashion designer Antoni Burakowski, of design duo Antoni & Alison

a snappy dresser and was supportive of Antoni’s career. “At catwalk shows, he would be there at the front.” He and Ivy were very proud of the MBE, although Antoni remembers him, ever the builder, wanting to fix up Buckingham Palace a bit. But Antoni Snr, who died five years ago aged 96, never went back to Ukraine.

Despite this, during his childhood, Antoni had strong links with Poland where he spent summer holidays with his two aunts – his closest relatives to have survived WWII – working on their cooperative farms. “The first time I ever

went out to a restaurant was to a Communist restaurant,” he says. “We never went to restaurants in Harlow, but in Poland everything was so inexpensive for us.”

During these times cousins and other family members would make their way from Ukraine or Russia to come to see us. “It really was a joyful time.”

As he grew up, he stopped going every summer but the links with Poland and Ukraine continued. “My cousin Volodymyr had been one of the soldiers that went in at the beginning of the explosion at Chernobyl,” says Antoni. “Afterwards he was given leave to go from Ukraine and move elsewhere.” He came to London first, on Antoni Sr’s bidding. Antoni Jr, then a fervent club-goer, looked after his nuclear-veteran cousin in London for a while, taking him to legendary clubs Kinky Gerlinky and Taboo. Despite the

culture clash, he says “it all went really well and he loved it. He lives in Canada now and I’m glad to say is in good health.”

His father didn’t want to go back to Ukraine because “he was worried”, says Antoni. “He never saw his mum or his dad again and his older sister and brother all died in or after the war.”

He did find two of his younger sisters in 1967 with the help of The Red Cross. Helen had been dispersed from what is now Ukraine to Opole in southern Poland, and Aniela to Kamien Pomorski in northern Poland.

But his father remained concerned that if he went back to Ukraine, he would be taken away again. “It instilled a real fear in him and a distrust for the Russians and

for Churchill, who dad said had given Poland-Ukraine to the Communists.” It became such a big thing for Antoni Snr that Antoni says that fear came out as strong memories in later life after he was diagnosed with dementia. “Sadly, he relived those days in the gulag again.”

When his dad died Antoni and his mother took the initiative and went back to the village where he was born. “It was important for us to see where he came from, and to find what remained of his family, so off we went on this emotional journey,” says Antoni.

In Ukraine, they went to the village where Antoni and his mother found cousins

and old family friends. With this re-found extended family they had an epiphany, enabling them to piece together their family history.

“We met everybody from the village, some of them our relatives,” says Antoni. “It was a magical time with lots of crying and vodka toasts, and we had made a brass plaque for dad to be put up on his birthplace, which we found. We had a party and many stories were remembered. Although he was really young when he was taken away he definitely hadn’t been forgotten.”

“What was so incredible is that I felt entirely at home and it was amazing to meet all these other Burakowski’s. And the best thing was that I found my nan and granddad’s grave, which my dad never knew existed.” Antoni put his father’s St Christopher locket in their grave: “As if a bit of dad being back with his parents again”.

Which brings us to the current Russian war on Ukraine, which has conjured for Antoni all the hardship and pain his father went through, as well as shining the spotlight on the spirit and bravery of the Ukrainian people.

“I think Ukrainians are tough but also very emotional,” he says. “The way they’ve dealt with this whole situation has been old-fashioned in a way, and terribly gallant. They have an incredible sense of history.” Borders shift and always will, but for Antoni seeing Poland opening up to Ukrainian refugees has bought a flood of family memories.

Now, it is a case of watching the war develop, and hoping for the best. “What is going on today is horrific,” he says. “I’ve looked at so much footage, and it reminds you of what the Ukrainians have been through.” It brings up, for example, the Holodomor famine of the 1930s – thought to have killed between 7–10m Ukrainians and a failure caused by Soviet policy.

Antoni Jr is now going to host three Ukrainian relatives in his house.

“Putin now has some odd nostalgic desire to return to something that people don’t want to be returned to,” says Antoni. “And however the Russian war on Ukraine develops, it will already have ruptured the lives of this generation of Ukrainians.” And that is one of the many disastrous aspects of war – that it lives for generations, as it did for Antoni’s father Antoni Snr.

If you want to help Ukrainian refugees, a list of charities can be found here: [london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/migrants-and-refugees/how-you-can-help-ukraine](https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/migrants-and-refugees/how-you-can-help-ukraine)



▲ The Antoni & Alison shop on Rosebery Avenue



▲ Antoni & Alison with their MBEs

# News from The Peel



Peel Social Club members get ready to lindy hop, with dance teachers Dan & Bryony

**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.**

**Connecting Communities**

Our strapline was coined just a few years ago, but it is not new. In fact, it reflects The Peel's core ethos since our founders started the charity in a Quaker Meeting House over a hundred years ago. Throughout its history The Peel has supported the people of Clerkenwell through many difficult times. That of course includes these past two years, and no sooner have we begun to emerge from the pandemic than war begins raging in Europe.

The onus of helping children, families and older adults through this trying period falls as much on community organisations as it does on schools, social services and others. We can do this by connecting with each other and working together to problem-solve thorny issues, to share

solutions and to provide support. This is at the heart of our new strategy at The Peel. By forging stronger community connections we can find ways to support and improve the general wellbeing of Clerkenwell, an area which we are proud to call our local community.

We would love to work with you to make this happen!

**Ready, Steady Cook**



Our youth club love to cook



Rustling up pancakes

Our youth club constantly impresses us with their culinary output, which has recently ranged from fajitas, to sushi, to delicious Jamaican buns. The young people are also taking part in a new mentoring programme. Designed to help them develop skills needed for higher education and employment success, they are getting to know themselves better through challenges and thought-provoking discussions.

**Feeding Clerkenwell**



Delicious dinners for all

We are very grateful to city investors Sarasin and Partners, who have cooked fresh, healthy and delicious meals for Clerkenwell residents who needed them throughout the pandemic. We continue to distribute meals approximately once a week, donated by this generous partner.

**Game on**

Our Code Club is where Clerkenwell young people solve tech challenges and puzzles under expert guidance from industry professionals. Right now they are getting to grips with the software programming language Python and designing their very own digital games. Equipped with these skills they will be able to design websites, other software and even artificial intelligence. Peel young people are the coders of the future!

Code Club volunteer Merel told us, "Coding is really creative, it enables you to build anything you like", whilst young coder Luca said, "I like Code Club because it's fun and I get to learn new stuff". He also added that new computers would come in handy.

**Rock Stepping**



Lindy hop experts Bryony & Dan

Lindy Hopping has reached Peel! Our hall recently came alive with this 1930s dance craze. Dancers Dan and Bryony soon got us rock stepping, triple stepping and showing off some very impressive turns. Tunes by greats such as Nina Simone and Count Basie got our toes tapping and hips swinging.

Let us know if you'd like to join a regular Lindy Hop class and we'll see what we can arrange.

**Peel's Wheels**



You might have spotted a sleek new minibus gracing the streets of EC1. After waving farewell to our old vehicle last year we are as pleased as punch to now have a smart, new set of wheels. We can once again provide transport for our older members who need it and to our children and young people for outings and holidays. Our new minibus is fully ULEZ compliant.

**Milestone Anniversary**



Jeana Kidd celebrates

"Jeana is a Peel legend! So many lives have been positively impacted because of her." Olu, Peel CEO

Our Children's & Young People's Coordinator, Jeana Kidd, recently celebrated 31 years working at Peel. During this time she's worked with over 3,000 children and young people in Clerkenwell.

Jeana told us, "In 31 years I haven't felt like I'm going to work, because I have always loved what I do, working with young people. I see myself in them."

On behalf of everyone at The Peel and the wider Clerkenwell community we extend thanks and congratulations to Jeana for so many years of dedication to children and young people.

**Bars & Beats**



Filming young people's music videos



Our Direct Action Project recently had the joy of working with some very talented young rappers, in partnership with Islington's Targeted Youth Team, Music Education Islington and hip hop theatre, Breakin Convention. Using a professional recording studio the young people recorded their own tracks, expertly guided by London rappers Shay D, Capo Lee and Jammz. They then designed their own videos, filmed by professional film maker Mikey Bharj. The results? Amazing!

**The Interview**

Meet Christine, one of our dedicated volunteers. She joined the team in February and volunteers two days a week with our Over 55s Social Club. Her varied role involves preparing lunches, organising quizzes and helping with admin tasks.

**Q: How long have you lived in the area?**

A: Pretty much all my life. My family moved to Percy Circus when I was just a baby.

**Q: How long have you known about The Peel?**

A: I used to take my son to a playgroup at Peel, when it was on Lloyd Baker Street. He's forty now! In the 1980s Peel moved to Percy Circus, opposite my mum's house. I used to go to aerobics classes and summer fetes there.



Volunteer Christine Dean

**Q: Why did you decide to volunteer?**

A: My husband passed away suddenly 19 months ago. I had retired early from my job as a finance officer with a local school so we could fulfil our dream of living abroad. His passing meant those plans changed and I want to keep busy. I'm not really ready for retirement so volunteering means I have got lots to do.

**Q: What do you enjoy most about your role?**

A: I really enjoy chatting to all the older ladies who come here. I also like helping people understand and respond to official letters, which can be very confusing sometimes. Plus, I'm trying out new things – I've just signed up for the Pilates classes.

**Q: What is the best thing about The Peel?**

A: That it gets people out and provides interesting things to do. I really like that it doesn't matter where you live, everyone is welcome here.

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

A: Malta

**Easter @ Peel**

We are enjoying welcoming spring and celebrating Easter. Our seasonal festivities kicked-off with hot cross bun baking and Easter basket making with our youth club, who then distributed their homemade goodies to the homeless. Easter celebrations with the Over 55s Social Club began with a fun Easter-themed quiz and a seasonal flower arranging workshop. On Wednesday 13th April at 12pm we are hosting an Easter church service led by Pastor Allan from Kings Cross Baptist Church, followed by planting spring bulbs and picnicking in Spa Fields on Wednesday 14th at 11am. We wish all EC1 Echo readers a very happy and restful Easter bank holiday weekend.

**Peel regular classes & special events include...**

- St George's Day Celebration! Wednesday 20th April @ 12.30pm. If you're over 55 then join us for a good old knees up with a pie and mash lunch. Advance booking needed.
- Dance and fitness classes
- Knitting & flower arranging classes
- Group cooking sessions
- Aromatherapy 4-week course.
- Code and Youth Clubs, for 10–18 year olds

**Join the Peel Team!**

Would you like to volunteer for us, or would you like to start class or activity for the local community? If yes, we'd love to hear from you. Drop us a line!

**Keep up with our news with our digital newsletter. Sign up from our website home page.**  
**Visit** [peelinstitute.org.uk](http://peelinstitute.org.uk)  
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# State of the Bart

*Ahead of next year’s 900th anniversary, Amelia Braddick romps through the years at St Bartholomew the Great*

Tucked away near Smithfield is St Bartholomew the Great, the City of London’s oldest surviving church. Perhaps you’d recognise its interior: it is where Charles (Hugh Grant) gets punched at the altar by Henrietta (Anna Chancellor) in *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, Sherlock (Robert Downey Jr) and Watson (Jude Law) narrowly prevent Lord Blackwood (Mark Strong) from murder in *Sherlock Holmes*, and Maud (Carey Mulligan) uses it as refuge in *Suffragettes*.

Although it has been widely featured in films, not many people know the unique history behind this magnificent ecclesiastical hub. That should change in 2023, when St Bartholomews will celebrate 900 years of ministry and service and to mark the occasion, hopes to raise £10 million to preserve the heritage site for subsequent generations.

St Bartholomew the Great had an unusual formation: its founder, Rahere, was Henry I’s court jester. While on a pilgrimage to Rome, Rahere became unwell and vowed that, should he recover, he would build a hospital for the poor in London. After he regained his strength and journeyed home, he had a vision of Apostle Bartholomew who commanded him to build a church in Smithfield to the glory of God: *”I am Bartholomew who have come to help thee in thy straights. I have chosen a spot in a suburb of London at Smithfield wwhere, in my name, thou shalt found a church.”*

Rahere abided by his promise. Once back in England, Henry I gave him land for both the church and hospital, and the building began in 1123. The east end (much of which survives) was completed by Rahere’s death in 1143 and the



Credit Wikicommons



St Bartholomew the Great Credit Wikicommons

”  
*It is planned to rebuild the second storey of the cloister*  
“

remainder of the church by 1300.

Other notable moments in history include William Wallace and Wat Tyler’s executions on the church’s doorstep. Engraver and painter, William Hogarth, was baptised there and painted the adjacent St Bartholomew Hospital’s North Wing’s staircase leading up to its Great Hall free of charge. Benjamin Franklin once worked as a typesetter in the printer’s workshop, now occupied by the Lady Chapel, and Deborah Mitford got married there in a wartime wedding.

The first stage of the fundraising campaign takes place throughout 2023 in parallel with the anniversary celebrations. Subsequently, the second phase of fundraising is focused on transforming the church’s fabric and facilities, outreach and generating a music endowment fund.

Ptolemy Dean Architects has performed extensive research into the church’s evolution over nine centuries. Its illuminating report reveals architectural constraints but highlights alternative techniques to repair and restore the ancient building, whilst minimising harm to its fabric.

The church’s 1980s extension, visible from Cloth Fair, contains a kitchen and toilets that are in dire

need of an upgrade. The plans involve upgrading the kitchen so that events and other functions can be properly catered for. There will also be a new disabled toilet, to ensure that everyone can worship, celebrate or perform there.

A more ambitious part of the plans is to open an education centre in the triforium or gallery level. St Bartholomew’s rector, Fr Marcus Walker says: ‘It’s currently completely unused. We hope it might become an education centre and or a museum space – a place that can tell the story of 900 years of this part of London and this church.’ This new space would attract families, nearby schools and tourists, encouraging them to learn about the history and culture of the City. With modern interactive technology, St Bartholomews hopes to bring to life the story of early medicine, medieval revolts, monastic life and the Reformation.

To celebrate its intimate connection with the hospital, it is also planned to rebuild the second storey of the Bartholomew the Great cloister and repurpose the space for counselling rooms and new offices. Many people’s mental health suffered as a result of the pandemic, and the church intends

to work with the hospital and other mental health suppliers to provide a wellbeing centre, with talking therapy for those who need it.

Furthermore, to promote these mental health initiatives, St Bartholomews are creating an accessible garden as an oasis of calm and contemplation. This welcoming space will also be used as an outdoor venue for artistic and musical events.

Music has always been a vital part of the church. As Director of Music Rupert Gough says, “We have a terrifically positive, vibrant musical tradition that we are upholding and a fantastic professional choir. But one of the sad things is that we have no proper pipe organ.” Some £3 million is needed to sustain the Endowment Fund which includes purchasing an organ, enhancing facilities and building new rehearsal spaces, establishing the church as a more commercially viable venue. Part of this campaign allows people the ability to endow a day of music for the next 100 years. The money dedicated to this project will ensure that the church’s world-class music reputation is sustained for generations to come.

What St Bartholomew the Great presents is an exciting vision and an opportunity to help shape the mission for the next 100 years, further enriching the local community and connecting the church more closely to the hospital as Rahere had originally intended.

Visit [greatstbarts.com](http://greatstbarts.com)

BY EVA GRIFFITH

As we come up to Shakespeare Day on 23 April, a writer has unearthed more evidence that the bard came to EC1 – and finds the wells where plays were performed

Local historians, aware of Clerkenwell’s waters, do not need to be told that refreshment and entertainment forms part of its character. Sadler’s Wells bears witness to this.

Further back in time, Biblical drama was recorded on the Medieval Green accompanied by the water that made the spectacle pleasurable. The Clerk’s Well can still be seen through a window on Farringdon Lane, once by the banks of the River Fleet.

But what of the Skinners Well, like the Clerks’ one, mentioned by John Stow as a place where Royal festivals of drama were performed before Richard II and Henry IV? Identification of its location has eluded the interested.



Eva Griffith near the Skinners Well

## All’s well that ends well

What was needed was a lucky find.

I am happy to announce the discovery of three surveys to add to the one published in my book of 2013: *A Jacobean Company and Its Playhouse: The Queen’s Servants at the Red Bull Theatre (c. 1605–1619)*, about a rival playhouse to Shakespeare’s Globe, built on the ‘Seckford Estate’ (the area including Sekforde Street and Woodbridge Street). One of the surveys is in much the same style as that included in my book, except this new, earlier representation shows a larger space for the theatre than was

previously thought, leaving the option open of a bigger playhouse yard.

Of more significance to London’s entertainment history, however, is the discovery of a 1587 survey showing the entire piece of land, penned by the distinguished Tudor surveyor, Ralph Treswell (born c.1540). In mint condition and coloured yellow, gold and pink, this survey shows new water sources for Clerkenwell history, one of which, a pump, looks like a person with a walking stick. An archaeologist, experienced in digs around Clerkenwell, has identified this pump as the likely location

of the Skinners Well where those Royal festivals took place.

Thomas Seckford, the high-powered lawyer who bequeathed the one-time St. Mary’s nunnery field to his Suffolk almshouse charity, lived on the land shown; his seafaring brother Henry, Master of the Tents, Toils, Hales and Pavilions, possessed a residence in the old St. John’s Priory buildings to the south of this. Henry’s role was one associated with that of the Master of the Revels based at St. John’s, who vetted, organised and controlled court entertainments.

Did Shakespeare come to Clerkenwell to deliver his plays and to see them ‘rehearsed’ before the Master? He probably did. For other reasons, it is also likely that he visited the Seckford Estate, on ground that seems to have been given over to drama for many hundreds of years.

An academic journal article is coming out later in the year; an exhibition, researched; a project involving the whole Clerkenwell community is mooted; a large part of a comedy screenplay is written – and further articles concerning the finds and the subject of water will be published soon on [lemon-shakespeare.com](http://lemon-shakespeare.com).

Advertisement

### LSO St Luke’s

WHAT’S  
ON April & May  
at LSO St Luke’s

LSO St Luke’s, Old Street  
[lso.co.uk/lstoslukes](http://lso.co.uk/lstoslukes)

#### Free Friday Lunchtime Concerts

Curious about classical music? Try a bite-sized concert, with introductions and Q+A. Free entry, just turn up!  
*Friday 8 & 29 April; 20 May 12.30pm*

#### BBC Radio 3 Lunchtime & Early-Evening Concerts

Get up close and personal: four very different soloists step into the spotlight, showcasing their talent and instruments with a blend of classical and contemporary music.  
*Friday 6, 13 & 27 May 1pm; 27 May 6pm*

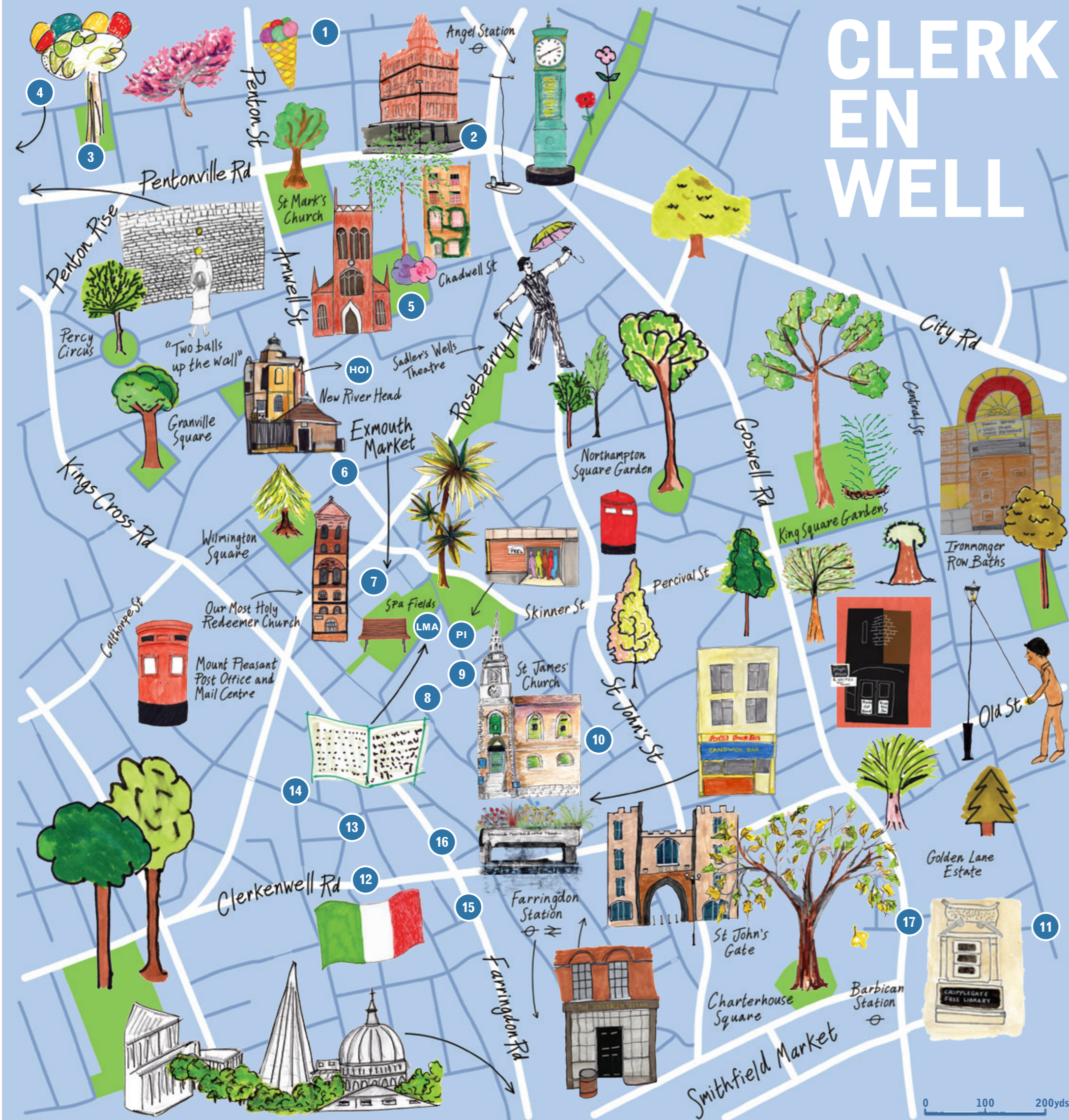
Plus ... ECHO Rising Stars & Gresham College Lectures

#### Round the corner at the Barbican ...

##### Lift Every Voice

A celebration of Afro-American gospel, spirituals and classical music to nourish the soul, with the London Symphony Orchestra and the massed voices of choirs from across London.  
*Sunday 29 May 7pm, Barbican*





With the Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration taking shape at New River Head in Clerkenwell – it's due to open in 2023 – the EC1 area is becoming one of London's big drawing destinations. This map is the product of a collaborative project between House of Illustration, The Peel Institute and London Metropolitan Archives. Illustrator and educator Siôn Ap Tomos delivered workshops with a group of past and current residents of Clerkenwell, Islington, who shared personal stories and observations about the area and created the illustrations to go with them.

This map depicts the sites of stories, recollections and personal interests chosen by a group of past and current residents of Clerkenwell in Islington, north London. The group was: Selma Atasoy (SA), Sheila Collins (SC), Vivienne Evans, Bill Gilliam, Marilyn Gilliam, Josie Hadley, Michael Janulewicz, Sue Lloyd, Maria Mansfield (MM), Jill Putland, Ray Rich (RR), Mary Smith.

**1** In Chapel Street and Exmouth Street Market there were pie and mash shops that also sold eels in the street outside. On a large table there would be a big metal tray about four inches deep with a block of ice in the middle and number of eels slithering and sliding over each other. When a customer bought one it was bashed over the head with the butt of a knife and slit open from its head to about halfway down its body. The vendor would insert his thumb into the slit to remove its gizzards, then quickly cut it into one-inch chunks to be taken home – Bill Gilliam

**2** There was a Lyons Corner House restaurant at Angel junction where Pentonville Road and Islington High Street meet. My dad and his mates would play dice when visiting there by marking sugar cubes with all the dots – Mary Smith  
Lyons Corner House was previously the Angel Hotel, built in 1903 on the site of the 17th century Angel Inn from which the area of Angel got its name. It is now a bank.

**3** Joseph Grimaldi Park is named after the Regency actor and comedian whose grave can be found here. Grimaldi was one of the biggest stage personalities of his day in England, most famous for developing the character of the clown as we know it today. Clown performers still celebrate him now with an annual memorial service held in nearby Hackney.

**4** Henry Croft was born in 1861 in nearby St Pancras Workhouse, now St Pancras Hospital, and worked as a road sweeper and rat catcher. He also collected money for charity and was the first to create and wear a 'pearly suit'. He was my friend's great grandfather – Vivienne Evans  
Croft founded the London tradition of 'pearly kings and queens' which still exists today. These 'pearlies' wear 'pearly suits', elaborately decorated with mother of pearl buttons, and raise money for charity.

**5** I was living at No. 16 Chadwell Street aged about six when my pet budgie Joey was found dead on the floor of his cage. After a short period of grief I took the biggest spoon I could find in our kitchen and took Joey over the road to Myddelton Square Gardens. I buried him behind the third park bench to the right of the main path to St Marks Church. I still visit him to this day – Bill Gilliam

**6** Merlin Street Baths provided somewhere to swim, bathe and do laundry. Due to poor housing in the post-war period, bathrooms were few and far between. On Saturday afternoons my friend and I would go for our weekly 'slipper bath'. Carrying our towels and clean underwear we would go and soak for ages, calling out for "more hot water in number four!", the baths being numbered, until we were told in no uncertain terms to get out as others were waiting – Mary Smith

**7** Exmouth Market takes its name from the Exmouth Arms pub that stands on the street. The pub is named after Admiral Edward Pellew whose notable naval career began at the age of 14, spanned several decades and conflicts, and led to him being given the title of 1st Viscount Exmouth in 1816. The street is notable for its many cafes and restaurants and, being pedestrianised, having substantial outdoor seating.

**8** Workmen had dug a trench through the tarmac playground of Hugh Myddelton Junior School [now Number 10 Bowling Green Lane] to lay a water pipe to provide a drinking fountain in the rain shelter. After the first of day digging there was a huge pile of skulls, long bones, rib cages etc. all roped off, but no workmen on site. They had caught diphtheria and were all in hospital.  
The next morning the entire school were made to line up at the door to the school hall to be inoculated for the infection, forming a very long queue around the entire perimeter of the infants playground and beyond. I remember bright sunlight and much mucking around indicating we had no idea of the danger we were exposed to. Many areas of Clerkenwell were used as plague burial grounds – Bill Gilliam

**9** I was seven years old when WWII began. I went to Myddelton School until we were evacuated and my school went to Luton. After seven weeks my parents were unhappy with the way I was being treated, so brought me home. I remember the first air raid I experienced back in Clerkenwell: I was riding my bike with friends in Northampton Park and I can still picture my dad running towards me, scooping me and my bike up and running home with me in his arms – Josie Hadley

**10** I moved to Clerkenwell with my son in 1975 and in 1980 had my second son at St Bartholomew's hospital. I attended the baby unit in Pine Street [now the Michael Palin Centre for Stammering] where I saw a leaflet left for mothers and toddlers to meet at Woodbridge Chapel. I attended and stayed for the next 30 years as a member of the chapel, meeting and making new friends in the area. The building was also used by the Watercress and Flower Girls' Christian Mission, founded in the 1860s [now Livability, a national disability charity] – Jill Putland

**11** We didn't have many books at home so I found this old dark library [Cripplegate free library] just around the corner. They wouldn't let me take a book unless I was a member and because I was young I had to get permission from my dad or mum. My dad refused to give his details so I thought that was the end of things but when I told the librarian she took pity on me and let me sign for myself. The smell of the place and the quiet gloom were magic! – Marilyn Gilliam

**12** St Peter's Italian Church on Clerkenwell Road was the first to be built in the basilica style in the UK in 1863. It was designed by Irish architect Sir John Miller Bryson, who modelled it on the Basilica San Crisogono in Rome. The church was created to serve the local Italian immigrant population that had developed in the 1800's to such an extent that the surrounding area was dubbed 'Little Italy'.

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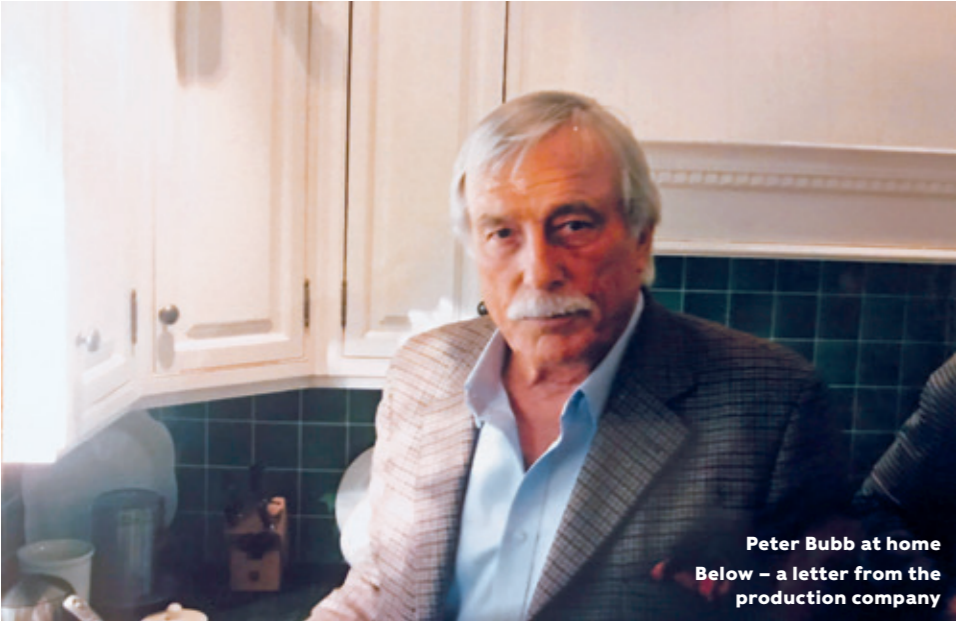
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FEATURE

The name’s Bubb – Peter Bubb

*There’s a race on to find the next James Bond at the moment – but few realise that a Farringdon restaurateur almost became the first 007*



BY DAVID ROSSI & OLIVER BENNETT

Now that Daniel Craig has handed back the keys to the Aston Martin after five 007 films – *Casino Royale*, *Quantum of Solace*, *Skyfall*, *Spectre* and *No Time To Die* – the hunt is on for a new James Bond. Among the runners are Tom Hardy, John Boyega, Outlander star Sam Heughan, Rege-Jean Page, Idris Elba and Henry Cavill.

We’ll have to wait and see – but meanwhile, there’s a curious local connection with Ian Fleming’s creation. Back in 1961, when Bond producers Harry Saltzman and Cubby Broccoli, along with Bond writer Ian Fleming, put up the first James Bond film, *Dr No*, the press was agog as to whom the secret service agent – already made famous in Ian Fleming’s books – would be. Among the runners were top actors Michael Craig and Patrick McGoochan, of *The Prisoner* fame. But it was Peter Anthony Bubb, a professional model from London who won, with Cubby Broccoli saying that Anthony had a “Greg Peck quality” – meaning Gregory Peck, one of the most famous post-war American actors, known for his square-jawed good looks.

Peter, later to run Bubbs restaurant in West Smithfield, came within a whisker of being Bond.

“A friend saw a small ad in the *Daily Express* for a competition for new James Bond and said I should respond,” says Peter, now 88 and living in the south of France. It was narrowed down to six people and Peter won by a landslide. Peter then received a letter asking him for a screen test and enclosing an 007 script. Off he went to a studio in Twickenham with “a suit and a pistol and the script. I took part in a photo session with the other candidates and then one on my own.”

a theatre in the London suburbs. But I was getting £100 a day to be a model [about £2,000 in today’s money]. So I said ‘no’ to the role. And I have never regretted it.” The producers moved on and as Peter says, “In the end, Broccoli chose a real actor: Sean Connery, who was in competition with David Niven and Cary Grant for the role.”

As Clerkenwell resident and an old friend of Peter’s David Rossi points out, Peter’s decision was no big deal at the time. “No one expected James Bond to be such a huge success,” he said. “It was just a film at the time and Peter was already having the time of his life.” So when the first Bond, *Dr No*, came out in 1962 with Sean Connery as the secret agent, Peter didn’t feel any regret or rancour. “As I wasn’t really an actor it didn’t matter.”

But clearly Peter made his mark on the Bond inner circle and in particular ‘Cubby’ Broccoli who, when *Diamonds Are Forever* (1971) was being cast, got in touch once again. Sean Connery had tired of Bond after five films and Broccoli hadn’t liked his replacement George Lazenby, a one-off Bond who played *On Her Majesty’s Secret Service*.

“They flew me to Hollywood,” said Peter. “I even met a lawyer who brought a series of contracts to my hotel room and they wanted me to sign immediately. But while I did a few film tests I refused once again because I did not want to rush into things.”

Moreover, by then Peter had another plan – to start a restaurant in West Smithfield called Bubbs. He opened the French restaurant in 1979, and in its heyday in the 1980s it was a destination, luring journalists from nearby Fleet Street, doctors from nearby Barts Hospital and parliamentarians from Westminster for long boozy lunches. “Running Bubbs was an adventure in itself” he recalls.

In the part of West Smithfield that is now to become the Museum of London Bubbs ran for 20 years, under a familiar yellow sign. Peter, a lover of good food, wine and conviviality was *the* host, and such was his clientele that he had to be discreet about his more famous denizens. But Bubbs closed in 1991 and Peter and his French wife Katherine Pastrie, herself also a model, moved to Arcachon and then Antibes, the French coastal resort where they live in the historic town centre.

“We eat out most days,” says the man who could have been Bond. “It suits us very well. You don’t need a car to get around. There are very good restaurants, the sea is nearby and there are lots of walks. I love Antibes. I go to London sometimes, but I am always impatient to return here.” And Peter confirms that he is definitely not in the running to be the new Bond.

It went extremely well. “The producer ‘Cubby’ Broccoli called me to say he wanted to see me,” says Peter, over the phone from France. “He and Ian Fleming had no doubt. I had the physique and the build to play Bond. But I would have to learn how to be an actor and take acting classes.”

At the time Peter had a thriving career, particularly for *Man About Town*, a 1950s-60s lifestyle magazine for men where he was a favourite model of photographers such as Terence Donovan, David Bailey and Brian Duffy, posing in sports cars to advertise sharp suits. These shots captured the mood for the Bond producers, another reason why he was considered a good fit for the role. “I went for four castings and they wanted me to get a bit of acting experience playing rep,” he says.

But while Broccoli considered Peter an “exciting find”, the model ultimately fell at the acting hurdle. “I wasn’t an actor, although I did play a few parts,” he says. “They would have paid me £40 a week to learn how to act. I would have had to go to



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News of the world

Local publisher Barnaby Rogerson talks about Eland: the travel publishing company that defies all the odds

Four international corporations dominate the British publishing industry, like vast supertankers afloat on an ocean of knowledge. Alongside these juggernauts, sustained by millions of pounds of annual turnover, there remain some flimsy little wooden skiffs, piloted by passionate amateurs such as Eland – one of the more idiosyncratic of these tiny publishing houses.

A cottage industry perched in a third-floor attic above a busy street market in Clerkenwell, Eland has been owned and run by a succession of writers who, like Dickensian mudlarks, scavenge through the rubbish at low tide, in this case picking over pyramids of neglected books. Britain publishes 188,000 new titles (including new editions) a year, so there has to be neglect or we would all drown. There are not that many gems to be discovered. Most of our hot tips now come directly from our readers, but one editor assessed that the hit rate was still not more than one in every hundred.

Eland has always focused on travel, but fortunately travel has a very wide remit: that criss-crosses between hair-raising adventure stories and history of places, between the humour of differences and a full-blown immersion in the lifestyles of others. We argue endlessly about veracity versus literacy (truth or skill) but in the end, we at Eland confess that we never know what we’re looking for until we find it.

Eland then hunts down the literary heirs which is always an interesting but seldom a

straightforward task. Then, once a contract has been found, it transforms these orphan books into beautiful objects: redesigning the typesetting, making them more readable, using better paper and sewn bindings. It agonises over the covers. Fiction has to be adorned by art from the period, while factual books need photographs of exactly the right age and sensibility.

Our office looks more like an antiquarian bookshop than a profit-driven corporate enterprise

Eland publish between two and eight books a year. Every book that has been chosen has remained in print, like a named animal in a cherished herd, and this herd is now 150 strong after 40 years of care. Some of the best books sell less than 50 copies a year, but now and then, a book goes off like a rocket and covers everyone in clover. But there have also been lean years, when paying the printer on the nail, has been a close-run thing.

Eland is often referred to by our colleagues in the book business as being the ‘last of the gentleman publishers’. We’ve got used to hearing an edge of disdain within this praise, but have to accept that there is something enduringly amateur and ‘for

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FEATURE

Shapes of things

*Clerkenwell Design Week’s Jedd Barry tells us what to expect as the festival returns this May*

BY JEDD BARRY

After a two-year absence we’re really excited about our return to Clerkenwell. We’re featuring more showrooms, more exhibitors and more venues than ever before; as well as expanding into a new hub in Charterhouse Square and new exhibition spaces by St John’s Gate and in St James’s Churchyard. There’s a real sense of excitement building among the showrooms with plans taking shape for the return of the architecture and design community to the area. We’ve increased the number of our locations – this year we will have ten dedicated exhibition spaces, up from seven in 2019, linked by a route running through the centre of EC1.

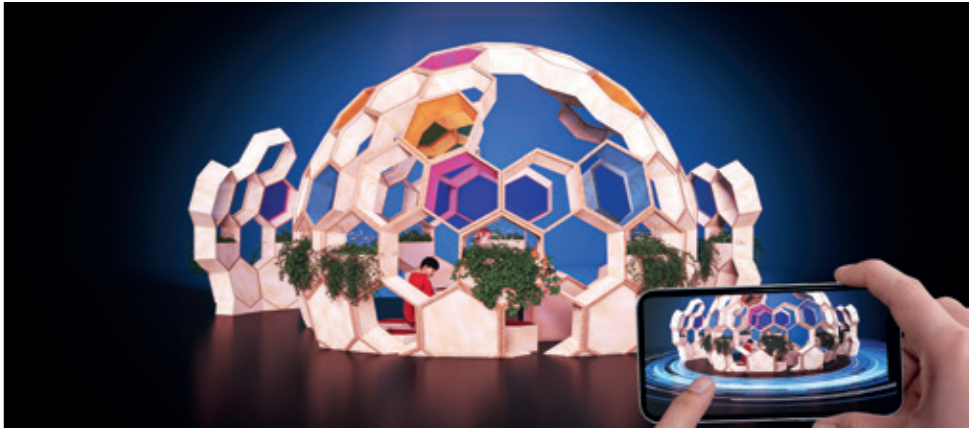
We encourage the local community, and our Clerkenwell neighbours, to be as much part of Clerkenwell Design Week (CDW) as possible. CDW works very closely with Islington Council as well as local partners and this year we’re delighted to confirm a number of initiatives to engage the local community including free Upcycling and Sketch-up workshops held within Finsbury Business Centre, and free daily yoga in our talks space in Spa Fields. We’ll also be working with The Peel Centre and their youth club members who’ll be briefed to design a series of artworks representing what Clerkenwell means to them – and these designs will then be on display at CDW. We’re also pleased to offer several work experience opportunities as well as paid work reserved for local residents.

We’re also showing the work of up-and-coming designers and emerging talent, offering them a platform to present their work to the industry. For the first time, this year we’re working with Islington Council to offer an up-and-coming designer the opportunity to exhibit at CDW for free. Clerkenwell’s subterranean House of Detention, previously a prison will showcase ‘Light + Rising Stars’ where upcoming designers will exhibit alongside leading lighting brands and Pop, the former cold store turned nightclub, will be essential to visit, hosting immersive experiences throughout the three days of CDW. The talks programme is still evolving but sustainability and climate change will be a key topic for speakers and panels.

For us, it’s key to show how design should be a means of improving the quality of life for us all, whether that’s at our workplaces, homes or leisure spaces. For example, acoustic panels are a key means

of cutting down outside noise that can interfere with our communication while good lighting can make all the difference to our mood and our ability to perform well. Biophilic design has also played a big role in the way that spaces are designed with an emphasis on the well-being benefits that living walls, plants and even trees bring to indoor environments.

We’re also thrilled that so many of our hospitality partners are once again involved with CDW, from gin distillers to coffee brewers. Restaurants and cafes will have special offers and menus and we know they’ll be extra busy during CDW. I think most of us are just excited about the chance to reconnect in person again with others from the design community.



COMMUNITY14



Stroll on

Kendall Ashlee Brown talks to Avril Nanton of Avril’s Walks and Talks

Avril Nanton of ‘Avril’s Walks and Talks’ tour guide service has a speciality – leading walks with a Black historical theme around London, including a walk through Islington taking in Angel and Sadler’s Wells. Indeed, this Islington walk was Nanton’s first walking tour, taking in many sites, including the old site of the African National Congress on Penton Street, the Eritrean Embassy on White Lion Street and the Keskidee Centre, which was in Gifford Street, and one of the first centres for young Black people. “It predominantly dealt with young Black people,” says Nanton, “but it was open to everybody.”

With five walks now, another of Nanton’s route’s centres on Black war memorials of Hyde Park, which looks back at Black involvement in the First and Second World Wars, and even conflicts before, such as the Battle of Waterloo. “New Zealand’s Maoris and Australian Aboriginal people who took part in wars for the empire, were never really, given any respect or credit,” says Nanton of this, her most popular tour. She also takes a walk to Tottenham, looking at the area’s Black history and tracing the steps of the MP Bernie Grant.

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It’s really interesting if you have an interest in history

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Nanton intention in taking the walks is to educate people but also to influence more people to become tour guides. “It’s really interesting if you have an interest in history and a good way to learn and teach people,” she says, adding that there are possibilities for expanding her walks, especially the one in Islington. “I’ve done a lot of research over the years and there are other stories Islington.”

Nanton has written a book expanding on the tours, going in further depth about the Black historical sites. “It’s like an expanded version of my tours,” she says. “And it’s surprising that there are a lot of places in London that people may not realise are markers of Black history.”

Visit [avrilswalksandtalks.co.uk](http://avrilswalksandtalks.co.uk)

May Day march is back

On 1 May, Clerkenwell Green is set to once again become a sea of red flags as the annual International Workers’ Day demonstration resumes. Predominantly organised by the Trades Council, one of the partners in the demonstration is the Marx Memorial Library, which opens for the day – fortuitously falling on a Sunday.

“We’ll have our doors open from 10.30am to 3.30pm for tours of the building,” says Merian Jump, archivist and library manager at the Marx Memorial Library & Workers’ School. “We haven’t been able to do that for a couple of years, so we’re expecting a great atmosphere.”

The Library will have tours, including cellars that extend under the streets outside, as well as speakers and secondhand book sales. “Visitors will be able to visit Lenin’s office where he worked while he was in exile, and edited the magazine *Spark*, from where it was transported back into Russia and Europe. Merian is expecting a big turnout this year. “I think people want to get out again.”

Those interested in attending the actual march should assemble at Clerkenwell Green from 12 noon. It then leaves for Trafalgar Square at 1pm where it assembles at a rally at 2.30pm.

**The Marx Memorial Library is at 37a Clerkenwell Green EC1R 0DU**  
**Visit [marx-memorial-library.org.uk](http://marx-memorial-library.org.uk)**



Credit Dan Atrill/Wikimedia Commons



CULTURE MILE15

Get access to local community funding with the return of the Imagine Fund

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.

**Humble beginnings**

Towards the end of 2020, Culture Mile launched the Imagine Fund – a community grant-making and support scheme providing 10 people with access to seed funding that would help make their community-led ideas a reality. The grants were allocated by a panel of community members who worked together to design the process and make decisions. Some of the projects funded included a socially distanced singalong on the Golden Lane Estate, weekly sharing sessions for unpaid carers, a history project on London Wall, a guided walk exploring the City’s floating pedways, and a pop-up choir.

This year, having learned a lot about the process, Culture Mile have announced the return of the Imagine Fund for 2022 – and it’s bigger and better than before!

**Seed Funds & Project Grants**

Building on the pilot scheme, the Imagine Fund has returned with not one but two grants available to those who live, work, or study within the City of London or a 10-minute walk from its boundary.

If you’re looking to start small and test an idea in your local community,

then the Seed Fund is for you. Have you always wanted to start a book group, for example? Perhaps you would like to have a go at a gardening club? If your application is successful, you will receive £500 to kick-start your idea and help benefit the area and the lives of the people in it.

What about if you have a community or cultural project in the local area which needs a bit more time, support, and money to make it happen? That’s where the Project Grants step in. There are eight small

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The panel will be selected with the aim of creating a diverse and representative group with strong links to the area

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grants of £2,000 each available, all of which will go towards projects that will bring people across the City and help make it a better place to be.

**Be on the Panel!**

Culture Mile are also looking for community members to join the Imagine Panel. Successful applicants will help the Imagine Fund team assess applications and make decisions about what’s needed locally. Not only is it an exciting opportunity to get to know other members of the local community, but you will receive training, experience, and £850 for taking part.

The team are particularly interested in receiving applications from communities that are traditionally under-represented in grant-making, including people from the global majority, disabled people, and working-class communities.

The panel will be selected with the aim of creating a diverse and representative group with strong links to the area who are committed to making positive change locally.

**Get involved**

If you’d like to take part in this year’s Imagine Fund by applying for funding or joining the panel, the process couldn’t be easier. Visit [bit.ly/ImagineFund2022](http://bit.ly/ImagineFund2022) for all the information, including application guidelines and FAQs, and you’ll find links to apply via the Good Grants platform. Deadlines are Tuesday 19th April to get involved in the panel and Tuesday 3rd May to apply for the Seed Grants & Project Funds.

**To find out more about the above projects and to explore what’s happening in and around Culture Mile, simply visit [www.culturemile.london](http://www.culturemile.london) or follow @CultureMileLDN on social media.**

CULTURE

mile

SPONSORED CONTENT



► Culture Mile announces the return of their community grant-making scheme Imagine Fund for 2022  
© Francis Augusto / Culture Mile

# Stamping ground

A fascinating exhibition about postcodes has just opened, but you’ll have to go to WC1 to see it

Postcodes are important. This paper is named after one. Estate agents gear their prices around them, snobs delight in them and street gangs pledge their allegiances around them. They can affect your car and household insurance and sometimes determine whether you can have pizza delivered to your house or not. And they’re very useful for SatNav.

Now an exhibition in the Postal Museum shines light on the hidden history of the postcode. “There’s two sort of sides to the exhibition,” says Chris Taft, head of collections at The Postal Museum. “One side is what your postcode says about you – the social history aspect. The other side is what postcodes are for and how they were developed. Postcodes were the result of innovation at the Post Office.” Both these aspects are shown in the museum, with maps, ephemera, machinery, advertisements and even ELSIE – that is, ‘Electronic Letter Sorting Indicating Equipment’ – one of the few original 1950s postcode machines left.

Postcodes, says Chris, have roots in the 19th century and were about speeding up the process and handling of mail. “In the early days of the postal service, you had a lot of duplicate addresses,” he says. “Street names were repeated and there was often a muddle about numbering. So postcodes were developed to try to straighten that out.” The letters came before the numbers. “For example, North One – N1 –was centred on the Northern District Office in Angel Islington way and EC1 meant East Central One.” But the full numbered system only arrived in 1959 when they were trialled in Norwich – which we should perhaps refer to as ‘NRI’.

Why did it take so long? “The comparative lateness of postcodes is partly because World War II spurred on the development of sorting machinery and technology,” says Chris. After WWI, the Post Office wanted to do more research and development. It decided to build a research



Norwich Sorting Office, using ELSIE

Postcodes can affect your insurance – and even determine whether you can have pizza delivered

station in Dollis Hill in northwest London which opened in 1931. Names like Tommy Flowers, Dame Stephanie Shirley and Sir Gordon Radley worked at the Post Office Research Station at Dollis Hill, developing postal mechanisation, postcodes and Colossus, the world’s first programmable electronic computer.

During the Second World War, these tech pioneers went over to war work. Bletchley Park, the famous codebreaking centre of WWII, asked some of the Dollis Hill team to assist and Tommy Flowers helped Alan Turing develop machines that would help break codes. They came up with a machine called ‘Colossus’, now regarded as being the world’s first programmable computer.

“So essentially the Post Office invented the computer,” says Chris. “And after World War II, when things began to return to normality, they took some of that technology to develop sorting machines.” By 1960, with the economy developing, around 28 million letters and packages passed through the postal system every day

and the new system began to take hold. There are oddities which sometimes flummox visitors to London, such as why N19 is more central than N2, and Brixton has a lower number with SW2 than Chelsea at SW3. Our neighbouring postcode WC1 – the

King Edward Building in London, sorting for Central London postcodes including EC in 1928

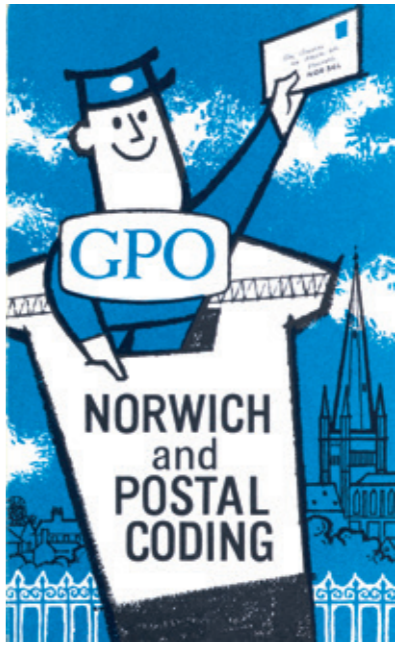
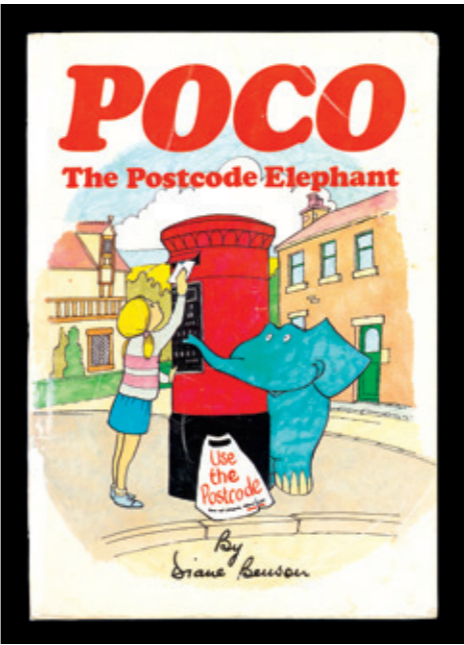
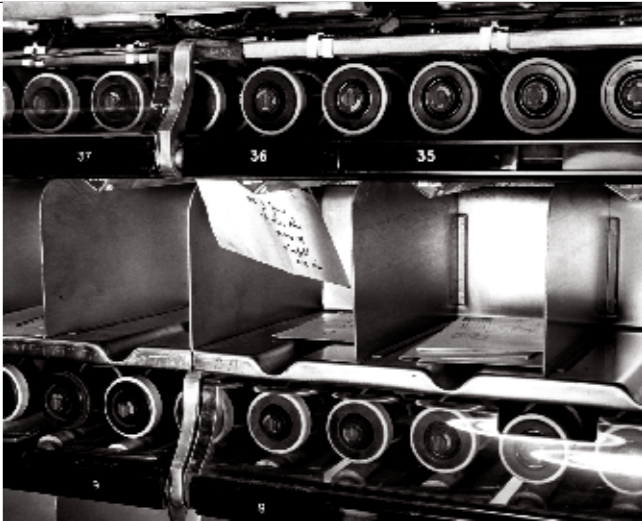
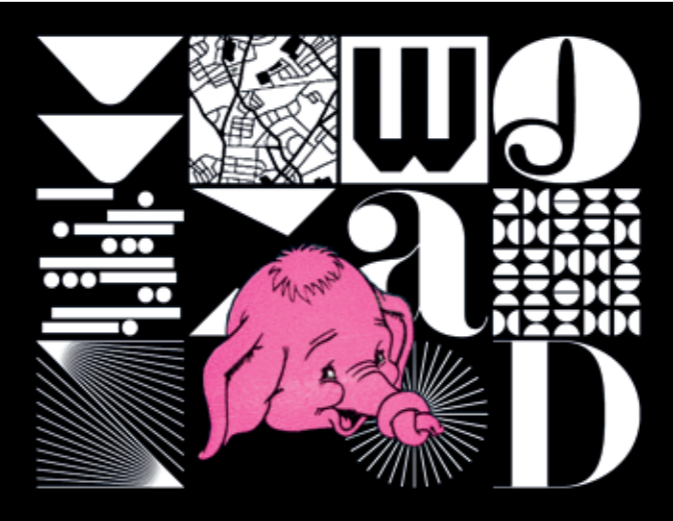


location of the Postal Museum –is the smallest postcode district in the country while the largest but least populous is IV: the Inverness area of Scotland.

As they have such an effect on prestige, Chris says that sometimes people want to change their postcode. “A famous case is Wimbledon Football Club, which doesn’t play in Wimbledon but wanted an SW19 Wimbledon postcode.” Being in neighbouring Merton, it reluctantly had to accept an SW17 postcode. The newest postcode is E20, created for Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford began life as the postcode fictional ‘Walford’ in BBC soap *EastEnders*. Even in the world of postcodes, life can imitate art.

**Sorting Britain: The Power of Postcodes**  
30 March 2022 – 1 January 2023 The Postal Museum, 15–20 Phoenix Place, London WC1X 0DA

Admission included in the ticket price for The Postal Museum (£16 online) [www.postalmuseum.org](http://www.postalmuseum.org)





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[winkworth.co.uk/clerkenwell](http://winkworth.co.uk/clerkenwell)