

EC1 ECHO

APRIL/MAY 2023 • N° 21 FREE



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Arts group The Space To Come led by artist Gaylene Gould is to create a memorial to Black Mary Credit Penny Dampier



Spring into action

A team led by artist-curator Gaylene Gould is on a mission to revive Black Mary's Hole – a fabled 17th-century healing well in Clerkenwell

● BY OLIVER BENNETT ●

Clerkenwell is full of the ghosts of ancient spas. Once these were places where people gathered, drank, listened to music, watched theatre and took part in rituals both religious and rumbustious. Some believe they were overseen by women – the tough landladies of their day – who would facilitate activities and keep the peace.

This is one interpretation of Black Mary, also known as Mary Woolston, whom it is thought presided over a spring

called Black Mary's Hole, in pole riparian position overlooking the River Fleet on the borders of Clerkenwell and King's Cross in the 16th and 17th Centuries. Documents are scant and sources are scarce – but centuries on, Mary is about to become famous once again. Arts group The Space To Come, led by artist Gaylene Gould, has started the multifaceted Black Mary Project: a production that will see a new artist's memorial to Black Mary, a dedicated garden, a Healing Tour and other manifestations of the ancient lady of the well, to be largely based at the Calthorpe Community Garden in

Gray's Inn Road. Funded by the Greater London Authority, it will bring the legend of Black Mary alive.

"Black Mary's been haunting me for decades now," says Gaylene. "I first read about her in a book about *A Guide to Black London* by historian Steve Martin, a specialist in early Black London, who mentioned this fabled character who ran a healing well called Black Mary. I couldn't get over it and had so many questions."

Gaylene and her colleagues, including psychotherapist Zaynab Bunsie and members of Calthorpe Community

Garden, put on a preliminary event called 'Who is Black Mary?' last October and this summer their project is set to take off. There is to be an event in June and the full programme, including the new memorial and garden, is set to land in Calthorpe Garden next spring. The memorial, which may well be a statue or sculpture, is to be made by a Black female artist yet to be commissioned by Gaylene – who has worked on many projects including for Tate, V&A and Selfridges. They will be assisted by two curators, and the memorial healing garden is to be designed

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N°21

APR/MAY

1st Apr

31st May

Waxing Gibbous

84%/0.5

Waxing Gibbous

85%/0.51

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NEWS

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Development fears in EC1

Office block goes ahead but residents fear loss of light

BY JULIA GREGORY,
LOCAL DEMOCRACY
REPORTER & EC1 ECHO

A new office block near Old Street is getting the go-ahead despite residents' concerns about loss of light in their homes. The new four-storey block in Bastwick Street EC1 will replace a single-storey former car repair workshop, which was also used as a photographic studio and storage space for props.

It is in the council's 'Great Sutton Street' Employment Priority Area, and Central Activities Zone, and developers hope it will support 100 jobs and space for small and medium-sized businesses.

Residents from the Pietra

Lara Building in Pear Tree Street, Bastwick Street, and Central Street urged Islington's planning committee to reject the scheme which they fear will impact on the levels of daylight and sunlight entering their homes.

The new plan for the four-storey block with two basement levels follows a previous scheme which was rejected in June 2022 over concerns about "unacceptable harm to the amenity of nearby residential buildings through loss of daylight and sunlight receipt experienced by those properties, overshadowing to a rear garden and an unacceptable sense of enclosure."

At the time, the planning committee also said it was an "unacceptable design". The council received 26 objections and one resident described how the loss of light in her living room would have "consequences on living and working conditions" at

home. She asked for the building to be "pulled back to align with neighbours". Another resident, Darren Stanford, whose garden in Central Street could lose sunlight, said a reduction of 1.5m in height would make a "considerable difference". However, the developers said the building was designed to give the standard three metres' height which "offices require".

The row comes in the wake of the row about the redevelopment of nearby Finsbury Leisure Centre. But in the meantime Islington Council's plans for Braithwaite House in Bunhill Row have been paused for financial reasons. "It is good news, as it would have taken away all our open space," says Braithwaite House tenant and campaigner Susie Luke. "This is already one of the densest areas of London and we deserve some breathing space."

Sylvia Pankhurst statue campaign hots up

A n event last month at the Gunmaker's Pub in Eyre Street Hill took place to herald the siting of Sylvia Pankhurst's statue on Clerkenwell Green.

The pub was chosen as it was once the Italian social club Dondi's, and the date was the exact centenary of Pankhurst's speech against fascism there – now thought to be the first publicly advertised anti-fascist meeting in the UK. It included a rousing recital of Pankhurst's historic speech by actor Emma Beattie, seen in many shows from Ladhood to Bridgerton.

As speaker Megan Dobney of the Sylvia Pankhurst Memorial Committee said: "Finally the campaign is bearing fruit and the statue will be erected."

"Sylvia Pankhurst was here exactly 100 years ago on 25 March and at the

same time in the afternoon to protest against the fascist reaction in Italy. It's almost a kind of reunion today.

"Clerkenwell Green will shortly be refurbished and pedestrianised. In 2017, the installation of Sylvia's statue became an intrinsic part of this refurbishment, with support from all the stakeholder groups."

Also speaking was Alfio Bernabei, a writer and historian of the Italian community in the UK, who said that Sylvia Pankhurst had a strong relationship with 'Little Italy', as part of Clerkenwell was then known. "She met Italian

refugee Silvio Corio in around 1917 who became her lifelong partner," he said.

As Dobney said, "She had a strong connection with Little Italy and it is absolutely appropriate that her statue should be erected at the place close to her heart."

Islington Council supports the statue, although there remain arguments about where it should precisely be placed. A timeline is expected soon, says Dobney, who hopes that the sculpture will be a rallying point: "The statue will tell people to be alert, remain alert and remain vigilant."

See Letters, Page 14.

From left to right: CEO of The Peel Olu Alake, MP Stuart Andrew, Chair of The Peel Arvinda Gohil, CEO of Locality Tony Armstrong



MP's crisis visit to The Peel

O n a recent visit to The Peel, the Rt Hon Stuart Andrew, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Business and Trade, said "The cost of living crisis is as bad as the pandemic".

Andrew, who championed the recently announced £100m fund in Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's Spring Budget to support charities working at the sharp end of the crisis, was at The Peel to discuss the crisis and how best to tackle it – with speed being of the essence. The Peel was recognised as a community organisation that has delivered an exemplary response to the cost of living crisis. Andrew was very keen to hear first hand about its experience and how charities like The Peel can act swiftly in the face of problems.

"The model to follow is Covid, as with the vaccinations [programme] we showed how things could be done very quickly," said Andrew. "Obviously we need to be concerned about accountability, but I would argue this crisis is similar to the pandemic, and equally urgent."

"Yet Government tends to be slow, and here, money is needed to get to people quickly and directly. As Jeremy [Hunt] said in his speech: 'We recognise that charities can act quickly'. I'm really keen to demonstrate how quickly help can get to the frontline – and use that as an exam-

ple of how we could have a more long-term strategic approach to crises."

The cost-of-living crisis has made the work of The Peel as well as fellow charities even more urgent, and it is reaching out to vulnerable communities across Clerkenwell and beyond to provide emergency support including warmth and food.

As The Peel's CEO Olu Alake said: "We have a real presence in the locality and through working with them through the ongoing crisis, we have become even more in tune with and sensitive to the needs of the community."

"A key objective for us is to make contacts with local businesses and organisations to deliver social value to the community – such as our food programme with Sarasin & Partners where we delivered 1,000 ready meals to the community, and our new Food Empowerment Initiative."

"But we are still finding a large scale of insecurity in the area, with people who are not getting the support and services they need."

The Government is set to deliver grants to frontline charities and community organisations most impacted by increased demand for their services from vulnerable people and increased delivery costs.

"It's important that it's not just the government doing this," said Andrew. "If we go into partnerships, we can actually end up getting better long term solutions to the problems we face from this crisis."

COLUMN

3

Step up the three R's

BY COUNCILLOR VALERIE BOSSMAN-QUASHIE

In many ways, since Covid things appear to have returned to normal. We've seen a lot of people coming back to work as well as to our bars and restaurants, and the streets are lively once again. But because we saw those streets when they were silent during the pandemic, I think we notice the problems more – I certainly do. And one thing that currently bothers me is the amount of litter that we can see – everything from hire bicycles thrown down onto pavements, to dog-waste bags, right down to chewing gum and cigarette butts.

I really think it's time to up the ante on this, and think about where all these items belong and where waste goes. It's almost four years since June 2019, when Islington Council declared an environment and climate emergency and put forward the plan to make Islington net zero carbon by 2030, with the three 'R's – reducing, reusing and recycling – part of that strategy, and by 2026 to send no biodegradable or recyclable waste to landfill. While the council is doing a good job, we are still below 35 per cent towards



Cllr Valerie and local residents tidying up the Bunhill area

meeting the targets. There's so much more we need to do to tidy up our estates and residential streets and make them more liveable – and this has become higher-key since Covid.

Islington Council's Liveable Neighbourhoods scheme is excellent and aims to include everything from recycling to creating more environmentally-friendly places where communities can congregate. As well as enabling people to walk

and interact in places free from vehicle pollution, they also encourage the three 'R's. But we still need to do more to get people actively involved. It's addressed in schools, but perhaps we need to address these matters in other spaces too, including local shops.

It's not good that we've got low recycling figures and we should all be more conscientious. So I think we need to start crunching data, enabling those in the council to make note of the highest-offending places. We could start by looking at our streets: which ones are the worst for gum, for example, or the worst for cigarette butts? Which are the worst areas for dog waste? This way we might find out how conscious our communities are, and help raise the game.

After all, things can improve. In general people are more conscious of litter and recycling. Dog waste was far more common on the streets about 20 years ago. Look at the way many of us are more conscious of our diets, with offices (including Islington Council) promoting plant-based diets as well as increased recycling and composting of waste food. People are far more aware of single-use plastics. Residents are

reaching out for more information on recycling and our libraries have recycling places where you can take items such as old hardware and batteries.

But there's still a lot of room for improvement. So as well as looking at how to keep our streets clean, we should also look at all the other things that we're not doing, and look at what we might do better. A whole community push would be a start: reminding our children and families to become more aware of our environment. Those with interests like food outlets and bicycle hire companies should be more responsible, as should their users. It has to be a conscious decision by all of us to become more liveable neighbours in our liveable neighbourhoods.

“
There's so much more we need to do to make our streets more liveable
”

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LSO



The Peel shortlisted for prestigious award

The Peel and the Finsbury Business Centre are delighted to announce that they have been shortlisted for the Third Sector Business Charity Awards in the category ‘Best Response to the Cost of Living Crisis’. This shortlisting is a huge recognition of The Peel’s charity work with its corporate partner Finsbury Business Centre in convening the Clerkenwell Alliance, and getting local stakeholders together to meet minds and address the issues that face our communities in EC1 and beyond.

For those who may not yet know about it, the Clerkenwell Alliance is a grouping of local businesses, community organisations, housing estate managers, local schools and residents and more who meet every couple of months to talk about specific issues in our community. The Finsbury Business Centre has generously hosted the Alliance since its inception, and has brought its own experience to the fore – spanning four decades as a local champion of

businesses who add social value to Clerkenwell. Over a difficult few years, beset by Covid and followed by the cost-of-living crisis, it has been extremely empowering for The Peel to get together with our friends and colleagues in the Clerkenwell community. The Alliance demonstrates the value created by working together – and ultimately, how we can assist each other to meet the needs of residents.

This award is a fantastic recognition for all of our work in the Alliance, and demonstrates what it means to have a community approach to identifying and solving local issues. Because of this, we at The Peel believe that being shortlisted is a ‘win’ in itself.

A huge thank you to all the organisations that have attended, contributed and donated money, items, expertise and good wishes to our efforts. This award is for all of you too!

The Third Sector Business Charity Awards Night is on 10 May at London Marriott Grosvenor Square. We'll keep you abreast of the results.

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THE MEDITATIO CENTRE

Making a mark

The illustration class at The Peel is an early glimpse of the Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration – due to open in Clerkenwell in 2025



The Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration (QBC) – due to open in the New River Head site off Amwell Street in 2025 – is already having an impact in the community. Classes at The Peel are luring dozens of drawers to its Friday morning class where students work at illustration in every media – from ink and monoprint to screenprinting and paper construction – with Grace Holliday, one of four new community illustrators developing projects for the QBC.

It is an early indication of the direction of QBC, which is due to be a local as well as an international hub for illustration in all its forms.

“Community support is a big part of the Centre’s ideals,” says QBC’s funding leader, Jess Hogg. “As well as The Peel, the community illustrators are working with mothers and carers of children with mental health difficulties, vulnerable families, refugees and asylum seekers and young people seeking work.”

Adds Jess: “Quentin Blake himself says that illustration is the most democratic of art forms. It is something that we can all participate in.”

Sometimes those who haven’t drawn anything since school may be inhibited and Grace is keen to put them at their ease. “We all have that sense of self-criticism,” she says. “So at the end of every session we have an anonymous showing to take that pressure off – and it allows people to really start to own their art.”

The Quentin Blake Centre is due to open in 2025 with dedicated learning and project spaces to support community programming, as well as outdoor spaces for local people to enjoy. Currently in its last fundraising round, as part of its effort it is selling 90 candles for founder Quentin Blake’s 90th birthday next December.

To keep up to date on QBC’s progress sign up to the newsletter here: qbcentre.org.uk/mailling-list

The online 90 candles print shop, celebrating Quentin’s birthday and raising money for the Centre, can be found here: 90candles.org.uk



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FEATURES

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by Juliet Sargeant, who has won awards at Chelsea Flower Show. "We want it to be contemplative – a healing, regenerative garden for London," says Gaylene. Film-maker Adenike Oke is making a film documenting the whole project. Gaylene is herself to devise the Healing Tour through Clerkenwell. "I'll take the tour through Clerkenwell ending up at Calthorpe Garden, taking about Black Mary and inviting people to share their own stories."

Yet there remains a huge question. Who was Black Mary and did she even exist? Some interpretations suggest that the 'Black' part of her name referred to the colour of Benedictine nuns' habits, or to the Christian icon of the Black Madonna. Yet most suggest the likelihood is that she was indeed a Black woman – with a tantalising lack of further detail.

"Assuming she existed, we're probably not going to find many hard and fast records because she was poor and Black," says Gaylene. "People like that weren't recorded." The biggest source, she says, is Thomas Cromwell's 'History and Description of the Parish of Clerkenwell' of 1828, which speaks of Mary Woolaston and the healing well Black Mary's Hole, where people would come for a water cure, notably for the eyes.

"It seems to have been a lively spot," says Gaylene. "Back then spas were healing places but also pleasure gardens that attracted everyone from highwaymen to the queer community –



From left to right: Memorial producer Corrina Antrobus, gardener Juliet Sargeant, artist-curator Gaylene Gould, and psychotherapist Zaynab Bunsie Credit Penny Dampier

and Clerkenwell was quite rough."

Finding the exact place remains a work in progress. The historian on the Black Mary Project, Kelly Foster, has overlain 16th-century maps onto the maps of today, and Gaylene says that the Project's current best guess is around the site of the Crowne Plaza hotel on the north side of Mount Pleasant: "But we're going to keep on digging and see what comes up." The site of Calthorpe Community Garden, a great survivor amid the developments of inner London, may not itself be Black Mary's Hole but it is very much part of the story. "When I saw Calthorpe Garden I thought, 'This is it,'" says Gaylene. "It really feels like a 'healing well' and a contemporary

healing sanctuary, and it's been an inspiration to explore it with local communities."

Wherever the Hole lay, it appears from old reports that when Black Mary died, the well fell into disrepair and then the Fleet was culverted, helping to kill off the exuberant spa culture. "What we're finding is that women well-keepers were a thing across England, and when the wells fell out of use they stopped being these public spaces," says Gaylene. "It makes me wonder what happened to the women of that time."

Another aspect of Black Mary is that she is dated to the 16th century, whereas a lot of Black figures in historic London are from the 18th-19th centuries, attached to the

transatlantic slave trade and connected to wealthy people. Perhaps, as Black Mary was a working woman, this was not her story – yet her name, Mary Woolaston, suggests that she may have been part of an English family, or in some way renamed. Who knows? "The research is fascinating," says Gaylene. "But one of the great things about being an artist and not a historian is that I'm interested in stories and sites of memory – and how people carry memory." That the UK's new Dementia Research Institute is being built next door to Calthorpe Community Garden has not escaped the team.

Whatever the historical facts about Black Mary, she is a considerable muse and that so much is unknown about her leaves ample space for creative interpretation. "She has given us a wonderful opportunity to look at the history of Clerkenwell and its healing waters, spaces and sanctuaries," says Gaylene. Perhaps Black Mary was a 'wise woman' figure, dispensing the vital female element of water? "Possibly," says Gaylene. "Part of the project is that the capital city needs a healing space more than ever." And it could be right here, on the Gray's Inn Road.

In June, Calthorpe Community Gardens will host a public event to show the work-in-progress on The Black Mary Project (see website below for further information) highlighting the new artists memorial, the healing garden and healing tour.

Find out more information about the project at thespacetocome.com/blackmaryproject and sign up to The Space To Come mailing list to get updates and follow the progress on Instagram @blackmaryproject

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Over the past three years, companies have seen increases in their PII premium by as much as 1000%. This has resulted in many practices having to cease trading. Ultimately, the consumer is suffering as the supply of professionals in specialist areas is reduced and costs are being passed on to the consumer. This adds yet more misery to the current cost of living crisis.

It is not just in professional services that there is an insurance crisis. As of January 10th, 2022, the Government set out a new plan to protect leaseholders from having to pay for unsafe



CREDIT UMIT YILDIRIM

cladding. Unfortunately, there is no such protection for other professional services and their regulatory required insurance. The Housing Secretary, Michael Gove, recently described the insurance market as 'failing' due to escalating increases, some of more than 1000%, including long leaseholders as a result of Grenfell.

Reasons cited for this dramatic premium increase include loss of profitability by insurance companies, decreased supply of providers within the market, future uncertainty and higher levels of exposure. Additionally, despite premiums increasing drastically, the coverage being offered is generally restricted and reduced.

Belleveue Mortlakes Chartered Surveyors started a trade body called PIFA (Professional Indemnity Fairness Association) in an attempt to assist and provide support, particularly to small/medium-sized firms in the broader construction industries who feel under-represented. The platform allows firms and professionals, in any industry, to put forward their views and concerns via <https://thepifa.com>. These are circulated within the industry and the working committee of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors on the subject of PII, of which we have a role.

It is our view that, unless the Government intervenes soon, our worst fears will be realised. There will be an almost complete annihilation of professional small/medium-sized businesses in the construction sector, leaving larger corporations dominating the sector, as always, to the cost of the consumer.

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NEWS FROM THE PEEL

The Peel is your local community centre, based in Clerkenwell since 1898.

We offer classes, regular events and activities for all ages and assist people to set up projects which benefit the community – including *EC1 Echo*, the community newspaper



Letter from Olu



objectives of our new strategy, we are very conscious of the challenges we have in continuing to maintain or grow our exciting range of place-based activity, especially given the increased costs we have all been experiencing.

Invariably, we will have to make some hard choices in some of our work areas. That this is no more true for us than it is for every other household or company in the country, doesn't make it easier. But, like everyone else, we will get on with things as best as we can. Our commitment to providing outstanding community connecting activities will not be diminished and we will continue to seek innovative ways to meet the needs of the community through these hard times.

In the meantime, please keep supporting us as best as you can. I especially implore local businesses to support our programmes and even this newspaper. Every little certainly helps. If you need any more information, please do contact me.

And finally some good news: we are delighted to have been shortlisted for a Third Sector Business Charity Award in the category of Best Response to the Cost of Living Crisis for our work with Finsbury Business Centre in convening the Clerkenwell Alliance. This is lovely recognition of the work that the Alliance has been doing. Well done to all our partners.

Have a lovely Spring!

Like many charitable organisations, The Peel's financial year ends in March. This means that a lot of our time at the moment is being spent on simultaneously looking back at the last twelve months and looking forward to the next year. What did we do well? What did we learn, what will we keep, what will we stop, how much do we have? These are questions we are grappling with. What do you think about us? Please let us know in the survey (details opposite).

While we are very proud of the progress we have made since last April on the key

Clerkenwell Food Empowerment Initiative

The Peel is appealing for donations of non-perishable food for emergency food parcels that they will be distributing to vulnerable residents in Clerkenwell. They are also appealing for fresh ready meals from local food restaurants and office canteens. The Peel is also appealing for vouchers or cash donations for them to buy non-perishable food. So far, they have had generous donations from Nakd and Bold Bean Co., and Waitrose Clerkenwell have kindly offered their support with this project.

In early February, The Peel team went out delivering hot meals to Brunswick Close estate, Hugh Myddleton School & users of The Peel with John Handford and Natasha MacKinlay from Sarasin & Partners. Thanks so much to Sarasin for the delicious food! They have donated over 1,500 meals so far since their offices shut during Covid. These meals have been greatly appreciated. As Grace Udoh, TMO on the Brunswick Estate commented – "I would like to say a massive THANK YOU!



John Handford from Sarasin & Partners with Grace Udoh, TMO of Brunswick Close Estate Credit Penny Dampier

for donating the sumptuous food. It flew off the shelf and I have been told by all who got one that the food is lovely indeed".

We need many more donations to up the scale of the project and to help feed Clerkenwell! You can drop off donations directly to The Peel, or scan the QR code in the flyer opposite, order your items from Amazon and they will be delivered to The Peel.

If you would like to offer your services in any way, by providing meals, donating money or volunteering to distribute food, please contact: Scarlett on s.gregory@peelinstitute.org.uk or Tel 020 7837 6082.

Family cooking sessions

In February and March we held two free 'Feed Your Family for a Tenner' sessions which were a resounding success! One participant said "Everybody had their job (cutting, cooking, etc) and nice conversation at my table". Another said she enjoyed "the fun of cooking with other people" and that "Everything was

fantastic". Whilst another simply said she "loved it".

The family cooking sessions were part of the 'Finsbury Winter Warmers' programme of events run by Islington Council, with the goal of reducing food insecurity and providing the chance for residents to improve their culinary skills. We look forward to collaborating on more events like this in the future.

Peel volunteer receives award

The Peel is a proud member of the Octopus Network of Community Organisations in Islington. The Network was recently awarded the Queen's Award for Voluntary Services for our outstanding response during the pandemic. The Queen's Award is the equivalent of an MBE for organisations. At the formal award presentation ceremony, one of our volunteers Rob Small was recognised for his contribution to this effort. The event was held at St Luke's on 23rd February and attended by Jeremy Corbyn MP and the Leader of the Council, Kaya Comer-Schwartz. The award was presented by the Mayor



Rob Small receiving his award Credit Olu Alake

of Islington, Marian Spall. Rob is an invaluable part of the social club support team. Well done Rob!

Social Club Activities



St. Patrick's Day at The Peel Credit Sam Rossi

On 15th March, The Peel celebrated St Patrick's Day with a fun day filled with Irish music and refreshments, a themed lunch, quiz and line dancing. This was an exciting opportunity for our members to connect, socialise and celebrate Irish culture.

At The Peel, we are interested in increasing internet safety and digital inclusion for our older community. For Internet Safety Day, we held a workshop highlighting the potential threats of using the internet, such as spam and phishing. We are looking for an IT specialist who would be able to hold a 3-month IT workshop, teaching our members simple IT skills. Please contact k.bottomley@peelinstitute.org.uk.

In celebration of World Radio Day, Social Club volunteer, Christine led a discussion about old radios and radio programmes.

Youth Club Activities



Fun at Go Ape! Credit Scarlett Gregory

Our youth club is going from strength to strength. We now have over 50 members and have lots of exciting activities in the pipeline.

In February half-term we had a fun filled week with lots of trips out. One of our favourite days was at Go Ape (pictured). We have a residential visit to Hampshire planned for the Easter holidays, and lots more besides!

'Fun Fridays' recently started at The Peel, which is in partnership with Hugh Myddleton primary school. This enables pupils from the school, who were impacted by the pandemic to socialise and have fun!

Our coding club runs every Wednesday, and we'd like to welcome our new coding tutor – Sabah. We'd also like to say a big thank you to Merel Theisen who has been helping out for the last seven years and is now taking a break. Also, thanks so much to Joshua Brown who has been volunteering with us for the last five and a half years and is now moving on to pastures new. We are still looking for another coding volunteer, so please get in touch with Jeana – j.kidd@peelinstitute.org.uk – if you can help and are free on Wednesdays from 5–6pm.

Clerkenwell Community Survey

Scan the QR code to respond to the Clerkenwell Community Survey and be entered into a prize draw! Closing date for entries is 30th April 2023.

The Peel Spotlight:
Jeana Kidd



Each issue, we interview a member of staff, volunteer or local resident to give readers an insight into life at The Peel, Meet Jeana Kidd, our Children and Families Officer.

What’s your role at The Peel?
As Children and Families Officer I facilitate a generic youth club, offering cooking classes, coding, 1-1 mentoring, offering general parent support and liaising with schools.

What’s your favourite part of the role?
I love seeing when there’s a marked difference in the children’s behaviour, attitude to life and watching them grow.

Challenges?
There’s a lack of volunteers in the non-profit sector. Ideally, I’d love more volunteer youth workers on the team.

What’s your best accomplishment in 32 years of working at The Peel?
Getting children from different parts of the borough (EC1 and N1) under the same roof and, despite their differences, getting them to socialise with one another. The fact that we offer a generic youth club (as opposed to solely structured as an activities club) is what makes The Peel stand out.

Describe The Peel in three words?
Diverse, family and team

What do you like about Clerkenwell?
Clerkenwell is such a curious, interesting place. People from all walks of life live here – all different but doing the same kind of thing. A decade ago, the area was more closed-off, people didn’t want to leave their houses. Now, with what The Peel and other charities are offering, more people are willing to interact with each other.

What opportunities would you like to see for young people in Clerkenwell?
I’d like to see young people have a choice in where they go, not just The Peel or hanging out on the streets. Previously, youth clubs used to run six nights a week – now it’s much less.

CLERKENWELL FOOD
EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVE
HELP FEED CLERKENWELL

DID YOU KNOW?
That there are more than 1000 people in Clerkenwell that don’t have access to a daily nutritional meal?

There are over 50% of children from a local Clerkenwell primary school that are on free school meals.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

We need donations of the following items:

Non-perishable foods
Fresh ready meals
Fruits and vegetables
Shopping vouchers

Scan here for our Amazon wish list:

If you would like to volunteer on this project, please get in touch!

CONTACT US:
s.gregory@peelinstitute.org.uk
3 Corners Centre, Northampton Rd, EC1R 0HU

Clerkenwell Alliance
The Clerkenwell Alliance is a collective of individuals from across public, private and voluntary sectors, all with the shared goal of pooling together resources to support the local community. The Alliance meet to focus on key local issues and implement positive change.
There is an unprecedented need for food and other donations due to the cost of living emergency and its knock-on effects on vulnerable members of the community. The Alliance are seeking any local businesses or organisations that would like to be part of or contribute to our upcoming initiatives. If you would like to join the Alliance, email admin@peelinstitute.org.uk

Would you like to volunteer with us?
Are you a local business or organisation that would like to support one of our upcoming projects? If your organisation would like to explore how we can work together on community initiatives, please get in touch with us at admin@peelinstitute.org.uk. We are so grateful for the support that we have been receiving from various local organisations.

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APRIL AT THE PEEL

SC Social Club
Adults 55+

YC Youth
Club

Please refer to our website and social media platforms for more details, and our March calendar

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|---|---|--|--|--|
| Saturday 1st | Sunday 2nd | Monday 3rd <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> <div>YC Easter holiday programme</div> | Tuesday 4th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> <div>YC Easter holiday programme</div> <div>Otis guitar classes 4–5pm</div> | Wednesday 5th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> <div>YC Easter holiday programme</div> | Thursday 6th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> <div>YC Easter holiday programme</div> | Friday 7th <div>GOOD FRIDAY – CENTRE CLOSED</div> |
| Saturday 8th | Sunday 9th | Monday 10th <div>EASTER MONDAY CENTRE CLOSED</div> | Tuesday 11th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> <div>YC Easter holiday programme</div> <div>Otis guitar classes 4–5pm</div> | Wednesday 12th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> <div>YC Easter holiday programme</div> | Thursday 13th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> <div>YC Easter holiday programme</div> | Friday 14th <div>YC Easter holiday programme</div> |
| Saturday 15th | Sunday 16th | Monday 17th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> | Tuesday 18th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> <div>YC Social 3:30–5:30pm (8–12 yrs) & 6–8pm (12+)</div> <div>Otis guitar classes 4–5pm</div> | Wednesday 19th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> <div>YC Coding 5–6pm (8–16yrs)</div> <div>Reiki 7:30pm (booking required)</div> | Thursday 20th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> <div>YC Cooking 4:30–6pm</div> | Friday 21st <div>Women's Group 10am–12pm (various locations)</div> |
| Saturday 22nd <div>Baby item swap event 11am–1pm</div> | Sunday 23rd | Monday 24th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> | Tuesday 25th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> <div>YC Social 3:30–5:30pm (8–12 yrs) & 6–8pm (12+)</div> <div>Otis guitar classes 4–5pm</div> | Wednesday 26th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> <div>YC Coding 5–6pm (8–16yrs)</div> <div>Reiki 7:30pm (booking required)</div> | Thursday 27th <div>SC Activites 10am–3pm</div> <div>YC Cooking 4:30–6pm</div> | Friday 28th <div>Dish n' Jam 6–9pm</div> <div>Women's Group 10am–12pm (various locations)</div> |

The *Echo* is helping to make the news

Artist Eloise Hawser, featured in *EC1 Echo* N°8, uses newspapers as her subject matter – including this very paper



Though newspaper printing houses are now located beyond London's edges, in earlier times they were located close to the spiritual home of newspapers – Fleet Street. There, they were surrounded by the other parts of the thriving trade: distributors, vendors, messengers, and even the odd journalist. The southerly reaches of EC1 were a large part of their daily perambulations, with Leather Lane and Clerkenwell Road being favourite lunch spots.

Artist Eloise Hawser and arts charity Mental Fight Club led an experimental afternoon on Monday 3 April about the fascinating world of newspaper-making at Shoe Lane Library – and Oliver Bennett, editor of the *EC1 Echo*, also gave a short talk.

Participants were invited to take part in the process of newspaper making: from reportage to layout, and collaging, printing to

distribution – and to consider the sites and spaces where the creation of news happened. The day included a walk led by newspaper distributors and talks by people who have worked on Shoe Lane and a hands-on hot-metal print workshop.

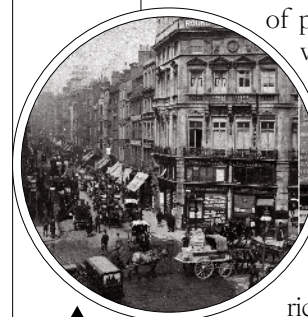
Hawser is an artist rather than a historian, who looks at newspapers as “objects that physically embody news”. She is currently working on a new project exploring the recycling of newspapers and her work has been shown at Tate, the ICA and the Istanbul Biennial. Her well-received 2020–2022 project, *Press Tracker*, collected the work of daily newspapers as they told the story of the unfolding of the Covid-19 crisis – in print rather than online – and has itself become an important archive of the period.

Since then, Hawser has become particularly interested in the hard-working histories of Fleet Street's fringes,

including Shoe Lane itself where the *Evening Standard* and *Daily Sketch* emanated.

“It's a crucial site in the history of printed news and was for many years a base for allied news trades such as printing and distribution,” she says. “I am looking at the Lane's news-rich past through the lens of its present-day relationship to news.”

Behind Fleet Street's grand offices and sumptuous facades was an ecosystem of news activity. Even in the 1970s–80s, a visitor to Shoe Lane would have found the street crammed with distinctive *Evening Standard* vans and now Shoe Lane's library is a source for information on the old “inky” trade.



▲ Stereograph view of Fleet Street by J.F. Jarvis
Credit Wikicommons

◀ Eloise at one of her popular newspaper workshops at Shoe Lane

Shoe Lane Library, 1 Little New Street London EC4A 3JR
Visit mentalfightclub.art/whats-next

Neighbourhood watch

Clerkenwell's horological tradition is down but certainly not out. The *EC1 Echo* visits the Little Yellow Watch shop on Clerkenwell Road to find out more

John and Annie Lloyd's shop, the Watch Service Centre on Clerkenwell Road, is known for being small and yellow – hence its nickname, ‘The Little Yellow Watch Shop’. Although not much more than a large kiosk the shop carries the weight of history, for John is the longest serving watch repairer in Clerkenwell, which remains the horological centre of London.

A living link to the time-keeping traditions of EC1, John started working in the area in the 1950s and although he has seen the trade diminish, he says that Clerkenwell is still the UK's centre for clocks and watches.

“When I first came here, every shop was either a material house [places that make and sell parts] or watch sellers with Shoot and Sons, one of the biggest material dealers in Europe. The only one left now is Gleave and Co on the corner of St John Street and Albermarle Way.” Now, says John, his stretch is dominated by estate agents and designer bathroom showrooms

– but there remain substantial vestiges of the old industries and it has a great sense of lineage and family tradition.

John himself followed his stepfather – a watchmaker who worked at Romford Market – into the trade and went to the Northampton Polytechnic, now City University, to study instrument making, followed by a job at Shoot and Sons. Getting a job in the area was straightforward as thousands were employed by the industry and John remembers a hive of activity on every floor of Shoot's, dealing with everything watch-related from production to packing.

“There'd be huge queues waiting to get into all the shops, looking for parts for themselves and their clients,” says John. “If they didn't get what they wanted in one shop they'd move onto the next.” In both domestic and business environments to have a clock was prestigious, while everyone wanted a watch. It was a golden age.

Now people tend to look at mobile phones to tell the time,

but John says the watch market remains in good health. “I've brought my hours down now, but it's still very busy,” says John, who is in his 80s. “Big watches hold their value and even appreciate. Rolexes go up 5–7 per cent a year and there's a growing trend for military watches like the British-made Smiths watches.” Parts still come from Europe, and John and his three-strong team assemble, polish and clean clients' timepieces, then give a year's guarantee. The lead time for a repair is about three weeks and the teams handle about 100 a week, while keeping a weather eye out for fakes. “Sometimes they're so good it's hard for people to tell,” says John. “But when I open your watch I'll

show you immediately. They don't have the right movement, and are worthless.”

John has several well-known clients, although he can't reveal who they are, and his shop is itself a charming experience. With old ephemera and photographs – including pictures of old clients, watch and clock ephemera and John's team, Manchester United – post-Covid it's still one-in, one-out. Once John and Annie have taken each order, the jobs are meticulously recorded in envelopes in old Champagne boxes, and while it's watches only, they can refer ailing clocks to Matthew Hopkinson of Motionwork, a stone's throw away – another Clerkenwell survivor.



▶ John and Annie Lloyd in their watch shop in Clerkenwell Road

The origins of Clerkenwell's clock and watchmaking industries are said to reach back to the Huguenots, the Protestant refugees from France. They settled close to the City and many went into clock-making. Threatened by the growing trade in Switzerland, Clerkenwell went into fine crafts rather than mass production, with a key advocate being John Bennett of Cheapside (an ancestor of the *EC1 Echo*'s editor and resplendent on the wall of John's shop). Bennett began the Horological Institute of Northampton Square near City University which produced horological dynamo George Daniels CBE, whose name still emblazons City's annual George Daniels Lecture and the clock on the University's St John's Street building. Other local reminders of the trade include Tompion Street, named after master watchmaker Thomas Tompion.

As if to continue the shop's colour theme inside, on John's wrist is an Omega Speedster with a yellow strap. It's part of a sunny experience where time is delightfully suspended – and as John explains, he and Annie will keep ticking over for as long as they can. “It's very rewarding as my customers become friends.”

The Watch Service Centre, Condor House, 60 Clerkenwell Rd EC1M 5PX, Call 020 7253 4925
Visit watchservicecentreclerkenwell.co.uk

A name to conjure with

Clerkenwell shop International Magic has survived over 60 years of trickery. The *EC1 Echo* went to investigate the only dedicated magic shop left in London

International Magic, which has been trading in Clerkenwell Road since 1958, has a mission – to bring more magic into our lives. Even the unchanged 1902-vintage red painted shopfront close to Leather Lane looks like something out of a film set, while within is a cornucopia of tricks large and small, how-to books on magic, doctored top hats, old posters, pictures of past customers including Tommy Cooper, and lots of playing cards.

Martin Macmillan, who runs the shop, is himself a magician who comes from a line of conjurers. His late magician father Ron, a music hall performer, started the shop, and it fell to Martin to make it his lifelong vocation.

“I came here as a kid,” he says. “When I was at school in east London, I’d just come into the shop. I was born into it.”

As magic shops have dwindled, International Magic finds itself in the position of being both the last magic shop in London and the UK’s oldest magic retail shop.

“When I was young there were eight magic shops in walking distance from here” says Martin. “I could have walked between them in an afternoon, from Wardour Street to Tottenham Court Road.” Now the market for magic has been changed by the internet but this also means that International Magic has become a tourist destination. “We are the only magic shop in London so when magic-minded tourists come to town they make a beeline here.”

Despite this, magic is actually more



Martin Macmillan at London's only remaining magic shop, International Magic

“*Magic is something that will always arouse curiosity*”

popular than ever. “Go back 40 or 50 years, and you’d have to make an effort to learn magic,” says Martin. “Now it’s much easier, because you can go onto YouTube and learn some tricks.” That may

be good, but as Martin says, “because it’s more widely done, I would say there’s also a lot more bad magic.”

Magic as entertainment has also changed. There are far fewer stage shows, but there are plenty of ‘table hoppers’ – magicians who move between guests at parties, weddings and corporate events. “This has grown tremendously because of marketing and corporate events,” says Martin, who says that “some are better than others.” It means that ‘close-up magic’ is more popular.

There’s been movement at the other end of the scale too – blockbusting shows by the likes of David Blaine, Penn and Teller and David Copperfield – while there’s another tendency, like Derren Brown, for the more psychological end of magic. “A good thinker,” says Martin. “He definitely popularised what we call ‘mental magic’ and it’s not all sleight of hand now.” Harry Potter has also helped.

The big sellers are the simple tricks, says Martin, demonstrating a few off-the-shelf tricks at the counter, where seemingly empty bags produce an endless stream of boxes and unprinted packs of cards suddenly show their colours. The point is, says Martin, that we all need a little bit more magic, particularly in depressing times. “Magic is something that will always arouse curiosity.”

International Magic, 89 Clerkenwell Road EC1
Call 020 7405 7324
Visit internationalmagic.com

Slice of life

An ex-sandwich shop in Smithfield is part of a groundswell of art in EC1

Contemporary art galleries in Clerkenwell have played a smaller role than the larger design and architectural industries in the area. But there are a few spaces, from Hollybush Gardens (see *EC1 Echo* N° 10) in Warner Yard and Clerkenwell Road’s Dinner Party Gallery – and the intriguing Ginny on Frederick gallery opposite Smithfield Market.

The owner of Ginny on Frederick, Freddie Powell – his earlier gallery was on Frederick Terrace in Hackney, hence the name (Ginny is his mother) – has kept the fascia, ‘Sunset Sandwich Bar II: Hot & Cold Food to Take Away’. Beneath it is a small tiled room that would defeat some exhibitors, but since it opened in 2021 in the Covid-exited sandwich kiosk, Ginny on Frederick has become

something of a fixture showing younger artists including the latest show, framework by Charlotte Edey, which features imagined landscapes on old sash windows.

“I opened in September 2021 as I was living nearby and used to walk around the market during lockdown,” says Freddie who used to work for White Cube gallery. “I found this space which was already empty.”

It took him a while to locate the landlord but having done so, he made a deal to open the gallery. Although there is no plumbing, and he meets visitors by appointment, it has been widely acclaimed and since the first artist FoG exhibited, Jack O’Brien, Freddie has led onto a roster of upcoming artists including the current show.

Although small, the gallery’s “space really allows the artist to take it over and manipulate it how they want,” as Freddie says. But he is not sure about how it will work in the longer term. Despite the increasing centrality of Smithfield, Freddie is not sure that Clerkenwell can become a thriving grassroots area for art galleries. “The rents are pretty high,” he says. “Also, there are two

worlds here: the people who come and work here, and the smaller number of people who live here.” But whatever happens, Ginny on Frederick certainly feeds into the sense of discovery that is part of Smithfield’s charm.

Ginny on Frederick
91-93 Charterhouse St, London EC1
Open by appointment
Visit ginnyonfrederick.com

Freddie Powell at his sandwich bar-turned-gallery Ginny on Frederick



The belles of St Clement’s

A new community choir has formed in a King Square church

A new choir at the church of St Clement’s at King Square has been formed from the ashes of the old LSO Community Choir (see *EC1 Echo* N° 18). The group, which was discontinued by the LSO last year, had been started by television personality and choirmaster Gareth Malone and performed widely. Its 120 members were left bereft when the LSO withdrew its funding.



Stuart Midson, who has been with the choir for 15 years, says that the new choir has been a lifeline for the members. “The LSO Community Choir was very important to us,” he says. “After that experience I didn’t believe we had the heart to form a new choir.”

But following talks with choir members, a working group including Milan Stamenkovic and Kim Caplin made the commitment to form a new choir. The venue at St Clement’s was found and at least 50 members of the old choir joined up. “It was great because we’d missed the old choir terribly and wanted it back,” says Midson. “It had been a great resource. Now we hope that despite the problems with the LSO, it can be resuscitated for the benefit of the community.”

The St Clement’s Community Choir has just performed their first Easter concert and is now open to new members. If you’re curious about singing you can simply turn up for a free taster session at St Clement’s King Square at 7pm on 17th April, or get in touch on newlondonchoir@yahoo.com. You don’t need choir experience or to be able to read music.

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EC1 ECHO
N° 21

Apr/May
2023

The new choir
at St Clement’s
Church

FEATURES

HISTORY

Frederick (Ira) Aldridge, pictured here as Aaron in Titus Andronicus, was born in New York. In May 1825 he made theatrical history at just seventeen by being the first modern Black actor to play Othello in an adaptation of Shakespeare's play at the Royalty Theatre in London's East End. His marriage to Margaret Gill in London is recorded in the archives in 1825.



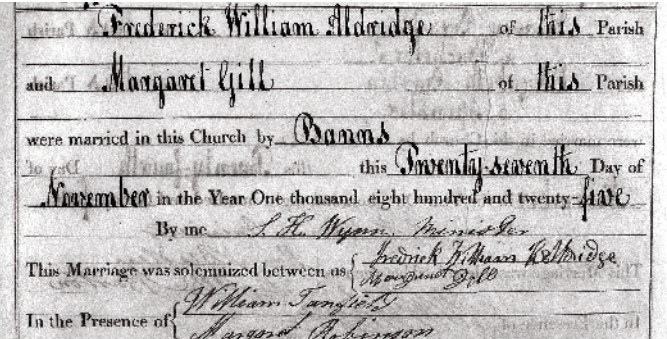
On record

A new exhibition in Clerkenwell highlights the history of Black and Asian Londoners

As our cover story with collector and archivist at The Peel Leon Robinson demonstrated (see *EC1 Echo* N°18) there has been a presence of African, Caribbean and Asian people in London longer than is often assumed. This April, the London Metropolitan Archives in Clerkenwell – a partner of The Peel – will make its own case with the exhibition *Unforgotten Lives*. Drawing from London’s biggest archive, it presents the stories of African, Caribbean, Asian and those of Indigenous heritage who lived and worked in London between 1560 and 1860. Through a range of documents and archives, some dating back nearly 500

years, the stories bring these late Londoners to life. The exhibition is drawn from an ongoing research project which aims to reveal London’s historic diversity. As well as enjoying the documents and pictures, visitors are also invited to download an app developed by London’s Northeastern University which maps those featured in the exhibition and the research project who lived locally – giving a new window onto the history of Clerkenwell.

Unforgotten Lives – Rediscovering Londoners of African, Caribbean, Asian and Indigenous Heritage, 1560 to 1860 is free to visit.
London Metropolitan Archives, 40 Northampton Rd EC1R OHB. 5th April-27th March 2024
For opening hours:
Call 020 7332 3820
Visit cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma



An early baptism record of 'Charles' at St Luke Chelsea, on February 13 1598. The text reads "Charles A boy by Estimacon [Estimation] x. or xii yers olde [10 or 12 years old] brought by Sr Walter Rawlie [Sir Walter Raleigh] from Guiana [Guyana]"

Let there be sight

There’s a little bit of Clerkenwell in Jerusalem, in the form of the St John’s Eye Hospital. The *EC1 Echo* visits its Holy City HQ

BY OLIVER BENNETT

In around 1070 – a little less than a millennium ago – the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem was founded. History that deep gets a bit hazy, but what known is that a ground-breaking hospital was established in the Holy City by Benedictine monks to look after Christians making the perilous pilgrimage. By the year 1113 the Pope had given his blessing to this religious, military and medical order called the “Hospitallers of St John” – all dedicated to John the Baptist. In the intervening thousand years there have been many twists and turns for St John in Jerusalem, including long periods in Malta and Rhodes. But now there remains a ringing echo of Clerkenwell in the order of St John in Jerusalem, where the hospital was administered from since about 1185. Indeed, there are many variations on the name St John across EC1 from the St John’s Ambulance organisation (which has its HQ here), the church of St John, St John’s Gate, the Museum of the Order of St John, St John Square, St John Street – not to forget Michelin-starred restaurant St John. Now the hospital site is likely to become more visible. In 2018 the ruins of what is now considered to be the Order of St John’s first hospital, more than 900 years old, were found. This is thought to be the first place in the world where an ‘ambulatory service’ – then, riders on camels and horses – was used to bring in sick and wounded people and it is the largest hospital of antiquity to be discovered in the Middle East. The Israeli Authority said: “The hospital was established and constructed by the Order of St. John of the Hospital in Jerusalem and known by its Latin name the Hospitallers (from the word hospital). They took an oath to care for and watch over pilgrims, and when necessary they joined the ranks of the fighters.” The hospital could accept as many as 2,000 patients and treated sick men and women of all religions, functioning also as an orphanage. Since then, the centuries fell away. Then in 1882 the St John Ophthalmic Hospital was set up – ahead of the founding of the St John Ambulance Brigade in 1887. In Jerusalem recently, the *EC1 Echo* visited the hospital’s key site on Muristan Street in the Old City. The hospital has six sites including at Gaza, Hebron and Anabta, and last year celebrated its 140th anniversary, drawing a visit from US President Joe Biden to the Old City site in Jerusalem, just round



Head nurse Marlene Katanasho at the old hospital of St John’s in old Jerusalem – long administered from Clerkenwell

the corner from Via Dolorosa and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. So ancient is the site that as head nurse Marlene Katanasho says, the charity is set to allow tourist’s access – and one can see why. With a lemon tree and a tree of life sculpture in a large courtyard, it’s a tranquil place in the heart of old Jerusalem – and a hard-working hub for a group of hospitals across the Palestinian territories. “Most of the eye problems are to do with diabetes, but also cataracts,” says Marlene. “These are preventable but some people don’t have insurance because they can’t afford it and haven’t had the healthcare to look after their sight. So unfortunately, these problems are usually at a late stage.” At the centre they pay €20 but as Marlene says, “no one gets turned away”. Every day brings about 200 patients. Sometimes the travel is arduous. Marlene, who was born and bought up in Jerusalem’s walled Old City, says that the strife in the region creates a real problem for healthcare. “I think Jerusalem is the best city in the world, but it’s not always easy to live in it. It’s expensive and not always secure. But we have to live here. It’s our destiny.”

If you’d like to donate to the hospital: Visit stjohnseyehospital.org



The hospital shows an ancient link between Clerkenwell and Jerusalem

ARTS & CULTURE

11

COLUMN

Geo-guesser

The East London Group would like the help of Echo readers to locate an artwork from 1932

The East London Group of artists – featured in *EC1 Echo N° 1* – were a prewar group of painters rediscovered in the 2010s. Their works included some of Clerkenwell by the 35-strong group, including Harold Steggles *Warner Street* of 1935 and Cecil Osborne’s *Sunday Morning, Farringdon Road* of 1929.

Now ELG curator Alan Waltham has exhibited the painting below, *Little Italy, Clerkenwell* (1932) by Harold Steggles for the first time since the 1930s, at an exhibition in the Lighthouse Gallery, Poole, Dorset. “It came to light from a private collection in the middle of last year,” says Alan. “Prior to that, I thought that it was lost.” A study of shopfronts against an urban backdrop, it is an atmospheric piece that is a shining example of the group’s quiet, enigmatic work.

Among other paintings of



‘Little Italy’, by Harold Steggles, painted in 1932 (Copyright of the artist’s estate)

Clerkenwell from the ELG, most are identifiable including Steggles’ ‘Warner Street’, which includes a corner of The Coach pub. But Alan cannot quite locate where this one was painted. “Looking at the painting alongside the map, I think that Harold can only have been looking from Warner Street towards Ray Street,” he says. “If that’s the case, then he seems to have painted it in the early morning, judging by the shadows.” It had been suggested to Alan that the location was further

up Warner Street by Little Bath Street and Great Bath Street but, he says, “at that point, Warner Street is too straight and there is a distinct bend in the road which is far better matched with the bend in the road around the Coach and Horses pub.”

With that in mind, Alan welcomes readers’ suggestions. Please write to eclecho@peelinstitute.org.uk

The ELG exhibition at the Lighthouse Gallery is on until April 8.
Visit lighthousepoole.co.uk/event/east-london-group-dorset-days

Tourists, please

With hotels opening across EC1 and London welcoming tourists back post-pandemic, David Wilcox proposes a new visitor push – ‘Destination Clerkenwell’

Last year the City Corporation launched Destination City to gain new visitors and increase footfall for its ailing visitor attractions, bars and restaurants. I live in the City, and think Clerkenwell should follow with an initiative to promote sustainable tourism.

Here’s a few reasons to support this idea. Articles in the *EC1 Echo* remind me why I find it so engaging to stroll from Farringdon, where I live, through Smithfield Market, St John’s Gate and Spa Fields to the Angel. It’s a great area for walking, and I’m working

with the Living Streets Footways project and local guides to create an online map with key points of interest.

The first focusses on the radical history of Clerkenwell, with support from The Peel and director Olu Alake, to help celebrate its 125th birthday. It could be the start of a digital Clerkenwell archive and as Olu wrote in *EC1 Echo N° 21*: “We want to utilise the rich archives of the area and work with local heritage and cultural organisations and individuals to bring this history alive using 21st century technology”.

There is so much to explore in Clerkenwell at historic venues like The Charterhouse, the Museum of the Order of St John and Marx Memorial Library as well as a multiplicity of pubs, cafes and shops. Clerkenwell Green is being remade as a destination. Exmouth Market is buzzing. For a deep dive into London’s history, the London Metropolitan Archives is a stone’s throw away. There are film locations across the area. The cluster of cultural organisations is large and growing, with Sadler’s Well Theatre

indisputably London’s most important dance venue, the Barbican Centre around the corner, the Quentin Blake Centre for Illustration due in 2025 and the London Museum (the Museum of London) due in 2026. All of these could be part of Destination Clerkenwell using maps, digital media, virtual tours and walks.

Destination Clerkenwell should be handled in a sustainable manner. One question is how organisations might come together to offer rich experiences to visitors, workers and residents alike. In the City of London, Destination City will take on Culture Mile’s earlier work while City Hall and Mayor Sadiq Khan have also done much to reinvigorate London’s tourism and the boost from international inbound tourism has been considerable.

Who might champion Clerkenwell? The Destination Clerkenwell story would have to be a strong proposition. In the past Clerkenwell has been marketed as London’s ‘secret village’, but now the area is better known that sobriquet may no longer the case. But Clerkenwell is known for its special character and keeping that would be important. Visitors aren’t necessarily a great boon to residential areas, and there are already concerns about the developments we may see when Smithfield Market moves in a few years. Many do not want another Covent Garden.

The key is to balance the interests of business, workers, residents and visitors. Creating maps and a digital archive of local heritage together could help build a partnership for sustainable tourism. Then visitors arriving on the Elizabeth Line could take the Barbican exit for Destination City – or the Farringdon exit for Destination Clerkenwell.

Email david@socialreporter.com



David Wilcox

Village voice

The late local artist Jean Elrington is shortly to have an exhibition at Amwell Street’s Tripp Gallery. David Sulkin of the Amwell Society offers an appreciation



Lloyd Baker Street

BY DAVID SULKIN

Local artist Jean Elrington died peacefully last summer at her home in Lloyd Baker Street aged 95. Professionally, Jean worked as an architect and, from childhood, was a committed watercolour artist, a passion that lasted all her life. She painted places that were close to her heart

around the world and extensively in the area where she lived including the Lloyd Baker area, Amwell Street, Exmouth Market, Clerkenwell Green and more distant parts of Islington.

Along with her architectural training, Jean’s painting style and personality were unique. Her vivid use of colour, apparently casual and playful use of line, brush and perspective mean that these pictures are her legacy.

The exhibition is being hosted by Sharon Dowsett and Tony Relph at the Tripp Gallery in Amwell Street. All income from the sale of the paintings will be used to contribute to a memorial to Jean – a garden seat, a sapling or an etched window at the Quentin Blake Centre at the New River Head – while any funds left will be used by the Amwell Society to enhance and underpin our mission to protect and look after our area. Jean’s pictures are already mounted and will be on sale at affordable prices. Simple frames will be able to be ordered separately.



Union Tavern, Lloyd Baker Street

Paintings around EC1 and WC1 by local artist Jean Elrington. Exhibition and sale at the Tripp Gallery, 59 Amwell Street EC1R 1UR

Saturday 22 – Sunday 30 April
Saturday 22 – April, 12pm–5pm
Sunday 23 April, 1pm–4pm
Monday to Friday 24–28 April, 3pm–7pm

HEALTH



Give yourself a break

Ahead of Mental Health Awareness Week in May, Meditation teacher and active member of the community Juliana Lottman offers a couple of options for those needing respite

Today we are so used to stress that signs of poor mental health are often disregarded. Too many of us live in a state of anxiety without any tools to unwind and come back to a state of restfulness. No wonder more than two million adults, and almost one million children in the UK, experience some kind of mental health issue or learning disability, and according to the NHS this number has increased considerably in the past few years. Around 18,000 people in Islington have been diagnosed with depression, and depression-related disorders and approximately 3,750 are suffering with serious mental ill health. These are the highest rates in London. Mental Health Awareness Week has existed since 2001 and this year its focus is ‘Anxiety’. From 15–21 May, a series of events will seek to share knowledge and bring support for mental health to the community led by me, Juliana, an experienced meditation teacher who since 2019 has run meditation and mindfulness classes across the community. Juliana is now promoting two free workshops in partnership with

the Barbican Library. ‘How to Create Inner Peace in Your Life’ aims to point out the effects of stress and anxiety on our bodies and minds, and how to use simple tools like meditation to help us alleviate those symptoms and create a daily practice to help maintain a state of calm and peace.

“
I’m hoping to break down perceived barriers [...] and to alleviate loneliness
”

Juliana also hopes to draw attention to neurodiversity and autism. Many studies have found that anxiety and depression is much higher in neurodiverse members of the population than in the general public, partially because of the stigma and exclusion suffered by neurodiverse people. As her son was recently diagnosed with autism, Juliana hopes to highlight the importance of community in fighting the stigma associated with neurodiversity, and look at how community can improve the quality of life of those with such

diagnoses, as well as their friends and families. This is why she started the Autism Community Café at the Vibast Community Centre, in partnership with the London Autism Group Charity. She’s hoping to break down perceived barriers, to enable participation in groups, and to alleviate loneliness.

For neurodiverse people, poor mental health is very common. We didn’t yet have a support group in our community, so she was very keen to introduce LAGC and help create a safe haven, with understanding, support and help for the autistic community and their friends.

The Autism Café has been running since November last year and will now become a permanent feature, officially opening on 21 May.

Weekly free meditation sessions at Barbican Library led by Juliana: Thursdays 1pm–2pm

Meditation Workshops:
Tuesday, 16 May, 12.30–1pm
Thursday, 18 May, 6–7pm
At the Barbican Library, Silk St, Barbican Centre EC2Y 8DS

The Community Café for Autism is to become a permanent feature and officially opens on 21 May. All are welcome.

Subsequently it will be open on the 3rd Sunday of each month, from 11am–1pm Vibast Community Centre, 167 Old St EC1V 9NH. Supported by the London Autism Group Charity, contact Juliana Lottmann via WhatsApp: 07426 440544

Social prescribing

BY WARREN CARL

From day one, when I started yoga and meditation teacher training at the Chopra Centre in California, we were taught that yoga was not a bendy-body competition but about the human experience as a whole – from the individual to the community at large. The goal is to engage a journey towards deeper fulfilment and purpose while nurturing a sense of worth and belonging.

That applies to all communities, including here in Clerkenwell, and with social and financial pressures as they are, managing stress is the biggest hurdle for most.

Many think that meditation is forcing your mind to be quiet. However, it’s more like letting thoughts pass – like clouds, including the occasional thunderstorms – without paying any attention to their story. Once the internal turbulence and stress has been reduced through some simple techniques, then the ability to face the external, sticky stuff of life can be faced with steadier feet and minds.

This is where ‘social prescribing’ offers a hand and nourishing next step. Social prescribing is a term that means connecting

people to non-medical support to address issues and other unmet needs – and recognising that many things that affect health can’t be treated by doctors or medicine alone.

For example, loneliness, debt, or stress due to financial pressures or poor housing can be crushing. Social prescribing is about connecting people to activities, groups and support that improve health and wellbeing – and lest it seem too way out for some, the NHS’ Long Term Plan is committed to building the infrastructure for social prescribing, and bringing social prescribing and community-based approaches to the NHS.

The National Academy of Social Prescribing is now housed at Southbank Centre and there are similar programmes at the Barbican Library and EC1 community centres.

So whether it’s joining a mindfulness group at your local library, or a befriending group, an art class or a community gardening project – there’s lots of ways to be involved and evolve.

To explore voluntary and community organisations on the National Academy of Social Prescribing: Visit socialprescribingacademy.org.uk

For more information: Visit england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing



Minds still matter

Minds Matter Islington – based at The Peel – is working on a set of tools-based workshops for groups, such as self-care with social media and dealing with rejection.

If you need a list of mental health resources aimed at young people and their carers, you can

either pop into the Peel to pick up a paper booklet or you can find a digital version with live links on the Peel’s website under Mental Health

For workshops get in touch at d.action@peelinstitute.org.uk if you’d like us to come and deliver a session.

For The Peel’s mental health resources: Visit thepeel.org.uk/mental-health

Advertisement

ST LUKE'S COMMUNITY CENTRE EC1

Become a member!

ST LUKE'S
COMMUNITY
CENTRE



People of any age can become a member of St Luke's Community Centre and benefit from the free or low cost activities we run daily at our community hub on Central Street. The only requirement is to live within our area of benefit (check QR code, or ask at reception) in south Islington. Members can enjoy lots of free activities every day, including art, cookery, exercise and gardening. We are open every Saturday and Sunday, offering a range of activities or a space to relax and unwind.

KING'S CORONATION WEEKEND

SATURDAY 6TH MAY 11AM-3PM
CORONATION CELEBRATION

TV screening of the ceremony with Coronation-themed arts & crafts activities for adults and children.

Coronation Chicken lunch (with veggie option), afternoon tea and Pimms.

SUNDAY 7TH MAY 11AM-3PM
SUNDAY MUSIC CAFÉ

Open mic for all with a DJ and singers

Royal Curry followed by afternoon tea and cake

MONDAY 8TH MAY 11AM-3PM
ST LUKE'S BIG HELP OUT

Help the community by dropping off non-perishable Food Hub donations, help us varnish the garden furniture and meet your neighbours with edible art fun in the Cookery School. Crown Jewel Soup, afternoon tea and scones

Lunch served at 12.30pm - limited availability to avoid waste.



Under 8s Community Wardrobe A BABY ITEM SWAP EVENT

Bring your pre-loved baby/children's clothes, toys and books to swap, 0-8years. Donations are welcome (no electricals) during centre opening times from 17th June.

Free Event
Refreshments
provided

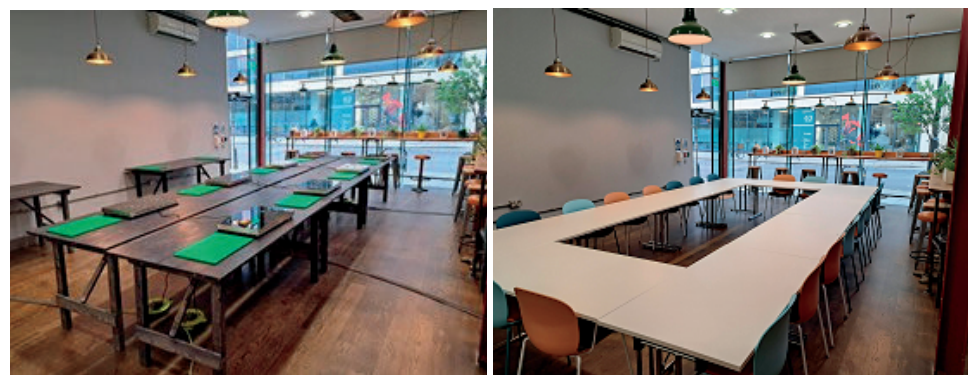
Saturday 1st July 11am-1pm
St Luke's Community Centre
90 Central Street, EC1V 8AJ

Saturday 22nd April 11am-1pm
The Peel, Three Corners Centre
Northampton Road, EC1R 0HU

ST LUKE'S
COMMUNITY
CENTRE

New community space: The Bunhill

St Luke's Community Centre has developed a new multi-purpose space that can be hired for meetings, community or cookery events.



Contact: roomhire@slpt.org.uk or phone 020 7549 8181



ST LUKE'S
COMMUNITY
CENTRE

St Luke's Community Centre, 90 Central Street, EC1V 8AJ

info@slpt.org.uk | 020 7549 8181

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Charity number: 207497

LETTERS

14

No to statue

Robert Cope,
Clerkenwell Close, EC1

As a resident of Clerkenwell, actively involved in several local community organisations, I am writing to express concerns on behalf of many residents regarding the proposal to erect a statue of Sylvia Pankhurst on Clerkenwell Green. While I agree that she was a remarkable woman, I strongly believe that there are better locations for her statue, and would like to suggest the former site of Holloway Women’s Prison as a more appropriate location.

It is important to note that this statue was previously rejected by Islington Council after public consultation in 2017. We therefore request that the Council explain why the statue is once again being proposed without further appropriate consultation with the community.

Proponents of the statue have cited two reasons: Sylvia Pankhurst’s anti-fascist views and her supposed visit to speak at a local pub called Dondi’s. However, I believe that these reasons are insufficient to justify placing her statue in Clerkenwell. Many notable people at the time also spoke out against fascism, and the assertion that Sylvia Pankhurst spoke at a pub in Clerkenwell lacks historical evidence. Dondi’s was situated on Eyre Street in the Holborn & Covent Garden ward and not even in Clerkenwell. Since there is no accurate historic record, relying on this claim for her statue on Clerkenwell Green would not be appropriate. On the other hand, Sylvia Pankhurst was imprisoned in Holloway Women’s Prison several times.

Clerkenwell is steeped in history, with many notable figures more appropriate for a statue on the Green. For example, Sir Hugh Myddelton, the Welsh entrepreneur responsible for the New River, merchant Richard Cloudesley, who bequeathed money for a school for the poor, Charles Dickens, who worked in Clerkenwell and set several novels there, Annie Besant, who founded the influential

Theosophical Society and William Hogarth, the artist and social commentator, who produced many prints there. All of these figures played a significant role in shaping Clerkenwell, and a statue of any one of them would be a fitting tribute to their contributions to the area, rather than Pankhurst who lacks any real connection to Clerkenwell.

Green peace

Debby Lee,
Leather Lane, EC1

Those of us that live in Clerkenwell, one of the most urbanised areas in London, have just two distinct and rare green spaces – Spa Fields and St James’ Church Yard. These two little public parks are small yet precious to our community: where our kids play and people picnic, walk dogs, gather and exercise. We know enjoying green spaces is vital to our wellbeing and mental health.

So why are we denied use of them each year? For several days every May (excepting the Covid years) they are fenced off by Clerkenwell Design Week, normally leaving these vital parks in a state of disrepair. This year St James’ has lush new turf and we dread to see what will happen to that.

CDW pays money to Islington Council for the hire of these parks (and the green outside Charterhouse) yet has little to show the community. It is great for design, but at what cost?

Surely there must be other places CDW can be housed, including purpose-built sites. Perhaps it is more cost-effective to build ugly marquee structures in our parks for a week or so each May. But that week comes at a huge cost to our community, who help pay for these important spaces with their Council Tax. Islington Council – you should have a rethink.

AN ISLINGTON COUNCIL spokesperson responds: “Our parks and open spaces are vital places for local people, as we work to create a greener, healthier Islington.

“All income from events in

parks, including Clerkenwell Design Week, goes to the parks service and helps pay for Islington’s parks.

“Also, we support events in parks which add to the cultural life of our borough, and Clerkenwell Design Week is an important event for the local area.

“Clerkenwell Design Week also funds other benefits for local residents including free fitness sessions, and free tickets to other events.

“We’re talking with Clerkenwell Design Week about how best to protect grass at both sites, including arrangements before and after the events. We’re also trialling new ways to best protect grass, including changes to cutting, watering and aeration.”

“We expect Clerkenwell Design Week to continue using local open spaces in future years.”

Gig rights

Nigel Mackay
Leigh Day
Goswell Rd, EC1

People working in the gig economy are struggling to make ends meet because the companies they work for refuse to accept that they should be given workers’ rights such as holiday pay and the National Minimum Wage.

Everyone is feeling the effects of the cost-of-living crisis so it is vital that workers receive the pay they are entitled to. To get a clearer idea of the impact, law firm Leigh Day conducted a survey of gig economy workers. It revealed that more than 80 per cent feel that the money they earn does not cover the cost of living.

Gig economy workers should not be struggling to feed their families because the companies they work for, such as private hire companies Addison Lee and Bolt, refuse to accept that they should be classified as workers and given the rights this status affords.

Leigh Day doesn’t think this is acceptable and that is why we are bringing claims on behalf of Bolt and Addison Lee drivers with the aim of securing them the rights they are entitled to. Companies with similar business models should make note and pay their workers fairly and protect their rights.

QUIZ

Quiz by David Rossi

1. Which country has the largest number of Spanish speakers?

2. In which century was the Black Death?

3. In which country were women first allowed to vote?

4. What is the most expensive spice in the world?

5. When talking about stage props, what is ‘prop’ an abbreviation of?

6. Florentine means served with which vegetable in cooking?
7. Which singer has the largest number of Twitter followers?

8. What is the most energy consuming organ in the human body?

9. What is the most commonly used letter in the English language?

10. Which fruit is found on top of the Wimbledon men’s tennis trophy?

Answers 1. Mexico / 2. 14th Century / 3. New Zealand / 4. Saffron / 5. Property / 6. Spinach / 7. Justin Bieber. / 8. The brain / 9. The letter ‘E’ / 10. Pineapple

Crossword N° 4

The first three correctly completed crosswords handed into Clerkenwell Kiosk win a free coffee

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ACROSS

- 1 Knee’s-up (7)
- 5 Sale by bidding (7)
- 9 Capital of the Netherlands (9)
- 10 Oak tree’s nut (5)
- 11 Thinking clearly (5)
- 12 Laid-back (9)
- 13 Preparation for e.g. singing or exercise (4-2)
- 14 Unlucky number? (8)
- 16 Courage, grit (4)
- 17 American whiskey (7)
- 23 Pleasantly warm weather (5)
- 24 Break down (food) (6)
- 27 Resting place for one’s pint (4-3)
- 28 Type of poison (7)
- 29 Extra-terrestrial (5)
- 30 Branch of science (9)

DOWN

- 1 Rascal (9)
- 2 Uncertainty, anxiety (10)
- 3 Terrible (8)
- 4 Gizmo (6)
- 5 Layer of gases surrounding a planet (10)
- 6 Obvious mistake (7)
- 7 Revered (8)
- 8 Nine-sided shape (7)
- 15 Inclined to treat one’s beliefs as fact (8)
- 18 Japanese art of folding paper (7)
- 19 Fundraising scheme with a winning ticket (7)
- 20 Fish, often cooked en croustade (6)
- 21 Stop (6)
- 22 Sweet braided bread (5)
- 25 Hairy Himalayan creature (4)
- 26 Dull pain (4)

Answers to Crossword 3 in EC1 Echo Feb/Mar 23

ACROSS: 1 Impersonator, 8 Terrapin, 9 No dice, 11 Reenergised, 12 Dud, 13 Avulsion, 15 Spar, 18 Iberico, 19 Pharaoh, 20 Noon, 22 Diagnostic, 24 Llama, 25 Eye-opener, 26 Brackish, 27 Argyle

DOWN: 1 International, 2 Persecute, 3 Readership, 4 Owed, 5 Ovoid, 6 Ahead of the curve, 7 Kindergarten, 10 Ash, 14 Odourless, 16 Pea-souper, 17 Apogee, 21 Omaha, 23 Hack

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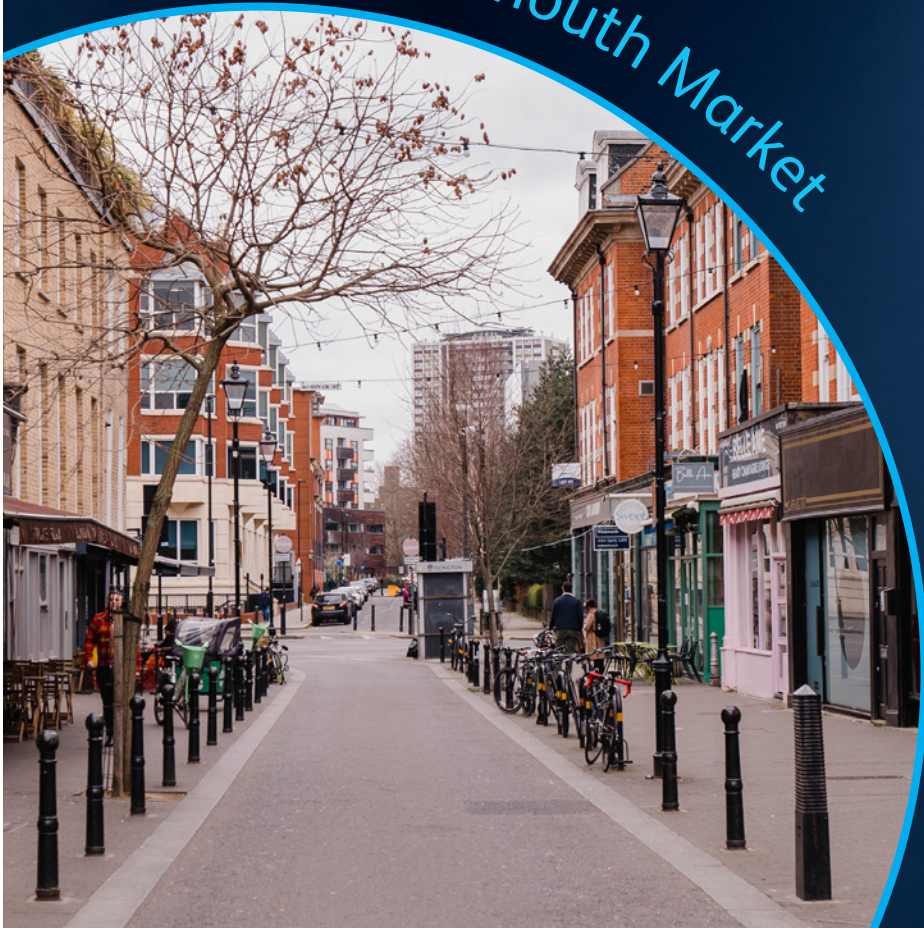
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