

EC1 ECHO

JUNE/JULY 2023 • N° 22 FREE

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Top left: Courier by Cedric D'Amico | Top right: Spa Fields by Adele New | Bottom left: Breakfast at Scotti's by T Barrington | Bottom right: Saturday morning chess at St John's Square by Richard Betson



Picture this

It's the third year for the Clerkenwell Photography Competition – and this year's theme is Street Life

● BY OLIVER BENNETT ●

The third Clerkenwell Photography exhibition is upon us and this year the theme is Street Life. Following the lockdown period it's been heartening to see the area come back to life, and for this year's competition, it may well be that your photographs reflect the

return to our streets, parks and public spaces. This could mean anything – humans, animals, social life, workers – as long as it stimulates your photographic creativity, and we're expecting some interpretive pictures like the one here, T. Barrington's picture, 'Breakfast at Scotti's on a sunny day'. As before, there are different age groups, and as before there's a sterling set of judges, a

group of fantastic prizes and a chance to join us at the prize-giving view in early September.

"It is a pleasure to be running the competition once again," says Chris Walker, the competition's director. "It's with thanks to all our sponsors and partners that we're able to run the competition, and we're expecting some brilliant pictures." Said

judge Helen Healy, picture editor of the *Financial Times*: "I'm looking forward to seeing how photographers interpret the theme."

Get snapping and send your photographs in to photographyawards@peelinstitute.org.uk by 10 August.


See website for full details:
Visit clerkenwellphotography.com

N°22

NEWS

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JUNE/ JULY

1st June **31st July**

 Waxing Gibbous Waxing Gibbous
91%/0.52 **98%/0.54**

EC1 Echo is the area's free community newspaper. We publish bi-monthly and distribute 7,500 free copies of each issue. Now more than ever we believe that the media should be responsive and accountable to the community it serves.

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Bart Smith, Islington council's active travel officer using a bike hangar Credit Islington Council



Cycle parking spaces 'too expensive'

BY JULIA GREGORY, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Cyclists said the price for parking bicycles in Islington is too high as Islington racks up its 500th lockable hangar. Cycle Islington welcomed the milestone but said the cost is "inexcusable" and more than 3,300 people were on the waiting list in January for a space. Campaigners said the Council needs to keep pedalling to double the number of bike hangars to meet demand. Cycle Islington campaign co-ordinator Eilidh Murray said: "Secure cycle hangars are great for our health and the planet because they make cycling an easy way to get from A to B. They're especially needed in Islington where cycles don't last five minutes locked to a lamppost and many people live in cramped flats with no space to safely store a bike." However she said campaigners are "puzzled" about the "massive cost"

of renting a space.

Ms Murray said: "At £107.25 a year plus deposit of £27.75, Islington residents must pay almost twice the London average and, in some cases, more than it costs to park a car."

She said hangars need to be affordable to help reach net zero targets by 2030.

Islington's charges compare with £8.40 a year in Ealing, which was slashed last year from a £72 annual fee and £40 in Westminster.

The issue of fitting more hangars is exercising councils in London as they try to encourage people to ditch their cars and use two wheels instead to help the battle to cut carbon.

Flat dwellers say it is hard to find space to store bikes and they are not allowed to keep them in corridors because of fire safety rules.

Six bikes can fit in each on-street bike hangar and Islington council said it has now provided lockable spaces for 3,000 bikes, with another 2,500 bike parking spaces for free on its council

estates and 2,000 stands on the streets.

It said it is on track for another 1,200 on-street bike parking spaces by 2025.

Rowena Champion, the councillor responsible for the environment, air quality and transport said the extra hangars "are really important in our efforts to create a greener Islington, because they help make cycling a more convenient option for local people."

She added: "We're determined to make Islington a greener, more welcoming place for all, where local people have cleaner air to breathe, and making environmentally-friendly modes of travel easier is at the heart of achieving this."

Cllr Champion said getting on your bike can help boost health and save cash.

"As well as being enjoyable, choosing to take more journeys on foot or by cycle can help you save money, lower your carbon footprint, and enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of exercising regularly."

Good view

The Clerkenwell Community Survey 2022-23 is out and positive – with a few gripes

The results of The Peel's Clerkenwell Community Survey for the year 2022-23 are starting to come through, and by and large the area should be pleased with itself. Of the responses so far, 53 per cent felt positive about our neighbourhood, with 8 per cent feeling 'very positive' and just 3.3 per cent feeling 'negative'. Also good is that most of the respondents 'strongly agreed' that they 'felt part of a community in the area'.

In a segment where we asked people what they felt "most proud" about in the neighbourhood there were also good results. Among the responses were that "the quality of the environment is fantastic". Another cited the amazing "local heritage" and yet another felt that they were part of a "small diverse community who come together to help one and another". The "eclectic mix of people and buildings and the area's history" came up as a positive for one respondent, while we were pleased to see one felt that Clerkenwell was "united" and was also doing well to "protect the environment".

But there were a few downsides among the pearls, and respondents found several areas where there was room for improvement, citing the low level of "fitness equipment in the community" and indeed, the need for better public exercise facilities – particularly to "try and get more kids and teenagers into sports". As well as matters of civility – one didn't appreciate "businesses that don't engage with the community" – there were nods to criminal activity including "knife crime", the problems with phone theft and the need for more police to counter this – and a more general plea to feel "more safe at night".

More support for parents was noted, while another suggested a "homework club for all ages". It was noted that the rubbish in our streets and parks should be reduced as "overflowing bins are commonplace" – and one cited the need for more resources for children with "special needs". Things that could also be worked upon were the need for more "community activity organisation".

More interaction between the estates and local businesses was also needed, along with more youth clubs, with the accent taken away from relentless over-development and towards "more green space to improve health and bring communities together". One noted that there should be "fewer businesses closed at the weekend" – a long-term criticism of Clerkenwell, which used to almost shut down entirely at weekends.

Who might make these changes, we asked? Islington Council came first, followed by community organisations like The Peel and the national Government. But over 34 per cent of people felt they themselves could make a difference – a gratifying number of respondents.

We've now extended the deadline for having your say on Clerkenwell. Please fill in the survey by the 30 June, and be in with a chance of winning a £20 shopping voucher. Scan the QR code for the link to filling in the survey



NEWS

Bart's Fair returns to Smithfield

BY MATTHEW BELL

There is something big to look forward to in September. Dust off your ducking stools – Bartholomew Fair is returning to the City of London after 168 years.

When David Wilcox and I wrote last year about re-starting Bart's Fair, which had run from 1133 and was closed down in 1855, we hoped that it would be taken up by the City of London in time for the 900th anniversary of St Bart's this year. David had done some fantastic work on 'Museum of the Streets' and was keen for the Fair to take in some developing digital ideas. Meanwhile, I had spoken to masses of people, including Livery companies, local residents and businesses and everyone agreed it was a tremendous idea.

When the City of London's 'Destination City' officially started late last year, I ensured that the Bartholomew Fair

relaunch was on the desk of the new Director the morning she took office. As a Councillor in the City, I am used to things taking a long time to process, so it is with some degree of surprise (and excitement) that we are able to write that it was rubber stamped by the Corporation last month and is due to happen this September.

The plan is that it will once again, become an annual event.

As the Corporation is keen to have events that take in the whole of the Square Mile, it is no longer a local fair but now a City-wide extravaganza. At the time of going to press, the dates are not precise but it will be from around August 30th to the end of September.

This does not leave much time of course and there is much to do. While the City are planning a website to go with the festival type feel, David Wilcox is creating a more neighbourhood-focussed one at *bartsfair.city* initially concentrating on our EC1 area.



Bartholomew Fair By Thomas Rowlandson (1807)
Credit: Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1917 Met Museum/Wikicommons

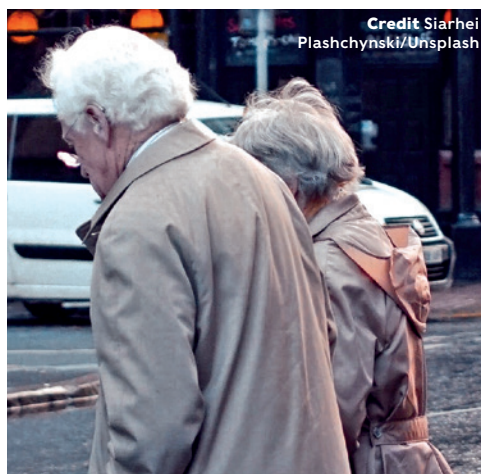
Older Londoners in poverty

BY NOAH VICKERS,
LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Action must be taken to protect older Londoners from falling into poverty, Sadiq Khan has been told.

The London Assembly's economy committee warned the Mayor that older Londoners who wish to continue working need to feel welcome in the capital's workplaces – and that those getting by on pensions should not be missing out on cash to which they're entitled.

The committee cited research from Age UK London suggesting that poverty levels amongst older Londoners are the highest in England, with 25 per cent of over-50s in the capital living in poverty, compared to 18 per cent in the rest of England. This is despite the fact that London has the highest rate of over 65s in work in the country.



Credit: Sjarhei Plashchynski/Unsplash

During its investigation into the issue, the committee heard that the return of more older people to the capital's workforce could help address labour market shortages, contribute towards the financial stability of older Londoners, and support London's economy.

In a letter to Mr Khan, the committee said he should develop an 'Employers Toolkit for older Londoners' to help workplaces become more "age-friendly", based on similar examples in other parts of the UK.

The toolkit could potentially include information on 'age-positive' hiring practices and advice on how to encourage career development at all ages.

The committee also said the Mayor should lobby the Government to provide more personalised careers advice and specific support for over-50s seeking employment.

For older people who are retired and making ends meet on a pension, the committee warned that despite rising cost of living pressures, uptake of Pension Credit remains relatively low in London.

Pension Credit is extra money, separate to the state pension, which tops up the income of older people if they're struggling to make ends meet.

City Hall estimates that some £246.5 million of Pension Credit is unclaimed in London each year, suggesting that thousands of eligible households are missing out on up to £3,300 each.

Workplaces should become more age-friendly

Mr Khan has already launched a campaign to boost the benefit's uptake, but the committee said he should report back to them on the impact of that campaign and inform them of his plans to scale it up, as well as lobbying the Government to help raise awareness of it.

A spokeswoman for Mr Khan said: "The Mayor has received the Assembly's letter and will be responding in due course."

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Victoria Jenkins
Credit Kimi Gill for Islington Faces

FEATURES

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Fashion designer Victoria Jenkins became disabled in her 20s. This led to her setting up Unhidden, offering stylish and easy-to-wear clothes for people with all sorts of accessibility challenges. Now Victoria creates stylish, comfortable ‘adaptive’ wear that works for a huge number of accessibility and health situations whatever the disability – including for wheelchairs-users, people with stomas, Hickman lines, dexterity issues and more.

Now Victoria – who works in EC1 – has had the accolade of having been featured in *Vogue*. But most importantly, she has demonstrated that there is a definite need for her work. Her Unhidden trousers, for example, are a best seller.

“It’s far and away what we sell most of,” says Victoria who studied fashion design in London. “We have men’s and women’s version, seated and standard, so that’s technically four trousers [all are £70]. I’ve worked on tailoring at a variety of brands and it’s hard to get right, so to get it right for this community was a very proud moment.”

Last year Victoria had her first London Fashion Week event at the Instituto Marangoni followed by her debut runway show thanks to her partners The Bicester Collection and Kurt Geiger. Since then, her brand, media coverage and buying customers have all taken off – although this is fashion, so nothing is easy.

“I’ve been trying to work a four-day week for the last year,” says Victoria. Wednesday is usually her rest day, so today she’s at home on the sofa. The rest of the week she’s at her office within Kurt Geiger’s head office in Farringdon.

“I live with chronic pain so pace myself with a rest day in the middle of the week,” she says. “At home I try and sit and do nothing, not physically moving.”

The idea of Victoria being in so much pain might seem terrible, but she talks about her situation in a matter-of-fact way, peppered with humour. She has, she says, a “number of conditions – paralysed stomach, diseased intestines and chronic pain – from a variety of surgeries. It’s a fun house in there. I refer to it as a ‘gift’ because it’s given me my purpose, Unhidden. Before I was trying to survive in fashion, and I’d given up all attempts of having my own brand. Now I have a brand, and it’s impactful.”

Alongside the popular tops and bottoms, Victoria is also proud of



Wearing for wellbeing

Pain and endless hospital visits led to designer Victoria Jenkins’ award-winning adaptive fashion brand, Unhidden. Here she talks about making universal designs for all bodies

BY NICOLA BAIRD

her dress from her new collection which works in three different ways: for short statures, wheelchair users and ambulatory design. “You can’t tell what I’ve done with it that makes it work but it looks like a nice dress which is great,” she says.

Customers often contact Victoria direct. “The feedback can be heartbreaking and sometimes the DMs (direct messages) are very intense,” she says. “People say things like, ‘I wish you’d been around when my mum was going through chemo and had everything stripped from her’, or just ‘I’m

glad you exist.’ I get many stories like that. There are so many people who didn’t know they had the option, or they didn’t know what to look for.” As Victoria says, “Adaptive design works. It can be stylish, comfortable and accessible – and it’s not that difficult to do.”

Victoria wears her own designs. “At home I often wear my jersey culottes, which are really nice, made from heavy-weight jersey with nice pockets, comfy and look good.” The idea for the culottes came after a hospital visit to UCLH, one

of many stays for Victoria in 2016. “Another woman on the ward had had ovarian cancer, but as is often the case she had been left a number of lifelong conditions by the treatment. She had two stomas and a line for her arm and one in her chest.

“She made me think about adaptive clothing because she knew I worked in fashion and said to me, ‘I can’t wear what I want to and I can’t dress how I want to at work or at home’. In the hospital she had to take all of her clothes off, so doctors could access various parts of her body for examination. Someone should be doing it and it’s so obvious.”

Victoria started to research. “In 2016, there was not very much adaptive fashion and what there was looked very medical,” she says. “They were not made from the perspective of the people wearing the clothes, more from the carer’s perspective, so they could wipe it clean.” The idea fermented, and soon Victoria started creating designs with invisible zips, elasticated waistbands and adjustable aspects to allow for all conditions from bloating to colostomy bags.

Victoria now aims to take adaptive fashion into the mainstream. “Designing for disabled people means you are also designing for everyone else,” she says. “I’ve chased awareness because what I do is so needed, and it’s already led to a number of partnerships and collaborations with brands.”

Up to now Unhidden clothes have been made to order, but Victoria realises that people don’t want to wait two months, so the next step is to work with an investor and start to buy stock. She’s also planning to make adaptive suits and adaptive clothing for kids. For now her brand is online as bringing Unhidden to shops presents challenges. “There are places that are prepared to sell Unhidden but then I have the issues: is the shop and changing room accessible? To be truly accessible it would need a hoist and medically trained staff. How many shops have those? The goal is to have a stand-alone shop with all those things.”

With more than a billion people globally with some form of disability it’s incredible that so little clothing choice is around. Unhidden is giving that choice back to this growing market.

“*Victoria’s Unhidden trousers are a best seller*”

This article first appeared in Nicola’s blog, Islington Faces – see islingtonfacesblog.com Instagram for Unhidden and Victoria is at @Unhidden.uk and @VictoriaAnnOfficial

FEATURES



Old school, new vision

World-famous architect Zaha Hadid had her HQ in Clerkenwell. Now a foundation and a gallery on the same site will take her vision forward

BY OLIVER BENNETT

The old Bowling Green Lane School has high ceilings, grand windows, and quaint separate entrances for boys and girls. Built in 1874, it's a fine example of a London School Board building, designed by the star of the genre, ER Robson.

But it is now better known as the home of another celebrated architect – Zaha Hadid. It was from here that the late Hadid ran her company, and it's now home to the Zaha Hadid Foundation (ZHF), which is bringing on ambitious plans for the handsome red-brick school.

Hadid died in 2016 at 65. Not long after this untimely loss, the school was shuttered. Passers-by didn't know what had become of it. But now, the Foundation is building its presence, with exhibitions, social programmes and exciting plans to make part of the site into a gallery devoted to British-Iraqi Hadid, who created artworks, furniture and jewellery as well as buildings – some 15,000 pieces all told, most of them in storage.

In the courtyard, a streamlined Hadid bench shows what to expect. "She was a wonderful painter, a furniture and jewellery

designer, was hugely into textiles and has left magnificent architectural models and hundreds of drawings and much more," says ZHF director Paul Greenhalgh. "She kept it all and it now belongs to the Foundation." A Hadid gallery-museum would certainly make a welcome addition to Clerkenwell, now one of the world's most richly populated districts for architects and designers.

Hadid was one of a handful of architects to become a household name and as Greenhalgh says, without overstatement: "She was one of the top three or four architects in the world in her last years." Governments and

clients worldwide clamoured for her striking, sinuous designs – indeed, readers may have swam in the Aquatics Centre in Stratford made for the London 2012 Olympics. She gained the two biggest accolades in architecture – the Pritzker Prize in 2004 and the Stirling Prize in 2010 – and was a celebrated figurehead. All of this flowed from the old school in Bowling Green Lane.

The Foundation was set up in 2013 while Hadid was still alive. "It wasn't very active at first and took years to be properly established," says Greenhalgh. "But in retrospect, we can see what was in her mind with the Foundation." Now with a



"Hadid's gallery and museum will keep her vision alive"

17-strong team, Greenhalgh says that the ZHF Foundation "has been functioning properly for about 18 months" and all its plans are now emerging.

Hadid's working life was deeply embedded in Clerkenwell. "Zaha loved this area," says Greenhalgh. "She moved in when it was far quieter and occupied a corner of the school [in 1983]. By the time she died, she owned the whole schoolhouse." Even prior to being in the school, Hadid took space in the Finsbury Business Centre over the road. In those early years, Hadid travelled and taught but built little. That changed, and by the time she died her practice had created many buildings worldwide from offices across the globe. The practice still exists under the name ZHA – the London branch is also in Clerkenwell, on nearby Goswell Road.

"It's clear from what she wrote that the Foundation was not simply about preserving her work," says Greenhalgh. "But it's great that Zaha kept just about everything." The gallery and museum will exist alongside offices, research and study spaces, in order to keep her "intended vision" alive. There are already exhibitions on site, and they will be augmented by evening events, a programme of artists' commissions, and events such as Open House. In doing this the ZHF could also help activate Bowling Green Lane, currently a bit of a cut-through.



The Foundation aims to be both global and local. "It will operate globally because her greatest buildings are scattered around the planet," says Greenhalgh. "But there's a community here which Zaha was part of for decades, so the hope is that the Foundation will work with communities and schools. We're already in touch with organisations that promote the study of architecture and design among the less advantaged in London and have already given our first bursary to three young people."

A full architectural training is long at seven years, and is getting harder for lower income groups. So the Foundation champions upcoming creative talent from what it calls "diverse and complex backgrounds", reflecting Baghdad-born Hadid's own path.

"As she often said, she was a woman and Arab, so she started with two fascinating disadvantages," says Greenhalgh. "She loved Arabic culture, and although not a deeply religious woman was influenced by factors like Islamic calligraphy. And she was hugely concerned with where she came from and what she represented, spending lots of time in Lebanon as well as London." Hence the Foundation's interest in reaching out to underrepresented groups.

Hadid studied Mathematics to degree level – which brings up another matter. "Probably more than any other discipline, architecture brings the arts and sciences together," says Greenhalgh. "I find the divide sad and we'll absolutely be involved in promoting the sciences, particularly among the more challenged groups in our society." In addition, architecture often attracts dyslexic students, so addressing neurodiversity will also be on the agenda.



Hadid's Vienna Library Learning Centre
Credit Böhringer Friedrich/Wikimedia Commons

Zaha Hadid
Credit Dmitry Ternovoy/Wikimedia Commons

A bench by Hadid in the Foundation's HQ in Bowling Green Lane

London Aquatics Centre, Olympic Park
Credit Fred Romero/Wikimedia Commons

For more information: Visit zhfoundation.com

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



The Peel team say goodbye to Milad at his leaving lunch

that have made organisations such as The Peel so necessary to the fabric of society over the years, are successfully challenged and drastically minimised. We have continued to develop our thinking and service output over the past few months and continue to work with our wonderful community to seek innovative and cost-effective solutions to the myriad prevalent issues (mainly cost of living and emotional health and well-being related). As always, any feedback or ideas that you have will be greatly appreciated. Better still, please join us: we always need great like-minded people like you!

Finally, we are sad to see the departure of one of our long-standing members of staff, Milad Miah. Milad has been the Finance & Admin Officer of The Peel for the past 20 years. We thank him for his incredible service and wish him every joy and success for the future.

It is quite amazing to think that in The Peel's 125-year history, we have had just five monarchs. As we enter this new Carolean Age, we can all but hope that the social and economic issues

Adults' Activities at The Peel

We had two big celebrations in April and May. The first was St George's Day when our members enjoyed some excellent entertainment from singer Richie Cooper. We also had a right royal knees up for the King's Coronation with a fantastic afternoon tea, coronation bingo, and sing-a-long classics from Lloyd Ellery who was dressed as a Pearly King! We had a surprise visit on the day from the outgoing Mayor of Islington, Marian Spall.

Our knitters made some really cute egg hats for Easter. Our new 'Cooking with Jeana' sessions have been very popular, with our members working together to make dishes including roast chicken, shepherd's pie and apple crumble. Regular activities such as line dancing have been going really well, and we've introduced self-massage sessions on a Wednesday too.



St George's Day at The Peel Credit Penny Dampier



Our adult members enjoying the Coronation Credit Penny Dampier



Cooking with Jeana Credit Penny Dampier



Entertainer Lloyd Ellery at the Coronation party at The Peel Credit Penny Dampier

Youth club

Over the Easter holidays, our Youth Club went on a residential visit to the wonderful outdoor activity centre Avon Tyrrell, in Hampshire. There they engaged in various team building, motivational skills, problem-solving, confidence-building and resilience-building activities. Avon



Youth Club about to do kayaking at their residential stay Credit Jeana Kidd



Outdoor activities at Avon Tyrrell, the youth club's residential trip Credit Jeana Kidd



Outdoor activities at Avon Tyrrell, the youth club's residential trip Credit Jeana Kidd

Tyrrell said: "It's been brilliant having you all on site! So fantastic to see you all enjoying outdoor learning"

Back in London, they went on trips to the Science Museum, London Zoo and the cinema, plus they learned how to cook pizza, and had an Easter Egg hunt. We're really proud of our youth club, which is one of the longest running in the UK, having been a foundational activity of our founders back in 1898.

At the end of April, the Peel Youth Club had a great (if messy) time making Stress Balls with our own Minds Matter Islington team, where they also learned about other ways to deal with stress.

Community engagement

We had our community coronation party on a local estate which had 100 plus local people joining in with the celebrations.

In April, over 65 families attended our most recent Baby Item Swap event at The Peel, which was amazing. These events have a real community feel to them.



Women's Group members enjoying a trip to the Sky Garden Credit Scarlett Gregory



Coronation party at Brunswick Close Estate Credit Scarlett Gregory



Coronation party at Brunswick Close Estate Credit Scarlett Gregory

We have recently started a women's group for all ages, with sessions happening in and around the community. We have coffee mornings, well-being sessions, talks, walks and visits to galleries etc. On Friday the 12th of May, we visited the beautiful Sky Garden.

Our regular monthly Dish 'n' Jam events have got more and more popular and have evolved into nights where the local community feel they have a safe space to come and have some fun! It's family-friendly too and completely intergenerational.

The Peel Spotlight: Scarlett Gregory



Scarlett Gregory Credit Penny Dampier

Each issue, we interview a member of staff, volunteer or local resident to give readers an insight into life at The Peel. Meet Scarlett Gregory, our Community Programmes Officer.

How would you describe your role at The Peel?

I lead on The Peel's community engagement work, designing activities to bring local people and businesses together to help encourage community cohesion. I have a collaborative approach and many of The Peel's community projects have been working in partnership with other community groups and organisations. My role is fast-paced and I work on multiple community projects, including projects

that are led by volunteers from the local area. I am responsible for the work of The Peel's Community Organisers and the outreach work that they do. The community programmes are designed in a responsive way, addressing the community's needs, such as projects that offer support to residents through the cost of living crisis.

What's your favourite part of the role?
Meeting new people and having fun doing what I do. Helping the community address issues face-on and supporting people.

Challenges?
The majority of The Peel's community activities happen at locations in the community and we sometimes find this a challenge as it takes lots of planning and organisation. The support that we can offer in response to the needs of the community is not endless, and working at a realistic pace is always challenging.

What have you got in the pipeline for the coming months?
We will be holding our second cost of living workshop in collaboration with Hugh Myddleton primary school. We have our sixth Baby Item Swap event in July. We will also be pushing forward with our Food Empowerment Project, sourcing more donations and planning The Peel's new Food Co-operative. We will be continuing our outreach work in the local area, both at pop-ups and door-knocking on local estates.

Describe The Peel in three words?
Dynamic. Supportive. Growing

What do you like about Clerkenwell?
I have lived in Clerkenwell for 12 years and love the area. I love the diversity and rich heritage. There is a real community spirit and that, I feel lucky to be a part of.



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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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JUNE AT THE PEEL

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

MON 5 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Club Mix Dance Party 1.30pm	TUE 6 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Youth Club - T-shirt design 3.30-5.30pm & 6-8pm	WED 7 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Outreach 10am-2pm Youth Club - Coding 5-6pm Group Reiki 7.30pm	THU 8 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Theatre matinee trip 2.30pm Youth Club - Cooking 4:30-6pm	FRI 9 Quentin Blake Illustration Workshop 10am-3pm The Peel's Women's Group at Brunswick Close Estate 12-3pm Quiz Night 5-7pm	SAT 10
MON 12 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Club Mix Dance Party 1.30pm Family Kitchen 3.30-6.30pm	TUE 13 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Youth Club - Father's Day planters/compost/cactus 3.30-5.30pm & 6-8pm	WED 14 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Outreach 10am-2pm Youth Club - Coding 5-6pm Group Reiki 7.30pm	THU 15 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Youth Club - Cooking 4:30-6pm	FRI 16 Adults at The Peel 10am-1pm The Peel's Women's Group at Brunswick Close Estate 12-3pm	SAT 17
MON 19 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Club Mix Dance Party 1.30pm Family Kitchen 3.30-6.30pm	TUE 20 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Connaught Opera 11am Youth Club - T-shirt printing 3.30-5.30pm & 6-8pm	WED 21 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Outreach 10am-2pm Youth Club - Coding 5-6pm Group Reiki 7.30pm	THU 22 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Youth Club - Cooking 4:30-6pm	FRI 23 Adults at The Peel 10am-1pm The Peel's Women's Group at Brunswick Close Estate 12-3pm	SAT 24
MON 26 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Club Mix Dance Party 1.30pm Family Kitchen 3.30-6.30pm	TUE 27 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Youth Club - bath bombs/face masks 3.30-5.30pm & 6-8pm	WED 28 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Outreach 10am-2pm Youth Club - Coding 5-6pm Group Reiki 7.30pm	THU 29 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm Cook your lunch 10.30am Youth Club - Cooking 4:30-6pm	FRI 30 Adults at The Peel 10am-1pm The Peel's Women's Group at Brunswick Close Estate 12-3pm Dish 'n' Jam 6-9pm	

THU 1 Adults at The Peel 10am-2.30pm	FRI 2	SAT 3 Youth Club - Theatre trip Sadler's Wells 7.30pm
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In May, EC1 Echo spent some time speaking with members of the Clerkenwell community about their experiences of the cost of living crisis and what it meant for them living and working in the area

EC1 is a place where many come to work, where large communities benefit from jobs in a variety of growing industries. This prosperity is not universal. But it is also an area where people have lived for generations, and where memories of other times and ways of life persist. In Clerkenwell, according to Islington Council's figures, 17 per cent of children live in relative low income families.

D, a food bank volunteer at The Peel who wishes to remain anonymous, has seen the situation become more desperate

"We've had food banks for a while but because of the cost of living crisis they've become more important. Food banks were meant for people who were poorer. But little by little I've seen them change, and now the food banks I work with are no longer just for people who are desperate - they're for low-income families who are in work, but still cannot afford reasonable and good food to put on the table for their children. They're having to make choices about what to buy - food, heating, transport or their phones and TVs - and now without your phone you can hardly survive. They've all gone up.

"The people who are at the food banks wouldn't be there before [this crisis]. They consider themselves average, going out from time to time. Now they can't afford it anymore.

"At the same time, at the food banks the donations have gone down. Before, you had people shopping in the supermarket who'd buy a bit extra and put it in the food bank basket: sandwiches and things like that. Now nobody is giving as much. The food banks have struggled to get donations and it's really becoming a big issue. In the estates around here there are people with real needs. For some, if you can't afford so much, it isn't critical, or the point where you say, 'God, what am I going to do tomorrow?' For others, it is, and in today's environment, how can you feed five or six children?"

"I've seen people queuing for food banks, and they try to be helpful to see what they want and what they need. So, you know, as I say, sometimes they have more limited items on. So they have to also look at what they give and take, for example, do they take two loaves of bread from a limited supply, because they know they don't have enough, and I've still got all these people coming? You see things like that, these are very difficult. It is about the difference between food essentials



Princely Croos talks to Mark Brown Credit Penny Dampier

The sharp end of the crisis

BY MARK BROWN

against your everyday bills. Of course you can't go without eating, but electricity, water, and the internet and phone are also important. And it's very difficult for those with children because some of them were used to getting more, and still say 'I want this phone or shirt' and parents then feel bad because they can't offer their children these things"

John Princely Croos is a minister based at St James's Church, Clerkenwell Close, who is quite new to the area. "I do part-time work and it's a real struggle for me," he says. "With a family, it's a big struggle. Sometimes I have no answer about how to go about it and how to address it."

From the perspective of his work, Princely sees people becoming nervous. "It makes people angry also. What's going on, why is it so? Why are things not addressed? Is there any alternative way the government can go about it? Lots of questions. I find imbalance is coming up. The haves and have-nots. That divides the society. In the long run it could go to a kind of clash between haves and have-nots."

Princely says that Britain doesn't need to have a split between rich and poor, and that balance is important. "People should be aware of what's going on, raising the issues to the relevant authorities. I think that some people, even though they know the cost of living is very high, some of them they don't care. They just keep on spending and not thinking about saving or not considering about other people."

"I feel people are angry and worried," adds Princely. "People who don't know

what to do get worried and probably reduce their expenses and try to be what they can, but it shouldn't be the life of Britain and it doesn't need to be. Britain has to come out of it. There are resources, there are different ways of tackling this one. I'm not an expert to say what ways, but it looks like it has to be solved. Ups and downs are growing. The imbalance is not a good picture of Britain in the world. It's better it's solved as soon as possible."

Lorraine and Frances are both local residents and have seen a lot of changes in EC1. "They cater for the richer people round here," says Lorraine. "They've got to realise there's a lot more working-class people that live round here but we don't get thought of. It cheeses you off. We haven't even got a pound shop round here.

"I like going to Dalston and Holloway for shops." There's nothing round here. Aldi and Lidl are a proper trot if you haven't got a car. Then you've got to carry it back or try and get on the bus with your trolley, but no cheaper shops." Lorraine had been hopeful that the N1 Shopping Centre in Angel would have "nice little cheap shops" but both agree that it doesn't. Frances says you have to go to Tottenham Hale to do a proper shop.

Says Frances: "When I was younger and my kids were younger, there wasn't a lot of money about but it wasn't like now, the

cost of living. You could go in and get a good dinner for your family. But now you go in and you look and you think 'Oh no, not this week.' You've got to go round the shops now."

"My kids,

the ones that have got children are the ones that are finding it hard," says Lorraine. "You've got people slinging their animals out because they can't afford to feed them." She helps out where she can. "It's just put in front of you. Everything's gone up and you've got to get on with it. Simple as that."

Going out is expensive too. Lorraine says, "If you go into the yuppie bars you'd spend six quid for a pint of beer", but adds that "normal" pubs are the same now. "A lot of people don't go out no more. Number one because of the Covid, number two because it's too expensive."

"It's like we're going back in time," says Frances. "When I was a kid we were poor but everybody was the same and you got on with it and you didn't find no different." Some families are doing okay "but there's another kid and their parents are really scraping. They can't afford all these labels and kids, they're wicked aren't they?"

Both Frances and Lorraine feel Clerkenwell has changed since, in the words of one, "The yuppies have moved in." "If you say you live on the Finsbury Estate," says Lorraine, "people are like 'Oh', especially if they live in a house round the corner."

Frances says "Take a step back before you judge." Lorraine says "When I say I have five kids people straight away think 'sponger' but I've never had a benefit in my life. There's these new-builds gone up, but unless you're on benefits you can't afford them." Lorraine knows a couple who both work "but don't have brilliant jobs" who pay £1,000 a month for a three-bed flat. "The private ones want £650,000 for a one bedroom. That's over the top."

Lorraine worries about the future and getting by if she retires. Frances worked five years over pension age, and Lorraine will have to work extra years because the pension age was changed. "This is the best I've ever been off," Lorraine says, "but then they go and put everything up. My gas bill is £150 more than it usually is. The rent, the electric has gone up. I used to put a tenner a month on the electric, now it's £40, £50 a month." Frances says you think twice about putting the heating on, then think 'Oh no, I'll put a jumper on.'

"I don't see it getting much better, we're British so we put up with it," says Lorraine. "I just hope my kids' kids get decent jobs. There's nothing left in the pot."



Lorraine and Frances Credit Penny Dampier



Food with thought

The Food Hub at St Luke's began in crisis and its work remains relevant

With artichokes, peppers and fridges full of high-quality ready meals on offer, the Food Hub at St Luke's on Central Street could be an upscale farmers' market. In fact, it is one of the food distribution hubs that has acquired a new necessity in the cost of living crisis, feeding the community in this part of Finsbury.

"The Food Hub started during Covid because in the pandemic everything was closed," says Food Hub manager, Tsedal Menghistu. "So we responded to the needs of the community. People started coming and we began distributing food twice a week."

The Hub continued, and is now remains open two days a week, working on an appointment system with the people in the area of benefit, and is available for each recipient for eight weeks, for people who are struggling on low incomes and with no recourse to public funds.

"Following Covid, the trouble was that the need didn't change," says Tsedal. "The impact of the pandemic was closely followed by the cost of living crisis and people then found themselves struggling with the huge cost of food."

With food inflation at highs of up to 17 per cent, the effect on those with lower and even middle incomes has been dire. Tsedal says that the group has "increased enormously and we want to reach as many people as we can. We don't want to have a fixed group of people using it and we don't want waiting lists because we see it as a holistic support."

At St Luke's, the partners include the Felix Trust and City Harvest, alongside other donations from companies, organisations and partners and local people. Members who attend the food hub can then move on to join St Luke's

"We responded to the needs of the community"



Food Co-op. Here they contribute a certain amount of money and buy in bulk.

Halima (not her real name), who moved to EC1 over a year ago with her daughter, says that she has found great strength in both the Food Hub and the Co-op. "It's been a big help," she says. "We see how much we need in the group and then divide it. It has really been a very big help in my and my daughter's life. Also, the food quality is very good with lots of fruit and vegetables, oil and rice. It's given us a fresh start, like moving into a new home."

Another aspect of the Food Hub and the Food Co-op is that they are sociable, adds Tsedal. "People can meet and come out of isolation as well as learn skills. As well as the food, we have also had money workshops to do with budgeting and cooking lessons. So it offers emotional and financial support, skills development and employment support, with children and parents working together, and specialist classes like cooking for diabetes." As to how long the Hub and Co-op will last, as Tsedal says, "We are continuing and we will be here until people stop needing us."

Visit: splt.org.uk

The cost of living crisis – how to cope

The cost of living crisis has been hard. Energy, food, household bills have all hit historic highs, in some cases well over 100 per cent more than they were just a few years ago. Added to other things like travel costs and soaring child-care and people are suffering. Prices still seem to be going up and up.

The energy crisis is at the heart of the crisis. There were inflationary pressures before that, and the war in Ukraine has been a significant factor, but whatever the cause, the cost of energy has caused misery across our communities. Food has also become a real problem, with rising prices caused in part by supply chain issues. It means

that household bills are enormous, and that affects everything else. If it cost £80-£90 a month for a three-person household a couple of years

ago, it's now at least twice that and public sector wages are in real terms 30 per cent lower than they were 15 years ago. Even with two people working in a household it's difficult to make ends meet – let alone those at the lower end of the income bracket who are in real hardship.

There are some things people can do about it to alleviate their situations. Firstly, some charities and community centres like The Peel and St Luke's [see left] have been very good at distributing food with schemes that get food to residents. Be in touch with them. Also, if anybody is having trouble, I'd urge them to get in touch with us. Islington Council's hardship fund, for households with combined incomes under £50,000, has helped many people.

Also, assess your levels of benefits. Even if you don't realise you could be in receipt of them, you might now be eligible. There's a council department called Islington Council Income Maximisation Team (iMAX) where they can tell you what you're eligible for, and will even apply for you.

Some people I meet –

particularly older people – think that benefits are a stigma. They want to be resilient and independent, which is noble. But we need to reach out to those people and say: you've paid your taxes and it's your right to receive these funds.

There are also financial problems caused by the slowing down of the economy and again, I'd say, come to us. We see lots of jobs and I get news every week about weekly apprenticeships and schemes. So if anybody's worried about work please email me. This is particularly important if you're coming to an end of a job and need another as soon as possible. Also, there are lots of jobs for young people at the moment: from TfL to laboratory technicians for the local

community – we just need to make sure they're getting to the right people.

There are longer-term things we should do to boost the economy, and one surefire way to do this

would be to start a massive house-building programme to increase supply. This would in time help to solve high house prices and rents as well. There are pressures against this as there are vested interests in higher house prices, but this would really help, and it would keep younger, priced-out people in the area. A massive 1945-style housebuilding programme would act against the supply chain problems.

As we also need to be greener, we should be looking at renewable energies. And

here I'd like to say that it's about time we nationalised our utilities industries, so we can create

better energy security. While we produce about 60 per cent of our own energy, for some reason this country also uses the most expensive electricity, gas, coal etcetera and we're overpaying for our nuclear energy because private company owners are maximising profits. So let's look at the causes of the cost of living crisis, and try to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

Email Ben.Mackmurdie@islington.gov.uk



HISTORY

10

Steps in time

A century on, historian Mark Aston looks at writer Arnold Bennett's 'dingy' and 'sordid' Clerkenwell and finds that some themes have persisted...

BY MARK ASTON

This year we commemorate the centenary of the publication of *Riceyman Steps* by Arnold Bennett (1867–1931). It's a claustrophobic exercise in post-World War I 'slum fiction', and an intense psychological exploration of obsession, in which the author backdrops a sordid and down-at-heel Clerkenwell. Did Bennett, however, intensify the district's known down-to-earth, working-class character solely for literary effect? Or was his work, as one contemporary review suggested, "the last word in detailed actuality?" Certainly, the author's depiction of Clerkenwell 100 years ago starts with a jolt of reality.

"On an autumn afternoon of 1919 a hatless man with a slight limp might have been observed ascending the gentle, broad acclivity of Riceyman Steps, which lead from King's Cross Road up to Riceyman Square, in the great metropolitan industrial district of Clerkenwell".

So begins Bennett's story of miserly second-hand bookseller Henry Earlforward, the main protagonist. Set in in the north-west of the district, the titular steps (now Grade II-listed Gwynne Place), where Henry kept his shop, is based on the thoroughfare that leads up from King's Cross Road to Granville Square – Bennett's 'Riceyman Square'.

Literature has not always been kind to Clerkenwell. In this period of post-First World War austerity, we witness Henry Earlforward dream of the area's golden, bygone age of a "murmuring green land of medicinal springs, wells, [and] streams with mills on their banks" but, in reality, he, wife Violet and maid dwelled in a "dingy and sordid neighbourhood where existence was a dangerous and difficult adventure in almost frantic quest of food, drink and shelter,



Granville Square (aka Riceyman Square), early 20c.

Riceyman Steps by Hanslip Fletcher (1924)

A large number of poor people lived hand-to-mouth

where the familiar and beloved landmarks were public-houses". This echoes Dickens' *Oliver Twist*'s of 1837, where the first impression of Clerkenwell was, "a dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen...". Worse, in *The Nether World* (1889), George Gissing describes the area as "barely human".

Contemporary press reviews, however, promoted *Riceyman Steps*' gritty realism: "The scene is laid in sordid surroundings ... a sombre corner of Clerkenwell" said the *Western Daily Press*. The narrative is "weighed down by temperamental flaws, flaws... curable in Mayfair, but which, in Clerkenwell, dragged these poor creatures to their doom", said the *Daily News*. Decisively, *The Truth* newspaper con-

sidered Bennett's work "the last word in detailed actuality".

From 1900, Clerkenwell was under the administration of the Metropolitan Borough of Finsbury. By 1923, Finsbury's diminishing population was estimated at 77,280 with its daytime workforce population around double this figure.

Its residents were no strangers to hardship. At the end of the 19th century, Charles Booth's poverty survey noted that Finsbury was one of the poorest and most overcrowded districts in London; 45 per cent in poverty compared to a London average of 31 per cent, with over 53 per cent of inhabitants living in overcrowded conditions.

Conditions were no better in the



Arnold Bennett, c.1921

All images courtesy of Islington Local History Centre

aftermath of World War I. The people of Finsbury and Clerkenwell faced a difficult future. The continuing lack of decent housing, ongoing unemployment and economic challenges prevailed into the 1920s, and the deprivation that had characterised the area at the end of the 19th century had continued into the next.

At the time of Riceyman Steps' publication, the findings of the Medical Officer of Health (MOH) endorsed what residents already knew – that the borough's housing problem was chronic and among the worst in London. On one hand, there were a large number of poor 'submerged' people, living hand-to-mouth, who could not pay an economic rent for houses or tenements. These were accompanied by a class of people who could pay an economic rent, but resorted to stinting on food and clothing. On the other hand, due to its proximity to the City, land in the borough was so expensive that proposed housing schemes were rejected simply due to cost. Here is an example from the MOH's report presenting a plea from a Clerkenwell resident desperate for accommodation:

"I have a wife and eight children in two very small rooms measuring 12 feet by 10, owing to the lack of space four of my children sleep in one bed and four in another. I have been 20 miles of London to seek a place... I work night work... and myself sleep in an arm chair".

Fortunately, a better home for this family was found in Ilford. At each meeting of Finsbury Council throughout 1923, properties were recorded where serious health

concerns had been raised: verminous rooms, smashed windows, leaky roofs, insufficient WCs and accumulated filth. At 1923's end, 212 dwelling houses were deemed unfit but not so dangerous that they could not be inhabited.

In parallel, Bennett wrote: "I do think you're a little hard on Riceyman Square," he [Henry] said ...She [Violet] replied gaily and firmly: "Not one house without a broken pane!" Although their loyal charwoman and maid servant Elsie Sprickett's squalid lodgings in Riceyman Square were comparatively spacious with three families (ten people) living in a total of nine rooms, "the landlord of the house was too poor to do necessary repairs". Two decades earlier, Charles Booth's survey found the square (Granville) "fairly comfortable", its inhabitants enjoying "good ordinary earnings" but, a little to the south, Bennett remarks that "Coldbath Square easily surpassed even Riceyman Square in squalor and foulness". This a definite decline in living standards since Booth declared Coldbath Square a mixed inhabitation, "some comfortable, others poor".

Squalor and acute welfare problems went hand-in-hand with housing issues. In 1923, Finsbury's infant mortality rate stood at 60.7 per 1,000 births; the highest in London being Holborn at 79/1,000. Causes of death included measles (357 deaths in 1923), diphtheria (317) and tuberculosis (193). Suggestions for reducing the infant mortality rate included open air nurseries, a massage clinic, day creches, cooking classes and lectures and instruction in Italian for Clerkenwell's substantial Italian

population. Another concern was the lack of public baths and laundries in the borough. By 1918, every borough in London had one or the other or both, except Finsbury. Discussions about providing these facilities began in 1923 but, as with new housing, were shelved due to cost. It took another five years before the issue was properly tackled, when an incoming Labour council recognised the desperate need for action:

"Out of 20,005 families living in the Finsbury Borough in 1929, 4,917 shared a single room and 7,253 lived in two rooms. Most had no bath or wash house. 4,248 families lived in block dwellings with need of a better bath and washing facilities. Of the Borough's 12,000 dwellings no more than 500, or 4 per cent, had private baths".

However, it was not until 1933 that the people of Clerkenwell finally got their own purpose-built bath house in Merlin Street. Meanwhile Ironmonger Row Baths had opened two years earlier in the south of Finsbury.

The late 1920s witnessed positive improvements of housing and welfare conditions, with revenues from businesses supporting the municipal provision. A Maternity and Child Welfare Centre was built on Pine Street in 1927 and in the same year, the council's first effort to provide decent modern accommodation resulted in Grimaldi House in Calshot Street. Although the latter was woefully small, rehousing just 15 families, it was a start. The next decade brought much-needed housing improvements, such as the completion of the Margery Street Estate in 1933 where one of the estate blocks was named Riceyman House – extraordinary, given Bennett's uncomplimentary portrayal of Clerkenwell a decade earlier.

Bennett did not disguise the fact that he and his characters found Clerkenwell dingy and sordid, and, while the author's depiction of the district may be the last word in 'detailed actuality', in reality, it was reports from the MOH and Finsbury Council that presented the authentic and truly despondent nature of the area. Improvements eventually arrived and citizens said goodbye to the deprivations of the 1920s. Now, while poverty remains, 100 years later, ECI's fashionable character is far removed from the fictional vérité of Riceyman Steps. What might Arnold Bennett and Henry Earlforward make of the "great metropolitan industrial district of Clerkenwell" today? I think they would be pleasantly surprised.



Gabby, the Museum's community gardener

Herbal haven

The healing properties of the Museum of the Order of St John's Cloister Garden are on display this summer

The Cloister Garden at the Museum of the Order of St John's is one of Clerkenwell's great secrets. Walk into this sheltered space in the heart of the city and the stresses of life disappear. Paved and planted with paths and beds, it is far more than just a place to eat sandwiches in peace – although that's not a bad use of this sheltered space – but also somewhere designed for healing, based on the 'paradise gardens' of the ancients and stocked with medicinal herbs like rosemary, lavender, and wormwood, alluding to the medical traditions of the Order of St John which cultivated such plants for healing. This aspect is set to be brought out in the garden's Open Day on 10 June, which coincides with London Open Gardens weekend.

"The garden has several different strands," says Gabby Boraston, the Museum's community gardener. "It's partly about making it continue to look good, expanding the outreach of the museum and making family workshops which means we can get hands-on with the herbs."

The garden hasn't always been a haven. Pictures from 100 years ago show a place strewn with rubble. It was then connected with St John Street, a link that remains an aspiration. Refurbished in 2011, it was planted with several herbs from the Mediterranean – including myrtle, oregano and sage – giving it a sense of timelessness that is compounded by a stately olive

tree, somewhat over a century old, that looks as if it has been here forever. "There are a lot of different stories about where it comes from," says Gabby. "Some people say Italy, Spain and Portugal or, given the history of the Order, Jerusalem." Either way, it took 15 people to plant it and it now occupies centre stage.

The garden's medicinal herbs are being brought to the fore by Gabby, including St John's Wort, a herb noted for the alleviation of depression and similarly to the Order itself, dedicated to St John the Baptist. "I thought it would be a good idea to have lots of different types of St John's Wort," says Gabby, who has found several varieties including one that grows in Malta, which "has a significance for the Order of St John", and another from Mount Olympus in Greece, as

"Medicinal herbs are to the fore"

well as more types from other parts of Europe. "The idea is to have a lot of traditional European herbs, some of which are native and others from elsewhere including Eastern Europe as well as the Mediterranean," she says.

There's a need to prune and harvest, and Gabby aims to use those times as a workshop. The coronation, for example, created a crown-making workshop. "It's a way to use the plants for both learning and healing."

The Cloister Garden's open day is on 10 June – the same day as Open Gardens Day – exploring some of the medicinal plants in the Cloister Garden with Gabby Boraston. Visit museumstjohn.org.uk

For other gardens on London Open Gardens, see londongardenstrust.org



COMMUNITY

12

Stop in the name of love

BY SHENNA DARCHEVILLE

Reducing knife crime is a struggle that involves us all, says Shenna Darcheville, Youth Voice Lead and research coordinator of StopWatch – due to lead a workshop at The Peel

StopWatch has been around just over 10 years. It started with a coalition of lawyers and academics doing behind-the-scenes work: politics, campaigning, writing academic papers. More recently, we're being a bit more visible to the community, providing legal advice and services, workshops and education.

At The Peel we're shortly to be speaking to young people about their stop and search rights including things like how a stop should be properly conducted: what a young person should do if they are approached by the police; what to do if they're unhappy with the experience and if they are unhappy, how to make complaints.

We're also running an eight-week Youth Changemaker programme at The Peel. It will take about an hour and a half a week, and will go out to those who want to make an impact in their community. As part of this we'll go on to recruit a Youth Advisory Group – including young people at The Peel. It's because we want our work to be championed and led by young people. A lot of talk about young people happens when they're not in the room, so the group will be trained to speak for themselves. Alongside this we are also specifically looking to speak to girls and young women about their experiences with the police, as part of the StopWatch girls project. We hope to use these stories to build a national campaign and create change in the way that girls and women are handled by the police.

A lot of times, the media and police capitalise on knife-crime incidents to ramp up the need for stop and search. However, statistics show that a very small percentage of searches actually result in a weapon being taken off the streets. The focus needs to be on why young people are carrying knives, and we advocate early intervention – educating young people around the dangers and consequences of knife crime.

People underestimate what community groups like The Peel can do. When young people have somewhere they can go, and



A workshop from Stopwatch Credit Shenna Darcheville

meet people such as youth workers, they find common ground. It creates a sense of community and then everyone doesn't feel so removed from each other. Young people are often seen as a problem rather than people who can actually bring value to society. If we make them feel that way, it gives them a sense of purpose.

Some young people drift towards gangs because of a lack of role models and positive engagement outside of school hours. Increasing pressures on parents may be part of it – they cannot be on top of it all the time.

But the young people may not have anything else to do, plus there have been a lot of cuts to youth support groups. But parents also need to understand and prevent if they feel their child is going down the wrong road.

It's a matter for everyone as not all people involved in knife crime come from difficult backgrounds. If knife crime is happening in your area, it's everyone's problem and if a child has been a victim they're more susceptible to carrying a knife themselves – the key reason why the majority of young people carry knives.

The main thing to do is to look out for your child and notice changes in behaviour. See who they're hanging out with; make a point to get to know their friends. Also, don't get lulled into a false sense of security because your child is at home a lot, as social media can be a way of portraying a certain image

of themselves such as using violence to express how manly they are, to fit in as part of group and think, this makes me feel big. If that's the only way you feel like you can get a little bit of power and respect, maybe that is what you'll do.

It's girls too. In more indirect ways girls can be part of knife crime: hiding and carrying, perpetuating violence through being enablers. But again, it's lack of education. In a lot of workshops I've done, when you explain the consequences they think twice. There have been a lot of workshops with the police and many are successful. But there is an issue throughout the police force and it really is a system that needs to be reconstructed. You can have more successful community initiatives, but it's not enough. So do things with young people that are not just about crime, but are about their local communities.

There is more scope for community policing, with officers being more visible in positive circumstances – making sure that they're there in good times as well as bad. So speak to young people, be part of what they're doing, maybe help them put on events that are important to them such as music events or football tournaments, let them see you can be there when they need you and support them in positive activities. If there's a football tournament put on by the Metropolitan Police, you can show that it's possible to do positive things – and it won't be that the only time these young people will be in contact with the police is when they are stopped and searched.

Come along to our taster day at The Peel on Tuesday 13 June to hear more about both of these projects or contact Shenna@stop-watch.org for more information

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13



Winning the pools

A disabled swimming group has arrived in EC1, courtesy of Natasha Fleming from WeSwim

With its sense of leaving gravity, swimming is the perfect exercise for anyone with an impairment. Which is why the charity WeSwim is building up a reputation across London for its informal disabled swims – and it now operates in two sites in the EC1 area. Already in Ironmonger Row baths [see above] for a year and a half, WeSwim has just started at Golden Lane gym near the Barbican – and it is actively seeking new swimmers at both venues.

Natasha Fleming of WeSwim is keen to spread the word. “I used to volunteer at a similar organisation in Victoria, but I felt that there was a need for more across London,” she says. “It’s because 21 per cent of Londoners are registered disabled which is a startling figure.

“If you’ve got a disability then travelling is much more difficult, so we need lots of clubs all over London so that people can access somewhere that’s near to their home without having to get on public transport.”

Natasha is now heading up WeSwim as a full-time job, supported by a growing list of volunteers, which she is building up. “That’s important as people are giving their time to connect with others,” she says. “This is

an important factor. As well as the exercise, we’re looking at the social element: helping people to meet each other and trying to tackle loneliness and isolation, which can be a real challenge for people with disabilities.” It also helps that it is good value, as disabled people are less likely to have disposable incomes.”

The sessions are obviously about swimming in its various forms. But they also span what Natasha calls “water confidence” and offer people the chance to be in a non-judgemental, supportive environment alongside what she calls “disability allies”. No pool prowess is needed, she adds. “Some people just do physio, others just come along for a bit of a chat.”

“It is for the whole spectrum of abilities”

The groups are inclusive. Adults and children with physical and learning disabilities – including autism – are included and people’s abilities vary hugely. “We’ve got some people who have literally just started to learn to swim, and we’ve got one visually impaired man who swam the Channel last year. It really is across the whole spectrum of abilities.”

Up to 12 people come to each session so that WeSwim can keep it close to a one-to-one service – one volunteer to one swimmer – and also so the sessions remain undaunting and inclusive. A hoist

is available at each venue.

The customers are delighted. “I’ve been meaning to start exercising for years since becoming Type 1 diabetic,” said Bob, who has a damaged eye and unclear speech after a motorbike crash in 2013. “This club has encouraged me to get exercising – and the staff don’t look at me or speak to me as if I’m weird, which regularly happens in some public spaces. Every Friday night, I now have a place where I can get fitter, improve my health, and make new local friends.”

Caroline, whose son has autism, said, “It has been a godsend for us”, while Tracey had been looking for a disability swim activity for her son, who has a learning disability. “I thought my son would really benefit and he agreed to go. Now WeSwim has become a big part of his life: a community he feels part of every week. He has fun with the volunteers and is increasing his social skills.” Brian (not his real name) who had a life-changing accident, says, “Three months after the accident I found WeSwim and after three weeks of attendance was swimming full lengths of the pool with a slightly modified breaststroke – an unexpected milestone in my recovery. I was euphoric.” Although he has several scars, he didn’t fear displaying his body at WeSwim – and now intends to become a volunteer swimmer.

WeSwim costs £2 per session.

Golden Lane pool is 7pm–8pm on Wednesday evenings.

Ironmonger Row is 6.45–7.45 on Friday evenings.

Volunteers are also wanted, apply through the website: weswim.club

COLUMN

We need a community response to ASB

BY CLLR VALERIE BOSSMAN-QUARSHIE

Antisocial behaviour – often known simply as ASB – is one of the key issues that constituents raise with me. They are sometimes very angry about it, and feel disempowered – while ASB erodes their quality of life, they very often don’t feel they can do anything about it.

There are very broad types of ASB ranging from small things that are daily niggles to actual crimes. The first can be the easiest to resolve, although they can come down to habitual behaviour and can sometimes be hard to change. It may be someone perceiving menace where it isn’t the case, or it could mean annoyances like noise from other flats – people playing loud music, listening to the television at higher volumes, that sort of thing.

Then comes a family of larger complaints. Sometimes constituents find people smoking cannabis on their estate stairwell, say, and feel understandably intimidated. They also, quite justifiably, don’t like it when people pee in what they assume are quiet corners. There is the dumping of bikes on pavements, and litter, and persistent petty theft. Then there are harder crimes like phone and bag-snatching, robbery with menace, doorstep thefts and so on.

Sometimes the people flagging these up either don’t approach the police because they don’t think it’s a ‘proper’ crime, and don’t want to bother them, or they don’t think the police will do anything about it. That then starts another argument – that they have no support against the ASB.

Some take pictures of the ASB and take it to the Nextdoor website. And of course, some escalate their ASB complaints to Islington Council, sometimes via councillors like me, and to people like our local community safety team member Peter Cook.

However small they may appear, these ASB factors are meaningful to people. At one level they show that we live in quite a fearful society. People might see perfectly innocent kids wearing clothes that they think are threatening, and that might be misconstrued. Here,

talking is the best thing, and can break down the perceived barriers.

I suspect we should think about ASB from the grass roots up. We have to almost go back to how we used to be, and instil community structures which will lessen the possibility of ASB. That might involve getting to know each other better, so we can raise issues with other parents and neighbours in a safe space. It might mean having neighbourhood meetings where people can voice their opinions and suggestions to local councillors, among others. Once we know about it, we can then take it to the police if necessary, who have specialists to deal with ASB. But with these community inputs on ASB, we’re not always expecting action to be a top-down thing. This way, many complaints will be alleviated before they are escalated.

There’s another factor about ASB complaints, which is that some of the people complained about have mental health issues. Then it becomes more difficult, as a multi-agency approach is needed. There is a dire lack of support for mental health in the community, which is a shame. Even if we did have support these people, it’s not always easy to resolve and may need a bit of give-and-take, and possibly medical referrals.

I propose there should be an ASB app that will be easy to use and will log any problems. Then there should be a level of community advocacy: people who are able to build bridges and stop the alienation that leads to distrust and ultimately to ASB. If people feel they know each other, then the potential of ASB is far lessened.

Having this kind of buffer zone between people and the police is a good idea. But as to the police themselves, if there were more on the beat, that also would be a good move on ASB. It would also be a good way to find out whether it is worth escalating an ASB complaint, or whether it is something that can be sorted by a quiet chat. Either way, having a system of neighbourly advocates, backed up by an App, would be a way to start. There’s something to work with there.

LETTERS 14

Tubeway barmy

Ojas Singh Bhanot
Rosebery Avenue, EC1

Living in Clerkenwell, a vibrant area with a rich history and thriving culture, I feel that one aspect that has been missing here for too long is a Tube station. A station at Mount Pleasant was originally proposed by the Metropolitan Railway in 1910 and the plans even secured Parliamentary approval, but were never brought to fruition. Yet in the present, perhaps it is worth reconsidering this important project for the local community.

The main reason why a Tube station is needed at Clerkenwell is the large gap between King's Cross and Farringdon. People here have to travel longer distances to access either station, with both being beyond short walking distance. This means that the area is not as well-connected to other parts of London as it could be. By bridging this gap, a new station at Mount Pleasant would provide excellent connectivity to the rest of London, being situated on three major lines.

Following the opening of the Elizabeth line, Farringdon has become a major transport hub and is set to be one of the busiest stations in the UK. Building a new Clerkenwell station to serve the local residents would help reduce some of the passenger load and ease congestion at Farringdon. As more people would be brought within walking distance of the Tube, public transport usage will increase which will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

An Underground station at Clerkenwell would also boost the local economy and society. It would bring more visitors to the area, especially to lively spaces such as Exmouth Market, supporting local businesses and creating more jobs. The quality of life for residents in

the area will also improve, with less time spent commuting meaning more time to spend on leisure or social activities. It would also reduce traffic congestion in the area, which would have a positive impact on air quality and noise pollution.

In conclusion, the project to create a new Tube station at Clerkenwell is an important one for the local community. The benefits of this project are clear: it would improve connectivity, boost the local economy, improve quality of life for residents. It is time to take action and pursue this improvement that can make a tangible difference to people's lives.

Location finder

Elizabeth Seward,
Charles Dickens Museum, WC1



I was very interested to see the painting reproduced in *EC1 Echo 21* (Geo-guesser, P11) and think I can help in identifying the geography. I work on a collection of old photos of London at the Charles Dickens Museum in Doughty Street. Most photos relate to scenes in Dickens' novels so there are many relating to Clerkenwell, Holborn and Finsbury. I also live in Holborn myself.

On reading your article I retrieved the image [above], which is clearly that view which features in the very charming painting by Harold Steggle of the East London Group. It is catalogued as follows: 'Photographic print, black and white. View of 'Hockley in the Hole' showing degraded homes in the area. Back Hill (Clerkenwell) can be seen to the left of the image and Warner Street to the right. Building to

the right of the image next to the lamppost, appears to be a public House, with signage reading 'Special Scotch sales'.

The photo is included in the archive at the museum with reference to Dickens' *Oliver Twist* where Hockley in the Hole features in relation to its closeness to Fagin's Den. I do hope this is useful.

Site inspection

Dr Keith Baker
Amwell Street, EC1

I was looking at your great website. I wondered if there is an online archive of previous editions?

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dear Keith and other readers, all our back copies are now on the website to be read or downloaded, plus constantly updated content relating to EC1. Please visit www.eclecho.co.uk

Rolling your Rs

Lindsay Nance,
EC1

I'm sorry to sound like an intolerable pedant, but, as an authority on the use of the apostrophe, I must ask why, on page 3 (*Echo 21* column: Step up the three R's), there is an apostrophe in "R's"? Plurals do not require an apostrophe unless possession is present. Fifty years ago, a primary school headteacher taught us an infallible method of determining when an apostrophe is necessary. It has never failed me, both as a student and as a teacher.

Submit your letters

Do you have an opinion on an issue affecting EC1?

Email your letters to ec1echo@peelinstitute.org.uk by 20 July

LISTINGS

Sadler's Wells dance class
Part of Carers Week 5-11 June
Friday 9 June, 2-4pm
Sadler's Wells Theatre,
Rosebery Avenue EC1

Find a release from everyday stresses and strains with this creative dance class. Take part seated or standing, with refreshments to follow.

To book
Call 020 7281 3319
Email info@islingtoncarershub.org

City Fest
Northampton Square
Fri 2 of June, 12-5pm

An event on campus but open to local residents with various activities.

Free
Visit events.citystudents.co.uk/event/cityfest/84126

Creative Hangouts with Allie's art club
Vibast Community Centre,
167 Old St EC1V 9NH

On the first Sunday of the month. Have fun, make friends and be creative. Art supplies available, but you're welcome to bring your own and any ideas or projects you'd like to make with us - or just come for a cuppa and a chat.

£0-£11.55
Visit eventbrite.co.uk/e/creative-hangouts-tickets-557747556957

Cook and eat session
Monday 5 June, 11am-1pm
St. Luke's Cookery School, St. Luke's Community Centre,
90 Central St EC1V 8AJ

In each of the classes you will cook alongside our community chef to learn new skills and enjoy a shared meal together with other adults.

Visit slpt.org.uk
Call 020 7549 8176

Women's Group
Every Friday, during term time, 12-3pm
Brunswick Close Estate
Community Hall, Mulberry court, Tompion Street EC1V

A weekly community-wide activity for women of all ages. Join us for a coffee, social gatherings and outings.

For more information
Email scarlett@peelinstitute.org.uk

Dish 'n' Jam
Friday 30 June, 6-9pm
The Peel, 3 Corners Centre,
Northampton Road EC1R OHU

A monthly event that merges food and music. This month we are celebrating Pride, and there will be live entertainment. We encourage you to bring a culinary dish of your choice to share with other attendees.

Free
Email admin@peelinstitute.org.uk

Under 8s Community Wardrobe - A Baby Item Swap Event
Sat 1st July, 11am-1pm
St Luke's Community Centre,
90 Central St EC1V 8AJ

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
Email scarlett@peelinstitute.org.uk

London Sound Project presents... FOUND.
Tuesday 4th July, 7pm
Crypt on The Green, St James's Church Garden
Clerkenwell Close EC1R OEA

The London Sound Project (choir) perform a summer setlist from the mellow to the majestic at one of London's coolest venues.

£12.50
Visit <https://tinyurl.com/LSPFound>

Windrush Day 2023
The Peel, 3 Corners Centre,
Northampton Road EC1R OHU

For the 75th anniversary of Windrush Day, there are several events across Islington. Jeana Kidd, childcare organiser at The Peel, asked her grand-aunt, 103 about the journey. "It was challenging. You came to make a difference to the so-called mother country, and were chosen to make your family proud and better your life chances. 'Good morning' was seen like a foreign language even when said with a smile but the sight of other black people lifted one's spirits and allowed one to feel whole again."

For events
blackhistorymonth.org.uk/section/the-windrush

Workspace Offer

Are you an Islington resident starting a social impact business? Could you benefit from joining a community of change makers in a co-working space? If so, book a free trial day at Better Space.

Better Space is a co-working space with community at its heart, offering a range of flexible and affordable coworking memberships, with further discounts to Islington residents. As well as this, we also offer business support workshops, programmes and a wide range of events.

The fully accessible venue is a partnership between City, University of London and Islington Council. We are building an inclusive community that not only wish to do better business - but also want to share knowledge and skills with residents in and around Islington to inspire and develop more purposeful businesses and regenerate the local area.

Head to www.betterspace.london to book a tour or a taster day and sign up to the newsletter to learn about the upcoming opportunities. You can also follow Better Space on Instagram and LinkedIn @betterspacelondon.

Quiz by David Rossi

1. What does the letter 'S' stand for in relation to mobile SIM cards?
2. What nationality was the soothsayer Nostradamus?
3. Which nut is in the middle of Ferrero Rocher chocolates?
4. Who has made more gold and platinum albums than any other female artist?
5. Vanilla counts from which flower?
6. Which country in the world drinks the most coffee per capita?
7. Discounting Andorra la Vella, the capital of Andorra, what is the highest capital city in Europe?
8. Which country has the most islands in the world?
9. What the letters HP stand for on the label of HP Sauce?
10. What is the least number of countries that you can cross to get to Norway from North Korea?

Answers 1. Subscribe / 2. French / 3. Hazelnut / 4. Barbra Streisand / 5. Orchid (the seed pod of the orchid Vanilla planifolia) / 6. Finland / 7. Madrid / 8. Sweden (it has approximately 270,000 islands) / 9. Houses of Parliament / 10. One (Russia)

Answers to Crossword 4 in EC1 Echo April/May 23

ACROSS: 1 Shindig, 5 Auction, 9 Amsterdam, 10 Acorn, 11 Lucid, 12 Easy-going, 13 Warm up, 14 Thirteen, 16 Guts, 17 Bourbon, 23 Balm, 24 Digest, 27 Beer mat, 28 Cyanide, 29 Alien, 30 Chemistry

DOWN: 1 Scallywag, 2 Insecurity, 3 Dreadful, 4 Gadget, 5 Atmosphere, 6 Clanger, 7 Idolised, 8 Nonagon, 15 Dogmatic, 18 Origami, 19 Lottery, 20 Salmon, 21 Desist, 22 Babka, 25 Yeti, 26 Ache

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- Every penny of income from EC1 Echo helps us deliver more journalism in EC1
- The cost of producing and distributing the EC1 Echo significantly exceeds our bi-monthly income
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