

FitzroviaNews



Fitzrovia News is produced by residents and volunteers and distributed free to all businesses and residential addresses in Fitzrovia

Issue 127 Winter 2012

EVICTED!

35 hospital workers 'treated like criminals'

Terrified hospital workers have told of receiving eviction notices a month before Christmas.

The University London Hospital Charity has sold the housing of the 35 local workers (in three blocks in Cleveland Street and one in New Cavendish Street) to off-shore landlords, Pendragon Properties Limited.

"Two men knocked on my door, one with a security uniform with 'dog handler' on it," a resident of over ten years' occupancy told *Fitzrovia News*.

"They served the eviction papers and made us sign to say we had received them," she stated.

"For those who did not answer they taped the notice on their door and photographed it to prove it was there. And a letter was put under the door.

By OUR NEWS TEAM

Another came by post the next day. We were made to feel like criminals. I have never felt anything like it before.

"It was terrifying, and I was left badly shaken by it. They really put the frighteners on us.

"It was like something out of a television crime programme.

"They have told us we have got to be out by January 31."

Since the sale nobody is dealing with emergencies such as flooding or light failure.

Nurses, doctors and cleaning staff received letters in October telling them they had a new landlord who required vacant possession of the small flats.

At a meeting arranged by the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association in November tenants told a legal advisor from the Central London Law Centre about their circumstances.

Fitzrovia News spoke to several of these tenants who work shifts at the nearby hospitals.

Many have little chance of finding similar accommodation nearby and could face difficulties continuing to work at the hospitals.

This local housing shortage is now exacerbated by the plans of the new owners to turn the former hospital workers' studio flats into luxury pied-a-terre accommodation, a trend of super-gentrification that has been gathering pace over the last



How Marcus Cooper marketed the housing to wealthy Hong Kong buyers few years.

The tenants were also shocked to find that their homes were listed on websites as "investment opportunities" before they were notified of the new landlords. The flats were being marketed to foreign investors and even featured in a Hong Kong newspaper.

Pendragon Properties Limited are registered as a company off-shore in Guernsey. According to the Guernsey Registry, Pendragon were formed by Barclays Corporate Wealth in July 2012. Pendragon have appointed the Marcus

Cooper Group in Finchley Road to manage the properties. In turn Cooper have teamed up with Oakmayne to give the properties a makeover before selling them with 999 year leases.

Estate Agents Fraser & Co are marketing the properties in the UK and in Hong Kong and the far east. In October Fraser & Co organised an exhibition in Hong Kong. This follows the recent marketing of the neighbouring yet-to-be-built Fitzroy Place apartments which were promoted to far eastern investors.

Most of the hospital workers are currently paying rent of between £800 and £1500 a month. The tenants have been instructed by solicitors acting for Pendragon Properties to pay their rent to Pendragon's offices at the same address as the Marcus Cooper Group in Finchley Road.

Marcus Cooper and Oakmayne are promoting the flats as investments and buy-to-let suggesting a rental income of more than £2,000 a month.

Barclays Corporate Wealth make a number of claims to "social responsibility" including: "Investing in and supporting local communities", and "Acting fairly, ethically and with integrity in everything that we do".

Fitzrovia News contacted Barclays Corporate Wealth and suggested that the acquisition and quick sell-off of these properties is one of the worst examples of corporate greed that we have seen in our neighbourhood. We told them they are not only going to evict these tenants but they did not even have the courtesy to tell them before they started advertising the properties on the international market. Furthermore, Pendragon Properties Limited, the company they created, is based off-shore and will benefit from a tax advantage.

Barclays Corporate Wealth declined to comment.



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Your Letters

Turn Alfred Place into open space immediately

The underused Alfred Place and North Crescent have for some time been seen as a potential open space.

The idea has now been enshrined in the Fitzrovia Area Action Plan which identifies it as a potential open space to, in small part meet, the desperate open space deficiency in Fitzrovia. The average open space per resident in the London

Best chance to increase green space

Fitzrovia is short of public open space and the situation is getting worse as the working and residential populations only continue to rise.

Fitzrovia News readers will be aware of the postage stamp of a park planned for Chitty Street as part of the 'Saatchi block' redevelopment, which was turned down by Camden councillors but then approved by the mayor of London. Since the transformation of Crabtree Fields from car park to real park, Fitzrovia has seen no new public open space in a quarter of a century.

Part of solving problem may

Borough of Camden is 20 square metres. The average for Fitzrovia is 0.7 sq m! As the Council owns the land there is no need to wait until the formal process of making the plan statutory.

Work on Alfred Place should start immediately and to achieve this a campaign group has been set up under the umbrella of Friends of Open Spaces of

Fitzrovia. Those involved will remember the long campaign led by Charlotte Street Association to get Crabtree Fields, and they know that every gain by the community has to be fought for.

What needs to be done to make our park in Alfred Place a reality?

The project is supported by our councillors and they must

now ensure that the Council is formally committed to the project and is included in the forward programme with a timetable for implementation.

Consultants need to be appointed – landscape architects with a proven track record for this kind of small urban park to prepare, in consultation with the community, an imaginative and generous scheme with costings.

Secure funding, this will not be easy in the current climate but there are sources including Transport for London who have a budget for this sort of project: \$106 million (planning gain), the expenditure of which is not at present prioritised by local councillors let alone the community. Also no doubt the new Fitzrovia Partnership will wish to contribute generously in furtherance of their purported aim to improve the area and for the direct benefit of their employees.

It is a rare opportunity to secure a truly imaginative and high quality space that must not be compromised.

If, due to funding difficulties, it needs to be implemented in stages, so be it. Better than settle for an austerity scheme of a bit of fancy paving and a few benches.

Don't settle for second best. Campaign for Green Fitzrovia Open Space, and a splendid park in Alfred Place.

Max Neufeld,
Colville Place.

Send your letters to Fitzrovia News, 39 Tottenham Street, London W1T 4RX, or email news@fitzrovia.org.uk



ALFRED PLACE could be used to increase the area's open space

be to turn Alfred Place, which lies between Chenies Street and Store Street, into some public open space. This would not be a straightforward task – a cycle hire station now sits at its southern end, for example. But as a broad road, already lined with trees down one side, it could provide valuable green space for residents and local workers.

With Friends of Fitzrovia Open Spaces, we can take this forward by setting up a working

party to liaise with Camden council to make this a reality. It has already been identified by a recent study of Fitzrovia's potential for open spaces as the best prospect for gaining new green space.

To get involved, please email alfredplaceparkcampaign@gmail.com or call me on 07584 407 456.

Adam Harrison,
ward councillor

Church yard space needs cherishing

At St Giles we're currently working with Camden Council and a team of landscape architects to improve the design of the churchyard, just about the only public open space this side of New Oxford Street.

Together with the adjacent Phoenix Gardens, residents and workers flock here on warm days or at the first signs of spring, to sip coffee and eat lunch, to walk the dog, let the children play or brush up on their Tai Chi.

The facilities and greenery need improving and we hope

that with community involvement we can make a modest difference. It's just the same in Fitzrovia, where public open space is also at a premium. Everywhere has its property value, but these breathing spaces are priceless.

They are probably the closest we ever get in these close-packed streets to the old common land.

Such times are long past, but the human need behind them remains.

We are more than the sum of our workplace, as much as we

rely upon it. We need these small patches of grass where the sun can cast a shadow, a bird hover on a branch.

Many have complicated and restless working routines or personal timetables. It's always been the same. All the more reason, then, to get out for a while, walk round the block and look up. These open spaces need our cherishing. They take the heat out of small, daily conflicts. They help us to breathe again.

Alan Carr,
St Giles church.

Our pub is part of the community

As long standing residents of Fitzrovia, more recently of almost eight years, and previously of six years, we were somewhat upset that the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association (FNA) made a representation to Westminster Council, regarding our forthcoming licence review.

At no time were we aware that the FNA had a complaint against us. Had we been approached we would have done our utmost to rectify it. We are a family business, and also residents of Fitzrovia. And we embrace the "village" we live in.

We support the *Fitzrovia News*, by advertising in it. We do not use our 12 am licence for the sake of the residents. We do not empty our glass recycling into the bin after 9 pm, we introduced the barriers of our own volition. And regularly clean and wash surrounding pavements.

Access to Charlotte Place is always kept clear, and we work in harmony with all the other businesses and residents who reside here. Including two very elderly neighbours, of which one is in a wheelchair (the only person locally who we know of).

We organised the Jubilee celebrations, decorating Charlotte Place. Your own newspaper covered it! We considered ourselves to be part of this community, and good neighbours.

Should you have any reason to challenge this, or wish to put a complaint to us, we offer our top room for any meetings you would like to hold.

We hope that should there be any cause for complaint in the future, you will contact us directly so we can address it and clear it up as soon as possible.

Debi & Alan, Duke of York public house, Rathbone Street



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The end of Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre

By News Reporters

Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association is to be served notice to quit the premises it has occupied in Tottenham Street for nearly 40 years. Camden Council intends to seek vacant possession of the building in the new year and put it up for sale.

The ground and lower floors have served as the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre since 1975 and staff and volunteers will be sad to leave their much-loved home.

The Neighbourhood Association, which is a registered charity, intends to seek other accommodation of similar size in Fitzrovia to continue its community work.

The Association delivers a number of services including publishing *Fitzrovia News*, providing housing and welfare advice, community development projects for the local

Bangladeshi community, and responding to planning and licensing consultations.

The Neighbourhood Centre was created from a £54,000 "urban aid grant" which was acquired by local people in the spring of 1975.

The building was a glass shop and the first volunteers to help bring the building back into use remember shovelling lots of broken glass out of the basement which acted as a workshop underneath the shop front.

In March 1975 *The Tower* (predecessor to *Fitzrovia News*) reported that the building's owners — the Middlesex Hospital Special Trustees — had agreed to rent the shop and basement to the Fitzrovia Urban Aid Project.

In June of the same year *The Tower* reported the formation of the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association which would go on to manage the building and



employ its staff.

As part of the millennium celebrations in the year 2000 a mural was painted on the Goodge Place side of the building by mural artist Brian Barnes who was assisted by local children.

The Neighbourhood Centre became firmly established as one

of the district's landmarks and has been photographed many times.

A local housing trust is hoping to acquire the building for the benefit of the neighbourhood.

The FNA is looking to rent alternative accommodation within Fitzrovia.

More old friends forced out

Two local shops are being forced to move out to make way for the "Charlotte Street Market" deli cafe restaurant, which the owners hope will be a triple shop unit "providing local produce to the local community". Double J' sandwich bar (licensed to fill) and Eclipse hairstylists have to vacate their premises in the new year. The scale of the new premises has worried locals who fear that a three shop unit at 61 - 65 Charlotte Street will spoil the small shop units feel of the street. One resident said "Charlotte Street has always been about small scale shops which give a local feel. I am afraid that knocking three shops into one is a bad precedent. If this shop goes out of business in a few years time a large chain restaurant could move in. Already the area's individuality is being eroded."



Card offer

Christmas cards painted by All Souls Church School pupils, costing just £3 for eight, are available from the Bricklayers Arms, Gresse Street.

Low cost food

Advocacy Plus. are running a "pop up cafe" providing inexpensive lunches for the over 60s on Tuesdays from 12-2pm at the Fitzrovia Community Centre in Foley Street. Contact Pat Dobson on 020 7837 6744

More disruption on Hanway Place is threatened by new planning application

Residents and businesses around Hanway Street are worried about a planning application recently made to Westminster Council for the demolition of parts of 26 - 44 Oxford Street and permission to build a new seven storey building backing on to Hanway Street.

They fear the negative impact on close community and small businesses.

Jeremy Thomas of the Recorded Picture Company fears another two years' noise pollution and disruption after the works on the Primark store which only finished earlier this year.

"My business suffered during the last development, we endured two years of intolerable disturbance," he said. "Our tiny street was used to service all works. As a consequence we suffered continuous noise and dust pollution, limited access and sometimes full closure to our street causing total disruption. We lost staff. Dust carts could not gain entry, rubbish piled up and vermin abounded. We had to put up with aggressive and unsym-



pathetic workers for two years. No one would help us despite paying incredibly high business rates for years. Hanway Street is a conservation area. This tiny working street is the sole access for all demolition and construction. If the developers are given the go ahead we need an enforceable commitment that the street will not be closed. Our access needs to be maintained. It could ultimately force businesses, small independent shops and restaurants to close in a time of recession."

Tim Derbyshire runs "On The Beat" records at number 22, one of the last independent record shops in London. "Hanway Street cannot withstand any more pressures or setbacks," he said. "I was nearly driven out of the street and out of business by the demolition of the Virgin Megastore interior and the construction of the Primark store."

"I lost business and passing trade because the street was continually blocked, closed, rubbish strewn, smelly and rat infested."

"The site workmen were rude and obstructive."

"Despite paying high rates we were never compensated in any way for the losses to our business. We have only just returned to normal and now it all starts again"

"My livelihood and health are at stake. This development is likely to finally kill off Hanway Street which it so nearly did recently."

Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association (registered charity) is looking for new premises

We are seeking to rent approximately 65 square metres of office and community space. The new premises should be within Fitzrovia (an area bounded by Euston Road, Gower Street, Oxford Street, and Great Portland Street) and ideally would be on a ground floor and basement with a window onto the street, or on upper floors.

We deliver a number of services including publishing

Fitzrovia News, providing housing and welfare advice, community development projects for the local Bangladeshi community, older people, and responding to planning and licensing consultations. We are recognised as a community group by Westminster and Camden councils.

If you have suitable premises to let, please contact us on

020 7580 4576 or email fna@fitzrovia.org.uk

News in brief

Sales of 170 flats at **Fitzroy Place**, on the site of the former Middlesex hospital, have reached **£280 million**. Of these only **30 per cent had been sold to UK buyers**, with the rest going to buyers from Europe, Asia, India, Russia and the United Arab Emirates. Completion is expected in late 2014.

Sir Robert McAlpine, the construction company building Fitzroy Place, are sponsoring **Christmas hampers for Fitzrovia's pensioners**. If you know of a neighbour or friend who would like to receive one please contact Barb at the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre 0207 580 4576.

Land Securities are currently preparing a planning application for the redevelopment of **Oxford House** building at 70-88 Oxford Street.

Plans are being drawn up to **demolish the Post Office sorting office**, Rathbone Place, Newman Street. Great Portland Estates want to build a large mixed use scheme (offices, residential and retail) with a throughway between Rathbone Place and Newman Street and a landscaped open space at the centre.

The Fitzrovia News archive project is creating a digital archive of all printed editions of *Tower*, *Fitzrovia Neighbourhood News*, and *Fitzrovia News* community newspapers. The archive will contain readable microfiche-like images of every page of every edition and will include a searchable text summary. Check it out on <http://archive.fitzrovia.org.uk>

The Margaret Pyke Centre building on the corner of Charlotte and Tottenham Streets will be completely demolished and a new building built. The building is owned by Derwent London PLC.

The Margaret Pyke Centre is a registered charity and provides a number of sexual health services and counselling. It is one of the biggest contraceptive centres in the world, seeing between 600 and 900 patients per week. Where the Margaret Pyke Centre will move to is not yet known.

The present building was constructed in the 1960s on the site of Jay's Jewellers and a bomb damaged site. The jewellers became infamous in 1947 when it was the scene of a robbery and subsequent murder in Charlotte Street. The incident is retold by **Paul Willetts** (who will be profiled in a future *Fitzrovia News*) in his book **North Soho 999**.

Supermarkets soon to increase to 12 in Fitzrovia - can small shops fight back?

Fears that the latest Tesco to open in the area could put independent local traders out of business have increased.

The new one opened on November 14 at the corner of New Cavendish Street and Hanson Street.

"I am thinking of selling up after nearly 60 years trading here," said Christine Vasili who runs Christine's Stores opposite, and lives above it.

"Already I am having difficulty getting my deliveries because Tesco lorries are taking up all the parking spaces.

"Also they make a lot of noise both early in the morning and late at night, which means I have difficulty getting sleep. The big trolleys are delivered before the supermarket opens at 6am, and there is noise until it closes at 11pm.

"It is not just me who will suffer loss of trade as well, but at least four shops nearby and the garage shop round the corner in Clipstone Street. These are all shops that have become part of the community.

"There are just too many supermarkets all around us in this small area. We are also worried that because Tesco sells cheap alcohol, people will buy it there, and then drink



CHRISTINE VASILI

it in the street, make a noise and vomit when they have had too much.

"We have all written letters to the council objecting to it but we have been ignored. One of us was told by the council we were wasting our time. It seems the big chains can do what they want."

Mukesh Shah with his wife Priti has run the Om Sai News at 63a Cleveland Street for the past year. As well as newspapers, tobacco, sweets, drinks, snacks and basic groceries they have recently started stocking a range of homemade Indian snacks including chakri sticks and puris. Mukesh said "We feel our business



MUKESH SHAH

is quite threatened by the new Tesco supermarket round the corner. The supermarkets sell goods e.g. bread and milk cheaper than we can buy them from our suppliers. We just can't compete with that. We are feeling the pinch because TFL recently withdrew our oyster card facility so we fear a loss of custom but we can offer a human touch and a personal service with a smile so we hope our regulars stay with us"

Formal consultation on Fitzrovia Area Action Plan begins

A planning document to shape the future of Fitzrovia is undergoing formal public consultation before it is adopted as part of Camden's planning guidance next year. The plan will then be submitted to the Secretary of State in early 2013 to be followed by an examination in public in the summer of 2013.

The Area Action Plan will develop a vision for the area shared by the Council, residents, landowners, ensuring that growth takes place in a way that balances the need for residential, institutional and commercial uses. The plan aims to co-ordinate development proposals across a number of significant sites and ensure that growth delivers the maximum benefits to the area. For more information about the Plan see <http://tinyurl.com/cqs6ln9> or contact Bloomsbury ward councillors, Adam Harrison, Milena Nuti or Abdul Quadir.

Drinking in moderation in Fitzrovia's well-loved pubs

By ANGELA LOVELEY

Those miserablists at Westminster Council are at it again, or so it seems. Last year it was double yellow lines and stopping people driving their beloved cars into the West End and parking for free, this year it is stopping pubs using the streets as an extension of their licensed premises.

It's easy to poke fun at Westminster Council. They could be bashed for a number of things, but this is not one of them.

Over the last five years since the ban on smoking in public places came into effect on 1 July 2007 there have been increasing numbers of people standing outside pubs mixing with the smokers. It is now commonplace to find more people standing outside than inside.

The sheer numbers of people now gathered drinking outside many of the pubs is a source of noise nuisance and concern about public safety. Those living nearby the pubs, particularly older people, have complained about noise and difficulty in passing along the pavements.

Over the past year or so Westminster Council have been having a quiet word with publicans and asking them to restrict their customers to the licensed area, which is either inside the pub or on the forecourt. Some pubs have placed barriers in an effort to keep customers to remain within them. In other cases Westminster have reviewed the licence (which means the licence could be revoked) and introduced conditions.

Camden Council have also been concerned about the increasing use of the pavements



for drinking. Both Camden and Westminster operate controlled drinking zones (CDZs) throughout their boroughs which means that it's an offence to drink alcohol in any public place after being asked not to do so by a police officer or police community support officer.

The impetus for the CDZs was street drinking by rough sleepers not customers from pubs standing in the street. However, there is now more nuisance from these "legitimate drinkers" than those not fortunate enough to have such media sympathy.

Tracy Bird the landlady of the Newman Arms has hit back at Westminster Council and started a campaign to allow customers to stand beyond the confines of the licensed area and use the pavement and street to make merry.

And at a meeting with Westminster's licensing officers her daughter Amber, who manages the bar, apparently suggested, with a good dose of sarcasm,

that the bar staff serve the customers more slowly.

Westminster's officials didn't get the joke, or more likely didn't see the funny side and took her up on the suggestion to limit the number of drinkers crowded outside the pub.

Things got rather serious when Martin Rawlings the British Beer & Pub Association's director of pubs and leisure told the Publican's *Morning Advertiser* that "deliberately

serving slowly is potentially very dangerous" and "makes customers angry".

The news spread fast with *The Independent* reporting:

Ms Bird has launched a petition to encourage an alternative solution to the problem of outdoor drinking in the area, which has already led to licence reviews at other nearby pubs.

"We're thinking about street sharing - where they remove kerbs, railings and people aren't restricted. Or 10 hours a week when cars aren't allowed through, where we could have street theatre and dancing," said Ms Bird.

On the pub's new campaign site A Slap in the Pie it suggests adopting a Dutch engineer's urban design ideas to improve the consumer experience:

"Alternatives like Hans Monderman's creative vision for Shared Spaces. Shared space is an urban design approach which seeks to minimise demarcations between vehicle traffic and

pedestrians, often by removing features such as kerbs, road surface markings, traffic signs and regulations. This enables all users to be able to share the space on equal terms. For instance a wheelchair user wouldn't have to struggle to keep getting up and down kerbs or pushchairs negotiate small areas between lampposts, bicycle racks, trees and the like. We should be encouraging better use of our living streets and taking a holistic approach, not just treating the symptoms of clustered people on pavements."

So does that mean there is no limit to a pub's capacity? The street is now to be part of the trading environment and an extension of the bar area? Is Fitzrovia to become one big, outdoor booze tent?

If the punters are going to stand outside, sooner or later they are going to wonder what's the point of paying around £4 a pint in a pub when Sainsbury's and Tesco's will sell you several bottles or cans for around the same price.

What is to stop people going into the supermarkets and buying a pack of beer and standing in the street and creating their own pop-up pub? The landlords

and landlords of this manor would soon complain, I'm sure. And quite right, too.

Do publicans want to see the removal of controlled drinking and licensed areas? Will they want to compete with the supermarkets in a race to the bottom? I don't think so. And nor do most people want a free-for-all where people are descending on Fitzrovia because of a further relaxation of licensing. Let's enjoy the more than 40 pubs in Fitzrovia, as editors of *Fitzrovia News* did last year when we did our infamous pub crawl of all the pubs.

What makes Fitzrovia a pleasant place to live, work and visit is a sense of balance, and Westminster and Camden as licensing authorities have a difficult job to strike the right equilibrium between residents and pub owners. By and large they do a good job. Never mind the police and ambulance services who have to clean up after things get out of hand as can happen in other parts of the West End.

A version of this article was also published online in *The Publican's Morning Advertiser*.

Bloomsbury ward councillors' surgeries

6:00 - 7:00pm first Friday of the month at

Fitzrovia Community Centre, Foley Street, W1W 6DN

6:00 - 7:00pm second and fourth Fridays of the month at

Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, WC1N 1AB

Third Friday of the month is a 'roving surgery'. Get in touch if you would

like us to conduct the surgery at your street or building.

Adam Harrison, Milena Nuti, and Abdul Quadir

Contact 020 7974 3111 or adam.harrison@camden.gov.uk

milena.nuti@camden.gov.uk abdul.quadir@camden.gov.uk

Shop changes

Shops restaurants closed

Sweet Spot 60 Great Titchfield Street

Sample Trend 26 Goodge Street market research

Palms of Goa 160 New Cavendish Street

The Little Greek Pie shop 22 Cleveland Street

Opened

Newman Street Tavern (British food using the best seasonal, specialist and wild products from around the UK) 48 Newman Street



Café Gitane (coffee, cakes, pastries with modern Middle Eastern and Persian cuisine.) 60 Great Titchfield Street

Rev JW Simpson (Cocktail Bar from the Bourne and Hollingsworth stable, focusing on Fizzes, Flips, Cobblers, Smashes and Sours) 32 Goodge Street.

Ex-police sergeant supports lap dancing

A FORMER Camden police sergeant Bob Dear who now works for lap-dancing club Spearmint Rhino on Tottenham Court Road recently supported their application for a 24-hour seven-days-a-week licence.

Residents living nearby and in the Paramount Court flats

Byron Hamburger 6 Store Street
Syriana (Syrian-Lebanese food) 80 Cleveland Street



Bonnie Gull (seafood – accessible, affordable, educational, simple, fresh, responsibly sourced and 100% British) 21a Foley Street

Salento Green Life (Italian deli café) 51 Goodge Street

Gail's Bakery and Kitchen 11-13 Bayley Street



Opening soon

The Life Goddess (greek coffee products and food) 29 Store Street

Chillies Tandoori (Halal Asian cuisine) 160 New Cavendish Street

Pall Mall Barbers (mens grooming) 45 Fitzroy Street



above the club complained of nuisance from those touting for business outside the club and people making a noise arriving and leaving, mini-cab doors slamming and people urinating in doorways. 22 letters objected. Councillors have yet to announce their decision.

Social housing group flogs flat

Genesis Housing Association have put up a vacant flat for sale at public auction. It is at Howard House on Cleveland Street.

The rest of the block is rented out socially. The residents are asking why are housing associations selling off flats when there is such a chronic housing shortage in Westminster.

They fear they could be sold for rent to students, or used as a pied-a-terre, at the expense of key workers who could be driven out.

Philippa Roe, formerly cabinet member for housing in Westminster and now leader of the council, has always promoted the idea of mixed communities within her expensive borough.

Fitzrovia BID to include representatives from residents and small businesses

The Fitzrovia Partnership has announced that it will include representatives from residents and small businesses in the newly created Fitzrovia Business Improvement District (BID). The move comes after a meeting in the summer with the BID company, residents representatives and Camden Council which discussed including the wider community. At a public meeting in September residents and small businesses also asked to be represented.

Lee Lyons of The Fitzrovia Partnership told *Fitzrovia News*: "The new articles of association have been agreed and will be adopted at the first meeting of the Board as part of the newly constituted BID company. They provide for two representatives from the residential community and two representatives from small businesses."

West End body lacks local input

The 'West End Commission' has been set up to closely look at all issues that affect the West End of London.

It was established by Westminster council in January after their controversial parking charges were dropped.

Sir Howard Bernstein, chief executive of Manchester City Council, will chair the new Commission aimed at finding ways of controlling congestion that do not harm the area's £50 billion economy.

Drawing on the evidence

and experience of all interested stakeholders, the Chair and Commissioners hope to work towards a long-term strategic framework to ensure that the West End meets the future needs of residents, businesses, communities and visitors alike while continuing to occupy its vital place within London and in the global economy.

Out of 14 commissioners named on their website only two claim to live in the West End, making the residential voice very much a minority.

Councillor upsets locals over their noise complaints

The *Evening Standard* of November 19 reported that Cllr Jonathan Glanz, whose ward covers the West End, had said in evidence to the West End Commission that residents' associations in the West End are not representative of people living there and are in danger of creating a "hollowed out" area because of their complaints about noise and night life,

This caused uproar, that a councillor would say this about the people he was elected to represent.

Such was the anger from local groups that Cllr Glanz responded: "The Standard mis-quotes me and inaccurately portrays my view of Residents' Associations, who are a vital part of the community and do huge amounts of work to bring people together and celebrate the areas in which we live."

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Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association
39 Tottenham Street, W1T 4RX
Tel: 020 7580 4576
Contact: Barbara Jacobson
E-mail: olderfitzrovia@yahoo.co.uk



James Bond's best buttons buyer

By PETE WHYATT

Tailors Buttons have been established in the West End for over 100 years. They offer hand covered fabric buttons for wedding dresses, evening wear, hand made fabric upholstery buttons, vintage buttons, dyed buttons, handmade buckles and belts, and they are one of the last companies left that provide a walk-in while-you-wait bespoke hand made covered button service.

Maureen Rose has been selling and making buttons at 22 Cleveland Street for 12 years now. Previously the business was run from Silver Place in Soho for 40 years. Maureen with her late husband Leon (known by everyone as "Mr Buttons") bought the business name Tailors from a father and son, when the son retired in his 70s.

As I sit talking to Maureen she carefully lines up a small square of silk, some backing material and a shank in the button press. She pulls over the lever firmly like pulling a pint of beer, lets it go and up pops a beautiful covered button. "That one's for a bridal gown. I make covered buttons and supply to bridal, tailors, couture houses, TV and film dramas, the theatre and even Royalty." But Maureen is very discreet so she won't name names.

MILLIONS

A succession of customers call into the shop, the girl who has just lost a button off her overcoat, a man who wants to change the look of his jacket by completely changing buttons, a tailor to pick up the covered belt that Maureen made up.

"I couldn't begin to tell you how many buttons we have in the shop," she says. I can see there are millions every shape and size.

"Most of my buttons were bought through the trade over many years but now there are not many wholesalers left. The oldest buttons I stock are some vintage 1930's 40's Art Deco silk buttons. I have many belt buckles, and buttons made of leather, horn, silk, mother of pearl, metal, plastic, nylon jet, crystal, and casein which is a by product of milk."

You can use shanks (the backing part of a covered button) made of metal cloth or plastic, then the choice of covering is made by the customer.

The craft of button making is many hundreds of years old and the Button Makers Guild was formed in 1250. In the button trade the measurement unit is a Ligne which is a French deriva-



Maureen surrounded by her millions of buttons

tion word which roughly equates with one mm.

Maureen's buttons have appeared in many films including James Bond films Skyfall, and Casino Royale, plus the Harry Potter series. She has produced covered buttons for the Royal Family, Margaret Thatcher's public appearances, and a host of famous fashion houses including Hartnell,

Hardy Aimes, Gieves and Hawkes.

Nowadays Maureen serves customers from all over the world on her website which was designed by her son. "I'm a little disappointed that he's not following me into the trade (he works in IT) because I love the job," she concludes. "It is constantly changing and interesting. You meet lovely people who are making beautiful clothes."



Great Danes in town

Fitzrovia News now has a Danish readership. Margit Andersen (pictured) and her partner John Poulsen first came across our paper last year on a visit to the area, and have been following it online ever since.

And in September they returned for a holiday and picked up the paper from the neighbourhood centre, then arranged to meet editor Mike Pentelow in a nearby pub.

They told him that they helped bring out a community paper of their own in the Christianshav area of Copenhagen, which has a free circulation of 7,000 eight times a year, and has been going since 1983.

"We had to fight to keep its independence from the town council," said John. "It is very popular and has a broad organisation supported by political parties, tenants' organisations and others."



In a spin

By ANN GOODBURN

Breakdancers span on their heads and disc jockeys spun discs at a street party celebration of Fitzrovia's youth on September 1.

Every summer since 1999 young people from Fitzrovia Youth in Action (FYA) have organised and hosted a street party and community dinner for local residents by the Warren at the top of Whitfield Street.

A stage was erected in the play area and tables set out in the street this year.

FYA director Andre Schott said: "The young people who hang out here organised this. They have been setting up since 11am and all the acts are performed by them. It is a great opportunity to get young people and residents together."

He set up FYA nearly 20 years ago and has made a real contribution to the community.

Pictured: Corina.

FITZROVIA WIDE AWAKE HAND SURGERY

The BMI Hospital In Fitzroy Square is pleased to announce the arrival of the One Stop Wide Awake Hand Surgery (OSWA) service in Fitzrovia in December 2012.

The OSWA service specialises in Wide Awake Hand Surgery which enables treatment of complex hand surgery problems under local anaesthesia without general anaesthesia or regional anaesthesia or sedation or tourniquets. The service has been the subject of multiple scientific publications in 2012 is now available in London in the prestigious setting of BMI Fitzroy Square in Fitzrovia. Please search "BMI Fitzroy Square" and "One Stop Wide Awake" for further information or call 020 7388 4954. The before and after photos, below, show the seven week results of one 45 minute OSWA treatment...

www.onestopwideawake.co.uk



The Dining Detective

Pizza Express, 5 Langham Place, 9 Charlotte Street, 215 Great Portland Street.

I never thought I'd be writing a review of a 'chain,' in this column. But in my search for good-food-good-value in our poor be-knighted area I would be mad to leave out the fact that we have three Pizza Express restaurants in Fitzrovia and I rate them highly.

At some stage this chain got re-thought and re-vamped.

For instance: they now offer a number of leggera pizzas which have a big hole in the middle of the pizza which is filled - not with more pizza dough but with fresh rocket. The leggera padana (£10.50) is only one of a number: this one is filled with goats cheese and caramelised onion and spinach and garlic oil, with the big pile of rocket in the middle. It is a large pizza but made with thin crispy dough a million miles from what we used to eat, and it is absolutely delicious. And, if you care, these leggera pizzas are guaranteed all less than 500 calories.

And if you don't want a pizza with a hole in the middle, all sorts of interesting pizzas are available at the same sort of price: Etna (hot Italian sausage, peppers £11.20); Da Morire (gorgonzola, pancetta, artichokes £11.95); Diavolo (hot spiced beef, pepperoni, Cajun spices £11.95); Ponodoro Pesto (marinated tomatoes, mozzarella, pesto, fresh basil £9.95). Or the hottest one of all full of exotic meats and chillies and peppers - which I confess I haven't tried: Francesco Mazzei Calabrese.

And all the old favourites are there as well: Margherita, La



7 Conway Street
PICTURE PUZZLE ANSWER:

Reine, Pollo ad Astra, Four Seasons: all of these are under £10. They are thin-based but large; you can add a salad for £3.50 if required. In fact you can have a whole meal of a salad if required: Warm Vegetable and Goats cheese, Pollo Pancetta, Nicoise - all around £10.

The unfussy wine-list has decent wine, not necessarily Italian, and reasonably priced, by the glass (£3.95- £5.50) or bottle (£14.50- £20). They serve starters (dough balls, garlic bread, bruchetta, antipasto) and half a dozen desserts of which a Toffee Fudge Glory or a Chocolate Fudge Glory will add all those calories you lost by having a pizza with a hole in the middle.

The staff are uniformly helpful, with time and knowledge to explain anything, and I have observed that they make people who come on their own just as welcome as a larger party. So if you have to, or want to, eat out on your own this is an easy place.

And they don't expect you to eat fast and dash out - nobody seems to mind if you linger over a mint tea (made with real mint) or another glass of wine. I had a meeting over dinner there recently and realised we were there for two hours.

Picture puzzle



How well do you know Fitzrovia's landscape? Can you identify where the picture above was taken by Eugene McConville? The answer is below the Sherlock Homes picture at the top of this page.



Word on the street

Savile's travels

How times change. "Jovial Jimmy Savile" was spotted in Great Titchfield Street by this paper's gossip columnist Alfie Maron in November 1976.

"Choose your favourite on your TV screen and you will probably find them satisfying an appetite in this street," he added.

Sing-a-long

Max Bygraves, the cockney comedian who died recently aged 90, had several connections with the area. As mentioned in the last issue he entertained people sheltering in Goodge Street station during the blitz of 1941, with his singing when he was just 19.

In later years he visited fellow comedian Ted Ray when he was a patient in Middlesex Hospital, Mortimer Street, and had him "in stitches" to the annoyance of the nurses.

And Max's signed photograph is still in Olivelli's restaurant at 35 Store Street where he dined regularly.

Marxist knees-up

Eric Hobsbawm, the marxist historian who died recently at the age of 95, had a rich mixture of neighbours when he lived at 37 Gordon Mansions, Torrington Place from 1956 to 1966.

There was comedian "Wee" Georgie Wood at number 52, jazz trumpeter John Chilton at number 20, comic double act Jimmy Jewel and Ben Warris, pop star Robin Williams at number 23, communist impresario and singer songwriter Bruce Dunnet at number 9 where he was often visited by the legendary folk singer Ewan MacColl, and communist musical writer Karl Dallas at number 28 where he often put up folk singers such as Pete Seeger and Arlo Guthrie.

What a party that lot could have had!

Charlie snuffs it

A final dear departed: Gangster Charlie Richardson, died recently, aged 78. He had a torture chamber at 27 Windmill Street, and burgled the Anti-Apartheid Movement offices at 89 Charlotte Street in 1966 to get membership files for BOSS (the apartheid secret police).

His wife, Maureen, worked for the Family Planning Association at 27-29 Mortimer Street.

Celebrity watch

My brother Percy spotted TV chef Nigel Slater scurrying along Goodge Street the other day, muttering to himself (or maybe on the phone - as Percy says it's so difficult to tell these days).

He fondly imagined he was dreaming up recipe names for his latest series. A new take on Charlotte Pudding, perhaps. Or Boeuf Bolsover? No, as Percy discovered when he tuned in, our Nige eschews those fancy foodie monickers.

Percy tells me he did enjoy his Spuds, Bacon and Beets, though.



Cartoon by Jayne Davis

Oh, my Darling

My other brother, Mortimer, spotted the unmistakable eyebrows of Alistair Darling walking past the Cock in Great Portland Street.

Wisely he did not drop in for a wee dram.

Otherwise the ex-Chancellor of the Exchequer, who taxed beer above inflation every year from 2007 to 2010, may have been given an unwelcome "stiff one" for the road...

Farewell Ian

I was distressed to learn that one of our most renowned writers in residence, Ian McEwan, has forsaken his Fitzroy Square home and moved to Gloucester.

His novel "Saturday", which was set round 'ere, was seen by many to be about the paranoia of inner-city living.

His agent tells me he's too busy writing his next novel to send us some fond and no doubt finely-crafted words of farewell. Maybe it's about the paranoia of living in the middle of nowhere?



Quiz tiz

With Bolivar Hall being in Grafton Way, next to the Venezuelan consular section, surely everyone locally knows Simon Bolivar was born in Venezuela. Not apparently the quizmaster at the One Tun in Goodge Street, which is just 150 paces from the mural depicting Bolivar at the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre (pictured)

"He was born in Caracas, but the organisers were clearly crack-ers," quipped quiz contestant Mark Thomas. "We were not even given Venezuela as one of the answer options, which were Ecuador, Argentina, Colombia, or Peru."

The only "man from Peru" I know is ex-Goon the late Michael Bentine.

Bolivar is very much in the news at present with the re-election of Hugo Chavez as president of Venezuela who describes himself as a Bolivarian. More about Bolivar can be found on page 13 in this issue.

By George

My famed literary talents have been drafted in by Ed Hutchings, manager of The George.

There's a panel in the Mortimer Street entrance relating how Sir Henry Wood, sometime BBC Orchestra conductor, called the public house The Gluepot because his brass section so often got stuck there.

Ed has now commissioned a similar panel bearing the legend of Dylan Thomas and his radio script.

After the BBC accepted Under Milk Wood it's said he proceeded to The George for some celebration, and when this was concluded several hours later he left his only copy of the script there.

Charlotte Street

Painter, novelist, teacher, screen writer...

By CLIVE JENNINGS

A visit to Reg Gadney's generously proportioned studio, which occupies most of the ground floor of the large Georgian house that he has shared with his wife, restaurant critic Fay Maschler, for 20 years, reveals a man who has spent over fifty years immersed in the worlds of education, literature and art.

The walls are lined from floor to high ceiling with books, paintings and memorabilia. He has received the highest accolades in all three disciplines: teaching at the Royal College of art for 15 years in the 1970s and 1980s, he became its youngest ever Pro-Rector, and lectured at Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard and Yale; his parallel career as a writer then took over, including some 16 published crime thrillers and many screenplays, several of which have received BAFTAs and Golden Globe nominations; and latterly he has built a following for his painting, a life-time pursuit, with several well received solo shows of his paintings, and works in collections around the world.

Film posters and auto-graphed photos recall a life long love of film, and an 18 month stint in his late twenties as Deputy Controller of The National Film Theatre. (Though Reg refers to his role there as "Deputy Manageress" as he recalls doing everything from cashing up, counting the ice creams and picking up used condoms to organising the first tribute to Cinematheque Francaise). Paintings by students, friends and other artists that he admires are everywhere. Everything from a small, exquisite Lucien Freud ink drawing to the first painting that Turner Prize winner Chris Ofili ever sold (to a prescient Reg for £100) - a magnificent colourful canvas. He still paints or writes for at least three hours on most days and the room has two distinct areas of activity - painting at one end and writing at the other.

The son of B C Gadney, a schoolmate of David Niven, who, as captain of the undefeated England Rugby Football XV during 1934-6 was something of a national hero, and a difficult



act to follow. It was decided that Reg should join the army, "to make a man of me - but it didn't work!", and he served three years in the Coldstream Guards, serving in Libya and France and ending up as a military attaché at our embassy in Oslo, gaining insights into the machinations of governments and the military that were to serve him well as a thriller writer.

The army was followed by studies in English, Fine Art and Architecture at St. Catherine's College, Cambridge, where he was editor of the literary magazine *Granta*. His undergraduate thesis on John Constable was subsequently published, the first time this had happened, and his catalogue of Constable's drawings in the Fitzwilliam Museum prompted much interest in an area previously largely overlooked.

This experience was to prove useful when he met Francis



Waterloo Bridge, oil on board, by Reg Gadney: 30.5 x 38 cm.

Bacon, who also favoured Constable over Turner - "too many views" - and was inspired in his own paintings by the white lead pigment oozing through the back of Constable's paintings, and had asked curators at the Victoria & Albert Museum to take a painting down so he could examine the back. When Reg explained to Bacon that he had to leave to teach at the Royal College of Art, Bacon rather grandly remonstrated: "Art is more important than jobs, jobs are for ordinary people". Giving the great artist a lift back to his studio at a time when compulsory safety belts had just been introduced, Reg suggested that Bacon put his safety belt on, Bacon, known for his strict sexual tastes, demanded, "Only if you strap me in tight, tight, tight. Please do it tighter."

While at the Royal College of Art, Reg lectured on "Art and the Popular Imagination" showing pop music, film and contemporary images that affected painters' work. This was so popular with the students, mainly because he would show Fred Astaire and John Wayne movies, that he recruited an assistant in the person of the young Sir Christopher Frayling, now a former rector of the RCA and popular culture guru, who was then a porter at the Imperial War Museum, to help out. Amazed that his students hadn't heard of

the holocaust or ever seen a dead body or a birth, Reg arranged to show them films of Belsen to give them a taste of the dark side of humanity. He is slighting of current policies in art education, at the "Royal College of Hobbies", as he dismissively describes his former home, and sums it up thus: "The glory of art schools is that nobody quite knows what they are for, which makes them so wonderful."

Since his college days, Reg had wanted to write "seedy thrillers". He admired and kept in touch with Patricia Highsmith and Daphne du Maurier, who were both very supportive. His sixteen "literary thrillers, include six novels featuring his anti-hero, Alan Rosslyn who Reg describes as "dull but a very good listener, which makes him a successful seducer of women". Of particular interest to Fitzrovia residents is his 2000 Rosslyn adventure "Strange Police" which finds our man involved in foiling an audacious conspiracy by Greek Nationalists to steal the Elgin Marbles from the British Museum and return them to Greece. With many scenes set in and around the familiar streets of Fitzrovia and Bloomsbury, he draws on his local knowledge to give it a sense of reality, making it probably the only novel, ever, to feature a scene set in the 24-hour store on Grafton Way. Reg ingeniously and topically wove the construction of Norman Foster's spectacular Great Court at the Museum, completed in 2000, into the story. Research included walking atop the magnificent glass roof constructed of triangular sections that encloses the Court, which covers two acres and is the largest covered public square in Europe.

Film and TV writing followed. His 1984 screenplay "Kennedy" about the 1961-3 presidency of JFK for Central TV and NBC, starred Martin Sheen as Kennedy, and won a BAFTA for Best Drama Series/Serial and four Golden Globe nominations. In 1996, his adaptation of Minette Walters' novel "The Sculptress" was shown on BBC1,

starring Pauline Quirke, and earned Gadney another BAFTA nomination. He also adapted Iris Murdoch's "The Bell" for the small screen, and became good friends with the writer. Reg lays great store in the opinion of his wife, and his son and daughter, when a work is complete, and also that of his close friend, the playwright David Hare, who reads all Reg's manuscripts, and with whom he collaborated on a film script.

Although he has painted since he was nine, when encouraged by his watercolourist mother he entered and won a competition with a painting of the boxer Rocky Marciano, he kept it quiet during his Royal College days, partly on the advice of Patricia Highsmith, also a "closet painter" apparently. Over the last 12 years or so, since hitting 60, Reg has increasingly come out as a painter, a subject about which he is zealous. "Painting is like a vocation, like a religious belief, you either believe in it or you don't and I believe in it. I have a passion for painting." His work is largely divided between two themes: portraits and figures, and landscapes. The paintings, in oil on board, are all quite small in size, rarely larger than 60cm x 45cm and frequently much smaller.

The figurative works are usually heads, or female nudes, and the landscapes, brisk atmospheric impressions. Reg points out an important connection between the two genres, "the portraits are landscapes without the greenery. They are maps of somebody." Despite their modest dimensions, these works sing out with a contained intensity, enhanced by a palette of pure, bright colours. Reg explains: "There is a moment when you see a painting, perceive it as a painting, as smears on canvas. You then look away, and you see it as a work of art. Somewhere in between that communicates something. That's what happens and we still don't know quite what it is. ... It's in that weird space that the thing has power."

Reg loves Fitzrovia, particularly the cultural mix of the small local businesses, and has many friends amongst the people that work in the area: newsagents, shopkeepers, café owners. He recently insisted on being paid in haircuts when a Warren Street hairdresser asked if he would coach her son in the finer points of painting. Many of his portrait subjects are locals, and he particularly enjoyed painting an exotic transsexual friend, who lived locally. Despite all the recent changes in the area, Reg finds it, "still pretty anonymous - people leave you alone."

Reg Gadney's Landscape paintings can be seen from December 5 to 13 at Rebecca Hossack Gallery, 2a Conway Street.



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Graffiti: the great controversy

By STEPHEN CARTER

The rapidly developing graffiti art form in Fitzrovia continues to create controversy and disagreement amongst residents and law enforcers.

This essentially stems from the fact that there are many different styles of graffiti whose values are highly contested. Some styles are reviled by many and some are held in high esteem by others and/or by the same people.

Whilst some street art is atrocious amounting to little more than wanton vandalism, we may be wise to stand back and appreciate the plurality and diversity of the art form that surrounds us in Fitzrovia.

Collectively, these creations of imagination have the potential to expand our sense of possibility and may also in some cases have the potential to reaffirm life.

Recently the Fitzrovia Partnership and Camden Council had been criticised for not consulting residents and small businesses over the creation of a BID in Fitzrovia. The graffiti campaign has been criticised by many including local resident Griff Rhys Jones.

The limitation of Graffiti to bring about political change has

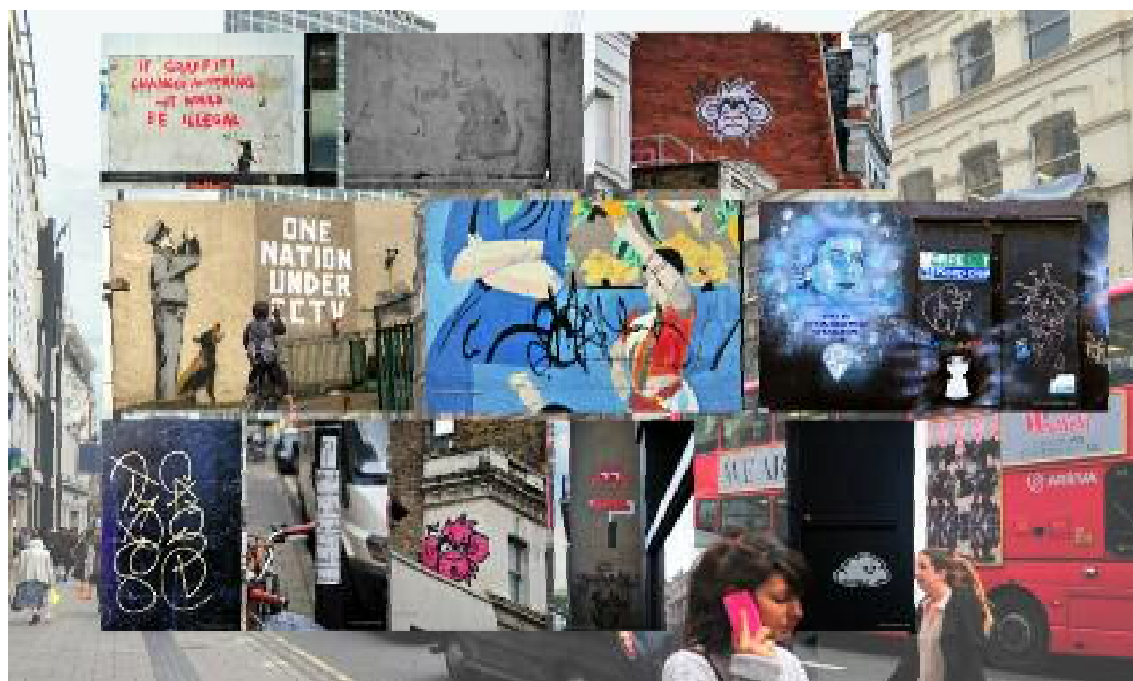
been immortalised in the work of Banksy (If graffiti changed anything it would be illegal).

Over a year ago a "well-known" public figure had stumped up the cash for a sheet of perspex to protect this Banksy stencil in Fitzrovia from City Hall's whitewashers (City Hall has a zero tolerance policy on graffiti).

Banksy's iconic old rat can still be seen, only just, at pavement level on New Oxford Street. When you are next in the vicinity of Tottenham Court Road Station see if you can spot it. You may be surprised to see many live rats running around having had their habitats disturbed by the excavations being carried out for Cross Rail.

And a relatively new addition to the burgeoning art Galleries of Fitzrovia is Lazarides, at 11 Rathbone Place, run by Steve Lazarides, who is well known for helping Banksy to become a global phenomenon.

This brand-new five-floor spread opened last May in a Georgian town house that was once a brothel. The Outsiders is also part of Lazarides Ltd, and many of their artists have succeeded outside of the traditional gallery system, emerging



All photos by unusualimag: unusualimagephotography.blogspot

through popular fields like graffiti, design, and illustration.

What Steve Lazarides is careful to remind us is the diversity of motives embodied in graffiti: "You've got a whole tagging movement out there that will tag a 20-storey building from top to bottom. With the Arab Spring, graffiti as a political statement is becoming very powerful again. I've been travelling round the world to go and see stuff, and

the most directly challenging political stuff I've seen is coming out of Saudi Arabia and Iran. I'm not going to name the artists just in case, but I've seen a biting critique of the petro-chemical industry. In the west, it's become more of an art form, whereas in the east it's become more of a protest thing."

The mural in Whitfield Gardens was erected in 1980 featuring a montage of scenes rele-

vant to the area at that time.

There have been several more recent additions to the lower elevation, of dubious relevance, causing some consternation and disapproval from the more traditional residents.

Similar concerns have been expressed about what is seen as the defacing of the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre's mural in Goodge Place.

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The wrestling professor

Unforgettable characters, No 2: Ray Lees

Ray Lees (1931-2011) - the "wrestling professor" - is immortalised on the hoarding outside the old Middlesex Hospital site development in Mortimer Street (pictured right).

And it was at 76-78 Mortimer Street that he was based during the 1970s and 1980s as professor of sociology and head of social sciences at the Polytechnic of Central London (now the University of Westminster).

One of his students, John Fisher of the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, remembers some of his eccentricities - such as delivering an entire lecture standing on his head. And some of the "seminars" were conducted in the nearby George pub.

For someone who was to become a professor he did not shine at his grammar school, doing badly in his matriculation (exams) - so he became a professional wrestler. His father, a bus driver and an army boxing champion, wanted Ray to become a boxer. But this was ruled out as he had an almost total lack of vision in one eye, so he settled for wrestling.

His fighting names were variously "Little Hercules", "Ray du Barry" (from The Three Musketeers), or "Ray Du Vallieres". The last named was after he had danced with



Princess Grace of Monaco when visiting the principality at the age of 19, and the promoters thought it would be good to portray him as French.

At first he was one of the "golden boys" who nearly always won in the fixed bouts. But when he organised a union among the wrestlers to negotiate their wages and conditions, he became unpopular with the bosses and was made a "bad boy", having to lose nearly all his fights. As a Communist Party member he had also sent reports to the Daily Worker from Franco's fascist Spain when wrestling there.

He gave up the ring and became a "leisure co-ordinator" in a hospital for the "sub-normal". He decided to give his own mother, a school cook, an IQ test to see if she qualified as "sub-normal" and was surprised to discover that with 135 points she was of "very high intelligence." He admitted he had

underestimated her.

Next he trained as a psychiatric nurse - and won the Florence Nightingale Prize as top trainee nurse in his field.

Soon he became involved in a campaign to humanise the care in psychiatric hospitals, where sadistic warders would often dish out brutal treatment.

His next job was as a probation officer when he became more seriously politicised. He questioned the way in which the modern state functioned, which he addressed in his first successful book to be published, called "Politics and Social Work".

He trained as a teacher and took a BA degree in politics at Regent Street Polytechnic, then taught there for a couple of years during which he was head of an anti-poverty research programme, funded by the Home Office. Then he became head of social science, just seven years after graduating there.

While working there he had six books and several journal articles on politics and social welfare published.

In 1987 he took early retirement, as Margaret Thatcher targeted senior lecturers.

Amateur dramatics was his next project, appearing with his long time comrade and fellow retired lecturer, Frank Warner, in "Waiting for Godot" and other plays at Tollington Park commu-



Ray (standing) in one of his professional wrestling bouts

nity centre over eight years.

This was followed by four years with Unity Theatre in an old pub at 58-60 Hampstead Road near Warren Street (now the Camden People's Theatre). Bill Owen, of "Last of the Summer Wine" fame as Compo, was one of his fellow actors

there.

These were the happiest years of his life, he told his partner Madelaine, and it enabled him to keep in touch with his old Fitzrovian friends, including Fiona Green who took the photograph of him included in the Mortimer Street hoarding.

The painter who had 19 children from two wives

According to the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, 'Happy families are all alike. Every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.'

I'm not going to argue with Tolstoy, but unhappy families do seem to me to be pretty samey when they are coupled with parallel secret families, especially in the 19th century. Man marries in



William Powell Frith

SUE BLUNDELL continues her series of Fitzrovia's Secret Families

his 20s, has a successful career and makes a bit of money, finds his wife isn't keeping up with him so acquires another 'wife', and sets her up in a home which is within walking distance of his existing household.

This was the pattern followed by Charles Dickens, the subject of my first article, and two of his closest friends entered into very similar arrangements.

The painter William Powell Frith was born in North Yorkshire in 1819, and in 1835 came to London to study at Henry Sass's Academy at 6 Charlotte Street. Later he had a studio at 15 Fitzroy Street, where he painted one of his most famous works, 'The Derby Day', nowadays to be found in Tate Britain. When this was first

exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1858 it attracted such large crowds that a rail and a policeman had to be installed to keep the visitors back. Frith met Dickens in 1842 when he was commissioned to paint some of the novelist's characters. Later in 1859 he produced one of the best-known portraits of him, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Frith married Isabelle Baker in 1845, and one of their earliest homes was at 31 Charlotte Street. Together the couple had five daughters and seven sons.

But Frith also maintained a long-term secret mistress, Mary Alford, who was 16 years his junior, and may at one time have been his ward. In about 1855 he settled Mary in a house in Oxford Terrace (now Sussex Gardens) a mile away from his new home in Bayswater.

With Mary he went on to father a further seven children. According to one story Frith was finally caught out by Isabelle when she met him in the street posting a letter, at a time when he was supposed to be in Brighton.

Isabelle died in 1880, and a year later Frith married his mistress, whose existence by now

seems to have been fairly common knowledge. The two remained together until Mary's death in 1895. The painter himself died 14 years later at the age of 90.

Frith had been immensely successful as an artist, and his multi-figured narrative paintings were justly very popular. The visual and story-telling possibilities of a swarming crowd of diverse people were wonderfully explored in 'The Derby Day,' and later on in 'The Railway Station', now in Royal Holloway, University of London.

As one critic has written, the artist was clearly very partial to crowds, both in his paintings and in his households.

Frith's 'invisible woman' Mary may have served as a model for one of the fashionably dressed females in the crush at the Railway Station, while Isabelle appeared nearby as a woman kissing her son goodbye. Frith was also responsible for quite a number of sentimental and improving domestic scenes, such as 'Many happy returns of the day'.

We might think that he was being rather hypocritical here - or alternatively that he was in a better position than most to



Mary Alford and children modelling for one of Frith's paintings

acquire an understanding of family values. But it comes as no surprise to learn that Frith was not a very attentive father.

Cissie, one of his daughters in family number one, wrote that, 'He was an affectionate parent, as long as we wanted nothing from him, and as long as none of us gave him any trouble.' For Cissie the advent of her father's mistress had brought about 'the crumble and fall of our once happy and distinguished household.'

The two tandem families maintained by the novelist and playwright Wilkie Collins were rather less conventional than Frith's, because Collins never married either of the women with whom he set up home. This companion and soul mate of Charles Dickens will be the subject of my next 'Secret Family'.

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EXPLOSIVE BRAIN

Burton slips around the corner, pressing himself against the wall. He listens until the sound of her heels on the pavement fades then he comes out, treading carefully. It is dark and fog hangs in the air, covering him.

He creeps up on her, wanting to reach out and touch her hair: he remembers its smell, its hint of sourness, like vinegar. Even in the dark he catches the sway of her hips. He is mesmerized and nearly bumps into her as she stops to cross the street, but she never turns around and he manages to pull himself back. He follows her like this all the way to the door of the sculptor, Augustus John's, studio. She spins sharply around so that his face is an inch from hers.

'And you can stop following me,' she says. 'I've had enough of it, you hear? Every night this week.' She sets her flinty eyes on him. His gaze lingers on her mouth. The skin of her lips is cracked, but he yearns to brush them with his.

She clicks her fingers. 'Oi, what with you!' She turns away and he grips her arm.

'I need to see you,' he whispers.

'Ah,' she says, with a pitying smile. 'I told you: it was just a little fun. No need to turn into a mooncalf about it.'

'Betty May...'

'Betty May,' she mimics, and pulls her arm away.

He clenches his teeth. 'You shouldn't mock me.'

'Little lamb! Off with you. This place is for grown-ups.'

She sashays through the door. The cheering and whistling as she enters make him sick.

He is still lingering in the

A short story by
SUNITA SOLIAR

doorway when Douglas Bose comes out.

'What's the matter?' Bose smirks. 'She turf you out?'

Burton stiffens. 'It's nothing to do with you.' He hates Douglas Bose. Bose is a young writer, a hot talent, which means that he is granted permission into Betty May's circle, while he, Douglas Burton, is a mere critic. He grimaces at the mocking similarity of their names.

Bose lights a cigarette. 'Look,' he says, and puts his arm around Burton. 'As one Douglas to another...'

Burton shakes him off.

'Alright,' Bose says. He

He hears a roar of dirty laughter and looks over to where Betty May crawls on all fours, a saucer of whiskey on her back

walks off and Burton is left alone. He need only ring the bell, but he doesn't think he can withstand Betty's scorn. He raises his hand but cannot do it. A female guest comes out, squealing with the shock of seeing him there, finger raised. As she exits, he slips indoors. The room is loud, and when guests glance at him he feels that they are jeering. He knows the things they say: that he is 'strange', a 'semi-dwarf'.

He hears a roar of dirty laughter and looks over to where Betty May crawls on all fours, a saucer of whiskey balanced on her back. A couple of men dart towards her to lick the whiskey as she moves. This is why they call her Tiger Woman. Burton loosens his tie and feels a trickle of sweat on his face. He



has seen her do this trick naked in his flat; he loves the arch of her strong back. The room sways. He sees Sylvia Gough and tumbles into the seat next to her, closing his eyes.

'What's the matter, pet?' she says.

He likes her for her closeness to Betty May. They are the models, the desirable ones that Augustus John sculpts. With his eyes closed he almost fancies that she is Betty May.

He says, 'She won't speak to me.'

'You know she doesn't like to see a fellow much more than once.'

'But I love her,' he says, and opens his eyes.

A cheer rises as Betty May wiggles her hips without spilling the whiskey.

Burton's hands shake. Sylvia steadies him and offers him a glass of gin.

He takes it. 'Once I saw an Indian head coming towards me,' he says. 'I thought it was going to kill me.'

'Just a head?'

'Don't you believe me?' he snaps.

'I only meant...'

Illustration by CLIFFORD HARPER

The gin glass breaks. Blood streaks his hand...

'They shouldn't mock me.' The gin glass breaks. Blood streaks his hand. Sylvia starts, then she takes the glass away and dabs his hand with her handkerchief.

'It isn't too bad,' she says. Her face is close to his and now he sees that her eye is swollen.

'What happened?' he says.

She looks away, but he knows: Bose. His expression is one of disgust. And jealousy.

'It was a Brazil nut,' Sylvia says.

Burton clenches the fist with the wrapped handkerchief. Blood oozes. 'He shouldn't have done that to you,' he says, but he is not looking at her. He sees only Betty May, and what right has Bose to touch her?

'Come back to mine, Betty,' he says.

'Betty? I'm Sylvia.'

'Come back. You can stay there.'

Her face tightens: a look of

distaste. He saw how Betty looked at the empty tins scattered around the kitchen, baulking at the noose that lay in the corner of the room. But he would never hurt her. He gets up and wanders to the balcony. His hands are shaking and he grips the railing to steady himself.

Then a voice comes from inside him, muting the ambient laughter. He has heard it before. It blasts: I must do something catastrophic. And now he cannot stop his hands. He goes back into the party and walks, hypnotized, through the minglers. He passes a half-formed sculpture of Betty May and picks up a hammer. In an intimate corner he sees her everywhere: Betty May laughs with a young man who leans against a fireplace; in a corner of the room she is doing the saucer trick, and on the bed Betty May kisses Douglas Bose, Bose who hit her and has no right to touch her. As he goes towards them and raises the hammer, Bose gives him a look of fright and now Bose too is Betty May. They are all her, and he brings the hammer down hard on Bose's head.

In the room the laughter is cut dead and Betty May screams.

'I love you, Betty May,' he says.

'I'm Sylvia!' she cries. 'What have you done?'

Sylvia? And now as he looks at her he sees her, the woman with the black eye. And Betty May – is this the real one? – comes up to this woman and they nurse Bose. But Bose is not breathing. His skull is cracked across the floor.

And it will all come out about the noose and the Indian head, and the judge will declare him to have been suffering from an explosive brain when he murdered Bose. They will call him strange, a freak.

He feels someone restrain him, hands behind his back, and as the handcuffs go on, he says, 'I love you, Betty May.'

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Author Greene injured in the blitz

By MIKE PENTELOW

The worst night of the blitz, April 16, 1941, was witnessed in the Tottenham Court Road area by author Graham Greene (1904-1991) who was an air raid warden at the time.

Over 2,000 people were killed and over 100,000 homes destroyed on that fateful night, and Greene himself had his hand cut from flying broken glass caused by the blasts.

He was living at 19 Gower Mews, off Gower Street, at the time, and was having a drink with his lover, Dorothy Glover, in the Horseshoe pub at 264 Tottenham Court Road when the air raid siren went. They then went to Frascati's restaurant at 26-32 Oxford Street, but were shook by the bombs there and went to Gower Mews.

They went on fire watching duty on the roof of a nearby garage, and saw flares from enemy planes drifting down "like great yellow peonies" as he described it in his autobiography.

They saw Maple's furniture store at 141-150 Tottenham Court Road go up in flames.

They were due to sign off at 2.30 am but could not because the bombing continued.

Further flares came down above them on the corner of Alfred Place and Tottenham Court Road, and across Charlotte Street, followed by a huge detonation.

Gower Street was ravaged on both sides, including University College, and a parachute bomb fell on the Victoria Club in Malet Street where 350 Canadian soldiers were sleeping.

Women wearing dressing gowns and bleeding from face cuts told Greene and other wardens that someone was hurt on the top floor above RADA at 62 Gower Street. They ran up four flights and found a very heavy girl bleeding in her pyjamas.

There was only room for one to carry her at a time so they took it in turns.

Outside there were flames everywhere and as more bombs whistled down, Greene's hand



Oxford Street on the morning of April 17, 1941, after the air raid. On the left at number 82 is the remains of Maureen & Chester, shoe dealers, near the corner of Newman Street. Frascati's restaurant at numbers 26-32, where Greene dined during the bombing, was on the same side in the distance towards Tottenham Court Road. (Getty Images). BELOW: Graham Greene

was cut by broken glass and bled a great deal, so he went to his post at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine on the corner of 20 Gower Street to have it dressed. The windows were blown in by another bomb as he was being treated.

As more bombs dropped he felt this was the end and began an Act of Contrition.

He continued patrolling the shattered streets, however, and found a big factory ablaze in Ridgmount Place. This was John

E Dallas & Sons, which made musical instruments. Behind every window on every floor a wall of flame was blowing up. So he went to the fire station at Euston to tell them about it, but they were so busy they could not come for three hours (two of their auxiliary firemen were killed that night by Tavistock Square).

The raid did not finish until about 5 o'clock in the morning.

As the dust settled more casualties were revealed. The

Jewish Girls' Club at 31 Alfred Place, was reduced to a black hole, belching flames, and choked with smashed brickwork and mutilated corpses. More than 30 were killed, and rescuers were taking bodies out for hours afterwards, and the stench stayed for days.

Police dogs were used to search the ruins in Tottenham Court Road.

Greene wrote articles for the Spectator describing life in an air raid shelter off Gower Street: "Between the thuds of the barrage a young man explained to a girl the secret of contentment and a Czech told fortunes in a teacup. 'A bomb will fall,' he said, and everyone laughed.

"There was no warning whistle when the bombs exploded; they tore the air like calico. The fourth bomb wiped away the house next door. There wasn't time to be afraid; only the silence afterwards was a little shocking, and the smell of hot metal."

A complaint was made to the shelter Chief Warden by someone who was disgusted at the passionate embrace of a couple. "But that is Mr Greene, one of our best wardens, and his nice



wife," replied the warden. It was not his wife, however, but Dorothy.

Afterwards they came up to see craters and tangles of cables in the streets. "Wet hoses would still be spread around like giant spaghetti," he wrote, buses were overturned, gas mains broken, burst sandbags littered everywhere, and houses reduced to heaps.

Apart from the Horseshoe he often drank during the war in the Fitzroy Tavern at 16 Charlotte Street, and dined in The Elysee at 19 Percy Street.

A fellow warden in the area was Malcolm Muggeridge, the writer and broadcaster.



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Simon Bolivar's time in London

By JESS OWEN

In 1810 Simon Bolivar, arrived in London as a delegate from the newly established junta of Caracas. Their base was the house of Francisco de Miranda at 58 Grafton Way. Aware of British naval power, the revolutionary government wished to assure the dominant regional powers that they would not upset the 'status quo'.

By the time the delegation arrived, de Miranda was a leading publicist for the cause of South American independence, running a newsletter, *El Colombiano*, modelled on the pioneering efforts of Blanco White and Hippolyto Jose da Costa with their *El Espanol* and *Correo Brasiliense*.

Bolivar landed at Portsmouth on July 10, 1810. The senior member of the mission was Luis Lopez Mendez. They went directly to London where a series of meetings were arranged with Government Ministers, and Foreign Office officials. Bolivar and his companions were seeking to urge the British not to intervene in the Caracas Revolution. With the collapse of the Spanish monarchy, the occupants of Caracas had taken the opportunity to throw off Madrid rule and declare autonomy.

The British statesmen they met had several concerns. Above all they wished to pursue the conflict with Napoleon in Spain. But the Spanish were hopelessly dependent on British supplies and money. They promised to recompense the British when they regained access to their gold and silver shipments from South America.

The British had other concerns. Their West India merchants, had an opportunistic eye on the



SIMON BOLIVAR

Spanish trade to the South of the continent. A third factor bothered them. In 1791 the slaves of St Domingo had rebelled against their French masters. In 1806 Dessalines declared Haiti an independent republic. The British in the sugar islands of the West Indies were terrified of suffering a similar 'fate'.

The day after landing Bolivar and Mendez sent a letter to the Foreign Secretary stating that: "Venezuela, as an integral part of the Spanish Empire, is menaced by France and desires to have in support of its security, the maritime protection of England" and requesting "the means which may be necessary for defending the rights of its legitimate Sovereign...against the common enemy".

And they asked for 'the Mediation of His Majesty' in order to preserve their peace and friendship with their brethren of both Hemispheres. Bolivar and his companions travelled to London and took up residence in Duke Street, Marylebone. But much of their time was spent with de

Miranda at his house in Grafton Way. From here introductions, mostly with prominent Whigs, were arranged throughout London.

The British thought about their requests, but they had already been considering the possibilities. Notes appended to the document revealed the Foreign Office feared that the insurrection would spread throughout the Americas.

A memo, roughly dated July 1810, is with the papers of Lord Liverpool. Written by Lord Hanway, it began with the strategic realities of the situation: "The preponderance of our naval power must make an alliance with us most desirable for South America.... all the devices of France cannot exclude our Commerce from the Continent: neither therefore could they exclude that of Spanish America when forming a part of ours."

Trade was paramount in the minds of the British. Four years earlier the Governor of Grenada had informed William Wyndham that the inhabitants of Caracas were thoroughly sick of Spanish rule. Should they succeed in overthrowing it, he said, it "would extend our commerce in a wonderful manner - The Caracans offer a very rich trade." The vultures were already hovering over the carcass of the Spanish 'Empire'. Spanish treasure was vital in the European conflict. Whilst Napoleon had defeated the 'Third Coalition' at Austerlitz, his manoeuvres had exhausted his finances.

As Elizabeth Sparrow puts it:



FRANCISCO DE MIRANDA

"The effect of Bonaparte's march across Europe was to leave the French economy in ruins, ... The crisis lasted from late September 1805 to 27 January 1806. On this date Gabriel Ouvrard agreed to guarantee loans against the gold from the Spanish South American colonies.... The race to gain control of South America was on."

One key figure in this contest was Bolivar's host, Miranda. Formerly a French republican general, he had defected to London and was in receipt of a British pension. In 1797 he had conspired with Henry Dundas to 'liberate' Venezuela and Colombia. Secret funds were also offered in 1804 for much the same purpose. In 1806 he tried to launch an invasion, again with British help.

Hanway's memo to Liverpool made explicit the importance of South American gold to the British efforts against Napoleonic France in 1810: "A considerable proportion of the means of contin-

uing the struggle in Europe is now supplied by Spanish America, particularly the means which we cannot supply [gold]." The key, for British strategy, was how far the 'Colonies' were prepared to go in their desire for Independence. "If Spanish America gambles its declaration of Independence upon the presumption that the cause of European Spain is desperate, it can no longer consistently contribute directly to the support of that struggle, which must therefore be at an end or assume a different form."

The delegation from Caracas had anticipated this response. They had been careful to include a declaration of loyalty to the deposed regime in Spain in their missive to the Foreign Office when they referred to their country as "as an integral part of the Spanish Empire."

Bolivar and his companions had several meetings with British Ministers in 1810. They returned home later that year, empty handed. But British policy had been refined during their visit. As Wellesley later told the Prince Regent: "The principal object is to check the progress of civil discord between Spain and her American possessions, and to unite the whole Spanish Empire in resistance to France. In this attempt it is also... desirable that such a course should be pursued as might dispose Spanish America favourably towards the British Empire whatever may be the fate of Spain."

The fate of Venezuela, and their neighbours was now, nominally, in their own hands.

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Adrian Heath: A man of contradictions

MIKE PENTELOW WRITES:

The artist Adrian Heath is described as "a man of more than usually pronounced contradictions" in this excellent book which illustrates both his life and work.

"There is something particularly touching about the skirt chasing, rugby playing young hearty sitting in a prisoner of war hut talking endlessly about art and life," observes the author.

She also remarks: "He put into practice his belief that art should be taught to anyone who wanted to learn, not just serious art students and would be art teachers at Corsham or the Regent Street Polytechnic, but shop girls on day release, prisoners from Wormwood Scrubs, and even generals like Sir Bryan Horrocks or newspaper proprietors like his friend Sir Edward Hulton, who were members of a class for serious amateurs he held in his early days in Fitzroy Street."

This was 22 Fitzroy Street where he moved with wife Corinne in 1949 and met fellow artist Anthony Hill who still lives in Charlotte Street.

Heath had joined Slade in 1939 then the RAF in 1940. He became a prisoner of war and on demob returned to Slade in 1945. In 1947 he painted a picture of Fitzroy Street with "emphatic verticals and horizontals which hint at the beginnings of a non-representational picture structure" states the author.

When he moved into the street the area was "the somewhat dilapidated but lively hub of London's literary, artistic and theatrical worlds. In certain streets every house was honeycombed with rickety studios which had been occupied by successive generations of artists, going back in some cases to the 18th century."

Two reviews of the new book about him

Adrian Heath, by Jane Rye, published by Lund Humphries, £40.

After he moved in there "artists visiting London could be sure of a bed, or a temporary studio, and 22 Fitzroy Street, surrounded by bombsites, soon became a meeting place." He also organised pioneering exhibitions of abstract art at his studio there, and wrote a book on it published in 1953 (by Alec Tiranti at 72 Charlotte Street).

Among those to visit him were the two Roberts, Colquhoun and MacBryde "at the height of their raffish celebrity."

At one of the exhibitions there in 1953 there were works by Heath, Hill, Terry Frost, Ben Nicholson, Eduardo Paolozzi, and Victor Pasmore (his mentor who had a studio at 8 Fitzroy Street before the war).

Heath and his family moved to 28 Charlotte Street in 1957 - "a house which is still warmly remembered by many for its hospitality, its austere, modernist decor, and the variety of people who might meet there."

David Hockney had his early etchings proofed and editioned there, and Heath's friend and neighbour Anthony Hill designed a small bathroom cupboard "of impeccable austerity" for him in 1958.

The house became famous as "the home of a cultivated yet unorthodox Bohemia, a convenient doss-house for impecunious fellow artists and a convivial venue for discussions about art."

Heath had met Corinne Lloyd in Paris in 1947, when she was studying stage design at Slade, having had "an enterprising and adventurous war as a Torpedo Wren." They moved in together in 1949, got married in 1952, and had two children Damon and Clio.



Ascending Forms, Oil on canvas painted in 1951 by Adrian Heath

MAX NEUFELD WRITES:

The publication of this copiously illustrated monograph on Adrian Heath is an important event. It recognises and describes Adrian's major, but still neglected, role in post war British Art. After finding his feet following three years as a prisoner of war, Adrian consciously became an abstract painter through the study of art theory and intellectual conviction. As he put it: "I no longer work from a visual experience but towards one."

In the early 1950s a group of like minded artists coalesced around Victor Pasmore including Anthony Hill, Kenneth and Mary Martin, and Adrian Heath.

As so often in his life Adrian became the active promotor of the group and it was at his flat in 22 Fitzroy Street that the first of three exhibitions was held in 1952. They called their work "Constructed abstract art".

Adrian subsequently separated from the group as he was the only one to go on painting while the others created constructions. Adrian developed as an artist over the years and painted many beautiful paintings but there is no doubt that the early to mid 1950's were his most innovative and important period. During this time his painting had a particular intellectual rigueur and tension. In his subsequent development particularly the 1970s and 1980s his work became more sensuous with the appearance of abstracted human form in his pictures.

Adrian was in many ways a contradiction: politically conservative and establishment and a member of the Beefsteak Club, but artistically a radical. He believed passionately in the social value of art and in his abstract painting pursued an unpopular aesthetic. He never sought to be fashionable. With his wide knowledge of art theory and related philosophy he was an intellectual but in a country where intellectuals are suspect he carried his knowledge lightly. He had an encyclopedic knowledge of 19th Century French painting.

In recent years Adrian's work, particularly that of the 1950s has become more sought after and it is to be hoped that this study in depth of his work will further encourage recognition of his importance in a key period of British art and that he will at last be given the long overdue major retrospective at the Tate.

A witty twist to striptease

The Paintbox, Downstairs@Sergios, Great Titchfield St. Wednesdays 8.30pm (resuming in the New Year)

By BRIAN JARMAN

I've searched high and low for good old-fashioned burlesque: Berlin, Paris, New York - you name it. But somehow it's elusive.

Little did I know that all I had to do was walk out of my front door and cross the road to Downstairs@Sergios in Great Titchfield St. There you can relive the days of the Paintbox, an underground club run at one time by screen bombshell Diana Dors.

Legend has it that she once had to escape through an upstairs window after it was

raided by the police. Events Manager Ronnie Davison has now recreated the Paintbox on Wednesday nights. There won't be shows in the pre-Christmas season but it will resume in the New Year.

"It started as an artists' bar in the 1950s where people would come and draw nudes with charcoal," he says.

It developed into a hideaway club for flamboyant Fitzrovia, its jazz, cabaret, drag acts and burlesque attracting a large gay following at a time when homosexuality was illegal.

"Diana Dors was involved with a lot of shady characters and that's how it came to be documented," says Ronnie.

One of the mainstays of the new Paintbox is cabaret singer Holly Penfield, whom Ronnie

first met when he went to see her show at The Savoy.

She comes on snapping a riding crop, trailing a sparkling mermaid-like tail, and kicks off with I Get No Kicks from Champagne, while we're sipping our complimentary glass.

Other cabaret favourites follow - La Vie on Rose, A Foggy Day in London Town, - and you're soon immersed into that late night, smoky (nicotine-free of course), scotch-soaked Fitzrovia atmosphere that we always knew was there somewhere. Holly departs, promising that her evil twin will come on later.

There's assertive jazz keyboard from Peter Saunders, who played the Hammond Organ for Dexy's Midnight Runners. And there's a crisp bass player too.

Next, to cries of 'Oh my God,' we're introduced to Miss Ginger Blush. Now it's time to hold on to your hat, as Miss Blush certainly doesn't. She's wearing a hard one, with a high visibility jacket. But not for long.

It's in the best possible taste of course. Miss Blush's next set is as Little Bo Peep, carrying a tea pot. She brings a contemporary witty twist to striptease.

Then Holly's evil twin appears. And she.....no, I won't reveal all. Not like certain others I could name.

It's great fun, very professional and fitting for Fitzrovia, I feel. In these days of mass-produced reality TV, it brings some much-needed Ooh-la-la to our doorstep.



Holly Penfield

Check your lucky stars in our horoscope column

Watch out for winter equinox

By **GEORGE BINNING**

Winter is upon us (again), and some theorists suggest that the continued low level of sunspots will give us a cold one. You may also have heard other people harking on about the end of the world and a uniquely dangerous alignment of the planets on the winter equinox (Dec 21).

The world may, or may not, end, but this alleged alignment is wobbly at best, total nonsense at worst (even from the helio-centric perspective). Mercury and Venus will be within 10 degrees of each other, and roughly in opposition to Jupiter, but this is relatively unremarkable.

In other news the Geminids meteor shower peaks December 13-14, an annual highlight with as many as 50 meteors an hour. Get under a clear patch of sky from 9pm if you can.



Aries

The time you spend with others will reward you in coming months. When your ruling planet Mars passes Neptune in the 12th house of Aries on Feb 4 unusual circumstances will enable you to realise a strength that has been hidden for a long time.



Taurus

Your ruling planet Venus travels in the wake of Mercury and you find your goals are hard to pin down. But when passing Pluto on Jan 17 you will get a cryptic clue. Pay attention to foreign languages on that day.



Gemini

Jupiter's retrograde has cramped your outlook for a while now. When Mercury comes into opposition with Jupiter on Dec 17 you will feel particularly tied down by an acquaintance. Exiting retrograde on Jan 30 will improve things.

THE MOVEMENTS OF THE PLANETS DEC 2012 - MARCH 2013



Illustrations: planets by George Binning; zodiac signs by Chris Tyler.



Cancer

A new moon in Capricorn on Jan 12 will help you reason through the new responsibilities of the year. Don't lose your head if you have to make a choice on Jan 26, when the moon is full and in your house.



Leo

Mercury, Venus and Saturn are retreating into the distance, a full moon eclipses February and although the Sun may be at its lowest point, it never actually goes into retrograde. Hold out for a few months yet.



Virgo

On Feb 7 Mercury comes into conjunction with Neptune, if you are wondering how best to pass on a message, imagine telling yourself the same thing.



Libra

I wish I had your stars Libra. On Valentines day (Feb 14) your ruling planet Venus is progressing through the 5th house. This is telling you to get creative, you love rat!



Scorpio

The rapid advance of Mars will buoy you up, giving a sense of purposeful progress until April. But upon hitting the square with Saturn on Jan 9 it may briefly seem that your best laid plans have taken a wrong direction.



Sagittarius

Sagittarians will be the most affected when Venus opposes Jupiter on Dec 23. This would appear very much to be a pre-Christmas panic. Reduce cosmic chaos by not leaving things to the last minute.



Capricorn

Do you feel unable to conceal your true opinion, regardless of the consequences? You may want to be sensible and true to yourself, but tact is not quite the same as insincerity.



Aquarius

You have much to look forward to in the next few months, however your ruling planet Saturn enters its long retrograde on Feb 19. But your working restrictions aren't so limiting if you can think outside the box.



Pisces

Your memories and experiences will serve you well when you spot an opportunity near to your home. You should make use of fertile ground when Jupiter leaves retrograde on Jan 30 and Mars, Mercury and Venus enter your sky in the following March.

Ten years ago

Fitzrovia Youth football champs

Fitzrovia Youth in Action's under 13 football side was pictured after winning the national five-a-side competition.

Goodge Street station remained closed during an eight-day firefighters' strike.

The Fitzrovia was the new name of the pub, previously called the Valiant Trooper and Finnegan's Wake, which reopened after refurbishment on the corner of Goodge Street and Whitfield Street.

The congestion charge was announced to be introduced from February 17, 2003, for £5, with a penalty of £80 for those who failed to pay it.

It had been introduced by the then Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, who said it would

lead to a significant reduction of traffic in central London. It was intended to ensure those who used valuable and congested road space made a financial contribution to it, and to encourage other modes of transport. It was also intended to ensure that "for those who have to use the roads, journey times are quicker and more reliable."

Fitzrovia News, December 2002.

Zoo time extended

The Grant Museum of Zoology, 21 University Street, has extended its opening times to include Saturday afternoons to serve locals better.

It is packed full of skeletons, mounted animals and specimens preserved in fluid.

Terrific shopping in Tottenham Court Road

Fantastic feasting in Charlotte Street

Avoid the crowds this Christmas and find out what Fitzrovia has to offer. Pick up everything from a flat screen TV to a flat-pack wardrobe, software to soft furnishings in **Tottenham Court Road**. Then take a quick pit-stop or a long lunch in and around **Charlotte Street** where you can eat your way around the world from Argentina to the Philippines or through the alphabet from alpaca to zabaglione.

Find out more at
www.fitzroviaw1.com

The Fitzrovia Partnership
Business Improvement District

Hospital public art work

By **ANN GOODBURN**

Stuart Haygarth has recently completed a major public art-work 'Strand' for the new Macmillan Cancer Centre at University College Hospital, Huntley Street.

As Haygarth has said: "My work revolves around everyday objects, collected in large quantities, categorized and presented in such a way that they are given new meaning. It is about giving banal and overlooked objects new significance." The objects were mainly collected walking along the English coastline.

The objects have been suspended on fine metal cables and



create an impressive centre piece to the most advanced cancer facility in the UK.

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WHAT'S ON AROUND FITZROVIA

Email news@fitzrovia.org.uk by February 19 for the March 2013 issue, and put "Listings" in the subject box.

ART GALLERIES

4 Windmill Street, 4 Windmill St (4windmillstreet.com): Tatiana Macedo (Seems So Long Ago, Nancy) to Dec 15.
Alison Jacques Gallery, 18 Berners St (alisonjacquesgallery.com): Bernd Ribbeck to Dec 20
Arch One, 12 Percy St (archonepictureframing.co.uk): Various artists, ongoing
Art First, 21 Eastcastle St (artfirst.co.uk): Louis Maqhubela (Transformational Discourse) to Dec 20. Partou Zia (The Late Works) Jan 9-Feb 23.
Arup Phase 2, 8 Fitzroy St (arup.com/phase2): Traces of Peter Rice to Apr 5.
Bartha Contemporary, 25 Margaret St (barthacontemporary.com): Kate Shepherd to Feb 2. Indian Tantric + Western Contemporary Feb 8-Mar 29
Black Arts Company, 73 Great Titchfield St (theblackarts.org): Check web.
Building Centre, Store St (building-centre.co.uk): Housing London to Dec 21.
Caroll / Fletcher, 56-57 Eastcastle St (carrollfletcher.com): Manfred Mohr (One and Zero) to Dec 20. Michael Joaquin Grey (Orange Between Orange and Orange) Jan 11-Feb 16.
Cole, 3-4a Little Portland St (colecontemporary.com): Neil Rummung (Hand Me Down) to Jan 12.
Coningsby Gallery/Debut Art, 30 Tottenham St (coningsbygallery.com): Anna F C Smith (BURPology) Jan 21-26. Guy Reid (Little Me) Feb 4-Mar 2.
Contemporary Applied Arts, 2 Percy St (caa.org.uk): Gifted to Jan 12. Barbara Christie (Light Seeping Through Windows) Jan 18-Mar 20.
Curwen Gallery, 34 Windmill St (curwengallery.com): Lee Sellers + Christmas exhibition Dec 6-28. John Hoyland & others (Late Greats) Jan 9-Feb 2. Hot off The Press (MA Printing Graduates) Feb 7-Mar 2.
Derwent London Gallery, 43 Whitfield St (derwentlondon.com): Check web.
Gallery Different, 14 Percy St (gallerydifferent.co.uk): Winter Collective to Jan 23.
England & Co, 90-92 Great Portland St (englandgallery.com): Paule Vezelay (Abstraction-Creation and Le Groupe Espace) to Dec 8. Then Shane Bradford.
Exposure, 22-23 Little Portland St (exposure.net): Check web.
Framers Gallery, 36 Windmill St (theframersgallery.co.uk): LOLCAT, The Exhibishun Jan 23-Feb 15.
Fred - London, 17 Riding House St (fred-london.com): Lea Golder Holterman (Orthodox Eros) to Jan 12. Oskar Laffont (Drawings) + Alexandra Makhlof Jan 16-Feb 23. Anand Zenz - (Is Is Not Not?) Feb 28-Apr 13.
Gallery at 94, 94 Cleveland St (galleryat94.com): Murano 1291 jewellery and collectables.
Getty Images Gallery, 46 Eastcastle St (gettyimagesgallery.com): Check web.
Hanmi Gallery, 30 Maple St (hanmigallery.co.uk): Various artists (It's Just a Matter of Time) Dec 11-19.
Haunch of Venison, 51 Eastcastle St (haunchofvenison.com): Isca Greenfield-Sanders (Second State) to Jan 19.
Gallery Libby Sellers, 41 Berners St (libbysellers.com): M/M [Paris] (Carpetalogue) to Dec 15. Craftica by Formafantasma Feb 1-28.

Josh Lilley, 44-46 Riding House St (joshlilleygallery.com): Various artist (Something New) to Jan 10. Analia Saban Jan 18-Feb 22.
Laure Genillard, 2 Hanway Place (lauregenillard.com): Check web.
Lazarides Gallery, 11 Rathbone Place (lazinc.com): VHILS (Devoid), to Jan 17.
Margaret Street Gallery, 63 Margaret St (margaretstreetgallery.com): Marcus Doyle (Salton Sea Series) to Jan 2. Young Photographers' Alliance Jan 8-17.
Modern Art, 23-25 Eastcastle St (modernart.net): Lothar Hempel (Voice of the Triangle) to Jan 19.
Mummery+Schnelle, 83 Great Titchfield St (mummeryschnelle.com): Jonathan Gent (11 Paintings) to Dec 15.
Nancy Victor, 6 Charlotte Place (nancyvictor.com): Louis Masai (Afrofabrication) to Dec 7. Various artists (It's A Wonderful Life) Dec 12-Jan 3.
Nati Gallery, 22 Warren Street (nati-gallery.com): Check web.
National Print Gallery, 56 Maple St (nationalprintgallery.com): Check web.
Nettie Horn, 17A Riding House St (nettiehorn.com): Kim Rugg Dec 7-Jan 26.
Paradise Row, 74 Newman St (paradisewow.com): Erratum to Dec 21. Various artists (Kiss Me Deadly) Jan 22-Mar 9.
Pilar Corrias, 54 Eastcastle St (pilarcorrias.com): John Skoog to Feb 2. Shahzia Sikander Feb 21-Mar 23.
The Piper Gallery, 18 Newman St (thepipergallery.com): New Possibilities: Abstract Painting from the Seventies to Dec 21. Martin McGinn Jan 11-Feb 8. Paul de Monchaux Feb 13-Mar 15.
Rebecca Hossack Gallery (1), 2a Conway St (r-h-g.co.uk): Reg Gadney, Dec 5-13. Holly Freaan (Before and After) Dec 5-19.
Rebecca Hossack Gallery (2) 28 Charlotte St (r-h-g.co.uk): David Farrer (Island Life) Dec 6-22.
Regina Gallery, 22 Eastcastle St (reginagallery.com): Alexey Kallima (everything Is For Sale) to Jan 15.
Rollo Gallery, 51 Cleveland St (rolloart.com): Check web.
Rook and Raven, 7/8 Rathbone Place (rookandraven.co.uk): Erik Sommer (Pray to Fallen Skies) to Dec 22.
Rose Issa Projects, 82 Great Portland St (roseissa.com): Pictorial representations from Iran to Dec 20. Another Era Jan 20-Feb 28.
Rosenfeld Porcini, 37 Rathbone St (rosenfeldporcini.com): The Continuation of Romance: Painting - An Interrupted Discourse to Jan 8. Silvia Hatzl Jan 18-Mar 7.
Richard Saltoun, 111 Great Titchfield St (richardsaltoun.com): Rose English + others (Taking Matters into our own Hands) Jan 23-Mar 8.
Scream Gallery, 27-28 Eastcastle St (whisperfineart.co.uk): Greg Miller (Four Corners) to Jan 5.
Store Street Gallery, 32 Store St (storestreetgallery.com): Point 35 Dec.
Tiwani Contemporary, 16 Little Portland St (tiwani.co.uk): Nathalie Mba Bikoro - (The Middle Passage: Alice in Wonderland) to Dec 15.
T J Boulting, 59 Riding House St (tjboulting.com): Henry Hudson (Hominidae) to Jan 26. Dale Adcock (Ratio) Feb 5-Mar 16.
Woolff Gallery, 89 Charlotte St (woolffgallery.co.uk): Check web.

The Christmas lights in Oxford Street



CHRISTMAS EVENTS

All Souls Schools, Foley St: Winter Fair, Dec 7, 3.15-5.15; Foundation Stage Christmas Performance, Dec 12, 10am; KSI and KS2 Christmas Performance, Dec 13, 10.30am, and Dec 14, 2pm; Christmas parties/Santa visit, Dec 20, 1.30pm.
All Souls Clubhouse, 141 Cleveland St (clubhousew1.org): Christmas Service and community carol service followed by mince pies and mulled wine, Dec 9 at 6pm; Crib service Dec 24 at 4pm; Christmas celebrations, Dec 25, 10.30 am.

Bolivar Hall, 54 Grafton Way: Xmas Variety Show presented by Venezuelan Embassy and Bolivar Hall Dance Group, Dec 6, 7.30pm.

LIVE MUSIC

All Souls Clubhouse, 141 Cleveland St (clubhousew1.org): See Christmas Events.
Bolivar Hall, 54 Grafton Way (cultura.embavenez-uk.org): Love songs and dances from Brazil and Portugal, Dec 13, 7.30pm.
Fitzrovia Community Centre, Foley St: Free lunchtime music recitals, Ray Warleigh, sax and flute, Barry Booth piano, Dec 6 and 13, 1-2pm.
The 100 Club, 100 Oxford St (the100club.co.uk/gigs): Future Rock, every Friday. Goldblade, Dec 10. Matthew Lee & The Octaves, Dec 11. Lenny Beige, jazz lunch session. Fabulous Lounge Swingers, Dec 15. Mike Sangez, Dec 16. Frank Sanazi, Dec 18. Remembering Joe Strummer - 10 years on, Dec 22-23. New Year's Eve Soul Night, Dec 31, 7.30pm-3am. See also Christmas Events.
Rada Bar, Malet St, opposite Birkbeck College (rada.org): Swingtime Serenaders jazz, Dec 5, 7.30.
UCL Chamber Music Club, Haldane Room, Wilkins Building, Gower St (ucl.ac.uk/chamber-music): Concert, celebrating club's 60th anniversary, Dec 6, 5.30-6.30pm. See also Christmas Events.

THEATRE

Bloomsbury Theatre, 15 Gordon St (thebloomsbury.com): The Nutcracker, Dec 7-9. Tom's Midnight Garden, Dec 12-22, 27-29, Jan 7-19. The Joy of Sketch, Dec 13. Paul Foot - Kenny Larch is dead, Dec 14. Nine Lessons and Carols for Godless People, Dec 15 and 23. Chris Ramsey: Feeling Lucky, Jan 11-12. Stand Up For Women, Jan 14. Sex Appeal II, Jan 18. Festival of the Spoken Nerd, Jan 21-22. Laugh Till It Hurts, Jan 23.
Camden People's Theatre, 58-60 Hampstead Rd (cptheatre.co.uk): Angel Cake, and Defrag, until Dec 15, 6.30 or 9pm.
Dominion Theatre, 269 Tottenham Court Rd (dominiontheatre.co.uk): We Will Rock You, ongoing.

London Palladium, Argyll St (the-london-palladium.com): Scrooge, starring Tommy Steele, until January 5.
The Plaza, Oxford St: All Saints choir, Dec 13, 6.45-7.45pm then in area around Great Portland St, Market Place, Margaret St.
UCL, North Cloisters, Wilkins Building, Gower St: Chamber Music Club Christmas Concert, Dec 11, 6-7pm.
The 100 Club, 100 Oxford St: A Christmas Mod Ball, Dec 9, 7-11pm. Home Grown Rock "A Christmas Carol", Dec 12, 7-11pm. Any Swing Goes Christmas Party, big band, Dec 17, 7.30pm to midnight. Todd Sharpville's Christmas Blues Party, Dec 19, 7.30-late. Northern Soul Xmas Party, Dec 20, 9pm-2am.

London Palladium, Argyll St (the-london-palladium.com): See Christmas Events. A Chorus Line, from Feb 2.
RADA Studios, 16 Chenies St (rada.org): Romeo and Juliet, and Canterbury Tales, Dec 6-7. Cabaret, Dec 13, 7pm. Other radio recordings can be booked through the BBC Ticket office.

LIVE COMEDY

College Arms, 18 Store St: Mondays at 8pm.
Fitzroy Tavern, 16 Charlotte St: Wednesdays at 7.30pm in basement.
Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place: Improvisation on Thursdays, 8.30pm, and stand-up on Saturdays, 7.30pm upstairs.

CINEMA/FILM

Green Man, 36 Riding House St: London Animation Club, first Tuesday of month.
Odeon, 30 Tottenham Court Rd: Weekly film details from odeon.co.uk or 08712 244007.
Screen @ Rada, Malet St, opposite Birkbeck College (rada.org): Skyfall, latest James Bond, Dec 13, 8pm.
SERTUC Film Club, Congress House, Great Russell St: sertucevents@tuc.org.uk for future screenings.
UCL JZ Young Theatre, Anatomy Building, Gower St: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (1931), Dec 4, 6.30pm.

PUB QUIZZES

One Tun, 58 Goodge St: Every Tuesday, 8pm.
Prince of Wales Feathers, 8 Warren St: Every Monday, 7pm.

POETRY

Rada Bar, Malet St, opposite Birkbeck College (rada.org): Farrago Poetry Slam, Dec 11, 7.30 pm.

BELLY DANCING

Efes, 80 Great Titchfield St (efes-restaurant.co.uk): Throughout December.

EXHIBITIONS

British Museum, Great Russell St (britishmuseum.org): Virtual autopsy, explore a natural mummy, until Dec 16. Ice Age art, opens Feb 7.
Grant Museum of Zoology, 21 University St (ucl.ac.uk/museums/zoology): Current Questions and iPads, ongoing.
RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects), Gallery One, 66 Portland Place (architecture.com): 21st Century Light Space Modulator, until Jan 29. Colour in Architectural Photography, until Jan 31. Guided tours, last Tuesday of every month 7pm.
UCL (ucl.ac.uk/events): Art Museum, South Cloisters, Gower St: One Day in the City, architecture, art and literature, until Dec 14. Octagon Gallery, Wilkins Building, Gower St: Model Translations, first exhibition of new art gallery, until April 30.
Petrie Museum, Malet Place: Fit Bodies - Statues, Athletes and Power, until Dec 20.
Wellcome Library, 183 Euston Rd (wellcomecollection.org): Image Awards, until Dec 31. Death: A Self-portrait, until Feb 24. Pain and its Meanings, Dec 7-8.

TALKS

UCL public lectures (ucl.ac.uk/events): Darwin Theatre, Gower St, entrance in Malet Place: All 1.15-1.55pm. Apocalypse in 2012? History, myth and science, Dec 6. From Bletchley Park to modern computing - the value of Twitter, Jan 8. Gower Street to Euston Square, A local history of the Underground, Jan 15. Obama's America, The significance of the 2012 elections, Jan 17. Science for everyone by everyone, Jan 22.

WALKS

Fitzroy Tavern, 16 Charlotte St: London Literary Pub Crawl, every Thursday (6.30) and Saturday (4pm).