

Fitzrovia News



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

Issue 121 Summer 2011

Mail delays threatened

Workers have voted to strike against the closure of the Royal Mail delivery and distribution office in Rathbone Place, which they fear would worsen local deliveries and hit jobs.

The Royal Mail has announced it intends to sell the office for millions of pounds and transfer the work to Mount Pleasant, about one and a half miles away.

Picking up post from that far away will inevitably delay postal deliveries to Fitzrovia. And if people are not in to collect deliveries they will have to go further in order to pick them up if the Rathbone Place centre is shut down.

It is one of three mail centres threatened with closure, the other two being in East London, and at Nine Elms in Vauxhall. About 3,500 workers are involved, including 600 at Rathbone Place. They fear com-

Selling of delivery office provokes furious response

pulsory redundancies and have voted by 79 per cent in a ballot to resist the closures. And there was an overwhelming vote at the union's national conference last month against taking any work transferred from closed offices.

"We are worried about compulsory redundancies and have tried to negotiate with management over this and have got the support of independent consultants," said Andy Hyatt, the West Central Distribution representative of the Communication Workers' Union. "But negotiations have broken down." He believes 600 jobs could go between the three offices. When they asked management for

assurance that this was not the case they were refused.

"The new regime seems intent on stripping assets to make a profit. But these are assets needed for an efficient business, and will amount to a short term profit at the expense of the long term interests of the service," he added.

"There is talk about compulsory transfers to other offices within a 15 mile radius, but when people have asked for jobs nearer their home they have been told there are no jobs there."



The last post. Opened in 1963 by Queen Elizabeth, the West End Delivery Centre is due to close. The land is to be sold and speculative development plans are currently with Westminster City Council.



Banksy gets mystery protection

A sheet of protective perspex has been installed over an artwork which is believed to be the work of street artist Banksy, writes Angela Lovely. The painting is on a wall on Westminster City Council's property in Clipstone Street. The Council had said they would have the art removed because they have a policy of removing graffiti and see Banksy's work as no different. However, it remains unknown who drilled 18 holes into the wall, fitted plugs then screwed a sheet of perspex to it before finishing the edges with sealant. Camden councillor Adam Harrison is a fan of Banksy and had started a petition to get the work protected.

News in brief

Film actor Ewan McGregor has a taste for single speed bikes and bought one at Fitzrovia Bicycles on New Cavendish Street. Olympic cyclist Victoria Pendleton and Radiohead's Thom Yorke have also taken an interest in the shop.

More people would cycle if there were better facilities in Fitzrovia say survey respondents <http://wp.me/puay0-M8>

Ridgeview Fitzrovia
Sparkling Rosé 2004 was served at the Buckingham Palace state dinner to honour the visit of **President Barack Obama**. The Sussex-based winery names its classic Champagne after central London neighbourhoods.

Changes to way residents are consulted on licensing applications

Continued on page 5 column 5



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New Community Centre building complete but signing of contracts delays public opening

The new Fitzrovia Community Centre has now been completed (as reported in Fitzrovia News 120) however arrangements for the drawing up of contracts and taking control of the building have yet to be finalised. Users of the building are likely to start moving in over the summer months as each contract for use is signed.

The Fitzrovia Community Centre Trust (FCCT) who will control the building will know in September how much financial support Camden Council will give to the running of the building over the next three years. All community centres in Camden are applying for funding at a time when the Council's Government grant is being cut.

FCCT will also be looking for some financial support from Westminster City Council to support Fitzrovia's Westminster residents.

Increasingly councils are expecting community centres to be self financing from a mixed economy of incomes. This makes the setting up and running of a community centre particularly challenging.

Bloomsbury ward councillors' surgeries

6.00-7.00pm on the first and third Fridays of the month at Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre, 39 Tottenham Street, W1T 4RX
And on the second and fourth Fridays of the month at Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, WC1N 1AB

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Society and offenders can benefit from crime and find the good life

By Denise Julien

The government's Big Society initiative is not so much about getting people to do unpaid work. It has enabled communities who want to bring about change, the freedom to do so without the red-tape and bureaucracy of public sector workers who oppose any change that would threaten their easy life.

I originally asked the Payback team to do work at Holcroft Court two years ago. Two mini-bus loads of nine offenders would arrive with two supervisors, slowly get out the equipment, talk about what to do, have a cigarette break, then it was a coffee break, go through the motions of working, go to lunch, then at 2.30 pm, it would be time to clear up and return home.

Because I complained about this, those in charge closed down the project because they will not put their supervisors in a position where they have to explain why no work is getting done. I renegotiated for them to come back, but the same happened, twice.

Now the Payback scheme has changed for the better, as volunteers like myself are able to organise the work. Gone are the lazy supervisors who believed that the taxpayer owed them an easy living, and who made the public believe that all offenders are troublesome and dangerous just to justify their position.

On the contrary, all the offenders that have been sent my way were absolutely fine. The Community Payback scheme allows them to pay their debt to society without having their whole life ruined by a prison sentence. To date I've not been sent any women, which begs the question, are women really better behaved, or just better at not getting caught?



Offenders restored garden furniture under the government's Community Payback scheme

Holcroft Court was not due to be repainted for a few years, so the work has not replaced jobs from the paid sector. And, the standard of the work done is very good. I am also in the process of decorating the courtyard and the garden furniture, which has never been cared for. All benches and tables have been sanded down and re-varnished, giving them a near new appearance.

As a volunteer I am able to give offenders a reference to enable them to get a job, which the probation department is unable to do. Furthermore, the high visibility of the orange vests that they are obliged to wear send out a strong signal to potential trouble makers that crime and antisocial behaviour will not be tolerated here, and is a deterrent for those who would be tempted.

There are also many benefits for the volunteer. You get the work done for free at your own specifications. Joining in with the work is very good exercise, and you get to know all your neighbours, many of whom will want to assist you.

And, as Aristotle said, "cultivating the good life requires participation in public life, and exercising responsibility".



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Derwent London fail to win approval for Saatchi block redevelopment

By Peter Whyatt

A planning application submitted by Derwent London to redevelop the Saatchi office block at Charlotte Street, bounded by Chitty Street, Whitfield Street and Howland Street was rejected by Camden Council because the proposals failed to comply with the council's planning policies. Camden's development control committee voted by eight votes to three to reject the scheme at a highly charged meeting at Camden Town Hall on 19 May.

The proposed redevelopment, included plans to increase the office floorspace from 25,000 square metres to 40,000 square metres by knocking down Fitzrovia's "secret" pub The Pregnant Man (named after the 1970s Saatchi & Saatchi advert) and in-filling the internal open space which is presently partly used as a car park.

The scheme would have introduced retail and restaurant premises, and would add several floors to create a nine storey building at the heart of Fitzrovia and in the Charlotte Street conservation area. The plans also included residential use and a small pocket park on Chitty Street.

Camden's planning officers recommended that permission be granted.



Left: The existing and proposed buildings compared.

The existing elevation along the south side of the Saatchi block in Chitty Street and below it the proposed elevation showing the increased height of the building.

Both pictures are to scale.

Objectors to the proposals, however, said the plans were an overdevelopment, lacking in public open space and failed to provide adequate market and affordable housing.

At the development control meeting a deputation from the Charlotte Street Association (CSA) explained their grounds for objection.

Penny Abraham, a ward councillor for eight years, relied on her knowledge of the area to argue for the community's need for public open space and affordable housing. She recalled that discussions in 2009 had identified the site as having significant potential to make a contribution to meeting these needs.

The shortcomings of the scheme and its almost total failure to meet the planning policy and actually worsened an already identified lack of community facilities.

Councillor Adam Harrison also spoke against the plans.

Derwent responded by urging the Council to approve the scheme and as a sweetener offered an additional off-site affordable dwelling, and that viability did not allow them to offer more.

On the issue of viability the Council's consultant told the committee that Derwent's return on capital would not make enough money from the scheme to offer more public open space



Home to Fitzrovia's Mad Men. Derwent London's huge redevelopment plans for the Saatchi block at 80 Charlotte Street failed to impress local people or Camden Council.

or affordable housing.

The CSA argued that Derwent's plea of poverty cannot justify a scheme which almost totally failed to meet Camden's policy and local needs. To allow financial considerations to justify a scheme so totally at variance with the objectives of the policy constituted bad planning.

The CSA argued that the site is not derelict, the buildings are fully occupied and in the circumstances it was better to leave well alone rather than prejudice the future by approving a damaging scheme.

Neighbours and local residents groups wrote in to object to the proposals. Holborn and St Pancras MP Frank Dobson also objected, describing the planned nine storey building as a "grotesque overdevelopment".

The residents of Chitty Street were furious at the idea of being overlooked by five extra stories of office space.

Councillor Flick Rea criticised the pocket park being proposed: "The open space is not enough for the office workers let alone the surrounding residential community."

Councillor Matthew Sanders, said Derwent "have failed to meet any of our policies".

In response officers argued that community benefit was also restricted because of the Mayor's a £1.4m Crossrail levy.

In the end, councillors agreed with the objectors and voted to refuse the application.

Derwent London may appeal the decision.

We asked Derwent London to give us a statement. A spokesperson said they were reviewing their position on 80 Charlotte Street but declined to comment further at this time.

Below is an extract from the Charlotte Street Association's comments to Camden Council's development control committee.

1. Overdevelopment. The proposals for the Saatchi block represent gross overdevelopment increasing the existing floorspace by 69 percent; increasing the plot ratio from the existing 4.78:1 to 8.10:1 — a higher density than Central St Giles.

2. Conservation. This would be seriously damaging to the quality of the conservation area particularly in relation to Chitty Street and Whitfield Street.

3. Public open space (POS). Camden's Planning Guidance required 3285sqm POS, yet no POS is offered; only 231sqm of publicly accessible space is provided.

4. Planning policy requires increases in commercial floorspace to be matched by an equivalent area of residential floorspace of which 50 percent should be affordable. In the present case only half (53%) of the required residential floorspace is provided — 5462sqm — instead of the target of 10925sqm. The level of provision of affordable is even worse; only just over a quarter (27.5%) of the required provision is offered. 1500sqm instead of a target of 5462sqm. A mere 15 units instead of 55.

5. Ground floor uses. The proposed retail and restaurant uses on the ground floor of all four frontages would bring the frenetic activity of the perimeter main roads into these streets. Part of the character of a city is derived from the contrasts between active and quiet areas. The tranquil character of this part of Fitzrovia would be undermined by extensive retail and restaurant ground floor uses.

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Dog and handler let sleeping residents lie



Dog can be unmuzzled and is trained to seize an arm.

By Peter Whyatt

Residents of Fitzroy Square now employ a security guard and dog to patrol the square in the evenings. Edward Turner, chair of Fitzroy Square Frontagers, told *Fitzrovia News* that the incidence of anti-social behaviour in the square had increased dramatically over the past few years and the disturbance has meant that residents have been unable to get a decent night's sleep and have felt threatened when returning home in the late evening.

Mr Turner said: "There have typically been three separate teenage gangs, mainly local, congregating in doorways and on the benches in the square making noise, dropping litter and being an intimidating presence. And they have been seen using or dealing drugs and are associated with cars that frequent the square," he said.

The residents felt that the police and local authority did not have the inclination or resources to tackle the problem. Two of the residents stepped forward to underwrite the costs (about £20,000) and hoped that residents (including businesses and close neighbours) would contribute on a voluntary basis. Some have contributed but others not. Everyone in the square is given access to the security guard's protection. For example, they can ask to be escorted to and from their doorways whether or not they have paid into the service.

"The security guard is licensed, insured and trained in security and dog handling to the same standards as the police," he continued. "The company he works for, has a number of contracts with local authorities and housing associations to

provide security for residents on sites across London.

"The security guard is able to challenge anti-social behaviour instantaneously, and to call for police back-up when needed. The dogs are usually muzzled, but may be unmuzzled in response to a specific threat. The guard is required to issue a warning before using his dog in defence or to apprehend a suspect. The dog is trained to seize the arm of a suspect, unbalancing them so that they fall over, and then to pin them to the ground on their back until they are arrested. The guard works with the full co-operation of the Metropolitan Police, the Safer Neighbourhood Team and local authority wardens," said Mr Turner.

"We have a zero-tolerance policy for anti-social behaviour; people who do not abide by this policy will be asked to leave the square," he warned. "The police are involved immediately if illegal drugs are detected in the square (whether dealing or using).

"We have no problem with homeless people or people drinking alcohol in the square; the same rules apply to them as to everyone else. We deal sensitively and tolerantly with any vulnerable local residents who inadvertently engage in anti-social behaviour."

Mr Turner said: "The security guard was subjected to threats of violence for the first few weeks and there was a daily stand-off against the gangs. Eventually they adopted more threatening tactics so the police intervened, and the gangs have since dissipated.

"The evening ambience of the square has been transformed and it is now a welcoming and safer place," concluded Mr Turner. "The drug dealers' cars no longer turn up; the gangs have largely left; it is usually litter free in the mornings and Fitzroy Square is now enjoyed by a wider group of people, including local elderly people, young couples and individuals, and people passing through late at night looking for somewhere to pause."



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Battle over night time lorries and roadworks in 2012 and beyond

By Linus Rees

Westminster City Council have confirmed they will allow lorries and roadworks to take place at night during the 2012 Olympics after Mayor Boris Johnson announced plans to allow late night working.

It is feared that other local authorities could follow Westminster's lead.

However, councillors representing Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia have launched a campaign to stop the Mayor of London allowing lorry deliveries in the small hours of the morning and roadworks at the weekends and at night-time.

Concerned that the plans will disturb the sleep of residents, Labour councillor Adam Harrison, who lives in Fitzrovia, said the plans "financially incentivises utility companies such as the National Grid to dig up our roads and pavements at the times when residents deserve a bit of peace and quiet after their week at work.

"Recent [late night] works in and around Warren Street and Conway Street already show how disturbing this can be."



The Mayor of London wants to allow night-time deliveries and works during the 2012 Olympics, but has not ruled out allowing them to become permanent.

Cllr Milena Nuti, who also lives locally, said "Protecting the quality of life for Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia residents is one of the main aims of our local team of councillors. That is why we have launched this campaign to give local people a voice and make City Hall think twice about its plans."

To sign the petition to prevent the powers coming into force, residents can visit <http://bit.ly/BloomsburyNoise> or see the councillors at their regular street stalls on the second Saturday of the month on Marchmont Street and the fourth Saturday of the month on Goodge Street through the months of May, June and July.

Leaf blowers banned

By Fitzrovia News reporter

Perhaps one of the most stupid devices ever invented. Leaf blowers were promoted by their manufacturers as an easy way to sweep leaves up. Their noisy electric or petrol engines would disturb the peace of a Sunday morning and worse raise dust and pollen into an already heavily polluted atmosphere.

Blowing leaves was easier than sweeping them, apparently. Marketing people would say anything to sell a product to a gullible public.

One resident had enough when street sweepers in Bedford Square were seen to be using the noisy leaf blowers to sweep up the spores from London plane trees. Jim Murray saw a fine haze drifting across Bedford Square in his direction, took a picture and sent it by email to Camden Council after escaping indoors to avoid suffering a bout of heavy sneezing.

My Murray, who is chair of the Bloomsbury Association, told Camden Council: "The dust that you see is the spores from the Plane Trees which, when they divide, float around and scatter. This affects the atmos-



Raising dust and spores in Bedford Square. Photo: Jim Murray

phere in London, and at a casual glance, it looks as if it is raining. These spores cause havoc for those poor souls who suffer from hay fever, and, at least, make the eyes water of those that don't suffer from that allergy.

"I really am unable to understand how our borough council can spread air pollution like this," he wrote.

Seeing sense, an officer from Camden said they would ban the use of these machines immediately and sweepers would do the obvious thing and use a broom. University of London also banned the use of blowers by maintenance teams.

Middlesex plans forthcoming

Plans for a £750 million commercial development on the former site of Middlesex Hospital are to be unveiled shortly. The consortium who own the site (Aviva Investors, Exemplar Properties and the former Kaupthing Bank) have appointed architects Sheppard Robson to draw up outline proposals for the development which will be a mix of housing, offices retail and a restaurant - as well as preserving the chapel for community use, space provision for the primary school and new healthcare facilities.

A spokesperson for the developers told *Fitzrovia News* that an exhibition centre is currently being prepared on the site to show off initial plans for the new scheme during the summer.

Workhouse listed



The former Strand Union Workhouse in Cleveland Street

By Linus Rees

The former Strand Union Workhouse on Cleveland Street has been given Grade II listed status by the heritage minister John Penrose. The decision is likely to prevent the proposed demolition and redevelopment plans currently pending.

The owner of the site University College London Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (UCLH) had submitted a planning application to build a mixed-use development which included 140 flats. Local people had criticised the proposal for being too big and ugly, destroying a heritage site, and not providing enough social housing from planning gain.

John Penrose MP, the heritage minister, in allowing the listing application by English Heritage said: "This austere and imposing building is an eloquent reminder of one of the grimmer aspects of London's 18th century social history.

Some claim that it was the inspiration for the workhouse in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, but whether it was or it wasn't, we know that it is the sole survivor of the workhouses that were operating in the capital when Dickens wrote his famous novel, and that as a young man he had lived just nine doors along from it.

"It is undoubtedly an important and interesting part of our history and heritage, and deserves the extra protection that listing provides," said the minister.

However, only the C18 part of the workhouse has been listed. The listing schedule states: "The building's special interest ends at the line of the rear wall of the C18 workhouse. The later ward blocks attached to the rear, and the separate ranges to the North and South, are not of special interest."

UCLH have declined to comment on the minister's decision.

Awards recognise Fitzrovia architects and buildings

By Angela Lovely

Fitzrovia-based architects practice Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios received a prize in this year's Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) awards for their design for a school in Chelsea. The Chelsea Academy was also recognised in the Building Awards 2011 Public Building Project of the Year.

In Fitzrovia, buildings at Fitzroy Street and Maple Place won a RIBA award for Duggan Morris Architects for their office refurbishment for client Derwent London.

RIBA Awards for architectural excellence were announced on 19 May and presented to 97 buildings in the UK and Europe (89 in the UK and 8 in the rest of the EU). The shortlist for the RIBA Stirling Prize for the building of the year will be drawn

from the 97 RIBA Award winners.

RIBA President Ruth Reed said: "For 46 years the RIBA Awards have reflected the health of British architecture. This year's winners show that in spite of a terrible worldwide recession, many exceptional buildings have been, and continue to be, built in the UK and overseas. Winning projects demonstrate that even in constrained times committed clients working with talented architects can achieve architectural excellence.

"These well-designed buildings will add huge value to the lives, prosperity, health and pride of their owners, users and communities and I am delighted with this year's selection. We are promised an interesting RIBA Stirling Prize shortlist," she said.



Alan Titchmarsh, MBE, celebrity broadcaster and gardening expert, planted an elm tree to mark the arrival of 48 new trees in Bolsover Street. This marked the completion of efforts by the W1W Tree Initiative to 'green' this historic street and return elm trees to the neighbourhood. Over 160 trees were planted along Marylebone's streets since the beginning of the year.

Photo: W1W Tree initiative <http://w1wtrees.wordpress.com>

.... Continued from page 1

cations in Camden
<http://wp.me/puay0-L5>

Camden Council is seeking the public views on its **Sex Establishments Policy**
<http://ow.ly/4ZleU>

Westminster City Council are inviting comments on the **Westminster Draft Air Quality Action Plan** to help shape future action to improve air quality in Westminster. This consultation will run until Friday 22nd July 2011. See: <http://ow.ly/54A9p>

There will be a special editorial and social meeting of **Fitzrovia News** on Tuesday 5 July to celebrate the time since the **Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre** first opened its doors.

At 7.30pm we will have the usual editorial and social evening to be followed at 8.30pm for a special **celebration of life in Fitzrovia** with some special guests who contributed to **The Tower** (fore-runner to *Fitzrovia News*) and the Neighbourhood Centre of the past four decades. Everyone is welcome to attend.

A new contemporary art gallery will open in Fitzrovia in June. The first exhibition at **Rosenfeld Porcini**, 37 Rathbone Street, London W1T 1NZ will be of work by the Spanish artist **Enrique Brinkmann** from 24 June to 10 September. See: rosenfeldporcini.com

Metro Bank have opened a new branch in March on the corner of Tottenham Court Road and Store Street.

The **Co-operative Food** have opened a new shop on the corner of Store Street and Alfred Place.

Supermarket chain **Waitrose** have posted a notice to apply for a licence to sell alcohol at a premises on Tottenham Court Road near the corner of Store Street.

Velorution, retailer of town, cargo and folding cycles is moving from its Great Portland Street shop to a larger premises at **71 Great Portland Street**. velorution.biz

The **Really Free School**, the collective of free thinkers, finally left Fitzrovia during the first week of March. They first drew attention when they occupied Guy Ritchie's house in **Fitzroy Square** and put on free classes on politics, literature, art and computing and then went on to do the same at the **Black Horse** pub in Rathbone Place. For several weeks after they continued their activities at the formerly empty **Hand and Racquet** pub in Whitcomb Street WC2

Continued on page 7 ...

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Tottenham Court short of a toilet

By Angela Lovely

Despite its millions of visitors and shoppers Tottenham Court Road has no public toilet. In fact there are no public toilets on the Camden side of Fitzrovia, the nearest Camden loo being on the north side of Russell Square in Bloomsbury.

Residents are now fed up of washing urine and worse off their doorsteps and have been meeting to decide what to do about the lack of a public toilet particularly with the increase in visitors to the area during the 2012 Olympics and the extra footfall from the new Crossrail station in 2015.

Whitfield Gardens is regularly used as an impromptu toilet as are the other open spaces and doorways in Fitzrovia. Yet those needing to answer the call of nature have little choice if there are no public facilities to use.

A group of residents and business people have now had enough and are considering a site for a staffed public toilet open for long hours somewhere along Tottenham Court Road. A spot favoured is the disused entrance to the air raid shelter between the American Church and the advertising hoarding



The disused air raid shelter. A potential site for public toilets on Tottenham Court Road if money and the political will can be found.

near the junction with Torrington Place. Residents and businesses are trying to identify funds to build and run the toilet. One solution is to use money from planning gain, known as 106 money, from one or more of the many property developments on the Camden side of Fitzrovia.

Currently much of 106 money has been used to pay for the Legible London tourist signs and to encourage visitors, but no money has been set aside for

providing somewhere for those many visitors to go to the toilet.

By contrast Westminster City Council has two public toilets in Fitzrovia: one at Great Portland Street tube station and another in the Plaza Centre on Oxford Street. However, Westminster's urinals at Soho Square have drawn criticism because there is no facility for women.

Residents told *Fitzrovia News* we need a public toilet that is clean, accessible, staffed, and open long hours.

Danielle le Poupon and Gustav Langshaft
investigate Camden and Westminster's public loos.

The Russell Square loo has instructions in three languages and braille, and is accessible for those in a wheelchair. This is the only public toilet in the whole of Bloomsbury ward. One of those dreaded automatic loos where we have an in-built fear that the door will slide open just as we're about to give our gift to the muddy ol' river.

When we visited, the hand drier was permanently whirring away, water was running from the jet washer and through the slots in the floor, there was no toilet paper and no soap appeared to be coming from the automatic dispenser.

Also no condom machine but plenty of room for stand up fun and games with more than a few people should the occasion arise.

When you leave the toilet it is presumably hosed down by a pressure washer.

Whether people would take the time to fiddle about for 20 pence or ask a passer-by for change, rather than water the

nearby railings, we're not so sure.

Women and people in a wheelchair don't have that advantage and they are poorly served by this unhygienic contraption. Those with a disability Radar Key can get in for free, which is some consolation. Open 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

Next up on our tour of toilets is the basement loos at Great Portland Street tube station. These are attended loos and very clean. There is toilet paper, soap and a condom machine. And there's some nice artwork.

A full flight of twisting steps to the toilet and so it fails the accessibility test. While it is open seven days a week it is only open between 10am and 6pm. If this toilet was at street level and open longer hours it would be pretty much the gold standard.

Inside the Plaza centre on Oxford Street there is an attended loo which costs 20 pence to use. These were clean and accessible and the women's loos were served with vending machines for feminine hygiene products. They are open during the Plaza Centre's hours.

See also toiletmap.co.uk

More news at fitzrovia.org.uk/news and at twitter.com/fitzrovianews

Please join us for a Guided Tour of Fitzrovia with local author and historian Mike Pentelow

7pm Thursday 16 June

Meet at the Fitzrovia Mural, Whitfield Gardens W1T 2AQ

The tour costs £10 with all proceeds going toward the mural restoration.

See <http://mural.fitzrovia.org.uk>

Two of Fitzrovia's specialist shops close their doors for last time



Kingsley Photographic Ltd, a family business at 93 Tottenham Court Road was set up in 1965 and originally one of two of their shops in Tottenham Court Road. Faced with a bill for £65,000 in rent and £24,000 in rates the company has gone into voluntary liquidation, writes Peter Whyatt.

Managing director Tim Stavrinou explained: "The main reasons are the rent which is getting very expensive, footfall is down and a lot of people are buying online." He added he was baffled as to how independent high street shops could continue to survive.

"Quality of service and a good knowledge base were the ideals we founded our principles on and, unfortunately, it seems that a lot of consumers and distributors today seem to understand the price of everything and the cost of nothing," he claimed.

The building's freehold is owned by Derwent London.



picture Ewan Munro

R D Franks which sold books and magazines about fashion and design finally closed its doors last November, with the company wishing "kindest regards to all our lovely customers." The company ceased trading at 5 Winsey Street, having previously been at Market Place, Great Titchfield Street and dates back to 1877.

R D Franks was a world renowned fashion publication specialist. The store stocked hundreds of national and international titles, every international edition of Vogue, rare trend magazines, the latest coffee table books and reference literature for budding fashion designers. Lining the book shelves were a diverse range of literature covering fashion, fashion history, dressmaking and sewing.

There is a lovely story about super model Naomi Campbell trying to get an old copy of Vogue Italia Black with her picture on the cover. A fellow passenger on a trans-Atlantic flight told her about R D Franks. She called the shop and was relieved to hear they carried copies. She specified: "Do you have the issue with Naomi Campbell on the cover?" The voice on the other end of the line responded "Yes". She yelled and eagerly asked them to reserve her two copies for her to pick up. They voice asked: "Under which name do we reserve the copies?" She answered, "Naomi Campbell".

Pruning the body is the secret of acupuncture



Fine piercing may not be everybody's liking, but the needles are neither intimidating nor painful. Photo: Etienne Gilfillan

By George Binning

Nicholas Newton practises acupuncture at his Cleveland Street clinic where I visited him to try the treatment.

Nicholas asked me: "If you could change anything about yourself what would it be?"

I am surprised to learn that acupuncture can be used to treat most emotional, psychological as well as physical conditions.

Nick hopefully suggests: "To give up smoking?"

Dodging the question artfully, we move on.

We unearth that I have an issue with body temperature, getting very hot at night, and a desire to be more motivated.

So the first course of action is an Aggressive Energy Drain (AE drain). This is required before any treatment starts. The procedure involves twelve needles, which are carefully placed into the skin on the back. Once the

aggressive energy has cleared the effect is instantaneous. It's hard to say what exactly what, but it felt as though I had just eaten a pile of vegetables, gone to bed early, risen early, been for a run and come back to a huge bowl of porridge and a newspaper.

The first treatment finishes with two points on the feet. It was the experience I was hoping for. The idea of this sort of fine piercing may not be everybody's cup of tea, but the needles are neither intimidating nor painful.

A lot of pulse taking goes on throughout. Nicholas explains that each wrist actually has six pulses and he shows me exactly where they are. At least four of them are easily discernible. As he reads the pulses on my wrist like a trumpet player plays the valves he is not just counting the pulse, but searching for each pulse's quality and strength.

At the end of my Aggressive

Energy Drain, my pulse ran smoothly past my fingers rather than throbbing dimly. It showed such a marked difference that I am surprised that the qualities of my many pulses are ignored by modern medicine, and that frequency is really all they need.

Nicholas practises Classical Five Element Acupuncture, which he says "treats the cause not the symptoms"; his training involves an understanding of the manifestation of water, wood, fire, earth and metal in people. Admittedly it sounds a little far out but he is very matter-of-fact about something that has always seemed mysterious to me.

I ask whether this channelling of energy can be done to any living things such as plants, he says we do it all the time: pruning. This image nicely encapsulates the theory of acupuncture; and it straddles the gap between alternative and conventional medicine most convincingly.

After three sessions in three weeks I felt the benefits, subtly but definitely. Being more aware of my health in the way an acupuncturist sees it has also helped. The downside to such a widely applicable remedy is that you start to recommend it for almost everything, from sore knees to annoying neighbours.

nicholas@fiveelement.co.uk

Concerns over cap on housing benefit

Residents attending the monthly *Fitzrovia News* editorial and social meetings say the government's cap on housing benefits is one of the most important issues facing life in Fitzrovia, writes Linus Rees. Again and again the same question is asked: how many people in Fitzrovia will be affected by the housing benefit cap and what effect will it have on the neighbourhood?

As yet it is a difficult question to answer, but out of a population of 8,000 the figure at the end of this year is likely to be in the hundreds.

For people who have been made redundant from their jobs since 1 April, when many of the public service cuts took effect, some of these may also lose their homes because they rent property which costs more than the maximum allowed by the local housing allowance. They may be forced to move out of Fitzrovia and maybe London altogether such are the high rent levels in London.

Most one bedroom properties in Fitzrovia start at about £350 per week with extra bedrooms costing about £100. There are very few three and four bedroom properties which become available in Fitzrovia.

Many people will have to seek shared houses or bedsits. However, there are very few of these properties around and estate agents are reluctant to take on properties at the slum end of the market. Seeking out homes which fall below the benefit cap means walking the streets and looking for notices in shop windows.

... Continued from page 5

which they finally left at the end of April.

The **Black Horse** pub, which is currently closed, may never open as a public house again. It is believed to have been acquired by the fast food chain **Byron Hamburgers**.

The **Northumberland Arms** on the corner of **Goodge Street** and **Charlotte Street** may close for nine months if plans to convert the upstairs ancillary accommodation to two or three residential units goes ahead. The pub's kitchen and toilets will be relocated within the building during the proposed refurbishment.

It is believed the freeholders, **Shaftesbury Charlotte Street Ltd**, have come to an arrangement with the pub's owner to preserved its viability. A campaign last year by the real ale group **Camra** and local people urged the freeholders to protect the pub which has been on the site since 1791.

Have **Serco** given up on **Boris Bikes**? Empty docking stations and difficulty with the payment system according to many users.

If you want to keep up with the latest **news in Fitzrovia**, email news@fitzrovia.org.uk and ask to "subscribe" to our regular email update.

Pies from Greece



Pie tasters: Clara, Natasha, Zoe and Lara. Photo: Emhphotos

Fab! Fab! Fab! made from wholesome, original family recipes, writes Fiona Green. They look good, taste so good, they are the best pies in town!

Delicious. Clean, smart shop. Lovely staff....and the building is from Dickens time (the old man actually once lived here).

Owner Angelo is from Zagoria, northwest Greece, a mountainous area, which still holds traditional bakery close to its heart and where the people make this wholesome food for all events.

The pies tend to be made by syndicates of women: retirees or widows, who open bakeries to cook this National dish for celebrations like weddings and christenings.

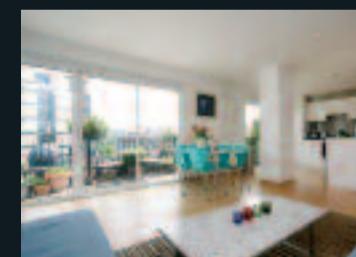
The delicious ingredients, which are grown there, are carefully sourced here for the family recipes. It's delicious, low in fat, high in fibre with an original taste. Greek food has — undeservedly — never had the reputation of its European neighbours, like France or Italy, but once you taste these pies, this will change.

Perfect for office catering or parties at home.

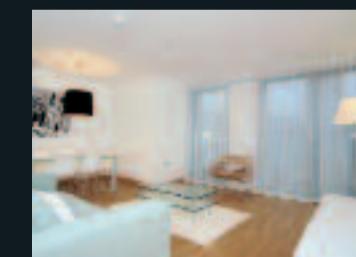
After talking to Angelo, I am keen to visit this part of Greece, on a gastronomic tour. Certainly, when tourists come to this area, to see Dickens House, they will find an unexpected bonus in the mouth watering Little Greek Pie Company!

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Fitzrovia for sale

Developers can't wait to demolish, re-build, increase density, add more offices, shops, cafes and restaurants in Fitzrovia. They can't help it: it's in their nature.

But will it be the noise of the building works, the crush of shoppers, or the smell of grilled food wafting through the narrow streets that turn people off a successful neighbourhood better known for its variety of uses and interesting streetscape?

Peter Whyatt maps and photographs Fitzrovia's craters and development sites, while **Linus Rees** slides about the greasy pavements and digs about in the rubbish bins.

An Area Action Plan

Following an initiative by the Charlotte Street Association at the recent inquiry into Camden's Development Framework, residents and business representatives are working with Camden Council on an Area Action Plan for Fitzrovia.

As there are so many development sites on the Camden side of Fitzrovia it has been agreed to work together to produce a policy document that identifies how to plan for the future developments which balance commercial aspirations with identified local needs.

The plan seeks to highlight what needs there are and what qualities of Fitzrovia there are which need to be retained or improved. It currently sets out eight objectives:

- 1, deliver affordable housing that meets the needs of a stable mixed population;
- 2, provide more and better quality public open space;
- 3, provide more appropriate community and public facilities;
- 4, to sustain and promote the valued character of the area;
- 5, to reduce the impact of traffic;
- 6, to improve the pedestrian environment;
- 7, to promote small and medium scale businesses and specialist shops; and
- 8 to ensure a long-term sustainable future.

The plans which will include urban design studies will be put to the wider Fitzrovia population before being finalised.

Westminster City Council are not proposing to do any Area Action Plans. However there are two major developments which will have a huge impact on Fitzrovia. The first is the former Middlesex Hospital site where a new scheme is currently being prepared and for which there is an existing planning brief and planning permission. The second is the Royal Mail delivery centre in Rathbone Street and Newman Street where a major scheme including significant retail uses is currently being planned and which is potentially damaging by opening up Fitzrovia to the existing frenetic activity of Oxford Street.

Saatchi Block: 80 Charlotte Street. Currently occupied by Saatchi & Saatchi and other advertising and media organisations. Owned by Derwent London who recently failed to get planning permission to redevelop the site. (See story page 3)



Windeyer Building: 46 Cleveland Street; fronting onto Howland and Charlotte Streets. Plans to demolish existing building to make way for a new six storey academic research building to be known as "The Sainsbury Wellcome Centre". Owned by UCL Estates.



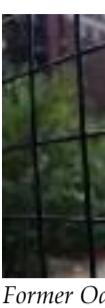
Former Strand Union Workhouse: Another blow for the developers when the minister of state allowed an English Heritage recommendation to give it listed status. Back to the drawing board for the owners UCLH. However there is an outstanding obligation to provide social housing on the site.



Former Middlesex Hospital: Demolished, sold, sold again and now there are currently plans emerging for this the largest of sites in Fitzrovia. Jointly owned by Aviva Investors, the former Kaupthing Bank and Exemplar properties. Planning permission still exists for a massive nine-storey mixed-use development and because of this it may speed quickly through Westminster City Council's planning officers and committee. Likely to cause huge disruption during construction for those living nearby.



Royal Mail West End Delivery Centre: Highly controversial development. Owned by Royal Mail who have submitted plans for a 600,000 sq. ft. mixed use project to be built on the site, comprising retail units, offices, a new public square and a new street called Newman Place. Decision to sell will affect jobs and postal service.



*Former O...
UCLH and...
decades. H...*



Primark site: Owned by Land Securities and situated right opposite the forthcoming Crossrail station. Currently a huge hole in the ground which swept aside three stores to make way for Oxford Street's second and much larger Primark store. Controversy was raised when planning permission was given, despite great local concern, to widen Hanway Street at the rear to allow large delivery lorries to enter. Many London conservationists and local people bitterly disappointed that such a huge store got permission at this part of Oxford Street which has an attractive architectural mix and includes Oxford Street's only remaining public house.



Ear Hospital Huntley Street: Owned by UCLH. Uncertain future.



Medical Students Union Huntley Street: Owned by UCLH. Uncertain future.



Goodge Street Tottenham Court Road: Owned by Dukelease Properties. Site includes the unlisted but oldest building on Goodge Street. Previously owned by Derwent London whose plans to demolish it were refused. Current owner seeking to redevelop.



Windmill Street: Owned by Dukelease Properties who have plans to change use and some redevelopment.

Central Cross, Tottenham Court Road and Stephen Street. Owned by Derwent London who plan to redevelop on two street frontages. Plans for more office space and at least 50 percent increase in retail space to fill in current street arcade.

Sainsbury's Tottenham Court Road: Only built a decade ago and there are proposals to knock it down and build something bigger.

This map and list of sites and landowners are not intended to be definitive or complete. There are many more properties that have minor plans pending or proposed. There are also many proposals to increase licensed premises. Many existing premises are looking to increase licensing hours. Change to restaurant use can then lead to a change to serving alcohol. Both changes of use in planning and licensing terms contribute to change the nature of the neighbourhood. It is vital that the public is properly consulted and remains informed about these changes.

Major land owners

University College London Hospital. UCLH have a long history of knocking the neighbourhood about and had owned a number of sites on both the Camden and Westminster sides of Fitzrovia. With the advent of the new hospital on the Euston Road they consolidated their estate around the north eastern part of Fitzrovia. In their wake they left a huge crater along the Camden and Westminster border where the much-loved Middlesex Hospital once stood, and have had controversial plans for the former Strand Union Workhouse halted by the current government.

University College London Estates. Own sites containing research, academia, student residences and have redevelopment plans.

Consortium of Aviva Investors, Exemplar, and former Kaupthing Bank. Looking to build on the largest crater in Fitzrovia, the former Middlesex Hospital site.

Land Securities. The biggest commercial company in the UK own large chunks of Fitzrovia including Oxford Street frontages. Likely to compete with Derwent London and Great Portland Estates for more property. Possibly looking to acquire the Royal Mail Delivery Centre in Rathbone Place.

Derwent London. Own large amounts of office space with some retail and looking to increase both. A lot recent activity with buying and selling property in Fitzrovia. Lost the battle to redevelop the Saatchi block but shouldn't be underestimated. Highly ambitious with plenty of money to hand, have plans to increase density and return on their current Fitzrovia property, and have suggested pedestrianising streets. They have a stake in the New West End Company business improvement district (BID) and are backing the Fitzrovia Partnership which may apply to become a BID in the near future. Possibly interested in buying the Royal Mail Delivery Centre when it becomes available, but will have to fend off Land Securities. Fitzrovia is very important to them according to recent statements from their CEO John Burns. The company pleaded viability concerns to Camden Council recently but in March Burns told shareholders the company had the ability to acquire higher rental incomes on both their office and retail properties.

Great Portland Estates. Own large amount of property on the Westminster side of Fitzrovia, smaller than, and slightly marginalised by activities of, Land Securities and Derwent London.

The Bedford Estates. Recently re-furbished part of Store Street and brought in new tenants. Currently completing a redevelopment on the former petrol station on Ridgmount Street. Own much of south eastern part of Fitzrovia around Bedford Square.

The Localism Bill: who is it good for?

Originally Localism was hailed as a triumph for residential communities and democracy. No longer would government impose its view on citizens and instead people would be given power to shape their neighbourhoods.

One briefing paper published in April 2011 by a Cambridgeshire group stated that local residential communities could put together their own "neighbourhood plans". The paper painted an optimistic picture of what Localism could mean for communities.

But according to the Campaign for the Protection of rural England (CPRE) the Cambridge group had obviously ignored George Osborne's budget statement in March. Far from the benefitting local residential communities and bringing much needed local services, "Economic growth through development is now the overriding priority for the planning system. Local, community, environmental and heritage concerns must give way to that priority."

Whereas people have been led to believe that it is residential communities and voluntary groups who can put together neighbourhood plans, it now turns out that business-led groups can do the same.

At a time when support for voluntary organisations is being cut and business improvement districts are being encouraged, the balance of power is shifting not from government to people but from government to big business and developers.

Regular art nights planned

A new art event involving many galleries could bring evening exhibitions throughout the year to Fitzrovia, writes Fiona Green.

The event organisers are hoping to develop evening or night-time collaborative exhibitions similar to Paris's *Nuit Blanche* and East London's First Thursdays.

The project is in its early stages of development and is being led by Marq Smith of the Institute for Modern and Contemporary Culture at the University of Westminster. He hopes regular monthly, quarterly or annual events could take

place.

At a meeting on 24 March in the University of Westminster the organisers, artists, gallery owners and Fitzrovia residents discussed how the event could take shape.

"Depending on frequency and scale, it could be the similar to present offerings or something else altogether.

"It could involve, for instance, all the galleries in the neighbourhood extending their opening hours on a particular day once a month, or however often" says Marq.

instituteformodern.co.uk

Mancini's pub just after the war



Behind the bar at the George & Dragon, Cleveland Street, in 1948 are Alf and Lou Mancini. The picture was sent by a local who remembers them in response to the pub history crawl feature in our last issue. She would like to give the original photo to any close relatives of the couple, who should contact Fitzrovia News.

A club of one's own

There is a women's-only gym at 44 Portland Place. It's the only ladies-only gym in the area it is owned and operated by the YWCA Central Club, writes Beryl Burton.

It has been at this address for over two years, yet is still a well-kept secret. And being in a Grade 1 listed eighteenth-century town house, no signs and plaques are allowed and so is a little difficult to find.

The club includes a cafe, a gym and health facilities. It also offers a range of courses as well as a marvellous club lounge. Members are entitled to use the club building and facilities during opening hours and may bring guests.

You can enjoy the licensed cafe internet access, a programme of events which include a film club, a book club, club nights, use of a photographic darkroom, a comfortable lounge to relax in.

There are many courses on offer, including language courses, belly dancing. So, if you have always wanted to shake those hips, why not go along.

A Women's Business Club is also on offer, where invited speakers talk on a variety of subjects of interest to business women.

For those who prefer to sing, there is the choir. This meets on Wednesdays at 6 pm.

Men are allowed in only as associate members but only for them to attend courses and events. Aren't we women kind, giving them a look in?

44portlandplace.org.uk

Jumping on the sushi train

By Sally Beerworth

When I first came to Fitzrovia six years ago, there was only one place you could buy sushi. It was easier to buy crack, than seaweed, apparently.

Now you can get it on every corner. (Sushi, that is.)

At first, I assumed it was because the British are instinctively scared of anything that isn't served with chips. However the reason for the absence of raw fish is far simpler: they just didn't trust something that reminded them of a beach. All the fake tan in the world can't hide their fear of a place where you have to show your legs.

Now Fitzrovia seems to have turned into some kind of culinary underwater nature reserve. Or maybe years of eating Gigi's has finally seen people try and eat karmically. Any local worker will have to eat their body weight in raw eel to make up for the years of dining at our beloved Gigs... it will almost be worth it too.

The real reason that the local workers are starting to eat the stuff is not for health reasons, or because it tastes good (obviously) but because it is one of the few foods that you can knock back whilst walking back to the office. There is less chance that you will ever dribble it (a prawn on your lower lip is obvious to even the most hung-over workers). This is good for growing the UK's population: I know few people who can claim to have picked up someone whilst wearing a meal.

My favourite place for sushi is Samurai on the corner of



Goodge Street and Tottenham Court Road. It combines Japan with London: health wrapped in plastic that you have to queue for. It doesn't taste quite as fresh as the stuff they serve up at Roka, but it also doesn't cost as much... neither do most second hand cars. Samurai haven't put me up to writing this... the bastards still charge me an extra 5p for soya sauce. How could you be expected eat raw fish without a little help?

The people at Itsu saw a gap in the market for people wanting to pay more for less, as long as the less was wrapped in pretty packaging. Their clientele of mad men wannabes think that what they pay for lunch should be proportionate to their salaries. If only it tasted of something other than the kind of thing I used to get force fed as a kid. The pretty packaging seems to distract them from this fact. They say that fish is good for the brain, so at some point their customers will wise up and leave. Although given the portion sizes, the omega may not start working its magic for some years to come.

I won't even mention the sushi that can be picked up at Pret or Eat. There is something unnatural about the same people who make my dairy led pleasures touching up fish.

Even if you don't want to eat the stuff, enjoy watching the nine to fivers, who are trained like seals to come out and eat raw fish, and then scurry back from where they came from. It is at least good to see that they are walking a bit faster these days, with all the omega.

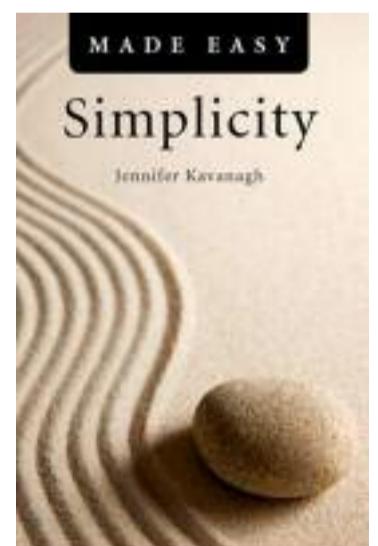
Simplicity Made Easy, by Jennifer Kavanagh

Reviewed by Linus Rees

When things get a bit on top of you there's nothing like a good clear out to physically and emotionally de-clutter your life. In this slim volume Fitzrovia author Jennifer Kavanagh looks beyond de-cluttering and encourages us to find a deeper often spiritual meaning to and enjoyment from a simpler life.

As an atheist I'm not attracted to the religious passages (Kavanagh is a Quaker) but I've many times enjoyed the simplicity of staying in a French monastery; its quiet space for relaxing, contemplation, far away from computers and mobile (de)vices. Despite my distaste for Catholicism the simplicity of life in the monastery gives me time to rejuvenate.

But Kavanagh is not concerned with a temporary spiritual detox holiday. Instead she examines how and why we might want to achieve a more meaningful permanent settle-



ment in our own lives; how we can de-consumerise and understand what it means to lead a more economically and emotionally contented and sustainable life.

Simplicity is part of a series of self-help books published by O-Books. o-books.net

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Pub crawlers



The great Fitzrovia pub crawl of 46 boozers in six days, advertised in our last issue, was completed by three dedicated boozers, pictured above (left to right): Mary Cambridge, Mike Pentelow, and Jean Sveinsson. Two have now got gout. Scores of others took part in several of the legs, but only these three drank in all 46 to qualify for the t-shirt.

Local bars

In addition to the 46 pubs in Fitzrovia (listed in our last issue) there are 16 bars.

We list them here without having visited them all, so would appreciate any comments from readers.



The Bar, 38 Hanway Street. Open 9pm-3am. Live music.

Barrica Tapas Bar, 62 Goodge Street.

Black & Blue bar, Mortimer Street/Berners Street.

Bourne & Hollingsworth, 5 Percy Street (corner of Rathbone Place).

Chutney & Lager Bar, renamed Riding House Cafe, 43-51 Riding House St (Great Titchfield Street corner), Brasserie bar.

Crazy Bear, 26-28 Whitfield St.

Eagle Bar Diner, 3 Rathbone Place (next to Black Horse).

Jerusalem Bar, 33-34 Rathbone Place.

London Cocktail Club, 61 Goodge Street.

Loom Bar, 5 Clipstone Street (corner of Bolsover Street).

Nordic Bar, 25 Newman Street and Newman Passage.

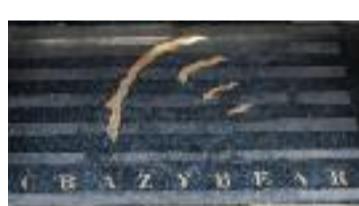
Pinchito Tapas Bar, 11 Bayley Street (next to Jack Horner).

Sevilla Mia, 22 Hanway Street. Open 7 or 8pm to 1.30 or 2.30am. Live music.

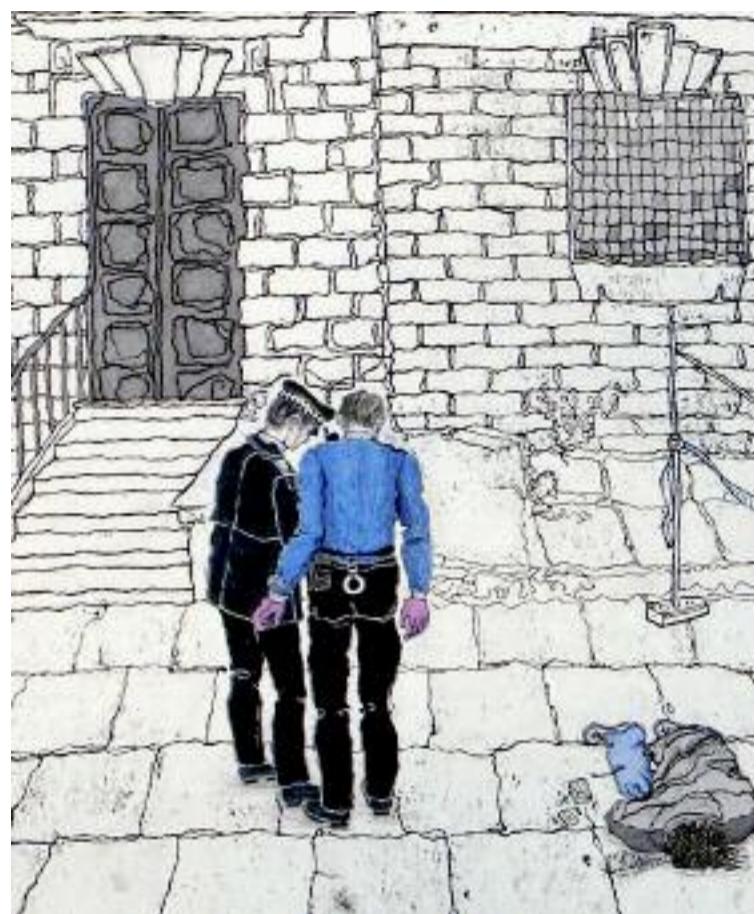
The Social, 5 Little Portland Street. £5 membership fee.

La Tasca, 300 Regent Street (Margaret St corner).

Vino Latino's wine bar, 31-35 Langham St (basement).



Photographs by Peter Arkell and Mark Thomas



The Crossroads Between, by Jane Palm-Gold.

St Giles Rookery revisited

The underworld that existed 200 years ago and in the present day in St Giles Rookery were graphically linked by Jane Palm-Gold's exhibition at the Coningsby Gallery until June 3.

The original Rookery was literally a den of thieves and a no-go area for the police in the 19th century as the alleyways and tunnels that extended from St Giles High Street to the bottom of Tottenham Court Road could be used to trap them.

These slums were bulldozed in 1847 to make way for New Oxford Street, just as part of the area has been bulldozed today to make way for the Crossrail Link.

Back in 1847 however no compensation was paid to the poor (depicted in Hogarth's etchings of gin swilling) who were made homeless. The dwellers of this "noisome neighbourhood" as it was officially described were herded north into what is now called

Fitzrovia.

Charles Dickens had visited the notorious "Rat's Castle" in the Rookery to get inspiration for some of his characters. This was the same Rat's Castle where the inhabitants threatened to skin the dog of sculptor Joseph Nollekens (1737-1823 who lived at 44 Mortimer Street) and hang it up if he did not pay one of his models her full fee.

Nowadays some of the crack addicts who live rough around St Giles church would have been a natural for Hogarth to depict.

Luckily we have modern day artist Jane Palm-Gold to perform this task. She has combined her own paintings of the present with drawings from the past with the help of the Museum of London Archaeology. Entitled "London's Underworld Unearthed, The Secret Life of the Rookery" it is to be hoped it will be exhibited again. Much of the work can be seen on her website (www.janepalmgold.com). MP

An actor's life for me

Actor Dudley Sutton (best known as Tinker Dill in television's "Lovejoy") entertained the Sohemian Society with a string of anecdotes, plus his own songs and poems, at the Wheatsheaf.

His first link with Fitzrovia was as a student at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (RADA) in Gower Street in 1955 after four years in the Royal Air Force. He had to buy himself out of the RAF but was chucked out of RADA.

He went to act for Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop, which was a complete contrast. One of the workshop's writers was Brendan Behan. Dudley recalled that Behan would heck-

le the actors when attending performances of his own plays.

"The second time he did it I said: 'That was Brendan Behan, I know his brother Les.' As Frankie Howard told me: 'Always rehearse your adlibs'."

Dudley also remembered impassioned exchanges with the audience at some of the agitprop performances at the Soho Poly when it was in Riding House Street (where the University of Westminster is now) in the 1970s.

He also worked away from the stage at a women's clothes manufacturer in Eastcastle Street, and as a "camp photographer" at Butlins. MP M

Rebel with a cause

By BRIAN JARMAN

If you're running a theatre and need government funding, putting on a play in which the Prime Minister does a striptease is perhaps not the most sensible strategy.

But then Philip Hedley never was one to take the easy way out. He became Artistic Director of the pioneering Theatre Royal, Stratford East in 1979, taking over from the notoriously feisty and forthright Joan Littlewood. Then the theatre was struggling.

'I always used to bite the hand that fed me,' he says, outside a cafe near his flat on Tottenham Court Road where he's lived for thirty years. 'Within six months I was asked to the Arts Council for a meeting – all men in suits and the top brass.'

'They started by asking if, given all the problems, it was worth continuing. I said I'd stay for three months until they appointed someone else. I invented everything I'd always wanted to do that we were going to do over the coming years.'

Only one of them came to pass. He'd heard that the director Lindsay Anderson wanted to do a production of Hamlet.

'That embedded me,' says Philip. The Theatre Royal went on to have its most successful year ever, and Philip stayed for twenty five years.

'If you cut down on your risk tasking, you'll certainly go down,' he says. 'It's guaranteed. That's a battle you must fight.'

The stripping Prime Minister appeared in the 1980s in a play by Barrie Keeffe who was writer in residence at the theatre. He went on to write plays such as The Long Good Friday, which became a successful film.

'We had a naked Mrs Thatcher. She came on in her full outfit and as she announced cuts she did a striptease until she only had her hat and shoes on. Questions were asked in the House – why we were attacking Mrs Thatcher with Government money and so on.'

Philip was born to a working class family in Manchester in 1938 but spent his teen years in Australia and started his love affair with the theatre at Sydney University where 'on paper' he studied English and Education but became more and more involved in drama.

'You didn't study theatre then. There were no courses for directors.'

And fittingly enough his lightbulb moment came when he arrived in London and went to the Theatre Royal to see a Ben Johnson play, Everyman in His Humour. He heard two tea ladies chatting in the cafe beforehand.

'The real Cockney accent was new to me then,' he says. 'I delayed going into the theatre



Philip Hedley nurtured much Eastender talent such as Anita Dobson

because I wanted to hear their stories. When I went in the play was just the same as the two ladies – the same rhythm, sparkiness and immediacy. It was stunning.'

He went backstage afterwards to look for Joan Littlewood.

'I asked if there was anything I could do in the theatre. I was very inarticulate. Twenty years later I was running it.'

From there he went on to the E15 Acting School, but soon

attack people and eventually she went for me. She accused me of everything conceivable, down to my progeny and my testicles.'

But when she retired two years later he took over from her and began to make his own mark on the theatre's work.

'Newham was changing,' he says, 'becoming one of the most multicultural boroughs in Britain. I grew to believe in community theatre in the sense of it reflecting the community. It

of American bandleader Louis Jordan who was known as King of the Jukebox. It transferred to the West End and Broadway.

The Theatre Royal set up musical theatre workshops for local writers and composers.

'It took ten years for the Arts Council to catch on,' says Philip. 'We ticked all the boxes before they even thought of boxes – new work, reflecting the community, involving audiences.'

And in 2004, just before he retired, the theatre put on the country's first black British musical, *The Big Life*. Using Reggae and Hip hop, it looks at the generation of people who came to Britain from the Caribbean on the Windrush after the war. It went on to become a West End hit, and Philip was the first individual to be given the Arts Council's Eclipse award for combating racism in the theatre. A year later he was awarded the CBE.

Over the years the Theatre Royal Stratford East has nur-

'Working with Joan Littlewood was wonderful and hell'

realised he was more of a director than an actor, and spent a few years freelancing around the country and the world – 'from West End musicals to a school playground in Khartoum.'

Then destiny took him back to see Joan Littlewood and she gave him a five hour interview to be her assistant.

The time he spent with her, he says, was wonderful and hell.

'She was demanding and challenging, she was wonderful and hell,' he says. 'She used to

became a case of attracting Black and Asian artists and benefitting from their talents. It kept it dangerous and exciting. They were hard times.'

It started with the country's first black principal boy in *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Since then the hero or heroine in the theatre's annual pantomime has always been black.

Then in 1990 came the international success of *Five Guys Named Moe*, based on the music

tured many of our favourite actors such as Michael Caine and appropriately some of the stars of EastEnders, like Barbara Windsor and Anita Dobson.

Anita was one of his favourites.

'She was a real company member,' he says. 'She'd even wash up the cups and glasses in the Green Room.'

It's the West End, however, where Philip has made his home.

'I've developed a phobia of the long rows of houses in suburbia. I like to live on the Monopoly board and then I know I exist.'

And he can walk to visit his 90-year-old mother in Portman Square. As he does so, he passes the blue plaques that tell of the area's heritage, such as the one to Francisco de Miranda, the forerunner of Latin American independence at the Venezuelan Embassy in Grafton Street. Here he met the revolutionary Simon Bolivar.

'It's a joy to walk past that house and think that once in the front room were the leaders of the revolution in South America,' he says.

It's Fitzrovia's sense of rebelliousness that he values. And he should know.



Philip with his CBE

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THE BLUE VIOLIN

A short story by
SUNITA SOLIAR

He was always cleaning up after her – teacups around the house, murky splashes along the sink from when she washed her makeup off, and all her unwanted toys: skis, foam cylinders for some sort of exercise, an easel. She would take up these stupid hobbies and he'd have to store the equipment in a cupboard without making the whole house of cards fall apart. She never wanted anything for very long.

He walked down Mortimer Street carrying the violin. He'd heard the hoarse groan of the strings from outside the bedroom door – she'd stopped allowing him in by then. A violin! It must have been expensive too.

A bell announced him. All around violins hung like meat in a butcher.

'Can I help you?' the assistant called. She stooped in order to see him as she came down the stairs. At the bottom she smoothed her jacket – she had strong hands: the veins stood out hot with energy and her nails were cut short, not like Tanya's, which were long and painted coral in the summer.

'My wife –' he began, and wiped an awkward hand over his chin. He started again. 'I'd like to return this.'

'Is something wrong with it?' The assistant put it on the sales desk and clicked open the case. 'It's a beautiful instrument.'

'Yes,' he said, not knowing either way.

'I remember this sale. Two weeks ago, wasn't it? Your wife was here for a couple of hours. I played several instruments for her upstairs.' The woman's good humour buttoned up.

'You see, my wife doesn't

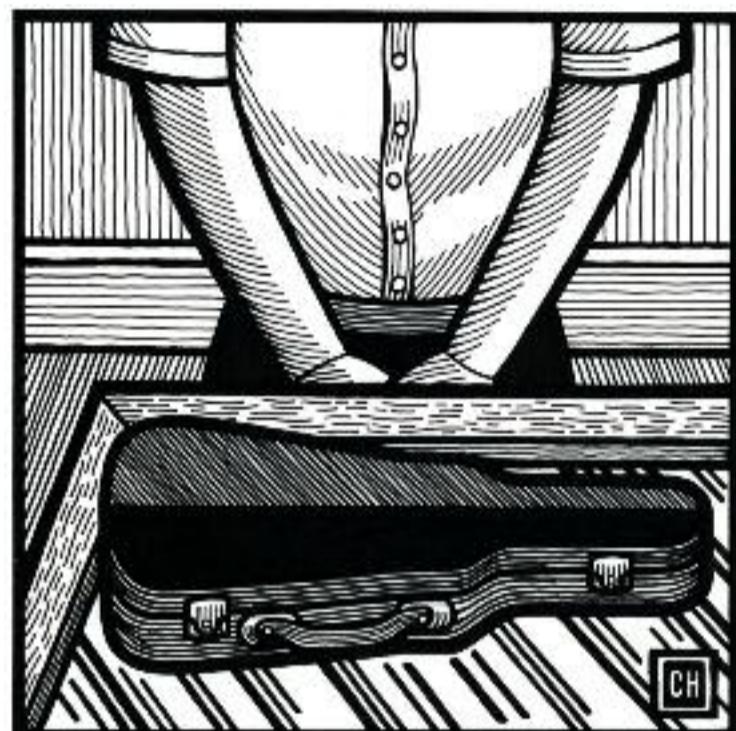


Illustration by CLIFFORD HARPER

play. She thought she might but it wasn't for her.' Shards of light fell through the window and across the counter, striking him in the eye. He wondered how this woman, so plain and practical, would have looked at Tanya, with her breathy aura of orchids, and of leaves fluttering in the breeze. The selfishness of beautiful women! How she would have scoffed at him for that: lately she'd seen only the bloating.

The assistant said, 'I even let her – your wife – take it home for a week's trial. Strictly, we don't do that but because it was a high-end piece...' She made a movement with her hands as if that explained it. 'Your wife kept it for two weeks.'

'It really was a mistake. She wasn't thinking about what it might mean – the practising and what not. So if you could take it back, just this once...' He heard

the note of desperation in his voice.

'I'll have to call the manager.' She went to the back of the shop and picked up the telephone.

He shifted from foot to foot and peered around the place, catching the woody flicker of reds and yellows. It was so like Tanya to leave such a clumsy mess for him.

She'd married at nineteen, not to him, but to her first husband, Roderick. She was Indo-Surinamese, beautiful, and could have had the pick of them. Roderick had adored her at first. They'd moved to England from the Netherlands, had a son, and split up when the kid was four. There was no trouble in the marriage: Roderick had loved her as much as he'd loved his car or his new watch, that was all. The kid lived with her until once, when he was nine, she gave him sleep-

'He balled his hand into a fist as though he might smash the violin: it was this thing that mocked his love'

ing pills so she could have an afternoon to herself. He moved back to the Netherlands with his father and the Christmas cards to Tanya had stopped a couple of years after that.

She'd met him, Peter, at thirty-six. She'd always liked pretty things and so she came to him with suitcases of debt, which he'd cleared. After a year she became restless – she'd never stopped feeling like a foreigner in London. She cheated on him once then she took up hobbies instead, a new one every three or four months: she needed the constant passionate fumbling of first love. Towards Peter she was wilful, at times combative, but she had that spark, the toothsome rapture at pretty days. And her caress was there in spontaneously baked pies that she brought to his work at lunchtime. She'd once planned a birthday party for a holidaying niece – she'd put the whole of herself into it until there was a chocolate cake as well as a cream sponge, a bouncing castle and karaoke.

Then a couple of months ago she was diagnosed with thyroiditis. The medicine made her bloat and everyday she'd look in the mirror, her fingers working like scotch tape against her cheeks. 'I could get this much cut out,' she'd say.

'I've spoken to the manager,' the assistant said. 'At this point a return would be irregular.'

He nodded into his shoes.

Then he said, 'It's only that this is an irregular situation. My wife...'

'If she'd come in a week ago...'

'I can't have it in the house!' he snapped.

The assistant's look shifted as though in search of a security button.

Peter pressed his fingertips yellow against the counter. How to explain? For a couple of months Tanya had been complaining: she was too fat. How could he love her? Then she'd say something about the mistakes she'd made in her life. The next moment everything was everyone else's fault. He couldn't keep up. Then she stopped talking to him altogether and he'd been moved into the guestroom. But he couldn't stand not talking to her, not curling her into him at night.

He'd knocked on the door. She held it open. The violin lay tossed on his side of the bed. He was going to Dusseldorf on business – he wanted to talk first. She said she was tired, that she was going to take a bath. He asked if they could talk when he got back. She turned her head a little to the side: he read it as maybe. When he got back he saw the pallor of the silence before he jimmied open the bathroom door.

He stretched his fingers away from the counter. 'I don't care about the money,' he said. 'Just take the thing away.'

'We couldn't...'

'Goddammit!' He balled his hand into a fist as though he might smash the violin: it was this thing that mocked his love: it had not been enough. But that wasn't all of it. Why hadn't he seen what it had meant – that it was her last attempt? The knowledge that he had failed her rattled inside the thing's hollow body and gleamed dully along the strings. He used to take better care of her.

The assistant waited.

'I'm very sorry,' he said. 'Of course you can't keep it. It isn't your fault.' He put the violin inside the case and made his way to the door.

Poetry

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When Bob Marley rocked in Ridgmount Gardens

By MIKE PENTELOW

Reggae icon Bob Marley, who died 30 years ago aged 36, had close connections with Fitzrovia.

He lived at 34 Ridgmount Gardens (between Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street), marked now by a plaque, and his first gig in London was at the Speakeasy club at 48-50 Margaret Street (near the corner with Great Portland Street).

It was in 1972, as a little known musician, that he moved into Ridgmount Gardens after he and his group the Wailers found themselves stranded without funds while promoting records on their previous label.

While in London he also lived with Cindy Brakespeare, who was Miss Jamaica in 1976, and they had a son Damian born in 1978. Bob wrote the song "Three Little Birds" as a tribute to Cindy.

His widow, Rita, reacted to the erecting of the plaque at Ridgmount Gardens during Black History month in 2006 by stating: "My husband had a special affinity with London. We truly look forward to seeing the plaque the next time we are in London. Jah bless you all. One love."

One love, of course, was one of his great hits on the Island label, which he and the group, signed up to when stranded in London.

And it was during the hard winter of 1972-73 that he played his first London gig at the Speakeasy.

This would have introduced him to many of the top pop stars of the day who either performed there, were in the audience checking out fresh talent, or jamming on the way home from performances elsewhere in the early hours of the morning.

About this time, November



1972, for example Ian Dury was on stage, while Roger Daltrey of The Who was in the audience. Others who were frequently mingling with the fans were Eric Clapton, and (earlier in the 1960s) John Lennon, Jimi Hendrix and Brian Jones.

Marc Bolan had been there the night he was killed in a car crash in 1977, the same year Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols attacked disc jockey Bob Harris with a broken glass. A friend of fellow Piston, Johnny Rotten, beat up Joe Strummer of the Clash in the club as well.

In view of this it is perhaps not surprising that the club was run by Laurie O'Leary, a friend of the Kray gangster brothers, from 1968 to 1977.

The club had opened in 1966 and lasted until 1982. Two songs were written about it - by The Who on their album "The Who

Sell Out", and by Elvis Costello (London's Brilliant Parade) on his album "British Youth."

Marley and the Wailers returned to Jamaica, but revisited London many times, including in 1973 on their "Catch A Fire" tour, and 1975 when the live performance of "No Woman No Cry" was recorded. In 1976, during the Notting Hill riots, he helped form an alliance of young rastas and punks, recording "Punky Reggae Party" (at the Roxy, Neal Street, Covent Garden).

His next return to London, to live for 15 months from January 1977, was under traumatic circumstances.

On the eve of a peace concert in Jamaica in December 1976, he was shot and wounded in his own home. Despite this he appeared at the concert the next day, but decided for his own

safety to take refuge in London.

During this spell he recorded his experimental "Exodus" album as part of his response, his first full album recorded outside of Jamaica. It includes the classic "Jamming." He also liked to play football in London's parks, and in 1977 received a foot injury in one game, which could have started the cancerous growth that eventually killed him.

In 1980 he was in London to celebrate the independence of Zimbabwe.

The following year cancer in his toe had developed and he went to Germany for treatment.

On his return flight to Jamaica he died, during a stop over in Miami, on May 11, 1981.

His final words were reportedly to his son Ziggy: "Money can't buy life."



Scene of the latest squat

of the squatters was Jean Blache, who became a Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association activist and volunteer.

Toulouse Lautrec behaving badly in delightful exhibition

By CLIVE JENNINGS

"Some Photographs taken in France"

The modest title of this enchanting exhibition belies the scope and sensitivity of a survey that offers a fascinating window on French society and culture through a celebration of the first 100 years of photography in France.

It is appropriate that the first commercially successful photographic image is generally credited to two Frenchmen, Niepce and Daguerre. We see the technical developments from early Daguerrotypes; through to salt, albumen and silver gelatin prints, and an aesthetic progression from early stiff portraiture and still life to lyrical and dynamic mid twentieth century subjects. Particularly interesting are the Modernist and Surrealist photographers who push the boundaries of the medium by distortion and interaction in the darkroom: a solarised "rayograph" by Man Ray and a nude study made from a cross hatched glass negative by Brassai are just two examples.

The delight of photography is that fascinating images may be captured by famous names or by unknowns, as technique vies with subject and art with documentary. This is amply demonstrated in this exhibition, which as well as including all the major exponents of the art - Atget, Brassai, Cartier Bresson, Daguerre - also has examples by many lesser known photographers and some whose authors remain unknown, in particular a series of amateur snaps taken surreptitiously of the recently vindicated Captain Dreyfus, one of which is of the poor man asleep in his bed.

Many famous faces peer out from the displays: here a handsome young Jean Cocteau, there a debonair bearded James Joyce. My favourite was a cheeky sequence of photos of Toulouse Lautrec, trousers around his ankles happily gurning for the camera as he squats to relieve himself on a beach in Picardy. The gallery suggests that this is probably the first example of a celebrity behaving badly!

The gallery opened in May 2009 and shows solely photography. They also offer a portfolio review service for photographers and courses for collectors. The exhibition is at Diemar/Noble Photography, 66/67 Wells Street, from May 12 to July 16 (Tuesday to Saturday 11am-6pm). www.diemarnoble-photography.com

130 years of squatting

The Really Free School squats in Guy Richie's house in Fitzroy Square and then the Black Horse in Rathbone Place hit the headlines a few months ago.

In fact these follow in a long tradition of squatting in the area.

In the 1880s the painter Walter Sickert (1860-1942) squatted at 21 Cleveland Street (after being thrown out of Slade art school in Gower Street). This squat was later demolished to make way for an extension to the Middlesex Hospital, which in turn has recently been demolished. The squat was opposite where 22 Cleveland Street is.

In 1946 many homeless people squatted in local hotels. One of the leaders was John Morten

(1912-1998) who following the squat was housed at 9 Chenies Street for the rest of his life. That was after he was charged with mutiny and then fined £10 (at least two weeks' wages in those days) for obstruction. He was a member of the Communist Party.

In the 1960s Goodge Place was squatted by hippies, including poet and author Heathcote Williams who shared a room with a stripper and her snake.

In 1974 about 80 people squatted in Centre Point after property speculators had made huge profits by keeping it empty for 11 years. Clifford Harper, now a Fitzrovia News illustrator, was one of them. It lasted two

days and ended with a rally of 3,000 people. An attempt by Camden council to compulsorily purchase 24 flats on the property was rejected by the Law Lords.

Another squat in Tolmers Square, just north east of Warren Street station, lasted a couple of years until it was demolished in 1977 to make way for council housing.

In 1980 pop singers Boy George and Marilyn were among those who squatted at 21 Carburton Street before achieving fame. There were other squats in Warren Street and Great Titchfield Street at the same time.

Later in the 1980s Goodge Place was squatted again. One

Birgit Skiöld, print shop pioneer, hailed at the V&A

By CLIVE JENNINGS

From May 1958 to her untimely death in May 1982, modernist artist Birgit Skiöld ran the highly successful Print Workshop in the basement of 28 Charlotte Street, now the Rebecca Hossack Gallery. It was the first open access professional print workshop in England and it soon became a destination of choice for international artists, working with such notable artists as Michael Ayrton, Jim Dine, David Hockney and Victor Pasmore.

In tribute to her enormous contribution to printmaking, The Victoria & Albert Museum, which acquired the Birgit Skiöld Archive in 1997, recently held a temporary exhibition entitled "Birgit Skiöld: Zen and the Art of Print", which offered a window into the life of a busy print studio and demonstrated the leading role in the London art world of the 1960s and 70s that Skiöld and the Print Workshop played.

Born in Stockholm in 1923, Skiöld arrived in London in 1948, studying at the Anglo-French Art Centre, where she met artists Francis Bacon, Edouardo Paolozzi and curator/writer David Sylvester. An exhibition of French lithographs featuring Max Ernst and Oscar Kokoshka sparked an interest in printmaking, which led her to Regent Street Polytechnic where she studied lithography with Henry Trivick and etching with Richard Beer. Further studies in Paris followed and by 1954 she was living at 76 Charlotte Street, and had set up her first studio in a basement in George Street, Marylebone, having acquired the lithographic press and stones that belonged to Vanessa Bell (of Omega Workshop, Fitzroy Square fame) and which had been used by artist and illustrator, Edward Ardizzone. Here she and fellow students made prints and Skiöld identified the need for open access printmaking facilities in England.

Skiöld was in part inspired



by the example of English artist William Hayter's famous Atelier 17 studio in Paris and New York. Hayter had collaborated with Picasso, Miro and Kandinsky in Paris, and Pollock and Rothko in New York with stunning results. Robert Erskine (who ran the St George's gallery at 7 Cork Street, and who was to be influential in encouraging Stanley Jones to set up the Curwen Press, another operation with Fitzrovia connections through the Curwen Gallery in Windmill Street) was a generous supporter of Skiöld's vision. They were to organise several exhibitions of Print Workshop artists together over the coming years. Against this background of increasing interest in the medium of print, Skiöld found a home for the Workshop in the basement of the artist Adrian Heath's house in Charlotte Street. Heath and his wife Corinne were benevolent landlords, and only charged a modest rent, with Heath making use of the facilities himself.

The presses were moved in

May 1958, and the Print Workshop provided a professional and friendly place where artists found a busy centre for avant-garde ideas, and a haven of print culture presided over by a "very special doyenne, who ran a fairly strict regime on a shoe-string budget", at a time when it was unusual for a woman to be running her own establishment.

Having recently visited the very modest space, which is now used as Rebecca Hossack Gallery's stock room, I found it hard to imagine how they managed to fit in all the etching and

lithography presses and proofing facilities. Skiöld's husband, Peter Bird, director of Bradford City Art Galleries and Museums, has described the studio as having "a lively and industrious atmosphere, when it was at its best, and a little chaotic on a bad day. There was no house style or tendency, just diversity, individuality and excellence. One might have encountered Tom Philips working in one corner, or Maurice Payne proofing for David Hockney, maybe an American or Japanese artist over in London to work for a few months, or Skiöld herself developing one of here ideas."

The impressive list of artists who either used the studio, or whose work was editioned there reads like a survey of mid twentieth century art: Michael Ayrton, Boyd & Evans, Jim Dine, David Hockney, Tessay Jaray, Edouardo Paolozzi, Dieter Roth, William Tillyer, Joe Tilson, William Tucker.

Skiöld's own achievements as a printmaker were many. She was a pioneer in championing the status of printmaking as art, and experimenting with techniques including embossing, mixed media, Xerox printing and collage. She was also an early exponent of the *livre d'artiste*, working on occasion with texts by other famous Fitzrovia residents, past and present. Her first artist's book incorporated texts by the pre-Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who was born at 38

Charlotte Street and later lived at No.50, and at 37 Fitzroy Square.

A shared love of Japan led her to work with poet and travel writer James Kirkup, in 1977, the same year that the charge of blasphemous libel was resurrected and used for the first time in 50 years to prosecute Gay News for publishing the Kirkup poem, The love that dares to speak its name. Kirkup was a well known fixture in the pubs and clubs of Fitzrovia, and was renting a room above a shoe shop at 77A Tottenham Court Road from 1948.

The Print Workshop was a spawning ground for talented printmakers and many who worked there under Skiöld's watchful eye went on to open their own studios. In addition to extensive teaching commitments, she was also a founder member of the Printmakers' Council, and was instrumental in getting the British International Print Biennale off the ground.

An influential curator, Skiöld mounted printmaking exhibitions too many to number in England, Europe, the United States and Japan, delighting in experimental work by young artists. Skiöld's highly social personality, and international affiliations, had made The Print Workshop at 28 Charlotte Street an art world hub, as Skiöld described her domain: "not a business, not a college, not a gallery, simply an idea which has worked."

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Ten years ago

Important findings on the link between air travel and lethal blood clots in passengers were released by Middlesex Hospital surgeon John Scurr.

It showed one in ten long haul flight passengers - 40 times as many as was previously thought - developed deep vein thrombosis.

"The study clearly demonstrates that there are measures, in this case elastic stockings, which are effective in controlling the development of blood clots," said the surgeon.

Blood clots were found in ten per cent of passengers who had not worn lower leg supports, but none in a group which had.

(*Fitzrovia News, June, 2001*).

WHAT'S ON AROUND FITZROVIA

Email fitzrovianews@yahoo.co.uk and put "Listings" in the subject box by August 18 for the September 2011 issue.

ART GALLERIES

Alison Jacques Gallery, 18 Berners Street (www.alisonjacquesgallery.com): June 10 to July 9 - Hannah Wilke, work from 60s & 70s.

Art First Projects, 21 Eastcastle Street (www.artfirst.co.uk): Until June 18 - Will Maclean (Lead and Line), Joe Watling (Vanishing Point). June 29 to August 19 - Karel Nel (There But Not There), Joni Brenner (Unavoidable).

Building Centre, Store Street (www.buildingcentre.co.uk): June 14 - Geometric Computing for Freedom Architecture. July 5 - Wood Talks: the Dos and Dont's of Specifying Wood.

Contemporary Applied Arts, 2 Percy Street (www.caa.org.uk): Until June 11 - Claire Curneen, Alice Kettle: Lost Certainty. June 17 to July 23 - Jacqueline Mina (Touching Gold).

Coningsby Gallery/Debut Art, 30 Tottenham Street (www.coningsbygallery.com): Until June 11 - Melissa Launay (To All The Hidden Creatures). June 13 to 18 - Michelle Elwell (Ephemeral Beauty), June 20 to 25 - Praed and Piper. June 27 to July 9 - ArnO-Gloss. July 11 to 16 - Yael David-Cohen. July 18 to 30 - Puns and Needles.

Curwen Gallery, 34 Windmill Street (www.curwengallery.com) Until June 30 - Artizan Editions. July 7 to 26 - Albany Wiseman/The Mynotts.

Diemar/Noble Photographic Gallery, 66-67 Wells Street (www.diemarnoblephotography.com): Until July 16 - Some Photographs Taken in France.

Framers Gallery, 36 Windmill Street (www.theframersgallery.co.uk): June 21 to 24 - Eyes on Nature (new wildlife and environmental photography).

Gallery at 94, 94 Cleveland Street (www.galleryat94.com): Kate Enters (Is The Grass Greener?).

Josh Lilley, 44 Riding House Street (www.joshlilleygallery.com): Until June 24 - Fabian Seiz (French Park/I Was Here).

Paradise Row, 74 Newman Street (www.paradiserow.com): Until June 18 - Diann Bauer (The Enemy Is Everything That Might Happen). June 24 to August 26 - The Pavement and The Beach.

Pilar Corrias, 54 Eastcastle Street (www.pilarcorrias.com): Until June 18 - Tala Madani (Manual Man).

Rebecca Hossack Gallery (1), 2a Conway Street (www.r-h-g.co.uk): June 9 to 25 - Iain Nutting (Ark). June 30 to July 23 - Angus McDonald (Sit Still).



Opera returns to Fitzroy Square on Thursday, July 21 with a new production of "Pagliacci and The Impresario" by the Garden Opera company, directed by Saffron van Zwanenberg. This embraces comedy and tragedy. First Mozart's hilarious pastiche, "The Impresario". Then Leoncavallo's "I Pagliacci", about what might lie behind the clown's smile. Further details phone 07581 257594.

July 28 to August 27 - Emma Haworth. August 4 to 27 - Aboriginal Prints Part III.

Rebecca Hossack Gallery (2), 28 Charlotte Street (www.r-h-g.co.uk): Until June 18 - Gond Artists. June 24 to July 16 - David Frazer (Last Blossom). July 22 to August 6 - Barbara MacFarlane.

Regina Gallery, 22 Eastcastle Street (www.reginagallery.com): Until June 25 - Savage (Why We Will), Andrei Roiter (Approved Baggage), Graham Dolphin (The Stars Will Remain Here). June 30 to August 5 - Andrei Monastyrski (Recent Works).

Rollo Gallery, 5 Cleveland Street (www.rolloart.com): Until July 1 - Crossings: From New Amsterdam. July 6 to September 2 - Stefanie Schneider.

Rosenfield Porcini, 37 Rathbone St (www.rosenfieldporcini.com): June 24 to Sept 10 - Enrique Brinkman.

Store Street Gallery, 32 Store Street (www.storestreetgallery.com): Until July 23 - Figure It Out.

Woolff Gallery, 89 Charlotte Street (www.woolffgallery.co.uk): Until September - Group Show, featuring various artists.

THEATRE

Bloomsbury Theatre, 15 Gordon Street (www.the-bloomsbury.com): June 13 - Charity Comedy Night. June 14 - Dave's Comedy Society: Live. June 17 - Tim Vine. June 18 - Hoochie Coochie Girls. June 20 - Francesca Martinez and comedy

CINEMA/FILM CLUBS

Bolivar Hall, 54 Grafton Way (www.cultura.embavenez-uk.org): June 9, 7.30pm - Venezuelan Short Films Evening. June 15, 7.30pm - Latin American Women's Rights. June 16, 5.30 to 9pm - Latin America Rising, Culture and Empire.

Odeon, 30 Tottenham Court Road: Weekly film details from www.odeon.co.uk or 08712 244007.

LIVE MUSIC

The 100 Club, 100 Oxford Street (www.the100club.co.uk): Future Rock every Friday, 7.30pm until late. June 18 - Symarip, ska. June 21 - Duane Eddy. June 25 - The Custard Big Band, swing. June 27 - The Echoes of Ellington Band. June 28 - James Hunter. June 29 - Get The Blessing. June 30 - Martin Taylor's Gypsy Journey. July 1 - Chris Barber. July 3 - Dr Geelgood.

Bolivar Hall, 54 Grafton Way (www.cultura.embavenez-uk.org): June 21, 7.30pm - Bacalao Men, Venezuela's tropical fusionistas. June 22, 7.30pm - Palmeras Kanibales, reggae, ska and rock. June 24, 7.30pm - Transformations Music Series with Gary Ryan on guitar. June 29, 7.30pm - London Schubert Players Quintet.

Camden People's Theatre, 58-60 Hampstead Road (www.cptheatre.co.uk): June 10 to 11 - The Still. June 13 - The Clap Trap.

Dominion Theatre, 269 Tottenham Court Road (www.dominiontheatre.co.uk): Ongoing: We Will Rock You, musical about Queen.

Drill Hall, 16 Chenies Street (www.drillhall.co.uk): June 11 to 12 - Drill Hall Darlings: Alice.... June 15 to 18 - The Mia: Zombie Prom.

London Palladium, Argyll Street (www.the-london-palladium.com): Ongoing: The Wizard of Oz, starring Danielle Hope and Michael Crawford.

RADA, Malet Street, opposite Birkbeck College

Gielgud Theatre: June 7 to 18 - Ladybird, by Vassily Sigarev. July 7 to 14 - Dirty Butterfly, by Debbie Tucker Green; Nocturnal, by Juan Mayorga.

GBS Theatre: June 7 to 18 - Our Town, by Thornton Wilder. July 8 to 16 - Reigen, by Arthur Schnitzler; Get To Know The World, by Luisa Cunille.

Jerwood Vanbrugh Theatre:

June 7 to 18 - All About Mother, by Pedro Almodovar. July 8 to 16 - Twelfth Night; Comedy of Errors; Romeo and Juliet.

The Bar @TCR, 182 Tottenham Court Rd: 70s and 80s music, every Thursday, 8pm.

One Tun, 58 Goodge St: Karaoke, last Saturday of month.

LIVE COMEDY
College Arms, 18 Store Street: Mondays at 8pm.

Fitzroy Tavern, 16 Charlotte Street: Wednesdays at 7.30pm in basement.

Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place: Improvisation on Thursdays, 8.30pm, and stand-up on Saturdays, 7.30pm upstairs.

PUB QUIZZES

College Arms, 18 Store Street: Every Wednesday, 8pm.

One Tun, 58 Goodge Street: Every Tuesday, 8pm.

Prince of Wales Feathers, 8 Warren St: Every Wednesday, 7pm.

EXHIBITIONS

British Museum, Great Russell Street (www.britishmuseum.org): Until July 17 - Afghanistan: Crossroads of the Ancient World. June 23 to October 9 - Treasures of Heaven, saints, relics and devotion in medieval Europe. Until October 16 - Australia Landscape, Kew at the British Museum.

Slade School of Fine Art, UCL, Gower Street (www.ucl.ac.uk): Until June 22 - UCL Slade School of Fine Art, Degree Shows.

UCL, South Cloisters, Wilkins Building, Gower Street: Until August 11 - Hidden World of Past Oceans.

Wellcome Library, 183 Euston Road (www.wellcomecollection.org): Until August 31 - Dirt, The filthy reality of everyday life. Until July 10 - Welcome Image Awards 2011. Until August 22 - First Time Out, changing display of five objects never displayed before.

TALKS, LECTURES

Building Centre, Store Street (www.buildingcentre.co.uk): June 21, 6.30pm - Beyond Control, is psychology the missing link in changing the way our buildings perform?

UCL lunch hour lectures (1.15 to 1.55 pm) normally at Darwin Theatre, Gower Street, entrance in Malet Place (www.ucl.ac.uk/events): Temporarily at the British Museum, same time. June 9 - A climate of fear, human responses to climate change. June 16 - Slowing the spread of HIV in a complex world. June 23 - Greek sculpture and the modern male body. June 30 - Investigating pigments in art and archeology.

WALKS

Goodge Street Station (<http://londontrails.wordpress.com>): 2pm every Sunday - Fitzrovia Walk with Old Maps. Costs £8, about two hours. Details: Ken on 07534 207442.