

# FitzroviaNEWS



Issue 99, December 2004

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Dec 2004

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By Catherine Griffin

RESIDENTS AND councillors have joined forces in a bid to prevent a Fitzrovia nursery from being sold. The Fitzrovia Early Years Centre closed its doors for the last time in July and now stands empty while the council decides what to do with it. However, if they are unable to use it, it will be offered for sale.

Councillor Penny Abraham is working with Friends of the Parks - Fitzrovia and other concerned groups to preserve the Whitfield Street building as a community facility. She says: "All Bloomsbury ward councillors feel it's very important that the building remains in community use and we'll be working very hard to bring this about."

The nursery closed to make way for a new Sure Start Children's Centre, to be based in Regent's Park ward. Sure Start nurseries are part of a government-funded initiative to "increase the availability of childcare for all children".

Camden council decided the £159,000 annual running costs and



Gates closed at the Fitzrovia Children's Centre.

£1.2 million required to bring the Fitzrovia centre up to Sure Start standards would be best spent elsewhere. Councillor Nick Smith, Camden's Executive Member for Education says: "This is the right decision. We have to make sure that we spend every penny where it will do the most possible good.

"By investing these resources in Sure Start Centres, we will be able to offer better services for many more children and so support more families across the borough."

The Fitzrovia nursery catered

for around 25 children while the new nursery will cater for 90, but will not open until 2006. Until then children from the nursery have been allocated places at one of two nurseries in the NW1 area.

Sure Start is considering a proposal put forward by campaigners to support a part-time, drop-in nursery at the Whitfield Street site. A Homework Club and Asian Women's Group also want to use the building. Other ideas being considered are to lease the building to University College London

Hospital for use as a staff nursery, and making the building available for community use in the evenings. Campaigners want the outdoor space to be used as a much-needed play area for 8 to 12 year-olds.

Councillor Abraham plans to talk to the council's education department about the proposals. In the meantime campaigners will hold a public meeting on the issue, and have pledged to continue their fight if a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached on the future of this important site.

## Affordable homes, not luxury flats demand campaigners



The former electricity sub-station on Whitfield Street

Photo: S. Moller

Fitzrovia News  
returns thanks to  
**COMIC RELIEF**

AFTER AN absence of over a year Fitzrovia News is back providing news, views and stories of interest to the people who live and work in Fitzrovia.

A Comic Relief grant to Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre means the newspaper will now be published regularly.

Fitzrovia News will continue to be provided free to the residents and businesses in Fitzrovia.

See the back page to  
find how to get  
involved in  
**Fitzrovia News**

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## News

# Affordable homes and green spaces - not luxury flats demand



The former sub-station as viewed from children's play area in Crabtree Fields

By Hector Wells and Scott Moffat

- from front page

housing and increasing the area of the park - by compulsory purchase order if necessary".

"There's been virtually no affordable housing built within the last 6 years within Fitzrovia," adds Mr Smith.

Bloomsbury councillor Penny Abraham agrees: "What we need is housing and enhanced open space, not more offices."

Camden's planning brief, approved in April 2002, calls for the site to become housing, or mixed-use scheme with housing the "primary land use", and encourages proposals that extend the adjoining public open space.

The Artesian proposal - not yet finalised - will be for a multi-storey building with over 15,000 square feet of offices, 14 private-market residential flats covering about 15,000 square feet, and perhaps a leisure centre or small hotel.

Artesian held talks with Camden planning officers and hope to formally submit an application by Christmas. Artesian first want to present their scheme to CSA (on November 18) and the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association at a date yet to be fixed.

Artesian associate director Malcolm Wynder says: "Our

scheme will be more acceptable [than the withdrawn proposal] in terms of height and bulk. But there are no plans to extend the park to our land. To expect so is unrealistic."

An application submitted in June 2003 by London Electricity Group (who were bought by EDF Energy) to build a 4-storey block containing offices, studios, a health club, a restaurant, and four residential units, was withdrawn in February after vociferous opposition. A CSA-organised petition, urging redevelopment as housing and an extension of the park, was signed by 1,800 people and supported by Frank Dobson, MP for Holborn and St Pancras.

Camden council officers have not yet directly responded to the petition's proposals following the Camden chief executive Moira Gibb's visit to the site in July. But Cllr Abraham is confident that a solution will be found: "We are hopeful that the council will assist in ensuring that an appropriate development takes place here."

Once the planning application is formally submitted to the council, there is a statutory 3-week consultation period during which anyone can view the plans and make comments.

Planning officers then submit a report and recommendations to councillors, who will decide in a planning committee meeting open to the public.

## Affordable Housing: An ongoing issue in Camden

Fitzrovia's urgent shortage of affordable housing extends borough-wide throughout Camden; the council estimates it needs 11,400 additional affordable homes.

Affordable homes include those owned by housing associations (Camden council no longer own newly-built housing); or those offered for rent, sale, or part-rent/part-sale to key-workers such as teachers, nurses, police - also known as 'intermediate housing'.

One way councils obtain new affordable housing is through the so-called 'planning gain', a legal condition attached to planning permission which requires private-market developers to make a proportion of their new development's housing affordable.

In Camden, when building 15 or more new residential units, developers are normally obliged to make 50% of the residential units affordable.

For 'mixed-use' developments - those providing both commercial and residential units - the non-residential units are not counted towards the 15-unit trigger point.

To meet Camden's shortfall of affordable housing, 70%, rather than 50%, of all new housing over the next 12 years would need to be affordable.

But figures from the years 1996 to 2000 show that only 15% of units built were designated as affordable. In part, this is because new housing developments with less than 15 dwellings are not obliged to provide any affordable housing.

**Have your say: write to Fitzrovia News - see back page for address**

# Social housing rent increase reprieve

By Hector Wells

A TENANTS' CAMPAIGN has forced the government to postpone changes to how rents are calculated. The changes could have seen Fitzrovia social housing residents suffer amongst the highest rent increases in London.

London Tenants Federation (LTF) urged council and housing association tenants to send specially-printed postcards to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).

The cards mock the government's rent restructuring review, which the ODPM said would ensure rents are "fairer and less confusing for tenants".

However LTF claim the proposed changes would have seen rents rise in Camden by "over £70 per month on top of inflation by 2011/12".

The ODPM disputes this figure and claims any rent increase would have been covered by an increase in earnings for tenants with lower incomes over the same period.

The postponed new system aims to harmonise housing association and council rent levels over a 10-year period by basing both on a formula giving 70% weighting to regional earnings and 30% weighting to the capital value of the homes.

The postponement is a temporary reprieve for Fitzrovia tenants

who live in a high 'capital value' area and could therefore be subject to significant rent increases under the new formula.

Concerns voiced by tenants' bodies about the affordability of local authority housing has caused a climb-down by the ODPM, who will defer the implementation of the proposals for a year to investigate tenants' concerns.

The government's postponement announcement marks an end to the review process, which had come in for further criticism from the LTF for failing to have included any tenant representation after the tenant's representative was unable to attend an important review meeting due to because of their poor health.

## New owners for 'legendary' chip shop



Harry and Chris (above both far right), and (right) previous customers Ali G and Boy George.

By Mike Pentelow

GIGS CHIPPIE in Tottenham Street - an institution to generations of students and Fitzrovia residents for nearly 40 years - has undergone a rare change of ownership.

John Kouvakas has retired after running the restaurant for over 26 years. He became known to millions when his regular customer, Sacha Baron Cohen (aka Ali G), featured him in the opening credits of his television show.

Another regular - when he was squatting in the area - was pop star Boy George. Students in the area as far back as 1967, when it opened, return decades later as professors or businessmen.

Gigs' reputation has been built on cheap and cheery fish and chips. The new owners Chris Jordan and Aristos Papa-Savva (known as Harry), would like to build on this.

"We would like to keep the tradition of fish and chips and kebabs but add to it, with more



starters and wine, to make more of a night of it than just a quick meal," explained Aggi.

Both have worked in Fitzrovia before. They say they like the area and the local characters. "It is really homely and friendly, like a village," said Chris.

Aggi added: "Having been in the rag trade this is really getting back to my roots. I find it fascinating talking to people. There are so many characters each with a different story to tell."

# UCLH to 'maximise' Middlesex asset



Middlesex hospital, Mortimer Street

By Frank Smith

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE London Hospital Trust (UCLH) remains tight-lipped over their plans for the Middlesex Hospital building in Mortimer Street when its services are moved to the new Euston Road site in 2005.

Sean Martindill, UCLH Media manager, said they are in discussions with the council and that public consultation will not be until planning applications are made.

He added "obviously, we want to maximise this important asset."

Community groups and resi-

dents associations have petitioned the trust, suggesting the site should in part be given over to affordable social housing, some of which might benefit UCLH nursing staff.

The initial phase of the new £225 million University College London Hospital is due to be completed in April 2005 and it is expected to treat its first patients early next summer.

The hospital development forms the major part of a £422 million investment by the UCLH trust spread over the next ten years.

Towering 80 metres above the

ground, it will dominate the landscape on the southern side of Euston Road. It will also extend 17 metres below the ground to house a state of the art gym as part of its physiotherapy unit, a pool for hydrotherapy treatment and a radiotherapy department.

On its 15 floors, provision will be made for accident & emergency, critical care, general inpatients, cancer wards, paediatric care, adolescent wards, tropical and infectious diseases and private patients. There will also be a research centre for nuclear medicine.

There will be 669 beds and 18

acres of floor space. Each of these new beds will transform the inpatients' experience. Every bed will have its own touch screen monitor which will be equipped for TV viewing and internet access.

The monitors will also display the patients' medical records, eliminating time-consuming paperwork.

In contrast, the Trust says it is operating the Middlesex Hospital in conditions which are "rapidly becoming unsuitable for twenty first century healthcare".

Prior to the new hospital being built, these departments were housed in several different locations. The Trust say this was seen as less convenient for patients and staff, who were often required to move between the different sites.

## New UCLH Hospital: facts and figures

- 97 metres high
- 80 metres above ground
- 17 metres below ground
- 2000 rooms
- 2400 PCs
- 3000 vision panels
- 669 beds
- 1200 washbasins
- 18 acres of floor
- 100 kilometres of ductwork
- 34 acres of wall space



The new UCLH building on Euston Road

# New drug centre 'not neede

e exchange'

By Scott Moffat

A CENTRE to combat anti-social behaviour by drug users in the streets of south Camden has opened in Fitzrovia to provide a first step in breaking the cycle of drugs and crime.

Unlike the clinic at the same location, closed in 2001, the new centre at 16a Cleveland Street will not offer needle exchanges and there is neither methadone nor other drugs on site. Measures have been taken to deter anti-social behaviour by the centre's clients.

A series of one-to-one meetings, held once or twice a week for up to twelve weeks, aims to build trust between the centre's clinicians and drug users. The centre's clinicians assess, stabilise behaviour and drug use, and refer drug users to other longer-term, anti-drug abuse programmes elsewhere in Camden.

Opened in mid-October, the centre will eventually serve about one hundred clients at any given time, by appointment only during daytime working hours.

To deter anti-social behaviour by clients, the centre has a full-time

security guard. Street wardens and uniformed police patrol the immediate area, working with the centre to help assure there is no negative impact on neighbouring residents and businesses.

The centre's deputy manager and senior clinician, Adele McKay, says: "If neighbours experience any difficulties at all, they can contact the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre, street wardens, or me directly."

Drug users are referred by third parties, such as the criminal justice referral team, following arrests that would usually not warrant a prison sentence, for example begging, shoplifting, or injecting in a public place.

The centre is a collaboration between Camden council's Drug Action Team and the Camden and Islington Mental Health and Social Care Trust.

The service is only available to Camden residents, or homeless people with a proven connection to Camden. Westminster council will be running a similar service for its residents.

Adele McKay, deputy manager  
16a Charlotte Street: 7530-4580

## Neighbourhood Wardens: We're the 'glue' of the community



left to right: Neighbourhood wardens Ben Hayday, David Lovell and lead warden Andrew Rockliff

**W**arden means someone who looks after, or takes care. And this is the role of Camden council's street wardens who patrol outside 16a Cleveland Street and elsewhere in the Camden portion of Fitzrovia.

The highly visible street wardens, dressed in yellow reflective vest over red jackets, help make safe the streets, estates, and parks of Fitzrovia.

Working in pairs, the wardens deter anti-social behaviour, report suspicious behaviour to the police, and flag problems such as graffiti, abandoned vehicles, and used needles and other drug debris for clean-up by the council's environmental department.

Having no enforcement powers, but close contact with police, the wardens try 'talking solutions'. Lead warden Andrew Rockliff says: "Wardens are the 'glue' of the neighbourhood," as they get to know residents, shopkeepers, regular visitors, and the homeless, trying to foster civic pride.

They also are quick to give directions to visitors, and organise late night football and basketball for youths, and give special attention to vulnerable people.

The wardens patrol from 8am to 8pm, when police take over.

Contact details:  
tel: 020 7974-8244  
email:  
streetwarden@camden.gov.uk

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## News

# Work underway on the future of broadcasting

By Frank Smith

WORK IS underway on a £400 million project to revamp the BBC's site at Broadcasting House. The new site is to bring together the BBC's news, radio and online output for the first time.

John Smith BBC Director of Finance says it will be "the flagship of our strategy to create more stimulating and flexible working environments for staff, and buildings which are also more welcoming to our audiences and the local community."

The scheme aims to regenerate the area for the public, making the BBC more attractive and accessible but thanks to a commercial partnership with, Land Securities Trillium, it should not add to the cost for licence payers.

As a listed building, Broadcasting House will retain its exterior but the interior will be completely refurbished. Surrounding BBC buildings are to be replaced altogether.

Glass will replace the brick-work at the rear of Broadcasting House and walkways will link it to the new buildings.

The refurbishment will be completed by 2005 and the new buildings will be added by 2008.

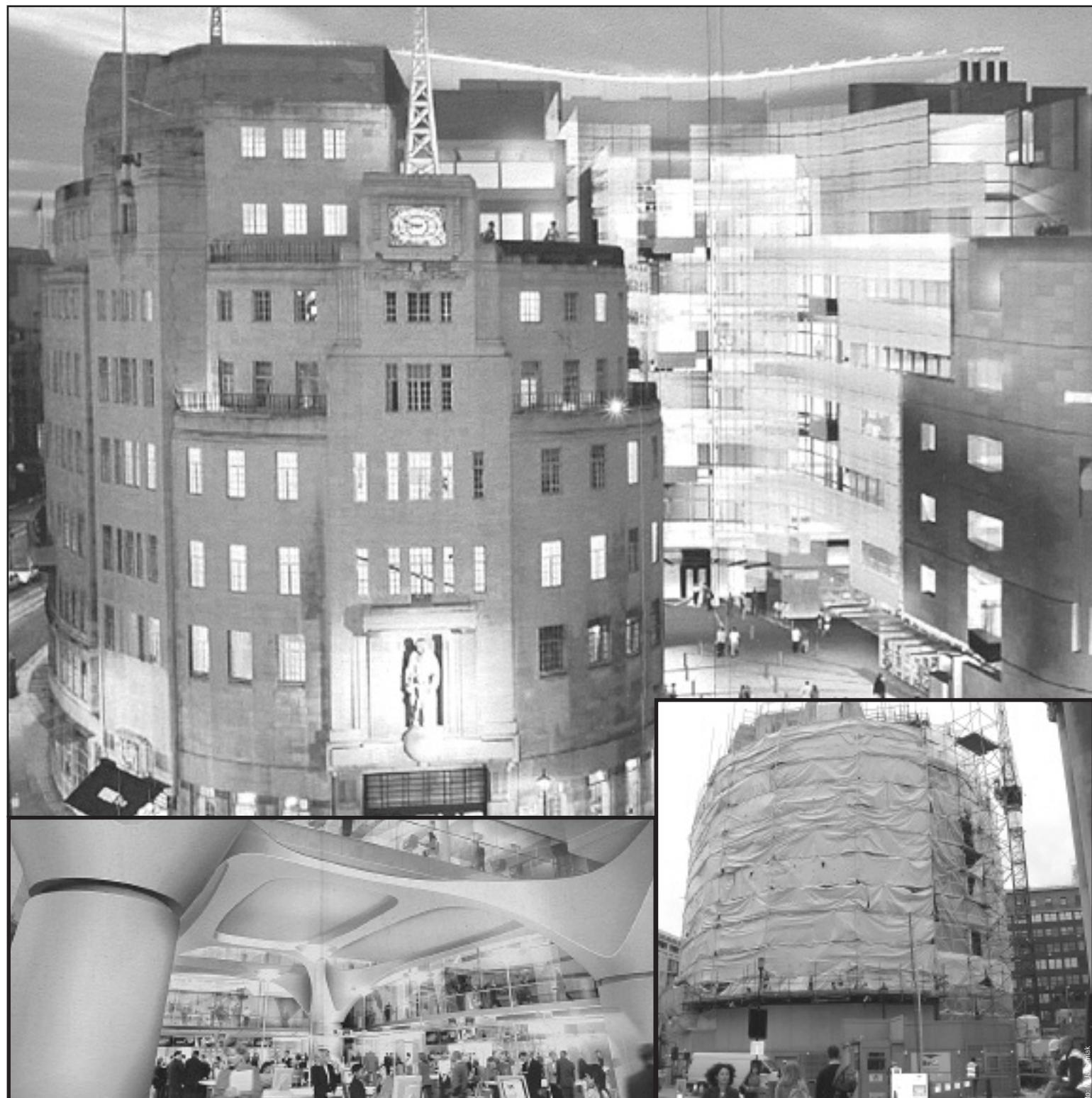
The site will be the world's largest broadcast centre, boasting 140 studios and 20 miles of cabling.

Between the new buildings an attractive open-air courtyard will stage a variety of free, live performances.

It will also be possible to watch live news broadcasts from a gallery area.

This state of the art facility has been designed by Sir Richard MacCormac. It will contrast sharply with the utilitarian grimness of the last major BBC site at White City built in 1990.

John Smith explains the corporation's new line of thought, "The nation's broadcaster ought to produce buildings the nation can be proud of."



Clockwise from top: An artist impression of the new Broadcasting House; The current shrouded facade; How the new BBC newsroom will look

## Supermarket tries to keep the noise down

A FITZROVIA supermarket claims it is making life quieter for residents by taking deliveries at times that will minimise disturbances to local people.

This is one of the changes they initiated following customer research conducted while the store was closed for three months for refurbishment and expansion.

The Tesco Metro, Goodge Street which reopened in July, has twice the floor space of the former store on the same site.

Mo Rahman, customer service manager, said: "Before reopening we made sure we spoke to the community and as a result we now don't have any deliveries after 11pm.

"The bigger store means we can stock more lines, this means both the people who work in the area and who live here can come and do their whole shopping here," continued Mr Rahman.

Store manager James Graham said: "We are trying to cater for both the local and the commuter markets. We carry a wider range in

our produce department including organic products. We weren't able to do that before the refurbishment. We also still carry our value lines."

When asked whether the new checkouts at the store were suitable for other shoppers as well as commuter customers, Mr Graham

said: "We accept the checkouts are not designed for family shoppers, but put it this way, I do my weekly shopping here and have no problems."

You can contact Tesco Metro with comments about their new policies on 020 7599-7400.

Do you feel Tesco or other supermarkets cater for the local community? Write to **Fitzrovia News** - address on back page.



Tesco Metro, Goodge Street



### Charlotte Street

### NEWS

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perry@charlottestreetnews.co.uk

# Wait and see on changes to licensing laws

By Catherine Griffin

FITZROVIA RESIDENTS will soon find out whether changes to the licensing law, aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour resulting from binge-drinking, have paid off. The new Licensing Act comes into force next February, after a period of public consultation by local authorities, which ended in November.

Fears that the legislation could backfire have been voiced by critics of the new policy at consultation events held by Camden and Westminster City Councils. And the different approaches of the two authorities has caused some local concern.

Fitzrovia, is classed as a "stress areas", defined by local authorities as areas in which licensed premises are already at saturation point.

Yorum Blumann of Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association points out that: "It will be easier to obtain a licence and residents will have to investigate what is actually being applied for. We've not

seen Camden's enforcement or review policy and without that we are not sure they will be able to meet the objectives of the act."

Another concern is there is no convincing evidence that extended opening hours will reduce binge drinking. It is just as likely that people will continue to get drunk late into the night, exacerbating crime and disorder problems.

A spokesperson for Westminster City Council said that, whilst the council supports the new legislation, it can't predict whether it will have the desired effect. He said the theory that spreading out the drinking day will make people less inclined to "drink up" could prove to be flawed.

He said it may be an overestimation to expect the British people to suddenly embrace a "continental" drinking culture, whereby they pace themselves, drinking for pleasure, rather than to get drunk. He acknowledged this represents a huge attitudinal shift, which could take years.

## Main points of the new Legislation

- Local authorities to have sole decision-making power for granting of licenses.
- Businesses able to apply for 24 hour opening and drinking time.
- Residents given the right to oppose applications and ask for a review.
- Police given powers to close down trouble hotspots.
- Live Entertainment licenses to also fall under the jurisdiction of local authorities.

# Green-fingered volunteers lend a hand on the roof



Photo: M. Lewis

STAFF FROM John Lewis Partnership in central London helped out a Fitzrovia community centre with some gardening expertise.

Members of the department store's IT department gave up their day to give the All Souls Community Centre in Cleveland Street roof garden a make-over.

The day was organised through the Business in the Community scheme. The John Lewis team said was a great experience and have signed up for several more volunteering days.

Find how your company can give time to the community at [www.bitc.org.uk](http://www.bitc.org.uk) or by phoning 0870 600 2482



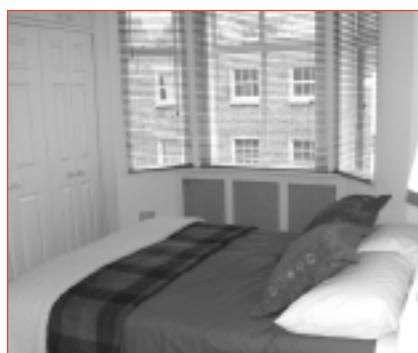
Robert Irving + Burns  
23-24 Margaret St  
London W1W 8LF

Tel: 020 7637 0821  
Fax: 020 7637 8827  
e-mail: [gary@rib.co.uk](mailto:gary@rib.co.uk)



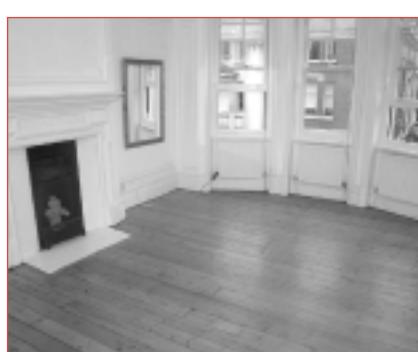
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## LETTINGS



£350 pw furnished,  
Cleveland Street, Fitzrovia, London  
W1

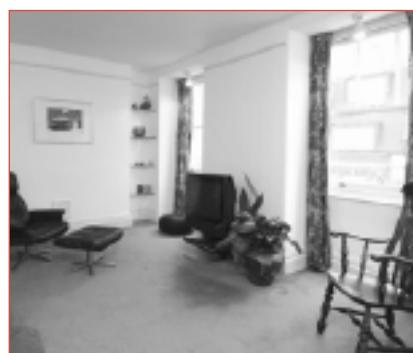
Bright two bedroom apartment situated on the third floor, separate fully fitted kitchen, bath/shower, ample storage, double bedroom plus single bedroom/office, spacious reception, excellent location, available beginning



£390 pw unfurnished,  
Great Portland Street, Fitzrovia,  
London W1

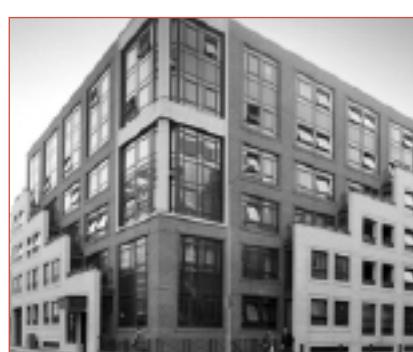
Bright and spacious two bedroom apartment situated on the third floor, wooden flooring throughout, double bedroom + single bedroom / study, fully fitted kitchen, bath/shower, secure entry, available end of

## SALES



Great Portland Street, Fitzrovia,  
London W1  
£475,000

A spacious and well-maintained 2 / 3 Bedroom Apartment, situated on the 4th (Top) Floor of an attractive period building. 118/122 Great Portland Street is centrally located between New Cavendish Street and Langham Street, with the closest Underground Stations being Oxford Circus and Great Portland Street. SOLE AGENT



Whitfield Street, Fitzrovia, London  
W1  
£447,500

Two Double Bedroom (1,020 sq ft) Raised Ground Floor Flat, in a modern purpose-built block, ideally located for Fitzrovia's varied restaurants and shopping amenities and comes complete with an Underground Parking Space, Day Porter, Double Glazing and use of the communal Roof Terrace. The nearest Underground Stations are Warren Street and Goodge Street



# What's On in Fitzrovia

compiled by Frank Smith



David Bromley at the Hossack Gallery

## David Bromley at The Rebecca Hossack Gallery: 35 Windmill St & 28 Charlotte St W1T

Bromley is currently working with two distinct themes: The Female Nude and The Boys Own Adventure series.

Bromley's ten nudes owe a lot to his love of pop art. His subjects are crisply and simply delineated and washed with aqueous colour against an illusory background. He plays with the notion of cool and warm both in his use of colour and in terms of the sheer attitude of his subjects. To anyone of a certain age, the Boys Own Adventure series will remind them of their old children's annuals and the Ladybird reading scheme. These were Bromley's inspirations and they make for surprisingly arresting paintings.

Evoking a world of half a century ago, he uses large boldly coloured canvases to

create naive, idyllic scenes that are almost disturbing in a contemporary context. Several of the paintings hint at some darker imagination at work.

David Bromley has twice officially been acclaimed as one of Australia's fifty most collectable artists and on this evidence you can see why.

## Sidney Strübe Political Cartoon Gallery, Store Street from 25 November, (see p7)

Daily Express cartoonist Sidney Strübe spent 36 years with the paper from 1912-1948.

This was a particularly fertile period for a political cartoonist, as it covered two world wars, a global economic depression, the rise of the soviet bloc and the colourful careers of several politicians.

Not to be missed if you want to say you attended the first exhibition at the world's first political cartoon gallery.

## The Drill Hall 16 Chenies Street WC1

Nine Days Crazy: written and performed by Chris Goode

Premiered at The Edinburgh fringe and starring two-time Fringe First winner Chris Goode, *Nine Days Crazy* puts a unique twist on the road movie genre. No high-powered Harley for our hero, instead he decides to accept a bet to morris dance from London to Norwich.

The idea mimics the legend of actor Will Kemp who was sacked by Shakespeare and then went on a road tour decrying the great man's name. Goode plays a disaffected actor in this journey of self discovery that is both moving and uproariously funny. There's also a love story thrown in, so it really does make for an eventful nine days.

Cirque du celery (Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th December)

Ever thought vegetables were under-represented in contemporary theatre? If so, fret no more. Cirque du Celery brings its unique brand of ingeniously inventive vegetable puppetry to the Drill Hall. All manner of vegetables are cobbled together to create some memorable characters. There is plenty of humour here to enjoy but you will never look at your vegetables in the same light again.

## Sing it Black

A fascinating night that addresses the question what is black music? Through jazz, soul, hip-hop and even opera, the performers attempt to give us an answer or at least food for thought.

Reference is made to a pantheon of black artists from Prince to Nina Simone.



Political Cartoon Gallery, Store Street

**Sat 4 December at 8pm  
Sun 5 December at 4pm**

Liebe Wetzel's  
Lunatique Fantastique

## Cirque du Celery

Take everything you know about puppetry... and eat it!  
Contains adult content.



**Sat 11 December at 8pm**

## Sing It Black A Musical Medicine

Created and performed by  
Allyson Devenish & Wills Morgan

Featuring OutKast, Miles, the Duke, Ray, Nina, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Errollyn Wallen, Prince and Stevie Wonder.

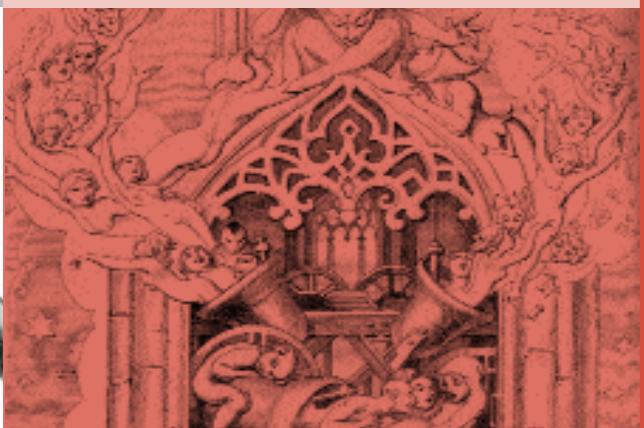


**Sun 19 December at 8pm**

## The Chimes A New Goblin Musical

by David Willis &  
Nicolas Bloomfield  
adapted from the story by  
Charles Dickens

A tale of fog and snow and hail and happiness.



**drill hall**

16 Chenies Street, WC1E 7EX (off Tottenham Court Road)  
Tickets £5-£10 · Box Office: 020 7307 5060 · [www.drillhall.co.uk](http://www.drillhall.co.uk)

## Preview &amp; Review

## DVD review

What to rent this winter - **Joe Larner** looks at forthcoming DVD releases.

**I Robot**

(Released: 3 Dec)  
Chicago, 2035, and all is rosy with robots doing the



jobs we hate. However, a suspicious suicide sets traumatised Detective Spooner (Will Smith) on an investigation which casts doubts on this utopian vision.

An intelligent sci-fi film with surprising twists and exemplary special effects. Smith provides us with another wise-cracking hero and is fun throughout.

However, the stand-out performance comes from Alan Tudyk as robot Sonny whose human characteristics shine through. The disc includes three separate commentaries and a making-of documentary.

**King Arthur**

(Released: 29 Nov)



An attempt to put Arthurian legend into a more accurate context, and all the better for it. Arthur (Clive Owen) is a Roman soldier in charge of a band of Sarmatian knights, who are entrusted with protecting Roman settlements from attacks led by Merlin.

It's the 5th century AD. Arthur and his men are on one last mission. They are victorious, but decide to help the pagans repel the Saxon's at the battle of Badon Hill. Arthur is crowned King of the Britons and promptly marries Guinevere (Keira Knightley).

Well directed by Antoine Fuqua (*Training Day*) and features a suspenseful face-off on a frozen lake. The cast fill their roles with gusto, although Owen fails to convince as an action hero. The film is better than the cinema reviews suggest and is a treat for a night in.

**Garfield : The Movie**

(Release: 26 Nov)  
This adaption of the popular Jim Davis cartoon strip sees the lasagne-loving cat compelled to rescue his owner's new pet dog, Odie, from dastardly TV presenter (Stephen Tobolowsky).

Bill Murray, breathes some life into the ginger furball, but you feel uninvolved, and unlike Toy Story or Shrek, there aren't enough jokes for the adults. Children may enjoy the antics but even they'll be raiding the fridge for more Sunny



Delight before the end.

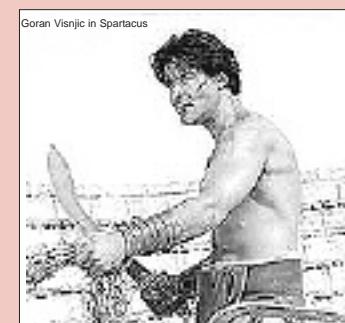
The extras include a commentary, deleted scenes, games and a making-of documentary.

**Spartacus**

(Released: 1 Nov)  
A new adaption of the 1951 Howard Fast novel stars Goran Visnjic as Spartacus and features Sir Alan Bates in his last screen role.

Although it lacks the emotional impact of the Kubrick classic, it does have some epic and visceral battle scenes and engaging performances by Visnjic, Bates and Angus MacFadyen. The sparring scenes between the Agrippa (Bates) and Crassus (MacFadyen) are well-written and have a modern resonance to them.

Approach with an open mind, forget the Kubrick version and enjoy it. It also has the dubious pleasure of our very own Ross Kemp as Spartacus' gladiator teacher.



If you've there's something you'd like to review for

**Fitzrovia News**

contact

features@fitzrovianews.co.uk

or phone our features desk on

020 7580 4576

# Little Angels

By Hector Wells

AN ARTIST has been working with children from three central London primary schools to create a festive work of art with a difference.

Pupils from St. Joseph's Roman Catholic School, St Clement Danes Church of England School and Soho Parish School worked with Alison Neville to build a ceramic crèche featuring traditional nativity scenes transported to modern day London.

The crèche will be based at St Giles in the Fields Church (near Centre Point) from December 8th to January 6th 2005.

A special dedication service for the crèche will take place at St Giles in the Fields church at 1pm on Wednesday December 8th.

The service will also feature Alexandra Jay one of the stars of the west end musical *Mama Mia*, singing the Abba hit 'I Believe in Angels'.

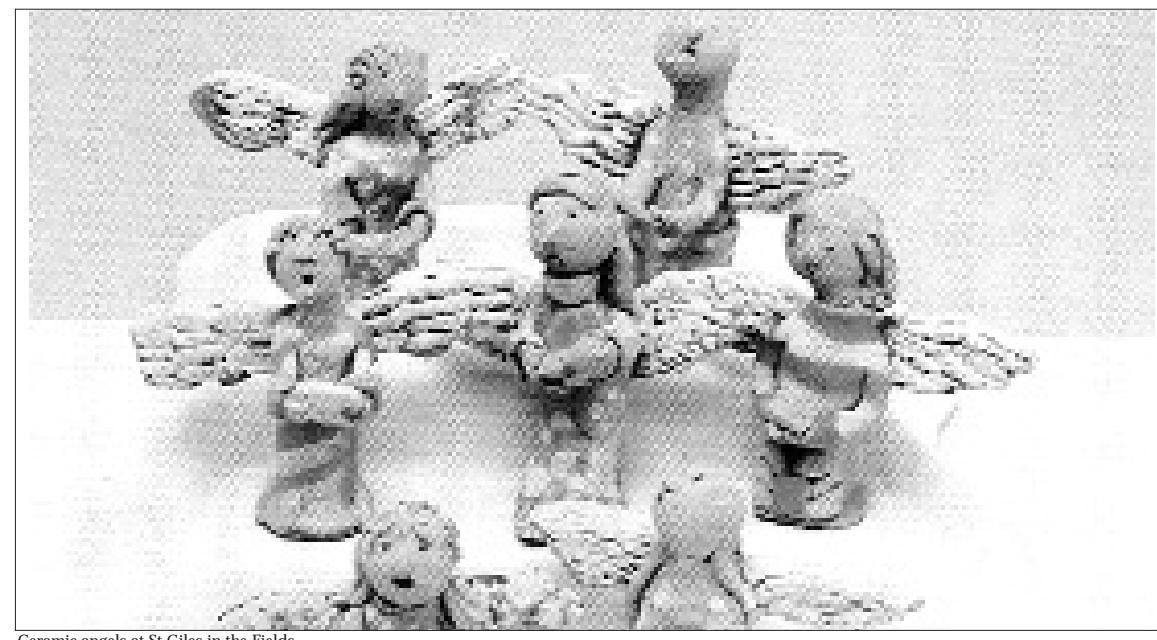
## Fitzrovia Restaurante Italiano

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Ceramic angels at St Giles in the Fields.

# Quick on the draw



Tim Benson holds Philip Zec's famous cartoon 'Here it is - don't lose it again'

**Frank Smith** visits a new Fitzrovia gallery with a political slant

THE WORLD'S FIRST political cartoon gallery has recently opened in Fitzrovia chronicling the last 150 years of British history with wonderful and witty illustrations.

Gallery manager Tim Benson is the driving force behind this unique display. He describes the society as "an organisation interested in learning about history and politics through the medium of cartoon."

One section is devoted to cartoons which are for sale, many of them dating back to the nineteenth century. It is hoped that the sale of these works will fund the upkeep of the gallery, as the society has so far been unable to attract funding.

Contemporary murals illustrated by the country's top political cartoonists decorate the café downstairs.

Four exhibitions a year are planned, and there are already sufficient ideas to fill the next three years, but Tim is always on the look out for more.

Exhibitions will showcase the work of particular cartoonists, such as Daily Express's Sidney Strube, whose exhibition will be opened by the newspaper's

owner Richard Desmond on November 25th.

Other exhibitions will be themed, such as the Winston Churchill exhibition, and a London exhibition which is to be opened by Mayor Ken Livingston in 2005.

The Society currently has 350 members but is looking for more. Members receive personal invitations to exhibitions and free entrance to lectures and seminars, they also judge the Annual Political Cartoon Awards. The £20 annual fee also entitles members to a discount on books and in the café.

It's not every day that you get a unique experience on your doorstep.

Entrance to the gallery at 32 Store Street is free.

# London poetry's debt to Ceylon

**N.Sivasamba**  
remembers the  
Fitzrovia years of  
influential poet  
and editor Meary  
James  
Tambitmuttu



Meary James Tambitmuttu

**T**he surrealist poet and editor, Meary James Tambitmuttu, arrived from Colombo, Ceylon, (now Sri Lanka) in 1938 and moved into Fitzrovia where he was to live for thirteen years.

His love of the area was such that he once warned fellow writer Julian McLaren Ross, dubbed 'The King of Fitzrovia', that the area brought about a condition which prevented an artist from doing anything other than enjoying the delights of its pubs and café society.

Nevertheless, between

1939 and 1951 he found time to edit the influential journal, Poetry London, together with Keydrich Rees and Anthony Dickins. This journal became a leader in its field. The great American poet, T.S. Eliot once

*"It is only in Poetry London that I can consistently expect to find new poets who matter."*  
T. S. Eliot

said "It is only in Poetry London that I can consistently expect to find new poets who matter".

Tambitmuttu's surrealist principles and bohemian lifestyle may have shocked some of the literary establishment but his eye for artistic talent was virtually flawless. As an editor, he helped nurture some of the great artistic reputations of the twentieth century, such as writers, Dylan Thomas and Gerald Durrell and artist and sculptor, Henry Moore.

No less renowned as a publisher, he also founded Editions Poetry London, which published many leading names in the world of letters, and later the Lyrebird Press which gained him the reputation of being not only a publisher of new writing but also a publisher of the book as an aesthetic artefact. He even presented the Queen with a specially bound edition of Indian Love Poems, which earned a Publishers Award.

Back then, as now, the area known as Fitzrovia was just inside the space west of Tottenham Court Road. It was named after Charles Fitzroy, Baron Southampton who owned this piece of land. It was not an officially recognised name for a Parish or a Borough ward.

When I once showed him a map of this area west of Bloomsbury, he outlined on it his Fitzrovia, which extended

the area owned by Charles Fitzroy to include the space enclosed by Euston Road, Cleveland Street and New Oxford Street and extended it across New Oxford Street into Soho.

In an article published in Harpers and Queen he wrote in celebration of this part of London, mentioning fellow artists and friends, who he refers to as Fitzrovians.

Tambitmuttu was also the first intellectual from Ceylon or Sri Lanka to have a place in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

The entry recognises his work as an influential editor of poetry and a publisher of the avant garde thinkers of his time.

A few months before his death Tambitmuttu founded the Indian Arts Council, which aimed to promote greater understanding of Indian artists in the West.

He passed away in 1983 after suffering a heart attack. At a memorial gathering in 1984, the poet Kathleen Raine, who wrote in an obituary: 'the torch Tambitmuttu had lit should not be allowed to go out'.

We at the Ceylon Bloomsbury Group have taken up this torch and believe that a monument in Fitzrovia would be a fitting tribute for his contribution to the area's artistic history.

## What are your memories of Fitzrovia?



Local resident David Watson

By Hector Wells

IF YOU'VE WITNESSED first-hand the changing face of Fitzrovia your memories could help preserve its unique past.

University College London is running an oral history project and wants to hear stories from the area's long-term residents. Tamsin Green, project coordinator, says the scheme aims to: "Find out what it was like to live in the cen-

tre of London over such a long period as it has changed so much over the last 50 years."

Eleven people have been interviewed since the project's launch last year, among them retired advertising executive David Watson, a 69-year-old Tottenham Street resident. He recalls that Fitzrovia was "very much more of a downmarket area" when he moved in 38 years ago.

But the decline in the area's rag trade left a hole soon filled by new businesses and people. David says: "We started putting up with city-type people, the advertising agencies moved in and we got jolly smart."

Fitzrovia has "changed for the better in that it's cleaner, it's sprucer, it's nicer" says David, but "it's changed for the worse in that we've no longer got a butcher and we've got too many hairdressers and coffee bars".

Once complete, the oral histories will be offered to Camden and Westminster councils for archive, and there are plans to publish a book.

In the meantime Tamsin is hoping for more recruits.

Fitzrovia Oral History Project  
© The Voluntary Services Unit  
UCL Union, 25 Gordon Street  
London WC1H 0AY

## Remembering Woolf

AN EVENT to commemorating the arrival of novelist Leonard Woolf in Colombo, will take place in Tavistock Square on 16 December.

Cecil Woolf, nephew of the distinguished novelist Leonard Woolf, will be planting a ginkgo biloba tree to honour those who ushered in the contemporary literary period in Colombo and London. A plaque, will be unveiled by the High Commissioner for Sri Lanka, His Excellency Faisz Mustapha.

Leonard Woolf and his wife, Virginia Woolf, lived at Tavistock Square from 1924 to 1939. Their home, at No. 52 on the south-eastern corner, housed their publishing company, the Hogarth Press.

The tree planting at 2.30 pm will be followed by a seminar on Woolf's first novel, *The Village in the Jungle* at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in Russell Square. The book, based on Woolf's experiences as a colonial administra-

tor in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), is widely-held as one of the seminal pieces that marked the beginning of the contemporary period in literary history. Limited copies of a new edition of the book will be on sale at the seminar.

If you want to buy the book, attend the event or find out more, call 020 7278 5232 or email: ns.bloomsbury@btinternet.com

Which Fitzrovia people should we feature in future issues?

Contact:  
020 7580 4576  
features@fitzrovianews.co.uk

# Portrait of a Fitzrovia artist

Glynn Boyd Harte was a Fitzroviaan who will be fondly remembered. **Michael Lawler** talks to his widow and his close friend.

**G**lynn Boyd Harte, who died in December 2003 aged 55, was one of the most recognisable characters of Fitzrovia during the eighties and nineties.

Boyd Harte, an artist, illustrator, author and traveller, lived for two decades in the area. Fitzrovia meant so much to him that he produced an entire exhibition based on the area.

He lived with his wife Carrie from the early 1980s in a Georgian house on Percy Street and later in a flat on Gower Street. Many in the area will recall his distinctive style of dress, always in co-respondent shoes and in later years sporting a very French beret.

His last exhibition of watercolours, at the Curwen Gallery was a complete sell

place students would go as it was very cheap and Frau Schmitt was very stern with a moustache."

Boyd Harte was born in Rochdale, Lancashire, in 1948 and always celebrated his "official" birthday, on May 1st, with a lavish party even though his real birthday was in late April. May day was, says Carrie, a good excuse for a party. His father was a commercial artist and lithographer and his grandfather had owned a lithographic printing works.

Boyd Harte followed the family tradition. He studied at Rochdale School of Art and then St Martin's School of Art in London, and finally at the Royal College of Art.

Carrie explained that Boyd Harte was not a one to follow fashion and preferred to occupy his own place in the London art world. "He was



Self portrait of Glynn Boyd Harte (1988) in trademark co-respondent shoes.

## "He had a great feeling for Fitzrovia"

out. Jill Hutchings, a friend of Boyd Harte and owner of the gallery recalls how she was "thrilled that he lived to see what a success his last exhibition was."

Boyd Harte's watercolours and lithographs were of whatever pleased him: bread, lobsters or tennis players. He illustrated countless books and articles.

His widow, Carrie remembers how in the early years of their relationship they would spend time in Fitzrovia and its recalls colourful characters. "We used to go to Schmitt's German restaurant. It was a

always very interested in architecture and design, he had an interest in lettering and enjoyed using it. But he didn't fit into any category - he felt most at home as part of a tradition of quiet English artists who would observe the world in a very realistic way."

Boyd Harte's work also included the designing of wallpaper and fabrics. He was an accomplished pianist and composer and performed in cabaret and in several pantomimes at the Art Workers' Guild - of which Boyd Harte was Master in 1995.

His love of London and

especially of Fitzrovia helped inspire him through several years of illness towards the end of his life. Jill Hutchings feels Fitzrovia was a special

place for him: "He had a great feeling for Fitzrovia. It was a great area for artists and he was a great man for history." Carrie sums up the rela-

tionship with Fitzrovia: "It was a place he felt at home. He was an exceptional person and that says a lot about the area."

# Princesses and gangsters

Mike Pentelow discovers some of the seedier goings-on in 1950s Fitzrovia.



**G**angsters, Russian princesses, and the last of the Bloomsbury set were all part of the scene when Stevie Pearce was growing up in Fitzroy Square just after the second world war.

Now an antique dealer in Marylebone, Stevie lived at 29 Fitzroy Square from the age of three in 1946 until 1960.

Jack Spot, a notorious gangster of the 1950s, she recalled had an office "up some rickety winding stairs" at 21 Warren Street, a street that was nicknamed "Badlands".

He mixed with the dodgy second hand car dealers "who sat around outside and wheeled and dealed by the curb," she added.

"I was told that the car dealing started as a front to launder the proceeds from bank jobs and black marketing."

"You could not get into the Smugglers Tavern in Warren Street when it was full of villains exchanging wads of cash."

"Jack Spot was always very smart wearing a camel hair coat and a cravat."

Spot (real name Comer) did not like being written about by The People's crime reporter, Duncan Webb, so lured him to the Horseshoe pub at 267 Tottenham Court Road in 1953 and broke his arm with a knuckleduster.

Two years later Spot stabbed the Italian bodyguard of his rival gangster, Billy Hill, at a continental fruit store in Charlotte Street. The store owner, Sophie Hyams, hit Spot over the head with a heavy metal scoop which gave the bodyguard time to recover and stab Spot several times. His wounds to the face, arm and chest (one of which penetrated his lung cavity) were treated in Middlesex Hospital.

The Kray twins worked a while for Spot and he told them: "Always steal from thieves - you can't never be nicked."

Another of the Warren Street traders that Stevie remembers was Mark Harrison, who became a millionaire owning three buildings in Park Lane. "He was always very polite and charming," she said.

Gangsters also ran open prostitution in the area, she added. "The vice trade was taken over by the Maltese gangs at the end of the war and their prostitutes would stand on the corner of Fitzroy Square by the YMCA."

"The Maltese lived where The Warren is now [at the top of Whitfield Street] and hung their washing out of the windows. They were very good with knives and you saw lots of men with scars on their faces."

Bengali run brothels were also set up between Fitzroy

went gaga and fled to France.

But Olga came here and always celebrated the Russian Easter with special Russian food."

At 27 Fitzroy Square lived an old woman who was the last of the Bloomsbury set. "She had a retainer and a chauffeur in leather boots for

her Rolls Royce," recalled Stevie.

She also remembers a Swiss choir regularly singing in the centre of the square. "An old Scottish gardener called Mr McGregor was employed to look

after the square and had a little hut. He was ex-army and interested in archeology and would talk to passers-by for hours."

Stevie vividly remembers the great fog of 1952. "You could not see in front of your face and did not know whether it was night or day. Even with

all the windows and doors shut tight it still got inside."

"All the buses stopped, and once when I went on a local visit on the Sunday I did not get back until the Thursday."

Eartha Kitt lived by Great

Portland Street station when she was a singer in London.

Around 1949 the police had a tip off that Archbishop Makarios (later president of an independent Cyprus, but then wanted for terrorist charges) was going to visit Cyprus House, which was then at 21 Fitzroy Square.

"Some undercover police hid outside the house inside a butcher's van which stayed there all day."

"You could see the police were there by their cigarette smoke coming out of a hole in the roof," explained Stevie.

Also in 1949 the country's first launderette opened at 88 Cleveland Street. The Red & White launderette is still there 54 years later.

In her teens Stevie would go to local clubs, such as the 100 Club in Oxford Street, and the Marquee which was originally by Oxford Circus, to see such great musicians as Acker Bilk, Muddy Waters, and John Lee Hooker.

"I also remember Long John Baldry being very rude to his piano player whom he called an idiot on stage. He was a young Elton John."

"It was a great area to grow up in, you could walk home at midnight without any worries."

## "Always steal from thieves - you can't never be nicked."

## Five-a-side pitch for hire

WHY NOT get together with your friends or workmates for a regular five-a-side session? It's a great way to keep fit and sharpen your skills. The pitch at The Warren is available Monday to Friday and is currently taking bookings for Fitzrovia's budding footballers.

To book the five-a-side pitch call  
020 7580 4576



### Fitzrovia Youth in Action

welcomes the new

### Fitzrovia News



We invite young people who have ideas for a project in their community to contact us at the number below.

We also provide football training sessions for Under 10's/Under 12's/  
Under 14's/Under 16's.

New members always welcome.

Fitzrovia Youth in Action. Basement, 66-68 Warren Street, London W1T 5NZ. Tel/Fax 020 7388 7399.

Registered Charity number 1082155

## Girls allowed



Fitzrovia needs you: girls referee Nazia Gofur

By Hector Wells

GIRLS ARE taking to the pitch as a Fitzrovia youth group adds girls' football to its long list of ongoing community projects.

Fitzrovia Youth in Action (FYIA) held its first training session for girls at the Warren on Whitfield Street on bonfire night.

The FYIA already run teams for boys aged seven to 18, but football is only one of the many ways the group is involved with young people in Fitzrovia.

FYIA also run a youth tenants association, a young women's project, and a drug awareness programme.

Project coordinator Andre Schott

says in spite of Fitzrovia's relatively affluent image, there are youngsters who face "similar pressures to young people in any inner-city area", such as "lack of opportunities and difficulties in finding somewhere to live".

Andre believes the group's work helps them "identifying issues in the community and doing something about it".

AJ, a 19-year-old volunteer, is keen to emphasize the positive aspects of working for FYIA. Speaking at a Halloween under-10s football tournament, AJ said: "It's a great experience, you meet lots of talented kids, you get to meet people who are getting chances to be heard in the community. I like it a

Girls football training sessions are every Friday evening at The Warren  
7-10 year olds 4pm-5.30pm  
11-13 year olds 5.30pm-7pm  
For more details call  
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### Get involved in Fitzrovia News

Fitzrovia News is back. Thanks to an application by the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, Comic Relief have funded the re-establishment of the newspaper.

Since 1973 Fitzrovia has had its own neighbourhood newspaper.

We aim to provide a forum for balanced discussion of neighbourhood issues and celebrate everything that's great about Fitzrovia.

The next edition is due out in February and we will continue to publish from then on. If we can get real momentum behind the paper - we will look at increasing the frequency of publication.

Get involved as a volunteer  
Journalists, distributors, and advertising sales people are needed.

Contact us  
If you've got a news story or would like to write a contribution contact the news desk:

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