

# FitzroviaNews



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

Issue 144 Spring 2017

## Workhouse plans fail to deliver on housing, heritage and open space

By Linus Rees

Proposals by a hospital charity to redevelop the site of the former Strand Union Workhouse on Cleveland Street have been met with over 150 letters of objection sent to Camden Council which is due to make a decision on the plans later this year.

The site was last used as the Middlesex Hospital Annex in 2006 and it has since remained largely vacant with property guardians using the buildings as temporary accommodation.

It is now under the ownership of University College London Hospitals Charity which has submitted plans for a housing and commercial development.

The land is one of the last pieces in the jigsaw of older hospital sites in Fitzrovia which have been emptied, sold or redeveloped as part of UCLH's strategy to renew its vast medical estate.

It is also one of the few remaining opportunity sites identified for housing in the Fitzrovia Area Action Plan, and is the subject of an outstanding s106 agreement to provide at least 30 social rented homes plus another 1,425 square metres (at least 14 homes) of much needed social housing.

The latest proposal is to refurbish the Grade II listed workhouse building and part demolish and redevelop the rest of the site to provide 50 homes and 4,535sqm of commercial floor space mostly in a new tower block to be built at the rear.

Ten residential properties will be for sale on the open market, 36 will be social rented homes, and four intermediate affordable homes for local NHS workers.

Many of the objections submitted in response to the planning application raise concern about the lack of social housing on the site, a situation compounded by the fact that UCLH Charity want 40 percent of the site for office space.

The application falls well short of the amount of homes expected and *Fitzrovia News* understands that Camden Council is no longer going to demand the outstanding 1,425 square metres of social rented housing connected with a previ-



The former Middlesex Hospital Annex and Strand Union Workhouse building on Cleveland Street.

ously planned development at Grafton Way.

While the plans do open up an attractive pedestrian walkway from Charlotte Street to Cleveland Street the scheme fails to deliver much in the way of public open space to provide amenity for residents and local workers. The large amount of commercial premises planned — with possibly 400 employees — will exacerbate the lack of public open space in Fitzrovia.

UCLH Charity admit the public open space proposed falls short of what is required.

"In total 711 sqm of POS is provided. While this is below the provision expected by guidance, the spaces provided are of a high

quality and standard of design," says the planning statement.

However, a great number of people wrote in to ask for an archaeological investigation of the historic graveyard on the site where human remains may still be present.

Most of the objections submitted call for all the Georgian and Victorian buildings on the site to be retained.

UCLH Charity feel confident they will get their plans approved after winning an appeal against Camden Council which had refused permission to redevelop another former hospital site for mostly offices.

However, Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association

argues that UCLH Charity's proposals fail to meet the criteria laid down in planning policy. It is recommending to Camden Council that it refuses the application because it fails to deliver on housing, public open space, appropriate design, and respect for heritage assets.

Camden's planning officers will now assess the application before writing a report and recommendations ahead of a decision to be taken by the planning committee, most likely, later this year.

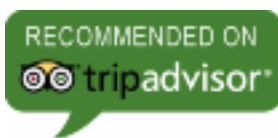
*Middlesex Hospital Annex, 44 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JT. Planning application: 2017/0414/P; and listed building consent: 2017/0415/L.*



Local Danish cakes on TV  
Page 6



Bikers' paradise celebrated  
Centre pages



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Issue 144 Spring 2017  
Published 7 March 2017

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### Printed by:

**Sharman & Co Ltd,**

**Newark Road,**

**Peterborough PE1 5TD**

**sharmanandco.co.uk**

**Fitzrovia News is produced  
quarterly by the Fitzrovia  
Community Newspaper  
Group, ISSN: 0967-1404**

**Published by the Fitzrovia  
Neighbourhood Association  
(registered charity no. 1111649)  
39 Tottenham Street,  
London, W1T 4RX  
fitzrovia.org.uk  
google.com/+FitzroviaOrgUK  
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**Public editorial  
meetings are held at  
7 pm, first Tuesday of  
every month at**

**Fitzrovia Neighbourhood  
Association,**

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# Letters, emails and comment

Write to letters@fitzrovia.org.uk or post to Fitzrovia News, Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, 39 Tottenham Street, London W1T 4RX

## Public libraries are essential for learning, literacy and research

Library access is getting further and further away from Fitzrovians which can only discourage learning and literacy, especially among young people.

Until 40 years ago we had our own Westminster branch library in Little Portland Street. A valiant campaign by Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association failed to prevent its closure.

Until a couple of years ago there was a Camden branch library just a short walk north of Warren Street on the Regent Park Estate. But that also was closed despite public protest. In addition to losing access to books it meant being deprived of access to the internet on the library's computers, especially important to young people.

Now the two nearest libraries, both over a mile from the centre of Fitzrovia, are threatened.

Westminster Council has announced it will be moving Marylebone branch library, now

in Beaumont Street, just this side of Marylebone High Street, to Seymour Leisure Centre in Seymour Place by Edgware Road. This involves a much longer walk from Fitzrovia.

The nearest Camden library is now the Holborn Library and Local Studies and Archives Centre in Theobalds Road, just our side of Grays Inn Road.

This is now going to be made much smaller in order to build housing on the site.

*Fitzrovia News* relies on the local studies and archives facilities to research many of its historical articles. The search room for these will be compressed into a much smaller space and, according to Camden History Society, up to two-thirds of its archives will be "off-sited" out of London, probably to Yorkshire. This will entail a wait of at least three days for an archive to be delivered to the library, rather than having instant access as at present.

Public libraries have long been essential in their development to those who cannot afford to buy books, especially authors. And as last year's Writers & Readers Festival of Fitzrovia demonstrated many writers were connected with our area.

The map illustrating this, by Jack N Fawdry Tatham (see page 12), is soon to be reprinted. It shows the places connected to the likes of: Rupert Brooke, Samuel Coleridge, Wilkie Collins, Charles Darwin, Daniel Defoe, Charles Dickens, D H Lawrence, Doris Lessing, Joe Orton, George Orwell, Alexander Pope, Bernard Shaw, Percy B Shelley, Dylan Thomas, H G Wells, Oscar Wilde, Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, John Wyndham, and W B Yeats.

So cutting off today's budding writers from libraries will surely undermine this tradition.

**Local author, by email**

## Only 17 people sleep rough in the whole of the borough says Camden Council

Camden Council has told the Department for Communities and Local Government that there were only 17 rough sleepers on a "typical night" across the entire borough in the autumn of 2016, according to official statistics released in January.

The figure of 17 is just not credible. Camden claims to have fewer rough sleepers than neighbouring Brent, Barnet and Haringey.

*Fitzrovia News* recently organised three street counts in part of Bloomsbury ward in Camden. Each of our street counts found over 20 people sleeping rough. More in one 45 minute walk than Camden estimates for the whole of the borough. The London Borough of Camden has 18 wards and our street counts covered only about a quarter of one ward. All sightings of rough sleepers were reported to Camden's Safer Streets Team. Our street count numbers could only represent the tip of the iceberg of street homeless in the borough.

Camden's Bloomsbury ward councillors wrote to local residents last year saying that rough sleeping "is something that is of increasing concern" and invited them to attend a public meeting to discuss the issue.

Labour controlled Camden Council did not bother to do an actual street count of people sleeping rough on its streets in 2016 but opted to do an estimate instead. In response to a Freedom of Information request from *Fitzrovia News* the council said:

"Camden carried out an estimate, and has done so each year since 2013, overseen and verified by Homeless Link. We believe this is the best use of partnership resources to produce a snapshot of rough sleeping in the borough. We work closely with a full range of partners in the borough to target homelessness and thus have a robust system in place for the reporting and targeting of rough sleeping."

Camden Council has consistently maintained that it has very low numbers of rough sleepers. A year ago it said there were 15 rough sleepers and the year before only five.

Bloomsbury ward Councillor Rishi Madhani has asked the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association to address the council's culture and environment scrutiny committee and present its criticisms of Camden's estimate. *Fitzrovia News* will also be carrying out a further investigation on why Camden Council is refusing to recognise the extent of rough sleeping on its patch.

Neighbouring Westminster City Council did a street count and told the DCLG that there were 260 people sleeping rough on a typical night last year. However during a consultation on rough sleeping last year the Conservative run council admitted to around 300 people sleeping on its streets on any one night, and a group of volunteers found 461 people sleeping rough over three nights in the summer last year.

## The Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association annual general meeting

**Monday 20 March 2017 from 6:30pm**

**Venue: Sainsbury Wellcome Centre lecture theatre 25 Howland Street W1T 4JG**

Anyone who lives and works in Fitzrovia is invited to attend Attendees are invited to arrive from 6.30pm for drinks and snacks before the formal meeting takes place from 7pm to 8pm.

The meeting will review the work of the charity over the past 15 months, its accounts, and discuss the future of the organisation as well as the changes to the neighbourhood.

At 8.30pm after the formal business of the meeting is dealt with attendees are invited for drinks, snacks and to socialise at the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre, 39 Tottenham Street, London W1T 4RX.

## Social housing

Camden Council appears to be caving in to pressure from UCLH Charity to wriggle out of its legal agreement to provide at least 44 social rented homes on the former Middlesex Hospital Annex site at Cleveland Street.

In 2013 UCLH made an application to Camden Council to modify the s106 agreement and completely remove its obligation to provide the 44 homes. UCLH blamed conservation campaigners and the subsequent heritage listing of the former Strand Union Workhouse for making redevelopment of the site unviable. But Camden stuck to its guns and refused the application to remove the social housing.

Things dragged on and in 2015 at a meeting organised by local MP Keir Starmer about housing, Camden Council leader Sarah Hayward said she didn't want to take UCLH to court to enforce the legal agreement because the council didn't want to pit one public body against another.

Max Neufeld of the Charlotte Street Association expressed his frustration: "All the chance we get for social housing is through these Section 106 agreements. Camden's planning department is in disarray — why has this not been resolved?"

Starmer responded by saying it sounded like an "interesting dispute" and wanted to see "more transparency" in planning decisions.

But little transparency is forthcoming.

The current planning application (see front page story) includes only 36 social rented homes on the site.

UCLH Charity states in the planning application that Camden's planning officers have told them that 14 of the social homes are "no longer required".

The Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association has written in response saying planning officers cannot make this decision without the applicants making a separate planning application to modify the affordable housing obligations.

## Fitzrovia News deadlines

Our deadline for news, features, letters and adverts is normally two weeks before publication. Sometimes we accept articles later.

The next issue of *Fitzrovia News* will be out on Tuesday 6 June  
Deadline is Friday 19 May  
**news@fitzrovia.org.uk**



# School pupils excel in tests



Headteacher Alix Ascough said she was thrilled with the results.

Children at a Fitzrovia primary school are among the country's best young achievers according to government statistics published in December, writes Linus Rees.

All Souls Church of England Primary School in Foley Street was ranked in the top 10 percent of schools in England based on pupils' progress in reading, writing and maths.

At the school 87 percent of pupils met the expected standard in literacy and numeracy after sitting the key stage 2 test in 2016, well above the City of Westminster average of 58 percent.

The school was ranked second from top place in Westminster in a London Evening Standard league table of schools. There are over 20,000 primary schools in England and the Telegraph newspaper ranked All Souls in the top 1,000.

## A Fitzrovia pub is brewing its own beer on the premises

The George and Dragon in Fitzrovia is now the only pub of its kind in the West End because it is selling its own brand of beer brewed on the premises.

The pub opened again last autumn after changing hands and the new owners Ray Corner and Charles Gardner have given it a light renovation and revealed many of the original features of the historic building which stands on the corner of Cleveland Street and Greenwell Street.

The independent free house is already drawing a crowd to its range of craft beers and the gourmet food served up by its resident chef Adam Rawson.

Now staff at the brewpub have been pulling beer created in the tiny brewery on the premises.



Ray Corner outside The George and Dragon

Corner, who is fermenting and barrelling the beer, told Fitzrovia News that he has "invented a fully automated, full-grain brewing machine" which is bubbling away in the pub's cellar.

The George and Dragon, 151 Cleveland Street W1T 6QN.

All Souls is a multi-cultural school with 196 pupils from a diverse mix of income backgrounds: 67 percent of them do not use English as a first language (compared with 21 percent nationally) and 34 percent qualify for free school meals (25 percent nationally) according to National Statistics for the 2015 to 2016 academic year.

There are eight full-time and three part-time teachers, says the school.

Alix Ascough, headteacher of All Souls, told Fitzrovia News that she was thrilled with the results. "It's a testament to all the hard work the children and teachers have done. It goes to show that if you invest in teachers you get the results."

The school was also rated "outstanding" in a recent Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) Report.



Spare Tyre challenge prejudice through theatre. Photo: Patrick Baldwin.

## Theatre group take a serious look at the absurdity of health and safety

A theatre company is trying to stage a play when all of a sudden things are brought to a halt and descend into absurdity by an impromptu visit from a health and safety inspector. That's the theme of a new play called "Safe" to be performed this month at the New Diorama Theatre (see back page).

A climate of farcical risk assessments and box-ticking is explored in this lively satire by Eastenders writer Pete Lawson, and performed by the Spare Tyre theatre company with a cast of older people and people with learning disabilities.

Safe pokes fun but asks serious questions about who really benefits from adult safeguarding. "Have we stopped listening to those we are trying to protect?" asks this self-referential act.

Spare Tyre is a participatory arts charity with nearly 40 years experience of producing bold theatre to challenge prejudice and transform lives. They work with people aged 60+, adults with learning disabilities, economically disadvantaged communities, women who've experienced violence, and people with dementia and carers.

Safe runs from 15 to 18 March 2017 at New Diorama Theatre, Triton Street, Regent's Place. More information and tickets. newdiorama.com

## Theatre group seeks youth to join its cast



A theatre group for teenagers is looking for more young people to join its cast of performers to rehearse in preparation for a series of plays to be staged at venues later this year.

Camden Youth Theatre was formed in 2016 and put on its first play in the summer. The group is led by professional theatre maker Gemma Rowan who will work with the young people to form a company producing exciting and accessible theatre, and is a collaboration between Camden People's Theatre on Hampstead Road, Fitzrovia Centre and New Diorama Theatre at Regent's Place.

"The Fitzrovia Centre is a partner in the programme. We also help with communications and marketing," says Sarah Moore of the Fitzrovia Centre in Foley Street.

"Camden Youth Theatre will introduce local young people to the skills they need to make inventive new theatre. They'll

work with top professionals, creating new shows and performing at two of London's best studio theatres," she says.

Productions for 2017 have yet to be finalised but auditions and rehearsals are taking place this spring.

"For auditions you don't need to prepare anything, and you don't need to have any acting experience, you just need to be up for creating exciting new work. Auditions are open to anyone aged 13-19," says Moore.

Camden Youth Theatre meets every Monday during school term time at 7pm at Diorama Arts Studios 201 Drummond Street, Regents Place, London NW1 3FE, and it's completely free to attend. Any young person can attend any of the sessions and auditions but they must first email arts@fitzroviacentre.org to book a place. You can follow CYT on Twitter @Camden\_YT.

## Developers trade millions in property

A flurry of buying and selling activity in Fitzrovia took place this winter with hundreds of millions of pounds of property changing hands.

In December Derwent London sold the freehold of 120-134 Tottenham Court Road to a private investor for £69.74m. The site includes the 330-room Radisson Blu hotel and 26,400 sq ft of retail and restaurant floor-space. And in February Derwent sold the freehold of 8 Fitzroy Street to its occupiers Arup for £197m (See Arup story p5).

Great Portland Estates sold the freehold of Rathbone Square, 35-50 Rathbone Place to Rathbone Place Jersey Limited, which is owned by a German company for £435m. The deal on the former Royal Mail delivery centre site means a £110m profit which GPE says it will pass on to shareholders. However, the selling price was four percent below what the site was valued at in September 2016 which suggests that property prices in Fitzrovia have reached a peak, or are even overvalued.

Construction firm Kier Group has put the office building at 33 Foley Street on the market in a sale-and-leaseback deal for £92m. Kier wants to rent the building for 20 years and relocate there from its current home at Cavendish Place once building work is complete.

The Triangle site at 87-125 Cleveland Street which was in the process of being demolished and redeveloped by Dukelease Properties and owners Soho Data Holdings is "under offer" for sale, according to estate agents. In a brochure published by Savills the owners are looking for at least £35m for the leasehold which includes planning permission for a residential and commercial development. The brochure also has details of alternative schemes including an office-led development and a possible 252 room hotel on the site. The freehold of the site is owned by Westminster council.

## News in brief

The pedestrian alleyway alongside the **Newman Arms** pub at **Newman Passage** is to close for **six months** from March to allow "**structural work**" to be done, according to a notice outside the pub which is currently shut for refurbishment (again).

**Dennis Publishing** is moving from **Cleveland Street** to new offices in **Alfred Place** this summer.

**Ollie Dabbous** and **Oscar Kinberg** are to close their famous **Whitfield Street** restaurant in June after five years in Fitzrovia and start a new project elsewhere.



# Maureen Ransom



photo Etienne Gilfillan

Maureen was born in Greenwich in 1936. She went to the local Catholic primary school rather than the rough local school and got beaten up on her first day.

However, Maureen was always a survivor and flourished in the Catholic secondary school where the Sisters encouraged her natural talent for languages. She was awarded a scholarship to Westfield College, London, to read modern languages. Maureen spent a year in France as part of the course, acquiring a life-long understanding of the language and a love for Voltaire.

After graduating, Maureen attended a teacher training course in Cambridge where her gift of mimicry for foreign languages confused the male undergraduates who assumed she was a French tourist.

Following completion of the course, Maureen taught at Spitalfields Girls School. Her friend Ingrid, also teaching at the school, took up a room at her house at Westcombe Hill. Maureen loved Greenwich and in the 1950s was actively involved in the re-birth of the Greenwich Theatre.

Maureen studied for an English degree at Birkbeck College evening classes, and Russian at Holborn College, which led to a British Council scholarship to Moscow for a year to perfect her spoken Russian.

On returning from Moscow, Maureen was appointed as the first female Head of the Language Department at the adult education City Literary Institute. Maureen inherited a

lively department and expanded it in the number of languages taught and the number of staff teaching. Eventually, there were 120 part-time staff teaching 40 languages. Maureen organised a series of lectures for sixth form pupils based on the set examination books. One of those pupils was a second cousin – who was inspired to follow a career in languages.

Maureen always enjoyed travel and recuperation from an operation included a tour of sub-saharan Africa. Travel included holiday jobs as a guide on educational cruises around Scandinavia and the Mediterranean; various trips in northern England; a sabbatical in France (where Maureen worked on an English translation of one of the short stories of Annie Saumont); a City Lit group tour of India; and as a house guest with USA families.

On retiring from the City Lit Maureen continued teaching French at local adult education colleges. She had a part in the inauguration of the Eurostar service by teaching the English drivers to speak French.

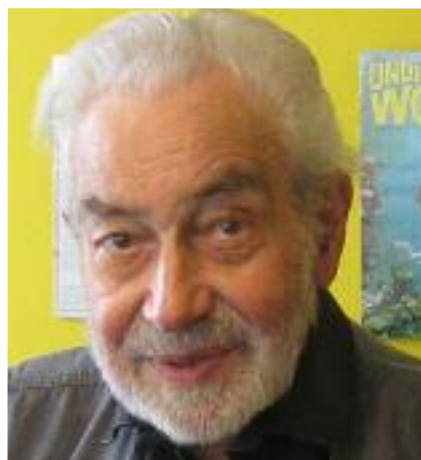
In recent years, Maureen built up her interest in organisations locally the FNA's Older Fitzrovia singing group, and the Club House activities. She helped out at various celebrations in Fitzroy Square as well as Regents Park Gardens and the Royal Academy of Music.

Maureen's love of cinema drew her toward the crypt of St. Mary Magdalene Church, Munster Square, where there was a weekly film show. This led to regular Thursday lunchtime concerts.

Maureen was a familiar face, but she hardly changed – which led to a co-incidence. One day in the local supermarket some three years ago, Maureen was recognised by her cousin who had not seen her for around 30 years. So Maureen was re-united with her remaining family of cousins and their families.

In the last few weeks, when Maureen's health deteriorated, her character still shone through. The mini-cab driver who drove her home from a CT scan in December was Russian and they had a lively conversation in Russian during the drive.

Maureen still managed to achieve all that she wanted, helped by her friends and neighbours. In the couple of days after Maureen was admitted to University College Hospital she was well cared for and passed peacefully away in her sleep on 11 December 2016.



## Leo Zanelli

Leo Zanelli lived at Holcroft Court in Fitzrovia for 17 years. He was born in 1930 to Italian parents. In 1939 his family moved to Soho.

Leo attended Notre Dame school in Leicester Square. On leaving, his first job was in catering, at the Albany Club on Saville Row. As a young man his passions were jazz, football and cycling. he was a founder member of the British League of Racing Cyclists. In those days mass cycle riding on public roads was illegal.

At school English was his strongest subject so he decided to try his hand at journalism. He started off freelancing and was soon offered a job with the publisher Collins in Covent Garden as a book editor.

In 1950 Leo went to the USA for one year with Collins. In America he also took photographs for publication. After this Leo was never went anywhere without a camera.

He returned to London in 1951, and worked as a writer/photographer through the fifties, during which time he also developed a passion for scuba diving. Leo went on to become National Diving Officer of the British Sub Aqua Club, he had the First Class Diver certificate and was a qualified scuba instructor.

He played alto saxophone with several modern jazz groups and had lessons from the well known saxo-

phonist and bandleader Harry Hayes.

Leo published around 30 books, on varied subjects, the first of which was one of the Teach Yourself titles: Sub Aqua Swimming. He was also the editor of several magazines and part-works, including the best-selling Golden Homes. He joined Central Press Features, now part of the Daily Mail group, Fleet Street, in 1976, and over the next 20 years had work published in over 200 newspapers.

At one time he was writing six different columns a week in addition to his usual work. For 17 years he was 'Adam the Gardener' in the Sunday Express. Leo wrote about wine since the 50s, and was a member of the Circle of Wine Writers. He was a founder and honorary life member of the London Press Club and had honorary life member of the National Union of Journalists.

He was a prolific author and wrote books on many subjects. Titles include – Beer and Wine Making Illustrated Dictionary; British Sub-Aqua Club Diving Manual; Sub Aqua Swimming; All you can build in the garden; Central Heating, Plumbing, Electricity; Shipwrecks Around the World – a Divers Guide; Rock Gardens and Pools.

He qualified as a City of London Guide and Leo's most popular guided walk was through Fitzrovia and Soho.

For many years Leo was interested in Freemasonry and was editor of "The Square", the Freemasons magazine. He wrote many articles on the subject. Leo was initiated into the Italia Lodge – the only Italian-speaking Freemasonic Lodge in the English Constitution. He later joined the British Sub-Aqua Lodge. Leo was also a member of the "Oddfellows" a national fraternal friendly society whose local branch called Duchess of Kent Lodge met regularly at Warren Street.

Leo John Zanelli died peacefully in his sleep on the 5th January 2017. He is survived by his two sons Mark and Craig.

## Corrections and clarifications

If you think *Fitzrovia News* has made a mistake please tell us by email [news@fitzrovia.org.uk](mailto:news@fitzrovia.org.uk) or contact us at our office.

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# Walking football is a beautiful game

A Fitzrovia man is looking for people to play "walking football" at a local sports pitch and is hoping to get enough players together for games that are more about enjoyment than winning.

50-year-old Russell Davies, who has lived and worked in Fitzrovia for around 15 years, wants to get a couple of teams together to play at the 5-a-side astro-turf pitch at The Warren on Whitfield Street.

"Walking Football is football minus the running. It's aimed at those aged 45 and over and it's become something of a craze recently," he says.

Since he was at school he's played football and this has continued into his adult life.

"I've never been particularly good, but I've always liked playing. I've organised various 'works' teams'. In order to get a

game I normally have to be the person who organises the matches. So nothing's changed, really."

Now he's interested in walking football as the running game is notorious for injuries, especially for older players. But it also has other attractions.

"What is nice about walking football is the absence of a formal code. Games start with an agreement about how it is played, then we just get on with it and enjoy the game. It's more like football you play in the park," he says.

"I've played with the Arsenal walking football team a few times in the last few months. It was fun, but I thought it'd be nice to do it a bit closer to home."

Davies is hoping to attract some local would-be players who want to continue enjoying

the game into later life.

"I wouldn't want people to think 'I won't come along because I'm not good enough'. Everyone gets a game. It's about playing the social aspect. It's not about a winning machine."

"People might have assumed it's over as they get older, but football still has room for different types of player. You can still get a workout. It's still physical, but there is more of an emphasis on skill and co-ordination."

But more than anything, it's about pure enjoyment of the beautiful game. "There's a spirit of: 'We're here to play and enjoy ourselves'."

If you are interested in walking football in Fitzrovia, visit the Old Fitzrovians Walking Football Club at [OldFitzrovians.com](http://OldFitzrovians.com) where you can find out more.





# Arup left staff in the dark after deal to sell offices and relocate

By Angela Lovely

Staff at Arup's London headquarters were left with a week-end of unnecessary uncertainty about the future of their offices after a surprise announcement was made saying their building had been sold and that they were moving but to a new address.

A trilogy of multi-million pound deals involving the global engineering firm and two publicly listed property developers meant that separate embargoed press notices went out several days apart leaving hundreds of employees not knowing what was going on.

On the morning of Friday 24 February Workspace Group plc announced they were buying the freehold of 13-17 Fitzroy Street for £98.5m and that Arup was due to vacate the building.

An email from Arup's management confirmed to staff the same day that they had signed an agreement to sell but said they couldn't say where or when they were intending to move.

Despite Arup priding itself on being run for its staff — "Arup is a wholly independent organisation owned in trust for the benefit of its employees and their dependants" — those very employees were kept waiting and worrying to find out what was happening.

Staff who spoke to *Fitzrovia News* expressed great concern about where they would be working beyond 2020 and feared it would mean commuting to a different part of London or even beyond.

It was not until four days later that the full story was made known.

On the morning of Tuesday

28 February property developer Derwent London made a public announcement saying it had struck a deal with Arup for the firm to move in to the former Saatchi & Saatchi building at 80 Charlotte Street — less than a minute's walk away from Fitzroy Street — when the redevelopment of the site is completed in the second half of 2019.

Derwent also announced that Arup was buying the freehold of its other Fitzroy Street offices in a deal worth £197m.

In a statement to *Fitzrovia News*, Arup said:

"While we were not in a position to let staff know the full details on Friday last week, a communication was sent to all London based Arup staff on Friday 24th February confirming that the firm has signed an agreement with Workspace Group PLC giving Workspace the option to acquire the freehold of 13 Fitzroy Street and assuring staff that 'within the next week', we would 'be in a position to share the details of an exciting additional investment in office space close to our current locale'."

Arup also issued a public statement on Tuesday and told *Fitzrovia News*: "Prior to the news piece going live on our website, staff internally have been informed of the wider details of the announcement."

All ended well in the end. But why couldn't these three very large companies get together and agree to make a public announcement of the full facts of the separate property deals all at the same time?



## Curtain to come down on theatre bookshop

Customers of a theatre bookshop which has traded on a Fitzrovia street corner for nearly 35 years have been invited to visit before the curtain comes down for the last time.

A notice in the window of French's Theatre Bookshop on the corner of Fitzroy Street and Warren Street says: "Sadly the bookshop will close in mid-April. Thank you for everything. Please pop in and say goodbye."

News of the impending departure for the popular store leaked out last year when a neighbouring cafe announced it was to close after an equally long run in Warren Street.

*Fitzrovia News* understands that Samuel French Limited which also has offices above the shop were holding on until the last minute in the hope of being able to negotiate with the building owners to secure a future.

Now a statement on the shop's website explains to customers that they are shutting because of a huge hike in the rent.

"The lease on our current building in Fitzroy Street (where we've been since 1983) is coming to an end. Facing an unsustainable 200% rent increase to stay in our current location, and after

exploring all options for alternative premises, we have come to the conclusion that sadly it isn't viable to maintain our London shop.

"We remain resolutely committed to theatre bookselling, and we will continue to sell a full range of plays and theatre books and license plays through our online shop.

"Though we bid a sad goodbye to the bookshop, we will be staying in touch with our customers, and making some of the great work the shop has done available to everyone. You'll still be able to contact us for advice on plays and books on the phone, email and social media.

"We'd like to thank our loyal customers from all over the world who've supported our bookshop. We've loved meeting and helping you all, and we're very grateful that the shop has played such an important part in the theatre community. Before the shop closes, we'll be throwing a party to say farewell and thank you and to celebrate the wonderful times we've had.

"But even as we look back on an era coming to an end, we look forward to a new one just beginning. We hope you'll come with us."

## Grow your own strawberries



Wild strawberries. Photo: Wendy Shillam, Rooftopvegplot.

Most of us will be aware of government advice to eat five portions of fruit and veg every day. But round here there are not many shops that sell fresh produce, writes Wendy Shillam.

Freshly picked fruit and veg contains more nutrients than stuff that's been sitting on the shelf. Chemicals are pumped into the packaging to improve shelf appeal, not conserve flavour or nutrients.

If you are buying from a supermarket, the chances are that the food comes from a great distance and your "fresh" produce will have been grown using chemicals.

So how can we eat fresh and organic without spending a fortune at the farmers market?

My approach is to grow some of my own. Experimenting on my rooftop, where the soil is only six inches deep, has taught me that almost anything can be grown in a small pot or raised beds. This year I'm planning to grow wild strawberries.

Most pot grown fruit and veg require full sunlight, but strawberries, can be grown in partial shade. When harvested freshly they are an excellent source of antioxidants, vitamin C, potassium, folate and fibre. Just a handful sprinkled onto your breakfast cereal can improve your diet. They add a natural sweet taste without adding too many calories or fat.

So, if you want to receive a good crop of vitamins from your window boxes, the wild ones are an excellent choice as they are a "cut-above" the normal strawberry.

In Fitzrovia we hardly ever get a frost, so you can be brave about putting them outside quite soon. (Just throw a tea cloth or sheet of plastic over the plants if a night frost is forecast.)

Wild strawberries will grow back every year. Buy them now as small plants from a reputable supplier. Blackmoor offer plug plants by post. I grow my strawberries in a couple of strawberry pots that I've stacked up on top of a wheeled plant stand. This allows me to turn the pots around to make sure they all get good light during the ripening season.

Strawberries planted now will crop this year and then even more profusely next year.

Wild strawberries are not cut and come again, like lettuces. But their distinctive leaves can be snipped at any time, to add flavour to a salad and their delicate flowers and scented foliage give pleasure in a mixed pot throughout the year.

Wendy Shillam is running 'How to Grow Fruit and Veg' workshops in her roof top garden this summer, starting on March 10th. See her blog: rooftopvegplot.com

## Camden to hold inquiry before decision on Torrington Place

Camden Council is to hold a public inquiry ahead of any decision on the future of the experimental Torrington Place and Tavistock Place road layout which prioritises walking and cycling, writes Linus Rees.

The new traffic system along the east-west route linking Fitzrovia, Bloomsbury and Kings Cross was implemented in 2015 to address concerns about motor traffic volume and road safety. The changes removed westbound motor traffic from the whole length of Tavistock Place between Gower Street and Judd Street, and doubled the size of the cycling lanes along the route.

Senior councillors at a meeting in February asked the council to progress the scheme with the goal of making it permanent, and to make further changes including widening pavements to improve pedestrian capacity and safety.

Councillors heard deputations from Camden Cyclists, Bloomsbury Residents Action Group, the London Cycling Campaign, and the London Taxi Drivers Association.

Transport officers stressed the need to keep the experimental road scheme for the time being

because their responsibility to reduce air pollution and the Torrington-Tavistock scheme is consistent with a London-wide strategy to encourage cycling and walking and create "Healthy Streets".

Although the scheme is largely supported by pedestrians, cyclists, businesses, employees, residents, and the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, there is strong opposition from the London Taxi Drivers Association (LTDA), Imperial Hotels and the Bloomsbury Residents Action Group (BRAG).

Over 15,000 responses were received during a public consultation on the road layout with 79 per cent in favour of keeping the scheme and improving it. Of the residents living close to the route 56 per cent said they were in favour.

But residents living in the Russell Square area are opposed. BRAG also claims opposition is strongest in the Judd Street area according to a map they have produced.

Camden's officers recommended that the council voluntarily hold a public inquiry on the merits of the scheme because objectors could delay any decision by forcing the issue at a later date.





## Word from the Streets

By CHARLOTTE STREET and her family

### Location of Tower was 'top secret'

Some amusing tales about the BT Tower were regaled in a recent edition of QI on BBC television.

First of all its location at 60 Cleveland Street was an official secret from when it was built (as GPO Tower) in 1965 until the 1990s. This despite the fact that it stands 627 feet tall, was officially opened by the then prime minister **Harold Wilson**, and then opened to the public in 1966 by **Tony Benn** and **Billy Butlin**.

Yet because it was considered such an integral part of the communications infrastructure it was categorised as an official secret, and technically it was illegal to take photographs of it. In a secrets trial in 1978 it was referred to as Location 23. But it had public viewing galleries and a revolving restaurant that was open to the public until 1980.

Comedian **Alan Davies** recalled on the programme how he attended a charity concert in its revolving section. He went into the toilet in the non-revolving centre when it was by the audience section. When he came out it had revolved and he found himself embarrassingly on the stage while singer **Rick Astley** was in the middle of his act.

On another occasion a *Fitzrovia News* photographer put his bag on the outer rim, took some photographs from the centre, then could not find his bag... until it came round again 20 minutes later.

### Danish cakes scoffed on television

**Brontë Aurell**, owner of **ScandiKitchen** at 61 Great Titchfield Street, appeared in **QI** on the box over Christmas (pictured right). One of the questions was about **Aebleskiver** (Danish Christmas pancakes), which were made by **Brontë** and tucked into by the guests.

Fellow Dane, **Sandi Toksvig**, who hosts the programme, introduced viewers to **Brontë** who was shown in the audience.

"Sandi used to come to the shop all the time when she was chairing the News Quiz round the corner at the Radio Theatre in Broadcasting House," said **Brontë**. "I am also a member of her Women's Equality Party. Sandi said, why not come on the **QI** show for Christmas."

"It was recorded in September, and took about two

Illustration by Jayne Davis



and a half hours or so to record. It was lovely to meet the guests (**Alan Davies**, **Josh Widdicombe**, **Susan Calman**, and **Matt Lucas**) afterwards as well."

She has run the shop for almost ten years, and has had three cookery books and a cultural one published. The recipe for the Danish Christmas pancakes is in her book called **Scandikitchen Fika & Hygge** (which she is pictured with on our front page).



### Monkhouse at the Albany

The last ever recorded performance by comedian **Bob Monkhouse** (above) took place in the cellar of the **Albany** pub in **Great Portland Street** just before his death in 2003.

And it was screened for the first time ever on BBC television last Boxing Day.

Then aged 75, he said, he did not have a stairlift or a walk-in bath yet. But he did have something to keep him upright in bed. It was *viagra*.

"My wife calls me Spider Man," he continued. "It is because I can't get out of the bath without assistance."

The **Albany** had a stripper every night, he joked. "They take the label off and sell it as vodka."

**Peter Sellars**, the comedian who died in **Middlesex Hospital, Mortimer Street**, was from theatrical stock, **Bob** revealed. Peter's mother **Peg** performed on stage, clad in a skimpy bathing costume, immersed in a tank of water, eating bananas. Not even his zany fellow **Goon**, **Spike Milligan**, could have conjured up that.

**Bob** concluded by saying he had been diagnosed with cancer two years before at the **Princess Grace Hospital** in **Euston Road** ("I have been inside **Princess Grace** more times than **Prince Rainier**," he quipped).

When **Bob** asked the doctor how long he had left to live he was told: "Ten." **Bob** said: "Months, weeks or what?" The doctor looked at his watch and said: "Nine, eight, seven..."

**Bob** persuaded comic impressionist **Mike Yarwood** to come out of retirement and be interviewed on stage.

### Impolite notice

A so called "Polite Notice" outside 49 Grafton Way was so impolite that it enraged my brother **Warren**. It states: "Bicycles chained to these rails will be removed without notice" and "at the owner's expense." **Warren** fumed: "Who do they think they are? Donald Trump charging the Mexicans to build a wall?"



### John Hurt: a cool customer

Actor **John Hurt**, who died aged 77 at the end of January, was a regular patron of **Gigs fish and chip shop** in **Tottenham Street**, where he is pictured with proprietor **Aristos Papasavva**.

"We normally saw him on a Saturday when he bought fish to take away," said **Aristos**. "If **Arsenal** lost he would be there within half an hour to take the piss out of us as supporters."

"He was very knowledgeable about football but refused to say who he supported in case we took the mick out of him when they lost. But he often spoke about **Norwich** and **Stoke**."

"He was just a nice bloke, a very ordinary chap. We will always miss his lovely tone of voice. What a character."

The actor, who trained for two years at **RADA** in **Gower Street**, also lived in **Gordon Mansions** off **Tottenham Court Road**.

### Sex in the chapel

My sister **Margaret** was glued to the BBC television thriller **Apple Tree Yard** last month. Imagine her delight when the **Fitzrovia Chapel** shimmered onto her screen, posing as the **House of Commons Chapel**. A middle-aged woman scientist was lured into a broom cupboard for a bout of vigorous sex with a man she'd only just met.

Later she was seen hurrying along **Foley Street** late at night. She may also have been glimpsed in **Newman Passage**.



Photo by Ann Goodburn

### Star in bar

The star of the film "I Daniel Blake" **Dave Johns** turned up in the bar at the **Regent Street Cinema** (pictured above) when it was showing there. It was the day after it won director **Ken Loach** his first ever **BAFTA** at the age of 80.

**Dave**, who played the title role, won the Best Actor award for it in the British Independent Film Awards.

After watching the film, my sister **Margaret** remarked that **Daniel Blake** reminded her of the bloke in the bar!

### Vintage rubbish

A seemingly senseless corporate slogan caught the eye of my brother **Percy** on the side of a wine delivery van in **Wells Street**. It proclaimed: "Rethinking wine drinking since 1983."

"I am no connoisseur," he said. "But I thought the only thing to think about was whether to swallow it or spit it out."

### Toilet blockage removed at last

Good to see one of the two doors that used to be between the bar and the gents toilet has been removed from the **Duke of York** in **Rathbone Street**.

My elder brother **Mortimer** recalls when a cockney customer called **Brian** passed out when intoxicated between the two doors.

This meant he was blocking both doors so those in the toilet could not get out, and those desperately wanting to use it could not get it.

When he finally came round the landlord rolled him under one of the benches until he was sober enough to stand. When he awoke to find someone's ankle in his face he expressed his annoyance by biting it. Only then was he finally barred.



Cartoon by Jayne Davis

*Charlotte Street*



# Sylvia's progress

By Beryl Burton

Nestled among other old red brick buildings in Margaret Street is the well-established fashion design studio of Beau Monde. It is easy to miss, lying as it does at the end of Margaret Street where there is the large All Saints Church, as well as an old convent now turned into a Jesus Centre (helping the homeless), the London Fo Guang Shan Temple (Buddhist), and a more recent addition, Happy Science Temple (an all-religion centre set up by a wealthy Japanese). You would think Beau Monde out of place, but Margaret Street is one of those eclectic streets for which Fitzrovia is famous.

Beau Monde is a made-to-order private women's fashion house and I recently spent a very cold Saturday afternoon speaking with its founder and owner Sylvia Young, about how she came to design such beautifully elegant clothes which are displayed in the window of her establishment. It all started 30 years ago, she explained. In fact they would be formally celebrating 30 years in the business later this year. She started in Lexington Street selling ladies fashion, but after six months she started designing, then making and then selling her designs in her own shop. She later moved to Kingly Street and then on to Margaret Street.

She has been in Margaret Street for six years.

Sylvia's progress from selling other people's design to designing, making and selling her own was gradual. It started when she found that a lot of her customers started asking for changes to garments: little things at first, then more elaborate changes – maybe a collar here, or a sleeve there. This became so frequent that Sylvia decided to concentrate on selling her own designs. This proved so popular that she found that instead of retailing it would be much better to have an appointment-only system. Thus she started to design individual garments for each client.

How did she come to design and make her own garments instead of selling other people's? Sylvia has always had a background in fashion. She trained in all aspects of retail and even worked for Jaeger, where she said she learned a lot about clothes and how to make them and the nitty gritty of sewing and cutting. She never trained formally as a designer. I am really amazed that she could be so unwavering in her bid to get into the design side of fashion, and without doing a long course. I admire her determination for it must have taken an awful lot of hard work to be where she now is. Not just designing but becoming one of the most popular designers of women's fashion in London. In her studio a woman

can not only choose her fabric, but also have a say in the design. It takes much less time to be completed and all is done on the premises. There are rails of made-up garments so that clients can see the latest fabric and designs.

A major difference between Sylvia and other designers of women's fashion, is not only that she does not retail her clothes, but also that a large part of her clients are ordinary working women. Elegant working women love her styles for the office, but she has clients in all aspects of women's fashion. Apart from the design, what makes her work unique and so popular is that she uses original fabrics. They come from as far away as Australia and as near as Italy or from the colourful Middle East. She shops around for the right fabric, which makes it probable that when you attend a function it is most unlikely that you will run into someone else similarly dressed. Also, she has a knack of adding a distinctive touch to many of her garments. Maybe a unique piece of lace at the wrists or a bow in an outstanding fabric tied a certain way. Whatever it is, women keep coming back for more. To really appreciate the designs coming out of this wonderful studio, have a look at Beau Monde's website and especially read Sylvia's Blog.

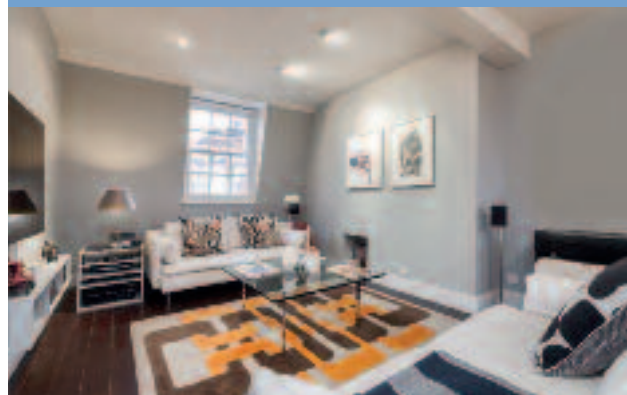
[www.beaumonde.uk.com](http://www.beaumonde.uk.com)



## SALES

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£1,250,000



We are delighted to launch to the market this stunning two bedroom, two bathroom lateral top floor apartment located in the heart of Fitzrovia. The apartment has been beautifully refurbished to a very high standard and offers a 106 year lease.

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## LETTINGS

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# The legends and th

## Iconic bikers' shop celebrated

By HELENE PARRY

**L**ewis Leathers is more than a shop in Fitzrovia - it's home to a British fashion icon. Few clothing brands have played such a large role in youth culture. The Beatles, The Sex Pistols, Lemmy, The Libertines – all have worn Lewis Leathers over the years.

The story began in 1892, when David Lewis Isaacs set up a tailor's shop at 124 Great Portland Street, trading under the name D Lewis. This choice of location proved momentous, as by 1918 the street had become "Motor Row", something of a showroom for the automobile industry, with Benz Motors, Vauxhall, and Jaguar among the manufacturers displaying their vehicles along the street. D Lewis accordingly began to specialise in coats, gloves, and headgear for the then "gentlemen's sports" of motoring and flying. By the 1930s the company had trademarked the brand name AviaKit for its range of flying kit. Amy Johnson (1903-41) who set many long distance flying records, including England to Australia, was a regular customer. During World War Two the company supplied the RAF with much-needed kit.

In the mid-1950s the growth of motorcycle culture opened a new chapter. John Surtees (born 1934), the only person to be world champion at both motorcycle and car racing, first became speedway champion in 1955, and was another regular customer. In fact a blood stained crash helmet, which had saved his life, was displayed in the shop's window.

In 1960 the D. Lewis company registered the name by which it became known, Lewis Leathers. As Mods and Rockers clashed at British seaside resorts, Lewis Leathers clothing could be seen on members of both warring tribes. When punk rock burst on to the scene in the mid-1970s, Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols, Joe Strummer of the Clash and the Ramones were among the leading figures of the new subculture pictured wearing Lewis Leathers. The company's clothing has appeared in music videos and modelled in fashion shoots for magazines such as Vogue.

Throughout changing musical trends, the brand has worn well and is still popular with today's hitmakers, such as Pharrell Williams, seen performing on US TV's The Voice rocking a Lewis Leathers jacket. And



Speedway ace John Surtees was another customer (Getty Images)

the BBC America science fiction detective series Dirk Gently's Holistic Detective Agency has made a star of the Super Sportsman Jacket worn by leading actor Samuel Barnett, who played Dirk on screen.

After occupying various premises over the years, today the Lewis Leathers shop is at 3-5 Whitfield Street, not far from its original location. Its present owner, Derek Harris, bought the business in 2003 and brought it back to Fitzrovia.

"We're in Fitzrovia to be as close as possible to Great Portland Street, where it all started," explains shop manager James, when I visit. Looking around at this veritable museum of motorcycling history, I can see there's much more to the business than leather jackets. The range includes jeans, T-shirts, gloves, scarves, belts and other accessories.

"We don't just attract bikers," explains James. "Our customers are fashion fans, punk

fans. Japan is a big market too. And we do sell ladies' clothing as well as men's!"

The shop's most popular item, according to James, is The Lightning, a leather jacket famously worn by Iggy Pop. As one happy customer says of the jacket: "The mere act of putting on this work of art makes me feel good."

Lewis Leathers also offers a made-to-measure service. "People can choose colours, different coloured sleeves, all sorts of options are available to them." One jacket is made by one machinist, a process that can take up to 20 weeks, but the company is not willing to compromise on quality for the sake of a quick sale.

Now a new book has been published, covering the first 60 years of Lewis Leathers. Wings, Wheels & Rock 'n' Roll Vol. 1, by photographer and writer Rin Tanaka and Derek Harris. It covers the legends, the leathers and the legacy in 240 pages featuring 1,600 photos of vintage flying, motoring and motorcycle clothing from the 1920s onwards. Copies of the book will be available in the Whitfield Street shop in November, or online, price £60.

"We never really advertise!" notes James. "Fashion stylists come to us!" Judging from the brand's enduring popularity, so do many other deeply satisfied customers.

Lewis Leathers, 3-5 Whitfield Street, Fitzrovia, London W1T 2SA. Tel: 020 7636 4314. Regular opening hours are 11am to 6pm, Monday to Saturday.

Website: <https://www.lewisleathers.com>  
E-mail: [webshop@lewisleathers.com](mailto:webshop@lewisleathers.com)  
Twitter: @LewisLeathers



The present premises at 3-5 Whitfield Street.



The new history of the business, available in the shop some time in March.



Flying pioneer Amy Johnson was a customer. (National Portrait Gallery)



# e leathers



Proprietor Derek Harris outside the shop with regular customer Ronnie Wood's portrait in the window.

## Clothing for misfits

By MIKE PENTELOW

'Clothing for misfits' was advertised by the original D Lewis shop which dealt in second hand clothes in Victorian times.

"But that describes us now," laughed Derek Harris, the man who rescued Lewis Leathers and brought it back to Fitzrovia.

The phrase originally referred to clothes that had not been made to measure.

But in more recent times it could refer more to the customers: misfits such as Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols, and Ronnie Wood of the Rolling Stones, the latter still being a regular visitor who is pictured in the shop window.

Others have included Steve McQueen, who wore their jacket and trousers, in the 1961 film, *The Great Escape*, and Dudley Sutton, who wore their bomber jacket in the 1964 film about rockers, *The Leather Boys*.

"There were a lot of romantic images and we have tried to bring it back," concluded Derek. "We all need a bit of romance."

Explaining how he had rescued the shop he told *Fitzrovia News*: "I had worked for the shop on a voluntary basis in my teens. I had particularly helped it marketing in Japan in 1991-2. Then from 1993 the retail shop was closed and operated wholesale only.

"So when the owner Richard Lyon talked about selling the company it intrigued me

and I bought it at a good price.

"Even though we were a wholesaler we had a show room in Paddington where retail customers kept turning up, especially on Saturdays.

"This gave me the confidence to open a shop again as close as possible to our original shop in Great Portland Street. Whitfield Street was within our budget and when we moved there in 2009 it was the best thing we could have done.

"When people saw pictures of the shop on the internet it became more and more popular. We now sell to customers in the US, Japan, Europe, Taiwan, Korea, China and everywhere.

"But we consider ourselves very much part of the Fitzrovia scene."

There is one other Fitzrovia connection. In the 1920s a rival motorcyclists shop run by Sydney Lewis (no relation) was at 19a and then 27 Carburton Street. It was bought out by D Lewis in 1959 when Sydney died, and run as a shop until 1967, then as mail order premises until the early 1970s.

It was then occupied in 1979 by squatters who turned it into a cafe and cabaret club. They found old goggles which they wore in night clubs.

Among them was yet another misfit - Boy George of Culture Club.



The original premises at 124 Great Portland Street (English Heritage)

## Opening and closing

### Closed

HSBC bank 117 Great Portland Street  
Bianco Caffè 31b Goodge Street  
Café le Midi 23 Warren Street  
Go Go Lenanese restaurant  
80 Cleveland Street  
Da Beppe Italian restaurant  
72 Cleveland Street  
College of Naturopathic Medicine  
41 Riding House Street  
Ladbroke 116 Tottenham Court Road  
Ladbroke 22 Great Portland Street  
Love die late bar 114 Great Portland Street



Rasa Express Indian eatery 327 Euston Road  
Choconut coffee bar 161 Great Portland Street  
Millimetre hairstylists 83 Mortimer Street  
Dindin Persian takeaway 47 Margaret Street  
Chris Dedman estate agents 156 New Cavendish Street  
Chez Mamie brasserie 22 Hanway Street

### Opened



Fabrique Swedish bakery 53 Goodge Street  
Henna Beauty eyebrow threading specialists  
50 Goodge Street  
Boots chemists 140 Great Portland Street  
Amarino ice cream 21 Goodge Street  
Lokhandwala Indian tapas  
93 Charlotte Street  
Mere eatery 74 Charlotte Street  
Firedog Aegean restaurant  
92-94 Newman Street  
GBK burgers 3 Berners Street  
Betfred 116 Tottenham Court Road  
Betfred 22 Great Portland Street  
Caffè Napoli 31b Goodge Street  
Tosta & Co eatery 22 Hanway Street  
Shoop soup shop 27 Tottenham Street  
Atherton Cox hair salon 45 Newman Street  
Joshua Kane fashion 68 Great Portland St



Labassa Woolfe tailoring and antiques  
6 Percy Street

Opening soon Kibele Turkish restaurant 175-177 Great Portland Street

## American Dream

the London Pop Up

at Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association

20<sup>th</sup> February – 27<sup>th</sup> March, 1.00 – 3.00pm

A free arts and crafts class



Join us to create an exciting collaborative art work inspired by The American Dream exhibition now on at the British Museum.

The exhibition looks at pop art in the 1960s and includes works by some of the most celebrated American artists. Taking these art works as a starting point, the project will explore themes of consumerism, urban environment and food, through a variety of techniques including Textiles, iPad and Digital Imagery, Collage, Printmaking, Applique.

Your art work will be part of the final piece, in collaboration with other community groups, and will be exhibited in the Great Court of the British Museum in June 2017.

For more info contact Samina at Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association  
Address: 49 Tottenham St, London, W1T 4RY  
Phone: 020 7580 4576





# How Prince Monolulu inspired two children who later became stars

By MIKE PENTELOW

**C**oronation Street star Derek Griffiths revealed on radio how he was inspired as a youngster by colourful race-course tipster Prince Monolulu.

In 1954 the eight-year-old Derek moved with his parents into Flat 6, 128 New Cavendish Street, on the corner of Great Titchfield Street. Just round the corner at 83-85 Cleveland Street (now part of the University of Westminster) lived Monolulu (1881-1965) and they often met in the street.

"He treated us as adults and had conversations with us when the normal attitude was that children should be seen and not heard," said Derek on the Radio 4 programme *The Prince Monolulu Quandary* on December 17.

"He influenced me as the first adult I conversed with properly. In my approach to children's programmes [which he presented for many years on television] I did not want to talk down to them but treat them as adults as he had done."

Comedian Stephen K Amos, who presented the radio programme, said that when he was watching Derek on television he felt he was treating him as an adult, and he followed the same in his performances.

Derek, who now plays car mechanic Freddie Smith on ITV soap *Coronation Street*, recalled the lasting impact of Monolulu. He praised him for his courage and flamboyance, and his outrageous costumes - described on the programme as "billowing robes, lions' paws swinging from his neck, and ostrich feathers adorning his hair."

As a black man, Derek added, Monolulu "could play the part with total ease, and people known for violence in the area were very friendly with him. He manipulated them with his personality."

In those days, he said, the area was a "vibrant village" with Jewish tailors, Greek Cypriots, and an Italian community.

Another youngster who admired Monolulu on the programme was Cleo Silvestre, who was born in 1947 in 24 Conway Street. Now she is a singer and actress living in the Regent's Park Estate.

"I met him in Soho when I was a three-year-old," she said. "He had gold teeth, and I often visited him in his flat in Cleveland Street. I never saw him out of his costume."

This greatly amused Stephen K Amos - that Monolulu never dropped his persona as an Ethiopian prince.

In fact the tipster's real name, he revealed, was Peter McKay,



A 1938 cigarette card of Prince Monolulu.

the illegitimate son of a Scottish slave owner, born in St Croix in the American Virgin Islands.

He came to London in about 1903, and during the first world war became a prisoner of war. Significantly in view of his future profession he was kept living in a horse box on a race-course near Berlin (Camp Ruhleben).

His son, Peter, who was born at 55 Howland Street in 1924, recorded in 1980, stated that when ever his father saw poor

hungry black people he told them to come to his home to eat and drink.

Stephen K Amos gave the details of Monolulu's typically colourful end. "When he was recovering from pneumonia in Middlesex Hospital [on the corner of Mortimer Street and Cleveland Street], the journalist Jeffrey Bernard interviewed him and took him some Black Magic chocolates. Unfortunately he choked to death on a strawberry cream, so it was death by black magic."



Derek Griffiths as Freddie Smith has a drink with Audrey Roberts in *Coronations Street*.

## Poetry corner

SPRINGTIME, by Wendy Shutler

The winter trees are misted green,  
dressed for Spring.  
The fresh new buds unfold so fast  
I almost see them move. At last!  
Then you ring.

"You sound very happy" you said on the phone.  
Are you happy?"  
I'm happy because I'm talking to you,  
I should have said, for it was true.  
I didn't, though.

Another voice whispered in my ear:  
Don't let him know!  
Don't let him know how your heart sings  
just because he suddenly rings,  
don't let him know.

But I had come to life again,  
green anew.

Next time you rang I made it clear  
how sweet your voice was to my ear,  
so now, you knew.

And stored me away for a rainy day.  
Next time you ring –  
as April rain splatters window-panes –  
I'll burst into leaf again like Spring.  
It's the same thing.

LAUGHTER, by Wendy Shutler

The audience laughed.  
"What a wonderful sound that is!"  
said the actor in the wings.

"When I think of all the terrible things,  
the pain there is in the world. That is  
a wonderful sound."

Another laugh came rippling in.  
Acting in plays is not, as some say,  
a trivial thing.



# Jack the Magician

A short story by  
SUNITA SOLIAR

Dear Sirs,

This next news I have for you – I've got a responsibility to tell it and to tell it right. You'll know best what to do with the information, how to handle it, I'm sure. To be frank, Crowley says he knows the identity of Jack the Ripper. Mind, I'm telling you this not to give a saucy story, but because I have a responsibility to those women he killed. I want to make that very clear because there's some who think I only send these reports on Crowley for the money, but it's important to me that the readers of the Sunday Express – and the public at large – know about him. If what he tells me is true then it's worse than his murdering cats and holding orgies here at his glorified Abbey in Sicily, isn't it?

I've often thought that I might have known some of Jack's women. Long before I moved to Fitzroy Street I was a Limehouse girl, and Limehouse is right next to Whitechapel. When me and my brother was kids, our mother packed us off to live with father in a brothel. He'd been an engineer, but he was idle, that was his problem, so that's where he lived, in a brothel in Limehouse with his girlfriend. So these dead women may well have been the ones who gave me a bit of milk when I was young. Of course, Crowley would say I am one of them, but that's not what goes on at the Crabtree Club. It never went on at the Café Royal neither. You've never seen gay times like that – sawdust on the floor, cloudy absinthe, a plate of chips for sixpence. The artists used to come. Augustus John and Jacob Epstein. I was an artist's model, that's all. But Crowley always confuses brightness for seediness, as though his dark Abbey is so much cleaner. He says my Fitzroy flat is a filthy, frowsty, verminous den and calls me a prostitute to my face. Well, I'm not, let's be clear on that, and mind what you print. Not that I



'It was filled with ties, hundreds of ties. I took one out and it was stiff with something dark and crusty. It had to be blood. I sniffed it'

look down on them who are.

Crowley said he found out the Ripper's identity from Vittoria Cremers who got it from Mabel Collins, her lover, and that it was someone Mabel had been with. Can you print that? The names, I mean. I'm not trying to add to the scandal. There's enough of that surrounding Jack, even though it's many years ago, but I suppose that's because he's probably still alive, roaming free. Well, that's why I'm writing. There's still a shot at justice. I was just exploring The Abbey. It's horrible and dank, but it's filled with Crowley's magical apparatus, half of it I can't make head or tail of. I came across a large chest and I opened it. It's not

like Crowley ever said it was off limits, and anyway, it was in the name of these reports, wasn't it? My duty to you at the Sunday Express. It was filled with ties, hundreds of ties. I took one out and it was stiff with something dark and crusty. It had to be blood. I sniffed it. It was dry so you couldn't say for sure, but I got a metallic whiff.

I was planning to find Crowley and ask him, but when

*Illustration by Clifford Harper*

I turned around, there he was and me clutching these blood-stained ties! I nearly fell backwards into the chest. He just came out with it, his baldhead shining in the light that came through a broken window. 'They belong to the man the newspapers call Jack the Ripper,' he said. The room went all stupid and giddy. I asked, 'What are they doing here?' He told me, 'He wears a new one for each murder.' It didn't seem to answer the question. It sounded batty. I thought maybe he was having me on. But Crowley did-

n't look like it was a joke. He did a flourish and said, 'He's a magician. And a surgeon.' Still I was wondering, yes, but why do you have his bloody ties? And why have you kept them so long. He was probably planning to use them in one of his rituals. He told me, 'The reason they never caught him is because he makes himself invisible with magic.' I suppose it doesn't hurt to have Crowley to hide his ties. You'd think he'd have bloody gloves or what-nots too. It must be old blood by now. Crowley gave a name. Robert Dotson, I think it was.

I'm sure you'll use the information responsibly. Of course, it's all his word. I don't want to add to the hearsay. Crowley said of course he'd always known Jack had to be a magician: he'd looked into the horoscopes of the Whitechapel murders and it was crystal clear: either Saturn or Mercury were precisely in the Eastern horizon at the moment of the murders. Mercury is the God of Magic, the distorted image of the Ape of Toth what's responsible for trickery at the heart of black magic or something. And Saturn is, I forget, but it's got to do with being worshipped in the Witches' Sabbath. I don't know. It couldn't be, could it? But if he could make himself invisible, it would explain how he committed two murders in one night, wouldn't it? I shouldn't speculate. I should stick to facts. You know, for a minute I thought it could be Crowley. I thought he was going to dispatch me right there. I didn't fancy having my guts pulled inside out. If they are the Ripper's ties, then Crowley's certainly involved. You never know with him. If I can get you one of those ties, I'll send it in my next letter. That's what the Ripper said about that ear, isn't it? Anyway, I'm just reporting. I'm sure you know what to do with the information. We're all duty bound. And yes, the five hundred pounds you offered for the rest of my reports will do nicely.

Yours,  
Betty May.

## Bloomsbury ward councillors' surgeries

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

Fitzrovia Community Centre, Foley Street, W1W 6DN

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

Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, WC1N 1AB

Third Friday of the month is a 'roving surgery'. Get in touch if you would like us to conduct the surgery at your street or building.

**Adam Harrison, Sabrina Francis, and Rishi Madlani**

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

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# The artist and bee-keeper who lives in a toy museum



Jack draws a picture in his toy museum studio.



Jack using his Victorian printing press.

By MIKE PENTELOW

**A**rtist, bee-keeper, sculptor, and printer. Jack Newton Fawdry Tatham, who lives in Pollock's Toy Museum, Whitfield Street, is all of these.

Readers of *Fitzrovia News* would have seen his work last June when he produced an illustrated map showing where literary figures lived in the area.

Aged 26 and born in Scotland he first lived in the area for three years when studying sculpture at Camberwell art college. Now he is back while on a full-time scholarship for an MA in drawing at the Royal Drawing School.

But it was at Camberwell, while a youth worker, that he first pursued his interest in bees.

"Grants became available to promote bee-keeping in community spaces," he said. "So I was able to open up a bee-hive for the children I was working with, and it is still going."

"I really love animals and insects. Bees in particular I find fascinating, and get inspired by them for my art work."

"They communicate through dancing, for instance, and the way their society works is so complex, so we should give them more credit than we do. They are more emotionally engaged than we think."

"Because there are no pesticides in London there are more bees in the city than ever before."

For those interested more in this you can pick up his

"Illustrated Guide to the Honeybee" from the toy museum.

This was produced by him on a 150-year-old printing press which was used in the museum for printing pictures of actors and toy theatres.

"I etch copper plates using acid in the grooves and then apply ink through the press," he explained.

"I am drawn to the process of printmaking as a bridge between drawing and sculpture, using acid, metal, blood, sweat and brute force to create images that can be clean and delicate."

In this way he has produced a series of etchings which is "mainly influenced by the relationship between humans and the natural world. How we fit in? Are we part of nature? Can animals be our friends? Are plants intelligent? What do bees think of us? What does the future hold for human and beast?"

Jack is the great grandson of Marguerite Fawdry, who started the toy museum in the 1950s, taking over the stock of the toy theatre business which had gone bust after being bombed out in the blitz. His father Eddy runs the museum and his mother Lea is a zoologist.

"I really love London," declared Jack. "I cycle everywhere and see different parts of London and feel different energies."

"In Fitzrovia it feels like a village on Sundays. I am keen on the community having a feeling of network. That is quite important in the middle of a city."

"It has had gentrification but has come through the other end. When my grandmother started

here it had Greeks and others and it felt like more people were living here. Now people get moved out through gentrification, and it is quite a different place after commercialisation."

"Apart from students there are few young people living here now."

"But we still have council houses, in Scala Street for example, which brings diversity to the area, so it is not just the super rich."

"There is something about Fitzrovia that survives, and it could be a lot worse than it is."

Other areas such as Elephant & Castle and Brixton, where he grew up, the change was too rapid and had an unsettling effect, he concluded.

Jack's website [cargocollective.com/jnftatham](http://cargocollective.com/jnftatham) has more about his work.



His illustrated guide to the honeybee (available in the toy museum)



Jack with one of his sculptures



An elephant that he sculpted.



# Curwen gallery closing: the end of an era

By CLIVE JENNINGS

Fitzrovia is now accustomed to the thriving art scene that has built up over the last five or six years with around 50 commercial galleries now from all over the world. This was not the climate 35 years ago when Jill and John Hutchings made the bold decision to move their gallery from its base at the Royal Academy, Piccadilly, to Windmill Street, Fitzrovia, initially at No.4 and subsequently at No. 34, merging the two spaces in 2005.

Curwen has prospered and delighted both locals and visitors for the last 30 years with stimulating exhibitions from an enormous range of artists. Sadly this is about to end as rising overheads have forced Jill Hutchings to make the very difficult decision to close the gallery, and there will be no further exhibitions beyond March.

Around 50 galleries have disappeared from Fitzrovia in the last six years, most recently Art First in Eastcastle Street and Evelyn Yard Gallery, though many new ones have popped up to replace them, but none with the longevity of Curwen Gallery.

We are witnessing the classic progression that has happened in many parts of London - Shoreditch/Spitalfields - and further afield - SOHO, New York. Artists' studios are followed by galleries; then come the property developers that sell expensive residential units on their appeal of being in a bohemian/creative quarter and the rentals of the galleries jump up, only to be snapped up by up



Jill Hutchings (in middle) with Natalie Suggit and Tom Sunerton

market shops and restaurants keen to sell to the well heeled new residents of the area. The original cachet of the area is lost, never to return.

The association of The Curwen Gallery with Fitzrovia goes back even further to 1958, when the original Curwen Press was located in Midford Place, off Tottenham Court Road, with a

gallery in Colville Place (now The Movie Poster Gallery).

Jill's husband John, who sadly died in 2009, had been advising the Curwen Gallery and Studio since the 1960s, and became a director. Jill had previously worked at the Middlesex Hospital, where she trained as a nurse, and her daughter and son in law trained as doctors there.

## Stimulating art in the area since 1958

The Curwen studio relocated but Jill maintains a close relationship with them.

Jill remembers well when they first moved in to 34 Windmill Street to discover that its previous incarnation had been as the main base for fan clubs for The Kinks, Led Zeppelin, The Who, Slade and Ozzy Osbourne.

Also a local resident, she explains: "I love this street, I love the area and I wouldn't change anything. I like people and I love to meet artists and clients. My love is the gallery and this space. I've been incredibly happy here. I still see it as a village."

Ably assisted by her colleague of 13 years, Natalie Suggit, and more recently Tim Sunerton, the Curwen Gallery is organising a final Live Auction to take place on Wednesday March 22 in the Gallery, with all the artworks on display in the gallery during March 6-22. There are distinguished works by some of Britain's leading 20th century artists, including Edward Bawden, Sandra Blow, Paul Hogarth, Ceri Richards, Michael Rothenstein, and Philip Sutton; alongside works by younger artists including Richard Walker and Lucy Willis.

The auctioneer will be Dominic Kemp, an actor by trade and a protégé of Jill's, who became an art dealer, and famously wrote the catalogue raisonné of the prints of Sir Terry Frost. He made such a success as the auctioneer in the film "Miss Potter" about the life of Beatrix Potter, that he has reprised the role in real life and will be Master of Ceremonies. The catalogue will be available online and it is also possible to bid online.

Full details can be found on the website at [curwengallery.com](http://curwengallery.com) and at 34 Windmill Street.

## An Indian worth revisiting

Calcutta Street, 29 Tottenham Street.

No, Calcutta Street is not a forgotten little alley off Tottenham Street, but a small new Indian restaurant that boasts 'Genuine Calcutta Street Food' which is IN Tottenham Street.

I have been keeping my eye on this newish place: it has had good and not so good reviews in the national papers and has often been rather empty, but slowly over the last months has built up a clientele both at lunchtime and in the evening.

Finally I went for dinner there with a friend and found a small, really nicely-decorated space with lovely retro music: forties jazz was playing when we went in and the whole ambience was really pleasant.

I imagine it can hold less than 30 customers, and that includes on stools at the window and at the little bar, but on a chilly winter evening perhaps three-quarters full, that smallness makes it rather cosy.

Excuse me for writing back-to-front but I have started writing this review straight away, and I can still taste the absolute-



By the DINING DETECTIVE

page is at 8 Ogle Street on the third floor.  
PICTURE PUZZLE: The picture on this page is at 8 Ogle Street on the third floor.  
ly delicious dessert dish called Banana Malpoa, a sort of banana sticky pancake which my friend and I ordered at the end of the meal and which cost £5 which I shall lovingly remember and which I highly recommend.

But to go back to the beginning: starters of a version of chicken kebab (£5.50), and kind of aubergine fritters called Beguni (£3.50) were tasty and filling. But it does seem to me that it is almost an oxymoron to boast of selling 'street food' - a picture, in my mind at least, of passing people picking up a snack - and then charge nearly

£10 for one glass of riesling.

The main courses, also filling, could be eaten with various interesting kinds of rice but we had ours with porota (£2.50 each), a drier version of my favourite Indian bread, paratha. We shared Panchmishali Torkari, subtitled 'grandmother's dish' which seemed to us a fairly ordinary vegetable curry (£10), and Paneer Posto, a cheese curry that was flavoursome (£12). We were recommended to also order Alur Bhaja as a side which we did, which was kind of grated French fries (£3.)

Sticking to my sad new rule of only one glass of wine each on these Dining Detective hunts if the wine is expensive, the bill, including service charge of 12½ per cent, came in at almost exactly the upper limit I try and (often fail) to set for myself: £35 each.

The menu suggested one might go in for an afternoon pick-me-up of one of the sweet dishes. I think I'll definitely be back at Calcutta Street one afternoon when I'm in need of help, and have another Banana Mapola.

## Picture puzzle



How well do you know Fitzrovia? Can you identify where this photograph was taken? Answer below the Dining Detective picture (left).



# The magical Scala Theatre

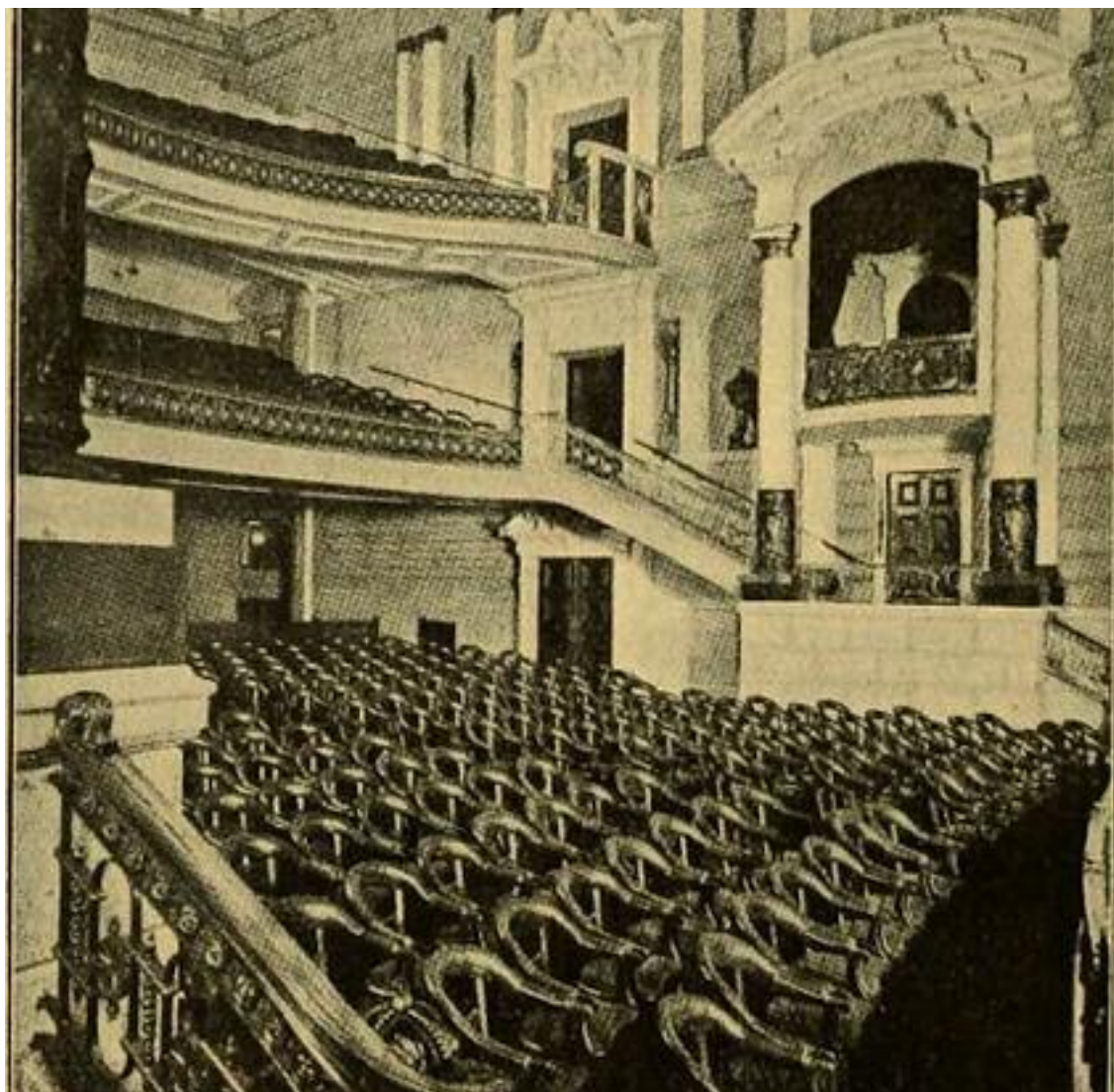
By ANN BASU

**T**he old Scala Theatre was brushed by cinema magic. As the journalist Lesley Blanch said in 1945: "It has always been associated with the cinema ... One director told me how he came out from seeing one of the first great Griffith pictures, and reeled down Charlotte Street, punch-drunk by its impact" (The Leader for 17 November, 1945).

The site's chequered history as an entertainment venue began way back in 1772, when The New Rooms was built for musical concerts on the corner of Tottenham Street and Charlotte Street. For years the building retained its musical nature under different names, but in 1802, as The Cognoscenti Theatre, it was used by an exclusive theatre club, The Pic-Nics, whose membership included the Prince of Wales. But this fashionable set quickly moved on, leaving it to be used as a circus!

By the time Marie Wilton took over in 1865 it was known as the Queen's Theatre but was nicknamed "The Dusthole": the sort of place where the more uncouth patrons ate oranges in the gallery and squirted the juice over the posher customers in the circle.

Under Wilton's management the theatre flourished, hosting celebrated actors such as Ellen Terry. But by the 1880s the building badly needed renovating. It was left empty, then used by the Salvation Army. In 1903 it was bought by Distin Maddick, who extended the site and built what became the Scala, designed on a grand scale by Frank T. Verity.



Architect's plans included a large high-ceilinged restaurant occupying several levels of the theatre. The theatre's name, Scala, was derived from the grand stairways leading from the dress circle to the stalls. Its first play was The Conqueror in September 1905 – but the venue

was not a success and after the first few years only staged plays sporadically.

But in 1910 the Scala branched out into film, installing a cinematograph box. Charles Urban, a cinema pioneer, premiered his experimental Kinemacolor productions there from 1911. By hiring the Scala, Urban avoided risking money on a new-build cinema in what was then an unproven medium and gained a characterful building well-suited to his large-scale displays. Urban put on spectacular shows there such as the 1912 film of the Delhi Durbar welcoming King George V as the Emperor of India.

The Scala stage was turned into a mock-up of the Taj Mahal, with special lighting effects ... a chorus of 24, a 20-piece fife and drum corps, and three bagpipes.

Urban's films were hugely popular. The mix of cinematic and theatrical showbusiness sparkle must have been heady.

Theodore Brown, the inventor, also used the theatre in 1913 to show his Kinoplastikon films, an experimental form of screenless cinema originating in Germany where lifelike images appeared via reflected mirror projection. Luke McKernan says: "Kinoplastikon films were produced in a studio lined with black velvet (the actors had to be dressed entirely in white) on the roof of the Scala theatre."

The Bioscope of 8 May 1913

comments: "The appearance of these amazing spirit creatures is curious. They resemble the figures of an ordinary cinematograph film, cut away from their original background with a pair of scissors, and set to caper and gesticulate."

In the 1930's the Scala was home to live productions like Ralph Reader's Gang Show, and staged recurrent seasons of Peter Pan from 1945. But that same year it also gained a new lease of movie life when The New London Film Society celebrated "Fifty Years of Cinema 1895-1945" with a Sunday programme of international classics. The opening film was Griffiths' Birth of a Nation followed by greats such as Robert Weine's The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, Eisenstein's Potemkin and The Passion of Joan of Arc by Karl Dreyer. Lesley Blanch revealed that screenings included full orchestral accompaniment with a half-time break for the players.

She reminisces about the times when live orchestras regularly played during feature films: "End of Part II! Up went the lights, the orchestra stumped out for half a pint of bitter ... and audiences scrambled madly across each others' knees to get seated again for Part II" (The Leader 17 November, 1945).

Ten years later the Scala made more cinema history: it was the stage for the first-ever UK festival of Indian film organ-

ised by the Asian Film Society in 1955. Its opener was Sohrab Modi's Queen of Jhansi, a take on the Indian Mutiny, attended by Peter Ustinov and Ingrid Bergman. Each show included a dance performance by Sitara, 'The Kathak Queen'. Its most successful film, the first to obtain a British distribution deal, was Munna, mildly praised in the programme by Indian Prime Minister Nehru: "I liked this film and consider it good from many points of view." At a second festival in 1957 the Scala hosted Satyajit Ray's masterpiece, Pather Panchali, drawing large audiences. A number of other film societies used the theatre at this time: in 1953 there had been a Festival of Soviet Films, arranged by the British-Soviet Friendship Society.

The success of the second Indian film festival prompted BBC television to make a half-hour documentary on Indian cinema, which, suggests Edward Hotspur Johnson in Sight and Sound Autumn 1988, was "possibly the first western television programme" on the Indian film industry. The theatre continued to show Indian films regularly: one Fitzrovia resident, Mohammed Moyeen Uddin, has said he remembers going to Sunday afternoon screenings.

The Scala was finally demolished in 1969. It sounds like an eccentric place with something wonderful about it: it was even used by the Beatles in 1964 to film musical scenes for their film, A Hard Day's Night. In live theatre it might not have made much of a mark, but instead it became a small but memorable part of the history of film in Britain.

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# The light behind the scaffold

**R**ecent years have seen a growing exodus of residents and retailers from Fitzrovia, chased out by the spiralling costs of living or trading here.

Their places have often been taken by chains which gradually transform this traditionally warm, eccentric and artistic urban village.

I arrived in Fitzrovia around the turn of the century, and have plied my own trade here, as pianist, writer and musician, ever since. I have seen many good friends, both residents and restaurateurs, succumb to this pressure and leave the area. I always thought it would not happen to me. Renting my flat for this long period here, I managed to negotiate with my private landlord to keep my rent manageable through most of this time, with a total increase of 50 per cent over a period of ten years, compared with some who have had a similar or greater rise in just one year.

Now, however, the landlord in question, who shall remain nameless, has decided it would be a good idea to build a new floor comprising a luxury penthouse flat across the rooves of two adjoining three-storey houses. This, in microcosm, is a perfect small example of what is happening everywhere. Nobody



here was crying out to have the skyline spoiled, the light reduced, or to have rents raised. Permission was refused by Camden Council. Six months later they reapplied and mysteriously, the authority changed their mind and granted permission.

The landlord wanted the flats empty in order for the builders to have free reign, and so as to refurbish internally in order to justify huge rent rises next year. They managed to get all of the tenants out of both houses, except for myself and one other. Various approaches were tried, but after about 15 years here I was determined to stay on. The scaffolding went up, climbing up the building and beyond, into the sky, as a framework for the extra floor to be added. The scaffolding was then shrouded and the flat became dark. Because of the nature of the job, the scaffolding had to cover the back of the building too, so gradually we were encased in a cage.

This, however, proved to be merely the stage for a piece of

crass commercialism which was far more symptomatic of the age we live in. Without warning, an additional frame was erected across the front of my flat and a huge advertisement unfurled...for You Tube. It featured three young, imbecilic looking, trendy stars of the platform, one of whom, his gurning face two metres high, was now staring at me through my first floor window, with virtually everything else outside blocked from view. It was enough to make even the strongest temperament waver, having this ugly and idiotic image, Big Brother style, mounted around the clock.

It turned out that Camden, in their sensitivity and wisdom, had also approved this source of extra income for the landlord and the advertising agent, to the detriment of local people. When I complained that I had not had one of the usual planning notification letters through the door, as an affected party, so that I could have sent in an objection, I was told that one of the recent cost-cutting policy changes at Camden is that they no longer send such letters at all. How, I asked, could people now object to planning requests which affect them? I was told that such applications can be found by



searching, via the specific details, online. But if you are not aware of such an application having been made, why would you be searching, and what for? George Orwell, who lived, worked and drank near here, would have appreciated this paradox, as well as the hoarding itself appearing to have been lifted straight from the dystopian nightmare he depicted in his book, Nineteen Eighty-Four.

The scaffolding feels increasingly like the hangman's scaffold, as even my determination to remain a Fitzrovia resident comes under impossible pressure. One morning I was woken

Cartoon by Chris Tyler

up at 7am by a workman coming in through the door to my flat whilst I was half asleep. I jumped up ready to confront some intruder, only to be told by him that he had been told that nobody was any longer living in the building. I put him straight. For now, there certainly is someone living here and if you go past at night you will still see one or two lights from behind the shroud. If you listen really carefully, you might even hear the gentle sounds of my piano, too, as us locals live to fight another day.

## Looking back through the archives

See also [archive.fitzrovia.org.uk](http://archive.fitzrovia.org.uk)

### 40 years ago

#### King of car dealers and his old banger

The "king of the Warren Street car dealers" died of an overdose, reported *Tower* in March 1977.

George Wright rose from a poor background to become a wealthy second hand car salesman - but was considered an "unsavoury" character by Earl Howe, whose daughter Lady Charlotte Curson had an affair with him.

When she dumped him Wright took her shotgun in order to shoot himself, but missed and hit an embassy



garage across the road. When he finally died his body was found by Lord Rudolph Russell, son of the Duke of Bedford.

Fellow car dealer Les Barker remembered Wright swallowing a gold chain. "George thought it was a real laugh. He said he was drunk at the time and had done it for a bet."

Another car dealer said: "He operated from a couple of park-

ing meters and joked to me only a few days before his death that he had about 450 parking tickets outstanding. It would tickle him pink to think that they will never be paid now."

Increased unemployment meant queues for the casual labour job centre for the catering industry in Mortimer Street were getting longer. Men were sleeping rough outside all night in all weathers from 9pm to get jobs. The police were moving them on and council street cleaning carts were spraying them with water. "It is interesting that people queueing all night for tickets to the Bolshoi Ballet or a Royal wedding never

get sprayed or moved," observed Tower.

**Squatters** took over 54 ex-police flats in Huntley Street. Before the 150 homeless people moved in the only signs of life were pigeons on the roof and rats among the rubbish in the playground. The squatters had cleaned up the playground in order to share it with children living nearby. "We intend to make a positive contribution to the community," said the squatters. "Sharing the playground is just a beginning."



Local kids in the squatters' playground. Picture by Dagmar Cassena.

**Live jazz** was played at several local pubs: Percy's Shell Tornados (Fitzrovia's only steel band) in the Albany, 240 Great Portland Street; Doug Landau's Harlequin Stompers at the Cambridge, 48 Newman Street; the Phoenix Goodtime Dixielanders at the One Tun, 60 Goodge Street; and Waddocks Jazz Ensemble in Wolsey's Wine Bar, 52 Wells Street.

### 10 years ago

#### Library on the move

The Wiener Library (the world's oldest holocaust memorial institution) was having to leave Devonshire Street where it had been since 1956 because the lease was expiring, reported *Fitzrovia News* in February 2007.

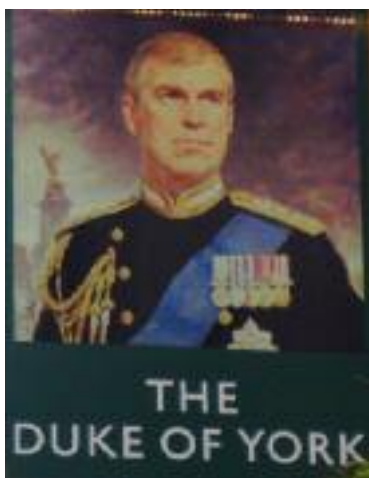
It had been started by Dr Alfred Wiener as the Jewish Central Information Office in 1933, the year he fled Hitler's Germany. It became known as Dr Wiener's Library and moved to Manchester Square in 1939. Now called the Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust & Genocide, it is based at 29 Russell Square.

Fitzrovia Youth in Action under 14 football team won the Kick It [Racism] Out tournament after their opponents walked out of the final when leading 2-1 in protest at the refereeing.

How to Get Rich, by local publishing tycoon Felix Dennis, was published. He spoke about his plan to create the Forest of Dennis in over 50,000 acres of Worcestershire.

Local artist Fiona Green wrote about Edward Fitzgerald, the translator of Omar Khayyam. He had shunned his mother's house at 39 Portland Place, preferring to live in shabby rooms at 18 Charlotte Street.

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# WHAT'S ON AROUND FITZROVIA

Email [news@fitzrovia.org.uk](mailto:news@fitzrovia.org.uk) by May 19 for the June issue, and put "Listings" in the subject box.

## LIVE MUSIC

**The Albany**, 240 Great Portland St ([thealbanyw1w.co.uk](http://thealbanyw1w.co.uk)): Ukeleles on Wednesdays, 8pm.

**King & Queen**, 1 Foley St : Folk once a month on Fridays 8-11pm ([visitwebmustradclub.co.uk](http://visitwebmustradclub.co.uk)). Andy Turner and Mat Green, Apr 7; Thomas McCarthy and Robing Gillan, and The Pigeons, May 5. Scaledown alternative live entertainments last Friday of the month ([theorchestrapit.com](http://theorchestrapit.com)).

**Sevilla Mia Spanish Bar**, 22 Hanway St (basement): World Fusion, Tue, 9.30pm; Swing 'n' Blues, Wed, 9.30pm; Spanish Rumba, Thur-Sat, 10.30pm.

**Simmons**, 28 Maple St: Live music every Wednesday evening.

**The 100 Club**, 100 Oxford St ([the100club.co.uk](http://the100club.co.uk)): Badfinger, March 17; Sham 69, March 24; Jilted John, March 29; Cud, March 31; The Ramonas, Apr 1; Steve Ignorant's Slice of Life, Apr 7; The Vapors, Apr 8; Erja Lytinen album launch, Apr 11; Melanie Pain, Apr 13; Booze & Glory, Apr 21; The Marcus King Band, Apr 26.

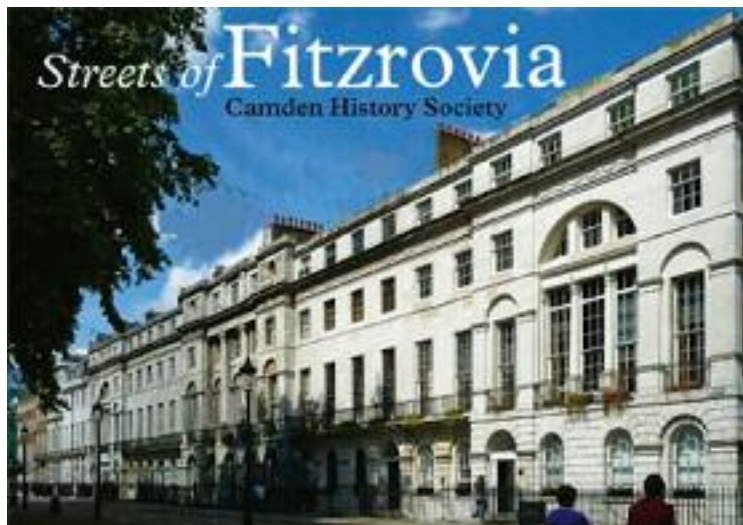
**UCL Haldane Room**, Wilkins Building, Gower St: Chamber music concert ensemble, March 14, 5.30-6.30pm.

## THEATRE

**Bloomsbury Theatre Studio**, 15 Gordon St ([thebloomsbury.com](http://thebloomsbury.com)): Cooling Off Day, by Singaporean playwright Alfian Sa'at, March 17-18; Ram and Jael, Hebrew version of Romeo and Juliet, March 28; Bang Said The Gun, poetry for people who don't like poetry, March 30 & April 27; Stand Up Comedy, May 16-17 & 19-20; Carl Hutchinson, comedy, May 18.

**Camden People's Theatre**, 58-60 Hampstead Rd ([cptheatre.co.uk](http://cptheatre.co.uk)): The Black Cap, an adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's tale, March 15; Theatre & Dragons, riotous comic theatre, March 18; Pull the Trigger, art/cabaret about Indian corner shop culture, March 18; The Coolidge Effect, storytelling and poetry about how pornography impacts on mental health and relationships, March 22; Skeletons (or how I learned to love fucking up), cringe worthy confessions, March 23; Kill Climate Deniers, hostage thriller action piece, April 13 & 15; Faslane, documentary theatre about Trident, April 20-22.

**Dominion Theatre**, 269 Tottenham Court Rd ([dominiontheatre.com](http://dominiontheatre.com)): An American in Paris, until Sept 30.



*Streets of Fitzrovia*, published by Camden History Society, is being launched in Holborn Library on March 15. See under Talks (right)

**London Palladium**, Argyll St [palladium.londontheatres.co.uk](http://palladium.londontheatres.co.uk): Honeymoon in Vegas, London Musical Theatre Orchestra, March 12; 100: A Tribute to Dame Vera Lynn, March 18; The Wind in the Willows, from June 29 (previews from June 17).

**New Diorama Theatre** ([newdiorama.com](http://newdiorama.com)), 15-16 Triton St (Euston Rd opposite Fitzroy St): Safe, a satire by Eastenders writer Pete Lawson, performed by Spare Tyre Artists, March 15-18 (see page 3); Narvik, World War Two drama, March 21-25; The Gap in the Light, a show about fear, May 2-27.

**RADA**, Malet St ([rada.ac.uk/whats-on](http://rada.ac.uk/whats-on)): **Gielgud Theatre**: A Bitter Herb, by Kwame Kwei-Amah, March 14-25. **GBS Theatre**: Vinegar Tom, by Caryl Churchill, March 15-25. **Jerwood Vanbrugh Theatre**: A Winter's Tale, by William Shakespeare, March 16-25.

## CINEMA/FILM

**Bolivar Hall**, 54 Grafton Way ([cultura.embavenez-uk.org](http://cultura.embavenez-uk.org)): London Socialist Film Co-op screen films at 11am on the second Sunday of each month: We Are Many, protest against Iraq war, March 12; The War You Don't See (media role in war) and They Call Us Maids, The Domestic Workers' Story, Apr 9; The Woman Knight of Mirror Lake (uprising in ancient China), May 14.

**Green Man**, 36 Riding House St: London Animation Club, first Tuesday of month.

**Odeon**, 30 Tottenham Court Rd: Weekly film details from [www.odeon.co.uk](http://www.odeon.co.uk) or 08712 244007.

**Regent Street Cinema**, 309 Regent St: For daily programme visit [regentstreetcinema.com](http://regentstreetcinema.com)/programme. Matinee classics every Wednesday at 2pm, for over 55s, £1.75.

**Senate House Library** (Seng Tee Ling Seminar Room), Keppel St/Malet St: Spirit of '45, March, 17, 6-8pm

**UCL Art Museum**, South Cloisters, Wilkins Building, Gower St: A Room with a View, March 21, 6.30-8.30pm.

## LIVE COMEDY

**The Albany**, 240 Great Portland St: Mondays at 8pm, basement.

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

## PUB QUIZZES

**The Court**, 108a Tottenham Court Rd: Every Sunday, 8pm.

**King's Arms**, 68 Great Titchfield St: First Monday of the month (resuming soon).

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

## EXHIBITIONS

**British Museum**, Great Russell St ([britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)): Free: Iranian voices: recent acquisitions of works on paper, until Apr 2; Defacing the past, damnation and desecration in imperial Rome, until May 7; British watercolour landscapes 1850-1950, until Aug 27; Where the Thunderbird lives: cultural resilience in the Northwest Coast of North America, until Aug 27; David Hockney: fourteen poems from CP Cavafy. Pay for: The American Dream: pop to the present, until June 18.

**Senate House Library**, Keppel St/Malet St ([senatehouselibrary.ac.uk](http://senatehouselibrary.ac.uk)): Radical Voices, collections from 19th and 20th century Britain, until March 31.

**UCL Main Library**, Wilkins Building, Gower St: East side stories: Londoners in transition, until Dec 15.

**UCL Octagon Gallery**, Wilkins Building, Gower St: Cabinets of consequence (works of UCL geographers, neuroscientists, archaeologists, zoologists), until Apr 21.

**UCL Petrie Museum**, Malet Place: Artefacts of excavation (from Egypt 1880s-1980s), until Apr 29.

**Wellcome Library**, 183 Euston Rd ([wellcomecollection.org](http://wellcomecollection.org)): Making Nature: How we see animals, until May 21; Electricity: The spark of life, until June 25. Permanent exhibitions: Medicine Now, and Medicine Man.

## TALKS

**Holborn Library**, 32-38 Theobalds Road, WC1: Streets of Fitzrovia, Camden History Society book launch, March 15, 7pm, local studies and archives section. Talks by researchers Steve Denford, and Ruth and David Hayes. Visit web ([camdenhistorysociety.org](http://camdenhistorysociety.org)) for more details.

**Sohemian Society**, Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place: All 7.30pm. Peter York on youth fashion, Apr 12; Jake Arnott on his new novel, The Fatal Tree, Apr 19.

**UCL Darwin Lecture Theatre**, Malet Place ([ucl.ac.uk/events](http://ucl.ac.uk/events)): Tuesdays and Thursdays (1.15-1.55pm) during term time: Swearing as a second language, March 9; Heads you win: tails you lose - the leadership gamble, March 14; How can 21st century research on autism empower London's teachers? March 16.

**UCL Petrie Museum**, Malet Place: The secret life of objects, March 16, 1.15-1.45pm; Artefacts of excavation, March 22, 6-8.30pm.

## WALKS

**London Literary Pub Crawl**, every Saturday, 5pm. Start at the Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place. [LondonLiteraryPubCrawl.com](http://LondonLiteraryPubCrawl.com).

**London Walks** ([walks.com](http://walks.com)) £10, Over 65 £8: Beatles Magical Mystery Tour, Tottenham Court Rd station, every Sunday 11am, and every Thursday, 11am, Wednesdays 2pm. Rock'n'Roll London, Tottenham Court Rd station, every Wednesday, 7pm, every Friday, 2pm.

## OTHER EVENTS

**UCL Grant Museum of Zoology**, 21 University St: Dead, life drawing (draw animal specimens), March 16 & Apr 27. Creature creations (create art), Apr 8, 1.30-4.30pm; Explore zoology (questions answered), March 25 & Apr 22, 1-4pm.

## ART GALLERIES

**Featured exhibitions. A full list of all galleries is on our website**



*Pollocks toy museum* by Glynn Boyd Harte, at the Curwen

**Curwen Gallery**, 34 Windmill St: Live Auction Exhibition, March 6-22. Auction: Wednesday, March 22, 7-9pm. For further details see feature on page 13.



*Marlene Dietrich* by Tim Fowler, at Darren Baker Gallery

**Darren Baker Gallery**, 81 Charlotte St: Faces and Places, March 17-24



*Woman (1639)* After Rembrandt, by Gordon Cheung, at Edel Assanti

Edel Assanti, 17a Newman St: Gordon Cheung – "Unknown Knowns", March 10-April 15.

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