

# FitzroviaNews



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

Issue 147 Winter 2017

## Oxford Street pedestrianisation plans divert traffic into neighbouring areas

By Linus Rees

Mayor Sadiq Khan has revealed more details on his proposal to pedestrianise London's Oxford Street and confirmed exactly what residents in surrounding districts feared — all vehicles will be simply diverted into neighbouring streets but with a reduction in buses serving the area.

The plans put out for consultation this November by Westminster Council and Transport for London are to completely close Oxford Street to all but emergency vehicles between the Selfridges and John Lewis department stores.

The number of bus routes serving the area will be reduced from nine to two with the 139 and 390 running every six to eight minutes in each direction east and west along Wigmore Street and Henrietta Place during the day and every 30 minutes at night. TfL will also make all buses in central London less polluting by 2019 with up to 250 zero-emission buses by 2020.

Taxi ranks will be relocated to nearby streets with the total number of rank spaces to increase by 20 per cent by 2020. All new taxis and private hire vehicles licensed from 2018 must have reduced emissions.

Some of the surrounding streets will be converted from one-way to two-way and in some one-way streets the direction would be reversed to help the road network "function more efficiently" says TfL.

Despite the transfer of traffic into Wigmore Street, TfL says that "fewer vehicles would use the street in future"; a claim that is met with scepticism by local residents who believe that a reduction in buses will lead to more trips by people using private motor vehicles.

Cycling will not be allowed along Oxford Street but there will be improvements for cyclists along nearby streets. "In Summer 2018 we will consult on new high-quality cycle routes along quieter roads to the north and south of Oxford Street," says TfL.

TfL has not ruled out night time deliveries to service busi-

nesses along Oxford Street saying the "option remains open to allow some access overnight if required".

Residents in the neighbourhoods of Marylebone, Mayfair, Fitzrovia and Soho are alarmed about the plans and are angry that the mayor has done exactly what he promised not to do: pedestrianise Oxford Street at a cost to surrounding streets.

People in these districts want traffic calming and pollution reduction in their residential areas, directing the bulk of motor traffic to major roads which has been done in the "Mini-Holland" schemes to be found in outer London

"What sort of reality does the Mayor live in where he thinks that all this traffic should be taken out of an almost 100 per cent commercial area and pushed through its surrounding residential streets?" says Michael Bolt of Better Oxford Street, the campaign set up by local community groups.

"Shifting congestion, pollution and road safety issues rather than tackling them is unacceptable," he says.

In a press statement Better Oxford Street warned that the ban on motor vehicles using Oxford Street after 7pm will mean that all the evening and night-time traffic — taxis, private hire vehicles, private cars and pedicabs — will be pushed into the side streets.

"The majority of those that live and have businesses in the West End are against this scheme. Instead it is being pushed through to the detriment of the wider West End. The people who know the



Is it an art installation or is it rubbish? We think it's rubbish. Westminster Council have been asking residents what they should do with it. (Letters, p2)

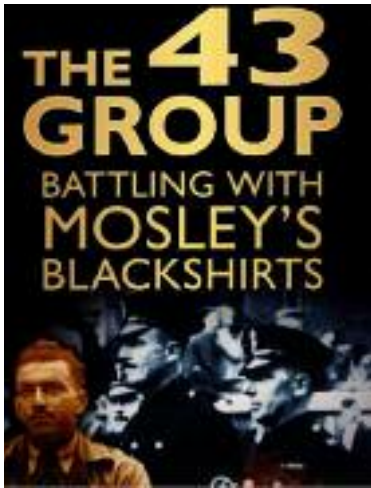
area, who know the consequences of these hasty and ill thought out proposals, don't want it," says the campaign group.

A previous consultation found that most local residents and businesses did not support or have concerns about the plans to pedestrianise Oxford Street.

The current consultation will run until December 2017. If given the go ahead work will start in the summer of 2018. This consultation is also seeking views on the "principle" of transforming Oxford Street east.

A further consultation giving details of the Oxford Street east plans will be conducted in the early summer of 2018. These could propose diverting traffic along Mortimer Street, Goodge Street and other streets in Fitzrovia if Oxford Street east is closed.

Public consultation: Have your say on the transformation of Oxford Street. Closes Sunday 17 December 2017. Visit: [bit.do/oxst](http://bit.do/oxst) (More on Oxford Street on p5.)



Fighting fascism page 12



Englishwoman in New York page 8



Goddess of Wisdom page 14



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Letters, email and comment

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We need those bins back Every little kindness

I am a resident of Hanson Street and when some of the big black bins for both rubbish and recycling in the area first disappeared some months ago, I rang Westminster Council to enquire as to their whereabouts. I was told they had been taken away for cleaning. Only subsequently did I discover that they had been permanently removed.

Later still, FitzWest circulated information regarding an additional recycling collection which means that recycling is now collected twice a week, however I do not feel this compensates for the absence of the bins.

I appreciate that the Council is attempting to deal with an enormous amount of waste deposited on our streets and that they are concerned that the presence of the big black bins offers some sort of carte blanche for dumping, but the spread of rubbish around the small street bin at

the bottom of Hanson Street does serve to illustrate why the big black bins were useful. I have signed a local petition asking for their reinstatement, and if I have rubbish to put out which does not coincide with collection times I am currently walking it round to the big black bins that, for the moment, still stand outside West One House on Riding House Street.

I took this picture today (see front page) at the bottom of Hanson Street, though I have seen piles of rubbish much worse than this here.

The Council would do well to remember that most of the flats on Hanson Street and the surrounding streets are small, and residents need to be able to dispose of rubbish at will and when required, particularly in this age of overwhelming amounts of packaging.

Disgruntled resident

Some weeks ago I popped into my local Tesco on New Cavendish Street to pick up some supplies after work. Much later in the evening, I looked in my bag for something only to realise that my purse was not there. I immediately panicked and thinking back quickly remembered that Tesco was the last place I had been. I rushed downstairs and across to the shop feeling incredibly anxious as my bank card was in the purse along with some cash I had just withdrawn on my way home.

Breathless with alarm I addressed myself first to the security guard and then to the cashier, describing my purse. To my absolute delight the cashier reached down, picked it up and gave it to me, and everything was inside just as it had been! Apparently I had left it on the self-service machine and someone had handed it in. So, I am writing to thank whoever was

so very kind as to see my purse and give it to the cashier, and to the very nice staff at the store who kept it safe for me. It is very heartening indeed to know that honesty and kindness still prevail!

Grateful resident

Car crime?

Having lived on Greenwell Street for over seven years, I am astonished as to why Greenwell Street has been listed as a car crime hotspot (FN 146, page 3). Greenwell consists of two resident parking bays, which enables four cars to park. The remaining spaces are designated for ambulance and emergency vehicles, which are never left overnight. I have never seen any evidence of car crime. Sounds suspicious to me.

Suspicious resident

Is that pollution I hear? Magic trees and mystic lamp posts

By Tim Waterman

It's 8.30am on a Monday morning, and the generator, pump, or compressor that's been clattering away incessantly on Bourlet Close for the last few weeks has just fired up for yet another day. "Westminster is noisy!" begins the introduction to Westminster City Council's Noise Strategy, and one might infer from this statement that "So suck it up!" is the logical answer, though of course this is not the message the Noise Strategy is trying to get across. Fitzrovia, and not just its Westminster parts, is actually often quite the opposite of a noisy place, and the nuances of the distribution of noise and quiet here need better understanding by everyone, from businesses to developers to residents.

I've had a long-running exchange, usually but not always cordial, with the neighbouring hair salon. It has a noisy fan next to my bedroom window, and while I could wallow in my own misery, it's more useful to point out the kinds of issues this highlights. First is that more traditional buildings in Fitzrovia, such as the mansion block I live in, tend to have living spaces on the street and bedrooms on the insides of the block. There is often a marked difference in noise between the two. If the hair salon's fan is off, the silence at the back of our building is truly deep, while noise from the street at the front comes in waves all night.

Second is that discontinuous noise can be disruptive of sleep, such as when the hair salon's fan kicks on and off. This is increasingly an issue in Fitzrovia, where more and more buildings use mechanical heating and cooling, and where the plant is located at the rear of the building rather than along the street. Recently residents at Middleton Place, for example, have suffered the unsightly and noisy intrusion of flues and ductwork from new construction by Great Portland Estates.

Continuous noise, such as that of the engine at the building site next door, is a different kind of stressor, and no less a hazard to health and well being. Also the nature of noise can change over time, such as when ageing equipment develops squeaks and rattles.

One further issue my struggle with the hair salon has unearthed is even more difficult to resolve, and points worryingly to a deepening crisis in human relations. In my last communication with them, they questioned why they should have to concern themselves with my requests as I was not a customer of their salon. If small businesses and large developers both see themselves as exempt from being neighbourly, then legal action will increasingly be required to solve noise pollution, rather than simple human decency.

Have a look at DEFRA's noise map here to see the distribution of noise in London: extrium.co.uk/noiseviewer.html

By Rev Alan Carr

There is an unwritten rule in Store Street (I live at one end) that any rubbish left at the foot of one of the plane trees or lamp posts that line the street (of which there are many) will be spirited away in the night by the unseen hands of goblins and elves.

I've done it myself sometimes and it's pure magic. An unmarked and invisible zone around each tree or post is considered an acceptable distance for placing the unwanted objects and gadgets of our lives, from banana skins (a perennial favourite) to three piece suites (admittedly less common) and every thing in between.

From the time the black sack or cardboard packaging leaves our domain until we reach the tree or post it remains our own, but the moment we reach the magic and mystic zone and deposit the now unwanted article, then another magical and mystical process takes place and it immediately ceases to be ours at all, so much so that with one swift turn around and a look over our shoulder to check that no one in particular is looking, we would swear even before a judge in court that we have never ever laid eyes upon that sack of junk before.

We acquire at leisure and dispose in haste. What did the trees and posts ever do to us that they have become the site of memorials to avarice and consumption? Nothing, of course. The one uncomplainingly converts carbon (though it has its work cut out) and the other showers us with light. But this is not enough. We must garland them with the unwanted detritus of our everyday lives, as if marking the place where the excesses of modernity meet finality and uselessness.

Someone, we say, will take them away, though we scarcely care who. 'They' will. 'They' have their work cut out as well. And so it goes, that come the witching hour nocturnal, mechanical and devouring beasts arrive, largely unseen (though not by us local night owls) and the unseen hands of dustbin elves pick them up with the odd shout across the street and banging of the lifting gear. So that, come the morning, the magic trees and mystic posts have come up trumps, and what was once unwanted is now long forgotten and we have moved on and are already busily acquiring new pre-unwanted stuff. All hail the magic of the tree and the mysticism of the lamp posts.

Rev Alan Carr is Rector of St Giles-in-the-Fields.

## Great Portland Estates runs out of street names



One of the incorrect street signs.

As the massive commercial and residential development on the former Royal Mail delivery centre in Fitzrovia nears completion, developer Great Portland Estates appears to have run out of ideas for street names, writes Angela Lovely.

The Rathbone Square development will have office space for Facebook, 142 private residential apartments, cafes, shops and restaurants surrounding a central square within 50 metres of Tottenham Court Road station.

Pedestrian walkways running through the site and linking Newman Street to Rathbone Place have now been labelled with those instantly recognisable and iconic vitreous enamel street signs.

There's Rathbone Square, Rathbone Passage, and... Newman Passage.

But hang on a moment. Isn't there already a Georgian alleyway further up the road called Newman Passage? Yes, there is. And it's quite well known.

Westminster City Council's guidelines — and commonsense — on street and building naming states that new street names should not duplicate any similar name already in use.

A rather embarrassed representative of the dopey developers got in touch to thank us for pointing out the mistake and said the signs would be replaced.

"The signs are incorrect and not approved and have been put up in error. They will be replaced with signs titled Rathbone Square which is the name approved by Westminster City Council," said Piers Blewitt of Great Portland Estates.



Paul Gardner manager of Hobgoblin Music 24 Rathbone Place playing the cittern. "The shop has been here for over 16 years We're happy to be supporting local people wishing to learn and to play music and British instrument makers. We hope to be part of this neighbourhood for a long time to come."

## Planning Venues seek late policy night licences update

Camden Council is seeking the public's views on its updated planning guidance documents, which provide detailed information on how the council applies its planning policies.

Comments on the draft documents can be made until 12 January 2018. To view these documents and respond to the consultation visit: [camden.gov.uk/cpg](http://camden.gov.uk/cpg)

Westminster council has announced that it is to delay a consultation on the revision of its major planning policies until the spring of 2018. [westminster.gov.uk/planning-policy](http://westminster.gov.uk/planning-policy)

The mayor of London has published the draft London plan. It is open for consultation until Friday 2 March 2018. [london.gov.uk/new-london-plan](http://london.gov.uk/new-london-plan)

Late night licence applications for three premises in Fitzrovia are currently being consulted upon by Camden Council.

Owners of the Reverend JW Simpson in Goodge Street are seeking to vary their existing licence to serve alcohol until 2am on four nights a week.

The application states: "The proposed variation is to extend the sale of alcohol on Wednesday and Thursday from the current hours of 10:00 to 23:30 to the proposed hours of 10:00 to 02:00 the following morning; and on Friday and Saturday from the current hours of 10:00 to midnight to the proposed hours of 10:00 to 02:00 the following morning.

"The opening hours of the premises will be Monday and Tuesday 10:00 to midnight, Wednesday to Saturday 10:00 to 02:30 the following morning, and Sunday 10:00 to 23:00," states the application.

The last date for making a representation on the application is 13 December 2017. Ref: APP\PREMISES-VARY\086412 Reverend JW Simpson, 32-34 Goodge Street, W1T 2QJ.

A new premises licence application for a restaurant and bar at 80 Cleveland Street, W1T 6NE has been made. The application is for sale of alcohol, and other licensed activities Monday to Sunday from 11.00 to 02.00 the following morning.

Ref: APP\PREMISES-NEW\08646. Last date for con-

sultation: 16 December 2017.

Spearmint Rhino is seeking to renew its sexual entertainment licence. Proposed opening times of the premises are Monday to Saturday, 09.00 to 04.00 the following morning; Sunday: 10.00 to 02.00 the following morning.

Last date for representation: 14 December 2017.

Application reference: APP\SE-RENEW\086432: 161 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 7NN.

Comments on these applications can be made to Camden Council via its website [camden.gov.uk/licensing](http://camden.gov.uk/licensing) and searching the register using the application reference number.

Camden Council states members of the public can support or oppose an application, but comments must not be frivolous, repetitive or vexatious. They must address the effect the application could have on one or more of the four licensing objectives:

Prevention of crime and disorder; Protection of children from harm; Public safety; and Prevention of nuisance.

The council is obliged to grant a premises licence if no objections are received within the three week consultation period. All comments must be submitted before midnight on the expiry date.

Fitzrovia News provides news about planning and licensing applications in its email newsletter: [bit.ly/fitzrovia-news](mailto:bit.ly/fitzrovia-news)

## News in brief

Middleton Place post-production company **Sequence Post** has closed after falling into financial difficulties. Sequence was best known for its work on music productions, including Rolling Stones: Sticky Fingers Live at the Fonda Theatre.

Work is due to start this winter on the redevelopment of the former **Strand Union Workhouse** on Cleveland Street.

UCLH Charity has put up for sale a row of eight Grade II listed townhouses at 46-60 **Huntley Street**. The charity arm of University College London Hospitals says it is selling the houses to fund health facilities.

Dramatic footage of an attempted daylight robbery of a motor scooter in **Fitzroy Street** was captured on camera from within the Arup headquarters. The film showed a group of thieves on motor scooters thwarted by a lorry driver and members of the public.

The London Fire Brigade has ordered improvements to a Camden Council residential block of 135 flats in **Grafton Way** after it was discovered fire safety laws were being broken.

At nearby homes a faulty fire alarm that rang constantly sent residents into despair. Clarion Housing Group, formerly Circle 33, said it was "sorry for the disruption" at the block in **Whitfield Street**.

Westminster council has given permission for developer **Derwent London** to part demolish and redevelop a cluster of commercial buildings on the northwest corner of Rathbone Place and Oxford Street. The plans were heavily criticised by the **Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Forum** which asked for the application to be refused because of harm it would have on the conservation area.

## Christmas dinner at Indian YMCA

Warren Street based Charity Fitzrovia Youth in Action will be holding their Christmas Community Dinner from 1pm to 4pm on Thursday 21 December at the Indian YMCA, Fitzroy Square. They promise lovely food and lively entertainment. Dinner is free, but must be booked in advance. Please call FYA on 020 7388 7399 or email [alice.weavers@fya.org.uk](mailto:alice.weavers@fya.org.uk)

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## Youth club planned at Whitfield Place

A Warren Street charity has applied to Camden Council to create a youth club underneath a block of flats at Whitfield Place in Fitzrovia.

The plans have been submitted by Fitzrovia Youth in Action who want to build an activity space for young people aged between 14 and 19 years old in the basement of Suffolk House and below the 13 affordable homes managed by Origin Housing.

Finance for the project will come from a grant by LandAid who awarded the charity £100,000 in 2015.

Fitzrovia Youth in Action say the club will be called The Warren Centre and will be open between the hours of 9am and 9pm and will be occupied by 20 youths per day who will be supervised by one or two members of staff. The designs include a new front door and entrance canopy.

Camden Council's planning department will now review the application before deciding whether or not to approve the plans.

Planning application: 2017/3907/P — Basement, Suffolk House 1-8 Whitfield Place London W1T 5JU.

## Travel group reveal plans for hotel on Newman Street

Plans for a new hotel in Fitzrovia were unveiled at a public exhibition in November.

Travel and leisure group Leeu Collection will shortly be submitting a planning application to Westminster City Council to redevelop 50-57 Newman Street.

Leeu Collection which has several hotels in South Africa bought the site earlier this year.

The forthcoming planning application seeks permission for "a high-quality hotel offering at least 60 bedrooms with ancillary retail, food and beverage services".

However, the plans are to completely demolish the existing building before redeveloping the site with an increased floorspace.

The Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association has written to the owners expressing concern about yet another major demolition, an intensification of entertainment use on the site, and noise nuisance from the operation of the hotel and restaurant. They have requested the owners produce a green travel plan and a ban on diesel motors during demolition and construction.

# Artist's home and studio in Charlotte Street listed

\*A building containing the former family home of artist and designer couple Adrian and Corinne Heath and the studio of modernist artist Birgit Skiöld has been listed as a heritage asset because of its architectural and cultural value.

In September Historic England gave Grade II listed status to the building at 28 Charlotte Street because it holds architectural interest as "an externally little-altered example of an eighteenth century terraced town house with an inserted nineteenth century shopfront" and for the "legibility of its floor plan, and surviving range of interior joinery and features".

The designation also recognised its historical interest because of its "association with the artists Adrian Heath and Birgit Skiöld" both of whom worked out of the building in the second half of the twentieth century.

Historic England also regarded the building as complementing the neighbouring property at 26 Charlotte Street which is listed at Grade II.

Adrian Heath (1920-1992) was a major figure in the development of abstract art in England during the forties and a key proponent of Constructivism. Corinne Heath (died 2009) was a theatre designer.

The protected asset status means any redevelopment plans have to receive listed building consent. A planning application for its redevelopment which was approved by Camden Council in April has now been withdrawn.

The application to list the building which was built in 1766 was made by the Bloomsbury Conservation Area Advisory Committee and prompted by Camden's decision to allow the building to be converted into flats.

Local campaign group the Charlotte Street Association successfully presented a case for the property's architectural merits and cultural value. They argued that the building has one of the finest remaining Georgian facades in Charlotte Street and that it is possibly the only house to remain un-subdivided (excepting that the ground floor and basement are in commercial use).

Their response also noted interest for the 1960s studio to the rear of the house. Evidence showed that from the mid-1950s and 1960s the house became a meeting place and a centre for an important and unique group of British abstract and constructivist painters in the post-war period.

These figures included Victor Pasmore, Terry Frost, Peter Lanyon, and Patrick Heron. Adrian Heath's presence was a continuation of the tradition of artists, their studios and their teaching, based in Charlotte Street and Fitzrovia since the late eighteenth century.



28 Charlotte Street, built in 1766, has been listed at Grade II because of its architectural and cultural interest.

teenth century.

From the late 1950s to the early 1980s, Birgit Skiöld ran the first open-access professional print studio workshop in England from the basement of the building. Her facilities were used by artists including David Hockney and Eduardo Paolozzi.

Having assessed the arguments for and against listing, the advice report by Historic England concluded that the building was worthy of protection.

"28 Charlotte Street is an important survival of an C18 town house modified for commercial use in the C19 and then for the occupation of artists of some repute in the C20. We acknowledge that there have been some alterations — this is to be expected in a house of this date — but the degree of original fabric and later alterations which add to its character and interest is such that we have no hesitation in recommending its Grade II listing."

## Camden Council quashes planning consent after claim to high court

Camden Council has agreed to quash the planning permission it gave for the redevelopment of a site in Fitzrovia after the decision was challenged in the high court.

Camden's planning committee gave permission in the summer for a roof extension and other alterations to Cyclone House, 27-29 Whitfield Street which stands on the corner of Colville Place.

However, local resident Max Neufeld successfully challenged by judicial review the legality of the decision in the high court after he claimed that officers in Camden's planning department had failed to take into consideration the impact the development would have on his neighbouring grade II listed building at 1 Colville Place.

Neufeld argued that Camden's officers had given incorrect advice to members of the planning committee with regard to national policy on the protection of heritage assets.

Camden Council offered no defence to the legal challenge and came to a settlement out of court and agreed to pay claimant's costs of £5,000.

Councillor Danny Beales, cabinet member for Investing in Communities said: "Whilst the Council considers that it made a lawful decision, we recognise there could have been more detail in the report.

"Therefore we 'submitted to judgement' — this is a simple legal process which allows the courts to quash the decision so the case can be reconsidered by our planning committee. The Council had no wish to waste public money battling a long standing resident in court when a less costly and time consuming course of action was available."

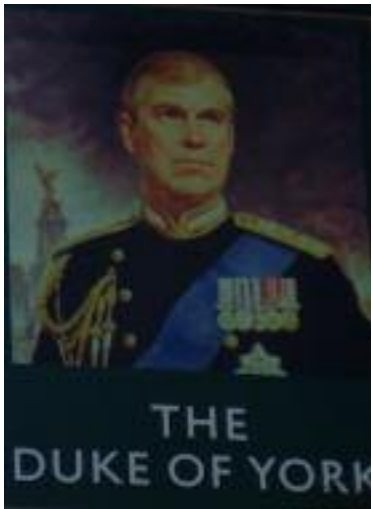
Neufeld was not impressed by the response from Camden's cabinet member and felt the Council had not taken the matter seriously.

"It is shameful that the Council should now seek to trivialise the serious failures identified by my legal challenge conceded by the Council.

"The claim clearly demonstrated that officers had failed to correctly apply national policy in assessing the damage of the proposed development to the setting of the listed buildings and as a consequence fundamentally mis-directed members as to the application of law and policy," he said.

The application will now have to be redetermined and planning committee members will be made aware of the outcome of the judicial review in deciding on any future application.

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# Most local residents oppose or have concerns about Oxford Street plans

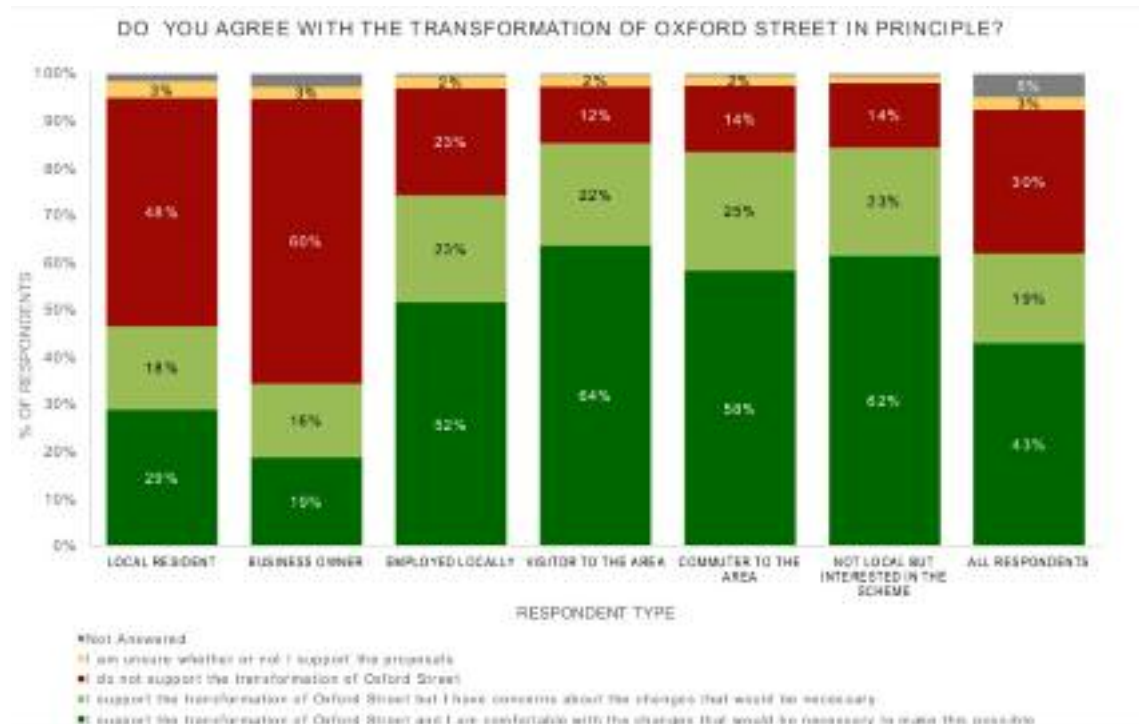
By Linus Rees

People living in the neighbourhoods near Oxford Street have come out strongly against plans to pedestrianise the shopping street because of concerns about displacing motor vehicles into surrounding areas, according to the results of a consultation carried out by Transport for London and Westminster Council and published in October.

More than 65 percent of local residents are either opposed to or have concerns about the proposals put forward by Mayor Sadiq Khan and pushed for by campaign group Living Streets. Residents say they are strongly against buses being diverted along parallel roads and taxi ranks being placed in side streets.

Businesses are even more opposed to the scheme: 60 percent are unequivocally against, a further 16 percent with concerns, and only 19 percent are fully in favour of the scheme.

Nearly 50 percent of all respondents either oppose or have concerns about the proposals and only 43 percent support the trans-



formation of Oxford Street and are comfortable with the changes that would be necessary to make it possible, according to the consultation report.

However, Transport for London and the Mayor's office are claiming there is "strong support" for the proposals and claiming 62

percent of respondents are in favour of the "transformation" plans.

TfL did acknowledge concerns saying it "was clear that any scheme must address a range of transport, accessibility and congestion concerns raised by locals and others."

Residents groups remain unconvinced of TfL's ability to deliver full pedestrianisation of Oxford Street without displacing a great deal of congestion, pollution and night time disturbance into neighbouring areas.

## Residents and business asked to say 'no' to Oxford Street plans

Better Oxford Street, the campaign formed by the amenity societies in Fitzrovia, Marylebone, Mayfair and Soho (and backed by *Fitzrovia News*) is asking residents and local business to say "no" in the current consultation (see advert below).

The mayor of London and Westminster Council want to push ahead with pedestrianising Oxford Street in one form or another but a final decision has yet to be made and will depend on the public consultation.

To respond, go to the web address: [bit.do/oxst](http://bit.do/oxst)

This will take you to the official TfL consultation page.

Answer "no" to question 1. In the comment box say why you said no.

At question 2 it asks about "developing proposals for the eastern section of Oxford Street". Here you can raise your concerns about transport, congestion and air quality in Fitzrovia.

The consultation runs until 17 December 2017.

The London Taxi Drivers Association has formed its own campaign — Open Oxford Street — to oppose pedestrianisation and has taken out adverts in local papers including *Fitzrovia News* (see advert on page 7).



**GUESS WHERE ALL THIS IS HEADING?**

**THROUGH OUR STREETS IS WHERE!**

**IF YOU LIVE IN:**

- **MARYLEBONE**
- **FITZROVIA**
- **MAYFAIR**
- **SOHO**

**The Mayor plans to close Oxford Street to ALL traffic For 24 HOURS a day!**

**He plans to start it in 2018!**

**THE WEST END said NO to the last consultation but the Mayor didn't hear us!**

**This new consultation still offers no solutions to where all the displaced traffic goes.**

**Say "NO" again – it's our last chance to stop this...**

## THE CONSEQUENCES FOR SURROUNDING AREAS

They will have to accommodate the following:

- c.320 buses DAY and NIGHT (hybrid/diesel engines)
- c.500 taxis per hour all DAY and most of the NIGHT
- after 7.00pm it will ALSO include ALL the private vehicles, lorries, vans, pedicabs and ALL the non-black cab traffic that fill Oxford Street through the night
- New TAXI RANKS and LOADING BAYS on the side roads

**This means more congestion, more pollution and more dangerous local roads**

OXFORD STREET will be CLOSED TO ALL TRAFFIC and OPEN TO: amplified buskers, traders, pavement artists, beggars, clowns, and levitating Yodas, such as already populate other pedestrianised areas in Leicester Square and Trafalgar Square.

**STOP THIS NOW - WHILE THERE IS STILL TIME**

**Go to: <http://bit.do/oxst> and say "No"**

1. Do you support our proposals for the transformation of the Oxford Street district?

☐ Yes

☐ Yes, but I have some concerns about certain elements of the proposals (please tell us below)

☒ No

QR Code:



<http://bit.do/OXST>

**Or write to Freepost: TfL consultations - Oxford Street - Say "No"**

**Consultation closes: 17th December 2017**

**BETTER OXFORD STREET** is a campaign for a better Oxford Street, not a closed Oxford Street.  
[www.betteroxfordstreet.org](http://www.betteroxfordstreet.org) [contact@betteroxfordstreet.org](mailto:contact@betteroxfordstreet.org)

Better Oxford Street is a not for profit residents and business group formed and supported by The Marylebone Association, The Soho Society, Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, Charlotte Street Association, Mayfair Residents Group, Residents' Society of Mayfair and St James's, all members of the West End Community Network. © 2017



# Word from the Streets

By CHARLOTTE STREET and her siblings



The real decaying head of Jeremy Bentham (above) and how he appeared on the pub sign (right)



## Give me the head of...

The head of **Jeremy Bentham** (1748-1832) is now on display at University College London in Gower Street - just months after the local pub removed its picture sign of him.

Bentham was an eccentric philosopher who was an early supporter of UCL from its foundation in 1826. Being against burial he donated his organs to medical research and his skeleton dressed in his own clothes to be displayed in a glass case in the South Cloisters where it remains. Originally his head was part of the display but was replaced with a wax effigy when it started decomposing. The original is kept in a safe where it is removed annually to check the skin and hair.

But it is now part of an exhibition called What does it mean to be human? Curating Heads, in the UCL Octagon Gallery (Wilkins Building) until February.

Scientists have taken samples of its DNA to test theories he may have had Asperger's or autism.

The Jeremy Bentham pub sign in University Street was removed when it was taken over by Simmons cocktail bar earlier this year..



## Hair raising

This hair clipper sign (above) in the window of 44-46 **Riding House Street** bamboozled my sister **Margaret** into thinking it was a hair stylist.

"I was about to ask for my hair to be tinted in the same tone as the bright orange broom that a witch on the wall was riding, when I realised it was an exhibition," she quipped. It is in fact the Josh Lilley art gallery although there is no sign to confirm this.

"I am glad the mistake drew me in as the multi-media work by artist Alex Da Corte, including the neon sign in the window, was most enthralling," she added.

It runs until December 23.

## Worst deal ever?

"Who would market an offer as the worst deal?" asked my half-brother **Stephen**, walking past Herman Ze German in **Charlotte Street**. He had not read it properly, it was in fact a "Wurst deal" for sausages, fries and a drink. Could not have been that great, however, as no price was specified.

The Capricorn clip joint, that used to be at 32 **Goodge Street** until a police raid closed it a few years ago, was described as "an upholstered sewer" by television darts commentator **Dave Lanning** who died just over a year ago, aged 78.

The source for this is his fellow darts commentator **Sid Waddell** (1940-2012), in his book "Bellies and Bullseyes, The Outrageous True Story of Darts".

Dave took Sid to the club in 1973 after they had been to TV Times in Tottenham Court Road.

Sid wrote that the club was "a place where committed toppers [regular drinkers of large quantities of alcohol], tired journalists

## True respect

A touching tribute by the call girls of **Tottenham Court Road** to **Princess Diana**, just after her death 20 years ago, has been revealed. Journalist **Alex Webb** told the Evening Standard that he was phoning a story from a public box.

"I noticed there were no prostitutes' cards in the phone box; just a single hand written card with a red rose pinned to it, saying 'as a tribute to our princess, the working girls are not advertising today.'"

It reminded my brother **Percy** of local call girl cards proudly announcing "Pre-Budget prices apply."

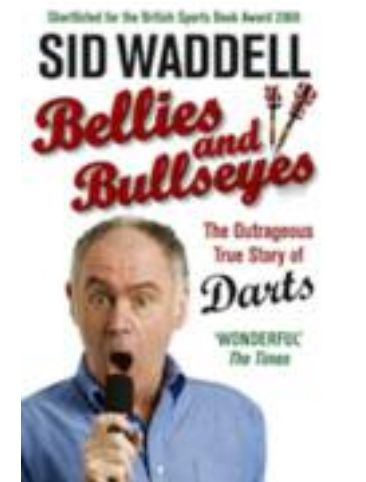
## Shoot-out by the Tower?

Could there be a shoot-out in **Cleveland Street** between local film actor **Nick Moran** and director **Guy Ritchie**?

The film "Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels" starred Moran and was directed by Ritchie.

Moran revealed in *Waitrose Weekend* that he had been paid just a few hundred quid for the film with no extras from box office takings.

He now lives "literally ten yards away" from the BT Tower in Cleveland Street - just a gun shot away from Ritchie's pad in Fitzroy Square.



and general low-lives went when the pubs closed at three in the afternoon."

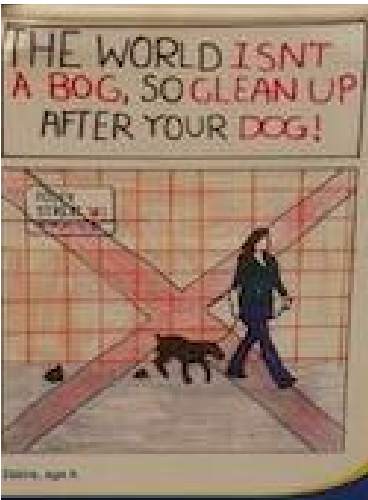


Illustration by Jayne Davis

## Celebrity name dropping

Comedian **Tim Vine** was absolutely awe struck by American actress **Greta Moreno** when they both appeared on Radio 4's "Loose Ends" some years ago. So much so that afterwards in *The George* pub in **Great Portland Street** ("after plenty of drink and dubious Scotch eggs") he asked if she really knew **Elvis Presley**.

"Yes, I dated him, but only to make **Marlon Brando** jealous," she replied. This struck the programme host, the late **Ned Sherrin**, as the ultimate in name dropping, as he gleefully recounted in a recently repeated Radio 4 Extra programme.



## Good advice

Congratulations to **Zakira**, aged nine, of **All Souls School** in **Foley Street** for this appeal to dog owners (above), displayed in **Riding House Street**.

## Blanking out the first duke

The **Grafton Arms** in **Grafton Way** has taken down its heraldic sign with the Duke of Grafton's coat of arms (pictured right). The chequered bar denotes the illegitimacy of the first Duke, **Henry Fitzroy**. Surely in this day and age there is no shame in that.

## Pirate rivals

The first "pirate" commercial radio station to broadcast in opposition to the BBC in the 1930s cheekily opened an office at 37 **Portland Place**, right next door to Broadcasting House. It was called **Radio Normandy** which beamed its programmes to Britain from France.

The staff of the two rival stations often exchanged insults in local pubs such as **The George** in **Great Portland Street**, and the **Yorkshire Grey** in **Langham Street**.

This was all outlined in a recent Radio 4 documentary which also revealed **Roy Plomley**, before becoming the "Desert Island Discs" stalwart of the BBC, had broadcast for the pirate station, and sold "washable condoms" called the Workman's Friend.



## News from Canada

Does anybody remember **Sally Baker**, who lived on the corner of **Riding House Street** and **Can-dover Street** from 1978 to 1993?

She recently bumped into my brother **Warren** in Toronto, where she now lives.

She passed on her best regards to **John Andrews** of the **Kings Arms**, and was sad to hear of the death of actor **Ian Collier** who lived next to the **Crown & Sceptre** in **Great Titchfield Street**.

Charlotte Street



*Looking for Alice is an exhibition telling the story of photographer Sian Davey and the relationship with her daughter who was born with Down's Syndrome. Exhibition open daily: Friday 8 December to Tuesday 12 December, 11.00 - 18.00, Free admission, The Fitzrovia Chapel, 2 Pearson Square.*



*Loretta strikes again! The Queen on Rathbone Street*

## Art boom never gained traction

By Clive Jennings

Towards the end of 2011, I wrote enthusiastically about the increase in the number of commercial galleries, from 16 in 2008 to 37. By 2012 the number peaked at around 54, but we are now down to around 32 spaces. Also, these figures don't take into account the 60 gallery closures over the last six years.

There are many reasons for this falling off, the massive increases in West End rents and business rates, that has affected art galleries all over central London, being an important factor. While one reads daily about auction records being smashed and vast sums of money being paid for paintings at the rarefied top end of the market, these sales are made to a small coterie of international collectors/investors, and the works often never leave the auction house's warehouse, before being sold again. These headline sales have little effect on smaller

galleries, that often struggle.

The business model of the art world has also changed dramatically in the last ten years: many dealers are eschewing the traditional gallery set up, in favour of a modest office/showroom, and spending the money saved on a much bigger presence at the increasing number of Art Fairs all over the world. These "Art Malls" guarantee that, with luck, not only their clients, but all the other galleries' clients will see what they have to offer.

The art boom in Fitzrovia never seemed to gain traction as an entity, compared to somewhere like the New York district of Chelsea. There were initiatives to promote the area as an art hub, such as Fitzrovia Lates, but they fizzled out long ago. I like to think that what we are seeing is a helpful "correction" in a market that grew too quickly, and we do still have some stunning and innovative art spaces in our manor, showing stand out work.

## West End group seeks an expanded BID

The business group which represents the largest retail and leisure companies in the Oxford Street and Regent Street area is holding a ballot on an expanded business improvement district (BID).

The New West End Company works in a public-private partnership with Westminster Council and provides business services and lobbies on behalf of its members. It is seeking a new BID term to run from April 2018 to March 2021 and is asking hundreds of the largest businesses in the area to vote on its three-year plan which includes a wider catchment area than the existing district.

## Opening and closing Closed

**Julia's Meadow** *café*  
44 Newman Street  
**Rathbone News** *newsagents*  
55 Rathbone Place  
**Abocado** *wraps* 36 Berners Street  
**Patara** *Thai restaurant*  
5 Berners Street  
**NatWest** *bank*  
125 Great Portland Street  
**West End Cameras**  
160a Tottenham Court Road  
**Zena** *Italian cuisine*  
144 Great Portland Street  
**Acupoint** *medicine massage*  
42 Goodge Street  
**Byron** *hamburgers*  
6 Rathbone Place  
**Simplypleasure.com** *adult shop*  
23 Goodge Street moved to basement and renamed **London Pleasure Store**

**Bitmibap** *Korean cuisine*  
47 Margaret Street  
**Hema** *homewares*  
1 Bedford Avenue  
**Almost Saturday** *Italian café*  
24 - 25 Foley Street  
**Saucy** *pasta*  
52 Tottenham Court Road  
**Aston and Woods** *opticians*  
170 Tottenham Court Road  
**Russell and Bromley** *shoes*  
Oxford Street/Rathbone Place  
**Scribbler** *cards* 55 Rathbone Place  
**La Tagliata** *Italian restaurant*  
45 Grafton Way  
**Maui** *Hawaiian Poké*  
20a Gosfield Street

## Opening soon

**Samsonite** *luggage*  
1 Bedford Avenue  
**Ottolenghi** *deli restaurant*  
59 Wells Street  
**Barclays Bank**  
154 Tottenham Court Road  
**Dolcezza** *Italian cuisine*  
76 Tottenham Court Road  
**Greyhound cafe** *Thai food*  
37 Berners Street  
**Said Dal 1923** *Italian Chocolate*  
29 Rathbone Place  
**The Flavour Garden** *eatery*  
1 Bedford Avenue  
**Santa Maria Pizzeria**  
160 New Cavendish Street

## Opened

**Harris+Hoole** *coffee*  
136 - 138 New Cavendish Street  
**Protein Haus** *shakes*  
36 Berners Street  
**Starbucks** *coffee* 5 Warren Street  
**Ole and Steen** *Scandi baker*  
1 Bedford Avenue  
**Noizé** *restaurant*  
39 Whitfield Street  
**Jova** *café* 69 Charlotte Street  
**Mortimer house kitchen**  
*restaurant* 37 - 41 Mortimer Street

Advertisement by Newington Communications on behalf of the Open Oxford Street campaign and Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association.

# TRANSPORT FOR LONDON AND WESTMINSTER COUNCIL HAVE ANNOUNCED PLANS TO BAN ALL TRAFFIC FROM OXFORD STREET

## Oxford Street – the facts

- 175,000 people get on or off a bus on Oxford Street every day
- Its shops generate £6 billion per year – 3% of the total UK economy
- It's visited by 15,000 taxis per day



Under current plans, the stretch of Oxford Street from Oxford Circus to North Audley Street will be banned to all vehicles, including taxis, buses and delivery vans 24/7. That means all the vehicles, pollution and noise from the **busiest shopping street in the world** will be pushed into residential areas.

We are **Open Oxford Street** – an independent campaign backed by local residents to keep Oxford Street open and accessible to all. We believe that banning all vehicles from Oxford Street will harm the local community. What's more, our recent survey shows that **87%** of local residents agree.

We want TfL and Westminster to explore alternatives which work for everyone.

**Join our campaign today!**

[www.openoxfordstreet.com/join](http://www.openoxfordstreet.com/join)

[openoxfordstreet.com](http://openoxfordstreet.com) [@OpenOxfordSt](https://twitter.com/OpenOxfordSt) [facebook.com/openoxfordstreet](https://facebook.com/openoxfordstreet)

# Wandering spirit crossed continents and settled on a clutter-free city life

By Pete Whyatt

Stylish and engaging, Claire-Louise John leads a busy work and social life but found time to talk to me about her journey from country girl to city dweller.



*Looking in the mirror, Claire-Louise being held by her actor mother Margaret Louise Hampton.*

"Making Fitzrovia my home was important because of my family history and links to the West End," she tells me.

"I'm now very much a city person but was brought up and raised just outside the village of Chiddingfold in the countryside and hills of the West Sussex-Surrey borders."

Her father was a renowned pathologist at St Thomas's Hospital and her mother was a Shakespearean and Classical actor.

"We loved her theatre stories and her wonderful friends were part of our childhood, visiting us in the countryside after she had left the theatre herself.

"My mother converted to Roman Catholicism but she was free spirited with a liberal permissive outlook, although my sister and I were sent to convent boarding school."

After sixth form college in Godalming, Claire-Louise studied English and Philosophy at Aberdeen University; these experiences were liberating and she gained an interest in current affairs, politics and ideas, human rights, and overseas development.

In her final year at university Claire-Louise won two Virgin Atlantic flight tickets to the USA in a competition. Ditching her then boyfriend she gave her spare



*Claire-Louise with her baby sister Cordelia.*



*Graduation from Aberdeen University.*

ticket to a friend who was going to study in the States.

Claire-Louise stayed for a while in Chicago then moved to New York. She obtained an H1 job-specific visa which gave her the right to work for the business and financial public relations firm who sponsored her. She shared in Mid-Town initially, before moving to her own studio apartment on Broadway and Gt Jones Street in the Village. She was part of a downtown collective of young artists and film students that put on events at their gallery and performance space "Points of Departure" where Claire-Louise performed her own poetry.



*At the top of the World Trade Centre with Brooklyn Bridge behind.*



*On a beach in the Hamptons, Long Island.*

But her life in America was restricted because her visa limited work opportunities. After two years in the USA she decided to travel to Latin America, visiting Mexico, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia.

Back in London Claire-Louise began working in publishing for Headline Books in Great Titchfield Street (where she also lived for a while). Before that she worked for Eagle Lion TV distribution (a job which she got by meeting an executive on a beach in Miami but that's another story).

The next few years were spent working, travelling and studying.

"During this time I spent one year travelling around Nepal, India, SE Asia, and Australia. I love mountains and trekking at altitude. I have enjoyed walking some of the highest passes in the Himalayas, Andes and Pyrenees."

She took a masters specialising in the anthropology and politics of Latin America.

Claire-Louise has worked in a number of interesting environments. She worked at the Arts Council, was assistant administrator for the Covent Garden Festival of Opera and Music Theatre for two seasons. She also worked for the independent think tank



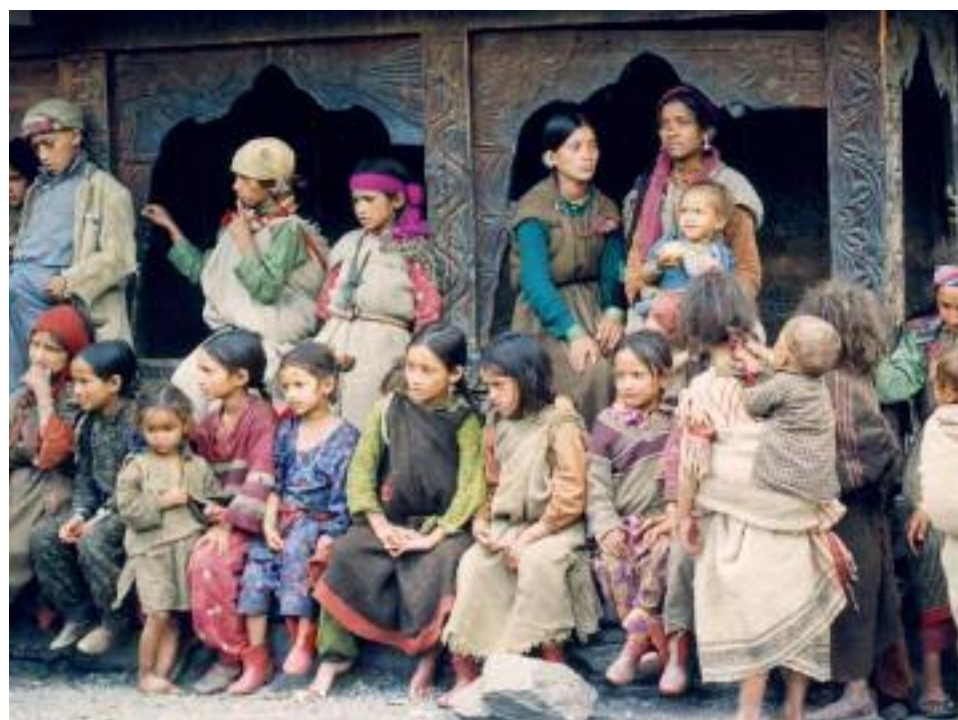
"I'm passionate about the arts, love literature and have been writing poetry since I was six years old. I'm fascinated by people, our differences and similarities. I enjoy yoga meditation and long walks"

The Overseas Development Institute.

Today she works part time on Pall Mall for a fine art advisory and valuations firm where she is marketing and client liaison co-ordinator.

"It's a creative arts environment and I enjoy my work and my colleagues."

She is a very organised tidy minimalist and has a sideline freelance business in clutter busting. "Helping people to clear their physical space requires great sensitivity as possessions evoke powerful memories and emotions for most of us."



*In the Himalayan village of Malana, Kulu Valley, Himachal Pradesh.*

# Store Street and Cleveland Street - chalk and cheese?

By GUY O'CONNELL

Fitzrovia's long been loved not just as the cooking pot of the West End ... but its melting pot too. With the thousands of famous pubs, bars and restaurants have come the flavours and accents of the world.

Historians have documented the Germans, the Italians, the Greeks, the Russians and the South Africans who set up home here. Marx and Engels planned a communist future, leaders of the African National Congress dreamt of an end to Apartheid, and some have even wondered if Hitler and Lenin walked down Charlotte Street while visiting in the same year.

Even now within 200 metres, you can visit the Indian YMCA to indulge your need for a curry or the Goodge Street Mosque to break your fast. A new soup shop has opened on Tottenham Street thanks to the super skills of two Israeli friends.

But can there be two short streets which offer more contrast in our area than Store Street and Cleveland Street? FN readers are hereby invited to vote for their favourite of these two much-loved strips.

## CLEVELAND STREET

Come here for the Indie chic with two rival Chinese restaurants that have been tipped as two of the best in London. The only Laundrette left for miles. Key cutters, dry cleaners, fish and chips, Brazilian pastries, tailor-made clothes an Oyster Bar and craft beer.



Friendly rivals: Bamboo Flute at 145 and Oriental Dragon restaurant at 100.



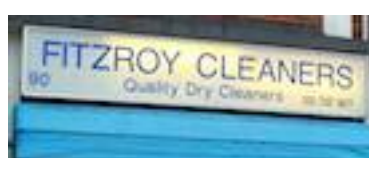
The last laundrette in the area at 88.



Brodie's key cutting at 88a



The Fish Bone at 82.



Fitzroy Cleaners at 90



Footes Music at No 41

## STORE STREET

Pop into the picture framers, pick up your hipster espresso, or get your diploma printed in beautiful hard-back style. Indulge your gothic fantasies in the book shop, plug in your guitar in a rented music studio, or see the diorama of the whole of London on your way to the Co-op.

But there's something totally different about both these streets .... Landlords in Store Street have long used the same style shop-fronts lending a smart style like a well-mown lawn. But up on Cleveland Street, the grass has grown longer and the moss has set up home too.

So what's your favourite and why?

Make sure to visit the stores in both streets for the Christmas



Orchidya at No 42



Coffee at The Life Goddess, No 30



Artists' materials at No 30

season and give our local businesses a boost. With so many developers moving in to make the area feel like just another city street, these two local favourites get our vote here at FN.



Bespoke tailor Paul Kitsiaros at 66

Seasons greetings  
from all at RIB  
Wishing you a happy and  
prosperous New Year

**RIB**  
Robert Irving Burns  
Property Consultants

[www.rib.co.uk](http://www.rib.co.uk)

# When skiffle was the art of improvisation... and plenty of plagiarism by the stars

By MIKE PENTELOW

All the skiffle stars of the mid-1950s performed during their early days in the Bread Basket coffee bar at 65 Cleveland Street, including Lonnie Donegan and Tommy Steele.

But two local lads appeared in the resident band, *The Vipers*, which also went on to have a string of hits, as described in a new book by Billy Bragg called *"Roots, Radicals and Rockers. How Skiffle Changed the World"* (Faber & Faber, £20).

One local was **Ron Gould** who grew up in *The Ship* public house, run by his father, at 134 New Cavendish Street, on the corner of Hanson Street.

Ron began playing washboard in 1955 with a bunch of friends called the Southern Skiffle Group, busking in nearby bomb-sites.

As he was leaving *The Ship* carrying his washboard his father declared to his customers: "Look at him, he's going out to play with a band that uses scrubbing boards and God knows what! Call that a band?"

A few days later he showed his father a record which listed "washboard" on the sleeve notes. Unimpressed he said: "Yeah, but that's a real bloody musical washboard."

Ron states in the book: "The attraction of skiffle was that it represented a rebellion against your parents and what they stood for. You could hear skiffle because it was being played in the street. There was a feeling that this was us... we're doing this for ourselves. It was anti-commercial. We're going to play our music and sod all the rest."

He went on to play the tea chest in the house band of the Bread Basket, which was a cellar cafe decorated with Spanish themed murals of flamenco dancers and guitarists. Sometimes they would be joined by Tommy Steele on guitar when he was on shore leave from the merchant navy.

The other local lad, who played guitar in the coffee bar, was Wally Whyton, who lived with his mother off Tottenham Court Road, and had bought his first guitar in a pub just north of the same road in 1954. Gradually this band, led by Wally, developed into the *Vipers*, which was playing regularly in the bar by 1956.



Bread Basket coffee bar in Cleveland Street advertises in NME in 1959.

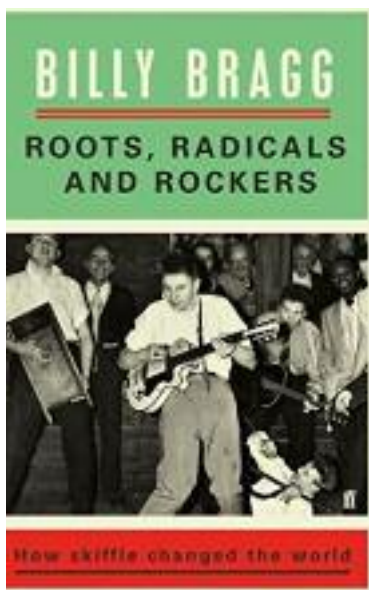
They bumped into John Hasted, a banjo player who was also a lecturer in atomic physics at University College London in Gower Street. He was a Marxist who had formed the London Youth Choir to take part in festivals all over the world.

He invited Whyton and the *Vipers* to get on his red lorry and play as part of the Soho Fair parade. Also on the lorry was a seaman called Redd Sullivan who sang a shanty called "Sail Away Ladies" with the phrase "Don't she [meaning the ship] rock?" from the shantyman, to which the crew replied: "Die-dee-o" as they pulled together.

The *Vipers* adapted (or possibly misheard) it and changed the lyrics into "Don't You Rock Me Daddy-O" and the refrain "Sing away lady, sing away."

It went down a storm when they performed it at the Bread Basket on July 30, 1956. Lonnie Donegan who was in the audience and joined them on stage for a couple of numbers, was particularly impressed.

He offered guitarist Johnny



Booker a job in his band. Donegan asked him to teach them "Don't You Rock Me Daddy-O" as he intended to record it himself... and copyright it himself. This so outraged Booker that he left the band and warned Whyton who copyrighted it before Donegan.

Ron Gould had earlier witnessed Donegan's pilfering tendencies when trying to borrow a Muddy Waters plantation record from the library of the United States Information Service in Grosvenor Square, only to be told it had been taken out by a Mr Donegan and never returned. Lonnie admitted years later that he had stolen it, and paid a fine.

Versions of the "Don't You Rock Me Daddy-O" by the *Vipers*, and Donegan, both shot into the

hit parade.

Booker had in fact introduced Whyton to Tommy Steele who then played with them at the Bread Basket. Tommy also brought his own band, the *Cavemen*, where they first played their hit "Rock with the Caveman" written by Lionel Bart. This was later recorded in a toilet at the Decca's studio because they had not booked a space, but this produced a natural echo which made it a best seller.

John Hasted printed a handy guide to constructing a tea-chest bass in a magazine which also gave information on making "a Lagerphone". This was an Australian invention comprising of 300 lager bottle tops attached to a broom pole which rattled when it was bounced on the floor.

An intriguing footnote is that Lonnie Donegan smuggled Buddy Holly (on tour in London) into an historic benefit concert for singer Big Bill Broonzy who was suffering from cancer. It took place in March 1958 at the Dominion Theatre in Tottenham Court Road where performing with Lonnie's group were the bands of Chris Barber and Ken Colyer. (Colyer, incidentally, had been brought up in Fitzroy Square where his parents were servants).

And who was in the audience at the age of 19 on his first trip to London? The future disc jockey John Peel.

## A Victorian Pryvate Eye

The indiscretions of those in the Tottenham Court Road area were frequently exposed in a scurrilous Victorian scandal sheet called *Paul Pry*.

The editors were frequently jailed, not only for libel, but also blackmail of victims to keep them out of the paper.

One of these was John Pardy, a "dog stealer" who preferred to describe himself as a "keeper of a register office for the recovery of lost dogs." In other words he would charge owners for the return of the dogs he had stolen.

When living in *Maple Street* (when it was called *London Street*) in 1849 he was jailed in a debtors' prison for obtaining credit by false pretences, describing himself by then as a stable keeper and horse dealer.

Back in 1838 he had brought *Paul Pry* into court accusing it of blackmailing him by demanding he pay £50 (worth about £5,000 today) in order not to be named for an unspecified felony. He was unsuccessful in this case.

This is outlined in an article called *Paul Pry in Camden: local victims of gossip in a penny paper of 1849* by David A Hayes in the latest issue of *Camden History Review* (available from Camden Local Studies & Archives Centre, Holborn Library, 32-38 Theobalds Road, WC1X 8PA).

Many of those gossiped about had their identities only slightly veiled by dropping some of the letters out of their names. Through diligent consultation of street directories, parish rate books, and census returns Mr Hayes has been able to have an educated guess at who they were.

They included:

Funeral carriage master E J Blackburn of **25 Store Street**, accused of passing off brown horses as black with the use of black polish.

Charles B--n of **Torrington Place** (when it was *Francis Street*), accused of "amours with the ballet girls" of the Queen's Theatre in **Tottenham Street**, which ended its days as the *Scala Theatre*.

Henry Aste, shopkeeper, of **169 Tottenham Court Road**, a married man with nine children, accused of spending too much time in the company of a pretty waitress in the *Bull's Head* pub at **101 Tottenham Court Road**.

Miss L E E--e of **Warren Street** was admonished for going to concerts frequently with different young men and returning at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning.

William Henry Morley, a 19-year-old lawyer's clerk, living at **34 Huntley Street** (when it was *Sussex Street*), was condemned as "a most tremendous boaster and swaggering bully."



Illustration by Clifford Harper

## Poetry corner

**WHITE CHRISTMAS**  
by Wendy Shutler

*Hushed in a bright silence of snow,  
the house  
wraps around us like a blanket.  
As pine logs crackle, burn and blaze,  
their smoky scent pervades our cave.  
Chestnuts roast upon the fire, and hot  
spiced wine, infusing our blood,  
makes us merry.*

*The great dog Oscar dances with me,  
round and round the Christmas tree.*

*Winter sunrise draws an outline,  
neon red on snowy fields.*

*The kids build a snowman on a white  
lawn  
as smooth as the icing on the Christ-  
mas cake,  
but for their footprints.*

*Lopsidedly, he melts away,  
some time after New Year's Day,  
with their footprints.*

Aspiring poets should submit  
their verse to us (contact details  
on page 2) by February 14, 2018.

**VIA POINT**  
By Beth Lynette Thyre

*It's something of a family joke:  
The snail-paced meander through the  
busy parking lot*

*The eyeing-up of potential harbours  
The fickle rejection of same  
Even the aborted docking  
Cast away on what grounds?  
On feel*

*On sudden skittishness  
On the deluded notion that there is a  
right spot  
Resplendent in its perfect suitability  
Further on*

*My husband slumps with staged res-  
ignation  
My teenaged son giggles  
But my twelve-year-old daughter  
- wrists still bare -  
Squishes her face between my head-  
rest and my window.  
"That space works, Mum," she says  
to my right ear,  
"You'll definitely fit. Just try again."*

*As if commitment were easy  
As if success were self-evident  
As if the parking lot were a via point  
And I had somewhere yet to go*

**For more verses by local poets get:  
A FITZROVIAN MISCELLANY  
Price just £3.50  
from Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre  
39 Tottenham Street, London W1T 4RX**

## Bloomsbury ward councillors surgeries

First Friday of the month 6:00-7:00pm Fitzrovia Centre 2 Foley Street  
Second and fourth Fridays of the month 6:00-7:00pm  
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 in your street or building  
**Adam Harrison, Sabrina Francis and Rishi Madlani**  
contact 020 7974 3111  
adam.harrison@camden.gov.uk rishi.madlani@camden.gov.uk  
sabrina.francis@camden.gov.uk

# The Duke of Darkness

A short story by SUNITAR SOLIAR

**Do you feel safe in the dark? Big Ben off, street lights off, windows boarded up. This city thinks it's getting one over on them by playing dead, living in this mausoleum of night.**

Children to bed early, a cold supper so as not to use the stove. Check for light leaks from gaps in windows so that the bombs that come from the sky can't see you. I have flown over life from up there — it is nothing to care about. But down here, at ground level, you and I have found a new way to thrive. In a dark alleyway, the cobbled echoes of Newman's Passage. New man. Quite. The men are all new to you, aren't they? But you are like old leather, soft, easy to open up. Yes, I watch you from Rathbone Street, skulking where your daytime pals can't see. If only you could know that I was watching you without you knowing! We're all of us fallen in the dark, aren't we? This thing inside me, this entity, could not have grown in the light. Brightness feeds things. It also kills them. In the dark rats crawl through the cold tunnels of the human mind.

And how long can I creep along this thin tunnel without you noticing? Past the recessed doorways, the grilles over the windows...aha! You've got me. You're older up close, you've got the frown-and-scold mouth of someone's mother. I've heard they call you The Lady, the men at the pub. Well, at the base, they call me The Duke, so that makes this a date.

'You didn't half frighten me,' you say. Good one. I'd laugh, but you're not in on the joke yet, are you? Looking at me full on with your coat open in a shirt and skirt that would be respectable if they were a couple of inches looser. We could pretend civility, discuss the possibility of a date, guarding our eyes from passers-by, but no one sees now.

'How much?'  
'Depends what you...'  
'Full.' Let's not pretend to be

delicate about it.

'Two guineas/ Couple of pounds.'

Are you pleased by that? Thinking you've won the lottery? If that's what you need to think, I'm happy to oblige.

But to step onto the black-and-white striped streets we must pretend. Take my arm? You don't mind if you do. A soft arm, as though street work has reduced you to the essentials, flesh, not bone. Oh, you want to talk. 'Nice night' - 'It's as black as any other' - 'Working late at the office?' - 'It's my night off. RAF' - 'Fancy! What does it look like from up there?' Did you squeeze my arm tighter? You think you're safer because I'm in the RAF. But it's the Duke you are with. Gordon Cummins is signed in at mess - it's silly what you can get for a pack of cigarettes. Your heel wobbles in a pothole as we turn a corner — is that an accident? With a different man at a different time of day, you might do this so that he is forced to catch you in his arms. I know your tricks.

'This is our stop.' If you only knew what you were unlocking the door to! It's perfect, this feeling for the banister in the dark, me following the creak of your shoes up the stairs. Another door — the mazes we go through, but we've arrived. This is your flat. A table lamp by the door — on. Stale as bad breath from all off the brown tape and cardboard wedged up against the windows, and everything in the room as limp as your flesh — a withered rug, the seat of the chair hollow where the springs have given up — though limpness is relative. You'll find out. Hasty, aren't you, to get me in the sack? Pulling aside the curtain that separates the living room from the bed. I'll take my own time, and who is that? On the piano. A young girl. A you with more air inside of her — pretty. You don't want me looking at her image, hurrying me on with 'Come this way, love.' But I'll decide when and what happens.

'Will she be back?'

That makes you squirm, doesn't it? 'She's at boarding school.' Chews you up, does it, the thought of this little angel at school while you let in a stranger who ogles her picture? Does it pain you that I might think of her while you let me have my way with you? 'It's why I work nights. The fees.'

Boo hoo. 'Born out of wedlock, was she?'

'Her father died.'

Bet that's a lie. Boarding school is probably a lie. A child out of wedlock: a thing shoved out of sight. Perhaps father is a peer, a swell, a promise of a different life that the child is deprived of by this whore of a mother. What is done in the dark may not breathe in the light, and here you tell me your dark lies.

'Shall we?'

I'll be the one to say. 'Turn the lights off.'

That's fine by you. Cheaper that way, I suppose. Cheap is the motto.

Zippers and buttons. You undressing on the other side. Well, here's the surprise I've saved! How will I look to you through rubber, the two big bug eyes of my mask? They're supposed to protect us from invisible killers, but isn't the smell of disinfectant sickening inside, doesn't the sight of your own inhuman, masked face nearly stop your heart? We'll find out.

In the darkness of your bedroom, you can hear me, can't you. The plastic creak of the mask moving away from my face with each breath. 'You alright?' There it is, a stocking I can feel on the bed. Good for many things. Your hair, crispy to the touch, your neck. There you go, jerking and twisting. I know that sound of your eyes bulging towards blackness, your hands no match for mine. If you could know the life that slips out of you into my hands, the life that spills out of me, while the rest of the world is still in a place so dark, unashamed. I could live here. If day, would never come back.

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# Fighting the post-war fascists



By ANN BASU  
Jews had become a prominent group in Fitzrovia by the time of the Second World War. Having migrated into the rich ethnic mix of Fitzrovia, these Jews were much less exposed to anti-Semitism than the East End Jews, who were also a far larger group.

However, as the 1930s progressed and German Fascism grew, strong forces threatened Jews across London and other British cities. The biggest home-grown Fascist movement was Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists, which operated mostly in the East End but had several offices in the West End, including a recruiting office in Regent Street.

## Hanson Street printer was in thick of battle

A local lad, Sidney Spellman, was one of the 43 Group's members. Brought up in Hanson Street, he was an apprentice compositor in the print trade at the time of his involvement. Sidney writes in a letter quoted in *The 43 Group*:

"My first involvement was attending fascist meetings on Saturday afternoons at Notting Hill Gate. Victor Burgess [a well-known Fascist and anti-Semite who belonged to the pro-Mosley British Union of Freeman before joining the UM] spoke. ... The platform was often knocked over ... One meeting was the first night of the Succoth festival [a Jewish festival commemorating the Exodus from Egypt and taking place between late September and late October]. The Fascists were about 2,000 strong. They were protected by mounted and foot police who kept us apart. Next morning the *Daily Graphic* had a large front page picture showing me in the front row. I needed this to show my father why I had not been at synagogue the previous evening."

The 43 Group's response to the Fascists was "we were born here! We fought for this country and were trained to kill the same type of bastard coming back out of the woodwork. They, too, must be attacked and destroyed. If you can't do it, we will!"

Some Jews living in Fitzrovia and the West End, like many other Londoners, were concerned with avoiding 'trouble' and going about their daily business without interference.

In my own family of Fitzrovia tailors this might have been the ruling view, judging from the

memories of my mother's cousin Henry, a small boy in the 1930s. The people he knew were "humble and timid people", he says, not well-informed about the current situation and not prone to getting into fights with anyone.

But by 1936 the feelings of unease and fearfulness at what



Workers take to the streets against Mosley's fascists

was going on in Nazi Germany and at home had built up into a powerful sense of threat that was causing constant pressure on the Board of Deputies to take action. A Jewish Defence Campaign set up by the Board of Deputies was announced in the *Jewish Chronicle* on July 24, 1936, less than three months before the Mosleyites tried to march in Cable Street.

The Defence Campaign aimed to oppose the denigration of and attacks on Jews by reasoned arguments against anti-Semitism and the presentation of the positive contribution Jews were making to British society.

The Jewish People's Council against Fascism and Anti-Semitism was also formed at this time. This took action on the streets and engaged in anti-defamation work that exposed the political motives of the fascists. It worked closely with the National Council for Civil Liberties, organising joint conferences and having their speakers on the same platform at meetings. Other defence organisations were formed at around the same time, including a Jewish ex-servicemen's organisation that soon had more than a thousand members.

### COURT APPEARANCES

Numbers of local residents resisted the BUF, and sometimes ended up in court. The *Times* of June 25, 1937 reports that a fitter's mate and St. Pancras resident, William Joseph Fairman, had been fined 40 shillings (£2) for "using insulting words and behaviour" by shouting "Smash Fascism! Down with the Fascists!" at a group of BUF marchers from Shoreditch and Stepney who were marching through St. Pancras opposed by "about 1,000 St. Pancras residents".

Fairman had been found with "Communist literature and application forms". He must have been among many Communists who opposed the BUF locally. Anti-Fascist protest continued un-

abated until the outbreak of war and the banning of the BUF, along with the internment of its key figures including Mosley.

But after the War in the late 1940s there were attempts by Mosley and others to revive the British Fascist movement. Markets including Soho's Berwick Street market were targeted for distribution of Fascist literature, although Hackney was the area of London most affected by the Mosleyites. Several other Fascist groups were operating at that time, many based in West London – perhaps as many as 14 groups in London.

This drive was vigorously countered by various groups who by 1950 had aided in ending the 'Union Movement', as Mosley's new group was called.

### LYONS CORNER HOUSE

The 43 Group consisted of Jewish men and women many of whom had served in the War and weren't prepared to see Fascism take root again in British soil. Their story is compellingly told by one of the 43 Group's key members, Morris Beckman, in his book, *The 43 Group* (1992). The 43 Group frequently met at an old and popular rendezvous for Jewish people: Lyons' Corner House in **Tottenham Court Road**. Its office was in Panton Street, Soho.

The Group helped to beat the Mosleyites by continual pressure on the Fascists often leading to violent confrontations at Fascist meetings; by working to gain support from people living in the most affected localities; and by obtaining advance information on the movements and intentions of the UM by successfully using infiltrators.

By 1950 Oswald Mosley had conceded that efforts to keep the UM going had failed, moving to Ireland in 1951. So, by 1950, those like Fitzrovia's Sidney Spellman who had fought to defeat post-war Fascism could feel that their job was completed.

## Star billing for this film restaurant

**BFI Stephen Street Kitchen, 21 Stephen Street.**

The British Film Institute is the main organisation - government and lottery assisted - supporting and promoting the making of British film and television. Benugo is a chain that specialises in having restaurants and cafes in places like Westminster Abbey, London Wall, and the House of St Barnabas in Soho (and John Lewis).

Down an easy-to-miss small street off Tottenham Court Road, or reached by Gresse Street off Rathbone Place, is the Benugo-run Stephen Street Kitchen, attached to offices (and small downstairs viewing cinemas) of the British Film Institute.

I find this a really pleasant place to go to. There is a big bar space with sofas if you just want a drink, and a café-restaurant if you want to eat – and a pleasant outside terrace at the back, if you dare.

Not a large menu but plenty of choices. Small plates with things like smoked salmon scotch eggs, or roasted cauliflower with mushrooms; wood-fired flat-breads like small pizzas; salads; grilled sandwiches; mains of fish or chicken or beef, with vegetarian alternatives.



By the DINING DETECTIVE

page 14 is at 21 Conway Street. PICTURE PUZZLE: The picture on

I've been there three times (learning now not to review a place until I've made several visits), and enjoyed the informality, the food, the reasonably-priced wine by the glass or carafe or bottle, the pleasant staff – and an opportunity to eat out within my budget.

And just a thank-you here to the restaurants like this one that allow you to taste the wine before you order – in some of the places I've reviewed over the years a 'tasting' glass adds £2 to your bill before you start.

The wood-fired flat-breads are like long, thin pizzas with varied tasty toppings: aubergine,

courgette, sundried tomatoes and mozzarella; ham, mushrooms and peas; spicy pulled beef, peppers and sweetcorn - priced from £9.95 to £11.95; a couple to share with a salad is a meal for two.

If you'd rather have a main, the two most expensive (and really enjoyable) are roast free-range chicken, beautifully-cooked and juicy when I had it, served on a bed of crispy potato strips with baby leeks; and an extraordinary-looking (and good-tasting) slow-cooked, short rib of beef with chunky chips and beetroot and horseradish. For vegetarians, as well as half the wood-fired flat-breads and all of the sides, there is beetroot and ricotta ravioli as a main. Also there is sea bream with spring greens, fennel and citrus butter; plus a delicious pan-seared cod loin with chorizo and mint-infused broad beans and peas, mixed.

All mains are priced from £12.50 to £16.95. One of the really tasty side dishes, a snack in itself, is Sweet Potato chunks with chilli, lime and yoghurt (£3.50).

Desserts include affogato, cheesecake and profiteroles – and a flourless chocolate and hazelnut cake that sounds interesting – all £3.50 to £5.50.

# A pioneering artist whose life should be filmed

By HELENE PARRY

Over the years, Fitzrovia has welcomed many artists, some better known than others. One such resident was the Welsh painter Richard Wilson (1714–1782) who co-founded the Royal Academy of Arts, inspired Constable and Turner, and has been called the father of British landscape painting.

Yet the mountains of North Wales aren't known as "Wilson country". And as yet, there's been no award-winning arthouse movie, *Mr Wilson*, starring Anthony Hopkins or Michael Sheen as the eccentric, gifted brushmeister. So why is Richard Wilson not a household name today? The *Fitzrovia News* presents its own sketch of the man many critics consider the greatest painter Wales has ever produced.

Fittingly for a landscape artist, Richard Wilson was a child of the mountains – born in Pene-goes, rural North Wales. His father was a clergyman, but young Richard decided against following his father into the Church, instead moving to London in 1729 to train as a portrait painter – at the time, the best way for an artist to make a living. He became a competent portraitist, even being admitted to court to paint the future King George III (then Prince of Wales). But his love of nature must have proved stronger than the prospect of a safe career, because in 1750 he travelled to Italy to redirect his energies into landscape painting.

Wilson set up a studio in Rome and stayed in Italy for six years, painting the scenery around him, gradually developing his own style. It is fair to say he changed the way British and European artists approached landscape painting. Before Wilson, landscape artists tended to sketch from nature, but then return to the studio to produce idealised versions of what they had seen. But, rather than follow the fashion, Wilson painted what was in front of him, closely observing the topography, the light and weather conditions, and bringing to his work an emotional engagement with the scene.

On his return to London in 1757, Wilson became the first major British painter to concentrate on landscape painting.

In search of inspiring landscapes to paint, he soon turned his attention to his native Wales. Up until then Wales had been considered a bleak terrain of no interest to artists, but Wilson's powerful paintings opened his artistic contemporaries' eyes to the dramatic mountains and stunning Welsh scenery. A young JMW Turner admired Wilson's work so much, he even trekked across the Welsh



RICHARD WILSON (National Portrait Gallery)



*A View from Tivoli over the Campagna, by Richard Wilson*

hills to find the precise spots Wilson had painted from, so that he could replicate the scenes.

In addition, Wilson revolutionised the English country house picture. Traditionally, the house itself had always taken centre stage. Wilson pushed the building to one side, a technique later copied by Constable, who, after seeing Wilson's painting of Tabley House in Cheshire, wrote that it "still swims in my brain like a delicious dream".

Wilson took lodgings in Charlotte Street, which at the time afforded views of the open countryside, and would invite his friends to come and watch the sunset from his balcony.

**Over the years he lived at three addresses in Charlotte Street (8, 76 and 78 under present numbering), as well as 85 Great Titchfield Street, 21 Bolsover Street (when it was called Norton Street), Rathbone Place, and Tottenham Street (the part which was then called Chapel Street, between Whitfield Street and Tottenham Court Road) until shortly before his death..**

He also played skittles and drank in the Farthing Pie House in Euston Road (now called the Green Man)

Wilson enjoyed a comfortable, convivial existence during the 1760s. In December 1786 he became one of the founder members of the Royal Academy. But gradually the market for his type of landscape painting disappeared and his income dwindled.

In a quirky aside, Wilson is believed to have painted the sign of the We Three Loggerheads Inn in Mold, North Wales. Not many artists are known for taking on such a commission (although Chagall would certainly have done justice to The Green Man).

Richard Wilson died in Llanferres in May 1782, and was buried in the churchyard of St Mary's at nearby Mold. In Wales he is still considered the country's most distinguished painter, and the Royal Cambrian Academy has held exhibitions of his work as recently as 2014.

Today, Richard Wilson's paintings hang in galleries throughout the world, including Tate Britain and the National Gallery. Although his powerful, romantic landscapes are far removed from the London quarters he lived and worked in, Fitzrovia can be proud to number, among its former residents, the "father of British landscape painting".



## Murder in 1905...

**The unmasking of the Union Street sign on the corner of Riding House Street and Cleveland Street (pictured above) reminds us of a murder there in 1905.**

Riding House Street between Great Titchfield Street and Cleveland Street was called Union Street until 1937.

In 1905 a 50-year-old man called William Butler lived in a flat in the street with Mary Allen, also aged 50. Trouble started when her son from a previous marriage, George Melhuish, moved in.

The two men did not get on, resulting in a fight which led to Butler being taken to hospital with a broken jaw.

He thought Mary supported the attack and vowed vengeance

on her and her son to neighbours.

On the morning of September 24, 1905 he stabbed Mary four times with a shoemaker's knife. She was taken to nearby Middlesex Hospital in Mortimer Street, but died later in the day, after naming Butler as her attacker.

At his Old Bailey trial he claimed he was so drunk at the time that he did not know what he was doing. But several witnesses gave evidence of his threats against her, and he was convicted of murder.

He was hanged at Pentonville on November 7 the same year. Despite being only 5 foot 2 inches tall he weighed 15 stone, and was despatched with a six feet drop.

A sketch of him appears in the December issue of *True Detective* magazine.

## .... and in 1945

**A meeting in the Duke of York in Rathbone Street just after the war led to the murder of a Canadian army captain in Soho.**

The two men in the pub wore British army uniforms although neither was entitled to.

One was Robert Blaine, a 24-year-old labourer from Walworth, south London, who had been discharged in April 1945 from the army, which considered him a psychopath.

The other was a 21-year-old Scot called Charles Connelly who was an army deserter.

Then on September 14, 1945 they were walking down Wardour Street and saw a pile of bricks. Connelly told Blaine to pick one up, which he did thinking it was to be used to break a window for a housebreaking robbery.

Then, according to Blaine, he saw Connelly in an alley hitting a man on the head with a brick. He took the brick off him, but then they went through the unconscious victim's pockets.

They heard two policeman coming so ran off.

One of them caught Blaine who told him: "Jock clouted him. I didn't see if there was a fight. I heard a holler and went up to them. I only took some gear. That's all I know." Meanwhile Connelly escaped.

The victim, who was found to be dead, was Captain John Alexander Ritchie, aged 41, sta-

tioned in Hampshire.

Blaine was tried for murder at the Old Bailey on November 15, 1945.

Police sergeant John Dimsey, who had arrested the prisoner, gave evidence that when he told him the man was dead with his head bashed in with a brick, the prisoner said: "I didn't do it. The other one hit him when I was holding him."

Blaine denied using these words, which were not in his confession, stating that although he robbed the man he at no time harmed him.

For some reason, however, the defence lawyer did not cross-examine the police about the use of the words "when I was holding him."

It was these words that led to the guilty verdict and the death sentence. He was hanged at Wandsworth Prison on December 29, 1945, by Albert Pierrepoint (a regular customer in the Fitzroy Tavern, Charlotte Street).

Connelly had escaped to America by stowing aboard a ship, only to be deported back to England in handcuffs. But because he was using the alias of Kelly, he was released, and by the time his true identity was realised he had disappeared, and was never captured.

A full account of the case is in the winter special issue of *True Detective*

# Goddesses and Gods of Fitzrovia

The first in an occasional series by SUE BLUNDELL

The next time you walk down Chenies Street, look out for the goddess Athena, gazing down at you from on high in North Crescent. I should really call her Minerva – the Roman counterpart of the Greek goddess Athena – since the building she presides over is Minerva House.

But in this statue she appears very much in her Greek guise, with helmet, spear and shield. The head of the Gorgon Medusa, the monster who turns men who look at her into stone, is displayed on her shield.

Minerva House is a former car showroom and workshop, created for the Minerva Motor Company, a Belgian firm, in 1912-13. One early importer of Minerva cars was Charles Rolls, who set up a dealership in Fulham in 1903. Over in Fitzrovia, Minerva House was designed by George Vernon, and was built in Portland Stone. It is a grade II listed building.

I don't know why a Belgian motor manufacturer chose Minerva as the figurehead for its company, but I can hazard a guess. She's a goddess who looks reliable and tough, capable of outdistancing other travellers. And in mythology she was a renowned technician and inventor. Her mod-



ern reputation for wisdom, however, is a bit undeserved. She and her Greek equivalent Athena are clever, rather than wise. They are good at manipulating both material and people. They are very good at getting their own way.

But the most striking quality of both Athena and Minerva is their militarism. A famous warrior goddess, Athena rarely appears anywhere without her weapons and armour. In Homer's poem the Iliad, she regularly sweeps down to the battlefield at Troy, bellowing war cries. She storms through the Greek ranks, bullying her favourites into killing more Trojans, and guiding their spears into enemy flesh. She is totally ruthless.

So it is entirely appropriate that Chenies Street should contain a number of military references.

When you're there you can easily miss Minerva House because it's partially obscured by the Eisenhower Centre. This is a concrete structure containing the main entrance to a deep-level shelter built under Goodge Street tube station in 1942. The shelter was occupied by the US Army Signal Corps during the preparations for the D-Day landings. It's sometimes said that General Eisenhower, the Supreme Allied Commander, met Churchill there during the final run-up to the landings, but this has never been confirmed. Nowadays it is used for archive storage, and there is no public access.

Just outside the Eisenhower Centre there's a memorial to The Rangers, the 12th (County of London) Battalion of the London Regiment. Wreathes are still laid there on Remembrance Day.

And finally on the other side of Chenies Street, at number 16, there's The Drill Hall, built in 1882 as premises for The Bloomsbury Rifles. It's now occupied by RADA Studios, and the building has been associated with the arts for a long time. It was used as a rehearsal space by Nijinsky and the Ballets Russes in the early 1900s, and for Gang Shows during the Second World War. From the 1980s until 2012 it was an arts cen-



tre celebrated for its cutting edge theatre.

I can't say that I like the goddess Athena all that much, but she's been quite an important figure in my life. The first conference paper I ever gave, in Washington in the early 1990s, was about the problem of Athena. How did an intensely patriarchal society like that of classical Athens cope with being represented by a female deity? The answer I gave, in brief, was that the Athenians had manipulated the image of their patron goddess to emphasise her masculine qualities (her warrior aspect) and downplay her feminine side.

"She's not a real woman," as a friend of mine once said of Margaret Thatcher. I didn't like Margaret Thatcher either – far from it – but I did resent the way in which she was often portrayed by the media, as a closet male. Any powerful woman must essentially be a man, they seemed to be saying.

The comparison between Thatcher and Athena isn't an idle one. The warrior Athena became the prototype for the figure of Britannia, invented by the Romans when they conquered our country. And Britannia was of course one of the many guises which cartoonists of the 1980s loved to confer on our first woman Prime Minister, especially when she was doing battle with the EU.

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THE  
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Picture  
puzzle

How well do you know Fitzrovia? Can you identify where this picture was taken? Answer below the Dining Detective picture on page 12.



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# The piano's on my foot



**The Piano Man No 11 by CLIFFORD SLAPPER**

One key part of being a live pianist in bars or clubs is the tradition of the request. A good signal of enthusiasm from the crowd, the right request at the right time can really lift the mood. On the other hand, this tradition can occasionally be used in less helpful ways.

Of course, yours truly has never experienced, but has heard tales of, the hapless player being asked if he takes requests, only to be requested by the would-be wit to cease playing. More likely, the problem would be that the music is in full swing, with lively punters dancing around the edges of the room to a piano playing some Jerry Lee Lewis to its full percussive potential, when a jejune geek totters forward to demand Bach's Mass in B minor. This is best dealt with by a sincerely delivered one-word reply: "Later".

Such a change in mood can also have its comical side. My old friend, Lisa, would always request the country song, 'Ruby, Don't Take Your Love To Town', which, like many country songs, is rather tragic. It tells the tale of a man in a wheelchair having to watch his wife get made up to go out on the town without him. Somehow it is so sad, it's funny.

According to statistical records, the top ten songs requested in piano bars include 'Don't Stop Believing' by Journey,

'Sweet Caroline' by Neil Diamond, and 'Piano Man' by Billy Joel.

'Sweet Caroline' is the archetype of the singalong song which us pianists either love or hate. Some enjoy leading singalongs. Communal musical harmony is a positive thing. But more often than not, the reality can be painful, an inebriated mass howling and shouting which owes more to the football terraces than to the bliss of an ethereal choir.

Playing some years ago at the Groucho Club, I was approached by an extremely polite and self-eff-

## Requests can make a monkey out of you

facing Stephen Fry, who charmingly framed his request as an apology. It turned out his embarrassment was at asking for "anything by Elton John", fearing that this was too predictable. I quickly reassured him that it was a fine request, and duly obliged by offering a spirited rendition of 'Benny And The Jets' (with thanks that he had not requested Billy Joel!)

It is fascinating to see how public group singalongs some-



Cartoon by Chris Tyler  
times rewrite certain aspects of a song. For example, often when I have played David Bowie's 'Life On Mars?' and people have started singing along, they will omit the second half of the chorus ("Take a look at the law man...") and proceed straight into the well-known refrain, "...Is there life on Mars?" too early. Perhaps they are impatient to get to the climactic line. As the pianist, I have to make a split second decision whether to follow their error or stick to my guns and let them follow me instead.

My dear old friend, magician Fay Presto, used to ask people requesting her favourite tricks to write their requests on a fiver. With inflation that should probably now be a tenner.

But perhaps the last word on requests should go to our simian friends. There was a television advertisement many years ago for PG Tips tea which our more mature readers will certainly recall. Two monkeys were carrying a piano up some stairs. The young monkey cries out, "Dad, do you know the piano's on my foot?!" to which the older monkey replied, "No, son, but you hum it and I'll play it!"

# A history of every street in the area

A comprehensive history of every street in western Fitzrovia is included in the recently published Survey of London for South East Marylebone (Volume 52, Part 2).

It includes archive pictures of many pubs, concert halls, places of worship, historic restaurants, art schools, and a fire station... all long demolished.

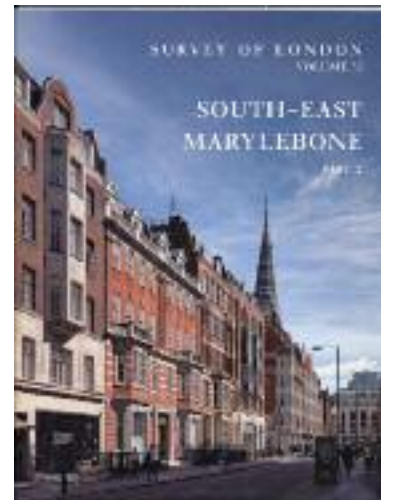
Among the pubs are: The Colosseum at 198 Great Portland Street (there from at least 1826 to at least 1890), the City of Hereford at 1 Cleveland Street on the corner of Riding House Street (at least 1809 until the 1920s), and the Castle at 28 Great Castle Street (at least 1826 until at least 1898).

Concert halls include Queens Hall at 4 Langham Place (there from 1893 to 1941), and the Philharmonic Hall (previously St James's Hall from 1905) at 97 Great Portland Street (from 1913 to 1929).

Many musicians (and singers such as Caruso) performing at these venues dined at Paganini's restaurant at 40-48 Great Portland Street from 1884 to 1941 when most of it was bombed, but No 40 continued as a buffet until 1955.

St Paul's Chapel on the north west corner of Great Portland Street and Riding House Street, was built privately in 1760 as the Portland Chapel and demolished in 1906 according to the text, but pictured in 1908 according to the caption.

The West London School of Art was at 153-155 Great Titchfield Street from 1879 (having pre-



*Margaret Street on the book cover.*

viously been in Wells Street from 1862) until 1889. It also hosted the Artists Rifle Volunteer Corps in the 1880s.

Art students from here in its Wells Street days may well have used Fuller's Temple of Fancy which was at 34 Rathbone Place from 1809 until 1862, as a printer and seller of artists' materials.

Also pictured is a fire station which was at 171 Great Portland Street from 1866 until at least 1902; and the Radium Institute which was at 1-3 Riding House Street from 1910 until 1947 when it was taken over by the NSPCA.

As well as modern pictures there are maps of the whole area from 1870 and 2010.

The bad news is that the book (published by the Yale University Press) can only be bought with Volume 51 for a combined price of £150. But the text can be visited online.

# Looking back through the archives

## 40 years ago

### Warren play area off to great start

**From Tower, December 1977:**  
The Warren Playground Restoration Appeal got off to a grand start with a Funday that raised £80, wrote appeal secretary Gill Burke.

"The highlight was the five-a-side football knockout, giving a glimpse of one of the many recreational uses to which the Warren will be put when the money is raised and the restoration completed.

"The prize for the five-a-side was a crate of beer, generously donated by Collet, Dickenson and Pierce of Howland Street.

"There was some consternation when the winners proved to be too young to drink the prize, but the gallant (adult) losers soon

came to a satisfactory arrangement with them.

"Well over 200 people came - most of them children - proving, yet again, that Fitzrovia is a family district which really does need a recreation area like the Warren."

Cricket matches, cribbage leagues, shops, restaurants and pubs had all raised money.

### Swami concert

A man who claims to be able to hold his breath for 30 minutes and make sounds come out of his ears [scope for a misprint] was due to perform the art of Taan at the Mandeer Restaurant in Hanway Place on January 7, 1978. Swami Nadabrahmananda was billed as one of the greatest living classical Indian musicians and the last know master of Taan, the exact science of sound.

### All round entertainer

Peter Kenyon, a versatile performer living in Langham Street, had a busy schedule every night from 9.30pm to 2.30am, according

to Alfie Maron. "He starts off at the famous Talk of the Town, where he is part of a dancing group. After the early show, he darts off to the Burlesque Club in Regent Street, where he does a speciality Adagio act. As soon as this performance is over, he's off again to the Hironelle to do a singing and dancing stint."

### Bum's rush

Landlord Alan Thorne thought nothing of it when he served a pint to an anorak-clad tourist in The Hope the other week - until the customer went to sit down, that is. It then became apparent that the anorak was the only thing he was wearing!

Given, as it were, the bum's rush by Alan, he was later apprehended in the Rising Sun, Tottenham Court Road. I (wrote the gossip columnist) hear that he was Swiss and claimed he had been robbed; lucky man, at least they left him with the price of a pint...



*Orphans, one of the Middlesex Hospital paintings under threat.*

## 10 years ago

**From Fitzrovia News, Autumn 2007:**

A campaign to save four masterpieces by artist Frederick Cayley Robinson (1862-1927) for public view was launched by Fiona Green. The paintings entitled collectively as "The Acts of Mercy" were at the time in Middlesex Hospital reception area, Mortimer Street. They depicted first world war nursing and were chosen to be placed in the hospital by arts patron Sir Edmund Davis.

The private developers who had bought the hospital were intending to sell them at private auction.

Sir Nicholas Serota, director of the Tate Gallery, opposing this, declared: "It would seem wrong that Sir Edmund Davis' wishes for them to serve as an inspiration to patients and medical staff should be ignored by a subsequent generation."

The hospital claimed there was not enough room for them in the new UCH hospital in Euston Road.

# WHAT'S ON AROUND FITZROVIA

Email [news@fitzrovia.org.uk](mailto:news@fitzrovia.org.uk) by February 17, 2018 for the March issue and put "Listings" in the subject box

## MUSIC

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



Peter and Barbara Snape

**King & Queen**, 1 Foley St: Folk once a month on Fridays 8-11pm (visit [web.mustradclub.co.uk](http://web.mustradclub.co.uk)). Peter and Barbara Snape sing music hall songs (pictured) and tunes from Katie and John Howson, Dec 8. Burns Night celebrated by Carol Andersn & Racker Donnelly, Jan 19. Brian Peters, Feb 16. Michael Sheehy & Ed Barrett, plus Marianne McAleer, March 9.

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)): The Mike Flowers Pops' Singalong Christmas Party, Dec 11. The Annual Christmas Tour: Bad Manners, Dec 16. Boot Boys Christmas Knees-up, Dec 22. Christmas Show: Ruts DC, Dec 23. Climax Blues Band, Jan 17. Stan Webb's Chicken Shack, Jan 19. Downliners Sect, Jan 20. Sex Pistols Experience, Feb 24. Juicy Lucy, Feb 27. The Ramones, March 8.

**UCL North Cloisters**, Gower St: Chamber Music Club Christmas Concert, both choral and instrumental, including first performance of Puer Natus est Nobis by Roger Beeson, Dec 12, 6-7 pm.

## COMEDY

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

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

## PUB QUIZZES

**Carpenters Arms**, 68-70 Whitfield St. Every Tuesday.

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

**Rising Sun**, 46 Tottenham Court Rd. Every Wednesday, 8pm

## THEATRE

**Bloomsbury Theatre Studio**, 15 Gordon St ([thebloomsbury.com](http://thebloomsbury.com)): A Peril of the Sea, Dec 14-16. Roll Over Atlantic, Dec 18-19. Graham Fellows (aka John Shuttleworth and Jilted John): Completely Out of Character, Jan 29-30. Carl Hutchinson "Live", March 2.

**Camden People's Theatre**, 58-60 Hampstead Rd ([cptheatre.co.uk](http://cptheatre.co.uk)): Man On The Moon, Dec 12-13. Anne Meets Jeffrey, Dec 13-14. We've Got Each Other, Dec 14-16. Mr Mineshaft, Dec 15-16. The Book of Darkness and Light, Dec 19-20. Sing-A-Long-A-Muppets, Christmas Carol, Dec 21-22. Calm Down Dear: Big Bang 1, Jan 15. So Many Reasons, Jan 16-Feb 3. Enter The Dragons, Jan 16-17. The Gentle Art of Punishment, Jan 18-20. The Doctor Is In, Jan 21. Calm Down Dear: Big Bang 2, Jan 22. Enticement Machine, Jan 23. Psychopomp, Jan 24. Syd & Sylvia, Jan 25. All Of Me, Jan 26-27. Temporary, Jan 28. Calm Down Dear: Big Bang 3, Jan 29. Bodies [Broken 4U], Jan 30. Sexy, Jan 31-Feb 3. Thunder Road, Feb 4.

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

**Fitzrovia Chapel**, Pearson Square: Dylan Thomas: A Child's Christmas In Wales, Dec 15, 1pm.



**London Palladium**, Argyll St ([london-palladium.co.uk](http://london-palladium.co.uk)): Dick Whittington, starring Julian Clary and Elaine Page, Dec 9-Jan 14.



Thirty Christmases

**New Diorama Theatre** ([newdiorama.com](http://newdiorama.com)), 15-16 Triton St (Euston Rd opposite Fitzroy St): Thirty Christmases (a Rebellious Comedy for Grown-Ups), Dec 4-23.

**The Wheatsheaf**, 25 Rathbone Place: The Christmas Carol, starring Guy Masterson, Dec 17 and 18, 2.30 and 7.30pm. A 50 per cent discount to Fitzrovia News readers, quoting code "Charles" when booking at: [www.TheChristmasCarol.co.uk](http://www.TheChristmasCarol.co.uk)

## CINEMA

**Bloomsbury Studio**, 15 Gordon St ([thebloomsbury.com](http://thebloomsbury.com)): Italian documentary season (all 7pm): Surbiles, Dec 12. Il Monte delle Formiche, Dec 16. L'ultima Spiaggia, Feb 20.

**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. Trasmontane, about a young blind man in Lebanon, Dec 10. Revolution, Jan 14. First Cry, and Mother Jones and her Children, Feb 11. She's Beautiful when She is Angry, March 11. [socialistfilm.blogspot.co.uk](http://socialistfilm.blogspot.co.uk)

**Charlotte Street Hotel**, 15-17 Charlotte St: Film Club with meal and a movie for £40. To book tickets visit [bit.ly/CharlotteStreetFilmClub](http://bit.ly/CharlotteStreetFilmClub). Special screening of Wonder (2017), Dec 9, 11am to raise money for the Magic Breakfast Charity (£10.90, child £5.69), book through [purearth.co.uk](http://purearth.co.uk).

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

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

**Regent Street Cinema**, 309 Regent St: For daily programme visit [regentstreetcinema.com](http://regentstreetcinema.com). Matinee classics every Wednesday at 2pm, for over 55s, £1.75. Kids' Kino Club, every Saturday, 11.30am.

**Royal Anthropological Institute**, 50 Fitzroy St ([raifilm.org.uk](http://raifilm.org.uk)). Regular programme of interesting screenings.

## 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.

## CHRISTMAS

**Pollocks Toy Museum**, 1 Scala St: Christmas themed evening, with mulled wine, Friday, December 8, 5-8pm.

## EXHIBITIONS

**British Museum**, Great Russell St ([britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)): Free: On violence and beauty: reflections on war, until Jan 21. The business of prints, until Jan 28. The currency of communism, until March 18. Pay for: Scythians, until Jan 14. Living with gods: peoples, places and worlds beyond, until April 8.

**Grant Museum of Zoology**, 21 University St: The museum of ordinary animals, until Dec 16, 1-5pm.

**Royal College of Nursing Library and Heritage Centre**, 20 Cavendish Square, Henrietta Place entrance opposite John Lewis Food Hall ([rcn.org.uk/whatson](http://rcn.org.uk/whatson)): RCN Centenary Exhibition, until Dec 22.

**UCL Art Museum**, South Cloisters, Wilkins Building, Gower St: The composition has been reversed, new works by Slade artists, until Dec 15, 1-5pm.

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

**UCL Octagon Gallery**, Wilkins Building, Gower St: What Does It Mean To Be Human? Until Feb 28.

**Wellcome Library**, 183 Euston Rd ([wellcomecollection.org](http://wellcomecollection.org)): Can Graphic Design Save Your Life?, until Jan 14. Ayurvedic Man: encounters with Indian medicine, until Apr 8. Permanent exhibitions: Medicine Now, and Medicine Man

## TALKS

**Sohemian Society**, Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place: David Bowie Made Me Gay, by Darryl Bullock, Dec 7, 7.30pm.

**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.

## FAMILY

**Grant Museum of Zoology**, 21 University St: Explore zoology, Dec 9, 1-4pm. Creature creations, produce art inspired by weird and wonderful animals in the museum, Dec 16, 1-4pm.

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## ART

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



**Alison Jacques Gallery**, 18 Berners St: Juergen Teller "Go-Sees, Bubenreuth Kids and a Fairytale about a King", to Jan 13. Pictured above: Vesna.

**Bartha Contemporary**, 25 Margaret St: S. Baumkotter, J. Howell & P. Sims "Accrochage", to Jan 27.



**Josh Lilley**, 44-46 Riding House St: Alex Da Corte "Bad Land", to Dec 23. Pictured above: installation view.



**Narrative Projects**, 110 New Cavendish St: Harm van den Dorpel "Asking for a Friend" (pictured above), to Jan 20.



**Tristan Hoare**, 6 Fitzroy Square: "Studio Africa !" (pictured above), to Dec 20.



**Tiwani Contemporary**, 16 Little Portland St: Manuel Mathieu "Truth to Power", to Dec 22. Pictured above: "Eternal Flowers".