

FitzroviaNews



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

Issue 152 Spring 2019

Road scheme risks health of residents at council block

Grafton Way residents ignored by Mayor and hit by Camden with increased pollution

By Linus Rees

The health of hundreds of residents in a council block in Fitzrovia is being put at risk because their street has been left out of the Mayor of London's new Ultra Low Emission Zone and will have increased motor traffic from a new road scheme designed by Camden Council.

People living at 30-40 Grafton Way will suffer the double whammy of being excluded from the Mayor's 24/7 pollution control this April and face an increase in vehicle fumes from displaced road traffic from Camden Council's £35m West End Project to convert Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street to two-way working when it is completed in spring 2020.

The street is part of the busy Euston Circus road system which means drivers coming from the east who want to go north are directed along part of Grafton Way. The road design is a heavily polluted leftover from the 1960s and Camden Council and the Mayor of London have failed to bring it into the 21st century by getting rid of the gyratory, despite spending millions on laying granite paving stones imported from China to cajole shoppers into the nearby Tottenham Court Road.

Jo Hurford who lives in the Camden owned block on Grafton Way told *Fitzrovia News* that the council has ignored residents concerns about air quality and done nothing to address the problem.

"I have been trying to get the Council to listen to me since I first went to a meeting about the Project in 2014.

"I told them that the potential for life-limiting health impacts on Grafton Way residents should mean the West End Project is rethought, or at a minimum some kind of mitigation is offered for residents like air filtration.

"The Council say some areas will get better air and some much worse, they've looked at the picture from a distance and claim an



Traffic island castaways. Residents at 30-40 Grafton Way are outside the congestion charge area, will be excluded from Ultra Low Emission Zone, and face increased pollution from Camden's West End Project.

'overall' improvement, but this is not how it works in terms of human health. If you make traffic flow heavier in Grafton Way pollution will increase and residents will suffer even more than they are already," she said.

Camden claims its scheme will reduce overall traffic in the West End Project area and improve conditions for cyclists on Gower Street. But the council has been criticised because businesses and shoppers on Tottenham Court Road will gain at the expense of many residential side streets

which, like Grafton Way, will see increased motor traffic according to traffic modelling published in 2014.

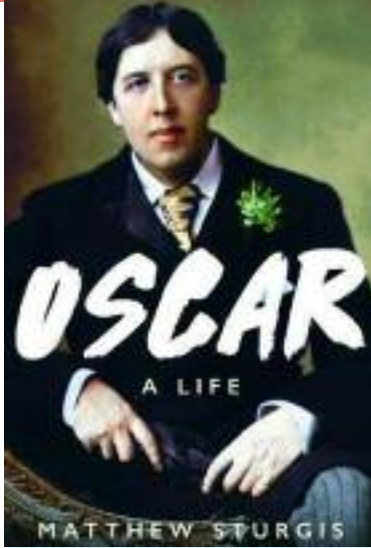
Nitrogen Dioxide, a gas that causes respiratory problems, is already above the legal limit on Grafton Way according to measurements taken by residents. The street is also likely to have very high levels of particulate matter which can cause strokes and heart disease. Both pollutants are generated from either motor vehicle exhausts or from tyre and brake wear.

The Grafton Way Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) says Camden is failing in its duty to protect its residents.

"The TRA is very concerned at the potential impact this development will have on the lives and health of our 274 residents. Many are elderly or very young and vulnerable."

They say Camden is failing to take action on the air in the street despite a 2017 report from the

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Westminster's Oxford Street place strategy - beyond the consultation

When Westminster Council's new scheme for Oxford Street was introduced its new district wide approach was broadly welcomed by our organisations. The fact that many suggestions previously made by various individual amenity societies and other groups had clearly been listened to and incorporated in these plans meant that we were, and still are, happy to endorse much of what has been proposed.

However, three very significant proposals - those that advocate the closing or the severe restricting of Oxford Street traffic - were contained amongst the large amount of detail about much else that give us cause for concern:

A. The proposal to investigate options to close the section of road around Oxford Circus between John Prince's Street and Great Portland Street to all east-west traffic and pedestrianise it.

B. The proposal to restrict the width of Oxford Street to 2 carriageways only, along its entire length.

C. The proposal to close certain sections of Oxford Street to all traffic other than buses at certain times of the day.

All three appear to undermine the principle and purpose of keeping Oxford Street open to traffic and would result in outcomes that we previously understood had been un-



ambiguously abandoned by Westminster Council, albeit only after being comprehensively rejected in the previous consultation and at the ballot box.

The proposals would result in non-bus traffic being deterred from using Oxford Street even in the parts allowed to remain open. The extra time buses would take, caused by single lanes and road closures, would inconvenience and also deter bus users. Sporadic and intermittent closure of various parts of Oxford

Street and the permanent closure of the parts of the street either side of Oxford Circus would push non-bus traffic into the heartlands of Fitzrovia, Mayfair and Marylebone. Safety issues would also be encountered by the introduction of 4 new turns to get traffic around Oxford Circus, each one bringing traffic into further conflict with pedestrians.

These proposals are wrong for the same reasons that the Mayor's previous pedestrianisation scheme was wrong, namely that they will result in the displacement of traffic through our surrounding neighbourhoods. We are therefore opposed to them for the same reasons we opposed the previous pedestrianisation plans.

Our full representations on the scheme and the full length version of this article can be found at www.betteroxfordstreet.org

Better Oxford Street is supported by all the West End's recognised amenity groups, including the Marylebone Association, Harrowby and District Residents Association, Soho Society, Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, Residents' Society of Mayfair and St James, Mayfair Residents Group, Charlotte Street Association and Hyde Park Estate Residents Association.

Stats, lives and homeless deaths

Seventeen homeless people died in Camden during 2017, according to the first ever national statistics published for deaths of homeless people. Yet the quality of statistics on homelessness and rough sleeping in particular are often very poor, writes Linus Rees.

The local authorities with the highest estimated number of deaths varied from year to year. Birmingham featured in the five LAs with the highest numbers of deaths of homeless people in every year from 2013 to 2017, while the London boroughs of Camden and Lambeth each featured in three of the five years. The highest estimate for any LA in any year was 23 deaths in Camden in 2016.

When analysed by deaths of homeless people per 100,000 population, Camden still featured in the highest three areas each year from 2013 to 2017. These figures are calculated per 100,000 total population of the relevant LA, and are not mortality rates related to the number of homeless people in the area, say the Office for Na-

tional Statistics.

The records are mainly people sleeping rough, or using emergency accommodation such as homeless shelters and direct access hostels, at or around the time of death.

It is surprising, however, not to see Westminster mentioned in the highlights from this statistical release as the borough has twice the number of people sleeping rough compared with Camden and the highest of any local authority in the country.

One explanation is hidden in a discussion of figures by an ONS statistician. "Local registrars do not follow any consistent practice in recording deaths of homeless people. Furthermore, it is possible that the fact that the deceased was homeless might be omitted either due to incomplete information given to the registrar, or out of consideration for the preferences of the family."

The statistics are also marked as experimental. "They have yet to be assessed against the rigorous quality standards of National

Statistics. Comments and suggestions to improve the quality of this output and make it more useful to users are invited," they say.

In the autumn of 2018 there were 306 people recorded sleeping on the street in Westminster and 141 in Camden on a single night. The count in Camden revealed that only 20 percent of those on the street were UK nationals. Yet the stats collected by the outreach teams for the three months from October to December stated that 51 percent of those on the streets were UK nationals. A huge disparity between the two figures.

I recently responded to Camden's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. I saw no commitment in the strategy to do an accurate count of rough sleepers in the borough for the autumn one night snapshot survey that all local authorities are required to do and submit to central government.

Camden has 18 wards and yet the autumn count only covers the so-called "hot spots". Most of the

teams go out on foot and count in parts of Bloomsbury, Holborn & Covent Garden, Kings Cross, St Pancras & Somers Town, and Regent's Park. One team goes out in a car to cover the north of the borough.

Having taken part in two annual counts I consider this method and the number of count teams inadequate to accurately measure the number of people sleeping rough on a typical night every autumn.

I have recommended that the count should have a greater number of teams — at least three times as many — and cover more streets in the south, middle, and north of the borough.

Camden should review its historic reporting of rough sleeper numbers and take into consideration that from 2010 to 2016 it was submitting highly inaccurate information. Camden needs to acknowledge its poor track record on accurate street counts and estimates. The last 18 months has been an improvement but more needs to be done.

Traffic scheme risks health of residents

Continued from front page.

UK's Chief Medical Officer which states that local authorities "can take powerful action to address and avoid negative health impacts from pollution".

The lack of action by Camden also comes at the same time as the publication of its draft Clean Air Action Plan.

Grafton Way residents will also be excluded from any benefits from the Mayor of London's air pollution cutting measures because the street despite being within the inner ring road is designated as part of the Euston Circus traffic interchange.

Drivers travelling along Grafton Way between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road don't have to pay the congestion charge, and won't encounter the ULEZ charge when it comes into force in April.

While other streets south of the Euston Road will benefit from the Mayor's ULEZ scheme Grafton Way will have to wait until the ULEZ is expanded in a few years' time. But there are no plans to expand the congestion charge zone. Black-cab drivers don't have to pay the congestion

charge and will be exempt from paying the ULEZ charge.

The council tenants and leaseholders want the street removed from the gyratory and included in the congestion charge and ULEZ. They want drivers heading north to be directed along the Euston Slip Road next to the Euston Underpass instead of around the block and past their windows and front doors.

A spokesperson for Camden commented on the traffic analysis that had been done.

"During the development of the West End Project, traffic modelling and survey work was undertaken to assess the impact of the project across the area including the side streets. These predicted that the implementation of the project would lead to a reduction of traffic across the wider area with improvements on the majority of side streets in addition to the main routes. The modelling does however, also indicate an increase in traffic on certain side streets. As with all traffic schemes the impacts will be monitored and consideration given to mitigation measures where appropriate.

"Camden is fully committed to review the scheme 12 months after completion. The predicted



Part of Grafton Way is outside of the congestion charge and Ultra Low Emission Zone.

increase in traffic on the side streets may in fact only occur at peak hours and as the network will be generally quieter at other times, these side streets may still receive a net reduction in traffic over the whole day," they said.

Adam Harrison, cabinet member for improving Camden's environment, said: "The West End Project will cut motor traffic in the area by up to a quarter, bringing numerous benefits in terms of air pollution, noise and congestion.

In addition, I continue to support the removal of Grafton Way from the Euston Circus gyratory. It is clearly inappropriate to have a residential block and a hospital surrounded by a busy gyratory."

Cllr Harrison's comments puts the Labour council at odds with the Labour Mayor and Transport for London who have no plans to remove the gyratory.

A TfL spokesperson said: "The Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) will clean up London's toxic air in central London and the surrounding areas beyond the ULEZ boundaries. Areas on the cusp of the ULEZ, like Fitzrovia, will see more low-emission buses and cars on the road than currently. Emissions from cars, vans and HGVs in areas outside the ULEZ are expected to reduce by more than 10 per cent. We will also expand ULEZ further to the North and South Circulars in 2021, which will improve the air quality around London even more."

The Mayor of London's new congestion charge and the Ultra Low Emission Zone come into force in central London from 8 April. ULEZ will operate 24 hours a day, every day.

Date set for TCR switch

Camden Council has published a target date to change Tottenham Court Road from one-way to two-way along with a map of the rather confusing traffic system ahead of Gower Street following suit a year later.

The Easter holiday weekend is the target to bring about traffic in two directions along with two-way bus services. If contractor Eurovia cannot finish work by that date then the early May holiday weekend is the reserve date.

Eurovia will then get going on Gower Street which will be reduced to two lanes southbound until it goes two-way in spring 2020.

The interim road layout map sent to *Fitzrovia News* turned out to be so full of obvious errors that we sent it back to them asking for the mistakes to be rectified. That was weeks ago and we haven't heard anything since.

Councils asked to cut all east-west through traffic

Camden and Westminster councils have been asked to consider proposals to cut out all of the east-west through traffic in Fitzrovia to improve air quality and access for residents and businesses.

The Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association has written to the two councils asking them to work together to make Fitzrovia access-only to prevent extra motor traffic as a result of forthcoming restrictions on private vehicles on Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road.

The FNA has asked for the councils to consider "filtered permeability" using bollards across east-west streets including Goodge Street, New Cavendish Street, and Clipstone Street. The scheme would cost between £130k and £260k.

Bollards have already been installed across some Fitzrovia streets and Riding House Street is due to be permanently closed this summer.

The FNA has also asked the councils to review single yellow lines and consider making them double to stop drivers blocking streets by parking outside of controlled hours.

Doc departing

Local GP Dr Caroline Evans will be leaving the Fitzrovia Medical Centre, according to sources in the waiting room.

A notice in the Grade II* listed Fitzroy Square surgery informs patients that her last working day will be Thursday 28 March 2019.

"Sadly after 25 years a much loved member of staff will be leaving our Fitzrovia family. Dr Evans has been at this practice since October 1994 and this year marks her 25th anniversary here at the practice. We are all very sad to see her leave and hope you all join us in wishing Dr Evans good luck on her new journey. She will be very much missed by all," says the announcement.

Banksy wrapped to go



Banksy's "If graffiti changed anything..." mural, painted in 2011, has been carefully cut out of the wall in Clipstone Street as part of the demolition of the site which is being redeveloped by Dukelease Properties. Our photographer captured it protected by a wooden frame and covered in polythene awaiting removal. Former head of planning at Westminster council Robert - two lunches - Davis once excoriated the artist saying his art belongs in a museum and not as graffiti on the walls of the City of Westminster: "I think it is a disgrace." The artwork has now been carted away for restoration before it is returned to Fitzrovia, according to Westminster council which claims ownership of it.

Spring treats for older residents

Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association is spoiling older residents with a raft free of cultural activities this spring.

There will be a British Museum event at 2pm on Wednesday 13 March where people from the museum will be bringing a new handling collection around the theme of Resilience and Survival to Fitzrovia Court, 24 Carburton Street W1W 5AS. Great conversation, interesting objects and refreshments!

Tea and Cakes will be at Honey & Co on Sunday 17 March 3-5pm 25a Warren St W1T 5LZ. Itamar, Rachael and the staff are looking forward to seeing you!

Edward Munch: Love and Angst at the British Museum Community View, Sunday 7 April 1pm (or thereabouts).

If you would like to attend, please let Barb Jacobson know by calling 020 7580 4576 or by emailing barb@fitzrovia.org.uk

Memorial service

A rededication service of the newly restored war memorial in Chenies Street takes place at 11am on Sunday, March 24.

Members of the armed forces with connections to the Rifle Brigade will be attending with the mayor of Camden and local church leaders.

News in brief

Black-cab drivers blocked Tottenham Court Road for several evenings this winter in a failed attempt to persuade Camden Council to allow them full access to the street. "Where buses go - taxis go", they said.


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Photo : Adrian Tanovic

Mary Banham was an artist, curator, writer and editor, and a committed Modernist. Born in 1922, she was the elder daughter of Kathleen Mullett (née Garrett) and her husband, John, a farmer's son from Dorset who was sent away to sea as a boy and ended his career as a London County Council parks inspector.

Mary and her sister Anne grew up in London, mainly at Blackheath, south of the river. It's quite hard to imagine Mary as a baby, but apparently, when she was tiny, her mother took her shopping in the pram, parked it outside a shop, as one did in those days, forgot all about it and went home on the bus. Fortunately Mary was retrieved unharmed, and, as far as we know, most of her childhood was unmarked by existential threat. Except that, when the second world war broke out, her secondary school was evacuated to the south coast, only to return hurriedly when the coast was bombarded.

Mary was interested in both arts and sciences. At school she wanted to be a surgeon, but she was told her maths wasn't up to it, and when she left, it was to go to art school, where she had hair-raising stories of fire-watching on the roof. Most of the London art schools were evacuated together to Folkestone, and when Mary returned to London, it was to the Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts, where she completed her Art Teachers' Diploma.

Art school was a mind expanding experience for Mary. She used to laugh at her mother saying: 'You've never been the same since you went to that art school,' but my gran wasn't wrong.

Mary's first teaching job was at Notre Dame High School, in Norwich, where the mother superior liked to have a few 'heathens' on the staff (Mary was at that time a communicant member of the C of E). In Norwich she met my father, Peter, then stage manager at Nugent Monck's Maddermarket Theatre, and the couple lived next door to Monck, in a cottage known as 'the Offing', with their friends Don and Sonja. My grandmother refused to come to the wedding, as she thought Peter

Mary Banham

An appreciation by her daughter Debby Banham

"Peter and I weren't interested in the past; we were only interested in the future"

'not good enough' for Mary, but relented when my grandfather said that he wouldn't go without her, and then Mary would have no family there. Peter's brother Paul was at the back of all the wedding photos, as they only had one suit between them.

In 1949, Mary returned to London with Peter, when he began his studies at the Courtauld. Mary worked initially at the Daily Mirror, subbing the agony aunt's column, which was entertaining, but not very well paid for someone supporting two adults. Fortunately she soon got a teaching job, at a big secondary school in Wanstead. In 1951, the Festival of Britain was a big inspiration to her and Peter, like many of their generation, despite reservations about spending public money on such frivolity at a time of austerity. The buildings on the South Bank were a particular source of excitement, showing what could be done when innovative architects and designers received official patronage. Another major inspiration was the Independent Group that met at the Institute of Contemporary Arts from 1952, comprising some of the most radical artists, designers and thinkers in London at the time, including Peter, all bubbling with pent-up creativity after the war years. There the ideas were discussed that culminated in the This is Tomorrow exhibition at the Whitechapel in 1955. Mary and Peter used to hold 'open house' where these discussions continued, originally on Sundays, later on Friday evenings.

When Peter started work at the Architectural Press, Mary took a break from teaching to have children, becoming my mother at the then advanced age of 31. Ben followed in 1955. When Ben was only a year old, Mary developed unexplained pains in her right leg, which turned out to be cancer. This resulted in amputation and a fairly long period of convalescence and rehabilitation. She had to learn to drive in fairly short order, and bought a pale blue Heinkel bubble-car, essentially a motorbike under a glass dome. Despite being quite alarming mechanically, this vehicle was popular with a lot of people, including the local kids, who all wanted a ride to school in it, even those still too young to actually attend school. Mary decided not to return to the hurly-burly of teaching, but to concentrate on her artistic practice. In the 1960s she took a technical-drawing course,

and produced exquisite architectural drawings for Peter's book *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment* (1969), but her main focus for many years was on print-making. She joined a screen-printing class in Kentish Town, and kept in touch with many of the participants for years.

In the early 70s Mary worked at the Royal Institute of British Architects' Drawings Collection, and curated an exhibition at their Heinz Gallery on the Festival of Britain South Bank buildings. This led to a commission to organise a much larger show about the Festival at the V&A, with Bevis Hillier, and write the catalogue, *A Tonic to the Nation*, together. Both exhibition and publication were a great success. By the time the show opened in 1976, Peter was working in Buffalo NY, where Mary joined him the next year. There she continued her print-making work, and worked on a guide to the then little-known architecture of Buffalo, but the upper New York State winters were too much of a challenge to her mobility. Sometimes she would park outside a building, but be unable to cross the snow-packed sidewalk to the door. After three years, she and Peter moved to Santa Cruz, in California, where they enjoyed the much balmer climate. They had a house by the ocean, and Mary ran a gallery on the idyllic campus, exhibiting many of the most interesting artists in California and further afield. In her studio at home she made prints inspired by the spectacular coastal landscape of Monterey Bay.

Mary made many good friends in both Buffalo and Santa Cruz, but when Peter died in 1988, she came home to London, living with Ben off Tottenham Court Road. Despite her fierce commitment to Modernism, Mary



Mary (right) with her sister Anne circa 1940

was quite traditional in some ways. She saw it as her role to support Peter and his career, perhaps not in preference to her own, but certainly as an equal priority. She was involved from their inception with the Banham lectures, given in Peter's memory and organised jointly by the Design History Society, the V&A and the Royal College. The annual trip to the V&A, and later the RCA, for the lectures, and then to the Polish Hearth Club for drinks, became a major gathering for friends and family. But Mary also got involved with plenty of activities that had nothing to do with Peter. In 1993, at the age of 71, she took an MA with Winchester School of Art, needing a special dispensation, as her wartime art-school training did not have degree status. The course group spent most of the year in Barcelona, where Mary had a fantastic time, and returned to painting for the first time in many years.

Back home, she initially took a studio in London Fields, but in 1997 she commissioned Jonathan Ellis Miller to build her a striking single-story building at Prickwillow, near Ely, in Cambridgeshire, where she could watch the sun set behind the cathedral. She spent the next 15 summers in the Fens, producing a new burst of work, exhibiting in the annual Cambridge Open Studios event, and making many good friends among the local artistic community. She also joined the Connect group of artists in London, which included some of her old friends from Kentish Town. In Ely, Mary chaired a schools' art competition for the new public library. We used to have our family Christmases at Prickwillow until three years ago, and quite a few birth-

days, too, so Mary's studio was a focus for the whole family. For my most recent birthday, in June, we all went to Kew Gardens, our last family outing together.

Mary was a great swimmer. In the water, she wasn't disabled. She swam in Buffalo and Santa Cruz, and until fairly recently she was still swimming at the YMCA off Tottenham Court Road, and in Ely in the summer. Then she started getting pains in her upper body when she swam, which in retrospect must have been angina. A heart attack followed at Easter 2010, and, although Mary made a good recovery, her health slowly began to decline from then on. Her activities gradually became more limited, but even very recently she was still enjoying visits from friends and family, including her special 'girls' lunch' group (no participant under 60). She also enjoyed tea and cakes once a month at Honey and co, and following people's news on social media. At 96, she had lived a long life, full of variety and interest, as well as challenges.

Mary was a big personality. Her namesake and neice, Mary Harborne, has talked about losing 'the matriarch of our family', and other people have spoken since her death of her charisma, her zest for life, and of her being an inspiration, and a force of nature. Her strength of character helped her live with physical limitations that would have defeated a lesser mortal. She didn't suffer fools gladly, and you might think yourself a fool if you disagreed with her. But you always knew where Mary was, what she was doing, and what she thought. Things were rarely dull when Mary was around. She'll leave a huge hole in our lives.



Mary with her husband Peter, daughter Debby and son Ben 1967 Photo : James Stirling



From prison to pharmacy

Ronak Patel is the new kid on the block at Shiv Pharmacy Great Titchfield Street. He's been at the store for three years and has been a pharmacist for over ten years. "I chose the profession because there was a good career path with a diverse range of job opportunities," he said.

Shiv is still at the shop several days a week but he's taking things a little easier nowadays.

"Shiv is my uncle and I was happy to come and work in his shop and hopefully take over from him if he retires. I already run a pharmacy shop in Praed Street, Paddington."

Ronak studied pharmacy at Portsmouth University and started out working as a locum at various locations. One of his first placements was at Pentonville prison and he must have enjoyed it there because he stayed for four years. "It was an interesting placement and I sometimes saw gruesome things."

Once one of the former inmates came into the shop at Great Titchfield Street. "He recognised me and asked me if I was at Pentonville. I had to explain that I was the pharmacist not one of the inmates."

Ronak was brought up in the Highbury district where his parents had a corner shop convenience store. "We lived above the shop and I have vivid memories of Arsenal match days as we were near the Highbury ground."

Naturally he is an Arsenal supporter now and when he can manage it he still catches the odd game at the Emirates Stadium. He lives in Southgate with his wife and young family a boy of two and girl five years old

"I'm looking forward to taking my son and daughter to football matches soon. I'm not sure if my wife is interested in that though," he concluded.

Opening and closing

Closed

SudaThai restaurant 5 Berners Street
Yama design menswear 42 Great Titchfield Street
Getty Images Gallery 46 Eastcastle Street
Next Property estate agents 74 Wells Street
Bobo Social burgers 95 Charlotte Street
Serge le phoque restaurant 20 - 21 Newman Street

Opened

Cutting room eatery 95 Charlotte Street
Yopo Latin American cuisine 20 - 21 Newman Street
Kalifornia Kitchen vegan and vegetarian restaurant 19 Percy Street
Omotesando Koffee Japanese coffee 8 Newman Street
Sababa of Soho Mediterranean grill 49 Newman Street
Aperture Leica cameras/repairs 17 Riding House Street
Oxygen Boutique clothing/cosmetics 51 Eastcastle Street
Raven barbers 35 Grafton Way

Opening soon

Caffe Terra coffee shop 4 Rathbone Square
Efe's Turkish restaurant 56 Maple Street
Great Thai Grab and go takeaway 51 Great Portland Street
Caffe Terra coffee shop 4 Rathbone Square
Bambusa Asian cafe 6 Charlotte Street
Jolt coffee shop Market Place
Kafi coffee shop 20 Cleveland Street
Big Mamma pizzas 40-41 Rathbone Place

The next issue of Fitzrovia News will be out on Tuesday 4 June 2019.
Deadline for articles, features and advertisements
17 May

Advertisement

Changing Fitzrovia: How is The Area Developing?

Fitzrovia has been changing for many years, with different industries in the area and new developments springing up everywhere. These include the Portland and Riding Development and the Margaret Street Development, both of which were sold by RIB. One of the most prominent of these is Rathbone Place, home to Facebook's new offices as well as one of the first new public squares in Central London for 100 years.

The development makes this part of Fitzrovia highly desirable for both residents and investors. We are proud and delighted to offer a rare opportunity to acquire three immaculate apartments located just off Rathbone Place. Consisting of a studio apartment, a one bedroom apartment, and a three bedroom apartment all apartments are immaculately laid out and have proven to be very successful on the rental market. These apartment modern interiors, wooden floors, original sash windows, and a contemporary feel throughout. They are let to a company giving a purchaser a return of £104,000 PA with a tenancy expiring on 20th November 2020. The agreement incorporates a rental increase of £2,600 each year of the tenancy. There is also an option to have vacant possession subject to two months notice.

Robert Irving Burns have been based in Fitzrovia since 1962 and in that time we have seen many changes. However, our mantra hasn't changed, we are proud to be the foremost agent in the area, helping hundreds of people find their ideal Fitzrovia Home. We are proud of our heritage as local agents and bring expert insights on the Fitzrovia area. To get in touch with one of our residential experts about selling or letting your property, or to view the excellent range of homes we have available, please contact us on 0207 637 0821.





Word from the Streets

By CHARLOTTE STREET and her siblings



Sophie was star of TV quiz

University Challenge on television over Christmas featured the **University of Westminster**, based in **Wells Street** and **New Cavendish Street**. The team, which beat the University of East Anglia, were all ex-students from the days when it was the Polytechnic of Central London.

The star was undoubtedly **Sophie Scott** (pictured right in 1990) who got seven starter questions out of a total of 13. She obtained her degree in life science in 1990 and is now a UCL professor specialising in "the science of laughter."

Other members of the team were **Stuart Ray Clarke**, who got his arts degree in 1984 and is now a documentary photographer; **Torsten Schmiedeknecht**, who



got his architectural diploma in 1992, and is now a professor at the University of Liverpool specialising in "post-war architecture in children's picture books;" and **Danny Wallace**, who got his media studies degree in 1999 and is now a television producer, author and broadcaster.

Foul mouthed Mary Poppins

Revealing showbiz anecdotes of the late **John Avery**, the **London Palladium** manager who lived in **Riding House Street**, were recalled with relish by his friends recently.

They involved **Yul Brynner**, **Julie Andrews** and a famous pop singer, as told to our illustrator **Jayne Davis** and feature writer **Brian Jarman**.

Yul Brynner was very unpopular - especially after he tore up a programme that a fan had asked him to sign outside the theatre. When she walloped him, **John** had remarked, "it was a case of the fan hitting the sh*t!" The stage hands also punished **Yul** by putting tacks on the stage when he was performing barefoot.

Julie Andrews, who played the sweet natured **Mary Poppins**, apparently swore like a trooper using the "f" word frequently.

And the pop singer was literally "pi**ed on from a great height" while starring in the musical **Singing in the Rain**. The stage hands, whom he had annoyed, relieved themselves into the water supply for the raining scene.



Illustration by Jayne Davis

Radio drama in Warren Street

The serialisation of "Twenty Thousand Streets Under the Sky" on Radio 4 Extra recently spurred my brother **Warren** to buy a new edition of the book. Imagine his delight on reading that the fictitious pub in it, the **Midnight Bell**, was "in the vicinity of **Warren Street**."

This was where two of the three main characters, **Bob** and **Ella**, worked. **Bob** also frequently visited the real life pub, the **Green Man**, opposite **Great Portland Street** station.

Smashing time

You know the old story about a Scottish man with a bottle of whisky who fell over and felt liquid dripping from his leg. "Thank goodness," he said on discovering it was blood. "I thought it was the whisky."

Well a similar thing happened to my older brother **Mortimer** recently. He was crossing the road, carrying a bottle of wine, when he was knocked over by a cyclist hidden by stationery cars. The wine was smashed but he was relieved because he had nearly bought a bottle of vodka.

Biting humour

After searching everywhere for his dentures **Bill in the King & Queen in Foley Street** finally found them in his back pocket.

"Thank goodness you did not sit down with them or you might have bitten your own buttocks!" quipped my brother **Percy**.

Budding actor

Watch out for local boy **Alfie Taylor** on Amazon Prime. He plays a character, **Wensleydale**, in **Good Omens** which has already been filmed.

Bingo bonanza

Confusion reigned during the bingo session at the pensioners' Christmas party run by **Fitzrovia Youth in Action** at the **Indian YMCA** in **Fitzroy Street**. Unfortunately several duplicate cards were issued... leading to lots of winners all at once. "We all saw the funny side," said my sister **Margaret** (who was not one of the bingo winners but won a prize in the quiz)

This reminded me of when **Alexei Sayle** had purposely dished out duplicate bingo cards prior to his act at the Polytechnic of Central London (now **University of Westminster**) in **Wells Street** in the 1970s before he achieved fame.

Greener on the other side



Is there a game of one-up-manship going on between the two pubs previously known as the **Green Man**?

First the one at 383 **Euston Road** (opposite **Great Portland Street** station) added an "E" to the **Green** in accordance with the brewer **Greene King** which owns it.

Then the one at 36 **Riding House Street** added "ER" to the **Green** making it supposedly "Greener". It does sell only vegetarian food now apparently.

Bus driving pop star

A fascinating tale of pop singer **Matt Monro** (1930-85) driving a bus up **Tottenham Court Road** and stopping to chat to a friend has emerged.

He had many international hits in the 1960s and 70s, but in the 1950s he was still a bus driver.

Francesca Shashkova reveals in a Facebook correspondence that **Matt** (pictured right) was friendly with her mother who lived at 45 **Goodge Street**.

She recalled her mother telling her how "he was driving a bus up **Tottenham Court Road** one day and spotted mum on the street. He stopped the bus, but not at a bus stop, to hop out and have a chat with her - to the amazement of the somewhat disgruntled passengers who had places to be."

Francesca's mum was also a singer who had a demo for **Bill Haley** (**Rock Around The Clock**) who wanted to manage her in America. But she got married in-



stead and gave up that career.

Also involved in the Facebook dialogue was **Clifford Slapper** (**Fitzrovia News** music columnist) who told her of the 1965 pop hit "**Sunny Goodge Street**", written and performed by **Donovan**.

This brought in **Ray Burmiston** who lived in the **Northumberland Arms** at 43 **Goodge Street** from 1969 to 1993 and is now a photographer.

In the mid 1990s he went to photograph **Donovan** in Ireland. "As I was setting up my lights I said to him that I grew up on **Goodge Street**, but had never heard the song," recalled **Ray**. "He picked up his guitar and played it there and then. It was a bit of a moment."

Celebrity watch

David and Victoria Beckham were spotted in the **Lore** of the **Land** pub (previously **The Lukin**) in **Conway Street** shortly after it reopened. According to press reports **David** shares ownership of the pub with film director **Guy Ritchie** (who owns a house around the corner)

Comedian **Hugh Dennis** was noticed tucking into fish and chips in **Gigs** restaurant in **Tottenham Street**.

Liam Gallagher (**Oasis**) popped in for a pint at the **Duke of York** in **Rathbone Street** after visiting a guitar company in the same street. He had a long chat with the landlord, who has now become a fan.

Charlotte Street





Photo by Brian David-Stevens

Mañana for historic Hanway Street bar

A popular and distinctive bar has had its future guaranteed for another ten years, much to the relief of its customers.

Bradley's Spanish Bar at 42-44 Hanway Street has had its lease extended up to 2028. It had been feared for some time that the extension of Tottenham Court Road station might lead to its demolition.

"Many people for a while had been worried that we would be shut down; so it is nice to assure them we are here for another ten years at least," said bar manager, Jan de Vries.

Joint owner, Oliver Johnson, was equally delighted: "The street has been ripe for redevelopment for many years, but now that threat has gone. So we are delighted to still be here to maintain and be part of the ongoing community."

He has a strong connection with the area as his great great grandfather lived

there when it was first constructed in the mid to late 18th century.

"The site of the bar was rumoured to be a drinking place for centuries," he said. "Then in the mid 18th century it was sold to the Long brothers who imported barrels of port and sherry."

Around the 1950s it was used as a drinking place after work for those at the nearby William Bradley glass cutting company. Finally it became a public house in the early 1970s and changed its name to Bradley's Spanish Bar.

It still has the atmosphere of a cellar bar even though it also has a ground floor bar - with an old fashioned juke box.

And there are several pop music connections with the street. Apart from the many record shops that used to flourish in it, Cliff Richard, filmed the 1959 movie Expresso Bongo in one of its coffee bars, and the Beatles often ate in a vegetarian restaurant there in the 1960s.

To keep up with planning and licensing news, sign up for our email newsletter: bit.ly/fitzrovia-news

All Souls pupils map plaques



The Plaque Walk Map and Guide

By ANGELA NICHOLSON (School Parent)

Back in 2017 I and others came up with the idea for the children of All Souls Primary School to create a Blue Plaque Map Walk. London's Blue Plaques were created over 100 years ago to link the people of the past with the buildings of today. We thought it would be a great idea for the local children who go to school in Fitzrovia where many plaques are located to learn more about them and the famous people who lived and worked in the area.

The school set all the children holiday homework to learn about the famous people who were awarded the plaques. The children were creative and wrote about and designed their own plaques,

which included Bob Marley, Virginia Woolf, Samuel Morse, Charles Dickens and many more. Year 4 at the time led by their class teacher Miss Duda Boric designed the maps by walking the local area, plotting the plaques on their own maps and designing them in the classroom.

The children are now excited to have had their hard work printed and their own Blue Plaque Map Walk produced for people of Fitzrovia to enjoy.

The map was not only produced as an informative piece for the public to enjoy but also to purchase as a fundraiser for the School.

Please contact the school for further information: office@allsoulsprimary.co.uk



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Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Plan sets priorities for the next 15 Years

By Nick Bailey

The FitzWest Neighbourhood Forum was set up in 2015 and one of its main functions is to prepare a neighbourhood plan for that part of Fitzrovia lying west of Cleveland Street and Charlotte Street as far south as Oxford Street in the City of Westminster. The Marylebone Road is the northern boundary. The Forum is made up of representatives of local residents, businesses and ward councillors from West End and Marylebone High Street wards.

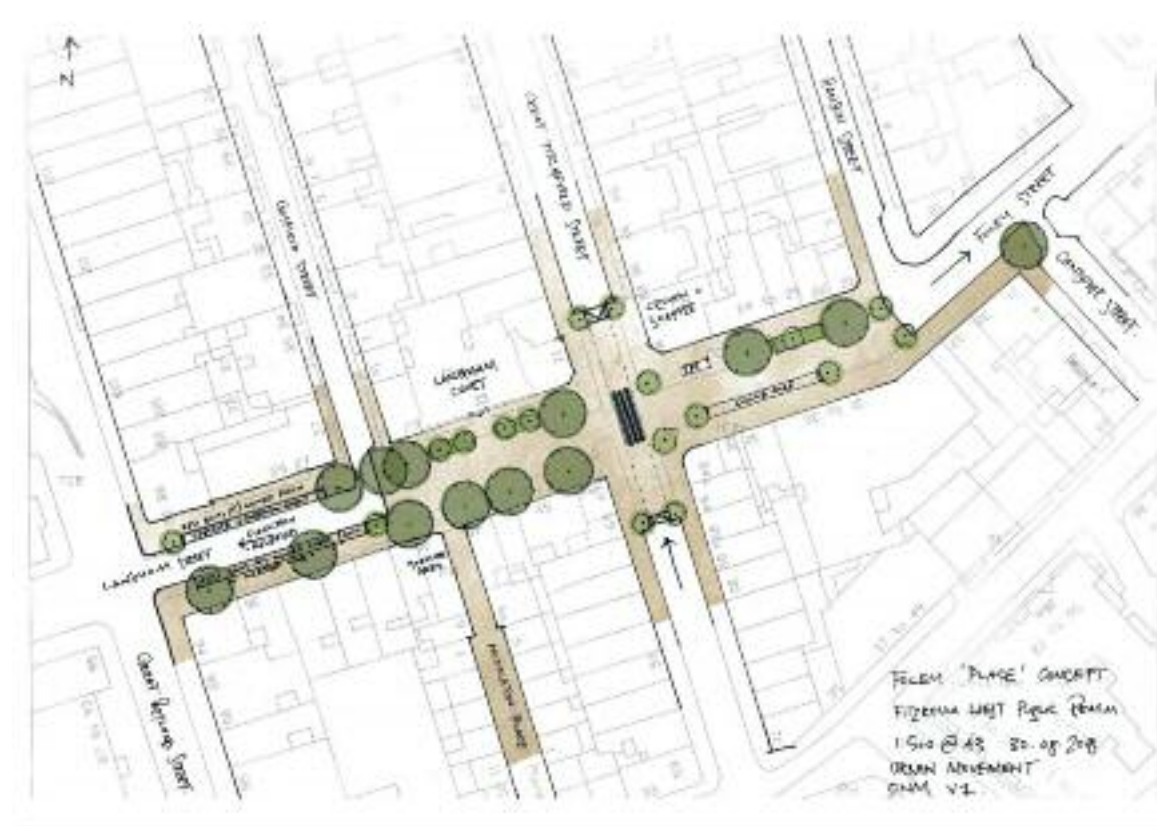
The plan has to pass through a number of stages before it becomes part of the statutory planning process and is then used as an important guide when the Council decides on planning applications. It also enables us to set out our priorities and inform officers and councillors about what improvements are needed in the future.

FitzWest is an urban village with a mixture of residents and businesses that makes it such an attractive place to live and work. There are also many thousands of workers and visitors travelling to and from the area every day. Because of this mixture, Westminster has decided we are a 'business neighbourhood'. This means that we must pay special attention to the needs of local businesses, as in the final stage the plan has to be approved by a referendum of both residents and businesses.

So what is the plan proposing? We have five main objectives:

The first is to preserve the mix of uses in the area and increase the amount of affordable housing.

Large parts of the area lie within Conservation Areas and there are many listed buildings and other attractive or historic buildings that need to be protected and not overshadowed by inappropriate high-rise developments. Where new development is proposed it should respect the scale, quality of design and mix of uses in the area. In line with Council policy, new housing development of 10 or more flats should provide at least 35% of affordable housing which should be built on site and not in another part of the borough. In the past developers have been able to make a payment to avoid this stipulation. Very high quality architecture and an attractive street frontage are essential.



Left: Langham Street and Foley Street public realm improvements. One of several ideas for improving greening, creating public space, and removing the dominance of motor traffic.

“the plan aims to reduce through traffic while enabling existing businesses to gain access to their premises”

FitzWest is renowned for its arts, cultural and leisure provision but these should be well managed and considerate to neighbours. We want to restrict large hotels and nightclubs to the area south of Mortimer Street, which has fewer residents. Community facilities, such as the Fitzrovia Centre, All Souls' school, All Souls' Clubhouse and the nursery in Holcroft Court, should be protected and, where possible, increased provision should be provided to meet all needs.

The second is protecting and increasing green and open space: FitzWest has long suffered from a lack of green and open space, including play space for young children. In 2018 the Forum commissioned a study which identified a number of streets which could be closed to traffic and landscaped to provide sitting out areas and play space without the constant danger of passing traffic and pollution.

Riding House Street near All Souls' school, parts of Foley Street and Langham Street are high priorities for this treatment. There are many other streets where traffic could be redirected and the street could be landscaped for sitting areas and play space. Too many streets are narrow but often full of parked cars, making it difficult for pedestrians and dangerous for children and cyclists. We want to see the City Council tak-

ing a lead in implementing these proposals.

The Forum has also promoted a scheme to 'green' the pavement area on the west side of Holcroft Court and wants to see an increased use of green roofs and walls, tree planting and planters for use by residents.

Our third is about supporting small businesses: As part of the Central Activities Zone, FitzWest provides a home for over 2000 businesses employing a total of almost 40,000 people. It has an extremely dynamic economy ranging from the small shop or specialist consultancies, to creative industries and global companies such as Estée Lauder and Facebook.

FitzWest has traditionally housed many craftsmen, shops, galleries, restaurants and specialist companies which depend on easy access to the BBC and other media companies, or department stores in Oxford Street or Tottenham Court Road. We wish to see this mix sustained and in particular, increased provision of appropriate workspaces for small, start-up companies.

One of the particular attractions of FitzWest is the range of shops, cafes and restaurants on streets such as Great Titchfield Street. While shops have been declining in number throughout London, there are other uses which can take their place and en-

sure the streets remain vibrant and provide the range of services those living and working in the area need. This equally applies to Oxford Street where some major retailers are closing or using less floor space.

The fourth objective is protecting and improving environmental standards: FitzWest experiences some of the lowest air quality standards in London and the Forum strongly supports any measures to reduce unnecessary through traffic and to rationalize the buses and deliveries by mainly diesel vehicles.

As well as vehicles going electric, buildings need to be more energy efficient and sustainable through reducing the emission of greenhouse gases. These changes can also play a part in limiting the 'heat island effect' whereby temperatures in central London are significantly higher in the summer than surrounding areas.

The final objective is improving mobility and transport: As already noted, the plan aims to reduce through traffic while enabling existing businesses to gain access to their premises. The emphasis is very much on improving provision for walking and cycling and encouraging greater use of electric vehicles for deliveries and use by residents.

The opening of the Elizabeth Line (Crossrail) will bring increased numbers of pedestrians

onto Oxford Street, as well as increased pressures for expanding and redeveloping property in the area.

Ideally we'd like a full and comprehensive review of traffic flows on both the Westminster and Camden sides of the boundary with a view to a comprehensive plan for traffic calming and improved air quality.

The draft plan, and supporting documentation, is available to view on the FitzWest website and we warmly invite residents, local businesses and visitors to read it and send us their comments and feedback. It also includes an appendix to promote other ideas by which the area might be improved but which cannot be directly influenced by the planning process. The plan and other documents are available here:

<http://fitzwest.org/wordpress/draft-plan/>

FitzWest Neighbourhood Forum consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan and AGM, Monday 13 May, Sainsbury Wellcome Centre, 25 Howland Street, W1T 4JG. 13.30 onwards: Consultation on Neighbourhood Plan. 18.00 AGM. Presentation on Neighbourhood Plan followed by guest speaker from the Westminster Council on air quality. Refreshments will be available. We look forward to seeing you.

The church that went on its way to Wembley

The story of how a church in Wells Street was completely dismantled and then reassembled brick by brick near Wembley was told recently.

Nick Bailey, in his talk "The Changing Face of Fitzrovia" at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, revealed all about St Andrew's Church in Wells Street. It was built in 1847 where the University of Westminster is at number 32 - but is commemorated next door by St Andrews Chambers (pictured below) at 23-31.

Then a rival High Anglican church, All Saints, was opened and consecrated by Cardinal Manning in 1859 just round the corner at 7 Margaret Street. For a while both survived and the actress Sarah Bernhardt, for example, got married at St Andrew's in 1882, but the marriage did not last.

This was ultimately the fate of the church as a loss of population meant the area could not support two such similar churches so close together.

In 1929 it was decided to take down St Andrew's and reassemble it elsewhere. Kingsbury (pictured left), near Wembley in Middlesex, was chosen as it had a small and inadequate church in an enormous churchyard.

This was carried out from 1933 to 1934. The "unique casket of architectural jewels and decorative treasures" were removed and rebuilt faithfully by Holland & Hannen, and Cubitts.

In fact it can be seen to much better effect in its new location as it is no longer surrounded by other buildings as it was in Wells Street.



Good nutrition makes old age more comfortable



Wendy Shillam

Free nutrition advice is now available in Shiv Pharmacy at 70 Great Titchfield Street every second Thursday from noon until 2pm.

The drop in service is provided by fully qualified nutritionist and practitioner Wendy Shillam who is based at 122 Great Titchfield Street.

"There is a huge amount of misinformation about nutrition," she said. "So I decided to retrain a few years ago so that I could spread the word about the truth of nutrition, and set up a social enterprise, Say Tomato.

"Good nutrition can not only extend our lives but make old age more comfortable. My clinical practice specialises in women over 50 like myself, but I will see

anyone at the drop in sessions.

"Middle age spread develops because people plod on as if they were 25 and don't change the way they eat in accordance with their changing metabolism. This becomes less efficient at breaking down food. So more care should be taken in what is eaten, including more of certain nutrients.

"A good rule of thumb is to eat a little less overall but a little more if anything of protein. Some good eating options easily available are hard boiled eggs, full (not skimmed) milk, and wholemeal bread."

There is also an environmental benefit, she added. "The way we eat has a massive impact on our carbon footprint, as 25 per cent of it is connected to food. Local wholesome fresh home made food is therefore good for the planet, and local shops."

Wendy's final training as a nutritionist took place locally at UCL and she has lived in the area since the 1980s and is involved in the FitzWest Neighbourhood Forum. Her previous profession was as an architect and town planner.

The drop in sessions are an experiment, at Shiv, which says Wendy, has a good range of vitamins on sale.

Indian YMCA gears up for 100th birthday



The Indian YMCA celebrates 100 years in 2020.

The Indian YMCA on Fitzroy Square will be celebrating its centenary in 2020 with a whole range of cultural activities and a commemorative mural planned.

The General Secretary JP Fernandes told *Fitzrovia News*: "We are preparing several programmes promoting art, history and culture. A reorganised exhibition hall, a refurbished website, and a facelift to our historic building are all planned. We are using crowdfunder to raise funds for a colourful mural on the atrium and staircase leading to the Mahatma Gandhi Hall painted by Dan Llywelyn Hall. To make a pledge or to find out more please visit crowdfunder.co.uk/indianymca

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Times of Daily Prayer, Masses & opportunities for confession & counselling are advertised at: www.allsaintsmargaretstreet.org.uk Parish office: 020 7636 1788

'X'-ploits in Fitzrovia

Spotlight on glamour photographer Harrison Marks

By YAK EL-DROUBIE

The pin-up photographer George Harrison Marks has always been associated with Soho. Besides having his studio in Gerrard Street he lived there with Pamela Green in the 1950s before moving to a flat in Hampstead. But what about his relationship with Fitzrovia?

At the film laboratories where he worked at the time, he was introduced to an older woman called Diana Bugsgang. Legend has it Diana lived with her Polish mother in a flat above a Greek-owned strip-club in Goodge Street and that she volunteered as an air-raid warden at the tube station. Her father was Austrian and the family once had a shop in Hanway Street.

According to George, one day on his way home from work on the underground he fell ill and had to be rushed to the hospital. He was suffering from stomach ulcers. After two weeks in hospital he discharged himself, against doctor's advice, and at their invitation, he went to recuperate under the care of Diana and her mother. As Diana nursed George back to health they grew rather fond of each other and after he had fully recovered from his illness, they were married. George claimed that he was just 17 at the time and that Diana was 25.

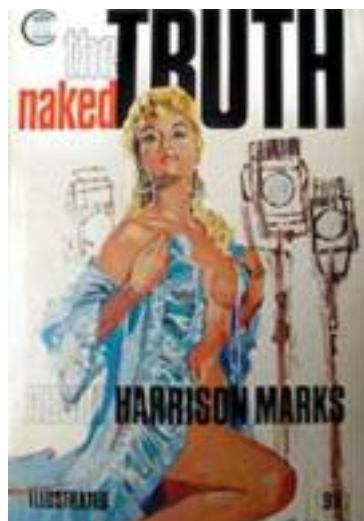
After the wedding, however, George found his Polish mother-in-law somewhat overbearing, so they went to live with his aunt and uncle in Brighton. With the war over, people were heading to the seaside again and George became a photographer along the seafront. It wasn't long before he was a theatrical photographer. All was fine until December 1950, when Brighton was brought to a standstill by an outbreak of small-



pox. The theatres, that had provided George with his winter income, closed and his fortunes waned.

As the story goes he sold and pawned his possessions to try and ride it out, but he was getting deeper and deeper in debt, and his creditors were becoming increasingly threatening. Diana by this time had left. George fled to London in 1951, penniless, homeless and desperate for work.

As he describes it in his biography *The Naked Truth*: "It was then I did a quick count-up of my resources, and it was a damned quick one, too! All I had were two tanners, four pennies and a half-penny, plus, of course, my dog and a suitcase with a suit and a couple of shirts in it. I can tell you that I had never felt so low in my life. I had next to nothing. No job,



nowhere to kip, no prospects and next to no money.

"All I could think of doing was to walk down Oxford Street to Joe Lyons Corner House in Tottenham Court Road and lash out

on a cup of tea. It was at least somewhere to sit and think. So the dog and I set off and arrived in Lyons' at about five o'clock. I spent fourpence on a cup of tea — which I shared with the dog — and sat there thinking, but far from gathering inspiration, my mind just went blank. All I could think of was that in about two hours time London was going to come alive and I'd have to move on, but where to?

"Fate is a funny thing, and it was pure fate that was to save me that night. On the other side of the room, I noticed a familiar face. I couldn't quite place it, but it belonged to a chap I had once known and, thank God, he recognised me and came across to sit at my table. Well, I was so relieved to find a friendly face, I just poured out the whole tale.

"When I'd said my piece this bloke suddenly threw out an offer which saved my life. 'I've got an empty attic in my place in Charlotte Street. You can have it if you like until you get on your feet,' he said. I could have kissed him for I was so grateful. I didn't though, but went round with him to his house and up to the top of the stairs."

And that's how George ended up living around the corner from his wife, who was back at her mother's on Goodge Street.

George's attic room was as big as a coffin and half as inviting. "There was an old dressing table and a rusty iron bed — no mattress, just the bedstead — and a rusty gas bracket hanging off

the wall, and that was it. Still, it was somewhere for the dog to kip, and I was so tired and depressed I accepted with thanks. Anyway, he brought up a mattress and put it on the bed, and I crashed out on it, with the dog on the floor. I must say that after about five minutes, I began to wish I'd put the dog on the bed and slept on the floor myself, though. That mattress needed chains to keep it on the bedstead, it was so lousy, but it is a measure of how tired I must have been, that I slept on it like a babe.

"I was woken up at about mid-day by the sound of the dog barking, and I sat up to find out what he was growling at. I thought there was a hell of a lot of coming and going in the house and even when I went down to the basement, where the man lived, and passed half-a-dozen men on the stairs; it didn't dawn on me... In fact, I was living there for two days before I tumbled it — the place was a brothel!"

George started the rounds of the showbiz agents in town, touting for photographic work and set up his first London darkroom, in a washroom at the back of the basement.

I'm not sure how long he stayed there before he moved to Gerrard Street but he "found out that some prostitutes really do have hearts of gold": "...they were marvellous types, always ready to help, inviting me in for tea and so on. I had a lot of time for them. One lent me £8 to get a camera out of pawn." One can see how George as a theatrical photographer in the heart of the West End, taking press pictures for cabarets and nightclubs ended up as a glamour photographer.

Diana eventually applied for a divorce. The court case was lively with Diana claiming that George's then partner liked being beaten with wet fish!

The Goodge Street flat that Diana moved back into with her mother eventually made her neighbours with Boy George, earning her a mention in his biography. As a long-term resident, she gained the moniker "Queen of Fitzrovia". She ended up working with vulnerable residents and was appointed the local community liaison officer for Camden Council before she died in 2010, aged 93.

A 50th-anniversary edition of *The Naked Truth About Harrison Marks* by Franklyn Wood is available online at Amazon. <https://amzn.to/2OS2yC1>

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Celebrating 50 years as a photographer



Local hero: Bob the Builder.

A special exhibition is about to celebrate the 50 years as a photographer in Fitzrovia of Adrian Ensor.

Indeed it is half a century since he moved into his studio at 69 Grafton Way and he has been photographing local characters (or heroes as he calls them) and scenes ever since.

He is not confined to that however and has also taken his (black and white) camera to places such as Spain, Belgium, and Ireland.

The exhibition takes place from April 25 to May 10 at the Framers Gallery, 36 Windmill Street.

"It will include the installation of my dark room (with red light, chemicals and enlarger), office, photographs, contact sheets, momentos, and books that have influenced me," said Adrian.

He started as a photographic printer 60 years ago at the age of 15, working with glass negatives in an advertising department.

As he got a reputation for quality of tones and speed of work he was able to go freelance, and acquired the basement in Grafton Way.

"It was almost Dickensian then and had been used as the office of one of the Warren Street motor car trade dealers," he recalled.



Portrait: Adrian Ensor (by Si Melber).

"I was able to build up a large client base at the right time - black and white photography was very popular and in vogue during the 1960s.

"But in the 1990s advertising budgets of clients were cut back,

ending the creativity of the 1970s and 80s. So I decided to take photographs as well as print them."

This he did seriously from 1994 and has completed many projects, such as architecture, gangsters, and night scenes.

Some of his photographs are in the Tate gallery, and he has prepared a book on monuments, which has yet to be published.

He has persisted in black and white using film (rather than digital) and old developers and formulas, to get an edge.

Only recently has he discovered that his grandfather, Alfred Ensor, was born at 100 Great Titchfield Street.

Much of his work can be viewed on his website (adrianensor.com).



Architecture: 33 Fitzroy Square.



Night scene: Portland Place.

Greyhound on the track to success

By the DINING DETECTIVE

Greyhound Cafe, 37 Berners Street.

I did not become a Dining Detective to expound, as some sort of health guru, on the joys of eating early, as I also did in the last review of Cote Brasserie. But it is true there are advantages in our area: I've noticed there are more and more "pre-theatre menus" – at the Greyhound if you drink between 5 and 7pm the very pleasant house wine is – or was over the whole of the festive season, please check – one third cheaper at £4 a glass.

The large space that is now the Greyhound, on the corner of Mortimer Street, has had several fairly unsuccessful lives as a restaurant, as locals will know. But the Greyhound, advertised loudly as "Bangkok on a Plate," is the most successful, and often now fairly full, and its large outside space was useful over that last long hot summer. It is open all day, including for breakfast, and one of the own-



PICTURE PUZZLE: The photograph on page 14 is at RADA Studios, 16 Chennies Street.

ers, seeing me outside looking at the menu and admiring the (fake but very well done and cheerful) flower decorations, said: "People can come and have a coffee any time."

Somehow the very largeness both inside and out had put me off but I want to say: don't be put off, because some of the Thai food which is now served here is really good. Advertisements on the wall also describe it as a "Bangkok Playground" – you'd be playing a good deal cheaper in Bangkok – however there was a satisfyingly tasty and filling main

dish of a kind of soup containing a generous amount of Thai River prawns and vegetables with noodles for £15.50, so by judicious eating my companion and I were able to keep to our £35 per person limit again.

The spicy meals are illustrated in a large rather garish-looking menu – a good idea for people trying Thai food for the first time, and the titles of the food are matchingly descriptive: ANGRY VEGGIE PASTA (£12) – anything that uses a very hot sauce is described as angry; a dish of mixed mushrooms was called a BASIL CHILLI BOMB (£12); WEEPING WOK (£8) was lamb on cucumber; HAPPY TOAST (£6.50) – a dessert made from tea custard, sea salt caramel and condensed milk.

Instead of having a main you can order plenty of smallish dishes which they suggest you share – some are served in small or large portions as you wish. A small portion of Lamb Cubes in Yellow chilli (£7) was absolutely perfectly cooked and delicious; Tataki

tuna Larb (£8.20) which seemed just to be slices of tuna, was less so; a Thai bruschetta (I love all the cross-overs!) was fresh with raw tomatoes and a small onion of some kind – delicious at £6.50. Another cross-over was a Dried Chillie Brownie for dessert. The staff were extremely pleasant and helpful about what the dishes were, how to order.

I had a small drama with one of the smaller dishes – there is a picture of "Corn Pops", corn in batter, naughty but nice (£6.80) in one part of the menu so we ordered them and ate them first, like a snack, while we were deciding what else to try. While we were eating these "Corn Pops" I came across another picture in another part of the menu of the exact same dish – only this time it was called "Corn and Crab Pops" and I had to restrain a loud yell. Some time ago I was told, after a particularly unpleasant and quite scary reaction, that I was allergic to crab, and I have of

course avoided it ever since. I called the waiter mid-swallow – I hadn't tasted any crab – and he said yes, the corn pops had crab in them; the offending dish was taken away hurriedly when I spat into it.

I froze, not knowing what to do next; spitting is not the action of a Secret Dining Detective, but nothing happened either then or later thank heavens so either there wasn't crab in them, or I am not allergic to crab, but I do think that is exactly the kind of mistake that anyone selling food should avoid. And the experience rather shook me for the rest of the meal.

I saw later there was a notice outside saying "Please tell our staff if you have any allergies" but if it was there before our visit I didn't notice it. The waiter brought back some corn pops with "definitely no crab" in them (but I noted we were charged for both dishes when we got the bill).

So: keep your eyes open, but I do think the Greyhound is worth a visit.

Wilde in Fitzroy Street

By MIKE PENTELOW

Oscar Wilde was well acquainted with Fitzroy Street and the fringes of Fitzrovia, as revealed in a new biography of him - *Oscar, A Life*, by Matthew Sturgis (who lives in the area).

Wilde was drawn to the Century Guild of Artists, dedicated to arts and crafts, which was formed in 1882 in Fitzroy Street. He contributed an article about Keats to its quarterly magazine, *Hobby Horse*, and planned another about Thomas Chatterton, the poet who poisoned himself at the age of 17 in 1770 in despair at his poverty.

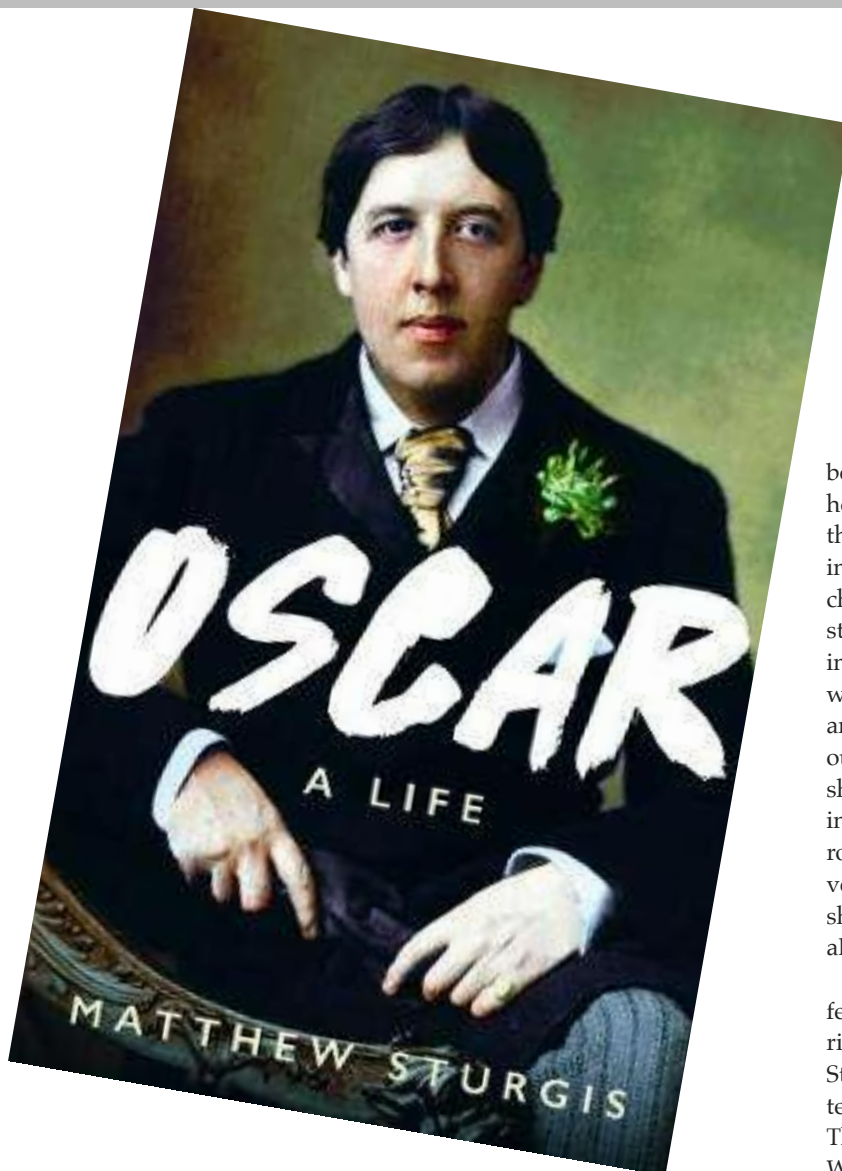
The guild had been established by Arthur Mackmurdo who designed furniture; Selwyn Image, a poet, artist, and stained glass window designer; and Herbert Horne, a poet and designer, who was 22 when Wilde met him in 1886.

"Your poems are most charming," Wilde told Horne. "You combine very perfectly simplicity and strangeness."

The Rymers Club was set up in 1891 meeting in the guild's headquarters in Fitzroy Street, where Wilde attended its meetings.

Here he met the poet Lionel Johnson [who lived at 20 Fitzroy Street] who later introduced him to Lord Alfred Douglas, the gay lover whose affair led to Wilde's two years' imprisonment for acts of "gross indecency". Also at these meetings was John Gray, also befriended by Wilde and referred to as the model for his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. It was John Gray's reading of French symbolist verses at these meetings which first attracted Wilde to him.

A raid on a club at 46 Fitzroy Street in 1894 led to the arrest of, among others, two rent boys used by Wilde, named Charlie Parker and Alfred Taylor. There were no convictions but the case was widely reported and Wilde was particularly distressed at the trouble it caused Taylor. Another rent boy he used was Fred Atkins, whose landlady at 25 Osna



burgh Street gave evidence in Wilde's trial of finding "horribly stained bedsheets" after one of his several visits.

A previous raid on a gay male brothel at 19 Cleveland Street in 1891 had led to a scandal with one of the clients, Lord Arthur Somerset, fleeing the country to avoid being prosecuted. Lord Alfred Douglas attempted to contact him in exile. Lord Euston, who had visited 19 Cleveland Street, was represented by lawyer George Lewis, whose home at 88 Portland Place (on the corner of Devonshire Street), was frequently visited by Wilde.

Lewis specialised in cases "where the sins and follies of the wealthy classes threaten exposure and disaster." The Prince of Wales employed him "when dealing

with his mistresses" so he got to know the actress Lillie Langtry. Wilde met Lillie and the painter Edward Burne-Jones at the parties in 88 Portland Place.

Lillie and Oscar went together to a lecture at University College London (UCL) in Gower Street on Greek art by Charles Newton in May 1880.

Soon after coming to London, Wilde attended "bohemian parties" of artists and actors at the home of actor Norman Forbes-Robertson and his parents "off Bedford Square."

So he was familiar with Gower Street, and wrote about it in *Modern Art Training*: "Even Gower Street, one of the most monotonously dull and colourless of formal London thoroughfares has periods when it is actually

WIN THIS BOOK

Simply answer this question: In which street did Oscar Wilde visit a palmist during his trials?

Either email your answer (putting "Competition" in the subject box) to news@fitzrovia.org.uk or post it to Fitzrovia News Competition, 39 Tottenham Street, London, W1T 4RX.

Entries close on May 7.

beautiful. I remember coming home from a party and passing through it when day was breaking when its aspect was most charming and I was forcibly struck by this fact. In the softening obscurity of the morning mist which had filled it with golden and purple hues, softening its outlines, and giving variety to its shadows, with the sun rays piercing it in long golden shafts, the roofs were shining like molten silver, and the vermilion pillar box shone like a gem. It was a scene of almost fairy-like beauty."

The painter James Whistler felt the latter part was a plagiarism of his comment: "In Gower Street at night you may see a letter box which is picturesque." The initial friendship between Wilde and Whistler had turned sour. When Wilde congratulated Whistler on a witticism and said: "I wish I had said that" Whistler replied: "You will, Oscar, you will."

The pair attended a fancy ball hosted by Mrs Douglass-Murray at 34 Portland Place (on the corner of New Cavendish Street) with Oscar dressed as a Venetian noble, and Whistler as a Spaniard of the middle ages in black velvet.

It was also in Portland Place, at number 18 which is now part of Broadcasting House, that Wilde met the prime minister William Gladstone, at a party in aid of the Liberal Association of Marylebone, at the home of Lady Margaret Sandhurst.

And just over the road at the Langham Hotel, 1 Portland Place, Wilde met the Sherlock Holmes author, Arthur Conan Doyle, and the Italian popular novelist Ouida

(aka Maria Louisa Rame).

Wilde also formed a bond with the painter Ford Madox Brown and often called on him for tea on Saturday afternoons [his home was at 37 Fitzroy Square].

During his trials in 1895 Wilde consulted the palmist, Mrs Robinson, known as the Sibyl of Mortimer Street [at number 53 of that street]. He was very happy when she told him: "I see a very brilliant life for you up to a certain point. Then I see a wall. Beyond that wall I see nothing." She also predicted "a long voyage" with his companion and they would walk "always hand in hand" together. Buoyed by this he went to Algeria with Lord Alfred, where they found the local boys "quite lovely" and the hashish "quite exquisite." On their return he visited Mrs Robinson again and she (wrongly) prophesied complete triumph in his court case. After losing the case, he declared: "Why did the Sibyl [Mrs Robinson] say fair things?"

He got some support however from the Dutch anarchist Alexander Cohen, who condemned the law's right to "pronounce on matters of private passion." This was in *The Torch*, a magazine produced [in Goodge Street] by artist and poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti's nieces [Olivia, aged 16, and Helen, aged 13, and their brother Arthur, aged 14].

The book, price £25, is published by Head of Zeus.

Oscar and book reviews

When Oscar reviewed books "he evolved the theory that it was both harmful and unnecessary for a reviewer to read the entire book: 'To know the vintage and quality of a wine one need not drink the whole cask. It must be perfectly easy in half an hour to say whether a book is worth anything or worth nothing.'"

While this reviewer did not read the entire 890 pages of "Oscar, A Life" he took considerably more than 30 minutes.

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

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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

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I am dead inside my body.
How long will I lie here?
Long enough for my mind to
shrivel, contracting my heart
and lungs with it. Here rests
a slop of meat that was once
Nina Hamnett.

My hands are already senseless. They can do nothing. What is a body other than a dead weight around one's thoughts? And how does one be a painter without mobile hands? Father waves a light in front of my eyes, as though looking for a soul lost at sea. Who would come back to life for that hard, closed face, all practical calculation and nothing else? He is ever the army officer, denouncing everything with a single blow. Art school: worthless. Reproductions of Whistler's etchings: rot. A sure reason for him to send me to the lunatic asylum. He said as much. Perhaps I am not lost, but hiding. No, I shan't come out until something interesting happens. Because it is boredom of which I am dying. Boredom — and prolonged virginity. Can Father find that out with his flashlight? He prods at my arm, lifts my hand and watches it flop back onto the bed. No, I'm not getting up for this. To be sixteen and bored to death.

If he wants to bring me back to flesh, to movement, he'd better enlist Charlie who lives in the flat below grandma's. Charlie has the pulse of blood in him, the cutest dimples, and he's in training to be a doctor. If only he could attend me. He has very assured, precise hands. I am sure they could cure me. Then after he'd nursed me back to life, we'd swirl around London together, sipping ab-

Spinal Adhesion

A short story by SUNITA SOLIAR



Illustration by Clifford Harper

sinthe at the Café Royal — if doctors do such things — eating chestnuts in the park then dashing into The National Gallery to escape the cold. Then we'd be married. Imagine the idyll: when his patients had ceased to be, he could strip the skin and I could draw the muscles twining over each other. Then off with that and I could paint the bones. I must remember not to say things like that to him. He likes girls with curls, who wear hobble skirts with hems narrow enough to give them a mincing, helpless step, girls who don't stare at the naked parts of strangers in Life Drawing. It wouldn't seem so shocking to the likes of Father

if he could see how lumpen and blotched the models are. Not much to look at in the flesh, but on the canvas they become an idea, an image of life, a meaning. We must have meaning, mustn't we? The other girls in my class haven't heard of Manet and it doesn't worry them at all. Perhaps it is I who am boring. Nina Hamnett, sixteen, languished in her bed and died from trying to bore everyone else to death.

The door — could it be Charlie come to heal me? Of course not. The doctor could be my father's dour twin, cut from the same gabardine. With the help of Mother, who

has crept out of her meek corner, they assemble me into an upright position. The doctor enjoys himself, stretching my eyelids and staring into my pupils, his hairy nostrils breathing onto my cheeks. Now, over his shoulder, I can see into the mirror. Is that you, Nina? How funny you look as the doctor repeats Father's flesh prodding and digs a sharp finger into your spine, then kneads your ribs with his thumbs. You're compliant, as they try to model your flesh, as though it were clay and they were gods.

'Yes,' the doctor says, stepping back with all the gravity of a magician. 'It appears to be a case of spinal adhesion.'

'Spinal adhesion?' my father asks. What made-up disease is this monster saddling me with?

He explains: 'It's as though she were sticking to herself. The nerves around her spine are beginning to stick. That is why she finds herself unable to move.'

'I knew she wasn't getting enough exercise,' Mother says, as always seeking Father's approval.

'So we need to mobilise her,' Father says.

'Mobilise! Dear, no,' replies the doctor. 'No, she must rest. No cure but bed rest.'

They mutter about prescriptions and shuffle their way out of my room. Mother smooths my hair for no dis-

cernible reason, other than that moving her hands gives her a sense of purpose. Verdict: I could be more dead than I am now. More finally so. But they have left me here against my pillow with Nina looking back at me. Perhaps it's time we had a chat. Well, Nina? What shall we do? If you or I have to lie here any longer we will adhere not just to ourselves, but to the mattress. Ought we to lie down and die for them, the bloodless? And what is wrong with sticking to oneself?

You know, Nina, you don't have too bad a form when you're not slumped like jelly. Let's see your torso — and there is a hand undoing the buttons of your smock top, a hand moving, yes, moving! A bit skinny on the ribs, yes. Breasts could be more pneumatic, a little less far apart. But it's a better form than those models, isn't it? Let's see the rest of you. And there are the legs, not bad in motion, the way the ligaments flex, the legs up and out of bed, the fingers locking the door and stripping the body down to nakedness. Let's have a look at your back in the mirror. Turn around a bit. Not bad. Not bad at all. Not a boring body. It speaks of desire and hunger. In fact, Nina, there is nothing boring about you. See the way the light hits the curve of your hip there. Not boring at all. The bony knuckles of your toes, tense with energy. Yes, there is something of life in you, something of interest right here in this room. Perhaps we could help each other. What do you think? Yes? It's settled then, Nina: I'll paint you.

Poetry corner

NEIGHBOURS
By Elizabeth Adams

*BOTH lived at Nortiam in East Sussex county:
One with his acres, one a small space.
And though they lived at a different pace,
Each would enjoy his garden's bounty.
Did Christopher Lloyd meet Masood, born Elms?
And did their paths cross for a while?
The white-haired man with the gentle smile,
O'erseeing the beauty which overwhelms
The visitors who come back every year.
Did Elms buy plants at Great Dixter's nursery?
Was the glance he received no more than cursory,
For it seems he hadn't yet struck fear?
But in the year of the old man's OBE
A brawl at the inn brought more than just shame
To the man who'd be jailed and change his name,
And one day embark on his killing spree.*

Elizabeth explains the poem: "I had been shocked when I read that the Westminster Bridge terrorist [Adrian Russell Elms, alias Khalid Masood, 22nd March 2017] had lived for about ten years just

down the road from Great Dixter, one of my favourite gardens, and also that the killer had liked gardening. Great Dixter is one of the finest gardens in the south east and Christopher Lloyd one of our most respected garden designers. He died in 2006. Masood had a history of cocaine use and aggressive behaviour; it's said that he was probably radicalised while in prison.

FLYING OVER LONDON
By Wendy Shutler

*A thin, fine and golden thread
snakes across black velvet, spread
with flashing, fabulous jewels,
as if casually dropped on a dressing-table:
sparkling trinkets, scintillating gems.*

*Somewhere between that little gold bracelet -
Tower Bridge -
and the two great dark
sleeping spaces of the royal parks,
is the place where I live!*

*Hidden in the middle, among a thousand jewels,
under this glittering blanket, I'm just one
of the crowd of the tiny, scuttling, creeping things.*

*I fly up here on borrowed wings,
looking down on my kind, like a king.*

MARCONI 1901
by Terry Egan

*The receiver on the table
was crude - a few coils and condensers, a coherer,
no valves and no amplifiers,
not even a crystal. And yet he was on the point
of putting to test the correctness of his beliefs.
Then: 'Pip-pip-pip' came the answer...
'Can you hear anything?' He asked Kemp, and Kemp
said: 'Yes,
the letter S'. He could hear it.
So the electric waves sent out
into space from Poldhu had traversed the Atlantic -
a huge distance - unimpeded
by the curvature of the Earth.
And all his anticipations had been justified.*

After the Referendum
By Sandra Wheen

Post Office Tower, old friend,

Blue light shining through my
window

Landmark helping me find
home

Beacon of Europe's greatest
capital bar none

Beaming messages of hope into
the world

What have they done to you?

You look the same

But
All
Your
Glory's
Gone.

Music hall antics

By MIKE PENTELOW

A theatre was set ablaze during a ballet performance of "The Fire Bird", and another had its boards trodden by Richard Wagner's cat.

These are just two anecdotes from "Music Hall - Our Finest Hour", by Stephen Lees (SPEL Publications, £8.50).

Six theatres and two pubs are featured from Fitzrovia.

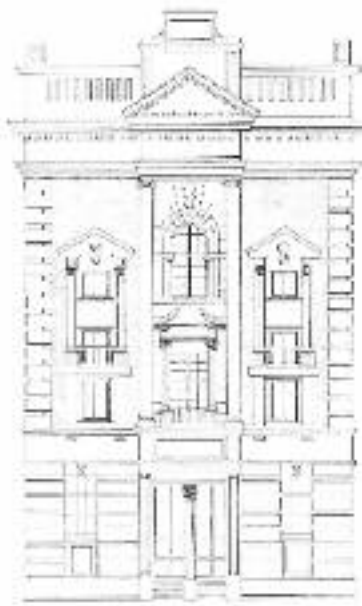
Although written by an American architect in the form of an imaginary tour by American vaudeville artists around the late 19th and early 20th century, the details of the buildings are factual.

"The Fire Bird" was composed by Stravinsky and performed at the Oxford Music Hall, on the corner of Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street.

An enthusiastic female dancer "got carried away in a reckless trance brought on by the ecstatic and rapturous applause she had generated from an appreciative audience." But then "in her dancing delirium, she bowed too near the blazing footlights and in so doing her protruding, starched, taffeta costume made contact with the gas flames causing it to catch fire!

"The applause increased as she ran about the stage on fire and in a blind panic, which the audience mistook as being part of her Fire Bird act."

Her blazing costume then ignited the stage scenery and then

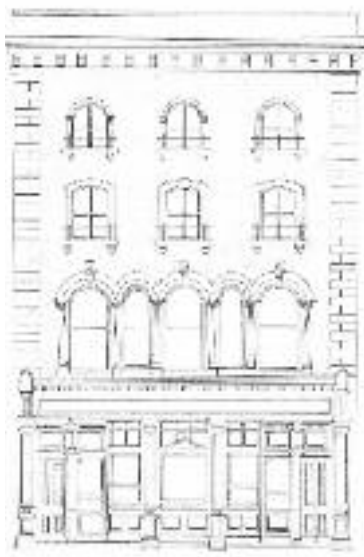


St George's Hall

the entire auditorium became engulfed in flames.

The audience would have stayed calm if the views of comedian George Robey, who performed on the same stage, were born out. He thought that "the British are a type of people who, if armed with laughter, presented more of a threat to an enemy in the battle field, than any other weapon at their disposal. The laughter within them took away fear and treated real potential death situations with disdain and an inordinate impunity!"

As for Wagner's cat he made his home at St James's Hall at 95a Portland Road as it was then, and is now 97 Great Portland Street.



Horse & Groom

The cat would often walk on stage during rehearsals of Wagner's works, but never to those of other composers. "Clearly the cat had a very well developed appreciation and discerning innate sense of music!" (Wagner incidentally lived at 25 Old Compton Street).

Edward Elgar's "Sea Pictures" was performed at the same theatre with Elgar himself playing piano. Another of his compositions "Variations on an Original Theme" (also known as "Enigma Variation") was at the same venue conducted by Hans Richter in 1899.

The theatre had its own orchestra. Later it was renamed the Philharmonic Hall and showed films and lantern shows which were a form of illustrated lectures.

The Scala Theatre/Cinema in Tottenham Street and Charlotte Street lasted until 1980 when it was taken over by Channel 4.

But it started in 1772 when it was called the New Rooms. It was subsequently renamed The King's Concert Rooms, then The

Cognoscenti Theatre, and others such as New Theatre, Regency Theatre, Tottenham Street Theatre, West London Theatre, Queen's Theatre, and Fitzroy Theatre. In 1865 it was refurbished and became the Prince of Wales Royal Theatre. For a while it was used as a Salvation Army hostel for displaced persons until 1903 when it was sold to impresario Edmund Dustin-Maddick who built it as the Scala Theatre.

It opened in December 1904 with one of the largest stages in the country measuring 1,620 square feet. The decor was rather grand with marble walls and ornamental staircases on either side of the auditorium linking the balcony with the stalls. In fact it was named after the Italian for staircase not the opera house in Milan.

Up to 1,200 could be seated, but sometimes the character of the audience could be at variance with the elegant decor, it being in "a comparatively poor neighbourhood."

A group of Nihilists disrupted concerts at the Queen's Hall [4 Langham Place] by double booking seats leading to arguments over whose seat it was, applauding at inappropriate moments, and jeering. One to suffer this treatment was a benefit concert for victims of the sinking of the Titanic in 1912.

The London Palladium at Argyll Street, Oxford Circus, had an audience made up of costermongers and "tossers" (people who searched the Thames shoreline for valuables). Backing on to the theatre lived the Hungarian composer and pianist Franz Liszt at 16 Great Marlborough Street. He was sometimes known as Abbe after being ordained as a Franciscan in 1865, and was the father-in-law of Wagner.

Also mentioned are the Royal

Princess's Theatre at 152 Oxford Street [number 73 when it was opened in 1880], and the Regent Street Theatre which opened at 309 Regent Street in 1848 and showed the first screening of film by the Lumier brothers in 1896. [It is now the Regent Street Cinema].

Two pubs in Great Portland Street are described in the book.

The Horse and Groom [at number 128] has its origins in 1759 when it was named the New Inn with stabling for horses. It changed its name to the Horse and Groom in 1761. After being rebuilt in 1847 it was burned down 12 years later, but later reconstructed. The decor was re-designed in 1895.

The Cock [at number 27 on the corner of Margaret Street] has a history going back to at least the 18th century. But the present building was constructed in 1896 when the saloon was divided into three with Queen Anne and Baroque styles.

Other titbits include:

Joseph Alysius Hansom, who invented the horse drawn carriage of that name, was based at 103 Portland Road (now Great Portland Street), the same house in which lived Charles Barry, the "architect of the Palace of Westminster."

Also in the same road lived two German composers Felix Mendelssohn [number 103] and Carl Maria von Weber [number 91].

Architectural illustrations of the buildings are by the author.

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Picture puzzle



How well do you know Fitzrovia?

Can you identify at which address the above photograph was taken?

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Twinkle Toes



Piano Man
No 16 by
Clifford
Slapper

I first moved to Fitzrovia in the 1990s, settling in my current home on Charlotte Street around the turn of the century. It had once been the family home of a wealthy family who, in the middle years of the 20th century had it converted for multiple occupancy. The son of the dowager once came to visit and commented on how my first floor, one-bedroom flat had in his day been two separate (very small!) bedsits.

In 2004 the current landlords purchased the property, with me as a sitting tenant. I have had to exercise determination and resourcefulness to remain all these years, whilst many others have been forced out of the area by escalating rents, rates and other costs. Back in 2004 my neighbours on the floors above were comedian, Adam Bloom, and film composer, Joe Henson (son of Una Stubbs). Each time a flat is vacated, the rent is hauled up a notch. Now the area has lost almost all of its true creatives, the assorted artists, photographers and writers who were a significant proportion of the residents here 20 or 30 years ago, and instead is more populated with



Cartoon by Chris Tyler

those making money out of the creativity of others (which apparently is more lucrative). At the same time, the proportion of those living here to those working here has continued to shift more toward the latter. I have just been hit with an 11 per cent rent rise and the warning of a possible further 45 per cent rise in a year.

In 2016, The Sunday Times named Fitzrovia as the best place to live in London. It remains, however, at risk of losing its distinct character. This is a long term process. In the 1960s a lot of the older housing stock was lost locally and several groups, such as the Charlotte Street Association in 1970 were created by residents to resist the threat to the unique character of the area. The very existence of this esteemed newspaper arose out of those struggles,

having been started in 1973 (originally called The Tower) as part of the campaign against property developers putting money before the welfare of the local community. That year also saw the first Fitzrovia Festival, with the theme "The people live here!" The following year, the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association was formed, and in 1975 the FNA opened the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre in a disused glass shop on the corner of Goodge Place and Tottenham Street. It is a Grade II listed building and is still the office of the Fitzrovia News, as well as a centre for community action. In many ways, that process is now accelerating again, in new and even more dramatic ways, as the battle for the soul of our beloved urban village continues.

For the past two years I lived, in effect, on a building site, as all of the floors above my flat were rebuilt and refurbished, and a new penthouse flat was added on the roof, across two houses. Just when I thought there would be some peace at last, work then began on reconstructing the ground and basement floors beneath me, for a new commercial use. At first there was some conflict of interest between myself and the latest building crew. However, it soon turned out that the site manager, Robin, was a great music lover. He has seen Les Misérables nine times! He heard me playing "Life On Mars?" one

day, and we have now become the best of friends. I have nicknamed him Twinkle Toes, as he is a mean tap-dancer. Once again, music unites. I was reminded of how pianist Mike Garson suffered anti-semitism and other problems during his national service in the US army, until he started playing the blues on the piano in the canteen. After that he became popular and many of his problems dissolved (as told in my biography of him, "Bowie's Piano Man: The Life of Mike Garson"). Meanwhile, I am getting requests now on the piano from the builders working on the shop below, as they can hear me through the windows.

For a very long period, Fitzrovia enjoyed a position as one of London's inner urban villages, with a profusion of interesting residents and businesses, independent and family run cafés and bars, music, art and colourful, cultural expression. There are vestiges of that still, but they are hanging on by a thread. Like Covent Garden earlier, then Soho, we are being subjected to the faceless power of money, as higher returns for distant investors are delivered by erasing that individuality. The long term result is anodyne, homogenous, standardised, chain-outlet, corporate branding: like a song with only one note, the monotonous drone of money.



Fairyland murder in 1914

A murder in Tottenham Court Road in 1914 established a legal precedent regarding provocation.

It was on August 12 of that year that 22-year-old Donald Lesbini (pictured above) shot and killed 27-year-old Alice Storey in the Fairyland shooting gallery, 92 Tottenham Court Road.

Lesbini was a soldier who had deserted after being bullied in the army for being Jewish (which he was not), and was staying in nearby Drummond Street, working as a tailor. He even contemplated suicide and went to Fairyland to practise shooting.

Working there, loading the rifles, was Alice, the daughter of travellers, from Essex.

On previous occasions she had called him by a racist anti-semitic term, but said she was only joking. She repeated the term this time and he shot her between the billiards table and the hoopla stand.

She was taken to nearby University College Hospital which was then in Gower Street but died on the way.

Lesbini was arrested by PC John Kitsby, who was patrolling nearby, who took him to the police station at 55-59 Tottenham Court Road.

He told the constable that Alice had insulted him. At the trial he said: "She made fun of me about my name and nationality. I had warned her before about it. She was tantalising me as she gave me the rifle. It was provocation, I'd had enough."

His defence was insanity and provocation, which the judge defined in a certain way, which became a legal precedent in Britain, Australia and Canada.

The jury found him guilty, recommending mercy, but his execution date was set for October 13, and he was refused leave to appeal. Despite this the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He was released in 1934 and died in 1955 at the age of 63.

Previous articles have reported how the Fairyland gallery had been used by Indian nationalists and suffragettes planning assassinations.

Looking back through the archives

10 years ago

Banksy mural painted over

From Fitzrovia News, Spring, 2009:

The Banksy mural on the Royal Mail site in Newman Street [now Rathbone Square] was painted over. "A debate had sparked over the last few months between the owners of the adjacent building [on which it was painted], who wanted to preserve the mural to capitalise on the value of the artwork, and Royal Mail, willing to cancel it to punish what they consider another act of vandalism on public ground, but apparently the public company won the argument."

The painting had the caption: "One Nation Under CCTV" was directly below the Royal Mail's close circuit television.

Work started on dismantling the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and

Obstetric Hospital in Huntley Street to make way for the new UCLH Cancer Centre.

Two deaths of local characters were reported:

John Bermiston, landlord of the Northumberland Arms [now Queen Charlotte] in Goodge Street, for 24 years. He and his wife Pearl took over the pub in 1969, following the death of his brother Jimmy who previously owned it. John became a stalwart of the community and made many friends among customers who worked for Radio 2, Middlesex Hospital, and others. He was still dancing at the age of 84 shortly before he died.

John Hutchins, who opened the Curwen Gallery in Colville Place in the 1970s with his wife Jill, died at the age of 80. As a cricketer he kept wicket to Surrey and England bowler Tony Lock. He also played tennis and hockey. In street festivals their gallery was always the last to stop serving drinks. He was a regular attendee at St Giles-in-the-Fields.

40 years ago

Original editors move on



From Tower Community Newspaper, March/April 1979:

Original editors of the newspaper, Patrick Ensor and Judith Thomas (pictured above), moved from their "slum penthouse" in Percy Street to north London.

Judith took photographs and drummed up the advertising that paid the printing costs of the paper, and Patrick used his skills as a Guardian journalist to produce a profession product.

Judith was also one of the

committee that set up the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre and became its first treasurer (as well as painting the building).

Author Peter Leslie, who wrote many episodes of the popular Avengers television series, returned to the area to research a detective novel he was writing. He had left the area to live in the South of France.

Frank Dobson was standing to be Labour MP for Camden for the first time, which he won. He had lived in the constituency for 20 years and had stood in other constituencies three times. He had been elected as a councillor for Holborn in 1971, but resigned in 1977 to become a local government ombudsman.

Standing successfully as the Conservative candidate for St Marylebone at the same time was **Kenneth Baker**. He had lived in Marylebone nearly all his life and been MP since 1970, having previously been MP for Acton two years earlier.

WHAT'S ON AROUND FITZROVIA

Email news@fitzrovia.org.uk with listings by May 17, for the June issue and put "Listings" in the subject box

LIVE MUSIC



Peter and Barbara Snape at the King & Queen on April 12.

All Saints, 7 Margaret St: Organ recital - Jordan Wong, Dr John Birch, March 24, 3.30pm.

The Albany, 240 Great Portland St: Sixties Rebellion (Garage, Surf & Rockabilly), every Friday, 9pm-2am.

King & Queen, 1 Foley St : Folk once a month on Fridays 8-11pm (visit web.mustradclub.co.uk): Peter and Barbara Snape, April 12. Will Noble, May 17.

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.

UCL, Haldane Room, Wilkins Building, Gower St: UCL Chamber music for ensembles, March 12, 5.30-6.30pm.

The 100 Club, 100 Oxford St (the100club.co.uk): The Korgis, March 15. The Claim, March 23. Tom Russell, March 29. Northern Soul All-Nighter, March 30, 11pm-6am. The Brew, April 3. The Mekons, April 5. The Fabulous Lounge Swingers, Apr 18. London Calling play The Clash, April 18, 19 and 20. The Spitfires, April 26 and 27.

BALLROOM DANCING

Black Tie Ballroom Club, Indian YMCA Fitzroy Square 7:00pm
March 8th Ewan Bleach Quintet + beginners' rumba lesson
April 12th Art Deco Orchestra and Alistair Sutherland + beginners' slow waltz lesson
May 10th Art Deco Orchestra with Alistair Sutherland + beginners' slow foxtrot lesson
 Standard tickets £20, available online, include beginners dance lesson, tea, sparking water and a hot Indian vegetarian snack. Female and male taxi dancers for guests at no additional charge
meetup.com/black-tie-ballroom-club

THEATRE

Bloomsbury Theatre/Studio, 15 Gordon St (thebloomsbury.com): UCL Dance Society perform Illusion, March 7-9. UCOpera perform Libuse, March 18-23. UCL's Viva La Vulva presents Freak by Anna Jordan, March 19. Sex, Drugs and Other Things I Never Do, by Simon Caine, April 21.

Camden People's Theatre, 58-60 Hampstead Rd (cptheatre.co.uk): Earwax X Sprint, women's music and poetry, March 10. Big Bang Sprint, various artists, March 11. George, presented by Contingency Theatre, live music and surreal comedy, March 12. The Great Cat Massacre, absurdist exploration of late stage capitalism, March 15. Melonade, clownesque theatre, March 19.

Dominion Theatre, 269 Tottenham Court Rd (dominiontheatre.com): Bear Grylls interviews Sir Ranulph Fiennes, opens March 6. An Evening with Dame Diana Rigg, opens March 9.



Barry Humphreys and Rob Brydon at the London Palladium on Apr 28.

London Palladium, Argyll St (london-palladium.co.uk): The Songs of Queen, starring Tom Chaplin, April 22. Rob Brydon probes Barry Humphries Live on Stage, April 28.

New Diorama Theatre (newdiorama.com), 15-16 Triton St (Euston Rd opposite Fitzroy St): Dinomania, performed by Kandinsky, until March 23.

RADA, Malet St (rada.ac.uk/whats-on): Woman and Scarecrow, by Marina Carr, March 13-23. Gig, by Atiha Sen Gupta, March 14-23. Otis and Eunice, March 29-30.

CABARET

The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place: Maverick Theatre's SpeakEasy Cabaret, first Saturday of the month, 7.30pm. If you would like to appear for up to ten minutes email story@maverick-theatre.co.uk.

CINEMA



Dennis Skinner: at Bolivar Hall on April 11

Bolivar Hall, 54 Grafton Way (cultura.embavenez-uk.org): London Socialist Film Co-op screen films at 11am on the second Sunday of each month. These Dangerous Women, Women's Peace Crusade, March 10. Dennis Skinner: The Nature of the Beast, April 14. Calais' Children: A Case to Answer, and The Patriot Games by George Galloway, May 12.

Charlotte Street Hotel, 15-17 Charlotte St: Film Club with meal and a movie for £40. To book tickets visit bit.ly/CharlotteStreet-FilmClub.

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

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

Regent Street Cinema, 309 Regent St: For daily programme visit 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/events): Regular programme of screenings.

COMEDY

The Albany, 240 Great Portland St: Every Monday and Wednesday (plus occasional other nights) at 7.30 pm.

PUB QUIZZES

The Albany, 240 Great Portland St: Sundays, 7pm

Carpenters Arms, 68-70 Whitfield St. Tuesdays, 6.30pm.

Prince of Wales Feathers, 8 Warren St: Tuesdays, 6pm.

Rising Sun, 46 Tottenham Court Rd. Wednesdays, 6.30 for 7pm.

EXHIBITIONS



British Museum, Great Russell St (britishmuseum.org):

Free: Witnesses: emigre medalists in Britain, until Apr 7. Feeding History: the politics of food, until May 27. Artists postcards from 1960 to now, until August 4. Rembrandt: thinking on paper, until Aug 4. Reimagining Captain Cook, until Aug 4. Pay for: Edvard Munch: Love and angst (pictured), Apr 11-July 21.

Framers Gallery, 35 Windmill St: Adrian Ensor photographic exhibition, Apr 25-May 10 (see p11)

Wellcome Library, 183 Euston Rd (wellcomecollection.org): Global Clinic, until April 22. Smoke and

TALKS

Sohemian Society, Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place: Canine Intellectuals and Celebrated Talking Dogs, by Dr Jan Bondeson, March 7, 7.30pm. A Different Class of Murder: The story of Lord Lucan, by Laura Thompson, April 11, 7.30pm.

UCL Darwin Lecture Theatre, Malet Place (ucl.ac.uk/events): Lunchtime lectures, Tuesdays and Thursdays (1.15-1.55pm) during term time. Child obesity, March 12. Brain imaging, March 19. Self-driving cars, March 21. Down syndrome, March 26. EEG, April 23. Transport, April 30.

POETRY

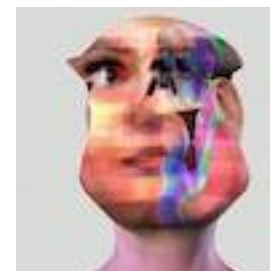
King & Queen, 1 Foley St: Poems by Wendy Shutler and Andrew Cuthbert, songs by Ivor Game, May 21 at 8pm.

WALKS

London Literary Pub Crawl, every Saturday, 5pm. Start at the Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place.

ART

Featured exhibitions below. A full list of all galleries is on our website: news.fitzrovia.org.uk



Edel Assanti, 74A Newman St: Various artists "We are the people. Who are you?" To March 9. Tony DeLap, March 15-Apr 27

Fold Gallery, 158 New Cavendish St: Various artists "Carry On" to March 9. Tim Ellis "Tomorrow's Harvest", March 14-May 4.



Harlesden High Street, 32 Newman St: Various artists "Trust Is The Ultimate Currency" to March 24.



Rosenfeld Porcini, 37 Rathbone St: Teodora Axente "Symmetries of the Oneiric", to April 6.



T J Boulting, 59 Riding House St: Various artists: Subversive Stitch - Embroidery and the Making of Feminine, until March 23.

Woolff Gallery, 89 Charlotte St: Love Jordan, to March 15.

Framers Gallery: Photo exhibition - see under Exhibitions

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