

FitzroviaNews



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

Issue 156 Spring 2020

Last 'crown' post office to close, and go private

By Linus Rees

One of the last remaining crown post offices in the West End and the only one serving Fitzrovia is to close this year and be taken over by a private operator.

"Great Portland Street Crown Post Office workers were given the bad news at a staff meeting," said the Communication Workers Union.

Seventeen workers at the busy post office on the corner of Mortimer Street were told that the branch would close in May this year and that a deal with private operators is currently being negotiated to run it as a franchise.

"The closure will result in the collective loss of almost 400 years' service by colleagues, to the local community. Such franchises often mean a reduction in access, services and staffing levels plus a lessening in the quality of service, received by customers," said union representative Garrie Bond who attended the staff meeting.

The branch is in a busy commercial street serving thousands of residents and tens of thousands of people working within 500 metres of the premises says the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association.

The announcement means that nine Crown Post Offices are being closed so far in 2020 with the loss of 75 public sector jobs.

"Since the New Year opened, there has been an acceleration of the franchising programme by the Post Office — a programme which makes a total nonsense of government claims that the post office network is 'safe' in their hands," said Andy Furey the national union officer for Post Office workers.

In a statement to Fitzrovia News, Post Office Limited said: "From May 2020 the branch will

be operated by an independent franchise partner, from the current premises, offering the same great range of products and services with extended opening on Saturday afternoons. Our new franchise partners, Mr Zahir Khan Subekhan Pathan and Mr Anish Mustufa Vohra, plan a major refurbishment of the premises, providing a brand new, modern Post Office branch and a retail offer of stationery, packaging, drinks and confectionery.

Post Office's Head of the Directly Managed Branch Network Steve Blampied said:

"We are making this change in order to maintain Post Office services in Great Portland Street. There are unprecedented changes on our high streets and the needs of our customers are evolving too.

"Our priority is to provide secure and commercially sustainable services in Great Portland Street, continuing to meet our customers' needs now and into the future. The vast majority of our 11500 Post Office Branches, large and small, are already successfully operated by independent franchisees."

In October 2019 a House of Commons report criticised the Post Office for its strategy of closing Crown Post Offices and recommended that the Post Office



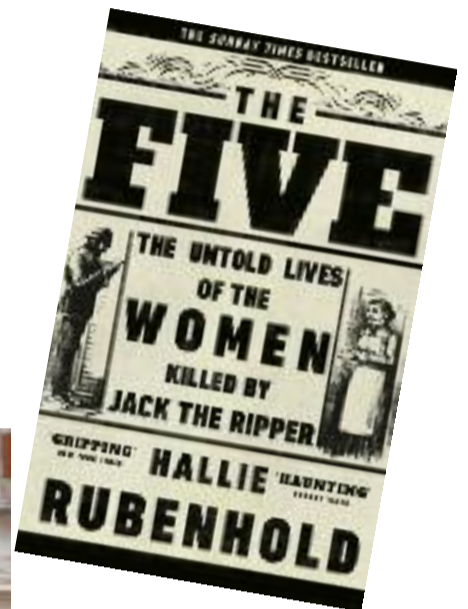
Staff at Great Portland Street post office have been told the branch will be run by a franchise from May this year.

Ltd and the Government reconsider.

The Post Office has also been criticised for the way it handled its relationship with sub-postmasters and had to pay out £58m after the High Court ruled the company to be at fault for installing

the defective Horizon computer system in branches.

Sign the petition to stop the closure of Great Portland Street Crown Post Office. See: bit.ly/Save-GPS-PO



Win this book signed by the author page 11



Boy George returns to Carburton Street page 6



Awarded tripadvisor certificate of excellence five years running 2014 - 2018



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Frank Dobson opened the first Fitzrovia Festival

In the last *Fitzrovia News* the tribute to Frank Dobson describes him as our MP opening The Warren playground in November 1979.

His first appearance in Fitzrovia was in June 1973 when as Leader of Camden Council he opened the first Fitzrovia Festival in Charlotte Street, standing on

the steps of Cottrell's (now the Charlotte Street Hotel).

In "40 years ago" in the same issue is an account of the collapse of two houses at The Warren 24 hours before it was due to be opened by Frank. A narrow escape for him and many others.

**Janet Gauld,
Ridgmount Gardens**

Mural must be sensitively restored

I feel heartbroken by the decision by Camden Council to offer the "restoration" of the Fitzrovia Mural to Global Street Art. I have a connection to the mural (my father and uncle are painted in it) and have been actively trying to get it restored since 2008. We've carried out fundraising, produced surveys and engaged with the community, to try and have this work sensitively restored. The decision to award this to a commercial agency feels like a slap in the face.

The campaign began when the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association put me in touch with the original artist, Mick Jones. I interviewed and eventually befriended Mick, gaining valuable insight into his hopes for the restoration. Together with the FNA and the London Mural Preservation Society I arranged a guided walk, sold tea-towels of the design, and publicised the mural's restoration on BBC radio. After Mick's passing I met with Paul Butler, a contemporary of Mick's and someone who successfully restored the Dalston mural. We worked with Eazl and the Fitzrovia Centre to produce a public exhibition at Arup in Fitzroy Street about the mural, fully documenting the current state of the wall with high res photos. £2,000 of funds raised went towards the wall condition survey.

I've tried for years to make this project happen. I'm disappointed that Global Street Art (a company who plaster buildings with giant advertisements for makeup and electronics), will be carrying out this project.

Since my first encounter with Global Street Art, I've been unconvinced of their commitment to the historical importance of the

piece, and their sensitivity in preserving it. Their CEO Lee contacted me a few years ago, saying he wanted to paint a giant box of popcorn over the mural. Is this the level of "restoration" we are dealing with here? The original work is a product of the local community, and its locality and sense of "place" is intrinsic. I hope, then, that this large-scale historical document (one of only a handful of murals left from the 1980s) will be preserved for future generations.

Murals across London have been successfully and sensitively restored — the Dalston Peace Mural and Cable Street Mural are high-profile examples. These restorations enhanced the originals. They were carefully planned and carried out — do Global Street Art have any real experience of carrying out historical restorations?

Aside from grave concerns over the mural being lost, I'm worried that even if the content is to be preserved, the quality of the restoration could be compromised. Part of the research we've carried out consisted of detailed conversations with Mick Jones over the best types of paint to use, for instance.

Our proposal to Camden Council took time, money and effort. Personally I have worked entirely in a voluntary capacity on this project. It's a gross insult, then, that no-one in the council even had the decency to let Eazl or myself know that our proposal had been rejected. After years of work we are rewarded with two sentences: a shrug and a 'sorry'. This 'apology' is dismissive and disrespectful.

Kristina O'Donnell

I suffered with AirBnB guests for two years

I'm a woman living in a small flat in Fitzrovia which I rent from a housing association. I only work part-time due to an ongoing illness. I've lived here relatively peacefully for nearly 20 years, but the last two years of the comings and goings at all hours of the day from the flat below me has ruined the modest life I have.

It first started in March 2018 when an American family arrived at the street door and rang my buzzer. They had broken their key off in the lock and needed my help to get in. They had rented the small two bedroom flat (owned by a private landlord) for a few days while visiting London. They had come via AirBnB.

This was the start of my unwilling role as an unpaid AirBnB concierge as it became more and more a regular occurrence. People would arrive with all their luggage, bump their way in through the front door, or ring my buzzer asking me if this was the right place.

Sometimes there were four people, often eight, and every now and again there would be a party, and fire alarms would go off. The average hen party would go out at 10pm and then come back at all hours and then some of them would go out again for a cigarette. One group of guests turned up to make a film and had 30 people in the flat. They kept going outside with these girls in skimpy clothes and filming them in the street with a drone!

July and August was solid with different guests. Even when people are well behaved you get this constant noise of coming and going.

In October that year I contacted AirBnB because the short-letting was exceeding the 90-day limit, large numbers of people were occupying the small flat, and the front door was getting damaged. I also contacted the freeholder of the building.

After I got nowhere I contacted Camden Council's planning department and asked them to take enforcement action. They wrote back to me saying that there wasn't enough evidence to take action and that I would have to keep a diary of all comings and goings, backed up by photographs.

After the first few times of taking photos I realised that this was not going to be a workable solution because I would have to be in all the time and have to lean out of the window taking a photo.

So I spent £200 on a camera with a motion sensor to film the comings and goings of the guests from the street door. This was money I could not afford to spend but I really wanted to get my life back.

I started a spreadsheet and backed up every entry with a video recording.

It took until the middle of July to record at least 90 days of short-letting activity. I sent Camden the spreadsheet, video, website links to the AirBnB listing, the company running the commercial short-letting scam, and photos of the cleaner dumping rubbish in the street.

I didn't hear from Camden for some time. In the autumn I contacted one of my local councillors. But still nothing happened and it all dragged on as they said they were reviewing the evidence. By this time I was getting concerned that I hadn't given them enough information and that I would have to start the whole process again of recording yet another 90 days and more of short-letting.

This all took its toll on me. It was draining, and I was constantly on edge. I didn't know if the next group of guests would be noisy or quiet. Large groups of blokes drinking and shouting were the worst because I found them intimidating and I didn't feel safe in my own building.

Eventually Camden issued an enforcement notice in November instructing the company to cease the activity within 30 days, but it was not until the end of January that it actually stopped and the last of the short stay guests came and went.

Everybody involved in the property was making money out of my misery. There was the freeholder who owned the building, the leaseholder who owned the two bedroom flat, the managing agents who managed the flat, the tenant who rented this flat on behalf of his short-letting company, and AirBnB who took a share of the income from the short-letting. And none of them gave a damn about what they were doing.

Name and address withheld

Camden criticised over Fitzrovia Mural contract

Camden Council has been criticised for its choice of contractor to undertake the restoration of the Fitzrovia Mural, and the way it handled the competitive tendering process, writes *Linus Rees*

Kristina O'Donnell, whose father and uncle are depicted in the mural, says she is "heartbroken by the decision" to award the contract to Global Street Arts (see letters, p2).

Global is more known for creating corporate advertising made to look like community art, and has painted graffiti art in and around Camden Town. The company is not known for its mural restoration work.

"I've been unconvinced of their commitment to the historical importance of the piece, and their sensitivity in preserving it," says O'Donnell who led the campaign to get mural restored.

The Mural, originally painted in 1980 by Mick Jones and Simon Barber, is one of London's most famous.

In 2010 Jones recalled how he and Barber created it.

"In close consultation with local people we took inspiration from local life: newsagent workers, a butcher, builders, office workers, nurses, a pub, and local school children all found their way into the composition.

"The skyline reflects the speculative building of the time, the young boy behind a fence is a comment on the lack of open spaces and amenities in the area. We developed a highly figurative, narrative cartoon style which contains humour and wit as a way of highlighting the themes and issues," he said.

Jones died of cancer in 2012 but O'Donnell continued to champion the mural and worked with the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, the London Mural Preservation Society, and then the Fitzrovia Centre and community interest company Eazl on the initial steps to get it restored.

Eazl photographed the entire mural in 2015 and held an exhibition in collaboration with Fitzrovia firm Arup at its gallery. Camden Council was involved and committed to pay for the restoration as part of the transformation of Tottenham Court Road.

But in 2018 Camden forgot all about this groundwork, and approached the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association asking if there were any photos that could aid the restoration. The FNA



Photographing the Fitzrovia Mural in 2015.

pointed out that they had already been taken in 2015.

Camden then put the contract for the restoration out to tender.

Eazl put in a bid as did other contractors including Global.

Eazl worked with Hirst Conservation to submit a bid that would have involved the artist Paul Butler re-painting the mural. Butler and Hirst had worked on the restoration of the Hackney Peace Carnival Mural in 2014, also originally painted by Mick Jones, and Ann Walker, based on designs by Ann's husband, Ray Walker.

Eazl heard via a third party that the contract had been instead awarded to Global. Camden had not even bothered to inform them that their bid had been unsuccessful. Camden later apologised over the way it had been handled.

However, both Camden and Global now stress they are committed to a faithful restoration of Jones and Barber's original artwork.

Lee Bofkin, co-founder of Global, told *Fitzrovia News*: "We are incredibly proud to have been awarded this project and appreciate the sensitivity around this much loved mural.

"We have undertaken a great amount of research for this project, including a comprehensive digital mapping of the mural, an extensive study of how it looked before lower parts were lost to

graffiti and how the colours would have looked when the mural was first painted, by looking at the vibrancy of other murals from the period. This thorough research will facilitate us to restore the mural authentically.

"Since we were founded in 2012 we have organised 2,500 legal murals across London. That number greatly exceeds our commercial projects and we are proud of our extensive history of working with local communities within Camden," he said.

Councillor Adam Harrison, cabinet member for parks, said:

"We received a number of high calibre proposals during the tender stage and appointed Global to restore the mural fully and historically accurately, replicating both the historical colours and design. Global have an excellent track record of designing new murals and painting murals designed by others, including high profile locations.

"We are excited to be able to ensure that the mural is at long last going to have the restoration it deserves allowing it to once again be enjoyed by future generations complemented by the rejuvenation of Whitfield Gardens," said Harrison.

The restored mural is due to be unveiled this summer.

Women's group gather evidence for 'safe zone' around Whitfield Street health centre

A group campaigning for an end to the harassment of pregnant people outside abortion clinics nationwide is gathering evidence in order to create a safe zone around a health centre in Whitfield Street, writes Angela Lovely.

Many residents and workers in Fitzrovia would have noticed the sometimes large numbers of people holding a "vigil" opposite the Central London Marie Stopes Clinic on Whitfield Street and usually one or two people standing right outside.

Now a group called Sister Supporter is collecting first-hand accounts as evidence of the traumatic effects the clinic "vigils" have on women seeking health care.

Sister Supporter successfully petitioned Ealing council in 2018 which resulted in a Public Space Protection Order around the clinic. Anyone who breaches the order could face a fine or imprisonment.

Now the group want Camden council to do the same for the Whitfield Street clinic and are asking women to submit their personal accounts of harassment by filling out a form on their website. Later this year they will submit evidence to Camden and ask for a safe zone to be implemented.

See: sistersupporter.co.uk/whitfield-street

Soho walk-in health centre under threat

A busy health clinic used by tens of thousands of local residents, workers and visitors to the West End every year will have to close unless changes to the way it operates can be made, say NHS managers.

The Central London Clinical Commissioning Group are proposing to close the Walk In centre in Soho Square from 31 March 2020 unless the way it operates can be brought in line with new national guidance.

The nurse practitioner led service treats around 50,000 people a year.

CLCCG Board. Date and venue of next public meeting: 11 March 2020, 3.00-5.00pm, Room 1.1, 87-91 Newman Street, W1.

McGee apologise for overnight work

Contractors McGee working for American private equity firm Westbrook Partners apologised to local residents after they ignored environmental protection regulations to erect a crane on a street in Fitzrovia overnight denying local people the chance to sleep, writes *Linus Rees*.

Residents contacted Fitzrovia News after they endured a noisy weekend where operators of huge vehicles ran diesel engines for hours on end as a crane was installed on a construction site in Tottenham Street over the weekend of 18 and 19 January.

McGee blamed delays in getting equipment onto the site but residents were angry that work carried on until the early hours of the morning.

People living in Goodge Place, Tottenham Street, and Tottenham Mews were kept awake on Saturday night and past 4am on the following Sunday night into Monday morning at the start of this week.

Despite the promise of considerate construction and commitments not to run engines when idle McGee staff carried on regardless with contempt for local residents and environmental protection regulations. When asked to stop working, they refused and carried on.

While it is normal for cranes to be installed on a weekend, contractors are supposed to keep residents informed of work through regular contact and act with consideration and get work done in the daytime hours.

"We apologise for any inconvenience and disturbance caused to local residents as a result of our recent planned out-of-hours works at Arthur Stanley House. Due to unforeseen circumstances on the day, the activity on Tottenham Street overran, requiring McGee to request an emergency dispensation from Camden Council to continue working through the night to ensure the works were completed safely," said a spokesperson for the noisy contractor.

Camden Council officers told Fitzrovia News:

"We will issue a formal warning reminding the company of the requirement to liaise effectively with residents in the future and provide evidence of this to the planning obligation team in good time.

Permission given for short-letting

A bungled attempt by planning enforcement officers in Camden Council to stop illegal short-letting at a building in Charlotte Street ended with permission being granted for AirBnB-style use to continue on a permanent basis, writes *Linus Rees*.

In a case which is believed to be the first of its kind in Fitzrovia, Camden Council have issued a "certificate of lawfulness" for three flats at 68 Charlotte Street to be used as short-letting and with the loss of three permanent residential properties.

The decision by the Council was made last year, but the officers' report describing the decision appeared to be withheld until *Fitzrovia News* submitted a Freedom of Information request asking to see the document. Camden later said the "information was not published by mistake and is now available on the planning portal".

The council report describes an attempt by officers to take enforcement action against the owner of three flats. In response the property owner claimed the flats had "been in use as an apartment (Class C1) since 2005 and have remained in continuous use as such until the present" and countered the enforcement notice by applying for a certificate of lawfulness.

The report which was seen by senior councillors on the planning committee's Members Briefing Panel stated that on the "balance

of probability" the three flats had been in use as hotel accommodation for more than 90 days in each year for more than ten years, and as such the council would have to approve its lawful use for short-term letting.

However the report also revealed that a previous attempt to take enforcement action against short-letting of the three flats was "closed in error" in 2015.

Councillor Danny Beales, cabinet member for investing in communities and an inclusive economy, told *Fitzrovia News*:

"This case highlights the challenges involved in taking action against short term lets.

"We opened a number of enforcement investigations during this period, but each time was not able to obtain sufficient evidence that the building was being used as short term accommodation contrary to the legislation, which changed in 2015 to allow for up to 90 nights short term lets a year. The owners then proceeded to submit a certificate of lawfulness with evidence to demonstrate that the use had been operating for 10 years.

"Unfortunately, providing evidence of a breach is one of the most significant challenges for councils like Camden, who have seen a rise in short term lets. Cases like this are disappointing, and have prompted us to take action trialling new technology and techniques to tackle the issue, whilst continuing to lobby Gov-



Previous illegal short term letting of three flats at 68 Charlotte Street has now been given a certificate of lawfulness.

ernment for the introduction of a national registration system, that would allow for more effective monitoring and enforcement," said Beales

The case raises concern that properties used for AirBnB-style short-letting for more than the legal limit of 90 days a year could become permanent.

When short letting takes place illegally, the business running the letting only pay council tax rather than the more expensive business rates which hotels have to pay.

The Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association and the Charlotte Street Association have both raised concerns about the amount of short-letting in the neighbourhood and have submitted evidence to Camden where whole buildings are being used illegally

as short-lets.

The fear is that all these properties could be granted a certificate of lawfulness if enforcement action is not prompt and successful.

Camden says it is introducing a pilot this year within Bloomsbury to work with residents to identify short term lets, raise awareness of the 90-day limit and trial different ways to tackle short term lets.

"Bloomsbury is one of the most affected wards by the rise of short term letting. We will be reaching out to local groups to engage in our pilot and urge local residents to report any suspected short term lets," says Camden.

You can report any short term lets by email to: planning@camden.gov.uk

Woman hit by police driver on Tottenham Court Road

Part of Tottenham Court Road was closed on the evening of 19 February after a police car struck a woman who was crossing the road.

Camden police issued a statement saying that road closures are in place at the junction of Tottenham Court Road and Cheries Street after a police vehicle "collided with a 19 year old female pedestrian around 17:42hrs.

"She is being treated by London Ambulance Service. We await an assessment of her condition. Enquiries into the circumstances continue," said the statement.

The police later stated: "The female has been assessed in hospital. At this stage her condition is not thought to be life-threatening

or life-changing."

Fitzrovia News understands that the police car was being driven south on Tottenham Court Road and that the collision occurred on or near the pedestrian crossing just south of the junction with Cheries Street.

Last year four pedestrians were hospitalised in separate collisions with buses on the south-bound carriageway near the junction with Torrington Place.

Camden council also revealed in a freedom of information response in November last year that there have been "seven reported incidents on Tottenham Court Road that have involved buses and pedestrians since 20 April 2019".

Developer wants to pack more rooms into underground hotel

Residents living next to an underground hotel development on Great Russell Street were stunned to be told that the property developer wants to increase the number of hotel rooms in the already cramped space four levels deep.

At a meeting in November local people were told that Criterion Capital want to increase the number of bedrooms from 166 to 208. This would be done by simply cramming more rooms into the former basement car park.

The assembled residents got another surprise when they were told that the work was going ahead on this basis and that planning permission from Camden Council would be asked for afterwards.

Planning and licensing

The Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association is encouraging residents to sign up to the *Fitzrovia News* email newsletter to keep up to date with the latest planning and licensing applications, and other public consultations. You can sign up by visiting bit.ly/fitzroviaNews

Licensing applications: Icco Pizza, 46 Goodge Street. Late night refreshment. Camden council ref: APP\PREMISES-NEW\101103.

Flat Iron Steak Limited, 22-24 Great Portland Street, London W1W 8QS, sale of alcohol Westminster council ref: 20/02153/LIPN.

Formerly Portland Food and Wine on the corner of Bolsover Street, 246-248 Great Portland Street, London, W1W 5QY: sale of alcohol. Application Reference: 20/02266/LIPN

You can also view the monthly planning lists and latest licensing consultations at fitzrovia.org.uk

News in brief

Campaign group **Save Bloomsbury** wants residents to install the **Clean Camden** app on their smartphones to report instances of fly-tipping. Save Bloomsbury was set up to help protect the conservation area and improve the street environment. savebloomsbury.co.uk/

Drivers are being advised to avoid the area around **Tottenham Court Road** due to the resurfacing works that are being carried out on **Gower Street** from today until Sunday 8 March, and **Bloomsbury Street** until Sunday 30 March.

Gower Street is due to become two-way for all traffic from Easter 2020, when new traffic restrictions will also come into force on **Tottenham Court Road**.

West End Ward

Labour Councillor Surgery

I run monthly advice surgeries. Residents and members of the community can come and speak to me directly about any problems or issues they face.

I run them on:

- the third Saturday of the month
- from 10:00-11:00 at **Danceworks, 16 Balderton Street, Mayfair, W1K 6TN,**
- from 11:30-12:30 at **68 Dean Street, Soho, W1D 4QJ**

Alternatively, please call or write to me and I'll see how I can help.

Pancho Lewis 020 641 5377 plewis@westminster.gov.uk

Registered housing provider left door to homes open and broken for weeks

Fitzrovia West area plan progress

Social housing tenants in a block of eight flats on busy Mortimer Street in the West End ward were left without a front door for weeks on end as registered housing provider A2 Dominion “waited for a quote” to carry out the repair, writes *Linus Rees*.

The street door at the block on Mortimer Street, Fitzrovia appeared to have been smashed in and was only repaired after *Fitzrovia News* contacted A2D. This is on a busy street and an area of high crime. There was also a notice taped to the back of the door asking people to shut the door due to a recent burglary.

Fitzrovia News spoke to two residents who said that the broken door had been reported to A2D but that nothing had been done. One resident said it had been broken for “about a month”, and another thought that it was broken “since the beginning of the year”.

It appears the premises was inspected on 14 January, according to a cleaners’ signing-in sheet in the hallway.

This is not the first time we have heard of problems with A2D property. Last year we reported on a broken street door and other problems at the shared ownership housing at Rathbone Square which A2D were very slow to deal with, and residents claimed A2D was incompetent in dealing with maintenance issues.

The Mortimer Street social housing came about by a s106 agreement with Westminster council for the developer to provide affordable housing as part of the redevelopment of the former Royal Mail delivery depot at Rathbone Place.

The Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association (FNA) said: “We are very concerned to see yet again a problem with A2D housing in Fitzrovia connected to a s106 agreement to bring affordable housing to the neighbourhood. Residents in social housing and intermediate affordable housing should expect a better standard of care from the registered housing provider and security issues should be dealt with promptly.”

When the FNA made contact on residents behalf, A2D responded saying: “We are currently waiting for the approval of a quote [to repair the door].”

David Lingeman, Director of Property Services, A2Dominion, told *Fitzrovia News*:

“We have ordered a bespoke replacement door to be made. This will be fitted as soon as it ar-



Front door was broken and left open for weeks.

ives. In the meantime we have made arrangements to secure the street entrance and make things safe for the residents. [*Fitzrovia News* can confirm this was done in January after we had been in contact]

“However, we do appreciate that on this occasion there was an unacceptable delay in taking this action. This was caused by the freehold of the block recently changing — leading to a lack of clarity on the responsibility for repairs within the lease.

“We would like to apologise to the residents and assure them that now the obligation for this accommodation has been clarified, this will not happen again,” said Lingeman.

West End ward councillors expressed concern about the standard of housing management by A2D.

Conservative councillor Jonathan Glanz told *Fitzrovia News*:

“It is unacceptable that the property should be left insecure, and I have written to the Housing Team requesting that this be actioned immediately. I am increasingly concerned at the attitude and approach of Housing Associations (now known as Registered Providers), and this is a recurring theme across the West End and beyond. It seems to me grossly unfair that these associations, that are in receipt of substantial public funding and other benefits and privileges, should do anything other than concentrate on their core role of providing affordable housing for those in need, and maintain, repair and manage the properties in an efficient and proper way,” he said.

Labour councillor Pancho Lewis said:

“It’s frankly totally, totally unacceptable that A2 Dominion should have taken so long to repair the door. This is a busy road with plenty of people passing by — their inaction is hugely irresponsible. Unfortunately they’re now beginning to build up a record of a significant failure to deliver on their core responsibilities. I am taking this up and will be pressing them and the Council hard to let them know we are not going to stand for this. Fitzrovia deserves better,” he said.

The Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Forum, which represents residents and businesses on the Westminster side of Fitzrovia, has made good progress in preparing its neighbourhood plan, writes *Nick Bailey*.

This will shortly be submitted to Westminster City Council and then examined by an independent examiner. Subject to approval by the examiner, a referendum of both residents and businesses will take place later in the year. The Forum will be organising a campaign to make everyone aware of the plan and the opportunity to vote on it later in the year.

The plan emphasises increased control of development and the provision of more affordable housing. Support for shops, small businesses and improved air quality are also accentuated. A number of side streets are identified where control of traffic and improved landscaping could contribute to what the Mayor of London calls ‘healthy streets’. See the FitzWest Forum’s website for more information and the latest draft of the neighbourhood plan.

The Forum has also been engaged in improving the local environment by supporting

Westminster’s project to re-landscape Market Place just to the north of Oxford Street, for which the New West End Company is taking the lead. The Forum is also promoting two greening projects: a green wall near the All Souls’ School and improvements to the pavement near Holcroft Court. It has also welcomed Westminster’s decision to consult local people on a scheme for Riding House Street near the primary school. The Council will also be consulting soon on a west-east cycle route down Foley Street and into Camden via Cleveland Street and Tottenham Street.

Other concerns to the Forum are the possible closure of the NHS medical walk-in centre in Soho Square, which is used by many people living and working in the area and the possible closure of the Crown Post Office in Mortimer Street. As is well known, this is heavily used throughout weekdays and Saturday mornings. We will also be commenting on Westminster Air Quality Action Plan.

Nick Bailey is a member of the FitzWest executive. See fitzwest.org for more information.



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Word from the Streets

By CHARLOTTE STREET and her siblings

UCL in TV semi-final

The University College London (UCL), based in Gower Street, competed in BBC TV's University Challenge at Christmas and reached the semi-final, where they were beaten by Leeds University.

In the UCL team were (pictured left to right facing **Jeremy Paxman**) **Pen Haddow** (the first person to sledge alone from Canada to the North Pole, who



read geography at UCL), **Poppy Sebag-Montefiore** (journalist, broadcaster and film maker), **Maryam Moshiri** (BBC television broadcaster who graduated in Italian in 2000), and **Professor**

Hugh Griffiths (Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering).

For another University Challenge contestant see "On the Box" at the bottom of this page.

Archbishop's student days

The new Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, studied at the Polytechnic of Central London (now the University of Westminster) in Riding House Street from 1976 to 1979.

"I was part of the second ever cohort of students doing media studies, then a new, novel and unusual course to be studying," he told me.



"Michael Jackson - the one of Channel 4 fame - was in my year group." This is the Michael Jackson who later became Controller of BBC1 and BBC2, and Chief Executive of Channel 4.

Stephen himself worked in the film industry for a short time before becoming ordained into the church in 1984 at the age of 26. Currently the Bishop of Chelmsford he takes over as Archbishop of York in June.

A strong opponent of nuclear weapons he reportedly told a rally: "The renewal of Trident is an affront to God and to all that is decent."



Celebrity squatters return

Pop singers **Boy George** and **Marilyn** returned to **Carburton Street** (where they squatted 40 years ago) for a BBC 4 documentary, broadcast on January 24.

They fondly recalled their time at 21 Carburton Street in 1980 and the many eccentric char-

acters they met. George moved the next year into a room in the loft at 37 Goodge Street for a year or so.

The programme was called "Boy George's 1970s: Save Me from Suburbia" which could well be repeated on the same channel.

ON THE BOX

Playwright **Sue Blundell** of **Goodge Street** was reminded of her 1967 appearance on University Challenge recently.

She represented Westfield College from Hampstead on the television show when reading classics.

A newspaper report of the event appears in the "Camden in the Swinging Sixties" exhibition in the Holborn archive centre at 32-38 Theobalds Road, which continues until the end of March.

crushed her by his weight. (They lived at 15 Percy Street from 1928 to 1931).

In describing the "decadent life style of the bright young things" in the 1920s Humphries mentioned another doyen of the era, **Kate Meyrick**.

He revealed that she was "jailed several times for serving alcohol after hours in clubs for the nobility and criminal classes." One of these, incidentally, was the **Folies Bergere** club in **Newman Street**.

favourite couplet from it: *See that her youth isn't wrecked by vermouth. Pull her up short if she goes for the port.*

Humphries did not mention that **Elsa**, an actress and cabaret artist, ran an illegal drinking club, the **Cave of Harmony**, at **107 Charlotte Street**, from 1924 until evicted the following year.

He did however mention that she was married to the "portly" actor **Charles Laughton** and he possibly

Sinful singer commemorated on radio

A true bohemian from Fitzrovia was heralded by comedian **Barry Humphries**, on his Radio 2 programme of "Forgotten Musical Masterpieces" last month.

He played **Elsa Lanchester** singing "Don't Tell My Mother I'm Living in Sin." There was an irony about this as her own parents caused a scandal by refusing to get married after her birth in 1902.

The song tickled the fancy of **David Hepworth** in the Radio Times who quoted what was his



Lisa Stansfield at the Cock

Popular singer, songwriter and actress **Lisa Stansfield** appeared at **The Cock** in Great Portland Street last month.

She was there for the unveiling of a drawing of the pub by her friend **Stephen Lees**, the author of "Music Hall - Our Finest Hour."

The book (SPEL Publications, £8.50) includes his drawings of many

theatres and pubs, including several in Fitzrovia. Last year his drawing of the **Horse and Groom**, also in Great Portland Street, was unveiled in that pub.

My brother **Percy** and sister **Margaret** are pleased to report that real ale from the hand pump has been restored to the **Horse & Groom** as well as the dart board.

100 Club gets lifeline

It was music to my ears that the **100 Club** in Oxford Street has been made exempt from business rates by Westminster Council. This saves the club £78,000 a year so helping to safeguard its future.

Interestingly the club was known at the very top of government circles in the 1960s - by prime minister **Harold Macmillan** no less.

When the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, **Reginald Maudling**, visited him at 10 Downing Street, he was wearing a velvet midnight blue dinner suit. "Ah, Reggie, off to the 100 Club again?" the prime minister greeted him.

"Plays the drums, y'know," **Macmillan** muttered to other ministers round the cabinet table.

According to a biography of **Reginald Maudling** (being read by my older brother **Mortimer**) Reggie was "quietly rather hurt at the time, but enjoyed telling the anecdote" as he was "no stranger to the late night, smoky bonhomie of London's jazz clubs."

The book is "Reggie, The Life of **Reginald Maudling**", by **Lewis Baston**.

Charlotte Street

Delightful deli



The Italian delicatessen, H T Harris, has been on the corner of Great Titchfield and Little Titchfield Streets for over 50 years.

It is a family run business by Giovanni Di Iulio (left in picture), and his sons Simone (right in picture) and Danila.

Giovanni originally worked there with his father-in-law 40 years ago, then after a spell away returned 11 years ago.

“Our customers are like a family,” he told Fitzrovia News. “Everyone knows each other and it is a real community, like a village.”

One of his regular customers is author Anna. Perera who said: “There is nowhere in the world quite like it. Giovanni is the proprietor, chef, waiter and everyone’s best friend.

“He serves delicious, inexpensive food with a delightful nod and an immense desire to help.

“There’s never a menu, price list or absolute closing time and the neighbourly comfort is a unique experience.

“The usual bunch of locals can be seen hanging out for hours, along with visitors from far and wide, who join in the chat while window watching a cast of characters that only Fitzrovia can provide.

“It’s a hidden gem, open seven days a week.”

Opening and closing

Closed

- Loft furnishings 52 Warren Street
- No. 26 coffee shop Rathbone Place
- Yo Sushi! 105 Tottenham Court Road
- Coffee cakes and kisses 54 Warren Street
- Eat sandwiches 94 Tottenham Court Road
- Arbina tapas restaurant 110 Whitfield Street
- Kalifornia Kitchen vegan eatery 19 Percy Street

Opened

Sushi Fabrique
105 Tottenham Court Road



- Ampéli Greek restaurant 18 Charlotte Street
- Oklava bakery+wine 64 Grafton Way
- Wrapchic wraps 48 Goodge Street
- Hugs and bites eatery 23 Warren Street
- Farm girl cafe 29-32 Berners Street
- Ai flowers and tea 10 Great Russell Street



- Feisou beauty products 11 Great Russell Street
- Rawr nails and beauty 38 Rathbone Place
- Hubber hair salon 19 Rathbone Street
- Old Chang Kee Singaporean cuisine 56 Goodge Street

Opening soon

- Ole and Steen Danish bakery 46 Eastcastle Street
- Mak’s guitar shop 56 Rathbone Place
- Flat iron steak restaurant 22-24 Great Portland Street
- Henry Austrian cuisine Unit 4 103 Tottenham Court Road
- Busi cafe 48 Great Portland Street
- Aqua restaurant 170 Great Portland Street
- Akoko West African restaurant 4 Berners Street
- Lidl discount supermarket 145 Tottenham Court Road
- Banjarah Indian restaurant 79-81 Mortimer Street

Advertisement

Fitzroy Mews News

Located within the Fitzroy Square Conservation area, Fitzroy Mews was originally constructed to provide coach house and stable accommodation for the houses located on Fitzroy Square and today mostly comprises residential units. There are a number of characterful properties located on this beautiful cobbled mews with properties mostly comprising of two and three storey buildings with different kinds of architecture including period and modern.

The mews was part of a speculative development of Fitzroy Square by the First Baron Southampton in order to provide London homes for aristocratic families with the street having first been laid out in the late 1700s.

We are delighted to have been instructed on the sale of a stunning four bedroom townhouse spread over 1,281 square feet with four bathrooms, a reception room, a fully fitted kitchen, separate dining room, and an additional storage room. The house is well located for the open space of Regents Park as well as the shopping facilities of Oxford Street and Regents Street with the subject property a short walk away from the restaurants and bars of Fitzrovia.

RIB 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 viewing an apartment on Fitzroy Mews, or any of our other properties in Fitzrovia, please contact us on

0207637 0821.



David Caldeira
Tel: 020 7927 0616
Email: david@rib.co.uk

Ilana Ormonde
Tel: 020 7927 0609
Email: ilana@rib.co.uk

Inspirational writers at the Wheatsheaf

By Beryl...

It is amazing the variety of regular events one can attend in Fitzrovia. The university is a case in point. It produces a guide to what each department has to offer. However, if you are a screenwriter and wish to get out of your bunker and come up for air – and meet other writers - there is somewhere just for this. Once a month, Euroscript holds a networking event at the Wheatsheaf pub in Rathbone Place on the last Tuesday in each month when top screenwriters, producers and directors are invited to come and inspire the room.

I have been to quite a few of these events. Apart from the inspiring speakers, (this alone would suffice me) you also have the opportunity to network. One of the things I like the most about these evenings though is the intimacy. There you are, in this medium-sized room with a well-known speaker sitting a few feet



from you. Apart from that, afterwards you have the opportunity to speak with each one. As a result of this I was able to send a Treatment of one of my film scripts directly to a producer.

Some of my favourite evenings have been : How to get an Agent, with agents Julian Friedman and Louisa Minghella; Script Feedback – Take it like a Pro, with writer/director Paul Viragh (Sex & Drugs and Rock and Roll); What do Directors Look for in a Script, with Robert Thorogood, creator of Death in Paradise, and Kate Rowland of Red Planet Pictures; Writing Epic Biopics, with producer Anabel Wigoder of Salon Pictures, the producers of Churchill.

Should you wish to attend one of these wonderful evenings, visit the website : euroscript.co.uk

The evening costs £8 and takes place every last Tuesday at the Wheatsheaf in Rathbone Place.



Much loved cat goes missing on Cleveland Street. Have you seen him?

A much loved black cat has gone missing and we are asking readers of Fitzrovia News if they have seen him.

“He is very much loved and we miss him so very much,” says Verity who contacted us. “He has been missing since 30 December from our flat on Cleveland Street, near the corner with Greenwell Street.”

He is about a year old, neutered, all black, with short hair, a very long tail and long legs. He is slightly Siamese-looking, meows a lot, and his name is Coco.

Unfortunately he does not have a collar with ID as he lost it shortly before he went missing. However he is microchipped and registered.

People are asked to check rooms and out buildings in case the curious cat has got himself locked in. He may have wandered out of Fitzrovia into Marylebone or even towards Regent’s Park, Bloomsbury or Soho.

If anyone has seen him or is looking after him, please contact Verity by email verity_juliet@hotmail.com so that they can be reunited.

Riding House Street closure to cars



Westminster council are asking for comments on the proposed permanent closure of Riding House Street at the junction with Cleveland Street to motor traffic. The street would have new paving, the zebra crossing a lights removed, but access for motor vehicles would be maintained from the western part of the street. The closure to motor traffic would also help with connecting All Souls Primary School to its annex classroom in the Fitzroy Place estate. Any comments on the proposals should be returned no later than the closing date of 10 March 2020 by email to rhs@fmconway.co.uk the council’s street contractor.

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Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association (registered charity)

is seeking **trustees**

to support its proposed new advice service based in Cromer Street, King’s Cross.

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For more information and to apply, visit our website fitzrovia.org.uk/trustees



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A bite of octopus balls

Ippudo Japanese Restaurant, 40 Goodge Street.

Recently I was visited by a skateboarding, piano-playing, 21-year-old Canadian relative. Apart from learning a lot about free skateboarding at the South Bank, and free piano-playing at St Pancras Station, I found out about Ramen. One day this young man started looking for strange spices, buying noodles, marinating strips of beef, saying "not till tomorrow." And the resulting version of Japanese Ramen was so delicious that when I saw a new Ramen Restaurant was opening in Goodge Street I was of course intrigued and decided to add it to the Dining Detective's list.

At first I had gone past and found it open, shining, sparkling ready – but fairly empty. Then on a Friday evening four weeks after it opened it was completely full – we got the last table and for the next hour there was a constant queue outside – I think the absolute rush hour is about 6-7.30pm. Word must have got about very quickly – and rightly so. It also means there's no hanging about once you get a table while the rush-hour is on. The service is good, and starters and mains come together, just whenever the dishes are ready. But although very efficient, nobody actually pushes you out or says how long you can stay, for which, grateful thanks. And if you want to really linger, you can just turn up a bit later when, I see now when I pass, that there are often quite a lot of



By the DINING DETECTIVE

near the Malet Street end. Keppel Street on the southern wall the bottom of this page was taken at

PICTURE PUZZLE. The picture at

people but room for a few more.

First things first: we each had one large glass of house wine at £8.50 per glass – (sigh) but pleasant tasting, and there is also Japanese beer on sale

The Japanese starter of octopus balls (£7), recommended by friendly dining neighbours, were eaten with great enjoyment and very quickly by my companion, but I found them a bit strong-tasting. My time was yet to come!

Ramen itself, as I had already learnt, is a really good and healthy sort of broth with different names and slightly different recipes but the basis is the same; at Ippudo a combination of meat slices, home-made 'thin and straight' noodles, sesame kikurage mushrooms, bean sprouts, and spring onions, all mixed with Ippudo's 'secret, spe-

cial-blended' miso paste and fragrant garlic oil. The most commonly used meat at Ippudo is sliced belly of pork and I made sure to check there are also vegetarian options. The prices vary from £11 for the Classic Shiro-maru Classic up to £18 for the addition of varyingly more pork belly, and extras like soft boiled eggs and seaweed. You can even choose exactly how you like your noodles: soft, medium, firm, or very firm (!) These noodle broths are utterly delicious and you definitely feel as if they are somehow good for you!

The main other kind of dish served at Ippudo is called Donburi which has a rice base and is made from either chicken or pork. The Chicken Katsu Donburi (£9) which was sliced chicken cutlet served with freshly cooked rice, shredded lettuce and 'special' Katsu sauce was fresh-tasting and, again, absolutely delicious.

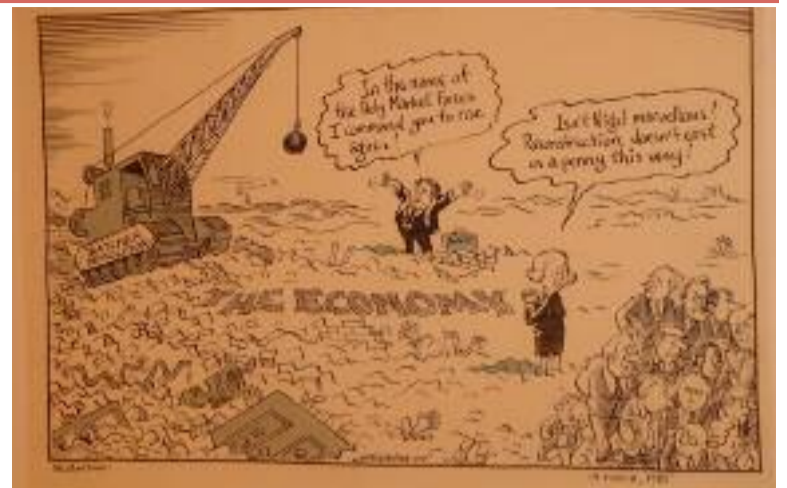
With every dish we had there is, somewhere on the side, excellent, pink, pickled ginger.

We looked (but were too full) at the dessert menu, different flavours of Mochi, Japanese ice-cream: available in vanilla, green tea, toasted sesame, Yuzu and chocolate. This ice-cream, they say on the menu, is Japan's favourite dessert

The whole meal, including the wine and the service and the VAT was £49.50 for two.

I have since found that Ippudo is part of a chain of Ramen Restaurants in London and I feel lucky that they have opened one in Fitzrovia: I have already made a return visit.

Go there!



Cartoons from whole world

Famous cartoonists' work from all over the world are included at a special exhibition called "Dear Mr Poole" at the Cartoon Museum, 63 Wells Street, until June 28.

It celebrates Philip Poole (1909-1999) who sold nibs to cartoonists, other artists, illustrators, designers and calligraphers (often on credit) for over 50 years.

Those who showed their gratitude by giving him their cartoons included Larry, Michael Heath, Ralph Steadman, Ronald Searle (illustrator of the St Trinians books), Alex Graham (creator of Fred Bassett, the Daily Mail comic strip), Hank Ketcham (creator of the American Dennis the Menace from 1941 onwards), Donald Room (who produced the anarchist Wildcat strip), Bojan M Djukic (the Serbian who drew Tom & Jerry), and Les Gibbard (the New Zealander who had a daily cartoon in the Guardian for many years).

Mr Poole started his stationery business when he bought a box of elastic bands, divided them up and sold them at a profit. "His Nibs" shop opened at 182 Drury Lane in 1956, and moved to 105 Great Russell Street in 1990.



TOP: Les Gibbard. ABOVE: Michael Heath. BELOW: Larry.



Picture puzzle



How well do you know Fitzrovia?

Can you identify this photograph (taken by Paul Rowson)?

For the answer see below the detective picture at the top of this page.

All Saints Margaret Street

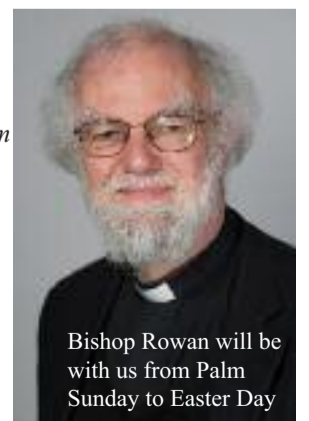
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Holy Saturday 9:00pm Easter Vigil
Easter Day 12 April 11:00am
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Maggie to release her new single

A classically trained singer and local bartender will be releasing her new single in May.

She is Maggie McCreat (pictured above), aged 19, who works in the Bricklayers Arms, Gresse Street, and plays guitar, bass and piano as well as singing and writing songs.

Her previous releases can be seen on YouTube:

“Moonlight”, which she wrote of a chilling experience, walking home from playing at a pub when she was 16 (and so under age), and looking at people waiting at a taxi rank under a full moon; and

“Drag Me Up”, about feeling very low.

From Lancaster, she is on the first year of a three-year university music course in London, and hopes to make a living out of singing and playing.

She comes from a musical family; her father being a disc jockey (very much into punk and reggae) and her mother a singer, who sang “Annie’s Song” to her as a baby.

After being classically trained in singing for two years Maggie joined an electronic band in Lancaster and would like to work with them again.

She wants to be a solo performer, but also now jams with a band of university friends from many different musical backgrounds.

Her own musical influences include David Bowie, the Beatles, Lady Gaga, Simon and Garfunkel, and Amy Winehouse. “Their beautiful lyrics appeal to me,” she said.

“I like mixing things up and experimenting, and have very eclectic tastes.” Those wishing to hire her for gigs should email her on maggiename@hotmail.com or text 07946 290128.

Adventurous chefs make it

By BRIAN JARMAN

When Brontë met Jonas, it wasn't exactly what you'd call a romantic encounter.

It was at Copenhagen airport. They were both returning to work in London, he a Swede, and she a Dane. He'd broken his leg so she helped with his bags. Their flight was delayed so they had a couple of drinks.

Many years later, they are the Aurells and they run the hugely successful Scandinavian Kitchen in Great Titchfield Street. She's published several cook books, they have an online sideline supplying Scandinavian goods throughout the country from two warehouses in West London, and they're planning a new café in the area this spring.

Always the adventurer, she left her small village when she was sixteen and went to Luxembourg to learn French. Jobs in Switzerland and the UK followed, before she went to university in Edinburgh to study Communications. Then came the fateful meeting at the airport.

‘We both wanted to be chefs,’ she says, ‘and we missed food from home. But both our mums realised that cheffing is a really, really hard career, and said it was better to have another background.’

So their thoughts turned to a café and deli and they scoured London for a suitable place.

‘We did it on a shoestring,’ she says. ‘It's very difficult to set up in London with no money.’

They opened their doors in July 2007. At the end of the day Brontë swept up, locked up, and three hours later gave birth to the first of their two daughters. Then came the recession.

‘We were hit hard,’ she says. ‘It wasn't fun.’

But things soon turned around.

‘There was a Scandinavian food wave in 2009, and Scandinavian design and TV series. Everything Scandinavian was popular.’

They soon found that what they term the ‘locals’ flocked to the café during the week. Then at the weekends it was the turn of the Scandinavians - Swedes from Marylebone, Danes from Hampstead, and Norwegians from Wimbledon.

Soon Brontë's thoughts began to turn to writing a collection of recipes.

‘The cookery books came



ABOVE: Nordic foodie Brontë Aurell in the Scandinavian Kitchen.

RIGHT: The Aurells outside their ‘special place.’ They have plans to branch out.

BELOW: From recipes on napkins to cookery books.

about because I ended up spending so much of my time here writing recipes down on pieces of napkins for people, so I thought well, I might as well write a cook book.’

She didn't realise that she should have an agent so she went straight to publishers bearing plates of open sandwiches. She came out with a contract for her first book.

That was The Skandikitchen - Simple, delicious dishes for any occasion in 2015. It proved popular and three others followed. It's not all pickled herring and open sandwiches, although there's quite an array of those. There's Sautéed Reindeer, Crayfish, Fika and Hygge. The Kitchen also has a deli section for Nordic goodies.

But a year later came another blow - the Brexit referendum result. Brontë took to social media to express her dismay. She wrote:

‘You see, after 20+ years, 2 kids and a 30-people business, it's not just a matter of saying ‘I'm off’. Firstly, that's just not how you do things, it's also not feasible. You can't rip your British-eseque children out of school without it changing their lives. You don't just give up. You can't bring yourself to consider leaving - because you love your life. You feel (almost) British.’

One of her posts got two million views, but also attracted trolls - many of whom Brontë thinks are ‘professional trolls.’



Her advice in dealing with them: ‘Block, block, block and don't take it personally.’

It became clear that Europeans would have to apply for settled status with fewer rights and more red tape for changing jobs, homes and doctors. Brontë started Buns and Brexit sessions downstairs at the café at weekends, with the help of a customer who's an immigration advisor.

‘It's not very nice to have to apply to stay in your home. A lot of elderly people are frightened. The sessions are free and informal and people just turn up between eleven and four and we sit and help people one on one.’

At the first session, a hundred people turned up and to their surprise that level was maintained in the following weeks, so since they started they have helped hundreds.

‘We ended up working alongside the Mayor of London's office. Sadiq Khan has done a lot for us European citizens in London. When the overall message from the Government hasn't been particularly positive, he has been positive and I'm so happy that happened.’

‘I'm proud to be a Londoner, super-proud to have a business in Fitzrovia, to be part of the community and to have a Mayor who actively says: “You are wanted. You are needed. You are loved and welcomed.” That has made a massive difference to my personal feelings about sticking around.’

When the Aurells first opened up shop, they found Great Titchfield Street to be quite a quiet place, unlike its trendier neighbour Charlotte Street. But things have changed.

‘We have amazing neighbours that we work really well with. We love the fact that this whole street is a community street and it's brilliant to have seen it change over thirteen years with all the hustle-bustle.’

‘It's going to be strange for us to branch out but this is always going to be the really special place.’

Never one to sit still for too long, Brontë is now thinking of turning her hand to writing fiction.

So the next time your flight is delayed, just think what it could lead to.

Heartbreaking history behind hotel

By MIKE PENTELOW

The third victim of Jack the Ripper, Elizabeth Stride, had been a housemaid at a “genteel” lodging house in Gower Street. It was run by a widow called Elizabeth Bond at number 67 (now the Ridgmount Hotel).

Mrs Bond and her widowed daughter, Emily Williams, managed the business. Meanwhile young Stride (or Elisabeth Gustafsdotter as she was then called) and another servant “trudged up and down three flights of stairs with scuttles of coal and buckets of water, supper trays and laundry” as Hallie Rubenhold describes in her new book. This is entitled “The Five: The Untold Lives of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper” (published by Black Swan, price £9.99).

Young Stride also had to scrub grates and make beds for the lodgers. These included a lecturer, merchant, brewer, solicitor, and a German musician, Charles Louis Goffrie, and his daughter who gave singing and piano lessons in their rooms.

She had come to London from her native Sweden in 1866 and started working in Gower Street about two years later.

Her future husband, a carpenter called John Thomas Stride, worked in the furniture trade, based around the northern end of Tottenham Court Road, and lived nearby at 21 Munster Street, which used to be between Os-naburgh Street and Munster Square [near Great Portland Street station].

He regularly went to Daniel Fryatt’s coffee house at 6 Munster Street, and this could well have been where he met the Swedish



Elizabeth Stride (in 1872) who worked as a housemaid in the lodging house at 67 Gower Street, now a hotel.

housemaid when she was out shopping for her employer.

By early 1869 the couple had become engaged and on March 7 got married at St Giles-in-the-Fields church [near the southern end of Tottenham Court Road]. Rev Will Powell conducted the service, witnessed by the coffee house owner Daniel Fryatt, and N Taylor. The bride changed her surname to Stride and anglicised the spelling of her first name from Elisabeth to Elizabeth.

Later she was nicknamed “Long Liz”, the “long” being linked to “stride” not her height, which was 5 ft 2 ins (1.57m).

Some months later they moved to Poplar in the East End to jointly run a coffee shop (while John also continued carpentry work).

Sadly this venture failed and Liz had left John by 1877. She became destitute and was taken to the workhouse after being arrested under vagrancy laws for begging and sleeping rough.

The couple were reconciled in April 1881, but by December the same year they agreed to part permanently.

Then she moved to



Whitechapel staying in the workhouse or lodging (when she could avoid the daily rent) at 32 Flower and Dean Street (which was between Brick Lane and Commercial Road; and between Fashion Street and Thrawl Street).

Her husband died of heart disease, aged 73, at Stepney Sick Asylum in October 1884, and her life spiralled downwards after that. Just two weeks later she was arrested for being drunk and disorderly, and soliciting, for which she was sentenced to seven days’ hard labour.

Despite the popular portrayal of her as a prostitute this was the only time she was arrested for soliciting.

Back in Sweden she had been placed on a police register for a time when, pregnant and unmarried at the age of 21, she was found to have syphilis. She was detained in a venereal disease hospital and treated internally with hydroiodic acid. Then she gave birth to a still born girl two months prematurely while still locked up in the hospital.

Rubenhold speculates in her book that it was the latter stages of syphilis which might explain

her increasing unruliness near the end, with arrests for drunken disorderliness and obscene language. The disease attacks the brain and nervous system, manifesting in epileptic fits, which Stride suffered. The seizures were so bad that sometimes the police let her off charges.

Three days before she was killed she was visited at Flower and Dean Street by the famous children’s home founder, Dr Thomas Barnardo. He spoke to her and several other women in

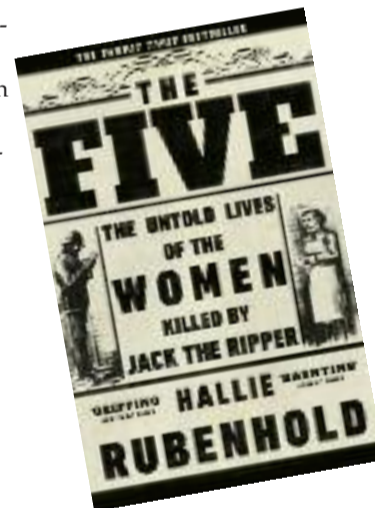
the communal kitchen about their experiences with children in lodging houses. One of them, whom he later believed was her, said no one cared what became of them and perhaps they would be killed by the Whitechapel murderer next.

Two women, both probably living rough in the street not having the rent for that night, were killed on the same night of September 29. Stride was found with her throat cut, on her side against a wall in a back street yard in the foetal position looking like she had been asleep. Catherine Eddowes was the other victim and was known to have been sleeping rough in a shed.

Rubenhold believes that the killer was targeting street sleepers while they were actually asleep rather than prostitutes. This would explain why no screams were heard, and no sex took place.

Another book that examines the case is “Elizabeth Stride and Jack the Ripper” by Dave Yost (published by McFarland & Co in 2008).

Win this book signed by the author



Answer this question: Where did Elizabeth Stride live in Fitzrovia? Email your answer to news@fitzrovia.org.uk before May 14, 2020, with your name and address.

CONGRATULATIONS to the winner of our last book prize:

Chris Daniels of London NW1 wins “William Godwin” from the last issue with the correct answer of 44 Gower Place (where Godwin lived in Fitzrovia).

The shoemaker who died for the liberty of all

The 200th anniversary of the Cato Street conspiracy to assassinate the entire government cabinet in London was marked on February 23 this year.

This was planned as revenge for the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester the previous year, when government troops shot dead peaceful demonstrators.

Second in command of the Cato Street conspirators, duly executed, was John Thomas Brunt, a bootmaker who had spent his entire life in Riding House Street (called Union Street at the time).

He was born there in 1782, and was apprenticed as a shoemaker there at the age of 14. He

joined the Spenceans, a radical club that believed all land should be shared equally, and attended its meetings at the Cock tavern in Grafton Way (Grafton Street at the time).

When the government not only organised the Peterloo Massacre, but actually applauded it, Brunt said no punishment was too severe for them.

Early in 1820 his wages were savagely cut from £4 to 10 shillings (50p), which was not enough to support his family.

A revolutionary coup was planned but one of those involved was a government spy and agent provocateur called



JOHN THOMAS BRUNT

George Edwards. He supplied the weapons and organised the meeting in Cato Street, Marylebone, then told the police where they

were. They were all arrested and put on trial.

Brunt was found guilty and executed like four of the others. At his trial he said he had acted in the public good against the enemies of the people and would fight for liberty to the death.

In his Newgate death cell he wrote a song condemning the government’s crimes and ending: *Still each Briton’s last words shall be,*

Oh! Give me death or liberty!

On the scaffold he declared: “It is better to die free than to live like slaves.”

The crowd expressed their disapproval by attempting to cas-

trate the masked executioner after he had decapitated the hanged men.

Brunt’s widow, Mary Welch, along with the other widows, petitioned the king to allow them access to the bodies so they could “shed a silent tear over their mutilated remains ‘ere they are consigned to the tomb.” This was refused and the bodies buried in quicklime under the cells.

An exhibition about the affair is being held at the Guildhall Library, Aldermanbury, London EC2V 7HH until April 30. An historical enactment of the conspiracy will be held there on April 7 from 6pm to 8pm.

The real Ziggy Stardust

By MIKE PENTELOW

One of David Bowie's most famous creations "Ziggy Stardust" was based on a character he knew from meetings in Tottenham Court Road.

This was Vince Taylor, a pop star who had achieved fame in the 1960s mainly in France, but by the 1970s had become a victim of LSD.

The two had originally met at La Giaconda cafe in Denmark Street, by Tottenham Court Road tube station, in the 1960s, when Bowie was a teenage mod, fronting a band called The Lower Third. He regularly bumped into Taylor at this venue.

Bowie recalled the momentous occasion they met again in 1972 (in a recently repeated programme "Ziggy Stardust Came from Isleworth" on BBC Radio 4 Extra).

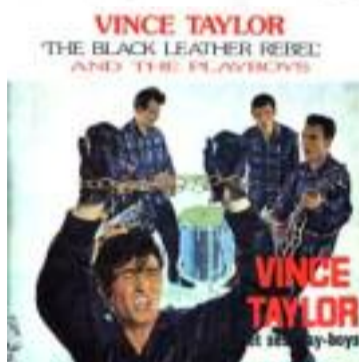
Taylor (who was born in Isleworth), by then had seen his career collapse after he had become convinced that he was the son of Christ.

Bowie saw him sitting outside Tottenham Court Road tube station "with a world map showing where aliens were" crouched on all fours in the middle of rush hour. Taylor unravelled the map and pointed to Bowie where all the alien bases on earth were, and said: "Look, David, see, there are UFOs everywhere, the extraterrestrial is living among us."

(UFO was also the name of a famous club in Tottenham Court Road, see later).

Bowie knelt beside him on the pavement hunched over the map, and thought: "This guy was a nightmare, he was bonkers."

He had heard that Taylor had been booted off stage when dressed in white robes and told everyone he was the messiah, and this ended his career.



The iconic Ziggy Stardust album... and the rock star who inspired it

"He was not part of this world, but too good, part of another world, and he became the blue print and main inspiration for Ziggy Stardust," said Bowie. Thus was born "The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars", released in 1972, and also "Jean Genie" in 1973.

The rise and fall of Vince Taylor was described in the programme by members of his band,

The Playboys.

His career started in the late 1950s when he became known as the "British Elvis" in the coffee bars of Soho. His first record release was "Right Behind You Baby" in 1958. In the following year his own composition "Brand New Cadillac" became a hit in Europe, and was later considered a classic when it was covered by such artists as The Clash (in their 1979 album "London Calling").

At the time the BBC refused to play the original because of its ban on advertising (the lyrics mentioned Ford and Cadillac), so it was not a great hit in Britain.

But it was a different story when he went to France. His drummer Bobby Woodward recalled: "He was a sensation there, smashing microphones, rolling about on stage, and causing riots. He was known in France as La Diable Noir."

Taylor recorded in French for Barclay Records, and in 1961 one

of his live performances literally led to a riot.

Chas McDevitt, a skiffle star in the 1950s, said of Taylor: "He was cool and quiet in person, but on stage he got up to wild antics, hip gyrating, a great mover and performer. Very sexy, gyrating Elvis style on the Oh Boy ITV show for example. He had a weak voice but his performance made up for that." He always dressed in black leather and chains.

The downfall came in 1965 when, as Bobby Woodward described, the group were in Paris and Taylor went to London to collect money they were owed. While he was there he took LSD.

When he returned to Paris the band members got worried. "His eyes were staring, and he was in a silk purple robe. He had a bottle of Mateus wine, and said 'You all think I'm Vince Taylor. My name is Mateus and I am the son of Christ.' The hotel was not paid for and we had no food.

"We asked him if he had got the money and he said 'money its the evil of the earth' and started burning it with a lighter, burning the carpet in the process.

"At the theatre he took a pen and crossed out Vince Taylor on the poster and put Mateus in its place.

"He performed Come On Everybody but then went into the audience saying 'God bless you, I am the son of Jesus Christ'. Then he was taken out by the managers."

Another band member, Brian Lockier, last saw him in Tottenham Court Road in 1972 with whitish hair, very pale and wearing dark glasses. "The conversation was not much. How are you man? Been in France. Not much beyond that, a bit odd. We had a brief chat and hugged."

After the Paris performance the band left him, but later reunited, and had success recording albums and sharing the bill with the Rolling Stones in 1965. Then they split again and Taylor recorded and performed intermittently.

His last few years were spent working as an aircraft mechanic in Switzerland with his wife and stepdaughter which he said was the happiest time of his life. He died there from lung cancer in 1991, aged 52.

Apart from Ziggy Stardust, tributes were also paid to him by Golden Earring with their 1973 song "Just Like Vince Taylor" (on the B side of "Radar Love" in the US), Van Morrison's 1999 song "Going' Down Geneva" (with the lyric "Vince Taylor used to live here..."), and Adam Ant with a track "Vince Taylor" on his 2013 album "Adam Ant is the Blue-black Hussar."

Ant claimed that he received a gold plated chain which had been owned by Taylor from a French girlfriend. He said he later used it as a weapon around his fist in a fight with Sid Vicious.

In another radio programme on David Bowie, recently repeated, he remembered frequently visiting the UFO Club at 31 Tottenham Court Road in the mid 1960s, where he used to hang out with Marc Bolan (T Rex leader). "We were both impressed by the space mysticism of Syd Barrett in Pink Floyd," he said. Syd, of course, was another mental casualty of LSD.

Bloomsbury ward councillors surgeries

First Friday of the month 6:00-7:00pm 52 Club basement 52 Gower Street
Second and fourth Fridays of the month 6:00-7:00pm
Marchmont Community Centre, 62 Marchmont Street, WC1N 1AB
Third Friday of the month is a "roving surgery" Get in touch if you would like us to conduct the surgery in your street or building

Adam Harrison, Sabrina Francis and Rishi Madlani
contact 020 7974 3111

adam.harrison@camden.gov.uk rishi.madlani@camden.gov.uk
sabrina.francis@camden.gov.uk

Technically not me

A short story by SUNITA SOLIAR

Dior: I don't mind if we miss it.

Moncler: I thought you wanted to see it.

Dior: It's just a film.

Moncler: Yeah.

We planned to go to the film.

He agreed to go to the film. The only reason I said I'd hang out with him is because of the film. He makes no sign of moving.

Dior: Try the matcha.

Moncler: I don't want to.

Dior: The bitterness is so good. Cleansing.

We are friends because we were both at school in Singapore and because neither of us knows anyone else in London. And for these reasons, we will probably continue to know each other. So what is it we are expected to talk about?

Moncler: This is the restaurant I was telling you about. It's called something with an F or a P-H. I don't remember but it has three Michelin stars. I took, like, a million pictures. Have you been there? It has three stars.

I do a pretty good impression of myself. You can't help but be us amongst other people like us. It's infectious. It's not like I have someone else to be.

Moncler: You haven't been there?

Dior: I think you just told me about it.

Moncler: You go there and it's like six hours for a meal. You'd like it though.

Dior: Really.

Moncler: Six hours.

Dior: To be honest, I don't want to spend that long eating.

No, but he can draw this drink out.

Moncler: Yeah, it's a lot for one meal.

Dior: And it must be expensive.

That drink is two inches from the bottom — it must be all ice by now.

Dior: Is it expensive?

Moncler: Six to eight hundred.

Dior: Yeah, I'd rather buy something from Dior.

Of course he would. He must always not want to do what you are doing, or want to do.

Moncler: 8.15. Now we definitely missed Parasite. I guess if there's nothing to do...

Dior: We can't go home.

There's nothing to do at home.

Don't bail.

It would be no use trying. He is very good at taking prisoners. And besides, this is what life is, right? All the people you know? He is who I know.

Moncler: No, it's great to hang out. I saw it actually. I watched it at home.

Dior: You pirated it? Why?

Moncler: I was leaving Beijing just as it came out, then it wasn't out when I got here. Technically it wasn't me. It was my friend.

Dior: How was it?

Moncler: There's not that much to it until you really think about it. I think that's the charm of it. Actually I don't mind seeing it again.

How long are we going to sweat here in our jackets, as though about to make a move at any moment?

Dior: I guess we could go to a movie.

Am I the one who is going crazy? Still, it would not be wise to point out the absurdity of this situation. Take what you can get.

Moncler: There's an Odeon on Tottenham Court Road.

He gets out his phone as though this were entirely his idea.

Dior: 8.45

Moncler: If we leave now. Actually, this will be my fourth time watching it.

Dior: What?

Moncler: Parasite.

Dior: No. It's 1917 at 8.45.

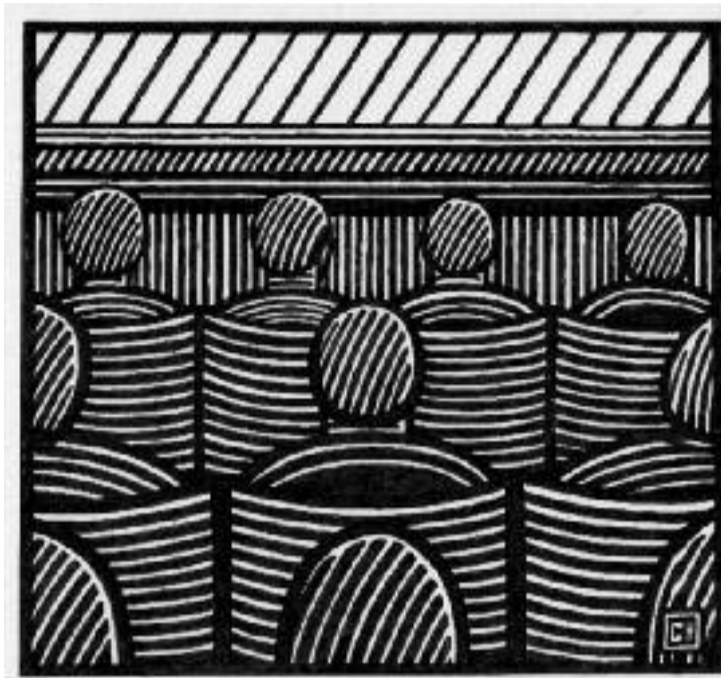


Illustration by CLIFFORD HARPER

Moncler: Oh. I thought you said Parasite.

Dior: You've seen it.

Moncler: I don't mind if you want to see it. I think you should see it.

Dior: I don't care as long as I don't have to go home.

And I want to go to Parasite so maybe we can find another showing. I am going to stay here gripping the edge of my chair.

Moncler: I saw on the poster it said Act Like You Own the Place. I thought that was kind of cool.

Dior: We've got to bounce. We'll miss the film.

Gripping the edge of my chair.

Moncler: Is it on another time?

Dior: What?

Moncler: Parasite?

Dior: No.

Moncler: You didn't check. It's just that if we go to a really long film... I don't know if I can sit that long.

Dior: So you can just zone out. It's too early to go home.

I want to point out that neither of us is at home. I am in a rented flat and he is in a property that his parents own, in which he is not al-

lowed to make himself too comfortable in case he damages the walls or the furniture, which will mean an inconvenient replacement before the new tenants arrive.

Moncler: It's just good when you can feel that something is actually happening. I want to see your reaction when you see it.

Dior: I don't need to see it. Why would you see it four times?

Moncler: It has a lot of charm. You wonder who the bad guy really is. Technically, it's the... I don't want to spoil it for you, but you keep wondering. You start thinking crazy thoughts too, like, even if you are just pretending to be who you are, you'll probably end up that way, you know?

Dior: Come on. 8.45.

He is leaving, his footsteps thumping, running down the stairs. Parasite isn't on anywhere at a later time — I checked — and there isn't any other direction to go so I am following.

Moncler: Actually, the food at the 'f' something place sucked.

Dior: I can't wait to get into this movie and maybe fall asleep.

Poetry corner

Café Fragments #27
By Terry Egan

*Won't you tell me, cup,
what she will not - how soft they are,
her fingers, how kind,
holding you in her hand like that?
How she knew to flip and fill you,
laughing, with her love -
before delivering you up
to my questioning?*

*Don't hold back now, cup -
weren't there any sweet nothings, look!
cryptically whispered
in the process of your pouring?
Fill me in as I swig from you -
isn't there a glance,*

*some special look, extra imprint,
left in your vessel?*

*Ah! But let's not mind
how gently I sip or let be
during this gulping...
the inquisition leads nowhere.
How silent you are at the last...*

Man with Television
By Sandra Wheen

I have often thought back to our visit
A year after his wife's death
Seen him alone in that tiny room
With the huge television he'd bought.

We found him still friendly, still talking of 'us'
And remembered the couple they'd been,
Small caravanning people, twins joined at the hip.
You spoke their names in one breath.

But only today have I seen with a shock
Why he'd had to buy such a large screen
So out of proportion with himself and his room -
He was matching the size of his grief.

Interesting origins of local street names

The origin of the name of Totten Hall (which gave its name to Tottenham Court Road) was told in a recent talk by Camden council's senior archivist Tudor Allen.

The old manor house of that name was near Tolmers Square, he said, [which is almost opposite Warren Street station], where it was until being pulled down in 1808.

Totten, he continued, was an old word meaning "nook of land" or "a looking area". Alternatively it could have been the name of the owner of the land.

Other place names which he explained included:

Charlotte Street, built in 1763, was named after Queen Charlotte (1744-1818) who had married George III in 1761 before he succeeded to the throne.

Windmill Street, between Tottenham Court Road and Charlotte Street, was named after an actual windmill that used to be there.

Euston Road was named after the Earl of Euston who allowed it to be built on the land that he owned.

Details of future talks are on camden.gov.uk/localstudies.



The Old Manor House at Tottenhall (courtesy of Camden Local Studies & Archives Centre).

Know Your Demons
By Bess Linnet

Know your demons
Walk up and greet them
Ask them about their days

Discover their longings
For bad things, for wrong things
Determine what led them astray
Give them a snuggle
Although they are ugly
For when the veneer strips away

People will meet you
And love you, and leave you
But your demons are with you to stay.

Madcap radio rolls on

By HELENE PARRY

This spring, Britain will lose an hour when the clocks go forward – but one Fitzrovian hour excels at bringing the past to life. The Fitzrovia Radio Hour is the comedy troupe still writing and performing plays twelve years after making its debut in a cellar bar in Fitzrovia, the area that inspired its name.

The group perform comic pastiches of 1940s-style radio plays, with the players delivering their lines into period microphones while wearing sophisticated evening dress. What adds to their appeal is that they produce their own inventive DIY sound effects live on stage.

“Audiences love seeing the sound effects,” says founder member Jon Edgley Bond. “It’s taken us time to develop this. Our early audiences enjoyed seeing one actor on the left of the stage making the footsteps, while another actor was walking.”

Since their early shows at the Bourne & Hollingsworth bar in Rathbone Place, the Fitzrovia Radio Hour have performed at the Edinburgh Fringe and in other London venues including Trafalgar Studios. They



have also appeared on the BBC Radio 4 shows Today and Loose Ends, bringing something very different to the table with their particular expertise.

“We’ve experimented over the years to find out what makes a good sound effect,” says Jon. “We’ve spent hours messing around with fruit and veg and hammers!”

Work that has clearly paid dividends. He reports: “We’ve found out there’s a type of cabbage called a Java which is easily the best when you want the sound of someone getting punched in the face!”

When the troupe performs, beside their microphone stands a table laid with an array of objects, similar to the ingredients for a TV cookery show. All the actors play multiple roles in the show, wearing different hats to denote each character. During a show, they’ll deliver their lines in cut-glass diction, then dash across the stage to make the sound of a roaring fire (shaking Rice Krispies) or simulate the sound of someone’s neck being broken (a quick twist of bubble wrap).

The juxtaposition of actors with plummy voices wearing 1940s fashions and the homemade sound effects adds to the comedy, says Jon. “It’s the sight of a cast in vintage evening wear waving rubber gloves to make the sounds of birds’ wings flapping!”

To engage a live audience, the sound effects have to be visually appealing too. “When the BBC sound people want a gunshot, they use a recording of a gunshot,” says Jon. “But we burst a balloon!”

The 1940s-style dramas appeal to a wide range of theatregoers, he notes. “When we started, the credit crunch was going on. There was a spirit of make-do-and-mend, as well as nostalgia for the old days. At our plays, we get

80-year-olds who remember the golden age, and younger people who like the hard-edged comedy we slip into our shows.”

The group started out adapting old radio scripts, but progressed to performing their own versions of well-known stories including Dracula and A Christmas Carol. And the good news yet to come is that they hope to present us with another show this year.

“We’re in the early stages of discussions with a producer and a theatre for a new show,” says Jon. “Hopefully for this year. It will be based on another well-known story. In the meantime, we’ve all been doing different things – it’s a bit like an opera company, people will be invited to join us, go off and do another job, then come back.” As well as early members Alex Ratcliffe, Alix Dunmore, Phil Mulryne and Tom Mallaburn, regular cast members include Dan Starkey, known for his role as Strax in Doctor Who. “We’ve been really lucky to have these people working with us,” says Jon.

He thinks the Fitzrovia Radio Hour’s greatest success is that it’s still going. “After 12 years, people still want to come and see us!”

Another factor contributing to the troupe’s longevity is surely its sheer inventiveness:

“In one play, we needed to make the noise of a car engine starting. We couldn’t get the sound right, so we changed the scene to four people jumping on bicycles instead. Four kitchen whisks did the trick!”

WANT TO DANCE?

By ANNA PERERA

Dragging heavy shopping home from Waitrose one cold and windy January afternoon, a new dance studio: dan’s.co.uk caught my eye. Only a three minute walk from Oxford Circus, the entrance looked invitingly bright so I took a deep breath, threw my not so young shoulders back, and left the endless, noisy traffic behind.

Greeted by the sight of a juice bar offering healthy drinks of the coconut, turmeric, youthful kind, the genuine welcome was a warm surprise and something inside me nodded. Yes, it’s super-chic, with three different classes on offer: from high energy fitness to soulful, meditative alternatives to yoga, and salsa for all ages and abilities, but I didn’t feel out of place despite my scruffy jeans and waterproof coat.

The friendly owner, Daniel Bermeo, ex banker, tennis player and successful health food entrepreneur, stepped forward. Dancing often starts up beside the juice bar and it’s clear to see why meeting people the old-fashioned way by doing what comes naturally, equates with the current need for genuine attention.

With several beautifully decorated rooms celebrating Latin artists like Frida Kahlo, the opportunity to leap up and down in such attractive surroundings was one I couldn’t resist. Signing up for the beginners salsa (madness) turned out to be anything but - because the classes are small and Alexis, the master teacher, made the whole thing fun and easy. You turn up. Someone grins and off you go. Awkwardness doesn’t exist here and Daniel himself often joins the classes. So far, ours have gone over time every single session.

There are two more beginners’ salsa lessons to go and by the end I’m determined to try one of the Sunday afternoon socials. We know dancing is beneficial not only for mental and physical health, but also memory, cognitive function and cardiovascular health, so frankly, leaving winter and hours in front of a dull screen behind for these weekly sunlit pauses is a wise as well as pleasurable choice. Dancing restarted my enthusiasm for new face-to-face encounters in a real community and as a result hurrying home from the shops has led to more confident and lighthearted moves whatever the weather.

For full details see: dan’s.co.uk; 0207 998 4086; hello@dans.co.uk; @danslondon; 5 Cavendish Place, W1G 0QA.

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Class and fame



**Piano Man
No 20** by
**Clifford
Slapper**

Walking home from a musicians' party and jam session last New Year's Eve, on the first day of the new decade, I passed over 30 homeless people sleeping rough on Tottenham Court Road between Warren Street and Stephen Street. They were seeing in the new year without music, as well as without warmth, that winter's night. Fitzrovia is seeing a sharpening of class divisions in recent years, as elsewhere. A January 2020 report from Oxfam shows that the world's 2,500 billionaires have more wealth than 4.6 billion people combined, or nearly three fifths of the entire world's population. Locally, we see property developers crudely building street after street of multi-million pound luxury flats, bought as investment vehicles and left empty, whilst local family businesses and long-standing residential tenants are priced out of the area, all in the name of profit.

At the time of writing, the entertainment world is reeling from the shocking news of a popular, quite young television presenter just having ended her own

life. No doubt the causes are multiple and complex, but one factor seems to be the hounding of such people by sections of the press, and already a petition to end such harassment has attracted half a million signatures in just one day. The petition aims to make it a criminal offence for the British media to "knowingly and relentlessly bully a person, whether they be in the public eye or not, up to the point that they take their own life".

For musicians, does fame offer any escape from insecurity and poverty? An actress friend recalls how she pursued David Bowie relentlessly as a fan in her younger years, until she succeeded in meeting him face to face. At that point she received an insight into the damaging nature of the fame/fandom relationship, from Bowie himself. He simply asked her, "What is it that you want from me? Think about it". She met him a few more times as a friend, and remains sceptical about fame to this day. Fame has become an overused barometer of achievement. Even young children who I teach ask me, "Are you famous?"

I have had people I don't know approach me in the street and say hello, because they have seen me perform somewhere. My

Cartoon by
**CHRIS
TYLER**



failure to reciprocate and recognise them is caused simply by the mathematics of the situation: a pianist performing to a hundred people in a club is seen and noted by each of them, but sadly the reverse does not apply (admittedly, my inebriation in earlier years before I became a teetotal pianist may also have something to do with it!) What one wants, as a musician, is to have one's craft and creativity recognised, not one's face, and to be allowed the opportunity to go on creating for oneself and for a receptive audience. There is, however, a special place for appreciation by a fellow artist whom you already hold in high esteem. I shall never forget one occasion when I was playing at Gerry's club in Soho. The great Tony Bennett was doing some shows at Ronnie Scott's that week. We had a mutual friend who brought him into the legendary, intimate basement bar

which is Gerry's, where he took his seat unassumingly, and listened. Seeing him applaud enthusiastically at the end of my set was, for me, the ultimate encouragement and accolade.

A few years later, a launch was held for my book at a local venue. A dear friend of mine happens to be the father of a very famous comedian, and was going around introducing himself as such. Also present was the daughter of possibly the world's most legendary rock guitarist of the late twentieth century, and she was also being introduced to people in that way. When the two of them met, and were introduced as the father and daughter of people who were not themselves there, it became comically clear just how absurd such definitions can be.

Another amusing example of the difference that fame makes occurred when I bumped into

singer Joss Stone at a Soho club, just at the time she was first coming to attention. I invited a group back to my Fitzrovia flat for a late-night party and jam session, and had great fun performing with Joss, songs such as "You Make Me Feel Like A Natural Woman". The following morning, a neighbour knocked and complained about the music they'd heard in the small hours. I took a gamble and mentioned who it was they had heard singing, and they were so impressed that they dropped their complaint. After all, they had experienced a free show from someone whose concert tickets were selling at high prices!

To end on a note of continuity, which shows that musicians have long had a special, if dubious status in how we are treated: once, whilst playing at Joe Allen restaurant, I met an historian who was at the bar, poring over parish records from the 18th century. One address caught my eye: 9, Meard Street, Soho – because at the time it was the address of a musician friend of mine, Gayle Day. I asked if I could see the entry from 250 years earlier, and, weirdly, it read: "at this place a strumpet practises her clavinet daily, and is then carried in a sedan chair". My singer-songwriter friend is most certainly not a "strumpet", but she does play the modern equivalent of the clavinet [an electric keyboard], and surely deserves to be treated to a sedan chair!

Looking back through the archives

10 years ago

From *Fitzrovia News*,
Spring 2010:

Singer **Lily Allen** has bought a "glitzy duplex penthouse flat" in Great Portland Street, according to the national press.

The Times newspaper comments that "the area could regain its racy chic status" because "the singer has the hint of notoriety that represents Fitzrovia's celebrity ideal."

Flats around the site of the former Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital in Bolsover Street, are for sale at prices from £650,000 to £1.65 million.

The London Palladium manager for 20 years, John Avery of Great Titchfield Street, was profiled by Brian Jarman.

He mixed with all the stars, and royalty including the Queen Mother and Princess Diana.

He remembers the BBC broadcaster Gilbert Harding inviting him to a party over in Cleveland Street. "He'd filled his hallway with sweet peas," says



LEFT: Lily Allen.



ABOVE: John Avery with Princess Diana.

RIGHT: Drummer David Rowntree

John. "And sitting in the middle was Marlene Dietrich."

"Drumming up political support" was the headline on an interview with Blur drummer David Rowntree with Anne Shewring.

He was aiming to contest the Cities of London and Westminster parliamentary seat for Labour. He was motivated by the amount of poverty he had seen when doing legal aid work for a year.



"My favourite restaurant in Fitzrovia is the Pizza Express in Charlotte Street," he said. "When I met my girlfriend, it turned out that she lived on one side of it, and I had worked on the other. We had both spent many evenings there, sitting in the same corner, and ordering the same pizza, but had never met. The restaurant has an air of destiny about it."

20 years ago

'Free Guinness in public libraries'

From *Fitzrovia News*,
March 2000:

Ex-manager of punk group, the Sex Pistols, **Malcolm McLaren** of **Scala Street**, announced he was standing in the election for London Mayor.

He pledged himself to supplying free Guinness to readers in public libraries (which was illustrated by cartoonist Kipper Williams), and providing a free bicycle to each household in London.

Meanwhile, **Ken Livingstone**, who was later elected mayor, set up his campaign headquarters in **Hanson Street**.

A film called *Fitzrovia Noir* was made by **Paulo Sesazzari** against the Candy Brothers' attempt to name the development on the old Middlesex Hospital site in **Mortimer Street** as **Noho Square**.



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WHAT'S ON AROUND FITZROVIA

Email news@fitzrovia.org.uk with listings by May 14 for the June issue and put "Listings" in the subject box

LIVE MUSIC

King & Queen, 1 Foley St : Folk once a month on Fridays 8-11pm (visit web.mustradclub.co.uk): Jim Eldon (fiddler/singer) and Lynette Eldon (clog dancer), March 13. Niamh Parsons (Irish songbird) and Graham Dunne (brilliant guitarist), April 3. Thomas McCarthy (great Irish traveller singer), and Viv Legg (west country romany singer), May 15.

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

Simmons, 28 Maple St: Live music every Wednesday evening

The 100 Club, 100 Oxford St (the100club.co.uk): The Last Internationale, March 17. Downliners Sect, March 19. Clearwater Creedance Revival, March 24-25. London Calling Play The Clash "Sandinista!" March 27 and 28. Teenage Werewolves, April 12. Celebrate Zappa, April 18. UK Subs, 40th anniversary tour, May 1. Hung Like Hanratty, May 15.

LIVE COMEDY

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

The Phoenix, 37 Cavendish Square: Mondays.

CABARET

The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place: Maverick Theatre's SpeakEasy Cabaret, first Saturday of the month, 7.30pm.

Ballroom dancing



The Art Deco Orchestra present the Fitzrovia Society Ball at the Indian YMCA Fitzroy Square dancing to recordings from the 1920s and 30s from 7pm with the band playing live from 8.30pm. Fridays monthly 7:00pm Free soft drinks, tea and coffee. Taxi dancers for those without partners plus indian snacks. Tickets on balcony for non-dancers. check eventbrite.co.uk fitzrovia-society-ball-tickets for dates and prices

THEATRE



See under Dominion theatre.

Bloomsbury Theatre/Studio, 15 Gordon St (thebloomsbury.com): John Shuttleworth, March 31. Sara Pascoe and Friends Comedy Fundraiser, April 1, and Apr 30. Alexei Sayle Live Tour, Apr 6-8. Barking Mad at the Bloomsbury (Dog Friendly Comedy Night), Apr 18, and May 16. Fifty Things About Us: Mark Thomas, Apr 28.

Camden People's Theatre, 58-60 Hampstead Rd (cptheatre.co.uk): I'll Be Your Dog (misadventures of a comedian in the Calais Jungle), March 18. An Intentionally False Statement (Charlotte McShane one-woman show), March 19. Obscene, Vicious and Depraved (part anthology horror, part live reconstruction), March 26. Everything Is Absolutely Fine (comedy musical about anxiety disorders), Apr 7-11. Bonkers (comic account of navigating mental health and queer identities), Apr 21-25.

Dominion Theatre, 269 Tottenham Court Rd (dominiontheatre.com): The Prince of Egypt, a new musical, until Sept 12.

London Palladium, Argyll St (london-palladium.co.uk): Lulu: On Fire, March 15. Clannad, March 17. Jamie Cullum, March 18-19. Van Morrison, March 20-26. An Audience with Arsene Wenger & David Dein, Apr 27.

New Diorama Theatre (newdiorama.com), 15-16 Triton St (Euston Rd opposite Fitzroy St): Shorts and Socks Included (a nun's underwear company supplies Leeds United's away kit), March 31-May 2.

RADA, Malet St (rada.ac.uk/whats-on):

GBS Theatre: Circle Mirror Transformation, by Annie Baker, March 11-21 (aftershow questions March 16). Won Best New American Play award.

Jerwood Vanbrugh Theatre: The Importance of Being Earnest, by Oscar Wilde, March 12-21 (aftershow questions March 16, captioned performance March 21, 2.15pm).

CINEMA

Bolivar Hall, 54 Grafton Way (cultura.embavenez-uk.org): London Socialist Film Co-op screen films at 10.20 for 11am on the second Sunday of each month. The Real Story of Winnie & Nelson Mandela, and A Woman's Place, March 8. Sorry We Missed You (Ken Loach's 2019 film about zero hours contracts), April 12. The Occupation of the American Mind (exposes propaganda against the Palestinian people), May 10.

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

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

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

Regent Street Cinema, 309 Regent St: For daily programme visit regentstreetcinema.com. Matinee classics every Wednesday at 12 noon and 3.30pm, 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.

PUB QUIZZES

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

Carpenters Arms, 68-70 Whitefield 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: German emergency money 1914-1924, until March 29. French Impressions, prints from Manet to Cezanne, until Aug 9. Piranesi drawings, visions of antiquity, until Aug 9. Edmund de Waal, library of exile, March 12-Sept 8.

Pay for: Tantra, Enlightenment to Revolution, Apr 23-July 26.



Cartoon Museum, 63 Wells St: "Dear Mr Poole" (see page 9), until June 28. Philip Poole (pictured above) portrayed by Etem Caliskan.

UCL Art Museum, South Cloisters, Wilkins Building, Gower St: Witnessing Terror: French Revolutionary Prints, 1792-94, until June 12.

Wellcome Library, 183 Euston Rd (wellcomecollection.org): Play Well, explores how play transforms both childhood and society, until April 13.

TALKS

Sohemian Society, Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place: Italian Futurism, an illustrated talk by Christopher Adams, March 18, 7.30pm.

UCL Darwin Lecture Theatre, Malet Place (ucl.ac.uk/events): Lunchtime lectures, Tuesdays and Thursdays (1-2pm) during term time.

UCL Gustave Tuck Lecture Theatre, 2nd Floor, South Junction, Wilkins Building, Gower St: All at 6.30pm. Light, Film, Sound, Stone, March 10. Incentives in Health Care, March 17. Alongside: Drawn to Know, March 23. The Future of Museum Anthropology, March 24. Perspectives: Public support for sustainable development, May 13.

WALKS

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

FESTIVALS

London Book & Screen Week, March 9-15, at the Groucho Club. Visit londonbookandscreen-week.co.uk

ART

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



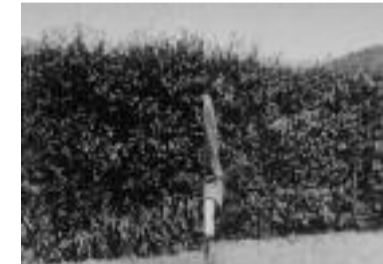
Coningsby Gallery, 30 Tottenham St: Quentin Blake / "The Sennelier Portraits" (above), March 10-26.

Fold Gallery, 158 New Cavendish St: Will Cruikshank / "SILO", until March 28.



Josh Lilley, 44-46 Riding House St: Celeste Rapone / "Retreat", until March 27.

Benedetto Pietromarchi / "Guardians" (above), until March 27.



Narrative Projects, 110 New Cavendish St: Rachel Lowe / "Split" (above), March 3-April 11.



Pilar Corrias, 54 Eastcastle Street: Shara Hughes (above), until March 28. Hayv Kahraman, March 28-May 2.