



# SOHO

## clarion

NO. 176  
THE CLARION  
CALL OF  
THE SOHO SOCIETY

spring  
**2020**

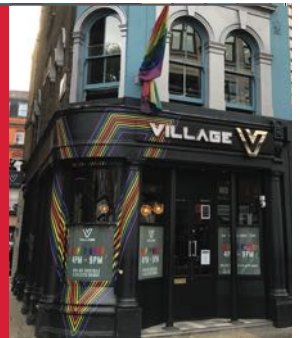
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Cover image: Jenn Lambert@sohosketchbook

## THE SOHO SOCIETY

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Jane Doyle



## **NOTICE OF THE SOHO SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The AGM of the Soho Society will be held in St. Anne's Community Hall, 55 Dean Street, London W1D 6AF on Monday, 20 April, 2020 at 6.00pm to 9.00pm

The AGM provides you with an opportunity to voice your thoughts and ideas, your hopes and fears for the future of Soho and to speak to those who are seeking to make Soho a great place to live, work and visit.

Papers for the AGM are on the Society website ([www.thesohosociety.org.uk](http://www.thesohosociety.org.uk))

At the meeting we will report on the Society's on-going activities:

- Planning
- Licensing
- Production of the Clarion
- Soho Village Fete and Waiters' Race
- Various other social events

In addition, we will report and discuss specific projects that we have launched, or are continuing, during the year, such as:

- The proposed closure of Beak Street
- The possibility for, and scope of, a wider traffic project for all Soho
- Twentieth Century House building in Soho Square
- Commercial waste collection from the streets
- The proposed closure of the Soho Walk-in Health Centre
- The development of the concept of Soho Preferred Providers
- The launch of our strategy for Soho and its implications

We will also elect our Executive team for next year – see separate notice.

All members of the Society are invited – and if you are not yet a member, come and join at the door (for a mere £20 for Soho residents). We hope that the evening will be enjoyable and interesting for all; there will also be drinks afterwards.

**PLEASE DO COME**

The ghosts of two ex Westminster City councillors, Robert Davis and Paul Church, have been back to haunt Soho's narrow streets over the last few months. Robert's ghost is seen in the smarter restaurants, now eating and drinking alone - he never picks up the check, which crumbles to dust, as if by magic, as he collects his coat and leaves. The staff feel a shiver down their spine. Paul Church's ghost wanders the blocked streets carefully picking his way around the construction cursing under his breath. If you listen very carefully you can hear him say:

*"I tried to stand up for the communities I was elected to represent against the dominance of property developers and their agents, patronage and power in Westminster, but I was bullied, silenced and threatened by their powerful allies. Local government shouldn't be like this."*

So why have these ghosts returned to Soho's streets?

Beak Street is a narrow street on the west side of Soho taking vehicle traffic from Lexington Street from both the north and south out on to Regent Street. At certain times of the day, possibly because of the phasing of the lights at the Regent Street intersection, the traffic backs up. Two pedestrianised streets - Carnaby Street and Kingly Street - have large numbers of pedestrians due to the success of the managed shopping district known as "Carnaby" in driving additional footfall to its shops to drive, in turn, the revenue accruing to Shaftesbury plc that owns most of the freeholds. Pedestrians leaving "Carnaby" to go south have to cross Beak Street with its congested traffic.

Last September the Society got wind of a proposal by Westminster City Council to close Beak Street to vehicle traffic permanently and pedestrianise it except for a delivery window from 7 am to 11 am every day. The reasons given for the decision were (1) to make pedestrians "more comfortable" and (2) to reduce congestion and pollution in Soho. No decision has yet been made and there has yet to be a consultation with local residents but that may start soon.

It makes sense to look at this proposed decision both substantively and procedurally. Substantively it seems odd. There are only two vehicle exits on to Regent Street from Soho - Beak Street and Great Marlborough Street - both are highly congested during the day and night. Great Marlborough Street has a pedestrian crossing and light phasing that does not favour the traffic leaving Soho - Beak Street has a weight of traffic and traffic lights as well. One might think that closing one of these two exits might make traffic congestion and pollution worse not better as traffic backs up trying to exit Soho's network of narrow streets.

So now on to the birthing of the decision itself. There have for some years been concerns about congestion in Soho - both from residents and businesses. It's caused by the Crossrail development, the number of deliveries, the increase in entertainment activities at night and, spectacularly, the amount of large scale construction in Soho which has increased markedly over the years. The concerns over pollution are real as we have become better informed of the health impact. To date it appears the Council has done little about it and may be in breach of its legal obligations in failing to act. The Soho Society has asked for a Soho wide traffic reduction scheme controlling entry of vehicles into Soho but that has, as yet, no support from the Council.

Into this context Shaftesbury plc commissions a series of traffic

reports on the impact of the closure of Beak Street to vehicles. When asked, Shaftesbury plc tells the Society the reports indicate that 60% of the traffic in Beak Street is "rat running" i.e. it has not stopped in Soho but is using Soho as a quick way to get from Shaftesbury Avenue to Regent Street. The alleged rat run is from Shaftesbury Avenue, up Great Windmill Street, across Brewer and up Lexington and then out on Beak Street to Regent Street. Both Shaftesbury and Westminster City Council refused to provide the traffic reports when the Society asked to see them. The Society pursued a Freedom of Information Act request against the Council which, several weeks later, provided the reports and other information. The reports did not support what Shaftesbury and Westminster Council had been saying - in fact the 2017 traffic report said that the closure of Beak Street would be impossible unless other mitigating action was taken at the other vehicle exits from Soho and that most traffic in Soho has a business reason for being there - i.e. the rat run theory (which develops later) is wrong. In later reports the rat run story emerges but the methodology as to how this data has been created is, as yet, unclear despite repeated requests to the Council for clarification. The instructions from Shaftesbury plc to the traffic consultants, or notes of meetings with them, are unavailable.

The Society ran a simple online survey on the proposal and we had around 100 replies. Nearly 80% of residents were against the scheme and very concerned that traffic would be redirected down residential streets - Great Pulteney, Bridle Lane and through Golden Square and that traffic would back up into Soho. We raised this with Cllr Tim Mitchell (then Cabinet Member for Transport) together with our concerns that Shaftesbury had a financial interest in the closure of the street and that therefore it was deeply inappropriate for Westminster to rely on traffic surveys that Shaftesbury had commissioned and paid for. Further, we noted from the FOIA response that Council officials had meetings with Shaftesbury at which the closure may have been discussed on 31 October 2018, 13 December 2018, 28 February 2019, 1 April 2019, 2 May 2019, 12 June 2019 and 19 September 2019 but the Council had failed to keep minutes of any of these meetings. Finally 70% of residents in our survey thought that the Council working this closely with property companies damaged the Council's reputation.

Cllr Tim Mitchell in October 2019 told the press that the scheme was in "early stages" and would only go ahead following a consultation with residents. Only three months later in February 2020 a draft consultation is shared with the Society with two options and two options only - either a permanent closure or a trial closure for six months. So in fact the scheme will go ahead even if the majority of residents think it shouldn't. A number of councillors have refused to meet or talk with the Society including Mervyn Caplan (not his area), Tim Mitchell (no longer his brief) and Andrew Smith (will talk only after the consultation has closed).

Concerns about the risk of undue influence over the process by Shaftesbury plc have also been raised with the Council's Head of Legal, Tasnim Shawkat, but she shows little interest. We have also started a formal complaint about the process with the Council - who to date have provided no substantive response to the concerns raised.

Whatever happens on Beak Street, the ghosts of Robert Davis

Editorial continued ...

and Paul Church will not rest until there is a full independent inquiry into the relationship between Westminster City Council and the property industry and how that relationship had impacted on WCC's decisions on planning, licensing and traffic in Soho over the last ten years. It's the proper inquiry into Robert Davis's

## Soho Square General Practice

As readers will know, this GP surgery at the Health Centre has had a very troubled existence in recent years under commercial providers.

When Living Care Medical Services Ltd. said last autumn that they would be handing back to the NHS their contract to run the surgery, the CLCCG (Central London Clinical Commissioning Group), which is responsible for procuring and overseeing NHS contracts in the Westminster area, ran an engagement exercise with patients and local stakeholders about the future of the practice. The response was overwhelmingly in favour of maintaining the GP practice at the Health Centre, and there was then a procurement process to find a new provider to run the Practice.

Several local surgeries put in bids, but happily no big commercial providers. Although none of the local surgeries were successful, the contract was awarded to Penceat, whose Chief Medical Officer, Dr Helen McCalvey, and Chief Officer Sree Agarwal, have experience of working in south London general practice in the Bromley area for a number of years.

Sree and Helen came to the January meeting of the PPG (Patients Participation Group) and assured the meeting they are committed to re-establishing Soho as one of the best regarded Practices in central London, with an emphasis on improving the 'patient experience'. The PPG has been very encouraged by further meetings that have been held with Penceat and are looking forward to 1 April when they will be taking over. We are very optimistic for the future of the Practice.

None of this affects Dr. Bark's Practice.

## Soho Society Hour

The Soho Society Hour goes out live on award winning local radio station Soho Radio every Thursday morning, from 9.00am to 10.00am, with hosts Clare Lynch and Leslie Hardcastle.

On 19 March 2020 we will broadcast our 300th show. On these shows four hundred and fifty guests have talked about "their Soho" and invariably speak with affection and recognition of Soho as playing a special part in their lives, but also often expressing concern for the future. We also talk about current issues and events. If you would like to join us one week and talk about "your" Soho, do get in touch by emailing Leslie Hardcastle on

[l.hardcastle@bopenworld.com](mailto:l.hardcastle@bopenworld.com)

behaviour that never happened. Nothing else will restore trust in the Council to represent its voters rather than the property industry. These ghosts have roamed our streets for far too long - its time they were allowed to rest.

## Comings and Goings

**Soho Society AGM - Monday, 20 April**

**Food Feast - Weekend of 6 / 7 June**

**Soho Society Fete - Sunday, 21 June**

**Pride Parade - Saturday, 27 June**

We're sad to hear that, although not strictly Soho, Angels in Shaftesbury Avenue is closing apparently due to the landlords wanting to redevelop the site. There have been seven generations of the family throughout the 170 years they have been in business. The company has a fascinating history and it is well worth a look at their website: [www.angelsfancydress.com](http://www.angelsfancydress.com).

From the outside 90 - 104 Berwick Street doesn't look to have progressed very much in the last three months. It's difficult to know what's going on inside but who knows! Will it be completed before Crossrail opens?

The other building developments seem to be progressing with no more than the usual disruption associated with building works - will Soho ever be free of building sites? We don't hold our breath, but .....

As to restaurants and other food related matters, in Old Compton Street Belgo's has gone and is being revamped to open as another chicken restaurant, making three chicken related restaurants in Old Compton Street alone!

Also in Old Compton Street L'Antica Pizzeria Da Michele has now opened in the premises that housed Patisserie Valerie. It looks bright and fresh and, glancing through the window at people eating, the pizzas look delicious!

Another new opening is Paradise, 61 Rupert Street, specialising in Sri Lankan cuisine. The menu promises seasonality and sustainability. The chef, Charith Priyadarshana, started life in London as a kitchen porter just a decade ago. He developed a keen interest and flair for fusion cooking while working as kitchen porter, eventually being promoted to junior chef at the Lord's Cricket Ground restaurant, Lord's Tavern. We look forward to reviewing the restaurant which we understand is excellent.

Bonnie Gull in Bateman Street has closed after three years, but a restaurant called Claro will be taking its place in the spring. Leandro Carreira is teaming up with Bonnie Gull co-founder Alex Hunter to open a restaurant. 'influenced by the tabernas of Carreira's native Portugal'.

We see that there is a new fish and chip shop due to open in St Anne's Court called Hobson's Choice.

We wish all these ventures every success and look forward to visiting them in the future."

## Ward Panel Update - Jane Doyle

Many people will know that there has recently been a large operation around Cambridge Circus to combat the drugs trade in that area, which resulted in a number of arrests with alleged dealers being held on remand awaiting trial. This operation was much needed as Cambridge Circus (both Westminster and Camden) has been a no-go area for months. The reports are that Cambridge Circus is now a much nicer place to be. In fact, whenever I'm in the area I wonder what's missing! So thanks to all those who took part in this operation, which is much appreciated by residents and businesses alike.

I am told by the police that crime figures are going up slightly (about 3½% over the last 12 months). Burglary has increased slightly, mostly of commercial premises. Some of this is due to businesses not taking the necessary precautions and leaving valuables on display or doors unlocked. However, I understand a suspect was recently arrested on suspicion of six commercial burglary offences in Soho and Oxford Street.

Theft from the person and robbery is still prevalent. Again, people should be aware of what's going on around them and not walk down the street engrossed in an iPhone, or indeed leave phones in full view as thieves are very quick. Always be aware of your possessions and don't be surprised if you leave something unattended and go off to the bar/loo/wherever and return to find it's not there!

Street begging seems to have lessened slightly, but that may be due to the weather as there aren't so many people sitting outside restaurants and standing outside pubs and bars. We'll see what happens when the weather improves.

Just before Christmas our local officers carried out a joint operation with the vehicle enforcement team to target illegal pedicabs. Over 50 were stopped and around 30 were found to have an illegal motor. The 'riders' require a licence and insurance, which they didn't have. They were told that if they came back with the relevant papers they could be returned. All but one were later crushed.

Be careful, and keep reporting crime - in an emergency dial 999, a non-emergency 101, you can also report crime on-line.

Lastly, we would like to thank the Soho Angels who, together with St John's Ambulance, help so many people who may be vulnerable on Friday and Saturday nights. Their volunteers do fantastic work. If you meet them, do say hello - they're easy to spot due to their pink high viz jackets.

## Crossrail and the Gin Club

In January 2019 Crossrail's road works damaged the Georgian vault underneath Hollen Street in Soho, the premises of The Star Café / London gin club, a family business since 1933.

The damage was such that the business had to close for repairs in April 2019. It was only then that the full extent of the damage was revealed and from then on a battle ensued with Crossrail. Little did anyone know at the time, that Crossrail would deny their part in the damage and refuse to make good what they'd done - for almost a year.

The owners spent most of 2019 fighting, arguing, and compiling extensive evidence that showed without doubt, that Crossrail caused the damage. Crossrail simply ignored the

evidence and refused to engage with the facts of what they'd done.

We all understand when something has happened there is a period of establishing cause. That's fair enough. Cause was established very early on as, apart from a wealth of evidence showing the pre and post works conditions, Crossrail were the only company to work above the vault in 10 years. Its shocking that large companies can simply ignore the facts in front of them, for an entire year, causing a business to effectively be ruined having not traded for so long.

Out of desperation and sheer frustration the owners of the Gin Club contacted Caroline Pidgeon, Chair of the Transport Committee at the London Assembly. She took the case on and raised the issue at a higher level to get some action. It is thanks to her that the CEO of Crossrail, Mark Wild, got involved, Crossrail finally admitting liability in January 2020.

Repair works finally started in February 2020 thanks to The Gin Club's business insurers, who have mobilized workmen to dig up the road, repair the vault and put right the damage Crossrail caused.

The frustration for the owners is off the scale. There will be months of repairs before trading from the premises can begin.  
- Julia Forte

## Soho at Home

Soho At Home is a project celebrating the lives of residents who live there now. Through audio and visual mediums, it will share a unique perspective from the homes of those who live in this lively, notorious and ever changing part of London.

Previous Soho dweller and artist Stella Cecil and creative producer Tiphaine Tailleux are collaborating with residents to collect stories for an installation in June 2020.

We are seeking to amplify the voices and experiences of the local community not widely known. Collaborating with expert audio producers and visual artists we will tell the stories of Soho through a personal and domestic lens.

We are looking for people to speak to from the neighbourhood who have a story to share and would be willing to invite us into their home. Participants have the option to remain anonymous.

We are also looking for partner organisations and venues in Soho. Tiphane can be contacted on [tiphaine@empathymuseum.com](mailto:tiphaine@empathymuseum.com)

## Twentieth Century House

Disappointingly, neither Historic England nor the Twentieth Century Society supported the Society's application for listing of the building and the battle to save it now moves on the planning process. The applicant has submitted a second proposal to Westminster City Council which would include a partial retention of the facade of the building. Concerns over the height of the building and the proposed new entrance to Soho Square remain. You can examine the proposals on the Society's website. We have heard that the two preview theatres will soon be demolished and that the staff of Twentieth Century Fox have moved out. Disney is insisting on removing the circular neon 20th Century Fox sign from the top of the building as, having acquired the 20th Century Fox Corporation, it is insisting on removing any reference to the older company and its brand. Mickey Mouse is therefore *persona non grata* in Soho.

# SOHO SOCIETY

## FUTURE STRATEGY - QUENTIN THOMPSON

The Soho Society has existed as a charity since 1972. Its objectives for Soho, set at the time, are: to promote environmental improvement; to educate the public about Soho; to secure features of historic or public interest. We have made an impact on these fronts, not least as a result of the critical eye we keep on Planning and Licensing Applications.

Recently there have been increasingly rapid changes in Soho in directions with which, on behalf of those who live and work here, we are not comfortable. Our concerns are about the decreasing diversity, the loss of many small, independent and idiosyncratic retail and food outlets – often displaced by large national or international chains, the traffic, the pollution, an unsympathetic development of hotels and the increasingly tawdry appearance of the area.

The Soho Society wants to counter these changes and so secure a pleasant environment with unique and diverse amenities as befits its special character. Soho should be special, thriving, vibrant, varied, fun, clean and safe. To this end, we have now adopted a wider, fourth objective:

To make Soho a better place to live, work and visit, with a unique and diverse range of amenities in a pleasant environment.

What the Soho Society would like to see:-

Soho should be an exciting, interesting and idiosyncratic place. It is, and should remain, special and different from the rest of London. It is only a small area, with narrow streets and many old, sometimes historic buildings, all of which help provide a special ethos to the place. We want to keep it that way.

Within this physical fabric, we want to see a continuing wide variety of thriving, small and independent retail outlets, cafes and restaurants as well as other small suppliers of goods and services. Soho is a place for SMEs, with a particular strength in the creative industries, which results in a variety of employments as well as a variety of enjoyments. Small hotels also have a role to play, but, to be in keeping with the intimate nature of our area, the emphasis should be on ‘small’; to provide for many more fleeting visitors would risk destroying the very ambience that visitors come here to experience. We are also concerned to protect threatened public suppliers of services, especially the Primary School and the Health practices.

To protect Soho’s character, we need to be vigilant, and to try to mitigate the impact of some of the more virulent (economic) forces that underlie the boring and amorphous uniformity that afflicts so many other places. The last thing we want is for Soho to become just like anywhere else. It is not easy to find ways to resist the economic forces that push in the direction of uniformity, but we hope to encourage a more community approach by landlords so that they take more account of the special nature of the area, rather than the more usual simplistic pursuit of profit maximisation from the high rents that can only be afforded by large companies.

The entertainment and leisure industries are major parts of Soho; while we welcome them, we worry about the danger of such provision also becoming boringly uniform, with little musical

variation. There is a further danger of over concentration and of ‘entertainment’ being based too much on the consumption of alcohol. We wish to see more of a variety of leisure industries.

Evening and night entertainment, while giving enjoyment to those directly participating, can cause distress to those nearby who are not participating, not least (but not only) local residents. The main concerns are noise and general anti-social behaviour, often associated with excess alcohol (or drugs). WCC has a policy of ‘core hours’ for alcohol licenses, but there are almost as many exceptions to it as not. In addition, many establishments fail to observe their licensed hours – and there is little enforcement. There are clearly conflicting interests with the need for sufficient respect for residents. The balance is not well struck.

The environment on the streets

The streets of Soho should be safe and clean, but also different and fun to walk down, visit or live on; some of them bustling, others quiet. To achieve this, we are looking for high quality in five aspects of the environment.

Environmental pollution. The air quality in Soho is some of the worst in the country; there should be much higher emission standards for all vehicles entering Soho. On the ground, physical pollution usually stems from commercial waste left on the streets outside the set hours, looking unsightly and causing a health hazard – and an attraction for rats; hardly a first world city. Noise ‘pollution’ is an environmental problem, mainly from entertainment venues and often late into the night. Light ‘pollution’ from window displays can be excessive in intensity and duration; it often lacks subtlety and wastes energy.

Traffic causes several types of problem. Much more attention should be paid to planning for Soho traffic, not least to reduce emissions and congestion, but also to develop well thought-out proposals for timed pedestrianisation or restrictions on vehicle access. The inter-connectedness of the streets in Soho means that any proposed changes should be planned for their effect across the whole of the Soho area. There should be more consolidation of freight deliveries and commercial waste collection.

Public spaces are not well provided in Soho; there should be more greening of streets and more trees (perhaps in large pots) as well as some more, and greener, public spaces, albeit small ones such as for seating. (For example, the new provision for Cross-Rail at Tottenham Court Road has NO green at all.) All our public infrastructure should be a high quality of design.

New developments are always happening in Soho and we do not object to this in principle. But they should be done in ways that respect, protect and enhance the scale and grain of our area. There should also be a requirement that any new development work should be scheduled so as to minimise traffic and pedestrian blockages. In addition, more respect should be paid to historic buildings, both in their treatment by their owners and tenants (for example using lighting and signage that is tasteful rather than garish) but also in planning terms.

Effective ways to control bad behaviour will be essential if these environmental concerns are to be addressed; physical changes



will not be enough. For example, in the corporate sector, there should be much stronger enforcement for bad behaviour by businesses, such as the breaches of licensing conditions, blocking pavements or putting out waste illegally. For individual bad behaviour, there should be similarly much stronger enforcement: Crime and safety are real worries in Soho, much of which is related to drugs and other forms of ASB. The streets of Soho should belong to the law-abiding public.

Our strategic approaches

There are three approaches that the Soho Society uses to try to bring about change:

- A. Undertake direct activities which others cannot or will not do, mainly for community benefit, such as our Soho Fete
- B. Make proposals for change to those with power and/or influence (eg. major landlords, WCC, police), based on facts and thoughtful analysis, through quiet diplomacy up to public protest

- C. Increase public awareness and/or support on relevant matters, using communication vehicles such as our Clarion, our web site, Soho radio and press releases

In addition to our regular work on Planning, Licensing, the Clarion and the Fete, we undertake projects on topics of concern, by assessing the facts and based on analysis. We are increasingly pro-active on topics as well as being reactive to proposals made by others. We are currently involved with a number of such topics, for example: the proposed closure of the Walk-in Centre and the health facilities in its building; the proposed closure of Beak St; the unsatisfactory arrangements for the collection of commercial waste; the concept of 'Preferred Providers' for selected retail and other outlets that are special to Soho.

The Soho Society would be pleased to have suggestions for other topics that we might tackle in our efforts to keep Soho special.

# PLANNING WE ARE WATCHING - MATTHEW BENNETT

**O**n a positive note we were pleased to see that an application has finally been made giving the details of the construction of 92 new homes on the two blocks over the Crossrail station at the top of Dean Street. This will be a welcome and sizable addition to Soho's housing stock and it is good to see it moving towards actual construction after so much delay.

We have yet to see any obvious policy changes to planning decision making as a result of Westminster's declaration last September of a climate emergency and the target of making the city carbon neutral by 2030. We are still seeing applications and decisions based on openable shopfronts and outside heaters burning up gas to heat punters whilst they smoke and drink outside. "Torrential rain may flood the homes of others but I need to be warm if I have a smoke or a pint outside!" seems the refrain. Still a long way to go, Soho, before we wake up to acting more responsibly about the climate. If London weren't in the South East but up located North or out West I suspect an area like Soho and indeed the whole of the West End would be under much greater scrutiny. Our area wastes energy like there is no tomorrow (and may be there isn't much of one if we carry on like this) as any perusal of fact and evidence shows, but who cares about those. Rant yes, but also underlying truth.

We saw an interesting and colourful application in January to modernise the public toilets at the top of Carnaby Street. But we weren't convinced it was the right way to go. The toilets were reduced to two ground floor 'pay for use' toilets and the roof structure whilst colourful on the day it might have been completed didn't seem very likely to age well or provide any tangible benefits although for pigeon lovers it would have provided multiple perching points. More fundamentally, we have a clear issue with late evening and night street urination and a solution which provided no publicly accessible urinals did not seem like a step forward to us. As it was promoted by Shaftesbury plc, who have been at the forefront of changing the use class

of premises to hospitality venues, it also seemed a step back for them and their reputation from taking responsibility for all those full bladders their tenants seek so hard to provide.

On the edge of the area Criterion Capital has applied to turn the London Pavilion into a hotel. Whilst we don't really need yet more beds for tourists, if approved, we hope this new use will reverse the slide into tattiness that the building has suffered in recent years.

One application was particularly worrying for us. Whilst what was at issue may have seemed simple, the desire to have fully openable windows to a loud restaurant despite residents living directly above, our concern was the way that the professional consultants had 'manipulated' their acoustic report to disguise the true impact, and in response a planning officer was proposing a completely unenforceable condition. If we can't trust the reports of professional firms to have been compiled with integrity and if we can't have faith in planning officers to act effectively to protect the public we would be moving to a really dark place. Central Government has created a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' which pressures the Council to grant consent as much as possible but that is meant to be on the basis that decisions are based on true facts and professional integrity. We have raised the matter with our local councillors and we look to them to ensure that the processes remain truthful and unbiased.

## THE SOHO NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

This has been finalised and by the time this Clarion is published I am confident that it will have been submitted to Westminster to start the process towards it becoming adopted as the statutory neighbourhood plan for the area. All the resident and business representatives who have worked to produce it should be congratulated in coming together around the vision and policies in it.

# SOHO HOUSING

We are very pleased to announce that Soho Housing have agreed to acquire a new property at 12-13 Greek Street, adding eight affordable 2-bedroom homes to the heart of Soho. Once the location for MPL, Paul McCartney's production company, this property will increase our profile on Greek Street as we already have homes at 54 and 59 Greek Street and ensures that management is run by a local organisation. Completion is due to take place in 2021.

This purchase comes out of our long-standing relationship with dedicated local landlord, Soho Estates, and forms the affordable element of their new development project, Ilona Rose House, which spans Charing Cross Road and Greek Street.

Vivienne King, CEO of Soho Housing said *"This fantastic acquisition is a key milestone in our mission to both create and maintain affordable homes in unaffordable places in London."*



# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Running the Soho Society needs lots of volunteers. We have recruitment ongoing for a treasurer with accountancy skills, an archivist and more people to join our planning group - especially if you have planning experience. Take a look at <https://reachvolunteering.org.uk> to see the roles that we are currently recruiting for. You do not need to live in

Soho to volunteer for the Society but you will likely need to make it to Soho once a month for our exec meeting. We have recently upgraded our broadband connection to fibre so our office is ready and waiting if you want to get things done for your community - from saving heritage buildings to fighting to keep the Walk In Centre. Call us if you want to discuss 0300 302 1300.

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# Are you a Soho Resident, Business, Worker or Visitor?

## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

*Join the Soho Society today*

### WHY?

1. Get involved in the Soho community
2. Support the Society's work reviewing planning, licensing and lobbying on local issues
3. Invites to member-only events
4. The Soho Clarion delivered to your door

### Membership Prices:

#### Individual

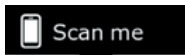
Soho Resident £20/Non-Resident £30/Lifetime £250

#### Business

Business <30 employees £50

Business >30 employees £200

There are three easy ways to join The Soho Society:



1. Scan the Code

2. Via Our Website

[www.thesohosociety.org.uk](http://www.thesohosociety.org.uk)

3. Payment via your bank

The Soho Society - Barclays bank

Account No: 13609987

Sort code: 20-10-53

(Use surname and postcode as reference)

**MAKING SOHO A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND VISIT SINCE 1972**

# SNAILS BEWARE! THE SOHO FETE IS BACK



## **Soho's 46th Village Fete takes place on Sunday, 21 June 2020, 12-6pm**

**St Anne's Gardens, Wardour Street, Soho W1D 6LB**

Once experienced, never forgotten and always re-attended, the Soho Fete, organised by The Soho Society, happens annually somewhere between the Food Feast and Parish School Summer holiday.

Soho's tongue-in-cheek rural Village Fete comes complete with Drag Queens, Morris dancing horses, Dog

Show, Vicars and a traditional Tug of War. The Soho Community generously donates raffle prizes, waiters, chocolate snails from Le Escargot, bar and staff from the French House and volunteers - thank you in advance, we salute you!

This year's fete is on Father's Day, so "bring your dad to the fete", we cry! There are plenty of activities for Dads from marshalling the World-famous Soho waiters race to joining in with the Morris dancing. There is also talk of a best dressed dad competition so watch this space.

Top billing goes to the Waiters Race at 3.30pm. SHOUT OUT TO Soho's restaurants and bars, to take part and seize the

trophy from the House of St Barnabas. 50 Soho waiters will be under starter's orders at 3.30pm sharp, racing from The French House, up Dean Street round Soho Square and back down Frith street finishing outside Gerry's on Old Compton Street. There are strict rules, waiters must race, balancing a tray, bottle of champagne, glass and ashtray – without dropping or holding on.





We are looking for 100 volunteers to marshal the crowds and ensure fair play.

Old favourites, and crowd-pleasers are back, including snail racing, the spaghetti eating contest, human fruit machine, horn blowing competition from Sweetie of St Moritz and St Anne's More Tea Vicar with 6 hours of song and dance, entertainment on stage.

Get ready for tension, tantrums and testosterone with the rerun of the TUG OF WAR between Soho's finest – MPS Soho and the Soho Fire Station after the Fire Station emerged victorious last year.

Last year's Fete Committee have forgotten all the pain, and agreed (without torture), to do it all over again helped by a big fat fete debrief meeting at The Union Club and 1 or 2 of bottles of red.

So what's new this year? We have new bunting being made by Joan Martyr; funds donated by Knight Frank, we hope to have Bees - courtesy of London Beekeepers and we are in discussions with various organisations to invite some city farm residents – goats perhaps? We are open to suggestions so get in touch [fete@thesohosociety.org.uk](mailto:fete@thesohosociety.org.uk).

Bring your friends, family and your children, your dog and don't forget your dad, to St Anne's Gardens, Wardour Street, to enjoy a uniquely Soho Summer's day

VENUE: St Anne's Gardens, Wardour Street, Soho, London W1D 6LB

DATE: Sunday 21st June 2020

TIME: 12:00-18:00

ENTRY: FREE

SOCIAL MEDIA: Twitter/ Facebook/ Instagram @SohoSocietyW1

Join the Soho Society [www.thesohosociety.org.uk](http://www.thesohosociety.org.uk)

To volunteer, hire a stall, donate to the raffle or tombola or for more information, contact Lucy or Rachel - [fete@thesohosociety.org.uk](mailto:fete@thesohosociety.org.uk) (Tel:07903 523380)



## SOHO FOOD FEAST 2020

### SUPPORTING SOHO PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOL

**SATURDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> & 7<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY JUNE**

**S**oho Food Feast has been supporting the Soho Parish Primary school for the last nine years with this being our TENTH year! Previously our fundraising objective has been the school playground and supporting their healthy eating kitchen. Moving forward, the school needs our help financially to help with the growing number of pupils but lack of government funding.

Although the school is over-subscribed and has grown by 10% over the last two years, because of its Victorian building and location the school cannot fit as many pupils in as a large state school which means they are poorly funded. The sad truth is that without financial support from the Soho Food Feast and other fundraising events the school would be in a critical state. The happy truth though is that school is the only one in Soho and we have an incredible community spirit which is evident in the success of the previous nine years of this event where residents, both local and further afield in London have come together to support this unique school.

Soho Food Feast was set up by Margot Henderson of Rochelle Canteen and St Johns restaurants and Anita Moir the wonderful parent and catering manager. They set up the event to raise money for the school. Since the first event ten years ago it has grown from a school event style gathering to a large weekend extravaganza of exciting restaurants, chefs, bars and entertainment...not forgetting the infamous vegetable sculpture competition for the kids.

The Soho Food Feast attracts over 2000 people over the weekend, and we are looking for restaurants who would like to participate as well as sponsors to help make this event the best one yet. If you would like to be involved please contact the events coordinator, [anna@sohoparish.co.uk](mailto:anna@sohoparish.co.uk)

Anna Ashford



# PANCHO LEWIS

LABOUR WARD COUNCILLOR

## Stand up for the Soho Walk-In Centre

As readers will know, the Soho Walk in Centre on Frith Street is under threat of closure. This would be a devastating blow to the community. We need to send a message loud and clear to the health authorities that it must remain open.

The centre provides an invaluable service to workers, visitors and residents alike. On a monthly basis, it gets roughly 4000 visitors and the nurse practitioners who run the service do an absolutely fantastic job. At a time when GPs are already over-stretched and getting an appointment can take days if not weeks, it would be madness to close down the centre. And as one resident put it to me: "closing it would also add more pressure on already very busy A&E departments".

Its value isn't just medical. Located by the Soho Hospital for Women, a building erected in the early Victorian era, it serves as a bridge to Soho's past and reminds us of our rich history.

Plus the centre serves us all, regardless of background. In other words, it is a public good. At a time when Soho is suffering from overdevelopment and has undergone a process of 'hotelification' - both of which are, above all, about private gain, with developers seeking to extract more and more money from the Soho village - we must stand up for public institutions which place everyone's wellbeing at the heart of what they do.

The Soho Society are running a campaign to keep it open. They've put together a detailed brief which is well worth reading, which outlines practical proposals about how the NHS can build a sustainable future for the centre. You can read more about it on the Soho Society website.

Meanwhile, I've launched an open letter to the health authorities which has received hundreds of signatures to date. If you haven't signed it yet, please do: contact me on [plewis@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:plewis@westminster.gov.uk) and I will add your name (the copy is below). I also urge everyone to take 5 minutes to go online and write to the health authority on [clcg.sohowic@nhs.net](mailto:clcg.sohowic@nhs.net) about why the centre is valuable to you. Writing to them in your own words helps drive the message even further that we want to see it remain open. Every extra email they receive makes a difference.

We have only a few weeks to press the health authorities to do what is right and save the centre. I urge everyone reading this to join the campaign.

### Open Letter:

*The proposed closure of the Soho Walk-In Centre is unacceptable. It is used by workers, visitors and residents across London and it is an invaluable community resource. Its closure would be devastating for Soho and the West End. We want to see the centre remain open.*

*The building must remain a centre which is used for medical purposes*

*- not sold off for profit or converted into a hotel. Please do what is right and save the centre.*

### Advice surgery:

Pancho holds his advice surgeries on the third Saturday of each month between 10:00-11:00 at Danceworks, 16 Balderton Street, Mayfair and 11:30-12:30 at 68 Dean Street, Soho, W1D 4QJ. No appointment is needed

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- Text/SMS 07860 021 319
- Book via our website [london-fire.gov.uk](http://london-fire.gov.uk)



# TIM BARNES

## CONSERVATIVE WARD COUNCILLOR

### The 100 Club is saved...

One of the most important grassroots live music venues in the country, The 100 Club on Oxford Street, has been saved thanks to a new exemption on business rates that I was delighted to be able to pilot through the Council. Its future had been in doubt given rising costs over the last couple of years and a desire by the owners to keep prices down so it can remain a grassroots venue, accessible to everyone.

The 100 Club has the kind of heritage that you can't replicate. The Rolling Stones, Oasis and The Sex Pistols have all played there. We need anchors like this for our entertainment sector and to ensure there are places across the country that continue to give opportunities to new bands and to the people that want to hear live music. Working with the likes of the Music Venues Trust, over several months, we were able to identify a legal mechanism to provide them with help.

Preserving the 100 Club comes as part of new Westminster commitments to save live music venues in and around Soho and our plans to transform Oxford Street and the nearby area over the next few years now that pedestrianisation has been ruled out.

Coverage of the 100 Club scheme earned me a quote in the NME, something that my sixteen year old self would have seen as validation of all of my life choices thus far!

### ...Now for the Soho Walk-In Centre

The NHS Walk-In centre is used by thousands of residents, local workers and visitors to central London. Councillor Jonathan Glanz and I are campaigning to oppose the possible closure of this hugely valuable service. A major part of the argument is that losing the surgery would increase pressure on local GPs and hospital A&E departments.

We are working across party lines as well as with local campaign groups, including the Soho Society and our new local MP, Nickie Aiken.

If you want to know more and sign our petition to oppose the closures, please visit: [westm.news/walkincentre](http://westm.news/walkincentre)

Pedicabs - we have had some recent successes with long-running

## SAVE THE SOHO NHS WALK-IN CENTRE, 1, FRITH STREET.

The Soho Society is concerned for the future of our local Walk-in Centre, established in 2000 it has been providing a treatment service to residents, workers and visitors in the area, it treats over 50,000 patients a year but following NHS policy changes the future of this highly valued service is now under threat. The Soho Society has set out its preferred option of transforming

issues such as pedicabs. Following a focused programme of activity in Soho and the Oxford Street area, the Met were able to impound 50 pedicabs for technical violations recently, 49 of the vehicles were subsequently crushed. While this is far from a long-term solution, it has shown that action can be effective when and where the will exists and we will keep the pressure on the Met to continue to do more.



New Year, New Changes - with the General Election at the end of last year seeing former Council Leader Nickie Aiken moving on to become our MP, a new council leader was elected. Cllr Rachael Robathan has taken on the role, having previously overseen finance and regeneration across Westminster. Following the subsequent reshuffle, I am now the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and, much more importantly for many Clarion readers, I remain the Lead Councillor for Soho.

If you have an issue you want to raise, Cllr Jonathan Glanz and I hold a councillor surgery in Soho on the last Friday



*Cllr Jonathan Glanz, Nickie Aiken MP and Cllr Timothy Barnes at the Soho Walk-In Centre*

of every month at St Anne's on Dean Street from 5-6 pm and another on the second Saturday of each month from 11am at the Mayfair Community Space on North Audley Street. You can just turn up and drop in – no appointment needed – and all local residents and businesses are welcome.

Meanwhile, please feel free to contact me via phone on 020 7641 3411, @CampaignTim on Twitter or [barnes@westminster.gov.uk](mailto:barnes@westminster.gov.uk) if you prefer.

the Walk-in Centre to an Urgent Treatment Centre providing a wider range of services and needs everyone living and working in Soho to support our proposal. The Central London Clinical Commissioning Group responsible for commissioning this service is undertaking a series of engagement workshops with the community to determine its future and want to hear your views, please check their website for dates and email your views to [CLCCG.sohowic@nhs.net](mailto:CLCCG.sohowic@nhs.net). Also if you have a business in Soho and your employees make use of the Soho WiC then please let us know. [admin@thesohosociety.org.uk](mailto:admin@thesohosociety.org.uk)

# SOUNDS OF THE UNIVERSE

BY RICHARD PIERCY

There was a time when every high street in the nation had at least one record shop and Soho was no different, with the number at various times approaching double figures. They were predominately independently run enterprises; their owners enthusiastically sharing their encyclopaedic knowledge with the disciples who visited these temples of musical pleasure. They provided a cultural haven, where youth movements were nurtured, as the musical scene shifted throughout the 60's 70' 80's and into the early 90's. A social hub where the latest releases were forensically evaluated and new discoveries made; a place where the record collections amassed provided a soundtrack to our lives.

The introduction of the MP3 player and preference for the cold convenience of the digital musical download, heralded the closure of many of these once cherished emporia. The ones who completely abandoned vinyl in favour of the CD format were hit hardest. Those that survived the upheaval, did so because they maintained their commitment to vinyl and had a loyal following of likeminded customers to support them. One such shop is Sounds of the Universe at 7 Broadwick Street and as Record Shop day approaches, I decided to pay them a visit to find out more from Wayne Gilbert, one of the highly knowledgeable inhouse staff.

Wayne began by explaining that the name of the shop was derived from it offering an eclectic mix of music from around the world – It's a place where customers can browse the racks for Reggae, Brazilian, Dubstep, Latin, African, Disco, Electronic, Kraut Rock, Rock, Soul and Country Blues, perhaps stumbling across some 1970's Cambodian psychedelia along the way. The selection, arguably the largest in the UK, reflects founder and owner, Stuart Baker's taste in music – 'this is a niche business and a conscious decision was made, not to stock mainstream pop music; there's no point in trying to be a mini HMV'

Sounds of the Universe is also affiliated to the Soul Jazz record label, another of Stuart's creations. The label specialises in producing compilations and reissues and has had some notable hits with the Dynamite series of funky reggae and Nu Yorica, a Latin Jazz compilation derived from the 1970's New York City music scene. Stuart regularly travels the world looking for new music to release on the label. To complete the setup there is Soul Jazz books which to date has released ten publications.

Sounds of the Universe began life on a market stall at Dingwalls in Camden, offering second-hand jazz records at the Sunday afternoon jazz dance, where Giles Peterson was the resident DJ. As the business grew, Soho beckoned and premises in Ingestre Place were duly acquired; fortunately this was an era when an independent small business could afford the rent and rates being demanded. In 2003 the business moved to its current premises, a building that itself has a rich musical history. Originally a pub called the Brick layers Arms, it's where Brian Jones held auditions in the early 60's for a band that became the Rolling Stones. After the pub closed a violin maker and dealer moved in. The basement of the building still has a vault with a strong door in which the most valuable violins were stored.

The vast majority of record sales at Sounds of the Universe are for vinyl with sales in this format increasing. As Wayne reflects 'It's hard to love a CD in the same way as a vinyl record, replete with artwork and inside notes. Vinyl has benefited from the renewed interest in nostalgia and retro; older customers who regret dumping their vinyl in favour of CD's and are now replacing them, whilst the younger generation, brought up on download, are starting to discover it'

Sounds of the Universe is a proper record shop – a place where you can easily while away the hours, browsing the racks, digging through the crates or listening to a new release through the headphones – 'try before you buy' is actively encouraged. If you're into world music or looking for something off the beaten track, this is the place for you!



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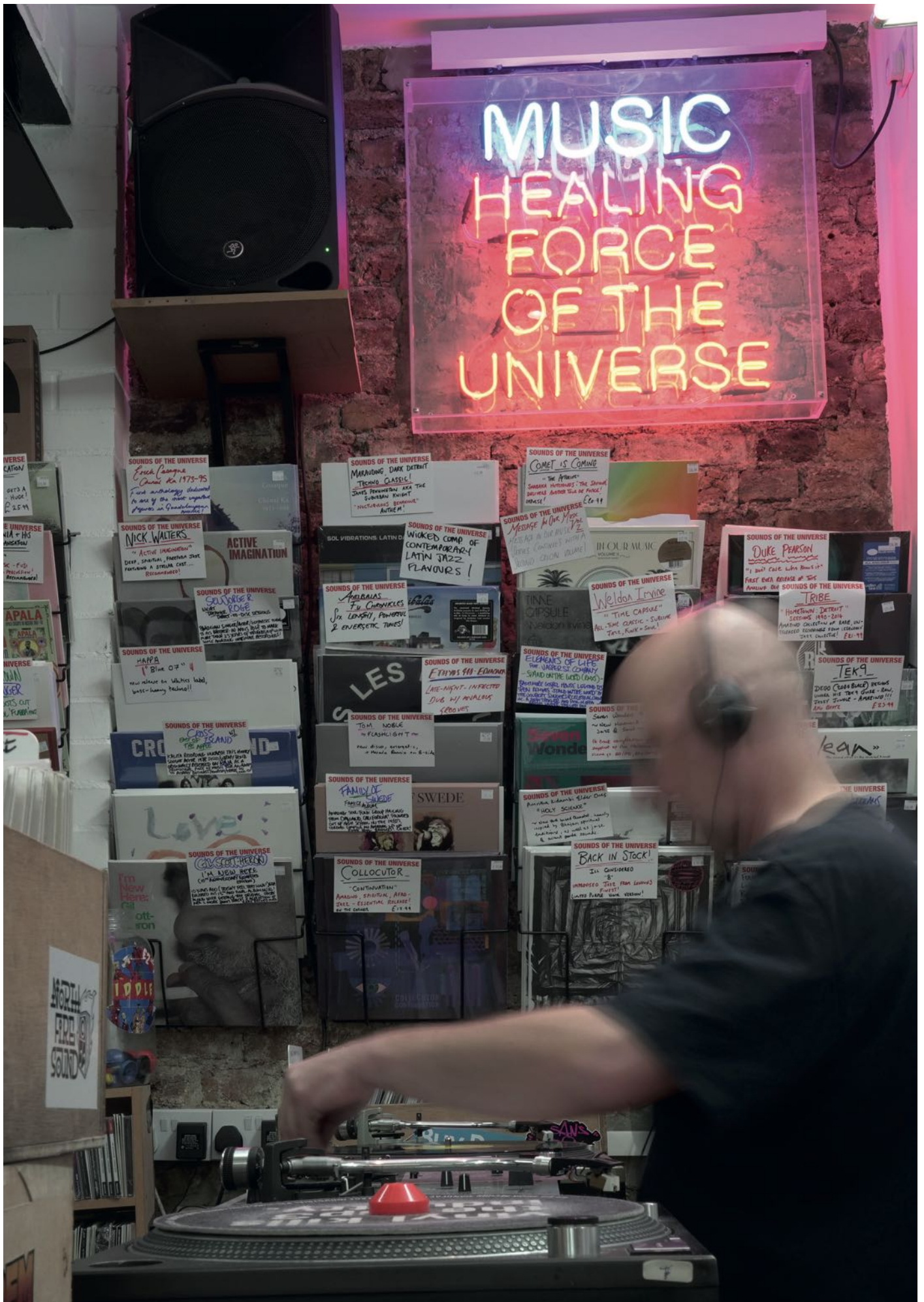
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Picture - Richard Piercy

# MUSES, MENTORS AND MONSTERS

BY CLIVE JENNINGS

The 16 April sees the publication of Darren Coffield's new book *Tales from the Colony Room: Soho's Lost Bohemia*, an authorised history of London's most notorious arts club. The Colony Room Club was dominated, indeed created, by two personalities – its owner and founder, Muriel Belcher, a tough, sharp-tongued veteran of the Soho drinking club scene, who opened the Colony Room in 1949; and the artist Francis Bacon who became Belcher's co-conspirator when she paid him a retainer to bring in his rich pals.

Over ten years after it closed, and seventy since it opened, this book puts the record straight by drawing on a wealth of new material taken from audio tapes given to Coffield by the Colony's last proprietor Michael Wojas. This includes previously unpublished interviews with Jeffrey Bernard, Daniel Farson, Ian Board and Francis Bacon. Coffield has also tracked down over 50 leading members, and conducted interviews to create an oral history of the louche life lost in Soho that will become a document of social reference - personal reminiscences and memories that range from the poignant to the vitriolic.

This wealth of material is accompanied by many unpublished photos from the Club. The Colony has become the stuff of Soho myth, the truth often lost in a fuddled alcoholic mist, but Coffield explains: "the aim of this book is to give the reader a flavour of what it was like to frequent the Colony and its environs by using the authentic voices of those who were actually there".

Where other drinking clubs disappeared, The Colony Room Club survived - a continuous party from 1949 to 2008. The Club's reputation for louche characters hurling insults at each other, made for a perfect Soho mix of class, colour and status. Purchased bottles of champagne were kept behind the bar, and a well heeled member would often find their bottle mysteriously low, while a more impecunious member at the other end of the bar had a full glass, care of the caring bar staff. Noms de guerre were popular at the Colony: they included: Twiggy, Hitler, Brian the Burglar and Butterlegs (apparently so called because they spread so easily!)

Many other well-known artists drank in the club alongside Bacon, over the years: Craigie Aitchison, Michael Andrews, Frank Auerbach, Tim Behrens, Peter Blake, Edward Burra, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Patrick Caulfield, Joshua Compston, John Craxton, Tracey Emin, Lucian Freud, Alberto Giacometti, R.B Kitaj, Jeff Koons, Leon Kossoff, Augustus John, Sarah Lucas, Eduardo Paolozzi, Edward Seago, Keith Vaughan, the list goes on and on. Sohoites often mourn the passing of the Colony, and the old refrain of "Soho isn't what it used to be" is frequently heard. It never has been – Colin McInnes said the same thing around the time that he wrote "Absolute Beginners" in 1959.

The lethal triangle of The French, The Coach & Horses and The Colony were the staging points of the Dean Street shuffle, with occasional forays into other joints such as The Gargoyle or The Mandrake in the early days and The Groucho or Blacks at the end. During the period that Damien Hirst and other

YBAs made it their watering hole of choice clambering out of the Colony's toilet window and sneaking across the roof and in through a Groucho window was a popular jape.

An accompanying Exhibition at Delasposa Gallery (2 Bathurst Street, W2) *Tales From the Colony Room – Art and Bohemia* will tell the story of postwar Bohemian Soho, using artwork and ephemera from the Club, featuring works by Frank Auerbach, John Deakin, David Bailey, Art & Language, Sarah Lucas, Paul Fryer, Lucian Freud, Francis Bacon and many others. Many works that haven't been seen for decades will be on display, such as a portrait of Muriel Belcher on her deathbed by Michael Clark that hasn't been seen since it won a gold medal at the Royal Academy in the '80s.

Unusual items include artwork by Bill Lloyd who was lauded as the 'the next Freud', but died in a mysterious explosion on a boat, and paintings of Soho by Frank Norman, better known as an author/playwright. Also photographs by Harry Diamond, John Deakin, Michael Woods and Angus Forbes, famous for the '70s Silk Cut cigarette adverts. Events include: 22 April – Exhibition and Colony Room book launch, 6pm-9pm; and 25 April – curator's talk and tour, 2pm.

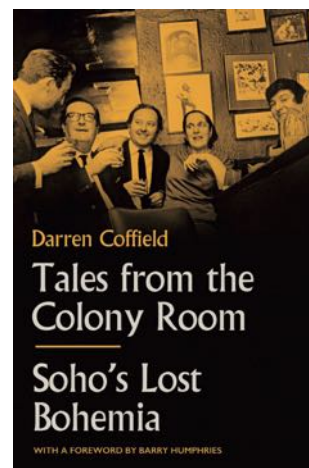
Coffield is now working on a new project about the extraordinary, bohemian women that drank in post-war London. Overshadowed by the men, they have never been written about as a group before. They moved in creative circles and were great influencers. Previously overlooked, they were the backbone that kept the Bohemian set going. Bacon's career wouldn't have taken off without the women in his life. People tend to dwell on Bacon's relationships with men because they ended in huge dramas, but it was the supportive women with whom he had relationships that lasted decades.

Muses, mentors and monsters - the Divas of Dean Street has contributions from: Isabel Rawsthorne, Muriel Belcher, Sonia Orwell; Marianne Faithfull talking about Henrietta Moraes and Joanna Lumley talking about Jean Muir. On 27 April, there will be a Soho Women talk and Colony Room book launch at the French House, Dean Street, Soho, 7pm-9pm.

With a glass of Champagne in your hand, get laid with Lucian Freud, queue for the loo with Christine Keeler, go racing with Jeffrey Bernard, and pass out with Damien Hirst. I well remember the neon sign that was propped up against the altar at the funeral of the Colony's last proprietor Michael Wojas: DRINK UP / PAY UP / FUCK OFF – ah, happy days!

*Tales from the Colony Room: Soho's Lost Bohemia* is available from all good bookshops from 16 April

More at [www.talesfromthecolonyroom.com](http://www.talesfromthecolonyroom.com)



# PRE-HISTORY OF 20 CENTURY HOUSE, SOHO SQUARE

BY PAUL SHAW

A reader scanning the pages of the Evening Standard on January 11 1937 may have come across a brief paragraph under the rather anodyne heading 'Two Historic London Houses to Go': 'Two houses of historical interest, no. 31 and No. 32, Soho-square, are to be pulled down. New premises for commercial purposes, will be erected on the site.' Accompanying the article was a photograph of two lofty and handsome Georgian-style town houses. The 'new premises' which were to follow on the site comprised none other than 'Twentieth Century House', the threatened demolition of which has generated the campaign of the Soho Society to save it. It may thus be of interest to know something about the antecedents of Twentieth Century House, which appear to have been allowed to vanish with little of the interest and concern which has attended the potential loss of their successor. And one particular notable previous resident of the site whom I would like to draw attention to is a Catholic religious sister, who is already being popularly referred to as the 'Saint of Soho'.

Soho Square was a highly prestigious address following its creation in the 1680s, and a number of substantial mansions clustered around the square. However, by the late nineteenth century, most of the aristocratic families had moved west, and many of the buildings on the square consisted of charitable institutions and commercial premises. Of the original buildings only two now survive relatively intact, numbers 15 and 22. As for numbers 31 and 32, the former had been split into two properties around 1707, and had also been altered by the



addition of the porch and rusticated ground storey shown in the photograph. However, number 32 was much more substantially and elaborately rebuilt between 1773 and 1775. A previous attribution of this work to Robert Adam has been rejected: and the suggestion in the newspaper article that the fine interiors of the house were salvaged I have not been able to substantiate. Particularly notable amongst former inhabitants of number 32 was the great naturalist Sir Joseph Banks, and from 1821 to 1857 the house was used for meetings of the Linnean Society of London, the oldest biological society in the world. Both of these connections are celebrated in the stone plaque inserted into the frontage of the current building.

Of number 31, early residents were Lord Bolingbroke and the distinguished naval officer and Member of Parliament, Sir Cloudesley Shovell. In the 1740s, a portion of the house was occupied by the Venetian Envoy, with part of the rear fitted up as a Catholic chapel. From 1761 to 1767 the property was occupied by the distinguished Scottish artist Allan Ramsay, who was employed as Principal Painter to George III. One historic association which is seldom remembered is the connection with Frances Taylor (in the religious life known as Mother Magdalen). Mother Magdalen Taylor was a convert from the Church of England, who in 1872 founded an order of Catholic religious sisters to work with the poor, known as the Poor Servants of the Mother of God. The work carried out strongly parallels that of the House of St Barnabas across the square in Greek Street,



# FEATURES

though the humanitarian work of Mother Magdalen and her sisters is much less well known.

From the 1870s, the sisters were working from a number of sites to provide spiritual and material aid to the poor of Soho, particularly the very large class of Irish labourers and their families. Much of this work was carried out in connection with the Victorian church of St Patrick's Soho, one of the most imposing presences on the square. They had a refuge for vulnerable women, provided schooling and medical care, and for a period a hostel for young Catholic women come to work in the Metropolis. They lived and worked at 31 Soho Square from 1898 to 1913, and in fact it is here that Mother Magdalen died in 1900. Recently she was declared 'Venerable' by Pope Francis, the first formal stage to canonisation. And her connection with the area is still maintained and celebrated: one of the community which she founded, Sr Mary Kenefick SMG, still works in connection with St Patrick's Church. A more permanent memorial is shortly to be erected in the church in the form of a stained glass window celebrating her work in the locality, as part of a larger scheme by distinguished artist Vivienne Haig. When we look at Twentieth Century House and think of the rich and varied history of the site, we may perhaps be further re-energised to safeguard the heritage of a fascinating area of London.

Paul Shaw

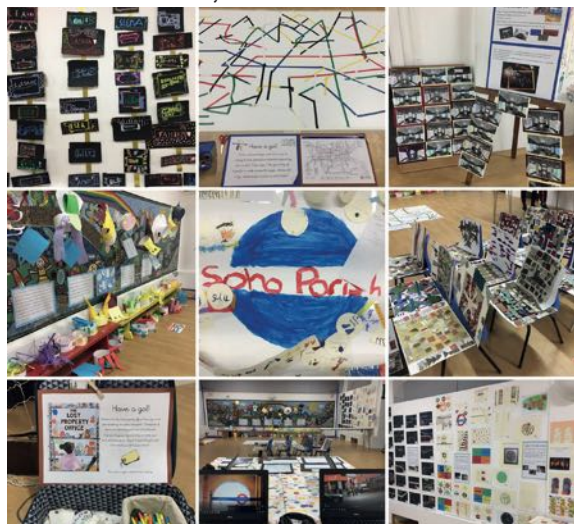
*SMG Central Congregational Archivist*



## SOHO PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOL - Anna Ashford

A journey themed Art Week at the school saw the newly formed Student Arts Council work alongside the London Transport Museum.

The Arts Council visited the museum to gather ideas which they then communicated to teachers at a staff meeting, each councillor then paired up with a teacher to help plan a workshop which was then delivered to the rest of the school. The workshop saw all the years work together in order to learn and share ideas with their peers and different teachers. There was then an exhibition of the art produced where family and friends could come and celebrate the children's creative achievements. Some of the work was chosen to create a special temporary display at the Museum later this year.



# THE BUSIEST FIRE STATION IN THE UK

BY JOEL LEVACK

I first came into contact with the Soho Fire Station about ten years ago when my bike was stolen from Cambridge Circus. The thieves had used a once common technique of stealing a bike and re-locking it around the corner with their own lock. I was on my mobile phone to the police, getting my crime reference number for the insurance company when I stumbled across it locked up on Gerrard Place, next to Soho Fire Station. After gaining permission from the Met, the on-duty firefighters took an angle grinder to the lock and I pedalled home safely.

Soho Fire Station gets more call-outs than any other fire station in the UK. The average call-outs are 3,909 per year, a fact Station Commander Chris Line is very proud of. "It's a huge privilege to work here, Soho is an incredibly unique station dealing with such a range of incidents". Notably they were called to the London bombings in 2005 and, the Westminster Bridge terrorist attack and Grenfell Tower incidents in 2017.

More recently they were dealing with the undetonated WW2 bomb on Dean Street. Chris was incident commander on the second day when further fragments were found. It's at times like that when a solid relationship with the community becomes essential. Knowing who to talk to at various premises helps them speed up any process of evacuation.

They also spend time on fire safety especially with restaurants – a recent focus being encouraging the regular cleaning and inspection of ducting – it was a build up of grease that caused the fire in Steak and Co on the Haymarket a couple of years back.

Going back even further – it was Soho who were first on the scene of the famous King's Cross Station fire in 1987 and they are understandably very proud of the work they did that day, and of Station Officer Colin Townsley who lost his life in service. They still keep his hanger empty in the locker room as a mark or respect.

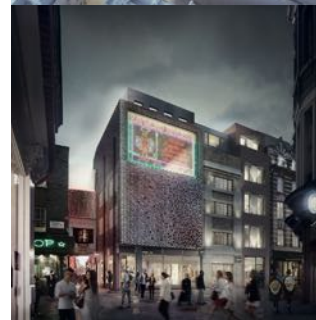
Smoking, which caused the King's Cross fire, is still an issue, especially people smoking in bed. Another cause still high on the list is people cooking when arriving home after a few drinks. The Brigade works hard to try and minimise these risks by spreading the messages of safety – a really good suggestion is to organise a FREE fire safety visit (see info on the flyer to arrange page 12).

The staff at Soho is comprised of 60, four crews of 15, colour coded as Red, Green, Blue and White Watch. They work 10½ hour days and 13½ hour nights; with a shift pattern of two days on, four nights on, four days off.

There are 103 fire stations across London, all kitted out slightly differently. Here at Soho they have two fire engines (known as appliances) and an aerial appliance capable of going to 32 metres. Also at their disposal and part of the wider LFB 'toolkit' is the Fire Boat, now stationed at Lambeth. Chris's favourite bridge is Westminster, he crosses it every day on his way to work, and gives him a real sense of responsibility, and a feeling of "anything could happen today".

Keeping fit is essential for firefighters and the station has a fully equipped gym for the crew to use. Firefighters come in all ages, shapes and sizes and the Brigade believes in having a diverse workforce that reflects the community that it serves.

They have Open days at Soho Fire Station. The next days are:-  
Sunday 15th March - St Patricks Day, Sunday 26th April - London Marathon, Saturday 27th June - London Pride



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# MARK POWELL CELEBRATES 35 YEARS IN SOHO

BY RICHARD PIERCY

George Clooney, Mick and Bianca Jagger, Harrison Ford, Naomi Campbell, and Ronnie Kray – just a handful of the names who have graced Mark Powell’s client list; this Soho based clothes designer, stylist and bespoke tailor is a man at the top of his game. It’s 35 years since Mark opened Powell & Co, his first Soho shop at 11 Archer St, where his signature neo Edwardian style, influenced by the world of nostalgia and rockabilly became an immediate hit; David Bowie, Bryan Ferry and Sade were among his early clients. It’s a look that he’s remained faithful to and one he attributes to his continuing success; always following his own design instincts, rather than being influenced by trends in fashion.

Born in 1960 in South London, Mark spent most of his childhood in the East End and Romford. His mother Eileen worked for Charles Fox, a theatrical costumier in Drury Lane, and his father Les in textiles, so Mark was introduced into clothing and fashion from a young age. However, his first job was at a Savile Row hairdressers’, where, he assures me with a grin, he was the best dressed man in the shop. From Savile Row Mark moved to the stylish Conduit St based gentleman’s outfitters, Washington Tremlett, before commencing his training in the art of bespoke tailoring at James Bond’s tailor Anthony Sinclair.

Mark’s career has often taken him in many different directions although his presence in Soho has been a constant. He has at various times been commissioned to design costumes and clothes for the music, film and TV industries, worked as a consultant in the fashion industry and designed his own ready to wear line. In 1988 he diversified into night clubs, opening ‘Violets’, London’s first easy listening lounge club, situated in Tisbury Court. In 1998 he had his first solo fashion show at Café de Paris in Coventry St. He’s also taken the opportunity to branch out into womenswear, he says to express his creativity and as a reaction to having at times been pigeonholed as part of the ‘gangster, geezer, lad culture scene’.

Mark Powell Bespoke has been situated at its current Marshall Street site since 2010. Originally opening as a pop-up store, it continued to thrive after it started to attract a new younger clientele interested in bespoke suits and a Mod following from customers such as Paul Weller, Martin Freeman and Sir Bradley Wiggins. I asked Mark what advice

he’d give to someone hoping to succeed as a bespoke tailor in today’s world - ‘Be bold’ he responded.

Not wishing to outstay my welcome as the shop was now busy, I asked Mark whether he was optimistic or pessimistic about Soho’s future. “Optimistic” was the unequivocal reply, ‘You have to embrace change and work with it, you may not like some of it, but it’s here to stay. As long as there are young people moving in with energy and ideas, the area will evolve and survive’.

Favourite restaurant and Bar? ‘Temper on Broadwick Street for dinner, followed by drinks at Quo Vadis’.

Mark Powell Bespoke

2, Marshall Street, London W1F 9BA



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[unionclub.co.uk](http://unionclub.co.uk)



The Union



# I BLOOM - MIEKO SHIMIZU BY RICHARD PIERCY

**S**oho and Berwick Street resident, Mieko Shimizu, a prolific Japanese singer, song writer, composer and producer, released her latest album, 'I Bloom' on the 7 February. Five years in the making, I Bloom is a fabulous record, that interleaves haunting melodies with instrumental elegance and simplicity that allows Mieko's undying passion for her music to shine through. Originally trained in Jazz, she cites the multidisciplinary performance artist Meredith Monk and composer Terry Riley as early influences, but also draws her inspiration from many genres of music and electronica in particular.

Hailing from a musical family in Japan, Mieko arrived in Soho in 2000 and has lived here with her partner Peter and daughter Jasmine ever since. When not busy writing music in her Soho

studio, Mieko likes to hang out in My Place or The Mediterranean Café in Berwick St for coffee or lunch. Her favourite place for dinner is Andrew Edmunds on Lexington St, particularly as the restaurant allows her to bring her dog!

I Bloom is released by Street Furniture Records and is available in Vinyl and digital formats from Sounds of the Universe and Sister Ray in Soho, Rough trade East in Shoreditch and [miekoshimizu.bandcamp.com](http://miekoshimizu.bandcamp.com). Stream link: [miekoshimizu.lnk.to/ibloom](http://miekoshimizu.lnk.to/ibloom)

Mieko Shimizu will be performing live at Rough Trade East on Saturday, 14th March at 1pm and signing copies of her latest album.



# THEATRES, MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

## BY JIM COOKE

### & JULIET

Shaftesbury Theatre - 5 Stars - Until Oct 3

Mon - Sat: 7:30 pm, Thu & Sat: 2:30 pm



&Juliet is a bold, assumption-undermining and mind-bending production. It starts with the premise that Anne Hathaway, Shakespeare's neglected but determined wife, has ideas of her own about how one of his most famous tragedies should play out. She takes pen in hand and rewrites the plot giving Juliet a second chance to find empowerment and happiness. However, the

### How can you go wrong with Shakespeare meets Britney Spears?

struggle between the spouses/writers is just the start to the playing with expectations and conventions which this show delights in. Most musicals with pre-written songs simply showcase those pieces linked by a thin plot thread, but &

Juliet recontextualises hits by artists such as Britney Spears and Katy Perry in a way that gives us a totally new perspective on the originals. The wonderful thing is much of the audience who came along, perhaps just to hear these hits, appeared completely enthralled by the new readings of their familiar favourites. This is a very clever production which makes us see things we are familiar with and may love in a new way – whether it's the values in Shakespeare's play or the songs of Max Martin. & Juliet challenges and seeks to expand both our artistic and social assumptions, and does so with relentless energy, great dancing and some outrageous puns that Shakespeare would have loved. Beneath a lot of silly fun and some post-modern literary tropes there is a serious engagement with issues of female empowerment, gender identity and being true to thine own self. The show has a first-rate cast who all rise to the occasion. Miriam-Teak Lee amazes as Juliet and her voice is electrifying. Cassidy Janson as Anne and Oliver Tompsett as Shakespeare bring some amazing energy and great comic timing to the party. David Bedella as Lance and Melanie La Barrie as Nurse are hilarious. Jordan Luke Gage is terrific as our dim Romeo, and Arun Blair-Mangat and Tim Mahendran are wonderful star-crossed lovers. This is a thoroughly enjoyable production that becomes much more than the sum of some spectacularly diverse parts!

### BRITISH BAROQUE

Power & Illusion, Tate Britain - 5 Stars - Until Apr 19

Mon - Sun: 10 am - 4:30 pm

Art in the service of politics! A quite different perspective from many of today's artists who see their mission as to challenge the status quo. The period from the restoration of Charles II to the death of Queen Anne was a tumultuous time. Society was seriously divided between Catholics and Protestants, and



later there were the struggles of the Tories and the Whigs. The country as a whole, and the monarchy in particular, were far from stable. Art and architecture were used to assert a sense of certainty and constancy that were in reality far from assured. Artistic expression served as propaganda to instil a sense of awe, authority and control. Classical idioms to impress were employed where religious expressions could be divisive. But, all of this grandeur is partially aimed at hiding the fundamental divisions and insecurities at the heart of the social structure and to pretend to a national unity often politically achieved by war. This is an amazing exhibition which is the first of its kind to look at the British Baroque period, and it brings to light several works not previously on public display. The show is arranged chronologically but also has some fascinating interludes exploring the contemporary fascination with the concept of illusion. The trompe l'oeil exhibit in Room 4 and Interiors exhibit of Room 7 are particularly interesting. In our own current period of political division and increasingly nationalistic assertion, this is an exhibition which offers a look at a little known era not so dissimilar from our own as it might at first appear. This is an exhibition that is a feast for the eyes whilst offering considerable food for thought.

For more reviews and ratings visit:

[www.londonlivinglarge.com](http://www.londonlivinglarge.com) | Twitter: @LondonLivingUK

### LA CAGE AUX FOLLES [THE PLAY]

Park Theatre: Feb 12 - Mar 21, 2020

The world premiere of the play in English with a new translation by Simon Callow.

### DAVID HOCKNEY: DRAWING FROM LIFE

National Portrait Gallery: Feb 27 - Jun 28, 2020

The first major exhibition in over twenty years to focus on the artist's drawings.

# THE MANETTE CAFÉ

BY CLIVE JENNINGS

Denizens of Soho sauntering along Manette Street (which connects Charing Cross Road with Greek Street alongside House of St Barnabas) may have noticed a café sign featuring a familiar Soho face with a fag hanging from his mouth, casting a disdainful eye over the locale, but more of him later. Created from a former massage parlour, and opened in December 2019, the Manette Café is “a greasy spoon without too much grease” – the interior, with its lino floor and tables replete with squeeze bottles of sauce and mustard, echo a time when Soho was populated by many characterful, independent cafés before the chains took over, such as the much loved New Piccadilly, with its famous wall-to-wall Formica, on Denman Street, which closed its doors in 2007. Although new, the Manette’s traditional look makes you think it has always been there – the type of place you walk past and think, “That joint looks interesting, I’ve never noticed it before”.

The Manette Café, which is open daily from 7am, serves a wide range of food including breakfast (from cereal to Full English), main courses (from traditional roasts to vegetarian curry by way of pasta dishes and fish and chips), filled Yorkshire puddings, bagels, sandwiches, melts, salads, omelettes, pies, desserts and their speciality baked potatoes with a selection of fillings; also find tea, coffee and a variety of soft drinks.

The downstairs seating area has been named the Rose Room (the original name of this busy little thoroughfare was Rose Street) and is available for hire as a private meeting and function room, as well as providing a new gallery area for local artists. This space is also a venue for acoustic musicians, in the tradition of the famous 2i’s Coffee Bar on Old Compton Street, home of skiffle and rock’n’roll from 1956-1970, where Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard were discovered; and more recently, the much

lamented 12 Bar Club on Denmark Street. Owner Kevin Kavanagh is hopeful that this friendly venue will develop into a community hub for Soho.

Manette Street has a fascinating history that encompasses Anarchism (the Rose Street Club was a meeting place for 19th Century radicals); Dickens (A Tale of Two Cities features the characters of Doctor Manette whose Soho Square home was reputedly based on what is now The House of Saint Barnabas, hence the name change) and Rock ‘n’ Roll (next-door neighbour the Crobar is still the favourite watering-hole of Heavy Metal fans). Soho musician and artist Hugh Brooker has captured this history in a quite wonderful series of montages of Soho, themed pictures that form a colourful and fascinating backdrop to eating at Manette’s. Indeed it’s hard to tear your eyes away from the hundreds of images that pay tribute to Soho’s history. Hugh’s engaging paintings can be seen in the current exhibition Jazz Not War in the Rose Room.

Now back to the character in the judge’s wig on the swinging sign: Soho’s very own Paul Ryan – actor, writer, crooner, broadcaster and cineaste, in costume for the film Venus Noire. Hugh explains: “For me, Paul sums up Soho. One of the last old school characters round here that cross the bridge from the past to the present.” A perfect choice!

16 Manette Street / 020 7287 0456 / [www.manettecafe.co.uk](http://www.manettecafe.co.uk)



# SMITH’S COURT

BY JANE DOYLE

Walking along Berwick Street you could easily miss Farrier’s Passage - don’t, because hidden away at the end is Smith’s Court, a small courtyard containing a handful of independent shops. As you enter from Berwick Street you pass Mr Tortoise, an ‘eyewear boutique’, specialising in handmade glasses.

Next down is Rina Tairo, a Finnish jeweller selling a range of beautiful distinctive and delicate hand-crafted jewellery, from rings to bracelets, necklaces and earrings.

In Smith’s Court proper, facing you, there is Hideaway Coffee House, a small and friendly independent coffee shop, where they also serve croissants, pastries and so on - perfect to sit outside and not realise you’re in the centre of London!

Next door, there is Bibi’s Kitchen which serves breakfast boxes, toasted sandwiches and salad boxes, as well as coffee, tea and soft drinks. There is also outside seating.

Then there is Mr Mullan’s General Store, which has an extraordinary and eclectic mix of goods, ranging through clothing, footwear, homeware - indeed anything Mr Mullan himself likes. There is also Mr Mullan’s skincare range and his

men’s grooming tool range for the perfect beard. Looking for a gift, you’re bound to find it here.

Next door to that is The Second Shelf, a bookshop that sells first editions (some signed), rare and antiquarian books by women. It is owned by A N Devers, a writer, arts journalist and critic. They carry over 3,000 titles covering a huge range of subjects, such as feminism, history, philosophy, cookery and children’s books, far too much to cover here, so go and visit them.

After all this, should you require a quick massage, there’s a walk-in Back Rub, next door to Hideaway - times and prices vary from 10 minutes at £15 to 40 minutes at £45; there is also a one hour fully body shiatsu massage.

Last but certainly not least, you will find William Curley, Pâtissier, Chocolatier, where you can have a cup of coffee and perhaps a pastry but .... It is home to an array of delicious looking chocolates from chocolate bars and slabs through nibbles to boxes, through cakes, confections and patisserie. There is also the Curley Club where each month you will receive a parcel of chocolate “including new chocolates, seasonal chocolates and treats” - a great present.

# SUSSEX BAR AND RESTAURANT

BY JANE DOYLE

63-64 Frith Street  
London W1D 3JW

A welcome addition to Soho is Sussex Bar and Restaurant, which opened at the end of last year. It is the fourth restaurant from the Gladwin brothers, Richard, Oliver and Gregory. I went and had a chat with Richard earlier this month to find out a bit more about their 'story'.

The family bought a vineyard and farm near Pulborough, West Sussex, in 1990, and the three brothers were brought up there. Their childhood varied with the seasons – digging in the vegetable garden in spring, picking ripe produce in the summer, harvesting the grapes in the autumn, and actually making and bottling the wine in the winter. The vineyard was originally planted with Riesling grapes, the wine from which is sold in the restaurant there, and served in their own glasses, especially made.

The brothers' father is Peter Gladwin, whose company, Party Ingredients, specialises in banqueting, mainly in the City of London. Their mother, who was a chef, oversees the vineyard, and also paints - some of her pictures are on show in the restaurant there. With such a heritage, it was unlikely that the brothers could ever be involved with anything other than 'land, food and wine' and so it proved. Gregory (the youngest brother) chose farming, Oliver (the middle brother) became a chef and Richard (the eldest) oversees the management of the restaurants.

Sussex is the brothers' fourth restaurant, following The Shed in Notting Hill, Rabbit in Chelsea and Nutbourne in Battersea (Nutbourne is also the name of the vineyard in Sussex). Asking Richard why Soho, he says, 'It's always been the most exciting place for me,' although it took him a little time to persuade his brothers that it was where their West End base should be. One of the main reasons for choosing Soho is because the area has managed to keep its independence and character.

As with all their restaurants, the Gladwin theory is 'what grows together, goes together', and following this philosophy Oliver's food is a celebration of local and wild British ingredients. Besides a daily changing à la carte menu, Sussex does a set lunch and theatre menu: good value at £24 for two courses and £28 for three courses. They also have a Sunday lunch menu (all roasts served with 'skyscraper Yorkshire pudding and seasonal vegetables'), and I'm told the roast potatoes are something else again. This latter is proving very popular, as Soho doesn't have too many restaurants offering traditional Sunday roasts. In addition, you can just have a drink at the bar and something from the snack menu, which features, amongst other things, mushroom Marmite éclairs and tempura garden herbs.

You might like to 'Take a seat with the best view in the house – tucked beneath the main dining room' and watch your meal being prepared. There is also an eight-course tasting menu (minimum eight people), and at weekends they offer a 'Nutty Lunch' for eight – 'a five-course lunch menu featuring all the Sussex favourites from moreish mouthfuls to wild game tortellini



Oliver and Richard Gladwin

and divine desserts.' (For details of all this and more see their website: [www.gladwinbrothers.com](http://www.gladwinbrothers.com))

There is a smallish wine list which features wines from the family vineyard in Sussex, along with wines from France, Spain, Chile and New Zealand. There is also a cocktail menu!

Their business is unlikely to be badly affected by Brexit. All their sourcing is in place, and they have a warehouse in Battersea, where all the fresh produce is stored. For instance, that morning I spoke to Richard, a lorry went down to West Sussex and picked up wine, vegetables and locally foraged wild garlic. This was all sent to the warehouse overnight and then was distributed to the various restaurants the next day. The farm, run by Gregory, produces its own pork, lamb and beef, and they buy from local vegetable growers, game dealers and craftsmen. Many of these relationships are forged in the pub: for instance, the wooden tables for the restaurants are produced within the community close to the farm, and plates are made by a nearby potter.

As an aside, the restaurant displays artwork by Valentino Monticello, a sommelier in Harry's Bar in Mayfair, who had a love of opera and was a collector of wine labels. He created a series of pictures, including opera scenes made entirely from wine labels, one of which features Nutbourne's first label.

I think Sussex Bar and Restaurant is there to stay. The brothers have a passion for what they do, and they want the rest of us to enjoy it. So go and enjoy what's on offer – who knows, there may even be squirrel tortellini on the menu...

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# DUCK SOUP

BY GABRIEL WILDING AND COCO

Honest food reviews from Soho's resident canine culinary connoisseur, exploring the array of dining options available for dogs accompanied by their humans.

## Duck Soup

41 Dean St, Soho, London W1D 4PY

020 7287 4599

Open daily 12 noon to 10.30 pm and Sunday 12 to 5.30

Hidden on Dean street veiled by Victorian-style grates barring the windows is the celebrated Ducksoup. "Wanting to attract the right kind of people" the waiter informs me with only a touch of irony, this trendy and informal restaurant has been quietly twinkling for eight years. To boot it's dog-friendly for lunchtime bookings (selective but better than nothing) and for a couple of tables near the door (specific but it's a start).

Me (the humble writer) Coco (pictured) and my boyfriend (along for the ride) decided to pop along to celebrate Valentine's Day, and sit smugly surrounded by other smug couples. With a record player playing funk in the background and a lively crowd, the stage was set for a leisurely but hearty lunch.

The initial treatment of our guest of honour (Coco) was positive and considerate although not overly smoochy. No water was offered but I assume it would be provided if asked for. As Coco is small and a little bit spoilt (she makes Violet Beauregarde look well mannered) there was no objection to me having her on my lap, so she could stare out of the window and feel superior - one of her favourite pastimes!

About five small tables cluster around a marble counter with stools, so if gazing at your fellow diners while enduring back-pain gets your heart racing hop right up. My human partner opted for the lunch deal (a very reasonable £10 for a main and a glass of wine) and we start off with a deliciously refreshing set of Lindisfarne oysters, because.... Valentine's day! Next two thick slices of sourdough which although filling was a touch stodgy for my delicate sensibilities.

The lovely details at times did prove to be slightly impractical as the stylishly misshapen earthenware water jug gives a heart attack to its user due to its lack of handle - a good way to keep your guests on their toes clearly. A subtle, slightly sweet Xarello is suggested by one of the many handsome male waiters and, along with my human partner's unknown but delightful house white, Ducksoup lives up to its wine bar credentials! The selection of biodynamic and natural wines changes weekly and along with the decanters is another thing to keep you alert throughout your meal.

Enticed, we were ready for the mains; my deep-fried Chicken livers are a complete hit! Like fried pâté, with a chili yogurt sauce and curry leaf boot up the behind. Perfectly sumptuous for our

lavish lunch.

Sadly, my partner's very reasonably priced dish didn't quite hit the same spot. The cod cheeks with roasted turnip did sit in a lovely creamy sauce but the addition of orzo created a rather disconcerting insect-like effect, adding very little.

With Coco tiring of people watching and both of us rather running out of time (the leisurely pace was almost glacial) we decided to skip dessert and save ourselves another 20 minutes wait.

The atmosphere of Ducksoup is charming, and more or less bang next to the Groucho Club (and fittingly named after the Groucho Marx film) it will always be filled with a smart set. Dog owners



beware, any pup larger than a badger might cause unnecessary awkwardness in the cosy space but if you are craving a lunch both rich and unhurried this is the place for you.

Coco approved (although she was rather disappointed by the lack of any ducks, either live or in liquid form)!



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星期四	上午九時	至	下午六時三十分
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# IN WITH THE OLD AND ON WITH THE NEW...

## REV'D SIMON BUCKLEY WRITES:

I received an email in December from a chap called Marc Russo who had been out with his metal detector just outside York and found what he thought was a bit of Soho history that I might be interested in. It was a brass button from the uniform of a St Anne's schoolboy, dating from the middle of the 19th Century. And of course, I was interested. I'd never seen one before.

The school was founded by members of St Anne's Vestry (as the church council was called) in 1699, just thirteen years after the foundation of the church itself, and was situated on Dean St on a site that later became a synagogue and is now the Soho Theatre. In 1939 St Anne's School amalgamated with St James's and St Peter's schools in the building owned by St Peter's (whose name is still clearly visible high above the entrance on Archer St) becoming Soho Parish School. The St James's in question is of course, St James' Piccadilly, whilst St Peter's was a church on Great Windmill St. Unlike St Anne's, St Peter's survived the blitz, but when a new vicar was instituted in 1952 he tolled the bell, as is the custom, bringing down part of the roof in the process. The building was immediately closed and later demolished.

But back to the button. Originally St Anne's School buttons, bore the words 'St A School Westminster' but from 1845-1865 they were changed to read 'St Anne's School Soho' and made by a company on St Martin's lane. However, what is perhaps most remarkable about this story is not just that we have a button from a school uniform around 160 years old, but that the York where it was discovered was not 200 miles up the M1, but near Perth Western Australia, 15,000 miles away! The button is currently on display in the entrance corridor of St Anne's, along with an illustration of a Soho boy in school uniform from Rev'd Henry Cardwell's book about the school, published in 1899 to celebrate its bicentenary. We're really grateful to Marc and his wife Lisa for sending us this little button, and can't help but wonder how it ended up in Australia. Surely the founding fathers of the school who wanted boys to have an education so they could work rather than fall into crime hadn't wasted their efforts in this instance? I guess we'll never know!

Despite this fascinating detour into our past St Anne's is much more concerned with the present and the future. In April this year we are launching a new venture – Tea Time @St Anne's, beginning on April 8th and continuing on the second Wednesday of each month.

The aim is to provide a welcoming and hospitable atmosphere in which to enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and slice of cake in the company of others. We want this to be a place where particularly those who are older, living alone or vulnerable in any way can come for an hour and enjoy a cuppa and a chat in a safe environment. Conversations with Dementia organisations suggest that carers with their clients will find this a particularly valuable

resource and, as it develops, we plan to offer board games, crafts and entertainment occasionally as seems appropriate.

We will also welcome parents to stop off with children on their way home from school (providing a wet-weather alternative to their usual meeting point of the Wardour St Gardens) and hope the teas will become a regular feature of community life in Soho and a place of inter-generational mixing. There will be no charge for refreshments, though people will be able to make a small donation if they wish. Tea Time will be run primarily by Alison Cattermole, our Parish Assistant, under the auspices of the Church Council who wanted to start a new initiative this year to serve the local community.

Our launch date is the 8 April (a few days before Easter) and will continue on the second Wednesday of each month - you'll be very welcome to drop by. If you're interested in helping in any way we'd also be glad to hear from you. Contact Alison; parish.assistant@stannes-soho.org.uk.

As always everyone is welcome at St Anne's whether out of an interest in our past, to share in our present or help us plan for the future.



Tea Time @ St Anne's

Afternoon Tea every  
second Wednesday in the month,  
3 - 4.30pm. All welcome.  
55 Dean St, London W1D 6AF

St. Anne's Church, Soho  
www.stannes-soho.org.uk

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Muddle the strawberries in a shaker, add the other ingredients and shake well with ice. Fine strain into a chilled coupe and garnish with a strawberry.

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