



NO. 179
THE CLARION CALL OF
THE SOHO SOCIETY

SOHO clarion

summer
2021

The Soho Society's Free and yet
Priceless Magazine



NOTICE OF THE SOHO SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*The annual general meeting of the Soho Society will be held in
St. Anne's Community Hall, 55 Dean Street, London W1D 6AF*

**on Thursday, 14 October 2021
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 will be on the Society website in advance
(www.thesohosociety.org.uk).

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

Planning
Licensing
Production of the Clarion
Soho Village Fete and Waiters' Race
Soho Society Hour on Soho Radio

We will also elect one third of our executive team for next year.

All members of the Society are invited. We hope that the evening will be enjoyable and interesting for all; there will also be drinks afterwards.

PLEASE DO COME

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

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Cover image: Dave Crocker

THE SOHO SOCIETY

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Richard Piercy | Jim Cooke | Susan Fleming | Reverend Simon Buckley

EDITOR Jane Doyle

FROM THE TOWER



“Time to talk” Westminster City Council, decisions and how to consult.

‘Consultation’ is a fancy name for talking to people before you make decisions that will impact them - it’s particularly important if the impact is on where they live or work. It’s a key part of what the council does - it makes many decisions that impact our community. The Soho Society’s main function is to participate in these consultations - from the formal process of commenting on planning and licensing applications to responding to a number of other proposals initiated by the council.

In no particular order consultation is a good thing because:-

- if done properly you get better decisions based on input from people that have more direct experience than the decision maker has
- it keeps the peace in a community where not everyone will agree with the council - but if the consultation has been fair and transparent people are more likely to accept the outcome and move on
- finally, proper consultation allows voters to hold their elected representatives to account as consultation can disclose lots of information about whether the council is competent, i.e. whether its decisions actually deliver on their planned outcomes.

For a consultation to work you need:-

- accurate information shared in advance so all participants have a reasonable chance of reviewing it, e.g. the plans relevant to a planning application
- engaging with and then listening to people - especially those most impacted by the proposed decision
- honesty about the real motivation behind a proposed decision.

Recently there was a phone call between all the heads of the community associations in Westminster because they have lost confidence in the council’s consultations.

Let’s look at why that might have happened with some recent examples.

The council removed a lane of traffic in both directions on Regent Street in May 2020. Soho is adjacent and two of its main exit roads - Great Marlborough Street and Beak Street - will congest when traffic flow is restricted. We know this because when Regent Street was closed for a weekend last year we had eight hours of gridlock in Soho with pollution in residential streets increasing significantly (as was measured by one of the road side

pollution monitors). The council did not consult, though Melvyn Caplan told us the scheme is temporary and has now confirmed it is for two years. Perversely, the Crown Estate, which own the shops on the street, is consulting on making it permanent. The Crown Estate is conflicted as its income depends on rent and in turn footfall and pedestrian numbers, and should therefore not be running the consultation. Score out of ten? A firm zero.

The council has decided to permanently close the two remaining underground public toilets in Soho on Broadwick Street and Carnaby Street. It did this despite the fact there are 1,200 licences to serve alcohol for premises in Soho and there has been a significant increase in outdoor drinking in the street from

“Al Fresco”. Residents were, and remain, concerned that this will cause increased street fouling and indeed have provided photographic evidence of the same to the leader of the council. The council has responded by saying it will renew the single street level unit in Broadwick Street which has been out of order for years. The council did not consult residents on the decision to close the underground toilets. Although cottaging has been suggested as the reason for the decision the council has refused to investigate any alternative to closure that might seek to address that problem. Given the long history of the council’s failure to maintain the public toilets there is considerable suspicion that the real motivation is to save money. Soho generates £200 million per year in business rates some of which one would have thought might be spent on keeping the toilets open. Zero again.



The council is closing Oxford Street to traffic east - west at Oxford Circus later this year. This is to make Oxford Street more inviting to shoppers. There was no formal consultation with residents in adjacent neighbourhoods, but the scheme is initially “temporary” and, in theory, could be pulled if it proves to be a congestion disaster, or turns into a problem at night for policing. We asked the deputy leader on what criteria the council might decide to pull the scheme and what metrics they would be measuring during the “temporary” period. He had no answer on that. The imposition of the scheme breaches a number of previous promises made by the council on Oxford Street pedestrianisation. Null points again.



The council has built a £2 million pound installation at Marble Arch to encourage shopping on Oxford Street called the Mound. It has been an internationally recognised failure with the council forced to rethink its plans so that there will be no charge for entry in August. Therefore taxpayers will foot a proportion of the bill. Once again the council consulted no one. Many residents suggested informally that the money would be better spent elsewhere. Since writing the above the costs have escalated to over £6 million and the deputy leader has resigned as a result. Another zero.

In 2021 the council decided to close 14 streets in Soho to allow for street dining to help the local restaurants and bars which faced COVID restrictions. Residents were supportive provided the scheme was safe, reasonably well managed and only lasted while the crisis continued. It turned out not to be very safe (in terms of social distancing or emergency vehicle access) or well managed (disabled access, noise, street fouling, impact on other businesses), and the council then dithered on the issue of whether in fact it might be permanent. It promised a consultation on any permanent scheme and hired a political consultancy to run it. Ruchi Chakravarty, the council official running the consultation, has denied on a number of occasions that the consultation is in fact anything to do with Al Fresco. The council has refused to say what the brief for the

consultancy was or to share how much it is spending on it. Confused and angry residents have attended one of two meetings in which places were restricted (no more than 30) and at least five of the places were taken by a campaign group that wants to close all of Soho to vehicle traffic (none of whom live in Soho). At those meetings small groups were asked to write ideas down on post-it notes. Many people found it difficult to hear the presentation and no substantive information or even proposals from the council were shared in advance. No financial information was provided on whether Al Fresco had worked in terms of saving businesses - though we had specifically

asked for it. We warned the council in advance that unless the consultation was a fair one it would make the situation much worse. That is what has happened. Not even zero.

So it's not going particularly well and the council has (at the time of writing) only some 270 days before the local elections on 5 May 2022 to persuade us that this is a passing aberration rather than a consistent pattern of behaviour. Candidates for the West End Ward might like to address the issue of consultation in their manifestos and promises to voters over the next few months.

Both the Tory and Labour party have selected their candidates. Jonathan Glanz and Pancho Lewis are moving on (we wish them well and thank them for their service to the West End Ward) so whatever happens we will have two new councillors next year. Tim Barnes is standing again. The next Clarion will deal in detail with the candidates biographies and positions on issues that impact Soho in particular.

Preparation for the Fete continues apace and we look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on 5 September in St Anne's Gardens. The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be on Thursday 14 October in the Community Hall – we hope to see as many of you as possible there as well.

Tim Lord

SOHO HOUSING

I am hugely excited to be starting work as the new chief executive of Soho Housing Association in September.

The organisation has played a significant role in raising the profile of housing in the area over many years and I am really looking forward to building on that. I have worked in housing, both in the public and private sectors for over 20 years, and I am honoured to be able to bring this experience to such an historically significant housing organisation.

I joined Westminster City Council in 2015 and was appointed Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing in 2018. The key demand of this job was to balance the careful conservation of the city's great heritage with the need for growth and at the same time make sure the council's own housing services were delivered well. I think this experience will hold me in good stead as I know the importance of Soho and the sometimes difficult line to be held between heritage and growth.

I will be mindful of this, especially as the City recovers from the pandemic. I believe that it is important that we acknowledge the need for businesses in the area to recover whilst recognising that Soho is also a residential area. This is about balancing such things as the needs of residents, economic growth and the area as a magnet for night time visitors. I'm looking forward to getting a real understanding of the Soho that I'm passionate about.

Despite living in London for over 30 years my first guided tour of Soho homes was a revelation! The secret roof top gardens and hidden courtyards where residents have carved out their own quiet corners in the middle of the city are fabulous. Not an inch of space has been wasted. At the same time the limitations of older, smaller properties, many without lifts, also became clear.



It's important for me to remember that the Association also has commercial tenants and that the portfolio of shops and offices plays an important part in the history of Soho as well as the future of Soho Housing Association. From book shops in Charing Cross Road which have been on the site for over a hundred years to state of the art film production companies, I doubt if any other housing association in the country has such a varied and historically important portfolio of properties.

My overriding passion and belief has always been that everyone deserves excellent services and I can't wait to meet more residents and find out what they think of how we are doing and what they might want to see changed.

Ensuring Westminster's residents have options to live in the heart of London no matter how much they earn has always been a driving force for me during my roles at Westminster and I will bring that ethos to Soho Housing Association by growing our housing stock. But

it has to be good growth and I will look very carefully at how we can achieve this.

When I'm not working, I have a keen interest in the arts and run a gallery with my partner. I am learning to play the piano and enjoy swimming outdoors. You may see me cycling through Soho's back streets to and from meetings. I am a keen e-cyclist and will commute in from my home in north London!

I'm really looking forward to getting stuck in and getting to know Soho and you better, fully appreciating the strong sense of community that exists in the area.

Barbara Brownlee

SOHO SOCIETY HOUR



It has been another bumper few months on the Soho Society Hour with a range of guests chatting to Joel and me on our weekly programme, which goes out live every Thursday from 9.00 am to 10.00 am. Those otherwise occupied at this time can listen to the programmes on the Soho Society website.

Two highlights of the last few months have been the amazing children of Soho Parish School, who talked to us about their school and what makes it special; and a former pupil at the school, who was born and has grown up in Soho, winner of the 2020 BBC Young Composer of the Year award, Jasmine Morris who talked to us about her memories of the school and how she had benefited from being a pupil there, as well as about her musical career.

It is impossible to mention all our guests but one recent guest, a past president of RIBA, the architectural association, Ben Derbyshire, had a particularly important message to share with us all when he spoke about RIBA's recent report highlighting the damage done to the environment when developers demolish buildings, rather than retaining and renovating them. This is particularly important to us in Soho and hopefully developers and planners will take this message on board (the threatened demolition of Twentieth Century House has been raised by several speakers).

Speakers have also of course highlighted the big issue that has concerned us all over the last year talking about road closures and the drunken, noisy, loutish behaviour and street fouling that comes in its wake. Most importantly we have had guests talking about the Soho Neighbourhood Plan and Referendum.

We've had film-makers and tailors; artist Dave Crocker talking about his Soho project; speakers from the art gallery world, big and small; the world of fashion (British Fashion Council); local residents, and author Fiona Mozley. We've had local café, Bar Bruno, music – the Piano Bar – and books (second hand - Henry Pordes Books in Charing Cross Road; and new: Sam Roberts' Ghost Signs). And a wizard wand maker.

The programme starts every week with a round up of the latest Soho news.

As ever, our thanks go to Soho Radio for welcoming us to their Broadwick Street Studios every week, and in particular to Rachel and Will who help us with the technicalities and are always supportive and accommodating.

Leslie Hardcastle

Photo: Jason Fisher-Jones

PLANNING

MATTHEW BENNETT



We're Watching

The number of planning applications being submitted for sites within Soho is rising again, which is one indicator that property owners feel some confidence that the West End is starting to return to something similar to 'normal'. In this context it is probably worth saying that the Soho Society does not object to the vast majority of these applications, and where we make comments it is often only to ask for amendments or additional planning conditions which we think will improve schemes or lessen any adverse impacts.

The Soho Society wants all business sectors to succeed and thrive but also to be good neighbours. In a complex area like ours there are often impacts from development on others and cumulatively on this historic Conservation Area as a whole. We try to mitigate these adverse impacts where possible and preserve the interesting balance between all the different uses.

Sometimes developments are just too big for the area to be supported, or have tended to create larger units and office floorplates which reduce the spaces available for small businesses. Most of the time our comments are about more detailed matters such as the impact on air quality of allowing a wood burning pizza oven in Wardour Street, or locating a hot tub at the back of a premises for an Airbnb flat in a block where residents are forced to hear the cavorting of people very much in holiday mode at all hours.

Another recent trend we urge the Council to control is the fashion for new occupiers to paint the outside of their buildings a single and often bright colour. What is wrong with that you may ask but when they move on, as is usually the case, the building is repainted yet again and under the layers of paint work the features which made the conservation area distinctive are lost. This is particularly the case when the brickwork of some of our older, but as yet unlisted, buildings is painted over. It is almost impossible to successfully remove paint from brick work and whilst older brickwork weathers and adds character unmaintained paintwork soon looks tatty.

The creation of Class E, the single planning use for a whole range of previously separate uses, is continuing to slowly

but surely change Soho as former shops, offices, travel agents, etc, can now change to yet more restaurant use. Whilst Soho is a renowned centre for hospitality, moving further towards a simplistic 'party town' quarter will not be in the interests of other important business sectors such as theatres, recording studios, post-production, film and advertising which are important industries and business clusters for Soho. And it makes life even more difficult for residents.

Soho Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Forum's Plan has been finalised and goes to referendum on Thursday, 2 September:

www.planforsoho.org.

Please don't forget to vote, either in person on the day at St Anne's Community Hall in Dean Street which is the polling station, and open from 7.00 am to 10.00 pm - or by getting a postal vote before 17 August and returning it before 2 September. You need to be on the electoral register to vote as a Soho resident. Soho businesses which pay business rates have one vote each regardless of size and must nominate the person who will vote on their behalf or again ask for a postal vote by 17 August.

The referendum is the culmination of six years work to build the plan based on extensive consultation in 2016, 2017 and finally in 2019. Covid has slowed things down in getting to this final referendum stage but it is here at last. Please vote and vote positively. The Plan will be kept under review and will be altered in the light of experience and changing circumstances. Westminster City Council has recently announced that it wishes to develop a long term 'Vision for Soho' which will build on the neighbourhood plan, its policies and recommendations, and will focus on delivering the improvements needed. It is important that all local people get involved and give their views as that 'Vision' emerges.

Matthew Bennett

LICENSING

RICHARD BROWN



Licensing exists in a constant state of flux, and never more so than during the Covid-19 pandemic. When I sat down to write my article for the last edition of the Clarion, Soho restaurants and bars had just been permitted to reopen for outdoor seated service, with many taking advantage of the Government's legislation enabling 'pavement licences' and Westminster City Council's 'al fresco' scheme.

It was an unfortunate irony (and in stark contrast to the situation when 'lockdown 1' happened) that the 12 April 2021 reopening coincided with an unseasonably cold spell of weather. Notwithstanding this, I am told that the uptake of Soho outdoor hospitality was strong.

By the time the Clarion was published, indoor hospitality had opened up (17 May). As I sit down to write this piece, 'Freedom Day' has just been and gone. As an aside, the hyperbolic monikers attached to releases from lockdown probably don't assist with an orderly release – the end of 'lockdown 1' on 4 July 2020 was variously known as 'Super Saturday' or 'Independence Day'...

'Freedom Day' means that legal restrictions relating to restaurants, bars and nightclubs have gone. Who knows what will have changed again by the time this edition of Clarion is published – one suggestion already doing the rounds is a requirement for proof of vaccination for entry to nightclubs. One thing is as certain as anything can be - that Soho will be at the forefront. This will no doubt continue to pose challenges both for the hospitality industry (to mask or not to mask? That is the question) and those charged with looking after the interest of residents.

In fulfilling this latter function, the Soho Society takes its lead from Westminster City Council's Statement of Licensing Policy. I wrote about the new iteration of the Policy previously – in short, it sets out a general framework (although sufficiently in depth to extend to some 164 pages) by which applications for a new licence or an extended licence will be judged. Every so often, an application arises which is a bit of a head-scratcher in terms of what policies apply - innovation being a hallmark of Soho hospitality. Over a period of time, such applications can be seen to form a pattern, and it will be necessary to account for these changes in policy, both to guide applicants as to the council's expectations and to guide residents and others (e.g. the officially recognised amenity societies such as the Soho Society) on how identified issues may be addressed - licensing very often being a process of compromise to strike a balance without unduly stifling business.

The City Council has duly identified three distinct types of application which are being made or are anticipated to be made in greater numbers in the future. A consultation on proposed changes to the Statement of Licensing Policy to account for these types of operation closed recently. The Soho Society responded to the consultation.

The three types of operation identified in the consultation were deliveries of alcohol and 'late night refreshment' from licensed premises (typically, restaurants and bars); deliveries of alcohol and late night refreshment from grocery delivery services (so-called 'dark stores'); and provision of licensable activities (principally, sale of alcohol) in retail shops wishing to diversify their offer. The genesis of all of them to one extent or another can be found in societal changes resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, although applications for each and all of these types of operation can and have been made in the past and in some cases for many years. There will now be a policy framework which should capture the specific issues each type of operation may engender. This provides an opportunity for applicants to set out how they will address such concerns.

It can be alarming for beleaguered residents to see a proposal that may look like a green light to more licences, but the policies are not about that. In each case, the three types of application could already be made and determined under current policy - but without the detailed provisions and assessment contained within the bespoke policies. The Soho Society has however expressed some concerns about the overall policy approach, wanting a shift in emphasis in the policies which would mean a stricter presumption for refusal unless various requirements were met. The City Council's response is expected in due course.

Richard Brown
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WARD PANEL UPDATE

AND OTHER NEWS

In coming back to life from the various lockdowns, one particular problem for Soho is cyclists, particularly delivery cyclists, e-scooters and pedicabs. Cyclists do not seem to have grasped the concept of “One way streets”, signs saying “Cyclists Dismount”, and other such signs, the fact that pavements should be for pedestrians, and so on. This has been raised so often that it was a ward priority at the last Safer Neighbourhood Ward Panel meeting, and is continuing as a priority. The police have made attempts to stop people and have issued a number of tickets, but signs are largely ignored. E-scooters are dangerous, not to mention illegal, and I’m quite sure that most riders don’t have any form of insurance. There are numerous tales of accidents, some fatal. Some councils, which Westminster is joining, are trialling e-scooters which are modified to go at slower speeds, and have conditions attached to them, but...

Pedicabs are loathed by almost all residents, particularly those that choose to play music at full volume, late into the night (one of the advantages of lockdown was the lack of pedicabs on the streets). The sooner there can be some form of legislation the better - as they need to be regulated, with driver identification, safety checks, DBS checks, insurance, tariffs on display, sanctions for breaches, and so on, and it goes without saying there should be an embargo on music. There was an attempt to get a Bill through Parliament (which was thwarted by Sir Christopher Chope MP), and our MP, Nickie Aiken, is trying to revive this. So, fingers crossed something will happen in the not too distant future.

Berwick Street is still blighted by building works, with two large projects going on on the corner of Broadwick Street - the new hotel and Yauatcha, both of which are noisy and dusty. Hopefully there’ll be a rest from building works in the not too distant future, but...

Whilst sadly, some restaurants have not weathered the last 18 months, one of the casualties, Vasco and Piero’s Pavilion, has apparently found a new home in D’Arblay Street, where they are hoping to open in October, which is good news.

Another piece of good news on the restaurant front is that the old Red Fort premises at 77 Dean Street are in the process of being renovated and will be opening as The Seafood Bar. Its origins are Amsterdam where the first restaurant was opened by the aptly named Fons de Visscher, a fishmonger who switched to being a restaurateur in 2012. I am told they’re looking to bring us fresh, seasonal

produce with a big focus on shellfish, such as fruits de mer platters, piled high with lobster, North Sea crab, razor clams, langoustines, Dutch shrimps and more. They’ll also have sustainably-bred oysters from France and a “Mixed Grill” of crustaceans and fish cooked on a La Plancha grill. If you’re a fan of seafood, it sounds as though it will be well worth a visit.

A relatively new premises hidden away just off Soho Square at 3-5 Sutton Row is 21Soho, which is a comedy club, café, bar and live entertainment venue. They are open from 8 am selling Brick Lane bagels and coffee (amongst other things). There is also a bar as well as live events. For more details visit: www.21-soho.com/. They also hosted the last ward panel meeting, for which we thank them.



A new venture is Dunno. Curated, a unisex clothes store, at 8 Berwick Street. Their opening collection is made up of vintage apparel (excluding handbags & jewellery) sourced through global wholesalers and individual curators from their own networks, handcrafted reworked/upcycled workwear and streetwear, and a wide selection of hard-to-find sneakers. Visit their website www.dunnocurated.uk, or better still go and meet Jamie and Dylan who will be delighted to show you around and tell you more.

Jane Doyle

POLICE UPDATE

STEVE MULDOON, METROPOLITAN POLICE



Thank you for again giving me the opportunity to write an article, things are clearly heading in a direction of “the new normal” and as such all the powers we had under the coronavirus legislation have ceased.

Our priorities over the last four months as set by the ward panel were drugs, theft and cycling. Cycling was a new one for us, although not new as an issue as people had been raising it for some time. I believe the quieter streets really did intensify the issue as many cyclists seemed to be failing to follow the Highway Code. Over the last few months I have identified missing/faulty no entry signs, identified locations for new or clearer signs and issued numerous fixed penalty notices. We also arranged for other teams that deal with cycling offences to work in Soho, and that will continue going forward.

Theft and drugs were set as it was predicted they would become an issue again. The drug issue has not returned to pre-pandemic levels, though I am aware there are now small locations that seem to see the issue returning. Theft however is still an issue and is evident mainly along Old Compton Street.

I am fully aware of the issues that are occurring on various nights of the week where people have been turning up with large boom boxes and blasting music out. We have been called a number of times to deal with this and are working with Westminster Council to try and resolve the problems. If you see this behaviour please call the noise team from the council as they have the powers to deal with this issue - 020 7641 2000 or report it online.

Peak times for all our offences are still Friday/Saturday nights, we have officers deployed into the West End on foot 24/7, and these officers are attached to the West End team and work in partnership with us. E-Scooters are a rising issue where we have now got powers to seize these scooters and report the riders. We have been taking part in operations across the West End with the West End team and the Cycle safety team.

We now carry a ward mobile phone whilst on duty and are already taking calls on this. Please do NOT report crime on this number but use it for information and advice. The number is 07769 957063.

We are also running a survey for both residents and businesses every three months, our most recent one closed with 129 responses which was the most for any ward in

Westminster. Please keep an eye out for the next one on our twitter or Nextdoor accounts. Our current one saw an average response in terms of feeling safe in Soho as 7/10 and it was great to see 65% of respondents knew who we were! I was surprised to see however that 75% of people continue to report via 101 or 999. In an emergency always use 999; however if the incident or crime is not an emergency then you can do so online at www.met.police.uk/report or you can tweet 24 hours a day by sending a DM to @MetCC. Should anyone think there could be more relevant or other questions in the survey then please do give me a shout.

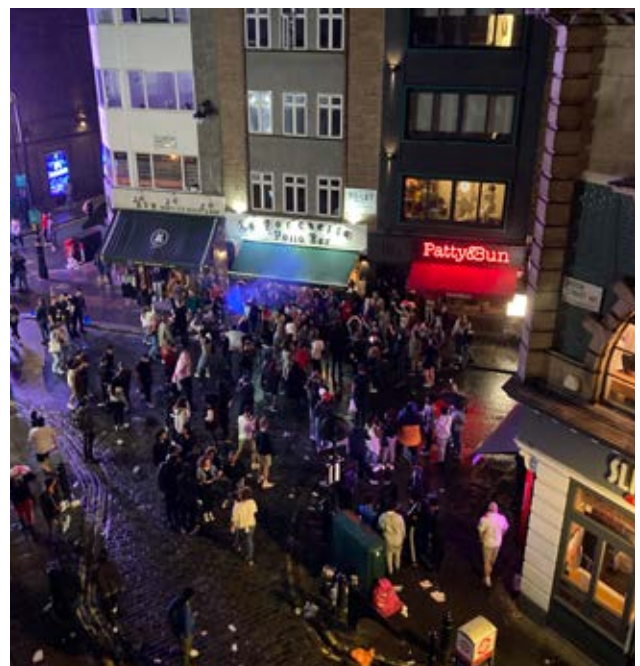
As always if anyone has any queries then please do get in touch.

Tel 07769 957063

*Pc Steve Muldoon 2332AW
Soho DWO
Charing Cross Police Station,
Agar St, WC2N 4JP*

Follow our twitter/nextdoor pages:

@MPSSoho



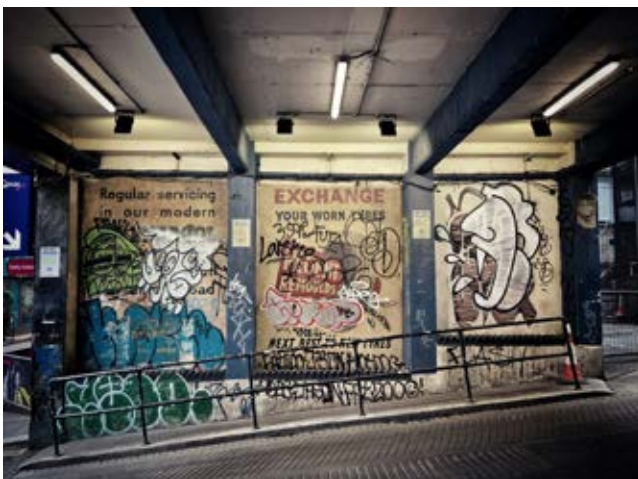
POLAND STREET CAR PARK

Leading fine art conservation company Plowden & Smith has been employed by Westminster City Council to restore an important piece of local history; two large 1950s murals advertising BP Energol and Regent Remoulds that are located in the Q-Park Soho car park on Poland Street.

The distinctive large-scale advertising murals measure approximately 260cm x 300cm and feature the slogans: “Regular Servicing in our Modern BP Energol Lubrication Bay Will Keep your Car on the Road”; and “Exchange Your Worn Tires for Regent Remoulds. Next Best to New Tires - at half the Cost”.

Seeking a more long-term and sympathetic solution to the problem, Westminster City Council approached Plowden & Smith to help them restore these murals at the entrance of what is in fact the UK’s very first staggered-floor (or split-level) parking garage car park, opening in March 1925.

Based in South London, Plowden & Smith employs a large and diverse team of professional conservators. Plowden & Smith’s specialist restoration departments include Furniture, Paintings, Paper, Contemporary Art, Ceramics, Stone, Metal, Gilded and Decorative Surfaces; as well as offering bespoke picture framing and object mounting services. The company carries out work for private



Since the beginning of 2021, the murals have been overpainted by a thick layer of white paint, a response to the many different graffiti tags and throw-ups that have gradually covered the murals since the late 2000s.

individuals, museums, galleries, auction houses, stately homes and heritage sites, specialist insurers, as well as local councils and trusts responsible for the care of public art and objects of special interest.

Plowden & Smith has vast experience restoring paintings on a wide variety of surfaces and Dr Rita L. Amor, one of Plowden & Smith's Painting Conservators who is leading the Poland Street murals restoration project, has a particular research specialism in the conservation of mural and street art.

To prepare for carrying out this work, Dr Amor initially assessed images of the two murals before they were covered over by graffiti, which allowed her to select eight different areas for graffiti removal testing. After carrying out rigorous testing, the method finally selected by Dr Amor, involves mechanical techniques combined with the careful application of solvent-based solutions.

Using this painstaking approach, Plowden & Smith will remove both the white overpaint and the graffiti beneath it; and then restore the sixty-something year old painted murals to their former glory. Structural issues will be treated to help ensure the murals' long-term preservation and the murals will be conservation-cleaned. Finally, a protective coating will be applied to their revived painted surfaces, so that any future graffiti can be more easily removed.

Work will start on the 26th July, and last three weeks.

To find out more about the project, please contact info@plowden-smith.com or call 020 8874 4005.

THE ACCOLADES KEEP ON COMING

During the darkest, emptiest days of lockdown last year, the Soho Dairy bravely continued providing food supplies to the neighbourhood. They also took care to stock other necessary-but-suddenly-scarce things like toilet rolls, for instance, after early panic-buying left them absent from the supermarkets. The Soho Dairy, alone in Berwick Street, became not just the only sign of nearby life, but a real community and social centre where local people were meeting for coffee and precious, albeit socially-distanced, interaction. Staying open and functioning normally during lockdown provided focus and hope behind the apparently overwhelming pandemic. For this, Robin and Keith were regarded as local heroes in Soho.

Their heroic status has just been formally confirmed as Robin was given the gold award for National Business Hero in July by the National Business Awards 2020/2021. These awards have been presented by Lloyds Bank since 2002 to celebrate UK business achievements. The most recent awards in the SME (Small and Medium Enterprises) section included the Hero award, and as they have a public vote, it is clear that many people made sure they voted for Soho Dairy.



The Soho Dairy opened in November 2015, when Westminster Council were promoting Berwick Street market. But just a few months later, they suddenly served licence termination notices as the market was being put out to tender for management by a private operator. Robin sprang into action and brought fellow stallholders together into the Berwick Street Traders Society, which he continues to chair. They were about to legally challenge the council,

but the 37,000 signatures they had collected in a petition to keep the market in public management somehow changed Westminster's mind and halted the privatisation. This effective campaign ultimately earned Soho Dairy an award from the Federation of Small Business Awards 2017 as Retail Business of the Year. Not bad for a small market stall.

In just over five years of operation, Soho Dairy has been awarded two national business awards that would each be a proud achievement for any recipient. That a single market trader has earned these awards proves that Soho Dairy is punching well above its weight. Congratulations!

David Gleeson

A NEW VIEW FOR ST PATRICKS

**The Church of St Patrick's, Soho Square
and 'The Beauty of Holiness'**



Reproduced courtesy of St Patrick's Church, Soho

St Patrick's Catholic Church has been a bold presence on Soho Square for almost 140 years, a typically muscular Victorian contrast to the urbane and relaxed sensibility of this locale. The original architect, John Kelly, was faced with a cramped corner site, and the limitations of budget imposed by the need to erect a church largely required to serve the urban poor: at that time largely Irish in origin, as the dedication proudly proclaims. The church's powerful presence on the square is not a product of a discrete or dominant location, but of the imposing four-storied campanile, 125 feet high, which faces the square, and the imposing round-arched brick elevations stretching back along Sutton Row.

Always a church which prioritised care of the poor and vulnerable, during the Covid-19 outbreak the parish priest, Canon Alexander Sherbrooke and his team of staff and volunteers, were asked to step up and provide two cooked meals a day to 200 homeless people. For them, the great

red-brick tower with its monumental stone-pedimented porch, must have indeed seemed like a beacon of love and compassion in the midst of isolation and the ever-present threat of contagion.

The church had already undergone a £3.5 million restoration project ten years ago, with the aim of refurbishing and improving the rich and soaring Renaissance-style interior, and also of adding a kitchen, café, lecture hall and parish office in the basement, thus permitting it to more effectively carry out its work of service and outreach to the neighbourhood of Soho and its often transient population. To this has recently been added a revamped digital presence. It was always intended, however, that when it became possible, a final phase of restoration of the interior would be executed, comprising the insertion of stained-glass windows in the five large plain arched windows high up opposite the sanctuary, and in the circular window above. A further recent phase of restoration was necessitated due to movement caused by the construction of the Crossrail station under the church, the scaffolding erected for that purpose also enabling the installation of the glass.

On 22 June, with a full invited congregation limited in size due to the pandemic restrictions, the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Vincent Nichols celebrated Mass and formally blessed the new windows. It was a beautiful event, with immaculate choral music, including a world premiere by Stefan Bednarczyk. In his homily, Cardinal



Stained glass images ©Vivienne Haig/Made in Blue

Nichols spoke of the power of beauty in bearing witness to the presence of God. This theme was further emphasised and explored on the following day in a lecture in the church, 'The Redress of Beauty', given by the distinguished artist and poet Roger Wagner, one of a number of events during the week connected with the re-opening of the church.

The windows themselves are by the distinguished artist Vivienne Haig, executed by Glasmalerei Peters of Paderborn, Germany. Ms Haig has carried out a number of commissions for stained, etched and engraved glass for churches in Scotland and England, and notable amongst them is stained glass in the chapel of Oriel College Oxford, celebrating the life of St John Henry Newman. Her stained glass at St Patrick's portrays five saints and holy people: St Teresa of Calcutta, St Damien of Molokai, St Therese of Lisieux, St Francis of Assisi and Venerable Mother Magdalen Taylor, with the crucified Christ in the

oculus above with Soho in the background. The figures are depicted against deeply-hued semi-abstract backgrounds, suffusing them with a rich nimbus of colour. The individuals have been chosen because of their connection with the mission of the parish. Mother Magdalen has a particular association with this area, and she in fact died in a house on the square in 1900. She was the founder of a religious order, the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, which has always had a particular concern to care for the poor, especially vulnerable women (as depicted in her window), and her Sisters' service in Soho, in connection with St Patrick's Church, continues to the present day.

Paul Shaw

SMG Central Congregational Archivist

MY SEAT IN SOHO

Soho is renowned internationally for its film and entertainment industries, members clubs, pubs and restaurants, as well as being the gathering place in the 50s and 60s for Bohemian London and its celebrated artists. But unknown to many, Soho is also home to over 3,000 residents living in social and private housing. My Seat in Soho is a celebration of the diversity of this community. We want visitors to this famous square mile and those who work there, to encounter the lesser known aspects of this vibrant community, their role in preserving its heritage, as well as in forging its future, particularly as London begins to open up and reset post-pandemic.

The Project: My Seat in Soho is a collection of stories from Soho residents that explore the theme of being at home. The pandemic has forced many of us to stay at home, in a period that has been like no other. But what does it mean to be at home? Where in your home do you feel most at home? Where do you feel most at home in your neighbourhood? And why? Interviewing residents from their favourite seat, the project will capture ten individual stories and soundscapes from the heart of residential Soho.

Setting up in an empty shop in Soho, My Seat in Soho will result in an immersive installation, curated from chairs and objects, which invites visitors to sit in a recreated corner of the resident's home and listen to these stories on headphones. Ranging from a puppeteering priest, to a primary school teacher, from a local radio DJ, to a vintage toy collector, each story will be a unique and fascinating

portrait of home in Soho. Through listening to the residents' stories, My Seat in Soho will be a place to discover hidden parts of Soho and to have our own relationship with home reflected back at us.

We are looking for participants! You can find out more about the project at The Village Fete on 5 September, where we will be running an activity and talking to residents interested in telling their story or anyone interested in supporting the project. To find out more about the project contact Info@stellacecil.com



The project is conceived by two Londoners: Stella Cecil - until recently a long term Soho resident - is a Theatre Designer and Multimedia Artist based in London. She has worked for over 13 years in the Theatre and Film Industry.

www.stellacecil.com

Tiphaine Tailleux is a creative producer and programmer, with ten years experience developing and delivering innovative public realm arts and audio projects. She is currently Producer for The Empathy Museum, leading an award winning installation 'A Mile in My Shoes'. Partnering with Choose Love in 2019, Tiphaine produced A Mile in My Shoes in 2019, for Refugee Week, with the support of Shaftesbury Estates.

Tiphaine Tailleux

www.uk.linkedin.com/in/tiphaine-tailleux-53981310

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It's what we do

NICKIE AIKEN

CONSERVATIVE MP FOR CITIES OF LONDON &
WESTMINSTER



I'm working to ensure the safety of Pedicabs.

Many of you, I'm sure, will be aware of my campaign for greater regulation for the safety of pedicabs. Although my first attempt to bring regulation failed due to lack of Parliamentary time, I have been working hard to bring my Bill to regulate Pedicabs back to Parliament. The Bill I originally put forward would require Transport for London (TfL) to issue a licence to Pedicabs drivers, requiring them to meet a specific safety standard, whilst TfL also gain the power to regulate the prices they charge. In June, I met with the Leader of the House of Commons, Jacob Rees-Mogg MP, to discuss the Bill's legislative journey and what route would be most successful in allowing the Bill to make its way entirely through the Parliamentary process to secure it becoming law.



I am very aware that as lockdown restrictions have eased over recent months, pedicabs are coming back with a vengeance to Soho and the surrounding neighbourhoods. The noise and disruption are just as bad, if not worse, than before. I am continuing to discuss the issue with my colleagues; lockdown has shone a light on the desperate need for regulation. Monday, 21 June saw the next step in my aim to ensure that pedicabs gain regulation for the safety of those who use them as I, again, introduced legislation to the House of Commons. If my second attempt fails there are other avenues that I am pursuing, more details of which I will share with Soho Clarion readers at a later date – I may need your support on my next steps if my second attempt fails!

Throughout the Summer, I'm looking for the Two Cities' best photographer. That's why, I've launched my Summer Two Cities Photography Competition in Memory of Neil Jelley. Neil was a well-known Westminster resident and photographer who sadly died earlier this year. The competition is open to all ages from four years and above. I am delighted that I have been able to secure a brilliant team

of judges: renowned journalist Dominic Lawson, committed youth worker and CEO of Caxton Youth Organisation; Rachel Akehurst, distinguished photographer Gemma Levine. And myself! I hope that I can invite the winners and runners up to a special awards ceremony in Central London in the Autumn (restrictions allowing). Please do encourage children and young people as well as adults to take

part. Let us celebrate the vibrance that is Soho and across Westminster and the City of London. Visit www.nickie.news/summersnaps to find out how to get involved!

If you would like to contact me about any issue or concern, please email nickie.aiken.mp@parliament.uk or call 020 7219 4553.

TIM BARNES CONSERVATIVE WARD COUNCILLOR



New West End Conservatives Team

The 2022 local elections will be contested on new boundaries, with West End Ward taking in more of Fitzrovia and Marylebone, in addition to the current Mayfair and Soho boundaries.

I am delighted that I have been reselected to stand again for the elections in May 2022, having had a great deal of rewarding experiences as West End Ward councillor and Lead Member for Soho since 2018 as well as my current role as Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning.

Joining me in our local team are Cllr Eoghain Leo Murphy and Julie Redmond. Eoghain is a member of the Soho Society and currently represents Bryanston and Dorset Square, one of the wards that will be lost as a result of the boundary changes with some of it coming into our ward. Eoghain has lived in West End Ward for nearly ten years. Julie lives in Marylebone and has been active in her community for several years, particularly on issues such as loneliness and mental health, as well as being a member of the Marylebone Association Committee. She runs her own business and has spent much of the last few months helping as a Covid vaccination nurse.

Do stop and say hello if you see us out and about! We will always be happy to hear about your concerns or share thoughts on where things are going.

Berwick Street Building Works

In the past few months, the much-delayed main building works on Berwick Street have come to an end. I have apologised previously to residents of Kemp House for the delays and was delighted to have been able to arrange for a cash payment to each household in recognition of the terrible conditions they have endured.

Public Toilets

Many residents have been concerned about the public toilets being closed on Broadwick Street. Multiple attempts to reopen these have been thwarted by the continued use of the site for sexual activities, finally including one involving a group of men that was witnessed by a young

boy and led to a further request from the police for their closure. These will now not reopen, but a new accessible unit has been ordered to replace the current one at street level and this will also incorporate a new urinal to provide additional capacity.

Many other public toilet sites across Westminster, including Great Marlborough Street in Soho, will see investment and will be fully returned to use, while facilities such as those nearby at Piccadilly Circus have remained fully open throughout the lockdown.

Soho Inside Out

As the summer draws to a close there can be no conversation in Soho, or about Soho, that does not reflect on the impact of Covid and the associated closures on the hustle and bustle of regular Soho life. My colleague, Cllr Matthew Green, is featured in this issue

of the Clarion discussing the impact of al fresco dining and the longer-term Vision for Soho consultation that is underway and which is one key part of planning for the future.

In the shorter term, we are delivering a programme of activity called "Inside Out" to help encourage visitors and residents to return to all manner of attractions across Westminster, with a particular focus on cultural attractions of the West End. I am delighted that September will see some real highlights in Soho with the Soho Fete and the Soho Live Jazz Festival.

More of all of the events we are supporting in Westminster can be found online at:

www.westminster.gov.uk/events

Let's Talk

With in-person surgeries having been difficult for so many months we will be returning this autumn on the last Friday of the month at St Anne's on Dean Street between 5pm and 6 pm. Alternatively, please feel free to contact me via City Hall on 07447 019243 or direct online via @CampaignTim on Twitter or tbarnes@westminster.gov.uk.



PANCHO LEWIS

LABOUR WARD COUNCILLOR



West End Labour: Standing up for Soho

After the serious challenges of the past eighteen months, you would have hoped that Conservative-led Westminster Council would do their best to protect quality of life in Soho. Unfortunately, they've fallen way short of the mark. The covid al fresco scheme has been terribly mismanaged: Residents experience urination on the streets or worse; extreme noise pollution from buskers and the likes of the 'Wee Toast Tours' trolley; and revellers often gather in large groups flouting social distancing and putting residents at risk. After intense lobbying West End Labour secured additional portaloos and resources for street cleaning, but far too many problems continue. Council leaders seem to have buried their heads in the sand.

Similarly, the Oxford Street part-pedestrianisation plans have generated significant local concern. There was no consultation before it was announced and there are worries about the potential displacement of traffic. We are pressing the relevant Cabinet Member to listen to local people instead of kowtowing to the interests of big landlords.

Meanwhile, helicopter noise continues to cause a headache for people in Soho. Our lobbying efforts have centred on asking police to use alternative technologies like drones — like everyone, we understand the need to police protests but this has become excessive.

In other news, Westminster Labour voted against the Council Tax rise brought forward by the Council. Central government should be fronting funds for the council, not residents who are already out-of-pocket. Council tax should be kept low because it's a regressive form of taxation. At the very least, the Council's Cabinet should call out the Government for backtracking on its promise to support local authorities through the pandemic. But they've refused to do so.

One piece of good news amidst all of these problems is our victory on Marshall St leisure centre opening hours. Last year the Council severely cut back on the centre's opening hours to only three hours a day. We campaigned hard to get the decision reversed, with an open letter to Council Leader Robathan signed by dozens of residents. The

Council subsequently U-turned on its decision, and the centre is now open from the early morning (6.30 am) until 10 pm and 8pm (on weekdays and weekends respectively), alongside the swimming pool. This is a victory for the community. Enabling people to safely exercise and protect their physical and mental health, especially in the midst of a pandemic, is crucial.

Labour candidates announced!

West End Labour has announced its candidates for next year's council elections: Patrick Lilley, Paul Fisher, and Jess Toale.

Patrick stood in the last election (coming within 27 votes of being elected). He is a community activist who is currently working as a researcher on the ONS Covid 19 Infection Study. Paul and Jess are experienced community campaigners; Paul is a barrister by trade and Jess a human rights and international development advocate. The team has hit the ground running, getting out and about speaking to the community. Do feel free to reach out to Patrick, Paul and Jess on team@westendlabour.co.uk

I'm not re-standing as I'm joining a team at Lancaster University to pursue a new opportunity, namely researching how to make politics work better to tackle the climate crisis — an issue I feel very passionate about. I'm still your councillor

until May and will continue to work flat out for residents. Plus, I'll be campaigning in force to ensure a smooth transition to getting three Labour councillors elected. For too many decades the Council has taken residents for granted and people feel at their wits' end. People are looking for change and we'll be making the case that electing our team presents that opportunity.

Pancho Lewis



THE SOHO VILLAGE FETE IS BACK

How lovely it is, to have our uniquely Soho Summer Festival, the 46th Soho Village Fete, to look forward to after another disrupted year – note the date in your diary now - on Sunday 5th September 12- 6pm, St Anne’s Gardens Soho.

The Soho Village Fete and Waiters’ Race are organised by a team of hardy volunteers from The Soho Society. Zoom meetings this year have unearthed new challenges, including an absent travelling stage and tents (currently sojourning in France), to mask or not to mask, keeping up to date with the latest regulations and the ever-present risk assessments overshadowing all discussions. However, Soho has and will always prevail, and fingers crossed, and no further changes withstanding, we are all set for our end-of-Summer shebang!

In the 1950’s there were two summer festivals in Soho, with local businesses taking up stalls and floats from Regent Street, to Charing Cross Road. The Annual Village Fete was reborn in the 1970’s as a tongue-in-cheek rural country Fete in central London, complete with Drag Queens, Morris dancing and Sohoite bohemia.

Back with a bang after 2020 cancellation due to Covid, this year’s Fete will host the usual line up of Waiters Race, Soho Police vs. Fire Brigade Tug of War, Human Fruit Machine, Spaghetti Eating contest and six hours of live musical entertainment. This is a true Soho Community event involving residents and businesses

including Soho band The Red Stripes, Hollen Street menswear brand, Fleet London, Govinda’s restaurant of Soho Street, Soho Parish School PTA, The Central London Samaritans of Marshall Street, and St Anne’s Church with their “More Tea Vicar!” stall and of course, Soho’s racing waiters.



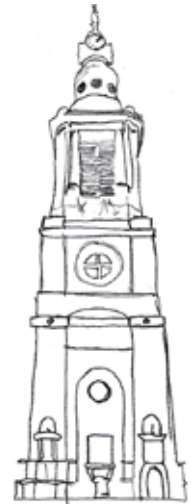
The main event is the annual Soho Waiters Race and the Soho Society are working with the Soho Business Association to make this year’s race a winner. With al fresco dictating a new route, Soho waiters will be under starter’s orders at 3.15pm sharp from outside The French House Pub. The

Race routes up Dean Street round Soho Square and back down Greek Street, tracking across Romilly Street and back to the French House Pub. Balancing a tray, bottle of champagne, glass and ashtray – rules are strict and competition fierce. Waiters must navigate through Soho streets, without dropping their champagne bottle and glass, or holding on. If you fancy racing or getting involved sign up via the Soho Society website. We are recruiting 50 Soho waiters and a team of 100 volunteer marshals to manage the route and keep an eagle-eye out for rule breakers.



Don’t miss the Tug of War at 2pm, featuring Soho Police vs Soho Fire station. After a shock defeat in 2019, involving some suspected ringers from NYC Fire Department, Soho





Ward policeman, PC Steve Muldoon and his team are in training and up for revenge.

The Fete will also feature, the Human Fruit Machine, Snail Racing, the Soho Dog Show (12.50pm), the spaghetti eating contest (12.30pm) sponsored by Pastaio restaurant, Ganton Street, The Soho Society Tombola and a bar run by Lesley Lewis of the French House Pub, astrology reading, wand making and stalls with retail and community groups alongside six hours of live entertainment all rounded off by the drag queen finale.

The Fete is free to attend, and will be following the latest Covid regulations so grab your friends, your parents, aunties and your children and head down to enjoy a completely uniquely Soho, late summer festival, all welcome!

The Soho Fete takes place on Sunday 5th September, 12-6pm in St Anne's Gardens, 55 Wardour Street, London, W1D 6HW

To volunteer, please email fete@thesohosociety.org.uk or sign up via www.thesohosociety.org.uk

A big big thank you to our wonderful Sponsors who make the Fete happen;

The Crown Estate, Shaftesbury PLC, Westminster City Council, The Co-op, Broadwick Street Holdings, The Rotary Club, Soho Housing Association, Soho House, Pastaio and King of Soho Gin.

Lucy Haine



THE SOHO WAITERS RACE

From a one-time Bronze medallist:

The Soho Waiters' Race how to fare fairly well.

The Waiters' Race at the annual Soho Village Fete is back. The budding participants, no longer having to wear their COVID invigilator hats (enormous thanks to all front of house hospitality staff for keeping us safe and facilitating fun in recent times), are gearing up to represent our favourite haunts by running round the streets of Soho trying to cross the finish line with the contents of their trays still intact.

Sport this summer has reminded us of how it can spark so much enjoyment, solidarity, and heartache. And so, for Southgate's boys, for Jade Jones' tears, and for Murray's (for want of a better injury) groin, I want to try and help this year's participants by giving three tips from a one-time third placer in the Soho Waiters' Race.

For those who are unfamiliar, the Waiters' Race, a cultural delicacy in Paris, requires the participating waiters to do a lap of Soho with a tray and white cloth over one arm. "Easy!" I hear you cry. Alas no, for upon that tray, the waiters must carry: a bottle of Champagne (or a bottle of other, similar sparkling wine of a different provenance perhaps which has been provided by a neighbouring benevolent business), two flutes and an ashtray. To place

And so, how then should waiters proceed?

1. Do not let the big names intimidate you

Leave your busy sections behind you and get down to the French House for the starting whistle. Front of house staff from the chicest of private members' clubs to the friendliest of diners will surround you, do not let them get in your head. Whether your opponents are big in name or big in nature (as a 5'7 young thing, I recall that Andrew Edmunds must have sent the Amazonian contingent from his front of house team), do not let them get in your head – positive vibes only.

2. Bring as many fans to support you along the way

Bring guests from your section, bring other members of the team, and bring your friends and family. Where in the world will passers-by be more supportive than on the streets of Soho? Let the cheer of loved ones spur you on.

3. Long and low strides

This is the golden ticket: keep long and low strides; it will ensure the equilibrium of speed and balance is maintained to ensure a respectable finishing place.

Above all else, to participants and spectators alike, enjoy!

Harry York



at the end of the race, the runners must complete the racecourse with all the said items unbroken. Furthermore, the waiters must carry this tray using one arm only and may only use their second hand to steady the trembling tray's contents for a maximum of two paces at a time. Any tray steadying for more than two paces and one of the hawk-eyed marshals shall tell the race regulators, and the offending waiter shall be disqualified.



Scan to enter



The cover of this edition of The Clarion features a section of a painting by Soho artist Dave Crocker. The entire work is reproduced here and depicts the finish line of the Soho Waiters Race in 2019.

Dave has donated a 40" x 20" embellished canvas print of the painting to be raffled at The Soho Fete on Sunday September 5th, so don't forget to buy your tickets for a chance to win this fantastic piece of art.

Visit davecrocker.co.uk

to view more of his paintings and films.



AFTER AL FRESCO...

WHAT NEXT FOR SOHO?

ANDREW MURRAY

In its wisdom, Westminster Council has decided to give us the opportunity to 'co-design' 'a wide-ranging vision and programme of improvements'. From the people who brought you the Marble Arch Mound ... Be afraid. Be very afraid!

To be fair, the Vision for Soho project does have potential. After all, who could argue with the idea of pooling resident and business ambitions in a plan to make Soho a better place.

But the history doesn't augur well. Over the past 30 years Westminster Council has ignored Soho (when it was too sleazy to bother with); 'consulted' Soho (leading to the missed opportunity of the Soho Action Plan); and dictated to Soho (remember Cllr Davis?). The results speak for themselves.

Why dig up the past? For the obvious reason that if you don't learn from history you are going to repeat the same mistakes. The Marble Arch fiasco is just the latest exhibit demonstrating the frequent gulf between council rhetoric and reality. Over-promising and under-delivering, in part through failing to interact with communities effectively, has been the norm (and, I should add, Westminster Council are far from the only offenders).

So if Westminster wants a 'Vision for Soho', what's wrong with this? 'Soho should house a healthy, happy community in a clean, crime free and sustainable environment ... Soho is a place where everyone should feel comfortable, knowing they can live and work in an area that is not leaving its past behind, yet is evolving in a balanced and healthy way into the most fantastic neighbourhood in London'.

Not my words, but a quote from the ill-fated Action Plan back in 2006: a lot of text, painstakingly produced, but not much action. Which helps to explain the hesitancy among

residents about yet another 'consultation'. How much time and energy will we have to expend, for what?

And yet ... maybe we should get involved. Not with high hopes (see above) but because Soho could be better and because without our input you only have to look at Marble Arch to see what could go wrong. Perhaps experience from the pandemic and the resulting Al Fresco scheme can act as a catalyst for positive change. Perhaps this process is

an opportunity for Westminster Council to show it realises the need to improve the way it connects with communities.

The 2006 vision for Soho still makes sense to me. But what specific changes would I like to see now, personally? Hardly anyone else was here during lockdown, of course, but it gave us residents a taste of cleaner air and a reminder of the wonderful streetscapes that

we still have. As Soho heads towards much busier times again, workers and visitors also ought to be able to enjoy something of this, so reducing traffic and prioritising pedestrians is a must. How it can be done while retaining the essential deliveries that both residents and businesses depend on is a real challenge though.

Al Fresco was a mixed blessing, an understandable temporary response to an unprecedented crisis but with some very unattractive elements. Westminster Council were right to try to support the local hospitality businesses that play an important part in the character of Soho, but commercialising the public realm on a permanent basis would be a disaster. What could enhance Soho's character, though, are timed road closures to enable a limited amount of outdoor dining on pavements directly outside premises while pedestrians use the roadway. And if there are ways to encourage visitors to respect the local community, especially late at night, that would be excellent!

Is there a possibility of reconnecting Berwick Street Market



with its heritage? There's an interesting idea being floated to use new retail space alongside the market for fresh food (along Borough Market lines?) and also serve as a hub for a supplying local restaurants. Wouldn't that be good?

The long term implications of the pandemic for business and property are still far from clear. But isn't it obvious that repurposing some buildings to residential use should be part of the future, along with a shift from new construction to retrofitting the buildings we already have?

And then there is the thorny issue of enforcement. A more proactive approach by the authorities to ease the burden on residents would help to make Soho a more liveable place, which would need a change of attitude as well as more resources.

One thing to be thankful for is the framework of the Soho Neighbourhood Plan. Westminster has said that this will be a starting point for their 'Vision' project, and it contains recommendations that really would make a positive difference if implemented.

So, Vision for Soho could be a breakthrough in making constructive change in Soho. But it needs a transparent and inclusive discussion which enables residents and businesses of all shades of opinion to contribute their views; its decision making and conclusions must be clearly explained and justified; and it must be able to deliver what it promises. Here's hoping!

THE RESIDENTS

Since March 2020 Soho has been many things - large numbers of boarded up shops during the first lockdown, then a period of limbo when some shops and businesses were allowed to open followed by 4 July, which was a real shock to the system as thousands crowded on to our once deserted streets to visit the bars and restaurants. There was "eat out to help out", there was social distancing (seemingly largely ignored in Soho), there were rules of six, a 10 pm curfew, no alcohol without food, a further lockdown, attendant re-openings, then Christmas (with conditions), which was eventually more or less cancelled, then a further lockdown from 6 January. We're now in more or less the final stages of reopening (we hope), but many businesses are now suffering as a result of the 'pingdemic' (aka track and trace).

Al fresco has been rumbling on (when allowed). There are, unsurprisingly, mixed views about it, covering 'loving it' to 'hating it at all costs'. One of the main problems bringing large numbers of complaints has been noise, particularly in streets where there are clusters of restaurants together, such as Dean Street, Frith Street and Old Compton Street. The general chatter of people seated at tables seems to have 'shout' as the default sound, making it nigh on impossible to hear or think. Social distancing has also gone largely ignored and unenforced - whilst there may be a metre between tables, there certainly isn't when anyone sits down. Another theme running through the comments received is that pavements have been blocked making access difficult, particularly for wheelchair users, prams, etc though that seems to have slightly improved recently.

We have therefore asked the two main landlords, Soho Estates and Shaftesbury, to give us their 'vision' for the future, alongside the Soho Business Alliance, which represents many of the hospitality businesses. You will see their 'visions' over the following pages. Matthew Green, Westminster Council's Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning, has also contributed to this issue.

Over the months, the Soho Society has run a survey and held a meeting via Zoom and we received many comments, both for and against the scheme, a few of which are given below.

A general refrain repeated by many was, "Pavements were blocked with tables, as was the whole carriageway in places, leaving a narrow passageway for pedestrian traffic - had there been a risk assessment?" "Had the impact of excessive noise been considered?"

It was said in June 2020 that this would be "for a strictly limited period, safe for pedestrians and most importantly it needs to be acceptable to local people", then "residents are at the heart of strategy, and their interests are above all protected", "temporary and flexible", "an in-built consultation on each individual premises' plans". Yet here we are in August 2021 still hearing the same comments and complaints.

"Saturdays give the air of being a free for all, large gatherings of people on the streets shouting, seemingly here for the 'party atmosphere' of Soho, not particularly supporting the restaurants - gathering on the streets until the early hours of the morning, at times bringing their own sound systems - Soho Square is an example of this." Visitors coming into Soho have also complained of a feeling of crowding, lack of safety, and so on.

Another resident in favour said, “I believe Soho’s al fresco dining is an important contribution to Soho’s economic well-being and vitality, but recognise that Soho residents, like me, may have differing views as to its impact on life in our community. I support al fresco dining continuing and think we can find an appropriate balance between the economic and community/resident interests. For example, in a post-Covid safety measures environment, it might be possible to limit the number of tables allotted to each restaurant to ensure sufficient space for pedestrians to pass and to reduce the noise levels. I urge everyone to work together to find a workable solution.”

Other comments include, “The boost to the beleaguered local businesses is undeniable and I don’t know how people can want to defend Soho, and yet not want to lend a hand to the very institutions enriching and serving the community. Without the bars, restaurants, and independent coffee shops the area would be a wasteland, populated by Caffè Nero and a couple of corner shops.”

“Soho historically has always been vibrant, loud, messy, and glorious, and denying that is to misunderstand the area fundamentally. Switching the focus from late-night partying to meals and drinks in the open air over the summer is surely welcome to us locals? Seeing tables covered in colourful cocktails and beautiful plates of food, it’s hard not to love Soho’s new continental facelift. So, I pray to the goodtime gods that it returns next summer!”

Another comment has been that any al fresco should not be seven days a week - perhaps Thursday to Saturday and the streets reopening on Sundays at, say, 6.30 pm.

Other major players in Soho include the film and TV industry who needs access, as do the theatres, which have had to close their doors for the best part of 18 months. They need assurances re. access for both audiences (including disabled access) and scenery, and also quiet in auditoria, all this in a cumulative impact area. It’s felt by the theatres that WCC should consult with them re plans to ensure access is available.

All that said, many of the restaurants and, particularly the older established venues, have made every effort to ensure their premises look welcoming, that there is no overcrowding, to enable their visitors to enjoy the ‘al fresco’ experience. You know who you are and we know who you are.

Jane Doyle

MATTHEW GREEN

Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning

We all value the distinctive and sometimes joyfully eccentric character of Soho. Its vibrant and exciting nature is why readers of the Soho Clarion have decided to make it their home or, at the very least, chosen to experience its unique personality by way of a visit. Thomas Burke, the author and chronicler of Chinatown and the gay London of the 1920s and 30s, said that “every street is a song” in Soho and described how, arriving in Greek or Dean Street,



he was greeted by the “clang” of Metropolitan France.

For just over a year now, with breaks for the two lockdowns between November and May, the Council has enabled the clang of Metropolitan France to return to the streets of Soho, by allowing the much-loved local restaurants and cafés of the area to spill out on to footways and highways. This was not only an attempt to recreate the continental atmosphere beloved of Burke, but also an opportunity to give the hospitality businesses the chance to climb back out of the economic nadir that was brought about by COVID.

And I recognise that the “clang” of al fresco dining has been too loud for many. The scheme has not been perfect and I appreciate that a number of residents have experienced difficulties. As I said at the Soho Society Meeting in March, I can only apologise for any inconvenience caused. But I think that, ultimately, the Council, Soho residents and local employers are aligned on achieving the objective of giving Soho businesses a chance to recover from the crisis and to continue to offer jobs to some of the 80,000 people who work in the hospitality sector across Westminster.

While things have slowly started to return to normal, it's important to realise that the crisis is not over for the hospitality industry. Most businesses are still paying down debt rather than returning to anything close to their pre-COVID levels of income. And some Soho cafés and restaurants have paid the ultimate price with businesses like Milk Bar closing for good.

Nevertheless, I am not pleading the case for a continuation of the current al fresco schemes. The Council has been clear that these schemes will come to an end on 30 September and road closures and temporary barriers will be removed at that date. Until then, we continue to make adjustments to the scheme. We have already revoked some pavement licences in Soho and we are reducing the number of tables and chairs on Old Compton Street to compensate for the planned re-opening of the Prince Edward Theatre. I have promised residents that if there are specific premises that are causing problems, we will look at them again and try to resolve any issues. That pledge still stands, and please do get in touch with your concerns.

While not without its difficulties, the Soho al fresco scheme has arguably added to the vibrancy of the area while certainly staving off restaurant closures and job losses. Accordingly, we want to look beyond 30 September and to ask residents if they would like to see al fresco dining return to Soho, albeit in a different form and only in areas where it is appropriate. This is why, as per our promise, the Council is consulting residents on a Vision for Soho. The first two workshops held at the end of July were a great success. We will continue to work with residents and businesses to design a scheme that not only supports hospitality but also improves air quality, fosters green spaces and helps deliver net zero carbon pledges. And then we will ask residents to choose. And if a majority of the residents consulted don't wish to proceed with a new scheme, it won't go ahead. We

encourage as many residents a possible to get involved. Please start by visiting visionforsoho.co.uk.

SOHO BUSINESS ALLIANCE

Soho is a thriving and important Business community in the heart of London. It has approximately 7000 businesses and 80,000 jobs. This does not include the supply chain to service all the businesses in Soho. It is the centre for Art, Culture, Music, Cinema, Theatre, Bars, Clubs, Hotels and Restaurants. Film and post-production have always lived in Soho and play a massive part of our community.



Soho attracts thousands of visitors from all over the world and has been badly affected by the restrictions of the pandemic. We fear it will take a long time to recover. Recovery will not be effective until workers and tourists return. The WCC ward accounts for 3,5% of GDP of England, has an economy bigger than Wales, and is an integral part to the success of the UK as a nation.

Al Fresco has allowed business to resume under restrictions and saved thousands of jobs and businesses. Families are directly impacted. We are all grateful and pleased with the general atmosphere and warm collaboration between business and community.

One of the legacies of this pandemic was the formation of the SBA, which was born

out of a mutual need to come together in a time of crisis. Previously people were busy managing their own success, but it has become obvious that the SBA has a place and voice in the future of Soho.

Over the coming months we expect to see a gradual change in the current Al Fresco, with a very much diminished outdoor area designated for dining. We hope to see wider pavements for people and a more balanced

plan for cars and pedestrians to share and shape Soho to accommodate all.

We look forward to the return of music and live acts to Soho. Outdoor dining has made Soho a destination, with Hotels and Theatres supporting the wonderful atmosphere and continental feeling that has been allowed.

The challenge is to find a way to open the streets, using clever place sharing, which should be to encourage flow of people, including trading on the streets that doesn't prevent egress either in or out, and allows for emergency services.

We envisage Soho as a unique and cohesive neighbourhood, where business and residents and visitors all cooperate for the best community. It is the role of the SBA to facilitate communication with businesses and share the future vision with the wider community to realise a Soho for all. We hope to keep the character of Soho with historic outdoor use of space, celebrating Soho's rich heritage.

Soho Business Alliance

www.sohoba.co.uk

SOHO ESTATES

Love it or hate it, Al Fresco has saved Soho. We are in the biggest financial crisis since the second world war and although it looks busy in the streets this is not over.

The small, independent restaurateurs, which are the DNA of Soho would not have survived without the ability to trade in the fresh air. Lockdown turned the streets of Soho into a great set for a Zombie film, with boarded up shops and empty roads.

Usually in times of recession the heart of the city is the first to regenerate, but in this case the heart of the city was the place everyone wanted to avoid.

We at Soho Estates realised our responsibility to Soho. We are a large Landowner with 46% of our tenants in the hospitality business. We decided to engage with our tenants to reassure them that we are all in this together and offered our help.

It was obvious we needed outdoor space to help business to survive. A very simple proposition was to put people where cars usually go.

This was an emergency measure and with the cooperation of WCC we achieved the first Al Fresco outside dining, which helped operators to survive.

There were 112 licences granted for outside dining very expediently by WCC in Dean Street, Frith Street, Greek Street, and Old Compton Street, the heart of Soho.

Everyone who has a licence has been seen as fit and proper by the relevant authorities as it was in their interest to manage the space and obey the rules. Their livelihood depended on being able to trade.

The fourth of July saw the release of a pressure valve and Soho was swamped with people who just needed to be out and to be human. This was not something anyone could control but we soon settled into a well organised and controlled environment which people could enjoy. Soho is a unique place and attracts a wide variety of people. It is known for its tolerance and inclusion. Throughout history it has always had the ability to reinvent itself.

We all thought this would be over by Christmas and made our agreements accordingly.

This was not the case. As the cold weather approached people put on more clothes and braved the cold to warm up friendships.

Lockdown again. Jobs lost. Hopes dashed. Many had to use legal mechanisms to save their business and not paying rent was one of them. While the impression of the landlord is that he is untouchable, the truth is this is another business which sells rent like someone else sells coffee.

Landlord overheads and costs had no help and in this game of pass the parcel, it has firmly ended up in the landlord's lap with no relief expected.

This pandemic has changed how we must perceive the future. The landlord / tenant relationship will change, I think it will be more of a partnership and we will certainly encourage new young businesses, with ease of entry, by providing the infrastructure to enable them to trade.

I think the future of Soho would be to embrace Al Fresco with a scheme that allows outside dining which would revitalise and enhance the area. We see this as place sharing where the pavements are extended, where traffic and deliveries happen early, and later it becomes space to trade.

John James

Soho Estates

SHAFTESBURY

Shaftesbury was founded in 1986 and began life in Soho with an investment into a large block of property in Chinatown. Since 1997, Shaftesbury has been the custodian of Carnaby Street and 13 other streets around it and has been working across the Soho area, breathing new life into old buildings, refurbishing and reusing space, responding to local plans and policies and helping to implement them. Our team at Shaftesbury sits at the heart of what we do, with our Chief Executive Brian Bickell having been with the company

since day one, several of the senior team having been with us for over 30 years and a third of our team each having worked in the area for more than 15 years. People stay at Shaftesbury because they're passionate about the areas we work in and the experience we bring from our longevity means that we take our role in how the area will evolve in the coming years very seriously.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on the future of Soho and the wider West End. Even though this area has a long history of embracing change, the pandemic has seen an acceleration of new ways in which our buildings are used, but also in how the streets of Soho have needed to offer a lifeline and essential redistribution of space away from vehicles and towards people.

Shaftesbury has long supported the idea of prioritising pedestrian movement of people rather than in vehicles, particularly in Soho, as it is in a unique position in the West End of being within a five minute walk from any point to a source of public transport that will take you to almost every corner of London. Chinatown and Carnaby have been pedestrian priority areas long before Shaftesbury owned buildings there and they have stood the test of time adding vibrancy, footfall and helping the businesses to

thrive and residents and workers to get about safely, with better accessibility than surrounding areas and improved air quality.

At Shaftesbury we have always been keen to see all of those benefits extended to more of the West End's streets and, working with Westminster City Council through their previous West End Action Plans, we have been a long term investor in wider footways, dropped kerbs and balanced traffic management where full pedestrian schemes haven't been possible. Not everywhere is suited to complete traffic removal, but if the benefits that brings can be partly delivered that is still of great benefit to everyone in the area.

We recognise the need to balance the ability for local residents and businesses to get their deliveries, have rubbish collected and move around by taxi if mobility is an issue, but we will continue to champion a Soho that prioritises more space for people and activity that reflects its character, rather than domination by vehicles.

Lydia Clarkson

Head of Public Realm and Policy

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Thursday 2 September 2021

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FOR SOHO

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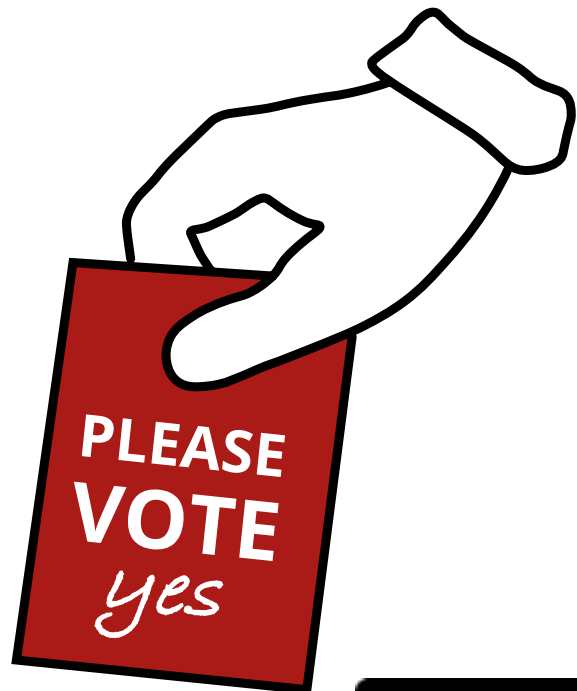


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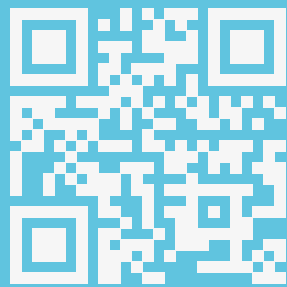
planforsoho.org

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SWEETY OF ST MORITZ

BY RICHARD PIERCY

Sweety of the St Moritz

Restaurateur and Club Owner

Armin Loetscher a.k.a Sweety has presided over The St Moritz restaurant in Wardour Street since 1974 and the St Moritz Club in the basement below it since 1967. This surely makes him one of the longest serving proprietors currently in the Soho hospitality industry. Over lunch, he recounted the Soho he discovered upon arrival here in the late 1950's, the history of his restaurant and club and last but not least how he earned the sobriquet Sweety!

The renowned bakery of Madame Floris used to occupy a four-storey building on Bourchier Street, a site now occupied by a block of flats. It was here that Armin, a young pastry chef from Zurich, arrived in the late 1950's, to work on the recommendation of his boss back in Switzerland. The bakery was hugely successful and the cakes and chocolates it produced were sold throughout London. Naturally they were available in the coffee shop and restaurant on Brewer Street that Madame Floris and her husband, a chocolatier, also owned. Armin would work there from time to time and recalls meeting Winston Churchill, who was a frequent customer.

Soho at this time had a huge number of bars, cafes and clubs that would open at all times of the day and night. Many provided a place where chefs and those employed by the night-time economy could go to eat and drink once their shift had finished, as well as those looking to continue their night out. These establishments were generally small independent businesses reflecting an era that existed before the large chains and corporations moved in. One such place was the St Moritz Club, opened in 1960's in the basement of the restaurant above it, by the then owner Mr Eaferman. It was a tiny club that catered mainly to Swiss people and Armin would often visit to hang out with his compatriots. Sometimes he'd come armed with cakes from the bakery for the au pairs that used to frequent the club on their night off, which traditionally in those days fell on a Wednesday. It was these very au pairs who christened him Sweety!

Sweety was not yet ready to commit his future to Soho though and left to spend 18 months in the merchant navy, as a pastry chef working on a liner that used to sail between London and Buenos Aires. Upon his return to London, he resumed employment at Madame Floris' bakery and also started working part-time at the St Moritz Club to help out

the owner, who was struggling to cope with the demands of running both the restaurant and club. The club had become a huge success and to keep up with demand had been knocked through into the adjoining basement. In 1967 Sweety seized his opportunity to acquire the club from Mr Eaferman followed by the restaurant in 1974.

He describes the 60's and 70's as some of the best times he had in Soho. The club was running at full tilt with a membership of more than 4,000, and the restaurant was equally busy. During the lunch time and evening service Sweety would be working flat out in the restaurant kitchen serving up the high quality traditional Swiss food that the St Moritz has always been known for. Once evening service was concluded, it was down to the club where he would organise parties themed around Swiss food and drink. The club at that time also fielded a football team, FC Moritz and had its own newspaper, The St Moritz News. During the 70's and 80's live music became an increasingly important part of the club and musicians would often hang out there after playing at the nearby Marquee club. Lemmy from Motorhead became a semi-permanent fixture and could usually be spotted in front of the club's fruit machine. Since 1995 The St Moritz has hosted Gaz's Rockin' Blues on a Thursday; London's longest running club night (see issue 177)

It's great to see the St Moritz club and restaurant back open now restrictions have been lifted. Some of the effects of the pandemic on the hospitality industry have been mitigated by the al fresco dining scheme. However, the St Moritz along with many other restaurants in the area (and on Wardour Street in particular) was unfortunately unable to benefit as it was not granted a pavement licence by WCC. Independent establishments such as the St Moritz are an intrinsic part of the cultural fabric of Soho and their survival is essential to its character. As the economy slowly recovers our continued support for them is vital. There's never been a better time to pay this wonderful neighbourhood restaurant a visit.

For reservations and information visit

<http://stmoritz-restaurant.co.uk/stmoritz.htm>

<https://www.stmoritzclub.co.uk/>

Photo: Richard Piercy

PROJECT THIRTEEN

On first entering Project Thirteen, I was struck by a world of possibility. Its name is taken from its location on Soho Square, the space over four floors is run by the very welcoming Maggio Carizi.

Knowing we do fairly similar things with Changing Room Gallery Jason (who took these wonderful attached photographs) kindly introduced us. I was fortunate enough to have the full tour of the space, and we started on the rooftop.

I remember 13 Soho Square from when it was the head office of Red Bull around 15 years ago, before they relocated. Indeed we held various meetings on the rooftop, that looked north and east over smaller rooftops of Soho.

The Georgian building may be better known for its racing green frontage and striking floor to ceiling windows. These south facing windows allow for a great space to house artists. And indeed Maggio has found a selection of artists – with a range of practices but presented as a cohesive collective. The full list of current residents is below, with links to various websites.

The resulting output has a great energy to it, and that possibility really shines through as you walk through the floors.

As a fellow artist I admired the works of Christine O’Hanlon which take both 2 and 3D form, and are seen across the building. The other thing that caught my eye was the DFRG Press – these folks make artist books. This kind of specialist craft is slowly creeping back into Soho and it makes complete sense to try and find people that complement each other and put them under one roof.

The hope now is that many other creatives might take the same initiative as Maggio did – approach a landlord of an empty building to “try something out”. We must remember some of the best ideas started as pop ups, and the current climate in commercial property allows for so much opportunity to come to Soho.

Joel Peter Levack

Photos by Jason Fisher-Jones



www.project-thirteen.org

dfrgpress.com

loop-generation.com

cristinaohanlon.com

fedrogaudenzi.com

maia.pictures.com

lookaftergroup.co.uk

<http://linkedin.com/company/j-hcommunications>



SAUCY SOHO?

SUSAN FLEMING

Soho has long been thought of as ‘saucy’, but there is more to the epithet than you might think! After buildings along the north-western side of Charing Cross Road were demolished – by Crossrail for the new station at Tottenham Court Road – archaeologists from the Museum of London uncovered over 13,000 sauce, jam and pickle vessels in a warren of vaults that had lain beneath a 19th-century pickle and jam factory. The demolished buildings had originally been erected by Crosse & Blackwell, world-famous condiment makers, as factory and warehousing. Who knew that Soho once housed such a major manufacturing enterprise?

Since 1706, a grocery business by the name of Jackson had been operating on King Street (now Shaftesbury Avenue); in 1819 it was renamed West & Wyatt. Two apprentices joined in 1819, and within ten years had bought the company, for the grand sum of £600, renaming it Crosse & Blackwell after themselves. They expanded their range of products, now making and selling sauces, vinegar, pickles, jams and marmalades, and were honoured with one of the first Royal Warrants from Queen Victoria in 1837. They moved the bulk of the business to 21 Soho Square in 1839. They also built behind it along Sutton Row and Crown Street (as Charing Cross Road was then): the new building housed their jam and pickle factory. They developed many more properties, mostly in Charing Cross Road: numbers 111, 151-55, 157 (the Astoria Theatre) and later, 114-116. They also bought 20 Soho Square, and bottling and labelling took place in the Adam rooms of the original two houses. What with vinegars, jams and pickles being made, it is said that there was a particular pungency to the air of Soho at this time....

Crosse & Blackwell were amongst the first food companies to produce canned foods. They were probably the first manufacturers to use ‘celebrity chefs’ for their products. Alexis Soyer, the French chef at the Reform Club, produced

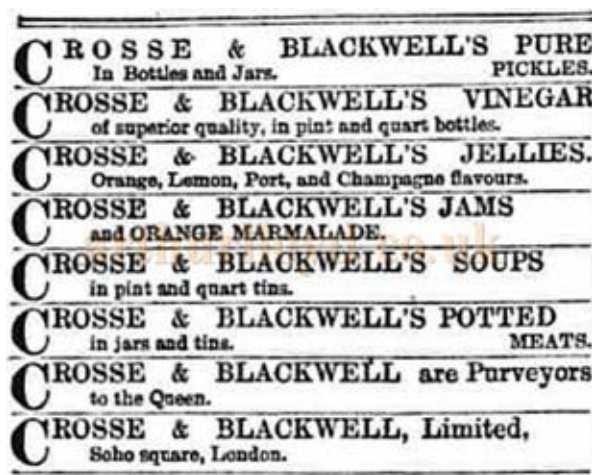
sauces and relishes for them: he had his photograph on the bottles, very twenty-first century! Charles Francatelli, the Italian-British chef to Queen Victoria, also promoted the company: in his *Modern Cook*, an Indian Curry Sauce (No. 47) includes ‘two tablespoonfuls of CROSSE & BLACKWELL’s curry paste’.

Crosse & Blackwell’s list of products encapsulates a history lesson: it mirrors the changing tastes of the times and, in the early days of the British Raj, the increasing popularity of Indian flavours. They produced a curry powder and paste, but also Captain White’s Oriental Pickle, and Abdool Fygo’s Chutney. They were wholesalers of the famous Lea & Perrin’s Worcestershire Sauce – another Indian-inspired

sauce, still a bestseller today. When the company moved their factory to Branston in Staffordshire in 1920, leaving the factories in Soho, the world-famous Branston Pickle was developed two years later.

Crosse & Blackwell remained a family company, acquiring other companies (including marmalade-maker James Keiller of Dundee) and opening factories all over the world. The Crosse & Blackwell group was bought in 1960 by Nestlé, and has changed hands several times since. The brand still exists though: canned soups (the Princes Group, ‘Est. in 1819’),

and chutneys, marmalades, vinegars (J.M. Smucker Co., ‘Since 1706’). It seems astounding to me that such a huge enterprise could have been based in such a small area as Soho, and that it stretched over such a huge proportion of that small area. By 1898 the company was one of the largest food manufacturers in the world, and probably the largest employer of labour in London. Not all of these employees were in Soho, admittedly, but the germs of the enterprise and its development were firmly based in our own precious square mile. Saucy Soho indeed!



Advertisement for Crosse & Blackwell products, from the Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 1st November 1893.

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藥物使用監管

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星期二	上午九時	至	下午六時三十分
星期三	上午九時	至	下午六時三十分
星期四	上午九時	至	下午六時三十分
星期五	上午九時	至	下午六時三十分
星期六	上午十時	至	下午四時
星期日	休息		

Opening hours
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Saturday 10:00am - 4:00pm
Sunday closed

THEATRES, MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

FROM LONDON LIVING LARGE

HEATHERS THE MUSICAL ★★★★★

Theatre Royal Haymarket | Until Sep 12, 2021

Mon - Sat: 7:45 pm, Wed & Sat: 3 pm

The first question to ask about Heathers The Musical is “Were we entertained?” Yes, most definitely. Based on the 1989 Daniel Waters film, which was described as “the nastiest, cruelest fun you can have without actually having to study law,” this isn’t the first musical to feature grand guignol and murder as its main theme, but it might be the most darkly cynical and subversive. Here, the school bullies are relentlessly killed off amidst an endless stream of generic rock show tunes by Laurence O’Keefe. Throughout the production, the ensemble work in Gary Lloyd’s bouncy choreography is impressive. The leading performers are excellent – Jodie Steele almost steals the show as Heather Chandler, but top marks must definitely go to Christina Bennington as the strong and frequently

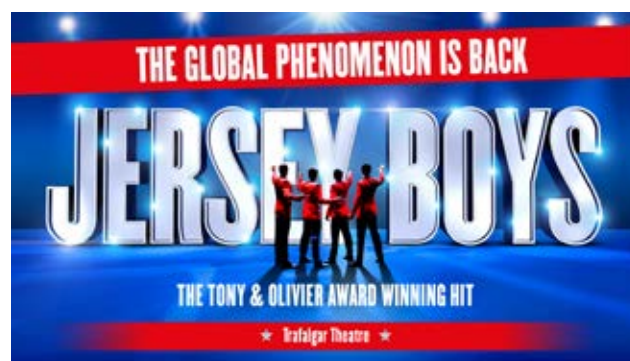


bemused Veronica. Jordan Luke Gage plays the murderous JD with silkily reptilian élan, and he sings thrillingly. Ross Harmon and Joaquin Pedro Valdes have great fun as the college jocks who shine in their slow motion fight with JD before having to play the whole of Act Two in their underpants. The opening number of the second half, “My Dead Gay Son”, could be toe-curlingly embarrassing but becomes a joyous celebration. The banner with the slogan “Westerberg Takes The Bite Out of Suicide” demonstrates

that this show delights in taking bad taste to a whole new level. Filled with cartoonish colours and characterisations, plus endless verve, this is a musical that is darkly sardonic, and undeniably, irresistibly fun.

Reviewed by David Saxon Jones

Photo by Pamela Raith



JERSEY BOYS

Trafalgar Theatre: Jul 28, 2021 - Jan 2, 2022

Returning to the UK, this musical promises a wonderful trip down memory lane. Oh What a Night!

PAULA REGO ★★★★★

Tate Britain | Until Oct 24, 2021

Mon - Sun: 10 am - 6 pm (book in advance)

This Paula Rego retrospective is a simply phenomenal exhibition. She is, perhaps, not as well known as she should be – if you’ve been to the café at the National Gallery you may not have realised that the murals there are by Rego. Here, in Tate Britain, we have over one hundred pieces from sixty years arranged through eleven galleries, which show the huge range of her work. Rego’s fierce anti-fascism frequently manifests itself as does her socio-political



feminism; women are frequently depicted as coerced and abused by the system, notably in the Dog Woman series of pictures. She uses the full range of media whilst seemingly reinventing figurative painting. Many works have never been seen in Britain before; two which we found particularly striking were *The Dance* (1988) featuring her husband and *Cast of Characters from Snow White* (1996). The latter with its hint of cruelty behind the light-heartedness offers a nod towards Bruegel or Hogarth. Elements of caricature morph into nightmares as each room is filled with jaw-dropping images. *The Artist in Her Studio* (1993) shows Rego in her milieu, and what a fabulous milieu it is. Rego's darker side is certainly not ignored; the torture many of the figures suffer is palpable but the pictures remain beautiful in themselves. The fight to allow abortion in Portugal is close to the artist's heart and she hits the mark accurately. Art has often been used simply as a political tool but great art transcends that. Paula Rego creates great art.

Reviewed by David Saxon Jones

Image: Paula Rego The Dance 1988. Tate © Paula Rego

BELLOTTO: THE KÖNIGSTEIN VIEWS REUNITED

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FLUMMERY

SUSAN FLEMING

Flummery is a rich cream pudding from Scotland, which is traditionally flavoured with whisky and some heather honey. It takes no time to make, and is delicious by itself, but you could adapt it in a couple of ways. You could add some soft fruit (when it would be more like the Scottish cranachan), or some meringue, crumbled, plus puréed strawberries, which would turn it into a Scottish ‘version’ of Eton mess.

Per person

- 3 tablespoons double cream, whipped
- 1 teaspoon clear honey
- 1 teaspoon whisky
- a squeeze of lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon oatmeal

For the variations

- 1 tablespoon soft fruit (raspberries, chopped strawberries, blueberries)
- sugar and more oatmeal (optional)
- or
- 2 large hulled strawberries, puréed
- 1 small bought or home-made meringue, crumbled.

For the flummery, warm the honey gently until it is just runny, and then mix it with the whisky and lemon juice. Cool a little. Heat the oatmeal in a heavy pan until it just starts to brown. Stir the whisky mixture into the cream gently, put into pudding bowls – preferably glasses – and top with the browned oatmeal. Serve warm or cold.

For the sham cranachan, mix the soft fruit into the whipped cream, perhaps adding a little sugar to taste, and a little more browned oatmeal. Serve in glasses.

For the Scottish take on Eton mess, mix the strawberry purée and the crumbled meringue carefully into the whipped cream. Serve in glasses – fairly swiftly, or the meringue will soften.

*with thanks to
Rosemary Stark*



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Our Featured Cocktail:

King in the Green

- 50ml King of Soho Gin • Dash Absinthe • 2 Teaspoons Lavender Sugar • 20ml Lemon Juice • ½ Egg White

Shake all ingredients well, then shake again with lots of ice and double strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with an edible flower.

NEWS FROM ST ANNES



Some people binge-watched box sets of the West Wing, others learned Italian and others did yoga on-line. Most of us put on weight (the average person put on half a stone apparently, so for the first time in my life I think I can claim to be above average). Whatever you did during the last eighteen months in those times when you were denied the opportunity to do the things that usually give you life and joy, I hope you can emerge from this time with some sense of accomplishment. Amidst the loss and the sadness, the emptiness and anxieties, there have been glimmers of positive things - whether that was cleaner air for a while, or a slightly slower pace of life which offered time for reflection.

At St Anne's with our usual weekday activities suspended we slowly emerged as the venue of choice for 12-step groups that had previously met elsewhere but whose venues had closed and not re-opened. By the end of last year, we were hosting 24 different 12-step groups a week at St Anne's - some of which required two or three rooms to meet in so as to be comply with the latest Downing Street edict about how many people could safely gather in one room. Thankfully now 45 people can meet in one room (and even dispense with masks) whereas before they needed three. Most of the groups were AA, some NA, some specifically LGBT+ and some were for the adult children of alcoholics.

The level of gratitude from those attending these meetings was extraordinary. That we continued to be here and find ways to fit these groups in (with the attendant risk assessments, required - but probably unnecessary - additional cleaning, and all the rest) was something they valued in ways beyond our previous understanding. Several members of those groups have said that 'if it wasn't for St Anne's I honestly think I would be dead now', and another this week said, to tumultuous applause, that he only got clean under lockdown because we remained open. Even as a parish priest I can have moments of questioning how I as an individual, or the church as a community, are making a difference in the world. Under lockdown and the different

tiers of restrictions - those long months when we couldn't do all the things we normally would do, or enjoy doing without a second thought - it's good to know that time was not wasted, and we perhaps achieved more than we would have done otherwise. Most of us don't know what positive impact even the smallest thing we do can have on others.

Something fun we did during lockdown was a project based around verses from the Psalms of the Old Testament. Members of St Anne's congregation and children from Soho Parish School joined with others in submitting

photographs of Soho life in normal and abnormal times, together with poems and paintings which illustrated, and at times playfully interpreted, verses from the psalms. The result is a beautiful A5 size hardback book, professionally printed with over 50 high-quality photographs and entries. Copies are £7 and available from the Parish Office at St Anne's (55 Dean St) or through our website www.stannes-soho.org.uk/news.



Interestingly many of the Psalms were written in a time of adversity, or when reflecting on hard times. 'By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion' may be a Boney M classic from 1978, but it comes from Psalm 137 written over two and a half thousand years before. It was a communal lament by the Jews in exile as they pined for Jerusalem and life as they knew it before. As we continue the slow

emergence from the pandemic and long for normality, we know that life won't quite spring back to how it was before. Things around us have changed and so have we. But life in Soho continues to evolve (though for some it feels like regression) and so will we. Let's just be sure to take the good things from this time forward with us, however small they may be: those we are grateful for, whatever new thing we have done or learned, and let's leave the rest behind.

*Rev'd Simon Buckley
Rector of St Anne's*

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