

SOHO clarion

December 2018 Issue Number 171

INSIDE:

NEWS AND REVIEWS FROM THE PEOPLE AND THE
PLACES IN OUR SOHO
TALES FROM THE COLONY
RUBY VENEZUELA
ROBERT DAVIS RESIGNATION



glp

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THE SOHO SOCIETY

St Anne's Tower, 55 Dean Street, London W1D 6AF | Tel no: 0300 302 1301
 admin@thesohosociety.org.uk | Twitter: @sohosocietyw1
 Facebook: The Soho Society | www.thesohosociety.org.uk

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Tim Lord | Jane Doyle | Lucy Haine | Jonathan Glanz | Pancho Lewis | Mark Field | Tom Phillips
 Reverend Simon Buckley | Steve Muldoon | Anna Doyle
 Matthew Bennett | Richard Piercy | David Gleeson

FROM THE TOWER

EDITORIAL

Welcome to our 2018 Christmas Edition of the Clarion.

Since we last spoke we have held a Waiters' Race and the Soho Village Fete on 1 July, a "Society Social" on 27 September and a Silver Sunday on 7 October. We would like to thank Westminster City Council for their sponsorship and support with these events. Also enormous thanks again to Lisa and Will for organising the fete which was a great success, raising money for the Society, connecting us with local businesses and providing a very Soho experience. Thank you also to all our other sponsors. For next year's Fete we have plans to have even more volunteers, more beer and more entertainment. If you want to get involved now is the time to drop an e-mail to Lucy Haine. (lucy.haine@thesohosociety.org.uk) We are looking for an entertainments officer. If you would like to be the sponsor of the Waiters' Race or the bar, now is the time to let us know.

A great deal has been happening in the world of planning. Westminster CC has published a draft city plan for Westminster with a special policy area for Soho. It is also consulting on new policies and procedures at the planning department (including no more lunching by developers, and the public to be heard at planning committees). If you have views can you send them to us or respond directly to the council. <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/cityplan2040>

WCC has new proposals for Oxford Street and the surrounding villages of Soho, Marylebone, Mayfair and Fitzrovia - (vehicles stay on Oxford Street, but a new speed limit and £50 million to spend on improvements). Quentin Thompson is preparing the Society's response to the consultation which is due on 16 December. We encourage you to contact him and also put in your own views to the Council <https://osd.london>. Point 1 of the Society's response is that there is no such thing as the "Oxford Street District"!

These are both moves in the right direction compared to two years ago. It's too early to tell but we can be both optimistic and yet hold our Council to account on the promises it has now made. We will keep you updated.

Matthew Bennett has diligently been progressing with the neighbourhood plan which has to pause its own progress pending the adoption of the City Plan. The draft neighbourhood plan has already provided some useful input to the draft City Plan. If the City Plan is adopted as currently envisaged, larger hotels and restaurants will be refused permission in the Soho special policy area - thus protecting office and small business use which is a key part of the Soho mix. Soho has always been a place of work as well as somewhere to live - we like it that way. Small restaurants fit in, the large ones don't. Hotels do not make for an interesting mix. This outcome is consistent with the feedback we got from residents and workers as part of the Neighbourhood Forum process.

However, the overall amount of construction continues to be a massive problem for all Soho's residents, visitors and workers - congestion from streets blocked by construction is worse than it has ever been to my memory. There needs to be a shift to take into account the costs imposed on the public of the larger development schemes. Berwick Street's residents and businesses have been blighted by development for years - lessons now need to be learned and acted upon.

David Gleeson and his team continue their work on licensing. It is perhaps worth mentioning that the Soho Society did NOT object to the renewal of the Sexual Entertainment Venue

licence for the Windmill Theatre, contrary to some newspaper reports. We only object to those if residents are adversely impacted which in this case was not an issue. Our hope is that the venue will remain open and offer something entertaining for all of us.

Our new ward councillors Tim Barnes and Pancho Lewis are settling in. See Pancho's and Jonathan Glanz's stories in this issue. We also have Mark Field MP.

Crossrail has slipped its timeline from December 2018 to autumn 2019. It remains to be seen how the new trains and station will change Soho. Views vary. The Soho Society is working with TFL on the hoardings to go round the new Western Ticket Hall at the top of Dean Street.

On 8 November 2018 we learnt that we have been successful in having the Soho Hospital for Women listed as an asset of community value. We put the application in because we are concerned that the NHS, which owns the building, was withdrawing more and more services from the building (leaving much of it empty) and these actions might precede an attempt to effectively re-zone the building in order to sell it. Currently its use class is D1:-

Non-residential institutions - Clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law courts, non-residential education and training centres.

In order to re-zone it for hotel or residential use the owner has to show that there is no demand for the D1 use. The NHS as both the owner and occupier has an interest in withdrawing medical uses, failing to let it to anyone else (by not trying very hard), re-zoning it for commercial use (which would increase its value) and then selling it. This would no doubt release a lot of cash but would remove a key public asset from Soho to give us yet another soulless hotel. We want the building to remain as one that provides employment and medical and other ancillary services for the community. The listing only gives us a chance to buy it in certain circumstances and the price would be many millions even with the D1 use. However, we have already been contacted by a national organisation that wants to use part of the building as a museum, and by a donor and investor who is keen to ensure that the Chinese community have continued access to good medical and ancillary services. We will work to put together a community bid made up of medical uses and other activities within the current use class. If you have views, let us hear them. If you want to help, then join us and volunteer.

It's a small step but the listing as an asset of community value focuses people's attention on the role of these buildings in supporting the community: it is no longer a decision solely about private profit - wider public issues are brought in to play. Given the history of the building as one supported by public donation over many decades this seems entirely appropriate. Thank you once again to the Council for their thorough analysis, and application of, the listing rules.

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be on 21 March 2019 at 6.30 pm in the Community Hall. One third of the board will be up for re-election, if you are interested in standing, get in touch.

Have a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

NEWS



SOHO PARISH PRIMARY SCHOOL

This autumn the children celebrated Harvest Festival at which the children performed poems and songs. The children in year 3 have been learning to weave, and during a science investigation the children learnt how the digestive system works in our body.

The children will, as always, take part in the Christmas Tree switch-on in St Anne's Gardens on Thursday, 6 December at 6 pm.

WE'RE WATCHING

PLANNING REPORT

Westminster City Council called in the Planning Advisory Service to review its planning service in the light of the resignation of Robert Davis former deputy leader and chair of the planning committee. The PAS has recommended that in future planning committees should be recorded, the public enabled to speak at committee, making it easier to engage with planning and supporting earlier involvement from residents in planning applications and ensuring that councillors and officers keep apart from applicants other than at formally arranged and recorded meetings and the creation of a new Place-Shaping and Planning Directorate.

Council leader Nickie Aiken says there will be a *'new dawn for planning in Westminster which will be achieved by working with ward councillors, Amenity Societies and Neighbourhood Forums to scope out what they want*

for their areas and then reflecting that in planning.' The Society welcomes this and hopes that this will usher in a planning process we can place more trust in. We will review the recently published draft of WCC's local development plan against these aspirations and put forward further suggestions during the consultation process.

One of the areas we hope the council will look more carefully at in its 'place shaping' role is the vexed question of tables and chairs. Our pavements are normally narrow, there is an objective to get more of us walking to ease congestion, reduce pollution from vehicles and improve our health yet more and more pavement space is taken up with tables and chairs outside restaurants, cafes and bars forcing those walking into the street.

We quite understand and often share in the pleasure of sitting outside for a meal or coffee or standing outside a pub for a drink but if we are to make a success of the Elizabeth Line opening and WCC and the Mayor's walking strategies we need to think carefully about how the pavements are used. At present applications can be granted with plans which show unrealistically placed tables and chairs which could only be occupied within the allotted space by seriously thin and stationary people. We know in reality that as the chairs move to be made more comfortable and A-boards display menus and welcoming offers it is the pedestrian space which loses out. We need a review of the council's policies to properly evaluate where there is and isn't sufficient space and a requirement that plans show realistic spaces for each person rather than cramming in as many tables and chairs as the space can possibly hold.

On another issue which clutters our pavements we, together with the council, continue to resist a rash of applications for new "phone boxes" which are not intended to provide a real phone service (as though mobile phones didn't exist) but as a money-making exercise which exploits weak telecoms legislation to put up large advertising hoardings which happen to have a landline attached.

There have been fewer large-scale redevelopment proposals recently but the signs are that a number of new schemes may be coming down the track. We shall continue to watch them closely.

Planning Committee

The Soho Society

LICENCING REPORT

Last summer we wrote about SEVs (Sexual Entertainment Venues) in Soho, and how the quality of sex shops has - like so much in this neighbourhood - changed to reflect the tastes of a different, more prosperous, lifestyle demographic. The opening of any premises selling toys, devices and general sexual paraphernalia is something which we can no longer assume will be a seedy, shabby venture, as in the quaint Soho of local myth.

Whilst on the subject of SEVs, the Windmill Club has lost its SEV licence following a decision by Westminster City Council, which was upheld on appeal. The Windmill had, of course, been an institution of Soho since before the second world war and didn't close during the Blitz. Who knows what its future holds.

Another relatively new trend in Soho is shops and other organisations applying for licences to sell alcohol ancillary to their principal trade (such as Fiorucci, Sweaty Betty, Salon 64, Blade). Will this become a new trend as a means of generating revenue to cover the ever increasing rents and rates in Central London? We're Watching.

Licensing Committee

The Soho Society

SOHO SOCIETY BEER

This summer the Soho Society launched its own beer, simply called 'Soho Society' It was first unveiled at the Summer Fete where revellers drank their way through case upon case of this deliciously refreshing IPA style craft beer. It's brewed for the Soho Society by Battersea based Mondo Brewing Company and the brewery's Jack Langridge and Mihono Sato Rain gave a presentation and tasting at the Society's social event in September.

Some 50 guests were treated to an evening of beer related entertainment, which culminated in a good old fashioned sing song around the piano. Soho Society IPA is now available in various Soho bars and restaurants, which to date include My Place in Berwick Street, St Moritz Club in Wardour Street, Randall & Aubin and SophistiCats, both in Brewer Street, and Kettners in Romilly Street. It can also be purchased through the Soho Society website shop (www.thesohosociety.org.uk/shop) as an off sale. If you are a bar or restaurant owner



and would be interested in stocking this exclusive brew, please get in touch with us and we will let you have a sample.



The Soho Society receives 30p for every bottle sold, so next time you're at the bar why not give Soho Society IPA a try and show your support for all that's good about Soho.

Richard Piercy

LICENCING APPLICATIONS: ADVICE FROM RICHARD BROWN

For many years Richard Brown of the Citizen's Advice Bureau service has provided invaluable support for the Society. He has penned the attached article which explains the licensing process.

"Soho has an enviable history as an

iconic melting pot of cultural diversity and a bellwether of cultural trends. This has manifested, among other ways, in a proliferation of licensed premises of almost every conceivable type. Premises which sell alcohol, or provide 'late night refreshment', or provide 'regulated entertainment' such as music and dancing, are regulated by the Licensing Act 2003 and require a 'premises licence' which can permit one or more of these activities, usually subject to conditions. When it came into force in 2005 the Act was seen as a game-changing piece of legislation. It transferred responsibility for the alcohol licensing regime from the Magistrates' Courts to local authorities. Hence Westminster City Council became responsible for issuing alcohol licences (it was already responsible for issuing 'public entertainment licences') and enforcing the regime in its area. This requires a careful and delicate balancing act.

The 2003 Act is, on the face of it, a liberalising regime. Back in 2005 – and for a significant period of time beyond that – some feared it would be 'open house' for the industry, where operating hours would be extended almost willy-nilly. Whether this panned out in practice depends on myriad factors – and, perhaps, whom you ask. A sensible assessment may conclude that sufficient checks and balances are incorporated either explicitly or implicitly in the regime to ensure that this has not happened. Licensing authorities have latitude to shape their areas in keeping with wider strategic and public policy aims.

One such 'check and balance' has been the increased role given to residents under the 2003 Act. Indeed, this was one of the founding principles of the Act, and in keeping with contemporary trends in society in general and regulatory licensing regimes specifically. So what role do residents have?

Each application for a new 'premises licence' – usually to permit sale of alcohol – or variation of an existing premises licence prompts a statutory 28 day consultation period. The Act allows residents (and amenity societies such as the Soho Society) to comment on the application, called a 'relevant

representation'. Representations are usually objecting, either to the application as a whole, or to aspects of it, but can be in support.

Local residents can become aware of licence applications in a number of ways. Firstly, an application must be advertised at the premises, on a blue A4 notice. Secondly, the City Council writes to residents within a certain radius of the applicant premises to inform them of the application and how they can make their views known, in much the same way as they do with planning applications. Thirdly, the City Council produces a weekly bulletin, Licensing News, which details all applications within the consultation period. Fourthly, the City Council has an online system called 'Public Access' – see www.westminster.gov.uk/licensing – which upon registration can be tailored to notify a resident of applications made in a defined area.



If a resident sees an application which they would like to know more about, the first step should be to look at the relevant documentation on the Council's website. The application form, plans of the premises, and if relevant the current licence, can help to contextualise what is sought in the application. The fundamental principle of commenting on an application is that the comments must relate to the likely effect of the application on the promotion of at least one of the four 'licensing objectives': prevention of public nuisance; prevention of crime and disorder; public safety; and protection of children from harm. Anyone who submits a legitimate representation will be invited to a meeting of the Licensing Sub-Committee at the City Council, where the application will be determined. Residents are able and are encouraged to play a full role in these hearings, and indeed in pre-hearing developments such as amendments to the application. It is possible that the applicant will either agree to further measures proposed by residents, or

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propose further measures of their own, having considered the content of representations submitted either by residents or statutory bodies such as Environmental Health and the police.

Residents are very welcome to attend hearings and are entitled to address the Sub-Committee to expand on their representations, and to address any amendments made to the application. The Licensing Advice Project can provide free representation at licence hearings. However, it is still important for residents to attend. Our experience is that the Councillors on the Licensing Sub-Committee find it useful to hear from residents; for example about where they live in relation to the premises; what their experience is of the premises operating; what their experience is of the wider vicinity. Hearings generally take place on Thursdays at the Council offices currently at 5 The Strand or in future 64 Victoria Street. Hearings involving residents are usually listed early on.

A licence hearing tends to be about finding an appropriate 'balance' between the often competing aims and interests of the various parties; the applicant, residents, police and Environmental Health. The Licensing Sub-Committee ensures that a hearing takes the form of a discussion. Each party who has the right to speak is able to address the Licensing Sub-Committee, but there is wide scope for a 'round table' type discussion including a deeper inquiry into residents' concerns, and ways in which the application might be tweaked to remove activities or amend timings which are of concern, or propose conditions which may alleviate worries. This approach is not only sensible, but is in line with established legal principles such as proportionality; a licence hearing is rarely either an outright refusal or an outright grant as applied for. It also ensures that residents who attend a hearing are fully involved with this process."

We can be contacted by email: licensing@westminstercab.org.uk or by telephone 020 7706 6029.

The Soho Society would also like to suggest that if you are contacted by any applicant seeking a meeting with you before the public hearing then speak to us before any meeting takes place.

BASEMENT VAULTS

The Society has been concerned over two street collapses - one in Poland Street and one in D'Arbly Street - and the length of time it is taking to repair the carriageway - in both cases over a year.

Andy Foster, Highways Infrastructure at WCC sent us this update.

"The issue of basement vaults extending under the public highway can unfortunately become a complicated matter when they fail, from an operational, legal and planning perspective. With an estimated 15,000 vaults in Westminster alone, it is impossible for the Council to understand where all these vaults are and keep track their condition. The problem vaults at D'Arbly Street and Poland Street are good examples of the complexities which we can face - both have presented different problems and both have been a problem for over a year, Poland Street we became aware of in April 2017 and D'Arbly Street in October 2017.

When a vault collapses, in most cases the building owner will start an insurance claim via their buildings insurance provider, this might also involve making a claim for damages against a third party. This course of action has been followed by the vault owner at Poland Street, albeit the process hasn't happened as quickly as any of us would have liked. The situation has also been complicated as the vault was beyond repair and needs a complete re-build to modern highway loading standards whilst maintaining the same form and fabric as much as possible as the original to satisfy Listed Building Consent. Listed Building consent was granted in August this year and at the end of last month insurers finally gave the owner approval to commence the



works, these are due to commence in January.

The situation at D'Arbly Street has stalled mainly due to legal issues around one of the two vaults attached to the property not being registered in title with Land Registry (both vaults have been severely damaged). The owner and/or the owners agent have been unwilling to commence repair works or engage with Westminster's legal team to resolve any ownership and responsibility issues or commence any claims for damages against a third party. The Council is currently considering its position including what powers we have under the Highways Act.

Looking forward, there are a number of initiatives officers are currently looking into to try and improve the management of vaults in the City, this includes:-

- *Developing a Vaults Strategy*
- *Improvements in the planning process - i.e. have a more consistent approach, particularly where listed vault structures are concerned.*
- *Have a more proactive approach - e.g. work closely with landlords to identify vaults which may have been blocked off internally but still exist under the street and remain at risk of collapse but are unknown to the freeholder.*
- *Offer an advice and maintenance/repair service to vaults - or offer a*

service to properly de-commission unwanted vaults

- *Raise awareness generally about vaults, responsibilities and the importance of keeping them in good condition etc."*

The Soho Society welcomes this information but we feel we must point out that these collapses are almost certainly caused by construction traffic. Property developers cause harm and the costs fall on others, in this case the public and the frontages. Maybe these costs should in future fall on those that benefit financially from the development.

NORMAN'S COACH & HORSES

Is the Coach & Horses on Greek Street under threat again? It looks as if it could be. The lease has another nine months to run and landlords, Fuller's, are planning to bring it into their "managed estate".

As people will be aware, the Coach & Horses was run for many years by Norman Balon, self-styled rudest landlord in London, and some of its regulars at that time could also lay claim to the title of "rudest customer"! On Norman's retirement in 2006, the pub was taken over by a new landlord, Alastair Choat, and his daughter, Hollie. By way of décor, very little appears to have changed, which is good. There has been the introduction of a piano, and sing-alongs have become a regular feature - also good. There is also a wide vegetarian menu, another plus. A further plus is Earl and Grey, the pub cats, who can be seen checking out their 'manor' and generally 'helping'.

It is commonplace these days that breweries tend to take iconic pubs, give them a 'facelift', put in a manager who, with the best will in the world, has no idea of the regular clientele and lo and behold, an empty and characterless pub, probably through no fault of the manager who is acting on instructions. It is said by Fuller's that they will be returning the pub to its 'former glory'. This is unlikely. Its 'former glory' is its regulars who visit for what the pub is, the landlord,

the staff, the atmosphere, to meet their friends, and so on, not for what someone, who may well never have been there, decrees it should be.

Please don't let this happen. Alastair and Hollie should have our support. We will be watching.

Follow them on:

www.coachsoho.co.uk

Facebook and twitter: @coachsoho

Jane Doyle



DECEMBER 2018

NEW BEGINNINGS

Soho and the Soho Society always welcome new independent restaurants, and since the last Clarion Lina Stores has opened a restaurant in Greek Street on the site of Aldo's Café, which is proving very successful - see our review.

Also in Greek Street, we welcome the Chipping Forecast, a recently opened fish restaurant that has a sister in Notting Hill.

In Romilly Street, Berenjok, an Iranian restaurant, has now opened, which will mean that all premises in Romilly Street are now occupied with a wide variety of restaurants running between the Spice of Life and the Golden Lion.

In Old Compton Street we welcome the Old Compton Brasserie, which opened in September.

Also in Old Compton Street on the corner of Frith Street is Café de Nata, where, as the name suggests, one can get those wicked (for the waistline only) Portuguese custard tarts (they come in a variety of flavours). Whilst on the subject of the "expanding waistline",

a relative newcomer is Maitre Choux, specialising in eclairs on the corner of Old Compton Street and Dean Street.

Also at the French House, 49 Dean Street, Neil Borthwick (formerly of Merchants Tavern, Shoreditch) has opened the upstairs restaurant, and we wish him well, and hope to report further in the next issue. There have already been some very good reviews in the national press.

Jane Doyle

GAY HUSSAR UPDATE

Sohoites and foodies will be interested to learn that the fight for the Gay Hussar, Greek Street, politico hotbed and goulash lovers' heaven, goes on. The team recently pitched their bid to the owners of the building last week. There were three or four bids and the Goulash co-operative await news and we remain cautiously optimistic - watch this space!

Lucy Haine



WARD PANEL

It has been a busy time since the last issue of the Clarion. Our dedicated ward officers have changed with Steve Muldoon having been joined by Will Heaton, Lara Sharp having crossed Shaftesbury Avenue into West End and Chinatown. We thank Lara for her hard work and efforts during her time in Soho and wish her well 'across the road'. Also, our inspector, Richard Jary, has retired after 30 years' service, and we wish him well. PS Sarah Jackson has joined the team.

Drug dealing and drug abuse still remains the number one priority for the Ward, with Cambridge Circus and its surrounds being the worst affected (Soho, Covent Garden and Camden),

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with drug dealing being seen openly on the streets. We are told that the police are working on this, and have had some success, but they're limited in what they can do. It still remains a problem as the groups of people hanging around (who can appear intimidating) are not committing a crime by doing that, unless they're in breach of an order. If you know someone is in breach of a Criminal Behaviour Order ("CBO") it needs to be reported. Also drug dealing, etc, needs to be reported by calling 101/999 because, if it isn't, there isn't perceived to be a problem and extra resources won't be made available. Antisocial behaviour can now be reported online, which is easy to do and gives you a reference number.

At the time of writing there is an ongoing operation called Operation Taniwha. This has seen considerable success with arrests for offences including burglary, drugs and breaches of CBOs. It seems that, despite the lengths the police go to obtain CBOs, they are ignored by some of the more persistent users and dealers.

There have been reports over the summer months of rough sleeping and also a 'tent' population, which has caused all sorts of problems in the area - in particular Hollen Street has seen more than its fair share of tents with associated ASB. However, the residents of said tents have, at the time of writing, moved on.

The summer months have also seen a lot of street begging, which has been reported as becoming more aggressive. It's hoped this will tail off a bit as it gets colder and residents and visitors alike aren't sitting outside restaurants and bars thus making themselves easy targets for this type of behaviour. There need to be initiatives to deal with this, as those who donate money may not be aware that this is more than likely to fund the purchase of drugs; or alternatively, it is begging by people coming to the West End where there are richer pickings and then going back to their own borough.

There was a nasty mugging of a ninety-one year old lady just off Berwick Street

in broad daylight in August. A suspect, a forty four year old female, has been arrested for this, and is in custody awaiting trial.

Please continue to be vigilant and report anything suspicious, particularly over the upcoming busy Christmas period.

Jane Doyle

PLAN FOR SOHO

The Soho Neighbourhood Forum has been working over the Summer and Autumn on our Plan for Soho www.planforsoho.org. For all new readers, the goal of neighbourhood planning is to give more powers to local people to help determine what happens, in planning terms, in their local area.

We have been working for the past few years to develop a draft Neighbourhood Plan first by consulting people who live, work and visit Soho. We have surveyed well over one thousand people in Soho, who told us that housing, the environment and, head and shoulders above all else, keeping its size and scale and looking after the 'spirit of Soho' were key to keeping Soho as the special place we all love. Using this feedback, we have been working in three Policy Development Teams to draft the policies for our plan. Each team focused on a specific area (Housing, Environment and Culture, Heritage and Commerce). We held our Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 4 July, where we updated local residents, workers and members on our work over the last year and also provided information on how neighbourhood forums, when designated, have a say on a percentage of the Community Infrastructure Levy ("CIL") funds that are paid to the local council by new building developers as a way to financially "give back" to the local area.

A draft of the plan is on our website and we are now discussing it with Westminster to get the detail agreed. We are aiming in early 2019 to have a final round of public consultation and then formally submit our Plan for Soho to the local council and an independent inspector for designation. The Westminster new draft City Plan

is now open for consultation until 16th December. This is an important document for Plan for Soho as neighbourhood plans have to align with the local borough plan, as well as the Mayor's London Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework. To find out more and comment on the Westminster City Plan you can visit their website: <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/revision-westminsters-city-plan>. On pages 74-76 of it you will find a section dedicated to Soho which we would encourage all to review.

You can read more about the forum, what we do, who we are and how to get involved by visiting our website (<https://planforsoho.org/>) and you can keep up to date with our work through signing up to our e-newsletter and following us on Facebook and twitter. To sign up as a member, or if you have any questions, please do email contact@planforsoho.org.

*Matthew Bennett
Anna Doyle*

STILL NO RESIDENTIAL FIBRE BROADBAND IN SOHO

Despite being at the centre of a global city and the year being 2018 many Soho residents and small businesses have to make do with a poor ADSL broadband service (<8Mbit/s). The map below shows that BT/Openreach and other providers actively avoid providing faster broadband service (>=100 Mbit/s) to residents and small businesses - preferring instead to only offer such services to large business customers who presumably pay through the nose for it. One can only speculate as to the reasons why all the network operators would cooperate with one another in order to ensure that no fast residential service is offered in these central business districts.

BT continue to refuse to install a cabinet with fibre in Soho. It did talk about doing it but when we sent it a list of potential customers, as it had requested, it just stopped replying.

The alternative providers have also been disappointing. HyperOptic offered the Society a 100Mb/s service

in November 2017 at £80 a month. It has recently reneged on this agreement and said, having looked at where its network actually is, it will cost £350/month. Why the Council is still allowing HyperOptic to use the voucher scheme is a mystery.

Our two Tory ward councillors have recently made much of their efforts to have broadband improved in Soho. Many of us are still waiting to see the fruits of their labours. Community Fibre has, we understand, provided service to some of the blocks.



If anyone has any ideas on how to put effective pressure on BT, please let us know. In the meantime please cancel your subscription to BT Sport and let them know why. We are watching.

The Society has had an exchange of emails with Mark Field MP on this issue going back over two years which is on the website. <https://www.thesohosociety.org.uk/campaigns-blog/2017/7/31/fibre-broadband-for-residents-and-small-businesses-in-soho>

Tim Lord

TOILET HUMOUR

Over the summer the public toilets in Broadwick Street were closed for over seven months. In the hot weather pub customers, and indeed many others, urinated on the street and the whole area began to smell like a public urinal. We decided to investigate - following a number of Freedom of Information Act requests sent to Westminster City Council we found out the following:-

WCC carried out a Strategic Review of public conveniences in the summer of 2011. It was spending £2,115,000 on running 21 conventional public conveniences.

To make the provision of public conveniences “cost neutral” (by which

I think they mean “for nothing”) the Council decided to fully divest the portfolio to a third party through a long- term property lease - “with appropriate guarantees in place securing their continued use as public conveniences ... and with opening hours and standards of service that meet the legitimate expectations of users”.



On 30 July 2012 a lease was granted to Carlisle Cleaning Services Limited (“Carlisle”) relating to the public convenience at Broadwick Street for 10 years.

Under the lease Carlisle agreed to:-

“... from [10am to 2am] keep the Property open for public use and properly cared for and must actively keep the public toilet and the Facilities in operation throughout substantially the whole of the Term ...”

“The Landlord may serve a Landlord’s Keep Open Notice at any time if the Tenant has failed to comply with the provisions of this clause for a period of two weeks.”

We raised the closure (which took place in February 2018) with our Councillors. Jonathan Glanz told us it has been closed because of “antisocial behaviour”. We checked with the police - they had no record of it.

Pancho Lewis got this from Guy Salcombe at WCC on 29 August.

“Corporate Property does not manage Public Conveniences, but is responsible for the lease management of those properties. They have absolute responsibility for management of the facilities as the interest in those properties passed to Carlisle under the lease.

Broadwick Street has been subject

to persistent and unpleasant and aggressive ASB and Carlisle has had no option other than to keep them closed.”

This is a strange interpretation of the lease which makes it clear that it is for the Council to monitor Carlisle’s compliance. Also, ASB is not a reason to allow Carlisle to close the toilet.

We wrote to Carlisle at their head office on 28 June. No reply. We contacted the parent company, Impellam Group. This eventually led to a letter from Carlisle on 4 September that said the toilet had closed on 12 August because of a broken urinal and that it had reopened on 4 September. Certainly two of these statements were false - we don’t know about the urinal (and a broken urinal in the men’s toilets wouldn’t lead to a need for the ‘ladies’ to be closed).

The toilets have re-opened since the 16 October, but only intermittently. They remain dirty and without any supervision with the result that they are often unusable.

Carlisle and Impellam Group are linked to Lord Ashcroft (the former deputy chairman of the Conservative Party and the 95th richest person in the UK, as ranked by the Sunday Times Rich List 2017, with an estimated fortune of £1.35 billion).

Westminster Council is busy with its plans for the “Oxford Street District” ... its ambition is to “*deliver a programme that will improve and enhance the district as a global destination with thriving residential neighbourhoods, acknowledged as the place to do business as well as offering an unrivalled visitor experience*”. We suspect that rival cities offer visitors public conveniences that are both open and clean.

Tim Lord



INTERVIEW

WITH LINA STORES

Lina Stores has long been an institution of Soho, having first opened in 1944. Marina Dentemaro came to the UK eight years ago, and discovered Lina Stores on her travels, and has been working there for the last eight years. She first worked with Tony and Gabriella, who gave her all her training. They retired and left the shop to Marina and Massimo, Tony's son-in-law, who decided to follow another direction two years later, leaving Marina in sole charge.

Marina has a huge enthusiasm for what she does and takes great pride in Lina Stores, in that when you come into the shop she wants you to feel as though you're "having a piece of Italy, where you can get the proper Italian experience", and you do. The shop is friendly and all the staff are welcoming. All their produce comes directly from trusted suppliers in Italy that they've been using for many years - meat, cheeses, antipasti, wine. Another thing they are very proud of is that in the kitchen downstairs they have been making fresh pasta on site since the 1940s - fresh ravioli and other pasta using the same recipes.



Also, all the different sauces sold are made and packaged on the premises from ingredients sourced in Italy - sauces such as beef ragù and pesto. Also on sale are Lina Stores tea towels, cups and saucers, aprons, and so on. Marina supports independent Soho businesses and the market, buying from them where necessary, including from Soho Dairy.

What makes Lina Stores a little different is that at the shop as well as "normal" sales, they prepare sandwiches to order from the filling of your choice in the bread of your choice - these can be taken away or eaten at the bar in the shop or sitting at one of the few tables outside in Green's Court. You can also order a selection of meat, cheese and antipasti from the counter (all sold by weight so you can have as much or as little as you wish). Also available is home-made pasta cooked daily, to include ravioli cooked with butter and sage and parmesan.

For many years it has apparently been on the cards for Lina Stores to open a restaurant, and the new addition to the Lina Family opened to great delight in the spring of this year, having finally found suitable premises at 51 Greek Street (on the site of Aldo's Trattoria). Headed up by Italian chef, Masha Rener, the restaurant houses a counter upstairs and then 40 seats downstairs, selling dishes prepared in the kitchen in Brewer Street. As part of the staff training, all staff are told and understand the 'Lina' story. Should anyone want to recreate the dishes in the restaurant, most of the ingredients used can be bought at the Brewer Street shop. The menu of course change by the season. *See our review.*

As to Brexit, Marina believes the first Brexit effect is the hiring of staff as it looks as though people at the moment are wary of coming to the UK because of the uncertainties, preferring to go elsewhere in Europe for the time being. Whilst they don't have a huge turnover of staff, certainly in the shop, there is some seasonal recruitment (such as for the busy Christmas period), which could be adversely affected in the future. In terms of prices we will have to wait and see what happens as nearly everything comes direct from Italy. However, Marina remains positive.

Could there be a Lina Stores cookbook one day? Who knows, but watch this space!

Lina Stores

18 Brewer Street, London W1F 0SH
020 7437 6482
info@linastores.co.uk

Jane Doyle

REVIEW

LINA STORES

When the infamous Aldo of Aldo Trattoria, a stalwart of Greek Street and one of the last remaining traditional Italian restaurants decided to close, most of us were resigned to yet another coffee shop, ice cream parlour, or some such. Imagine our joy when we saw the familiar green tiles being applied to the shopfront and, on further enquiries, to be informed that Lina Stores was branching out, and a new addition to the Lina family would open, a restaurant recreating many of their antipasti, and pasta dishes.. happy days.

The restaurant is small and intimate. With an open kitchen on the ground floor, those who choose to take a counter seat will enjoy the culinary action of the chefs battling the steaming and frothing pans. Downstairs is a little more refined, and certainly quieter. The menu is short, sweet and reasonably priced. The selection of antipasti is well balanced, the star being the Nduja con Ricotta for those who enjoy a little spice to their meal. The prosciutto is also a must, delicate strips of flavoursome cured pork with their white fat melt in your mouth.

The Pasta main courses are all a lesson in what pasta should taste, smell and feel like. It is most definitely not that flaccid limp white snake-like offering at the bottom of a can of tomato sauce usually offered to the great British public as Italian pasta! Spaghetti alla

Chitarra con Granchio, Pepperoncino e Limone (Dorset crab, chili and lemon) is a dish where the chef is more than happy to ignore the bottom line and spoil you with a great dollop of crab, lightly cooked with just the right amount of chili and lemon. The Agnolotti Verdi with black truffles and ricotta is fabulous. The serving may at first sight seem a little restrained. However once you cut through the green pasta and hit that blend of rich ricotta, dripping with butter and truffle you will understand that it would be simply decadent to expect more.

Lina, the formidable founder from Genova would be proud to see that her legacy is still the go to place for authentic Italian food.

51 Greek Street
London W1D 4EH

12 - 2.30 and 5 - 11 pm
Monday to Saturday - closed Sundays

020 3929 0068
hello@linastores.co.uk

Philip Antscherl

Photograph by Richard Piercy

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The Society is always looking for volunteers to help with events and to join our planning and licensing groups. admin@thesohosociety.org.uk



JONATHAN GLANZ

COUNCILLOR

1. A Markets Review is being undertaken across the City. The Council is looking for ways to ensure that its markets can continue to function and thrive in a world which continues to change significantly in retail offers and expectations.

That process has engaged Street Traders and the representatives in both Berwick Street and Rupert Street to canvass as widely as possible what can be done to ensure a vibrant and successful market offering relevant to local residents and visitors. The consultation address is <https://openforum.westminster.gov.uk/street-markets>

2. **The City Plan** – a complete review of the City Plan is pending and will go to Consultation shortly. It is designed to recognise the significant changes which have taken place in various of the competing uses for space in the city, and to come up with a framework to facilitate residential, commercial and leisure activities to take place while recognising the unique heritage of Westminster in general.

Following extensive lobbying by Councillor Barnes and myself, the recognition of the unique status of Soho will be, for the first time, incorporated within the Plan with a series of special policies applicable to Soho.

Whilst it is not possible to protect individual traders or occupiers through the Planning process, a policy to preserve and enhance small units is being proposed in order to ensure that small independent traders can continue to have suitable premises in Soho. This would prevent amalgamation of units, which could then only be available and affordable by larger chain-type operators.

In addition, recognition that large hotels can crowd out other uses is to be incorporated. Whilst hotels have a role to play in a vibrant central location, it should not be at the expense of other employment or commercial uses.

There will be other policies recognising the fact that retail is moving away from its previous forms, partially through the Internet and partially through other shifts in the general economy, and that the mix between retailing and experiential opportunities has become smudged. The current Planning policies do not recognise this change on the ground, and will need to do so if London is to maintain its position.

We do not live in a museum, and we must expect change, but that change should be managed to ensure that we preserve the best of the existing buildings and the unique mix which has made Soho special.

The policy will go to Consultation shortly, and I would encourage you to give your views.

3. **Oxford Street** - the Pedestrianisation Plan, proposed by Labour Mayor Khan will not be pursued by the Council. The GLA are still unhappy about this, and have withdrawn the funding which would have been available to pay for the unwanted pedestrianisation. They continue to talk about taking over the street and imposing the clumsy scheme and we continue to oppose them.

We have now produced an Oxford Street District Proposal, which takes into account the views of residents and local businesses in a way which the Mayor's plans simply did not. Broadly, this will involve substantial widening of pavements and creation of additional pedestrian space whilst maintaining a limited number of bus routes (currently to be 4) through a narrow ribbon in the middle of the road. Opportunities for deliveries outside peak hours would be maintained.

There would be a significant greening of the areas concerned with new trees etc, and a full maintenance of north-south connectivity.

Provision for disabled access and a properly funded scheme for the management of the space to be created form part of those proposals.

This proposal will be on Consultation from the 6th November to 16th December. It is really important that you give your views, whether supportive or critical, so that we can adapt the proposal to reflect full need. The consultation address is:

<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/oxford-street-district>

4. **City West Homes** – the Council has recognised that its former management organisation, City West Homes, has not been providing the services expected by Tenants and Leaseholders.

It is therefore now agreed that the management of the Council's housing stock (some 21,000 units) will be taken back in-house, in a way which it is believed will be more responsive and more cost-effective in terms of dealing with both day-to-day management issues and long-term maintenance and repair of buildings, some of which are extremely expensive to maintain through a combination of their age, design and original construction methodology.

The change will take some time, but this is a clear recognition of a change of direction within the Council to ensure that the needs of residents within our buildings are put first and foremost.

There is a roadshow of explanation in relation to these changes, and the Council will work with residents, Area Panels and Residents Associations to take on-board suggestions as to how improvements can be made and maintained.



PANCHO LEWIS

SOHO'S LABOUR COUNCILLOR

The challenge of over-development in Soho and the future of social housing in Westminster

When I was asked to write a piece for the Clarion, I decided to write about what I think some of the key challenges and opportunities facing Soho are, and tell you a bit about the work I've been doing recently. Below I've written about two key areas. There are other issues which are also very important (for example how to safeguard the future of the Soho Square GP service as well as what will happen to Oxford Street) but here I've focused on two issues. Please write to me with any thoughts you have about what I've written, or just to say hi and introduce yourself if we haven't met yet. My e-mail address is: plewis@westminster.gov.uk

Over development

Over development is a real threat in Soho. Infrastructure like Crossrail and building more and more luxury hotels have a massive impact - they lead to endless road closures and the constant din of drills and diggers which are very disruptive to local life. Over development can also undermine Soho's character and sense of community. Soho is special because of its mix of residents, people working in the arts and creative sector, small business owners, and market traders. Local people are the glue that bring Soho's communities together and give the village its unique identity. But hotels undermine this sense of place and community, making Soho feel more transitory and bland.

There are many examples. But the most glaring example is Berwick Street. Building works have gone on for years now and there is still no end in sight. Those who have suffered the most are residents, market traders, and independent businesses - meanwhile developers make a profit. At the end of the process there'll be a Premier Inn on Berwick Street that most people didn't want in the first place. Which brings me onto my next point. Local people feel like they haven't had any say in shaping and influencing change in Soho. Decisions have been made in a top-down way without genuine consultation or community involvement. This is totally unacceptable and needs to end.

The resignation of Robert Davis, a leading Westminster Conservative who received hundreds of gifts and hospitality from developers and other big businesses, will be welcomed by many Soho residents. He was a key player in granting planning approval to unpopular developments. But his resignation doesn't guarantee a change of direction at Westminster Council, far from it. The challenge is now to ensure it does and that the local community is given more of a say. That's why

Westminster Labour has been pushing for reforms to planning to put residents in the driving seat. We pushed for residents to be allowed to speak at Planning Committees, and the Council has finally agreed. We also want the Council to appoint a 'residents' advocate' on major applications to put the case for local people. There are other opportunities: the ongoing review of the Soho Audit and the release of the draft Soho Neighbourhood Plan (a stellar piece of work by local residents) may provide tools to challenge overdevelopment. Plus, change needs to happen at a higher level - at national government - so that planning frameworks do not constrain the agency of people to challenge decisions which aren't in the local interest. We must remain vigilant of these opportunities and I will continue to work with local people to lobby for meaningful reforms.

CityWest Homes is scrapped

CityWest Homes is an independent (or 'arms-length') organisation which was set up by Westminster Council to manage the Council's provision of social housing. For years tenants and leaseholders living in CityWest Homes (CWH) accommodation have been getting a terrible service. During the local election campaign and since then I've spoken to many CWH residents, and frankly those who have anything positive to say about the service they get are few and far between. Over and over again I hear residents talk about the same issues: the call centre isn't fit for purpose, there is an ongoing repairs crisis which means getting anything fixed often takes far too long (if they get fixed at all), and major works are managed poorly. To their credit, there are some members of staff who work very hard and do their best, but the system overall is failing.

I presented a motion at Westminster Council in the summer, asking for the management of CWH to be brought back 'in house'. This would mean that the Council would take on the role of managing council housing directly, helping bring about the lack of accountability that exists and potentially precipitating a culture change. The Conservatives voted down the motion at the meeting, but I was very pleased when they later changed their mind and agreed to the proposal. The decision has now been taken to bring CWH in house, and as of April next year a new management structure - with the Council at the helm - will be in place.

This is a good step forward. But it isn't enough. The Council now needs to show real leadership and demonstrate it is able to tackle the persistent problems residents experience. Also, there are questions that remain unanswered, like what on-the-ground support residents will get given that the Council hasn't committed to reopening estate offices it closed down a year ago (something else I also called for). I will remain vigilant and

continue to press the Council on the issues.

These are two of the areas I've been working on. I'm keen to hear from you and understand what's important to you. So do write to me and introduce yourself if you haven't yet.

Pancho Lewis can be contacted:
plewis@westminster.gov.uk
 or call: **020 7641 3411**.

He holds regular advice surgeries on the third Saturday of each month from: **10:00-11:00** at **Danceworks**, 16 Balderton Street, Mayfair, W1K 6TN, and **11:30-12:30** at 68 Dean Street, Soho, W1D 4QJ. No appointment is needed.

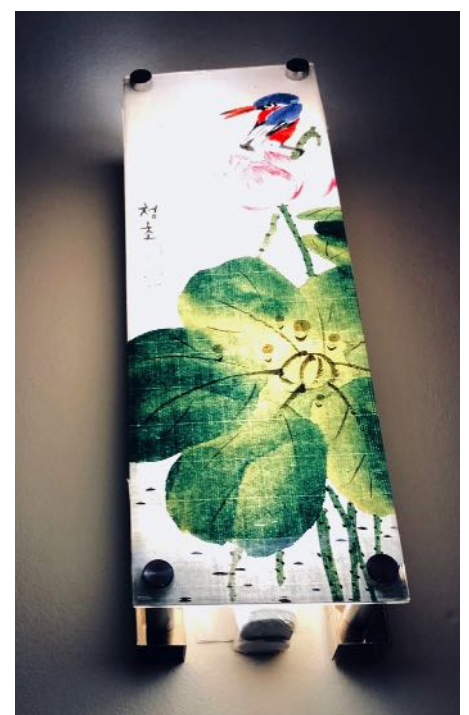
REVIEW

CO & KO - KOREAN FUSION

Of a Friday evening, having found all the usual places packed, we walked further up Berwick Street and saw this new little number nestling on the west side of Berwick Street. It was empty but I liked the look of the menu and the spare lighting. Anyway, turned out to be a bit of a find. It has the atmosphere of a restaurant created by people who are really obsessed with food but only have a passing interest in actually running a restaurant. This suited me and turned out to be charming. Its Korean fusion with exquisite quality and balance in the cooking

- add a strangely handsome waiter and Korean Plum Liqueur (essentially Sloe Gin) and we could have wanted for nothing more. We are so lucky that great creative chefs from all over the world (this one is Austrian) come to Soho to try their luck. This one deserves to do well. K-Pop Chicken and Shrimp will make you very happy. Just go now - you won't be disappointed.

Tim Lord



TALES FROM THE COLONY

THE AUTHORISED HISTORY OF LONDON'S MOST NOTORIOUS DRINKING CLUB



WARNING: This book contains strong language, sex, violence and extreme wit.

To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the closure of London's infamous arts establishment, the Colony Room Club in Soho, former member Darren Coffield has written the authorised history of this notorious drinking club. It's a hair-raising romp through the underbelly of the postwar arts scene. During its 60 year history more romances, more deaths, more horrors and more sex scandals took place in the Colony than anywhere else. And if they didn't actually happen there, they were definitely planned there.

In a regimented and sexually repressed post-war London, the Colony attracted professional drinkers to a man, woman or something in-between, since sexual non-conformity always played its part in the mix. The Colony was heroically bohemian and was created by two dominant personalities – that of its owner, Muriel Belcher, and the artist Francis Bacon. Muriel was a combination of muse, mentor, critic and guru to those who gathered around her. The Colony brought together the confluences of talents that would help define post-war London and will be forever associated with the artistic circle of Francis Bacon and Lucian Freud.

These ghastly English laws, you can't have a drink, can't do anything. Do you think they'll ever change

them?...I can take you up that awful Colony Room if you like.

- Francis Bacon

This is an oral biography, consisting of previously unpublished and long-lost interviews with the characters who were central to the scene, giving the reader a flavour of what it was like to frequent The Club.

With a glass in hand you'll move through the decades listening to personal reminiscences, opinions and vitriol, from the authentic voices of those who were actually there. On your voyage through Soho's lost bohemia, you'll be served a drink by James Bond, sip champagne with Francis Bacon, queue for the loo with Christine Keeler, go racing with Jeffrey Bernard, get laid with Lucian Freud, kill time with Doctor Who, pick a fight with Frank Norman and pass out with Peter Langan. All with a stellar supporting cast including: Peter O'Toole, George Melly, Suggs, Lisa Stansfield, Dylan Thomas, Jay Landesman, Sarah Lucas, Damien Hirst and many, many more.

To book your place on this extraordinary and scandalous romp through the postwar Soho scene, make sure you pledge and pre-order your copy.

Search for Tales from the Colony at unbound.com

Darren Coffield was born in London in 1969. He studied at Goldsmiths College, Camberwell School of Art and the Slade School of Art in London where he received his Bachelor of Fine Art in 1993. He has exhibited widely in the company of many leading artists including Damien Hirst, Howard Hodgkin, Patrick Caulfield and Gilbert and George at venues ranging from the Courtauld Institute, Somerset House to Voloshin Museum, Crimea. His work can be found in collections around the world. In 2003 his controversial portrait of Ivan Massow, former chairman of the ICA in full fox hunting costume was exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery in London.

MESSAGE FROM ST ANNE'S

REVEREND SIMON BUCKLEY

Walking down Romilly Street from Charing Cross Road after visiting a parishioner in hospital I passed two men looking, I presume, for somewhere to have a drink on a wet Sunday evening. "There was that place back there" one said, gesturing in the direction of the Golden Lion opposite St Anne's "or" said the other as he pointed in the opposite direction, "that one, the Coach and Houses.. that's a weird name". Whether the man in question had already had more than enough to drink or simply should have gone to Specsavers I can't really confirm, but it is funny the things you hear on the streets of Soho. Sometimes the snatched parts of conversations projected over the sound of impatient taxi horns, or the exasperation of those shouting into their mobile phones about being "exactly where ****ing Google Maps is saying it is, and it ain't ****ing here!" Sometimes people can't believe what they're seeing and at other times refuse to accept what they have or haven't seen. On one occasion a visitor to St Anne's told me he'd come to see the Cocteau murals. I explained that they weren't at this church but at Notre Dame De France by Leicester Square. He looked at me like I was a complete idiot and repeated "the COCTEAU murals?" (he was actually speaking to me in capital letters) "I've SEEN them HERE before", "I'm sorry, but you're mistaken" I said, to which he laughed and said "no, YOU'RE mistaken...they were definitely HERE". In the end I asked him to ring my doorbell when

he'd found them and walked away. There was no point arguing.

St Paul writes about how we see 'only in part': our lives are simply snatches of a bigger conversation, whereas it is tempting sometimes to think that the bit we hear or the fragment of life we see is all that there is: as though the whole world can be seen from where we're standing and what we think, see, or think we've seen must be right. Clergy are often privy to people pouring out their woes and troubles- and one of our difficult responsibilities alongside giving sympathy and support is to enable the person who is often convinced that they have been wronged, for example, to see their reality in the context of a bigger and more complicated picture. They may indeed have been wronged, but perhaps not with the direct intention or consequences that were intended. Sometimes we hear only what we want to hear, or see what we want to see, or just can't hear clearly above life's noise what's actually being said.

We can all need help at times to see what's right before us (or to hear what's being said) and to recognise that from where someone else is standing the view is not only slightly different, but that their perspective can actually enhance and inform our own.



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SOHO, 7:09am

TOM PHILLIPS

Daybreak in Soho. Shadows stand where they have all night, as the machinery of the day begins to turn. Silhouettes of streetlights, edges of buildings, satellite dishes, and the calm curves of cables stand diligently as their darkness bleeds away; the streets are nearly empty, but threaded with small, necessary activity, a precursor of everything that is to come.

The air is crisp, the sky dim, but clear. A sparse army of cleaners, sweepers, window-washers and pickers work their way through the streets, removing remnants of yesterday, meditating on sacks of refuse, neatening small details, preparing for the day. Shift workers stack shelves, fridges and trays in empty cafés, fast-food joints and restaurants with airs ranging from hurried and lethargic, blearily signing delivery notes and handing clipboards back to drivers who plonk back into their seats, check some small thing and go humming off down the road.

These are peaceful hours, suffused with the final hints of last night's activity, and the first beatings of today's. A crossover period, holding a sense of lucidity, a gathering of energy and thought before the beginning of the hustle.

Water flows through the streets, an icon of this fresh start; hanging baskets rain excess water down onto the street, roughly following the grooves in the pavement as it snakes away. It is joined by the water from a woman mopping the entrance to a building, her own thin slick of it growing luminous as it reflects the light emanating from the doorway. Next door a window-washer, quietly engrossed in his work, drags his squeegee across soapy glass in quick, practised motions. His route is halfway done - he likes the mornings; they are quiet - fewer people - and he mimics the action of a mouth talking with his hand before smiling, and finishing the pane.

Berwick Street, and a woman buys a bunch of thistles from Ronnie's Flowers before he's even fully set up. But he has time for her, and instructs how to pull the leaves off, just gently, so we can see the flowers. They smile, depart, and he rejoins a colleague who shuttles buckets of water from a communal tap to her thirsty stems, flat streams of it spilling over and glossing the brickwork floor.

Through to Dean Street, where wave after wave of broken and breaking glass roars into the waiting void of a refuse truck that's making its way up the street, unloading endless grey bins piled high with remnants of last night's consumption. The operators of the machine laugh as they work, tossing life-lessons and rough, exuberant philosophy to each other and the passers-by that they recognise.

They pass; their dirt and brutality and need is lost down the street, and something of the softer, finer side of Soho takes its place. Deep browns and golds begin to appear through the windows of Dean Street Townhouse - a door opens and an immaculately dressed waitress appears, placing pieces of shining silver cutlery on the marble-topped tables, adding a bright, clean, singular

twinkle to each in stark opposition to brash, disordered clattering noise just passed.

Elsewhere, pigeons bubble softly down even-quieter side-streets, reflected sunlight plays across the brick façade of a high-rise, and a jet-black fire-escape stands proudly in all of its rustic glory. Chauffeurs idly buff their already shining cars, awaiting their fares, and two day-glow security stand around, guarding something that isn't quite there yet. A man passes, recognising them - Early today! - and they respond with friendly snorts, smiles, yeahs, and continue to bask in the dual warmth of easy payment and morning sun.

I follow the road round, and find two removal men chatting amicably as they take stock of the wealth of junk, mostly assorted pieces of wood, piled in a holding garage.

Smokey Robinson - to fully appreciate him you gotta listen to the whole album, man!...

As I'm listening long, strange, discordant whines echo around the walls of the mews. The refuse truck has found me again; it creeps round the corner, attempting to sneak up, swallow me up - I make myself thin against a wall, allowing it to pass, and leave it stuck.

By now, daylight has erased all but the deepest shadows. The neon of the Soho Theatre, usually bright and proud against the backdrop of darkness it was designed for finds new expression, and a delicacy, set instead against the pale pastel colours of the sky. A magpie flies overhead and the whites of its wings become almost transparent against the bright, clear sun. I wander into some shade, and then some more. In an alleyway a homeless woman huddles in a corner, fiddling with a needle that flashes as I pass. The only sound is the flutter of a pigeon's wings and the soft arrhythmic ticking of a moped engine, contracting as it cools at the end of a row of others. Then the scrape of shoes, and two figures in fresh, ironed suits pass slowly by the end of the alley, chatting, gesturing with their coffee-laden hands to something in Soho Square. The contrast is acute; I return shortly thereafter with a croissant and coffee; milk, two sugars. We chat a while, and remark how pleasant a morning it is.

Then back out to Frith street, where something has changed. A higher frequency of figures populate the streets; more people dressed for work, the odd tourist, people clearly beginning their days. Open doors, the odour of pastry and coffee and garlic. There is no clear end to this discreet section of the day, but there I was, at it. No curtain goes up or down over the dutiful work that buzzes in the early hours, no real distinction between night and day, only a presence that you can be sure of when it arrives. The morning is a period of waiting, getting things done whilst there is time and space, before the inevitability of the crowds; getting everything in as fine an order as possible before its structure is walked upon by thousands, unpicked, discarded and left ready, for those whose duty it is, to prepare for the next.



RUBY VENEZUELA

DAVID GLEESON

Photograph By Shahin Shahablou

When American writer and performer Kate Bornstein once declared: “Drag queen is a gender like no other”, it’s likely she knew nothing of Ruby Venezuela who, in the drag universe, was a drag queen like no other. Moving to London in the late 1980s I discovered a commercial gay scene in the middle of a golden age where merely buying a pint would give punters free live entertainment from such outrageously talented performers as Regina Fong, Lily Savage, Adrella and Ruby. On their night, each of these was unmissable, but Ruby became my personal favourite for the sheer hilarious wit, surreal absurdity and theatrical nous of her performances. Sadly, she passed away in August, and those of us who were lucky enough to have experienced her at her best know just how unique was the talent we have lost.

Friends and family gathered at St Anne’s Church on Saturday 06 October to remember the “saucy, kitsch, over-the-top” (her own words) phenomenon known as Ruby Venezuela, as well as the kind, gentle, charming and surprisingly modest person she also was. Born Brian Pearce in Portsmouth – another universe, far away and long ago – Ruby emerged when convalescing after a badly broken ankle. Stuck in bed for a few weeks, and bored silly in the hotel where he lived and worked, Brian amused himself by making up parodies of popular songs. The hotel manager was sufficiently impressed to offer a regular Thursday booking in the bar, and to disguise the mending leg and hide the crutches, Brian performed whilst wrapped in a large crimson cape. And so Ruby was born.

Ruby’s long association with Soho began in 1963, the year she began working here as a window-

dresser. Although she never actually resided in the neighbourhood, it was definitely her spiritual home. When Paul Raymond was later searching for someone to run the old Pink Flamingo strip club in Brewer Street which he had turned into a piano bar, he asked Ruby for recommendations, and she suggested he meet a friend of hers called Jojo. Thus was born Madame Jojo’s, beginning a decade of legendary entertainment – part musical revue, part opera and full-on glorious travestie – all masterminded by Ruby. A night there was like mixing a Babylonian seraglio with the Rio Carnival via a filter of Mad Max, whilst being waited on by a troupe of fabulous drag waitresses, the Bar-bettes. These famous shows finally ended in 1996, after presenting some of the most amazing cabarets Soho has possibly ever seen. Who remembers Ruby as Botticelli’s ‘Birth of Venus’, stood onstage in a giant seashell wearing a pink body suit and giant blonde wig, singing ‘Seafood Mama’ by the Andrews Sisters? Or singing “I’d rather have you but instead / I’ve only got crumbs in my bed” whilst wearing a costume that was a complete bed, with frilly pillows, floor-length duvet and a real cigarette burn? And (for the sake of trivia) occasionally hiding Fergie and Princess Diana in her dressing room to evade paparazzi?

During this time, Ruby (unbelievably) also ran her own club – Ruby’s - in Gerrard Street, actually running between Brewer Street and there to perform at both places every night. Ruby’s was a quieter, more relaxing environment that attracted the likes of Stephanie Beecham, Liza Minelli, and Ruby’s friend Joan Rivers, with some regulars like Vivienne Westwood occasionally getting up to sing. When Quincey Jones complimented

the house pianist, Ruby immediately introduced them.

Until just two summers ago, Ruby had long been the headlining act at Soho Society Summer Fetes. Her presence made it a singular event in the summer season, with her professionalism and experience effortlessly transferring from the nightlife stage onto that of a family-fun day out. It was also further proof of the generosity that had seen Ruby performing to raise money for aids hospices and homeless charities since the 1980s, as she would produce an entire bill-topping show for expenses only. To support the Soho Society, Ruby tirelessly produced enjoyable, occasionally hilarious, closing acts, enlisting other professional

musicians, singers and performers to make that one summer day in the churchyard unforgettable, from planning, directing and staging to singing, performing and seeing off hecklers.

Since Ruby stopped performing, the Soho Fete has been fortunate that her friends - Ebbonknee Zealy, Luke Meredith, Rebecca Wheatley and others - have continued creating great performances to help raise funds for our neighbourhood. The iconic drag queens who ruled the 90s London gay scene are all no more, but Soho particularly remembers Ruby Venezuela, our new patron saint, with affection, humour and gratitude.

SOHO BAKERS CLUB

EASY CHRISTMAS CAKE

200g raisins
200g dried apricots, chopped
200g dried figs, prunes or dates, chopped
75g light soft brown sugar
75g unsalted butter, softened
75g honey
50g black treacle
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
3 medium eggs
75ml brandy or cold tea
200g plain flour
75g whole almonds
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder



- You will need a 20cm round cake tin, line the base and sides with baking parchment.
- Weigh out the fruit in a bowl and leave to one side.
- In a bowl beat the sugar, butter, honey, treacle, cinnamon and one of the eggs together until smooth and creamy.
- Then add the other two eggs one at a time with the brandy and beat well, the mixture will look curdled and that's normal.
- Sift in the flour and baking powder into the bowl and beat well.
- Then add the fruit and almonds, fold in until evenly mixed.
- Spoon into the tin and bake 170°C / 150 °C fan / 335F/ Gas 3 for approximately an hour and a half.

STEVE MULDOON

SAFER NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM



Thank you for asking me to write another article for you, I was so pleased the last one went down well and was informative to the readers. I hope this will become a regular feature as it's a great way to provide detailed updates to the residents and visitors to Soho. I was also amazed to see at

the summer fete people speaking to me and recognising me from the article. I have been in the role of Soho's ward officer for two years and really do feel a member of the community within Soho.

Since I last wrote we have had some great Soho events. We were welcomed at the fete and met some great people, this was a good way for us to spend the weekend before a very different one the week after. The week after of course was Pride which for us is a huge Policing operation, not just in Soho but across most of the West End. I'm pleased to say in terms of Policing this went by with no real issues and for us was in general a fun occasion. I do understand however the disruption an event of this size has on the residents and businesses. Last year for the first year we managed to link in with Pride's fantastic resident and business liaison team. I have contact details for the team so if anyone had any issues at all, or advice/suggestions for next year then they would love to hear about them. Either email or tweet me (contact details at the end) and I will pass these on.

We have had some changes on the team since I last wrote, we have a new Sergeant and a new PC on the ward. PS Sarah Jackson and PC Will Heaton have both arrived. Will is another designated Ward Officer for Soho and Sarah is Sergeant for both our team and for West End China Town.

I wanted to mention a new project we are involved in alongside many of our partners including Westminster Council and our local Business Crime Reduction Partnership (BCRP), Safer West End. Soho Angels, which will be a group of volunteers who patrol the streets of Soho (a set area based on our night time economy venues).

They will be on the streets looking to assist people who may need medical attention, potentially preventing a person from becoming a victim of crime and giving

assistance to the night time economy venues should they have issues with customers in the street. They will also have a night hub where St John's will be on hand. This is a trial for Soho that mirrors numerous schemes across the country which have all assisted in reducing crime and ASB. I am extremely excited about this project and going forward believe Soho will be a much safer place to visit. The Soho Angels during December will operate on Friday nights between 22:00 and 05:00. They will also operate the same hours on New Year's Eve. I will be working with them on those dates to ensure things are going smoothly and that we are supporting them as best we can ready for the full launch. It is then believed and hoped they will start functioning properly in February where they will operate every Friday and Saturday night.

Following numerous complaints to us we have launched a new operation to target the issues in and around Cambridge Circus. Operation Taniwha has been running for six weeks so far and at the time of writing we already seen over 60 arrests, with 55 CPN written warnings and 3 CPNs. This operation at present does not have an end date, we are using our resources from the West End Team along with various other units from across Westminster. The officers we dedicate to this operation will not sacrifice Policing the rest of the ward. We have also seen an increase in officers being allocated to us from various units across the Met. The TSG, Roads Transport and even the mounted branch have all assisted in some way with the operation. We will continually ask for assistance from these and other units across the Met.

We have four new Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) currently going through the courts. I will tweet pictures of those we successfully get at court. As yet, we have not had one refused, so I am confident these four will go through. We can only get them when the defendant is found guilty of the offence they are charged with, so I cannot give a timescale. However, the four going through are all persons who have been committing various offences on top of antisocial behaviour every day within Soho.

We are still seeing far too many commercial premises either being broken into overnight or burgled during the day by someone simply walking in and taking items such as laptops. We have managed to arrest four separate people in the last few weeks who we believe have been responsible for a huge percentage of these. They are all going through the court system and updates will of course be tweeted out. Whilst it is great we have made these arrests and CID are working on the cases, it concerns me how easy it had been for them to

commit the offence. Officers are visiting premises and will be advising on security over the coming weeks. Our colleagues over in Mayfair are running some great events with companies who aim to assist commercial properties with burglary prevention, the invitation will be extended out to Soho businesses and again the details will be tweeted out. I am pleased to say residential burglary is consistently low with most months zero offences reported within Soho.

If you have any queries on anything at all please do contact me through the below channels.

Twitter - @MPSSoho

Email - Steve.muldoon@met.pnn.police.uk



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MARK FIELD

MP FOR CITIES OF LONDON AND WESTMINSTER

Recent months have seen a flurry of political activity, from the party conference season to the last Budget before our departure from the European Union. Indeed, we parliamentarians have been kept busy, not least the Prime Minister and the Brexit Secretary, who remain locked in talks with their EU counterparts, the culmination of which we expect to see this month, in time (we hope!) for a withdrawal deal to be signed off at the December European Council meeting.

As for myself, at the end of September I again had the privilege of representing the UK at the United Nations General Assembly alongside our new Foreign Secretary, Jeremy Hunt. Assembly discussions I had ranged from issues concerning climate change and green finance, to the pressing need for justice for the Rohingya and other Burmese minorities who have suffered appalling human rights violations at the hands of the military. More recently, I had the pleasure of accompanying the Prime Minister to Brussels, not, I hasten to add, to volunteer my negotiating skills but as her Sherpa at the 12th Asia – Europe Meeting. Rarely does one have the opportunity to work so closely alongside the Prime Minister and our time together served to reinforce my confidence in her calm resilience; qualities so seldom portrayed by our often unforgiving media.

Despite my Ministerial commitments and hobnobbing with Prime Minister, keeping on top of my post bag and constituents' concerns remains my priority, and recent months have seen my team and I working on a number of issues at the local level.

In May, I was delighted to welcome a long-fought victory in the battle against problem gambling caused by fixed-odds betting terminals (FOBTs), with the Government deciding to slash the maximum allowed stakes from £100 to £2.

Having campaigned on this issue for years, I know very well the terrible damage this aggressive form of betting, once dubbed the crack cocaine of gambling, can have on individuals and communities, particularly in the West End. So it was with disappointment from some sections of the House that the Chancellor announced during the Budget that changes would not, as had been thought, come into effect in April, but rather six months later in October.

I, of course, empathise completely with those whose lives have been turned upside down by FOBTs and for

whom change cannot come soon enough. My own view is that with victory secured, conceding when to expect implementation comes as a necessary, albeit difficult, compromise with the Treasury for its hard work in making stake reduction possible at all.

On the persisting problem of pedicabs, our fight for their proper regulation resolutely continues. At present, the Pedicab Bill, which is due for its second reading later this month, is making slow progress through parliament. Despite the Bill attracting support from all sides of the House and the Government recognising the need for regulation, its journey towards becoming legislation remains sluggish. With a packed legislative timetable for the foreseeable future, there is currently little obvious opportunity to debate this important Bill without threat of it being 'talked out', as was the case in May and is the vulnerability with all non-Government Bills.

Nevertheless, my Council colleagues and I continue to make the case to the Transport Minister for urgent action to be taken in an area which has gone without for far too long. A newly-published report from the TfL commissioned Task and Finish group reiterates this point and, although my Ministerial role prevents me from being as vocal a public advocate as I have previously been, I want to assure readers that I am pushing hard behind the scenes for the Department for Transport to respond to the Group's recommendation to legislate for regulation as soon as possible.

Perhaps most pressing of all the issues I am contacted on is the London-wide struggle against crime. A serious problem which particularly afflicts the Soho area, as many readers will be all too familiar with, is the flagrant drug-related anti-social behaviour on our streets, often in broad daylight.

On this, I recently wrote to the Met Commissioner, in collaboration with our Council leader, Nickie Aiken, to express the deep concerns of many Westminster residents and business owners who feel that criminality in their area is worsening, and to echo Cllr Aiken's call for there to be a renewed emphasis on community-focused policing, based on daily patrols by officers with well-established local knowledge of the areas they serve.

Additionally, my team remains in close correspondence with the West End's superintendent, Helen Harper, on

the specific challenges relating to Soho and with whom I will soon be meeting to discuss the unique policing challenges presented by the area and to visit some of the most troublesome hotspots.

Such meetings and correspondence with community stakeholders also formed the basis of recent representations I made to the Minister for Policing on the challenges faced in the constituency by the Met and the City of London Police forces. My thoughts and concerns were raised in the context of the of the upcoming Police Funding Settlement for 2019/20 and the 2019 Spending Review, the outcomes of which are crucial to the safety of Westminster's residents, business owners and tourists. Naturally, it is pleasing to have Westminster's case recognised and for it to form part of the Minister's thinking for future police

funding plans, and I shall, of course, share more on this as it develops.

These are, of course, just some of the issues that my team and I have been working on. There is clearly much to keep me occupied in the constituency, Parliament and further afield with the Foreign Office. Meeting these challenges will not be simple, though I am in no doubt that with support of our councillors and the civically-spirited Soho community, positive progress can be made on most fronts in the months ahead.

Of course, I am always keen to work closely with residents and can only do so effectively when I know about the issues affecting their lives, so please never hesitate to get in touch to share your thoughts with my team and me.

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HOW SOHO CAN HELP:

HOMELESS YOUNG PEOPLE

For the past 50 years Centrepoint has been a part of Soho life. Established in the basement of St Anne's church, Dean Street, Centrepoint has been supporting homeless young people ever since.

Its ancestral home in Dean Street has been through many transformations over this time, and is now a learning centre and social space for homeless young people with lots of opportunities for the Soho community to get involved and support. From hiring the space for your meeting or event to donating to fund activities for young people, Centrepoint Dean Street would love to work with you.

Young people become homeless for a variety of reasons: family breakdown, leaving the care system or fleeing a dangerous environment. Often years of neglect mean these young people battle with mental and physical health issues and have limited education or work experience. We know that homeless young people have boundless potential but they just need the right care and support to unlock it. That's why Centrepoint exists. For our young people, their future starts when they come to live at Centrepoint and have a safe and secure place to call home. Then, to help them rebuild their lives, we give them dedicated support with their physical and mental health and a patient and understanding place to learn. Our aim is for every young person to leave us with a job and home of their own so that they can live a happy life and have a bright future.

Our Dean Street centre is a safe space for young people to learn, receive health support and socialise. Social isolation is a big issue for homeless young people and we address this by hosting activities that focus on confidence building, friendships and fun.

Many of our young people also experience food poverty and suffer from poor health and nutrition. Centrepoint's research has shown that a huge number of the young people we support skip meals, go to sleep hungry or eat less because of monetary constraints (60%).

Due to previous experiences, it is likely homeless young people have less financial resources and lack the knowledge to maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle. A staggering two thirds of the young people Centrepoint support do not cook regularly for themselves, as they lack the skills, confidence and money to do so. Our team of internal health professionals, which includes

dieticians, offer guidance and support with the goal of changing this, ultimately improving the health and wellbeing of the young people at Centrepoint.

So, what are we doing to address this and how can you amazing people of Soho help?

We have a few projects either being delivered or in the pipeline to provide much needed social activities for our incredible young people.

These include:

- **The Centrepoint Social:** A weekly evening where homeless young people in Westminster are welcome to come along and enjoy a hot meal, make friends and enjoy socialising together.

Are you a local restaurant or take away? Could you donate occasional meals or ingredients to help us provide a nutritious meal for our fantastic young people?

- **U.G.L.Y Tribe (Understanding Girls Like You):** A programme that provides young homeless women with the skills and abilities to build emotional resilience, enabling them to cope with change, build confidence, improve self-esteem and motivation and reach independence. Are you a Soho retailer or business? Could you donate products for us to treat the young women who are committed to the programme? Beauty products, accessories – anything a young woman would like!
- **Christmas Pop Up Shop:** We are planning a fabulous Christmas party and pop up shop, where we will recognise and reward young people's achievements over the past year. We aim to have rails of clothes and our very own shoe shop where attendees can pick up outfits for interviews, for work or for college. Maybe you run a luxury brand that could donate items for prizes or a retailer who could provide clothes for our pop up shop?
- **Education and Training:** We deliver a variety of training programmes at Dean Street from Functional Skills (basic English and Maths) to Digital Skills to traineeships in hospitality, amongst many others. If you work in the creative industries, hospitality or retail could you offer a work placement to a young person who needs to experience a work environment to gain to

confidence and skills to reach their potential?

- **Hire the space:** We have a beautiful, bright, modern space available for private hire along with a professional kitchen to cater for your event. We can accommodate anything from meetings, training courses, castings, launches and evening receptions. Every penny of income from private hire goes straight back into providing activities and resources to help our young people into a home and a job.

Please contact us at: Deanstreet@centrepoin.org or call: **0207 4236805** if you are interested in hiring the space or supporting our activities. Any contribution would be hugely appreciated by Centrepoin's brilliant youngsters and your help could make a massive impact on their lives and help them build the future they deserve. Thank you.

A SOHO CHRISTMAS STORY

LUCY HAINE

The Clarion will be running a series of articles on SME's - small businesses operating in Soho.

This month, The Clarion interviews Joao Rocha, Soho resident, Soho Society Member and owner of Soho-based florist, Storm Flowers London.

This is a busy time of year for you Joao, how is Christmas going?

Manic! We'll be installing over 140 Christmas trees across the West End & City of London and we take on a Xmas Sparkle team of 20 Seasonal staff to help us install our trees. We spent 2 full days in My Place Café earlier this month, interviewing for Christmas tree decorators and drinking a lot of coffee! We recruit artists, visual merchandisers, set designers and film students to work with us.

This year we are seeing the fashion colours really driving demand for Christmas trees. Our bestselling tree is Mulberry sparkle which has Gold, Plum and Chocolate baubles and Accessories, closely followed by our Nordic design which is gold orange and dark grey. We start creating designs around March time based on fashion & lifestyle trends, and we are pretty much thinking about Christmas all year round. We have every bauble colour you can imagine!

We're seeing a shift to real trees this year which gives us less time to install, as real trees tend to be placed into buildings for 3/4 weeks.

What kind of Clients buy your trees?

We mostly supply offices, we have some very high-end clients, City Banks, fashion companies everyone from Chanel to New Look, Savile Row to St Anne's. The Sparkle team will be decorating trees from 8th November onwards and the season finishes on 10th January then I'll head home to Brazil to get some rest and catch up with my family.

Do you supply any businesses in Soho?

We do yes, aside from St Anne's we work with Medius House off Wardour Street as well as contracts in Soho Square and Broadwick street. We supplied the flowers for London Fashion week when it was based in the NCP Car Park on Brewer Street.

How long have you lived in Soho?

I moved to London in 2006, partly due to a bet with my brother. He had spent 6 months in Paris and said I wouldn't be brave enough to do the same thing. I did go to Paris initially, but then moved to London as I had family here and it seemed more exciting. When I arrived in 2006 I did not speak any English but I fell in love with London immediately and I moved to Soho in 2008.



Why is Soho a good location for your business?

Soho is great central location and a vibrant neighbourhood. It is easy access on foot to many of my contracts which is great as we are always looking to reduce our carbon footprint. It is very friendly and we all seem to try and support each other. For example, I get my pumpkins from Jimmy in the Market for my Halloween displays and pass personal clients over to Lesia and Mark in the market as we only work with businesses.

Tell us about Storm Flowers?

Storm is a B2B (Business to Business) contract flower business, we have just moved to a new head office in St Anne's Tower, operating on the floor above the Soho Society. We supply flower displays, office plants and Christmas trees to businesses across the City and West End. Our clients include most of the big property companies and we supply offices in streets including Savile Row, Jermyn Street and St James as well as the big corporates and banks in the City of London.

We only work with fresh cut flowers and create all our displays on site. Our designs are contemporary minimalist style with a lot of tropical flowers for example anthuriums, ginger lily, proteas and birds of paradise. Of course, our displays vary seasonally and we create displays based on what flowers are available at Covent Garden Market, as well as what's going on in the calendar for events like Halloween or Wimbledon. We have a large and unique collection of vases!

How did the business start?

Storm was originally set up by a lady called Sam Hopkins in 2003. Sam was an ex-Visual merchandiser who worked for many of the big brands including Fenwick. The name originally came from her business partner whose surname was Storm.

So how did you get involved?

I started working for the business initially as a florist assistant in 2009, Sam trained me up to be a florist and then in 2014, asked me if I would like to buy the business.

What was it like going from working for a business to running it?

It was quite tough! Although of course I had been working for the business for 5 years, I had to gain the trust of the clients as the new owner and get to grips with owning and running a business rather than just working for one. That meant getting into, all the back-end side which I had little

experience of like invoicing, contracts, salaries and health & safety.

I bought the business with no debt and no cash flow which meant that the first 3 months, waiting for payments was quite hairy, but we survived and our contracts have doubled in 4 years.

What are your favourite places in Soho?

I like nothing better than calamari in Bills or a Croque Monsieur at Cote and My Place does a great Latte!

If you'd like your business to feature next time, please contact Lucy Haine for an interview.

Lucy.haine@thesohosociety.org.uk



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DEVELOPMENTS

JANE DOYLE

Since the last Clarion much has happened in Soho - our annual village fete, Pride, Bastille Day and many other events. The weather has been hot and sunny. It seems hard to believe that Christmas is fast approaching, particularly as the good weather continues!

The John Snow pump has been returned to its rightful place. There was a short ceremony on 20 July when it was 'unveiled' by Councillor Richard Beddoe at 8 am in the presence of the John Snow Society, members of the Soho Society and others present. [See early risers photograph credit Richard Piercy]

There are fresh water fountains Ham Yard, Rathbone Square & Kingly Court where you can fill your water bottles. This is all part of an initiative to reduce the use of plastic.

Building work in Soho continues, although there are signs that it may be slowing down. For instance, Poland Street appears (at the time of writing) to be without scaffolding for the first time in what seems like an age, though there are still problems with collapsed vaults half way up. They have been like this for some considerable time, with no signs of any ongoing work. There are also collapsed vaults on D'Arblay Street. We have just received a response on this from the council, which is printed in full on page [see basement vaults]

There are still several ongoing larger developments, three of which are in Berwick Street. more of which later. There is also the Soho Estates' ambitious Ilona Rose House development (300,000 sq ft) on the site of the old Foyle's building, which is not due for completion until about 2022. It will house shops, restaurants and offices, which will in turn create many jobs. It will also have roof gardens and terraces looking over Soho. Importantly, it will also house Warner Brothers in a 25,000 sq ft purpose built and insulated space, which will keep them in Soho. There will also be 8 affordable housing units. Further information can be found on their website: www.ilonarosehouse.com.

Another large project is Meard Street/Richmond Mews. The work here started earlier this year and is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2019. We will be keeping an eye on progress, but currently understand that all is going smoothly. As a small historical (and useless) fact, when Meard Street was created in 1732 the occupants included a harpsichord maker, a Reverend, a writer, a painter, a composer and a drunk. It seems as though Meard Street has always attracted eclectic and artistic residents and long may it continue to do so!

As to Berwick Street, there is Soho Estates' Walker's Court development, which is well on the way to completion.

In fact at the time of writing, the scaffolding is in the process of coming down. This development includes the revival of the Boulevard Theatre, which will include a revolving auditorium giving it the flexibility it needs to stage a wide variety of plays and cabaret shows, and the internal works are due for completion in the second half of 2019. Madame Jojo's will be returning in due course. The Raymond Revuebar sign should be in place before Christmas (the scaffolding covering this will remain in place until the works are completed). There will also be new shops, restaurants and residential units.

Also demolition has started preparatory to the building of yet another hotel on the corner of Broadwick Street/Berwick Street by Broadwick Street Holdings. This is expected to have three basement levels, some retail at ground floor level and a hotel with up to 69 bedrooms, bar and restaurant facilities, and includes terraces, and so on, at the upper levels. It's not known when this work is likely to complete as demolition only started in the summer. We will be watching closely and reporting on this.

Without doubt, the worst development, and certainly the worst managed, of the lot is that which covers 90-104 Berwick Street. This has had a huge impact on businesses and residents alike, particularly those residents in Kemp House and Ingestre Court. The development has been beset by disasters - too many to mention. but including floods, damage to residents' belongings, and much, much more, including recently homeless people getting into a residents' storage area on the site (through access via the security code, I am told) and using it as a toilet, a place to take drugs and a general 'help yourself' site.

There has been continuous noise from drilling, dust, and so on, with, it seems, barely a thought for those affected. It seems a great shame that they didn't arrange to 'return' the supermarket first. This might, only might, have given the developers a few 'brownie' points and helped the market, which has suffered hugely from the downturn in footfall, not to mention the poor unfortunate residents being woken up for goodness knows how long to the sound of the drill, though residents seem to come a poor last in anybody's thinking on this site.

As to future progress, I understand that completion is expected in mid-May of 2019, but I am told no one is holding their breath. However, there are, as is always said in the wake of any form of fiasco, "lessons to be learnt". Time alone will tell whether this proves to be the case. We will watching this keenly and reporting in future issues.

Whilst on the subject of Berwick Street, the council has held consultations on all Westminster's markets,

including Berwick Street. Residents, community groups and businesses were asked to comment and contribute ideas, and we await the outcome of the consultation with interest and will report further as and when we have news.

Also, following the May local elections there have been all sorts of developments at WCC, one of the most important of which is that there will be a shake-up in planning, and various changes will be made.

The key changes that have been approved include:

- agree that public speaking rights should be included at planning sub-committee meetings so residents' voices are heard (we wait to see how this will be done)
- improve the way the council explains policies and decisions
- record planning sub-committee meetings and make coverage available as well as live stream when possible
- create a new Place Shaping and Planning Directorate which reflects the ambitious agenda set by the Leader and cabinet to deliver a City For All.

In addition, the Cabinet agreed that all members and officers are to be reminded regarding the clear rules on gifts and hospitality. They have also requested that there is further engagement with ward councillors, amenity societies and residents' groups. The purpose of these discussions is to bring forward details as to how the proposed changes, including public speaking rights and delegation of decision making, should be implemented in the future. This will then be subject to a further Cabinet decision. We will be watching this. The Community Contribution has so far raised £400,000

- this was a scheme whereby Band 'H' householders were asked to voluntarily pay an extra element alongside their council tax. Those donating have picked three priorities for the money to go on - people sleeping on Westminster's streets; youth support and tackling isolation across the generations.

The money being raised will go towards:

- employing two ex-rough sleepers to become Westminster 'buddies' - helping people on the streets who may be distrustful of mainstream authority
- grants for organisations who help rough sleepers
- funds for schemes that provide young people with jobs skills or training
- funds to go towards initiatives that combat loneliness in the community - not just among the elderly but also the young.

SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY FOR 2019

The Soho Society AGM will take place St Anne's Church, 55 Dean Street, on 21 March 2019 at 6.30 pm.

The Soho Parish Primary School annual food feast will take place on 8 and 9 June 2019.

The 2019 Soho Society Village Fete is already in the planning and will take place on 30 June 2019.

The Pride March will follow six days later on Saturday, 7 July 2019.

The French House will be celebrating Lesley's 30th anniversary on 14 July 2019.

ADVERTISING IN THE SOHO CLARION

Our quarterly magazine is published in March, June, September and December. We print 3,000 copies that are distributed across Soho and the wider West End to businesses, community spaces and residential premises along with online publication at www.thesohosociety.org.uk

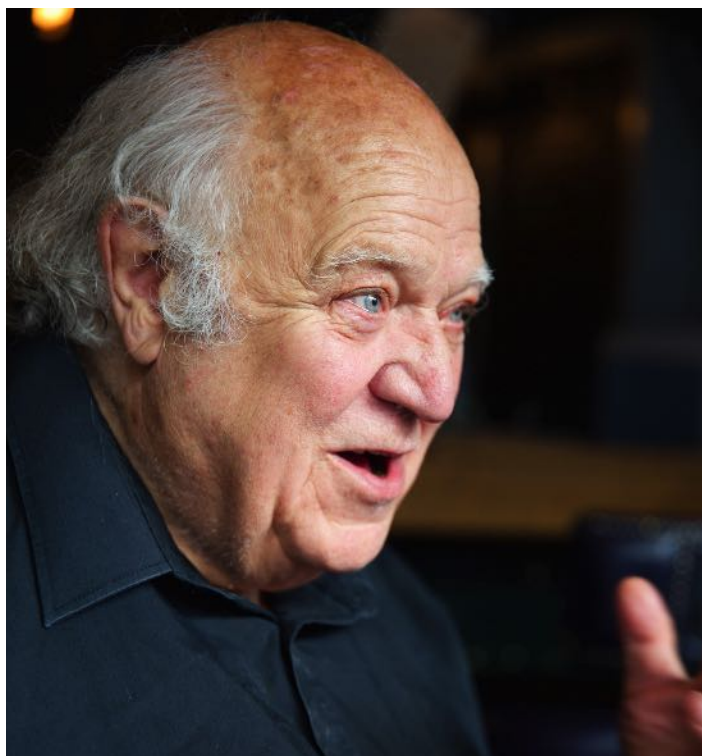
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THE SOHO SOCIETY HOUR

ON SOHO RADIO



Photographs By Iona Wolfe

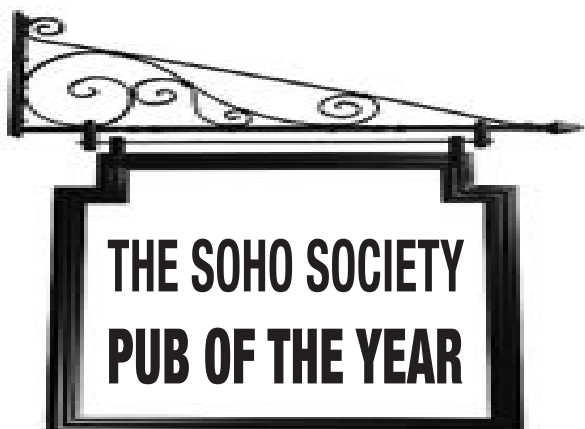
Over three hundred guests have now spoken of their personal connection with the remarkable village of Soho, an area of great diversity and creativity.

Local resident and radio presenter Clare Lynch, and Soho Society Hon. President Leslie Hardcastle, host “**The Soho Society Hour**” on the award winning local radio station Soho Radio, in Great Windmill Street every Thursday between 9.00 and 10.00 am.

You can listen to past programmes via the following link:
<https://www.mixcloud.com/sohoradio/stream/>

Collectively these conversations with guests from every aspect of Soho life constitute a unique and important record of life in contemporary Soho.

You too could be part of this project. If you would like to share “your Soho” do please contact us via the Soho Society: admin@thesohosociety.org.uk



PUB OF THE YEAR COMPETITION:

The Soho Society is delighted to announce the return of the Pub of the Year Competition.

So nominations, please, let us know your favourite pub; or, landlords, put your pub forward for consideration by our diverse, discerning and erudite panel of judges!

The winner will be announced at the Soho Fete on 30 June 2019, so make a note of the date .

Send your thoughts/nominations to:
admin@thesohosociety.org.uk marked “Pub of the Year”

ROBERT DAVIS' RESIGNATION

AND THE INVESTIGATION INTO HIS BEHAVIOUR BY WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL

Robert Davis resigned from the Council on 11 October 2018. By doing so he prevented any further action or sanctions that the Council might have taken against him following the investigating officer's finding that he had breached the Members' Code of Conduct.

Robert had previously been the Deputy Leader of the Council and Head of Planning and a councillor for some 17 years.

The full report dated 10 October 2018 can be found as per the link below
<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/statement-from-leader>

Although the investigating officer found a breach of the code she also stated that "no illegality was found". However on this last point it is worth considering:-

- 1) no one who provided the hospitality to Davis was interviewed by the investigating officer or asked what they paid and why;
- 2) the report states that the law is that if the hospitality is disclosed then there is no chance of illegality - this is not the law - see the article referred to below;
- 3) payments and links to the Sir Simon Milton Foundation were not investigated;
- 4) the report contains no analysis or mention of the Bribery Act 2010 which would be the relevant legislation if one was concerned about unlawfulness and accepting hospitality from people whose planning applications you were deciding upon; and
- 5) despite these limitations, there are five cases where hospitality was paid for by the applicant, and permission granted against officers' advice by Davis' committee.

We put these points to the investigating officer. Hazel Best's responses, received by us on 20 November 2018, are on our website at <https://www.thesohosociety.org.uk/robert-davis-investigation/>.

Andrew Smith of Corker Binning, an expert on the Bribery Act, wrote an interesting article on this, which we have re-published with permission below.

The Westminster City Council scandal: how does the Bribery Act 2010 apply to gifts and hospitality in practice?

Robert Davis, the deputy leader of Westminster City Council and, until last year, the chair of its planning committee, resigned on Wednesday this week after an internal investigation found he had breached the Council's code of conduct.

The internal investigation resulted in a report, published [11 October 2018] on the Council's website, which explains that Mr Davis was entertained by and received gifts from property industry figures on at least 150 occasions from 2015 onwards. These gifts and hospitality included dinners at London's finest restaurants and trips to the south of France, Switzerland, Spain and the United States. They were provided by property firms involved in half of the planning applications his committee ruled on in 2016.

Whilst the main focus of the report is on whether there was a breach of the Council's code of conduct, the remit of the report is stated to extend to whether Mr Davis's acceptance of the gifts and hospitality has been "unlawful or given rise to illegality". The report concludes that the "acceptance of a large number of gifts and hospitality is not in itself unlawful."

On the face of it, this is an odd conclusion. Despite running to 21 pages (with a further 87 pages of appendices), the report does not refer at any point to the Bribery Act 2010 - a surprising omission if one is asked to investigate the legality of gifts and hospitality which might be considered to prompt suspicions of corruption.

This raises an important question. How is the Act's application to gifts and hospitality being implemented in practice, some seven years after the legislation came into force? In 2011 there was uproar in the business community, with widespread fears of corporate entertainment being outlawed. In fact, those fears never came to anything, although there has been a recalibration of what level of hospitality is acceptable in different circumstances.

The Act, it might be argued, does not apply where, first, gifts and hospitality are declared openly on the appropriate register, so that nothing is hidden; and where, secondly, there is no evidence that the gifts or hospitality influenced decisions taken by the recipient or his or her organisation.

But this is to misunderstand the breadth of the offences created by the Act. Section 2 of the Act defines the offence of bribery as it applies to the recipient (or potential recipient) of a bribe. It delineates four scenarios (the Act uses the word "cases") in which the recipient commits a crime.

Case 4 (found in section 2(3) of the Act) provides as follows:

"(3) Case 4 is where—

(a) R requests, agrees to receive or accepts a financial

or other advantage, and
(b) the request, agreement or acceptance itself constitutes the improper performance by R of a relevant function or activity.”

In this scenario, the prosecution only has to prove one act, which in the case of a Council official, would be the “acceptance” of the “financial or other advantage”. The prosecution does not have to prove that the recipient knew or believed that the performance of his functions was improper. The performance of his functions is deemed to be improper by virtue of the position held. That is, it was improper in and of itself to accept the gifts and hospitality, regardless of whether the acceptance had any impact on the recipient’s behaviour.

Case 4 is a complete answer to the two arguments outlined above. In relation to the first argument, it is irrelevant to the commission of the offence that the gifts and hospitality are openly declared. The prosecution does not have to prove secrecy or subterfuge. In relation to the second argument, it is irrelevant to the commission of the offence that the recipient performed his functions properly. The prosecution does not have to prove improper performance; the offence is based entirely on the acceptance of the advantage, not the consequences of accepting the advantage.

The rationale of case 4 is that it criminalises the conduct of persons from whom good faith and impartiality are expected in the performance of their functions. The very occupation of a position of trust – and a councillor and chair of a Council’s planning committee is undoubtedly that – renders it a crime to accept gifts and hospitality, irrespective of whether favours are sought or provided. This is particularly so when the gifts and hospitality emanate from property firms with a vested interest in the planning applications being considered by the committee chaired by the recipient of the advantage.

None of this is to suggest that Mr Davis should be prosecuted [or that any prosecution would be successful]. The evidence may not be sufficient for reasons not in the public domain or otherwise] and there may be good public interest factors which mitigate against prosecution. But it is simply incorrect for the report to conclude that accepting gifts and hospitality is ‘not in itself unlawful’ when section 2(3) of the Act was introduced for the specific purpose of criminalising the type of conduct laid bare in Westminster city Council’s investigation. [our emphasis]

By Andrew Smith, Corker Binning.

The Society’s concern is a narrow but important one. If your powers of investigation are limited the fact that you didn’t find any illegality may say more about your powers rather than a definitive answer to the question whether any illegality actually took place (which in reality, we still don’t know the answer to). Further, it appears that the investigating officer got the law wrong on the issue of disclosure and the Bribery Act.

Davis, who had an advance copy of the report, made much of the “no finding of illegality” wording in his briefing to the press. The truth is we just don’t know what really went on and will never know until there is an investigation by someone who does have the powers to ask the right people the right questions.

The Leader of the Council is keen to draw a line and move on. Residents of Soho who feel that the area has been blighted by inappropriate development and excessive construction for years, and continues to be so blighted, may find this more difficult to do.



Membership

To join the Soho Society please go to our website where you can sign up.

<https://www.thesohosociety.org.uk/shop/>

Individual membership

Lifetime £250

Annual £30

Concession / Soho Resident £20

Business Membership

Standard £200

Small Business (<30 Employees) £50

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Christmas Tree Switch-on in St Anne's Gardens

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Tuesday 18th December @6.30pm

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Thursday 20th December @6.30pm

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25th December @11am

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to celebrate the Birth of Christ.



www.stannes-soho.org.uk