



SOHO

clarion

NO. 178

THE CLARION CALL OF
THE SOHO SOCIETY

spring
2021

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Priceless Magazine





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EDITOR

Jane Doyle

FROM THE TOWER

So how do we find Soho at the time of writing?

As of 6 May we have had three weeks of food and drink businesses re-opening but only outside. This means many restaurants remain closed but a number that have access to outside space have been able to open and serve seated customers. Office workers have as yet to return in any great numbers but that may change later in the month. Construction, on the other hand, seems to be increasing with work on Film House in Wardour Street commencing in earnest, and no less than three large construction projects on foot in Broadwick Street. The Co-op will finally re-open at the end of the month as the much delayed Berwick Street project is finally completed.

Bob O'Dell has resigned from the board but remains a keen participant in our planning group and we thank him for his service to the Society as a trustee. We have made room for an extra board member and if you are interested in supporting and volunteering for the Society, as ever, please speak to any of our trustees.

The Soho Village Fete is planned for 5 September and work has already started on making new bunting, booking the acts and arranging for stands to be taken. The firemen have confirmed their availability for the tug of war - though this year it will be the Blue Watch not the Green which will maybe give the Metropolitan Police team a chance to even the score. Our local ward officer, Steve Muldoon, is recruiting young officers solely on the criteria of weight and heft as last year's loss has taken a heavy toll. We will once again be speaking to William Hill to ensure you can have a flutter on which of the uniformed services will be able to hold their heads up high on the day. There is a signup sheet on our website if you would like to volunteer with anything from running the bakers' stall to putting up the bunting.



In the last of edition of the Clarion, as avid readers will no doubt remember, we were in the depths of lockdown, there was no vaccine in sight and we were wondering what opportunities might arise for the future of Soho as it emerged into a new post pandemic world. Whilst we were wondering more commercial minds were already on the case and no time was lost in persuading the council that the only solution for Soho was the closure of streets to allow for extensive dining and drinking in the street to save Soho's pubs, bars and restaurants. The council in turn alighted on this opportunity to get rent and rates to recover as soon as possible. In its haste to do the right thing the council wasted no time in consulting the residents who actually live on the streets it planned to close seven days a week. When I say it "wasted no time" I mean literally no time because it didn't consult them - despite having previously promised to do so.

This has led to the most serious fracture between the various groups that call Soho their home or make their livelihood here in my memory. Broadly, residents have sympathy for the businesses that have been massively damaged by the lockdown. Indeed many residents are not impacted by road closures at all and like the use of outdoor space. However, there remains a number who live on the closed streets and have had their lives and homes blighted to a serious degree.

Businesses are desperate to re-open for as long as possible in the largest possible area to start making up for losses during the lockdown. Landlords are desperate for back rent to be paid and the council needs to collect the rates. The council has made clear where it stands on this debate by closing 14 streets in Soho for seven days a week without any discussion with residents. No other part of Westminster has anything like this degree of change. Other London council's have limited times or the number of days -



e.g. Southwark to 10pm not 11pm. Westminster simply pushed it as far as possible.

On 1 March the Society ran an online survey that confirmed the seriousness of the adverse impact on some residents. On 11 March Councillors Matthew Green and Tim Barnes sat through evidence from residents, including a disabled resident who had had been unable to leave her flat because of the closures in 2020, and others that had been unable to work or sleep because of the noise.

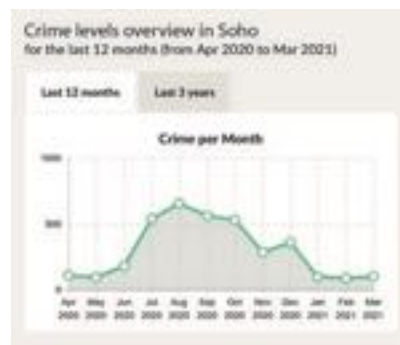
None of this was a great surprise to the councillors as we understand they had previously discussed that the road closures would make 40 housing units unliveable in - impacting some 100 residents.

The breach of the council's earlier promise to consult was exacerbated by the council's suggestion in February 2021 that although the road closures would be "temporary" and end on 30 September 2021 (as had been promised in relation to September 2020) it would also consult on making the scheme permanent. In simple terms, if you say you will consult on making something permanent at the same time as promising that it is temporary you risk losing any remaining credibility you may have with an audience that you have previously misled.

Following the meeting we have been given a written promise by the leader of the council (overleaf) that no permanent scheme will be imposed without full consultation and agreement from a majority of residents. The precise plans for that consultation have gone quiet which does not help those who have engaged closely with the council's past consultations on, for example, the closure of Beak

Street to vehicles. So yes, road closures might end in September but you can't be sure - which is precisely what is so damaging to maintaining a long term committed residential community in Soho. The uncertainty created by the council cannot now be expunged and the damage is done - longer term residents are leaving. The bigger question remains - is the council keen to see long term residents leave in order to allow a short term increase in profits, rent and rates by moving to extensive outdoor sales of alcohol - the "Magaluf" option? Is that the council's intention? It's hard to credit that the "permanent" option was mentioned by mistake. It's been open for the leader or indeed any of our councillors to make it clear what the council's intention is. So far they have failed to do so.

So three weeks in to the temporary road closure scheme what have we learned about the 2021 scheme in practice?



First, an enormous amount of effort and work has gone into the re-opening in the most difficult circumstances for which the bars and restaurants and their staff should be proud. They seem to be busy and making money and are, we hope, starting to make inroads into the debts and deferred rents that have accumulated over the lockdown. Once they open inside and all restrictions have hopefully lifted in June there is no reason why their profits should not return to normal, or be even higher given the number of additional covers some of them will then have.

Secondly, in one or maybe two places the extended pavement has been well managed and seems to be all upside for both the businesses and the residents - The French House being a prime example.

Thirdly, the road closures have fundamentally changed

parts of Soho from an urban village of mixed uses, including residents, shops and other businesses, to what is best described as “Magaluf” at night - a monoculture of outdoor alcohol consumption across the core of East Soho which the police (by their own admission) are unable to control, seven nights a week until 11pm every night apart from Sunday, which is 10.30pm - even on a temporary basis it is a catastrophic change.

Fourthly, Soho remains enormously popular - the bars and restaurants are full and reservations are hard to secure. It is not clear that the road closures need to persist for months after restaurants fully re-open in order for Soho to resurrect - Soho is enormously popular.

If the road closures become permanent Soho would be changed forever. Such a change would keep rents and profits from the sale of alcohol high - Tesco has done a roaring trade in off-sales. However, the shared environment in which residents, businesses and property owners can co-exist could well be lost forever.

Further, if it becomes permanent, then well loved local retail businesses, such as the Algerian Coffee Stores and I Camisa, may be pushed out as rents rise to reflect

the migration to alcohol sales. With the new Class E designation, which means any shop can become a restaurant without requiring planning permission, it is easy to see that there is little to stop this happening. More insidious is the feeling that this may have been the plan by the council and landlords for some years.

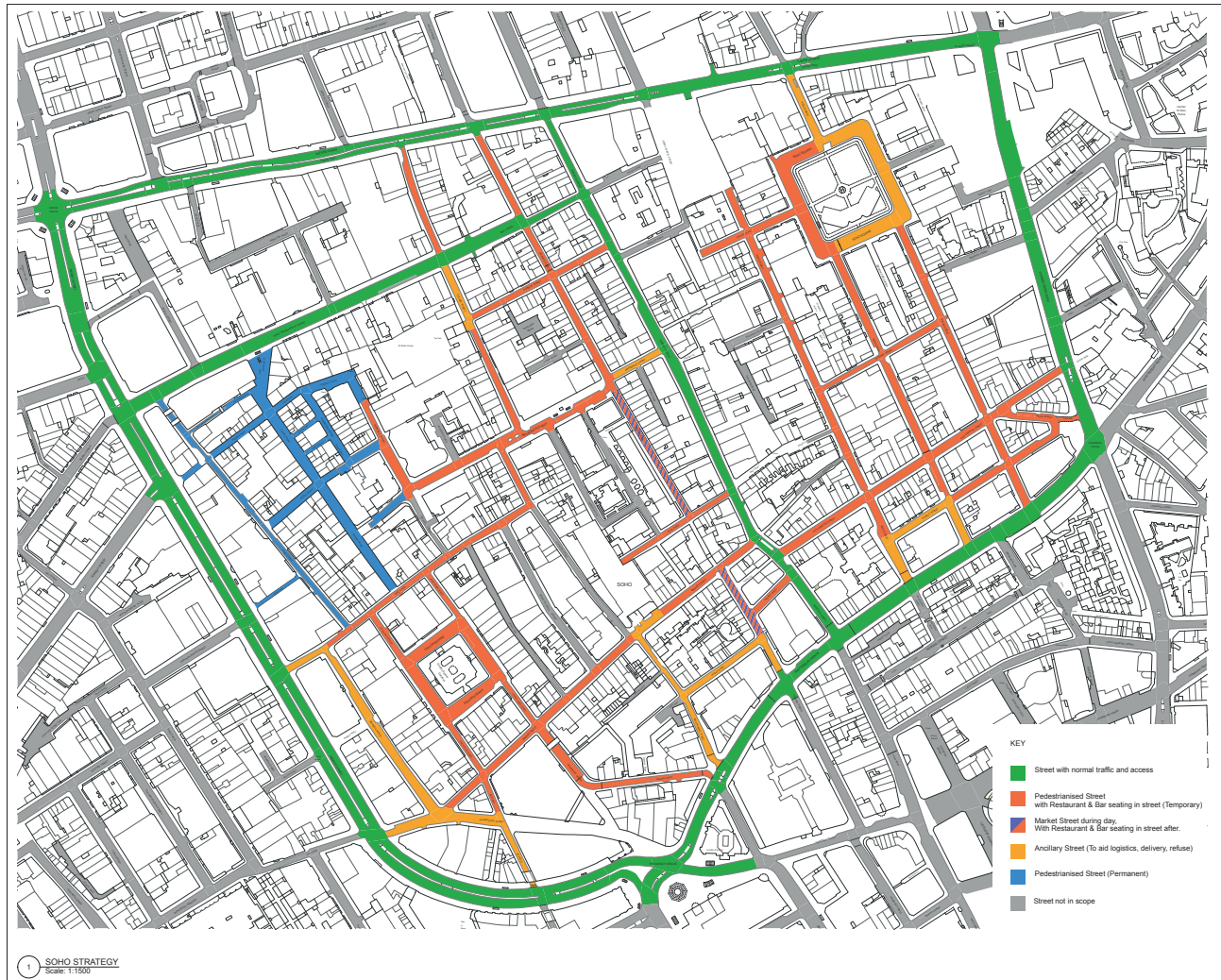
For the landlords I have one question. Where does it end? 24 hour licences? Seven days a week? Whole streets of bars as has happened in other European tourist destinations? That is a question that we need an answer to. John James of Soho Estates said on 11 March he only wants a few places for pavement widening in any permanent scheme. Let's hope the council takes note.

So yes, Soho is emerging from the crisis, battered but still enormously popular. The need for the community as a whole to engage with and hold to account the council has never been greater if we are to prevent irreversible changes to Soho under the cover of the crisis.

Tim Lord

Chair, The Soho Society

Soho Business Alliance proposals to Westminster Council for pedestrianisation in 2020



Westminster City Council
westminster.gov.uk



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Tim Lord
Chair, Soho Society
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Wednesday 10 March 2020

Dear Tim,

Following your appearance on BBC London last week, I am reaching out to clear up any potential misunderstanding and make an open offer to work with you as we think about the future of al fresco hospitality in Soho. I really do understand the concerns held by residents in Soho and I am absolutely clear that whatever we do must work for the community as a whole. In that context, and in the spirit of working closely with you on the future of Soho, I want to be absolutely clear that the only decision we have made is to allow al fresco hospitality schemes to continue on a temporary basis from the planned reopening on 12 April until the end of September. The resident community will be fully involved in deliberations on what, if anything, happens after September as we want to work with you on this. We expect formal consultation to start in April or May.

We have announced that we will temporarily extend outdoor dining until September to support the hospitality sector after what has been a very difficult time for business. It is critical that our businesses can welcome customers back in a safe way, as they did last summer. The hours of operation will remain as they were set last summer and will not be extended. I know this has also been a concern for some residents.

However, I want to reiterate that these remain temporary measures and no decision has been made on the provision of outdoor hospitality beyond September. Any changes to the city to accommodate outdoor hospitality beyond September will have community input and be subject to formal consultation. This means we won't do anything without the clear backing of the local community, hence why I really want to work with you on the proposals for Soho.

You are right that there must be a balance of attractions in the area, and we want residents and visitors alike to enjoy everything that Soho has to offer safely. We are working very hard with partners and cultural institutions on a programme of events to draw people back to Soho and the West End, including Inside Out, our cultural showcase that will be launched in the summer. We very much understand there is plenty to attract visitors to Soho and this includes, but is not limited to, hospitality.

I hope that you and Soho residents are reassured that these current, planned measures are temporary, as well as by my clear commitment that any future schemes will be developed with input from the local community.

As always, my colleagues and I are happy to discuss our thinking in more detail, and I note Cllr Matthew Green will be joining the public meeting organised by the Soho Society on Thursday to address any further concerns.

Yours sincerely,

CLlr Rachael Robathan
Leader of Westminster Council

SOHO SQUARE GENERAL PRACTICE

We hope that this finds you well as we start to emerge from this lengthy lockdown.

The lockdown has clearly helped to drive down cases of Coronavirus within our community, but at some cost to our overall wellbeing.

We encourage all readers to address any health issues, whether these are physical, psychological or otherwise, that may have arisen over the past few months of lockdown, with their GP or other healthcare provider.

Health services, including ours, have remained open throughout the pandemic. We currently operate a 'telephone first' service, but continue to see patients in person where clinically necessary.

As national restrictions further ease, and in line with NHS guidance, we will look to adjust our model so that patients can have the access to our service which best suits their needs.

We are fully supportive of the Coronavirus Vaccination programme, and are working with our colleagues across Westminster GP surgeries to support the implementation and ensure equitable access to all residents.

We encourage everyone who is eligible to take up the vaccine offer when it is available to them. If you or someone

you know is struggling to access the vaccine, you can find information about this at www.nhs.uk. If you are hesitant to have the vaccine, please talk to us before you make a final decision.

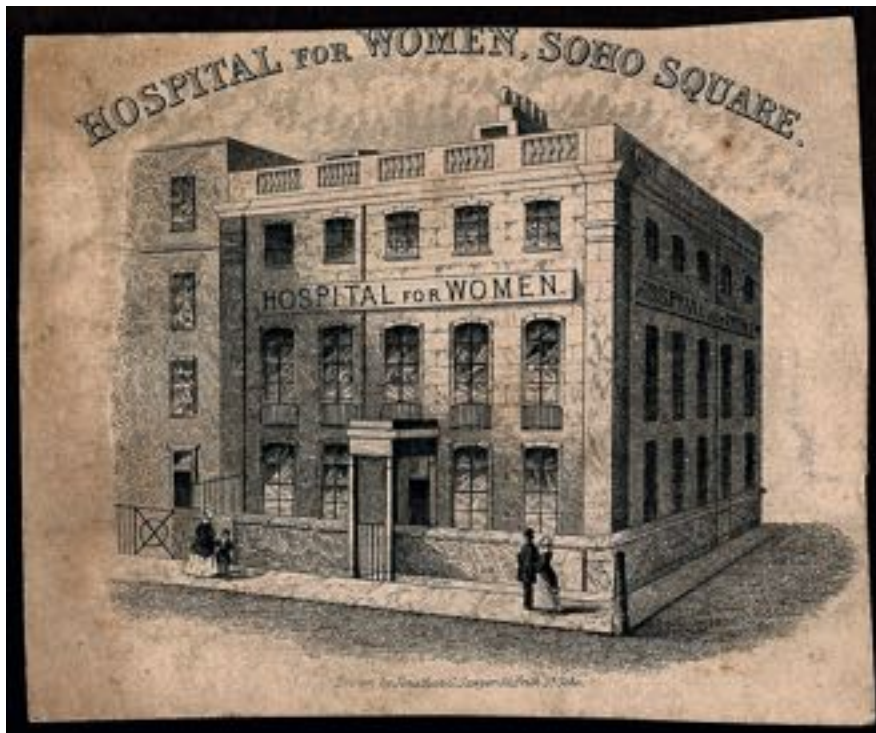
For anyone not currently registered with a GP surgery we offer a quick and straightforward registration process, please see our website www.sohosquaregp.nhs.uk for details.

We now have a permanent and stable workforce. We are delighted to welcome our newest clinician Dr Ming Ho Liu to the team. Dr Liu offers consultations in Cantonese as well as English.

In spite of the pandemic patient numbers have grown over 12% in the last 12 months, the surgery now has almost 5,000 patients, and this growth will help us create a sustainable long-term practice.

As always we welcome any patient feedback or suggestions that will assist us in developing the practice and improving our service. We would be grateful for any reviews left on NHS Choices or Google.

Sree Agarwal



SOHO SOCIETY HOUR



In February Joel Levack and I welcomed guests to the 350th programme of The Soho Society Hour, 315 of which were co-hosted by the indefatigable Clare Lynch. The programme goes out live every Thursday morning between 9.00 and 10.00am. Recent programmes are then available on the Soho Society website and older programmes on Mixcloud.

During the five years since Soho Radio started up and the Soho Society was invited to produce a weekly programme, we have welcomed over 450 guests from every walk of Soho life, and from its many different interdependent communities - and sometimes from across the border in Fitzrovia and Covent Garden. Guests talk to us about their personal and business relationship with Soho and I don't think we have ever had a guest who did not say that Soho is a special place.

Most recently we have welcomed guests - local residents (including Kai Lutterodt, aka The Soho Girl, who produces My Soho Times), members of the Soho Society Executive, independent retailers and businesses (Fleet London, Rapha Bikes, the Algerian Coffee Stores, Storm Flowers), hairdressers (Paul Jessett), actors (Jim Fish), charities (WECT and the Samaritans) local estate agents (GLP and Knight Frank), musicians and performers (Tim Arnold, Lydia Piechowiak), exhibition spaces (the

Changing Room Gallery), post-production (Carole Humphries/GCRS), restaurateur (Jeremy King), the Chinese Community (China Exchange and Restaurateur Geoff Leong), St. Anne's and St. Patrick's Churches), authors (Alim Kheraj: *Queer London*); the Soho Business Alliance.

The coming months promise to be equally diverse. We are always interested to hear from anyone who would like to tell us and our listeners about "their Soho", about their business, or a new project. So if you would like to join us one week on the programme do get in touch at: radio@thesohosociety.org.uk or call 0300 302 1301 We will certainly be returning to the important issues of street closures and *Al Fresco* dining, and post-covid hopes and concerns.

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Rachel and Will at Soho Radio for inducting Joel into the technicalities of radio broadcasting, and providing essential technical support every week, helping us to get the show on the road. And of course we have to thank Soho Radio itself for welcoming us and giving us studio space every week, originally in their Great Windmill Street studios, and now in their Broadwick Street studios.

Leslie Hardcastle OBE



PLANNING

MATTHEW BENNETT

There continue to be fewer planning applications than normal during the various Covid restrictions, most were uncontroversial, but we have kept our eyes open on a number of potential problems. We objected to roller shutters being installed at locations in Newport Street and in Rupert Street as these downgrade the appearance of both the Soho and the Chinatown Conservation Areas. We objected to a hot food take away in Little Newport Street because of the potential for anti-social behaviour and litter. We also opposed applications for external gas patio heaters which simply burn fossil fuels to create carbon dioxide. We also opposed a large fully openable shopfront proposed on Great Marlborough Street because of the potential for noise nuisance. We noted the problems of reletting a large unit on the northside of Leicester Square and accepted that hotel use in this location was a suitable alternative to restaurant and retail uses.

The premises at 33 Old Compton Street continue to be a problem for its neighbours in that controversial works have been carried out there without the benefit of planning permission. At first floor level a flat has been created which is not in residential use but is perpetually used for short term letting and an external hot tub has been installed and used by guests at all hours causing real nuisance to other neighbouring occupiers. In addition, the ground floor food and beverage unit installed a full height extract duct without seeking consent. Another continuing irritation to local residents on the upper floors of 30-31 Peter Street is that the restaurant below seeks to continue the use of large openable windows which were installed without authorisation and the noise from the restaurant and its music has caused repeated problems.

Whilst we were pleased to see that a hoarding is going up around the Elisabeth Line entrance at the top of Dean Street as the prelude to the construction of new residential accommodation, we objected to the commercial nature of the advertising on the hoarding. Given that local people through the Soho Society put a lot of work into producing professional large scale community photos for use on the Crossrail station which were not used because of a change of heart by Crossrail we would like to see these used on the hoarding whilst the very welcome new flats are constructed above.

A potentially very controversial development at 91-92 Dean Street has been discussed locally but not yet been submitted for planning. This is to upgrade the existing hostel with a capacity of 295 bedspaces to around 830 using Japanese style sleeping pods. There are also serious implications for the valuable NHS service for the homeless in Great Chapel Street which would be forced to move out if the development went ahead as proposed.

Soho Neighbourhood Forum

The Independent Examiner for the neighbourhood plan has issued her draft report which recommends that the plan goes forward to the referendum stage. This report is subject to a short fact checking process, but we hope this will be issued soon and that Westminster will start to set in place the referendums of residents and businesses necessary to bring it into statutory effect.

On a more practical note, we are pleased that we are starting to apply some community infrastructure levy (CIL) funds to the things that the community has asked us to. We are funding new school gates at Soho Parish School, new traffic cameras and pollution measuring equipment and a feasibility study with the Soho Business Alliance as to how food and beverage businesses can better handle their waste. Work is also going forward to install a variety of greening measures.

We are also aware that the City Council is keen to agree a long-term vision for Soho post pandemic and has started to consult the Forum and the Society about the elements it should contain.

STOP PRESS The Forum has just been informed by the City of Westminster that the referendums of residents and businesses within Soho to vote to bring the Plan into effect are likely to be either 22 or 24 June. The date and voting arrangements will be confirmed soon but please make a note in your diary.

LICENSING

RICHARD BROWN



May I first say that it is a pleasure to be asked by the Soho Society to write another article for The Clarion. This is particularly so when my pet topic, licensing, is back in the news. I am constantly impressed by the amount of time pillars of the Society spend to protect, promote and further the Society's aims and objectives and look after the interests of its members – not least now when, at the time of writing, hospitality businesses have just been permitted to reopen for outside, seated service. As readers will be aware, Westminster City Council has continued its 'al fresco' scheme to close certain streets of an evening to allow for larger areas to be used for outside service.

The subject of this article however is the City Council's new Statement of Licensing Policy and new 'Cumulative Impact Assessment' ("CIA") which were published in January 2021 following extensive research and consultation. The City Council must formulate a Policy at least every 5 years, and can publish a CIA if it considers that the number of existing licences is such that granting further licences of certain types is likely to be in conflict with the City Council's duty to promote the licensing objective. The Soho Society expended a considerable amount of time in producing a lengthy and comprehensive response to the consultation.

In particular, they were keen to show their support for a change in the Policy which reflected a frustration that the Society has often had when deciding whether to respond to a licence application – a lack of sufficient information in the application. The Policy now specifies that applicants should include as much detail as possible to enable residents to understand the operation of the premises and how the licensing objectives will be promoted.

In keeping with the intended balance of rights and responsibilities under licensing law, there is concomitant encouragement for residents responding to applications to do so with as much detail as possible so that concerns or misunderstandings can be addressed by the applicant. Mediation is also encouraged. Where an agreement is not possible, those who have made representations are encouraged to attend the Licensing Sub-Committee meeting where the application is determined. I echo this advice. Oftentimes it can help residents and give them the opportunity to hear and understand better the reasons for the application, how the premises will operate, what additional conditions or amendments have been proposed etc. It also provides residents with the opportunity to address the Sub-Committee on their concerns. We can help with this.

The substance of the Policy remains unchanged. For many years Soho and other parts of the West End have been designated as an area of 'cumulative impact' due to cumulative effect of the concentration of late night and drink led premises. Depending on the nature of the operation (typically defined by way of conditions on the licence) an applicant must either demonstrate an exception to the Policy, or that they will not add to this cumulative impact.

What has been particularly challenging about developing the Policy is, of course, the Covid-19 pandemic - how and to what extent to account for the impact of the pandemic in a way which reflects the distinctly challenging environment for the hospitality industry but which also promotes the licensing objectives and protects residents.

The City Council must publish a CIA if they wish to retain/ implement strict policies on granting certain types of new licences or longer hours. The CIA must detail the evidence for the policies. The City Council undertook this process through 2017-2019 – a very different landscape in the West End to that which pertained during most of 2020 when the policy approach was being developed and consultation with stakeholders taking place.

The evidence collected supported further policy restriction on applications, as they would be likely to add to cumulative impact. However, the CIA also recognised the reality that 'the patterns observed in this research may not accurately describe the fabric and dynamics of the City at the time this assessment was published.' – that is, the impact of the pandemic. Accordingly, following consultation, the City Council decided that they would not implement the findings in full at the current time but would continue with the existing policy approach where possible.

It remains to be seen how the new Policy will be applied in relation to applications for longer hours in Soho. The Soho Society will have plenty of opportunities in the near future to check how the new Policy is being applied in practice, due to the weight of applications which continue to be made.

Richard Brown - Licensing Advice Project

Citizens Advice Westminster

licensing@westminstercab.org.uk

SOHO HOUSING

JANE HARRISON, INTERIM CEO

I am delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to this edition of the Clarion and give an update on activities at Soho Housing, a significant local provider of affordable homes and commercial premises in the heart of the West End.

I joined Soho Housing as Finance Director in November 2019 but since early December 2020 have also taken on the responsibilities of Interim Chief Executive, supported by a strong Executive team and skilled and experienced Board members. The last year, and in particular the last few months, have been very challenging for us, for our residents and for our commercial tenants. As we move forward gradually out of lockdown the green shoots of spring have never felt quite so apt or desired.

Our tenants, both residential and commercial, are front and centre of everything we do. The lockdowns during 2020 and early 2021 have meant changes in the ways we interact with them as well as with each other. Our office on Charing Cross Road was closed for much of the period as staff were expected to work from home, although some of the team continued with limited estate visits throughout the year. We have since moved to a new base, 18 Hanway Street, just north of Oxford Street and are planning our own road map out of lockdown. We are looking forward to welcoming staff and visitors to the new office later in the summer.

For some staff (and residents) the office move may seem like going back in time: until a few years ago the entire building at 18 Hanway Street was the Soho Housing office. This time the office will be occupying the ground and lower ground floors and has been updated to a modern working and meeting space, accessible for all. We let out the remainder of the building to tenants with a mix of social and market tenures.

The health and safety of our residents is paramount and we've continued with our essential compliance testing throughout the year. Whilst acknowledging all other repair work is important, our focus has been on emergency and urgent repairs and consequently there have been some delays with non-urgent works. We are working with additional contractors to increase the volume of repairs and complete those delayed during lockdown.

One thing that has changed during the last year is the way we communicate with our tenants, other stakeholders and with each other. We've all had to adapt to virtual meetings and many more phone calls and email conversations than previously experienced. Internet connectivity has become a critical aspect of life. When we've been able to meet we've worn face masks and observed social distancing – and this seems likely to continue for some time yet, although the successful roll-out of the vaccine is offering hope for greater social interaction.



Outdoor dining is returning to Soho. Whilst this is good news for some businesses and for bringing the buzz back to Soho, it will also mean disruption for many residents. We have asked our tenants for their views on the forthcoming street closures and evening dining out on the streets of Soho. Many people acknowledge the benefit of time-limited street closures, particularly for local businesses, but have highlighted the late-night and early-morning noise as a major concern, based on their experience last year. Deliveries and refuse collection in the middle of the night were cited specifically.

As a local landlord with both residential and commercial tenants we are acutely aware of the need to balance residential amenity and wellbeing with the promotion of commercial activity. We will work with local councillors, businesses and community representatives to achieve a fair balance and make sure our residents' voices are heard.

The latest relaxation of lockdown restrictions means that many of our commercial tenants business can resume,

albeit at a gentle pace initially. We have worked closely with these tenants throughout the pandemic to help sustain their businesses and provide a stable platform from which to move forward. Some businesses have not survived. However, the draw of this diverse and vibrant area remains strong and we have recently signed agreements with a number of new tenants who want to operate in the heart of Soho.

Some commercial tenants have used the opportunity of lockdown to carry out adaptations to their premises in order to allow easier and safer access for customers. New businesses coming to Charing Cross Road include a Korean restaurant and a Japanese cosmetic enterprise. We're continuing to experience strong interest in any vacant units, with potential tenants seeking longer-term commitments of ten years or more; good news for the future of Soho!

REGENT STREET CARRIAGEWAY RESTRICTIONS

The Crown Estate, with permission from the council, has widened the pavement in Regent Street and Langham Place to make room for more shoppers. This means vehicle traffic is now one lane in either direction not two lanes. This will not bring reduced car usage but rather greater congestion on those arterial routes and in Soho as businesses return. If a bus breaks down (as happened recently) all the traffic stops in that direction. The council approved it and, in a familiar refrain, concerns are brushed away on the basis that this is a temporary intervention - in this case 18 months. We have recently

been told that the 18 months runs from January this year - i.e the temporary road restrictions will run until 19 July 2022. We do not share the council's view about when the restricted period started. Carriageway restrictions and pavement widening actually began when the green barriers were installed in May 2020, therefore we believe the 18 months ends in November this year.

Tim Lord

Regent Street, May 2020



WARD PANEL UPDATE

AND OTHER NEWS

It will be no surprise that during the lockdown there was very little crime. However, al fresco has brought an increase in crime, in particular theft of phones from tables. The thieves are very quick and often the victims are not aware that phones are gone until it's too late. There is one story of a phone being tracked, only for the owner to find that it had arrived overseas the next day - no doubt with many others. So please be aware and don't become a victim.

The ward panel's priorities for this quarter were theft/robbery, drugs and cyclists. The first two are standard priorities but there has been widespread complaint during lockdown about cyclists and the danger and annoyance they cause by riding the wrong way up one-streets, not dismounting where there are clear signs that they should do so, and cycling on pavements, and so on. This was a first for the ward priorities, though it has been a problem for some time. I understand the police have stopped many riders and that it's starting to have an effect, though there's a long way to go.

If you're a victim of crime, please report it. If it's just posted on twitter or other social media, it's not regarded as a report of crime, more as a comment.

www.met.police.uk

999 in an emergency

101 non-emergency

@metcc where you are given a number and the problem is relayed to the appropriate place.

I would like to thank Steve Muldoon, Kenny Brown and V Iqbal for their hard work on our behalf.

Also problems with noise, including buskers and pedicabs should likewise not be reported on twitter, where it's regarded as 'comment', but should be reported to the Council either by calling 020 7641 2000 or reporting online at www.westminster.gov.uk/report-it. Also council related problems can be reported via Fixmystreet.

Pedicabs are becoming a problem yet again, now that Soho's businesses are returning. They, for some reason, feel it a necessity to play loud music late into the night, and can be aggressive when asked to turn it down. It's still highly unlikely they have any form of insurance or vehicle checks. Let's hope our MP, Nickie Aiken, manages to get the proposed Bill through Parliament. It's high time.

There will be a fuller update on restaurants and other hospitality businesses in the next issue of the Clarion. However, in the meantime we would like to congratulate So|La, Dean Street, on its Michelin Star. Also, we're told

by Mark Fuller that the Karma Sanctum Hotel in Warwick Street has a new chef starting in May, Garry Hollihed, billed as "one of Soho's most prodigious sons". He has had a long association with Mark Fuller and has now come full circle to join the Karma Sanctum Hotel. So watch this space and we wish him well.

The Carnaby area welcomes back visitors with a brand new pink shimmer disk arch reading 'Welcome to Carnaby London' as well as a new outdoor installation by Kristjana Williams, showcasing an exclusive piece of art dedicated towards key workers. If you can't get to Carnaby... download the artwork for free via Carnaby.co.uk.

In the meantime, some new additions include Earthly Matters, a new zero waste refill shop located at 5 Newburgh Street in the Carnaby area. This is the first of its kind in the neighbourhood, and has an extensive range of organic, allergen-free and environmentally friendly products including fresh and dried groceries, health supplements and toiletries. Foods such as nuts, grains, and breakfast cereals are available to purchase alongside immune boosting vitamins, vegan proteins, and nutritional powders. Shoppers are encouraged to bring empty containers to fill and refill as a means of cutting down on single use plastics. There is also an option to purchase reusable glass jars or use paper bags to fill up with supplies.

Also in Carnaby Street for cyclists there is the Carnaby Bike Hub, 57 Carnaby Street. As cycling is the 'new best way' to get around town this should be welcomed by cyclists. It's free to use. There is space for 50 bikes on a first come, first served basis, so what are you waiting for.

Some of the food-stalls in Berwick Street have returned though not many, but thanks go to Pitstop Carol, who has been out on Wednesdays feeding the local community (and lately Mondays and Thursdays), and of course Soho Dairy and Jimmy's Fruit and Veg, who are out every day.

The Co-Op is due to open on Berwick Street on 28 May, having been closed due to the 'lengthy' development of 90-104 Berwick Street, which has caused such stress to all those in the immediate vicinity.

There is a consultation taking place regarding the Rupert Street market, which once housed Street Food Union, supported by Soho Estates, the idea of which was to provide food for office workers at the same time as providing a step-up for would be restaurateurs and those wanting a change in career. It was certainly beneficial to the area when it was trading, as Rupert Street / Tisbury Court had a 'reputation' for drug abuse and dealing.

Jane Doyle

WISH YOU WERE HERE?



Like a scene from Dr Who, bright blue TARDISEs and grey droids have appeared across Soho. Amid endless construction, rubbish piling up on street corners and terrorist blockade barriers, these alien urinals - not designed for use in such open public spaces - have been randomly dumped in the very middle of public walkways, requiring grown men to expose themselves to passers-by due to the total lack of privacy these facilities offer.

While existing public conveniences remain shuttered by the council, additional provisions are welcomed. But perhaps a little more discretion on their positioning is in order.

Soho's public realm has never looked so diabolical. A world class tourist destination ready to begin welcoming visitors back? Or a shabby building site poorly equipped for the return of tourists and families heading to theatres and restaurants? This summer, many may wish they were somewhere else.

Jason Fisher-Jones

A VISION FOR SOHO 2021-2040

At the last Soho Society exec meeting we approved our Soho Vision for 2021-2040 as an alternative to the Council's own impressive landscape document running to 216 pages. Our document runs to four pages and can be examined on the Society's website. Please take a look and let us know if you agree or disagree and what you think is sensible and what is not. Thanks to Quentin Thompson for drafting and producing the document.

We think section 5 of the document provides a useful summary:-

5. A vision for the future

There have been many changes in Soho over the past 20 years or so - not all for the better. But policies for, and reactions to, the changes have tended to be relatively ad hoc, almost tinkering while the area steadily declines. Recovery from the pandemic provides an opportunity to be bolder so that Soho is 'built back better'. Positive changes are more likely if they form part of an underlying vision.

We are developing ideas for an overall vision... These are in their early stages and need more work - as well as more data, for example from the SNF's planned traffic use study. But components of a vision might include:

1. A vastly improved environment by reducing the volume of rubbish on the streets. Various options are being considered and the investigations are being funded by the SNF through the CIL process.

2. A major reduction in the concentration of drunken and anti-social behaviours in Soho at night. A good step would be for WCC to limit all new and renewed alcohol licences to its own 'core hours', along with using cumulative impact data to set limits on the numbers and times of licenses. Other steps might include implementing the existing law on drinking on the 'open street' and having electronic noise monitoring installed in premises and in the street. A strong 'policing' presence would need to be able to act quickly to enforce these limits.

3. A greater variety of outlets, not only retail but also more varied F&B. This could be facilitated by a WCC initiative to make active use of planning and licensing policies to encourage a variety of building uses on any one street. Landlords could also be encouraged to accept their responsibilities to Soho by adjusting their lettings and rental approaches to try to attract a greater variety of types of tenant. Active enforcement of the current limits on Airbnb would also encourage more actual residents to live in Soho.

Please post your comments, ideas and suggestions to:
www.thesohosociety.org.uk

TWENTIETH CENTURY HOUSE

The planning application to demolish 20th Century House in Soho Square has been restarted (it paused last year while a report on the construction impact was put together) and the committee hearing is likely to take place later this summer or possibly September. The date has moved out because of the change in Westminster's planning policy that took place in April this year.

Under the new plan the applicant will have to submit an assessment of the carbon impact of demolition and rebuild.

In the latest round of comments to the council 229 people commented with 227 objecting and zero supporting the scheme. Over the last two years it has become very clear what a substantial contribution this much loved building makes to the Soho Conservation Area. Investigating its history has revealed how much has happened there - essentially an enormous part of the production, distribution and publicity for the UK and US film industry took place in this building over the last 80 years. From Shirley Temple, Marilyn Monroe and Julie Andrews all the way to Carrie Fisher would be one way of looking at it.

If permission is granted it will be three years of construction, producing a Frankenstein monster of a building with a partially retained facade in one of London's oldest and most historical squares, a new retail area tacked on to the south east corner of the square, the loss of thousands of tonnes of embedded CO2 then requiring similar tonnes of new carbon intensive resources to rebuild, the loss of a building that survived Hitler's bombs, and the loss of a unique connection to the UK's film industry which was centred in Soho, with 31 million visits to the cinema every week in 1946. Hard to think of a better example of our shared cultural heritage.

We continue to ask Royal London to withdraw the application and work with the community in finding a worthy tenant for the building, one that would value a refurbished office building with a real and meaningful history attached.

Tim Lord



Dear Mr. Walton and the Council of Westminster:

I am writing this letter in support of saving Twentieth Century House not only because it is an important site to the history of Twentieth Century Fox but also to the British film industry as a whole.

Almost a century ago, Fox Film Corporation made the bold move of setting up international offices in an effort to make and promote films around the world. The United Kingdom was an obvious choice due to the lack of language barrier and the constant flow of British talent to and from Hollywood. Choosing a smart location, Fox would install itself in Soho Square and remain there for almost a century. In addition to being a hub of film activity, that London location was forever memorialized at the famous Twentieth Century Fox "Café de Paris" commissary in Los Angeles in the 1930s as part of the mural depicting the studio's international outposts (see attached picture). Twentieth Century House is an important locale due to the fact that many important films were developed, promoted, and distributed from these premises. Beginning in the 1930s, Fox became heavily invested in making British films and made a colorful mark on British film history by bringing the first Technicolor movie filmed in the UK -- *Wings of the Morning* (1937), starring Henry Fonda and Annabella -- to the screen. Fox continued to make distinctly British fare by showcasing Gracie Fields' talents in *We're Going To Be Rich* (1938) and *Smiling Along* (1939); boosting Carol Reed's prestige with *Night Train to Munich* (1940); and *The Remarkable Mr. Kipps* (1941); and had fun with Gordon Harker and Alastair Sim in several *Inspector Hornleigh* films.

During the post-war period, Twentieth Century House would really shine as the center of production for a myriad of film achievements. In the 1950s, Fox again captivated British audiences by introducing them to "CinemaScope" with the Vivien Leigh film *The Deep Blue Sea* (1955), the first film shot in widescreen in the UK. Fox produced ambitious period pieces like *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines* (1965) and *A High Wind to Jamaica* (1965); created fascinating character studies like *The Mudlark* (1950) with Irene Dunne as Queen Victoria and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1969) with Maggie Smith as the irrepresible school teacher (which won her an Oscar); fostered clever comedies like *Modesty Blaise* (1966) and the original *Bedazzled* (1967) with Dudley Moore and Peter Cook (and Raquel Welch!); and reached celestial highs with James Stewart and Marlene Dietrich in thrillers like *No Highway in the Sky* (1950) and devilish lows with Gregory Peck and Lee Remick in *The Omen* (1976), to name a few. But perhaps most relevant to today's film audiences is the fact that Twentieth Century House is where the logistics for the filming in the UK of the original *Star Wars* (1977) would have been handled. The production decisions, the travel arrangements, the studio administration, and the promotional activities in the UK would have all occurred within those walls. In fact, the publicity and distribution of all Fox films in the UK from the 1930s to the present would have emanated from here as well -- the movies of Shirley Temple, Marilyn Monroe, *The Sound of Music*, *Alien*, and all of the *X-Men* films. If it was a Fox film, it passed through Soho Square!

I learned from my colleagues who worked at Twentieth Century House that, from time-to-time over the past few decades, there was discussion of moving the Fox headquarters to a new location in London but it never happened because of the historical connection. Fox had been at Soho Square so long that it was inconceivable that it could be somewhere else: Twentieth Century House was Fox in London -- and so they stayed. Even though Twentieth Century Fox is now just a part of history, it seems even more relevant to maintain this unique British film history site.

In addition to its film connection, let me add that it would be a shame for Westminster to lose such a lovely building as Twentieth Century House. I spent a summer working in London a few years back and it remains one of my favorite cities. Many an evening I found myself wandering the quaint streets and squares. It really bothered me to see old London replaced with architecture that seems so incongruous. For example, I distinctly remember visiting Berkeley Square for the first time and being shocked to see that a modern building had been allowed to be built on one of the city's most picturesque squares. Don't they know, I asked myself, that people travel from far and wide with the hope of hearing a nightingale sing there and that a new building really affects the aesthetic? If the last century has taught us anything regarding city planning it is that steel and glass do not a beautiful city make. I hope the council decides to save Twentieth Century House from demolition and continues to protect the unique character of Soho Square.

Sincerely, Jeffrey Paul Thompson
Twentieth Century Fox archivist (2005-2016)
Co-author of the official corporate history "Twentieth Century Fox: A Century of Entertainment"

FAREWELL TO ST ANNE'S



It was in February 2013 that I first came to St Anne's Church, Soho, to attend the licensing of Fr Simon Buckley as the priest-in-charge (he's now the rector). Working, as I did, at King's College London, and with no particular church to attend on Sundays, I decided to come along the next Sunday – and the rest, as they say, is history.

Very quickly I found at St Anne's a diversity and inclusion that is not often found in the average parish church. Here was, and is, a community of young and old, male and female, gay and straight, and all those who simply don't fit into such binary classifications. And clearly a community – not just a collection of individuals gathering on any given Sunday morning – working and worshipping together. The buzz of conversation after a Sunday service, the gathering together for lunch in a local bistro (a regular monthly feature of St Anne's, especially good for newcomers to make new friends), socialising together with Lady Lambrini (our own church-based drag-queen) at one of her amazing fund-raising and community-building evenings, or simply meeting with a handful of others for Morning Prayer during the week – all speak of community and purpose.

St Anne's is a church in what is sometimes called the "liberal catholic" tradition. It means that our commitment to the Christian faith and the Gospel – that God is with us in Jesus, decisively and uniquely – is lived out in an inclusive and liberal approach to and welcome of all. So I've valued being part of a church earthed in the local community – through the parish school (where so many of our local children are educated), our partnership with the Soho Society, our provision as a meeting place for AA and other support services, our lunch club for the not-so-young – they all speak to and express a commitment to Soho and to the preservation of this unique and diverse village in the midst of a huge metropolis. We're a community that celebrates well together (Gay Pride and Chinese New Year being two examples), but also knows how to grieve collectively (I think of the annual Admiral Duncan Memorial), and in both to be alongside all who join us.

It was five years ago that I formalised my relationship with St Anne's by becoming the assistant priest – a voluntary

post, alongside my continuing role as Chaplain and Vice-Dean at King's College London. For most of this time I've lived close to the Barbican with my wife Jen, who's superintendent minister of Wesley's Chapel. But, as others will testify, we may well have our homes elsewhere, but having been touched by Soho, we know it as the village where we've felt at home. Soho is indeed unique in central London of being a real place where not just residents but others feel they have a home. Every time I've gathered with others at St Anne's (and "virtually" this last year) I felt both an honour and a privilege.

St Anne's, under the kind and generous leadership of Fr Simon, seeks to be, and I believe is, a community of welcome because we believe that this is how God is. We don't seek to judge any for their religious or other beliefs, but we do seek to pattern in ourselves a Christian faith that is open, inclusive, and as welcoming of others as, we believe, God has been of us in Jesus. And in that work, being true to what we believe, we partner with all people of good will in standing alongside, welcoming, and championing the causes of all those who've been excluded, marginalised, or despised.

In May I begin a new role as I become a bishop. I'm to be consecrated and then installed as the new Bishop of Argyll and The Isles – that's western Scotland. In many ways where I go could not be more different from Soho and St Anne's Church. But I take with me the values which I believe are transferable anywhere – that geographical areas can be communities of people, that churches and other places of gathering should be welcome to all and servants of their communities, and that fun and laughter is part of what we bring, and can sustain us in the bad times as well as the good.

May God continue to bless Soho!

Keith Riglin

NICKIE AIKEN

CONSERVATIVE MP FOR CITIES OF LONDON &
WESTMINSTER



We need to scrap the Vagrancy Act to end rough sleeping.

One of the reasons I came into politics was to end rough sleeping. First as a Councillor, and now as an MP, I've made the case to government that in order to end rough sleeping, the Vagrancy Act needs to be scrapped. I recently made the case for doing so in a Westminster Hall debate.

The 1824 Act is simply no longer fit for purpose. It fails to address the 21st-century problems that so many work tirelessly to deal with among the street population. The main problem is that rather than seeking to help those on the street, it criminalises them.



The better outcome for rough sleepers and for society is surely to address the reasons why they are on the street in the first place. From my experience of being responsible for rough sleeping policy in Westminster and my long association with charities such as St Mungo's and the Passage, I feel there is a clear solution.

We need to replace the Vagrancy Act with laws that take a more assertive outreach approach. Greater social care and specialist medical support needs to be offered to rough sleepers alongside the safety of a bed. Care should include access to an addiction counsellor, psychiatric help, and medical support.

If we get this right, it will end the revolving door that too many rough sleepers currently experience whereby

they accept outreach help, are placed in a hostel and eventually into their own accommodation - but too often find themselves back on the streets because their underlying mental health or addictions have not been addressed.

Many living on the street have complex needs. Some do not have the mental health capacity to make decisions for their own wellbeing or to accept the help on offer. If this approach is to work, we need to overhaul the mental health threshold and allow outreach workers to make the decision on their behalf.

It also needs to be backed up with long term funding. Local authorities and charities need to know Government funding for such services will be available for at least three years rather than the current annual basis.

During the pandemic, the Government's 'Everyone In' strategy saw 90% of those on the street brought in, and many accepted the on-site mental health and addiction help provided. Recent annual rough sleeping figures demonstrate the strategy's success - there's been a 27% reduction in rough sleeping in Westminster.

I recently asked a question to Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick about this and was delighted when he said the Vagrancy Act "should be consigned to history".

Repealing and replacing it, longer term funding attaching health services to accommodation and overhauling the mental health criteria will do that very thing.

Agree with Nickie that the Vagrancy Act should be repealed? Let her know at www.nickie.news/VagrancyAct

Want to contact Nickie about an issue or concern? Email Nickie at nickie.aiken.mp@parliament.uk or call 020 7219 4553

You can also keep up to date with Nickie on social media @ [twocitiesnickie](#) on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

A PARENT IN SOHO

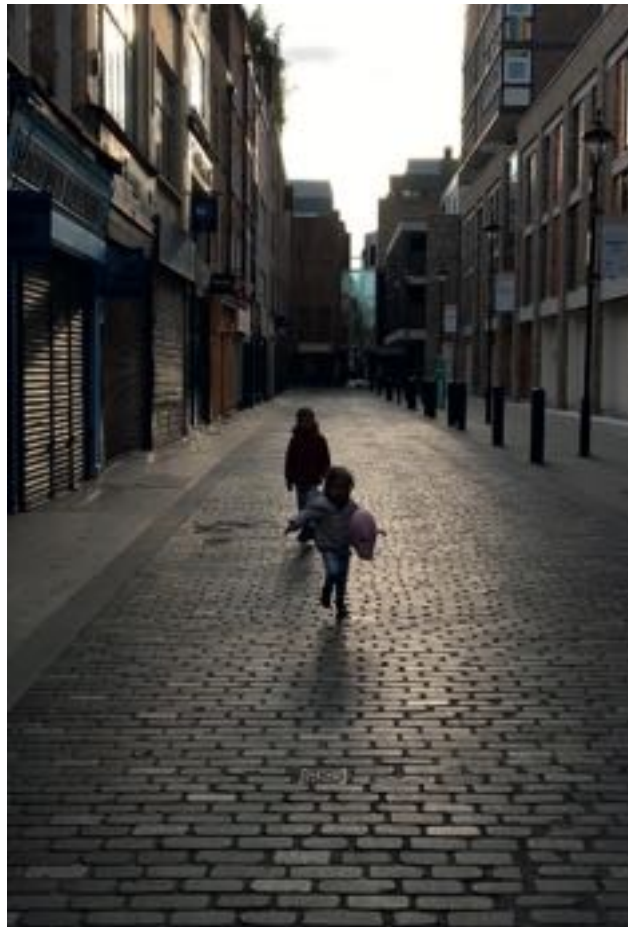
The past year has seen a change to the way we work, the way we parent, the way we socialise and the way we live, I am sure far better writers will scribe endlessly over the coming months and years on the impact the pandemic and various lockdowns have had on every part of our lives. I wanted to take this opportunity to write about bringing up young children in Soho, not only over the last year but before.

As many have said before, living in Soho is like no where else in the city, we live in a village, probably the most famous village in the country, during the past year my son has started school at Soho Parish, and I commend the teachers and staff for making what has been very unusual, seem routine. My daughter attends the Soho Centre nursery, and it has been great to see that remain open as much as possible.

Throughout the last year, local businesses like Soho Dairy have proved vital. Robin and Keith have provided a friendly face and a chat whilst the children stretch their legs on Berwick Street. Grabbing a pint of milk or a coffee whilst playing football with my children on 'market road' as my son calls it has been one of the most enjoyable things over the last year.

One of the biggest issues about living in Soho is the ongoing construction, some days it seems Soho is just one big construction site. I do wonder if my children will ever be able walk down their road without having to dodge delivery drivers on the pavements (a developing issue), scaffolding, or other building debris flying through the air. The biggest issue here is safety or lack of it, parents with small children in buggies need clear accessible walkways to get around,

not only is this not the case on some streets where we are forced on to the roadway with no safe walkway provision provided, this is either done due to ignorance or lack of knowledge of who needs access. This is not helped by Westminster City Council who seem to just not care about the impact the construction work has on not only families but all residents here.



As we look forward to the imminent re opening of Soho, there are some obvious trepidations about what it will bring:

Will the crime and the drug problems return?

Will the community spirit remain?

Will WCC keep the al fresco dining in check so it does not overtly impact residents' lives negatively?

Will we continue to support the local businesses that have proved so vital throughout the last year?

Can we support the businesses to reopen and make sure Soho still feels local?

I guess time will tell, long term it will be interesting to see how the kids react to larger crowds returning, I am sure they will miss playing on 'market road'. Whatever the case, I will

make sure my children are incredibly proud of growing up in this unique/diverse village in the centre of our city. A place where you can still stop and have a chat with your neighbour.

A Soho Parent

GERRY CAMPION: A CENTENARY SALUTE

BY PAUL RYAN



Above the customers' side of the bar in Gerry's Club in Soho hangs a small photograph of a contented-looking man sitting with a glass of wine at an outdoor table in the South of France. Anyone of a certain age who studies it for a few moments might find something familiar in that round, bespectacled face. This was Gerald Campion, famous on children's television in the Fifties as the incarnation of that legendary schoolboy, Billy Bunter. More importantly, he was the "Gerry" who founded the club that bears his name.

He was born 100 years ago on 23 April 1921 in a room above the Angel pub, just off the northern stretch of Shaftesbury Avenue. Back then it belonged to Gerry's grandfather and was run by his mum Louise (a cousin of Charlie Chaplin). His father Cyril was a screenwriter who wrote scripts for such stars as Boris Karloff and Will Hay (with whom Gerry would appear in *The Ghost of Saint Michael's*) and Gerry was named after one of his godparents, the legendary actor-manager Gerald du Maurier. With such a pedigree, acting and hospitality were entwined in Gerry's life from the very start.

By the time he was cast as Bunter, Gerry was a married father of two who managed the Buckstone Club near the Haymarket Theatre. The membership was made up of stars of stage and screen as well as a fair number of out-of-work jobbing actors while guests included Hollywood A-listers and British Royalty – Campion treated everyone

equally. The Bunter shows were transmitted live, once in the afternoon and again in the evening, so Campion (still running the Buckstone) had a punishing schedule and eventually relied on amphetamines to keep going. Nevertheless, he opened a second club close to the Palladium. This was the Key Club which gave each member a door key (invariably lost) in place of a membership card. But Campion fell out with his "mad woman" partner, and during a break from filming *Bunter*, sought a new club of his own.

He bought a basement in Shaftesbury Avenue for £1500 from an aunt of the actress Wanda Ventham. Gerry's opened on 6 May 1956, with 200 members and it was soon a mecca for the range of stars, celebrities and "resting" actors that had graced the Buckstone. In 1968, Gerry "gifted" the club to actors Bunny May and Sean Lynch (husband of jazz singer Annie Ross). Julian Holloway (son of Stanley and cousin of Soho legend Jeffrey Bernard), amongst others, helped out. After Sean's death, Bunny sold it to Sean's sister Dee who, in 1984, moved it lock, stock and beer barrel into its present home in Dean Street. In 1991, Dee sold it to long-time member Michael Dillon. Gerry died in 2002 but Michael keeps his spirit alive and, while he waits to reopen the club, he (and many others) will be sure to raise a centenary glass to Gerald Campion the "Fat Owl of the Remove" who became Founder of the (largely liquid) Feast.



CHANGING ROOM GALLERY

Changing Room Gallery seeks to change what we know a gallery to be and how we know art to be seen. In a time when creatives are consciously and continually adapting, Changing Room is a gallery that does the same; engaging and aligning itself with change.

Its name, a nod to its original location at the back of a garment store, identifies the possibilities for exposing the practices that so often go unseen. Changing Room Gallery encourages you to walk in on the artistic process at any time.

Changing Room invites artists to occupy the gallery and work in dialogue with the space and the people who pass through it. Based in the heart of Soho, Changing Room brings the creative process to the forefront of the gallery

experience. Changing Room will run a programme of residencies and exhibitions, in which it will integrate process and product, and inspire interaction and conversation.

Apply to our next duo Residency via our website www.changingroomgallery.com.

Co-Director Georgie McGivern

Co-Director Joel Levack



THE MUSEUM OF SOHO

SARAH WISE

As the London School of Economics revamps and expands its Charles Booth Poverty Map website, Sarah Wise reveals what the Booth survey tells us about late 19th-century Soho.

On 15 May 1888, one year before publication of the first volume of his *Life and Labour of the People in London* survey, Charles Booth gave a lecture to the Royal Statistical Society, revealing his investigative team's preliminary findings on the living conditions of the 909,000 inhabitants of East London. At the end, Booth expressed the desire that somebody would undertake the same investigation for the other areas of London.

In Booth's audience was Robert Valpy – barrister and West End charity campaigner. He took up Booth's challenge, and with a team of philanthropists and youth workers, Valpy spent the summer of 1888 creating a 27-page micro-survey of Soho and St Giles-in-the-Fields.

Valpy had a survey population of 113,000 – just one-eighth of Booth's East End total. Keeping to Booth's methodology, Valpy concluded that while there was a smaller percentage of people living in chronic poverty in West Central than in East London, nevertheless, those who were experiencing precarious employment or unemployment endured deeper poverty than their counterparts in East London.

Soho rents were significantly higher than those charged in the East End, he pointed out, with 6 shillings affording a three-room lodging in the East but just a single room in Soho.

Soho was dominated by small-scale workshop manufacturing but there were also a number of large firms operating in 'heavier' industries, such as glass working and gun-making, and big breweries and food-processing plants. One of the largest factories in the district was RW Wilson, a tin-plate works on a huge site between Wardour and Dean Streets. Soho was additionally noted for piano and organ manufacture.

One of the reasons that, towards the end of the 19th century, people believed the East End was poorer than 'Up West' was that as well as being a hard-working part of town, Soho had become, as historian Judith Walkowitz has put it, 'the bureaucratic centre of empire, the hub of communications, transportation, commercial display, entertainment and finance... A modern landscape constructed of office buildings, shops, department stores, museums, opera, concert halls, music halls, restaurants and hotels'.

Soho and St Giles also experienced the breaking up of concentrated communities of the working poor with the construction of Shaftesbury Avenue and widening of Charing Cross Road (these opened in 1886 and 1887 respectively); most notably the total loss of the Five Dials (where Cambridge Circus is today) and Newport Market (Charing Cross Road ploughs right through its site). Thousands of people were displaced as their small homes were demolished for the new roads.

Later, the population decline in Soho, between the Censuses of 1881 and 1891, was 20%, with Soho losing over 9,000 residents. This shrinkage was second only to the population fall in the Square Mile itself, which took place for broadly similar reasons.

One-quarter of the 42,000 residents of Soho and St James's worked in the tailoring trade, and almost half of that one-quarter could be described as "poor" or "very poor", according to the methodology used by Charles Booth and adopted by Robert Valpy. The fashion houses of Regent Street, Bond Street and Oxford Street, and the bespoke gentlemen's outfitters of St James's, had been shifting from in-house workshops to outsourcing manufacture via middlemen. This resulted in a drop in wages, as home-based workers undercut each other to secure orders. The brightly lit shopping streets of the West End were contiguous to slum streets where the produce was manufactured.

A longer version of this article appears on The Museum of Soho's blog:

<http://mosoho.blogspot.com>

London School of Economics Booth website Soho notebooks:

<https://tinyurl.com/revu8j5z>

*Sarah Wise teaches a 6-week 'Introduction to Charles Booth' course at the Bishopsgate Institute and the City Lit, and she is the author of *The Blackest Streets: The Life and Death of a Victorian Slum* (Vintage)*

SOHO REMEMBERS PRINCE PHILIP

His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, engaged with the Soho community on a number of occasions over the last forty years, dating back to the late seventies, not long after the Soho Society and Soho Housing Association were formed. Our heartfelt condolences go to Her Majesty the Queen and all the Royal Family.

Perhaps the Duke found the village of Soho more interesting than the ones immediately surrounding the Palace. We do know that he regularly dined in Soho at Wheeler's in Old Compton Street in the late forties and early fifties as part of a dining club that met every Thursday in an upstairs room.

And perhaps he admired the energy, enthusiasm and creativity of the residents and businesses and other people that he met.

His connection began on a Sunday in June 1977 when the Society organised a cavalcade of twenty floats which travelled round the perimeters of Soho as part of the Queen's Silver Jubilee celebrations. Each float depicted one of the Soho arts and crafts trades of the time.

During the two hour journey, Master Tailor Maxwell Vine and the tailoring firm Dormeuil, in Golden Square, made a hunting jacket for the Duke. At the time tailoring was one of the largest trades in Soho with individual tailors working for the Master Tailors in Savile Row and Sackville Street. The jacket was presented to him at the Palace by Soho Society Executive Members Maxwell Vine, Mario Forte and Eric Wee. Apparently the jacket was a good fit.

Messrs. Vine, Forte and Wee (sadly all no longer with us) invited the Duke to come to Soho to meet Soho traders, crafts people, businesses, residents, and members of the Soho Society Executive Committee. He accepted the invitation and came to a Reception held in the House of St Barnabas, followed by dinner at L'Escargot with the Soho Society Executive.

The Duke was particularly interested in the achievements of the Soho Housing Association as he was Patron of the National Federation of Housing Associations.

He returned to Soho in March 1980 to formally open SHA's first completed housing scheme, Royalty Mansions in Meard Street, followed by a Reception in a flat in one of the six Georgian Houses in Great Pulteney Street that Soho Housing had also acquired, to meet the Management of SHA and the Soho Society Committee. The flat was at the time undeveloped. He asked where the "services" were. He was told that he had passed the toilet on the stairs and it was explained that it was shared by the occupants of the

three flats and two small ground floor businesses; and he was shown the bath which was in a short passage linking the bedroom to the kitchen. It was further revealed that the occupants of one of the flats bathed once a week in a tin bath - filled and emptied by hand - which was taken out of the cupboard where it hung for the rest of the week.

It was maybe the Duke's interest in Soho and the Housing Association movement that led to other members of the Royal Family coming to Soho and Covent Garden to open Soho Housing Association schemes or to participate in other special occasions. Her Majesty The Queen opened two schemes, Driscoll House in Covent Garden and a Foyer scheme in Smithfield; HRH Prince Charles opened Sandringham; HRH Prince Edward opened the Centrepoint Hostel in Berwick Street and also attended the Soho Society Fete in the late '80s. HRH Princess Anne laid the foundation stone to celebrate the start of the redevelopment of the St Anne's Church site, which includes the Chapel, Community Hall, and Soho Housing's Chancel Court.

On the occasion of the rededication of St. Anne's Tower and its unique clock, by the Lord Bishop of London, Prince Philip telephoned from Australia to congratulate Brian Burrough, Soho Society Chair and Chair of the Tower Appeal Committee, the Church and the Society on the hard work that had gone into making the restoration possible.

And in 1985 members of the Executive attended the thanksgiving service at Westminster Abbey to celebrate 400 years of the City of Westminster. Brian Burrough, Chair of the Society, was presented to Her Majesty the Queen at a Reception after the service. She asked him how the Society's battles were going and whether the Housing Association was able to bring more people back into Soho. She wished the Society and all its members the best of luck. We are sure she was briefed by her husband.

Leslie Hardcastle OBE

SOHO CLARION

SOHO SOCIETY'S FREE NEWSPAPER MAR-APR '80 No.30

PRINCE PHILIP VISITS ROYALTY MANSIONS



Prince Philip with tenants Mrs. Harlowe and Mr. Barnes.

The re-opening of Royalty Mansions by HRH The Prince Philip celebrates the first project to be completed by the Soho Housing Association. SHH was set up in 1975 by a group of Soho residents alarmed by the swift decline in population and appalling condition of the housing stock.



Royalty Mansions is a red brick turn-of-the-century block of twelve two-bedroom flats. It had no bathrooms, and was half-empty and very run down. All the seven tenants wanted to stay in Soho, preferably in the building. SHH had no other accommodation to offer them, as it was the first project, and was determined that people should be able to remain or return to their homes wherever possible. So the eighteen month building contract was carried out round the tenants, who all moved while the building. Tenants who agreed with suspicion in the beginning are now happily settled in fully equipped flats with bathroom.

The architect at Royalty Mansions, Peter Wilson, has worked very closely throughout the project with staff at the SHH, particularly Charlotte Robinson and Rennie McIlroy. Many of the tenants have been able to choose their own decorations and have had built in small variations as the work has progressed.

Prince Philip visited Mr. & Mrs. Alalouf and then inspected the roof area. Before unveiling the plaque above, he was presented in a number of people most closely connected with the project. The Prince spent some time talking to tenants and builders before inspecting the Casira family home. The Duke of Edinburgh then attended a small reception at Great Pultney Street, with the Management Committee of the Soho Housing Association and representatives from Westminster City Council.

SOHO PUB & WINE BAR COMPETITION!

Anyone can enter the Soho Pub or Wine Bar of their choice in this free competition. All you do is put the name of your Pub or Wine Bar on a piece of paper together with your own name a Soho address (book or leaflet), post it or deliver it to The Editor, Soho Clarion, 50 Dean Tower, 50 Dean Street, London W.1. Every Pub and Wine Bar will be judged on three criteria - atmosphere, service and value. Prizes include cases of wine and handsome framed inscriptions for the winners to display in their establishments. Closing date for entries May 31st. Winner to be announced at the Soho Festival on July 1st.

Council and the Housing Corporation. Thanks are due to Les and Wendy Harcourt for allowing the use of their flat.



The Soho Housing Association was set up specifically to solve Soho's housing problems and it involves tenants in management and development. The Management Committee is drawn almost entirely from local residents and business people.



One of the families whose flats Prince Philip visited in Royalty Mansions was that of the Camisa family, pictured here. In the hat is Sue Butchart, the new Housing Manager of the Soho Housing Association.

We are very pleased to have a letter from HRH Prince Philip's private secretary saying how much Prince Philip enjoyed reading the last Clarion with its pictures of the Tower opening and sending his best wishes for the work.



The Duke of Edinburgh at the Soho Society's dinner of St. Barnabas, Greek Street on 19th July

A ROYAL VISIT TO SOHO



On 19th July, 1979 HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, paid his first official visit to Soho, where after a reception with invited local residents and members of Soho in the House of St. Barnabas, 1 Dean Street, he dined with Executive members of the Soho Society at L'Espresso, the French restaurant in Dean St.

"The whole thing" explained Marie Byrne, Hon. Sec. of the Society, "started during our Jubilee Party in July, 1977, when on a visit visiting the premises of Soho, a letter for me was sent by John's secretary outlining and presenting to him an invitation for Buckingham Palace by members of the Committee."

The reception buffet at the reception was provided and staffed by local restaurants including the Duke St. British, the Turkish House, The British House, Italian House, Indian House and the British House as that our international guests like me well defined too.

"The highlight of the evening for me," continued Marie, "was the Duke's opening address when he said, "The fact is anything you want done, you have got to do yourself. I am extremely impressed by what the Society is doing." I think that says it all - and it only remains for me to apologise to all the people of Soho on their behalf a good night's sleep to all."

APPRAL - CONT. P.1
The Society's progress since 1972 has been remarkable in developing a full-blooded sense of enterprise for the people living and working in Soho that had previously not had a voice. But it is not alone that has happened such more and a lot more people could have been done to and help



Prince Philip addressing guests before unveiling the plaque. Members of the S.H.A. L - St. Lis Jenkins, Chairman; Zelia Hillson; Leslie Hardcastle, O.B.E.

It is only because of this strong local involvement that schemes as complicated as, and worse than, Royalty Mansions have started. The area is so complex and expensive that its housing problems were only tackled with extreme reluctance until the local people decided that there would be no community left unless local action was taken.



Chris Welner - Plasterer, Jock (back to camera) - Stone restorer and 'Acker' - labourer joking with Prince Philip about working at Buckingham Palace.

<p>ALPHA SET</p> <p>Agents to search for artist Artists in search of an agent Studios in search of advice or removal to other</p> <p>ARTISTS PARTNERS LTD</p> <p>24 Old York Road London NW2 6SS Telephone: 011 724 7381</p> <p>Artists Partners represent great Illustrators</p>	<p>THE GAY HUSSAR</p> <p>RESTAURANT</p> <p>Serve about 1975 & SUPPORTS THE SOHO SOCIETY</p>	<p>MAISON BERTAUX</p> <p>RESTAURANT</p> <p>1975 & SUPPORTS THE SOHO SOCIETY</p>
<p>BRASSERIE OFF</p> <p>The SOHO SOCIETY has been established in the SOHO for the title of Monumental Brick Restaurant by a gentleman in Market Street, such quality for SOHO since he set at home, who recently paid £12,500 for half a street light. Would like women for the problem of the street light...</p>	<p>CHARLOTTE ROBINSON of the Soho Housing Association being introduced to HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. In the background the members of the Soho Society including Felicia Street and Joe Platt with Thelma Havers, the founder of the Society.</p>	<p>Leslie Hardcastle O.B.E., Chairman of S.H.A. greets the Duke of Edinburgh in Meard St.</p>



JASMINE MORRIS

SOHO RESIDENT AND BBC YOUNG COMPOSER OF THE YEAR

Interview and photograph by Richard Piercy

Soho has long been a place where musicians and composers have lived and thrived and Berwick Street resident and composer, 19 year old Jasmine Morris, is certainly keeping this tradition alive. Currently studying composition at the Royal College of Music, she has recently beaten 250 contestants to win the coveted title of the BBC Young Composer of the Year Award, adding to her list of considerable musical achievements.

Jasmine has been immersed in music her entire life as the daughter of Mieko Shimizu a Japanese singer, songwriter and composer and Peter Morris, a producer and former ballet dancer. From an early age Jasmine spent a great deal of time mixing with various musicians as she accompanied her mother to concerts, rehearsals and recording studios.

Taking up the piano at only four years old, by the age of eight Jasmine had added the violin to her repertoire. In the years that followed she also developed a passion for composing and in 2013 joined Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in Greenwich. Whilst there she wrote music for, and played in a composers' ensemble, which performed at LSO St Luke's, Queen Elizabeth Hall and the Painted Chapel.

An alumni of Soho Parish School, Jasmine has fond memories of her time there, citing the huge contribution that the school made to her own education as well as that of the local student community. She recalls her class being encouraged to participate in local projects and musical events within Soho and across London. On one occasion, a trip to The French House was organised which resulted in the group singing 'It Must Be Love' with Suggs – not the sort of primary school outing that most children experience, but one they would all surely enjoy! 'The school taught me to be open to ideas and not to judge a book by its cover, It's a really special place', she says, 'the lessons learned there continue to inform my work as a musician.'

After leaving Soho Parish Jasmine attended Camden School for Girls, known at the time for its excellent music curriculum. In 2018 she moved on to the renowned Purcell School of Music in Hertfordshire, having been awarded the George Drexler Scholarship. She quickly made an impact with her music and in 2019 was made composer in residence of the National Youth Orchestra with her compositions going on to be premiered at the Barbican centre.

Jasmine is also a keen orchestrator and rearranged a piece for piano commissioned for a commonwealth concert held at Westminster Abbey. The National Youth Choir sang at the event and it was broadcast by the BBC with over 2000 people in attendance, drawn from royalty and members of the public.

It was fascinating to learn about Jasmine's approach to composition. She prefers to compose her scores in her head, committing them directly on to paper, unless they are orchestral compositions, in which case she will use the piano to check harmonies. Her musical interests extend beyond traditional classical music with her work being influenced by many other genres and in particular electronic music. It's an approach that has resulted in further recent success, with Jasmine being chosen to write for the Solem Quartet. The ensemble put out a 'Call for Scores' and they chose her submission from over 200 entries. Her piece Hitogata for strings and electronics will be performed as part of their six part series that the quartet will perform nationwide. She is also working on a commission for the BBC which came about as a result of her success as BBC Young Composer of the Year which will be performed as part of the BBC Proms.

Jasmine clearly has a deep love of Soho and waxes lyrical about Carol Wong's food at The PitStop Café, Espresso Martinis at Bar Italia and evenings spent with her parents and friends at My Place, Ronnie Scotts and the jazz club at Pizza Express. Even though she hopes her musical career will lead to opportunities to travel and work abroad in the future, Soho is the place that this local girl will forever call home.

Visit jasminemorris.co.uk to find out more or to listen to her award-winning compositions.

Visit solemquartet.co.uk to book tickets for their upcoming concert featuring Jasmine's commission Hitogata for string quartet and electronics.

SOHO - ALL LIT UP FOR CHRISTMAS

LUCY HAINE

The future is looking brighter for Soho Christmas lights in 2021. Hannah Peaty, Art Lead at Soho Parish School, is working with Architect, Antonio Capaelo and local Soho Florist, Joao Rocha, of Storm Flowers London, in a project to create Christmas lighting panels to light up Soho's streets this Christmas.

"We're so excited to be taking part in this project, as an Artsmark Platinum school we highly value opportunities for children to engage in creative projects that will inspire and motivate them as well as serve the community. Seeing their artwork lit up around the streets of Soho will be such a Christmas gift and something to be proud of for many years to come"

Hannah Peaty, Senior Leader and Art Lead, Soho Parish Primary

Architect Antonio Capaelo was inspired to bring the project to Soho by a school in Newburgh in Scotland who have been creating Christmas panels for the last 19 years. Designs for the lights are created by children and turned into high tech lighting panels by Blachere lighting. The panel can be fitted to lampposts for a uniquely local Christmas display.

Soho Parish School will hold a competition to choose their Christmas designs to be converted into lighting panels. The judging panel includes The Royal Institute of Architects – RIBA, The National Gallery, The Soho Society and Ward Councillors alongside ex pupils. Currently the plan is for seven lighting panels to be created, one for each year group.

The number of panels is dictated by funding. Westminster City Council has generously awarded almost £10,000 towards the project from the Soho Ward budget and the project team is in discussions with Shaftesbury Estates who have kindly offered to provide the remaining funding in order to create more panels across Soho. It would be fantastic to increase the number of panels per class. The plan is for panels to be displayed on Archer Street, Rupert Street and Berwick Street, Soho's High Street, and hopefully more streets across the area and the project team are working with Westminster Council and the Soho Business Alliance to work out exactly which streets will be included.

"We're delighted to be taking part in this innovative project. The children will be so excited to see their work in lights, and we hope their contributions will illuminate the school's place at the heart of the community."

Louise Ritchie, Headteacher, Soho Parish Primary

There are plans for a walking tour of the lights in Soho, which will be added to every year, and the light panels may be auctioned off, or sponsored, to raise money for the school. Soho Parish School are short of much needed funds, as they have been unable to hold the Soho food feast for two years running, due to Covid. This is an event which usually raises approximately £50,000. There will be a proviso that whoever buys the lighting panels, returns them each year, to be displayed in Soho in time for Christmas.

So, generous sponsors and Christmas fans, please step forward and perhaps Joanna Lumley might return to Soho, once more, for the big switch on?



Soho Housing has moved to

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NEW PUPIL AT SOHO PARISH SCHOOL

If the past year has taught us anything, I feel it is the ability to find joy in the everyday; where we have been lucky to have little helping paw from the latest addition to our Soho Parish family. Meet Crawford, who is now eight months old and has been attending school since September in our Year 6 class.

It would be an underestimation to say that the pandemic has been difficult for us all. Personally, it became even more so after we lost my partner's Grandfather towards the end of the first lockdown last year. Following this, and after considering getting a dog for a few years, it led me to one of those 'let's just do it' moments. Crawford could not have come into our lives at a better time, when we needed him most. We named him after the great man that we lost.

I had previously read the benefits of having a therapy dog in school and discussed them with Louise, our Head Teacher. Once I had made the decision to get a dog, it seemed the perfect opportunity to consider training him to become one. Although this has been held up due to the pandemic, he has already had a positive impact at Soho Parish.

Now a frequent rider of the 87 bus, Crawford travels to school with me every day. Whilst settling in to his new surroundings, he began his school life by joining my Year 6 class. Words could not describe the sheer excitement of the children. Throughout many years of school council meetings, the request of having a class pet is a frequent one; their wish had been granted. As he was only three months old at the time, we made sure to establish a routine; as we do with the children when they start school in Reception. Aside from lots of play and cuddles, he also goes on a daily walk with our Caretaker, Paul. Admittedly, the possibility that having a dog in the classroom could prove distracting did enter my mind, but this was not the case. If anything, his frequent puppy naps helped to promote a sense of calm throughout the room.

Even without his therapy training, he has started to leave his mark upon the children in the room: 'Crawford makes me feel happy and comforted'. Many of the children in Year 6 had not regularly attended school for six months and their return would still be very different. Having Crawford in the classroom raised morale and ensured that the children felt excited to come to school. Some pupils have found this more difficult than others and one has recognised that he has had an impact on their wellbeing, 'I struggle with stress and it comes to me very easily. I think Crawford really helps with that stress. He's just always there for me to cuddle. When I'm feeling bad I go and sit with him. I feel like he understands and he's nice and lets me cuddle him'.



Some children within my class find it difficult to regulate their emotions. For one child in particular, I have noticed that their ability to return to a feeling of calm after frustration has improved; as have they, 'It calms me down, playing with him and stroking him. I calm down quicker when I'm with him than when I'm not'. As Crawford's familiarity with the school grew, we began to schedule time with him as a behavioural incentive. During the latest lockdown, one pupil said that Crawford is the thing he misses most about school and has a picture of him that he keeps at home to remind him of his weekly play session. His Teaching Assistant says that his face lights up when he sees him.

It is known that with pets comes responsibility, and this is something that the children learnt quickly: 'Loads of people can't have pets at home so it's nice to have the experience of a dog in the class'. Many of our students do not have outside space and it's therefore not practical to keep pets. Crawford has given the children the opportunity to experience ownership and the jobs that it entails. From making sure that his water bowl is full to setting up his bed in the morning, all of the children have shown great responsibility. I also owe Crawford's great behaviour and

good nature to the children as they all enjoy lining up to give him a treat as a reward when he follows their commands; though he does have a cheeky side, especially when he sneaks upstairs to pinch tennis balls from Year 5!

As the English Lead at Soho Parish, I was keen to put Crawford to work straight away to help me to promote reading and writing amongst the children. One of his favourite things to do is to sit and listen to children read, particularly if it is something they have written themselves. For one pupil, reading their writing to Crawford has become a motivation: 'I like Crawford listening to my writing, he seemed calm and relaxed when I was doing it. I was finding it difficult to write, but when I heard I could read it to

Crawford I wrote more and more'. Once 'bubbles' are a thing of the past, I think Crawford's favourite spot will be the school library; cuddled up listening to story after story.

I will be forever grateful for the joy, fun and sense of support that Crawford has been for our school; particularly during these difficult times. He has changed the narrative of this school year for many children and I look forward to seeing how he continues to do so. If you spot us taking a stroll through Soho, please do say hello!

Robyn Churchman



THE SOHO VILLAGE FETE

5 September 2021 in St Anne's Gardens - 12 noon to 6 pm

If you'd like to volunteer to help on the day, get in touch at
fete@thesohosociety.org.uk

SOMEONE OF SOHO

BY CLIVE JENNINGS

In June 2020, several of the shuttered bars and restaurants of Soho came back to life through an open-air exhibition of 36 large scale, arresting, black & white photographic portraits of some of the Soho characters that usually frequent them, affixed to their street frontages. Six months later in the first two weeks of December the Poland Street and Oxford Street facades of the Flannels store were transformed by a stunning, crowd stopping, digital photographic installation, three storeys high of over 60 such portraits, each portrait one to three storeys high, and constantly changing.

Both these life asserting ‘Someone of Soho’ public art projects were the work of Richard Piercy, who some

readers may remember as the owner and manager of Zest Pharmacy, on Broadwick Street, from 1990 to 2016. A lifelong love affair with photography moved up a notch in 2015, when Richard rented Soho tailor Tom Baker’s old studio on Berwick Street, and started the ambitious and speculative project to document Soho ‘people with great faces and interesting stories’ in a series of black and white portrait photographs.

During the summer of 2018, he set up a studio on the first floor of St Anne’s clock tower. All the photographs were shot on film, using a medium format camera, initially assisted by Mihono Sato-Rain. Amazingly, given the extremely high standard of the photographs that capture the very essence



and exuberance of the sitters/dancers/gesticulators, this was Richard's first outing in studio portraiture.

Richard explains: 'The participants are drawn from all walks of Soho life and include residents, rock stars, and reverends; plumbers, playwrights and publicans; teachers, tailors and market traders; the LGBT community, musicians and electricians; shopkeepers, restaurateurs, and DJs.'

As he was preparing for a summer exhibition the lockdown arrived, leaving businesses devastated and Soho deserted. Richard saw the potential for a community based art project - 'Places are about people, a neighbourhood may change but it's the people that define its character. When I saw the boarded up shops and empty streets, I thought it was an opportunity to repopulate the streets with many of the people you would expect to see. I brought the people back by hanging their portraits on affected shop fronts, windows and doorways. This is not what I initially had in mind. This is much, much better.'

Richard financed the summer street project himself and it was made possible by the support and participation of Soho businesses: Bistro 1, Cuts, Duck Soup, The French House, Kettners, The Ku Bar, Prix Fixé, Soho Town House, ably assisted by production and location helpers, Tim Fennell, Joel Levack and Tim Lord; and installers Lucy Haines, Steve Head, Rhiannon Sussex and Rachel Waddell.

Through the extraordinary vision of Mark Dale, founder of W1 Curates, Richard was able to exhibit a much larger selection of 'Someone of Soho' portraits on the Flannels store on Oxford Street. This was seen by over 50,000 people every day, and Richard joined the celebrated company of previous exhibitors, internationally renowned photographers David Bailey and David La Chapelle.

200 portraits later, the project is still ongoing, and if anyone out there has a space in the Soho area that Richard could use as a studio (ideally around 24 sqm) do contact Richard via his website. You can see more of Richard's photographs on:

richardpiercyphotographer.co.uk

Instagram at [@someoneofsoho](https://www.instagram.com/someoneofsoho)

Soho Parish School Fundraiser Print Sale

Richard has produced a Someone of Soho edition of prints from the exhibition, to raise much needed funds for Soho Parish School. They are at the special price of £30, for all orders placed before 30 June. For each one sold £15 will be donated to the school. To place orders or for more details, please contact Richard through his website or Instagram (details above).

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CARNABY





Lockdown at the French House

SO-HOMESICK

I ventured into Soho when I first arrived in London from Scotland, in 1967, and it became a microcosm of the entire city for me. The York Minster was my Soho starting point, and in short measure I met Gaston, the Chicago Kid and Spike Milligan (then appearing in *The Bedsitting Room* at the Saville Theatre). A couple of fun-filled Soho years later I had acquired many people I still count amongst my closest friends, and my first husband, Ian Fleming. Soho and all its delights were manna to my Presbyterian soul, and I have been indulging in Soho ever since, at every possible opportunity.

But opportunities have been distinctly lacking during this last year. I have been shielding outside London, and it has made me realise just how much Soho has meant, and still means, to me. It is primarily people that I miss. I keep in constant touch with the closest friends, but there is something very special about bumping into someone you see only rarely – and what fun it is to catch up! And I don't think I had appreciated properly how good it is to engage with strangers in shops, pubs, on the street – something that has become almost verboten during the past months.

Soho's pubs were my first interest. The York Minster was favourite, of course, through the affectionately remembered Gaston years, and the advent of Noel and Lesley and a name change, to The French House. I also patronised the John Snow, the Coach and Horses, the Dog and Duck, and the Crown and Two Chairmen (where I met both husband Ian and Rosie Stark, two huge influences in my life). As I

write, I haven't been to a pub for over a year, I haven't lifted an alcoholic drink with someone who is not family, and I am SO HOMESICK for Soho and its pubs.

As a book editor and later food writer, Soho was also responsible for my education in food and restaurants. My first professional forays involved taking agents and potential authors out for lunch, and Elena Salvoni of Bianchi's was such a comfort to a quivering novice. Once I became more confident, La Terrazza – the Tratt – next to the York Minster, was favoured. Later, I edited books by Alastair Little and Antony Worrall Thompson: I ate deliciously at the former's eponymous Soho restaurant and the latter's Dell' Ugo. Richer authors took me to the wonderfully old-fashioned L'Escargot, Kettner's, Madame Maurer's and the Gay Hussar. Gerrard Street was where I chose to eat, when not doing so on expenses, and Chinese food remains a favourite: pork and duck on rice was the mop-up fuel of every Soho Friday night. I loved Karly Wah, and oh, how I miss Y Ming, which replaced it, and the affection of Christine and William. I will never forget the Amalfi, and I was so beginning to relish upstairs at the French....But, once again, I haven't eaten in a restaurant since last March, and I haven't eaten anything I haven't cooked myself! I am SO HOMESICK for Soho and its restaurants.

As I am for Soho shopping, with its authentic international ingredients, its pâtisseries, wine and spirit shops and bookshops. In the last year I have been buying online, but nothing, just nothing, beats meandering around the

aisles of New Moon Loon, trying to identify what might be edible, or soaking in the atmosphere of Milroys or the Vintage House (where Ian and I used to buy two bottles of wine for the weekend on a Friday night, for the grand sum of £2!) I am SO HOMesick for Soho and its shops.

Soho was my first introduction to clubs. I loved the bohemianism of Gerry's, which I remember from Shaftesbury Avenue. (Where Rod McLennan, my second husband, was once able to park his car before drinking below ground with the likes of John Junkin, Bunny May and Bill Mitchell.) I was a fervent visitor to the Dean Street Gerry's reincarnation, and latterly was proud to be part of the girls' group who ate, drank, capered and sang with Kenny on Alison's Wednesday nights. I became an addict of the Colony Room, through all its incarnations, from Muriel to Michael. On one early visit, after a drunken lunch with an author, Frank Norman, I was photographed between John Hurt and Francis Bacon. I would love to see that picture....The Groucho was a great place to see and be seen, and to take authors and agents, for drinks, food and atmosphere. And the years when Ian and I were members

of Ronnie Scott's were unforgettable. I am SO HOMesick for Soho and its clubs.

But will the Soho pubs, clubs, restaurants, cinemas and theatres survive these horrendous months of virus closure? And, possibly most importantly, will I ever be brave enough to venture back into them? As I write, though, at the end of March, I am beginning to sense approaching freedom. This will hopefully mean a return to Soho. But it will have to be done slowly. I have spent the past year learning to fear other people, crowds and hugging, and it will take some time to unlearn that. But I have an image of me with a glass of house white, standing outside the French, giggling with Lesley, Mandy, Annabel, Dennis....I am tired of being SO HOMesick. I can't wait.

Susan Fleming

Photo by Jason Fisher-Jones



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LONDON'S WEST END

REVIEW BY CLIVE JENNINGS

London's West End – Creating the Pleasure District, 1800-1914 by Rohan McWilliam

Yes, the clue is in the strap line - what survey of central London that includes the words Creating the Pleasure District could not have a substantial section devoted to Soho! This substantial and authoritative volume is apparently 'the first ever history of the area that has enthralled millions.' McWilliams defines the West End as the area stretching from Kingsway in the east to Bond Street in the west; and Oxford Street in the north to Strand in the south.

As one would expect from a book written by the Professor of Modern History at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge and published by the venerable Oxford University Press, this scholarly tome is nothing if not thorough in its investigation of the area's social and cultural history, but the author achieves this with a light touch that makes it both very readable and fascinating, in much the same way that Dan Cruickshank's recent survey of Soho's architecture, also delves into the history and the people. The book addresses such questions as: 'how did the West End of London become the world's leading pleasure district? What is the source of its magnetic appeal? How did the centre of London become Theatreland?'

As well as a formal history of the area, much of the book is devoted to the three major pursuits that came to define the West End: theatre, hospitality and shopping. In all these, the number of contemporary sources quoted is testimony to the depth of the author's research, and along the way he manages to almost incidentally document the birth of many contemporary pastimes, such as shoplifting and bargain hunting. 'Shopping was a device that allowed women to become flâneurs in their own right, a role that had previously been largely masculine. The department store shared a rhetoric of comfort, hospitality, status and respectability with other West End pleasures.'

The author, in my opinion, gets Soho – his opening comment in the Soho section is that 'On one side of Regent Street was Serious Money; on the other, there were tradesmen, artisans, small shopkeepers, and the poor.' He then quotes Charles Booth, the famous Victorian social researcher and reformer, 'step but fifteen paces (off Shaftesbury Avenue) and you will find yourself in another world, with another people – other habits, other thoughts, and other manners seem to



prevail.'

Yes, indeed, Mr. Booth, welcome to our world - otherworldly Soho! Mc Williams develops this view of Soho as 'another world, but I would argue, complex.'

Several themes that he pursues still resonate today - 'Soho had a history of taking in immigrants from abroad which made it feel different. It helped give the west End a feeling of being in London but not entirely English ... Soho pleasures were those of food and alcohol rather than the theatre ... Soho streets were impervious to traffic as they were crowded with street traders.' These observations of Soho over one hundred years ago still ring true today.

This is the first in a two-volume project aiming to cover the West End's story from its beginnings to the present day. Much modern culture and consumer society was shaped by a relatively small area in the middle of London. This pioneering study successfully establishes why that was.

London's West End – Creating the Pleasure District, 1800-1914 by Rohan McWilliam

Published by Oxford University Press

HOT STEW

REVIEW BY DAVID GLEESON

Hot Stew by Fiona Mozley

Part of living in Soho is having to listen to the fantasies projected onto it by others. I'm used to hearing bores from Mayfair to Melbourn delivering opinions on the neighbourhood when they hear it is where I live. That the place attracts so much fascination, curiosity and envy has made the mythologising of Soho a cultural phenomenon.

To which this book is a very recent addition.

Soho-based fiction occasionally turns up an interesting tale, with writers eager to use the place for their fantasies of producing The Great Modern Urban Novel. My personal experience of these stories has been generally disappointing in that, despite Soho being such fertile inspirational ground, so many putative writers (and others) can't see beyond the tired old 'sensual-and-heroically-gritty-playground' cliché. And produce more variations on this theme.

With this in mind, I confess that I cautiously picked up this book fully expecting another typical attempt to 'celebrate' (but diminish) Soho. This is Fiona Mozley's second novel, and, like an unexpectedly successful young musician facing that difficult second album, she has written something very different. The first (Booker shortlisted) tale, *Elmet*, was about an unconventional, rural Yorkshire family living on the edge of society, and this one is moved to the heart of the big city. Both look at themes of ownership and power in society, with *Hot Stew* set in and around a brothel (uh-oh) threatened by property developers. Yes, it already sounds

awfully stereotypical, but credit must be given to Mozley for doing her homework and having a fairly incisive picture of current Soho. Whilst a basic internet search can tell the world about residents versus developers in this corner of London, she gets extra brownie points for the restaurant that trains and recruits ex-homeless staff, or the phenomenally wealthy young female property magnate. She loses those brownie points, mind you, for falling into the same old Soho clichés, even if the brothel is a somewhat enlightened, feminist and pimp-free organisation run by the women who work in it.



It has to be said that Mozley is very good at both character and dialogue, and the story is an easy read. She can engineer credible plot lines and effortlessly develop narrative interest – in a cast of multiple characters, each player is clearly drawn so there's no time wasted trying to remember who's who. Given her obvious literary skill, there is much more to anticipate from her. But the main problem with this story is articulated by the author herself:

“The grander parts of London are wide and bright and difficult for dissidents to take by force. In Soho, the streets are narrow, and the lanes are dark. And it has always been a place of sedition.”

I don't necessarily disagree, but these words confirmed my suspicion

that Mozley has failed to see beyond the standard Soho fantasy. Yes, she has produced an interesting chapter in the 'sensual, heroically gritty playground' trope. But the Great Modern Soho Novel is still to be written, and this isn't it.

COCO'S CORNER

BY GABRIEL WILDING

An honest food review from Soho resident canine culinary expert, exploring the array of new dining options available to dogs and their humans.

Tao Tao Ju - 15 Lisle Street, WC2H 7BE

Life in lockdown is undeniably tough. Yet with the collected works of fiction, science, art, and most importantly (personally speaking) nourishment at your now slightly chubby fingertips, one could argue it could be a hell of a lot worse.

Yet, the plethora of choices can be both daunting and off-putting. Never fear, Coco has returned (via her humans) to save you from yourself, consuming many, many bad takeaways so you don't have to.... not all heroes wear capes, some wear bibs!

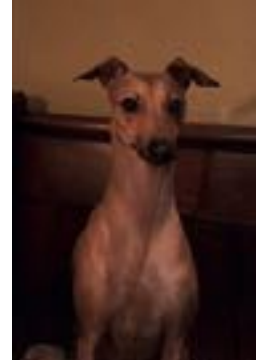
Crowning the best of Soho is too wide and subjective a net for even myself to cast, so I have specified. What about the best Chinese takeaway? Gone are the days of lacklustre chicken chow mein with a side of chips. This is a slice of authentic China delivered straight to you in Westminster. The modern world, isn't it wonderful?

Tao Tao Ju sits squarely in the heart of Chinatown, recently winning the 2020 Travellers' Choice Award from TripAdvisor (although isn't that like winning the Slovakian sailing competition?). Nevertheless, this Jewel of the east is turning the greasy takeaway trope on its head.

Arriving in an attractive reusable cooling bag the boxes are packed carefully, with American-style waterproof cardboard containers. The smell and warmth emanating from the bundle is enough to wake Coco from her slumber, she sniffs our suddenly perfumed living room and dives back under her blanket. A decidedly boring dinner guest, but as she is at home I will excuse this display of incivility.

Box after box offered up their secrets. Firstly, Crispy Prawn Wontons (without the soup) crunch and shatter, the perfect

audio-visual experience of finger food. Keeping with the seafood theme the Prawn and Chive fried dumplings are soft, gooey, and delicious. More fruit of the sea are next, the Squid Cakes are salty clouds of flavour that magically soak up the vinaigrette like sauce. The Scallop Cheung Fun are like long gelatinous Dim Sum, but, although flavourful, are a little too close to organs for my tastes, with a distinctly living mouthfeel. Lastly the Scallop Dumplings in a chili sauce are tasty but not the highlight of the bite-sized section.



The Duck Spring Rolls are the warming stodginess you want in these frigid days, and the tender meat soaks up the oozing brown Hoisin sauce excellently. Even the Vegetable Spring Rolls have a satisfying crunch, avoiding the sogginess sometimes expected from the dish.

For mains, we rather unimaginatively went for Stir-fried Beef with Black Bean Sauce and Chili. A classic which can be a heart-breaking disappointment in less skilled hands. This is without the MSG aftertaste, fragrant and perfect. Paired with a lovely side of Egg Fried Rice and a rather disappointing Pad Thai (asking too much from a Chinese restraint maybe?).

Having sampled a lot of the deliverable local options coupled with an unhealthy obsession with Dumplings, I would say that considering it's a similar price point to Plump Valley down the road, it might even eclipse this popular institution.

Has the crown of best Chinese restaurant been snatched? Has the battle of the Wonton been won in Tao Tao Ju's favour? Does anyone care? Either way for a trip to China (via Deliveroo) you could do a lot worse than Tao Tao Ju, so maybe lockdown isn't so bad?



QUEENS OF BOHEMIA

PREVIEW BY CLIVE JENNINGS

Whilst finishing his biography of the Colony Room Club it occurred to Darren Coffield that an oral biography should be written about the extraordinary creative women who frequented post-war Soho. The women appear in various autobiographies, biographies and texts as individuals, but no one has attempted to write a book where they all exist as contemporaries to one another - telling their own stories, side by side.

Darren's new book, *Queens of Bohemia: Soho and Beyond*, is an affectionate attempt to rescue some of these remarkable women from virtual obscurity. He takes personalities that time has unfairly dismissed, giving fresh insight and a female perspective on the past. The testimonies of these women throw a shaft of light across the post-war creative scene - truthful accounts by intelligent individuals of what it was like to live in a constant bohemian flux. Simultaneously effervescent and harrowing, the book uses eyewitness accounts of those who were there in an attempt to establish not the fact, but the truth of what happened.

'The facts! ... They will sort you out. Beware of the facts, because they aren't the same thing as the truth. Not at all, not at all.' *Isabel Rawsthorne*

The roll call of female muses and artists include: Sonia Orwell nicknamed the Euston Road Venus and the model for Julia, the heroine in George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*; Isabel Rawsthorne, artist, model and muse for Epstein, Picasso, Derain, Balthus, Giacometti and Francis Bacon; Caroline Blackwood, wife and muse of Lucian Freud; Muriel Belcher, proprietor of the Colony Room Club, mentor and muse to the School of London; Nina Hamnett, artist and model for Augustus John and Modigliani; Henrietta Moraes muse for Freud and Bacon

and their art dealer, Erica Brausen, a former spy, and her lover Toto Koopman, model and muse for Coco Chanel ... to name but a few.

'I stumbled over an inert Nina Hamnett outside the door to the ladies lavatory, a famous beauty in the Twenties and a model for Modigliani and the sculptor Henri Gaudier-Brezska, whose marble *Torso of Nina* is in the Tate Gallery. She called the first volume of her autobiography *Laughing Torso*, but even at that age, I recognised there was nothing

funny in an old woman lying in a pool of her own piss.' *Sandy Fawkes*

Then there were the female hostesses such as Anne Fleming (wife of Ian), the artist Elinor Bellingham-Smith and the poet Elizabeth Smart, whose parties, soirées and salons became the social fulcrums of the London art world. Many of these women could be found in Soho, where a mass of 'Miss-fits' would gather in the numerous watering holes and out of hours private drinking clubs, often run by women. Each one had its own collection of eccentric and exceptional females.

Through this historical web of friendships, rivalries and working relationships woven into the narrative of the book, we gain an overview of the important role women played in the formation and success of many of London's leading cultural figures and establishments of the post-war period.

*A paperback edition of Coffield's book *Tales from the Colony Room* will be launched on 24 June 2021, and *Queens of Bohemia* is to be published in April 2023.*

You can find out more at: talesfromthecolonyroom.com



SPICED BISCUITS

SUSAN FLEMING

These spiced biscuits are very British - like ginger biscuits, but softer - and are often served after church on Easter Sunday, usually in a group of three to represent the Holy Trinity. Perhaps less well-known than hot-cross buns and simnel cake, they are an Easter speciality across much of south-west England. Shrove Tuesday pancakes are made to use up the more luxurious ingredients like dried fruit, spices, eggs and sugar before Lent, so these shortbread-like biscuits would have been a treat following Lent. As they would be at any time!

Makes 8-16, depending on size of cutter

225g plain flour

110g salted butter

110g caster sugar, plus extra for topping

110g raisins (or a mixture, try currants, sultanas, dried cranberries, mixed peel, dried lemon or orange peel)

1-2 tsp each of ground mixed spice and ground cinnamon

1 medium egg

2 tbsp brandy

milk

Preheat the oven to 180°C/Fan 160°C/Gas 4. Lightly butter two baking sheets.

Sift the flour into a bowl. Cut the butter up into small pieces, and rub these into the flour until the texture is like fine breadcrumbs. Add the sugar, raisins, mixed spice and cinnamon (quantity of spices to taste), and mix together. Make a well in the middle.

Beat the egg and brandy together in a cup, and add to the well in the dry ingredients. Stir until you have a stiffish dough. If too stiff, add a little milk. Cover with clingfilm, and chill for an hour or so, if you have time.

On a very lightly floured work surface, roll the dough out to about 1cm thick. Cut out into rounds with a fluted cutter. Use a spatula to transfer to the prepared baking sheets. Bring the remaining pieces of dough together, and re-roll and cut out more shapes.

When you have used all the dough, place the baking sheets in the preheated oven. Bake for about 20 minutes until golden brown.

Leave to cool on a wire rack. While they are cooling, if you like, brush the tops of the biscuits with a little milk and sprinkle with a little sugar.

Susan Fleming



NEWS FROM ST ANNES



I've never been much of a fan of Monty Python. And no, it's nothing to do with the film 'Life of Brian'. Python had failed to tickle my funny bone well before that movie was released. My older brother loved Python and frequent changes of conversation at the dinner table when we were teenagers were heralded with the phrase "and now for something completely different!", said in his best John Cleese or Michael Palin voice.

Well, I'm writing this article with no idea what articles will have gone before it. But hazarding a guess that there will be plenty about al fresco dining, street closures, pedestrianisation and a plug for the Soho Society Village Fete (5 September, in case you've missed that). Assuming that you've made it this far into the magazine (and aren't one of those people who read it starting at the back!) It's my turn to say 'And now for something completely different!'

I recently unearthed a copy of 'Twenty Years in Soho' by my predecessor, Rev'd Henry Cardwell, who was Rector of St Anne's from 1891- 1914. Covering the first two decades of his incumbency it offers a fascinating and detailed window into life in our beloved community in which familiar street names today jostle with a way of life which sounds light years away. I thought you might be variously amused and interested by these quotes:

'The clergy of St Anne's would be the very last to pretend that Soho is an "optimistic oasis", their knowledge of the misery and sin around them is too complete for this'

'It is an unsavoury subject, but the story of the last twenty years in Soho would not be complete without some mention of the crusade against "disorderly houses" which was commenced in 1892... at that time there were a large number of these houses in the parish and the evil was growing. Respectable families were being turned out of their homes in order that the houses might be let for the higher rent which vice could pay.'

'The St Anne's clergy have always been anxious to be anything but strangers to the licensed victuallers of the parish'

'The year 1893 will be remembered by many as the year in which a Bazaar and Garden Fete were held in Soho Square. It was thought that the novelty of a Bazaar in a square in central London would probably attract a large number of customers and might be the means of securing the interest of an increased number of friends'

'Whereas in 1891 there were very few Jewish children in St Anne's Schools, they now (in 1911) form twenty five percent of the scholars. The Christian and Jewish children are on the best terms and last year a Jewish boy won the popularity prize.'

'It was thought that there was a danger that politics, apart from the special needs of Soho, might be the main question at the election.'

'In July, 1903, the "Wardour Street Improvement" became an accomplished fact, and Wardour Street was widened, on the East side by taking a strip off the Churchyard. This improvement has been discussed for some years ... and a beginning was made for the further widening of Wardour Street, which is greatly needed for the crowded traffic.'

'I wonder if that once staunch supporter of St Anne's, Miss Kate Santley, recalls a melancholy afternoon I spent with her at her own theatre, the Royalty on Dean Street, the day after poor Fred Leslie died? There were rain and fog outside, and prospects were not cheerful within.'

Here comes summer, enjoy it everyone!

Rev'd Simon Buckley



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