



SOHO

clarion

NO. 183

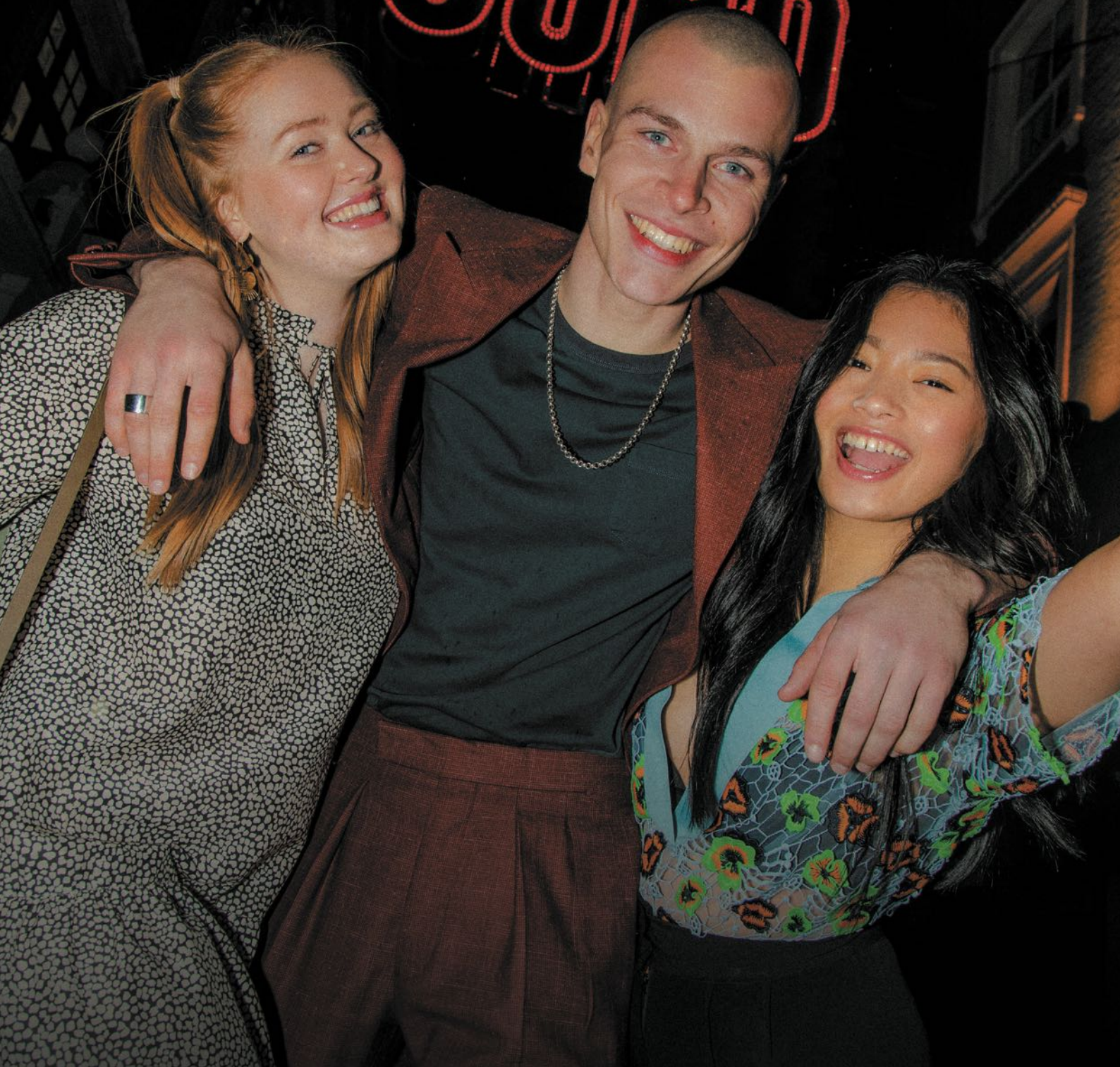
THE CLARION CALL OF
THE SOHO SOCIETY

winter
2022

The Soho Society's **Free** and yet
Priceless Magazine



SOHO



THIS IS
SOHO

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Diverse, vibrant and always buzzing, the streets of Soho are London's beating pulse.

Eat and shop your way through Soho this Christmas with an exciting mix of restaurants, bars and nightlife plus independent and international fashion brands.



Scan to find out what's happening in Soho this Christmas

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Cover image: Jason Fisher-Jones

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FROM THE TOWER



At the time of writing it's just over six months since the local elections in which Westminster City Council changed control from Conservative to Labour after some 50 years under the Conservatives. The West End Ward returned three new Labour councillors, Jessica Toale, Patrick Lilley and Paul Fisher. So what can we say six months into the new administration?

The Labour manifesto contained a number of promises, with the following being particularly relevant to Soho. The new Labour administration promised to:-

Revive the West End and protect it from over commercialisation to keep it special; and reduce over reliance on chain retail, protecting its unique character.

End Westminster's cosy relationship with developers.

Make Westminster Council transparent and give residents more say over their areas.

The manifesto said that, "For too long, Westminster Council's approach to economic development has been focused on serving the strategic needs of big business and major landlords, with often little connection to the needs of Westminster's residents".

So are we are seeing these promises being implemented by the council? In some areas, broadly, yes, though there

has been a dose of reality imposed because these changes will take time. For example, legal changes to planning and licensing policy documents could take as long as two years.

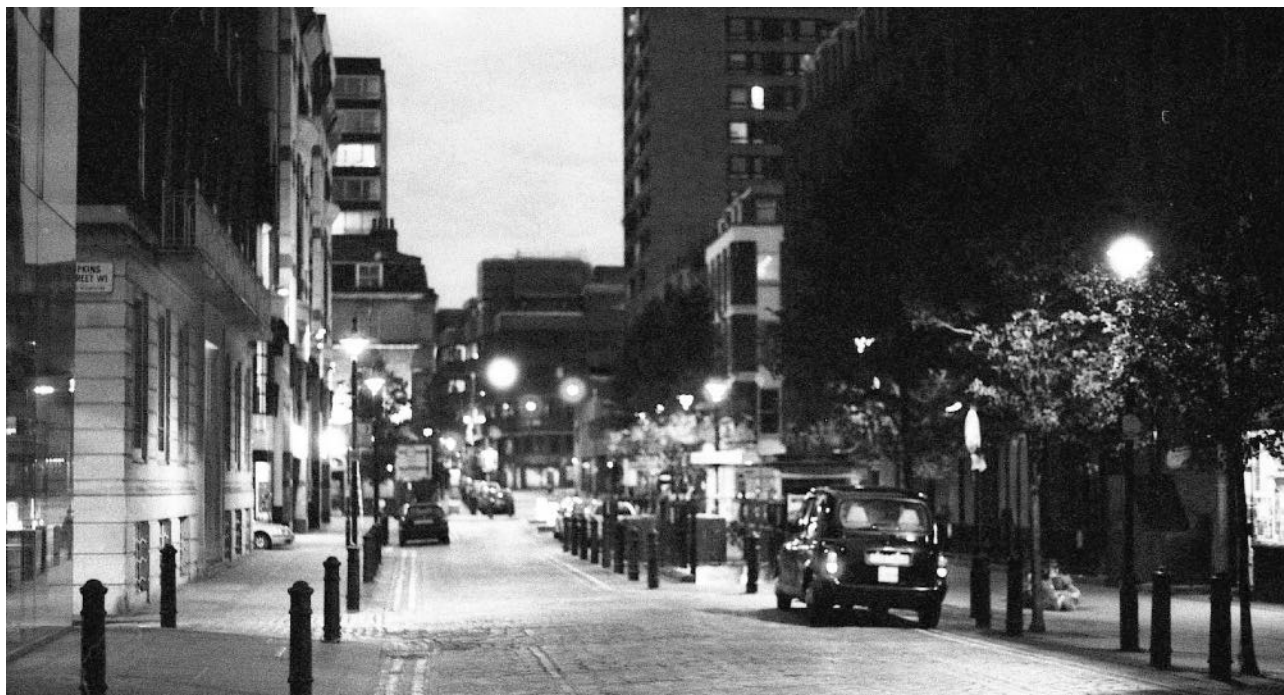
Many of the other promises will also take time. Some will require a significant change of approach by council officers who have been dancing to a different tune for years or even decades.

The change we have noticed more immediately is one of approach and attitude. Our ward councillors and the council leadership are in listening mode and are prepared to voice residents' concerns. This is a welcome, fundamental and much needed change. It's a beginning on which new foundations are being built.

The Society had a successful annual general meeting on 22 September and continues its work on planning and licensing and organising events for the community. Please feel free to join in - contact any one of the trustees and we will take it from there.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Tim Lord



PLANNING



We're watching...

COMRADES IN THE STRUGGLE?

After six months in office it seems fair to say that, in terms of planning, the new Labour administration at Westminster Council has steadied the ship. How far the ship will eventually turn in a new direction and how long that will take are harder to judge.

Early on, Tim Lord, Matthew Bennett and I met with Geoff Barraclough, the new Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, and he was cautiously positive in response to some of our concerns. Since then, his commitment to listening to residents has led to a very different feel from the previous administration. The 'Vision for Soho' process has been paused; plans for Oxford Street will be more focused on improving the street itself; and a mini-review of the City Plan is looking at affordable housing, retrofitting and site allocations as a priority. All these are moves in the right direction.



However, dealing with some of Soho's more pressing issues will not be easy. Tackling noise problems, for example, will be difficult without a culture change at the council, with greater understanding by officers and councillors on planning and licensing committees of the real impact of noise on residents. It is hard to see how granting permission for 208 people to be seated outside at the rear of Ilona Rose House will not have a significant impact on the amenity of adjacent residents. The permission is temporary, for 12 months, and we hope in that time that the council will do a real-life analysis of noise levels rather than depend on desktop studies by the applicant's consultants.

Another area of concern is the use of the public realm. Pavement space in Soho matters, given the seemingly

irreversible approach by the authorities and businesses to pull more people into the West End. Is accessibility for people with disabilities, for older people and parents with buggies important? It ought to be, in which case we need better planning decisions and more resources for enforcement. Tables and chairs outside cafes are great, provided that they do not dominate the public realm and there is sufficient space for pedestrians. A couple of relatively minor decisions, in Broadwick Street and Wardour Street, have suggested that council officers do not always fully understand the local situation or do not have time to check.

On a much larger scale, Shaftesbury have applied for a very significant allocation of street space for tables and chairs in Chinatown, following the temporary Covid arrangements. Now that visitors are back in the West End in large numbers this would result in making overcrowded pedestrian routes permanent and that is not acceptable. We believe the council should

restrict what is permitted.

One encouragement is that council officers are beginning to tackle pavement obstruction in Soho more systematically, beginning with A boards that block the way. There has been a positive improvement in the often busy St Anne's Court, for instance.

Recent applications: we were disappointed with the decision to permit a large new drinking establishment at the Trocadero. Until progress is made on noise and ASB issues in the West End it seems wrong to increase the number of premises likely to add to them. We are concerned that the licensing and planning regimes do not deal appropriately with this. We supported Meard Street residents in objecting to an application for Rudy's at 80-82 Wardour Street which would potentially affect the amenity

and the character of a very special Soho street. We have also objected to several BT hubs. These are very large and it seems to us that they have very limited public benefit. Their main purpose seems to be to provide advertising space. BT are offering to remove unused telephone boxes in return but, in our view, where phone boxes are more or less redundant they should be removed as a matter of course (or imaginatively repurposed somehow if they are the traditional red boxes, as has happened elsewhere).

Construction stops and starts: while it may be never-ending, we are coming to the end of several major projects. Crossrail has finally opened, making Dean Street in particular busier, and the flats above the site are on the market (£1.2 million for a studio!) More affordable is a seat at Soho Place, 'the first new build West End theatre to open in 50 years' (not sure why the Boulevard doesn't count), which has opened to some acclaim. Ilona Rose House is heading towards completion, scaffolding has come down at Film House in Wardour Street and the new hotel in Broadwick Street. Even the shopfronts along Berwick Street Market are being completed and, wonder of wonders, D'Arblay Street has finally reopened.

But spare a thought for residents and businesses around Dean Street and Great Chapel Street, where the misery will continue for some time with the redevelopment that

has started at the old Dean Street hostel site. Also due is development on a large site that runs between Berwick Street and Wardour Street, with frontage on Oxford Street.

Looking ahead: we have made our views plain to Hines, the owners of the site at 2-4 Dean Street / 7 Soho Square, which currently includes Tesco. They are planning a development which would mean the loss of the supermarket, and we oppose this strongly. A further consultation is expected before the end of the year and we wait to see whether there will be any changes before a planning application is submitted.

And, whisper it very softly, Crossrail 2 is still talked about from time to time, even if TfL have said recently it is unlikely in the short term. Soho being Soho, big or small, there will always be battles to be fought.

Andrew Murray



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PLAN FOR SOHO, ONE YEAR ON

With a year under my belt as chair, I have been reflecting on what we have achieved as a Forum, thinking about where we go from here and, with a new Deputy in place, we are an all-woman crew.

Forum Steering Group meetings are held quarterly and the forum is made up of eight residents/eight businesses. Business members include the New West End Company, Nimax Theatres, Soho Housing Association, Soho Dairy, Shaftesbury PLC, Soho Estates and Randall & Aubin. We have co-opted members who bring additional expertise in planning, creative/charity and entrepreneurial flair. Plan for Soho is the only neutral space for the Soho community to come together, review and consider ideas for CIL to shape the future. During our meetings, we have a business and residential discussion on the main issues in Soho with subjects from the environment and potential of a power station in Soho to rising energy costs and reduced footfall, high on the agenda.

So how does the forum work? Community Infrastructure Levy projects are steered, debated and moved forward by a sub-committee who meet monthly and feed into the quarterly steering committee.

CIL project, “Soho Comes Clean”, an 88-page study into rubbish, recycling and collections in Soho, (by consultants, Crystal Associates & Orbitl) was shared with the media and Westminster City Council, the main Rubbish collector in Soho. Matthew Bennett, Jason Fisher Jones and myself met Paul Dimoldenberg and senior Council Officers in November. We are encouraged by WCC plans to recruit an education and enforcement officer for Soho, one of the main recommendations of the report. The project also called for greater recycling, and WCC shared plans for food waste consolidation coming to Soho in the New Year. We hope that, with the support of our three councillors and in partnership with the business community, we will start implementing the 18 recommendations to clean up filthy Soho. Read the full report on our website and do let us know your views.

The Spring Community Meeting – held in May at Zero-One was well attended and gave everyone a refresher on

the plan, plus a reminder of the original policy list. A spot consultation was carried out on the original list for CIL, with greening and heritage still proving popular.

A new Deputy was elected from October, as Jace Tyrrell, CEO of NWECA heads off to Sydney to lead a BID down under, with Joan Moynihan, Executive Director of Nimax Theatres taking over.

New Website/Ward Budget – thank you to Westminster City Council for approving our Ward Budget application, this will be used to overhaul our website so keep an eye on the changes. We want to ensure that CIL is easy to understand and there is a clear process for putting ideas forward. <https://www.planforsoho.org>

Other CIL ideas we are working on include; air/traffic and noise monitoring, hopefully in collaboration with WCC, greening Golden square, a heritage audit of Soho, finding a community space, and a children’s playground.

If you have a proposal for CIL please do get in touch,

but remember it needs to be an infrastructure project, fit in with the policies and values of the Plan for Soho, and of permanent benefit to Soho’s community rather than a pop-up.

Any thoughts, feedback or suggestions please email chair: lucy.haine@planforsoho.org

Plan for Soho AGM, please pop 11th January in your diaries and keep an eye on our social media for more details.

If you work or live in Soho, Plan for Soho is free and you can stay up to date with our news and community meetings via www.planforsoho.org

Lucy Haine





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

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Join the Soho Society today

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2. Support the Society's work reviewing planning, licensing and lobbying on local issues
3. Invites to member-only events
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There are three easy ways to join The Soho Society:

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www.the-soho-society.org.uk

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LICENSING

The year is coming to an end and it's time to look back at another year of licensing in Soho. At the time of writing in early November there have been 81 licensing applications, all reviewed by the Licensing Committee and representations submitted to 25 applications.

Of the 81 applications, 12 were for new alcohol licences in premises or part of premises previously unlicensed. Ten licences were for new restaurants, one private members club plus event space and one shop, with a combined capacity increase of 1,420. The majority of these applications fell within Westminster's licensing core hours policy. However, disappointingly, three premises were granted 1am licences falling outside of the policy and accommodating 740 people.

Applications of note during 2022 include:

The Box on Walker's Court: they applied to extend their alcohol licence until 5.30am and entertainment until 6am in the basement room from Monday to Saturday. The application was withdrawn before it went to a hearing.

Sophisticats on Brewer Street applied to extend their current licence from 3am to 6am and, as with The Box, this application was withdrawn before a hearing.

The Warwick, 1-4, Warwick Street: this site originally housed the Warwick Bar and Japanese restaurant on Warwick Street. The new development consisting of six floors, maintains the bar and restaurant on the ground floor with reduced hours and capacity. The new floors above provide work space, event space and a private members club until 1am Thursday to Saturday. The club also includes a

roof top terrace until 11pm. This application was granted.

Iona Rose House on Manette Street: this development included four new restaurants and licences were granted until 1am in 2021. In 2022 they submitted two new applications to combine three restaurants into two. Both applications were granted with capacities totally 470 indoors and 164 outdoors.

La Pastaia (previously Café Espana) on Old Compton Street, applied to extend its hours for the sale of late night refreshment in the basement to first floor from 12.30 to 2am Friday to Saturday, which application was also granted.

Lebaneats, 13 Moor Street, applied for a late night refreshment licence until 2am, and this application was refused.

We will continue to update residents on new applications via our monthly newsletter and the Clarion. In the meantime, if you receive an envelope addressed to "The Occupier" of your premises don't ignore it, it could easily be from WCC advising of either a planning application or a licensing application, which may affect you adversely. If you want to object to a licence it's very important to do

so, as objections carry more weight when supported by residents. Let us know and we will support your objection.

Lastly, as always, we'd like to thank Richard Brown of the Licensing Advice Project, Citizens Advice Westminster, for his help and patience. Richard can be contacted by email at licensing@westminstercab.org.uk.

The Licensing Committee



WARD PANEL UPDATE

AND OTHER NEWS

Whilst visitor numbers seem to be at pre-pandemic levels in Soho, crime is also at very high levels. Over half the crimes committed in Soho are in the area to the east of Wardour Street. Looking at the crime maps, a lot of the crime seems to be in areas close to the 24 hour shops that operate. One of the streets that has the highest levels of crime is Greek Street, almost certainly due to the large number of late night licences in the street, plus a 24 hour shop. Crime on this street and its immediate environs is top of the ward panel priorities, chosen by the police. A walk up there on any Sunday morning is not a pretty sight - 13 November offerings included empty noxious gas canisters, discarded balloons, broken glass, the odd shoe, a sock and a shirt, and so the list goes on. If you would like to attend future ward panel meetings, raise an issue or suggest a priority please contact Jane.Doyle@thesohosociety.org.uk. The next one (hopefully very shortly) will give us a chance to meet our new ward officer, Andy DeSantis. Many people will have already met Matt Carr (who worked with Kenny Brown prior to his departure and following Steve Muldoon's departure).

Our MP, Nickie Aiken, has opened a survey on crime, which can be found on her website, www.nickieaiken.org.uk/News under "Campaigns", so please do complete it.

Cyclists and delivery drivers continue to be a problem. In the main cyclists don't seem to consider road rules apply to them. Pavements, one way streets, "I want to use it, so I will", seems to be the thought process of most users. Delivery riders, whilst one can understand they are paid by the delivery and want to find the quickest route, have scant, if any, regard for pedestrians and other traffic. Something needs to be done before there is a serious accident, and one suggestion is some form of identification on the bikes, besides education on the Highway Code.

Some good news is that, thanks to the work done by the police and the council, pedicabs are less likely to play loud music after 9pm. There was a lot of work done by the previous WCC regime alongside the police under section 62 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, which has resulted in some quite hefty fines. The new regime is carrying on this work with continued success. There is still no date for the progress of the Transport Bill under which Nickie Aiken, our MP, is hoping to get the legislation through Parliament, but we will advise readers either via our newsletter or the Clarion when we have any news. It will then be up to TfL to regulate the pedicabs. In the meantime, below is a list of regulations we would like to see in place (as I have been saying for the past six or more years). Watch this space!

(i) All pedicab riders to be licensed following appropriate DBS checks, and to have appropriate licences on display at all times to include photo identity. Pedicabs should also be separately licensed to cover multiple use of one vehicle - i.e. both pedicab and rider should be licensed. All riders should have a basic knowledge of first aid in case of accidents, and some form of proof of this. It goes without saying that riders should not only have a knowledge of the Highway Code but also observe this - it applies to all road users!

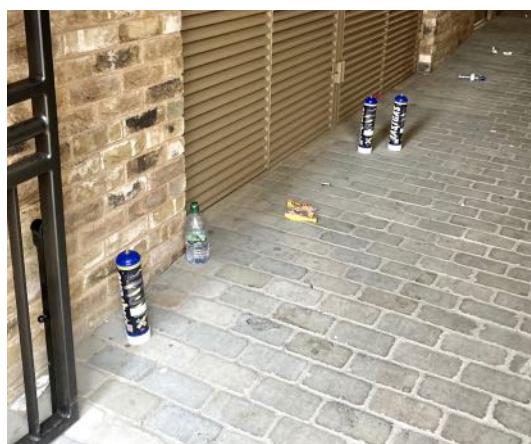
(ii) All operators and their vehicles should be appropriately insured and have proof of insurance on display at all times.

(iii) There should be regular safety checks of the pedicabs and proof of these should be on display.

(iv) Regulated fares (a tariff to be displayed) and to be licensed to operate within time parameters.

(v) No loud music to be played at all times, not just after 9pm.

(vi) There should be sanctions in place for breaches.



A new restaurant, Maresco, 45 Berwick Street, W1F 8SF, opened on 9 November. It is a modern tapas bar serving Spanish dishes with a focus on the Scottish seafood. It's owned by Stephen Lironi, and his partners Pablo Rodriguez (ex-Barrafina) and Naroa Ortega, and is the third restaurant they've opened, the other two being in Crouch End and Stoke Newington. It's a small restaurant with bar seating upstairs and tables and chairs seating around 20 downstairs. We look forward to trying it - let us know what you think. The menu will be short and currently includes dishes such as Txistorra del mar - sausage made with mackerel and monkfish, Shetland mussels, Lochinver hake a la marinera. Also on the menu is Presa Iberica and Highland venison.

They also have a good wine list, a short cocktail menu and of course sherry.

See their website for all this and more: <https://www.maresco.co.uk>

Also, Kettners has recently reopened its restaurant doors to the public, following a period when it was open only to Soho House members. The restaurant, which is of course a beautiful room, is now called the Clarence at Kettners. The menu changes seasonally, and when I went I had delicious roast beef (sadly it didn't come with Yorkshire pudding), and delicious roast potatoes. The menu features such things as Roast turbot, chips and béarnaise sauce, Lamb ragu and cavatelli, gremolata, and Pork chop, borlotti beans, marinated peppers and basil, and also slow roast

lamb for two. Among the desserts on offer are Tiramisu and Peach and brown butter tart, both vegetarian. The wine list features wines from £35 a bottle up to £275, as well as some wines by the glass.

Jane Doyle

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星期三	上午九時	至	下午六時三十分
星期四	上午九時	至	下午六時三十分
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THE SOHO SOCIETY HOUR



To sit and watch life go by is a constant source of entertainment in Soho, and the glass studio at Soho Radio from which we broadcast our show is a wonderful spot from which to do so. We usually kick off the local chatter by casting an eye up Poland Street and declaring a weather report, as well as commenting on the good (road repairs) and bad (poorly-parked Lime bikes) that we spy outside.

As is the way with London, our weather reports vary from hot, hot, hot, to raining cats and dogs, but inside we remain cool(ish) and dry and carry on with fascinating local guests.

Summer '22 had something of a youth focus. Jamie from Dunno Curated joined us in June to talk about one year of fun and fashion on Berwick Street. In July we had the studio full of Soho Parish Primary School pupils who spoke about the unique experience of growing up and attending school here, followed by the young winners of the Soho Christmas Lights competition. To bridge the gap between them and our adult guests, we had another episode speaking to two local residents in their teens / early twenties to get their perspective.

Always good to hear young voices on the show... the downside

being that we had to wait a while to play Soho Fete musicians The New Sticky's debut single - due to potentially non-child-friendly language!

Autumn was focused on creative voices - artists Clive Jennings, Marc Gooderham and Charlie Milligan all came by to talk about their practices; and we were delighted to speak to Nica Burns OBE and George Hudson about the launch of both their new Soho venues: @sohoplacetheatre

and The Boulevard Soho Jazz Club respectively. The arts scene in Soho is thriving and we are delighted to report on it.

Lastly, we were honoured to receive a visit from the youngest ever Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr Hamza Taouzzale, who also attended the Soho Fete.

Too much to fit into a short round-up, so listen in Thursdays 9-10am (<https://sohoradiolondon.com/>) or catch up on our

website: www.thesohosociety.org.uk/soho-radio..

And if you're passing the glass windows at that time of the morning... give us a wave!

Cat O'Shea



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NICKIE AIKEN

CONSERVATIVE MP FOR CITIES OF
LONDON & WESTMINSTER



Working on your priorities this winter.

Firstly, I want to start by congratulating the recently elected new West End councillors. I won't deny that I am disappointed that the Conservatives lost control of Westminster City Council but as many of you will know from my own time as a councillor and now as an MP, I have a strong record of working with politicians from across the political divide. That will certainly remain the case and I look forward to working with all councillors for the benefit of all those we represent.

When I stood for Parliament in 2019, I was determined to secure a pedicab licensing scheme. Having lived in the Two Cities for 25 years and as a former Westminster Council Leader, Cabinet Member for Public Protection & Licensing and Westminster City Councillor, I fully understood the immense challenges a minority of pedicab riders caused with blaring music, rip-off fares and antisocial behaviour.

I am, therefore, delighted that after my campaign, the Government confirmed in the recent Queen's Speech that legislation for a pedicab licensing scheme will be included in the forthcoming Transport Bill.

For too long, rogue pedicab riders have caused nuisance on our roads, blaring out their music and charging rip-off prices. I have heard directly from local people, businesses, residents associations, amenity societies and councillors right across Soho and the Two Cities their awful experiences involving pedicab drivers causing so much noise and anti-social behaviour. It's the blaring music that Soho residents have had no choice but to put up with hour after hour, day

after day, night after night. This will now stop under the new licensing scheme.

The Soho Society has played a pivotal role in supporting my calls, arming me with evidence ahead of meetings with Ministers and officials and keeping me updated about the on-the-ground reality in Soho and the issues faced by local people. I believe this support has been instrumental in securing Government support for the licensing scheme.



My thanks must also go to the Prime Minister for his personal commitment to giving Government time to secure a pedicab licensing scheme. Answering my question at Prime Minister's Questions in February and in a private meeting with me, Boris Johnson agreed for Government time should my Bill fall. He has seen through that commitment.

With summer drawing ever closer, we will no doubt see even more people visit Soho, particularly during the evening and into the night. I know many of you remain concerned about crime and anti-social behaviour and I will continue to ensure our Borough Commander puts the resources into the area to keep Soho streets safe for all. I will also continue to work with the Soho Society and the Government on the

legislative plans for planning and licensing to ensure they are not detrimental to central London's neighbourhoods.

Lastly, I am here to work for you. If there are any local, national or international issues you think I may be able to help with, please send me an email to nickie.aiken.mp@parliament.uk

Keep up to date on social media! Follow @TwoCitiesNickie on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube.

PATRICK LILLEY



I am writing this article six months into the role. so, it's a fair question to ask: What's changed since the May elections?

Pedicabs

Pedicab noise is down. I have been out a number of times supporting the Metropolitan Police and City Inspectors to enforce noise pollution rules on pedicab riders causing nuisance. Significant fines have helped reduce their noise after 9pm. I've also presented Westminster's case to the Department of Transport that pedicabs should never blare music out and riders should be licensed, have DBS checks, be able to do first aid and obey the Highway Code!

Toilets

Pop up loos are in place from Thursdays to Monday. Cllr Toale and I opened the Carnaby Street Public Conveniences (ribbons, balloons, tunes etc) and our video of the event went viral. The Carnaby Street loos and several others will get a full refurbishment as part of multi-million pound project. The Broadwick Street loos will not reopen following advice from the police, which disappointed me. But I have been assured by our Cabinet Member for Finance that if and when that property generates funds a substantial amount of the income will come back to Soho for further investment in facilities that could help provide a long-term solution.

As the season of excess arrives, I am leading Westminster's Don't Piss Off Soho - Go Before You Go campaign to educate revellers, with the threat to fine offenders who don't respect your streets and doorways. WCC will put the location of our 30 pop up loos on Google maps, and joint operations by the Police and City Inspectors will, where practicable, enforce the law.

Ultimately Soho has too many licensed premises (nearly 500) and hopefully these efforts are helping to mitigate the problem. The above ground Automatic Public Convenience on Broadwick Street which is accessible, should be open 24/7 by the time you read this and, I hope, free to use by Berwick Street Market traders.

Soho Comes Clean

Veolia have implemented a new system where they have an operative on an electric bike that goes around Soho (main streets and side streets) clearing all the bags of waste. Resident

feedback suggests that things are looking better. Westminster Council has also adopted another key proposal of the Soho Comes Clean report with plans now in place to recruit a full-time officer to focus on enforcement against fly-tipping and real consolidation of private waste collection

Noise, traffic & air quality

I have been meeting several Soho organisations to understand their concerns and to bring WCC closer to the people and communities of Soho, including Soho Streets for People, Soho Business Alliance, The Soho Society and Soho Neighbourhood Forum and working to involve all in WC C's plans to study levels of noise, traffic and air quality. (In other activity I helped co-ordinate resistance with residents to night markets planned for three nights a week in the run up to Christmas.)



School Christmas lights

Meanwhile all of Soho is looking forward to the Parish School Kids Xmas Lights project happening from 29 November. Now in its second year pupils of Soho Parish Primary School have enjoyed drawing workshops, made their designs, and the judges selected 14 designs which will be turned into new Xmas Soho lights. The West End councillors are proud to join over a dozen local businesses to support this project from our Ward Budget.

Cllrs Toale, Fisher and I also agreed ward funding for the Soho Recovery Centre, a dedicated space at 123 Charing Cross Road where 12 step recovery meetings take place (AA, NA).

Future actions include reviewing a Late Night Levy - i.e. taxing Westminster's licensed premises who operate between midnight and 6am, to help pay for more police and better clean ups. Who could argue against that?

If you have issues to raise with me, please email me at plilley@westminster.gov.uk Surgeries are on the second Saturday of every month between 10am-11am at 68 Dean Street W1D 4Q. No appointment is necessary.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

ADAM HUG



It remains an enormous privilege to be the leader of the Council but with multi-billion Government cuts on the horizon and a cost-of-living crisis engulfing us all, it is a hugely challenging time. And while the Council cannot solve the crisis on its own, we are working hard to help residents in difficult circumstances.

To give you some examples: we have pulled together £8 million so far in funding to help families, with more to come by the time the Clarion lands in people's letter boxes. This includes programmes to support food banks, offer help through the Citizens Advice Bureau, and open up warm spaces with free activities through our Winter in the City programme (see www.westminster.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support for more). While bills are going up across the board, we are continuing this year's Council Tax freeze into next year.

The Council's plan, Fairer Westminster, ensures residents are at the heart of decision-making. It has five pillars:

- Fairer communities: reducing poverty and inequality to make our City healthier and more equitable
- Housing: making sure Council uses its land effectively to deliver social and truly affordable homes
- A fairer economy means ensuring Westminster's local high streets share in the City's success along with the West End
- A fairer environment - tackling the climate crisis while making our City greener and easier to get around
- Finally, a fairer council - reforming how we consult with residents

On the last point, the Council recognises the real challenges that Soho residents face with noise issues, and we will be working with the Soho Society and other local stakeholders to identify areas where the City Council can help. While the buzz of Soho is a major draw for international visitors, that cannot be at the price of round-the-clock disruption for local people. While the scheme proved successful in many parts of the city, there were many problems related to *al fresco* on a number of streets in Soho during lockdown.. I can assure you now we will not proceed with further *al fresco* schemes in Soho unless we know residents support them. As a Council we are taking action to tackle public urination and street fouling in Soho, as evidenced by the recent decision to reopen the Carnaby Street toilets.

We are getting to grips with the long-delayed Oxford Street District project. After delay and in my view needless expense – typified by the much-derided Marble Arch Mound - we are now cracking on with practical plans to improve the street itself with wider pavements, better seating, and more greenery. The Soho Society and other Residents Groups will be fully represented on the new Oxford Street Advisory Board that will help supervise the next steps. We are working with theatres, galleries, and arts organisations to hold more events and activities to draw people to the area. The Council is actively supporting local entrepreneurs to set up on Oxford Street in “pop up” businesses while enforcing against the rash of seedy US candy stores which bring the tone down.

A vibrant Soho is at the heart of the West End. The Soho Society will have a stronger voice than ever our plans to create a fairer Westminster, and I look forward to working with you.



CARNABY CELEBRATES

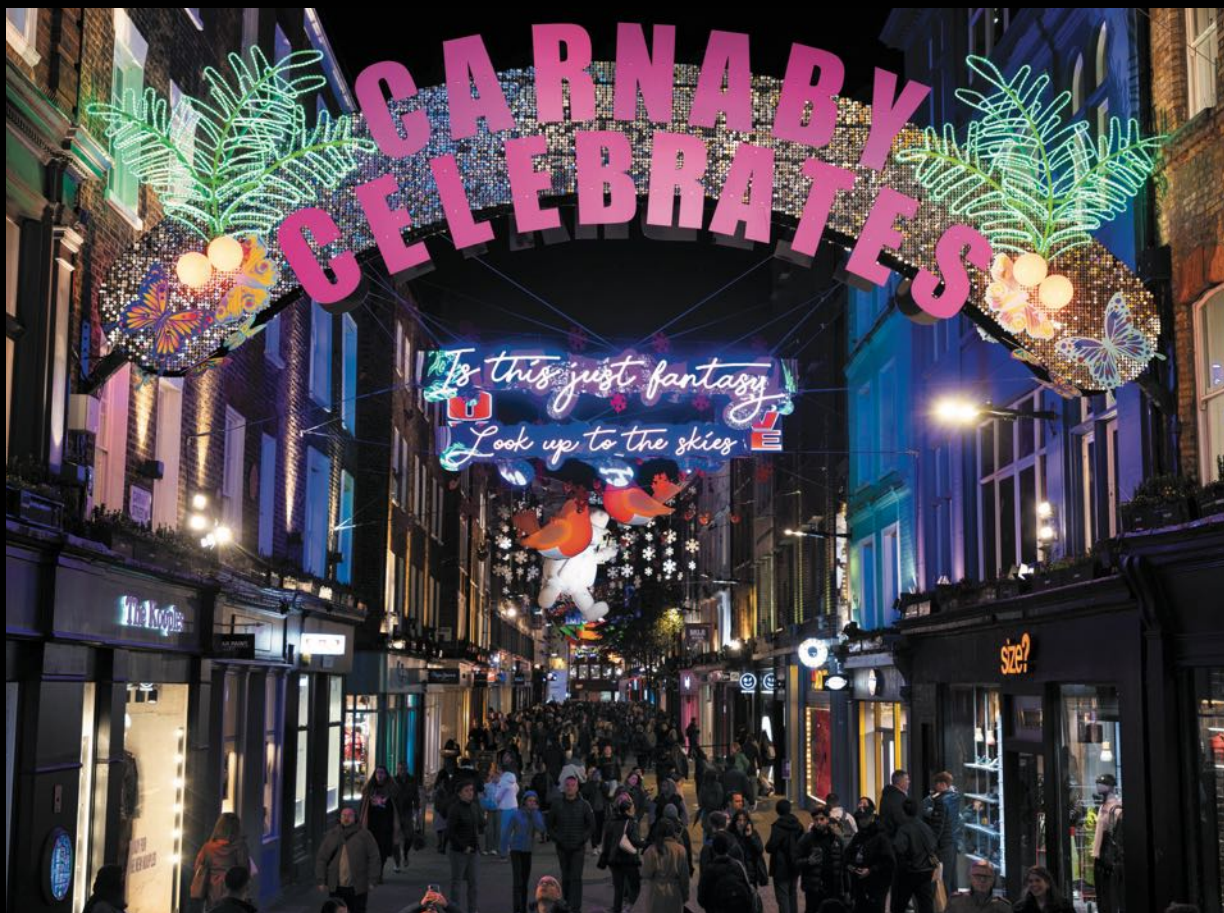
Carnaby is London's most iconic shopping and dining destination with over 100 independent and international brands alongside 60 restaurants and bars across 14 streets including world famous Carnaby Street. Be immersed in this year's vibrant Christmas installation and celebrate iconic moments from the past 25 years.

The installation includes an underwater seascape, colourful rainbows, oversized fairy lights, giant snowmen, 60s inflatables, a kaleidoscope of butterflies and collaborations with two of the world's most famous bands; the Rolling Stones and Queen.



Scan to find
out more

@CarnabyLondon #CarnabyChristmas
Carnaby.co.uk



CARNABY
Shaftesbury

CHOOSE
LOVE

W(H)ITHER SOHO?

Here's a question: how many Soho shop, restaurant or bar owners do you know who clean outside their premises each day?

I don't know any residents who are unhappy living in Soho, it's a neighbourhood with a strong sense of community and history, where you bump into people you know on the street and stop and chat, with informal hubs like Soho Dairy, My Place and Bar Italia where locals linger, and local businesses, whose numbers are unfortunately dwindling. But the once cool and ever noisy Soho with its reputation for being edgy, cosmopolitan, interesting, outrageous, occasionally dangerous and above all different is disappearing under an unremitting tide of alcohol and late night licences.

So there's tension in the air fuelled by the tunnel and bridge crowd intent, apparently, only on a booze sodden instagrammable night out who, indulged by formidable commercial interests, dismiss Soho residents as whiney, troublesome and standing in the way of their utopian pursuit of 24 hour 'fun', actively egged on by those who'll profit most from it:

Marco from Bar Termini who says, *"the problem you have in Soho is a lot of punk rockers came to live here in the 1970s and now they're 70 they complain about everything"* *

And Robert, manager at Ku Bar is surprised that *"neighbours get quite upset, its not the music but the drama they see outside, police cars, ambulances"* *

Or James a manager at Canwood55 who thinks his entitlement to maximise profits by wanting to serve alcohol 24 hours a day is being *"unreasonably stymied by residents whining about noise after 3am"*. *

Developers have changed the face of Soho rapidly and,

helped by a complicit and compliant council (now thankfully under new leadership), they've created a dull disneyland of chain bars and restaurants that's had a significant impact on residents' quality of life.

But with active new councillors ready to listen and engage, this is a moment in time to push back and redress the balance between businesses and residents. There are shoots of hope: new, cool restaurants: Firebird, Bubula and Miznon have opened; Vasco & Pieros have phoenixed despite a greedy landlord; indy fashion retailers: Patta, Adam and Reign Vintage are hanging on against the encroaching Carnaby Street chains. It's also an opportunity, given the incoming economic challenges, for local organisations to increase their activities to strengthen and support the community - for The Soho Society to champion and speak for even more residents and small businesses and for Soho Housing to remember its social mission.



So back to my question, which was never about sanitation but about whether businesses see themselves as part of our community . . . should we start an 'I've cleaned my doorway' campaign so that businesses can show they genuinely care about being in Soho and are not just taking advantage of being here?

And for all those 'revellers' who find us an inconvenience, no, we're not going to move to somewhere quieter, we were here first.

**Quotes from Westminster Extra 19.8.22*

BEAUTIFUL SHOPS

LUCY HAINE

With two valuable amenity shops (Ryness and Tesco) under threat of closure and rising rents, energy costs, online spending and unpredictable working patterns, all contributing to high street closures, retailer Lucy Haine reviews three Soho stores in a new feature, “Beautiful shops”.



CASS ART, Brewer Street

Family Owned, UK Registered

Cass Art first opened in Berwick Street, Soho in 2003. Their first shop was 13 Charing Cross Road next to the National Gallery in 1984 taking over the lease of an art shop that had been in place since 1884 and frequented by Claude Monet. The business is known for their wide range, great discounts and supporting artists, currently celebrating 20 years of their manifesto “Let’s Fill This Town with Artists”

which takes pride of place above the shop front of their new store in Brewer Street which they moved to recently from Berwick Street.

Store layout: Bright, well-lit with white shop fit, which showcases colourful art stock, fantastic sightlines with pricing and discounts clearly on display, and a clever nod to paint colours in the branding.

Meet the team: Dana, Store manager, joined the business in 2020, has a team of eight and they are recruiting an assistant manager.

Soho Best sellers: Spray paints (of course!) Montana gold 94 a new outdoor graffiti paint.

Busiest time: Afternoons.

Events: Ten student days per year with 20% off, Cass Artists has four exhibition spaces in London and artists lead workshops for free.

What you like most about Soho: Dana says, the variety of people from our regular artists with studios to famous artists and actors who drop in.

Soho discounts: 10% off for Soho residents with Carnaby card/Soho Society membership.

Did you know? All the staff are artists and experts in the products which they get to try.

Did I buy? Yes! A fantastic collection of oil pastels for £7.95 before Soho discount.

www.cassart.co.uk

ROMANYS, Brewer Street

Owned by the same owner since 1998, the site has always been a hardware store, opened in 1925, trading in 1947 as Burgess & Galer Ltd.

Romanys is a traditional ironmonger with counter service and an incredible selection of knobs! Their USP is 40 years of expertise, and they can pretty much find what you need or advise you on what you should buy. 80% of customers are trade, and arrive early doors.

They also offer key cutting/security locks/consultation in DIY.

Store Layout: Cluttered with an eclectic approach to product display, however the point is, the team do know where everything is and they have anything you ask for.

Meet the team: Dilip is the manager in Soho with a team of three and there is also a shop in Mayfair.



Busiest time of day: First thing, the shop opens at 8am.

Soho Bestsellers: Maintenance and decorating products.

Best thing about Soho: Vibrant with different types of people because of theatres and recording studios lots of actors and musicians.

Soho discounts: None but very handy.

Events coming up: No

Did you know?

Did I buy? Yes! some stone cleaner for the patio.

www.romanys.co.uk



Derschutze

Peter Street/Walkers Court

German Brand, UK registered

This is a Drop model, Once sold out, gone forever, streetwear brand, the store opened on 27 November 2021, and the brand has been around for four years with 150,000 followers on Instagram. Biggest business international USA and Germany There are two clothing drops per month online on a Monday and in-store on a Friday. TikTok transformed the brand with thousands of views massively extending their global reach.

Store Layout: Pared back and minimal with product blocking and unique touches like the games console, bean bag and bench where anyone can drop in for a chat.

Meet the team: Georgio is the store manager.

Team: Keely, Patrick James, Musa, Elijah.

Busiest time of Day: Thursday - Sunday 2pm - 6pm

Soho Bestsellers: The hoodies which retail at £78 and are thick and fleece lined.

What you like most about being in Soho: The mix of people, the latest Godfather collection was shot at Sweeties of St Moritz Club using local Soho people as models including Ray Gelato and Ryan, hairdresser from Joe & Co

Any Soho discounts you might like to include: Soho discount 10% off.

Events coming up: One year anniversary with limited exclusive range, which will only be available in-store, people all over the world will want the item.

Did you know: One of their employees is a Mortal Combat expert, beat him to get 10% off, beat him three times get 80% off!

www.derschutze.com



Soho shops – use them or lose them #ShopLocalShopSoho

Own a Beautiful Soho Shop? Get featured next time, email lucy.haine@thesohosociety.org.uk

Photos by Jason Fisher-Jones

MY SOHO STOCKING

Lucy Haine asks the Society Exec to choose their favourite Christmas gifts from Soho's best independents.

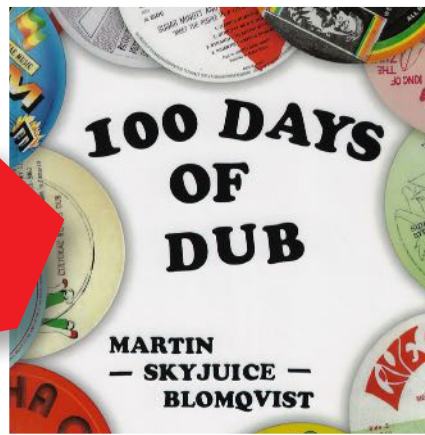
Leslie

Box of Fruit with orange for the toe & lime for a G&T
£10
Berwick St Market



Takashi

100 Days of Dub by Martin Blom Qvist - £15
Sounds of the Universe
Broadwick St



Matthew

Pumpkin Ravioli 250g
£6.25 Lina Stores
Brewer St



Jane

4 piece Chocolate Box
£7.50
William Curley, Smiths Court



Margaret

White Truffle 10g
£50, Camisa's
Old Compton St



David

Gluten free chocolate gateaux
£38
Said, Broadwick St



Tim

Untold London, by Dan Carrier
£20
Foyles



Joel

£150
Hot pink overalls
McOveralls, Brewer St



Quentin

Dinner for 2, Vasco &
Piero Pavillion, £100
D'Arblay St



Marina

Voucher for delicious
cream cakes, £40
Maison Bertaux
Greek St



Jason

Soho Theatre Membership
£35
Dean St



Lucy

Pottery Christmas tree
decoration, £5 French House
Market, Dec 11/12th



GERRY'S CLUB - THE NEXT ACT

Gerry's Club is a Soho Institution. Opened by the actor Gerald Champion (famous for his TV portrayal of Billy Bunter) on May 6 1956, and originally on Shaftesbury Avenue before moving to Dean Street in 1984, it is one of the last of the old Soho late night drinking dens. Originally a club where actors, and anyone else who worked in the theatre, could unwind over a drink after the curtain came down, Dennis Rogers is the new owner, and only the fifth in the Club's history. I asked him about his plans for Gerry's.

Clive Jennings: Tell me a bit about your background, your historic connection with Gerry's and how and when you came to take it over.

Dennis Rogers: I've been involved in business for the past 40 years predominantly property related. I did own and run an entertainment agency in my 20s and I was a professional DJ for a number of years. I had been a member of Gerry's for 25 years before we bought it.

After lockdown and flooding issues, Michael Dillon and Alison, the previous owners, decided

to retire and wanted a private sale to someone they knew who respected and understood the history of the club and would cherish and develop it onto its next chapter (which is exactly what happened when Michael bought it in 1991).

We have re-launched it, respecting the history of the past, but building on the future, with ground breaking musicians 5 nights a week - developing the character of the club and supporting the characters who are members.

CJ: Tell me a bit more about the family involvement?

DR: My son Elliott and I jointly run the club together and my wife Jennifer dips in with help and support whenever possible.

CJ: Do you consider Gerry's to still be a club for theatre people?

DR: Yes. Gerry's is as it was: predominantly for actors both past and present. It's exciting to see that as well as the old established network of older members, we have a large number of young actors joining us from both the West

End theatre and TV. We also have members from the music world – producers, performers and writers.

CJ: Gerry's is one of the last of the last great bohemian clubs, an important stopping off point on the Dean Street shuffle. Does this history mean a lot to you?

DR: Yes very much so, and it is paramount that we maintain Gerry's as custodians for future generations.

CJ: The recent deaths of resident pianist Kenny Clayton, and of singer Paul Ryan, who often performed at Gerry's, were a great loss to Soho. Do you see this as an opportunity to change the musical direction of the club and the bar?

DR: We have live music now five nights a week – jazz, piano and up and coming musicians. We respect the past while allowing opportunities for new acts. We also have many theatrical evenings and one off events to keep the theatrical element going, and are even looking at putting on a series of one act plays next year.

The Dean Street Project is a new jazz trio created especially for Gerry's and we will be holding the world spoon playing

championship at some point!

CJ: Gerry's has always had the reputation of being like walking into a hopping party. How do you see yourself putting your individual mark on Gerry's?

DR: I think we already have, it's a party every night from 5pm until 3am,!!!

CJ: No plans to change the name to Dennis's then?

DR: No, Gerry's is an institution and will always be what it is, with its rich history and its exciting future.

For more on Gerry's history, read Paul Ryan's excellent Spring 2021 article 'Gerry Champion: A Centenary Salute' in the Soho Clarion archive at: <https://www.thesohosociety.org.uk/previous-issues>

Clive Jennings



OUT & ABOUT

SOME HIDDEN GEMS

Navigating the streets of Soho is no easy task, especially when trying to find somewhere to go of an evening but Soho has a plethora of hidden gems for every occasion. I have been lucky enough to partially grow up in Soho for the important years of sixteen onwards (obviously), so the nightlife here I know inside-out. Soho has definitely been lacking in places to be with more independent, late-night bars and clubs severely needed. But I have a few gems I have found on my nights out that are special places to me and I know probably too well, to my mother's dismay!

Of course I have to start of with a place that has become somewhat of a second home, My Place Soho, Berwick Street. It has a warm atmosphere and good music. Particularly a must-go if you are a fan of cocktails, they definitely do the best cocktails in Soho. I would particularly recommend their Espresso Martini or Margarita. They also have a shot called the My Place shot and I haven't met anyone who hasn't loved it. A must go to for the best cocktails, perfect for a date night.

The first place I'd like to tell you about is the new Soho live jazz music venue, aka the new place to be. From the owner of the Piano Bar comes The Shed at The Boulevard, located on Walker's Court. This place is so hidden, it is often missed by a lot of people (the hidden places are always the best) but honestly it is not one to be missed. The decor and space is truly magical with tremendous acoustics. Tickets can be bought on dice.com and start from £5. The atmosphere is electric and the crowd is as diverse as it gets. The Shed is a more intimate affair with musicians jamming out and often testing new music. The Boulevard, aka the "theatre in the clouds", is an immersive experience with world-class jazz performances. The Night Train shows at the Boulevard run until 1am and are my favourite. The cocktail menu is short and sweet but top quality. A must-go to if you like jazz or even just live music. A must-see is Kitty LaRoar who, apart from having a voice like butter, is a great drummer and blends both singing and drumming with an effortless flair. This is the most welcoming place around and everybody is always having a good time.

Next up on my places to be is Below Stone Nest. Located on Shaftesbury Avenue you could easily miss the entrance, but again the hidden places are the best places. Upon entering you go downstairs and into a boastful open space. There are tables and chairs and a stage for when there's live music. There is also a DJ booth where some of the best music is played. The bar boasts reasonably priced cocktails - one to try if you don't know what to have would be the Gin Aperol

Sours. The staff are lovely and accommodating, and this dimly lit bar is perfect for a date night or to sit and have a catch up with a friend, and then on their lively nights you can dance into the night to some good tunes.

The final place to be is a private members club, the Pink Chihuahua. In a Soho that is lacking late night places to go with places shutting by midnight or 1am if you are lucky, the Pink Chihuahua saves the day (or should I say night). It is frequented by a lot of hospitality workers, looking for somewhere to go after work. You won't see an entrance to the Pink Chihuahua easily - you have to go in through El Camion, Brewer Street, which does amazing food until the early hours of the morning (I know, as I am no stranger to their Chorizo Quesadilla!) You will likely have to queue, but it

is usually fast and after signing in you go down some steep stairs and see the doors to the Pink Chihuahua. Once you are in a DJ blasts old school RnB, hip hop, and even some Latin music. The crowd is mixed, the drinks are not cheap, but you must have a Tequila shot with their infamous chaser. If you are lucky enough to secure a cave booth don't let it go! It gets lively at around midnight/1am and is open until 3am.

These aren't the only places I go to, but they are probably my most regularly visited places and I have never had a bad night at any of them. So, if you find yourself looking for somewhere to go of an evening, remember, these are the hottest spots in Soho!

Ella Sprosta



NICA BURNS OBE

The Clarion caught up with Nica Burns, CEO of Nimax Theatres, which owns and runs six West End theatres (now of course seven) early in November, less than a month after the opening of the new theatre that has been built in Soho adjacent to the site where the Astoria stood prior to being demolished (along with several other buildings) to make way for the Elizabeth Line, the first new West End theatre to be built in over 50 years.

Nica has a long history in the theatre, starting as an actress and then doing her own work. She started directing, and was artistic director at the Donmar from 1983 to 1989 prior to its redevelopment. Following that she was production director of Stoll Moss and Really Useful Group from 1993 to 2005. In 2005 she founded Nimax Theatres with her business partner Max Weitzenhoffer, and co-owns the Palace, the Lyric, the Apollo, the Garrick, the Vaudeville and the Duchess. She was also President of the Society of London Theatre ('SOLT') for three years from 2008 and then Vice-President from 2011 to 2013. She has received numerous awards and received an OBE in the 2013 New Year's Honours List for services to theatre.

A little of the history of the theatre is that in 1986 Derwent acquired a chunk of the north-east part of Soho, which was safeguarded by Crossrail and eventually in 2009 the site was demolished. The founder and CEO of Derwent

contacted Nica to invite her to discuss a "project" with him - this turned out to be @sohoplace. An agreement was signed in 2011 and finally in October 2022 (after various delays with Crossrail, the Covid pandemic), the theatre opened with a play called 'Marvellous', based on the true story of Neil Baldwin, who overcame all sorts of difficulties, becoming Stoke City's 'kit man', and a local hero.

Enormous thought was given to every detail of the theatre: there are no restricted views, the acoustics are excellent, Derwent having got all the best builders, best experts, and the result is this great space. The stage is "flexible, with changeable configurations for the production, with a particular interest in in-the-round". Nica feels that the auditorium "really works and has a kind of magic about it, in that the audience feel an interaction with the actors, no seat being further than six rows back". In addition, amongst other things there is an on-site rehearsal room, and great facilities for the actors and crew.

Everything in the building has a story or idea behind it, and Nica wants the local Soho community to come and enjoy the building, not just the theatre, and stresses the point that at the heart of this 21st century theatre everybody is welcome off-stage as well as on it. She said that, when thinking about how the auditorium and building should look and feel, she was "transported to a moment when as a young actress,



I was standing on the stage of one of the great theatres of the ancient world in Greece. It was 8 o'clock - show time - with the last rays of a golden sun coming through the trees and the stars starting to twinkle in an indigo sky. It was magic. The acoustics were incredible, the horseshoe shape hugged both the actor and the audience and the sightlines were fantastic - it was a heart-stopping moment. The theatre was Epidaurus. It was built in the late 4th century BC – that's 2,400 years ago. Performances still take place there, and under the stars on a warm Greek night it is still magical. Contemporary theatre today has roots in the Greek classical theatre and we still learn from its writers, such as Aeschylus, Aristophanes, Euripides, Sophocles – whose plays continue to be performed today.” That is what she has achieved.

She goes on to say, “the idea of stars is embedded in contemporary theatre. Great actors are called ‘stars’, critics’ reviews rate productions with stars and here our audiences will walk under constellations in the ceilings of the front of house spaces into the auditorium. Outside when you look up, you will see the constellations twinkling on the ceiling of the outdoor terrace. Our theatre @sohoplac has deep indigo as its main colour, trimmed by a dark gold. The white marble of the staircases and corridor panels also remind you of the classical statuary of ancient Greece. When you stand outside the theatre at night, the whole building shimmers.”

The names of the constellations are written on the ceiling, and when lit up you really are gazing at the stars. One idea is that the space could be used for educational purposes to help children learn more about the sky as, certainly in Central London, we don't see the stars - no doubt the children of Soho Parish School would love to visit the space, see the stars and learn about them.

Sadly, by the time you read this, the first production, Marvellous will have finished its run.

The next production is As You Like It, which Nica says will be a beautiful production - ‘the costumes are gorgeous, the music is wonderful’. It stars Leah Harvey as Rosalind and Rose Ayling-Ellis as Celia (readers will no doubt remember her from East Enders and as the winner of Strictly in 2021), with Alfred Enoch playing Orlando (who is apparently something of a heart-throb). It runs from 6 December to 28 January 2023.

Following on from that is Euripides’ Medea, starring Sophie Okonedo and Ben Daniels, which runs from 17 February to 22 April (with previews from 11 February).

They are about to announce a new play, which they have applied for; and then after that the hope is that they will produce a musical.

Seats start at £25, with the most expensive being £65.

Nica also thought, “it would be fun to add a restaurant and cocktail bar, so ‘stars restaurant and bar’ on the ground floor was born to allow the public to enjoy being in the theatre outside show time”. The restaurant and bar are currently open from 5.30 to 10.30pm. They are hoping to open all day in due course, but currently, as with many in

the hospitality sector, there are staffing difficulties. If you're going to see a show you can enjoy a pre-theatre meal and simply walk up the stairs to the show. Nica is very keen for the theatre to be part of the Soho community and for us to feel able to drop in and have a course or a drink. So in the period leading up to Christmas (and beyond) bring your children for a ‘stars burger and chips’, and see the stars. You may well see Nica serving at table, as she spends a lot of time in the theatre, looking to see that everything is working properly, and hearing what people have to say.

A little about the restaurant food, well recommended: our honorary president and his wife, Leslie and Wendy Hardcastle, would thoroughly recommend stars @Sohoplac. Wendy says, “I had the crispy skin cod, at £29 the most expensive item on the menu and absolutely delicious; Leslie had the equally delicious pork belly at only £17. Apart from the cod all the other mains are between £14 and £24. For starters we had Korean spiced wings, also highly recommended and great value at £6.50. As I drink white and Leslie drinks red we tried some interesting wines by the glass. The staff are lovely and this new restaurant manages to combine delicious food at modest prices. Also, the “speedy” set menu at two courses for £20, or three courses for £25, is great value for pre or post theatre, or if you are in a hurry.” What more could you wish for!

Other comments are: “We went for the speedy pre-theatre set meal, excellent value with great, attentive service, without feeling rushed. Plenty of time to get to our seats. It is a lovely environment. Well planned. We would recommend it ... Very welcoming staff and very good food and service.” Another diner added, “Having had a delicious burger, the chocolate mousse for dessert was gorgeous too. A lot of food for £20!”

Another diner, who visited on a day when the kitchen was experiencing electrical problems, said, “Fortunately the issue was resolved and I'm really pleased because the food was excellent. Above all though the service was amazing and we were really looked after, particularly my sister as this was an early birthday lunch and theatre trip for her. Would definitely visit again and recommend the theatre too - a great new space and Marvellous was exactly that!” Others say: “Place is lovely, the food was good, but most of all the service was excellent!! All the staff went the extra mile to assist and make us feel welcome. Super efficient and attentive.”

There is a good wine list with a number of wines by the glass varying between £6 and £15.

@sohoplac is a wonderful space and both theatre and restaurant deserve our support and we wish them every success - so we recommend you to go and see the stars. Go before everybody discovers it and make it impossible to get in.

Jane Doyle

DICKTALES

CLIVE JENNINGS

Dicktales: Thankyous and Sluggings by Dick Bradsell

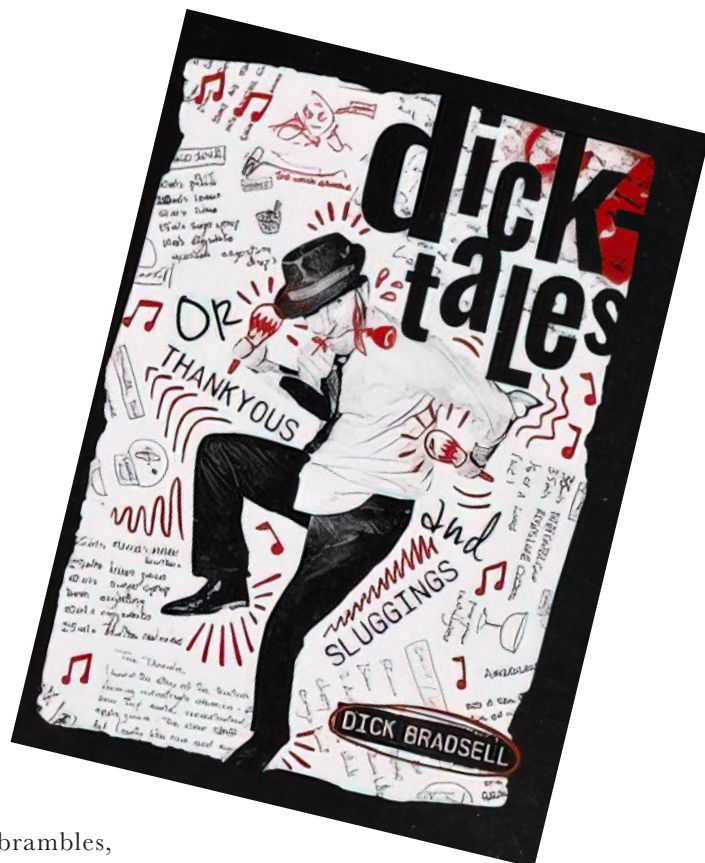
Many denizens of Soho will be familiar with the legendary bartender and cocktail wizard Dick Bradsell, who sadly died of a brain tumour in 2016. He practised his art behind many famous Soho bars, including Zanzibar, The Groucho, Fred's, the eponymous Dick's Bar at The Atlantic and The Colony Room Club, to mention but a few. He was credited with single-handedly changing the face of the London cocktails scene in the 1980s. His many creations, in particular The Espresso Martini and The Bramble, have transcended their humble Soho origins and are now considered to be modern classics, featured on cocktail menus the world over.

This book is a compilation of his writings, musings, drawings, photographs ... and of course cocktail recipes – 131 of them and notes on how to make them. All this is presented in the cut and paste style of a punk fanzine from the 1970s. Dick was obviously an inveterate scribbler, and this book has been 'carefully reconstructed from his own writings in his incalculable notebooks, personal letters and scraps of paper, over almost four decades, reproduced in the raw so all the feeling and emotion of his thoughts are left their finest unedited, unpolished form' by his partner, Eline Soo Yun Bosman, and his daughter, Bea Bradsell, a chip off the old block who is still involved in the cocktail business.

This is not a cocktail book or a bar manual, and, in its presentation, is the antithesis to the classic Savoy Cocktail Book of 1930, but they are both fascinating records of the cocktails that set London alight at the time. Dicktales (see what they did there!) captures the joy and the verve of Soho in the '80s and '90s – the rise of the members clubs, and cocktail bars populated by media types and hard drinking YBA's. There are even Dick's playlists – David Bowie, Roxy Music and the B52's – and we learn that he co-wrote Twist and Crawl by The Beat!

Dick learnt his trade at the Naval and Military Club (known as the In and Out) at 94 Piccadilly, where his uncle wangled him a job at the age of 17. For all his punk credentials, and gonzo bartending, he developed exacting standards and a set of rules that would become industry standards. He would tell his trainee bar staff: 'Perfection in bartending doesn't just happen; you have to make the effort.' He despaired of the new breed of cocktail bartenders, all beards and tattoos, opining: 'It's become a style thing, but style with no content.'

The origins of his most iconic concoctions are documented in detail in delightful notes that sometimes verge on the poetic, always handwritten. On the birth of The Bramble, Dick explains: 'I was brought up in East Cowes, Isle of Wight and spent my autumns and summers beating through the gorse and



brambles, covered in scratches and semi dyed purple after harvesting these little jewels ... Then some chap from a company brought me Boutinot Crème de Mure from France. I sipped it and had my Proustian Madeleine moment. It reminded me of childhood foraging for blackberries.' Another puts the record straight on The Espresso Martini, invented for a top British model who wanted both to be woken up and pepped up, and was like rocket fuel, claims Dick: 'Thus The Pharmaceutical Stimulant is Damien Hirst's name for the previous Espresso Martini recipe (and it wasn't Kate Moss, who looks younger as she gets older – good trick, luv). That's it.'

I knew Dick slightly. About ten years ago I presented Christopher Nolan's first feature film Following [1998] at a film club devoted to Soho, in the Sanctum Hotel. I thought that I recognised the actor who played a particularly sadistic thug of a gangster in the film, and sure enough, it was Dick. When I asked him about it, he explained that the film was made on a very small budget and Nolan scouted a bar that Dick was involved in at Seven Dials, Covent Garden, as a location. When the now internationally famous director saw Richard Arthur Bradsell, he was so impressed with his look, that he offered him the part ... Dick could have been the next Batman!

This book is a great read, either cover-to-cover or just dipping in, and profusely illustrated. The perfect Christmas present for anyone who likes a tippie or Soho or both. So, pour yourself your favourite drink and let Dick stroll you through his life!

Published in several different formats by Mixellany Ltd

LOVE+

LOVE+ by Persona Collective - Community Immersive Theatre project in SOHO

Persona Collective is a multidisciplinary team of creatives from theatre, dance, design, architecture, film and education. They bring together community members and creative practitioners to perform immersive theatre in unexpected places throughout London.

“We bridge communities and take art, design and performance out of their traditional ghettos. We create and stage extraordinary events in unexpected places layered with cultural heritage but at risk of slipping from living memory”.

Their new upcoming production is called LOVE+ and is taking place in Soho. This project has been supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and connected with numerous partners across the LGBTQ+ and local communities. They are officially starting in mid December 2022 and the live shows will happen at the end of March 2023.

The audience will find themselves stepping into an intimate journey across multiple secret locations throughout Soho and Chinatown - from a barber shop to a chapel, weaving through hidden passageways.

They will be immersed in a multi-sensory experience, somewhere between fiction and reality. Each group of audience will be following one character's story, whilst witnessing threads of multiple narratives throughout their journey. Audience members usually describe the experience as “being immersed inside of a film” or as “hyper-realistic,



it was never clear whether something was reality or an artistic construct”.

This project will celebrate the diversity and tolerance of Soho's local community and indie businesses with a narrative based on real voices and in real unique locations in the local area.

But before the live performance happens, the collective will be running over three months of free workshops with the members of the community. The participants will have the opportunity to learn how to act, dance and get ready to perform in front of an audience. This year they are also offering Design for Theatre Labs, for those who want to learn about lighting, sound, sets for site-specific immersive performance. Participants will be approached through Open Calls: “Together we will co-create the final show, giving each of our cast and collaborators a sense of ownership and connection to their work”

They will be working with several indie local businesses and build a set/installation in an empty shop, all in Soho.

“We will deliver a site-specific, immersive theatre production and interdisciplinary programme of creative

workshops. The project outputs will be live shows and a film with artists and a diverse group from the local community”

“And we hope to see you all there!”

More information at www.personacollective.co.uk

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

PANTO TIME!

Revd Simon Buckley catches up with ace Ventriloquist Paul Zerdin ahead of his 7th appearance in pantomime in Soho's most iconic and famous theatre, the London Palladium.

Paul, thank you for squeezing this interview into your schedule between appearing on a cruise ship and starting panto rehearsals. Where have you been, and how did it go?

Hello Simon! Yes, since the Summer I've been performing on Disney Cruise Lines and have been to Miami, The Bahamas then Holland, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Iceland and last week I just got back from the brand-new Royal Caribbean ship Wonder of the Seas where I was the last guest entertainer in Europe before it sailed across the Atlantic to the Bahamas. Good job I got off in time otherwise I'd be bobbing around the Atlantic whilst Palladium rehearsals had begun! The shows were great and these new cruise ships are just amazing, I mean the Wonder of the Seas is the biggest cruise ship in the world and the theatre is beautiful, it holds 1300! Not quite as many as The Palladium - see what I did there!

Nice link!

Thanks for that, I was going to make a link between cruising and working with Julian Clary, but I'll leave that to the master of innuendo himself! Obviously you're glad to be on dry and land and at the 'adium, and of course being reunited with Julian, Gary Wilmott, Nigel Havers and the gang.

Yeah, it's always great to get back with the gang for Christmas. This year in particular it feels even more exciting, as the last couple of years have been touch and go - and particularly last year when all the theatres seemed to be closing around us with covid and yet we managed to make it thorough without any hiccups!

I have always loved Panto and I find I spend all year on stage on my own talking to myself and so its really lovely to be back with my friends and have other people to talk to on stage! I share a dressing room with Havers and we run a little cocktail bar in there after the show! It's a very civilized

way of us having a post show debrief! Also we do get some very interesting guests backstage sometime. Sir Ian McKellan and the Pet Shop Boys spring to mind! They have always been my favourite pop band and I remember having a chat with Neil Tennant about how my puppet, Sam, came alive on his own. That was very exciting!

So what's this year's show, and who will you and your trusty sidekick Sam be playing?

This year it's Jack and the Beanstalk and I play Silly Simon he's like the village idiot and my sidekick is the village idiot's sponge friend Silly Sam.

'Silly Simon?' erm... some people may say that role has already been taken!

Haha, no comment! Actually, I think Jack and

the Beanstalk is one of the best Panto stories and I've played Simon quite a few times before and also the role of Jack some years ago with Havers playing the baddie. We had quite the sword fight at the end, it was brilliant!

No matter what the pantomime is Julian always seems to say he's doing 'the same camp old nonsense', but does Sam have some new gags?

We are very conscious that we have quite a big returning audience so we try and come back with new routines and material each year. So yes, it's all new jokes in this Jack and



the Beanstalk.

Oh, you never disappoint! And without spoiling the surprise, do you have any new characters for us to meet this year?

My Baby character is in the show this year and he's very naughty! It's great that I get to use another character as it means Sam and I have break from each other in one scene - to be honest we don't really get on and you might have noticed we're always bickering.

Yes, I have sensed a bit of friction between you two on stage occasionally- and I've seen five of Palladium pantos since they started in 2016 . Do you have a favourite one, or favourite memory?

Cinderella was always my fave as I've been Buttons many many times and I think there's an automatic love of that character cos you know he should really end up with the girl but doesn't. But too be honest I've enjoyed all of the different shows we've done. I have some favourite moments from some of them for example doing the Pheasant plucker routine with Julian and Paul O'Grady. The look of fear in all our eyes as the routine gets more and more difficult and we are sailing very close to the wind from a rudeness point of view!

And also it's so great to be back with Dawn French again as she's such fun on stage to be with.

Lovely Dawn! I did some car insurance adverts with her a number of years ago, and she is a delight to work with - but you need to be with nice people as it's hard work, and you're doing exactly 70 performances this year- how will you keep going?

Vodka! Only joking... Not 'til after the show! Pantomime is like a big train which leave the station and you have to be on it. You just get into a routine and it's a big machine that chugs along. I think as we all have lots to do in the show we are never bored and it goes very quickly.

And is it good to have an excuse to be in Soho?

Yes I love it. It's like having a pad in town even though I don't sleep in the dressing room we are there so much it feels like it.

Is your girlfriend still in Mary Poppins the other big Soho show for Christmas?

Yes, then she joins the Pantomime as one of the ensemble as she has worked with Karen Bruce the choreographer on other musicals.

What about favourite Soho hangouts or shops that you like to call into between the matinee and the evening show, or slouch in afterwards?

Yes M&S on Gt Marlborough Street is our local food shop where we pop in most days.

Then there's Soho House in Greek Street which is very convenient for a drink or a bite on the way home.

I saw Julian once in M&S getting supplies for his dressing room, which ridiculously took me by surprise. Do you get recognised much in the West End by people expecting you to speak to them without moving your lips?

I find I only get recognised at motorway service stations at around 2 in the morning!

I never use my ventriloquism in public unless I can make it work to my advantage. I did once get a free drink after I threw my voice to make it sound like the barmen had said "They're on the house mate!" I said it as joke but it actually worked!

Brilliant! Panto is, as we know a very British thing. Perhaps as the winner of America's Got Talent, you could take it to the States.

They do have a Pantomime in California every few years but it's mainly for the expats I think, and possibly there was one in Vegas a few years ago but I'm not sure if the Americas would get it. I think if you were an American and you came to see The Palladium Panto you'd probably enjoy it as it's just a big Variety Show really.

Paul, I know you only get Christmas Day off, so how will you spend it?

I'll be hosting Christmas for my Mum, Dad, sister and her family so it's not much of a day off but I love it. We do all the trimmings and my favourite job is to pick some really nice wine for it. I usually go with Nigel to Berry Bros in St.James between shows and he picks out some great reds! Nigel is a bit of a wine expert as you can imagine.

That's handy! But, I've got to ask, and has Sam ever bought you a present?

Has Sam ever bought me a present? Simon you of all people should know Sam's not real, as you've puppeteer him on a TV pilot we did, remember! There's a massive hole in his back.

I did come out of the stage door once at the Palladium and there were a crowd of autograph hunters and one bloke specifically wanted Sam's autograph and not mine. I did Sam's and when I offered mine he didn't want it! That made me laugh.

I gather Rod Hull was booked for a gig and really annoyed the bookers by turning up without the puppet, as they hadn't specified Rod Hull and Emu on the booking form! Look, It's great having you and the gang back at the Palladium and in Soho, Paul. On behalf of the Soho Society I wish you all the very best for Christmas, and a great run of shows - and especially the matinee on Boxing Day when, as usual, I'll be cheering you on!

Thank you! I can't wait. Happy Holidays everyone.

Jack and the Beanstalk runs at the Palladium from December 10th – January 15th.

SPAGHETTI WEST END

'Spaghetti West End – The Legend of Vinnie Saint'

A Play by Lenny Di Lorenzo

Interview and photo by Richard Piercy

The Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin and The Who were some of the many bands who had residencies at the Marquee club on Wardour Street during the 1960s. Towards the end of that decade a talented 25-year-old Italian Blues musician by the name of Vinnie Saint shared the bill one night with John Mayall's Blues Breakers. Nobody in the crowd was sure how this kid got to be there, they'd never heard of him before, but by the end of the second number they knew that they were witnessing something very special and he was going to be a major star. But then, just as his career was beginning to take off, he disappeared never to be heard of again until now. His story may well have gone untold had audio visual artist, composer and Soho resident Lenny Di Lorenzo (pictured) not run into his good friend Dave Edwards, a DJ and record collector. Dave is always introducing Lenny to records by obscure and unheard-of artists, sourced from his vast collection of vinyl. On this occasion he lent Lenny a seven-inch single called 'In My Town' by a certain Vinnie Saint. Lenny was blown away by his compatriot's talent and couldn't understand why this guy hadn't gone on to be a huge success. His curiosity now piqued, he felt compelled to delve deeper and find out more about this musical enigma. The result is 'Spaghetti West End – The Legend of Vinnie Saint', an eight year-long labour of love that explores the background of this unlikely blues guitar hero. As Lenny says, most aspiring Italian musicians in the 60s would be performing opera, not playing blues guitar at the Marquee.

'Spaghetti West End', its name a homage to Sergio Leone, was originally conceived as a stage production and, whilst this is still the end goal, Lenny decided to produce it in the interim as a radio play. Inspired by the methods of Italian film directors such as Fellini, he assembled a cast of professional actors, complemented by people from the neighbourhood. This approach has allowed Lenny to produce a play about Soho, part performed by the people of Soho and in doing so has made it a truly community-based project, which was very important to him. Lenny has co-

produced the show with American theatre producer Robert Mark Kalfin. The script is a cocktail of youthful dreams and ambition mixed with romance, set against a backdrop of 60s gangland Soho. The story begins with Vinnie (Lenny Di Lorenzo) arriving in Soho from Sicily in 1968. He lives in a small rented flat on Frith Street but spends a lot of time hanging out at the bar of the Evaristo Club on Greek Street, chatting with the owner Lorna (Gail Porter). By chance Vinnie meets Rocco Vitale (Ray Gelato) who befriends and rescues him from the unscrupulous clutches of his employer, club owner Zack Abrahams (Mark Nolan). Rocco hears Vinnie's music and is impressed. Subsequently he hatches a plan to put Vinnie on stage at The Marquee Club, but first must get the nod from The Boss, Alberto DiMeo (Benedick Blythe). DiMeo consents, 'kindly' insisting he also becomes Vinnie's manager. Although he doesn't yet realise it, DiMeo is the organised crime boss in control of Soho. Vinnie is now unwittingly involved with the mob and as any gangster will tell you there's no such thing as a free lunch. To make matters worse DiMeo's enforcer, Harry Cox (Alexis 'Rockin' Dave' Saunders), is extorting protection money from the Chinese bakery in Gerrard Street, owned by the father of the Zhao Lin (Franki Crawley), the girl Vinnie has fallen in love with. Things are not looking good. The play has a breadth of characters that hold the listeners attention from beginning to end. Other cast members include journalist Larry Mackay (Antonio Polledri), Detective Leonard Read (Otiz Canneloni), Mr Zhao (Charlie Cheung) and BBC newsreader John Warnaby (Dizal Martin). The accompanying soundtrack is top drawer and gives weight to the production. It includes songs by Vinnie Saint as well others, written and performed by Lenny himself, accompanied by his band.

Intrigued? - the play will be available for streaming from 20th November onwards at spaghettiwestend.com

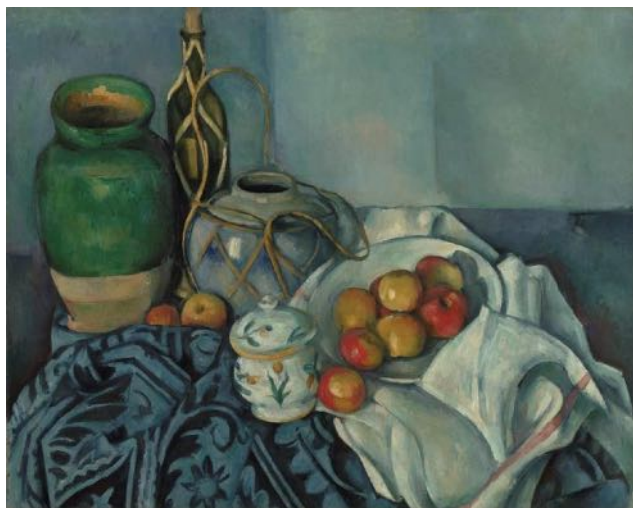


THEATRES, MUSEUMS & GALLERIES FROM LONDON LIVING LARGE

THE EY EXHIBITION: CEZANNE ★★★★★

Tate Modern | Oct 5, 2022 - Mar 12, 2023

Mon - Sun: 10 am - 4:30 pm



Cezanne is often referred to as the artists' artist, and this major exhibition of his work demonstrates why he receives that appellation. The first five rooms of the exhibition trace how Cezanne became the painter he was: his move to Paris in 1861, his friendship with Zola and Pissarro, his creation of a family, and finally his withdrawal to L'Estaque in 1870. It is from this point that Cezanne definitively emerges as the painter who is so currently renowned; his sense of self and his artistic commitment are both confirmed from this point on. Room six looks briefly at the materials the artist employed in his various endeavours and sheds some light on the complexity of his technique as he uses the newly available commercial tools and supplies. The next three galleries look at the major themes of the artist's work: the iconic still life works with the signature props (apples, pears, water bottles etc.); the evocative landscapes with the emblematic Mont Sainte-Victoire and then Cezanne's celebrated bathers which look both to art's past and anticipate its future. It is particularly these latter figures which serve as inspiration to many of the painter's successors. Indeed, Room ten draws on the collections of artists, from Picasso and Matisse to Henry Moore and Jasper Johns. The final gallery covers the period from 1899 to 1906. For the first time, Cezanne has a purpose built studio, and while his work continues to be vibrant and innovative, an awareness of his mortality is clearly present. With this exhibition, the curators have created an outstanding overview of an artist who is a germinal figure in contemporary culture.

Reviewed by J.C.

Image: Paul Cezanne *Still Life with Apples* 1893-1894. The J Paul Getty Museum

TURNER ON TOUR

The National Gallery: Until February 19, 2023 (Free Entry)
Two paintings on loan from The Frick Collection in New York throw light on Turner's development as an artist: his homage to the past and his anticipation of the future.

THE WOMAN IN BLACK ★★★★★

Fortune Theatre | Until April 29, 2023

Tue - Sat: 8 pm, Tue & Thu: 3 pm, Sat: 4 pm



What better way to celebrate Halloween than with London's favourite ghost story? We recently revisited *The Woman in Black* which has been running in the West End for over thirty years and has been frightening audiences all year round. It all begins when an elderly lawyer decides to share his curious story with a young actor. In his youth, the lawyer visited an isolated house to deal with the estate of the local recluse and some strange things began to happen. As the lawyer stumbles through his description of his experience, the actor attempts to dramatise this bizarre tale and its haunting incidents, but little does he know that the drama may end up coming to him. Despite its long run, *The Woman in Black* continues to be fine entertainment and can still induce a frisson. Where much contemporary theatre depends on special effects to create atmosphere, this production does it the old-fashioned way by appealing to the audience's imagination. In the same way as the young actor animates the lawyer's story, the audience is drawn into the supernatural tale by its own power to create the spooky picture that is being drawn. That collective imagination is powerfully stimulated by some strong performances from Julian Forsyth as the elderly lawyer, Arthur Kipps, and from Matthew Spencer as the actor who also portrays the younger Kipps. Both cast members do a first-rate job of creating the dark world of the narrative and of engaging the audience's imaginative power. There's a reason that this show has been running for as long as it has. It's simply a good ghost story that is well told and which is worth a visit at any time of the year.

Reviewed by J.C.

Photo by Tristram Kenton

RUMPELSTILTSKIN

Park Theatre: Dec 13, 2022 - Jan 14, 2023

Everyone loves a Christmas pantomime and one of our favourites is always the Charles Court's offering. There's an adult and a family version!

For more reviews and ratings visit:

www.londonlivinglarge.com | Twitter: @LondonLivingUK

KENNY CLAYTON (KC)

1936-2022

I loved Kenny Clayton for many, many reasons. One of them was that he played for no fee at my first husband's funeral 22 years ago. Another was that he and his wife Sarah introduced me to my second husband, Rod McLennan, 18 years ago. Rod's love for Kenny goes back even further. When Rod came to London from Australia in 1962, in pursuit of a musical-theatre career, Kenny was the répétiteur at Rod's first audition. They became fast friends, and Kenny introduced Rod to Soho and, in particular, to Gerry's Club (when it was in Shaftesbury Avenue, and you could park your car outside!). And, of course, Kenny played at our wedding in 2008.

Nobody in Soho who knew Kenny could be unaware of the larger outlines of his musical career – that he worked as accompanist and/or musical director to a panoply of big-name singers, among them Matt Monro, Shirley Bassey, Cilla Black, Petula Clark, Anita Harris, Sacha Distel and Charles Aznavour. He actually worked with Petula on and off for over 40 years. We knew that he was a hugely talented pianist, equally at home with classical music as he was with jazz, pop and the popular classics of the American songbook; he had a great singing voice too.

But who was aware that he was a child musical genius? After his first piano lesson at seven, he had passed all eight grades in piano examination by the age of 11. He then went, at that very young age, to study at the prestigious Trinity College of Music in London for five years, where he was classically trained. I never knew that his first professional job was playing piano in Ruth Ellis's Little Club in Knightsbridge in 1953; that gig was interrupted by two years of National Service, and Ruth's death in 1955 (the last woman to be hanged in Britain for murder). He worked for clubs, as arranger and orchestrator for television and theatre, released his first single ('Tenerife', 1961), and musically directed two albums for Robin Gibb (when he briefly escaped from the Bee Gees in the late 60s). He composed film scores, and worked closely with the pop-singer Donovan on the music for the 1975 Jacques Demy film of *The Pied Piper* (*Le Jouer de Flûte*). I didn't know that he composed original music for spoken-word recordings, working with stars such as Glenda Jackson, Bernard Cribbins and Spike Milligan.

Kenny's classical training and expertise enriched everything he wrote or played. Paul Ryan, a Kenny collaborator for many years, wrote in *The Soho Clarion*: 'Listening to the runs and fills that colour KC's arrangements is a joy in itself. He relieves the melancholy of "Here's That Rainy Day" with an ironic and witty quote from "Singin' in the Rain"; Debussy's "Claire de Lune" segues into "Blue Moon", just as Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata" transforms itself into "Night and Day".'

Kenny could transpose into and out of any key with dazzling speed. Rod remembers that, in his last conversation with Kenny,

back in August, Kenny talked about his first rehearsal with Shirley Bassey. She wanted to sing 'Big Spender' from *Sweet Charity*, and Kenny swung into an arrangement he thought she might like. It was the wrong key, though, and a couple of tries later the right key was found – and 'I want that arrangement.' That song and its arrangement were duly recorded, and Bassey's 'Big Spender' spent 16 weeks in the charts in 1967.

But Kenny was a talented lyricist too. Who can forget his wonderful spoof, 'dedicated to the female vocalist, wherever she is...', to the tune of 'Love Story': 'Where do I begin/Please play a loud note just before I come in'. Or his 'My Favourite Scams' to the tune of 'My Favourite Things': 'Enron and Anderson and Abbey National/ITV digital trading irrational.' And Condoleezza Rice, an erstwhile American Secretary of State, achieved a Soho immortality she could never have imagined when Kenny wrote lyrics about her to the tune of 'Mona Lisa'....



In the last 20 years Kenny Clayton collaborated with the actor Bruce Montague (lyrics) in writing the music for musicals including *Clochemerle* and *Oedipus Ring Your Mother* (which Kenny, hoping mischievously that it might be more pantomime, renamed *Oedipus in Boots*). I will never forget the workshop presentation of their musical, *The Mistress*

(the story of Lady Emma Hamilton and Nelson), in St Pauls, Covent Garden, in 2005, starring Melanie Stace, Anita Harris and Liz Robertson.

In the 20 or so years I have known him, my Soho social life has been interlinked with and almost dominated by Kenny and his performances. Of course we listened to him in *The Colony*, *The French and Gerry's*, but we also followed him to the *Alley Cat*, *Burgh House*, *L'Escargot*, the *Cellar Door* and *Crazy Coq's* – and, occasionally to Brighton.... During this time he worked with many younger artists, such as Lisa Stansfield, Holly Penfield, Laura Doyle and Maddy Highland and, latterly and most frequently, with the much missed Paul Ryan. And of course, many more people, professional and amateur, were thrilled to have the opportunity to sing with him at Gerry's (his acknowledged home from home).

Our Soho world and our musical lives are immeasurably poorer for the loss of Kenny. Dennis Rolfe's memory of him is perhaps the most poignant: '...his ability to circumvent the broken keys on the Colony's piano, smoking a fat Havana and wearing black leather gloves, whilst playing music straight from heaven, was the stuff of legend. Christ! If that piano had been a pit pony, they would have founded a Royal Society against the cruelty.'

Susan Fleming

ANDREW EDMUNDS

1943-2022

If you happened to be walking down Lexington Street in the late sunny morning of October 11, you could not have missed Soho's farewell to Andrew Edmunds as his funeral took place elsewhere. Handel's aria of Love to a Plane Tree floated out of the windows above his restaurant as staff, friends, tenants, and neighbours gathered to raise a glass to one of Soho's true originals. For almost half a century, Andrew exercised his twin passions for 18th century political caricature and fine wines out of the gently crumbling Georgian buildings at 44 and 46. He had discovered the secret: he had found the things he loved doing and a way of making a living out of them. He worked hard, excelling at both, making it look jolly good fun. For every hour spent with a wine glass in hand, there would be four with a magnifying glass, poring over his unrivalled print collection.

Assembling the collection was his life's purpose; the restaurateuring he originally considered to be a convenient solution to the problem of where he and his friends could eat and drink well for the least possible outlay. This economy extended to the restaurant's layout – cram in as many tables as possible - and heating system – the latter being limited to candles stuck in bottles. Enforced intimacy and candlelight gained it a reputation for romance and Andrew was amused by the numbers of children whose parents claimed he was responsible for their fathering. He accepted the notion that the place was romantic but “NOT on Valentine's Day, as there are always large bouts of silence punctuated by occasional sobbing.”

Andrew's manner of dealing – whether in print or wine – was unorthodox. He would refuse to sell a particular print to a private customer “they'll only ruin it by sticking

it under glass”, or off-sale a case of a rare wine to someone in the restaurant because “they couldn't get it this cheap in Oddbins”.

A keen countryman of the old huntin' & fishin' school, Andrew transferred these skills to the West End in his own peculiar style. He kept an air rifle at the back of the print shop for the purpose of potting pesky pigeons. He was an enthusiastic and skilful practitioner of the art of sabrage. Customers of the very small restaurant would be alarmed to see him brandishing a sabre. Panic would be somewhat mitigated when it was applied to the neck of a champagne bottle, only for everyone to duck under the tables as the cork went shooting round the room.

As a landlord, restaurateur, and club proprietor, this essentially shy man gathered about him a colourful cast of friends and characters in whom he delighted. He congratulated himself on matchmaking his tenants - architect Charlotte Skene-Catling with Factum Arte's Adam Lowe, pretended to be cross with art dealer & gallerist Karsten Schubert who regularly helped himself to blooms from Andrew's famous floral arrangements, and charged nominal rents to friends and enterprises in need. From his staff, he earned love and loyalty for his willingness to be the first to clear a blocked drain or overflowing loo, for his attention to detail and above all, kindness.

Mandana Ruane



CHRISTOPHER PAUL RYAN

1952-2022

“He was the finest singer...in his price range”, that was the typically witty wording suggested by Paul Ryan for his own memorial. The Soho vocalist, author and photography historian, has died aged 69. In the final days of his life, he was asked to sum up what Soho meant to him in just three or four words. “Thank you very much” was his instant reply. While Paul had gratitude, Soho too is surely thankful for him.

For two decades Paul Ryan brought live music to this area, with a singing style evoking the golden age of great crooners. At venues such as Ronnie Scott’s, Hippodrome and Crazy Coqs his sell-out shows were based on the great American songbook. They were attended by stars including Sir Michael Palin, who said Ryan had a “sublime gift”.

He venerated great lyricists, “Every song I choose is a story” he said. He explained the song writing art in elegant simplicity “it’s not a stand alone poem, it sings and fits the melody.” When a concert goer praised him for singing Sinatra”, he replied “ I don’t sing Sinatra, I sing Johnny Mercer and Harold Arlen”. London Evening Standard jazz critic Jack Massarik wrote “all these kiddy-crooners around today think they’ve got the Sinatra touch but, believe me, they are not fit to shine Paul’s patent-leather shoes”.

Paul Ryan also found compelling stories to tell in pictures, his 1994 book “Marlon Brando: a portrait” gathered photos of the star into a rich biography. It was part of a life-long celebration of film and photographic history encompassing “Sins Of Our Fathers” (2000) a study of Victorian pornography which was, much to Ryan’s amusement, categorised on a popular online sales site under “school books”.

A fluency in French and love of film led him to interview more than 150 actors, directors and writers on stage for Institut Francois over a period of 30 years - including Catherine Deneuve and Peter Ustinov. He translated the American crime series “Columbo” into French - and as he joked “despite that” was awarded Chevalier (knight) Ordre des Arts by the French state.



Paul’s joie de vie withstood a cancer diagnosis in 2019, continuing to perform and record. He was asked how he remained so positive ...he replied “I’m not positive about death, I’m positive about life”.

He added colour and character to Soho and many of his favourite places were on one street. At The French House he made many friends, he frequently performed at Pizza Express and at Gerry’s Club - all on Dean Street. Paul’s knowledgeable and joyous showbiz anecdotes became

a blessing for many who bumped into him in the area, earning him a reputation as the storyteller of Soho. Now it is time for lovely stories to be told about him.

Paul is survived by his wife Sophie (nee Mortimer), an illustrator and picture editor, who he married at his hospital bedside in June 2022. He also leaves his son Kiran, from a previous relationship, and his sister Anne.

Chris Choi

ALASTAIR LITTLE

1950-2022

Folk were always popping into the kitchen at Alastair Little in Frith Street. Walking through the front door, Simon Hopkinson would munch on spiced breadcrumbs in a bowl on the pass, and Matthew Fort waved en route to the dining room. It was not unusual to hear Rowley Leigh ring to ask if he might speak with the eponymous one. Another call might have been from Ben Woodcraft asking what fish was wanted from that morning's catch at Mersea Island near Colchester.

An instinctive cook of great character and a peerless palate, Alastair Little brought bonhomie and modernity to British cooking in the 1980s that brightened kitchens and dining rooms equally. His first foray into cooking was at the Old Compton Wine bar, untrained but with a boundless enthusiasm, which kick-started his culinary life with, in one hand, a copy of *French Provincial Cooking* by Elizabeth David, and the other trying to control flames scorching lamb cutlets on a grill.

In the following years, praise was heaped on at tenures in the kitchens of, among others, *L'Escargot* and *192*, before igniting the stoves on Frith Street. Change was in the air and with inspiration taken from many a lunch and dinner eaten with friends and family, at home and abroad, in restaurants and kitchens both near and far, Alastair Little opened his eponymous restaurant on Frith Street, Soho in 1985, with Kirsten Pedersen and Mercedes Andre Vega. Between them they had made an almighty success of *192* in Notting Hill. Acclaim was instant with a dizzying tumult of folk beating a path to the door.

Alastair created some of the most distinctive menus in British restaurant history. Devouring cookbooks, Alastair was as inspired by the classicism of French kitchens, as he was by the lightness of food then sweeping California and the traditions of Italian cooking. Through his unique style, Alastair had an extraordinary impact on the then often staid restaurant scene in the British Isles. The menus, so beautifully illuminated by Brian Ma Siy, were written daily by hand, dishes changing from lunch to dinner. Each dish,

carefully considered, leapt with vigour from the page, with prowess from the kitchen. Shellfish still sizzling in the pan flew to the tables, a peerless jambon persillé was carved, sea bass as wild as the seas from which they were fished were grilled whole, fresh pasta was shaped in every form. There were always terrines, salads and soups including a magnificent pasta e fagioli, and lovely desserts such as summer pudding and a pitch-perfect crême brûlée.

Wherever Alastair cooked it was in Soho that he excelled. Jonathan Meades who had so praised the restaurant, he named it restaurant of the year in *The Times*, beautifully summed up this remarkable talent on the back of Alastair's much lauded first cookbook, *Keep It Simple*, written with his great friend Richard Whittington. 'What makes Alastair

such a good cook (apart from talent, taste, application and curiosity) is that he possesses the un-English conviction that eating well is a normal part of a civilised society.' The book is seminal as is his lamented restaurant, and remains still a testimony to cooking superb produce with an elegant simplicity without skimping on effort and acumen.

Ever at the forefront of change, Alastair, Kirsten and Mercedes ensconced Juliet Peston as his co head-chef, banished furies from the kitchen and embraced a thoughtful approach to cooking which permeated the kitchen and dining room equally. Alastair was on the cover of the first edition of *British Elle*, spirited, bright eyed, as youthful in looks as he was in outlook, a book in one hand, a wooden spoon in the other, talking all the while, charming, hilarious, complex and brilliant. Alastair dazzled and inspired a new generation of cooks and restaurants, to such a degree that restaurateurs to this day aspire to the extraordinary heights a small restaurant on Frith Street in Soho attained.

Jeremy Lee, Chef-Proprietor, Quo Vadis



ALASTAIR LITTLE AND SOHO COOKING

I don't need to write about Alastair as a 'godfather of modern British cooking', as others better qualified have already done so. I want to showcase his relationship with Soho. I edited his *Soho Cooking* (1999), and enjoyed every minute of it. I could visit Soho every day (legitimately, I was working!), and spend time with a witty, intelligent (and handsome) man who was passionate about food – and was a good writer to boot.

As a chef, Alastair was entirely self-taught. His culinary precept was 'keep it simple', somewhat necessary due to his professional inexperience. (And this was the title of his brilliant first book, written with Richard Whittington, another Soho man.) He cooked seasonally, simply, without fuss, allowing food to taste of itself. He would check the refrigerators each morning, and then go shopping in Soho, at the markets and various suppliers. His cooking style was eclectic, borrowing and adapting from several cuisines represented in Soho – French, Mexican, Japanese, Chinese, Italian – and from his inspired studying of the best cookery writers of the day.

He also worked, some years later, at L'Escargot in Greek Street (1981). He opened his own restaurant, Alastair Little, in Frith Street in 1985 (said to be the first eponymous restaurant in Britain).

Through working in Soho for so many years, Alastair got to know the area, its people, its suppliers and its restaurants in a way that few other people could. When he was cooking there, from 1975, Soho was rich in good butchers, fishmongers and delicatessens. Most of them have gone now, and reading a list of their names is nostalgic – and depressing: Bifulco's (butcher), W. Fenn & Sons (poulterer and game dealer), Randall & Aubin (charcutier), Slater & Cooke (butcher); Hamburger Products, Myall's, Richard's

(all fishmongers); Parmigiana (Italian deli) and Dell Ugo (pasta makers). Basically only Camisa and Lina Stores are left.

The listing of Soho restaurants that he worked alongside is also disheartening: gone are Au Jardin des Gourmets, Bianchi's, La Capannina, La Columbina d'Oro, La Cucaracha, L'Epicure, Lee Ho Fook, Romano Santi, Spiga, Mario and Franco's Trattoria and Wheeler's. He mentions Y Ming and the Zilli restaurants, but of course they have closed since, along with many others.

Soho Cooking is a time capsule of the years Alastair Little spent cooking in Soho. In 1999, when the book was published, he was already bemoaning the losses as above, mostly due to rent rises, but some through retirement. His friendship with Michèle Wade, owner of Maison Bertaux, led him to declare that if, like Michèle, others had been willing to take over when the owners retired, we might still have a dairy in Frith

Street, a chocolatier in Brewer Street, and an epicerie on Old Compton Street....

PS No obituaries mention it, but I remember Alastair appearing on University Challenge in the 1970s, representing his Cambridge college. He then did a celebrity version in 1992.

Susan Fleming



JAPANESE STYLE DUCK SALAD

This dish was served to me over twenty years ago [so circa 1978] in what was then Soho's only Japanese restaurant, called Fuji (funny that). None of the ingredients, with the exception of soy, is particularly Japanese, or indeed at all difficult to obtain. English mustard may seem a rather strange inclusion, but the Japanese are very fond of it; their beloved wasabi (green horseradish paste served with raw fish) is in fact nothing more than English-style mustard powder with green colouring and horseradish flavouring added. The real wasabi, a true horseradish, grows wild in Japanese mountain streams, is extremely scarce, expensive and virtually unobtainable outside its native land.

Serves 4 as a starter

400-500g duck breasts (usually from France and often called magrets)

salt and pepper

1 kg spinach, cleaned

2 tbsp lemon juice mixed with 8 tbsp Kikkoman soy sauce

1 bunch spring onions, trimmed and shredded

2 tsp English mustard powder, mixed with 3 tsp water

Method

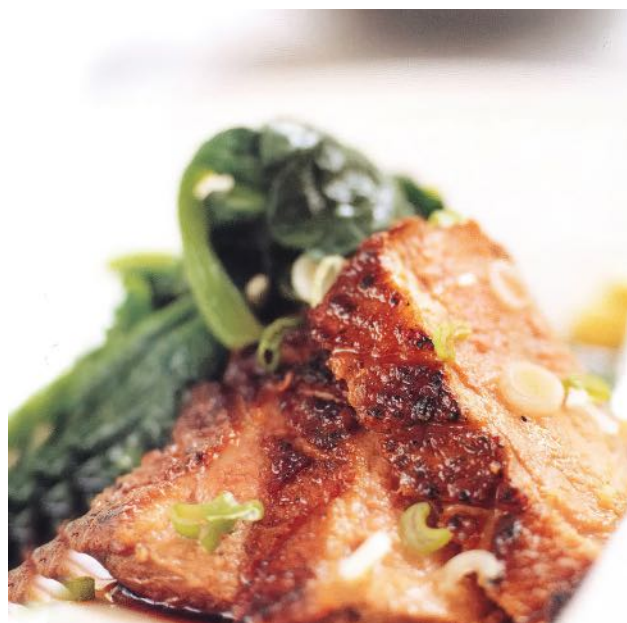
Put a large pan of salted water on to boil. Season the duck generously with salt and pepper, then heat a frying pan over a medium flame. Lightly slash or score the duck fat and skin, then cook skin side down for 10 minutes, pouring off any excess melted grease as it collects. Turn the breasts over and cook for a further 2 minutes on the flesh side, then allow to cool. Tip the spinach into the merrily boiling water, stir quickly and immediately drain through a colander. Transfer the spinach to a bowl of cold water and refresh for a minute or so. Squeeze the spinach into dry little balls then plump up into something resembling leaves again.

Serving

Take four shallow bowls and mound the spinach in each. Dress these little heaps with a spoonful of the soy-lemon mix. Slice the duck breasts as thinly as you can, then arrange in fans, skin side up, on top of the spinach. Sprinkle with the spring onion and spoon a little more of the soy mix around. Finally dab a small pile of the mustard on the edge of each plate, warning any non-English or non-Japanese guests about its potency.

Alastair Little

From Soho Cooking, Ebury Press, 1999



FESTIVE PEPPERS WITH ANCHOVY SAUCE

Sweet peppers are always available, and they bake beautifully for a colourful Christmas meal starter. I worked with Italian cook, Antonio Carluccio, for years, and this recipe is heavily influenced by one of his. The sauce is very like ‘bagna cauda’, a Piedmontese speciality: you dip pieces of raw vegetable – cucumber, pepper, white cabbage, fennel, carrot, or even cardoon – into the warm sauce.

Serves 4

2 large red and 2 large yellow sweet peppers

125-150g mozzarella cheese

16 cherry tomatoes

extra virgin olive oil

For the anchovy sauce

50g butter

6 large garlic cloves, peeled

190ml milk

10 anchovy fillets in oil, drained

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Fan 180°C/Gas 6, and lightly oil a suitable baking dish.

Wash, dry and cut the peppers in half through the green stalk end. Remove the seeds and any surplus internal membrane. Arrange them, hollow side up, in the greased dish. Cut the mozzarella cheese into 8 pieces, and place into the half peppers, along with 2 cherry tomatoes. Drizzle each filled pepper with a little olive oil.

Bake in the preheated oven for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, make the anchovy sauce. Put the butter, garlic and milk in a small pan and cook gently until the garlic is very soft. Add the drained anchovies, and stir around until they too have dissolved. Mash together if necessary. The sauce should be smoothish.

Place a tablespoon of the sauce inside each pepper half, and serve hot.

Susan Fleming



THE RECTOR WRITES



The traditional image of the Nativity is of a stable with open doors enabling all-comers, be they shepherds or eastern astrologers, possibly even kings, to come in, bringing their sheep and maybe even camels with them. Well, we are yet to have anyone rock up at St Anne's with a camel, but since we discourage people bringing in scooters, dromedaries are definitely to be left outside.

But one of the challenges about being a church that has chosen to engrave the words 'All Welcome' on the glass doors at its entrance is that you have to live up to that intention: to receive graciously and hospitably whoever comes in. It's what (without getting too theological in a secular publication) we call a Christ-like response to others. Many people have of course felt, or been made to feel, unwelcome in church over the years, and we are keen here that everyone is accepted as they are (just as we believe God accepts them - sorry, a bit more theology there) whilst they grow into being the person they and God longs for them to be (look, referencing the Almighty comes with my job, so, get over it!).

So 'all' are welcome, and 'all' really do come through the door - though occasionally and rarely we have had to show people out of it. I think it was reasonable that when, via the CCTV, our administrator spotted two chaps in church cutting up crack on the prayer books that we went down and told them that was not acceptable, and we did not crumble (unlike the crack they were breaking up) under their defence that the shiny black cover of the books was an ideal surface to do this on. They were politely shown the door and they courteously went through it, rubbing their fingers across their gums as they went.

Recently, as I was about to take our Tuesday lunchtime service, a slim young man with a beard and a baseball cap asked if I was Fr Simon, and whether the phone number displayed was one he could contact me on - the answer to both questions was of course, 'yes'. I had no such easy response to make, though, when he then started to tell me that he had just bought some new underwear in a shop 'near here' which he wasn't finding very comfortable as his father had him circumcised when he was a baby. However he now identified as a Christian, he said, and he and his girlfriend were attracted to older religious leaders with grey hair and so wondered how old I was! He didn't stay for the service, so I can only presume I wasn't old enough, but Fr David, a few years my senior, who was present and overheard the conversation, told me "well, he said all that to me just a

few moments before speaking to you... but he didn't mention any girlfriend"!

Soho has always attracted characters and Soho continues to offer them a place in which they can be their quirky selves. Friends from out of town when asked what they want to do when they come and stay with me frequently remark that they just want to sit outside Balans and see who or what goes by. And those of us who live here, or run businesses here, thrive on the ebb and flow of diverse humanity as it regularly brightens our day and occasionally challenges our equilibrium.

It irks me when those who don't live in Soho, or haven't been around here long, accuse the residential community of acting as if they wished it was a sleepy suburban backwater, always opposing late night opening and new bars and restaurants. Their assessment of Soho's residents is wrong and also demonstrates that they don't understand the delicate ecosystem of an area like this that requires the quirky and the calm, the bawdy and the banal to co-exist in a harmonious and occasionally cacophonous tension, to create an area that has real depth of character rather than become a monochrome caricature of its mythological former self from any chosen era.



In the 1750's Soho was one of the most densely populated - and also poorest - parts of London. Records indicate that its population peaked around that time, when there were some 63,000 inhabitants in Soho, compared to slightly over 3,000 residents today. It is probably a more desirable neighbourhood now than at any time in the last 200 years, though most who come here do so for an evening rather than for a lifetime.... Though many continue to enjoy a lifetime of evenings here, some of which they even remember the next morning.

The question remains as to who does Soho exist for? Swathes of it may belong to property companies and wealthy land-owners, but ultimately it is here for everyone: a place where all are welcome and in which the only rule is that whatever you do while you're here isn't detrimental to the life of anyone else. Oh, and if you leave your camel in a resident's parking bay don't be surprised if it gets a ticket.

Happy Christmas to Soho and all who love this place.

Simon



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