

FitzroviaNews



Fitzrovia News is produced by residents and volunteers and distributed free to business and residential addresses in Fitzrovia

Issue 155 Winter 2019

Children's nursery open under new management

The children's nursery in Whitfield Street has opened again under new management after being closed for more than a year. The Fitzrovia Nursery, which has space for up to 24 full time children, opened with little fanfare in September and hopes to increase the number of children on its roll for the new term in January.

It is being run by Flint Nurseries Ltd a small private company which also operates the Secret Garden nursery in Belsize Park, Camden and The Tiger Lillies nursery in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

A spokesperson for the nursery told *Fitzrovia News* its aim was to be a "leading provider in early years education, provide community cohesion through nursery activities, and help children from all backgrounds attain their potential". It's nursery in Belsize Park has been graded as "Good" by Ofsted.

The site in Whitfield Street has had a checkered past and in 2005 Camden Council wanted to sell the site for development. But after a campaign by local people the Fitzrovia Trust property charity acquired a 20-year lease on the site and refurbished the existing building.

It was re-opened as a nursery in 2008 after the Trust made an agreement with the London Early Years Foundation (LEYF).

However, in June 2018 parents and carers of the children at the nursery were shocked to learn that it would close at the end of August after the Fitzrovia Trust and LEYF failed to agree on its future.

Now under new management the nursery is again providing a much needed facility to serve families in the new market-priced and affordable homes which have



The Fitzrovia Nursery and children's playground on Whitfield Street. The site is in full use again after a new nursery provider struck a deal with The Fitzrovia Trust.

recently been built in the neighbourhood.

Flint Nurseries Ltd say they want the nursery to be at the heart of the community and hope to develop after school activities in addition to the daytime childcare and education.

Election results

Cities of London & Westminster

Nickie Aiken (Conservative) elected: votes 17,049; vote share 39.9%

Chuka Umunna (Liberal Democrat) votes 13,096; vote share 30.7%

Gordon Nardell (Labour) votes 11,624; vote share 27.2%

Zack Polanski (Green) votes 728; vote share 1.7%

Conservative majority: 3,953; turnout 67.1%

Holborn & St Pancras

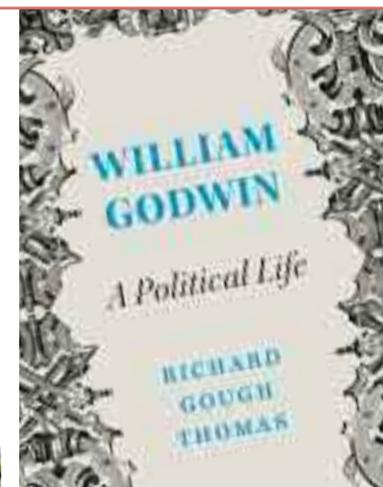
Keir Starmer (Labour) elected: votes 36,641; vote share 64.5%

Alexandra Hayward (Conservative) votes 8,878; vote share 15.6%

Matthew Kirk (Liberal Democrat) votes 7,314; vote share 12.9%

Kirsten De Keyser (Green) votes 2,746; vote share 4.8%

Labour majority: 27,763; turnout 65.1%



Win this £16.99 book page 11



Dog appeal page 14
Garrett Anderson and her struggle for medicine and votes, page 12



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four times a year.**

**Our deadline for news,
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before publication. The
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Notice

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A tale that needs telling

Fitzrovia local writer, Anna Perera, has something to say. . .



I've written four books for young children and two young adult novels. The first, *Guantanamo Boy*, published by Penguin, was nominated for many awards and translated into a dozen languages.

Two years ago, I wrote another young adult novel — a coming of age story *The Whole of the Moon* with the logline, *Don't all teenagers watch porn?* And no one would publish it. My agent was baffled. He thought it remarkable as did many others. I'm still baffled.

There are a thousand things I could say but in an effort to keep things short and simple here, I refer to The Guardian article, 15th November 2019: 'Childline Reports 16% Increase in Victims of Sexual Exploitation' — caused by the rise of a greater awareness by children and the increase in targeting by online abusers. 'Some victims turned to self-harm, alcohol or substance abuse as a way of coping'.

The head of Childline at the time of the report, Shaun Friel, said 'I wouldn't want to present a picture that it [the internet] is a dangerous world but it just means that children can be contacted in ways they couldn't before.'

Are you kidding me? The internet is a cess pit when it comes to vulnerable young people, espe-

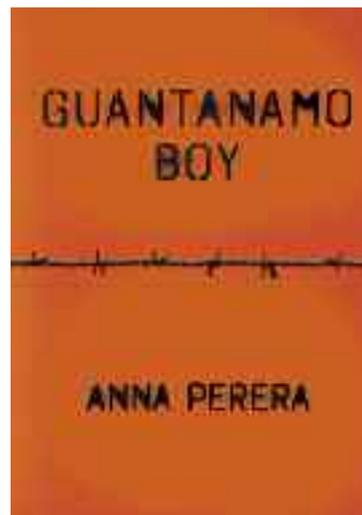
cially those in primary school, who don't have the skills to obstruct the sophistication of dedicated online predators. We've read countless articles about this epidemic over the last decade, haven't we?

It goes on. . .

'Childline says teachers must be provided with proper training to ensure the lessons are effective and relevant'.

Good point, but who will provide funding, and more importantly, when? Ten years hence?

There is no mention in the article of the expanding, billion dollar, hardcore porn industry and the huge bucks made from warping kids' sexuality before they've come to understand their own de-



sires, leaving them open, not only to physical and emotional abuse, self harm, drugs and suicide, but also to the damaging belief that the sex they see up there is real, and watching porn is as normal as brushing your teeth. Cool, even. Where are the young adult stories? And I'm not talking about revenge porn but the attraction to it by children. Where is the discussion about the vile images they can't make sense of while putting themselves at risk of hijacking by abusers and money men determined to hook the innocent into viewing and copying violent pornographic acts.

I've waited two years to see a convincing story for young people, given up and self published online because I believe a novel which spotlights the loss of control, fear, sadness, anger and shame swimming around the bloodstream of teenagers as a result of pornography, should be available. It's a family story and not a hard, horrific or terrifying read. I hope you'll agree there's much love and beauty in the carefully written tale.

The synopsis is online, but to get a flavour of the novel, please take a look at the first page of *The Whole of the Moon* below.

Please understand Evan's not weird. He just went into a massive meltdown in the car on the way to school. Mum was singing along to some rock god, smiling in a girly way and it was one of those mornings where everything feels possible and amazing things are just waiting in the ether for me to grab with both hands and when that kick of inspiration to live a big, extraordinary life, hits me between the eyes, I feel so excited it's hard to breathe.

The old, brown microwave was on the front seat of the car and I was kind of dancing my way to the edge of an unpredictable adventure in the back. Happy as anything until Evan kicked my leg to stop me bouncing around.

I punched him and his iPad sprang out of his hands to my feet. My mouth fell open at the vile video of a girl's bare ass, an implement of some kind and two guys.

It felt like someone stepped on my head and kicked me down to earth.

Evan grabbed the iPad and the look on his face nearly finished me off but I had to tell and shouted, 'MUM, Evan's. . .'

With storming pain in his eyes, Evan mouthed 'Sh -ut - up. Sh -ut - up' slowly and calmly and I'm sure he would have choked me to death if Mum hadn't been there but she was.

When a skateboarder in school uniform clacked onto the road in front of us, the car braked, Evan leapt out, leaned back in and said, 'I wanna rape a girl, kill her, then kill myself.'

The rock god effect vanished even though the music was still playing. Mum froze, expressionless. When Evan had gone up the school steps, she shook her head unable to take in what he said. Rooted to the spot, I hesitated but told her, 'He was watching hardcore porn.' Needing to immediately separate my having watched low level screwing in movies from Evan's obvious evil addiction.

'I don't understand,' she said.

'You were going to get a thing on the internet to stop us getting that stuff?'

The car behind beeped.

I clicked open the door, got out and looked back for an answer but Mum just nodded slowly to herself.

'Have a good day, sweetie.' And drove off.

From *The Whole of the Moon* www.AnnaPerera.com

A Fitzrovia pub is gaining a lot of attention recently for all the wrong reasons, writes *Angela Lovely*.

For the past five years the Duke of York in Rathbone Street has had two large images of Prince Andrew emblazoned on the outside of the building after special permission was granted by the Royal Household.

But after a disastrous interview with the prince was broadcast by the BBC and his subsequent forced retirement from public life due to his association with sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, you'd think the pub signs might be covered up or taken down.

But it seems there's little chance of that happening, for the time being.

"The signs of Prince Andrew cost me well over £500 each and have been up for years — and up they are staying — indefinitely," said a defiant Alan Monks, landlord of the Duke of York, in a statement to The Sun newspaper in November.



Prince Andrew welcome here, says pub landlord.

Pub signs of Prince Andrew "are going nowhere" says landlord

"There's absolutely no reason that they should come down and I don't care if people don't like them.

"I repeat, the signs of Andrew are going nowhere, why should they? The pub will continue celebrating and honouring

Prince Andrew and all the good work he does," he declared.

A day later a journalist from the *i* newspaper appeared to have been given short shrift by the pub landlord when he asked about the pub signs.

Petrol pumps to be replaced by electric vehicle charging points at Cleveland Street development



Plans for a petrol filling station on Cleveland Street have been scrapped.

A petrol filling station that was due to be built into a new residential and commercial property development in Cleveland Street, Fitzrovia will not now go ahead after the plans were scrapped in favour of an electric vehicle charging station.

The development of 88 luxury apartments, 35,000 sq ft of commercial space and 15 intermediate affordable housing units at 87-125 Cleveland Street was to include a new petrol station situated next to the existing Holcroft Court block of flats, raising concerns about health and safety as well as air pollution.

The whole scheme was strongly opposed by residents at Holcroft Court and Fitzrovia community groups but given permission at a planning committee

headed by Councillor Robert Davis in 2015 when he was deputy leader of the council. No social housing is included in the development.

Developer Dukelease was never keen on including the petrol station and it was Westminster council's planning department which insisted it was part of the original plans during pre-planning discussions. However, an application to swap the petrol pumps for charging points was granted with little or no discussion by planning officers earlier this year, probably as a result of growing public concerns about air pollution.

Dukelease, who are leading the project with Art-Invest Real Estate UK and German real estate developer ECE, have now ap-

pointed McClaren as the contractor to build the residential and commercial project which will have a capital value of around £190m and is due to be completed in 2021. McClaren will be paid the lion's share of the estimated £49m construction costs. Demolition and groundworks works on the site are being carried out by Erith who will handover to McClaren in early 2020.

Famously a wall on the original building featured a mural — "If graffiti changed anything..." — painted by the street artist Banksy. Westminster council originally strongly disapproved of the graffiti artist's work but later claimed ownership of it and has promised to return it to the neighbourhood as a permanent feature.

Major work at 80 Charlotte Street finishes

Work on the construction of Derwent London's hideous-looking flagship building at 80 Charlotte Street is due to be completed in early 2020, local residents will be pleased to hear.

All the major construction work on the offices, apartments and the very small pocket park is due to be completed by the end of January, and Charlotte Street, Whitfield Street, and Chitty Street will be opened again.

Only some internal office fittings are still due to be completed. Derwent's monster project with its bare concrete exterior and Corten steel entrance surround gives it an abandoned and unfinished appearance, but we understand it's supposed to look like that. Rust and concrete is the new architectural chic.

Derwent are not trying to be green and cuddly with this dystopian mouse-pushers factory. Just perfect for one of its main occupants Arup to mastermind its part in the highly destructive HS2 project to pour yet more concrete all the way from Euston through Londoners homes, ancient woodlands and beyond in an uncompromising act of social and environmental destruction. Arup are also working on the expansion of Heathrow airport.

The remaining office space will mostly be filled by the Boston Consulting Group. Welcome to Charlotte Street.

Clerkenwell rag hits the streets

It was good to hear about a new printed local paper being launched this autumn. EC1 Echo is hyperlocal newspaper serving the district of Clerkenwell and its surroundings.

Similar to Fitzrovia News, they will print 5,500 copies of each issue six times a year and distribute them to homes and local businesses.

The paper was started by journalist Oliver Bennett and is a three-way collaboration with Clerkenwell charity The Peel, and Social Spider a Walthamstow-based community interest company (CIC) which also publishes the Waltham Forest Echo, Tottenham Community Press, and Enfield Dispatch.

See ec1echo.co.uk for full details.

New rough sleepers in London up 50 percent

The number of people sleeping on the street for the first time has gone up by 50 percent, according to statistics covering July to September 2019 published by the Greater London Authority.

The total number of people sleeping rough is also 28 percent higher than the same period in 2018.

Westminster has the highest street homeless population in the UK and had one of the highest increases in new rough sleepers.

Camden, which has a poor record of accurately counting the numbers (*see FN passim*), showed a slight drop in the number of new rough sleepers and the total number sleeping out.

A fresh set of statistics will be released at the end of the winter showing the results of the annual, nationwide count of people living on the streets.

The main reason for becoming homeless is the loss of an assured shorthold tenancy, often as a result of arrears due to rising rents.

News in brief

Plans by **The Royal Parks** to restrict through motor traffic and promote better access for people on foot, cycle and public transport has been supported by an overwhelming majority of respondents to a survey. Under plans being considered **The Regent's Park** could see greater restriction on drivers using park roads as a short cut.

Westminster Council will make a decision in the spring of 2020 on whether or not to restrict traffic speeds to 20mph across the City, following a public survey on the plans.

Camden Council has now made a decision to leave the traffic direction of flow on **Torrington Place** and **Tavistock Place** as it is. They will also improve the pavements and the cycle track.

Westminster council is still working on plans for the "Oxford Street District".

The **FitzWest neighbourhood forum** is finalising its neighbourhood plan which will be subject to a public vote on it in 2020. The forum is also due to renew its status.

John Theodore Fisher



John Fisher (left) with his life long friend Arnold Isaacs in their younger days.

As an 80-year-old with wild long dreadlocks and immaculately dressed John Fisher stood out in the street. He had such a distinctive appearance that young strangers would frequently approach him to be photographed with them.

He explained that he had not had his hair cut since his barber died about 20 years ago.

And having spent 40 years in Fitzrovia, on and off, he was also recognised as a familiar figure to many locals.

He was born in Cape Town, South

Africa, on September 11, 1936. His mother was one of the San (bushmen) native people and his father a plumber of mixed race.

John moved to Amsterdam in 1970, then on to London.

His first association with Fitzrovia was in 1976 when he became a mature student at the Polytechnic of Central London (now the University of Westminster) in Wells Street. Back in South Africa his education had been minimal, not attending school until he was ten years old and then with four classes crowded into just one room.

After gaining his economics degree at PCL he lived variously in Nassau Street, Gosfield Street, Whitfield Street, and latterly Great Titchfield Street.

As a community minded person he served several times on the management committee of the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association, was its chair in the 1980s, and its treasurer from 2012 until the close of the centre in June this year.

He also contributed many poems to Fitzrovia News, and helped distribute it.

Over the years he had a wide range of jobs from office cleaner to financier in the city. He had also been a docker, journalist, administrator of a print co-operative and a community project, warehouseman, insurance salesman, and lab technician.

He returned to Cape Town for a few years after the end of apartheid, when five of his friends were government ministers. His greatest pride was to be introduced to Nelson Mandela when setting up a community investment company.

John died early in the morning of November 7, and his funeral was at Hendon Cemetery on December 13.

At the service, his life long friend Arnold Isaacs, now living in Berlin, spoke movingly of their friendship since childhood.

He also said John had been a very good player of both rugby and hockey in his



Photo by Doralba Picerno

youth.

John's nephew, Conrad Johnson, came over from Cape Town to add his tribute and that of his mother, John's sister.

Joe Matthey (a drinking companion of John in the One Tun, Goodge Street for many years) praised John's humanity and how he had taught him many values.

As an ardent fan of jazz pianist Abdullah Ibrahim (previously known as Dollar Brand) he was delighted to hear that he

was an old friend of John, who introduced the two at Ronnie Scott's club.

One of Abdullah's latest recordings was played at the funeral. It is called "Cape Town District Six". This is the area which was bulldozed and all the residents forcibly removed in 1975, because too many people of different races were living together in harmony.

Tamer Kamel, manager of the ICCO Pizza in Goodge Street where John was a daily visitor, also spoke of how "Mr John" as he was known became his friend. A plaque to him is to be installed in the restaurant.

Two of those present also sang impromptu songs as their tribute, which were loudly applauded. These were Pal Carter and Chris Kaufman (both ex-residents of Nassau Street).

John himself was a fine singer and often sang "Summertime" at parties, the version of which by Paul Robeson opened the funeral.

The closing music was "Moon River" by Danny Williams (which was number one in the hit parade in 1961). He was also from Cape Town, and while at a party there he was asked to give a live rendition of the song. At first he was reluctant, but was then "persuaded" to do so by John.

People had come from Amsterdam (his old friend Marguerite Johnathan), Berlin, Cape Town, and Scotland, and continued their memories at the wake in the nearby Red Filly Irish pub.



Frank Dobson

Former MP for Holborn and St Pancras Frank Dobson who died in November was a regular visitor to Fitzrovia.

In his first year as an MP he opened The Warren playground and public open space in November 1979 (picture) after the Fitzrovia Play Association and local people won funding to turn a car park on a bombsite into much-needed public open space.

He attended many community events in Fitzrovia and was a frequent visitor to the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre (now closed).

He also supported hospital workers who faced eviction after Fitzrovia News broke the news that their homes were sold off by University College London Hospitals Charity to a property developer.

He served in government as Secretary of State for Health from 1997 to 1999, and was the official Labour Party candidate for Mayor of London in 2000, ultimately finishing third in the election behind Conservative Steven Norris and the winner, Labour-turned-Independent Ken Livingstone. Dobson retired as an MP at the 2015 general election.

Dobson was born in 1940 in Dunnington, York. He will be fondly remembered as a no-nonsense, straight-talking Yorkshireman and for his often humorous remarks.



West End Ward Labour Councillor Surgery

I run monthly advice surgeries. Residents and members of the community can come and speak to me directly about any problems or issues they face.

I run them on:

- the third Saturday of the month
- from 10:00-11:00 at Danceworks, 16 Balderton Street, Mayfair, W1K 6TN,
- from 11:30-12:30 at 68 Dean Street, Soho, W1D 4QJ

Alternatively, please call or write to me and I'll see how I can help.

Pancho Lewis 020 641 5377 plewis@westminster.gov.uk

Westminster's problem with air pollution and Freedom of Information requests



Signs in Hanson Street remind drivers to switch off their engines.

Westminster council wants people to help it improve air quality by reporting drivers running their engines when parked but hasn't got a clue where the worst offenders are located, according to a Freedom of Information request made by a Fitzrovia resident.

Yet despite what the FOI response revealed the council maintains it does keep a record of complaints about engine idling.

Edward Kellow got so fed up with reporting drivers running their engines in Hanson Street — and no sign of council enforcement officers to issue an £80 fine — that he made the FOI request to try to find out why nothing was being done.

"I've been trying to find out whoever deals with engine idling at the council for about two years. Even with the help and support of Councillor Pancho Lewis, no-one from the council contacted me," he told *Fitzrovia News*.

"The #dontbeidle site asks for registration numbers, vehicle make and colour, and a postcode. So it should be possible to analyse the hotspots," he said.

Kellow asked how many reports the council had received in total since 2016, how many drivers had been fined, and how many reports there were in the W1 area.

In response the council stated that there were 1467 reports for engine idling, of which 322 came via the #dontbeidle web page and 42 drivers had been fined since 2016. But was "unable to determine how many reports have been received specifically for the W1 area" as the software used doesn't give a location.

In other words, Westminster council it seems has no idea where to deploy its enforcement officers to stamp out the problem in the worst affected streets.

"The message I take is that #dontbeidle is 'greenwashing' and it seems the council is not putting any resources into monitoring hotspots," said Kellow.

When challenged on this Westminster council denied they were clueless.

"Our teams keep exhaustive records of all idling complaints along with street names and loca-

tions which determines where enforcement action and awareness-raising days are located around the borough, allowing us to focus our efforts and continue to lead the way in tackling air pollution in Westminster," said a spokesperson.

Instead they blamed the FOI process for giving an incorrect answer.

"The FOI request in this instance asked for specific locations from a W1 postcode, and from a specific source (Westminster.gov.uk/don't-be-idle). Our teams do not categorise locations by postcodes but rather by street names, and this was the reason for the specific response to the questions raised," they said.

"The #DontBeIdle campaign is about raising awareness and changing behaviour, not just fining motorists who may not yet realise the impact of engine idling, and we are making a real difference — with over 14,000 drivers and 20 of Britain's biggest, freight, delivery and taxi services pledging their support to cut idling and improve air quality," they said.

Bringing up the bodies of London's forgotten poor

The excavation and removal of over 2,000 burials at the site of the former Middlesex Hospital Annex on Cleveland Street will begin in early 2020.

The site has to be cleared and the human remains re-buried elsewhere before work can begin on a redevelopment scheme to create new commercial and residential property and a landscaped area.

University College London Hospitals Charity own the site including a Grade II listed former workhouse building. A condition of the planning permission is for an archaeological survey and the removal of human remains from the ground to the rear of the workhouse.

Under the first phase of work Morgan Sindall Construction will be helping archaeologists excavate and remove the remains.

A complex scheme of works will enable the archaeologists to access their work areas while excavating to depths of approximately four and a half metres, predominantly by hand. The remains are unmarked and unrecorded and are those of the London poor who were buried

from around 1790 until approximately 1860.

Prior to the site being used by the Middlesex Hospital it was the Central London Sick Asylum, The Strand Union Workhouse Infirmary, and the Covent Garden workhouse.

When it was just open fields in May 1775, the Covent Garden vestry obtained an Act of Parliament "to enable the inhabitants of the parish to purchase a piece of ground for a workhouse and for providing an additional burial ground for the parish". The central building on the west of the site, set back from Cleveland Street, was constructed between 1775 and 1778 as a workhouse for the parish of St Paul, Covent Garden.

Around 7,000 cubic metres of soil will now be excavated and examined for bone fragments. The work will take between 12 and 18 months. Only after this work is completed can construction start on the new buildings.

See bedfordpassagedevelopment.com for full details of the works on site.

Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association waits for funds to re-open advice service

It is six months since the housing and welfare advice service closed at the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre and the building is still boarded up and empty.

Camden Council, who own the building, was in a hurry to get the charity out of the building but no work has started to bring the building back into use.

Meanwhile the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association is homeless and hoping for news about funding to open a new advice service in another Camden-owned building in Cromer Street, Kings Cross.

The work to produce *Fitzrovia News*, assess local planning and licensing applications, and reviewing other public consultations — all previously done at the Neighbourhood Centre — are now done by a small group of volunteers

who meet in a room offered by The 52 Club in Gower Street, and in people's homes.

The charity is actively seeking trustees to help run the new advice service in Kings Cross.

By the middle of January the charity will know whether it will have the money to open the much-needed service and if it is able to employ staff to run it.

If not enough money is forthcoming the organisation will give up its charitable status next April and operate as a small community group using only volunteers to do a limited amount of environmental work in Fitzrovia.

If the advice service is lost it will add to the list of casualties from cuts to grants, local authority funding and legal aid funding that have seen law and advice centres across London close.

Fitzrovia Nursery

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Word from the Streets

By CHARLOTTE STREET and her siblings



Local museum relic on television

A rare animal bone was brandished on BBC2's QI show recently by a curator from the **Grant Museum of Zoology** based at **21 University Street**.

Tannis Davidson (below) showed on screen the bone of a Quagga (above), a now extinct sub species of zebra. It had been declared a protected species in Cape Town in 1886 - unfortunately this was three years after the last one had died in an Amsterdam zoo!



The Grant Museum thought it had two zebra skeletons in its collection (open to the public in the afternoons), but closer scrutiny in 1972 revealed one was a donkey and the other a Quagga. It is one of only seven in the world, and the only one with a skull.

Sadly one back leg is missing. It is thought it may have been lost when lent to the Royal Society of Surgeons, or when it was evacuated to Wales during the war.

Radio star beats retreat to pub

BBC radio 6 Music disc jockey, **Steve Lamacq**, who was featured in this column last time, was actually in **The Ship pub, New Cavendish Street**, when the paper was delivered.

Another of his favourite pubs in the area is the **Stag's Head** in the same street.

In his autobiography "Going Deaf for a Living" he recalls a live session on Radio 1 in which he interviewed **Noel and Liam Gallagher**, at the height of their **Oasis** fame, and they swore a lot on air. Noel told Steve: "You might get the sack after that."

He decamped to the **Stag's Head**, where Gary the landlord had already pulled him a pint of cider. "Oh, mate," he says. "I was really feeling for you. I had it on in the pub, but then I had to keep turning the volume down when they started swearing."

Apostrophe or not apostrophe

Brian Jarman, who writes for Fitzrovia News, was on radio defending the correct use of the apostrophe this month. It was on the Sunday morning Radio 4 programme "Broadcasting House" hosted by **Paddy O'Connell**. My brother **Percy** tuned in but was half asleep so remembers little. Others say it was all rather amusing. It was on December 8 about 45 minutes in if you want to hear it on catch up.

Back home to film crime thriller

It was like coming home for actor **Takehiro Hira** when filming in August 2018 the BBC2 television crime thriller **Giri/Haji**, screened recently. He played a Tokyo based detective, **Kenzo**, who heads to London to track down his brother.

"I lived in Fitzrovia," said Hira, "and I could walk anywhere."

So he would have been familiar with the **Blue Posts** in **Newman Street** where part of the programme was filmed - as noticed by **Gordon Tees** of **Middleton Place**.



Takehiro being filmed in 2018

Student nurse became pop singer

Cerys Matthews, the singer and BBC radio disc jockey, was once a student psychiatric nurse at the **Middlesex Hospital** in **Mortimer Street**.

Her time as a 16-year-old on the wards in 1985 was described on **Jeremy Vine's** Radio 2 show recently following an exchange on Facebook.

She said she trained at the **University College Hospital** (then in **Gower Street**) and the **Middlesex Hospital**, but only lasted three terms, first on a general medical ward, then "a high security acute psychiatric ward."

A consultant neurosurgeon at that time was **Brian Horton** who recalled on Facebook: "A blond first year student, with a strong Welsh accent, came up and asked me to explain why I had done whatever it was I had done."

"It was unusual for any student nurse to approach a consultant directly, but I have always liked teaching (and the Welsh) so I carefully explained what I could."

"She listened carefully, asked a few sensible questions then thanked me for giving her the time, and sadly I never saw her again on the ward."

The radio broadcast can be heard on the web: bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0008hty.



Missing a point

What on earth is "invisible permanent clothing?" asked my puzzled sister **Margaret**. The sign is on the **Inku shop** at **15 Warren Street**. Their website claims its clothes, made in England of Indian cloth, are an almost "invisible" protest against the fashion status quo in creating clothes with a "permanent" style and quality. Any the wiser?

Popular passage

Disability rights campaigner **Adam Pearson** was filmed walking through **Newman Passage** for his recent BBC 4 television documentary "Eugenics: Science's Greatest Scandal." Peeping Tom film, and **Minder** TV series have both used this location.

Cheeky chappie

My brother **Warren** was cheered up by a tube driver's announcements at **Tottenham Court Road** station. "Don't bother pressing the 'Open' button on the doors," he advised. "It is a complete waste of effort as they open automatically." Earlier he had said: "Blah, blah, blah" after the official recorded announcement about the next station.

Becoming super

These computer predictive spelling gadgets can come up with some strange results. My brother **Mortimer** was keying in a story about **Yiddish** films being watched at the **Scala** cinema in **Tottenham Street** in the 1920s by **Sidney Spellman** (appropriately) of **Hanson Street**. It changed this to "Superman". Luckily **Mortimer** spotted it in time.

Celeb watch

Carol McGiffin, of **Loose Women** fame, was spotted in the coffee shop on the corner of **Percy and Charlotte Streets**. And **Ian McNeice** (**Bert Large** in **Doc Martin**) was seen strolling up **Tottenham Court Road**.



ALEX ROWSON of **Gresse Street** is pictured above with his freestyle relay medal won at the **British Swimming National competition** in **Glasgow**.

As reported in this column last time his incredible burst in the last leg saw his team go from third to first.

Comic in awe

Legendary comedian **Tony Hancock** was overawed by another legend, singer **Judy Garland**, whom he saw at the **Dominion Theatre** in **Tottenham Court Road** just after the war. This was described in **Steve Punt's** "Hancock Cuttings" on **Radio 4 Extra** recently.

Charity jackpot

CONGRATULATIONS to the **King & Queen** in **Foley Street**. It has raised more than **£20,000** over the years for **Macmillan Cancer Support**. The precise amount a while ago was **£20,520.09**.

Game on, again

Hurrah! The darts board is back in the **Horse and Groom** in **Great Portland Street**. It was taken out several years ago when there was a disturbance involving darts players. Like throwing the baby out with the bathwater, thought my brother **Stephen**, whose aim is far from accurate.

Charlotte Street



Exhibition at museum

Pollock's toy shop and museum held a successful month-long event in November celebrating all things dolls, teddy bears, and toy theatres. The Gallimaufry featured a special exhibition where contemporary artists working in a variety of crafts and media exhibited works inspired by the unique, mostly Victorian, collection at the two historic buildings on the corner of Scala Street and Whitfield Street.

Jack Fawdry (pictured left), whose great grandmother founded the museum, gathered the artists together to produce the works.

"It's quite exciting because the toy theatre has had a turbulent past and it almost disappeared completely," says Fawdry who is an accomplished artist and printmaker.

"Pollock was the last great publisher of toy theatres, then he went out of business. After the Second World War Britain started to modernise and change and its Victorian past was slightly left behind.

"So that's when Marguerite, my great grandma, comes in and starts the museum in homage to toy theatres," he says.

Since then, toys of old have achieved an underground status and Fawdry is keeping tradition going in inventive ways by encouraging the artists he knows through his work and social circle to get involved and maintain an appreciation of the drama of theatre-in-miniature and the love of traditional toys.

Opening and closing

Closed

Ivor Mairants *guitar shop* 56 Rathbone Place
Cafe Deco 43 Store Street
Beyond bread *gluten free bakery* 2 Charlotte Place
Masterclean *dry cleaners* 34 Berners Street
Senor Ceviche *Peruvian cuisine* 18 Charlotte Street
William Hill *betting shop* 36 Charlotte Street
William Hill *betting shop* 50 Grafton Way
Gaylord *Indian restaurant* 79-81 Mortimer Street
Wrapchic *wraps* 48 Goodge Street
Velorution electric *bikes* 61 Great Portland Street
Navarro's *Spanish restaurant* 62 Charlotte Street
Zizzi *Italian restaurant* 33-41 Charlotte Street
Abokado *wraps lunches* 16 Newman Street
Lokhandwala *Indian tapas* 93 Charlotte Street
Mail boxes etc. *business services* 10 Great Russell Street
Teamwork *photographic equipment* 41-42 Foley Street
Kyseri *Turkish Cypriot restaurant* 64 Grafton Way (re-opening with new concept see opening soon)
P Johnson *tailors* 51-52 Rathbone Place (moved to new premises see openings)

Opened

P Johnson *tailors* 31 Percy Street
Hibox *Palestinian Lebanese vegan food* 48 Goodge Street
Vapourcore *vape store* 46 Newman Street
Ippudo *Ramen noodles* 40 Goodge Street
Gaucha *Argentinian steakhouse* 60A Charlotte Street (re-opening)
Old Chang Kee *Singaporean cuisine* 56 Goodge Street
Mini Yummy Kitchen *Chinese restaurant* 29 Tottenham Street
New Age *dry cleaners* 34 Berners Street
Fitzrovia barbers 59 Cleveland Street
Gargotte *wine bar* 6 Percy Street
Stretchlab *gym* 18 Wells Street

Opening soon

Ampéli *Greek restaurant* 18 Charlotte Street
Henry *Austrian cuisine* Unit 4 103 Tottenham Court Road
Busi *cafe* 48 Great Portland Street
Aqua *restaurant* 170 Great Portland Street
Akoko *West African restaurant* 4 Berners Street
York Ji Chicken *Oriental eatery* 28 Goodge Street
Lidl *discount supermarket* 145 Tottenham Court Road
Banjarah *Indian restaurant* 79-81 Mortimer Street
Oklava *bakery+wine* 64 Grafton Way

Advertisement

Festive Fitzrovia!

London's Very Own Bohemian Rhapsody

Having been based in Fitzrovia for over fifty years, we know that the Christmas period is one of the most vibrant times of year in the area. With the stunning Christmas lights on Charlotte Street and Tottenham Court Road and a wide range of different events taking place throughout the local area, Fitzrovia is the place to be.

Whilst A Christmas Carol was not set in Fitzrovia, Charles Dickens lived on Cleveland Street as a child, and the former Cleveland Street Workhouse which inspired Oliver Twist is testament to the area's festive spirit.

We are certain that this Christmas will be an absolute delight thanks to all the people who work hard to keep our home as vibrant and dynamic as it is. From the hardworking journalists who write the Fitzrovia News, to the local business owners who keep Fitzrovia's independent spirit alive they all make us proud of Fitzrovia and the area which we call home.

Most of all, we would like to thank the residents of Fitzrovia for continuing to work with us here at RIB – you help make London's own Bohemian Rhapsody what it is today. We are certain that we will continue to build on our recent successes next year and look forward to everything that the new decade holds.

With how beautiful Fitzrovia looks in the snow, we really are wishing for a White Christmas.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from everyone here at Robert Irving Burns!



Live like royalty in Fitzroy Square



Outside 2 Fitzroy Square. Corgis, jewels and a personal butler come as optional extras. Photo: The Plum Guide.

The scourge of short-letting in Fitzrovia — where people rent a home and use it like a hotel for a few days — continues apace.

Even well-off residents are having to put up with the comings and goings of their absent neighbours temporary guests.

One of the latest offerings from AirBnB-for-the-very-rich, *The Plum Guide*, features a Grade I listed family home in Fitzroy Square going for £1,373 a night.

According to Plum it is “A stunning Georgian townhouse in one of the most beautiful squares in London. With the pedestrianised square at the front and a row of mews homes at the rear, this is an incredibly peaceful space. What really excited us was just how huge the home is, a rarity in such a central spot. A few highlights include the stunning library, Robert Adam fireplaces, a gym, endless pool, sauna and of course the spacious double garage that you won’t find anywhere else round here.”

The site describes the house owners (hosts) thus: “Jo and her husband usually rent out a collection of cottages in Wales and a gorgeous farmhouse in Suffolk but have decided to let others enjoy their exquisite and soulful



London townhouse when they are away.”

If playing in the five bedrooms and eight bathrooms is not luxury enough for you, your visit can be enhanced by choosing “the royal experience” which is a limited offer available for a minimum stay of one week.

North American wealth guide *The Robb Report* says you could be “attended to by a personal butler who will brush up your manners during a royal etiquette workshop with expert and social commentator, William Hanson, then put them to the test over a lavish banquet dinner and afternoon tea — the latter attended by a bunch of corgis for some prime photo ops”.

If that’s not a daft enough fake royal experience, you can add on “a horse-and-carriage ride, a private tour of the Stately Rooms at Buckingham Palace, access to jewels to borrow, and



More tea princess? Photo: The Plum Guide.

a hamper full of treats from some of the Queen’s preferred brands round out the perks”.

The ludicrous mad parade of excess makes reference to the fact that certain scenes of netflix’s *The Crown* were filmed in the square and that potential guests would be familiar with the house as its external facade was a major feature in the series.

It is not known how the house owners felt about filming in the Square as when it was going on several residents voiced their very vocal complaints about the intrusion of film crews and constant running of diesel generators to power lighting for months on end.

But after the fallout from Prince Andrew’s TV interview, is spending a few days living like a royal, and a convenient place to stay, so attractive anymore?



Gower Street resurfacing and a confusing set of diversions

People living on The Gower Peninsula — the area between Tottenham Court Road and Gower Street — have been taking the brunt of the current traffic diversions as Camden Council’s West End Project grinds towards its final act.

The air is thick with traffic fumes and drivers and cyclists are confronted with a confusing set of diversions to avoid parts of Gower Street closed for major road works.

“This work will require noisy work to break up the road surface and involve large machinery moving around the area to lay the new road surface. Disruption to traffic and long pedestrian diversions should be expected. We will be working from 8am – 6pm Mondays to Fridays,” says Camden.

On notices tied to lamp posts it stated that the closure of Gower Street meant vehicles would be sent south-bound along Tottenham Court Road and then directed left into Chenies Street to re-join Gower Street to head south. But some of the yellow diversion signs stated otherwise and directed drivers across Tottenham Court Road and sending them around in circles. Whether this is by intention or accident is anybody’s guess.

Cyclists face the hazard of mixing with motor vehicles as protected lanes are closed either with cones on Maple Street or steel fencing for the continued closure of the track on Tottenham Court Road.

Pedestrians meanwhile navigate sloping pavements, paddling pools at crossing points, and grow old waiting for the lights to change.

More chaos is promised in early 2020, says Camden Council.

Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association

(registered charity)

is seeking

trustees

to support its proposed new advice service based in Cromer Street, King’s Cross.

We need local people from Camden to join us to secure a housing and welfare advice service that meets the needs of residents in south Camden.

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CIRCOLO POPOLARE, 40- 41 Rathbone Place.

I recently had a very enjoyable Fitzrovian evening in the biggest Italian/Sicilian restaurant I've ever been in, in either London or Italy! It was a freezing cold night and it was full: that means 240 people, with others queueing outside. A waiter told us that in summer another 30 can sit in the garden at the back of Rathbone Square, in this new use for the old Royal Mail sorting office.

This restaurant is part of the Big Mamma group who have already had restaurant success, so some of you might know more about all this than me! Look them up on the internet and they or their friends and fans describe this new Fitzrovian place as "outrageous" and "flamboyant" and "over the top" – they mean the décor, not the food!!

Sicily, just to be clear, is part of Italy but a proud and autonomous part, with perhaps other influences in its food because of where it is, at the bottom of the 'boot' of Italy. I only clarify these distinctions so that I don't offend anybody from either place!

Circolo Popolare would be a very welcoming place to enter at any time, but especially on a cold wintry evening. All around the walls are shelves and shelves, right up to the ceiling, of glass bottles of different colours, still full of something – perhaps alcohol? Although on closer inspection



By the DINING DETECTIVE

Hospital for Women and Children, 209 Great Portland Street (Portland Hospital). The picture at the bottom of this page was taken at

tion the glass was different colours but the liquids were perhaps much the same pink colour (but that might have been the lighting). Wine bottles, gin bottles, rum bottles, vermouth bottles, brandy bottles – all lit somehow from below and casting a bright, warm glow so that the walls were shining and beautiful. Where there were no bottles, there were old photographs and old china plates. Music, lots of very long tables – yet somehow my colleague and I, sitting at one of the few tables for two, were able to talk easily. Maybe the high ceilings sucked up the noise.

Or maybe it was the 'lilac bushes' hanging from the ceiling – not real I think – but still attractive.

Of course, in a place as big as this, it wouldn't be run these days without the friendly staff (all Europeans – what will happen to places like this if we leave Europe?) being connected to the front desk by electronic means, letting the receptionists know when a table was going to become empty. Yet despite the business, and the bill arriving promptly, we did not at any time feel rushed, nor were we given any sort of table-time. It was just very friendly and very efficient.

The diners were mostly youngish – many sort of late-20-year-olds it felt like – and there were very many Italians eating here, always a special recommendation.

And the food was – truly excellent. We shared a large, tasty lasagne (£14 each) served on a copy of one of those big, old-fashioned pasta plates – fresh and filling comfort food. (All the different pastas are made daily, it is advertised, on the premises). I'm often a bit doubtful about the word "authentic" used in restaurants, but I was not doubtful here. Our Sicilian neighbours explained very proudly (and at length!) a cheese dish that we had admired that they were eating: it was Burrata con Patatine – a Burrata cheese baked with a pesto heart made of basil and pine nuts, it was gluten-free and cost £12. All the food was cooked in the basement below – the kitchen was also of course hooked up to the waiters electronically!

I'm not sure that I carried out my Dining Detective duties entirely because after our own per-

sonal lasagne and a couple of glasses of wine (house wine, pleasant, £5 a glass, £27 per bottle) with lovely fresh bread and an excellent olive oil thrown in for free, we couldn't eat any more! However I watched and listened. There were amazing assorted – and coloured – cocktails mixed at the bar. There were many kinds of pizza ranging in price from £11 to £18 that seemed very popular (the vegetarian one was called "Animal Lover"). We could have shared a lot of antipasti dishes, and a birthday party on one of the long tables was doing just this: small pizza; Crudo Crocante (lettuce cups filled with Cornish sea bass, tomatoes and olives); pork rib bites (£7); Magic Mushrooms Bruschetta (!) – described as bruschetta with wild mushrooms with vegan aioli and fried leeks; salads large and small, and much more.

There are also puddings for those that can keep on eating, priced between £8 and £11: lemon pie, apple crumble, banoffee pie, and – of course – ice-cream. And the sparkling birthday girl was presented with a big cake topped – also of course – with sparklers.

It's hard to do honour to 'ambiance' but it's a long time since I've sat in a full, warm restaurant and enjoyed myself, and the food, so much – and been made to feel so welcome and so unhurried. Although the restaurant has closed periods during the day, their website advertises breakfast and brunch, and the day I was writing this review I walked past at lunch time and Circolo Popolare was as full as it was the night we were there – with a queue waiting outside.

Thoroughly recommended.



Turkish treat at museum

The model of a Turkish Scribe's Box from the period 1600-1800 (pictured above) was made by the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association craft group and exhibited in the British Museum (continues until January 26).

The original, also in the exhibition, was made from wood, mother of pearl, tortoiseshell, and bone. The FNA model was made from wood and wrapping paper.

It was part of an installation to accompany the exhibition entitled "Looking East: Middle East in the British Museum" demonstrating how the Islamic world influenced western art.

Helen Roden was the teaching artist who helped groups construct the installation, including the FNA, who also produced a red and yellow crochet (pictured below).



Picture puzzle



How well do you know Fitzrovia?

Can you identify where the photograph on the left was taken?

For the answer see under the detective picture on this page.

If you enjoy Fitzrovia News, please consider making a donation:
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Christmas services 2019

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Haydn Missa Sancti Nicolai

CHRISTMAS DAY HIGH MASS Wednesday 25 December 11:00am

Mozart Missa Brevis in C (Spatzenmesse) K220

CHRISTMAS 1 HIGH MASS Sunday 29 December 11:00am

Malcolm Missa ad præsepe NO EVENING SERVICE

EPIPHANY CAROL SERVICE Sunday 5 January 6:00pm

EPIPHANY HIGH MASS Monday 6 January 6:30pm

Times of Daily Prayer, Masses & opportunities for confession & counselling are advertised at: www.allsaintsmargaretstreet.org.uk Parish office: 020 7636 1788

Buttoning up the rag trade

By ANN BASU

While I was writing *Fitzrovia, The Other Side of Oxford Street: A Social History 1900-1950* (The History Press, May 2019), I often picked up the phone to call Henry Harris.

Henry, aged 90 and born three years after my mother, was her favourite cousin. They would often play together, along with my mother's twin brother Abraham or 'Ubba', in and around Howland Street in Fitzrovia where my mother's family lived before the Second World War. Now Henry is the sole surviving member of my mother's generation and it's to him I'm indebted for a number of family anecdotes from those early days and for his own experiences of Fitzrovia.

Henry has a close and long-standing connection with Fitzrovia, even though he never lived there: he was a button wholesaler based in Margaret Street. He founded the business in 1957 with two partners, trading until 2012. They called their enterprise Halicombe Trimmings Ltd, using their three surnames – Harris, Lipman and Titcombe – to make a portmanteau business name. Mr Titcombe was actually a Polish man, Tytko, who had Anglicised his name.

Henry never aimed to go into the button business. As a young man, not long after the war, he was on the lookout for job opportunities and spent his weekends cleaning cars to get by. One of the car owners was Lou Fields, a director of a button business, Model Trim, in Margaret Street, located at the heart of the booming clothing trade north of Oxford Street. Lou used to travel all over the UK to sell buttons, hence the need for a regular car wash. Lou thought



that Henry would be a good recruit for Model Trim and convinced him to work there.

Henry, an extremely personable and charming individual (my description not his!) got on exceptionally well there, building up a valuable circuit of customers. At this time, rationing of materials was still in force and button manufacturers sometimes improvised from what was left over after the war: a local button maker started to use Perspex from fighter aircraft manufacture, for example.

After a few years, Henry was head-hunted by another button supplier, D. Steinberg and Sons, and went to work there. His career there was helped by family connections: his wife Jean's grandfather, a costume maker, knew a Miss Cohen, the button buyer

from Alexon, a very popular and well-regarded clothing brand whose proprietors were also named Steinberg. Henry went to see Miss Cohen and persuaded her to give him an order for 12,000 buttons, his first big button deal.

Henry continued to do very well in sales at D. Steinberg and Sons, attracting big-name customers like Jaeger and Windsmoor. Unlike most of his colleagues, he carefully nurtured his links with key buyers, visiting all his most important clients at Christmas, for example. His schmoozing paid off well and he became the firm's best salesman. However, D. Steinberg's sons, as they grew older, were encouraged by their father to take a major part in the business, dis-

placing Henry. It was 1957 and time for Henry to move on.

Henry Harris, together with Lipman and Titcombe who had also worked at D. Steinberg and Sons, set up Halicombe Trimmings at the corner of Margaret Street and Great Portland Street, on the fifth floor above a little restaurant. Great Portland Street at that time was a centre of the car sales industry and it was common for car showrooms to occupy the spacious ground floors with their huge display windows while tailoring firms and associated businesses were based on the upper floors.

Henry still had his large customer order book from Steinberg's and had already told his customers that he was opening his own business. The first week of opening, the new business made £500 – a very large amount in those days and more than enough to cover costs and provide the three partners with wages large enough to support their families.

Halicombe continued to thrive, moving to 5 Margaret Street next to All Saints Church, then soon afterwards to 15/16 Margaret Street where they stayed until the business closed. Henry tells me that at 7 or 8am "the whole place was alight" with the activities of all the garment manufacturers. He loved the atmosphere of Fitzrovia in full flow and continued to trade for more than 50 years. He was finished by the financial crash of 2008, coming on top of the decades-long movement towards outsourcing of the trade overseas. He kept the business open until 2012 for the sake of the people working there – and, I imagine, because he loved it so much.



Curry story

The Banh Mi Bay Vietnamese restaurant at 21 Rathbone Street (pictured above) has an historic connection with Indian cuisine.

Back in 1776 this was the home of the first ever importers of Indian curry powder (when it was called Glanville Street).

Mr Jackson, the proprietor, advertised his true curry powder from India "for sale to the gentry" – and claimed it was particularly good "for those suffering from wind or colic."

It was guaranteed to last for seven to eight years in any climate, and cost two shillings [10p] per phial, although great allowances of price could be made for captains of ships or others able to sell it in bulk.

"Mr Jackson says he dresses meals at short notice, including mock turtle," proclaimed his advert in the *Gazetteer and New London Advertiser* on December 18, 1776.

All this was revealed on BBC Radio 4 Extra on December 4 in a programme called "Ruby Murray: The Secret Story of Curry" (originally broadcast in 2010).

The programme also explained how a well known Indian television chef, Madhur Jaffrey, was spurred on by the lack of good Indian restaurants in Fitzrovia.

She was a 19-year-old drama student at RADA in Gower Street in the late 1950s and despised not only "the see through beef slices and over cooked cabbage" in the canteen but also the food in the local Indian restaurants.

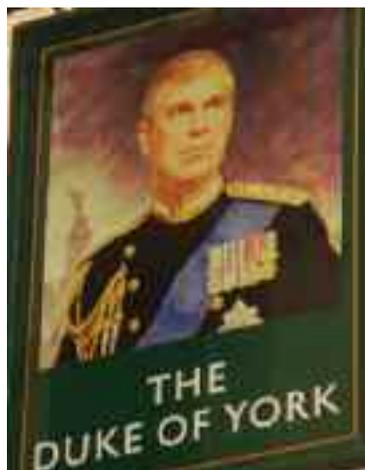
"It had no flavour and was not what I was used to in India," she said. "I dreamed of the food I had grown up with so wrote to my mother for recipes, and got them for goat and cauliflower curry.

"I tried this out on my fellow RADA students and it was a great success."

She pursued an acting career in film, television and radio, but decided to supplement her income by writing food articles to pay for the education of her children.

The BBC heard about this and she got her own television programme "Madhur Jaffrey's Indian Cooking" which was broadcast from 1982 and became very popular.

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Masked ball

Sir Thomas Robinson in his 70s is shown escorting his elderly mistress to the Pantheon Theatre at 173 (number 359 at the time) Oxford Street in the 18th century for a masked ball.

It is exhibited at the Foundling Museum until January 5.

The radical of Hanway Street

The radical philosopher William Godwin lived and ran a children's bookshop at 9 Hanway Street from 1805 to 1807 (writes Mike Pentelow).

But because of his notoriety (in the eyes of the government) for his anti-authoritarian stance he had to disguise his identity as owner of the bookshop and author of many of its books.

A new book, "William Godwin, A Political Life" by Richard Gough Thomas (Pluto Press, £16.99), gives details of the dangers that advocates of basic democracy were under, and how the shop was used to support liberal views on children's education.

Godwin's most famous work was "An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice" which was published in February, 1793, extolling basic libertarian views, later characterised as an anarchist.

These views were dangerous considering it was just two months after his friend Thomas Paine had been sentenced to death in his absence for "sedition" in writing "Rights of Man" calling for universal suffrage.

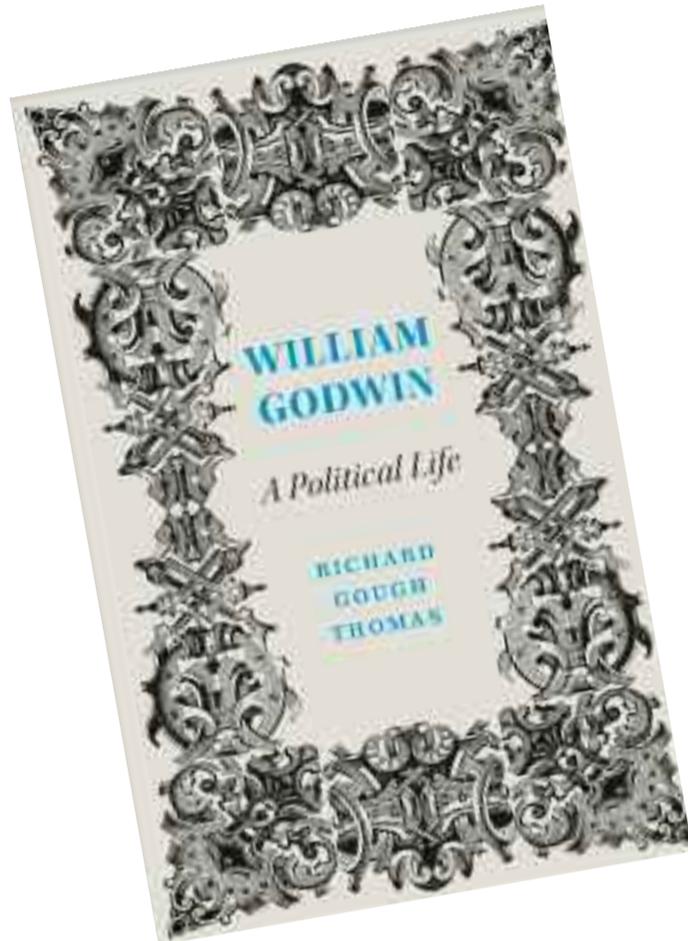
This in itself was defined as seditious by the government, and a lawyer Thomas Muir, and a minister Thomas Palmer, were transported for campaigning for it in 1793. Godwin visited them three times on a prison hulk moored at Woolwich and wrote to the press complaining of their treatment.

Another friend of Godwin, Joseph Gerald, was also transported for being a delegate to a convention on parliamentary reform.

The following year another of Godwin's friends, John Thelwell, was charged with others for high treason (calling for constitutional reform). More were arrested for the same offence including Thomas Holcroft, a life long friend of Godwin.

Holcroft (1745-1809) was a journalist, novelist and playwright who lived in what is now Clipstone Street, where Holcroft Court is named after him. He was outspoken and forthright in his opinions, and proudly presented himself to the Lord Chief Justice rather than wait to be taken when the indictments were announced.

Godwin asked Holcroft's daughter to arrange a visit to him in Newgate prison and offered help in his defence, but Holcroft told him to focus on a greater cause.



Win this book worth £16.99

Answer this question: Where did Godwin live in Fitzrovia towards the end of his life? Email your answer to news@fitzrovia.org.uk before February 14, 2020.

CONGRATULATIONS to the winner of our last book prize: Jason Cobham of Berners Mews wins "Bohemian London" from the last issue with the correct answer to "Where in Fitzrovia did French poets Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud live?"

The answer was: 35 Howland Street.

The law on treason at the time was medieval, dating from 1351, when it applied to threats to the royal family. The government claimed that those who wished to change the system were guilty of "imagining the king's death."

The Prime Minister, William Pitt, who had already suspended Habeas Corpus to allow arrests without charge, brought in repressive legislation in 1795 redefining treason as intending to depose the monarch or intimidate parliament. Known as "the Gagging Acts" they forbade political lectures unless approved by two magistrates, meetings had to be notified to magistrates and could be broken up if "encouraging contempt for the government", and refusal to disperse was punishable by death.

Godwin condemned all this as an attack on free speech and free thought, and criminalising intellectual enquiry, so wrote a novel, "Caleb Williams", about the abuse of authority, which was a best seller.

In the event Thelwell, Holcroft and their fellow defendants

were found not guilty. Holcroft continued to be hounded by the reactionary press, however, so moved to the continent with his family for three years.

Godwin said he missed him as an instructor, adviser and pilot.

He borrowed money to rent the house and book shop in Hanway Street, calling the shop the "Juvenile Library."

His views on the formal education of children were that its main aim was to "inculcate habits of obedience rather than enquiry." Reading books, he thought, enabled the opportunity "to educate without exerting authority over the learner." It enabled children to exercise their imaginations, put themselves in the place of the characters so learning from it, and to think for themselves.

His own writings, hoping to encourage this, were published under a series of pseudonyms and sold in the shop.

Whereas other children's authors offered mundane stories his provided fantastic ones; where others provided "role models" he would encourage children to

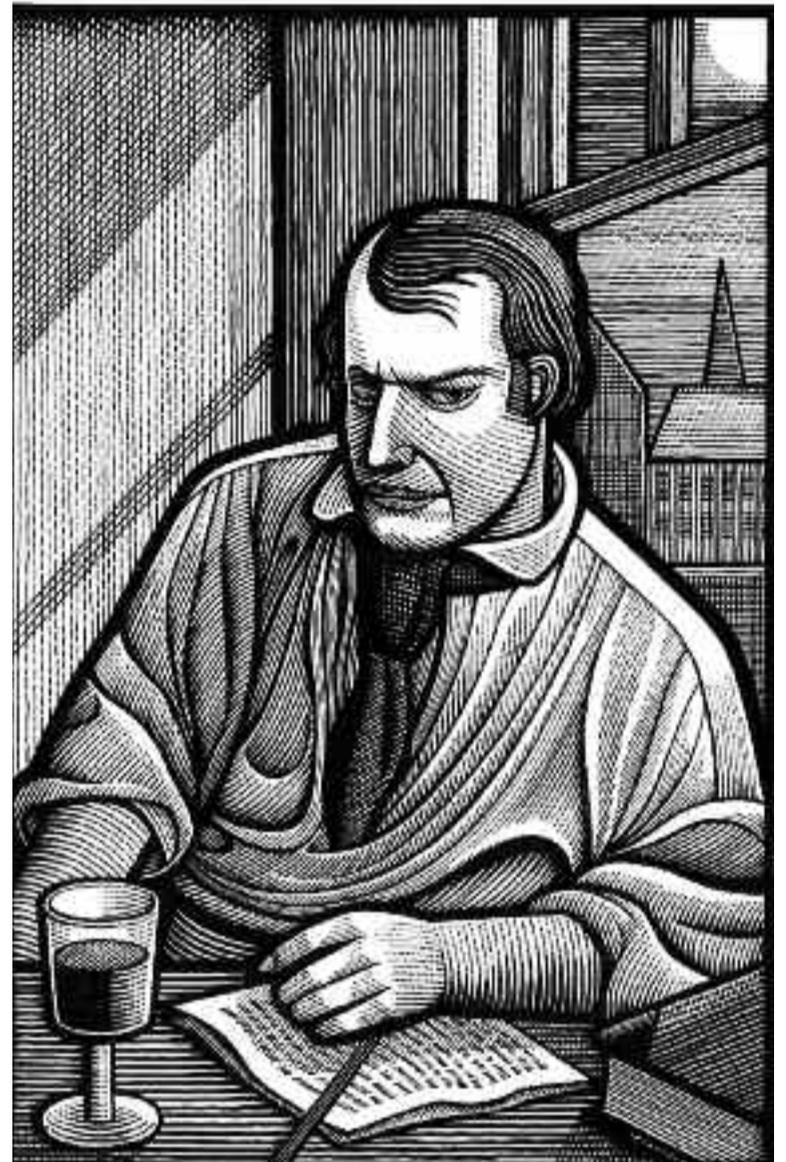


ILLUSTRATION BY CLIFFORD HARPER

question who they wanted to be.

Under the name of Edward Baldwin he published "Fables, Ancient and Modern", but unlike other fables which had morals to the stories, he asked readers what they might have done in the circumstances of the tale. And he adapted well known fables to open them up for debate.

Under the name of Theophilus Marcliffe he published in 1805 "The Looking Glass" which was a biography for children of his friend and illustrator, William Mulready, still a teenager at the time. It explained his success as being down to his love of vocation which young readers could look for in themselves (rather than emulate conventional role models).

Mulready, incidentally lived at various times in 42 Newman Street, 11 Fitzroy Street, Foley Street and Torrington Place.

The Juvenile Library, while in Hanway Street, also published "Tales from Shakespeare" by Charles and Mary Lamb, and later the first translation of "Swiss Family Robinson."

When the shop moved to Smithfield in 1807 it became clear

that the shop manager, Thomas Hodgins, had been embezzling money from the business and was dismissed.

Godwin wrote two histories for children - "The Life of Lady Jane Grey" and "The History of England" - plus a book of classical myths "The Pantheon".

As Thomas Holcroft lay dying in 1809 he summoned Godwin and was overwhelmed with emotion when he arrived. He visited him every day until his death four days later, and organised financial support for his wife, Louisa, and children.

The essayist William Hazlitt undertook a biography of Holcroft, which was published, with the help of Godwin and Louisa, in 1816 under the title "Memoirs of the Late Thomas Holcroft".

The Juvenile Library struggled on until the national financial crisis of 1825, when excessive speculation caused the collapse of banks and businesses relying on credit, such as publishing.

This bankrupted Godwin who moved to a house at 44 Gower Place, just off Gower Street, where he lived from 1826 to 1833 just before he died in 1836.

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson: SHE FOUGHT MEDICAL RAT RACE

By MIKE PENTELOW

Rat baiting and boxing bouts were organised by medical students in the dissecting rooms of the Middlesex Hospital, in Mortimer Street in the 19th century.

The hospital (on the site now occupied by Pearson Square by the corner of Cleveland Street) was where Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (1836-1917) was sent in 1860 to see if she had the stomach to become a medical doctor.

It took her ten years of hard struggle to overcome the prejudices and outright bans to become the first British woman doctor (excluding Miranda Stuart who qualified under the pretence of being a male, Dr James Barry, and Elizabeth Blackwell who had an American medical degree).

At first Garrett was a nurse and “unofficial student” at the hospital. But she was banned from studying officially at the medical school, when the male students threatened to boycott it if she as a female was accepted.

These were the same students who placed captured rats into the pit of the dissecting rooms and then bet on which of two dogs would kill the most rats by taking them in their mouths and shaking them to death.

They had a reputation for idleness and rowdiness, preferring to drink in bars and music halls or playing all night poker to attending lectures. So much so that a special dean had been appointed to control their disorderly conduct.

Yet they claimed to have respectable motives for banning women which was “the impropriety of males and females mingling in one class while studying subjects which hitherto have been considered of a delicate nature.”

The hospital committee and lecturers did not accept this reasoning but felt it “inexpedient” to admit women to lectures in future, when the students, whose

tuition fees they relied on, got up a petition and threatened to leave.

(The ban lasted until 1947).

The governor of the hospital, William Hawes, approved of the principle of women studying medicine, but had alerted her to the difficulties; and suggested she should prove her powers of endurance by becoming a nurse for six months before studying medicine directly.

These were the days when surgeons’ coats were stiff with blood and pus, as the need for sterilisation was not yet understood. And barber surgeons still cupped blood.

When off nursing duty Garrett would study various medical books.

The staff surgeon and dean of the medical school, Mr T W Nunn, was impressed by the fact that Garrett did not flinch at the sight of blood and offered to take her to his outpatient clinics, and treat her as his pupil.



The Elizabeth Garrett Anderson wing of UCH in Grafton Way.

Another surgeon and physician (Dr Willis) encouraged her by explaining the medical procedures. But neither of these had a say in accepting her to the medical school. Pupils, at first, also treated her as a student and gave her information.

She acquired a prospectus of the medical school’s courses and read the syllabus by herself in the museum.

The lecturer in surgery, Campbell de Morgan, told her, accurately as it proved, that the chances of getting into the college were impossible because: “A lady’s presence at lectures would distract the other students’ attention” and “all the London colleges will refuse to admit you.”

He did agree, however, to let her attend doctors on their rounds, go to operations, gave her a room to study in, and private tuition with the hospital’s apothecary. The latter was Joshua Plaskitt, who accepted her as a pupil for three or four hours a day in the hospital dispensary when her nursing probation finished.

When this happened she be-

came an unofficial medical student and was allowed to make rounds of the wards and assess new patients in the casualty department.

Plaskitt and Dr Willis set her mock exams and were struck by the thoroughness of her learning.

She was allowed into the dissecting room and to chemistry lectures and impressed everyone.

On asking to be admitted fully she was asked to sign a book promising not to smoke in the hospital or garden and “comport herself in every way as a gentleman.”

This seeming acceptance was followed by getting a certificate of honour in each of the class exams.

But this sparked resentment by the all male students at her success who, as described, organised opposition to her.

For the next six weeks she went daily to the hospital to finish the course of lectures, sitting the exams, and qualifying for her certificates.

She applied to matriculate at the University of London in April 1862 and pointed out it was founded to provide education for all classes and denominations without any distinction. The previous month William Smith (who had been a master at University College School in Gower Street) had a letter published in the Morning Star (not the current paper of that name), stating:

“An examination for a degree acts both as a stimulus and as a

test; and there seems no sufficient reason for withholding these advantages from women, if they can be secured without risk of collateral evils.”

The Senate voted by seven votes to six to reject her on the basis of a 1846 legal case’s interpretation of its charter which was due to be replaced with a new one. When the new charter was being considered a draft amendment to accept woman resulted in a tied vote of ten for and ten against, with the chairman casting his vote in favour of the status quo, so defeating it. (The UCL ban on women lasted until 1918).

So she went to St Andrews University in Scotland, where the Professor of Medicine was Dr George Day, whom she knew from his time as a lecturer at Middlesex Hospital School. Predictably she was rejected by the University, but he taught her a complete course of anatomy and physiology every day at his house. He also got local fishermen to supply various “sea beasts” for her to dissect and examine.

Dr Day’s private course of lectures was recognised by the Society of Apothecaries and eventually it accepted her as a member (after it was advised legally that it could not refuse as its constitution had no formal ban on women). It took the threat of further legal action before it allowed her to take their exams to qualify.

In 1864 one of the Middlesex Hospital medical lecturers, Dr S J Goodfellow, took her on as a private pupil for the entire course he was teaching at the hospital. So even though not accepted as a student she was allowed to enter the hospital wards as a visitor.

This was when she met and befriended her future brother-in-law, John Ford Anderson, a young Scottish doctor who was the resident medical officer in the hospital.

She completed the last period of clinical practice in 1865. Then the medical committee ruled her hospital visits must cease, but wished her well in her career.

The same year she set up a dispensary for women and children at 69 Seymour Place, Marylebone, where women were treated by her for free or for a penny.

Her bedside manner was described as “often brusque” and patients found her candour “dev-

Continued on next page

Bloomsbury ward councillors surgeries

First Friday of the month 6:00-7:00pm Fitzrovia Centre 2 Foley Street

Second and fourth Fridays of the month 6:00-7:00pm

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Third Friday of the month is a “roving surgery” Get in touch if you would like us to conduct the surgery in your street or building

Adam Harrison, Sabrina Francis and Rishi Madlani
contact 020 7974 3111

adam.harrison@camden.gov.uk rishi.madlani@camden.gov.uk
sabrina.francis@camden.gov.uk

Continued from previous page

astating at times." So perhaps a female version of Doc Martin.

In 1866 a petition in parliament was organised to extend the vote to women property owners (which excluded married women as their husbands acquired their property). The Women's Suffrage Committee was set up to organise this and met at Garrett's home also in Marylebone (20 Upper Berkeley Street). It was moved in parliament by Henry Fawcett, losing by 196 votes to 73.

Fawcett proposed marriage to Garrett but, after she rejected him, he married her sister, Millicent, an active campaigner for women's suffrage, who lived at 2 Gower Street.*

Garrett became the medical officer for the East London Hospital for Children, in Shadwell, in 1870 where she met John Ford Anderson's brother, James Skelton Anderson (whom she married the following year thus taking his surname).

She was finally elected as the first woman to the British Medical Association in 1874, as the only qualification for membership was to be a registered practitioner. It later introduced a rule to prevent other women joining which lasted for decades.

When the hospital for women in Seymour Street grew too big it moved in 1874 to 222 Marylebone Road in front of Marylebone railway station. When the lease ran out in 1884 they were thrown out by Lord Portman, who did not like crowds of poor women (including prostitutes) waiting outside the hospital. So it moved to 130 Euston Road (now the headquarters of Unison), which has a gallery devoted to Garrett Anderson open to the public Wednesdays to Fridays, 9am-6pm, and third Saturday of month 9am-4pm. It was renamed the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital in 1918, the year after her death. It stayed there until 2000 and is now the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson wing of the University College Hospital in Grafton Way.

* Garrett Anderson had been a lifelong supporter of the constitutional movement for women's suffrage, headed by her sister Millicent Fawcett. But in 1908 she felt progress was too slow so joined the new militant movement, the Women's Social and Political Union, led by Emmeline Pankhurst. In the same year, aged over 70, she joined the great attempt to "rush" the House of Commons. This was met with police violence but Garrett Anderson escaped arrest. Her daughter Louisa, also a doctor, was however jailed for her "direct actions" demanding the vote.

Safe Conduct

A short story by SUNITA SOLIAR

How do I know which of the strangers will hurt me least? On a crowded train from London to Cambridge there is no choice but to sit with others. A table for four: a quiet young couple adding up receipts in a language I don't understand. They are not going to spread their existence over mine like a shade denying the light I need to live, which makes me less like a weed encroaching on their space.

Still, it is much better when the fourth seat is filled by a tidy woman in her forties or fifties — the older the more innocuous. Now it's two against two. This fourth traveler is petite with a sharp haircut and a shrug over a grey woollen dress. Her movements are delicate: she manages herself the way an archivist might handle a rare book. I am impressed by people like this. Pretty mannerisms seems to express consideration for others. Can I pass for such a person? If I can manage not to leak out of myself, I might fool others into thinking I fit with these safe-ish people. I might be able to pull it off. As a group, the four of us seem well composed if everyone just keeps to the edges of themselves.

The train nudges into movement. What else can you do on a train but stare into the lives of others? How do some manage to turn so far in towards themselves that they do not see fellow pas-

sengers? Reading books. Listening to music that spills beyond the boundaries of headphones. How is it possible to be so much oneself in public?

Traveler number four retrieves a sandwich from a bookstore tote bag. A highly conspicuous sandwich: a baguette juicy with meat and egg yolk. How can she stand it? Eating in public: the humiliation — to reveal one's base need for sustenance. But her expression does not change. She peels the paper from the edge of her baguette with the same daintiness she exhibited when removing her coat. She does not look around to see if anyone observes her. Imagine! Being able to eat so unaware that you might be the object of a critical gaze. People always say you shouldn't worry about others: no one is looking at you. But this isn't true: I am always watching and if I am watching you, might someone else be watching me? But she is absorbed in her dainty bites. Look at her tearing the bread, a small piece of meat slipping away from her lips and into the packet, while I stare right into her mouth, her act of chewing expanding itself across my being. But this does not hurt: she seems so capable of eating this sandwich for all to see without a care. How can I not watch? It is enthralling, this act of human triumph bite after bite —



Illustration by CLIFFORD HARPER

A spill. Why has she betrayed me? Egg yolk oozing out of the sandwich and landing on her top. She does not see it. Her mouthfuls continue in their neat way as another blob lands on her top. How can this have happened while she continues to eat, to sit, in that conscientious way? How can she not know? I feel light, nauseous. What is there to anchor me? The calm, the trust in her competent consumption — gone.

I want to get away from the mess she has caught me up in, but there is of course nowhere else to look. Only at the yellow yolk drying into her black top. She tricked me: we are not on the same side at all. She isn't safe. There is only one way to look at her now, with hope that she will notice. But she doesn't notice as she eats the end of the sandwich. She doesn't notice as she scrunches up the sandwich wrapper. Is she not going to notice? If she does not, then this between us will always be incomplete.

What is it that makes her no-

tice? She looks down at her top and sees the horror of it. Then she looks at her tote bag, where it has also dried. She is a complete ruin. Nothing changes on her face, but she opens her palm in a gesture of offering or as if to say, 'What can I do?' It isn't directed at me. She doesn't make eye contact. For whom is the performance? She is very still. She does not attempt to search for a napkin. If I could offer her something, I could be kind, and we could exchange smiles. But there is nothing I can do except stare. She moves around helplessly then returns her hand to the resigned gesture. Why does she keep displaying this? It is too much to endure while the splatter seals itself into the fabric of her top. Does she see me watching? The third time she fumbles then returns her hand to the open-palm gesture, the woman across from us notices and offers two wet wipes. They smile. I am not part of it.

She dabs at herself feebly. What does she hope to remove with such gentle, cautious wipes? I wonder whether I am going to vomit. What is she dabbing at her hair for? Fine globs of yolk in the strands. I cannot watch her useless attempts to remove it. How can she have tricked me? I trusted her, but all of the controlled neatness meant nothing, and all I can do is imagine the smell and stare at the crust she has done nothing to remove. And now I am changed, my skin crawling with the smell of it, with the thought of her walking around for the rest of the day with that tarnish stuck to her. The yolk so cruelly dried into my vision. A woman so seemingly safe turned treacherous. She has inflicted herself on me. How am I to bear it?

Poetry corner

FRAGMENTS OF THE BON VOYAGE
(Fragment #7)

Fluffed up by the wind,
the birds flit off, as that ferry
makes full-steam for us
from all the way across the sea.
But it veers at the last moment,
just as I'm about
to spill my coffee - and the birds
return to their posts,
hopping frantically
along the top of a chair back
or rim of a pane.
Nor - looking here and there from Now -
do I weep over you at last.

Terry Egan

FLYING OVER LONDON, By Wendy Shuttler

A thin, fine and golden thread
snakes across black velvet, spread
with flashing, fabulous jewels,
as if casually dropped on a dressing-table:
sparkling trinkets, scintillating gems.

Somewhere between that little gold bracelet - Tower Bridge

and the two great dark
sleeping spaces of the royal parks,
is the place where I live!

Hidden in the middle, among a thousand jewels,
under this glittering blanket, I'm just one
of the crowd of the tiny, scuttling, creeping things.

I fly up here on borrowed wings,
looking down on my kind, like a king.

Poisoned by chemist boss

Ambulances took a 19-year-old beauty queen and her office manager to University College Hospital in Gower Street on April 26, 1954.

They both worked at Sangers Ltd, wholesale chemists, round the corner in Euston Road between Gower Street and Tottenham Court Road.

The young woman, June Malins, and her female colleague, Betty Grant, the 27-year-old secretary of the office manager, died the next day from cantharic acid poisoning after suffering severe internal burns.

The office manager, Arthur Ford, aged 44, survived after complaining only of severe headaches.

It emerged that he had heard about Spanish fly being a powerful aphrodisiac, and its chemical name was cantharidin, which was stocked in the laboratory.

There he asked the chemist if he could have some for a neighbour breeding rabbits. The chemist replied that it was a deadly poison and one bottle would be enough to poison a whole regiment.

Nevertheless Ford stole 40 grains of it from a bottle and put one or two grains in some coconut ice cubes. He gave some to Betty with the intention, as he later admitted, "to make her want me sexually."

He could not say how Jane Malins got some "except that it must have been an accident."

A safe dose of the drug, used medically as a blistering agent, would have been one two-hundredth of a grain, so he had stolen enough to kill more than a thousand people, for which there was no effective antidote.

At the Old Bailey trial two months later he pleaded guilty to manslaughter of both women, and was sentenced to five years in prison. He died in Hillingdon in 1983.

From *True Detective* magazine, November 2019.



Benito Mussolini in Italy in 1922.

Photo: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:March_on_Rome.jpg

Italian Fascists London centenary

The earliest fascist organisation in London was formed by Italians, just off Tottenham Court Road, in 1920.

Then it was called Little Howland Street, now it is Cypress Place (between Maple and Howland Streets) and full of office blocks.

Back in 1920 it was where the fascists set up their weekly newspaper in Italian, call *La Cronica*.

It was run by an organisation called *Unione Reduci Military Italiani*, which had been set up just eight months after Benito Mussolini had formed his fascist party in Italy, prior to becoming dictator.

Those in London were mainly veterans from the first world war, when Italy had fought on the same side as Britain.

The newspaper described their cause as an "insurrection of men and sticks against red violence" which was justified in their view. It set up a formal fighting force in 1921.

In the same year the newspaper announced the setting up of the London Section of the Italian National Fascist Party. Its first meeting was just south of Soho Square at 16 Bateman Street.

The most prominent member was Antonio Cippico, a lecturer at University College London in Gower Street.

The editor of the newspaper was ex-Captain Giovanni Savani, who was one of the founders of the London Fascists.

There were 20,000 Italians in Britain at this time. By no means all of them were fascists and some indeed represented the "red menace" as communists.

In her memoirs, Fitzrovia painter Nina Hamnett, recalled Italians of these opposite ends of the political spectrum, having a pitched battle in the area in the 1930s.

Facts from a Morning Star feature.

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Casper and Marley

Campaign for popular Fitzrovia mascot

Fitzrovia residents will surely have seen two lovely dogs always being walked by their owner, Marie, the length and breadth of Charlotte Street. Casper is a playful white miniature poodle. Marie rescued him from an abusive situation at 8 weeks old. Now he is 8 years old. His distinctive brown & white, mixed-breed brother, Marley is 5, and also a rescue dog, who was found surviving on insects in the barren hills of Cyprus. They have for some years been a popular presence on the streets of Fitzrovia. A few months ago Casper developed cataracts in both eyes, and sadly is now blind. The cost of the operation to

get him his sight back, is way beyond Marie's means, so we've launched a crowdfunder to do this. He misses running around and playing with Marley and the other dogs they meet locally. Marie suffers badly from anxiety, and Casper & Marley help her a lot with that, but it's not the same with Casper unable to move around freely without constantly banging into things and hurting himself. Please dig deep to help this lovely dog see again. Thank you. The link for donating is:

www.gofundme.com/help-casper-see-again

The invisible pianist



**Piano Man
No 19 by
Clifford
Slapper**

Fitzrovia's connections to the film industry are legion. In particular, many great films have been made on location in this part of London, from Michael Powell's 1960 shocking thriller, *Peeping Tom*, through to Edgar Wright's *Last Night In Soho*, much of which was filmed in the streets of Fitzrovia last summer. Many tales about Fitzrovia and film will be found elsewhere in the archives of the Fitzrovia News, but as your local piano correspondent, I present this story of one specific way in which musicians contribute to film.

Sometimes the role of pianist involves being like Macavity the Mystery Cat, who was there and yet when you look for him he "isn't there"! Children used to be taught to be seen and not heard; sometimes the pianist must be heard, but not seen. Last February, when the snow was a foot thick on the ground, I set off from

Charlotte Street at 5.30am one morning, and headed for the leafy suburb of Elstree, with a 7am call time. Filming was being completed for the third season of television epic *The Crown*, and there was to be a scene in which Edward Heath would be seen playing Chopin's 'Raindrop' Prelude in D flat. Then the camera would pan out and, whilst his playing continued, various other characters would be seen in a rapid progression of the plot. The problem was that the actor playing the former Prime Minister, Michael Maloney, is not a pianist. I had been tasked with performing the piece for the actor to mime to, and since the request had come through only the day before, I had been up all night practising that beautiful piece by Chopin, whilst the view from my window was more snowdrop than raindrop.

On arrival, I was shunted from one part of the lot to another and, as always on film sets, there was a great deal of waiting about, whilst lots of technical activity buzzed around in the middle distance. Then I was invited to wait until called, in a large and some-

Cartoon by
CHRIS TYLER



what deserted catering wagon. Two hours later, someone came in and apologetically muttered that for reasons unknown I would not be needed after all. I had narrowly missed playing the hands of Heath. Some would say that was just as well.

More recently, and much more satisfyingly, I was brought in as a pianist to work on a new television comedy film about the late comedian Les Dawson, looking back on the time when as a young man he had gone to live in Paris to concentrate on working as a novelist, and ended up playing the piano in a brothel, without even at first realising that it was a brothel. Strangely enough, my friend, the jazz singer Ian Shaw, who worked with me on

my 'Bowie Songs One' album, had exactly the same experience as a young man playing in Amsterdam, only gradually realising the true nature of the venue he was playing in.

When Les Dawson used to raise laughs by playing badly, it was a much more skilled craft than might at first be evident. He was actually a very good pianist. The wrong notes were not just random. The same applied to Victor Borge. It was quite a challenge for me, as a pianist, to recreate Dawson's particular kind of "wrong". I was reminded of Eric Morecambe's classic protestation to André Previn that he was playing all the right notes, "though not necessarily in the right order"! After studying a number

of old films of Dawson, I found that his trick was to continue vamping with his left hand quite correctly in key, whilst playing the right-hand melody properly, though transposed just one key up or down. Audiences loved the hilarious result of a familiar theme just off-kilter enough to sound wrong, and yet recognisable. His importuning them to sing along only caused even more helpless mirth.

I must also mention under this heading my similar off-screen playing for David Bowie's cameo appearance in Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant's 2006 television comedy, *Extras*. Playing Bowie's hands for the day was a special thrill given that I had grown up on his music and had been propelled into my own work as a musician by a love of his early albums, and of the piano played by Mike Garson on them. Similarly, Garson was the unseen pianist for a 1988 biopic film of Liberace. In that case his hands and arms were actually filmed playing, wearing Liberace's signature rings and extravagant sleeves. For this Garson was told to lose eighteen pounds of weight in two weeks, so that his arms would more closely resemble Liberace's!

So next time you see an actor playing the piano on film, do bear in mind that things may not be quite as they seem, and spare a thought for the unseen fingers which may have provided the music you are hearing.

Looking back through the archives

10 years ago

Capricorn club raided

From Fitzrovia News, Winter 2009-10:

According to the tabloids, Ronnie Wood, the Rolling Stones' guitarist, is reported to have paid £6.5 million in a divorce settlement to his wife after his well publicised rendezvous with a Russian waitress in a sleazy Goodge Street dive.

The notorious venue, also known as the Capricorn Club, was later busted in a police raid at the end of November. The Sun newspaper declared: "Lap bar is busted as brothel!"

Detective Inspector John Anderson, of the Metropolitan Police, said: "It is hard to believe that these shady dealings were blatantly going on."

A Channel 4 programme had exposed the club's activities over a year ago.

Rachel Christie, the first black Miss England, was known to members of the 52 Club in Gower Street, where she learned a dance from the days of Queen Victoria.

"I wanted to learn the correct steps to stun people with some-

thing really unusual," said Rachel, a professional athlete and niece of Linford Christie. She first became interested in the Victorian era when modelling a dress as a teenager.

Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason has opened a business club for private members in Alfred Place (off Chemies Street).

He first came to the area to study architecture at the polytechnic at 309 Regent Street (now University of Westminster) with guitarists Roger Waters and Rick Wright in the early 1960s.

Darwin and the Greeks, by Sue Blundell, played at the Stevenson Theatre in the British Museum.

This thought provoking play by Sue of Goodge Street was sold out at the prestigious venue.

A new rooftop playground was completed at All Souls school in Foley Street. It included pitches for games, plus a quiet area where herbs, plants, flowers and vegetables can be grown.

The Political Cartoon Gallery in Store Street had decided to close after rates had been doubled.

40 years ago

The Warren opened

From Tower, December 1979: Two years of gruelling work by the Fitzrovia Play Association, involving the raising of nearly £30,000 from local residents, charities and national government, reached a triumphant climax last month, when the new Warren Playground opened in Whitfield Street.

But the triumph missed a tragedy by a hair's breadth. For, exactly 24 hours before the opening ceremony, two houses in Whitfield Street collapsed in an avalanche of rubble, covering the spot where local children, the Mayor of Camden, the Deputy Mayor of Westminster, and local MP Frank Dobson were due to stand.

It was two o'clock on Saturday, November 24, when workmen putting the finishing touches to the Playground landscaping heard the rumble of collapsing floors inside 141 and 143 Whitfield Street. Then, with a terrifying roar, the brickwork of both houses toppled into the street.

Within minutes the police were there to cordon off the street, shortly followed by the owner, who had been "improving" the derelict houses for over two years with occasional weekend labour. He was



closely quizzed by the District Surveyor, who immediately set about shoring up the adjoining houses.

Next day, in his opening speech, Frank Dobson contrasted the dereliction of "private enterprise" across the street with the swings, seats, trees and football pitch of the Warren Playground which community action had produced. He praised the work of the local organisations like the FPA and the Bengali Workers Action Group in improving living conditions in the area backed up by the hard work of fund raising groups like the landlord and regulars at the Cambridge public house [now Mr Foggs] on the corner of Newman Street and Goodge Street.

By contrast, private landlords had done nothing to improve their properties for a hundred years. With the confirmation of Fitzrovia's two Housing Action Areas, the time had now come for the government to give solid support to the efforts of local groups, Housing Associations and Camden Council to purchase and improve the "disgraceful slums" which still existed in the area.



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WHAT'S ON AROUND FITZROVIA

Email news@fitzrovia.org.uk with listings by Feb 14 for the March issue and put "Listings" in the subject box

LIVE MUSIC

King & Queen, 1 Foley St: Folk once a month on Fridays 8-11pm (visit web.mustradclub.co.uk): Tracy Boyle (Edinburgh) plus Roger Digby (concertina), Liz Giddings (fiddle) and Tim Normanton (banjo) with Scots tunes for Burns Night, Jan 17.

Sevilla Mia Spanish Bar, 22 Hanway St (basement): World Fusion, Tue, 9.30pm; Swing 'n' Blues, Wed, 9.30pm; Spanish Rumba, Thur-Sat, 10.30pm.

Simmons, 28 Maple St: Live music every Wednesday evening.

ULU Live (The Venue), Torrington Place (ulu-live.co.uk): Slade, Dec 20. Unearth, Feb 15.

The 100 Club, 100 Oxford St (the100club.co.uk): Brian McFadden's Christmas Jam, Dec 22. Kool as the Gang, Dec 23. Corduroy, Dec 27, 28. T J Johnson and his Band, Dec 29. Resolution 2020 Punk Festival, Jan 3-12. January Blues Festival (includes Chicken Shack, Dr Feelgood, Savoy Brown), Jan 15-20, Jan 22-24. Atomic Rooster, Feb 6. Don Airey (Deep Purple), Feb 28.



At the 100 Club



Ballroom dancing

The Art Deco Orchestra present the Fitzrovia Society Ball at the Indian YMCA Fitzroy Square dancing to recordings from the 1920s and 30s from 7pm with the band playing live from 8.30pm. Fridays monthly 7:00pm Free soft drinks, tea and coffee. Taxi dancers for those without partners plus indian snacks. Tickets on balcony for non-dancers. check eventbrite.co.uk fitzrovia-society-ball-tickets for dates and prices

THEATRE



At the Dominion Theatre.

Bloomsbury Theatre/Studio, 15 Gordon St (thebloomsbury.com): David Williams Billionaire Boy (age guidance 5+), until January 5. Sarah Pascoe and Friends (charity comedy spectacular in aid of Mums In Need), Dec 21, 7.45pm. Laugh Till It Hurts (in aid of Crisis), Jan 8, 7.30pm. London Hughes and Special Guests, Jan 10 and 11, 8pm. Barking Mad At The Bloomsbury (Studio), six comedians, in aid of Battersea Dogs Home, Jan 18, 6pm.

Camden People's Theatre, 58-60 Hampstead Rd (cpttheatre.co.uk): Nightmare Before Christmas (how much do you have to punish naughty children for them to learn the true meaning of Christmas?), Dec 22. Talk Propa, and How to be Amazingly Happy, Jan 17-18. Smoke Weed Eat Pussy Everyday, Jan 20-23.

Dominion Theatre, 269 Tottenham Court Rd: White Christmas, until Jan 4.

London Palladium, Argyll St (london-palladium.co.uk): Goldilocks and the Three Bears, starring Paul O'Grady, Julian Clary, Nigel Havers, and Gary Wilmot, until Jan 12.

New Diorama Theatre (newdiorama.com), 15-16 Triton St (Euston Rd opposite Fitzroy St): Antigone. From the makers of A Girl In School Uniform (Walks Into A Bar), Jan 7-Feb 1.

CABARET

The Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place: Maverick Theatre's SpeakEasy Cabaret, first Saturday of the month, 7.30pm.

CINEMA

Bolivar Hall, 54 Grafton Way (cultura.embavenez-uk.org): London Socialist Film Co-op screen films at 10.20 for 11am on the second Sunday of each month. The Silence of Others (victims of Spain's 40-year dictatorship), Jan 12. The Big Meeting (Durham Miners' Gala), Feb 9. The Real Story of Winnie & Nelson Mandela, and A Woman's Place, March 8.

Charlotte Street Hotel, 15-17 Charlotte St: Film Club with meal and a movie for £40. To book tickets visit bit.ly/CharlotteStreetFilmClub.

Greener Man, 36 Riding House St: London Animation Club, first Tuesday of month.

Odeon, 30 Tottenham Court Rd: Weekly film details from odeon.co.uk or 08712 244007.

Regent Street Cinema, 309 Regent St: Dec 28: Downtown Abbey, 2pm, 4.30pm; Joker, 7.30pm; Dec 29: Miles Davis Birth of Cool, 3pm, Life to the Scaffold, 5.20pm, The Report, 7.30pm. For daily programme visit regentstreetcinema.com. Matinee classics every Wednesday at 12 noon and 3.30pm, for over 55s, £1.75. Kids' Kino Club, every Saturday, 11.30am.

Royal Anthropological Institute, 50 Fitzroy St (raifilm.org.uk/events): Regular programme of screenings.

PUB QUIZZES

The Albany, 240 Great Portland St: Sundays, 7pm

Carpenters Arms, 68-70 Whitfield St: Tuesdays, 6.30pm.

Prince of Wales Feathers, 8 Warren St: Tuesdays, 6pm.

Rising Sun, 46 Tottenham Court Rd: Wednesdays, 6.30 for 7pm.

EVENTS

Grant Museum of Zoology, 21 Museum St: Snakes & Ladders, the museum is turned into a massive board game, Jan 30, 6.30-9pm.

EXHIBITIONS

British Museum, Great Russell St (britishmuseum.org):

FREE: Pushing paper: contemporary drawing from 1970 to now, until Jan 12. Sir Stamford Raffles collecting in Southeast Asia 1811-1824, until Jan 12. Currency in crisis: German emergency money 1914-1924, until March 29.

PAY FOR: Portrait of the artist: Kathe Kollwitz, until Jan 12. Inspired by the east: how the Islamic world influenced western art, until Jan 26. Troy: myth and reality, until March 8.

Grant Museum of Zoology, 21 University St: Displays of Power: A Natural History of Empire, until March 7.

Wellcome Library, 183 Euston Rd (wellcomecollection.org): Misbehaving Bodies: Jo Spence and Oreet Ashery (two artists explore the representation of chronic illness and reclaim the idea of "misbehaving bodies"), until Jan 26. Play Well, until March 8.

TALKS

Grant Museum of Zoology, 21 University St: Displays of power. What can stories about the specimens in the museum tell us about human power structures? Talks, films and performances. Feb 27, 6.30-9pm.

UCL Darwin Lecture Theatre, Malet Place (ucl.ac.uk/events): Lunchtime lectures, Tuesdays and Thursdays (1-2pm) during term time. Think Universe! Science and the accidental story of Humanity in Paradise, Jan 14. Teaching and Leading Generation Z, Jan 21. Skateboarding and the City, Jan 23. Nazi Persecution and the Quest for Justice, Jan 30. Tech to improve lives - the Contraception Choices, Feb 6. The loss of bumblebees - why is it happening and why is it important? Feb 11. Recording from a myriad of neurons to understand behaviour, Feb 25. Gaysocs: a brief and incomplete history, Feb 27. Learning to decode (read) Spanish is easy! March 3. Any Museum Heart: Cardiology through the ages at UCL, March 5.

WALKS

London Literary Pub Crawl, every Saturday, 5pm. Start at the Wheatsheaf, 25 Rathbone Place.

ART

Featured exhibitions below. A full list of all galleries in the area is on our website: news.fitzrovia.org.uk



Alison Jacques Gallery, 18 Berners St: Roy Oxlade, until Jan 11. Dorothea Tanning "Worlds in Collision" (above), Jan 24-March 21.

Edel Assanti, 74a Newman St: Gordon Cheung "Tears", Jan 17-March 17.



Pi Artworks, 55 Eastcastle St: Selma Parlour "Activities for the Abyss" (above), until Jan 11.



Tiwani Contemporary, 16 Little Portland St: Michaela Yearwood-Dan "After Euphoria" (above), until Jan 11.



Tristan Hoare, 6 Fitzroy Square: Kiki Smith & Paolo Colombo (above), Feb 14-March 20.