

Mike Pentelow Tributes



At the opening of the Warren five-a-side pitch in about 1980. The Tower Tornados. From left to right: Adrian Dennis (one time treasurer of the FNA), Nick Bailey (one time secretary and chair of the FNA), Patrick Ensor (founding editor of Tower), Roger Burrell (architect who designed the Neighborhood Centre 39 and the Warren Playground), and Mike Pentelow.

Mike will be remembered and missed by all who knew him. His knowledge and his sincerity will be irreplaceable. **Eddie Duke-Lo**



Mike with Ann Goodburn at the "Characters of Fitzrovia" book launch in 2001

my computer as a back up and I know the passion Mike put into it.

Mike hired the 100 Club on Oxford Street for his 60th Birthday in 2006 which he shared with his 'godson' John-Michael's 18th Birthday. It was an amazing night with live gigs of all ages.

Mike was devastated when JM was badly burnt in a car accident in Namibia in 1999 and when he died in 2016 but he was always there to support him and both his parents.

Gigs Restaurant on Tottenham Street was the choice of venue for both celebrations and Mike's regular Saturday night meal with Jean, Liz, Lemar and other friends. Aristos and Chris always welcomed us all.

Mike's soulmate was Peter Kirker and I enjoyed times when Peter's daughter Sorcha (Mike's goddaughter) and her partner Andrew would visit from Orkney and we'd all go out together.

Mike has hundreds of friends and comrades and I have only mentioned a few in his beloved Fitzrovia. Mike was loyal and non-judgemental. I have been privileged to have Mike as such a loving friend. His warmth, his humour and his laughter will live on within us and amongst us.

Mike is outlived by his brother Guy, niece Clare, nephew David and new arrival his great nephew Grayson who he was pleased to visit in Ontario last July.

A Memorial will be held at Golders Green Crematorium followed by a wake at Mike's local pub, the King and Queen on Foley Street, when restrictions are lifted. It will be announced via the Fitzrovia News. **Ann Goodburn**

Mike's commitment to editing, writing for and publishing the Fitzrovia News made it by repute the longest running community newspaper in London. His community work started in the early 1970s when he was a member of the Whitfield Study Group, co-ordinated by Karin Janzon, one of Camden's community workers based at the Whitfield play centre. This Group submitted the application to Camden for Urban Aid funding to set up the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Association. Funding was awarded in 1974 and the FNA took over the shop at 39 Tottenham Street the following year. Mike was possibly the first secretary of the FNA.

Tower was first published in April 1973 and in 1979 Mike wrote a front page article on plans to turn 24/25 Nassau Street into luxury flats for overseas visitors with relatives in the Middlesex Hospital. The existing tenants were being offered derisory sums to move. The title changed to the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood News in November 1980 when the FNA staff took a leading role in producing the paper. Fitzrovia News followed in January 1987 and in 2007 Mike took over as editor-in-chief and author of numerous articles on famous and infamous events in Fitzrovia's history. Radical politics, pubs and murders were some of his particular interests.

Nick Bailey

I first met Mike with a group of nursing friends in Anemos, a Greek restaurant in Charlotte Street, in 1980. This was when the Retsina and Ouzo flowed all too freely and the waiter became a magician and dancing took place on the chairs. Although Mike's unique and endearing dancing technique required more space than a table top.

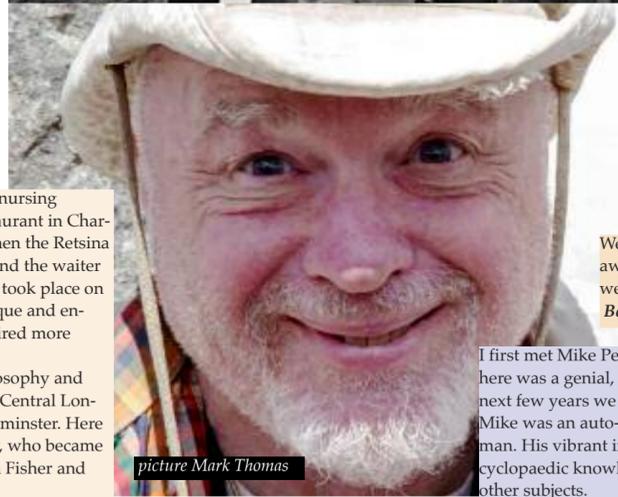
Mike studied PPE, Politics, Philosophy and Economics at the Polytechnic of Central London, now the University of Westminster. Here he was tutored by Frank Warner, who became a lifelong friend along with John Fisher and Steve Doherty.

The Glory restaurant on Goodge Street was a longtime favourite. Run by two Greek Cypriots, Nick and Costa. Mike would hold Sunday 'Nosh and Natter' afternoons there with a topic and main speaker. These could get quite lively but there must be no doubt that if you ever saw a mouse it came from the restaurant next door!

Mike had lovely parents, Jack with the Pentelow wit and Joan so sweet and caring. Joan had Alzheimer's for many years but Mike would visit her frequently taking her out and bringing a lot of cheer to all around her. One of the highlights of my life was the 'Character's of Fitzrovia' book launch at the Bolivar Hall in 2001. I used to save each Chapter on



Singer Ben E King meets the international president of the Stand By Me Club.



picture Mark Thomas



Mike with his godson John-Michael in 1989

I first met Mike Pentelow in December 2014. It was immediately apparent that here was a genial, thoughtful, kind man with a sense of humour. Over the next few years we found much in common and became firm friends. Mike was an auto-didact, a humanitarian, a communist and a Renaissance man. His vibrant interest in music and pop culture sat easily alongside an encyclopaedic knowledge of the labour movement, local history and myriad other subjects.

Soon after we first met, having interviewed me for Fitzrovia News, we came up with the idea of me writing a regular column about my life as a local musician, called The Piano Man. We always met for coffee and shared a few jokes each time I delivered my column to him.

To help get the paper itself delivered throughout the area, he would gather teams of volunteers on a Sunday to be allocated different sections of Fitzrovia, and afterwards we would convene at the One Tun pub on Goodge Street, where Mike treated the entire distribution team to a Sunday lunch, just one example of his extraordinary generosity of both spirit and substance.

Mike had long belonged to the Communist Party of Great Britain and had written for their newspaper, the Morning Star. I belong to the Socialist Party of Great Britain. The two organisations have always been implacably opposed to one other, fiercely. However, despite this, we got on very warmly and found common ground on many issues, and it was typical of Mike that he would often address me as "comrade", in recognition of this. He was always one to find the commonality between people more than their differences. He was no dogmatist, and his political commitment was informed by passion and compassion, as much as analytical debate. He was exceptionally laid-back and mellow, which made him a pleasure to spend time with.

Many times I would come across some obscure item connecting Fitzrovia to the history of socialism and the labour movement, and knew that Mike was the one person who would most appreciate it. Just recently I was sent a pamphlet published by the Socialist Party of Great Britain in 1905, showing its address as 107 Charlotte Street (also the Communist Club), which I sent straight on to Mike, together with a rare article about the Communist Club, much to his delight.

Mike was a true embodiment of Fitzrovia and its special profile, in all of its best facets from the 1970s to 2020, from its eighteenth century cultural antecedents through to its more modern manifestations. He was erudite but wore his knowledge lightly, being unassuming and diligent. He was fundamentally decent, caring and generous, but also funny and witty. His loss will be felt keenly by many of us friends who held him in dear regard, but also by the neighbourhood as a whole. **Clifford Slapper**

We are deeply saddened to hear that Mike passed away. We both have very happy memories which we will treasure.

Bookie John and Sandra Guddrick



Mike with Jean Sveinsson 2018 picture Etienne Gilfillan

He had his favourite eating holes. The Glory in Goodge Street until it closed and then Gigs on Tottenham Street on a Saturday night. At those meals together with friends Mike would always insist on paying, but would ask us to be generous in tips for the staff. Mike used to join me at Regent's Park where Lemar played football. He even took Lemar to see his beloved Watford play at home. Mike would join us at Christmas, and always bring presents. He surprised us once by putting in a 5th birthday request for Liz on Radio 2. We tuned in and heard the lovely birthday wishes from him, followed of course by the song Stand By Me. He will be truly missed. Mike had so much more to give. Taken from us far too early. A top social socialist. R.I.P. **The Sveinsson family**

"Well done, team" or "Well done, comrades", Mike would say at the end of a night out. Mike was a wonderful man, he was generous to a fault, loyal, reliable, wise, funny, good company, and the best of friends.

I met Mike in the early 80s and through him I met my future husband Mac Sveinsson. Mac was Mike's lodger at Nassau Street and eventually I moved in for over a year. Mike's place was party central mainly due to the fact that Mike had a fabulous record collection. He had painted his sitting room completely black, even the ceiling, which had Xmas decorations hanging, which he never took down. The red flag dominated the room plus posters of Russia, band tours and even a circus. Mac and myself moved to Page Street. But we celebrated the birthdays of my daughter Elizabeth and then her son Lemar at Mike's flat. Mike made all events into something special. He has been a wonderful uncle to Liz and Lemar. When Mac and I got married Mike was the only one wearing a top hat and tails at the wedding. When he visited his friend Leaping Jack in Bremen, Germany in the early 1980s they started "The Stand By Me Club". They emphasized with the words and to be a member you just had to feel the same. Its membership was huge and it soon became the "International Stand By Me Club" with Mike being the president.

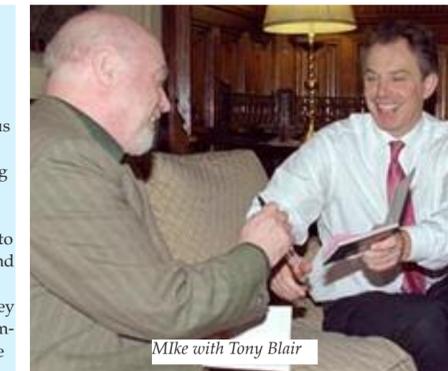
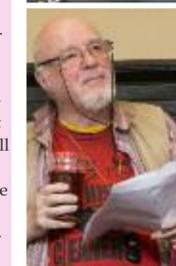
When newsletters sent by Mike appeared, they were always a great read. There were pictures of new members and Zoe, Mac's first daughter, would often submit illustrated, funny, quirky stories when she was 12 years old. The back page was devoted to any bands who had covered the song made famous by Ben E King. Even MPs joined and Mike and Pal Carter were interviewed on morning TV. Fame at last!

He bought the Morning Star every day, and he was very upset when his newsagent closed due to the virus. He would have hated this lockdown, being such a social person who loved the pubs.



Fitzrovia News Quiz team at the All Souls fundraising event

September 2004, me and Chris had just taken over Gigs in Tottenham Street. Mike walked in the same week and sat down in the restaurant. He ordered a chicken shish, Greek salad and chips along with a bottle of Retsina. We got chatting and he became that very rare thing, a special friend. I would then see him at least once a week, where we would analyse, discuss, laugh and debate anything and everything. His sense of humour was something special; his ability to find the funny side to any subject was unique. I along with everyone have so many great memories to remember and cherish. When we finally reopen after this crisis subsides things will be different especially with no Mike, the first thing we will do is open a few bottles of Retsina and toast Mike, he has left but will never be forgotten. As he would say every time he left Gigs, "see you mon bruv". **Aristos Pappasava (Gigs)**



Mike with Tony Blair

I first met Mike Pentelow seven years' ago at All Souls School in Foley Street. The school had heard about Mike as a well known local historian, author and *Fitzrovia News* editor.

We ran a parent engagement programme called F.A.S.T (Families and Schools Together) in 2014 and Mike was invited into the school to hold a series of fun talks about the history of Fitzrovia. He never hesitated to bring his knowledge and enthusiasm about history, highwayman, and the rats of London to the School Mike and *Fitzrovia News* became an important part of our school community which included: Super Hero's Day, community issues, fundraising, and advertising our annual Summer and Winter Fairs.

Two years' ago I met with Mike and Jean Sveinsson to liaise with them on the Blue Plaque Walk Map a project created by the pupils. Mike gave the school a list of the Blue Plaques in the area and how a walk and map could be structured. The children then created their own map

Mike also took part each year in All Souls School Quiz Night forming the Fitzrovia News Team against the other teams of teachers, parents and local donors.

We were all so saddened to hear about the passing of Mike and his amazing influence, knowledge and charm at All Souls Primary School. Mike Pentelow was truly a much loved Character of Fitzrovia and will be dearly missed. **Angela Nicholson**



Mike with Peter Kirker

I was talking about Mike to a friend who'd never met him. Writer, historian, activist, editor, pub-crawl organiser ... I was on the edge of tears. "No wonder you're upset," she said. "You've obviously lost part of the fabric of your community." And she was right, of course. More than that, Mike was one of the kindest men I've ever known. How will we manage without him? -- **Sue Blundell**

I first came across the name Mike Pentelow when my wife gave me a book called Characters of Fitzrovia. It was beautifully and warmly written, reflecting the rich and colourful history of the area and its people. When I started writing for the Fitzrovia News I found in Mike a supportive, kind and endlessly curious friend. He was a journalist of the old and best school, scribbling notes down in his little red book which seemed better than any modern data system. I once met him outside the Prince of Wales Feathers, I think it was, for a pub quiz. He was excited to have discovered that the word aqueduct is spelt with an e instead of a second a. As a fellow journalist and writer, I was surprised at this too. It was Mike's undying enthusiasm for this kind of detail that will stay with me. Mike was a rare species, who for me will always be the soul of Fitzrovia. -- **Brian Jarman**