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Summer

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▶ A new experimental concept store dedicated to supporting and showcasing emerging designers is set to open at the end of June.

Created by London-based art and design collective Something & Son, 50m aims to help tackle sky-high shop rents in London and support new design talent in the highly sought-after Eccleston Yards development.

In return for an affordable monthly fee, designers will get a dedicated rail space to showcase and sell their work, as well as a hot-desking area, events space, café and social meeting spot.

Ten exciting, emerging designers will be featured during the opening month, showcasing menswear, womenswear and jewellery.

50m can showcase up to 30 designers at any one time and will also offer an eclectic programme of workshops and talks. Visit 50-m.com to find out more.



▶ Take a gastronomic journey through some of the world's greatest kitchens with Aster restaurant chef patron Helena Puolakka.

The six-course Taste of Aster menu is inspired by the chefs Helena has learned from, including Gordon Ramsay, Pierre Koffmann and Olivier Mourellon, and is paired with Laurent-Perrier champagnes.

Held at Victoria's new foodie hub, Nova, the menu combines bold flavours from the rugged landscapes of Helena's home country of Norway, with cooking techniques from the beautiful rustic charm of France's rolling hills.

The tasting menu costs £65 (or £140 with champagne) and is available Monday to Saturday, from 5-9.30pm. Book at aster-restaurant.com



The action's heating up in Victoria this summer, with a Wimbledon-themed wine tasting, a new tapas restaurant and a shop showcasing talented young fashion designers

▶ Celebrate the spirit of Wimbledon with a summer-themed wine tasting at Rail House Café on July 9.

The Taste of Summer kicks off in style with an aperitif of Taittinger Brut followed by six wines for guests to try, accompanied by the traditional Wimbledon snack of fresh English strawberries.

The café's resident wine expert will chat about the wines as they are sipped, giving a fascinating insight into each selection.

Arrival drinks begin at 6.30pm and the event starts at 7pm. Tickets are available from designmyright.com and cost £27.





▲ A state-of-the-art tailor has opened in Grosvenor's new Eccleston Yards development, offering a bespoke suit service that requires only one fitting.

Tailor Made London, at 15d Eccleston Place, features the company's cutting-edge 3D body-scanning technology, allowing customers to have a single fitting with precise and contactless measuring.

Founder and CEO John Buni said: "We're not your typical tailors and the new space reflects our unique brand personality with a focus on cutting-edge technology and attention to detail.

"Clients will experience a high-end, personal service in an informal atmosphere as our expert styling team bring their wealth of knowledge and expertise to the store."



The sunshine flavours of Mediterranean food come to Victoria with the launch of Omar's Place on Cambridge Street.

Restaurateur Omar Shabaan has restored a former listed pub near Victoria Station into an uber-chic and sophisticated space, painted in the bright hues of the Med, with marble table-tops and curved mirrors.

Vicente Fortea, who hails from Mallorca and has previously worked in Michelin-starred restaurants, has created a menu of contemporary tapas, meat and seafood grilled over charcoal, including carabinero prawn with crispy rice and 45-day aged Galician beef.

The bar offers unique cocktails and a "whisky greatest hits" for amateurs and aficionados alike. There's also an outside terrace for the warmer months. Find out more at omarsplace.co.uk



A private wealth and tax lawyer based in Victoria has been given a prestigious award at an event celebrating the most influential Muslims in the world.

Mamuna Farooq, who works for law firm Child & Child in Bressenden Place, collected a Legal Excellence Award at a gala dinner at the Hilton Park Lane.

The event marked the launch of *Power 100 Parliamentary Review: The Muslim 100*, celebrating leading Muslims on both the UK and international stage.

Attended by more than 600 guests, the evening saw the presentation of special awards to 15 outstanding individuals selected from within the Muslim 100 list.

Mamuna began her legal career 10 years ago and in 2013, she was named Young Achiever of the Year at the inaugural British Muslim Awards.



▶ Junior chefs got a taste of the action at the Blue Boar Restaurant in the Conrad London St James hotel this spring.

The initiative, called aSPiRING Chefs, gave the young chefs a chance to design a new seasonal menu under the nurturing wing of executive chef Michael Riordan, allowing them to develop and grow in their careers, while also supporting a great cause with a £1 donation from every booking going to Hospitality Action.

Having trained at Westminster Kingsway, Michael is passionate about giving back to his college and recruits many junior positions within his kitchen from the school's graduates.

Dishes included Cromer crab cannelloni, Cornish plaice with confit chicken wing and a rhubarb pistachio tart. Visit conradhotels3.hilton.com



▲ There are very few truly alfresco bars in the city – unless you're a fan of standing on pavements breathing in traffic fumes, so when the sun shines and it's gin o'clock, try the bar terrace overlooking the gardened courtyard at the St Ermin's Hotel.

The London Essence summer terrace offers a new drinks menu with fresh ingredients from the hotel's rooftop kitchen garden, honey from the hotel's own hives and a zero-proof selection of drinks for those who may join the traffic later.

The bar terrace is open through the summer, weather permitting, and will host a series of floristry courses led by Toby Roberts as well as live coverage from Wimbledon and the World Cup. Visit sterminshotel.co.uk



▲ Lunches have got a whole lot more exciting since the launch of an express global bento menu at St James' Court hotel.

The menu puts a playful twist on the traditional bento box, drawing inspiration from global cuisine.

Fresh, fast and full of flavour, the Pure Box includes a grilled roast chicken or

vegetable panini, served with sweet potato fries and a smoked salmon salad, while the English Classic Box contains lightly battered fish, a scotch egg, salad and a sticky date and walnut pudding.

Other options available include the Bharat Box with its Indian flavours, including a tangy samosa with tamarind chutney, creamy tikka masala and tempered potatoes with cumin and coriander.

Lunches cost £14.95 or £19.95 with wine or beer and are available from 12.30-4pm. Visit stjamescourthotel.co.uk

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Summer

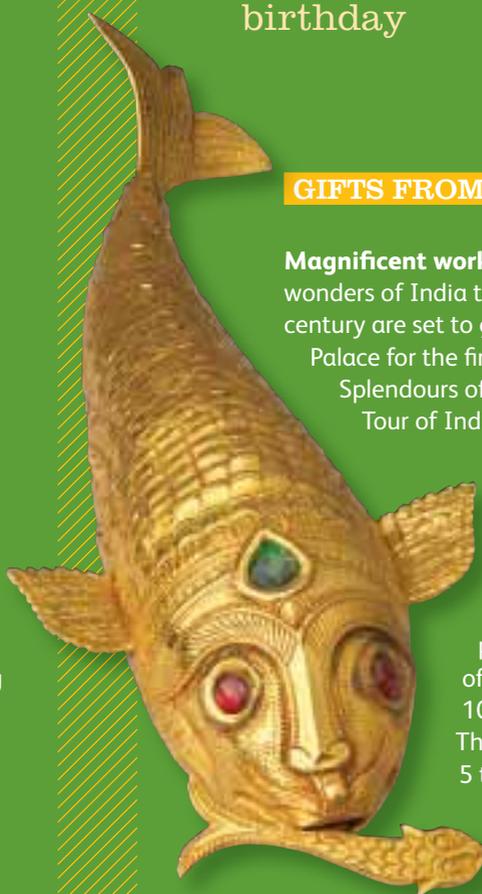
Where to watch Wimbledon in Victoria; plus more than 100 works of art go on show to celebrate Prince Charles' 70th birthday

PRINCE CHARLES' PICKS

To mark the 70th birthday of Prince Charles this year, the summer opening of Buckingham Palace on July 21 includes a special display of more than 100 works of art. His favourites from the Royal Collection will be shown alongside works created by young artists supported by three of the prince's charities – The Royal Drawing School, The Prince's School of Traditional Arts and Turquoise Mountain. Among the works on show is an oil sketch of the Queen painted by Michael Noakes in 1972. Visitors will also be able to view traditional crafts including textiles, stained glass and mosaics, and a highlight will be a geodesic dome carved from walnut wood by Naseer Yasna. The exhibition runs until September 30 and entry costs £24. royalcollection.org.uk

GIFTS FROM INDIA

Magnificent works of art that brought the wonders of India to Britain at the end of the 19th century are set to go on show at Buckingham Palace for the first time in more than a century. Splendours of the Subcontinent: A Prince's Tour of India 1875-6 marks the historic visit by Prince Albert and showcases some of the finest examples of Indian design and craftsmanship in the Royal Collection. The pieces were presented as part of the traditional exchange of gifts and include a stunning 10-piece gold dinner service. The exhibition runs from June 5 to October 14 in the Queen's Gallery. Tickets cost £12, royalcollection.org.uk



IN WITH THE IN CROWD



A reworking of the classic 1980s musical, *Heathers* takes a blackly comic look at whether it's good to be popular at school or not. Starring Carrie Hope Fletcher and featuring brand new songs, this wickedly funny story takes the audience to Westerberg High, where new girl Veronica is taken under the wing of the popular girls until teen rebel JD turns up. Showing at The Other Palace theatre on Palace Street as part of its summer programme, *Heathers* runs from June 9 to August 4 and tickets are from £25. theotherpalace.co.uk

events



WIMBLEDON IN VICTORIA

With less than a month to go until the first balls are served at this year's Wimbledon championships, a number of events are planned in Victoria for those not lucky enough to have tickets for the world's most prestigious tennis tournament, which runs from July 2-15.

Back by popular demand, Landsec's Great British Summer series is serving up all the action from Centre Court, with free outdoor screenings of Wimbledon at its outdoor locations.

Wimbledon Workout is a week of outdoor fitness classes in partnership with London gyms including **Cardinal Place**. It runs from June 25-30 and aims to get people in shape for summer.

With more than 20 classes taking place across the capital both before and after work, there's a choice of HIIT, strength and conditioning, mum and baby workout, spin, Pilates or yoga for a £5 fee, with all proceeds going to Barnardo's.

Once Wimbledon starts, you can catch a game after work for free when the big screen returns to the **Cardinal Place roof garden** for the duration of the tournament.

Accompanying the screening will be food and drink pop-ups to keep viewers



fed and watered in what everyone is hoping will be gloriously sunny weather.

During the first week of tennis, **Conrad London St James** hotel will be selling a specially created Wimbledon-inspired cocktail in the Blue Boar Bar.

Top Spin is a refreshing and fruity blend of vodka, peach, Pimm's, lime and orange juice and ginger ale; just the thing to sip on while catching a match or two. It is served from July 2-8.

It will also offer an afternoon tea complete with a petit four shaped like a tennis ball.

With a sweet pastry case featuring a coconut filling, topped with a layer of mango gel, a Malibu and coconut mousse and white chocolate coating, this delicacy is just part of a scrumptious cream tea being served in Emmeline's Lounge throughout the championships, for £35, or £42 with a glass of Pimm's.

If you want to escape the hustle and bustle and watch the sport in peace (apart from the odd cheer for Andy Murray), head to **Eccleston Yards**, where there will be deckchairs and a big screen showing all the matches.

Within the Yards, **Jones Family Kitchen** will also be opening their terrace with views of the screen and will offer strawberries, food and drink to keep tennis fans fed and watered.



Clockwise from top left: Naseer Yasna's geodesic dome; tennis yoga; tea at the Conrad London St James; Cardinal Place; Carrie Hope Fletcher in *Heathers*; gold and jewelled fish from the Royal Collection



Iranian art goes on show



ABOVE: *Chance* (2010) by Mostafa Nourbakhsh
ABOVE RIGHT: art on show at CAMA Gallery
Photo: Ed Aked
OPPOSITE: *Untitled, The Pulse of the Earth Series* (2018) by Bitva Vakili

New gallery CAMA is committed to bringing Iranian art to British audiences. We met co-founder Riley Frost as the inaugural exhibition opened its doors

BY LAYLA HAIDRANI

The smell of fresh paint is a sure sign that CAMA Gallery is a recent addition to the neighbourhood. Following the success of their space in Tehran, the new gallery in Westminster is CAMA's first venture in the UK. Moreover, its inaugural showcase is the first time contemporary Iranian art has been the sole focus of an exhibition here.

Co-founder Riley Frost believes the launch of CAMA (which stands for Contemporary And Modern Art) is particularly timely. Iran's contemporary art market is currently outperforming all other countries in the Middle East. In spring last year, the combined sales of Iranian artists' work – from auction houses including Bonhams, Christie's and Sotheby's – reached an eye-watering \$8 million.

The opening showcase of the new gallery is titled *Sensation*. It will feature a range of artistic styles, from hyperrealistic painting to calligraphy. "Whether the viewer is Iranian or British, we want there to be some sort of emotional reaction to what is on display," says 25-year-old Riley.

"The feedback has been very varied. There's not one work that's consistently come up as a favourite and from that perspective, we couldn't be happier."

Among the 19 contemporary Iranian artists on show is Bita Vakili, one of the most sought-after female artists in the Middle East. At 40, she recently broke sales records at Christie's Dubai. "Bita likes the notion of urbanism and the way [the] skyline meets the night sky," says Riley, who studied anthropology at Goldsmiths.

"We want there to be some sort of emotional reaction to what is on display"

Other established artists, such as Mostafa Nourbakhsh, are looking to appeal to a new market. "This is indicative of Iranian artists in their 50s and 60s," says Riley. "They have a fairly decent domestic profile but haven't had opportunities in the West. Audiences love the work, they just haven't seen it."

The richness of the current Iranian art market means that picking artists to appear in the gallery is no mean feat. "I get approached by about 50 artists a week sending emails and photos," says Riley. "The fact we have a broad selection to pick from is testament to that."

But while Riley says there is a "massive" appetite for Iranian art in London and beyond, he is keen for the artists featured not to dilute their heritage. "Often, when Iranians move to the West, they start adhering to the wants and needs of the American collector base and produce Western art infused with Persian iconography. But we're not looking to represent a sugar-coated version of Iran."

Diplomatic relations are not exactly sweet right now and Riley acknowledges that there is a certain irony about the gallery's proximity to the heart of the British government. "The state rhetoric to Iran is not as strong as in the USA but there's still hostility in many respects," he says.

"There's a constant media barrage of negativity to the Iranian state and often we look at the Iranian state and Iranian people as one big monolith. But for us the key is to help distance Iranian people and Iranian state. Theresa May acts in my name but she doesn't act for me in that sense."

Future plans include hosting afternoon group discussions to teach Iranian art history through the ages, including the birth of the modernist movement. Iranian films could be screened too.

Above all though, Riley is keen for the gallery to change assumptions. "Art can bypass a lot of preliminary judgment with regards to cultural bias," he says. "The Iranian diaspora in London are some of the warmest, most welcoming people I've ever met but media sources wouldn't present that. Slowly but surely, we can hopefully change the way people view Iranian art."

Sensation runs at CAMA Gallery until June 25.



WOMEN

Hobbs

Summer travels automatically mean extra essentials – sunscreen, sunglasses, hayfever tablets, extra water. With its style, space and versatility, the Lula bag, £149, in cornflower yellow is ideal for this. It even has an attached zipped wallet for easy access to loose change and cards.

3 CATHEDRAL WALK



Sun set

Accessorize

Summer means a new swimsuit, and the Chevron Stripe, £39, is just the ticket for a pool party at home or abroad. The low back and plunge neck give the piece its allure while the multicoloured chevron print with gold spots adds the playful element.

15 VICTORIA STREET



New Look

Cork is the shoe trend of the summer and these wedge sandals, £25.99, are a great buy. Made with a leather-look fabric, the neutral tan colour ensures they'll go with any outfit.

VICTORIA PLACE SHOPPING CENTRE



Beulah London

The latest addition to Elizabeth Street has brought with it some stunning pieces for SS18, including the Aesha Pom Pom Dark Straw Clutch, £150. Handcrafted in the Bahamas, these eye-catching bags aim to empower the community of women who made them and have been plaiting since childhood.

77 ELIZABETH STREET



Soak up the sun in some of these summer essentials, all available in Victoria's shops

BY SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS

MEN

Next

A summer essential, the straw hat is made more accessible with this version from Next, £18. Made of 100 per cent straw, with a pinched crown, wide brim and black band, it can be matched with nearly any outfit.

1 VICTORIA PLAZA, 111 BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD



M&S

The M&S Collection Suede Trisole Nubuck Lace-Up Gibson Shoes, £69, are great all year round shoes, but look even better in the heat, especially in the moss green colourway.

CARDINAL PLACE

Howick

Get holiday-ready with this jungle print shirt from Howick, £30. Warm weather-appropriate, this classic fit shirt features short sleeves as well as being made from 100 per cent breathable cotton. It'll look great with shorts or chinos.

HOUSE OF FRASER, 101 VICTORIA STREET



Barbour

A lightweight Barbour has to be a summer essential for guys, and the Ashby Midas Jacket, £219, most definitely fits the bill. Worn over a T-shirt and with shorts, it's the ideal British summer accompaniment as it's waterproof yet made of a lightweight technical fabric, ready for any weather.

HOUSE OF FRASER, 101 VICTORIA STREET



Creed
 This Virgin Island Water fragrance captures summer perfectly, with notes of coconut, lime and ylang-ylang flowers.
£155 FOR 50ML, LES SENTEURS, 71 ELIZABETH STREET



Nuxe
 Soothe and repair sunburnt lips with Nuxe's Rêve de Miel lip balm enriched with honey and essential oils.
£10, SPACE NK, 4 CATHEDRAL WALK

Kiehl's
 A Kiehl's bestseller, this overnight recovery concentrate works wonders on tired skin.
£38 FOR 30ML, SPACE NK, 4 CATHEDRAL WALK



Get the glow

Look your best on holiday with these must-have beauty products from Victoria's shops

BY ALISS WAGNER



Sisley
 This Black Rose Precious Face Oil contains an elixir of Bulgarian rose and magnolia oils that will repair dry skin and leave a satin finish.
£150.50, HOUSE OF FRASER, 101 VICTORIA STREET

Aesop
 Containing staples for hair and body, the Vienna Aesop travel kit has everything you need for summer city breaks.
£50, SPACE NK, 4 CATHEDRAL WALK





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Hotel school

“Madam, would you like a drink, some cake?” asks a lady holding out a tray of treats with flawless etiquette.

Little did I know she was one of the latest graduates of the Hotel School, an initiative started by homeless charity The Passage and The Goring hotel.

For the past year, Hotel School has conducted three 10-week programmes, teaching hospitality skills to homeless and vulnerable people and providing them with a stepping-stone into employment.

More than 50 local businesses support the project, including Westminster Kingsway catering school and London’s five-star hotel community.

I meet the students at their graduation ceremony at The Passage on Carlisle Place.

Chief executive of The Goring, Jeremy Goring, greets each individual with applause as they enter the classroom – even myself.

“Everyone gets a round of applause here,” he says with a look of both jubilation and relief.

Handing out the framed certificates with pride, he addresses the spirited audience: “We have a crew of volunteers who teach subjects in a fabulous and engaging way and without them, nobody would bother turning up from one day to the next.

“This is our third group of students and I think the most memorable; we’ve had some real personalities.

“It’s just like being a school teacher, and then slowly personalities come out and everyone has something to say and this one has been absolutely brilliant.”

I grab Jeremy once the cake is cut and, looking around the room, he adds: “Every cohort has its own challenges and we certainly had thrills and spills here – no doubt about it.

“We basically include anybody who has a need, no matter how tough it might seem at the beginning and that does mean that getting the results isn’t always as easy as we could make it for ourselves if we really wanted to.

“But we got some superstars in this group and in the last two



Homeless charity The Passage and The Goring hotel are helping vulnerable people back into work by teaching them vital hospitality skills

BY SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS

“Leaving Hotel School, you’ve learned a lot, you’re updated and you’re integrated back into society”



PROFILE: Maria Oyelakin, 48, Graduate

I WAS A SUPPORT MANAGER for Synergy with the NHS, who sterilise equipment in hospital so there was a lot of lifting and walking around. That affected my back, and I get a lot of headaches so I hadn’t been going to work and was signed off sick. Then there was a problem with my rent; I deposited £6,000 and it’s still under investigation as to where the money has gone. I was connected to Crisis after I became homeless and I still couldn’t go to work because I was sick. I wanted to go into beauty therapy but Crisis told me I was better in hospitality and introduced me to Hotel School. On the first day, we went to visit The Goring and I loved it, so I decided to give the course a go. I had my trolley with me because I was in a shelter in Ealing – you just have to drag your suitcase everywhere. We have learnt about food safety, budgeting and some new ways of cooking. It is a good opportunity to deal with people so high in the industry, who are humble as well. It’s also a good place to make friends; when you’re going through something like homelessness, the last thing on your mind are friends. Leaving Hotel School, you’ve learned a lot, you’re updated and you’re integrated back into society. After this I would love a customer service job because I still can’t lift a lot. Just before Easter I got a place to live in Northumberland Park so things are looking up.”

groups. You just can never predict who they are at the beginning.”

In a flash, Jeremy zooms off to partake in the photo call. Applauding the afternoon’s events in the corner is project coordinator, Zoe Minihan, who has nine years’ experience in homeless outreach.

Zoe is responsible for finding the students as well as helping to facilitate their move into employment.

“Next week this group will be going out on their interviews,” she says, adding that previously, some people have literally graduated on a Friday and started work on a Monday.

“That happened to one of my favourite graduates, who was a gentleman I found in the dining room here at The Passage. He’d been homeless and only lost his job because he broke his leg.

“His background was in painting, decorating and maintenance, and everybody was like, ‘What would he do in hotels?’ But all hotels need maintenance people and that’s why he literally started work straightaway.”

Skills taught include barista training, housekeeping and cooking lessons. “I would do this course if I didn’t have a job,” Zoe admits. “So many of my friends have asked if they can do it and I’ve said, ‘Sorry you don’t fit our criteria.’”

Students also learn soft skills, such as self-esteem and confidence-building, numeracy and literacy support and help with housing benefits.

“What I’ve found, which I’ve not encountered before, is the genuineness of the hotel partners who go above and beyond to support and that’s pushed this forward,” Zoe says.

Throughout the course students are assessed and advised and work experience placements during the 10 weeks help to prepare them for introductions to employers.

Guest speakers include executive chef of The Ritz, John Williams, The Goring’s managing director David Morgan-Hewitt and Park Plaza’s managing director Rob Flinter.

Numbers have ranged from 11 on the first course to 12 on the second and nine on the third, each time only losing one person. Nearly all graduates have gone into hospitality at one of the partner organisations.

Another person looking suitably relieved the course has finished without any serious scrapes is Veronique Bonnefoy, innovative learning and development manager and leader of the programmes.

Having spent three years as head of training worldwide at Gordon Ramsay Restaurants, Veronique then made the Escoffier Restaurant Training at Westminster Kingsway one of Europe’s leading restaurant service environments.

She says: “I didn’t quite understand what it was to start with, or what calibre of student we were talking about.

“I was a little bit worried I wouldn’t fit the bill because I’m a little bit old-fashioned, but maybe they needed some structure.

“It was tough for them and tough for me, but you just need a couple of stars and a couple of smiles.

“I’m not a softie at all I don’t think, but I love people, so if you love people you want to help. And compared to real students who don’t give a damn, these guys are grateful.”

Veronique constructs lesson plans that involve practical and theory. She admits it’s been an eye-opening experience.

“Typically they turn up at 9am, always before us, because they have nowhere to go and they often don’t want to leave either because they have nowhere to go,” she says.

“They have awful living situations – this is the only thing I can’t do much about.

“I know it’s a completely mad thing to aspire to – to have a few rooms upstairs. The main problem is nowhere to sleep and shower.

“This happened to one woman, someone came in to deliver a session and she suddenly realised she didn’t look good enough so she took all her bags, left and came back after having a shower looking really nice and clean; I bet she slept on a bench somewhere the night before.”

An addition to the course this time was one-to-one tutorials, which have helped the teachers to get to know the students better.

“I tell them about this magical world that people spend £500 a night to sleep in and they never thought they could work there,” says Veronique. “But the minute they put on the uniform and are treated like staff, they realise, ‘Oh God I can do it’ and it’s all worth it.”

For more information about Hotel School, visit hotelschool.org.uk



“It is the genuineness of the hotel partners who go above and beyond to support and that’s pushed this forward”



Poliform

Top of the chops



Meet the team behind The Jones Family Kitchen – a new local restaurant where cuts of meat take centre stage

BY LAYLA HAIDRANI



Veganism may be all the rage, but a new restaurant in Victoria carries some mighty fine meaty credentials that may steer you away from the bandwagon.

The Jones Family Kitchen, a recent addition to Grosvenor's Eccleston Yards development – a creative hub of food, fashion, retail and wellbeing – hopes that it can be top of the chops by placing special emphasis on grilled meat.

Following the success of their first restaurant – The Jones Family Project based in Shoreditch – they are hopeful that their new site will recreate the magic. Co-founder Duncan Jones says that the location represents a higher risk than a more mainstream plot, but one that is worth taking.

“If you can get people in and if we’re good enough to keep them coming back, then we’ve done our job well,” he says.

Oliver Pollard is the man behind the grill. As group executive chef, he certainly knows his

onions. His CV includes spells at some of the toughest kitchens in London, working alongside Gordon Ramsay, Jason Atherton and Marcus Wareing among others. “It was definitely some of the toughest times in any chef’s life,” he says. “I had some amazing experiences.”

Michelin-starred kitchens and fine dining was never his goal, but he admits that he took a lot from the process.

“What I took out from working for them is the appreciation for ingredients and the work that goes into getting the best flavour,” he says. “Everything, from the technique you’re using to the ingredients, is focused on taste.”

He is a man true to his word as we sample dishes including Anna’s Triple Chocolate Brownie (named after “the matriarch Jones”) with malted cornflake gelato. Other members of the team have gathered including wine connoisseur Alejandro.



“Everything, from the technique you’re using to the ingredients, is focused on taste”

Although, naturally, Ollie has a lot of say with the menu – “I design the menu based on all the things I think are great about Jones; it’s all about showing seasonality” – the team regularly holds tasting sessions to discuss what works best.

Meat is sourced from the renowned Ginger Pig butchery and the new restaurant features a host of new dishes including a starter of seared scallops with cauliflower and wild garlic gremolata and spatchcock poussin with kimchi rub.

Meanwhile, the brand’s signature dishes such as truffled macaroni cheese and the “potato menu”, which includes a new addition of brown crab potatoes, make the journey from Shoreditch to Victoria.

The showstopper, however, is the Jospier grill. It’s considered something of a game-changer when it comes to meat. “Cooking on charcoal as a traditional grill means you gain a lovely oaky

smokiness as an outdoor barbecue would,” says Ollie. “A steak is perfectly seared to lock in the moisture and flavour while becoming slightly caramelised on the outside and remaining cooked inside as rare and pink as requested. This is why the meats work so well.”

The restaurant also has a commitment to sustainable fish and fishing. They have partnered with The Flying Fish Team to bring fish from the ship to the restaurant in 48 hours or less. “The fish we have each day will depend on the local landing and will change from day to day,” says Anna.

It isn’t just savoury creations that take pride of place either. Desserts, so often an after-thought, have been given careful consideration, with Ollie partnering with Hackney Gelato to develop a selection of ice creams.

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BY LAYLA HAIDRANI

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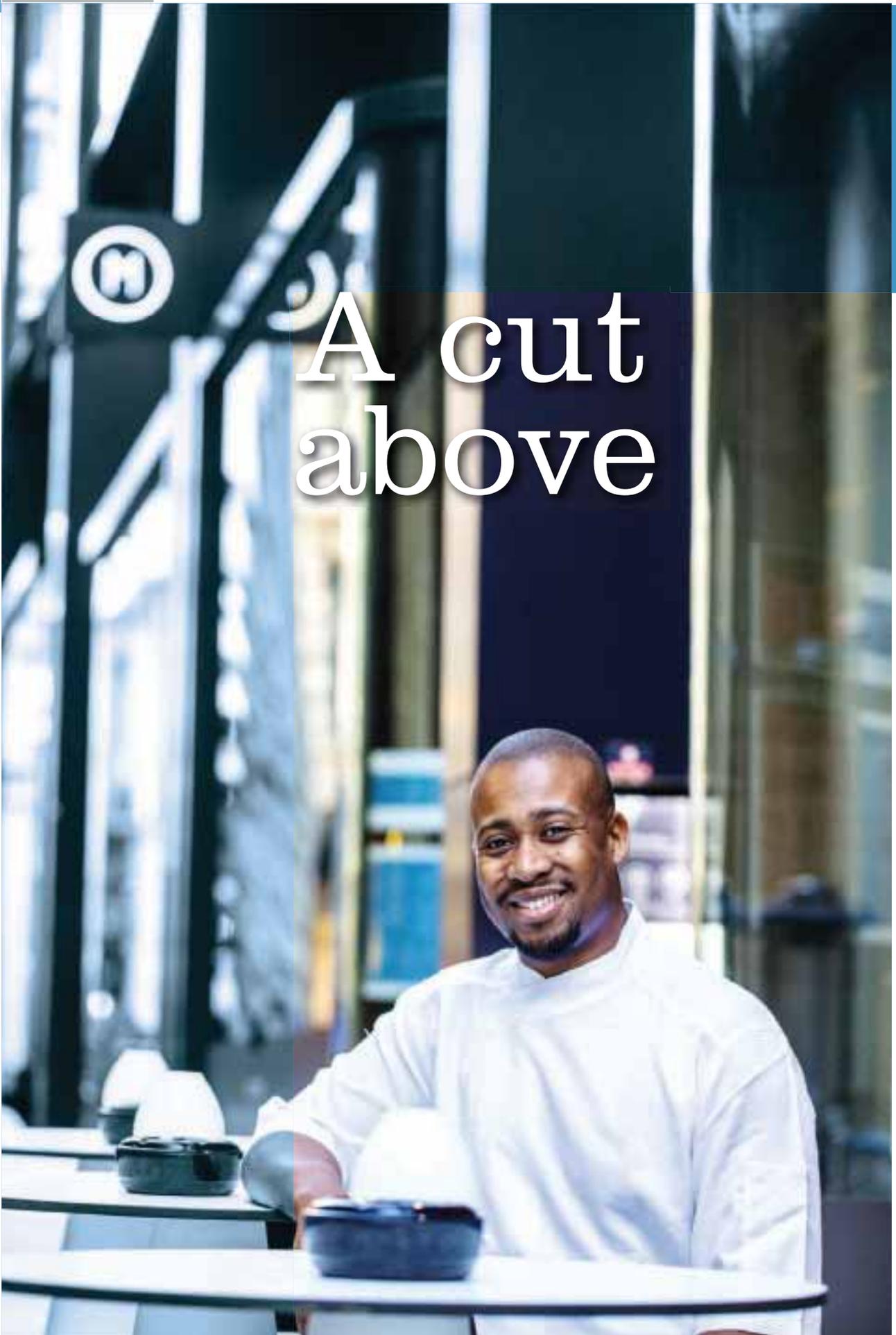
  
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A cut above



Executive chef Michael Reid says there's something for everyone at M Restaurant – and explains why, when it comes to the beef, he lets the quality of the meat speak for itself

BY REYHAAN DAY

When M Restaurant opened on Victoria Street at the beginning of 2016, it was with a bang. A 160-seat, 10,500 sq ft complex featuring a grill restaurant and a gluten-free restaurant; public and private members' bars; events and private dining spaces; and a wine store, tasting room and members' hangout, The Den, M immediately asserted itself on Victoria's yet-to-flower food scene.

"The first year was a challenge – obviously there was still a hell of a lot of development going on in Victoria in year one. For us, it was all about the regeneration of the area. We would not have come to Victoria if we didn't anticipate this sort of level of growth, because that's what Victoria needed," says executive chef Michael Reid, who has been with the company since the start. "This is a big restaurant – it's a lot of bums on seats. We knew the regeneration would bring us the trade we needed. We were very fortunate that we were one of the first high-end restaurants to come to Victoria."

To call M simply a restaurant is reductive; its myriad spaces create the feeling of a members' club or hotel. Michael says that it's essential with a site like this to make it approachable at different times, and for different occasions. "One of the things we wanted to do when we started M was to appeal to multiple demographics depending on the time of the week – but also to go from breakfast to lunch to afternoon trade to early evening and then to dinner and after dinner – they are very difficult skills to have," explains Michael, whose experience prior to M included Restaurant Gordon Ramsay and Le Gavroche.

Central to M's offering is the cooking of quality beef over fire. Michael and his team scour the globe to find the very best farmers producing the finest cuts money can buy. Meat-lovers will rarely see a menu as dedicated to the highest grades.

Michael says he has an affinity with the cooking methods required to get the best out of



each cut. "I have a huge appreciation for beef: the amount of work that the farmers do in raising the cattle, the love that goes into it, how different each piece of beef can taste depending on the country, region and diet; the ageing process... it amazes me," he says. "It's one of the elements of my cooking that is all about the simplicity of the produce. I don't mess with beef. I know it, I treat it well, I clean it, cook it in the right way, whether that's on wood or on coal – for me, it always has to be an open fire. But essentially, the hard work has been done by the producers."

Michael says that he wanted to offer guests a taste of the world's best, while offering less extravagant cuts to satisfy all tastes and wallets. "It had to be about showcasing the best beef from around the world. I took the same approach as building a wine list; I tried to have a little bit of everything for everyone to try. So, yes, you cover off all the different price points; but more than anything, you showcase the well-aged, the dry-aged; grass-fed, grain-fed; whether it's 100 per cent Wagyu or a cross... I just wanted to find the best from each country."

While M has developed a reputation for meat which prospective diners could align with heaviness or hedonism, Michael explains that Victoria Street's Raw restaurant caters to more understated occasions or those looking for a lighter culinary experience, with its totally gluten-

free menu and focus on leaner dishes. “There are a lot of food intolerances nowadays,” he explains. “The biggest one that we have requests from are coeliacs – gluten intolerant guests. Why not make it easier for everyone? Victoria is so diverse and has such a mixed demographic, we wanted to say, ‘You can have high-end food that is gluten-free, and you’ve got your own menu which is as big and glamorous as everyone else’s.’”

He says that often, the gluten-free and non-meat options are the most popular – particularly at lunchtimes, when business meetings require something subtler. “People want clean food, something fresh. In fact, only 40 per cent of our main courses served here are beef; 60 per cent is other dishes. That’s great, because it means we’re perceived as a restaurant, rather than a steak restaurant.”

Michael has less complimentary things to say about veganism, which he describes as a “trend” and “just a phase” – but he still loves to cook with plants. “One of my signature dishes is carrots done in eight different ways. That’s not me following a trend – that’s me showing an appreciation for a carrot. It’s food, and I love food. It’s about cooking whatever inspires you. Sometimes that will be meat-based, other times it will be vegetable-based.”

Alongside its all-day service, M Restaurant supports a number of projects and recently hosted an event for Not For Sale, which raised

awareness of human trafficking. “We have big venues which we can let charities use for fundraisers,” says Michael. “The pop-up we did raised over £10,000, which is all going straight to Not For Sale. It’s an incredible achievement.”

As Victoria’s food scene goes from strength to strength, Michael feels like his restaurant does also, telling me that the future looks promising for M – though it remains a challenge.

“It’s only good for the area to have a bigger offering for people to attract more guests to Victoria. I’m very confident in our offering, which is very different to our competitors – who we see more as friendly neighbours.

“It’s an endurance test for staff – it’s an incredibly hard site to run. You need a very strong team and luckily we have that.”

74 Victoria Street



“It’s about cooking whatever inspires you. Sometimes that will be meat-based, other times it will be vegetable-based”



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Japanese soul food to savour

Ross Shonhan is the man behind Bone Daddies, which has just opened its sixth site in Victoria's Nova. He tells Layla Haidrani about his life in food, from memories of his mother's cooking to his love of Japanese cuisine

Why did you choose Victoria as the site for your sixth restaurant?

We wanted to expand, and Victoria is one of the major transport hubs in London.

What are your earliest food memories?

Growing up in Oz, my whole family used to make our own mud crab pots. Catching them when I was seven years old was fun and delicious.

What was your favourite thing to eat as a kid?

My mum would cook homemade food every night of the week.

Do you have a favourite ingredient?

The one I have the most fun with is miso paste. We've explored it in a lot of different ways and use it in marinades, dressings and condiments. There are thousands of miso pastes and each grain varies in flavour, so you have this enormous array of base flavours to play with.

What's always in your fridge at home?

I always have a variety of cheeses. It's the one thing we don't use a lot of in Japanese restaurants. When you come home late, it's amazing how quickly half a block of cheese can disappear.

What's your favourite dish to cook?

A Sunday roast because you can almost never get it as good in a restaurant as you can at home.

What's your favourite thing to drink?

My wife introduced me to whisky, so I've now recently got into it. I'm developing a pretty sizeable collection.

What's the best meal you've ever had?

I was lucky enough to go to a restaurant in Spain called El Bulli a couple of times. They were the greatest meals of my life.

What's your vision for the food at Bone Daddies?

Ultimately, I want to people to think it is delicious. Then I want to challenge people's perception of what Japanese food is, as a lot of our dishes are rooted deeply in Japan.

You worked at Nobu, what was that like?

Taking my first head chef job at 25 at Nobu was incredible because I was taught nearly all of the dishes by Nobu Matsuhisa himself, but it was painful as I knew much less than I thought I did. But ultimately that put me on the path to where I am now, so you could say it changed my life.

What's your top dish at Bone Daddies?

The only dish we serve in every Bone Daddies restaurant is fried chicken wings because they have a sweet, spicy sauce that people seem to be addicted to.

What food reminds you of home?

Every year since I've left home at 17, I have a tradition of making my mum's home-cooked ham hock and split green pea soup every winter.

Where do you get food inspiration from?

Our cooking is very much experimental. It starts with a notepad, a set of scales and a variety of ingredients. A lot of ramen chefs don't publish recipes, so we have to develop it blindly through trial and error.

Where's your favourite place to eat?

I've been following Roti King as I used to have the restaurant to myself before it got busy. A Wong on Wilton Road is always special as I had my wedding celebration there.

What would you choose as your last ever meal?

Anything simple so long as it was with my wife. But maybe a load of cooked but cold shellfish in the sun.

Where in the world do you go for the best food?

Japan is phenomenal – like nowhere else. But London is a great food city. I think London has one of the greatest food scenes on the planet.



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BY LAYLA HAIDRANI



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A feast fit for a king is an idiom much vaunted yet rarely accomplished, but with Buckingham Palace a mere corgi's scurry away, entwined history and a new restaurant supplied by royal warrant holders, the Rubens at the Palace is well placed in the pursuit of such epicurean endeavour.

Fine dining may have endured a lingering identity crisis in recent years, but at a time when some have tried to relegate the traditional approach to the doldrums of restaurant history, the Rubens' owners, Stanley and Bea Tollman of the Red Carnation Hotel Group, boldly opted to buck the trend, investing in a gloriously British traditional dining experience.

Taking a typically personal approach, the couple have overseen the hotel's multimillion-pound investment and refurbishment. Now, the Rubens' English Grill has placed the hotel at the forefront of the area's foodie renaissance as Victoria and the Nova complex become dining destinations in their own right.

Maître d' Paul Foxon took the reins a year ago, overseeing the opening and bringing his vast experience – including his time as the youngest ever head waiter at The Ritz – to the table.

"We're looking at a new customer demographic and it's interesting seeing that change, and new customers coming through and the increased awareness of the restaurant and bars. It's good fun watching it develop," says Paul of the refurbishment.

"It's been the owners' baby. Mr Tollman loves classic fine dining and has really put a lot of his own personal time into both the menu and the restaurant."

The dining room is a stunning haven of comfort and opulence, with polished silver, simple linens and plump seating taking a vibrant colour cue from turquoise-tipped Murano glass chandeliers. A glass wall provides a clear view into the workings of the kitchen.

Table theatre is provided by tailcoated waiters, proudly presiding over domed roast trolleys wheeled to the table. Robustly carnivorous offerings from royal warrant holder to the Queen, Aubrey Allen, are expertly carved on the trolley, fish dishes are filleted, and smoked salmon is sliced at the table; not a skill employed at many of the capital's dining establishments.

The art of attentive service in a fine dining environment is something Paul is keen to rekindle.



Silver service

Fine dining may no longer be in fashion, but one hotel is going against the grain at its newly opened English Grill restaurant – and customers love it

BY CORRIE BOND-FRENCH

“Being a classic grill, it’s the concept of simple food, done incredibly well. A lot of restaurants are modernising and simplifying but we’ve gone the opposite way, back to classic, fine dining.

“That boils down to the service as well. More modern restaurants with a less classic style of service rely on their staff being reactive – customers will ask them for something and of course they’ll get it for them. There’s nothing wrong with that, but when you have a restaurant of this style you need to pre-empt what the customer is going to ask for, you try and deliver things without the guest having to ask.”

Paul believes there is a growing appreciation of the traditional dining style: “The restaurant trend in London is heading back that way. The industry is realising that actually, the heart and soul of the scene was fine dining, classic restaurants – and now we’re losing lots of them. There are

still lots of simplified service restaurants that are absolutely incredible, Michelin starred and wonderful, but we’re keeping that classical skill that people don’t have anymore, so it’s nice to be at the forefront of that.

“Victoria is a hub of hospitality. We’re getting regular clients from Mayfair and the City, all saying it’s cool to come to Victoria. It seems maybe less stuffy than some areas, more friendly, and that’s one of the reasons why people head over here. It’s a really exciting time to be here.”

Victoria magazine readers will receive a complimentary glass of Bouchard Finlayson wine when quoting “Victoria magazine” when they make a dinner reservation in The English Grill at Rubens at the Palace, 39 Buckingham Palace Road. Valid until the end of August (Tuesday until Friday).



“With cocktails I don’t like to overcomplicate things. I like to keep things simple and use the best ingredients”



LEOPARD PRINT will always add a certain *je ne sais quoi* – just ask Kate Moss, but the Rubens at the Palace’s newest addition, the Leopard Bar, is set to bring a sleek, feline air of decadence to round off the hotel’s refurbishment when it opens its doors this month.

Led by bar manager Silviu Stan – a man so knowledgeable he has forgotten more about all things cocktail and beverage than most of us will ever know – the Leopard Bar, now something of an institution within Red Carnation hotels, will complement the hotel’s New York Bar as a standalone alternative, open to all.

Guests will be spoiled for choice with 200 whiskeys on offer and all champagnes available by the glass, plus an extensive cocktail list and live jazz. There’s also an opportunity to attend a whiskey masterclass, or a gin masterclass in the New York Bar. Palace side-views can be enjoyed from the outside seating in the summer, when Silviu will also unveil the new cocktail menu.

“With cocktails I don’t like to overcomplicate things. I like to keep things simple and use the best ingredients, I like to be aware of what’s happening in bars around the world, not just in London. There are always things that surprise you,” he says.

“I think Victoria has seen a huge change and all of these bars and restaurants have created a special buzz, and now that the buzz is here, there is definitely a need for a luxury beverage operation in the middle of Victoria, and we do fit that profile.

“It will be a very cosy, luxurious bar. With the New York Bar specialising in gin and the Leopard Bar offering a fantastic whiskey experience, we’re offering something for everyone – two bars with different specialities and music, but you could happily bounce from one to the other and maybe enjoy a nice steak in the English Grill.”



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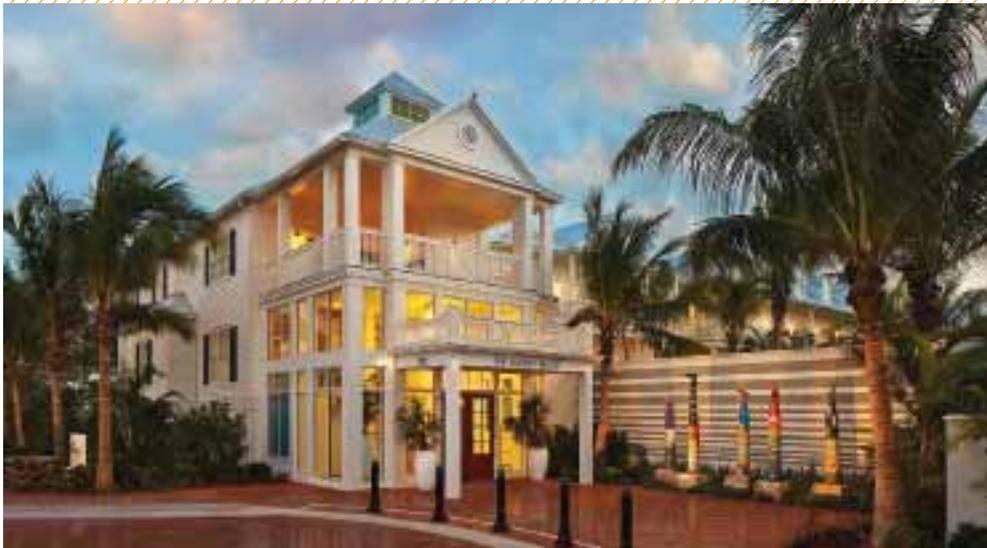


Olivia Byrne, owner of the Eccleston Square Hotel, tells us about her travels and her new Town House addition

BY ALEX BRIAND



Checking in



Above: Olivia Byrne and her Town House.
Left: The Marker hotel, Key West.
Right: Armani Hotel, Milan.

What kind of traveller are you?

I'm a totally relaxed traveller. I'm not the type of person who will plan every hour of the day – I'm more keen to soak up the atmosphere, find some great local restaurants and avoid the crowds.

I love food so I'm always trying to get recommendations from friends. I'm lucky because having gone to international school I have friends all over the world, and I try to live like a local, really, rather than a tourist. I hate being in places where there's lots of people – and I don't like queueing!

Do you take inspiration from every hotel you stay in?

Definitely. I always try to pick hotels that are similar to us – boutique hotels that are a bit different to the norm – because I always love to compare and take inspiration.

I always try and book breakfasts because I'm always looking for new ways to improve our buffet breakfast. It's the little things, like viennoiseries, or different juice options, that really make the experience.



What was your last big trip?

Not too long ago I went on a bit of a road trip through Miami and the Florida Keys. In Key West they'd converted petrol stations into these amazing food trucks. It was a great place to visit, and very chilled. We stayed in a boutique hotel called The Marker, and loved it.

Where have you had the best culinary experience?

Italy is hard to beat. The few times I've been there, I've been blown away by how amazing the food is. It's nothing complicated, just really good produce – simple food, cooked very well. They have the savoir faire; the understanding of food.

Sometimes it pays to take a risk there. You really don't have to go anywhere fancy, you can just go to a neighbourhood restaurant, or the equivalent of your local pub, and you will generally get great food. I'm more into that than chasing Michelin stars.

What is the best hotel you've ever stayed in?

I really enjoyed the Armani Hotel in Milan – it was so slick. You feel cool just being there. It's very Italian, very chic, and you just feel like you're part of the Milanese experience. The rooms are comfortable, the restaurant is very good, and they have a spa with a view over the city.

But again, it's all very simple; it's not overstated. You feel well, when you're there. That's the Italian touch.

And what's your worst hotel experience?

I won't name names, but there was one hotel I stayed in recently where you really felt like you were bothering the staff when you checked in.

So bad customer service is what turns you off the most?

Definitely. And it's hard, I get it. I work in a hotel, I know what it's like – people are not machines. But that first impression is everything – it matters if someone smiles at you or looks you in the eye. If they're not bothered then you start off with a bad feeling.

You've pitched your new Town House as being halfway between a hotel and an Airbnb. What has the feedback been so far?

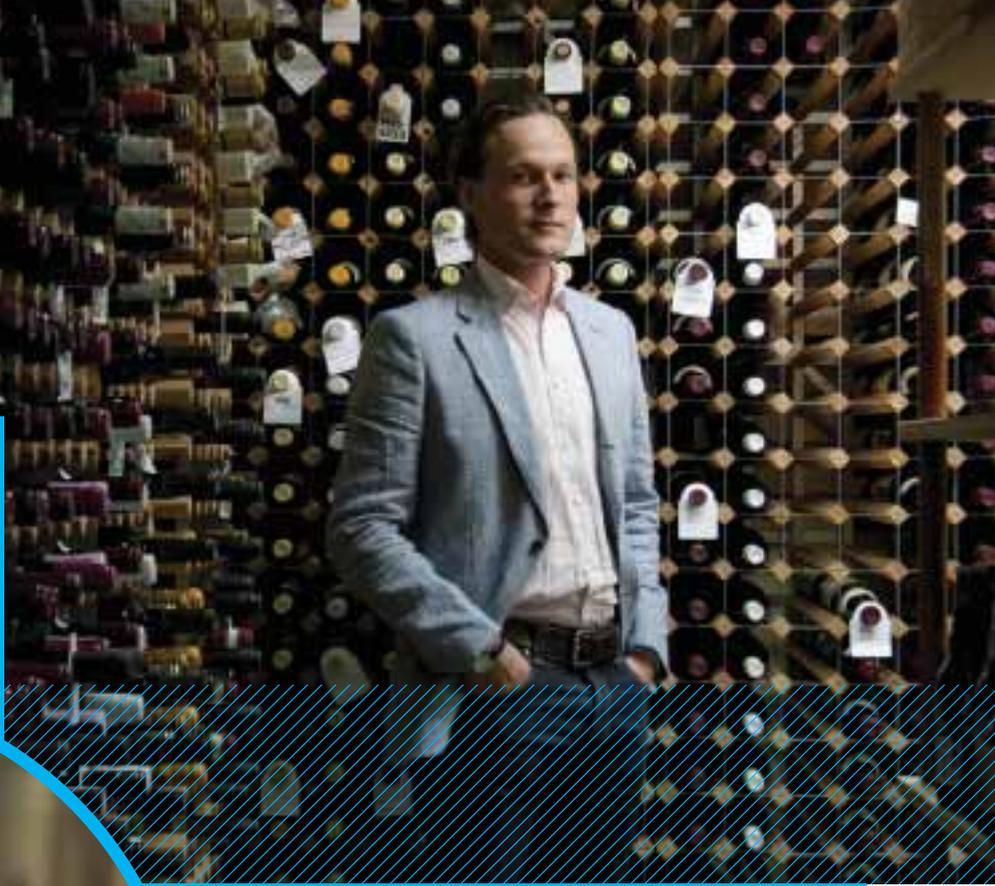
People have appreciated having a place to cook. There's a kitchen and dining room so that people can entertain, which is nice. If they stay for a few weeks it's nice not to have to go to restaurants all the time. There's even an outdoor patio with a barbecue and outdoor seating area. We provide housekeeping and laundry like a hotel, but otherwise it's like a home, without having to deal with all the hassle of managing a home.

It's all decorated similarly to the hotel, but it's basically a cosy, high-end house. One of the en-suites has a view out of the back over a private garden, which feels very relaxed and rural.

What destinations are still on your bucket list?

I really want to go to Japan and experience the culture shock. I've also never been to Greece, but I'm going this summer and I can't wait. I have a friend who's renting out a villa on a tiny little island, and it's very complicated to get there. Perfect.

RIGHT: mentor
Hamish Anderson
BELOW: Gustavo
Medina
BOTTOM:
Rex Whistler
Restaurant
OPPOSITE: Tate
Britain



Gustavo Medina is sommelier and wine buyer at the renowned Rex Whistler restaurant at Tate Britain. He tells us about a typical day in his role and why he loves the job

BY CORRIE BOND-FRENCH



A fine vintage

Back in the day, the most sustenance visitors could hope for in art gallery catering establishments were insipid offerings from the tea urn, accompanied by dense wedges of sponge cake that enjoyed only begrudging encounters with the jam spoon.

Tate Britain, however, bucked the trend as far back as 1927, raising the game by commissioning the then up-and-coming artist Rex Whistler to paint his whimsical *The Expedition in Pursuit of Rare Meats* mural in what was then known as the refreshment room and laying down such exquisite wines in its capacious cellars that it became an overnight sensation.

More than 90 years on, the Rex Whistler restaurant at Tate Britain remains a byword among wine lovers throughout the capital and beyond. Few restaurants can claim such longevity of prestigious repute, and the wine list continues to be as feted as the surrounding works of art by restaurant critics and connoisseurs alike.

Gustavo Medina, now in his 18th year at the restaurant, relishes his role as sommelier and wine buyer. He changed career path to pursue his love for wine and service, and it has clearly paid off. Gustavo's wine pairings are a revelation, and he evidently enjoys working in such a convivial and iconic establishment.

"My passion for wine, food and service flourished in the best possible place here at Tate Britain, it has been so well recognised for its magnificent wine list over the years. This job has given me the chance to take part in exceptional wine trips around different countries, meet very interesting people and taste the most beautiful wines and food," says Gustavo.

"I also very much enjoy being in a restaurant so full of character, where I can talk and engage with customers who are always so keen to experience and taste new wines, as well as the traditional mature clarets or Burgundies we offer. Plus I'm supported by an excellent chef and food team."

A typical day for Gustavo starts with checking temperatures on the cellar and fridges, and ensuring everything is in

place and order. There might then be meetings with suppliers, and he checks bookings to plan recommendations for regular customers.

There is a staff briefing every morning: "We usually open a bottle of wine to taste, look at the profile of the wine and discuss possible matches," says Gustavo.

"We greet customers and explain about the food and wines that they can taste to match, telling them about the history behind a specific wine and suggesting wine-food pairings.

"When a customer is not sure about what to taste, I help them by giving some ideas and tips of what they can expect. I politely challenge my customers by offering them a wine that I think they will like and telling them that if they do not like it, I would happily take it away and have it for my dinner.

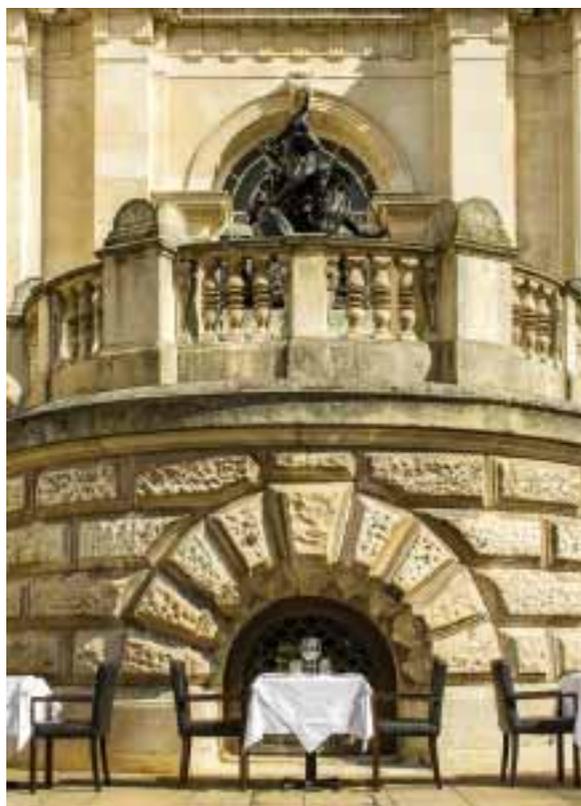
"The buying part may be a more technical, serious task but it's extremely important and I take great pride in it. I would say the most challenging, yet rewarding part of the role is being able to maintain this level of excellence and to achieve this, I fortunately have had the best possible mentor in Hamish Anderson, from whom I have learnt so much."

A consummate sommelier, Gustavo is hard-pushed to narrow down his absolute favourite wines from the cellar.

"It's the most difficult question, because wine is about attitude, who you are with, the occasion, the food.

"The GG [Grosses Gewächs] and ageing Riesling are wines that I love as well as the top-end spectrum of old ageing Burgundy wines that I just listed in the updated wine list, from great producers such as Dujac and Méo-Camuzet. I am also passionate about great Australian wines.

"I have been able to see the evolution of the wine industry since I started to work in it, with regard to the countries from which wines are coming back in fashion, such as sherry and Riesling, and countries that nowadays produce beautiful top quality wines, such as South Africa."



Rex Whistler restaurant,
Tate Britain, Millbank



Above: how the gardens could look
Below: the gardens today

Inviting spaces

We take a closer look at plans to transform Christchurch Gardens on Victoria Street

BY LUCY DOUGLAS



A last stretch of green space on Victoria Street, Christchurch Gardens has been open to the public since the 1950s. Since then the space has had little attention, but there are plans underway to transform it into a blooming public garden for Victoria's residents and workers to enjoy.

The project will see a complete transformation of Christchurch Gardens, explains David Beamont, operations manager at Victoria BID, with more natural light and biodiversity, and adding in paving and seating areas to encourage people to spend time enjoying the space.

"The design is now at a point where we want to share it with the community to get their views prior to submitting a planning application," says David. The renovation of the gardens will, he hopes, get underway in the autumn, to be completed and ready for workers and residents in Victoria to enjoy the space next summer.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The scheme is being designed by landscape architect practice ReardonSmith. One of the aims is to improve the biodiversity of the gardens and increasing the time span in which flowers will be in bloom. "A lot of work has gone into where the

plants will go," says David. It involves selecting plants strategically to get a balance of flowers that bloom at different points in the year, and carefully placing them to make sure they get the natural light they need.

"Increasing the amount of pollinator-friendly plants and the flowering period is great for wildlife," says David. The plans will mean losing some of the trees that stand in the gardens, in order to increase the amount of natural light, which will in turn improve the health of the lawn.

VICTORIA HERITAGE

As well as ushering in new growth in the space, the project will highlight the gardens' vivid history. The site's church that gave the gardens their name was destroyed by a bomb during the Blitz in 1941, but the graves of those buried in the churchyard still remain beneath the ground.

To ensure sustainability of the project, soil conditions have been checked, and the Museum of London Archeology has conducted investigations of the site. Among the more colourful residents of the yard is Thomas Blood, a self-styled colonel and conman who attempted to steal the Crown Jewels in the 17th century. "This is what makes London special – the history – so we want to bring that forward," says David.

The scheme will retain the gardens' sculptures, which include a memorial to 17th century composer Henry Purcell and the sculpture commemorating those who fought for votes for women (nearby Caxton Hall was a key meeting place for Suffragists).

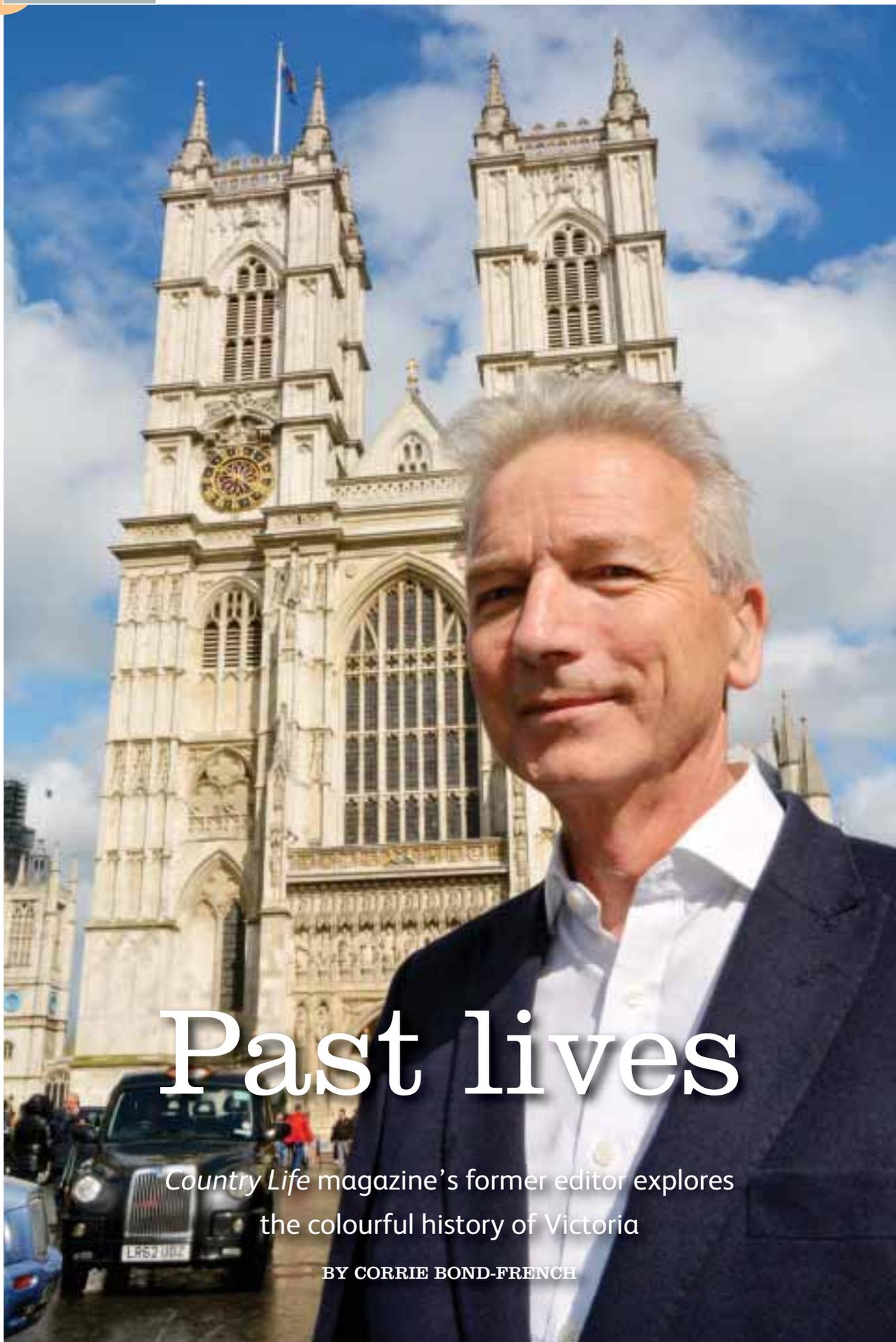
David hopes that rejuvenating the gardens will encourage local families to spend more time in the space, in addition to office workers on lunch breaks and tourists visiting Westminster.

The gardens will remain unfenced and accessible 24 hours a day, and David says the plans include improving the lighting in the area with the Light Bureau [a design and consulting studio] and possibly installing a drinking water fountain. One element of the plan is a proposed area of hard standing to equip the site to host temporary events in the gardens, such as live music recitals.

"We think a lot more people will use it, so we want as many people to comment as possible," he says.

To keep up-to-date with the project, visit christchurchgardens.london





Past lives

Country Life magazine's former editor explores
the colourful history of Victoria

BY CORRIE BOND-FRENCH

From the ancient, cherished façade of Westminster Abbey, past the ongoing transformation of Victoria and on towards the genteel stucco streetscapes of Thomas Cubitt's Pimlico, there are few walks that could better illustrate London's defining capacity for reinvention and development.

None of which is lost on Clive Aslet. Best known for his long-in-the-tooth tenure at *Country Life* magazine, his erudition and authority on architecture, Britain, the countryside and the British way of life, Clive is, in fact, a happy city dweller. A gentleman who appreciates Samuel Johnson's dictum, however clichéd it may now be, that when a man is tired of London he is tired of life.

Having now lived in Pimlico for around a quarter of a century, Clive has recently written a book on the history of the area in collaboration with the Victoria BID. As a local resident, he was thrilled to write about an area he feels has been overlooked.

"One of the things I like most about places is that they tell this great story. It's true of houses but it's also true of places like Victoria, in that it's about needs and ambitions people have to make places better and they respond to the economic circumstances of the time," he says.

"It's a funny area because many areas in London were villages, but that was never the case – there was never any ancient village of Victoria! In the very ancient days there was Westminster Abbey... they didn't build very much except immediately around the Abbey until quite a late period in the development of London. All of that bit which is now Victoria Street was very scrappy, there were fields and

one or two things like a house of correction, a prison and a great big brewery, but it was not very high end development. When the railway came in the canal basin became Victoria Station, and they built Victoria Street as a lovely new road to demolish all of the slums."

Clive's love of London stems from his Surrey childhood, yet it remained a mystery to his family. "From a very early age I wanted to come and live in London," he says. "I had a great instinct. It was totally incomprehensible to my parents because they were the generation who were escaping London. The thought that you could go and live in lovely green space, go in and earn your crust in London then go home to a lovely green space again was absolutely wonderful for them, but I found it unbearable."

Clive credits his former art teacher for helping him to develop both a love of London and a passion for his subject that would eventually lead to a career that he acknowledges has been a labour of love.

"I went to school in Wimbledon. I was so much enjoying art that my art master, clearly a very enlightened man, said, 'It's obviously hopeless, this child doing games, it would be much more important if he spent every games period going into London looking at art galleries'. How lucky was that!

"So off I beetled, at about 16, 17. I went around looking at things, I loved the texture, I loved wandering round Covent Garden when it was still a market, I was a flaneur. Those school games lessons spent wandering around London's art galleries were very important."

After studying history of art at Cambridge, Clive was recruited by *Country Life*, where he

Platform at Victoria Underground Station on the District Line, 1896





Westminster Abbey by
Thomas Hosmer Shepherd,
early 19th century

would go on to become editor and, latterly, editor at large, as well as writing more than 20 books.

With such insight into the country way of life, Clive is the very soul of discretion. After decades visiting and writing about the great and the good on home turf, he does think that the English eccentric is becoming less, well, truly eccentric as time marches on.

"I'm not sure that eccentrics are actually quite so good as they were in the old days. If you read James Lees-Milne's diary, there really weren't the same social constraints. Also, people lived surrounded by all this stuff, but it wasn't really worth very much so nobody had the same appreciation. You might have masterpieces hanging on your wall, but these days everybody knows what everything is worth so I think the great age of the eccentric has gone. There are people who are recluses, or have gone a bit batty, but mostly everyone has got things valued by Christie's and everything's a business.

"There were lots of people who live with lots of cats, dogs and animals, and there are people who live in houses which they're determined not to abandon even though they don't have any means to heat them. That's slightly unusual now but there are one or two people who cling on.

"Sometimes there are people who are living under the shadow of their parents or grandparents and who feel they can't give up and there's this tremendous weight of responsibility on them, and that makes them quite eccentric because they're trying to

carry on a life which actually they can't really support."

And Clive wasn't immune to the odd faux-pas. "Sometimes you've written to Lady X and realised that she's just been divorced and you've asked the wrong one, or you've gone to the wrong house.

"There was plenty of embarrassment, and I suppose also that there are numerous pitfalls in this world because it's so rarefied. I do have quite a lot of memories of social faux pas, such as wearing the wrong clothes and things."

Clive is aware that times are constantly changing, and that country houses are changing with the times: "There's now a whole new area of luxury. I went to a house the other day, a very striking modern house. It's for sale for £35 million, it's all marble and much bigger than the original.

"We've just got much higher expectations. Very wealthy people expect more; swimming pools, private chapels, collections of historic cars. You go into a building which looks like a barn and it's air-conditioned, like a James Bond villain's lair, all shiny and space age, gleaming cars everywhere, and of course the art. The days when Michael Heseltine was criticised for buying his own furniture, that sort of snobbery has gone, but it has been a huge change, though of course this is a wonderful time to be shabby."

Given that we're both sitting on furniture picked up at auctions, in Clive's wonderful, comfortable study, I have to agree. After all, there's always an eBay bargain to be had. "It is wonderfully democratic, isn't it?"

INDIAN OCEAN
INSPIRATIONAL OUTDOOR FURNITURE



Harrods

AFTER THE demolition of the Stag Brewery in 1959, Landsec, with the design expertise of EPR Architects, transformed the site in 2006 into Cardinal Place – the shopping and dining destination you see today.



Then and now

This fascinating series of digitally merged images shows how the bustling streets of Victoria have evolved over the years to offer a rich mix of historical and modern architecture

Take a look at these images of Victoria, digitally merged between past and present, to see how SW1 has changed over the years. While some areas of Victoria still retain their traditional charm, other parts have seen new modern developments spring up to meet Victoria's increasing demand for residential, retail and office space, bringing a burst of new life to the borough of Westminster. Over the last decade property developer Landsec has helped transform Victoria into a destination for people to live, work and play.

WHERE OLD meets new: recent years have seen much-needed office space spring up in Victoria, neighbouring the stunning Neo-Byzantine Westminster Cathedral, which continues to dominate Victoria's famous skyline.



STILL RETAINING its original façade of 1860, Victoria Station is the second busiest train station in the country, welcoming nearly 76 million visitors last year. Alongside Landsec's transformations in Victoria, TfL has been leading significant changes to Victoria Station, including a new Tube entrance on Victoria Street.



COMMUTERS OLD (1971) and new (2018) have trodden the changing face of Victoria Street. Landsec's development of SW1 blends old and new architecture, positioning the development of 123 Victoria Street alongside existing sites such as Westminster Cathedral.



Koffmann at the Tate

Legendary chef Pierre Koffmann served up a feast of French cooking at Tate Britain as part of a special collaboration with the gallery. His signature main course of pigs' trotters was part of a four-course menu in the Rex Whistler restaurant, with guests able to enjoy a private view of The EY Exhibition: Impressionists in London. Hamish Anderson, head sommelier at Tate Britain, said: "We were honoured to host chef Koffmann at Tate. He is a culinary artist and an inspiration to so many."



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