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Wicked has partnered with Starling Arts to deliver motivational school and community group workshops. Each session will pick up on positive messages from the hit musical and use them as a starting point to explore themes like self-esteem and anti-bullying. Wicked Active Learning has also launched a writing competition, Wicked Writers: Be the Change, which invites children to write persuasively about something they want to change for the better. The competition closes on March 31. wickedactivelearning.co.uk



All the latest news, including Wicked workshops, London love stories and Westminster renovations

BY ALICE CAIRNS

London HQ celebrated Valentine's Day by taking part in the London for Lovers campaign. Four bespoke postboxes were placed across the London Heritage Quarter, popping up at Victoria and Charing Cross stations, the Strand Palace Hotel and Conrad London St James. Passersby were invited to fill in a postcard with a love message to London, whether that was a treasured memory or a favourite landmark.



Westminster residents have the highest life expectancy in the capital, alongside residents of Camden, Kensington and Chelsea, according to researchers at Imperial College London. Another study by Guardian Carers reported similar results, finding that over-40s in Westminster have the highest remaining life expectancy (48.4 years) compared to any other UK area, equalled only by residents of Kensington and Chelsea.



◀ **The prime minister has announced a new Holocaust Memorial Bill,** which will allow a planned Holocaust memorial and learning centre to be built in Victoria Tower Gardens. The project had previously been denied planning consent due to an act of 1900, which stated that Victoria Tower Gardens must be maintained as public gardens. PM Rishi Sunak said: “This important bill brings us one step closer to delivering a national Holocaust memorial and learning centre at the heart of our democracy in Westminster, where it rightly belongs.”

▶ **The Victoria BID funded a team of six specialised medics** to patrol Victoria Station and the surrounding area during the busy festive season. The medics were available Monday to Saturday from 5.30pm to 1.30am, for three weeks until New Year’s Eve. A total of 52 people received medical care and first aid treatment, allowing them to get home safely after Christmas nights out. Due to the success of the initiative, it’ll be making a return this year.



▼ **Riu Hotels & Resorts is launching its first UK hotel this spring – and it’s located in Victoria.** The Riu Plaza London Victoria will open at 1 Neathouse Place, near Victoria Station, with 435 rooms and suites, a lobby bar, restaurant and 24-hour gym.



▼ **The Palace of Westminster’s tallest tower is due to undergo a £70 million repair.** The masonry of Victoria Tower is deteriorating due to its exposure to a freeze-thaw cycle and frequent storm conditions. Work will begin next year and is expected to be completed by 2030, with additional conservation work taking place to restore window glazing, roof iron, drainage and the flagpole.



GEORGIAN STYLE

Featuring over 200 works, including paintings, drawings and rare surviving examples of clothes and accessories, *Dressing the Georgians* reveals how this revolutionary period of travel, trade and technology had a radical influence on fashion. Opening on April 21 at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, you'll explore everything from the practical dress of laundry maids to the glittering gowns worn at court, and discover what fashion can tell us about life in the 18th century.

rct.uk



A DAMN GOOD SHOW

David Tennant returns to the West End in *Good*, a contemporary reimagining of one of Britain's most politically charged plays. Filmed live at the Harold Pinter Theatre in London and shown at Curzon cinema on April 20, Tennant plays John Halder, a decent and intelligent German professor, who is sucked into a movement with unthinkable consequences, both for Halder and for his country.

58 Victoria Street, curzon.com

Liven up your spring calendar with an enthralling exhibition, a painting class or a night at the ballet

Spring events



ISAAC JULIEN: PAS DE DEUX WITH ROSES (LOOKING FOR LANGSTON VINTAGE SERIES) © ISAAC JULIEN COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND VICTORIA MIRO

BEST OF BRITISH

Isaac Julien is internationally acclaimed for his compelling lyrical films and video art installations. Now for the very first time, a major UK exhibition from April 26 at Tate Britain shows his prescient and pioneering film and video across four decades. From his contributions to black independent British cinema to his portrayal of queer culture, Aids stigma and marginalised LGBTQIA+ communities, the artist has revelled in creating experimental and politicised works that break down barriers between different artistic disciplines. *Millbank, tate.org.uk*



A NIGHT TO REMEMBER

Few venues do justice to the magic of Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*, but Westminster's Central Hall is one such place. Hosted by Fever on March 17, these two shows bring the famed Russian composer's vision to life with a string quartet, professional ballet dancers and a beautiful venue bathed in candlelight. With the quartet Artisti con Brio providing the elegant, atmospheric melodies, this is a show that classical music and ballet fans will not want to miss. *Ambrosden Avenue, feverup.com*

CREATE YOUR OWN MASTERPIECE

Art studio MasterPeace is hosting two classes this spring: a coached painting experience and a beginner's workshop in candle-making. The painting class, part of an ongoing series, provides personalised coaching from a professional artist as they work step-by-step to create an acrylic painting of a photograph. At the candle workshop, which takes place on March 18, visitors can learn the craft of wax blending to create their very own vegan, essential-oil based candle. A perfect gift for Mother's Day.

12 Eccleston Yards, *masterpeace studio*



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Conceived as an annual lecture on spirituality and pastoral theology, the Eric Symes Abbott Memorial Lecture invites guest speakers to give talks on religion and society. This year sees Professor Anthony G Reddie, director of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Culture, dissect the history of black theology and its relationship to contemporary political and activist movements including Black Lives Matter. This talk on May 25 promises a thought-provoking examination of a hugely important topic.

Dean's Yard, *westminster-abbey.org*





Royal expert Ingrid Seward on what to expect from the coronation

BY ALICE CAIRNS

On May 6, the eyes of the world will be on Westminster. The King and Queen Consort will be crowned in Westminster Abbey, in a historic ceremony that has been codenamed Operation Golden Orb.

Details of the coronation remain a closely guarded secret. However, according to royal expert and biographer Ingrid Seward, a long-term resident of Ebury Street, it's likely that this coronation will be different to any that has taken place before.

"There's a lot we don't know. But I do think this coronation will be very different to the

Queen's in that it will be all-inclusive, more diverse and a lot smaller. I understand that the King will have a lot of guests representing his charities, so I would expect to see ordinary people in attendance, not just the great and the good."

"Charles is the right man for the monarchy just now, because he's pro-change"

The Queen's coronation took place just eight years after Britain's victory in World War Two, in an atmosphere of patriotism, pageantry and celebration.

Today, the national mood is somewhat less jubilant, with the cost-of-living crisis casting its shadow over overt displays of opulence and wealth. As a result, Ingrid expects the coronation to be a rather

more restrained affair than the ceremony of 1953.

"I think the dress code will be a lot less formal," she says. "We are in an era of dressing down after all! The King and Queen will of course be wearing the coronation garb, but I imagine guests will be less formal, and the other members of the royal family will probably wear uniform."

"Of course, that's not to say there will be no opulence and beauty. I think people are looking forward to the coronation lifting some of the gloom, because every day seems to bring some new ghastly disaster, doesn't it? A royal event like this can take your mind of that completely, and provide a little bit of brightness, and I think most people are very much looking forward to it."

Another complication of the coronation involves the invite list. In recent years the monarchy has experienced some highly publicised rifts, culminating in the publication of Prince Harry's autobiography *Spare*, which scandalised the public with its unsparing accounts of family fights, press intrusion and PR wars – including an unflattering portrait of Queen Consort Camilla. Much of the speculation surrounding the coronation centres on whether Harry will receive that all-important invite – and if he does, whether he'll make the trip from California to be in attendance.

"The situation is extremely difficult, but I am sure Harry will be invited," says Ingrid. "It's not a little tea party, it's a very, very serious occasion, where Charles is being crowned in the eyes of God. Anyone in their right mind would realise that both Harry and his wife have to be invited,



and I think they will both come. Apart from anything else, I think they need to have that stardust of royalty sprinkled over them, even if they don't have a prominent part to play.

"This is about the institution, not the individual, and Harry is still part of the institution, because he was born into it. I know that when you look at polls, lots of people don't want Harry and Meghan there, but I believe that will fade as we get nearer to the time, because I think people will see that Harry needs to be there, with everyone standing firm behind Charles at that crucial moment."

Ingrid is also sceptical about the idea that Harry's rift with the monarchy is unprecedented. "It's happened before. Really, if you can survive an abdication, you can survive anything! And I



IMAGE: PETER RHYS WILLIAMS/SHUTTERSTOCK

think if you look historically, brothers, sons, kings have always fought. The only difference is social media, but that's the way of the world at the moment. The fact remains that the monarchy is an ancient institution, and it's seen it all."

And in spite of the changes Ingrid expects to see to the size and scope of the coronation, the ancient ceremony at its heart will remain unchanged. Once inside Westminster Abbey, King Charles will be anointed with holy oil behind a golden canopy by the Archbishop of Canterbury; he will receive the orb, sceptres and St Edward's Crown; and finally, he'll be seated in a throne while peers kneel to pay homage. It's a solemn ceremony and one that symbolically formalises his position as king and head of the church – but once all the pomp and pageantry is at an end, what kind of king will Charles be?

"A good one," says Ingrid. "Charles is the right man for the monarchy just now, because he's pro-change, and I believe he'll streamline the institution – both the number of active royal family members and the scope of royal responsibility as well.

"It's true that Charles loves many things that are old and traditional, such as [historical] architecture, but he's not an old-fashioned

man: he's a modern thinker, and he knows that in order for the monarchy to survive, it has to change with the times."

Ingrid is equally positive about the new Queen Consort, who she sees as key to the King's good humour in the face of endless appointments,

tours and royal duties. "It's a lot, given that he's not in the first flush of youth," Ingrid points out.

"Camilla helps because they can have a laugh together. She keeps him on an even keel, which is important because it's a tough job, a really tough job, and there is very, very little privacy, so I think you've got to see the funny side. King Charles is a total workaholic, working late into the night, and Camilla understands the way he works. She connects well with people, too."

Ingrid herself is looking forward to watching the coronation from her home on Ebury Street, where she has lived for more than 30 years.

"I'm very much looking forward to the coronation, which is happening here, on our doorsteps. This is an interesting time for the monarchy, and I think the way the coronation is handled will tell us a lot about what to expect going forward. Whatever your views on the monarchy, this is a historic occasion. I wouldn't miss it!"





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William Sturges is one of the UK's most established law firms. We have expertise across all the main law disciplines including commercial and residential property, company and commercial, employment, family, insolvency, dispute resolution and private client.

What do you love about the area?

Caxton Street is a prime location between Victoria and Westminster, close to Buckingham Palace. It is a busy and thriving area, popular with workers and tourists alike. It is well served by public transport and a good retail spot but also has easy access to green spaces including St James's Park. The street is of historical



CHEZ ANTOINETTE

importance, with the listed buildings of Bluecoat School and Caxton Hall close to Burwood House. The location is also extremely convenient for our colleagues and clients.



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Legal eagles



Law firm William Sturges has been based in Victoria for nearly 60 years. We caught up with Rosie Hannon, a member of resolution specialising in family issues

BY ALICE CAIRNS



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When it opened its first store on Portobello Road in 2004, the Hummingbird Bakery introduced the UK to something special: red velvet cake. This soft red sponge cake has a vanilla and cocoa flavour and comes slathered in tangy cream cheese frosting, topped with extra cake crumbs. The public couldn't get enough.

Almost 20 years later, and the bakery is still overwhelmed with demand for this perennial bestseller. The brand has since opened four more branches across London, including its newest bakery in Victoria, where red velvet cake can be purchased in new and exciting forms, along with a range of other tasty bakes.

"Our Victoria branch has been open since October," says operations manager Simone Tasker. "It's an exciting place to be, and the store is doing really well. We're in the process of adding more seats so that more people can come and visit us – we really want the bakery to have that home-from-home feel."

Visitors to the Victoria bakery will enjoy the usual Hummingbird offering of American-inspired pies, cupcakes, cheesecakes and cookies, as well as some signature bakes that have been specially designed to reflect the character of the area. Playing on its Buckingham Palace Road location, Hummingbird Victoria is serving "crownies" (chocolate frosted brownies with a regal crown motif), as well as fruit loaf and



whiskey bundt cakes inspired by the new king's favourite desserts. These sweet treats are freshly baked every day, and can be ordered for delivery or demolished in-store.

As Hummingbird's newest bakery, Victoria is something of a trendsetter. The brand's other bakeries are now in the process of being refurbished to bring them in line with this shiny new branch, which has plenty of exciting features.

"We're very excited about our personalisation station," says Simone. "People can stop by and watch our team decorate

Let them eat cake

The Hummingbird Bakery has opened a new branch at 40 Buckingham Palace Road

BY ALICE CAIRNS

FROM TOP: SIMONE TASKER; A HUMMINGBIRD CROWNIE





cakes, and they can request their own personal messages. We also have an ice cream station, where you can get red velvet ice cream that comes with a slice of red velvet cake, as well as your choice of sprinkles.”

There are also plenty of “free from” options for visitors of every dietary requirement, from gluten-free cupcakes to vegan cheesecake frostings, ensuring that no one who visits Hummingbird Victoria need come away hungry.

The pandemic may have familiarised us with the ins and outs of online shopping, but Hummingbird is a firm believer in the importance of the in-person experience. That’s one of the reasons why Victoria is such a perfect location.

“Victoria has everything around it,” Simone says. “It has tourists, locals and workers – a bit of everything, which is perfect for our stores, and it’s what we look for when we pick a location. We love to open in places that are vibrant and busy, with different things for different people.

“During Covid, obviously our branches were shut down, and everything was online. Now we’re so excited to be back in our stores, feeling them coming alive and getting customers back through the doors. Our staff love selling to customers in person, it’s what they enjoy doing.”

Asked how Hummingbird has weathered the storms of economic uncertainty and

pandemic closures, Simone credits the company’s simplicity.

“We don’t follow the trends. We stick to what we know, and what we’re good at. Often, many generations of the same family will come in to our bakeries together, and there’ll be something for every one of them.

“I think that’s what has kept Hummingbird alive – the joy it brings to families. It’s always the centrepiece of a birthday or a celebration or an office party, so a lot of people have lovely memories involving our cakes.

“I hope everyone will visit Victoria for a cupcake or a scoop of red velvet ice cream soon.”





Next time you're walking through Westminster, spare a thought for the hidden history beneath your feet

BY ALICE CAIRNS

Treasure Island

Did you know that Westminster is built on an ancient island that's buried deep beneath our streets and buildings?

This is Thorney Island, an eyot on the Thames formed by rivulets of the River Tyburn. Today, the boundaries of the island are lost somewhere underground, perhaps flowing through our sewage systems. As a result, the precise outline of Thorney Island is the subject of much scholarly debate, with the most popular view holding that one rivulet flows into the Thames from the Vauxhall Bridge area via Tachbrook Street, while the other crosses Whitehall below Downing Street.

What isn't up for debate is the historical significance of this ancient patch of Westminster. The Thorney Island area is dense with history, from world-famous buildings like the Houses of Parliament and Westminster School to lost landmarks like the Palace of Whitehall, an enormous royal residence (at one time, the largest palace in Europe) which burnt down in 1698. Thorney Island has weathered

Viking invasions and been tamed and tended by monks, and has played a central role in the coronation of every king and queen of England since William the Conqueror was crowned in Westminster Abbey in 1066. It's difficult to imagine an area of London more loaded with history – and there's still plenty more to uncover.

If you'd like to learn more about Thorney Island, you may want to consider joining The Thorney Island Society. Founded in 1985 to protect Westminster Public Library from demolition, the society continues to monitor developments in the Thorney Island area on behalf of residents and businesses. It currently boasts more than 250 members, and holds regular historical talks and social events, as well as curating an archive of books, prints, plans and ephemera related to the ancient island. Join to find out more about the hidden history of Thorney Island, and to help preserve some of the ancient monuments that make it so unique. Thethorneyislandsociety.org.uk



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Drawings by Jon deMartin



<https://www.bacaa.org/jon-demartin-summer-oxfordlondon-figure-2023>

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Oxford/London, UK July 8-14, 2023

Paintings by Devin Cecil-Wishing



<https://www.bacaa.org/devin-cecilwishing-the-luminous-still-life-oxford-uk>

This summer we will be offering a very special opportunity to study in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, UK with instructor Devin Cecil-Wishing. Included are 5 days painting, and 2 days of London museum visits/lectures.

www.BACAA.org (650) 832-1544 info@bacaa.org

Mailing Address: 969G Edgewater Blvd, 106, Foster City, CA 94404

Location: Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2PH

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Street life

Dedicated teams work hard to keep our streets safe and clean. Lauren Dowdle, security and business resilience manager at the Victoria BID, tells us more

BY ALICE CAIRNS

Meet... the security team

What do they do?

The security team provides welfare and reassurance services to businesses, workers and residents. They work seven days a week, from 6.30am till 11.30pm. The team is Security Industry Authority (SIA) registered and trained in first aid, vulnerability and tackling violence against women and girls.

What are their responsibilities?

The first and last thing the team does every day is check the welfare of rough sleepers. They know the rough sleepers by name and can refer them to support services and day centres.

The security team also helps the police outreach teams, British Transport Police and Westminster to prevent low-level antisocial behaviour and crime in the Victoria area such as street drinking, fighting and shoplifting. They have helped to ban problem individuals in the area by sharing intelligence and taking part in special operations. They help to run the Victoria Radio Link scheme and carry out 200 business welfare checks a week, as well as regularly attending to medical emergencies.

How can we meet them?

You can call them on the Victoria Radio Link radio or meet them at the monthly street briefings at 1pm on the third Thursday of every month.



Meet... the clean team

What do they do?

The clean team are on site Monday to Friday from 7am till 5pm, ensuring the streets are clean, safe and ready for the start of the working day.

What are their responsibilities?

They carry out pavement flushing, bin cleaning and manage special places such as the Westminster Cathedral Piazza, Christchurch Gardens, local parklets and the tables and chairs at the Blewcoat School.

They deliver services to ensure the area is well managed and sparkling, including deep-cleaning, gum removal and a rapid response janitor service for spills and graffiti. The team is equipped with fully electric vehicles, an electric van and janitor card.

How can we meet them?

The clean team is ready to respond to your requests, and free janitor services are available Monday to Friday from 8am till 4pm. Give the team a call on 07934 845503.





Going green

An exciting new project proposes new street scenarios and spaces between Storey's Gate and Cardinal Place. David Beamont, placemaking project manager at Victoria BID, tells us more

AS TOLD TO ALICE CAIRNS

The Arc is an ambitious public realm project led by the Victoria and Westminster BIDs. It seeks to create a people-first route for all ages and abilities between Storey's Gate and Cardinal Place – the "arc" that gives the project its name.

The idea came from our 2020 public realm strategy called People Wanted written by BDP and Urban Flow. In that document, the Arc was presented as a concept idea alongside several others for improving the streets and spaces in the two BID areas. We began developing the Arc idea further in spring 2022 with a design team led by John McAslan + Partners.

People are walking and cycling more and being encouraged to do so, and so the project aims to make the streets in the Arc project area better for pedestrians and cyclists. Pedestrians are a priority group, whereas now the streets are more designed for vehicles. Castle Lane for instance has pavements that don't meet the minimum width set out in the Disability Discrimination Act. Our proposals to introduce more

greenery and rain gardens will also help tackle the anticipated effects of climate change, such as hotter summers and wetter winters. Some parts of the project area are prone to flooding, for example, and there are relatively few street trees.

The project will take several years and what is completed has yet to be finalised. We hope to deliver the overall scheme incrementally over the next five to 10 years, subject to funding, further consultation, planning and other consents.

Sustainability is now a priority in the way we plan and update our cities, and there are many examples where this is happening and being supported through policy, for example through planning and implementing sustainable urban drainage, tree planting, wider pavements and cycle parking. Freight consolidation is also helping to reduce the number of vehicles on London's roads while still enabling people to get what they need.

We hope the Arc will be well used – and enjoyed – by everyone.

For more information, visit victoriawestminsterbid.co.uk/the-arc



Urban paradise



Local gardeners share how we can transform city spaces into green oases

BY CORRIE BOND-FRENCH

As spring unfurls and warmer days seem within grasp, the nation's collective enthusiasm for gardening will see the tills ringing at garden centres, and a flurry of renewed activity in gardens and public green spaces alike.

The science is out there: gardening is hugely beneficial to our physical and mental wellbeing, a balm to busy city lives that was highlighted by the experience of lockdown, but it can be difficult to know where to start if you're a novice with constraints of space and know-how.

Just a single container or hanging basket can tap into those green benefits. A sign of the times was

the recent addition of a balcony and container gardens category at the Chelsea Flower Show by the Victoria-based Royal Horticultural Society, championed by director of gardens and shows Helena Pettit. "They dispel the myth that gardening is only for those with large outdoor areas or big budgets and provide ample inspiration for creating a little piece of greenery in whatever space you have," Helena explains.

We are lucky in this part of the capital to have access to spaces such as royal parks and garden squares, and allotment and community gardening has also become a boon for many in recent times. Public green spaces have also gained increased recognition. Westminster's Christchurch Gardens



were redesigned by the BID to a design by ReardonSmith Landscape, creating a welcome contemplative space amid the hustle and bustle of Victoria Street, and there is further community innovation in the area, including the Onion Garden at Seaforth Place and the King's Scholars' Passage Community Garden (KSP).

Both spaces have delighted local residents and businesses, not just by transforming formerly unloved, concrete spaces into quirky green oases, but by creating a project that involves and benefits the whole community. KSP founding member Sarah MacDonald Eggers explains there is a real need to bring greenery into the neighbourhood.

"Urban community gardening is an opportunity for local residents to express their creativity through gardening and greening can improve spaces which are of low priority to local authorities and generally ignored," she says. "There have been many satisfying outcomes from KSP."

Florist and garden designer Jens Jakobsen, founder of the Onion Garden, is adamant that urban gardening is for everyone. "Everybody needs a bit of green for their eyes and wellbeing," he says. "We can all do it even in the smallest areas. We have shown that at the Onion Garden, which is actually a pure container garden – nothing is planted in the ground. Some plants like shade, others like full sun or semi sun, so do look into that before you plant or sow, so you don't waste your money or risk getting disappointed with the result later on."

"Use all kinds of clay pots, or even as we have done plastic buckets and containers which we then cover up with all kinds of natural materials – twigs, moss, paper, natural cotton etcetera – a kind of biodiversity. You can't see the plastic material then from the outside, but it helps the soil stay moist. That's the power of plastic – we just always have to recycle it in the right way, whereas terracotta containers absorb water as well because it's not glazed. Always stick your finger in the soil to feel if it's dry or wet and then you water. Plants and soil are like us humans, some need more than others."

KSP founding member Bridget Jacob suggests sowing nasturtium seeds on window sills to get started this spring, and insists that everyone can enjoy gardening. "I think sometimes people are put off by the idea you must have some background or prior knowledge, but this is not true at all. Plants need light and water and the rest they take care of themselves."



CHRISTCHURCH GARDENS

Getting involved in community gardening is also a great way to get started. "Because we are all amateurs there is no expectation, or pressure, for any of us to get it right, or to know what they are doing, and it makes for some fun afternoons. Joining a community garden is a lovely way to spend some time outside, with your neighbours while making a positive contribution to the area you live in, and it's free!

"We are also great believers that gardening is not just something you do when the weather is good. In the winter months our sessions are typically shorter than the summer as there is less to do, but all year round Thursday and Sunday afternoons we can be found in KSP looking after our plants and are always delighted to meet new friends, so please come and join us or at least stop by and say hello."

JENS JAKOBSEN



Nearly a year has now passed since the historic swing of Westminster City Council from traditional Tory stronghold to a Labour administration for the first time in the council's history. The majority tally of 31 seats out of 54 (over 18 wards) prompted huge media interest nationally as many hailed it a bellwether of voting behaviour.

Given that the saying goes that a week is a long time in politics, the past months have surely been challenging to new arrivals, who now number Pimlico ward representatives Cllr Gillian Arrindell, (Vincent Square), and Cllr Robert Eagleton (Pimlico South) among their ranks. Gillian is also Air Quality Champion and Disability Champion, with further appointments on the Climate Action, Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee. Robert is also Deputy Cabinet Member for Fairer Working.

Both have vivid memories of the vote count last May. "The only word that describes it for me is 'surreal'," says Robert. "It really did feel historic. I think there was a lot of enthusiasm for change, people wanted to see how we would be different. The reaction has been really positive."

Gillian agrees "I went in not too hopeful, not too negative I just went in passively and thought let's see what happens, and I was astonished at the number of people voting for me. It was a bit of a whirlwind, when they actually announced the results, I was completely overwhelmed, and I just had to sit quietly for quite some time to come to terms with it!"

Gillian's entrée into local government is underpinned by her broad experience as a legal advisor. After initially volunteering for Citizens Advice, she has held posts at the Royal Courts of Justice, UCL, Goldsmiths and the Terence Higgins Trust as a welfare advisor. She was encouraged to stand by Labour party colleagues. "I'd been Women's officer and I'm currently the BAME officer. I'd organised lots of events and campaigning and was increasingly doing advice work locally, and people started saying 'why don't you put yourself forward as a councillor because you're already doing the role anyway?' So, I was encouraged, but I really wasn't going to stand because I have a breathing respiratory disability, I use a mobility scooter as well so I thought how on earth am I going to get around as a councillor? I eventually put my name down, then pulled out, then they pulled me back in and here I am!"



Westminster

Meet the



Cllr Robert Eagleton and
Cllr Gillian Arrindell

"There's no kind of honeymoon period. there are always issues for residents so it's not something that you kind of work yourself into, you have to be on it from day one and I think that the major thing is learning and understanding who you need to speak to about this or who you need to speak to about that, the best way of handling a resident's inquiry and moving that forward."



councillors

An inside guide to Westminster City Council

BY CORRIE BOND-FRENCH

It's a huge learning curve but I do enjoy it. I searched for the right mobility scooter, and I do meet a lot of residents in coffee shops. It's just easier if residents don't want to come to City Hall or other places, or also if someone's elderly or they just don't want to travel that far, it's more community based so I like doing it that way."

Robert, 27, has lived in Pimlico since graduating from a degree in politics to work as a civil servant in Whitehall. His appetite for politics grew in his teenage years in Preston. "As a young adult I just found that suddenly life was becoming a lot harder. I was angry at the

time because I felt like the recession and the financial crisis happened – that you have not had anything to do with. My Dad worked in the private sector, and he lost his job and because, not getting into the weeds of it, but because my step mum earned too much he wasn't eligible for Social Security payments even though he'd paid in all his life, so it just felt to me that the system wasn't fair. Then I was the first year to go to university and pay the triple tuition fees from £3k to £9k, so that's when I became politicised really."

"I don't really see politics as a career, and



Royal Courts of Justice

I'm quite suspicious of people that do. I don't have grand designs on becoming an MP in X number of years or anything like that, I just think it's about serving my community and seeing if I could make a difference. I would never have stood for somewhere like the West End where I had no connection. I got into this to help the community and also help my party. In the medium to long term, it's about getting used to being a councillor because I've still got a full-time job and it's a lot to manage, but also campaigning with our parliamentary candidates to make sure that we can turn cities of London and Westminster Labour and deliver, those are my priorities. I see it as a collective team effort.

Both councillors cite changes to policy such as freezing council tax and providing free school meals as successes and have been involved in other Pimlico-based triumphs, including saving the 24 bus route and directing community groups to access arts and culture funding. But it is the issue of housing that remains the most challenging.

"The housing issue isn't going to be something that can be resolved overnight because of what has gone before," says Gillian. "I definitely think our administration has made huge steps in policy – I don't think it's really been shouted about. Under the right to buy back we're buying back properties

– about 100 recent purchases. There's been a clamp down on placing families with children miles away from the borough – I think the limit now has to be the borough has to be accessible within a half hour journey, so major steps have been taken but that's not an overnight thing."

"You can really be taken aback by some case work, especially when you hold a surgery," says Robert. "Once I had a family of 6 who were all living in a 1-bed apartment. The oldest girl had failed her GCSEs and the father was explaining it's because she's not got a place to study, and it just amazed me how some people live. I've had another couple with three kids, and the couple each live with their respective parents, and they take all the kids between each other. They're on the waiting list but there's so many other people on the waiting list with such a limited supply of housing.

Despite the challenges of their roles, both councillors are positive about the future. "It is really rewarding to help people individually, but we're not sort of elected social workers, we're there to do the big ticket outcomes as well,

like when we deliver on things like free school meals, we know we've really helped a lot of families with the cost of living," says Robert.

Gillian agrees. "There are changes, we are making steps and going in the right direction and that's really important to me that we do that."



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Eat & drink Directory out & in



A SPRING DREAM AT THE IVY

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theivyvictoria.com

The Ivy Victoria
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London SW1E 6SQ

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www.theclermont.co.uk/victoria/restaurants-bars



TOZI

Meaning "a group of friends" in Venetian slang, TOZI is a restaurant and bar in the heart of Victoria focusing on traditional Italian cicchetti. Head chef, Maurilio Molteni, has created a menu that offers guests an authentic taste of Italian cuisine packed with seasonality and signature dishes including black truffle buffalo ricotta ravioli, lobster linguine for two and pistachio tiramisu to finish.

At the bar, guests are invited to enjoy a selection of regional Italian wines, craft liquors and innovative cocktails including the infamous TOZI barrel-aged Negroni.

Group bookings: info@tozirestaurant.co.uk
Website: www.tozirestaurant.co.uk
Phone: 020 7769 9771

ST. ERMIN'S HOTEL

Caxton Grill located at St. Ermin's Hotel is a local neighbourhood restaurant serving seasonal food in a relaxed informal environment. Inspired by their rooftop garden, their menu highlights the best of Jospier Grill cooking. It features a range of seasonal meat, fish and vegetable dishes that are grilled and smoked to perfection. The restaurant is open 7 days a week for lunch and dinner. Privilege Card holders can enjoy 20% off the lunch a la carte menu.

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www.sticksnsushi.com



We publish 25,000 copies of *Victoria* magazine every issue.

A very conservative estimate is that between four and eight people will look at each magazine.

To be a part of the Food & Drink Directory please email Julie@pubbiz.com

Girl power

Chef Sally Abé has announced an incredible line-up of female talent for this year's International Women's Day event at Conrad London St James and the Pem restaurant. Taking place on March 8 to promote and support female talent in the hospitality industry, there will be a series of four panels and workshops running simultaneously exploring life in the kitchen, on the restaurant floor, in operations, journalism, branding, mental health and beyond. Influential figures from the hospitality sector in attendance will include chef and presenter Ravneet Gill, social media personality and "potato queen" Poppy O'Toole and *The Great British Bake Off* winner and owner of the Green Man Candice Brown.

22-28 Broadway



Hot plates

With themed lunches, bespoke gins and inspiring events, Victoria's culinary scene is in sizzling form

BY WILL MOFFITT



Gin o'clock

St Ermin's Hotel has created its own brand of home-grown gin, made exclusively using botanicals that have been hand-picked from the hotel's kitchen roof garden, as well as a touch of honey from its resident Buckfast bees. Infused with mint, lemon verbena, lavender, blue basil and geraniums and made by the award-winning Hawkrigge Distillers, the spirit will be served at the hotel's Caxton Bar. Served in a good old gin and tonic or a stylish Vesper martini, 007's drink of choice, a splash of small batch gin is the perfect way to wind down after a taxing week or celebrate the arrival of the weekend.

2 Caxton Street

Eat & drink Directory out & in



NEAT BURGER

Neat Burger serves up a delicious menu of plant-based burgers, shakes and sides, using ethical alternative-proteins that are better for you and better for the environment.

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Brilliant burgers

American burger restaurant Five Guys has opened in Cardinal Place. The burgers are cooked from scratch using Scottish beef, and you can choose from 15 free toppings to create more than 250,000 possible combinations. Five Guys is also known for its generous scoops of fries and its thick and creamy milkshakes, with as many free mix-ins as you like including Oreo cookie bits, banana, peanut butter cups and more.

Roof Garden Level, Cardinal Place



Tea fit for a king

The Goring has created two new menu items to honour King Charles III's coronation. Served on the hotel's veranda, overlooking the garden, the Coronation afternoon tea features King Charles's favourite cakes and sandwiches. A limited-edition Coronation strawberry and elderflower jam is served alongside the freshly baked scones. The hotel has also launched a Michelin-starred Coronation tasting menu devised by head chef Graham Squire and focusing on Welsh specialities and foraged ingredients, to foreground the environmental philosophy that King Charles III celebrates.

15 Beeston Place



Murder with a spot of lunch

Pullman has brought suspense and intrigue to lunchtime dining with its Moving Murder Mystery lunch experience. Delivered in collaboration with Belmond and Private Drama Events, the immersive show is a homage to Pullman's rich heritage and the great British thriller tradition, brought to life by West End actors. Departing from Victoria Station, guests will be transported to 1951, when 10 enigmatic characters are visiting London on the occasion of the Festival of Britain. Combining luxury with a dash of adventure, this new journey will keep passengers' senses on high alert as they enjoy a five-course lunch prepared by British Pullman's chef Jon Freeman. Starts March 10.

From £540 per person, belmond.com





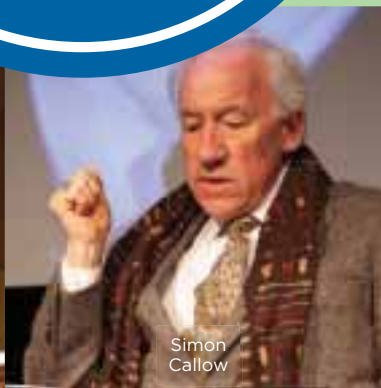
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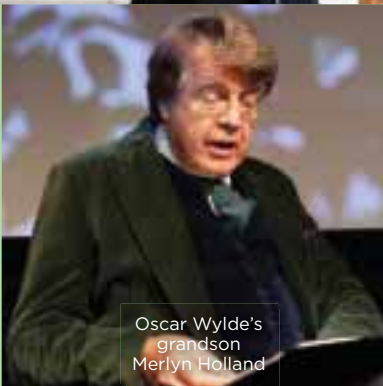
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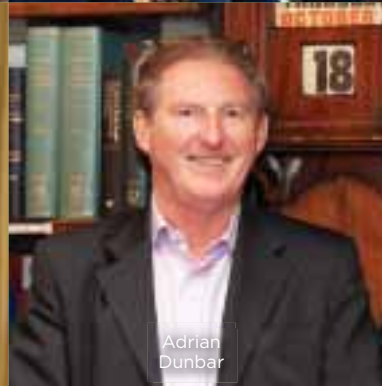
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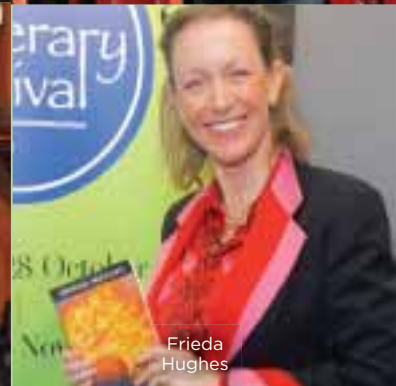
Oscar Wilde's grandson
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Our previous festivals have featured events graced by the above figures

Thursday, June 22
to Monday, July 3



Yes chef

Working from a pop-up restaurant in Victoria Station, a new project backed by two-Michelin-starred chef Adam Simmonds hopes to get homeless people off the streets and back into employment

BY WILL MOFFITT

The statistics are harrowing. According to estimates by the charity Crisis there are 278,000 homeless people in the UK and 42 per cent of bosses would fire a member of staff if they became homeless. Almost all of them would not contemplate hiring a homeless person. That's the stigma that Home Kitchen is trying to break.

Founded by Alex Brown, director at Soup Kitchen London – a charity that feeds homeless people in central London – and two-Michelin-starred chef Adam Simmonds, the initiative is striving to get vulnerable and neglected people off the streets and into the kitchen.

"During the pandemic our numbers grew from about 90 people a day to about 160 at our peak. They've never gone down since then," Alex says. "Recently we've seen more people coming that are struggling with food and energy prices. There's a tonne of pensioners that come here. It's ridiculous to be honest."

"During the pandemic our chef was totally burnt out and needed a break so we asked Adam for help. We felt a bit funny asking a guy who had two Michelin stars to come in but we just didn't have anyone else. Adam said, 'I haven't cooked in months. I'd love to come down.'"

After a stint working together at the shelter the duo toyed with the idea of founding a project that could give homeless people the opportunity to learn valuable skills and help the hospitality industry overcome a chronic staffing crisis.

The end result is Home Kitchen, a pop-up eatery in Victoria Station that will employ 15 homeless people for 13 weeks. Hand-selected by Adam and co from a pool of around 100 applicants – and given an intensive three-week training course – staff will be paid the London living wage and given a travel card and phone.

"The project was born from doing some time at the soup kitchen and seeing what

it meant to so many people," Adam says. "I am super excited to be involved with the fantastic team at Home Kitchen. I am so delighted to help give guys and girls an opportunity and hope where society has given up on them and made judgements. We can really make a difference to so many people."

The group has been engaged in funding, working with partners such as the Beyond Food Foundation, who specialise in training people for a career in catering and hospitality, and the Zurich

Community Trust, which has given £10,000 to help kickstart their crowd-funding campaign.

Currently their target is to raise £452,645 to cover wage bills, the cost of sponsoring qualifications and food and drink stock.

"When you're sleeping rough often your purpose is just surviving. You're just going from one meal to the next, just trying to get through the day. That leads to depression and anxiety. It's so tough for people," Alex says.

"We want to give people opportunities, to allow people to have some sort of control over their lives, rebuild that confidence and give them purpose."

Despite being conceived as a one-off project Alex and Adam have plans to expand and open restaurants in Brighton, Bristol and Manchester. By partnering with companies working in the food and hospitality sphere the organisation aims to find recruits full or at least part-time employment. Food delivery service Fresh Fitness Food has already promised to take two members of the cohort and employ them at the London living wage.

"It's no longer just a pop-up," Alex says. "Anyone who wants to progress we will be able to find full-time employment for them – we're about to start the recruitment process very soon."

"It's really exciting to be able to give people more than a new coat or a new pair of shoes."



ADAM SIMMONDS

Good times

Getting together in Victoria and
Westminster

Local links

Westminster City Council partnered with One Westminster to hold a “meet the charity” event at St Ermin’s Hotel, with local businesses invited to partner with charities in order to help them through the cost-of-living crisis.



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Merry and bright

Christmas was a busy time in Victoria and Westminster. A festive wish tree was installed in Victoria Station, with passersby invited to write down their hopes and dreams and hang them from the colourful boughs of the tree.



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Adam Jones

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50M, 14-15 ECCLESTON YARDS

Charles Tyrwhitt

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UNIT 3, CARDINAL PLACE



MEN

50 shades of green

Spring is in the air, so freshen up your look with some gorgeous green

Zara

This shirt with pockets, £59.99 can be worn either as a shirt or an overcoat and would also work really well for festivals and garden parties.

82 VICTORIA STREET



Consciously Crafted

Not only are these khaki Tynemouth trainers, £99, green by design, they are green by nature. They are made using apple leather with a recycled polyester lining and recycled rubber sole.

JONES BOOTMAKER, 84 VICTORIA STREET



WOMEN

New Look

When you walk out with this green quilted shoulder bag, £19.99, everyone will want to follow suit. It's the easiest way to update your style using an accessory.

VICTORIA PLACE SHOPPING CENTRE



Monsoon

A hand-embroidered cable knit cardigan, £80, in green, delicately embellished with subtle flowers is just the piece that's needed to throw on over T-shirts and dresses this season.

UNIT 32, VICTORIA STATION



Oliver Bonas

Great with T-shirts or an oversized jumper is the swirling animal-pleated midi skirt, £65, in a bright and invigorating sea-foam green.

UNIT 49, VICTORIA STATION



Clarks

The Wallabee in pine green, £130, is one of the latest colours to grace the iconic Originals style. The uplifting shade will add a touch of spring to any outfit.

149 VICTORIA STREET

Flower power

This sweet floral perfume is perfect for spring. The heady orange blossom heart note is accompanied by the scent of clementine and pink peppercorn, grounded by a woody base of cedar.

**£125, LES SENTEURS,
71 ELIZABETH STREET**



The perfect bake

Tuck into this indulgent red velvet cake topped with cream cheese frosting. It's decorated with buttercream flowers especially for Mother's Day.

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Mum's mug

Prepare your mum's morning brew in this ceramic mug, featuring a subtle pink rim and gold debossed lettering. A gift-box service is also available to save you the trouble of wrapping.

**£14, OLIVER BONAS,
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VICTORIA STATION**

Mamma mia

The perfect picks for Mother's Day

BY ALICE CAIRNS



If the shoe fits

Any active mum would be delighted with these pastel-toned Hoka trainers. Hard-wearing and vegan-friendly, they are perfect for running errands or taking a gym class, with plenty of bouncy cushioning for comfort.

**£145, SWEATY BETTY,
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101 BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD**



You're sweet

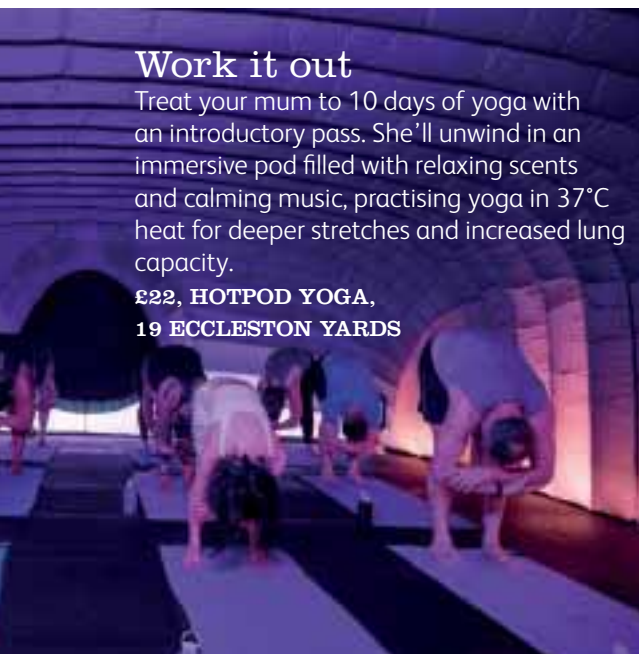
The 2023 Mother's Day Sleekster contains 27 tasty chocolates. From champagne truffles to honey-infused florentines, and from strawberry macarons to intensely nutty pralines, there really is something for everyone.

**£24.50, HOTEL CHOCOLAT,
133 VICTORIA STREET**

Work it out

Treat your mum to 10 days of yoga with an introductory pass. She'll unwind in an immersive pod filled with relaxing scents and calming music, practising yoga in 37°C heat for deeper stretches and increased lung capacity.

**£22, HOTPOD YOGA,
19 ECCLESTON YARDS**



Lend a hand

Ward off chilly days with these cosy cashmere wrist-warmers, particularly recommended for arthritis sufferers. Designed by Turtle Doves, they're made from recycled jumpers and come in every colour of the rainbow.

**£30, PIMLICO TROVE,
20 UPPER TACHBROOK STREET**



In hot water

This bath bomb is wrapped in biodegradable muslin and filled with lavender and neroli. It will turn bath water deep purple and has a sweet, sleep-inducing scent.

**£7, LUSH,
UNIT 42B, BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD**



Take the biscuit

Biscuiteers has collaborated with ceramics company Emma Bridgewater to create this beautiful biscuit tea-set in a decorative tin. Each lemon-flavoured biscuit is hand-iced with delicate spring flowers, a classic Emma Bridgewater motif.

£48, BISCUITEERS, 14-15 ECCLESTON YARDS

Changing things up

Change Please uses coffee to lift people out of homelessness. We met with its founder, Cemal Ezel, to find out more

BY ALICE CAIRNS

A cup of coffee can lift your mood, boost your energy and warm a grey commute. According to Cemal Ezel, it can also save lives.

Cemal is the founder of Change Please, a non-profit social enterprise which creates award-winning coffee blends while fighting homelessness. Every cup of coffee or bag of beans is used to fund life-changing resources and opportunities that will help get people off the streets and into employment.

“Rather than people who are homeless being dependent on the government for handouts, donations and philanthropy, which is just so uncertain, we find people who can work and who want to work, and we use coffee as a tool to lift them out of homelessness,” Cemal explains.

“We train them to be a barista, giving them the skills, the tools and the expertise to come back into society and receive a living wage. We are able to provide housing to our trainees within 10 days, and we also provide a bank account.”

Change Please has a remarkable success rate. Since starting in 2016, the organisation has created 500 professional baristas and provided 5,000 nights of accommodation to homeless people. This isn’t just short-term success: 85 per

cent of Change Please trainees go on to find ongoing employment.

“I think a lot of our success comes down to the therapy support we provide,” Cemal says. “Whether our trainees have been in the military and suffer from PTSD, or have gone through a divorce or a bereavement, or have experienced domestic abuse, sexual abuse or a mental health condition, we support them with counsellors and psychologists and we continue to support them as they enter employment.”

Now Change Please is opening a new space in Cardinal Place, where local people can grab an award-winning coffee from one of the charity’s trainees – knowing that 100 per cent of their money will be used to tackle homelessness.

When it came to choosing the location for a Change Please retail site, Cemal knew he wanted somewhere busy and diverse, where different kinds of people could meet Change Please trainees and reevaluate their views about homelessness.

“I think it’s important that our customers won’t just be seeing homeless people outside the train station or out on the streets,” he says.

“I hope they’ll go from the traditional stereotypes and labels like ‘drug addicts’ and ‘mentally ill’ to seeing that these people are brothers or sisters or mothers, people who are

“We train them to be a barista, giving them the skills, the tools and the expertise to come back into society and receive a living wage”

able to contribute, because of the positive interactions they'll have.

"The same is true for our trainees.

Standing behind a counter gives them some distance and a safe space, which they may prefer, especially if they're a victim of sexual or domestic abuse. But interacting with people on a regular basis, feeling like you're contributing and giving back, can help rebuild your trust in society. It's this sense of confidence and dignity we hope to restore, a closer connection to people."

The Victoria location will also allow Change Please to collaborate with the Passage, another like-minded homelessness charity based at Carlisle Place, as well as strengthening its links to London charities like St Mungo's, Single Homeless Project and Cyrenians.

In fact, the location is so ideal that Cemal hopes to open another Victoria-based retail site soon. Change Please has signed the lease for a site in Victoria Station, outside the District and Circle lines, and will be working hard to get it up and running soon.

"We want to contribute to the reduction of homelessness in Victoria," he explains. "We want to show that the people we pass on the streets on a daily basis can be supported, if you can understand that person's needs and their core issues. We believe that employment is the best way to tackle the problem of homelessness, and we're very excited to see what we can achieve here."





A vertical photograph on the left side of the page shows a person from the side, wearing a blue sweater and light-colored trousers, standing near a window with a view of a brick building.

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Stepping up the pace

I've been in health and beauty since Barry's began but I've never been brave enough to try it. Maybe it's time?

BY SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS

I think it's the word "bootcamp". It doesn't exactly fill me with joy or happiness. Rather, it instantly makes me think of an army, hordes of military personnel training for one specific purpose – to fight an enemy.

When I got an email informing me that Barry's Bootcamp is 10 years old, I couldn't believe it.

I vividly remember being in the office the year Barry's first launched in London, and feeling anxious at merely the sound of the boutique fitness studio's name.

At the time I was into hot yoga, which is intense – so it might sound strange to some people that I was scared of a bootcamp.

But high-intensity interval workouts, where you are constantly moving at a high energetic pace for 50 or 60 minutes, is a level above.

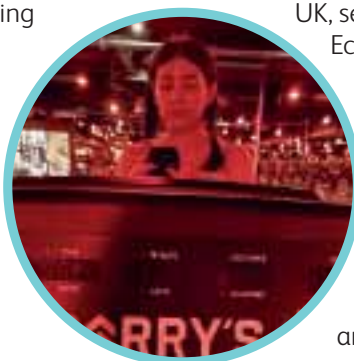
I remember colleagues and friends excitedly booking into classes, and they began to go regularly while reporting back about all the famous people they had trained beside.

It's been a decade now, and having recently had a baby, I have never been more out of shape, so what have I got to lose?

There are now 10 Barry's Bootcamps in the UK, seven of which are in London, including Eccleston Yards, which is the largest one in the capital.

I finally plucked up the courage to try a total body workout and was greeted with such a warm welcome when I arrived, which is so important when you're as nervous as I was.

The Barry's studios are immaculate. A fuel bar offers delicious shakes, drinks and energy snacks, where you can order



your drink ahead of class so you have some much-deserved refreshment waiting for you at the end.

The shop contains a selection of fitness apparel that, if you bought it, would probably make you work that little bit harder in the class.

Then there is the changing room, which doesn't disappoint; easy to use lockers, inviting showers stocked with all the essentials, hairdryers, basic toiletries, towels and even a free bag to put your sweaty clothes in.

OK, enough digressing, let's get to the class.

For newbies like me, a five-minute induction takes place ahead of the start time – luckily the treadmills are easy to navigate with unmissable on and off buttons, while the speed and incline buttons are positioned for ease on the handlebars.

It is exactly how I imagined; a dimly lit room, illuminated by accents of red, blaring music and instructor Henry's welcoming voice amplified by a microphone.

Once you're through those doors, there is no time to reflect. I was on the treadmill thinking, "OK I'm actually doing this."

The five-minute warm-up sets the pace for the rest of the class. Everyone was pumped and ready to go and you can't help but get spurred on by other people's level of commitment and energy.

Combining cardio and weight training is no easy task, but the movement on and off the treadmill to the floor and back again, so that you spend two sessions on each station, worked well.

I found the floorwork much more achievable than the sheer pace needed for the treadmill.

But all credit to me, I didn't stop once, and I'm sure that's because I didn't try to exceed my capabilities.

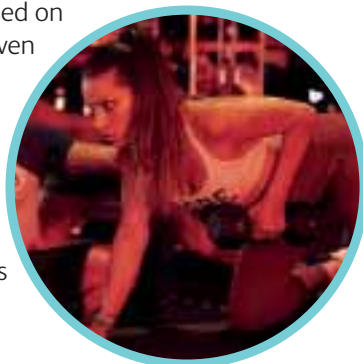
Surprisingly I actually found the weight press-ups, burpees, elbow to knee sit-ups and lunges pretty enjoyable.

I also have to admit, working out is better in the dark – there is something comforting about not being able to see yourself clearly – although there are mirrors covering every single wall so if you're hoping not to catch a glimpse of yourself, think again.

Time really flew during the class – that was possibly the most surprising part of the Barry's experience for me. You're so focused on the goal at hand that you don't even think to look at the clock.

When it was all over, I didn't feel like death – I actually felt sad the class had finished and that was an emotion I definitely wasn't expecting.

I can't believe I waited 10 years to do it, but now I have, I'm very glad.



In other news...

Health and beauty round-up

KALMAR

The founder of the holistic wellness brand, Karen Ruimy, has written a spiritual music album called *Soul Magic*, a collection of 10 songs that will put you in different soul moods. They promise to speak to your deepest self about your journey as a soul, to uplift and transform you. She worked with record producer, mixer and writer Tim Ross to produce this one-of-a-kind album.
27 Eaton Mews South



DR DAVID JACK

The specialist in rejuvenating aesthetic procedures has just opened a second clinic. New to this offering is the super quick and results-driven SkinTech studio – a facial bar offering four facials that take no longer than 45 minutes. A must-try is the Korean "glass skin" facial, £170, which uses a micropeel, ionised oxygen bubble mask, ultrasound and LED.
59 Ebury Street



ADEM

The home of exceptional hair colouring, haircuts and sustainable hair products, the salon has undergone a transformation of its own. Introducing a clean air system, which filters fresh air into the salon and expels old air through a series of pipes, Adem now has a living tree in the centre of the salon alongside handmade wooden elements in keeping with the nature-led ethos of the brand.
61 Ebury Street



Days in the sun

Michael Howard is a politician who has served as leader of the Conservative party. He lives in Pimlico with his wife, Sandra Howard, the former model and author. He shares his holiday memories and top travel destinations

BY ALICE CAIRNS

What is your earliest travel memory?

I was taken on our first family holiday immediately after the war, when I must have been about five years old, to Llandrindod Wells in mid Wales – we lived in south Wales at the time. The experience was slightly disfigured by the number of wasps we encountered, but I think notwithstanding that, we had quite an enjoyable family holiday.

The best holiday you've ever been on?

That's a bit tricky, and the answer isn't a single holiday but an annual trip. We go almost every year, for a week or 10 days, to the Caribbean island of Grenada. We stay in the same modest hotel, usually in the same room every year! We just love

Grenada – it's an extremely beautiful island with wonderful weather and very friendly people. We enjoy going to the same place every year – it means it's a sort of home from home for us.

What is your favourite city (other than London)?

I would probably have to say New York, because I lived there for seven months when I was a young man, so I know it better than any other city in the world other than London. It's a very exciting place to be. But I also love Venice, for its beauty, and sunny Melbourne. They're all very different, but those would be my top three.

Any holiday disasters?

Apart from the usual lost luggage and travel delays, the worst travel disaster I can remember is when we joined another family and took a cottage in mid Wales one summer. It rained every single day, so that when we eventually ventured outdoors, it was to spend our time on the beach in our anoraks. That was not an experience to be repeated!

A favourite travel souvenir?

We bring a jar of grapefruit marmalade home with us from Grenada every time we visit. It's absolutely delicious!

What's left on your bucket list?

We long to go to Easter Island. I've always been



VENICE





GRENADA

intrigued by the story of Easter Island – the monumental statues and the question of what happened to the civilisation that built them. That’s at the top of our bucket list, and although we’re getting on a bit, we still hope to get there.

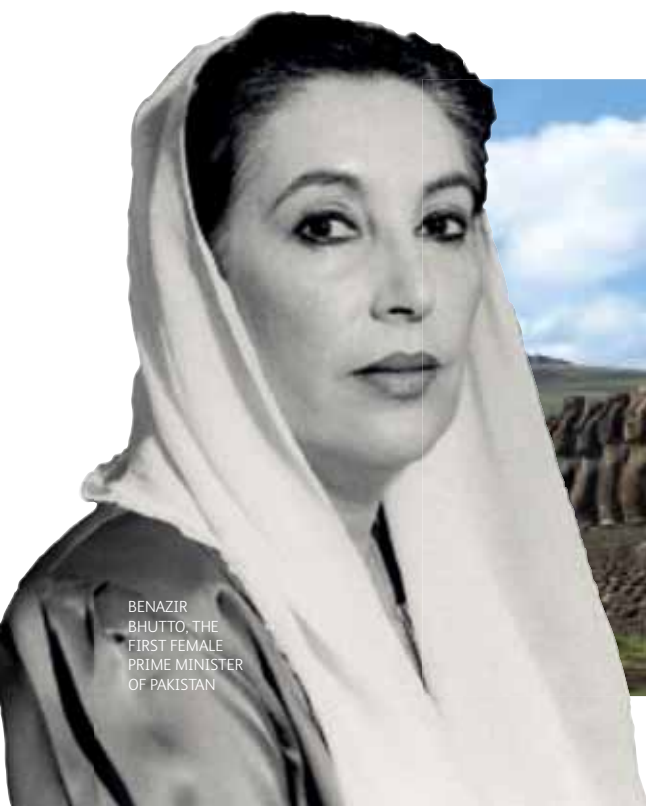
Which country has the best food?

I would say that I’ve never travelled somewhere where I’ve hated the food. Most cuisines have something to recommend them, or something good and inexpensive. But if I absolutely had to

choose, it would of course be France. The food there is absolutely wonderful.

Who is the most interesting person you’ve met on your travels?

I’ve been lucky enough to meet a lot of extraordinarily interesting people, especially when I travelled when I was in government, when I was a minister. I particularly remember meeting Benazir Bhutto, the first female prime minister of Pakistan. That’s something I’ll never forget.



BENAZIR BHUTTO, THE FIRST FEMALE PRIME MINISTER OF PAKISTAN



MOAI ON EASTER ISLAND



Susie Ind is the owner of Pimlico Flowers, based in Eccleston Square, which has provided fresh flowers locally for more than 30 years. She shares her favourite spots in Victoria and Westminster



How long have you worked in the area?

I started Pimlico Flowers over 30 years ago. I used to be a nurse, but then I decided I wanted to do something more artistic with my life. I love creating beauty using different colours, heights, textures and scents.

What do you love about the area?

I love how cosmopolitan it is – you get a lot of different types of people wanting flowers for all sorts of different events. It's an exciting place to work.

Your favourite places to eat locally?

The restaurants I like to frequent are O'Sole Mio on Belgrave Road, La Poule Au Pot on Ebury Street and Pizza Express on Moreton Street. There are so many good restaurants locally.

Your favourite places to visit locally?

Having been the daughter of a clergyman, I am somewhat wedded to churches in the area. I love St Gabriel's in Warwick Square, where I sing in the choral society – my next love after flowers is music. I also love



WESTMINSTER ABBEY



RATATOUILLE AND CASSOULET AT LA POULE AU POT

Westminster Abbey where I am an honorary steward, which of course is a great honour.

Your favourite places to buy flowers?

My favourite place for shopping for flowers is definitely Marks & Spencer in Cardinal Place, followed by Waitrose in Bressenden Place.

Then on very special occasions, or when I need something exotic, I will venture to Harrods.

The best flowers for Mother's Day?

My choice of flowers for Mothering Sunday would be hyacinths, tulips, narcissi and freesias, interspersed with greenery and catkins for this time of the year.



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