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Cover: Raffles at The OWO  
Right: Biscuiteers  
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### In the market

Black business owners took part in two special pop-up markets in Cardinal Place. From Black Business Owners, with Love was a collaboration between Victoria BID, Landsec and Pop Up Africa in honour of Black History Month. The markets featured a range of amazing products, from shea butter, jewellery and art to vegan Caribbean and Ghanaian street food.

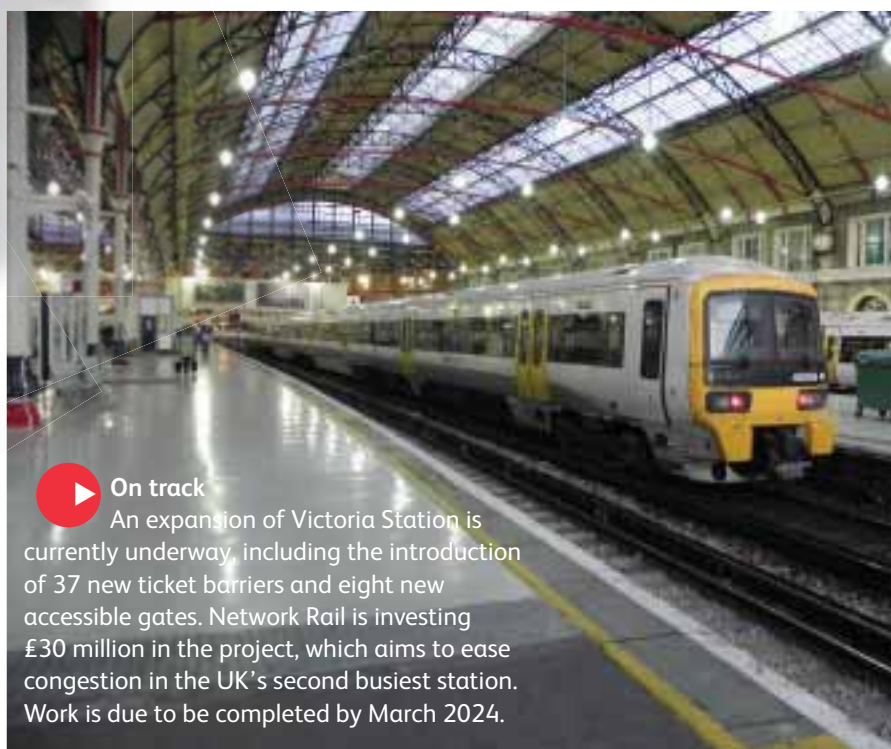


### Glitz and glam

Accessorize has opened its first ever jewellery-only concept store at 92 Victoria Street. Expect to find a fantastic range of jewellery items, including silver and gold pieces. Visit the piercing parlour where you can get a free ear piercing with any £18 pair of earrings, and take a sneak peek at the festive collection too.

## All the latest news from Victoria and the surrounding area

BY ALICE CAIRNS



### On track

An expansion of Victoria Station is currently underway, including the introduction of 37 new ticket barriers and eight new accessible gates. Network Rail is investing £30 million in the project, which aims to ease congestion in the UK's second busiest station. Work is due to be completed by March 2024.





### Good stuff

Good London has opened a pop-up store in Victoria Station. The brand specialises in beautiful preloved clothing and accessories, providing a sustainable alternative to fast fashion. Shoppers can expect to find high quality secondhand pieces as well as some one-of-a-kind vintage items. It's a stylish way to support the circular economy.



IMAGE: ALAMY



### St Margaret's remembers

A memorial for Charles Ignatius Sancho is being installed in St Margaret's Church. Sancho married his wife, Anne Osborne, at St Margaret's, and the couple baptised their eight children there. A writer, composer, actor and abolitionist, Sancho is thought to be the first man of African descent to have voted in a British general election and to have had an obituary published in national newspapers. He was buried in the churchyard which is now Christchurch Gardens.



### New name for local school

Eaton Square Sixth Form in Pimlico is changing its name to London Park School Sixth. The name change, which is due to take effect from September 2024, will also include the phased introduction of a new uniform. The head teacher, Dr Adrian Rainbow, said: "We're excited about the transformation as it underlines our commitment to providing the highest standards of education while offering additional resources and expertise."



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IMAGE: ANDREW WHITTUCK



## PRINCELY PORTRAITS

Discover more than 100 works of art by Hans Holbein the Younger dating from the court of Henry VIII. Holbein at the Tudor Court showcases sketches and portraits of iconic figures from history, from Anne Boleyn and Jane Seymour to Sir Thomas More and Mary Shelton. These extraordinary works of art can't be put on permanent display for conservation reasons, so this is your chance to take a look. *Until April 14, the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace*

## EDIBLE ARTWORK

Tate Britain is hosting a restaging of a major feminist artwork that has not been seen for 50 years. Bobby Baker's *An Edible Family in a Mobile Home* features five life-size sculptures made from cake, meringue and biscuits. The public will be able to steadily eat these sculptures, some of which are made from vegan cake, on the museum's south lawn. *Until December 3, then from March 8 to April 8, Tate Britain, Millbank*

# Winter events

From edible sculptures to festive screenings, there's plenty to keep you entertained on cold winter evenings

BY ALICE CAIRNS

## FESTIVE FAVOURITES

Visit the Curzon cinema this festive season to see feel-good seasonal classics on the big screen. On December 12, you can watch the Royal Ballet's twinkling production of *The Nutcracker*, complete with dazzling costumes and snow-dusted sets. On Christmas Eve, Curzon will hold a screening of the beloved Christmas favourite *It's a Wonderful Life*, and on Boxing Day you can see Greta Gerwig's Oscar-nominated *Little Women*. *58 Victoria Street*



IMAGE: HELEN MAYBANKS





### CHILD'S PLAY

Wild by Tart has collaborated with Tarka to host a monthly kids' club. While parents enjoy a leisurely Sunday lunch, children will enjoy developmental games that promote teamwork and creativity. The sessions end with stretching and breathing exercises, leaving kids feeling zen. Sessions cost £40 and run from 1-4pm.

December 10, 3-4 Eccleston Yards



### NINETIES REVIVAL

From January 11, a stage musical based on hit 90s movie *Cruel Intentions* is coming to the Other Palace theatre. Featuring music from Britney Spears, Boyz II Men, Christina Aguilera and more, it's a story of seduction, deception and romance. The show celebrates the film's 25th anniversary and will run for a 14-week season.

12 Palace Street



### FESTIVE FUN

Planning a spot of Christmas shopping in Cardinal Place? From 12-2pm on November 23, 28 and 30 and December 5 and 7, a traditional gospel choir will be performing Christmas carols. Enjoy a live soundtrack to your shopping trip or stop for a meal on one of the terraces to soak up the festive atmosphere.

Cardinal Place, Victoria Street

## Count down to Christmas with our seasonal events guide

BY ALICE CAIRNS

Christmas is coming, with plenty of festive events for your diary. Expect to see Christmas trees arrive in Christchurch, Whitehall and Victoria Tower gardens and outside Westminster Cathedral. These will all be illuminated on November 22, along with the glittering lights along Victoria Street.

The London Heritage Quarter is bringing a life-size gingerbread house to Victoria Station from December 7 to 10. Passersby will be able to enter a sweet seasonal wonderland, taking festive photos and receiving a free candy cane to get them



# Festive fun

in the Christmas spirit. On December 7 and 9, the gingerbread house will host a festive VIP: Father Christmas himself. Meet him from 12-4pm, during which time London HQ will also be raising money for St Vincent's Family Project via QR code donations.



Based in Westminster, the project supports young families to help them manage the pressures of parenting. It provides vulnerable families with invaluable resources such as creches, one-to-one support, therapy, courses and classes.

### SOME MORE FESTIVE EVENTS...

#### FOR MUSIC LOVERS

Don't miss the Christmas concert at Westminster Abbey on December 20. You'll see the world-renowned abbey choir, as well as harpist Anne Denholm, who will perform Benjamin Britten's *A Ceremony of Carols*.

#### FOR FOODIES

If you're searching for fresh produce for a festive feast, look no further than the Pimlico Road farmers' market, where sellers showcase everything from artisan cheeses to turkeys. Visit from 9am to 2pm on Saturdays.

#### FOR THEATRE GOERS

See a musical parody panto with a difference at the Other Palace theatre. *A Very Very Bad Cinderella* retells the beloved fairytale from the perspective of the ugly sisters. From December 1 to January 7.



# Boardroom, Bar and Beyond

Making it easy for men to dress well, Charles Tyrwhitt is smartening up Victoria. Store Manager, Mark Halliday, tells us more.

## For those who aren't familiar with Charles Tyrwhitt, how would you describe the brand?

At its core, our philosophy is simple – we want to help men look good and feel good. Whether that's in the office, working from home, or on the weekend, we've got the clothing for every dress code. Our store at Cardinal Place is the dream location for all kinds of local businessmen – they can pop in for a casual shirt or get measured up for a razor-sharp suit.

## Can local businesses benefit from your Victoria store?

We've got a huge range of local connections, and we offer exclusive discounts to our corporate friends regularly. Keeping it simple, it's normally just a code businessmen can use online or quote in-store for extra convenience. In particular, we help dress men who need to wear a uniform to work. Whether it's local restaurants, hotels, or front of house staff, we can supply shirts and ties for security teams for instance, and we can throw in a special offer while we're at it.



## What other things do you do to help local businesses?

The quality of our clothing speaks for itself, but we love to shout about our experts in-store! Our teams on the shopfloor are all trained up on tailoring, measuring and style advice, so customers can come in for one-on-one appointments or just have their general questions answered. Shopping online is easy and convenient, but sometimes, nothing beats an in-person chat.

## What's the next best step for a local business owner reading this?

We'd love to hear from you. Get in touch with us at [ukshop.Victoria@ctshirts.co.uk](mailto:ukshop.Victoria@ctshirts.co.uk) or pop into the store to speak to a member of the team about setting your company up as a corporate client.

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# Hallowed halls



Sir Winston Churchill is trying to catch my eye. In the office of Philippe Leboeuf, the French managing director of Raffles London at The OWO, a small porcelain figure of the former PM is perched on a shelf behind his desk.

"I'm quite an Anglophile," he says, sipping an espresso in front of a rain-soaked window that reveals a view of the hotel's courtyard. "It was given to me by a friend before I worked here. In Paris, my home, I have a bookshelf full of books on Churchill so it's funny that I'm now here."

It was here, in this very building at 57 Whitehall, that Churchill had an office during the Second World War (now the Haldane suite), where he would address his staff from the first-floor balcony, where he would routinely touch the mane of a lion's head at the foot of the grand staircase (for luck) and where he would plan the D-day landings.

This is a quite extraordinary place with a history to match. Built on the site of the old Whitehall Palace – the royal residence to monarchs including Henry VIII – it was

originally constructed for the British army (in Edwardian baroque splendour) in 1906. Grade II-listed, it has since witnessed world-changing events as the office of political and military leaders from David Lloyd George to Lord Kitchener.

Spies and intrigue abound. It was here (in the Haldane suite) that the secretary of state for war, John Profumo, entertained a 19-year-old Christine Keeler. It was here that the Secret Service Bureau was founded in 1909 – the origins for MI5 and MI6 – headed by Captain Mansfield Smith-Cumming, the man who would become the inspiration for Bond's "M" (he would test whether recruits flinched by plunging a paper-knife into his wooden leg).

Ian Fleming was inspired to write Bond after his time working as an officer in the naval intelligence department here and the building has featured in five Bond films since (at the end of *Skyfall*, Daniel Craig overlooks London from one of The OWO's turrets).

This delicious dossier has been incorporated into the hotel experience brilliantly. As part of the billion-pound project – an eight-year



## Philippe Leboeuf, managing director of Raffles London at The OWO, shows us round the magnificent new hotel

BY JONATHAN WHILEY



restoration masterminded by the Hinduja Group after it bought the lease from the Ministry of Defence – there are five “heritage suites” (once offices of some of the country’s leading figures and politicians, from Churchill to spy Christine Granville) and eight corner suites named after notable women and

female spies (from Nancy Astor to Christian Lamb, a Wren intelligence officer).

The latter is Philippe’s favourite in the entire 120-room hotel. “It’s part of the turret and prime space, they are circular and kind of sexier. It’s important to bring a bit of femininity because with the army, it was

quite a male environment. It’s a suite that we are finding commercially very successful.”

Despite a glittering launch – with a performance by tenor Andrea Bocelli and Andrew Lloyd Webber in front of royals such as Princess Anne – the moment that 102-year-old Lamb, one of the last surviving Wren officers, came to The OWO remains a highlight for Philippe.

“She came and opened her suite and it was one of the three most important moments in my career,” he says. The other two? Meeting

From left: the grand staircase, Café Lapérouse, the Churchill suite, Paper Moon

### In numbers

**14 floors**

**25 million bricks**

**27,000 sq ft**

Guerlain spa spanning four floors

**20 metres**

Considered the biggest hotel swimming pool in London

### 9 restaurants

Including three restaurants led by renowned chef Mauro Colagreco

### 3 Bars

Including the Spy Bar – an invite-only, unmarked speakeasy in rooms once used by MI5, with an Aston Martin DB5 behind the bar. Try the London sling – a take on Raffles’ famed Singapore sling or a Vesper martini, naturally. Strictly no pictures.

the Dalai Lama (“I felt like he was psychoanalysing me... the handshake, which was more than 20 years ago, left a big impression) and spending time with Michael Jackson. “This was at The Carlyle and it was like being with someone from outer space. I had to go to his suite and he had five of the same leather jackets and five pairs of all-black boots; I’ve never met anyone so meticulous.”

Philippe’s hospitality pedigree is impressive, with a CV that includes senior positions at Hôtel de Crillon in Paris, Mandarin Oriental Group, The Carlyle in New York and three years as general manager of Claridge’s.

Where does this particular role sit for him? “It’s a lifetime project,” he says. “This is something quite unique. There are so many facets and so many examples of things I have never seen [elsewhere].”

Is there pressure and how does he deal with that? “Yes it’s a pressure of course. I exercise a lot; I cycle, I swim. I’m lucky that now the hotel is open I’ve made a deal with the owners and I’ve moved into one of the residences [there are 85 in total, Michael Bloomberg owns one]. I have my independence on the residences’ side, so if I want to wear jeans then I can. But also, if you call me last-minute and you have a royal highness who wants to come in, then I’ll be here. And it happens – today I had the president of one of the major four banks in the world who came in to see if he can do his board meeting here.”

Despite the international interest, how important is the local market of Westminster and Whitehall? “Extremely,” he says. “We have nine restaurants for Londoners and even wellness with Pillar [a training and health brand founded by elite performance coach Harry Jameson with yearly membership available] is to bring in Londoners. People want to come to hotels with locals.”

“This is a lifetime project – it’s something quite unique”

*Philippe Leboeuf*

Philippe’s day usually starts at 8am – but can run from 6am to 11pm – and features a daily 9.15am briefing, “a bit military-style with about 20 of us”, he says.

“We review the day and the day before and if we have big things, the day after. We review revenue figures, arrivals, the main events and something that’s called ‘opportunities’. An opportunity could be spilling coffee on the carpet and ruining your shoes. I don’t like to call them glitches. If we have stained your shoes, how do we recover? There is no standard answer. In some cases we have to buy new shoes.

“I had a client yesterday who wanted running shoes so I proposed some brands and then you add what is not expected; so I added two pairs of socks. A little extra I call the five per cent.”

Philippe says that the most exciting thing is being able to build a team and work with young talent. “I’m hiring on attitude versus aptitude. If you don’t know how to make good coffee, I can teach you, but if you are talented but don’t have the attitude then maybe you have to look at different hotels.”

It’s a fitting line in these hallowed halls, for it was Churchill who once remarked: “Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference.”

## Still to come

### Langosteria

Italian fine dining with the promise of “some of the best seafood experiences in London”. Philippe hopes it will be open by May.

### Rooftop restaurant

Opening in February, Creative Restaurant Group and Michelin-starred chef and sushi master Endo Kazutoshi will open a high-end Japanese rooftop restaurant. There will be a sake bar on the ground floor and an eight-seat private dining room in a turret.



# Quick bites



Foodies rejoice: we bring you festive brunches, gourmet bus tours and whiskeys from around the world

BY ALICE CAIRNS

## Well-travelled

Great Scotland Yard Hotel has launched a whiskey passport for Sabin, its hidden whiskey bar. The bar has mixed cocktails using versions of the spirit from 10 far-flung destinations, including Taiwan, Finland, Canada and Japan. Your first cocktail and stamp are included with the price of the passport (£50), and any subsequent cocktails will be half price for passport holders. *3-5 Great Scotland Yard*



## Up on the roof

Market Halls has opened a winter roof garden, perfect for longer nights and colder weather. It's fully heated, with stacks of cosy blankets and twinkly lights. Grab a mulled drink and some festive street food and enjoy views across London's skyline. *191 Victoria Street*

## Take the biscuit

Biscuiteers is offering a range of festive activities to get you in the Christmas spirit. The seasonal afternoon tea includes a range of sweet treats inspired by the flavours of Christmas, including one of the brand's signature hand-iced biscuits. Icing lates give adults the chance to create their own box of five Christmas biscuits, accompanied by a glass of prosecco. Finally, families can attend a gingerbread-house icing class, in which your own private icer will teach you how to make your very own Hansel and Gretel DIY gingerbread home. *14-15 Eccleston Yards*



## Bullseye!

Flight Club will be holding a festive brunch social every weekend in December. You'll receive a festive cocktail on arrival, before enjoying two hours of darts with friends. Every participant will receive bottomless pizzas and a bottle of prosecco with carafes of orange juice – perfect for mimosas. Christmas jumpers are encouraged.

6 Sir Simon Milton Square



## Busy bees

St Ermin's is selling honey made by its 35,000 bees to raise money for charity. The bees live on the hotel's Victoria rooftop beside the kitchen garden, gathering pollen from some of London's major parks – as well as the gardens of Buckingham Palace. Each jar of honey costs £10, with profits going to the Bee Friendly Trust to support its mission of creating habitats for pollinators in urban spaces.

2 Caxton Street



## Go green

Brigit's Bakery is bringing back its Grinchmas afternoon tea bus tour. You'll soak up gorgeous views of central London, including Westminster Abbey, Big Ben and the Regent Street Christmas lights. Your Grinch-inspired afternoon tea will feature treats like green scones, "I hate Xmas" cupcakes and a frozen heart shortbread cookie, with vegan, vegetarian, halal and gluten-free options available.

6-7 Chandos Place





# Eat & drink Directory out & in



## CASA DO FRANGO

"Bringing the taste of the Algarve to SW1, the latest restaurant from Casa do Frango sits in the heart of central London in the buzzing Nova development – just across from Victoria Station and London's Theatreland, and moments from Buckingham Palace.

Set over two sun-soaked floors with abundant greenery, expansive windows and high ceilings, with alfresco dining on the terrace perfect for summer. A spacious, light-filled restaurant on the ground floor shares a view of the open charcoal grill and leads upstairs to a large mezzanine with its own bar."

**Casa do Frango**  
**2 Sir Simon Milton Square**  
**London**  
**SW1E 5DJ**

**Tel: 020 3943 7777**

**[casadofrango.co.uk](http://casadofrango.co.uk)**

**Groups & event enquiries: [events@casadofrango.co.uk](mailto:events@casadofrango.co.uk)**

## THE PEM

The Pem has introduced a new set lunch menu that promises exceptional value at just £35 for two courses. Crafted by acclaimed Chef Sally Abé, known for championing British flavours and produce, each dish has been inspired by the finest pickings of the season. Indulge in the rich flavours of Potage of Pumpkin and Saffron, the exquisite Venison Tartare and the earthy goodness of Roasted Ceps with Jerusalem artichoke. The set lunch menu is available alongside the a la carte, Wednesday – Friday, 12:00 pm – 2:00 pm.

**Conrad London St. James,**  
**22-28 Broadway, London SW1H 0BH**  
**02033018080**

**Nearest stations: St James's Park, Victoria and Westminster**

**[Thepemrestaurant.com](http://Thepemrestaurant.com)**



## WELCOME TO WESLEY'S!

Whether you're looking to catch up with a colleague or friends, or simply drop in to grab a bite on the go, Wesley's Cafe is the perfect place. Nestled in the heart of Westminster, our bright and airy independent café is the perfect location to relax and enjoy our delicious refreshments. With sustainably sourced ingredients, our dedicated team of chefs work hard to provide exciting offerings to entertain your taste buds, including a range of hot options, fresh soups, salads and sandwiches daily. Our on-site baker's sweet treats go hand-in-hand with our freshly brewed drinks. Come and check us out!

**[www.c-h-w.com/wesleys-cafe/](http://www.c-h-w.com/wesleys-cafe/)**

**[www.instagram.com/wesleyscafe/](https://www.instagram.com/wesleyscafe/)**

**Central Hall Westminster, Storey's Gate,**  
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## GREAT SCOTLAND YARD HOTEL

Experience a truly enchanting holiday season at Great Scotland Yard Hotel, where festive magic comes to life! The season inaugurates on November 27th with the launch of our multi-sensory Festive afternoon tea in The Parlour, a delightful collaboration with London's oldest perfumier "Floris London".

Join us for an unforgettable Christmas Eve at Ekstedt at The Yard by Michelin-starred chef Niklas Ekstedt which promises to be an exquisite celebration of flavors and traditions as well as our Christmas Lunch at The Yard, showcasing culinary excellence with a festive cheer.

If big celebrations need to be remembered, then ring in the New Year with a spectacular dinner at Ekstedt at The Yard, creating lasting memories at Great Scotland Yard Hotel.

## GREAT SCOTLAND YARD HOTEL

**3-5 Great Scotland Yard, London, SW1A 2HN**

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**Mobile: +44 (0) 7795 637 961**

**[www.greatscotlandyard.com](http://www.greatscotlandyard.com)**



## Spirit of Portugal

Casa do Frango has arrived in Victoria. It specialises in southern Portuguese dishes including authentic piri-piri chicken, grilled over wood charcoal and brushed with a traditional spice blend. The mezzanine is bookable for private events, parties and feasts for up to 100 guests.  
*2 Sir Simon Milton Square*



IMAGE: CHARLIE MCKAY



## Eat your greens

Healthy eating hub Tossed has a new home on Victoria Street. It specialises in tasty, customisable salad bowls and wraps, with plenty of veggie and vegan options. For every superfood salad purchased, Tossed will donate 50p to local sports clubs.  
*54 Victoria Street*

# What's new

An abundance of new openings to satisfy local foodies

BY ALICE CAIRNS

## Cafe culture

The Westminster Hotel has a new ground-floor cafe. Open every day from 7am, it serves up pastries, sandwiches, juices, cookies and snacks, as well as canned cocktails and pre-dinner tipples.  
*30 John Islip Street*



## Flavours of China

House of Ming restaurant has opened at St James' Court, a Taj Hotel. The menu is designed for sharing, with plenty of Sichuan and Cantonese-inspired dishes. Solo visitors (or those who prefer not to share) can select from the carefully curated single diners menu. There's also a tea sommelier and a tea trolley with a selection of white, green, black and oolong teas.  
*54 Buckingham Gate*



# Eat & drink Directory out & in



## BOISDALE OF BELGRAVIA

A renowned restaurant, bar, and live music venue - best known for its distinct Scottish theme and upscale atmosphere - offering a unique blend of dining, entertainment, and cultural experiences. Using only the finest British ingredients, their menu celebrates Scottish cuisine with a particular emphasis on high-quality seafood, game, and traditional dishes such as Haggis, Scottish Salmon & Oysters. Boisdale is famous for their extensive Scotch Whisky collection and their award-winning spirits & cocktail list. The venue features a secret back bar, a heated terrace where premium cigars are available to purchase and smoke, and a beautiful private dining room that can seat up to 20 people.

**Address:** 15 Eccleston St, London SW1W 9LX

**Phone:** 020 7730 6922

**Website:** [www.boisdale.co.uk](http://www.boisdale.co.uk)

## LONDON'S ORIGINAL SALAD BAR!

Founded in 2005, Tossed serve healthy and delicious food, made fresh, with love and their newest site just opened in Victoria street. With everything you need for a better lunch, however you choose to eat.

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**www.tosseduk.com**

**54 Victoria St, London, SW1E 6AJ**

**07519 541455**



## UNI RESTAURANT

UNI Restaurant, nestled in Belgravia's Tophams Hotel, boasts a vibrant and modern atmosphere, ideal for social outings, dates, or meetings. Its elegant, welcoming interior complements the impressive Japanese-Peruvian fusion cuisine. Customers love the tantalising sushi and dishes like ceviche, tiraditos, and miso black cod. With friendly staff, a comprehensive wine list, and various cocktails, UNI provides a distinctive dining experience in Belgravia.

**T: 020 7730 9267**

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## HEFAURE

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Tjeerd Bakker is senior horological conservator at the Royal Collection Trust and is part of a team that looks after the collection's 1,600 clocks – including those inside Buckingham Palace

AS TOLD TO ALICE CAIRNS

# Tick tock

As with any career, people come to horology for different reasons, but it may have been a combination of a curiosity for learning how different things work, a preference for working with your hands, or having an eager eye for detail and precision. You are able to train as a horologist in the UK, with different courses specialising in clockmaking, watchmaking, servicing and timepiece conservation.

When the clocks change in all the royal residences, we aim to have the public-facing clocks like the turret clocks in St James's Palace and the Royal Mews at Buckingham Palace done first. These clocks fulfil a public duty and ensure that the correct time is displayed for everyone.

Moving the clocks back takes a lot more time than moving them forward – the clock change at Buckingham Palace this autumn required about 16 hours in total. There are many clocks in Buckingham Palace that chime each hour, or



even every 15 minutes. We take extra caution to make sure that the mechanisms do not lock themselves in the process, as most clocks need to be moved forward 11 hours, or sometimes even 23 hours as clocks might have calendar mechanisms inside.

The Royal Collection contains over 1,600 clocks, some of which are highly complex timepieces that require a long time to work on. One of my favourite clocks is the mantel clock in the Blue Drawing Room in Buckingham Palace, which can be seen as part of a visit to the State Rooms. Made by Jean-Antoine Lépine, it displays almost everything you would want to know about calendars and time-keeping. It was acquired by George IV and, with its complex mechanism, it is one of just a handful of clocks like it in the world – none of them, to my knowledge, are exactly the same.

Another is a four-sided table clock made by Christopher Pinchbeck. Each of the dials



Left: Tjeerd Bakker adjusts an ornate timepiece  
Below: two more of the Royal Collection Trust's historic clocks



displays something different: there is a perpetual calendar, one shows the high tides at trading ports around the world, another shows a heliocentric orrery [a mechanical model of the solar system], there's one for sunrise and sunset, and another displays the equation of time, among other things. It also chimes every 15 minutes. It is a marvel of craftsmanship and was partly designed by George III and Sir William Chambers, the architect of Somerset House.

At the beginning of my career, it was very nerve-racking to handle such complex and valuable objects. I recall being 19 years old and training to be a horological conservator when I was presented with a clock made by Thomas Tompion, an English clockmaker whose timepieces are rare and valuable. With pieces like this you can't afford to make a mistake. But all the items we work with get the same care and attention. I understand now that when you respect the object and trust your training and

experience, every day is a chance to learn and see something new.

Old clocks are timepieces made by skilled craftsmen in the past. They create sounds that have been the same for decades or sometimes hundreds of years. Hearing them makes us think of the clocks' previous owners or users. These people would have seen and heard the same things. In a digital age where things have become more and more silent, I believe it is not only my job to conserve the mechanisms, but also the sounds and therefore the experience we can all have from these great pieces.

# An optimistic life

Meet Varun Kapoor who runs Optimiser, a  
Victoria-based tech business

## **Why is Victoria the right base for Optimiser?**

I've been based in Victoria for my entire professional life, ever since I moved to England from India. This has been my place, my base. There are so many great businesses, and the area has amazing connectivity. It's a mix of everything, isn't it? It's the royal family, politics, big offices and hotels and shops and markets. It has it all. I love this place, to be honest.

## **What services do you offer?**

Optimiser offers an all-in-one, streamlined business platform which can be tailored to your requirements. We help businesses in a wide range of sectors, from charities and event management to sales and hospitality. We love working with local businesses across Victoria and Westminster.

## **QUICK FIRE**

### **Your favourite spot for dinner?**

I like Nando's in Cardinal Place, and also Great Scotland Yard Hotel. I think what they've done with that place is amazing.

### **For a drink?**

I like The Albert on Victoria Street. It's a Grade II listed building surrounded by all these office blocks – it looks amazing. It really shows the diversity of the area!

## **For meetings?**

The Wellington Hotel in Vincent Square. I like to sit outside in the garden when it's sunny. Pretty much all my clients stay there too because it's so convenient for Victoria and St James's Park stations.

*Optimiser.com*

Clockwise from Varun Kapoor! Great Scotland Yard Hotel, The Wellington Hotel and The Albert



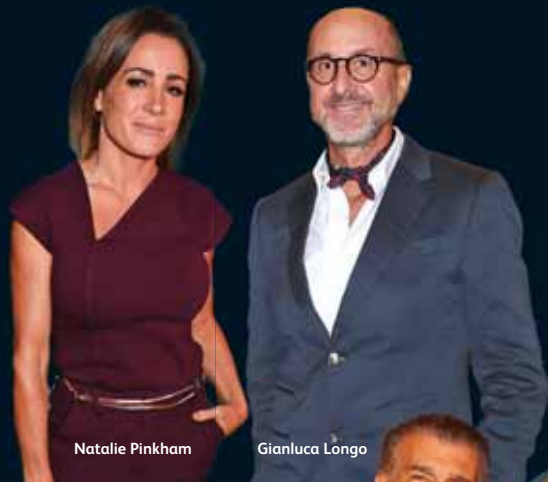
**“The area has amazing connectivity. It's a mix of everything, isn't it?”**





# Checking in

The launch of Raffles London and The OWO was a suitably glamorous affair



Natalie Pinkham

Gianluca Longo



Edoardo Mapelli  
Mozzi and Princess  
Beatrice



Steve Varsano and  
Lisa Tchengui



Anne, Princess Royal



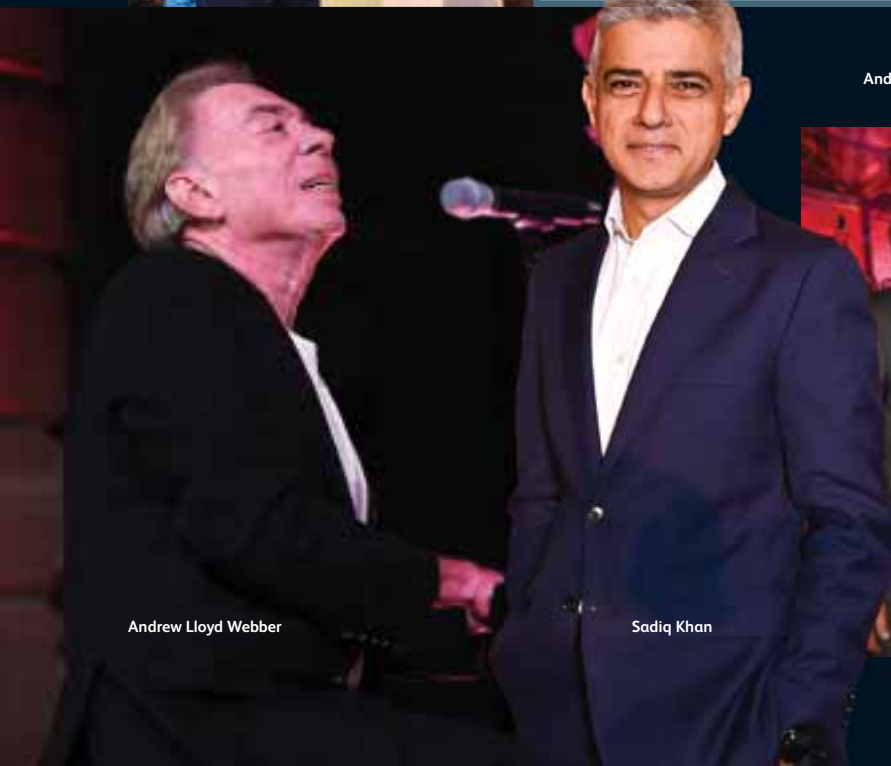
Sébastien  
Bazin

## New beginnings

Celebrities, politicians and members of the royal family attended the opening of Raffles London and The OWO. Princess Anne opened the doors of the historic building, and guests enjoyed live entertainment from music icons Andrea Bocelli and Andrew Lloyd Webber.



Andrea Bocelli



Andrew Lloyd Webber

Sadiq Khan



Giorgio Veroni, Tamara  
Beckwith, Patricia Caring  
and Richard Caring



# Giving back

Christmas is here, and there's no better time to do your bit for the community. Stephen Spavin, community services manager at Age UK Westminster, tells us about the support it offers to older people

AS TOLD TO ALICE CAIRNS

## What does Age UK Westminster do?

Age UK Westminster provides a range of services to support Westminster residents aged 50 and over to live rich and fulfilling lives.

An important element of what we do is to provide free and confidential information and advice. This can be anything from checking benefit entitlements and assisting with the applications to helping with buying new furniture or replacing broken fridges. If the team aren't able to help, they are great at finding the organisation that can.

As well as ensuring that people have enough money to live off, we put a big emphasis on reducing







the negative impacts of loneliness and isolation. These issues can affect all ages but we are really aware that they can happen with ageing.

I oversee the activities and warm spaces programmes, ensuring that residents have a wide range of opportunities to meet new people, enjoy social connections, maintain their physical fitness, get digitally connected and have fun. We have specialised monthly drop-in and weekly groups for people living with dementia.

#### **Why is Christmas such an important time for you?**

Christmas can be such a challenging time if you live alone. It can feel like the whole world except for you is busy with family gatherings and having fun. We have a long-running Christmas meal project that we run with the wonderful generosity of St Paul's school. A warm meal and a friendly chat is delivered on Christmas Day to some of our most vulnerable clients.

We also have a packed programme of lunches and afternoon teas and festive fun in the month of December. That way, even if people are not doing anything on Christmas Day, they still have that chance to have fun and enjoy the magic of this time of year.

#### **What about people who struggle to leave home?**

We are aware that sometimes health issues can make getting out more and more challenging. That's where our befriending programme comes

in. We match volunteers to residents who are housebound or struggle getting out or just need the company of friendship. Some of the matches are telephone calls, others are visits and some of them are going for a walk. And for residents who are housebound and want to maintain or improve their physical fitness, we have a specialised exercise-at-home programme.

#### **How can we help?**

We are always looking for volunteers – whether it is supporting the enquiries telephone line in the office, which is in the Queen's Park area, helping out with the digital inclusion sessions or becoming a befriender. Volunteers really are the life-force of Age UK Westminster. At the moment we are particularly looking for individuals who have one or two hours a week available during the day on weekdays.

#### **What's next for Age UK Westminster?**

In 2024 we want to really develop our presence in Victoria and Pimlico. We will be launching a digital inclusion drop-in session at Pimlico library. We can help with all sorts of questions, from getting set up on your digital device for the first time and getting to grips with Google, to getting connected to old friends and family who live overseas via WhatsApp. The digital list is endless and we are aware how much of a barrier that not being confident using the internet is increasingly becoming.

We are also planning an exercise class and a lunch club in the area – and that's just for starters. We are always looking for new partner venues and to hear from residents to know what it is they want.

#### **Why is it so important to change our attitude to ageing?**

Getting older can bring challenges, but it can also be a time to do the things that you forgot to get round to when you were younger. There are lots of opportunities to try new things, meet new people and have new adventures. They say "youth is wasted on the young". Getting older gives you the advantage of experience and knowing how to make the most of the day. Sometimes it's not so much the physical challenges that age can bring that are the issue, but the attitudes of society. Our befrienders tell us how much they learn and how much they enjoy the chance to spend time with their befriendees. They also tell us how the years disappear when you connect: age is just a number.

*To get in touch, email [enquiries@ageukwestminster.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@ageukwestminster.org.uk) or call 020 3004 5610 (Monday to Friday, 10am-2pm)*

## Gift guide



### Lush

The Wow set, £195, features 32 Christmas products, including the snow-fairy shower gel, mini cinnamon-roll bubble bar and candy-cane lip butter. As Christmas gifts go, this really is a wow.

**UNIT 42B, BUCKINGHAM  
PALACE ROAD**

### The Guardsman

The festive afternoon tea, £75 per person, includes turkey sandwiches, a white chocolate snowman, orange and cranberry scones and a glass of Mumm Cordon Rouge.

**1 VANDON STREET, DECEMBER 1  
TO JANUARY 2**



### Sweaty Betty

The Power 7/8 gym leggings, £88, in the new green brushstroke Leo print, are a favourite multi-sport legging for workouts. Flattering on the legs and bum, they are quick-drying and sweat-wicking.

**90 VICTORIA STREET**



### Caorunn

For the spirit lovers, this Scottish gin, £29.50, will become a firm favourite for all your future cocktails. With botanicals such as rowan berry, dandelion, bog myrtle, coul blush apple and heather, this dry, fruity gin is a winner.

**WAITROSE, BRESSENDEN PLACE**



### Monsoon

Anyone who receives the Gracie bow midi dress in gold, £110, will love wearing it through the festive season and beyond. Even better, this metallic dress of dreams was made with sustainable raw materials.

**UNIT 32, VICTORIA STATION**



### KVD

The Moongarden vegan eyeshadow palette, £38, is the only palette you'll need for the season. It has a choice of 12 bold metallics and matte shades to suit any outfit.

**BOOTS, 107 VICTORIA STREET**





## WineWeaver

Wine poured into the Black Velvet wine aerator, £24.99, immediately opens up. The softened tannins make for a more pleasurable drinking experience.

**83 VICTORIA STREET**



## FOR HIM

### Curzon cinema

A Class membership, £65, will make any film buff's Christmas, with five free tickets a year and discounts on extra tickets, food and drink and home cinema rentals.

**58 VICTORIA STREET**



### Hermanos

This tasting kit, £46 for 100g, is sure to wake up any coffee aficionado with its selection of six coffees – while also supporting Colombian farmers.

**UNIT 21, TERMINUS PLACE**



# Stocking surprises

The best Christmas gifts from local shops

BY SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS

### Charles Tyrwhitt

Socks are always a winner when it comes to Christmas gifts, and this Money Doesn't Grow on Trees pair, £10.95, will be a hit with dads, grandads and husbands alike.

**UNIT 3, CARDINAL PLACE**



### Molton Brown

Mesmerising oudh Accord & Gold, £120 for 100ml, is a heady mix of saffron, black tea, vanilla and oudh that makes for a memorable scent encased in a refillable glass vessel.

**227 REGENT STREET**

### Sorel

The footwear guaranteed to last all season, the Explorer II waterproof ankle boots, £125, with waterproof leather, microfleece inside and rubber soles, make this a gift that keeps on giving.

**JONES BOOTMAKER, UNIT 19A, CARDINAL PLACE**



## Otherworld

For all the tech kids, this is a must-visit virtual reality space, with 16 of the world's best VR games and experiences – from partying on a beach to shooting zombies. Gift tickets cost £34.50 for 55 minutes.

**85 BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD**

## Clarks

Cool, classic, timeless, the Wallabee boot, £80, is a great choice of shoe for on-the-go kids, with a breathable lining and soft suede for ample flexibility.

**149 VICTORIA STREET**



## Biscuiteers

How wonderful to see kids' faces light up at the sight of the Biscuiteers Advent calendar, £125. Featuring 24 beautifully decorated festive biscuits, what better way to get in the Christmas spirit.

**14-15 ECCLESTON YARDS**

## Jellycat

When it comes to toys, they don't get much cuter than the Toastie Amuseable Avocado, £22. Any kid (or adult) would love to have this fun toy to bring some hugs and cheer.

**SCRIBBLER, 125 VICTORIA STREET**

## FOR KIDS



## Specsavers

Inspired by Disney's *Encanto*, these new round eyeglasses, £64, are perfect for any kids you know who want to conjure their inner Mirabel, with green floral arms, green rims and a gold metal bridge.

**1 CATHEDRAL WALK**



## Waterstones

In *Sparkle* by Lakita Wilson, £14.99, aspiring star Sparkle Moore, 12, is diagnosed with alopecia. Find out how she navigates school and home life with this new challenge while continuing her journey to stardom.

**88 VICTORIA STREET**



# Directory

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“The way we work has changed enormously in the last few years,” says Ko Makabe of KPF Architects.

“When it came to creating a new office space for Victoria – in such an amazing part of London, at the heart of the city – we knew that we had to think outside the box.”

Ko is part of the team developing 105 Victoria Street, a brand-new space that reimagines what an office building could look like. From an urban farm to a central cycling ramp and an open village square, it’s a far cry from the characterless cubicles or corporate meeting rooms that many of us associate with workplaces.

“People now have choices about whether they come to the office – and many are opting not to return at all,” explains Ko.

“Part of that is because office design doesn’t suit them. With 105 Victoria Street, we wanted to design a place where people would want to be. That meant putting wellbeing first, and also integrating the building into the surrounding community so that it served a genuine neighbourhood need, rather than feeling cut off.”

# Building a better

Instead of a lobby, 105 Victoria Street will feature an open-plan “village square” that will be open to the public 24/7, with space for independent shops and a multi-purpose auditorium.

“This is a versatile space that we hope can be adapted depending on the season: for example, it could be used for fashion shows, theatre performances, music events, farmers’ markets and Christmas villages. We know that there are lots of schools in the area, so in the basement we’re developing a basketball court where schoolchildren can play.”

Ko hopes that this new, community-focused approach to design will help office workers feel happier and more connected.

“Buildings should be versatile and adaptable. They should feel like part of the neighbourhood. We wanted to invite people into 105 Victoria Street, rather than creating a space that is closed off or inaccessible.”

As well as promoting connection to the local community, 105 Victoria Street was designed to be sustainable. If all goes to plan it will be the largest office building in the UK to achieve carbon net zero, thanks to a range of design features including the reuse of greywater from

showers, high efficiency lighting and appliances, recycled building materials and a biodiverse green roof.

“It’s no good creating buildings that don’t perform well over time,” says Ko. “We’ve put sustainability at the heart of this project so that we can look towards the future. We’ve thought about the environment in every step of the process – for example, we tried to recycle and reuse as much of our materials as possible,





## Architect Ko Makabe tells us about an exciting new development coming to 105 Victoria Street

BY ALICE CAIRNS

# future

105 VICTORIA STREET: DBOX COURTESY KPF

including using waste materials from other industries – like film sets.

“We also wanted to make it as easy as possible for people using the office to make sustainable choices. That’s why we provide a central ramp for bikes, which will allow people to cycle through the building, and we have lots of bicycle parking spaces as well as showers and lockers for cyclists.”

One of the most striking features of the design is its abundance of green terraces, which will allow office workers on almost every level of the building to have access to an outside space complete with abundant plant life. The planting strategy is being carefully developed to provide dappled shade in summertime, to support local wildlife and to allow for beautiful views of the surrounding landmarks. A “walk and talk path” will snake around the building, allowing workers to take meetings outside or go for a stroll to clear their heads.

**“We’ve thought  
about the  
environment in  
every step of the  
process”**

*Ko Makabe*



On the top floor there will be an urban farm, with removable planted crates for growing crops and herbs that can be used in the building.

“We know that access to greenery makes people happier,” Ko explains. “We hope people will use the outside spaces in lots of different ways – perhaps for yoga classes with a view and alfresco events.

“We are aware that this building will be in a very important part of London, and we’ve done everything we can to make it sensitive to the site. We’ve used materials that should blend in with the surrounding buildings – for example, the richness of red brick and terracotta tiles – and we’ve tried to maximise daylight to bring as much natural light as possible into the building. Our hope is that this new, sustainable building will become a place where people love to spend time.”



## MAKEUP: SMUK

Makeup is often people's achilles heel, especially for those who are time-poor, but luckily there are artists at SMUK who can create your ultimate party look for you. Using organic and eco-friendly products, the team make sure they listen to your suggestions and tailor the look to not just your features but your outfit too.

*From £60 for day look, 20-21 Eccleston Yards*

Get ready for party season  
with these brilliant  
beauty boosts

BY SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS

# Christmas party prep



## BODY: Temple Spa

The Outer Glow is a face and body exfoliation treatment that will get your skin sparkling. The scrub leaves the skin soft and hydrated and also helps with circulation to get you through the colder nights. Perfect before a Christmas party.

*From £70, Taj Suites and Residences,  
51 Buckingham Gate*

## SKIN: Dr David Jack

Get your skin looking healthier and younger quicker with Dr David Jack's Mesotite. This tri-layer treatment combines three non-surgical techniques – dermaplaning, mesotherapy and Forma RF – that exfoliate and resurface the skin, inject it with vitamins, minerals and amino acids and use radiofrequency to tighten and lift the face.

*£450, 59 Ebury Street*







## HAIR: Adem

Adem has you covered for all your hair needs. Definitely book in for a hair treatment – either a scalp treatment or a gloss – before you go for a colour, cut service or blow-dry. Owner Adem's blow-drys are second to none, so even if this is all you have time for before the Christmas party, make sure you book.

*Blow-drys from £55,  
61 Ebury Street*



## NAILS: Townhouse Victoria

Party season means it's time to get those nails twinkling. Townhouse Victoria specialises in nail art – perfect for this time of year when it's the bolder, the better. Whether it's a glitter nail, festive holly or stars, just ask beforehand for the bespoke nail art option. The treatment to get is the simultaneous mani-pedi – it's the full works with two technicians pampering you. Great if you want to save precious time.

*From £42, 129 Victoria Street*

## LASHES AND BROWS: Browfique

You won't regret the brow and lash lift at Browfique, which lasts for up to eight weeks for an effortless look that can be dressed up or down depending on your outfit or occasion. Technicians pay close attention to the shape of your brow and also the length of your lash to make sure that the end result is something that looks natural and suits your face.

*£151, 20-21 Eccleston Yards*



Selena Radia is head of retail operations at Change Please, whose new coffee shop in Cardinal Place trains people experiencing homelessness to become baristas

BY ALICE CAIRNS

**Tell us a bit more about Change Please.**

We're a coffee shop and social enterprise, providing people experiencing homelessness with training and employment.

**Why is Victoria the right place for your latest coffee shop?**

It's so central with amazing transport links, so we're able to meet so many new customers from all walks of life. It's important to us that lots of people come through our doors, meet our trainees and rethink some of the assumptions they might hold about homelessness. Cardinal Place is always bustling and there are so many brilliant shops and businesses around us. We feel like part of a community.

**Have you had support from the local community?**

Absolutely! When we opened we were joined by the lord mayor of Westminster, Cllr Patricia McAllister, and the MP for the Cities of London and Westminster, Nickie Aiken. They welcomed us to the area.

**Your favourite place for a meal?**

When I've been working at our Victoria shop, I sometimes like to treat myself by going out for



dinner afterwards at Zizzi in Cardinal Place. I get pasta and garlic bread with mozzarella. It may not be the healthiest but it tastes amazing!

**Where do you like to shop?**

You can often find me in the Marks & Spencer in Cardinal Place and also in Zara on Victoria Street. Cardinal Place generally is a great place to shop – it's where I'll be looking for Christmas presents.

**Your favourite local charity?**

We actually have close links with the Passage, which is based in Carlisle Place. We both work to combat homelessness and it's great to be close to them so that we can collaborate and share ideas.

**Where would you spend an hour in the local area?**

I would visit Westminster Abbey, or take a stroll in St James's Park. The area has so much history. A walk in St James's Park always helps to clear my head.



From top: Cllr Nickie Aiken and Cllr Patricia McAllister with Change Please founder Cemal Ezel; sweater, £35.99 from Zara; Zizzi in Cardinal Place



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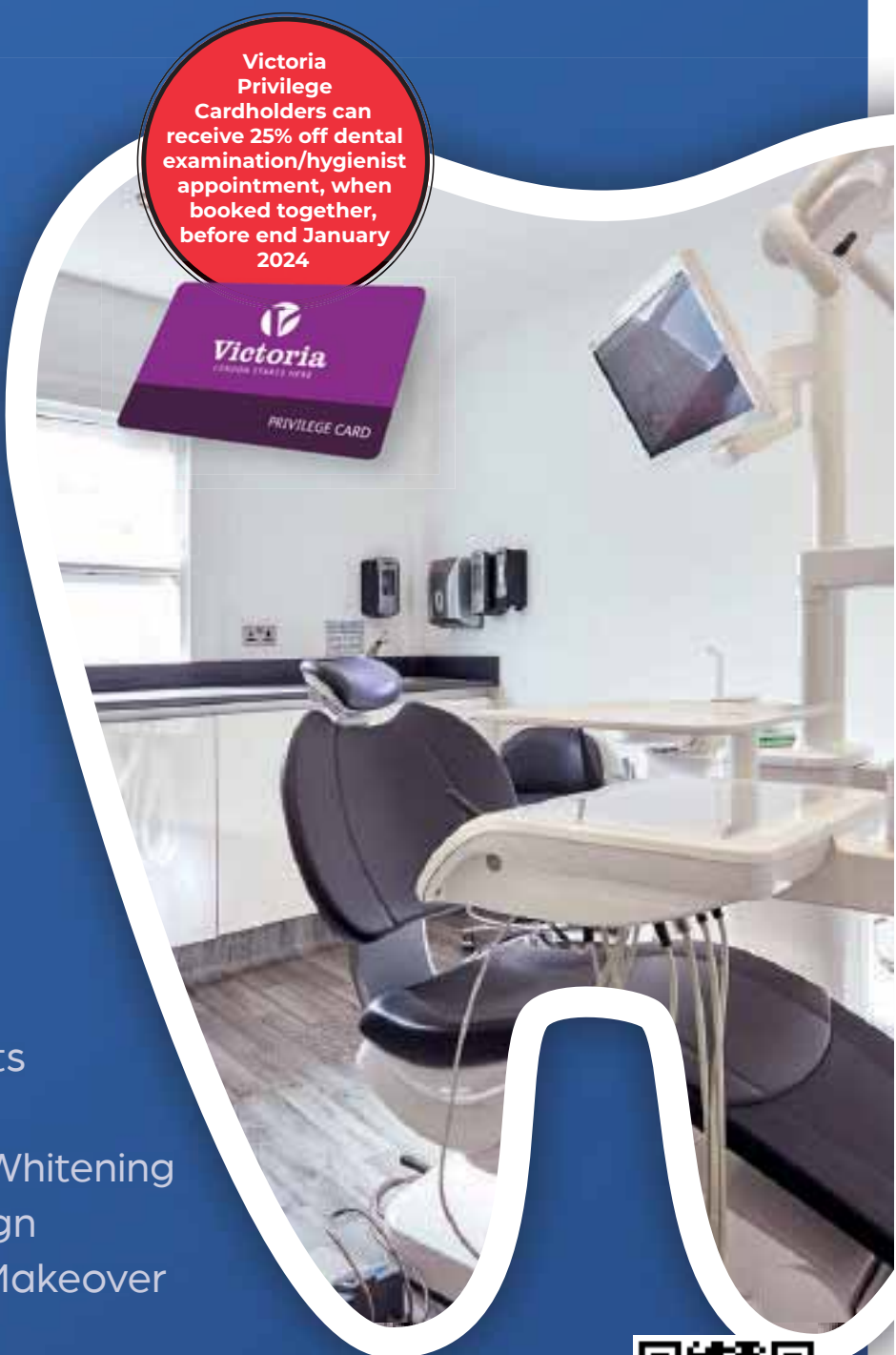
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