



DESTINATION:

CHRISTMAS

CALLING AT:



PREZZO





next



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DRY



Get stuck into some delicious new fare at the Ivy's Victoria outpost or salads with a twist at Urban Greens, while reusable lunchboxes pack an eco punch at Tachbrook Market



Crowdpleasing all-day brasserie chain The Ivy Collection is set to open in Victoria on November 12 with a striking 292-guest restaurant.

Critically acclaimed Martin Brudnizki Design Studio has consulted on the interiors with artwork inspired by Buckingham Palace set among leather banquettes.

Open seven days a week in the former Jamie's Italian site, it will serve modern British classics and 'internationally inspired' dishes across breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner.

"We hope to provide an exciting, yet relaxed environment." said Ivy Collection managing director Baton Berisha. 66 Victoria Street



A star-studded 'The Art of Wishes' Gala took place at Lindley Hall at the Royal Horticultural Halls in Westminster to raise money for children with critical illness around the world.

David Walliams was master of ceremonies for the event to mark the launch of Frieze London with entertainment and auctions to raise money for charity, Make-A-Wish.

Hosted by its UK patron, philanthropist Batia Ofer, guests included Mary McCartney, Georgina Cohen and Lydia Forte.



Cllr Tim Mitchell with a CauliBox

A lunchbox scheme, the first of its kind in the UK, has been launched in Westminster to cut the use of thousands of takeaway cartons.

Westminster City Council set up the trial scheme to help hot food traders at Tachbrook Market reduce their waste.

Users pay a £5

deposit and are given a membership number, which they use to collect their lunch in a 'CauliBox' participating food stall.

Once finished, they drop the box off at a collection point for it to be cleaned. Boxes, from China, can be used up to 500 times and are made from bamboo and recyclable polypropylene.

To register interest, visit wearecauli.com/register



The Lanesborough Club & Spa is a private members' health and fitness club where time ticks to an alternative tune. Here, world-renowned fitness regimes, nutritional programmes, spa and beauty treatments are bespoke, allowing for an optimal state of wellbeing.

Welcome to the epitome of tranquillity, where high octane lives find much needed rest and relaxation. Quote "Victoria" when enquiring.



A mindful art experience has launched in Victoria, exploring the link between creativity, mental health and wellbeing.

MasterPeace, in Eccleston Yards, was founded by 27-year-old entrepreneur Zena El Farra. "MasterPeace is a social enterprise with a mission to raise money for schools, alongside our wellbeing agenda," she said. "For every adult taught at MasterPeace, we aim to help fund a creative arts class for a child in a local school facing funding cuts."

Open to beginners, guests can use MasterPeace's light-based technology, 'hacks', projecting a photograph from their smartphones on to their canvas and painting directly on to the light.

A schedule of nearly 200 sessions take place per month, from 10am to 10pm every day of the week. Alongside MasterPeace, a curated art gallery was recently unveiled showcasing the work of award-winning artists.

12 Eccleston Yards



Three friends who met at university have shunned their respective corporate career paths to set up a new food business.

Urban Greens, in Victoria's Palmer Street, was set up in response to a growing trend for interesting salads in Scandinavia and the east coast of the United States.

"We want to reinvent what Londoners believe a salad is," co-founder Rushil Ramjee told *Victoria* magazine. "We focus on high quality ingredients and there is a Nordic twist to what we do with marination and pickling. It is about honest food, no frills and no fuss."

20 Palmer Street



A housekeeper at St Ermins Hotel in Westminster has picked up a prestigious industry accolade for her tireless work.

Ankica Korzelius was named 'Housekeeper of the Year' in the AA Hospitality Awards, which took place at Grosvenor House in September.

It was a successful night for the historic hotel, which also received four red stars as part of the ceremony.



Plans to move Victoria coach station have been scrapped by Transport for London.

The layout of the Grade-II listed terminal, which serves 14 million people a year, will be altered instead and customer facilities will be upgraded.



BAROQUE 'N' ROLL

For the first time ever, a show dedicated to baroque art of the later 17th century will take up residence at Tate Britain this winter.

From the restoration of Charles II to the death of Queen Anne, the late Stuart period was a time of momentous change for the country, and British Baroque Power and Illusion explores the magnificence of art and architecture at the time. Running from February 5 to April 19, the exhibition features work by leading artists of the day, including Peter Lely, Godfrey Kneller and James Thornhill.

For more information visit tate.org.uk

Winter events

Banish the winter blues with a festive night out at the likes of Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral and the Curzon Victoria

FEEL FESTIVE AT THE ABBEY

Handel's much-loved oratorio *Messiah* is synonymous with Christmas and what better place to experience a performance than at Westminster Abbey.

On December 3, the choir will be accompanied by St James' Baroque ensemble, conducted by James O'Donnell. It's one of a trio of festive events, including the Christmas Concert on December 12, offering seasonal choral works, readings and carols. Christmas Meditation on December 15 includes a brief service, a reading of the nativity, and a performance of Benjamin Britten's A Ceremony Of Carols.

For more information visit westminster-abbey.org

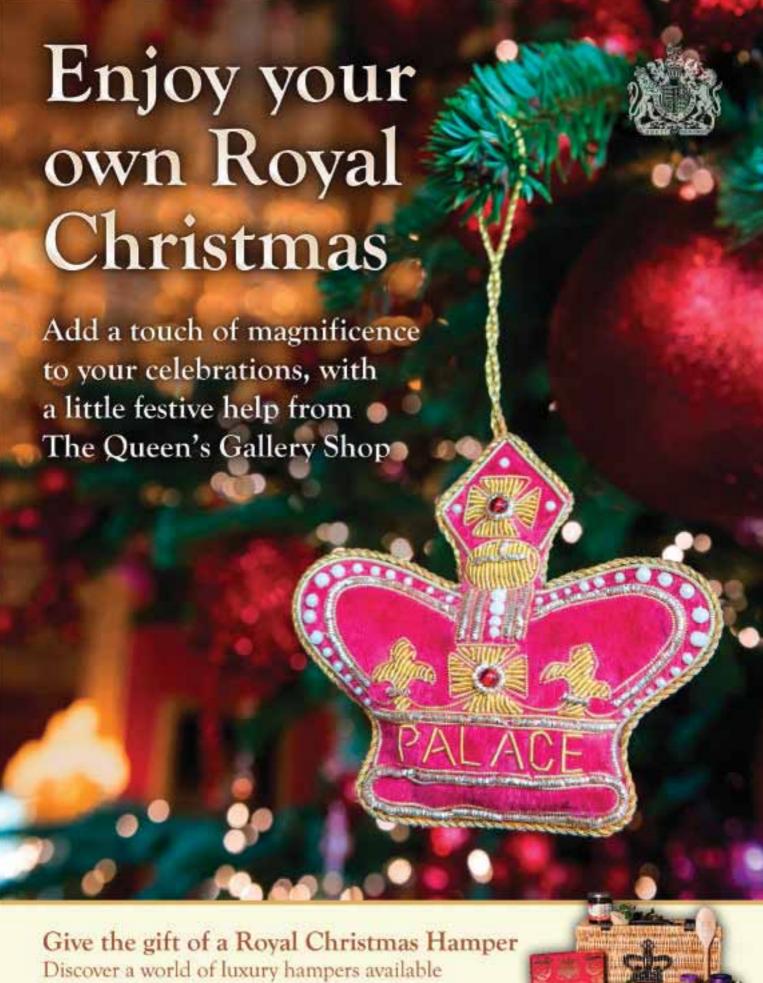
BALLET SCREENINGS

A double helping of Tchaikovsky's timeless classic ballet *The Nutcracker* comes to the Curzon Victoria for Christmas, with screenings of versions by the Royal Opera House and the Bolshoi.

In a pre-recorded screening on December 15, the Bolshoi's rising star soloist Margarita Shrainer embodies Marie's innocence and enchantment, alongside principal dancer Semyon Chudin. Two days later, the ballet will be performed again by the ROH and Royal Ballet, featuring exquisite festive stage designs and captivating dancing.

To book visit curzoncinemas.com





exclusively online at www.royalcollectionshop.co.uk



Ring out the bells! Christmas is just around the corner at Victoria Place shopping centre, where the popular snow globe attraction will make a welcome return.

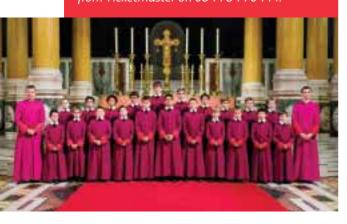
The winter wonderland will take centre stage from December 9 to 12, when it will be open to the public to enjoy and take pictures from 11am to 3pm.

The Victoria and Victoria Westminster BIDs are also hosting an online advent calendar from December 1 to 25 with prizes, promotions and events on offer from local businesses. Keep checking the BID's website, victoriabid. co.uk, to be in with a chance of winning an early Christmas present.

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

Start the festive holiday off on the right note at the annual Christmas Celebration concert at Westminster Cathedral.

A mix of readings, congregational carols with the orchestra, and choral pieces are on the programme, led by conductor Martin Baker. The world-famous cathedral will be illuminated by candle light for the concert, which runs on December 18 and 19, 7.30pm. Tickets are available from the gift shop or from Ticketmaster on 0844 844 0444.





The courtyard of Eccleston Yards will be transformed into a glittering immersive experience this winter with multi-sensory light installation, 'Chromotherapy Christmas'.

Renowned artists Squidsoup have created the showcase which will feature 500 individually suspended orbs and promote a sense of calm.

The glittering display will run from November 28 to January 11.

The easy life

Emerging British luxury brand Newton Wood® harnesses the unique restorative properties of Epsom salt, first discovered over 400 years ago, to offer the perfect natural solution to the stresses and strains of 21st Century living.

As few readers will need reminding, London life can be tough on both body and mind. If you live and work here, there's the daily physical and mental toll exacted by packed streets and creaking transport infrastructure, quite apart from whatever the job itself throws at you. Even if you're here purely for pleasure, a long day of sightseeing and shopping can still leave you tired and footsore. And whether you're a resident or visitor, the sheer pace of life in the capital can bring on or exacerbate a whole panoply of aches, pains, complaints and conditions that make day-to-day living awkward and uncomfortable.

Happily, the solution to a great many of these everyday issues has been with us for years – 401, in fact. Because it was in 1618 that the restorative properties of Epsom salt (the common name for magnesium sulphate) were first identified. Today, this remarkable product is as effective and relevant as ever – and thanks to new British brand Newton Wood®, it's even easier to make it part of your daily health, wellbeing and beauty routines.

Launched at the International Professional Beauty Show at Landon's Excel in February 2019, Newton Wood® is the world's first super-premium beauty and wellness brand bringing this traditional – and quintessentially English – restorative to a global audience, A 100% natural, organic and sustainable product, Newton Wood® crystals are made from the highest-grade Epsom salt, free from artificial colours, perfumes, anti-caking agents and other additives.





Soaking in Epsom salt dissolved in warm water has long been recommended for easing and reviving tired muscles and joints after hard work or exercise, and is a popular complementary therapy for a wide range of conditions. You can add Newton Wood® crystals to a bowl of warm water to soak weary hands and feet, or to a bath to relax and restore the whole body.



Plus, Newton Wood® crystals make a wonderful natural addition to your daily beauty and bathing routines. The crystals dissolve easily in shampoo, where they act as a gentle but effective deep cleanser, leaving hair softer and more vibrant. Mix them with your favourite face cream and you have a natural, organic microdermabrasion treatment, replacing facial scrubs containing harmful plastic microbeods, which were banned in the UK in 2018. As a further banus, Newton Wood® crystals are suitable for both vegans and vegetarians, having been officially certified by the Vegetarian Society as a wholly non-animal product, free from all artificial additives, and guaranteed never to have been tested on animals.

If you're a shower person rather than a both person, you can add Newton Wood® crystals, which are colourless and fragrance-free, to your favourite shower gel for a simple deep cleanse. After showering, you could also try gently massaging your wet skin with a handful of crystals; the coarse texture will help scrub away any remaining dead skin cells. Rinse off thoroughly, then apply a moisturising body cream to leave your skin soft, smooth and radiant.

Newton Wood® crystals are supplied in attractive biodegradable packaging designed and produced in the UK, in a range of sizes from 250g travel packs to 1kg packs to keep in the bathroom at home.



NEWTON-WOOD.CO.UK

Purveyors of the finest Epsom salt crystals



f there was ever a person to play the role of Amélie on stage, then surely it is Audrey Brisson. She is fluent in French, petite and darkhaired with an endearingly quirky side to her, and even has the same first name as the actress who first made the role famous on film.

After a tour of the UK, *Amélie The Musical* transfers to the West End on November 29 for a nine-week run at The Other Palace in Victoria, and Audrey is excited about returning to a theatre she has fond memories of.

"Although I enjoyed touring and visiting new places, it can be very tiring and it's exciting to be back at home. It's a lovely theatre and I'm looking forward to returning," she says.

Taking on the title role, originally played by her namesake Audrey Tautou, is a bit of a dream for Audrey, who first became aware of the musical version of the film when it was about to be performed on Broadway five years ago.

"It's a film that I love. I remember hearing about the American production, which was

something that I was very interested in at the time, so when the director Michael Fentiman approached me to say he was doing a UK version, I thought, yes great!"

Amélie tells the tale of an imaginative and shy French girl with a gift for helping others. She lives quietly in the world but loudly in her mind, secretly improvising small but extraordinary acts of kindness that bring happiness to those around her. But when a chance at love comes her way, Amélie realises that to find her own contentment she'll have to risk everything and say what's in her heart.

While it begins in 1970s Paris, with the action moving later to the late 1990s immediately in the aftermath of the death of Princess Diana, one of the film's main themes – how people connect with one another – brings the story bang up to date for us in the digital age.

"Because of the way she was brought up, Amélie struggles to make connections with other people and this is so appropriate for today



Amélie ever after



mela Raith Photo

because people rate how many friends they have based on Facebook rather than how many people they actually see," said Audrey.

"When I first came to the UK at the age of 21 in 2006, I was amazed at how much people used their phones to connect with people, which is something that hadn't really happened by then in Canada. That dichotomy of being able to be reached but not actually being reached."

Amélie's acts of kindness begin when she is watching TV and hears that Princess Diana has been killed in a car crash in Paris, causing her to drop the bottle top she is holding which reveals the secret hiding place of a box belonging to someone who had lived there years earlier.

"Princess Di was always there to help other people but must have had such a lonely life being in that royal family, and that mirrors Amélie's situation in that she could help others while remaining isolated herself," says Audrey.

"When she first finds the box, her first thought is, if I find the person and return them their box,

then I can be as good as Princess Di, so it's that imagination that her good deeds will make her like her heroine."

Audrey herself was just 12 when Princess Diana died and she admits remembering little about it. "All I remember is my mum saying I was the same age as the youngest, Prince Harry, and that I would eventually marry him!" said Audrey.

This new adaptation of Amélie The Musical has a more European feel to it, with actors speaking in French accents and playing the instruments on stage. But apart from her looks and French-Canadian upbringing, how much of Amélie's character does Audrey see in herself?

"I do see some parallels between myself and Amélie; it is sometimes easier to retreat into my living room, but maybe not to the same extent as her. I think I'm perfectly normal, but others do seem to think I'm a bit quirky."

Amélie The Musical runs at The Other Palace from November 29 to February 2. Tickets cost from £19.50, theotherpalacetheatre.co.uk



Modelling, fame, entitlement and the charity close to her heart – we set the world to rights with the absolutely fabulous Joanna Lumley

BY JONATHAN WHILEY

Golly! More Bolly?

assy spy Purdey, Bolly-slugging Patsy and the most English of English aunts in Hollywood blockbuster *The Wolf Of Wall Street*. Sweetie, is there any role Joanna Lumley can't master?

Now 73 – though you would barely know it – her karate-chopping, champagne-swigging antics have lit up our screens for decades. Oh, and then there is *that* voice; delicate as an orchid, rich and comforting as a simmering pot of Nonna's raqu.

We're here to discuss a charitable venture close to her heart, but first take a trippy walk down memory lane.

She is sweeping me through the streets of London in the mid Sixties, where sexual revolution scents the air and life was an intoxicating palette of short skirts and thick eyeliner.

"It was very exciting but it was also scary," says Joanna, who used her modelling days to inform BAFTA-winning AbFab creation Patsy. "People were smoking pot and I don't think we were as rich as we are now. You see in the pictures just how skinny everybody was; not just

the girls, but the boys. We didn't have very much money and so you never got drunk. They weren't drunkards around like there are now because we couldn't afford drink. Unless you were very rich you couldn't afford dope even. A joint would go round six people at a party and you would go, 'woo!' but only the rich got really stoned. Heroin didn't really exist, smack and crack and all those things didn't exist."

This isn't so much Joanna longing for yesterday (when perhaps all our troubles seemed so far away), but merely painting life as it is – as it was.

Born in Kashmir a year after the Second World War, she was exposed to the vivid colours and heavy storms of Malaysia and Hong Kong at a young age, before moving to Kent to attend boarding school aged eight.

"The school was tiny; 60 or 70 children and only about 11 or 12 were boarders. It was completely different from every single thing I had known, but I've always been quite a cheerful creature and you go: 'Oh this is new, I'll do this'."





Did travelling teach her to be stoic? "I was never brought up with luxuries and at boarding school you have strip washes. This idea of hot showers every day is rubbish; you stand by a basin or, if you're in a tent with a lamp or a candle, you stand by a bucket of water and wash yourself.

"I don't find that shocking or frightening or odd. I don't find being dirty odd or frightening or sad making. My mother was very good at teaching us how to have respect for the natural world. I'm never afraid and I don't think: 'Ooh, there might be a snake here', because we were taught to handle snakes."

Charisma and natural warmth seemed etched into Joanna's DNA; has she always had an irresistible and inherent sense of joie de vivre?

"You're kind to say that; I think I was just a show-off!," she says. "I'm an optimist, I like the world and I tend to like anything before I dislike it. I was born, I think, without too many critical faculties. Unless I think it's really bad and then I think it's horrible and fight it."

Among her many charitable ventures is Kids For Kids, a British charity founded to help children in Dafur, Sudan. This year, Joanna, who is a patron, will host its annual Candlelit Christmas Concert at St Peter's in Eaton Square alongside a starry collection of guest readers including Barry Cryer, Timothy West and Miriam Margolyes.

The charity was set up by Patricia Parker and operates a unique microfinance system in one of the most abandoned parts of the planet.

The poorest 15 per cent of families in villages in Dafur receive a "goat loan"; six animals that can provide milk for starving babies and lifesaving nutrition.

In turn, the flock grows and mothers earn an income from selling milk and yoghurt, benefiting the whole community.

"So odd to think that Dafur is a name we only knew 20-30 years ago and now, in our strange and troubled world, we turn our eyes on to something else.

"Dafur has been utterly abandoned. Not only abandoned by the Western world and the benefactors, but its own country. What I loved about Patricia is that she was training people to help look after the animals but, most importantly, along with animals are the people. Building up schools and having midwives trained and planting trees. She is an extraordinary woman."

Joanna more than has her moments too and her gloriously evocative travel documentaries – ITV is soon to air her new series on Cuba and Haiti and she has a three-month trip to Australia in the pipeline – perfectly illustrates her appreciative nature. "Yes, I am grateful for everything," she says. "We were poor when we were young. We shared flats, rooms, clothes. We shared everything and happily lived off scraps. If you were lucky enough to be taken out to dinner by a boyfriend, you would take the bread roll and put it in your bag so you could have it for breakfast – or give it to somebody for breakfast – the next day."

"I think [now] there is a slight, rather dismaying, sense of entitlement that people think they ought to be having more."

When fame arrived, she says, it was something of a thunderbolt and incidental to her acting career. "When people recognised me after *The New Avengers*, it came — and it sounds naïve — as a complete shock.



"Fame was not something anybody wanted. I'm not saying they dismissed it but you just didn't search for it. Now when almost the only object in quite a lot of young people's minds is being famous, hence Instagram and trying to have a following – I'm not saying it's bad, but it's completely alien to the way we were brought up."

Her candid nature is refreshing and delivered in that velvety voice, almost irresistible.

Little wonder strangers approach her every day for a hug – "I love that" – and she receives her fair share of emotionally charged fan mail.

"I've had two or three letters from people who have swerved out of suicide by watching episodes of AbFab, or people who have suddenly been enthused by travel programmes," she says. "Or people who have just listened to something or picked up something in an interview like yours Jonathan, where they have thought, 'I might try that, that might just work'."

Kids For Kids Candlelit Christmas Concert, St Peter's Eaton Square, December 5, 7pm. Adults £35, children £15. Visit kidsforkids.org.uk

Zara.

Cargo pants, originally a military design, found the height of their fame in the Nineties. These trousers with drip effect, £49.99, worn with a suitably retro pair of trainers and shirt, will complete the rave look.

UNIT 19, 82 VICTORIA ST

Party like it's 1999



Who would've thought... the Nineties are back. Get out those glow sticks and let's go raving

BY SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS

Dr. Martens

The British bootmaker reached its height of popularity in the Nineties with the rise of grunge

fashion. The classic eight eyelet lace-up boots, £130, are not only footwear for a lifetime but a trendy way to step back in time. HOUSE OF FRASER, 101 VICTORIA STREET



Oasis

The only way to wear a slip dress in Ninetiesstyle is over a t-shirt or jumper. Taking inspiration from Oasis' Rosebud print slip dress, £55, the winter way is with a jumper and a special pair of heels or boots.

HOUSE OF FRASER, 101 VICTORIA STREET

Hobbs

A nod to the cult teenage film of the era, Clueless, where Cher and Dionne wore an insatiable amount of check, the Whistley bag,

> £159, can be worn with dad jeans and t-shirt or an LBD to Nineties it up. 3 CATHEDRAL

WALK



Oliver Bonas

One of the most iconic looks of the decade was elaborate hair accessories. A modernised version is this Magic hair slide, £15, to be worn alone but ideally with even more slides.

UNIT 49 VICTORIA STATION

IF IT AIN'T BROKE BROKE LET'S FIX IT ANYWAY GOVERNMENT TO TINKER WITH TENANCY LAW



If the latest proposals from the Government on residential tenancies are enacted, all residential property investors where the tenancy rent does not exceed £100,000pa (a figure which, by the way, can be raised by the government at any time with minimal parliamentary scrutiny) will be affected. There are real fears that for all their good intentions, the proposed changes will drive some investors out of the market and reduce the availability of rental units to individual tenants (corporate tenants are not affected).

Until 1989, tenancies were primarily governed by the Rent Act 1977, which gave tenants a very high level of security of tenure and controlled their rents to what were called 'fair rents', a misnomer, some would say, as they were only fair to tenants, being about 30% below market rates. The Housing Act 1988 brought in assured and assured shorthold tenancies, which allowed market rent and in the case of shortholds, an automatic right to possession on two months' notice at the end of the tenancy term. From 1996, all new tenancies were assured shortholds unless specifically agreed to be assured tenancies. That essentially is the present position.

The new proposals, pejoratively referred to as 'the end of no-fault eviction', abolish assured shortholds so that all tenancies are assured, with security of tenure, so that in the absence of fault the prime ground for possession will only be where the landlord wants to live in the flat (a ground not available to corporate landlords) or sell it, unless there is a fixed term or an agreed break clause in the tenancy agreement. The consultation on the proposals closes in October, and the Government is likely to receive a number of responses from landlords fearing real damage to the private rented sector if the proposals are enacted – the law of unintended consequences, perhaps.





Mum's the word

Treat Mum to
a luxurious spa
day at the Taj
that includes
a massage for
two, a haircut by
a celebrated stylist,
and a delicious themed
afternoon tea

BY SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS



ime out is a luxury. Spending those precious hours with a loved one, especially your mum, is the ultimate luxury. The Spa in the City package at Taj incorporates elements known for relaxation and recuperation. The award-winning Jiva spa is where the journey begins. Jiva meaning "life force", the spa is rooted in Indian practices, using ayurvedic philosophy.

The 60-minute treatment to be enjoyed as a pair is a detoxifying massage called Indian Aromatherapy. The treatment begins with a cleansing foot bath before the massage begins, using a blend of tulsi, ginger and lime oils. Focusing on every body part, from the soles of the feet to the top of the head, pressure points

are pressed, joints are stretched and muscles are kneaded using elbows and hands until tension is released. Hard pressure, although painful at times, is recommended, especially for

anyone with stiff shoulders.

Next a session with celebrity hairdresser Dar (pictured), is on the schedule. Dar began his career in 1973 at a salon behind Selfridges and has never looked back "I don't think it's about having a flair, my main reason for doing this was to make women happy," he says. Dar is known for high glam makeovers — think the likes of Goldie Hawn. Nicole

Scherzinger and Bollywood icons Kajol and Aishwarya Rai – and is a man in high-demand, recently giving designer Karen Millen the blunt bob that has been called the "best anti-ageing trick ever".

Afternoon tea is a pastime for mothers and daughters everywhere and is the final part of the package. The Taj's Kona restaurant has three menus. The Alice in Wonderland Afternoon Tea is a playful take on the story, complete with playing cards, pearls and a Mad Hatter's top hat. Or for a taste of India, the Jasmine Indian Afternoon tea, with chicken tikka rolls, gulab jamun sweets and a salted caramel lassi with chikki toffee crunch, is a must. Washed down with masala chai, one of more than 20 teas on the menu, a cheeky glass of rosé champagne, impeccable service and the best company, what could be more luxurious?

Spa in the City starts from £180, 54 Buckingham Gate, taj51buckinghamgate.co.uk

Bare bones

Bad back? Sore neck? Sophia Charalambous sits down with Duncan Webster, principal osteopath at Pimlico Osteopathy, to talk all things musculoskeletal

How does osteopathy differ from other manual therapy?

Practically thinking, the physiotherapist can click stuff, a chiropractor can do gentle mobilisation, and osteopaths can use strength exercises. But if you've been to one osteopath they're not necessarily the same as others. In my clinic there are specialists in women's health, paediatric osteopathy and sports. I can do visceral osteopathy, which is waggling around your organs. Sometimes it seems like I've had good effects on people with constipation or reflux – any issue where the muscle of the stomach is tight, you can stretch it. If they change their diet alongside, it can reverse symptoms.

Top tips for office workers?

Office chairs tend to slope backwards so as you sit on it, it curls you backwards into a snail position. I'm trying to get people to either have a chair that tilts down a little bit or to perch on the edge and then you can be a bit upright. Shoulder rolls are a good exercise – think about drawing a square with your shoulders rather than a diamond – because otherwise you will miss parts. A couple of times a day. Another one is to lie down on your back with arms out at a right angle and let your hands fall.

What is the cracking noise about?

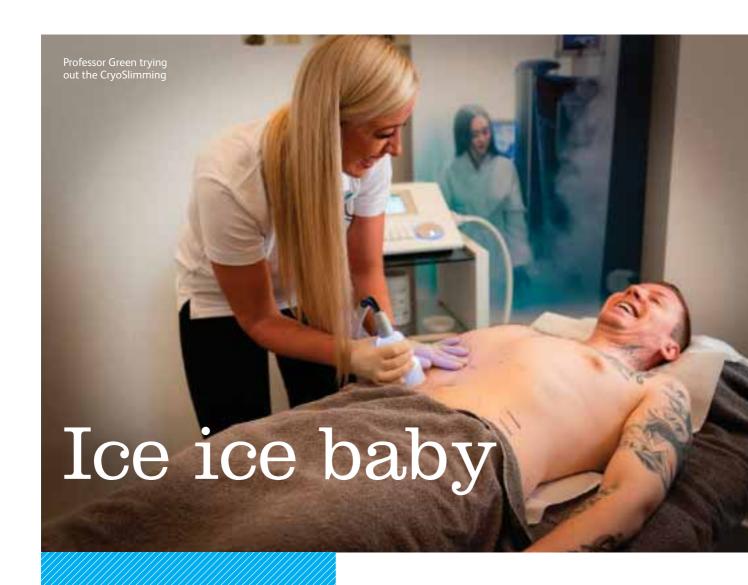
The cracking stuff is somewhat disappointing because you want it to be bones bashing together and it just isn't. It is what happens when you put a little bit of tension into a joint capsule. Pressure changes, gas comes out of suspension, forms a bubble and pops. It provides a quick neurological shock making all the muscles temporarily relax a little bit and switches off some of the pain amplification. The problem is if you go back to curling up, everything goes back as it was. If you use that period to be a bit freer then you'll keep it. Clicking is rarely a magic solution.

Who needs a treatment?

Hopefully you can help yourself, but very few have time for that or know how to do it. What we like is for people to come for an acute problem, which normally needs three treatments. At the end it might be more; there are some things that do take time.

34-36 Warwick Way, pimlicoosteopathy.com





No longer just a reference in sci-fi films, we are finally waking up to the benefits of cryotherapy. We brave the sub-zero temperatures at Victoria's new chamber

ylvester Stallone introduced me to cryotherapy. Sort of. The first time I watched 1993 sci-fi flick *Demolition Man* (kids, ask your Dad) Sly – alongside Wesley Snipes – is cryogenically frozen in a new 'Californian cryo prison'. Readers, it was ahead of its time.

Fast-forward 26 years and I'm about to enter a cryotherapy chamber in Victoria. except this time it's not – admittedly – to do with saving the world. LondonCryo is the latest addition to Eccleston Yards, increasingly a hub for health and fitness with a slew of LA-style neighbours.

It's only been open a matter of days when I arrive, but this once other-worldly treatment is proving popular. Aussie owner Maria Ensabella, a resident, is delighted at the response so far. She has been on the lookout for a site in the area for quite some time, having established a strong audience in the City with its first clinic.

Maria, who has a corporate background, changed career paths after a eureka moment in 2011 when she was in bed listening to a podcast by American author Tony Robbins. "He was saying how he did cryotherapy and it was helping reduce any inflammation or muscle soreness that he had, always being on his feet," she says. "I tried to find somewhere in London to do that and there was nothing available."

After experiencing whole body cryotherapy on a trip to New York, she fell in love with it. "It just gave me lots of energy," she says. "I had been for a run that morning through Central Park and it just gave me a boost of energy. I was there for two weeks and so I booked a course of treatments to get the most benefit and then thought: 'How am I going to do this at home?'."

The City site opened three years ago, before its recent arrival in Victoria, which has added an Infrared Sauna treatment. Ice and fire – very *Game Of Thrones* – are in vogue.

My treatment begins with 25 minutes in the sauna, which hovers at a very toasty 67 degrees

for the duration. At the 15-minute mark I'm beginning to feel like a slow-roasted rotisserie chicken, but manage to last the course (45 minutes is also available if you can hack it).

After a quick shower (also in the same private room), you are instructed to don white gloves, socks and a fluffy robe and told to dry yourself as much as possible to prevent any possible frostbite onset (qulp).

As I make my way to another room where the cryotherapy chamber lies, I pass rapper Professor Green who is waiting for the sauna. At first this is disconcerting (particularly in a robe) and then quite reassuring. It turns out he can't get enough of London Cryo and is a regular visitor, as his Instagram posts attest to.

I'm a little anxious at the thought of stepping into a chamber pre-cooled to minus 100 degrees, but Maria is a comforting presence. When I do step inside and the door closes (your head is outside the chamber at all times), the temperature plummets to 130 degrees.

"As long as it goes to minus 110 or colder, you are going to get the cyrotherapy benefits," says Maria. "It triggers flight or fight and the brain sends a message to the blood to say: 'Oh my god, it's freezing' so it rushes to your core area."

Once I remove my robe and hand it over the door, my two minutes begins (all introductory sessions are two minutes and three minutes thereafter). And yes, it's freezing, obviously. But, to my surprise, not unbearably so. Every 15 seconds I rotate 90 degrees and I can feel the blood rushing as the vapour circles.

"It oxygenates the blood and replenishes nutrients, flushes out toxins and releases endorphins," says Maria.

No question it's incredibly invigorating and easy to see why 70 per cent of clients use it for sports recovery (with another 20 per cent for pain management, dealing with the likes of autoimmune disease).

Next up it's CryoSkin, a non-invasive facial with a cool probe that feels like a flavourless Solero lolly being applied.

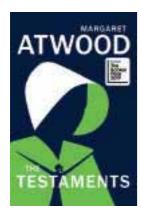
This is all about aesthetics; increasing collagen production to provide a smoother, firmer face. It provides instant, very visible results and is a real pick-me-up, particularly if you're heading to an event or special occasion.

There is also CryoSlimming available at the clinic – to freeze and kill off unwanted fat cells – and the fantastically named CryoSkin Double Chin treatment, which suggests a whole new Demolition Man entirely.

15c Eccleston Place, londoncryo.com







Margaret Atwood

THE TESTAMENTS

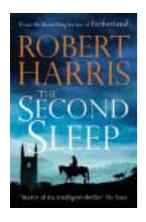
Much-anticipated sequel to The Handmaid's Tale. £20, Belgravia Books



David Nicholls SWEET SORROW

The One Day author takes a look at first love in this classic coming-of-age tale.

£20, WHSmith



Robert Harris

THE SECOND SLEEP

A dystopian tale from the celebrated thriller writer set in the medieval West Country. £20, Belgravia Books



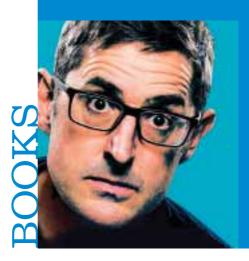
Debbie Harry FACE IT

A no-holds-barred rock 'n' roll memoir, buckle up as you get down and dirty in New York.

£20, Belgravia Books, 59 Ebury street



Tales from the arch inquistor's eclectic life. £21.99, WHSmith, Victoria station





John Humphrys A DAY LİKE TÖDAY

Newly released biography from the man dubbed the "Rottweiler of Radio 4".

£20, WHsmith

Christmas crackers

Get in the good books with these festive gift ideas, from memoirs and fiction to fragrance, food and drink



CREED VIKING

A fiery grown-up men's fragrance with top notes of Sicilian lemon, Calabrian bergamot and pink peppercorn.

£195 for 50ml, £280 for 100ml. House of Fraser, 101 Victoria Street



TOM FORD SOLEIL NEIGE

Transport yourself to freshly powdered slopes with this new scent, heady with orange flower, white blossoms, jasmine grandiflorum and Turkish rose. £164 for 50ml, £250 for 250ml. House of Fraser, 101 Victoria Street

THE FRAGRANCE TRIO

A collection of Jo Loves' bestselling citrus fragrances in travel-friendly 10ml form. Includes signature scent Pomelo, Jo By Jo Loves and Green Orange and Coriander.

£60. Jo Loves, 42 Elizabeth Street



JULIETTE HAS A GUN

In The Mood For Oud by Juliette Has A Gun celebrates female desire using bergamot, tonka bean and oud. The scent starts soft until it pulls you in with its dark charm. Les Senteurs, 71 Elizabeth Street, £220 for 75ml





FOOD & DRINK

CHRISTMAS MORNING CEREAL

Kick off Christmas morning with this indulgent cereal blend made with Valrhona Caramelia, crispy puffed rice, smoked cinnamon mini meringues and candied hazelnuts. The perfect stocking filler for little ones.

£12, from November 29, Dominique Ansel, 17-21 Elizabeth Street



PIXIE ESPRESSO CUPS

Set of two double-wall Espresso cups made from stainless steel featuring colourful dual tones by Danish designer Louise Campbell. £22, Nespresso, Unit 3, Cardinal Place, Victoria Street

GROW YOUR OWN MUSHROOMS

An ideal kit for the funghi fans, this kit from the Espresso Mushroom



NO.3 LONDON DRY GIN

With a blend of orange, lavenderscented juniper, angelica, cardamom, grapefruit and coriander, and distilled in a 100-year-old, brick-encased copper pot still, this gin is a modern classic. £28, Waitrose, 62 Victoria Street

2015 GUSBOURNE BRUT

The signature blend from the Kent-based English sparkling wine company, this vintage makes a wonderful aperitif.

£38.95, Jeroboams, 50-52 Elizabeth Street Company sees you harvest your own oyster mushrooms in two weeks from the coffee of 100 espressos.

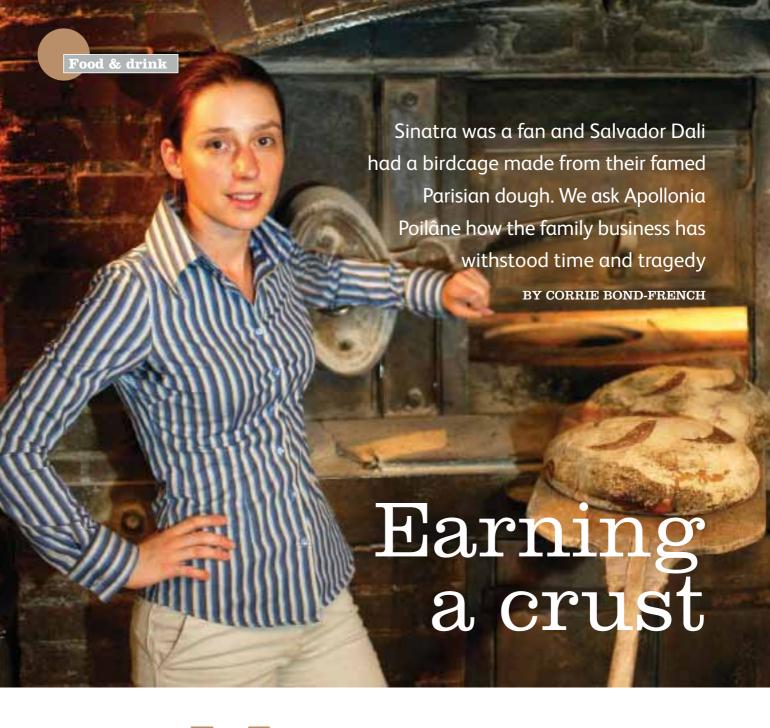
£25, Sourced Market, 85 Buckingham Palace Road





TWENTY THIRTEEN

SUSBOURN



anna from heaven or crumbs of comfort, the breaking of bread can be jam-packed with meaning and significance like love, friendship, largesse and camaraderie, so it's small wonder that the French word for friend, 'copain', has its origin of meaning in the sharing of a humble loaf.

It is pure passion for bread that has kept the wood-fired oven burning at Poilâne – the welcoming slice of Parisian boulangerie nestled in Elizabeth Street, for just short of two decades now.

The year 2020 will mark 20 years since the esteemed, late Lionel Poilâne opened the doors to his family's eponymous bakery's first foray on to foreign soil. At the time, he had already elevated bread into an art form, creating structures out of dough for Salvador Dali (including a birdcage from which the bird pecked its way free) and continuing the legacy of the sourdough loaf, or 'miche', which his father had popularised on Paris's Rue du Cherche Midi in 1932.

There has been no waning of appetite for pain Poilâne, the dusted, darkly magnificent rye sourdough which Monsieur Poilâne senior opted to offer Parisians against a backdrop of tough times simply because it would last longer. Parisians took it to their hearts, cherished it and savoured it. Baguettes are one thing — a Poilâne 'miche' is another. Happily, its introduction to the Parisian palate coincided with the emergence of brasseries in the 1930s. In



a city famous for having more than 30,000 bakeries, Poilâne became a byword.

When Lionel took over the family business from his father (his brother also set up a bakery business under his own name), he looked to spread the crumbs further afield. Signs stating: 'Ici, pain Poilâne' stood outside the city's best restaurants and brasseries, but his masterstroke was to position the bakery's manufactory in easy proximity to the airport, ensuring that the Poilâne produce could be Fed-exed across the globe.

Poilâne became internationally synonymous with quality. Frank Sinatra and Robert De Niro were reputedly fans. In Paris, it was said that actors including Gérard Depardieu and Isabelle Adjani regularly joined the queue for Poilâne's produce that meandered on to the street in the 8th arrondissement on a daily basis.

Lionel Poilâne wanted to mark the occasion of Poilâne's first bakery outside France by involving the next Poilâne generation, his teenage daughters Apollonia and Athena, to light the oven. It would take a month to reach the right temperature and its flames – fuelled by waste wood – haven't been dampened

since. Two years later in 2002, tragedy struck when Lionel and his American wife Irena were killed in a helicopter crash. At just 18, Apollonia, now an orphan, stepped up to take the reins of the family business she loved, at the same time as she took to her studies in economics at Harvard. While others partied, Apollonia was making transatlantic telephone calls and dealing with suppliers. But she had always planned to run the business one day, working in the bakery over the years. When she was born, her parents used a dough basket as a cradle, which she still has at home in



Lionel Poilâne outside his Parisian bakery in 1984. Rex/Shutterstock Opposite: Apollonia Poilâne



"Bread is a basic necessity; quality bread is special and that's what we're trying to offer"

Paris. Apollonia has now been running the company for just over half of her life. She remembers that day of lighting the oven in Elizabeth Street with clarity. "It was quite an adventure. My sister and I came to light up the oven... at 14 and 16 we wanted to be doing other things! I can remember being in this moment when I was thinking: 'I know this will be a memory I will enjoy in time, but right now I would rather be outside'..."

We meet at the shop, toasty warm and welcoming, the perfect foil to the autumnal rainbow weather. As we sit, a steady flow of customers pull up outside or walk in, braving the elements to leave clutching umbrellas and pains Poilâne. Clearly, there is a loyal market.

"My father had the feeling that London was an up and coming market, which I think it has proved to be," says Apollonia. "This was around the time when there was a really great boom in the culinary scene in London. I think it works, it was a bet, and I can tell you that the first years were not easy, but when I took over in 2002 I worked super hard with our suppliers."

Since taking over, Apollonia has worked to introduce Poilâne beyond London, distributing bread to Waitrose stores nationally. "Bread is a basic necessity; quality bread is special and that's what we're trying to offer. In France, more likely than not when you live in Paris, you'll come across a Monoprix, which is the Waitrose equivalent. For us it was important to also be present in distribution because it allowed us to have a reach to clients that we wouldn't have otherwise."

Being a local presence is still absolutely essential to the Poilâne vision, however.

"Grosvenor did an amazing job at revamping Elizabeth Street... Now there's Dominique Ansel who has his bakery down the street, there's Peggy Porschen... This neighbourhood has changed.

"What I like with having a shop presence is that it allows you to have contact with your clients. I'm the third generation, we're entrepreneurs, we like to go beyond our craft. For us, it's a philosophy and a way of life. I think that maybe there's some resemblance in the way the French go about their rapport, their relationship to baking with the way the British have a connection to their pubs, and what I mean by that is that it is a place of emotion."

46 Elizabeth Street

CHRISTMAS AT CAXTON

2-course festive menu £35pp 3-course festive menu £45pp

What better way to kick start Christmas celebrations with friends, family and colleagues than with a delicious lunch or dinner? Caxton Grill's festive menus, an artful mix of traditional and contemporary dishes are available from 27th November.

Looking for a special destination for Christmas Day and New Year's Eve, we've got suitably celebratory menus for these special occasions.

www.caxtongrill.co.uk/christmas

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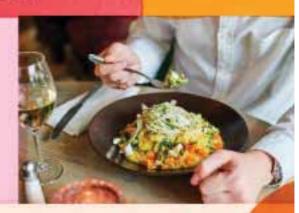


Bill's

RESTAURANT & BAR

We've had a make-over, come and say hello!

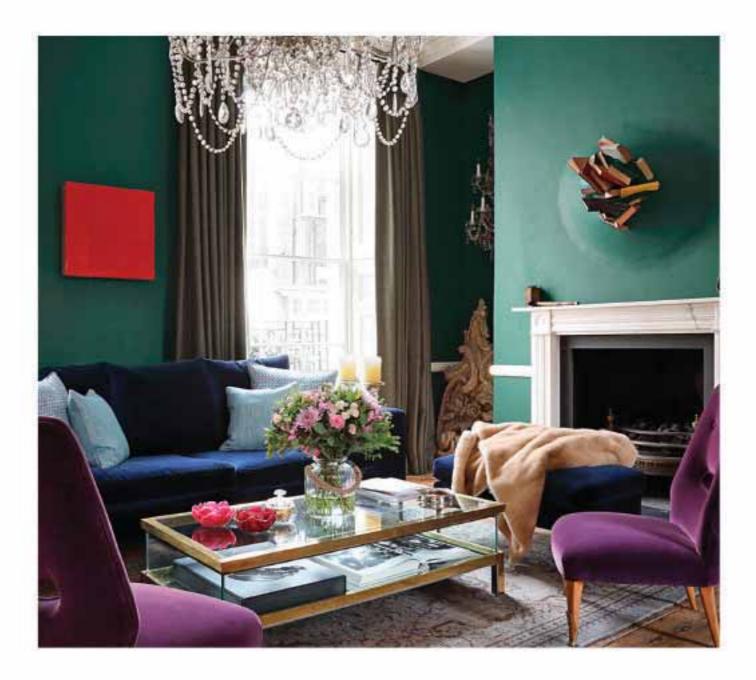
Enjoy healthy and indulgent seasonal dishes and cocktails in our vibrant, newly designed restaurant.



Re-opening from 7th November 19 Book your table now: bills-website.co.uk

All day & into the night





Perfectly Imperfect Interior Design





Rippon Cheese

Celebrating its 30th year in Victoria next year, Rippon Cheese is a much loved local expert on everyone's favourite festive treat.

A beautiful façade conceals an impressive selection of cheeses from across and outside the UK – and the team is always happy to offer recommendations. Be true blue with **Mrs Bell's** sheep's milk variety, or opt for a stilton; if soft cheeses are your thing, go for the **Vacherin Mont d'Or**, one of the few seasonal soft cheeses.

26 Upper Tachbrook Street

Jeroboams

Jeroboams is the wine and spirits shop every London neighbourhood hopes to have. The Elizabeth Street site sees well-versed staff listen to customers' requirements before advising on bottles and varietals sourced from the world's most revered winemaking regions, from the Old World of Bordeaux and Burgundy to New World leaders like California and Kent (!). The shop also stocks a significant selection of spirits, helping to make it a very merry Christmas indeed.

50-52 Elizabeth Street



Poilâne is not the only independent gem in Victoria and Westminster.

Swerve the supermarkets this festive season and pick up something special from a neighbourhood favourite. BY REYHAAN DAY



GASTRONOMICA PIMLICO

La dolce vita in all its glory at this cosy cafe-deli with imported ingredients including charcuterie, cheeses, olives, pasta, fruit and vegetables. If the shopping is too much, pull up a chair and order a Campari spritz.

45 Tachbrook Street

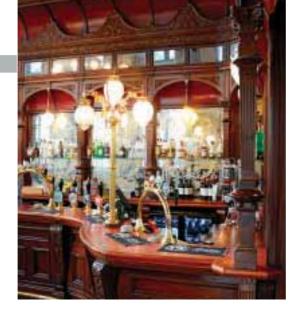


DELICIAS

For charcuterie, sweet snacks and other morsels, head to Portuguese deli Delicias. From pastéis de nata to cured meats and dried salted cod – as well as bites from Brazil and Spain – visitors will be spoiled for choice.

43 Warwick Way

Food & drink





ST STEPHEN'S TAVERN

Best for: POLITICOS

Perfect pint: FURSTY FERRET AMBER

ALE

A favourite of Parliamentary figures, St Stephen's is a stone's throw from the Commons – just across Westminster Bridge Road. First opened in 1875, it still has an original 'division bell' behind the bar to warn MPs that time's running out to vote.

It's been claimed that the name came from the old name for Big Ben, but that's always been the Elizabeth Tower. In fact, it was named for the hall in which MPs sat. 'St Stephen's' was often used as a shorthand by Victorian journalists for anything to do with Parliament.

These days, its clientele is a healthy mix of locals, tourists and politicians, and its menu includes a hearty Badger Beer-Battered Fish and Chips.

10 Bridge Street

THE SANCTUARY HOUSE HOTEL

Best for: POST-PROROGATION PINTS
Perfect pint: SEAFARER'S ENGLISH ALE

Ps weren't confined to pubs right across the road. In fact, if you believe the legend, a secret passageway runs directly from the basement of the Sanctuary House all the way to Parliament.

The Sanctuary House Hotel has history in spades. Tothill Street, on which it sits, is the oldest street in Westminster and one of four major streets created in the early 19th century. Prior to becoming a boozy bolthole for Members of Parliament, the building has been a railway gazette, a book-publishing house, and was even home to the London Municipal Society in the early 20th century.

33 Tothill Street





Perfect pint: OLIVER'S ISLAND GOLDEN ALE

medieval tavern known as the Hopping Hall was the first drinking house on this site back in 1434, and in the early 16th century it was bought by the Crown. A little further on it was the local of a young Charles Dickens, who liked it so much it featured in his novels. He wrote that the landlady was "admiring and compassionate", and today's general manager Colin George is a welcoming sort, too. "We are not very big in size," he says. "But the pub does pack a big punch when it comes to our history." It's a short skip from Downing Street – more or less every British PM since the pub opened has passed through its

door, and it was especially beloved of Churchill. That political legacy continues, with today's representatives still popping in from Parliament. "Managing this historical pub gives me a lot of pride," says George. "I'm really pleased to be able to share the history with all of our customers."

48 Parliament Street

Pub crawl

The pubs of Westminster and Victoria are steeped in history and tradition. Here is our pick of the best ones in which to rest your feet and wet your whistle

BY ALEX BRIAND

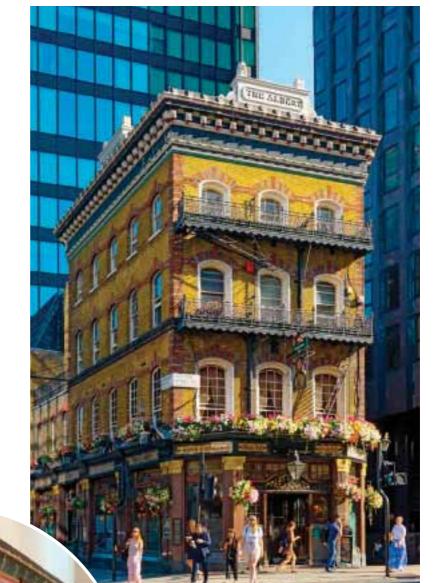
THE ALBERT

Best for: ROYALISTS

Perfect pint: GREENE KING IPA

Ashort way down Victoria Street, this is the only remaining building from the original phase of the street's development, with a beautiful red-brick and stucco façade that stood strong through the Blitz. Now Grade II-listed, it was built between 1845 and 1852 and originally named the Bluecoat Boy. In 1862, the freehold was bought for a grand total of £978 – around £117,000 in today's money – from the Dean and Chapter of Westminster.

When it was redeveloped, the pub was named for the late Prince Consort, who had died a few years previously and was front and centre in the public consciousness. "It is said Queen Victoria



would stop and reminisce when she came past," says general manager Sam Newman.

The first-floor restaurant has been frequented by royals and political figures alike, and there's another 'division bell' still proudly hanging to prove it. If that's not enough evidence, take a look at the frames as you climb the stairs to gaze into the eyes of Prime Ministers dating back to 1900. Also look out for Queen Victoria's personal table napkin.

For lovers of all things royal, Newman has another surprise up his sleeve: "The ground-floor bar features the original hand-cut windows, which are marked subtly with an amusing reference to Prince Albert for those with sharp eyes."

52 Victoria Street

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Efficiency through Integration





Councillor Ruth Bush has made history by becoming the first ever Labour Lord Mayor. While the role means she can avoid politics, she still has to overcome personal anxiety

BY CORRIE BOND-FRENCH

hen the lights are twinkling on the Christmas tree in Trafalgar Square this year, it will a mark an extraordinary journey for The Right Worshipful Lord Mayor of Westminster — councillor Ruth Bush. Since 1947, the Trafalgar Square tree has been gifted annually to the people of Britain by the city of Oslo as a token of gratitude for support to Norway during the Second World War, and tradition has it that the Mayor of Westminster attends its felling in Oslo in the autumn.

What is particularly of note this year is that Ruth will be making history of her own as the first ever Labour Lord Mayor. It follows a remarkable decision by council leader Nickie Aiken to make the civic role available to the opposition by not putting forward a Conservative candidate, to ensure that the Lord Mayor represents all of Westminster's residents. Despite never imagining she would ever be in this position. Ruth has taken on the chains of office with boundless positivity.

"The whole thing was a surprise and I do take my hat off to councillor Aiken because I think it was a courageous and thoughtful thing. She said to the minority party when she became leader that she would do something about it because it was not right, she felt, because the position is a non-party political one and she said it ought to be demonstrably so," said Ruth.

"She managed to persuade the majority of the council of 40 people, and they managed

to say we have this honour, we're accustomed to giving it to one of our own and we will now make it available to the other side. That's a lot to take on and I really do admire them for having got there."

Ruth has served as councillor for the Harrow Road ward since 2005, and will be leaving her political role aside in fulfilling mayoral civic duties: "I'm having a year off politics, which is quite nice in these current circumstances!

"I think everybody acknowledges that it was the right thing to do on all sides of the council. I've been very surprised and heartened by the warmth of the reception on all sides... I've had one person telling me they'd be watching me and I thought well, I am setting about this and continuing with it in such a way as I hope to make it quite clear that there wasn't a mistake made. I'm trying to do it in a way that meets everyone's expectation so the majority party may see it as a precedent."

Ruth has already had some stand-out moments. One that highlights the contrasts of the role was at a primary school when she officially opened a reading den – a young boy's idea that transformed an unused space.

"I was there to cut the ribbon. I said: 'I'm here this morning to open your reading den and this afternoon I am going to be at Westminster Abbey meeting the President of the United States of America, and it is just as important for the Lord Mayor to come to your school as it is for her to be at the Abbey meeting the American president'.





"I come from humble origins in Surrey. I'm not accustomed to grand dinners and events"

"I do think it is true. Being with those children is very, very important so that they have a sense that there is this person in this rather curious role of Lord Mayor who brings the greetings of the city as a whole to them and thanks them for what they're doing."

There was also the occasion when she took the salute on Horseguards Parade as the crew of HMS Westminster exercised the freedom of the city: "That's not something that happens every day, to stand there with the Royal Marine band playing and sailors marching... and I'm standing there, taking this salute as these people point their rifles with bayonets in the end at me, it was quite extraordinary!" laughs Ruth.

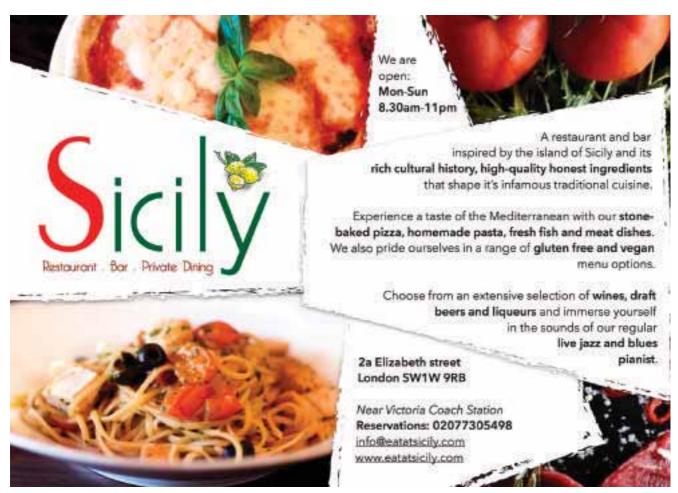
Ruth has previously worked as a teacher, an MP's secretary, a parliamentary lobbyist and she has set up a shelter for homeless women. Since entering local politics, she has focused

on mental health including setting up the All Sing choir, and, as Lord Mayor, introducing STOMP, a strapline to encourage people to "speak to one more person".

The role has been a joy thus far: "I don't think that anything has come as a colossal surprise or frustration because I was aware that you have to restrict yourself in political terms, and that you'll meet all sorts of people. I suppose the most difficult thing — as an entirely personal and social thing, is doing grand events because I come from humble origins in Surrey. I'm not accustomed to grand dinners and events so I've had to overcome a degree of anxiety about things of that sort.

"One of the striking things about doing this is the diversity of people I meet. There's such a variety doing so many different worthwhile things in Westminster that being invited to all of those events has been a real privilege."







Sailing the seven seas

What are your earliest travel memories?

Going sailing with my dad when I was seven or eight years old. We used to rent 50-foot sailboats and did most parts of the Mediterranean, but we also went to places like the Seychelles and Tahiti which back then were very different places.

Tahiti still is an incredibly beautiful place, but in 1982 it was truly untouched. It was the other side of the world. We started off in Tahiti and then we went off to Teti'aroa, the island where Marlon Brando lived for many years, and from there all the way to Bora Bora, and we were the only boat around. I remember snorkelling away in these incredible blue lagoons, with nobody.

What kind of traveller are you?

Unfortunately with children I have become more pedestrian in my travels. But I'm an explorer at heart. When I was 18 my dad bought me a 12-metre catamaran, and I took it from the south of France to Hawaii.

In the course of four years I did about 26,000

miles. I crossed the Atlantic and half of the Pacific. I did it in stages – whenever I'd have a break from university, I'd fly to where the boat was and take it one extra step. Then I lived on the boat for about two and a half years to do my masters in Hawaii.

I was lucky with the weather for the number of miles that I did, but my least successful part of the trip was after Panama. I never got to the Galápagos. I got as close as 80 miles but I was beating into the wind for seven days straight, which a catamaran doesn't deal with super well. I just turned south and went to Ecuador. Those seven days were probably the most challenging from a sailing perspective. From a psychological perspective, Ecuador to Hawaii, which was 32 days of sea, was the most challenging.

What have you drawn from those experiences?

I always say that I learnt more doing that trip than I did during my studies in a certain way.







Rome



San Pietro di Positano

Getting along with people in very confined quarters, diplomacy, calculated risk-taking, quick decision-making – there are a lot of business skills that one learns by doing such a trip.

Which place has the most awe-inspiring scenery?

I think that the north coast of Hawaii, the Napali coast, is absolutely breathtaking. If you measure from the bottom of the sea to the top, they are the tallest cliffs in the world, but with the lushest vegetation you could imagine.

And which city has the most impressive architecture for you?

You'll say that I'm biased but I have to say Rome – because in a very small area you have 2,000 years of history. Some of it completely intact. It's seismic as well, we've had the odd ripple every ten years, and the Pantheon is still standing as they built it 2,000 years ago. Architecturally it's beautiful but also a real feat for the time.

What do you look for in a hotel?

It has to connect with its environment. For me, the number one hotel in the world is the San Pietro di Positano. Last time I went, I went into the bathroom and the bathtub at the end had stained glass overlooking Positano.

What do you think the Victoria area offers travellers to London?

You have four world heritage sites, one next to the other. And many people don't appreciate how central it is. We chose it because we just couldn't understand why it was so unloved until recently.

What places are still on your bucket list?

Machu Picchu. My kids went there two years ago and I wasn't able to go. It must be awe-inspiring.

Northacre is currently working on No 1 Palace Street and The Broadway in Westminster. Visit northacre.com

Keeping the area safe

he Victoria and Westminster BIDs are bringing businesses peace of mind, with the installation of a cuttingedge security system designed to keep workers and business owners on top of emergency situations.

The Victoria Emergency Notification System (VENS) is an app-based platform that combines SMS alerts, voicemail, mass emailing and two-way in-app messaging to provide a massnotification tool, for use in the event of unfolding security situations – including 'black swan' civil emergencies such as the Holborn fires in 2015, protests and terrorism.

In an emergency, VENS can send a broadcast to all business members, who would receive an alert through a variety of channels, so they can make an informed decision in the case of crisis about what to do next.

"We felt that it would add value to the local business community, and enhance local business resilience," says Chris Tsikolis (pictured), head of security and business resilience at the BID. "Information and speed are of the essence, especially in the digital era; it's important to have timely information."

Uniquely, the system is linked to a government department, meaning updates are instant. "The main challenge was to plug this platform into a government department so that we could give 24/7 capability, which we were fortunate enough to do, because we have a government department within our footprint, so we can get near-realtime information from them. We can then feed that on to the platform and push it out to all the businesses in the area."

The Victoria and Westminster BIDs are the first



A new security system is set to give peace of mind to businesses in case of unforeseen and emergency events

BY REYHAAN DAY

to have a system like this. "Others seem to be adopting the same solution; and a wider security group called the West End Security Group, which represents six BIDs and six estate owners in Westminster, are also looking to take up the platform." Thankfully, VENS hasn't yet

been used to report anything catastrophic. "We've sent out 80 broadcasts since January – although most of them are in relation to protests. We've got Victoria Street; several government departments; Parliament Square within our footprint – so it's the go-to place to protest. The main test of it was during the Extinction Rebellion protests. "We think this system will give comfort to current and prospective business owners in the area."

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Vision for Victoria

Transformative work may have taken place in Victoria, but Ruth Duston OBE, OC, the BID's chief executive, is not resting on her laurels. There is still work to be done

BY ANTONIA WINDSOR

Victoria station



n the past 10 years, Victoria has changed from a somewhat non-descript transport hub into a vibrant district with burgeoning businesses, shops, restaurants and bars; driven partly by the investment and vision of Victoria BID. But this is just the start. Future plans include developing Christchurch Gardens into a more welcoming green space, a multi-million pound upgrade to Victoria Station to increase capacity and enhance customer journeys, and strategies to tackle rough sleeping and air pollution.

"Although the last 10 years has seen the most sweeping transformation in Victoria since the Victorian era, the story is not over yet and there is more work to do," says Ruth Duston OBE, OC, chief executive of the Victoria BID. "Our vision, as we look ahead to our third term, is to ensure that Victoria continues to realise its full potential, harnessing the additional growth opportunities on the horizon and tackling the challenges that still exist."

She says that the remit was never to change the vibrant and diverse Victoria area beyond recognition, but simply to make it as good as it can be, drawing on the great assets around us.

"One of the hallmarks of the success of our first two terms has been partnership, and I see this as being central to our future achievements too," says Ruth, who was awarded an OBE in 2018 for her services to the business community in central London.

She sees the BID's work with Westminster City Council, and other public sector partners as vital, and increasingly, they are working in partnership with the wider Victoria community, including residents. "I strongly believe that it's through collective action that the best outcomes can be achieved," she says.

Some of London's big concerns, such as security and air pollution, require joined-up thinking and communication is key to achieving success in those areas. "We of course already work closely with our 'sister' BID in Victoria Westminster, and increasingly are joining up with the Northbank BID, and indeed other central London BIDs, on cross-cutting issues," Ruth says.

With increasing global competition, and the ongoing uncertainty around Brexit, there is a growing acknowledgement that all areas in the capital are





raising their game. The drive to compete for a rightful share of the tourist market and entice domestic visitors has never been more important.

"BIDs in the capital are a powerful and strategic force for good. From transformational public realm projects, to supporting small businesses and making areas safer, cleaner and more pleasant places to visit or work, BIDs have a proven track record for driving change and innovation," says Ruth.

And she should know, having been involved in more BIDs in London than any other person and, in the past decade, helping to generate several billion pounds of national and international investment for the redevelopment of major parts of central London.

In tackling the challenges of the next 10 years, Ruth believes that innovation, creativity and unrelenting support for Victoria will lead to success.

"We need everyone's support when the ballot opens in the new year"

"We have ambitious plans to help deliver more good growth in Victoria, and it is crucial that we develop our vision working collaboratively with all parties," says Ruth. "There are significant opportunities on the horizon – tackling congestion, enhancing the public realm, addressing the long-term future of the mainline railway station, for example – but we must look at these holistically, ensuring that further growth is good for the whole of the area."

So what growth can be expected in the area? "We are excited about the significant opportunities that lay before us for a third term," says Ruth. "From ambitious greening projects like Christchurch Gardens to galvanising key players to press forward the redevelopment plans for Victoria Station; from working with local partners to support young people into employment to addressing thorny issues such as rough sleeping and air pollution. All these things are being tackled on our watch."

The BID will be going to ballet in early 2020 to continue for a third term. "We need everyone's support when the ballot opens in the new year," Ruth says. "We believe we have the right plan in place – a plan that delivers for all of Victoria – residents, visitors and businesses. So please do 'Back the BID' and let's get on with this important work together!" To read the 2020-2025 Business Plan, visit victoriabid.co.uk



Scandal in the Square

Once home to

socialites and spies,

Dolphin Square is regarded as the most infamous address in London BY CORRIE **BOND-FRENCH** SQUARE DOLPHIN

t has been home to politicians, spooks, royalty, cooks, clerks and taxi drivers. Princess Anne once resided here. Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice-Davies cavorted here, Babs Windsor and Sid James "carried on" here and General Charles de Gaulle led the wartime Free French movement from within its walls. It's appealing to imagine he may have borne witness to two of his more sinister neighbours, Nazi-sympathisers Oswald Mosley and his Mitford wife, being arrested on their doorstep to be incarcerated at His Majesty's pleasure. Dolphin Square's corridors haven't been short of colourful characters.

Reckoned by some to be the most famous and infamous address in London, Dolphin Square is a vast block of service flats in Pimlico, built in the 1930s on a seven and a half acre site that was once master

builder Thomas Cubitt's works. What Cubitt – whose Doric columns and stuccoed townhouses formed the Pimlico we know and love – would have thought of the Art Deco edifice will never be known but, from the off, Dolphin Square's intent to provide affordable rented housing to people working in the area who could then walk to work was a master stroke.

Built over two decades before the advent of council housing blocks, the square of 1,200 serviced apartments was a pioneering vision. In the eyes of its American owners it offered a new, socially inclusive approach that challenged the norms of the time, while its design and construction were intended to resist collapse in the event of aerial bombardment. This was tested by around a dozen bombs during WW2. At the time, it was the largest block of flats

"The appeal of the square's location to the political and espionage communities

is evident"



in Europe. Publicity material from 1937 promised "Effortless Home Life". Here was a foray into serviced living, with no servants required at a time when home life had changed after the social shifts of the Great War. At that time, the cheapest flats were around a tenth of the price of the most expensive.

The Square has again been in the news recently. Earlier this year, Westminster City Council's Planning Department recommended for approval plans submitted by American owners Westbrook Partners for a £400 million-plus revamp. Major changes included the demolition of the art deco shopping arcade and the demolition and 10-storey rebuild of the northern block to offer additional floors and a basement to provide leisure facilities including a swimming pool. The Grade II-listed Fountain Garden and Spanish Garden would also be replaced.

The changes to such an iconic building, its listed gardens and concerns over the provision of affordable housing resulted in the galvanising of residents and community groups, as well as Labour councillors. In June, with resident and former *Country Life* editor Clive Aslet representing opposition for a cohort of groups, the planning committee ruled against the council's recommendation.

The square, with its varied and sometimes powerwielding tenants, is often mentioned in the news. The appeal of the square's location to the political and espionage communities is evident. Exit stage left to Westminster, exit stage right to the river and MI5. At one point, more than 100 MPs and lords

had a Dolphin Square address. Former Prime Minister Harold Wilson and party leaders William Hague, Sir Menzies Campbell and Sir David Steel have all resided here. Sir Winston Churchill's daughter Sarah was evicted after flinging gin bottles out of the windows.

Back in the late 1930s, English spymaster Maxwell Knight – reckoned to be the inspiration for 'M' in *James Bond*, based himself in Dolphin Square, living just doors down from Oswald Moseley. MI5 section B5 (b) used Dolphin Square as a base for infiltrating subversive groups. Maxwell Knight not only spied on the Mosleys and arranged for their imprisonment in Holloway prison, but also recruited a number of

Below: Mandy Rice-Davies and Christine Keeler, 1963 Bottom: Oswald Mosley leads a fascist rally at Trafalgar Square, 1934





"Maxwell Knight not only spied on the Mosleys [in Dolphin Square], he also recruited a number of spies, including Ian Fleming" spies, including Ian Fleming.

When Admiralty clerk John Vassal was convicted of spying for Russia, it was the lavish furnishing and interiors of his Dolphin Square flat, number 807, that helped to convict him for being in the pay of the Soviets. When Conservative MP Iain Mills died of alcohol poisoning in his flat, John Major's government lost its parliamentary majority.

Operation Midland has now been dismissed as the work of a fantasist, but it was serious business when the Metropolitan Police appealed for information about alleged child abuse taking place in the square, following allegations of a paedophile ring involving senior military personnel and political figures in the 1970s and

1980s. The allegations were made by a man referred to as "Nick", who claimed he was taken by car to "parties" where he was abused at a flat in the square.

It has a chequered past, but community is still thriving in Dolphin Square. Perhaps many tenants will raise glasses higher at the residents' Christmas lunch this year, knowing that they will not, for now, be uprooted from their homes in the name of a revamp and the demolition it would entail. Time will tell what plans, if any, are resubmitted, but this iconic building, as a London landmark, is, most importantly, still providing the homes it was intended to.



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