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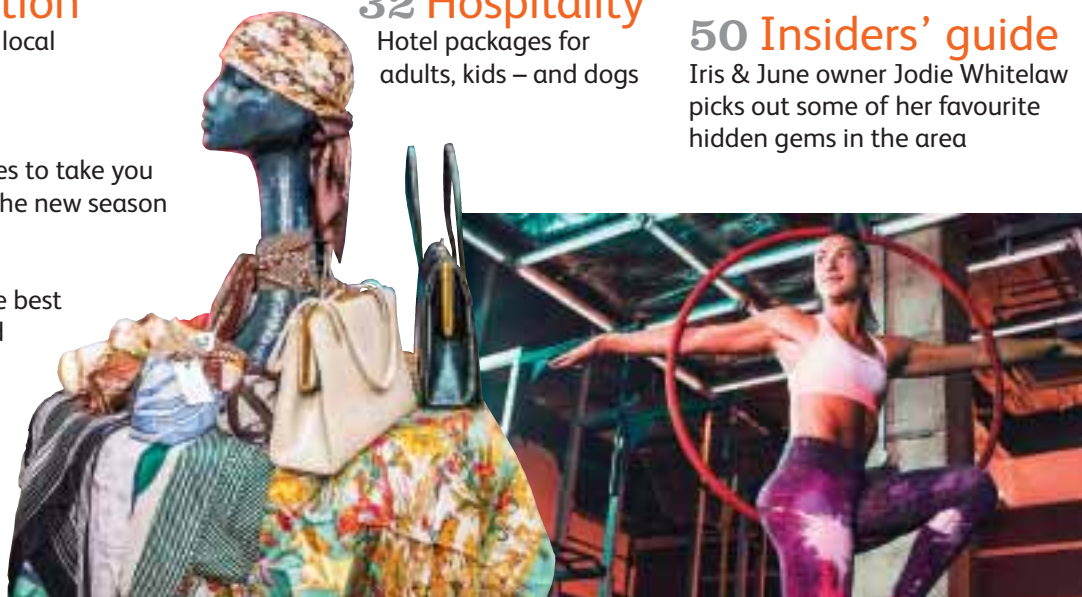
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Publishing Business
3 Princes Street London W1B 2LD
020 7259 1050 www.pubbiz.com

Editor Jonathan Whiley
020 7259 1057
jonathan@pubbiz.com

Writers Corrie Bond-French,
Sue Bradley, Alex Briand,
Sophia Charalambous, Reyhaan Day

Sub-editor Selma Day

Designer Andy Lowe

Circulation manager
Julie Ward

Advertisement managers
Bridget Rodricks
bridget@pubbiz.com 07769 331 599

Richard Taylor
richard@pubbiz.com 07724 992 410

Publisher Adrian Day
day@pubbiz.com 020 7259 1053

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A Holocaust memorial and education centre in the heart of Westminster has been given the go-ahead by the government.

The plans were initially rejected by Westminster City Council, but that decision was subsequently overturned (despite opposition from the 'Save Victoria Tower Gardens' campaign). The centre will be free to visitors and will consist of 23 bronze sculptures and an underground learning centre, dedicated to honouring the victims of the Holocaust. Construction will begin late this year, and the centre is expected to be open in the autumn of 2024.

Victoria Tower Gardens



This Summer, Victoria, Westminster, Whitehall and Northbank BIDS launched their 'Everyday Kings and Queens' campaign, celebrating local heroes who went above and beyond during the pandemic.

Public spaces were transformed with colourful, interactive installations including card benches, photo-booths and wrapped bollards. In August, Christchurch and Lower Grosvenor Gardens became hubs of entertainment complete with roaming musicians, stilt walkers, flower crown workshops and giant garden games.

M Victoria Street will be holding quarterly 'pooch parties' – dog-centric celebrations featuring canine fashion shows, puppy ball pits and pet-friendly canapés.

The parties are the latest addition to M Victoria's already impressive roster of dog-friendly events, which include a weekly 'six-legged brunch' during which pups and their owners can bond over a three-course meal. The inaugural pooch party was held on August 14 and had a 'Dogue' theme (taking inspiration from *Vogue*), including a red carpet and a 'best dressed' award.

Zig Zag Building, 74 Victoria Street





Neat Burger is opening a new restaurant in Victoria.

The plant-based, fast-food brand is backed by F1 star Lewis Hamilton, and serves up tasty vegan burgers as well as dairy-free shakes, gelato and sweet treats. Neat has teamed up with The Eden Project to ensure that for every burger sold, a tree is planted.

36 Buckingham Palace Road



All the latest happenings including an eco-friendly workspace, a vegan burger joint and pooch parties for canine fashionistas



6-8 Greencoat Place has been let to Fora, a premium flexible workspace provider.

It's now in the process of being transformed into a warehouse-style office space, set to open in 2022. The property is part of a cluster of late-Victorian buildings which were once used as food halls by the Army and Navy store. Today, it has been retrofitted with electric heating and glazed windows to boost its eco credentials, as well as shower facilities and bike spaces to allow commuters to cycle to work.

6-8 Greencoat Place



Andrew Wong, of much-loved Victoria restaurant A. Wong, has been awarded Chef of the Year at the prestigious National Restaurant Awards.

The award recognises Andrew's outstanding work in transforming the image of Chinese food in the UK, drawing attention to new techniques and flavours. A. Wong is currently the only Chinese restaurant outside Asia to hold two Michelin stars.
A. Wong, 70 Wilton Road

TATE BRITAIN – SERAFINE1369

A new installation from London-based artist, dancer and choreographer SERAFINE1369 is arriving at Tate Britain on September 24.

From Darkness Into Darkness is part of Tate's Art Now series of free exhibitions that showcase emerging artists and new developments in British art. The installation features atmospheric landscapes crafted through music, video and choreography, which consider what it means to feel haunted by exploring mythological archetypes of monstrous creatures.

Millbank



CARDINAL PLACE ROOF GARDEN

Landsec is bringing live entertainment to the area every Thursday, with its Live @ Lunch acoustic performances taking place on the revitalised Cardinal Place roof garden, from 12pm to 2pm, as part of its Landsec Presents: Summer Sounds series.

Thursday evenings will also see its Sundowner Sessions take place at NOVA, with an eclectic mix of live music from 5.30pm to 8.30pm, with saxophonists, cellists and violinists, percussive groups and DJs playing chilled tunes. Free to attend, but NOVA's al fresco spots are the best seats in the house.

WESTMINSTER INSIDE OUT FESTIVAL

The Victoria BID will be participating in Westminster City Council's brand new festival, Inside Out, which brings art, entertainment and culture onto the streets of Westminster.

Taking place until October 31, the festival line-up features collaborations with theatres, galleries, museums and performing arts venues to bring the streets of Westminster to life, with diverse and interactive content for locals and visitors to enjoy.

Public art specialist MT Art Agency is set to place two light art installations in Victoria, at the Westminster Cathedral piazza and Christchurch Gardens; and one in Victoria Embankment Gardens. For more information, visit westminster.gov.uk/insideout

Autumn events

With the return of theatre and live music, there's plenty to keep you entertained this season, including the exciting new Inside Out festival

BOISDALE

Belgravia's home of blues and jazz, Boisdale, has a packed schedule of live music events to keep you entertained throughout the rest of the year.

From Sunday's swinging classic jazz and takes on cuts from the Great American Songbook to Cuban rhythms and celebrations of legends like Aretha Franklin and Ray Charles, Boisdale offers the electric atmosphere of live performances that we've all come to miss over the last year. Visit boisdaletickets.co.uk for full listings.
15 Eccleston Street



WICKED RETURNS

Blockbuster theatre production, *Wicked*, is set to return to Apollo Victoria Theatre this month, after months of cancelled performances and continued uncertainty surrounding the theatre industry.

2021 marks the world-famous show's 15th anniversary. Chief executive of the Victoria Business Improvement District (BID), Ruth Duston, said that welcoming back the iconic show will be a big boost for the area, when plans to stage the production were announced. "*Wicked* is an iconic fixture in Victoria. The reopening plans will further galvanise both the economic renaissance and vibrancy of the area."
17 Wilton Road



THE GORING THANKSGIVING

The Goring will help American patriots celebrate Thanksgiving with a one-off, six-course menu, putting the spotlight on luxurious American classics like Venus clam chowder, smoked bacon and caviar.

The tasting menu is priced at £110 per person, and available only on the evening of November 25.
15 Beeston Place



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Transport yourself to ‘paradise island’ with a new virtual-reality experience in Victoria. OTHERWORLD – billed as ‘the UK’s most popular high-street VR experience’ with celebrity fans including Adele, Skepta, KSI and Jonathan Ross – recently opened its second London ‘portal’ in Victoria’s NOVA.

Since opening in 2019, its unique immersion pods – the only ones in the world to sync heat, wind and rumble effects with ‘free-roam virtual reality’ – have transported more than 60,000 people to a paradise island in virtual reality. Once there, you can enjoy 16 immersive gaming, arts and education experiences such as fighting a zombie apocalypse deep in Arizona or blockbusters such as Half-Life: Alyx.

Guests at the new Victoria location earn DreamCoin as they play in VR, a virtual currency which earns them discounts on more VR time or drinks from the self-serve bar. There are 10 taps on offer, serving the likes of Asahi, Peroni, Tiny Rebel and a selection of premium cocktails from Black Lines.

“Our second location is a first-class departure lounge to a parallel universe,” said Ed Wardle, chief creative officer.

“We’re excited to welcome our guests to an awe-inspiring, projection-mapped space where they can prepare for their journey into virtual reality and swap stories once they’ve returned.”



The second location follows a £2.9 million investment from leading venture capital funds and is part of a country-wide expansion.

“We’ve been spurred on by fantastic guest feedback and strong trading results,” says CEO Chris Adams.

“We’re working to take OTHERWORLD to new cities across the UK.”

OTHERWORLD is run by The Dream Corporation, a team of creatives, technologists and operations founded in 2017 by Chris Adams and Ed Wardle, named in the *Evening Standard*’s ‘Progress 1000’ list of London’s most influential people.

Chris, who leads growth and technology,

Parallel universe

OTHERWORLD – billed as “the UK’s most popular high-street VR experience” – has landed in Victoria’s NOVA

BY JONATHAN WHILEY

was a strategy consultant for eight years to FTSE 100 tech and leisure clients and led an esports start-up, hosting pro tournaments with EA and Activision.

Ed, meanwhile, who leads content and creative direction, sold four feature screenplays to Oscar and BAFTA winners as a writer and studied film at USC [University of Southern California] in Los Angeles.

Prices vary from £14 to £48, depending on date, time and session length (40-minute, 55-minute or 70-minute sessions are available).

85 Buckingham Palace Road, other.world



Curator Isabella Manning takes us on a personal tour through *Masterpieces from Buckingham Palace*

BY ALICE CAIRNS



Judith with the Head of Holofernes, Cristofano Allori

The big picture



A Woman at her Toilet, Jan Steen

Buckingham Palace is in the midst of a refurb – and very rarely have planned building works had such positive results. While teams of builders rewire, renovate and restore its historic rooms, a selection of the palace's treasures have been given a new home in the Queen's Gallery. The result is *Masterpieces from Buckingham Palace*: an embarrassment of artistic riches, with priceless Rembrandts, Vermeers and van Dycks lined up side by side.

"The exhibition brings together some of the best paintings in the Royal Collection – and in the entire history of art," says curator Isabella Manning, who picks her four stand-out pieces...

***Judith with the Head of Holofernes, 1613*
Cristofano Allori**

"This painting has a hidden meaning. The beautiful Judith is modelled on the artist's lover (Maria de Giovanni Mazafirri), while the

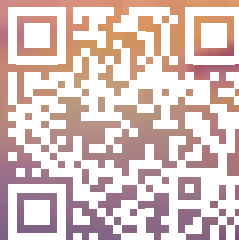


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maidservant standing to the left is thought to be based on his lover's mother. The decapitated head of Holofernes, which Judith is clutching by the hair, is a self-portrait of the artist. So as well as depicting a famous biblical scene, it is a way of reflecting on the artist's own love affair – which, as you can probably guess, ended unhappily."

A Woman at her Toilet, 1663

Jan Steen

"This painting is full of symbols. Just look at the still life on the floor: a lute with a broken string, which symbolises transience; a book of music, which symbolises love; and a skull, which represents death. Anyone hoping to reach the alluring woman on the bed would have to step over these objects, which represent the transience of earthly love. We're kept at a distance from the woman, as though we're hovering at the threshold, and we're being warned against stepping inside and falling for her sensual charms."

The Shipbuilder and His Wife, Rembrandt Van Rijn



"The exhibition brings together some of the best paintings in the Royal Collection"

The Shipbuilder and His Wife, 1633

Rembrandt Van Rijn

"The way Rembrandt handles paint is just exquisite. In some places, he applies it in really thick layers, then uses the end of his paintbrush to incise into the wet paint, for example, to convey the dark hairs on the shipbuilder's head. The portrait was made at a time when married couples were usually painted separately, so it's exciting to see Rembrandt flout that convention to capture the playful dynamic between this couple."

Portrait of a Woman in Yellow, 1529

Andrea Del Sarto

"This unfinished portrait was discovered in the artist's studio after he died of the plague. Because it's unfinished, it gives you a sense of all the work that lies behind the other, more polished pieces in the exhibition. The artist has paid a lot of attention to the depiction of the sitter's face – her costume is less finished, and he was probably intending to return to it later. If you look closely, you even can see Del Sarto's underdrawing, especially on the neck. I like to think of this painting as an insight into the workings of a Renaissance studio."

Portrait of a Woman in Yellow, Andrea Del Sarto



Masterpieces from Buckingham Palace runs until Feb 13, 2022.

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James Handscombe PRINCIPAL OF HARRIS WESTMINSTER SIXTH FORM

"I think I must have been a nightmare to teach. I was very clever and very good at passing exams, but I was also quite lazy and didn't have much tolerance for authority figures. I suffered a bit from bullying because I was weird and geeky, until I very sensibly made friends with the biggest guy in the class, which fixed that problem for me.

At the same time, I was aware that some of my teachers were wonderful at what they did, and deserved much better than I ever gave them. So when I decided to go into teaching myself, I knew that I needed to be one of the good ones. I realised that I couldn't just stroll into a school and be instantly brilliant, but I promised myself that if I wasn't a great teacher after five years, I would leave the profession and do something else. Luckily, I've been a teacher for 22 years.

Great teachers understand people and can generate a human connection with a class. I'm also interested in the idea that teaching is about creating a persona. When we step into a classroom, we present a censored version of ourselves. Students need you to be



Talking heads

As a new school year begins, we catch up with the heads of some of Victoria and Westminster's local schools

BY ALICE CAIRNS

consistent, reliable and predictable. I always advise my teachers to think about who they want their 'teaching self' to be.

We believe that learning is a delight. The biggest danger in education today is that we think of learning as a transactional experience. I think that that does a huge disservice to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. If you are lucky enough to have educated parents who are engaged in your education, then you will grow up surrounded by interesting kinds of learning. But if you don't have that background, then your only impression of what learning is will come from school. Do we really want to teach students that learning is just about meeting grade boundaries?

Harris Westminster takes students from all across London, from all different backgrounds, but we have a particular mission to the most disadvantaged. We want to give everyone a wonderful education, and to teach them that learning is an all-consuming way of life."

Harris Westminster Sixth Form, Steel House, 11 Tothill Street

Sebastian Hepher

**PRINCIPAL OF
EATON SQUARE SCHOOLS**

"My own school days were very happy – which is not to say that I didn't get into my fair share of trouble. I was definitely not a model student. Sometimes I'll be sitting in my office when I'll hear a knock on the door, and a member of staff will put their head round and ask me to have a word with a student.

Invariably, when I hear what they've done, it'll be some boyish mischievousness that I may very well have been guilty of myself. I will always be serious and admonish in the correct fashion, of course, but at the back of my mind I'll be thinking, 'actually, that was quite funny'. Luckily, I've mastered a stern expression after 30 years as a headmaster.

I knew that I wanted to be a teacher from a very young age. When I was 12, I remember being given a group of much younger children to entertain one summer holiday. I'll always remember how much

I enjoyed that day – reading to them, playing games with them – and how that evening, somebody told me I was a natural. That really stuck with me and, from that point on, I knew teaching was what I wanted to do. Thinking about it now, I wonder if I was just absolutely rubbish at everything else, and that was the only compliment I'd ever received.

In my opinion, the independent sector needs to work hard to avoid becoming a pressure-house of exam stress. Some students will respond to that, it's true, but I would say it's the minority. We can't forget that our students are children, and need time to be children. I think that's been lost to a degree.

My tips for a new school year: make the most of it. Be open to new challenges and new experiences, and enjoy and value each other's company.

The pandemic has made us all realise how important those freedoms can be.

Spending time with our friends and our peer group is utterly invaluable."

*Eaton Square
Prep School, 55-57*



"Be open to new challenges and new experiences, and enjoy and value each other's company"



Peter Broughton

HEADTEACHER OF WESTMINSTER CITY SCHOOL

"I think it's the job of a school to develop the whole child – not just academically, but also morally, spiritually and through extra-curriculars. At Westminster City School, we have an excellent rowing programme and numerous choirs and ensembles, which for a state school is pretty unusual. Sport is very important to me, personally. When I'm not teaching, I coach my son's football team, and I'm a lifelong Crystal Palace supporter.

Our location is so important to us. We collaborate with businesses in our community: for example, we've just launched a scholarship with Polar Capital (16 Palace Street), offering two full university scholarships. The fact that we're based in Victoria means we're able to work with these companies, offering transformative experiences to our students.

As a society, I don't think we value teachers as much as we should do. You don't hear much talk of teachers being key workers but, in terms of response to the pandemic, we provided a fundamental service and were in contact with masses of young people. Having started my career in Japan, where teachers are revered, you really feel the difference."

Westminster City School, 55 Palace Street



Rachel Jewitt

HEADMISTRESS OF ST MATTHEW'S PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY AND ST BARNABAS' PRIMARY SCHOOL & NURSERY

"I became a teacher for a very simple reason: I wanted children to look back at their primary school experience and have happy memories. I did a music degree, and I always strive to integrate music into my teaching. That means school choirs, trips to the Royal Albert Hall, live music, orchestras, music groups and instrumental teaching. Technology is such a huge part of children's lives nowadays, but it can be quite 2D and linear; music encourages creative thinking and freedom, interpretation and improvisation. I want to offer students opportunities that they wouldn't get if they weren't at one of my schools.

I believe that we need to place more trust in the amazing teachers and leaders that we're lucky enough to have in our schools. Especially in Victoria and Westminster, there are so many local schools, and so many amazing members of staff. At the same time, each school is so different. Even the school down the road will have its own challenges or priorities, its own community to serve. There's no single way to be a great school – no one-size-fits-all approach. I think it's important to remember that."

*St Matthew's School,
18 Old Pye Street
St Barnabas' School,
St Barnabas Street*



A Brighter Future

Katharine Woodcock, Headmistress of Sydenham High School GDST, takes the positives from the pandemic

AS WE HEAD TOWARDS WHAT WE HOPE is the light at the end of what has been, at times, an extremely dark tunnel we have to be thankful for what this time has taught us. The importance of community, values and caring for one another. The new ways in which we have adapted and evolved: technology at the forefront of much of what we do, balanced with a deeper focus on mindfulness and staying active away from devices.

Innovative teaching and more efficient working practices have meant that ahead of the new term in September, the school and its pupils are perhaps in a better position to thrive than ever before.

As it stands, our pupils have the best chance in nearly two years of having an uninterrupted year of learning and being around their peers. Mental health has become a bigger priority across the board, and we welcome athletes role-modelling the importance of mental fitness alongside physical

"keep finding joy in small things and remember for every negative situation, if you look hard enough, you can always find a positive!"

health. Something we have long heralded. Though moving towards familiar behaviours and routines at the end of last term helped to provide stability, the necessary adaptability required by the pandemic has fostered key skills of resilience and problem-solving which will stand pupils in good stead for the future.

If another lockdown occurs, our pupils are well equipped to deal with, and overcome, the implications that come with that. Throughout the pandemic our pupils learned to "keep finding joy in small things and remember for every negative situation, if you look hard enough, you can always find a positive!", which is a lesson we all can learn.

It's been said countless times but the past 18 months have

not been easy, especially not for the children whose learning and childhoods have been interrupted. But now is the time to look forward, to roll up our sleeves and get back to work, building something better than what came before. The summer holidays provided a time for rest, relaxation and reflection and enabled all facets of the school to be able to go full steam ahead come September. The new term brings with it something of a new beginning and here at Sydenham High School, we are more than ready for it.

Sydenham High School is part of the Girls' Day School Trust, a family of 25 schools helping to shape the future of girls' education. Discover more at open events throughout the autumn. admissions@syd.gdst.net, 020 8557 7004, sydenhamhighschool.gdst.net.



M&S

Although the summer weather hasn't been the best, there is still time to get in some chino shorts, £12-£25 and team with a shirt, jumper and moccasins.

58 VICTORIA STREET



Jones Bootmakers

The Bushwick Goodyear welted leather brogues, £149, can be teamed with any range of trousers, from jeans to suits.

84 VICTORIA STREET



Specsavers

These Specsavers x Viktor & Rolf glasses, £169, will make a stylish update to your regular eyewear.

1 CATHEDRAL WALK

Ben Sherman

This well-made Dijon check shirt, £50, and black cardigan, £85, will look great with some skinny-fit chinos, £65, just like this pair.

**HOUSE OF FRASER
101 VICTORIA STREET**



Back to school



ME + EM

The Frill Layering Cuff, £21, allows you to customise your outfits and give the illusion of a shirt without having to buy one. With plisse cuff trim and scalloped edges, it adds elegance to any sleeve.

45 ELIZABETH STREET

Clarks

The trainer to power walk to work is the Craft Run in mint green, £99. The lightweight shoe has removable Cushion Plus footbeds and is made from responsibly-sourced leathers and recycled materials.

149/151 VICTORIA STREET



Step into autumn with these stylish, transitional pieces

BY SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS

Oliver Bonas

Mark our words, the balaclava is the must-have piece for the season. This Knitted Hood, £25, with sparkle ties in green will work perfectly.

UNIT 49

VICTORIA STATION



Hobbs

A new season calls for a new suit like this Hetty jacket, £199, trousers, £119. Worn with flats or heels, it is ideal for day-to-evening transition.

3 CATHEDRAL WALK



VINTAGE: MODES & MORE

Vintage, which refers to well-made items of clothing that normally date between 20 and 100 years ago, is what Susie Nelson, founder of Modes & More specialises in – vintage designer, couture and rare vintage clothing and accessories.

Popular styles vary with the season and catwalk trends, but Susie shares her top tips for finding the best vintage pieces:

Wear clothes you can get in and out of easily – vintage clothes need to be tried on.

Know your measurements or take a tape measure, belt and HB pencil for sticky zips.

Don't take any notice of size labels – a size 12 back in the 1950s/60s is probably equivalent to a size 8 today and it varies from brand to brand.

Hold the items up to the light or use the torch on your phone if in a dark shop. This should enable you to see any patches, repairs and areas of delicate fabric.

Check for missing buttons, hooks and eyes, belt hoops and zips that are stuck.

Check the underarm areas for sweat damage; some vintage items were made before deodorant was widely used.

Unless you can sew or know a friendly seamstress I wouldn't advise buying items that need a lot of repairs.

Ask the shop staff for any specifics.

48a Moreton Street



Susie Nelson of
Modes & More

Vintage vibes

Second-hand and vintage fashion is
steadily becoming big business

BY SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS

CHARITY:

ROYAL TRINITY HOSPICE

Royal Trinity Hospice sells everything from high street to designer and vintage in its boutique space.

The Wilton Road store manager, Vanessa Martinez, believes lockdown has played a part in the growing numbers who shop second-hand. "Our mission is to be the antidote to non-sustainable fashion and convince people to use second-hand clothes first," she says.

Vanessa tells me the vintage pieces that are selling well include items from the 80s' and 90s' – wraparound 80s' dresses, and graffiti, neon and high-top trainers from the 90s.

"One time, we received a donation in a black bin bag – it was Thea Porter from the 50s, a tunic dress in velvet, stunning – we checked the prices online and they were selling from £2,800."

When shopping second-hand, Vanessa believes you should first decide on the area you're visiting – some shops' stock is going to be more or less high-end.

Her second tip is to have patience because you will have to look through every rail and you shouldn't go in with a specific piece in mind because you most likely won't find it.

"Buying from us means you are helping a cause, the environment and your pocket because you can get so much more from charity than a normal shop and I think it's going to be the future of fashion," she says.

85 Wilton Road



"When you want to buy something new, think, 'can I get this second-hand?'"

SECOND-HAND: THRIFT+

Joe Metcalfe, CEO of Thrift+, the UK's largest online second-hand fashion store, has revolutionised the way shopping second-hand works.

He says: "Our main piece of advice when you want to buy something new is to first think, 'can I get this second-hand?'"

"We have nearly 200,000 items on our site at any one time, so there is a huge range, and people can often find great bargains."

Joe believes now is the time, particularly in light of the pandemic, to reassess the way we shop.

Offering high-street and designer options on Thrift+ allows shoppers to access the whole market.

Zara, for example, is its top-selling brand, and this diverts tonnes of waste away from landfill.

"I often find brilliant sportswear on Thrift+," says Joe.

"A recent pair of Nike trainers have carried me through many long runs around my new home in Edinburgh."



WHSMITH

Face-painting fun is guaranteed with this Snazaroo Halloween face-paint kit. £13.49.

Victoria Station



NEXT

Trick or treaters will look the part in this Rubies Halloween vampire costume. £11.

Unit 1, Victoria Plaza, 111 Buckingham Palace Road

Fright night

Get Halloween ready with these ghostly goodies

BY KATE WHITE



BUCKINGHAM PALACE SHOP

Add this Leonardo Da Vinci skull pencil eraser to your desk for a subtle nod to the season.

7 Buckingham Palace Road



LUSH

Relax and unwind with this Halloween buds bath set. £16.

Victoria Place Shopping Centre





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Tuck into a “yumpkin” – a chocolate alternative to the traditional pumpkin. £6.50.
133 Victoria Street

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Cardinal Place



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M&S SIMPLY FOOD

Drizzle this pumpkin seed oil over pasta, potatoes and soups. £10.
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Eat & drink Directory out & in



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W: www.berrysbar.co.uk



THE PEM RESTAURANT

A fresh take on fine dining in the heart of Westminster: The restaurant is inspired by suffragette Emily Wilding Davison, whose pet name was 'Pem', and celebrates generations of pioneering women. Winner of the National Restaurant Awards' One to Watch, the Pem's team is under the experienced guidance of Michelin-starred consultant Chef Sally Abé. Serving a lively menu of British flavours and beautifully curated wines, the Pem also features The Harben - an intimate private dining room for up to 24 guests.

Conrad London St. James,
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W: thepemrestaurant.com



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ROSA'S THAI CAFE

Rosa's Thai Cafe is born out of our founder Saiphin's passion for authentic Thai food served in a no-frill and relaxed atmosphere. We put genuine hospitality and great recipes at the heart of everything that we do and are proud to have been born in Thailand and raised in England. Rosa's Victoria is situated in the middle of the ever-busy Pimlico neighbourhood. We offer delivery and takeaway 7 days a week, bringing a modern twist on authentic Thai cuisine to the hungry fans of Thai food in the area.

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To order delivery or click n'collect, please visit:
www.rosasthaicafe.com/locations/victoria



Photo: Tim Green



The Pem

Seasonal British produce takes centre stage at The Pem, Sally Abé's new restaurant at Conrad London St James.

The menu includes starters such as charred day boat mackerel with raw and pickled summer vegetables, while mains include sirloin and rib of Dexter beef with oyster, turnip and horseradish.

Desserts include an apricot custard tartlet and black forest gâteau, while the wine list champions independent producers. 22-28 Broadway

Quick bites

Autumn kicks off with a Moulin Rouge experience, and a look at the latest openings

BY JONATHAN WHILEY AND ALICE CAIRNS

New openings

A new steakhouse has opened in Westminster from renowned hospitality group, STK.

The restaurant at 30 John Islip Street, which also includes a raw bar, serves the likes of roasted lobster tail and Black Angus Tomahawk with sides such as black truffle mac and cheese.

Gastropub Berry's Bar recently opened at 50-52 Buckingham Palace Road with an extensive gin menu, Brewdog on tap and speciality cocktails.

M Victoria

On September 25, diners at M Victoria Street will be transported to the heady world of fin de siècle Paris. The Moulin Rouge dinner is the second in a series of immersive dinners held at M this year. Guests will enjoy a meal and drinks, while a group of entertainers bring to life the bohemian glamour of Paris's 19th century nightclubs.

£125pp, Zig Zag Building, 74 Victoria Street



Market Halls Victoria

After lying dormant for 16 months due to the pandemic, Market Halls

Victoria has reopened. This foodie hotspot brings together seven tasty kitchens, with old favourites Butchies, Gopals, Soft Serve Society, Fanny's Kebabs and Baozinn now joined by a new poké kitchen, Poke the Bear. The newly-revamped space also features plenty of great bars, including a renovated rooftop terrace where diners can enjoy a cocktail with a view. Visit from 11.30am every day for food, drinks and plenty of atmosphere. 191 Victoria Street

What are your earliest food memories?

Drinking hot chocolate on the mountains with my parents. When I was young, we would go out for long walks or jump on the snowmobile and my parents would boil milk over the fire before stirring in chocolate. Those are my favourite childhood memories.

Who or what first inspired you to cook?

The main reason I wanted to get into cooking was because I wanted a job where I could always travel and do my work anywhere. My dad used to own a vegetable stall before I was born and is a very keen and curious cook. Growing up, he made sure we always had fresh vegetables on the table and this is something that has definitely stayed with me. We often cook together now, especially in the summer in southern Sweden.

What made you choose London to open your first restaurant outside Stockholm?

When I was a child, we lived in Sussex for two years so from a young age the UK has always been a second home to me. My brothers stayed and moved to London and (until this year) I



have constantly travelled between Sweden and London. It is the only place I would think of to open my first restaurant outside Sweden.

What are your earliest memories of London?

Well, I was raised in rural Northern Sweden, where it takes two hours to get to the nearest supermarket. I then moved to Sussex which is also very rural so you can only imagine what I thought of London at the age of 13. All the

From deer heart to oysters
cooked in beef fat, a
new restaurant at Great
Scotland Yard Hotel will
introduce wood-fired
'old Nordic' cooking to
Westminster. We meet
its Michelin-starred chef,
Niklas Ekstedt

BY JONATHAN WHILEY

buildings and taxis and buses – it was just amazing. My favourite place to go was Hamley's and visiting for the first time was a big moment. When I was 15, my family celebrated my dad's 40th birthday at La Gavroche [in Mayfair] which I will always remember very clearly as my first great restaurant experience.

What can diners expect from the menu?

It's going to be traditional Scandinavian but with warmth to it. I would say it is a slightly different style to what people are used to from Scandinavian food. I will be all about heat and warmth with a big pinch of Northern Sweden.

How would you describe 'Old Nordic' cooking to those who are unfamiliar?

Old Nordic is based on Birch wood used to make Birch fire. It's not grilled but cooked in a cast oven over fire. Kind of how a witch would cook her food.

Do you have a dish on the menu that you are most proud of?

One dish we really love, that has become our



Playing with fire

signature at Ekstedt and we are working at the moment to make it more British, is our oysters cooked in beef fat. It is an ancient dish that we found in old cookbooks about nine years ago and have brought back to life. It has been on the Ekstedt menu since very early in the history of the restaurant and we are looking forward to bringing it to London.

Are there any ingredients that diners in the UK may not have tried?

Most of the ingredients we will be using will be sourced locally and we're very excited to be able to use a variation of British produce. We will, however, be introducing UK diners to game dishes that they may not be used to, such as the heart of a deer and vendace roe [a type of freshwater fish].

What sort of atmosphere do you hope to create?

I want to create an atmosphere of warmth at the restaurant. Mainly, I want to kill the idea that Nordic is about being calm and quiet. Ekstedt at The Yard will be a loud and fun place.



What is your favourite London restaurant?

Brat – no question. I have been sad not to make it to their new place at Climpson's Arch as I haven't been able to get over to the UK since lockdown! Going there is at the top of my list of things to do now I am back in London.

Ekstedt at The Yard opens on Sept 17, 3-5 Great Scotland Yard



Back in the Sixties, when the late, great Roux brothers were busy setting the standard for a nascent hospitality industry in London after bleak years of post-war rationing, they would fill the family car up in their native France and try their luck at the ferry port. Hopefully, the fact that Maman Roux and even a young Michel Roux Jr were surrounded by suitcases chock-full of such tresors du terroir as foie gras and truffles would escape the notice of any beady-eyed customs official. The revived palates of London's diners were in for a treat.

Times do, of course, change: a country might join and then leave an economic community that has itself changed beyond initial function; foie gras becomes more controversial, truffles become prized obsessions and pandemics sweep across the globe.

There's no denying that the impact of Brexit, Covid-19 and the droves leaving their barman's friends in a jar by the door to have a rethink career-wise has been anything but devastating for the hospitality industry. In spite of that and perhaps more timely than ever before, efforts are still being made that underscore just how inventive and big-hearted the industry can be.

There's certainly a fair share of trailblazing going on locally. Fat Macy's, originally a roving supper club, now has a permanent home with a restaurant on Ebury Bridge Road.

The brainchild of Meg Doherty, Fat Macy's is a social enterprise that tackles homelessness.

"For customers to do something good, all they need to do is to eat a meal. It's that simple.

We're using food as a vehicle for change and we

now have a place to call home and where every service adds to their training hours."

Through a 200-hour programme, trainees learn from professional chefs, work in front-of-house roles and help to run the business; in a year, trainees earn a deposit for a rented home with Fat Macy's providing support for up to two years as they transition into independent living.

The vision behind the Middle Eastern-inspired menu comes from business director Nathalie Moukarzel, inspired by the homely Lebanese dishes she grew up with.

Over at Westminster Kingsway College – which

"For customers to do something good, all they need to do is to eat a meal"





Faced with the challenges of Covid-19 and Brexit, two local businesses are doing their bit to help revive interest in the hospitality industry and train chefs of the future

BY CORRIE BOND-FRENCH

counts such luminaries as Jamie Oliver amongst its alumni, Marc Whitley, senior lecturer at The Escoffier Room, happily reports that despite such unprecedented times, interest is on the up.

"Sixty per cent of hospitality employers say they are now getting more applications from UK workers than ever before," he says.

"Sixty seven per cent of employers are seeing staff who left the hospitality industry during lockdown now return from other sectors, and over half (56 per cent) have hired new staff from other sectors in the last three months.

"There is a small light at the end of the tunnel, but resource prices and fixed costs are significantly rising which means that the sector will have to pass on these costs directly to the customer.

"The positive changes are that the industry has had to reposition itself and make important

changes to working practices and remuneration for employees to make this a career of choice."

With such a change of approach, then a renewed positivity could usher in a new era for the hospitality industry. Certainly, there is hope that the energy and the enthusiasm that the Roux family brought (literally) to the table can again be employed.

"We're working closely with the Roux family across their venues so that our students have the opportunity to work to their ideals and standards, become familiar with what the Roux names means to this profession and, ultimately, begin their careers with the Roux business."

Mark your diaries too; a special 'Roux family celebration' menu runs at The Escoffier Room from November 8 to 12 and May 9 to 13 next year.

vincentrooms.co.uk/fatmacys.org

Top dogs



From a canine concierge service to a foodie escape, we round up the latest news and new packages at hotels across Victoria and Westminster

BY SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS,
JONATHAN WHILEY AND ALICE CAIRNS

Bossie, our writer Sophia's pooch, at St Ermins' hotel

After travelling for what seemed like days, mum and I arrived at a building surrounded by hydrangeas, and a man called Adrian carried all our bags to our room. I was delighted to see treats waiting for me in a large room, which mum called a suite, as travelling can make you very hungry and thirsty. I couldn't wait to get into the packet, but I made sure to jump on the bed a few times to see just how comfy it was – it was very. There was a bed in the room for me also, but once you've tried a king there's no going back. She's always telling me how high-maintenance I am, so I bet she was happy to see they had set up more things just for me – a squeaky toy, food bowls, even poo bags. There was also a mini fridge to store my dinners.

Once we'd settled in, the nice ladies at reception gave us instructions to reach

St James's Park – the nearest green space and just a five-minute walk where I could tire myself out. I wasn't expecting to see lots of swans, geese – even pelicans. I had a growl at them, but then a swan hissed at me. Don't pick a fight with a swan.

It was a hot day so I was happy to head back for some cold water and a lie down. Mum left me in the suite while she had dinner at the Caxton Bar and Grill, but I joined her for afternoon tea the next day on the terrace.

What a display – my mouth was watering at the chocolate and star anise profiterole. Still, I had my water and treats. You can't win them all!

For more information and the best dog-friendly local restaurants, shops and pampering, visit sterminshotel.co.uk/about/canine-concierge/

Georgian charm

Cosy up at Lime Tree hotel, which has undergone an extensive refurbishment for the first time since the 1960s.

The historic Ebury Street townhouse has been run by Matthew Goodsall and his wife, Charlotte, for the past 13 years. Charlotte's parents ran the hotel for 20 years before they took over.

"We closed in December 2019 for its first major refurbishment since the '60s," said Matthew. "It was a huge job and, obviously, we were held up rather dramatically by the lockdowns."

Each of the 28 rooms have been refurbished and new facilities include a guest lounge and an all-day dining café-restaurant, The Buttery, open to locals and guests. Don't miss the hotel's 'secret' walled garden, a pretty spot to enjoy a cocktail.

135, 137 Ebury Street,
limetreehotel.co.uk

Charlotte
and Matt



Banish Sunday blues

For many, that lurching feeling of a Sunday evening never leaves you. Often it dates back to school days. I can vividly remember watching ITV drama *Heartbeat* with an impending sense of dread that a double maths lesson at school was fast approaching on Monday morning. Those fine people at Rubens at the Palace know this only too well. The five-star hotel recently launched an overnight package, 'Celebrate Sundays' that it hopes will help ease Londoners back into the working week. It includes an early check-in on Sunday (10am) and a host of different experiences to choose, from an afternoon tea overlooking the Royal Mews to a martini or gin masterclass. While both The English Grill (think 28-day dry-aged steaks on the Josper) and AA rosette, The Curry Room, were both closed during our stay (we enjoyed a wagyu burger in The New York Bar instead), there are hopes for reopening both in September. Service is sharp and friendly, but never over familiar, and the palette of ruby red throughout – from the staff uniforms to the decor – lends a deliciously old-school grandeur and sense of Saturday night occasion. Come Monday, you have the option to 'work from the hotel' (check-out is 6pm) so you can enjoy a hearty breakfast that includes the likes of tattie scone stack with Stornoway black pudding and bacon jam, at considerable leisure.

From £295, 39 Buckingham Palace Road, rubenshotel.com



Down the rabbit hole

Enjoy a slice of *Alice in Wonderland* with a 'Queen of Hearts' afternoon tea at Taj 51 Buckingham Gate Suites & Residences. The five-star hotel has a 'Spa in the City' package that includes tea in the hotel's restaurant, Kona, and a treatment at its Jiva spa, the first of its kind in Europe. The themed tea is presented on crockery with *Alice in Wonderland* illustrations and includes creations such as a dark chocolate hat for the Mad Hatter's tea party and a selection of sandwiches designed to replicate playing cards and the Queen's soldiers. The package is priced from £150, depending on the spa treatment you choose.

51 Buckingham Gate, taj51buckinghamgate.co.uk



Time for tea

Great Scotland Yard Hotel has unveiled a new afternoon tea in collaboration with Floris London, the only appointed perfumer to the Queen. This multi-sensory tea menu is packed full of floral flavours, taking inspiration from the notes of Floris's iconic Bouquet de la Reine fragrance (originally created by Mr Floris as a wedding gift for Queen Victoria). Alongside freshly-baked scones, expect the likes of rose and pistachio drizzle cakes, delicate violet leaf madeleines and crème fraîche milk buns. To drink there's Ruinart champagne as well as a selection of fine teas from the Rare Tea Company.

From £50 per person; 3-5 Great Scotland Yard

Gastronomic escape

Attention foodies! The Conrad London St James has launched two new packages to the experience its multi-million pound gastronomic makeover.

The Live London Escape includes a one-night stay and breakfast for two at the five-star Westminster hotel with a choice of cocktail at the new Hedgerow bar and dinner at chef Sally Abé's new rose-hued restaurant, The Pem (from £407).

Alternatively, for a little more luxury, The Love London Weekend includes all of the above, plus a second night (check-in Friday-Saturday) and an additional lunch at the hotel's revamped Blue Boar Pub, known for its superb Sunday roast (from £676).

22-28 Broadway, conradhotels.com/london



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(there are dozens more to benefit from)



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www.victoriaprivilegecard.co.uk



A new era

Historic railway hotel The Grosvenor has undergone a double rebrand and now falls under new brand, The Clermont.

The Grade II-listed hotel next to Victoria station was rebranded The Amba Grosvenor, but has recently been rebranded again as The Clermont Victoria.

It recently emerged from a top-to-toe refurbishment of rooms and 18 meeting and event rooms, many named after famous trains such as The Orient Suite and The Scotsman Boardroom.

101 Buckingham Palace Road



Exclusive luxury

It's easy to miss The Guardsman, Westminster's new five-star hotel. When I visited, it took me five minutes to locate the front door, so free of signage was the discrete grey and gold exterior.

As it turns out, that's rather the point. The Guardsman is designed to feel like a members' club, requiring its lucky patrons to be 'in the know'. Once you've found your way inside, the rewards are plentiful: from the plush velvet drawing room to the well-

stocked library, it's an oasis of calm.

The Guardsman has 53 rooms and six 'residences', and it was into one of the latter that I was ushered after I'd finished my cocktail (a 'Queen Bee', made with gin, lime and honey). Inside, I discovered a luxurious home-from-home: a two-bedroom space complete with kitchen, enormous living area and garden terrace.

My next stop was the restaurant, which is only open to hotel guests. I had an excellent salad of heritage

tomatoes topped with creamy burrata, followed by a green pea risotto and a tangy passion fruit cheesecake.

And so to bed – where lavender balm and an eye mask had been laid out on my pillow. When I woke, refreshed, it was to find breakfast delivered to my door. My verdict? If you enjoy calm, privacy and a frisson of exclusivity, The Guardsman is one for your little black book.

1 Vandon Street

Directory

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Flexibility and safety are key priorities
for gyms – and for gym-goers restarting
their fitness regimes

BY SOPHIA CHARALAMBOUS

Back to the gym

Barry's UK

Barry's UK has gone from strength to strength each year. The SW1 studio is the largest of all the London studios, and its Red Room is the perfect escape from the hustle and bustle of Victoria.

Sandy Macaskill, co-owner of Barry's UK and founding UK instructor, talks us through how the gym space is adjusting to the pandemic: "I think we need to wait a little longer to see if long-term patterns of behaviour have changed as a result of the pandemic, purely because gyms haven't been open long enough without disruptions like the "pingdemic" to really see what's going on.

"Short term, we obviously had the online boom, but the more we go on, the less I think it will cannibalise studios like Barry's because the real-life experience is just so much better.

"Spit and sawdust membership gyms may not be so fortunate."

Barry's has extended sanitisation protocols to make gym goers feel even safer, and there is still a form of social

distancing by booking specific spaces in the studio.

There are no flexible membership schemes but then Barry's has never had membership fees or join-up fees.

"It's one of the ways we ripped up the sector status quo in 2013," says Sandy.

"We are class based, so you can come whenever you like so if you've changed your workday routine, for example, we're perfect for you.

"Although we offer memberships, it's our class packages that are the most popular due to the ultimate flexibility it allows.

"Because of this, we have to earn our clients' business day in and day out, which is why we have the best in class customer service.

"We have offered a very generous expiry extension on packages and memberships throughout the pandemic in response to the closures and change in commuting habits."

16 Eccleston Yards

Adam White Personal Training Studios

Built around the desire to empower men and women into the best shape and health of their lives, Adam White, of Adam White Personal Training Studios, based on Romney Street, is a personal trainer who found his calling after a severe car accident injuring his neck and spine.

His studio is a private and residential studio, which means it's open to residents in Romney House for booking and clients, including training clients and personal trainers.

Adam has seen a change in the way people train since coming out of lockdown.

"We were forced as a nation and globe to train either at home or at parks – the workouts would have been online, on a pull-up bar, with mats or mates in the park," he says.

"From what I have noticed in my studio, people have missed the machines and cables.

"If I were to generalise, I would say women like to do barbell squats and use the kettlebells and mats as well as the glute abduction and hamstring machines, as well as the stepper and treadmills.

"Men have been quite keen to do a lot more barbell work such as bench press and bent over rows with deadlifts as well as pull ups and dips.

"But what I have noticed is that there is a much greater mixture of core and bodyweight moves melanged with weights, machines, barbells, kettlebell with the outdoor runs, hikes and cycles."

With sanitation practices in place as well as social-distancing signs and track and trace and limiting numbers, the signs are positive that gym spaces are moving in the right direction.

"People are generally respectful here about giving each other space and about cleaning before and after them. People are still also wearing masks at their own disclosure," adds Adam.

65 Romney Street





Gymbox

Gymbox has 11 gyms around London and offers diverse classes, Olympic-sized boxing rings and combat cages.

The Victoria gym is one of these spaces and Rory McEntee, brand and marketing director, tells us how fitness has changed post pandemic: “We are seeing a shift in gym usage patterns as people continue to balance being in the office and working from home. There is a greater mix of using the gym alongside at-home workouts.

“We are also seeing an increased demand for members to get back into group exercise as they crave those IRL experiences they missed during lockdown – classes such as Aerial Yoga, Killer Combat and Bike & Beats.

“Gymbox’s digital platform, Out the Box, is free as part of our membership, with hundreds

of live and on-demand classes.

“We felt that our community should get it free to add greater flexibility to their training and wellness needs – we also have the option for members to purchase home equipment at a reduced rate,” says Rory.

Gym capacity and class numbers have been reduced to ensure the gym is never crowded and it has even tweaked the format of some classes so there is less sharing of equipment.

Working hard to get the PT training sessions back on track, it has also started putting dates in the diary for special events – partnering with White Collar Flight Club for a charity event in October and launching eight-week boxing and Muay Thai classes.

123 Victoria Street

What’s hot in health & beauty

HEALTH: EGO DENTAL CLINIC

Multi award-winning EGO Dental Clinic’s Dr Charlie Attariani has noticed a surge in interest for dental procedures following lockdown and the “Zoom” effect. Lumineers – a minimally invasive type of veneer restoration – is ideal for anyone who needs small adjustments to the tooth structure, but wants the amount of work to be minimal compared to conventional veneers. The thin porcelain veneers are bonded to the front of your teeth for an immediate, dramatic change to your smile.

13 Strutton Ground



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The Sutton Trust aims to tackle problems of low social mobility by providing lower-income youngsters access to better opportunities

BY REYHAAN DAY

Path to success

Britain has historically low levels of social mobility, and evidence suggests that the problem is getting worse. Opportunities that are open to young people, particularly from less advantaged backgrounds, are dwindling, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Westminster-based The Sutton Trust was set up 25 years ago to tackle the problems of low social mobility in Britain.

“Social mobility is affected by lots of things,” says CEO James Turner. “How the economy is doing, housing and benefits policy, geography – but we’re particularly interested in education, because we think education is a way of being socially mobile; a way of someone from a poor background getting the qualifications and opportunities to do well.”

Turner says that England’s socially-segregated education system is a major

obstacle. “The quality and experience of education that you have when you’re wealthy is very different than if you’re from a poor background. The type of school that you go to, the support you might get from parents and the amount of money that’s spent on you and, therefore, your chances of going on to university and professional careers is very different. If you’re born poor, it’s a long way to the top. That inequality makes matters worse.”

He adds that the pandemic has highlighted the divide between wealthy and more economically-disadvantaged younger people. “We know poorer children who were already behind better-off kids in school are the ones that have missed out most on teaching while schools have been closed; they’re the ones that struggled to access home learning because they didn’t have a laptop or a quiet space to work. So it’s likely that the gap



between them and better-off children will have grown.”

The opportunities for poorer youths thinking of entering the world of work, or further education, are also at a low after the pandemic. “The pandemic has had a huge economic impact; if there are fewer jobs, fewer apprenticeships, fewer university places, then that means there are fewer opportunities for young people to progress into, which has a negative impact on social mobility.

“We help about 7,000 young people every year,” says Turner. “We help them access opportunities that we think are really high value and that are going to increase their prospects in life.

“A lot of our work is around getting them into some of the most selective universities that lead to some of the best jobs. We do things like summer schools and camps for young people to get a flavour of life at those universities and to help them apply. But we also have an eye on employability and making sure these young people can access top professions as well.”

The organisation’s Pathways programmes help young people get into fields such as law, medicine and engineering. “It also gives them a work experience base and contacts with lawyers, doctors and engineers from various backgrounds to help them navigate that

profession and make good choices, so their chances of success are greater.”

The Sutton Trust also highlights the benefits of apprenticeships for young people. “We want poorer, bright youngsters to benefit from those opportunities just as much as people from wealthier backgrounds.”

Turner says that the institutions partnering with The Sutton Trust also benefit. “Whether they are employers or universities, they actually want to get access to the brightest and best young people, regardless of their background, and we help them do that.”

The other integral part of The Sutton Trust’s work is trying to influence universities, schools, employers and government to change their policies and practices around social mobility. For the latter, having headquarters in Westminster is key. “Over the last 25 years, access to decision-makers and being within easy reach of Whitehall has been really important. We’re a stone’s throw from the Department of Education and for various projects, we quite often need to be there.

“The location is really important – there are the meetings, but there are also all the things that happen in Westminster concerning our agenda: think tank events, parliamentary receptions – all those things that allow us to build a network in the sector we work in.”

suttontrust.com

“If you’re born poor,
it’s a long way to the top”

James Turner, CEO, The Sutton Trust



Grand designs



Sir Winston Churchill's Old War Office – once a backdrop to royalty, politics, scandal and spies – is soon to open as a Raffles-branded hotel and luxury residences

BY CORRIE BOND-FRENCH

Imagine, if you will, dining in the very room where Sir Winston Churchill's pen blotted papers marked for his eyes only, where soaring oak-panelled walls are still infused with cigar smoke, steeped in the hush and whisper of wartime diktat and the timbre of embattled doggedness.

Or standing, bulldog proud à la Bond in *Skyfall*, on a rooftop overlooking Horse Guards and St James's Park, breathing in the heightened air of Whitehall heritage and eminence grise, the view punctuated by iconic turrets and the red, white and blue of Union flags fluttering in the wind.

For a cool £5 million plus, either of these scenarios, and many more besides, could become a reality. After decades shrouded in secrecy, the iconic Old War Office in Whitehall is now transformed into a private residence unlike any other. Following the sale by the MOD in 2014 to Rich List titans the Hinduja brothers (for a rumoured £350 million), the building, now known as The OWO, is mere months away from opening as the most glamorous address in London – half Raffles hotel and half glorious private residences. As Raffles' first foray into the UK and Europe, it's a vodka martini (shaken not stirred) meets Singapore sling love-match in a marriage of prestige and history.

It may only be a little over a century old, but few buildings could evoke such compelling old-world glamour as The OWO. Built on the site of the old Whitehall Palace, royal residence to monarchs starting with Henry VIII in 1530, the Edwardian baroque style building was initially built with bureaucracy in mind, housing 2,300 officers.

During the First World War, it was the working post for Lord Kitchener, whose 'Your Country Needs You' campaign inspired a million new recruits, and T.E. Lawrence of *Lawrence of Arabia* fame. Churchill's office, the Haldane suite,

would, half a century later, be the same room that a smitten Secretary of State for John Profumo would take Christine Keeler to 'to show her around', oblivious to the fact that she slipped from his arms into those of a Russian spy. From within these walls

Ian Fleming, working for the Naval Intelligence Division, drew inspiration for the character of James Bond. Working as liaison with the Secret Intelligence Service (a service born in the building) of the War Office, he was involved in planning Operation Goldeneye and intelligence units 30 Assault Unit and T-Force; Inspiration would not be hard to come by. Political

heavyweights including Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, David Lloyd George and Anthony Eden also worked within The OWO walls.

Two-bedroom apartments start at £5.8 million.

Penthouses and larger apartments will be POA, each one featuring awe-inspiring architectural proportions, many ceilings run to 4.4 metres high, and two apartments will occupy the turrets above London's skyline. No two apartments are the same.

The central cobbled courtyard will be a Zaha Hadid pavilion doubling as one of the nine restaurants in situ. The restoration of the old messenger rooms and features including mosaic floors and lashings of marble will ensure that the impact of this Edwardian nod to empire, power and grand architecture will continue to make its mark. For a breath of fresh OWO air, there's outdoor space

in Marcus Barnett's spectacular garden, and further facilities include multiple gyms, access to an impressive hotel pool, multiple lounges and a 16-seat cinema for private screenings.

Raffles Hotels & Resorts will be operating The OWO's 125-room and suite flagship hotel as well as the 85 branded residences, delivering the service synonymous with the Raffles brand to residents 24/7.



The Hinduja Group has worked with Historic England and Museum of London Archaeology, and appointed EPR Architects to oversee the intricate redevelopment, while the hotel's interiors are being designed by New York-based designer Thierry Despont. The entire project is seen as a celebration of the building's history and location.

"London is one of the best cities in the world, steeped in history and tradition, and has been our home for over 40 years," says Hinduja Group co-chairman Gopichand P Hinduja. "With our knowledge and experience in restoration of historic buildings, everything we do, and every decision made on The OWO, is underscored by our passion and respect for the heritage of the building and long-term commitment to London."

Accor-owned Raffles considers the partnership something of a homecoming: "Raffles is a pioneering brand with British roots, named after the British statesman and founder of Singapore, Sir



Thomas Stamford Raffles, so it is very fitting that Raffles is coming home to the UK," says CEO Sébastien Bazin.

"The inherent majesty and grandeur of this site is entirely in keeping with the Raffles brand and, to have unearthed an opportunity within such historic walls to deliver a flagship hotel and the first Raffles-branded residences in Europe, marks a significant moment for the Accor group."

With Inigo Jones's 17th-century Banqueting House next door – complete with its ceiling painted by Rubens, Downing Street just yards away and Westminster within a stone's throw, The OWO sits within the fulcrum of establishment and government.

This is prime property of the highest order, reflecting the times we now live in as it did when the foundation stone was laid.

The OWO Residences by Raffles are now on sale.

The hotel will open in early 2022. theowo.london



THE NAME'S BOND...

The War Office was the natural location for *James Bond*, and was first shown as the MI6 base in 1983 in *Octopussy*, with Roger Moore playing Bond. Further appearances were in *A View to a Kill* (1985), *Licence to Kill* (1989) and *Skyfall* (2012), when Daniel Craig looks out over the skyline next to the War Office turret, and again in *Spectre* in 2015, when Bond and Madeleine Swann drive off in the iconic Aston Martin.

In 1963, the War Office wrote to the Bond filmmakers advising that the War Office was unable to loan or sell flame-throwers for the making of *Dr No* "as these are considered prohibited weapons".



The interior also featured in the *Battle of Britain*, where Sir Laurence Olivier strides down

corridors as Sir Hugh Dowding, while the rooftop featured recently in Netflix series *The Crown*.



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City escapes

Nickie Aiken, Conservative MP for Cities of London and Westminster, reveals her bucket-list destinations

WORDS: ALEX BRIAND

What's your earliest travel memory?

I grew up mostly in Cardiff and we tended to stay in the UK for our trips. But we went abroad a couple of times, to Italy and Spain.

So what was your first experience of London?

I first came on a half-term holiday. I remember walking from St James's Park through Downing Street and Whitehall, and having my photograph taken with one of the police officers outside Number 10.

Did that first trip into London have an impact on you?

That particular experience made me think, 'I never want to live in London'. It was the sheer size of it. And now I not only live in central London but I also represent it.

What do your trips out of the capital look like these days?

Living in the centre of the city, my kids, my husband and I love being able to go somewhere completely rural. We love the Highlands, and Powys and north Wales. And we tend to do a city trip on the way. I think it's really important to show my children who are both Londoners about the other regional cities. They've got such history behind them. We had an absolute blast in Liverpool.

What do you look for in a hotel?

We tend to hire a cottage. But if it's a city break, it has to be in the centre so it's easy access to the sights and to restaurants. And I do love a good, firm bed. I don't mind about breakfast being included because a lot of the time it's better to go out and explore.

Do you switch off from work?

I try to, yes. It's really important to get some thinking time. I remember it happening in the August of 2017: I took a full month off and we all went to the States. My brother lives in Atlanta, so we went to stay with him and did lots of trips from there. I came back in September so refreshed and we really drove through the work we did on the Council Tax voluntary contribution. I love it in Atlanta; it's a real can-do city. It's got so much history and one of the first things we did was go to the Martin Luther King Museum. Atlanta was the first place I visited in the States as a proper adult. The portion sizes were eye-watering.

What do you think the Westminster and Victoria areas can offer visitors?

I think it's really important for tourists to come off the beaten track. Obviously, the West End and Covent Garden have fantastic

things to offer but I always encourage people to visit the amazing neighbourhoods in Pimlico and the backstreets of Westminster and Victoria – go a couple of streets away from the tourist hubs and you'll experience what real Londoners do. London is a series of villages. Just off the main roads you have fantastic restaurants, on Willow Place, for example. And Andrew Wong – two Michelin Stars and he's Pimlico born and bred. I've also found a fantastic new deli and café called Benvenuti on Upper Tachbrook Street, and we have amazing markets in and around Victoria. The butcher and fishmonger and fruit and veg guys at Tachbrook Street Market really did a brilliant job supplying people who were shielding this year. Even in the darkest times of lockdown they were always there.

What destinations are still on your bucket list once you feel ready to travel again?

I'd love to go to Australia one day. It's got such a connection and history with the UK, and there's so much to do. And next summer we're hoping to go to the US again. We had booked it last year to celebrate my daughter's GCSEs but it was cancelled. So, we'll resurrect that trip as soon as we can.





How long have you worked in the area?

We first opened our doors in April 2014. Our mission is to provide excellent coffee and awesome food, and to serve it with a smile. We go out of our way to look after our customers and employees. Iris & June is a happy, relaxed and cheerful place to work and visit.

Where is a good spot for a quick takeaway lunch?

Wild by Tart in Eccleston Yards. It's a lovely place for flavoursome, fresh, healthy food, similar to what we do at Iris & June.



Jodie Whitelaw

**Jodie Whitelaw, owner of coffee shop
Iris & June, picks out hidden gems across
Victoria and Westminster**

BY ALICE CAIRNS



Bbar



Wild by Tart

What is your favourite place for a sweet treat?

It's got to be Soft Serve Society – in the Market Hall food court, right next to Victoria Station. Vanilla and coconut sundae with added marshmallow fluff all the way!

What is your favourite pub?

The new Blue Boar Pub on Tothill Street. It's modern and fresh; probably a bit slick to be classed as a traditional pub but it's worth checking out and the food is delicious. It has lots of vegetarian and vegan options too.

What is your favourite local shop?

Not so much a shop, but a wonderful beauty salon: Brigita Vather on Buckingham Gate. It's owned and operated by the lovely Brigita – one of our regulars.

Best place for a cocktail?

Bbar! It's fun and they really know their cocktails. I love good tequila and bbar do a great tequila-based cocktail called the Hummingbird which includes lime, grapefruit, passionfruit and honey – a perfectly balanced sweet and sour combo.

Where do you recommend for a blow-out dinner?

A. Wong – it's just the most incredible Chinese. Everything is beautiful – it's such a special place. If I had to pick just one item from the menu, it would probably be the Gong Bao chicken.

1 Howick Place



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