

Issue 6
Priceless

Autumn/Winter
2021

MAIDA UNVEILED

From The Paddington Waterways and Maida Vale Society

Large Interior, London W.9., 1973 (oil on canvas). Copyright: © The
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A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

John Zealley

Dear PWMVS Members, W9W2 residents and readers, it is with great pleasure that we bring you the autumn/ winter 2021 edition of Maida Unveiled!

As ever you will find between these covers an eclectic range of articles bring to life some of the unique experience that comes from living in or visiting our area. In so doing we continue to try and build the appreciation of what our area collectively represents as a community and so encourage more of us to actively support, sustain and extend the amenity of the area.

For our part, we are working on a number of areas. First, in terms of planning, we are continuing to engage with the planning process for the Paddington Green Police Station and Travis Perkins sites. Our aim is to support the creation of more homes and facilities for the area, whilst also ensuring that the developments proposed enhance rather than detract from the setting of the conservation area and duly consider the impact on neighbouring properties.

We have also been working with WCC to enhance the 'streetscape'. This has included the remodelling of the junction of Warwick Avenue and Blomfield Road to introduce a pedestrian phase to the lights. This was seen as a priority now that the junction has become increasingly busy with 'rat running' since TfL introduced the no left turn from the Harrow Road onto Edgware Road.

Future schemes under consideration include the greening around the 'stack' at Warwick Avenue and along Elgin Avenue. Also, following our work to enhance play facilities at Paddington Rec, we are examining how we can work with WCC Councillors to improve other play spaces in the both Maida Vale and Little Venice.





Last, but by no means least, we are working to finalise plans for the return of the Christmas Carol Concert on December 7th. This is held in collaboration with the Choir and music staff of St Saviours school along with contributions from leaders of nearly all the faiths represented in our diverse area. This is only possible on account of the support of British Land and our thanks go to them.

In the meantime, read on and enjoy - and if you aren't already a registered member then do visit W9W2.co.uk to sign up!

John Zealley,

November 2021



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"The Views expressed in Maida Unveiled are those of the individual contributors and not necessarily of PWMVS"

Support your local businesses
... here is a point of reference of where to go!(*)

Boat Tour Agency
Jason's Trip

Performing Art Theatre
Canal Cafe Theatre

Restaurants / Delicatessen
Le Cochonnet, Paulette, La Piccola Deli, The Peppermint, Maida Hill Place, Baker and Spice and Raouls.

Coffee and Bakery Shop
Toast, Weza.

Grocery and Convenience Store
Dhigs

Craft Beer and Natural Wine Shop
Real drinks

Flower Shops
Avalon Flowers, Elgin Blooms

Yoga and Pilates
Yoga and Barre 50

Hair Dressers
Sam Warrington, Simon Warwick

Nail Salon
Cobalt Nails and Massage

Online Cookie Shop
Le Cookie Shop

Lifestyle Boutique
The Brimful Store

Photography Studio
Annika Block Photography

Computer Training School
Riva Learning

Charities
The Mosaic Community Trust, North Paddington Foodbank, North Paddington youth club.



(*) Local businesses featured on our autumn / winter 2020/2021 front cover (as above).

If you are a local business and would like to be included in our next issue, please contact our editorial office (alice.sinclair@w9w2.co.uk)

KAREN BUCK

Local MP

We may have been due to catch a break after the last 18 months of the pandemic and the havoc it has wreaked on our lives, economy and society. We didn't all get it.

For hundreds of residents in Maida Vale and Little Venice, such summer as we had was ruined by the **serious flooding** which hit north west London on **July 12th**. The initial impact of the rising water and, for many, raw sewage backing up into their homes, was only made worse by the poor response from Thames Water, which was nowhere to be seen in the immediate aftermath. Even now there are people who have not been able to return to their homes. Some lost everything, from precious personal belongings to furniture and clothes. Not everyone was insured, but those who were face higher premiums in future.

I have been in regular contact with Thames Water, who were quick to deny any failure on their part but have set up an independent inquiry into these events which will take another 6 months to report! Westminster Council held a scrutiny committee in September, which heard the same from Thames- but also the necessity for a strategy to reduce surface flood risk more generally. As I said in the Parliamentary debate I secured on this on September 8th, we need to know what went wrong, given a new £19m drainage system was installed in the area only 6 years ago- and above all we have to know how we can prevent it happening again.

The harsh reality is that climate change is increasing the risk of severe weather events and we need to adapt to that in a number of ways. Westminster's 2019 Strategic Flood Risk assessment states 'climate change is predicted to lead to an increase in the intensity of extreme rainfall which will lead to an increase in the risk of surface water flooding. Current guidance from the Environment Agency suggests that extreme rainfall intensity is likely to increase by between 20% and 40% over the next 100 years'. We are going to need to adapt to this changed reality regardless of what (if anything) comes out of the Thames Water inquiry, and look to the Council to show leadership on it.

The news is more positive on Covid, although St Mary's/Imperial were still caring for 66 patients who had tested positive for Covid-19 on their current admission to hospital, as of the need of September. 14 of those patients were being cared for in critical care, and all were on a ventilator. This remains a heavy demand on the hospital, especially as winter hasn't yet begun.

It remains a concern that Westminster is still the lowest ranking authority in the country for vaccination. Some of that is likely to be a statistical quirk, reflecting the fact that we have such a massively mobile population, but that doesn't explain all of it. Despite great work by front-line NHS staff, it has been a struggle to raise vaccination rates in many areas of the city. Westminster Council, with my support, wrote to the government asking for extra help back in July, warning of the risks involved in large numbers of visitors arriving into an area with low vaccination levels- which the council described as creating a 'petri-dish for virus spreads and mutations'!

Karen Buck,

November 2021





Paddington Recreation Ground on 13th July 2021

AN UPDATE FROM THE MAIDA VALE COUNCILLORS

Since our last report for Maida Unveiled a lot has happened. We said something similar last year, but the last year has been even more eventful. However, as we write this article there are many reasons to be optimistic.

Flooding

Over 300 basement properties in Maida Vale and the surrounding area were flooded on 12 July as one month's rain fell in just one hour. Local sewers, already full of water flowing from Brent, could take no more rain, and spilled raw sewage up to three feet deep in some places.

In Maida Vale, damage was particularly severe on Kilburn Park Road (where over 75 properties were flooded), Shirland Road, Elgin Avenue and Essendine Road. Many of the residents affected were tenants of Westminster Council or Notting Hill Genesis Housing Association. Many didn't have insurance and have lost everything. It has been heart-breaking to see people's belongings piled up in the street for the Council contractors to take away.

Residents want answers about what happened on 12 July including why the recently built Maida Vale flood defences did not protect them.

And, with climate change likely to spark increasingly heavy storms, we want assurances that the authorities are taking all necessary action to make sure flooding on this scale doesn't happen again.

Westminster Council is the responsible flood authority and has published the results of its initial investigation. We represented residents and questioned officers at a special Scrutiny Committee meeting held at Porchester Hall on 30 September. However, the solutions are likely to involve London-wide action. This is why we are eagerly anticipating the outcome of Thames Water's independent inquiry which is expected in 2022. This document is expected to contain concrete proposals to protect homes in London from future flooding.

Thames Water has refused to pay any compensation, so we have used part of the Maida Vale Ward budget to support a crowdfunded appeal by local charity, One Westminster. If you have suffered uninsured losses from the floods, One Westminster can make grants of up to £200. We know that many people have lost much more than this, but we hope this appeal will go some way to demonstrate solidarity from friends and neighbours.

New waste bins

Many of you will have noticed the colourful new bins that were placed on the streets in August. These were part of a £50k behavioural experiment to see whether people would behave better if pictures of flowers and funny slogans would help them build an emotional relationship with waste receptacles.

The answer was a resounding "no". The new bins quickly became magnets for fly-tipping. And they kept breaking when they fell off the back of the Veolia trucks. We are very pleased that we have been able to halt this pilot and return to the robust, big black bins of before.

Ward Budget

Besides the contribution to One Westminster to support residents who were flooded, we have used the ward budget to pay for the winter flower baskets that are now decorating our streets. It's not affordable to have flower baskets on every street, all year round but we are hoping to have them on a few more roads such as Oxford Road, Lauderdale Parade and Lanark Road.

Guerrilla Gardening

With the help of Paul Newman of Paddington Waterways, we have been supporting the guerrilla gardeners of Shirland Road. Paul organised for Veolia to provide extra topsoil to help the winter planting in the tree pits.

Planning issues

The owners of 123 Dry Cleaners on the corner of Shirland Road and Elgin Avenue have obtained planning permission to build a five-storey building in its place. The upper floors will be flats but the ground floor will have a re-provisioned dry-cleaning shop.



Architectural rendering of the Proposed Development at the junction of Shirland Road and Elgin Avenue

Covid Vaccinations

Covid cases are now rising across the country although they remain much lower in London. It is still very important for everyone who hasn't been vaccinated to do so. Although the large vaccination centres have now closed, you can easily get vaccinated at the Little Venice sports centre every Wednesday and Friday, at the Stowe centre on Mondays, while 7 pharmacies across Westminster also offer vaccines.



Guerrilla gardening on Sutherland Road



Maida Vale councillors

STREET SAFETY AND HOW THE MET POLICE ARE ADDRESSING IT IN OUR COMMUNITY

The Street Safe Pilot Programme <https://www.police.uk/streetsafe>

By Alice Sinclair

The Police are running a nationwide pilot scheme called "Street Safe"

This is a website you can go to to report locations in the UK where you may have felt 'unsafe'. This can be related to an incident or just a general feeling - for example if the street is not well lit - it may feel less safe to walk down after dark. Or if someone were to approach you in a threatening manner, or you have been harassed.

Navigating the complexity of how to manage 'the unreported incident' is challenging. It's seems the police are onto something with the street safe pilot scheme. Current WHO stats dictate that 1 in 3 women have experienced gender based violence. Survivors of GBV are often left managing issues such as complex PTSD. So what looks like "nothing" to one can be a huge "something" to another. This is why the pilot scheme is so empowering for women in particular, to be given a platform to speak, and anonymously. It's a way of channeling some of the residual anger, the anger we are left with when these "somethings" happen.

What Happens to the gathered data from street's safe?

"There are two parts of data collected from street safe. Firstly the location you're concerned about, for example if it has poor lighting or no CCTV, making you feel unsafe there. The police, local authorities and other relevant partners that will need to be consulted will then review the results. The second part is about who is reporting it,. This is voluntary, but should ensure that every voice raised matters and a variety of views have been heard.

By collecting the data it should be possible to measure where people feel unsafe across London and perhaps changes to the environment can be made. Outcomes are entirely dependent on what data comes back, and new processes could be put in place to improve these areas- for example improved lighting, or cutting back bushes that block line of sight, or local Neighbourhood and Response officers alerted to keep an extra eye on a particular location."



ASK FOR ANGELA

Continued ... By Alice Sinclair

The safety initiative 'Ask for Angela' is being rolled out to bars, clubs and other licensed businesses across London. People who feel unsafe, vulnerable or threatened can discreetly seek help by approaching venue staff and asking them for 'Angela'. This code-phrase will indicate to staff that they require help with their situation and a trained member of staff will then look to support and assist them. This might be through reuniting them with a friend, seeing them to a taxi, or by calling venue security and/or the police.

Venues that support 'Ask for Angela' have been given Welfare And Vulnerability Engagement (WAVE) training. Delivered by the Met's licensing officers and Safer Sounds, it gives staff the ability to help customers who may be in a situation that makes them vulnerable or unsafe.

Bars and restaurants across the country are being informed of this programme.

Vagabond, a wine bar in Paddington basin had their WAVE training in person, after the local police dropped off some flyers advertising the programme. The Bridgehouse Pub had their training online.

“The training was all online, and it was very simple but thorough. I have not had to use it yet, however I am fully confident that if the time came, then my staff and i will be ready”

Bar staff member, The Bridgehouse pub, Little Venice

“We are so glad to be part of this programme and the safety of women, and anyone really, is very important to how we operate, I am happy to be helping”

Bar Manager from Vagabond, Paddington



SIXTY SECONDS WITH ALICE

Featuring: Ben Okri, OBE

The Sixth Edition of Maida Unveiled is delighted to have Ben Okri as our feature guest in our 60 second interview with Alice.

Ben Okri OBE is a poet, playwright and novelist. He has published many books, including *THE FAMISHED ROAD*, which won the Booker Prize for Fiction in 1991. His other novels include *STARBOOK*, *THE AGE OF MAGIC*, *DANGEROUS LOVE*, and *ASTONISHING THE GODS*. He has published eleven novels, four books of Short Stories, two collections of essays, and three volumes of poems. He has invented a new form of storytelling called the "Stoku", which is a cross between the short story and the haiku.

His works have been translated into 27 languages. He has been a Fellow Commoner in Creative Arts at Trinity College, Cambridge and is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. He was awarded an OBE.

Ben Okri's books have won numerous international Prizes including the Commonwealth Writer's Prize for Africa, the Paris Review Aga Khan Prize for Fiction, the Chianti Ruffino-Antico Fattore International Literary Prize, and the Premio Grinzane Cavour Prize.

The recipient of many honorary doctorates, he is a vice-president of the English Centre of International PEN and was presented the Crystal Award by the World Economic Forum for his outstanding contribution to the Arts and to cross-cultural understanding.

Ben wrote the script for Peter Krüger's film *N: THE MADNESS OF REASON*, which won the 2015 Ensor Award for Best Film.

He wrote a much acclaimed adaptation of Camus's 'The Outsider' for The Coronet, in London in 2018, which won The Offies Award for Best Theatre Production. In 2020, his play, 'Madame Sosotris,' was performed to full houses at the Pulloff Theatres in Lausanne, Switzerland.

His most recent plays are 'Moby Dick: Queequeg speaks,' performed in Belgium, and 'Changing Destiny,' which ran recently at the Young Vic.

In 2019 his novel, *ASTONISHING THE GODS*, was selected as one of the BBC's '100 novels that shaped our world.'

Recent books are *THE FREEDOM ARTIST* and a volume of short stories, 'Prayer for the Living.' His latest book of poems, *A FIRE IN MY HEAD*, was published in January 2021.

He is an honorary Fellow of Mansfield College, Oxford. He was born in Nigeria, and lives in Maida Vale.

His environmental fable for children and adults, *EVERY LEAF A HALLELUJAH*, has just been published.





“ I’ve lived here for thirty years and
there’s not a day I am not struck afresh
by the beauty of the place. ”

Ben Okri, OBE

Name: Ben Okri

What is the best thing about Little Venice?

Its magical atmosphere. The relationship between the canal, the streets and the trees opens up the residential spaces into a kind of visual and emotional oasis. I've lived here for thirty years and there's not a day I am not struck afresh by the beauty of the place.

What is the worst thing about Little Venice?

It's becoming too well known. Please keep it a secret.

When you were little what did you want to be when you grew up?

I wanted to be many things. Because of Robert Louis Stevenson, I wanted to be a pirate. Then a composer. I have a buried gift for music in my soul. Then a painter. I painted in my youth and maybe still do. Then a scientist. Writing didn't figure in the things I wanted to do. But it was the greatest gift that life gave me, beyond my own wishes. Maybe the discovery of what we really should be doing is one of life's great secrets.

What are the most valuable things that you believe that you have?

The most valuable beings in my life are my family and friends. Books and manuscripts and dreams.

Who are your 5 dream dinner guests?

Jesus, Sappho, Oscar Wilde, Marilyn Monroe, Mandela

Who would play you in a film?

An actor whose charm is not obvious, whose subtlety is concealed, whose intelligence is hidden, whose presence requires special awareness, whose silence is poetic.

If you could steal credit for any piece of art, song, film, book etc which would you claim?

I wouldn't want to claim anything I had not done myself. The only thing one can truly claim is one's own achievement. So I would claim The Famished Road trilogy and Astonishing the Gods and The Freedom Artist. There are many great works I would like to have created. But one should strive to have the qualities and the application and the dedication required to achieve greatness. It can't be wished for. Thinking about what it takes to create the ninth symphony, The Magic Flute, or The Last Supper gives me vertigo. The ninth symphony probably shortened Beethoven's life. How can one wish to have made such a work without also wishing for the effort and agony it takes?

What would your last meal be?

Breakfast in paradise

How would you describe your job to a 5 year old?

I'm a magician of stories. A wizard of words. A maker of worlds. A conjurer of enchantments. A creator of dreams that help people live.

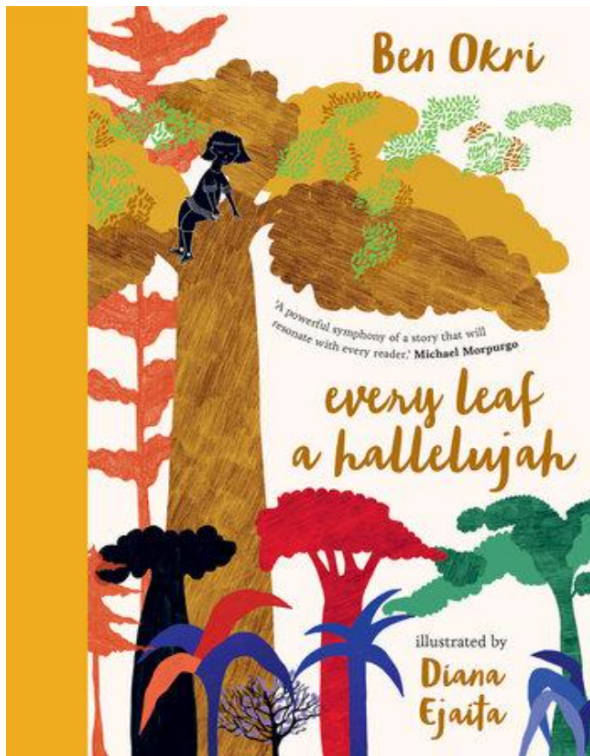
Where is the best place to spend time in Little Venice?

Just walking the dream paths of the canal, into reverie, into sky dreams, into the meditation of the feet.

Finally... what was the funniest thing you've seen lately?

Watching people on the Go Boats on the canal unable to navigate properly, sometimes spinning around, sometimes stuck at an angle. People think they can do things without adequate knowledge and training. I hope it's not a sign of what's happening in the culture and in the world.

Ben Okri
Little Venice, London



Ben will be signing his new book at our Multi-faith service At St Mary's Paddington Green, 6.30pm Tuesday the 7th of December.

The book is called Every leaf a Hallelujah and here is a little intro to what it is about...

In the forest near Mahgoshi's village in Africa there grows a very special flower. Mangoshi knows that only this flower can save her mother's life. It can save her village too. All she has to do is find it.

Ben Okri and Diana Ejaita have created a magical world of beauty and colour, an enchanting array of extraordinary trees, each with its own personality and voice. The chief among them, the great Baobab, invites us into his branches to travel the world and see for ourselves the perils of not listening to nature. All around us, forest are vanishing, and no one is listening.

'A powerful symphony of a story that will resonate with every reader.'

'It was sheer joy to be able to read this. It is mysterious and magical and true. Children and those who read it to them will love it and long remember it. The illustrations are woven wonderfully around the words; the trees are with you, telling it, writing it. Once read we will know never to take trees or leaves for granted again. A powerful symphony of a story that will resonate with every reader. We hear the wind in the trees on every page. We only have to listen.'

Michael Morpurgo

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LOCAL ARTISTS

LUCIAN FREUD

EDWARD ARDIZZONE

WHEN LUCIAN FREUD LIVED UPSTAIRS

By Robert Bruce

Back in February 1971 one of the most famous of the up and coming artists of the time moved into the top floor of a house in Thorngate Road in Maida Vale. And on the same day Nicola Cousinne, and her two small sons, moved into the lower floor and basement. The painter was Lucian Freud, then a year off turning fifty with a career retrospective coming up at the Hayward Gallery in three years' time. He died trailing fame, fortune, notoriety and a global reputation in a grand Notting Hill home in 2011. Nicola still lives at Thorngate Road.

Freud had been living and painting in a top floor flat in Gloucester Terrace. But the council wanted to renovate it, so he had to move. Nicola had been living in a flat by Warwick Avenue. Again there was a scheme to refurbish it. So she had to move.

'I was separated and my mother had died and I'd got two boys aged three and five', she recalled. 'Then they offered me Thorngate Road, basement and ground floor'.

Freud, whose work Nicola knew well from art exhibitions, appeared on the same day. They rather got off on the wrong foot.

'He introduced himself', she recalled. 'He knocked on the door and said he'd moved in upstairs and that he was a painter. I knew who he was but I said: "House?". He just smiled and said: "No".'

The area round Thorngate Road was then, as Nicola says: *'Very downmarket'*. The other side of the road and another road running parallel to it had been so badly bombed during the war that they had been demolished. German bomber aircraft aiming to destroy the railway lines into Paddington Station only had to get their bombing run marginally wrong and that area of Maida Vale bore the full brunt.

Freud had always liked the idea of downmarket. He had lived in a succession of Maida Vale and Paddington flats, always just one step ahead of their demolition.



*Large Interior, London W.9., 1973 (oil on canvas).
Copyright: © The Lucian Freud Archive / Bridgeman
Images*

In 1965 Lord Snowdon had photographed him for an artworld book, *Private View*, on the cusp of the days of 'swinging London'. It included a double-page photograph of a scruffy and unkempt looking Freud standing, fag in hand, in the midst of a deserted Clarendon Crescent, by the church of St Mary Magdalene, near where he was then living in another war-ravaged slum due for demolition. Typically he was waiting for the council to rehouse him. Nevertheless Freud, ever with an eye for a sharp contrast, is pictured standing alongside his Rolls-Royce.

He knocked on the door and said he'd moved in upstairs and that he was a painter. I knew who he was but I said: "House?". He just smiled and said: "No"

Nicola Cousinne

Life in a house with Lucian Freud living upstairs was not dull. *'We had to tell him not to leave his dust bin on the stairs after he had rolled it down'*, she said.

And there were deliveries. *'He once brought down a huge number of daffodils that someone had sent him and gave them to me'*, she said.

Hampers would turn up at Christmas. *'There was one really huge one'*, she said, arms stretched wide. *'The delivery man said: "Take good care of it. It's full of wine". It was from the Playboy Club. But when he came down to collect it he told us it was "painting materials"'*.

'One morning he gave us a lift in his Bentley', she said.

'He must have noticed that every morning we walked up to Robinsfield School, which it turned out was directly opposite where his mother lived. He took me and the boys. And they being small boys pressed the buttons to open and close the windows', she said. *'He didn't like that. He never gave us a lift again'*.

Though he did show other kindnesses. At the age of seven one of Nicola's sons had a first asthma attack and coughed and cried all night. Nicola was beside herself not knowing what to do. And in the morning she apologised to Freud saying that she hoped he hadn't been disturbed.

'He said he suffered from asthma himself', she recalled, *'and said that he was never disturbed by natural noise'*.

And, by and large, their paths didn't cross that often. He was working in his studio. Nicola was out at work.

'He was working all the time so you didn't see him', she says. *'My living room was in the basement, so I missed a lot. His agent occasionally knocked on the door to see if I knew where he was'*.

Freud's biographer, William Feaver, described his first visit to the house, in November 1973:

"Number 19 Thorngate Road, a late Victorian house with spindly columns flanking the front door, had a Bentley parked outside and a cramped adventure playground opposite. Smiling a faintly wolfish welcome Freud hurried me upstairs two steps at a time. The rooms had been knocked about a bit; the council, he explained, had removed the fireplace and installed radiators and "slightly illicitly", as he put it, he himself had taken out a wall or two, as was his habit. There was a bed in each room. In the bathroom, lurking behind a bead curtain – one he had bought in Nice in 1948, he told me – was a bossy bronze figure: Rodin's naked Balzac standing with arms folded as though affronted. In the back bedroom, where he worked in the daytime, Large Interior, W9 was on the easel and the blackened pestle and mortar was still in position by the chair: "a chair I use a great deal which I very much like".

Feaver looked out of the window. He saw: *'dishevelled gardens, derelict lilacs. A swing hangs idle. Mattress slumped against a wall'*.

Across the road where the houses had been bombed and demolished they had started to build a school. These days that school is long gone and Paddington Academy stands in its place. It is very different to the days then. For a start there was a pretty rough and ready adventure playground on the land at the corner of Marylands Road and Thorngate Road.

'My boys used to climb over into the playground', said Nicola.

'It was dangerous. There were still huge timbers left there amongst the bomb debris. There were nails everywhere'.

But it was perfect for Freud and before he moved on he made a painting of the playground. Freud's time at Thorngate Road is probably best known now for the many portraits he painted of his mother in that upstairs room. After the death of her husband she had suffered from depression and to provide her with some purpose Freud embarked on a mammoth project. Most mornings he would go and collect her and take her to breakfast at Maison Sagne, a café and patisserie decorated in high European style which had been on Marylebone High Street since 1921. This would then be followed by a four-hour sitting in the upstairs room at Thorngate Road.

There would be, it is estimated, over a thousand of these sittings, resulting in nine portraits and several others where his mother, sitting in a chair, is juxtaposed with a semi-naked woman in a bed behind. This was Jacquetta Eliot with whom Freud had a lengthy and turbulent relationship at the time.

'On one occasion', Nicola recalls, 'she kicked the panels of the front door in because he wouldn't let her in'. This was in 1973. 'I'd never heard a woman say "fuck" before'. Now Nicola's son lives upstairs. Life is quieter. Freud moved out in 1976.

'My life became very difficult at Thorngate Road through being caught up with Jacquetta', he is quoted as telling Feaver in his biography. He wanted more privacy and somewhere more substantial and so he moved to a huge flat in Holland Park. But before he went he had paintings to complete, in particular one of the view across the road. This was of the adventure playground.





'Children's Playground 1974'.
Copyright: © The Lucian Freud Archive /
Bridgeman Images

'It was done long distance, through the window, fairly soon before I left', he told Feaver. 'The cranky steps and exits of Children's Playground (1975), reflected the dismantling involved in his move from W9 to W11', Feaver suggests, 'the sheets of corrugated iron forming a wonky barricade between grass and concrete, hidey-holes exposed and a walkway tacked together from planks'.

Nicola looks back amusedly at her time with Freud living upstairs. She enjoys his paintings. *'I've been to the exhibitions. I like his paintings but I wouldn't want to live with one'*, she says. *'The skin quality in his paintings is flaccid and horrible though I'd like one of his early ones'*. He did paint one called *'Nicola in The Attic Doorway'*, but it is definitely not of her. *'People used to ask me if I'd sat for him'*, she recalled. *'But he never asked. I'd be the wrong shape, wrong face'*.



People used to ask me if I'd sat for him. But he never asked. I'd be the wrong shape, wrong face.

Nicola Cousinne

EDWARD ARDIZZONE WISHES YOU A HAPPY CHRISTMAS SEASON

The artist Edward Ardizzone lived at 130 Elgin Avenue for 52 years until 1972, and adored the neighbourhood of Maida Vale.

He loved its people, the children all around, and the pubs. In his illustrations and drawings and his hugely popular children's books he portrayed people with joyful humour and warmth. He loved people and they loved him. So it is no surprise that for many years he produced an annual Christmas card for friends and family. This one shows him heading home along a snowy Elgin Avenue, lost in thought. Or perhaps simply coming back from a lunchtime pint at the pub. Behind him is the spire of St Peter's church, now long since demolished. Ahead of him, and unbeknownst to him, is a small gang of local children, all armed with snowballs and just waiting for him to turn the corner into the snowy ambush. And behind them there is a poster on a hoarding. This shows an equally mischievous Father Christmas recommending a bottle of beer, or possibly, it being the season, stout.

Ardizzone produced many posters in his time, particularly and famously for Guinness. So here we have the quintessential Ardizzone, quietly celebrating Christmas and the simple pleasures of life and the people of Maida Vale. There is a Blue Plaque commemorating him on his house now. Perhaps, if we have snow over the Christmas season, we should toss a friendly snowball at it in thanks for all his happy work.



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LOCAL BUSINESSES

THE ITALIAN CUPPA

REAL DRINKS

LOCAL CHRISTMAS CARDS

BY CHEF JEN

THE ITALIAN CUPPA

Interview with Alice Sinclair

We sat down for a socially distanced chat with Local entrepreneur and chef Alessandra Bellio.

How did you get to the Italian Cuppa?

I am passionate about food and I love preparing authentic Italian recipes especially from my family traditions. As you can guess I am Italian. I was born in Padova, where my lovely family is based even today.

In my free time, I've attended several cooking classes. Growing up, I understood that cooking was my anti-stress, the kitchen became my oyster, a place to connect with myself.

In 2019 I moved to London to follow my love, Matteo.

I decided to transform my home kitchen into my office and I've started my own food business. I chose this name because, I wanted to put together Italy with something very popular and common in UK!

What inspired you to set up your own business?

Previously I was working in the Communication-Marketing environment in the food sector and I became really attracted by it. I love food, events, and the idea of supper clubs that unfortunately aren't still popular in Italy.

I always loved conviviality, especially around the table, preparing table settings and cooking.

When we moved to London, I felt it was the right moment to follow my dreams and to believe that dreams can come true...





How has the pandemic impacted this?

The pandemic really impacted on my project, but finally things are better now! Even if I'm a sunny person that always try to smile at life I can guarantee that it has been hard, as for everyone.

I was ready to launch my business, even my social media pages where live and BOOM, Covid arrived! I totally transformed my business. My initial plan was to start with supper clubs, sitting people around the table and letting them feel like in an Italian grandma's kitchen! I created seasonal traditional Italian dishes and I've started offering deliveries directly in people houses instead.

During lockdown this really saved my business, and I had the chance to let people try my food. Some of them are still great clients!

At the moment I continue with deliveries, especially with weekly menus. I want to define myself as a guardian angel in the kitchen! For example I cover suppers for families, giving them the possibility to eat healthy and tasty food everyday and to have more free time during the week.

The core activities now, are: catering for private events or bespoke menus that I prepare in people houses offering private cooking service.

In my kitchen, I respect the Health and Safety Rules and I have achieved the Certificate in Food Safety in Catering Level 2.

I always look for the highest quality ingredients. I cook everything specially for my clients, to meet allergy and dietary requirements.

The way it works is very simple, once they approve the menu, they just have to decide for a delivery, or opt for the private cooking service!

Remember, Christmas is behind the corner folks!!!! If you need my help, now you know where you can find me! It would be lovely to cook for the kind readers in the neighborhood!

What challenges have you faced?

Absolutely deliveries!!! Without doubt. Finding and managing couriers, to deliver sometimes to the other side of the city. For months this was my nightmare!

What are you feeling hopeful for?

I really hope that after the hard period that we all faced, the human value and the importance of things that before we gave for granted, are becoming more important now. For example, support for local businesses, rediscovering the pleasure to stay home eating with family and friends.

What do you love about being a Maida Vale resident and what brought you to the area?

I discovered Maida Vale because we have friends living in the borough. We were looking for a bigger house during lockdown and they showed us the area.

We immediately felt in love... it's quite and very green. A residential area, it's seems to be in a village but at the same time you are close to the center of the city.

Last but not least without the Paddington Rec I would never have started running in my life!

I look forward to cooking for you and meeting you in the neighborhood!

Alessandra
The Italian Cuppa Ltd
www.theitaliancuppa.com
info@theitaliancuppa.com



REAL DRINKS

R Real Drinks (formerly Real Ale) on Formosa Street Maida Vale rebranded this year in April 2021. Since the business started 16 years ago, the industry has evolved considerably. This rebrand reflects this evolution, encompassing Real Drinks love for not just beer, but for cider, wine, spirits and any drink crafted with integrity and skill. The team remain passionate about top quality drinks, making them, tasting them, packaging them and sharing them.

Real Drinks Maida Vale is now managed by Iris. Iris started working at the Maida Vale shop in April 2021 and recently stepped up to fill the Manager position in September 2021. This is her first job in the UK as she is French and was living in Italy before. With a wine sales background and an interest for beers, joining Real Drinks was the perfect fit. Warmly welcomed by the Maida Vale community, Iris is enjoying the village feel of the area despite being in a big city.

The shop stocks a core range of over 400 different products from small independent producers from around the world. The team are always on the lookout for new craft beers, natural wines and spirits to make the products stocked exciting for customers (and the staff as well!).

After over a year of lockdown, restrictions and the rollercoaster life we've become used to, Real Drinks Maida Vale has been able to reopen onsite drinking since June, both inside and outside!

It is a pleasure to finally see customers sticking around, chatting and having a pint of craft beer...But as the colder months are approaching, plans are in place to reopen the downstairs area for on-site drinking, and increase the capacity upstairs. This will also allow for events (get ready for wine and beer evenings!). Regular wine nights with special bottles by the glass are soon to be announced. And by the end of October, a brand-new tap system and growler station will be in place, which will make everything smoother, with new beers and wines on tap!

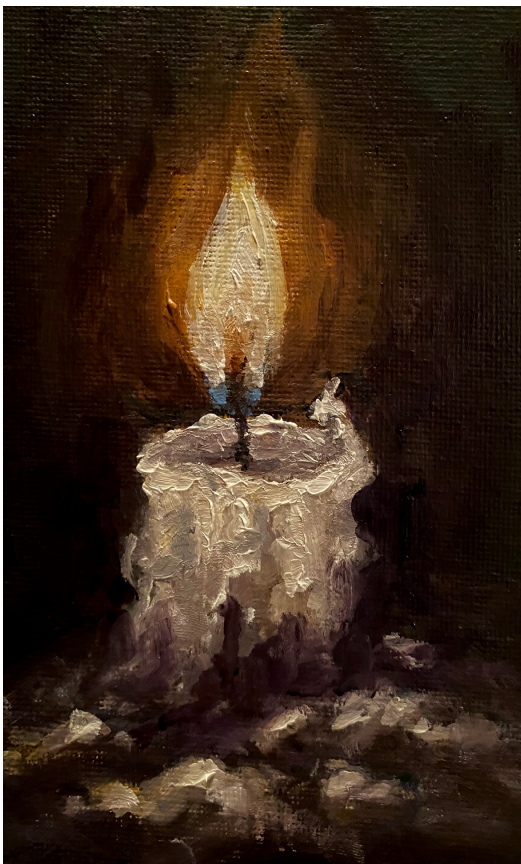
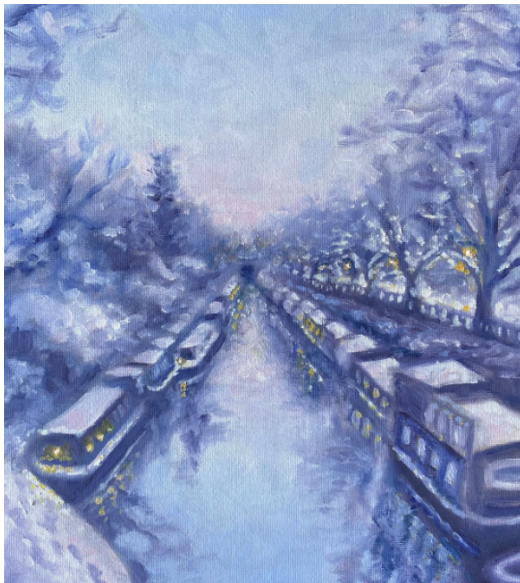
Look out for a host of festive discounts starting in early November and when you are next in the area do pop in to say hello to Iris and the Real Drinks Maida Vale team. They would love to meet more of the neighbours and want to help you and your friends and family find the perfect drinks to suit your needs and maybe introduce you to some different styles of beer and wine along the way.



CHRISTMAS CARDS

Eleanor Abou-Sakr is a local artist who lives and paints in Maida Vale.
Her Christmas cards are available locally, at The Brimful Store, or directly through Eleanor at:
www.eleanorabousakr.com or eleanor.abousakr@gmail.com

The cards are being sold to support the work of the Companions of the Order of Malta, who run weekly soup kitchens in Central London and provided essential support for the homeless community in Westminster during the lockdowns.



NOURISHING RECIPES WITH AUTUMN'S FINEST INGREDIENTS

by Chef Jen

Walking down our beautiful tree-lined streets, it's hard not to indulge in the beautiful colours that Autumn brings to our neighbourhood each year.

The nights are drawing in and the air is crisp, and it's most definitely the time to enjoy time in the kitchen preparing warming, comforting meals to come home to.

I love to slow down a little, at this time of year, and my cooking style matches this with plenty of slow-cooked recipes simmering away during the week.

I love to make the most of sweet root vegetables like squashes, carrots and even parsnips and I move away from lighter herbs like parsley and coriander and look to hardy thyme, rosemary and sage to infuse flavour at this time of year.

Cabbages are my favourite of all vegetables, and I find myself pairing so many different meals with braised red cabbage or a quick sauteed savoy side.

Let's not forget mushrooms, an ingredient I unconsciously avoid until Autumn and suddenly I can't wait to use them in everything!

The recipes I'm sharing with you this season are both satisfying in their simplicity and delicious in their depth of flavours, and I hope they can bring you some nourishment this season. I've chosen them from some of my most popular dishes on my healthy meal delivery menu - if you've only got time to try one make sure it's the beef goulash!

I hope these recipes have inspired you to get cooking this season. You can find more of my recipes at www.bychefjen.co.uk



Creamy Miso Mushroom + Kale Pasta (serves two)

Very quick and easy to throw together, this is a beautifully autumnal recipe that completely sums up my idea of great comfort food.

INGREDIENTS

- Half a brown onion
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 250g chestnut mushrooms
- 100g wild mushrooms
- 150g casarecce pasta
- 1 tbsp miso paste
- 100g chopped kale
- 2 tbsp creme fraiche
- 1 tbsp chopped parsley or thyme leaves
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- Pinch of black pepper and sea salt



DIRECTIONS

- Slice your onion, and gently sauté with a pinch of salt in a hot pan, with a drizzle of good quality rapeseed oil.
- Once soft, add your minced garlic and cook for a further 2 minutes.
- Add the sliced chestnut mushrooms, and sauté in the pan. Meanwhile, start to boil your pasta in salted water, following packet instructions.
- Add the wild mushrooms to the original pan, and cook altogether for a further minute.
- Reduce the heat, and add 1 heaped tbsp of miso paste to the mushrooms, the chopped kale and creme fraiche.
- Simmer gently, and then add the lemon juice and black pepper.
- Finish with chopped parsley, and toss all together with the drained pasta. Enjoy.

Beef Goulash with Paprika Roasted Potatoes and Parsley Creme (serves four)

A slow cooked recipe that is absolutely oozing with flavour. Very simple to prepare once everything is in the pot, you can leave to simmer for a few hours and return to a beautifully tender beef dish.

INGREDIENTS

- 500g beef braising steak, diced
- 250g tomato passata
- 50g tomato puree
- 1 large onion, sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 stick of celery, finely chopped
- 2 large carrots, sliced into half moons
- 2 red peppers, diced
- ½ red chilli, minced
- 200ml water + 1 beef stock cube
- 1 tbsp smoked paprika
- 2 tbsp creme fraiche
- 3 tbsp flour (and salt/pepper)
- 1tsp lemon juice
- 2 tsp chopped parsley



Suggestions for side:

- 500g Maris Piper potatoes (diced and roasted in olive oil, thyme and sea salt)
- 200g kale or cabbage (sauteed gently, with garlic + lemon juice)

DIRECTIONS

- Firstly, toss the diced beef in flour with salt and pepper.
- Heat 1 tbsp of rapeseed oil in a large pan, and brown the meat all over.
- Once browned, remove from the pan and add the lemon juice to deglaze.
- Add the sliced onions, carrots, peppers, celery + garlic and gently cook for 10-15 minutes until everything begins to caramelise and soften.
- Add the beef back into the pan, along with the tomato puree and paprika. Stir well and cook out for 2 minutes.
- Add the beef stock and tomato passata and cover everything with a lid.
- Simmer gently for 2.5-3 hours, stirring occasionally. (You can check your goulash is almost ready by testing if your beef is beautifully tender.)
- At this stage, add your creme fraiche + freshly chopped parsley - you're ready to serve!

Caramelised Leek + Roasted New Potato Soup (serves four-five)

A classic soup - I add plenty of sweetness by slowly and carefully caramelising the leeks first, and be sure to use new potatoes with skins on for extra fibre and flavour!

INGREDIENTS

- 500g leeks
- 1.5kg new potatoes
- 1 onion
- 2 sticks of celery
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 3 sprigs of thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 litre of boiling water
- 1.5 vegetable stock cube
- 1 tbsp creme fraiche
- Optional toppings:
- 2 tbsp sunflower seeds, toasted in a pan
- Drizzle of pesto



DIRECTIONS

- Begin by dicing your leeks, onion, celery and new potatoes.
- Toss your potatoes in olive oil and roast for 15 minutes at 200C until the skins are a little crispy.
- In a large pan, heat 1 tbsp rapeseed oil, and add the leeks, onion, celery and garlic.
- Cook over a medium-low heat, for 15 minutes, stirring every 3-4 minutes so that the leeks don't burn but allow to eventually caramelise until soft and sticky.
- Add the roasted new potatoes, thyme and bay.
- Combine the vegetable stock and hot water, and pour over everything to just cover.
- Place a lid on top, and simmer for 30 minutes.
- Blend everything until smooth, adding a little more water if necessary for a smoother finish. (I like my soup quite thick and creamy!)
- Add creme fraiche and salt to taste, then top with anything you wish.

This soup will freeze really well - so feel free to make a big batch and keep your freezer well stocked.



The Lonely Pet Column

Name: Nigel

Species: Boa Constrictor

Job: Civil Serpent

Would like to meet: A randy reptile

In Nigel's words...

I have spent too long alone in a glass box eating mice overlooking the canal at Little Venice. My owner insists on keeping his snake locked down, but its time for me to break free and find a friend.

I am a good hugger and my jokes are hissterical.

The last time I got any excitement was when my owners nephew threw me into the canal and I met an eel called Mealanie. She was electric.

When I had Covid recently I lost my taste...I started listening to Phil Collins. It soon passed. My last girlfriend, Anna Conda, left me for a bigger snake called Kyle.

My owner tries to reassure people that snakebites aren't poisonous, unless you are allergic to cider. He's promised to make me a profile page on a dating app, but we heard Maida Unveiled had a successful column. Hopefully it'll work out better than my last squeeze where a controlling lizard kept trying to monitor me.

**** Have you got a pet who you think would like a partner? please email alice.sinclair@w9w2.co.uk if ypu would like them to feature in our next issue ****

PADDINGTON WATERWAYS AND MAIDA VALE CHRISTMAS CAROLS

You are warmly invited to our annual multi faith
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on

Tuesday the 7th December 2021

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It takes a village to raise a child.
Even in a big city.



MAIDA VALE PARENTS 2 PARENTS

Facebook group for parents and carers in the W9 area – with bumps, babies, toddlers, tweens, teens and grandchildren.

Join our group of nearly 5,000 to share useful tips, find that elusive activity for a rainy day, get support from others, have a laugh (or ten), and meet new people.

www.facebook.com/groups/maidavaleparents2parents

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The North Paddington food bank provides food and essentials packages alongside advice, support and home deliveries to housebound recipients to between 70-110 households per week. An approximate 55% increase in demand in 12 months.

To effectively meet the continually increasing demand we need volunteers and regular financial donations big and small from individuals and businesses, whilst physical donations of items are also welcome. With this, we seek to work together to increase our understanding of the situations that bring people to food banks and to find the most effective ways of supporting them.

Find out more: info@npfoodbank.org.uk **Donate:** www.npfoodbank.org.uk/donate
Twitter: @npfoodbank **Facebook:** north paddington foodbank

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