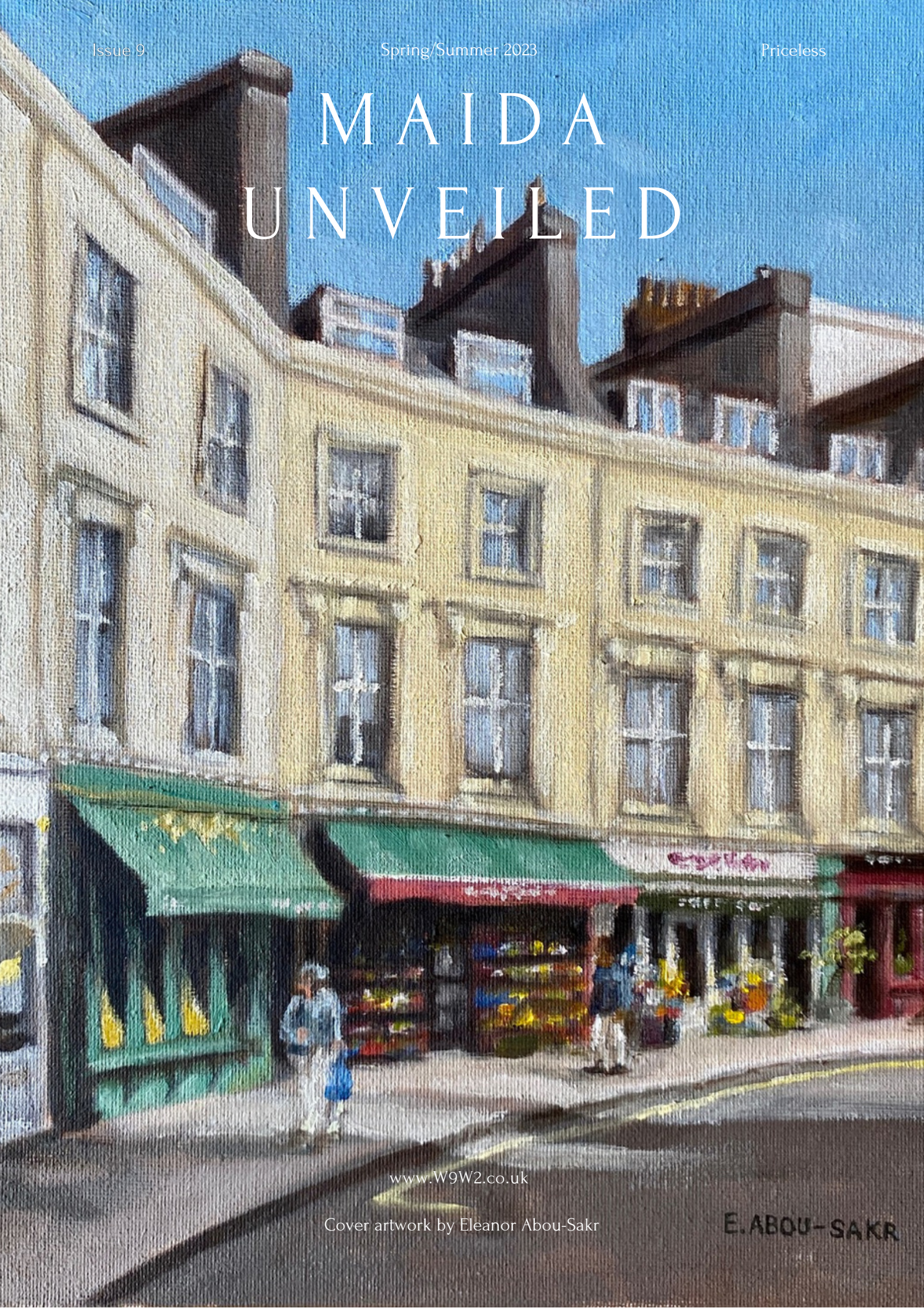


Issue 9

Spring/Summer 2023

Priceless

# MAIDA UNVEILED



[www.W9W2.co.uk](http://www.W9W2.co.uk)

Cover artwork by Eleanor Abou-Sakr

E.ABOU-SAKR

# A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Our area really comes to life at this time of year, whether in the streets, the cafes, the Recreation Ground and gardens and of course, along the Canal. So it is with great pleasure that we welcome you to this Spring-Summer edition, the 9th, of Maida Unveiled, the magazine of the Paddington Waterways & Maida Vale Society (PW&MVS/W9W2.com).

The Paddington Waterways & Maida Vale Society, exists to sustain and enhance the amenity of our area, for residents, visitors and those who work in our area. We have over 500 households as members, as well as businesses a growing following on social media. Our work ensures that the built environment is managed to respect its conservation area status, whilst encouraging sensitive development to ensure facilities are up to date; it covers highway schemes and maintenance; it covers street safety; it covers licencing, all in conjunction with the elected WCC Councillors, Officers and other bodies such as the Police. Maida Unveiled aims to give a glimpse as to how this amenity is put to good, often inspired use.

But before you dive into the following pages - a few highlights from PWMVS activities since our last edition. The planning agenda remains full of ups and downs. On the up, we are excited by the prospect that British Land will soon proceed with a scaled down version of 5 Kingdom Street, thereby reducing the impact on the backdrop of the area, whilst also including an 'e-distribution hub' to reduce the carbon footprint of deliveries in the area.

More concerningly, despite strong objections from residents and ourselves, supported by our local WCC Councillors from each party, the Mayor of London chose to override the views of local residents and allow the building of 3 excessively tall towers on the site of Paddington Green Police Station, thus blighting Paddington Green itself and the site of St Mary's Church.





As we have learned from the experience of the Brunel Building, which similarly blights the Jubilee Greenway around Warwick Avenue bridge, the damage to local amenity from such 'landmark' buildings impacts residents and visitors long after the politicians concerned have moved on and the architect's award is gathering dust at the back of a cupboard. We will work for a more enlightened approach when the new plans for the Travis Perkins site become available!

More positively, the Elizabeth Line continues to offer enhanced connections for our area, to the benefit of residents and visitors alike. However, the result is increasing congestion on the active transport routes between Paddington and W9. To help alleviate these, PWMVS is engaging with WCC to find ways of more clearly opening up the route along Stone Wharf and through Rembrandt Gardens, as well as addressing the safety concerns presented by the present layout of the Porteus Road underpass.

So, we have a vibrant area with a diverse range of communities all benefiting from the W9W2 'magic' as a backdrop to their life and work. Read on to learn more - and This is a special issue where we celebrate DHIGS and Peter Brown.

If you would like to join us, please visit [W9W2.co.uk](http://W9W2.co.uk) and click the 'join us button'.

John Zealley,

May 2023



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

*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](mailto:alice.sinclair@w9w2.co.uk))*

# KAREN BUCK

## Our local MP

We have had a slightly calmer time in politics in the first few weeks of 2023, which is no bad thing after the upheaval of last year (there aren't many years in which we have three Prime Ministers). Even so, there's been more than enough going on.

Crime and policing are issues which concern many residents and although Maida Vale and Little Venice are far from being high crime areas there is usually something which needs to be addressed. We are, of course, still dealing with the long term consequences of the running down of neighbourhood policing after police numbers (and the Met budget) were slashed a few years ago and although numbers are now being built back up, we have nonetheless lost a great many experienced officers. The Metropolitan Police Service must, at the same time, take on the grave challenges posed by the Casey Report into police culture and behaviour. Contributing to the Parliamentary statement after the Report's publication, I made clear my view that the unacceptable attitudes and behaviour could not be blamed on the pressures of spending cuts - those who have contributed to the toxic culture in policing must accept responsibility for their own actions. However, I am also clear that rebuilding confidence in the Met starts with rebuilding effective neighbourhood policing, as well as accepting all the report's recommendations on vetting, training and dealing with misconduct. A city as diverse as London needs a police force which efficiently responds to and investigates crime, reflects the communities it serves and treats all Londoners with respect. The Peel principles of policing by consent, on which British policing is founded, were laid down in London. They said: "that the police are the public and that the public are the police". The essential reforms now being driven forward must continue to have those principles at their heart.

The last few weeks have been busy ones in Parliament. MPs packed Westminster Hall in February to show solidarity with Ukrainian President Zelensky when he addressed us on the eve of the anniversary of the Russian invasion. We've also been debating the Illegal Migration Bill - the second piece of immigration legislation in just two years, and no more likely to succeed than the last one.



*Above: Karen Buck*

No-one believes that dangerous small boat crossings operated by brutal criminal gangs is the basis of a humane, fair asylum system. Most people appreciate this is a complex and difficult issue to resolve. But there are better ways to proceed, from tackling the now massive backlog in asylum claims to more co-ordinated action against people smuggling gangs, better legal routes for family reunion and more help tackling humanitarian problems at source.

As everyone who has experiencing poor health over this last winter will know, the health service has been under massive strain. Having had cause to be in and out of St Mary's regularly over recent months, I am also extremely aware how much they desperately needed the promised investment in the long-promised new hospital building - the Imperial NHS trust, which includes St. Mary's, has had floods, fires and collapsed ceilings over the last few years as they struggle to manage the largest maintenance backlog in the country. As one of the government's promised 40 new hospitals, they have been waiting for the go-ahead for some time, so I used one of the rare Prime Minister's Questions slots any of us get (PMQs operate on a ballot system) to ask for assurances that this was on the way. Sadly the answer was evasive, but I'll keep pressing. Another government promise that seems as far out of reach as ever is to end rough sleeping by 2024. In fact, the housing crisis and the freeze on housing support has pushed the numbers sleeping rough right back up again, following the temporary success of the 'Everyone in' initiative during the pandemic. More positively, the new team in Westminster Council is bringing serious pressure to bear on properties where Airbnb-type letting rules are being systematically broken, which is something I greatly welcome.

As always, your comments and questions are always welcomed.

You can email me at [buckk@parliament.uk](mailto:buckk@parliament.uk)

**Karen Buck,**

May 2023



**NHS**  
**Imperial College Healthcare**  
NHS Trust

# AN UPDATE FROM OUR MAIDA VALE COUNCILLORS

## Fairer Westminster

The new Council administration launched its Fairer Westminster plan at a local venue - St Mary Magdalene Church on Westbourne Green. This is a welcome recognition that all parts of the City need to share in its success.

Some of the key Fairer Westminster initiatives are:

- Provide free school meals for all children attending state schools up to year 9.
- Build more genuinely affordable homes including a new 65 unit extra-care facility at Carlton Dene on Carlton Vale to support older people.
- A £218m programme to retrofit existing council homes to help Westminster achieve net zero emissions by 2030.

## Ward Budgets

The Maida Vale councillors spent the 2022/3 ward budget across 13 projects, including last summer's flower baskets, funding for North Paddington Youth Club, affordable physical activities by various charities, Christmas festivities, the Paddington Service of Remembrance, and school trips for local children.

With the start of the new financial year, we are getting a new allocation of our ward budget and we urge all local charities, residents associations and other groups to apply with ideas that will benefit Maida Vale residents. You need to have a bank account and to be a constituted group.

Apply for ward budget funding | Westminster City Council:

<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/apply-ward-budget>

When Labour took control of Westminster Council on 5 May last year, the three Maida Vale councillors all took responsible positions in the new administration. In the following page they explain their priorities for the City.



*Above: St. Mary Magdalene Church on Westbourne Green*

### Cllr Nafsika Butler-Thalassis

*"As Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and the Voluntary Sector, my focus has been on securing funding to support people with learning disabilities and mental health challenges and gaining more cash for local charities that provide essential services to residents. This was on top of dealing with public health challenges. Beyond Covid, these have ranged from Covid to Mpox and most recently Invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease (IGAS).*

*Looking ahead, I'm very concerned that the Gordon Hospital (the only hospital in Westminster providing mental health beds for people who are acutely unwell) remains closed, 3 years after it shuttered temporarily as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. I am also working to ensure all local NHS trusts pay the London Living wage."*

### Cllr Geoff Barraclough

*"I serve as Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development with a strong focus on ensuring the planning system is transparent. Residents deserve a strong influence on the decisions that affect them. I've put in train a series of reviews that should result in key policy changes including stronger support for retrofitting buildings as an alternative to demolishing them.*

*Regarding economic development, I will be launching a new plan to help our residents gain access to the well paid, fulfilling jobs on our doorstep in the heart of London. In the West End, I am driving Westminster's Oxford Street programme which will see the nation's High Street refurbished from Marble Arch to Tottenham Court Road."*

### Cllr Iman Less

*"As Mental Health Champion, my primary focus is supporting young people and children. I'm working closely with Cllr Butler-Thalassis for our upcoming mental health days, where we want to establish safe places for young people to talk about mental health. I'm really looking forward to helping people talk about mental health and the stigmas that can often surround it, especially as many marginalised groups are often left out of the conversation.*

*As Night Time Champion, I have focused on women's safety, particularly in the West End. I'm working on delivering a comprehensive strategy this summer, as well as working closely with our partners for our Night Stars volunteering program. We're out every Friday night from 7pm to 4am patrolling the West End, offering support to young women who feel particularly unsafe. If you're interested in being a volunteer, please send me an email to get you on our list!*



*From left to right: Cllr Geoffrey Barraclough, Cllr Nafsika Thalassis, Cllr Iman Less*



### Three new public realm schemes

There have been proposals to rebuild the Maida Hill market square for some years but residents were not happy with some aspects of the scheme presented by the previous administration. We've now managed to find additional funds and are consulting on revised proposals which, we hope, meet the community's expectations.

The latest proposals move noisy activity away from residents. They also include a new toilet block, extra greening, a new location for the market, a prominent position for the Christmas Tree and space towards Harrow Road which could be used for community events.

We are working on two other proposals locally. These are to reposition Westbourne Green Open Space (roughly between St Mary Magdalene Church and the canal) as a public park and to reinvigorate the public space by the canal opposite Queen's Park Library on Harrow Road. Subject to consultation, we hope to begin work on these three schemes in the Autumn.

### Paddington Recreation Ground

We caught up with Westminster's parks and leisure management to hear the latest plans for investment in Paddington Rec. During 2023/23, the Council hopes to replace the safety surface of the children's playground which is heavily used and is worn away. Also for our younger residents, we're keen to explore options for some water-based play, such as a splash park. This is in a very early phase and we'll let you know if or when we can make this a reality.

You'll have noticed that although some of the worst parts of the paths were repaired at the end of 2021, there is much more work to do. Westminster hopes to replace all the paths around the Village Green and the main park entrances to ensure an even surface and improved drainage and flood mitigation.

The Council also hopes to resurface the synthetic tennis courts which haven't been resurfaced for about 15 years.

We would also like to improve the journey from the disabled parking bays at the Carlton Gate into the park. This can be tricky for people with limited mobility.

### Flooding

Almost two years after the floods of July 2021, the majority of affected residents are back in their homes but, with warmer summers likely, very concerned about whether this could happen again. Over 400 basement flats were affected in Westminster, the majority in Maida Vale and Little Venice. Many residents have been finding flood insurance either impossible to find or significantly more expensive. Along with neighbouring boroughs, Westminster has written to the Minister asking for changes to the national Flood Re insurance scheme to make sure that all our residents can benefit. At the moment, the scheme excludes houses divided into more than three flats which rules out many of our residents. Cllr Barraclough met with Thames Water to impress on them the urgency of fitting non-return valves where appropriate. Many flats have been surveyed but we're still waiting for action.

### Neighbourhood CIL grants

New buildings pay a tax called the Community Infrastructure Levy. A part of this levy is retained to be spent locally and we're pleased to work together with The Paddington Waterways and Maida Vale Society to bring forward applications for CIL grant funding for community projects in our area. Recent projects include £38K for new equipment at North Paddington Youth Club on Lanark Road, £75k for two new minibuses at Queen Elizabeth School - a local special school for children with severe learning difficulties - and £71k for replacement flooring at St Augustine's School sports hall. The hall is also used by the community after school, during the weekends and during all school holidays.

**Cllr Geoffrey Barraclough, Cllr Nafsika Thalassis, Cllr Iman Less**

**Maida Vale Labour Councillors**

**May 2023**

# AN UPDATE FROM OUR LITTLE VENICE COUNCILLORS

**We continue to take up Little Venice residents' casework on all issues from planning to parking and as always pay particular attention to the needs of vulnerable residents.**

## **Mayor Sadiq Khan Approves 3 Tower Blocks of up to 39 Storeys at Paddington Green**

Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan has approved the building of three new tower blocks of 17, 24 and 39 Storeys on the site of the old Paddington Green Police Station.

Although Westminster Council had rejected this application on two occasions, the Mayor decided to make the decision instead. This was taken at a formal inquiry held by the Mayor last month and Little Venice Councillor Melvyn Caplan spoke at the hearing to oppose this application. As we have previously reported, this scheme is totally inappropriate and is a very poor decision that ignores all the evidence. It is not just the height of the scheme that is too much, it is a poor design and many of the new housing units as well as existing properties will suffer from lack of daylight and poor sunlight. The decision ignores the overwhelming local opposition to the scheme.

The Labour mayor is desperate to catch up on his woeful performance in providing new housing. Although providing 556 new flats is a good thing, it is not the right trade off that such housing units should be built at any price.

## **Food Waste Collection**

We are disappointed that there are continued problems with the food waste collection. This is an initiative that was introduced by the previous Conservative administration but has not been well implemented in our area. We get weekly reports of missed collections with Porteus Road, Sutherland Avenue, Warwick Avenue and Warwick Place having repeated missed collections. We also see the food waste 'bins' being dumped around the ward and this is another concern. We have asked for this to be urgently reviewed as the service does not seem to be performing properly in our area.

## **Graffiti**

We have been reporting a significant amount of graffiti along Harrow road and St Mary's Green. It is always important that this is dealt with swiftly as we know from experience that it leads to more graffiti if it is not swiftly removed.

## **Policing of Little Venice Ward**

There have been persistent issues with youths causing anti-social behaviour on the Hall Park Estate. We have been working with the police and the City Of Westminster College to stop these problems and to allow residents to live their lives peacefully.

We continue to lobby the Mayor of London, who oversees our police, and the Westminster Borough Commander to ensure that we see more police on patrol and to take a proactive zero-tolerance approach to tackle all crime.

### Transport Concerns

We have been receiving a significant number of issues which concern the Mayor and his responsibilities for Transport for London (TFL). These range from complaints about tube noise which is affecting a number of residents in Warrington Crescent to concerns about the poor condition of Warwick Avenue Tube station which is desperately in need of some refurbishment and maintenance. We have raised these issues with TFL. We were also very disappointed with the recent decision by the mayor to remove bus route 16 from Edgware Road/Maida Vale. This is the removal of 6 buses per hour and means that residents will have to rely on the already overloaded route 6. This is on top of the previous service reductions we have experienced to the local routes 46 and 414 routes as well as previous reductions to the 6 service. The last few years have seen more and more hammer blows to our local bus services that many residents rely upon. We have a Mayor that is simply ignoring our local community.

### Thames Water and Flooding

We continue to support a large number of residents that were affected by the flooding on July 12 th 2021. We have written about this many times, but we remain concerned that Thames Water are still not delivering on flood alleviation measures to protect at risk properties. We are also concerned and continue to push the council for more planned gully maintenance.

### Ward Budget

We have continued with hanging baskets across the ward for the summer months as we know that residents enjoy seeing the greenery and colour throughout the ward.



### Keeping in touch

If you wish to contact any of us, you can phone the Little Venice Conservative councillors' hotline on 0207 289 9929 or email us at [littlevenice@westminsterconservatives.com](mailto:littlevenice@westminsterconservatives.com).

You can also write to us at  
2 Lanark Mews, London W9 1RY.

Cllr Melvyn Caplan, Cllr Lorraine Dean,

Little Venice Ward  
Conservative Councillors

May 2023

## AN UPDATE FROM OUR LITTLE VENICE COUNCILLORS (continued)

‘Blossom by blossom the spring begins!’

After the cold and dark days of winter, I’m excited that we will all be spending a lot more time outside once again. Spring always brings new life and fresh hope, and we are in the middle of supporting exciting outdoor events that local residents can all enjoy.

I will be looking forward to the launch of the new Little Venice Film Festival in August. It will be the first film festival in Little Venice, so we will be looking for local support from the local Little Venice and Maida Vale communities to make sure it’s a major success.

We were really pleased with International Women’s Day event at the Little Venice sports centre last month, which was a real success.

As Westminster Council’s newly appointed Women and Girl’s champion, I’m keen to see events and initiatives that support and promote women’s empowerment and safety.

We have had a mix of good and bad news on other fronts, despite opposition by Westminster City Council, the Deputy Mayor of London unfortunately ruled in favour of the controversial development plans for Paddington Green Police Station which we naturally opposed. We, along with local groups argued that the building was far too tall and the design quality was inferior to what previously been presented. We are also looking at the feasibility of a new accessible playground on Paddington Green and have a requested an archaeological survey of the area given the proximity to historic burial grounds.

The cost-of-living crisis meanwhile has continued to have an impact on many of our residents, with those in the most vulnerable categories forced to make difficult decisions.

I have been working very hard to make sure these people are as supported as possible and can get access to the right help. Meanwhile, my work on trying to ensure we have greener, cleaner, and safer streets continues.



**Cllr Sara Hassan,  
Little Venice Labour Councillor**

**May 2023**

# WESTMINSTER CITY COUNCIL PLANNED PREVENTIVE MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME (PPM)

Each year Westminster City Council (WCC) carry out a PPM programme of carriageway resurfacing and footway renewals. As the name suggests, these works are evaluated at the time when the asset condition gets to the point where reactive remedial work (ie pothole filling etc) becomes necessary. The current programme for this year in our area includes footway renewal in Chippenham Rd, Essendine Rd, Maida Ave, Oxford Rd (underway), Lauderdale Rd and Lanhill Rd.

Each year our Society is asked for our nominations for these works, along with nominations from the local Councillors and the WCC Highways inspectors. These nominations are then assessed by the WCC highways team, along with nominations from all the other wards in Westminster to draw up a final programme of works.

So if you feel your street has reached the point where this work needs to be included in next years programme, please let us know.

These photos show works that were part of last years programme.

Paul Newman

May 2023



*Carriageway resurfacing on Formosa St*



*Footway renewal Kilburn Park Road*



*Brand new finished Warrington Crescent footway*

# FAREWELL TO DHIGS

It may be blindingly obvious but it is always worth reminding ourselves that communities depend on the efforts of people to bring them together, to renew them, and in times of difficulty to quietly resolve the problems. Here in Maida Vale one of the catalysts, if not the catalyst for this has been DHIGS, the newspaper and magazine, store, the general store, the post office, on Formosa Street.

In the words of Alice Sinclair: *'It's quite easy to walk past DHIGS on Formosa Street and not really notice the power it wields in the community. It looks a simple convenience store, one that has been there for approaching half a century. When you go in, however, you get a glimpse of the warm and playful energy that the shop is filled with'*, she said.

Now the store is changing ownership after several generations of the same family have enlivened and served the local community. That longevity and quiet community have been at the heart of what they created.

*'I've known H and D for a long time'*, said Alice. *'I would walk an extra 10 minutes more than I had to, just to get a dose of humour from H and Darshna. I would pretend to steal stuff in front of them, and they would pretend to get mad. If that wasn't the vibe of the day we would just have a friendly chat, and Darshna would show me cool stuff her daughter was doing online with her baking skills'*, said Alice.

But it was when the pandemic struck that the quiet community that they had built around them really came into its own. As Alice puts it: *'This was when H and Darshna became family. As the community shut down and retreated behind brick and masks, I witnessed D and H spring into action. They collectively changed the lives of hundreds of local people, with their shop being the heart. I want to say kidney too, because they took information and filtered it through to other community members so that a balanced network formed. We were able to work together and figure out who needed urgent deliveries and they would, sometimes at no cost, deliver to the most serious of cases without fee or delay. Personally I couldn't have done it without them, and sometimes, when it got tough for me living alone, H and Darshna would see it, not make a fuss, and just bring me a bag of goodies to the door, so I felt loved, then we would fight about the amount (they charged me less!)*



*Above: A painting of Dhigs, by E. Abou-Sakr (our frontcover artist)*

*It will be hard to imagine the community without them, the new owners have some boots to fill and some chat to brush up on'.*

And here are some other local memories from community members to share how one little shop, full of heart, has impacted lives in our local community. This is what Elizabeth Virgo recalled: *'Coming back from Bermuda to live in Formosa Street some twenty five years ago, Dhigs was the first port of call for me, and has been a mainstay ever since. I think a measure of the family's importance and value to the community was the amazing turnout for the protest march to save Dhigs post office.'*

*We got over 3,000 signatures in a week from its customers, which was presented to Parliament by our MP Karen Buck and to the Council by Melwyn Caplan. The long crocodile gathered for the march, and escorted by the police, was covered by TV, radio and press. Sadly none of this made any difference but the Patels have since cleverly diversified and added services and different products. A lot of what they do for the community passes unnoticed but they quietly help many of us manage in old age, ill health and difficult circumstances. The family will be sadly missed'.*

Glen Matlock, of Sex Pistols fame, had a more explosive approach in his tribute: 'Oh no, what a drag', he said. *'So sad to learn the fantastic gang at Dhigs are calling it a day. They have been so helpful, engaging and fun over so many years that they have all become a big part of the neighbourhood. Nothing ever seemed too much trouble and whatever you needed, if not in stock, they would try and get with expediency, grace and sometimes a wry smile too. Many a late afternoon was spent jokingly playing 'wind each other up' much to the bemusement of other innocent, less regular customers and I will miss that big time. I wish them all every success as they visit pastures new but this now begs the question - do I still have to settle my account?! Joking aside, I feel there will be a big hole in Formosa Street that will take a lot to fill. Take care guys.'*

And Hazel and Matilda Hindler recalled the impact and lasting legacy the Dhigs family have created. *'This is certainly the end of an era', she said. 'Your family have been with us in Formosa St as long as I've lived here. Your parents ran DHIGS when I moved in nearly 40 years ago, succeeded by 'D' and 'H' and their families. We had our children at the same time and shared news of their developments, education and progress. You have been open from early to late providing essential (pre internet!) News, Post Office, mail collection, food and other a mass of necessary and miscellaneous things. You performed with cheerfulness and humour, and provided an amazing community service during the dreaded lock down, staying open throughout, providing essential services and a much needed focal point during very difficult times for those in need. You have made and been at the heart of our community, quietly helping and watching out for those in need and if we didn't say it before or enough you are VERY much appreciated and will be hugely missed'.* With love and heartfelt thanks to Hitesh, Darshna and The Patel Family from Hazel and Matilda Hindler.

We finish these tributes with a mention of the impact they had on the life of Peter Brown. Peter was a man of the Caribbean who was an engineer with the RAF during the war flying with Lancaster bombers, a warm and quiet man. He enjoyed keeping to himself, and was much loved by members of the community who often offered their support as Peter lived alone, well into his 90's. He was independently minded but, if he chose, people would enjoy lovely conversations with him. One neighbour recalls how Peter regaled his grandson with lengthy tales about the time he served on the same wartime airfield as the Dambusters squadron.

But he was a private man and as he grew older the team at DHIGS supported him with errands, hospital trips and general everyday care and kindness. Peter passed away in December. The British press has been quite vocal in its coverage, something we are not entirely sure Peter would have been in alignment with given his quiet and private nature. It was reported that he 'died alone.' That is true. He passed away in the flat he lived in alone but he was absolutely cherished by his community family and the front runners in his life were D and H.

In a 2020 issue of Maida Unveiled Local Paul Newman wrote an article about Peter's extraordinary life, which we have printed here again, along with the photo of Peter sitting on his favourite bench in Warrington Crescent. On pages 17-19.

**With love from the local community**

**May 2023**



*"As the community shut down and retreated behind brick and masks, I witnessed Darshna and H spring into action. They collectively changed the lives of hundreds of local people"*

*Alice Sinclair, Editor of Maida Unveiled*



# ASK DR DANIAL

## WHACK-A-MOLE!

With summer approaching, I'm sure many of us are excited to spend our time outdoors doing fun activities with family and friends.

### What do you need to lookout for?

Moles are small, pigmented spots that commonly appear throughout our lifetime. Most of them are harmless, but some can potentially be dangerous such as a Melanoma, a type of skin cancer. A useful mnemonic we can use to identify suspicious features in mole is ABCDE:

**A — Asymmetry.** A benign mole is usually round or oval. Look for changes in colour, shape or texture (including if the mole is raised or flat) from one half of the mole to another.

**B — Border.** Lookout for moles with rough, uneven edges, and no clear colour distinction between the mole and the surrounding skin.

**C — Colour.** Moles are usually uniform in colour so pay attention to those with a mixture of different colours.

**D — Diameter.** Suspicious moles tend to be larger than 6mm in size. Check your mole with a simple tape measure if needed.

**E — Evolution.** Moles normally stay the same, so look for any changes in colour, shape or size over time. Also look for changes in how the mole feels, for example if it becomes painful or itchy or if starts bleeding or discharging fluid.

If you do notice any of these changes, make sure you book an urgent appointment with your GP.

One good tip is to take a picture of the mole with a tape measure next to it so the GP can make an objective comparison when he sees you to check for changes.

If the mole needs further investigations such as a biopsy (taking a small sample of the mole and sending it to the lab), your GP will refer you to the Dermatologist.

### How do I protect my skin?

Prolonged exposure to harmful UV sunlight can cause damage to the DNA which can lead to cancer in addition to accelerating skin ageing.

When you're out this summer, use a good sunscreen with a minimum cover of factor 30 with 5UVA protection. Remember that there is no such thing as a 'safe-tan.' A tan simply a sign of skin damage.

Those with lighter skin are more at risk of having greater damage. So, apply sunscreen regularly and don't forget to reapply after swims.

Finally, try using sun protective clothing as much as you can, get a hat, make sure you get those stylish sunglasses on and enjoy the summer responsibly.



*Dr Danial Daud, MBCHB, MRCP*

# A TRIBUTE TO PETER BROWN



Peter's funeral will be held in late May, and while we understand the importance of the RAF and local council members attendance with the view of respecting the services that Caribbean men provided in wartime, we will be showing our respects to the loss of a much-loved member of the community family, quietly, as Peter would have wanted.

We have re- printed the interview we did with him on the anniversary of VE day in 2020. please see this on the next page.

The photographs below are copyright of Paul Newman. On the left, Peter Brown celebrating his 90th birthday at home. On the right, Peter Brown enjoying a coffee at Peppermint.



# VE DAY ANNIVERSARY

## Our greatest generation

Introducing Peter Brown. Peter is a well known figure around Little Venice. He is often seen out and about around the neighbourhood, belying his 94 years.

Peter's home country is Jamaica, and at the age of 16 signed up as an RAF cadet. In 1943 he joined a convoy from Cuba to Canada where he trained to become an airborne wireless operator. In September 1943 he moved to the U.K. to Warrington to the air base there (ironically Peter has lived in Warrington Crescent for the last 50 years!).

In 1944 Peter moved to RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire and flew in Lancaster bombers. Scampton was the home base for the 617 squadron who were made famous for their 'Operation Chastise' which was later immortalised by the epic film 'The Dam Busters'. Although this operation was carried out about 15 months before Peter's arrival there.

Peter remembers VE Day but he was still on duty that day at his base in Scampton. No huge party he recalls, but did manage a few celebratory drinks!

After several overseas postings, including Egypt, still flying Lancasters, Peter left the RAF in 1952 and became a Civil Servant. After a period back at Warrington, Peter moved to Randolph Ave in 1961, then Warrington Crescent 10 Years later.

Peter loves living in this area, made all the more special by its close proximity to the home of one of his greatest loves, Lords Cricket ground, where Peter has been a member for many years.



*Above: Peter Brown in 2020*

HILARY BRUCE, PAST CHAIRMAN OF THE  
P G WODEHOUSE SOCIETY



Sitting down for 60 seconds with our editor, Alice

**Name:** Hilary Bruce

**Age:** Old enough to know better.

**How long have you lived in Maida Vale?** Almost 45 years. My first neighbours were a vastly entertaining actor, who bought his flat on the royalties for saying just two words: "Die Hard" in the ads for the film. And on the other side a very proper elderly lady who came to Maida Vale as a refugee from Austria and in the early days, crafted hats for private clients.

**Why so long in Maida Vale?** It's a lovely place to live, convenient, fabulous trees and of course the canal, and friends and family have loved visiting us here over the years. It's full of interesting and enterprising people too, like the W9W2 team that organised volunteer 'outworkers', of which I was one, making facemasks for St. Mary's during lockdown.

**Any entertaining local walks?** My husband and I were married at St Mary on Paddington Green. It was a gorgeous day and we walked from the church to the reception at the Amadeus Centre led by a piper in full Highland Dress heading a crocodile of more than 120 people. Someone came out onto their balcony and joined in on his tin whistle, and all the traffic stopped as we crossed the canal.

**How did you get involved with The P G Wodehouse Society?** A friend of my husband had started a P G Wodehouse Society, but it was very small. With my marketing background I offered some ideas on how they could publicise themselves. They instantly elected me onto the Committee! I became Chairman about five years later.

**What is the Society?** It's a literary society, aimed at "spreading sweetness and light" as Wodehouse himself put it, through the medium of Wodehouse's beautifully written and extremely funny work. Wodehouse was a very prolific writer so you might have read some of his books, or know of characters like Bertie Wooster and Jeeves. Our Society is run by and for its members, produces a quarterly journal and has quite the social life, with evenings at the Savile Club, a magnificent formal dinner and a springtime out-of-town weekend every other year.

We field our own cricket team too.

**Best thing about the Society?** The people and the fun. People that enjoy Wodehouse are invariably excellent company.

**Best thing about Chairing it?** I've spent some fine evenings dining and chatting with our three beloved Presidents, the late Richard Briers and Terry Wogan, and the present incumbent, the delightful Alexander Armstrong. I'd never in my wildest dreams have imagined myself in that situation.

**Any special achievements?** Top of the list must be the installation in 2018 of a memorial to Wodehouse in Westminster Abbey. It had taken a very long time to achieve. The dedication service, conducted by the Dean of Westminster, was a joyous event with readings and Wodehouse songs sung in the Abbey, and a riotous after-party with more singing in Church House. It was that at that event I had my most 'pinch me' moment, talking Wodehouse with The Dean of Westminster, and our Patron, HRH The Duke of Kent. I so wished my mum could have been there to see it.

**Most inspiring Wodehouse character?** Would have to be The Empress of Blandings, a prize-winning Berkshire sow which appears in the 'Blandings' books. Under her imperious, though benign influence, the Society campaigned on behalf of Berkshires, and annually I would find myself in a show ring in, yes, Berkshire placing, with considerable difficulty, a Champion's sash on a vast black-and-white pig, all the while the going underfoot being decidedly non-grippy.

**Any more pig stories?** Oh yes. We'd helped Heywood Hill, the lovely bookshop in Curzon Street create a brilliant Wodehouse exhibition in the shop. Next job was to organise the publicity. And that was how I found myself very early on a Saturday morning with photographers, Stephen Fry and a very large Berkshire pig on the loose outside the shop in Mayfair. Passing police cars and binmen were amazed. There was an atmosphere of utter astonishment all around us. Except for the sow, who was entirely phlegmatic about her big day out.

# NATURE

A, SWIFT, WALK AROUND MAIDA VALE

THE SWIFTS OF MAIDA VALE

"NO MOW MAY" AT PADDINGTON RECREATION GROUND

THE SECRET FORAGING BEES OF MAIDA VALE

# A, SWIFT, WALK ROUND MAIDA VALE

Talya Davies takes us on a walk round nesting sites in Maida Vale where swifts can be spotted.

The best places to spot swift nesting sites is where people have put up swift boxes or where there are still open spaces beneath the eaves. The enemies of swifts are over-zealous builders renovating the eaves and closing off access.

You could start your walk at the eastern end of Marylands Road closest to Shirland Road, where there are usually several groups of swifts nesting under the eaves. Then walk round the corner to Sutherland Avenue opposite the library, where looking up from Amberley Gardens you can see two Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) swift boxes on the back of 99 Sutherland Avenue.

Then there are swifts overhead all the way along Sutherland until The Warrington pub, where the next place would be behind the Synagogue on Lauderdale Road where about three pairs have been seen and finally up towards Elgin Avenue and perhaps to the park.

I'm worried about the swifts above the Warrington and behind the Synagogue, because the houses next to the Tesco garage, that have boxed eaves, have this year been renovated, and I fear that that is where those swifts had their nests, although I don't know for sure because it's really difficult to spot the nests unless you see swifts either going in when they are feeding their chicks in May and June, or else screaming at the nests in their 'screaming parties' in July.

The screaming parties are when you really do find out where the nests are: in July, on hot, sunny days, you can see the parties of swifts all screaming and swooping right up to all of the local nests in turn. That's when you really see them, and you won't even see that unless you notice the noise and look up: it always amazes me how many people are completely blind to this exciting phenomenon. I'll be craning my neck up and grinning like a maniac, and all the while people will be passing me by in the street, completely oblivious even despite my blatant telegraphing. They must just think I am mad!



*Above: A swift box high above Essendine Road*

There used to be swifts on Randolph Avenue, someone told me, but they are no longer there now, although if boxes were provided then they could return.

It has been so depressing walking around the area this past year and seeing scaffolding going up in every single place where the year before I saw swifts overhead. It really is no wonder that swifts are now endangered and on the 'Red List.'



There is a magnificent, bright white swift nesting box up on the wall of the small building inside the Sayers Croft Nature Area in Paddington Rec, by the wildlife pond, so you can see what one might look like and what sort of size they are. The Head Gardener saw a very fast bird coming out of there, which we presume was a swift, and they are playing attraction calls each year, so that will also be a good place to spot them this coming May-July. We saw that box in the Rec on last year's Swift Walk, initiated by Mike Priaulx, from Islington Swifts.

On the walk last year, we also saw more of the boxes that Brent and Westminster Swifts Group have put up., most of them centred around Essendine Road, and you can find all the exact locations on [swiftmapper.org](https://www.swiftmapper.org) if you are interested.

There used to be many, many more swifts here, above Wymering and Widley Roads especially, where they used to nest in great numbers in the roofs of those Mansion blocks, until renovations happened quite a few years ago and then the numbers massively decreased. It would be great to be able to provide nesting places for them on those Mansion blocks again, because swifts have a long memory for good places to nest, as they pass them down through the generations, using the 'screaming parties' as ways to learn where all the best nests are.

[Swiftmapper.org](https://www.swiftmapper.org) is a website and app for recording swifts' natural nests (denoted by a yellow marker,) nest boxes (green marker) and screaming parties (blue marker.) Anyone can add a record, so if you see swifts anywhere this year, please do place a marker! Especially as there may well be swifts in the area that haven't been recorded yet.

There will be another guided walk this year: details will be on the **Brent and Westminster Swifts Group** page on Facebook.

Swift boxes suitable for any location, e.g. unshaded and/ or unsheltered by eaves:

- Action for Swifts uPVC Model 30 boxes: <https://www.actionforswifts.com/upvc-swift-boxes>
- And for information on how fit your own swift box: <https://www.actionforswifts.com/upvc-swift-boxes>

Talya Davies

May 2023



*Above: A swift box in Paddington Recreation Ground*

# THE SWIFTS OF MAIDA VALE

Swifts are the most astonishing of birds. In early May a sizeable number of them will begin arriving at their nesting holes right under the eaves of houses or in nest boxes placed high on the walls of houses in Maida Vale. They will, tiny birds though they are, about the weight of a hen's egg, have flown all the way from sub-Saharan Africa without stopping. They sleep, feed on airborne insects, collect nesting material, and mate, all on the wing. It is not unusual for them to travel a hundred miles or so to find food in poor weather. After all to feed their young they need to gather in thousands of airborne insects a day, storing them in sticky balls in their throats.

Swifts from their London bases have been tracked feeding over Germany later in the same day. They have been tracked, before dawn and in the late evening, ascending to heights of around 8,000 feet. From there they can see the stars for, it is thought, navigation, and observe developing weather systems and how they will affect their gathering in of food. They migrate here and nest in high crevices, or in specially provided 'swift bricks' or swift nest boxes high up on old buildings. And despite looking as though they are related to swallows or house martins their closest biological relation is, appropriately enough, the equally magical humming-bird.

They will be here in Maida Vale, raising a new brood of young swifts, and screaming about our skies, (they are the world's fastest bird in level flight: around 70mph is not unusual), until they head off on the lengthy journey back around the end of July and in early August. In the nest the young fledglings, the only time in all of their lives that they will be stationary and earth-bound, do wing press-ups until they are ready to drop out of the nest and fly, alone, back to Africa.

Then next Spring the adults will fly back to exactly the same nesting place here. We mere mortals have not a clue as to how they know how to do this. They are in flight for virtually all of their lives, even sleeping on the wing.

*Right: A swift 'screaming party' in Marylands Road in July 2020*

To do this they close down half their brain. But the other half stays alert so the swift can either remain in exactly the same place or, if migrating, continue on the same course. They pair for life, around twenty years, but it is several years before they produce young swifts. They spend the winter apart, only joining up again when they return to the nest site in the Spring.

They will have been in flight, constantly, to and fro between Maida Vale and southern Africa, for three to four years before they nest. Come July they join what are known as screaming parties. This is when the younger swifts, several years old and yet to mate and nest, scream around the streets looking for promising holes under the eaves, or swift boxes, in which they can nest and raise a brood the following year. For us we just have to enjoy the spectacle.

Where we are in Maida Vale we are lucky enough to have a roof terrace and can raise a glass to the joy of the swifts as they zip around us as dusk approaches. Their short season with us brings great happiness. For far too brief a time they will be above us, seemingly screaming with delight and swooping and soaring in the joy of their breakneck and spectacular aeronautics. Then sometime in early August they will suddenly be gone. Our skies will go quiet and an element of joy will have vanished until they return again next year. They are, simply, the most astonishing of birds.

Robert Bruce

May 2023



# "NO MOW MAY" AT PADDINGTON RECREATION GROUND

Since the 1970s the UK has lost more than 97 per cent of its wildflower meadows which are vital for food pollinators like butterflies and bees.

Despite being an inner London borough, an estimated 24 per cent of the City of Westminster is made up of parks and green spaces - an area of more than 500 hectares, boasting rich and diverse wildlife with over 600 different kinds of flora and fauna recorded.

Paddington Recreation Ground (27 acres in area) is Westminster City Council's largest open space, and is recognised as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation.

Westminster City Council is supporting Plantlife "No Mow May", the annual campaign calls for gardens and green spaces to not be mowed for an entire month, providing a space for nature to thrive in the height of spring. Selected areas of Paddington Recreation Ground will adhere to this campaign. By allowing grass to grow longer benefits wildlife, tackles pollution and can lock away carbon below the ground.



Longer grasses and wildflowers provide vital food needed by pollinators such as bees and butterflies. For more information check:

<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/news/westminster-city-council-supporting-no-mow-may>

<https://www.plantlife.org.uk>



# THE SECRET FORAGING BEES OF MAIDA VALE

Behind the tall houses of Maida Vale you often find secret communal gardens. And in amongst the trees, the flowers and the lawns, you could also find a beehive or two. These are the province of Graham Young, who has been tending them for twenty years, ever since he took over as chair of the garden amenity company that looks after gardens behind Sutherland Avenue. There are three acres of gardens hidden away and bees had been kept there for over 35 years.

The existing beekeeper was retiring and Graham took over, qualifying as a beekeeper in 2010. These days he also has hives in Little Venice Gardens and, further afield, in Hyde Park Gardens and Canfield Gardens. Secret gardens are invariably undisturbed gardens and can thrive in their own way.

*'There is a huge diversity of food sources for the bees', he said, 'wildflowers, undisturbed areas of buddleia and willowherb, and a huge number of trees; lime, chestnut, horse chestnut, and cherry blossom and all the flowers.'*

The bees thrive. It is small wonder that his Maida Vale honey took first prize for 'taste' in the honey competition at his beekeepers' association. For him it is an endlessly fascinating task.

*'It is not as straightforward as some people think', he said. There are lots of textbooks on beekeeping. But as wise beekeepers say: 'The bees don't read them'. 'They do different things so you need to build up an instinct for what is going on', he said. 'It takes time to get attuned to what their needs are'. And the structure and behaviours and different roles of the bees in each hive need to be understood. The world of bees is an extraordinarily ordered one.*

A good healthy colony has up to 50,000 bees. The Queen bee can lay up to a 1000 eggs a day. And there is a strict hierarchy. Worker bees have a variety of tasks: some clean up the hive; feeder bees clear up and feed the eggs with pollens; some bees provide flying lessons for all the newly born bees; some teach the new bees where to forage.


And then there is the bizarre but brilliant waggle-dance. Bees will dance in a figure of eight which, depending on the orientation of the dance and the direction of the sun, will let other bees know where there is a good foraging patch, while the duration of the dance will pass on the details of how far away it is. One second signifies a hundred metres. Ten seconds means a kilometre.

Bees will forage up to a couple of miles away. It is an amazing system. And the end result of all this intricate enterprise is that Graham harvests around 50 pounds of honey per hive. It is 'raw' honey. It is not heat-treated or pasteurised like the commercially produced stuff. It is spun off from the comb and although filtered slightly, still contains the health-giving grains of pollen, enzymes and trace minerals, and combats hay fever and associated allergies. The only caveat is that the stomachs of infant children under one year old cannot process one of the natural ingredients, propolis, produced by the bees. But for the rest of us it is a healthy and joyful addition to our diet, full of the natural benefits of Maida Vale.

For more details contact Graham Young:  
Tel: 07973101650  
email: grahamyoung007@hotmail.com

**Robert Bruce**

**May 2023**



*"There is a huge diversity of food sources for the bees...wildflowers, undisturbed areas of buddleia and willowherb, and a huge number of trees; lime, chestnut, horse chestnut, and cherry blossom and all the flowers."*

*Graham Young*

# FAIZ SARA

## A journey from Syria to Maida Vale

Faiz Sara and his wife Hayat came to Maida Vale by a circuitous and sad route. He spent fifty years working as a well-known journalist and publisher in Syria, fighting for freedom, democracy, justice and equality. Now he and his wife Hayat live in a one-bedroom flat in Maida Vale. He is a proud man and refused to apply as an asylum seeker for refugee status.

*'I am Syrian', he said, 'and Syria was where I was born, lived, and sacrificed my life. To become a refugee would be to have another nationality'.*

He had been arrested and imprisoned in Syria several times and finally left in 2013 after being threatened with further arrest or death.

The long route to Maida Vale took them via Lebanon, France, Turkey and Germany. But once here they found the Grand Junction project at the church of St Mary Magdalene nearby. There through the language café activities, they made contact and an exhibition of his craft-based work, made both during imprisonment at the Adra prison near Damascus, and more recently here in England, took place at the church earlier this year. It was all about life between Damascus and London. He makes the pieces, small representational doors, owls, flowers and trees. Hayat adds brightly coloured embroidery.

He was not a professional artist. He was a journalist, publisher and activist. But during his first imprisonment between 1978 and 1980 he started making craft artefacts and when he was imprisoned again in 2008 he started working on them once more. His idea was to create 'an affectionate connection' with those friends and family outside and 'to add beauty to the life around us'. His larger works are still in Syria.

His house was taken by the regime. Hayat and her sister's house was bombed. His office and all his books are gone. He makes a gesture. Only the clothes he stands up in remain. He was arrested again three weeks after the start of the Syrian revolution in 2011. And finally he was released along with a dozen other signatories of the Damascus Declaration for Democracy after international pressure.

Now their life in Maida Vale is at least settled. *'We can't go back to Syria unless the regime goes'*, he said.

And they are sad that so much pain has been inflicted.

*'We can cope with losing our environment'*, he said, *'but many can't and we feel sad about them'*.

Exile is harder when you are older. *'People of our age need to live in our own places'*, is how he expressed it.

Meanwhile, as far as is possible, they are happy. *'London is a beautiful city'*, he said, *'and people are very friendly'*, and the exhibition was successful.

*'I am not a professional artist'*, he said. *'But I feel very happy that people were interested in the exhibition. It reflects how people want to know about other people and understand them'*.

**Robert Bruce**

**May 2023**



*"We can cope with loosing our environment, but many can't and we feel sad about them."*

*Faiz Sara*

## A VALIANT VEHICLE VENTURE BEHIND A PUB IN MAIDA VALE

Standing outside St. Joseph's school and looking towards the Warrington hotel public house it is difficult to imagine a time when there was a sports vehicle factory where your open house now stands.

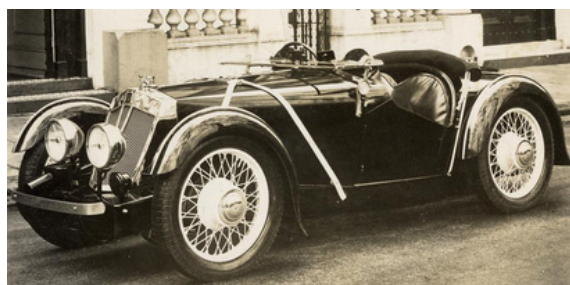
In 1859 as part of the licence application for the Warrington pub there was provision for extensive stabling over which there was to be accommodation for 24 families. 70 years later the space had become available for rent and became the site of the Maida Vale Motor Company.

Established in 1935 by an aristocrat and his two partners it was a gentlemen's hobby venture.

Pownoll Pellew later 9th Viscount Exmouth, Allan Gaspar and Robert Wilcoxon had a vision of producing a low cost sports car – “*a fast little lady*” in the jargon of the time, and in true amateur spirit the funds were provided by Pellew's mother and his girlfriend the actress K. Walsh who was later to marry David Lean. Gaspar's father was a bank manager and provided further funding and finally by contribution from Robert Wilcoxon, whose brother was also a successful actor and a close associate of Cecil B. DeMille. In typical 30s fashion the two brothers were known as Biff and Bang for their fighting skills.

The first cars that they made were hand-made and constructed using an 832cc engine made by the Triumph Motor Company and a chassis built by Rubery Owen. Unfortunately, the top speed was only 70mph - too slow for racing, so later versions utilised a larger engine made by Coventry Climax which took it up to 85mph. Nevertheless, the car raced at Brooklands and Monte Carlo with some success but never managed to win any laurels.

*Right: Pownoll Pellew later 9th Viscount Exmouth. Copyright of Julian Futter*



*Above: The Vale Special in 1933 (top) and today (bottom).*





Advertised as “a hand-made car at mass production price” the cars were relatively inexpensive, at about £200 pounds compared to an Austin 7 saloon costing £135 and a top-quality Ford for about £250. Nonetheless, during the course of 1934 the price of the car fell and by October a £200 version was being advertised at £140. By 1935 the company had been sold and by 1937 it had disappeared.

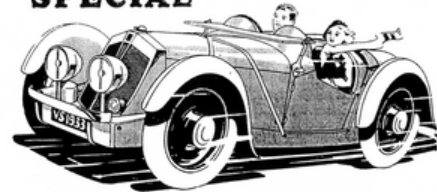
The Vale years were the highlight of the original three founders’ careers. Pownoll Pellew became 9th Viscount Exmouth and had an undistinguished career in the House of Lords, dying aged 62 in 1970. Robert “Bang” Wilcox was killed rescuing soldiers from Dunkirk in 1940 and Allan Gaspar became chief accountant for Decca and as late as the 1950s raised a pugnacious defence of his car against its detractors in a letter to Motor magazine, which I think can act as an epithet for this very gallant, yet fated endeavour:

*“I just happen to be a co-designer and producer of the little car. They were first-rate high-speed touring cars. The Vale was a praiseworthy attempt to produce a sports car at a low price and with none of the drawbacks of the specialist-bodied versions of popular chassis. Who the hell is he anyway and what are his qualifications that he sets himself up as an arbiter of fashion, technical history, and smug castigator of other people’s efforts?”*

Julian Futter

May 2023

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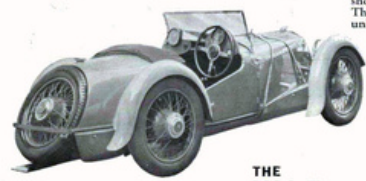
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## PADDINGTON SPORTS CLUB - MAIDA VALE'S BEST KEPT SECRET?

It's not unusual for long term Maida Vale residents to confirm that the Paddington Sports Club is the area's best kept secret. This happened again very recently when a neighbour who had lived for 25 years visited the Club for the first time and was amazed by what she saw. A significant cause of the Club's low visibility is its narrow entrance next to the Bon Appetit delicatessen at 73 Castellain Road. Despite this (and thanks largely to a combination of digital and traditional marketing) the Club is thriving with over 1,000 members of all ages. The members play tennis, squash, bowls (outdoor and indoor), indoor mini-tennis, use the gym, social facilities (bar, snooker, sauna) and enjoy the food provided by our Thai caterer. Our coaches help members develop their skills, and Club teams participate in leagues and tournaments with clubs in the London region, and nationally. As well as competing in the LTA winter and summer leagues, LTA tournaments are also regularly held at the Club.

The Paddington Recreation Ground (the "Rec") is a great example of modern town planning. The Paddington Sports Club (PSC) is, however, often confused with the Rec. Although entirely separate organisations they share a connection. In 1893 the Paddington Recreation Ground Act was passed. It enabled a cycling track, football pitches and cricket pitches to be built. There was no provision for outdoor bowls until 1905 when the Paddington Bowls Club was established.

Within a decade or so of the founding of the Bowls Club at the Rec a two-court tennis club was in operation on the site currently occupied by PSC. There are few records of this apart from the photograph dating back to 1913.



*Photograph of the (two courts) Paddington Sports Club in 1913*

In the 1920s the Paddington Bowls Club was doing so well that it started looking for larger premises. Many options were considered but eventually the area between Castellain and Delaware Roads was chosen. In June 1927 a lease was entered into to allow the Club to be formed. This was a significant achievement, and we acknowledge the work of Mr. H.J Hoggarth in bringing the scheme to fruition. He is shown in the centre of the front row in, and is flanked by the other directors of the Club at that time.



DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT

*Directors and Committee of Management at Paddington Sports Club in the 1920's*

The Club Pavilion was built in 1928. The photograph below was taken from a flat in Elgin Court and shows how the Club looked between 1928 and 1935.



*Photograph taken from a flat in Elgin Court showing how the Club looked between 1928 to 1935.*

In 1935 the squash courts building and Indoors Bowls pavilion were completed. Little has changed to the exterior of these buildings since then, but the picture below (taken in 1987) shows the installation of first floodlights.

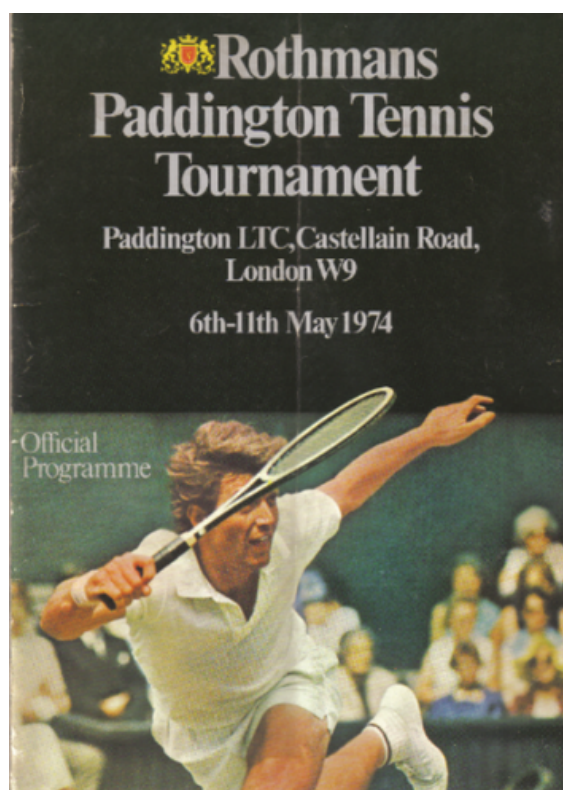


*Photograph of the squash courts and indoor building pavillion taken in 1935.*

It was a remarkable achievement that the Indoor Bowls building was completed in 1935, so soon after the Club moved to its current site, and despite the economic challenges of the Great Depression.

One unusual feature of this building is that it has no central supports. A further feature is the mural which was painted on the south east wall of this building. The inspiration for the design of the main turret is apparently Warwick Castle, chosen perhaps because of the proximity of Warwick Avenue.

Since PSC's foundation many tennis, squash and bowls tournaments have been held at the Club. A regular fixture was the Paddington Tennis Tournament, and the front page of the official tournament brochure from 1974 is shown below. As sponsorship of sporting events was banned over 20 years ago it may be a surprise now to see the involvement of tobacco companies in such events.



*Brochure of the Paddington Tennis Tournament (1973)*



*Sue Barker winning the Ladies Title at PSC in 1983 when she was 27*

To this day LTA tournaments continue to be held at the Club. This has meant that some of the future tennis stars have played on our courts.

The social side of the Club has always been strong and in previous years a newsletter was printed telling members about the events and going on at the Club. These suggest that it had some talented cartoonists among its members.

In recent years PSC has moved with the times and converted the first floor of the main Club pavilion into a gym and with a separate exercise studio where classes are regularly held. The celebration of our late Queen's platinum Jubilee was supported enthusiastically by PSC's members, and we were honoured by a visit from the Lord Mayor, Cllr Hamza Taouzzale during the Jubilee weekend.

Looking forward, planning permission was recently obtained to install LED lights on the 5 existing floodlit courts, and also to put up floodlights on a further 3 currently unlit courts. The additional playing time arising from the 3 new floodlit courts will enable PSC to admit further new tennis members. There is currently a waiting list of around 200 for "peak time" tennis membership, although off peak tennis memberships are immediately available. In addition to the investment in tennis floodlights the squash facilities have just been revitalised with a new floor and much improved heating.

PSC is a not-for-profit members club. It is run by the members for the benefit of those who wish to use it, and membership is open to the whole community. PSC welcomes players of all standards, and social membership is also an option.

Many of PSC's members have moved to Maida Vale not knowing anyone locally. The Club enables members to meet other people from all walks of life through its sporting and social activities. One way of trying out Club's facilities in the summer is to join an informal "barefoot bowls" session. These usually take place on the evening of the first Friday of each month from May – September. Basic coaching will be provided to any novices by our friendly bowlers. Please contact the club if you are interested in attending these sessions, or finding out more about the Club.

One of our most loyal members of recent years was a cat who adopted us in the 1990s when his owners moved from Castellain Road to a nearby address. The cat, named "Bilko" by us, decided that life was more fun at the Club and stayed for 20 years, with occasional visits from his owners. As well as getting on well with Club members, Bilko got on (albeit warily) with the local foxes, and kept the rodents at bay. When Bilko died a memorial service was held at the club by his friends, and an article about his unusual life was published in the Wood & Vale newspaper.



*Lord Mayor, Cllr Hamza Taouzzale visited the Club during the Queen's platinum Jubilee (2022)*

The Club's flag is sometimes flown at half mast. This happens during periods of national mourning, for example on the death of our late Queen, and also when a Club member dies.

For more information about Maida Vale's best kept secret please visit the Club's website at [www.pslondon.com](http://www.pslondon.com)

**Nigel Stokes**  
PSC President

**May 2023**



*Bilko, a cat who decided that life was more fun at the Club and stayed for 20 years*

Acknowledgement is made to a former President (the late Terry Rigby) who with the help of others compiled and published the Club's centenary brochure in 2005. Much of the information in this article is drawn from this source.

## DEATH AT THE WHITE HOUSE

Julian Futter takes a look in the archives at an unsolved murder from the past

Walk a few minutes along Randolph Avenue from the Warrington Hotel pub to the White House and you are on the spot of one of the area's most notorious unsolved murders.

The 12th of November 1972 was a night of high winds and heavy rain. Britain had just joined the EEC and high inflation had forced the Ted Heath to impose wages freeze. Earlier that week the government had just launched a structural reform of the NHS to cut long waiting lists.

That night was the last time 22 year old Amala Ruth deVere Whelan was seen alive. She had spent the evening drinking with a "good looking Anglo-Asian man" in the Warrington Hotel. The next time she was seen, she was covered in bruises and face down on the floor in her flat on the 4th floor of the White House, 61 Randolph Ave, strangled with her own tights. The crime scene had been carefully cleaned and no fingerprints or any evidence was found except that the word "Ripper" had been sprayed on a wall using yellow detergent.

At the time of her death, Amala had only been living in the White House for about 3 weeks. She had led an unconventional life after leaving Warwick University and was involved with the CND. She entered into relationships with men on her own terms and was working at the Bar Lotus in Primrose Hill (now the Lemonia restaurant) which had a young clientele, was car themed and offered drag artists and male striptease. She was described by those who knew her as a caring, popular and independent personality. According to her mother she was due to travel to Zurich in early December and then to continue her studies.

As was common at the time the police concentrated on her lifestyle and placed her in the "not respectable" category. At her inquest much play was made of her unconventional lifestyle.

METROPOLITAN POLICE

# MURDER

**AMALA RUTH De VERE WHELAN**, aged 22 years, height 5ft.5in., plump build, long brown hair, hazel eyes, dressed in a purple coat and multi-coloured long dress, was found murdered in a flat at 61, Randolph Avenue, W9, on Thursday, 16 November, 1972



*She was last seen alive at 10.30 p.m. on Sunday 12th November 1972 (the night of high winds and heavy rain) at the Warrington Public House, Sutherland Avenue W.9.*

**WHERE WAS SHE BETWEEN SUNDAY AND THURSDAY ?  
WHO WAS SHE WITH ?  
DID YOU SEE HER?**

*Above: Appeal for missing Amala*



*Above: Photograph of the White house in 1972. Amala Ruth deVere Whelan was living at this address at the time of her death*

Steve Hyams, a 22 year old musician, who had introduced David Bowie to the rock band Mott the Hoople, met her whilst waiting for a taxi some three days before her death and told the court how the next day he went up to her flat and had intercourse with her.

This, the police stated at the time, was a normal pattern of behaviour for her. Newspapers had reported salaciously that she had hosted an orgy a few days earlier but the court transcripts tell that the two participants, "respected businessmen" (sic), had taken their clothes off due to the wet weather and were unsure if Amala had as well because they were too drunk to remember properly.

It is sadly typical of the period that a popular and fun loving single girl with a wide circle of friends living alone in a flat, in what was then a seedy part of London, would be branded as at best a person of loose sexual morals.

Like so many murdered women victims the contemporary reports send out the unmistakable message that through her conduct Amala was in some way responsible for her fate.

The Police contacted nearly 700 persons during the course of their investigation but the case remained unsolved.

45 years later, in 2017, the case was reopened and a DNA profile was obtained from items left amid the chaotic scene in her flat. DC Tim Hargreaves said:

*"Amala knew her attacker. She lived quite a bohemian life, and this was not uncommon, bearing in mind the age she was living in. She was obviously a very bright girl and the brutal nature of her death remains shocking today and we are determined to catch whoever is responsible."*

Julien Flutter

May 2023

*Right: An article, illuminating the female shaming culture.*

## Bed-sitter murder a puzzle

The word "ripper" was written in yellow liquid on a wall of a bed-sitting room where a woman aged 22 was found strangled, it was stated yesterday at an inquest in Westminster. A verdict of murder, by person or persons unknown, was recorded on Miss Amala de Vere Whelan, of Randolph Avenue, Maida Vale.

Professor Donald Teare, pathologist, said Miss Whelan had probably been dead three or four days when she was found on November 16. There was no sign of sexual interference, but he took swabs of semen from her body.

The coroner, Mr Gavin Thurston, was told Miss Whelan had spoken in the street to a man she did not know, and later had sexual intercourse with him. She undressed in front of another man whom she had known for only 15 minutes.

Detective Chief Superintendent Robert Chalk said police had taken statements from 320 people, and had seen 360 others. Police had "quite a few statements"—apart from the evidence called—which would bear out Miss Whelan's "pattern of behaviour." She kept her friends away from one another "in watertight compartments."

Mr Thurston: "Then there is an endless possibility of people who had gone into that room?—Yes. This is typical of bedsitter land where nobody knows what goes on next door."

ISSUE  
9

MAIDA  
UNVEILED

SPRING/  
SUMMER 2023

# THE ART OF FOOD

JOHANNA WIKSTEDT



## SWEDISH NIGELLA, AKA JOHANNA WIKSTEDT CONTINUES HER ADVENTURES IN THE LONDON FOOD SCENE

It is now May my dear reader. A lot has happened since we last spoke.

Alongside many, many, business meetings in the bustling Financial Sector where you're nervous, stuttering and can't find your words, to failed dates where you're well, nervous, stuttering and can't find your words – I've however still managed to accomplish some thrilling progress on the food front. Still some nerves, less of the stuttering and heck, when could I ever really find my words?

I bring you to EKTE Nordic Restaurant. My first ever Kitchen take-over, where I was invited to literally "take over" the professional kitchen and whole team, and create a Scandinavian Menu. A medley of small open sandwiches which we call Smorrebrod were lined up; Toast Skagen - whipped mayo, dill and Atlantic prawns, herrings, and deep-fried place with Danish Remoulade sauce amongst a few.

Meatballs with buttery creamy mash followed to people's smiling content (me ignoring the Sesame Street's "Swedish Chef" impressions in corners). A Cinnamon Roll Pain Perdu wrapped up the festivities, topped with a Swedish Rum Ice cream. A hit I'd like to call that. And I am confident there will be more of these exciting takeovers all over the city, in fact, I know there will be.

So keep an eye out!



*Follow Jo on instagram @itgirllondon*

# Gravad Salmon on Sourdough, Poached Egg and Primeur Green Asparagus

*It's officially Spring! I for one have been longing for this. Spring vegetables, sun, flours and Cherry tree blossoms in bloom. Being able to have your coffee outside, I almost feel I've forgotten what that feels like. So I thought I'd start with a lovely Spring Dish which honestly works well as a starter, a Breakfast-charmer or even a super luxurious Brunch dish for the weekend.*

## Ingredients

- Asparagus (as many as you'd like per person)
- Salmon 500g
- 1 Egg per person
- Sourdough or Rye
- 100g sugar
- 100g Salt
- 2tbsp White Peppercorns
- Dill
- Aluminium Foil

## Method

First, let's "grava" (cure) this salmon. A fantastic way to cook salmon whilst keeping it soft and silky, keeping all of its delicious flavour with only faint hints of dill and white pepper, cutting the fatty aftertaste. I would suggest getting about 500g of Salmon from the middle-part of the fish, making it easier to cure evenly as the meat/fillet piece will be even, and not thinner towards the tail. This allows us even taste, and not an incredibly salty flavour towards the thinner pieces.

Cut the Salmon into two fillets (250x 2).

Crush the white pepper corns in a pestle and mortar until it's a coarser powder. Then mix the salt, sugar and white pepper corn. Spread evenly over the salmon (you can keep the skin on the salmon) and focus on sprinkling more of the mixture on the flesh side rather than the skin side. Then roughly chop the Dill, stalks and all, and place onto the salmon.

Place the salmon fillets, almost like LEGO, skin side to skin side, keeping a lot of dill in between them, and make a parcel of aluminium foil.

This then goes into the fridge for about 24-48h with something heavy placed on top. After 12h, I would flip the Salmon-package over. I'd also after 24h open it up and taste the Salmon. If you're happy, salty enough, it's done. If you have a thicker salmon fillet it will need a little more time. If they're thinner, then almost 12-24h is enough.



Wipe the salt, pepper and dill off of the fillet, alt five it a quick rinse, and slice thinly for serving. Next step, Poach and Egg.

Boil water, turn the heat down to barely even a simmer. And pour a whole egg into the water as you've created a bit of a circular whirlwind into the pot.

I prefer to not add Vinegar or Lemon drops, but it may help to just add a tsp of vinegar into the water before pouring in the egg. Simmer on low for about 2 minutes, until you get the perfect egg to your liking. And trust me, if you get, this right, I'm the first one to be proud – as I cant poach an egg to save my life!

Steam your glorious asparagus. When they're this crisp and fresh, no more than 2-3 min is needed. Brush with some Olive Oil and sprinkle with salt.

Toast a slice of Sourdough in some butter. Place a lettuce leaf on top. Some Gravad Salmon, the poached egg and the asparagus – and just enjoy the subtle fresh flavours.

## Tomato Salad with Silver Onion, Burrata and Oven-dried Prosciutto Ham

*We continue on, to something equally colourful and inviting to the eye. Tomatoes and crisp Silver Onion, you cannot go wrong. And tomatoes are only going to get better as we approach the summer. "Onion you can eat like an apple" my dad always said – and this, very much is, when grown and picked at the right time.*

### Ingredients

- Plum Tomatoes
- Multi Coloured Cherry Tomatoes
- 2-3 Silver Onion / Salad Onion ("Dear Child has many names" as we say in Swedish)
- Prosciutto
- Sumac
- 2 tbsp White Wine Vinegar
- 4tbsp Water
- 1 tsp Salt
- 1 tbsp Caster Sugar
- Basil
- Fresh Burrata

### Method

Pour the water, vinegar, sugar and salt into a bowl.

Cut the Silver onion thinly into circles and place into the "pickling" liquid. Leave for 30 min or so.

Put the oven on 150c.

Place the prosciutto slices out flat on a baking paper, on a tray, and place in the oven for about an hour. If the Prosciutto doesn't look quite dry and crisp yet, leave it in for a little longer.

Cut Tomatoes into whatever shapes you prefer. Some halved, some whole, you get where I'm going.

Toss the tomatoes in a bowl with some stunning olive oil, chopped Basil, some salt and black pepper.

Cut the Burrata in half.

Plate up the tomatoes around the Burrata. Place the sliced onion onto the tomatoes. And the Prosciutto Crisp on top of the Burrata.

Feel free to add more Olive Oil, Salt and a sprinkle of Sumac for colour.



## Crispy Sushi Rice topped with Tuna Tartar and Yuzu marinated Jalapeño

*As Spring and Summer (slowly) approach, we're going to hopefully have more drinks and nibbles outdoors, more parties and more gatherings where a handy little snack will come in use. Please find one of my favourite people pleasers ever. And it's so simple compared to how impressive and complex it appears!*

### Ingredients

- Sushi Rice
- 200g Tuna
- Potato Starch
- 200g Mayonnaise (Japanese Mayo alternatively your own if you're feeling lavish)
- 2tbsp Sriracha Sauce
- Chilli Flakes
- Sugar
- Salt
- 1 Lime
- Yuzu Extract (if you don't find this, the juice from one orange, one lime and one lemon will do the trick).
- Sunflower Oil

### Method

Cook the Sushi Rice according to Packet Instruction – Alternatively order in some already cooked Sushi Rice.

Both Local Maguro in Little Venice, Maida sushi in St Johns Wood and Sushi Murasaki in W9 offer great Rice.

Place into a rectangular oven dish lined with clingfilm (in order for the rice to not stick) and press out evenly. We're later going to make little rectangular blocks.

Place in Fridge to cool.

Mix Mayonnaise, Sriracha (to taste, make it as spicy as you like), a pinch of sugar, lime zest and a few drops of juice, chilli flakes and some salt.

Cut, chop or cube the tuna to your liking. Some like it minced almost and some prefer the chew when it cubed. And pour the mayo-sauce onto the tuna. Use it as a binder. It is not meant to be a saucy wet mix as then it won't stick together once placed on top of the rice. Leave in fridge to bond and cool.

Finely slice the jalapeno. Place into a small bowl with a pinch of sugar and cover with the Yuzu extract.



OR Alternatively the Citrus juice mixture. Leave for 30 min, gently dry off, and place on top of the Tuna Tartar as garnish, when ready.

Take the Sushi Rice out of the fridge.

Pour a few spoons of Potato starch out on a plate.

Cut and cube the Sushi Rice (dip your fingers in water, same for the knife - it will help handling the sticky rice).

Roll the Rice blocks into the potato starch and brush off excess starch.

Pour half an inch of Sunflower Oil into a frying pan. Heat until 180c, or until you see that a small piece of bread or rice starting to fizz and brown. Place the rice block into the oil and cook until golden.

Leave to drain off on kitchen towel. Top with Tuna Tartar Mix and the marinated Jalapeno slice.

Enjoy!

# LOCAL BUSINESSES

D1 COFFEE

LITTLE COFFEE TREE

# MELBOURNE GIRL LOST IN LONDON

Melbourne Girl is a local coffee connoisseur. She lives and works locally and likes to keep her identity private, like a secret agent for coffee.

In her own words:

*"I love coffee. I love the sun. I love travelling. Not passions that I thought would keep me in London for over 10 years, but I do believe things happen for a reason.*

*Originally from Melbourne, I grew up listening to entrancing stories from my Italian father. He didn't move to Australia until he was in his mid 30s, so his adventures/life in Europe (mainly as a bus tour guide) captivated me. Growing up as a child in the western suburbs in Melbourne, I knew I would always travel and experience life in as many places that I could. Studying in America, whilst at university, gave me a taste of travelling overseas and I guess I have never looked back.*

*Living and teaching in London has continued my passion for travel and along the way my obsession for a good coffee. Over the last few years coffee has taken off here in London and I love discovering and sharing new places on my instagram feed.*

*The idea behind this blog is to share a Melbourne girl's guide to London coffee, as well as, a few others things that grab my attention on my way to get a coffee- And boy, can I get easily distracted!"*



Insta: [@melbourne\\_girl\\_lost\\_london](https://www.instagram.com/melbourne_girl_lost_london)

<http://melbournegirllost.com/about/>

# D1 COFFEE

Venture just off Edgware Road towards The Regent's Park and make your way to D1 Coffee on Aberdeen Place in Little Venice. Coffee is why you'll come here and the reason why you'll return. The quaintest little unassuming place I ever did stumble across. Be warned...come here on a late sunny Sunday afternoon and you may find it already closed! Who wants to work when the sun's out? With tables outside and only a few steps from the chaos of Edgware Road, you may be mistaken in thinking you are in the backstreets of Hampstead. The staff are friendly and the water free and be prepared to have a chat or two, especially with the locals! It's also (but not during a busy lunchtime) a place you can sit and read for a while, a long while.

I love sitting inside on the front counter and watching the world go by, having my skinny latte and trying not to be tempted by the muffins!

They have recently renovated and are looking good. You can pick up coffee beans too and their selection of pastries is fantastic! If you are there when they open up in the morning, you may have to wait a bit while the croissants are baking in the oven...but it's a wait worth waiting for. Don't come here if you are in a rush. You need time, take in the neighbourhood, talk to the locals, then walk along the canal. A pretty route to the park.

I love drinking their skinny cappuccinos and having a berry muffin! The chocolate one with banana cream is pretty good too!

**Insta:** [dlcoffee\\_](#)

**Webpage:** <http://www.dlcoffee.co.uk>

Address: Aberdeen Place  
Little Venice  
NW8 8JN

**Melbourne Girl**

May 2023



# LITTLE COFFEE TREE

I keep coming back to The Little Coffee Tree because it is so familiar and friendly. There are never any surprises, and it is a guaranteed place for good company, fresh produce, and a smiley welcome. It is a place where you can catch up with the locals queuing and exchange an update or two and feel part of a community. I love sitting inside on the front counter and watch the world go by, having my skinny latte and trying not to be tempted by the muffins! Lockdown taught me a lot about myself and what is important to me, post pandemic has really highlighted the struggle too that businesses are undergoing and their commitment to survive and I feel as a customer, a real duty to support small businesses that make such an important impact on our community.

You know you are a regular when Timi (the owner) knows your name; you recognise the dogs that visit (and boy are there some cute dogs!) and you can continue the conversation with another customer you met last time!

The Little Coffee Tree like the name suggests is little. And this quaint little shop, with 2 tables, a window bench and tables outside is full most lunchtimes! But there is a reason for this... freshly made sandwiches, paninis and home-made cakes (some gluten free too-try the gluten free brownie!!) and savoury treats all add up to the delight of this place.

There's a pop-up shop inside too that stocks essentials and at Xmas you can stock up on panettone! Who does not like a panettone?!

I will always grab a skinny cappuccino and a treat, my favourite at the moment is the jam doughnuts, but if I'm looking for something small a cannoli is the perfect addition with my coffee. Reminds me of summer holidays in Italy and it's delicious!

Go visit The Little Coffee Tree, be sure to introduce yourself and grab a loyalty card because you will be back!



Insta: [@thelittlecoffeetree](https://www.instagram.com/thelittlecoffeetree)

Address:  
215 Shirland Rd,  
London W9 3JP

**Melbourne Girl**

**May 2023**





# The Lonely Pet Column

**Name:** Daisy (11 months old)

**Species:** Dog, rottweiler

**Owner:** Michael and Juliet

**A day in the life....** Hi I'm Daisy and welcome to a day in my life.

I start my mornings with a walk to D1 for some treats from my pal Jonny and cuddles from the neighbourhood friends. Then I head to St Mary's cemetery to run around with a bunch of sausage dogs - they're cute but not as tasty as they sound. Afterwards I head home for a large breakfast before starting my shift as a security guard.

I have the world's best job. I pace around all day getting my 10,000 steps in, always have great banter by the water bowl, and nobody seems to mind if I nap on the job. Every once in a while I think there's an intruder and I show them what I'm made of but really it's just mom bundled up in a big winter coat.

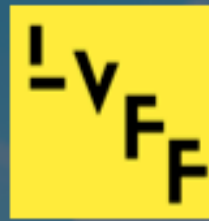
After work, I head over to Paddington Rec for some exercise. I'm training for the 20m sprint because that's the farthest dad can throw the ball. Sometimes people are scared of me but it's not my fault I'm a big girl - I was born this way! I'm super friendly and would love to get to know as many of you as possible.

I spend my weekends comparing London's Royal Parks, which takes so much mental effort that I usually need a 4-hour nap afterwards! I'm a girly girl who loves the spa. I sign-up for a 20 minute belly rub and 5 minute head rub every single weekend. Finally, I head to Beany Green for a nice puppaccino to unwind from a long week.

What am I looking for? I'm not picky. I love all types of dogs, including those yappy dogs that really seem to want to chat when I pass. I've never quite understood what they're saying, though! I use all four paws to swipe right on every profile because woof woof every dog is a beautiful dog. If you ever see me, say hi! I love friends and can't wait to meet you.

My Instagram is @daisythelondonrottweiler

*\*\*\* Have you got a pet who you think would like a partner? please email [alice.sinclair@w9w2.co.uk](mailto:alice.sinclair@w9w2.co.uk) if you would like them to feature in our next issue \*\*\**



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# Our W9W2 area...

