

MAIDA UNVEILED



www.W9W2.co.uk

Our Patron, Sir Tony Robinson

A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Welcome to the 12th issue of Maida Unveiled, our first as an annual publication.

In response to both environmental considerations and a desire to create something more enduring, we've transitioned from a biannual format to a single, thoughtfully curated, coffee table-style edition. This shift allows us to bring you a richer, more substantial issue, while reducing our ecological footprint.

Within these pages, you'll find familiar voices and new perspectives. Our local ward councillors and our MP, Georgia Gould, return with updates from across the borough. We're pleased to share fascinating pieces of local history, including stories from Lauderdale Road and reflections on Maida Vale in the 1970s and '80s.

We hear directly from the next generation, with candid insights from young adults at the NPYC. Our "Behind the Mask" feature offers a poignant portrait of a local volunteer's quiet heroism during the pandemic, while we also bid a warm and heartfelt farewell to our cherished local policeman, Paul Reading.

Lighter moments are found in our pet column, featuring two charming goldfish in search of a third companion, and in the kitchen, where we bring you a beautifully simple Tajik bread recipe to try at home.

As ever, Maida Unveiled is a celebration of our community, its history, its voices, and its vibrant present. It is made entirely by volunteers, with enormous thanks to our talented scribblers Robert and Julian, and the support of our valued advertisers.

We hope this issue brings you joy, reflection, and a sense of connection to the place we all call home. With all good wishes,

Alice and Giulia

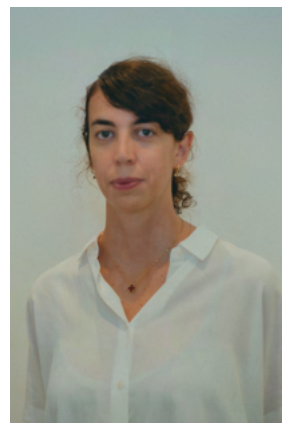
Editors

Alice Sinclair

Alice is a UKCP-registered integrative transpersonal psychotherapist and committed feminist activist, who's called Little Venice home since 2012. Her passion for community and equality has led her to chair the Healthcare Circle NGO and the Samburu Girls Foundation in Kenya, and she currently serves on the board of the North Paddington Youth Club. In recognition of her Covid-era community work, she was recognised by the late Queen in 2021.

Giulia Matteoni

Giulia works as an environmental consultant at Arup. She specialises in Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) covering a variety of sectors including energy, healthcare and urban regeneration. She moved to London in 2013, after completing her studies in Civil Engineering at the Technical University of Denmark. She has been living in Maida Vale since. You may have spotted Giulia walking around the area with her inseparable companion Oscar, a Labrador Retriever.



Our editors, Alice Sinclair (left) and Giulia Matteoni (right).

You can contact us at: maida.unveiled@gmail.com.



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

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the 11th edition of the priceless, Maida Unveiled, now in its reincarnation as an 'annual' publication, celebrating many of the features of our area which make it prized by residents, workers and visitors alike.

As such, it seems only right to begin with some words of thanks to those who have contributed to helping our area remain special and continue to thrive. 3 individuals we wish to thank; first, Elizabeth Virgo, the immediate past PWMVS Chair and our long term point of liaison with the Metropolitan Police who has this year formally stepped back from the Committee, handing over her role on Licensing. We are very grateful for the many years of volunteer leadership she has provided. That said, Elizabeth is far from retiring entirely and remains very active in her direct support to the Met.

On that theme, we record our 'vote of thanks' to Paul Reading who has recently retired from his role as the Metropolitan Police LV Community Officer. Paul's dedication to our community goes beyond words, based as it was on many hours, adding up to years, invested in getting to know the area and the people who live here. Demonstrating as he does the power of long term continuity in such a role, we trust that we can look forward to it being filled with similar commitment going forward.

Last, but by no means least, we remember, in memoriam, John Walton. John who recently past away at the age of 99, had for many years been the knowledge and wisdom behind the successful 'PRACT' partnership which successfully brought 'joined up thinking' to bear on transport matters which crossed the boundaries of PWMVS, SEBRA and Hyde Park WCC Amenity Areas. We remember John fondly and note with gratitude all he did for our area.

Looking forward, we will likely have a busy year ahead, with a number of significant schemes reaching important milestones. These include the public realm schemes at Paddington Green, Stone Wharf & Rembrandt Gardens, Warwick Avenue and Formosa Street pedestrianisation. In addition, there remain significant proposals 'in flight' for Maida Vale Studies, Lauderdale Parade and the Travis Perkins site aka Baltic Wharf to be reviewed.





The good news is that our community remains well engaged with PWMVS. This is evidenced by the record number of households registered with us, whether via email or our social media channels. This level of engagement is also reflected in the strong turnout and dynamic atmosphere at our recent AGM, graciously hosted by St Joseph's school on Lanark Road, the spirit of which we will aim to follow through on.

So, finally, with further thanks, this time to Alice, Giulia, Robert and Julian for bringing us another wonderful edition of MUV and to fellow PWMVS Committee members for the volunteering they commit to our society and the community

Enjoy!

John Zealley,

June 2025



MEET OUR NEW PATRON

Sir Tony Robinson

By Alice Sinclair

From his unforgettable role as Baldrick in *Blackadder* to his passionate storytelling in *Time Team*, Sir Tony Robinson has been a beloved figure in British entertainment for decades. An actor, comedian, presenter, and author, he has brought history to life for millions, blending wit with wisdom. Now, as our new patron, he brings his enthusiasm and expertise to our cause. In this interview, Sir Tony shares his admiration and passion for W9, a community he has called home since 1999.

What inspired you to become the patron of the Paddington Waterways and Maida Vale Society?

After attending a public meeting about regenerating Little Venice, I was struck by the community's desire for thoughtful change. When members of the committee approached me, I initially hesitated due to my existing voluntary work. But the more I considered it, the more appropriate it felt. I've always believed in taking responsibility for the area where I live.

How did you first discover Little Venice?

In 1999, I was house hunting and initially considered Primrose Hill. An estate agent suggested Little Venice, which at the time I associated with drugs and sex workers. But he convinced me to take a look. The moment I saw my flat, I knew it was right. I've never regretted the decision.

If you could time travel to any moment in Little Venice's history, when would you go?

The Georgian era, definitely. I'd love to see the area before it was fully developed—when flash houses were just being built and there were still streams and laundry women working the land. It would be fascinating to understand the landscape before urban development.

What's the most significant change you've seen in the area?

The gardens have dramatically improved. When I first arrived, many looked drab and overgrown. Now there's a new generation of managers who are enthusiastic, imaginative, and understand that gardens must evolve.



If you could commission a statue for Little Venice, who would it honour?

The laundry women and cowmen who were here long before the white stucco buildings. We often start our neighbourhood's story with these grand structures, but the area's real history goes back much further.

If you could take a canal boat trip with any historical figure—who's on board, and what are you talking about?

Byron, without a doubt. I'd love to discuss why they called this area Little Venice. Was it ironic? How did he view the industrial boats going by? Would he have imagined that 150 years later the area would be so unique and retained?

What's your dream archaeological discovery in the area?

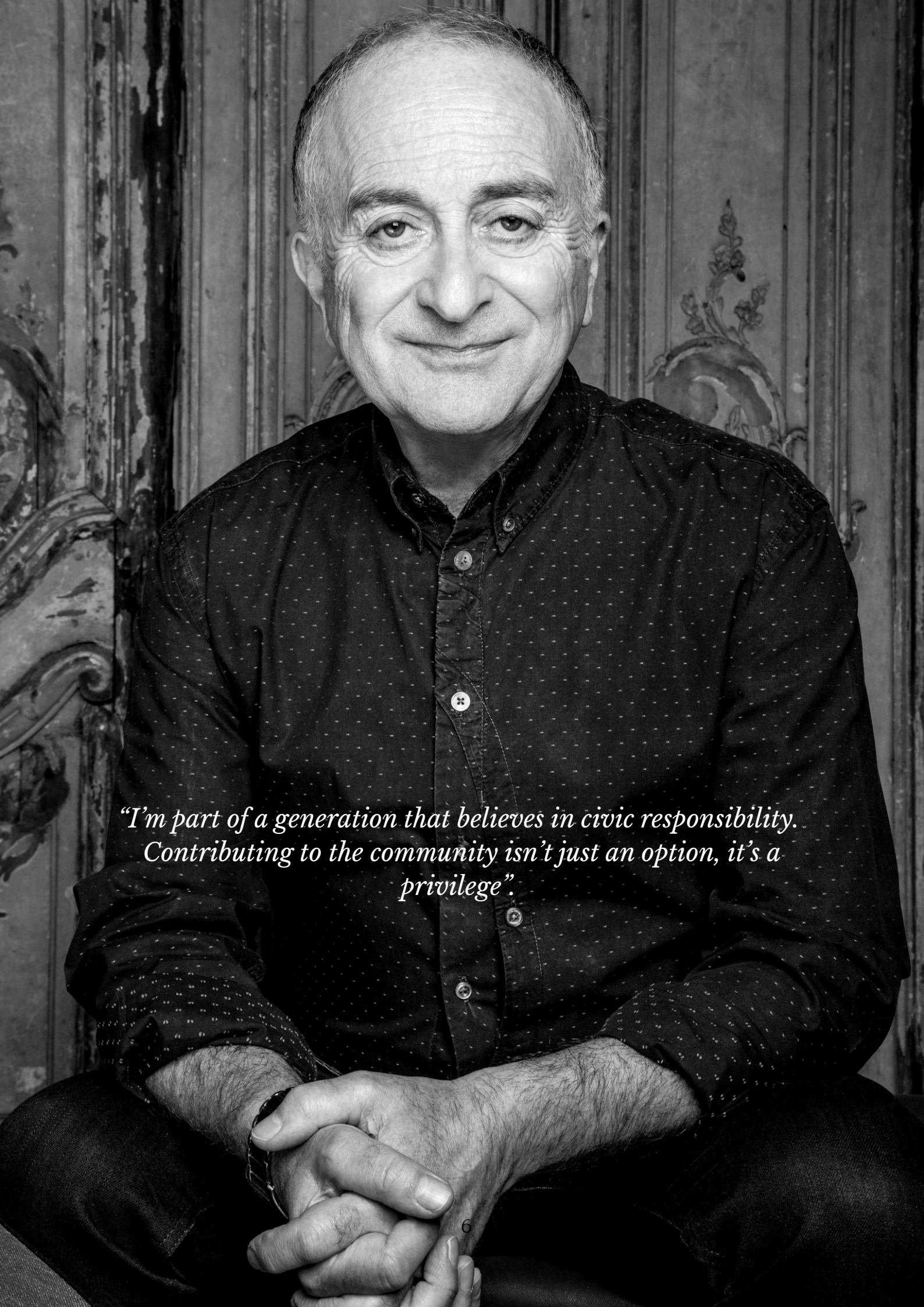
I'd love to dig up the Bakerloo line. Both Warwick Avenue and Maida Vale stations are architectural gems with potential hidden histories. The engineering treasures beneath could be extraordinary.

How would you describe Little Venice in three words?

[Laughs] Very Wonderful Indeed!

Any final thoughts about your new role as patron?

I'm part of a generation that believes in civic responsibility. Contributing to the community isn't just an option, it's a privilege. Little Venice is a unique place, and I'm honoured to help protect its character.



"I'm part of a generation that believes in civic responsibility. Contributing to the community isn't just an option, it's a privilege".

GEORGIA GOULD MP

Reflections of my first year

When sitting down to write this column, it was hard to believe that it's been almost a year since being elected as an MP. It's been an enormous privilege picking up the mantle from Karen Buck and continuing to advocate for and champion this community in the way she has for over three decades.

It means a huge amount to me to represent this community. My great grandfather came to this country as a teenager, working his way up to open a shop on Kilburn High Road and my family has been in the area ever since. My mum grew up off the Edgware Road before moving to Maida Vale, and I was born at St Mary's Hospital and grew up on Westbourne Park Road. This is a special place that knits together so many stories and backgrounds into a vibrant and strong community.

I think it's fair to say that the first year certainly hasn't been quiet with plenty of activity locally, nationally, and globally influencing our day to day lives in the Queen's Park and Maida Vale community. Over the last year I've seen first-hand the impact of the challenges facing our community, be it the continuing impact of the cost of living, the ongoing consequences of the housing crisis, or the pressure on local public services.

But what I've also seen is that in the face of challenges this community time and time again will stand up to show solidarity, support, and kindness to each other. This was no more apparent than during the recent fire at the Maida Vale substation. We saw neighbours rush to support each other, our local community centres open their doors to provide refuge, and our brave emergency service workers stand in the face of danger to keep us all safe.

We don't just see this during moments of crisis either, be it the Paddington Development Trust empowering local people to shape their neighbourhood, the team at Paddington Arts working to provide a first-class cultural hub, or the team at North Paddington Youth Club providing opportunity to the next generation, this is a community that day in day out shows that it deeply cares and that I'm incredibly proud to represent.



One of the most urgent challenges we've faced over the last year is ensuring the safety of our young people. The tragic murder of Tikquaan Stephenson-Walters in Queen's Park in September was a devastating moment for the whole community and unfortunately not an isolated example of a young person having their future taken away from them by violence on our streets. In response, we've acted not just to respond to individual incidents but to take a community led public health approach to keeping young people safe. Westminster City Council set up the North Paddington Serious Violence Taskforce which I'm proud to Co-Chair—bringing together schools, youth workers, local authorities and police to explore systemic, long-term solutions to this issue. The council has invested £250,000 to support the taskforce's recommendations, and we are already seeing the strength of what happens when communities come together and are empowered to make change.

But youth safety isn't just a North Paddington issue. Following the tragic events, I convened cross-borough meetings with Leaders and Police Commanders from Westminster, Brent, Camden and Kensington & Chelsea.

Together, we are working on joint initiatives to share data, expand mentoring schemes, and improve access to safe spaces across all four boroughs.

Over the last year I've also been fortunate enough to support a number of local campaigns including the work of local residents and Cllr Geoff Barraclough to improve insurance products for those homes impacted by the 2021 floods. We've also had residents help us win a campaign to tackle the obstruction of pavements by e-bikes, as well as champion the legacy of local cultural heritage, and work to improve play facilities in their local park.

I've also supported over 1350 residents with casework over the last year, with housing being the biggest issue and I am working nationally to support changes to tackle the housing crisis- ending no fault evictions, reforming the leasehold system, and speeding up council housebuilding.

It's the ideas, activism and willingness to reach out and build something better together that I will remember most from my first year and, as I look ahead to the next year, I want to extend an invitation. If you have an idea—big or small—about how to make our community stronger, safer, a more equal or happier place to live, please get in touch. Whether it's a local event, a campaign idea, or a project you want support with, my door is always open.

There is no doubt over the coming year we will continue to face more challenges but with this community's spirit of collaboration, courage, and care I know we will face them together.

Warmest wishes,

Georgia Gould,

June 2025

You can email me at: georgia.gould.mp@parliament.uk



Above: Maida Hill Moroccan Event

AN UPDATE FROM OUR LITTLE VENICE COUNCILLORS

Where are the police in Little Venice Ward?

We are becoming increasingly concerned about the lack of police on our streets. Since the retirement of our local neighbourhood's police officer Paul Reading, we have rarely seen anyone patrolling the area. Paul almost single handedly papered off the gaps in resource and now it is abundantly clear that crime is rising and those that perpetrate such acts do not feel there is any chance of being caught. We are aware of the frequent incidents of shoplifting in Clifton Road, phone snatching in Warwick Avenue and numerous incidents in Edgware Road.

Neighbourhood CIL plans

We are pleased that the council has approved two local Community Infrastructure plans in Warwick Avenue and Warrington Crescent that we helped design and supported from the earliest stage of development. These schemes are both to improve crossing points across busy junctions to enable children and adults to safely get to local schools and other local facilities.

Tents

The last year has seen many tents under the Westway, at St Marys Terrace and at Stone Wharf. We know that once the outreach workers have tried to help the individuals who are there, it is essential after the assistance has been rejected that this is swiftly followed up by seeking a court possession order. Sadly, it took 10 months for the council to go to court. At the time of writing some of the tents have finally gone after 12 months, but many others still remain.

Protecting Residents from Nuisance from Licenced Premises

We rarely need to oppose licensing applications but there are two such applications that have caused concern for residents of the ward.

The first is a proposal to allow Go Boats to sell alcohol for boat hirers to consume whilst operating the boats. This is a bad idea and those of our residents that live on narrow boats on the canal oppose these proposals.

Alcohol that could be brought by the boat users was banned some years ago when there were too many incidents of boats being hit or incidents of urination or other anti-social behaviour in people's gardens of those that live on the canal. We will be pushing for the licensing committee to refuse this proposal when it comes to the committee in June.

The second application that we opposed was one to extend the licensing time for The Hero of Maida in Shirland Road for an extra 30 minutes each day, which would mean hours up until 00:30 on Fridays and Saturdays and midnight on Monday to Thursdays. This is beyond the hours of any other pub in the area. Local residents were genuinely concerned about these extra hours and want the status quo to remain in place which we are pleased to report was agreed and the extended hours will not go ahead.

Blomfield Road Contraflow Cycling Lane

The question we await an answer on is whether Westminster Council will respect the wishes of those that live there. We know every property in the affected stretch of Blomfield Road opposed the scheme. The proposals put forward for a two-way cycle lane in the one-way section of the street were dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists as well as for cars, but will the council listen and think again about these unsafe proposals?

Warwick Avenue Proposals

As we said in last year's article, we have always been supportive of measures that would tidy up the recycling centre, green the hideous ventilation shaft and improve the footpaths around the canal. However, we will continue to resist spending amounts of up to £10m on a grandiose scheme. The council has yet to confirm what it plans to do and what it will cost. We have asked for the plans to be significantly scaled back and residents to be given the full information on what is proposed and what it will cost and to respect the views of residents who live there.

Planning

In last year's article, we said that we were waiting for the new Travis Perkins planning application. We led the campaign to reject this new application that was only a fraction lower than its predecessor and we did not support the addition of 600 student flats. These are not needed for local students and the substantial buildings are not appropriate for the area and will put huge pressure on local services. Despite the application being rejected by the council, the Mayor has decided he should have the final say. We have also reported several planning enforcement cases in Clifton Road, Formosa Street and Warrington Crescent. We are unhappy of how long it is taking to formalise enforcement action in each of these cases, so will continue to push for these unauthorised structures to be removed.

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.

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

Cllr Melvyn Caplan, Cllr Lorraine Dean,

**Little Venice Ward
Conservative Councillors**

June 2025



*Above: Cllr Lorraine Dean and Cllr Melvyn Caplan
attending the Canal Cavalcade in May 2025.*

AN UPDATE FROM OUR LITTLE VENICE COUNCILLORS (continued)

It has-as ever-been a busy time to be a councillor in Little Venice. Preparations for the annual Cavalcade were exciting but tempered by the sad news several days before of an oil spill following a fire at the substation on Victoria Passage which also displaced residents from nearby homes. I have been working hard with the council on issues related to tents under the Westway, Stone Wharf and near St Mary's Terrace. This includes plans for an alternative repurposing of the area to include a storage area with a high fence to dissuade people from using this area to sleep rough as it is not a safe place. Our Westminster outreach teams have also been regularly visiting the area to offer help. We have numerous hostel vacancies available and we want people to accept help including with substance abuse and mental health.

I have also been delighted by the Labour administration's commitment to make good on its promise to invest and spend on local community infrastructure, as opposed to seeing money invested in larger West End schemes which in the past have been controversial. Included in the list of possible works which could receive money from the levy generated by the West End Gate and Paddington Green developments: A new and much-needed accessible playground, greening and improvements to the area around Warwick Avenue tube station, a pedestrianisation scheme for Formosa Street and new walking route by the canal.

I was also happy to support and excited to see two new pedestrian crossings approved for Little Venice which I believe will significantly improve safety. The first will be at the junction of Warwick Avenue and Formosa Street and the second by the roundabout by Warrington Crescent and Sutherland Avenue. I'm grateful to W2W9 for making the applications to the council.

As always, much of my time in recent months has been spent supporting our residents on housing issues. This includes dealing with bad landlords, vulnerable council tenants who need urgent work on their homes, people in temporary accommodation, and supporting residents who need to review leaseholder service and major works charges.

I have also referred a number of residents for additional support from adult social care.

In addition to the above, I have been doing the usual reporting of any graffiti, fly-tipping and untidy areas. As always, I want to stress what an enormous privilege it is to serve Little Venice and the Paddington Green area as a local councillor and welcome anyone wishing to discuss anything with me to get in touch or come to my monthly drop-in surgery on Clifton Road.

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

June 2025



Above: Cllr Sara Hassan.

AN UPDATE FROM OUR MAIDA VALE COUNCILLORS

North Paddington Youth Club

Youth clubs are a vital part of our social infrastructure. Many were closed during austerity and this has proved to be a false economy. Many young people were left without safe, engaging activities outside school which can lead to crime and anti-social behaviour.

We're very pleased that, with the support of Paddington Waterways, we have been able to bring significant investment to North Paddington Youth Club (NPYC) on Lanark Road. Westminster Council has paid for new facilities and equipment, creating more opportunities for local young people to get involved in sports, explore new hobbies, and enjoy arts and culture.

NPYC is thriving. The club boasts a new gym, upgraded basketball equipment, and an electric minibus. It offers a full schedule of after-school and weekend activities, as well as residential trips and unique experiences—ranging from horse riding to scuba diving. The club even offers driving lessons, helping young people become more independent and ready for paid employment.

NPYC's impact is clear in stories like that of Kimani Wilmott, who joined the club at age eight and went on to win Gold for Great Britain at the World Amateur Kickboxing Championships.

When young people are in school NPYC also supports the wider community. It hosts walking football and walking cricket sessions for over-60s, as well as women-only Zumba classes.

Paddington Rec

Paddington Rec is a much-loved local space, and there's always something happening. The Council has recently improved the park by installing new drainage, resurfacing the tennis courts, and replacing many of the old paths that used to flood during heavy rain.

Looking ahead, we're planning to refurbish the cricket nets with a new roof and refresh the formal gardens. We've also consulted the community about turning the bowling green into school allotments, giving local children the opportunity to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

Paddington Rec isn't just a community hub—it's also a place for serious athletes. We were proud to welcome Olympic medallist and local legend Bianca Williams, who unveiled a plaque celebrating the many hours she spent training right here.

Flooding

Flooding is the number one climate-related risk facing our area, as many residents experienced during the severe storms of July 2021. Hundreds of basement flats were affected, especially along Kilburn Park Road and Shirland Road.

To help prevent future flooding, Cllr Geoff Barraclough has launched Westminster's new Flood Risk Strategy, which includes a £3 million investment in sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS). Contractors are already installing SUDS near to St Mary Magdalene Church but the first local highways project is set to begin this year on Essendine Road, one of the areas hit hard in 2021.

If you're interested in joining the new Maida Vale Flood Forum, please get in touch with your local councillors.

New Community Hub

The basement of Ernest Harriss's House on Elgin Avenue had been empty for years, so we're delighted that Westminster Council has transformed the space into the city's first community hub.

Beautifully decorated by local resident Fran Lee and her non-profit, Flourish, the hub is now known as The Exchange. It's managed by North Paddington Foodbank and offers affordable coffee and free lunches every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday.

The Exchange will also host a range of services from the Council and local charities, including classes, activities, and a community kitchen—creating a welcoming space for everyone.

CCTV

In the fight against crime, every little helps. We're very pleased that Westminster Council has restored its CCTV network of 200 cameras across the City such as this one on Shirland Road.

Other cameras are placed outside Maida Vale station and on Grantully Road outside Paddington Rec where there has been a lot of car crime. That camera has already caught a high-res image of a man breaking into a car. This will help the police with their ongoing investigation.

Ward budget

The beautiful flower baskets hanging from lampposts in Maida Vale are a summer favourite — and good news: they'll be back again this year!

Thanks to your local Maida Vale councillors, who've allocated ward budget funding, the baskets are returning to brighten up our streets.

This year, we're also focusing our ward budget on three key priorities: supporting activities that improve community health and wellbeing, providing more activities for children and offering more opportunities for older residents.

New traffic scheme on Elgin Avenue

We're very pleased with the new traffic scheme on Elgin Avenue near Maida Vale. Based on ideas from Paddington Waterways and Maida Vale Society. The taxi rank moves to the pavement's side where it's more accessible and we've planted three new trees in the central median. For more information, see article on page 15.



From left to right: Cllr Iman Less, Cllr Geoffrey Barraclough, MP Georgia Gould, Cllr Nafsika Thalassis.

Active Westminster Awards

It was lovely to see local Maida vale resident Tony Lazare from the London Basketball Association win the Unsung Hero award at the Active Westminster awards for his work with local people.

Cycle storage

Keen to encourage cycling, we've got Westminster to install plenty of new cycle hoops, known to transport professionals as "Sheffield stands." You'll find the latest ones on Shirland Road and Grantully Road.

New lease of life for Maida Vale Studios

Westminster Council has approved exciting plans to transform the iconic BBC Maida Vale Studios on Delaware Road into a state-of-the-art music and film production hub. The BBC will be moving out in 2026, and the site has been sold to world-renowned film composer Hans Zimmer, who will use the studios as his London base.

The new owners are also committed to supporting local talent and creating career opportunities for young people, as part of the new North Paddington Creative Enterprise Zone.

23 Shirland Road

Construction should begin soon on the new block of flats at 123 Shirland Road. The scheme had been held up by ongoing negotiations between the developer and 123 Dry Cleaners, who want to re-open their operations once the building is finished.

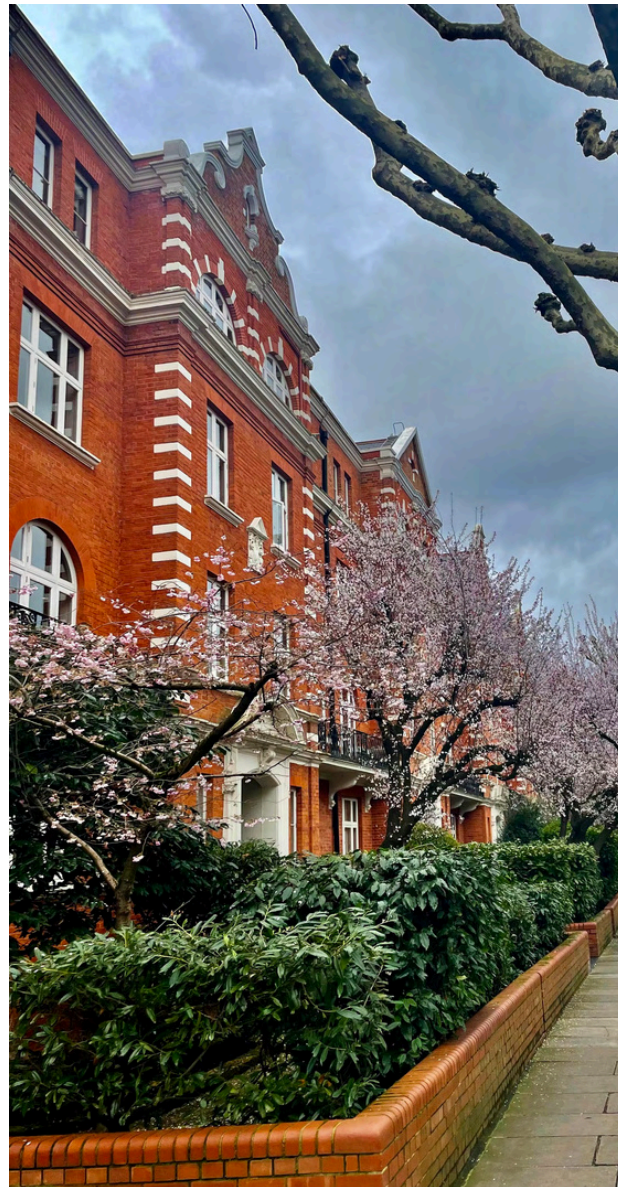
We understand that an agreement has been reached, and hopefully the project can restart soon.

Joe Strummer Plaque

One of the last pieces of the refurbished Maida Hill market was the relaying of the Joe Strummer memorial plaque. Lots of his former friends and associates joined us for the celebration organised by Westminster Council. Maida Hill has been completely refurbished with new flower beds, improved drainage and modern infrastructure for the market including free Wifi.

Cllrs Iman Less, Geoffrey Barraclough, Nafsika Thalassis,

June 2025



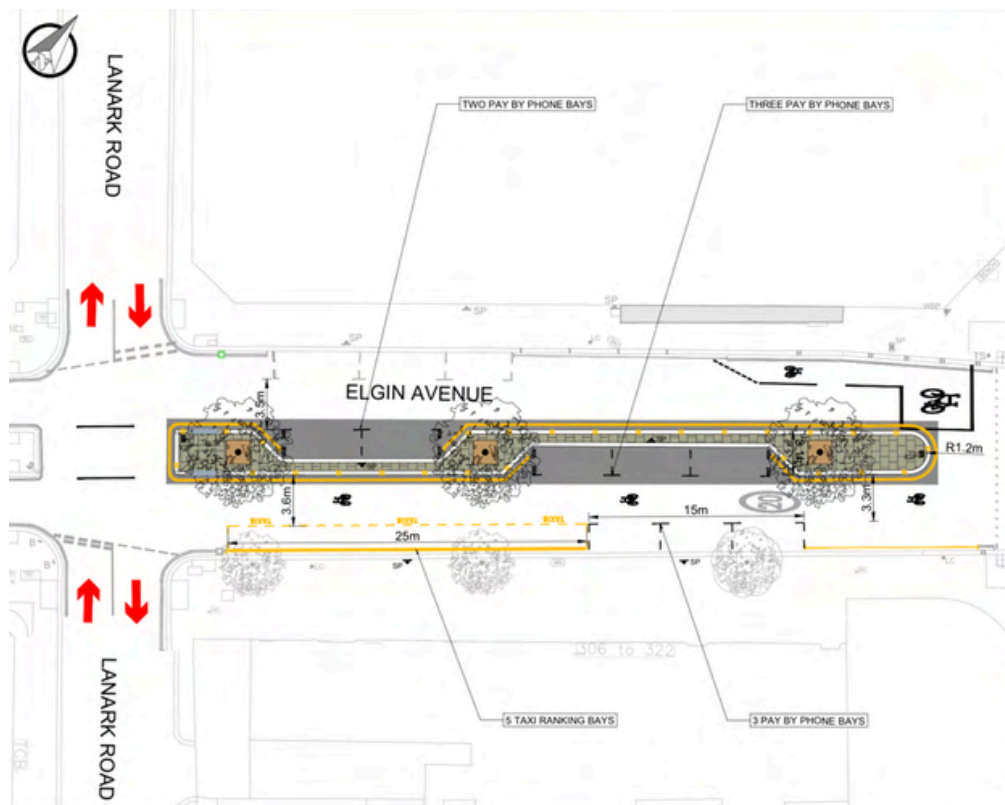
THE GREENING OF ELGIN AVENUE

The Community Infrastructure Levy, CIL, is a very useful and practical idea. Large private companies developing blocks of flats, for example, provide a tiny percentage of the cost of the works to the local community for them in turn to create schemes that will benefit the whole community. A tiny percentage from a property developer often represents a pretty large contribution for the local community. And so it has proved.

As the recognised local amenity society the Paddington Waterways and Maida Vale Society comes up with ideas. Westminster Council assess them and, if approved, implement them. And so, in recent years, children's playgrounds and community pavilions in Paddington Rec, a wide new pedestrianised area overlooking Browning's Pool at Little Venice, new equipment for local gyms, and a variety of local schemes have been provided, with more in the pipeline.

The latest initiative, the greening of Elgin Avenue, was completed earlier this year. The idea was a simple one. The eastern end of Elgin Avenue, where it connects with Maida Vale and Edgware Road, was a wide expanse of parking and taxi ranks. It felt an empty space of road at the point where it should have been, as an entry point from the main road, welcoming and representative of the green and peaceful world of Maida Vale beyond. It took several years to reach fruition.

The taxi rank in the middle of the road must, in the dim and distant past, have fulfilled a need. But the scale of need was long gone. So the intention was to move the rank to the side of the road and, never easy to negotiate, reduce the taxi numbers. The middle of the road was to become a mixed area of parking and trees to provide a more rural and bucolic feel in keeping with the area. The trees chosen by Westminster, Liquid Amber, will provide blossom and colourful leaves.



Above: Elgin Avenue Scheme. Central Island Design.

The work started in March. But before that years of painstaking and detailed effort took place.

The negotiations and discussions date back to a pre-Covid era. It was a two steps forward, one step back type of a process where you finish up spending weeks on the alignment of a zebra crossing rather than getting a tree in place. But you stick at it and when all is approved and agreed the shovels hit the ground and it is a very swift process.

The central island offers refuge and trees. The design is intriguing and new. The paving surfaces are designed so that the rainwater drains inwards (rather than out onto the road) to drain into small drains running down into the trees' root systems. Simple and thoughtful, and effective.

The work was finally carried out to programme and slightly under budget and has been done to a very high standard of workmanship by the FM Conway team of Vasile, Ilan and Florian and ably managed by Supervisor Vasile. Our thanks go to the team for their professional work and all the times they were eager to discuss the progress of the work with us and other members of the public in a courteous, friendly and helpful manner.

And now the painstaking work on further CIL projects continues. Westminster has approved several new schemes involving traffic calming and making the environment safer near schools and, in due course, they will all go ahead. Maida Vale will continue to be a green and pleasant, and safer, land.

Paul Newman and Robert Bruce,

May 2025



Above: The Elgin Avenue Scheme under construction.



Above: The Elgin Avenue Scheme as completed.

MELISSA AND JACK

It's an odd combination. An odd couple. One started painting and being taught by Lucian Freud as a teenager at the Slade School of Art.

The other was famous as one of the finest of England's cricketers, a great and eccentric wicketkeeper. But these days you can find the two of them with easels, palettes and canvases, painting the changing seasons and the astonishing variety of subjects around Little Venice and Maida Vale.

They are Melissa Scott-Miller and Jack Russell. Jack had turned to a successful career of painting cricketing subjects while still a cricketer. Melissa, based in Islington and not far from the canal, had increasingly turned to landscape painting. They were introduced to each other by Chris Beetles, for whom both had contributed to exhibitions at his gallery in St James's.

Melissa had actually started her student days in Maida Vale, in a squat as people did then. 'It was the pubs', she said, 'that was why we loved the area. I always wanted to paint The Warrington'.

Jack came to know the area during his cricketing days. He was a Gloucestershire lad. 'I used to walk up to Lord's Cricket Ground from Paddington', he said. And of course Chris Beetles himself lives in Maida Vale and introduced both of them to their new inspiration.

'My fascination grew', Russell said. 'Things grab you. You start looking at details, the pubs, the doorways, the water, the bridges, the architecture, the amazing colours of the trees, even at night, the lights and the light from the pubs. There is so much material. I could paint these for the next twenty years.'

Melissa likewise. *'There is so much to paint', she said. 'I like the boats and the life on the boats, and the different colours, and the contrast between the grand houses and the boats, and the pubs at night and the people outside'.*

Both paint largely out of doors, *en plein air*. Melissa has a large umbrella and a collapsible easel that she carries about in a shopping trolley. *'People are friendly', she says. 'They come up to you and say "you should paint that cherry tree around the corner". At night they are even more friendly and tell you how brave you are for painting at night and say they are glad you are recording London'*. One came up to Jack Russell and asked if he was *'that Walter Sickert'*, only a century and more out. *'People are really nice', said Melissa. 'One night a father and his son came by. "Isn't it wonderful she's painting", said the father and the son replied "Yes. But she doesn't have a home"'*.

Melissa also teaches at the Heatherley School of Fine Art and takes students painting around London and Maida Vale in particular. *'Young people really love to go drawing in the pubs', she said. 'I take them to The Warrington. They like the staircase'*. It all chimes with an earlier career, that of Edward Ardizzone in the middle of the last century, who also loved painting the Warrington. *'Ardizzone's drawings are so full of humanity and he captures the London streets really well', said Melissa, 'the dogs at the pub and the women'*. Jack and Melissa, on what Russell describes as *'their painting adventures'*, work hard. They like their painting forays. *'It's nice to have someone alongside you when you are painting but in a totally different way', she said. 'There's no competing', he said. Both are very happy with the endless possibilities of light, colour and the local people. And off down the towpath or the wide tree-lined avenues they go.*

Robert Bruce,

May 2025





CHRIS BEETLES GALLERY

Melissa Scott-Miller & Jack Russell ***En plein air in Maida Vale***

Opens 10 June 2025 and runs throughout the summer



Melissa Scott-Miller (born 1959) *Early Spring, The Warrington, Maida Vale*, oil on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

The Chris Beetles Gallery Summer Show is the annual celebration of the very best of traditional British art.

This year's exhibition features over 150 exceptional watercolours, oils and works on paper from the eighteenth century to the present day.

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Jack Russell (born 1963) *The Warrington Fox, Maida Vale*, oil on canvas, 16 x 24 inches

A complimentary illustrated Summer Show brochure is available to *Maida Unveiled* readers on direct contact with the gallery.

All works are available to purchase and can be viewed on our website.

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ARDIZZONE AND THE ALFRED

Back where he belongs

The recent renovation of the Prince Alfred pub in Formosa Street has seen a triumphant return to his roots by the artist Edward Ardizzone.

In 1949 he immortalised the interior of the pub in his drawings for the book he co-authored with his old school-friend Maurice Gorham: "Back To The Local". Revelling in a peacetime return to what they saw as good old-fashioned pubs after the end of World War 2 the book celebrated the whole world of pub culture and beer. And as he lived a mere ten minutes' walk away from the Prince Alfred and it is a wonderfully ornate Victorian gin-palace of a place, it was a gift for him to draw. Here is his drawing for the book of the darts players back in 1948. The attentive chap on the left looks very much like him.



*Illustration of the Prince Alfred from Back to the Local.
Copyright: The Ardizzone Trust.*

In recent years his part in celebrating the pub has been sadly largely forgotten. But with the new renovation he comes firmly back to the fore amongst the new pictures in the dining rooms.

He loved wine and painted its joys often. So high above the tables is a print of a painting of his called "A Fine Nose". One imbiber has a long nose that is probing the aroma of wine deep in his glass. The other, looking a lot like Ardizzone himself, is raising a glass of red wine to the light and savouring its depth of colour. And on the pillar dividing the dining room from the bar there is now a fresh painting of a portrait of the great man himself.

The original was painted in Italy by Edward Carr in 1944. Both Carr and Ardizzone were official war artists, employed by the then War Office to create a record of British efforts during the war. It seems wonderfully appropriate to have him gazing out over a favourite pub interior in peacetime. And to bring the story full circle when the house where he used to live had a 'Blue Plaque' to him unveiled on wall beneath his studio window his family and friends repaired here to the Prince Alfred to celebrate after the unveiling.

Robert Bruce,

May 2025



Painting of "A fine nose" at the Prince Alfred.

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STUART ROTHSTEIN

A local estate agent who has been in the property industry for more than 30 years

You've been in the property industry for over 30 years—what first drew you to this line of work, and what has kept you passionate about it all these years?

I felt an attraction with property and architecture which Maida Vale offers an abundance of. The beautiful Victorian red brick Mansion blocks and the stunning stucco fronted conversions backing onto extensive communal gardens have kept me captivated.

Maida Vale and Little Venice are unique areas in London. How have you seen the property landscape in these neighbourhoods evolve over the decades?

When I first started working as an estate agent the area was predominately rented as the Church owned most of the freeholds so they were Church Commissioner tenants paying a low rent. These houses and apartments were gradually sold over the years to private individuals who restored the properties back to their former glory. So the gentrification has changed dramatically over the years as have the property values.

What's one standout property or sale that has stayed with you throughout your career, and why?

Actually, there is a very recent sale that is very close to my heart. We just sold the Coach House on Warrington Crescent, which is one of the few houses that backs onto the stunning Crescent Communal Garden. The house has been with the same owner for nearly four decades, it was a very unusual house with a wonderful roof terrace and large conservatory on the roof, it really was an unusual house. The amazing part of this sale was, the vendor was not only a client but also a friend that I have had the pleasure of knowing for the last 30 years.

As someone deeply rooted in the local community, how important is that local knowledge when it comes to selling properties in Maida Vale and Little Venice?

This is irreplaceable because you are not just selling a beautiful house or apartment, you are also selling an amazing area.

Applicants need to understand that the Regents Canal is on your door step offering wonderful walks as are the eateries and local boutique shops on Clifton Road, Lauderdale Road and Formosa Street. Paddington Recreation Ground which has seen a large investment over the years offers a wonderful children's play area, tennis courts, running tracks and cafes. Maida Vale and Little Venice also offer excellent local faith schools and of course an excellent choice of local schools.

What would you say sets your approach apart when it comes to dealing with clients and ensuring smooth property transactions through to completion?

I am very fortunate that most of my clients are long-standing clients, a base that I have built up across many years starting off at Vickers Co. 30 years ago and now with Winkworth. A lot of my new business is through recommendation and referral. Now each client is different, and therefore I bespoke my services accordingly to aid a smooth transaction. I very much understand the conveyancing system and I take pride in making sure that my team are up to speed with ever changing legislation through regular training to provide the best possible service, but above all to take the time to build on relationships and create strong connections with the local community.

What are the most significant changes or challenges you've faced in the industry, especially with the rise of technology and online platforms?

Most of the changes that have happened in the industry are for the better, we now have to qualify applicants and vendors in relation to Anti Money Laundering Legislation and conduct extensive background checks before we act for them.

However, interestingly for me the biggest change is that everything is online. Whether that be through the portals, Rightmove, Zoopla and OnTheMarket, etc, a lot of people now do not want to talk over the phone, they prefer Whatsapp or email for communication. Call me old fashioned, I believe a telephone call can resolve any issues or queries quickly and also provide a more personal aspect to the transaction.

Can you share a moment in your career that made you especially proud or reaffirmed that you were in the right profession?

This is a very interesting question, 30 years ago I started acting for a very important client who is still 100% loyal to me today because of my honesty, integrity and hard work. Many competitors over the years have tried to poach this client without any success. That hopefully shows that I give the correct advice for my profession as an estate agent. I am very happy to say I have sold approximately 100 properties for them, which is a wonderful achievement.

Looking ahead, how do you see the future of property sales in areas like Maida Vale and Little Venice—what trends or shifts are you anticipating?

There will always be a demand for properties within this area because of the transport links to central London, easy access to Paddington with the links to Heathrow and the fantastic local schools and stunning communal gardens. People are also mesmerised by the beauty of Little Venice and are amazed how quiet it is but yet so close to all of Central London.

Describe Maida Vale and Little Venice in three words.

Tranquil, London, Village.



INSIDE THE BOAT POD

A music studio like no other on the canals of Little Venice

Tucked into the peaceful waterways of Little Venice, West London, a floating studio is quietly rewriting the rules of underground music. On the outside, the canal looks like a postcard, swans gliding by, pastel-painted boats under overhanging willows. But inside the Boat Pod, you'll find something buzzing going on: a powerhouse of live-streamed sets, collaborative sessions, and creative energy, all captained by DJ and music veteran Sophie Callis.

The Floating Vision

When I ask what sparked the idea of turning a narrowboat into a studio, Sophie grins. *"It started years ago, my dad quietly bought the boat. I moved in, and over time, it became my home, then and now the Boat Pod."*

The vision became a reality during the pandemic. *"Construction was the only thing allowed,"* she says. *"So I called up my mates who build creative spaces and said, 'Fancy a project?' Together, they transformed the boat into a fully functioning studio with a vintage 70s feel and digital broadcast tech, all wired into a floating shell."*

Building Through the Storm

The timing, however, was anything but ideal. *"I'd spent a few years trying to get a license from the Canal & River Trust and finally got it — March 2020,"* she says. *"Then the world shut down."* Instead of retreating, Sophie went all in. She sanded, painted, helped wire the boat herself. *"It was therapy,"* she says.

A Studio That Moves You

Little Venice isn't just a backdrop, it's a co-producer. *"Studios are usually in basements. This? This is alive. Water moves. And creativity follows that rhythm,"* Sophie says. *"Artists come here and open up. It becomes a shared emotional space."*

On any given day, you'll find her feeding the boat mascots: two goldfish (aptly named Drum and Bass), firing up gear, and welcoming a rotating cast of musicians, poets, and producers. *"No two days are the same,"* she says. *"We might host a production class in the morning, then a live DJ stream or poetry slam in the afternoon."*

Locals often stop to peek inside. *"We've got an 'On Air' sign, QR codes, A-frames on the towpath. Passersby can download our APP or scan the QR code on the side of the vessel and instantly land on board via our bespoke website which comes to life when we start live streaming. In joining this global community, you can engage in the chatroom, tip the DJs, explore the archive, check out the website, events, boutique, courses and more. It's a living hub."*

More Than Music

The Boat Pod isn't just about beats — it's about preserving stories. *"This culture was built by people who never got the spotlight,"* Sophie says. *"We're here to honour them. We often forget where music comes from,"* Sophie reflects. *"Drum and bass, house, and hip hop — most music is anchored (pardon the pun) in either jazz or sound system culture. And the rhythm, the drum, comes from Africa. London wouldn't be London without the generations of immigrants who shaped its sound. The Windrush generation — post-WWII — laid the foundation for so much of what we do."*

This summer, she's launching *Joe Public*, a new series inviting everyday people aboard to share one meaningful track and the story behind it — a kind of floating Desert Island Discs. *"It's not just music,"* she says. *"It's about memory. Community. Humanity."*

After Dark on the Towpath

When I ask what it's like working solo on the canal, often late into the night, Sophie shrugs. *"I'm a classic Londoner — streetwise, fearless. I've had a few weird moments, but my music fam has my back."*



Still, she's clear: creating a safe space for others, especially women entering music or tech, is central to her mission. *"There's pressure to prove yourself in this industry. That's why this space has to be inclusive. It's non-negotiable."*

From Little Venice to the World

Despite its size, the Boat Pod has global reach. With its own app, interactive website, and streaming tools, Sophie's little vessel broadcasts far beyond the canal. *"We want to enchant people, giving them an all encompassing experience of being on board no matter where they are in the world, hence why we live stream with 10 cameras delivering a mix of both internal and external visuals allowing us to push art, music, culture and beyond from this little boat to the world".*

Alice Sinclair,

June 2025



Above: Sophie Callis

Catch the stream, explore the archive, or book a session at: contact@theboatpod.com

Instagram @theboatpod



Above: On air at The Boat Pod

INSIDE NORTH PADDINGTON YOUTH CLUB

A Lifeline for Local Teens

On any given evening in North Paddington, behind an unassuming door, you'll find an amazing local facility full of laughter, debate, and quiet power of young people connecting. I sat down with some young adult members, and the conversation was enlightening. North Paddington Youth Club isn't just a hangout. For our local kids, it's a sanctuary.

"I come here to let everything out," says Sydra Ghanian. "It's like a second home."

That phrase, second home, kept coming up in our conversation. In a world where teenagers often feel unheard, overwhelmed, or simply overlooked, this fantastic youth club offers a place to be understood. With activities ranging from walking football to scuba diving and even flight training, the club is a hub of energy and opportunity.

Omar Boutlate, an ambitious pool player, proudly declares his goal to be *"the best in the club."*

Others, like Mohammed Jemal, appreciate the structure and physicality: *"It keeps me moving, keeps me focused."*

"Lots of kids our age tend to hang out on the streets, without much purpose which it can lead to negative impacts" said Amna Sultan.

However, its most significant impact goes beyond recreational activities. In a conversation shaped by the BBC documentary *Adolescence*, members opened up about the digital pressures they face. *"There's no manual for social media,"* one teen remarked. The comments came quickly—about online bullying, anxiety, and the invisible weight of curated perfection.

"Some people react really badly to online hate," said Amna Sultan. *"It can push them to scary places."*

Omar shrugged, *"I just block people,"* but acknowledged, *"not everyone can do that."*

What stayed with me the most from the conversation was that a particularly powerful aspect of the club was its previous youth engagement program with local police officers. The program's success was evident in tangible outcomes. Members shared stories of young people voluntarily surrendering weapons, feeling safe and supported rather than threatened. The officers provided reassurance and guidance, breaking down long-standing stigmas about police interactions.

"Before, I really wasn't too fond of the police"; Omar said, with a cheeky grin. "But once I interacted with them, I started to grow warmer towards the police force."

The program's dismantling was met with genuine disappointment. Members emphasised that one-off workshops cannot replace consistent, relationship-driven engagement. *"Because they were here weekly, we built genuine connections"* Amna explained. One particular officer was so connected with the programme he still drops in, in his spare time, check up on everyone. He himself as someone who grew up in the area and understands the layers of difficulties and pressures facing kids.

NPYC is more than bricks and activities. It's a rare kind of place, where consistency, care, and conversation aren't just buzzwords, they are practice. It's work is supported by Westminster City Council, the Hyde Park Place Estate Charity, the Garfield Weston Foundation, the DFE, the Edward Harvist Trust, Paddington Charities, the NCIL Fund, and the National Lottery's Awards for All, among others.

As local authorities consider youth support strategies, the North Paddington Youth Club stands as a powerful example of what comprehensive, compassionate youth engagement can achieve. Far beyond a physical space, the club is a refuge, a place where young people are seen, heard, and supported in navigating the challenges of today. Their message is clear: Supporting young people requires more than programs or policies. It requires genuine connection, trust, and a commitment to listening—you heard it from them.

Alice Sinclair,

June 2025



Amna Sultan and Sydra Ghamian



Mohammed Jemal and Omar Boutlate

‘WHAT’S GROWING ON’ at Bloomfield Community Garden

In the heart of Little Venice, London, Bloomfield Community Garden has blossomed into a vibrant green haven along the Regents canal side — a beautiful well cared for garden which enhances the local environment and provides nature-themed experiential learning for local children and the wider community. It features raised vegetable beds, native wildflowers, a wildlife pond, insect habitats and interactive learning zones, all aimed at fostering environmental awareness and community engagement. This garden is particularly important for pupils at Edward Wilson Primary School, where access to green space is limited.

Plant Environment: Cultivating Growth and Learning

Plant Environment, a London-based not-for-profit organisation specialising in creating environmental education projects, adopted Bloomfield garden from the Canal and River trust. Over the past 6 years, they have been invested in developing, nurturing and caring for the garden. Their mission is to help young people connect with nature through firsthand experience of food growing and garden-based practices. Plant Environment has been instrumental in transforming school gardens all across London, into valuable and crucial resources for environmental education.

Plant Environment opens the Garden every Wednesday during school term time, welcoming drop in volunteer mornings for the local community and afternoon environmental education workshops for Edward Wilson primary school. With occasional weekend openings.

If you are interested in becoming apart of the Bloomfield Garden community, you can find their contact information below.

Educational Programs and Community Involvement

For the majority of pupils at Edward Wilson Primary School, the garden provides them with a much needed opportunity to engage directly with the rest of nature.

The school is situated in an area with limited green space and high pollution levels. Therefore, having an outdoor learning space just minutes walk from their school provides the pupils with hands-on activities like planting, composting, harvesting, wildlife observation as well as free expression through environmental creativity. The pupils are gaining practical knowledge about sustainability, climate change and the environment whilst deepening their emotional connection with the earth. The garden is more than just a green space; it is an oasis for practical learning.

“In the Garden”

The garden is full of peace, come and take a look!

Its full of animals that you can see

But don't step on a twig, or you might break their peace

The flowers are blooming, as the sun is shining

In the wildlife pond life springs like sprinklers

As the birds soar, flowers bloom and the world is a place of wonder

Take a peak in this wonderland.

- by Year 4 pupils, Mekong Class

Local residents and volunteers play a crucial role in maintaining the garden, creating a sense of shared responsibility and community spirit. This collaborative effort not only enhances the garden's upkeep but also strengthens the bond between all participants and their surrounding neighbourhood.

With plant environment's connection to the paddington partnership the garden has also been hosting local corporate volunteer teams. Their participation not only aids in the maintenance and development of the garden but also fosters a sense of corporate social responsibility and strengthens the bond between businesses and the local community.

Funded by Westminster's Community Priorities Programme

The Bloomfield Community Garden project has been made possible through funding from Westminster City Council's Community Priorities Programme. This grants programme supports community-led initiatives aimed at enhancing the health and wellbeing of residents, with a focus on empowering communities in areas of highest deprivation. Bloomfield Garden is one of the 80 projects funded in the latest round, which has been issued for 2 years.

Growing Together: How Our Community Garden Plans to Flourish

"Bloomfield community garden serves as a communal hub where individuals from diverse backgrounds and people of all ages and abilities come together. I've witnessed the positive impact that shared nature based activities have on generating teamwork and communication, which has led to many people forming meaningful relationships. This sense of community is ever more important at this time as it seems that we, as human beings, are losing our grasp on what really matters, that being social cohesion, support and respect for the natural world."



As we look to the future of Bloomfield garden, our vision is to expand this green oasis, fostering greater community involvement and environmental responsibility. We recognise the invaluable role of volunteers. From tending to the soil to organising community events, volunteers bring diverse skills and perspectives that enrich our collective experience. We are actively seeking individuals who are keen to contribute their time and energy.

Whether you are an experienced gardener or a novice, there are numerous ways to get involved. Opportunities range from general garden maintenance and composting to assisting with educational workshops and community outreach."

- Azeska Ellis (Plant Environment Director and Environmental Teacher)

Today, the community garden stands as a testament to the power of collaboration and community spirit.

It serves as a peaceful retreat for residents, a garden classroom for students, and a model for sustainable urban development. The project has not only enhanced the local environment but has also strengthened the bonds within the community, demonstrating the profound impact of collective action in creating shared green spaces.

Azeska Ellis,

June 2025

Contact Info:

Website : <https://www.plantenvironment.org.uk/>

Email: info@plantenvironment.org.uk

Instagram: [Plantenvironmentgardens](https://www.instagram.com/Plantenvironmentgardens)



"Tucked beside the charming Westbourne Terrace Road Bridge lies one of Maida Vale's hidden gems, the Blomfield Community Garden. This garden was created to offer members of the community a space to reconnect with nature. Projects like this should never be taken for granted; they rely on ongoing collaboration, support, and appreciation".

Local resident, Ivan Konig, June 2025

BEHIND THE MASKS

The first lady of Tajikistan

In 2020, when the government ordered us to stay behind closed doors due to the pandemic, none of us could have predicted the challenges.

The streets of Maida Vale and Little Venice became eerily silent, taking on a dystopian feel. Everyone was facing an unfamiliar storm, each in their own way. I was alone, and an overwhelming urge to take action washed over me—I knew that if I didn't, I would struggle. So, I set up a local response group under the Paddington Waterways and Maida Vale Society. One of the key initiatives we launched was mask-making.

Over 70 local women rallied together, sewing tirelessly after receiving instructions on how to make approved masks. Each one had the potential to save lives, and they were urgently needed at St Mary's Hospital and beyond. We set up a simple system: collect materials from the doorstep, sew the masks, then return them to the the doorstep. I would then take the masks to the hospital, where they would be sterilised and used in surgeries, on wards, and anywhere to protect staff and patients. For those who were shielding, we had a volunteer driver team to collect and deliver the masks.

Once you've learned how, it takes roughly 15 minutes to sew a mask. In total, our collective effort resulted in over 14,000 masks and was recognised by the late Queen. But beyond the numbers, there were real people. One woman, who played a key role in this effort was Mukaddas, originally from Tajikistan. She made more than 250 masks.

I remember meeting Mukaddas at the doorstep, accompanied by her daughter. We were cautious, polite, and kept our distance. But these fleeting moments of at-a-distance company meant a great deal. For months, our meetings were brief—masked faces on doorsteps, muffled words behind fabric barriers. Connection was defined by separation.

The response effort went on for over a year. Once the lockdown lifted, life slowly inched back to normal, and our interactions faded. It wasn't until a few months ago that I received an email from Mukaddas asking for a reference. We both agreed it would feel important to meet in person again, but this time, for real.

Nearly five years after the pandemic, having just exchanged a hug, we sit across from each other at the café in Clifton Nurseries. The air is warm with conversation, the comfort of coffee cups in our hands, and the sparkly hum of "*just before Christmas*" carrying on around us. It's a stark contrast to the isolation we first met in. But today is different, we sit face-to-face for the first time, the weight of the pandemic lifted. There's a quiet recognition of the journey we've both been on, the changes it has brought. This feels more than just a conversation—it's a reunion and a chance to reflect on the solidarity that carried us through. And for the first time, we can truly see each other, behind the masks.

Mukaddas is an extraordinary woman, and it soon became clear that one catch up coffee was not going to cut it. This HAS to be shared and it is an immense privilege to be able to be trusted with this, her experience, from the mountains of Tajikistan to Maida Vale.

Tajikistan is home to the Pamir Mountains, recognised by UNESCO for their exceptional natural value. The Pamiris, an indigenous ethnic minority of about 250,000 people, originate from this region. Mukkudas, being Pamiri, recalls her early childhood with deep fondness—an existence shaped by freedom and the beauty of nature. She would pick apples in her family's garden, ski through blue skied winters, and walk through snow tunnels (taller than her) carved by her grandfather to reach school.

"*Winters in the 1980s were harsher than they are today,*" she reflects. She shares how her connection to nature has always stayed with her, helping her to try and understand world. As she recalls her childhood in Tajikistan, there's a quiet reverence for the land that served as her first teacher. To keep these memories alive, Mukaddas paints from recollection, capturing the landscapes that shaped her. She speaks of the blue flowers called Codonopsis that once filled the hills, but are now scarce. I get the sense these vibrant paintings are more than just reflections of the past; they are a testament to the changing world she's witnessed.



Photo by Harvey Johnson

As a young girl, Mukaddas developed a deep fascination with Afghanistan. Living near the border, separated only by the Panj river, she and her community were forbidden from crossing. But that only fueled her imagination. She dreamed of sending paper planes soaring across the water, hoping to communicate with the mysterious people on the other side.

Her curiosity was further sparked by the allure of the black market. Smuggled goods, luxuries from the outside world made their way in, carried by soldiers. She remembers how her mother would wear Lancôme mascara and denim jeans, treasures from across the border. This secret world of contraband thrilled her mischievous spirit, a memory she recalls with infectious delight as we sit in the Frontline Club, our third time meeting.

Yet, this peaceful existence would soon be disrupted by the realities of a country caught in the throes of conflict. The civil war that ravaged Tajikistan (1992-1997) after the collapse of the Soviet Union would be the next chapter in her life, pushing her to make difficult choices for survival. She recalls how her family, caught in the middle of the war, became displaced within their own country. Her father, an engineer and respected community leader, worked tirelessly to evacuate women and children to safety, but tragically lost his life in the conflict. This loss, at the age of 15, meant that Mukaddas was forced to grow up quickly in order to support her mother and younger siblings.

At just 21 years old, Mukaddas had to make a choice to escape the violence. She quickly flashes to a memory of the day she leapt from the second floor of a building to avoid being caught in the war's chaos. It was a moment of survival—a trauma shared by countless others who had to flee, often making life-or-death decisions in the blink of an eye.

"Women, in particular, faced unimaginable hardships, some resorting to jumping from buildings in their desperation" she said.

One woman, a civil activist, later met the actress Angelina Jolie and shared her story, which would eventually inspire a Hollywood film. However, Mukaddas reflects that the reality of their experiences was far more complex and painful than any portrayal on screen.

"We were going through these things, not just in the movies, but in real life," she says.

She then went to Moscow, where the harsh realities of discrimination against Central Asian migrants became evident. Despite their significant contributions to the city's growth, she says that many migrants faced prejudice and racial profiling. So in 2001 she then made her way to London, and found a stark contrast—a place where strangers *"went out of their way to help her when she was lost"*

On arrival in London, Mukaddas found a job in the hospitality industry. She recalled "Many Londoners were surprised to meet someone from Tajikistan, with some even calling me 'the first lady' they had ever encountered from her country". This title, 'the first lady' though unintended, became a source of pride for her, representing the unique opportunity to introduce a sliver of Central Asia to the world. She told me that she took this role seriously, embracing the chance to represent her nation and shape how people from different parts of the world viewed Tajikistan. She believed that everyone could be *"the first"* in something meaningful, and in her case, it was offering a glimpse into a world few people knew.

A few years later, Mukaddas's remarkable fluency in seven languages caught the attention of international organisations, launching her into a career as a translator. Her skills opened doors to extraordinary opportunities, allowing her to travel across the world, from Russia to West Africa, particularly Liberia. But the most thrilling moment came in 2006 when she finally set foot in the place that had fascinated her since childhood: the mysterious Afghanistan. One particularly unforgettable moment occurred while she was traveling there as a translator for a British person. Stopped by the Taliban and met with

suspicion, she remained calm, using her wit and diplomacy to defuse the tension. What could have been a rather hairy encounter transformed into an unexpected moment of hospitality. The Taliban men ended up catching a fish and inviting her and her companion to dinner, a mark of her adaptability and ability to find common ground even in the most unpredictable circumstances.

Mukaddas also managed an environmental project where with the help of around 300 Afghan women, her project planted 10,000 trees in Northern Afghanistan. *"Today it really hurts when these women are forbidden to sit under the shadow of these trees and pushed to the darkest shadow under the regime of Taliban"* She shared how her experiences navigating these complex cultural environments sharpened her ability connect with people.

Though she has made a home in London, Mukaddas remains deeply connected to her roots, particularly the Pamiri community, which continues to face hardship in Tajikistan and beyond. The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, where Pamir is located, is still a region beset by economic struggles and political pressures, forcing many to leave. Yet, despite the distance, technology has allowed the Pamiri diaspora to stay connected, forming a virtual community that transcends borders. Its arguable that with 250,000 having fled, it is now a community that can only survive online.

Her work during the pandemic was a testament to this new digital era, where solidarity can stretch across continents. After sharing her mask-making efforts on social media, friends in Moscow reached out, inspired by her volunteer work. Through Zoom, she taught them how to sew masks, and soon, this small act of kindness rippled out as far as Pamir, a reminder of how digital connections can foster real-world impact.

But I can see that Mukaddas worries. As her children grow up speaking more English than their native tongue, she fears the scattering of her mountain people and the next generations of them to come will lose touch with their heritage. To keep it alive, she weaves traditional Pamiri symbols and patterns into her art, preserving the intricate designs once stitched into crocheted socks handed down through generations.

Her mission (which she calls mission impossible) is for Pamiri culture to be recognised globally, much like Nowruz, the Persian New Year, which was recently incorporated into a Disney production.



Photo by Harvey Johnson



She believes that the world must see and understand the richness of her people's history—and that art and creativity are key to safeguarding it. Mukaddas believes that the cultural heritage of the Pamiri people should resonate with all minorities. She paused, ensuring I understood the weight of this idea. The handmade dolls of her childhood, crafted by her grandmother from cotton and fallen branches, carried centuries of history. Later, Mukaddas discovered similar designs in indigenous cultures worldwide—like the “God’s Eye” used by the Maya as a protective symbol—highlighting an often-overlooked cultural interconnectedness.

Reflecting on this, she really sees how artistic expression transcends geographical and historical divides. Growing up with Persian and Russian poetry, she later recognised their echoes in English literature, a thread itself in the fabric of universal creativity. *“Unlike modern plastic toys that harm the environment, these traditional creations were sustainable, serving as meaningful connections to culture, history, and the natural world.”* To Mukaddas, they are messages to our future selves, reminding us of a time when playthings were more than mere entertainment, they were reflections of our shared human experience.

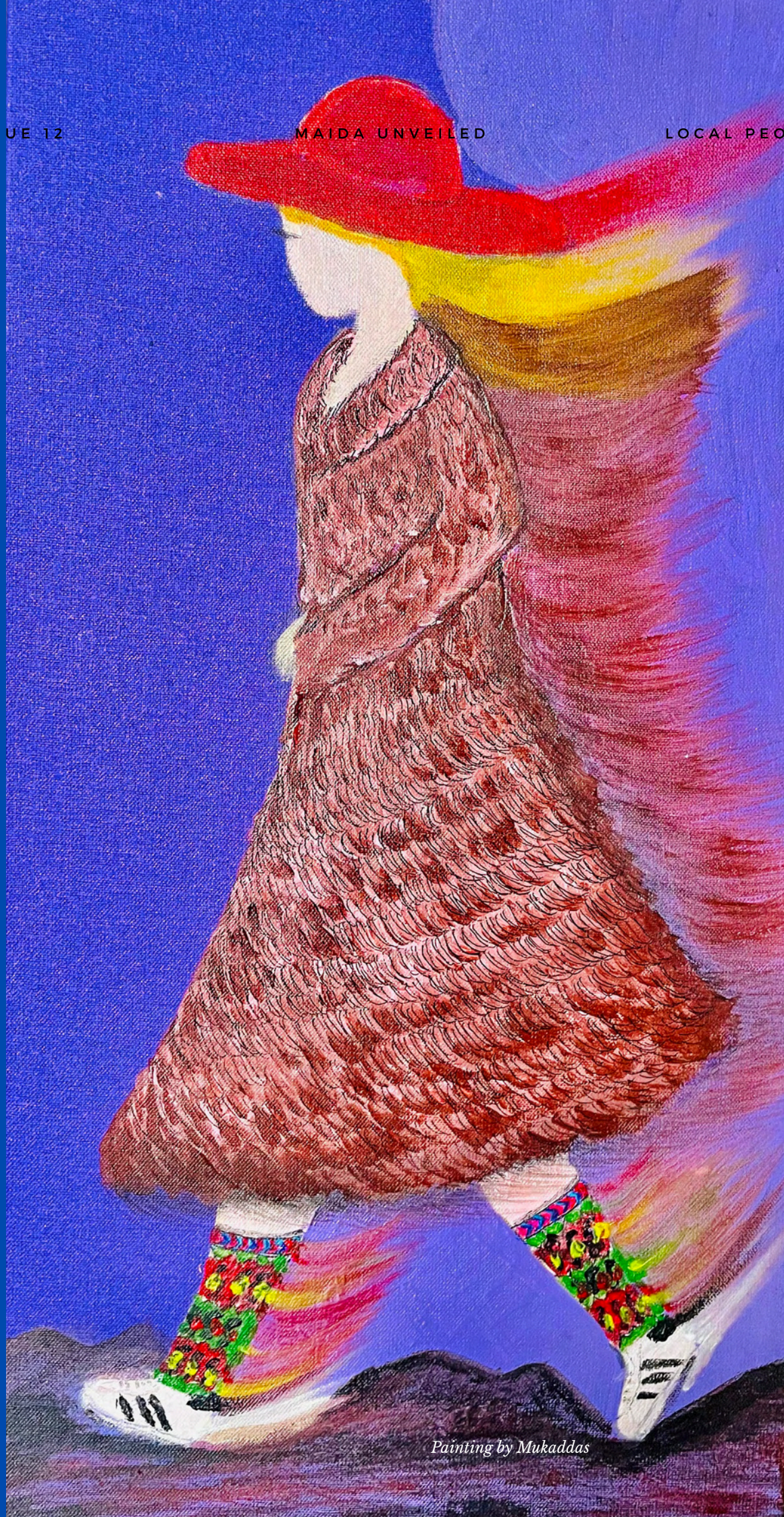
Through her mask making with the local response group, her commitment serving British and multicultural communities, and her passion for cultural preservation, Mukaddas continues to be seen and make a difference. She attended the Buckingham Palace Garden party only weeks ago, in honor of her commitment to community. Her journey from the mountain paths of Tajikistan to the concrete streets of London, through war and great loss, has shaped her into a woman who understands the power of community, the importance of cultural exchange, and the urgency of protecting her heritage, rooted in inspiration from her father. Mukaddas's courage in sharing her experience serves as a profound reminder that, even amid the most unimaginable challenges, we can unite in support of one another to foster a more compassionate, interconnected future within our communities. Now, more than ever, this is essential.

Alice Sinclair,

June 2025



Buckingham Palace Garden party



Painting by Mukaddas

THE RICH HISTORY OF MAIDA VALE AND WARWICK AVENUE TUBE STATIONS

In the heart of London, nestled within the famous Bakerloo line, two iconic stations—Maida Vale and Warwick Avenue—hold fascinating histories that stretch back over a century. From being among the first stations staffed entirely by women to their unique architectural features, these stations offer a window into a pivotal time during the First World War and the development of London's Underground. Both stations have been decisive in the development of Maida Vale and Little Venice.

Maida Vale Station: A Legacy of Design and Innovation

Opened in June 1915, Maida Vale station is not just another stop on the Bakerloo line. Its design closely follows the work of Leslie Green, the renowned architect behind many iconic stations across London. Born and raised in Maida Vale, Green died before he could see the completion of his local station.

One of Maida Vale's standout features is its design, which broke from earlier stations by incorporating escalators instead of lifts. The lack of a requirement for lift machinery enabled the station to be constructed on one floor, a significant innovation at the time. The stunning red terracotta exterior (sang de boeuf), adorned with Tiffany-style lamps and original iron lamp brackets, gives Maida Vale a timeless appeal.

Maida Vale Station shares with Swiss Cottage the distinction of being one of the few stations to be named after a Pub.

During the tumult of World War I, when many men enlisted, Maida Vale station became one of the first to be entirely staffed by women. This marked a significant moment in both the station's history and in the role of women in the workforce. Although this staffing arrangement ended in 1919, it represented a major step in the fight to open up the labour market to women.

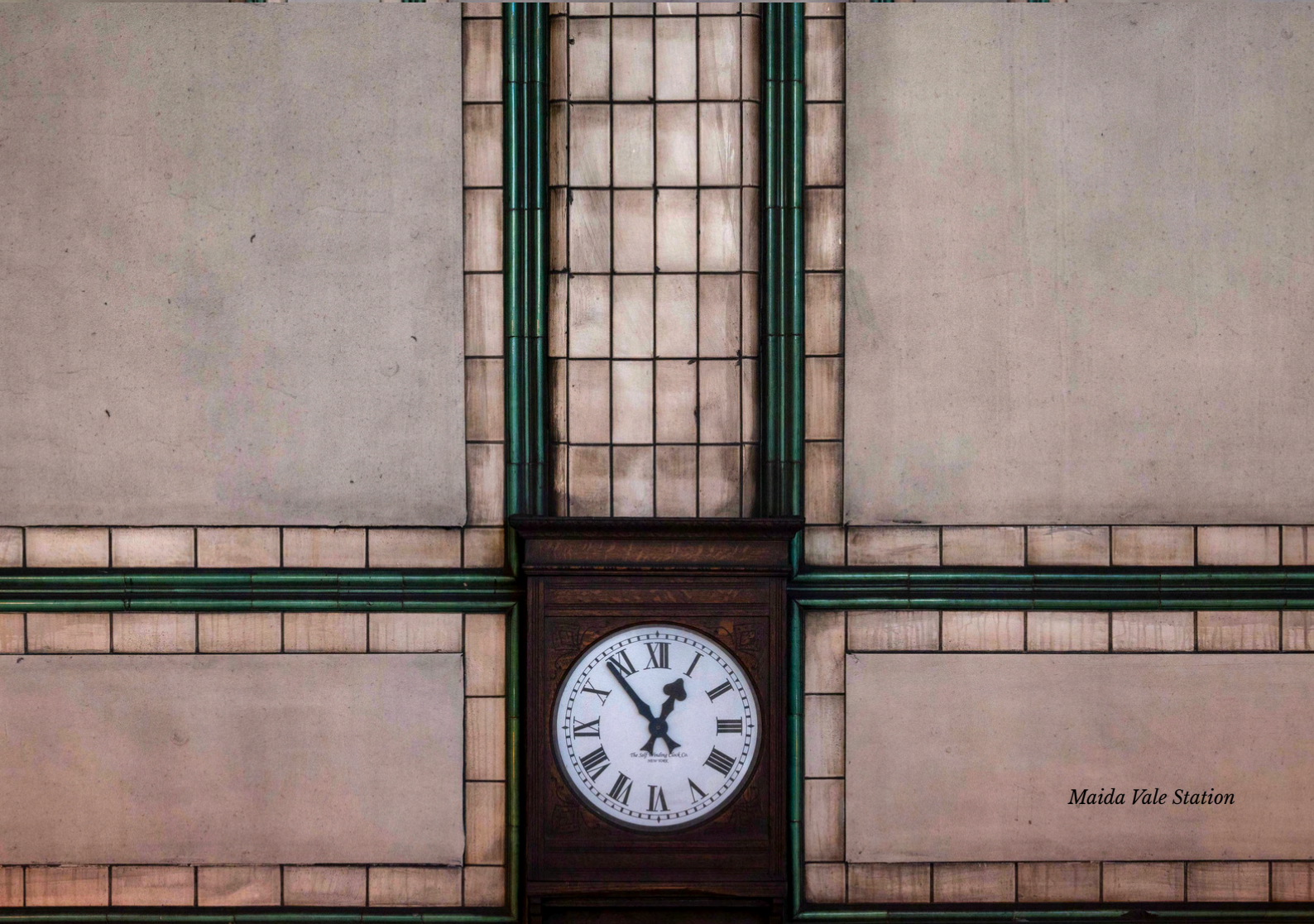
In 1987 the station was grade II listed and in 2008 the station was sensitively restored.

A Closer Look: The Ticket Hall and Mosaic Roundels

Inside the station is its distinctive ticket hall, which features a rare, contemporary mosaic roundel—one of the few of its kind still surviving today. The clock at the base of the stairs is another charming feature that has been preserved throughout the station's long history. The huge steel doors at the platform entrance are intriguing, leaving visitors to wonder about their purpose—there is no flood danger so perhaps they are a reminder to the station's wartime past when it was used a bomb shelter.

Maida Vale's distinctive features haven't just been appreciated by commuters—they've caught the eye of filmmakers too: Alfred Hitchcock's film *Downhill* (1927) starring Ivor Novello and Stephen Poliakoff's *Runners* (1982) both of which featured the station's entrance and staircases. In 2014, it was even rebranded as "Westbourne Oak" for the popular Paddington film.





Maida Vale Station



Warwick Avenue Station: A New Station for a Changing Time

Just a short distance from Maida Vale, Warwick Avenue Station also has its own intriguing history.

Initially intended to be named Warrington Crescent, it officially opened its doors on January 31, 1915, under its current name. Warwick Avenue, and despite being smaller than Maida Vale, shares a similarly rich connection to the First World War and early 20th-century London.

During the two World wars both stations were used as Air Raid shelters with Warwick Avenue having capacity for 2000 people and Maida Vale for 1000.

As the gateway to Little Venice, Warwick Avenue is the only station roundel to have text “(For Little Venice)” incorporated in it as well as its station name.

Warwick Avenue is also one of the few Tube stations to be immortalized in song. Duffy’s 2008 hit, “Warwick Avenue” brought the station into the spotlight, making it for a while our own Abbey Road for Duffy fans.

For hungry passengers there is also a cabmen’s shelter by the exit where they can get a good cup of tea and a bacon sandwich. It is one of only 13 surviving examples, built in 1888 and Grade II listed.

The Bakerloo Line: The Oldest Trains on the Underground

Opened in 1905, the Bakerloo line is one of the oldest lines in the Underground system. The trains on the Bakerloo line, including those serving Warwick Avenue and Maida Vale, are among the oldest still in operation today, with many having been in service for over 50 years. The Mayor, Sir Sadiq Khan, is reported to have asked the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, for long term funding to allow for the purchase of new stock by 2030.

Both stations continue to be central to the rail network. In 2023, Maida Vale saw 2.5 million journeys, while Warwick Avenue reached 3 million. These numbers reflect the ongoing importance of both stations in London’s transport network, as well as their continued place in our area’s vibrant life.

From their architectural beauty to their connection to significant historical events, Maida Vale and Warwick Avenue stations are more than just stops on the Bakerloo line—they are living pieces of London’s past. Whether a local commuter or a visitor discovering the city’s hidden gems, a journey through these stations offers a glimpse into the rich and diverse history that makes London so unique.

Julian Futter,

June 2015



Right: Woman ticket inspector, 1915.



Two young boys amongst the rubble before work begins in earnest to re-gentrify the area.

EYE-WITNESS TO CHANGE

Two new books shed light on the changing world of Maida Vale and Bristol Gardens in the 1970s and 1980s.

When Sheila Burnett first set eyes on Maida Vale, as an arts School graduate just down from Birmingham in 1969, she was bowled over. So far she had only stayed in friends' spare rooms in Turnham Green. Her sister told her of a room in Maida Vale going for £6 a week. She took a look. *'This was jaw-dropping, eye-opening W9 with wide streets and grand mansion blocks with stuccoed terraces turned into one-room bedsits'*, she recalls. She loved it. *'Yes ! This is the place to be!'* She moved into *'a room overlooking Sutherland Avenue; a room with a bed, a two-ring Baby Belling cooker and a 16 watt light bulb with no light shade'*. 'Yes', she thought. *'This is the place to be. Love at first sight'*.

This was back in the days before mobile phones or any of the technology or creature comforts that we rely upon now existed. The house had been turned into eight separate bed- sitting rooms. *'There was one shared bathroom, one shared toilet and one communal telephone'*, she remembers. *'The landlord came round every Friday to collect the £6 rent. Did it matter? No! We have a room in London! How exciting is that with the Shirland Arms, [now The Hero], around the corner. A lot of time was spent in the Shirland. Many pints consumed. Many friends were made. And it just happened to be where lots of actors enjoyed a drink or three at a time when art and theatre overlapped'*.

Jobs' as she recalls, *'were plentiful'*. She landed a job in the art department of a Fleet Street newspaper while also rubbing shoulders with alternative fringe theatre folk at the Oval House theatre. She built a career out of portraiture in the theatre world. But a camera was also her way of 'sketching'. It was quicker and easier and she unwittingly captured the changes happening at the time in Little Venice as the seeds of gentrification were sown by the artists and musicians who made these properties their home.

This is what the two small books published by Café Royal Books document. The first is simply called 'Maida Vale, London 1970-1986' and the second 'Bristol Gardens, London 1978-1986'.

'The photographs in these two small books', said Burnett, *'show a different world. There is one of two small boys amongst the rubble of Bristol Gardens before work begins in earnest to re-gentrify the area.'*



Café Royale Books



And on the back of the main Maida Vale book is a shot of a door in the much-loved old St Saviour's church with a brick wall built across it before demolition. A favourite picture which was the first indication that the old St Saviour's would be demolished. *'I walked past this brick wall every morning on my way to Warwick Avenue tube station until eventually the bulldozers moved in'.*

'The cover photograph of the Bristol Gardens book shows the street at a low ebb of dereliction, largely squatted and on the cusp of regeneration, but with its own beauty. These buildings had an incredible presence in the space between what has happened and what will happen. The photograph took just seconds', she recalls. 'The sun was setting behind Shirland Road and then it was gone. The photograph is what survives. A moment from 40 years ago'.

'That's my bike', she says of a photograph of No 10 Bristol Gardens. There is another photograph of a milkman and his float delivering outside the Warwick Castle pub where she was the lunchtime cook of 'a mean Shepherd's Pie'. It was a musicians' haunt then. 'The boss was Harry Dodson who used to be a roadie for Lindisfarne', she said. 'The pub attracted musicians, poets and local thespians. It was also near Richard Branson's barge on the canal. The locals were the likes of Tom Newman who produced the epic, [and world best-selling] Tubular Bells music by Mike Oldfield which made the fortune of Branson's Virgin Records. Jackie Leven of Doll by Doll, Dave Gilmour of Pink Floyd were there. And a mixture of affectionately called dodgy mechanics and property people'.

It was through one of these that she secured her first mortgage, which is how she took advantage of the Church Commissioners' sell-off of their local property and how she came to live in Randolph Crescent for 40 years.

The fruits of almost fifty years of her life in Maida Vale are now in her photographic archive and now, in a small taster, in these two exuberant and evocative books.

Both are available from Café Royal Books for £11 for the two together:

<https://www.caferoyalbooks.com/shop>

Sheila has also published a roadshow journal about her time on the road with the infamous Pip Simmons Theatre Group. It's available from: <https://offstage-book.co.uk>.

Robert Bruce,

June 2025



Bristol Gardens



Old St. Saviour's church with a brick wall built across it before demolition.



R. Cornwell & Son.



Dog beauty saloon.

LAUDERDALE ROAD and the rise of the mansion block

Bthe end of the 19th century, much of the area surrounding Paddington Recreation Ground was still undeveloped, with allotments and open land.

Though roads had been laid out, construction had not yet taken off. It wasn't until 1897 that the first mansion blocks, Lauderdale and Essendine, were built. These developments were followed by Ashworth and Elgin in 1900, and Biddulph and Delaware by 1907. The architectural partnership of Boehner and Gibbs was responsible for many of these buildings that had begun to define the area.

The emergence of these mansion blocks reflected a shift in the city's housing needs. As the middle class began to grow, the financial burden of maintaining large homes became unsustainable. These self-contained residential apartments were seen as a solution. The once grand villas were replaced by the new mansion blocks, offering modern amenities without the need for servants. Despite these changes, a few of the original villas remain, particularly at the junction of Lauderdale Road and Sutherland Avenue.

Lauderdale was typical of these blocks. Middle-class families, such as the Guinness family (Alec Guinness the famous actor, was born here in 1914) settled into these flats. However, they weren't the only ones drawn to the new developments. The actress Irene Handl, who lived in Leith Mansions in the 1900s, described the community as one that mixed both the respectable middle classes and what she described as actresses. *"Those mansion flats were some of the first flats. And respectable people in those days did not live in flats. A lot of them were occupied by what they used to call 'actresses' but they were really tarts."*

Lauderdale continued to attract personalities the most recent being Kathryn Flett and Mary McCartney. Tony Meehan, founder member of The Shadows, Cliff Richards backing band, died after a fall in his flat at number 34 in 2005. Today flats in these blocks are still very popular and can command very high prices.



The arrival of the Jewish community

As Maida Vale expanded in the late 19th century, the area began to see a significant movement of Jewish immigrants, particularly those who had come from nearby Bayswater and Great Portland Street. By the 1870s, Maida Vale was affectionately known as the “*New Jerusalem*” due to the growing Jewish presence. The Anglo-Jewish Association, which represented Jewish concerns, even had its headquarters at 160 Portsdown Road (now Randolph Avenue).

The first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion, lived in 77 Warrington Crescent in the 1920s.

By the 1880s, it was estimated that 1,500 out of 10,000 residents in Maida Vale were Jewish.

This shift was even remarked upon by the parish priest of St. Saviours in 1897, who expressed concern over the area’s changing demographics - “*One half if not two thirds of the houses of our well to do are inhabited by Jews.*” This explained why attendance at church was low together with the fact that cab drivers who “*forming a large proportion of our working population....are extremely difficult to bring good influence to bear on them*”.

With the increasing population, the need for a new synagogue for the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community had become pressing. In 1894 they resolved to build a new synagogue in Lauderdale Road on an empty site. It was completed in 6 months with a budget of £5000 (today worth about £550,000).



The synagogue became a focal point for the Spanish and Portuguese Jewish community, whose origins can be traced back over 300 years. This community had originally fled the Inquisition in Spain and settled in Amsterdam before many of them made their way to London, particularly after 1656 when Oliver Cromwell lifted the ban on Jews living in England.

Today, the synagogue remains an important cultural and religious landmark in the area and continues to serve a vibrant and growing congregation, which, since the 1950s, has welcomed Jewish refugees from Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Gibraltar.

Dairy and Agricultural Legacy

In the 19th century, much of the agricultural land surrounding Paddington was dedicated to growing hay to feed London's vast population of horses. Urban dairies also became a common sight as the city's demand for fresh milk soared. Feed was provided from barges using the new canal system. Cows attracted milkmaids and milkmen, many of whom came escaping poverty from Wales. Wales Farm Road in nearby Acton bears witness to this influx as does what is now the Amadeus Centre, previously a Welsh non-conformist chapel and St David's Welsh church in Paddington Green.

As the population increased, so did demand for even more milk, which then was met by urban cow parlours and milk imported from the West Country and brought in by the recently opened Great Western Railroad. The last Cowhouse in Paddington closed in 1927.

We can see the remnants of this industry at the end of Lauderdale Parade. The Avalon Flower Shop was once the site of the Express Dairy, which is close to the Welford Dairy site in Shirland Road. Opened in 1848, at its peak in the 1890s this sprawling dairy complex occupied 2 acres of land and employed 400 male employees as well as 50 women clerks, all of whom lived in flats on the site.

There was also stabling for a hundred horses and a laboratory to monitor quality, something most dairies failed to adhere to. Favoured customers could even have a special cow reserved for them. Today, only the faintest traces of the dairy remain, such as the cow's head adorning the front of Elgin Food and Wine—a quirky nod to the past.

Though the industry has long since vanished, we can still see the remnants at the end of Lauderdale Parade. The Avalon Flower Shop, which once housed the Express Dairy, still has with a gorgeous tiled wall depicting a bucolic dairy farm.

Lauderdale Road's history is a fascinating blend of architecture, social change, and evolving communities. From its Victorian mansion blocks, dairy activities to its Jewish heritage, the area tells the story of how London adapted to the changing needs of its growing population. Today, Lauderdale Road is still a vibrant and diverse area, steeped in the legacies of its past.

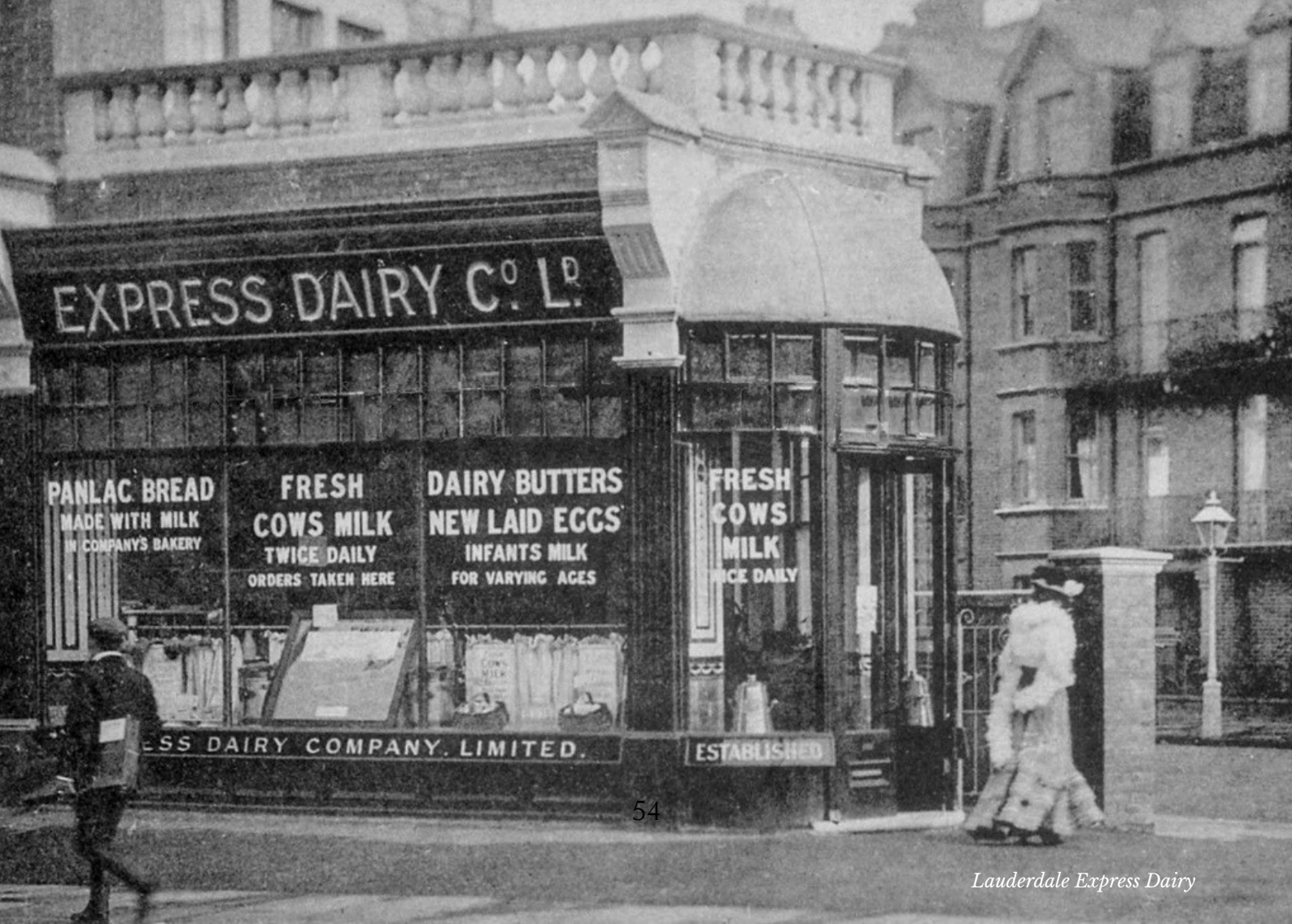
Julian Futter,

May 2025



Lauderdale Parade

THE EXPRESS DAIRY COMPANY'S New Branch at 1 Lauderdale Parade, Elgin Avenue, W.



Lauderdale Express Dairy

THE STORY OF Maida Vale Studios

The British do love their crazes - Rubik cubes, Beanie babies, Chopper bikes - you name it. Few however measured up to the excitement generated by the new-fangled roller skates that were produced in the first decade of the 20th century. In 1910 there were nearly 500 roller skating rinks in the U.K. and on the back of this boom, in 1909, Louis Napoleon Schoenfeld decided to invest in the "American Skating Palace" to be built on an empty site in Maida Vale.

The site he chose was in Delaware Road, opposite Delaware mansions which had been built only four years earlier and whose tenants would have been none too pleased to see what was being built next to them. His plans were ambitious to say the least. A rink that would seat 2,600 people with an orchestral balcony and a rink 800 feet long and 110 feet wide – the largest in Europe. It opened to great fanfare in February 1910 and within 6 months it had gone bankrupt. The great roller skating boom had bust and by 1912, 17,000 people directly and indirectly employed in the industry had to find other employment. Surviving remnants of the Victorian and Edwardian skating crazes are now very rare.

In the years after its closure the site became used for purposes far removed from the public's entertainment and was eventually taken over as offices by the Ministry of Health.

BBC to the rescue

By 1933 the BBC had run out of space in its Portland Place headquarters. The now vacant Delaware Road site provided an ideal base upon which to build a studio large enough for the BBC Symphony Orchestra and a small audience as well as smaller studios for dance bands and chamber concerts. Spoken word and drama programs could also be recorded in one of the four smaller studios. There was also provision for production facilities and offices. Plans were drawn up in January 1934 and in November of that year the Studios opened.



Maida Vale skating rink in 1909



Maida Vale skating rink opening notice

Today many of the original fittings and features still survive which means that the existing studios still have a strong, tangible connection to the time when many of its most famous recordings were produced.

In 1934, the BBC studios were inaugurated and along with the HMV studio on Abbey Road which had opened in 1931, it became one of the only two principal recording facilities in the United Kingdom. The Decca studio in Broadfield Gardens would only open in 1937.

The exterior of the building, designed in Edwardian Baroque style by noted architects Detmar and Greg is still imposing and was described, somewhat unfairly, by Brian Hodgson, who was responsible for the voices of the Daleks, as “*A decomposing wedding cake*”.

From 1934 until the outbreak of the war in 1939 the studios became one of the centres of British music making being the home of the BBC Symphony Orchestra and as well as the venue for Henry Hall and Geraldo’s dance bands.

In 1940, during the Blitz, the building became a target for the Luftwaffe and parts of it were damaged but the structure remained intact.

Bing Crosby made his last recording here in 1977 and the Beatles, in June 1963, some of their first. Other artists who came to Maida Vale were David Bowie, Led Zeppelin, Nirvana, Radiohead, the White Stripes and Beyoncé. The influential DJ John Peel recorded his famous Peel Sessions at Maida Vale. The roster of artists who recorded here will never be equalled since unlike commercial studios there was never a roster of signed or affiliated artists. The studios were also the home of the innovative BBC Radiophonic Workshop where Delia Derbyshire created the sounds of the Dr Who theme.

The Future is secured

In 2018, the BBC announced that they would be relocating to Stratford and in 2020 the building was Grade II listed, protecting it from being converted into flats.

In August 2023 the film composer Hans Zimmer, known for The Lion King, Gladiator, Top Gun: Maverick and the Pirates of the Caribbean, his business partner Steven Kofsky, and Notting Hill film producers Tim Bevan and Eric Fellner bought the site for a reported £10.5 million.

Mr Zimmer, who first worked at the studios 45 years ago, said: “*I was just a kid, in awe, honoured to be booked to play on one of my first sessions. I still remember the strong pull, the desire to touch the walls, as if that would somehow allow me to connect to the artists whose extraordinary music had resonated against these walls on a daily basis. This was a place of revolutionary science in the service of art, this was place that inspired you to give your best.*”

It is his intention to create a state of the art facility, housing all stages of music recording and post production for British film, TV and music under one roof. Much of the original fabric will be retained while the building will set new benchmarks as a centre of excellence. So what started as the largest rink in Europe will, 120 years later, set new standards in cutting edge technology for an entertainment industry unimagined by Louis Napoleon Schoenfeld.

Julian Futter,

June 2025



Delaware Road, 1910

THE MURDER OF DORA LLOYD

Maida Vale has always had a bawdy reputation. From the incorrect connection of the word randy with

Randolph to the stories of mistresses being put up in Blomfield Road there is no shortage of innuendo and ribald stories. The reality however, is somewhat different. Prostitution has been carried out in our area on a large scale and Maida Vale was well known as a place where sex could be purchased from desperate women for pitiful amounts of money.

The trade was dirty, degrading and dangerous. It still is. Only 7 years ago, Romina Kalaci, a sex worker, was murdered in Fernhead Road.

In February 1932 Dora Alicia Lloyd was 44 years old, the widow of a minor music hall artist who had died 5 years earlier. She had a son, Charles, who had been brought up by an uncle in Cardiff and who had recently joined the Bristol Police Force. It had been years since she last saw him.

With 17 convictions for solicitation dating back to 1919 and living in numerous different addresses - latterly in Delamere Terrace and finally at 27 Lanark Villas, now Lanark Road, Dora lived what would be described in a later age, as a chaotic lifestyle. Number 27 was then divided into 9 rooms and a basement and Dora occupied the front room on the ground floor.

Lanark Villas and Clifton Road around the Eagle pub were well known places where sex could be easily bought.

At about 10.00 in the evening of Saturday the 20th of July, Dora took the number 6 bus to Air Street just off Piccadilly to solicit. She had spent the earlier part of the evening drinking with a friend and on the way to Air Street had stopped in the Noah's Ark pub at 313 Oxford Street (now the Swatch shop) for another drink. She remained there until closing time and left with her friend "Mad Maggie" who the police referred to as "low type prostitute sodden with drink and pick-me-ups".



(Top): 27 Lanark Villas in 1932. (Bottom): 27 Lanark Road today

After buying some pick-me-ups (hangover cure) at Heppells pharmacy in Piccadilly, the same pharmacy that Aleister Crowley obtained his heroin from, Doris bought a copy of "The Matrimonial Post" from which she said she would write to old bachelors and see if she could get some money from them.

At about 12.00am, having bought a bottle of port and after a coffee in the Continental Café in Shaftesbury Avenue, they parted and Dora walked to her usual haunt in Air Street, standing there with 5 other prostitutes.

Around 1.00 am, a man, aged about 30-35 and just under 6ft with horn rimmed glasses approached one of the prostitutes standing near Dora and offered her 15/- to go with him. She refused saying she would not accept less than £1.00 (about £60 today). Following a refusal from another prostitute he then went over to Dora who was seen by one of the prostitutes getting into a taxi with the man.

The next morning the landlady, Mrs Haddock, said that she went to the room of Alexander Fraser, who lived above Dora, to give him some cake. He then told her that at about 1.30 he heard some muffled screams and "peculiar gurgling noises" as though someone was being strangled and a few minutes later heard someone leave the house slamming the door behind them. He also remembered hearing a car pull up earlier.

Worried about Dora, they went down to her room where they found her lying naked on her back on the bed with her face bruised and bloodstained with blood and froth oozing from her mouth. Other injuries indicated that she had also been badly beaten up. Mrs Haddock fainted at the awful sight and the police were called.

Dora's few possessions were strewn on the floor. A ten shilling note, some pawn tickets and a condom were on the floor. Also on the floor was a copy of the Matrimonial Post which she had bought earlier that evening.

These pathetic remnants testify to her hardscrabble existence. Desperate enough to accept the 15/-, her decision to go with this man cost her her life.

The only clue left was a pair of men's dark suede gloves left lying on a chest.

Police investigations went nowhere. A number of her associates were interviewed and only served to expose more of her sad life. Her diary mentioned a Frederick Cole, a married man aged 56 living in Porchester Terrace who initially met her for sex but latterly only for drinks.

He had given her small sums of money and had paid her rent of £1 a week for three months before he ceased his association with her in June 1931 as he considered it not only "morally wrong to associate with her" but also expensive. He was dismissed as a suspect since there was no evidence to link him to the night in question and that he was just "a foolish old man".

Another suspect, Walter Sandford, had briefly lived with her in 1931. Dora tried to reconnect with him in January but he had not seen her since April 1931.

The taxi driver was never found and with no further leads the police investigations came to an end.

At the inquest in April, the coroner noted "No doubt he is still wandering about the streets carrying his dreadful secret and probably awaiting the next insane impulse to kill. It is only on the rarest occasion that the perpetrators of these murders by unknown casual visitors to prostitutes can be discovered."

By an awful coincidence, almost exactly 50 years later and only a 4 minute walk away, Amala Whelen, a 22 year old student, living alone in Randolph Avenue, was found strangled in her flat. Her murderer too was never found. Although the lifestyles of these two women were completely different the parallels are striking even though separated by 50 years.

Julian Futter,

June 2025

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF COMMUNITY SERVICE

PC Paul Reading says farewell to the Force

After 25 years of dedicated service, PC Paul Reading is hanging up his police uniform and embarking on a new chapter as a city inspector with the local council. However, his impact on the community he has served for over two decades will not be forgotten.

Paul's journey into policing began unexpectedly in 1995 when he was invited to join a police boxing team from London on a trip to New York. Although he wasn't a police officer at the time, the experience opened his eyes to the possibility of a career in law enforcement.

"I'd just had my first child and I thought, I need to get a good career," Paul recalls. "And I thought, the police – everyone loves the firemen, but I thought perhaps I won't join the police." However, after being rejected from the fire department due to high competition, Paul decided to apply to the police force and was accepted straight away.

What was initially seen as a potential stepping stone turned into a lifelong passion. Over the course of 25 years, Paul has become a beloved figure in the community, known for his approachable demeanour, mentorship of young people, and unwavering commitment to making a difference.

One of Paul's proudest achievements was starting a boxing club in 2009, which has had a profound impact on countless young lives. *"I give them tough love,"* he explains. *"I've had children sent to me from the young offenders, and I've had them stay with me for nearly four years."*

Through the boxing club, Paul has been able to provide discipline, guidance, and a sense of purpose for vulnerable youth, many of whom have gone on to find success and turn their lives around. *"It's just rewarding, because whether I've impacted on it or not, the fact they've come and told me that they've not been arrested for goodness knows how long, and they've now got a good job or are doing an apprenticeship. So, it is rewarding, you know, very rewarding."*

While Paul's career has been immensely fulfilling, it has also come with significant emotional challenges. He has witnessed the tragic loss of young lives and struggled to console grieving families. *"Dealing with the emotional aspect of things, you know, trying to switch off, which you can't,"* he says.

To cope with the stresses of the job, Paul has relied on his strong faith, exercise, and the soothing sounds of his saxophone. *"It's just nice to see the response from the people,"* he says of playing music in public spaces.

As Paul transitions into his new role with the council, he will undoubtedly be missed by the community he has served so tirelessly. But his legacy will live on through the countless lives he has touched, and the enduring impact of the boxing club he has poured his heart into.

"I love people," Paul says simply. *"That's the most important quality for a good officer."* It's a sentiment that has defined his remarkable 25-year career, and one that will undoubtedly continue to guide him in the next chapter.

Alice Sinclair,

June 2025



JOHN WALTON

A notice of passing

We are deeply saddened to share the news of the passing of John Walton, a remarkable individual whose intelligence, dedication, and integrity left a lasting impact on all who had the privilege of working with him.

John played a pivotal role during the early days of the Elizabeth Line, particularly in navigating the complex Parliamentary procedures as the Bill made its way through both Houses. As Elizabeth Virgo recalls:

“The first time I worked with John was in the early days of the Elizabeth Line, dealing with the Parliamentary procedures involved as the Bill went through Parliament. He masterminded the approach taken by the multiple Residents’ Associations impacted in the Paddington area and beyond, authoring much of the paperwork. What would have been a number of fairly amateur responses to the Committee in both Commons and Lords became a highly successful and professional achievement, winning quite a few battles. We owe much of that to John’s meticulous efforts and dedication. I also very much appreciated his coaching for the giving of evidence in front of the two Committees — a real learning experience! And he became a good personal friend — I miss his company.”

John’s legacy is one of thoughtful leadership, generous mentorship, and tireless service. He will be remembered not only for his many professional contributions, but also for his warmth, kindness, and friendship.

He will be sorely missed.



THINK GLOBALLY, ACT LOCALLY

Terence Dormer worked at the Commonwealth Secretariat for over thirty years before retiring to pursue a career as an underwater photographer, specialising in the fauna of endangered tropical coral reefs. Later, he was appointed as the Representative for Climate Action for The Commonwealth Association and is an Honorary Life Member of the Founding Branch of the British Sub-Aqua Club. Dormer has been a resident of Little Venice since 1973.

We are all acutely aware of the pressing issues our planet faces due to climate change, but rather than dwell on the problem, the crucial question is: What can we do about it? We can't afford to sit back and do nothing. Instead, we must choose to act—thinking globally but starting locally, with the aim of making a positive, tangible difference.

“But what exactly does “local” mean in this context?”

We're fortunate to live in Europe's North-Western Islands, a region that offers unique advantages. In fact, I wrote about this in the February 2018 edition of The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs, long before the controversial “STOP THE BOATS” campaign. Here's a brief excerpt from that article.

“Imagine the world in 2070. Average temperatures are three degrees Celsius higher than in 2020, with further rises on the horizon. The colder regions at the top and bottom of the planet have warmed, and while this has made food production more feasible, severe storms have become more frequent. In contrast, the middle regions—where most people live—are becoming less habitable, leading to famine and the mass migration of climate refugees. These refugees, seeking food and safety, attempt to move north and south, but fewer and fewer are welcomed.”



Britain and Ireland, in a difficult situation, have taken in many refugees. The available land is utilised for growing food, and strict rationing has allowed the population to survive. However, military budgets have surged. It's a lifeboat situation which risks the collapse of the system."

I was feeling relatively optimistic when imagining a future in 2070, with only a three-degree rise in temperatures. However, with the 1.5°C climate target having been surpassed last year and many tipping points fast approaching, we might face such a scenario much sooner—by 2050, and potentially with a 4°C rise. Sadly, without drastic action, this bleak future is well within reach.

But instead of dwelling on such grim predictions, let's shift our focus to what we can do here, in our local community—Maida Vale, Little Venice, and Paddington. These areas offer an opportunity to make a real impact on both the environment and quality of life. When we take a closer look, we see that we have more green spaces and waterways than developed areas. With collective effort, we can transform this part of London into a model of environmental sustainability.

Together, we have the potential to make a significant difference. Perhaps, with enough effort, we could even compete for an Earthshot Prize—an award designed to tackle the most urgent environmental challenges facing our planet. Thousands of nominations have already been submitted, and there's still time to join this global movement. (For more, check out Prince William's speech from November 2024 on YouTube.)

So, what can we do as individuals to help?

The United Nations has outlined twelve simple actions that, when taken collectively, can have a big impact:

*Save energy at home.
Change your home's energy source.
Walk, bike, or use public transport.
Switch to an electric vehicle.
Reconsider your travel habits.
Reduce, reuse, repair, and recycle.
Eat more vegetables.
Waste less food.
Plant native species.
Clean up your environment.
Spend money consciously.
Speak up and take action.*

The truth is, the future of our planet is in our hands. If enough people choose inaction, things will only worsen. But if we take action—no matter how small—we can collectively create a significant, positive impact.

Terence Dormer,

June 2025

COST OF LIVING SERIES

It is widely assumed that achieving net zero will increase costs of goods and services. The changes that are occurring are revealing opportunities to save money, however, for

example on the cost of electricity. As some 90% of homes in Westminster are flats there is limited scope for adoption of solar panels in the W9W2 area. Instead have you considered installing a home battery system?

This may be a better investment than solar panels which typically have a 10 year payback. Home battery systems also have the potential to reduce the cost of achieving net zero as they shift demand away from peak times and so reduce the costs of upgrading the electricity network.

My experience following the installation of a home battery is that an average cost savings of 47% on the price of electricity paid was achieved during the first 3 months of operation. This would equate to a ~14% return on investment (or 7 year payback) assuming current electricity prices remain at the same level, and also that a similar discount between peak and off peak rates applies in future. What has helped shorten the payback period is the recent decision to zero-rate home battery systems, thereby saving the 20% VAT previously paid.

If electricity prices increase (for example as a result of higher gas prices, or because of the costs of upgrading the UK electricity network) then the payback period may be shorter. Of course the opposite may be true if electricity prices reduce.

These systems work by storing electricity when it is cheap and supplying it to your home when it is expensive. Most of us are familiar with dual electricity tariffs but not everyone has heard of “dynamic pricing” nor the fact that this pricing is now available to domestic customers. This innovative tariff is based the wholesale price which changes every 30 minutes. As an example, on a typical day electricity pricing (p/kWh) vary as indicated in **Figure 1**.

There are days however when the price of electricity is close to (and sometime below) zero.

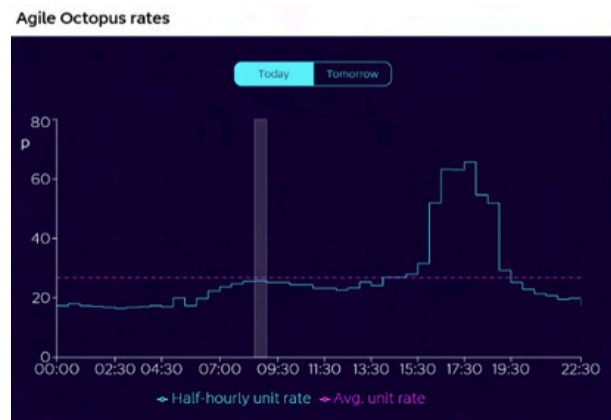


Figure 1: Typical typical day electricity pricing

The main reason for the low prices on this day is that there were strong winds across the UK and this meant there was an excess of cheap wind energy. It was also sunny, and there may have also been a further significant contribution from solar energy. Please note that you must have a smart meter to switch to dynamic pricing.

Battery systems can be programmed to charge up at cheap times to ensure that they hold enough charge for you to avoid using electricity at expensive times. Some systems offer a “machine learning” approach in which the systems predicts when you will use electricity and takes power from the grid accordingly. A simpler approach is to set the system to automatically charge between set hours (i.e. in the small hours when the cost of electricity is usually cheapest).

If you are averse to dynamic pricing your supplier may offer the option of fixing the price of your electricity at peak and off-peak times. For example a popular tariff currently offers 8.5p off peak (00:30am – 05:30pm) and 27.2p at other times. Typically on 2-3 days per week my battery provides all the electricity needed using cheap rate electricity. On these days the cost would be reduced to 8.5p/kWh all day. If the ratio was (say) 80% off peak / 20% peak then the average cost would only rise to around 12.2p/kWh. For anyone thinking about trying dynamic pricing it may be helpful that many suppliers offer the option of a penalty-free switch from dynamic pricing back to a dual rate tariff so you can revert to your current contract if needed.

A London-based company supplies and makes my home battery system, but there are several good alternatives. A recent report from “Which?” evaluated all home battery systems. The mid-range (8kWh) battery is sufficient to cover the electrical consumption of a two bedroom flat from 6:30am until around 10pm on most days, based on an overnight charge. If the electric oven or other high energy electrical devices are used then the battery will be depleted in the early evening.

This is OK as the cost of electricity is usually reasonably low from 8pm onwards. Some battery systems can provide emergency power. This is worth having if you have any concerns about power failures.

For anyone interested in installing a home battery please research the systems currently available, and ask any provider to estimate the cost savings based on your use of electricity. Potential savings can be estimated by some suppliers if you have data from your smart meter going back a whole year.

Nigel Stokes,

June 2025





The Daily Bread of Tajikistan

Tajik Kulcha-Non

(Round Flatbread)

From Mukaddas Muborakshoeva

Tajik bread carries a history that spans thousands of years and remains a cornerstone of the Tajik-Pamiri diet. Archaeological evidence shows that the early inhabitants of Central Asia were cultivating wheat and baking flatbreads as far back as the Bronze Age. Over time, these traditions have been shaped by Persian culinary influences and the ancient trade routes of the Silk Road, which passed through the Pamir Highways.

In the Pamir Mountains, each day begins with a simple yet meaningful ritual: milk tea and freshly baked bread. Life in this remote, mountainous region is defined by scarcity and self-sufficiency. With limited arable land, most food is grown organically and prepared by hand. Every grain is treated with deep respect, and bread is honoured as the “food of God”—a sacred gift at the heart of every meal.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup warm water
- 1 cup warm milk
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1 tsp sugar
- 2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp yeast
- 4 cups all-purpose flour (sifted)
- 1 egg (for egg wash)
- Poppy seeds or mixed bread seeds (for topping)

Instructions:

1. In a large bowl, combine the warm water, milk, and oil. Mix well.
2. Add the sifted flour, then stir in yeast, sugar, and salt.
3. Knead the dough until smooth and elastic. Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled in size—about 1 hour.
4. Preheat your oven to 260°C (500°F).
5. Punch down the dough and divide into 6–8 equal portions. Roll each into a ball and gently flatten into a round.
6. Decorate the center using a traditional bread stamp (chekish), fork, or knife for a rustic touch.
7. Brush each piece with egg wash, then sprinkle with poppy seeds or a mix of seeds.
8. Place on a baking sheet and bake for 15–20 minutes, or until golden, shiny, and slightly crispy.
9. Let the aroma fill your kitchen—and enjoy a taste of the Pamirs, warm from your own oven.

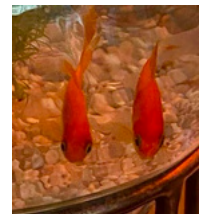
The Lonely Pet Column



Artwork by Jesse Brown

This year in Maida Unveiled's Lonely Pets, we're diving deep (literally) into the shimmering underworld of Little Venice. Moored onalside in little Venice live a pair of flamboyant, fin-tastically fabulous goldfish looking for love, or at least a third to join their floaty, flirty bubble of joy.

Meet **Drum** and **Bass**: synchronised swimmers, lifelong companions, and unapologetic romantics. They're two peas in a boat-pod, but lately, they've been feeling the stirrings of curiosity... and not just when the bilge pump kicks in! These aquatic adventurers are ready to expand their world. They want someone bold, briny, and brimming with personality to join their fluid (in all senses) dynamic.



Their vibe? Think French Riviera meets Hackney Wick. They're equally at home with low-lit sea-shanty soundscapes and underwater rave energy. Living on a converted music studio narrowboat just off the Regent's Canal, they spend their days basking near the port window, eavesdropping on ducks. Let's break them down:

Drum (she/her): A bold, orange comet-tailed flirt with a knack for choreography and an obsession with floating disco balls. Once survived a week-long plumbing mishap by "believing in vibes alone."

Bass (they/them): A moody, contemplative bubble-blower with a sleek, matte gold finish and a poetry blog you can't read (unless you understand Morse-coded fin taps). Partial to kelp noir and underwater ambient.

Their ideal third? You don't have to be a goldfish, but they do ask that you're semi-aquatic or at least hydration-positive. Bonus points if you're already boat-savvy and don't get seasick near propellers.

"We love someone who can match our energy," Bass burred, flicking a fin suggestively. "Someone who's flirty, flexible, and has great dorsal lines."

What do you get in return? A place in a cozy tank with panoramic water views, unlimited access to duck gossip, and the kind of love that only comes from two beat loving fish

Are you the one they've been bubbling about? Do you have what it takes to stir this already effervescent pot? Do you believe love, like a good tank filter, is about circulation and clarity?

Drum and Bass are ready for the drop. Are you?

*** Have you got a pet who you think would like a partner? Please email maida.unveiled@gmail.com if you would like them to feature in our next issue.



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*Artwork by Eleanor Abou-Sakr
@eleanor.as.art*

YOU ARE WARMLY INVITED TO THE PADDINGTON WATERWAYS & MAIDA VALE SOCIETY W9W2
CHRISTMAS CAROLS
TUESDAY THE 9TH OF DECEMBER 2025 AT 6.30 PM (DOORS 6.00PM)
ST MARY'S CHURCH, PADDINGTON GREEN

Contributors

Robert Bruce (writer)

Robert has lived in Maida Vale since 1979. He is a business journalist and loves the area for its pubs and its people; its trees; its summer population of swifts and its quiet places to sit and read.



Julian Futter (writer)

Julian has been a resident of Little Venice for more than 40 years. He has brought up two children and four grandchildren in this wonderful part of London. He is a dedicated flaneur and lover of psychogeography, an avid teller of tales and enthusiast of the diverse history of this place.



Harvey Johnson (photographer)

In Harvey's own words:

I think I've always been a visual person. I remember being interested in how cameras worked as a teenager but not really understanding how the settings worked at the time.



It was two years ago when I discovered street photography as its own genre, the less well-known cousin of landscapes and portraits.

It's a different way of seeing city life - noticing things that we don't often pay attention to and trying to capture them in an interesting way.

I'm particularly drawn to reflections and symmetry in the city; many of my photos of London involve these in some way.

I bought a second-hand Sony camera eighteen-months ago (much cheaper than buying a new one!) and have learnt a lot since then.

Follow Harvey's work on instagram @harveywmj

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Our W9W2 area...

