

thecourt

February / March 2021



ART THERAPY
Mind Healing Remedies

EC FARMERS' MARKET
Offering Food & Friendship

MEET THE CEO
Earls Court Development



Keeping
Life Local

MAKING A DIFFERENCE, NOW

At time of going to press, London is still trapped in Lockdown 3.0 restrictions. We talk to people finding new ways to help their neighbours in Fulham and Kensington.

At midnight on Saturday December 19th, we were all thrown into yet another round of meeting and travel restrictions. With a new variant of Coronavirus rearing its spikey head – potentially up to 70 percent more transmissible than the first – we have, for the most part listened, despite the damage it is doing to our society and our economy.

In this edition of *The Court*, we have sought

out some of the people trying to make a difference to the lives of those around them. We bring you their personal stories and a glimpse into what they are achieving to help our neighbourhoods flourish in the gloom.

We talk to Malcolm Connell about his upbringing in Earl's Court – and his hopes for a new community centre; Nikita Franks Williams from Sickie Cell Plus on the charity's work in our area; Art Therapist Elspeth Scott on the benefits of creativity for mental health; Ali Kingsley of Refettorio Felix on creating a fine dining experience for the vulnerable and the homeless; Emma Kendal on how the Earl's Court Farmers market provides more than essential food and drink, and Neil McPherson reminds us of the people of the past who weathered far greater storms than those facing us.

My heart was truly warmed just before Christmas. I had an appointment at the NHS Dentist Earl's Court clinic on Hogarth Road and wandered off a reasonably busy main road to get there ahead of time. Ushered in by a security guard, I was confronted with a sea of mostly older people in the clinic's large reception. They were all being given the Pfizer-BioNTech anti-Covid vaccine.

As I watched through a glass door, it struck me how brave were the recipients of the vaccine, and how calm, measured and caring the NHS staff were while delivering it. One phrase stuck with me. Each patient was asked before the jab what possible ailments and prescriptions they might have to make sure nothing interfered, but the last question was '... And are you happy to take the vaccine?' Each said an emphatic 'Yes'.

Bring on a brighter 2021 for all.

Brian Scudder



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THE COURT
COMMUNITY
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EARLS COURT DEVELOPMENT NEWS

MEET THE NEW EARLS COURT DEVELOPMENT CEO

New CEO Rob Heasman joined The Earls Court Development Company (ECDC) team in December.

Alongside the appointed architects, Hawkins\Brown and Studio Egret West, Rob will spearhead The Earls Court Development Company's new approach to how it thinks about the plans for the area.

Rob has experience of working on some of London's largest, complex regeneration projects which gives him valuable experience and knowledge to bring to Earls Court.

He will oversee the development of the Earls Court site, the largest cleared construction site in London's Zone 1, which will play a vital role in supporting the city's housing targets. Rob and ECDC's goal is to fully reconnect the Earls Court development with its local area once again, and to bring the vacant site back to life again. To achieve this, participation from the community is top of Rob's agenda.

Rob told The Court "The fantastic thing about London is that each community is totally different from the next – each with their own charm, heritage and sense of identity. This patchwork of different communities is what makes London the greatest city in the world.

"Earls Court is an area rich in association with the arts and culture. Some of the world's leading cultural and academic institutions are on the doorstep and we have an opportunity to build on this reputation, and I am keen to work closely with all of our local neighbours to do this."

As well as making headway on the development project, ECDC have been supporting the community throughout 2020 by investing in a range of local projects. They've worked with The Smile Brigade to provide free meals to vulnerable residents and Solidarity Sports to support local children with essential item care packages and engaging indoor activities. ECDC have also supported Dad's House in running a local foodbank from the West Brompton Crossing on Lillie Road.

The ECDC team said: "We're proud to support a range of community projects which have been vital during the pandemic, like The Smile Brigade who have been



working tirelessly during the pandemic to provide free over 111,000 free meals to vulnerable residents, and Dad's House who are helping 800 families a week during the Covid-19 lockdown with their foodbanks.

Rob and ECDC are continuing to support local projects in the area throughout the pandemic and are looking forward to continuing to do so well into

the future. For further information on community support please visit <https://theearlscourtdevelopmentcompany.com/community>, email ECDC at info@theearlscourtdevelopmentcompany.com. Or follow the project on social media: Instagram: [@earlscourtdevelopmentco](https://www.instagram.com/earlscourtdevelopmentco/) / Twitter: [@earlscourtdevco](https://twitter.com/earlscourtdevco) / Facebook: [earlscourtdevelopmentco](https://www.facebook.com/earlscourtdevelopmentco)

COMMUNITY. CREATIVITY. CARE.

My Earl's Court Story, Malcolm Connell, Community Arts and Cultural Advisor

My Earl's Court story started in the

early 1970s. It was then that I moved from South Kensington, where my mother was a housekeeper. We moved to Redcliffe Gardens, and I soon became what they call 'a local'.

My school days were spent at Bousfield School, on the Old Brompton Road, and when I was about nine I became a chorister - my deep love of singing really started then and it grew as I went through my secondary school years as a teenager.

Believe it or not, I still bump into one of my old Bousfield teachers, Sheila Kemp - who some of you might know. Every time I see her, it really gives me a deep sense of belonging and connection to Earl's Court.

Creating Confidence

As I grew, I actually found life in the area quite lonely. There wasn't really much to do for young people after school and at weekends in the area back then.

It was actually through my eldest brother, Anderson, that I made an incredible local discovery. He was a student at Hammersmith College at the time, and he used to encourage me to go with him to the West Indian Student Centre, which was a hub for the West Indian community right here in Earl's Court. On my doorstep!

The West Indian Student Center was in Collingham Gardens, and it was officially opened 1955 by HRH Princess Margaret. It was a place where students from various Caribbean backgrounds studying in the UK could go to meet, relax and hold intellectual and political discourse.

I enjoyed all sorts of lessons there with some great tutors. It's really where the next phase of my arts and culture journey started. Dancing, singing, acting - the city's best professionals gave their time to teach and inspire us to greatness. These lessons excited me as a young boy. The classes there signposted the direction of my life.

My love of acting gave me the opportunity to go on what were called "small-scale" UK and European theatrical tours as a professional actor's Equity member. Our shows were aimed at young people and were always educational in nature. It was really those experiences that solidified my understanding and conviction in the arts as a key pillar of community engagement and cohesion.



Top left: UK pop band JLS, Top right Malcolm with Jennifer Ware, Right & Bottom Left; Crowds at The Earl's Court Festival.



Inspiring A Generation

As a centre for the development of West Indian students studying here in the UK, The West Indian Student Centre hosted incredible inspirational speakers from the UK and overseas and many great Caribbean leaders had their start there; influential thinkers such as Kamau Brathwaite, Stokely Carmichael, CLR James and Andrew Young spoke. Some of these people are now seen as cultural legends. They spoke to people like me, people that lived like me, looked like me - people that thought like me.

It was in a small room in Collingham Gardens that I realised that I had a mission

in life, and that when people come together, they really do have the power to change society.

I really feel that in Earl's Court, we need dedicated centres like these again, centres of art and culture, places where anyone of any background, young or old can find connection, develop skills and confidence and be welcomed into a safe space with the potential to feel like a second home.

It's really important to understand just how much change and ground-breaking thought across the globe actually had its origins in little old Earl's Court. The area has always been radical and subversive in its own way.

Cultural Advisor - The Earl's Court Community Trust

After my acting tours, the following 20 years were great.

I did what I loved - became a successful songwriter and vocal coach; wrote songs for globally famous artists (I was songwriter to Tina Turner); and led a busy life touring around the world. I'm extremely proud to have founded the UK boy band JLS together with Oritse Williams, who I later went on

to manage. Having travelled the world, my heart was always in Earl's Court, because my mother was there still in her place on Redcliffe Gardens.

In 2006, along with a treasured mentor of mine, Jennifer Ware, and other deeply committed locals such as Keith Clancy and Barnabus Palfrey, I helped to create The Earl's Court Community Trust (ECCT).

I'm very proud to be associated with those people and that amazing organisation, with its mission to provide community engagement through the arts. Originally, I sat on the board as a Cultural Advisor and Trustee.

Ever mindful of the fabulously diverse buzz that I enjoyed locally as a younger man, my primary goal as an adult has always been to find ways to breathe new life, culture and the joy into the area and I've always believed that arts and culture are the surest means to accomplish that.

In 2008, I agreed to step down as a ECCT trustee so that I could take over the management of The Earls Court Festival. The festival was an amazing two week local celebration, filled with poetry, music, theatre, street performance and all things Earl's Court. The history of the event stretches back many years and it used to be held on the forecourt of the Earl's Court Exhibition Centre. It was a perfect showcase for local arts and cultural heritage.

Horizons. The Future

As an inner-city resident, you don't ever get to see the horizon, but we know that a world of opportunity is literally on our doorstep.

Every neighbourhood has its limits and Earl's Court is no exception. But the amazing thing about living here, right now, is that the powers-that-be seem to have the will and resources to make great things happen. With creative teaching and community outreach for people of all ages, this area can become a centre of creative excellence once more. There are some truly excellent possibilities for local regeneration.

I am not alone in my desire to have a state-of-the-art cultural venue in our area, and we look forward to working with the local council and the Earls Court Development team to see how we can carve out a space for the creative community as local master plans develop.

Shorter term, it would be amazing to create some kind of temporary home where classes for local people can be set up, and I know that the ECCT team hopes to resurrect The Earl's Court Festival in 2021, if it is safe to do so. Two brilliant initiatives that, if they can be delivered, will do much to lift the local community out of our Covid blues.

Life and laughter are just around the corner!

Positive Local Support for Sickle Cell Sufferers

Our neighbourhood has been the birthplace for a long line of community arts clubs and collectives channelling local creativity. Now, a new group wants to add to that tableau by creating a recreation space that will support sufferers of Sickle Cell Disease and their families.

Nikita Franks Williams

knows a thing or two about Sickle Cell Disease. A paediatric nurse, she has just completed a research project on the effects of Sickle Cell Disease on children's educational attainment. She's also been working alongside her mother, Savannah, at the not-for-profit charity Sickle Plus for 10 years.

"A lot of people think that Sickle Cell only affects people of black African or Caribbean descent. And that just isn't true," Nikita says.

"Sickle Cell affects one in five black Africans and black Caribbeans. But it also affects one in fifty Southeast Asian people and one in five hundred Caucasian people. Add in sufferers from Mediterranean and Middle Eastern backgrounds and it's one of the worst blood disorders in the UK.

"The disease is growing rapidly because of the greater number of mixed relationships and increased births in the country. That makes testing and awareness of who it can affect very, very, important."

Nikita says that symptoms vary considerably. "Painful episodes are called crises," she continues. "Children can have strokes, delayed growth, and blood clotting. They can be immunocompromised so there are high risks of infections, anaemia, severe fatigue, and illness. And these lead to frequent hospitalization and constant, strong, pain medication at home and in hospital.

"Our aim is to promote testing for the trait and to counsel and support new couples who may be considering having children.

"Earl's Court has historically been a great place for the



arts and ethnic diversity," Nikita continues. "In the 1970s there was a great singing and dancing spirit, with classes available to locals. We want to continue this tradition. That's why we want to build a recreation centre to continue this legacy.

"We'll be offering dance and singing classes, performance-based workshops and other artistic outlets. These classes will be provided by West End musical professionals and health care professionals. It will all be on a voluntary basis. We have committed people who are ready and willing to teach and support community projects right now."

Sickle Plus has been moving between schools to give its arts-based healing therapies. These include singing and contemporary dance classes and workshops; painting, and song and poetry writing. "We have just started music creation classes where people can learn how to make their own music," says Nikita. "At the moment, we're reaching around 160 participants per month."

During early lockdown, the charity made changes to its usual schedule, making Philbeach Gardens a base for those classes that can be held outdoors, with lively WhatsApp groups for online workshops and outreach to shielding sufferers.

"Our next step is to find a venue for when this is all over," says Nikita. "We are

kick starting this with our new fundraising campaign. If there's anybody out there who has a venue or a building in mind which would be suitable for a community recreation centre please do contact us [see details below]."

Sickle Plus has some serious support in the creative industry. As part of the campaign, the team wrote a song called 'Higher' that was produced by platinum award-winning band Rudimental. The song features recording artists Aswad, Alexander O'Neal, Linda Lewis, Adam Deakin, and UK crime artist Jammer.

"It's got a really diverse mix of artists," says Nikita. "We've got drum and bass. We've got reggae. And we've got grime. There's something for everybody in the song.

"Meeting Rudimental was honestly a true blessing. The idea that we had of pushing out this charity song to raise funds and raise multicultural awareness was in line with their desire to give to a charitable cause that was close to their heart. They come from Hackney, which is also a very multicultural area, and they wanted to help support multiculturalism in London. The music video for 'Higher' premiered at the Earl's Court Film Festival."

Working to secure mainstream radio and music television plays, this exposure will drive awareness of the charity and help make the dreams of a Earl's Court Sickle Cell Recreation centre a reality.

If you can help, want to donate, or have a venue for Sickle Plus' classes, contact sickleplus@yahoo.uk and visit www.sickleplus.org. To watch the video for 'Higher', also visit the website.

THE GOURMET'S INDIAN TAKEAWAY: FLORA INDICA

International food critic Gary Gourmand savours the new takeaway menu at old Brompton Road's Flora Indica restaurant.

It has been a while since I have enjoyed Flora Indica's culinary art. Several menu changes and a world apart from my pre-Covid review, I am delighted to tell you that its kitchen is still in full swing. Not with its usual sit-down delights – but a gourmet takeaway and delivery service.

Available to order from 4pm to 11pm, Tuesdays to Sundays, there can be no better way to banish those lockdown blues.

Given that I am writing for the first 2021 issue of *The Court*, my wife and I thought it in keeping to choose only the vegan options to taste on your behalves. Not normally something I would consider, but my wife is at the coal face of fashion – Veganuary being her latest nod to saving the planet. And let's face it, the more nods the better.

It also makes for an interesting test of Flora Indica's reserves of skill in these difficult times. Used as we are to all things dairy, we find it a challenge to make tasty vegan dishes at home, let alone expect excellence in a takeaway serving.

To Start

We took starters of Chilli Tossed Fried Cashew Nuts (£5.50) alongside the dish that changed my attitude toward okra the first time I dined at Flora Indica: Kurkure Okra Fries with Chaat Masala & Lemon (£5.50). Both were as delicious as I remember them.



Particularly with a cold drink like gin and tonic or white wine.

But it was the Small Plates' Baby Bitter Gourd Tak A Tak, Delica Pumpkin Kadi & Toasted Pumpkin Seed (£7.50) that proved once again this is still one of the best Indian restaurants in London, vegan or otherwise.

The Bitter Gourd had all of the tartness one might expect of the fruit, but was layered through with rich spice and counterpoised by the distinctly sweet Delica pumpkin puree – providing a depth of flavour that can only come from its thick flesh being slow-cured in rooms heated by woodburning stoves on the farm. The Bitter Gourd and Pumpkin are also uniquely filling despite it being a Small Plate dish.

Another delight was the Paneer Cheese & Spinach Bon-Bon & Heritage Tomato Chutney (£8.50). And quite how the chefs turn Kaffir Lime Leaf Flavoured First Grade



Basmati Rice into dreamy clouds of perfection is beyond me. Flecked with pistachio, it the perfect base for the meal. Sauteed Zucchini & Carrot, Toasted Coconut, Curry Leaves & Ginger Chilli was fresh, and again, had a lovely consistency. Meanwhile the Spiced Creamed Spinach Cooked With Dill & Cherry Tomato proved that a genuinely creamy taste and composition can be achieved with coconut milk and other vegan friendly cooking techniques.

These things are what continue to put Flora Indica ahead of the Indian fine dining pack. Each dish is discreetly complete. But each lends itself to the next flavourful course without pause.

Order now from the full menu on flora-indica.com or call them on 020 7370 4450. Delivery available. Pick up as usual from 242 Old Brompton Road, Earls Court, London, SW5 0DE.



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Dignity in dining

Refettorio Felix CEO Ali Kingsley describes how good food can do more than feed the homeless and the vulnerable.

The St Cuthbert's Centre was founded 30 years ago. But three years ago we were approached by Massimo Bottero - who is regarded by many to be the world's best chef - with a project to elevate the standard of food while only using food that would otherwise go to landfill. So in partnership, we gave it a full refurbishment to make it a beautiful place, which is really key to what we offer. A lot of what we do is about giving people their dignity back and raising their self-respect. We want guests to feel as good as if they were in a restaurant, which is what it now essentially feels like.

And because of our connections with Massimo, it's attracted really top chefs who are his close friends. At least once a week, sometimes more, we welcome a guest chef who will come in and cook the service.

We've had Michel Roux Jr., Brett Graham, John Williams from the Ritz - we really went to town on that one - the food was served under cloches with everyone in uniforms and Ritz front-of-house workers. It's become a real restaurant experience. It's raised our profile and allows us to offer an even higher level of service.

We've found that the quality of food attracts people who wouldn't necessarily access the other services that we provide, generally for mental health reasons or a lack of confidence.

We find that not only are we now helping to improve the nutrition and well-being of our guests, but also we're reaching people who perhaps otherwise wouldn't be reached.

We typically welcome eighty-five to a hundred people a day and feed them a three-course lunch, made entirely of surplus food, and we then wrap all sorts of survival services around that.

We have a full time mental health worker who is available for assessments or one-to-one sessions. We have a housing advice worker. We have a very active art class and we do cooking classes designed to help people get work in the hospitality industry. So we're very busy.

But with the pandemic, we've had a change our services. We've turned our lunch into a three-course takeaway, and all of our services are outside, apart from the one-to-one sessions which we now do remotely. We have over 150 people queuing up every day with our support workers available outside to give advice.

We have a very, varied community of guests. It includes all types of vulnerable people. The factor that they all have in common is that are socially isolated. So we very much lay out the centre to combat that. We have long tables designed to make everyone stick together and talk over their food. We have people who are suffering from mental health conditions, maybe haven't been diagnosed. Or they haven't been able to access statutory services. For homeless people we have showers and laundry. And we have people perhaps feeling isolated from the community. Of course, that includes quite a large number of elderly people - people over 70. For some people we might be



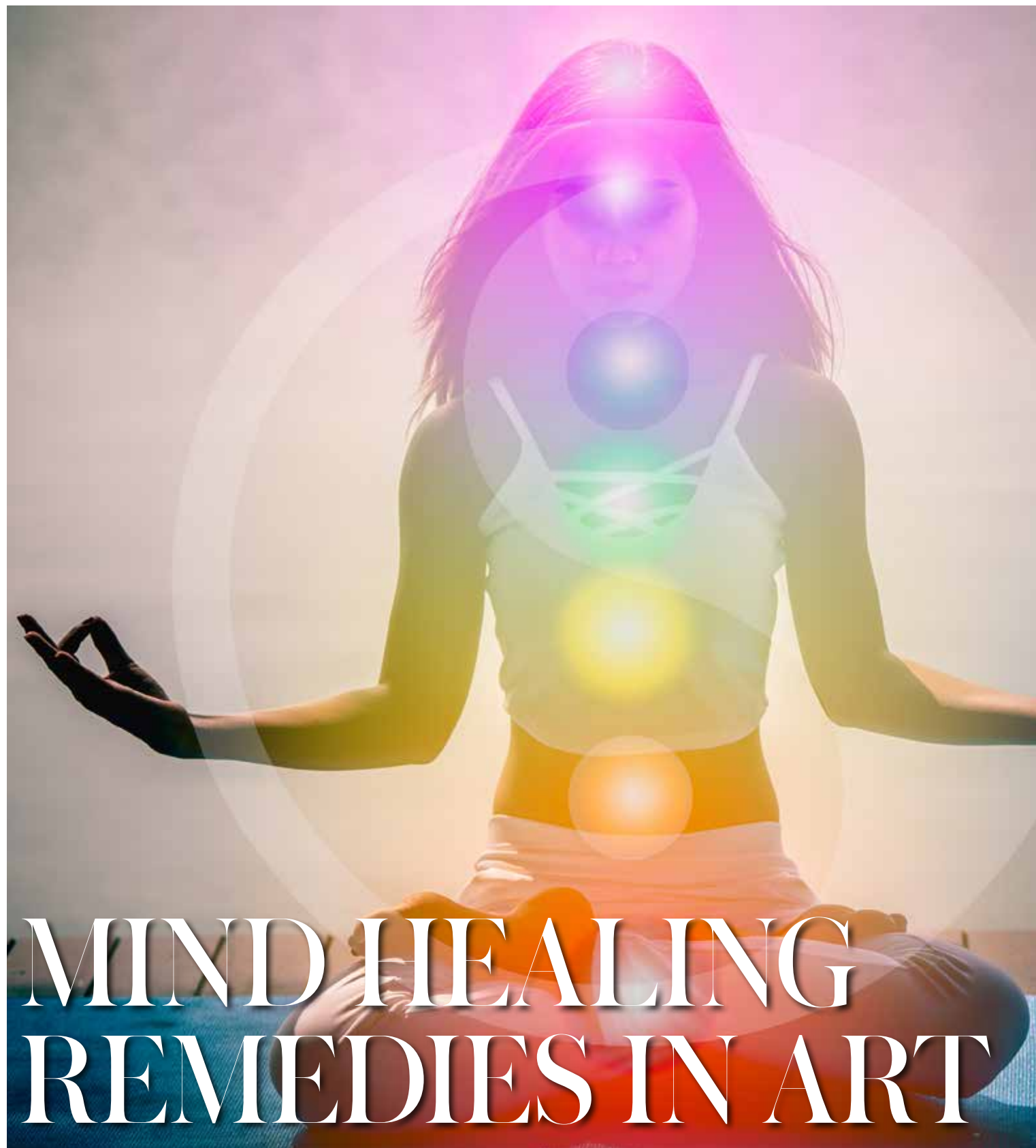
the only people they talk to that day and they can come every day and do that.

We don't get any statutory funding. All the funds we have that keep the centre going are fundraised through donations from the public, the community and local businesses. It's difficult to know exactly what our income will be from day to day.

We've now launched a Friends of Refettorio Felix scheme which allows people to donate money regularly, spread their giving over the year. This has major benefits for us because it allows us to better predict what we're going to have from month to month, allowing us to plan and commit to projects knowing what our income will be. We're asking people to join that and commit to a monthly donation of ten pounds or more. For that you will receive monthly updates and when we are allowed there will be exclusive Friends of Refettorio events where we'll have some of our best chefs coming in to cook great food for all. You also get a Refettorio Felix badge!

What we'd really like to do is raise £500,000, which would be the most we've ever raised. This would allow us to cover all of our existing operation costs, but also to expand our community support.

To donate, see www.refettoriofelix.com and Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.



MIND HEALING REMEDIES IN ART

BY ELSPETH SCOTT

Looking through an old notebook from when I began my art therapy training in 2001, I came across the words ‘painting at a time of distress’. Below I had written that people turn to art at times of emotional crisis, with an example of how prisoners throughout history found ways to create artwork, often

on cell walls with whatever they had to hand.

During a year when many have felt restricted due to various lockdown measures – and we are both personally and collectively dealing with challenges around feelings of stability, safety, and loss – questions have been asked about how we can support ourselves mentally and emotionally, together with looking after our physical health.

“Young children are generally uninhibited in their creativity. Re-gaining this freedom of expression can be more challenging as adults.”



“Across the country as a whole, the outdoors has become the safest arena for putting on cultural events where restrictions allow, with less likelihood of spreading the virus in the open. Unsurprisingly, the discipline of Environmental Arts Therapy has come to the fore over these last few months. Here, art materials are taken outside or found objects used to create artwork *in situ*.”

of which can now be seen in his only recently published manuscript *The Red Book: Liber Novus*.

It is important to acknowledge that not everyone will feel an urge to draw or paint. There are numerous ways to be creative, including through design, craft, drama, dance, and music. Baking and gardening are also excellent examples. Each has the potential for healing.

Young children are generally uninhibited in their creativity. Re-gaining this freedom of expression can be more challenging as adults. The popularity of adult colouring books in recent years is testament to the fact that being creative can be playful. With their vast selection of designs, colouring books can be used as tools for simple enjoyment, or to help ease feelings of stress and anxiety.

During Lockdown 1, I attended an online seminar from the Anna Freud Centre on ‘Arts, Place and Wellbeing’ in which Karen Mak spoke about evidence that those who experienced arts and cultural engagement had improved levels of self-esteem and confidence that was not influenced by individual differences.

This engagement can be wide-ranging and – importantly under the current circumstances – includes online experiences. We are now able to access virtual tours of museums and galleries from all around the world. There are many ways to access them, <https://secretldn.com/virtual-museums-exhibitions-tours-london> being just one.

I was delighted during the first lockdown to discover that I could take a virtual tour of the artist Frida Kahlo’s home in Mexico, now a museum, without moving from my sofa (<https://www.museofridakahlo.org.mx/en/the-blue-house/virtual-tour/>).

Karen also spoke about the March Network, a policy forum that focusses on social, cultural and community assets – including the arts – and the role that they play in enhancing mental health and well-being, preventing mental illness, and supporting those living with mental health conditions.

These assets are usually found in local communities and therefore, in normal circumstances, would be accessible to those in the community. As we are socially

distanced, the March Network website at www.marchnetwork.org provides links to home-based, creative ways to support mental health during these uncertain times.

The government’s social prescribing scheme (allowing GPs, nurses, and other primary care professionals to refer people to local, non-clinical services to support their health and wellbeing) also puts art’s ability to address people’s needs in the spotlight. Here and across the country as a whole, the outdoors has become the safest arena for putting on cultural events where restrictions allow, with less likelihood of spreading the virus in the open.

Unsurprisingly, the discipline of Environmental Arts Therapy has come to the fore over these last few months. Here, art materials are taken outside or found objects used to create artwork *in situ*, including mandalas. Jung used mandalas in his work, as he noted that getting his patients to draw them had a calming effect.

This brings me to my favourite online workshop during the pandemic, for that same reason. It was entitled *Mandala: The Art of Self-Compassion*. Run by Patricia Fitzgerald, who is a Mandala artist based in Dublin, Ireland (<https://www.healingcreations.ie/online-workshops.html>), we began by making doodles within a framework before moving on to creating a freehand Mandala followed by a more structured form. The workshop ended with soothing body relaxation and meditation.

Sometimes we are required to look for things that inspire us and can bring benefit, while at other times we may be surprised how things somehow find us. As we move forward into a period of predictable restrictions, and begin another year, it could be an opportunity to search out whatever creative endeavour is most appealing, be it via traditional methods or online, and explore something new, or else continue to build on what it is we already like doing.

Either way, art-as-therapy remains accessible for everyone through this challenging time. Have you discovered your favourite?

Contact Elspeth Scott at elspetharttherapy@protonmail.com.

The term ‘art therapy’ was coined in the 1940s by an artist named Adrian Hill. He identified the therapeutic benefits of making art while convalescing from tuberculosis at the King Edward VII Sanatorium in Midhurst. He went on to support other patients in this way to aid their recovery.

Carl Jung had also encouraged his patients to make art after he began creating intricate works earlier in the century, many

Keeping people in food and friendship

Manager Emma Kendall explains how Covid has turned the Earl's Court Farmers' Market into a special place for the Earl's Court community.

As a provider of essential food and drink,

The Earl's Court Farmers' Market is open every week, whatever tier of lockdown London might be in. Come rain or shine, the farmers and producers that have become staples for people in the area make their way to St Cuthbert's School every Sunday to sell their beautiful produce.

For Market Manager Emma Kendall, this has effectively become a way of life.

How did you find yourself managing Earl's Court Farmers' Market?

My husband and I have been very involved with food, food production, and sustainability for ten years now. We've lived on community farms, worked on them, and we both work for a farm in Forest Row, East Sussex, called Brambletye Farm. It's a biodynamic orchard and vegetable farm. My husband's been working for them for just over a year now as a manager.

Before this, he set up Horniman Market in Forest Hill, which is still running. We've passed it over to the Horniman Museum now. We also stepped in for a while to manage Brixton Farmers' Market.

The first time I sold bread was at Earl's Court Farmer's Market - for a friend of mine called Sid Aston. He's a baker who for the last fifty-five years has been growing his own grain for organic sourdough bread. That's Aston's bakery. They're amazing. So, I was selling bread when I first met the Earl's Court community.

I knew that the market wasn't very busy. It only had a few stalls. It was just hanging on. I was aware that London Farmers Markets, the original organisers, might drop it. All of that happened in Lockdown when it was very clear that we should continue because so many community members wanted us to.

Because I sell bread, I get to meet everybody, but they don't all know each other. It was obvious to me that it was the right place to have it and that it was really valued there. It's gained momentum just from the community itself.

It's also an opportunity for people to actually meet. It's safe. There's all the space for



“If we don't see the same customers every week, we know that something's up. We're looking out for each other. If someone's having an operation, one of us offers to drop food off to them. It's that sort of thing.”

distancing and it's outdoors. So, we're allowed to speak to one another. I know that for a lot of our older customers it's been a lifeline - just being able to see the same faces once a week, even though it's a brief exchange, has become very important to them.

What are the plans for Earl's Court in 2021 in the best case?

I'm not going to try to plan our way out of Covid because we've got no idea what's going to happen. But these kinds of things are in the nature of farming. Just knowing these farmers and watching how they operate has been inspirational. Especially the organic farmers. They have to deal with every challenge as it comes up on a daily basis.

They've really inspired me to just keep coping with whatever comes at you on that day. That's what farmers do. It's an amazing philosophy.

So, for 2021, we'll just keep being of service to the community, because the demand is there for the fresh produce. The priority is making sure that everyone's got access to good food.

But it is also about helping people transition to a more sustainable lifestyle. That doesn't just mean getting dirty and working the farms. We're talking about mental health here. What we need is to keep in touch with each other - a community where you support each other.

I grew up in London and it's so easy to be alone and to not get engaged with your neighbours. I've done that. I think that that's something that's springing out of Covid really - people becoming more aware of neighbours that may be isolated for example.

If we don't see the same customers every week, we know that something's up. We're looking out for each other. If someone's having an operation, one of us offers to drop food off to them. It's that sort of thing.

But our focus still has to be on safety. Shopping outdoors is safer, but it is very important that we operate responsibly. We ensure everyone observes Government guidance to help keep everyone safe.

Earl's Court Farmers' Market is open every Sunday at St. Matthias C of E Primary School, Warwick Road, Earl's Court, SW5 9UE

Remembering 1940

The first in a new regular series by Neil McPherson, Artistic Director of the Finborough Theatre, on the rich history of our local area and community.

In 2020, more people in the UK died of Covid-19 than the number of British civilians killed by enemy action in the Second World War. 2020 was also the eightieth anniversary of the start of the Blitz. As we live through another national emergency, it seemed appropriate to remember those local residents who lost their lives in 1940, concentrating on three local streets: Coleherne Mews, Ifield Road, and Finborough Road.

In the early hours of 13 September 1940, less than a week after the start of the Blitz, a bomb hit Coleherne Mews, killing eight of its inhabitants – an 18-year-old shop assistant; a husband and wife; a father and son; a teenage brother and sister; and a 45-year old architect who fought in the First World War, Jack Bishop.

On 12 October, almost exactly a month later, five houses were destroyed in Ifield Road. One of them was 126 Ifield Road, where 84-year-old Henry Jennings, his wife Edith (who was twenty years his junior), and his disabled sister-in-law Gertrude were killed. The site is now occupied by Earl's Court Youth Club and the Ifield Road playground. Number 126 stood roughly where the tree now grows in the centre of the playground.

Our area has always attracted writers, artists, and musicians. In 1940, one such creative family lived at 73 Finborough Road – Michael Battiscombe, a portrait painter, writer and opera singer, his wife Patricia and their 1-year-old baby son, Giovanni Raphael Paul. On 18 October – less than a week after the Ifield Road bomb and almost parallel to it – all three died there together. Had he lived, baby Giovanni would have celebrated his 82nd birthday this year.

The scars the Blitz left on the area are still discernible, especially in Finborough Road, most obviously where a single building from the 1950s or 1960s stands marooned in a sea of Victorian houses. The clearest examples are 140 Finborough Road, and 115-119 Finborough Road, named Honey Lane House after the old cart road where Ifield Road now stands.



Finborough Arms c 1938



Jack Bishop with his aunt Eleanor Bishop Miller.

Across the road from Honey Lane House stands the Finborough Arms building, now home to the Finborough Theatre. Shortly after it opened in 1868, it was taken over by the Finch family who ran it for fifty years. William Finch and his wife Mary Ann brought up their large family in the flat on top of the pub, and six of their ten children were born there. By the 1890s, they had done so well that they could afford to run the pub and move out of the area to live in a spacious house overlooking Ealing Common. By 1940, the long-widowed Mary Ann Finch and her six unmarried daughters had lived in Ealing for more than forty years.

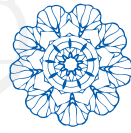


On the same night that the Battiscombe family were killed in Finborough Road, the Finch family home at 2 Leopold Road, Ealing Common, was hit by a single high-explosive bomb. Three rescuers were recommended for gallantry medals for digging the family out of the rubble. 70-year-old Mary Ann, and her younger sister, Florence, died at the scene. The matriarch of the family, Mary Ann Finch, died of her injuries in hospital two days later. She was 93 years old.

As we live through a time where staying at home is the safest place to be, it is worth remembering those who came before us who could not even depend on the safety of their own home.

In the next issue, we'll turn to lighter subject matter – with the assistance of Sherlock Holmes, Mrs Tiggywinkle, Amy Turtle, She Who Must Be Obeyed, and all the cats in the Finborough Road who eat buttered mice and boiled pelican...

There is more local history on Neil's new website at www.earls courtlocalhistory.co.uk



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Visit the Earls Court virtual Community Hub

The Earls Court Development Company (ECDC) host the virtual Community Hub, which is a portal for community initiatives that are going on in Earls Court during this time of uncertainty and social distancing.

We know that keeping the mind and body active is essential while we are in lockdown so we have brought together a host of wellness, fitness and arts & crafts activities online.

From dance classes, story telling and online theatre performances to home education tools and healthy meal ideas, there is something for all of the family to enjoy and take part in, and best of all it's **FREE!** You can also find out the latest news about your local amenities and businesses, as well as community aid and how to help the community during COVID-19.

If you have any activities or ideas you would like to share with us, please don't hesitate to email us at info@theearlscourtdevelopmentcompany.com

Visit the website at earlscourtcommunityhub.com or simply scan the QR code below.



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