

THE ELEPHANT

MAGAZINE

Issue 23 / Spring 2022

THIS ISSUE

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THIS IS THE ELEPHANT

And this is the Elephant Magazine.

The Elephant Magazine is the publication dedicated to all things Elephant and Castle. We want to celebrate all that is fabulous about our neighbourhood and our community. We want to look back with fondness on the area's past and look forward with optimism to the future. The Elephant is changing and the Elephant Magazine will be following every step of the way.



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We welcome your ideas, comments and contributions, so please get in touch.

Photography from left to right: Pizza chef; cans at The Cinema Museum; Castle Square; East Street sign; Siobhan Davies dancers; Elephant Says Hi; food at Tupi; Faye, Kaieteur Kitchen; Dickens' Fields; Southwark Heritage Centre; School of Historical Dress; Lenin, Miko's; ice-cream; Sokari, local artist; Elephant Springs; Four Quarters; Castle Centre; elephant statue

Keep in touch

Visit us at elephantandcastle.org.uk and subscribe to our mailing list for updates.

Work starts on Walworth Town Hall



Walworth Town Hall is being restored. It will reopen next year as flexible workspace alongside a new community hub.

The Grade II listed buildings on Walworth Road, which once housed the Newington Library and Cuming Museum, have been out of use since a major fire in March 2013.

Since then, Southwark Council has opened a brand new and thoroughly modern Southwark Heritage Centre and Walworth Library (just a few doors away on Walworth Road) which includes many items from the Cuming Collection alongside a new permanent heritage exhibition and a state-of-the-art library.

Now, the old town hall, which has been on the Heritage at Risk Register for nine years, is finally being restored and refurbished. Work began in March and should be complete by the end of 2023.

The scheme is being delivered by developer, General Projects, in partnership with the council. When complete, the town hall will reopen featuring a mix of flexible

studio and workspaces (ideal for start-ups and small businesses) alongside a new community space on the ground floor of what used to be the Newington Library.

The refurbishment includes a new third floor and mezzanine level within the former council chamber and a new entrance, which will open onto Walworth Square. There will be a new café, a courtyard and cycle storage and the memorial garden, which runs along Walworth Road, will also be relandscaped.

The work is being carried out by Conamar, a contractor with substantial experience in heritage projects. Over the course of the next 18 months, they will undertake demolition work, structural frame installation, façade restoration, roofing and internal fit-out before finishing the project with the external landscaping work.

The scheme has been designed by General Projects with Feix&Merlin

architects. General Projects has been granted a 125-year lease by Southwark Council to operate the town hall once it reopens.

The new workspaces will be hired out privately to businesses and individuals. However, as part of the planning agreement, the central areas of the town hall will be open to the public for events on at least 12 days every year.

A new independent management board chaired by local resident, Manisha Patel, and comprising other members of the Walworth community, has been established to help shape and oversee the new community space. This space will be operated by a third party (to be chosen by the management board) and will be available to the public all year round for a variety of uses such as meetings, events, talks, performances, arts and crafts, workshops and classes.

Former Council Chamber

What was once the Council Chamber now sits at the heart of the restoration. It provides the bulk of the flexible workspace with a new mezzanine level overlooking the first floor.



Courtyard

The project includes a number of improvements to the exterior of the building and its surroundings and will include a repurposed courtyard that can be used for outdoor working or a well-earned break when the weather is good.



Café

In addition to the community space in the former Newington Library, the town hall will include a café, which will be open to the public as well as those who are working in the building.



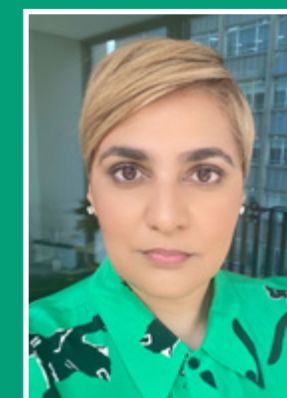
Community Space Management Board

The Community Space Management Board is an independent body. It will appoint an operator for the new community space and monitor how it is run.

The board was established at the end of last year and comprises nine members. Five of the members, including the Chair, have been drawn from the local community. The other four are from General Projects and the council.

Manisha Patel, Chair of the Community Space Management Board, told the Elephant Magazine “It’s an honour to Chair the Community Space Management Board. My fellow board members and I understand the great responsibility that we hold.

We are committed to ensuring that the new community space is open to everyone and reflects the richness and diversity of Walworth. We are ambitious in our vision for the space in terms of use and accessibility and we want to see a thriving community hub that delivers something for every resident.”



Keep up to date on Instagram: [@wth_community_space](#)

HAVE FUN AT ELEPHANT PARK THIS SUMMER

A packed summer of events and activities awaits you at Elephant Park this summer. Here's just a flavour of what's in store...

GET SPLASHING

Elephant Springs, the fun, rocky, watery landscape in Elephant Park, has reopened for the summer. Great for big kids and small, it features stone towers to clamber up, slides to slip down, waterfalls, fountains and a running stream. There's even plenty of sand to wiggle your toes in. So, if you didn't discover this urban oasis last summer, don't delay, you won't want to go anywhere else this year.

DON'T FORGET! Your bucket and spade



GET TRACKING

Have you spotted any elephants around Elephant Park lately? Perhaps one very colourful, patchwork elephant in particular? The hugely popular Elmer the Elephant trail is back and it's the perfect fun and free way to spend an afternoon with the family. Ten decorative Elmer statues have been set out around Elephant Park; each one designed by a different local community group. Can you find them all? If you need a hand, you can pick up a map from the nearby Southwark Heritage Centre and Walworth Library (147 Walworth Road) or download a copy from elephantpark.co.uk

DON'T FORGET! Tag your photos #ElmerAtTheElephant



GET SNACKING

The Picnic at Elephant Park promotion is returning this summer. Participating cafes, bars and restaurants are laying on a special picnic menu throughout the summer. Travel on a foodie exploration to every corner of the globe, as you mix and match your perfect picnic, packed full of international flavours.

Keep an eye out for details coming up on Elephant Park's Instagram.

DON'T FORGET! Your picnic blanket



GET RELAXING

Did you know Elephant Park now has its very own tree house? Drop-in to the main park and you'll be amazed.

Just at the top of Sayer Street, you'll find the brand new Tree House, a pavilion built for the community, with great views across the park. Designed by Bell Phillips Architects, The Tree House contains a bookable community space, a café kiosk run by Hana Coffee and a fully accessible, expansive, roof terrace from which you can sit, relax, and enjoy the view. The building wraps itself around one of the park's mature, London Plane trees, so when you climb up to the roof terrace, you really are amongst the treetops with a bird's eye view.

Find out more, including how to book the community space for meetings, events, or activities at elephantpark.co.uk

DON'T FORGET! Your bird watching book



GET DINING

There are already lots of brilliant places to eat and drink around Elephant Park and many new venues are set to join in the fun, later this year.

Keep a look out for The Rosey Hue on Ash Avenue. Opening in the summer, this large, dog-friendly boozier will be run by the popular south London pub group, Livelyhood. Expect great-tasting food alongside a wide-ranging drink selection, all with a focus on local suppliers and produce.

Also arriving in Ash Avenue soon is DistriAndina. Currently based in the arches beneath Elephant and Castle station, DistriAndina has been a favourite amongst locals for many years. Their new store will sell a large selection of grocery items and snacks imported from across Latin America. And, as one of the main social hubs for the Elephant's Latin American community, DistriAndina will continue to operate as a bar and restaurant too; serving up delicious South American street food including freshly made arepas, empanadas and plenty more besides.

And, if that's not enough to whet your appetite, waiting in the wings are Korean/Japanese takeaway, Kokoro and Mexican bar and restaurant, Cheeky Chicos.

DON'T FORGET! Leave room for dessert



Find out more at www.elephantpark.co.uk and on Instagram @elephantparklondon

JEFF DEXTER: LET'S TWIST AGAIN



Jeff Dexter, the man who taught 60s London how to do The Twist, tells the Elephant Magazine about a life immersed in music, dance and fashion.

A pioneering dancer turned DJ; publicist turned record producer; band manager and concert promoter – not to mention one of the most stylish figures of his era – Jeff Dexter has certainly left his mark on the city.

It's not a bad CV for a local lad who first discovered his love of music at a youth club on East Street.

"I bought my first pop record in 1955 from A1 Records on the Walworth Road. It was a 78rpm copy of *16 Tons* by Tennessee Ernie Ford" says Jeff.

"A1 was an electrical shop with a record bar out the back. They also used to have a stall in East Street Market every Saturday and Sunday where they would sell records" he explains.

"My relatives sold fruit in the market and I used to help out on the stall at the weekend. On Saturday mornings we'd get in my uncle's truck and head into Covent Garden at 4am to get the fruit. We'd come back to East Street, where the stall would have been set up for us, unload and then start selling. I remember it all vividly."

Now aged 76, Dexter is as dapper as ever, although his clubbing days are long behind him.

"What really got me interested in contemporary music was going to the youth club on East Street" he says.

"The boys at the club were generally interested in playing snooker and billiards but I was so small that I could barely see over the table! So I soon took control of the record player instead. I played records for the girls to dance to. I always liked female company and throughout my life it's stood me in good stead. I'd play the records that the youth club had (the pop hits of the time) and dance. It gave me a taste for what's a good tune and what gets people dancing."

"By 1961 I was a dancer and singer at the Lyceum theatre (which was then a Mecca ballroom) in Covent Garden. My first time there and the DJ is playing all these great R&B songs that I'd never heard before. I introduced myself to him and he said 'I'm Sammy' (Ian Samuel). He became my mentor and a very good friend.

He was about 12 years older than me and keen to make people dance."

Ian Samuel was a musician, songwriter, DJ and much else besides. Notably, he wrote *Move It* which was the first big British rock 'n' roll record and Cliff Richard's very first hit in 1958.

Ian taught Dexter to DJ and together they would go on to manage and produce the band America (including their 1971 hit *A Horse With No Name*).

"I was the first person to dance The Twist in London back in 1961" says Jeff, referring to the dance craze that had begun amongst American teenagers just a year or so before.

"It was at The Lyceum but the management banned me – saying

the dance was obscene!" Jeff laughs. "But just a few weeks later, The Twist really began to take off here and The Lyceum hired me to demonstrate the dance to clubbers."

This was at the start of the decade that would eventually become known as the "Swinging Sixties" and Jeff found himself at the very heart of the London scene.

"It was Sammy who taught me how to DJ" says Jeff.

"Mecca had an account at Imhof's on New Oxford Street (a

had just started importing well-cut gear for little blokes like him and me" he chuckles. "That year we both modelled at the Men's & Boys' Exhibition at Olympia. Mark's mum ran a stall on Berwick Street in Soho and we would meet there before going shopping for clothes. He liked music too but he was always more interested in clothes. Mark was a funny bloke."

Jeff and Mark were both early devotees of the mod style but by the end of the decade had gone on to embrace the burgeoning hippy scene.

What really got me interested in music was going to the youth club on East Street

department store that sold music and hi-fi gear) and when the new-release records were delivered on a Tuesday afternoon, we'd go along and take a big pile of them into one of the shop's listening booths and try them out, one by one. Firstly, I was looking for how good they were to dance to and secondly (if they weren't dance tunes) how they worked for the dreamtime snogging."

"Tony Calder and I went into the record promotion business and worked The Beatles' first 45, *Love Me Do* in 1962" explains Jeff. "Epi (that's what I called their manager, Brian Epstein) hired us because he didn't trust EMI to do a good job on the promo. I was only 16 and our success with The Beatles meant we got lots of work on behalf of other bands, including The Searchers, Brian Poole and all those Liverpool acts."

A sharp dresser himself, when The Beatles came to London, Jeff introduced the band to his tailor, "to get their Beatle suits made."

Another clothes-obsessed teenager that Jeff befriended throughout the 60s was a young Mark Feld – who would later go on to find fame as Marc Bolan.

"I first met him in 1959 when he was 12 and I was 13" says Jeff. "It was at Connick's Junior Man – a menswear shop in Dalston that

Marc formed the band Tyrannosaurus Rex (later T. Rex), while Jeff became resident DJ at the Middle Earth club in Covent Garden where John Peel (who would soon become a star broadcaster at the BBC) also DJ'd.

"I met John when he was just off pirate radio (Radio London)" says Jeff. "He was a very nice bloke and I really liked what he played; it was very different. I played more R&B and Blue Beat than he did. Dancers

loved them but John couldn't dance!

I was the first DJ in Britain to play the Beach Boys' *Good Vibrations* (at The Empire, Leicester Square) and the first to play four tracks off the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (at The Roundhouse). Back then, it was important to me to be the first with everything."

Jeff was born in Lambeth Hospital, part of which is now home to Elephant and Castle's Cinema Museum. He grew up in Newington Butts and Walworth and has many fond memories of the area from the 1950s and 60s.

"I went to the opening of the Elephant shopping centre in 1965" he recalls "It was brilliant! The first of its kind. I'm disappointed they've knocked it down."

He also mentions that Baldwin's, the herbalists on Walworth Road, features a photo of him as a child customer. "The sarsaparilla they sold back then was so good!"

Jeff has lived in Hampstead for many years now but he still returns to Walworth on occasion. As someone who has always kept up with the latest trends and changing times, Jeff notes "It's changed a lot since I left. But that's the way of everything – always moving on and changing."



Jeff with Marc Bolan in 1970 and, above, Jeff demonstrates The Twist in 1961, aged just 15

A new arts festival is taking to the streets of Elephant and Castle from 29 to 31 July.

From dancers in Bagshot Street and acrobats in Walworth Square to African music in Nursery Row Park, the Urban Elephant festival will be a free, community celebration of everything that's wonderful about our neighbourhood.

Local community arts groups, including Superarts Academy and the Yuruparí Colombian folk dance group, along with some of the best street artists from around the world, will be performing at eight locations across Elephant and Castle throughout the festival weekend.

"The arts are a great way to bring people together" says John Whelan, the festival's Creative Director.

« ————— »
We've got the largest diaspora of the Latin American community outside Latin America

» ————— «
 "Urban Elephant is about connecting the old and the new. It will stretch from one end of Walworth Road to the other, linking every part of the neighbourhood from the Aylesbury estate to Elephant Arcade.

We're bringing in some amazing street artists, but we're also going to showcase the amazing talent we have on our own doorstep and celebrate the immense cultural diversity of the area."

John wants Urban Elephant to be London's first fully sustainable and carbon neutral street festival.

Rather than building staging, performance areas will be marked out with temporary chalk, and people will be encouraged to walk and cycle from one performance to the next.

John and the team are working with two local primary schools to create a map that shows all the key sites. The map will be printed on tote bags and given out as

free gifts over the weekend.

There will be free family activities running throughout the day in Castle Square on 29 July and a sparkling, live music and dance event, that celebrates the area's many Latin American communities, will launch the festival proper at 5pm.

"We've got the largest diaspora of the Latin American community outside Latin America" says John, "so we really want to celebrate their contribution to the neighbourhood. But this area is a microcosm of so many different cultures we also want to make sure the festival is truly diverse and accessible for everyone."

The idea for Urban Elephant came from John and his Artistic Director, Mike Raffone and it is being run in conjunction with the Elephant and Castle Business Forum – a partnership of local firms, retailers and arts and cultural venues, established by the Elephant and Castle Town Centre team to promote business and increase trade in the area.

"The weekend will be a particularly good opportunity for cafés and restaurants to do special offers or promotions" says John "but every business can get involved."

The festival has been funded by Southwark Council's High Street Recovery Fund with additional support from Lendlease, Get Living and Notting Hill Genesis.

"The last few years have been tough on local businesses, so we want to encourage people to visit their local high streets and appreciate all the great places they have on their own doorstep" says John.

Alongside the main festival there will be a variety of pop-up community events in the evening to promote the Elephant's night-time economy.

John organised events for Liverpool's European Capital of Culture in 2008 and in 2014 he founded People's Company, a free community theatre group for over 25s based at Southwark Playhouse.

"People's Company gives local people a platform to express themselves creatively, not just



by performing, but also through writing, directing or stage management" John explains.

As part of the festival, People's Company will lead free Animated Tours of Elephant and Castle, which have been put together with the Elephant and Castle Town Centre team. Starting in Castle Square, these tours will shine a spotlight on the area's history and heritage.

"Actors will bring our local history to life in a new and interesting way" says John. "People who have moved into the area recently will be able to learn more about where they live but I'm sure that those who have grown-up here or been here for many years will learn a few things too."

"In fact, there's an opportunity to try the Animated Tours ahead of the festival too" says John. "We're doing tours on Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 May. They are free but you will need to book a place via Eventbrite."

John hopes that Urban Elephant will attract visitors from across the capital and become an annual event.

"Elephant and Castle used to be known as the 'Piccadilly of the south', because it was such a popular destination for music and entertainment before the Second World War" he says. "We want it to be that kind of destination again."

Find out more: urbanelephant.org.uk
freetourselephant.eventbrite.co.uk

Business Forum:

info@elephantandcastletowncentre.co.uk

URBAN ELEPHANT FESTIVAL

29 TO 31 JULY

FROM CRATE TO PLATE

At the corner of Elephant Park sit several shipping containers with a green secret.

As the doors open, you're immediately struck by the fresh smell of fields. And as your eyes adjust, 2,800 heads of lettuce come into view, all growing in neat rows under artificial light.

This is the world of hydroponics – a method of growing plants using mineral nutrient solutions instead of soil. The plants in this container take up 320 sq ft but on a traditional farm, a crop this size would occupy up to an acre of land.

Some people believe hydroponics represents the future of farming and a solution to feeding an ever-growing global population.

This particular Elephant and Castle "farm" belongs to Crate to Plate. It's the brainchild of Sebastien Sainsbury, who thinks people living in cities should be able to eat high quality, pesticide-free food, just days after harvest.

Part of the famous supermarket family, Sebastien not only wants to sell good quality food but also wants to educate people and spread the word about hydroponics.

Sebastien says "Shipping containers are ideal for locations like Elephant Park. We can just drop them in and they're good for two or three years. It's the perfect way of getting fresh produce to people, grown within 15 minutes of their own homes."

As well as serving local residents, Crate to Plate also sells to local restaurants. And with a strict no wastage policy, any leftovers are broken down into mixed leaf packages and sold online, sold to shops or donated to the charities, Peckham Pantry and City Harvest.

A former banker in the City, Sebastien's passion for sustainable farming began over a decade ago.

"In 2007, I was doing research on food security and where our food comes

from. I read that the World Health Organisation estimated we need to increase our food production by 80 per cent if we are to meet the needs of our growing population by 2050."

Sebastien was toying with a business idea around the same time. He says "I pitched my idea to various people but they all told me 'the public will never buy fresh food online'."

Years later, he took a trip to the Milan World Fair: Expo 2015. It was here that he saw a vertical farm exhibited in the US pavilion and made up his mind to give it a go.

“Technology has changed everything”

"Hydroponics have been around for a Millennium. If you think about it, the ancient Hanging Gardens of Babylon were grown in water, so it's nothing new" says Sebastien. "You can grow anything in nutrient-rich water and new technology enables us have a controlled environment where every aspect of the plants' growth is monitored from start to finish, including the temperature."

Sebastien admits he couldn't have done any of this 12 years ago. "Technology has changed everything" he says, adding "to produce a batch of 600 lettuces only needs one dishwasher's worth of water a day."

He says that working with Lendlease, the Elephant Park developer, was the perfect fit.

"Lendlease are committed to helping the community and committed to sustainability. They have the same fundamental values

and ethos as our company."

Sebastien now has grand plans to expand Crate to Plate.

He's building a home delivery and click & collect service from his Elephant Park base. It's aimed at the 50-odd retail and leisure businesses located here, as well as up to 3,000 residents who will be able to order through the residents' app. He says "we want to build a subscription-based service, which we hope to launch this summer."

His ambition is to provide produce for the wider Southwark area too. And, from September, he wants to teach the borough's schoolchildren about sustainability from a classroom in Elephant Park.

"My commitment to the community is to open a classroom and bring in kids, from both primary and secondary schools. We'll give them talks about sustainability, food wastage and where our food comes from. It would be great if, one day, our containers become training grounds for kids, so we can give them the chance to come in, grow their own produce and take it home to eat."

He plans to add a site in Stratford, shortly, to the hydroponic farms he runs already (in Kentish Town and the Isle of Dogs as well as Elephant and Castle).

"The long-term goal is to feed people at mass market prices" says Sainsbury. And, within five years, he hopes to get Crate to Plate produce stocked in supermarkets.

Asked which chain he would like to be the first, he smiles and replies "Sainsbury's, naturally!"

Find out more at cratetoplate.farm and www.elephantpark.co.uk



PEDAL

PUSHERS

Cycling for commuting and leisure has seen a huge increase over the last decade. Now the push is on to get businesses to take-up pedal power too.

Over 260km of cycle routes have been created in London over the past six years and there are now some 700,000 journeys made by bike, throughout the city, every day.

The number of cargo bikes is increasing too and Southwark is leading the way with the Bikes for Business (BFB) project, which promotes zero-emission cargo bike deliveries as a mainstream solution for business freight.

First launched by Team London Bridge two years ago, and overseen by sustainable transport consultancy, MP Smarter Travel, the scheme is helping local businesses to make the shift from petrol to pedals. After an initial run in 2020, it's now back for a second bite of the cherry.

"2020 was a big success" says

Leigh Gravenor, the consultant heading up BFB. "We hit our targets and got re-commissioned to do a second phase."

He continues "I used to be a cargo bike courier in central London. I understand what it takes and I know what companies look for. I've a pretty good eye for the type of business that can make the most out of bikes."

BFB provides support and funding to businesses that want to try cargo bikes for the first time.

The stats show that making the switch to cargo bikes makes good sense. Replacing just one HGV with cycle freight in central London can save 9.8 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year. Meanwhile, estimates from a European study (*CycleLogistics – moving Europe Forward*) suggests

that up to 51 per cent of all freight journeys in cities could be replaced by cargo bikes, with some bikes able to carry as much as 300kg.

Bikes for Business is working with companies throughout Southwark but particularly with those based along the Low Line (the route which traces the railway lines through the north of the borough). This includes firms in Blackfriars, Bermondsey and Elephant and Castle.

In the first phase, a number of Bermondsey businesses – such as Bell & Sons butchers, based in The Blue market – tried cargo bikes for the first time. Now Leigh wants to push further south, down Walworth Road and as far as Burgess Park. He says "We've already linked up with the traders in East Street market to deliver food to

Elephant and Castle by bike, where previously they were using taxis."

The target is to engage with 1,300 businesses. "This means speaking to them and having a meaningful conversation about their deliveries" explains Leigh. "Out of these, we aim to get at least 300 using cargo bikes in some way. It could be just a one-off but it's better as a trial for at least one month. At the end we see how many deliveries they've done and we pay them a subsidy depending on that."

Funding for the scheme comes from Southwark Council, the two local Business Improvement Districts (Team London Bridge and Better Bankside) and the charity, Impact on Urban Health, which wants to improve air quality in urban areas.

To encourage businesses to use the scheme, Bikes for Business offers a subsidy up to £700, depending on the number of deliveries. The firms can put the money towards their own bike or towards hiring a

third-party service. In addition, MP Smarter Travel provides free advice and guidance to each participant.

"Some people think using a cargo bike is a massive commitment, but it's not" says Leigh. "We just want them to try the bikes where they currently use a van, car or motorbike. We might help them to set up a brand-new service or simply help them to choose a type of bike."

Leigh stresses, however, that it won't affect the jobs of drivers within any firm that makes the switch.

"Take Orbit Beer on Walworth Road" he says "we approached them a couple of times on engagement walks and said 'you've got an online shop and you sell kegs to breweries – could some of this be done by bike?' They have their own driver who does the pick-ups and deliveries on the longer distances but now they've moved some of their local orders to cargo bikes."

With the current scheme finishing in

the autumn, Leigh says "As a transport agency we'll still be in the area, but whether we continue this project will be down to funding. We'd be keen to keep going because we feel there are many more businesses we can help and more work still to be done."



If you would like to find out more about Bikes for Business, email Leigh Gravenor from MP Smarter Travel at bikesforbusiness@mpsmartertravel.co.uk or call 020 7960 2553

DIOGENES THE DOG

Sunny Hodge is pulling in visitors from far and wide to his neighbourhood wine bar on Rodney Road.

« We transformed the place in just 42 days, working around the clock to get it ready »»



Diogenes the Dog has put Elephant and Castle on the map when it comes to wine. Everyone from *Time Out* and *Stylist* to *Decanter* and *Conde Nast Traveller* are fans of this wine bar, bottle shop and café.

Sunny Hodge opened his business three years ago in the former Rose and Crown pub on the corner of Wadding Street and Rodney Road.

The bar takes its name from the ancient Greek philosopher Diogenes (nicknamed The Dog) who was known for doing things a little bit differently.

Sunny likes to take an unconventional approach too. Rather than opt for a traditional wine list, his bar focuses on up-and-coming wine regions from around the world. These include places as far afield as Poland, Texas and China, and many of the wines are imported directly from the producers.

Sunny has always wanted his bar to be a go-to place for wine lovers, not just from London but from across the globe too. And it wasn't long after he first opened in 2018 that he knew word had got out.

"I wanted to create a destination spot" says Sunny. "One Saturday night, about six months after we started, somebody entered the bar and told me they'd come straight from the airport – just off a plane from Singapore. It was then that I knew that what we were doing was really working."

Creating the wine bar has been a labour of love for Sunny. He had already worked in hospitality for more than a decade, including stints at Margot in Covent Garden, the Gaucho group and The Fordwich Arms in Kent.

He spent two years looking for a good site before he came across The Rose and Crown, which had been vacant for a while. In his twenties, Sunny had lived nearby (just off Walworth Road) and he felt Elephant and Castle was the right place for his new venture.

"If we had opened somewhere like Dalston, where people already go out a lot, we would just have been one of many places to drink and dine but I wanted us to be something of a local institution" he says.

The old pub needed a lot of

work to get it into shape.

"When we took it over it was pretty much an empty shell" Sunny recalls. "There was no running water and only one double socket downstairs."

Luckily, he had help. His girlfriend, Paulina, designed the interior and her father, Darek, assisted him with the refurbishment.

"We transformed the place in just 42 days, working around the clock to get it ready" says Sunny, who even created many of the fixtures and fittings himself. "I made the benches and some of the table-tops and I even welded the wine racks. The stools and a few other things came from Gumtree" he adds.



« After 5pm, the whole space transforms »»

The ground floor is a beautiful open-plan area filled with plants and with bottles lining the walls. Downstairs is a cellar which is open at weekends and can also be booked for private events.

During the day, Diogenes operates as a café bar and grocery, where you can have a coffee and a pastry or a glass of wine and a snack. You can also buy a range of locally-sourced breads, cheeses and meats. However, it's in the evening that it really comes into its own.

"After 5pm, the whole space transforms" says Sunny. "We move the counter and put wine glasses on the tables and light candles." He adds "We offer a bespoke, tailored service. We've trained our team as sommeliers and we help our guests to understand more about the wines on offer."

Most of the wine is available by the

glass. "We want people to try different wines, so we actively discourage guests from buying a bottle" Sunny explains.

The food menu includes plates of charcuterie from Bermondsey's Crown & Queue Meats and "Boozy Cheeseboards" sourced from Drunk Cheese in Borough Market, all served-up with homemade pickles.

The bar is incredibly popular with couples on 'date nights' and with friends meeting up for a chat. The formula has worked so well that Sunny opened another venue, Aspen & Meursault, in Battersea, last summer.

However, it hasn't been plain sailing by any means.

"Closing for lockdown, just 15 months after we first opened, was tough" says Sunny.

He managed to retain his staff and keep the business going by turning the bar into a shop. He ran a phone sommelier service – providing customers with wine advice – and provided free delivery in the local area.

"There were far fewer visitors from abroad, of-course" says Sunny "but local trade is now making up for that. We were always full of people on a Friday and Saturday night, but no-one was from the area. Now it's the opposite" he beams. "In the last six to nine months, it really feels like local residents are spending more of their weekends going out in Elephant and Castle rather than going to Bermondsey, Borough, Camberwell or elsewhere."

Diogenes the Dog is also signed up to the Elephant Says Hi project which aims to tackle loneliness and social isolation and he's proud to be a part of life in Elephant and Castle.

"Me and all the staff are very much part of the local community" says Sunny. "Sometimes it feels a bit like *Cheers* in here" he laughs, "where everyone knows your name!"

Diogenes the Dog

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Sun: 11am to 10pm

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SPURGEON AND THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE

Elephant and Castle is always changing, but there is one landmark that any local resident of the last 150 years would recognise instantly – the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

Standing on the platform at Elephant and Castle station, for the first time in more than 50 years, you can now look to the west and admire the Tabernacle's impressive portico.

This view, which had been hidden by the shopping centre since the 1960s, is one of the many reminders of our neighbourhood's rich history.

At one time, the Tabernacle was home to the largest independent Baptist congregation in the world.

The roots of the Baptist faith lie in the English Dissenting movement of the 1600s. Following the Church of England's break with Rome (1537), various groups of English Christians became dissatisfied with the established church. Some of these dissenters, like the Puritans, attempted to reform Anglicanism from within, while other groups broke off entirely to form their own churches.

Two English exiles, John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, created one such group in Amsterdam in 1607.

Smyth and Helwys believed the Bible was the only guide to Christian living and that the only valid church would be one that comprised believers who had been baptised after a personal confession of faith. Their breakaway group baptised its first believers in 1609 and, in the process, they gave birth to the Baptist movement. After Smyth's death, Helwys took over the leadership and he and his followers returned to England in 1611.

The origin of the Metropolitan Tabernacle congregation dates back to 1650.

At this time, the government was actively suppressing non-Anglican Christians. For its first couple of decades, the Tabernacle group appears to have been fairly informal (no doubt due to persecution) but, in 1688, the congregation opened its first chapel on Carter Lane, close to



1890



2022

where the London Bridge Hospital stands on Tooley Street today.

The group flourished and, under Pastor John Rippon (1776-1836), it became one of the largest Baptist congregations in the country, prompting a move to New Park Street (by Borough Market) in 1833. The new chapel could seat 1,200 people.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who would become the Metropolitan Tabernacle's most famous pastor, was born the following year.

In 1850, at the age of 15, Spurgeon

had a conversion experience. Within a year he had become pastor of a church in Cambridgeshire and, within three, he had published his first gospel tract.

He took over as pastor of New Park Street church when he was only 19.

The charismatic young preacher's sermons were wildly popular. In fact, by the age of 22, Spurgeon was the most popular preacher in the UK. He attracted the kind of crowds and hype that we associate with rock stars today.

Attendance at services quickly outstripped the capacity of the New Park Street chapel (even after an expansion) and the congregation adapted by renting space in the Surrey Music Hall (which stood roughly where Pasley Park in Walworth is today).

On 1 October 1856, the first service saw 10,000 people crowd into the Music Hall and as many again listening from outside. Unfortunately, it ended in tragedy when someone inside the building shouted "Fire!" The ensuing panic and crush killed seven people. Spurgeon would carry grief and guilt over the deaths for the rest of his life.

Services at the Surrey Music Hall restarted in November, routinely drawing 10,000 people, but ended in December when Spurgeon objected to a series of Sunday evening concerts begun by the Music Hall (as they broke the Sabbath). At this point he appears to have moved his services, temporarily, to the Crystal Palace in Sydenham. In 1857, Spurgeon preached to a huge crowd here of more than 26,000 people.

However, plans were already afoot to build a new, permanent

home for the congregation.

Spurgeon and his associates chose the Elephant and Castle site, as it was believed to be where three Protestants – the Southwark Martyrs – had been burnt at the stake in 1557, during the reign of Queen Mary I (Bloody Mary).

The new Metropolitan Tabernacle, which originally featured an auditorium seating 6,000 people, was completed in 1861.

Spurgeon was not just a preacher and pastor. He was also involved in evangelism and philanthropy. In 1856, he founded a college to train pastors (which would eventually be known as Spurgeon's College) and, once the new Tabernacle was ready, the New Park Street chapel was sold and the proceeds used to build alms-houses (an early kind of sheltered accommodation).

In 1867, Spurgeon also founded the Stockwell Orphanage to care for vulnerable boys (and later, girls too). It appears to have been the favourite of all his institutions and, for many years, he would use his birthday to raise funds for the orphanage. This included holding one of London's largest bazaars.

The orphanage remained in Stockwell until the Second World War, when the staff and children were evacuated to Reigate. The site was later destroyed in the Blitz.

In 1951, the orphanage moved to Kent but eventually closed in 1979. However, the work Spurgeon started in 1867 continues to this day through the charity, Spurgeon's, which works with young people and vulnerable families.

Spurgeon (unlike many of the Baptists in America) was also staunchly in favour of abolishing the slave trade. In 1873, he hosted the Fisk Jubilee Singers at the Tabernacle. The singers were an a cappella group from Tennessee, many of whom were former slaves. The proceeds from the 10,000-strong audience helped pay for Jubilee Hall, the first permanent building on what is now the Fisk University campus in the USA.

In 1892, Spurgeon died while in Menton, France.

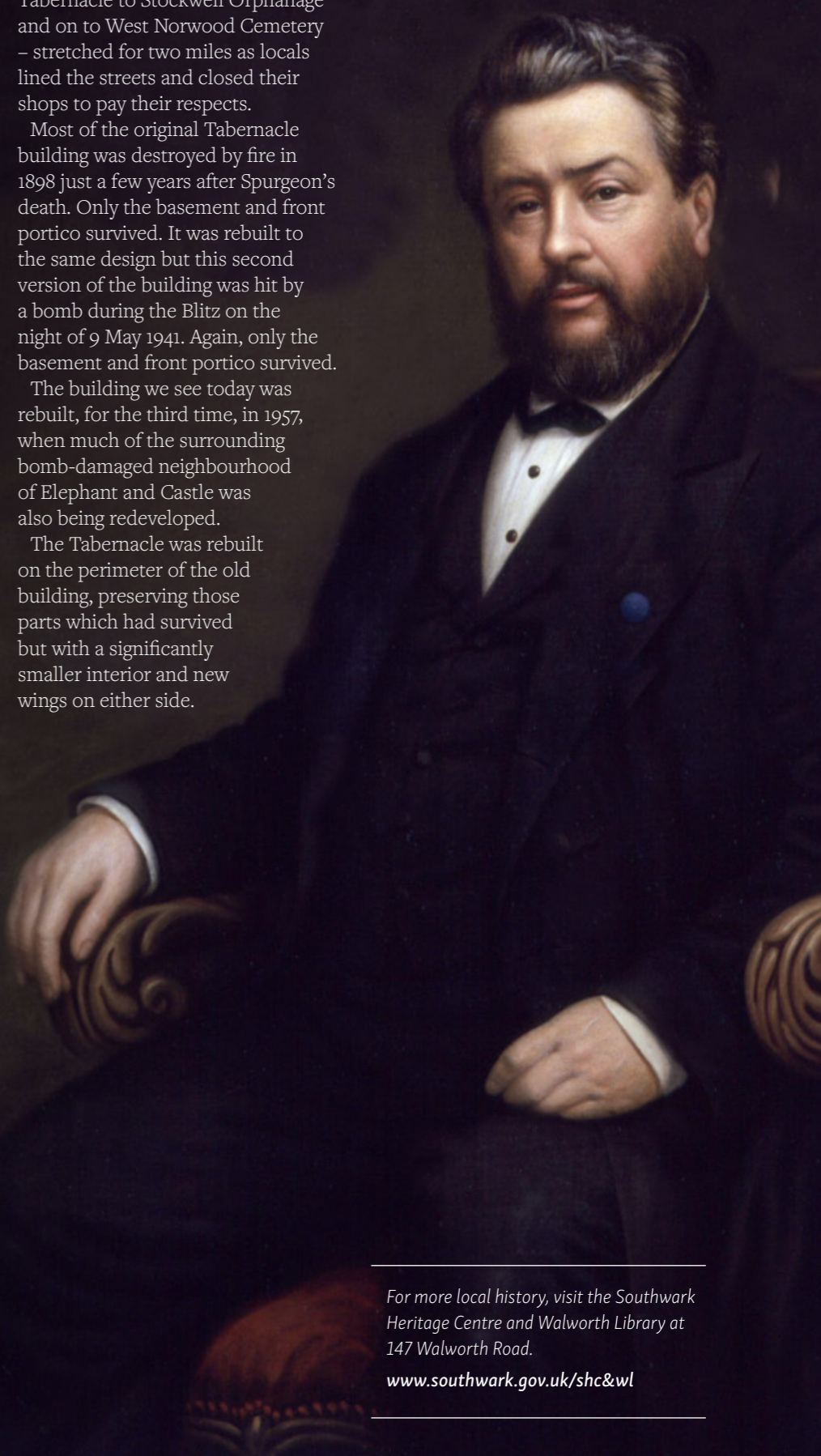
Four 12-hour-long memorial services were held in Elephant and Castle before the funeral, and on the day

itself, extra public transport and police were laid on for the estimated 100,000 mourners. The funeral procession – from the Metropolitan Tabernacle to Stockwell Orphanage and on to West Norwood Cemetery – stretched for two miles as locals lined the streets and closed their shops to pay their respects.

Most of the original Tabernacle building was destroyed by fire in 1898 just a few years after Spurgeon's death. Only the basement and front portico survived. It was rebuilt to the same design but this second version of the building was hit by a bomb during the Blitz on the night of 9 May 1941. Again, only the basement and front portico survived.

The building we see today was rebuilt, for the third time, in 1957, when much of the surrounding bomb-damaged neighbourhood of Elephant and Castle was also being redeveloped.

The Tabernacle was rebuilt on the perimeter of the old building, preserving those parts which had survived but with a significantly smaller interior and new wings on either side.



For more local history, visit the Southwark Heritage Centre and Walworth Library at 147 Walworth Road.

www.southwark.gov.uk/shc&wl

MY ELEPHANT AND CASTLE

Locals tell us what they love about the Elephant



Cassandra

Elephant and Castle has definitely changed a lot in a good way.

There are so many more options with all the new businesses. I love Little Louie café on Ash Avenue and I really like Beza Ethiopian Vegan Restaurant on Sayer Street. Beza's food is amazing and the people are so lovely. It's great that she's been in the area for over ten years. I also love the Nunhead Gardener next door. It's such a nice space to walk around and they have candles and other nice things as well as plants.



Jaimie

I've lived in Elephant and Castle for six years. It's great to have so much here on our doorstep. There are many new cafés and restaurants and I love the parks and green spaces. It's such a good area for families. My son was at the new library on Walworth Road earlier with his grandparents. He loves to sit in the children's area and look at all the books. We also like the newly reopened Dickens' Fields, which has such a good play area. The sand pit and playground at Elephant Park is another favourite.



Rebecca

I love the variety here. You have very traditional London buildings alongside lots of modern ones. There's so much music, arts and culture too. I run the SoLo Craft Fair shop on Ash Avenue (we stock over 60 local makers and designers). The local community has been so welcoming and people here really want to support small, local businesses. I enjoy a beer and an arcade game at Four Quarters. I love Little Louie café and the sourdough pizza at Four Hundred Rabbits. The Elephant and Castle Pub is great too.



Declan

I like Elephant and Castle as it has a bit of everything for food and drink. There is such a great diversity of places to go and everywhere is different from each other. It's also one of the best spots in London to get to anywhere you need to go; it's so well connected. I also like the fact there are lots of green spaces.



Max

I like how Elephant and Castle is very central. It is in Zone 1 but still has a community feel. It's a bit of a dichotomy. It's fast-paced as it's central London but people are in less of a rush. I feel like I know a lot of the small business owners and if you go somewhere you often end up having a chat. The Nue Ground café bar and the people who work there are really nice. I also like Theo's as they do really good pizza.



Kirstie

What's great about this area is that so many different cultures are able to express themselves and share their stuff (food and fashion etc). Walk along the Old Kent Road and there are so many different businesses and cafés, and lots going on. I work in a local school one day a week. It is such a warm, welcoming community with a big heart, lots of energy and big smiles. I particularly like Hej café as it's very friendly and you can stay and work for as long as you like.



Fran

This area is great for kids. I have a young child, so I take them to Burgess Park a lot and I'm just about to go to the baby swimming sessions at Darwin Court healthy living centre on Crail Row. The Frogprince baby music classes at Mercato Metropolitan are great as well. I also like the new MMy Mercato food market on Walworth Square. The quality of the fresh produce is so good, and the bread is delicious.



Aurelia

I'm south east London through and through. I don't venture north unless I have to! I'm half French and half Turkish and I love the multi-cultural influence in Elephant and Castle. It still feels very community based and down-to-earth; which isn't always the case when there's been redevelopment. Louie Louie café on Walworth Road is my perfect place to have a coffee and catch up with work and I feel really at home there. Mercato Metropolitan is a favourite place to go and eat as there is so much choice and a really cool atmosphere.

The Elephant Magazine is produced by Southwark Council. We would love to hear your feedback and welcome suggestions for future features. Drop us a line at councilnews@southwark.gov.uk

Read more about the regeneration programme at www.elephantandcastle.org.uk and remember to subscribe to our mailing list for updates.