ON THE HILL

FREE

AUTUMN 2025



I Shop, Therefore I Am

The new book by Mary Portas

PLUS

Martha Swift and the Primrose Bakery

AND

St Paul's School Coronation Garden

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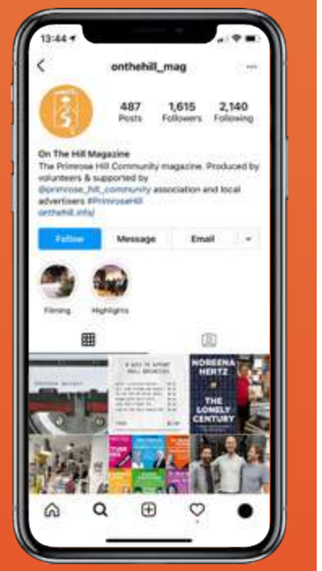
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ON THE HILL
PRIMROSE HILL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

onthehill.info

AUTUMN 2025

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PRIMROSE HILL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

This publication is created by the community and for the benefit of Primrose Hill on behalf of your local charity, the Primrose Hill Community Association (PHCA). All proceeds from this publication go directly to fund the charity. We hope you enjoy.

www.phca.cc

Disclaimer: the views in the magazine are not necessarily the views of the PHCA.

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Cover Photograph
Sarah Louise Ramsay

Editor's Letter



Welcome to Autumn

In William Miller's 2018 book, *Gloucester Crescent*, he recalls listening to the 'rhythmic clatter of manual typewriters coming from the open windows of houses along the street'. The typewriters were those of his father, Jonathan Miller, and the many other literary residents for which Gloucester Crescent is renowned. Those manual typewriters have mostly been retired now, but the computer keyboards of Primrose Hill have certainly been clacking away this year.

Mary Portas has a new book, *I Shop, Therefore I Am: The '90s, Harvey Nicks – and Me* which recounts her time spent as the window dresser for Harvey Nichols. The book takes you straight back to the '90s fashion scene and is packed with juicy anecdotes.

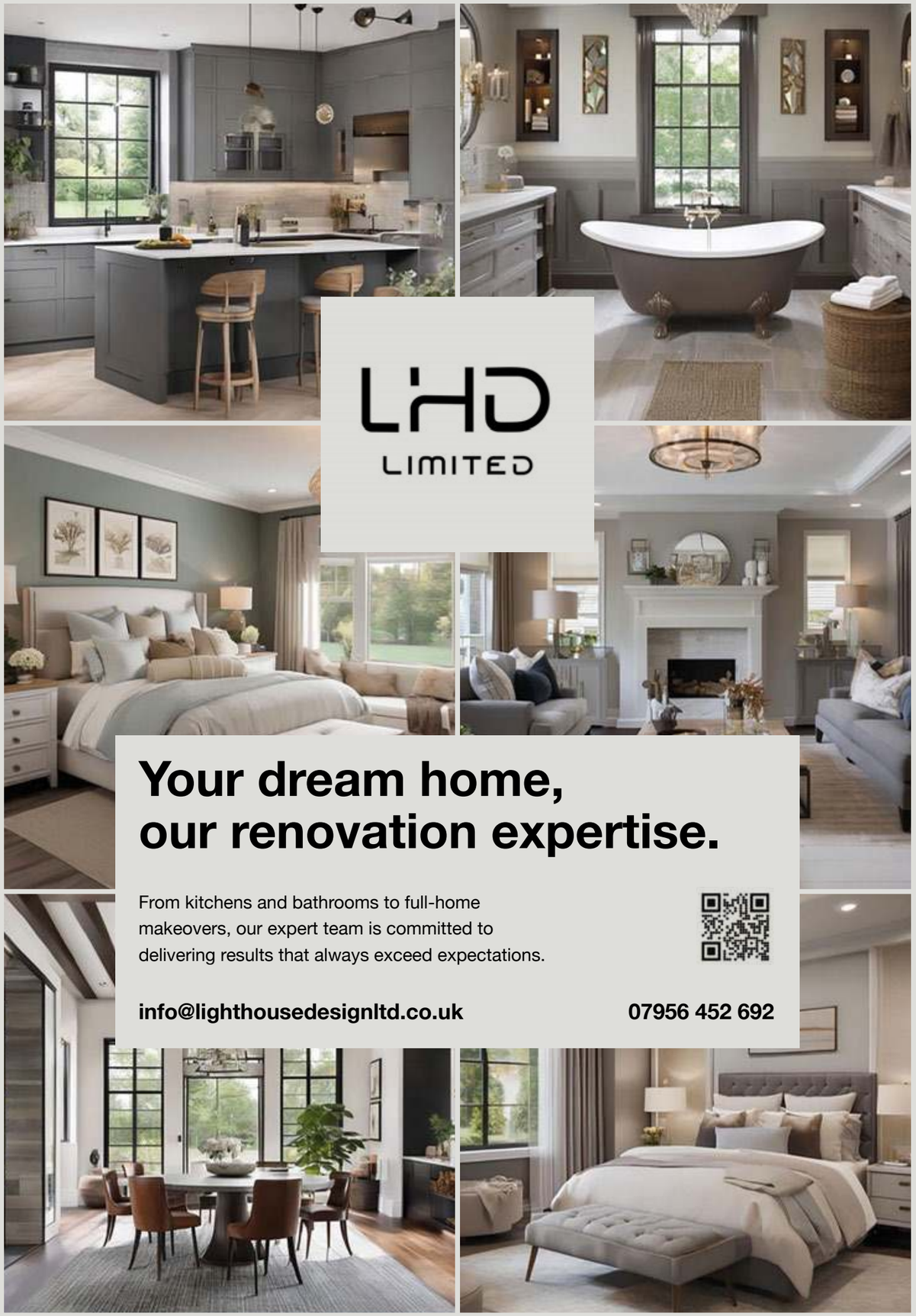
On the cake front, Martha Swift of the Primrose Bakery has published a new book, *Mix & Match Baking Box*, which consists of 30 recipe cards including hundreds of cake combinations. Read about the early beginnings of the Primrose Bakery and Martha's life on p 20 of this issue.

For those interested in local history, Martin Sheppard has published an illustrated treasure trove of times past with *Primrose Hill*, a condensed version of his 2013 book *Primrose Hill: A History*.

Theatre lovers have not been left out; Janet Dulin Jones has written *Charles Dickens – Morning Chronicle*, a play about the early life of Charles Dickens, which will be directed by Trevor Nunn. If you'd like to support this project, fundraising details can be found on p 13.

While the above writers give their digits a well-earned rest, we have plenty of reading matter to be getting on with as the nights draw in, including the recent new acquisitions in the Primrose Hill Community Library. Happy reading!

Maggie Chambers



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ON THE STREET

St Paul's Coronation Garden (p8)

***Primrose Hill* by Martin Sheppard** (p9)

Yoga Centre Comes Home (p12)

***Charles Dickens – Morning Chronicle* by Janet Dulin Jones** (p13)

AND MORE



St Paul's Coronation Garden

Continued on p 8 ▶

St Paul's CE Primary School Coronation Garden



In June, St Paul's School held an opening ceremony for its new garden, which will provide an effective extra classroom for the children, alongside many unique learning experiences.

The garden is the result of our community working together to achieve something special. Headteacher Clive Hale wanted to create an outdoor learning space to encourage students to participate in practical outdoor learning in nature.

The children played a key role in creating the garden. They moved tree trunks, cut poles, made walls out of willow, planted vegetables, made ceramic sculptures, tended the plots, and made the walls of the greenhouse out of bottles. The staff helped them consider what kind of spaces to create, encouraged classes to tend their garden plots, and defined possible learning opportunities. The parents collected water bottles, raised money, volunteered to help clear the garden and offered family watering days in the holidays.

Others contributors in the community include Matt Halsall from the Royal Parks, who was involved with consulting with the children, drew up the first plan and was instrumental in getting support for the garden; Mary-Jane Roberts, who project-managed, fundraised, lobbied and assembled a workforce; Natasha Delliston, who gave horticultural advice and support; the Growing Green charity, who gave advice and established the woodland habitat; Think Green London Ltd, who did bespoke project work and drew up plans; and Learning through Nature for grant funding and staff training.



The end result has been to create a space offering a variety of natural habitats, including a bug hotel, a wild flower meadow, a hedgerow, composting area, bird feeding stations, a flower garden, scented and culinary gardens, allotment plots for each year group and an orchard. Taking inspiration from Ricky Sandhu's innovations in bottle-houses (*OTH* July/August 2019), Mr Hale incorporated a greenhouse made from recycled bottles. Additional features include wooden seats, rainwater butts, a solar water feature, wind spinner, pergola and a fire-pit on which wood and cuttings are used to create the heat to brew up hot chocolate.





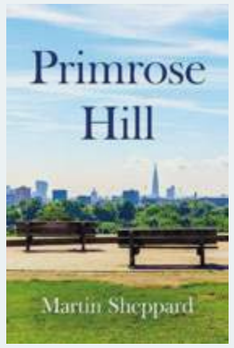
The garden will be used for hands-on learning experiences that will help the children to understand nature, the importance of looking after our environment, supporting the concept of recycling and reusing, harnessing energy, learning where our food comes from, tending the garden, identifying and classifying plants, birds and insects, as well as providing inspiration for projects in Art, Maths, Geography and Science. The 'forest school' element will give opportunities to try new things, safely engage with risk, build structures and social interaction. And most importantly, the children will have a special space where they can be mindful and appreciate nature.

The opening ceremony was attended by councillor Anna Burrage.

The project was supported by The Royal Parks and Blakedown Landscapes, as part of their wider work in The Regent's Park to create a new garden commemorating the life of Queen Elizabeth II.

Aiming to follow the success of St Paul's garden, a team of volunteers will now work with Primrose Hill School from Autumn 2025. Would you like to donate towards plants or the School Forest? Maybe you can provide some gardening muscle-power? If you could be part of our broader team, do send an email to maryjanerf@icloud.com.

Primrose Hill by Martin Sheppard



In 1850, two young buffaloes broke free from Paddington station and, disturbed by sweeps shaking a soot bag, broke free and charged out across Regent's Park into Primrose Hill, injuring seven people. This unusual vignette might have been lost to many of us were it not for local historian Martin Sheppard.

In 2013, Martin published *Primrose Hill: A History*; but has now written an abbreviated version, *Primrose Hill*. This version covers the chronological history of our area, as well as the spiritual elements of ley lines, UFOs, Druids and William Blake 'conversing with the spiritual sun', plus more down-to-earth details such as the clay structure of the Hill and its impact on local geology.

The colourful history of Primrose Hill is revealed in tales such as the discovery of the body of Protestant magistrate, Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, and the duels: 42 known challenges were held in the area between 1790 and 1837, with seven men killed and fourteen injured. The reasons for the challenges included 'being pushed off the pavement, the use of an insulting nickname, the failure to keep an appointment, a quarrel between two dogs and disparagement of the navy. While only a few of the disputes were fought over women, two piano journeymen fought a duel about tuning.'

Throughout the eighteenth century, Primrose Hill became a destination for excursions and various structures were planned for the Hill, including a replica of the Parthenon, a pagoda, a pyramid taller than St Paul's Cathedral, a villa for 'physical and spiritual refreshment', a statue of Britannia and a statue of Shakespeare. There were also two campaigns to build a cemetery.

The government eventually acquired the Hill and opened it as a park in 1842. It was deliberately left wild and was more like open pasture, complete with grazing sheep. In 1848 a gymnasium was opened which excluded women and children under eight. A kiosk which had been part of the Great Exhibition was placed near Barrow Hill Reservoir in 1851, and then upgraded to tea rooms in 1859. The playground was added in the 1920s.

Primrose Hill was described as 'the Hyde Park of the working classes' and gained a reputation as 'a place of popular rather than genteel amusement'. The press coined the term 'Cockney Sundays', and in July 1845 reported that 'Primrose Hill is a living mass on a Sunday evening'.

Famous early visitors to the Hill included Herman Melville, author of *Moby Dick*, Eleanor Farjeon, and Lenin who used to ride over from Clerkenwell with his wife as it only cost sixpence. H. G. Wells included mentions of Primrose Hill in *The War of the Worlds* and also *The Invisible Man*, in which the hero is 'sitting in the sunshine and feeling very ill and strange on the summit of Primrose Hill' the day before he becomes invisible.

Vandalism was an ongoing problem on the Hill, with reports in 1877 of the glass panes in lamps being smashed. In 1934, the see-saw was destroyed in the playground and a swing went missing. Hooligans were reported as using the gymnasium as a rendezvous in 1936, and there was evidence that it was 'becoming a training ground for prostitutes'. An aluminium viewfinder was placed on top of the Hill in 1953 but was continually vandalised, no matter what precautions were taken, so eventually the Park admitted defeat and removed it in the early 1960s.

The book contains a chapter on the two World Wars and how they affected Primrose Hill, including a sketch of the guns and huts placed there in 1941. Four high explosive bombs and two oil bombs fell on the Hill, V1s fell on the Zoo, the canal and King Henry's Road, and a V2 fell on the tea room and obliterated it in 1945.

Primrose Hill is a fascinating gem if you'd like to delve into the history of our area. It's available at the Primrose Hill Community Library and Primrose Hill Books.

Martin Sheppard will be giving an illustrated talk, 'Primrose Hill in Old Postcards' at the Primrose Hill Community Centre on Tuesday 21 October.



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Postcards from Primrose Hill



This crossroads view is where Chalcot Road meets Fitzroy Road, looking south-east towards Princess Road. Chalcot Road was known as St George's Road until 1937, when it was changed to eradicate duplicate street names in London.

On the right, just inside the frame, we see a young boy posing for the photographer. He's wearing a white apron and looks directly into the camera. He's carrying a basket in both hands; maybe he's on his way to make a delivery. I'm guessing he was employed by Turner Butchers, located at number 38, which is just behind him, outside the frame. Most of us know that address as Fonthill Pottery.

Two businesses are very clearly visible in the photo. On the left, at number 22, is what we now know as the Princess of Wales pub. In 1911 it was run by John K. Spiers, whose name is visible behind the street light. He managed the pub with his wife Kate, niece Dorothy and two servants.

Across the road was a master baker, originally from Meisenheim, Gemany. Phillip Beischer married an English woman with German parentage named Elizabeth. Together with their two sons and one daughter, they worked and lived at number 40. There were also two trainee bakers listed on the 1911 census. The name 'Beischer' is just visible above the entrance of the shop, next to the sign 'Pastrycook'. How interesting that today it is Sam's Cafe that occupies these premises.

@old_primrosehill_postcards



NEWS & INFORMATION

PRIMROSE HILL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

from Primrose Hill Community Association

Your regular update from PHCA, publisher of *On The Hill*

There's plenty going on this autumn at the Primrose Hill Community Association and we'd love you to get involved!

UPCOMING EVENTS:

We're kicking off October with a **Volunteer Get-Together** on **Friday 3 October, 6.30–8.30pm** – a relaxed social to thank all who help out at our projects and events.

Then join us for the **AGM on Thursday 16 October at 7pm**, followed by a talk from a special guest speaker.

On **Tuesday 21 October**, local historian **Martin Sheppard** will give a fascinating illustrated talk entitled 'Primrose Hill in Old Postcards'.

And don't miss our annual **Village Disco** on **Friday 22 November** – a lively evening of dancing to hits from the '60s through to the '90s!

REGULAR ACTIVITIES:

We run a variety of weekly and monthly sessions for all ages and interests, including:

Open House – free weekly talks, walks, films or outings, always followed by tea and cake.
Zumba Gold – fun and upbeat keep fit for seniors.
Seniors Yoga/Pilates – free gentle, chair-based sessions for those who find regular classes tricky.
Life Drawing – for all abilities, with live models.
Wellbeing Café – every **Wednesday 10am–2pm**, pay what you can.
Sunday Bar – every week, with a low-cost bar and pool table.
Memory Singing Circle – for those affected by memory loss and their carers.
Art for the Mind – monthly sessions for those with memory challenges, carers welcome.
Qi Gong – a popular free movement class (check the PHCA bulletin for dates).
Narcotics Anonymous – support groups every **Thursday and Saturday**.
Sadie yoga – a free semi-regular yoga class including meditation, breath work, positive intentions and Jivamukti-inspired yoga flow

GET INVOLVED:

Our much-loved **Primrose Hill Walks** are currently on hold following the departure of our organiser. If you're passionate about local history and fancy leading monthly themed walks, we'd love to hear from you!
Neighbourhood Nosh are currently looking for volunteers to help at the Wellbeing café on Wednesdays; if you're interested, email wellbeingcafe@phca.cc

If you'd like to join our Events team helping to plan events, get in touch. Visit **phca.cc**, or drop into the Community Centre, or **email info@phca.cc**

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Yoga Centre Comes Home

By Micael Johnstone



Yoga and wellness space HOME is an exciting new addition to the Primrose Hill community. Created by the Triyoga founder Jonathan Sattin and located on the original site of the first Triyoga on Erskine Road, HOME is a holistic wellness space that includes the vegetarian cafe Only Love. Micael Johnstone met Jonathan to find out more.

How are you, Jonathan?

Great – it's been a really lovely summer, thank you.

How does it feel to be back on the original site of your first yoga and wellness business?

It feels like the right thing to do, the right place to be. The yoga and pilates studios are actually in the original building, which feels quite poignant to me and it feels like home! There's something special about Primrose Hill, there's a community here. It feels like somewhere that has a history; somewhere where people feel connected. A sense of home is really important, and we've got our home back for the community;

Why did you get into the wellness industry, and what led you back to this place?

When I look back, I have no idea how it happened! I was a lawyer for a long time and always wondered what I should be doing, but I knew I had to stop being a lawyer. My friend in LA said to me, "Why don't you do what you love, which is yoga?" I looked at 'the yoga set' in New York and LA, and thought, that's interesting, and then it just took on a life of its own. It sounds weird, but there was a sort of momentum to it.
Sometimes you are either following something or you're being pushed into something, rather than actually setting out on something. I didn't set out to help people live healthier lives; it wasn't something I had in my head.

And then somehow I went along this route and realised this is what I should be doing. I look back and go, "Wow, it's pretty interesting how that happens." We left Primrose Hill to go to Camden and that was a big thing. But we only left so we could come back – back home!

Why this time and specifically this place?

I thought, if I'm going to do this anywhere, it would be Primrose Hill. It's been my home – either living or working – for probably 40 years. The response we've had from people to HOME has been really moving. I feel we've opened in response to what people have asked for.

Why is the wellness industry in such demand?

I think that there's more consciousness of our wellbeing, both physically and mentally, and people place more value on that. We live in really interesting times, and I think people are looking for things that help them cope. You can use wellbeing as an escape, or you can use it as a tool.

What are your hopes for the future?

I want us to deliver what we say we're going to do: giving people a place where they can feel better, happier; a place where they belong, which I personally think is really important. Service is one of my passions. I believe in the importance and power of service – of being in service to people. I think it's such an amazing practice. In the West, a lot of the time, you think it's about being subservient to people, and I don't think that at all. I think it's very nice being able to serve someone, and I'd like that to run through everything we do at HOME: that sense of 'we are in service'.
www.homewellness.uk



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Charles Dickens – Morning Chronicle

By Janet Dulin Jones

When the world is out of joint . . . someone has to tell us the truth.

Four days before Christmas in December 1835, a penniless 23-year-old newspaper journalist gave his notice to the Morning Chronicle *in London. He had accepted a position at the Inns of Court as a clerk in the hope of a better future, but five days later the journalist did not show up for the job; no one ever knew why. What happened in those five days changed the course of literature and the social fabric of Great Britain. The reporter's name was Charles Dickens.*

When I was writing my play, *Charles Dickens – Morning Chronicle*, friends said to me, "Gosh, if you could only get Trevor Nunn to direct this!" I laughed and rolled my eyes. But the incredible has happened, and after a few years of wondering if my play would find a home – and through a miracle – Sir Trevor Nunn is indeed directing my play. This wonderful outcome with my beloved Dickens and Mr. Nunn still at times leaves me in shock. However, here we are, taking steps to make the play come to life in London.

On 10 April, we presented a great table-reading to colleagues and friends at the Riverside Studios in Hammersmith. After just one day of rehearsal, our truly excellent and inspired company of 17 actors achieved astonishing, complex and nuanced performances.

The singing was stunning too: of songs written by me and my song-writing partner, Sadie Jemmett, led by Music Director, Steve Edis. The whole company was amazing, and the enthusiastic reception (including a standing ovation) has launched us.

We are now moving forward with *Charles Dickens – Morning Chronicle*, buoyed by the reading. Trevor and I are bent on a full production to bring the play to the stage in London. The dream plan is to start with a six-week off-West End run to premiere the show; then move the play to the West End, and eventually Broadway and beyond.

The Dickens team has a GoFundMe support site. If you have theatre-loving friends who love Dickens, Christmas, supporting women playwrights and/or the legendary works of Trevor Nunn, please share our GoFundMe link. As we are overseeing everything in pre-production, donations will be deeply appreciated.

www.gofundme.com/f/morning-chronicle



The Camden Choir Concert Programme



The Camden Choir has announced its 2025–26 concert programme, which includes Music from the Americas: A Celebration of Thanksgiving (Saturday 29 November), Mendelssohn's oratorio *St Paul* with orchestra (Saturday 21 March 2026) and Bach and Baroque (Saturday 20 June 2026). All concerts are held at St Mary's church and begin at 6pm. The Choir is also delighted to welcome Joan Bakewell (Baroness Bakewell of Stockport) as a Patron, alongside Dame Judi Dench and the broadcaster Jon Snow.

Rehearsals are on Monday evenings and have just started, so if you are interested in joining this friendly and welcoming group, please visit **www.camdenchoir.london** for full details. You don't have to live in Camden, and the first term is free!

Harriet Kelsall: Employee Ownership and New Managing Director

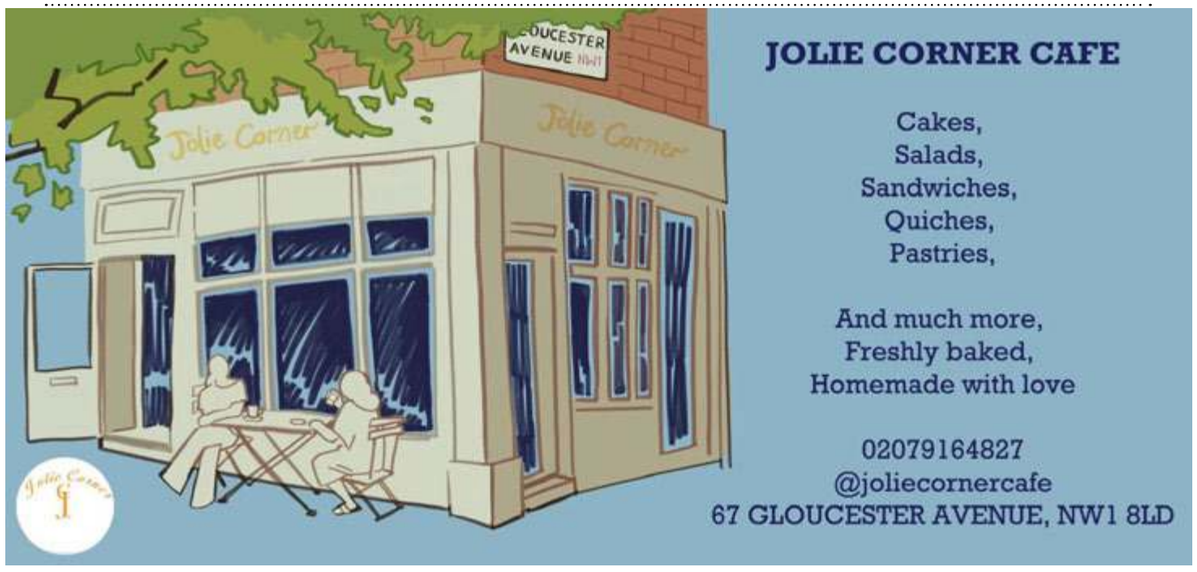


Harriet Kelsall Bespoke Jewellery has announced two major milestones: a move to employee ownership and the appointment of a new Managing Director. Rebecca Howarth – a key member of the team for over 20 years – will lead with a collaborative approach, continuing to champion the company's strategy, employee-owned values, and ongoing commitment to creativity, ethics and innovation.

Years ago, while living in Chalcot Square, Harriet fell in love with the area, feeling that its sense of community, individuality and creativity aligned with her own. Her dream started at her kitchen table in 1998, when opening the studio 'felt like coming home'; since then her company has brought bespoke to our high street.

Throughout, the company have pioneered ethical and sustainable practices and earned many accolades along the way, including Bespoke Jeweller and Ethical Jeweller of the Year. With employee ownership, the talented team that has helped shape each success are now key stakeholders in its future too.

Harriet Kelsall intends to stay in the business, combining her role with other non-executive director roles.



News & Views

Meet My Paws



On the morning of 29 April 2017, Martine Davis was walking her dog Rusty on Primrose Hill when they crossed paths with Anthony Joshua, who was training ahead of his Wembley fight that evening. Rusty offered his paw and Anthony Joshua shook it. That lovely moment stuck with her and it became one the sparks for Meet My Paws, a new platform she's launched to help dog owners connect for friendship, companionship, or even love. The website is all about creating natural connection between people who meet while out with their dogs; no pressure, just paws first.

martine@meetmypaws.com
www.meetmypaws.com / @meetmypaws

The Basement Gym



The Basement Gym + Studio has opened at 128 Albert Street, just off Parkway. The locally owned North London gym was founded in Kentish Town in 2020, where it is known for its strong community spirit, high-spec strength equipment and inclusive atmosphere. The Basement now brings that same energy to their new space in Camden.

Members can expect world-class strength and cardio equipment, a multi-functional studio offering yoga and mat Pilates, and premium recovery facilities including a sauna, steam room and ice drop bucket. The Camden Club is also home to The Basement's expert in-house personal training team, offering bespoke, results-driven programmes tailored to each individual's goals, combining specialist coaching with the unmatched access of a fully equipped training space. The Camden Club blends style with function, creating a thoughtful, welcoming environment where everyone, from seasoned lifters to first-time gym-goers, can train, recover and thrive.

thebasementldn.com / @thebasementldn

Unveiling of Red Wheel Plaque



The Red Wheel plaque to celebrate Pickford's Stables was unveiled in July by the Mayor of Camden, Councillor Eddie Hanson, while Peter Darley, director of Camden Railway Heritage Trust, hosted the event. Welcome refreshments were on offer in the horse tunnel at Michael Nadra. Pickford's Stables, built in 1857, were the largest and most sophisticated working horse stables of the mid-19th century. Red Wheel plaques are sponsored by the National Transport Trust to celebrate important transport heritage. The plaque is mounted on the Gloucester Avenue wall, part of the original stables.



TUESDAY 7 OCTOBER
Film Show: Tampopo
Join us for the deliciously unique cinematic experience of Tampopo, a cult classic from Japanese director Juzo Itami. PHCL. Doors open 7.15pm. £8 including a glass of wine. Tickets at phcl.org/filmshow

WEDNESDAY 15 OCTOBER
Book Club
PHCL. 7pm. Check website for details of the book, phcl.org. Free.

FRIDAY 17 OCTOBER
Gig at the Library
PHCL. Doors open 7pm. £5 online, £6 at the door. Tickets at www.phcl.org/gig.

SATURDAY 26 OCTOBER
Feldenkrais Workshops
HOW on Earth do you STAND – Focus on Pelvis. PHCC. 12.45–2.45pm.

MONDAY 27 OCTOBER TO FRIDAY 31 OCTOBER
Circus Glory Camp
PHCC. For ages 4–12 years. Visit their website for details: https://www.circusglory.com/childrens-camp

KIDS

MONDAY
Ready Steady Go Beginners
A gentle introduction to pre-school activities for ages 1–2 years. PHCC. 9.15–11am. Contact 020 7586 5862.

Ready Steady Go
Pre-school education and activities for ages 2–3 years. PHCC. 9.30am–12.30pm. Contact 020 7586 5862.

Rhyme Time
Library Rhyme Time for under-5s. PHCL. 11–11.30am. Suggested donation £2. Contact 020 7419 6599.

Circus Glory
Trapeze for ages 2½–16. All levels welcome. PHCC. 2–7.15pm. Contact Genevieve 07973 451603.

Board Games
Come along to the Library for our board game evening. Bring your own or join in with one that we have. PHCL. 6pm. Free.

TUESDAY
Ready Steady Go
Pre-school education and activities for children aged 2–3 years. PHCC. 9.30am–12.30pm. Contact: 020 7586 5862.

Monkey Music
Music and play for under-5s. PHCC. 9.45am–12.15pm. Contact 020 8451 7626.

Ballet
Introductory ballet sessions for children, using storytelling and imagery to teach the basics of dance. PHCL. 10–10.30am. Suggested donation £2. Contact lilykourakou@hotmail.com.

Hartbeeps
Multi-sensory music movement and drama classes for infants and toddlers. PHCC. 2–5pm. Contact clarelouise@hartbeeps.com.

Chess Club
Every other Tuesday (14 and 28 October). PHCL. 6.30pm. Free and open to all ages and abilities. Check Library website for more details.

WEDNESDAY
Ready Steady Go Beginners
A gentle introduction to pre-school activities for ages 1–2 years. PHCC. 9.15–11am. Contact 020 7586 5862.

Ready Steady Go
Pre-school education and activities for ages 2–3 years. PHCC. 11.30am–12.30pm. Contact 020 7586 5862.

Circus Glory
Trapeze for ages 2½–16. All levels welcome. PHCC. 2–6.45pm. Contact Genevieve 07973 451603.

Primrose Hill Children's Choir
Exciting performances, fun singing. St Mary's NW3 3DJ. 4.20–5.20pm. primrosehillchoirs.com. Contact: maestromattheww@yahoo.co.uk

THURSDAY
Ready Steady Go
Pre-school education and activities for ages 2–3 years. PHCC. 9.30am–12.30pm. Contact 020 7586 5862.

Mini Mozart
Musical story time. PHCL. 9.30–11.10am. Book at www.minimozart.com.

Catherine's Ballet
Nursery and primary ballet classes for ages 3–7 years. PHCC. 4–5.30pm. Contact 020 8348 0262, info@chalkfarmschoolofdance.co.uk or chalkfarmschoolofdance.co.uk.

Street Dance for Kids (8–12 years)
PHCC. 5.30–6.30pm. £12 drop-in per class or £10 for block bookings. Contact info@theimperialsteps.com

First Class Learning
Maths and English tuition. PHCL. 3.30–6pm. Contact primrosehill@firstclasslearning.co.uk

FRIDAY
Ready Steady Go
Pre-school education and activities for ages 2–3 years. PHCC. 9.30am–12.30pm. Contact 020 7586 5862.

Circus Glory
Trapeze for ages 2½–16. All levels welcome. PHCC. 3–7.30pm. Contact Genevieve 07973 451603.

SATURDAY
Perform
Drama, dance and singing for ages 4–12 years. St Paul's CE Primary School. 9.30–11am (4–7s) and 11.15am–12.45pm (7–12s). Contact 020 7255 9120 or enquiries@perform.org.uk.

Tales with Tracey
A fun and educational session featuring a well-loved children's book, enhanced with props, expressive character voices, interactive storytelling and singing for under-5s. PHCL. 11–11.30am. £3.

Family Dance Sessions
PHCC. Under-5s: 10am. Ages 5–11 years: 10.50am. Ages 12–19 years: 11.45am. Contact info@icandance.org.uk

SUNDAY
Perform
Drama, dance and singing for ages 4–12 years. PHCC. 10am–11.30am (4–7s) and 11.35am–1.05pm (7-12s).

What's On Autumn 2025

ADULTS

MONDAY
Board Games
Come along to the Library for our board game evening. Bring your own or join in with one that we have. PHCL. 6pm. Free.

Chilled Strings
Beginners' orchestra rehearsals. PHCC. 6.15–8.45pm. Contact sueandhercello@gmail.com.

Primrose Hill Choir
Love to sing? All styles of music, all levels welcome. PHCC. 7.30–9.30pm. Contact maestromattheww@yahoo.co.uk.

Choir: Voices on the Hill
A community choir singing soul, blues, pop, jazz and classic songs. Everyone welcome. PHCL. 7.30–9pm. £10 per session. Contact voicesonthehillchoir@gmail.com.

TUESDAY
Pilates
Dynamic sessions 10.15–11am; gentle sessions 11.30am–12.15pm. PHCL. £15 per class, £120 for 10 classes. Contact patricia-pilates.com.

Laban Explorers
A small, eclectic group of actors, singers and dancers meet once a week, term-times, online and in person. PHCC. 12.30–1.30pm. Contact jennyfrankel.laban@gmail.com

Zumba Gold
Zumba class for seniors looking for a fun, modified, low-intensity workout, made easy with simple-to-follow steps. PHCC. 2.30–3.15pm. £3 per session or free for benefit claimants. Check PHCA website for details.

Memory Singing Circle
Singing and socialising sessions aimed at people with dementia or other neurological conditions and their carers. PHCC. 3–5pm. Check PHCA website for details.

Morris Dancing Class
All welcome, no experience required. CSH. 6.30pm. Book online.

Chess Club
Every other Tuesday. Free and open to all ages and abilities. PHCL. 6.30pm. Check Library website for more details.

Fellows Singers
A local chamber choir with a wide repertoire across the centuries, styles and languages. PHCL. 7.30–9pm. Contact 07901 555 785 or jeremy@jeremylewison.co.uk. More information at fellowssingers.com

Qi Gong
Introduction to mindful movement and conscious breathing. Every Tuesday 5.30–6.30pm. PHCC. Free for the general public. Contact ChiKungGuy@icloud.com for more info.

WEDNESDAY
Wellbeing Cafe
Cafe space and warm bank serving delicious home-made soup and cake, tea, coffee, jacket potatoes and more. PHCC. 10am–2pm. Pay what you can.

Open House
Talks, museum and gallery visits, films and more, always followed by tea. PHCC. 2–4pm.

Yoga
Renata teaches breath- and alignment-based yoga, aiming to foster strength and mobility, while inviting a quality of mental spaciousness and ease. Classes on 4 and 25 June. PHCC. 6–7pm. More info: renatabittencourtyoga.com.

English Folk Dance Club
Fun for dancers of all abilities and none. No partner needed. PHCC. 7.15–10pm. Contact camdenfolkdance@yahoo.com.

London Sound Project Choir
A friendly community-led choir in North London, performing contemporary songs with a pro band, open to all (18+). PHCL. 7.15 9.15pm. More info: ldnsoundproject.co.uk.

THURSDAY
Silver Swans Ballet
Ballet classes for over 55s. PHCC. 11am–12pm. Contact katie@primrosehillballet.co.uk.

Gentle Pilates
Gentle but effective Pilates class. PHCL. 12.30–1.30pm. £15 per session. Contact jane_seal@hotmail.com.

Narcotics Anonymous
Support for people with narcotics problems. PHCC. 1.30–3.45pm. Free. More information via NA helpline 0300 999 1212.

Primrose Hill Community Orchestra
A symphony orchestra for all strings and woodwinds. PHCC. 2–4pm. £10. Contact sueandhercello@gmail.com.

Dance Funky
Weekly Dance Workshops. Beginners welcome. PHCC. 6.30–7.30pm. £12 drop-in per class or £10 for block bookings. Contact info@theimperialsteps.com.

Bridge Club
Advanced session 6–8pm. PHCL. Contact jojarrold@gmail.com.

Life Drawing
All levels welcome; friendly group. Please bring your own materials. PHCC. 6.30–8.30pm. £12 card, £10 cash. Follow on Instagram @lifedrawingph. Just drop in or sign up online at meetup.com/Primrose-Hill-Life-Drawing-London.

FRIDAY
Aerial Pilates
PHCC. 10–11am. Feel stronger and more flexible with the support of an aerial sling. Contact Pieta at pieta.ruckkeene@gmail.com.

Chair Yoga for Seniors
PHCC. 2.45–3.45pm. Free. Register at www.phca.cc.

SATURDAY
Primrose Hill Market
St Paul's School playground, Elsworthy Road, NW3 3DS. 9.30am–2.30pm. Contact www.primrosehillfoodmarket.com.

Narcotics Anonymous
Support for people with narcotics problems. PHCC. 5.30–7pm. Free. More information via NA helpline 0300 999 1212.

SUNDAY
Sunday Bar
Primrose Hill Community Bar, a chance to meet neighbours over discounted drinks and play pool. PHCC. 12–3pm.

CONTACT DETAILS

Primrose Hill Community Centre (PHCC)
29 Hopkinson's Place
(off Fitzroy Road), NW1 8TN
Contact: 020 7586 8327,
info@phca.cc
www.phca.cc

Primrose Hill Community Library (PHCL)
Sharpleshall Street, NW1 8YN
Contact: 020 7419 6599
events@phcl.org
www.phcl.org

Cecil Sharp House (CSH)
2 Regent's Park Road, NW1 7AY
Contact: 020 7485 2206
www.cecilsharphouse.org

Primrose Hill Community Library

As soon as we took responsibility for the Community Library over 10 years ago, we realised that window displays would be of prime importance. The 1960s design of the building features low-level, broad window sills that can be used to highlight a selection of books for passers-by; and the Library's book stock has provided inspiration for the regularly changing window displays over the years.

Topics are discussed and decided at the monthly Book Committee meetings. It is then very satisfying to select which books to display (almost always too many to choose from), and to research an appropriate image for the poster that heads up each display. But the main purpose, of course, is to attract potential new readers into the Library.

New Acquisitions

Paperbacks

Francesca de Tores
Saltblood

Claire Douglas
The New Neighbours

Alison Espach
The Wedding People

Lisa Jewell
The Family Remains

Karen Joy Fowler
We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves

Peter May
The Black Loch

Liz Moore
The God of the Woods

Orhan Pamuk
The Museum of Innocence

Steve Silberman
NeuroTribes: The Legacy of Autism and How to Think Smarter About People Who Think Differently

Scarlett Thomas
The Sleepwalkers

Hardbacks

R. F. Kuang
Katabasis

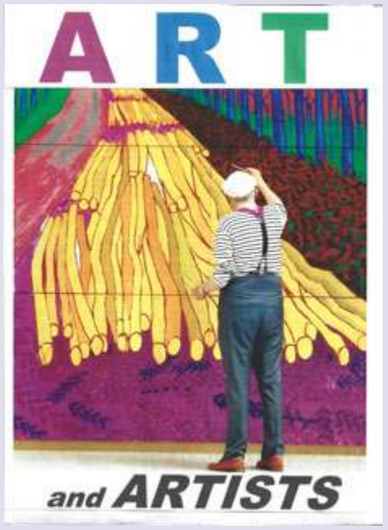
Sally Smith
A Case of Life and Limb

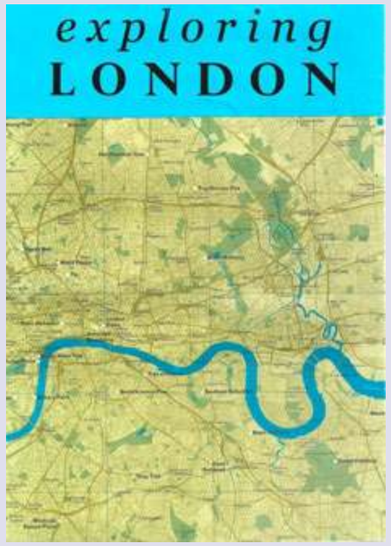
Children's

Lauren Child
I Am Too Absolutely Small for School

Sharna Jackson
High-Rise Mystery

Michael Rosen
Oh Dear, Look What I Got!





Please check whether you have overdue library books at home; many books, especially children's books, are long overdue, and since we are a community library, funded by you, we rely on you to keep our wonderful new stocks available to the whole community.

The Primrose Hill Festival Dog Show

Presented by Virtue Vets, hosted by Gail Porter and Adele Sica, and with Jamie Cameron as MC, the Primrose Hill Festival Dog Show was held earlier this year. The show is supported by Savills Primrose Hill and Focus Furnishings. Winners from each category received a goody bag from Pet Pavillion.

All donations go to support St Mary's church community programmes.

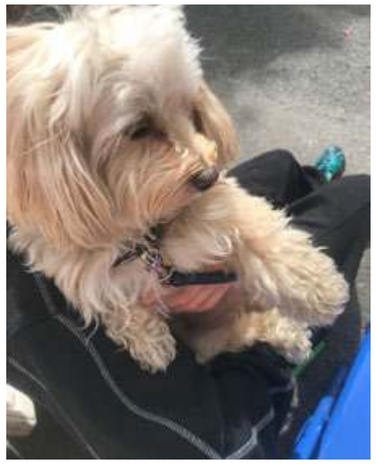




















LOOKS GOOD, TASTES GOOD

by The Mole on the Hill

Grandad, what's that smell?

That, Lass, is the unique smell of Primrose Bakery cupcakes coming out of the oven.

Smells nice.

Oh, it does. That lot you can smell will soon be snapped up by those people in the queue, or packed up and on their way all over London.

Martha Swift has been running the Primrose Bakery for 21 years. For three years it was seven days a week, 6.30 in the morning until 11 at night.

"I started with a friend of mine in our respective home kitchens. Then we moved to the present shop in Gloucester Avenue. About twelve years ago I bought out my business partner and now I have anywhere between 12 and 15 staff at any one time."

After Camden School for Girls and Exeter University to read Economics and Geography, Martha worked for a couple of years as an editor at *The Spectator*. Her family were inclined to the literary world. Her grandfather was the author Alan Moorehead, her mother is the writer and researcher Caroline Moorehead; her brother, Daniel Swift, is a distinguished Shakespearean scholar, author of *The Dream Factory* which takes an oblique look at the evolution of Shakespeare the writer by telling the story of his theatre – what we now know as The Globe.

"I was fine editing, but I wanted to be different. I asked myself: What can I do that's nothing to do with writing? I knew that I wanted to have my own business, but I had no business background and certainly no baking background. I chose baking because I really love cakes. Simple as that."

When Martha and her business partner started by baking in their own kitchens, they supplied customers who came to the houses to collect the cakes. At the beginning they did everything.

"We supplied Melrose and Morgan with all their cakes when they opened. Then we got an intro to Selfridges Food Hall. We were the first home business to supply them. Then we went to Fortnum and Mason and really began building up orders."

As soon as the shop in Gloucester Avenue came up, they were able to get it. That was 19 years ago.



At the time Martha had two daughters and her business partner had two sons, so they had to juggle around family for nearly three years. There was no respite. They once decided to take a two-day break in the Isle of Wight, but you can't just tell Selfridges you're on holiday, so they ended up doing all the baking there in the Isle of Wight and bringing it back to make the delivery. Some holiday! It was around this time that Martha bought her partner out.

"The last 18 months have been very difficult. We bake everything on site and electricity prices keep going up. Also it's very labour intensive, so putting up National Insurance hasn't helped; and then the prices of ingredients have gone sky high. So what can we do? You could say it's been tricky.

"We don't do savouries. When we started 21 years ago, cupcakes weren't a big thing so we were lucky. It was a fantastic time to start.

But it's not like we'll just bake anything. I don't want to sell somebody something unless I'm confident it's good: looks good, tastes good."

At the Primrose Bakery they follow recipes or make up their own. They use more or less the equipment you would find in a home kitchen.

Their belief is that cakes come out best if they're made in a small batch.

"I really wanted a neighbourhood business. I've lived here since I was eleven. My Mum, my aunt and my daughter all live round the corner. It's nice to have regular customers, whether they want one cupcake or 200. Sometimes kids will come in from school and just get one mini cupcake. That's just as important as a birthday cake or a wedding cake.

"We deliver all over London. For 10 years we had a second shop in Covent Garden. And for five years a third shop in Kensington. By chance they both closed just before Covid. Best thing that could have happened! We didn't close for a single day during the pandemic. People were happy we were open, just for take-away. We expanded all our deliveries then. For us, it was a very good time."

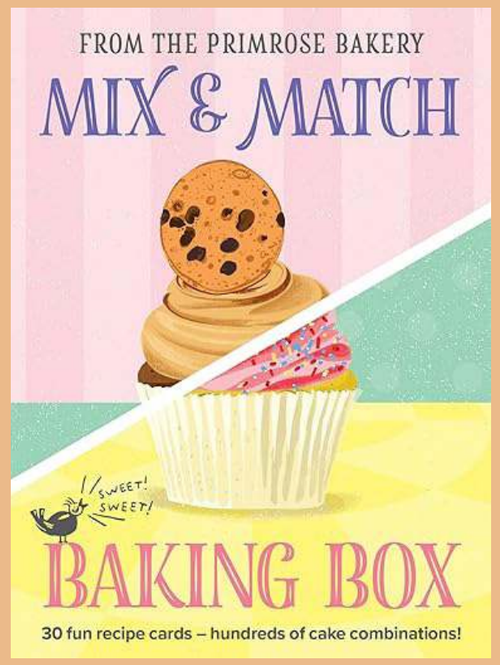
When you have your own business, you have no choice: you just have to keep going. If staff want to quit they can, but the owner can't.

"The business has 12–15 staff: three to four chefs in the kitchen and two people in the shop. They usually work three or four days a week. There is a range of nationalities and ages, mostly women: chefs, bakers, cake decorators. We need them because the work has become more complicated, more detailed. I prefer to employ people who really want to work, rather than someone with an amazing CV. I think we can teach what we do, and if people have the right attitude and really want to work that's more important – ethos, hard work, common sense.

"My Mum is the best example of how to work hard. She's still working at age 80. Both my daughters have worked with me. My elder daughter still does."

There is a cookbook on sale in the shop. In fact, it's the sixth one Martha has produced. All the recipes are those they use themselves. The books are glossy with photos. They are intended to give a good idea of what they do in the bakery, so that no matter where you are, you will be able to picture Martha and her team working in their little shop. The latest publication is a box of recipe cards.

"I do as many jobs myself as I can. About 14 years ago I had a manager who stole a lot of money from the business. She was clever and it took three months to find out what she was up to. She received a suspended sentence and had to pay the money back – about £10,000 – although I'm still waiting for the final instalment. From that day on, no one else except me has ever paid a bill.



"The other people I employ are amazing, really talented. They come from all over the place. I've had a Mongolian chef for 16 years. When she started, she had no training, no experience of baking. Now she's my top chef. People who work in hotels and restaurants think this is an easy job. They have no idea.

We have to produce hundreds of cakes to order, seven days a week. Consistency is essential. Every batch must meet the standard we've set."

With such a workload, it's hard to see how Martha has time for anything else. She admits she's not good at work/life balance but she is embedded in the local community, with two daughters, three grandchildren, her mother and her aunt living nearby. If the opportunity arises, Martha will go sea-swimming or spend time at the ballet. Apart from that, it's just cakes.

Grandad, what do the cakes look like?

Look down there in the shop window. They're all on display.

They look yummy.

They are. We could wander down there and maybe buy a couple.

What are we waiting for?

***Mix & Match Baking Box* by Martha Swift is on sale in the Primrose Bakery.**

© The Mole on the Hill

I Shop, Therefore I Am

The '90s, Harvey Nicks – and Mary Portas

by Maggie Chambers



Photo: Sarah Louise Ramsay

Mary Portas is passionate about communities working together for the common good, and does a great deal for our community here in Primrose Hill. We are all familiar with Mary's Living and Giving shop in Regent's Park Road, the first of 26 across the country which raise millions for Save the Children. She runs her own agency, Portas, and was awarded an OBE in 2024 for services to business, broadcasting and charity work.

So how did Mary get where she is today? Her latest book, *I Shop, Therefore I Am: The '90s, Harvey Nicks – and Me* recounts her early years leading to a position in the 90s as window dresser for Harvey Nichols, which she transformed into a headline-grabbing destination.

As a teenager, Mary wanted to act and was accepted at RADA. But by the time she was nineteen, she had lost both parents and the family home she shared with four siblings. This vulnerable situation meant she couldn't afford to move to London; so instead she took a course in Visual Merchandising near her home in Watford, where she was told she'd have no future in retail!

At the age of 21, she landed a job as a window dresser in Harrods and realised she didn't simply want to dress windows, she wanted to create them. From there, she became Display Manager at Topshop where she hired Boy George to perform live. She soon got noticed and before long was asked to do the same for Harvey Nichols.

Originally established as a linen shop in 1831, Harvey Nichols had declined over the years into 'a fusty department store'. Mary's job was to breathe new life into the business and transform it from the place where 'Plummy mummy-and-daughter duos wander the shop floor together – all pleated skirts, strands of pearls and puffy velvet hairbands'; it had to change from 'Fiona in Fulham in her frilly blouses, to a woman who knows her own mind and has her own cash'.

For this mission Mary needed a strong vision, and her earlier life had given her just that: '... it gave me a strong creative drive: an ambition not just to preserve life, but to be alive, feel alive. I need security, but I constantly crave self-fulfilment, excitement and newness – a desire to create, build and move forward.' One such innovative idea was New Gen catwalk shows, held annually during London Fashion Week to showcase the best of Britain's emerging fashion designers, and featuring top models such as Naomi Campbell.

The climate was changing fast, away from the old Sloane mentality. Top designers were opening their own stores in Bond Street, and the fashion director of *The Times* declared 'The Department Store is Dead'. Rather than the edgy youthfulness of Topshop, where Mary had been in her element, she now had to rely on her strong sense of creativity to forge forward. This meant overcoming the age-old social class codes which were still prevalent, and learning to trust her own instinct and intuition. 'If I've learnt anything so far, it's this: you know deep down inside when an idea feels right . . . I feel it like an electric current running through me. On the one hand I feel buzzy with energy and excitement; on the other an odd calmness. A voice inside me says with utter conviction, *This Is It*.'

Mary's eye-catching windows for Harvey Nichols included a display of glassy-eyed dolls, Car henge with monochrome mannequins peeping out from the cars, Linda Evangelista striking poses in a live photo shoot, and a Barbie-inspired window which resulted in a customer issuing a fatwa against Harvey Nichols for representing 'everything that's corrupt about the Western World'. Her final window was 'Autumn Intrusion', conceived in conjunction with the emerging designer Thomas Heatherwick: it involved a vast white wooden branch snaking in and out of the windows of the whole store front.

The Christmas windows were vital, as Christmas accounted for a quarter of the store's annual revenue. As stakes were high, planning began in July. In Mary's first year, on the hottest day of the year, one of her team turned up with his beard spray-painted white for the occasion, only to find it dripping down his black vest in the heat.

One of Mary's biggest coups was hearing that Jennifer Saunders was planning a series based on the fashion industry; feeling determined that Harvey Nichols should play a part, Mary offered Saunders the run of the building after hours, inside and out, and a free rein to borrow any designer clothes they required in exchange for a mention. The eventual series was the renowned *Absolutely Fabulous*, and thanks to Jennifer Saunders and Jonanna Lumley's characters' shopping habits, the store became universally known as Harvey Nicks.

The job of turning round Harvey Nichols was rewarding but relentless, and the pressure was intense. There was always the underlying fear of having to clear your desk one Friday. But as Mary pointed out, the constant vigilance was nothing compared to Harrods, just down the road, where luxury goods were planted in the belongings of shop-floor girls, and their only redemption was to have a private audience with Mr Fayed.

> " If I've learnt anything so far, it's this: you know deep down inside when an idea feels right . . . I feel it like an electric current running through me."

During these years Mary gave birth to two children, each time returning to work after three months wearing 'cabbage leaves stuck in my bra'. She learnt to prioritise her time ruthlessly. Meanwhile, as with much of retail, Harvey Nichols was paying intense attention to spreadsheets and profit margins and losing its capacity for spontaneous creativity. Against the backdrop of Tony Blair in power and Princess Diana's death, Mary decided that it was finally time to make decisions on her own terms. 'Decisions as simple yet profound as choosing to be there for my children's sports day without needing permission' or having to run her interviews past the MD to make sure she hadn't said anything out of order. 'The truth is I like being out of order. I am an out of order person – and I'm finally accepting that. I need to go out and do my own thing in my own way.' Mary had given Harvey Nichols an identity and transformed it into a destination. It was now time to do the same for herself.

'I shop therefore I am' was a statement by artist Barbara Kruger about how we define our identity through the stuff we buy. Mary would prefer to review those consumerist years and transform shopping into an assertion of creativity and hope: where we choose to buy goods responsibly and invest in our communal future, both for humanity and the planet. 'I shop therefore I am' should be a reminder for every day that each pound we spend is a vote for the future we want to live in. 'And that is something we should never lose sight of.'

Mary Portas will be speaking at the Primrose Hill Lecture Series at St Mary's church on Thursday 2 October at 7pm.

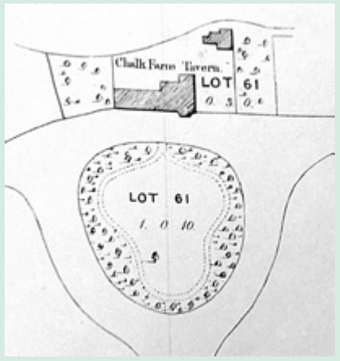
Tickets are available from Primrose Hill Books or eventbrite.co.uk

***I Shop, Therefore I Am: The '90s, Harvey Nicks – and Me* is available from Primrose Hill Books.**

CHALK FARM TAVERN 1790 TO 1865
THE HEART OF PRIMROSE HILL FOR 75 YEARS (PART II)

BY PETER DARLEY

The freehold of the Chalk Farm Tavern and Tea Gardens was sold by the Southampton estate as Lot 61 on 4 May 1841 for £1,974, subject to a lease with 37 years to run. The areas in question, shown in the plan, amounted to 0.8 acres for the Tavern and its grounds, and 1.1 acres for the Tea Gardens. The Tea Gardens had been laid out with a footpath about 250 yards long. Charles Dickens alluded in 1846 to 'the bowers for reading and smoking scattered about the tea-gardens at Chalk Farm'.



The Tavern was enlarged over 1847-48 and the balcony extended as seen in the painting.



The licensee advertised in April 1848:

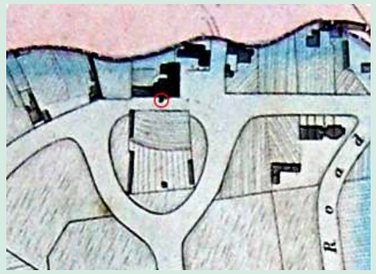
> "... the Annual Sports will take place as usual on Easter Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. The Gardens, which have been much improved, will be brilliantly illuminated. A splendid Band will be in attendance each day on the green. Admission free. The ball-room, capable of holding 800 persons, will be opened at Five o'clock. Gyoury's Quadrille Band is engaged. To conclude each evening with a grand display of Fireworks."

Competition for the Chalk Farm Tavern arrived briefly in the late 1840s in the form of the Primrose Tavern, a close neighbour on Regent's Park Road, seen here around 1850 with the various unsophisticated entertainments it later added. It appears to have closed in 1851, after its owner went bankrupt.



The area around Chalk Farm Tavern developed slowly on the lines of the Southampton estate auction sales plan. Such residential development, intended for the prosperous middle classes, created a number of conflicts with the licensees of the Tavern. There were complaints in 1851 of the stairs from the Long Room, which projected straight out from the side of the building, creating a hazard in the new Regent's Park Road. There were further complaints by new residents of fairs in the neighbourhood of Chalk Farm Tavern, notably that the Chalk Farm Fair drew to the spot a number of disorderly and undesirable characters.

The stairs, shown circled in the plan, were removed, which must have had some influence on the decision to rebuild the Tavern without the Long Room. Much of the old building was demolished in 1853 to be replaced in 1854 by the new building with which we are now familiar. Bricks and other materials were auctioned in 1853 and would have been incorporated into houses built locally in the mid-1850s.



Several other public houses were built nearby in the mid-1850s, including the Queens, the Adelaide, the Pembroke Castle and the Lansdowne. Increasing competition led the Tavern to obtain a licence as a music hall from 1850 to 1862, formally under the name of the 'Hare and Hounds'. The Chalk Farm Tavern remained popular primarily because its gardens were largely retained by the new building. These pleasure gardens, on the site now bounded by Berkley Road, Chalcot Square and Sharpleshall Street, were available for outdoor recreation and public entertainments. They were enclosed by lofty walls and decorated with ornamental trees and flowering shrubs.

David Stevenson, by now a senior employee in the Goods Department of the London and North Western Railway (LNWR), resided in Montrose House in Regent's Park Road, a stone's throw from Chalk Farm Tavern. He observed in October 1853 that:

> "The ball-room at Chalk Farm Tavern is no more. It has been taken down to make way for some new houses. And so farewell thou scene of gents and dirty muslin! At one time, I suppose, greater swells frequented the place – white kids, cravats, and well-cut coats, and fair forms charmingly arrayed; but they all went their way, and of late years 'sixpenny hops' have made night hideous there – soldiers and servant maids, dirty drabs, and dangerous young fellers' in curious clothing, with short pipes and wonderfully unclean hands, – such a set! And they, too, are all gone!"

Montrose House was located at the corner where The Chesterfields, a residential block converted from the former boys' home, now stands. Stevenson sold his property for £1,300 (about £180,000 today) in 1856 to his employer, LNWR, to afford a right of way to Eton's Chalcots Estate. This was the start of King Henry's Road.

The new tavern building, completed in 1854 for Calvert & Co., was designed by Edward Blakeway l'Anson, son of an eminent architect, Edward l'Anson, who was later president of the Royal Institute of British Architects. As can be seen in the drawing, the architect retained substantial parts of the old building but added a floor to the main southern frontage on Regent's Park Road. The adjoining building, seen on the east side in the drawing, formerly dining rooms with a large balcony, appears diminished and rendered out of scale by the new building, but was balanced by a similar building frontage to Regent's Park Road on the west side.



Now, 170 years later, we are able to appreciate the building he created which we know as Lemonia, the Greek Cypriot restaurant on Regent's Park Road. Over time the east side has adapted to the development of Erskine Road, with part of the original retained.

We should further appreciate the strong continuity between the existing building and its forebears, in contrast to the common assumption that the 1854 building was a complete rebuild. The existing building remains remarkably true to the rebuilding of 1854.



While the former Long Room had been demolished, the new Tavern was nevertheless able to boast a dance floor capable of taking one thousand people as well as a bandstand known as the Chinese Orchestra, the large ballroom being decked with chandeliers and convex mirrors. This was situated in the former Tea Gardens from the mid-1850s until the Tavern's music hall licence expired in 1862. For example, on 26 May 1860 the Tavern advertised its grand Whitsuntide galas:

> "The public are informed that these delightful and popular Gardens will open for the season on Whit Sunday and Monday, and during the summer for a succession of Galas and Fetes on a scale of splendour never before attempted.
>
> "The beautiful decorated Chinese Orchestra is 36 feet high, and tastefully illuminated with profusions of variegated Lamps, Chinese Lanterns, &c., together with a Leviathon Platform, capable of accommodating 1000 persons. Musical Director, Mons. V. Laurent, and the Quadrille Band from the Argyle Rooms. Mons. Louis Leglere and Son and Professor Gelline the unrivalled Vaulters and Trampoline Performers on the Cord volant par de jour, and terrific leaps through daggers, pipes, drums of liquid fire, &c &c. A Race with Two Balloons. The Illuminations, and a superb display of Fireworks at 10 o'clock, by H. F. Davis. Admission, Sundays by Refreshment Ticket, other days Sixpence each."

For a quiet and very respectable residential neighbourhood, some remarkable entertainments were given in these "Gardens", as described by Gilbert Dalziel of Fellows Road in a letter to the *Hampstead Advertiser* of 13 December 1923, having observed them some sixty years earlier from what is now No. 1 Chalcot Square:

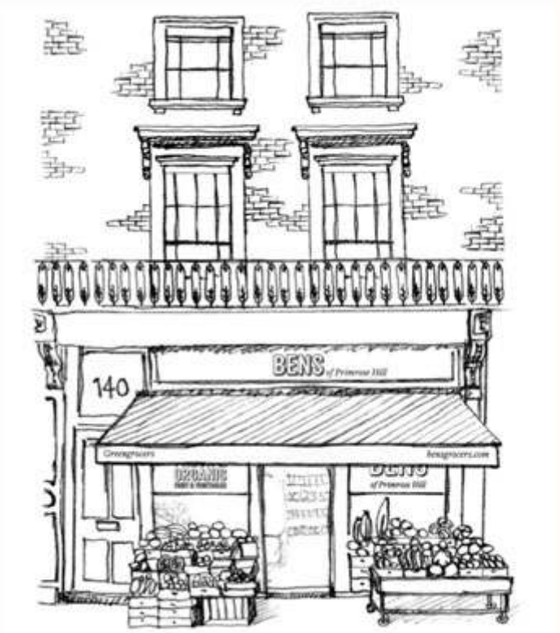
> "As a boy, I well remember seeing, from my Uncle's drawing-room window at No 1 St George's-square, Blondin, the hero of Niagara, walking the tight rope there. It was an evening performance, and Blondin garbed in shimmering silver was seen, balancing-pole in hand, crossing the rope at a very great height amidst a tremendous display of fireworks, finishing up by pushing a man seated in a wheelbarrow across the rope.
>
> "It was a very curious spot in those days. In the fields on either side and at the back of the Tavern quite important Circuses would pitch their tents, now and again, with the usual supply of elephants, camels, performing horses, etc. On one occasion there was given a very lively boxing bout, between Tom Sayers, England's idol for many years, and the American pugilist Heenan: but perhaps the most startling item in the programme, amidst Fat Ladies from Peru, and Spotted Boys from the Sahara, was a man, be-feathered and face-painted to represent a Wild-Indian, who killed live rats with his teeth!"

By the mid-1860s, however, Calverts the brewers, following complaints from the owners of nearby and recently-built houses, had sold off the garden for building plots and the Chalk Farm Tavern became just one of the many pubs in the area.

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Pictures from Primrose Hill

Thank you to Pat Snell who sent us a couple of pictures of autumn walks, Fi O'Sullivan for the shots of Primrose Hill, Evie Dodd for the sunrises and sunsets and Ann Rosenthal for the Isabella Tiger Moth which landed on her kitchen window.

If you have any photos of the area which you'd like to share, please send them to **editor@onthehill.info** for possible inclusion in our next issue.



Ann Rosenthal







Evie Dodd







Fi O'Sullivan





Pat Snell

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7PM THURSDAY 2ND OCTOBER

Mary Portas

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Viv Groskop

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Helen Fielding

IN CONVERSATION WITH

Helen Atkinson Wood

Bridget Jones: creating an icon

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Hello, Primrose Hill!

The annual Primrose Hill Garden Party was held in Chalcot Square in June. Hosted by the Primrose Hill Community Association, there was live music, tea, cakes and Pimms plus children's activities including an arts and crafts stall run by Ready, Steady Go nursery and a magic show.

Photography by Leela Ramsay













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Letters

Dear *On The Hill*,

When I had an issue with Thames Water in 2023, I learned that my high water bill was due to their use of Rateable Value to assess water bills. I also learned that less than 50% of their domestic customers have meters fitted.

I contacted 30 households on Princess Road (where I have lived for nearly 40 years) and found that only a third of them had water meters fitted. Not one of these households was aware of how their bill was calculated. I also found that on average those without meters were paying close to 2.5 times as much as those with meters (even after their single person occupancy discount).

Since then several of my neighbours have requested meters to be installed. Bills have more than halved. (I expect my bill to fall by over 80%.) Others who were told a meter could not be installed have negotiated lower bills.

I expect Princess Road households are a good representation of the Primrose Hill community, so I urge anyone without a meter (and if you are paying over £500 a year) to request Thames Water to fit one.

Yours,
John Simpson





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