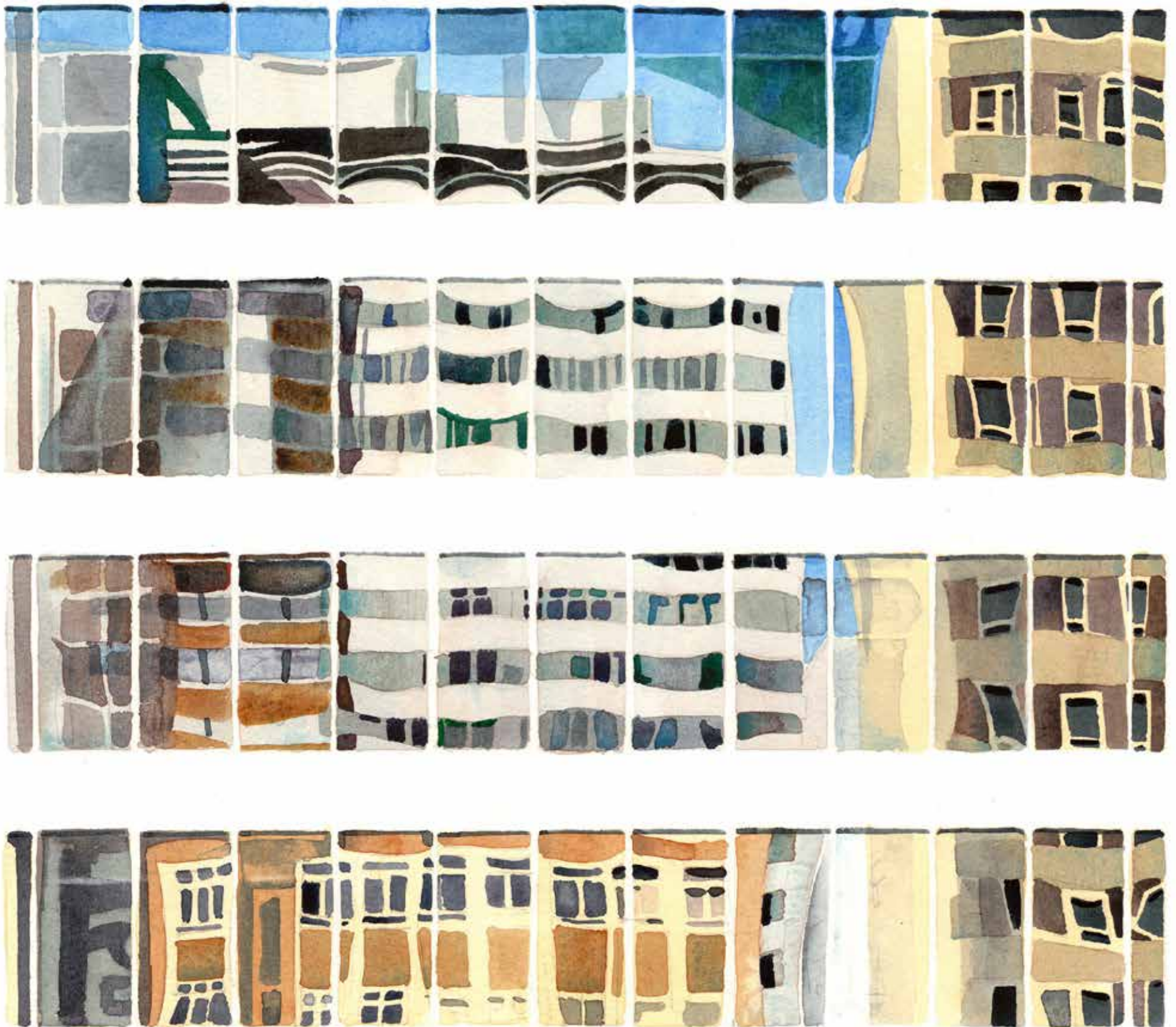


THE CROYDON CITIZEN



The news magazine where **you** write the stories



Reflecting on 2014

Harvey Edser on music at the Fairfield Halls | **Tara Green** on how to be a parent at Christmas
Tom Black on UKIP, the polls, and 2015 | **Jess Bashford** rustles up a cinnamon and apple cake
Bernadette Fallon talks to Gareth Gates | **Tom Lickley** on house prices | Poetry by **Esoteric**

FREE

December 2014
Monthly news magazine

A review of the year

Citizen Editor-in-Chief James Naylor looks back on 2014

And so we come to the end of 2014. This year saw the council return to Labour control after eight years of Tory administration and the sudden resignation of its leader, the 'iconic' Saffron Square tower become the tallest building in the borough by a country mile – making it apparently visible from North London – and Westfield... still the same time away from being opened as it was the year before. The less the said about that, the better.

It seems safe to say that 2014 was a pretty interesting one for Croydon politicians, not least for its dramatic election result – one that saw Labour form the largest council majority for a long time and areas of the borough turning red that never had before. But, otherwise, it has not been such a great year of change, and certainly not of any particular economic or cultural triumph. It could easily seem that in 2014, things were just ticking over.

But if you think that, I think you'd be pretty wrong. Because it seems to me that 2014 in Croydon has been a year of many small but important successes, of things building in the right direction, especially around culture: We saw the (real) David Lean cinema re-open after three years of tireless community campaigning; a gallery exhibiting the work of some of the world's greatest pop-arts opening up in St George's walk; and theatre going from strength to strength in small venues in the town centre, like the Spreadeagle and Matthews Yard, even while we watched the poor old Warehouse theatre fall to the wrecking ball.

Croydon's first speculatively built office building in 20 years was finished

The same is true for Croydon's economy. Croydon Tech City continued to build. House prices surged ahead of even London's growth this year, pointing towards a fundamental shift in people's confidence in Croydon as somewhere to invest or live (even if we are all still in a bubble!). We watched the Renaissance building – Croydon's first speculatively built office building in 20 years – be finished, advertised and fully occupied in a matter of months. The message it now proudly displays to all and sundry at East Croydon? "Offices Fully Let" – a pleasing opposite to the "To let" signs we're too used to seeing. More excitingly, work even got started on Ruskin Square, a site that has up until now served as the very worst front door for Croydon:

a waste land derelict for forty years, a grim and foreboding foreground to Croydon's ageing '60s towers. Now it has an attractive new public square that plays hosts to regular food markets and has housing and offices springing up on either side of it; something actually nice to see when you pull in on the train. Again – all built speculatively because the signs are that Croydon is coming back.

It wasn't plain sailing for everyone. Because as housing got less affordable, it got less affordable for the people who need it most. Like everywhere, it seems wages are pretty stagnant in Croydon and food bank use seems to be rising. And as well as these sorts of endemic issues we still face, there were plenty of other 'one-off' bad news stories this year too; death at the Croydon rave or the massive flooding that caused so much damage in the early part of year.

There's a faint something in the air, something that touches lots of things

So it is in this edition we take a look back at the good and bad of Croydon's year across poetry, imaginative writing, serious property economics and political analysis – all with with a firm eye on the holidays ahead (something which it sounds like we've all deserved). As you'll see from the news, not all is rosy in Croydon by any means. It's certainly no time to be complacent about where we live. But it seems that things have changed, just a little: There's a faint something in the air, something that touches lots of things, a wild and fleeting notion that things are kind of getting better.

But my advice? Don't look right at it, or like that – *puff* – its gone.

As always....

What you read in this magazine was written by ordinary people, not professional journalists. We're always looking for new writers. If you want to tackle the big issues, highlight the things that matter or reflect on what's really important in your community, we want to hear from you.

Perhaps your article will be here next month? Get in touch with editors@thecroydoncitizen.com and it just might be.

Yours,

James Naylor
Editor-in-Chief

Eager to read more? You can find us online at thecroydoncitizen.com - updated every weekday with new articles.

Welcome to the Croydon Citizen

The news magazine where you write the stories

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This month's cover

Our front cover image was originally created as a painting by talented local artist Lis Watkins. You can see it, and more of her work, at lineandwash.blogspot.co.uk

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Missed a month?

PDFs of back-editions of the Citizen are available online, at thecroydoncitizen.com/news-magazine-past-issues/

Some hard copies are available to readers happy to pay postage costs. Email editors@thecroydoncitizen.com for details.



Never knowingly undersold

Gardener Andy Dickinson shares a message of hope to warm the cockles of Croydon's heart

Dear Santa,

I know that I haven't written to you for a number of years for the things I wish for most at Christmas. I have become a bit forgetful, neglecting to write to you, and fallen a bit behind the times with my needs and wants.

It's just that I have two new 'uncles' now; uncle Hammerson and uncle Westfield, and along with grandma Croydon Council and some other relatives, they are going to build me a new shiny steel and glass shopping centre to replace the ones that I've had for a number of years. Even though they have been looked after, they are no longer what people want (!).

I've been really well behaved in the last few years since the incidents of 2011, so I really think I deserve this. It really would be the one thing that would make my retail heart complete. I don't expect it to be delivered immediately, I'm prepared to wait so that it fits in with my new development. But it would be the one thing that would fulfil my retail offering.

It's something that my uncles have given their other shopping centres, and many towns and cities across the country have one already. It makes a statement about the type of character I aspire to be. I have missed out on this many times over the last few decades due to circumstances and have stood by and seen my neighbours successfully get them.

I'll get to the point Santa, what I really want for Christmas is a John Lewis.

Love,

The Heart of Croydon

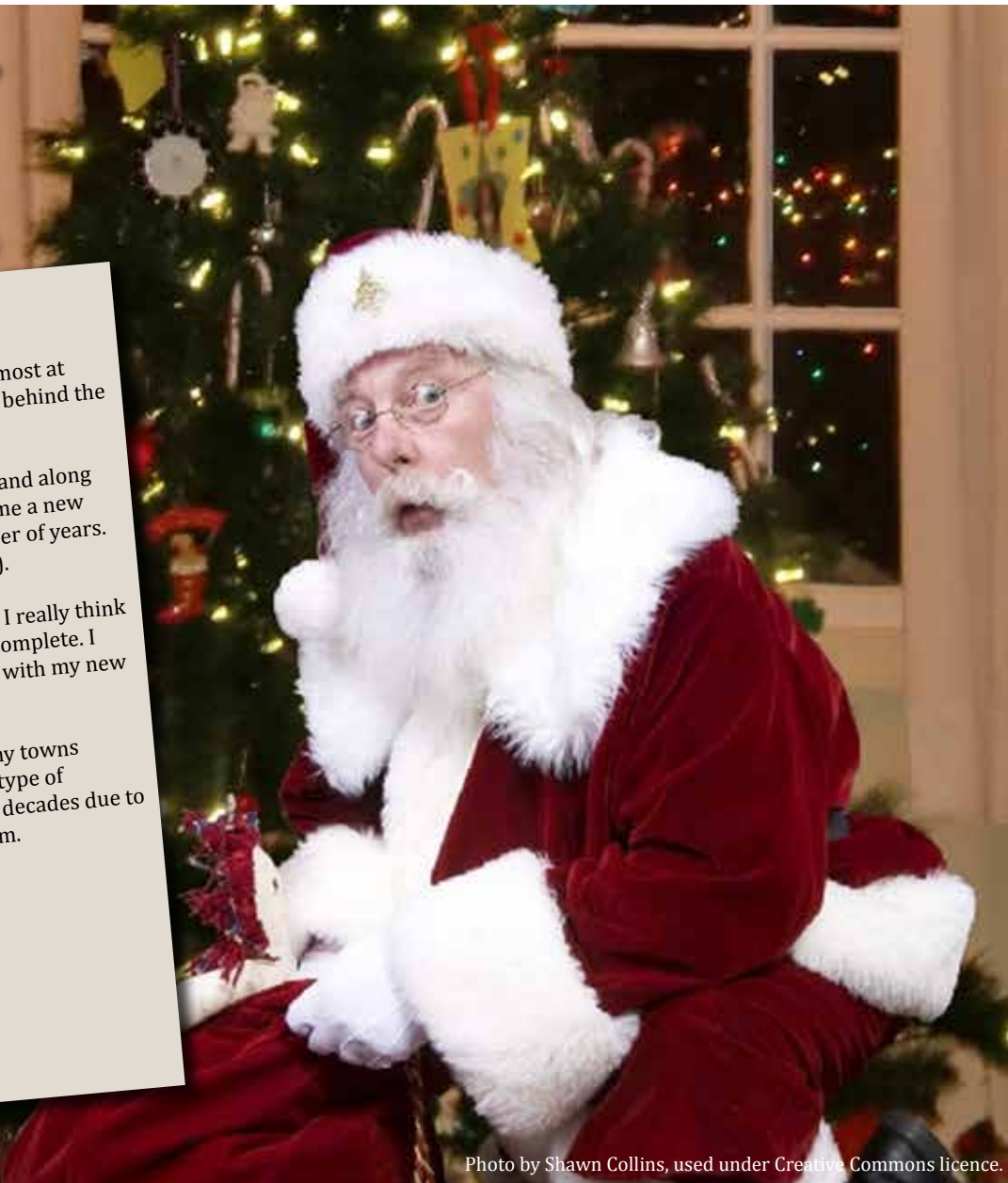


Photo by Shawn Collins, used under Creative Commons licence.

Dear Santa: a Christmas poem by Esoteric

What does a poet do? The Oxford English Dictionary describes poetry as 'literary work in which... feelings and ideas are given intensity... by distinctive style and rhythm' – and that'll do for me.

I'm a Croydon girl – I went to St Mary's High School in the town centre, studied for my A levels at Harris Academy Crystal Palace and did a degree in midwifery a few miles away, at the University of Kingston. I love my work assisting and empowering women as they become mothers and feel privileged to be involved every day with such raw, real-life creativity.

Creating with words has become my other passion, and with the wonderful encouragement of my friends and family, I write and perform poetry in London and elsewhere in the UK. Most recently I've taken part in 'Well Versed', a series of events in Thornton Heath.

I love live performance and feeling connected to an audience. I chose the stage-name 'Esoteric', which means 'intended for or understood by a group of people with specialised interest or knowledge.' If you are interested in all our inner landscapes of emotion and awareness and want to explore them with honesty, I hope you'll enjoy my work and find it has something to say to you.

This is a poem about Christmas and how differently I experience it now as an adult compared to how it was for me, and for so many of us, as a child. I think we stop being children only when we learn the difference between what we want and what we need – and although Santa can bring us many things, that's a lesson we need to teach him rather than the other way around.



Naomi Raffington is a poet and spoken word artist who was born and raised in Croydon. In her final year of studying a Midwifery Bsc hon's degree at Kingston University she published her first ever anthology entitled *The Escape of My Imprisoned Thoughts* available on Amazon.

In addition to empowering childbearing women, Naomi thoroughly enjoys reading her poetry at various events across the UK and interacting with like-minded people.

Dear Santa

A list of material things to distract me from reality and restrict my growth,
all scribbled down on the cleanest sheet of paper..
But Santa, I'm no longer that infatuated with things made out of plastic anymore.
The things I want for Christmas, I don't believe you can give.

They can't be bought
and I don't want them wrapped in aesthetically-pleasing paper to obscure their true identity.
You cannot touch the things I want.
The sense of touch your hands possess is useless.
But open your heart –
and you will feel what I do.

You see, Santa...

love
respect
loyalty
peace
equality
justice
prosperity and good health
can't be placed under my tree
and unfortunately
all the material gifts you have to offer
are of no value to me.

So Santa – this year I send you not a list.
This year, Santa, I send you...
a confession.

This little girl has grown up and no longer 'wants' but 'needs'.



November in Brief

Missed the recent big stories? The Citizen team compiles some of the noteworthy events of last month into a handy page

Environment



Judge rules that rejected legal challenge to incinerator may not be appealed

The *Croydon Guardian* reported last month that Shasha Khan's long-running legal challenge against the Beddington Lane incinerator had been thrown out. Justice Frances Patterson denied Khan the chance to appeal her decision, saying there was "no realistic chance of success" for the challenge. Khan, however, insisted that this was not the end. Unperturbed by what he called the "normal" decision by the judge to deny the chance to appeal her own decision, he said he intends to take the case to the Court of Appeal. A fundraising target of £15,000 has been set for this next stage.

Deer rescued from swimming pool in South Croydon

Brother and sister Lucy and Toby Brymer were woken at 3:30am by the sound of a roe deer thrashing in the water of their neighbours' swimming pool, the *Evening Standard* reported last month. After an hour of trying to coax the panicking animal out of the water, Toby entered the pool and the deer allowed him to pull it out. RSPCA officials attended, and considered putting the animal down as it appeared to be at risk of shock and hypothermia. Thankfully, at 7am, the deer got up and walked off.

Transport



Coulsdon bypass has speed limit increased

Since 2007, drivers have faced a 30mph speed limit on most of the Coulsdon bypass, also known as Farthing Way. According to the *Advertiser*, after complaints that this was unfair and counterproductive, TfL has agreed to raise the speed limit at the northern end of the road to 40mph in the New Year.



Photo by Liz Sheppard-Jones. Used with permission.

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Business & Economics



Legal challenge to Westfield development thrown out

A legal challenge to the Westfield development, brought by the Whitgift Trust (not to be confused with the Whitgift Foundation), has been dismissed by Mr Justice Collins. The trust's suit claimed that the residential commitments of the Westfield development were "unviable", but the High Court judge found that these complaints – along with an objection about a "withheld" planning report by Deloitte about the scheme's viability – were not relevant to the decision to grant planning consent.



Photo by Hborkyb. Used under Creative Commons Licence.

Politics



Shockingly easy campaign to get defibrillators into public places

Croydon Council and the Croydon Clinical Commissioning Group have joined the London Ambulance Service's 'Shockingly Easy' campaign get defibrillators in Croydon's workplaces. The campaign aims to get 1,000 extra defibrillators in shops, businesses, gyms, places of worship, and other high footfall areas across London. Recent LAS data shows that there were 457 out of hospital cardiac arrests in Croydon in a year, and 43 of these occurred in the street. The campaign is now underway.

Culture



Bernard Weatherill House wins architectural award

The new council HQ, about which there has been controversy over cost, has won the category of 'London office architecture' in the UK Property Awards. Councillor Simon Hall, Croydon's cabinet member for finance and treasury, said: "Bernard Weatherill House is a fantastic building and I'm delighted it has received this award. Its design and architecture is among the very best in the country."

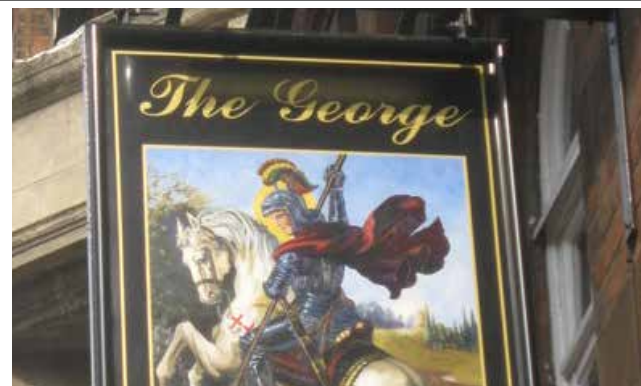


Photo by David Anstiss. Used under Creative Commons Licence.

Entertainment



Best Bar None awards reward Croydon's best evenings out

Croydon's Best Bar None awards, which encourage responsible management and "safe and enjoyable" places to spend an evening, were held last month. George Street Wetherspoons pub, The George, was the overall winner, as well as the winner of Best Pub. Best Small Venue and Best Family Friendly Venue went to The Oval Tavern, while Indian gastropub The Crown & Pepper took home the Best Food award. Croydonians looking for a longer night will want to know that Park Street's Bad Apple won Best Late Night Venue.

Crime



London Road to get 'police contact points'

Croydon's borough commander, Chief Superintendent Andy Tarrant, told a public meeting of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime that in response to the impact of crime on London Road's businesses, two 'contact points' would be opening on the road. The 'contact points' – which are not police stations, but would place officers in an accessible nearby location – are planned to be located at Croydon University Hospital and the Croydon Voluntary Action enterprise centre.

Poppy appeal collection stolen from fish and chip shop

One day before Remembrance Sunday, a man dressed in "a black hooded top, jeans, white trainers and a black backpack" entered Old Coulsdon's award-winning Danny's Fish & Chips. After a moment's hesitation at the unattended counter, he grabbed and took the collection tin for the Royal British Legion's poppy appeal. He then exited the shop and ran down Old Coulsdon street The Parade, according to CCTV released at the end of last month. At time of writing, the suspect is still being sought.

Judicial first as Croydon judge receives verdict over Skype

In a case regarding a teacher accused of a sexual offence, Judge John Tanzer had been present at Croydon Crown Court when the jury returned a not guilty verdict on one of the counts against the accused. However, the judge was away at an official engagement when the jury returned a verdict on the remaining counts, so – in what is believed to be a UK first – arranged to be contactable over Skype. The *Law Society Gazette* reported that the judge's image was projected onto screens in the courtroom, and he was able to hear the jury return a verdict of not guilty on the rest of the counts. He then discharged the defendant.



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Various properties in Croydon, both old and young. Photos by Dr Neil Clifton, A P Monlat, Pafcool2, and Robert Ward. All used under Creative Commons Licence.

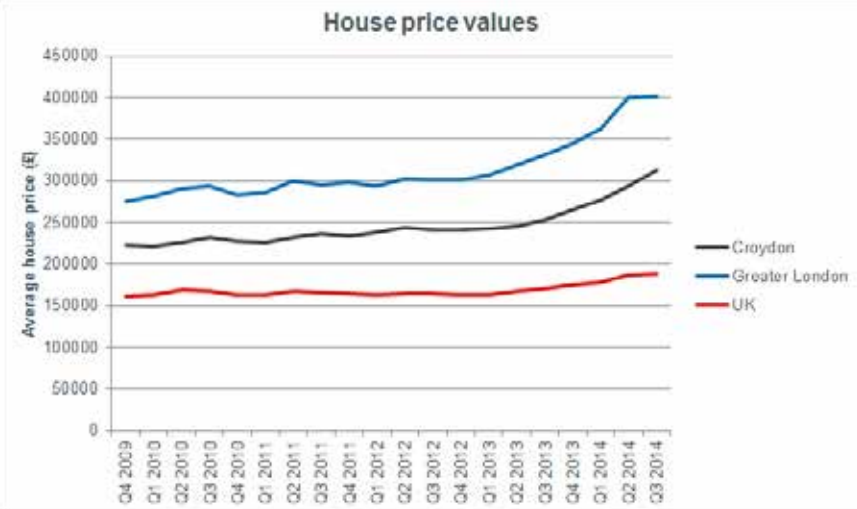
Croydon house prices continue sharp increase – but remain affordable by London terms

Tom Lickley's house price report for the third quarter of 2014 shows continued increases in Croydon residential prices

Croydon's house prices continued upwards in the third quarter of 2014, according to latest figures from Nationwide. Growth in Q3 2013 to Q3 2014 was 24%. Whilst seemingly a large rise (well above the 10.5% year-on-year rise in the UK as a whole) in London terms it's just above average, with the capital recording 21% growth in house prices since the same point last year.

A house in Croydon now averages £312,973; the borough is the fourth cheapest in London, and occupiers may worry that for an area with comparatively cheap prices and potential, growth is not as high as might be expected. Of course, it's better news for potential buyers.

House price growth in London and the UK cooled in the previous quarter, with prices in the country as a whole actually falling 0.2%.



Why has interest lessened in the housing market as a whole? New mortgage restrictions, under the banner 'Mortgage Market Review', impose more stringent checks on mortgage applicants, leaving only 64,212 mortgage approvals nationwide in August 2014 – down from 76,000 in January 2014. Uncertainty over the 2015 election, expected interest rate rises and house prices rising faster than wages have all dampened enthusiasm. Summer is in any case slow in the housing market, which may have influenced statistics.

Businesses looking for continued low office rents could do a lot worse than Croydon

What does this mean for Croydon?

Whilst property prices have slowed in recent months, it is not expected they will decline any time soon; rather prices in other areas of the country, in particular the commuter belt outside Greater London and in Surrey, Sussex and Kent, are expected to rise faster than those in the capital.

As a London borough therefore, Croydon represents an excellent investment opportunity; with prices still relatively low yet increasing at a higher rate than both the UK and London averages.



Cheap house prices also represent excellent opportunities for businesses to relocate here; a concern for Greater London in the future is whether the increasingly unaffordable nature of its houses will push businesses out into other countries and cities where skilled workers can afford to live in relative proximity. With #Croydon #TechCity embarking on another ambitious year, businesses wanting continued low office rents and good transport links yet affordability for employees could do a lot worse than Croydon.

Concerns remain amongst the Croydon community surrounding the unaffordability of houses. London is now ranked most expensive city in the world in which to live – and Croydon, as a constituent borough of that city, must expect high prices – but those able to get on the housing ladder here are making a sound investment. Government initiatives such as Help to Buy are proving a successful aid to first time buyers (FTB), with 28% of all purchases in August 2014 completed by FTBs.

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SURREY STREET

TREATS

Festive edition

By Jess Bashford

We all know what time of year it is. And we all know what that means – it’s time to eat. So it’s also time to get cooking. With Surrey Street’s winter haul brimming, I thought it would be good to give some of their more ordinary ingredients a Christmas twist: apples and onions.

Now, I’m not a fan of the traditional Christmas pudding so I’m trying out an alternative. For the market’s apples, I’m popping them in a pud. A different choice of warming dessert: my cinnamon and apple cake.

For the market’s onions, I’m showing you one of my favourite things: my Mum’s bread sauce. I love bread sauce at any time of year, but I can’t do Christmas without her traditional accompaniment. So I thought it would be a lovely way to show off some of Surrey Street’s humble onions.

Cinnamon and apple cake

From Surrey Street market: 4 apples. (If you can get cooking apples it would be handy, but it works without them.)

From the kitchen: 8oz butter, 8oz caster sugar, a few drops of vanilla extract, 1 tbsp cinnamon, 4 eggs, 8oz self-raising flour, 300ml double cream, 2 tsp icing sugar, 2 tsp more of cinnamon.

- 1) Preheat your oven to 200 degrees.
- 2) I think it’s handy to get your apples ready now. Just peel, core and chop up two and a half of them into smallish, evenly-sized-chunks. (But don’t worry if they aren’t all exactly the same.) Then pop them to one side.
- 3) Mix your butter, sugar and 1 tbsp cinnamon until they come together and look smooth.
- 4) Add your vanilla, crack in your eggs and whisk them all up.
- 5) Pour in flour and stir everything together.
- 6) Throw in your apple chunks and fold them through everything.
- 7) This is your last chance to taste before it goes in the oven. So if you want to add more cinnamon, you can do it now.
- 8) Line a deep baking tray with baking paper and pour your mix into it.
- 9) Then stick it in the oven. Because of the juice from the apples, it might take up to 45 minutes to cook through. But it very much depends on your oven and apples. So no matter what you do, keep an eye on it and test that it’s cooked before you take it out. (Take a look at step 9 of my little lemon drizzle cakes recipe - available on the Citizen website - to see an easy way to do that.)
- 10) Once it’s cooked, it’s up to you how you serve it.

You can serve it warm, straight from the oven. I’d serve it with brandy butter, custard or cinnamon cream (which I make for the decoration, below).

Or leave it to cool and decorate it. It could be a Christmas or Boxing Day tea time treat.

Decorating the cake

- 1) Preheat your oven to 160 degrees.
- 2) Take the 1 and a half apples you have left and chop them into thin slices that are a only few millimetres thick.
- 3) Separate them out on a baking tray lined with baking paper and pop them in the oven for around 40 minutes. You’re drying them out – so keep an eye on them. You don’t want them to burn.
- 4) Whip your double cream together with 2 tsps of icing sugar and cinnamon. Keep whisking it until it gets to a consistency you’re happy with. I like mine thick enough that I can spread it over the cake and it doesn’t run down the edges.
- 5) When your apples are dried out enough for you, leave them to cool.
- 6) Spread your cinnamon cream over the top of your cake and finish it all off with your dried apple decorations.

My mum’s bread sauce

From Surrey Street market: 1 medium-sized onion.

From the kitchen: 3 slices of white bread, ¾ pint of milk, 5 cloves, a splash of olive oil, salt and pepper.

- 1) Cut the crusts off your bread and turn it into breadcrumbs. (I find it easiest to blitz them with a hand blender.)
- 2) Chop your onion as finely as you can. Pop it in a microwaveable bowl with your splash of olive oil and microwave it for 2 minutes. Or you can just gently fry it – but don’t let it go brown.
- 3) Stick your breadcrumbs, cloves, salt and lots of pepper into a saucepan. Then add the milk and onion, put it on the heat and stir.
- 4) Let everything come to the boil.
- 5) Leave it to bubble until it’s thickened and looks like a sauce – not breadcrumbs in milk anymore. Once it’s come together, you can leave it to sit for anything up to an hour.
- 6) Before you’re ready to serve it, you need to go hunting for cloves. Scoop them out of the sauce – an unexpected clove isn’t a nice thing to bite down on.
- 7) When you want to serve it, just heat it back up. (If it’s got a bit too thick, add a little more milk.) Then pop it into a warm bowl. It’s enough for four greedy people or six people (if they’re happy to share).

All that’s left is to eat your Surrey Street treats. And for me to wish you a very merry Christmas.



Jess is close to graduating from her English literature and creative writing degree at the University of Kent. She is passionate about showing that Croydon is a great place to live and very excited to delve into Croydon’s cultural side.



Photo by Mats Hagwall, used under Creative Commons Licence.

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Croydon's new RISEgallery: exclusively for everyone

*A new gallery and project space has arrived in St. George's Walk.
Its assistant, Josephine Porciatti, explains the ethos behind it*

RISEgallery is a new and unique project which aims to serve as a catalyst for positive change, throughout the community as well as in each of its individuals. The gallery, which opened on 24th October, plans to offer new, creative ideas to Croydon, using art to bring together ideals, cultures and people.

The gallery specialises in contemporary, modern urban and post-war art, working closely with both emerging and established artists who display exceptional talent, technical skill and intrinsic creativity. At RISEgallery we believe in the life-enhancing value of art and we aspire to play a key role in London's creative and cultural landscape.

It's sad to see such a negative image in St George's Walk - it needs help

RISE has evolved from the internationally recognised organisation Recherché Art, whose creator and director is leading art dealer Kevin Zuchowski-Morrison. Kevin is a long-standing resident of Croydon and has been saddened to see the negative image it has gathered in spite of its great potential. Kevin identified St George's Walk as being the place most in need of help, recognising it as one of Croydon's last strongholds of independent shops. He enthuses about the architecture of the area and points out that the famous Nicholas Treadwell had his first gallery on the same street in the 1950s.

Kevin says: "My journey with RISE started over 18 months ago. I have been in the industry for many years now. My background is trading in post-war pop art and I am well-known in the industry as an advisor dealer to most of the larger corporate collections globally. The works of Andy Warhol are what I'm best known for. RISEgallery is my gift to Croydon and is only the start: the RISEproject will see this area revived through art and it will be a globally recognised area for art that is as good, if not more exciting and better, than others.

Art crosses cultures, age, every ethnicity and is enjoyed by all, and I am determined to use my experience and industry knowledge to help Croydon once again have that exciting feel.

Additionally, I want to help the independent businesses in St. George's Walk flourish by increasing footfall here."

We are founding an Arts Quarter in Croydon

Philanthropy is an essential element of RISEgallery's culture and the organisation supports a number of charities and is always looking for new projects to be directly involved in. One such project Kevin is founding is an Arts Quarter in Croydon, where artists may express themselves and paint murals on the street walls, to combine fun, meaningful art with everyday life. RISEproject is finally about to begin and future projects will be continuously evolving, taking advantage of Croydon's diverse cultures to make something new and long-lasting that unites and enhances its community and gives the possibility of exploring community capabilities through art and creativity.

RISEgallery will be lending part of its premises in St George's Walk to ArtHalo, a not-for-profit organisation whose primary vision is to make high quality artwork available to all. ArtHalo also aims to provide art inception to vulnerable adults who may not have had the chance to be supported in their desire to find an outlet for their creative expression.

Through positive, high quality visual art intervention, ArtHalo endeavours to enrich the lives of these people, be a voice for them and to support every individual in developing the skills they need to fulfil that most basic human desire: to create and express oneself and ensure that creative desire is fulfilled and supported to its full potential.

We believe in the philosophy that art is inclusive to all and exclusive to none, and that is the central thread of all our past, current and future projects.

RISEgallery opened to the general public for the first time on Thursday 24th October and is open from 10am - 6pm Tuesday to Saturday.

Review

Jonathan Dove's 'For An Unknown Soldier', Fairfield Halls

Harvey Edser finds beauty and brutality in the Ashcroft Theatre

"Dad, you have to hear Dove - it's so dramatic!", enthused my 8-year-old son after one evening's choir practice at Croydon Minster.

Who could resist? So on Friday 14th November I took a front-row seat in the Fairfield Halls for the London Premiere of Jonathan Dove's *For an Unknown Soldier: A Cantata of Remembrance*. For an Unknown Soldier was co-commissioned by the London Mozart Players (Croydon's resident orchestra) and Portsmouth Grammar School, and is a setting of nine WW1 poems for tenor solo, local children's choirs, adult chorus and chamber orchestra.

The evening's dual aims were to commemorate the war and celebrate young Croydon talent - in singing and performing, curating war memorabilia and displaying their artwork.

The Edwardian pieces evoked soon-to-be-shattered innocence

The first half of the evening featured composers who wrote or fought during WW1. However, these were not war pieces but evocations of a pre-war English pastoral idyll. Holst was represented not by *Mars, the Bringer of War* (1914) but *St Paul's Suite* (1912), delightful folk dances written for the pupils of the school where he was musical director, and the LMP were appropriately

joined for this by young instrumentalists of Croydon Music & Arts.

Butterworth's *The Banks of Green Willow* has additional poignancy, knowing that the composer went on to die in the Somme aged 31. And the Croydon Salvation Army band gave Elgar's already nostalgic *Nimrod* the full *Brassed Off* treatment.

These Edwardian pieces evoking soon-to-be-shattered innocence formed a perfect foil and introduction to Dove's war commemoration. So I would have omitted Ibert's *Concerto for Flute and Orchestra*, written by a French composer long after the war (in which he served), and chosen mainly to showcase brilliant young flautist Emma Halnan (2013 Croydon Festival Concerto Competition winner).

The evening was by turns viscerally dramatic, shocking, and gently poignant

Dove's *Unknown Soldier* didn't disappoint - though it did disturb. The climactic opening line "War broke" (from Wilfred Owen's 1914) recalled Orff's *O Fortuna*, before entering a Tavener-like soundscape of soaring strings

and complex chords. Dove's music was by turns viscerally dramatic, shocking, and gently poignant. The setting of war poems nods to Britten's *War Requiem*, but overall *Unknown Soldier* felt most comparable to James MacMillan's *Seven Last Words from the Cross* - a similarly beautiful and brutal choral-orchestral commemoration of human suffering and sacrifice.

Dove's cantata moves between drama and pathos, the horrors of the front and the grief of the bereaved back at home. Some of the lyrics are horrifyingly graphic, particularly Isaac Rosenberg's poem *Dead Man's Dump*: "A man's brains splattered on / A stretcher-bearer's face". Perhaps it was fortunate for younger listeners that (as with most choral works) it was sometimes hard to make out the words, though Nicholas Sharratt's tenor line soared bugle-clear.

Powerful, moving and harrowing stuff

And after all the dramatic percussion of battle, the work fades out to eerie quiet at the end with the words "This is the path to glory" accompanied by tolling bells, leaving the audience shell-shocked in their seats. Powerful, moving and harrowing stuff.

So it did feel a little incongruous to emerge from this to the sound of Croydon Brass jauntily oompah-ing 'It's a long way to Tipperary' in the foyer - though it was good to have something more child-friendly. Also, if I were running the event, I'd have made it shorter and earlier for the young participants, some of whom were clearly up way past their bedtime.

Nonetheless, *Unknown Soldier* is a brilliant and fitting new work, the musicianship was excellent, and the evening proved a truly historic concert in all senses.



Harvey Edser has lived by a cemetery in Croydon for 13 years. By day he's a web editor for Royal Museums Greenwich. In his other lives he blogs about theology, writes music and poems, plays various instruments and loves nature, Harry Potter and cake.

The season to be jolly?

*Gather all your relatives. Overfeed them and give them plenty to drink. Get the children hyper. **Tara Green**, Croydon's own parenting coach, can help you deal with the consequences*

In my *Croydon Advertiser* column and Parenting Geek coaching blogs, I help people face the challenges children and families bring – however much we love them. That’s never more true than at Christmas.

Many people feel stress as they spend time, money and effort on holiday preparations, with high expectations and great hopes. How can we make this Christmas live up to those expectations – happy and harmonious for us and the people we’ll spend it with?

Planning and preparation are key.

Practical preparation

Christmas is nicer as a group effort but if you do most of it yourself, you’ll have to make tough decisions about what you can manage. It’s not worth driving yourself to exhaustion.

Physical preparation

Make part of your Christmas preparation early nights and restful days for children. Well-rested, well-nourished and following a normal routine, they’ll have energy for the late nights and irregular routines of your celebrations.

Emotional preparation

You can have too much of a good thing, especially as a child: too much excitement, too many new things, too many people and too much rich food. Write a list for each member of the family containing calming activities for that person: quiet time and relaxation, running, bike rides, reading, kicking a ball, craft activities. Then if anyone’s losing their cool, consult the list and shepherd them into a break.

What to do if big bad feelings hit at Christmas

Anger

Much of the work of managing big emotions is in the teaching and preparation. Start talking to children now about strategies they could use.

They need to be able to tell you they are angry and why, clearly and assertively, without physical and verbal aggression. Teach them the sentence “I am feeling ----- because --- ----- and I would like -----” so they have a simple way to communicate when feelings are overwhelming. Take time out yourself too if you’re losing your cool, explaining you need a few minutes as you’re getting mad too.

The bad mood blues

If the unthinkable plight of a Christmas bad mood descends upon you, try to avoid criticising others and yourself whilst it’s around. Later you just won’t feel this strongly, so try to ignore bad-mood opinions, or see them for what they are: a grumpy set of thoughts that will pass when your mood has lifted.

Boredom

It’s disheartening when children open presents then within hours complain of having nothing to do. Be prepared, though – it will happen in many homes. Have old favourites ready; make quiet times when they can just draw, read or watch a film.

Children still want time and attention even if they have many new toys, so make time for this. They’ll remember how they felt at Christmas, not what they got.

Coping with conflict

There’s little point trying to have reasoned,

rational conversations in the heat of the moment. The skills of conflict resolution are part of our lifelong learning.

Teach children to keep the other person’s point of view in mind. If they are too angry or sad to talk, review what’s happened later on so they can still learn. Gradually their ability to understand, resolve and learn from conflict will develop and mature.

Avoid over-explaining and over-negotiating with your child. Decide where you have full authority – safety, health, education – and clearly tell them the rule, decision or expectation. In other areas there’s more room for negotiation.

Think through when rows may well start and about solutions. When children squabble it can drive us to distraction and make it difficult to react appropriately, so being ready with responses makes it easier to say and do things we’re proud of.

Family matters

If you’re cooking for the five thousand whilst spending time with guests, children can be left to their own devices more than usual. If this leads to sibling squabbles and demands for attention, seek to create more time with them.

“I can’t stop now or dinner won’t be ready until next Christmas, but once all the washing up is done, let’s play that new game. I really appreciate you being so patient”. And see tough moments and tantrums as storms that will pass.

Google **#invitationtoplay** for ideas for activities you can set up for even the smallest of children to play independently for a little while.

Is your extended family more Addams Family than Brady Bunch? Mentally prepare for spending time with them. Families have long memories and old triggers can create drama, negativity and upset. How can we minimise conflict?

At Christmas, I want to hear you chanting under your breath: “This too will pass.” You will be back to your own home or just your own family soon. Vent to close friends if you need to – but remember that their agreement doesn’t always make you correct. They’re your friends: of course they’re siding with you.

Your thoughts create your feelings. If you decide to expect the very worst, interpret things negatively and wind yourself up, then you will feel sad, angry, frustrated, irritated, isolated, betrayed and/or let-down. Don’t let anyone’s words or sentiments dictate your feelings. They will go home eventually!

And finally...

Take five or ten minutes to think about the kind of Christmas that you want for 2014. Use these wishes as your guide and focus on them as you plan and shape the festivities in your home. You’ll be much more likely to get them.

I wish you and those you will spend Christmas with a happy and harmonious holiday season.



Tara Green is a mum of three and wife of one, parenting blogger and coach, hoping that no one will notice that she’s learning the craft of raising kids whilst on the job. Specialist life coach for children and parents, providing individual sessions and group workshops. Parenting columnist for the *Croydon Advertiser*. Find out more at www.theparentinggeek.com



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POWER THROUGH KNOWLEDGE



Gareth Gates. Photo by Fairfield Halls, used with permission.

Always the prince

As Gareth Gates steps out as Prince Charming in Fairfield Halls' Christmas pantomime 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs', Bernadette Fallon asks him what life is like after starting at the top

From the adulation of millions in the heady days of the first-ever *Pop Idol* phenomenon, to the stage of Fairfield Halls for the Croydon Christmas panto: it's been quite a journey for Gareth Gates. But maybe not exactly the journey he would have imagined for himself back in those million-selling record days?

He, however, has a very positive take on his life so far. "I've always been very busy and I'm very grateful for that."

So yes, there've been the four number one singles, the millions of records sold, the famous head-to-head with Will Young in the *Pop Idol* final when a nation collectively gasped as the winner was revealed as not Gareth – *what?* – but Will. Will the posh boy, the privileged one; Gareth, stammering his way through interviews but singing word and note perfect.

"In my mind, Pop Idol was just a small talent show"

Looking back on those early days, what advice would he give to his younger self, the 17-year-old *Pop Idol* finalist?

"I'd say have fun, just go with it. That series of *Pop Idol* was the first of its kind, nobody knew what it would become. In my mind I was just entering a small talent show – but it changed my life. And I've been fortunate ever since. I've never stopped working."

From entering a 'small talent show' to holding millions of viewers captivated every Saturday night, it must have been one hell of a roller coaster. He's relaxed about it all however.

"I was young, I didn't ask any questions. I just accepted it. But yes, being thrown into the middle of all that attention is a bit crazy."

He explains that he always knew he would end up working in music – as music had always been a part of his life.

"When I was a child I wasn't able to speak properly at all, a lot of the time I just couldn't get any words out. But I could sing the words, and music became my form of release."

Getting on stage after battling a stammer in rehearsals is a challenge

Ah yes. The stammer. The aspect of Gareth's story that became as famous as he did. The stammer is still an issue every time he faces a new show.

"This is my sixth panto. I've always played the prince but it's always a challenge. I'm naturally finding things more difficult than the rest of the actors in Croydon because of my stammer. The end result is always the same – by the time I get on stage for the show my speech is fine – but the process takes longer for me. I have a speech guy who comes down and helps out – but it's mostly about the rest of the cast being patient and comfortable with it in rehearsals."

Getting up on stage after battling weeks of stammering through rehearsals and knowing you have to be word perfect? A challenge? Well that's an understatement.

Despite this, he's played leading roles in West End musicals including *Les Miserables* and *Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat*. He's taken roles in *Legally Blonde* and *Loserville*.

"I've also done straightforward theatre that's all speech and no music," he adds. "I eventually

get into the character, adopt a totally different persona, and my speech is completely fine. It just takes me a while to get there."

"When the crowd's up for it, panto is brilliant"

So, how will playing Croydon compare to the West End stage?

"Playing in the West End is totally different, it's a different type of show. *Les Mis*, for example, was very serious, though of course it's a great experience and learning curve. But panto is just such fun – you can have such a laugh doing it. I love the script the production company, Evolution, has developed for the show – it's written for both adults and children and there will be lots of audience interaction. When the crowd's up for it, it's brilliant."

There you go, your chance to come and interact with a multi-million-record-selling artist here in Croydon. And might we see his old mentor Simon Cowell in the audience?

"We chat every so often, we're often at the same events. Yes, it would be great if he came to the show."

Gareth has very much moved with the times and kept busy – as he says, never out of work. So far this year there's been the *Dancing on Ice: Champion of Champions* tour, following his first appearance on the show back in 2008. There was the *Big Reunion* arena tour in summer as part of pop super-group 5th Story, with former pin-up pop-sters Dane Bowers, Adam Rickitt, Kavana and Kenzie. And, more recently, an acoustic tour of the UK that had fans posting excitedly all over Twitter, which ended the week before rehearsals for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* began. Writing some of his own music these days, he describes his sound as "still pop, but older pop".

He's delighted to be playing in Croydon

It's a gruelling schedule for the panto; two shows a day for the entire run, with only Mondays, Christmas Day and New Year's Day off. He shrugs it off with a laugh. "I've done pantos where we've had three shows a day, so this is an easy one for me."

He's also delighted to be playing in Croydon, as it means he can go home to Chiswick every night.

"Most years I have to spend six weeks away from home, when I'm doing panto in other parts of the country. This way I get to spend Christmas at home."

He won't, he reveals, be cooking his own dinner on Christmas Day though.

"My family's coming down from Bradford. My mum will be doing the turkey."

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs runs at Fairfield Halls from 5th December to 5th January. For more information and booking phone 020 8688 9291 or visit www.fairfield.co.uk



Bernadette has been a journalist since the age of 7 when she devised, designed and launched 'Fallon's News' – much to her family's delight. Brought up in Ireland, she was born in Addiscombe – where she now lives, though it took her several decades to find it again.

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The Public Gallery

*In a roundup of his weekly online column, **Tom Black** looks at the state of play for Croydon Central's parliamentary candidates, and tries to get to the bottom of a story that's spinning out of control*



Barwell considered second least likely UKIP defector

Gavin Barwell is considered by the bookies to be the second least likely Conservative MP to defect to UKIP. The least likely? David Cameron.

It's a logical show of faith in the loyalty of the Croydon Central MP who is – unlike some of his colleagues – never afraid to attack UKIP on social media or speak out against its politics in public.

There's a policy logic to it as well. Barwell has long presented himself as a liberal conservative (his office has a picture of Benjamin Disraeli, 19th century Conservative PM and the father of the 'One Nation' ideal) and is on the left of his party on most issues – with the notable exception of crime. But while UKIP voters might approve of Barwell's traditional 'law and order' approach, they won't be keen on his unashamed support for immigration and multiculturalism.

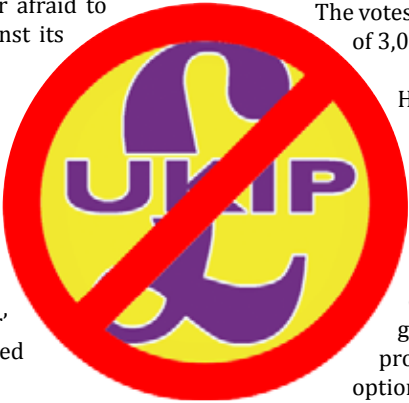
Speaking of UKIP voters, what does Barwell's 'wet' position mean for 2015? Barwell tweeted that he wears the prediction as a 'badge of honour', as is his right. UKIP is a divisive party, attracting adoration and loathing from different bits of the British electorate. Barwell's picking of a side may play well with floating moderate

voters. But a big part of Barwell's 2015 hopes is known to rest on the so-called 'Pelling votes'.

In 2010, sitting MP Andrew Pelling stood as an independent candidate after leaving the Conservatives. Barwell won, but Pelling took 3,000 votes. The belief that those votes are going to 'come home' to the Tories now Pelling isn't standing (and, indeed, has defected to Labour) has long been a comfort to local conservatives as their national poll leads became an increasingly distant memory. The votes would notionally double Barwell's slim majority of 3,000.

However, the belief that the Pelling votes will necessarily 'come home' has started to wane. Many who voted for him last time will have done so out of personal loyalty over the way he was 'treated' by the Conservative leadership (inverted commas used very deliberately). In 2010, it looked like most of them could be depended upon to vote for a sitting Conservative government come 2015. But UKIP, of course, provides a third option. A very tempting third option for a lot of people – many of whom have strong objections to David Cameron.

Might the Pelling votes find a new home instead? A purple one, among others who are unhappy with the present Conservative leadership? It must be a thought that keeps Barwell and his team up at night, particularly considering the polling data (see right).



Astroturf. An advanced form of it is used in the MUGAs that are becoming increasingly common in Croydon. Photo by Rune Mathison, used under Creative Commons license.

What's going to happen to Croydon's playing fields?

Croydon Labour, which currently runs Croydon Council, is denying that it has a plan to sell off Croydon's school playing fields. This, at least, seems accurate – initial hysterical reports (many of which came from vested interests) gave the impression that Croydon's schoolchildren would, overnight, lose all access to the sensation of grass beneath their feet.

As ever, what appears to be happening is a lot more nuanced. It appears that Labour's Cllr Simon Hall, who is overseeing the decision, has categorically ruled out 'selling any playing fields'. So what's the controversy?

The distinction appears to come down to 'sell'. Hall went on to say that surplus land may be considered for 'alternative uses'. Quite what 'surplus land' means is explored below, but that's the official line so far.

Labour's position has been unclear at best, though things are coming into focus. The plan, apparently, is to talk to local schools (and academies, which are independent from local authorities) about land they deem to be 'surplus to requirements'. Labour plans are believed to involve consultation with Sport England, giving them a sense of legitimacy, and Labour sources are confident that there is, in fact, a number of schools where land could easily be deemed as surplus without too much real controversy – particularly as more and more schools introduce the government-endorsed MUGAs (Multi-Use Games Areas, basically a flexible astroturf area).

The Conservatives, meanwhile, have been quick to leap into action. In an echo of their 'tenant tax' approach, they have launched a petition on Gavin Barwell MP's website that calls for people to sign to 'Save Our School Fields'. It's an impressive example of a fast-moving response to a local story, and will probably achieve its objectives – to make people think Labour wants to sell off playing fields (which has been categorically denied) and, like every petition run by a political party (including Labour's Zone4Croydon), to

harvest people's email addresses. Signatories are informed that their email address is required in order to 'keep you updated with progress on this *and other issues*' (emphasis mine).

In terms of the local commentariat, there have been some real feats of mental gymnastics underway as local left-wingers try to justify 'selling off playing fields' simply because Labour is (maybe, sort of) doing it and 'the evil Tories' oppose it. It seems that when Michael Gove does something, it's horrific. When it looks like Labour might do it, it's the right thing to do. It's yet another chapter in The Croydon Book of Doublethink – local right-wingers have done the same thing in the past. Indeed, some on the left are accusing the Croydon Conservatives of criticising something they themselves seemed open to doing when in power.

One left-wing defence of the plans is that Croydon needs more council housing. It certainly does. But the plans don't currently involve the council building council housing on the land. Articles on the subject consistently talk about 'affordable housing', but even if we leave aside the fact 'affordable housing' doesn't actually mean 'most people can afford to live in it', affordable housing is categorically not the same thing as what you and I would call 'council housing'. Social housing may be an end goal of the plans, but while it might not be clear exactly what's happening here, it isn't some 1930s-style state house-building programme.

It's difficult to predict how the rest of this will play out. Labour will have to come out swinging with a clear, factual message if it wants to lessen the blow from Barwell's petition. The Conservatives, equally, will need to build momentum from this, and Barwell's petition site – and recent tweets – suggest that he is inviting Labour parliamentary candidate Sarah Jones to condemn the plans as well.

'Selling off playing fields' is an emotive message, and may impact how the crucial swing voters of Croydon Central make their decisions next May. 'Considering alternative uses for surplus land, including social housing' is less sexy, but may turn out to be the truth of the matter. This will come down to a battle of political messaging – and at the moment, the Conservatives are winning.

Ashcroft poll shows Labour lead in Croydon Central

Lord Ashcroft, the former deputy chairman of the Conservative Party, has been setting himself up as an independent pollster for some years now. One gap in the market that he seems keen to exploit is marginal constituency polling – national support is one thing, but the 2015 election will be won and lost in a comparatively small number of seats that could swing either way. It makes sense to poll them for a picture of how the country looks to be going.

Ashcroft's latest marginal poll looks at a long list of Conservative-held marginal seats – the ones that Labour need to win in 2015 if they want to have a hope of forming a government. As Labour's national lead appears in danger of being completely eroded at present, the figures in last month's marginal poll will make good reading for Ed Miliband.



Labour's Sarah Jones. Photo by Croydon Labour Party.

Closer to home, the figures for Croydon Central will make very good reading indeed for Sarah Jones. Once likelihood-of-voting is taken into account, 36% of Croydon Central residents are likely to vote Labour, while 31% say they'll vote Conservative. These figures change to 39% and 33% respectively when voters were asked to think specifically about which party's candidate they would back in Croydon Central itself. The third place party in 2015 is now all-but-certain to be UKIP, who polled around 20% on both questions.

Despite how good the raw figures look for Jones, Ashcroft does describe the six-point Labour lead as "the smallest I have yet found in a seat the Tories are defending from Labour in London". The data will have been a difficult read for Ashcroft, who was an early mentor for Barwell in the 1990s. It's worth pointing out that while Ashcroft remains a Conservative, his polling has earned plaudits from respected observers and is generally not seen as in any way biased. As with any up-and-coming polling company, there's a degree of uncertainty as to how accurate Ashcroft's findings will prove to be in 2015, but his polls are popularly seen as credible.

If Labour has a six-point lead in Croydon Central at a time when its popularity is sporadically dipping across the country, what does this mean for its chances in the constituency next year? There seems to be only one sensible guess at present.



Tom is the *Citizen's* General Manager, and has spent his whole life in Croydon, apart from three years at the University of Leeds. Passionate about theatre, history and politics, he self-identifies as 'somewhere on the left of the Labour Party'. He is fluent in Danish, but speaks no useful languages.



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Recent events

Mike Southon addresses SLEC

Mike Southon of 'Business on a Beermat' fame gave an excellent presentation. Dealing with being an entrepreneur in this day and age, he spoke to a meeting at South London Export's HQ in Weatherill House.

Mike also introduced ideas he had developed following the World Merit visit of young entrepreneurs from around the world - who had recently won funding to visit the UK.

Dutch students hosted in Croydon

SLEC recently hosted a group of 30 Students from the Netherlands (specifically Arnhem, which is twinned with Croydon). After a briefing at their offices, the students visited Martek Ltd in New Addington. There, in their new conference facility, Derek Galloway (MD) presented details of his company and how they exported their products and services overseas.

After lunch at a farm in Kent the students returned to Croydon Town Hall for a very

English experience: tea and biscuits with the Mayor. The Mayor gave them an official welcome to Croydon when they presented themselves in the council chamber itself. We hope they'll be back.

Live webinar with New York connects Croydon businesses to the US

On Tuesday, 18th November, a group of intrepid pioneers set out from the Weatherill House Business Centre, Purley Way, to seek a new world of commercial opportunity. The setting out, however, was done in a very twenty-first century fashion: thanks to the South London Export Club and Exclusive Target Networking (ETN), they had the opportunity to network live with entrepreneurs from New York City who were, in their turn, interested in working with businesses in South London.

Twenty or so companies attended the inaugural event, which was part of Global Entrepreneurship Week and was organised and ably hosted by Bella Networking Guru, founder and director of ETN, who kept the networking flowing and overcame a few teething problems with the live NYC

connection: New Yorkers, it turns out, are surprisingly wary of Skype. But the connection was made and several Croydon companies enthusiastically pitched online to US contacts including Kojenwa Moitt of Zebra PR and the Corcoran Group's Jeffrey Gardner.

The South London businesses then had the opportunity for more traditional face-to-face networking with each other: Taste of Success - makers of promotional branded cakes and confectionery - Maxelerator Ltd, Peter Schneider Photography and Destination Croydon, the town centre conference bureau, among them.

The New York networking event is one of a number of activities organised locally by the South London Export Club, set up to encourage local businesses to get involved in international trade, help them identify overseas business opportunities and avoid costly mistakes. Its regular gatherings attract a growing audience among small and medium-sized companies who hear speakers from different part of the world, along with business people with real international experience, give guidance on global expansion.

South London Export Club's next event will be covering

South Korea | India | Jamaica

...and some ideas on future webinars around the world.

January 28th at the Croydon Park Hotel at 1:30pm until 5:00pm

We wish all our contacts a very happy Christmas, and a successful import or export 2015!

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Towering ambition

*The technology sector is starting to rival finance as the industry powering London's growth. But, asks **Tom Lickley**, how much of that can we expect to filter down to Croydon?*

As the cranes begin to cast shadows over East Croydon station, and shimmering glass and steel rises to replace the dirt that has lain adjacent to the tracks for many years, one may expect Croydon's office market to be in rude health. After all, the much publicised Renaissance building on Dingwall Road successfully let all 100,000 sq ft of office space in a short period of time – a great achievement for a speculative development in an area where leasing activity had not only cooled in recent years, but had been damaged by the loss of major international businesses such as Nestlé, Philips and BT.

However, whilst plans are pressing ahead for the new office development at Ruskin Square, a Grade A office space adjacent to central Croydon's other train station lies empty. 180,000 sq ft of the Interchange Croydon development by West Croydon station remains unlet, a year after the optimism surrounding the building being brought to the market. With rental prices very affordable by London standards at £22.50 per sq ft (and indeed cheaper than those offered by the Renaissance building at £23.50 per sq ft), two main factors spring to mind as to why the building remains unlet.

Croydon, with its vacant, affordable office space and great connections is perfectly placed

The location is clearly less advantageous than that offered by Renaissance, with East Croydon offering faster connections to central London and Gatwick Airport, and the wider east Croydon area seen as more desirable for residents and workers alike than west Croydon. However, more worrying is levels of demand; affordable, Grade A office space is readily available next to a Tube network-connected station and is completely unlet.

We have two contrasting stories therefore; the considerable success of Renaissance and the optimism of Ruskin Square negated by the challenges faced at Interchange. Vacancy rates remain high in Croydon and rents remain low – which, depending on which side of the fence you sit, could be a positive or negative story. If you're one of the many entrepreneurs behind a technology company in London however, the news could be very positive indeed.

The technology industry has joined the banking, finance and professional services industry in powering the economy of London. Indeed, according to JLL the TMT (Technology, Media and Telecommunications) sector accounted for 30% of all occupier activity in central London in Q3 2014, compared to 20% for the banking, finance and professional services industry. Outside of central London, Croydon has also been a part of this drive. Jonny Rose, co-founder of the Croydon Tech City movement, suggests, "The Croydon tech scene is booming at the moment having seen a 38% increase in new tech, digital and creative businesses set up in the area since 2011." This

much needed development across London (if and when the financial markets hit the bottom of their next cycle, London needs another sector which can help soak up the damage) has been fired by several headline deals in recent years, including a 210,000 sq ft letting by Amazon in Holborn, and Google's headline-grabbing (and delay-ridden) 750,000 sq ft campus in King's Cross.

The town needs to offer all kinds of office space – whether it be that offered by charities for minimal cost, a shabby 60s office block, or Grade A facilities

Whilst we shouldn't expect deals of this size to happen in Croydon anytime soon, investors and developers in the town can take advantage of the filter down effect of these deals. As the 'Midtown' area of central London (that bit between the West End and the City in layman's terms) and the 'City Fringe' (Shoreditch, Old Street, or 'Tech City' and the like) continue to attract major international technology companies, and as London becomes the forefront of the tech sector outside of the USA, prices will grow exponentially. Croydon, with its vacant, affordable office space and great connections is perfectly placed to take advantage of the spillover from those medium sized companies who are being priced out.

Whilst this potential development could be hugely exciting for those behind the Croydon Tech City movement, more immediate is the range of advantages being brought to current tech business owners. As Rose explains, "There are now over a thousand such businesses in the borough: this has been created by a combination of the supportive and dynamic start-up ecosystem created by Croydon Tech City and Croydon's unique mix of competitively-priced office space, new business rate relief scheme and a solid broadband infrastructure." Whilst start-ups are likely to begin from workspaces such as the fantastic opportunity presented by 3Space, for those ready to move into their own premises the vast amount of empty space and considerably cheaper rents present an incredible opportunity which, if central London does become unaffordable, will not be there for long.

Rents for some office spaces in central Croydon are close to single figures, which puts the town at a distinct advantage compared to central London. Compare these rents to those in the City fringe, where they average around £32.50 to £42.50 per sq ft for Grade A space, and £22.50 to £30.00 per sq ft for refurbished Grade B space (Carter Jonas). Most tech companies are not looking for Grade A office space, but instead an area that they can adapt and fit out to their own needs.

It is clear that these buildings do not offer a Grade A space. However, for those companies in development which need little more than a quiet space, internet access and a toilet, Croydon

boasts an ideal platform for expansion. Rose continues, "For tech entrepreneurs who are not yet in a position to commit to fixed or serviced offices, there has also been an interesting growth in workspaces in the borough (such as 3Space and My Outspace) which have emerged to capture the market between bedroom start-up and multi-floor tenancy."

Croydon needs to attract and retain businesses in much the same way that it needs to attract and retain talent

So how can Croydon create an environment where the demand from small to medium sized tech companies is sustained? Firstly, the recent abandonment of permitted development rights by Croydon Council – i.e. preventing unlimited office to residential conversion – is a greatly positive step for the future of Croydon. The town needs to offer all kinds of office space – whether it be that offered by charities for minimal cost, a shabby 60s office block, or Grade A facilities – if it wants to keep those start-ups which do become a local success. Imagine: a start-up operating out of 3Space, growing into its own space in another floor in Southern House, before becoming successful and large enough to rent a premium Grade A space at Ruskin Square.

However, Croydon also needs to expand its offering outside of the office space itself. There needs to be enough housing, enough modern shops and enough of a cultural offering to attract businesses and the people who work for them to the town. The myriad of cranes which will arrive in the town over the next few years covers the first two bases but, for a town of over 350,000 people, the cultural offering in Croydon is still very weak, despite the positive steps taken by initiatives such as the opening of the RISE Gallery. Croydon needs to attract and retain businesses in much the same way that it needs to attract and retain talent, and it is not yet in a position to do so.

Croydon also needs the local authority to assist. Croydon Council needs to maintain a good relationship with developers and investors to develop the town as the primary office market outside of central London, and there is plenty that can be done to achieve that – including marketing, tax breaks and incentivising landlords to offer flexible rents to tenants. With Croydon Tech City over two years old, the movement now has a fantastic opportunity to mature and take advantage of the window of opportunity which is starting to crack open.

Further reading (PDF): CBRE, Creative London: How technological innovation, work and play are changing office workplace strategies of creative industries (2014)

If you would like further research on the commercial or residential markets in Croydon, please do not hesitate to contact me at tom.lickley@thecroydoncitizen.com

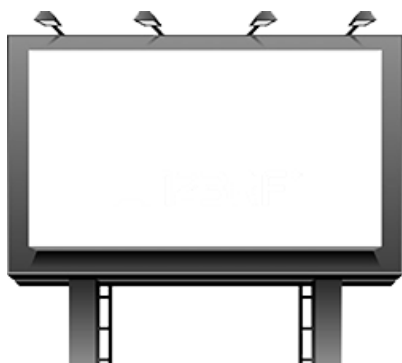
I Would make
CROYDON
 BETTER by--

How could Croydon be improved?

*We want your suggestions today! Email us:
editors@thecroydoncitizen.com*

In July, we launched a campaign to get your suggestions to make Croydon a better place. Why? From the beginning, a big part of the *Citizen* has been about proposing concrete, achievable solutions to the town's problems. Now we want to do more and involve readers on a larger scale than ever.

These are your latest ideas



Advertise ethnic food stores

I would make Croydon better by simultaneously building on the street improvement work in West Croydon and encouraging the variety of different ethnic food stores there by publicising on street boards the various products available. Maybe with recipes suggesting how to cook foods that we are not familiar with?

Kate Richards



Free reusable nappies

I would make Croydon better by ensuring that every family/parent with a new baby was given half a dozen, free washable nappies of their choice. These nappies are wonderful, colourful, economical, healthy ways to work towards a more sustainable and environmentally-friendly lifestyle as well as reducing the huge volume of non-biodegradable waste going to landfill sites or incineration in or near our homes. No boiling involved!

Grace Onions

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London Living Wage

The LLW is now £9.15 an hour. It is independently calculated to be the minimum you need to live on in London. It rewards a hard day's work with a fair day's pay and is good for workers, good for business, and good for Croydon. The council has pledged to pay the LLW, now we need businesses too.

James Asfa



Think you can do better?

Tell us your specific, concrete idea in no more than 100 words and we'll aim to feature it in our next print edition. It doesn't have to be something that *you* can do – just something specific that's achievable for *someone*. Ambition is great, but it must be achievable and well defined.

Whatever your idea, we want to hear it.

Send submissions to:
editors@thecroydoncitizen.com



Festive Fun for Carers

The Carers Support Centre, George Street, offers information, advice, training and social activities to Croydon carers who are looking after someone who needs help due to illness, disability or old age. Come along to our free Christmas events for carers:

Carers Singing Group
 Wed 3 and 10 December,
 11am – 12.15pm
 Join to take part in our Christmas performance on Wed 17 December.

Song & Dance Show
 Wed 17 December,
 10.30am – 12.30pm
 Attend our carers singing and dancing groups to showcase your talent.

Sugarcraft Session
 Tues 16 December,
 10.30am – 12.30pm
 Make your own sugarcraft Xmas treats.

Carols and mince pies in the Carers Café
 Mon 22 December,
 10.30am – 12.30pm
 With singers from Croydon Minster.

No need to book, just turn up! We look forward to seeing you there!

Christmas Opening Times

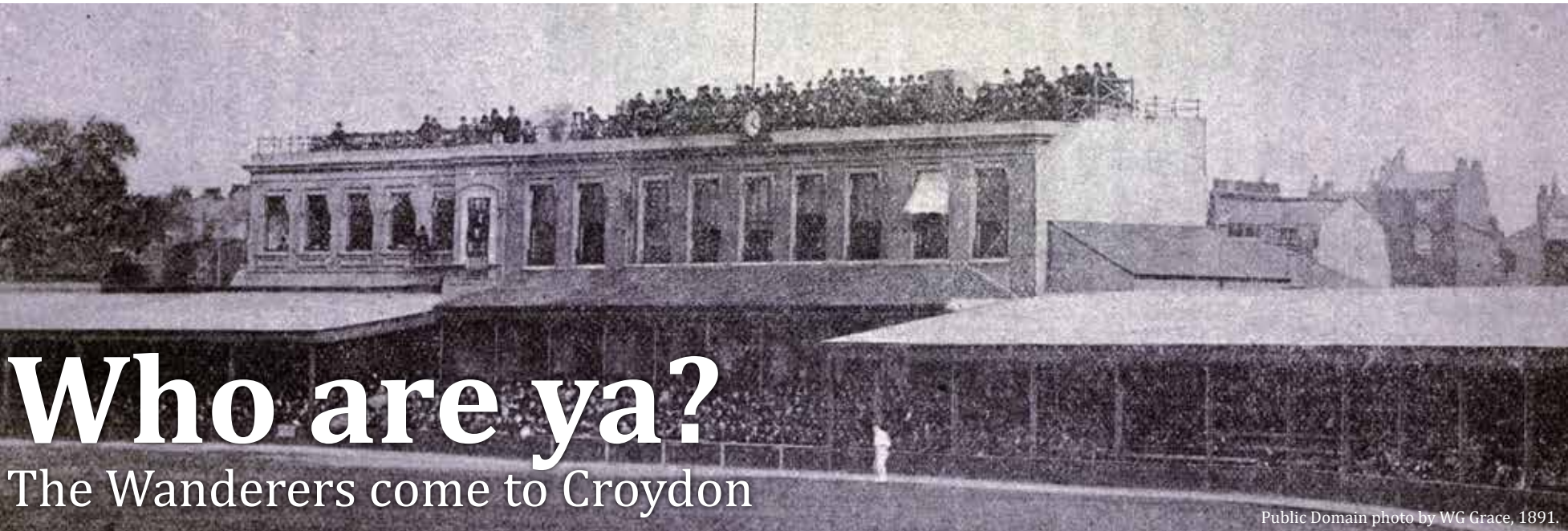
We will be closed on Christmas Eve and will re-open on Fri 2 January. The Centre will also be open on Mon 29 and Tues 30 December, 10am – 2pm. You can contact the Centre on 020 8663 5608 during these opening times.

For more info visit www.carersinfo.org.uk or call 020 8649 9339, option 1.



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Public Domain photo by WG Grace, 1891.

If the name ‘Wanderers FC’ suggests a team without drive, without ambition, then it is a misleading one. Rewind over a century and a half, to 1850, and one of the oldest names in football was born. Wanderers were so-called as they did not have a fixed home ground. Rather, they played their fixtures in various stadiums in and around London. But there was one venue which they frequented more often than others: The Kennington Oval. A bastion of English sport, many prestigious Test cricket matches also take place at the London arena. And between 1872 and 1892, it hosted 20 of the first 21 FA Cup finals – 4 of which Wanderers won.

In fact, Wanderers emerged triumphant in 5 of the first 7 editions of this historic competition. Charles William Alcock, who spent 14 years at the club, was one of the founders of the FA Cup. A burly centre-forward with a hard shot, he felt that a knock-out tournament would only serve to foster the popularity of football in England.

Morton Betts’ 15th minute tap-in made him the first man to score a winning goal in an FA Cup final

Admittedly, a large slice of fortune allowed the London team to compete in the inaugural final. At the semi-final stage, Wanderers played out a draw with Scottish club Queen’s Park. A date had been set for the match to be replayed, but the Glaswegians couldn’t afford to return to London. Their subsequent withdrawal sent Wanderers through to face Royal Engineers in the showpiece occasion.

Fitting really – considering that Alcock had

been one of those to formulate the idea of the whole thing. It was a blustery March day, and 2,000 were in attendance to witness the game at a sun-soaked Oval. Wanderers got lucky again, winning the coin toss. They forced Royal Engineers to play the first moments battling against both wind and sun, as well as their opponents.

The ‘Sappers’ – as Royal Engineers were known – were an army team, and the hardiness of Her Majesty’s Corps was evident in the game’s opening exchanges. Lieutenant-cum-winger Edmund Creswell broke a collar bone in a melee before 10 minutes had passed. But leaving the field of play in the first FA Cup final would’ve been daft, wouldn’t it? Creswell didn’t just play on, he saw out the match in its entirety – witnesses claiming he struggled as a ‘passenger’ on the wing.

The wing was also the starting point of the first – and only – goal of the encounter. With 15 minutes gone, a Wanderers forward – the brilliantly named Robert Walpole Sealy Vidal – steamed down the flank and crossed for striker Morton Betts to prod home. A goal for the history books. Curiously, Morton Betts was not how the forward’s name appeared on the team sheet. Betts played the final under the pseudonym “A.H. Chequer,” an alias supposedly derived from the name of his local team, Harrow Chequers. The alter-ego may have been used to dodge a potential cup-tie infringement. This seems unlikely though, as formal registration with clubs was not mandatory in this early era of football. Perhaps Betts thought his name was difficult to pronounce, or maybe he simply reckoned that ‘Chequer’ just sounded pretty cool. What is certain is that his 15th minute tap-in made him the first man to score a winning goal in an FA Cup final.

Wanderers were connoisseurs of the game, the model to follow, a stellar institution – but then it all fell apart

And the success didn’t stop there for Wanderers. They championed what newspapers described as “some of the best play, individually and collectively, that has ever been shown in an Association game”. They developed the talent of Arthur Fitzgerald Kinnaird – regarded as the finest player of his generation. They were connoisseurs of the game, the model to follow, a stellar institution. In other words, Wanderers were the absolute business.

Then it all collapsed. In the modern era, the decline of a well-run football club is usually linked to one (or a combination) of the following: a) financial troubles b) disparity between the owners and the management or c) flying too close to the sun.

A different problem altogether beset Wanderers. By 1878, football clubs had been established for former pupils of most leading public schools. Thus, the best players decided to play for their respective old boys’ teams instead. This left Wanderers squad decimated. Another FA Cup final appearance was all but a fleeting dream; in the 1878-79 season they were knocked out of the competition at the first hurdle, suffering a 7-2 defeat to Old Etonians. The same opponents sent Wanderers crashing out in the third round a year later. To compound matters, Kinnaird played for Old Etonians in both of these games.

Such devastation was swiftly followed by a potent shot of realism. More players jumped

ship, and the club had to withdraw from the FA Cup in 1880 – they didn’t have enough players to compete. A dark day indeed. By 1881, the fixture list painted a bleak picture: One match per year, against Harrow School each Christmas. Wanderers’ last game was reportedly played in December 1887. They went down 3-1 to Harrow and the remainder of what was a ‘team’ departed shortly afterwards. With no direction, no players, and no hope, the club was forced to disband. Sometimes even the greatest of trees can be felled.

But 2009 saw the phoenix brush off the ashes and rise again. Wanderers were reformed in London, with the descendants of the original club giving their seal of approval. In 2012 they participated in a rematch of the first ever FA Cup final at The Oval. There was to be no repeat of the 1872 result though, as Royal Engineers ran out 7-1 winners. Since that date the new Wanderers revolution has gathered quite some pace. Two promotions in as many years, and they are now competing in the Surrey South Eastern Combination Junior Division 2 – enough to warrant a move to a larger home. As of this week, Wanderers will be sharing the 3,000 capacity Keith Tuckey Stadium in Thornton Heath with AFC Croydon Athletic. A new ground means renewed hope. And who knows – maybe, just maybe – another shot at FA Cup glory.



Nadim Lilani is a recent Hispanic Studies graduate from the University of Birmingham. A keen football fan and writer, he enjoys expressing his love for Croydon by documenting all things sport in South London.



Public Notice – STEM ACADEMY CROYDON GATEWAY

STEM Academy Croydon Gateway is due to open in September 2015 at 11, Oliver Grove, South Norwood, SE25 6ED (former Police Station)* to play its part in enabling the education of students aged 16-19 in **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)**. These subjects are vital in the competitive global economy in which we live and STEM Academy Croydon Gateway is dedicated to giving its students the knowledge, skills, and qualifications they need to enter university, to achieve a fulfilling career, to enter directly into the workplace, to advanced apprenticeships or to start an entrepreneurial business.

The Secretary of State for Education’s approval of the Application to set up STEM Academy Croydon Gateway was based, amongst many criteria, on the STEM Academy Education Trust’s assessment of the current positive demand for a STEM education locally and in London generally.

A Public Meeting will be held at Fairfield Halls, Park Lane, Croydon, CR9 9DG at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday 21 January 2015 where anyone wishing to discuss STEM Academy Croydon Gateway or make observations on the Academy is invited to attend. **Please visit www.stemacademy.ac.uk to see the Academy’s Admission Policy and for further information.**

STEM Academy is required under Section 10 of the Academies Act 2010 to consult widely in the local community to gain local stakeholder views on STEM Academy Croydon Gateway – the consultation will formally commence on 1 December 2014 and will end on 30 January 2015

Stakeholders include those who are likely to be interested in or affected by the opening of STEM Academy including but not limited to: potential students, parents, local authorities, politicians, local businesses, local community groups, and local schools.

We will be seeking the views of stakeholders using a variety of methods including questionnaires, public events and letters to individual stakeholders during the consultation period.

To contribute to the Stakeholder Consultation, please go to www.stemacademy.ac.uk (Croydon Gateway page) or by writing to **STEM Academy Croydon Gateway, 2nd Floor Suffolk House, George street, East Croydon CR0 0YN.**

*subject to planning permission and final approval by Secretary of State for Education.

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