IN PRAISE OF THE SUBURBS

James Naylor defends suburban identity | Lauren Furey talks nightlife
John Grindrod and Andy Miller stop apologising for Croydon
Tom Winter speaks up for brutalism | Our new Young Citizens page
In praise of the suburbs
Inspired by Croydon Till I Die, the Citizen takes an eclectic look at suburbia

Sprawling, sometimes dangerous, or just plain dull, the suburb is far from a universally-praised form of human settlement. This, in spite it being exactly the type of settlement that the majority of us will live in. We can’t all live in a city-centre penthouse or a remote farm, after all. Croydon, as a frequent poster-child for the suburb, has attracted regular ire and derision for the suburban way of life it represents – as well as, at times, being a rich study in what being a suburb is all about.

For this edition, we have taken inspiration from the currently-touring literary roadshow Croydon Till I Die: a unique event in which a group of proud South London suburbanite authors explore their experiences of growing up in the suburbs, and the often underrated cultural life that characterises them. Its last performance, presented by John Grindrod, Andy Miller and Bob Stanley, will take place on 20th-23rd August at the Green Man Festival in the Brecon Beacons.

In this edition, we review its first event in Crystal Palace, explore behind the scenes of its creation with John Grindrod and Andy Miller themselves, and I take a deeper look at why we feel the need to defend the suburbs at all. Architecture, nightlife and even Woking: we consider it all as we try to determine how fair any of this stereotyping is.

Of course, as always, there’s plenty more besides, with restaurant reviews, events coverage, recipes and your June in brief news round-up. We’re also launching our new Young Citizens page: a new section of the paper specially created to get our younger readers and writers more involved in local debate.

Last but definitely not least, you’ll find, inserted in the centre of the paper, a guide to the upcoming Ambition festival with its sheer mountain of comedy, music, comedy and artistic events. For the scale of it alone, it’s something to behold.

As always...

We’re on the lookout for new writers. If you’ve got a story to tell or an idea for an article, or if you just want to hone your writing skills, don’t hesitate to get in touch. Who knows – maybe your article will be in the next edition! Just drop us a line at editors@thecroydoncitizen.com to get started.

James Naylor
Editor-in-Chief
In defence of the suburbs

The suburb is inoffensive, but why does it conjure up so much negative sentiment? asks James Naylor

“But what, exactly, do the suburbs need defending from?” said Rob.

To me, the answer felt obvious. It was the reason that I, and 300 others, gathered on 11th June for the final leg of the part literary roadshow, part reading group, part evangelical revival that was Croydon Till I Die at the Fairfield Halls. It was what, through the event’s mixture of readings and personal reminiscence about suburban life in Croydon, resonated with me in such a strong and familiar way that it felt like old news. It was how this literary seminar about late 20th century suburban identity could end with 300 people chanting, “I know I am, I’m sure I am, I’m Croydon till I die” while they swore allegiance to a newly imbued sacred symbol – the T from Taberner House’s famously dated signage.

And yet, as I stared back at Rob through the webcam of my laptop, I couldn’t give a single coherent answer to his question.

The suburbs are where most of us live. Since the vast growth of railway and the huge population explosion of the 19th century, the vast majority of people’s experiences has not been lived amongst the bustling sounds and tight-packed conditions of the city, or the quiet wide-open spaces of the country, but in the space in-between. A place of nearly silent evenings, gardens rather than fields, and houses which cluster rather than compete for space.

That’s the real landscape of Britain – if such a thing exists – and it makes up the bulk of every British town and, indeed, far more square miles of London than large Georgian townhouses, modernist housing estates or trendy Victorian warehouse conversions.

They are logically convenient: close to shops, work and schools. They are – to even hang around with the same people would be to “go backwards” as one school friend put it. I must admit, I had much to agree with. I wanted excitement, and I wanted London (at that time Croydon was not London to me).

“Cause on the surface the city lights shine They’re calling at me, ‘come and find your kind’”

In a straightforward lyrical boldness that is almost too much on-the-nose, Canadian band Arcade Fire captures it perfectly.1 And such a sentiment crosses generational boundaries.

The ringleaders of Croydon Till I Die clearly once felt much the same (notably none lives in Croydon now) as did the intellectual figures of the early 20th century that they referenced. Names as varied and illustrious as T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence (despite living in Croydon and taking trips to Purley by tram) and E.M. Forster poured scorn on the suburbs through literary reference and, occasionally, direct condemnation: dull, corrupt, even lacking in “life force” in George Bernard Shaw’s parlance. Evelyn Waugh’s Vice Bodies gives an archetypal example: so strong is Nina’s dislike that the mere sight of the “squalor of millions of little detached houses sitting by themselves” is enough to make her physically sick.2

In more recent times, the cold hard numbers bear out this existential desire to escape in the real movement of people and money. We tend to think of the suburbs as – at least – materially prosperous. But while the inner city – especially in London – has grown much richer, outer London and the suburbs of many of the UK’s cities have grown poorer. House prices in outer London were approximately flat in 2000-2010 – as were total numbers of jobs. Between 2004 and 2010 more than 90% of neighbourhoods that became more deprived were in outer London.

It’s visible in places like Purley and Coulsdon. While wealthy in relative terms, they are not as prestigious as they once were. The once leafy suburbs of Thornton Heath and West Croydon are not places that the word ‘leafy’ is normally used to describe any more. But macro economics is not enough to make a room full of people so charmingly determined to profess their love for Croydon against something. The rejection of the suburbs runs deeper – it runs to not only a rejection of where you’ve come from, but a rejection of who you are.

“They’re screaming at us, We don’t need your kind”

Amongst the intellectuals of the early 20th century, the suburb was perhaps most spottily perceived because it was filled with the detestable clerks – the burgeoning mass of people doing white collar jobs (administrators, agents of all kinds, office workers) enabled by the introduction of free education in the second half of the 19th century. A “low, inferior species” of people, according to T.W. Crostland, whose very attempt to become educated and rise above their station was offensive to him.3

The imagined contrast to city people couldn’t be more clear than in the words of the poet Brian Howard: “I live in Mayfair. No doubt you come from some dreary suburb”. Not being vibrant city folk – artists, intellectuals, aristocratic playboys – or honest, simple rural people, their only real crime was to be unexceptional. It makes sense if you personally a little offended. The clerks are the forerunners to what we think of today as the middle class.

Of course, such direct sentiments are much less likely to be expressed quite so nakedly today (although the adjective ‘suburban’ still has a negative ring). But I wonder if, deep down, we’re still often left with the same dissatisfaction. We romanticise city life and city people even today and we romanticise country life: but espousing a dream of a middle kind of life in the suburbs is something that few would admit to.

It’s an idle thought, but the timing of this might be no accident. The early 20th century wasn’t so different to today: it was a time of comparative inequality, at least to a second half that saw, in Europe and America, the rise of the biggest-ever middle class. Today, the middle class is shrinking as more of the clerks jobs are swallowed up by machines. In a world where it feels like we must fight to be at the top of the social pile to avoid falling further, being unexceptional like this is a problem. It probably begins early. Today, people bemoan how children’s occupational dreams today are unattainable for most. They dream of being pop stars or sports stars instead of the more traditional ambitions to be a train driver or a fireman. Even once we’re older, and our dreams have become less grand and more nuanced by their inevitable clash with reality, we have a deep-seated and unconscious fear that if we stay in the suburbs – by force or choice – we are doomed to be unexceptional. The affirmation at the end of Croydon Till I Die is perhaps, on this view, a form of therapy: affirmation that being ordinary is ok. “I know I am, I’m sure I am, I’m Croydon till I die”.

‘Unexceptional’ is the last thing that I would ever describe Croydon as being today. It is full of life, intrigue and sometimes danger. But it is never dull. It has a vast amount to recommend it, and this paper – and many other issues of it – prove that.

But then, is it still a suburb? Since the ’60s, the centre of Croydon hasn’t resembled one and its latest round of high-rise development will only increase its urban character. It has its own suburbs. Perhaps more importantly its ethnic and cultural mix is not one typically associated with suburbs (perhaps itself an outdated notion). And as it goes through the change that it’s going through right now, it is more stereotypically urban by the day. Perhaps, for all my claims to love it, I do so because I’ve left the suburbs behind.

References

1 Sprawl II (Mountains Beyond Mountains) from The Suburbs by Arcade Fire, Mercury 2010
2 Many of these examples come from John Carey’s excellent book, The Intellectuals and the Masses (London: Faber, 1992). It covers this extensively and was briefly read from during the Croydon Till I Die event itself.

James grew up in Coulsdon. After a brief spell in Somerset he returned to central Croydon as a useful London base. Since then however, his enthusiasm for Croydon has slowly grown into obsession – leading him to set-up Croydon Tours and eventually the Croydon Citizen. James is particularly interested in the power of local media to foster new ways of thinking about communities and how to empower them.
In a regular feature, the Citizen team compiles some of the noteworthy events of last month into a handy page.

**Economics & Business**

**Benefits of Gatwick expansion were extolled in Croydon**

The Davies Commission has now recommended that Heathrow, not Gatwick, build a new runway to increase London’s airport capacity. But with the government known to be divided on the issue, Gatwick may yet be the favoured option. Tony Newman, leader of Croydon Council, spoke in favour of a second runway at Gatwick and called upon the prime minister to support it, citing “30,000 new jobs, some of which could go to Croydon residents”. While concerns about the environmental impact of the expansion are also being raised, hopes for the knock-on effect on Croydon’s jobs and infrastructure mean there is support for Gatwick’s expansion from a cross-section of public and private Croydon organisations.

**Council offered training to shopkeepers facing new law on sale of e-cigarettes**

New laws, which will come into force in October, ban the sale of all vaping products and parts to under 18s, including replacement cartridges and refills containing nicotine. Shopkeepers found to be in breach could face fines of thousands of pounds. Croydon’s trading standards team is running a ‘Do you pass?’ training scheme, which is free of charge and available only to Croydon-based businesses, to ensure all traders are aware of the rule change.

**Politics**

**Croydon NHS Commissioning group went into the red for third consecutive year**

Croydon’s Clinical Commissioning Group, made up of all 58 GP practices in the borough, announced a projected £11.9 million overspend for the financial year 2015-2016. This would bring the cumulative deficit accrued by the CCG since it was created in April 2013 to £44.8m. Mike Sexton, the CCG’s finance director, stated that there is no threat to frontline services. The group has declared £25m of cuts and efficiency savings over the last two years and predicts a further £10.5m can be saved in the coming year.

**Education**

**New grammar school for 1,000 pupils announced for Addington**

Wallington County Grammar School (WCGS), a selective boys’ school in Sutton, hopes to open a new free school in Pioneer Place, off Featherbed Lane, in 2017. No formal plans have yet been published although Department of Education funding was secured in March. It is hoped that the new secondary school, which will have six forms of entry as well as a sixth-form, will absorb some of the pressure of Croydon’s rising school-age population. Concerns have been raised about the proposed location, at a narrow ‘pinch point’ in Featherbed Lane – heavy industrial traffic uses the route to access a waste transfer station at Pear Tree Farm.

**Transport**

**Long-running coach route withdrawn from Coulsdon**

National Express’ 025 coach is to be permanently diverted via Sutton and Banstead from 6th July. The route has linked the very south of the borough to Rosley and beyond since before the Second World War (when it was run by Brighton and Hove Buses). The service is used by a number of elderly people, as well as people wishing to transfer to other National Express services at Gatwick and London Victoria.

**Culture**

**Croydon’s Click Clock gallery showed work of its 250th exhibitor**

With the opening of photographer Simon Shaw’s ‘Croydon Through My Eyes’ exhibition on Saturday 13th June, the Click Clock Gallery celebrated the work of its 250th exhibitor since it opened in September 2011. Founded by photographer and art enthusiast John Reeve with the goal of maintaining an arts presence in the town centre following cuts, the gallery now appears on the Spoonfed London culture listings website and has sold an average of ten pieces of work a month.

**The Heritage Festival returned to celebrate its third year**

The Whitgift Foundation’s popular Heritage Festival opened on Saturday 20th June with a day of stalls and exhibitions in the town centre. The week-long festival comprised over 70 separate events, including talks, walks, exhibitions, workshops, open buildings and children’s activities. The festival took place with the support of a great many volunteers, as well as corporate sponsors, the council and local organisations including historical societies, residents’ associations and schools.

**Sir Bradley Wiggins raced through Croydon town centre**

The Pearl Izumi Men’s Tour Series and Matrix Fitness Women’s Grand Prix, two of Britain’s main professional cycling events and the backbone of the UK professional cycling scene, came to Croydon town centre on the evening of Tuesday 2nd June. The 75-minute men’s race was one of ten events taking place this summer at town centre venues across the UK and one of only two to take place in London. The one-hour women’s race was one of five events across the country. The 1km cycle route included the northern section of North End, crossed the tram lines at George Street and Church Street, and continued down Surrey Street. Croydon Tramlink was suspended in the town centre for the duration of the race. As part of race coverage, Croydon featured in a one hour highlights programme on ITV4 and Eurosport, broadcast in 100 countries.
23 - 26 July
Ambition Festival
CROYDON

Tickets www.ambitionfest.com
Fairfield Halls and venues around town
Soul II Soul
TINARIWEN
Lee ‘Scratch’ Perry

Alternative Dubstep Orchestra - Hyde & Beast - Nick Harper - Lazy Habits
Too Many T’s - White Mink Electro Swing Club - Beans on Toast
Circle of Sound - Josienne Clarke & Ben Walker - Of Land and Tongue
Polish Arts in London Variety Night - Poetic Media Arts & Debarred Theatre +++

Bring the FAMILY to our free outdoor stages
MUSIC - COMEDY - THEATRE - DANCE
Queen's Gardens + Fairfield Gardens

CROYDON
www.croydon.gov.uk
I woke up on the morning of Friday 8th May with a strong desire to place the British electorate on a giant collective naughty step. I was determined to consider how its behaviour and attitudes could be improved. And, at the end of a fascinating evening at the Bookseller Crow store, Westow Street, Crystal Palace, on Thursday 21st May, I wanted the audience to join in.

It was nothing personal. These were nice people – CP without the FC, and you could tell at a glance that their babies are breastfed longer than the national average. Whilst there’s much to admire and love in that, they were still a baffling bunch. For when each and every assertion of Croydonian identity is met with a well-spoken cheer my irony detectors go off at once, and remained on high alert for the rest of the evening.

Croydon Till I Die was a talk, a book-reading, a musical entertainment and an exploration of identity. It began with a quick turn from The Effracs (who then left for a gig at the Oval Tavern), and the books in question were The Year of Reading Dangerously by Andy Miller, Concretopia by John Grindrod, and Hopscotch and Handbags by Lucy Mangan. The evening set out to explore what it means to come from the suburbs, why suburbs came to exist and what have they become, and to examine the changing nature of suburban experience, specifically in relation to Croydon and South London. In other words – this was all about your life and mine.

What it came down to was this: London, in all its edgy, dirty beauty, is a SUBURB.

Croydon could always dream big.

For me, it was Andy Miller and New Addington-born John Grindrod who really delivered – though I’m still not sure how much the audience was listening. John explained that suburban sprawl is about hope and renewal: remember what the suburbs replaced, he told us, and the post-war optimism that created them – the uplifting belief in housing for the masses that isn’t slum-dwelling and a higher standard of living for everyone in an exciting, futuristic landscape. Croydon could always dream big and the term ‘concrete monstrocities’ as shorthand for post-war development came later.

Andy Miller, meanwhile, was nothing short of magnetic – a fiercely intelligent man from a lower middle-class background who began by reading us John Betjeman’s ‘Croydon’, possessed of the wit and flair to laugh at class privilege while his eyes remained cold. He was clearly itching to sock it to the ‘metropolitan elite’, whose condescension to the suburbs, historic and current, has done so much to shape our collective low opinion of ourselves.

A new militant strand of Cronx dwellers

In reality, most of us come from here. And what that means is a big cultural disconnect: the majority of Britons don’t live in the country that’s sold to us. Why do we allow a gang of rich kids that doesn’t play by the same rules, or even on the same playing field, to bully us into feeling ashamed of ourselves?

Which brings me to the most inspiring yet frustrating part of the night: Andy identified ‘a new militant strand of Cronx dwellers’, with a growing sense of pride in our identity. If I hadn’t been scribbling I’d have leapt up and cheered – but this crowd didn’t. They didn’t really get it, because they don’t go to Croydon much. Later in the Croydon Till I Die tour this was to change, big-time, as you’ll read elsewhere in this magazine – but “art galleries in Croydon!” said one young woman and everyone said “oh”.

I don’t know what it’s like to grow up in the suburbs because I didn’t – I came to London wide-eyed at eighteen, and to me any place within thirty minutes by public transport of the centre of one of the most exciting conurbations on earth was and remains the edgy, dirty city that I love. I live where I can afford to, which was once zone two but it changed to five – and there are more and more Londoners like me. The defensiveness of suburbanites (a strong theme of the evening) will surely alter as the centre of our city grows and the conurbations on earth was and remains the edgy, dirty city that I love. I live where I can afford to, which was once zone two but it changed to five – and there are more and more Londoners like me. The defensiveness of suburbanites (a strong theme of the evening) will surely alter as the centre of our city grows and the suburbanites’ angry turn from The Effracs tells us a lot.

What are their troubles? They’re mostly problems of identity: they have become, and to examine the changing nature of suburban experience, specifically in relation to Croydon and South London. In other words – this was all about your life and mine.

What it came down to was dissing Catford.

But it seems that a suburban childhood makes you apologise for yourself. Suburbanites are ambivalent, uncomfortable about settling here and deciding not to reach for the Shard. Enough is enough for us, and for Catford girl Lucy Mangan, that ability to be content makes for a life of dignity, even of beauty. I very much agree with her, although her remaining contributions disappointed me – and I speak as a long-standing fan of hers. She’s a terrific journalist whose sharp, self-ironic observations have always made me laugh and did so again, but what she came down to on the night was dising Catford. Having low self-esteem in a comedic way isn’t something I need lessons in, and neither does Croydon.

The zeal of Croydonian incourterer Liz Sheppard-Jones for her adoptive home does credit to all converts. Liz is the Citizen’s Senior Section Editor and an advocate and fan of our rich local heritage. She was a founder member of Croydon’s award-winning Visitor Centre (December 2008–May 2015). You can follow Liz on Twitter @LizSheppardJone.
Croydon till they die: John Grindrod and Andy Miller in conversation

Croydon is the super ‘burb, pin-up and lightning rod for all that post-war development promised then (arguably) failed to deliver. This summer, celebrated authors John Grindrod and Andy Miller explored suburban identity in their literary roadshow, Croydon Till I Die.

Here are John and Andy on how their four book-readings in Crystal Palace, Shoreditch, Fairfield Halls and the Brecon Beacons came about, what they set out to say, and how an author’s best laid plans don’t always allow for an audience.

John Grindrod: Hi Andy. So, the phrase ‘Croydon till I die’ – when did that first occur to you?

Andy Miller: Hi John. ‘Croydon till I die’ popped into my head when I was writing the introduction to my book The Year of Reading Dangerously. There are several mentions of Croydon and I talk about coming from the suburbs, so ‘Croydon till I die’ seemed both funny and true: you can leave your home town but it never leaves you.

JG: I remember finding it very funny. My book, Concretopia, had been published, and people were interested in the Barbican or the BT Tower but not in Croydon, which was its core. So I was keen to do something more Croydon-focused too. We realised quickly that ‘Croydon till I die’ was a good name for an evening of readings about suburbia. But it was daunting. We thought getting special guests in would help. I work for Faber, who published Croydon legend Bob Stanley, and so he seemed like a good person to approach.

AM: I find traditional book events quite, erm, sedate – that’s putting it politely. So I’m always interested when authors talk about a subject, rather than just reading from their work. This was an opportunity to do something worthwhile and entertaining. I liked the idea that Croydon Till I Die could be different every time, depending on who was involved and the location.

JG: We thought small at first, then you said the Fairfield Halls. When we booked, our feeling was terror – like we’d struggle to get fifty people to turn up, and the Arnhem Gallery seats 300 plus. But, as Bob said: “It’s the Fairfield Halls! We’ve got to do it”.

Bob had written great stuff about Beano’s record store, and I’d written about the post-war rebuilding of Croydon in Concretopia. There were a few (I thought) good jokes and some slightly odd opinions that I wasn’t sure how they’d go down with locals. You were coming from a more literary perspective. How did you choose your angle, and what to read?

AM: I wanted to read from The Year of Reading Dangerously – the sections about The Tiger Who Came to Tea by Judith Kerr and about Croydon libraries which influenced my childhood – but to preface that with others: the poem ‘Croydon’ by John Betjeman, an extract from Hilary Mantel’s novel Beyond Black, and sections of the film Robinson In Space, written and directed by Patrick Keiller. The common theme was ambivalence – a mixture of pride and despair in suburbia. Which is pretty much how I feel too.

JG: Yes, I was surprised the Crystal Palace audience was so positive about Croydon – not what you expect! In Shoreditch I wasn’t sure how a trio of middle-aged men talking about suburbia!

But leads turned up and again asked thoughtful questions, interested in changes in contemporary Croydon, arts and cultural organisations and how a new generation is re-inventing the town centre, rather than how my generation had complacently accepted what was there.

So – two events in and both had gone well. The big scary one was still the Fairfield Halls. That was a bit of a revelation, wasn’t it?

AM: We thought fifty people would show up – then 300 walked in!

JG: I remember being anxious. I wasn’t sure that what we were going to do was big enough for the number of people who had turned up...

AM: But it was amazing and I felt so proud of what was happening – hundreds of people cheering and swearing allegiance to the letter ‘T’ from the now-dismantled Taberner House – a bit of pantomime there. And we namechecked stuff happening in Croydon now: new galleries, Tech City, the Fun Palace – as many as we could.

The energy comes from what the audience wants to talk about – Croydon, obviously, their memories, and the nature of suburban identity, which is obviously what we want to talk about too. But you don't know what's coming...

JG: Absolutely. Everyone was so generous-spirited with their questions and observations. We all came out as Croydon And Proud. We’d not realised this would be a group therapy session! I’ve long felt that Croydon might as well have had a cloaking device, for all of the notice anyone takes of it. It was brilliant to shine a spotlight, and to stop apologising for it too.

Next stop, Las Vegas. This has to happen.

AM: I agree. Like our hearts, Croydon Till I Die will go on.

John Grindrod’s Concretopia: A Journey Around the Rebuilding of Postwar Britain is published by Old Street Publishing. His website is dirymodernsound.blogspot.co.uk. He is on Twitter @Grindrod.

Andy Miller’s The Year of Reading Dangerously: How Fifty Great Books Saved My Life is published by 4th Estate. His website is mill-i-am.com. He is on Twitter @I_am_mill_i_am.

Photo of John Grindrod and Andy Miller by Richard Depesands, used with permission.
What is brutalism? It's a style of building associated with pioneers such as the French architect Le Corbusier, in which ‘béton brut’ (concrete), [is] treated... uncompromisingly, with the formwork patterns not only visible but deliberately emphasised [and in which] aspects of mechanical engineering become overtly displayed. (That's according to James Stevens Curl in his Architectural Dictionary, which I purchased as a first year architecture undergraduate at the University of Plymouth).

Adjectives such as uncompromising, crude and rough provide an accurate foundation for most people's thoughts on brutalist architecture, or to be more specific, what they believe brutalist architecture to represent. For the most part this is true, and to visit a worthy example of pure brutalism such as Trellick Tower by Erno Goldfinger in Notting Hill will undoubtedly reinforce the idea that the style is unforgiving and confrontational. Harshly segregated into circulation and living, with a uniform structure presented proudly on the exterior, Trellick Tower represents a period of time within architecture that produced an ideology of no nonsense, and no prisoners. Yet there is honesty, totally unadulterated architectural honesty that is still apparent, and that is a characteristic worth reinforcing today.

There's a crucial difference between brutalism and a building which is brutal

Croydon's architectural stock is for the most part a hangover from a delirium of development that occurred in the 1960s, and monoliths of this time are well littered throughout the town. This particular building stock is often described as brutal and ugly, a grey wash of cement and tireless horizontal belts of glazing rising upwards. However, although not great in number, there were honorable pieces of architecture constructed in Croydon during this same era. They have sadly fallen into the same fighting pit as their exhausted and uninspiring office block companions.

For there is a crucial difference between brutalist architecture and a building that is brutal, but understood. When you first look at these buildings, you perceive their large form and jagged finish and notice little else, but this is all part of the act. For me, the beauty of brutalist architecture is how humble it really is - the thorough honesty of the form and its materiality allows it to calmly exist amidst the thorough honesty of the form and its materiality allows it to calmly exist amidst the busy modern world. There is almost nothing more beautiful than witnessing a brutalist building that by way of introduction appears monstrous and then surprises by the delicate way it caresses the sunlight and embraces the human form.

To drive down Wellesley Road and look out of the window will provide you with all the ammunition you require to understand a brutal building. What you see will not be subtle, and shows little care for its local context. Aside from Corinthian House, which stands like a blooming flower amongst the remnants of a car crash, almost all the surrounding building stock is of a hideously inhumane scale and egotistical character. Most of these buildings are for office use and with so much of the same typology in close proximity, each building tries to muscle up its own aesthetic and stand more proud than the others. What none of these buildings actually has is the architectural honesty that defines brutalism. Look closely and they reveal a stockpile of fake columns, grandiose cladding and voluptuous atriums. Such building elements are fine in moderation, but the current building stock in Croydon consists largely of this kind of finish – and judging by what's happening recently, our newest buildings have not learnt from their elderly neighbours.

Currently there are numerous active construction sites rising throughout central Croydon, awoken from their lengthy development slumber by the whispers of a new shopping centre. What can be seen, especially in the area immediately around East Croydon station, is a collection of hoardings, pile foundations and stair-cores all creating their first permanent mark on the landscape. A brutal act in itself. What is more interesting, however, is to deconstruct the few contemporary pieces of architecture that have already been completed in the town. They paint a clear canvas of things to come. We are once again heading for a disconnected urban landscape

Bulky forms touching the ground in a clumsy fashion, often clad with a system designed to distract your eyes more than to emphasise a corner or dissect sunlight, is a fair description of these contemporary buildings. Their function is true, but so often their form is stubborn and their appearance vain. We are once again heading towards a disconnected urban landscape. Standing on platform one at East Croydon station, you can witness one of these buildings being constructed, with its naked concrete lift shafts and sturdy steel trusses displaying their true form, only to be concealed not long after by a mask of self-importance.

Both Croydon Magistrates' Court and No. 1 Croydon [the NLA Tower] reveal a different way of approaching the production of an architecture that is brutal, but understood. When you first look at these buildings, you perceive their large form and jagged finish and notice little else, but this is all part of the act. For me, the beauty of brutalist architecture is how humble it really is - the thorough honesty of the form and its materiality allows it to calmly exist amidst the busy modern world. There is almost nothing more beautiful than witnessing a brutalist building that by way of introduction appears monstrous and then surprises by the delicate way it caresses the sunlight and embraces the human form.

Smoothbean! – Croydon’s best-connected coffee shop

Smoothbean! is one of London’s ‘third wave’ coffee shops, setting Croydon’s benchmark for quality in an atmosphere that’s great for business.

Just fifteen minutes from the heart of the city and one minute from East Croydon’s busy interchange on the capital-to-coast rail link, Smoothbean’s commitment to the finest coffee by Volcano Coffee Works, loose leaf tea by Eteaket of Edinburgh, artisan lunch menu and stylish interior makes this cool indie coffee shop the perfect spot to connect with clients, colleagues and friends.

You can start your day with a business breakfast, join a networking session* or drop in any time for a stand-out coffee experience. Delicious cakes and pastries (try apple and olive oil cake with maple icing for a slice of unexpected bliss!), divinely healthy smoothies and gluten-free options make Smoothbean! the perfect choice for a moment of quiet refreshment amidst the bustle of Croydon’s fast-growing business district.

*Thanks Up networking offers quality time with potential customers – see Eventbrite for details.

Smoothbean! Coffee Shop, 2-3 Dingwall Road, CR0 2NA
Open 7:30am-5:00pm Monday-Friday
www.smoothbean.co.uk
So the transformation of Croydon gathers pace. Modern developments will continue to flourish and transform Croydon’s landscape. Businesses will open and others will surely close their doors. Familiar sights will give way to new projects that aim to bring people back to Croydon and change the current negative perception. You just can’t please everyone, so something will refresh and others revile it. Some even believe that Croydon is beyond repair. But whatever your opinion, Croydon is changing.

Everyone has their own story of nightclub heartache

The Citizen’s ‘I would make Croydon better by...’ section features strong support for cultural events, diversity, creating a positive image, communication and social development. The people of Croydon submit these ideas because they care and want to talk openly about retaining our heritage and our community and our future as a developing London borough.

Something that frustrates me is the neglect that Croydon’s nightlife has experienced in recent years. Everyone has their own stories of nightclub heartache, from the closure of the Blue Orchid to the Black Sheep, but one thing is clear – a closed club is not replaced by another. Look around central Croydon and you’ll see abandoned buildings that used to be nightclubs: the Roxbury, Black Sheep Bar, Banana Joe’s, Blue Orchid and, more recently, Yates.

I don’t know anyone who plans a big night out in Croydon these days

What bothers me most of all is not just the closures but the obvious benefits of having a selection of good clubs in Croydon. As the town continues to develop and improve in all ways, housing and retail, why not throw some light on the frankly dead offerings on Friday and Saturday nights? I don’t know anyone, these days, who plans for a big night out in Croydon anymore.

Croydon is minutes from central London but has the great benefit of not being central London. You don’t pay bank-busting prices for a pint or lose your cab fare on a club’s entry fee. Croydon also happens to be the birthplace of dubstep – the fusion of Jamaican dub and two-step garage – and yet there’s absolutely zilch to offer at the moment.

But there are some who feel that an expansion of Croydon’s clubbing options could create a dangerous and potentially hostile atmosphere – one that might genuinely require heavier police presence. We’ve certainly seen club closures due to violence. Others will feel that this call for change isn’t a current priority, and that’s understandable too. But there’s still no denying the cathartic joy of a night out with friends, and Croydon just doesn’t have much to offer at the moment.

There’s cathartic joy in spending a night out with friends

I’m not saying that there wouldn’t be any trouble, but there’s a right way to do these things. Imposing strict laws on how people enjoy their down time creates a feeling of hostility. How can you enjoy that pint with your mate when the boys in blue are glaring at you from the other side of the road? You feel like something is going to happen, even if it isn’t.

Croydon is maturing and, unless we’ve been given certain controls and an element of trust, we won’t be able to prove otherwise. The town’s current ambitions seem firmly rooted in creating offices and housing that will bring in new people and new money. The Westfield shopping complex will create a brand new retail experience and there’s talk of a South Bank-style makeover around Fairfield Halls – but what about when the sun goes down? Croydon, after dark, needs a positive revival.

Aside from the fact that there’s continuing uncertainty about the future of many of Croydon’s empty buildings, there’s also the issue of local government. A couple of months ago, I discussed Croydon’s lacklustre nightlife with a local club owner. As it turns out, the problem is a little more complicated than I’d anticipated. ‘For starters, there’s a curfew. So you couldn’t expect to bring in some of the bigger events. Plus, there’s the police presence. Club owners just don’t want to have to fork out for additional security. There are too many barriers and costs to put on a truly great club experience’.

It’s true. You can’t say that you haven’t seen the herd of bobbies outside Tiger Tiger but does it mean that Croydon just cannot be trusted to have a nightlife of its own anymore?

I support many of Croydon’s bars and pubs – we know how to run a good one and there’s an understanding that we’ll always have a place to enjoy a few bevvies after a long week’s work. I take issue with the fact that having a selection of varied venues to dance till the sun rises in is just not on the cards.

I would welcome a place where we could enjoy regular events, supporting a variety of musical tastes, and which would allow Cronx folk, and beyond, to enjoy a genuinely memorable night out. With Croydon on the mend, it only seems right that we should have something special of our own.

Gelattiamo – putting quality coffee at the heart of the community

Gelattiamo is the new coffee shop on the block, and its gourmet coffee, fresh pastries, beautiful organic cakes and premium gelato certainly bring a fresh, exciting feel to London Road.

Owner, manager and foodie entrepreneur Leandro Longo has a quality gelato CV – including Morelli’s Gelateria in Harrods – and for him it’s all about great ingredients and a warm welcome for all his customers. “I bring a little of the finest products of Italy”, he says, “and I’m sure that authenticity and our artisan coffee will help make this one of the coolest streets in Croydon”.

With its great vibe and warm Italian welcome, Gelattiamo’s is the perfect spot to pick up a morning espresso or chill in gelato heaven on a warm afternoon. So check it out, on new-look London Road – with attractive Victorian shop fronts restored and the carnival set to burst into life on Saturday 19th July, this area’s definitely part of our town’s bright future.

I was born in Croydon in 1988 and I’ve spent my life here, building friendships and experiences that have shaped me as a person. As a Croydon native, I have a big passion for local events, arts, history and culture... and Mexway.

Photo by Martin Fisch, used under Creative Commons licence.
When I tell people that I’ve recently moved from Woking to Croydon, the usual reaction is “Why?!”. Why would someone choose to leave a tranquil town in well-heeled Surrey for the stressful, noisy, urban jungle that is Croydon? Yet although I have lived here for barely a month at the time of writing, I immediately want to spring to Croydon’s defence.

Yes, I could sometimes live without the constant rumble of traffic and the regular police and ambulance sirens along St. James’s Road. Yes, I do sometimes miss the suburban gardens and the abundance of trees in the most wooded county in England. On the other hand for me, naïve newcomer that I am, Croydon is an exciting new world of adventure. The simple fact that I can walk ten minutes down the road and catch a bus to the centre of one of the most beautiful and famous cities in the world still seems nothing less than remarkable.

I know and feel that I’m living in the city

Yet Croydon is also a troubled town with a bit of an identity crisis. Friends had told me that it was part of Surrey, yet it’s actually been a part of London since 1965 and it took me less than a week not only to know but also to feel I was living in the city.

Developments and the new buildings here can generate optimism and excitement, and Croydon’s challenge is to retain the best of the old, and make sure new developments benefit all its people.

I’ve explored a small fraction of this varied conurbation and it’s these developments that create an indelible impression. Many of the new ones are very impressive, soaring up into the sky like enormous coloured digits, and I feel that this desire to be different, maybe even a bit wacky, springs from a past in which people often did wish to put a bit more of their characters into their buildings.

Croydon has an inferiority complex

Croydon also keeps its many and varied lights under a big bushel. And I’d go further – either foolhardy or brave as I’ve been here such a short time: I’d say Croydon itself has an inferiority complex.

I’m particularly upset there are no plans to replace one victim of redevelopment – its visitor centre, which was so helpful to this particular newcomer. Surely, if Croydon wants to appear more than just a huge building site in the next few years, a spanking new visitor centre is just what it needs. It may not have a Tower of London or St Paul’s, but there’s enough of interest and beauty in and around Croydon to lure in visitors. I hope – once I’ve done enough research – to take people on historic pub crawls around the town centre, not merely to enjoy the taverns but to appreciate the streets in between. For the moment, this new Croydonian is very much intoxicated with the sights and sounds of Croydon.

Charles Barber is a newcomer to Croydon, currently trying to publish a book and find gainful employment within the Croydonian urban jungle.
CELEBRATING EID

LONDON ROAD CARNIVAL 2015

SUNDAY 19TH JULY
12NOON - 5PM

FEATURING MUSIC FROM SOUL DIVA...

ANGIE BROWN

LIVE MUSIC  CULTURAL DANCE  LICENSED BAR  FACE PAINTING  DJ's  KIDS ACTIVITES  FAMILY ENTERTAINMENT  GAMES  STREET FOOD, MARKET STALLS... PLUS MUCH MUCH MORE!!!

WWW.LONDONROADCROYDON.CO.UK

LDNRDCARNIVAL  LDNRDCARNIVAL
Three weeks in summer: a young Croydonian takes the National Citizen Service Challenge

Ruth Olurunnisomo

National Citizen Service is a three week programme offering young people between fifteen and seventeen years old the opportunity to learn new skills acknowledged by future employers and educational institutes alike, meet new challenges, get to know new people and have fun. The project receives government funding and the maximum contribution anyone is asked to make is £50.00.

A combination of outdoor activities, self-sufficient living and charity work helps participants to discover their talents, extend their personal boundaries and realise their potential. It was launched in April 2009 and so far over 130,000 young people have taken part. For more information, go to www.ncsthechallenge.org.

I took part on the National Citizen Service Challenge last summer. I won’t lie and say that I was extremely optimistic about it, but as I wasn’t going abroad and my mum was keen on improving my GCSE’s form (the universities and colleges’ application form which everyone doing a degree at a British university must use)... I knew that taking part in the Challenge looks good on the ‘personal statement’ section of the form.

There was no internet. Imagine how my wave (the group of about sixty of us there) felt about this, but in hindsight it worked even better for us. We all became such a close knit mini-family, as we didn’t have our phones to keep us company, and we helped each other to conquer our fears. For example, I am petrified of heights but I climbed a huge wall of rocks with the help of some very encouraging screaming from my team mates.

In the second week you’re in uni accommodation, cooking and cleaning for yourself with a budget for the week. I think that this was absolute genius – definitely something that every young person needs to experience whether they aim for university or not. Finally, in the last week, you do something that every young person needs to do in their lifetime... You could imagine how my wave (the group of about sixty of us there) felt about this, but in hindsight it worked even better for us. We all became such a close knit mini-family, as we didn’t have our phones to keep us company, and we helped each other to conquer our fears. For example, I am petrified of heights but I climbed a huge wall of rocks with the help of some very encouraging screaming from my team mates.

The experience whether they aim for university or not. Finally, in the last week, you do something that every young person needs to do in their lifetime... You could imagine how my wave (the group of about sixty of us there) felt about this, but in hindsight it worked even better for us. We all became such a close knit mini-family, as we didn’t have our phones to keep us company, and we helped each other to conquer our fears. For example, I am petrified of heights but I climbed a huge wall of rocks with the help of some very encouraging screaming from my team mates.

Some groups campaigned to make people aware of mental illness to reduce stigma and misconceptions. My group created a campaign called Made In Croydon, about promoting the positives about Croydon. There was then the opportunity to pitch your idea to ‘dragons’ who would decide if your campaign was worth giving money to.

My Challenge experience has taught me so much about how to be an effective leader, live independently, and interact with people from all kinds of backgrounds, and has opened up so many doors for me. I’ve just finished a year as an NCS Youth Board councillor and this year I am volunteering as a Challenge Associate Mentor. To this day I still remember and miss all the small moments, like climbing a mountain or singing songs with my team members as we built our own zipwire.

I 100% recommend any fifteen to seventeen year old reading this to go on the Challenge. This opportunity will make your summer worthwhile and you will never regret or forget it!

If you’re under 7

• the incredible Horniman Museum – a 197 bus ride away, free family workshops, outdoor activities and an aquarium. www.horniman.ac.uk
• Kids AM: movies for £1.99 per person, at Croydon Grants Vue – every day of the holidays. www.myvue.com
• Stories in Gardens with Funsense Theatre: storytelling on Sundays 2nd, 9th and 16th August in Wandle Park. www.funsensetheatre.co.uk
• If you’re under 7

If you’re under 7

• the incredible Horniman Museum – a 197 bus ride away, free family workshops, outdoor activities and an aquarium. www.horniman.ac.uk
• Kids AM: movies for £1.99 per person, at Croydon Grants Vue – every day of the holidays. www.myvue.com
• Stories in Gardens with Funsense Theatre: storytelling on Sundays 2nd, 9th and 16th August in Wandle Park. www.funsensetheatre.co.uk
• discover a thousand years of history at the Museum of Croydon Katharine Street, Free entry. www.museumofcroydon.co.uk
• Dragon Quest Golf in Addiscombe – crazy golf from £3. www.worldofgolf.co.uk
• free sports coaching in Wandle Park, starting Monday 6th July: football/rounders/basketball/cricket, qualified coaches, equipment included. 020 8726 6000 ext 62263
• snap a selfie with a dinosaur – see the sculptures in Crystal Palace Park
• visit Croydon Airport and learn how they tracked planes before radar was invented. www.croydonairport.org.uk. (First Sunday in month only). Free.
• get arty at the RISE Gallery St George’s Walk, TURF Space Keeley Road and the Clock Clock Gallery Katharine Street. Entry free.
• go polar exploring at Christ Church holiday club, Addiscombe – 10:00am-12:30pm Monday-Friday 20th-24th July. (Suitable for ages 4-10). £2.50 per day/£10 for week. 020 8654 4610.

All we need now is sunshine. Happy holidays!

Pamela grew up in South East London and has been involved in many aspects of the entertainment industry. She has performed all across the globe including working with the Walt Disney company, Cleebies, Channel 5 Milkshake and many more. She is the creative director of her own company, Bop and Boogie, which introduces children to live theatre through fun original songs, dance and drama. Pamela is very excited to be the curator of the Young Citizens for the Croydon Citizen.

We are a high quality preschool that currently have 15 hour funded spaces for 2, 3 and 4 year olds.

@ 1 Ramsey Court, 122 Church St CR01RF

and

@ East Croydon United Reform Church
Addiscombe Grove CR05LP

For further information
Email: info@hopskipandjump.net
Phone: 07748107766

Lizzie Wallace

Copyright © 2015 Citizen Newspapers Ltd
We will defeat their prejudices about Croydon – one artisanal coffee at a time

Jonny Rose smells change in the air around Croydon’s independent coffee shops

There is no better herald of an area on the up than the arrival of a cool, independent coffee shop; the sort of place where students sketch furiously in moleskin journals and freelancers set up their laptop workstations for the day.

Coffee as a lifestyle

Coffee helps us. It gets us out of bed, it raises our productivity and promotes creativity, it’s the driving force of conversations and the fuel for writers and coders.

But coffee doesn’t just provide people with energy. Coffee culture has grown rapidly over the past decade and has become a major catalyst for urban development. This is not a revival of the ‘coffee houses’ that first emerged in Europe in the early 1600s, but rather a more complex phenomenon in which society and economy coalesce.

Boundaries between social and professional life are fading. Business meetings are sometimes hard to distinguish from just hanging out or catching up, especially for smaller and more flexible businesses. The fusion of professional and personal lives is the result of businesses and individuals becoming increasingly footloose within the confines of their city, making so-called ‘third places’ (places other than the house or the office) integral for both work and social purposes.

Coffee also has a status value: we are willing to pay more for fancy-named, exotically flavoured or artisan-brewed coffee, partly because we like the product, but also because we like to relate ourselves – our identity – to the product or the experience.

Forget Starbucks, Costa and Caffe Nero

Several years ago, the hip thing to consume was Starbucks. Now, there is a noticeable shift towards more artisan coffees, strict brewing rituals and freshly baked cookies and cakes in small-scale and cozy coffee bars, with vintage and ingenious interiors.

Coffee also has a status value: we are willing to pay more for fancy-named, exotically flavoured or artisan-brewed coffee, partly because we like the product, but also because we like to relate ourselves – our identity – to the product or the experience.

Join the resistance - support your local independent coffee shop

A new coffee shop has just opened in Croydon – it’s called Crushed Bean. It’s opposite Black Sheep Bar, right in front of Davis House. Every morning the owners Chezlov and Michael leave their homes in East London at 5:30am for a 7am start. Crushed Bean closes at 7pm. Their commitment to the area shows that they’re serious about coffee and about Croydon’s potential.

They’re not the only ones: Croydon is increasingly becoming home to myriad hip, self-aware coffee shops that are importing and serving the best quality beans, with care and panache.

From Yeha Noha to Matthews Yard to Cafe Adagio to Smooth Bean: Croydon’s independent coffee shops aren’t just a pleasant amenity – they are a statement of intent. The presence of these coffee shops says that Croydon can and will be better.

Jonny Rose

We will defeat their prejudices about Croydon – one artisanal coffee at a time.

Join the resistance - support your local independent coffee shop

A new coffee shop has just opened in Croydon – it’s called Crushed Bean. It’s opposite Black Sheep Bar, right in front of Davis House. Every morning the owners Chezlov and Michael leave their homes in East London at 5:30am for a 7am start. Crushed Bean closes at 7pm. Their commitment to the area shows that they’re serious about coffee and about Croydon’s potential.

They’re not the only ones: Croydon is increasingly becoming home to myriad hip, self-aware coffee shops that are importing and serving the best quality beans, with care and panache.

Forget Starbucks, Costa and Caffe Nero

Several years ago, the hip thing to consume was Starbucks. Now, there is a noticeable shift towards more artisan coffees, strict brewing rituals and freshly baked cookies and cakes in small-scale and cozy coffee bars, with vintage and ingenious interiors.

These new types of coffee bars are generally situated in places away from the high street – they cannot afford high-end rents as they are often start-ups run by young people whose clientele is the type that intentionally eschews the offerings of the identikit British high street. Whatever the exact composition of the clientele may be, many like living in neighbourhoods in transition or cannot afford to live in ‘better’ neighbourhoods.

Exactly the gamut of lived experience that can be found in a rapidly changing Croydon.

When trying to gauge the direction of a city’s growth, simply follow the aroma of coffee. Wake up and smell the coffee: Croydon is on the up.

Jonny Rose is a committed Christian who has lived in the Croydon area for nearly twenty years. He is an active participant in his local community; serving at Grace Vineyard Church, organising Purley Breakfast Club (Cafe Blue, Purley – last Saturday of each month) and patronising Purley’s KFC on a near-daily basis. He currently works as ‘Product Evangelist’ for software company, Idio, and is the founder of the Croydon Tech City movement. Views are his own - please don’t hold them against the rest of the Croydon Tech City team!

Join the resistance - support your local independent coffee shop

A new coffee shop has just opened in Croydon – it’s called Crushed Bean. It’s opposite Black Sheep Bar, right in front of Davis House. Every morning the owners Chezlov and Michael leave their homes in East London at 5:30am for a 7am start. Crushed Bean closes at 7pm. Their commitment to the area shows that they’re serious about coffee and about Croydon’s potential.

They’re not the only ones: Croydon is increasingly becoming home to myriad hip, self-aware coffee shops that are importing and serving the best quality beans, with care and panache.

Forget Starbucks, Costa and Caffe Nero

Several years ago, the hip thing to consume was Starbucks. Now, there is a noticeable shift towards more artisan coffees, strict brewing rituals and freshly baked cookies and cakes in small-scale and cozy coffee bars, with vintage and ingenious interiors.

These new types of coffee bars are generally situated in places away from the high street – they cannot afford high-end rents as they are often start-ups run by young people whose clientele is the type that intentionally eschews the offerings of the identikit British high street. Whatever the exact composition of the clientele may be, many like living in neighbourhoods in transition or cannot afford to live in ‘better’ neighbourhoods.

Exactly the gamut of lived experience that can be found in a rapidly changing Croydon.

When trying to gauge the direction of a city’s growth, simply follow the aroma of coffee. Wake up and smell the coffee: Croydon is on the up.

Jonny Rose is a committed Christian who has lived in the Croydon area for nearly twenty years. He is an active participant in his local community; serving at Grace Vineyard Church, organising Purley Breakfast Club (Cafe Blue, Purley – last Saturday of each month) and patronising Purley’s KFC on a near-daily basis. He currently works as ‘Product Evangelist’ for software company, Idio, and is the founder of the Croydon Tech City movement. Views are his own - please don’t hold them against the rest of the Croydon Tech City team!

Join the resistance - support your local independent coffee shop

A new coffee shop has just opened in Croydon – it’s called Crushed Bean. It’s opposite Black Sheep Bar, right in front of Davis House. Every morning the owners Chezlov and Michael leave their homes in East London at 5:30am for a 7am start. Crushed Bean closes at 7pm. Their commitment to the area shows that they’re serious about coffee and about Croydon’s potential.

They’re not the only ones: Croydon is increasingly becoming home to myriad hip, self-aware coffee shops that are importing and serving the best quality beans, with care and panache.

Forget Starbucks, Costa and Caffe Nero

Several years ago, the hip thing to consume was Starbucks. Now, there is a noticeable shift towards more artisan coffees, strict brewing rituals and freshly baked cookies and cakes in small-scale and cozy coffee bars, with vintage and ingenious interiors.

These new types of coffee bars are generally situated in places away from the high street – they cannot afford high-end rents as they are often start-ups run by young people whose clientele is the type that intentionally eschews the offerings of the identikit British high street. Whatever the exact composition of the clientele may be, many like living in neighbourhoods in transition or cannot afford to live in ‘better’ neighbourhoods.

Exactly the gamut of lived experience that can be found in a rapidly changing Croydon.

When trying to gauge the direction of a city’s growth, simply follow the aroma of coffee. Wake up and smell the coffee: Croydon is on the up.

Jonny Rose is a committed Christian who has lived in the Croydon area for nearly twenty years. He is an active participant in his local community; serving at Grace Vineyard Church, organising Purley Breakfast Club (Cafe Blue, Purley – last Saturday of each month) and patronising Purley’s KFC on a near-daily basis. He currently works as ‘Product Evangelist’ for software company, Idio, and is the founder of the Croydon Tech City movement. Views are his own - please don’t hold them against the rest of the Croydon Tech City team!
I’m placing my order at the bar in Matthews Yard. Next to me, blues legend Giles Hedley is ordering a very modest selection of drinks for the band, which he says always surprises those who expect them to be drinking bourbon. He tells me he conducted scientific experiments into drinking and performing in his youth. On one occasion, thinking he was playing brilliantly after drinking a quantity of tequila, he looked down to find his fingers weren’t moving at all. The result of the experiment is clear – two songs in, he is singing: ‘Ain’t touched no whisky since the blues made me drunk’.

They may not be hitting the hard stuff, but Giles promises us: “we’re going to get tropical in here tonight, we’ll find a way”. It’s evident from the laid back confidence of the Aviators – Sam Kelly on drums, Andy Hodge on bass and Christophe Pélissié on guitar – that we’re on course for a wild ride into the hot, steamy heart of the blues.

Giles started singing the songs on the records his brother brought home in the ‘50s, not realising they were blues songs, including Bessie Smith numbers, until his voice broke. Over time he would continually return to the blues, finding he just couldn’t sing anything else. Described by Clyde Stubblefield, James Brown’s drummer, as “the funkiest man I’ve heard in Europe”, he’s played clubs, bars and festivals internationally and supported many artists including Son House, Mississippi Fred McDowell and Juke Boy Bonner.

Giles has mined the heights and depths of his voice to give full expression to the soul-rendering lyrics of the blues – he impersonates the feline tones of Samson’s ‘Delilah’, holiers gospel classic ‘Jesus On The Mainline’ and truly howls Howlin’ Wolf’s ‘Commit A Crime’. His original songs are peppered with a sense of the experiment is clear – two songs in, he is singing: ‘Ain’t touched no whisky since the blues made me drunk’.

They may not be hitting the hard stuff, but Giles promises us: “we’re going to get tropical in here tonight, we’ll find a way”. It’s evident from the laid back confidence of the Aviators – Sam Kelly on drums, Andy Hodge on bass and Christophe Pélissié on guitar – that we’re on course for a wild ride into the hot, steamy heart of the blues.

Giles started singing the songs on the records his brother brought home in the ‘50s, not realising they were blues songs, including Bessie Smith numbers, until his voice broke. Over time he would continually return to the blues, finding he just couldn’t sing anything else. Described by Clyde Stubblefield, James Brown’s drummer, as “the funkiest man I’ve heard in Europe”, he’s played clubs, bars and festivals internationally and supported many artists including Son House, Mississippi Fred McDowell and Juke Boy Bonner.

Giles has mined the heights and depths of his voice to give full expression to the soul-rendering lyrics of the blues – he impersonates the feline tones of Samson’s ‘Delilah’, holiers gospel classic ‘Jesus On The Mainline’ and truly howls Howlin’ Wolf’s ‘Commit A Crime’. His original songs are peppered with a sense of

**Giles Hedley and the Aviators play at Bourbon and Blues**

**Matthews Yard, Saturday 30th May**

*Katie Rose travels to the hot, steamy heart of the blues via Croydon*

Since the ’80s, Christophe Pélissié has been adding his extraordinary guitar skills more recently – when he first sat in on a rehearsal and played a solo, Giles says he forgot to come back in with the lyrics. They play with a contagious trust and relish of each other’s musicianship, Christophe stopping to take a photo of Sam Kelly during yet another ingenious solo.

The second half takes us deeper into the shadows of the blues, with songs about winning back your woman by showing her a better time in bed and Willie Dixon’s classic about being a ‘Back Door Man’ to the wives of various upstanding members of the community. Giles is clearly not afraid to excavate the dark corners of the psyche. He communicates the raw emotion of the blues with a powerful honesty that makes every lyric hit home. He discloses that as a vicar’s stepson, the result of a stolen night in the Cardogen Hotel in 1946, he has the right to sing the blues.

*We leave feeling we’ve shared some real deep lovin’*

Leoni Descartes, director of Matthews Yard, standing amidst an array of candlelit Bourbon bottles, tells me what she loves most about the Aviators is the amazing relationship that they create with the audience. Indeed – by the end of the nightting, we are all howling like proper blues wolves whilst Giles is saying “we’ve made them very happy” and improvising lyrics about it being a ‘Two Way Thing’. They play two encores to wild applause and we all go out feeling we’ve shared a deep lovin’ thing.

The next Bourbon and Blues night takes place at Matthews Yard on 25th July as part of the Ambition Festival and features special guests from the USA, Debbie Bond and the Tru Dats, plus bourbons, delicious food and more.

Both Giles Hedley and the Aviators’ latest album, *So Glad I’m Living*, and Giles Hedley’s new solo album, *Rain Is Such A Lonesome Sound*, are available for order via www.giles hedley.com.

---

**How to win back your woman by showing her a better time in bed**

“Nobody does it quite like the Aviators do it”, declares Giles, who has been playing with Sam Kelly (whose gamut of facial expressions matches every perfectly-timed hit of his kit) and super-chilled bass player Andy Hodge, since the ’80s.

---

**Katie Rosie is a local singer, musician, sound therapist and vocal coach.**

Committed to making positive experiences of singing and sound accessible, Katie facilitates singing sessions in hospitals and community settings across London. Described by the Guardian as a ‘fine singer’ and by fRoots magazine as an ‘eye (and ear) opener’ she has released three albums and composed a piece for the film about the Dalai Lama, *Road to Peace*. For more information visit www.theroosewindow.org

---

**If you are looking to live an independent lifestyle with help close at hand or you require residential or full nursing care, our three care homes all have one thing in common – they are a place you can call home.**

Our homes the Whitgift Almshouses, Whitgift House and Wilhelmina House are happy, hugging communities where staff are on hand 24 hours a day to meet your needs, whether that be providing a full programme of activities, a friendly chat or just a cup of tea.

**We offer:**

- Independent lifestyles in rental flats supported by a warden and on call alarm system.
- Outstanding full nursing care endorsed by the highest award from the Gold Standards Framework, an independent quality assurance process for end of life care.
- Residential and day care in our warm, friendly and inclusive communities.

**Visit** www.whitgiftcare.co.uk

**Call** 020 8680 8499

**Follow @1596whitgift**

---

**Photos by Fluid4Sight, used with permission.**
How could Croydon be improved?
We want your suggestions today! Email us: editors@thecroydoncitizen.com

Last year, 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.

Guide visitors through the town with painted lines from East Croydon station

Why not follow the example of some other parts of London and help those visiting venues such as the Fairfield Halls, the Spreadagle Theatre or even the restaurant quarter with colourful painted lines on the pavements for them to follow? Signage from the station to these destinations is still poor and there’s no longer a visitor centre to give directions. The area is well lit and if bright colours are used this idea could still work in the evenings or on darker winter days. It would help make Croydon more welcoming to its visitors.

Marcia Henry Morgan

Outdoor cinema in Exchange Square

The recent successes of pop-up outdoor cinema, such at the Flower Fairies Festival in Park Hill Park, shows how popular this could be for adults and children alike – and Exchange Square is the perfect venue. This initiative would also drive footfall into an area which despite hosting occasional events is still struggling to put itself on the map. Food for film-goers could be provided by the brilliant BRGR & BEER at Matthews Yard.

Marcia Henry Morgan

Got an idea of your own?

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

Install a fountain

Let’s install a fountain in Croydon town centre. Fountains cool the air around them, which is ideal for scorching summer days, introduce soothing ambient sound to what’s often a noisy area and make their environment more beautiful all year round.

Elaine Garrod

CROYDON BUSINESS VENTURE

Helping your business succeed

BOOK NOW

3-DAY BUSINESS COURSES

- 22nd - 24th July
- 19th - 21st August
- 23rd - 25th September
- 21st - 23rd October
- 18th - 20th November

SOCIAL MEDIA WORKSHOPS

- 21st July
- 8th September
- 20th October
- 17th November

OFFICE SPACE AVAILABLE

- Affordable office space from £95pw
- Special rates for startup businesses
- Contact us now!

Call us on 020 3747 4747
or visit www.cbv ltd.co.uk

There’s no better place to start your business

Croydon Business Venture Limited, Registered Charity Number 1186818

@CroydonCit
Croydon is hardly short of great places to eat. We have a well-established restaurant quarter that draws gourmets from far and wide, plus an enviable array of gastropubs and ethnic eating houses.

But for a total double-take moment you really should try the Windmill Pub on St James Road, near to East Croydon station. We walked there, but the pub has a big off street car park which is a bit of a bonus in Croydon.

Outside is a billboard that reads: ‘Authentic Indian Cuisine’. What? In a pub? In Croydon?

It’s a typical local pub with old school touches like a dartboard and a jukebox.

Entering the Windmill doesn’t immediately answer those questions. It is a typical local pub that even boasts old school touches like a dartboard and jukebox. When we arrived in the early evening there was a darts match in full swing and locals at the bar, but also some diners enjoying that authentic Indian cuisine. Encouraging.

The pub has a small dining area, but you can sit anywhere and eat. This is functional pub dining. No flock wallpaper or sticky carpets. To be honest it’s a bit of a Spartan environment, but we’d come for the food.

The bar is well stocked with lagers and beers, less so with wine, but the latter isn’t really an issue when you are out for a curry.

In typical pub style there are no waiters buzzing around tables - you order food from a serving hatch opposite the bar, simple as that. The menu is Indian dominated, but oddments like Szechuan chicken and salt and pepper squid also pop up on the extensive tapas list. Successes on previous visits had included the mixed grill (chicken tikka, kebab and chops) and the chilli fried king prawns. This time we went for crispy fried chilli lamb from the tapas, then perused the main courses.

The Windmill punches above its weight. Some old favourites like chicken tikka masala and chicken vindaloo were present, but there were some notable exceptions. This was where The Windmill really started to punch above its weight. I asked the owner, Darshan Barot, if I could have chicken madras, which wasn’t on the menu.

“Of course, no problem at all,” was his reply. In fact, it’s possible to request, and be served, almost any favourite Indian dish that might not be on the menu, and at the strength that you want. Peshwari naan and chilli naan plus the obligatory starter of poppadoms completed our order.

The food arrived promptly and was well presented. It was also, dare I say it, a cut above many Indian restaurants that I’ve visited. The chicken madras came in a thick sauce of perfect spicy heat, rather than the usual runny gravy punctuated by oil slicks.

Absolute top class, freshly prepared, authentic Indian food

Plenty of tender chicken, well-flavoured, was perfect to eat with naan bread, rather than relying on rice to soak up the sauce. A total winner in my book.

The crispy fried chilli lamb was slightly less successful, but only because the sauce that came with it had taken away some of the ‘crunch’. There was plenty of flavour and the lamb was tender within its sometimes crisp coat. Next time, we’ll ask for the sauce on the side as a dipping option – and I’m sure we’ll get it, given the flexibility that had been shown.

Summing up, if you want a bog standard curry experience, The Windmill isn’t for you. But if you want some absolute top class, freshly prepared, authentic Indian food, it’s hard to beat.
Old Palace of John Whitgift School
Independent Girls’ School

Croydon’s best kept secret

Open Days

Seniors
• 5 September, 10.00-12.00
• 19 September, 14.00-16.00

Preparatory
• 3 October, 14.00-16.00

• Top performing independent girls’ school
• Top university placements
• Bursary and Scholarships available
• School minibus service
• Choral Scholarships available in Year 3
• EYFS inspection report: Outstanding

To register please call 020 8688 2027 or visit www.oldpalace.croydon.sch.uk
Halloumi peppers

Put an end to worrying and barbecue with confidence, says Jess Bashford

Method

1) Start off by turning on the oven to 200 degrees.

2) Then slice your peppers in half and lay them out on a baking tray. Give them a sprinkle of salt and pepper (but remember that the halloumi is salty so don’t use too much salt) and a little drizzle of olive oil.

3) Pop them in the oven for 10 to 15 minutes. You just need to make sure that they’re soft before you take them out.

4) While they’re in the oven, you can make the dressing. Just whisk together the garlic clove (crush it before), the juice of the lemon, the chilli flakes, your olive oil and however much oregano you like. And that’s it – stick it to one side until you’re ready to serve it.

5) You can also toast your pine nuts now too. Pop them in a dry pan and let them brown a little, but keep an eye on them because they can turn from brown to burnt very quickly. Once they’re toasted, pour them in a bowl until you need them.

6) When your peppers are cooked, bring them out and add a thick slice of halloumi to each.

7) Then stick them under the grill until the cheese turns golden.

8) Once it’s golden, bring out your peppers and pop them on the plate you want to serve them on. Then sprinkle over your pine nuts and drizzle over your dressing.

All that’s left is to eat your colourful, summery Surrey Street treat.

Ingredients

From the market: 3 peppers and 1 lemon.

From the kitchen: a pack of halloumi cheese, a clove of garlic, 1 tsp dried chilli flakes, 3 tbsp olive oil (with some left for drizzling), 3 tbsp pine nuts, salt, pepper and a sprinkle of oregano (depending on how much you like it).

Jess is a writer at a brand language consultancy and an English literature and creative writing graduate. She’s passionate about showing that Croydon is a great place to live and excited to delve into Croydon’s cultural side. She loves all things wordy and foody.
South London Export Club is a very proactive international group working with both importers and exporters of products and services. It arranges regular information meetings across South London, as well as regular clinics, training, and trade missions.

The club holds a large amount of freely available practical information within its membership. Additionally, contact with many chambers of commerce worldwide allows companies access to up-to-date data on opportunities for business, and news of contracts being issued.

**SLEC – global dynamism in the heart of Croydon**

On Wednesday 10th June, South London Export Club met in its regular location, the attractive and business-like surroundings of Weatherill House, Wandle Park in Croydon’s New South Quarter. There were plenty of new faces present, keen to take advantage of the club’s buzzy, entrepreneurial spirit and the encouragement and practical help it can give to local businesses at any stage of their development.

SLEC is a dynamic international group which offers help and support to businesses in Croydon who want to access overseas markets. The club holds a large amount of freely available practical information within its membership, and has contacts with many chambers of commerce worldwide which allow companies to access up-to-the-minute data on opportunities for business.

Croydon companies can take advantage of networking and information sessions working with both importers and exporters. It arranges regular information meetings across south London, as well as regular clinics, training and trade missions.

**This is advice from those who’ve been there and done it**

SLEC is about the ‘how-to’, and very hands-on, and Wednesday’s meeting was no exception. Just as important, of course, can be the ‘how-not-to’, and it’s here that the experience and knowledge of experienced business mentors like Bryan really come into play. The greatest benefit of SLEC events is networking with business people who’ve learned by experience, and it’s clear that participants value this greatly.

The other key to SLEC’s success is its accessibility and friendliness: the business community of Croydon is very supportive and the club’s expertise helps develop Croydon’s thriving entrepreneurial culture. Each event begins with a buffet lunch, allowing plenty of opportunity for newcomers to meet fellow business people in a relaxed environment.

One stop shops make expanding your business affordable

On a disappointingly cool and windy early summer day, the meeting had a distinct focus on sunshine, with delegates from Vietnam, the Caribbean and Africa Business Venture. The impressive Nghia Tran gave an in-depth presentation on the role of the Overseas Business Network, while Steve Rapley of United Kingdom Trade and Investment shared his expertise gained in twenty years living and working in the Caribbean. Sonia Galat provided an incisive overview of a new initiative, Africa Business Venture, a one stop shop for data, opportunities to connect and development support and advice for businesses looking to this vibrant continent currently undergoing rapid economic expansion.

Aware that these are challenging markets, she encouraged delegates to focus on the excitement of entering them, and made clear that the one stop shop approach is geared to making business expansion affordable. Geoff Ranson of Croydon Business Centre concluded the afternoon with a helpful and focussed Business Navigator Update.

**A tribute to David Callam**

SLEC members and the wider Croydon business community have been saddened to hear of the recent death of David Callam. David was the business editor of the Croydon Advertiser for many years and was instrumental in setting up SLEC, travelling on trade missions and creating its first website. He will be greatly missed. Chief Executive of Croydon BID Matthew Sims paid tribute to David and his valued contribution to the community of Croydon:

“David was a journalist with great passion and a phenomenal reputation. He had a knack of being able to put you at ease while making sure you were aware who was leading the interview. I remember being overjoyed when he agreed to write a column for the Chamber of Commerce – he had such presence. He was also a great friend and always so supportive while at the same time being objective”.

**Take your business to the top with SLEC**

In 2015 Bryan Treherne, the SLEC’s vastly experienced and expert mentor, will be leading missions to Vietnam, India and Crete.

South London Export Club’s next meeting will take place on 8th July at Weatherill House. For advice on importing and exporting, finding agents and distributors, organising trade missions and more, call 0203 747 4700, contact Bryan Treherne directly on 07779 717326 or visit www.southlondonexport.org.uk
streets ahead

E S T A T E A G E N T S

Bringing the awards back home to Croydon

Croydon-based Streets Ahead Estate Agents beat hundreds of other agents to win two of the most coveted titles in The Times and The Sunday Times Lettings Agents of the Year 2015 awards.

For the fourth year running, they retained the Best Small Lettings Agent in the South East title, and the Gold Award for Best Customer Service. The agents, who are celebrating their 25th anniversary, received their awards from Marathon World Record holder Paula Radcliffe at a glittering awards ceremony in London.

They were roundly praised by the judges for continuing “to set the goals to which others aspire.” Streets Ahead are now planning a Croydon Investor Forum for buy-to-let investors in September, following the ‘overwhelming’ success of their inaugural event last month.

Selling or letting call 020 8686 8686

Croydon
219-221 Lower Addiscombe Road
Croydon, CR0 6RB

Croydon Central
263 High Street,
Croydon,
CR0 1QH

South Croydon
7’ Ye Market,
Selondon Road,
Croydon, CR2 6PW

Coulson
148 Brighton Road
Coulson,
CR5 2ND

Purley
936 Brighton Road
Purley,
CR8 2LP

Crystal Palace
4-8 Westow Street
Crystal Palace,
SE19 3AH

www.streetsahead.info