

SOHO CLARION

Soho Society's Free Newspaper SPRING 99

No. 99

CRACK DOWN ON SOHO DRUGS

Clarion readers will recall the Soho crack problem seemed to erupt suddenly from nowhere last summer. By June 1998 dealers were selling crack openly on the streets. Worst of all dealers were positioned outside Soho Parish School.

The public meeting called by the Soho Society last July was the largest meeting any of us can remember in Soho. The hall was quickly filled and the Church had to be opened up: still others could not get in.

There was a very open and robust, though courteous exchange of views. There were two positive conclusions. A Soho Drugs Group was formed to promote a multi-agency approach to the problem to lobby

and to act as a ginger group. Secondly, Superintendent Phil Flower offered to meet the group regularly for ongoing discussions on the drugs problem in Soho and surrounding areas.

There have been positive developments since then. The immediate increase of high visibility police helped greatly. The pushers outside the school disappeared immediately. The police issued a notice which was widely distributed giving advice and telephone numbers for those concerned with drug related problems (see right).

Operation Gridiron was started in August and in January operation Philosopher - the largest undercover drugs operation since 1991 - resulted

in a large number of arrests.

Meanwhile the Soho Drugs Group has listened to presentations about dealing with drugs in Kings Cross and has discussed the use of CCTV in Soho. Talks continue with WCC about street lighting and safety. The transport authorities have been approached about giving advice to those visiting the West End.

The Drugs Group has representatives from the Soho Society, the Police, Westminster Drugs Action Team, Soho School, SHA, local councillors, WCC, Soho Health Centre, Hungerford Project and others. Inquiries about the Soho Group to the Tower please - 0171-439 4303.

HOTLINE NUMBERS

If you see people taking drugs (e.g. smoking crack cocaine or injecting themselves) please call 0171-437 1212 and ask for West End Police. If you have information about people who are dealing but who are not actually doing so at the time please ring West End Central Hot Line - 0171-321 8798.

If you have information about needles, cans and detritus that need to be cleared phone WCC on the Cleaner City Hot Line - 0171-641 1177.

If you see people dealing phone 999 immediately and ask for the police.



Holbird horses it up!

Every year since 1974 the Soho Society has arranged a Christmas Party for Soho children. The picture above shows the most recent at Soho Parish School where ecstatic children watched headteacher Derek Holbird being transformed into a horse by the Fat and Mad Street Theatre Co. which gave a

hilarious rendering of Cinderella. The performers appeared courtesy of Alternative Arts who have traditionally and generously provided the entertainers for our Soho Childrens' Parties. Over 100 children enjoyed games, cartoons and tea as well as Cinderella - and everyone went home with a present!

Soho Festival 1999

We're organising our Millennium Festival early this year. The date is Sunday 11th July 1999. If you are interested in having a stall please contact the Festival Co-ordinator as soon as possible on 0171-439 4303 with your name, address and what you will be doing. The price of a stall is £25.

We also need people with expertise in getting advertising, sponsorship, equipment and publicity. If you can help please ring the above telephone number to obtain details of forthcoming festival meetings. Even if you can wield a broom we still need your help.

Word of Mouth

The Museum of Soho now has its own tape recorder, having received a grant last September, so we are now committed to recording your Soho memories (the good old days?).

Rachael Mathews and Wendy Greenbury have been taping Soho residents, ex-residents, people who have worked and are working in Soho. You do not have to come to a recording studio as Wendy and Rachael have

professional portable equipment which makes recording like a homely chat. These recollections, which we believe are crucial to the Soho story, are only available from talking to you and will eventually form part of the Museum's collection.

Please phone Wendy at the Soho Society (0171-439 4303) and leave a message. Your messages will be replied to within a week.

Changes at Planning



Brian Ring

Members of the Society's Town Planning Group have long relied on the invaluable advice and help of John Blagg who has acted for the Society for 13 years. John said he'd retired 3 times in his life - from the Navy, from Richmond Council and, now, from the Soho Society, and this last was easily the one he regretted most. John's local authority experience was especially useful for the Society and his advice was readily given and valued by many in Soho.

We wish John a long and happy retirement in Kew and with many thanks for his time with us.

We turned as we usually do in these circumstances to REACH, the charity that puts retired professional people in touch with organisations that will benefit from their voluntary service. We had five offers and were very fortunate indeed to secure the services as Planning Adviser to the Society of Brian Ring, Dipl.Arch., FIHEEM, FRSA. Brian has 40 years' planning and architectural experience all over the world. He specialised in planning hospitals, clinics and doctor's surgeries as well as hotels and tourist infrastructures. Fortunately for us he is also familiar with Soho's streets and courts, being a central London dweller - albeit across the great divide which separates us from Bloomsbury, his home.

We welcome Brian to the Soho Society and hope his time with us will be enjoyable and stimulating as well as beneficial and useful for us.

Hong Kong's Soho

The Soho group, our local theatre troupe who started life in the Tower Room of St. Anne's Church and now tour the world with performances of Shakespeare, got a surprise in January when they arrived in Hong Kong to play 'As You Like It' at the Hong Kong City Festival. The theatre they were playing at was in SoHo - a

newly fashionable and newly-named district in what is now a Chinese city rather than a British colony. The district is so called because it is South of Hollywood - Hollywood being one of the main streets in Hong Kong. It joins the SoHo in New York which is named for the area South of Houston Street.

The Soho Ramblers flex their muscles!



At the high summit of Itford Hill. Note: SORA members spurn the use of oxygen

SORA, as they liked to be known (motto: Empty heads and tongues a talking make the rough road easy walking) is composed of Sohoites who wish to breathe the odd breath of fresh air in between the lungfuls of exhaust fumes which is our usual diet. The idea was to find some walking within easy rail distance of Soho that we could walk one Saturday a month. The South Down Way runs from Eastbourne to Winchester and is bisected by railway lines as well as being chalk and well drained and thus good for winter walking.

Our usual walk is between 8 and 11 miles. We did Eastbourne to Berwick in November, Berwick to Southease in December and by the time you read this should have done further walks to take us west of Brighton.

Anyone who would like to join is welcome provided they come with us on the train (no cars in SORA!) and wear suitable shoes or boots and warm clothing. For details of the next walk leave your name and telephone number at the Tower (0171-439 4303) and SORA will be in touch.

Bryan Burrough

<p>Increase your vitality</p> <p>Complementary Therapist</p> <p>Reflexology CranioSacral Therapy Remedial Massage Therapy Professionally Qualified</p> <p>Oliver Lawrence</p> <p>0171-437 6383 or 0966 451 999</p> <p>The Poland Street Practice 38 Poland Street, Soho (off Oxford St.) W1V 3DA</p>	<p>DENTIST</p> <p>Free consultation</p> <p>Cosmetic dentistry, Hygienist</p> <p>31 Carnaby Street, London, W1</p> <p>Tel: 0171-734 6421/2071</p>	<p>It's marvellous</p> <p>Newly-opened hair and beauty salon with very experienced staff and full range of Aveda and Fudge products. Reasonable prices, comfortable surroundings.</p> <p>20-23 Peter Street, Soho W1</p> <p>Telephone: 0171-287 8748</p> <p>visit www.marvellous.co.uk for appointment</p>	<p>GURU SINGH</p> <p>BSc. (Hons) Ost. M.G.O Dip.Couns.M.B.O.A.</p> <p>"When Stress Gets the Best of You"</p> <p>OSTEOPATHY & COUNSELLING</p> <p>at THE POLAND STREET PRACTICE, 38 POLAND ST., LONDON W1</p> <p>Tel: 0171-437 0056/6383 (Mobile 0976-285517)</p> <p>Friday 9.00 a.m. - 1.30 p.m.</p>
<p></p> <p>Deliciously Healthy</p> <p>New - CMC Energy Shakes</p> <p>Open every day</p> <p>9 Brewer Street</p> <p>Telephone: 0171-287 3555</p>	<p>PICTURE FRAMING</p> <p>Quick, efficient service at</p> <p>NEWFRAMES</p> <p>37 Beak Street, W1</p> <p>Tel: 0171-437 8881/8163</p>	<p>Kettners</p> <p>29 Romilly Street 0171 734 6112</p> <p>Serving Soho since 1867</p>	<p>ALPHA ONE FISH RESTAURANT</p> <p>43 Old Compton Street</p> <p>Soho, W1</p> <p>0171-437 7344</p> <p>Fresh Fish Daily</p>

The Charles Norton Centre - Latest

The last community space in Soho, the Charles Norton Centre, is not yet lost to community use. But it is not yet won.....either.

On the 4th of February, the WCC Planning subcommittee met to decide on the details of use by local groups for the Charles Norton Centre, 60-62 Broadwick St. What was on offer when it went to the Committee, was a derisory sharing of space between the Housing Dept. and local groups.

Because of the various needs of the future Estate office, it was suggested that days and time access for community groups be severely limited, as well as the amount of space on offer.

The main, large open space at 60 Broadwick St. (which goes so well with the kitchen) was all to be partitioned and used for the Estate office. The community was being offered the small meeting room in the back (which can accommodate about 10 people), a state of the art, modern kitchen facility and the toilets.

Insufficient Space Offered

This was a far cry from the days of Age Concern's occupation and Westminster Children's nursery use. The Soho Society and Soho Family Centre had made strong representations to the Committee that the space being offered was insufficient to meet community needs.

Councillor Richard Stirling Gibb

attended the committee meeting on the 4th of Feb. and presented a very good case on behalf of community access and use of the site. The sub committee, chaired by Councillor Alexander Nichols, were very probing of the plans for community use submitted by the Planning Dept. and in the end were unanimous in agreeing that the community had inadequate access to 60 Broadwick St. While being sympathetic to the needs of the Estate office, the Chairman nonetheless requested that plans be completely redrawn, giving more space and more frequent access to local groups. Additionally, Councillor Nichols said he thought he would make a site visit to see the layout of the building himself.

Safe Services Needed

It was clear from the application paperwork that the Housing Dept. did need to relocate from Kemp House in order to provide more access to community residents. In the proposal submitted on the 4th of Feb., the Estate office was also seeking regular space for Tenants' meetings, besides office space. Yet in a neighbourhood where commerce is not child friendly, and where serious drug use has been on the increase, parents need community projects to provide safe services for their children.



On the morning of Feb. 4th, forty parents and children from Soho Family Centre marched to the Charles Norton Centre and demonstrated outside the building for an hour's time. Since June '98 parents at the Family Centre have been asking the council for more space so that more services can be provided for their children and themselves.

New Government Initiatives

In line with new government initiatives, parents want/need holiday play schemes for school age children, more nursery provision, more parent and toddler drop-in groups and more space so that local people,

especially immigrant families, have a place to gather with their children and rebuild a sense of community. Parents want skill groups and classes.

The decision of the subcommittee on the 4th of Feb., is most welcome. However, it is difficult to see how the competing space needs of the Estate Office and of the community can be adequately reconciled within the Charles Norton Centre. We will be watching closely to see what will next be on offer to local groups. A small amount of space, part time, will not be acceptable.

Diana Ryken

Further information about this development can be obtained from the Soho Family Centre or from the Soho Society.

<p>100 CLUB</p>  <p>Jazz at the 100 100 Oxford Street Mon-Sun Telephone: 0171-636 0933</p>	<p>CAFE BAR SICILIA (Little Sicily)</p> <p>PASTA PIZZA</p> <p>32 GREAT WINDMILL STREET, LONDON, W1 Tel: 0171-439 1123</p> <p>No corkage - No service - No cover charges</p>	 <p>LONDON'S ORIGINAL SWISS RESTAURANT Mouthwatering Swiss specialities, delicious fondues, and real Alpine hospitality. Ideal for post theatre meals. Monday - Friday: 12.00-15.00 and 18.00-23.30, Saturday 18.00-23.30 161 WARDOUR STREET, LONDON W1. TEL: (0171)734 3324</p>	 <p>OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK LIVE MUSIC NIGHTLY PARTY BOOKINGS WELCOME</p> <p>THE SOHO PIZZERIA</p> <p>16-18 Beak Street, Soho, London Tel: 0171 434 2480</p>
<p>GRAHAM BYDE</p> <p>Member National Institute of Medicinal Herbalists MEDICAL HERBALIST Poland Street Practice Poland Street, W1 For appointments Tel: 0171-437 0056/6383</p>	<p>MAISON BERTAUX</p> <p>28 Greek Street Shaftesbury Avenue London W1V 5LL Telephone: 0171-437 6007</p> <p>pâtisserie française and tea room</p> 	 <p>29 Wardour Street Tel: 0171-437 7215 10 Dean Street Tel: 0171-437 9595</p>	

The New Soho Theatre

It was the afternoon of Sunday 17 January. A thirty strong group of Soho Society members, interested parties and well-wishers along with representatives of The Soho Society Executive and Planning Committees were given a guided tour of the site of the new Soho Theatre at 21 Dean Street.

Richard Paxton, the architect who has been working on the project for 4 years, Mark Godfrey, the Administrative Producer of The Soho, Abigail Morris, the Artistic Director and their Associate Director Jonathan Lloyd, conducted the party through the chilly, grey concrete conversion. At present the four floors that will be devoted to the business of presenting new plays (and helping to pay for them through the provision of a cafe/bar and restaurant) are quite without heat or lighting. Between them our hosts provided the necessary warmth and illumination as to how it will all turn out. The opening is on course for November, later this year.

The roomy, steeply raked auditorium will seat only 200 patrons. As an actor and performer I can tell you that the stage provides the opportunity for an unusually intimate and truly challenging feeling of contact with your audience. There's also a high degree of flexibility built into the performing space. It will be possible to stage productions in the round or with an audience on three sides. I was particularly impressed with the large,

rectangular platform, or 'lift', that will provide either a sunken, or a slightly elevated additional stage level and if desired can serve as a raised additional audience gallery behind the acting area. There will be a large rehearsal room on the second floor next to offices for the theatre staff and there will even be some additional spaces for 'the writers' themselves to work in.

As someone who was so closely involved in the beginnings of The Soho and whose heart and soul were wrung into total service for the first seven years, it was inspiring to get a first hand glimpse of how the new set-up will look all of thirty years further on.

In a world where the echoing cry is always, 'But is it economically viable?' theirs is a courageous policy commitment. To some it may seem strange that there is such an emphasis on new writing. Yet every single piece of writing we now love was new once. Every author was once in need of a break. The original Globe on Bankside specialised in presenting new plays, as did the classical Greek drama festivals and, once upon a time, T.V. and radio on a very regular basis. Each 'classic' play, novel or poem is a result of someone giving that author a chance, an opportunity to reach a first audience and develop. May the new Soho provide that opportunity for many new writers for the millennium years to come.

Fred Proud

Westminster Playwriting Prize

Now in its fourth year, the Westminster Prize is open to anyone resident or working in the Borough of Westminster. You don't need any experience of writing or the theatre to enter: just a vivid imagination. Plays should be ten minutes long and inspired by a photograph taken from an exhibition in The Photographers' Gallery. The winning plays will be performed by professional actors and directed by the company's associate Director, Jonathan Lloyd. The winning writers will receive theatre tokens and a years' free membership to The Photographers' Gallery.

Soho Theatre Company will be running playwriting workshops, open to all, in April and May throughout the Westminster area to help you get started. Two will be at the gallery and one at the Soho Society.

The Prize will be officially launched in March, when the photograph and the list of rules will be available. To receive more information on the Westminster Prize please call Sara Murray on 0171-287 5060, write with an SAE to Soho Theatre Company, 1 Old Compton Street, London W1V 5PH or you can email sara@sohotheatre.com.

3 More Soho Screens

One of the principle reasons for going to the movies rather than waiting for your favourite film to be shown on television is the thrill of seeing it "on the big screen". Often these days, though, with more and more cinemas splitting their auditoria, you may as well be watching something rented from Fred's Video Store. At best the seats are small and uncomfortable and the screen itself has the size and picture quality of a London transport security camera. At worst, the tiny flea-pit makes you feel like you've forgotten your dirty mac.... Lyn Goleby, co-director of City Screen, who operate the Curzon chain of cinemas, is determined that the joy of picture-going should not be lost when they split the Curzon Shaftesbury Avenue into three more manageable screens in October.

"It's all very technical" she explains, "but we're specially raking the front rows and stepping the rest of the seating to allow for a luxury feel and room to spread out". The screen size, too, has been mathematically calculated to be exactly the right size for the room, so as to retain that "epic" quality.

Curzon cinemas specialise in arthouse movies, and Goleby has

been noticing recently that the enormous Shaftesbury Avenue venue has become "somewhat of a dinosaur". With so much cinematic choice in Soho, filling all the seats for some of the more obscure pictures is increasingly difficult, and they are also unable to show as many different films as they would like.

The refurbished cinema will have three state-of-the-art screens, a ground-floor cafe, "Le Tabac", selling both coffee and movie publications, a mezzanine bar for patrons and an exciting new programming policy. After the enormous success last year of experimental screenings of old favourites such as "It's A Wonderful Life" - queues round the block and standing ovations - they are aiming to become ever more adventurous in their film choices.

"We want to make the cinema work for the residents of Soho" explains Goleby. To back this up, she welcomes suggestions from Clarion readers, either in a comments book which will be provided, or by writing to her at City Screen Limited, 86 Dean Street London W1V 5AA. To join the mailing list call 0171 734 4343.

Sandra Lawrence

Ronnie Scott's 40th Anniversary

Ronnie Scott's - the most famous jazz club in the world - celebrates its 40th anniversary this autumn with a series of major concerts and residencies, the centrepiece of which is a charity Gala Evening at the Barbican Centre on Saturday 2nd October.

The concert features George Benson, the Count Basie Orchestra, Elvin Jones and Dee Dee Bridgewater. Peter King, who opened the bill on the first night at the original Ronnie Scott's Club in London's Gerrard Street, will also be performing with Georgie Fame. The Gala Evening will be presented by Silver Clef in aid of Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy Centre and the Ronnie Scott's Bursary Fund.

The three-month anniversary celebrations also include two further dates at the Barbican Centre. The first to be confirmed

is headlined by the legendary saxophonist Sonny Rollins on Friday 8th October. It will be his only British concert this year.

The Barbican Centre has been chosen to participate in the celebrations because of the venue's audience capacity and its ongoing commitment to jazz. "It's a humbling experience to realise the high esteem in which the club is held throughout the world, and our thanks go to all the musicians and journalists who have contributed to its success", says Pete King, co-founder of Ronnie Scott's.

"When the club was launched, I don't think anyone could have predicted we'd still be in business 40 years later. Now we've reached this landmark year, however, the next ambition is to secure the club's reputation in the new millennium." Details from Ronnie's on 0171-439 0747.

