Noisy diners may force closure of iconic music club

By LWN reporter GEOFF BAKER
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WEST London’s most iconic music venue, a favourite club of everyone from the Rolling Stones and Ed Sheeran to Adele and Prince Harry, is facing closure because the local council is supporting noise complaints from just FOUR people.

But the complaints are not even about the music – but are about patrons chattering too loudly.

The world-famous Troubadour – a Mecca for thousands of music fans as the London birthplace of Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Paul Simon and Joni Mitchell – is up for sale as the owners are struggling to make ends meet because of lost revenue due to a noise abatement order from the council’s order means we have to close the garden at nine, we have lost money, which represents a big chunk of our cash flow.”

Mrs Thornhill said the complaints over chatter in the garden had come from only four residents.

“What I can’t fathom is why the council is supporting the complaints of just four residents up against the widespread popularity of The Troubadour. This is one of only three major live venues left in Kensington and Chelsea,” she said.

But now the council is facing a wave of complaints from rock stars, music fans and the Music Venue Trust, calling on councillors to cancel the noise abatement order and save the club, which is steeped in music history.

The Troubadour now boasts a restaurant, bar, wine shop, delicatessen beside the hugely-popular music venue, but it is also one of the last remaining 1950s coffee houses in London.

Since it opened in 1954, it has been a Mecca for thousands of music fans as the London birthplace of Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Paul Simon and Joni Mitchell.
London homes in on new housing land

MAYOR of London Boris Johnson and Housing Minister Brandon Lewis have officially launched the London Land Commission, marking the first ever co-ordinated effort between City Hall, government and boroughs to free up surplus public land in London to build the homes that the city so desperately needs.

At the commission’s first meeting, held at City Hall, it was announced that real estate research firm Savills has been appointed to compile the preliminary stages of a so-called ‘Doomsday Book’ of all brownfield public land in London, to be completed by the end of 2015. Once collected, City Hall will use the data to map the spread of sites across the city. It is thought to be the first time such a comprehensive set of data has ever been collected for London.

The commission’s launch on July 13 followed a comprehensive set of data has ever been collected for London.

The commission, appointed by the Mayor and Chancellor George Osborne in February as part of the long-term economic plan for London, will work across layers of government and public bodies to develop strategies for unlocking public land for development. The commission will identify priority areas for future growth and co-ordinate efforts to fast-track the process whilst ensuring a good return for the taxpayer and better regeneration sites across London. The inaugural meeting was attended by London Councils, NHS England, Transport for London and Network Rail, with participation at the highest levels from other bodies such as the Department of Health.

Boris Johnson said: “The London Land Commission will build on the great efforts we’ve already made at City Hall to ensure brownfield land that has lain empty for years is put to productive use in providing much-needed housing for Londoners. In a city like ours, with its burgeoning population, it is simply madness not to act as quickly as we can to unlock more of these kinds of sites. The commission’s work will be in co-ordinating the release of a whole raft of public bodies to achieve this important goal, helping to cut through the red tape that has kept valuable land tied up for too long.”

Brandon Lewis said: “As a global city, with excellent opportunities and links to the rest of the world, there is clear demand to release land and provide more homes for Londoners. The London Land Commission will bring a joined-up approach to land release in the capital – regenerating brownfield land and providing more homes, whilst continuing to protect the green belt around our capital.”

London Councils’ executive member for housing and Mayor of Lewisham Sir Steve Bullock said: “It is vital that our overall strategy to tackle the housing crisis delivers an increase in affordable homes for ordinary Londoners. The efficient use of vacant land, whether owned by the Mayor, Transport for London, boroughs, the NHS or private sector developers, is a key part of the solution.”

Land already released by the Mayor includes east London’s Royal Docks, the Beam Park site in Rainham, and the former Cane Hill hospital site in Croydon. Unlocking unused public land for development is vitally important in achieving the Mayor’s aim of building half a million homes for Londoners over the next decade, including 100,000 affordable homes over two terms.

The Mayor has designated 15 housing zones with a combined total funding of £466.23 million across London to help achieve this aim, working with boroughs to fast-track development approvals and transport improvements in areas where this may not otherwise have occurred. 20 housing zones are expected to be designated by the end of 2015, with 50,000 new homes to be created as a result. In May 2015 the first allocations of the Mayor’s £200 million housing bank were announced, which will provide low-cost loans to enable homes to be brought forward on a speedy timeline.

COMMISSION WILL FREE UP URGENTLY NEEDED DEVELOPMENT SITES
Troubadour may be forced to close over noise complaints (diners talking, not the music)

FROM PAGE 1 has long been a launch venue for the careers of many of the world’s biggest music stars and is a landmark of London’s musical heritage.

Bob Dylan performed one of his first gigs in London there in 1962, when he played under the name of Blind Boy Grunt. Paul Simon played there in 1965 and it was a favourite venue of Jimi Hendrix when he lived in London in the Sixties.

Charlie Watts was discovered drumming at the club in 1961 by the legendary Alexsis Korner, who recruited him to his band Blues Incorporated and then introduced him to Brian Jones, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards and Bill Wyman to form The Rolling Stones. Two years ago fellow Stones Ron Wood and Mick Taylor chose the venue for a secret gig for friends.

Kensington resident and guitarist Jimmy Page played The Troubadour in 1975 at after-show jamborees following Led Zeppelin’s gigs at the Earl’s Court and Elton John chose the club for a show to promote the launch of his album Goodbye Yellow Brick Road.

The club has also been a home to Joni Mitchell, folk legends Sandy Denny, Linda Thompson, Martin Carthy, Davey Graham and Bert Jansch and many jazz stars including Lionel Grigson, Spike Wels and Daryll Runswick.

More recently, Morrissey played at The Troubadour in 2012 and it was a launch venue for the two biggest stars of the modern music scene, Ed Sheeran and Adele. The club is also a popular nightspot for Prince Harry. And before he was married Prince William regularly visited the club to see his friends’ bands play.

“The Troubadour is far too important a venue to have to close,” said Mrs Thornhill. “It’s still a venue for the future stars of tomorrow.”

“If the council was to respond positively and remove the noise abatement order it could change things and would give us a bit of a breather and help our cash flow. But if the sale goes through we’re hoping that it would bring investment for the club to survive, as it deserves to live on.”

But a new owner could close the club and turn it into another office block or apartments or offices that have opened in the area in recent years.

“We have also suffered loss of business from the knock-on effect of Earls Court shutting,” said Mrs Thornhill.

“It’s extraordinary that the council said that wouldn’t have any effect on local night time businesses. It has had a big effect and now we’ve got all of these estate agents moving in. We need a vibrant area here for restaurants and local businesses. If we have more estate agents it’s all going to disappear.”

The council revealed that all the complaints about noise from The Troubadour garden came from just one resident, protesting on 15 occasions on behalf of other neighbours.

A council spokesman said: “Those complaints did not relate in any way to music from the basement venue but to noise from the garden. Environmental health officers visited on a number of occasions and witnessed the nuisance for themselves. Loud voices could be heard in neighbouring properties through the evening and into the night.”

“We met with the owners and their representatives who voluntarily offered to close the garden from 10pm. The council considered that 9pm would bring investment for the club to survive this at a later date. The owners have not taken up that offer.”

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KENSINGTON’S MP Victoria Borwick has promised a tag-team campaign with her husband in the House of Lords to “fight steadfastly” for the vulnerable and disabled and has vowed to become a champion for the poor and the rich of the borough alike.

In her 10-minute, 1,200-word maiden speech in the House of Commons last week, Lady Borwick told MPs of her determination to fight for the disadvantaged of the community.

“I am here to fight for the needs of the vulnerable and disabled in our country and I welcome the challenge,” she said.

In her revealingly-personal first speech to the Commons, during a Budget debate last Tuesday, Lady Borwick told how her family had coped personally with the trials of disability. She told MPs that her two eldest children had been born with heart defects and she pledged that she and her husband Lord Borwick will campaign in both the House of Lords and the House of Commons for better deals for the disabled.

“I have been married to Jamie for over 30 years, and we have four wonderful children. Sadly, our eldest two were born with serious heart defects. Our eldest son spent a year in the Royal Brompton & Harefield hospital. Despite the excellent care, he was left with permanent disabilities,” she said.

Lady Borwick also spoke of “the vital importance” of supporting local businesses in the borough and said she would campaign to make sure that they are free of red tape.

“Only by supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses can we help promote jobs and employment,” she said.

Extracts from Victoria Borwick’s maiden speech...

Tribute to Sir Malcolm

I WOULD like to begin by paying tribute to my predecessor, Sir Malcolm Rifkind. One of only five Ministers to serve throughout both the Thatcher and Major premierships, Sir Malcolm has a long and distinguished record of service to our country.

A fierce opponent of injustice, Sir Malcolm is not one to be cowed or intimidated. In 1984, as a junior Foreign Minister on an historic visit to Poland, against the wishes of the then Polish communist Prime Minister, General Jaruzelski, Sir Malcolm insisted on meeting the leaders of the Solidarity movement and laying a wreath at the grave of a Polish priest who had been brutally murdered at the hands of his communist oppressors. Sir Malcolm is also a visionary and a forward thinker. Quick to identify Mikhail Gorbatchev as someone with whom the west could ‘do business’, he was instrumental in convincing Margaret Thatcher of the importance of our engagement with the Soviet Union. Above all, Malcolm Rifkind was much admired in the constituency.

Dirty work

I HAVE had the good fortune to inspect multimillion-pound infrastructure projects. Upon the instruction of my now Honourable Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), I was lowered through a manhole cover to inspect sewers, as part of the re-engineering work for Crossrail. Separately, I have made further visits to Uxbridge and South Ruislip, asked me to be his deputy. Kensington is my home; it is where I grew up, went to school, worked and raised my family. Although I have been Kensington’s MP over time, I am not quite old enough to have seen the deprivation of the mid-19th century piggeries and potteries, which were some of the most evil-smelling in London, but which have since been transformed into the stylish streets of Notting Hill.

I know many Honourable Members are familiar with Kensington. How many have beaten a path with their families to twirl the handles and press the knobs at the Science Museum, to explore the world of the dinosaurs and meet the much-maligned Dippy in the great hall—now the Hintze hall—of the Natural History Museum, and to marvel at the glories of the V&A, to name but a few of our cultural attractions? Twelve million visitors came to our museums last year. Nationally, more people visit museums and cultural attractions than go to football matches.

A good deal

FOR much of my career I was involved with the art and antiques industry. There are over 7,000 specialist art and antique dealers nationally, offering jobs and employment, particularly in Kensington Church Street and, of course, our famous Portobello Road. As president of the British Antique Dealers Association, I support our trade. We should be working with those small businesses to ensure that we in this House do not impose ill-considered restrictions upon them.

Kensington & Chelsea
Nursing home makes way for ‘extra care’

By GEOFF BAKER

AN empty and outdated old people’s home in Chelsea is to close permanently as part of plans to provide around 150 new homes for older residents, the council’s cabinet decided last week.

The 56-bed Thamesbrook home has been closed since May 2014 following the discovery of Legionella in the water system. Despite the efforts of staff and specialist contractors, the outbreak proved intractable and led to what Kensington & Chelsea Borough Council called “an unacceptable reduction in care standards and consequent transfers to other homes”.

Following the temporary closure, the council ordered a review that looked at four options for the future of the home: refurbishing it, remodelling it so that it meets modern standards, replacing it with ‘extra care’ housing units on the site or replacing it with extra care units elsewhere in the borough.

“Extra care is a form of housing in which older people rent or buy their own homes in developments where care is available on site, in the quantity and type needed, and which can ‘scale up’ as people become older and frailer,” said a council spokesman. “Extra care homes also feature communal social areas where residents can keep company and enjoy activities.

“One of the key ambitions expressed in the council’s 2013 strategy for the future of older people’s accommodation, ‘Modernising Older People’s Housing’, is for more extra care schemes. The evidence is that the extra care approach produces more years of good health and independence, and also that older people themselves prefer such arrangements.”

Following last week’s decision, the council will now bring forward plans for up to 100 new extra care units either on the Thamesbrook site or on a large council-owned site at Lots Road – or shared across both.

“Although the configuration is yet to be settled, some of those homes will be for the private market, for which there is a strong local demand, and at least half will be at affordable rents,” said the spokesman. At the same time the council is also working on other schemes in North Kensington that could add a further 70 new affordable homes for older residents. To address nursing provision the authority is investing £1.1 million to create a new 20-bed nursing unit at Ellesmere House on the Fulham Road. The new unit is expected to open in autumn 2015.

“Thamesbrook is one of the last old-style homes and has given great service for many years,” said Cllr Mary Weale, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care. “But old-style institutions are no longer how we wish to look after our older residents and it’s not how older people want to be looked after either.

“Extra care is the future and this prime site means we now have the chance to make a serious down payment on our ambitions for high quality extra care housing. That’s a fitting legacy for Thamesbrook to leave behind.”

As part of the Thamesbrook review a public consultation was carried out that received nearly 200 submissions. A total of 48 per cent of respondents supported the council’s preference for the extra care options, compared with 44 per cent of respondents who were opposed, preferring to see the home refurbished, remodelled or rebuilt.

“Despite that opposition, people were generally supportive of extra care housing. In total, 77 per cent agreed that the council should seek to maximise the amount of extra care housing in the borough,” said the spokesman. “However, some were concerned that the extra care option did not address the needs of older people with advanced dementia or other conditions requiring nursing care.”

Built in the 1960s, Thamesbrook was one of the few homes in the UK still run by a local authority and the only one run by the council. “As well as Legionella, the building has many other defects,” said the spokesman. “It is tired and institutional. Rooms are some 16 per cent smaller than modern standards. None can be classified as wheelchair compliant. Also, the furniture layout is repetitive and fixed, meaning residents had less choice about where things go and what personal items they could bring in and several rooms cannot meet current care standards because it is impossible to provide care from either side of the bed.

“In addition, the overall layout of narrow winding corridors and units spread across three floors made supervision much more difficult and contributed to running costs far higher than places in private nursing homes offering objectively higher standards of accommodation.”

NEWS FROM KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

It’s never been more fun to keep fit... come on in!

IN the days of my youth, I was something of a speed walker. You had to be in the 1970s, if you wanted to watch Sue Lawley on Nationwide and still arrive at the Red Lion in time for first orders.

But sadly my athletic days are long gone and the big physical challenge for me lately has been applying Voltorel to my lower back. For the harsh truth is that over the last couple of decades exercise is something that I have been putting off until tomorrow. That must change.

So slowly, tentatively, I have been dipping my toes, quite literally as a matter of fact, because one the safest forms of exercise for someone of my fitness level is swimming.

Out of consideration for our residents I have swapped my ancient Speedos for a pair of knee-length shorts and, as readers of this column will know, I have been popping up to our brand new £30 million leisure centre which is magnificent, quite frankly.

It is a real pleasure to do a few lengths of powerful front crawl and butterfly in the pristine surroundings of the Kensington Leisure Centre.

Anyway, it turns out that I am not the only one who has decided that the hour has come and that they simply must do some exercise. Since we have opened our new leisure centre in North Kensington and handsomely refurbished our Chelsea gym there has been a very pleasing upturn in gym usage.

The number of members across both gyms is now 4,800 – up from 2,950 for the old gyms. The number of pay-as-you-go users is up too.

In all, we had 64,000 gym visits in May alone: 29,000 for swimming, 20,000 for the gym and 15,000 for classes.

And we’ve got more kids doing swimming lessons as well, with 1,700 pupils taking the plunge.

We have spent a lot of money on our gyms but the early signs are that we are seeing a return on that investment, in more people taking better care of themselves, in more people having fun and in more young people getting involved in sport and fitness.

If, like me, you belong to the Angel Delight generation, it could just be that you too could do with a little exercise. If so you could do a lot worse than check out our excellent gyms.

There is swimming, weights, treadmills, cross trainers, an amazing array of exercise classes and crucially, a very friendly and encouraging atmosphere. All the details are on our website www.rbkc.gov.uk
HERITAGE SELL-OFF ‘COULD PUT QUEEN IN PERIL’

Plans for hotels in landmark buildings spark terror fears

By LWN reporter GEOFF BAKER
geoff@londonweeklynews.co.uk

PLANS to turn Government buildings in Whitehall into luxury hotels are putting The Queen at “a massive risk” to a terrorist sniper, members of the House of Lords have warned.

Peers fear a terrorist could book a room overlooking the route taken by The Queen on State parades and attempt to assassinate the monarch or other members of the Royal Family.

Lord Reid, the former Home Secretary John Reid, told the House of Lords that the sale of two government buildings will compromise national security and put the Queen in danger.

Admiralty Arch and the Old War Office, in the heart of Whitehall, have been sold to private developers for almost £200 million. Developers plan to convert the buildings—which overlook the route of State processions between Buckingham Palace and the Palace of Westminster—into luxury hotels.

Lord Reid: “National security is at stake for the Government, not just new private owners. As to the reduction of the deficit, while obviously we want to do that, if the cost of reducing the deficit by a couple of hundred million pounds is to put our national security—not to mention the monarch—at risk, it is not a price worth paying.”

Former Shadow Defence Minister Lord Foulkes called for the plan for new hotels to be re-examined by the security forces as The Queen could be endangered on Remembrance Day and at the State Opening of Parliament.

He asked Lord Bridges: “Does the noble Lord recall that when President Bush made a state visit to London, the entire Whitehall area was cordoned off, including to Members of Parliament? Does he also recall that the IRA, from within the area of Whitehall, managed to mortar No. 10? Further, he will remember that the bombing of the Brighton hotel, which affected Mrs Thatcher and others, involved a bomb was placed in the hotel some time in advance of the incident? Do the security services intend to yet positively all the staff of these hotels; has that been agreed? Will the hotels be closed to all visitors during state visits or will the visitors be vetted as well?”

Speaking for the Government, Lord Bridges said he was satisfied with security arrangements but he admitted that there were no rules that hotel staff should be security vetted.

“I have looked into the clauses of the leases for both the Old War Office and Admiralty Arch and I am satisfied that they allow for appropriate security for both security and ceremonial purposes,” he said.

Gallipoli VC hero’s story is etched in stone for all time

A MEMORIAL commemorating Leonard Keysor, a Westminster First World War hero who was awarded the Victoria Cross, took place on July 7th at Victoria Embankment.

Lance Corporal (later Lieutenant) Leonard Keysor of the 1st Battalion, the Australian Imperial Force, was honoured with a commemorative paving stone as part of a scheme to remember recipients of the VC.

The service was attended by Westminster City Council’s Armed Forces Champion Cllr Rachael Robathan and the Lord Mayor of Westminster Cllr Christabel Flitcroft, who unveiled the paving stone alongside past, present and future representatives from the Royal British Legion, HQ London District, and Army Cadets.

Mr Keysor was awarded a Victoria Cross for his actions on the 7th August, 1915, at Gallipoli, for “most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty at Lone Pine trenches in Gallipoli Peninsula.”

He picked up two live bombs and threw them back at the enemy at great risk to his own life, and continued throwing bombs, although himself wounded, thereby saving a portion of the trench which it was most important to hold.

Guests were joined at the ceremony by a class from Westminster Cathedral Catholic Primary school as two pupils read epitaphs having learnt about Mr Keysor as part of the Community Covenant Grant Scheme.

The Lord Mayor of Westminster, Cllr Christabel Flitcroft, said: “In Westminster we have built this memorial for residents and visitors to observe and remember our local heroes. By 2018, the paving stones here will be replaced with an engraved stone representing each of the local Victoria Cross recipients from the First World War.”

The Victoria Cross is the highest and most prestigious honour bestowed on any serviceman who has shown exceptional courage in the face of the enemy. Mr Keysor is the third of ten Westminster residents who received the Victoria Cross during the 1914–18 conflict.

SECURITY ALERT: The sale of former government landmarks such as the Admiralty Arch have prompted questions in the House of Lords.

Lord Reid: “National security is at stake for the Government, not just new private owners. As to the reduction of the deficit, while obviously we want to do that, if the cost of reducing the deficit by a couple of hundred million pounds is to put our national security—not to mention the monarch—at risk, it is not a price worth paying.”

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Landlord is fined £25,000 for licence and safety failings

A LANDLORD who did not have the required licence for the number of tenants living in his property, and also failed to carry out gas safety checks, has been ordered to pay £25,151.92 after he pleaded guilty at Hammersmith Magistrates’ Court to five charges under the Housing Act 2004. On October 8th, 2014, environmental health officers from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea visited 15 Bramley Road, London, W10, owned by Emmil Sescon Watson (also known as Emil Wayne Watson), of Nash Close, Earley, Reading.

The visit followed complaints from tenants about a leaking roof they could not get repaired as they were unable to contact Watson. Up to seven tenants were living in the house, despite Watson not having a licence for a house in multiple occupation as required by the Housing Act 2004. This licence is an important requirement as it enables the council to ensure a property is safe for the number of occupants and is properly managed.

The court heard that Watson had gone out of his way to avoid co-operating with the council and had made himself very difficult to contact. He had refused to obtain the proper licence despite two previous warnings. Three emergencies had occurred at the house since 2012, including a leak that caused a ceiling to collapse and a window that needed repair after a burglary, and tenants were forced to complain to the emergency services and the council because Watson could not be reached.

Danger

Watson told the court that he had licensed the property he would have had to raise the rents, whereas some rents had stayed the same for some years. He also stated that he paid the bills out of the rents he took. He also said he was not replacing the tenancies for a “life”, therefore avoiding the number of people living at the property, which would mean it would not need to be licenced.

Commenting on the case, which was heard on Tuesday, July 14th, the chairwoman of the bench said Watson had put his tenants in danger and failed to follow clear warnings from the council regarding the licensing of the property.

A council spokesman said: “The council will take action against landlords who deliberately avoid their legal obligations and who make life difficult for their tenants. We are very pleased that the court fully supported the action taken by the council and trust that the prosecution will act as a deterrent to other landlords who do not take their responsibilities seriously.”

Chorus of approval for opera

OPERA Holland Park is top of the classical pops – with its new album going straight in the top 10.

The album of OHP’s version of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland has become the must-have recording for thousands of fans of the Kensington opera company.

Within a week of its release at the end of June, the album shot to the top of the UK classical charts and has remained there despite two previous warnings. Three emergencies had occurred at the property since 2012, including a leak that caused a ceiling to collapse and a window that needed repair after a burglary, and tenants were forced to complain to the emergency services and the council because Watson could not be reached.

Market has the write approach

LOCAL authors looking for a subject to hone their writing skills have until Friday, 31 July to submit a story that captures the history of Portobello and Golborne Market.

The competition, organised by the council’s library service and the market office, is one of a series of events to celebrate the market’s 150th year of trading.

There is a rich vein of history running through the market, which offers inspiration to any author. Back in the 1860s Portobello Road was just a simple country lane where farmers sold milk to local people. All that changed in 1864 with the opening of the Metropolitan Railway Notting Hill station – now known as Ladbroke Grove station – which transformed the area.

The word limit for the competition is 2,000 words. For more information, including full terms and conditions, email libraries@rbkc.gov.uk

Winning entries will be published in an anthology produced by the council’s library service.

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Council to spend £10m buying ‘crisis’ housing

THE Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is to stump up £10 million to buy “a significant number” of high quality homes for temporary accommodation.

Properties in the private housing market will be considered up to a maximum value of £450,000. The council, which made the decision on Thursday, July 16th, anticipates that it could buy up to 39 properties (consisting of 27 two-bed properties and 12 three-bed properties). Since 2010 the number of households in temporary accommodation has been on the rise and with fewer affordable properties available in the private rented sector, the council is considering locations including London, the M25 area and southern counties.

Councillor Nick Paget-Brown, the Leader of the Royal Borough, said: “The reality is we are facing a huge shortage of properties in which to house those in greatest need. The pool available to us in the private sector is failing, and with the number of homeless households on our list rising, we believe purchasing our own stock is the right strategy to not only increase supply but contain costs.”

“An ideal world we would like to buy properties in Kensington and Chelsea, but the numbers simply don’t stack up. In reality we could only buy a handful of homes here, but by looking further afield we can purchase significantly more, making a huge difference to those on our waiting list.”

The council plans to start purchasing properties that are a commutable distance from the Royal Borough in the autumn, with the first household moving in during March 2016.

A number of other boroughs have also started to invest in the private housing market to help temporary accommodation. Oxford has agreed to purchase properties the council has seen its portfolio fall from over 100 properties to just 16 since 2012. Rents will be set at the temporary accommodation housing subsidy levels.
WESTWAY Trust, a charity that aims to improve the Westway area in Notting Hill, has announced it will award up to £100,000 in community funding this year through its new Community Grants programme. Applications for funding are now open and will be allocated in two rounds in 2015/6.

Community Grants will be available to not-for-profit organisations or groups of individuals who want to add to the social, cultural and community issues or bring the community together to celebrate the 150th year anniversary of Portobello & Golborne Markets. Groups and organisations must be located within the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Westway Trust is particularly interested to hear from groups or organisations with a focus on communities living in North Kensington and/or close to the Westway estate.

Angela McConville, Westway Trust’s Chief Executive, said: “We are delighted to offer this vital funding for local groups and organisations. We hope the Community Grants programme will fund a vibrant range of community activities. We hope local people will use it to come together, have fun and celebrate the rich culture and heritage of the community, particularly in this special year that celebrates the 150th anniversary of the Portobello Market.”

Two types of grants are being offered to eligible organisations, worth £500 and £2,500 each. Grants of up to £500 will be available for one-off community celebrations and events, including performances, arts workshops, garden and street parties, arts projects and other events that invite the community to participate and celebrate the 150th anniversary of the market.

Meanwhile, grants worth up to £2,500 will be available for a range of projects that support and improve the health and well-being of the local community as well as projects that provide economic opportunities. Westway Trust is also looking for groups who can celebrate local talent and diversity. This includes disability sports events, mental health projects, employment and volunteering programmes, and skills training.

Forging partnerships

“We have already had 120 organisations contact us expressing interest in our grants programme. We know it’s tough for local charities at the moment with the pressure on public funding. We are delighted to be in a position to award funding to local groups and look forward to forging new partnerships with projects that form an important part of this vibrant community, to work together and create a brighter future for the Westway,” Angela said.

The Community Grants programme will host two rounds of applications each year. Applications for the 2015/6 period will be accepted from 3 August – 14 September and 4 – 25 January. Organisations are restricted to one application per funding round.

See Under The Westway on page 9

Vibrant music mix at Westway festival

This year’s Westway Trust Community Festival on Sunday, July 26th will be bigger and better than ever with a vibrant mix of music and family fun.

The festival takes place on Portobello Green from 12noon to 6pm. It’s a FREE fun day out for all the family and will include a live stage, children’s activities, local stalls and international food on offer.

Showcasing the diversity and talents of the area, it will involve a wide range of community groups, organisations and schools.

The performers include:

- Sankoulekan – West African drumming and dance group
- The No Frills Band – UK folk band
- Cheb Dara – Moroccan singer
- Tribo band – Samba reggae band
- The Rhythm Studio – West London’s rock and pop music academy students
- Electric Dance Collective – Caribbean street dance group
- Pimento Supplementary School – Dance performance
- Children’s activities include a circus skills workshop, bounce castle, gladiator jousting, graffiti art, African drumming, arts and crafts, face painting, and more.

Westway Trust Chief Executive, Angela McConville, said: “This will be the fifth Westway Community Festival and it has grown to become a really important event in our Westway Presents calendar. It’s just part of the exciting and diverse programme of arts, culture and entertainment we provide for all the family and will include a live stage, children’s activities, local stalls and international food on offer.

Road closures for major cycle race

MAJOR road closures will begin from 5am on Sunday, August 2nd in preparation for Prudential RideLondon.

This event will see both amateur and professional cyclists tackling a closed circuit from the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park for the amateurs and Horse Guards Parade for the professionals, through central London before heading out of the city and on to Surrey. The riders then return back through London for a finish on The Mall.

Closing 100 miles of roads and bridges across London and Surrey will have a major impact on traffic, public transport and parking. It is not just the roads the cyclists ride along that will be affected. Many other local roads will be closed to traffic from the early hours of Sunday, August 2nd to allow them to pass safely through the borough. It is anticipated roads will remain closed until the early evening. Vehicles parked on the route will be removed. If you normally park your vehicle on any of the roads affected you will need to make alternative arrangements on Sunday 2 August.

Road closure timetable on Sunday, August 2nd

5am – outwards-bound roads closed across London. In Kensington and Chelsea the following roads will close at this time:

- Knightsbridge
- Brompton Road
- Cromwell Road (A4)

The roads closed on the outwards-bound route are expected to reopen at 3pm.

7am – inwards-bound roads will close across London. In Kensington and Chelsea the following roads will close at this time:

- King’s Road
- Cheyne Walk
- Ashburnham Road
- Cremorne Road
- Chelsea Embankment

The roads closed on the inwards-bound route are expected to reopen at 7.30pm.

All timings are subject to change. For up-to-date information please see the organiser’s website www.PrudentialRideLondon.co.uk/roadclosures or follow @RideLondon.
FOLLOWING a £1.1m makeover, pitches are now available at one of London’s oldest and most loved markets, Berwick Street Market in Soho.

Westminster City Council is looking for high-quality and unique first-time traders to apply to run a market stall, from one to six days a week, for as little as £10.61 a day.

Cllr Daniel Astarie, Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration, Business and Economic Development, said: “Running a market stall can be one of the best ways for entrepreneurs to road test their business ideas, without risking huge overheads. Pizza Pilgrims is just one example: “What is now a hugely successful chain of restaurants started out as two brothers selling pizzas from a stall on Berwick Street Market. “This is an exciting and affordable way for fledging start-ups and first-time entrepreneurs to launch their new business, in the heart of London.

Berwick Street Market began its life in the 1770s when shopkeepers displayed their wares on the pavements. It quickly earned its reputation as one of the most vibrant and diverse markets in London, and was the first place to sell tomatoes in 1830, and grapefruit in 1890. The market continues to live up to its reputation, with seasonal fresh produce, street food, gifts, crafts, fashion and more from Monday to Saturday.

“Thanks to the new lighting, surfaces and facilities that have been installed as part of our regeneration programme, Berwick Street Market has truly been transformed into Soho’s local high street,” added Cllr Astarie.

New traders are encouraged to apply by August 10. Priority will be given to Westminster residents and applicants offering something unique to the market.

By GEOFF BAKER
geoff@londonweeklynews.co.uk

Nothing wrong making strike rules democratic

WE keep being told one of the biggest threats to the economy is poor productivity.

Finding the exact cause of the so-called ‘productivity puzzle’ is as tricky as navigating London’s sewers without a torch.

However, it appears there’s one thing that puts a serious dent in productivity that we could sort out immediately – and that’s strikes.

According to new numbers from the Office of National Statistics the number of working days lost to strikes has jumped by 77 per cent in a year! In 2014, 78,800 working days were lost as a result of labour disputes up from 444,000 in 2013. This is higher than the average for the 1990s and 2000s, but, as you’d expect lower than the 1980s when industrial action was more common.

That said, it’s still far too common for my liking, and the liking of the British economy, and that’s why I can’t see anything even slightly wrong with at least 50 per cent of union members involved in a dispute having to cast their vote in order for a strike vote to be valid.

Anything else is the tyranny of the union bosses, whose loyal foot soldiers will back them to the hilt, forcing the perhaps 50 per cent who did not vote into a strike, or face being labelled a scab.

And it’s this cynical calculation that for decades has allowed union bosses to retain power over the increasing numbers of their members who do not vote for strikes. And that’s why it must be stopped.

If there is a genuine desire amongst a membership to take industrial action it cannot be too much to ask that every second person bothers to cast a vote to strike. Any argument from the unions that the silent majority are silent because they agree, and see no need to vote, falls because clearly under the new rules they will revert to marking a ballot paper with their previously privately held desire to strike.

And to those who continue to argue that the Government was elected with 36.9 per cent of the vote (from an impressive 66.1 per cent turnout), perhaps you could ask a bookee about the difference between a two horse race and one with a large field? Or learn to divide by a number larger than two and see what happens?

And if people still want to argue with statistics, try this one. Len McCluskey was ‘elected’ General Secretary of the Unite union with 64.5 per cent of the votes cast, in what was a two horse race with Jerry Hicks who received 35.5 percent, on a turnout of 15.2 per cent of those eligible to vote.

So Mr McCluskey was elected by 9.8 per cent of members of his union, meaning more than 1.3 million members didn’t give him their vote.

It would seem to me that the real reason the unions don’t want the new democratic approach applied to industrial disputes is because it threatens to undermine the authority of their leaders, and bring focus onto their highly questionable mandates.

This is not, as last week’s BBC headline reads, An Attack On Workers’ Rights, it is the opposite.

If you feel strongly about something you can vote to strike. If you don’t want to, don’t vote and you can’t be forced to face the ire and abuse of the militant few, who would rob you of your democratic rights. What’s wrong with that?

Views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of this newspaper

CHRIS IS RACING TO BEAT PARKINSON’S

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‘Join us’ call after market makeover

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS: Soho’s Berwick Street Market.

By GEOFF BAKER
geoff@londonweeklynews.co.uk

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UNDER THE WESTWAY

Cash grants to improve lives

Angela McConville, Chief Executive of Westway Trust, explains how income from business tenants and sports services is being used to support the North Kensington community

TODAY I would like to talk about an exciting opportunity for the Westway Trust.

Monday July 26th marks the opening of our new community grants programme. The trust will be launching a new community grants fund worth £100,000.

It’s a chance for not-for-profit groups based or working in the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea to apply for cash awards that will be made available for events or projects that benefit people living in the borough, particularly North Kensington.

We will be asking applicants to show us how they will spend the money in a way that will achieve our dual goals of improving the lives of local people, in terms of good health and social advantage.

We’re aware that in an era of austerity, it’s a tough time for charities and we hope our initiative will help. They can apply for two types of grants, worth up to £500 and £2,500 each. Awards of up to £500 will be made for one-off community celebrations and events, such as performance art workshops, garden and street parties, arts projects and other events.

In choosing who receives the £500 grant awards, there will be a particular focus on this year’s 150th anniversary of the Portobello & Golborne markets. The markets are the heart of the area and we aim to help ensure they continue to thrive. We want to give small grants for events that will celebrate them - and ensure people have some fun in doing so.

Grants of up to £2,500 will go to projects that support our strategic goals, and we particularly want to hear from groups who can celebrate local talent and diversity. This includes youth arts programmes, mentoring schemes, disability sports events, mental health projects, employment and volunteer programmes. We believe that in the hands of grassroots organisations, a little funding can make a huge impact.

Across the Westway estate there are many groups that are providing advocacy, advice, support, education, mentoring and skills development. They also provide friendship, networks and a sense of belonging. We want to encourage that. A vibrant community and cultural sector is central to our vision of the Westway being a distinct and attractive place to live, work and play.

Over the past month the Westway Trust team have been out and about attending local events and festivals to raise awareness of our community grants programme. Already 120 groups have contacted us expressing an interest in the funding. This is really encouraging as it demonstrates that there is a genuine enthusiasm for this approach. And we want to do more of this. As we work on ambitious plans to develop our estate over the coming years, we hope to be able to generate even more value so that we can reinvest back into local talent and voluntary action.

Proud track record

Providing support for the local third sector was part of our founding constitution more than four decades ago. It’s in our DNA. We have a proud track record of helping local organisations to grow and thrive. Whether it’s Westway Community Transport, Open Age, or the many supplementary schools we support, there is evidence all around of the commitment of the Westway Trust to supporting a thriving community sector.

Ultimately, sustainable charities working in partnership with us will ensure that our community is provided with many opportunities to fulfil its potential.

We have re-launched the grants programme this year after a review of the system for making awards. We are establishing a panel that involves not just Westway staff and trustees, but local and pan-London external advisors and experts, to ensure there is transparency and rigour in how we award funding. We want to know that the money will be well spent and that we can evaluate the difference that it is making locally.

It is perhaps timely to remind readers that we don’t receive taxpayers’ cash and that the community grants are funded from income we generate from our business tenants and our sports services. As we work on plans to develop the estate further and attract other funders to join forces with us, we hope to be able increase the community grants fund in future years.

Let me close by inviting you all to come along and join the fun of the Westway Trust Community Festival on Portobello Green on Sunday July 26th from 12 noon to 6pm. More than 40 groups are signed up, and members of the Trust team will be on hand to talk further about the community grants programme. I’ll be there with my family and look forward to chatting with you then.

Letters to the Editor

New school is ‘madness’

AS I was driving back from Heathrow this morning in heavy traffic I had to observe the huge number of hideous new buildings being built alongside the M4. In the distance I could see the partial skeleton of the Earl’s Court Exhibition Centre; the abandoned looking Apollo Theatre and other, smaller, scattered Victorian and Art Deco buildings soon to disappear, no doubt, in this madness of new buildings that architects should be embarrassed to put there name to.

It is probably too late, and coming from a “too unimportant a voice”, the beautiful Victorian school building on Draycott Avenue is going to be torn down and replaced by a new “superschool” to accommodate 60 more students. What madness! Look around London in every direction - you see cranes and six months later really unsightly buildings. An excuse for “housing shortage”? Progress? Improvement? Rather, I think, beautiful, solid buildings are being torn down and not particularly for altruistic reasons and when it is too late, it will be regretted. Or, maybe it won’t. Maybe we will just go to see an exhibition at the V & A in 15 or 20 years time and feel a little bit melancholy that these lovely buildings have disappeared forever. But, then perhaps our hearts will be colder and the word “nostalgia” will just be an archaic word of little importance.

I feel that the Victorian buildings and the Georgian buildings are to London and England what Pompeii and the Forum and the Colosseum are to Italy and Palmyra to Syria, and so forth. They are the foundations of a great city which should be allowed to remain so that they can be remembered.

S. Purtic (by email)

Travelling by bus in London is a nightmare

I AM writing in relation to your front page coverage of the London roosters which we are having to travel on.

When these buses were first put on the road I wrote to Boris Johnson but nothing materialised. I have since written to Mark Field at the House of Commons. He replied but unfortunately there was nothing he could do.

I have also written to Kit Malthouse at County Hall.

I have had a reply from somebody they are contacting TFL. I am awaiting a further reply at this time.

Over your coverage of this matter it states that windows do not open upstairs, they also do not open on the lower deck and it makes the journey unbearable.

I have seen people struggling to breathe. Something seriously needs to be done about this. Travelling on a bus now is a nightmare for some people.

With summers becoming warmer and more humid, this is an awful way to travel.

P. Gray (by email)
Australia’s Test cricket captain Michael Clarke took a break from the rigours of the Ashes series against England last week to put smiles on the faces of budding young batsmen and bowlers at a London school. He took part in a Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) community coaching session at St Edwards Catholic Primary School in Marylebone on Wednesday. Clarke partnered MCC community coach Ricky Reynolds for the session, organised by Cricket Australia’s official airline, Qantas. Clarke offered batting and fielding advice to the class, before signing autographs and posing for photographs with the children and MCC’s community mascot, Ernie the Ashes Urn. The visit formed part of the MCC Community Development Strategy, which this year is focusing on developing grassroots cricket in the local area around the Lord’s ground in St John’s Wood. To find out more visit www.lords.org/community.
Rescue pilot role puts pressure on ‘four jobs’ prince

By Geoff Baker

QUESTIONS are being asked about whether Prince William should be given at least a year’s sabbatical from conducting all royal duties – including running his charities.

Royal-watchers are wondering if William should be given a “get-out-of-jail card” to relieve him of royal work because of the highly-stressful and rigorous demands of his new job as an emergency rescue pilot.

Concern has risen that perhaps too much is being asked of the future king now that he has typically chosen one of the world’s most-demanding roles as his day job for at least the next two years.

As a helicopter pilot for the East Anglian Air Ambulance the Duke of Cambridge has committed to working up to 10 hours a day flying mercy missions which are stressful enough on their own – without his added responsibilities as a young father of two very young children, running 40 charities and patronages and his grooming to take over the running of the Duchy of Cornwall estates.

As a pilot William will be working a four-days-on-four-days-off rota, constantly involved in a life-or-death race against time and in a state of high alert for every moment of his shifts as, by the nature of the work, he is dealing with seriously-injured victims of traumatic road accidents, heart attack and stroke victims and babies needing to be rushed to hospital.

If on the day shift, William has to get up by at least 6.0 am to be able to report for work at the early start-time of seven. If on the night shift, he could be flying all through the night. The air ambulance service says the prince could be flying up to 10 missions a day.

“If he has to spend his days working the full rota but after his time will be cut to two-thirds of the normal shift pattern to allow for his royal duties. Now some are asking if it would not be easier for the have-a-go hero if he is relieved of royal duties to allow him to concentrate entirely on his 999 response job.

“Having four days off to recover is all very well when you’ve not got a great deal to do on those days off, but William’s life is more complicated and demanding than that,” said the commentator.

“If he has to spend his days...
Is the sky the limit for busy Duke?

FROM PAGE 11
off as a working royal, with his charity work, conducting investitures, representing The Queen at parades and State occasions and being groomed for future roles, when is he actually going to get any time off to relax?

“Plus, even though he is clearly enjoying his role as a young father, as any young father knows that does get tiring: babies do wake up in the night and disturb your sleep. If he had chosen a desk job, the demands wouldn’t have been so potentially-exhausting. But William, as is his way, has chosen one of the most stressful jobs in the world.”

Last year the pilots of the East Anglian Air Ambulance flew 1,785 missions, a 20% increase on the emergency flights of the year before. The ambulance is on call 365 days of the year, so William could be working Christmas Day and might have to miss family birthdays and anniversaries because he is in the cockpit saving lives.

And none of the flights will be a picnic. Most of last year’s missions [467 of them] dealt with racing to hospital road accident victims who are too badly injured to be taken by ambulance.

“When I got the job, I was already an experienced pilot – but I’d never even seen a broken leg. On my second day, we went to a 250-car pile-up, with four people dead. It certainly isn’t for everyone,” said one of the pilots for the nearby Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Air Ambulance.

“For the ambulance to be called, it’s got to be serious. We deal with a lot of car crashes and industrial accidents, and we went to the London bombings in July 2005. You see horrible sights, and it can be tough for a new pilot.”

The air ambulance also comes to the rescue of a high proportion of cardiac cases – 319 in 2014 – where every second counts for those who have suffered a heart attack or stroke.

“Every minute of an emergency rescue pilot’s life is a shout is urgent, the concentration levels are intense, they are dashing against time and calling on great skills and all of their training to land the chopper on roads, in back gardens and wherever it takes to get to the victim fast,” said a veteran emergency worker.

Stress tests on ordinary airline pilots have revealed that they face stress 95.2% for of their work and endure time-related pressure 89.8% of their shift. But when a pilot is dashing a critically-injured or seriously-ill person to hospital, the pressure of the crucial importance of every second rises to 100%.

It takes an especially tough sort of flair to take on a job as an air hero and experts say a lot of them do it for the buzz.

“People get into this work for the juice, the adrenaline rush,” said air ambulance doctor Tony Bleetman.

But for William, it seems that besides the buzz he is compelled by an over-riding compulsion to earn his privilege as a future king and to make an important contribution to society. Typically, he has forgone his £40,000 salary as a rescue pilot – which he is donating to charity – and he says that he hopes his work will keep him steady and able to rise above the praise and attention that comes with being heir to a throne.

“I’m trying to do what I can and trying to be a decent individual,” he said. “I’d sort of a follow-on from where I was in the military with my search and rescue role. There are many of the same kind of skills and a job like this is very worthwhile, valuable and there’s an element of duty. It’s an important area for me to be involved in to continue my career and training. For me it’s a really important point to be grounded. I feel doing a job like this really helps me to be grounded and that’s the core of what I’m trying to become.”

What he is trying to do, and no doubt will become, is a great king but his “homework” for that position is being done without the pressure of spending 182 days of the year on high alert and racing to save lives in the air.

For his “off” days, William has to help with the running of 33 charities of which he is patron, plus another three that he administers with Prince Harry each four more that he runs with the Duchess of Cambridge. He is renowned for taking his charity work very seriously and refuses to be just a titular head of organisations including the homeless charity Centrepoint, the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, the FA, National Playing Fields Association, BAFTA and the Royal Marsden Hospital.

The workload could prove exhausting, although the mercy-dashing prince says he is sure that he can handle the multi-tasking.

“At some point there’s going to be a lot more responsibility and pressure but at the moment I’m juggling it and enjoying it,” he said. “While I’m still relatively young, I will manage the two jobs the best I can.”

But on top of his rescue and charity work, William is also having to constantly study for another job, for when Prince Charles takes to the throne he will assume the title of Duke of Cornwall and he is already on a programme to learn the ropes.

The Secretary of the Duchy, Alistair Martin, has revealed that William is attending the Duchy Council and has to regularly study updates on projects affecting the 135,000-acre estate.

“I meet with him on a regular basis and brief him and respond to questions from him and seek his views,” said Mr Martin.

He said many of the projects undertaken by the Duchy will take years to come to be and will fall to Prince William to see through. If he takes the same close interest as Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall in the estate, it means controlling the huge business empire of the Duchy, with its farms, forests, business premises and homes stretching from the Isles of Scilly to the Oval cricket ground.

But despite concern that as a pilot, charity chief, businessman and a new father “Billy Four Jobs” is pushing it in his relentless drive to prove his contribution to society, Prince William is shrugging off criticism.

“It’s no more difficult than what everyone else has to do,” he said modestly on his first day as the rescue royal.
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August 2015
Cardiff v Fulham  Sat 8 Aug  12:00
Fulham v Brighton  Sat 15 Aug  15:00
Hull v Fulham  Wed 19 Aug  19:45
Fulham v Huddersfield  Sat 22 Aug  15:00
Rotherham v Fulham  Sat 29 Aug  15:00

September 2015
Fulham v Blackburn  Sun 13 Sep  12:00
Fulham v Wolves  Wed 16 Sep  19:45
Sheff Wed v Fulham  Sat 19 Sep  15:00
Fulham v QPR  Fri 25 Sep  19:45

October 2015
Charlton v Fulham  Sat 3 Oct  15:00
Middlesbrough v Fulham  Sat 17 Oct  15:00
Fulham v Leeds  Wed 21 Oct  19:45
Fulham v Reading  Sat 24 Oct  13:30
Bristol City v Fulham  Sat 31 Oct  15:00

November 2015
Burnley v Fulham  Tue 3 Nov  19:45
Fulham v Birmingham  Sat 7 Nov  15:00
MK Dons v Fulham  Sat 21 Nov  15:00
Fulham v Preston  Sat 28 Nov  15:00

December 2015
Nottm Forest v Fulham
Fulham v Brentford
Fulham v Ipswich
Bolton v Fulham
Derby v Fulham
Fulham v Rotherham

January 2016
Fulham v Sheff Wed
Wolves v Fulham
Huddersfield v Fulham
Fulham v Hull
Blackburn v Fulham

February 2016
Fulham v Derby
QPR v Fulham
Fulham v Charlton
Leeds v Fulham
Fulham v Middlesbrough

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# Fulham Football Club Fixtures 2015-2016

## March 2016
- Sat 5 Dec  15:00  Reading v Fulham
- Sat 12 Dec 15:00  Fulham v Burnley
- Tue 15 Dec 19:45  Fulham v Bristol City
- Sat 19 Dec  15:00  Birmingham v Fulham
- Sat 5 Mar   15:00  Sat 12 Mar  15:00
- Tue 8 Mar   19:45  Sat 19 Mar  15:00

## April 2016
- Sat 2 Apr   15:00  Fulham v MK Dons
- Tue 5 Apr   19:45  Preston v Fulham
- Sat 2 Apr   15:00  Fulham v Cardiff
- Fri 15 Apr  19:45  Brighton v Fulham
- Tue 19 Apr  19:45  Ipswich v Fulham
- Sat 23 Apr  15:00  Fulham v Nottm Forest
- Sat 30 Apr  15:00  Brentford v Fulham

## May 2016
- Sat 7 May   12:30  Fulham v Bolton
- Sat 6 Feb   15:00
- Sat 13 Feb  15:00
- Sat 20 Feb  15:00
- Tue 23 Feb  19:45
- Sat 27 Feb  15:00

Fixtures are correct at time of print. For updates during the season visit: www.fulhamfc.com

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Calls will cost 7pence per minute plus your telephone company's access charge.
FULHAM Football Club opened the gates of Craven Cottage last week for a Picnic on the Pitch attended by supporters and local residents.

Over 500 people attended this unique afternoon as fans made their way past the iconic Cottage, through the players’ tunnel and onto the hollowed turf.

The event which was free to attend with a ticket obtained by registering on the club’s website, included family activities such as inflatables, balloon modellers, face painters and a visit from mascot Billy the Badger.

Those that attended were able to set up their picnic blankets on the pitch and enjoy their own food and drink or purchase items from the Cottage Café.

Fulham Football Club has long been regarded as a family club. Events such as Picnic on the Pitch and the club’s efforts to attract young fans and families to Craven Cottage by offering competitively priced junior tickets and enhancing the overall matchday experience in the family zone, have been contributing factors in recently obtaining “The Football League Family Excellence Award” for the 2014/15 season.

The award recognises the outstanding experience provided by the club for young fans and families. Fulham Football Club is keen to grow the Family Zone further next season and attract young supporters and families to all areas of the ground by offering a 50 per cent reduction on all junior tickets (under 17 years old) compared to last season, making it more affordable for young fans and families to attend matches in the capital.

The 2015-16 season tickets are competitively priced with adult prices starting at £259 and junior prices starting from just £47.

What’s more, a young person’s season ticket for supporters aged 17-21, as well as season tickets for over 65s, start from £219 which works out at less than £10 per match, reaffirming Fulham’s commitment of rewarding the loyalty of its fans, whilst at the same time attracting new supporters.

The 2015-16 season tickets are available to purchase online – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: fulhamfc.com/seasontickets or by calling 0843 208 1234 (option 3) Mon to Fri 9am to 5pm.

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JAMIE O’Hara believes his footballing experience could come in useful for Fulham’s youngsters this season - both on and off the pitch.

The 28-year-old joined the Whites on a free transfer last week, putting pen to paper on a one-year deal.

A product of Tottenham Hotspur’s academy, O’Hara had previously played for Chesterfield, Millwall, Portsmouth and Wolverhampton Wanderers. He joined Blackpool on a short-term contract last November, playing 28 times for the Seasiders and earning their Player of the Year gong.

“This is a massive opportunity to push on again,” O’Hara told the official website. “We’ve got a great squad of players and you need everyone to get motivated. Hopefully I’ll be involved and be a big part.

On and off the pitch, I’ll try and help the young players. Hopefully I can be an influence in the dressing room and help get this club back to where it deserves to be.”

O’Hara signed for the Whites after impressing during a trial period with the club.

“I have to thank the manager for giving me the opportunity,” continued O’Hara. “He watched me last season and said I played really well against Fulham. He gave me the chance to come in and be around the squad and I loved it, straight away I got in with the boys.

“He liked me as a player and wanted me to come in so he could have a look at my fitness. I knew it was a great opportunity for me to join a massive club.

“I was desperate to play at a club like Fulham. It’s a fantastic football club with great tradition. I’ve always admired the club so as soon as I got the call to come in I wanted to show I could play at a place like this.”

The left-footed midfielder also revealed the Cottage had been something of a lucky ground for him in the past, adding: “I’ve had a few cracking games at the Cottage. I always seemed to play well there and now I’ll be playing there a lot more. Every time I went to the Cottage it felt like a place I’d like to be.”

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Photo courtesy of fulhamfc.com

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Photo courtesy of fulhamfc.com

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Photo courtesy of fulhamfc.com

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What’s more, a young person’s season ticket for supporters aged 17-21, as well as season tickets for over 65s, start from £219 which works out at less than £10 per match, reaffirming Fulham’s commitment of rewarding the loyalty of its fans, whilst at the same time attracting new supporters.

The 2015-16 season tickets are available to purchase online – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: fulhamfc.com/seasontickets or by calling 0843 208 1234 (option 3) Mon to Fri 9am to 5pm.

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Monarch's 90th year promises a great deal

Queen's birthday present: worldwide publicity for all her favourite charities

OST people get presents on their birthday – but when The Queen turns 90 next year she is planning on giving gifts instead.

As reported last week, when Her Majesty marks her official birthday on June 12th, she will host a huge party on the Mall with 10,000 guests. Of them, some 7,500 seats at the enormous picnic of cucumber sandwiches, scones and jam will go to the charities and associations of which The Queen is Patron or President.

But the birthday party invitations for The Queen's causes are much more significant – and stand to be much more beneficial too – than those for the Buckingham Palace garden parties which are traditionally sent as a 'well done' to the great and the good.

For by inviting all of her charities, Her Majesty will be throwing the public spotlight on their causes, which should result in a multi-million-pound boost for their funds.

"Peter Phillips is a PR genius for thinking up this one," said one publicity expert of The Queen's grandson who has created the plan for the birthday bash.

"It's a really very clever idea – to represent the worth and valuation of The Queen at 90 not by who she is as a head of State, but by all that she does for charity and good causes, and, by doing so, helping them all out.

"There will be a massive media interest in this birthday party and, as Her Majesty doesn't do interviews, the only way that the world's media can properly cover the event will be to focus on the charities – which then throws them into the spotlight and by raising their profile it will raise them funds.

"It's very clever and, if you look at the work of her 90 years, very typical of her to be thinking up this one," said one top TV executive. "It’s deeply embarrassing and ‘the pig’s ear’ lined up near Trafalgar Square? And there’s more. Large video screens will have to be erected the length of the Mall so that everybody present can see The Birthday Girl blow out all of the 90 candles on the cake, which will be a fire hazard in itself, plus what manner of massive birthday card is going to be needed that is big enough for 10,000 people to sign it?

A more serious problem for Peter Phillips and the Palace to solve is which broadcaster should be awarded the TV rights to relay the huge event worldwide to the many nations who will want the footage, especially in the USA where The Queen is a huge favourite.

Although traditionally the BBC wins the TV rights for most royal events, the Corporation is still somewhat in the doghouse over the pig's ear it made of its live coverage of The Queen's Diamond Jubilee river pageant in 2012.

That coverage, presented by The One Show's Matt Baker and newscaster Sophie Raworth, was widely-castigated by viewers as “unprepared, ill-informed and patronising”, dubbed “dire” by veteran commentator Jonathan Dimbleby and lashed by Stephen Fry as “deeply embarrassing” and “the most mind-numbingly tedious programme in the history of the BBC”.

Given the audience of millions of viewers who are expected to follow the birthday party, ITV and Sky will be bidding for the rights and promising to do it better than the Beeb did with the Thames show that sank.

"The television coverage is going to be a tricky issue for the Palace," said one top TV executive, “all of the major broadcasters will be vying for the rights and the BBC will have to pull its socks up in order to land the deal. But they will have to put a top team on it, nobody wants a unique event like this ruined by a party pooper."
Diamond’s life writing songs, it’s been a habit he can’t quit

by Geoff Baker

S OON they will all be gone, those rock stars of the Sixties. Any year now, all of them will have stopped performing.

They say that they won’t. They joke that they will be coming on stage in a wheelchair [Paul McCartney] or if they are too old to stand up, they will sit down and play [Keith Richards], but the truth of the matter is that they will, they will be too elderly to tour or perform like they still do now.

It won’t be for want of trying or wanting to, it’s just the rule of nature; the big stars of the Sixties and Seventies who are now still performing in their mid-70s just won’t be physically up to it within a decade. Age will wither them, as it does the rest of us; voices go at 80, as do hip joints, and guitar-playing fingers get arthritis.

Rock stars hate to admit this and they come up with all sorts of justifications and resistances to defend the illusion that they are above and beyond biological laws that apply to the rest of humanity. For instance, they will point to Picasso and argue that he was still painting in his 80s.

But Picasso wasn’t a performance artist, his work didn’t depend upon an audience being present.

No, the sad truth is that the Sixties stars, the second wave of rock and roll, will sadly soon be finished. The first wave – Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Phil Everly – have already gone, and although Sixties stars say, well then we’ll just get like the old jazz men and blues icons did and play on gracefully, fine, but they – B.B. King, Muddy Waters, Freddie King – are gone too now.

And here’s another rub, the main audience of the Sixties stars is dying out also; those who were teenagers when the Beatles, Stones and Who first electrified London are pegging it all over the place. It happens, it’s called life. Or rather, not.

Those of us who grew up with the Sixties and Seventies hits can barely admit that, like music hall and the circus, the sound of the era will have had its day; we’ve spent 50 years believing Bob Dylan’s mantra that we will be Forever Young. But we won’t, and neither will Dylan [now 74] nor any of his contemporaries. The dream, as John Lennon once sang, is over. Or at least, very almost.

It’s commendable that so many of them have kept going for so long, but their popularity is relative. McCartney recently sold out two nights at the O2, which is laudable, to sell 20,000 tickets a night at the age of 73. But Ed Sheeran [24] sold out three nights at Wembley Stadium, capacity 90,000. The new wave has taken over.

What keeps them going, these grand old men of rock? The money? They say not, although the truth is that they do like a lot of it, no matter how much they have already. The buzz of performing to a crowd and the hit off of their affection that is said to be a better high than heroin.

Yes, partly that, but essentially – if they are any good – it’s the drive of maybe, hopefully, writing that one last great song that beats all that they have done before.

McCartney often alludes to that wish in his interviews, the Stones also talk of aiming for “that zenith” in their work. And so does Neil Diamond, another master craftsman at the art of writing a truly memorable song.

We might think that Diamond – who appears at the O2 on July 26th – would have stopped chasing the songwriters’ holy grail by now. With classics to his name that include Cracklin’ Rosie, Song Sung Blue, You Don’t Bring Me Flowers, America, I’m A Believer, Sweet Caroline, I Am I Said, Red Red Wine and Beautiful Noise, what’s more to do?

“In all honesty, I don’t think I’ve made it yet,” he said at the start of his world tour earlier this year. “I’m still struggling to get to that perfect song, to make those perfect notes, to give that perfect performance. So I’m still working on that part, I’m still working to that end. I haven’t stopped dreaming.”

As Beethoven would tell us if he hadn’t rolled over, the art of songwriting is like creating furniture; there’s a craftsmanship to it, a great skill that is honed with the years and while performing music may be more of a young man’s game, writing it necessarily isn’t. But truly commanding that skill has obsessed musicians over the years and has sent a good few of them mad in pursuing the challenge.

John Lennon’s early trick of knowing a great song was if you could remember how it went the next morning. When he started writing with Paul McCartney, before the days when even poor boys could afford machines to tape a demo, Lennon figured that if he could remember the melody the next day then the song had a shot at working on the radio, because if he couldn’t remember a melody the next day then what chance did a record buyer have after hearing it once on the radio?

For Neil Diamond, who has written some of the more memorable melodies of the past 50 years, the tune is king for him too.

“For me it all starts with the melody,” says the 74-year-old whose most recent album, aptly-titled Melody Road, debuted at the top of the UK and US charts at No 3. “I think there’s a certain part of the mind that deals with emotions and melody is part of it. After doing this for over half a century I just think it’s very important to open up the mind to the emotional foundation of the song.

“Let it come. Do not try to shape it, stand back to listen to what it is, see if it still moves, if it’s still interesting.”

But, like many other brilliant tune-writers, getting the words right is another matter.

“Lyrics are impossible to write,” he admits. “I hate writing them, I always have. Melodies are as easy as falling off a log for me, they come instantly and if they are written properly they provide an emotional foundation with the mood of a song.

“But then it’s up to me to match that song with words, and express that feeling or tell a story – and it’s hard. I don’t like doing it. But I haven’t found a lyricist that I can work with, so I’ll sort through the lyrics as best I can and hope that they reflect the mood of the melodies and the whole thing adds up to something for the listener.”

Great music, like all great art, gives its creator longevity, if not eternity. Although the joints and larynx may pack up around about the upper-70s, if the song lasts then so will you. But Diamond says that although he is still hooked on the process of songwriting, he didn’t set out to achieve immortality through it.

“I never really chose songwriting, it just absorbed me and became more and more important in my life,” he said. “I got into the habit when I was 16 or 17 and I haven’t been able to stop. I sometimes wish somebody would shake me or stop me or make me put my guitar down, but it’s like an addiction, it’s another way of communicating and it’s the right way for me.”

“It’s better than any shrink and it works, I’m able to put things down on paper that I feel, and I feel a little better after I do that.”

“But I can’t think of anything that I’d rather be doing. When I finish an album, within a matter of weeks I start writing again. I can’t help myself, it’s built into my genetic code, there are songs to be written. I just have that thing that hurries me up and say ‘Don’t sit around and don’t waste time, because it’s fleeting and if you have any songs that are still inside yourself you better get to work’. That whole concept has become part of me and as I get older it’s a more important whisper in my ear – Go to work. Go to work. Do not dawdle. Do not waste time. Write your songs and do them as well as you possibly can.

“That’s one of the things that motivates me now, that time is limited. So I’m taking advantage of every moment I have to make music, I think that’s my purpose here, to make music and to share it with people, and I’m on a mission to do that.”

Anybody who saw Diamond bring the farm down at Glastonbury a few years back will forever be glad of the share, good times never seemed so good.

Check out the YouTube video of him closing his set there with Sweet Caroline – with 160,000 people yelling “da da da dah” on the chorus – it is one of the happiest hairs-on-the-back-of-your-neck moments in the history of rock and roll and proof perfect that a great song will last forever. It is bound to take the roof off the O2 on Sunday. Go see it.

■ Neil Diamond at the O2 on July 26th.

Tickets www.theo2.co.uk

SHOWBIZ SPECIAL

Master of the memorable melody is not finished yet

MELODY MAKER: Neil Diamond is touring with a new album, inset bottom, and plays London’s O2 on July 26.
Calamity Jane gets better by degrees

THE hugely successful touring production of Calamity Jane starring Jodie Prenger will be the first in the world to be recorded in a 360-degree format.

The Curve theatre in Leicester will harness the very latest technology by releasing a 360° panoramic performance of the hit musical in a bid to make first class theatre accessible to all, calling it “a world first and true technological breakthrough”.

This revolutionary new technology allows audience members to choose what they see and from where from the comfort of their own home.

Artistic director Nikolai Foster commented: “It is thrilling that our play about a group of pioneers from the 1800s has been filmed in 2015 using cameras and technology even ahead of their time today. I was amazed when I met Tom Mills of VR Web Design and learnt about his boundary-busting work. All of us at Curve and the Calamity Jane team are very excited to be the first to test this new technology onstage.”

Prenger was the winner of BBC1’s I’d Do Anything in 2008, which gave her the opportunity to play Nancy in a West End revival of the British musical Oliver! at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

I caught up with the wonderfully down-to-earth performer who chatted to me about the show.

“Calamity is a glorious old dame of girl. I’ve never known a show that’s had such an amazing response from the audience. It’s been a surprise to me how people have hummed along and swayed to the Black Hills of Dakota. We’ve had kids come along dressed as Calamity.”

I confess that I took part in an amateur production of Calamity a few years ago and after a lot of giggling we talk about the complexities of playing such an iconic role.

“The dialogue is very difficult. We had the most amazing dialect coach on the show so we’ve all been ironed out. Tony, who plays Henry Miller, used to teach American history, so he has all the background and although it sounds reallyarty, it does help to give you a sense of where you are and what you’re doing.”

The musical, made famous by the indomitable Doris Day, has one of the most recognisable soundtracks in theatre and film history, with classics like Windy City, The Deadwood Stage and of course the song that provided Day with one of her top ten hit UK singles, Secret Love.

Jodie confesses that if she had to choose, the Secret Love scene is her favourite part of the show.

“When we finish in Richmond I’m going to find it very difficult to let go of that song.”

Letting go of it is inevitable, however, as Jodie’s work schedule is already packed full of new projects once the tour is over.

“When I finish Calamity I’m doing Annie in Oxford, playing Miss Hannigan, and then I’m doing Tell Me on a Sunday.”

She laughs. “I’m quite shocked Andrew Lloyd Webber is having me work for him again. Oh, that poor man and Don Black, who I’ve worked with briefly before. It will be nice to work with them both again.

“It’s such beautiful music and the story, well, with some of the people I’ve had in my life I’ve got a lot to draw on.”

She laughs again. “I love the piece and sadly I’ve never got to see it on stage.”

If you can’t wait for the filmed version you can still watch the show live when it comes to the Richmond Theatre from August 4th to 8th. See calamityjanetheplay.com

Very best of Bacharach

What’s it all About? Bacharach Reimagined
Menier Chocolate Factory ******

If someone were to explain this show it would be very difficult to do it justice, writes Nicky Sweetland.

It is a 90-minute review with no dialogue, little choreography and the same performers on the relatively sparsely decorated stage for the duration of the performance.

What you get when you see What’s it all About! Bacharach Reimagined at The Menier Chocolate Factory, however, is the most beautiful music played by the most wonderful performers in an uplifting and dynamic diamond of a show which will leave even the grumpiest theatre goers with a smile on their face.

The show was conceived by Kyle Riabko, who met Burt Bacharach in a Los Angeles recording studio after being asked to sing some demos for the legendary songwriter. After some brainstorming the show was gradually put together into what is a unique look at an incredible catalogue of music to form a non-stop musical arrangement. Riabko is a truly phenomenal performer who is not only the co-creator but also acts as musical director and front man. He bursts onto the stage and captivates throughout the entire performance.

This is not a tribute act and one of the most wonderful attributes this show carries is its different take on the classic melodies and lyrics which most of us know so well. From pure ballads to – at times – very heavy rock, the audience are taken through genre after genre, all ingeniously strung together and simply but cleverly staged.

It’s difficult to choose a musical highlight because the show literally jumps from start to finish and looking around the audience I wouldn’t be surprised if there were a few sore necks the following day from vigorous head nodding. Anyone Who Had a Heart, I Just Don’t Know What to do with Myself, I Spy a Little Prayer or even Walk On By, maybe – all were performed so skilfully I really couldn’t choose.

Instruments adorn the set, which is otherwise dressed with carpet and soft furnishings in staging that is comfy and friendly like that of a sort of home recording studio.

The cast is made up of the highest quality singers and musicians who can all play at least one instrument and so masterfully while often climbing or dancing around with superb energy and verve.

As if the press night of this show couldn’t have gone any better, there was also a surprise in store for the waiting throng who, after the curtain call, were treated to a very special appearance from Bacharach himself. The 87-year-old composer took to the keys and joined the ensemble in a chorus of Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head, which left many in the audience more than a little teary eyed.

This is a truly special show and one I would urge anyone to go and see. Visit the website menierchocolatetheatre.com

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Exciting explosion of jazz and circus hits the heights

Scotch and Soda
Wonderground

I WAS so pleased to finally make it to a performance of Scotch and Soda.

This show, which is billed as a circus and jazz fusion, has been running at London’s Wonderground since May and has received high praise, writes Nicky Swiss.

On a sunny July evening the buzz surrounding the area on the Southbank was electric and with the Underbelly festival in full swing, every bar and eatery was packed with people enjoying the warm weather.

The tone of the show was established as soon as we entered the big top, with lively music and the group of acrobats chatting and played cards, just as if we had entered a friendly local tavern. The show, which includes trapeze, pole, springboard and even cycling, had some of most unbelievable strength and skill I have ever seen.

This is a real showcase for both the acrobats and the band in a performance which is perfectly moulded together and given a style and humour which is so often missing from the regular circus. The gymnasts climbed ropes like they were stairs, and made some of the most difficult circus skills look like child’s play. With clowns around to add as much humour and fun as possible they were astonishing, and supremely backed by the excellent Crusty Suitcase Band.

For some of the time I was so mesmerised by the spinning and balancing that I almost forgot the musicians. It was therefore really refreshing when they had their solo moments and showed they were not to be upstaged by the tumblers. Particular mention must go to bass player Eden Otignon, whose strumming and slapping carried such a sparkling undertone.

This was a hugely entertaining evening show which showcased the incredible skills of both musicians and acrobats alike. With a bit of naked horse riding to finish it, this is a show not to be missed!

Scotch and Soda runs until 2nd August at London’s Wonderground.
Tommy revives big band sound

VETERAN song and dance man Tommy Steele is to star in a brand new musical based on The Glen Miller Story and featuring the music of the great band leader.

As a lifelong lover of musicals, I have to admit that I felt very honoured to be allowed to speak with Tommy, who started his career as Britain’s first rock ’n’ roll star. Dubbed the UK’s answer to Elvis Presley, he landed his first UK No.1 with Singing the Blues in 1957.

Steele chose the New Wimbledon Theatre owner and operator, Billy Kemsley, to make the announcement, the venue in which his iconic show Half a Sixpence was first performed 53 years earlier and where the smash hit song Flash Bang Wolfman was written within the very walls of the beautiful piano bar in which we met. I had been invited to the announcement, the show, which will tour for an 11-week season later this summer.

Along with long time friend and Artusio theatre producer Bill Kenwright, it’s a show which was conceived over a supper conversation following Tommy’s visit to a school where he found himself telling the students about the band leader whose sound was so definitive of the era. I chatted to Tommy after the announcement, a charming and extremely charismatic performer who will celebrate his 79th birthday later this year. His passion and enthusiasm for the project were obvious as he told me about it.

“Journey of a lifetime,” he called it. “It’s like looking for that treasure that’s out there, only this fella was looking for a sound. You can’t touch a sound, you can’t see it in the corner, on the top of the mountain or across a stream, you have to hear it and that was his dilemma.”

“He tried for years before he suddenly found it in the late 30s. He finds it at the end of act one. Everyone knows it’s going to have a sad ending but as a musical it’s beautiful and the dancing is fantastic. I can’t wait to do it.”

I’ve played a bit of Miller in my past life as a trumpet player and we talk about the wonderful sound of the big band music. Tommy tells me when he first heard it.

“I first heard the Glen Miller sound in the 40s. My mother and father loved it although it wasn’t until the war was over that suddenly the legend started to become. Everyone was talking about this icon of music who had died and no-one knew how.”

The 1954 film about the American band leader starred James Stewart and boasted cameo appearances of many stars of the time, including Louis Armstrong and Gene Krupa, who were real-life peers of Miller.

Judging by the assembled throng of fans, both the draw of the iconic bandleader and of one of the UK’s biggest ever stage stars is likely to appeal to the more mature theatre goer, although with toe tapping tunes like In the Mood and Moonlight Serenade the producers are hoping a whole new generation will be able to enjoy the unique big band sound that defined a generation.

Tommy has enjoyed a legendary career including over 20 hit singles, 12 hit movies and countless award-winning stage musicals.

More recently Steele enjoyed two successful runs as Spooner at the world famous London Palladium, in a role which has made him the theatre’s all-time record breaking performer, having lined up more performances than any other star in the history of the venue.

As a fan, I couldn’t leave without asking Tommy about his most famous role as Artie in Half a Sixpence. He asked which was his favourite part of the show.

“On stage it would have to be Flash Bang Wolfman! live, but in the film it would be If the Rain Falls to Fall, because it’s beautiful in the open air with everybody doing funny soft shoes on the grass by the river Thames.”

Tommy is obviously a big fan of musicals and watches as many as he can. We have a few minutes left after the interview and just chat about which shows we like and what we would like to see. I ask Tommy if there are any musicals he wishes he could have done the lovely soft shoes on the film it would be Flash Bang Wollop! because it’s beautiful but in the film it would be If the Rain Falls to Fall, we do a meet and greet after the show and it’s just wonderful to meet people and see what they think about it.”

The group will then set out on a world tour, taking in Amsterdam, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New Orleans, Tuscon, Arizona, Portland, South Beach, Copenhagen, Helsinki and Vienna. The Supreme Fabulettes are the vision of the A-list creative team behind Kylie Minoque, directed and styled by Kylie’s very own legendary creative director, William Baker.

The entertainment scene across London

Theatre-lovers off to summer camp

GLITTER and sparkle are hitting the West End this summer when the Supreme Fabulettes take up residency at the Leicester Square Theatre, writer Nicky Sweetland.

Britain’s most acclaimed all-female close harmony vocal group promise 13 spectacular evenings of entertainment during July and August in their favourite home. I caught up with Richard Rhodes, who plays razor-tongued Australian manager Miss Sheila Simmonds, just ahead of their opening night and he told me all about the razzle dazzle they will be bringing to Leicester Square.

“It’s high camp, it’s fun and it’s a story of a typical girl band like the Supremes. It’s the story of the girls from the beginnings to nowadays. The story has lots of twists and turns, lots of campness, lots of glitter, feathers, high heels, make-up, and audience participation. Everyone gets up on the sweet singing and dancing and it’s just a really good night out.”

Their live shows, a blend of classic number one hit songs, current chart-toppers and original songs by Boy George with sweet Glee-style harmonies, wondrous couture costumes and cutting-edge variety, have earned a clutch of five-star rave reviews and have twice been named No1 Critics Choice by Time Out. They also featured in the cult TV series Drag Queens of London.

“We’ve got some Supremes numbers, we’ve got Taylor Swift, Madonna, Lady Ga Ga and I also do a very special duet with my on-stage daughter that’s quintessentially Australian. We also do some musical numbers like the Cell Block Tango, which we’ve had re-written for the show. The audience seem to love it. We often do a meet and greet after the show and it’s just wonderful to meet people and see what they think about it.”

The group will then set out on a world tour, taking in Amsterdam, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New Orleans, Tuscon, Arizona, Portland, South Beach, Copenhagen, Helsinki and Vienna. The Supreme Fabulettes are the vision of the A-list creative team behind Kylie Minoque, directed and styled by Kylie’s very own legendary creative director, William Baker.

The Supremes remaining London summer dates are Friday, 21 and Saturday 22 August, Friday 28 and Saturday 29 August.

Osmonds embrace a Williams Christmas

TO celebrate the most wonderful time of the year, Andy Williams’ Christmas Spectacular, starring The Osmonds, is set to embark on a dazzling UK tour in December.

The show, which is being billed as a must-see holiday spectacle, will also feature the veteran British comic Jimmy Cricket alongside the Moon River Singers and Dancers.

Andy Williams Moon River Theatre owner and operator, Jimmy Osmond said: “I am thrilled to bring Andy’s Christmas Spectacular to our friends in the UK. I first appeared on Andy Williams’ stage when I was only three years old. My brothers had been singing back-up on Andy’s biggest hits and had been regulars on his hit television series for several years. It’s such a joy to carry on Andy’s legacy and continue his treasured holiday tradition.”

Audiences will also be treated to nostalgic footage of the legendary Andy Williams from Christmas past and be able to sing along to favourite Christmas classics including Silent Night, Last Christmas and Merry Christmas. Everybody loves to Steeplechase. The Osmonds will also perform their mega hits made famous during more than five decades of entertaining around the world. Osmond fans will hear Love Me for a Reason, Crazy, Happenings, Da Diddy By The Lazy River and more.

The tour starts on December 8th at the Malvern Theatre
WEST End leading man Michael Xavier is to star alongside Denise Van Outen in a strictly limited run of the Cy Coleman classic musical Sweet Charity. The concert version of the show made famous by Shirley MacLaine in the 1969 film adaptation will also star Girls Aloud’s Kimberley Walsh and West End legend Kerry Ellis. With just six performances at Cadogan Hall, the production will also feature the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in what promises to be a feast of musical delight. Xavier, who’s a double Olivier nominated actor and singer, most recently earned praise for his performance in the award-winning Steven Sondheim musical, Assassins, at the Menier Chocolate Factory.

London Weekly News theatre critic Nicky Sweetland caught up with Michael, who is obviously relishing the prospect of working with some of the West End’s most famous leading ladies. Here he provides a flavour of the story that I’ve got more than just the standard leading man character under my belt. Generally the roles I play are the love interest so it’s quite nice to play a nerdy character for a change. I’m singing ‘I’m the Bravest Individual’ in the lift with Charity and Vittorio has a gorgeous number called Too Many Tomorrows, but I also sing the title song, Sweet Charity, in act two. It’s such a great score, and playing with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra is going to be fantastic.”

Although it’s been billed as a concert version, Michael tells me there will be a lot more to it than just standing and singing along to the 50-strong orchestra.

“It’s a kind of staged concert version, so what that means is we will be in an outfit or a costume that will represent the era and give you a feel of it. We’ll have the odd prop here and there to help work the scenes. Because the orchestra will take up most of the stage space there is a very narrow front of stage that is the playing area. Where normally for a concert you would stand with your music, we will be off script and moving around. We’ve also got dancers from Arts Ed choreographed by the brilliant Matt Flint.”

Xavier’s co-stars will all bring with them a huge and quite diverse fan base of their own, having each had great success within their various showbiz fields. Denise Van Outen is perhaps most famous for hosting Channel 4’s Big Breakfast with Johnny Vaughan but has also been critically acclaimed for West End roles including Paulette in Legally Blonde and Roxy Heart in Chicago. Kimberley Walsh was one fifth of chart-topping band Girls Aloud and is about to return to the West End in the much anticipated Yuletide musical version of Elf, which will open at the Dominion Theatre in November.

Kerry Ellis is well known for her portrayal of the Green Witch Elphaba in both the West End and Broadway versions of the smash hit musical Wicked, but has more recently been wowing audiences after taking over the role of Grizabella from Nicole Scherzinger in the new Andrew Lloyd Webber production of Cats at the London Palladium.

Michael tells me: “I’ve known Kerry for years but we’ve never worked together and I’ve actually known Denise for quite a while too because I’m quite good friends with Lee Mead, who’s her ex-husband. It’s nice to be working with them and to get our teeth into some material together. I jumped into Kimberley at the Oliviers but this will be the first time we’ve worked together.”

I ask Michael to sell it to me and tell everyone why he thinks people should get their tickets before it’s too late.

“Cadogan Hall is a beautiful little venue and feels really intimate and close. Other than hearing the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra playing the most wonderful score, people should come because it will be a fun night out. There’s lots of comedy, romance, and tragedy within the structure of the story. Denise Van Outen’s fantastic and we’ve got Kimberley and Kerry as well who are going to sing up a storm. It’s going to be a really great night of entertainment.”

Sweet Charity has a strictly limited run at Cadogan Hall from the August 19th to 22nd. Visit cadoganhall.com

Charity receives the star treatment

The show is about Charity, who’s a young girl working as a dance hall hostess in a nightclub but dreaming and wanting more from life.

“She’s hoping that she can find a man who will look after her because she always seems to pick the wrong guys. She’s always down on her luck until she bumps into a movie star, Vittorio, and ends up spending the night in his hotel room. She decides she’s going to change her life and things do change when she bumps into Oscar, who is a claustrophobic, and they get stuck in a lift. He goes through this crazed state and by the end Charity realises he’s a nice guy so they start dating.

Michael is actually playing three different characters in the show, which had its last West End outing back in 2010 with the Menier Chocolate Factory production starring Tamsin Outhwaite in the title role. He explains a little about the different men he will be portraying.

“Playing Charlie at the start, who is the bad lad who takes Charity’s money and pushes her in the pond. I love getting to play different characters within a show because it’s an opportunity to be as diverse as possible and show people

Merchant mixes sensitivity and delirium

The Mentalists Wyndham’s Theatre ***

LAST Monday was the press night for the much anticipated West End debut of multi award-winning writer and creator of The Office, Stephen Merchant, in Richard Bean’s The Mentalists at the Wyndham’s Theatre, writes Nicky Sweetland.

It was enjoyed by the great and good of the UK comedy fraternity, including Jimmy Carr, Darcey Bussiness and veteran actor Richard Wilson, along with other showbiz stars. The play, which is a two

hander, also starred Gavin and Stacey’s Steffan Rhodri in this comedic look into a bizarre friendship between two unlikely comrades.

The tale takes place in a seedy hotel room where we meet Ted, played by Merchant, a middle manager stuck in a dull life who offers nothing towards the dreamy existence with which he has become obsessed.

His best friend Morris, a barber and part time soft porn film maker, has been roped into making a video to promote the life ideal which his friend hopes the world will embrace. As the story unfolds so does Ted’s constitution as we come to realise he has more personality flaws than are at first apparent.

Merchant as Ted is gawky and awkward and at times in act one doesn’t seem at all at home on the stage.

His performance in act two is much more plausible and he portrays the broken man with both sensitivity and delirium.

He is often outshine by the fabulous Rhodri, whose camp and yet macho Morrie delights the audience with classic anecdotes and one liners which keep the pace and interest intact during an otherwise slightly slow act one.

The play is amusing but I never felt myself laughing out loud, although many of the press night audience did. It is an interesting and compassionate insight into a friendship between two men who have been through the British care system and at times is very touching, but needs a little more pace and I would have preferred there to have been no interval.

STUCK IN A RUT: Middle manager Stephen Merchant.
Perfect summer pasta

THE sizzling weather might signal the start of holiday season for many of us, but while we slow down into relax mode, Italian cook Gennaro Contaldo is gearing up for another busy summer.

A great friend and mentor to Jamie Oliver, Contaldo is heavily involved in Oliver's Italian restaurant chain, which includes branches at Covent Garden, London Bridge, Angel, Canary Wharf, Greenwich, Victoria and Shepherd’s Bush, and has just released The Pasta Book - his second cookery title this year - which is tied in with the younger chef's online Food Tube channel.

It’s hard work, but work he clearly loves.

"A chef will always be a chef, it doesn’t matter what kind of weather it is," reasons the 66-year-old, who splits his time between London and Norfolk, with his wife Liz and their 11-year-old twin daughters.

"It’s nice to have a rest in the summer, but summer is also a nice time in the restaurant. The market stalls are full of incredible fresh vegetables, fish, herbs... People walk around with a big smile on their faces. It makes you happy."

Contaldo - who used to bat away being called a chef, preferring to refer to himself as a cook ("You can call me a chef when I am 100 years old. It is a chance for me to live longer") - was born on the Amalfi Coast and has been whipping up meals since he was nine-years-old, having been bitten by the foodie bug when he started helping out in a restaurant that belonged to friend of his father.

Frequently swapping recipes and tips with Oliver and his other great pal Antonio Carluccio, who he travelled around Italy with to film 2011 cookery series Two Greedy Italians, Contaldo's daughters have also felt the benefit of his wisdom, and learned to cook at a "very, very, very young age."

"At the age of seven, they could make their own risotto," he reveals proudly.

"They can go into a restaurant and choose whatever they like. They do that. I'm a cook you see, it's a part of the culture. You never know where they might be later on in life, it's nice to know they will be able to make something to eat."

Even though their father will be within arm's reach of the kitchen this summer, the family will make plenty of trips to Norfolk, to relax in their 200-year-old cottage and enjoy the nearby seaside.

"I was born near the sea," Contaldo says. "The first thing I heard was the sea."

"The sea was my swimming pool and the beach was my playground. I do miss the sea. When I first came to England, the nearest place to see the sea was Brighton, and I couldn't wait to go and run my fingers through it."

"It would transport me to my home town, because the sea goes to every corner, every channel, everywhere. If I touch the sea, it is a touch to my home town. The sea is peace to me." Although the sea is no longer in daily touching distance, Contaldo seeks solace in his plate, loading up on pasta dishes with plenty of fresh fish.

And rather than being stodgy and heavy, he insists that pasta is the perfect meal for summer.

"Summer pasta is good, everything is fresh and in season," he says.

"Use your imagination and think, 'I've got this nice ingredient, it will go well with the pasta and make a lovely marriage'. Just don't experiment too much."

"You can give it a go and say, 'You know what? Gennaro said it was good and he was right!'"

Cook the bucatini in a large pan of boiling salted water until al dente.

Meanwhile, finely slice the garlic and chilli, then roughly chop the anchovies and tomatoes. Heat three tablespoons of oil (use the oil from the tin of tuna for added flavour, if you can) in a frying pan over a medium heat, then add the garlic, chilli, anchovies and capers. Fry for two minutes, then add the tomatoes and toss well.

Reserving some of the cooking water, drain the bucatini and add to the sauce. Toss well over the heat until lovely and glossy, adding a splash of the cooking water to loosen, if needed.

Drizzle in the oil as it is blending. The mixture needs to be as smooth as possible. You can finish it off in a liquidiser if you have one and the food processor isn’t doing the job. Transfer to a bowl and cover the surface with clingfilm until required.

To make the relish: remove the outer skins from the broad beans, put them in a bowl with the spring onion, chilli and oil, season and mix well. Chop about three quarters of the coriander and mix with the rest of the broad beans with the sliced garlic and about 200ml of the hot cooking liquid, and discard the rest.

Transfer the broad beans, sliced garlic and cooking liquid into a food processor, season and blend on a high speed until smooth, trickling in the oil as it is blending. The mixture needs to be as smooth as possible. You can finish it off in a liquidiser if you have one and the food processor isn’t doing the job. Transfer to a bowl and cover the surface with clingfilm until required.

To serve, spoon the broad bean purée on to serving plates, spoon the relish over and scatter the remaining coriander on top.

Try one of Gennaro’s recipes from his new pasta book:

**SIMPLE TUNA BUCATINI**

(Serves 2)

200g bucatini pasta
Sea salt
1 large clove of garlic, peeled
1 fresh red chilli
2 anchovy fillets
4 ripe cherry tomatoes
Extra virgin olive oil
1 x 180g tin of quality tuna, in olive oil
1 tbsp baby capers, rinsed
Juice from 1/2 a lemon
100g wild rocket, washed

**BROAD BEAN HUMMUS**

SERVES 4-6

THIS is a great alternative to the traditional hummus most people buy from the supermarket. You can make this with frozen broad beans, which will cut down the preparation time and, to be perfectly honest with you, you won't know the difference.

500g broad beans (popped weight)
5 cloves of garlic, peeled and sliced
150ml olive or rapeseed oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the relish
1 large spring onion, trimmed and finely chopped
1 small red chilli, finely chopped
50ml olive or rapeseed oil
A handful of coriander leaves, washed

Cook the broad beans in boiling salted water for 4-5 minutes, then drain in a colander over a bowl, putting the liquid to one side. Remove about 150g of peas and put to one side for the relish. Mix the rest of the broad beans with the sliced garlic and about 200ml of the hot cooking liquid, and discard the rest.

Transfer the broad beans, sliced garlic and cooking liquid into a food processor, season and blend on a high speed until smooth, trickling in the oil as it is blending. The mixture needs to be as smooth as possible. You can finish it off in a liquidiser if you have one and the food processor isn’t doing the job. Transfer to a bowl and cover the surface with clingfilm until required.

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SURREY have not given up hope of reaching their third consecutive NatWest T20 Blast finals day. Last Friday's victory over Somerset, in front of another sell-out crowd at The Kia Oval, keeps Surrey in contention for a quarter-final place.

Jason Roy was outstanding, powering his way to 122 not out with 13 sixes – six maximums hits – off 65 balls as Surrey won by 38 runs. It sets it up very nicely for tonight’s (Thursday, 6.15pm) visit showdown with local rivals Middlesex at Lord’s, where Surrey need to win to keep their slender hopes of making it to finals day alive.

Roy formed a new opening partnership with Kumar Sangakkara, the combination putting on 84 runs before the Sri Lankan legend was stumped by Luke Ronchi off leg spinner Max Walter for 31. Rory Burns also deserves credit as the other not out batsman with a fine 46.

Roy’s century was only the second ever scored in Surrey’s T20 history, beating the previous best he’d set. His 122 haul in Surrey’s total of 206 was the highest by an Englishman in this season’s T20 competition.

After tonight’s short hop to Lord’s, Surrey will be in T20 action again just 24 hours later when they host Sussex (6.30pm) in their final southern group fixture.

Surrey’s latest T20 win followed their six-wicket success in the LV= Championship at home against Kent, which left them placed second behind Lancashire in the Division Two table. Sangakkara struck 110 runs in his side’s 311 all out, in reply to Kent’s 239.

After Kent were bowled out for just 99 in 41.1 in their second innings, Surrey had no difficulty amassing 126 for the loss of four wickets to win the game in 31.8 overs.

NEITHER Middlesex nor Somerset could force a result after a topsy-turvy 40-over run chase in the Championship at Merchant Taylor’s, Northwood. Hoping to achieve a positive result, home captain James Franklin opted to declare, setting Somerset 219 to win.

The away side looked well set at 99-2 but the loss of five wickets for 48 meant they could only muster 147-7.

The draw means Middlesex remain second in Division One, 14 points adrift of leaders Yorkshire. Middlesex remain firmly rooted to the bottom of their T20 group after last Friday’s four-wicket defeat at Essex at Chelmsford. The visitors lost their first big match, Dawid Malan, with just one run on the board.

CHELSEA – From page 28

“It doesn’t upset me. I’m happy with the way that we are doing things, happy with the challenge of fighting against this power. “I told the players that we are the same team and the others are not the same team. I cannot stop them. I cannot make an assault to the bank and spend millions and millions. I cannot stop that. I cannot stop the others from having a feeling that they are playing against the champions. “The others are spending. The others are buying. I try to be better than us and the fact that we are the same – we are changing a goalkeeper for another one, a striker for another one.”

He is referring to Asmir Begovic being brought in to succeed Petr Cech, and Didier Drogba being replaced by Radamel Falcao, albeit on loan.

Chelsea never intended to be major players in the transfer market this summer. They did try hard for business last year and reaped the dividends with a Premier League title to go with their Capital One Cup victory.

Challenge

But Mourinho has sent out a challenge to his stars that last season was one thing, next season must be better. “It’s a big challenge,” he explained.

“Be better with the same people, the players have to be better individually than they were last year. So when you think: ‘Oh last season I did great’, this season it is not enough,” he added.

“John Terry had a great season. This season it is not enough. He must be better. Cesc Fabregas, I don’t know how many assists last year. Fantastic. It’s not enough. Because the others are going to improve with the players they are bringing in and we have to improve by ourselves with our work.”

Mourinho’s comments are not a reaction to the current mega-spendings by the two Manchester clubs. He stated at the end of last season that his players have to be better.

He cited Oscar in those comments, saying that he has to show the same incremental improvement in performances that Eden Hazard did.

For his part, Oscar has spoken out about the speculation that he could exit Stamford Bridge for Juventus in Italy. He is reported to have said: “No, I know there has been a lot of talk about Juventus, but I am very, very happy at Chelsea.

Last year I signed a new contract and I want to stay a long time at Chelsea. I have never been unsettled by what was being said. “I missed the end of last season but now I am over the injury and back to full fitness. “I have been able to make the start of the pre-season and prepare for the season. I haven’t been able to have a pre-season for the past five years, because I have had to play so many games in the summer, so this pre-season for me is very important. “Most players don’t like to get injured but it did force me to have a rest. This is important. It meant I had to miss the Copa America but sometimes this happens in football and now I am fit and feeling fresh.

Chelsea’s first pre-season match on their USA tour takes place Thursday (tonight), when they travel to New York to take on MLS side New York Red Bulls.

Paul Lagan
Zouma figures in Stones bid

KURT Zouma is earmarked for a season-long loan to Crystal Palace but only if Premier League champions Chelsea can land Everton centre-back John Stones. The French centre-back, 20, who signed from Saint-Etienne in January 2014 for £12.5m, made 17 appearances for Chelsea last term, scoring twice.

However, many of his most impressive displays were as a central midfield destroyer, most notably when he easily shackled Spurs’ hit-man Harry Kane in the Capital One Cup final at Wembley, where Blues ran out comfortable 2-0 winners.

It was intended that last season would be his period of acclimatisation but Gary Cahill’s dip in form forced Jose Mourinho to pitch him to the first team at the first time than anticipated.

With Cahill almost back to his best, Mourinho is keen to revert to his original plan – by sending Zouma out on loan to a mid-ranking Premier League side where he can toughen up and play regularly.

Crystal Palace are eagerly awaiting the outcome of

It will cost Chelsea £30m to wrest Stones away from Goodison Park. The theory behind going public is that it will unsettle the former Barnsley star, who cost the Toffees £3m in January 2013.

Mourinho said: “We made a bid because we like the player.

When the transfer window is open, every club and player is open to bids.

“Bids come for our players and we make bids for other players. The process can be so simple.

“I would advise Roberto Martinez to do the same thing I do. If I don’t want to accept any offer, I say: ‘I don’t accept any offer’. He can make it very, very easy for himself.

“At the moment Everton say: ‘We don’t accept this bid’. They don’t say: ‘We don’t accept any bid’.

“When they say: ‘We don’t accept this bid’, until the transfer window closes, we can improve it. £1 m, £10 m, we can improve the bid. It is an open market until September 1.

“If one day Roberto, or the chairman, come and say: ‘He’s not for sale, we don’t accept any bid’, it’s game over. So during this process, it’s clear.

“We don’t deny we made a bid for Stones. It means we value him but good luck to him if they do not want to leave us.

An angry Martinez countered: “Another football club is making such a statement so openly and I don’t think that is the way we would do it at Everton. We wouldn’t speak about a player that is in another club.”

“But there is no issue from our point of view. John Stones is an Everton player, full stop.

“We are not running in that direction, it’s our respect. There is nothing to speak to John about. I always speak with the players but there is nothing to comment about.”

Mourinho knows that time is ticking on the extraordinary career of his skipper John Terry and Stones provides the club with a 10-year option, while Terry remains in SW6 on a year-by-year basis.

Mourinho explained his rationale and transfer strategy and it’s as pragmatic as ever.

“We have three central defenders plus Branislav Ivanovic, so that is four. We have two who are more than 30-years-old. We would like to have two under the age of 25, which would give us the next 10 years. But as you can imagine, it’s not something urgent, it is not something we are desperate for.

“I think five or 10 years ago, every Chelsea supporter would say: ‘I can’t see Chelsea winning a title without Frank Lampard’. But Chelsea won the title without one of its three best players in the last 10 years.

“No-one is irreplaceable. Difficult to replace, yes. To replace one by one is very difficult. To replace by good time, a good structure, a good dynamic, good options, it’s possible.

“One day when John stops, and I don’t think it will be next season, we have created already a situation for him to be replaced. I always think in this direction.”

He went on: “If I go for somebody, it’s because I lose somebody. Or it’s because somebody wants to leave and because somebody brings the perfect offer for Chelsea to accept.

Market inflated

“I think the market is inflated, I only have to look at what is happening in my own country. Portugal is a country in trouble generally, socially, politically, economically. It’s a country where people are suffering a lot, they have to buy a lot of cuts, old people have trouble with their pensions, tax is higher, salaries, jobs, everything.

“This season Porto paid €20m for Gennelli Imbula and they give Bier Caillaus an amazing salary. Sporting Lisbon are paying millions for coaches and players. Football breaks every situation.

“The market is saying: ‘You look at this amount (£49m) for Raheen Sterling’ but it will be worse next season. Next season someone will pay £60m. Football is like this. One season is financial fair play, the next is a way to dribble through the financial fair play.

City gamble on Fulham kid

FULHAM simply could not prevent their highly-rated teenager Patrick Roberts from joining Manchester City for an undisclosed fee – a deal that could reportedly eventually rise to £11m.

The 18-year-old right-winger, from Kingston-upon-Thames, has long been on the radar of England’s top clubs but finally made the move to the Etihad Stadium on Sunday after a summer of intense speculation.

Signed from AFC Wimbledon at the age of 13, the England U19 international made his debut for the Cottagers as a 55th-minute substitute at Manchester City in March of last year but made only 22 first team appearances for Whites.

Despite making an impact off the bench at Ipswich in Fulham’s first game back in the Championship, Roberts found opportunities

limited under both former manager Felix Magath and Kit Symons.

In total, he played only 356 minutes, spanning 17 games, throughout last season and completed a full match just once. He leaves having never scored a

first team goal for Fulham.

Caught the eye

It was his performances for Fulham as a youth and for England at international level that caught the eye of Man City. Roberts has turned out for England’s U19s on five occasions, netting four times.

Collectively, he has made 24 appearances for the Young Lions at U16, U17, U18 and U19 levels.

Roberts has featured on many FA highlight reel videos, with his tricky footwork and clinical finishing making him a stand-out performer for the national team.

Fulham’s U18s were one of the

most prolific teams among the Premier League youth ranks in recent years – and Roberts played a key role in their success. The starlet featured in Whites’ U18 Premier League title successes of 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Not only does he feature down

the flanks, he likes to drift inside

and is talented enough to play behind the striker in a playmaking

role as well.

Roberts had only a year left on

his contract at Craven Cottage but handed in a transfer request on

Saturday. By instigating his own departure, there was no way

Fulham had a hope of keeping him in west London with the Premier League’s biggest predators circling like vultures.

On the eve of Roberts’ move,

Symons explained the difficulty all

vulnerable clubs such as Fulham

have in trying to retain their best

prospects when much bigger clubs
covet them: “It’s very difficult,” said

Symons. “We want to keep all our

best players and build for the

future but there comes a point

where that becomes very difficult and you have to do what’s right for the football club.”

Committed

“It’s a shame to lose one of our

bright young talents but I need to

have people that are committed and want to play for the football club.

“I sat down with Pat and his

parents and told them how much

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