

THE ELEPHANT

MAGAZINE

Issue 1 / Autumn 2013



THIS ISSUE

Look Back on Elefest 2013

Eleven years and counting: the festival which keeps on growing.

Best of the Elephant

La Bodeguita: a taste of Columbia in the heart of South London

Walworth Town Hall

What next for the landmark building?

Cover Photo: Azucar Flower Festival, Jamie Simmonds

THIS IS THE ELEPHANT

This is the Elephant.
And this is the Elephant Magazine.

The Elephant Magazine is a new, quarterly publication dedicated to all things Elephant and Castle. We want to celebrate all that is fabulous about our neighbourhood and our community. We want to look back with fondness on the area's past and look forward with optimism to the future. The Elephant is changing and the Elephant Magazine will be following every step of the way.



The Elephant Magazine is published by Southwark Council. We'd welcome your ideas, comments and contributions, so please get in touch.
Editor: Richard Wells / Additional copy: Nikki Spencer / Photography: Hannah Maule-Finch and Jamie Simonds
Designed by Westminster Design and printed by Pitney Bowes / Enquiries: councilnews@southwark.gov.uk

Photography from left to right: Charlie Chaplin (MPTV, Camera Press London); Singer, Elefest; Imperial War Museum; Frank Bowling; Michael Faraday; East Street; Station; Elephant and the Nun performer; The Heygate estate; the Strata; Dancer at Azucar festival; Hotel Elephant; Seizure, Artangel 2008; East Street Market; Michael Faraday Memorial; Michael Caine (Kim Maydole Lynch / MPTV, Camera Press London); Elephant statue; The Rockingham estate; Siobhan Davies (Rachel Cherry); The Coronet; Young performers at Azucar festival; Dancer at Elephant and the Nun festival

THE ELEPHANT IS CHANGING

Walking south across London Bridge it's hard to miss the iconic Strata building. Emerging from the autumn mist, its 42 storeys proclaim this is the Elephant. From the harried commuters, bustling towards the underground, to the top deck tourists gazing through fogged windows, the Strata demands attention. This is London and this is the Elephant - reclaiming its place at the heart of our city.

Completed in 2010, the Strata is the most visible sign of the massive transformation underway in the Elephant. But it's by no means the only one.

Since 2005, the council's regeneration programme has gradually brought real change to the area and it's people. Subtler than the Strata tower, true, but nonetheless important changes for the community. The improvements to St Mary's Churchyard for instance or the reconfiguration of the southern roundabout, as well as much needed new housing. From Library Street in the north to Amelia Street in the south, hundreds of affordable homes have been built for local families. Now, as we approach 2014, the regeneration is moving up a gear.

Elephant and Castle is one of the biggest urban regeneration projects in western Europe. It promises to redefine what it means to be in central London, drawing the centre south, to our side of the river, with all the investment and opportunity that involves. By 2025, some £3bn will have been invested in the area, transforming the environment and streetscape, certainly, but also creating

a wealth of new jobs, training places, businesses and housing.

The change in pace is already evident. In the past year alone, 120 new homes for social rent have been built in Harper Road and Royal Road. Construction has begun on a brand new council leisure centre at Brook Drive and the Strata is soon to be joined by a new tower, Lend Lease's One the Elephant. Demolition of the Heygate Estate has started; making way for the largest new park in central London for 70 years as well as thousands of new homes, shops and leisure space. Combined with the council's plans to remodel the northern roundabout and the demolition of the shopping centre, these changes are set to finally give the Elephant its own accessible town centre.

Some of the promised improvements are going to take time, such as a much needed upgrade to the northern line Tube station, but others are happening right now. The new leisure centre, which includes a swimming pool, badminton courts and exercise studios, will open in just over a year and more homes (both affordable and market rate) are now under construction at Stead Street and

Trafalgar Place. The Elephant is on the move and the Elephant magazine will be following every step of the way.



Lou, former Heygate resident rehoused in Harper Road

To me living in the Elephant is like living in the

West End, you're so close to everything, including the City. When I first saw the flat I thought 'amazing'. I'm so happy. The day we moved in, my daughter slept around the clock just so she could make the most of finally having her own room!



Paolo, former Heygate Resident rehoused in Wansey Street

When I first moved to the Heygate I felt lucky to have a roof over my head. The flat was lovely and I had good neighbours, but things changed and I didn't feel secure. Although I'm glad it's being knocked down, I'll still feel sad, after all, it was my home. I didn't want to leave Elephant and Castle. I've gone from Walworth Road to the Heygate and now I'm in Wansey Street. This is my dream flat, it's fantastic.



“WHEN I FIRST SAW THE FLAT I THOUGHT ‘AMAZING’”

To find out more about the changes underway, including a video and map of developments, visit www.southwark.gov.uk/elephant



Coming soon

Elephant and Castle Leisure Centre

Being built now, at St Mary's Churchyard, this new council leisure centre promises state of the art facilities for everyone in the community. As well as a six lane, 25 metre swimming pool and trainer pool, the new centre will offer a sports hall with four badminton courts; a fully equipped gym and cycle studio; two exercise class / dance studios; a creche and a cafe. Work is underway to ensure the centre opens in spring 2015. In the meantime the council will be improving access to the public sports facilities at South Bank University.

Artworks

Making the most of the abundant creativity and talent in the Elephant, the Artworks project promises to bring a unique, new shopping and cultural experience to Elephant Road. Taking advantage of the new spaces opened up between building projects, Artworks will be a new creative 'village' for local designers, makers and crafts people. Fashioned from recycled shipping containers, Artworks offers a funky new place to shop, explore or simply hangout and watch the world go by. The team are currently open to enquiries from small businesses and employers who would like to set-up shop on site. Subject to planning, Artworks is set to arrive early in the new year. More details at www.theartworks-uk.com.

Stead Street

140 new homes are being built at Stead Street in a scheme by housing association Guinness South. More than half of these homes, 84 in total, will be available to rent at council target rent (40% of the market rate). The scheme is being built on the site of two former council car-parks and will include a new community church hall arranged around landscaped courtyards.



Martha
"I've heard of the council's plans. I think they'll improve the area."

I'm looking forward to the new buildings and houses. I'm also looking forward to the new leisure centre, for the swimming pool and the gym and for my kids and grandkids."



I WAS THE ONLY BOY IN SCHOOL WITH BESPOKE TROUSERS



A CUT ABOVE

One of many traditional businesses operating in the Elephant, Threadneedleman Tailors are the go-to people for some of the capital's sharpest dressers.

// I was the only boy in school with bespoke trousers" says George Dyer, the tailor on Walworth Road who was inspired to go into the trade by his Dad's needlework skills.

Since those early days growing up in Peckham he's learned his craft as an apprentice at Dombey and Sons and worked all over the city. Back then, tailors were common on most high streets and competition was fierce. Nowadays, discovering a business like Threadneedleman's in your neighbourhood is like finding a hidden gem.

"I've been in the business for the best part of 35 years and in that time I've made every style of suit and covered every fashion going" says George. Taking over 187a Walworth Road in 1995, Dyer became the third tailor to occupy the narrow shop crammed with materials and cottons. He knew he'd made the right decision: "I was born in Jamaica but raised in Peckham from the age of four and these are my people" he says about the locals, "I don't want to be looked down on in the city, I want to be comfortable and be me. It's a South London thing."

"I recently read a piece by Grayson Perry. He wrote that to be a craftsman was to be working-class nobility. I'll have a bit of that."

During his time in the Elephant, he's made suits for Madness' Suggs, actor Martin Freeman and boxer David Haye, to name but a few. With years in the business he's fused fashion and music with styles for "mods, skinheads, suedeheads, teds - you name it, I've grafted it." Is that why he has such a following? "Nah, it's because I'm the best," he says. And somehow, you don't doubt it.

*Threadneedleman Tailors
(appointment only) 020 7701 9181*

*For more about doing
business in Southwark visit
www.southwark.gov.uk/business*



OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

With £1.5bn investment from Lend Lease projects alone, the regeneration of the Elephant and Castle is bringing new opportunity for local people. From jobs and training through to investment in community projects the area is starting to see the benefit.



The council's regeneration partner, Lend Lease is at the forefront of investment and development in the Elephant. They're currently working on three key sites - the Heygate, One the Elephant and Trafalgar Place - representing half of the £3bn total

investment going into the area. Through the use of new technologies and intelligent environmental design, the schemes promise to be world leaders in sustainability and are set to support local people and the local economy.

£50k Boost for community groups

The inaugural Elephant and Castle community fund has contributed more than £50,000 to 14 local community projects, since its launch by Lend Lease and the council last September.

Nursery Row Park, one of seven beneficiaries of the fund, put their £4,000 boost towards an education programme for Robert Browning Primary School and weekly classes in the park. Other projects include a cycle safety awareness programme and a contribution towards Elefest. *(see picture right)*

The annual fund is open to any group working in the Elephant which aims to improve the area. A new round of £25,000 funding will be launched shortly - look out for more information at www.elephantandcastle.org.uk

Jobs and training

18 local residents have already secured jobs and training at One the Elephant and Trafalgar Place since construction began earlier this year.

Construction is a fantastic industry with many exciting opportunities and Lend Lease, in partnership with the council, is committed to providing these opportunities for local people throughout the lifetime of the regeneration programme. In fact, by 2025 the regeneration will have created around [5,000] new jobs in the area.

Local resident, Angelina, (pictured right), recently landed a job at Lend Lease's new project offices in the shopping centre. Angelina said: "I joined the BeOnsite Women in Construction programme to learn more about the industry. As a Southwark resident, I'm excited to be working for Lend Lease on the regeneration and I'm learning

a lot about the project. With all the opportunities and varied people I get to see, I look forward to using my experience to gain a job onsite, perhaps in a project management role."

// **As a Southwark resident, I'm excited to be working for Lend Lease**



If you are looking for work, then please get in touch with Southwark Works who will provide you with the necessary advice and support to access the available jobs and training opportunities.

Tel: 0800 052 0540

Email: info@southwarkworks.org.uk
Or visit Unit 239 Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre London SE1 6TE

Growing local business

So far, more than £2.7m worth of regeneration works contracts have been awarded to local businesses by Lend Lease. To register your interest as a supplier or consultant, email residentialsupplychain@lendlease.com.



One The Elephant electrics contractor Wingate Electrical has been a Southwark employer since 1995 and recruit and train apprentices locally.



Sustainability

The Heygate redevelopment is one of only 18 projects, globally, to be included in the Clinton Climate Positive Development Program for carbon positive development.

A breath of fresh air for the Elephant

Working with the council, Lend Lease has secured provisional grant funding from the Mayor of London's Air Quality Fund to monitor air quality around the Heygate estate. The money will be used to evaluate the current air quality in the

area and to establish a baseline against which all of Lend Lease's future air quality improvement schemes can be judged.

Lend Lease is committed to improving air quality and to building a healthier environment. Essential to this work is the protection of local trees. The company will ensure every tree felled will be replanted or replaced and 1,200 new trees will be planted in the surrounding area. Read more about Lend Lease's pledge on trees at www.elephantandcastle.org.uk.

Join in to protect local wildlife

The regeneration will provide greener public spaces and new parks. To ensure these parks become a thriving home to a variety of plants and animals, Lend Lease is teaming up with the London Wildlife Trust and other experts. Recent events include wood carving classes from felled local trees and a Bio Blitz on the Heygate where residents worked alongside ecologists to do a 'head count' of existing bug and plant life.

LOOKING BACK ON

Elefest

From solar powered cinema on the Heygate estate to artist-led tours in the local subways, for over a decade Elefest has been putting on film and arts events where you might least expect it.

HOTEL ELEPHANT

“You must be joking!” was the reaction Festival Director Rob Wray first got from the media when he started Elefest 11 years ago.

“The area is perceived as two roundabouts and a shopping centre but why shouldn’t we have a film festival?” he declares. “Elephant and Castle has a whole history in the arts and entertainment. It was called the “Piccadilly of the South” not because it had an Eros statue but because it had loads of theatres and performers. Film stars were the life blood of this area.”

Back in 2000, Wray was organising multi-media film and music events at festivals, including Glastonbury but wanted to do something closer to home. “I wanted to do something where I grew up and lived. We have so much art and culture and creativity right here. Elefest is about shining a light on that.”

Wray, an alumnus of LCC, has grown his audience from just a few hundred people in those early years to tens of thousands who now enjoy an annual action packed weekend of film screenings, exhibitions, art installations, DJs and live music, food

and drink, tours and Q&As.

And the location has actually proved a selling point says Wray with everyone from Time Out to BBC London’s Robert Elms trumpeting events.

“We have used it to our advantage” he reveals. “We still get publicity based on the fact that it’s one of the best-known but most misunderstood parts of London.”

This year’s Elefest programme was bigger than ever with three major pop-up cinema and music events in a new Hotel Elephant Warehouse venue

on Newington Causeway: a 40th anniversary screening of classic 70s reggae film *The Harder They Come* followed by a Don Letts DJ set; Noise of Art’s *Wicker Man Disco Inferno* and a special screening of award-winning, British thriller, *London to Brighton* followed by a Q&A with the lead actor and local boy, Johnny Harris.

For the second year running Elefest also played host to the thrills and spills of the UK Skateboarding Film Festival with a day of live shows and music acts headlined by British Beatbox champion Reeps and also saw the return of night market *The StockMKT* with street food, crafts and even ping pong.

Festival-goers also got their hands dirty at the Guerrilla Gardening Dig and joined the Incredible Edible Elephant: *The Feast* with locally grown food and music and dancing at *Pembroke House*. There was a nostalgic trip down memory lane with old-fashioned *Saturday Morning Pictures* at the Cinema Museum and a screening of Julian Temple’s epic

helped launched back in 2008.

“There are times when you’re banging your head against a brick wall”, he confesses “but then there are those moments when everybody has come and everyone is having a good time. That’s what Elefest is all about”.

Past highlights for Wray include the screening of *This Is England* at the Coronet. “We had two big ska bands playing including *The Tops Cats* and all 590 seats were full. We also set-up an outdoor cinema on the Pullens Estate. We showed *The Wizard of Oz* which really brought people together”.

The festival has also showcased new artists who have gone on to national and international fame. “We had *Paloma Faith* at the Corsica Studios. The guys at Corsica had come across her and curated the programme, which was great as people hadn’t heard of her then”.

He also singles out the solar-powered cinema in the centre of the Heygate estate as a favourite moment, although it



The Elephant isn’t just what you see when you pass by on the bus



film *London: The Modern Babylon* at The Electric Elephant café.

Arts events included an exhibition in the temporary gallery space in the old Heygate estate doctor’s surgery and a Subway Murals Tour led by David Bratby, the artist who painted four of the seven subways in the 90s.

Putting on Elefest takes some organising says Wray, who also now runs the independent Shortwave Cinema in Bermondsey Square as well as continuing to be involved in the Bermondsey Street Festival, which he

wasn’t without its challenges.

“We couldn’t afford security and it was a condition of hire that someone was there 24 hours a day, so me and my friend spent three nights sleeping in a tent in the middle of Elephant and Castle”.

So what’s the future for Elefest?

“We just want to keep building on it and to continue to challenge people’s perceptions of the area. The Elephant isn’t just what you see when you pass by on the bus”.



PC GRANT AND THE RIVERS OF LONDON



Ben Aaronovitch has stormed the best seller lists with his supernatural crime series, Rivers of London. His latest book, Broken Homes, is set on a mythical high-rise estate in Elephant and Castle.

“I didn’t start thinking I would set a book in Elephant and Castle but rather I had an idea for a story and Elephant and Castle seemed the best place to set it”, explains Ben of Broken Homes, the fourth book in his Rivers of London series where “most of the action takes place on a mythical estate not a million miles from the Heygate”.

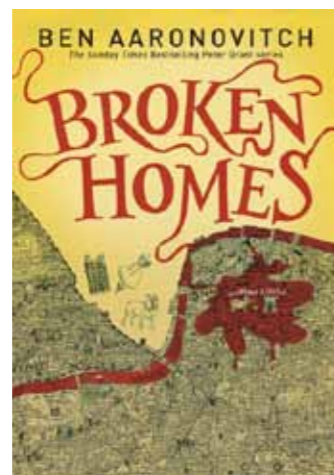
Aaronovitch’s books are a unique blend of police procedural and scary supernatural with threads of London’s hidden history woven through the plots. While previous novels have been set in and around Covent Garden and Soho, near where Aaronovitch worked as a bookseller at Waterstone’s, before turning to writing full time, he felt it was time to “venture across the river” where he says he found “a borough rich in history”.

The River of London series, which has recently been optioned for TV, follows PC Peter Grant, a London cop who also happens to be a novice wizard. In Broken Homes his investigations lead him to “Skygarden”, a peculiar London housing estate whose architect may have practised magic.

While some writers are happy to use the internet for their research, Aaronovitch took to the streets of Southwark.

“I like to go to places and hang out and get the feel of them. I try and imagine how my character would feel walking down a street. At a pinch you can use

Google Earth to find a location but I find it’s best to go there. I live on the other end of the 168 bus so it was easy for me. I’d hop on the bus and get off on the Old Kent Road”.



He also talked to Southwark’s planning office in his quest for accuracy.

“For my research I always try and talk to professionals and for Broken Homes I needed to know how planning decisions are made. I thought I might have to call around all the planning departments in London but thankfully Southwark said yes”.

And a visit to Southwark’s Local History Library and Archive at 211 Borough High Street certainly paid off.

“I was all ready to start doing my historical research and found it had been

“I had an idea for a story and Elephant and Castle seemed the best place to set it

done for me!” he reveals. “I just picked up a whole load of wonderful local history books and opened my wallet”.

“Southwark is the second oldest borough in London and I had faith it would provide me with lots of history but there was so much more than I was expecting. I could have written three books. It was a bit like having so much chocolate you can’t possibly eat it all”.

So will Elephant and Castle feature in a future novel?

“It may well do” says Aaronovitch. “I never know”.



Artists impression: subject to change

IT’S ROUNDABOUT TIME THINGS GOT MOVING

Love ‘em or hate ‘em, if there’s one thing the Elephant’s famous for, it’s the roundabout. An important junction for centuries, the current road layout largely derives from the 1960s; a decade in which the car was king. Now, Transport for London, with the support of the council and the Mayor of London, wants to improve the junction for all users.

Over the years, this complex intersection has had more road collisions than almost any other junction in London. Now, the same regeneration which promises to upgrade the Tube station and redevelop the shopping centre, offers the perfect opportunity to tackle the problem once and for all.

Transport for London have been busy exploring a number of options for the northern roundabout and are now ready to consult residents, businesses and commuters on a radical new solution. Their proposal is to replace the roundabout with a peninsula linked to the shopping centre site. This will mean new two-way traffic signals for the roads, surface level crossings for pedestrians and better facilities for cyclists. It will entail removing the subways and the creation of a large new public space.

TfL would like to hear your feedback on the key principles behind their proposals. This is the first in a series of opportunities to have your say, with plans to consult on the detail of the new road layout in the spring and the new public space later in 2014.



Jason and daughter Vita

“I’ve been a keen follower of the council’s regeneration plans over the last five to six years. I followed the stuff about the tram and the redesign of the road system but I’ve lost track in the last couple of years. I wasn’t aware of the peninsularisation but I welcome any new ideas, after all we’re not going to make it any worse.”

To have your say visit www.tfl.gov.uk/elephantandcastle or write to FREEPOST TFL CONSULTATIONS. Views must be submitted by 2 December 2013.

Key principles

For pedestrians

Replace subways with wide signalised crossings which allow people to cross directly between transport links and local amenities. This will make it easier and safer to move through the area at all times of the day.

For cyclists

Create dedicated and direct cycle routes through the junction to reduce areas of conflict and improve road safety.

For bus users

Improve the interchange between transport types and upgrade bus stops for easier access.

For drivers

Reduce manoeuvres which have historically resulted in collisions and use traffic signals to smooth journeys through the junction.

For the general public

Create a high quality space that is attractive, accessible and flexible. This will enhance the vitality of the area and the interchange environment.

PHOENIX FROM THE FLAMES

Earlier this year a devastating fire ripped through the old Walworth Town Hall on the corner of Wansey Street. Gutting the building entirely and putting the library next door out of action, the fire has left a hole at the heart of our community. Southwark Council is going to rebuild the town hall and is inviting people to have their say on what to do next.

What became apparent in the immediate aftermath of the fire was the overwhelming support and goodwill of the local population with dozens of offers of help from local organisations, businesses and individuals. People care about Walworth and they care about the Town Hall, a building which symbolised local heritage and the spirit of public service.

In July, the council announced its outline vision for rebuilding the Town Hall as a new, world class civic centre for Walworth. This includes reopening the Cuming Museum and providing a new enhanced library. Also included is the option for a flexible space that could be used for a variety of purposes, including community and civic events, exhibitions and performances and facilities for marriage, civil partnership and citizenship ceremonies.

The vision is for a new Town Hall which will offer local groups space and support to grow and prosper and also provide better ways for people to do business with the council. The vision has been developed in response to community views and now the council is asking everyone who would like to participate in

developing the plans to complete a short survey to get the ball rolling.

The rebuilt Town Hall will be pivotal in the regeneration taking place in the area as a whole. The council wants people to take pride in the project and to continue taking pride in Walworth.



LONDON COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION POSTGRADUATE SHOWS 2013

Between now and Christmas, the London College of Communication (LCC) will be presenting the next generation of creative talent from its postgraduate media and design courses.

Based in the heart of the Elephant, LCC works at the cutting edge of new thinking and industry developments to prepare students for successful careers in the creative industries of the future. From mid November until the end of December, over 300 MA students will be showcasing their work in film, documentary photography, photojournalism, sound and graphic design. All the shows are open to the public and free of charge.

Postgraduate Diploma Photography and Portfolio Development
15 to 21 November
MA Documentary Film
MA Photography
Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate
Design for Visual Communication

29 November to 6 December
MA Contemporary Typographic Media
MA Graphic Branding & Identity
MA Graphic Design
MA Graphic Moving Image
MDes Service Design Innovation
MA Photojournalism & Documentary
Photography

13 to 20 December
All exhibitions take place on campus at London College of Communication Elephant and Castle London SE1 6SB
For more information visit www.arts.ac.uk/lcc



//
**PEOPLE COME HERE
TO FEEL AT HOME
EVEN IF THEY ARE FAR
AWAY FROM HOME**
//



THE BEST OF THE ELEPHANT: LA BODEGUITA

Elephant and Castle has the largest Latin American community in the capital and at its heart is buzzing Colombian restaurant La Bodeguita.

"People come here to feel at home even if they are far away from home" says Diana Sach of La Bodeguita, the lively 150 seat Colombian restaurant and bar which she opened 12 years ago on the edge of the shopping centre.

Diana originally came to London from Cali in Colombia to study English when she was 18 and then spent 12 years working in an Italian coffee shop in Victoria. It was always her dream to open her own place providing the food she grew up with and in 1998 she took over a kiosk in the Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, where a Colombian lady had previously sold clothes and perfumes, and started serving traditional dishes cooked in her kitchen at home, alongside selling Latin American produce. Diana's Colombian food proved very popular with shoppers, local residents and workers and when, in 2001, the owner of the Italian restaurant opposite asked if she wanted to take over their premises too she jumped at the chance.

La Bodeguita is very much a family affair.

"When I opened the restaurant I asked my brothers, Eduardo and Joseph to join me and I'm very glad I did. I couldn't have done it without them", explains Diana

"We were here 24 hours a day at the beginning and it was very hard work but it was great as we saw it gaining popularity."

Customers come from across London, but also as far afield as Manchester, for everything from birthdays to baptisms.

"If they have anything to celebrate they come to us", says Diana although their clientele is not only Latin American.

"People come from all over. We get a lot of students who come here to study English and it's nice that they like to bring their non-Latin American friends. Many Japanese people particularly seem to like our food."

All the dishes, such as Cazuela De Mariscos, a seafood stew served



with rice and green fried plantain and Medallones Bodeguita, Argentinian beef in mushroom sauce, are freshly prepared and Diana says everything is "nicely seasoned but not too spicy".

She has witnessed a growing interest in Latin American cuisine over the years and says it is now much easier to source ingredients.

"When I first started, getting hold of plantain was difficult but now everywhere has it", she says.

But La Bodeguita isn't just about food, it's about dancing too, and at 11pm on

Friday and Saturday night the central tables are cleared away and the balcony sound system kicks in.

Parties are a regular feature and they recently celebrated their 12th birthday in true La Bodeguita style with a special night of food and drink, live bands, DJs and salsa, merengue and bachata dancing.

With council plans for the demolition of the Elephant and Castle shopping centre, the long-term future of the restaurant is up



in the air but Diana is determined that it won't be the end of La Bodeguita.

"We don't know what is going to happen yet but we do know we want to carry on running a restaurant in Elephant and Castle. La Bodeguita is my life but it is also a big part of so many other people's lives here too."

La Bodeguita restaurant and bar
020 7701 9166
www.labodeguita.co.uk

For more about doing
business in Southwark visit
www.southwark.gov.uk/business

THE PICCADILLY OF THE SOUTH

It's been a long time since anyone's described the Elephant as the 'Piccadilly of the South'. But, as a central London location (as central as Victoria) and with huge investment being ploughed into the area, it's a nickname which may be due a revival. Local historian, Dr Patricia Dark, explains the comparison.

Piccadilly, one of the capital's most prestigious roads (and roundabouts), is internationally famous for its shops: Fortnum & Mason's, Hatchards, the country's oldest bookstore, and Waterstone's whose flagship store resides in a Grade I Art Deco building originally occupied by Simpsons menswear.

Over the years, the Elephant has also had its share of equally renowned shops. Edgington's, at 106 Old Kent Road, began trading in tents, rope, sails, and other naval supplies in 1805. The flags for HMS Victory, Admiral Horatio Nelson's flagship, came from Edgington's - making the staff of the store the first men in England to 'do their duty'. While the store closed in 1967 to make way for the Bricklayer's Arms flyover, the façade was removed and replaced at the Woburn Abbey Antiques Centre.

Clothing stores were common - reflecting the Elephant and Castle's importance as a nightlife venue. Isaac Walton & Co's menswear shop was where the Salvation Army HQ currently stands, at 97-101 Newington Causeway. Hurlock's sold men's, women's, and children's clothes from a Walworth Road site currently occupied by the shopping centre. Carter's

menswear store, opened in 1851, a short distance down the Old Kent Road from Edgington's. It was famous - and beloved - for the clock over its front door, topped with a man wearing a bowler hat. He faithfully doffed it for passersby on the hour, every hour until the store's 1978 closure.

The Elephant and Castle is also home to nationally famous examples of street markets and shopping centres: the most ancient and most obviously modern forms of retailing. East Street Market is one of London's oldest and busiest; although it was formally founded in 1880, it traces its roots to the 16th century. In Victorian times the market stretched the entire length of East Street. Since 1927 stall-holders have had formalised pitches, ending the tradition of a policeman whistling to open the market - and the resulting scrum for places. The Elephant and Castle Shopping Centre, by contrast, is a mere baby: it opened in March 1965, as one of the earliest indoor shopping centres in the country, and the largest in Europe.

While Piccadilly has long been the gateway to the entertainments and attractions of the West End, south of the river, the Elephant was London's

premier entertainment destination for several decades. At first, the area offered music halls - venues for live variety entertainment. The South London Palace, next to the Bakerloo line Tube station, opened in 1860, and played host to superstars like Dan Leno and Marie Lloyd. By the early 20th century, however, cinema dominated: the area around the Elephant boasted 42 different picture palaces. Perhaps the most spectacular was the Trocadero, one of the biggest cinemas in Europe when it opened at Christmas 1930. Paul Robeson, the American singer and actor whose Othello is one of the high points of 20th century Shakespearean performance, was the opener. It was demolished and replaced in 1964 by Ernö Goldfinger's Alexander Fleming House (now Metro Central Heights); a plaque on the building commemorates the "Troc".

So in the Elephant's heyday, the two districts shared a real affinity and, who knows, were it not for the vagaries of fate, it could have been Piccadilly earning itself the nickname 'the Elephant of the north'.



From top left: Elephant and Castle c. 1960, Elephant and Castle Theatre c. 1930, Elephant and Castle c. 1907, Dunn and Co programme, Newington Causeway c. 1860 and Tain Springs fashions.

Dr Patricia Dark is Local History Library and Archive Manager at John Harvard Library, 211 Borough High Street. Why not drop-in to find out more about Southwark's history? The library is open from Monday to Saturday (closed Weds and Sun) for details see www.southwark.gov.uk/libraries.

Locals tell us
what they
love about
the Elephant

MY ELEPHANT AND CASTLE



Deryk

"I like the Amore café in the Walworth Road. My partner is away a lot and it's just me and

the cats, so I go there every day except Sunday. They do good food and coffee and there's always someone to chat to. I also like East Street Market. I've lived here for 20 years so the stallholders all know me."



Tim

"Standing at the bus stop with the rest of the world! I love the diversity of the area. I also love

the chocolate brownies at the Electric Elephant cafe in Pullens Yard and the perogies (dumplings) at Mamuska, the Polish restaurant in the shopping centre."



Carol

"I love the shopping centre. It's like going to a market but out of the rain! I come here

for Caribbean food, hair products and make-up and also for Clark's shoes. I have got some great shoes from their factory shop."



Karen

My family's from Ecuador but I grew up in Camberwell. We visit the Elephant because

this is where most of our Latin American community is. We like to come here to eat and enjoy the music. There's loads of restaurants and shops. There's also dancing and salsa classes. My favourite place is La Bodeguita.



Natty

"I've lived around here since 1985 and I love that it's an artistic area. I'm a painter and

sculptor and musician and in every nook and cranny you will find artists."



Rosie

"I like the fact that when I came to this country from Kenya as I child, the first thing I saw was

the Elephant and Castle roundabout. I'd fallen asleep and awoke to see that big silver box! I always remember that day, it felt like waking on another planet. When we were kids it was a real event to come shopping on a Saturday at East Street Market and the Walworth Road. Some of the shops may have gone but it's still got a strong community spirit.



Stuart

"I've lived here for 25 years (half my life).

Although people think of it as very gritty and urban

it's easy to escape to green pockets like Pullens Open Space and the Imperial War Museum Gardens."



Miranda

"There are some good children's theatre groups and so many free things or special offers. I took

my kids to see Titanic at the Southwark Playhouse and they loved it. It's great that it's now just minutes away. The area's so central you can hop on a bus and be at the Tate or the National Theatre in 10 minutes. You can get anywhere from the Elephant."



Siriol

"I don't know why anyone would want to live anywhere else. It's friendly, it's bustley,

never boring and has a stronger sense of community than anywhere I've lived before. We've got some lovely little parks including Pasley Park, which has a great atmosphere and is full of people doing different things like football training for kids. I also like the Chumleigh Gardens Café in Burgess Park"