



# THE ELEPHANT

MAGAZINE

Issue 5 / Spring 2015

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and our new favourite  
band

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Library now open  
at Artworks

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Looking back to when  
tigers, bears and  
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of Pasley Park

# THIS IS THE ELEPHANT



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

The Elephant Magazine is the 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 welcome your ideas, comments and contributions, so please get in touch.  
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Photography from left to right: Hervé Regent; Diana Sach; Dragon Castle; ISBU students; George Peabody statue; East Street; Station; Daphne Kasambala; Pullens Yards; Metropolitan Tabernacle; Musician, Elefest; Kavyne, Kelibray; The Old Vic; George Hinchliffe; Frank Bowling OBE; East Street Market; Tube; Rob Wray; Baldwins Apothecary; Southwark Playhouse; Imperial War Museum; Metro Central Heights; Arments Pie and Mash; Elephant Statue; Musician, Elefest

A middle-aged man with short, graying hair is standing in a warehouse. He is wearing a black V-neck sweater over a light blue collared shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. To his left are tall metal shelving units filled with various metal components, some with yellow labels. The background is filled with more industrial equipment and materials, creating a busy factory environment. The floor has yellow safety lines.

# BEHIND THE SCENES AT **FLINTS**



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For over 30 years, Flints Theatrical Chandlers, just off the Walworth Road, has been working behind the scenes, providing everything from paints and pulleys to ropes and rigging for countless West End shows.

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Flints is the largest company of its kind in the UK and now supplies film and TV companies as well as the theatre, not to mention the odd artist or two.

"I used to run a scenery building company and it was always a problem getting hold of supplies" explains founder Alisdair Flint. "You had to make 20 phone calls to get everything you needed just for one simple bit of scenery." And so Flints Theatrical Chandlers was born in 1981, a one stop shop for all the things required by scenic artists, engineers, carpenters, painters, prop-makers and pretty much anyone else involved in staging a show.

Alisdair started out with a small shop near London Bridge but as the business grew he sought larger premises, finding the perfect spot in Queen's Row, in a building that aptly has its own theatrical history.

Flints' premises were built in 1905 as painting rooms for Joseph Harker – one of the most important theatrical scene painters of his day. A Pathe news film from 1922 (now on YouTube) shows the pipe-smoking artist painting his "forty-foot art" for the Lyceum Theatre.

"You can still see his signature and those of other well known scenic painters on the walls upstairs" points out Alisdair "Harker was a friend of Bram Stoker, who wrote Dracula, and Stoker used his name for one of his main characters" he adds. The wooden frames that used to support Harker's canvasses are still there, along with a heavily paint-splattered sink.

Flints is a bit of an Aladdin's cave. The multiple racks of shelves are lined with a huge range of products. There's everything

from glitter to glues and glazes, wire ropes and winches and all manner of widgets, many specially designed to meet customer requests.

For the second year in a row, Flints has won 'Widget of the Year' at the ABTT Theatre Awards. In 2013 it was for a special matt black gaffer tape and in 2014 it was for a tool tether for working at height.

"The Elephant is a brilliant place to run a business" he enthuses. "We get so many demands from the West End where people say 'we need this immediately' and it's so easy for us to deliver anything they need quickly."

The company now has a £3-4m annual turnover and employs 40 staff. Until recently, everything was based at Queen's Row but last year they moved their warehouse operation to a new computerised centre in Deptford to cater for growing demand, which comes not just from the UK but from around the world.

"We do quite a lot of international work, especially in Japan and Sweden" says Alisdair "we supplied the original Mamma Mia and now the show has productions all over the world. The Olympics were good for us too and we've had a few spin-offs from that."

Flints has already spread its wings beyond the theatre world. They're now regularly used by schools, universities and museums and even for shop displays. They recently supplied Scena, the company which worked on the refurbishment of the Imperial War Museum, and they often work with artists too.

"We don't do fine art but anything beyond about 10ft x 5ft and people come to us" explains Alisdair. "We supply Damien Hirst and the whole Brit art scene has been good for us. Often they build or paint something and when they're asked to exhibit, we make the wire ropes to hang it."

With the capital now a popular location for so many film shoots, Flints' expertise is also in demand from the movie industry. "It's quite hard for us to know what things are used for once they're ordered but we've definitely done James Bond" reveals Alisdair.

Theatre is still very much at the heart of Flints, however. Their biggest customers are the Royal Opera House and the National and it's clearly something that Alisdair, who trained and later taught at RADA, feels passionate about.

"London theatre doesn't get the credit it deserves" he declares. "One of the major reasons people want to visit London is because it's got more theatres than anywhere else in the world. Nearly every tourist wants to see a show and if there wasn't the opera or theatre, then people wouldn't come."

And Flints deserves some credit too. Next time you see a play or visit a museum, there's a good chance Flints has played a part. Behind the scenes, of course.

Queens Row,  
SE17 2PX  
020 7703 9786  
[www.flints.co.uk](http://www.flints.co.uk)

# HOW THE ELEPHANT GOT ITS FUNK

It's 1982 and a ragged bunch of musicians are bashing out a tune on Brook Drive SE11.

They're a sweaty blur of denim dungarees, neckerchiefs and woolly hats, pounding away on banjo, drums, accordion and violin outside Vi's corner shop. This song will turn out to be the biggest selling record of the year and this video will help propel Dexys Midnight Runners to number one on both sides of the Atlantic and around the world.

But while the iconic video for Come on Eileen might have been shot in the Elephant, the band hailed from the Midlands and, despite producing two of the world's biggest film stars, our neighbourhood hasn't spawned a truly great rock or pop band. Yet.

"I'd love a big hit" explains Chris Anderson over coffee in Chatica on Elephant Road "but I'd be just as made up if I heard the record played on Match of the Day." Chris, the guitarist in new band Elephants and Castles, is talking about the single which earned them widespread airplay last year, a tribute to footballer Justin Fashanu.

Having met his song-writing partner, Robin Spencer, five years ago while they were both teachers at Surrey Square School on the Aylesbury estate, it's only recently that the band has secured a distribution deal with Bermondsey based independent label The Animal Farm.

Robin, who played professional football himself for a time at Lincoln City, met

Fashanu as a child and was inspired to tell his story in song. "Fashanu was the first £1m black footballer and also the first to come out as gay" he explains "and he faced a lot of prejudice."

"I think people were surprised that we'd write about a footballer; especially Fashanu. I think that's why it got so much media attention" explains Robin. "We even featured in the sports section of the Daily Telegraph" he says, sounding a little surprised himself.

Perhaps there's something in the water on the Aylesbury estate. For if there is one truly big music star to come out of Elephant and Castle, it's Aylesbury born Tinie Tempah. Raised in Wendover House until he was 12, Tinie had long since moved on by the time of his massive 2010 hit Pass Out. But he still credits the area as an influence on him as well as the music he heard growing up, such as the records of fellow South Londoners, So Solid Crew.

Other acts linked to the neighbourhood include 80s fuzz rockers The Jesus and Mary Chain, who built their own recording studio on Amelia Street; techno pioneer, Aphex Twin; The Maccabees and suave new kids on the block, Movie.

While the Jesus and Mary Chain recorded Honey's Dead at their studio in the early 90s, an enduring urban myth finds Richard James (aka Aphex Twin) 'living in the metal box on the roundabout' later

that same decade. He wasn't. But he did live and work in the Elephant for many years. More recently, indie favourites The Maccabees have recorded locally, having acquired and refitted the same studio used by the Mary Chain some twenty years previously.

For Robin and Chris, the Elephant has been more than just an area to base themselves or record a few tracks. It's where they met, lived and worked. It's given the band its name and it's provided inspiration, perhaps most obviously on the track Concrete Love, a homage to Erno Goldfinger (the man behind Metro Central Heights) and the architecture of his period.

"I really like the design of the shopping centre and I liked the Heygate" says Chris. "Obviously a lot of people hate this style and can't wait to see it come down but we wanted to celebrate something we see as beautiful before it disappears."

The new single, LLO, already being championed by the likes of Q Magazine as indie pop "as it's supposed to be", should see the band further cement their reputation. "It's about people who are full of hot air and let you down" says Robin. "It's pure coincidence but it seems good timing to be releasing it in the run up to the election" he adds with a chuckle.

For more live music in Southwark visit [www.southwark.gov.uk/southwarkpresents](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/southwarkpresents)





**INDIE POP  
AS IT'S  
SUPPOSED  
TO BE**







**IT'S ALL A PART  
OF MAKING  
THE LIBRARY  
A VITAL AND  
ENTICING  
SPACE**



Sandra Agard gets children and parents engrossed in her story at Newington Temporary Library



# IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD



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The enraptured look on the faces of the children says it all. Even in the age of instant digital entertainment the power of the word is still supreme.

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The children are listening intently to Southwark's very own 'book doctor', Sandra Agard, as she weaves one of her magical tales. Sandra isn't a teacher and this isn't a school reading session. This is Saturday afternoon and the children have come to Newington Temporary Library for one of the hundreds of free activities put on by Southwark Libraries every year.

Since the new library opened last October, it has played host to dozens of activity sessions from First World War poetry readings to winter stories and craft sessions, calendar making and even a Spanish fiesta. It's all a part of making the library a vital and enticing space. Of course, it's also a place to borrow books, DVDs or to simply sit down and read but the activity sessions add an extra dimension and they draw people in who might not be regular visitors.

Newington Temporary Library was born out of the fire which ravaged Walworth Town Hall in 2013. The fire put the original Newington library (which was next to the town hall) out of action. When the council decided to restart the service somewhere nearby, they selected the Artworks and it's proved to be a good choice.

Artworks is an eclectic mix of creative and start-up businesses operating from a 'village' of 40 brightly coloured shipping

containers on Elephant Road. It was established last year to help maintain trade and vibrancy around the site of the former Heygate estate while construction of the Elephant Park development is underway. Since opening it's become home to a number of innovative businesses, such as the ethical clothing company, Sappelle; cafes, street food vendors and, just lately, a table football bar known as the Six Yard Box. Being in the middle of this animated mix has proved to be a perfect fit for the lively, new library.

While Artworks is a temporary use of the space created by local redevelopment, it's still expected to be around for a number of years. The long-term intention for the library is to eventually move back to Walworth Road when the town hall is rebuilt as a new world class civic centre for the Elephant.

As well as the library, the plan for the rebuilt town hall includes space for the Cuming collection, which was rescued from the historic museum in the aftermath of the fire. The museum has continued with a programme of activities around the borough since it lost its permanent base and its 'Cabinet of Curiosities' visited the Artworks just last month. To find out where they'll be next or to see what's coming up at Newington Temporary Library, visit the Southwark council website.

For those who want to make use of regular library services they'll find Newington Temporary Library stocked with 10,000 books for loan, daily newspapers, magazines, public computers, internet access and free Wi-Fi. They've also got plenty of dedicated resources for Spanish speakers, having launched their brand new Spanish book collection earlier this year.

As Sandra brings her enchanting stories to life for the rapt young audience gathered around her, there can be no doubt that the next generation of library users is already well established and that the demand for great quality library services is here to stay.

Newington Temporary Library is open seven days a week, including evenings until 8pm on weekdays.

Newington  
Temporary Library  
Artworks  
Elephant Road  
SE17 1LB  
020 7525 2000

To find out more about the library and Cuming collection visit [www.southwark.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/libraries)

To learn more about Artworks visit [www.theartworks-uk.com](http://www.theartworks-uk.com)



**MORE THAN 300  
SOUTHWARK RESIDENTS  
EMPLOYED  
ON LEND LEASE DEVELOPMENTS  
IN THE ELEPHANT**







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As the council's regeneration partner, Lend Lease, near the completion of their first homes in the Elephant, the number of Southwark residents employed on their projects has passed the 300 mark.

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The regeneration of Elephant and Castle includes £1.5bn of development from Lend Lease alone.

Lend Lease's transformation of more than nine hectares of land in the heart of the Elephant has made huge progress over the last two years and, later this spring, the first homes on the site will be complete and ready for the first residents to move in. Known as Trafalgar Place, this part of the development includes 235 homes, of which a quarter will be affordable housing.

Now, with the demolition of the former Heygate estate complete, the first phase of Elephant Park has also begun and is set to deliver another 360 homes by 2017. In total, Lend Lease will build almost 3,000 of the 5,000 new and replacement homes being built in the Elephant up to 2025.

In addition to the housing, the investment by Lend Lease has created a huge amount of job and training opportunities for local residents. Since construction work began in 2013, 322 Southwark residents have been employed on Lend Lease projects, including 147 who were previously unemployed.

**If you live in the borough and are looking for work, then contact Southwark Works on 0800 052 0540 or email [info@southwarkworks.org.uk](mailto:info@southwarkworks.org.uk) to learn more about the opportunities available.**



Top image: the site of Elephant Park  
Bottom image: Trafalgar Place



## Jasmine Boadu, Receptionist - Lend Lease

Jasmine, from Dulwich, began work on the project with Be Onsite, Lend Lease's jobs charity, as an office junior and over the last nine months has quickly progressed to the position of Receptionist. Jasmine is keen to progress further on the project, and is interested in working in a community role in the future.



A middle-aged man with grey hair, wearing a black zip-up jacket over a black clerical shirt with a white collar, stands on a paved walkway. He is smiling slightly and has his hands clasped in front of him. The background shows a blurred outdoor setting with trees, a building, and other people walking in the distance. A quote is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**//**  
**CROSSWAY HAS  
ALWAYS BEEN  
ABOUT WHAT IT  
COULD DO FOR  
THE COMMUNITY  
GOING BACK  
100 YEARS**  
**//**



# STANDING AT THE CROSSWAY

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**Crossway Church, which has been part of the local community for more than a century, is about to start a new chapter in its life.**

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The United Reformed Church is the last building left of what was the Heygate Estate. It will soon be demolished to be replaced with a new Crossway Christian Centre near the Strata Tower.

The church has a proud history. Opened in 1904 by the Reverend Herbert Kenward as a mission to help the poor, its good work became so well known that Queen Mary visited its hostel, crèche and baby clinic and sent food and clothing parcels on a regular basis.

"Crossway has always been about what it could do for the community going back 100 years" explains the pastor, Reverend Peter Stevenson. "It was a mission station to serve the community first and to worship God second" he adds.

The church has always been a hive of activity. At one point in the 1950s, the original church, which stood on Gurney Street, even had a roller-skating rink in the hall. It provided three packed out sessions per day plus Saturday night entertainment.

"Back then, when Reverend Kenward needed more space he just built another room. He didn't bother with planning permission!" comments Stevenson with a smile. All very different from now, when four hour meetings with architects and planners are a regular part of the pastor's day as he helps to finalise the details of the new two storey Crossway Christian Centre.

This latest incarnation of Crossway will be its third. Back in the early 1970s, the

original church was demolished along with local tenements to make way for the Heygate Estate, which is when the church moved to its present site on New Kent Road.

As with the Gurney Street building, the 1970s Crossway wasn't just used by church goers. Indeed, when the Heygate became a popular location for filming, it was regularly used by camera crews. Everyone from the cast of *The Bill* to Luther used the building as a green room, even the Elephant's own Michael Caine (while filming *Harry Brown*).

The new building, the Crossway Christian Centre, will be quite a contrast to this 70s church. "It will be energy efficient with photovoltaic panels and an eco-friendly roof" explains the Reverend. "It will also be fully sound proofed so you won't be able to hear anything from the outside."

The building will consist of a main hall and a number of spaces that can be used for different sized groups, along with a prayer room, offices and a foyer that will double as an eating area. The new building will continue to be home to more than just the Crossway congregation. It will host numerous other local church services, as well as serving as a day centre for asylum seekers and as a meeting place for community groups. "I hate the idea of churches that are sitting empty and wasted spaces" declares Stevenson.

Building work on the new centre is due to start in June 2015 and, a month after it's completed, the current church will be demolished to make way for the Elephant Park development.

"We're surrounded on three sides by hoardings so at the moment we are just making the best of the situation" says the pastor, musing philosophically. "It's called Crossway as we always come to crossways in our lives" he says. "Movement and change doesn't threaten the church. In a changing world, the church provides stability."

After five years as pastor, Stevenson has lots of fond memories of the current church, although he says there are some things he'll be glad to leave behind.

"I won't miss rodding the drains or the water seeping in because of the flat roof! But I will miss the building. For 40 years those bricks have heard songs of praise."

"It was interesting talking to people as the Heygate Estate came down" he adds "even those that didn't like living there felt something when the bulldozers went in. But in the end, you have to let it go."

Perhaps not surprisingly, when the church is finally knocked down, next summer, Reverend Stevenson says he won't be there to watch. Looking to the future, as always, he explains "I'll be concentrating on the new building, getting it up and running for the community as best as I can."

[www.crosswaychurch.org.uk](http://www.crosswaychurch.org.uk)



# THE BEST OF THE ELEPHANT: MAMUŚKA! POLISH KITCHEN AND BAR

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As with so many good stories, Mamuška!'s began with two people meeting and falling in love.

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// met my wife Paulina in 2004 and she introduced me to Polish food" recalls Ian Coll as we chat in his restaurant on a bustling Tuesday lunchtime.

"She didn't cook it herself but one weekend we visited a friend of hers who cooked the classic Polish salad Sałatka Jarzynowa. I thought it was fantastic. I asked Paulina 'why can't we have this every weekend?' And she told me that it takes three days to prepare a Polish feast! But I didn't let that put me off."

Realising that there was nowhere in London selling freshly made Polish food at an accessible price, Ian, who has a background in sales and marketing, became a man with a mission. "I started work in earnest, researching the market, developing the brand and trying to find locations." He decided on the name Mamuška! after visiting his mother-in-law in Poland. "It's what you call your best friend's mother" he explains.



Ian and his family live in Borough and quickly identified the Elephant as the perfect location for their first restaurant. "It wasn't just because it was on our doorstep" he says "it was because it's so central and people can get here so easily. Elephant and Castle doesn't have a particularly big Polish population but there is in Lewisham and Balham and it's easy to get a bus to the Elephant from more or less anywhere."

After a long search he finally leased a vacant property, a former discount bed shop, in the shopping centre. "People said I was crazy, given the centre's state of disrepair at the time. But actually it's worked for us. On Trip Advisor people often call Mamuska! 'the hidden gem' or 'a diamond in the rough'."

Word soon spread about Mamuska!; their wholesome Polish food and the excellent value (starters and deserts are around the £3 mark with full roast pork dinner with salad and potatoes at £7.85). The restaurant began to garner rave reviews on the web and was regularly packed out, especially in the evenings.

It wasn't just popular with the Polish community either. "When we opened I thought we might get 50/50 and that would be really good but actually our customers are only about 20 per cent Polish which fits perfectly with our mission to raise people's awareness about Polish food" says Ian.

At lunchtime it's mainly local office workers and students, tucking into everything from Pierogi (classic Polish dumplings) to Gotąbki (Cabbage rolls) but in the evening people travel from all over, particularly Islington and Shoreditch.

"If there's a big event at Corsica Studios or The Coronet people often book a table here first. It's perfect for groups as you can eat as much or as little as you like. One person can just have soup and another a big meal."

It's clearly a winning formula and has been so successful that Ian is planning a rapid expansion programme with five more branches of Mamuska! by the end of 2016.

"I think the reason people love it to so much is that the food is fresh and delicious. Everything is homemade from scratch and the servings are big (not to mention great value) but also it's very relaxed. We call it "fast casual". You order at the counter and collect your food but you can stay as long as you want, no one is rushing you to order your next course or leave your table" says Ian.

"Oh and we have open mic nights. Every Thursday we bring the blinds halfway down and you can forget you're sitting in the oldest shopping centre in Britain and just enjoy the atmosphere within the four walls."

And, with his hidden talents, if you do arrive on a Thursday night, you might just catch the man himself, playing guitar and singing for his customers.

Mamuska!  
Open daily from 9am till midnight (kitchen till 11pm)  
Upper Ground Floor, Elephant and Castle  
Shopping Centre. SE1 6TE  
020 83602 1898  
mamuska.net



**IT'S WHAT  
YOU CALL  
YOUR BEST  
FRIEND'S  
MOTHER**





# A NEW PARK FOR THE ELEPHANT

A brand new park is being designed for Elephant and Castle and you can get involved.

At the heart of the Elephant and Castle regeneration sits a new park for the local community to enjoy. Lend Lease, the council's regeneration partner, wants the people who will use the park to have their say on the design.

Located in the middle of the new Elephant Park development, the park will incorporate most of the 122 mature trees that have been retained from the former Heygate estate, as well as some

of the hundreds of new trees that are being planted in and around the area. All of these trees will attract wildlife and help to purify the air, providing a natural, green heart for the neighbourhood.

The park will provide a new and inclusive area for everyone in the local community to share and use. It will include a promenade with cafes and restaurants so that people can sit and enjoy the leafy scene. It will also be designed in a way that connects

it with other green spaces in the area, creating a network of green corridors that will link wildlife across the neighbourhood.

Later this year, Lend Lease will hold a number of public events in different locations around Elephant and Castle to engage with everyone who lives near the site of the park.

If you would like to be included in this consultation please email [ele-ask@lendlease.com](mailto:ele-ask@lendlease.com)





# PARK ADVISORY GROUP

The Park Advisory Group will be integral to the delivery of the new park.

The Group was formed last September, to advise on the design and future management of the Park. It is made up, equally, of representatives from the local community, Southwark Council and Lend Lease.

Commenting on their work so far, Independent Chair of the Park Advisory Group, Sarah Gaventa, said: "The Group has already achieved great momentum in setting out a vision for

the new park. Creating a park which is aspirational, bold and inclusive is central to our vision. We can't wait for the wider community consultation taking place later this year and we hope that everyone in the Elephant and Castle gets involved."

For further information, including the membership of the Park Advisory Group and the minutes from all of the meetings visit [www.lendlease.com/elephantandcastle](http://www.lendlease.com/elephantandcastle)



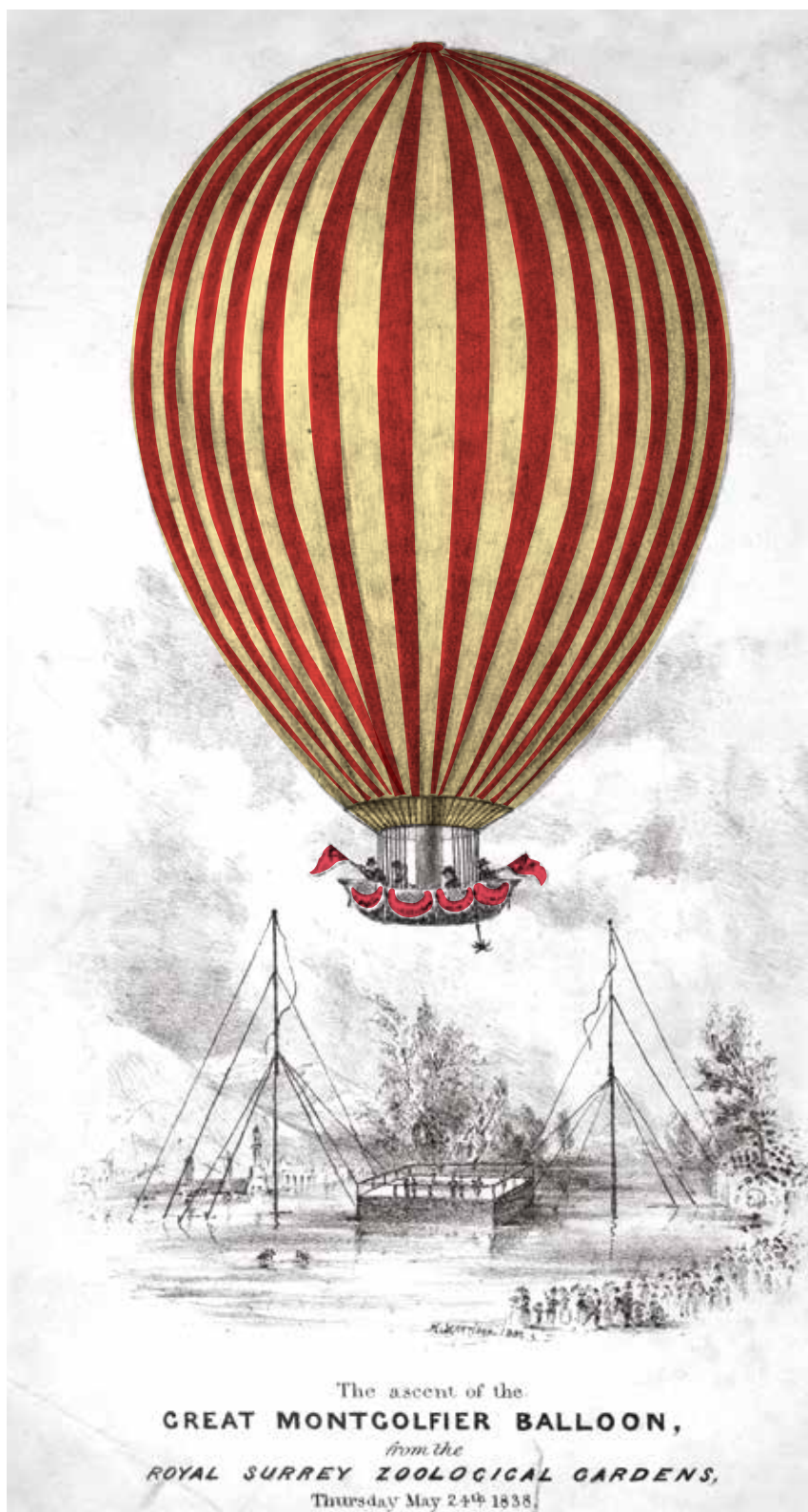
The images in the background, left and below are an artist's impression of the future Elephant Park. These will change as designs are informed by community consultation.

Above left: The Group has met with other successful community spaces, such as Dalston Eastern Curve Garden. Above right: The Park Advisory Group holding a community workshop on the site of the future park





# WHEN TIGERS ROAMED THE ELEPHANT



Thanks to Dr Patricia Dark and Judy Aitken, Southwark Libraries. The Southwark Local History Library and Archive can be found at 211 Borough High Street. Why not drop in to find out more about Southwark's history? For details see [www.southwark.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/libraries) or follow @SouthwarkLibs on Twitter.



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## Pasley Park is now a small green oasis in the heart of Walworth but if you stand and listen carefully, you might just be able to hear the echoes of its past: tigers and bears, waterfalls, fireworks and music in the air.

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That's because this pleasant but ordinary little park is the last remnant of one of London's great historic leisure attractions – the Royal Surrey Zoological Gardens.

Surrey Gardens, to give it its usual name, was a merger of two older forms of entertainment: the pleasure garden and the menagerie. Pleasure gardens, like those at Vauxhall, were public parks with other amenities such as rides, cafés, and performance spaces, hugely popular in the 18th century. Menageries were private zoos, the most famous of which was at the Tower of London.

By the early 19th century though, both faced serious problems. Pleasure gardens had gained a reputation for seediness and debauchery while a new style of zoo was supplanting the menageries.

The Zoological Society of London (ZSL) opened Regent's Zoo in 1828. It took in the Tower's animals in 1835 and became an instant hit that's still going today (albeit better known as simply London Zoo). In contrast, menageries, such as the one at Exeter Change (near Charing Cross) were in crisis. Their star attraction, Chuneé the elephant, was put down in March 1826 after killing his keeper and ZSL twice rebuffed owner Edward Cross's offers to manage the new zoo and bring his animals with him.

Since he couldn't join ZSL, Cross decided to beat them.

In the early years of Victoria's reign, London was the capital of a global empire. There were more Londoners, with more money to spend, than ever before. People wanted to get away from the noise, grime, and stink of the city and were hungry for new, exciting forms of entertainment.

All Cross needed was to find enough space. He found it in the area between Walworth Road and Kennington Park Road, formerly the grounds of Walworth Manor House. In 1831 Cross founded the Surrey Literary, Scientific and Zoological Institution to raise the money

necessary to purchase the site from Lord Holland. The Institution paid £40 for the land and paid Cross £3,500 for his animals.

Surrey Gardens opened shortly after. It was a unique blend: a zoo, pleasure garden and music venue. It soon became a firm family favourite and it wasn't long before it received the royal stamp of approval. Queen Adelaide visited shortly after its opening and Victoria visited twice, in 1836 and 1848.

The zoo was well-built and lavish. A circular conservatory that housed carnivores, birds and fish was one of the biggest glass buildings of its day: 6,000 square feet, big enough to enclose a stream. Eventually, the zoo was exhibiting more than 170 species of animal, including rhinoceroses, pygmy elephants, lions, tigers, apes, baboons and monkeys, reptiles, bears and a huge variety of birds. The first giraffes on public display in Britain were at the Surrey Gardens in 1843.

The elaborate pleasure gardens provided pleasant strolling amongst both exotic and domestic trees and plants as well as a three-acre lake. It very quickly became the place for fairs, fetes, fireworks and shows. Events like balloon launches were popular as well but the biggest crowds came for the 'spectaculars', re-enactments of dramatic events from history and recreations of ancient cities and landscapes.

In 1839, 'The Eruption of Mount Hekla' was attended by 500,000 people over the course of 100 performances. While 1841's 'Panorama of Rome' was set across five acres and featured a 97ft high cross on the replica of St Peter's Basilica.

If that wasn't excitement enough, there were also the concerts. In 1856, under the musical direction of French conductor Louis-Antoine Jullien, the Surrey Gardens Music Hall was built on the site. It featured a double-level stage, which held up to 1,000 performers and 12,000 spectators could watch from the main

hall or one of its three levels of galleries. Patrons could even listen from the landscaped gardens outside.

Unfortunately, times (and tastes) changed and the Crystal Palace provided stiff competition when it opened in 1851. Cross retired in 1844, leaving the Gardens under the management of William Tyler, who sold the animals in 1855, in an attempt to keep the enterprise afloat. The following year, seven people were killed in a stampede during a sermon by the local Baptist minister Charles Spurgeon and the resulting backlash helped tip the Gardens into bankruptcy.



## IT WAS A UNIQUE BLEND: A ZOO, PLEASURE GARDEN AND MUSIC VENUE



Following a fire, which gutted the Music Hall, the entire site was sold to St Thomas's Hospital in 1862. The hospital used Surrey Gardens as a temporary site for nine years. The old music hall held 300 beds, while the giraffe house served as the cholera ward. Following a brief attempt to revive the gardens when the hospital moved to Albert Embankment, the whole site was sold for housing in 1877.

Southwark, including Walworth, continues to be a destination for entertainment to this day but unfortunately the days when you could see an erupting volcano or indeed a tiger in the Elephant, are long gone.

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Locals tell us  
what they  
love about  
the Elephant

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# MY ELEPHANT AND CASTLE



## Saj

What do I like? It's an easy place to get to by Tube plus it's got the Ministry of Sound!

I used to go raving there. But now it seems a bit down trodden and dated so I think it does need regenerating. One thing I'd definitely change is putting up better signage because it's not an easy area for visitors to find their way around.



## Yoshimura

The oriental shops are great - you can get everything you need - but I'd like more clothes shops, like Primark. If I want to buy clothes at the moment I have to go to Peckham or central London. The transport is really good, especially the Underground so I wouldn't want to change that.



## Mick

I love the Elephant market and the record stall especially. It's an oasis of music and it's great to be able to buy second hand records and CDs locally as there aren't many places left. My missus loves the bingo in the shopping centre. She goes twice a week. We like the bowling alley too. I've lived here since the 70s when they were building the Heygate and now it's gone. Lots of things are changing and I'm not sure if it will be better or worse in ten year's time. It could go either way.



## Roseanna

I have a vintage stall in the shopping centre and I like how so many people say 'hiya' and 'hello' as they pass through. I would change the shopping centre and make it a bit more modern though. What would I keep? I'd like to keep my stall and I'd like to keep the people!



## Carol

I've lived here since I was 7 years old, so Elephant and Castle has always been home

for me. I know it like the back of my hand. What makes it so special is the people. You can't beat South Londoners - they're the salt of the earth. If I could change one thing it would be to have more police on the streets. I'd like to feel safer. What would I keep? I'd keep the shopping centre. They should modernise it but not get rid of it.



## Alan

I've lived here for 46 years. It's a nice friendly community and I know all my neighbours. The best pub is The Prince of Wales on St George's Road. It's a family local that does good pub food. I didn't go one Sunday, as I had a bad back, and the next week the landlady said "You should have told me and I would have brought your dinner over!"



## Anthony

I enjoy the Elephant Market and I like the 99p shop and Iceland. You can get most of the essential things you need round here. I don't think I'd change anything.



## Nelson

There's everything here. If you want to shop for food or find anything to eat, it's all here. But I'd like more clothes shopping. I want H&M!

One thing I'd like to keep is the positive atmosphere, it's pretty family friendly and in ten years time I think it will be better still.

The Elephant Magazine is produced by Southwark Council. We would love to hear your feedback and welcome suggestions for future features. Drop us a line at [councilnews@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:councilnews@southwark.gov.uk)

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