

&London

INSPIRING PEOPLE, PLACES & PROPERTY / SPRING 2016

LET'S

MAKE

SOMETHING

Beautiful

AMAZING ARTISANS | FABULOUS FEASTS | DRAMATIC DESIGN | GORGEOUS GARDENS



ON THE COVER
LOU BLACKSHAW

The colourful lettering on our cover was handmade by Lou Blackshaw, one of London's leading model makers. Working at her Battersea studio, it took a week to create all the elements for the cover and the Meet the Makers feature (p10). Lou used wool, flowers, acrylic and fabric, but her favourite medium is actually paper. 'It's so versatile to work with,' she says.

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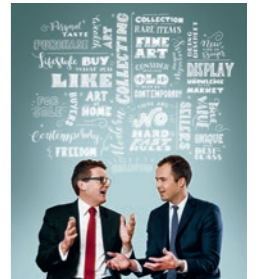
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We discover a charming country house that is the perfect antidote to the stresses of city living



Published on behalf of Strutt & Parker by Sunday

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wearesunday.com

Object of desire

Lee Broom's beautifully simple Hanging Hoop Chair was the star of his highly anticipated show at Milan Design Week. The chair, designed to be suspended from a ceiling, is created out of two brass-plated metal circles. The smaller of the hoops provides the seating, upholstered in bright red wool by Danish company Kvadrat, while the larger hoop provides balance and structure. There may be a nod to Eero Aarnio's iconic 1960s creation – the Plastic Bubble Chair – but this 21st-century version is very much of its time, thanks to its pared-down frame and splash of colour. 'I wanted to explore the things that are inspiring me right now,' says Lee. 'Pop culture, new materials and futuristic shapes.' leebroom.com



GAME CHANGER Swingers

As restaurant concepts go, this one is unique. Located in a 16,000 sq ft former World War II bunker at the foot of the Gherkin, Swingers will be London's first crazy-golf-themed venue. Along with two nine-hole golf courses, featuring a lighthouse and windmill, you will find a clubhouse with a gin terrace, four cocktail bars and street food. There will also be a grand private dining room, the President's Committee Room, that overlooks the green. Founders Matt Grech-Smith and Jeremy Simmonds, of the aptly named Institute of Competitive Socialising, are partnered with Freixenet – so great Cava and cocktails will be par for the course. The concept was trialed as a pop-up last year and attracted 90,000 Londoners during a six-month run. Now that it has a permanent venue, it's time for City workers to don their Pringle knitwear and get swinging. swingersLDN.co.uk



CATHCART ROAD, SW10 Better by design

This spacious and elegantly designed five-bedroom family home, located close to Fulham Road's restaurants and shops, offers the very best of modern living, with a sophisticated sound and lighting system, and a wonderful landscaped garden. *£3,500 per week. Let Contact 020 7373 1010*



Gabbia Pendants are an eye-catching mix of bright tones and rustic textures. *From £500, mintsop.co.uk*

TRENDING Totally tropical

Capture the spirit of the Rio Carnival with tropical prints and dashes of brilliant colour

Stretch your style wings with Sophia Webster's Chiara butterfly sandals. *£420, sophiawebster.com*



A kitsch but cool cockatoo ornament. *£30, houseoffraser.co.uk*



Turn up the heat with a fine bone china Palmeral Tea Set. *£171.60, houseofbackney.com*

Carlos Motta's Rio Dining Chair comes in a range of tropical colours. *From £635, espasso.com*



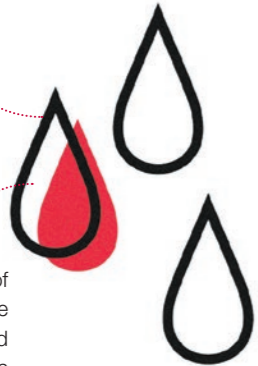
HOW TO MAKE...

The perfect Negroni

As revealed by drinks maestro Matteo Malisan of super-stylish Seymour's Parlour cocktail lounge

Method: pour the ingredients over ice cubes into a mixing glass. Put the lightest (gin) in first so the denser ones mix as they pass through. Stir, strain and pour over fresh ice cubes.

Strange but true: the Count Camillo Negroni walked into his local bar after a bad day and asked for a strong version of his usual cocktail – an Americano. The barman replaced soda water with gin, and the Negroni was born.



Ingredients: 1 oz each of London dry gin (for example Tanqueray), Campari and a bitter vermouth such as Belsazar White Vermouth.

Final touch: add a slice or twist of orange.



Ice: always use big ice cubes to achieve further dilution and open up the aromas as you drink.

Serve: in an Old Fashioned glass, not too thick, at around 0-2°C.



CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT...
Seeing Funny Girl

Tickets for *Funny Girl* at the achingly fashionable Menier Chocolate Factory sold out in 90 minutes. The musical features the iconic role of comedian Fanny Brice, which Barbra Streisand made her own – until Sheridan Smith stole the show with a performance big on tears, tantrums and tunes. For those who missed the first run, this exuberant musical will have a second act at the Savoy Theatre. It's a chance to see what is likely to be the performance of the year. 9 April-10 September, Savoy Theatre, funnygirlthemusical.co.uk



INSTANT EXPERT
79 Portraits and 2 Still Lives

What is it?

The first exhibition of new work by David Hockney to be staged in four years.

Where will it be held?

The Royal Academy of Arts from 2 July to 2 October.

Why is it worth going?

Having concentrated on epic landscapes for his 2012 London show *A Bigger Picture*, David Hockney has now returned to the intimate portraits that first made his reputation in the 1970s.

What are the highlights?

These paintings, which were created in his LA studio over a two-year period, feature friends, family and art world luminaries, alongside high-profile celebrities. Subjects include Lord Jacob Rothschild, gallery owner Larry Gagosian and the comedian Barry Humphries (*shown above*).

Why is it unique?

Hockney invited each of his subjects to sit for just three days, which he describes as 'a 20-hour exposure'. Every person appears in exactly the same chair, against the same blue background and on the same sized canvas.

royalacademy.org.uk



Height of style

CRANBURY ROAD, SW6

A dramatic, double-height dining room and open-plan kitchen are at the heart of this beautifully renovated home. With five bedrooms and three reception rooms, the stylish interior has been perfectly designed for family living. £3,200,000. Freehold. Contact 020 7731 7100



My London style

Designer Martin Brudnizki has created some of London's most iconic interiors, including The Ivy, Scott's and the Dean Street Townhouse

Inspiring building

The Barbican is totally unique. I find it visually stunning – the coarse concrete surfaces, wood window frames, lush gardens and elevated lakes all come together so beautifully.

Secret bolthole

The Academicians' Room in the Royal Academy of Arts is an ideal escape, either before or after an exhibition.

Dream night out

A play at the Donmar, dinner at The Ivy and then drinks in Soho.

Best specialist store

Jamb on Pimlico Road for rare and antique fire surrounds, chimney pieces and grates.

Favourite clothes shop

I have recently started buying lots of hats from Lock & Co.

Coollest market

The New Craftsmen on North Street. It's not so much a market but a collection of designers coming together under one roof who all share the same ethos in their dedication to their craft.

Treasure trove

Moioli Gallery on Fulham Road. It's a treasure trove of modern

Italian furniture and curiosities, with pieces by Ponti, Albini and lesser-known designers.

Urban oasis

Mount Street Gardens are beautiful, tucked between Grosvenor Chapel on South Audley Street and the Church of the Immaculate Conception on Farm Street. These two churches perfectly display two distinct architectural styles often found in London – the classical and Gothic Revival – and together with the gardens create a beautiful environment.

Best London view

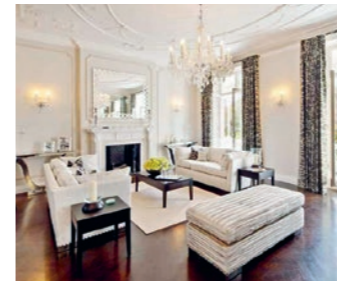
Outside Café Bohème on Old Compton Street, a place where you can appreciate the cultural diversity London has to offer.

Amazing space

The Sir John Soane Museum on Lincoln's Inn Fields. He was the master at using light and space, and does so to dramatic effect in the display of his art objects.

Ultimate indulgence

Time spent in the National Gallery. It's big enough to get lost in, so you can often find yourself alone and surrounded by great artists, which is a wonderful experience.



CADOGAN PLACE, SW1 Natural style

With its high ceilings, grand drawing room, fabulous roof terrace and beautiful garden views, this elegant two-bedroom apartment combines immaculate style with an enviable central location, right in the heart of fashionable Knightsbridge. £5,750,000. Leasehold
Contact 020 7235 9959



SECRET LONDON Black Label

Perfect 10 is a trailblazer of the home beauty trend. Loved by both *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, it has delivered luxury beauty treatments direct to London customers since 2011. Now the company is taking its offering to a whole new level with the launch of the elite Black Label. This 24-hour, members-only service, which is masterminded by founders Claire Aggarwal and Charlie McCorry, will provide beauty experts for clients anywhere in the world, from a country home to a villa in Ibiza. The highly trained therapists are used to dealing with VIPs and royals, so expect the ultimate makeover – wherever you are.
perfect10mobilebeauty.co.uk

ON THE GRID

Concept stores

London's latest retail destinations sell a complete modern lifestyle



THE MEETING PLACE DUKE STREET EMPORIUM Duke Street, W1

A chic Mayfair venue, backed by fashion label Jigsaw, offering a unique mix of style, shopping, culture and conversation.



You'll find rare books and art, but pieces from Jigsaw's premium brand, A-line, are the standout.



THE PIONEER DOVER STREET MARKET Haymarket, SW1

This ground-breaking concept of a street market selling exclusive global brands is housed in the former Burberry HQ.



This is the place to discover extraordinary jewellery, including the striking panther ring by Harumi.



THE MAVERICK CLERKENWELL LONDON 155 Farringdon Road, EC1

A cutting-edge creative hub that highlights new and established talent in fashion, jewellery, interiors and music.



The homeware is hard to resist, especially Mariah De Haan's Asian-inspired teapot.

THE PITCH

THE MUST-BUY

THE CUSTOMERS

THE PIT STOP



Trinny Woodhall, Downton Abbey's Laura Carmichael and designer Zoe Jordan.



The in-store Fernandez and Wells café serves great coffee, wine and tapas.



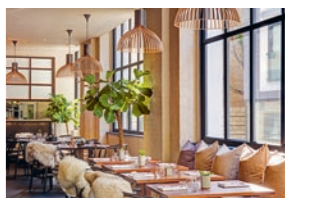
Style leaders, including Chloe Sevigny, Kanye West and Victoria Beckham.



Rose Bakery on the top floor is the perfect place for people watching.



A-List design talent such as Hussein Chalayan, Jasper Conran and Tom Dixon.



The suitably stylish 155 Bar & Kitchen showcases bespoke British producers.

IS
THIS THE
MOST
Creative
PLACE IN
LONDON?

Hidden in an overlooked part of central London is a creative
hothouse dedicated to nurturing the city's most talented new
designers. Welcome to the colourful world of Cockpit Arts

WORDS CLAIRE COLEMAN
MODEL LOU BLACKSHAW
TYPOGRAPHY ALEX FOWKES



A modest cul-de-sac, sandwiched between Great Ormond Street Hospital and Holborn, does not at first glance look like the hub of London's creative scene. But this is the home of Cockpit Arts, a revolutionary organisation whose approach to craft and design is unique in the UK.

While there are incubators for tech startups, where young companies are offered subsidised premises and access to mentors, this approach had never been applied to the world of design. But, a decade ago, Cockpit Arts changed from being just another workspace to being the country's first – and only – craft incubator.

'No one was looking at the incubator model for crafts when we launched in 2005,' says Vanessa Swann, Cockpit's Chief Executive. 'In fact, the aspirations for the sector were quite low. But we wanted to support individual designer-makers to be more successful.'

The scheme provides practical and creative help, from design mentoring and business coaching to affordable studio space. When you look at the talent that has emerged from the craft incubator it's hard to understand why more organisations haven't followed its lead. Notable alumni include Clarissa Hulse, one of

the UK's leading textile designers, whose scarves and bed linen can be seen everywhere from Liberty to Barneys; Mark Tallowin, creator of chic leather bags that have been featured in *Elle* and *New York Magazine*; and Jane Adam, an acclaimed jewellery designer who exhibits in museums and galleries around the world.

The moment you step inside the building it is clear why talented people want to work here. Doors open on to light, airy studios bustling with activity. In one there are piles of richly coloured material, in another a designer-maker is intently working on an intricate piece of jewellery.

For textile designer Nadia-Anne Ricketts, this is a uniquely inspiring creative community. 'I've become good friends with the other cloth designers,' she says. 'We share knowledge, contacts and experiences. It's a really great environment to work in.'

One of the key reasons for Cockpit Art's success is that it attracts a wide range of talent, from those who are just at the ideas stage to creatives with established businesses. The numbers are significant – Cockpit Arts has studio space for around 170 makers across two buildings (it has a second space in Deptford).

'On average, people are with us for about five years,' says Vanessa. 'Our churn rate is about 12%, so we have around 24 spaces to fill each year and we interview four times a year.'

The incubator is specifically set up to give people time to develop creatively without having too many financial restrictions. Those at the beginning of their careers are given free space for a year, with fees increasing over time. This means more established designers subsidise those who are just starting out. Along with the mentoring programme, which gives people access to Cockpit alumni, there is the informal exchange of ideas and information that comes from working in a shared space.

It's a model that perfectly suits Sarah Marafie, who joined Cockpit two years ago. 'I was making jewellery from bits of pottery, but I was self-taught and wanted to develop my skills and my product,' she says. 'The mentoring programme introduced me to jewellery designer Elizabeth Bone, who was invaluable.'

Sarah began to focus on exactly what sort of jewellery she wanted to make and, as a result, her business changed direction. 'I've rebranded ▶

TALENT SHOW

The best places in London to discover new creative work

Open studios

Studio open days, where young designers showcase and sell their products, are ideal opportunities for spotting new talent. Cockpit Arts, for example, holds two a year – one in the spring and one pre-Christmas. To find others, visit openstudiocomms.org.

New Designers

This annual exhibition, now in its 31st year, sees more than 3,000 graduates from some of Britain's leading design courses exhibiting everything from textiles and jewellery to product design and illustration. It takes place 29 June-9 July at the Business Design Centre, N1.

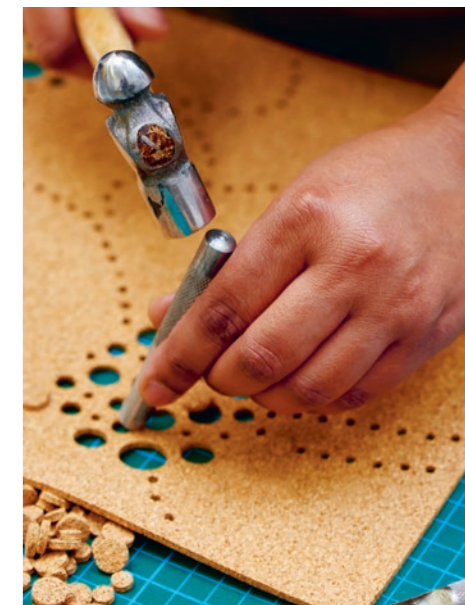
Designers/Makers Market

Founded in 2010, Designers/Makers was a local design market that has now grown into an agency supporting freelance designers. It runs an online shop (designersmakers.com) where makers can sell their wares, as well as a monthly market where you'll find more than 40 design and craft practitioners. It's held the third Saturday of the month at Old Spitalfields Market, E1.



"WE SHARE KNOWLEDGE, CONTACTS AND EXPERIENCE. IT'S A REALLY GREAT ENVIRONMENT TO WORK IN"

NADIA-ANNE RICKETTS
TEXTILE DESIGNER



Photography previous page: Rowan Fee
Photography this page: Holly Pickering



“I STILL FEEL I’M LEARNING AND I LOVE BEING PART OF A COMMUNITY. COCKPIT ARTS IS SUPPORTIVE AND SO INSPIRING”

ELEANOR LAKELIN
CABINETMAKER

as Boodi, creating pieces from more expensive materials, such as gold, silver and gemstones.’

Of course, success isn’t just about producing inspiring work, it’s also about the bottom line. It’s here that the craft incubator really delivers. Turnover and profits among Cockpit’s designer-makers have increased year-on-year since they introduced the incubation model in 2005. When the Craft Council reported national average turnover and profit figures for designer-makers, the equivalent averages for Cockpit designer-makers were around 50% higher. Equally impressive, for every £1 the council invests in a Cockpit designer through its loan fund, it produces £3.36 in income.

Not all the people who join the incubator go on to full-time careers. ‘Success does mean

something different for each designer-maker,’ says Vanessa Swann. ‘For some it’s developing a business model, while for others it might be looking at establishing a portfolio career, which might include something like teaching that enables them to do the work they love.’

When you talk to the makers, it’s clear they see Cockpit Arts as a genuinely creative space. That is why even the more successful studio holders plan to stay for as long as they can.

That’s certainly true of Eleanor Lakelin, a cabinetmaker who had been turning wood almost as a sideline before a bursary allowed her to move into the studios. Four years on, she creates collections for Liberty and her work is exhibited in galleries nationwide. But despite this success, she has no plans to move just yet.

‘I still feel I’m learning,’ she says. ‘And I love being part of the community. Many workshops are just workshops, there’s no sense of belonging to something larger. But Cockpit is supportive – you learn so much – and it’s so inspiring.’

If Vanessa Swann has her way, Cockpit Arts will be inspiring many more designer-makers in the future. ‘My dream is to do more with more people, as well as doing what we do more effectively,’ she says. That includes, at some point in the future, building a larger creative space and expanding the craft incubator.

It’s a big ambition for a studio tucked away in an anonymous backwater. But then, Cockpit Arts is all about defying expectations. ■

RISING STARS

Three talented designers to watch at Cockpit Arts



Jenny Espirito Santo

Jenny founded Mind The Cork in 2013 with the aim of designing and making beautiful objects from this underrated, sustainable material. Her handcrafted accessories include side tables and cork fabric cushions. mindthecork.co.uk



Beatrice Larkin

After finishing her MA in Textile Design at The Royal College of Art, Beatrice founded her own business. She designs fabrics at Cockpit Arts and works with a Yorkshire mill to manufacture woven blankets and throws. beatricelarkin.com



Carréducker

Bespoke shoemakers Deborah Carré and James Ducker, who work with Savile Row’s Gieves & Hawkes, are recent recipients of Cockpit’s Ingenious Growth Loan Fund and are launching ready-to-wear shoes this year. carreducker.com



The view finder

Open skies and great views are the key attractions of these stylish homes

1 Queen’s Gate Place Mews, SW7

A meticulously refurbished four-bedroom house with a fabulous private roof terrace. £6,950,000. Freehold
Contact 020 7225 3866

2 Wellington House, SW1

A spectacular duplex penthouse with breathtaking views over St James’s Park. £5,495,000. Leasehold
Contact 020 7235 9959

3 Lennox Gardens, SW1

A penthouse with direct lift access and views of the famous Brompton Oratory. £5,350,000. Leasehold
Contact 020 7235 9959

4 Cadogan Place, SW1

A five-bedroom penthouse with a sliding roof that creates an open-air roof terrace. £12,750,000. Share of freehold
Contact 020 7235 9996



MONKEY BUSINESS

Anna Glover's innovative work blurs the boundary between art and design

WORDS CLARE DOWDY

IT LOOKS like a painting. With its quirky subject and striking geometric shapes, Monkey Palace wouldn't be out of place in a modern gallery. But this isn't an artwork – it's a beautiful wallpaper by designer Anna Glover.

Anna, who won an *Elle Decoration* British Design Award last year, made her name producing bespoke murals. But not all of Anna's clients are in a position to commission original pieces, so her latest creation straddles the worlds of handmade murals and shop-bought wallpaper.

Monkey Palace has been designed to complement modern London interiors by playing with metallic colours and marble. 'My clients in luxury properties have lovely surfaces such as metals and marble,' she explains. 'I wanted to create something that would sit well with that, representing marble but in an unusual way.'

As well as making a silk wallpaper, Anna has also applied the Monkey Palace design to standard wallpaper and as a silk laminate on glass, which can be backlit or act as an ornate wall divider. 'Thanks to new digital print technology, we can now make individual pieces on a small scale,' she says.

When it comes to wallpaper, Anna is in favour of papering the whole room to create a unique space. It's part of her ambition as a designer to bring originality to her clients' homes. 'My work is playful and individual,' she explains. 'I feel it's really important to go into a space and enhance it.' ■



An inspired use of light and space has transformed this mews house in South Kensington into one of London's most desirable homes

THE LIGHT TOUCH

WORDS CLARE DOWDY

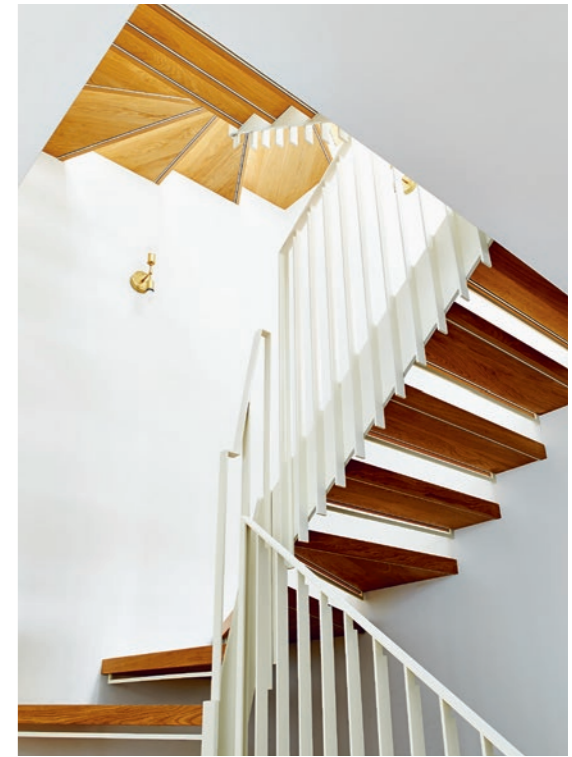
PHOTOGRAPHY RACHEL WHITING



This page and opposite: the main reception room, furnished with new and vintage pieces, has an internal balcony that overlooks the dining area



This page: the sleek kitchen and dining area; collectible pieces includes an Ercol chair. Opposite page: bedrooms combine style and comfort; the bespoke central staircase



ROOM AT THE TOP

What to consider when adding a storey to the top of your home.

Look up

Check to see if any of the neighbouring properties have already been built upwards to ensure that a precedent for extensions has been set.

Good experience

Engage a good local architect with experience of this type of project as they will understand the issues surrounding planning, overlooking and height.

Speaking terms

Tell your neighbours before you submit your planning application as a personal introduction always helps. People don't like to see a planning application on their doorstep before someone has spoken to them first.

On the move

When you have a start date for the work, arrange for temporary accommodation – adding a floor is a disruptive project that can affect the whole of a property.

THERE'S A BIG surprise waiting for visitors to this apparently modest house, tucked away in a peaceful South Kensington mews. Nothing from the outside would attract your attention, but open the front door and you step into an amazingly spacious property with striking design features.

The house has certainly come a long way since Harry Bridgeman first saw it. 'This was a rental property,' he says. 'It was fairly worn down and needed gutting. But I could see the house had potential.' It was the opportunity to add space that really caught his eye. The two-storey property lacked a basement and there was scope to create a new top floor.

Harry, a developer at Joseph Homes, appointed Alma-nac as the architects. They are a young practice with a track record in transforming small sites into eye-catching homes. The result is a four-storey house that makes inspired use of space and light.

The front door opens into the original garage, which has been transformed into an informal living room, with a polished concrete floor and pale grey walls – a colour palette that is used throughout the house. This leads to a more formal reception room, complete with a welcoming modern fireplace. 'This is where you would have your gin and tonic when you have guests around,' says Harry.

Rather than running the timber floorboards right to the back wall, there is an internal balcony at the far end of the room with

a view to the open-plan kitchen and dining room below. Light floods down from the glass roof at the top of the house, bringing a soft illumination all the way to the lower floor. The rear wall has been rendered in polished plaster to help reflect the light.

'I wanted to make sure that the basement felt as spacious as the rest of the house,' says Harry. 'So we pushed the ceiling heights to get a real feeling of volume.' Along with an elegant kitchen and dining area, there is also a TV snug and a utility room.

The four floors are linked by a bespoke central staircase, designed by specialists Diapo. It has been made with extra-thin floating oak treads and finned supports to allow views up through the house and across the rooms. The staircase works with the other smart design elements such as light wells and structural glass floors to bring as much natural light into the house as possible.

The bedrooms occupy the top two storeys of the house. The first floor has two bedrooms and two bathrooms, one en suite, while the whole of the top floor is given over to a master bedroom suite, with a bathroom and dressing room. A sliding glass door opens out from the bedroom to a private, south-facing terrace.

Buyers of a London property can be caught up in protracted negotiations about exactly which fixtures and fittings the sellers are prepared to leave behind. But in this house everything is included, so the new owners will be able simply to walk in and

enjoy the chic interiors created by Shoreditch-based designers Alexander Waterworth, whose clients include Soho House.

The result is a beautifully judged mix of new and mid-century pieces, some of which were sourced at Sunbury Antiques Market – a Mecca for design aficionados. Along with vintage Danish pieces and Ercol chairs, there are bespoke timber tables commissioned from British furniture maker Rough Living.

The lighting has a similarly bespoke feel. Rather than simply installing banks of downlighters, there are pendant and wall lights, many of them in brass, from Montreal lighting design studio Lambert & Fils and Cedar & Moss in Oregon.

The overall effect is cool and current, but also welcoming – this is a home for modern life where the design successfully balances style with practicality. 'I think the look and feel of the house will appeal to people who are either downsizing from a big house in London, or who have a country property and need a second home in town for work or leisure,' explains Harry.

This is clearly a very special house, with a discreet exterior that hides a fabulous living space. 'It's rare to find a property like this,' says Harry. 'The location, in a quiet mews, is ideal and the house is ready for someone to move straight in – it really is a gem.' ■

Cornwall Mews West, £3,750,000. Contact: 0207 235 9959



London style

Make a design statement with our choice of the most stylish homes

1 One Nine Elms, SW8

An opportunity to own a beautifully designed apartment with five-star hotel service and 24-hour concierge. Prices from £1,545,000. Leasehold
Contact 020 7318 4677

2 Epirus Road, SW6

An immaculately presented house with excellent entertaining space. £2,350,000. Freehold
Contact 020 7731 7100

3 Cathcart Road, SW10

An exceptional architecturally renovated family home. £4,950 per week. Let
Contact 020 7373 1010

4 St Stephens Gardens, W2

A smartly designed three-bedroom flat with a bright, modern interior. £1,795,000. Leasehold
Contact 020 7221 1111



5 Boyne Terrace Mews, W11

An elegantly designed three-bedroom mews house with a garden and garage. £3,600,000. Freehold
Contact 020 7221 1111

6 Cheyne Court, W8

A three-bedroom apartment with superb open-plan living space. £3,250,000. Share of freehold
Contact 020 7225 3866

7 Portobello Road, W11

A unique two-bedroom flat in a gated cobbled street with parking and a porter. £2,350,000. Share of freehold
Contact 020 7221 1111





1. DARWIN
2. LA SOUVAROV
3. FULLBEARD
4. DUCKTAIL
5. PETITE GOATEE
6. FRANZ JOSEPH
7. BALBO
8. CHIN CURTAIN
9. MUTTON CHOPS
10. HYNEMAN
11. NAPOLEON III
12. SHORT BOXED
13. FRENCH FORK
14. VAN DYKE
15. ZZ TOP

HAVE WE REACHED PEAK BEARD?

Beards have become icons of modern style. But is the trend set to last? We find out why London beards go in – and out – of fashion

WORDS DR ALUN WITHEY

ILLUSTRATIONS JOE WILSON

BEARDS ARE having a moment. Quite a long moment as it turns out. When the trend took off in the summer of 2013, particularly in the creative quarters of Shoreditch and Hoxton, it was initially dismissed as a passing fad. But beards are now more popular than ever. In fact, they are so prevalent that barbershops have become one of the fastest growing UK businesses over the past two years. But what is driving the trend? And are beards finally about to fall out of fashion?

Beards have always gone in and out of style, but the reasons for their popularity have changed throughout history. At various times they have been used to signify health, daring and even wisdom. They have also been seen as important statements, representing everything from a man's age to his occupation and status.

A visitor to Tudor London, for example, would have seen a bewildering number of different styles. But local residents would have immediately been able to interpret them, from the bushy styles favoured by nobles (as seen in Holbein's portraits) to the 'spade beard' popular with soldiers – so called because it represented the spade that was about to dig the grave of the enemy.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, beards were used as proof of current scientific thinking. This was a time when the body was

thought to consist of four humours – fluids existing in a delicate balance in a body. Facial hair was seen as evidence of a sooty material rising up from heat in a man's liver. A beard demonstrated good health – an idea that was later adopted by the Victorians.

In the 18th century, the beard largely disappeared from men's faces. This was the Age of Enlightenment, when elegance and openness were championed, as well as a youthful appearance. As a result, shaving became highly fashionable, helped by innovative technology. Located around the Strand, prominent razor makers, such as J.H. Savigny, used new types of steel to produce razors that were sharper and more comfortable. Just at the time that fashion called for smooth faces, better razors made the job of shaving far easier and ensured the trend spread in popularity.

If Georgian London saw the disappearance of facial hair, the Victorians brought it back with a vengeance. Around 1850, huge beards were considered to be the natural mark of masculinity. Prominent writers such as Thomas Carlyle and Charles Dickens extolled the virtues of the beard. New bearded heroes could be found in the military and also among rugged explorers heading off to tame new lands. When they returned, their heavily bearded faces were seen as a symbol of their endurance and strength.

Victorian medicine also weighed in to the fight to promote beards. All manner of articles sought to prove that the beard was naturally healthy. According to some it filtered out dust and germs, preventing them from attacking the nose and throat. For any profession involving public speaking, a beard was considered vital to protect the voice. Those who worked in dusty environments were implored to let their whiskers grow. As a warning, various studies testified that shaving off a beard actually invited illness.

So what does the past tell us about London's current obsession with beards? Facial hair goes in and out of favour for specific reasons. Fashion is certainly one element, but it is also noticeable that beards often become an issue when men have somehow felt

“AS A WARNING, VARIOUS STUDIES TESTIFIED THAT SHAVING OFF A BEARD ACTUALLY INVITED ILLNESS”

challenged. For example, in the 19th century, men were struggling to keep pace with new working conditions, industrialisation and growing challenges to their authority from women. How did they react? By growing massive facial hair!

It is possible to argue that in modern times, where the boundaries between the sexes are blurred, growing a beard is a subconscious reaction to deep-seated social changes. History suggests that, at some point, the trend will shift. Indeed, there may already be signs of changes towards shorter beards, rather than the 'hipster' beard. It's even possible that moustaches will make a comeback. My feeling is beards will be around for some time yet.

Growing a beard or shaving it off represents a choice. By looking at those choices over time, and what influences them, we can tell a great deal about any given society. That's why beards matter. ■

Dr Alun Withey is a research fellow at the University of Exeter



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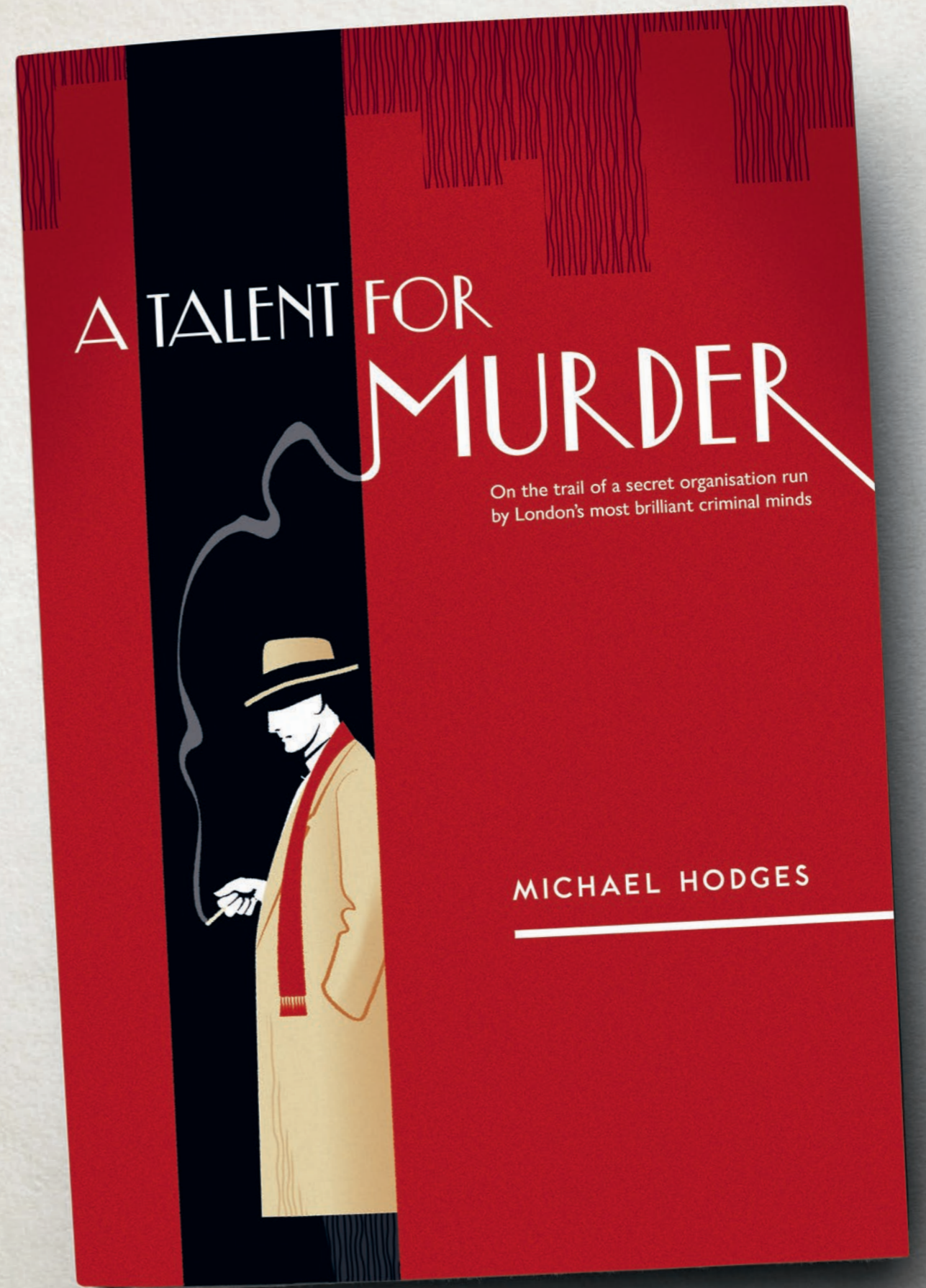
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Today, 31 Gerrard Street is not littered with corpses, the window boxes are free of discarded revolvers and blood doesn't seep from under the front door of the Georgian terrace. Instead, you will find the far more welcoming scarlet and gold frontage of the Oriental Dragon Chinese restaurant.

But on a fogbound autumn night in 1930, the crowd gathered on this shadowy Soho thoroughfare included some of the most fiendishly clever criminal minds in the country. The house, dating back to the 1690s, was the original meeting place for a unique society that has earned a special place in the dark annals of British crime: The Detection Club. Founding members included Father Brown creator GK Chesterton, Lord Peter Wimsey author Dorothy L Sayers, and the queen of the whodunit, Agatha Christie. Eighty-six years later the club is still a home for the élite of crime and thriller writing – modern members include Ian Rankin and Val McDermid.

The Detection Club's current president and archivist, crime writer Martin Edwards, thinks the club had a particular appeal for Agatha Christie. 'The club was founded at a time when she was getting over a lot of trauma in her personal life,' he says. 'She had been divorced and it seems clear that she saw The Detection Club as a bit of a lifeline. Agatha Christie was famously pretty reclusive – she wasn't a social animal – but she continued to be committed to The Detection Club until the end of her life. She wrote down in her journal the plot for a book she never actually wrote called *13 at Dinner*, which was exactly that – set at The Detection Club, with the characters based on her fellow members.'

The impressive group of crime writers was brought together by Anthony Berkeley Cox, universally known as 'Berkeley', author of lethal outings such as *The Silk Stocking Murders* and *The Poisoned Chocolates Case*. This was the Golden Age of detective fiction and Berkeley believed the form's greatest practitioners needed defending from the rush of trashy imitation mysteries, jammed with clichés and short on sophisticated plotting.

Berkeley introduced 10 rules for writing detective novels that appeared in The Detection Club charter, which every writer was expected to abide by. These rules are remarkably specific: 'Not more than one secret room or passage is allowable; twin brothers, and doubles generally, must not appear unless we have been duly prepared for them; the stupid friend of the detective, the Watson, must not conceal any thoughts which pass through his mind; his intelligence must be slightly, but very slightly, below that of the average reader.'

Meetings began with an oath written by Dorothy L Sayers. 'Do you promise that your detectives shall well and truly detect the crimes presented to them,' it began. 'Using those wits which it may please you to bestow upon them and not placing reliance on nor making use of Divine Revelation, Feminine Intuition, Mumbo Jumbo, Jiggery-Pokery, Coincidence, or Act of God?'

Unfortunately her oath didn't mention financial acumen and within a year of its opening Berkeley announced the club was so short of funds it could no longer pay the rent for Gerrard Street. Dorothy L Sayers, who had previously worked in the London advertising industry and had immense business nous, persuaded the disparate talents to co-operate on

the world's first compendium crime mystery. *The Floating Admiral* was compiled under her direction with members writing alternate chapters and then – in a media link-up that would delight any contemporary crime writer – the book was serialised on BBC radio.

'This year we are publishing a book masterminded by my predecessor Simon Brett, who was president for the past 14 years,' says Martin Edwards. 'It's in the same style as *The Floating Admiral* was in the 1930s. It's called *The Sinking Admiral*.'

For most members, The Detection Club was a social gathering, a chance to ham it up in agreeable company. Adding their own hocus-pocus to Gerrard Street's gaslight atmosphere, members wore ceremonial robes. Even at the time it was slightly outmoded, a last flicker of 1920s frivolity as the 1930s slid into the chaos of world war.

By the 1950s the club had left its Soho premises and become a wandering association that met in the dining rooms of the finer London hotels, including The Dorchester. Dorothy L Sayers had retired and the literary landscape had changed. Writers such as Graham Greene and Eric Ambler established the espionage thriller as the home of quality writing in genre fiction. Both Ambler and master spy novelist Len Deighton joined the club. According to Deighton, the appeal was romantic rather than practical – the chance to have his name alongside those of Christie and Sayers. 'The Detection Club was a somewhat incongruous band of writers,' he says. 'Their lives were seemingly stranger than fiction.'

Today members are still elected by secret ballot. Their annual meetings are not quite as cloak-and-dagger as they used to be, although perhaps not all the prospective murders that are discussed are fictional. 'Whenever crime writers are gathered together you'll hear them say one thing,' says Martin Edwards. 'How they'd kill for a TV deal.'

CRIME CLASSICS

Martin Edwards, author of *The Golden Age of Murder*, which explores how The Detection Club transformed popular British fiction, reveals his choice of five outstanding crime novels set in London.

- 1 *The Poisoned Chocolates Case* by Anthony Berkeley Cox
Murder comes to London clubland with this highly ingenious 1929 whodunit by a master of the genre. Someone is injecting chocolates with poison – but who and why?
- 2 *Lord Edgware Dies* by Agatha Christie
This underestimated 1933 mystery, by the greatest plotter in the history of detective fiction, follows Hercule Poirot as he investigates the murder of an aristocrat near Regent's Park.
- 3 *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* by Dorothy L Sayers
A private club, a favourite setting with Golden Age crime writers, is the scene of this 1928 outing for Lord Peter Wimsey as he tries to find out who murdered a 90-year-old general.
- 4 *The Tiger in the Smoke* by Margery Allingham
A psychopathic murderer is on the loose in an atmospheric, unsettling and smog-bound 1950s West End. Can Allingham's aristocratic detective Albert Campion stop him?
- 5 *The Case is Altered* by William Plomer
William Plomer's work was championed by Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury group. This 1932 novel is set in a London boarding house and was inspired by a real-life murder.



a taste of something different

Night markets have become the new nightclubs as Londoners put street food at the top of the menu. It's the start of an exciting trend that will transform socialising in the city

WORDS ANNA CRANE
PHOTOGRAPHY SCOTT GRUMMETT

MUSIC REVERBERATES around the moodily lit space, but this is not a nightclub; there are bartenders shaking up serious cocktails and dispensing craft beers, but it's not a bar. And then there is the food. Korean burritos, steamed Chinese buns, oyster po'boys from New Orleans – it has everything you might be craving, and some things you will never have even considered eating (anyone for skewered ox heart?), but it's not a restaurant.

Draped with twinkling fairy lights and packed with fashionable customers, this is one of London's new night markets – and it marks a sea change in the way we are eating out in the capital.

What started out as alternative evening entertainment for East End style setters is now coming right to the heart of London. Henry Dimbleby, one of the brains behind healthy fast-food chain Leon, and Jonathan Downey from Street Feast, the powerhouse driving last summer's hugely successful Dalston Yard night market, have joined forces to create London Union, which is aiming to set up 20 new street food markets in London by 2020, utilising our city's disused spaces.

There are also plans for a permanent base that, according to Jonathan Downey, will be 'the world's greatest food market in central London'. Crucially, given the vagaries of our weather, it will have a permanent roof. Other innovative ideas being bandied about include a floating market alongside the Royal Festival Hall on the South Bank.

This ambitious campaign is being driven by Facebook, Twitter and crowdfunding platform Seedrs, where some serious foodie names have pledged their financial support, including Jamie Oliver, Nigella Lawson and Yotam Ottolenghi. An impressive £2.5 million had been raised by the end of last year. 'London Union is well on the way to transforming London's food landscape,' says Henry Dimbleby.

But London Union is not the only player in this game. Kerb, a 'membership organisation for London's most exciting street cooks', which has been going strong since 2012, trades in the prime spots of King's Cross, Spitalfields, the Gherkin, Paddington and West India Quay. Founder director (and veteran vendor herself) Petra Barran is planning a night-time venue for 2016. 'We will be looking to push the night market concept into new and exciting places,' she says.

But why is it happening now? 'It has to do with the informalising of our dining culture, the increased number of mixed-use social spaces and the desire, driven by social media, to keep life casual and drop-in, drop-out,' says Petra. 'Night markets present a perfect solution.'

Richard Johnson, author of *Street Food Revolution*, argues that London always used to have a great street food scene. 'In Dickens' day we snacked on larks, whelks and warm eels,' he explains. 'It was only during the late 19th century that we became prudish and eating in public became something confined to the lower orders.'

These days, thanks to the farmers' market movement, Londoners are happy to tuck into a sausage in a bun – as long as the sausage is rare breed and the bun is sourdough. ▶

LOCAL HEROES

Central London's best markets sell everything from frocks to food. Here are five of our favourites

Pimlico Road Farmers' Market, SW1

Catering for the residents of Belgravia and Chelsea, as well as Pimlico, this farmers' market can be found on the corner of Pimlico Road and Ebury Street. It has a gorgeous range of produce, including fresh fruit from Chegworth Valley, seasonal tarts from Popina and seafood from the East Anglian coast.

Cabbages and Frocks Market, W1

A combination of cocktails, cupcakes and cappuccinos, plus handmade jewellery and designer clothes, make this Saturday market a fantastic place for lifestyle purchases. It takes place in the grounds of Marylebone Parish Church on the north end of the equally appealing – and fashionable – Marylebone High Street.

Covent Garden Apple Market, WC2

Yes, it's touristy but Covent Garden has regained a lot of its charm in recent years. The central building, which originally housed a fruit and veg market, is now given over to the Apple Market, selling a wide range of crafts by independent designers, as well as antiques and curios that are well worth a browse.

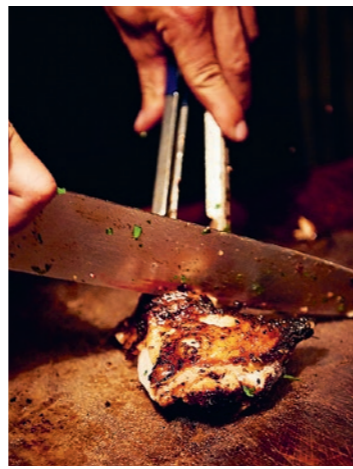
Portobello Road Market, W10

It's world famous and attracts a mix of casual visitors and genuine antiques hunters. Saturday is busy but it's the best time to find beautiful articles of clothing at the vintage market under the Westway. Although there are fewer stalls on Friday, it's a better day for pottering.

Strutton Ground Market, SW1

One of the most centrally located markets, this is also pleasingly old-school. Situated in a cobbled street near Victoria, and operating only on weekdays, it mainly sells to local residents and office workers. Fruit and veg, flowers, clothes and books are on offer, as well as great coffee from the popular Flat Cap Coffee Co.





Jessica Cargill Thompson, author of the *Time Out London for Londoners* guide, is a regular at street markets, which she thinks especially appeal to parents as they can go out, get a bit squiffy and not have to organise a babysitter. ‘I also think that going out after dark helps to give a place a certain frisson of romance,’ she says.

Charlie Nelson is one of the vendors who joined the popular Dinerama street food market in Shoreditch in 2015, alongside other big-name traders such as B.O.B.’s Lobster, BBQ Lab and Smokestack. He and his brother Rory run Fundi Pizza, a street stall that regularly tops the ‘best of’ lists for their traditional Neapolitan-style wood-fired pizzas. Despite the DJ playlist on a loop, the noise and occasional drunken punters ‘poking around in our olives and helping themselves to Bocconcini’, he loves the buzz of the night markets.

‘It’s casual – you don’t have to turn up at the correct time – and there’s more choice than the average restaurant experience,’ he says. ‘You can eat as much or as little as you want, hit the drinks hard or just come for a snack before other plans.’

Charlie likes the predictability of having a pitch at a regular London food market, but there are still plenty of mavericks who think that street food should stick to its authentic roots – individual vendors spontaneously popping up at different locations across the capital.

Angus Denoon is a perfect example of this more free-spirited approach. He took the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 2015 British Street Food Awards thanks to his dedication to Jhal Muri, a fragrant street dish from Kolkata that blends crispy puffed rice, roasted dhal, peanuts, spices, green mango, and fresh coriander

“I THINK THAT GOING OUT AFTER DARK HELPS TO GIVE A PLACE A CERTAIN FRISSON OF ROMANCE”

JESSICA CARGILL THOMPSON
AUTHOR

and lime, which he hawks in paper cones from his extravagantly decorated Everybody Lovelove Jhal Muri Express van.

‘I sell to people queuing outside the cinema or waiting for the night bus,’ he says. ‘Generally the law enforcers turn a blind eye because they have no idea what it is, and it looks pretty harmless.’

Richard Johnson, who founded the British Street Food Awards five years ago, has been a champion of Angus and countless other traders who have taken the gamble and put their hearts, souls and money into creating dishes for London’s hungry hordes.

‘The 2015 British Street Food Awards were a great illustration of how far street food has come in this country,’ he says proudly. ‘It was at London’s O2, with Naughty Boy performing for the crowds. The first-ever British Street Food Awards, back in 2010, was in a car park in Ludlow. And the prize was a stick blender. We’ve come a long way, baby!’ ■



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Style & Property

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1



2



3



4

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An exceptional three-bedroom house, with excellent entertaining space and a lovely south-facing garden, conveniently located close to Kensington High Street. £3,600,000. Freehold. Contact 020 7938 3666

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5 ST JAMES'S SQUARE, SW1

Combining contemporary design with traditional architecture, this palatial Grade II* Listed building sets new standards when it comes to craftsmanship and attention to detail. Set in a prominent position on London's pre-eminent square, the superb restoration has created 16,000 sq ft of prime office space.

POA. New lease. Contact 020 7318 4684

Turning the tide

In 1957, the River Thames was declared biologically dead. Pollution levels were so high there was not enough oxygen to sustain life in its waters. But now Canary Wharf workers can spend lunch breaks spotting seals, while anglers at Teddington Lock regularly land chub and bream. So what has changed? Along with an industrial shift that's seen factories move out of the city, Londoners have embraced their river. Organised volunteer clean-ups started in 2004 and have transformed the foreshores from health hazards into destinations in their own right. Crowds gather on the South Bank to see elaborate sand sculptures on the beaches, while at the Tide Fest event in Chiswick last September people were queuing up to join a paddle-boarding eco-tour between Kew and Hammersmith. Far from being an embarrassment to Londoners, the Thames is now an inspiration. We meet three people at the forefront of this revolution, and one campaigner with an exciting vision of the river's future.

WORDS KATH STATHERS

PHOTOGRAPHY JOE MCGORTY



“IT IS AMAZING TO WATCH KIDS WHO HAVE NEVER BEEN DOWN TO THE RIVER BEFORE SCOOP UP LIFE FROM ITS WATERS”

THE ENVIRONMENTALIST

AJ MCCONVILLE
THAMES RIVER WATCH
CO-ORDINATOR, THAMES21

‘When you’re right down at river level with your boots in the water, it’s really beautiful,’ says AJ, describing the view from the banks of the Thames. ‘The shingle, the stones and the bridges. At low tide you see the river for itself – its skeleton, if you like.’

AJ works for Thames21, a charity that started life a decade ago as the Keep Britain Tidy equivalent for waterways. When he is not at the head office in the heart of the city, you’ll find him under Kew Bridge leading a volunteer clear-up of the litter that collects there.

‘About 25 to 30 people usually come along,’ he says. ‘You get the chance to slow down and concentrate on clearing up the river – it’s quite meditative. We have found some interesting stuff over the years: a grenade, wedding rings, a full-sized Buddha. It’s a haven, this big empty space below, with so much traffic and bustle above.’

The clear-ups help to keep the foreshore looking good, but they also give local people the chance to become directly involved with their environment. ‘We work with schools as well as volunteers,’ says AJ. ‘It is amazing to watch kids who have never been down to the river before scoop up life from its waters – we often find eels and fish. They are so enthused by the living nature of the Thames.’

AJ admits that he used to see the Thames as a big, intimidating and dirty-looking river. ‘I often used to commute across it and not pay it much attention, but now I find I look at it much more,’ he says. ‘I have got a greater appreciation of the river’s tides and the life it holds. There’s an elemental force about the Thames.’



THE WILDLIFE EXPERT

JOANNA BARKER
MARINE BIOLOGIST, ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

Every August, Joanna Barker takes to the skies. Through the windows of the four-seater plane, the marine biologist counts how many seals she can see basking on the sand banks below. ‘They moult in August,’ she explains. ‘As they lose their old fur and grow their new one, they can’t retain heat too well, so they tend to stay out of the water, which makes them easier to count.’

Over the course of three days, Joanna crisscrosses the Thames from Teddington in the west to the estuary mouth in Essex. The count is part of the Thames Marine Mammal Survey, which was set up by the Zoological Society of London 10 years ago. The survey asks members of the public to record any sightings of seals and porpoises in the Thames.

‘It has been hugely successful,’ says Joanna, who runs the project. ‘We have at least one report of a harbour seal being spotted every single day, with hotspots around Canary Wharf, the O2 Arena and Hammersmith.’

However, the survey can’t give an accurate picture of how many seals there are as different people might be reporting the same animal in different places, which is why Joanna takes to the skies (and also at times a boat) to make an accurate count.

‘Our last count showed there were 630 harbour seals between Teddington Lock and the mouth of the Thames,’ she says. ‘It’s really good news as the harbour seal populations are declining in Scotland, so if they are growing here, we can study them better and help to conserve them.’ ▶

1,023
Seal sightings reported by the public between 2004 and 2014

125
Different species of fish recorded in the Thames

20
Years that eels stay in the river before travelling to the Sargasso Sea to spawn

1
A single short-snouted seahorse has been found in the Thames at Greenwich



THE CONSERVATIONIST

ALASTAIR DRIVER
NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY MANAGER, ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Alastair Driver is standing quietly on the river's edge, the wind rustling in the reeds. He's watching a grebe bobbing on the water. Suddenly it dives and resurfaces, gulping down its prey.

'It is fantastic to see birds here, finding fish to eat,' says Alastair, an early pioneer of conservation on the Thames. 'Here' is not some idyllic spot in Oxford, but Deptford in southeast London. 'The river banks used to be vertical sheets of steel that nothing would ever grow on. We took them out as part of a flood protection scheme and have built terraces instead. It's still an engineering solution to a problem, but one with a much more sustainable approach.'

The terraces are covered in reeds, with moorhens navigating from clump to clump. Below the surface of the water, the reeds provide a perfect feeding area for fish fry. 'It's little interventions – 100m here, 100m there – but gradually there's a response,' says Alastair, who is mentioned in *Who's Who* for 'distinction and influence in the field of environmental conservation' and travels the country thanks to his expertise in river conservation.

'Wildlife in London is amazing now, you can watch grebes, cormorants and terns feeding,' he says. 'I've seen porpoises from my office window in Millbank. There have even been signs of otters within London's boundaries. When I first started working on the Thames in the early 1980s, developers would design buildings that faced away from the river. Nobody would dream of doing that now – the river is the main attraction.'

ANIMAL MAGIC

The Thames has seen some unexpected visitors

Lampreys

This eel-like fish was once a delicacy eaten by royalty but has rarely been seen here since the industrial revolution. Its recent return to the Thames is welcome news as it can only live in relatively clean water.

Whales

The most famous whale arrived in 2006 when a northern bottlenose whale appeared in the centre of London and people flocked to bridges to see her. However, she failed to navigate her way down the Thames. Rescuers stepped in to help, but the whale died on the barge taking her out to sea.

Crocs and gators

It is not unheard of for people to report seeing crocodiles or alligators, although there is usually an innocent explanation. In 2013, a cyclist claimed to have seen a crocodile in the river near Reading, but this turned out to be a souvenir from the Bond film *Live and Let Die* that had washed off its usual spot on an island in the Thames during a flood.

THE VISIONARY

THEO THOMAS
LONDON WATERKEEPER

Theo Thomas is a man on a mission. A member of the Waterkeeper Alliance, which campaigns for cleaner rivers, his ambition is for the non-tidal Thames to become so pristine that it is a genuinely swimmable river. 'Imagine popping down to Richmond for a swim in beautiful fresh water,' he says. 'It would take a few changes, but if the will was there, we could make it happen.'

At present, the Thames would not meet the EU's strict standards on what constitutes a 'designated bathing area', but the changes needed are not unfeasible and other cities have done it.

In Copenhagen, the once badly polluted harbour now has clean, sparkling water and an outdoor swimming pool. 'The policymakers there said, "Let's just stop sewage going into the harbour," then they worked to remove the barriers that were in their way,' says Theo. In Munich, too, there are a number of popular beaches along the city's Isar River.

'I want that to be the aspiration among Londoners,' says Theo. 'The river between Richmond and Hampton Court could be dotted with swimzones, complete with changing rooms and beaches.'

If Theo's ambition becomes reality, it would pave the way for architect firm Studio Octopi to set up its Thames Baths swimming pools. 'At the moment they are designing pools with a filtration system that in future could be anchored off sites such as Temple and the South Bank,' says Theo. 'I'd love to see people swimming in the Thames, but even more, I'd love to see the River Thames clean enough to swim in.' ■



"THE RIVER COULD BE DOTTED WITH SWIMZONES, COMPLETE WITH CHANGING ROOMS AND BEACHES"

CHANGING GEAR

London is running on pedal power with the arrival of two cycle superhighways. Make sure you stay ahead of the peloton with our pick of the most stylish bikes

WORDS **ANDREW GILLINGWATER**

ILLUSTRATIONS **MATTHEW COOK**



Hase Kettwiesel

Bicycling bravehearts who are after something really different should take a look at this eye-catching recumbent. Riders sit in, not on, the seat (just like a go-kart) and the direction of the front wheel is controlled by two joystick-style handles. Thanks to its two back wheels, the Hase Kettwiesel is as stable as it is speedy. £2,235, londonrecumbents.com

Best for: Laid-back Londoners



Putney Bike

Once the signature cycle of madcap couriers, 'fixies' get their name from having a fixed wheel, which means riders can't stop pedalling. But the Putney Bike also gives you the option to freewheel, thanks to a changeable hub. The steel frame balances lightness with strength, while the racing-green finish means it looks as good as it rides. £325, fixation-london.co.uk

Best for: Londoners who like to travel in style



Tern Verge X10

The sleek design of this collapsible bike makes it look like a full-blown racer that's shrunk in a hot wash. It runs on Kinetix Pro X 20-inch wheels, boasts 10 gears and folds up in just 10 seconds – perfect for the race to the train each morning. It also comes with some classy details, including chrome handles and moulded grips. £1,200, evanscycles.com

Best for: Commuters in a hurry



Penny Farthing

If you want to rise above the noise and hassle of the daily commute, this is definitely for you. Richards of England specialises in producing hand-built replica penny-farthings. For the perfect period look, every element is crafted on-site. It takes four weeks to build a single bike, which is about the same time it takes to learn how to ride one. £1,500, richardsofengland.co.uk

Best for: A ride down memory lane



Pashley Princess Classic

When it comes to a bicycle that mixes beauty with reliability, it's hard to beat the Pashley Princess. This is the quintessential ladies' bike, with distinctive features such as a 'loop' frame, dynamo-powered headlamp, traditional bell, sprung leather seat and, of course, wicker basket. Riding to work has never been so relaxing. £595, chelseabikes.co.uk

Best for: Getting in touch with your inner Mary Poppins



WorkCycles Kr8

Combining a traditional upright riding position with a plywood box and seating for children, the WorkCycles Kr8 is as versatile as it is practical. There's space for four young ones, or shopping, plus LED lights, a spring-loaded stand, enclosed gears, seatbelts and a range of accessories to create the ultimate pedal-powered people carrier. From £1,617.81, flyingdutchman.bike

Best for: Eco warriors with a short school run



SwiftAIR

If you don't want to join the cycling hordes, but are keen to travel under your own steam, take a look at the SwiftAIR. Created for grown-ups who want to inject fun into their daily commute, the simple design is a head-turner. It's available in smart army green and matt black, or you can specify your own customised colour. £349, bikefix.co.uk

Best for: City slickers with a sense of humour



1

Scene stealers

Bold and beautiful, these dramatic homes are designed to impress

1 Sheffield Terrace, W8

A sensational two-bedroom apartment with a magnificent vaulted ceiling and spectacular open-plan living space. £2,150 per week. Let
Contact 020 7938 3866

2 Chepstow Road, W2

A beautifully presented five-bedroom house in the heart of Notting Hill. £2,950 per week. Let
Contact 020 7221 1111

3 Bolton Studios, SW10

A selection of individually designed apartments located in an exclusive Chelsea conservation area. From £1,500,000. Leasehold
Contact 020 7318 4677

4 The Buckingham, SW1

An eye-catching three-bedroom residence opposite Buckingham Palace. £14,950,000. Share of freehold
Contact 020 7318 4677



2



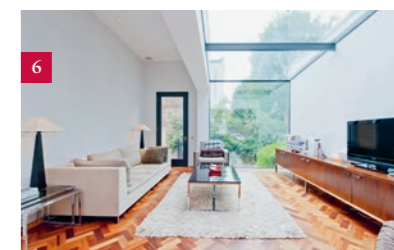
3



4



5



6

5 Elm Park Gardens, SW10

A magnificent apartment with high ceilings and exquisite period details. £3,750 per week. Let
Contact 020 7373 1010

6 Milner Street, SW3

This striking interior-designed maisonette is filled with natural light. £1,550 per week. Part-furnished
Contact 020 7589 9966

7 One Kensington Gardens, W8

An impressive four-bedroom duplex apartment next to Kensington Gardens. £11,650,000. Share of freehold
Contact 020 7938 3666



7



Nic McElhatton, Chairman of Christie's South Kensington, and James Boulton-Lea, Head of South Kensington, Strutt & Parker

The work of art

As Strutt & Parker opens its South Kensington office, a stone's throw from Christie's, we reveal how art and property work closely together

WORDS CLAIRE COLEMAN

ILLUSTRATION SHAUNA PANCZYSZYN

THERE IS an art to buying art for our homes. It isn't just the piece itself collectors need to think about, but also how it will be displayed and enjoyed. So what should guide buyers when they are considering the purchase of a new artwork?

If anyone knows, it is Nic McElhatton, the Chairman of Christie's South Kensington, who offers this reassuringly succinct advice: 'Buy what you like and want to live with,' he says. 'That should always be the most important factor driving a purchase. Also, research is key. Find out as much as you can about what you are interested in collecting and then buy the best you can afford.'

When it comes to displaying pieces, there are no hard and fast rules – 21st century taste is all about creating unusual, eye-catching arrangements. 'Anything goes,' explains Nic. 'Consider mixing old with contemporary and combining different genres and styles. Adding a piece to a room provides the chance to do something new. Move things around to keep the room fresh and create a new dialogue between the works on your wall, your furniture and objects.'

This freedom when it comes to displaying art at home stems from the arrival of a new type of

independent buyer. Fine art was once the preserve of connoisseurs and experts, but people are now more confident about expressing personal taste.

'Fine art has never been so accessible,' explains Nic. 'The internet has a lot to do with this as it continues to break down the intimidating barrier of the old shop or gallery front – domains that were previously exclusive to dealers and seasoned collectors. It's why we see more private individuals buying than when Christie's South Kensington first opened its doors in 1975.'

At the top of the market there is a strong connection between art collectors and property buyers – they are both looking for the unique or best in class. 'Property and art can be seen as commodities, but these transactions also have an emotional aspect,' explains James Boulton-Lea, Head of South Kensington, Strutt & Parker. 'When they are buying, many people have an instinctive reaction to what they like and don't like, and when they're selling, they may be selling something that's been in the family for generations.'

For the most affluent buyers, acquiring a London property is considered a lifestyle purchase – part of a collection of rare items such as cars, art and jewellery that is to be enjoyed, as well as being a good investment.

'This is particularly true of a London trophy home – a one-of-a-kind residence such as a former embassy – which is seen as similar to owning a Warhol or a Picasso,' explains James. 'These are architectural collectibles that are increasingly sought after by wealthy purchasers. In these cases, of course, the same requirements apply when it comes to valuations. If a property – or a piece of art – is unique, you need to have an in-depth knowledge of the market to understand its true value, and also to know the potential buyers and what they are looking for.'

Both Christie's and Strutt & Parker have developed long-term relationships with clients, both as buyers and sellers. 'We have some individuals who we have been talking to for several years before they instruct us to sell a property,' says James. 'It's about offering specialist advice and being discreet when required.'

It is these personal connections, more than anything else, that link the worlds of fine art and luxury homes. 'Whether it's a painting or a property, it's all about understanding people,' says James. 'That's what lies at the heart of a successful sale.' ■

LOCAL HEROES

James Boulton-Lea's guide to South Kensington

Aux Merveilleux

88 Old Brompton Road, SW7
A perfect patisserie if you want a takeaway breakfast as it sells amazing brioches and buns, along with great coffee.

Partridges

17-19 Gloucester Road, SW7
Excellent quality deli and food shop with interesting meats, caviar and smoked salmon for a treat supper at home.

La Bottega

97 Old Brompton Road, SW7
A lovely restaurant just across the road from the office that is ideal for a light lunch in the summer when you can sit on the terrace and people-watch.

Dozo

68 Old Brompton Road, SW7
Lots of places come and go around South Kensington, but this first-rate sushi and dim sum place has been here for years and is always packed.

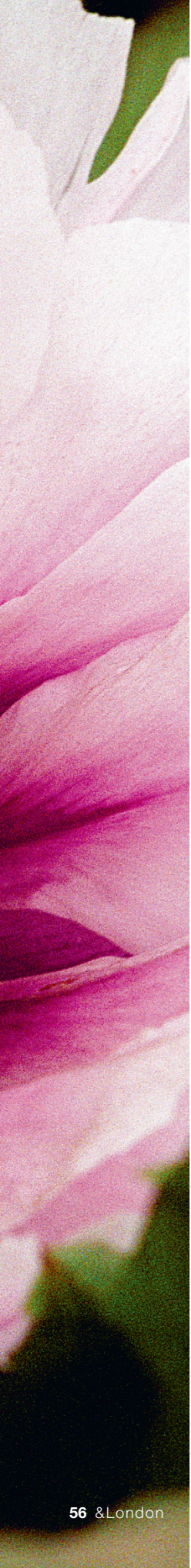
Iddu

44 Harrington Road, SW7
Located close to Christie's, this very popular Sicilian restaurant is open all day and is a great place to enjoy Sunday brunch.



G R O W I N G P A I N S

WORDS VERONICA PEERLESS



They have 19 days to build a garden that will make or break their careers. We find out what it's really like to be a first-time Chelsea designer

For aspiring garden designers, it's a chance to shine on the biggest stage of them all. Every May, the RHS Chelsea Flower Show highlights the best and most innovative gardens to a global audience. But with this unique opportunity comes enormous challenges as first-time designers struggle with deadlines, budgets and a tough selection process.

'You are constantly aware this is the biggest flower show in the world,' says Sam Ovens, RHS Young Designer of the Year in 2014 and now creating his first Chelsea garden. 'It's a great opportunity, but if you do badly everyone will remember you for it.'

Chelsea show gardens are the result of 12 months' hard work – the application process begins during the previous year's show when designs are submitted to a panel of five experts. The standard for selection is extremely high – judges are looking for original gardens that push the boundaries. According to show manager Tom Harfleet, all designers must have a sponsor, in order to meet costs. The amount of money spent on show gardens is not made public, but he admits, 'show gardens are expensive'.

In addition, a new designer must either have already created a show garden elsewhere (many cut their teeth at other events, such as the RHS Hampton Court Flower Show) or have appointed an experienced Chelsea contractor to help them get the garden made – on time, on budget and looking perfect.



"YOU ARE CONSTANTLY AWARE THIS IS THE BIGGEST FLOWER SHOW IN THE WORLD"

SAM OVENS

'For my first Chelsea garden, I used a tree nursery that had not supplied the show before,' admits multiple-gold-medal-winner Andy Sturgeon. 'The tree they gave me promptly died and it cost me a gold medal. Using a good contractor and plant supplier brings enormous security and allows you to sleep at night – which is important, as the show is never far from your thoughts.'

Chelsea presents new designers with a daunting set of challenges. One of the trickiest is that a show garden is always viewed from the outside in. 'Visitors are only able to see the garden from two sides and they can't walk in it,' says Nick Bailey, who is designing his first Chelsea garden for Winton Capital. 'That's why I've tried to create five different vistas into the garden – I'm hoping for a framed bit of perfection.' Designers know that their work must be photogenic, as images will be splashed across magazines, websites and TV.

Then there are the physical restrictions when it comes to the construction of a garden, which Nick noticed when helping award-winning designer Jo Thompson on her show garden last year. 'There are lots of people and traffic in a small space. It can take two to three hours for materials to get from the main gate to the garden.'

The show also takes place at a time when few plants are naturally in flower. 'The guys who grow the plants are quite limited in what they can do,' explains Channel 4's Landscape Man, Matthew Wilson, who is

back at Chelsea in 2016 having debuted last year. 'They can't use lights or heat, or the plants won't look good. All they can do is knock the edges off the season a bit.'

Then, of course, there's the sheer number of plants needed. 'We're growing 3,000-plus herbaceous plants under glass, with more coming over from Spain, Italy, Sicily and Holland,' says Nick Bailey. 'And we have got a planting team from Japan.'

Plantswoman Rosy Hardy is no stranger to the show, having created gold-medal-winning displays in the Great Pavilion, which showcases the work of nurseries and growers. Now she is designing her first Chelsea garden.

'I already know the pitfalls – the tight deadlines, the challenge of getting materials on to the site, the water pressure that drops to a dribble, the plane trees that make us all cough and splutter,' she says. 'But this is a different ballgame entirely.'

Rosy is growing her plants at her nursery in Hampshire. 'I would grow 10-12 plants to get five or six for a display in the Great Pavilion,' she says. 'Now I'm growing 40-50 to get 25-30. I'm growing the plants outside, which means they'll stand up to unpredictable Chelsea weather, but they could get damaged in the meantime.'

Lastly, there is the timing – show gardens must be built in 19 days. Nick Bailey has decided to build much of his garden off-site beforehand. 'That way, the big decisions will have already been made,' he explains.

Despite the time restrictions, Andy Sturgeon believes it's important to remain ambitious. 'The logistics of my first garden weren't really feasible, especially as I had



"WE HAVE GOT A PLANTING TEAM FROM JAPAN"

NICK BAILEY



"I ALREADY KNOW THE PITFALLS – WATER PRESSURE THAT DROPS TO A DRIZZLE, PLANE TREES THAT MAKE US ALL SPLUTTER"

ROSY HARDY

a very complicated water feature,' he says. 'But it made the design more dramatic.'

Designers go to great lengths to ensure finished gardens look real. 'In the Great Pavilion, you can artfully position plants, or stick foliage and flower heads in,' says Rosy Hardy. 'There's no "sticking bits in" when it comes to a Chelsea garden – the planting has to be correct, and it has to flow.'

Nick Bailey is hoping to spend two days tweaking – 'or rather driving myself insane by asking "is that *Geum* too close to that blade of grass?"' – because he knows it's attention to detail that wins gold medals. 'If even the slightest thing is wrong, the judges will spot it,' adds Matthew Wilson. 'You can't think, "that will do", because it won't.'

While designers are coy about medal expectations, Matthew admits that sponsors are naturally hoping for gold. 'But you're actually competing against yourself,' he says. 'It's not about beating others.'

Sam Ovens agrees that focusing on his work is the best way to face the challenge of showing at Chelsea for the first time. 'In theory, everyone in the show could win gold – so in that sense it's not a competition,' he says. 'But I want to prove myself.' ■

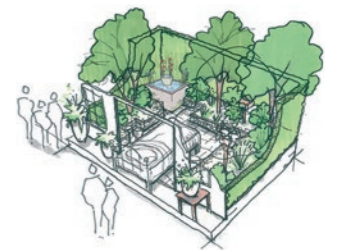
SHOOTING STARS

Three more gardens by first-time designers at the Chelsea Flower Show



Chihori Shibayama and Yano Tea

Chihori and Yano are designing their first Chelsea garden, the Watahan East & West Garden. It combines the distinctive form of a minimalist Zen garden with an informal planting style, featuring perennial plants typically found in British gardens.



Alison Doxey and Stephen Welch

Two lifelong friends, Alison (a florist) and Stephen (a landscape architect) are making their Chelsea debut to mark their 50th birthdays. The Garden Bed, an artisan garden, has been designed to be viewed from a hospice patient's perspective.



Catherine MacDonald

For her first solo exhibit at Chelsea, Catherine is creating a garden for Hartley Botanic. The central feature is a modern glasshouse attached to a walled garden. This acts as both a folly and a retreat, and has views of the surrounding trees.

Photography: Getty Portraits: Jim Spencer



Cooking up a storm

The heat is on as we track down the homes with the smartest kitchens

1 Elvaston Mews, SW7

The fabulous kitchen in this refurbished mews house is made for entertaining. £3,250 per week. Furnished/unfurnished Contact 020 7938 3866

2 Carlyle Mansions, SW3

This spacious kitchen is at the heart of a beautifully designed Chelsea apartment. £6,495,000. Share of freehold Contact 020 7235 3866

3 Holly Mews, SW10

An immaculately presented three-bedroom mews house with a sleek modern kitchen. £1,350 per week. Furnished Contact 020 7373 1010

4 Courtnell Street, W2

An outstanding four-bedroom period house with a spacious eat-in kitchen. £2,250 per week. Unfurnished Contact 020 7221 1111



COMPENDIUM

FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LONDON PROPERTY



The London skyline is testament to the amazing transformation of our city. Record numbers of high-rise residential and commercial buildings are appearing across the capital, from Hammersmith through Midtown to Whitechapel.

Some of the most exciting projects are in previously overlooked areas, including Nine Elms in Vauxhall. Developers targeting these regeneration zones often include the phrase 'placemaking' as part of their planning applications. First used in the 1960s, modern placemaking refers to the transformation of public spaces at the heart of a community to enhance health and wellbeing, and has become a passion among these urban pioneers. They also recognise that the buildings around public spaces, often created with great flair and originality, must be as well designed inside as they are outside, and perhaps most importantly, work with the objectives of the local borough.

But it's not just the centre of London that is being transformed. With a rapidly rising population, there is pressure to deliver housing stock within commutable

distance of the city. For local authorities, it presents an opportunity to enliven neglected spaces and benefit from the economic strength of the capital by allowing the construction of affordable, high-quality homes.

The level of investment demonstrates the enduring appeal of London across all property types and areas, which is why we are also seeing renewed confidence in traditional markets such as South Kensington and Chelsea. Buyers see these areas as safe havens in times of economic and political uncertainty.

This is a period of significant change and I hope the following features will provide clarity about the key trends shaping the London market.

CHARLIE WILLIS, PARTNER AND HEAD OF LONDON RESIDENTIAL

ONE

A degree of difference

UNIVERSITIES MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE CAPITAL'S PROPERTY MARKET. BUT NEW RULES COULD UNDERMINE THEIR SUCCESS, AS PETER BUHLMAN DISCOVERS

When it comes to education, London is top of the class. With four universities in the global top 40, the city now leads the world – according to the latest Times Higher Education World University Ranking.

‘The UK is punching above its weight in higher education globally,’ says Phil Baty, who edits the rankings.

It’s an academic achievement that also delivers a sizeable financial boost – overseas students who study in London contribute £3 billion to the UK economy, according to a report by London & Partners, with a significant proportion of this being spent on accommodation.

Imperial College is the highest ranked London university – rated number eight in the world. Perhaps not surprisingly, its global standing has a direct impact on the local property market.

‘We have a constant stream of flats coming on to the market,’ says Strutt & Parker’s Natasha Whalley. ‘They are bought for three to five years while the students study and then sold when they leave. Prices range from £500,000 up to £2 million, and location is paramount – all of the properties have to be within walking distance of Imperial College. The courses can be demanding and families want to make everything else as stress-free as possible for their children.’

While Imperial College enjoys the highest ranking, University College is the biggest recruiter of international students – not just in London but in the whole of the UK. In 2013-14, it had a total of 11,850 overseas graduates and undergraduates. This has helped to create new property hot spots in nearby Covent Garden and Bloomsbury.

So what type of property attracts these academic buyers? ‘Two-bedroom flats are

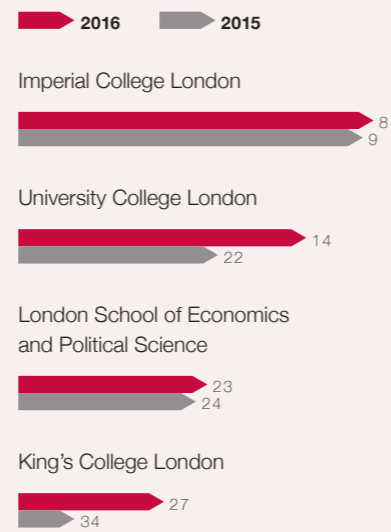


the most popular – either to share or to have a spare room if family come to stay,’ says Natasha. ‘Secure modern blocks are at the top of the wish list for most buyers.’

Some parents purchase properties in London years in advance of their children attending university in the hope that they will eventually study there. However, recent immigration changes have made it more difficult for non-EU foreign students to study and later work in the UK, and there may be consequences for the market.

‘Foreign demand for London property was under pressure in 2015 as a result of the economic slowdown across economies such as China and Russia,’ says Nina Skero, Economist from the Centre for Economics and Business Research in London. ‘Tax changes have also made it more expensive to buy prime property. Disincentivising overseas buyers further by making it more difficult for their children to study in the UK may slow house price growth.’ ■

FIRST CLASS How London’s universities rank in the world



Source: Times Higher Education World University Ranking

TWO

The rental potential

AFTER A PERIOD OF STRONG GROWTH, BUY-TO-LET IS UNDER PRESSURE. LAWRIE HOLMES REVEALS WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR THE RENTAL SECTOR

London has experienced a buy-to-let boom. Investment sales were up 71.7% last August, year on year, according to researchers Equifax Touchstone, with central London property sales seeing a rise of 112%. These are certainly impressive figures. But can the buy-to-let boom last or are we about to see a readjustment?

Investors received some sobering news in November’s Autumn Statement, when the Chancellor revealed a 3% additional stamp duty rate on any property bought as a buy-to-let or second home, set to come into force this April. The move followed the budget announcement in July that the perk of being able to deduct mortgage interest payments from rental income when calculating a property’s taxable profit would disappear in 2017.

Although the tax changes may dampen investors’ enthusiasm across the UK, the London market, with its global appeal, is likely to react differently. ‘Central London has retained an aura of strength linked to stability and respect for property rights, and generally offers a good-quality product,’ says Simon Rubinsohn, Chief Economist of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. ‘Any changes must be seen in the context of a lack of opportunity for similar property in investors’ home markets.’

In the short term, if anything, the tax changes created extra demand as buy-to-let investors sought to purchase before the April deadline. ‘Most of the investors in central London are cash buyers,’ says Henry Kruczko, Associate at Strutt & Parker’s Residential Development Lettings Department. ‘This means they have been in a position to move quickly.’

Henry believes that, once it arrives, the additional tax payment is likely to be met by increased rents as demand for central London rental property shows no sign of

slackening. ‘We’ve been seeing continually high demand from those keen to rent in prime London locations,’ he says.

The ability of investors and the London market to adapt to changing financial circumstances is part of a much bigger financial picture.

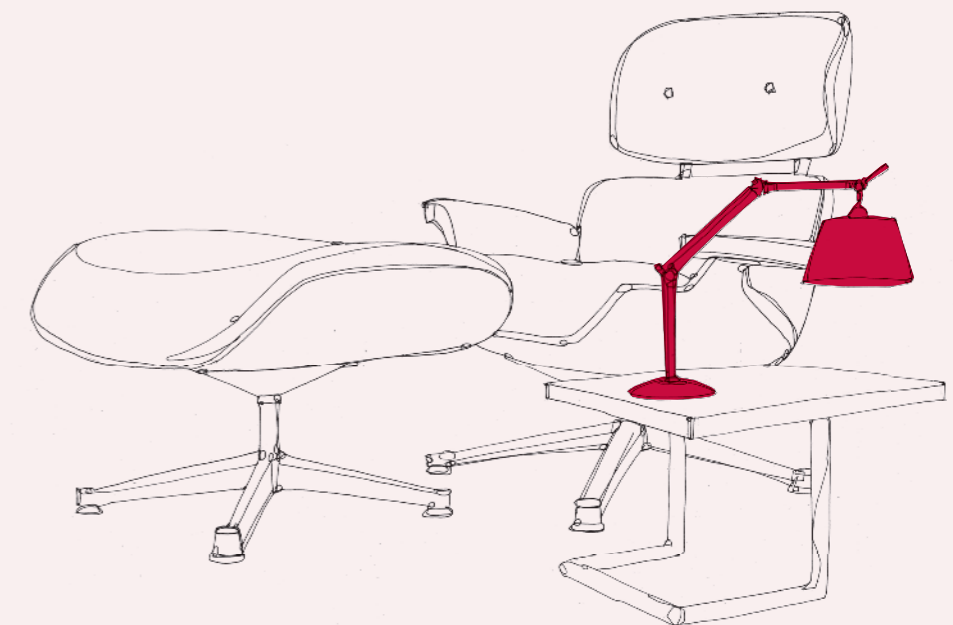
‘The combination of global tensions pushing investment to safe havens, such as London, and the finite amount of private property stock in the capital ensures that the capital remains one of the top three cities to invest in,’ says Joe Nellis, Professor of Global Economy at the Cranfield School of Management. ‘In the broader global context of low inflation, driven by lower oil prices, ensuring little return from government bonds and stagnant stock markets, the London buy-to-let market remains a strong bet for the year ahead.’ ■

ON THE MONEY
Simon Fernandes of Strutt & Parker on three key property investors

INSTITUTIONAL FUNDS: Sovereign wealth funds are active in the buy-to-let market. They buy completed structures, rather than off-plan, and are focused on yield.

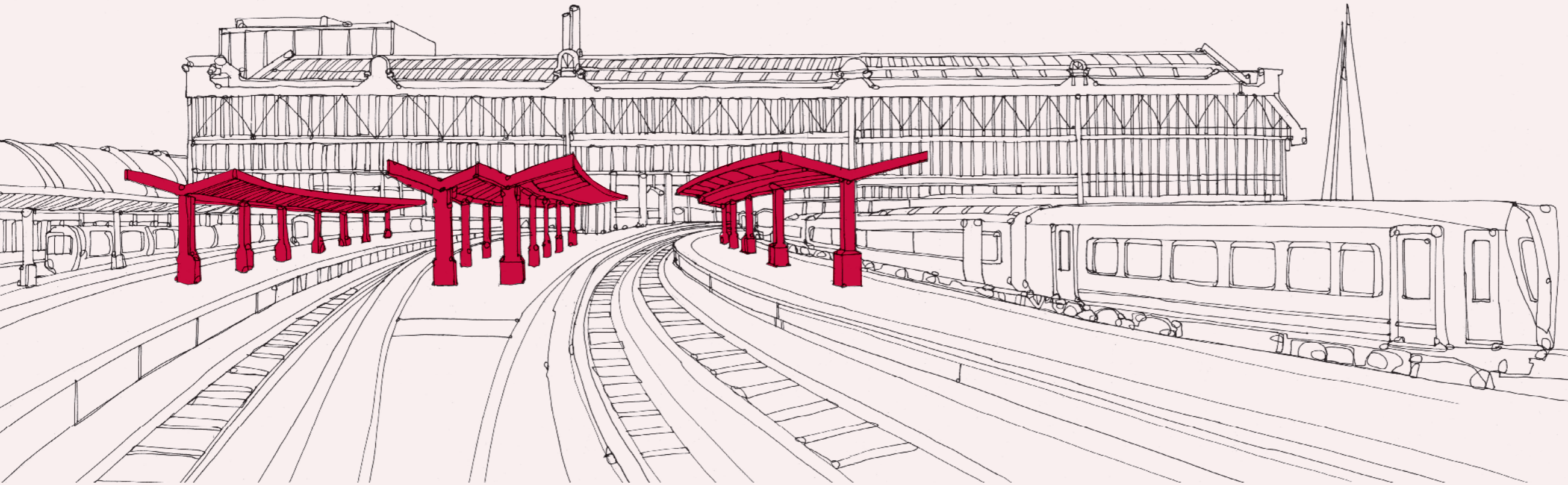
INDIVIDUAL INVESTORS: They are mostly interested in single units, with only around 10% looking to acquire two or three units.

OVERSEAS BUYERS: There’s been an upturn in Singapore and Hong Kong investors in the £600,000-£1.5 million bracket, and Middle Eastern buyers in the £3-£5 million market.



Illustrations: Abi Daker

Prime numbers



HOME ECONOMICS
Average property values around the UK

AVERAGE PRICE
£1,788,611
Inner London

£498,747
Southeast

£411,021
East of England

£357,769
Southwest

£335,578
Northeast Scotland

£286,071
West Midlands

£261,903
Yorkshire and Humber

£260,987
Northwest

£254,846
East Scotland

£254,700
East Midlands

£246,908
Northeast

Average sale price for second-hand detached properties in 2015 (up to HMLR data issued October 2015) from Property Database. Detached Residential Average (Mean) Property Prices in Scotland (published 27 October 2015) from RoS

WILL A GROWING PRICE GAP AND IMPROVING CONNECTIONS FINALLY TEMPT PRIME PROPERTY OWNERS OUT OF LONDON? GRAHAM NORWOOD REPORTS

Something strange is happening in the London market. Despite a decade of appreciating values that put most prime property owners in the enviable position of being able to buy larger homes almost anywhere in the UK, they are staying put. In fact, according to the latest Strutt & Parker research, 76% of London sellers want to remain in the capital.

But with the difference in property values between London and the country wider than ever before, will Londoners finally be tempted out of the capital?

‘The gap between London and the rest of the UK has continued to reach new highs,’ explains Robert Gardner, Chief Economist at Nationwide, who points

out that the average price of a home in London is double that of the rest of the country. Strutt & Parker research reveals that, in some regions, such as the northeast, the price of one home in inner London would buy seven houses (see chart, right).

Up to now, buyers have been reluctant to cash in on their property equity due to a combination of attractive lifestyle and smart investment. ‘If you buy a yacht, you want to moor it in Monaco – if you buy a home, you want it to be in London,’ explains Guy Robinson, Strutt & Parker’s Head of Regional Agency. ‘It’s a global city with advantages ranging from great culture to a strong financial centre and an ever-improving infrastructure.’

There is also a reluctance to lose a foothold in one of the world’s strongest housing markets. The old adage that ‘if you move, you can’t afford to move back’ is borne out by statistics. Typical property values across London are 44.8% greater than at the pre-downturn peak of 2007, according to research by the business consultancy Hometrack.

But now there are signs that some Londoners are finding the equity gap too big to resist. And when they move, they are taking their property wealth to new locations, as well as classic commuter areas.

‘We know that 10% of our clients who bought in East Anglia in the past year were from London,’ says Stephanie McMahon, Head of Strutt & Parker Research. ‘About 18% who bought in the southeast were from the capital and – in a growing trend – 15% of buyers in the southwest came straight from London.’

The increasing move from London to the West Country is being driven by better infrastructure. ‘The electrification of mainline train services means Bristol and Bath may shortly become realistic locations for a daily London commute,’ explains Stephanie. ‘It is a revolution for the region. While traditional locations in the Home Counties and Oxfordshire still remain popular with those leaving

London, these are being rivalled by the southwest surge.’

But it’s not all about the southwest. Stephanie recommends keeping an eye on Essex. ‘As London’s business centre extends further east, so this county becomes increasingly attractive for City commuters,’ she says.

These new markets not only redraw the commuter map but they also redefine what have become known as PNL – ‘Prime Near-London’ locations. These are areas that boast housing markets influenced – positively – by the gradual outflow of wealth from the capital, allowing buyers to upsize while also taking advantage of easy access to the capital for work and leisure.

‘As the national economy strengthens, so does London’s influence,’ explains Guy Robinson. ‘People love the capital and many choose to stay, but now those who leave can enjoy the best of both worlds.’ ■

“PEOPLE LOVE THE CAPITAL, BUT NOW THOSE WHO LEAVE CAN ENJOY THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS”

GUY ROBINSON
HEAD OF REGIONAL AGENCY

A day at the office

OFFICE CONVERSIONS HAVE CREATED THE CITY'S SMARTEST RESIDENCES. BUT IS IT TIME FOR LONDON TO GET BACK TO WORK? KATIE PUCKETT REPORTS

London has seen a boom in luxury residential development as office buildings have been converted into desirable homes. 'If you wanted to buy into a high-end development with leisure facilities, I could take you on a tour of 15 or 20 central London properties that were offices and are now residential,' says Mark Dorman, Partner in Strutt & Parker's London Residential Development and Investment Department. 'A decade ago, there would only have been two or three.'

The current trend has its roots in the 2008 financial crisis. While prime housing quickly returned to rude health, office rents languished, which made a change of use an attractive option for developers. Some converted existing office buildings, while others created new-builds on sites where the existing buildings had been demolished. For example, Westminster's Great Minster House, which was once the home of the Department for Transport, has been given a high-spec makeover as 61 apartments, while Burlington Gate is a completely new 42-home development on the site of a 1980s office block in Mayfair.

According to Charlie Baxter, Managing Director of Alchemi Group, the trend has been fantastic for buyers. 'The good thing about converting an office building is you get much better floor-to-ceiling heights and original features that add character,' he says. 'You're constrained by where the windows are, so that often helps to create over-sized apartments.' Alchemi's 55VS in Victoria offers loft-style apartments with 2.9m-high ceilings. 'You just can't get that in a new-build in central London.'

But we might already have passed the high point when it comes to prime office conversions in the capital. 'There's a finite supply of the right kind of building,' says Anna Cartledge, Senior Associate in the

planning team at law firm Shoosmiths, who points out that what developers are really looking for is the flexibility that comes from designing and constructing completely new residential projects. 'This might allow for higher-density, high-rise development,' she adds.

At the same time, the business case for commercial development is making a strong comeback. Renewed demand for commercial space, combined with weaker supply, has driven office rents and values to levels unseen since 2008, according to the British Council for Offices.

From a buyer's point of view, Mark Dorman doesn't think that's a bad thing. 'The good developers will remain in the market and compete for fewer locations,' he says. 'So they will have to build better and better product.' ■

"THE GOOD DEVELOPERS WILL REMAIN IN THE MARKET AND COMPETE FOR FEWER LOCATIONS"

**MARK DORMAN
LONDON RESIDENTIAL
DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT**



Return of the British buyer

PRIME PROPERTY HAS BEEN DOMINATED BY OVERSEAS BUYERS. NOW THE BRITISH ARE STAGING A COMEBACK, AS CHERRY MASLEN EXPLAINS

Central London will always be a global property market, but not long ago it looked as if the odds were stacked in favour of the overseas buyer. Thanks to beneficial exchange rates and relatively low levels of taxation, the capital proved irresistible to international investors.

All this helped to push prices skywards, leading to a ripple effect as UK buyers increasingly looked beyond Zone 1. But now, according to Strutt & Parker's latest research, the tables have turned. By the end of 2015, 65% of Prime Central London property buyers were UK based, leaving overseas buyers at just 35%.

So why the change? 'There's been a lot of negative influence for overseas buyers in the past year,' says Charlie Willis, Head of Strutt & Parker's London Residential Agency. 'Chief among these is the higher rates of stamp duty, but there is also the capital gains tax introduced for non-resident buyers in April 2015, and the fact that it is less easy to buy residential property through a company structure.'

Add to that the growing strength of sterling and it's not difficult to see why international buyers may be taking a step back. Plans to introduce inheritance tax from April 2017 for non-UK residents who hold properties through offshore companies will also have an impact.

Strutt & Parker's research identified the Prime Central London areas with the most significant shift from overseas buyers. The greatest change was in Knightsbridge, where UK purchasers accounted for only 25% in Q3 2014 – a year later this had doubled to 50%. It was closely followed by Kensington and Fulham, which both saw a near 17% rise in British buyers. Across all



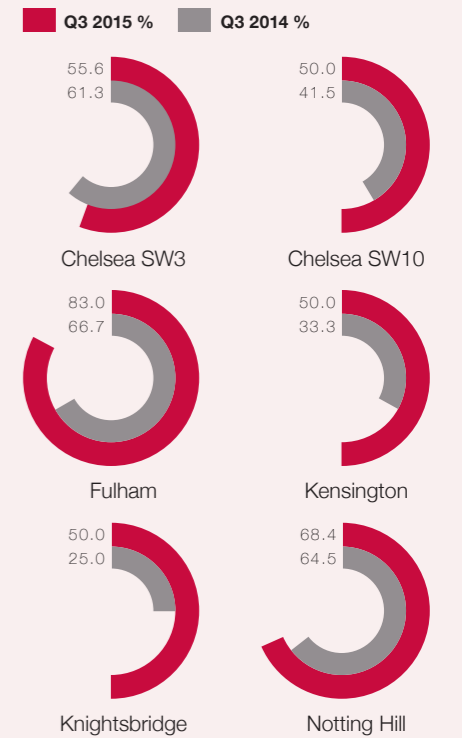
Prime Central London, only Chelsea saw a relative decline in domestic purchasers.

The type of properties being sold is also changing. As British buyers tend to be more active at the lower end of the prime market, proportionately fewer houses and more one- and two-bedroom apartments are now being sold.

It's not only areas that are seeing the growth of domestic buyers – property sectors are also being affected. Over the past decade, new-builds have seen strong overseas interest, but changes in currency rates, especially between the UK and emerging economies, have made London property more expensive. As a result, international investors have been replaced by increasing numbers of British buyers. At the former BBC headquarters in White City, which is being transformed into a residential destination, 80% of the flats have been sold to UK purchasers.

So, what of the year ahead? Charlie Willis believes the market has already adjusted to the new financial landscape. But with no easing of the tax situation for overseas purchasers likely in the near future, we can expect to see even more British buyers investing in the capital. ■

**NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH
UK domestic buyers in Prime Central London**



Source: Strutt & Parker



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