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De Beauvoir

ASSOCIATION

Newsletter / October 2012

Sponsored by mOrganics
229-231 Kingsland Road, E2 8AN

DE BEAUVOIR ASSOCIATION EVENTS

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 16 October at 7.30pm

Upstairs at The Talbot, 109 Mortimer Road, N1 4JY

Come and find out what the DBA does, what it has achieved during the last year, and help to elect your new committee.

Meet your neighbours too.

GUEST SPEAKER: Tom Ebbutt, Councillor De Beauvoir Ward

THE DBA IS PROUD TO PRESENT A FORTIES AND FIFTIES NIGHT WITH



Friday 12 October at 7.30pm

St Peter's Church

De Beauvoir Road, London N1 4DA

There will be a bar

The Bethnal Green Big Band is a group of twenty young musicians who met at college. They play and sing the big sounds of the 1940's to the 1960's from Glenn Miller to Frank Sinatra. Using their own arrangements, they produce a sound that is joyful, powerful, rich and soulful.

Feel free to dress appropriately: there will be prizes for the best-dressed man and woman!

BUY TICKETS ONLINE from www.debeauvoir.org.uk

AROUND THE TOWN

THE ROSEMARY BRANCH

2 Shepperton Road, N1 3DT

www.rosemarybranch.co.uk

Tel: 020 7704 6665 24-hour box office.

4–7 October: THE RIVALS by Richard Brindley Sheridan

10 October–4 November: ROMEO AND JULIET by William Shakespeare

14, 21 and 28 October: THE MARVELLOUS

ADVENTURES OF MARY SEACOLE by Cleo Sylvestre

6 November: I'M WITH STUPID by Revan and Fennell

8–10 November: HEART OF TIME by Amy Bird

12–30 November: BRANCHING OUT

2 December A RIGHT PAIR by Bette Bourne and Paul Shaw

7 December–9 January 2013 THE THREE MUSKETEERS

Not the annual panto? Oh yes it is!

DE BEAUVOIR GARDENERS

www.debeauvoirgardeners.org.uk

The club meets in the crypt of St. Peter's Church on

the first Tuesday of the month at 8pm.

Annual subscriptions: Single £20; Couple £30;

Concessions £10 and £15

2 October Taking Cuttings and Prunings

6 November Speaker or film tbc

4 December Quiz with mulled wine

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

119 Balls Pond Road, N1 4BL; Tel: 020 7275 7640

www.thedukeofwellingtonN1.com

CINEMA CLUB (1st and 3rd Sundays every month;

films start at 8pm, free entry.

7 October

KEITH HARING

The Universe of Keith Haring (2008)

82 mins

Comedy the last Thursday of every month- 25 October, 29 November..

THE SCOLT HEAD

107A Culford Road

Every Monday 8:00 pm: pub quiz

29 November - Jazz with Peter Werth

ANTHONY DARBYSHIRE

WE RECENTLY LOST a dearly loved member of the community – Anthony Darbyshire. He died on 23 August while undergoing treatment for cancer. He was 67 and lived in Ufton Road with his wife Fiona, deputy chair of the DBA and a former chair.

Before moving to De Beauvoir in 2006, Anthony was a chartered landscape architect responsible for developments across the country, from the Croydon Crown Courts to the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, Staffordshire.

After joining our community, he retained his passion for improving the built environment and undertook pro bono work for Open Dalston, which led to significant changes being incorporated into the 2010 Dalston Masterplan. He donated a great deal of time to the recent landscaping and planting around St Peter's Church and, as a member of the building committee, was closely involved with the refurbishment of the crypt.

Anthony was one of life's unfailingly charming protagonists. In a very short time he became a much loved and familiar figure in De Beauvoir and will be remembered by many for his vivacious conversation snatched over garden walls, his efforts selling raffle tickets at the Party in the Park, and

his friendliness to all. Most of all, though, we will remember his extraordinary courage and, despite his long illness, his great joy in life, in his family and friends, and in living in De Beauvoir.

At Anthony's request his body was donated to medical science and there was no funeral. There will be a party in celebration of his life in the New Year. He will be greatly missed by his family and many friends.



MEET A NEIGHBOUR – FROM LORRY DRIVER TO DRAG QUEEN

STEVE C. MIGHT NOT elicit much attention these days, walking his dog around De Beauvoir Square. But not so long ago he couldn't get from one side of the square to the other without being stopped for photos.

That's because, until 2005, Steve - he did not want his surname used - enjoyed a successful 20-year career as one of London's best drag queens. "Modesty Blaze" is this former lorry driver and care worker's alter ego - a big, brazen, redhead with towering heels and a terrifying wit.

"I'm six foot one normally," he laughs. "With heels and a wig, I was close to seven foot and larger than life!" And he got exactly that reaction.

Working his way up through pubs and clubs, hen nights and Christmas parties, by the end of his career he was playing to crowds of thousands and working alongside some of the industry's greats - including Paul O'Grady and Julian Clary.

Originally hailing from the area - his grandmother was married in St Peter's Church and his mother was born on Northchurch Road - in 1969, Steve's family moved out to Chingford but he returned to De Beauvoir 18 years ago. "It felt like I'd come home," he says.

And Modesty Blaze certainly felt at home here too. "I've walked around here in full drag," he insists. "In 2000, a friend was having a millennium party and I put on my glam frock, false boobs, huge feather boa, and walked from my flat off Englefield Road to my friend's house nearby. I don't know how many people stopped me for photos!"

He still has a wardrobe full of fabulous dresses, even if he hasn't worn them nor

sung a note since 2005.

"I do miss it," he admits. "I've always wanted to be an entertainer - not famous, I just wanted to entertain people. It's your alter-ego. It's who you are inside that comes out. You're the centre of attention and you can say anything. In drag, you can get away with murder!"

He insists he won't go ever back doing it professionally. "If you don't do it on a regular basis, you lose your confidence and your stamina. It's quite a stressful existence, being corseted up and in agony while you're on stage. I've got bad knees and a bad back now after the heels. But you live on adrenaline at the time, and I did have a blast!"

Yet Modesty Blaze will still make one last appearance - at his sister's retirement party in two years' time. It promises to be a big one and he's already looking forward to it. "The transformation is pretty unbelievable," he laughs.



Barbara Walshe

DBA

MEET A NEIGHBOUR

Welcome to our new series. We're all curious to know about our neighbours. How long have they lived here? What do they do for a living? Have they done anything exciting with their lives? What have they done in the local community?

The editors of your De Beauvoir Association newsletter are as curious as the rest of you, so if you'd like to suggest a neighbour we could interview and include in a future newsletter, please email us at info@debeauvoir.org.uk telling us what you think your neighbour's unique selling points are. Please make sure you have your neighbour's permission first though.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

From the Morning Chronicle, 10 October 1845

SUPPOSED INCENDIARISM – Much excitement has been caused in Beauvoir-town, Kingsland, in consequence of recent fires, which are supposed to have been the result of incendiarism. Information of the facts has been given to the police, and a large reward has been offered. It appears that about two months since, a fire was discovered in some new houses nearly completed in Mortimer-road and two houses were completely gutted. On Wednesday night the adjoining premises belonging to the same builder was burnt down under circumstances as mysterious as the former, and there scarcely remains a doubt that they were wilfully set fire to. The fire on Wednesday night was discovered about twelve o'clock but before the arrival of the engines the premises (consisting of a double house and shop) were nearly destroyed.

From the Daily News,
12 June 1846

The Morning Chronicle.

THE REV. ABRAHAM

MASON, M.A., who was appointed by the bishop of London to the curacy of the district church of St. Peter, De Beauvoir-town, West Hackney, during the suspension of the Hon. and Rev. Frederick Smyth Monckton, has been presented, by a large number of the pew-renters of the church, with a handsome piece of plate bearing the following inscription: - "Presented to the Rev. Abraham Mason, M.A., of Brazenose College, Oxford, by a large number of

the pew-renters of the district church of St. Peter De Beauvoir-town, West Hackney, in the county of Middlesex, in testimony of his zealous and efficient discharge of the ministerial and pastoral duties of the district, and his judicious and conciliatory conduct during the year he has officiated, under peculiarly trying, adverse, and discouraging circumstances."

NOTE: Rev. Monckton had been suspended from the clergy for 12 months in June 1845 after being found guilty of "familiar and unbecoming conduct towards the females of the family, and especially towards the girl Sarah Huggins". A diocesan court of enquiry found that "the ordinary habits of living which appear to have been adopted by Mr Monckton are degrading to a clergyman of the Church of England – that they have produced a scandal".

He was acquitted by the diocesan court of fornication and of taking indecent liberties with

female servants and other women, as well as of intoxication.

The court heard he had been sleeping with Huggins, 25, one of his three female servants. When she gave evidence she denied this and refused to name the father of the twins to which she had recently given birth in Gravesend. She had been sent there by Monckton after she became pregnant.

Monckton died in 1861, aged 50.

Paul Bolding

DBA



THIS POSTCARD (left) of the old Metropolitan Hospital in Kingsland Road recently sold for £57 on eBay. It is unusual for old postcards to fetch that kind of money. Does anyone know why? The hospital opened in 1836 as the Metropolitan Free Hospital and moved to this site in 1885. It closed in 1977. Donors in the 1920s included the exiled King of Afghanistan and Jewish charities and the hospital had beds reserved for Jews.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SPONSOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF THIS NEWSLETTER?

It's delivered to more than 3,500 homes in the area. If you're interested, email info@debeauvoir.org.uk for the current costs.

JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST. We send emails about De Beauvoir news and events once or twice a week to more than 450 local addresses. They are brief and available in plain text only. If you are not on the list, you could be missing out on something important.

Check out our website too on www.debeauvoir.org.uk; email info@debeauvoir.org.uk

AFGHANISTAN – THE VIEW FROM DE BEAUVOIR

AFGHANISTAN. HARDLY A WEEK GOES BY without this country being in the news, but what do we really know about it? Peter Markus has just returned from two and a half years there where he was seconded to the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL-Afg). On 15 August he gave an illustrated talk about his experiences at a dinner held in aid of the De Beauvoir Association at the home of David and Gisela Kingsley in Mortimer Road.

As Peter explained, Afghanistan has a long and troubled history. What it is going through now is just the latest chapter. But things weren't always thus.

Thousands of years ago Afghanistan thrived at the commercial crossroad between Asia and the rest of the world. The lapis lazuli that decorated the famous death mask of Tutankhamun came from Afghanistan's north-eastern province of Badakhshan and was transported from there along the Silk Route to Egypt.

But Afghanistan has always been of enormous strategic importance.

Alexander the Great tried to subdue the Afghan tribes and failed. In the nineteenth century Afghanistan had the misfortune to be at the heart of the "Great Game" – the rivalry between Britain and Russia, both of which were trying to gain supremacy in Central Asia.

As a result, the country was involved in two deadly Anglo-Afghan wars.

Fast forward to 30 years ago when the Afghan king was ousted and Afghanistan became a republic. In the years

immediately prior to that, Kabul had been known as the "Paris of the East". Tourism was booming and there was even a Marks and Spencer!

But after 1973 resistance to modernisation caused civil unrest, which resulted in a communist coup d'état. When communism faltered, the Soviet Union decided it was time to step in. But after a bloody war that lasted a decade and left Afghanistan in chaos, the Soviets retreated with their tails between their legs. Yet again, the Afghans proved that no one, not even the mighty Soviet Union, could subdue the fiercely independent Afghan tribes.

Sadly, left to themselves, things declined still further.

The successive rule of warlords and of the Taliban caused a complete breakdown of the Afghan state.

When, eleven years ago on 11 September 2001, there was an attack on the Twin Towers in New York, the Americans decided it was time to deal with the Al-Qaeda terrorist bases in Afghanistan and with the Taliban, so they invaded. The rest, as they say, is history.

Early in 2002, the international community decided to help Afghanistan rebuild its nation. Part of this nation-building project is the restructuring of the Afghan National Police and this is where EUPOL-Afg comes in. Consisting of around 400 international police experts from 23 EU member states, EUPOL-Afg is helping to train and remodel the Afghan National Police (ANP), turning it into a fully functioning police force that will be focused on the community and will operate with an acceptable level of corruption.

But what was destroyed in three decades can't be rebuilt in a few years. The norms and values that we take for granted in the West have to be reintroduced to Afghanistan's dysfunctional society and the ANP has to develop the organizational culture of a proper police force.

Despite all the bad news we hear, Peter was upbeat about Afghanistan's future.

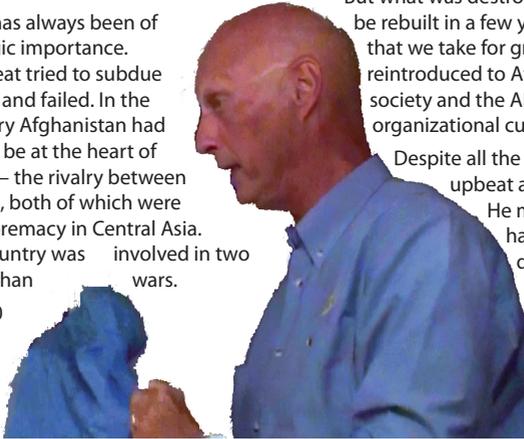
He met some kind, generous, hardworking people who are determined to see the country take its rightful place in the modern world. Above all, he was charmed by the children he met. He found the younger generation flexible and eager to learn new ways and he truly believes that, if the country can invest in decent education for both boys and girls, then

they – and us – might one day live in a safer world.

The DBA wishes to thank Gisela and David, who not only were the perfect hosts and did all the cooking for 26 people, but also paid for the food and wine. Thanks to their enormous generosity, we raised £790 for the Association, which will be used to help fund future community events.

Hilary Mandleberg

DBA



Peter holds up a burqa to illustrate a point

BOOMING CAFÉ CULTURE

COFFEE SHOPS SELL more than skinny lattes and cappuccinos these days. They're also a barometer for an area's cool credentials. Take De Beauvoir. Just a few years ago, it was almost impossible to buy a quality coffee locally. Today, frothing frappuccinos lie around every corner.

From HER (Haggerston Espresso Room) on Downham Road to the Towpath on the canal, the Deli on Southgate Road to Betty's and Tin on Kingsland Road, independent café culture is thriving in De Beauvoir. And it's not only appealing to locals but attracting crowds of hipsters, eager to make the area their home.

In fact, the entire borough has become so famous for its thriving café culture recently that it's spawned its own map. Illustrator Jane Smith is behind the "Hackney Café Crawl", a fun, quirky poster that showcases over 100 of Hackney's coolest haunts.

Originally commissioned for Hackney Museum's "Mapping the Change" exhibition, which ran from May to September, the map is also a labour of love for Smith. A resident

of Dalston for the past 18 years, she admits: "I've always loved the area but used to moan that you couldn't get a decent coffee around here. You had to go to Stoke Newington or Shoreditch.

You had to go to Stoke Newington or Shoreditch.

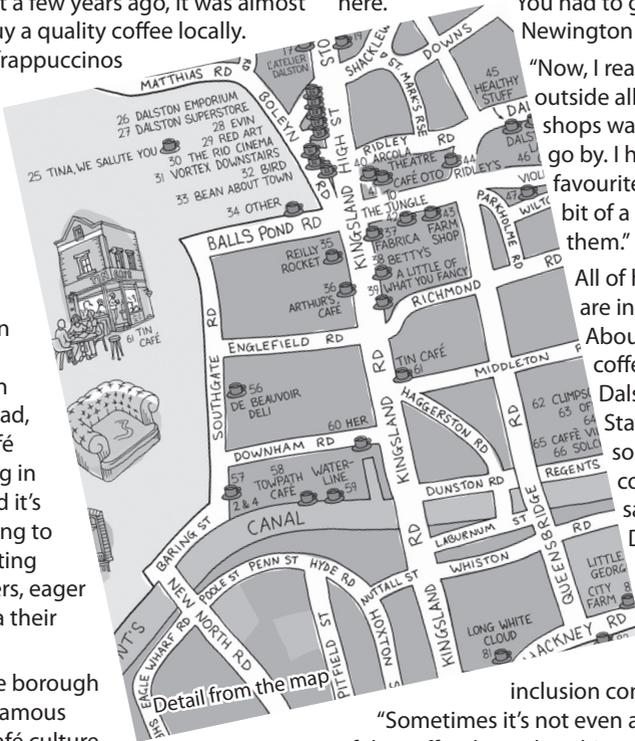
"Now, I really enjoy sitting outside all the great coffee shops watching the world go by. I have so many favourites, I've become a bit of a regular at lots of them."

All of her favourites are in there. Like Bean About Town, the coffee stall outside Dalston Kingsland Station, which has some of the best coffee around, she says. And Atelier Dalston, with its delicious drinks and vintage decor.

The criteria for inclusion constantly change.

"Sometimes it's not even about the quality of the coffee, but other things," she admits. "Partly it's about the people and partly about the furniture. I quite like going in and sitting in mad old chairs and looking at quirky stuff on the walls."

Already gaining cult status in the area, Jane's map has been a huge undertaking. She is currently taking a copy to every café featured in it; they can then stock and sell the maps if they choose. There are a few areas yet to be covered though – Shoreditch and Victoria Park – and then there's the



Detail from the map



challenge of keeping it up-to-date.

"It can't be a definitive traveller's map where people go around looking for the cafés, because it captures a moment in time. That said, I'd like to do another edition, taking out the cafés that have closed and putting in new ones."

Some coffee houses don't stand a chance of inclusion though. "I'd never put a chain in there unless it was specifically brilliant. And I would be up there manning the

barricades if Starbucks did come to the area. I like the fact our cafés are unique. It makes the area special."

Barbara Walshe

DBA



Hackney Café Crawl posters are available for around £5 from most independent cafes in De Beauvoir or can be purchased by contacting Jane (www.janeillustration.co.uk). She is also holding an exhibition in November featuring her illustrations of Dalston.

WHAT A SWELL PARTY

SINCE OUR LAST newsletter we have enjoyed our annual Party in the Park, now in its eighth year. It was another storming success. We held our nerve on 7 July in the face of changeable weather (with possible alternative plans for a smaller event in the church) and everything worked out well.

Aside from a drenching while volunteers were setting everything up in the morning, and a light shower during the party itself, the rain held off. As ever, the party's success was due to a lot of work in the months beforehand and more on the day by a huge number of people, too numerous to mention here. Their work resulted in an afternoon of fun and activities for children and their parents that we hope helped draw the community together. We gave away hundreds of footballs and other toys to the children as well as second-hand children's books. The sale of

second-hand adults' books, cakes and savouries baked and donated by local people as well as Pimm's and tea, helped fund the event and make us financially secure for at least another year. The raffle and tombola tickets that people bought made a great contribution too. Details and lots of photos are on our website at www.debeauvoir.org.uk.

Golden treasure

One of the items donated for the tombola, a piece of gold jewellery, turned out to have significant value. We have been trying to contact the person who gave it, to make sure it was not given by mistake, but without luck. If you think it may be yours and can tell us more about it, please get in touch. Otherwise we will sell it, and put the proceeds towards other events. Watch this space.

DBA

St Peter's Church presents

Hackney Debates No 4

Friday 30 November at 7.30pm; admission free

Education: Are we getting the schools we need?

Chaired by George Alagiah of BBC TV

With distinguished speakers. Floor contributions welcome