

MARKET TIMES

PAGE 2-4
NEWS BITES

PAGE 5
CREME DE LA ICE CREAM

PAGE 10-11
SINGING INDE TUNE

PAGE 14-15
HAPPY JUICE



MARKET
STARS ON
PRIME-TIME
TELEVISION
SEE PAGE 13



The team at Euro Harvest are smiling and settled in their new Market home - see pages 6-7



Editor's Message



It's not every day that the Market gets to show itself off to the nation, but we found ourselves front and centre of the BBC Friday night schedules in late October. Sandwiched nicely between two of the Beeb's behemoths, The One Show and A Question of Sport, A Night at the Market provided a really interesting, independent perspective on New Covent Garden, focusing on some of the people and processes that make our community click.

As we all know, it's easy to take things that you see every day for granted, but this programme wasn't really aimed at those of us who have inside knowledge. It was part of a series called 'We Are England', which aims to explore the "issues people care about, as told by them" and reflect the opinions and changing face of the nation. The Night Shift element of that series focuses on the people who are keeping our country and industry moving while the majority of people sleep and unpacks the issues and challenges faced by those who work the night shift. There is a brief summary on page 13, but I'd recommend anyone who hasn't yet watched it to find a free half hour and look it up on iPlayer.

Also inside this issue, we've talked to six of the fruit and vegetable traders who moved into their new units in October 2022, to ask them about their experience of relocating and how they are finding their new facilities (pages 6-7).

John Hardcastle, who owns and runs Bloomfields, is celebrating 50 years in the Flower Market. Normally we'd speak to John about this landmark, but he's not that keen on talking about himself! So for a different perspective on the man we chatted to his wife, Michelle, who has shared almost every step of that journey with him. Having a partner who works Market hours can be challenging, but Michelle like so many others is intertwined in her other half's business and speaks with great affection about his career here (back page).

Someone else who's connection to NCGM goes back a long way is Gemma Hammond, who's father Geoffrey Hammond once co-owned a company in the Market with Barry Ruffel. Gemma is now a chef and customer of the Market and she tells us about her Southsea restaurant Pollito Loco (8-9). And our Happy Customer in this issue is another successful restaurant, The Juice Smith in Cobham, which is the brainchild of ex-rugby player Richard Smith-Bernal (14-15).

Chris Bavin is well-known to many of the traders in the Market and is also now a TV star and celebrity. Once an award-winning greengrocer in Walton-on-Thames, Chris has recently announced his intention to launch a Good Greengrocer Guide. Find out more on pages 10-11.

Since the last Market Times, there's been a change of Chair at CGMA, albeit that John Lelliott, who has been a non-exec director on the CGMA Board for six years, has stepped in on an interim basis. John tells us more about himself on page 12.

So, a lot to get your teeth into - I hope you enjoy the read.

Tommy

Tommy Leighton, Market Press Officer



C-store group gets to grips with Market

A group of retailer members of the Association of Convenience Stores (ACS) visited New Covent Garden (NCGM), toured the site and met some of the key players here.

The independent retailers were taken around the site by Jo Breare, General Manager, and Sarah Calcutt, Board Member, of CGMA. They explained the role of CGMA, the history of the site and the intricacies of the ongoing redevelopment programme that will deliver the UK's newest wholesale market facility by early 2027.

The group experienced Buyers' Walk, then were given a look round Harwoods of London by its owner Jim Dew, who had recently relocated into one of the brand new units that represent the latest stage of the redevelopment.

Gary Marshall, Chair, and Jason Tanner, Vice Chair, of Covent Garden Tenants Association, talked to the group about market life and the continuing importance of NCGM to the independent retail trade. Gary said "good service, continuity and quality" are the hallmarks of the Market.

"When you come here, you don't just get the crème de la crème of product – you get passion, knowledge and belief in the fruit and vegetable business. You work with people who really know what they're talking about," he said. "The service level is so high that it can be easy to take it for granted, but it got noticed again during the lockdowns. We become your eyes and ears – that is instilled as an ethos across this market."

Jason added: "More groups have come back to the independent wholesalers and catering distributors in the last two years. We're not day one for day three, a lot of the time we're taking orders up to midnight that get delivered the next morning and our competitors can't compete with that."

And Gary concluded by saying the market is as busy as ever. "This market has an extremely bright future – we continue to be a force to be reckoned with. Whatever fresh produce you want, we're the boys and girls to get it for you," he said.

Food programme highlights new scientific thinking

BBC Radio 4's The Food Programme chose the market as its base for an episode that looked into the latest research into what, how and when we should be eating, from the power of polyphenols to the mysteries of our gut microbiomes.

Presenter Dan Saladino and guest Professor Tim Spector, winner of this year's Derek Cooper Lifetime Achievement award, roamed buyers walk at 4am once recent morning, to not only talk about the "nocturnal assault on the senses" and "delicious edible diversity" on offer, but also the "complex chemical compounds" that fresh produce contains and its potential impact on the population's gut health.

The programme – Nutrition's Dark Matter: The new science of eating – featured European Speciality Food and spoke to MD Tim Garrett about his lettuce and garlic

ranges, surveyed the "rainbow of carrots" available across the Market and also visited P&I Fruits, to talk about the nutritional properties of berries.

"Food is not just about pure energy, calories or boring macronutrients," said Spector, "it's about the [natural] chemicals in food that give it the amazing range of colour, flavours, tastes and textures and also have a huge [positive] impact on our bodies."

He extolled the virtues of a diet that consists of at least 30 different plants a week and recommended vibrant colours and plants with seeds as particularly beneficial. "Mix things up," he added. "Diversity is the key. Our research has shown that eating 30 different types of fruit, veg, nuts, herbs, seeds or spices a week is ideal – it's not so difficult if you're pragmatic about it. It's vital not to be reductionist, try to find a quick fix, a magic bullet; all the studies show the supplements never work as well as the plants themselves."

He said that we need science and data to provide the evidence that can change the food system, convince governments to adopt new, ambitious food strategies and encourage people to rethink their relationship with food. "If we all understand a bit more about our food, we will not only be more healthy in ourselves, but also have a much healthier planet to live on," said Spector.

Market Post Office wins annual regional award



The Market's Post Office has been selected as Post Office of the Year for South London, following a Mystery Shopper visit to all of the branches across the region.

Raj Patel, who runs the Post Office here, received a hamper of food and a bottle of wine as a prize, and said he was blissfully unaware at the time that the mystery shopper was in his branch, in the Food Exchange.

"With hindsight, I think I know who the mystery shopper was, but at the time I had no idea," said Raj. "I don't think I particularly stand out, I just treat everybody in the same friendly way and try to help them. I'll bend over backwards for each and every customer, whether I know them or not."

Raj has shunned publicity after winning the award, but was happy to talk to Market Times. "It's nice to be acknowledged, but I'll just keep on doing what I do," he said. "I don't really need feedback to tell me that my customers are happy with me. I've been working here for 32 years and [the Market community] is my family. I come in every day at 4, even if I don't feel 100%, because I am here for my Market and I know people here rely on me."

Belgians use Mission Kitchen to showcase premium produce

FRESH FROM BELGIUM brought together a select group of British and Belgian fresh produce businesses at New Covent Garden's Food Exchange in late November, to sample some of the fresh fruits and vegetables available to restaurateurs across London and the South East this winter season.

Taking over the development kitchen at Mission Kitchen, Flemish chef Bart Sablon live-cooked a series of sumptuous dishes, using fresh-picked produce from the fields of Flanders. Each of the four courses was expertly paired with a selection of artisanal Belgian beers to enhance the flavours of the food.

Belgium is one of Europe's largest field vegetable growers. Its thousands of small family farms are famous for traditional local favourites such as chicory, white asparagus, and Brussels sprouts. For its British customers, Belgium is focussing on market favourites over here such as tomatoes, peppers, leeks, and quality top fruit including Conference pears.

Chris White, Managing Director of Food Exchange based trade magazine FPJ, which organised the event, also welcomed the group to the "most important fruit and vegetable wholesale market in Britain". He said London is a "local market for Belgium", as it is just 200 kilometres distance, and that Belgian exporters are actively targeting the UK wholesale market sector with quality fruit and vegetables, as well as lesser spotted Belgian exports such as asparagus, and parsnips, which Chef Bart used in one of his dishes and labelled a "forgotten" vegetable.

Chef Bart also prepared a selection of



Pictured: Guests watched as chef Bart Sablon and assistant for the night Yvonne Poon created inspiring dishes

choice meat dishes using Flanders-reared pork.

Jo Breare, General Manager of CGMA, returned the compliment, by welcoming everyone to the market. "Our tenants sell a large volume of Belgian product and we value the produce that you send over here," she told the Belgian exporters. "It is consistently of the highest quality, which is exactly what our tenants and their customers demand."

The group was able to watch Chef Bart and his assistant, food stylist Yvonne Poon, cooking the dishes from their tables.

Tour showcases Market at its best

Exploring the history of New Covent Garden Market was the aim when an international group of women from a club based in London were given a tour of the estate at the end of January.

Starting in the Flower Market, the group of 11 from the St John's Wood Women's Club were amazed by the colours, aromas, and huge breadth of our assortment of flowers and plants, with everyone making at least one purchase before going on to see Buyers' Walk in the Fruit and Vegetable Market. The group were amazed when it was revealed that County Supplies delivers fresh fruit and vegetables to their near-neighbours, the animals at London Zoo. The tour ended with a visit to the Food Exchange roof, where our own neighbours at the American Embassy proved a popular landmark.



The club find London's history intriguing and have already visited several other markets in the capital – but none on the scale of our site in Nine Elms. Many of the club's members are from the US and are in the St. John's Wood area while their partners or families are working in Europe.

Festive activities light up Merchants Way

It's been a busy few months on Merchants Way, the colourful gateway that passes through New Covent Garden Market to connect Wandsworth Road and Nine Elms Lane.

The pathway features alcoves that host pop-up attractions and community activities throughout the year, adding more colour and animation for passers-by and visitors. Over Christmas, Merchants Way came alive with events and festivities for the local community.

As the evenings got darker, Merchants Way shone as bright as it does in the day thanks to the fabulous Christmas Decorators who replaced the autumnal leaves display with a lit winter garland on the archway by Pascal Street. On Festive Friday, on the first weekend of December, visitors enjoyed some tasty treats from Mission Kitchen's Frankie's Brownies and Tart Tart Quiche to the sounds of seasonal feel-good music from the talented All Star Steel Band. The Fred & Ginger Christmas Trees from the Bureau of Silly Ideas also served up a surprise dance performance too.

On Saturday, Nine Elms neighbour World Heart Beat opened its alcove to give free music lessons and the Bureau of Silly Ideas returned with a fun Magic Christmas Telephone walkabout act, while Harriet Parry Flowers ran Floral Mini Ornament-Making Workshop where you could make your own decorations to take home. Flow Dance Studio presented a Ballroom & Latin performance by their team of teachers, and even taught some passers by some moves.

The Merchants Way alcoves are spaces to test new ideas, speak directly to consumers, and provide much needed space for local community groups as well as a place to support business, charities and provide and deliver seasonal activities. If you want to get involved, expressions of interest are being sought from groups, individuals, businesses, charities, resident associations or anyone with a good idea! Fill in the online form at <https://form.jotform.com/213405461323041> to submit an initial expression of interest.

Introducing the burger of the future



In late November, a select audience gathered at Mission Kitchen in the Food Exchange for a very special evening exploring the future of one of the world’s best loved, but oft-maligned meals.

Attendees got to hear from plant-based pioneers, regenerative beef champions and insect innovators, who are transforming the burger game one patty at a time. Tom Barton, co-founder of Honest Burgers Ltd, top chef Neil Rankin of sympathy foods, Leopold Taylor of Yum Bug, Biff Burrows of Biff’s and Nick Hazell and Rory Gilbert of v2food took to the stage to convince the audience that their products represent the future of the burger.

Drinks sponsors, Food Exchange tenant Swig Wine and London brewer Toast Ale were on hand with the perfect pairings for the burgers provided by each of the innovators and cooked by the all-female chef team behind the event – Nurps, Justyna, Lucie and Emily. They prepared 150 burgers with five different patties – a regeneratively

farmed beef patty from Honest Burgers Ltd, a fermented mushroom, beetroot and onion patty from sympathy foods, a jackfruit patty from Biff’s, cricket strips from Yum Bug and the first taste in the UK of v2food’s plant-based patties. Plus all the chips!

After the event, Leo Taylor said: “What an honour to share a stage and talk about the future of the burger with these beautiful people. When I was working street food stalls back in 2017 - Biff’s super provocative branding and delicious food got me very excited about the power of food to change the world for good. We were working the same market stalls but I never met him properly or told him this. It was a total pinch me moment to be sitting next to him on a panel.

“Thank you Mission Kitchen for putting this on, especially Amy Win for killing the set up and organisation. It’s very exciting to see all the innovation happening in food right now. The future is exciting folks.”

Groundworks well under control

As anyone who has been to the Market recently will no doubt have noted, demolition has now been completed on the western half of A&B block.

The ground is now being broken out to prepare for the start of the sub-structure works, which are due to commence in early March and continue for 11 weeks until late May. The market tenants’ new units will then be developed and ready to move into by February 2024.

Until Christmas, due to the Market being its usual busy self in the run-up to the festivities, the road and parking facilities between blocks B&C were kept open. However, from January 4th 2023, the current road and parking arrangement for Rows B&C in the Fruit and Vegetable Market was altered to allow for the construction site to be extended southwards.

The new layout will remain in place until the completion of the construction works. Additional parking will be available on the aprons of the vacated units in C Row.

Please take care while getting used to this new layout.

CGMA will continue to communicate with all relevant parties when further information is available.



Obituary

Trevor Clark



Trevor Clark, a colourful and valued customer of the Market for over 50 years, has died aged 71.

Born in Swanley, Kent, on June 28th, 1950, Trevor began working in the fruit and vegetable industry for the father of Tony Compobassi (better known in the Market as Tony Marto), who had market stalls in the West End. In the early days, Trevor would buy from the old Covent Garden and the fruit was taken back to the stalls by horse and cart.

He progressed to running his own fruit and veg shops in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, before around 40 years ago, he began working for another market stall trader who had got a licence to sell in west London, the father of Paul Stein. When his father retired, Paul became Trevor’s partner in the business, which was now focused on one stall in Duke Street, opposite Selfridge’s, and their working relationship proved to be an enduring one.

“We both used to go to the Garden,” said Paul. “Trevor went very early and I’d go later to pick the gear up in the van. People liked him because he was no-holds barred, totally up-front. He’d tell you what he thought of you and he knew exactly how far he could go with salesmen on price – he understood that we all have to make a living.

“He was the same with me, very honest, and he made me save money and buy a house, as well as his younger brother who worked for us for a while.”

The market stall converted from fresh produce to a hot food stall, where Paul still trades his gourmet sausages today. “We stopped selling fruit and veg during lockdown and Trevor stopped going to the Market,” he said.

That was the end of an era – Trevor, fondly nicknamed ‘Dinosaur’ and ‘Jurassic Clark’, was remembered with much respect by many traders on the news of his passing. Eddie Barrett of HG Walker was moved to write the following poem in his memory. “It’s personal, but most people will relate, I’m sure,” said Eddie:

‘Twas 1984 my story began,
I met Trevor Clarke, a giant of a man.
“Ow much that grape son?”
He demanded to know.
“Dami” Italia, the pride of our show.
“Eight pounds that’s made”.
“Charge me a neves, we’ll have a trade.
Seven pounds 30p, we settled the deal,
Trevor, you’ll never know how that made me feel.
I wrote your ticket the deal was done,
A nod from the guvnor – “good sale, son”.
Turkey Bert, Mckennas, Martos, all West End boys,
But you Trev made most noise.
You said what you felt, you didn’t hold back,
Those that got it were cut no slack.
The banter between you and Johnny Marto,
Was legendary, as we all know.
In “Duncan’s cafe” the breakfast air was blue,
What most people didn’t know was your friendship was true.
“Greedy, deceitful, unkind” about most men you’d say,
But your love of dogs your heart would lay.
“Dinosaur”, “the giant”, “Jurassic Clark”,
But we knew Trevor it was all a lark.
All these years have passed us by,
Now we’ll miss that look in your eye.
New Covent Garden will never be the same,
Without the dinosaur who ended up lame.
You will be missed more than you know,
With memories affection and a heartfelt glow.
RIP

Trevor is survived by four brothers and three sisters. He was previously married to Louise, who passed away 20 years ago.



Oppo Brothers wins with feel good indulgence

Food Exchange based Oppo Brothers Ice Cream scooped four awards in the Great Taste Awards 2022. We talked to the company's Co-Founder Harry N Thuillier to find out what makes him and his team tick

Congratulations on your 4 Great Taste awards. Tell us about the flavours that won, and the tasting and testing process that went into making them?

Vanilla Caramel Brownie, Double Chocolate Brownie, and our Belgian milk chocolate salted caramel and Belgian milk chocolate and hazelnut ice cream sticks all won Great Taste Awards. Our mission is to create feel good indulgence that's better for health, and, when it comes to ice cream, taste is everything.

If a flavour doesn't taste as good as Haagen Daas despite the lower calories, we don't launch it. With the awards it was great to get further third-party proof that Oppo stands up against the most gluttonous premium ice cream and gelato. A big well done to our product and marketing teams including Sally Lawrence, Megan Lines, Christye McKinney, Hannah Strachan, Matthew Sherratt and Charlie Thuillier here in the Food Exchange!

Is there a favourite flavour in the range amongst the Oppo Brothers team?

One of the perks of working in the office is the unlimited ice cream. Everyone has their favourite but our new salted caramel balls are proving popular right now as they make a great office snack. Personally I find a tub of strawberry cheesecake goes down very well after lunch!

For people who don't know your brand or haven't tried your products, how would you describe your brand in three sentences?

Flavour that makes you feel good. Great Taste award-winning ice cream with half the calories and sugar of regular ice cream, and no compromise on taste. Like any responsible brand we also keep our environmental footprint to a minimum - we have just been certified as a B- Corp, our factories use renewable electricity, and our cows are meadow grazed. Is that three sentences?

The idea of healthy and sweet indulgence came about from your travels in Brazil. Could you elaborate on this light bulb moment - what felt right about pursuing this vision?

Yes, it started when we decided to break a record for the longest distance travelled by kite power on land, on the north east coast of Brazil. The buggies we used had no brakes and we had about two hours of kite experience between us.

“...proof that Oppo stands up against the most gluttonous premium ice cream and gelato

It was like learning to swim by crossing the channel. We often had to drag our buggies over 30 miles through mangrove swamps and ran out of the energy bars we had brought. So a few times, we ate fruit and coconuts.

These tasted amazing and were nutritious too. That was the light bulb moment. Why couldn't all food be like that? What if you could indulge in sweet treats, without having loads of sugar and nasty additives? 1,000km later and on our return Charlie immediately got into the kitchen and didn't leave it for two years. We tried about 2,000 recipes before making what we thought was temptation you never need to resist.

There were a lot of people in the food industry who said

it couldn't be done or that people wouldn't want it, and to Charlie that was like a red rag to a bull. We thought we could prove them wrong, and we just thought it would be amazing if you could go out and buy a tub of ice cream with little more calories than an apple. Others bought into this vision including our family, and that really encouraged us too.

What does great team work mean to you and does every employee have to love ice cream?

Well, we only happen to be an ice cream company, we could be selling anything that goes above and beyond the status quo and refuses to compromise on what's important. Luckily we're not selling marmite and most people do love ice cream anyway! The key thing is that our values resonate with each team member and they know what behaviours are going to help us achieve our aims as a business. Good team work is about people who can look at the bigger picture, know their own strengths and weaknesses and want to deliver for each other as well as for the company.

How do you decide upon your ice cream tub names?

We generally use four words and they just say what's on the tin. People looking at a freezer for 10 seconds to decide what to have for pudding that night don't have the patience to decode clever brand names.

Finally, are there particular fruits or even vegetables that are sold on the Market that could make interesting/unique ice cream flavours?

Yuzu, the citrus fruit is cool. There is some amazing produce on the Market.

What's the plan and vision for the year ahead?

Coming up with more flavours (watch this space for launches in UK supermarkets soon) and getting them to more shelves across Europe so that more people can enjoy flavour that makes you feel good.



Six firms settling in to new surroundings

As we reported in the last Market Times, a large proportion of the newly completed 115,725 sq. ft. (10,751 sq. m.) Phase A2 of the new Fruit & Vegetable Market had been fitted out and occupied by Market businesses by early October. The state-of-the-art facilities represent the second of six construction phases in the redevelopment and sit within the now fully completed 185,345 sq. ft. (17,219 sq. m.) western block of the market.

Three months after relocating to their new premises, we asked six traders how the facilities have been treating them so far.



Rick Harris, IA Harris

“There are three partners in the business and we are all approaching retirement age,” says Rick, himself aged 58. “So if we’re totally honest, we didn’t really want to go through a move. But we had the choice of closing the business or going for it and we decided there was more to be done yet. The investment was high, but now that it’s done, we’re seeing the benefits straight away.

“We went bigger, but I think it’s been worth the additional cost. We have the capacity to do more business and our main objective has always been to ensure we can give the customers the best level of service we possibly can – we can improve that here. It’s a lovely, modern environment to work in. It all feels more spacious; we’ve got a lot more room to move around. We were tripping over each other at times in the old units and we’re definitely more efficient now. The kit runs so much better, it’s nice and clean and tidy and there are no drafts in the offices, so we don’t need the fan heaters any more.

“We’d moved as a business before, but never to brand new units, and with hindsight, we perhaps could have done a few things differently. The hardest thing was that it’s really difficult to visualise the space you have until you’re actually here. But the last few years have shown us that we are more than capable of adapting and changing things quickly if we feel the need to.

“My advice to anyone who has yet to move is to plan ahead – we went through 25 versions of the plan, but that was absolutely necessary.

“All in all, we haven’t had many of the issues that I thought we might and in the run up to Christmas it all worked well. I guess we’ll see over the next few months how things turn out, but so far so good. I really think it’s all for the better.”



Alfie, Nick and John Lay, Lay's of Chelsea

The three governors of Lays of Chelsea all have a very positive outlook on what their move has done for them. “We couldn’t be happier,” says Alfie and Nick expands. “Everything is so much cleaner, clinical and lighter. It’s a far more work-effective environment. We are so impressed with the lighting; it’s really important for what we do.

“We had two units before, now it’s more like one and a half, but it feels like we have more space. Things are so much more efficient – it’s easier to get the product in, to prepare and pack it and to get the orders out again and we have more time.

“I suppose it wasn’t the ideal time to move, just after Covid, but there was no way of planning for the pandemic. I definitely wouldn’t want to do it again – we finished in the old units on the Saturday, moved everything over and started trading in the new place the next day. It was hard work, but we rolled our sleeves up and got on with it.

“My main recommendation to anyone moving after us is get hold of BT very early, to make sure your phone lines and broadband are up and running when you move in. We knew it would be the biggest challenge and we were onto it early, but we only just got it done. Putting a fridge in – that’s no problem!”

“The key to it is simplicity at the end of the day. You’re coming here to work; this isn’t your home,” adds John. “The Market is obviously in a transitional stage – it’s chalk and cheese at the moment, but when this place is finished, it’s going to be a real showpiece. I’m looking forward to showing it off!”



Rob Burton, Rushton's, The Chefs' Greengrocer

"We are more than happy. From our point of view, it was all very well planned. The only thoughts we had before we moved really were 'why is it taking so long!?' We were impatient because we could see the potential and not moving was only stopping us from doing things we wanted to do.

"The new units are a better shape for us. Because the Market has developed over the last 50 years, our old units were a bit of a rabbit warren. Now we have an open plan space that is truly fit for purpose, which makes it a lot easier to do what we need to do. We've changed for the better because the premises allow it. It's far more efficient and we can now encourage our customers to come here.

The biggest single reason for the success of our move though, has been the people working here. The two most important things for us were being able to provide our staff with good facilities and have our own toilets. Everyone showed great patience and understood that it would be better, while accepting that there could be some pain in the short term.

"For some of us, it was incredibly full on and we've still not quite got back to our day jobs yet. There are a lot of moving parts in a move and the object of the exercise was to get it the least wrong possible. You'll never get it 100% right – there will always be things you find out and fine tune when you move in. It's a case of ticking off things on a long list and it's important not to get frustrated with the last 10%, because they will take far longer than the initial 90%.

"The timescale to fit out the units was quite tight and stressful at times, but where we definitely benefited from being in phase 2 of the redevelopment was that there were learnings from phase I and we didn't have some of the issues they had. I hope the firms moving in phase 3 will see that benefit too."



Peter Brown, London Dairies

"We haven't really changed the way we do things, but the new facilities are a big improvement on what we had before," said Peter, picture right.

"The move was pretty straightforward really. We moved the ambient product across in the week before we had to be here and then the chilled stuff on the day we moved. It was all palletted, so it was just a case of us all chipping in and a forklift relay.

"Things are set up just how we want them and it seems like we have so much more space, even though in reality we haven't. Because the old units were 50-years old, there was wasted space and you found yourself making do with things.

"That's not to say the old place didn't work – we were BRC accredited and did everything right. But this is properly fit-for-purpose now. It's nice to have more of an overhang at the front of the unit, because we have so many deliveries and it's good to keep the product out of the rain."



Franco Antonucci, Euro Harvest

"We've got almost double the space and we've found that has made everything more efficient," said Franco, pictured second left with his team. "The business has stayed more or less the same, we don't really do anything differently. Because it's been Christmas, my customers have been very busy, so most of them have not been here, but we're looking forward to showing them our new premises.

"Before we moved, there were no fears - we were excited. It was pretty tight where we were before and we knew that with additional space, we'd be able to work better. We knew what we were going to get and what we had to do and the people who helped us plan and move all did a very good job. Good planning was really important."



Nick Santoniccolo, Vincenzo Ltd

"It's been quite a smooth transition from the old unit to the new. We had a few very busy months in the summer when we were organising contractors, the fit out, phone lines and broadband etc... but apart from the odd glitch in the first 10 days after we moved in, everything has been good.

"The premises are great – we're in a completely different situation to what we've been used to. Because they are brand new, it's just a case of getting used to them and sorting out a few minor details.

"We've got a lot more space to organise our stock now; plenty of warehouse space and the mezzanine level, which allows us to put out best-in-class Italian fruit and veg and specialist Italian products (olive oils, wines, frozen fish, charcuterie, cheeses etc...) we want customers to come and see. We've also got a really good office and conference rooms.

"The idea is to exploit our new facilities to increase turnover as we were previously at capacity. To a certain extent we have done this already but still have big ambitions for 2023 and beyond.

"We obviously need to account for a potential rising cost structure going forward and so we are continuing to import directly from markets and local growers in Italy that we have longstanding relationships with. We're all working in uncertain economic times and as of the beginning of 2023 most economies are at an inflation crossroads but promising signs in the US that inflation has peaked is reassuring for central banks, global markets, supply chains and our industry and puts us on the road to the end of the rate hike cycle we've seen in 2022. Although, the Bank of England's report in November predicted a recession by Q3 2023, due to seasonality with our clients this tends to be the busiest quarter of the year and so it is extremely unlikely that we will see QoQ declines in growth even if felt across the wider economy. Nevertheless, we've always found that customers who were strong before the pandemic and pre-inflationary pressures continue to be strong now – the top-end restaurants and high-end hotels which we exclusively operate within. The highest quality and service is an enduring combination, and we continue to strive to lead from the front.

"Regarding the Market there is obviously still a lot of construction going on here and maybe it's not time yet to expect / invite customers and locals to come to the Market, but when the redevelopment ends, we hope to see more customers and locals here. It's important to our business and the general awareness and visibility of the market. The Market has a responsibility to make itself as accessible as possible."

Gemma’s still loco for the Market

Gemma Hammond is owner of Pollito Loco, a restaurant based in Southsea, Hampshire. Describing the business as “a street trading and music festival fast food concept”, she sells tasty chicken in various styles and flavours. All the restaurant’s fresh fruit and vegetables are supplied by Fruit and Vegetable Market wholesaler Nature’s Choice and Gemma’s links with the Market go back a long way

Tell us a little about yourself, as we hear you have a long-standing connection to New Covent Garden Market.

I’ve had a connection with food since I was very young because my Dad, Geoffrey William Hammond, worked at New Covent Garden. He co-owned a business with Barry Ruffel called Ruffel and Hammond. I have many fond memories of the Market from my younger years. Since I was very young, I loved the buzz of the market and my Dad used to walk me around the different stalls. He’d haggle over prices and buy and sell goods, it was so exciting!

This is where my passion for food really began; seeing and smelling all the fresh produce, the colours and shapes of the vegetables. The market was a whole different world which happened at night, there was even a pub that was open all night long – this secret world was amazing to me!

When did you first visit the Market and what made it so special?

I used to love going with my father to work, even though children were not really allowed in the Market and I wasn’t even eight years old. So, I was forced into taking drastic action. At bedtime I’d wait until everyone was asleep, then I would get dressed and hide myself in the boot of my Dad’s car and sit and wait. I knew the journey well and soon learnt every turn and change of speed, working out when it was safe for me to jump out – too far for my Dad to be able to turn back and take me home. He was never that cross with me, I think he secretly loved my wanting to go to work with him in the middle of the night, in the freezing cold, whatever the weather. The smell of the market is one I will never forget.

My Dad loved the market, it was in his blood. He was always disciplined in getting up at strange hours and driving into town, and it didn’t stop him enjoying his life. He loved his music, fast cars and travelling. I wanted to follow in my Dad’s footsteps and carry on his business when he retired. Unfortunately, he was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease before I was old enough to do this and so I took another path, supported by my father. He used to take me to wonderful restaurants, including regularly to Jack’s restaurant in Battersea, which was yet another world. It was the time of the yuppie and anyone who entered Jack’s wearing a tie had it chopped off and put on the restaurant wall!



“I love visiting the Market at every opportunity. The vast array of suppliers and fresh produce helps me get the best on offer



Are there any stories from when your father had his wholesale business here?

We were never short of fruit and vegetables in our house and growing up this was often an amazement to our friends, who had never seen such an abundance of exotic fruits and veg. By our teenage years, however, we took it very much for granted and the food wasn’t always eaten, which led to my Stepmother’s Sunday ritual of making “MFP” (which to you and me is mouldy fruit pudding). It sounds horrible but they were always divine. I learnt that most fruits are at their best when their sugars are most concentrated.

My Dad had other ingenious uses for his fruit and vegetables; they were not just for eating apparently. There were six kids in the house, me being the youngest, and my Dad and Stepmother used to holiday without us quite a bit. Of course, house parties would follow. My Dad always knew whether we had had a party or not and we could never work out how he knew, we had always cleaned up so well and returned the house to its rightful state? How could he possibly know? Well, the sneaky fella used to purposely bring a large box of fruit home before their departure, knowing that we would never eat it all. When he returned from his travels if all the fruit had gone it had meant we had a party – ingenious!

When did you start your restaurant business?

I've been a chef since I was 15 years old, so food is very important to me. I first thought of the idea for my business in 2014 when I relocated from the UK to Spain. I was learning how to speak Spanish and watching a lot of TV to listen to the language, and I picked up a lot of great ideas from food programmes. My first commercial experiences were cooking my chicken lollipops, a new recipe I was trying out, at a couple of children's festivals. They proved a success and after I moved back to the UK in 2017, I was inspired to start my own food business. I knew that I wanted my business to be socially responsible and to also educate people about the food chain.

What are your plans to expand the business?

We have big plans to bring about system change within food businesses. Currently we're seeking funding to get our first food truck on the road so that we can build our brand and make our sustainable, zero-waste dreams possible! We're starting small and working hard to expand across the UK. It would be a dream to one day have my own unit at New Covent Garden, taking the family history full circle.

You're based in Hampshire, but still visit the Fruit and Vegetable Market for your produce. How did Pollito Loco get started and how did your new connection with the Market come about?

Pollito Loco serves award-winning free-range chicken in a variety of amazing styles and flavours. Our menu is designed using the entire bird, as we're a sustainable, zero-waste food business. We prepare the chicken accompanied by six crazy delicious sauces with global flavours. All our food is prepared in house using the finest fresh ingredients - the herbs, chillies, tomatoes, and peppers for our sauces all come from Nature's Choice.

One of our customers' favourite sauces is Jamaican Jerk, a crazy hot sauce made with Jamaican all spice, scotch bonnets, fresh thyme and coriander, ginger, lime, spring onions, brown sugar and tamari soy sauce.

The Market has a special place in my heart due to the family ties and I feel personally attached. Over recent years I've watched it change and develop into the Market it is today. I love visiting at every opportunity and the vast array of suppliers and fresh produce all in one place offers food businesses like mine a great opportunity to get the very best produce on offer.



How frequently do you purchase from Nature's Choice? Tell us a little about your relationship.

Nature's Choice has been my preferred fruit and vegetable supplier for many years. I first learnt about Nature's Choice years ago when I was a chef and met Martin Dykes (Nature's Choice owner). The quality of his fruit and vegetables and his excellent service and customer care has won my loyalty to him as my supplier.

When I became Executive Head Chef at Crystal Palace Football Club I used Nature's Choice as the supplier and continue to use them wherever possible. Martin has been a wonderful support to me over the years and I cannot fault him or Nature's Choice in any way. He has always gone above and beyond for me and is always available if I have any issues, which I find amazing as the company has grown massively yet he still makes the time to communicate with me personally, even though I am relatively small fry!

How does the knowledge and expertise of Nature's Choice contribute to what you purchase?

His knowledge is invaluable to my business. I often ask Martin for obscure things to prepare my menus. I love to create exciting dishes for my clients and often need something out of the ordinary. Martin and his team always do their best to find the exact products that I need. If they are unavailable, Martin makes a point of giving me a call and discussing alternatives to my requests.

Do you have a best-selling product and what makes it so popular?

Our best-selling product is our chicken, as this is the main component of our menu. However, we've also introduced vegan items to our menu and accompanied some of them with a Peruvian aji verde sauce, made with fresh coriander, oregano, garlic, parsley and fresh lime juice - again all supplied by Nature's Choice. We couldn't make our delicious sauces without our supplier's commitment to providing us with the freshest, best quality produce money can buy. We're truly grateful for their attention.

Find out more about Pollito Loco by visiting its website at www.pollitoloco.com or follow the business on Instagram - @crazylittle_chicken - and Twitter - @Pollito_Loco76



Pictured: A very young Gemma was a regular at the Market - not necessarily always in her fruity t-shirt!



Chris looks to give greengrocers a voice

Chris Bavin is well known in the UK wholesale markets, having worked in the fresh produce industry for more than a quarter of century, as a trader, a supplier and also a customer, while he ran an award-winning greengrocer. Now a successful BBC and Channel 4 presenter who has also published two cookery books, he has returned to his roots to set up a trade body representing independent greengrocers across the UK. Here, he explains the thinking behind the venture and tells Market Times how we at NCGM can help him achieve his objectives.



Chris ran a greengrocer called The Naked Grocer in Walton-on-Thames for almost a decade, so is in the perfect position to empathise with the rollercoaster an independent retailer rides while working on the country's high streets.

"A report published in early December revealed that more than 10,000 stores have closed on the UK's High Streets in the last three years," he says. "That included all sorts of stores, of course, but it's a stark figure and illustrates the problems that everyone is having. It's terrifying; and as every retailer will tell you, it's getting harder and harder. I want the industry to work together to help stop the rot and turn the tide in the opposite direction."

It is estimated that there are around 3,000 greengrocers in Britain. With no dedicated representation or central voice, however, the exact figure is an unknown. As a result, most businesses work in isolation; invaluable cogs in their community's wheel but relying on customers finding them rather than the other way round.

The first step on the journey for Chris is to compile a nationwide database of greengrocers – The Good Greengrocer Guide – which he admits is a herculean task in itself. The goal is to launch a website and social media tools with a 'find your local greengrocer' function to make it as simple as possible for the public to locate independent produce retailers, greengrocers, market stalls and farm shops.

He will use his extensive reach to use that period of data collection to engage the greengrocery trade and get widespread buy-in for his ambition and then aims to set up a trade association that runs marketing campaigns, secures collective discounts for members, and possibly one day enables regional and local doorstep deliveries via a centralised and joined-up distribution platform.



That dream is some way off. "I'm in the process of compiling the database and as I do it, it becomes ever more obvious why this is so necessary," Chris says. "Lots of these businesses have no website and no social media presence and therefore no way to talk directly to customers and potential customers. If we can put together a Good Greengrocer Guide and use creative ways to point consumers in the direction of their local stores, we can fix that."

"I aim to create an association where we can consolidate all the information, bring all the members together, and then find ways of using the power of the group."

"The need is there, I've had that confirmed to me over and over. I think the support is going to be there too. Since I first announced what I aim to do, the response has been really positive; from the wholesale markets, the retailers, the household brands and others. The lethargic few, or the 'wait and see brigade' are there as always, but we can't wait and see, this has to be done now."

He emphasises that the time is right by pointing to a potentially long-term change in the country's shopping habits. "Covid was a horrendous time but a whole new generation found their local independent retailers and greengrocers," he said. "Post-pandemic, lots of people went back to their existing shopping habits, but it's thought that around 20-30% of the sales increase was maintained. Let's go at that again."

"People are feeling the pinch, people are tightening their purse strings, and this is a time when the independent fresh produce retail sector can show what it can do – and I think there will be a potential new audience for us again."



What can traders do?

Focusing on New Covent Garden Market, he says there are two main things that traders can do. “First, they could talk to their independent retail customers about this initiative, fly the flag and promote the benefits. And second, they can get involved and support the association’s development. I’ll talk to anyone at any time if they want to discuss it further,” he explains.

“We’ve seen so many times that there is nowhere better than New Covent Garden when it comes to supporting good and worthy causes, rallying around and working together as a community. If we can nurture that sort of passion and commitment again, then we could really achieve something.”

This isn’t just a London thing; it’s a nationwide initiative, of course, and Chris adds that he would like to see wholesale markets up and down the country getting involved, hopefully working together where possible to strengthen the message.

“The catering trade has become more important over the years, but at every market, independent greengrocers and market stalls are still an integral part of the wholesale market community; if we want them to continue to succeed, we need to cherish them and help them to grow and I think wholesale markets should play a crucial part in that effort,” he says.

“Catering has become more important, but independent greengrocers are still an integral part of the wholesale market community



Let’s get together

As well as New Covent Garden supporting the initiative, Chris believes there’s potential for the wholesale markets to come together as a group and support it.

“I suppose it’s easier to communicate the vision to consumers, as the benefits of a robust greengrocery industry are very clear,” he says. “But from a B2B perspective, the benefits of this working would be large too. Not only will it be giving a voice to greengrocers and shining a light on the great things they do, we’ll be giving consumers and suppliers easier access to the independent retailer community through our guides.

“A strong independent retail sector can only make the wholesale markets stronger and that in turn adds power to the importers, distributors and growers, who require outlets for their produce. Every sector is linked and dependent on the sustainability of each other.”

There are obvious ways that wholesalers everywhere can add value right now. “It’s no easy task compiling a database of all independent retailers around the country by myself,” Chris says. “If wholesalers are able to reduce some of the legwork and promote what I’m doing then we’ll get things moving far more quickly. We will be providing a platform for people to find their local greengrocer and creating a collective presence and a buzz around a sector that just isn’t brilliant at creating that buzz for itself.”

While the project is still at its embryonic stage, the vision is for the trade body to comprise a board of greengrocers and be funded by sponsorships from major fresh produce brands as well as a small membership fee from greengrocers (around £10 a month). The eventual aim, says Chris, is to create a marketing fund to promote greengrocers and then work as a collective to secure membership discounts on equipment such as till units, vans, shopping bags and so on.

Few would deny that he’s onto something, but Chris needs help. Over to you, readers.

Follow The Good Greengrocer Guide on Instagram and Twitter: [good_greengrocer_guide](#) and email chris@bavin.org



Chris Bavin

Chris has worked in the fresh produce industry for 25 years, importing and selling to wholesale markets, and then starting The Naked Grocer, a fruit and vegetable retailer in Walton-on-Thames, which he ran for 10 years. Amongst other awards, The Naked Grocer was twice the proud winner of Independent Retailer of the Year at the Re:fresh Awards.

Chris has since gone on to enjoy an equally successful media career, presenting TV shows for the BBC and Channel 4 such as Eat Well For Less, Britain’s Best Home Cook, Britain In Bloom, Food Truth Or Scare and recently, Aldi’s Next Big Thing. He has also published two cook books – Good Food Sorted and Fakeaway

Still blooming great after 50 years!

John Hardcastle has worked at the Market for 50 years, having taken his first full time job here when he left school at 15 to join a firm on Drury Lane. He followed his father, Derek, and two of his uncles into the trade and has never veered from the flower business from day one. He now owns and runs Bloomfield of London. Apparently, he's not all that keen on doing his own publicity, so we spoke to his wife Michelle – who has been alongside him for most of his Flower Market journey – who tells us about John and his half a century of dedication to Market life.



Michelle married John when they were both 21 and says a life married to a man working Market hours can be challenging at times. “John actually lived above one of the firms in the old Covent Garden Market from an early age and was steeped in the Market long before he officially became a porter,” she says, “coming in to work before school on many mornings to earn some money.

“And it's been absolutely solid work for as long as I've known him. I have never met anyone who is more loyal – I'm sure a lot of people would agree with that, or more hard working, he gives 100% every single day. The hours have always been difficult, but he never complains.” Michelle admits that it was hard when the children were young. There was good and bad of course, because he was often there when they finished school, but at the busy times such as Christmas and Valentine's Day, we had to accept that we just wouldn't see him much for long periods,” she says. “He'd just get home, get ready for bed, get up and start again!”

The good times definitely outweigh the more challenging aspects of the job, she adds. “He's only moved firms a handful of times in all those years and I really don't know how he's done it. His role has always been to ensure that I could be there for the children and he's provided a really good life for the family.”

Since John established Bloomfields, he has been committed to sourcing the finest and freshest flowers from around the world and has fresh, seasonal flowers delivered six days a week from Holland, South America, Italy and other countries. On a daily basis, Bloomfields has a large array of fresh and dried flowers to choose from on its stand in the Market, but also places specific orders for customers. The company will delivery in London for a charge and in exceptional circumstances will look to accommodate deliveries further afield.

He has also brought the next generation of Hardcastles into the business. “Our children, Sophie and Sam, have both worked at Bloomfields and Sam is full-time there now,” Michelle says. “If I'm honest, neither of us really wanted him



to have a career at the Market, as we've seen what an impact it can have on you socially, but when he left university, he went to work with his dad and he's thriving. It really suits him and he takes after his father with his work ethic. Our daughter Sophie takes after John too – she also worked with him for a while after she left university, but she works in fashion now. I look after the books with my brother and even now when the firm's busy, all of us are happy to help out if and when needed.”

John's dad ran his eponymous business Derek Hardcastle in the Market for many years, but Bloomfield is Michelle's maiden

name and when John set up his own business, he decided he'd like to keep that name alive. “When my dad retired, he was at a loose end and used to go to the market three days a week to collect the sales books for me. It gave him something to do,” recalls Michelle.

“John's brother and cousins are also in the trade and I'm not sure that the next generation of many families is coming into the market any more. It's definitely becoming harder to find staff as we lose those connections. But ours really is a family business, everyone has been connected in one way or another.”



Pictured: John Hardcastle in his habitat of half a century

Photos: Clive Boursnell

Britain's biggest market goes prime time

The Market took centre stage for millions of viewers of prime-time Friday night BBC One, in October, as the We Are England series featured us in a documentary named **A Night at the Market**. For any of you who missed it, here are a few highlights of the show and its stars – the people of New Covent Garden Market



Vernon Mascarenhas, Nature's Choice

The programme started in a Notting Hill restaurant, with Vernon Mascarenhas of Nature's Choice. "If you live in London and you dine out, you will have come across produce from New Covent Garden Market – 100%," said Vernon.

The show featured Vernon talking a customer through his order, checking through that order in the Market overnight and then delivering English padron peppers, salad leaf, rainbow chard and borlotti beans to that same customer. "I want to get involved, market people want to get involved," Vernon said. "There's no better feeling than coming into a restaurant, looking at the menu and being able to say "that's mine", "that's mine", "that's mine".



Gary and George Marshall, Bevington Salads

Gary and son George also featured in the programme, to illustrate how Market businesses continue to pass from one generation to the next. "When you walk around the market, there are many father/son and a few father/daughter relationships, which is great. So obviously, if you're fortunate like me and you've got a lovely son who's got a bit of ability, you drag him in!" Gary laughed.

In the programme, George talks about preparing to take over the business from Gary. "We're the A team," George said. "He's 61 years of age now, he does not want to retire, but he does want to take a step back, so I can take a step forward." Gary adds: "If we could replicate what we do in this market every night across our country, if we could take away this passion, knowledge, desire, camaraderie, entrepreneurialism and work ethic, everybody would be in our slipstream."



Jo Breare, Covent Garden Market Authority

Jo explained the Market to the BBC viewers: "It is like one massive family - fiercely competitive, but also fiercely loyal. They are hugely supportive of each other and very driven, but they really do care about each other.

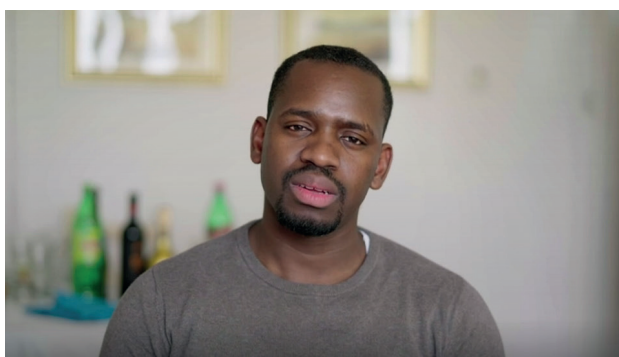
"People have said it's like the wild west, but it's actually organised chaos!"



Jim Dew, Harwoods of London

"We've got all types of different people here from different backgrounds; we're like a little family," said Jim. The diversity of cultures is useful, he added, when you want a perspective on a particular imported product. "We normally have someone we can ask whether that's what it tastes like in their own country," he said. "I can remember years ago when the kiwifruit came out. Now there's thousands of 'em, but you used to have to go miles to get a bloody kiwifruit!

"But since lockdown, we've encouraged a lot more chefs to follow seasons and try to buy British produce. Runner beans from Kent, for instance, have just started and they're at their best. Why buy a bean from Kenya when we've got them growing down the road from us?"



Leandro Cristovao, Nature's Choice

The undoubted star of the show though was Leandro, a picker and packer at Nature's Choice. He first talks viewers through his job and then the programme follows him to a home in North London on one of his days off, where he is with fellow Angolans.

Leandro came to the UK in 2013 after fleeing conflict in his own country and hasn't seen his eight year old daughter in three years. "I pay fees for school, food, transport, everything. I have never left her. I have to work to support her. Family gives me strength," he said.

Leandro added he loves the job at the Market and what it gives him. "We have different communities around the market. You can see how they look after each other. This [job] is a gift, you know. The night shift is not easy, but the market has helped me to grow up as a man."

The programme can still be watched on iPlayer - www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001dkf1



Richard juices up Cobham

Richard Smith-Bernal is the Founder and Owner of The Juice Smith, a restaurant based in Cobham, Surrey, supplied by Thornicrofts from New Covent Garden Market. Richard started cold-pressing juices in 2013 and has seen his business rapidly expand since he opened it in 2015. Market Times asked Richard about his company and his relationship with the Market

History of The Juice Smith

As a professional rugby player, Richard Smith-Bernal was relying on workout supplements to boost energy and support his active lifestyle. In 2012, he developed severe gastritis and started a journey to find alternatives to alleviate symptoms and return to full health. After months of doctors’ appointments and traditional medication, nothing seemed to help.

He fell in love with cold-pressed juices and the associated health benefits while in LA. He also developed a passion for plant-based food and noticed a real difference in his energy levels and mood. His symptoms improved rapidly, and he decided to start sharing these benefits with the world.

Richard launched The Juice Smith in the Summer of 2013 with one machine and one mission in mind. To improve health, through unprocessed and natural foods. The launch began with a collection of signature, cold-pressed juices. Cold pressed means that no heat is added at any stage of the juicing process to retain the highest level of nutrients, with all ingredients 100% raw and unpasteurised.



Tell us a little about The Juice Smith

We’re a seven-year old, family-run wellness brand, home to plant-based, organic products that are free-from refined sugars or any preservatives. I started cold-pressing juices single-handed from my Mum’s kitchen, and since 2015 we’ve had a restaurant and market space in Cobham. Now, our juices and snacks are available for nationwide online delivery and we’re constantly looking at new ideas.

How did the business get started and what made you choose your location?

I know Cobham well as that’s where I grew up. It’s an affluent area, so it was the perfect location to set up the restaurant, especially a business supporting healthy eating. I realised that people were becoming more health conscious and I’d been to restaurants in London that were offering more healthy options. I started juicing from home at first, then I raised the capital to buy a bigger machine and the business started to expand from there.

You’ve created a series of cold-pressed juices and drinks that combine a healthy lifestyle with delicious flavours. How easy is it to create new products and ideas?

It’s easy to create as we have lots of ideas! But it’s much harder to test with control quality and flavour going through various rounds of taste testing. One of our recipes took us six months of testing to perfect until we were happy. It can be a long process, but we draw on experience from the USA. I’ve travelled to America a lot and some of the restaurants and products are probably 10-years ahead of us in terms of the healthy eating journey.

History of Thornicrofts Ltd

Thornicrofts Limited has become one of the leading greengrocers in the fine dining sector, and aims to maintain and then improve the same standards that its customers typically strive to achieve each day.

Co-Directors Clive Thornicroft and Dan Fitzpatrick have both worked at New Covent Garden Market since the 1990s, gaining huge amounts of experience and expert knowledge along the way.

After several years of securing a solid foundation in the industry, Dan formed a company with the late Charlie Hicks, supplying the best restaurants in the West Country and Wales, together with a selection of niche greengrocer shops. Returning to London as a Buyer, Dan spent time in Europe building relationships with suppliers in Rungis, Milan, Fondi and Barcelona and also forging relationships with some of the best growers in the UK, before setting up Thornicrofts with Clive.

What is your connection to New Covent Garden Market and how did that come about?

My wife already had a connection to New Covent Garden, so we used to travel to the Fruit and Vegetable Market to look at what produce was seasonal, but it was the amazing buzz and the energy of the wholesalers that kept us coming back.

We’ve worked with different suppliers in the past and through our executive chef we’ve built a great relationship with our supplier at the Market, the fruit and vegetable wholesaler Thornicrofts Ltd. Danny at Thornicrofts is brilliant for us, and what sets them apart is the personal service that we receive. They supply us with literally hundreds of kilos of fruit and vegetables each week and we trust them to give us the best service.

Why do you purchase from NCGM and what makes us valuable to your business?

Good service, reliability, fresh produce. We use seasonal produce and Thornicrofts is always reliable with availability and quality. We use a combination of ingredients supplied by Thornicrofts for our seasonal menus and juices. What we gain from working with New Covent Garden Market is so important – the story and the people behind the fruit and vegetables is vital. The natural element is something that we’re proud about and we’re always keen to shout about our suppliers and our farmers, as the supply chain doesn’t get spoken about enough. We love working with people like Danny, who has the knowledge and experience and shares this with our executive chef. New Covent Garden Market is vitally important for London. We want to support the Market and shout about it to our customers.

How do you decide on which flavours to use and do you have a best-selling product?

From day one we realised that people like certain flavours, but it’s tricky getting it right. The team at Thornicrofts have been very helpful, and they’ve even sent us produce free of charge so that we can test recipes and flavours with our customers. As for our best-selling product, it’s our California Sun juice, that beams with a warm citrus glow. It’s full of anti-inflammatories and antioxidants, which can help boost your immune system and reduce signs of aging. We like to joke that it transports you to your favourite beach! Another popular product – and one that surprised us – was our Sweet Potato and Kale dish that we serve in our restaurant. It’s a lot of people’s favourite and we’re able to work with Thornicrofts to add a different seasonal twist each year.

Have you seen a growing demand for healthy juices and meals since you first opened the business?

Absolutely, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic. We’ve seen a big change in our consumers, who are realising that prevention is better than cure. We’ve even become a destination for people who are suffering with various ailments and we’ll happily recommend certain juices and



products. What you’re putting into your system is so important for your health. We work with nutritionists to make sure that all the goodness from our fresh ingredients is captured in the bottle, so we can let our customers know our products are special.

Cobham is also home to Chelsea Football Club’s training ground – has that had any influence on the business?

Yes, we’ve established a good connection with the club, thanks to John Terry, the former Chelsea captain. John lives locally so he used to regularly visit the shop and really got behind our products and started supporting what we were doing. It was thanks to John that we were able to form a connection with the club and we started supplying the training ground with our products.

Does having a physical shop make a big difference to the juice side of the business?

The juice business was my first idea and I knew that I wanted to have a physical shop so that I could meet our customers and get face-to-face feedback. The restaurant is a great testing ground for new ideas and the feedback we receive directly from our customers is invaluable. It’s our mission to make healthy food that’s good for you but also tastes incredibly nice!

Our long-term goal is to bring more products and recipes to market - we want to make healthy food popular and show the public that it’s not just rabbit food!

For more on The Juice Smith, go to <https://www.thejuicesmith.com/>



Happy
Customer

★★★★★

John Lelliott becomes Interim Chair at CGMA

As some readers will already be aware, there has been a fairly significant change at CGMA, with the departure of David Frankish from his role as Chair.

Stepping into David’s shoes until a permanent successor is found is John Lelliott, who has been on the CGMA Board as a non-executive director for six years. John will be Chair until a new permanent Chair is appointed by the Defra Minister; the recruitment process has already begun, but typically takes 9-12 months.

“There was much progress made during David’s tenure, perhaps most notably a significant improvement in the relationship between CGMA and our key stakeholders, the Market’s tenants, and a landmark agreement with the CGTA that has allowed the redevelopment of the Market to get right back on track,” said John.

“I want to assure everyone there will be no fundamental change to our light touch approach, as we continue to work alongside our tenants to drive the success of the Market. CGMA General Manager Jo Breare and her excellent team will be the focal point of that work and, as always, they should be the first point of contact when tenants need our help or support.

“I think that these are currently challenging times both for CGMA and tenants, however I am really optimistic that by continuing to work together and having clear lines of communication the market will be a great success.

“The redevelopment programme continues apace, as anyone who comes into the market will be able to see. The landscape changes before our eyes almost daily and I’m pleased to hear that the tenants who recently relocated into the phase 2 building have now settled into their new surroundings. The demolition stage of phase 3 is well underway and this year will see plenty more progress, as we head towards our January 2027 completion date.

“That date will no doubt be with us a lot sooner than we currently expect, but our first priority is to look forward to sharing a prosperous 2023 with everyone here at New Covent Garden Market.”

Personal Fact File

Place of Birth
Lewes, East Sussex

Where do you live?
Poole, Dorset

Tell us a bit about your career
I worked for 31 years at The Crown Estate, where I became Chief Financial Officer and Finance Director, until I left in 2016. The Crown Estate is a broad and diverse statutory real estate company with a £13 billion property portfolio that ranges from major holdings in commercial real estate, retail, offices and residential through to rural and coastal assets including significant interests in the offshore energy sector.

I am now a non-exec director and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committees of the Environmental Agency and also of the Sustainability and Charities Committees of University Hospital Dorset. I am a Trustee of the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, Centre for Sustainable Healthcare and JTL – a work-based training and learning charity. I served as Chair of the Natural Capitals Coalition from 2016 to 2019, and now sit on the Board. I am also Chair of the ACCA Global Sustainability Forum.

How does NCGM compare with the rest of your career?

It complements my executive career working in property, working with tenants and being involved in creating value through development. London is obviously of great importance as a capital city and it’s very rewarding being part of a Market that supports the success of London together with helping it meet the challenges it faces. My other non-exec and Trustee roles with the Environment



Agency and Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution also help me appreciate the wider issues impacting the agricultural and horticultural sectors.

What family do you have?
Wife, Wendy, a son and a daughter and a very recent addition of our first grandchild, in September 2022.

Favourite Fruit, Vegetable and Flowers
Satsuma, Red cabbage, white roses.

Market Times – a sustainable future

Market Times is no longer posted out to subscribers outside the Market. You can still pick up a copy when you are at NCGM, at one of the cafes or from the CGMA office in the Food Exchange. We will continue to email our extensive database and attach a PDF version when each issue is published. If you are not on our mailing list, send your name and email details to hello@cgma.co.uk and if you would prefer not to receive Market Times, you can also unsubscribe. Thank you.