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Mission Kitchen members
keep the great products
coming





Quite rightly, this Market and its tenants win plenty of awards in all sorts of areas and we celebrate them as representative of the great things that happen at New Covent Garden Market. For the second year running though, we’ve kicked off in style with an award that recognises the entire community here, as the PRmoments Awards judges picked us out as the outstanding finalist in the very competitive B2B Creativity category. So many people here were involved in making the 50th anniversary PR and promotional campaign such a success, but we all must bow down to the hippos and gorillas at ZSL London Zoo, who provided the silver lining to our creative coverage and piqued the interest of the world’s media, to give our story wings. These are very prestigious awards in the PR industry and our entry beat another inspired by Ross Kemp, so it’s also one for South West London over the Eastenders!

Trading wise, it’s been a slowish start to 2025 in many ways, but we’ve all been here before and expect things to pick up as the year springs into life. We have, however, kept ourselves in the spotlight through Valentine’s Day and Mother’s Day and we’ve got plenty planned over the next few months to enhance our profile. There is always plenty going on here, as you’ll see when you read the rest of this issue.

We’ve lost a few more of the old guard since the start of the year unfortunately, so inside you’ll find obituaries, plus a fascinating recollection of the days when Commission Agents were such a valued part of the Market fabric, due to the passing of the fabled Johnny Cruise. On a slightly happier note, we’ve also interviewed Graeme Diplock, who retired after 38 years in the Flower Market – he looks back on his time in Nine Elms, which began after he took one too many bangs to the head!

The Farewell Flowers Directory (TFFD) is taking funeral flowers to this year’s Chelsea Flower Show and NCGM is supporting an initiative that looks to connect people with independent florists offering personal and compostable arrangements. The traditional funeral still very much has its place of course, but TFFD wants to encourage more people to think about personalising their loved one’s funeral.

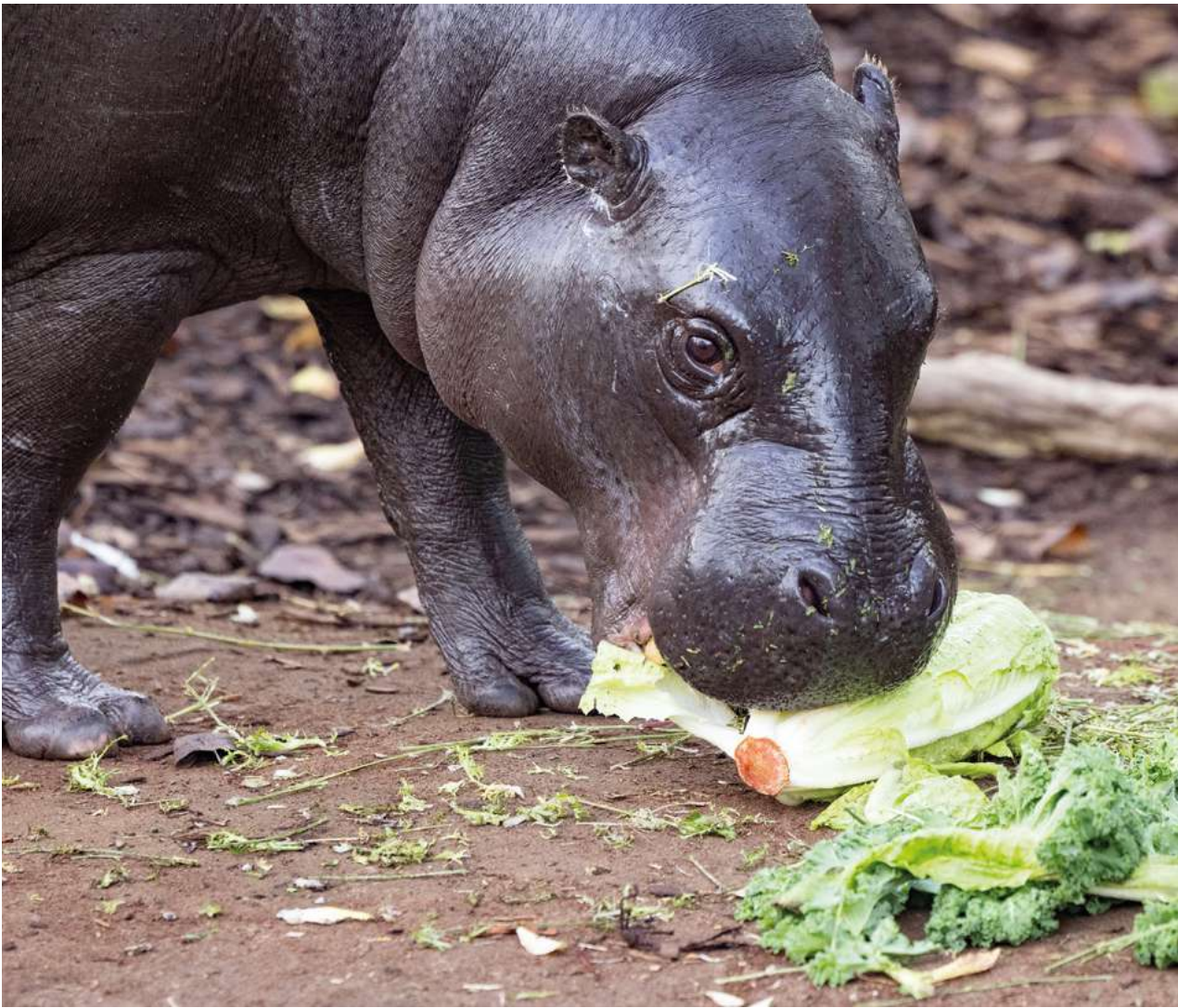
Also inside, we feature Komodo Bakery, another entrepreneurial firm that has significantly expanded its horizons since becoming a member of Mission Kitchen in the Food Exchange, as well as going back to school with D.D.P’s Paul Grimshaw as our not-so-strict teacher, and talking to Raj Patel, the Market Postmaster who highlights his vital added-value role within the community.

We’re in the borough of Wandsworth of course and looking forward to playing our part as this corner of London celebrates being the London Borough of Culture for 2025. There’s a full calendar of events planned by the local Council for later in the summer, but if anyone out there has any ideas or wants to get involved in celebrating the contribution of NCGM to the borough, let us know.

Enjoy the read!

Tommy

Tommy Leighton, Market Press Officer



Our 50th PR campaign wins major award

Along with our PR and Comms agency partner Sunny Side Up, New Covent Garden Market came out on top in the #B2BCreativity category at the PRmoment Awards 2025, in March.

The award recognises the ingenuity and successful implementation of the communications campaign that celebrated the milestone 50th anniversary of our move to Nine Elms.

Achieving an incredible global reach of more than 4.5 billion, the campaign told people in all corners of the world about the value and values of New Covent Garden Market. The coup de grace, which helped us to spread the word so far and wide and win this award was photography captured at ZSL London Zoo on November 11th 2024, the morning of the exact 50th anniversary of the Market’s relocation. Western lowland gorillas and a pygmy hippo at London Zoo tucked into a bumper breakfast of fresh vegetables and greens supplied by Market wholesaler and catering supplier County Supplies.

With the expert help of Sunny Side Up, our campaign went viral across national and international media, with New Covent Garden Market catching the attention of a worldwide audience. PRmoment Awards judges called it an “incredible campaign - so simple and so powerful”.

Tommy Leighton, NCGM’s Press Officer, said: “This is not just an award for the PR and comms effort, but another moment that puts the Market firmly in the spotlight and reaffirms our importance to the food and floral supply chains across the South East. The London Zoo photographs were just one part of the 50th anniversary occasion, in which so many of the tenants at the market played an active part, but what an amazing impact our hippo and gorilla friends made for us!”

And Giles Roddy, Head of Engagement, Covent Garden Market Authority, added: “The photographs were so



evocative that they were published across every region of the UK and in at least 20 countries and at least five continents. That’s just what we could trace online – and every time they were published, the full press release went in alongside them. It really was an unprecedented period of exposure for the Market and we’re working hard now to keep that momentum going.”

Above: Zoe Ward-Waring, MD of Sunny Side Up



The French Garden upgrades fleet with Renault tractor units

New Covent Garden Market wholesaler The French Garden (TFG) has purchased three gleaming new Renault tractor units for its 13.6 ft trailers, to improve efficiency and enhance the look of its fleet.

TFG has traditionally leased its vehicles, but has now driven down a different route. Director Iain Furness explained: “We had three articulated lorries and have added one more, to deliver the produce we already have on the road and cater for future growth.

“The decision to buy them outright was primarily based on the quality of the after care we believe we’ll get from Renault. With the amount of time our vehicles spend on the road and the perishability of the produce, reliability is absolutely key. We’ve been paying a lot of money for maintenance that we just weren’t getting with leased vehicles, but now these are part of us and they will be a big part of what we do,” Iain said.

“This is all part of our commitment to customer service – we just can’t let customers down and if one of our vehicles gets detained by port authorities, for example, this will give us more flexibility.”

The fleet transports produce to and from France six times a week and covers routes to the North, West and South East

of England three times a week. The state-of-the-art cruise control in the brand-new diesel tractor units will significantly reduce fuel usage for vehicles that do an average of approximately 100,000 kilometres each a year.

Garry Boyle, the firm’s transport manager, researched extensively before the final decision was made to go with Renault, and the drivers were all involved in the process – they were all consulted about the move to Renault cabs and engines and the cruise control functionality.

Garry has also specced up the tractor units to improve the driveability and comfort for drivers who often sleep in the cabs overnight. Each unit, for instance, has a fridge freezer installed as one of its ‘home comforts’. Garry said: “The drivers are really happy and looking forward to driving them. Having happy staff is so important – we have a great team here and hope this will make their working lives better too.”



Riverside Radio brings Valentine’s Day to life

Love is always in the air at New Covent Garden Flower Market, but never more so than on February 14th when the Valentine’s Day rush is complete, the red roses have all but gone and the Market community can reflect on a job well done while the left-it-to-the-last-minute romantics snap up what’s left for their significant others.

This year, for the 50th time in Nine Elms, the Market celebrated one of the biggest moments in its annual calendar by hosting the Riverside Radio Breakfast Show. Traders and florists including Bryan Porter, Damian Walloch, Graeme Diplock, Warren Bushaway and Richie Edwards, as well as CGMA Chair Wanda Goldwag OBE, veteran Market snapper Clive Bournsell and floral industry publisher Caroline Marshall Foster all spoke to the fun and energetic presenter Jason Rosam during his live broadcast from the Market floor.

The breakfast show was also broadcast from NCGM during British Food Fortnight last year, and this time brilliantly brought the Valentine vibe to life; talking listeners through the ins and out of the day of romance and the incredible array of flowers, plants and foliage on offer at NCGM, while introducing them to some of the names and faces here on the day, as well as roaming around and speaking with customers.

As well as the obvious chit-chat, a wide range of topics was covered, from job opportunities to Valentine’s anecdotes from the dim and distant past, and amazing florists and floristry to the allure of the Garden Café. You name it; it was talked about during the three-hour romp through all things floral and wonderful.

For more on these stories and to keep up-to-date with news from NCGM, scan the QR code



G’s Fresh Board gets an update on NCGM progress



Nick Padley of Side Salads joined Jo Breare of CGMA to give the Board of G’s Group, the UK’s largest independent grower of salads and vegetables, a tour of the Market, in March.

The £700m G’s Group has an extremely close relationship with Side Salads that stretches back many years and supplies the Buyers’ Walk wholesaler fresh produce year-round from its UK growing operation, as well as its businesses in Spain and Senegal.

The G’s team had been in London to see Chairman John Shropshire deliver a very well received City Food & Drink Lecture, at The Guildhall on the previous evening. They took the opportunity to visit the Market and have a look not only at Side Salads units today, but also the latest phase of the redevelopment of the Market, which includes the brand-new units that Side Salads and P&I will occupy from early 2026.

While we can’t divulge precise commercial figures, of course, G’s is certainly the largest supplier of British-grown fresh produce into New Covent Garden Market and a firm believer in the long-term value of wholesale markets and wholesalers to its business.

Wellness-focused brand brings kimchi to the Arches



Wellness-focused premium fermented food brand FERMARY, recently become a part of the S. Thorogood & Sons group.

Located in the Arches of New Covent Garden Market, FERMARY, like Thorogoods, is embedded in the heart of London’s fresh produce trade. It now produces kimchi and other fermented foods here, that are “designed to transform gut health, nourish the body, and elevate everyday meals, empowering a healthier, more balanced lifestyle”.

FERMARY Head of Brand Elena Deminska added that its products are “crafted with care and backed by decades of expertise”, celebrating “the art of fermentation, transformation and better living”. She said: “With over a century of expertise in working with the best growers, S. Thorogood & Sons has built a legacy of trust, quality, and innovation in fresh produce. We take that same commitment

and apply it to fermentation, using the finest seasonal vegetables sourced directly from the Thorogood network of growers.”

Both firms called the formal partnership an obvious extension from their pre-existing trading relationship and Thorogoods Director Will Thorogood added: “Together, we’re not just supplying amazing quality produce, we’re redefining its potential.

“Our journey has always been about more than just supplying fresh fruit and vegetables, it’s about honouring the hard work of farmers and ensuring their produce reaches its full potential. That’s why bringing FERMARY into the group is a natural progression.”

“Just as we champion fresh produce, FERMARY celebrates its next chapter, preserving peak-season ingredients in a way that enhances both taste and nutrition,” said Will.

Nine Elms hotel pays homage to Flower Market

Nine Elms first five-star venue, the sparkling new Park Hyatt London River Thames, is an 18-storey, 203-room hotel with a ballroom and stunning views up and down the river. It has four restaurants including a Cantonese flagship in a nod to the building’s Chinese ownership. The hotel also boasts a magnificent “wine library” with 1,300 different wines on offer.

Why are we telling you this? Well, the downstairs Nine Elms bar is illuminated by an installation of 400 tulip shaped bulbs in homage to the area’s history as the site of New Covent Garden Market for the last 50 years.

So, pop in, have a drink and think of the Market!



NCGM supports 'Welcome to Wandsworth' launch

New Covent Garden Market was represented as Wandsworth Borough Council launched Welcome to Wandsworth, the celebration of the borough’s status as The Mayor’s London Borough of Culture 2025.

Wandsworth is embarking on a year-long celebration of culture, creativity, and community. The stunning floral display in the picture above was created for the launch by the team at Pinstripes & Peonies in the Flower Market. Taking place at one of Wandsworth’s flagship venues, Battersea Arts Centre, the launch assembled musicians, performers, local dignitaries and community members from all walks of life.

The gathered throng represented the diversity of the borough as Welcome to Wandsworth officially kicked off an ambitious 12-month programme that will showcase world-class performances, grassroots creativity, and a pioneering focus on the power of culture to improve health and wellbeing. The 2025 programme is packed with events, performances, and unique cultural experiences. Among the highlights are:

- Strictly Wandsworth kicked things off on April 26th), and will be followed by Wandsworth Arts Fringe (WAF) (June 6 - 22), Wandsworth Heritage Festival (June 13 – July 13), and Battersea Park In Concert (August 23-25). As for New Covent Garden Market, we’re proud to be part of this borough and what it represents and will be supporting Wandsworth throughout its year in the cultural spotlight!

New home significantly broadens charity potential

City Harvest, the London charity that rescues nutritious surplus food from farms, manufacturers, wholesalers, and retailers, has worked with traders at the Market since 2017.

Tenants Association chairman Gary Marshall was the first person to receive a City Harvest green plaque for helping rescue food back in 2019 and he was also instrumental in increasing the number of NCGM wholesalers that work with the charity. Many more now proudly display their own green plaque.

The charity moved on site at the beginning of 2024, and last year collected three times more food, which as well as making a difference to the lives of 130,000+ people a week who receive food in one form or another from City Harvest, is simultaneously helping the Market to significantly reduce food waste.

To date, the traders of NCGM have helped rescue 772,860 kg of food, equivalent to 840,142 meals. City Harvest feeds people who may otherwise not eat and supports charities and schools across London with free food. It is a long-time supporter of FoodCycle, another charity which has a home in the Market, and in March signed up FoodCycle’s 20th London site to receive free food deliveries for people in need.



City Harvest supports any for-community group/ food bank/ charity that helps to nourish people facing food insecurity.

Now in Arch 5 at NCGM, you may have seen the new green neon sign, please do say hello to Richard or Mike (pictured posing nonchalantly) who are always happy to make sure no good food is wasted.

Unique light is photography heaven

Fifty shades of grey, that's just dull E.L James!. The Market has millions of shades of colour and light



Some readers might not be aware that no matter where one is in the UK, one is never more than 100 miles from the sea.

"So what?" you might ask, but my point is that this very fact accounts for the water that is constantly held in the air. I'm not talking about rain, although that is part of the equation. The varying amounts of water and the temperature held in the air at any time create "the Atmosphere", made all the easier by England's lack of a high mountain range, allowing 3,000 miles of water-laden Atlantic weather fronts to push East. Add the ever-varying position of the jet stream over the UK and that's a lot of water for a relatively small Island. Combined with changing air temperatures this gives us infinite conditions and, for a photographer, colours of light. In my opinion, few places in the world can boast the endless variety of light and colour we have here in "Old Blighty"

I am forever watching our varying light, particularly in days past in both the old and new markets where so much of the work was done outside. As we move into the 'new new' Market buildings, the outside light will play a lesser role, but while we still have it I'm a complete sucker for the fog, sleet, snow and rain, as well as the cold ethereal early-morning light, bursts of flaring sun at sunrise on those misty summer mornings.

In these moments, the work of the Market is almost secondary. The outside light completely governs the way I photograph; I disregard the camera light metering system, making my own picture exposure according to how I am feeling about whichever subject is in front of my lens. I love being in and working with the elements, perhaps even more so when I am photographing gardens and landscapes, another of my regular pastimes.

How much of the sky I allow into my picture frame depends on the darkness or contrasting definition. Up to a point, the lighter the sky and the lower the contrasting definition, the less sky I will have in my picture. Too much whitish sky will lose the focus of the viewer; however the blasting light of a low sun will surely hold their attention. It's like driving into the rising or setting sun - the power of the light can be overwhelming.

I particularly enjoy having light either coming straight into my lens or across my bows at roughly 45° to camera. I will only shoot with the sun coming from behind me when it is very low in the sky because when you photograph with the sun behind you, it becomes a gigantic flash bulb and can kill the atmosphere of any picture.



I've been taking pictures of this Market since I first stepped foot in it and fell in love in 1968. In this series, I'm looking back on some of my favourites and explaining the thinking and stories behind them.

See you next time!
CB 05/25

A first for funeral flowers at Chelsea

The Farewell Flowers Directory (TFFD) is primed to stage the first ever display of funeral floristry at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2025 and it will do it with the support of New Covent Garden Flower Market



In an historic first for the RHS Chelsea Flower Show, TFFD - a not-for-profit that aims to connect people to independent florists offering personal and compostable arrangements and eventually remove plastic from funeral floristry - has been invited to stage an exhibit of funeral floristry at the heart of Chelsea's Great Pavilion.

The creative display will demonstrate that you do not need to sacrifice beauty for sustainability. To spread the core messages, it will feature exclusively British-grown cut flowers and foliage and be entirely free of plastic floral foam and single-use plastic.

TFFD is the brainchild of Gill Hodgson MBE of Fieldhouse Flowers in Yorkshire and founder of Flowers from the Farm, and florist and funeral floristry tutor, Carole Patilla of Tuckshop Flowers in Birmingham. It is an online listing that describes itself as a "positive, practical response to the



huge issue of plastic waste in funeral floristry...on a mission to change the world of funeral flowers one compostable arrangement at a time". As well as its environment-friendly approach, the florists and growers behind the movement also want to personalise the funeral experience.

Gill says: "An unsustainable circle has evolved in funeral flowers over recent decades. In founding The Farewell Flowers Directory, we aim to break the chain. We want to make people aware of the many talented florists creating fully compostable, plastic-free floral designs and inspire more florists to make the switch. We want to demonstrate just how beautiful, personal and sustainable funeral flowers can be.

"Funeral flowers don't have to look funereal, they can be anything you want them to be. We hope that our Chelsea exhibit will help start conversations and let people know that

Walk on with personal tributes

Having designed this beautiful walking boots arrangement, Carole Patilla understands both the power that well-designed flowers can have and the need for a more sustainable approach. She explains: "A family came to me saying that they wanted something for their husband/dad but he wasn't really a flowery person. Veg was more his thing as a gardener. Initially they were keen to have a vegetable based arrangement, but when they went over to my website, they saw some hiking boots I'd arranged previously and fell in love with them



and switched from veggies entirely. "He'd loved walking and the countryside, and they asked me to include heather in them as a nod to moorland hikes. I made them as wild-looking and unflowery as I could, whilst still making them lovely. They asked me to include red roses as he'd worn a red rose buttonhole at his wedding. They supplied the boots, and I placed jam jars with water inside each boot and filled them with flowers. The design was meaningful, simple, seasonal, beautiful and free of plastic waste."

they have a choice. You can choose to celebrate and reflect a life with fresh, seasonal materials that are natural, beautiful and resonant with meaning. And you can choose for your tributes to tread lightly on the planet."

The Chelsea installation by TFFD will take the form of an artistic interpretation of a funeral scene. Its centrepiece will be a soaring arrangement of vibrant, wildly natural seasonal garden flowers and foliage that appears to burst out of an open willow coffin held aloft on white birch pallbearers. Watching on will be the wirework forms of a man and his dog by artist, Susan Nichols. Nestled nearby in the grass by the gravestones will be personal funeral flower tributes from walking boots filled with fresh flowers to casket sprays, wreaths and arrangements designed to be divided and shared with family and friends.

There are powerful mental wellbeing benefits associated with flowers and gardens and the process of working with flowers can be soothing at a stressful and difficult time. Florists from TFFD take the time to talk with the family and draw out the details that will inform their designs. Many are happy to incorporate flowers from the family's garden or welcome families to choose flowers from their plot or even join them in the studio to help create the flower arrangement.

"As funeral florists, we know that personalised and thoughtful funeral flowers make a difference because people write, call or even pop by to thank us," says Carole. "People often say how the beauty of the flowers helps to get people talking, provides a point of beauty to focus on and makes the experience of funerals that little bit easier."

Founded in 2024, TFFD already has around 200 member florists across the UK. Its Chelsea exhibit has also been generously sponsored by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM), Green Funeral Flowers by Tuckshop Flowers and Workplace Bereavement.

Top: Gill Hodgson MBE, the driving force behind The Farewell Flowers Directory
Above: A selection of the creative ways in which British florists are making funeral flowers more personal



Surveying the London funeral flowers scene

We featured Market customer Fran Bailey, who runs The Fresh Flower Company, in our last issue. Fran is a supporter of TFFD and we asked her about the business of flowers and floristry for London funerals. She says: “We work closely with a funeral directors called Poetic Endings, in Forest Hill, which offers a totally new approach to delivering funerals. When you walk in there, it doesn’t feel like a funeral directors and they make it clear from the start that you can have the funeral that best suits you and the person who has died. You don’t get the morbid sense of a funeral, more a celebration of life and thinking about what the person loved and what they would have liked at their farewell.”

“The vast majority of people don’t know what they want or even that they have options. Most funeral directors would automatically steer customers down the route of the Victorian style funerals that we have become accustomed to over more than 150 years – the formal burial, the limousines or horse drawn hearses, the familiar coffin styles and floral name designs.

“I’m not saying that’s wrong, but there is a realisation now that you can do something a little more personal; a funeral that reflects the person who has passed away. I wholeheartedly agree with that. There are beautiful cemeteries in places like Camberwell and Nunhead in South East London, but if you visit a grave four or five months after a funeral, often what’s left of the floral tributes does not reflect what the people who left them initially intended. There are a growing number of natural burial sites being opened inside the M25, allowing families and friends to commemorate and celebrate the person who has died and bury them in woodland. Plastic of any form is banned, as the burial has to be done in a fully biodegradable and sustainable way.”

The switch in emphasis and the advent of Farewell Flowers has inspired a growing movement in Flowers From the Farm, which is a “very giving community”, according to Fran, that shares huge amounts of information. “Even for someone who has been around as long as I have, the Instagram and YouTube demos are very useful. I can remember the days before we predominantly used foam, but it’s still good to be reminded how to work with moss,” she says.

Above: Some designs will combine the traditional with the modern

Below: Fran in her East Dulwich studio



“I am realistic and I do still provide customers with the floral tributes they want. But the changes I’ve seen are being driven by the customers and increasingly, I’m finding that they want seasonal – which generally means British when possible – natural and no foam. This is a nationwide trend, although I’d say in London, funerals are perhaps more traditional than elsewhere. You still see a lot of horses!

“It isn’t a case of one way or the other in my view. You can juxtapose the two – you can follow tradition and still incorporate natural flowers. Using seasonal flowers and being foam free is the core Farewell Flowers message, of course, but it’s a year-round business, so there has to be a realistic approach.

“I think the Flower Market is very good at catering for funerals – like I say there is still a demand for very traditional funerals in London and for some florists, it’ll be 20% plus of their turnover. A lot of the traders come from floristry backgrounds or have florists in their family, so they are very aware of that.

“Outside of the funeral market, plenty of venues and other organisations have also started to prohibit their preferred suppliers from using floral foams. I’m a recommended supplier of the RHS for instance. They have done that. It’s the way it’s going and it calls on florists to be adaptable and more creative,” Fran says.

“We recycle as much soft plastic as possible, minimise the amount of plastic packaging we use and it makes sense to reduce the use of foam too. There is still a debate about its use, as it is convenient and quick to use. Using moss, I think you can be more inventive and create more natural pieces, but you definitely have to get into the workshop earlier and also do everything on the same day!

“Across the industry though, there is a definite willingness to do what we can to reduce plastic waste.”



Graeme says goodbye after 38 years

As well as fun, love and romance, there were a fair few tears in the Flower Market on Valentine's Day, as Market legend Graeme Diplock, Director of Green & Bloom Flowers, said his goodbyes after 38 years in the Market. We asked Graeme to look back at his long and successful career

Lets's start at the start. What was your route into a career in flower wholesaling?

I was born in Gravesend and left school to become a conditional jockey (jumps). My mum and dad weren't too happy, as they had to pay for me to leave! To cut a long story short though, I got quite badly injured in a couple of falls when I was 18, riding a horse owned by a man called George Harmer. He suggested that I got out of that game and I went to work for his brother, on their flower stall in Holborn.

I was also engaged to George's daughter at the time and over the first six months, worked with the family and got to know the flower trade and New Covent Garden Flower Market. I'd go with them to the Market and to functions and meet suppliers and customers. I loved the banter and the atmosphere from the very start and just wanted to get into the Market as soon as I could.

George had a firm called Newtons and he worked at Fyffes Monroe, which was where I started in the Market in 1986. I came in as a buck, which basically meant I did any job going. I progressed quite quickly though and was assistant manager in two years and manager in three.

“ From the beginning with Zest, I knew what I wanted to be – up there with the best of them

Page Monroe bought Fyffes out and decided to let some of the staff go – George amongst them. I was loyal to George – he was like my dad, mentor, tutor and friend rolled into one, so when he set up his own company I went to work with him again. His name was George Bernard Harmer and I'll never forgive him for naming the firm GBH Flowers! It was only him and me and we had some great times, but eventually it ran into a few problems.

Around 1992, that wound up and George left the Market. I went to work for John Hardcastle and David Gibbs at Eurosales. I was there for another three or four years, then left to work for Bob Palmer at AW Carey in 1997. I left there under a bit of a cloud in 2002, having made a big mistake, for which I have always held my hands up.

But it was that which led me to open up Zest Flowers in the Market, and I had massive support initially from Dennis Edwards.

We know that Zest eventually became one of the largest cut flower traders in the Market, but how did the firm progress through its formative years?

At first, it was a very small business, with a tiny turnover. However, I knew where and what I wanted to be – up there with the best of them, selling the likes of McQueen's, Rob Van Helden and Simon Lycett. These things inevitably take time and through 2004 and 2005, it was slowish progress. Tony Graham joined me and he was a huge help to me during that period – we set up the foundations for what Zest became. Without him I don't think we would have got to where we did, he was my anchorman and I really needed that. We grew the business, got Geoff Edwards in and kept trying to expand by doing the right thing.

There comes a time with a new business in the Market when you need a bit of new impetus and Terry Barry, who was still working for me when I left in February, was at Austins. After a lot of persuasion, he took the decision to come and work with us. Terry was the catalyst for moving Zest up a few levels quickly. He brought some of the bigger customers with him and he had different contacts to me.

Terry also convinced me to start working on Saturdays, which I'd resisted until then, but Saturdays became massive for us. It cuts into your life, of course, but within a year, that had boosted our buying power and turnover and catapulted our business forward again. By this time, we were supplying all three of the firms I namechecked earlier and eventually McQueen's became a £million account for us, which was just phenomenal. With Terry serving Hybrid and Rob Van Helden and so many others, when Austins went out of business, we were in a good position to take on their salesmen, Terry Smith who is also still at G&B, Punchy, Eric and others. Austins customers tended to come to us and we became the biggest cut flower firm in the Market.

Things changed a lot in the last four years, as Zest became an integral part of Green & Bloom. Talk us through that.

My vision was always to keep progressing and Zest Flowers did that, thanks to a lot of hard work and a few good ideas from me and the team. But I still thought the internet was the way to go to keep the service in line with the way the Market was evolving. I was friendly with Martin Panter, owner of Arnott and Mason, and we chatted about it. His right-hand man was Freddie Heathcote and we ended up going out to Holland to see how things were done at Van der Plas, which



Pictured: Graeme's emotional final day in the Market was captured by Clive Bournsell and others. The Green & Bloom family and friends, colleagues and competitors from around the Market came for a hug and a fond farewell



is a massive company with a big online presence. For us, it was really a trip to get some ideas, but it became clear from day one that they were interested in a partnership.

After several discussions, it seemed that combining the biggest flower trader at NCGM with one of the biggest plant wholesalers and a huge Dutch operator under a single Green & Bloom banner in the UK was a concept that couldn't go wrong. We knew some people might be a bit anti the idea, some probably still are, but we really saw the potential.

As it turns out, for me it wasn't the right decision. Don't get me wrong – I've no doubt that Green & Bloom will still be successful now I've gone. But as soon as I'd signed the papers I felt like my voice was no longer heard and I'd lost control of operating in the way I felt it should be done – which had been really successful for a long period of time. Things were imposed upon us that I felt damaged the business at the time and we had disagreements. Maybe I was wrong some of the time, maybe I wasn't, but basically the Dutch side of the business had taken over, as far as I was concerned. ➤





Left: Graeme in his natural habitat - amidst the blooms
Below: With Freddie Heathcote, his erstwhile partner at G&B, who himself has now left the business
Bottom: And doing what he did best over nearly four decades – keeping the customers happy



The process towards me leaving started 18 months ago – it was hard for me to step back from the conflict, but I carried on doing my job in the Market and finally decided it was the right time to leave about six months ago. I still believe in the concept and what we set up, it just wasn't going to work with us as a group of people. My stepson Luke has taken over from me and they have the firepower to make it fly, it's up to them now.

Leaving the Market was very emotional, as some of the pictures and comments including around this article illustrate. But you didn't quite plan it that way, did you?

At first, my plan was to leave at the end of 2024 and just disappear from the Market on December 31st. I wasn't quite sure what I was thinking – just knew this was the end of my chapter and I didn't really want a fuss. The paperwork wasn't sorted though and they asked me to stay until Valentine's Day. I suppose after 38 years it would have been daft not to say something, but I didn't know how people would take it and I didn't want to get emotional.

I'm glad it worked out this way though. I had a holiday and then a week to say my goodbyes and honestly, I couldn't believe the response I got. It's been crazy, very emotional and made me feel very humble. I hadn't really realised that just by being me and doing my job, I helped a lot of people along the way. You don't necessarily think about the impact you have on people at the time, but some of the messages I've received and what I've seen on social media, you just think 'Wow!'.

The feeling's mutual I can promise them – I made so many friends and had great relationships with so many customers and I'll be forever grateful for that.

To have people who I haven't served for a while to make the effort to come up to me and make such nice comments - it's the proudest I've ever felt and something money can't buy. It's an intense trade and you don't have a lot of time to think, but it's made me realise that in those 38 years, I'd been doing a few things right.

So, your Market chapter ends. How will you remember the place you've devoted four decades of your working life to?

The Market changed my life completely. It means everything to me and I find it hard to put it into words. The hours might be s*** but it's a wonderful place to work. The camaraderie is second to none, you don't get that in offices. We're all competing hard with each other every day, business is business, but if anyone's in trouble, everyone stands by you. The Market does incredible things for its people when they

need support and help. It has changed massively of course. When I set up Zest in 2002, we sold largely boxes rather than bunches. That's just one change, but the customer profile has undeniably got older. As much as you try to keep with the times and progress how you do things, I do think we've got to a time when some of the younger generation need to take the bull by the horns and find a new dimension and add new customers on to the fantastic customer base they already have. I hope Luke is at the vanguard of that change.

If you'd said the Market's location is ideal 15 years ago, people would have laughed at you, but with the development of Nine Elms – Battersea Power Station and the American Embassy, I'm sure there will be a successful flower market as long as it is allowed to be there. There are a lot more non-trade customers lately, which reflects the changes in the area. It's very different and we don't want to see people coming in and buying from the Market rather than buying from our trade customers. In my mind though, with everything that's going on in Nine Elms, there's potential here for the site to become another Borough Market.

You obviously received a lot of support in your time here, Graeme, and your wife Katherine has worked alongside you for many years too.

There are so many people who supported me along the way. George, Tony and Terry stand out, of course, and I'm really pleased that Terry is still with the business too.

Kath has been with Zest since day one and has also now left the G&B business (on March 4th). She's been the silent champion –doing all the work no one else wants to do! But seriously, she's also been my rock – the best thing that ever happened to me in my life, but also the person I've leant on more than anyone when the proverbial hit the fan. People can work for a business but not see exactly what goes on behind the scenes, but Kath saw it all and she's supported me throughout. She's been part of all the meetings over the last few years and we'll be glad it's all behind us. Thank you, Kath!

Luke joined Zest in 2015 and I couldn't be prouder of him since he came on board. He's going to take over from me now and I know he'll do a fantastic job. He's got a great opportunity to work for a big company that will look after him and he's 100% up for it, which again, we're really proud of.

How has 'retirement' treated you to date?

It's been pretty good so far, not getting up at stupid o'clock. I've been at the gym, doing bits of pieces. When Kath finished, we had a nice holiday and now we've started to crack on with what comes next!





Left: Paul with one of the groups he teaches at Westking

Below: Paul with his very, very capable sous chefs - Emily and Tom

Paul educates nextgen star chefs

Paul Grimshaw of catering supplier Direct Delivered Produce Ltd has turned tutor this year, to deliver regular fresh produce masterclasses to the student chefs at Westminster Kingsway College



The entertaining and educational sessions at the college, which is located in Vincent Square SW1, have been predominantly delivered for first years who have finished school and become Westking students. Paul - with expert sous chef assistance from real-life tutors Emily Merricks and Tom Egerton - talks the nextgen chefs through a succession of fruit and veg, from home and abroad, the weird and wonderful facts behind them and the ways they can be used to enhance culinary creativity.

For many years, D.D.P Ltd has supplied Westking with fresh fruit and vegetables, sourced from wholesalers on Buyers' Walk at New Covent Garden Market. Each month, Paul also supplies two products free-of-charge to support the college's curriculum and the students' learning. These two products, one imported and one homegrown, are accompanied by a fact sheet that includes details about the products and the Market.

The tutorials at the college are a great add-on for the students. They are mostly teenagers (16-18), which makes bringing them to the Market during early-morning trading hours more of a challenge. "When the trading hours were a bit later, there were reasonably regular visits from students at chef colleges," Paul said. "It's not straightforward for them to get to the Market for 3-4am, but we are very close to Westking, so for me it's great fun to pop over to the other side of the river and talk to them about my work and my passion. These young people are the future."

Market Times attended one of the classes and we can report that the 26 students who attended now know, for example, that:

- You can hear forced rhubarb crackle while it grows in the dark
- Jerusalem artichokes are neither from Jerusalem, nor in fact artichokes
- The skin of a golden kiwifruit is where a lot of the nutrition is
- Pea shoots have been at the vanguard of the micro-green / micro salad trend
- Pomelo contains an extraordinary level of Vitamin C
- The flavour profile of a physalis is said to be a combination of tomatoes and pineapples - but the students and D.D.P disagreed; their opinion was more "tomato and plum"
- Bananas are berries, but strawberries are not berries

They learned lots of technical stuff too, of course and were encouraged to ask questions. Paul said there's no such thing as a daft question - there is! - but there were lots of great and pertinent queries from the engaged students, with 'what makes a vegetable a vegetable' perhaps the most difficult.

"I've been asked far worse than that," laughed Paul. "It's really interesting what their take is on products that I deal with every day of my life. I use a wide range of in-season produce; fruits like physalis and grenadillo don't tend to be known and stuff like Romanesco, celeriac and chillis always piques their interest."

An exercise that asks the groups to match country flags to the fruit or vegetables that came from that country is followed by a 15-question quiz, run through the Kahoot! App on their phones. That gets the competitive juices flowing for sure, and the leaderboard updating after every question keeps the buzz going right through to the end of the two-hour session.

"The quiz is based on things that I know I'll have told them during the class," says Paul. "It makes sure everyone is engaged and involved and it's another chance for them to absorb information that might be useful to them down the line."

And of course they really want to win and be top of the fresh produce class! Paul said: "I obviously set the questions and thought I'd do it myself the first time, just to join in. I came third!!"

Tutor Tom Egerton says the classes are a valued new addition to the curriculum this year and invaluable to his students. "We've been working with Paul for a long time and obviously understand the depth and breadth of the knowledge he has about the products he supplies us with. We'd done a few more ad-hoc things with him, but really thought that a more formalised approach would be useful for the students. It's brilliant that he takes time out of his own work schedule to come and do the classes and we love doing them with him."

"Most importantly," adds Tom, "the student chefs learn a lot about things like seasonality, sustainability, sources of fruit and vegetables and the huge range of options the fresh produce category gives them in a culinary sense. A significant number of them come here having little or no experience of the some of the products Paul shows them. They get to taste them and take them home with them - it's an important part of their learning journey."

For his part, Paul said he thoroughly enjoys being a pseudo teacher once a fortnight. "It sometimes gets a bit louder than it generally is in our office," he admits, "but I love the energy and once they get involved, we always have a really good laugh. If they're learning about fruit and vegetables and enjoying themselves, then it's job done as far as I'm concerned."

From software to small batch granola with BIG flavours

Small batch, handmade in London. That's the strapline for Komodo Bakery, a small start-up with big ambitions, based here at New Covent Garden Market's Mission Kitchen



Founders Joan Huang and Joe Brooke started Komodo Bakery so they could blend British and Asian flavours into delicious, unique breads, cakes, granola and biscuits using authentic ingredients. Their aim is to create a tasty and healthy dish, with flavours you just can't find in a supermarket product.

"Bread was the first thing that we thought of making but there were concerns with longevity of the product," explains Joe. "Then we thought of granola, especially as we're big granola fans. We looked at what was available from supermarkets and discovered there was a lot of choice but not much flavour definition or any choice for vegans. We're both vegetarians so right from the start we wanted to create a product that was made for us, by us."

The world of food production was a long-established dream for both Joan and Joe,

“ We're both vegetarians, so right from the start we wanted to create a product made for us, by us

who started as software engineers, making the bold decision to leave lucrative jobs and start their own business to satisfy their creative streaks. "We wanted to make things with our hands," explains Joan.

The duo conducted research during lockdown and even contemplated starting a tea business run like a tech start up using their experiences of the industry. "We

wanted to start with something small that we could both do part time, keeping our day jobs and launching the new business as a side hustle," says Joan.

They heard on the grapevine about a new concept called Mission Kitchen – offering flexible access to commercial kitchens, workspace and business support that was about to open at New Covent Garden Market. "Mission Kitchen's concept really appealed to us, being able to rent a kitchen space with all the equipment we needed without the set-up costs," says Joe. "We weren't ready to start a business full time back then but we finally joined Mission Kitchen in the summer of 2024, circling back to the idea of granola."

The humble goji berry was the first ingredient that Komodo Bakery looked at: full of healthy antioxidants and packed with more amino acids than any other common berry. What's more, studies have shown goji berry extract can boost brain function as well as lower blood sugar and blood pressure.

"We started with matcha goji berries, making 4.5kg of granola and divided it into 200g and 400g bags," says Joan.



“But now we’ve improved our method since our initial experiments, so we have scaled up to make about 40kg-50kg in a batch and divide up accordingly. We’ve also established regular customers who we’ve offered bigger bags of 1kg, which works out cheaper for them.”

Currently, Komodo granola products have a minimum shelf life of four months. Varieties include Earl Grey and Yuzu (a citrus fruit from Japan, with orange-like flavours), and Hojicha with mulberries. Customer feedback is that the mulberries taste sweet like a date and the profile works well with roasted green tea flavours. In fact, every variety of granola Komodo creates has a flavour profile chart on the back of the packaging, which helps determine which flavour the customer is most interested in.

The packaging is also created in-house

and initially changed every month to see what worked best with customers. Komodo now has customer-approved packaging, and also offers exclusive designs for brand collaborations and special occasions.

Following the success of its high-end granola, the team launched offshoot business Komodo Pantry selling Hojicha powder. This is a premium Japanese Sencha tea – in layman’s terms a roasted green tea, where the roasting process removes up to a quarter of the caffeine.

“When we started the business, we were buying in our Hojicha tea but that was proving too expensive,” says Joe. “Now we’ve found a new supplier, and we roast tea on site at Mission Kitchen. As a result, we have significantly cut our costs and we’re fully in control of all the ingredients and the flavours. We want to be completely authentic

Top: The granola aims to add extra layers to the flavour profile available on UK shelves

Above: Komodo Bakery’s product sits proudly in a Mission Kitchen hamper that features product from several more members

to ourselves and to our customers.”

Komodo also produces Melon Pan bread for event customers, described by Joan as a delightful ‘fusion of soft, sweet bread and a crunchy, cookie-like crust’. This baked treat is a popular favourite in Japan, with a golden-brown top that resembles a melon, though it’s not made with any fruit.

“It’s perfect for breakfast, a snack, or a sweet indulgence, it’s a must-try for anyone seeking a taste of tradition,” says Joan.

Having fantastic products is key, but building a customer base is just as important for a start-up business. “Initially our first customers were gained via word of mouth and by us attending events at Mission Kitchen and promoting what we do,” says Joan. “We’ve found that there’s just no substitute for face-to-face interaction with our customers, as we can taste test our products.”

Spending money on advertising can be a daunting challenge for a new business, especially when there’s no guarantee of a return on the investment, but Joe recognises it’s something Komodo Bakery will have to do to increase its market share. “So far we haven’t spent any money on advertising, so to get to this point is a really mixed feeling. We’re excited but there are a lot of challenges ahead for us to reach our goals.”

The first target was moving to a bigger production space, which meant Komodo became Mission Kitchen’s latest success story when it left the building in April. “New, bigger premises is our next stepping stone; with a larger space we can expand our production and get economies of scale,” says Joan. However, the team will still be keeping their Mission Kitchen membership. “The mentoring aspect and the knowledge that we gain from talking with other more established businesses is so valuable.” Joe adds that Bonnie from Miso Tasty – another Mission Kitchen start-up – has been a great help to their business. “She’s been a big mentor to us, helping narrow down our market and also helping with suggestions for our packaging.”

The second target for the future is to work with distributors and retailers to spread the Komodo products to a wider audience. Komodo granola is now available from the popular Delli website, and the team has plans to move into bricks-and-mortar retail soon. “At this stage we’re trying to get into independent delis and businesses,” says Joan. “With our handmade, small batch sizes, a retailer the size and status of Selfridges would be perfect for us.”

For more information on Komodo Bakery’s offer, visit komodobakery.co.uk.

Johnny Cruisey – commission agent extraordinaire

One of the iconic Covent Garden names of the second half of the 20th century was laid to rest in late March. Johnny Cruisey was a commission agent, a role that is rarely seen in the trade any more. Here, contemporaries, colleagues, family and friends pay tribute to a big character and pioneering businessman

Johnny and his brothers were born in Drury Lane, on the fringes of Covent Garden, and while neither parent worked in the Market, their father's three sisters, who lived on Gresham Street off Tottenham Court Road, were all well-known flower sellers in the West End.

Johnny's cousin Joe also began his career in the Market as a porter, before becoming a printer, but it was proximity rather than familial connection with Covent Garden that saw Johnny begin working at Barney Springer (Russell Street) as soon as he left St Joseph's Roman Catholic School in Macklin Street. It would prove to be the start of his long and distinguished career in the fresh produce trade.

Younger brother Jimmy had followed Johnny into the market and in 1959, the pair joined commission agent Albert Lawson to found Albert Lawson Ltd in a ramshackle office above Harold Day, in Russell Street. The business kicked off with its first order of 100 'Italian heads', bought from Victor Torfs for 8s. 6d a crate and sold to Wilson and Leatherhead of Middlesbrough. Geoffrey Wilson loaned the trio £100 to get started, which they worked off in commission.

The Market then was a hub that sold to provincial markets up and down the country and Johnny spent a lot of the early days on the road establishing new contacts and bringing new trade to Covent Garden.

"There were at least a dozen, maybe 15 commission agents in the Market each morning in those days," says Philip Emanuel, who traded with Johnny for decades. "They would take huge volumes of product on stock to sell to customers around the country. Most of the bulky stuff came through Covent Garden because we were able to move it quickly. And you have to remember that we were the yardstick for the rest of the country. If the job in Covent Garden was 12 shillings, but we started taking 9 and sixpence, within 15 minutes, markets everywhere else would react."

“ There are a certain amount of people who change the way business is done. Johnny was one

"Johnny was a real dealer. He knew his business, but he was always fair and never tried to catch you out. In fact, if you'd made a mistake on price, he'd often try to help you out. I had tremendous respect for him."

As the Market began to change, Johnny used his expertise in new potatoes, Spanish grapes and Italian fruit in particular to become a leading importer for both Covent Garden and his wider customer network. Pretty quickly, Lawson's became one of the leaders in the Market and moved to more spacious premises in Long Acre. Over the years the firm had been bolstered by the likes of John Gant, Peter Powell, Tony Lefevre, Peter Rogers, Kevin Wilcox and Micky O'Leary, some of whom were also board members.

Johnny and Jimmy's cousin Peter Powell got his first job at the Market when Jimmy asked him to work for a few days while he was waiting for a job as a printer, like his dad. "It was 100 yards from my bedroom to the office, so of course I did," says Peter. "And once I got there, I never left!"



Above: Johnny (left) and Jimmy Cruisey in front of the firm's infamous white board in 1984 (photo from the *Fruit Trades Journal*)

Right: Barnet Emanuel, one of the firms with which Johnny did a large amount of business

He recalls the "pandemonium" in the office in the 1960s. "The amount of produce coming into and going out of Covent Garden on a daily basis was enormous." He adds: "Johnny was always looking for something else to get involved in. In the '60s, before the supermarkets started to take a hold, we got involved in retail with three shops, but sold them all after a few years, then we got into fridge freezers. It didn't always work, but it was great fun."

"Johnny was a fantastic wheeler dealer. He was like a leach and if it dropped from 10p to 8p, 7p... he'd find a way to get any deal done! That was the era of there being some really good commission agents in the Market, the likes of Joe Da Costa, Jack Shaffron & Company, Harry Roberts and Albert Lawson himself, but I think Johnny was up there above them all."

A 14-year-old Micky O'Leary was given his first job – as tea boy – by Johnny in 1961. He was also friends with Johnny for more than 60 years. "Johnny was one of the real characters of the fruit business and the real key was the consistency of his character," said Micky. "He didn't fake it; he was the same every day and it made no difference who he was talking to."

"When Lawson's was set up, commission agents were quite staid, very traditional and respectful of the rules. They didn't tend to speak to each other's customers, for example. But that wasn't Johnny, he was fearless as a man and a trader. He ruffled a few feathers, that's for sure, but I think he was always underestimated for his intelligence."

Gary McGrath, more of whom later, picks out one of Johnny's many achievements: "He was the first in the country to bring in a full truck of produce (Spanish grape) for a provincial market (Sheffield) and he's remembered by everyone as a man who when he saw an opportunity, went for it. Those were good days to be a commission agent. You'd be sending six pallets to Glasgow, 10 to Gateshead and four to Wolverhampton. The majority of everything went through Covent Garden as there were no depots."

Micky adds: "There are only a certain amount of people who really change the way business is done in the market and Johnny was one of them. It was a running education working for him and the firm was one that gave everyone a chance to get on."

Colin Gant, whose dad John was a partner of Johnny's at Albert Lawson, was one of the younger people who benefited from Johnny's support. "I knew Johnny from when I was a little kid," he says. "Dad used to take me up to the old market and it was a real treat. Johnny was such a talented bloke and when he walked into a room, he lit it up. He was so generous to me – always introducing me to people as 'my Colin'. He really was like an uncle."

"In those days, they were the best in the business and I would do some work for them in the holidays when I was 8 or 9. Kevin Wilcox would always tell me to add some money on to the tea order and Johnny found out and slaughtered me!"

"He also got me my first job, at A Philips with his brother Joey, which started me off on my long career in the trade."

Philip Emanuel began working in Covent Garden in 1959 and Johnny was his first customer as a salesman, in the early part of the following year. "It must have been early in 1960 as it was the Cypriot carrot season and Johnny was a customer of my father [another legendary figure known to all as Legionnaire Lou]. He walked on to the stand one morning and said to my dad 'I don't want to deal with you now. Philip's here.'"

"The first customer he gave me was Sargent of Sheffield. There were huge quantities of Cypriot carrots in the Market in those days and that day they were selling for approximately six shillings a net. He bid me for 600 and I almost fell off my box! So, I served him and wrote the ticket – my dad said 'you did what?' but the price came in at about 5 and sixpence, so I didn't do too bad!"

It was the start of a decades long business relationship and friendship. "I knew him all my life in the trade," says Philip. "Johnny was a straight up guy, very personable and always smiling and happy. My wife Hilary and I were very friendly with Johnny and Eve for many years."

The abolition of import licences that essentially protected products from Commonwealth countries opened up the Market for more European product and Lawson's was very well placed to take advantage of the new opportunities. Johnny became Chairman of the London & Provincial Fruit Buyers & Merchants Association, which of course widened his reach again and put the firm in the right place when the association received enquiries from growers and exporters wishing to sell their products in Britain.

Johnny also had interest in C&C, a wholesaler in Covent Garden, as well as in other parts of the UK. He looked well beyond London when becoming a group of four that included Brian Critcher, who set up Fresh Fruit for Wales in Cardiff, in 1970. Brian and Johnny became close friends and shared regular holidays for four decades. But it was business that first brought them together.

"Johnny was the go-to guy to get product and he had access to a host of good quality international brands," remembers Brian. "We became big in Ferrari and A Gomez and other Italian and Spanish brands. This was in the days when everything was still being



sold through the wholesale markets, so the product would go into Covent Garden, then to us and we'd sell a lot of product. Our job was to sell it quick and satisfy the growers.

"Lawson's took a few pennies a package as a commission agent, which was a lot less than the 6% an importer would charge. We were very successful and Johnny was central to the success – he was a larger-than-life character, very popular, and always wanted to be at the centre of things. We had some great times."

When the Market moved in November 1974, Lawson's naturally followed suit and experienced the huge change. The company's office was featured in a TV programme created to illustrate how the new Market was functioning. "To say that the office was a hive of activity is a massive understatement," says Tony Ganio, who worked there from 1975-77.

"The office had a wall length white board with all the offers of that day, and it was constantly being updated. Phones would ring incessantly; everyone was on at least two phones at a time and we had direct lines in to several of the wholesale companies who were operating below us in the Market."

Johnny was a big personality, one of the key figures in the Market. Tony also recalls how he handled the imports of Canary Island potatoes through a company called Casmi, in Tenerife. "The communication between Johnny and Eduardo of Casmi was legendary", he says, as both struggled to speak the other's language, but overcame the barrier to forge a long-lasting business relationship.

Having left Lawson's and spent a few years investing in property development, Johnny returned to the Market to work for Freddie Sharmer, before becoming an independent commission agent and sharing an office for more than a decade with two fellow agents Gary McGrath and Jim Molloy.

Gary remembers this time with Johnny as hugely rewarding. "I was relatively late to the trade, having only entered the Market in

1986 with Jim. But when Johnny joined us, my world changed," he recalls. "He was best man at my wedding 24 years ago. When he left, the Market missed him, but me and my family still had plenty of good times with him after that."

"He was unique. There were many times he'd do things and people were asking 'what do you want to do that for?'," Gary says. "But that would never stop him."

"He was also a very funny man and although he had his moments, I don't think I ever really saw him lose his temper other than when he played a bad shot on the golf course," laughs Gary. "Although there was one night overseas where him and Jim got quite heated over whether Coca Cola or Pepsi Cola was the answer to a question in Trivial Pursuit!"

Still on the game-playing front, he adds: "We worked hard, but so many days when we finished at 1.30pm, we'd get a sandwich from the bridge café and sit in the office laughing and playing Kalooki 'til 6."

"We had many a great golfing holiday and Johnny set up the Covent Garden Golf Society and brought in sponsors that helped to make those really memorable, fun days."

As well as the joy, there was tragedy in Johnny's life, as both daughters Suzanne and Gillian died young. He and Eve adopted grandson Leon (now 37) when his mum sadly passed. Eve died last year to end a long and devoted marriage.

Johnny retired around 20 years ago, aged 70. Peter Powell says of his cousin. "He loved the trade, but it was Covent Garden that was particularly dear to him. As a family, from the day we were born we were in the Market and it was a wonderful place to be."

Gary Marshall, Chairman of Covent Garden Tenants' Association, was also a friend of Johnny's. He says: "Johnny was one of the great characters who made this Market what it was and still is. He was an incredible entrepreneur before the word was trendy and some of the stories about

Obituaries

Michael Goodwin – 1945-2025

Born in London on March 6th, 1945 to Maggie and George Goodwin, Michael came from humble beginnings. His Dad was a black cab driver and his Mum owned a flower shop on New Cavendish St in Central London, after starting off on a flower stall outside a hospital round the corner.

He was the youngest boy of four children, with Peggy and Johnny his older siblings and Mary-Ellen his younger sister. The family hailed from Drury Lane in Covent Garden and Michael's early years were spent living in Camelot House, in Camden.

It was in Camden, that Michael met his wife, Maureen. Having moved over from Ireland when she was just 16, Maureen was working in a pub in Camden called the City of London and that was where she and Michael met.

After nearly 54 years of married life and almost 60 years together, Michael leaves behind eight children (Maria, Katie, Daniel, Ciara, Peter, Lizzie, Mairead and Hannah) and 11 grandchildren (Ella, Andi, Sol, Jack, George, Maggie, Charlie, Makai, Nora, Rosie and Alfie).

Michael started working at around 15 years old as a butcher's boy at Benners in Charlotte Place, W1, but soon moved on to be a 'barrow boy'. After a couple of years with his own fruit and veg shop in Camden Park Road (before its regeneration) he started working at Baldwins at Covent Garden Market in 1973 as a Buyer.

Michael spent more than 50 years working in the Market, 30 of these under Stanley Baldwin at Baldwins, followed by London Fresh, Vincenzo's and a handful of others before finishing his career at EA Williams. He made many friends at the Market over the years who remained friends until he passed away on February 11th, 2025.

A lifelong Arsenal fan, many in the Market will remember him for cheeky banter and consistent good humour.

Outside of the Market, Michael was a family man to his core; they brought him a huge amount of joy and were a source of great pride.



Kenneth Turner – 1936-2025

Kenneth Turner, a friend and customer of the Flower Market for several decades and one of the first and most brilliant celebrity florists, died in February.

Ken was at the vanguard of the creative florist industry we have today; a master of all manner of floral creations, from simple posies to grand classical designs, botanical sculptures and topiaries, and became synonymous with the ultimate in floral decoration. Brilliant and endlessly innovative, he was the first to look outside the world of flowers for inspiration, using a host of natural ingredients from pebbles to vegetables, shells, lichens, herbs and driftwood in his creations for any occasion, tailoring his designs to suit each individual setting, with his unique imaginative flair.

From running his fantastic shops to becoming a dried flower pioneer and eventually opening his fabulous eponymous flower school, everything Ken touched came up smelling of roses - or at least one of the many hundreds of scents and aromas his varied pieces of art eschewed.

Bryan Porter of Porters Foliage said: "Ken was responsible for inspiring an entire generation of florists. Many of today's top florists worked with him during the crazy days of the '80s and '90s. An era ends."

On behalf of everyone who knew you at New Covent Garden Flower Market, thanks for the friendship and the memories, Ken.



the groundbreaking deals he did and the chances he took are legendary. He loved wholesale markets and wholesalers around the country, not just New Covent Garden, and was a pioneer in logistics, buying product from Covent Garden and using the transport of the day to distribute it to his customers across Britain.

"He was also a lovely man, great fun to be around – and he epitomised the hard, but fair approach to business at Covent Garden. People often say that there aren't the same characters around any more – I'm not sure that's true, but I would say there's never been

anyone quite like Johnny. He was a one-off."

The last word goes to Gary McGrath. "He was different class; so well known and so well liked across the Market and also around the country. In the old Covent Garden, he was instrumental, with Sheila Springer, in the installation of the bronze sculpture that commemorates some of the old fruit, veg and flower traders.

"He knew everyone. Wherever you were, if you said you worked at Covent Garden, you'd be asked 'do you know Johnny Cruisey?'"

RIP Johnny.



Raj supports his Market community

Raj Patel, who has run the Market Post Office for 34 years, asked Market Times to highlight the unofficial role his business performs for NCGM tenants. Of course, we agreed

“People use Post Offices as social purpose and although we are businesses, we are there to support local communities,” says Raj. “While first and foremost this is where the Market community comes to do their banking or buy things from the general store,” he adds, “over the years I have found that people need help with all sorts of issues. Obviously, I have been here a long time, everybody knows me and will come here for a chat, a friendly ear, some advice or help.”

“I’m in the privileged position that I know everyone at every level. I know who’s doing what and where. So, for example, I’m often a good conduit for people looking for a job, as if there’s one going, I’m almost always aware of it and can point them in the right direction. I help migrant workers understand the British system, people paying bills, dealing with the DVLA or getting a passport. I have accumulated knowledge of most issues and am able to advise accordingly.”

There’s a deeper meaning to Raj’s presence though. Alongside his role as one of 12 directors of the National Federation of Sub Post Masters, part of which is to represent and protect colleagues across the entire Greater London area, Raj has been very actively involved in the ongoing Post Office Horizon IT Inquiry. He has also been trained as a Mental Health Advisor.

Raj says: “It’s impossible to stress how important this [mental health challenge] is. NHS statistics say that more

than 21 million people contacted their mental health services in the year to April 2024. The figures are about 40% higher than they were before the pandemic. A majority of people will therefore have been affected by mental health in some way, whether directly or indirectly through the suffering of family or friends. However, too many people who do suffer with a common mental health problem do not seek or get treatment their condition needs.

“I’m here to help. Someone might have got divorced, be in trouble of some kind or be experiencing issues at work; they know they can talk to me one-to-one and it will go no further. If there are problems I can help with, then I know the right people to talk to. It’s been my unofficial role for many years and I like doing it, because I love all the people here.”

“I just wanted to say that out loud, so anyone reading this who feels like they need someone to talk to is aware that I’m here for them and will help them in whatever way I can.”

Mental Health Awareness Week (MHAW) 2025 will run from May 12th to 18th across the UK, with the central theme of “Community.” The annual event, led by the Mental Health Foundation since its inception in 2001, aims to elevate public consciousness about mental health issues and promote mental well-being for all.

The selection of “Community” as this year’s theme underscores the vital role that social connections and communal support play in mental health. Engaging with supportive communities can provide individuals with a sense of belonging, emotional backing, and practical assistance during challenging times. These interactions are often instrumental in fostering resilience and a shared sense of purpose, which are essential components of mental well-being.

A variety of activities and events will take place nationwide to celebrate the power and importance of community. These initiatives aim to educate the public on mental health issues, encourage open dialogues, and challenge the stigma often associated with mental health conditions. Resources and toolkits will be made available to assist individuals and organisations in participating effectively, promoting mentally healthy communities, and sharing inspiring stories from across the UK.

The significance of Mental Health Awareness Week extends beyond the event itself; it serves as a catalyst for ongoing conversations about mental health. By focusing on the theme of community, the 2025 MHAW aims to highlight how collective effort and mutual support can lead to improved mental health outcomes.

For more information, go to <https://mentalhealth-uk.org/>

