

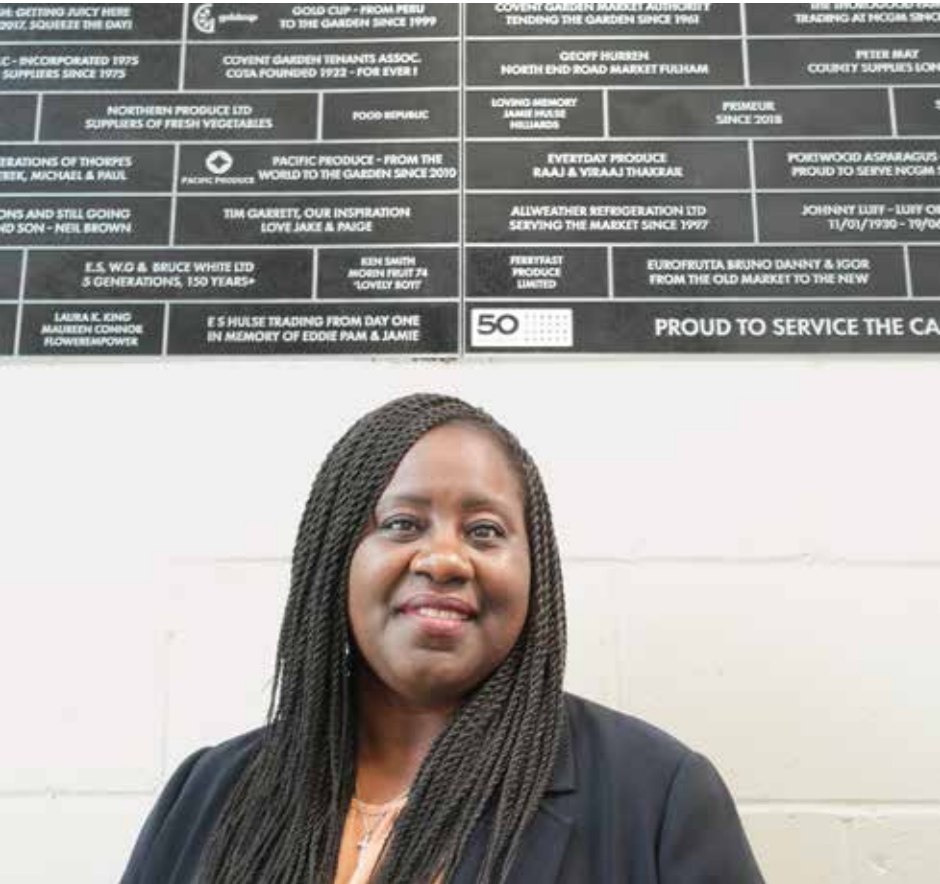
MARKET TIMES

PAGES 2-4
NEWS BITES

PAGES 6-7
PAUL SHOWS HIS METAL

PAGES 8-9
NICK STEPS UP

PAGES 10-12
MURPHY'S LAW



**FERMARY
JOINS THE
FAMILY**
SEE PAGES 14-15



NCGM supported a Gold-medal winning Farewell Flowers Garden at Chelsea





The spring and early summer have provided us with two poignant and happy occasions to fondly look back on. In the quarter when we remembered the golden anniversary of the official opening of the Market by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, we also unveiled The Garden Wall, which gives everyone the opportunity to leave a permanent mark of their legacy here.

The 100 plaques in the new section of Buyers’ Walk bear testament to so many things, but most of all the love people have for this place and the pride for their part in its history. There is plenty more space available for those of you who didn’t take up the opportunity to buy one of the first plaques to be installed – scan the QR code at the foot of this page to buy yours, it’s a very easy process and as anyone who was there to experience one of the two unveilings will attest, it really means something to see your relationship with the Market recognised in this way.

Outside the market, our support of the Farewell Flowers Directory’s display of sustainable funeral flowers at RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May meant that the New Covent Garden Flower Market brand was attached to a groundbreaking and Gold-Medal winning installation. The team behind the Farewell Flowers Directory put plastic-free, compostable funeral flowers into the spotlight with the first ever high-profile showcase for funeral flowers at Chelsea and in thanking the Market for its sponsorship, Carole Patilla said how wonderful it was to see the discussions and conversations which the display stimulated. The ripples spread far and wide across national and local print and broadcast media and we’re both delighted to have been on board and proud of what Farewell Flowers achieved.

Flowers frame every part of our lives, including our final goodbyes. One of the innovative additions to the core Farewell Flowers message saw more than 1,000 visitors to the show share their thoughts about funerals on colourful yellow labels. These became an attraction in themselves as people browsed to see what others had written, and were moved, entertained and informed by the very personal words that they read there. The whole effort was inspirational in so many ways, not least in bring the subject of funeral flowers out of the shadows and encouraging people to talk about them rather than shut their thoughts away.

The next quarter gives us an opportunity to reminisce in another way. In September, the Food Exchange hosts an exhibition of the work of photographer Clive Bournnell, which focuses on the last 15 of his 57 years snapping the Market. Clive has recently been presented with an Outstanding Achievement Award for his work at Covent Gardens old and new (see page 5) and he has made his selection of roughly 450 images he feels encapsulate his approach and skills.

Of course, it’s not all about what’s already happened; just as importantly you want to read about what is happening in the here and now. Also inside this issue, we’ve got the usual mix of news and features and plenty of content that illustrates the innovation and ingenuity that will keep this Market at the forefront of its trades for many decades to come.

Enjoy the read.

Tommy

Tommy Leighton, Market Press Officer



Market connects through The Garden Wall

The Market unveiled The Garden Wall on Friday June 6th – a commemorative installation that marks our 50 years in Nine Elms and celebrates the people and community that have shaped New Covent Garden’s story.

Located just inside the main entrance to the newly redeveloped Buyers’ Walk, The Garden Wall features personalised plaques purchased by traders, suppliers, friends and supporters - each a nod to cherished and lasting bonds with NCGM.

At 6am, traders finishing their night shifts gathered for the first unveiling, featuring speeches by Gary Marshall, Chairman of the Covent Garden Tenants’ Association (CGTA), and Jo Breare, General Manager of Covent Garden Market Authority (CGMA). At a second unveiling at 11am, a wider audience from the Market and many from outside who had purchased commemorative plaques saw Wanda Goldwag OBE, Chair of CGMA, and Marsha de Cordova, MP for Battersea, join Gary for another occasion filled with smiles, laughter and a few tears.

The ceremonies were attended by plaque holders, their families, friends, and colleagues, who shared memories of their connections to the Market.

Gary said: “This wall is part celebration, part commemoration. It has been created to give people and companies a permanent place to honour commitment, dedication, passion and love for Covent Garden fruit, veg and flower markets. We’re celebrating the people who have been so important here, who have done so much to shape this Market’s recent history.

“I know that you, like me, are immensely proud of what this Market represents and of the community we are all part of. For many of us here today, the people who have done so much to make New Covent Garden Market what it is were not just colleagues, but members of our own family, extended family or close friends.”

Wanda Goldwag OBE added that the “unique community of people” within the Market is key to its success. “There are also many names up there who will be responsible for the next phase. We have more than 130 traders operating here, most of whom compete with each other and many of whom trade with each other – but it is as a collective that New Covent Garden Market thrives. There is no other wholesale market in the country that sells the quality or breadth of product, or that services such a diverse range of high-end catering, hospitality and independent retail customers.”

And Marsha de Cordova MP added her own heartfelt words: “The Market’s history as an iconic institution in the heart of my Battersea constituency stretches back generations...it continues to drive our economy, provide much-needed jobs and is at the heart of our city’s character. New Covent Garden Market is a perfect example of how to be a good neighbour to everyone in our community.”

A constantly evolving legacy

Thank you to everyone who has bought a plaque for the wall – you have between you not just created a legacy for the names on that plaque, but also donated a collective £10,000 to the 50th anniversary fund of more than £100,000 that the CGTA has now raised for its selected charities – Anthony Nolan, Trinity Hospice and Parkinson’s UK.

There is plenty of room left for those of you who did not buy plaques to do so now. It’s an extremely easy thing to do and whether you want to remember someone you’ve sadly lost or highlight your past or ongoing relationship with this wonderful institution, The Garden Wall is a great tribute to them and this great Market. Scan the QR code or go to <https://www.funditnow.co.uk/thegardenwall/book/select-products> to buy one or more plaques now.



Above: Gary, Wanda and Marsha open the curtains on a new Market feature



Fresh Union expanding fast

Fresh Union, located in the rail arches, is quickly laying claim to being the fastest expanding firm at New Covent Garden Market. Founded just four years ago as a catering supplier of fresh fruit and vegetables with one rail arch unit and five employees, the company now has units in Block A1 as well as four rail arches, a product portfolio of more than 2,500 lines, 14 vehicles and 50 employees. As well as a frozen arm it added in December 2024, when it took on the well-established Attila Frozen Foods business, Fresh Union now also has Freshly Imported and Freshly Prepared divisions, as it builds on the solid platform set by founders Robert Murchison and Oscar Gomes. Rob and Oscar both had NCGM backgrounds, as do many of the colleagues across their growing team. The firm still

buys the majority of its product from the Market, but a willingness to travel and find new partners at source has paid dividends. Trips to Peru, Costa Rica and Turkey have helped to broaden the Fresh Union offer – an exclusive partnership with an avocado grower in Peru has even led to the launch of its first brand, Avoluscious, a chunky guacamole product that is proving extremely popular with the sushi and poke clientele. Both men previously worked at Sheringham’s and through his customer base there, Oscar had built a strong following in the sushi/poke sector. “It was a great place for us to start, as we only had one unit and we were working with a limited number of high-volume lines,” said Oscar. “Now we have a lot more capacity and we’re established across the industry, but Avoluscious is perfect for those customers.” Rob added: “We’ve grown organically and add new lines when the demand is there. We’re going to keep looking for new partners around the world though and when the opportunity is there with the right product and the right volume, we’ll look to introduce more brands.”

Fruitful support for MoonWalk London

Three New Covent Garden Market wholesalers – Bevington Salads, Premier Foods Wholesale and French Garden London – provided thousands of pieces of fruit to the 27th MoonWalk London, which took place in June. MoonWalk London is an iconic, original, and fun night-time walk organised by breast cancer charity Walk The Walk, which encourages participants to walk either a Full Moon (marathon) or Half Moon through the streets of London at night in a decorated bra or funky bra T-shirt and raise money and awareness for breast and other cancers. It came into being in 1996 when just 13 women power-walked the New York City Marathon in their bras to raise money and awareness for breast cancer.



The walkers gathered at Clapham Common and passed iconic London landmarks lit up pink including; the lastminute.com London Eye, Sky Garden, County Hall, BFI Southbank, Battersea Power Station Chimneys, PwC Embankment Office, Inner Temple Gardens, Middle Temple Hall. What started out as a one-off fundraising event, has raised in excess of £144 million to date and New Covent Garden Market was both delighted to support their ongoing efforts and extremely grateful to the organisers and walkers for their tremendous efforts to support such a worthy cause.

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



Hippo hat-trick for PR campaign

The Discerning Diners campaign, which was the centrepiece of New Covent Garden Market’s worldwide outreach to mark our 50th anniversary in Nine Elms, has won two more prestigious awards, taking its tally so far to three. The campaign came first in the B2B category at the PRCA Dare Awards and then also struck gold in the Best Use of PR category at the Independent Agency Awards. It was also a finalist in the Public Sector PR category at the Chartered Institute of Marketing Awards and, in September, will be one of the finalists in the Best Marketing Campaign category at the FPC Fresh Awards, so the quadruple is still on! Part of a campaign expertly curated and executed by PR & Marketing agency Sunny Side Up (SSU) – the stars of the Discerning Diners show were pygmy hippo Amara and a family of Western Lowland gorillas at ZSL London Zoo, who munched photogenically on premium quality vegetables delivered by NCGM catering supplier County Supplies on the morning of November 11th last year, 50 years to the day since New Covent Garden Market opened its doors.



Above: To Dare is to win!
Right: Zoe and Antonia of SSU pick up IAA trophy



GOLDEN MEMORIES: June 26th marked 50 years since Her Majesty The Queen Elizabeth II unveiled a plaque to commemorate her official opening of New Covent Garden Market. The royal event came over six months after the Market had opened its doors and there was a huge crowd in attendance as The Queen and her husband Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh, took a tour of the new facilities and met a large cross-section of the people who worked here at the time. Her Majesty hailed the Market as one of London’s great institutions and recognised the “legendary character and humour” of its community.

Obituaries

"Ted" Edward Aldred

Edward Aldred, who worked at New Covent Garden Market for around 65 years, died recently at the age of 97. His niece Jenny Haylock kindly shared this story of Ted's life with us.

'Ted' Edward Aldred was born on June 20th 1927 in Lambeth. On returning from overseas military duty in the late 1940s, he took a job at Covent Garden Market and enjoyed it so much that he stayed there for the rest of his working life.

Market life as a porter suited him down to the ground. He started at Southside Wholesale, and from day one loved everything about life in the Market. The camaraderie, the complexity, the incredibly early hours and heavy work pulling barrows up the cobblestones were something he thrived on. Ted always saw starting in the early hours of the morning as an advantage as it gave him the chance to enjoy the rest of his day with his beloved wife Ivy.

When the Market moved from Covent Garden, Ted did the knowledge, but driving was never something he took much pleasure from and so it was a relief when he found that the New Covent Garden was somewhere he could adapt to.

He settled down to work in the market for many more years and it was only when Ivy became ill that Ted gave up work to care for her. She lived long enough for them to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary.

In time Ted returned to the Market, in the Labour office for the union. Another former porter and union man, Bob Parker, said: "Ted was an absolute diamond, his heart and soul was in the market."

One of his roles was labour allocator for the union. Ted did not stand for nonsense, but was incredibly fair and just in his dealings with everyone – always a true gentleman. He only left the Market in 2012, ending a relationship that spanned eight different decades.

Ted died peacefully in his own home surrounded by some of his family, all of whom loved him dearly, aged 97 on May 22nd. He leaves two grandchildren, nieces, nephews and godchildren who have heard his stories from the Market throughout our lives.

RIP Ted, one of the all-time great market men.



Eric Potter

Eric David Potter was born on July 17th, 1933, in Plumstead. He grew up and went to school there until the start of World War II when he was sent down to Teston in Kent.

He was a chef before he started working at Covent Garden Market on May 12th, 1956, upon demobbing. He worked days in the beginning; later swapping to nights as the job was far better paid. Eric's daughters believe he worked for two firms in his time at both markets - J Lefevre and Gunnery's. He was a very proud market porter and worked there until he retired in 1998, aged 65.

He married his wife, Maureen, in 1962. Their daughter Allison said: "He made a lot of friends at the Market and loved working at Covent Garden. He always said it was like being part of a big family, where everybody looked out for everyone else."

Eric's time at the Market is commemorated with a plaque on The Garden Wall. He leaves behind 4 children, 6 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren.

Rest In Peace Eric.



Chiquita's London bus ride promotes bananas as snacks

This summer, Chiquita has brought its iconic Blue Sticker charm to the streets of London for a 10th year, in a fresh and eco-conscious way. From June 30th through to August 3rd, six branded zero-emission buses have been rolling through the capital's busiest routes, serving as mobile billboards for Chiquita's ongoing "Likely The Best Snack Ever" campaign.

Chiquita is the leading wholesale market banana brand in the country and New Covent Garden Market is one of its key sales outlets, selling millions of bananas every year to its customer base across London and the South East. The buses - part of London's expanding fleet of electric, zero-emission public transport - blend environmental responsibility with vibrant creativity.

Four buses were emblazoned with bold campaign slogans that champion bananas as the ultimate convenient snack for busy commuters, vacationers, and families on the move. Another featured exclusive artwork by a renowned pop artist, adding a splash of colour and fun to city streets. A sixth bus spotlighted a playful "Spot the Difference" design, inviting both children and adults to engage with the brand in a lighthearted, interactive way – with a goal to find the one Chiquita Blue Sticker that stands out from the others.

"Our London Buses campaign captures what Chiquita is all about, bringing joy, wellness, and quality to people's everyday routines," said John Cockle, Sales and Market Director for Chiquita, UK &



Ireland. "Whether you're hopping on a bus to work or heading out on a summer adventure, a Chiquita banana is the perfect on-the-go snack."

The campaign aligns with the rising consumer demand for healthy snacking options, particularly during the summer season when families are out and about. As health-conscious eating trends continue to grow, Chiquita is championing its hero product - a naturally nutritious, portable snack - as the centrepiece of its snacking campaign. The banana, they say, is an easy, energy-boosting option for consumers looking to snack smarter while enjoying summer adventures.

Chiquita's blend of art, sustainability, and fun aimed to not only turn heads but reinforce its commitment to keeping the hugely popular brand relevant, accessible, and in sync with the values of today's UK consumer.

NEWS IN BRIEF

NICK STEPS UP: Nick Padley was appointed as a Director of New Covent Garden Market wholesaler P&I Fruit, joining Paul Emmett and Paul Bishop on the Board of the group that includes P&I and Side Salads. Nick had run Side Salads since 2018. Now he steps up to oversee the entire firm in the Market. In a joint statement, Paul and Paul said: "Nick is extremely well liked and respected across the Market and he's the future of the firm. We wish him all the very best in his new position and look forward to working alongside him to take P&I to new levels in the years to come." For more, read feature on pages 8-9.

FLORIST PODS AVAILABLE: Florist and event company workspaces are now available on the ground floor of the Flower Market. The cost is £125 +VAT per day, per pod. If you are interested, let CGMA's Property team know the date/s you'd be interested in booking [property@cgma.co.uk].

CHARITABLE SUPPORT: Food redistribution charity City Harvest has celebrated the charitable efforts of New Covent Garden Market (NCGM) businesses in supplying fruit and vegetables for people in need across London and the South East. A City Harvest distribution centre has been based here since January 2024 thanks to donations from The Livery Food Initiative, moving to a dedicated 2,164-square-foot site earlier this year. With a chiller that can hold 24 pallets of produce, as well as a dry area, food is collected from NCGM businesses then delivered directly from the DC to the charity's community partners. In 2025, the Nine Elms site is estimated to have delivered 900,000 meals to people who need it most.

PODCAST EXPOSURE: Fresh produce traders at the Market are supporting 10 episodes of the brilliant *Go To Food* podcast, which features fascinating feature interviews with many of the country's top chefs. Ten wholesalers will supply a box of fresh produce for presenter Ben Benton to create a meal for each episode, while NCGM as a whole is credited as the show's sponsor. Put *Go-To Food* into your search engine, find the podcast on your preferred platform and fire it up – it's an entertaining, sometimes irreverent and always educational ride!

CHRIS TO HOST FRESH AWARDS: The Fresh Produce Consortium announced that long-time friend of the Market and champion of independent greengrocers Chris Bavin will take to the stage as host of the FPC Fresh Awards 2025, held on September 26th at the iconic Grosvenor House Hotel, London. NCGM sponsors the Foodservice Supplier of the Year category and several Market wholesalers have been shortlisted for awards this year.

NEW CGMA BOARD MEMBER: Jo Wright was named as a new Non-Executive Director (NED) of Covent Garden Market Authority (CGMA). Jo was appointed for four-years in May 2025 to bring finance and accounting expertise to the CGMA Board and she replaces Catherine Dugmore, who was an interim NED for the last five months. Jo is a Chartered Accountant who has had an extensive career in finance with more than 25 years in senior finance leadership positions. She is currently a NED and Audit and Finance Committee Chair for London & Partners, the growth agency for London with the mission to create economic growth that is resilient, sustainable and inclusive.

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



Award recognises Clive's lifetime of dedication



Veteran snapper Clive Boursnell was given an Outstanding Achievement Award at the World Food Photography Awards 2025, for his 57-year dedication to capturing first Covent Garden Market and then New Covent Garden Market on camera

Presenting the award, Caroline Kenyon, Founder of organiser The Food Awards Company, said: "Sometimes you come across someone so special, you want to give them the recognition they deserve. That is why we created our Outstanding Achievement Award. We don't give it every year, but this year, we have a wonderful recipient."

The average adult attention span is 40 seconds, Caroline informed the audience, adding: "In this age of scrolling, multiple screens, information overload, can you imagine focusing on one subject for not 10 years, not 20 years, not 30 years or even 40 or 50 years, but 57 years?!"

"One extraordinary man has done just this with his camera, photographing Covent Garden fruit, vegetable and flower market since 1968. The people, the interactions, the produce, the building, the drama, the emotion, the fatigue, the effort. All of this is here in his photos."

Clive, recounted Caroline, became a familiar figure in the market with his Hasselblad, and was often to be spotted with three cameras hung around his neck. On accepting the award, a delighted Clive said: "In 1968 I was already very aware of Covent Garden Market, but what I suddenly realised very early one morning at the top of James Street – seeing the light casting a long, lit shadow, and the cigar smoke going up from the salesmen, and the dust from produce and the horses and the clatter of the barrels and the camaraderie between the porters and truck drivers and buyers – was this incredible display of humanity going on, all based upon trade."

He added: "That interaction between produce and person... Suddenly I had this overwhelming passion to photograph it."

As Rosalind Jana wrote in *Another* magazine a few years ago of Clive's images: "Here everything is caught in passing. A hand. A face. A shared joke. A lit window. A box of broad beans. A barrow being pulled across slushy streets. A silent space waiting for the Outstanding achievement day's deliveries."

Clive continued: "Each picture is like a tiny facet of a multifaceted diamond before it becomes a whole. I asked myself time and time again, 'if I could only use one piece of film, what is the picture I'd take to say this is Covent Garden?' – and I was never able to answer it."

Before Dave Samuels, Brand Director, presented Clive with his well-deserved award, Caroline concluded: "Beloved by all at New Covent Garden Market and author of multiple books, he is a man whose life has ranged from farmhand to mountaineer, from woodsman to photographer. He is an artist whose modesty and gentleness is reflected in the tenderness with which he has captured people whose lives might never otherwise have been recorded."

And so say all of us. Congratulations Clive from everyone at New Covent Garden Market. Thanks for the memories you have captured on your many cameras over the years – we're sure your lifetime of achievements here is far from complete!



Paul thrives with Market’s support



Florist Paul Furness is one of the best known customers faces at New Covent Garden Flower Market, visiting several traders on almost a daily basis to procure fresh flowers for his floristry business

Based in London’s Seven Sisters - described by Paul as ‘a hub of eclectic independent businesses’ - his Petal to the Metal business is an independent contracts and event florist, with two full-time staff and two freelancers. They specialise in creating ‘bright, bold and beautiful flower designs with love, passion, a strong hand and a fine eye for the final details.’ And the process starts at 4am each day, right here in Nine Elms.

"I love early mornings when I’m visiting the Flower Market and buying the best of the season’s flowers and foliage,” says Paul. “As a florist, there’s no substitute for visiting New Covent Garden Market in person and enveloping yourself in the huge assortment – it is essential to what I do. You can start to create with your eyes, feel, touch and see the colours first hand. During an average week, me and the team will visit three or four times. During a busy period, like the run up to Christmas, we’ll be there every day. Yes, you can buy from the Dutch direct but all you’re seeing when you order is a stock image on a website. I’d describe it as similar to the difference between eating in your favourite restaurant and ordering a Deliveroo – I need to see what will make a display ‘pop’ and being at the Market means I can switch up my orders and makes it easier to work within a budget.”

“ There's no substitute for visiting the Market and enveloping yourself in the huge assortment

Career switch

Paul has been a florist for more than 20 years, however he started his career in publishing and magazines, before making the seemingly radical switch to the flower game after completing a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in floristry. “I’d been working in the media, living my best 1990s life. It was a strange move to become a florist, as I’d grown up in the North without a garden, but I’d always loved flowers. And it changed my life,” he says.”

Working for an independent florist for his first five years in a managerial role, Paul got busy learning and soaking up knowledge. That laid the foundations for his next step forward.

“I’d always yearned to start my own business from scratch, so I finally took the plunge to follow my dream,” says Paul. “I started in 2015, offering contracts rather than retail, with weekly deliveries to clients and special creations for one-off events. That was a powerful move for me to make but also terrifying! I was 43 and I really had to push myself, as the first three years of the business were very stressful. In your 40s you’re much more switched on but you’re also more fearful and I suffered from imposter syndrome. But I learned to know my own strengths and take my own lane. My proudest moment was seeing my first van with our logo on it.”



Happy Customer
★★★★★



Pandemic challenge

After a few years as a growing independent business, Paul faced his first major challenge when the Covid-19 pandemic shut down the hospitality industry in 2020. “I had to change to survive after the hard times faced by the entire flower industry during the pandemic,” he explains. “I could see how much the floristry business had changed over the past 10 years and Covid was a fork in the road that accelerated how people reacted to those changes.”

“Before Covid I’d had my best golden quarter [October to December] and that gave me a financial buffer when everything locked down. Many florists had to be agile and try different things, but I just kept my head down and rode out the lockdown, keeping my nerve and thankfully, I got through it. When we reopened, my clients stood by me, so I was fortunate to keep my connections. I couldn’t have what I have and do what I do without all the great relationships I have with traders in the Flower Market.”

Paul describes working with his clients as ‘a collaborative process’ and that’s where Petal to the Metal excels. “I’ve acquired my client base in lots of different ways: via word of mouth, through introductions, and by visiting and showing potential clients what we can offer them. The business has grown organically and that’s really helped us - we’ve expanded at a steady pace. When our clients are looking for a unique look or have a specific budget, we know what can work, and that comes from frequently visiting the Flower Market,” he says.

What’s the most important part of running a successful contract floristry business? After a reflective pause, Paul says ‘keeping things current’ is key. “I acknowledge what’s trending, but the flower world is constantly changing and moving. For Petal to the Metal, it’s about ensuring we remain creatively versatile and keep things simple. Each of our clients is very varied in what they’re looking for - we have a central line that we offer and then we bend and re-shape that offer depending on what the client calls for.”

Online style

With platforms like TikTok accelerating style and taste changes more rapidly than ever, every florist will tell you that a strong online presence is vital. “As we don’t have a physical retail shop, our Instagram and website becomes our ‘shop window’ to show what we can do,” says Paul, who had just finished a photoshoot in the Flower Market that will be an integral part of a website refresh.

“I’m inspired by my peers and enjoy the varied approaches to design. From the classics like Simon Lycett and Paul Thomas to the eternally beautiful and natural style of Scarlett and Violet and the more recent creative shifts from Worm London and Hamish Powell.”



Trusting relationship

With two decades of visits to the Flower Market under his belt, Paul acknowledges New Covent Garden has been a great place to learn his trade. “I’ve picked up so much knowledge from all the Flower Market wholesalers over the years, and I’m happy to say it’s a reciprocal process. As professional florists, we give really valuable feedback as to how long certain flowers have lasted and it’s a very trusting relationship.”

“I speak with a lot of florist colleagues, and everyone agrees that a visit to New Covent Garden is the best part of our day. You can meet up with your friends and we all chat and gossip together - we know the traders so well that it feels like home. Once you leave the Market you’re back into the real business world and our days can be very long. The flower industry is a huge eco-system and everyone is very supportive, despite the fact we’re competing against each other for trade.”

Community of love

When the Market’s ongoing redevelopment project reaches its conclusion in 2027, the Flower Market will move to its new – and final – location. Paul is convinced the Market’s wholesalers will continue to be a huge part of the floristry community. “To be able to visit the Flower Market each week and see the seasons changing is a wonderful thing,” says Paul. “I’ve visited flower markets in other countries, where they are mostly for trade people working in the flower business and not generally open to the public. Although I’m not a fan of non-trade customers using the Market, I do understand they can be valuable to many businesses. Flowers are a luxury item, so people who invest in flowers do so because they love it.”

“You cultivate people’s emotions with displays of flowers and that is why they’re so important to so many people. I’d describe London as fast, international and full of opportunity, so it’s great that the Market will continue to support florists wherever they’re based.”

Nick makes journey from porter to Director at P&I

Nick Padley has been appointed as a Director of New Covent Garden Market wholesaler P&I Fruit, joining Paul Emmett and Paul Bishop on the Board of the group that includes P&I and Side Salads. Nick began his career in the Market as a porter 23 years ago, aged 19, before becoming a junior salesman at Side Salads in 2011. Since 2018, he has run Side Salads and now steps up to oversee the entire firm in the Market. Market Times talked to him about his route to his new role

Nick was born and raised in Harlow, Essex, and followed his great grandad, grandad and father Bob into New Covent Garden Market. “My dad wasn’t in the Market his whole life, but he was a porter at P&I towards the end of his career,” Nick says. “The real family roots though were on my mum’s side, as her dad - Bill Watson - and grandad - also Bill, were both Covent Garden porters their whole lives.

“A lot of my extended family were porters over the years too, but I didn’t come straight into the Market. There was an element of the older generation not wanting me to follow them in because of the unsociable hours I suppose, but as soon as I’d been to the Market with my dad I kept bugging him. I’d studied for accountancy qualifications, but I knew the money was better in the Market and I didn’t want to be stuck in an office. I helped dad out a couple of Saturdays and from the first time I was up there I just loved the buzz of it, the fact that everyone else is asleep while we’re working.”

“Reputation is important here - work hard and people get to know you and take you seriously

Nick entered the Market in 2002 as a porter, on ‘odd work’, which meant he reported to the union office every morning and was assigned work with whichever firm required his services on that day. “I was a porter for a bit longer than I wanted to be, but it gave me a great grounding,” Nick says. “My dad wanted me to get in with him at P&I and knew how well the firm treated its staff, but there weren’t any jobs available at the time. So I had to earn my reputation. That was important, as once you are established here, your reputation precedes you – good or bad. If you work hard and people get to know you, they take you seriously and want to employ you.”

Opportunity knocks

It was when P&I Fruit bought Side Salads in 2011 that Nick’s opportunity arose. “Paul Bishop and Ian Taylor had always encouraged me, but when they bought Side Salads, they took me on as a junior salesman,” he recalls. “A few people came and went as you’d expect and I started managing the stand around 2018. From day one, I worked under Paul Bishop, who obviously told me how he wanted things done, but also gave me an open book to put my own stamp on it. He encouraged me to try new things – even if nine out of 10 new lines had failed, but one was successful, I always had his support.



“One of the main reasons P&I bought Side Salads was that they recognised the quality and value behind the G’s brand that was attached to it then and is still a very important part of the business. What we’ve always been about, and always will be, is looking after our suppliers. You’re only as good as the growers you’re working with and their willingness to listen to you with an open mind and work with you. As long as everyone understands that we all have to make a living, there’s enough in there for everyone if we work together,” says Nick.

The strong relationship with G’s saw Side Salads start programming prices across the English season for the first time as the firm recognised there was a demand for that service. It now does that with other English and international suppliers too. “G’s was always the lifeblood of the stand, but we’ve added several product lines into the mix and developed our relationships with growers like Portwood Asparagus, for example, and select brands from overseas.”

Changing trade

As the trading environment at NCGM has evolved, particularly post-pandemic, the amount of Side Salads’

business done online or by phone call or Whatsapp has increased to roughly 80% of the total, by Nick’s estimation. That has in turn changed the salesman-customer dynamic, he says. “A lot of the time, the customer is not going to see the product until they receive it, so we can’t send them poor quality product, or advertise that we’re selling one thing and send something different. The trust would soon break down if we did. They have the same time and staff pressures as us and we’re all working to a tighter schedule now, so a big part of my job is to give them as few headaches as possible.”

Trading hours have condensed and might be drawing to a close in Buyers’ Walk by 3am or so, but that’s not the end of the working day by any means. Nick is on the phone to suppliers and customers on his way home and once home, continues that flow of conversations for a few hours more. “That’s what wholesalers around the country are



doing – we start at 9pm or 10pm and they might not start ‘til 4am, but we’ve got to feed our service into the customers at the time they want it,” he says.

In the grand scheme of priorities, quality comes ahead of price, but service is also a key part of the equation. “We’re always aiming for consistency. Having good products is important, but having good staff is huge. I always want my staff to be polite and obliging when someone walks onto the stand, which is not always a given in a market at 2am! It’s not just the sales team, but the boys out the back too – you’ve got to care about people, whether they are your customer or not.”

Natural progression

Nick’s progression to Director was not exactly planned, but it is nevertheless a position he has been working towards. “I always had a view that I wanted to be involved in overseeing the business,” he explains. “I’ve learnt the trade from the bottom up and gone through the whole card of roles really, dealt with every supplier and customer, the hiring and firing, and so now I’m looking forward to getting more involved at the top end of the business.

“Side Salads and P&I have always had a blueprint on how we deal with things. We like to look after our staff; we want them to be happy and have a

smile on their face because without them we don’t have a business. Doing nights is hard enough without trying to do it in a poor environment. We have high staff retention, which I think says a lot.”

Nick’s two brothers, Josh and Bob, also work for the firm, as well as cousins Bill and Sid. “Working with family is good because you know you can always rely on them,” Nick says. “Sometimes, it makes the family social scene a bit of a juggling act, but you know you won’t let each other down.”

Nick has long had other people’s longer-term career paths in his mind. “I knew where I was trying to get to - the hours and the hard work were part of that. It’s not set in stone for any of us at P&I, we just do what needs to be done. So when we’re busier, we’ll be working six days and when it gets a bit quieter, we’ll do a bit less. I’ve had 18 and 19 year-olds come to work for me who really liked the job, but just couldn’t get on with the hours. So maybe that will change. If they were working say 5am to 2pm, and not a mandatory six days most weeks, more people might look at it as an option as they’d still get a social life. On the other hand, the traffic makes a big difference – coming in late evening and leaving early in the morning lets you get in and out of London so much quicker. If you switched to daytime hours, that becomes more of a challenge, but maybe using public transport is an option then.”

Pleased and proud

In a joint statement, Paul Bishop and Paul Emmett said: “We are very pleased and proud to appoint Nick as a director. He has worked his way through the ranks showing tremendous commitment, dedication and hard work and it’s been a pleasure to work with him along that journey.

“While we are both still very much involved in the management and strategic

Chefs get to know asparagus supply chain

The official launch of the English asparagus season is traditionally St George’s Day (April 23rd) and to mark the occasion Side Salads and D.D.P Ltd invited a group of chefs who run kitchens for Elinor and Lexington to a day on the farm with Andy Allen, whose Portwood Asparagus brand is prominent in wholesale markets around the country throughout the domestic season.

Side Salads is the exclusive wholesaler partner of Portwood Asparagus at New Covent Garden Market. “I believe Portwood Asparagus is the best of the best of the English crop,” says Nick. “His commitment to delivering consistently great product into the wholesale markets and his desire to get better every year really stands him out from the crowd.”



He adds that Andy’s approach and outlook are different to many of his contemporaries. “Generally, English growers do produce very good asparagus, but the attention to detail isn’t there. That’s what makes the difference to us as a wholesaler of premium products and brands – where the value is added throughout the chain is Andy’s willingness to invest in people and in his grading and packing systems, his meticulous operation procedures and the way he has worked with us to



constantly adapt his brand and the packaging he sends to market to suit our customers.

“I’d say the biggest thing is the grading. A lot of Andy’s competitors were happy to just bundle it, box it and send it off. But there is a science and an art behind doing the job properly, and I believe Andy has perfected that.”

To read more on this, scan the QR Code



direction of the business, we are not physically in the Market as much as we used to be and Nick will run the company at New Covent Garden on a day-to-day basis, as the face of P&I on the ground.

“Nick is extremely well liked and respected across the Market and he’s the future of the firm. We wish him all the very best in his new position and look forward to working alongside him to take P&I to new levels in the years to come.”

Murphys share lifetime of love for their trading places

Paul and Danny Murphy are one of New Covent Garden Market's best-known father and son partnerships. Both have enjoyed long careers here and for the last decade, they have been encouraging everyone to 'Peel the love' at the helm of catering supplier Yes Chef. While the pair were being filmed for the latest in NCGM's 50 years in Nine Elms youtube series (scan the QR code on page 12 to watch) we caught up with them to talk about the past, present and future



out of work for whatever reason, you waited 'on the cobbles' for someone who didn't turn in for a day for a day's work. If nothing came up by 6 or 7am then you'd go home with no work and no money. That's how it was. I worked in the Jubilee Market for a potato firm, then when we moved to New Covent Garden, I worked for Coxhill's, another firm that was originally on Russell Street."

Fifty years since the move to New Covent Garden Market and Danny is still in the Market regular as clockwork. "I've never stopped working. 'I've worked in a kitchen – under Brian Webb – and I had the first Café Rouge restaurant in England. It taught me so much about what chefs require and working with chefs now is such a pleasure for me. And then I came back into the market to be a catering supplier with Chef's Connection, then Yes Chef. I've done it all!" he laughs.

Go south, young man

He remembers driving across the bridge to the new market in South London "as though it was yesterday". Paul says his dad has often told him he was in tears making the journey in November 1974 and Danny does not correct him. "It was only two and a half miles away but it was another world to us. As porters, we weren't used to walls, there were so many wide open spaces at the old market, so it was a culture shock coming into a new market. I'd actually never been south of the river and thought I was going to prison!

"Thankfully though, the camaraderie of the porters soon brought some life into it and we turned it into a great market. We missed the variety of people we used to see in the old market, but we made it work for us."

Fourth generation Paul became a fully qualified ski instructor after he left school, so had worked in the Alps, USA and Canada for a few years before joining his dad in Nine Elms, in 1990. "I would never have asked Paul to come into the Market as I know how hard it is. It has to be your life and you have to love it," Danny says. "But he came to help me one day when I needed him and he never left. It's great working with him, but I don't know how he puts up with me!"

Paul has a slightly different version of this story. "Dad lent me a van to drive around in one autumn, as I didn't have a car. Then two days later, he called me and said 'Son, I'm a driver down and a van down, can you bring it back in. I brought it back in... and I'm still here."

"First I was a van driver, tea boy and sweeper-upper – all of which I'm still doing!" says Paul, "as well as having jobs as a packer and in the warehouse. I'm now more focused on buying produce when my buyers are off, and doing the types of things my dad also does now – getting out there to see the customers, the growers and the farmers."



Danny was the third generation of his clan to work with or in the original Covent Garden; both his father and grandfather hitched up their horse and cart each day to travel to WC2 from Caledonian Road, in North London.

Unusually perhaps, that connection was not why Danny himself entered the trade. "My first job was when I was 11, putting the stalls out in Exmouth Market at 6am and breaking them down again at 6pm," he says. So, markets were always in his blood. Although my dad and grandad had done a lot of work there, I actually first got introduced into Covent Garden through my boxing club. We went there to buy some fruit and when I walked around the corner from Drury Lane, the sweet smell of the fruit was intoxicating. The buzz, the barrows, the powerful porters, it just seemed so exciting to me."

From that day on, there was only one career path of choice for young Danny. "I eventually started in Covent Garden when I was 17; a bit later than I would have liked. In those days you had to wait for someone to die or retire to get in, because of the way things were handed down through the generations. So, I'd done a few other things before my ticket came up.

"As a porter, you started as an empties boy, a flower porter or a banana cutter and I was the latter for about 15 months, working under the catacombs, just off Langley Street. There were six or seven underground ripening rooms and a chute that came down from the street – some of the spiders that came with those bananas were unbelievable!

"Then a porter's badge came up and I was very proud when I started at A Phillips as a fully-fledged porter," he remembers. "From there I went to Baker & Kemp. If you were



Photos: Danny and Paul, the fourth and fifth generation of Murphys associated with the Market



Family challenges

Despite the many upsides, working with family has its challenges, says Paul, whose two sons have both spent time in the Market. “Working with dad has been interesting at times. He’s always been a hard taskmaster – nothing is ever good enough,” he explains. “But I do believe the reason we are as successful as we are now is the ethos he has instilled in me – you have to give 100% every day and make sure your customers get the benefits of that. I think our customers return to us because of the consistency of the quality, service and customer care we provide every day. Me, my dad and our co-founder Martin Wheeler are always on the end of a mobile phone, which I think stands us out from a lot of other suppliers.”

“He gave me the tools to part run Yes Chef.”

Danny adds: “I’ve worked with my wife, my son, my grandson and sooner or later you will upset them, so it is difficult. But we’ve always wanted to be the best at everything we do and it’s demanding. To upset my son at times hurt me too, but it is also lovely to see him every day of my life – well apart from Sunday, unless Arsenal are at home!”

“ We're a brigade at Yes Chef - like a chef's kitchen, we all work together

Opening time

Even one day off a week was never on the table when Yes Chef first opened though. “When we started, we were all here seven days a week, Martin with his dad and his son too, and often 16 hours a day. We would not leave until everything was done and that went on for many months. It’s fantastic to see now that our commitment then has paid off. I still love every day – I have never woken up not wanting to go to work,” Danny says.

Paul, Danny and Martin Wheeler are the directors of Yes Chef. In 2025, the hours are not quite as daunting as they were at the outset, but as with many firms at NCGM, it continues to be a very hands-on business. Paul says: My hours chop and change according to the needs of the company. I can be in at 9pm, but my normal hours these days give me a ‘lie-in’ and I can start at 4am! I will cover our buyers when they are away, I will also cover the driving, the warehouse, the forklift driving and anything that needs doing.”

Danny’s days are a bit easier now too. “I’ll come in a bit later in the day, see whether I’m happy with everything, if not I’ll annoy a few people, then go out delivering and see the chefs,” he says.

“I believe we’re lucky to be in this industry; it gives me so much satisfaction when we do a great job. When you have a passion for something, you get annoyed and frustrated when things aren’t right.”

Murphys’ law

“Our company motto is ‘Peel the love’ and we chose that because we wanted to create an environment within Yes Chef of respect between everybody – the team, the owners, the customers and the suppliers. All of our staff have this explained to them when they join us – if anyone doesn’t peel the love they won’t last here very long!” smiles Paul.

Danny laughs: “I don’t know how I’ve lasted so long! My role here is to come in and upset everyone. If there’s something I’m not happy with, Paul and Martin will hear about it, then everyone else. But seriously, I do it in the best way I can – we are always appreciative of the people who work for us. We’re a brigade - like in a chef’s kitchen - and we all have to work together. If we don’t it won’t work and we know the people who work for us are our agents when they go out to the hotels and restaurants. We’ve had some really great drivers here and I think it’s the philosophy and values of the firm that breed that.”

The meticulous approach to the fruit and vegetable business has netted many a premium customer. “We’ve met and served some wonderful chefs out of this Market, haven’t we son?” Danny asks Paul, who nods: “I had my schooling off Gordon Ramsay, Marco Pierre White, Gary Rhodes and Angela Hartnett. If you could supply them, you could supply anybody!”

Danny adds: “Marco was the one – his firm was unbelievable and Gordon was his number two back then. We served Pierre Koffmann and he was another one that many of the top chefs worked under. He was a tough one, but he had three Michelin stars so he could be.

“Fantastic people, old school, taught properly. Our first customer was Paul Gaylor – what a great chef he is. His knowledge of ingredients and spices is second to none. Giorgio Locatelli and the other top Italians that we served too – they were all amazing chefs, but if I wasn’t driving I’d have come home drunk every day from their restaurants!”

Paul says: “One area, where the industry has completely changed is that a lot of the younger chefs now don’t drink. The entertaining side of it hasn’t completely disappeared, but it’s not as big as it used to be.”

Right: Paul and Martin Wheeler
Below: Danny and Paul watching the Gunners at the Bernabeu, in Madrid

A fine romance

Danny met his wife, Paul’s mum Bettie, aged 17, while he was waiting to get his porter’s badge. “I got a job for about a year driving a lorry, delivering potatoes for Baldwin’s,” he remembers. “When I finished work, sometimes I’d pop up to the office as I knew a few of them.

“One day, I was doing a turn down Endell Street and saw a young woman talking to Bob, the foreman. She smiled, but we didn’t speak and she went back up to the office. But she’d made an impression on me and eventually I impressed her enough to go out with me by telling her I had two tickets for the premiere of *Two for the Road*, a top film with Albert Finney and Audrey Hepburn.

“Of course, I didn’t have the tickets, but luckily I knew a tout who did!

“Bettie and me were sat right behind the Duke and Duchess of Kent and the rest is history.”

Forever connected

“There’s a plaque in Southampton Street in the old Covent Garden with our [previous] company’s name and our family name on it,” says Paul. “They wanted to recognise companies and people that were in both the old and new Covent Gardens and we’re immensely proud that our name is going to be there for posterity, forever connected with the old Market.”

Danny adds: “The old Market is my real love – I took Paul there at a very young age and when I had loaded up a barrow, I’d put Paul on top of it while I pulled it to the lorries. Health and safety didn’t exist then! I loved having him with me and the porters all made a fuss of him. He’d somehow always come home with more money than I’d earned that day!”

“Dad must have loved this place, because he used to bring me and my sister down here every weekend, even when he wasn’t working,” Paul laughs. “We sort of grew up here as kids.”

“They were the best times of my life really,” Danny admits. “It’s hard to explain how fantastic it was or how much of a pleasure it was to come to work. Snow rain and all weathers, we went out and delivered – and those cobbles were a bit slippery when it rained and snowed, I can tell you! You had to get the job done, we couldn’t put an umbrella up or shelter inside.

“I still get the same feeling when I come back here now – they’ve done a remarkable job keeping the façade and where there are new builds, incorporating the same style into the new buildings. To come back and remember where I used to work is fantastic – I bored Paul for many years and now I bore my grandchildren to death with the stories. I never tire of it!”

Paul concurs: “I love going back to the old Covent Garden Market, it still feels like I’m going back to somewhere special. It’s the same for my two sons; they know the family history.”

And they both agree, that was the old Covent Garden, both a workplace and a place with infinite opportunities to have fun. “We had so many happy days there – every one of them was a laugh,” Danny says. “We used to see such a wide variety of people because we were bang in central London. The only people you see at New Covent Garden really are the people who work here or come to buy here.

“We’ve both made great friends in the Market though. It’s been an amazing life and a healthy one too,” says Danny. “Mind you, it’s nowhere near as physical as it used to be; I’d deliver three tonnes of potatoes every morning to Ronnie Wilcox’s near Charing Cross Hospital, load and unload all that weight and then pull it all down there. You’d get £2 for that – the portage was where you made your money.”

He may never have worked there, but Paul’s emotional connection to the old site is strong. “I have really good memories of Covent Garden Market from a very early age. Dad would wake me up at 4 or 5 in the morning, mum would wrap me up in warm clothes and we’d go down to the old market. I used to have so much fun there. I can remember when the Market moved in 1974 too and the vibrancy of this Market when it was brand new. It just always seemed like



there were thousands and thousands of people here, which was really exciting for a small boy. Don’t tell the authorities, but I even remember my dad letting me drive an electric forklift – this Market was decades in front of Tesla, it used to be full of electric vehicles!”

Professional edge

Paul adds: “There’s more emphasis on getting the job done and going home these days, which is fair enough. The new Market has changed a huge amount in the 30 years I’ve been there and it’s going to change a lot more.

“The Nine Elms, Vauxhall and Battersea skyline is so different. It’s like a mini Manhattan. And when I look at the rebuild, I’m excited for the future of this Market. We’re really looking forward to the completion of phases four, five and six [of the redevelopment programme]. I think the Market community will come together again and with all the building that has happened around the area, I’ve got a feeling it will have the same sort of vibe as the old Covent Garden Market. I’m sure it will be a really good place to work and attract the younger generation.

“You have to commit to this job, but if you work hard, you reap the rewards,” he concludes. “The great thing about the Market is that pretty much every firm here is owned by someone who was one of the workers in the old or new Covent Gardens. They started off like us, so they understand. If you take your opportunities, there is so much you can achieve here.”



The Yes Chef film you can watch on youtube was produced by local company Chocolate Films, which is based in the US Embassy Quarter, a stone’s throw. Scan the QR code to watch the entire 50 years in Nine Elms series

The power of consistency

Nick Woods, Partner at Sunny Side Up, the PR & Comms agency that supports the work of New Covent Garden Market's communications team, tells us just why a Instagram feed is the talk of the town

Good Morning chefs! It's all it takes, you already know who I'm talking about... because you, like me and 115,000 other people are a follower of Le Marché's Instagram page and its cheery MD, Marcus Rowleron.

One hundred and fifteen thousand people is a lot of followers for a relatively small B2B operation nestled within the embrace of New Covent Garden Market... so how has he done it? Why do so many follow this page? And is there anything the rest of us can learn?

Passion

This is a man who clearly LOVES fruit, veg and flavour. You just know it from watching the way he handles each piece, the knowledge he has about how and where it was grown, and by whom, the instinctive response when he taste-tests and the energy he brings every single day. Foodies love other foodies, and we can all see, whether we're amateur home cooks or three-starred Michelin chefs, Marcus is addicted to fresh food like few others.

Knowledge

I have a friend who is an architect and, for as long as I've known him, he has looked up at the buildings around him as we walked, absent-mindedly stroking walls and investigating door hinges, building materials, sizes and shapes... he is simply, happily, obsessed. Marcus is his fruit and veg equivalent: he doesn't just know his apricot from his almond, he knows his vanillacot from his Vesuvius Tomato, his Lemon Verbena from his lulu fruit and you just know that almost his entire existence revolves around knowing more, learning more and sharing his knowledge with anyone who seems even half-interested. When he comes across something new, he cannot help but be curious and he can't wait to tell us about it.

Whether it comes from darkest Peru, deepest Asia or any other far-flung corner, he is able to contextualise it, compare it and celebrate it with the skill of a (well-) seasoned pro.

“No gimmicks, no fancy lighting, no graphics - just a direct conversation with the camera



Eloquence

Sometimes people mistake eloquence for 'talking posh'; Marcus ain't no posho, but my God is he eloquent and engaging. In just 20 seconds he can have me drooling over whatever variety of lemon, tomato, blackberry, plum or parsnip he happens to be talking about, wondering which restaurant it's going to and how I can get there. No gimmicks, no fancy lighting, no graphics - just a direct conversation with the camera which makes it feel like he's talking to each of us directly. His use of language and body language is delicious, with products delivering visceral reactions as he tastes them and describes them back to us, making the viewer wish they could suck in the flavours too.

Likeability

If you're a chef and you love food, you want to know you're buying quality ingredients, of course... but it will always help if you like the people you're buying from. Marcus is just a nice guy, the knowledge, the passion, the use of language, the lack of frill or frippery and the way he interacts with the one or two people off-camera helping to create the content.

If I was a producer on *Saturday Kitchen* I'd be paying Marcus to have a regular slot on the show to talk about what's in-season, what's new and supplying on-air chefs with all their ingredients, because you just know TV viewers would love him every bit as much as London's finest chefs and his Instagram followers.



Consistency

He posts daily. He opens with his catch-phrase. He always has a direct conversation with the camera/viewer. He's always the main man, even if he brings someone else in. He always shows, smells and tastes. Sometimes 'consistency' can become a byword for boring, but not with Marcus - every day is different and every variety is different.

As the man himself, would surely say, when it comes to B2B marketing to the hospitality industry, Le Marché is... simply wowser!



FERMARY joins the family

Wellness-focused premium fermented food brand FERMARY joined the New Covent Garden Market family earlier this year, setting up its production base in the rail arches after joining forces with long-established Market wholesaler S. Thorogood & Sons

Using raw ingredients to handcraft an assortment of fermented foods – including krauts, kimchis and sauces – FERMARY has the twin aims of creating culinary experiences and promoting better health. Gut health is currently a hot topic: home to more than 100 trillion microbial cells, our gut influences our physiology, metabolism, nutrition and our immune function. So now is the perfect time to launch a business that creates fermented foods designed to transform gut health and elevate everyday meals.

Female-led

FERMARY is proud to be a female-led business and a continuation of the values established by co-founder and Head of Brand Elena Deminska, who has led women-centred teams for more than a decade in her previous ventures. Together with Managing Director Lucie Hague, FERMARY celebrates a predominantly female workforce, many of whom are Ukrainian women who previously worked with Elena and her husband Andrey at their former fermentation business. “We’ve built something special together,” says Elena. “Our team is incredibly loyal, skilled, and connected by shared purpose, it’s not just a workplace, it’s a real community.”

Lucie adds: “It’s rare to find such deep experience and consistency in a team, and it’s what makes FERMARY so special.”

Although FERMARY is a new venture, its roots run deep. Elena and Andrey have been at the heart of London’s fresh produce and fermentation scene for more than a decade. Their first venture was Puntarelle & Co, a respected retail outlet with a strong following among the chef community and a loyal customer base. The duo later opened a production kitchen in Bermondsey’s Spa Terminus, alongside respected names like Monmouth Coffee, Neal’s Yard Dairy, and Natoora.

Next up was fermentation brand, London Fermentary, offering a range of wild-fermented krauts, kimchis, and drinks. London Fermentary quickly became known for

quality ingredients and was stocked by Whole Foods, Planet Organic, Harrods, Selfridges and farm shops across UK. “Fermentation is part of our heritage,” says Elena. “We grew up with it. It’s not a trend, it’s a natural, intuitive part of how we eat and live. My recipes are based on tradition, deep hands-on experience and curiosity with innovation.”

After facing a difficult situation with investors, the original business was forced to close. Recognising the value of what had been built, long-time supplier Andrew Thorogood (of S. Thorogood & Sons) reached out to offer support. Elena introduced Lucie into the conversation – a seasoned business strategist with a background in specialist food, retail, and wellness. In combination with Andrew and his son Will, a new structure was established to bring the next chapter to life.

“The food and drink industry in the UK is really small, we all know one another,” says Lucie, who established The Bay Tree Food Co more than 30 years ago. “My background is very much in retail and foodservice, so it’s all about relationships for me. I’ve always been a great believer in using our connections to support each other and since we first thought of the FERMARY concept, the focus has been about getting back to producing. We retained our previous production team and moved them across to New Covent Garden Market at the start of this year. After making sure our new site was up and running, we officially launched in March. It’s important for us to celebrate the fact we’re female-led as that’s a real point of difference.”

The next chapter

The new partnership with Thorogoods was formed to continue the story of an established fermentation business built on years of tangible success, customer relationships and proven products. With FERMARY as the founding brand the company itself is The Big Pickle Company, which provides the structural base for future innovation, with FERMARY at the heart of its launch.

Adding Thorogoods directors Andrew and Will into the



mix makes for an ideal combination of product integrity, seasonal sourcing, and shared values, as Will explains: “Bringing FERMARY into the fold felt like a natural progression. Just as we champion fresh produce, FERMARY celebrates fresh produce by preserving peak-season ingredients in a way that enhances both taste and nutrition.”

With raw ingredients sourced directly from British growers, FERMARY’s commitment to traditional wild fermentation methods continues to set it apart. The brand

Opposite page: The FERMARY teams line up - products and people

This page: Elena surveys her unique range of products



has already been welcomed by leading retailers including Whole Foods, Planet Organic, and several of the UK's most respected farm shops and delicatessens - a reflection of the established reputation behind the products, and the relationships nurtured over years of consistent quality and trust. FERMARY is also available via its online shop, offering individual jars and curated bundles for home delivery.

Secret of success

As a new brand, FERMARY benefits from the heritage and visibility of New Covent Garden Market and the close ties to long-time produce supplier Thorogoods. "The Market is like a best-kept secret," says Lucie. "People have heard of the name and know the heritage, even if they have never visited. Now that we're based here, we're able to see this dynamic ecosystem in full swing and it's incredibly energizing. We love being based at the Market and being part of a wider community of independent food businesses.

"There may be new concepts in the future but now our focus is firmly on FERMARY because we already know these recipes work, the market exists, that's what consumers want, and the quality speaks for itself."

Elena adds: "Andrey and I had been visiting New Covent Garden Market for more than 11 years with our previous business, Puntarelle & Co, mostly during the night hours when it's busiest. We've always known the traders, energy and the pace. Now being here in the daytime, it's a completely different experience, but equally brilliant. This place is vital to London's food scene and the UK supply chain. We feel lucky to be part of it."

Less is more

The unique branding is another point of difference, offering a minimal look that allows the natural colour of the products to shine. "I love the branding because it's so simplistic," says Lucie. "I think we've got the packaging right with Elena's eye for detail on that. She wanted the bottle to be transparent so you can see the colours, which are amazing, aren't they? We felt that the white and gold were very pure and elegant. You know, competition is tough with a lot of fermenting businesses out there, so we need to significantly stand out."

Elena, who led the brand's visual direction and story, adds: "I wanted FERMARY to feel natural, elegant, and feminine, but also modern and strong. I brought in the white-and-gold palette because it felt clean and luminous, allowing the product itself to shine. The visual identity had to feel different from anything else in the market - and deeply connected to what's inside the jar."

Although she's not a product developer in the traditional sense, Elena works from intuition and observation. "I see what the modern wellness customer wants, food trends, what's missing, and how to express that through food. I don't



follow trends or create for the sake of filling shelves. For me, new products arise naturally - sometimes from a supplier's harvest, sometimes from an unexpected gap in the market, and sometimes by pure accident in the right moment and space. They can't be forced. That's when they're real and when people truly want them."

Elena adds: "Every product must carry a story, a purpose. My core belief is simple: it must be beautiful too - because people buy with their eyes - delicious, and beneficial. When all three align, that's when a product becomes a winner." Priced at the top-end of the price range for fermented goods, at £10 a jar, Lucie is confident that FERMARY can gradually position itself as a premium product. "All our products are handmade here in the Market and we want to shout about that," says Lucie. "We're confident we have the best products, with the best branding and the best taste, using the best quality ingredients in the right combination. Yes, it's £10 a jar at retail, but in the scheme of things where people are quite willing to pay £4.50 for a cup of coffee, we're actually offering great value."

Adds Elena: "We stand by the quality. These are not mass-produced ferments, they're handcrafted with intention, integrity, and flavour. We use a great deal of inherited knowledge and unique traditional methods, and we don't take shortcuts - everything is fermented until it's truly ready, for maximum flavour and gut-health benefits."

What's next?

FERMARY's core collection of wild ferments continues to grow, with occasional limited-edition products reflecting the availability of peak-season produce from Thorogoods' trusted grower network. Like any new product, Lucie reveals the brand will grow and evolve over the months ahead. "We're going to make a few tweaks," says Lucie, "such as



having printed lids and changing the size of the sauce bottle, so it comes out a little easier."

A new one-kilo pack has just launched, specifically for the catering industry so chefs can use FERMARY products in cafés and foodservice. "Next up will be a big online push starting in September," says Lucie, who is working with an agency called Tribe Digital, which has supported brands like Bold Bean, Freja, and Citizens of Soil. "I've partnered with them before; they're a small, agile team who really understand digital," she explains.

The partnership with Tribe began in July, with a focus on e-commerce, digital advertising, and refining the website. Elena adds: "We already have a loyal base of returning customers and subscribers, many of whom have followed our journey for years. The next phase is about nurturing those relationships while expanding our reach online. We'll continue to collaborate with like-minded wellness and food brands; it's such an inspiring, cost-effective way to grow the brand with soul."

With the possibility of celebrity endorsement in the future, Lucie says everyone should watch this space. "We're getting some great call outs from lots of people who'd like to partner with us in some way. Nothing's certain but it would be great if we did. We're being very careful to work with key retailers throughout the UK, so we can establish and build a loyal customer base, which is a big objective for us. We've already got several subscribers, and our continuing objective is to grow a subscriber database for automated orders delivered via post. We all know we've got great tasting products that stand out from the crowd."



A deep-rooted connection

In the first of a new regular feature that looks at some of the people who put this Market on the map, Market Times speaks with John Hardcastle of Bloomfield Wholesale Florist Ltd to find out more about his Market connections

What does New Covent Garden Market mean to you?

I love the Market as it's always been a part of my life. I used to look out onto the old Flower Market when I opened my bedroom curtains each morning as we lived in Covent Garden. I've worked in three different versions of the Flower Market, and I've been here in Nine Elms since the day it opened. Hopefully, I'll also be in the fourth version when we move to the Food Exchange building in 2027.

When was the first time you visited NCGM?

My Mum worked for the Covent Garden Market Authority (CGMA) back in the 1960s as a caretaker in one of the many office blocks at the old Covent Garden Market. It was through Mum's job that we got a flat living above the Market. All my childhood was spent around the Market, so it literally always felt like home - I even had a fire escape outside my bedroom window that would take me all the way down to the Flower Market. My connection to the Market has always been deep rooted!

What was your first Market job?

I started running errands for different people in the Flower Market every morning before I went to school, then when I left education I joined full time. My first Market role was as a junior salesman with a company called Fyffes Monro. They were based in a five-floor building just outside the old Market, so it made perfect sense as it was a short commute for me. However, it was a short stint with them - I didn't last very long as it didn't pay very well!

What was your first business called?

I set up my first company with my good friend Dave Gibbs, who is also still at NCGM as the owner of DG Wholesale Flowers Ltd. We called the business Eurosales, which was mainly a commission-based company. In those days you'd receive three big deliveries of flowers and foliage each day from across the country. It really was a case of feast or

famine, and you'd have plenty of stock or not enough as the supply of British-grown flowers was so seasonal.

After Eurosales I opened Bloomfield Wholesale Florist Ltd, which was really just me on my own in a little corner of the new Market. Look at us now - we've built up a monster of a business. I ran it full time until the Covid pandemic, which was when I handed the business over to my son Sam. Looking back, Covid was a tough time for everyone, but it was also a time of expansion for Bloomfield. As the Flower Market had to close, we needed to be creative to ensure we could remain trading. We really embraced the idea of selling online and that's when we started offering direct deliveries to our clients.

What's changed the most in your Market career?

The Flower Market has always been an amazing place to work - back in the day produce was arriving from all over the UK plus a lot of French and Italian produce that was all fantastic quality. Whereas nowadays we buy all our stock, back then everything was sold on a commission basis. The Dutch growers, who now supply all our stock, didn't really come into the Flower Market until the late 1970s.

What's the secret of your success?

It's all about our relationships. We have a brilliant relationship with our suppliers in the Netherlands. Our daily and weekly ordering is now done online, with deliveries direct to us. That relationship also extends to our clients, who trust us to always provide the



very best product for them, regardless of the season or the size of the order. We have a no-quibble guarantee with all our clients, which we'll always honour. If they're unhappy, we're unhappy and we all want happy customers.