

# MARKET TIMES

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**BLACK HISTORY MONTH - WHAT IT MEANS TO NCGM**  
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As an official partner of British Food Fortnight, we highlighted our support of domestic growers



## Editor's Message



There has been plenty going on in and around New Covent Garden Market since the last issue of Market Times, with trade picking up gradually as we continue to see the recovery gather pace and London clicks through the gears towards what will hopefully be a very busy Christmas period.

Inside, we reflect on some of the key events of the late summer and early autumn, take time to highlight two very important annual landmarks, look ahead to what's coming down the line and also feature some of the people and businesses that are doing great things within our midst.

October is Black History Month and we talked to a selection of the black people working in the market to find out how the month and its theme – Proud to be – resonate with them. On a different note, in the final two weeks of September, the Fruit and Vegetable Market threw its weight behind British Food Fortnight and showed its passion for this country's growers. Flick through these pages to find out how.

Over the next few months, you will see NCGM showing its passionate support for the independent retail sector, not just as a vital part of the market's customer base, but also as pillars of communities across London and the South East at a time when the value of communities has been brought back into the psyche of the general public. Like many of his counterparts in the market, Covent Garden Tenants Association chairman Gary Marshall began his career in the retail trade and he gives an impassioned shout-out to greengrocers and street market traders on page 10-11.

Elsewhere, Ian Parfitt at Whittingtons, in the Flower Market, is celebrating 20 years with the business and reminisces with us, David Jackson of Whitstable's Staines Farm Shop looks back on nearly four decades as a customer on Buyers Walk and Chris and Alfie at CSR & Sons tell us about a recent and highly successful addition to their range – plant based alternatives.

We also caught up with Jess Latchford, who makes it her business to rescue perfectly good fresh produce that would otherwise have gone to waste and work with wholesalers to get it into chefs' kitchens. The food waste challenge starts right at the farm and what Jess is doing to support British growers has a far-reaching knock-on effect to wholesalers, chefs and eventually consumers, who are all more interested that ever in being sustainable and reducing their own environmental footprints.

We've got one award-winning story on the opposite page and hopefully next time I write this column, we'll be reporting on more award-winning exploits by wholesalers shortlisted at the FPC Fresh Awards. Good luck to all!

### Tommy

Tommy Leighton,  
CGMA Strategy, Partnerships and Communications Team



## New art lights up market surrounds

A new piece of artwork has been installed on the Nine Elms Lane façade of the Flower Market.

'Remedy' by Sian Fan (pictured above) is the final installation in the three-year New Covent Garden Market Vitrine Art Commission series and will be on display for 12 months.

To create the artwork, Sian visited New Covent Garden's Fruit and Vegetable and Flower Markets to take photographic scans of a range of fruit, veg and flowers. Computer-generated textures from these scans were then used to create an abstract digital tapestry that features more than 30 items of produce across the full spectrum of colours and textures on offer, including Romanesco broccoli, Shimeji mushrooms, Japanese anemones and calla lilies.

"The work seeks to capture the breathtaking variety of the entire market, from fruits, to vegetables, to flowers," explains Sian. "It digitally fuses these elements together as a meditative expression of connection, curiosity and colour."



Another vibrant new artwork that celebrates the famous Buyers' Walk in the Fruit and Vegetable Market has also been installed on the hoardings of Merchants Way, a new temporary pathway funded and delivered by VINCI St. Modwen (VSM) that runs across the market from Pascal Street to the Arch 42 railway tunnel.

First-time public artist, Anna Nicolo was inspired to create the Buyer's Walk artwork following a visit to the market last summer. "Buyers' Walk is inspired by the market's history and architecture. It's a celebration of its rich and colourful landscape, distilled into a bright and joyful pattern, bringing together the past and the future of the market," said Anna.

And as well as the artwork on its hoardings, Merchants Way has a colourful rainbow pedestrian crossing at either end, also funded and delivered by VSM as part of the works they are undertaking on the surplus land at the eastern end of the market site, to reflect their support for diversity and inclusion.

## Quartet up for Fresh Awards gongs

There are four New Covent Garden Market names on the shortlist to win categories at the FPC Fresh Awards 2021.

Only two of them can win, as three are shortlisted in the same category! Smith and Green, Bruce White and Bevington Salads will go up against each other in the Wholesaler of the Year category – can we make it a one-two-three? One other person will be biting their finger nails as the awards are presented, as George Marshall of Bevington Salads is also in the running for the Young Person of the Year award.

The awards take place at a black tie event on November 18th, at Old Billingsgate Market. We are reliably informed that there are two more potential winners from the market, in categories that have no published shortlist. Good luck to all and whatever the outcome, congratulations for being recognised as one of the best in your industry.

We'll let you know how they get on.

# Food Exchange based Swig Wines wins top prize



Food Exchange tenant Swig has won the 'Best Online Wine Merchant of the Year 2021' in the Decanter Magazine Retailer Awards.

Swig was founded by Robin Davis with a vision to seek out and share delicious, undiscovered wines that punch well above their weight. For wine lovers, not for wine snobs, Swig basically takes you on a wine adventure, importing wines from Spain to South Africa, from Bulgaria to Argentina, and beyond.

"We are on a mission to discover amazing wines made by amazing people in amazing places," said Robin (pictured left on delivery duty). "We like to break down barriers, to introduce wines to that people wouldn't otherwise consider. We brought in a Pinot Noir from Bulgaria 10 years ago, for instance, and at first not many people would consider it, but it's now been written up by pretty much every major UK wine journalist and served in several Michelin starred restaurants."

Supplying retail, restaurants and corporate customers throughout the UK, you can sample some of Swig's bottles in restaurants like Core by Clare Smyth in London, Tom Kerridge's The Hand and Flowers in Marlow, Claude Bossi at Bibendum, The River Café, Vinoteca, Vagabond, Hide, The Clove Club, Gymkhana, The Pig, and Rick Stein's Restaurants. There are many more. Through its website and weekly offers sent to an ever-expanding mailing list, Swig brings producer stories to life with engaging tasting notes and food pairings, which can easily be tried out in the comfort of your own kitchen.

Swig often collaborates with its customers with resounding success and the business would love to hook up with anyone in the Market with foods and services that could cross-pollinate. It is on the second floor of the Food Exchange, so pop in and say hi; they are a friendly bunch.

They might even pour you some wine!



Lara



Peter

## Marathon efforts raise vital funds for charities

Two hardy souls from the Flower Market ran personal bests at the London Marathon recently and raised large amounts of money for three very worthy causes.

Peter Green of wholesaler Smith and Green made his way round the world-famous 26.2 mile course in four hours and 38 minutes. More importantly, he has so far raised well over £5,000 for two charities - Clockwork, a mental health charity based in Oxted, Surrey and Matthews Friends, which specialises in medical ketogenic dietary therapies.

Lara Chatten, who works with mum Linda at Linda Cottee Flowers, completed the marathon in five hours 49 minutes and has raised £2,600 for Cancer Research UK.

Both were running in memory of lost loved ones and

friends and both get our full respect and congratulations.

Back in the market, on September 23rd Bryan Porter of Porters Foliage and his wife Karen hosted a coffee morning and cake sale to raise funds for MacMillan Cancer Support. This was the third time that they had held the event and they raised over £600.

All the cakes were made by Karen herself and every slice was sold. The carrot cake was especially popular, said Bryan, who added: "We enjoy doing this, it's a nice way to involve the market community in raising money for a great charity. All of us have been impacted by cancer, whether through our friends or family, and this provides an opportunity to talk about it and remember the ones we've lost."

## FPJ moves into Food Exchange



The Fresh Produce Journal is moving to new offices at the Food Exchange in November.

The FPJ, which was called The Fruit, Flower & Vegetable Trades' Journal when it first appeared in the 1890s, is one of the world's oldest fresh produce trade magazines. It started out at Covent Garden and moved with the market to New Covent Garden in 1974, to an office in Market Towers. For the last few years, the business has called Wandsworth Road its home, still a stone's throw from the Market.

"We're so happy to be back on the Market, particularly at this very exciting time in New Covent Garden's history with all the redevelopments going on here at Nine Elms," said managing director Chris White. "We're really proud of our links to fresh produce wholesaling in the UK. They go back to our very first issue more than 125 years ago."

FPJ is now a monthly magazine available in print and digital, with updates pushed out daily to your smartphone and tablet via an app available free from Apple's App Store and from Google Play.

# New buildings beginning to take shape

The Market's redevelopment partner VINCI St. Modwen is making good progress with the build of the second section of the new A block in the Fruit and Vegetable Market, which is on track to be completed and ready for tenants to fit out their units in summer 2022.

Several long-established market businesses have already moved into modern, purpose-built units in the first sections of the new Fruit and Vegetable Market buildings, including Allison Risebro, Attila Frozen Foods, Bar Fruit Supplies, Fine Food Specialist, Fresh Connect, Gourmet House, Greenhill Mushrooms, Riverford Organic and Yes Chef.

Others including All Greens and Oui Chef are currently fitting out their units to meet their specific needs, ahead of moving to their new location.

## Demolition of the East Link Bridge

From July to October, scaffolding was erected around the East Link Bridge in the Fruit and Vegetable Market to enable the careful removal of glazing and asbestos insulating board. The bridge will now be safely demolished as the Market's essential redevelopment programme moves forward.

## Work continues on the Apex site

Preparatory work is continuing at the eastern end of the market site, where construction of the first building in the Apex development is scheduled to begin in mid-2022. VINCI St. Modwen recently carried out a consultation on its proposal to deliver 203 high-quality homes in Apex 1, as well as retail and green spaces.

You can find more information about their proposals at [www.newcoventgardensites.com/development-news](http://www.newcoventgardensites.com/development-news).

## Merchants Way pathway and artwork

This will be in place for three years, until a more permanent path is built as part of VSM's redevelopment of the Apex site. There are several alcoves along the path that will be used for pop-up events and activities throughout the year.

For more information visit [www.newcoventgardensites.com/merchantsway](http://www.newcoventgardensites.com/merchantsway)



## World Heart Beat films 'Nine Elms sessions'

Nine Elms charity World Heart Beat music academy visited New Covent Garden Flower Market over the summer to film for their 'Nine Elms sessions' series of music videos, which will be released in early 2022. Pictured are two of the talented young musicians playing clarinets in Lavenders of Covent Garden.

## Obituary

### Joe Tuhey

We regret to inform you that Joe Tuhey, who worked at Covent Gardens old and New for more than 45 years, has died at the age of 88.

Joe worked with and was good friends with Ronnie French when they started together in the old Covent Garden in the early 1950s, with Joe employed first as a porter for J.H. Pardoe Ltd and later working for Paige's and William Newton & Sons Limited, where he was on his retirement from New Covent Garden Flower Market in 1997.

Joe's daughter Lynn Maher remembers: "Dad worked in the market all his life, getting to work at 2am in the morning Monday to Saturday. He was married to my mum, Gloria for some 25 years and had three children, Lynda, Steven & Raymond and later separated and married Ann, who he was married to for some 27 years. Ann sadly predeceased Dad.

"Whilst at Covent Garden, Dad bought a caravan at Plucks Gutter near Ramsgate (much nicer than the name suggests) and spent the majority of his spare time there enjoying the river, countryside and seaside. Until the last year, Dad was independent and reasonably well and carried on enjoying life to the full. He did a lot of traveling with Ann to the US, Israel, Egypt, Malta, Bahamas to name a few and also when widowed he came away with myself and my husband Peter to the South of France, Brittany, Loire Valley, Switzerland, Norfolk Broads, Wales, Devon and Cornwall," says Lynn.

"Dad was always cheerful and loved a party. He had a witty sense of humour



and made others laugh. His favourite party piece was Show Me The Way To Go Home, which he sung loudly at the end of the night and did a little dance to ... What's not to smile about when remembering My Dad?"

Joe leaves behind Lynn, Peter and grandson Chris, as well as Steve, Katie and their 3 children Sarah, Lily and Sam. On his second marriage, he became stepdad to Keith and Jeanette and had a wonderful relationship with them and their children Jason, Johanne, Darren and Lisa.

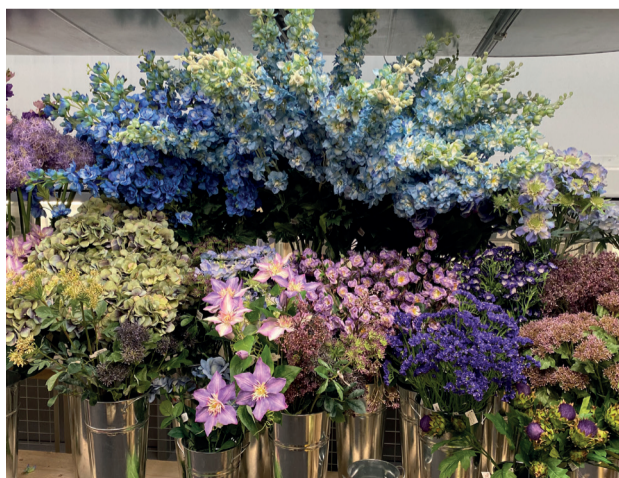
His funeral takes place on Tuesday, August 3, and Lynn came to the flower market to buy roses for the occasion from Darren French, son of Ronnie. "Darren remembered my Dad, so we had a good catch up and reminisced old times," Lynn says.

Condolences from everyone at the market go to the entire family.

Separately, we also pass on our condolences to Eddie Barrett of HG Walker and his family. Eddie's father Ron passed away in late September.

# Twenty years and counting for Ian at Whittingtons

Ian Armitt began working in the Flower Market 35 years ago and this year marks 20 years since he arrived at floristry sundry wholesaler Whittingtons. We had a chat with Ian about his career to date



"I started in the market when I was 15, when my brother introduced me into the Market," says Ian. "I was bringing the English flowers and plants in for Fyffes Monroe between 7 and 9 in the evening. I got to know the growers and the varieties really well – I could even spell most of them! – and I became a bit of an expert, to the point where people started asking me to come and give them a hand. When I was old enough, I became a junior salesman and the relationship I'd built with a lot of the local growers really stood me in good stead."

After eight years, he left the Market and took up a job running a flower and newsagent pitch in Knightsbridge, between Harrods and Harvey Nicholls. "I met all the rich and famous," Ian remembers. "Sidney Poitier used to love me, because I called him Steak and Kidney. Mind you, I did have to tell people where Harrods was roughly four thousand times a day, which gets a bit tiresome after 10 years!"

When he returned to his old hunting ground, Ian took up roles with C Best and then Evergreen, before then boss Brian Perkins sought him out for what would become his long-term Market home at Whittingtons. "The job at Evergreen was great, I was carrying a lot of stuff about as well as selling and got as fit as a flea with muscles in my eyelashes," he laughs. "But I got headhunted. I came in to Whittingtons as GDB (general dogsbody), but ended up being manager, although I'm sure that's just because I had the loudest mouth."



“I met all the rich and famous. Sidney Poitier used to love me because I called him Steak and Kidney!”



The Flower Market has moved during Ian's time here of course, but how has that affected him? "I love it here," he says. "I'm gutted that we'll have to move again, but like everyone, I get attached to where I am. The old site was a bit scruffy at the end, but when you're working in it, you get used to things and you tend not to notice I suppose."

"Our business is also a much tighter ship now and that is definitely for the better, both for the company and for employees who can feel more security in their job. Brady and Faye do a lot of the buying from around the world and our products have got a lot better too, a bit more upmarket. There are a lot more general public amongst our customers now and that's good for business too."

While we were with Ian, a steady stream of returning trade customers passed through, one or two of whom were back in the Market for the first time in a while. "Things are coming back gradually after COVID; we're certainly on an upward curve again now," he says. "There are a lot of people doing double weddings and a lot more weddings in midweek than there used to be, so we're seeing different patterns emerge," he said. "You have to be positive and look forward; there's no progress in looking back."

Whittingtons has 14 locations around the UK and is now part of a broader group. Having lived four minutes from the Market for most of his life, Ian certainly hasn't looked back since he moved to East Grinstead in early 2020. He now has an hour journey into work and has reduced his hours. "I'm doing four days a week now and I'm no longer the manager and while I always loved it, I think that has made it more enjoyable. If I'm needed to work extra days, I'll normally do that too, especially around busy times like Christmas."

"One of the best things about the job for me has always been getting up early in the morning. It's one of the hardest things about it too, but it's a way of life and I really don't think I could manage in the rat race. I've never had to travel to or from work in the rush hour and I wouldn't want to start now. If you'd told the 13-year-old me that I would spend my life working with flowers, I'd have thought you were mad," says Ian. "But it's given me a good life and I'm sure it will continue to do so."

# Celebrating Black History Month

October was Black History Month - and it gave New Covent Garden Market the opportunity to celebrate the valuable contributions that black men and women have made not just to the market, but to every aspect of our society, and to amplify the voices of individuals and businesses within the black community.



## The inventor who revolutionised global trade in fresh produce

Did you know, for example, that portable refrigeration units for trucks, boats and planes - which transformed the global trade of fresh produce including fruits, vegetables, flowers and plants - were invented by African American Frederick McKinley Jones in the late 1930s?

Born in Ohio in 1893, Frederick was an electrician in the US Army during World War I and later taught himself electronics, inventing a cinema sound system and then portable refrigeration. Thank you, Frederick!

## Voices from the market community

We asked Abiola from Premier Fruits, Nicky, Pedro and David from County Supplies, and Vanessa from CGMA, what Black History Month means to them and why this year's theme, 'Proud to be', is an important message.



### Abiola has been working at New Covent Garden Market since 2007 and is currently a forklift truck driver at Premier Fruits

"Knowing where you come from and what other black people have achieved means that you can feel proud of who you are and aspire to achieve more. Alongside my work at the market, I'm currently studying for an IT degree and in the future, I hope to work in a respected area such as website development or cybersecurity.

"Wherever you come from, whatever your nationality or your race, you should value your identity and feel proud of your roots. I'm from Nigeria and it's important to me to stay connected to where I come from."



### Nicky is a warehouse manager at County Supplies

"This year's Black History Month theme, 'Proud to Be' resonates with me. I'm always going to be proud, and my mantra has always been to create, achieve and believe. In terms of racism, there is still a long way to go in UK society, a good example was the sad trolling of footballer Raheem Sterling."





**David is a driver for County Supplies and is also a youth worker**

“It’s nice that there is a month that recognises the black community, but it’s not just about one month. Now is a time when young black people are feeling a lot more confident, they are inspired and are appreciating and embracing their African heritage and culture. When I was growing up, there weren’t many black people on TV, but today it’s the norm and there is far more representation across all areas of society. It’s fantastic that young people see a great range of stories being told.”



**Pedro also works for County Supplies as a driver**

“It’s important for all of us to be proud of our heritage. I definitely am.”



**Vanessa is a Credit Controller for Covent Garden Market Authority (CGMA).**

“Black History Month is an opportunity for all of us to become more informed and educated about the role that black people have played in history and to understand and appreciate the contribution that black people make to the UK’s economy, culture, and other aspects of life, instead of simply seeing black people as ‘immigrants’.

“As a black person living in the UK, it can be easy to lose your sense of identity. It is important for young people, especially, to understand their history, to know about the people who have gone before them and what they have achieved, and to see role models that look like them, so that they can feel proud of who they are.

“I was born in the UK but spent 10 formative years of my childhood in Nigeria, which helped me to understand both sides of my heritage and to see that although black people may be a minority here in the UK, we’re not a minority everywhere. Now I’m trying to help my kids to understand their heritage, by taking them to Nigeria when I can, so that they can know and be proud of who they are.”

## WANDSWORTH BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2021

### Local pride

New Covent Garden Market is a veritable hub of entrepreneurialism and amongst the local events held to mark Black History Month was a panel discussion on the theme *Black entrepreneurship in Wandsworth ‘then and now’*, which took place at Battersea Arts Centre.

Jacqueline Shepherd, BBC Radio London presenter and One Show reporter, hosted a discussion with black business owners that wandered back down memory lane and then brought the audience back to the present day. The panel discussed what it was like starting a business as a black entrepreneur in Wandsworth in the 1980s – and how that experience compares to launching one 40 years later? They addressed key issues including:

- What challenges, obstacles and opportunities have these business owners encountered along the way?
- How has their heritage helped influenced their business
- From Tooting to Selfridges Foodhall – how did the brothers behind Juici Jerk do it?
- What positive/negative impact has Covid 19 had on their business?

The panelists were:

**Charlie Phillips**, a pioneering Jamaican born photographer, known as a documenter of black London, whose snaps of celebrities including Omar Sharif, Gina Lollobrigida, Jimi Hendrix and Muhammad Ali featured in *Vogue*, *Life* and *Harper’s Bazaar* magazines and were exhibited at the V&A Museum, Black Cultural Archives and Tate Britain. Charlie also founded and ran *Smokey Joe’s*, a landmark Caribbean diner in Wandsworth, for over a decade.

**Neomi Bennett**, a practicing registered nurse, who served on the frontline during the height of the pandemic, who was the brains behind the life-saving product *Neo-slip*, which has developed into a highly successful enterprise. The multi award-winning *Neo-slips* prevent Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT), a condition from which 25,000 people die unnecessarily in the UK each year. Neomi is also founder of the grassroots organisation, *Equality 4 Black Nurses*.

**Troy and Jarrell Johnson**, inspirational siblings from Tooting, whose passion for cooking came from many years learning their mother’s delicious traditional Caribbean recipes. Adding a contemporary spin to the comfort food Londoners love, in 2017 the brothers launched *Juici Jerk* as a home cooking business, before venturing into street food vending. Earlier this year, they made history by becoming the first Caribbean food caterer to have a residency in the Selfridges food hall. [JuiciJerk.com](http://JuiciJerk.com)

All of them are legends in their own lifetime and we’re proud to say they’re from our Borough!



# CSR adds plant-based foods to thriving fresh-cut chip range

**Fruit, vegetable and fresh-cut chip specialist CSR & Sons has tapped into the growing market for plant-based meat alternatives**

Chris Roach has been trading out of New Covent Garden Market for nearly 30 years, having started out in the industry aged 14 helping out his uncle and then opening his first stall in Hampstead. He was soon supplying local restaurants, the business grew and a wholesale unit at the Market became a necessity.

CSR & Sons was supplying vegetables and sustainable fresh cut chips to a wide network of fish and chip shop and pub customers across London and the South East as The London Chip Company, before the plant-based alternatives entered the scene earlier this year.

The father and son team are the exclusive supplier of Triple F (Fylde Fresh and Fabulous) sustainable fresh-cut chips for London and the South-East Coast. Triple F has a biogas plant that breaks down all of its potato waste for re-use and also generates electricity that goes back into the

grid. It recycles every drop of water it uses in the production process for re-use on the farm. And every bag of chips has a barcode stamped on it, which allows anyone to trace that product right back to the field it came from.

"I first met the guy from Triple F in a chip shop I was serving in Hampstead about 10 years ago," remembers Chris. "They had been running their own vans into London, but I was serving a big group of pubs at the time and their product fitted in lovely. Quite quickly we were taking 4-5 tonnes of chips a week and that had risen to 25 tonnes in the period before the pandemic hit. We're building back stronger than ever and feeling confident in our position for the future.

The firm receives a delivery of Triple F chips every night and tries to clear that volume each trading day. "We want to ensure the product is sold at its freshest," says Alfie Roach. "The sustainable side of things is

important to our customers, of course, and that has been a big driver of the expansion. But more importantly, the quality of the chips is really excellent and the price is good. If it wasn't they wouldn't be buying them." CSR also buys from a Birmingham-based fresh cut chip manufacturer which specialises in different cuts of chip, from fries to Pont Neuf to Jenga.

## Plant-based move

Having established a market for customers keen on sustainable production and supply chains, the plant-based move was a natural progression. "Everyone needs to have vegetarian or plant-based options on their menu these days," Chris says, "and more often than not, they want it to look like meat."

CSR's supplier is Moving Mountains, which was founded by Simeon Van der Molen in 2014, after he was diagnosed



with high cholesterol and forced to cut out either meat and dairy from his diet. Disenchanted by the lack of tasty meat alternatives on the market, he decided to do something about it. For two years, he worked with a team of food consultants and technologists to create the UK's first plant-based 'bleeding' burger, which was an instant multinational success on its release. The product range has grown quickly from there; first with the introduction of hot dogs and then fish fingers, fish fillets, meatballs and much more.

All of those products are available to customers of CSR & Sons. "The vegan, plant-based option is a great addition to our range and as we do all the vegetables as well, we're giving a lot of our customers a full range now," Chris says.

While a large chunk of the business is based on delivery to customers from NCGM, both the fresh-cut chips and frozen plant-based products have really taken off on the buyers walk in the last six months. "I thought it might be really hard to change people's perception and get them to buy a frozen product, but we have turned the plant-based products into a profitable venture in less than six months," he says. The firm makes the deliveries in London itself, while regular customers include distributors covering the South East coast from West Sussex to Kent.

### Trading patterns

Trading patterns have certainly altered in recent months, as CSR & Son's customer base recovers at its own pace. "Since the pandemic everything is happening at the weekend" says Chris. "So Mondays and Tuesdays have become quiet here and it begins to pick up again on Wednesdays. Obviously, there are no tourists around and not many people in offices yet, but all things considered, we're doing OK, maybe 15% down on pre-Covid levels."

During Covid, CSR was one of the companies in the Market that donated huge volumes of product to various charities for vulnerable people and keyworkers around

London. It also quickly set up a home delivery service. "We had four vans out on the road every day and we concentrated on the area between the Market and where we live in the north of London, as well as some of south west London," Chris says. "Particularly during the first lockdown, when the supermarkets were really short of product, we were really busy. It was hard work, because finding staff wasn't easy, but looking back at it, it was very satisfying. There were so many older or vulnerable people who just hadn't seen anyone, and they were so grateful when one of our drivers turned up with their delivery and made the time for a chat."

Alfie adds that some elements of the day-to-day business remained relatively robust. "Fish and chip shops were one of the outlets that largely remained open during the lockdown period and that was a bit of a lifeline for us. Because we were doing the deliveries, we also got to see some of our chef customers who normally we wouldn't see very often in the Market. New customers were coming to us for the Tripe F range too, as some of their regional distributors had to shut their doors.

## “Everybody needs to have vegan or plant-based options on their menu these days

"We just kept things going really and without that desire to keep working through it all, I'm not sure we'd be where we are now. Whenever this is all over, I truly believe we will be in an even stronger position than we were before. It's just a matter of continuing to work hard and being flexible in an ever changing environment."

As the trend towards plant-based foods continues on its seemingly inexorable upward curve, CSR & Sons would certainly seem to have positioned itself very nicely indeed.

**Pictured above:** Chris, left, and Alfie, right, are building on their veg and fresh-cut chip offer with innovative plant-based meat alternatives

# Our commitment to the independent retail sector

Over the next few months, we are going to be underlining our commitment as a market to serving independent retailers of all shapes and sizes across London and the South East. They have always represented a huge and loyal customer base for us and our passion and commitment for serving them never waned, of course, but we feel that now's the time to let them know how much we still care and to make them aware of our pride in working alongside them to help their businesses grow in the coming years and decades.

New Covent Garden Market (NCGM) has become a very successful supplier to the hospitality sector and gained a deserved reputation as a fantastic catering market. That section of the trade represents the majority of the business done here now – we don't hide from that and our continued commitment to that customer base is unquestioned, but without our retail customers this would be a very different market.

As a group of diverse and experienced wholesalers, we've always known how important we are to the food supply chain. And during the most difficult stages of the pandemic, the value of wholesale markets, independent greengrocers and street market traders was put right back in the spotlight. When we were being told that the shelves in the major supermarket chains were empty, NCGM was not short of produce. Every day, local greengrocers and street markets were well stocked with phenomenal produce at very reasonable prices, fresh from us or from one of the other London wholesale markets.

Fruit and vegetable wholesalers in London and around the country collaborated magnificently – both commercially and charitably, with each other and with their customers – to ensure that people who were isolating and our incredible key workers had access to healthy, nutritious food when they most needed it. Without us, there were times when the food supply chain would have broken down and, while

“ The pandemic put the value of wholesalers, greengrocers and street market traders right back in the spotlight

it won't get remembered by everybody, I think we showed once again when the chips are down that the ingenuity, invention and flexibility of wholesalers and the people who buy from us is vital to the nation. That's not to mention our unmatched expertise, our heartfelt community spirit and our willingness to go as many extra miles as it takes when people need us.

I'm sure some of you will have heard me on LBC Radio – I call up whenever the subject is aired and give the support of our market community for the independent greengrocers and street traders across London.

We serve some brilliant street traders. They are the lifeblood of their communities – perhaps not quite to the extent they were when I started out, but no-one should ever underestimate their importance. They have changed dramatically in the last couple of decades. It's not about cheap or second class any more, it's about high quality and good value – their customers won't accept anything less and we wouldn't supply them anything less.

**Pictured:** Opposite page, top, Gary, centre, flanked by two of his team Tom and Barry, showing off some of their finest product during British Food Fortnight. They were joined by fellow traders and customers alike





**Wider perspective**  
 Through Market Times, we communicate with a wide and varied group of New Covent Garden Market's stakeholders. However, our targeted marketing and communications strategy for the next 12 months is focused on three key areas – independent retailers, catering and hospitality and young people.  
 We want to make people in all three of those categories more aware of what this market means (or could mean) to them, how vital wholesale markets still are to a fully functional food supply chain and last but certainly not least, the ways in which we will continue to support them in the months and years ahead.  
 New Covent Garden Market is a land of opportunity for suppliers and customers – we will be highlighting them and their businesses as well as those of traders internally. Our traders are also always on the look out for fresh faces and our communications will reach out to the next generation to shine a light for them on the possibilities of working here in a vibrant, diverse and rewarding environment.



I started as a fly pitcher in East Street Market in Elephant and Castle, when I left school at 13 to work with my dad and brother Kenny. There is nothing like getting up in the morning, going to market with a few bob in your pocket and trying to turn it into a few more bob. It's the best education you can get. I'm not the only one in our market with a background like that and there are plenty more who were greengrocers before a career at NCGM took their fancy.

It's what led me into NCGM, to set up my own business 30 years ago and to be the chairman of the Covent Garden Tenants Association (CGTA) for the last 15 of those years. The years as chairman of the CGTA have been eventful, you could say, as most of them have been served during the ongoing redevelopment programme. There have been some particularly tough times, but as we hopefully emerge from Covid for good and begin to see the light at the end of what was a

very long tunnel, I believe the market is back on track.

Our complete commitment and belief has convinced the government of the continued importance of our market and we'd like to play our part in encouraging local and national authorities to recognise the vital role independent retailers and street markets play in their communities and to support them accordingly.

I'd like to thank the tenants of NCGM, as well as many of the market's customers, for their support of the CGTA throughout my time in the chair to date. We have two and a half thousand people on site and as I touched on earlier, it's a very diverse community. But despite the fact that we are often competing with one another in a commercial sense, it is a fiercely united community on so many common grounds. Thanks to a lot of hard work on both sides, we've forged a better relationship with Covent Garden Market Authority now than we have had for many years, which will be hugely important as we move through the last few years of the redevelopment.

No-one ever thought it would be easy; not only is the market being redeveloped, but we're watching Nine Elms and Battersea being developed around us. It can be a little disruptive, but it's not stopped us trading. This area that we all love has massive potential and NCGM is right at the heart of it. We could not be in a better location to serve central London and the South East and I am confident that when the work is completed in a little over five years, this market will prosper and we'll be in an even better place to support our customers too.





# Waste Knot to the rescue

**Jess Latchford created Waste Knot as a revolutionary way of getting surplus veg out of farmers' fields and into chefs' kitchens. The business has found that its concerns around the problem of food waste is widely shared. It has worked with several New Covent Garden Market traders and we asked Jess to explain more about her work and how more wholesalers and their customers can get involved**

**Pictured above:** Jess out in the field with one of her British grower partners

**Tell us a bit about yourself, your background and what inspired you to set up Waste Knot?**

I've worked in the fresh produce industry for around 15 years, having started in sales and marketing for Secretts Direct. From day one, I could see that were problems in terms of the contractually obligated specifications that we had to work to and the fact that a lot of really good produce didn't find its way to the consumer.

I knew then that there was an increasing demand amongst corporate catering clients for partnerships and initiatives that allowed them to meet their Corporate and Social Responsibility requirements. It went past being a tick-box exercise and quickly got to the 'we have to do something' stage and that's what inspired me to set up Waste Knot.

**What is Waste Knot trying to achieve?**

We are waging a war on waste by getting high quality, surplus fresh produce from farmers' fields into chefs' kitchens, across the hospitality sector. Our ambition is to prevent food waste whilst making sure the farmer is paid, receiving a commercial value for the produce at the same time as helping the hospitality sector to enhance its sustainability credentials.

We work alongside the traditional way of doing things; rescuing product that would otherwise go to waste and give chefs the challenge and reward of making great food from seasonal ingredients.

We offer single lines and mixed boxes. Most of what we rescue is made up of the familiar staples, but we also love finding a use for the parts of the plant that are usually discarded and discovering new and unusual crops (cauliflower leaves and collard hearts, for example).

We're lucky to know several farmers who get a similar kick out of trying something new, and we try to share their discoveries to spread the word about innovations in growing and harvesting.

**How did it start?**

Our first customer was a large corporate caterer whose CSR director saw me speak at the London Produce Show and Conference in 2014 and approached me afterwards to discuss how we might work together to help with their CSR initiatives. We started providing them with mixed boxes and I'm still working with them to this day. While the last couple of years have thrown up a few

challenges, we've worked together to adapt to their needs.

We work with lots of other catering suppliers and in New Covent Garden Market, we work most extensively with Nature's Choice. They have been on board since day one and initially that was because I knew commercial director, Vernon [Mascarenhas]. We've got a brilliant relationship; Vernon completely believes in what Waste Knot is trying to achieve and is committed to making our partnership work for his customers and also for Nature's Choice.

**What products do you supply?**

Our products are, of course, all British and seasonal and we tend to work with hardier products that by nature have a good shelf life – squash, apples, pears, asparagus, rhubarb etc... We are talking to berry growers about processing surplus berries as frozen or pureed next year, which would be an exciting departure and another good addition to the range.

**How does your model work?**

Essentially, the business model is that we piggyback on the deliveries of our partners. We don't have our own fleet of vans, as that would create food miles and increase CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. No Waste Knot produce ever goes out to a customer on its own; it will always be on a vehicle that is already delivering to the same customer. So, with Nature's Choice as an example, they are able to offer their customer rescued fruit and vegetables alongside their daily orders and no customer can order rescued produce without having



“ We work alongside the traditional way of doing things; rescuing product that would otherwise go to waste and giving chefs the challenge and reward of making great food from seasonal ingredients.



that initial order in place. It is creating more business for them, otherwise we would be undoing some of the positive work by putting more vehicles out on the road.

It also wouldn't work unless Waste Knot is involved in the whole process and we are totally transparent with each other. With Nature's Choice, Vernon's understanding of what we're trying to achieve, a great line of communication, a rock-solid relationship and a real desire to make it work allows us to make things happen in a way that everyone benefits from. It's never been a box-ticking exercise for them and that's brilliant.

We're unique in the way that we work and one thing that I know for sure is that we're more transparent than other companies. Because of our relationship with growers, I can tell anyone who grew the product and where, who harvested it and when, why it was harvested at that time and why it became surplus to requirements. All of our product is rescued – we don't grow it for our customers – and no-one else is able to supply surplus fruit and veg to anything like the same volume or quality as we do.

**What would you say to other wholesalers who might like to work with you?**

We're always more than happy to have a conversation with wholesalers who are interested in stocking Waste Knot and having it as an essential part of their CSR initiatives. There are plenty of customers out there looking for support in meeting their own sustainability aims – this helps them do that without really changing anything. Getting the communication right to the front-line chefs is important, of course, and we'll always help with that too. Surplus product might not always turn up in exactly the format they're used to – it's produce that is fresh from the field; muddy, bumpy and wholesome – just the way UK produce should be.

Nature's Choice makes its customers aware of what products are available and what they will be able to order over the next few weeks. Our experience shows that this approach encourages many chefs to adapt menus to incorporate rescued surplus, reconnecting with nature's seasonal cycles and discovering new ingredients.

**You're a few years down the line from launch now - do you feel you're making a difference and what are your objectives moving forward?**

I do feel like we're making a difference and during the pandemic when hospitality businesses were forced to close, Waste Knot became FareShare's biggest fruit and veg supplier. Our main driver is to help people; be it the UK agriculture industry or those benefitting from FareShare's incredible work. Fortunately, we already had the logistics in place to be able to make a difference quickly and efficiently. Being able to shift our focus to supply them in such large volumes during the lockdowns is in my opinion our biggest achievement to date.

It's not just the fact that we're making sure that less produce is being wasted, but we're also having a positive impact on climate change and environment protection. The less food that is grown for human consumption, but then burnt, thrown away or fed to animals the better.

There is still far too much fresh produce being wasted and a lot of businesses who want to back British agriculture and reduce the environmental impact of their supply chain. They know that whatever changes they make to do things the right way will be worth it in the long run and we can help in their journey getting there.

Surplus produce is no less valuable or worthwhile than its Class 1 counterpart and we will continue until every overlooked fruit and vegetable is able to find its rightful place. I'd love to work with more companies at New Covent Garden to this end. Just get in touch and we can see how we may be able to work together.



# Showing our support for British growers

New Covent Garden Market is an official partner of British Food Fortnight, which this year ran from September 18th through to October 3rd.



British Food Fortnight (BFF) is the largest annual national, food celebration organised by Love British Food, during the traditional time of harvest festival, and invites communities and organisations across the country to celebrate the diverse and delicious, high-quality food produced by British growers and manufacturers.

This year was the 20th BFF – it was first held in response to the Foot and Mouth crisis and the impact it had on British farming. The aim throughout the years has always been to boost domestic consumption of British food and, in doing so, to create a robust home market that gives farmers and

producers the confidence to continue to farm and produce quality food.

The list of supporters is wide and varied – from schools, hospitals and care homes, to restaurants, hotels, supermarket chains and independent retailers.

This year saw many, many more organisations sign up to celebrate, says Love British Food founder Alexia Robinson. “There has never been a more important time for us to focus on British soils for stability in our food supply. British Food Fortnight is a proven strategy for promotion in putting British food first, across both the public and private sectors,” she adds. “With the British public’s appetite for British food and drink growing all the time, interest in this year’s event hit record highs.”

Several traders in the fruit and vegetable market celebrated BFF and we took a batch of images of seasonal produce around the Market to share widely through our social media feeds and through the wider media. A series of articles also appeared in Love British Foods online newsletter The Source, which has more than a million subscribers, highlighting the value of the Market to the British food supply chain and, in particular, to our customer base in London and the South East of England.

A set of beautiful posters featuring British fresh produce appeared around the market for the duration of the annual celebration and through active engagement with other supporters, we ensured that the NCGM message was heard loud and clear.

“While we of course sell world class, seasonal fresh produce from all corners of the globe, the Market is extremely proud of the relationships we have with the British growing community,” says Rebecca Barrett, head of strategy, partnerships and communications at Covent Garden Market Authority. “Many of the businesses here have been working with the same suppliers for several decades, through generations of families on both sides, and there are also



new suppliers selling into the Market every year.

“There is always excitement when the British season for any product begins – the demand for homegrown fruit and vegetables remains very high from our customers across the retail and hospitality sectors, and of course from their customers too. We’re proud to be able to support British Food Fortnight, as it reflects our passion for what we do, and we feel our support is mutually beneficial, as it allows us to showcase the market to a huge and very targeted audience.”



**Pictured:** DDP Ltd’s vintage porter’s barrow was out in full splendour at customer Coughlans, as the bakery showcased the incredible range of British produce it uses as ingredients in its delicious baked goods. Posters were placed around the Market to let people know what was fresh and in-season as they looked for all things British



# Please help to keep the market clean, tidy & safe



- Max. 20mph (5mph in car parks)
- Follow all road signs
- Close HGV doors when driving
- Slow down & stop for pedestrians at crossings & **rainbow** crossings



- Only to be operated by trained drivers
- Wear high-vis & protective shoes
- Be aware of pedestrians & vehicles
- Don't stand on fork or overload
- Annual Thorough Examinations



- Up-to-date Fire Risk Assessments
- Fire equipment is for emergencies only (not for use as door stops)
- Report damaged equipment immediately—it could save lives
- Keep fire exits clear at all times



- Use the bins to recycle food waste, cardboard & plastic
- Use the toilet facilities provided
- Take steps to reduce COVID risk
- No smoking, alcohol, drugs or fireworks on site

# Happy Customer



David Jackson runs Staines Farm Shop on Whitstable High Street. He is a regular customer at New Covent Garden Market, driving in four nights a week (Sunday, Monday, Thursday and Friday) to walk the market and select premium fresh produce for his own shop and a group of customers in the idyllic town on the Kent coast.

He has been a regular face at the market for four decades. "I first came to the market for my own business on January 6, 1983," says David (Jacko to most in the market). "I'd been to the market prior to that when I worked as a Saturday lad for a guy with a market stall. When I started up on my own, aged 17, I'd saved up to get a van, borrowed a bit of money off my dad and soon I had market stalls in Canterbury, Ramsgate, Herne Bay and Whitstable.

"The market stalls stood me in good stead for quite some years – it only really changed when they changed the Sunday trading laws. The only places that used to be open on a Sunday were the markets; they were the life of all retail really. Between 24 and 30 coaches used to arrive at Ramsgate every day, for example – it was huge! But when the markets began to dwindle a bit, I picked up a few restaurant deliveries and I'm very fortunate that I supply most of Whitstable High Street as well as a couple of good local schools," he says.

"Staines Farm Shop already existed and the guy who had it used to buy out of New Spitalfields Market. I didn't think he was doing a particularly good job and I took on the name above the door eight years ago."

David certainly puts the miles in – walking the whole of buyers walk every night he's in to find product that meets his specifications. "I will buy from whoever has got the best quality on the day. There isn't a single firm in the market that

I do not use and the good thing is, because they know me so well, everyone knows the standards I need and they will tell me if they don't have it on any given day," he explains.

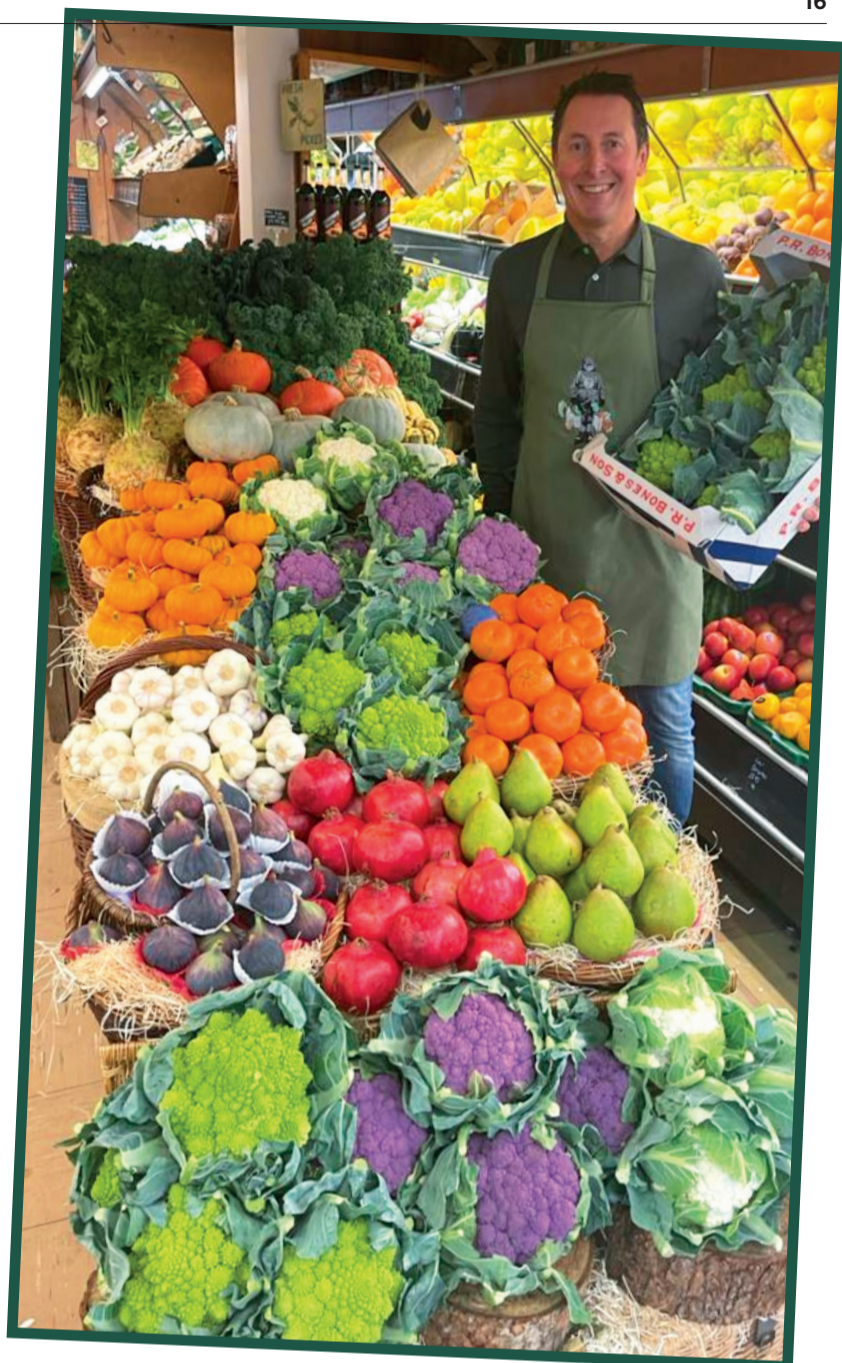
"I buy the majority of my product from New Covent Garden. In Whitstable, I'm at the heart of the Garden of England and from my shop I can be at one of the local strawberry farms in six minutes. They pick every day, so it makes sense to buy from them during their season. It's also one thing less to carry back from the market and I have a lot to fit into my van! I'm also blessed with local cherry, raspberry and asparagus growers – all less than 20 minutes away from me. If it is grown on my doorstep, I'll buy it here. Having said that, Matt at P&I sells Chris Bones's caulis and he's in Broadstairs, which isn't far from me. But I just don't have the time to get down to Chris these days, so it's as easy for me to get it in the market."

What is it that keeps David coming back to the market after all these years? "New Covent Garden gives me the capacity to provide huge variety to my customers. Previously, the owner of the shop stocked somewhere between 60 and 70 lines of fruit and veg – my old market stalls used to specialise in nine or 10. I looked at all the shelves and thought 'how am I going to fill them?'. At the market though, there is always something new, fresh and inspirational and I now stock somewhere in the region of 200 different lines of fruit and vegetables," he says.

"The customers love it. Gone are the days where they just asked for 'a tomato'. We now

stock 10 or more types of tomato and they really buy into the variety on offer," adds David. "I try all sorts – a bit of snake fruit or galangal, I've got customers who'll try anything weird and wonderful and it's great to be able to introduce it to them. Obviously, people's palates have altered as they've travelled more extensively, but if they've seen Jamie Oliver cooking with something on the TV the night before, you can bet your bottom dollar we'll sell out of it by 11am the next morning!"

Coming to market is a commitment he's happy to make, and one that's much appreciated by the traders, but what's David's routine? "The alarm goes off at 9pm, I have half an hour for a shower, a cup of tea and some toast, check for any late orders, and then I'm on the road. By the time I get back to the shop, unload and oversee the main orders, I'll have done the best part of 10 hours. Ideally, I can leave it to the team then, get home for a couple of hours sleep and get the rest of the day to myself," he says.



## Market Times – a sustainable future

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