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A local mum and daughter pass the Market's fabulous new feature





It's been a pretty warm few months since the last *Market Quarterly* was published and I'm pleased to report that NCGM and its tenants continue to scorch a trail as well.

The Market received another well-deserved piece of peer recognition when it was named the Non-Retail Supplier of the Year at the Festival of Fresh Awards. This reflects the tireless work that has gone on over the last two or three decades to align the product and service offer here to the ever-evolving demands of customers across the country's catering, foodservice and hospitality sectors. Every wholesaler and catering supplier in the fruit and vegetable market can be proud of their contribution to the Market being given this accolade – by recognising the direction of travel of their customer networks and adapting their approach to go with it, they have ensured that NCGM remains an invaluable asset to food supply and security for London and the South East.

As this issue went to press, CGMA published the Market's annual financial report, for the year to March 2026, and that too underlines the progress being made by traders at the UK's leading wholesale market site. For the first time, the combined turnover of the 130 businesses based here topped £1 billion, which is a milestone worth marking. The last few years have been challenging in so many ways for the firms operating here, as they have been for the Market's suppliers and customers, so to register a level of turnover that was 15.5% higher than in the previous 12-month period has to be seen as a positive. We ensured that the wider media was aware of this landmark figure – we know what this place can and does do, but it's so vital that we do everything we can to highlight the value of this site to as many external 'stakeholders' as possible.

On the front page is a snapshot of the new feature installed on the façade of the Market, there for anyone travelling down Nine Elms Lane to see. With a new tagline The fresh face of Nine Elms at its centre, this fantastic piece of art brings together a very large bunch of Clive Bournsell's images as one huge photographic celebration of the people of NCGM. If you haven't been to see it yet, please do – it's been there for three months already and the quality of each image still stands out as though it was put up yesterday. The artwork will be there until that part of the Market is knocked down at the end of the redevelopment programme and serves as a link with the local community and an advert for the diverse range of jobs on offer within this great community.

Inside this *Market Quarterly*, there is the usual heady mix of the latest news, fascinating features and the innovation that is shaping this Market's future. I hope you are all enjoying the weather, managing to stay cool and that you have a fantastic end to the summer.

Enjoy the read.

Tommy

Tommy Leighton,
Market Press Officer



Clive delights at fresh take on his work

As you will have noticed on this issue's front page, New Covent Garden Market has a new feature and a new tagline – The fresh face of Nine Elms, which showcases the Market community through the photography of Clive Bournsell.

Clive's work from the most recent two decades of his 58 years snapping the life and times of the Market was the subject of an exhibition at NCGM last year: *Wholesale Market Life Through the Lens of Clive Bournsell*. Many of those images are now on display in both the fruit and vegetable and flower markets, but there are also around 280 photos (and more than 400 people of the Market) on display on the exterior wall of the Flower Market, for everyone passing by on Nine Elms Lane to see.

On seeing the wall for the first time himself, Clive said: "It's wonderful, if a little intimidating. Talk about having your name up in lights. It looks incredibly impressive. I know, of course, that I have been taking photos of this Market for a very long time, but just seeing this many displayed in such glorious technicolour is wonderful and I can't believe I've done all that work!"

Giles Roddy, NCGM's Communications Director, said: "These photos are illustrative of the wonderful work Clive has done for so long, for which the Market is extremely thankful. They are at once poignant and celebratory, as there are people featured who are sadly no longer with us

and many more who have played, or are still playing, huge roles in ensuring New Covent Garden remains at the top of the wholesale market tree in this country. They also tell the story of a fantastic community at the Market and hopefully convey the pride and passion that the fruit, veg and flower traders have in their home, their suppliers, customers, family and friends. Last, but definitely not least, they reach out to our local community, of which we are also proud to be a part, and to anyone who is looking for a new career option with one of the thriving firms here."

For Clive, the photos represent the relationship he has built with the people of the Market since 1968, a relationship that enables him to capture the moments, the emotions and the character of the Market as one of the family. "I'd like to thank the Market's community for accepting me; what really is lovely is that these portraits to the lens are the result of me having no barrier with the person I am shooting," he said.

"There is mutual respect, understanding and, I dare say love between the camera and the people, and me behind that camera."

Above: Clive surveys faces he's snapped in the last 20 years

Premier marks 27 years of success

Premier Foods Wholesale (PFW) celebrated its 27th anniversary in June, marking another milestone in a journey that began at New Covent Garden Market in 1999.

Founded by Jason Tanner and Roger Garber, the business began as a fresh fruit supplier called Premier Fruits, built on a passion for quality produce.

What started as a Market-based operation has grown into one of the UK's leading independent family-run fresh and frozen food suppliers.

PFW has evolved alongside the changing needs of the food industry, expanding into vegetables, salads, exotic produce, prepared foods and frozen products. The business has maintained BRC Global Standards AA accreditation year after year and continued to invest in its facilities, operations and people.

Today, Premier Foods Wholesale employs more than 200 people, sources products from over 30 countries and handles more than one million packages annually. In recent years, the business has invested in its NCGM headquarters with a modern office fit-out including a gym and golf simulator to support its growing team, while also launching its own packhouse operation in Rwanda and Tanzania.

The company has also developed closer relationships with growers across key sourcing regions to help ensure quality and continuity of supply for customers throughout the year.

Reflecting on the anniversary, Jason Tanner said: "I'm incredibly proud of how far we've come. From a single market stand to a national supplier, our growth has only been possible because of the dedication of our team, the loyalty of our customers and the support of our suppliers."



NCGM scoops national award

New Covent Garden Market (NCGM) was named the UK’s best Non-Retail Supplier of the Year at the Festival of Fresh event, held annually to celebrate progress and creativity in the fresh produce and food sectors.

Judges highlighted the Market’s ‘continued reputation for premium produce’ alongside its ‘impressive redevelopment’ and the Market’s long history of serving the capital’s restaurants and foodservice businesses with top-quality fresh fruit and vegetables. The judges, editors of the trade publication Fresh Produce Journal, also praised the Covent Garden Market Authority’s (CGMA) ‘tireless efforts to promote NCGM and celebrate its traders’.

Speaking after the announcement, NCGM’s General Manager Robert McAuliffe said: “This award is testament

Above: Fred Searle and Chris White of FPJ present the award to two of NCGM’s leading catering distributors Rob Burton, of Rushton’s, and Paul Murphy, of Yes Chef

to the hard work, creativity, and dedication of the people here. We’re incredibly proud to be recognised among so many respected peers, and we see this as motivation to continue pushing boundaries within the fresh sector.”

NCGM was also exhibiting at Festival of Fresh alongside New Spitalfields and Western International as London Wholesale Markets, informing the fresh produce world of our combined value to growers from the UK and abroad who want a direct and profitable route into retail and catering customers in London and beyond.

The event was held in Barway, Cambridgeshire at the home of G’s, a family-owned fresh produce grower and supplier which has a long-standing distribution relationship with NCGM-based wholesaler P&I Fruits.

British Florist Association visits Flower Market

Editor of the British Florist Association (BFA) magazine Emma Alexander enjoyed a visit to the Flower Market, meeting wholesalers including Bryan Porter of Porter’s Foliage (pictured with Emma).

It was her first visit to Nine Elms since the Flower Market moved to its temporary location as part of the site’s redevelopment. “You can feel the passion that everyone working at the Flower Market has for their clients,” said Emma, adding: “As a trained florist myself, it’s such a wonderful place to visit. You can almost feel the Market’s heartbeat and it’s such a hive of knowledge.”



Emma writes for a diverse readership of retail, event florists, and industry professionals across the UK. Bryan said it’s vital to be part of such a diverse and helpful community of florists around the county. “The floristry industry is constantly changing, so we need to ensure as wholesalers that we continue to bend with the wind and react to the challenges we face,” he explained. “The BFA is growing in both membership and influence, so I’m looking for growers, wholesalers and florists to continue to work together so the entire floristry supply chain remains successful.”

Influential US group tours Market

Learning more about the UK’s leading wholesale market was the aim when 25 produce industry professionals from the USA visited New Covent Garden Market for a whistle-stop early-hours tour.

The International Fresh Produce Association (IFPA) is a US-based trade group that represents companies from every segment of the global fresh produce and floral supply chain. Covent Garden Market Authority Chair Wanda Goldwag OBE and General Manager Robert McAuliffe welcomed IFPA CEO Cathy Burns and her group, embarking on a visit to the new Buyers’ Walk in the Fruit and Vegetable Market, followed by a tour of the Flower Market.

The IFPA was in London for its annual European AGM and visited the Market to see the latest developments here and learn more about the UK wholesale market industry and its continuing integral role in the food and floral supply chains. Buyers’ Walk was winding down for the night,



although several firms had kept their full flashes out to ensure that the visitors viewed the Market in full operational dress. They also enjoyed seeing a busy Flower Market and talked to several traders before heading back into central London for a day of meetings.

“It was an insightful view into fresh produce and floral supply chains,” said Miriam Miller Wolk, Chief Membership Officer at the IFPA. “It was an inspiring start to the morning and so encouraging to see how vibrant and vital produce distribution is in London. We were very impressed and can’t wait to see what the future has in store.”

YOUR LINK TO OUR PAST

We often get asked for back issues of Market Quarterly (the newspaper formerly known as Market Times). Every one of our previous 30 issues is available on the Market website – newcoventgardenmarket.com – via a link in the Site Map list at the bottom of each page. You can also scan this QR code if you have the immediate itch to access news, features and interviews from the last seven years at New Covent Garden Market!



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



James turns Market plants into Badminton Gold Medal

Plant wholesaler Ilo Bloom has teamed up with event florist Plants By There to create a Gold-Medal winning installation at the first-ever Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Badminton Flower Show – and it’s all based on classic theatre show *Moulin Rouge! The Musical*.

Badminton is best known as the location for annual horse trials, but the South Gloucestershire town has now also hosted a RHS flower show, replacing Hampton Court for this year and introducing fresh formats.

“I was competing in the ‘houseplant terrarium’ category, a completely new format where all exhibitors are given a similar structure, but within that you can really push creativity and fashion something unique,” said Plants By There founder James Whiting.

Having won a Gold Medal at this year’s RHS Chelsea Flower Show, also with the support of Ilo Bloom’s owner Damian Waloch, James collaborated with Damian again to deliver a concept-led exhibit built entirely on plants sourced from NCGM.

In a move that reflects the growing convergence between live events, theatre and floristry, James secured a unique sponsorship from *Moulin Rouge! The Musical*, aligning his exhibit with the



West End production’s visual identity. It also celebrated the musical’s fifth anniversary in London and the 25th anniversary of the Baz Luhrmann film that inspired the stage show.

“For this kind of project, NCGM is essential,” said James. “You need quality, range and the ability to pull everything together quickly, and that’s exactly what the Market delivers. The sponsors didn’t know what plants I would be using, but they understood the colour palette and the mood and they trusted me to interpret that.

“For event work, you need reliability and breadth of choice,” he added. “The Flower Market is where we go because you can get everything you need, at the quality you need, often at very short notice. That’s so important.”

FRESH AT FIVE:

Fresh Union Group celebrated its 5-year anniversary, the latest milestone on a remarkable journey from a startup launched during the COVID-19 pandemic to one of the fastest-growing businesses at New Covent Garden Market.

Fresh Union was built with a clear vision: to modernise and strengthen food distribution for the UK hospitality sector through reliability, service and strong sourcing relationships. Today, the group is a 70-employee food business operating across fresh produce, frozen foods, dairy, dry goods, and prepared ingredients, supplying restaurants and hospitality operators across London, the M25, Brighton, Cambridge and Birmingham.

“Our growth has always been built on relationships,” said Co-Founder Oscar Gomes. “From day one, we focused on supporting chefs and operators during some of the most difficult moments for hospitality. The growth we’ve achieved reflects the trust our customers place in us every single day.”

AFRICAN WOMEN EXPERIENCE NCGM:

Eight delegates from the Africa Women in Food & Agribusiness Summit toured the Market, in June. Nana Adjoa Sifa was among them. “For our delegates who came from Africa, the visit was one of the highlights of their time in London,” she said. “Some were fascinated by the scale



and for others history, and impact of the Market. The visit brought to life the critical role the Market plays in our value chain and the importance of efficient supply chains, strong market infrastructure, and the people who work tirelessly behind the scenes to keep food moving every day.”

As an organisation committed to building stronger agrifood systems and creating opportunities for women in food and agribusiness across Africa and the UK, Nana said experiencing the Market in person was especially valuable. “We left with a deeper appreciation of the Market’s legacy and the team.”

SIX OF THE BEST:

Bevington Salads hosted a blind tasting session for Good Food magazine – as six strawberry ‘sommeliers’ judged six different berries on six characteristics.

The judges were: Cheryl Cohen – Queen of Markets; Sarah Mooney - Sauce of Love; Lina Saad - TV chef and author; Alice Shields – Good Food; Paul Murphy - Yes Chef; and Gary Marshall, Bevington Salads. The varieties were: Florice, Malling Ace, Malling Allure, Sonsation, Malling Centenary and Christine. The non-Market judges left enthused and more knowledgeable about strawberries than when they arrived – and Sarah got the ingredient she needed to finish off the pavlova she had baked the day before!

ARTISTIC IMPRESSION:

The colour and vibrancy of our Flower Market was captured by a group of artists from the Royal College of Art (RCA), who celebrated the beauty of flowers with an art installation at the RCA’s annual summer exhibition.

Held at the RCA’s Battersea Bridge campus, the RCA 2026 showcase highlighted the work of more than 1,600 postgraduate students.

“We were really interested in the Market space, looking at the mechanics of trade and the Market’s aesthetics, photographing some of the comings and goings using pinhole photography,” explained the RCA’s Aynur Abutalibova, who worked alongside fellow artists Ruth Beale, Amy Feneck, and Jelisaweta Noack to bring their vision to life.

They used specially adapted digital cameras to shoot pinhole images to capture uniquely blurred shots that created beautiful impressions, rather than specific detail.

Mercato makes impact

Andrey and Elena Deminska are pleased with the impact their Saturday morning retail offer on Buyers' Walk has had so far - and they’d love to see more traders across New Covent Garden Market join in over time.

Mercato Battersea runs from 9am to 1pm each Saturday, alongside the units of La Sovrana. For now, much of the range is top-of-the-range Italian produce, and plenty of local and London residents have been making the pilgrimage each week to buy the best of the best. The hope is that, in time, more of the Market’s traders will add their own high-quality products to the mix, so there’s an even broader choice for returning customers.

Andrey said: “The response has been really encouraging. We’ve had a lot of customers coming through - some of them buying in serious quantity. The concept works. We’ve been leafletting the area, and now it would be great to see the range grow.”

He added that the potential upside isn’t only theirs. With Mercato putting real weight behind social media and drawing new footfall to Nine Elms, the attention will naturally spread to the businesses around it. “The more we shine a light on what’s here, the more people get to discover these traders,” he said. “That can potentially bring fresh interest on the wholesale side too, not just retail - and a trader can pick up that profile without changing a thing about how they work.”

“For over 50 years everyone has thought of this purely as a wholesale market, and that idea won’t change overnight - we’ll melt it down gradually,” he explained. “Any trader who’d like to get involved is very welcome to, in whatever way suits them and we are happy to support.”



Obituary

Paul Emanuel

Paul Emanuel, who enjoyed a long and successful career in Covent Garden’s old and new, died in June, four days short of his 80th birthday.

On leaving school – Dover College, Paul was given the choice of going his own way or heading straight into the Market to work with his father Joe Emanuel. He took the latter option and so began a near 60-year association with wholesale market life.

He first worked for the family’s wholesale firm Joseph I Emanuel, on the floor alongside his brother Lewis. When Joe passed away in 1983, Lewis and Paul founded Lewis Emanuel and Sons, and whilst Lewis ran the import arm of the business, Paul remained on the floor running the wholesale side. An accomplished and respected salesman Paul ran the wholesale business until 1991, when he moved ‘upstairs’ to focus on not only supplying wholesalers but also supermarkets. Lewis sadly died in 1996, when Paul took the reins for the business.

He long held the nickname ‘The Tom and Cue Man’, as the biggest seller of cucumbers and tomatoes in the Market. In 1998, he sold Lewis Emanuel and Sons to the Poupart group, left the Market and began working alongside Jonathan Olins to grow Poupart Imports, which focused on sales to the entire UK wholesale market network. Paul’s cousin Philip Emanuel, himself a major figure at NCGM, went to work alongside Paul at Poupart, a partnership that flourished until Paul retired in December 2019.

Outside of work, Paul was a keen sportsman. He represented England schoolboys at shot put and also played rugby, hockey, and cricket, as well as following all sports and in particular being a fan of Wimbledon Football Club.

He met his wife Patricia in the old Covent Garden, where she was a cashier at NatWest Bank, and they were married for 49 years. They had two sons, Thomas and Richard, who gave them three grandchildren, Freddie, Isabella, and Joseph. Paul fell ill early in his retirement and tragically he and Pat also lost Richard last year. Paul died peacefully in his sleep on June 30th.

Rest in peace, Paul.



English Flower Hub opens at Market

A new grower-led flower hub at New Covent Garden Flower Market is helping to strengthen the connection between London's florists and English-grown flowers - creating a potentially valuable and expandable route to market for small-scale British growers



Launched by Cissy Bullock, Ellie Hunt and Ellie Canon through their wholesale collective Stem Union, the new collection point at the Market enables florists to source flowers and foliage from multiple English growers through a single ordering platform and collect them from Charlotte, who is here in Nine Elms each Thursday morning. The initiative is designed to address one of the long-standing challenges facing the resurgent national flower-growing sector: how to dovetail the output of fragmented, small-scale production with the requirements of professional florists and the wholesale trade.

The launch in April represented a significant milestone for the English flower industry at a time when demand is increasing. According to the founders, more florists across the country are seeking seasonal, locally grown blooms, but inconsistent supply and logistical barriers have often made sourcing sufficient quantities difficult.

Stem Union was established near Cambridge to coordinate supplies from growers across Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, Essex and Suffolk. Initially, the founders expected demand to come primarily from local florists. However, they quickly discovered considerable interest from London buyers eager to access a wider range of English-grown flowers. This growing demand from the capital ultimately led to the decision to establish a weekly collection point at the country's leading Flower Market.



"London florists are desperate for more English-grown flowers, but access has long been the problem," explained Cissy Bullock. "This model removes a major barrier by bringing dozens of small growers together and giving florists a single, reliable place to collect their orders."

The hub currently represents around 16 growers, ranging from micro-scale specialists producing unusual foliage to larger flower farms. Through an online platform, growers upload their weekly availability, florists place orders between Sunday and Tuesday, flowers are harvested on Wednesday and are available for collection in London from 4am on Thursday morning, reaching florists within 24 hours of being cut.

For growers, the hub – one of several popping up around the UK – offers an important solution to a structural problem that has historically limited growth. Many flower farms struggle to meet the volume requirements needed to support traditional wholesale relationships. By combining supply from multiple growers, the hub creates a coordinated offering that can satisfy professional buyers while allowing individual farms to retain control over their production.

"One of the biggest barriers to scaling British flower production has always been access, both for florists trying to source enough homegrown product for their larger jobs and for growers trying to reach wholesale markets in a sustainable way," she added. "Hubs like this are a practical way of professionalising the supply chain and giving the end customer easier access."

"New Covent Garden is where florists expect to find the best and most interesting flowers," said Cissy. "Re-establishing it as a hub for British-grown product, even in a small, practical way to begin with, feels like joining the dots."



Importantly, the founders stress that the hub is not intended to compete with existing traders. Instead, it focuses on specialist and seasonal products that would typically have been sold directly from growers to florists rather than through conventional wholesale routes. By operating as a collection point for pre-orders, the initiative seeks to complement existing businesses while broadening the overall appeal of the Market.

There may also be wider benefits for New Covent Garden itself. Every florist visiting the hub to collect an order becomes a potential customer for the Market's wholesalers. As Cissy pointed out, customers collecting flowers are also walking through the Market and discovering additional products and suppliers.

The initiative has been welcomed by the wider industry. Amber Cottam, Operations Manager for Flowers from the Farm, described the launch as "a significant milestone for British-grown flowers" and highlighted the rapid growth of grower-led wholesale hubs across the UK. She said the model is creating stronger routes to market that benefit growers, buyers and the future of the British cut flower industry.

For New Covent Garden Flower Market, the arrival of the hub reinforces its position at the centre of the UK's flower trade. For English growers, it creates new commercial opportunities and improved access to one of the country's largest concentrations of floral buyers. And for florists, it offers a practical way to source fresher, locally grown flowers from a broad network of producers.

Cissy said: "We're still in the early days of the revival of British flower growing. But if New Covent Garden can once again be a real hub for English flowers, that's a win for growers, florists and the Market itself."

Top left: Cissy and the two Ellies - founders of Stem Union

Fab five for Field to Fork

Five years ago, Field to Fork started operating from Block B of the Market with a borrowed van and two orders totalling £300. Today, it's a £15 million business working out of one of the most modern facilities in London. Founder and owner Danny Wallis takes us through his relatively short journey from Lockdown start-up to sizeable catering supplier



Danny first started working at New Covent Garden Market (NCGM) 25 years ago, as a driver. In his own words, he's done a little bit of everything in that quarter of a century. "I worked in the warehouse, packed and then moved into sales," he says. "I worked for Linkclass initially and then went to Sheringham's. I did leave the Market for a year to work for Fresh Direct, in Cambridge, which turned out to be a bit of a year's work experience as it wasn't really for me, working for a big national company."

"It was one of the guys there though that first put me into sales. He said, 'you've got the gift of the gab' and I did sales three days a week and drove the big lorries three days a week. He wasn't daft, I was on the lorries on the heavy days!"

It turned out he was right though and Danny performed very well in sales, very quickly. "So, when I came back to the Market, it was with Linkclass, in sales," he adds. "I then went back to Sheringham's for six years and started Field to Fork, by mistake. One of my customers said someone had offered to go to the Market, pick up the fruit and veg for him and the deal was quite a bit cheaper than what Sheringham's could do. I thought, 'there's a model there'. I said to Peter [Sheringham] at the time that we couldn't compete with the margins the customer were talking about and he agreed - so I bought a van and started doing it myself."

That van soon became five vans and the business grew to the point of it being amalgamated into another NCGM firm, Pavits. When Lockdown kicked in, Danny became national sales director for The Menu Partners [TMP]. I enjoyed that role, but still thought that there was room for a little guy in this Market and wanted to give it another go," he recalls. "Looking back it was quite a brave decision; we were mortgaged up to the eyeballs. This time, I borrowed a van - from Jason Tanner [at TMP] as it happens. On day one, I had two orders from customers that came to £300. Even that felt good - it was quite a nice easy start. But our niche was

that we were coming to the Market, buying all the products and turning them for our customers.

"Even when we'd grown to three vans, we were doing a fair bit of that work in the car park, often in the rain, going to the dairy and all the different suppliers, putting it all together, and making it look the part. We did the 20-hour days and all the rest of it, but the customers were coming to us as opposed to us chasing them - I think mainly because we were just a little bit different."

With its foundations rooted, the firm began to expand rapidly. Danny says: "Our first unit at the Market was in the old B row; just a box with a fridge in it to be honest, and we soon outgrew that. Then, when Rushton's moved into their new units, we took on their old bays, and we soon outgrew that too. It's sad that Allison Risebro isn't here anymore, but the units that they vacated gave us an opportunity to move and grow again last year. I'm sure we're going to outgrow this too!"

At the time of talking, Field to Fork had only been in Unit 335-336 in the new B Block of the Fruit and Vegetable Market for a little over six months, but the firm has taken the chance to customise the units to meet its specific requirements. "We have moved it around to suit us. We've just become more efficient; effectively, more space has brought greater efficiency," he explains. "We can pack on a Sunday here, whereas we couldn't do that before because of other things happening in the Market. We're pretty much 24/7 now; we've got a packing team here on a Saturday and Sunday, which means we're always ahead of the curve. Monday used to be our hardest day, but it's become the easiest because we were already prepared for it each week."



It's no great strategical statement, says Danny, just "operational savvy" based on previous learnings. He adds: "I learned from all the different businesses I've been involved with. At Sheringham's, we had six vans loaded on a Sunday because we were a little set apart from the rest of the Market and we had the space and freedom to do it. We had 50 vans on the road and you just wouldn't get the work out if you didn't stay ahead of things. During my time at TMP too I learned plenty of things from them. They're obviously a huge, national operator now and very good at it, while we're

Above: Danny, right, with Mr Jarek. All of the team are addressed as Mr or Mrs and their forename, as a mark of respect



pretty niche - supplying London and the Home Counties, but there were plenty of transferrable bits I pulled from my time there.

"Our customer base is wide and varied. We supply Hilton hotels, we supply a sushi concept with 200 sites, so we're pretty big in avocados, and we also supply care homes, private schools, pubs, restaurants and high-end staff canteens."

But, have the customers kept coming to Field to Fork, or has the firm been more proactive in marketing itself to potential new clients? "A bit of both really," Danny admits, "but we've got to the stage where we can be a bit more picky about what or who we take on. If we don't think it would suit either us or them, we don't do it. Because of my background, we tend to come up against more of the bigger catering suppliers and there's enough business out there for everybody, in my opinion."

What began with a handful of deliveries is an operation now serviced by a fleet of 20 vehicles - from electric bikes to HGV lorries. And behind the business, every day, is a dedicated team of 45 who deal with an ever-widening range of products. "Predominantly we're still our customers' fruit and veg guys," explains Danny. "And that's what we do well, but we always ask what else we can do for them, so we can use the space we have here to an advantage. That could be dairy or bakery, it could be moving third party products around - we've been asked for all sorts, even tables and chairs. Essentially, we're keeping our customers happy, while also keeping the vehicles moving and earning money."

Behind every delivery is an operations platform built in-house that keeps Field to Fork's fleet, logistics, and service running seamlessly, creating the efficiency to scale up without compromising on quality or reliability. "That too is built on years of experience, and picking the brains of everyone I've worked with," says Danny. "Linkclass and Sheringham's were both long-standing businesses, and they both had different ways of doing things. You take the best bits of that and use them in your own way. I wanted to get away from paper pick sheets, for instance, because they go missing and the order doesn't get packed. Almost everything we do, we do electronically. I want to remove paper completely, and we'll get there. I'm trying to do our bit."

"Our lead buyer lives between here and Poland and he's very good. When he's not here, he's on the phone every night. There aren't as many people to talk to anymore and we've got really good relationships with - and buy from - everybody on Buyers' Walk. There are many benefits to being based here, two of which are low stock-hold and very, very little waste. The product availability and quality is second to none. And every wholesaler is holding your product for you. If that wasn't the case, we would probably need a unit five times the size of this. So, when people come in and think we're low on



stock, that's because the wholesalers hold on to my stock until we replenish each night."

Building a team of 45 in five years in a wholesale market is no mean feat and Danny says staff turnover is "quite low", adding: "We've really tried to be a bit different with our people. We've got a lot of competitors around us for staff, so we've looked at the business from the outside and asked how can we be a bit different, whether in terms of the uniform, buying kids eggs at Easter, you know, whatever it might be, we just try and make sure the staff have got a smile on their face."

"Quite a few of them worked at Linkclass and plenty knew me from before and approached me when they saw Field to Fork was blossoming. As we've grown, it's been a case of having the right people at the right time and so many of them have been here a long time, so they've all got the experience you need to make it work. They know what they've got to do. And they've all got good ideas. So we listen and try and do it right. It's definitely not me that has all the bright ideas!"

So, what's the main difference moving from the older units into the nearly-new home Field to Fork has been in since late last year? "This space is more open plan. In our last units, we inherited someone else's ideas because obviously they had it laid out to suit their practices and the size of their business. This place just ticked all the boxes. We didn't need a particularly big office space because the majority of our admin is outsourced. It's fully refrigerated and there's space to be flexible, which we never had before."

For Danny's family, the firm is a way of life. His wife looks after the paperwork, their daughter works remotely in sales and customer service and their 17-year-old son does a couple of days a week between his days at college. They were all due to go on holiday just after this interview and an opportunity to be away together and switch off is particularly crucial when the day-to-day is as intense as a wholesaler's lot often is.

Not that Danny's complaining. "I've got to pinch myself with how we've got to where we are from just five years ago. My ambition then extended to filling a couple of vans up

“ Our customers' loyalty and trust have been the driving force behind everything we've built

and driving and delivering myself, which I actually enjoyed. I didn't think in a million years I'd get to this, but of course I'm thankful.

"The pleasing thing is that it has to be a reflection of how we've done it, doesn't it? "As we grow, we remain committed to doing it responsibly," he says, "and to making sustainability a meaningful part of that growth."

"It's not just me, it's the whole team around me. We couldn't have done it without them. And to our customers - many of whom have been with us from the very beginning - thank you. Your loyalty and trust have been the driving force behind everything we have built."

"None of this would have been possible without the relationships we've built. From the growers and suppliers, to our national supply partners who help us reach customers consistently across the UK and Ireland, every supplier and partner has played a vital role in our story. These relationships aren't just commercial; they're the foundation of everything we deliver."

The obvious question is 'what comes next?' and Market Quarterly is nothing if not obvious, so we asked! "I think we're kind of at a good level now. I always said I didn't want to get too big, but what is too big?" Danny asks himself. "We've grown by at least 20% every year to now and I think this is a sweet spot. I know all my staff by their first names, the good people are hard to get and the bigger you get and more people you need, it's even harder to find them."

"I know we can't stand still because it's inevitable we will lose the odd one or two customers along the way, but we're good at what we do and we've got new contracts coming on stream, so we're at a sustainable level and everyone's happy."

"Here's to the next five years!"



Immerse yourself in Woodbrown's creations

In a studio tucked down a side street not far from Battersea Park, London event florist Woodbrown specialises in creating immersive worlds for a broad range of clients. Much more than just floral arrangements, the environments it creates always show a deep respect for the beauty of flowers and plants. And the secret behind this design powerhouse? The men and women at New Covent Garden Flower Market, who supply everything needed for the projects

At the centre of Woodbrown are co-owners Christopher Hammond-Davis and Marie Sweeney, known by all as Maisie, who have been shaping some of London's most memorable events for the past 30 years.

From huge events such as the British Academy Film Awards (better known as the BAFTAs – more on that later), to deeply personal weddings, the company's work is defined not by scale, but by care and attention to detail. "We absolutely love creating something unique and individual for each event," says Christopher. "Whether it's an intimate dinner or a stunning wedding, each one is treated the same where we'll look at style, integrity and design."

It's a philosophy rooted as much in storytelling as in floristry, perhaps unsurprising given Christopher's origins. "I started off as an actor attending the then 'Italia Conti Stage School' based in Clapham, he explains. "I worked in film and television from the age of 11 and then on to stage at the age of 16. Like many performers, I had to navigate the unpredictability of the industry. It's feast or famine when you're an actor and at 26 I'd just got a mortgage, so I needed a backup income."

A chance encounter changed everything. Asked if he wanted to help dig over a garden one morning was a shock to the system. "An eight o'clock start!? You're still going to bed at eight o'clock in the morning when you're an actor," he laughs. That gig took Christopher to a Kensington florist and what began as a driving job quickly turned into something more immersive. "It was in at the deep end, really," he recalls. "They'd say, 'Try and copy this arrangement.' I

was doing contracts, installations, going to the Flower Market. I was absorbed by the mechanics of floristry and its creative possibilities." During this time, Christopher was still working occasionally in television and theatre and published two books on floral decoration. He later freelanced at Kenneth Turner Limited, where he worked closely with Simon Brown, the "Brown" behind Woodbrown.

When Simon and his wife Cynthia Wood founded the business, Christopher was there from the start. Five wonderful years later Simon sadly died of a heart attack aged just 44. "He was like a brother to me, says Christopher." In the wake of that loss, Cynthia asked if Christopher would run the company. Together with Marie, Christopher stepped into the role of running the business. "I first met Marie on the Avenue Princesse Grace Monte Carlo, as part of Simon's team of florists," reminisces Christopher. "We're still in the same studio Simon was in, and we feel like he's always there."

That sense of continuity is central to Woodbrown's identity. "I try and keep to his ethos," Christopher explains. "Sometimes I think, Simon would say 'what are you doing now, Christopher?' and that's where memory and instinct overlap. Every now and then, I dream he comes back," he adds. "Usually when something difficult is coming up, it's like he's there to help."

Events are rarely just flowers and plants and projects often evolve into immersive environments, shaped by narrative as much as design. A Cuban-themed wedding at Battersea Arts Centre (working with the party planner Philip Pleydell-Pearce) is an example. "We wanted it to feel like a street



party," Christopher explains, "so we created little bistros and buildings, so that you were walking into a different world." The concept was developed collaboratively with a long-standing client. "We knew the family already, so when they said, 'we want this Cuban theme,' we could run with it."

The result was extraordinary: a fully realised streetscape complete with graffiti-style installations, sculptural elements and a towering centrepiece. "We created a 15-foot Che Guevara," Christopher says. "Che's profile was created entirely from faux hydrangea so it could be kept as an art installation after the event. Everything was sourced from the Flower Market and the project took months to refine. We worked on it for quite a while, maybe 12 weeks," he says. "But sometimes you get offered something that big and you're only given a month's notice. That's just how it is." Despite the spectacle, the emphasis is on personalisation. "We find the client's individual style and work with them to develop a design reflecting their taste," Christopher explains. "It's about meeting their requirements and their budget."

As conversations around sustainability intensify, Woodbrown has been quietly adapting its practices. "We are as sustainable as possible," Christopher says. "We try not to use floral foam unless there's no other way." Instead, the team relies on water-based designs, reusable structures and traditional techniques. "Chicken wire gets used multiple times." The Cuban wedding offered a blueprint for a more circular approach, something that they've increasingly adapted to other projects. "The majority of what we used wasn't cut flowers, it was plants," says Christopher, adding



that everything got to live on via donations after the event. Installations were repurposed or donated, with plants finding new homes in gardens and via local charity Thrive Battersea.

"For the client, it was very important that everything had a second life," explains Christopher. "They said, 'What do we get to keep?' and the answer was quite a lot. You've got to look at it in totality," he says. "Flowers bring a lot of pleasure. And we were able to use those flowers and plants to bring pleasure to people during and after the wedding."

Although it has created a worldwide reputation and reach, Woodbrowne remains deeply connected to its local roots as a huge advocate of everything NCGM has to offer. "We've always supported the Market," Christopher says. "We don't order flowers online, we visit several times each week for inspiration." It's the physical interaction, he insists, that is irreplaceable. "You can pick up two bunches, put them together, see how they work. Smell them, understand the colour, the longevity." The Market is also a hub of shared knowledge. "It's a virtuous circle," he says. "You tell suppliers what's worked, what hasn't. They guide you. You can't replicate that." Equally important is the sense of community. "You're buying with your competitors all around you," he says. "You'll have breakfast with them and chat about upcoming projects." You might suspect there would be rivalry, but Christopher says that isn't the case, as there's enough work to go around. "People do different things and you're all in different lanes," he says.

In an era dominated by social media, Woodbrowne operates differently. "We don't get much business from Instagram,"

Christopher admits. "It's mostly word of mouth, and that's partly by necessity," he says, adding that high-profile clients often require complete discretion. "So much of the work we do is under non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), so we can't shout about it as much as we'd like to" he says. Even standout projects that appear in publications rarely translate directly into business. "We've had events featured in Tatler and House & Garden but, surprisingly, you get very little business from it," he says.

Instead, Christopher and Marie have built their business on long-term relationships. "We've been working with some party planners for more than 30 years," he says, "and it's the same with some production companies." Relationships are essential when timelines frequently tighten. "Sometimes you'll get a massive event with a month's notice," says Christopher, "and that's when freelancers come in. They're incredible, like family, really. We only have two staff, Marie and I, so we couldn't do it without our wonderful freelancers."

Woodbrowne approaches every brief with the same mindset. "Every single job, even a small one, is equally important," Christopher says. "With something like BAFTA you feel the exposure, you've got to get it right." The process begins with a brief, often just a colour palette or theme. "They might say 'kaleidoscope' or 'facets'," he explains. "From there we build a blend of structure and freedom. We're given direction, but we can interpret it. That's where the creativity comes in."

It's clear Christopher never truly left the theatre, he simply

changed his medium and continued to express his creativity. "At stage school we had costume and set design classes," he recalls. "I've taken that and run with it." Each project feels like a production: a carefully staged environment where flowers, foliage and plants create a temporary world. It exists, then disappears but what remains is an impression. "It's about how it feels when you walk in," Christopher says. "The moments we create for our clients and their guests, they're everything."

Pictured: Clockwise from top left: Christopher Hammond-Davis, Creative Director of Woodbrowne; Wedding Cuban style (image courtesy of photographer Katie Julia and party planner Philip Pleydell-Pearce); BAFTA Television Awards 2026 (image courtesy of BAFTA and inGenius Productions); Wedding Cuban style (image courtesy of photographer Katie Julia and party planner Philip Pleydell-Pearce); Marie Sweeney and the Woodbrowne team for the BAFTA Television Awards 2026; Che Guevara floral frame (courtesy of Woodbrowne and John Cowan); Wedding Cuban style (image courtesy of photographer Katie Julia and party planner Philip Pleydell-Pearce); Birthday Party (Wedding Cuban style (image courtesy of party planner Johnny Roxburgh)



Back to school for Pinstripes & Peonies

Two stunning floral displays that featured at this year’s RHS Chelsea Flower Show were later donated to local Nine Elms primary school Herbert Morrison, thanks to Flower Market events florist Pinstripes & Peonies (P&P)

Almost 400 plants were purchased from Flower Market wholesalers to create the Chelsea displays, with everything rehomed at Herbert Morrison as part of two volunteer gardening days organised by the P&P team during May’s half-term break. It’s not the first time P&P has supported the school’s garden initiative: the firm has been involved since January 2023, using materials from past events and providing plants and staffing for weekly sessions with the primary school’s pupils.

P&P project manager Sinead Mathew organised the volunteer days, the first of which was for families. “We invited P&P staff and fellow suppliers within the events industry to bring their children along to help add some colour and personality to the space,” says Sinead. “With ages ranging from 2 to 12 years old, our volunteers created bug hotels and bird feeders, tended to the frog pond and diligently watered the plants during May’s unexpected heatwave.”

The second day saw 25 people from across the events industry volunteer their time to help P&P rehome the plants returning from the Flower Show installations. “All the plants were rescued,” explains Sinead, “and included varieties such as Hydrangea, Scabiosa, Dahlias, Fuchsias, Clematis, Peonies and numerous varieties of grasses and herbs.”

Prior to P&P’s involvement with Herbert Morrison, the school’s garden was so overgrown that some of the P&P volunteers didn’t know the full scope of the space when they first visited. “The volunteers lovingly relandscaped the grounds,” says Sinead, “providing gardeners every Tuesday throughout the year to ensure that no plants or outdoor props from events and weddings ever go to waste.”



The 2026 volunteer days followed the launch of a new charity partnership in April giving pre-loved flowers a second life and raising much-needed funds for the school project. Called Second Hand Flower Shop, the partnership sees the P&P team take previously used flowers (the first batch were from a high-profile event at the Natural History Museum) and sell them in colourful bouquets at District café next door to the US Embassy for just £15 per bunch.

“We’ve been delighted with the response to the Second Hand Flower Shop, which has raised more than £1,000 in its initial month,” says Sinead, adding: “We’re aiming to roll the scheme out to more schools across Nine Elms and Vauxhall over the coming months.”



Top left: P&P’s Sinead Mathew
Top right: Volunteers dig in at Herbert Morrison school
Above: Young and older volunteers get to work
Left: A Second Hand Flower Shop display outside District café

Bob King retires after more than half a century in the trade

After more than 50 years of service to the fresh produce trade, Robert “Bob” King has retired, bringing to a close a career that has left an indelible mark on New Covent Garden Market (NCGM) and the wider hospitality sector

A familiar face to generations of London’s wholesalers and buyers, Bob’s career was built on a simple but uncompromising principle: only buy the very best.

Starting out in the industry in his early twenties, Bob followed in his father’s footsteps, working in the family’s wholesale business at Stratford Market. From those early days as a cashier, he developed a deep understanding of the trade that would underpin his future success. The family business later moved to New Spitalfields Market, while Bob expanded his own horizons by running a successful eponymous retail operation in Romford for 25 years – King’s.

As the capital’s catering sector grew, Bob began to supply restaurants, eventually joining forces with Le Marché at NCGM, where he became a key element of the buying team alongside Managing Director Marcus Rowleson.

Bob’s reputation with both suppliers and clients was built not just on his eye for quality, but on trust. He established close and strong relationships with growers and wholesalers alike, always ensuring he sourced the finest produce in exactly the right quantities. “You’ve got to buy the best you can find,” Bob says. “Be trustworthy. You have to get on with people and build up good relationships.”

His work also reflected the increasing sophistication of the hospitality market. From sourcing perfectly sized vegetables – whether golf-ball sized onions, perfectly uniform carrots or specialist lines such as Japanese aubergines – Bob was adept at meeting the increasingly precise demands of top chefs. His willingness to go the extra mile, including sourcing specialist products from other wholesale markets, helped cement Le Marché’s standing among elite kitchens.

Like many in the trade, Bob’s working life followed the unique rhythm of the Market. His day began at 11pm and ran through to early morning, ensuring the freshest produce was selected before most of the city had even woken. It was a demanding routine, sustained over decades, and supported by a famously unconventional sleep pattern. “Two or three little slots of two hours’ sleep every day,” he says. “I’ve done that all my life. It works for me.”

Colleagues and customers alike would agree that it worked exceptionally well. Through dedication, experience and an instinctive feel for the Market, Bob helped supply some of the most prestigious restaurants and hotels in the country, contributing quietly but significantly to the success of Britain’s fine dining scene. And, of course, to the success of Le Marché. “Bob, we couldn’t have done it without you,” says Marcus. “Nearly all the three Michelin star restaurants. Nine out of the eleven Michelin three key hotels. Not to mention all the other stars, restaurants and clubs – the who’s who of fine dining. This, of course, is down to a great team, and you have been by my side all the way. Not bad for a couple of old greengrocers.”

Bob fit the model of what it means to be a true Market man: knowledgeable, trusted, hardworking and fully connected to the trade. His expertise and character will be missed.



Top and above: Bob poses with samples of the premium produce he sourced from the Market floor
Right: Memories of old times and a last round of photos with some of Bob’s colleagues and friends around the Market

CGMA General Manager looks to the future

Six months into his tenure as General Manager of the Covent Garden Market Authority (CGMA), Rob McAuliffe talked to food broadcaster and Market supplier Chris Bavin to reflect on his first impressions, the progress of redevelopment at New Covent Garden Market, and his vision for the site's future

Chris Bavin (CB): Rob, six months in, how have you found the role?

Rob McAuliffe (RM): It's been incredibly rewarding, but equally demanding. NCGM has its own unique ecosystem – it's not just a market, it's a community and a vital supply hub in London's food and flower supply chain. Over the past six months, I've spent a lot of time listening to tenants, staff, customers and to the wider stakeholder base. That's been essential in understanding both the day-to-day realities of trading and operating here and the bigger strategic challenges ahead of us.

I've been struck throughout that time by the resilience and professionalism of the businesses here. Despite ongoing pressures – cost inflation, the global climate, staffing challenges and the lasting impact of Brexit – this Market continues to operate efficiently and with real energy. That gives me, in my role, a strong foundation on which to build.

Wholesale markets are fundamental to how cities function. What you'll find here is expertise, dedication and a level of service that is extremely hard to replicate. Our job at CGMA is to support that and ensure that NCGM remains a place where London's food and flower suppliers can operate successfully and sustainably.

CB: You came from a property and development background. Has that helped?

RM: Definitely. I worked for The Arch Company, which manages railway arches across England and Wales, so I understood the estate side of things. Interestingly, some of the arches here connect back to that world – although historically the Market was acquired through a compulsory purchase order when it moved from central London in the 1970s.

So I had some familiarity with the physical infrastructure,

market. Within the next 12 to 18 months, that part of the redevelopment will be finished.

After that, attention shifts to the Flower Market, which will move into a purpose-built facility directly beneath where we're standing now [the roof of the Food Exchange] and across the front of the site.

From its origins in the original Covent Garden in the West End, it relocated here, then into a temporary structure near the US Embassy. That "temporary" building has been in place for about a decade. What we're doing now is giving the Flower Market a permanent, high-quality home and, more than that, positioning it as a real focal point. With its glass frontage and prominent location, it has the potential to become the "shop window" of the entire site.

CB: And everything will finally be in one place?

RM: Exactly. That's hugely important. The site has reduced in size – from around 53 acres to about 39, but when the Flower Market is completed, everything becomes far more joined-



CB: It must have been a completely different world for you coming in?

RM: It is – and I think it would be for most people. The reality is that not a lot of people even know this place exists. They might have some indirect connection to it through the food or flower business, but very few people understand the nuances or the scale of it.

This is the leading wholesale market in the UK and one of the biggest in Europe, yet it largely operates out of public view. Coming in, I knew about the site through railway arches – my previous role involved managing those kinds of estates, but I had no idea how vast or complex the Market itself was until I arrived.

but not with the wholesale industry itself, and that's been the real learning curve.

CB: You've arrived at a pivotal time — right in the middle of redevelopment. Where are we now?

RM: We're at a really important stage. Two new blocks are complete and operational, and Buyers' Walk, which is the central spine of the Market, opened earlier this year. That was a significant milestone.

The next phase is Block C. We've got less than a quarter of the old Market buildings left. The plan is to move tenants into the next new block, demolish and clear the remaining section, and complete the final build-out of the fruit and veg



up. It's still a large footprint, bigger than the Battersea Power Station development, for example, but it will function as a connected, walkable destination.

The redevelopment has delivered modern, high-quality facilities that have transformed the trading environment. Many tenants now operate out of purpose-built units that are better suited to the needs of a modern wholesale business – improved logistics, better temperature control and more efficient layouts.

We're not there yet though. There are still several elements of this project to be completed and there is a continued focus on ensuring that the site is a coherent whole. A key part of our work is to continue to ensure that the redevelopment does not impact on the ability of tenants to trade effectively on a day-to-day basis.

Opposite Left: Rob and Chris chew the fat
Below Right: Rob with the Market's latest award



CB: You've spoken before about the importance of the Market to London's food system. How do you build on that?

RM: One of the most striking things for me has been understanding the Market's role in food security. During COVID, when supermarket supply chains struggled, this Market continued to operate effectively because of the way wholesalers source and distribute produce.

That's incredibly important, but it's not widely recognised. I believe part of our job is to strengthen that story and make sure it is heard by a wider audience.

At the same time, we need to broaden the offer. At the moment, we supply some of the best restaurants, caterers, schools and institutions in London. Crucially, the site

benefits from strong public access via the Nine Elms and Battersea Power Station Tube stations, the US Embassy, and major footfall routes. That gives us a real opportunity to open up the Market in a way it hasn't been accessible before - there's an opportunity to bring the public in and make this a visible part of London's food culture.

CB: So are we talking about a mix of retail, hospitality and wholesale?

RM: In essence, yes. The difference when you look at other food markets is that wholesale will remain the foundation here. What we want to do is build on that, not replace it.

There's a natural synergy between wholesale, retail and foodservice. If you connect them properly, they can reinforce each other. You've got produce coming in from across the UK and Europe, being traded by experts, and then the potential to showcase that directly to the public - through retail, dining, and events.

We want it to become a destination, something more akin to the great European food markets, where the public understands and values what's happening behind the scenes.



CB: Like Rungis in Paris, for example?

RM: Exactly. In Paris, people know Rungis. They're proud and protective of it. There's an understanding of its importance and a connection to it.

That's what we want to build here — a sense of pride and engagement. Whether someone is a large-scale buyer, a local resident, or just visiting for a meal or to buy produce, they should feel connected to the Market.

What excites me is the chance I have to help shape this market's future. Working along others to evolve NCGM in a way that meets the needs of London, while staying true to its core traditional strengths.

CB: There's also an educational element to that, isn't there?

RM: Absolutely. One of the most valuable things we can do is reconnect people with where their food comes from. Wholesale markets are uniquely placed to do that because they sit at the intersection between producers and consumers.

On top of that, we have initiatives like Mission Kitchen on site - an incubator that supports food start-ups. It's helping people turn small ideas into scalable businesses. That's another dimension of what this place can be: not just distributing food, but creating food businesses.

CB: So the ambition is to become a full food hub?

RM: That's exactly it, a genuine food and flower hub. A place that supports wholesalers, fosters new food businesses, connects producers to consumers, and offers something to the public.

If we get it right, it will be a one-stop ecosystem for food and flowers in London.

CB: What does the timeline look like?

RM: The core redevelopment should complete around the fourth quarter of 2028. We're aiming to have the new Flower Market operational before then, ideally with enough time for traders to embed themselves ahead of the key Christmas trading period.

From around 2028 to 2030, we'll be focused on building out the wider offer, particularly the public-facing elements. That means developing food and beverage operations, retail experiences, and events in a way that works alongside the wholesale businesses.

CB: Are you already seeing signs of that shift?

RM: Yes, early signs. Some traders are beginning to experiment with opening to the public - for example, on Saturdays when Mercato Battersea opens up on Buyers' Walk.

Buyers' Walk itself has the potential to become a major public space. It's essentially a huge, 300-foot corridor; one of the largest covered open spaces in London. We're introducing new cafes, which serve traders overnight and could also cater to visitors during the day. These are small steps, but they're the seeds of what the market could become as it adds to its fantastic wholesale heritage.

CB: There are practical challenges though - different operating hours, staffing, logistics...

RM: Of course. Wholesale operates overnight, so asking businesses to extend into daytime retail isn't straightforward. It requires different staffing models, different skills, and a different mindset.

It's not something we can impose. It has to evolve organically, in partnership with or driven by tenants. And from the Authority's perspective, we also need to ensure the infrastructure is there: security, health and safety, and the right supporting services.

But if it works commercially, I strongly believe it will gain traction.

CB: Finally, what excites you most about the future?

RM: The opportunity to unlock what's already here. This is already a hugely important £1bn Market, with incredible businesses and a critical role in the supply of food and flowers to London, the South East and further afield. Combined, NCGM's tenants are a major employer base, a vital pillar in London's fresh economy. They are an unmatched connection for growers from Britain and overseas to a huge network of catering, hospitality and corporate customers they would find it extremely hard to access otherwise.

What we're trying to do is amplify that - to make it more visible, more accessible, and more connected to the city around it. If we can successfully combine wholesale excellence with a strong public-facing offer, we can create something truly special.

Squish in the cocktail mix

Somewhere between the first pour at The Ritz and the last call at Soho House, there's a good chance the juice came from Squish. Cold-pressed in Italy, distributed from Nine Elms, and drunk in venues holding more than 60 Michelin stars across the UK, Squish has quietly become the juice behind some of the country's best bars and restaurants. It does it all from right here at New Covent Garden Market (NCGM)



It's a busy season for co-founder and Managing Director Dan Harrison. The Food Exchange-based business is about to take occupancy of two brand new units on Buyers' Walk and is preparing to launch a range of cold-pressed cocktail mixers that, he hopes, will change the way bars build drinks at speed. But to understand the new units and the new mixers, you have to go back to a problem most drinkers never notice.

A problem hiding in plain sight

Squish started the way a lot of good ideas do: two friends who spotted something broken. Dan had known co-founder Rob Simpson since primary school. Rob had spent years in the spirits industry, much of it with Bacardi, and knew the UK bar trade inside out. The bartenders he worked with were producing world-class cocktails, but their juice was letting them down. The options were either fresh and unreliable, or pasteurised and flat. After juice is heat-treated, the best of the flavour is lost. "It's like asking a Michelin-starred chef to cook with canned vegetables," Dan says.

They founded Squish in 2014 and started production from a small unit in Battersea. Within a year they were supplying The Ritz, The Savoy, The Ivy, and Harrods, all of which remain clients today. It was a quiet kind of revolution: not a juice for shelves, but juice built for the bar.

In those early years, Squish delivered everything itself. Dan and Rob loaded their own vans and walked into kitchens and bars across London. "That hands-on experience taught us what it actually takes to run a foodservice operation," Dan says. "We learned why correct packaging matters, why

a missed delivery isn't just an inconvenience but a problem that hits a venue's service, and why consistency is the thing that keeps accounts, not the thing that wins them."

That understanding, more than the product itself, shapes how Squish operates as a wholesale partner today.

Designed for service, not shelves

Squish sells exclusively through foodservice wholesalers, more than 20 of them neighbours here at NCGM. Field to Fork, Le Marché, Rushton's, Oui Chef, FoodPoint, and All Greens are just a handful of many clients. Indian restaurant chain Dishoom is supplied via The Menu Partners. Beyond the Market, Squish supplies Classic Fine Foods, Woods Foodservice, Allan Reeder, and north-of-England based Deli Fresh.

One of the very first Market clients was Yes Chef, which still purchases multiple pallets a week, with each pallet carrying 800 one-litre bottles. "In a blind taste test, you'd know a Squish juice straight away," says Yes Chef co-owner Paul Murphy. "We've worked with Dan and Rob since they first started the business making small batches of fruit juice in Battersea, and they've just got better and better. The firm has amazing packaging, which references NCGM on the label, plus their customer service is the best of any juice company I've ever worked with."

That last point matters more than it sounds. In 2025, Squish ran at over 98.5% on-time, in-full delivery. It's a number you only chase if you understand who you're really serving. "When you're supplying the kind of venues that notice if Tuesday's lime juice isn't as good as Monday's, that reliability isn't a nice-to-have," Rob says. "It's the whole job."

Italian press, English market

The juice itself is cold-pressed at a family-owned specialist in southern Europe, a partner Dan spent years finding. The plant had been pioneering cold-press processing long before most people in the UK had heard of the term.

"We did consider UK production, but the reality is that



the best fruit for our range is grown in southern Europe," says Dan. "Producing close to the source means we get fruit at peak season, processed within hours of harvest." There's a logistical case as well: transporting finished juice rather than raw fruit means roughly half the lorries on the road. Full loads arrive from Italy into Nine Elms each week, and the distribution operation runs six days a week. Everything else, the offices, the warehouse, the team, stays at the Market.

The juice is processed using High Pressure Processing, or HPP, a method that uses pressure rather than heat to extend shelf life. That gives around four weeks of shelf life into wholesale, without dulling the character of the fruit. "Heat pasteurisation would make things last longer," Dan says, "but it changes the product. For us, flavour is the whole point."

Cocktails in seconds

This month, the same thinking gets pointed at the cocktail itself. On August 1st, Squish launched a range of cold-pressed cocktail mixers built for professional bars and sold through the same wholesale partners. The opening line-up: Espresso Martini, Margarita, Passion Fruit Martini and Piña Colada.

"We've created perfectly balanced cocktails that you can make in seconds," Rob says. The pitch to operators is operational rather than nostalgic. Faster service. Tighter consistency. Fewer hands at peak. The drink that arrives at the table is the same one the head bartender signed off when the menu was written.

Manufacturing of the mixers will also take place in Italy, with Squish holding UK exclusivity. "We've built our cocktail mixers for the same audience and the same wholesale

Above: Back Row: Rob, Fraser, Vicky, Mark, Rob C and Dan
Front Row: Kristin, Junior, Kasia and Allegra



channel as our fresh juice business, on the credibility of our existing brand,” Rob says.

Dan is clear about where the priority sits. “Hospitality is our home market, and it’s where the brand earns its credibility. Any market expansion has to be well founded, and our test is simple: we don’t lose the top end in the process. The mixers in particular are much better suited to that kind of growth.”

The brand is already crossing the Channel ahead of the launch. Squish is about to start supplying international members club Soho House across Europe, with locations in Rome, Paris, Barcelona, Ibiza, Amsterdam, and Berlin.

A long-term bet on the Market

This summer, Squish took occupancy of two brand new units at 429-430 Buyers’ Walk. It’s a significant investment for the business and a deliberate one.

“The Market is where Squish started, and it’s where we’ve chosen to stay,” says Dan. “It’s also where most of our wholesale partners operate, so being here means we can respond quickly, solve problems face-to-face, and stay close to the people who matter most to the business.”

Asked for the one piece of advice he’d give someone starting a food business, his answer comes back quickly. “Get closer to your customers than you think you need to. For years we delivered our own product and spent time in the venues that we were supplying. That’s where you learn what actually matters to the people buying from you. Being physically present at the Market has been one of the most important decisions we’ve made.”



Recycling facility impresses Reading researchers

Two academics from the University of Reading enjoyed an early-morning tour of New Covent Garden Market (NCGM) during June, learning about the estate’s award-winning recycling facility and how the Market’s eco-system functions

As the UK grapples with food waste and supply chain resilience, NCGM is increasingly being viewed not just as a vital trading hub, but also a blueprint for a more sustainable system, setting a benchmark for food waste reduction and recycling.

Dr Eugene Mohareb, an Associate Professor in Sustainable Urban Systems, visited the Market with colleague Dr Jessica Bosseaux, a Postdoctoral Research Associate, to further their research for a project focused on reducing fresh produce waste across food supply chains. Looking at the entire sector, from production and distribution through to food service and retail, the aim is to better understand where and why fresh produce losses arise across the supply chain and to come up with potential solutions.

Focusing on NCGM’s strategic role in London’s fresh produce system, Eugene was highly impressed by the Market’s work in promoting sustainability. “I was expecting a sprawling space, but it’s very compartmentalised and efficient,” he said. “What struck me most during the visit was the scale of the operation and how organised the recycling system is.”

The Market’s waste-tracking infrastructure, with each bin linked to a specific wholesaler, also impressed Eugene. “That allows businesses to measure waste precisely, with every kilo of waste generated then captured,” he said. “Having that detailed tracking speaks to a level of sophistication in waste management and helps make the right decisions around food waste mitigation.” The system is complemented by what Eugene described as ‘impeccable’ cleanliness. “In terms of sanitation, the Market is spotless. It’s as clean as a supermarket only a couple of hours after trading.”

The researchers are keen to work collaboratively with food sector partners to identify practical, scalable interventions that reduce waste while supporting commercial viability. “We see wholesalers as an integral stakeholder in determining when and how food loss and food waste are occurring through things like specification, and variations in seasonal and annual demand,” Eugene explained. “There are many decisions made on the wholesale side that will then influence where there’s going to be loss and waste throughout the supply chain.”

Above: Jessica and Eugene talk with Gary Roberts of Mitie

Summing up the visit, he said it was fantastic to see such robust food waste mitigation on-site, including the Market’s relationship with food redistribution charity City Harvest, which has operated a distribution centre at NCGM since January 2024. At the last count, that facility was estimated to have played its part in delivering 900,000 meals to people who need it most. Food waste that cannot be redistributed is diverted to anaerobic digestion facilities, where it is turned into biogas that in turn, powers the waste collection trucks that visit the Market.

“What we saw at NCGM was a very lean operation capturing both the recyclable material waste, but also preventing food waste,” said Eugene. “You’ve got substantial food redistribution and having City Harvest on site to collect excess food is an essential part of that. These systems are integral and without them, it becomes much harder to manage food waste effectively.”

Wanda Goldwag OBE, Covent Garden Market Authority Chair, said: “NCGM has always been committed to reducing waste and supporting our communities, so we’re delighted that the University of Reading has chosen us as a case study. It’s a real endorsement of the work being done across the Market. We’re proud to play our part and very happy to be seen as what ‘good’ looks like in the food redistribution and recycling worlds.”

NCGM will support this project over the months ahead by introducing academics to wholesalers across the NCGM estate, to further enable the University’s research.



ON THE MAP

Green is the colour

Our latest operator who has played a huge role in putting this Market On the Map is Peter Green, Co-owner of flower wholesaler Smith & Green. Peter celebrated 50 years in the Market in May



When was the first time you visited the Flower Market?

It would have been around 1967 or 1968, going to the old Covent Garden Market with my dad. I was just a kid, coming up from Surrey, and it blew my mind. It was the noise, the chaos, the buzz, just an incredible flurry of activity. I'd never seen anything like it. It was alive and everything was happening in the streets around the Market. The move to Nine Elms made things feel more structured, more sterile, like working in a factory compared to what it had been. The old Market had something special. You could never really recreate that, but we learned to love it.

What was your first job working with flowers?

I started at New Covent Garden Market (NCGM) in May 1976. I still remember walking in on that first day and being hit by the smell. Almost everything was English grown back then. There'd be rows and rows of stock, and the smell was unbelievable. Even now, if I smell certain English-grown stock, it takes me straight back to that exact moment.

Working in the Flower Market wasn't the plan at all, I was supposed to go into the Fruit and Vegetable Market because that's what my dad did. But because of his working hours, he said he'd get me a job in the Flower Market to start with, until I could sort myself out. I didn't want to do it at first, but after a year everything changed. I settled in, made friends, found my feet, and started enjoying it. It became my world. I even had the opportunity to move over to the fruit side as I had a job lined up. But by then I'd built a life in the Flower Market. I had mates, we were going to football together, socialising and I just thought, 'why would I leave this?' So, I stayed. And that was it. I never left.

What was your first business?

I started out as a porter, did that for about seven years, and then got offered a job as a buyer at A Chapman Ltd, which was a step up. More responsibility and a bit more money. I'd had enough of lumping stuff about by then!

Eventually, the owner retired and I wanted to take the business over. I was ready for it as I'd been effectively running things. But he'd made an agreement with someone else years before, and he stuck to his word and wouldn't sell it to me. I stayed on for a couple of years under the new owners but I knew I wanted to do my own thing. Then a big customer told me that if I moved, they'd come with me. That gave me the confidence to take the plunge and, in 1991, I started on my own.

How did Smith & Green start?

I teamed up with Billy Smith, who I'd previously worked with. We complemented each other well. He was great out on the road, selling and building relationships, but he didn't enjoy the paperwork side. I was the opposite, so it made sense to join forces. We started the business right in the middle of a recession, which wasn't ideal timing, but we made it work. We built up quickly and had a good run for quite a while. There were ups and downs, though. Around 2004, when rail orders stopped and everything moved to road deliveries, I lost nearly 50% of my business almost overnight. It was a real shock. But I managed to pick up a strong customer, which kept things viable, and I rebuilt. I started focusing more on hotels and higher-end clients, and things began to grow again via recommendations. We started supplying the palaces and were delighted to be granted a Royal Warrant.

What's changed most during your Market career?

The biggest difference is the flowers themselves. When I started everything was English. You got what was in season,

and that was it. Now everything's imported and you can get pretty much anything all-year round. It's a completely different product to what it used to be. Even the way the flowers arrive has changed. Flowers used to come in boxes, now they come in buckets.

Then there's technology. The first time I saw a fax machine, I couldn't believe it. I thought it was magic! Now you've got smartphones and can do everything instantly. But tech has also made things less personal. People don't phone up and chat anymore, they just email or send a message. You lose that bit of human connection. There are also fewer independent florists now, fewer customers walking through the Market. The entire structure of the Market has changed a lot.

What's the secret of your success?

If I had to put it down to anything, it's reliability and honesty. I take pride in what I do, and I care about getting it right for people. That personal touch still matters, even if the business has become more digital. When a customer asks me for something, I'll always try and find a way to get it. I'll go and ask around, making the effort. Some won't leave their stand and if they haven't got it, that's the end of it. But I never say no and will go that extra mile. If people know they can rely on you, they keep coming back.

Any plans for retirement?

I'm not even thinking about retirement at the minute. I'm very lucky that I have my son Jack working with me, who's really got to know the business over the last 14 years or so. When we move to the new Flower Market site in 2028, that will be the point where I'll decide with Jack what we both want to do. I've got another two years at least!

And finally, what does NCGM mean to you?

It's a way of life, there's no two ways about it. It has been for a long, long time now. This place, and the road I've gone down because of it, has probably been the biggest thing in my life. Following the tragic loss of my beautiful daughter Molly, 11 years ago, it was the people in the Market who supported me and Jack and helped us through this devastating time.

The Flower Market is like one big family, the people here are the salt of the earth and, at times of trouble, are there for you. People always say you spend more time at work than with your family over your lifetime, and I think that's true, especially in this job. But I've genuinely enjoyed it all.

Pictured: Peter and Jack. And CFC!