



## Festival feud

Peckham Rye Park is set to play host to a DJ-led music festival this May, featuring some of the biggest names in disco and house – but not everyone is happy about it, writes *Kate Graham-Shaw*.

The popular event is set to take place on May 27 during the bank holiday weekend and will host live music, food and other entertainment. It was previously held in Brockwell Park but is moving to Peckham Rye for its third year this summer.

However, the Friends of Peckham Rye Park (FOPRP) have serious concerns about the disruption the festival might cause. Speaking on FOPRP's behalf, Paula Orr said: "A large part of the attractive and well-used park could suffer lasting damage in just a weekend."

While the Friends said they welcome community events on the park and common, they are concerned that "squeezing 8,000-plus people in the area [about a quarter of the park] will damage the natural habitats and green space".

They also said that railway engineering works over the bank holiday and the resulting disruption means that festival-goers will have to rely on cars, taxis or buses to travel to and from the event, which will cause congestion in the area.

The group said they have tried to voice their concerns to Southwark Council, but feel "like they are falling on deaf ears", and said the council has not consulted the community adequately.

However, councillor Johnson Situ, Southwark's cabinet member for business, culture and social regeneration, said: "Southwark is proud of its history of hosting community events and is happy to be welcoming the Gala Festival to this summer's programme."

"Together with the event organisers we are working closely with local residents, to minimise impact. There has been a public consultation, stakeholder meetings, emails and letters, which went to 3,000 homes neighbouring the park."

He said the council has acted on residents' concerns by "capping ticket sales at 8,000 people, restricting noise and requiring managed audience dispersal", and said it is "working hard to minimise impact and ensure a successful event".

Kingdom Collective, the company behind Gala Festival, said: "Throughout our application and subsequent licensing hearing, we have had and continue to have a dialogue with the Safety Advisory Group and local residents."

"Issues around crime, waste and travel are priorities for us and we have taken every measure to develop our plans for these matters in a thorough and responsible way. We will continue to work with local stakeholders as we finalise our plans over the coming weeks."



PHOTO BY LORINA ALLAN

## Stars of the stage

Talented students from a local school put on a performance to remember last month with their own unique take on Whoopi Goldberg film *Sister Act 2*.

The pupils, from St Thomas the Apostle College on Hollydale Road, reimagined the hit musical comedy, changing the name to Brother Act and setting it in an all-boys' school in Peckham.

"Essentially it was about a group of teenagers who are not doing very well at school and they find some solace in a monk, or a pretend monk, who takes them to a choir competition, which

they win," said head of drama Danielle Bumford. Up to 110 students aged from 11 to 17 took part in the play, including the school's gospel choir and band. It was performed to children from local primary schools, parents, residents and community groups.

"I was extremely proud of them," said Danielle. "It was a massive project – the performance was two hours long and there were so many students involved. At times it felt impossible, but I'm so proud of what they've achieved. They did a really good job."

The drama department is now working on a performance of *Blood Brothers* with year nine, who are studying the text for GCSE English. They will also put on a summer concert at the end of the year, with excerpts from plays and musical numbers.

Drama is a hugely popular subject at STAC, Danielle said. "The students love it and lots of them go to other local groups like Theatre Peckham and Blue Elephant, because it's their thing really. Drama and music are massive at this school."



## Prepare to be enchanted

Choumert Square will welcome visitors to its 20th fundraising afternoon in June as part of the National Garden Scheme.

This year's NGS booklet describes the idyllic lane, which is tucked away behind Choumert Road, as "46 mini-gardens" set in a "Shangri-La situation".

Visitors will have the chance to enjoy the gardens with a background of music and a variety of stalls to explore, with refreshments including afternoon teas and Pimm's.

Over the years, the award-winning square's popular open days have raised around £60,000 for the NGS's nominated charities, as well as St Christopher's Hospice in Sydenham.

The idea of running an open garden afternoon was initiated by former Choumert Square resident Jamie Pearson, a Canadian who recognised the unique otherworldliness of this Victorian laneway set in urban Peckham.

Just before its first opening in June 1999, the *Evening Standard* ran a double-page spread on the open day that said: "If you can't get to Chelsea Flower Show, don't despair; instead, trek to Peckham on Sunday week to see a real-life garden show, and prepare to be enchanted."

Visit Choumert Square on June 3, 1-6pm. Admission £4, children free.

## Out of this world

Children from a Peckham school won a gold medal for their space-themed World Book Day Award display.

Staff and pupils at St Francis primary school on Friary Road were presented with £5,000-worth of books, by a judging panel made up of Olympic champion and author Sir Chris Hoy, award-winning author Joanna Nadin and illustrator Clare Elsom.

The display they created aims to celebrate the pupils' love of books and encourage them to read more. St Francis pupils use "space passports" to travel to different "reading planets", each of which represents a different genre.

The centrepiece of the display features a rocket decorated with the "superstars" who help pupils

with their reading outside school. There's even a TV that plays book reviews children have recorded to encourage their classmates to pick up a book they wouldn't normally read.

Nanaba, Junior, Deborah and Angel in year six said: "As soon as we heard that the title of the competition was 'flying high with reading', we immediately started to think about what it meant."

"Books encourage your imagination to take flight; the books we read assist us to fly high into our own world of novels, to become writers and to use our ideas and imagination to create our own stories. Reading helps us shoot for the stars!"

The judges described the pupils' display as "truly out of this world".



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