

Time Out

London

LONDON'S WEEKLY LISTINGS BIBLE
OCTOBER 25 - NOVEMBER 1 2006
No.1888 £2.50



Disappearing London

Party time for the developers
but will anything be left of the city we love?

Will Self, Iain Sinclair, JG Ballard
lead the debate on what must be saved

Plus Halloween spectacular + complete London Film Festival listings

Reporter

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Guerrilla gardening

Green-fingered revolutionaries go to work



The horticultural militia in action at St George's Circus, Southwark

Name Richard Reynolds, aka The Guerrilla Gardener.

Job By day, Richard, 29, works in advertising, but by night he leads a group of 'guerrilla gardeners' who lavish much-needed love and attention on the capital's neglected public spaces. The green-fingered volunteers pull up weeds, plant shrubs, and tend bushes and flowers. Richard says, 'We work by night because it is when most of us are free after we have finished work. It also allows us to avoid picking a fight with the powers that be.'

Where have they struck? The latest operation was on the Brompton Road on October 18, where militia groups undertook a quick prune of a flowerbed near the V&A Museum. Other activity includes the planting of 200 red tulip bulbs on Westminster Bridge Road, brightening up St George's Circus, Southwark, with daisies, and planting a herb garden next to Seven Sisters Road - 'The most miserable plot we have tried yet,' according to Richard. He's also undertaken projects across Britain and even overseas - planting trees in Brisbane, Australia.

Inspiration? Irked in September 2004 by the poor state of the public spaces near his Elephant and Castle flat, Richard, who doesn't have a garden of his own, decided to take action. He carried out his first piece of direct action by turning a nearby concrete planter into a flourishing garden and since then his guerrilla gardening campaign has taken off.

What's it like to do? 'I can't quite believe it,' writes Lucy, from Hither

'My station at Hither Green is Dog Daisy heaven'

Green, on the Guerrilla Gardening website. 'Rarely do I leave the house in spring without my packet of wild flowers to sprinkle as I go. My station at Hither Green is Dog Daisy heaven and I can pick one for my hair in the morning before the commuter crush. The patch of rubble outside my house is now a lovely poppy meadow of about two metres square. A home for the flotsam and jetsam of wind-borne life.'

What has it achieved? Support is blooming. Over 2,000 people from around the world have registered support via Richard's website and over 120 different gardeners have joined the nighttime projects. 'We have enjoyed really positive support from the public. Even the local authorities appear to be turning a benevolent blind eye. Passers-by often get stuck in, and at a project in Stratford one local man brought us out a pot of tea and allowed us to use his toilet,' said Richard.

However, his exploits have got him into a few scrapes. On a few occasions he has been questioned by the police about his activities and was once reported when someone thought he was stealing plants. Another time he was suspected of making fertiliser bombs and questioned under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Next challenge Richard is aiming to spread the word by asking people to form their own local 'battalions' - so get your gardening gloves on. *Will Gore* See www.guerrillagardening.org. Do you know a plot of land that could do with a makeover? Nominate your patch at: news@timeout.com

Bob Marley plaque unveiled

Thirty-four Ridgmount Gardens looks like any other unassuming flat in Camden. But in 1972 it became part of music history when it was used as a base by reggae legend Bob Marley during the first of his many visits to London. Now a plaque, which pays tribute to 'a reggae icon and Rastafarian ambassador', is being unveiled there.

Marley came to London in 1972 to promote his single 'I Can See Clearly Now' and stayed at the flat, which belonged to Danny Sims, co-owner of his record label, for six weeks between February and March. During 1972, he also lived near the King's Road, as well as in Neasden, where he was arrested for marijuana possession. That year he visited Basing Street Studios in Ladbroke Grove, the home of Island Records. There he met the label's founder, Chris Blackwell, who signed The Wailers to his label.

He returned to the capital many times over the next decade, finishing the recording of 'Exodus' here in 1977, and famously enjoying football kickabouts in Battersea Park. In 1981, Marley returned to London for one last time. He died later the same year from skin cancer.

'The owners of the house were very excited. They did not realise Bob had lived there,' said Jak Beula-Dodd, chief executive of the Nubian Jak community trust, the organisation behind the plaque.

'The city was the catalyst for making Bob the international star that he became,' said Beula-Dodd. *Will Gore* Unveiling of Bob Marley plaque, Oct 26, 12pm, 34 Ridgmount Gardens WC1. See: www.london.gov.uk



Marley: feared Battersea midfield terrier