Most of us will know that Kentish Town City Farm – the oldest in the UK – has been celebrating hitting the big 4-0 all year. And don't fear, while the beasties are all still safely locked up in their barns, illustrator Sophie Jamieson wonders what would happen if those two and four-legged inhabitants ran amok across the neighbourhood.

Entitled This is Interaction – a phrase taken from the famous video of Prince Charles speaking about Kentish Town in the 70s (see page 3) – Jamieson says she finds the farm an inspiration. In fact, she reckons, “there’s no place like this anymore”.

A far cry from the artist’s childhood in the wilds of New Zealand, the farm is “a menagerie on our doorstep; a different environment. I wanted to play with boundaries by unleashing the animals in this way.” Jamieson’s first taste of K-Town was a job waitressing at the Bull and Last after graduating two years ago. Originally reluctant to move to London, she told her fiancé she’d only settle here if he found them somewhere “fun to live”. He came back with a houseboat near Regent’s Park – and she was sold.

“Being on the water does inspire me,” she says. “It’s a little nature-filled haven. I can watch the dragonflies and terrapins, and make duckling friends.”

When not chatting up all things feathered, Jamieson keeps it water-based and meets friends for walks along the canal, “which usually end with a boozy meal at the Colonel Fawcett or Caravan in King’s Cross.”

Sarah Fox
Like this illustration? See page 3
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Drinker’s Paradise; and our new writer Sarah Fox reviews Mango Shack. Plus don’t miss Dish of the Month, and a cheeky assessment of tiny Parkway bean-shop the Coffee Jar.

Elsewhere? We meet Blustons’ owner Michael Albert, chat to senior curator Maitreyi Maheshwari at the Zabludowicz and ponder the whereabouts of the ancient Gospel Oak. Slightly further afield (well, 12 minutes on the Overground), we show you when and where to go to upcoming Clapton.

Don’t forget we publish daily at kentishtowner.co.uk, often several stories a day. And online is where the liveliest debates take place too. We also have an online shop (shop.kentishtowner.co.uk) where you can buy everything from back issues to original art and merchandise. And look out for just fifty limited edition prints of our cover star Sophie Jamieson’s work.

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MAITREYI MAHESHWARI
CURATOR

Maitreyi Maheshwari was born in India and moved to London when she was six. Growing up in Stanmore before moving to West Hampstead as a teenager, she now lives in Archway. She’s worked at the Zabludowicz Collection on Prince Of Wales Road since 2007, responsible for producing the public programme of talks, workshops, performances and screenings. A very knowledgable local, she wrote her master’s thesis about Inter-Action, the alternative theatre and community arts group that were based in West Kentish Town in the 70s and 80s and who founded the City Farm.

When were you happiest?
Spending a day at the Alma Street festival. I didn’t go this year because I took six months off work to travel, but usually I’m there every year.

Where would you like to live (in the manor)?
I really love Kelly Street; but if not then one of the roads off Leighton Rd, Lady Margaret perhaps.

What is your favourite sound or smell (in the manor)?
Coffee. I can’t get enough of it. They’re so nice in The Fields Beneath.

What is your greatest life achievement?
Being alive! I think. Being in the world, that’s a good achievement.

What is your earliest K-Town memory?
When I was a teenager, my mum would say, “it’s fine to go to Camden, just don’t go to Kentish Town. It’s really rough around there”; that was about 15-20 years ago. I grew up in West Hampstead and always used to come to Camden to go to gigs. I didn’t know where Kentish Town was, so I was like, “why would I go there anyway?”

What makes you unhappy?
Hypocrisy, I get really annoyed at the news. Also when bad things happen to good people.

What simple thing would improve your quality of life?
Right now, something to take the swelling out of my thumb. It’s a music festival injury from the weekend and I spent a lot of yesterday at the doctor’s and in hospital.

What is your most unappealing habit?
I don’t know if this is for public consumption, but probably picking my nails. Picking the dirt out. I do it a lot. People say, “can you just stop doing that and just wash your hands?”

What is your guilty pleasure?
I don’t really feel any guilt whatsoever, but spending a whole afternoon sitting in the back of the Southampton Arms. Days and days have been spent doing things like that.

Where do you hang out?
Apart from the Southampton? Around the heath. I’ve spent as much of the summer there as I can possibly manage; although I’m currently still feeling a bit freaked out by the woman who died in the ladies’ pond, so have been exploring the lido more.

What’s your best experience in the neighbourhood?
I love the city farm, one of my favourite in London, and in between two railway lines. So transformative. You see how the kids are with the animals. Where else to you get to do that? And I love the allotments; fantastic.

What do you most dislike about your appearance?
Where do we start? My knees. I just don’t like them.

What’s the worst thing anyone’s said to you?
Probably that I lacked humour. That was horrible. Or was that I laughed too much at my own jokes? Horrible too. I think the person said it in a way of advising me.

What is your favourite dish and why?
It’s a kidney bean spicy curry called Rajma. It’s been more or less my favourite dish since I was four years old. I eat it as regularly and often as I can be bothered to cook it or get my mum to. It’s a very humble dish.

What did you do today?
We’ve been busy installing a solo exhibition of new work by UK-based artist Andy Holden and I left my house three times today to get to work because I kept forgetting things. I needed a tripod, and then I had forgotten my lunch. The show is Holden’s most ambitious project to date – and we haven’t worked on anything to this scale in this building before, so we’re really excited.

Describe yourself as an animal.
Maybe a fox. They’re quite streetwise and I am not. I’d want my animal alter ego to be a bit smarter than me. I think they get a bad rep, but you know they are alright.

“My guilty pleasure?
Spending a whole afternoon sitting in the back of the Southampton Arms. But actually I don’t feel any guilt whatsoever.”
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Mango Shack The Mango Rooms has borne a late sibling. But how does the fledgling Shack compare?

Mango Shack is the belated sister to Mango Rooms, local legend Derrick Blake’s Camden Town institution which has been serving up tasty Caribbean food for over fifteen years. So how does this new location under the arches of the Overground station (occupying the former Meribel Brasserie site) match up to its famous sibling?

6.30pm, a quiet restaurant, its vast, hollow arch plastered in a collage of brightly coloured wallpaper with dim jar-like lights. But those faux white wood wash chairs all empty? It was as if they were awaiting guests for a wedding.

We opted to sit by the window and, without delay, hit the cocktails. A coconut daiquiri was delicate and smooth; and a rum shack, a cobb of ginger beer, bitters and a good slug of the dark stuff, refreshing enough. But where were those fellow diners again?

Never mind, food wise it all started rather well: scallops with mango and pineapple salsa, the ripe fruit highlighting the perfectly seared and seasoned bouncy flesh, was made even zestier with a squeeze of lime.

Meanwhile the salmon, home-cured with a cocktail of rum, sugar, chilli and lime, missed the mark, but only slightly. Why? Its aftertaste was akin to a “dusty scout hall”, quipped my partner. As for me, I just found it a bit sweet and musty. Yet the texture of the fish was silky and the colour good.

The Mango Rooms staple, Camden’s Famous Goat Curry, arrived looking wholesome. The goat leg was rich and full of flavour, and the sauce, which there wasn’t quite enough of, delicately spicy and typically Caribbean. The same could be said for the char-grilled chicken. I wanted to mop up the tender breast in the smooth peanut sauce – but alas, there was only a dribble. Why? But the plate was decorated with intricately carved slithers of pepper, poking out in all directions.

I couldn’t help but think they were missing a trick here. It’s all in the name Shack. Camden has the fancier Mango Rooms so why not rough this new one up a bit? Then it all started to make sense: this venue is crying out to be a raucous Manhattan-style bar. I could just picture hundreds of revellers, rum shack in hand, bopping to the same brilliant tunes of Damian Marley and Gentleman cranked up a notch.

It’s only been open six months, but surely if something doesn’t happen fast, this venture, like the brasserie before it, might not be here for much longer. And that would be a huge shame, especially as nobody seems to know how good the food is.

7/10
Sarah Fox
47-49 Camden Rd
Meal for two around £40

Also try: Cotton’s – Longstanding Chalk Farm cocktail bar and diner. Go for jerk-marinated tilapia, parrot fish and red snapper and king prawns.
85 Chalk Farm Road
Guanabana – Quirky Latin American-meet-Camden cuisine; try the authentic ackee and salt fish, or a tender goat curry.
85 Kentish Town Road

“I wanted to mop up the tender breast in the smooth peanut sauce - but alas, there was only a dribble”

Cheeky Coffee... The Coffee Jar, Parkway

As London’s artisan café culture continues its march, the backstory is becoming a familiar one. A disillusioned city girl quits her safe job in banking to take the ultimate career gamble; to follow long-held dreams of owning a little coffee shop. It’s tough at the start, but soon enough the venture is flourishing. As we perched on the chunky, rustic seating at Camden’s The Coffee Jar, owner Maria spun such a yarn. Her enthusiasm for this new lifestyle only too apparent, not just in her beaming smile, but also in the visible success of this tiny hotspot.

The range of Monmouth-based coffees are flavoursome and well pulled by an all-girl team, while Maria’s home-made (check) cakes on the counter prove irresistible to many. A large wedge of toasted and buttered banana loaf – the owner’s personal fave – made for a hearty breakfast. Maria admits business was difficult up in the strange world of upper Parkway for the first few months. The coffee chains all cluster around Camden Town underground, picking off the tourists like caffeine assassins, so those on route to the Zoo tend to already be brandishing giant cups of insipid brews. But the local office workers and residents have been chuffed to bits about this opening, and are voting with their feet. With a new French bakery and café opening soon across the road, leafy Parkway is catching up with the quality of coffee we’ve enjoyed in other parts of the hood for a while now.
The meaty man in question is Will Dee (nephew to morose funnyman Jack), a chef who’s done time at Stockwell’s Canton Arms, a pub as garlanded as the Bull & Last. His ethos? “respect for everything we serve”. And the must-try dish? Why, a rabbit caesar salad (£12). Crammed around a bench outside the pub, three of us scoffed this harmonious mound of anchovies, parmigiano, garlic and the tenderest bunny (not stringy, dry or tough in the slightest), its little flavour bombs of salty croutons exploding on the tongue. The plates? Practically licked clean. Read our full review on kentishtowner.co.uk

Have you missed this corner gaff on Prince Of Wales Road?

We’ve got artisan breads, Lebanese baklava, locally brewed beer, organic fish, and Portuguese cheeses, hell, we’ve even got two tattoo parlours, and yet for a long time I was under the illusion that Kentish Town lacked a really good off license. Especially when on the hunt for ingredients to make a Negroni.

“What do want Campari for?” snorted the man in Oddbin’s (and yes, we know his wine selection is spot on.) If you can’t answer that question, I was about to retort, you shouldn’t be running a booze shop.

But I smiled sweetly and continued scouring the high street. Thankfully a last-minute tip-off led me to Drinker’s Paradise, the slightly crummy looking shop next to the vet on Prince of Wales Road, which enjoyed a moment of fame in Imelda May’s video for her classic Kentish Town Waltz.

And don’t let the exterior fool you – Drinker’s Paradise is in fact a veritable Aladdin’s cave of booze, some of it seriously specialist. Highlights include the range of aperitifs and vermouths including Antica Formula, a sought-after Milanese vermouth (great in a Negroni) and the French aperitif Lillet (essential to James Bond’s favourite, a Martini Vesper), a wide range of liqueurs, American whiskies and rums, and a humungous selection of more than 200 bottled beers, ciders and perrys from Wales, Germany, China and beyond (and the neighbouring Camden Brewery too) – oh, and also bitters. And they are lovely chaps to boot with a real passion for the subject.

So if you haven’t been get down there tout de suite to acquire a bottle of Campari. Once safely indoors, mix 25ml with equal parts sweet vermouth and gin, stir over ice, chuck in a slice of orange, and raise a Negroni to our ever-surprising manor.

Alice Lascelles
Drinker’s Paradise, 129 Castlehaven Road

Have you missed this corner gaff on Prince Of Wales Road?

The meaty man in question is Will Dee (nephew to morose funnyman Jack), a chef who’s done time at Stockwell’s Canton Arms, a pub as garlanded as the Bull & Last. His ethos? “respect for everything we serve”. And the must-try dish? Why, a rabbit caesar salad (£12). Crammed around a bench outside the pub, three of us scoffed this harmonious mound of anchovies, parmigiano, garlic and the tenderest bunny (not stringy, dry or tough in the slightest), its little flavour bombs of salty croutons exploding on the tongue. The plates? Practically licked clean. Read our full review on kentishtowner.co.uk

The Fat Butcher’s official launch party is on Sept 13.

20 Prince of Wales Road NW5.

Stephen Emms

Dish of the Month

RABBIT CAESAR SALAD £12 - THE FAT BUTCHER @ THE GRAFTON

Alice Lascelles:
“Drinker’s Paradise is in fact a veritable Aladdin’s cave of booze, some of it seriously specialist”
“The bad news is that the tree had disappeared by 1821”
“A month-long celebration across the borough”

IF YOU were a fan of the acclaimed show at the Jewish Museum (which runs till Sept 15, reviewed online in July) you can’t miss Amy Winehouse: For You I Was A Flame, which opens on Sept 12 at Proud Galleries.

Featuring artwork by Gerald Laing, Horace Panter, Bambi and Mr Brainwash and photography by Jake Chessum, Dean Chalkey and Oscar Lasa, here are some exclusive stills from the show, part of a month-long celebration across the borough for what would have been the singer’s 30th birthday.

Amy Winehouse: For You I Was A Flame, Proud Camden, 12th September – 6th October 2013, www.proud.co.uk
“We’ve had transvestites in. They want something a bit more showy, because they’re going to make a statement on stage”

1. **CONTINUITY is crucial.** My grandfather opened the shop, and I took over from my parents when they retired. I’ve been here for more than 50 years now, but my children are doing other things so all I can do is try to sell it as a going concern - and at least no-one can change the frontage. Next door was a big family-run department store called Daniels who all died out.

2. **PEOPLE WILL ALWAYS want something that little bit different, something dressy.** Especially after the war, when clothing had been under government restriction and everything was plain. Women hadn’t seen embroidered dresses for years. We had queues outside the shop.

3. **MATERIAL should be made in Britain.** We used to be the biggest exporters of clothing in the world. Now they’ve closed all the mills that made the cloth, we’re having to buy it from Italy and Eastern Europe. Even if they’re made here, the cloth comes from abroad.

4. **SELL to your clientele.** That’s how we’ve managed to survive over the years. We’re the only place round here where an older woman can buy classic styles. Youngsters used to be the biggest market, but it’s a different world now. The average age of our customers is going up and up - we have many now who are 100+ whose carers come in.

5. **YOU CAN SEE people’s personalities in what they buy.** Some are the head of the family; others are more quiet, so they choose long-sleeved, high-necked blouses. We’ve had transvestites in. They arrive as men and try on a dress or two. They want something a bit more showy, because they’re going to make a statement on stage.

6. **IT’S VERY DIFFICULT to try and influence anybody.** But customers can still surprise me. An older woman might buy something bright like the red polka-dot dress, and I’ll let her reminisce about going dancing, about returning to her youth in the 1960s.

7. **I COULDN’T be very modern, I don’t know how.** It wouldn’t suit me. Let’s leave that to somebody younger and in the swing of things.

Interview: Anna Bear/ Photo Tom Storr

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<td>A gem of a bookshop, often closed, but with its shelves stacked high on the Lower Clapton Road - once known as murder mile in the 1980s but now lined with coffee shops and famous late-night bar, Biddle Bros.</td>
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**Lumiere**
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**Shop on the Square**
72 Clapton Square
A lovely little gift shop right on leafy Clapton Square selling mugs, bags, cards, the usual. The soundtrack is always good and it’s worth a potter after a stop at the next-door Dreyfus Café and bakery.

**Clapton ponds**
This leafy corner was restored in 2005. Regard that splendid Georgian architecture! Admire the juxtaposition with the busy road!

**We smiled at a mother in lace gloves with dyed orange hair mooching along with her studenty son**

EVEYONE should really visit Clapton, as interesting a corner as any in the capital. If you’ve never been, you might be surprised to find a village pond, bucolic Georgian square, picturesque church, and medieval house or two (Hackney’s oldest surviving building, in fact, that dates back to 1525). And then there’s a thriving Sunday market which combines the inevitable demands of middle-class gentrification with longer standing bookies, ethnic grocers and massage parlours. It’s a similar vibe, in fact, to Queen’s Crescent, but definitely a bit more hipster, despite a still diverse Turkish, Asian and Afro-Caribbean community.

Much heralded as an example of community power, Chatsworth Road Market - once boasting 200 stalls peddling wares five times a week - was revived a couple of years ago, after decades of decline, in a typical tale of motivated incomers. It’s not been without its fair share of controversy, but on a sunny lunchtime a friendly, unpretentious buzz was undeniable. And it was far more grown-up and less irritating than the teenage squall of Broadway market on a Saturday, for example. Furthermore, a Sunday morning market in the Rushmore Primary School is more earthy, all good honest fresh fruit ‘n’ veg and bric-a-brac.

We took an alfresco table at a pavement café (Veneta’s, as it happens) and engaged in some people-watching: dreads, day glo gear, afros, turn-ups, beards. A colourful parade, for sure. We smiled at a mother in lace gloves with dyed orange hair mooching along with her studenty son. There were kids doing eighties, others strictly nineties.

Stalls line the street most of the way up. Plenty of streetfood for those inclined, from drippy warm Scotch eggs to Japanese noodles. The usual kinda craft and artisan stalls: vintage this and that, ‘junktique’ everywhere, a honey stall (Bee Mercy, if you will), second hand books, posh ice cream all worth a mooch. It’s probably worth adding that this sort of thing is all over Camden Lock and the downstairs floor at the Stables market, should you fancy it. But here it feels fresh, different.

After lunch (see side panel) we ambled around Chatsworth’s vintage shops, interiors boutiques (try Sanderson Sweeting Antiques at No 22, or Furnish at No 7) and the like; and then past sandblasted terraces – pebble-dashing is being removed like it’s the law – towards lovely Clapton Square. Laid out in 1816, the houses rival anything in nearby Islington, and one was apparently visited by Lenin. Hackney Council manage the central gardens, where families were grouped picnicking under some lovely trees. We could be in Hampstead, we thought.

Just beyond? Why, the St John-at-Hackney churchyard, declared “full” in 1689, a tranquil space with notable tombs like that of the Loddiges, who opened a world-famous nursery in 1816. And here really is the historical heart of this area, a religious site dating back to 1292; although, to be fair, much of the church dates back to a more recent 1797. **Stephen Emms**
SOME refreshment before the Overground back home? On Chatsworth Road, Creperie Du Monde makes a good starting point for the new arrival, occupying a sprawling corner on Glenarm Road and always rammed with families and yoof alike. Coffee wasn't up to much on our visit, but both crepes and omelettes looked tasty, and the interior is attractively distressed. On the same side of Chatsworth but further south, another corner spot (with Clifden Road) is Venerdi, pleasant for a decent enough pizza (all are under a tenner) and a (perhaps) pricey pink Pinot Grigio. It's in the former Clapton Park Tavern pub too.

But our top tip is Shane's on Chatsworth. Expect the usual modern British fare, and indeed we couldn't fault an onglet when it did arrive - medium rare, pink, tender. Good chips. Zesty side salad. A small point? Bearnaise a bit too buttery and cloying. At £13.50 it was priced correctly too. Service was inevitably relaxed, Antipodean, friendly: the waitress even popped to the hardware shop to buy our Jack Russell a bowl for her water. And we sipped on a good-value carafe of house red (£7.50). 62 Chatsworth Road. Stephen Emms

& CHATSWORTH ROAD MARKET
When I first came to Kentish Town from my home in Cricklewood to use the swimming baths in the mid 1970s, it was a shithole. A famous shithole. I was scared to get off the bus here, scared to walk down the pavement, scared to go into the water. But then I was only six. I thought maybe there were sharks in it.

When I moved to Kentish Town in 1994, it was still a shithole. But around that time the Vine closed its loyalist bomb-making room in the saloon bar and went gastro. Kentish Town was still a shithole, but you could eat here.

When I sold my flat and bought a house three doors down in 2003 with a view to starting a family, the Junction had thrown out the drug dealers and poshed up a bit, Harry was selling decent chickens on the high street, we were only seven years away from the Bull and Last reopening as the best pub restaurant in Britain, and there hadn’t been a stabbing death since Jamal in the Tally Ho car park at the end of the previous century. But Kentish Town was still a shithole.

When my old friend Nick Jones, owner of the Soho House Group, said to me at the beginning of last year, “Giles, I’ve got a new chicken concept that I want to launch alongside a Dirty Burger and a PizzaEast, with a possible option on a Soho House club on the top deck, and people have suggested Kentish Town,” I said “Brilliant idea. Ace. Top spot. Can’t lose.”

And when he said, “But isn’t Kentish Town a bit of a shithole?” I said, “Kentish Town! A shit hole! Are you MAD? Kentish Town is not, never has been and never, ever will be a shit hole. Kentish Town is hot. Kentish Town is the future. You have my word.”

And so he opened Chicken Shop/Dirty Burger/PizzaEast at the bottom of my road, in sight of my front door, all because of me, all because I told him Kentish Town was not a shithole. And the chickens flew out, the place was rammed, life round here was changed forever – especially for the parents of small children – and it became one of the most successful things Soho House Group had ever done.

I had lied to Jones about Kentish Town not being a shithole though. I lied because it made me angry to hear my successful West London friend talking about KT in those terms. It always makes me angry when outsiders disrespect NW5, and I will always, always fight them on it.

Kentish Town may be a shithole, but it is MY shithole.
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