

Summer 2016

ISSUE 132



THE  
*Simon*  
STAR



[www.simoncommunity.org.uk](http://www.simoncommunity.org.uk)



# STREET WORK

pages 6 & 7



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THANK YOU

The Pavement  
Bloomsbury Baptist Church  
Dylan's Bakery  
St Martin's Gospel Oak  
St Giles in the Fields  
The London Tea Company  
Pret a Manger  
Fareshare  
UPS  
Yateley School  
Kyla for the apples!

All our individual donors and supporters



**Volunteer Barbecue**

Thank you for reading this summer edition of Simon Star and for supporting the Community. We use this newsletter to let you know what is going on and invite you to share your stories.

## CONTENTS

### Cover story

Street Work

page 6 & 7

### News

Welcome to our new Chair  
page 8

No More Deaths On Our Streets  
page 4

### Updates

What's Going On  
page 10

Hello & Goodbye  
page 11

### Other

Welcome  
page 3

Letters From Friends  
page 11

If you have some news to share, or any questions you would like to ask, please get in touch with us at 129 Malden Rd, London NW5 4HS

# WELCOME TO THE SIMON STAR

We welcome you to this summer edition of the Simon Star, we hope that this message finds you well.

We had our AGM at the beginning of April and our Trustees were elected. We also have a new Chair, Jessica Turtle. Jess has an interesting history with the Community which she shares with us in her article on pages 8 & 9.

Director Jamie talks us through an evening that he spent out on street work with volunteer David (picture on front cover).

Full time volunteer Joe gives us his take on the March for the Homeless on pages 4 & 5.

In other news, our services are all running smoothly. The new evening centre continues to go from strength to strength with guests enjoying the hot food and friendly company that is on offer. We will be closing the evening centre when the venue is refurbished over the summer but look forward to providing a great indoor service there again as we head into the Autumn.



**Alex's birthday meal at the house**

# NO MORE DEATHS ON OUR STREETS

## Volunteer Joe tells us what he saw on the march

March with the homeless London on 15th of April (Solidarity not Charity) was organised by Streets Kitchen.

For the whole of that Friday the rain bounced relentlessly off the streets of London and seemed like it would never end. I left Malden Road with two fellow volunteers and we headed into the West End, our eyes squinting into the lashing gale.

Outside the palatial fortress of number ten Downing Street, we gathered with hundreds to 'march with the homeless'. This parade was coordinated by 'Streets Kitchen' through central London to express solidarity with and raise awareness of the growing numbers affected by homelessness in our capital city and beyond.

The wet weather did not dampen the spirits of the march, rather it seemed only to highlight the struggles endured by those who are street homeless. We persevered into the night shouting the mantra 'NO MORE DEATHS ON OUR STREETS!'

The atmosphere was spectacular, even the police that surrounded the

procession couldn't help but give a smile and give a thumbs up as we made eye contact and cheered.

The feeling of caring and compassion amongst the various organisations and individuals was amazing, the amount of times a friendly face would emerge from the crowd drawn by our banner to say 'Ahh the Simon are here! Glad you could make it!' after which there would be an enthusiastic exchange of names and backgrounds.

Although the wind and rain had dwindled the marches numbers down to only a few hundred, the energy and soul radiating from those chanting and thrusting banners into the night sky was one of confidence in our cause.

The sounds of booming music from a speaker trailer steered by a cyclist led the crowd for hours, we looped through central London, down over Waterloo Bridge and then eastward to Tooley Street, London Bridge.

We made a quick pit stop on The Strand to hand out sandwiches to anyone that needed food.



**Volunteers Kriszti, Annie and Elaine at the march**

In the face of diminishing availability of support accessible to vulnerable people we see the effects of austerity measures run deeper and deeper into society and it can make us feel helpless.

But albeit a small shout out in protest, there is hope in the work that we do, and we are not alone in our dedication to offer support to those who need it.

Joe Bailey

There are a few dates when we are not able to host Street Cafe at St Giles in the Fields.

On at least one of these dates we will be having a picnic for our guests. Please look out for updates on facebook for further details.

# STREET WORK

## Director Jamie talks to us about his experience of street work

Recently I realised that street work was the one outreach service that I had not experienced. This was due to it being so late in the evening (and also a bit of procrastination!). So I joined Ilanit who recently joined us as a volunteer, and regular street work volunteer David who has been volunteering on these services for over a decade.

We set out from 129 Malden road with rucksacks full of flasks and sandwiches. Ilanit had also lovingly made some cakes for us to give out. We caught the 24 bus at 9pm which took us to the heart of theatre land in Covent Garden.

From there David took us on his usual route through alleyways and shop fronts. David stopped me and said 'Can you hear that harmonica? That will be John.'

John's head was just visible over the cardboard windbreaker that he had constructed in the doorway. He had lined the floor space also with cardboard to sleep on.

As I poured the tea (far too slowly according to David) John made a point of telling me how much he and the

other guests appreciated the time and effort that David puts into street work, going out three times per week, every week of the year.

'We all wait for David,' he told me, 'he brings us our last cup of tea, and if we urgently need something like shoes or a coat, he will bring them with him next time he comes.'

This theme continued throughout the night, me being slow at making drinks, Ilanit gently offering her cakes and David being greeted with such appreciation that it made him blush and smile. I imagine that the banter and jokes are the same every time he comes out, but still mean the world to those that will barely even get acknowledged by the rest of society on a daily basis.

We also met some new homeless guests who were still in shock that they had found themselves in this situation and had no idea where to go for help. David swiftly gave them the details of our other services and information about day centres, health centres and organisations that they may be able to approach to ask for help in finding accommodation.



**Regular street work volunteer David hands out hot drinks to guests**

The longer people stay on the streets, the more issues arise, so for our guests to have reliable information about where to find help is so valuable.

We have some guests who have been sleeping on London streets for years, even decades. At some point in their street life they must have been approached with offers of help and the possibility of accommodation. We may not understand with a guest's decision to stay on the streets if there is an alternative. We don't need to agree with them, only to remain a constant, accessible presence on the streets,

that way if they change their mind, or decide they have had enough we may be the people they turn to for help.

At 11.30pm I had to leave to catch my last train (David called me a part timer). As I left the street I could see David very gently approaching sleeping guests to put a sandwich and a cake on their cardboard floors. His kindness and generosity of spirit makes such an impact on those who are most in need, we thank him and all our other volunteers for all they do.

Jamie Nalton

# WELCOME TO OUR NEW CHAIR

**Jessica Turtle tells us about her lifelong links to the Community**

It is an honour to write my first article for the Simon Star in my new role as Chair of Trustees.

I was elected at the 2016 AGM after having served as a trustee for two years, but my connection with the Simon Community goes back much further than that.

My Father, Fred Briscoe, first introduced Anton Wallich-Clifford to the many people skipping on the Embankment and is credited in No Fixed Abode with showing Anton what homelessness really means - contributing in no small way to the beginnings of the Simon Community. In turn, as with so many other volunteers, the Simon Community inspired my parents to set up their own project in Cardiff, responding to need in the late 1970s.

My brother and I were born and brought up in the Wallich-Clifford Community - named after Anton. So, this is in my blood and having been brought up in community amongst homeless people I have a deep connection with this organisation means. This is no ordinary charity. It is a precious set of relationships and a way of living and working together

that is sometimes chaotic, sometimes challenging but always rewarding. It is as necessary for today's society as it was in 1963.

Homelessness is once again increasing across the UK. Rough sleeping is up 102% since 2010. The homelessness sector is under pressure, as commissioned funding from central government and local authorities is diminishing rapidly. The safety net that exists for our most marginalised & vulnerable people is quickly being dismantled and the results of this are evident in our day to day work.

The Simon Community is independent and always has been. Therefore, in the context of reduced statutory funding, we are able not only to continue but to expand our work. In the last two years we have done just that and this has only been possible due to generous support from our wider community and in particular our Simon Star subscribers.

Many of you have been long term supporters, enabling the Simon Community to remain independent through the decades. I'd like to thank you for making that happen.



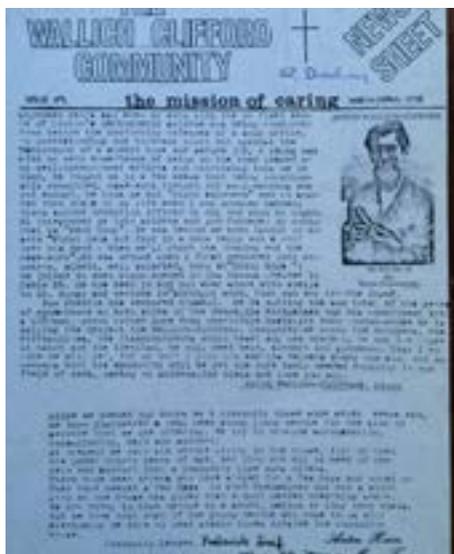
**Wallich-Clifford Community 1982**

In the coming years we will continue to develop the Simon Community.

We have a partnership with Sir Robert McAlpine, Bloomberg and Stanhope plc which will transform 129 Malden Road into a community space for the 21st century whilst staying true to the ethos that has always made St Joe's the very heart of the community.

yl have experience of capital development and fundraising at St Martin-in-the-Fields that I hope will be of use as we move towards this new phase.

I am proud to be serving as Chair in the organisation that changed my father's life and set my parents on



**Wallich-Clifford Community Newsletter**

a very unique path. Meeting and working with MT Gibson-Watt, who has held the community for so many decades and who is staying on as Trustee has been such a pleasure and has taught me a great deal.

It has been very moving to rediscover community as a Trustee and work alongside our wonderful residents, volunteers, staff and board.

The Simon Community recently celebrated its 50th year and I feel very privileged to take on this role as it moves into its next 50.

Jessica Turtle

# WHAT'S GOING ON...

We have quite a full house at the moment with 6 residents and 5 full time volunteers all working hard together to take outreach support out to our guests on the street.

Numbers on the early morning tea runs continue to increase. We started the Friday morning tea run on New Year's Day, less than 6 months later we are now regularly seeing over 100 people on Friday mornings. A few years ago the tea run was a relatively small service, now we are seeing around 600 people on average. We are grateful that we have volunteers who join us for this vital service before they go out to work for the day.

The new evening centre that we reported on in our last issue continues to grow in popularity. We have increased the numbers to invite more guests to join us for a hot meal. This service will be put on hold at the end of May as Bloomsbury Baptists Church is undergoing renovation work. We are looking forward to returning to the church to restart the evening centre in September.

The women's group has welcomed some new guests lately, though they have needed a little encouragement from volunteers to get involved in preparing the food (and taking care

of the dishes!). The members are planning a boat trip soon when it gets a bit warmer and everyone is looking forward to this.

Our weekend street cafe is going well. As the weather warms up we switch from hot soup to cake and squash, but it's not really about the food. Street Cafe provides some time out from the street and a bit of respite from the chaos that is central London on summer weekend afternoons. This is a great service for our new volunteers to come along to as it is really just a coffee and a chat with friends. It is great to see new part time volunteers joining us.

If you are interested in volunteering and have a few hours to spare we would be happy to hear from you...

Please get in touch with us at the office on 0207 485 6639

# LETTERS FROM FRIENDS

Hello,

My name is Ellie and I was once part of a group of students from Yateley Comprehensive School who fundraised and collected items to The Simon Community.

Please use this money as you will - I hope it helps to make a small difference :)

Regards,

Ellie Sherlock

*Dear Ellie,  
Thank you so much for collecting and sending on £200. It certainly will make a difference to our guests on the street. Many thanks to all at Yateley!*

Since the last issue we said a sad goodbye to Yusuke from Japan who spent six months with us as a full time volunteer. In our last issue Yusuke wrote about his experiences in the Community and how much he enjoyed it here.

Everyone who lived and worked with Yusuke will know him as a kind and patient man, he will be missed by all. Yusuke is off on his travels again, this time to Canada to study shiatzu!



## HELLO & GOODBYE

We are lucky to have a full team of volunteers living at the house at the moment. Lena has joined us from Serbia and Kriszti has come over from Hungary. Most recently Joe, who was living and working in London has joined us (you can read an article from Joe about the march on page 4).

We are looking forward to Mark joining us in June for a year when he takes a year out of university to come and join us!

