

Winter 2021

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THE  
*Simon*  
STAR



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THANK YOU

Wenzel's Bakery  
 The Speedomick Foundation  
 St Mark's, Regents Park  
 Vegware Community Fund  
 Zero Degrees  
 QCCA for the oranges  
 Mundy Cruising  
 Judith Bramall for the lovely  
 hand knitted hats

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Thank you for reading this winter 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.

If you would like to update, edit or remove your contact details then please get in touch.

You can email us on [admin@simoncommunity.org.uk](mailto:admin@simoncommunity.org.uk) or call the office on 0207 485 6639

# WELCOME TO THE SIMON STAR

We hope that this winter edition of The Simon Star finds you well and safe.

We have some big news to share! Alan Cole (below) has been made a Patron of The Simon Community in recognition of his many years of commitment and service to the Community.

Alan joined the Community in 1965 and has served in many ways, he is currently a member of the Board of Trustees. Alan is able to visit us again now and is doing well since he had (as he says) a 'touch of the covid's'! Congratulations Alan!

So since we last wrote we have been busy with street work, taking out food, hot drinks, clothes, toiletries and sleeping bags to our guests on the streets. We also had a 'touch of the covid's' (read more about both these things on p.6)

We had an amazing visit to the Secret Museum (p.4) where we shared in reflecting on the grass roots pandemic response of 2020.

After many locked down months of waiting, we finally met baby Pearl! A beautiful picture and the story of how Chris and Claire met is on p.7.



# The Secret Museum

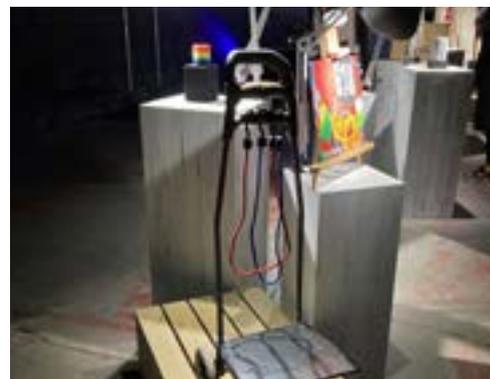
On Tuesday 6 November a group of staff, volunteers and residents visited the Secret Museum; an exhibition by the Museum of Homelessness. "Secret Museum is an invitation into a world of solidarity and underground organising, where the collective aim during 2020 was to save lives and uphold people's human rights". We had been sent the museum guide in the post which included instructions on where to meet as the beginning part of the exhibition was a walking tour and we didn't know where the final location would be – it was very exciting! We met by the BFI I-Max cinema, the site of which used to be the bullring; a cardboard city in Waterloo from about 1978 – 1998. We were told to look out for flamingos and other patrons who were wearing the rainbow sweatbands that we were also sent.

There was a large group of us from all walks of life; grassroots organisations, charities, council workers, members of the public and people that had experienced homelessness, including some people who had lived at the bullring and knew the Community from that time. The exhibition took

us through the streets of Waterloo on a quest of discovery. We had a UV torch to uncover clues about our next destination and museum workers at each spot to give us some site-specific history, talk about some of the stories that had been collected by and shared with the Museum, but also hold pace for reflection and remembrance.

When we got to the final destination it resembled a more traditional museum with objects displayed on well-lit plinths, but again we were surprised. There were no plaques explaining what each item was, instead actors recreated verbatim (they were listening to them through an earpiece) the stories that donors had told about each object. This made the stories feel very personal, allowing us to connect with them on a more emotional level. The Simon Community had donated an object and it was particularly moving to see this story being told and seeing its effect on other people.

The object we donated was a trolley of Fred's, a resident who was living with us at the beginning of the first Covid lockdown, but who found a move-on option



before the second one. His trolley (pictured above) is notorious as we all considered it to be the Rolls Royce of trolleys! When a lot of our services had to stop during lockdown we were going onto the streets with more things for guests than the usual street work and were finding it hard to find trolleys strong enough to carry everything. Fred gave us his trolley so that we could carry out more things easily, but it was more than that, it was a symbol of his intention to never return to the streets.

Another object was a tin of Lapsang Souchong tea that had been donated by someone who used to sleep at Heathrow but was put up in a hotel during the 'Everyone In' initiative during the pandemic, he is now back at Heathrow. We were given a cup of it as part of the journey to the museum, but did not recognise its significance until later. At Christmas he used to buy himself a tin of this

special tea the smell of which would remind him of who he is, no matter where he was. It was a symbol of his humanity and his effort to retain a sense of self.

When the stories had finished being told we were invited into a cosy space to share thoughts on the piece and feelings arising from it. It was an opportunity to reflect on a collective trauma but also something that had created unique opportunities for working together, breaking barriers and creating new options for some of our friends on the streets. It felt cathartic to look back and acknowledge the chaos and fear of that time, but also the huge feeling of solidarity and determination that no one get left behind as well as commemorating the effort (physical, emotional and logistical!) that that took.

The exhibition ran from 27 October – 6 November 2021.



## WHAT'S GOING ON...

We were seeing quite high numbers of guests on the street throughout the summer, this has come down a little bit now. However, we are worried for people with the cold weather ahead.

Back in the summer we got a £3000 grant from The Speedomick Foundation for supplies for the winter street work which will really help.

In October we had a bit of a brush with covid. Two resident members tested positive after one of them fell ill, and a staff member was also unwell. Everyone was fully recovered fairly quickly. We had a plan in place in the house to move the outreach equipment out and it worked. We were able to keep going and not miss any of our street work visits.

At the start of the pandemic when we had to adapt the services we agreed that our priority was to be consistent. At the time there was so much uncertainty and so many things had closed. Life for our guests changed very quickly and drastically. We knew that whatever we said we were going to do next, we had to be able to commit to and keep going, even if some of us got ill. So it was reassuring this October that when this happened all services went out uninterrupted.

We had our first face to face Board meeting this September and have our first Community Meeting booked for 13th December. It has been difficult for people to get together for a long time, and not everyone has access to the internet or can hear or see well enough to meet on zoom, so we are looking forward to this.

We have heard from Jeremias who has settled into his studies back in Germany. Stella is settling in well and is getting to know everyone. Anton who was with us in 2018 is coming back to visit us at Christmas while he is on holiday from his studies in Glasgow.



**Michael winning at the Friday games!**

## WELCOME PEARL!



We met at the back of the old van handing out sandwiches as part of the team running the Street Café, with Chelsea running from here to there and back again, Metal overseeing the teas and coffees, and Alan telling Claire all the old tales that Chris had heard many times before.

We definitely couldn't have imagined that it would lead to us having such great news to share with everyone just 4 years later...we made a Simon Community baby!

Pearl Elowen Francis arrived with us in April 2021, and in keeping with her fellow Community members she is certainly a character. We honestly couldn't have been happier to introduce her to our Community friends recently in London and now to share this news with our many friends around the world.

## THANK YOU!

**James Nelson** for the copies of his book No More Walls

**Judith Bramall** for her wonderful donation which included hand-knitted hats that went down a storm!

**Nat Dorrington** from Mundy Cruising for the donations for streetwork

**Speedomick Foundation** for their grant to help us through winter

**St Mark's Church**, Regents Park for the clothes donation

**Queen's Crescent Community Centre** for their donation of oranges for street work

**Vegware** for their donation of paper cups and bags for street work

**Wenzels Bakery**, West Hampstead for it's regular donation of sandwiches, pastries and pasties for street work

**Zero Degrees** for their donation of sleeping bags

And to all of our donors and supporters who enable us to carry on our work

