

“The Community Festival exists to celebrate our diverse community — The People Live Here. ”

Rebecca Hossack

I have always longed to live in Ancient Greece. Athens, during its Golden Age over two millennia ago, has always represented my ideal of urban living.

Modern governments, shrouded in bureaucracy, have seemed to become increasingly remote from the public they serve so it is difficult not to feel a sense of impotence. Even at the local government level one can feel powerless both when laws are imposed and when one is denied any role or debate in their creation.

Hence my dream of the open market place in Ancient Greece—the Agora. A place where citizens go to debate how their city is to be shaped, how it is to be run and how they—who live there—wish it to be.

“Hence my dream of the open market place in Ancient Greece—the Agora. A place where citizens go to debate how their city is to be shaped, how it is to be run and how they—who live there—wish it to be.”

Too often these days people complain, "They" have done this . . . ;'Do you see what "they" have done now? . . . The familiar and frequent plight of modern man against an anonymous "'They" is something we do not suffer from in Fitzrovia. *We are they.*

Thanks to the Fitzrovia Campaign and the tireless work of Stefano and his team, what we have here in Fitzrovia, deciding and working together for our future, is not so different from those blessed Athenians.

Rebecca Hossack is the owner of the Rebecca Hossack Gallery at 35 Windmill Street, Fitzrovia.

Community-wide initiatives and events are by no means new to Fitzrovia—as the committee of the Community Festival remind us in an overview of the history of the annual Fitzrovia Festival on the back page. I have also just re-read Nick Bailey's book *Fitzrovia* (Nick is another local resident) and he tells us that the Tottenham Court Fair provided respite and enjoyment for the area's residents and workers at weekends and public holidays throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, drawing people from far and wide. The Clubhouse Community Centre in Cleveland Street began work in 1958 and the Fitzrovia Neighbourhood Centre in Tottenham Street in 1975. Local amenity groups such as the Charlotte Street Association (founded in 1970) continue to contribute much to the area. The Fitzrovia Festival itself started in 1973 and *The Tower News*, the predecessor of *Fitzrovia News* started in the 1970s.

Fitzrovia Today, the business-led precursor of the partnership started in 1993. It seems fitting that much of this latter energy and initiative comes from the area's restaurateurs, men and women who have hospitality in their bones. Fitzrovia has always been a "living" and hospitable community, looking after its own and extending its welcome far and wide.

