

Broadway Market News

TROUBLE AT NUMBER 71

71 Broadway Market was an empty shell, home only to pigeons when Lowell 'Spirit' Grant took it off the Council's hands in 1993 and agreed to renovate it and bring it back into use. After spending six years and £40,000 of his own money, Spirit opened up his shop, 'The Nutritious Food Galley', where he sells fresh fruit and veg, fish and Caribbean foods.

But in 2001 the Council gave him just 28 days to come up with £100,000 or he would find himself with a new private sector landlord. Spirit went along to the estate agents' offices hours before the property went up for auction and handed over a 10% deposit cheque for £10,000. Later that day, Spirit saw his property being sold again at auction to an offshore developer, for £15,000 less than he was prepared to pay.

Spirit spent 4 years trying to find out exactly who his landlords were so that he could pay his rent. Eventually he tracked them down to The Bahamas but the company started possession proceedings against him for non-payment of rent.

The landlords now have an Eviction Warrant ready to enforce at their will pending an appeal by Spirit. The Council's own Fraud Investigators and the Police

have spent 2 years trying to get to the bottom of what really happened at the auction where Spirit was cheated out of his property and now even Scotland Yard has launched an investigation. Even so, none of this may be enough to convince the judges that Spirit should not be evicted.

At a public meeting on January 16th, Deputy Mayor of Hackney, Jessica Crowe, announced that the Council was 'sorry that the paperwork on this case was not as good as it should be', although she expressed no real regret that this would lead to Spirit and his children being thrown out on the street. Nor did she announce that the Council were prepared to do anything to prevent this from happening.

Hackney Council has the power to intervene and to buy back 71 Broadway Market (as well as number 34) from the current landlords, to be sold or given back to Spirit and Tony. But they fear a flood of claims from the many other former leaseholders who have faced similar problems and who would be likely to make a claim if they give in now.

So Spirit must now pay the price for the Council's incompetence. That price is his livelihood and his family home.



Lovell 'Spirit' Grant in his shop on Broadway Market



Picket outside Spirit's letting agent in Balham

TWO RESULTS

A DAY IN COURT

Spirit attended Shoreditch County Court on Friday January 27th to face lawyers representing his Landlords. The lawyers were desperately trying to secure his immediate eviction.

But the judge was having none of it. He forced the Landlords to give Spirit a chance.

Spirit has serious rent arrears as didn't want to pay rent until he knew who his landlords were, and his rent went up by 710% when his property was sold!. The judge ordered that he must cough up £3,000 as an initial payment against some of his arrears but that the court is also prepared to hear his appeal against eviction.

THE COUNCIL TRIES TO HELP..

The Deputy Mayor, Jessica Crowe, has now personally apologised to Spirit, and has offered 9 possible different council-owned properties for him to choose from. However none of the properties are in the area, none have accommodation, and they are all too expensive.

Spirit seeks to remain in 71 Broadway Market - this has been his home and household since 1993 and he wishes to stay put.

The story of the occupation of Tony's cafe so far...

On Sunday November 27th Francesca's cafe was occupied to prevent its demolition by developer Dr Roger Wratten. Wratten wanted to build luxury flats on the site. He had already evicted Tony Platia in July 2005. Tony had been in Broadway Market for 31 years.

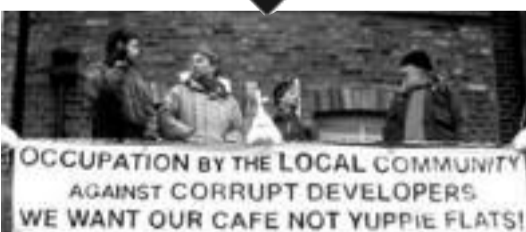
The occupied cafe soon became a focus for fun, unity and pride.



On Thursday December 15th over 130 people came to St. Michael's Church Hall to vent their anger over the situation. No Labour councillors were able to attend this meeting.



But in a surprise counter-attack on Boxing Day locals reoccupied the building, and then proceeded to rebuild it! Local people have proved that they can do anything when they work together.



On 9th December the protesters went to court. Dr Wratten wanted a possession order to evict them. Over 50 local people turned up in support. Although the hearing took all day Wratten's legal team won and an eviction was definite.

On Wednesday December 21st sheriffs officers under the orders of The Dark Lord of Kent, a.k.a. Dr. Roger Wratten, retook 34 Broadway Market. Wratten's stooges then proceeded to demolish half the building with sledgehammers.



Any further eviction at Tony's cafe will not be the end of the story!

Broadway Market Public Meeting January 16th

On Monday January 16th over 250 people packed into St Michael's Church Hall in Lansdowne Drive to seek explanations and vent their anger over the plight of Tony and Spirit.

Everyone present was left in no doubt as to the passion, power and anger which came from the meeting. We are hopeful that Jessica Crowe, the Deputy Mayor of Hackney, and the many other council officers and elected representatives who also attended, now understand the depth of feeling and strength of the support behind our campaign.

The overwhelming message to the council from everyone at the meeting could be summed up as follows: we want justice for Tony and Spirit and for all the other people

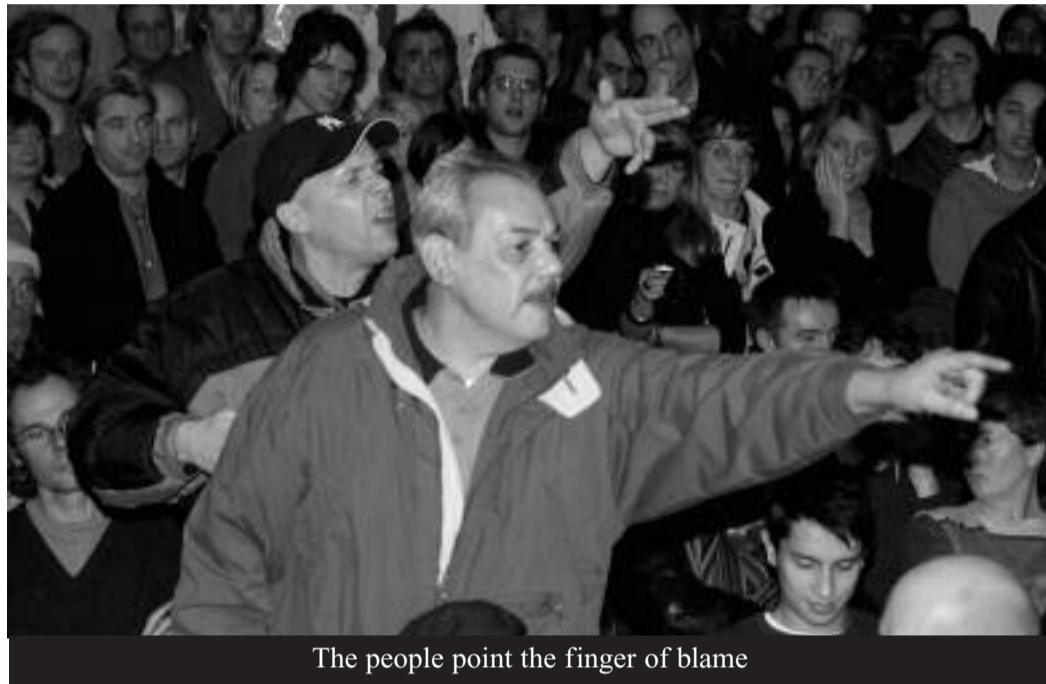
in the area on the blunt end of the council's 'regeneration' policy. It is us, not developers, that the council is supposed to represent, and our interests must come first.

As we re-stated at the meeting, we will stay in the cafe until they push us out. If they do push us out, we will come back. If they try and evict Spirit we are ready and willing to defend him and his home. Together, we can and will get justice for Tony and Spirit, and we won't stop until we do.

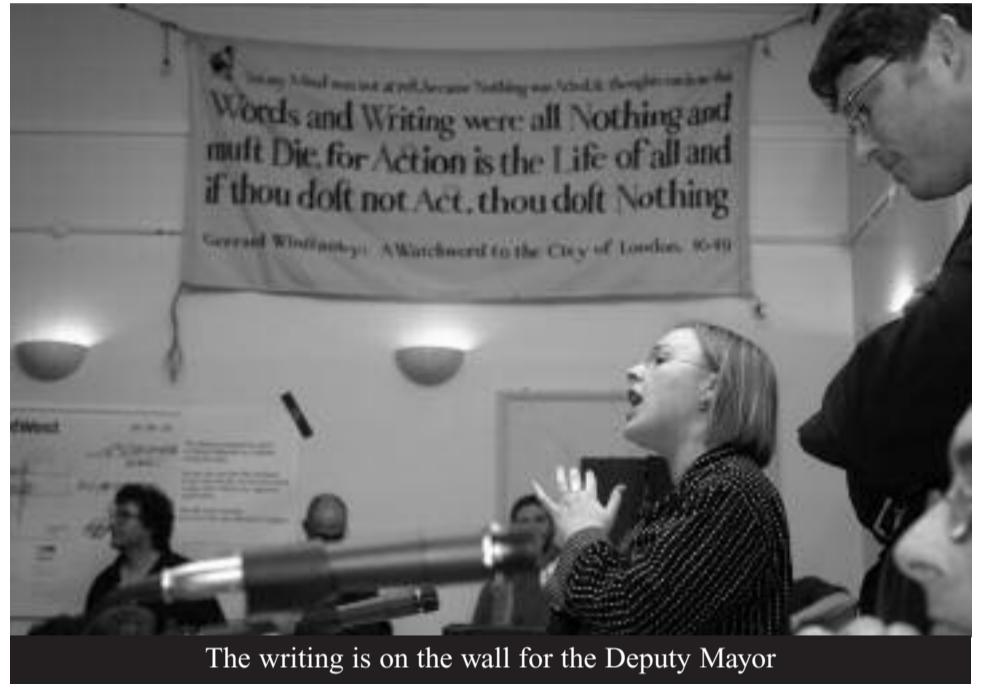
Thanks again to everyone who came to the meeting - particularly Spirit whose moving testimony cut through the doublespeak and denials from Jessica Crowe.



The chair of the meeting, Reverend Campbell Taylor, tries to calm the baying crowd



The people point the finger of blame



The writing is on the wall for the Deputy Mayor

Comments take from our website at <http://34broadwaymarket.omweb.org>

“As one of the "Occupiers" of 34, I just wanted to let off steam about the public meeting.

Who and what the hell is Jessica Crowe? There was nothing personable or even semi-human about her reaction to the heart rending speech made by Spirit.

For anyone that missed the meeting it was filmed and you should endeavour to get yourself a copy just to discover what kind of "Wet Fish" Hackney people have been voting for! We have a Deputy Shark! For heavens sakes where are the Betty Shanks of this world women with BALLS to stand up for what they believe in?

To all the other people that took time to attend the meeting I give a massive thank you. Tell all your friends. Lets swell our numbers because if we weren't angry enough last night how will Hackney cope with thousands of us?!!!"

“Anyone attending this meeting could not help but feeling shocked at the calous attitude of Jessica Crow. When challenged by one of the people attending the meeting on the way out as to whether she had any concerns about loosing her voters, she apparently replied that the people who had been present "weren't Labour voters anyway". They surely won't be now. Wake up Jessica!!!"

“I wasn't able to make it either but I really wish that I had been there, it was really heart warming to see the pictures and see the masses of people that turned up. I'm fuming at the council, their "cock up" has cost Tony and Spirit so much and they turn around and say it can't be reversed”

“Why is it that when they make a mistake somebody else has to pay for it? What angers me the most is that I used to see how hard Tony worked, even when he was rushed off his feet he'd still find time for a little chat and make me a blinding sarnie, and for his cafe to be swept from under his feet after so much hard work well it's just sickening. Similarly I know Spirit built up the Food Galley to become what it

is today, and not only is that his livelihood but his home, I mean, what the hell is wrong with Hackney Council?

I just really hope and pray that you get justice, your spirit and determination are truly inspiring. I'm so glad that you're showing Wratten what community is all about, something he clearly oblivious to. I wish you all the best, keep up the great work!!"

To add your own comments go to the website and join the forum!



Read all about it! Making the worlds news...

Over the last two months events along Broadway Market have not only made the national newspapers but also been reported in over 20 different countries...

of dirty tricks as Dr Wrattens wife admitted: "I have gone in under cover. I asked one protester what was going on and he told me".

Meanwhile *The Independent* made the link between local property 'developers' and the 2012 Olympics: "they could be forgiven for checking the skies in case showers of cash were to fall from the clouds".

The Italian media, picking up on Tony's Sicilian background, reported his struggle in the second highest circulation Italian daily, *La Repubblica*, and on Italian national TV news channel, RAI.

In Germany, articles have appeared in *Der Spiegel* and *Der Berliner Gazette*.

Online the story has been followed closely by Indymedia, Hackney Independent, Metamute, Lib-com and Urban75. Tony told news site Schnews: "The support of the community has been brilliant, they've been all Sicilians here, except without the shotguns".

The Broadway Market occupation even merits an inclusion under 'Gentrification' in online encyclopedia Wikipedia.

Groundbreaking Korean news service *OhmyNews* highlighted the disappearance of the greasy spoon caff in the UK and noted that "The dispute over Francesca's has become a matter of international diplomacy".

Television coverage has come from ITN London Tonight, BBC London, Channel 4, SkyNews and even as far away as Australia.

As the world-wide media continue to doorstep No 34 Broadway Market it's clear the issues at stake are ones that resonate in towns and cities across the globe.

The story first hit the news headlines in early December with a front page splash in the *Hackney Gazette* saying "We Mean Business".

The Guardian brought the story to a national readership on December 7 and asked "What happens when Britain's third-poorest borough gets a taste of regeneration?"

The *Evening Standard* (Dec 9) followed this up with a tale

DVD of the January 16 meeting on sale now!

A 40 minute edit of the packed and angry meeting that took place in support of the protest. Probably unlike anything you've seen before. £5. Pop along to 34 Broadway Market for your copy or through our website at <http://34broadwaymarket.omweb.org>

All proceeds go to funding the campaign

T-shirts: All sizes, £10



The £500 raised will go to Spirit's legal fighting fund