

The BILLINGSGATE GOSSIP

THE LONDON FISH & POULTRY RETAIL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2007

CJ joins the FC

by CHRIS LEFTWICH

Following on last year from their decision to admit ladies on to the livery, the Fishmongers' Company recently appointed CJ Jackson, Director of the Billingsgate Seafood Training School on to the livery.

The Fishmongers' Company, who exercise ancient rights over the quality of fish sold at Billingsgate is one of the last of the Great 12 livery companies to admit ladies. The very first lady to



• CJ Jackson joins the elite

join the livery was her Royal Highness the Princess Royal. She was closely followed by Libby Woodhatch, the Director of Seafood Scotland.

CJ now joins an exclusive bunch of ladies but hopefully will not get too lonely at livery functions as the Company will be admitting several more ladies over the next few years.

This is a great honour for CJ and is a recognition of all the years of hard work she has put into promoting fish and the fish industry, and more recently her work at the Seafood School.

Billingsgate on the move?

Recommendations in the *Wholesale market review*, published recently, could see the consolidation of London's markets

By Nadia Elghamry and Stacey Meadwell.

Recommendations made recently to the Greater London Authority could release up to 79 acres of land for redevelopment in central and fringe locations.

The Wholesale markets review, covering London's five principal wholesale food and flower markets - Smithfields, Billingsgate New Spitalfields, New Covent Garden and Western International - was conducted on behalf of the GLA by engineering and environmental consultancy URS.

The list of suggestions will help inform planning policy for the sites and alterations to the London Plan, although final decisions will lie with the market's owners.

The market review advises consolidation of the markets, with Billingsgate and Smithfields likely to move to either New Spitalfields in Leyton, E10, or New Covent Garden, SW8. The relocation of these two markets alone would release 23 acres for redevelopment. Both are owned by the Corporation of London.

Phased approach.

In the short to medium term, URS advocates a phased approach, with Billingsgate fish market relocated first. This would free up the 13-acre site near Docklands. Experts believe

the site could be worth up to £675m and accommodate up to 4m sq.ft. of commercial development.

Finding a buyer will not be difficult, believes Chris Williams-Ellis, director at Atisreal. "The site is hugely valuable. Canary Wharf Group will swoop at it fast and hard!"



he said. "It owns everything around the site but has no more developable spaces, and all its sites are frozen," he adds. He points to the groups proposed Shed 35 scheme, where movement is stymied by the Crossrail project and the neighbouring Riverside project scheme, which Williams-Ellis says is, location wise, isolated from current development.

Billingsgate could be ready for redevelopment and Williams-Ellis believes its new owner would develop an office-lead scheme.

BILLINGSGATE SEAFOOD TRAINING SCHOOL

Dear Colleagues

Welcome to the 'Monsoon Gossip' with plenty going on at the School. Our Masterclasses have been a great success this spring/ summer with our Knife Skills Masterclass and Sushi and Sashimi days getting rave reviews. Watch out for more of these to come as we focus on expanding our range of courses for professional courses for Fishmongers and Chefs.

We have really enjoyed working with Andy Ross (Deputy Head) and the young people from Royal Docks School this summer. The students have been working towards our City & Guilds course.

A massive thank you to all the merchants (Bards, Viviers, J. Bennett (Billingsgate) Ltd, J. Bennett Jnr, C.J. Newnes, A.A. Lyons, and James Nash) that have given the students work experience on the market floor. Please see the article written by Andy Ross overleaf.

On a personal note it was great to join Libby Woodhatch and Jason Combes on their wedding day, Saturday 07.07.07. Libby is an old friend and well known on the market, now Chief Executive of Seafood Scotland and also a Trustee of the School.

The wonderful day was held in sunny Salcombe with the wedding breakfast being a fabulously fishy affair, followed by dancing and celebrating until the early hours.

Our latest course dates can be seen below, these are regularly updated on our website www.seafoodtraining.org. All profits from these commercial courses help us deliver free training to encourage young people both into the trade and to eat more fish and shellfish as part of a healthy diet.



• Jack DeSantos from The Royal Docks Community School (left) and Bill Lyons

Best wishes,

Adam Whittle

Deputy Director

Billingsgate Seafood Training School

Latest course dates & availability at Billingsgate Seafood Training School

For more details come to Office 30,
call 020 7517 3548 or visit:
www.seafoodtraining.org

FULL DAYS @ BILLINGSGATE

CJ Jackson - Catch of the Day
Full Day Courses (6.15 – 2.15pm)

Working with seasonal species

Catch of the Day - 8th August
Sorry Fully Booked, waiting list available
Catch of the Day - 23rd August
Catch of the Day - 14th September, 26th September -
Sorry Fully Booked, waiting list available.
Catch of the Day - 12th October
Sorry Fully Booked, waiting list available.
Catch of the Day - 26th October
Catch of the Day - 6th November - Shellfish Catch of the Day, 8th
November, 15th November
Catch of the Day - 5th December, 8th December, 13th December
- Seafood Extravaganza.

MASTERCLASSES AT BILLINGSGATE

Sushi and Sashimi Master Class - 7th September
Sorry Fully Booked, 13th September.
Game Masterclass - Saturday 17th November

Full Day at Fishmongers' Hall - Steve Pini Masterclass

Wednesday 12th September Fully Booked, waiting list available.
Wednesday 21st November

SATURDAYS @ BILLINGSGATE

Catch of the Day Seafood Saturdays

1/2 day course (8.30 – 12.30pm approx)
Saturday 8th September - Catch of the Day with Eithne Neame
Saturday 29th September - Catch of the Day -
Sorry fully booked - waiting list
Saturday 27th October - Catch of the Day -
Sorry fully booked - waiting list
Saturday 24th November - Catch of the Day
Saturday 8th December - Catch of the Day

Passionate about Seafood Days with Duncan & Sue Lucas

Full Day Course (8.30pm – 3.30pm approx) Hands on knife skills
and cookery demonstration.
Saturday 4th August 2007 - Passionate about Fish - Fully booked,
waiting list.
Saturday 18th August - Passionate about Shellfish.
Saturday 13 October 2007 - Passionate about Shellfish
Sunday 28th October 2007 - Passionate TBA.
Saturday 3rd November 2007 - Passionate about Fish.



Mastering the Art

Saturday 11th August - *Sorry, fully booked, waiting list .*
Saturday 1st September
Saturday 15th September
Saturday 6th October
Saturday 20th October
Saturday 10th November
Saturday 1st December

PARENT AND CHILD SEAFOOD COOKERY COURSE

Saturday 22nd September

PUBLIC KNIFE SKILLS

Thursday 11th October
Friday 9th November
Friday 7th December

Quality Assessment of Seafood (Fish and Shellfish) for EHOs

Friday 17th August – Fish Quality Assessment
Friday 21st September – Shellfish Quality Assessment
Friday 23rd November - Fish Quality Assessment

Introduction to Fishmongering

Wednesday 29th August
Thursday 18th October

Get into Fishmongering

Wednesday 22nd August
Tuesday 9th October

City & Guilds Seafood Retail Course

Monday 17th - Tuesday 18th September

Escorted Market Tours of Billingsgate

Friday 24th August

EVENINGS AT BILLINGSGATE

The market is closed and quiet at this time of the day, but it is the perfect time to join us at the school for an informal evening, glass or two of wine and hands on fish preparation and cooking.

12th September – Crab, dover sole + one seasonal species
24th October – Scallops & seabass + one seasonal species
7th November – Snapper & mahi mahi + one seasonal species

Fish 'n' a dish evening course

9th August - Sea bass and sea bream *Fully booked, waiting list.*
25th September – Sea bass & sea bream
Fully booked, waiting list.
4th October - Sea bass and sea bream
23rd October – Squid & cuttlefish
6th November - Scallops

Seafood Evenings

12th September – Crab, dover sole + one seasonal species
24th October – Scallops & seabass + one seasonal species
7th November – Snapper & mahi mahi + one seasonal species

MONDAYS @ BILLINGSGATE

Fish Cooking Mondays at Billingsgate
15th October - Every which way with Salmon.
12th November - Working with Seasonal Species.

**Seafood
Job Finder**

Fish Filleter required at Wicker Fisheries Ltd at their factory on Stour Road. Contact John Exley at: Unit 6 Stour Rd, London E3 2NT Telephone 020 8986 9213, Fax Number 020 8986 1167

Operations Manager - Chamberlain & Thelwell (Billingsgate)
£30-£40K Chamberlain & Thelwell operates a well respected business based at the world famous Billingsgate Market. The business includes wholesale, processing and catering supply divisions with their own top quality restaurant, Chamberlain's at Ledenhall Market in the City. They are currently looking for an experienced individual who can take on the exciting and challenging Operations Manager's role within their Processing Division, to continue to deliver excellent service within a growing business.
Contact should be made directly to:
Jeff Steadman on 020 7537 3412 or jeff@chamberlainthelwell.co.uk

Fish Filleter required at Jefferson Seafoods in Looe. For details about the business look here <http://www.jeffersons-seafoods.co.uk>
Contact Andrew or Peter on our customer service line available on (01503) 269 076.

For enquiries about
The Billingsgate Seafood Training School
please contact Adam Whittle,
Office 30,
Billingsgate Market,
London E14 5ST.
Tel: 020 7517 3545
Fax: 020 7517 3535

E-mail: newsletter@seafoodtraining.org
Web: www.seafoodtraining.org

“Work with fish? you must be joking”

This was one comment made when a training course at Billingsgate Seafood Training School was offered to a group of 16 year old students at The Royal Docks Community School, Custom House, E16. However, there were others with different opinions and surprisingly it was those who hadn't been the hardest workers in school and some who had been in trouble outside of school.

So, in June eight boys of different abilities and from different backgrounds began the course. During this month the boys were taught by staff from the Training School and fishmongers, the foundation skills of filleting and gutting, identification of species, quality control and cooking techniques. Not surprising the student who had been hard working at school continued this attitude during the course but the revelation was the other seven who followed his lead and were fully involved in the course.

Many of the boys admitted it was the most work they had ever done during a day and the sense of achievement on their faces, was a sign that they had not only learnt skills but they had begun to believe they could be successful.

Thanks to the co-operation of merchants at Billingsgate a days work experience was organised to give the boys a real taste of work. All the boys arrived on time and completed the work. Thanks to the merchants they learnt new skills and really got a feel for life at Billingsgate.

Mr Andy Ross, Deputy Headteacher at The Royal Docks Community School, commented, “For some of the students on this course it is not exaggerating to say this course has been life changing. They have been given the self belief that they can achieve, learn new skills and realise that hard work means success. I am a lot more confident that these students will now leave school with a focus to go onto training or work and have opportunities,



• *Charlie Caisey and the lads from
The Royal Docks Community School*

rather than be tempted by crime and anti-social behaviour. It is heartening to find that places like Billingsgate still exist with the traditional values of hard work and reliability are held and merchants are willing to give young people the opportunity to succeed even though some have made mistakes in the past. I have two lasting memories of the course, firstly, seeing some boys who couldn't work for five minutes in school, studying practical and written fishmonger skills for around five hours!!

thank you

Secondly, seeing the enthusiasm and sense of achievement on the faces of the boys after completing their work experience, people laughed that this group would be at work between 2-3 am and be able to handle the work at Billingsgate, as many couldn't

get to school on time!! On behalf of the school I would like to thank the team at the Seafood Training School and all the staff and merchants who work at Billingsgate for giving these students the opportunity, the time and experience.

It has certainly made a difference to these young people's lives.”

Since the end of the course, four of the boys have been offered Saturday/holiday work by merchants and one is being offered work at a fishmongers.

The other three are looking to discover if any other merchants require Saturday work. Two who have been given work are now hoping to find full time work in September on the market.

Working with fish a joke? No way for these students, many are earning money and all been given a skill for life. Which is no laughing matter....

Farewell and good luck you two

John 'Salmon' Stone of J Bennett (Billingsgate) Ltd

by **ANDY SMITH**

No more the cries of "need a salmon", John will sort you out. "Which is best farmed or wild?" ask John at Bennetts. "How much is salmon worth today?" see John he'll know. The end of an era, another "Gentleman" of Billingsgate heads off into well earned retirement.

John has been down the Gate since the early sixties when as a teenager he decided to test the waters of the fishing industry. He took to it immediately and by the late seventies became MD of J Bennett, then part of Associated Fisheries, and finally got to call the company his own when he led a successful Management Buy-Out at the end of the nineties. Along with his Co-Directors and staff he managed to build the name of Bennett into the well known and respected one it is today.

In his early days with salmon the work was seasonal dealing with wild salmon and sea trout from all four corners of the UK. Seven days a week would see fish arriving by lorry and train into London. Armed with a handful of labels, an opening iron and an endless supply of ice, John could be found out in the lorry park of the old Market marking up Tay and Berwick boxes of salmon and grilse for the smokers and the freshers alike, Sundays would see them come in to re-ice the mountain of wooden boxes of salmon in the shop ready for the next weeks trading.

Between seasons John travelled the country to meet his suppliers and put a face to the voice on the end of the phone. Through this he built up the respect, trust and friendship of fishermen, still dealing with the company today. However changes were on the horizon and John had to adapt to them very quickly or fall behind as a market leader. The introduction of farmed salmon from Norway and Scotland meant the king of fish being available 52 weeks of the year, gradually pushing wild salmon into more and more of a support act, as more licences each year are given over to sport fishing.

However John was part of the revolution and quickly became known as an authority on farmed salmon, and as he had before soon built up a good relationship with the farmers of Norway and Scotland.

Over the years more changes were to come and although at times he was sceptical about some of them he was never frightened to try something different, saying things like "salmon fillets will never take off", only to be proved wrong. The passing of the years never saw Johns enthusiasm or thirst for knowledge wane and he was still learning right up until the day he retired. However John was not just about salmon and along with his late friend and fellow director John Shelton was responsible for helping to introduce Billingsgate to the delights of "Exotic Fish" from around the world, Snappers, Parrot, Tuna, Sword, Groupers, Breems, to name but a few.

John was a great Boss, Guv'nor, and Friend to all who worked with him, and will be sorely missed down the Gate. What will he do now at 2am without work, bit early to start gardening.

It only remains to wish him all the very best in his retirement and to let him know there is always a Bennett carrier bag for him to take round the market when he visits old friends and colleagues.

Michael Desmond

by **ROSHAN PERSAD**

Michael Desmondone might ask who's this? Surely everyone knows Michael at Billingsgate and elsewhere within the City of London Corporation as well as outside...

Michael started working at Billingsgate Market on the 16th December 1985 as a cleaner and some years later he applied for the post of Assistant Administrative Officer in the then Clerk and Superintendent's Office, where he was successful and continued working at Billingsgate Market but no longer as a cleaner but as an Assistant Administrative Officer to which he remained until retirement on the 21st August 2007.

Michael has always been a friend to one and all at the market, always willing to help and go that extra mile if needed, always willing to share his experiences and jokes on the market floor with all, always trying to be happy and trying to cope with issues and resolve them even though it may not be part of his job.

Michael always had time to say hello and educate people. be it on the history of the market, current affairs or just a good chin wag (stress release from the office). He also had time to speak about religious issues to individuals who were willing to hear. Michael has been a very close work colleague and a personal friend to a lot of people including myself. Michael voice was clear and crisp so he was the person that did most of the announcements made on the tannoy including bereavement, birthdays, wedding wishes and illegally parked vehicles.

Michael also had a laugh and a joke with the porters/tenants/merchants, sometimes on the receiving end where his ties have been cut into two or being placed inside a bin or even been stripped to his pants in the corridors, all good fun...remember the speech he made at Mr. Butcher's leaving do in the Seafood Training School..... no other place like Billingsgate Market in the entire world.

One of Michael highlights in his career whilst working in the office was him obtaining his ECDL Computer Qualification. He was at the right old age of 63 when he achieved that. just goes to show "you're never too old to learn".

Michael has also assisted beyond his normal duties in the office by assisting and partaking in the past years in The Lord Mayor's Shows, The Hays Galleria Oyster and Seafood Festival, The Harvest Festival, Introduction to Billingsgate Market (short film), The Annual Lord Mayor's Visit and being the most recognisable PR person who has undertaken many guided tours of Billingsgate where everyone has learnt something at the end of it, be it historical, factual, fiction or funny.

So what can I say....to the question first asked at the beginning, the answer lies within.....all the best for the future from your friends

...and it's goodbye from us

The LFPRA and indeed the National Federation of Fishmongers would like to say an enormous thank you Michael for all his enthusiastic help he has always readily given .

Enjoy a long and happy retirement. At least you won't have to face Charlie saying "Mike can you just..."

Good luck mate it has been a pleasure to know you.

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Still listening?

Recently on taking a group of young people around the Market to give them a look at the fish trade I could not stop thinking why do we convey such a negative outlook? As I explained to these young people the many aspects of the industry as I see it, I asked them to think about just how many people are involved in bringing the fish to your plate. From the trawlerman to the fishmonger in the High street and explaining how I had seen the trade change so much over the years.

Then asking people in the Market how long you been in the trade? The answer - "too long". Then surprised looks all round when you ask a porter to say something good about the job or the salesperson who says "you must be mad".

Enter the 'caff' and the same old tales - why do it then? To add a more positive note to this subject I am delighted to see that several merchants have taken the opportunity to give some of these young people the chance to get work experience. Well done!

Please give us an update for the next issue.

Oh my cod!

In February 1967 I purchased two stone of cod fillet in Billingsgate Market at twenty-eight shillings a stone, that's two shillings a pound -10p to you young 'uns. Two very well known fishmongers, Mr. Sam Stoller and Mr. Nat Jacobs both declared "The games finished".

My local and rather superb fishmonger showed me his recent fish purchase book. He had just paid £10 a kilo, that's four pounds fifty four pence a pound. The poor old trade is taking a long time to die!

By the way, a ton of potatoes costs around £2,000!

Congratulations

Following on from Adam's piece on the marriage of Libby Woodhatch and Jason Coombs which took place in July. Many people in the market will know of Libby and we are sure you will join the London Retail Association in wishing them both a long and happy life together

Thank you

I don't know. It's like buses. You wait for years for somebody to submit a story to the Gossip and then two come along at once. Our thanks go to all those who contributed to this issue of the Gossip. Let's see how many we get next time?

Fishcraft at Hays

Have you registered for the NFF British Fish Craft competition yet? If not, forms are available to download from the NFF website at: www.fishmongers-federation.co.uk

Obituaries

Sam Hart

We are sad to report the death of yet another much loved character of Billingsgate, Sam Hart. We understand that Sam was in his 84th year. The London Retail Fish & Poultry Association extend their condolences to the friends and family.

Billy Rhodes (William Murphy)

A cheery face which most of us would see as we entered the market hall each morning will be sadly missed. 'Billy' Rhodes the porter for A.H. Cox. 'Billy' had worked in Billingsgate for 47 years. Always quick to give a witty reply and never short of a story to tell. What so many of us did not know was Billy Rhodes was in fact William Murphy. The name of 'Rhodes' was we believe a previous relative. Goodbye 'Billy' and thanks for the memories



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Get it off yer chest..

Send your gripes or even valid points of view to: The Gossip, 67 Albany Road, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 4AE.