

# Halloween – done Fireworks – done Christmas – loading

IT seems to get earlier every year – and in a week where people were still letting off rockets for fireworks for Bonfire Night, the starting-gun was fired on Christmas.

You know it's getting close when St Pancras International unveils its festive tree on the concourse – coming up with a seemingly more spectacular installation every year.

This year's creation is based on a rotating music box, with buttons for passers-by to select the chiming tunes.

But what has really tugged on the heart strings – even more so

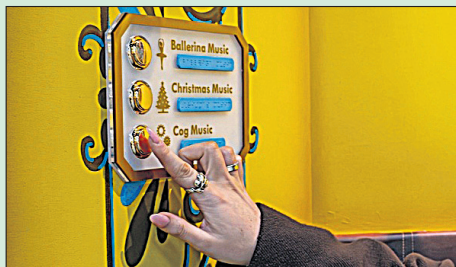
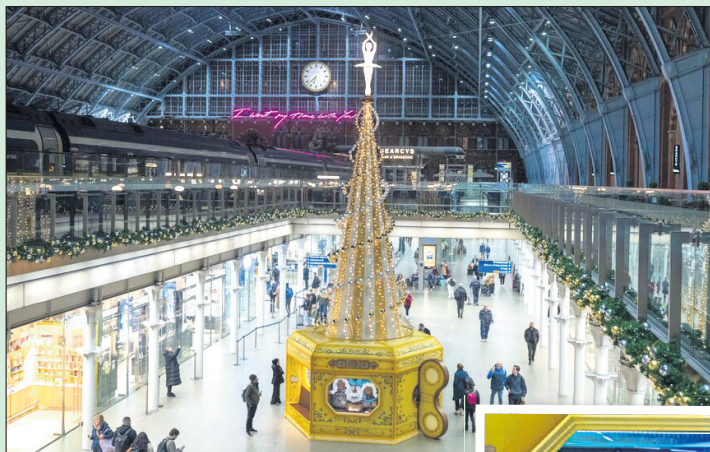
than a John Lewis advert – is that the cogs at the base include notes from children being treated at Great Ormond Street Hospital about their hopes for the future.

The Christmas wishes included ambitions to be a footballer and an Olympic gymnast.

Some have said this beautiful idea has left them in tears.

A scaled down replica is to be displayed at the hospital in Bloomsbury.

Previous trees at the station have been built with Lego and perfume boxes.



The music box tree now up at St Pancras International has seen everybody wanting to grab a photo – it's 12ft high and the station says it took 30 people a total of 1,800 hours to complete. A ballerina sits at the top of the installation. It will be up until early January near the Eurostar check-in.

# Hotel fire arson charge

A 64-YEAR-OLD man has been charged by police following a fire at a hotel housing asylum seekers.

Mark Neville, 64, is accused of "causing an explosion likely to endanger life".

He was initially arrested in September following reports of a suspicious fire to the Thistle City Barbican Hotel in Dingley Road.

No one was injured and staff put out the fire before police arrived.

Mr Neville has also been charged with possession of a knife in a public place. He is due to enter a plea at Snaresbrook Crown Court on December 2.

The Tribune reported last month how the hotel is no longer to be used for people waiting for their asylum applications to be processed.

# Dinah, queen of narrowboat canal

by CAITLIN MASKELL

THE founder of a museum that celebrates the waterways of the city has died aged 90.

The London Canal Museum exists today because of Dinah Hutchinson's remarkable determination and passion for those who worked historically on narrowboats.

Her death earlier this month was announced in a statement from the museum in King's Cross, where she served as its first chair.

During the cold winter in the UK known as the Great Freeze – 1962 to 1963 – Ms Hutchinson owned a house that overlooked the Regent's Canal near the City Road Basin, which is where she encountered canal boat people, many with colourful narrowboats marooned for weeks while the water was iced over.

Before the Arctic conditions, the waterways were used as a vital way to transport goods from Birmingham to London but when the ice eventually melted, trading routes had moved to the road, never to return to the canals.

Vowing to establish a museum to celebrate these people and their culture, Ms Hutchinson searched for a site



Princess Anne at the opening in March 1992 with, from left: Nigel Sadler, then museum curator, Dinah Hutchinson, and Tim Lewis



The London Canal Museum in New Wharf Road, King's Cross

where a museum could be established, amid the run-down wharves of King's Cross and with others she set up the charitable Canal Museum Trust.

In the late 1980s, Ms Hutchinson secured a 35-year lease at a peppercorn rent for a derelict site in Battlebridge Basin.

Amid a property boom, she negotiated a swap to acquire a more suitable historic ice-house for the museum at 12-13 New Wharf Road, gaining some payment from the developer.

With grants, the London Canal Museum was opened by HRH The Princess Royal in

1992 and later the freehold was purchased at a bargain price, ensuring a rent-free future.

Tim Lewis, a volunteer trustee at the London Canal Museum, said: "You can say some people are starters – they get things started and Dinah was one of those people. The museum is here because of her.

"We were originally going to buy a building next door but she made a deal to swap it for this one and got loads of money for it as well.

"She was very much involved in getting it up and running and that was her main life's work. She was good at negotiating with property developers."

Mr Lewis, who had met Ms Hutchinson personally, said that in the past 20 years she had stepped back in her role of running the museum.

"I knew her for quite a few years, she was one of these people who was involved in everything," he said. "When we started, certainly for the first 10 years, it was very much a hand-to-mouth existence. It's only been in the last few years we've had money to spend.

"She kept an eye on the finances, she was formidable and very good at getting things done." Ms Hutchinson

was born in 1935 in Wimbledon and was one of the first intake of women graduates at Cambridge University's New Hall, now renamed

Murray Edwards College.

The Canal Museum attracts more than 20,000 visitors annually. Its statement said:

"We are grateful to Dinah and the many others who have worked to develop and run the museum to date."

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