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# Londoner's Diary: Death knell for historic bell foundry as minister approves plans for hotel

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Campaigners outside the foundry in 2019 / © 2019 Andrew Baker

By Robbie Smith | 1 hour ago

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**W**elcome to today's [Londoner's Diary](#). It's bad news for campaigners as Luke Hall, on behalf of [Robert Jenrick](#), has decided on the [Whitechapel Bell Foundry](#) and gone for the hotel plan. Later on, we'll hear about [Jools Holland's](#) childhood disaster when trying to impress the local Marilyn Monroe, Kay Burley's awkward texts with a vet, and Dominic Cummings' playful hint that the VoteLeave election machine could be out for hire. In SW1A we ponder the [penguin](#) – and whether a fact about the birds helped Richard Benyon bag a government job. And Blur's drummer explains reflects on Britpop feuds and the Labour party.

1 hour ago



Getty Images

The Whitechapel Bell Foundry is to be turned into a boutique hotel after campaigners lost a four year long fight to preserve it as a working foundry. 

Minister Luke Hall, acting on behalf of Robert Jenrick, the secretary of state for communities, housing and local government, last night approved planning permission for the hotel, despite having agreed to review the original decision in January 2020 after a public outcry.

Distraught campaigners have hit out at the decision. “The site’s reason for being and its extraordinary intangible cultural heritage are gone forever,” said Factum Foundation, a group whose plan with Re-Form Heritage to recreate a working foundry was rejected.

Charles Saumarez Smith, the art historian and former chief executive of the Royal Academy, decried the disappearance of “four and a half centuries of bell-making in Whitechapel”, adding on his blog “another bit of British history will be turned into an ersatz coffee bar”.

This morning he told us “it’s the end of the line, the mood is one of resignation”. Saumarez Smith had hoped that as it “had become a Tory issue in a curious way” thanks to the symbolism of Big Ben, the alternative plan would succeed.

The Big Ben bell and America’s Liberty Bell were cast in the Whitechapel foundry. Senior Tory MP Sir Edward Leigh said in January last year he hoped Jenrick understood “the importance of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry for our country, our history, and our



Historic England have also come under fire after advising developer Raycliff on their plans. They argued that the loss of the bell making tradition “will be mitigated through the use of part of the site as a working foundry for small bells and artworks”.



Adam Lowe, one of the key figures in the campaign to preserve the foundry, said though he was sad about the decision, “with the help of artists like Grayson Perry, we are now going to demonstrate how new markets for bells will celebrate the vital role they play within the public imagination.” Perry is producing the Post Covid Bell to ring when the Pandemic ends. Lowe added “The future of bell making starts right here and right now.”

An MHCLG spokesman said: “Following an independent public planning inquiry and in line with the Planning Inspector’s recommendation, a minister at the department has granted planning permission and listed building consent for proposals at the Whitechapel Bell Foundry.”

2 hours ago

## Lack of rhythm gives Jools blues

