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mayfair times

*ART SPECIAL: Football legend Pelé, PAD and Frieze come to town
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Whitehall Court SW1

A unique three bedroom apartment on the third floor of this elegant fully portered Victorian block. Boasting wooden floors throughout and floor to ceiling French windows the apartment has balconies overlooking Horseguards and St James's Park. **£4,500,000**



Whitehall Court SW1

A spacious two bedroom apartment on the second floor of this magnificent grade 2 listed fully portered block. The elegant property boasts high ceilings, period features and stone balconies overlooking the river Thames. **£1000 per week**

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The art of estate agency

WHEN DAVID HARVEY MOVED HIS COMPANY HORNE & HARVEY FROM ITS DIGS IN MOUNT STREET TO HIS CURRENT OFFICE IN ST JAMES'S, HE WAS TOLD HE HAD TO RETAIN THE ART USAGE. KATE WHITE VISITS HIS OFFICE-COME-GALLERY TO FIND OUT MORE

Working as an estate agent in Mayfair and St James's comes with its own particular set of challenges, as David Harvey, director of Horne & Harvey, knows only too well.

"I once had a run-in with David Hasselhoff," he tells me when we meet for a chat at his office on St James's Street. "He was renting a flat that I was trying to sell and I gave him 24 hours' notice that we were coming round for a viewing.

"I turned up the next day, knocked on the door and said, 'Hello Mr Hasselhoff. We're about to come and do a viewing in your flat.' He looked at me and said, 'No way man – there'll be no viewing in my apartment.'

"The client was waiting so I said, 'Well, I did warn you in advance.' But he just said, 'No f*cking way man, you're not coming in.' He's quite a big bloke in real life, so I said, 'I tell you what – I think I'll just back off.'

"I did manage to sell the apartment eventually, and the owners told me that when he moved out, he left brown hair dye on their bathroom carpet and a signed photograph of himself."

David has been an estate agent for about 15 years, but he began his career monitoring broadcasts for FT.com. From there he moved to Estates Gazette Interactive, an online news, research and information service for the commercial property market.

When close family friend and estate agent Robert Horne passed away, his Mayfair-based company Horne & Sons was in danger of folding, so David and his sister took it over, changing the name to Horne & Harvey. The office was initially based on Mount Street and moved to St James's in 2006 – but there was one hitch. "A lot of the shops in St James's have leases which stipulate that they must remain as art galleries," David says.

"When we tried to move from Mayfair to here, we were told we had to retain the art usage. I said, 'Fine, perhaps I can do a mixed use of art gallery and estate agency', and they said yes. I draw and paint and I'm interested in art so it's quite fun."

David has rotating exhibitions on the walls of his office, which range from contemporary art to more traditional works. He currently has about 80 prints by the cartoonist Annie Tempest on display. The series, called *Tottering By Gently*, depicts the daily antics of Lord and Lady Tottering of Tottering Hall and the kerfuffles they get into, such as drinking too much red wine at their London club.

"The prints are very St James's because there are so many clubs here, like White's, Boodle's, the RAC," says David, who has just sold six of the prints to the Lansdowne Club in Mayfair.

So the art market seems to be thriving – well, Dicky and Daphne Tottering prints at least – but what about the property side? "A lot of people are saying it's not so good, but we've had a fair amount of activity," David says. "Sales were affected last year by the stamp duty increase, but properties below the £2 million mark are selling really fast. We launched a two-bedroom flat on Jermyn Street for £1.8 million last week with Knight

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Frank and it went under offer within two days. We've also made some sales in Whitehall Court, which is a great block and a really unique, interesting building. There are different price points depending on which floor you are on. The fifth and sixth floors have river views all year round, and on the other side the flats look back over St James's Park and Horse Guards Parade, so you have really nice views from those properties as well."

Previous residents of Whitehall Court include former prime minister William Gladstone, Lord Kitchener and a host of famous literary figures such as Oscar Wilde, HG Wells, George Bernard Shaw and, more recently, Barbara Cartland.

Residents are granted membership of the exclusive Farmer's Club, and the building also houses five-star hotel the Royal Horseguards and the spectacular National Liberal Club, which overlooks the Thames.

The buyer profile in St James's differs to Mayfair, says David. "You get slightly more Middle Eastern and Indian buyers in Mayfair, whereas in St James's it's more European and there's a larger percentage of English buyers.

"St James's is probably not as chic as Mayfair. It's a bit more stuffy and old-fashioned, in a *Tottering By Gently* kind of way. But we do get buyers who specifically want to buy in St James's rather than Mayfair. St James's has lots of little quirky bits – you've got Pickering Place, which is where the state of Texas was formed, and Crown Passage, where they filmed Harry Potter going to get his magic wand. I don't think you get that so much in Mayfair."

The most sought-after streets in St James's are the ones that overlook Green Park, says David. "Those command the highest prices, but there aren't many of them so when they do come up, they go pretty quickly.

"We've got one to rent at the moment – it's a five-bedroom penthouse in St James's Place with two terraces, and it's on for £12,000 a week. It has brilliant views over the park, and it's probably the most in-demand part of St James's."

Small one-bedroom flats in blocks like Dalmeny Court, Bray House and Bank Chambers also tend to sell quickly, says David. "A lot of people like to have a pied-à-terre in St James's to be near their clubs."

So what does David like most about being an estate agent? "It's the architecture and the people you meet," he says. "I've become really good friends with lots of my clients. I've been invited skiing, to 50th birthday parties, weddings and funerals.

"In the long-term you build really good relationships with people, which is nice. People come to us for our specialist knowledge of St James's, and because we're a friendly, family company. A lot of our business is repeat business, which is great."