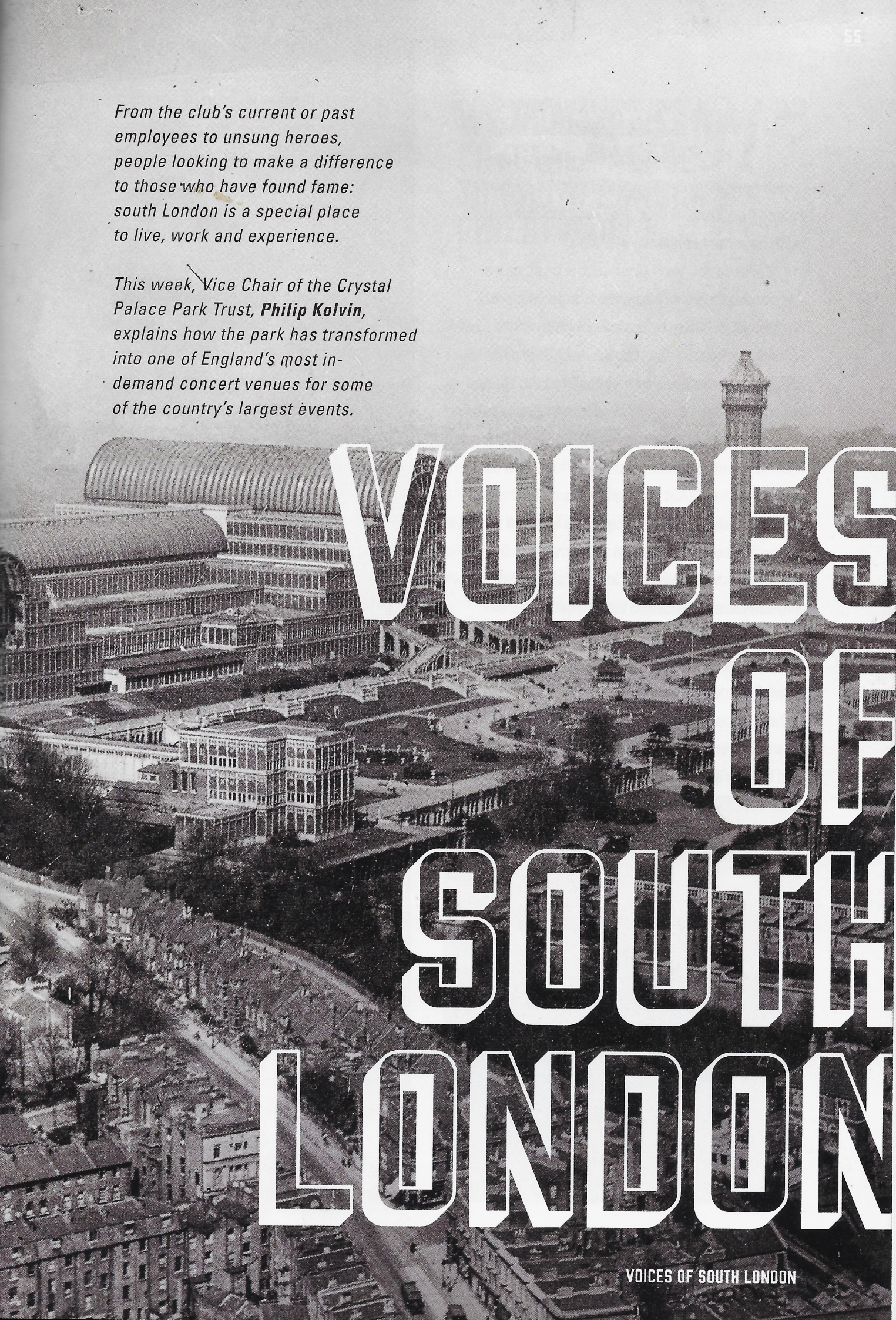


From the club's current or past employees to unsung heroes, people looking to make a difference to those who have found fame: south London is a special place to live, work and experience.

*This week, Vice Chair of the Crystal Palace Park Trust, **Philip Kolvin**, explains how the park has transformed into one of England's most in-demand concert venues for some of the country's largest events.*

An aerial photograph of the Crystal Palace area in South London. The large, ornate glass and iron structure of the Crystal Palace is prominent in the upper left. To its right, the tall, slender tower of the Crystal Palace Park is visible. The surrounding area includes residential streets with terraced houses, green spaces, and other buildings. The title 'VOICES OF SOUTH LONDON' is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on the right side of the image.

VOICES OF SOUTH LONDON

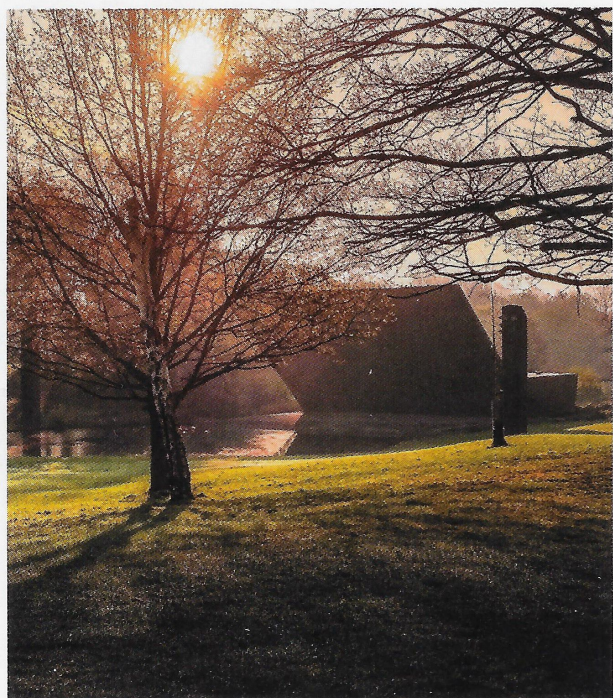
VOICES OF SOUTH LONDON

“When I went for the interview, they said: ‘Why do you want to do this?’, Philip Kolvin says, remembering the day he applied to join the Crystal Palace Park Trust. “I said: ‘Because this is the last really important challenge of my life.’”

Philip, today Vice-Chair of the Trust, has a passion for Crystal Palace that’s impossible to curb. Born in Newcastle, this adoptive south Londoner moved to the capital in 1987 and his affection for the area was almost instant. He and his wife pledged to never live beyond sight of the Crystal Palace transmitter.

“It’s been a presence for my whole adult life,” Philip explains. “That transmitter sits on the highest tree-lined ridge in London. I’ve had a love of that ridge in Crystal Palace for 34 years.

“When you walk onto Crystal Palace Park and see the sphynxes and terraces, it’s like you’ve stumbled upon the pyramids or something. Something amazing happened here and the idea of being part of the revival of that place culturally, historically, ecologically, recreationally, a place for kids and to look down across London and Kent, I just find it really exciting and invigorating.”



A Queen’s Counsel and published author day-to-day, Philip became involved in a movement to prevent building atop the ridge in the 1990s and then, five years ago, noticed the London Borough of Bromley advertising for members of the newly formed Crystal Palace Park Trust.

Naturally, he applied, succeeded, and began building an organisation fit to become responsible for the upkeep and management of Crystal Palace Park. Until that point, however, the Trust would have no legal interest or serious funding – roughly a million pounds a year to maintain the park in the manner they felt necessary.

They didn’t want to wait. Philip explains: “We were impatient to get going but we had no money, and having no money meant we couldn’t really do anything - we couldn’t employ anybody.

“The beauty of this park compared to other parks is there are lots of different spaces. You can run events in one part of the park without necessarily dominating other parts. But nonetheless we had to raise a lot of money from events. So, what are our choices? We’ve either got to run events constantly so that every time you come to the park you run into fencing, being excluded from part of the park, or we have to attract some big events that come only in one hit.

“So we built what we thought was a really credible events policy to rival and compete with any other green space in London. Then with that policy we didn’t wait for people to come to us, we went out and built a story around the park.

“Very quickly the word got around that Crystal Palace is a place where things are happening. We were getting calls and it grew and grew until we were fielding calls from the biggest promoters in the world... From the park being almost derelict in terms of events, we suddenly had a selection process. The people we’ve ended up with are fantastic organisations.”



“WE HOPE TO RESTORE CRYSTAL PALACE TO SOUTH LONDON’S FINEST PARK”

This summer, pandemic permitting, Crystal Palace Park will host Wireless – London’s largest annual music festival – and South Facing, a new event held over a month at the historic and soon to be renovated Crystal Palace Bowl, formerly host to artists such as Bob Marley, Pink Floyd, The Cure and many others.

It was also due to host KISSTORY Festival and will have the likes of Dizzee Rascal and The Streets perform this summer. For its first year truly back on the events stage, 2021 has seen several huge coups.

“We’ll have two 50,000 capacity events that will absorb a very large part of our fundraising for the year and we won’t need to be constantly fencing the terraces,” Philip continues passionately. “We’re using some of the Wireless money to refurbish the Crystal Palace Bowl in order to get an income from it.

“The beauty of this is we can run the largest events, we can run middle-sized events, we can run small events and then crucially we hope to have funding to promote community arts within the park.

“Suddenly in events terms we’ve gone from being the poor relation of London parks to being a wonderful venue which can put on everything from tiny, free community events to some of the most important cultural events in London. And [we can put on] everything in-between while funding the ecological restoration of the park.

“We hope to restore Crystal Palace to south London’s finest park.”

*With thanks to @cp_park_photographer and
www.crystalpalaceparktrust.org.*