

Last year there was a large fire in the Camden Lock area of Camden Town. Every Saturday the open spaces of Camden Town come alive for market day, there are tens of thousands of people shopping, market stalls pop up everywhere, Inverness Market, Camden Market, etc. Camden Lock is the largest of these shopping districts, and the loss of about 12 square blocks (by US standards) was a remarkable blow to the local economy. The day I went there last year, 15 February, was the first day that the unscathed portions of the market had reopened, and this is how things looked:





Today marked the official opening of the rebuilt Camden Lock, and thanks to X's sharp eyes and even sharper wits, we were early there (after first venturing down to Leicester Square to score 2 in stalls for *Duet for One* tonight at the Vaudeville Theatre). Here are some shots from the new Camden Lock:





You can find all of today's photos [here](#) for comparison to [last year's](#).

The market was *so alive!* It was remarkable, all of this energy coming from the crowd. We walked all around, stopped in at all sorts of vendors. I bought a punch of well photographed shots of Banksy graffiti from one stall. X was thrilled to discover, as we passed Proud Camden, a gallery and performance space in the heart of the Lock, that they had up *Withnail and me*, [an exhibit of Murray Close photographs](#) taken on the set of *Withnail and I*, her favourite film of *all time*. Twelve hours later we left the gallery and continued our walk...okay a wee bit of exaggeration.

X is proud to report that we somehow managed to escape with nary a piercing nor a tattoo. Still trying to figure out how we worked that miracle. We grabbed some noodles and fled the crowds (like a human car wash, constantly pressing in on one) across the street. It struck me suddenly that where we were standing was last year a no-man's land of construction barricades and works. Just down the way was the Hawley Arms, a favourite hangout for artists and their mates, like Amy Winehouse and Lily Allen. This is what it looked like last year:



And this is what it looks like now:



Notice the second floor? This was a remarkable rebuild, and as soon as we finished our noodles we were glad to go inside and give them some "welcome back" business. Polished off our cocktails, checked out the loo where so many of our fave stars have both pissed and passed out pissed, and then went to head home.

Not so fast. First there was the small matter of the marching band and the Camden Town Crier to contend with:



Such perfect timing that we emerged from the pub just in time to hear the marching band playing, wait for it... **California Dreaming!** What a hoot, just wish I would have fired up the video recorder option on my phone to capture it all for you to hear. Then, when that song was done, the town crier (the chap in red) made a pronouncement about the eminence of the occasion and bearing well wishes from the Queen(!) to which all and sundry exclaimed "God save the Queen!" and went back to their shopping, graffiti, piercing and tattooing. We went to the tube and back home again.

Ta!