

# Eyewitness



## Benchmarks

Each day in August, **Jim Grover** photographed visitors to a bench in south London and learned how Covid had affected their lives. He says: "At the side of Mount Pond on Clapham Common there is a 24-hour, 365-days-a-year snack wagon called Honest Tom's. It was owned and operated by Tom, who passed away last year. In his memory, a bench has been erected nearby. Whoever sat down on Tom's bench became my subject for the day." Covid Tales from Tom's Bench is on display at the Omnibus theatre on Clapham Common.



◀ Timothy first came to Honest Tom's in May, when he started working for Lambeth council on Clapham Common at the weekends. 'I have lived my life normally ... It's fate. I know one girl that caught the virus. I visit her and help her out a bit'



◀ Martin has been coming to Honest Tom's for 20 years and knew Tom. Maria has been coming for six months, but now comes a couple of times a week. Maria: '[Covid is affecting me] more now at the end.' Maria: 'It's all the uncertainty'



▲ The tree over the bench provides some shelter for Freddie, Rob and Te Keepa as rain starts to fall. 'It's been all right ... staying indoors ... not going out ... working has been a bit harder'



▲ Junior (left) comes to Honest Tom's from Bromley on his motorbike as often as he can, mainly to meet up with his friend Emin. 'I am trying to be careful ... everything has been fine'



▶ Three generations wait for their lunch on Tom's bench: Penelope; her daughter Rebecca; Rebecca's partner, Jamie; and their son, Max. Jamie: 'Working from home ... has its ups and downs. I wouldn't be able to be here today. I'd be in an office in Wapping'

▶ Victor (left) has been coming for a few weeks, Harvey for a year or two. Harvey is an electrical engineer but sometimes helps his friend with food deliveries. Victor: 'I kept on working right through.' Harvey: 'There hasn't been enough part-time work for me'



▶ Yvonne, a 'great-grannie', says: 'My husband died. He collapsed at home ... We managed to get him to St George's ... he was in there a couple of weeks and then he caught this virus ... And my two daughters and I ... we couldn't even say goodbye'

