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try and find the alternatives – whether it be at Carnaby Street or Portobello. I also used to love spending time at a little leather market in Bute Street.”

Visitors to Crystal Palace however, will know that they no longer need to go into town for quality vintage – they can simply enjoy a leisurely afternoon browsing the shops in the triangle, stopping off for a coffee along the way. So it comes as no surprise that Vivienne chose the area for her first shop.

“There’s an energy here, which for me as a shopkeeper is exciting. And it’s great to see young people supporting a small business. Since I opened, people from nearby pubs and restaurants have come to support me – it’s a great community. They come in and say ‘I love your shop and I’ll let people know you are here’.”

Pass the shop at the weekend and you’ll see it’s as full of people as it is clothes, and

they all have one thing in common – they want to find something no one else has got.

Much of Vivienne’s stock comes from further afield (across the pond to be exact) so don’t be surprised if you find a little pastel prom dress that looks as if it wouldn’t be out of place in a classic 1960’s American movie.

These clothes arrive at Vien in sealed barrels from a warehouse in California and like Forest Gump’s box of chocolates, “you never know what you’re gonna get”.

“It’s like a lucky dip for vintage fashion lovers,” says Vivienne. Some items she might customise, others (like a few dresses I spotted) have such a unique feel that they are left as they are for someone to discover.

But what if the fabric is striking but the cut isn’t? Vivienne has the solution; make one item into several eye-catching accessories or trim an existing skirt with a shock of psychedelic fabric.

“Nothing is wasted,” she says, and this

## Vivienne’s top tips to vintage

- 1** Be open to new ideas – choose a few things and always try them on. You might find a beautiful item that needs a little tweak. I can always do that – it’s part of the service.
- 2** To wear vintage, you have to be confident. Your look will be unique so don’t be surprised if people come and ask where a particular item is from.
- 3** If the season’s colour is purple, dip your toe into vintage with a blouse – it’s a great place to start and you’ll be on-trend with the colour too.
- 4** Take care of your vintage clothes – never put them in the washing machine. Use a little washing powder in a sink full of water. Very rarely will an item need to be dry-cleaned if you do this.

could be her motto – it’s an ethic she’s been sure to pass on to her children and her customers too.

“Vintage is good for society, it teaches people to look after their property and it makes them more conscious of what they buy, which I feel, in turn, makes them a better being. This generation is realising that there is an alternative. They are looking at how things are made – there’s an awareness which is really encouraging,” she concludes.

So if you’d like to find something unique to wear, take a trip down memory lane – Church Street to be precise – and you might just find gold in the treasure chest. ●

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