

NEWSLETTER

Autumn issue, September 2006

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Website: www.brixton society.org.uk



Autumn highlights...

Further event dates inside

Saturday 30 September: Lambeth Archives Open Day

Open from 10 am to 5 pm at the Minet Library, at the corner of Burton and Knatchbull Roads, SE5.

This year's theme will be *Émigrés and Immigrants*. As usual there will be a series of short talks linked to displays and stalls run by amenity societies and history groups.

Thursday 12 October: Revitalizing Brixton

7 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre,
2b Saltoun Road, SW2.

Light refreshments provided.

Lambeth Council officers will update us on the "Revitalize" package which has been taking shape over the past 2 years. On the face of it, the plans focus on the Recreation Centre, multi-storey car park and other Council-owned buildings, but will clearly affect the surrounding parts of the Town Centre too.

We will also bring you news of the latest version of proposals for Brixton's Central Square, which is still being funded by Transport for London. We hope members will take the chance to comment and ask questions.

Winter Social – advance notice:

Plans are still being made but the likely date is **Thursday 18 January**.

How to contact us...

Editorial & Event Notices:

Material for the next issue should be sent by 15 December to the Secretary, Alan Piper, as details in column 1 overleaf.

We welcome news and comment from all interested in the Brixton area, so opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the Brixton Society.

Planning issues:

If you are concerned about a local planning application, contact David Warner in the first instance at david@scriabin.force9.net or (020) 7924 0618, or write to him at 290 Coldharbour Lane, SW9 8SE.

But read the article on page 7 first!

Publications & Membership:

Publications orders, membership renewals and updates to the mailing list should all be sent to Diana Linskey, Membership Secretary, at 32 Stockwell Green, SW9 9HZ, or e-mail to wjdc1@globalnet.co.uk

And how to contact you?

Compiling and issuing Newsletters is a fairly ponderous process, but we try to post new information on our website between our quarterly editions. If you have an e-mail address, tell us and we can alert you promptly to any late changes of meeting arrangements, or extra events. If you don't, we can't – simple really!



Brixton Society meeting dates

The following dates are for Executive Committee meetings, unless otherwise advised. All at **7-30 pm** at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2. Contact the Secretary for details.

- **12 October (open meeting)**
- **9 November**
- **11 January**

Friends of Tate Library & Gardens

Meetings are now held at **6-30 pm** on the same dates as our committee meetings, listed above, again at the Vida Walsh Centre.

Brixton Area Forum

For meeting dates of the Forum and its working groups, contact the Town Centre office on (020) 7926 1077.

Links with other groups

We suggest checking with organisers in case of late changes to events listed here. Some events may be charged for, and most groups welcome donations in any case.

Further entries to Alan Piper (Secretary) at 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, tel/fax (020) 7207 0347 APiperBrix@aol.com

20 September to 3 December: Adam Elsheimer

The Devil in the Detail is the theme of this new exhibition at the Dulwich Picture Gallery, showing the work of the German miniaturist who flourished 400 years ago. Entry

including main gallery: £7 adults, £6 seniors. More details of this and other events can be found at www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk

Sunday 1 October: Big Draw Event in Brockwell Park

“Patterns in the Park – Chalk around the clock” will be a creative day of free drawing for all ages, inspired by Indian Rangoli patterns. Chalk drawing on the paths, led by local artists but with scope for anyone else to join in. 12 noon to 3 pm, between the clock tower and the Herne Hill gate. *Friends of Brockwell Park*

Sunday 8 October: South Norwood

Walk to Selhurst led by Keith Holdaway & Ted Cossor. Meet at 2-30 pm at Station Road entrance to Norwood Junction Station, SE25. *Norwood Society.*

Wednesday 11 October: Eastward Ha!

A slide tour from East Brixton via Loughborough Junction up to Herne Hill, presented by Alan Piper. 7-45 pm at Herne Hill United Church Hall, top of Redpost Hill, SE24. *Herne Hill Society.*

Thursday 19 October: Plaques and Places

Local history talk by Eric Kings, 8 pm at the Phoenix Centre, Westow Street, Upper Norwood, SE19. *Norwood Society.*

Saturday 21 Oct. Art of Heritage

A day of activities commemorating the struggle against the enslavement of African people. Part of Black Heritage Month in Lambeth, 11 am to 4-30 pm, Windrush Square, Brixton. Details from (020) 7748 4364 or www.oda-c.com *Andrew Magnus Nelson & ODAC UK.*

Monday 6th November: From Pillar to Post

Neil Lloyd looks at the history of the post office letter box, from Ludlows to Penfolds and beyond. 8 pm at Woodlawns (Streatham Darby & Joan Club) 16 Leigham Court Road, SW16. *Streatham Society.*

Tuesday 14 Nov. Victorian Leisure and Pleasures

Illustrated talk by Ian Bevan, 7 pm for 7-30 start, Housing Co-op Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1 (opposite the Old Vic). Non-members £1. *Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society.*

Saturday 18 Nov. History of the Elephant & Castle

Several eminent people from this part of Southwark are buried at Norwood, and their lives are recalled in a talk by Stephen Humphrey. 2-30 pm at Chatsworth Way Baptist Church, off Norwood Road, SE27. £1 for non-members. *Friends of West Norwood Cemetery.*

Down Your Way?

We receive a steady flow of enquiries about different corners of Brixton, sometimes from far-flung places about a local ancestor, sometimes seeking support to safeguard an old building. Here's a round-up of topics from recent months – so do contact us if you can add to the stories so far.



News from Friends of Windmill Gardens

The Friends have been very active this year. Another successful Festival was held in the Gardens in July, with over 1400 people attending. A short play on the history of the mill was included, in addition to a range of music performances.

Behind the scenes the Friends have been busy with funding applications, training members to guide visitors round the mill, and developing the new logo above, which has now appeared on official T-shirts.

During the recent London Open House weekend, over 500 visitors were shown the interior of the windmill, despite the limited space restricting tour parties to 6 at a time – which means over 84 tours provided!

The Friends' Annual General Meeting is on Tuesday 3 October from 7 pm at St.Saviour's Church Hall, Blenheim Gardens, SW2.

Enquiries to:

aileengarden@aol.com



A chip off the old box

The old Penfold pillar box at the corner of Mervan and Rattray Roads suffered minor damage to its cast iron base after a car accident on 26 June.

Fortunately a roadside bollard took the brunt of the impact.

The hexagonal postbox has stood on this street corner since the surrounding houses were put up in the 1870s, but lost the acorn finial from on top several years ago.

Thanks to David Chambers of Mervan Road for forwarding the picture to us.

Town Trails Feedback

I just happened to come across the Brixton Society website by chance, and I was delighted to read through Trail 4 – Oh what memories it evoked.

I was married at St. Marks Church at the Oval in 1957. I had my wedding reception at 5 Prima Road – a large house which lays back and is mentioned in the walk – where my aunt lived. I was hospitalised in the Belgrave Hospital in 1950. I went to school in Halsmere Road – the original Charles Edward Brooke Grammar School. We played our netball and tennis in Myatt's Fields Park as we had no playing fields at the school. I lived in Hillyard Street

Local History Focus

from 1946 to 1957.

My grandparents were married at St. John's Church in Angell Town, and my father was born in Peckford Place – a little different to what it is now, I am sure.

I haven't lived in the area for around 46 years now, but it certainly brought it all back for me. Well done – keep up the good work as it is greatly appreciated.

Janice Bird.



One type of picture that often turns up among family memorabilia is from a day's outing organized by the firm or the local public house. This example from c.1905 was sent to us in the hope it might be somewhere we knew. Only correct to the extent that I worked in the building next door for about 15 years – but sadly it's not in Brixton, but the Rising Sun pub in Catford, before its 1930s rebuilding.

Alan Piper.

Brixton Ancestors

We were able to give a few leads to John Rose, a 75-year old Londoner now living in Luxembourg, in tracing where various family members lived around a century ago. He was particularly keen to know which houses were still standing so he could take a quick look between visiting family in Hampshire and catching a flight back from Gatwick Airport.

My father, Norman Henry Rose, was born at 9 Bengeworth Road (Loughborough Junction) on 16 January 1896. At the age of 5 he was living at 83 Railton Road and

started his school days at the local primary school. His father, Henry Rose, had started his working life as a carpenter and joiner. By 1896 he was a builder's foreman and later became a "Clerk of Works" in the development of the Peabody Estates.

My grandmother was Alice Mary Moore, she had been born in the Victoria area of London, daughter of a Joshua John Moore, himself born in Cambridgeshire and a tailor by trade. They lived at 56 Saltoun Road at the time of the marriage of my grandparents in 1893. I believe that Joshua then worked mainly from home. Father had a sister Dorothy, also born at Bengeworth Road in 1897. She met and married a Canadian soldier who had come across to fight in the 1914-18 war and left for Canada with him.

My father continued his schooling in Brixton and during the 1914-18 war served with the Royal Naval Air Service at Eastchurch aerodrome on the Isle of Sheppey, and also in France. After the war, he followed his father into the building trade and became a surveyor with a large hotel chain.

After the end of the First World War, the family moved to the Crystal Palace area, Colby Road near Gipsy Hill Station. This was more convenient for grandfather, working on the Peabody Estates. I was born in 1931 in North London, but well remember visiting my grand-parents at Colby Road in the years before the Second World War. Grandfather was a typical Victorian and we children had to address him as "Sir". He was a strict disciplinarian and "children at the table were to be seen but not heard". We were not allowed to speak during lunch or dinner unless addressed by an adult. I was never afraid of Grandfather, who was a generous and kindly man despite his strict ways. It taught me discipline and good manners which helped me to cope

when I eventually entered military service as a Fleet Air Arm pilot, but that is another story.

It was through my Great-Grandfather that the family came to live in Brixton. Originally GG was born in Greenwich in 1839, the second son of Henry John Rose, a printer. GG was named Ransford John Tookey Rose. He married in 1867 the daughter of a hairdresser, and then moved to Londonderry in Ireland. There he set up his own business as a linen manufacturer.

Family history has it that he was an active member of a well-known brotherhood and that while in Ireland he refused to assist in the cover-up of some criminal activity to support a "brother". The result was that delivery of raw materials to his factory stopped and a bank loan was called in, with the result that GG became bankrupt. He left Ireland and returned to Deptford, having changed around his names so that instead of Ransford J.T.Rose, he was listed as John R.Rose. Again family history says this was to prevent the brotherhood finding him at his new address. Of course all this is hearsay and I have no way of confirming the truth of the bankruptcy. However, the change of name does seem to point to the possible truth.

In Deptford he became a factory manager in a shirt factory, using his knowledge of the linen business. The 1891 Census shows that he had moved with his family to 1 Jelf Road, Brixton, and reverted to his original name order. At some stage after this he had moved to 145 Railton Road and this was his given address when he died at the early age of 60. He died of nephritis at the workhouse infirmary at Brook Street (later Lambeth Hospital) in 1899.

Ransford's brother Henry William Tookey Rose became a schoolmaster and lived at Josephine Avenue, Brixton, and later at The Avenue, Acre Lane, where he died also at the early age of 58.

John Rose, johnros@pt.lu

Finding a Future for the Railway Hotel

For some time, ABC Brixton have been developing proposals to renovate the Railway Hotel, a splendid old Victorian pub right in the heart of Brixton, but neglected for many years.

The building with its unique 6-sided clock tower, has been a local landmark since 1880 when it opened as a public house and hotel. The pub had a long association with music and dance, and in the 1960s Jimi Hendrix played there regularly. The building was rebranded as Brady's c.1990 and continued to be part of the local music scene until it closed in 1999. Inside there were 3 bars – the front bar facing Atlantic Road, a smaller bar entered off Electric Lane, and beyond that a long bar serving the large performance space/ ballroom at the rear. Upstairs rooms were rented out.

The building is currently owned by the Borough of Lambeth and was meant to be part of a development scheme centred on the Tube Station sponsored by Brixton Challenge some 15 years ago. It is protected as part of the Brixton Town Centre Conservation Area, but is not Listed in its own right.

A community arts centre is being proposed as an appropriate use considering the creative community round about. The cultural and creative industries are recognized as drivers of successful regeneration and wider economic growth. In this context, a community leisure facility may represent the best way to achieve economic viability. A social enterprise business model could ensure this viability and keep social benefits intact.

ABC Brixton is a charitable community regeneration company formed in 2004 by residents of Central Brixton and Loughborough Park, as a company limited by guarantee. The Brixton Society recently enrolled as a member of the company.

Shared History

Black history in London didn't begin when the *Windrush* docked at Tilbury in 1948, carrying hundreds of hopeful Caribbean immigrants. That was just the latest chapter in a long story stretching back through the British Empire, to an earlier empire, when the Romans first founded London on the wide muddy banks of the Thames.

Much of that history is now almost invisible. Black people in Shakespeare's London, for instance, married into the wider population, as black Roman soldiers had done over a thousand years earlier.

Black History month, which runs through October with a wide range of local events, has the daunting task of telling this complex story while celebrating the lives and achievements of black people in Britain today.

Devon Thomas, co-ordinator of the Black Heritage Group, points out that black history is inseparable from British history. "Everyone's life has been affected by the British Empire" he says. "It was the first global economic system. The slave trade carried millions of people from Africa to the Americas to work on plantations. London was the biggest port in the empire, and that's why its docks were built."

The maritime heritage of Deptford, where he now lives, and the large Afro-Caribbean population in South London, are a living connection to this imperial past. Devon points out though that black people and their experiences have helped shape Britain over hundreds of years. "Slavery shaped the growth of the stock market, the expansion of the Royal Navy and the spread of the British Empire," he says.

Deptford is particularly rich in black historical associations, back to the time when Sir John Hawkins was blessed at old St. Nicholas' Church before setting off on his slaving voyages. Black writer Ignatius Sancho was a resident in the 18th century. The Stephen Lawrence

Centre now being built bears witness to the continuing struggle against prejudice.

"Black History Month was set up by the old GLC to draw attention to the achievements of black people" Devon says, "but it's really for everyone who wants to know why Britain is like it is today."

Based on an article in Lewisham Life.

Leaflets listing events in Lambeth are available from local libraries.

Recent Publications

Details of two more titles have reached us, though so far we have not got our hands on copies to review...

Herne Hill Personalities is the latest book from the Herne Hill Society. They have compiled short biographies of no less than 146 people who lived around Herne Hill, though its boundaries have been treated flexibly. But at less than 5p per person, who could quibble? 152 pages in A5 format for **£7** (plus £1 p & p) from the Herne Hill Society, PO Box 27845, London SE24 9XA.

Legalised Mischief (Vol.3) is the latest "grassroots history" of the Scout movement written by Steven Harris of West Dulwich. As before, I gather that the incidents are drawn from near and far, but focusing on the experiences at the grass-roots level. Having helped run an Air Scout Troop locally until 15 years ago, I am pleased to hear our branch gets a chapter of its own in this volume.

156 pages, A4 paperback, **£9.95** (plus £2.05 p & p) from Lewarne Publishing, PO Box 26946, London SE21 8XG, or at Dulwich Books, Croxted Road, SE21.

Alan Piper.

Look for more publications news in our next issue!



How can we help with... **Planning Cases**

So you have just had a letter from the Council telling you about a planning application nearby. If it does not sound very welcome, what should you do about it?

Act Quickly:

It is not possible for us to check on every planning application that is made in our wide catchment area, so we need you to alert us if you are not happy with what's proposed in your neighbourhood. From the very brief description in the weekly list of applications, we may not realise the potential problems of that proposal across the road from you, so do not rely on telepathy to get our interest!

The clock is ticking so you (and we) should try to reply to the planning department by the due date, only 3 weeks after the letter in most cases. This gives the best chance of influencing the case officer's own view on the proposed development, as any comments received should be taken into account when he prepares his report.

Who decides?

To cope with the number of applications in a reasonable time, about 90% of cases are decided by planning officers in the privacy of their own offices. They are under pressure from Central Government to decide cases within a set time-scale, so the emphasis is on quick decisions rather than good ones. Less than 10% are referred to a committee of local councillors, either because of the representations

received from neighbours or amenity groups, or because the proposals differ from what the council would expect in that location.

Build Support:

Work with the local residents' group or tenants' association if possible. If several objections are made by neighbours or amenity groups, this will alert the planners to the strength of local opposition and may be enough to trigger a referral to the planning committee for decision. Elected councillors will be more sensitive than the planners to local opinion, but also need to be convinced that they have legitimate reasons for rejecting an application.

Use Planning Policies:

Like all London Boroughs, Lambeth has a Unitary Development Plan consisting of about a hundred policies for different types of use and specific parts of the borough. These are subject to broad principles set down by Central Government, and a London-wide strategic framework set by the Mayor. These should all be available on official websites.

While these policies are strong on impressive concepts, they can easily contradict each other, and the key is to find a policy which seems to oppose the developer's proposals. If you can suggest that the plans are counter to a Council policy, it's much easier for the planning officer to turn them down. Developers' own greed can be their downfall when they try to do more than local policies would normally allow, but often this has to be pointed out to the busy planners.

What's acceptable?

Remember that you have a wider choice than just objecting – you could suggest changes or conditions instead.

Is there a solution that's acceptable to both sides? Maybe amenities can be safeguarded by imposing a condition, such as limiting opening hours. Perhaps simple amendments such as screen fences, planting, or a modified parking layout will help.

