

NEWSLETTER

Spring issue, April 2005

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Website: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk



A Century of Cinemas

Sunday 10 April, 2-30 pm

At the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road SW2 (Effra Road end, facing Windrush Square). Doors open 2-15 pm.

As a follow-up to September's tour of Brixton and Streatham cinemas, Richard Gray of the Cinema Theatre Association will recount the history of movie theatres.

The CTA was founded in 1967 when the magnificent movie palaces of the Twenties and Thirties were starting to disappear from our town centres. Since then it has widened its horizons to encompass the study of all cinema buildings, however humble, as well as live theatres, music halls and those entertainment buildings now in use as bingo halls or for other purposes.

A joint meeting with Lambethans Society



First of our Summer Walks

Rush Common

Sunday 22 May, 2-30 pm

Looking round the Brixton end of the former common with Alan Piper. Meet outside Brixton Tate Library, Brixton Oval SW2. *More walks dates inside...*

Annual General Meeting

Thursday 10 June, 7-30 pm

7-30 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2

Brixton Central Square was the main focus of our AGM last year, and we will take this opportunity to bring you up to date with developments since then. We also want to report progress on restoring **Brockwell Park** and the **Brixton Windmill**. And we are keen to hear all members' views on our priorities for the year ahead.

Getting Word Round

One of the frustrations of producing a quarterly newsletter is the difficulty of giving members decent notice of events – we can easily be out of sync with delivery of other groups' newsletters so that their most interesting events seem to happen just before our next issue, or just after we have gone to press. Planning cases and other consultations too are often on tight timescales. Late changes to our own meeting arrangements are even more difficult to circulate quickly.

E-mail should allow faster communication with many of our members – but only if we know your e-mail address! For most members we don't – or you forgot to tell us last time you changed it. So please help us to keep you in the picture by e-mailing our Membership Secretary with your current or preferred e-address – to Diana Linskey, wjdc1@globalnet.co.uk

As before, news and comments for the next issue should be sent to Alan Piper (Secretary) at the address overleaf, to arrive before **15 June**. And yes, you can use e-mail too, to APiperBrix@aol.com

Brixton Society meeting dates

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

- **14 April**
- **12 May**
- **9 June (AGM)**
- **14 July**
- **8 September**

NB- The Friends of Tate Library & Gardens will meet at 6 pm prior to our own meetings.

Brixton Area Forum

For meeting details of the Forum and its working groups, contact the Town Centre office on (020) 7926 1077. We know the following meetings are coming up:

Environmental Quality:
Thursday 7 April, 7 pm at the Town Hall.

Tulse Hill Ward:
Monday 18 April, 10 am at St.Martin's Library Centre, Upper Tulse Hill.

Traffic & Transport:
Thursday 21 April, 7 pm at the Town Hall.

Forum Meeting date yet to be announced.

Brixton Central Square Display

The last in the series of consultation events will be:

Saturday 16 April:
Open Day & Exhibition of proposals for comments, 12 – 4 pm in a marquee on Windrush Square.

Links with other groups

Based on news received but check details direct with the group involved. Future entries to Alan Piper (Secretary) at 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, tel/fax (020) 7207 0347 APiperBrix@aol.com

Thursday 14 April – Lambeth Voluntary Action Council:

Annual General Meeting at the YMCA, Stockwell Road, SW9 – prior bookings only to LVAC on (020) 7737 1419 or to: LvacAgm@Lambethvac.org.uk

Wednesday 20 April – Historians of Clapham:

Peter Jefferson Smith will review the work of Eric Smith and other local historians of the Clapham area.

7-30 for 8 pm at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4. *Clapham Society.*

Monday 16 May – Transport Today and Tomorrow:

John Stewart of Lambeth Public Transport Group on current developments and issues. 8 pm at Woodlawns, Streatham Darby & Joan Club, 16 Leigham Court Road, SW16. *Streatham Society.*

Sunday 5th June – Tree Celebration:

Annual dedication of newly-planted trees in Brockwell Park, starting 2 pm at the Clock Tower in the centre of the Park. *Friends of Brockwell Park*

5-19 June – London Sustainability weeks

A series of local events promoting community involvement, local action and best sustainable practice: information from: www.lsw2005.org

Wednesday 8 June: Lambeth Landmark

Nilu York on Lambeth Archives' collection of digital images. 7-45 pm at Herne Hill United Church Hall, c/o Herne Hill & Redpost Hill, SE24. *Herne Hill Society.*

2 & 3 July – Crystal Palace Victorian weekend:

Traditional sideshows & stalls each day, sited near Thicket Road gate (Penge end of Crystal Palace Park). *The Crystal Palace Foundation.*

Sunday 10 July – Brixton Windmill Festival:

Provisionally 12 to 5 pm (more details to follow). *Friends of Windmill Gardens.*

16 & 17 July - Lambeth Country Show

Brockwell Park (details to follow).

17 & 18 September - London Open House weekend

London-wide, buildings open to the public (details to follow).

Saturday 24 Sept. – Lambeth Archives Open Day:

10 am to 5 pm at Minet Library, Knatchbull Road.

Local History Focus

100 years ago...

“Certain charmed areas of the suburbs always claim the utmost respect among investors. Brixton is one, and houses here practically command a premium: 77 Akerman Road, held for 55 years at £8 p.a. ground rent and let at £55 p.a., sold for £450.”

Estates Gazette, 18 February 1905.



Brixton & Herne Hill on Stanford's 1876 map

Stepping Out!

Another series of guided walks in Lambeth (and beyond) is getting under way for the Summer season. Most will be on Sunday afternoons. A full list will be available in a month or so, but in the meantime here are some highlights, including our own contributions:

Saturday 23 April – Walk through Lambeth Parks:

Start at 1 pm outside Brixton Tate Library, then via Myatt's Fields Park, Kennington Park, Spring Gardens, Museum of Garden History, Archbishop's Park to arrive Jubilee Gardens at 5 pm.

Lambeth Friends of the Earth,
enquiries to
lambethfoe@hotmail.com

Sunday 1 May – West Norwood Cemetery:

General tour, starting at 2-30 pm from inside main gate, c/o Norwood High Street and Robson Road, SE27
Friends of West Norwood Cemetery.

Sunday 15 May – Crown Point to Crystal Palace:

Meet at 2-30 pm outside the Rose & Crown, c/o Crown Lane & Beulah Hill
Norwood Society.

Saturday 21 May – Dulwich Tree Walk:

Meet at 2 pm at junction of Hunts Slip Road and Alleyn Park, SE21.
Dulwich Society.

Sunday 22 May – Rush Common & Effra Farm:

Meet at 2-30 pm outside Brixton Tate Library, Brixton Oval, SW2.
The Brixton Society.

Sunday 19 June – Westow Park to Norbury:

Meet at 2-30 pm outside Café St.Germain, Crystal Palace Parade
Norwood Society.

Sunday 26 June – Clapham Park:

Meet at 2-30 pm at Tuson's Corner (c/o Brixton Hill and New Park Road, SW2). Led by Alan Piper.
Lambethans' Society.

Sunday 24 July – Crystal Palace to Beulah Spa:

Meet 2-30 pm at Café St.Germain, Crystal Palace Parade, SE19.
Norwood Society.

Sunday 14 August – Norbury, Norwood Grove & Streatham Common:

Meet 2-30 pm at Norbury Station (Norbury Avenue entrance) SW16.
Norwood Society.

Sunday 21 August – Deptford:

Meet 2-30 pm below Deptford DLR Station (south side of Deptford Bridge, SE8) led by Alan Piper.
Lambethans' Society.

Sunday 25 September – Ferndale Ward:

Meet 2-30 pm at Clapham North Underground Station.
The Brixton Society.

30 years ago...

In the early 1970s, Lambeth Council was pursuing a vision of rebuilding Brixton's Town Centre on what were then seen as modern principles – pedestrians separated from fast motor traffic, multi-storey car parking, indoor shopping malls and high-density new flats. Matching this was a programme of rebuilding whole neighbourhoods around the centre, creating estates such as Moorlands and Stockwell Park.

Residents gradually learned to organize effective opposition to these plans, at the same time as Central Government became more reluctant to subsidise an approach that was not sustainable. As a result, several older housing areas around the Town Centre were reprieved and eventually became subject to various improvement schemes. Activists in most of these neighbourhoods had already been networking over how best to resist demolition, so a natural progression was to set up a body to promote the better planning and conservation of Brixton as a whole. This was the origin of the Brixton Society, which was formally launched at a meeting hosted by the Lambethans' Society on 30th January 1975 at Effra School.

Initial boundaries were dictated by major construction sites to the north of the Town Centre for Angell, Myatt's Fields and Stockwell Park Estates, while Brockwell Park formed a natural gap to the south. Early concerns included identifying key buildings for conservation, defending the Town Centre from blight by

Museum Threat

The Type Museum at 100 Hackford Road, SW9 appears to be under threat from a recent planning application to convert all the existing 2 storey buildings to provide 8 2-bedroom flats. The former workshops and horse hospital currently house a huge collection of typefaces and associated printing machinery. This looks like being the latest victim of market pressure for housing to the exclusion of all other uses, with heritage uses like this being particularly at risk.

Objections must reach Lambeth Planning by 12 April (ref. 05/00476/FUL, for the attention of Evita Lake).

over-ambitious plans and offering support to local residents' groups trying to protect or improve their environment. These are all things that we still try to do today. In some ways it is easier now that public authorities are more used to dialogue with the local community, but the sheer number of issues, plans and initiatives nowadays means that we are often thinly spread and cannot always make the most of our opportunities. However, over time we have built up (and shared) our knowledge of the history of our area and the origins of its problems. Of course some of these have changed since 1975, but others persist, or simply re-appear with new acronyms.

ADP.



One of the Victorian houses reprieved from demolition in 1975.

Church records on-line

We are often asked about sources to fill gaps in Lambeth Archives' own collections:

The Saints and Sinners Project is part of the Access to Archives internet database. It provides access to the catalogues of several Anglican diocesan collections in London and the South-East. To plan a search or visit to a collection, first check the website www.a2a.org.uk

Church Plans On-line holds digitized plans of Anglican church building works between 1818 and 1982 throughout England and Wales, and can be reached at www.churchplansonline.org

Black Cultural Archives moves to next phase

BCA is pursuing the renovation of the front portion of Raleigh Hall as their new base, and their consultant came to our committee meeting in November to discuss progress. This project has great potential to enhance this neglected section of the proposed "Central Square".

In the short term though, BCA are about to relinquish their current base on the corner of Coldharbour Lane and Atlantic Road and will lease the Council's Kennington Day Centre until Raleigh Hall is ready. Selection of an architect-led design team should be made by the end of May, so that repair and adaptation of Raleigh Hall can be fully worked out and costed ready for the bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to be made in September. In the meantime the Council has organized contributions from Neighbourhood Renewal funding. However the total capital cost is £5 million, which still leaves a shortfall of half a million to find.

Writing Competition

Lambeth Archives is again running a competition for local history essays or research, aiming to publish the winning entry and retain other entries on file for reference. Closing date is 31 July and the winner of the £300 prize will be announced at the Archives Open Day in September. Entry forms from the Minet Library or e-mail to akrobinson@lambeth.gov.uk

With this competition underway, we felt it would be superfluous for the Brixton Society to run something similar this year, BUT we are always interested in publishing local history research or reminiscences (and we will not ask you for £10!) so do get in touch sometime.

Brixton isn't just where you think it is...

So said a recent advertisement by Brixton plc, a successful developer and manager of industrial estates known until recently as Brixton Estate Ltd. Their first estate was opened at the north end of Brixton Road in 1924 – see picture 4552 on Lambeth Landmark for the almost unchanged view from a passing bus, or www.brixton.plc.uk for more about what they do today.

Recent Enquiries

Our website stimulates a steady flow of enquiries and memories, of which only a specimen is given below:



"I enjoyed your trail. I am an old Brixtonian, my parents lived at 101 Cowley Road when I was born in 1925, and I went to Hackford Road School. The outside pulpit at Christ Church was (as far as I can recall from my mother) added by the Vicar just after the turn of the century. His name was Mowll (pronounced mole). According to her the congregation went outside after evensong and gathered round the pulpit from which the Vicar held forth at length. The road next to the church is named after him.

We left to live in Streatham in 1933, but I was at the wonderful School of Building in Ferndale Road from 1940 to 1943, and at its Architectural School from 1947 to 1952. My final thesis was on Greek Revival churches in London, and I have pictures including interiors of St.matthew's taken c.1950 and a few of the bombed St.Mark's"

"After sending my e-mail, I hunted through my library to find a little book that I knew had details of Christ Church. It is titled Modern Church Building, but is more correctly a bound version of the Journal of the RIBA dated 23 February 1907. There is a plan of the church, showing the outside pulpit as part of the details. There is also a perspective view from a drawing by Professor Beresford Pite. I have had the book for years but for the first time I compared the plan and perspective and they don't match. The view shows a one-bay nave while the plan has two bays and a narthex.

A photograph in "Edwardian Architecture" by Alastair Service (1977) shows the two bays. He says the church was built in 1902-03 and "Unfortunately another architect added a busy and gawky central tower to the road frontage in 1908".

I am stuck in Northern Ireland so I haven't seen Brixton for years."

Peter Benton, arch_ben@btinternet.com



“Revitalise” Reminder!

The Council has plans for you – but are you happy with what’s being proposed? We try to keep you informed of major developments via meetings, newsletters and other mailings, but we can only represent your views if you tell us what they are!

In the October Newsletter we outlined plans to replace the Brixton Recreation Centre and the adjacent multi-storey car park, with other new buildings and sales forming a complex property package. Maybe it was a little too complicated to grasp, but the Council is still persisting with it, and in February issued a colour brochure on this “Revitalise Lambeth” package which affects schools, leisure sites and Council offices mainly in Brixton and Clapham.

Maybe you feel that the present Brixton “Rec” is an obsolete white elephant, but how can we afford to replace it? If we dispense with the multi-storey, what happens to the cars that use it now? Are we happy to lose more trade to other boroughs that are less hostile to car users? Can we reduce the need for kids to travel out of Brixton to find a secondary school? Do you prefer Council offices to be local, or concentrated at a central point?

Alan Piper.

Town Hall Changes

Changes are also in the offing for the way that Council services are organized. Proposals include re-creating a Children’s Department embracing all services for children and young people from Education and Social Services. Social Services for adults, Adult Education, public health, community development, employment advice, sheltered housing and Careline will all be bundled together into a large “Welfare” department to be known as Adult & Community Services.

The existing Environment Department will take on responsibility for “Cultural Services” in addition to its present roles with Parks,

streetcare, refuse collection and recycling. Housing Services are already undergoing an internal re-organisation affecting local housing offices.

The Benefits service will become part of the Finance Department, while the Community Safety Unit will come under the obscure “Office of the Assistant Chief Executive”. The functions of the present Community Renewal Division are likely to be split among other departments, which may delay some regeneration work.

It is not clear yet where Town Planning fits in this new structure (no change there, then) nor whether Libraries & Archives will be regarded as Cultural or Educational.

Brixton Central Square

Just a brief progress report, pending new plans going on display on Saturday 16 April. Work is underway on interim improvements to the Tate Gardens to eliminate the worst hazards and improve the approach to the Library. This should be finished by 23 April and we may even see activities being staged to reclaim the space.

The most important change to the grander Central Square design is that the Effra road closure is now proposed only between Coldharbour Lane and Saltoun Road. This should reduce the risk of more traffic cutting through the side streets, and allow BCA’s Raleigh Hall project to link to the open space in front.

Adventure Playgrounds

I see from **Play Times**, newsletter of Lambeth Play Association, that **Slade Gardens** Adventure Playground was London Adventure Playground of the Year in 2003. It is now seeking a new senior playworker (closing date 12 April): for forms e-mail to veronica.plowden@btinternet.com

How to Contact Us

Council plans or policies: contact Alan Piper (see page 2) unless otherwise stated.

Individual Planning Applications: contact David Warner if you are concerned about a new application: tel. (020) 7924 0618 or e-mail: david@scriabin.force9.net

Events or displays: If you can spare some time to help with our stall, or can offer some display skills, contact Glyn Kyle (Chair) on (020) 7326 5070 or by post to 4b Dulwich Road, SE24 0PA.

Publications sales: orders for our books, maps or postcards to Bill Linskey, tel.(020) 7274 3835 or by post to 32 Stockwell Green, SW9 9HZ or e-mail to: wjdc1@globalnet.co.uk

How many Homes to allow?

This was one of the questions considered at a "round table" session of the Public Inquiry into Lambeth's **Unitary Development Plan** on 15 March.

Lambeth Council and the GLA presented differing projections of how many homes would be provided over the 15 year plan period. Nowadays neither of them are major providers but have to rely on third parties in the form of housing associations, house builders and developers to deliver the numbers. Things seemed to be smoothed over when their totals came out fairly similar around 21,000 homes, but there were big differences in their mix and even their definition of dwellings.

The Mayor's main policy for getting more affordable homes in London has been to require developments of 15 or more units to include 50% affordable units, typically provided in partnership with a housing association. One result has been more small developments of up to 14 flats, to avoid this extra burden, but Lambeth proposes to lower the threshold. Not surprisingly, representatives from the House-Builders Federation opposed this, while Housing Associations supported it.

Based on the number of planning applications regularly made in our area for converting large Victorian houses into flats, we suggested that Lambeth's estimate for the number of homes provided from conversions was too low. The GLA had predicted a higher rate of 375 a year or 4500 in all, while Lambeth's estimate of 2093 was based on past permissions plus a 50% margin for those they apparently don't hear about!

Of course it's possible that there is more conversion activity only in Brixton and less activity in other parts of the borough, but if it's understated overall, there will be a hidden increase in population that may not be provided for in local services. Perhaps more important, the Council will probably encourage more new building at higher densities in order to achieve its total target number of extra homes.

Conversions at least allow the familiar street scene to be retained, and Victorian buildings have proved to be very adaptable. However, in its anxiety to protect the stock of family houses, Lambeth has set a minimum area for any property to be eligible for

conversion of 120 sq.metres, and curiously excluding anything added since 1948. This seems excessive compared with a floor area of 97 sq.m. for a 6-person terrace house under the old Parker Morris space standards (which even some Housing Associations feel are rather generous). One is left wondering what the extra 23 sq.m. are for. This could be the real brake on providing more small units to cope with the trend to smaller households. The likely result is a residue of down-at-heel houses which are too large or expensive for family use and left to be shared by several single adults or students.



Recent Planning Cases

The latest proposals for the **Freeman's Site** in Clapham Road were turned down by the Council last month, but planning permission has now been granted for a new block on the **Pinewood Motors** site on the corner of Streatham Place and New Park Road. A decision is expected soon on **36-38 Hayter Road** where we supported local residents' objections at an Appeal hearing on 8th March. The latest plans for the **Effra School** site go before the Planning Committee on 12 April.

Recent applications include a proposal to replace the 1939 Guinness Trust estate in **Loughborough Park** by 500 new dwellings (that's 101 more than the present flats).

The Mayor's Quiz

What a relief to go to the Town Hall for an evening of something completely different and forget about Regeneration for a while. On 28 January, Glyn, Norma, Doye and Alan formed the Brixton Society team for a quiz night in aid of the Mayor's charity appeal. We forgot a few other things too, but we managed to come 4th among a field of 21 teams.

Not forgetting our own Social Evening in February, which went off smoothly, with food provided by the Jacaranda Garden.

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

The Consecration of the Church of St. John, Angell Town, North Brixton in 1853 according to a report in The Illustrated London News



NEW CHURCH OF ANGELL-TOWN, NORTH BRIXTON.

This beautiful structure was consecrated on Saturday last, by the Bishop of Winchester, assisted by the Rev. Dr. Vaughan, and upwards of twenty of the neighbouring clergy. The Bishop, attended by his chaplain, was received shortly before eleven o'clock, at the door of the church, by the Commissary, the Registrar, the clergy, and others attendant upon the occasion. The right rev. prelate immediately proceeded to the Communion-table, where a petition was presented praying for the consecration of the church. The petition having been read, the Bishop signified his consent, and commenced the consecration service by walking in procession down one of the aisles, and returning up the other aisle, attended

by the Commissary and the clergy; the Bishop and clergy alternately repeating the 24th Psalm. After the usual prayers, the Bishop being seated, the Commissary read the sentence of consecration, which was signed by the Bishop, and ordered by him to be duly registered among the muniments of the Registry-office. The usual prayers for morning service were read by the Rev. Dr. Vaughan; after which an eloquent sermon was preached by the right rev. prelate. The sacred edifice was crowded in every part by a congregation who manifested great interest in the event.

The church is capable of holding 1150 persons, and has been built at the sole expense of William Stone, Esq., of the Casino, Herne-hill, on ground liberally granted by B. J. A. Angell., Esq., of Rumsey-house, near Caine, Wilts, who has also given the site for the parsonage-house, and for schools, and dwellings for the teachers, built on another part of this large estate, shortly to be entirely covered with houses. The cost of the church (designed by Mr. Ferrey) has been upwards of £5000. It is in the Perpendicular style: the plan consists of a lofty and massive west tower, with octangular pinnacles at the angles; there are a nave, north and south aisles, and a conspicuous north porch, chancel, and vestry. The seating is entirely of oak; the paving of encaustic red and black tiles. The roofs are stained deal, and the spaces between the timbers tinted in azure colours. An organ remains to be provided.

CONGRATULATIONS to winners of our **COMPETITIONS** in the last newsletter. Two correct entries for the crossword win £10 book tokens each. They are Jean Woodham of Streatham Hill and Hugh & Hilda Barclay of Clapham. Unfortunately, no one took up the challenge of our "Order! Order!" competition – and we thought that was the easier of the two. Full solutions are on our website at: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk

STOP·PRESS·STOP·PRESS·STOP·PRESS·STOP·PRESS·STOP·PRESS·STOP·PRESS·STOP·PRESS·STOP·PRESS·STOP·PRESS

Tate Library Gardens: There will be Garden Party on Saturday 23 April 2005, 11:00 – 5:00 p.m

The formal opening by Councillor Clare Whelan of the renovated and refurbished Tate Library Gardens will take place at 12:00. This will mark the launch of new, regular activities in the square.

Other planned activities include: artists exhibition, live bands, pavement art, Friends of the Earth, start of walk through Lambeth Parks at 1:00; face painting; air-dried pottery; and storey telling

The Brixton Society will have a stall.

Refreshments will be available from the Ritzy.

ENTRY FREE

ALL WELCOME