

NEWSLETTER

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www.brixtonsociety.org.uk



Council's Renewal bid for Brixton

If you have ever waited for the 37 bus outside the Town Hall, you will recognize the pattern – after a long wait, three come along at once! Similarly with Lambeth Council initiatives, with several big projects and policies emerging together – and most of them focusing on the Brixton area. The Council has attempted to consider together the demand for local secondary schools, the sustainability of the Brixton Recreation Centre and rationalizing its own office facilities.

Around Brixton, the following proposals are now being consulted on:

- A new secondary school on the site of the Shakespeare Road depot, with potential access also from Loughborough Park.
- Replacing the "Rec" by a smaller sports centre in Somerleyton Road, alongside the railway, with potential to supplement the school facilities.
- Major development of the "Rec" and the adjoining Popes Road car park, to provide a mixed use site combining housing with new arts facilities, shops and parking.
- Major development around the Town Hall to provide improved office space, taking in the former Co-op store (Directions) in Acre Lane, Town Hall Parade and the derelict prefab in Porden Road.
- Another secondary school just west of the old Parish boundary in Clarence Avenue, using part of

the site of Glenbrook Primary School.

- Public Transport improvements to be included in the overall design of the Town Hall and Brixton Station Road areas.

(Continued on page 3)



Electric Avenue with its original glazed canopies, as seen c.1910-14.

Work in Progress

After a variety of events from the Lambeth Country Show onwards, it has not been possible to produce another Newsletter in less than 3 months since the last issue, but at least we have a good cross-section of news for you.

Inevitably some matters are still being sorted out as we go to press, and that includes arrangements for our **Winter Social** – so expect to hear from us again this side of Christmas. January will be the 30th anniversary of launching the Society and it would be good to mark it in some way.

Remember, if you want to see something in a future Newsletter, please send it to the Secretary, Alan Piper (by 1st December for the next issue) at 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, tel./fax (020) 7207 0347 or e-mail to: APiperBrix@aol.com

Brixton Society Committee

In addition to our occasional member events, our Executive Committee meets on the second Thursday of most months to plan for those events, receive reports from our representatives on other bodies and agree our responses to local developments. All meetings at 7-30 pm: the next one is at the **Vida Walsh Centre**, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2, on:

11 November

Links with other groups

Check with organisers first in case of changes since news reached us. Some events may be charged for, and most groups would welcome donations.

Until 31 October – Black Gold:

A celebration of Black British people in Sport, exhibition open 1 pm to 6 pm, Wednesday to Sunday at the Black Cultural Archives, 378 Coldharbour Lane (c/o Atlantic Road) SW9. *Black Cultural Archives.*

Thursday 21 Oct.- Brain of Lambeth:

Finals of the annual general knowledge quiz, conducted by John Moore. 7-30 pm for 7-45 start, Room 8 at Lambeth Town Hall (use main corner entrance). *Lambethans' Society.*

Thursday 21 Oct. - Brixton Area Forum Traffic & Transport

Working party at 7 pm, in Lambeth Town Hall (antechamber).

For details of this and other Forum meetings, contact the Town Centre office on (020) 7926 1077.

Tuesday 26 Oct. – Times Past:

An evening of reminiscence, history and interesting objects, presented by Robert Holden. 6-30 pm at Minet Library, Knatchbull Road, SE5. *Lambeth Archives.*

Thursday 28 Oct. – Discover London:

Free taster session on local history for the over 50s, conducted by Alan Piper. 1 pm to 3 pm at the Adare Centre, Adare Walk, Leigham Court Road, SW16. To enrol phone (020) 7501 5564. *Lambeth College.*

Monday 1 Nov.- History of Park Hill:

The story of Sir Henry Tate's home at Streatham Common, recently adapted as apartments. Presented by Cllr. Daphne Marchant & Brian Bloice. 8 pm at Woodlawns (Streatham Darby & Joan Club) Leigham Court Road, SW16. *Streatham Society.*

Thursday 4 Nov. – Annual Review

AGM, to review the past year and gather ideas for talks and visits for the year ahead. 7-30 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2 *Lambethans' Society.*

Wednesday 10 Nov. - Southwark:

A slide tour of "London's most historic borough" presented by John Beasley. 7-45 pm at Herne Hill United Church Hall, Herne Hill end of Red Post Hill, SE24. *Herne Hill Society.*

Wednesday 17 Nov. - Samuel Pepys in Clapham

Michael Green reports on his research into William Hewer's mansion, where Samuel Pepys retired for the last 3 years of his life. 7-30 for 8 pm at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4. *Clapham Society.*

Thursday 18 Nov. – Herne Hill:

A profile presented by Robert Holden. 8 pm at the Phoenix Centre, Westow Street, SE19. *Norwood Society (local history group).*

Saturday 20 Nov. – Sir Horace Jones:

A talk on one of the eminent Victorians interred in Norwood Cemetery, by Mike Stock. Jones was the City Architect responsible for Tower Bridge, Smithfield and Billingsgate markets. 2-30 pm at Chatsworth Baptist Church, Chatsworth Way, SE27. *Friends of West Norwood Cemetery.*

Monday 6 Dec. - Brixton Area Forum Community Assets

Working party at 7 pm, venue to be confirmed. *For details, contact the Town Centre office on (020) 7926 1077.*

Brixton Society Town Planning group

Would you like to feed your views into the town planning process?

Some older members may recall that in the 1980s the society had a Town Planning sub-committee which met regularly and responded to town planning applications concerning the community in the Brixton area.

This ceased mainly due to the decline in health of the convenor, the late Ken Dixon, since when matters relating to planning applications have been discussed at the society's executive meetings (usually at the end, and under pressure of time), and generally it has been left to Alan Piper, as secretary to write to the planners.

This is unsatisfactory for several obvious reasons, and the not so obvious reason that Alan as a professional architect practising in Lambeth can have conflict of interest issues on occasions.

I have offered to take some of the load from Alan's shoulders by reviewing planning applications and responding to the most significant ones. However I am anxious not to do this as a one man band with one man's esoteric prejudices. Are any other members willing to restart the Town Planning sub-committee? I would be happy to host it as a meeting round my kitchen table. Alternatively we could try an e-format, although as the information from the council comes in paper form, it would probably be easier to stick with conventional meetings.

If anyone is willing to lend a hand in keeping the Brixton Society response to planning issues as broad and sensible as possible, please email me on david@scriabin.force9.net. Alternatively please ring me on (020) 7924 0618

David Warner.

Renewal Bid...

(Continued from front page)

Further afield, it is proposed to replace Mary Seacole House (the Social Services office in Clapham) and the nearby Clapham Swimming Pool and depot by a new library and leisure facilities, probably combined with other uses. A third new secondary school is also being planned for West Norwood.

A major factor is the running cost of existing buildings. In some cases there are high repair costs due to past economies, poor design – or in the case of the multi-storey car park – 10 years of hesitation over its future. Site values are high because of the demand for private housing but past disposals for a quick profit have left the Council with less scope to adapt to changing needs. And then there is the Council's inability to plan secondary school provision - despite an 11-year lead time for current demand!

These are complex proposals and we need to use our local knowledge to steer Lambeth to a realistic package. Criticisms have already been made that the various school sites are too restricted, or that demolitions would write off too much past investment. Please let us have your views soon so that we can feed them into the process of consultations.

Alan Piper.

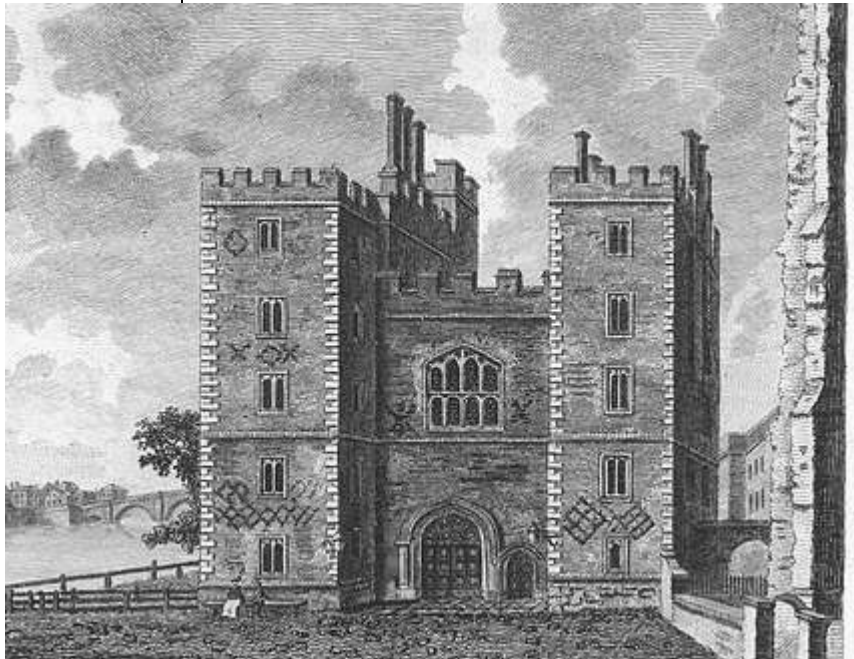
X marks the grot?

We are often asked about listing old buildings to protect them from insensitive development, but the above article reminded me of a suggestion made a few months ago by George Ferguson, president of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He urged a new grade X for buildings that ought to go, in contrast to those to be kept, and invited nominations. We would certainly be interested to hear if there are any local buildings that you think should be removed (or maybe just disguised?).

TOUR OF LAMBETH PALACE: Thursday 12 August

We had a good turnout for this event and two of our party were impressed enough to send in their comments:

Despite a rather overcast day, barring one short shower, the rain stayed away for the visit. The Archbishop of Canterbury has owned the Palace since about 1200. Its interior remains partly medieval, although there are examples of Tudor and Neo-Gothic architecture within the walls. Lambeth Palace sat almost opposite the old Palace of Westminster and the two were linked by a horse ferry across the Thames. Originally the Palace was closer to the river (as can be seen from some of the paintings which adorn the interior).



From an engraving of 1773, courtesy of Lambeth Archives

During the last 800 years, the palace has played a part in British history; for example, when Thomas Cromwell and the Lords of the Council questioned Thomas More in the guardrooms in 1534 for refusing to sign the Oath of Supremacy. During and after the Civil War the palace was used as a prison. The site is currently used as both offices for the Archbishop and as his home and official residence for entertaining.

We started our visit with a short video on the palace and the Archbishop's work. After passing some modern paintings, we moved onto the early 13th century crypt which was re-discovered relatively recently. The main highlights of the visit were:

- The Library in the Great Hall (with its splendid hammer beam roof), which has some fine illuminated manuscripts as well as many precious books;
- The Guard Room on the first floor;
- The portrait gallery (of many Archbishops both old and more recent) *which leads to*
- the dining room and drawing room (used by the Archbishop for entertaining royalty amongst others) with wonderful views over the gardens; and
- the Chapel which was built in the early 13th century, badly damaged during WWII but since much restored.

Our tour ended with a chance to look round the gardens. Near the house is an area restored by the wife of Archbishop Runcie which has a formal rose terrace and herb garden; beyond that a parkland-style area with masses of mature trees, woodland and native planting.

Ann Dolphin

I have long wished to see the other side of the rather austere exterior, so this was an opportunity not to be missed. The aspect that most of us are familiar with is Morton's Tower (above) which is the main entrance into the Palace. We went in by a side gate, leading to a beautiful rose garden and terrace, overlooked by various function rooms. We tend to forget that the Palace is not only a home for the Archbishop of Canterbury and his family, and other members of his staff, but also a working office and a study centre. Because of this we were unable to linger in any one area but the lady who acted as our tour guide was very knowledgeable and made the tour very interesting.

Long before bridges were built across this part of the Thames, there was a ferry connecting the north and south banks at this place. Edward the Confessor chose a site on the north bank for a monastery (Westminster Abbey) followed later by the Palace of Westminster, and the area became the seat of government, so that bishops

and nobles wanted to have houses not far from it. In the library we could see a Deed of Exchange between Archbishop Walter and the Prior and Convent of Rochester for the acquisition of the Manor of Lambeth in 1197, when Lambeth House, as it was then called, began its long association with the Archbishops.

The oldest surviving part of Lambeth Palace is the Chapel, completed in 1234, but altered and added to many times since. Work completed in 1833 constitutes most of the Palace we see today. It would take too long to mention every room we saw, but the most fascinating was the Library. The Palace Library was England's first "public" library, and it remains freely open for research, serving as the principal source for the history of the Church of England. It contains some 4000 documents, of which over 600 are medieval. Treasures of the collection include the MacDurnan Gospels, written and illuminated in Ireland in the 9th Century and presented to Canterbury by King Athelstan. Also a Gutenberg Bible printed in 1455. I could have spent all day in this room, but we were only given 20 minutes!

The overall impression was of a mixture of the beautiful and the austere, and a great sense of history. Kings and Queens, Archbishops and great names and events in the history of our country have all been associated with Lambeth Palace. Two rather homely displays that I remember were the shell of a tortoise killed by a careless gardener in 1753, having been brought to the Palace by Archbishop Laud back in 1633, and the gloves worn by Charles I on the scaffold.

Please may we have other visits to interesting places in Lambeth, preferably on a weekday. I am sure there are many retired people in the Brixton Society who would find it easier to attend such visits during the week rather than at weekends. Many thanks to everyone involved in arranging this visit – I thought it was a great success.

Patricia Ware.

Cinema Tour Success

We had a very good response to our joint tour with the Cinema Theatre Association on 12 September. 80 (plus) turned up for the morning leg in Brixton, and we took over £70 from the sale of postcards! We saw inside the Ritzy (1910) and the Fridge (ex-Palladium of 1913) and pointed out others in the area before moving on to Streatham for the afternoon leg.

Open Day at Lambeth Archives



Diana Linskey (Membership Secretary) and Glyn Kyle (Chair) looking after our book-stall in the Minet Library during the Lambeth Archives Open Day on Saturday 25 September. Our thanks to all members who took a turn on the stall.

Blue Plaque unveiled to writer C.L.R. James

Political activist, novelist, playwright, historian and renowned cricket writer C.L.R. James (1901-89) is now commemorated by an English Heritage Blue Plaque in Brixton. It was unveiled on Friday 8th October by his nephew, journalist Darcus Howe, at the official re-opening of the newly-extended Brixton Advice Centre in Railton Road.

From 1981 until his death on 31 May 1989, James lived on the top floor of 165 Railton Road. It was while living here that he enjoyed the reputation of an elder statesman, giving a wide ranging series of lectures on Channel 4 in 1983.

Cyril Lionel Robert James was born in Trinidad on 4 January 1901, the son of a schoolteacher. He immersed himself in the history and culture of the small colonial society in which he grew up. During the 1920s, in addition to his growing reputation as a cricket reporter, he began to write novels.

James came to England in 1932, spending a year in Lancashire helping the great West Indian cricketer Learie Constantine with writing his memoirs. James began to reach a wider audience as a cricket writer, with occasional pieces appearing in what was then the *Manchester Guardian* until the 1960s.

James's move to London in 1933 marked his increasing involvement in left-wing politics through the Independent Labour Party and the Trotskyist movement. In 1938 he produced a play "Toussaint L'Ouverture" about the slave revolt in Haiti, with Paul Robeson in the title role, followed in 1937 by a book on the subject. From 1938 to 1952 he lived and worked in the United States, producing some of his most important political writing.

In 1953 he returned to Trinidad and campaigned variously for decolonisation and the appointment of Frank Worrell as the West Indies' first black cricket captain. However, he later broke with Eric Williams, Trinidad's first president, and was expelled in 1966, though his body was returned there for his funeral in Tunapuna Cemetery.

As Darcus Howe pointed out, CLR James would have appreciated the fact that the plaque is actually on the Shakespeare Road frontage of the building, and in good company with several other literary figures commemorated by local road names, including Robert Burns Mews and Derek Walcott Close.

Brixton Advice Centre

The Advice Centre itself is by now something of a local institution, started in 1966 by volunteers from Lambeth Council staff, at the inspiration of George Greaves, then the Community Relations Officer. Initially it operated from a hut behind Railton Methodist Church, then from 1972 in the newly-rebuilt Community Centre. Eventually BAC was able to lease a shop building at 167 Railton Road, and became an indispensable part of the local community for legal and financial advice.

In the late 1970s, under its then director, Hartley Dean, it played a valuable role in co-ordinating residents' objections to Council plans for demolishing the surrounding area and then hosted residents' meetings with Council officers to discuss improvements. Probably its valued role as part of the social infrastructure helped it survive the 1981 riots intact, but the 1980s were hard times financially and at one stage No.167 was repossessed due to unpaid rent. In the 1990s funding from Brixton Challenge and Lambeth Endowed Charities allowed BAC to buy No.167 outright. Further fund-raising enabled BAC first to acquire the adjoining corner shop, and then to combine and renovate both properties.

During the recent building works, BAC was operating out of a converted stables on the other side of Shakespeare Road, previously the offices of their architects, Greenhill Jenner, now based at Clerkenwell, EC1. (Incidentally, Nigel Greenhill says he is still looking for a new tenant for the Shakespeare Road premises...).

Sources: English Heritage press release, with additional details from Alan Piper and Brixton Advice Centre's re-opening leaflet.

Remembering Clapham Park

The Clapham Park "New Deal for Communities" project covers an interesting area where the three "Town Centres" of Brixton, Clapham and Streatham all have some influence – and the South Circular Road cuts through it too! Major changes are planned for its Council estates but a more holistic approach to regeneration includes health, employment and education initiatives. As part of this, they are supporting a Reminiscence Group for local residents over 50, aiming both to provide some gentle exercise for the memory cells, and to record local life before more changes take place.

Meetings are every 2 weeks on **Wednesday mornings** from 11 am to 12 noon, at All Saints Church, Lyham Road (New Park Road end) SW2. The next meeting is on **27 October** and the series continues until 16 February. Further details from Carlos Coke (Clapham Park NDC) on 020 8678 5935, or from Alan Piper.

Discovering London

Brian Bloice currently has two series of talks underway on Discovering (South) London's Local History:

At Morley College, Waterloo:

Wednesdays 2 pm to 4 pm, Morley College, Westminster Bridge Road, SE1, enrolment/enquiries to (020) 7928 8501 (course 249).

At Lambeth College, Streatham Centre:

Thursdays 1-30 to 3-30 pm, Adare Centre, Adare Walk, off Leigham Court Road, SW16. Enrolment/enquiries (020) 7501 5564.

There's also a "try before you buy" offer of a free Local History session at the Adare Centre (at least for over 50s) on **Thursday 28 October** from 1 pm to 3 pm (see listing on page 2).



Applying Lambeth's Community Strategy

For the past 2 years, discussions about the Community Plan have been at a very general level, so the core document is mostly "motherhood and apple pie" statements, but reality is now beginning to bite. Central Government, as the main sponsor of the Renewal process, is keen to see tangible results and so is pressing for measurable targets to be set for improvements in local services and living conditions. At the same time, the full array of specialist theme groups are finally getting to grips with the practicalities of delivering the strategy which the various public bodies, community networks and business groups have signed up to.

Joining in the Process

The normal cycle of annual elections for community representatives on the steering group for Lambeth CEN and the board of Lambeth First has been delayed by the current restructuring of Lambeth First. The number and mix of our representatives will need to be adjusted to match the final pattern of theme groups, board and assembly. Meanwhile, to raise awareness and promote direct contact with the existing representatives, a "Big Listen" event is being planned for **Monday 8th November at 336 Brixton Road, SW9**, with a choice of afternoon or evening sessions to allow as many groups as possible to send members along.

The Theme Partnerships

- Employment & Enterprise (likely to include Education and Arts representatives).
- Health & Social Care (slightly complicated by NHS structures).
- Housing (including the Tenants' Council, leaseholders and housing associations among others)
- Crime & Community Safety,
- Children & Young People,
- Environment (see right).

Underlying all work on the Community Strategy is the aim of improving how services are delivered and identifying sticking points where different agencies seem to pull in different directions.

The Environment Theme Group

Two full meetings have been held and the interim chair is Alan Piper, current CEN Environment representative. In addition to the Council's Environment Department, the Environment Agency, London Wildlife Trust and Lambeth Friends of the Earth have been included so far. However there is a need to get buy-in too from other players whose policies can make a big difference, such as Lambeth Housing, the Planning Department and Network Rail. Working groups are being used to review the priority topics (below) in more detail. We will also need some joint meetings or liaison with other theme groups where our objectives overlap.

Environment Priorities:

Under the broad aim of a "cleaner and greener environment", eight topics were included in the Strategy, and four of these have been selected for action in the current year:

- A Bio-Diversity action plan,
- Improving transport networks, particularly walking, cycling and public transport;
- Environmental crimes (e.g. dumping of hazardous materials),
- Protecting & enhancing open spaces and riverside.

Suggestions are also invited for what should be addressed in the year starting April 2005.

Keeping in Touch:

Contact the Lambeth CEN administrator for details of events or to get your group on the mailing list: James Philip at LambethCENadmin@lambethvac.org.uk or tel. (020) 7737 9463 or write to: CEN, c/o LVAC, 95 Acre Lane, SW2 5TU..

Alan Piper would like to thank all the amenity societies and groups around the borough who already include him in their mailings. It's not possible to appear at many meetings but it helps to hear what's going on. If regular meetings or networking would help you, we can support it with CEN resources. See page 1 for contact details.

LAMBETH CREDIT UNION

Do you know that a Credit Union is being formed in Lambeth?

A Credit Union is a financial co-operative, owned and managed by its members.

Credit Unions are regulated by Acts of Parliament, the Credit Union Act 1979, and Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965. The Financial Services Authority supervises Credit Unions.

Following consultations with the people of Lambeth by the Association of British Credit Unions Limited (ABCUL) in 2001, it was unanimously agreed that Lambeth needed a Credit Union. Since then, efforts have been intensified by a Steering Committee drawn from across the Borough to bring the recommendations made by ABCUL to fruition.

Lambeth Council supports the proposed Credit Union and a dedicated officer was assigned to the project. The Credit Union is also supported by a number of local organisations including Clapham Park New Deal, Lambeth First, Lambeth Endowed Charities, Waterloo Action Trust and Family Housing Association.

A full time Development Manager was appointed in February this year working with the Steering Committee and temporarily sharing the Southwark Credit Union office in Denmark Hill. The staff of ABCUL have trained Steering Committee members and work has reached an advanced stage in the registration process.

However, we still need your support. We need more members to join the Union as many hands make light work. We need every skill we can get in Lambeth. To be a member, you have to be living or working in Lambeth.

The advantages of being a member are numerous. Low-cost borrowing, life insurance and dividends on your savings are all on offer.

If you would like to find out more, please contact the Development Manager on 0207 708 8784, or: lcu@lambethcreditunion.org

Doye Akinlade.

Brixton Central Square

Further to coverage in our July issue, Lambeth Council announced early in September that Gross Max had been selected as the landscape architects to design the Central Square as a whole.

Meanwhile, the Friends of Tate Library & Gardens have been discussing plans for interim improvements to the Gardens area immediately in front of the library. A key priority is to improve the approach to the library itself. The Friends have meetings scheduled at 6-30 pm preceding the Brixton Society main committee meetings (see page 2) or otherwise check with Glyn Kyle on (020) 7326 5070.

Black Cultural Archives are continuing to pursue the renovation of Raleigh Hall, guided by ABL Consultants. The Council have agreed in principle to granting a 99-year peppercorn lease which will open up several sources of funding, but the new centre may not open until 2009.

ADP

Cottage Listed

A rural survivor on the fringe of our area is **Brashier's Cottage**, off New Park Road, near the top of Brixton Hill. It is the best preserved of several small cottages from c.200 years ago, but all have recently been threatened with overshadowing by a bulky new development proposed for the vacant car dealership site fronting onto the South Circular Road. Both the Brixton and Streatham Societies have been supporting the local residents' group in objecting to these plans, and the recent listing strengthens their case.

ADP.