

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Spring, April 2009

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Distributed free to members.

Registered with the Civic Trust and the

London Forum of Amenity Societies,

Registered Charity No.1058103,

Website: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk

Our next open meeting

Thursday 11th June:

Annual General Meeting

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

Time again to report on what we have been doing over the past year, collect ideas for the year ahead, and elect committee members to carry them out. For details, contact the Secretary, Alan Piper on (020) 7207 0347 or by e-mail to apiperbrix@aol.com

First of our Summer Walks...

Sunday 14 June

Around Myatt's Fields

Meet 2-30 pm outside Loughborough Junction Station, Coldharbour Lane SE5, for a walk led by Alan Piper, tracing old farming estates on the Camberwell border. *On bus routes P4, P5, 35, 45, 345.*

A full list of guided walks in and around all of Lambeth is expected next month.

More dates on the back page...



The Centenary Street Party in Claverdale Road, Tulse Hill, was among the events where we provided a display and bookstall last year. With the help of a Lambeth Community Chest grant, we have recently obtained new display kit, so we look forward to putting on a better show at other events this summer.

(Photo by Annick Alet, CC-231.jpg)

Sunday 28th June:

Windmill Festival

2 pm to 5 pm in Windmill Gardens, between Ramillies Close and Blenheim Gardens, Brixton Hill SW2

If you can spare some time to help on our stall at this event (or others), please call Bill Linskey on (020) 7274 3835 or by e-mail to wjdc1@globalnet.co.uk

Brixton Arcades Reprieved?

The biggest threat to Brixton's Town Centre appears to have been averted – at least while the recession lasts. London & Associated Properties (LAP) had planned to build a 10-storey 110 flat development above the former Granville Arcade, now Brixton Village. This would have put the covered arcade out of action for 2 years and dispersed existing traders.

Continued on page 6 inside.

Brixton Society Contacts

Affiliations and Representation

The Society is involved with a number of other organisations, both locally and London-wide. The Executive Committee recently reviewed the list of our present connections and representatives, as below. However, some meetings or events are open to a wider range of members - if in doubt, contact the Secretary.

Locally:

- Brixton Community Trust (set up to oversee the ABC/ Railway Hotel project; the Society has a place on the board) *Alan Piper, Phil Isaac.*
- Brixton Forum (open to individuals and groups, being reorganised)
- Brixton Sheltered Street Scheme (meetings venue, the Society is entitled to a place on the management committee) *Alan Piper.*
- Brixton Stakeholders' Meetings (reps of several local groups plus relevant public departments, 6-weekly) *Bill Linskey, Alan Piper.*
- Brockwell Park Management Advisory Committee (reps from local groups plus elected members of the public) *Alan Piper.*
- Friends of Lambeth Libraries (reps from each library's Friends) *John Cunningham.*
- Friends of Tate Library & Gardens (*this is now embodied within the Society as a standing committee*).
- Lambeth Community Police Consultative Group: *Doye Akinlade, David Warner.*
- Lambeth LINK (run by Age Concern Lambeth for Lambeth Primary Care Trust) *Norma Williamson*
- Lambeth Local History Forum (quarterly) *Alan Piper, Bill Linskey.*

- Lambeth Parks Forum (reps from the Friends group or MAC for each open space) *Bill Linskey, Annick Alet.*
- Lambeth Voluntary Action Council (e-mail bulletins, newsletter and training courses; member groups can nominate to their committee)

London-wide (or beyond):

- Archives for London (e-mail bulletins and events)
- British Association for Local History (insurance scheme, bulletin)
- The Civic Trust (maintains the national register of amenity societies; e-mail bulletins and occasional events)
- London Forum of Amenity Societies (bulletins and events; societies can nominate to their committee)
- London Parks & Greenspaces Forum (e-mail bulletins and events)
- London Sustainability Exchange (e-mail bulletins only)

Note: There are also casual links with several grass-roots groups and residents' associations. In addition, we exchange newsletters etc. with most neighbouring amenity societies.

Alan Piper, Secretary.

Editorial and Event Notices:

Space permitting, we are happy to announce local events and publish reminiscences or enquiries in our newsletter. 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.

Material for the next issue should be sent before 15 June to Alan Piper – contact details as on page 1.

Changes to our distribution list and your book orders should be sent direct to our Membership Secretary, Diana Linskey at 32 Stockwell Green, SW9 9HZ or e-mail to wjdc1@globalnet.co.uk

LISTED BUILDINGS

The List of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest which is maintained by English Heritage is something with which most members will be familiar. Having a building listed gives it substantial protection from demolition or inappropriate redevelopment.



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Did you know that there is also provision for the creation of local lists? The following is from the Lambeth Unitary Development Plan which was adopted on 6th August 2007.

“Policy 46 List of Buildings of Local Architectural Interest

The Council will compile and adopt a list of buildings and structures of local historic or architectural interest.

The Council will use development control procedures to resist proposals for the demolition or inappropriate alteration of buildings or structures on the local list. ...”

Despite this policy being more than 18 months old, a local list has yet to be compiled. At the full meeting of the Council on 28 January 2009, a motion on local lists was carried which included the following:

“Council requests officers to report back to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration on progress around the development of the Local List, and in drawing up a List to involve the Borough’s knowledgeable amenity societies. Council also notes the comparison with Merton and Croydon and requests that Lambeth officers discuss with them the benefits/constraints of operating such a List.”

YOU CAN HELP

Hopefully, this will now get things moving and, if necessary, we will certainly press for a list to be drawn up. However, there is a slight sting in the tail. You will have noticed in the Council motion that officers are asked to involve the amenity societies such as ourselves in drawing up the list. That is great, but we cannot push for the list to be drawn up and then not be ready to help when called upon.

We cannot leave it all to the last minute. We can start drawing up our own list of recommendations straight away – and this is where you come in. Please don’t just leave it to your Committee, but let us know if there are buildings in your area which you think are special.

Write to me at 32 Stockwell Green, London SW9 9HZ or e-mail wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk with as much information as possible as to why you feel the building should be locally listed.

Bill Linskey



Fire Brigade Museum Possible Visit

The London Fire Brigade Museum is situated on Southwark Bridge Road. All visits are by appointment only. It has been suggested that we might organise a visit for members. We will need a minimum number to make it worth doing. Would you be interested?

These would be the arrangements: the visit would be on a Friday afternoon. We would meet at the museum in good time to go in at 2:00pm. The tour would take a couple of hours. There would be a charge of £3 per person.

Suggested dates are a Friday in June: 5th, 12th, 19th or 26th. If you would like to come, please contact me and let me know which of those dates you could make. Either e-mail:

wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk

or telephone and leave a message on:

020 7274 3835

Please remember to leave your name so that I can get back to you if it is on.

Bill Linskey

Parks and Open Spaces

Myatt's Fields Park

This small Victorian park re-opened in February after 9 months of building works. These include refurbishment of the bandstand and summer house, a new meeting room and a refreshment kiosk. £121,000 has been spent on new trees, shrubs and borders, the bindweed has been cleared and the wildlife area has new paths and a pond.



Musicians on the bandstand in the park during the open day on Saturday 14th February to show off the works recently completed.

Civic Trust Award

The renovation of the Lido in Brockwell Park was among the winners in the 2009 round of awards announced by the Civic Trust.

Brockwell Lido Member Offer

Fusion, the operators of the Lido, are offering our members free guest passes for a day trial, including free use of the Gym and Spa facilities (sauna, steam room and hydro pool). There is also the opportunity for discounted membership. There are no time restrictions. Opening times Monday-Friday 6-30 to 10 pm, Weekends 7-30 am to 9-30 pm (9 pm Sunday) The Lido itself will be open from the beginning of May. More info on their website:

www.fusion-lifestyle.com

If you would like a pass, contact the Secretary (details as on front page).

Railway Hotel moves forward

Early in March, Lambeth Council gave the go-ahead for an options appraisal on bringing the building back into use. The Council is now keen to hand over the building to save costs. ABC Brixton has been pursuing this for some time and this opens the door to raising funds and attracting backers.

Open Garden Squares weekend, 13/14 June

The delayed start on remodelling Tate Library Gardens/ Windrush Square deprives us of the chance to run something locally, but please take this opportunity to go round and learn from events in other small open spaces – from traditional London squares to busy urban open spaces. Enquiries to London Parks & Gardens Trust, tel (020) 7839 3969, or by e-mail to: opensquares@googlemail.com

Support Windmill Allotments

The allotments between the Windmill and the Waterworks are managed from the Reading office of Thames Water, so communications with plot-holders are tenuous. There have been intermittent threats to use the land for housing development or as part of a new school site. Over the past few years the Friends of Windmill Allotments have struggled to defend the allotments, to bring some order to the site and to return overgrown corners to regular use.

One of their recent projects has been to use one of the plots on a community basis for residents of a local care home, with children from local schools and adult volunteers providing the energy for the more vigorous gardening tasks that are beyond the powers of the infirm or disabled. Funding has been found, the different generations have been learning from each other and the project has raised the morale of elderly participants.

However TWA has been reluctant to endorse the project and some other plotters are concerned about more people using the site – though this trend is inevitable as demand grows, so more plots may be created by subdivision. FoWAA is therefore urging local residents and groups to write to TWA, asking them to approve the use, and to Councillors. Further details from Helen Sharrock on hsharrock@aol.com

Local History Research & Memories

We have had to hold back a few items due to lack of space, but we hope to compensate in our next two issues.

Name Brixton's New Square

Reprinted from Lambeth Life, 1 April 2009

Residents are invited to help decide on a name for the new square in the centre of Brixton.

Tate Gardens and Windrush Square will be joined together to create a new, high-quality space in the centre of Brixton. As well as a focal point for the town centre, it will provide a venue for community events, and could include a new café and public toilets.

Community safety is at the centre of the design for the new square, with improved lighting and better CCTV coverage just some of the new features.

Following extensive consultation and after talking to organisations facing the square three names have been suggested:

Windrush Square - referring to the Empire Windrush ship which brought the first migrants from Jamaica to London in 1948. This event has become a landmark in the history of modern, multi-cultural Britain and in 1998 part of the space for the new square was renamed Windrush Square to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the arrival of West Indians.

Brixton Heritage Square - focussing on the idea behind the new square as well its history. Making the most of Brixton's unique character is the foundation for all regeneration plans and the new square will bring people together to celebrate the area's culture and strong community.

Roots Square - the name "roots" implies social heritage as well as being a play on words, bringing to mind plants, the ground and the phrase "square root".

To take part in the opinion poll online please go to www.lambeth.gov.uk/futurebrixton or watch out for return postcards around Brixton. You can also send your choice to futurebrixton@lambeth.gov.uk

The closing date is 20 April and the winning name will be announced on 8 May.

Work on the square was due to start in April, but, because of when Easter falls, Transport for London is delaying the start until May.

Preliminary utility diversion works will take place at the junction of Brixton Road and Coldharbour Lane and will inevitably cause disruption.

- information obtained from the Brixton Stakeholders' Meeting – Bill Linskey



A Brixton Mystery

The re-naming proposal is a mystery – who were the organisations “around the square” which the Council talked to? It was not the Brixton Society, the Friends of Tate Library & Gardens, nor the Brixton Sheltered Street Scheme at the Vida Walsh Centre. It's very unlikely that it was Rushcroft Road residents, because the Council has just made a great show of finally evicting them. Maybe if we had been asked when the plans were still being made, we might have come up with something better, but from the limited choice there seems to be only one serious option.

Heritage Square is probably the least appropriate choice if we recall how each successive generation has re-shaped the space with scant regard for what was there before. In the 1930s a coach station, funfair and petrol station appeared on the former common land, and in the 1940s Tate Library Gardens lost its Edwardian railings to a scrap metal drive. The gardens were remodelled in 1966 and again in 1988, and another round of clearance is about to start.

My first thought about Roots Square was that it was intended to commemorate local businessman Levi Roots and his Reggae Reggae sauce, but it seems that someone in the Town Hall was just trying to be “right on” but missing the local mood by 30 years or so. Removing several good trees and concreting over the roots of the magnificent London Plane tree only adds to the irony.

So for me, it has to be Windrush Square – after all, it would be deeply insulting to abolish the name scarcely 10 years after bestowing it, particularly if the Black Cultural Archives succeeds in re-opening in Raleigh Hall, fronting directly on the new square.

News just in from Lambeth's Future Brixton team says the voting deadline is 27 April, so remember, vote promptly, vote often!

Alan Piper.

Minor Planning Applications

We try to monitor many planning applications in Brixton generally, but the case below shows the difficult choices that often arise. This one was also picked up by the Cinema Theatre Association – comments below from their case officer, Eva Branscome:

RITZY / ELECTRIC PAVILION, BRIXTON OVAL, BRIXTON, LONDON; EC HOMES AND LUCAS, 1911, GRADE II

There has been a proposal changing the entrance foyer to where the downstairs bar now is. The bar is to be in the former foyer area. While the spatial rearrangement makes more sense this way in terms of circulation, we regret that the 'sense of occasion' will be lost as a result. We have not objected though, because the venue will be more viable with a more attractive bar that can spill out into the pavement with tables outside during the summer and the entrance foyers and ticket sales consolidated.



Brixton Arcades Reprised?

Continued from front page

LAP had claimed that income from sale of the flats would be used to finance upgrading of the market arcade before re-letting. However their track record at other markets has been hostile to existing traders.

Now the slump in residential values has undermined the project. John Heller, Chief Executive of LAP, said "The residential market is going through a difficult time, so rather than pursuing the planning process to get a scheme going that would make no money, we are putting the scheme on hold."

Over the past few months, market traders, the Friends of Brixton Market and the Brixton Society have worked together to resist the proposals, successfully presenting a petition to a full Council meeting and showing our Greater London Assembly member, Val Shawcross, around the market. She has urged the Council to speed up local listing (see page 3) while statutory listing is still being

pursued with support from the 20th Century Society.

We need to keep up the pressure because LAP could try again once property values pick up, though they have said they now intend to improve the retail environment and retain existing traders. Other redevelopment proposals for historic London markets have been altered in the face of pressure from traders and users, including Wards Corner Latin American Market in Tottenham, and Oriental City in North London.

Sources: Estates Gazette, South London Press, Friends of Brixton Market.

Fast-track Planning Appeals for Householders

In Newsletter 191 we noted the easing of rules about the scale of alterations for which householders must apply for planning permission. If permission is refused, the appeal process is also being streamlined from this month. Householders will need to appeal within 12 weeks of the Council decision BUT objectors will no longer be able to make representations, nor attend when the Planning Inspector makes his site visit. The same restrictions apply to the Council, though they tend to rely on the weight of their accumulated policies rather than make much effort for individual cases.

Based on Civic Trust Grass Roots bulletin 39.



Neighbours will have less opportunity to object to next door's "Grand Design". (C102.001.jpg)

Support the Brixton £

The Brixton Pound (B£) will be a local currency for use in and around Brixton, to be launched in September by Transition Town Brixton (TTB). With the support of the local community, TTB will work with the council and Brixton's businesses to help maintain the diversity and resilience required for a strong local economy.

People who use the B£ are committing to spend a small part of their income within the community. This action will provide Brixton residents with an economic community that is more stable, a local job market that is more secure and a closer relationship with local businesses. Consumers will also benefit from rewards and special offers. Businesses will benefit from increased trade within their shop, ensuring stability and competitive advantage against the large retailers who can adapt more easily during recessions.



It works by exchanging a Pound Sterling for a B£ at one of the various exchange points which will be set up in strategic locations in Brixton. These B£ can then be spent at all the local businesses that have agreed to accept the B£. **Lambeth Savings and Credit Union**, a financial co-operative offering a secure savings and low-cost loans facility to anyone who lives or works in the London Borough of Lambeth, is one of our key partners and will hold all the Sterling backing of the Brixton Pound.

The B£ is part of a larger movement initiated by Transition Town Brixton. The goal is for local people to move Brixton towards low carbon living and create joined-up solutions to the economic, environmental and energy

crisis. The B£ has received support from the New Economics Foundation which has researched the various benefits that local currencies bring to a strong local community. The project has also received support from several Lambeth Council members.

If you would like to support the B£, please visit www.brixtonpound.org and sign up to our B£ 1000 Club. This is a list of local people agreeing to support us in our goal. We hope you will join us.

Tim Nichols, TTB.

Support for Local Enterprise

A number of public bodies are responding to the recession and stepping up support services for smaller firms.

These days it's more difficult to distinguish between commercial and community organizations, with some intermediate forms like social enterprises and community interest companies – frankly, if you are employing people, you need to take it seriously, so don't be fussy about whose ideas you adopt or adapt.

Lambeth Business Support Network

The Council's Business Growth and Enterprise Team issue a wide-ranging e-mail bulletin twice a month including new sources of advice, funding and publicity. To sign up, contact Colette Makambila on (020) 7926 5966, or through the Council website, www.lambeth.gov.uk

The Council has also launched a business desk to signpost local firms to relevant departments – tel. (020) 7926 3032 or by e-mail businessdesk@lambeth.gov.uk

Business Link

This network has been around since the last recession but seems to have had a recent injection of resources – at least it's trying harder to promote its advice and events for London businesses. Best starting point is their website, where you can sign up for another e-bulletin service: www.businesslink.gov.uk/london/events

Lambeth Voluntary Action Council

Not-for-profit organizations can tap into advice and training events run by LVAC – one example is listed overleaf.

ADP

Diary of Events, Spring & Summer 2009

Society Meetings

The Executive Committee usually meets on the second Thursday of the month to plan activities and agree our responses to current issues. These meetings are at 7 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2 (at the Effra Road end, facing Windrush Square).

- 9 April,
- 14 May,
- 11 June (AGM),
- 9th July,
- 10 September,
- 8th October (open).
- 12 November.

Links with Other Groups

Slippage in our publishing schedule has allowed news to arrive from a few other societies – please contact organisers directly for any queries over times or costs.

Sunday 19 April – Brockwell Park Walk:

Meet at 2 pm by the clock tower near Brockwell Hall for a walk led by Peter Bradley, tracing vanished buildings within the park.
Friends of Brockwell Park.

Monday 20 April – Community Groups in the Recession

How can your group tackle the challenges of hard times? 10 am to 2 pm including lunch at the YMCA, 40 Stockwell Road, SW9. To book, call LVAC on (020) 7737 9460 or see: www.lambethvac.org.uk
Lambeth Voluntary Action

Wednesday 22 April – The Good, the Bad and the Ugly:

John Adams presents a review of what has gone up – and come down – in Clapham since 1970. 7-30 pm for 8 pm start at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4
Clapham Society

Thursday 23 April – Fund-raising Auction:

7 pm at St. Vincent's Centre, Talma Road, SW2. An evening of food, drink and live music to raise funds for the Music, Arts & Drama programme of events in Brockwell Park. Tickets £10.
Brockwell Park MAC & Friends of Brockwell Park.

Sunday 26 April - Annual Spring Plants & Gardens Fair

10-30 am to 5 pm at the Garden Museum, next to Lambeth Palace, SE1. Admission £4, children free.
The Garden Museum

Monday 27 April – Friends of Windmill Gardens:

General meeting, 7-30 pm at Lyham Road Methodist Church (next to Clapham Youth Centre) SW2.
Friends of Windmill Gdns.

Saturday 2nd May – Modern Movement Event at the Lido

All-day celebration of 20th-century design, poolside at Brockwell Lido, Dulwich Road, SE24.

Monday 4th May – Ephemera & Books

Tracing local history through printed material, 8 pm at Woodlawns, Streatham Darby & Joan Club, 16 Leigham Court Road, SW16
Streatham Society – local history group.

Tuesday 12 May – Entertainment in South London:

Its history and buildings described by Brian Bloice. Opens at 7 pm for 7-30 start, The Housing Co-op Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1 (almost opposite the Old Vic Theatre). *Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society.*

Wednesday 13 May – Climate Change

A global perspective from Dr Rob Basto, 7-30 pm for 7-45 start, Herne Hill United Church Hall, corner of Redpost Hill and Herne Hill, SE24.
Herne Hill Society.

Sunday 17 May – Dulwich Woods Walk

Historical walk led by Brian Green, meet at 2-30 pm outside the Dulwich Wood House, corner of Crescent Wood Road and Sydenham Hill, SE26.
A Dulwich Festival event.

Sunday 31 May – Tree Celebration:

Meet at 2 pm by the clock tower for the annual dedication of newly-donated trees.
Friends of Brockwell Park.