

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Spring, April 2010

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Distributed free to members.

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Societies, Registered Charity No.1058103,
Website: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk

Our next open meeting

Thursday 10th 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

Open Garden Squares

Weekend - 12 & 13 June

Growing in Brixton event in the new
Windrush Square – details still being
settled but watch the website for more.

Carnegie Library will also be opening their
Reading and Wildlife Garden on **Saturday 12th**
as part of this weekend.

*Garden created by the Friends of Carnegie
Library.*

Myatt's Fields Fair

Saturday 19th June

Myatt's Fields Park, SE5, 2 pm – 5 pm

More dates inside...



Brixton Windmill go-ahead

The Heritage Lottery Fund recently agreed
to support the restoration of the mill – see
page 5 for more on our local heritage.

Sunday 11th July

First of our Summer Walks...

Rediscovering Rush Common

Meet 2-30 pm outside Tate Library,
Windrush Square, SW2, for a walk led by
Alan Piper, finishing at Brixton Windmill.
For more about Rush Common, see inside.
A full list of guided walks in and around all of
Lambeth is expected shortly – we will enclose
it with this issue if received in time.

Windmill Festival:

12 noon to 6 pm in Windmill Gardens,
between Ramillies Close and Blenheim
Gardens, Brixton Hill SW2

Organised by Friends of Windmill Gardens

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

Diary of Events, Spring & Summer 2010

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).

- 13 May,
- 10 June (AGM)
- 8 July,
- 9 September,
- 14 October
- 11 November

Links with Other Groups

Please check directly with the organisers if any queries over times or admission.

Thursday 15 April – Music in South London

Illustrated talk by Jill Dudman, 8 pm at the Phoenix Centre, Westow Street, SE19.
Norwood Society

Thursday 22 April – Waterloo

A live screening of Karl Gruhne's 1928 silent film, accompanied by Carl Davis's specially composed music performed by the Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by the composer. 7 pm at Royal Festival Hall, tickets £8 to £45, box office 0844 847 9921
South Bank Centre

Saturday 24 April – Shakespeare Event

At the Carnegie Library
Friends of Carnegie Library.

Sunday 2nd May – Cemetery Tour:

Meet at 2-30 pm inside main gate, Norwood Road, SE27 for general tour. Suggested donation £1.
Friends of West Norwood Cemetery.

Thursday 6th May – Film & Video at London Metropolitan Archives:

A tour of the film collections, led by Lydia Pappas, 6 pm at LMA, 40 Northampton Road, EC1. Free but please book prior with Nicola Avery on 020 7332 3816, Nicola.avery@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Archives for London (Brixton Society is a member).

Tuesday 11 May – History of London's Postal Service

Talk by Brian Bloice: hall 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.*

Saturday 15 May – Cemetery Open Day

11 am to 5-30 pm at Nunhead Cemetery, SE15

Sunday 16 May – Telegraphs, semaphores and the threat of invasion:

A hilly walk, led by Brian Green. Meet at 2-30 pm by the cafe in Dulwich Park.
Dulwich Society

Wednesday 19 May – The Garden Museum:

Talk by Christopher Woodward, director of the museum in the former church by Lambeth Palace. 7-30 pm for 8 pm start at Clapham Manor School – enter from Belmont Road, SW4.
The Clapham Society

Saturday 22 May – Orchestra Concert:

Beethoven's Symphony No.2, the Oboe Concerto by Richard Strauss and Brahms's Serenade No.1. Starts 7-30 pm at All Saints' Church, Rosendale Road, SE21.

Tickets £10, concessions £8 children £1. For further dates see www.lambeth-orchestra.org.uk
Lambeth Orchestra

Monday 7th June – Bygone Streatham:

Illustrated talk by John Brown, 8 pm at Woodlawns, Streatham Darby & Joan Club, 16 Leigham Court Road, SW16.
The Streatham Society

Wednesday 9th June – Magnificent Maps:

Antiquarian maps of London and South-East England, presented by Tom Harper of the British Library. 7-30 pm for 7-45 start, Herne Hill United Church Hall, corner of Redpost Hill and Herne Hill, SE24.
Herne Hill Society.

Weekend 12 & 13 June – Open Garden Squares Weekend:

For sites and events, see www.opensquares.org

Windrush Square

The delayed opening of the revamped Windrush Square took place over the weekend of Friday, 26th to Sunday, 28th February.

The official opening on the Friday morning was performed by the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, together with the Minister for London, Tessa Jowell MP and Lambeth Council leader Steve Reed.



**The mayor browsing a copy of Alan Piper's
"A History of Brixton"**

(Photo: Lambeth on Flickr:
www.flickr.com/photos/lambethcouncil/collections)

On Friday afternoon, Alan Piper and Joyce Bellamy led a number of guided walks around the square, pointing out its key features and relating its history and the history of its immediate surroundings.

Saturday was very much the public day, with entertainments including music and a human Catherine wheel. Unfortunately, on Sunday, the weather which had been kind until then had its revenge and the day's activities were cancelled.

Open Garden Squares Weekend 12 - 13 June 2010

We have entered Windrush Square for The Open Garden Squares Weekend organised by



We are organising an event called "Growing in Brixton" in the Square. It will be a celebration of urban gardening in the area. It will encourage the growing of flowers, fruit, herbs, vegetables and trees in everything from window boxes, through gardens and allotments to public spaces. A range of public, charitable and commercial organisations will be invited to "pitch their tents" in the square over the weekend.

If you are interested in helping, please contact Bill Linskey on 020 7274 3835.

Tate Library, Brixton Friends' Group

We have been encouraging interest in forming an active Friends' Group for the Library. A quite well-attended meeting on 13 March agreed that it was a good idea and agreed to another meeting on: **Saturday, 24 April 2010 at 3:00pm in the Library.**
Everyone welcome.

Going Batty?

A bat field survey training evening was run in Brockwell Park on 31 March by a team from the Count Bat Project. We learnt about current surveys being undertaken and then about the commoner species such as Noctule and Pipistrelle. We heard recordings of their calls – each bat echo locates, sending signals at a different frequency and a detector can be used to "hear" and identify the calls. Lambeth intend to run further Bat events and training during the year. If you are interested in finding out more contact Xavier Hamon, Count Bat Regional Officer on 07549834442 or xhamon@bats.org.uk Diana Linskey

Green Spaces & Green Issues

Windrush Square launch events



Tour party from Fenstanton School with official "goody bags" on Friday afternoon.



Marilyn Rogers and Bill Linskey preparing our stall for the public event on Saturday.

Brockwell Park update

The Management Advisory Committee (MAC) brings together all groups with an interest in the Park, and their Annual General Meeting was held on 23 March. Lamonte Johnson has stood down as chair but continues as a committee member, while Ann Kingsbury continues as Secretary.

HLF-funded work to restore the Park should resume in the Autumn, including refurbishment of the paddling pool, now that Land Use Consultants have been re-appointed for further design work. Land drainage is being improved in the meantime. An outline of the plans is on the Friends of Brockwell Park website, www.brockwellpark.com

Meanwhile, fund-raising continues in order to sustain the programme of music, art and drama events in the Park. Next up for this is:

Fund-raising Auction & Supper, Thursday 22 April at 7-30 pm

Plus Flamenco and Live Music at Brixton Community Base, Talma Road, SW2. Tickets £10 from Brockwell Art Services at 232 Railton Road, SE24 (near Herne Hill Station) or reserve by e-mail to auction@madforbrockwellpark.com

Wheels for Wellbeing

The special cycling sessions for disabled people are resuming in Brockwell Park from the first Friday after Easter, weekly from 10 am to 12-30. Charge is £3 per session. To book, call Janet Paske on 020 7346 8482 or e-mail to: janet@wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk

Earth & Sky

Thursdays from 6th May to 8th July

A series of 10 free evening lectures presented by Dr Martin Heath of the Ecospheres Project from 7 pm to 8-30 pm at the Francis Peek building in Dulwich Park, College Road SE21.

Assuming no previous scientific background, these lectures focus down from the farthest edges of the observable universe to our own planet and the urgent ecological issues on our doorstep.

Ecospheres Project, with Dulwich Area Parks, Friends of Belair Park and New Leaf.

South London Botanical Institute – open days

The Institute lies just a little way beyond Brockwell Park, towards Tulse Hill Station, at 323 Norwood Road, SE24, tel.020 8674 5787. Openings this season include:

Saturday 8th May – Annual Plant Sale

Open 11 am to 1 pm, admission free.

Thursday 20 May – Open Evening

Open 6 pm to 8 pm, admission free.

Thursday 17 June – Open Evening

Open 6 pm to 8 pm, admission free.

Sunday 27 June – Open Day

Open 2 pm to 5 pm, admission £2, Plant sale.

Thursday 22 July – Open Evening

Open 6 pm to 8 pm, admission free.

Local History Focus

A Future for Brixton Windmill

By now you probably all know that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) have agreed a grant of nearly £400,000 for the restoration of our much-loved Brixton Windmill. The money is to be spent over the next 5 years – with added money from Lambeth Council and the Friends, £581,272 will be spent on the project. Most will go to restore the fabric and workings of the mill, and the rest will fund a part-time education officer for five years.

The Friends of Windmill Gardens was formally established in 2003 to restore the mill and to have an education centre and improved local park surrounding it, but some of our members have been working on this project for over a decade.

Brixton Windmill now has a future for generations to come, thanks to all of the Friends group and the local community. Without your persistence this project would not have been possible. But our work is not over – we need to train lots of guides in time for the opening of the restored mill. We still believe the mill needs a dedicated education centre and of course we are still seeking to improve the surrounding park. Although fencing is already going up around the mill, we have a full programme of events planned for this summer in Windmill Gardens and hope to see more of you at them.

*Jean Kerrigan,
Acting Chair, FoWG.*

The Friends next meeting is the AGM, on **Tuesday 25 May** at St.Saviour's Church Hall, off Blenheim Gardens, SW2.

Edwardian Architecture

Based on a talk given at Lambeth Archives Open Day, Edmund Bird has written a monograph on Edwardian buildings in Lambeth. The centenary of the Town Hall's opening resulted in it featuring strongly, but there are other examples from Brixton as well as more widely within the borough. We do not have all the publication details yet, but we hear that the book will be launched at the Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, at 7 pm on **Wednesday 19th May**.

Black Cultural Archives coming back to Brixton

Another local project which has finally received backing from the HLF is the Black Cultural Archives. For years this was based in a corner shop on Coldharbour Lane and is presently in temporary premises in Kennington. Lambeth Council recently agreed a package of support which will allow it to move into the front portion of Raleigh Hall, at 1-3 Effra Road, fronting the newly-enlarged Windrush Square.

The package of support includes a peppercorn lease of the building to BCA, support with the adaptation of the listed building, and continued support of £800,000 a year for running costs.



Raleigh Hall as seen from Saltoun Road

Moving Lambeth Archives?

Lambeth Archives at the Minet Library faces two problems, lack of space as the collection grows, and an off-centre location distant from most public transport services. A little space was won back last year when the housing office moved out of the building, but some records still have to be stored offsite at West Norwood Library.

In recent years, the archivists' hopes were for a move north to Waterloo, replacing the prefab local library on the back of a big commercial development, but the recession put paid to that.

Now the Friends of Carnegie Library are suggesting a move to the Herne Hill Road site, to take advantage of a big listed building and underpin the existing local library. Other support services now based there would in turn move down to the Minet building. Could it work? What's your view?

Alan Piper

Matthews Tyres

A recent family history enquiry concerns one of the motor firms that were prominent in Stockwell Road until about 30 years ago. Harry Matthews started a car tyre business after the First World War, first appearing in local directories as a tyre merchant at 97 & 99 Stockwell Road. The poster below is undated but probably from the early 1950s. By then the firm had spread across 4 shops, but soon had to move aside when the Waltham Estate was built. In 1965 they were listed at 55-57, 60-64 and 107-111 Stockwell Road, with the business including car sales and spares. Later the business shrank back to the tyre-fitting operation at 60-64 Stockwell Road, until this building was bought by the Stockwell United Reformed Church to replace their old chapel in Stockwell Green (now a mosque).

Harry had three sons who apparently followed him into the business, Harry, Charles and Sidney. Our enquirer, Louise Brinklow, is particularly interested in Harry (senior) and his family, but any memories are welcome – to Alan Piper or direct to louisejb@live.co.uk



Local Listing of Buildings

Despite some confusion and delays, Lambeth Council has finally agreed a scheme for the Local Listing of buildings of historical interest or architectural merit. Some of these may be candidates for inclusion in the National List maintained by the Department of Culture, which offers safeguards against demolition, but in the meantime the aim is to identify buildings of merit or special interest and encourage them to be respected.

We are still collecting addresses to propose to the Council for inclusion in the local list – all suggestions to Alan Piper please (see page 11 for address).

Brixton Estate – Memories & memorabilia

In our October 2009 issue we reported the demise of Brixton plc, stimulating a number of comments about past users of their first industrial estate at the north end of Brixton Road.

Some distinguished firms were associated with this site. Two old sales brochures recently offered on the eBay auction website indicated that prestigious Bugatti sports cars were being sold from this Brixton Road address around 1931-32.

Also on eBay in February was a set of Wightman's Arithmetical Tables of 1930s vintage, originally retailing at sixpence (6d.) and printed by Wightman & Co. at 1-3 Brixton Road.

Decca was another company associated with 1-3 Brixton Road, initially as Decca Records and a distribution subsidiary called Selecta. Brixton Road was the registered office of the Decca Record Company in 1934, according to a postcard invitation to the company AGM acquired by our Chair, Bill Linskey. Another of our committee members, David Warner, has traced an earlier but undated (1920s?) advert for a Decca portable gramophone, made by Barnett Samuel & Sons Ltd at "Dulcet Works, Kennington, SW9" which sounds like the same site.

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Their premises were hit by a bomb in 1941, but repaired sufficiently for Decca radio navigation equipment to be made there in 1944. In 1958 a new head office building, Decca House, was built on Lambeth's riverside, at 9 Albert Embankment, next to the London Fire Brigade Headquarters. Everything to do with administration was moved to the new HQ but some Decca Navigator equipment continued to be made at Brixton Road. Decca House itself was vacated when Racal bought the company in 1982, and has since been replaced by modern flats.



1-3 Brixton Road from a postcard c.1930

David Warner adds: "In the late 1970s I worked for Decca Navigator. At that time the Decca Group included a record company (pre-CD of course) and two navigation companies, one manufacturing radar equipment and the other using radio technology for shipping and aircraft navigation. I was aware that Decca had used a factory at Battersea for television manufacture, and later for radar equipment after TV production moved to South Wales. I had always been told that Decca originated at Brixton Road.

Through Google I came upon a 1961 magazine reference to gramophone pickups being marketed by Decca Radio & Television Ltd at 1-3 Brixton Road. This suggests that at least part of the company was still operating from here, but they seemed to have a very fragmented structure.

They had been using a record-pressing plant at New Malden since 1929, in a converted cinema. Originally the New Malden site was purchased by Ted Lewis, a speculator and stockbroker, who intended to sell it to the Decca Gramophone Company. When Decca

declined to buy, Lewis started manufacturing records himself and then bought out Decca to get the trade name, building a recording organisation which at one point was the second biggest in the world.

Nevertheless, Lewis always kept an interest in manufacturing and electronic R & D, which resulted in the development of the navigation technology which provided crucial support for the armed forces in the D-Day landings, as well as being used for nearly 40 years after by ships and aircraft all over the world, until SatNav was invented. Ted (Sir Edward) Lewis died in 1980 and shortly thereafter the company was split up, with the recording side going to Polygram and everything else to Racal."

Rush Common – 200 years on

The recent renovation of Windrush Square brings together a few elements of the old Rush Common which was enclosed exactly two hundred years ago. Although it was a private Act of Parliament of 1806 which authorised the "inclosure" of all the commons and waste land within the Manor of Lambeth, the actual division of the land was not settled until 1810.

In those days, most of our present borough was farmland with small areas of woodland. This was still largely owned as several large estates or manors. A modern example which survives in the north of the borough is the Manor of Kennington, owned by the Prince of Wales as part of the Duchy of Cornwall estates. Lambeth Manor was owned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Lambeth Palace was originally the manor house.

Each manor would have some common land where tenants could graze their animals and gather firewood. This right was limited – if you lived on the west side of Brixton Hill, you were expected to use Stockwell Common, and if your goat was found on Rush Common instead, it would be taken to the manor pound (at the corner of Brixton Water Lane and Dalberg Road) and released only on payment of a fine – an early version of car-clamping!

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the owners of many manors preferred to enclose their

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common land so it could be cultivated more efficiently, or even sold for building if close enough to London. Some commons – like Clapham Common – survived where local communities were able to organise to protect them, but their use is now solely for public recreation and sports.

Lambeth Manor had two main commons, Rush Common in Brixton and Norwood Common, which lay between Knights Hill and Norwood High Street, southwards from the present cemetery. There were also numerous smaller patches of open ground or roadside verge, including some around the Herne Hill road junction, then known then as Island Green.

When the land was enclosed, it was parcelled out among the tenants of the manor in proportion to how much land they already owned or rented within the manor. Thus if you owned a large farm, you might receive the equivalent of an extra field or two. However if you only had a small cottage, you might receive only a very small plot, or even none at all.

It took surveyors 4 years from the passing of the Inclosure Act to the publication of their award, which survives in Lambeth Archives as a large map showing all the plots with a list of their owners down the sides. One piece of Island Green that was added to the Brockwell Hall estate in 1810 recently had to be given up again to enable changes to the Herne Hill road junction.

New or straightened roads were provided for on both Rush Common and Norwood Common. One distinctive feature of the enclosure award for Rush Common itself is that “building lines” were laid down, preventing building on certain parts of the old common. These continue to influence the development and use of the land even today. However, there was no effective enforcement until 1947, so a number of infringements still survive. Nowadays the restrictions are administered as part of the Town Planning system. Any “erection above the surface of the earth” requires consent, though garden walls and other landscape features are usually allowed.

Reclaiming parts of the old common as public open space has been a slow and piecemeal process. Tate Library Gardens was the first part to be opened, back in 1905. In 1821 the original Act had been amended to provide the site for St. Matthew’s Church, and the northern part of its churchyard was remodelled as a public garden in the 1930s, extended south of the church in 1959 following the realignment of St. Matthew’s Road. When Wandsworth Council built the Roupell Park Estate in 1955, its Brixton Hill frontage was laid out as public open space, a pattern later adopted for other estates further down the hill. Although this has been a very long-term process, generally it has attracted wide support locally.

Alan Piper.

The first of our Summer Guided Walks will be over parts of the old Rush Common – see p.1.

Open House to Open-City

The educational charity which has run the popular weekend event, Open House London, has changed its name to Open-City. Over the past 17 years that event has grown in scale, but also spawned similar events in New York and Dublin. Open House has also spread over the rest of the year to offer architectural tours, guided walks and educational events which champion the value of good design throughout the city.

NB – Due to restoration work, Brixton Windmill will NOT be in the London Open House tours programme this **September (18th & 19th)**. If we hear of any special buildings being opened around Brixton, we will highlight them in our next issue. Full details will be on the website in due course, www.openhouse.org.uk

On-Line Resources

London Metropolitan Archives

LMA’s catalogues are now available on-line at http://search.lma.gov.uk/OPAC_LMA/login.html

Forgotten Spaces

A recent ideas competition among London Architects targeted disused and forgotten corners of London. Designers were invited to propose ideas for developing their chosen space for the benefit of the community, whether by public art, landscape features or a new building. Brixton's Granville Arcade hosted one of the preliminary workshops, so there is a good prospect of some local sites being included in the exhibition of the short-listed designs. This will be in the foyer of the National Theatre on the South Bank from **24 May to 4th July**. Admission free; Bus routes 59, 68, 171, 176 or Waterloo Tube. *RIBA London*

Ups and Downs of Town Centre Regeneration

It's been mixed fortunes for Brixton Town Centre over the past several months, with achievements offset by disappointments and "own goals" from Lambeth Council. Sudden closure of the multi-storey car park came at the worst possible time for local trade in the run-up to Christmas, after 15 years of indecision over its crumbling condition. The Brixton Bazaar stalls on the Prince of Wales corner were also suddenly closed, without explanation, despite their welcome impact on drug-dealing here.

Colm Lacey, who led for the Council on Future Brixton, left at the end of February, with the completion of Windrush Square. At first this seemed like good news because of his past efforts to interest developers in sweeping away the market arcades, but then we discovered that nobody else has taken charge of the Cafe proposal for the Square, so several architects are still waiting to hear if their competing design bids will be accepted, and the timing has slipped again.

On the old Employment Exchange site in Coldharbour Lane, developers are seeking renewal of their 5-year-old planning permission for a block of flats with token business space on the ground floor. This is looking less and less suitable as time goes by, a missed opportunity to enhance the Town Centre. In

the meantime, how about re-opening it as a car park?

At least progress is being made with the series of art installations and cosmetic improvements for the Town Centre. Friends of Brixton Market were just finishing a consultation on designs for inside the market arcades as we went to press.

One of the simpler proposals for other shops is to transform their depressing grey metal roller shutters with new designs. One of the first to be completed is on the Phoenix Cafe in Coldharbour Lane, almost opposite Electric Lane. In this case it's based on an Edwardian postcard view of the nearby Prince of Wales corner, supplied by our Chair, Bill Linskey. It bears the Brixton Society logo and brought us a small royalty payment too.



Looking East... and West

Brixton Town Centre has been the focus of official regeneration efforts in recent years, but areas to the east and west also have issues which present planning policies do not seem to be helping...

Loughborough Junction

Residents around Loughborough Junction have recently been coming together to consider problems and ideas for their area. In February an on-street photo exhibit encouraged people to follow a trail around the neighbourhood, highlighting some of the issues. They have established a website as an on-line message board for promoting regeneration of the Junction area at www.loughboroughjunction.co.uk and are also inviting interested people to join a Yahoo group – e-mail to leclerc.elise@yahoo.com

Planning & Regeneration News

Next stage of their community-building campaign is **Loughborough Junction in Bloom** culminating on **Saturday 10 July**. This will be a competition with prizes for different categories, e.g. best residential garden, best window box/ hanging basket, best-kept street (or block), best vegetables etc. Entry forms are on the website as above, to be returned to 144 Lowden Road, SE24.

Acre Lane

West of the Town Centre, residents north and south of Acre Lane have a number of concerns, but chiefly the impact of more residential development displacing the commerce and industry that used to line much of the main road. Apart from loss of local employment, extra housing is seldom matched by a similar increase in local amenities, such as extra school places. Present planning policies fail to look at the area as a whole.

Fulham Timber Merchants' site was previously proposed for a self-storage depot, despite another having recently opened on the other side of the road. Now Genesis Housing Trust is proposing to develop the site as flats, but has also acquired the disused "Duke of Wellington" pub and a couple of adjacent shops to enlarge the site. Other vulnerable sites are the former petrol station at 47-49 Acre Lane (where earlier Genesis proposals were refused) and the disused tyre depot on the corner of King's Avenue.

Recent contacts for Acre Lane Residents: s.ambiavagar@btinternet.com or marekpytel@btinternet.com or philippe@opuslondon.com

After the Tunnelling

The extensive tunnelling work which has blocked some of the roads around Railton Road is beginning to wind down. Effra Residents' Group have advised that, if any house experiences cracks or subsidence following the works, owners should write to Mr Andy Wolfe, Thames Water, Esher STW, Farm Road, Esher KT10 8AU. He will arrange for a surveyor to come and assess the damage with a view to agreeing repairs or compensation.

Be Afraid...

Be very afraid when both major political parties seem to be promising much the same thing. I don't just mean their competition to threaten the most cuts in public services. Not long ago the Conservatives were talking about allowing council workers to organise themselves into autonomous bodies to run local services in their own way. Last month Lambeth's Labour Leader, Steve Reed set out a similar idea in *Public Servant* magazine. Now he did call them co-operatives, in deference to Old Labour terminology, but the concept sounds very similar to David Cameron's.

A more disturbing proposal advanced by Councillor Reed was to run some public services jointly with the adjacent Southwark Council. He is expecting their fragile Lib/Con coalition to be replaced by Labour after the London Boroughs elections on 6th May. It is equally likely that Lambeth will switch the other way, but if somehow the two boroughs end up with matching political leaderships, the idea may still be attractive for potential economies of scale.

The downside for residents though is that these two boroughs already compete in the local press for the sloth of their self-serving bureaucracies, and the consequences of shared departments with twice their current responsibilities would be a further decline in the quality of service.

Our role of course is to speak up for Brixton rather than for any particular political party, but whatever the election results, we will try to air the issues that local Councillors and MPs ought to be getting to grips with.

ADP.

Neighbourhood Watch in SW2

Effra Residents Group have notified us of this scheme, initiated in Mervan Road but also aiming to include Saltoun, Kellett, Dalberg, Rattray, Talma, Bankton, Probert and Jelf Roads.

If you wish join, please contact Dai Hawkins at dai_hawkins@btinternet.com

Notes and News

Why we bother

In this age of “instant” communications, people sometimes ask why we still bother to produce a printed newsletter and deliver most copies by hand. After all, many other organisations now issue e-mail bulletins and more frequently too.

We are well aware that it can take a couple of weeks from typing a page like this to a member reading it, whether in Acre Lane or Aberdeen. Yet the great majority of “news” stories move quite slowly, at least in fields like regeneration or heritage. Sometimes we have even featured topics months before they have appeared in the popular press.

As for late changes in planned events (and some are likely!) we try to post details on our website and e-mail those members with a known e-mail address – but that’s still only 1 in 4 from our mailing list, so you can see why paper copies are still necessary. But if you do have e-mail, let us know so we can alert you if urgent.

Our aim then is to keep all our members in touch with the range of projects that we are interested in around Brixton, regardless of their IT skills or resources. Paper newsletters after all can be read on the Tube or train in the deepest tunnel, while copies can be left in libraries or community buildings for interested locals to pick up.

Editorial Notice:

Space permitting, we try to feature local events and publish reminiscences or enquiries in our newsletter. We welcome news and comments from all who are interested in the Brixton area, so opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the Brixton Society.

All material should be sent to the Secretary, Alan Piper, at 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, or by e-mail to APiperBrix@aol.com
Phone/ fax enquiries to (020) 7207 0347.



Brixton Low Carbon Zone

This is part of an initiative set up by the Mayor of London, one of 10 Low Carbon Zones across London. The aim is to encourage people to live more sustainably and reduce their carbon footprint. Businesses and schools are being targeted as well as individuals.

A network of “Green Doctors” and Waste Prevention Advisers will carry out home visits and give advice. A part-time Green Community

Champions officer has been appointed to work with community groups and help them set up new projects.

If this all sounds too good to be true, the downside is that the zone is very limited in extent, with strange zig-zag boundaries. Coverage is confined to most (not all) of the Town Centre plus the Loughborough Estate. Rushcroft Road and Canterbury Gardens are in, but Wiltshire Road and Moorlands Estate are out. Only part of the Loughborough Park CA is included, plus the former Green Man pub and the Brixton (02) Academy.

If you were excluded, perhaps we can share some information with you from alternative sources next time. Meanwhile, the lucky few can contact the zone staff at brixtonlcz@lambeth.gov.uk



More to come

Despite extra pages this time, we still had to hold over some of the local history material that’s come our way. And we expect to have more to report on Planning matters, with both main parties threatening changes to the present system.

Links and Networks

Linking Amenity Societies

We have recently been grappling with how best to improve liaison with other amenity societies like ourselves.

At a National level, Civic Voice is being launched on 17th April as a federation of local societies to replace the defunct Civic Trust. We were rather disturbed to see on the voting paper for the election of its trustee board, that certain candidates were marked as officially recommended. Of greater concern to us though is the expense, initially £1.50 for each of our members, rising to £2 a head next year. Our committee is not convinced of the value of joining, but we will invite your comments at the AGM in June.

London-wide, we find the London Forum of Amenity Societies to be effective in keeping us in touch with developments in regional and national planning policies, and prompting us to submit our own comments.

Back in Lambeth, on 25th March we had a first meeting of representatives from most of the societies active in different parts of the borough. This looks set to become a quarterly fixture, mainly to compare feedback on local planning policies and complement the work of the existing Lambeth Local History Forum. Hopefully, contacts will also develop in between these meetings, though we have already been exchanging newsletters with adjacent societies for many years.

The Friendly Almshouses

These almshouses are tucked away at the Brixton corner of the Stockwell Park Estate, and provide accommodation for 30 women with warden support. The Trust which runs them was founded as the Female Friendly Society in 1802, and their previous building survives as the refreshment rooms in Burgess Park, Camberwell. The present buildings are mainly Victorian cottages of 1867, bookended by uninspiring blocks rebuilt after war damage.

The trustees are now planning a major upgrade to the accommodation and amenities, and are keen to recruit more **trustees** to share the task. Although traditionally run by women for women, men are equally welcome as

trustees. Meetings are held monthly with sub-committees as required.

If you prefer a more hands-on role, they are also looking for a **volunteer gardener** to spruce up the garden with possible help from residents. If you have time to spare in either role, please e-mail the Chair, Clare Wardle at clare.wardle@tubelines.com or ring Mary Searls, trustee, on 07 765 643 089. For more background see www.friendlyalmshouses.org

Permaculture Course

Weekend 24 & 25 April at Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses

An opportunity to learn about the principles of Permaculture in a participatory way, led by Pippa Johns of the Brighton Permaculture Newtwork. Course cost £120 including Sunday lunch (concessions may be available once core costs are covered). Bookings/ enquiries to Katy_Press@hotmail.com
Transition Town Brixton

Support for Voluntary Groups

Lambeth Voluntary Action Council continues to develop. A new programme of training events for committee members and staff of local community organisations will be published soon.

The Capacity & Development Team offers advice for small groups, new or existing – contact Kaluba Chitumba on 020 7737 9468 or smallgroups@lambethvac.org.uk

Another strand that has developed over the past year is the Volunteer Centre, now at 35 Brixton Station Road. This provides a brokerage service to match up volunteers with groups that are looking for extra help. It also aims to foster good practice in the use of volunteers. Enquiries to 020 7326 5490 or volunteering@vclambeth.org.uk

Linked to this, the new ELEVATE programme aims to provide unemployed Lambeth residents with the opportunity to develop their work-based skills while volunteering with local community organisations. – contact Daniel Bond on 020 7326 5487 or vso@vclambeth.org.uk