

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Spring issue, April 2014

No.213, free to members, quarterly.
Registered with the London Forum of Amenity
Societies, Registered Charity No.1058103,
Website: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk

Changing Times

Over the past year, the number of new proposals and initiatives affecting Brixton has greatly increased, and to help you keep track, we have devoted a lot of this issue to a roundup of what's going on. Remember that we need to hear from you if you think the Society should support or oppose any of these, or if you think we have just got our facts wrong – mistakes are easy with the number of projects in the air right now!

After our frustration in opposing the loss of the George IV and recently the Canterbury Arms, we have met with representatives of CAMRA to try to beef up protection for the area's surviving public houses.

We have also discussed with the London Mural Preservation Society the scope for a publication to record the story of several large-scale murals that survive around Brixton, mainly from the early 1980s.

Finally a reminder to come out and see these sights for yourself while you still can – why not join in a couple of our Sunday guided walks? You should find a Summer Walks programme enclosed with this edition of the newsletter.

Alan Piper.



*The Brixton Rec and the Central Sites as seen from Brixton Rail station, June 2012 (see p.3)
BTC-Jn12-09.jpg*

Three events lined up for June –

Thursday 12 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. Agenda details from the Secretary, Alan Piper on (020) 7207 0347 or by e-mail to apiperbrix@aol.com

Open Garden Squares Weekend - 14 & 15 June

We will have a stall on **Windrush Square** on both days, and use it as a base for some short guided walks.

Windmill Festival

Sunday 22 June

Provisionally 1 pm to 5 pm, with stalls, music, theatre and food. Windmill Gardens are between Ramillies Close and Blenheim Gardens, off the west side of Brixton Hill, SW2. For details of the Festival and other Windmill events, see: www.brixtonwindmill.org

If you can spare some time to help us at either event, please call Bill Linskey on (020) 7274 3835 or by e-mail to [wjdc@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk)

More dates inside...

Diary for Spring & Summer 2014

Society Meetings

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

- 8 May,
- 12 June (AGM)
- 10 July,
- 14 August

Market Walks

Our guided walks round the market area continue on the second **Saturday** of every month, at £3 including the illustrated booklet of the route. Tickets available via our website or after 12 noon on the day from our stall in Brixton Station Road. Walks start from there at **2-30 pm** and take about 90 minutes.

Links with Other Groups

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

Thursday 17th April – The Crystal Palace

Philip Emery of the Crystal Palace Foundation shares his knowledge of the building that gave its name to the suburb, 7-30 pm at Upper Norwood Library, Westow Hill, SE19.
Norwood Society

Saturdays 19 & 26 April – Community Market

11 am to 4 pm on alternate Saturdays, to bring the

community and local traders together, at St.Martin's Scout Hut, High Trees, SW2
Tulse Hill Community Mkt.

Sunday 27 April – Brockwell Park Community Partners

Open meeting including reports on proposals for the changing rooms block and for Brockwell Hall itself – at 11 am in Brockwell Hall (upstairs meeting room).

Followed at 2 pm by a History Walk around the Park, departing from the clock tower.

Friends of Brockwell Park

Sunday 27 April – Spring Plants & Gardens Fair

10-30 am to 5 pm at the Garden Museum, the former St. Mary's Church, Lambeth Road, SE1 – admission £5.
The Garden Museum

Sunday 4th May – Henry Tate Gardens

Conducted tours of the grounds of Sir Henry Tate's old house in Streatham, at 2 pm or 3 pm. Meet at the gates of Park Hill on Streatham Common Northside, near the junction with Leigham Court Road.
The Streatham Society

Wednesday 14 May – Elephant and Castle:

A history of the Newington/Walworth area, presented by Stephen Humphrey. 7-30 pm for 7-45 start, Herne Hill United Church Hall, c/o Redpost Hill and Herne Hill, SE24.
Herne Hill Society

Thursday 15 May – Bygone Brixton

Alan Piper highlights some of Brixton's history, 8 pm at the Phoenix Centre, Westow Hill (by Sainsbury's), SE19
South London Local History Group.

Monday 19 May – Clapham and the Bicycle

Roger Armstrong will tell the stories of some early cycling pioneers and bicycle makers in the area. Doors (and bar) open from 7 pm for 8 pm start, at **Omnibus** (the old Clapham Library) Clapham Common North Side, SW4.
Clapham Society

Tuesday 10th June – Walk around Stockwell

Meet at 7 pm outside Stockwell Underground Station for an evening walk led by Alan Piper.
Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society

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, 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, or by e-mail to APiperBrix@aol.com
Phone/ fax (020) 7207 0347

Changing Times

Heart of Brixton

Recently Fluid and AECOM ran a couple of workshop discussions on behalf of Lambeth and Network Rail to sound out ideas for developing sites around Brixton Station Road centred on the railway station. There was widespread support for ensuring the market was supported by parking for customers and storage for traders' barrows, and that space should be provided for small enterprises, rather than private housing supplanting everything.

Despite local opposition, the Council had just given permission for a developer's earlier proposal to replace the nearby Canterbury Arms by a 9-storey block of flats.

At least the Council has already committed to retain the **Recreation Centre**, and has just launched a consultation on how better use can be made of the existing building. Emphasis is on introducing additional activities and making the premises more user-friendly and efficient. The deadline for comments is Friday 30 May. See www.lambeth.gov.uk/brixtonrecsurvey or send your comments by e-mail to acs-consultation@lambeth.gov.uk

Meanwhile at the Ice Rink site

While the above developments are being planned, the cleared site of the former Ice Rink is likely to be available for a couple of years. Competing proposals for temporary use of the site had just been unveiled as we finished this newsletter. The rear part of the site, adjacent to Canterbury Gardens Estate, will provide some much-needed car parking for Brixton shoppers, but different mixes of uses are proposed for the frontages to Popes Road and Station Road.

Grow:Brixton is proposed by Carl Turner Architects, together with the Edible Bus Stop and Canteen. Worthy uses include facilities for locals to learn new skills including gardening, music and building, but the layout is rather enclosed.

Brixton Toolbox is proposed by Carver Haggard Architects and TALL Engineers, as a consortium of local businesses and community

organisations focussing on youth training, emerging technology and food businesses. Their layout provides a more open public space at the corner of Popes Road and Station Road, with opportunities for staging events.

For general updates on Brixton developments, see www.futurebrixton.org

Business Revival

Brixton's Business Improvement District (BID) was approved by a ballot of local businesses back in December, but the next steps had still not been announced as we closed for press. Check their website for updates: www.brixtonbid.co.uk

Brixton Market Traders Federation continues to run themed markets on each Saturday of the month in Brixton Station Road, and overall activity in the street markets is holding up well. See www.brixtonmarket.net

For the indoor market arcades, agreement has been reached between Lambeth Council and the management company that the company will oversee the mix of uses to ensure that the proportion of cafe uses does not increase to dilute the retail trade any further.



Townscape Heritage

The main thrust of the scheme is to encourage owners to restore the original character and detail when refurbishing buildings in the core of the Town Centre Conservation Area. The main focus is on Electric Avenue and nearby parts of Atlantic Road and Coldharbour Lane. Reliance Arcade may also benefit.

Changing Times

There is also an element for complementary projects to promote interest in local heritage and develop skills in building conservation. Current plans are for the bid to be sent to the Heritage Lottery Fund by the end of May, for work to take place over four years, 2015-19.

London Overground

The consultants presented an interim report to stakeholders in February. Providing platforms on the Overground line close to Brixton's present station was always going to be expensive because of the height above ground level, but it turns out that the greatest obstacle is that the existing tracks are too curved for safe access to modern trains by prams, bikes and wheelchairs – just saying “mind the gap” is no longer good enough for a new platform.

This applies to some extent at Loughborough Junction too, but there the main problems are that the Overground line passes a little way south of the existing station, and would require demolition of adjacent buildings to fit in the platforms. Hence some of us are inclining towards re-creating the former East Brixton Station in Barrington Road, as an affordable solution which would serve people near both centres. On the other hand, TfL tend to prefer improved interchange between different lines – though Clapham North/ Clapham High Street seems to be acceptable.

There is already an online petition to re-open East Brixton – see www.brixtonbuzz.com



East Brixton Station c. 1975

Somerleyton Road

Following several workshop discussions in the past month, the next key step is the

appointment of a Development Manager and design team, who will report to a steering group including Brixton Green and Oval House Theatre, as well as Lambeth Council. This should happen by the end of April, so that detailed plans can be developed between May and December. Lambeth's Cabinet will then review the plans, finance and governance structure, so that a planning application can be made in January 2015, for construction to start in July 2015 with a view to completion in Autumn 2017.

Brixton Green are planning more community workshops for June, and expect to have more news online soon: www.brixtongreen.org

New Town Hall project

In our last edition we reported that Muse had been selected as the lead developer for several Lambeth office sites in addition to remodelling the Town Hall itself. No fresh news about the satellite sites like Olive Morris House, but the Council has begun promoting **Impact Hub Brixton** as its business and community working space within Lambeth Town Hall: www.brixtonimpacthub.net

Brixton College site

Lambeth College were unable to fund their original plans for replacing their building on Brixton Hill, so have recently sold it to the Department for Education, who aim to use part of the site for Trinity Academy “Free School”. This will be a secondary school with a Roman Catholic ethos. The College plans to have a new building on the remaining part of the site from September 2015, while extending the facilities at its Clapham Centre, “The Street” on Clapham Common Southside, SW4.

St.Matthew's Churchyard

The Brix has responded to Lambeth's Co-operative Parks proposals by drawing up plans to reconfigure and take control of the whole of the Peace Garden, the former churchyard around the original St.Matthew's Church. Plans (drawn up by Shape) were unveiled at a meeting with stakeholders in February and include moving the forecourt parking and the play area to the southern boundary along St.Matthew's Road. Small allotments in the

Changing Times

form of raised beds would be provided at the SE corner with Effra Road. The major task is reconfiguring the entrance ramps on the north side of the building for easier access, possibly losing the fountain. Work is likely to take place in stages, depending on funding.

Brixton's public realm

Another project led by Shape landscape architects, consultation workshops were held back in the Autumn, and there are hints that proposals will appear within the next month. These will need to be integrated with the proposals for various sites in Central Brixton already mentioned above.

Community Infrastructure - funding local projects

An ongoing issue with major developments is their impact on the neighbourhood. Developers may need to pay for adapting road junctions to ease access to their sites, but wider effects like increased demand for local school places have been more problematic. The new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) means each borough introduces set tariffs proportional to the scale and type of new buildings. Lambeth's proposals are awaiting approval by a Planning Inspector, and the next stage is to establish how this new income will be distributed among the public infrastructure projects clamouring for investment. Lambeth proposes to pool 75% of the CIL income for projects spread around the borough, and to spend the other 25% "locally".

Comments have been invited on how "local" areas are defined, and who should have a say in spending that 25%. For example, it could be left to Ward Councillors, but there are 21 wards and the amount of local development (and of CIL money) will vary greatly – maybe millions in Waterloo and peanuts in Norwood. Ward boundaries often cut across "natural" community boundaries, and adverse impacts of a development may hit a different ward. Another option is to use Neighbourhood Forums, but these vary greatly in size, from all of Streatham to the compact Loughborough Junction Action Group. Few have defined their boundaries clearly and some areas are not

covered at all. A likely approach is to group a few wards (or forums) together, to reduce boundary anomalies and pool resources, but the grouping could be contentious – should Vassall Ward be part of Brixton as its natural focus, or be lumped with Stockwell and Vauxhall to benefit from those lucrative towers proposed around the riverside? Yet if Brixton itself attracts more flats, those extra people could increase wear and tear in Brockwell Park, nominally in Herne Hill Ward.

The current phase of consultation runs until Wednesday 14 May, but the final CIL scheme does not come into effect until 1st April next year.

Changing oversight of police & community safety

Lambeth's Community/ Police Consultative Group was set up in the aftermath of Lord Scarman's report into the 1981 Brixton Riots, and has been a valuable safety valve for raising concerns about local policing practice. Its future is now in doubt as the Mayor seeks to introduce a "one size fits all" approach to local input into crime and community safety issues. The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) has proposed that each borough will have a Safer Neighbourhood Board, superseding bodies like Lambeth CPG. MOPAC would also like to see "area" Safer Neighbourhood Panels created to cover clusters of Wards, in addition to the existing Ward Safer Neighbourhood Panels. These Area panels could be an opportunity for more local input into policing priorities and crime reduction.

A draft scheme has been published for comments, suggesting which interests should be represented. This consultation runs until noon on **Friday 9 May**, to be sent to saferlambeth@lambeth.gov.uk

Final proposals will appear in late May, and subject to sign-off by MOPAC, the first meeting of the Lambeth SNB should take place before the end of June.

Alan Piper.

Local History & Heritage

Window Tax or Design Feature?

I was walking around the local area with a friend the other day and came across an unusual row of terrace houses on Normandy Road (off the right of Brixton Road, heading north).

A typical row of terraces on the face of it, but there were 3 spaces on the first floor that were obviously for windows – and for every one of the identical houses the middle window had been bricked up! They did go all the way to the pavement with very flat facades in that Georgian way – so my suspicion was Window Tax (where I think the term daylight robbery originated).

SP Santospirito

It is easy to assume that any blocked window is a relic of the Window Tax, but almost all Brixton buildings were built too late to be affected by it. The tax was introduced in 1695 and remained in force for most of the 18th century. If a building existed when the tax came in, or was built in the early 18th century, then its owners might well try to reduce their tax bill later by bricking up a few windows if they fell on hard times.

I am aware of only one such example in our area, and that is long gone – Stockwell Park House, which stood on the site of the skateboard park at the corner of Stockwell Road and Stockwell Park Walk. It was built c.1705 and demolished in 1882 to make way for an earlier version of the Baptist Chapel which now faces the site. A few pictures of the house survive from different dates and these suggest that some of the original windows were indeed bricked up post 1705. A view of the building from c.1800 appears on page 19 of our “History of Brixton”.

That leaves two other reasons for blocked windows, the obvious one being where, in modern times, the window has been filled in to suit internal changes of layout, or to increase security on lower floors – more common once electric light was available. Those Normandy Road cottages (see right) were refurbished in the 1970s when most of the neighbourhood

was being rebuilt, but I think their blank windows are original.

The most common reason is that, rather than build boring plain brick walls, both Georgian and Victorian architects preferred to make their buildings more impressive and varied. They would try to add interest in the form not only of false windows but also roundels, cornices, finials, piers and bands of contrasting brick colours, depending on the prestige of the building and the fashion of the time. In the days when labour was cheap but brick was still expensive, even for modest cottages like these, builders were happy to save bricks by thinning out sections of the walls, and then use a little more labour to add arches over the top.

Alan Piper.

Bx-M14-02.jpg



Back in the Day Walks

Barrie and Alan have reminded us that Brixton still features in their repertoire of walks – see www.backinthedaywalks.co.uk

Local History & Heritage



Brixton Windmill openings

The 2014 season started this month, and the mill will usually open 2 pm to 5 pm. Full tours to all floors of the mill need prior booking, but are still free – details at:

www.brixtonwindmill.org/visit

Saturday 19 April,
Sunday 20 April (also Easter Egg Hunt),
Monday 5 May (Mill Memories exhibition),
Saturday 10 May (from 1 pm),
Sunday 11 May (from 1 pm),
Saturday 14 June,
Sunday 15 June,
Saturday 12 July (and Our Big Gig),
Sunday 13 July,
Saturday 9 August,
Sunday 10 August (and Art in the Park),
Saturday 13 September,
Sunday 14 September,
Saturday 20 Sept (from 1 pm, Open House),
Sunday 21 Sept (from 1 pm, Open House),
Saturday 4 October (and Big Draw)
Saturday 11 October,
Sunday 12 October.

Replacing Brixi's Stone

The Residents' Association covering Morrish Road and Sulina Road is seeking funding for recreating the old Saxon landmark, which stood near the top of Brixton Hill. The idea is to replace the triangular flowerbed at the corner of Brixton Hill and Morrish Road with a new green feature, including a sculpture to mark the site of the stone. Enquiries to Charmian Kenner of SMWRTA at c.kenner@gmail.com

Marking the centenary of Charlie Chaplin's Tramp

Thursday 17 April at the Cinema Museum
2 Dugard Way, Renfrew Road, SE11 4TH.
It's 100 years since Chaplin started making films as his "Tramp" persona, and the museum has a special evening presented by Glenn Mitchell, 7-30 pm, admission £8.50 (£6.50 for concessions) if booked in advance on (020) 7840 2200 or info@cinemamuseum.org.uk or www.wegotickets.com

More programme highlights at www.cinemamuseum.org.uk

Black Cultural Archives

The Black Cultural Archives are on track to open their new premises by the end of June, which will complete the south-east corner of Windrush Square.

The present BCA reading room at Othello Close will shut on 24 April to prepare for the move. Remote access to archive materials will continue to be available until 11 May – enquiries to archives@bcaheritage.org.uk

Pilots of the Caribbean: The BCA provided materials for a temporary exhibition at the RAF Museum, Hendon, showing the service of West Indian aircrew in the RAF during the Second World War. But hurry – this exhibit only runs until Tuesday 22 April. For museum details, see www.rafmuseum.org/whatson
Read about a First World War Brixton link to the Caribbean in our next edition!

SCRSS News

Another specialist collection long based in Brixton is the library of the Society for Cooperation in Russian and Soviet Studies, at 320 Brixton Road, SW9 6AB. It recently began a project to review its library collection and seek external funding for its development. There is a regular programme of events linked to the culture and history of Russia and other former Soviet states – details at www.scrss.org.uk or enquiries to (020) 7274 2282 or ruslibrary@scrss.org.uk

Notes & News

Help keep things running

The Brixton Society depends on enough of its members joining in to share the tasks of conducting walks, producing or selling our publications, representing us at various local meetings and a myriad of other tasks between.

One role which we are particularly anxious to fill is that of **Membership Secretary**, because Diana Linskey is standing down at our Annual General Meeting on 12 June.

What does this entail? Managing an Excel spreadsheet, sending out renewal reminders once a year, ensuring renewal forms are available at all our events, and processing renewals received by post, or via Paypal, or from events. Also allocating new members among our network of distributors for the quarterly newsletter, and removing from the list those who have not renewed subscriptions. Diana is happy to talk to anyone interested – please contact her at Diana@linskey.org.uk or on (020) 7274 3835.



The Forum has struggled to fit in meetings amongst the various events held by Lambeth Council and the smaller groups in its catchment area, but after our meeting on 27 March, we hope to get back to a regular pattern so that you will see and hear more from the forum this summer.

The next Forum meeting has been set for **Friday 2nd May at 7 pm** at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road SW2. We need a good turnout that evening in order to agree arrangements for our summer programme – we have opportunities to join in several events around the area.

Alan Piper.

Myatt's Fields Park Cafe

The cafe re-opened at the end of March, and for the summer will be open from 9 am to 5 pm on Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

Art & Craft Workshops

The series of afternoon workshops continues at the Tate Library, Brixton, on the first Saturday of each month:

3 May – Pop-up cards and books
(mainly for under 18s)

7 June – Daisy bracelets,

5 July – Silk painting for beginners.

Minimum age 8 but under 12s should be accompanied by an adult. Cost no more than £5 per session for materials, and if you can afford a donation it will go towards future sessions co-ordinated by the Friends of Tate Library. Enquiries to Joanna Spilman, jspilperson@gmail.com

Tall Buildings proposed

There have already been a couple of controversial proposals in Brixton, so it would be worth visiting a current exhibition at the Building Centre to see what else might be spreading southwards. Apparently there are over 230 towers of 20 storeys-plus already in the pipeline across London. The exhibition runs until 12 June at 26 Store Street, WC1 (except Sundays).

Another Post Office closure

Post Office Ltd. proposes to close the Stockwell branch at 225 Clapham Road in June, and expects most users to transfer to the busy Ferndale Road branch in Brixton Town Centre. However, for customers on the north side of Stockwell, the branches at 68-70 Brixton Road or 347 Wandsworth Road (SW8) may be more convenient.

Open Gardens

The Dulwich Society somehow manage to enrol gardens as far as SW9 in their charity openings scheme. **225a Brixton Road** (next to Mostyn Road) will open on Friday evening 4th July and Saturday afternoon 5th July – admission £3.50. More details are at www.uncommonland.co.uk or phone Deborah Nagan on (020) 7633 0247.