

# THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Spring, April 2016

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Distributed free to members.

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Societies, Registered Charity No.1058103,  
Website: [www.brixtonsociety.org.uk](http://www.brixtonsociety.org.uk)

## Our next open meeting **Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto:apiperbrix@aol.com)

## **Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June** **First of our Summer Walks...** **Stockwell Green spaces**

Meet 2-30 pm by Stockwell War Memorial,  
opposite Stockwell Tube Station, SW9, for  
a circular walk led by Alan Piper.

Of course you don't have to wait until June –  
the full list of guided walks in and around all of  
Lambeth was distributed to our members last  
month – if you missed out, ask the Secretary  
for a copy, as above.

**Market Walks** continue meanwhile on the  
second Saturday of the month, to coincide  
with the Makers' Market in Station Road.  
The next will be on **14 May** and **11 June**.



## **Lambeth Libraries – down but not out!**

The new slim-line plan for less libraries and  
more gyms was meant to take effect from 1<sup>st</sup>  
April but the reality is more complicated. This  
is a brief overview, but frankly the situation is  
fluid so this news may already be out of date!

**Brixton Tate Library** is not directly affected  
but it will come under more pressure due to  
closures and service changes elsewhere.  
**South Lambeth Tate Library** is continuing for  
the time being, though the Council may later  
choose to close this library, or the Durning  
Library at Kennington Cross. Further north,  
**Waterloo** has closed and is being offered for  
temporary uses for up to 2 years.

At **Minet Library**, the Lending library has  
closed so that Greenwich Leisure can convert  
the space into a fitness gym, but the archivists  
have asked us to remind you that **Lambeth  
Archives** should be open as before. However  
it was closed on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> when management  
feared another Carnegie-style protest.  
There is a long-standing aim to relocate the  
Archives, but Lambeth has scarcely settled the  
brief for appointing consultants to find a new  
site, so this will take another 2 years.

**Carnegie Library** in Herne Hill Road has had  
most publicity due to the sit-in started on 31  
March by library users. The past few years  
have seen increased use and activities with  
the support of the Friends of Carnegie Library,  
so replacing the librarians by fitness instructors  
was never going to be welcomed.  
At Carnegie, the situation is complicated by...  
(Continued on back page)

# Diary of Events, Early Summer 2016

## 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).

- 14 April
- 12 May
- 9 June (AGM)
- 14 July
- 11 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 are best booked via marketwalks@brixtonsociety.org.uk. Walks start from Brixton Station Road at **2-30 pm** and take about 80 minutes.

## 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](mailto:APiperBrix@aol.com)  
Phone/ fax (020) 7207 0347

## Links with Other Groups

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

### Sunday 17 April – Creating Brockwell Park

A Park history walk led by Peter Bradley – meet **2 pm** by the clock tower in the centre of the park.

*Friends of Brockwell Park*

### Saturday 23 April – Brixton Exchange 2

Three years on from the first Brixton Exchange, a day of workshops and discussions on Brixton's community heritage – what it is, how do we hold on to it, and what can we learn from others.

At Effraspace (the old tenants' hall), Effra Parade, SW2. Book via <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-brixton-exchange-2-tickets-22655146152>

*Anchor & Magnet*

### Monday 25 April – the Race to Save the Sea

Talk by Charles Clover, environmental journalist and champion of a sustainable approach to fishing.

Starts at 8 pm (doors open 7 pm) at Omnibus, the former Clapham Library, 1 North Side, SW4.

*Clapham Society*

### Tuesday 10 May – Finds from the Thames

Talk by Jon Cotton, 7-30 pm (doors open 7pm) at the Co-op Housing Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1 (almost opposite the Old Vic). £1 for non-members...

*Southwark & Lambeth  
Archaeological Society*

### Thursday 19 May – Pugin and the Gothic Revival

Talk by Peter Austin, 8 pm at the Phoenix Centre, Westow Street, SE19.  
*South London Local History Group*

### Saturday 21 May – the Soviet Union and the Spanish Civil War.

Talk by Dr Tom Sibley, to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the International Brigades to support the Spanish Republic against Franco's uprising.

Non-members £5, 2 pm at SCRSS, 320 Brixton Road, SW9.

*Society for Co-operation in  
Russian and Soviet Studies*

### Sunday 29 May – Henry Tate's Garden

Take a tour of the grounds of Sir Henry Tate's old home in Streatham – 2 pm or 3 pm start, from the Lodge Gate, Henry Tate Mews, west of Leigham Court Road on Streatham Common North, SW16.

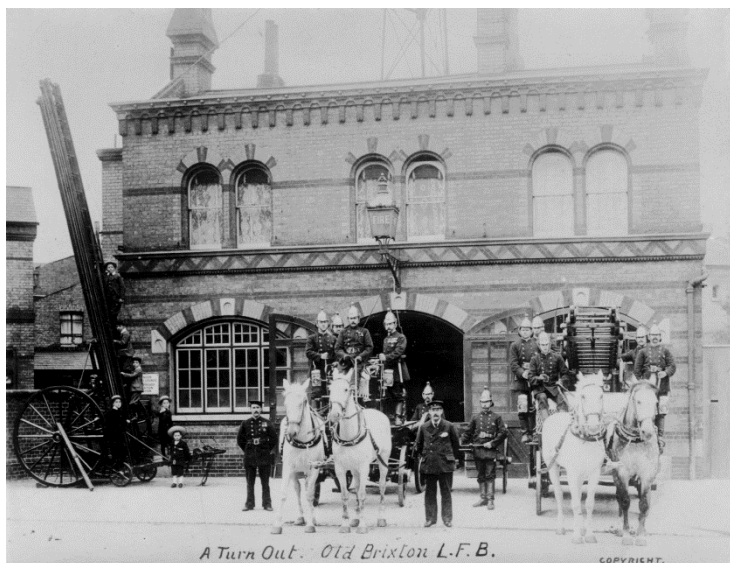
*Streatham Society*

### Sunday 19 June – Walled Garden tours

These were listed in the Summer Walks leaflet, but we can now confirm the start times as 2 pm, 3 pm and 4 pm – free but please reserve places online, to [info@brockwellpark.com](mailto:info@brockwellpark.com)

*Friends of Brockwell Park*

## Brixton's Fire Stations



What these all looked like is shown in our two photographs.

Thomas Tilling, who supplied the horses, was a famous Londoner. He ran many of the horse-bus services and hired every sort of horse for every sort of purpose to every sort of client right across the capital. He was headquartered in nearby Peckham.

The Ferndale Road station has recently undergone refurbishment. For a brief while recently it was visible when scaffolding was taken down and looked quite excellent. Made ready for a modern use, it retained the character of the near 150 year-old building. Hoardings have now obscured it as

refurbishment of the whole block continues. We look forward to it re-emerging when work is complete.

The London Fire Brigade is celebrating the anniversary with events in every London borough. Details can be found here:

<http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/150-events.asp>

Unfortunately, the Brixton station is not one listed as holding an Open Day. Perhaps that will change during the course of the year. However, the Lambeth Station on Albert Embankment is opening; that should be well worth a visit.

### *Ferndale Road station*

In 1865 the Metropolitan Fire Brigade Act provided for the first publicly funded, London-wide fire service which began on 1st January 1866. Therefore, this year marks the 150th anniversary of the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (which was renamed the London Fire Brigade in 1904).

Brixton's first fire station was not far behind. It was built in 1867 in Ferndale Road by a Mr. T. Cooper at a cost of £1,670. The earliest record found of its equipment is from 1903/4 when the station was near the end of its life. It consisted of:

- 1 station officer,
- 13 firemen,
- 2 coachmen, and
- (listed under "staff" in the official record) -
- 2 pairs of horses, hired from T. Tilling at £70.

Its appliances consisted of:

- 1 horsed escape,
- 1 steam escape,
- 1 manual escape, and
- 1 hose-cart.

Its replacement building in Gresham Road, which is still in use today, was built in 1906 at a cost of £9,626 16s. 8d. The staff list is almost identical except that there are only 11 firemen instead of 13. The appliances are a little different at: 1 steam fire-engine, 1 horsed escape, 1 manual escape, and 2 hose-carts.



### *Gresham Road station*

*With thanks to the London Fire Brigade Museum for the information on our stations.*

## Memories of Brixton



24 Acre Lane is still used as a dental surgery  
(BTC-M16-02.jpg)

### Appointment with Fear

A visit to the dentist can be daunting at the best of times, but Rowena Tompkins contacted us from Godalming about an incident her mother experienced on 28 June 1944. At the time she was a 15 year-old student living in Brixton Water Lane. German V1 flying bombs began to fall on London that month, and she was in the dentist's chair when they heard the engine of an approaching V1 cut out. She and the dentist just looked at each other and dived for the door. They got through the doorway just in time as the bomb exploded. It blew the front window glass into the surgery, and when she looked she realised that the dentist's chair had shards of glass embedded in it.

This turned out to be Lambeth's worst flying bomb incident, killing 25 people with a direct hit on the information centre opposite the Town Hall, and destroying the nearby post office, which later moved to Ferndale Road. The dentist's at 24 Acre Lane was shielded from the worst of the blast by the Christian Science Church next door (now the United Pentecostal Church). The incident is illustrated on page 75 of our *History of Brixton* and more photos can be seen on the Lambeth Landmark website, [www.landmark.lambeth.gov.uk](http://www.landmark.lambeth.gov.uk) under picture references 160, 161 and 162.

Rowena's mother returned from her evacuated college in Doncaster only a week or so later to find that her home (along with half a row of houses) had been obliterated the night before by another V1 (falling at 00:42 on 5<sup>th</sup> July) but at least her parents were absent at the time.

### 1981 Riots in Context

A programme of events will be taking place this year, in various venues, to mark the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Brixton Uprisings that began in April 1981 and other confrontations later that year, leading to the official inquiry under Lord Scarman. We aim to unpick what happened at the time, and to understand the causes, contradictions and consequences.

I was then working for the Council as its first Employment Development Officer, to address the depressed state of the local economy and create new jobs and training opportunities. The only other black senior officer at the time was Herman Ouseley, appointed by Council Leader Ted Knight to examine how the borough was delivering services to its minority communities and why it wasn't employing them at any level.

Two days after the first skirmishes on the "Front Line" of Railton/ Atlantic Roads, a Brixton Defence Committee was formed at a big meeting at the Town Hall. Eight people were appointed, two of whom, Clovis Reid as Secretary and myself as Chair, are still active in Brixton today. One other, Kingsley Smith was elected as a Lambeth Labour Councillor in May 1982 and appointed Mayor in 1983, the first person of African-Caribbean origin so appointed since John Archer in Battersea 70 years earlier. The Uprising propelled many black people into electoral politics for the first time, particularly in the Labour Party. This culminated in the election of Bernie Grant as the first Black Leader of Haringey Council, who was then elected as an MP in 1987, together with Diane Abbott and Paul Boateng.

The Brixton Defence Committee established itself at the Brixton Community Law Centre on Brixton Road, and secured funds from the new Ken Livingstone administration at the Greater London Council, to gather evidence to defend over 500 young people who had been arrested during the conflagration. To handle this volume of work, a Brixton Legal Defence Group (which I chaired) was set up, while other activists formed the Brixton Defence Campaign to continue political campaigning.

*Devon Thomas, [dcethomas3@gmail.com](mailto:dcethomas3@gmail.com)*

## What's happening at Cressingham Gardens?

Regular readers of this newsletter might remember that in July last year Lambeth's Cabinet agreed a plan to demolish and rebuild the Cressingham Gardens Estate, with 464 new flats in place of the 306 flats and houses which make up the estate now, and were about to appoint consultants to prepare detailed plans for the new development.

The Brixton Society teamed up with other local amenity groups – the Herne Hill Society, the Friends of Brockwell Park and the Brockwell Park Community Partners – to express our concerns to Lambeth's Cabinet about the impact that the redevelopment might have on the neighbouring Brockwell Park.



8002492.jpg, V.Lewis

At the end of November those plans were thrown into disarray when residents from the estate applied for a judicial review of the decision and the judge decided that the Council had acted unlawfully in not properly consulting residents regarding its proposed demolition and redevelopment of the estate.

Since then, the Council has carried out a further consultation with estate residents and on 21<sup>st</sup> March the Council's Cabinet met again to discuss the proposed redevelopment of the Cressingham Gardens Estate and resolved again that the estate should be demolished and rebuilt with 158 additional flats.

This decision does not mean that demolition will start soon. Lambeth has yet to publish any plans or drawings with details of the proposed new blocks, including crucially how high they will be. The next step is that in September this year the Council will appoint consultants to prepare a Masterplan for the estate, and, later, to work on a detailed application. The Council has stated to residents that they do not expect

building work to start until sometime in 2018 at the earliest.

The Brixton Society will continue to work with other local amenity groups to highlight the issue of the potential damaging impact of the redevelopment of the estate on the adjacent Brockwell Park Conservation Area, and to use our influence to minimise the impact of any redevelopment on the park.

*Vivienne Lewis.*

## Progress update on Brixton projects

*At the Brixton Neighbourhood Forum meeting on 31 March, Tom Bridgman from Lambeth Regeneration provided an update on Town centre projects – here are the highlights.*

### **New Town Hall & linked sites**

Work is underway on refurbishing the Town Hall, and the demolition of Town Hall Parade offices and Hambrook House is about to start, closing access via Porden Road. Work is also in progress to convert the old Co-op store in Acre Lane to residential use.

### **Somerleyton Road development**

This will provide 300+ new homes, with some business space and a new base for Oval House Theatre. Lambeth forgot that they sold one of the factory sites 20 years ago, so the owner's spoiler planning application caused a temporary panic.

At the far end of the road, the last of the old blocks are being demolished on the Guinness Trust Estate, ready for replacement by the final phase of "densification".

### **Brixton Central**

This plan covers the railway station, the old Tesco site between the railway tracks, and the former car park site in temporary use by Pop Brixton. Lambeth think there are opportunities for 250 new homes above and employment uses of various kinds at ground level, ideally with improved access to the station. Network Rail are part-owners but their current priority is to clear out and tart up the railway arches directly below the station platforms. This has caused much distress and will leave a big gap in the shopping on two streets, but there is little scope for the Planning system to restrain bad landlords.

Pop Brixton has almost reached its full extent, with a few more business units becoming available this month. They have just

## Regeneration News

announced their proposed use of the vacant Canterbury Arms site for a temporary ball games arena, pending work starting on a 9-storey block of flats.

### Electric Avenue improvements

With support from the Mayor's High Street Fund, the heart of the market in Electric Avenue is being reorganised. New paving is being laid and the layout of stalls will be more rational, based on a standard shelter design, instead of the present improvised cover that most traders have. Vehicle access and refuse collection arrangements will be changed to work with the new layout.

Other improvements supported by the HSF include recent refurbishment of the Pope's Road toilets, re-locating Impact Hub Brixton within the Pop Brixton site, and a cash machine for Brixton pounds.

The HSF project is running in parallel with another project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to restore the frontages of the buildings in Electric Avenue and nearby. That scheme includes a small element for complementary projects in the local community (more about these in our next issue).

### Market barrows restoration

A separate little heritage project is to restore some of the original wheeled market barrows, now an endangered species. Some funding has come from the Heritage of London Trust, but the Market Traders Federation recently launched a crowd-funding initiative to top this up. To support them, check out [save brixton's historic market barrows](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk) on [www.crowdfunder.co.uk](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk)

### Brixton Works

A feasibility study is being prepared, based on the Council getting involved again as a commercial landlord, to let and manage affordable workspace. The last of their previous such estates were sold off 13 years ago, and the long history of disposals means that few suitable sites are likely to remain, so don't expect much from this!

### London Overground

Another study is underway to get a local stop on the Clapham Junction to Whitechapel branch of the Overground, which presently sails over Brixton Road without stopping. The best prospect now seems to be re-opening the old Brixton East station at the far end of Station Road, closed in 1976. Network Rail claims the height and curvature of the lines

above the main Brixton Station make it too expensive to put it right in the centre.

### Canterbury Square

Work is underway to lay out the space in front of the Police Station in a more organised way, with suitable paving and a bit of planting. Cyclists will still have a cut-through route to Pope's Road.

### Brixton BID

Brixton's Business Improvement District is beginning to make its presence felt. It will be supporting publicity and events to attract more visitors and customers to Brixton.

The Brixton BID is co-ordinating local creative firms taking part in the Brixton Design Trail, which will benefit from the wider publicity umbrella of the London Design Festival which takes place in September.

The BID is also leading on preparation of a new Brixton Streetscape Manual, which will guide improvements to streets, markets and other open space as opportunities arise in the future. Consultants have recently been appointed to prepare this.

### Loughborough Junction

A little further afield from the other projects reported, but the London Regeneration Fund is investing in the Loughborough Farm site on Loughborough Road, opposite Wyck Gardens. The farm project will remain on the front part of the site, but new employment workspace will be built at the rear. A couple of the adjacent railway arches will be opened up to improve access between Styles Gardens and the railway station.

*Additional information via Alan Piper.*



*Watch 'em come down – demolition of the last 1938 blocks on the Guinness Trust Estate in Loughborough Park (Bx-M16-06.jpg).*

### Fenwick Estate: Another Estate Regeneration

In July last year (Newsletter 218) we reported that the Fenwick Estate in Landor Road was among those selected by Lambeth Council for “estate regeneration”. Emerging plans were shown at a small exhibition in the estate hall on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

The existing estate was the work of the GLC in the late 1960s, mostly 4-storey flats and maisonettes with lots of concrete access balconies. Pitched roofs added later have not improved their looks. Lambeth has already given itself planning permission to add 3 extra blocks alongside the Brixton-Clapham railway lines, replacing the present hall and parking bays. In order to fit even more residents on the site, the latest plans are to replace the older blocks by taller ones. Most of these will be 6 storeys, with a 10-storey tower in the centre of the estate, overlooking a small central square. Lambeth is trying to justify the increased density by the area’s good Public Transport Accessibility (its PTAL score) but in practice the nearby Northern Line is at full capacity in peak periods, with a dangerously-overcrowded narrow platform at Clapham North.



*Block model showing Landor Road frontage  
(Bx-Fw-A16-07.jpg)*

In the early 1980s, Lambeth built two-storey houses along the opposite side of Willington Road, where blighted Victorian terraces were considered too far gone for the renovation that was then being promoted in adjacent streets. Lambeth wants to include these newer houses to massage the “housing gain” figures for the main estate. However, whether or not they remain, Lambeth council tax-payers will pay off the original building costs for another 30 years.

One option is to replace this terrace by a 4-storey block, which has alarmed neighbours in Tasman Road at risk of losing their daylight and privacy. After all, this would not be a simple doubling of the existing eaves height, say 5.1m for a 1980 Council house. The Mayor’s Housing design standards now call for 2.55m room heights, so the new height will be at least 11.2m, depending on the roof shape.

The present estate has 431 dwellings, of which about a third are now leasehold under the Right to Buy. The new estate will have at least 700 dwellings, including 55 in Phase 1. The aim seems to be to provide some 300 of these as “social-rented” homes to match existing Council tenancies, plus 40% of the remainder as “affordable housing” of various types. This results in a similar number of social-rented homes as when the estate was first built, plus at least 260 leasehold or buy-to-let units.

However, the Government’s renewed enthusiasm for the Right to Buy means that the social-rented share could soon be eroded again, so is it really worth all the trouble and expense, just to “densify” the estate?

*Alan Piper.*

### Capturing memories of Sommerleyton Road area

Did you ever live on Sommerleyton or Geneva Roads in the 1950s or 60s? - Or in Carlton Mansions up to 2014?

Clapham Film Unit invites you to be part of an oral history recording, documentary and exhibition project about people who lived in the area before the new developments. Their aim is to collect and preserve memories of Brixton as it used to be, at a time when our area is changing so fast. The oral histories will be kept at Lambeth Archives, with an exhibition at Brixton Tate Library and a video documentary screened at the Ritzy Cinema. Everyone who takes part will be given a copy of the final film.

For more details contact Charlotte Bill on 07 971 284 794 or [claphamfilmunit@live.com](mailto:claphamfilmunit@live.com)

### Lambeth Libraries News

*Continued from front page*

...the existence of a self-appointed Shadow Trust which has been intriguing to take over the premises. However the Trust has offered no more than token library facilities, as with the GLL plan, nor any accountability to the local community. It was recently suggested that the Gym might be created by excavating the basement, but leaving the main library space untouched is little help unless the librarians and books remain. Despite Lambeth's pleas of hardship, it plans to spend more on setting up and supporting the gyms than it would cost to retain a 10-library service for the borough.

Further afield, **West Norwood** will continue and may even return to its 1960s building, but the Nettlefold Hall to the rear will become a commercial Cinema. **Upper Norwood** may survive under a local trust but neither Lambeth nor Croydon are willing to pay for staff. Meanwhile it is rumoured that Councillor Jane Edbrooke, who has driven the "Gymtrification" programme, is being reshuffled to Education. It is not clear yet which unlucky Councillor will have to deal with the legacy of bad feeling left behind in the run-up to the GLA elections.

*Alan Piper.*

### **BRIXTON** Neighbourhood Forum

The next two Forum meetings have been set for **Thursday 26 May** and **Thursday 28 July**, both at **7 pm** at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road SW2. We are currently working through a series of topics including Health, Crime, Regeneration, and promoting business and employment in the Town Centre, though agendas may change at short notice subject to availability of guest speakers. Lambeth is continuing to support the neighbourhood forums network for the year ahead.

Work is underway to expand and update the contact list and website. For the time being this remains at: <http://brixtonforum.btck.co.uk>

### Windmill Parade & Festival

To mark Brixton Windmill's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday, the annual parade and festival will be on **Sunday 26 June**, from 1 pm to 5 pm.

Would your group like to run a stall? Charges have been held at £25 for stalls that sell things and £10 for those that give out information.

To book a space, contact Sandra at [s.m.watts@btinternet.com](mailto:s.m.watts@btinternet.com)

*Organised by Friends of Windmill Gardens*

### Members' work recognised

We were pleased to hear that two of our long-standing members have been commended for their community work.

Committee member **Eileen Walkin** was presented with an Ambassador for Peace Award by the Women's Federation for World Peace, on UK International Women's Day, 12<sup>th</sup> March. This recognises her extensive voluntary work in the Croydon area since her retirement, including Croydon Refugee Day Centre, Care UK and Headway.

**Ken Floyde** established Brixton BMX Club following the 1981 riots and continues to support them. In January he was presented with a British Citizen Award at a special occasion at the Houses of Parliament. These awards recognise individuals doing extraordinary things in the local community.

### Remember Vauxhall View?

In the 1990s, Lambeth Council was in need of a major shake-up and a key player in the process was the Vauxhall View. This monthly magazine first appeared in 1993 and ran for 33 issues until 1998. During that time it was very influential, soon extending its coverage to Brixton issues. It encouraged an interest in planning issues and in local history.

The publisher and editor was Steve Morse, who ran the magazine on a shoestring budget from his flat, with the help of a small unpaid team. 9<sup>th</sup> January was the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death and a memorial event is being planned for later this year.

Were you a reader? Did you know Steve? Max Boucher at Community Support would like to hear from you – phone (020) 7582 8248 or e-mail to [communitysupport@email.com](mailto:communitysupport@email.com)