

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Spring, April 2013

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Distributed free to members

Reg. Charity No.1058103, registered with
the London Forum of Amenity Societies.

Website: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk

First of our Summer Walks...

Sunday 12 May

Upper Brixton Hill

Meet 2-30 pm at the corner of New Park Road
and Brixton Hill, for a walk led by Alan Piper,
finishing at Brixton Windmill.

A full list of guided walks in and around all of
Lambeth should be inside this issue.

**Open Garden Squares
Weekend – 8 & 9 June**

We have had to scale down our event this year
because we were unable to attract outside
funding, but we will be present on **Windrush
Square** on both days, using our stall as the
base for some short guided walks.

Our next open meeting

Thursday 13 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 apiperbrix@aol.com



*Easter Day in Windrush Square – due to the
late Spring, snowdrops are only just beginning
to appear around the oak trees along Saltoun
Road. The bulbs were obtained via the
Metropolitan Public Gardens Association and
planted by Friends of Windrush Square.
(Bx-E13-07.jpg)*

**Saturday 22 June:
Windmill Festival**

2 pm to 6 pm in Windmill Gardens, between
Ramillies Close and Blenheim Gardens,
Brixton Hill SW2. The event kicks off with a
parade up Brixton Hill, assembling in Windrush
Square at 1 pm. 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](mailto:wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk)

More dates on the back page...

Notes and News

From the Editor

Once again we try to update all our members without e-mail (plus those who have not told us their e-mail address!) but even for keen users of our website, we can offer some extra items to study regardless of your wi-fi connections!

Space permitting, we try to feature local events and publish reminiscences or enquiries in our newsletter. We welcome comments and news from all 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.

Health and Efficiency?

This month the Public Health function has moved out of the NHS and is now provided jointly by Lambeth and Southwark Councils, based in the latter's Tooley Street offices near City Hall. The Wellbeing Network's newsletter will still appear monthly – to see it, go to <http://lambethwellbeing.wordpress.com/>

Enquiries about the mental wellbeing network to Lucy Smith on (020) 7525 7530 or e-mail to lucy.smith@southwark.gov.uk

Flying the Flag

We recently heard from Philip Tibbetts, who helps at the Flag Institute with the registration of flag designs for communities and local authorities. Last year he attempted to design 374 flags for different towns and villages within Greater London, and he sent us his suggestion for a Brixton flag:



The design is inspired by the famous Electric avenue, hence the zig-zag pattern, recalling the electric street lighting that was a world first for Brixton. Its background colours are white for the town's football team and red for the local Topcats basketball team, from which the rampant cat emblem is also derived.

Mr Tibbetts is keen to encourage communities to adopt and register flag designs – details from the website below. If people like the idea, a competition could be held to select a design by a public vote – what do you think?
www.flaginstitute.org

Gone but not forgotten

We were sad to hear of the death on 28 March of **Helen Aspey** of Mervan Road, who died peacefully at the age of 95. She was a Brixton Society member and

newsletter distributor from way back and a pillar of the Lambeth Pensioner's group.

April's RIBA Journal included an obituary for **George Finch**, who died on 13 February aged 82. After service as an architect at the London County Council, in 1965 he joined Lambeth's new architect's department as a group leader, where he was responsible for several tower blocks. He was also the main architect of the Brixton Recreation Centre, though by the time that the plans were published in July 1971, he had moved on, to design provincial theatres and then became head of design at Thames Polytechnic's school of architecture.

Herne Hill Free Film Festival

With support from Film London, a series of film screenings are due to take place at outdoor venues in SE24. For full listing, see www.hernehillforum.org.uk

The first show is Charlie Chaplin's *Easy Street* on Friday **19 April** at 8 pm outside Herne Hill Station. Next up is Australian cult classic *Muriel's Wedding* on Saturday **4th May** at Brockwell Lido at 8-30 pm.

You can also enlist for a 48 hour film competition at the Prince Regent pub, Dulwich Road, between 11 am and 1 pm on Saturday **4th May**. Enquiries to charlotte@hernehill.org.uk

Myatt's Fields Park News

The Park's Little Cat Cafe will now be open from 10-30 am to 5 pm on Friday, Saturday and Sunday through the summer.

Also, there are a variety of local food sessions being run with support from the Big Lottery Fund's Local Food Scheme. A Community Gardener is being recruited to develop the park's greenhouse area and support local food-growing projects.

Summer events include the Big Lunch on Sunday 2nd June, and the popular Summer Fair and family fun day on **Saturday 22 June**. See the park website for more information: www.myattsfieldspark.info

Down the Drain...

London's sewer system is feeling the strain, not so much because people bath or shower more often than a century ago, but because more of the surface is now covered in concrete or tarmac, to park cars or just to save on grass cutting. This means that, in wet weather, increasing amounts of rainwater are running straight into the sewers rather than soaking into the ground. When the system is overloaded by heavy rain, sewage overflows into the Thames more frequently, undoing long campaigns to clean up the river. Thames Water sets great store by a projected trunk sewer along the bed of the Thames to carry a greater volume downstream beyond London, but riverside communities are concerned at giving up most of their open spaces as depot sites while the giant sewer is built.

One alternative is to replace the hard paved surfaces by more permeable material, while retaining more of the rainwater for local use, such as watering gardens. The London Forum has alerted us to <http://cleanthames.org> which is a website promoting this approach.

Securing London's Parks Network

The London Parks and Greenspaces Forum, which links local authorities and other park operators, is becoming a company limited by guarantee and a charity to secure its future. See www.green-space.org.uk/lpgsf/



Saturday 6th April: Members of Loughborough Junction Action Group planting up beds around the trees in Station Avenue, off Coldharbour Lane (LJ-Apr13-03.jpg)

Brockwell Park News

Although the lottery-funded upgrade to the Park is now complete, inevitably there are corners where it would have been good to do more. Fortunately, extra cash has become available from the developer's official "bribe" for planning permission for student flats on the far side of Herne Hill Station, £43,000 in all.

Friends of Brockwell Park have suggested using this for a performer's shelter or "sound-shell" as a backdrop to the performance area by Brockwell Hall, which has not had a stage or bandstand for decades. If you have any comments or ideas, please send them to: section106@brockwellpark.com

Over at the Community Greenhouses, a Gardening Club for the over 65s starts weekly sessions from **Monday 15 April**, from 11-30 am to 1-45 pm. Sessions consist of gentle gardening activities, a healthy lunch and a walk in the park. For details or to reserve a place, contact Beth on 07 427 685 714 or education@brockwellgreenhouses.org.uk

The Friends hold monthly car boot sales on the Brockwell Lido car park, next on **Sunday 21 April**. Sellers arrive from 7 am, £10 per car, £15 per van, open to the public from 9 am, public parking outside in Dulwich Road, FoBP also run a refreshment stall on site.

Local History Focus

Lambeth Heritage Month

Lambeth's Local History Forum has agreed that September this year will be Heritage Month.

A series of events will take place around the borough, anchored by the regular London Open House weekend on 21 & 22 September, and the Lambeth Archives Open Day on Saturday 28 September. There are already several guided walks lined up, and the Brixton Society has agreed to devote its meeting on Thursday 12 September to a local history presentation. We hope to have more detail in our July newsletter.

History publications

Three recent titles from the History Press may be of topical interest. Further details are on their website: www.thehistorypress.co.uk

Haunted Lambeth by James Clark has finally appeared. We were asked for suggestions of local ghost stories back in 2008, and the Stockwell Ghost is duly included!

London's Industrial Heritage by Geoff Marshall is a comprehensive guide to London's diverse industries, many now long gone. ISBN 978-0-7524-8728-1, £16.99

Several titles tie in with the 150th anniversary of London's Underground railways, including **London Underground – architecture, design and history** by David Long and Jane Magarigal. ISBN 978-0-7524-5812-0, £18.99

Recent Enquiries

I have included some recent enquiries below, with our responses – but can you add or correct any details?

A Brixton College

Nigel Stanley e-mailed from Rugby to enquire about an ancestor who lived in Brixton c.1900. He died in 1949 but left a written record which refers to his attending a Brixton College in the 1890s. Mr Stanley wondered where it was and what it taught.

There are two possibilities, pending a thorough check through old street directories:

Clark's College stood on Brixton Hill at the corner of Lambert Road, a site now occupied by a new Sainsbury's. It specialised in secretarial skills at a time when the job of secretary was still mainly carried out by men, and advertised itself as preparing students for the Civil Service exams. The present Brixton branch of Lambeth College, a little further down the hill, did not appear until the 1950s.

The Brixton School of Building was in Ferndale Road from 1904 to c.1972, by which time it was part of the South Bank Polytechnic. However, before it took on this specialist role for building trades and professions, the premises operated as the Brixton Polytechnic in the 1890s, presumably with a more general range of courses for school-leavers.

Crownstone Court



Bx-M13-01.jpg

Helene Anderson left London a few years ago to live in France but has many happy memories of Brixton. She enquired about Crownstone Court, where her late grandparents lived from 1944 to 1997. She was also interested to see the new Effra Social featured on Urban 75, as her grandfather was secretary of the Conservative Club there from 1961 to 1991.

Crownstone Court was designed in 1936 by Maskell & Tweedy, architects, on behalf of a Mr D.J. Barclay of Hove, Sussex. It was completed in September 1937. It stands on the site of 43-47 Church Road, now St. Matthew's Road. Brockwell Court nearby on Effra Road is similar in size and style, so may be a companion block.

Local History Focus

Van Gogh in Brixton

*David Ward contacted us because he had been instructed to prepare a programme note for a production of **Vincent in Brixton** at the Theatre by the Lake in Keswick later this year. His main interest was the present status of the house at 87 Hackford Road where Van Gogh lodged in 1873-74.*

Bx-E13-06.jpg



This was timely, because almost opposite the house, Isabel Street, a short cut-through to Liberty Street, was renamed Van Gogh Walk on 30 March. Using Section 106 funds from the nearby development of the old Freemans catalogue warehouse, the street has been repaved and new street trees and cycle stores provided. Two commemorative plaques have been placed on the boundary wall of the adjacent Durand Academy, providing further details of Vincent's time at the house, with a couple of quotations from his letters to his brother Theo.

The house itself was sold to a Chinese buyer last year but is looking a bit down at heel, though the original blue plaque is prominent. No news yet of the new owner's intentions, which might only come to light if conversion or extension were proposed, but with interest

rates so low, simply owning a London property shows a better rate of return than most other investments.

Stockwell before the Blitz

Several e-mails were exchanged with Jeff Britten in Pembrokeshire who was researching his father's time in Stockwell up to 1940. We were able to identify his house at 36 Grantham Road (since replaced) and in return he passed on this view of the former Methodist Church in Studley Road. After damage by a V1 flying bomb, the site was included in the postwar Studley Estate, and the church rebuilt nearby in Jeffreys Road.



Sussex Road or Hillmead?

Christine Bonnell asked if the present Hillmead Primary School was the same as the Sussex Road Infants school that she attended c.1950. She lived in Sussex Road from her birth in 1944 until 1961.

This school has had a number of uses and names since it was built in 1894. Most of its life was indeed as Sussex Road School, and there were originally separate gates for boys, girls and "mixed infants", each using a separate floor of the building. During the Second World War it was used as a reception centre for local residents who had been bombed out. Post 1945, it re-opened as a primary school, but then for part of the 1960s it was used as an annexe to the Brixton School of Building. It was modernised in the mid 1970s, to re-open as Hillmead primary school by 1977, by which time the Moorland Estate had been built around it, replacing the original houses in Sussex, Geneva and Somerleyton Roads.

Another Lambeth Plan

No sooner had we completed our comments on Brixton's Supplementary Planning Document, than the Council launched another draft plan, this time for Lambeth as a whole. There's a lot more to study, but essentially it tries to update previous Borough plans to suit changing needs and emerging problems, so we already have some inkling of what to focus our attention on.

This is an opportunity to tighten up policies which have been ineffective at stopping past abuses by developers, and to reform petty restrictions which have tripped up small businesses and householders. If we can get the policies right, we should be able to rely on the planning department to filter out the gross and the ugly without having to kick up a fuss so often ourselves.

The last day for comments is Friday **26 April** but if you want us to include your bright idea in the Society's representations, you need to tell us NOW – ideally by e-mail to: planning@brixtonsociety.org.uk

Making it happen

Brixton Green has a series of workshops underway to discuss priorities and proposals for developing sites along **Somerleyton Road**, backing onto the railway. Most sessions are at LVAC's Volunteer Centre on the corner of Popes Road and Brixton Station Road. Space is limited so e-mail to reserve a place at hello@social-life.co – but there is also another drop-in workshop on **Saturday 20 April** from 11 am to 6 pm on Windrush Square.

Keeping up with changes

Changes in National and London-wide planning policies are too frequent for us to cover comprehensively in these pages, but the London Forum's website can be a useful source. They have asked us to remind you about their London News page, which has been set up to receive the latest news feeds from Government departments, the Mayor, Transport for London and the London Assembly – go direct to: www.londonforum.org.uk/londonnews.php

Act now on extension limits!

In 2008 the previous government introduced a carefully worked-out set of size limits for extensions that could be added to existing buildings without Planning Permission. Back in September, ministers announced their intention to double the size limits but this is awaiting passage of the Growth and Infrastructure Bill. The Lords agreed to amend the bill so that councils could opt out of the new limits, but ministers intend to strike this out at the next Commons debate on **16 April**. The London Forum and Civic Voice – representing mainly provincial amenity societies – are urging their members to remind their MPs to defend the amendment and prevent ill-thought out alterations to buildings.



(picture Bx-M13-03.jpg)

Contemporary Home Design?

The distinctive Slip House in Bedford Terrace, Lyham Road, SW2 is the subject of the first book in a new series, *Detail in Contemporary British Architecture*, published by Outcast Editions. The house was designed by Carl Turner as his own home and studio and has already featured on *Grand Designs*. These monographs are designed for use with the iPad – details from info@outcasteditions.com

Townscape Heritage Initiative

Some editions of the South London Press on Friday 5th April reported that Lambeth's bid has passed the first round of the selection process. The Heritage Lottery Fund will contribute £50,000 for the proposals to be worked up in more detail by August, before the final selection round next year, which could provide up to £2 million towards a facelift for part of the Town Centre around Atlantic Road and Electric Lane.

Our Planning Guidelines

Last summer the Society adopted some core criteria for assessing planning applications and policies that come to our attention. We will:

Seek to protect historic buildings, especially (but not exclusively) those listed nationally or locally, and to protect the integrity of conservation areas.

Oppose over-development, i.e. proposals which local resources – such as transport or schools – cannot support, which shortfall cannot be made up by S.106 agreements.

Seek to protect the amenity of neighbours of any proposed development.

Seek to protect and enhance employment generation, including generally opposing proposed changes of use from business to residential.

Support high quality, energy-efficient, sustainable developments which do not breach the above guidelines.

Competing Airport Ideas

Next month marks the centenary of the first flight by a 4-engined airliner, when Igor Sikorsky's *Le Grand* took off from St. Petersburg. Since then, the aviation industry has come to expect inexorable growth in air travel, but last month's economic data from the GLA (quoting CAA figures) show that passenger numbers through all London's airports fell during 2008/09 and are still below pre-recession levels, with an increase of just 0.5% from February 2012 to February 2013. Unrestrained growth of London's **Heathrow Airport** is looking less credible. On the other hand our own direct rail link to **Luton Airport** (from Herne Hill and Loughborough Junction) has recently been reprieved!

On 11 March the London Forum hosted a meeting on the future of London's Airports. Guest speakers were Daniel Moylan, the Mayor's adviser on a new hub airport, and our old friend John Stewart of HACAN, the Heathrow Area Campaign against aircraft noise. For once, the speakers were agreed on

several points, but the elephant not actually in the room that night was BAA, operator of London Heathrow Airport but no longer in control of Gatwick or Stansted, now both pursuing their own growth strategies under new owners. While Central Government evades the issue, it makes sense for London's Mayor to take a regional view.

BAA's proposal for a third runway north of the present airport boundary had been heavily criticised and both speakers thought it was dead politically, but BAA came back fighting a few weeks later. On 2nd April the Evening Standard reported BAA's new 4-runway proposal, inserting a runway parallel to each of the 2 present east-west runways so that more aircraft could arrive and depart within the present operating hours. Clearly this would mean more air traffic over both north and south suburbs of London, and increased frequency over Brixton and Clapham in particular.

Alan Piper

The creative side of Regeneration

A stimulating event back on 1st February was the Brixton Exchange, organised by Anchor & Magnet* with support from University College of London. The day started with short guided walks through Brixton, converging on the Brixton East gallery in Barrington Road. The main business of the day was a series of short talks and discussions around community arts projects, the impact of redevelopment on migrant communities, urban planning, public art and the public realm. The organisers brought in a wide range of volunteer speakers to stimulate discussion and share their experience from other areas.

This well-attended event brought home that there is a definite creative buzz about Brixton these days, but the wrong planning policies could easily snuff it all out.

**Anchor & Magnet consists of Barby Asante, Katy Beinart and Kate Theophilus.*

The event outline can still be found on the web <http://anchorandmagnet.wordpress.com>

Spring and Summer Dates 2013

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).

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

Market Walks

Our guided walks around the market area continue on the second **Saturday** of each 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 (shared with Makerhood). Walks set out from there at **2-30 pm** and take about an hour and a half.

- 13 April
- 11 May
- 8 June

Links with Other Groups

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

Sunday 14 April – History Walk in the Park

Meet at **2 pm** by the clock tower in Brockwell Park for a guided walk led by Peter Bradley.

Friends of Brockwell Park

Saturday 20 April – Making Uncovered

Makerhood presents a full day of craft demonstrations, sales, workshops and talks, ending in an evening party with live entertainment. The event runs from 11 am to 11 pm at Brixton East, entrance in Barrington Road, SW9. To book a free ticket, go to www.makinguncovered.com

Monday 22 April – The future of sheltered housing in Lambeth

Public consultation meeting at **2 pm** at Lambeth Accord, 336 Brixton Road, SW9, to discuss proposed changes to the council's sheltered housing for older people. See also www.lambeth.gov.uk/ophousing

Wednesday 24 April – Brixton Recreation Centre Users' Group

All users of the Rec are invited to the next meeting at 6-30 pm in the Social Room on Level 5. Topics include ways of improving and promoting the Rec. Enquiries to Robyn Dasey, Secretary, at recusergroup@btinternet.com

Sunday 5th May – Tours of Henry Tate's Garden

View the grounds of Sir Henry's former home at Park Hill in Streatham – meet at 2 pm or 3 pm at the entrance to Henry Tate Mews, Streatham Common North, SW16
Streatham Society

Monday 6th May – The Cinema Museum

8 pm at Woodlawns, Streatham Darby & Joan Club, 16 Leigham Court Rd., SW16. Martin Humphries describes the collections and work of the museum now in the former Lambeth Workhouse.

The Streatham Society

Tuesday 7th May – Has Reality Bitten Yet?

A Lambeth Council conference on the impact of current benefit changes, 10 am to 12-30 at the Town Hall (Assembly Hall), Acre Lane, SW2. More info from RBilimoria@lambeth.gov.uk or see www.lambeth.gov.uk/benefitchanges

Wednesday 8th May – Protection of Ancient Buildings:

Elaine Byrne describes the origins and work of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, 7-30 pm for 7-45 start, Herne Hill United Church Hall, c/o Redpost Hill and Herne Hill, SE24.

Herne Hill Society

Saturday 18 May – Catacombs Tour

A tour of the original vaults below West Norwood Crematorium – details from Friends of West Norwood Cemetery, www.fownc.org or secretary@fownc.org Last year's art installation around the cemetery will be re-run for 5 weeks from **22 June**. *Friends of West Norwood Cemetery*