



THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Winter, December 2009

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Distributed free to members.

Registered with the London Forum of
Amenity Societies,
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Website: www.brixtonociety.org.uk

Our next event:
Thursday 14th January:
Winter Social

7 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre,
2b Saltoun Road, SW2
Admission free to members, but to help our
planning, please confirm if you are coming
(and the sooner the better). Notify Bill Linskey
on (020) 7274 3835 or by e-mail to
wjdc1@globalnet.co.uk

Is Recycling policy a load of old rubbish?

Ready for the post-Christmas surge in domestic rubbish, Lambeth Council has been publicising its special collections and recycling services through leaflets and in "Lambeth Life". In recent years, the proportion of domestic waste recycled has crept up to 26% for Lambeth, but the Government is setting higher targets for all councils, rising to 50% by 2020. Typical of government targets, it's a crude measure which disregards how much waste is produced in the first place and how effectively it is recycled. The present "orange sack" system encourages residents to mix several waste streams which have to be separated again at the depot, so that only low-grade recycling is possible. Other councils already have more developed systems, with wheely bins in two or three colours for different wastes

Back in October we joined in consultations on future recycling options for Lambeth. There was widespread support for pushing recycling levels well above 50%, but with more focus on re-use and waste prevention to reduce the total volumes of waste being handled. With 35% of homes being flats or high-rises, lack of storage facilities was a practical limitation for many residents, with existing estate bin areas inadequate and neglected. Special collection services through charities or recycling firms should be more widely publicised.

In February, Lambeth aims to recruit a part-time Waste Prevention Adviser to work within the local community on the "Zero Waste Brixton" initiative, promoting composting, recycling and reduced use of packaging. A draft Waste Strategy is due to be published for further comment during 2010.

More dates inside...

We are trying to get this issue out before Christmas to keep you informed, though we expect to have yet more dates and news to share next month, so check our website then too. Meanwhile, seasonal greetings to you all.

Diary of Events, Early Spring 2010

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 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.

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

Links with Other Groups

Dates are still coming in for 2010 events, but please check directly with the organisers if any queries over times or admission.

Until Sunday 17 Jan. –

Drawing Attention:

Touring exhibition of 100 drawings from the Ontario Art Gallery, extending from the Italian Renaissance to 20th Century masters: £9 admission (£4 concessions, children free)
Dulwich Picture Gallery

Thursday 7 January –

Retail Archives – John Lewis Partnership:

Judy Faraday, JLP's archivist, describes their business archives. Opens at 5 pm for 5-30 start, the Huntley Room at London Metropolitan Archives, 40 Northampton Road, EC1. Prior booking required – to Nicola.Avery@cityoflondon.gov.uk or tel (020) 7332 3816 (the Society is a member of AfL).
Archives for London.

Wednesday 13th Jan. –

The Peckham

Experiment:

Peter Frost of the Peckham Society describes the 1930s Pioneer Health Centre. 7-30 pm for 7-45 start, Herne Hill United Church Hall, corner of Redpost Hill and Herne Hill, SE24.
Herne Hill Society.

Wednesday 13th Jan. –

Common Voices:

Tricia Holland describes the recent oral history project based around Clapham Common. 7-30 pm for 8 pm start at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4.
The Clapham Society.

Monday 18 January –

Conservation in Lambeth:

Illustrated talk by Rachel Godden, head of Lambeth's conservation & urban design team, 8 pm at Woodlawns, Streatham Darby & Joan Club, 16 Leigham Court Road, SW16.
The Streatham Society

Tuesday 9th February – the Elephant Entertains

Talk by historian Richard Norman. 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 13 February –

Orchestra Concert:

Including Bruch's Violin Concerto and three works of the 1830s from Schumann, Mendelssohn and another of the orchestra's discoveries, Burgmuller. 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

Sunday 21 February –

Recent Archaeology in Southwark:

Talk by Christopher Constable, 3 pm at Goose Green Centre, St. John's Church, East Dulwich Road, SE22.
The Peckham Society.

Local History Focus



Somewhere in Brixton about 60 years ago – but where? Answers overleaf. Photo from P.Hotchin of Stanmore

Remember Olive Morris?

Exhibition until 24 January

Brixton-based activist Olive Morris (1952-79) founded the Brixton Black Women's Group and the Organisation of Women of Asian & African Descent. She campaigned for access to education, decent living conditions for Black communities and against state and police repression. As an early opponent of the "Poll Tax", it's ironic that today her name is attached to the Council Tax office on Brixton Hill.

The exhibition maps out 3 years of research into Olive's life by artist Ana Laura Lopez de la Torre, former colleague and community activist Liz Obi and members of the Remembering Olive Morris Collective.

Open Wednesdays to Sundays, 12 to 6 pm at Gasworks, 155 Vauxhall Street, SE11 – admission free.

For linked programme of events at Gasworks, tel (020) 7582 6848 or see

www.gasworks.org.uk

For more about Olive Morris and ROC, see www.rememberolivemorris.wordpress.com

Old Brixtonians remember

Mr William Hopwood, now living in Solihull, West Midlands, wrote to us in July with some reminiscences of Brixton life 1933-1956, which we could not squeeze into the Autumn edition.

I was born at 205 Railton Road, SE24, on 13 December 1933. My mother was Mrs Violet Emily Hopwood (nee Heard) and my father was William Charles Hopwood (born 17 May 1900). When I was about 18 months old we moved to Carshalton, but my mother was so lonely that we moved back to Brixton, to Chaucer Road, I think No.10. From there we moved to 285 Mayall Road, where three of my mother's sisters already lived – Aunt Ethel, Aunt Lil and Aunt Ada. All of them already had children, so I had plenty of company, including my sister Pearl who was three years older than me.

When I was about 4 years old I went to Effra Parade School. My friends there were Peter Bononatie, Peter Lashmar and Freddie Ives. I often wonder if whether they are still alive. We were split up when we were 11 years old – Peter Bononatie went to Tooting Bec Grammar School, Peter Lashmar and Freddie Ives to the Strand Grammar School, and I went to Alleyn's Grammar School in Dulwich.

Local History Focus

When war was declared in September 1939, I was evacuated from Effra Parade School to Brighton with my sister Pearl. We were selected by a Mrs Fennel who lived in a terraced house, 14 Toronto Terrace. We had one of the worst winters there and I was very ill. We were sent out at 6 o'clock in the morning when her husband went to work, allowed in again at 12 noon for lunch, then turned out again until her husband returned in the evening.

My father came and took us back to Mayall Road until the air raids really started when we were again evacuated, to an Essex village called Cornish Hall End, near Braintree. A Mr & Mrs French took us in. They had two boys of their own, Stan and Keith. They all treated us very well. It was beautiful countryside and they were some of the happiest days of my life. We returned home just as the "doodle-bugs" or V1s started. We were very shaken at one time when a V2 rocket landed on a bombed site in Shakespeare Road opposite the coal yard at the railway sidings, Loughborough Wharf.

Before I did National Service (September 1952 to 1954) a friend of mine, Jackie Wright, had introduced me to the youth club in Rosendale Road, and it was here they formed the Shakespeare Wanderers football club. Jackie has since died but I do not know what has happened to two other friends from those days, Bert Brook and Den Ashman.

I lived at Mayall Road until I married on 25 July 1956, when my wife and myself moved to a downstairs flat next to a scrap-yard at 82 Cottage Grove (off Landor Road) since demolished for new homes.

My parents stayed in Herne Hill for most of their married lives. My father died at the age of 91 and my mother at the age of 86, a few months after my father. They were always going to Brixton to shop, and my father worked during the war at the Co-operative Society store in Acre Lane, just up from the Town Hall.

I wonder if anyone remembers my family or friends from those days? If so, it would be interesting to hear from them. I am afraid I do not have a computer – at 75 it's all a bit

beyond me – but you are welcome to drop me a line.

W.J.Hopwood,
24 Bridge Meadow Drive, Knowle,
Solihull, West Midlands B93 9QG

Stockwell War Memorial

The memorial itself was dedicated in May 1922 and sits alongside the entrance to one of the deep air raid shelters built just above the tunnels of the Northern Line in 1940-42.

The memorial now has its own website at www.stockwellwarmemorial.co.uk including the stories behind some of the names carved on it. More photos of the ceremony on Sunday 8th November can be seen at www.stockwellnews.com

1860s Schooldays...

Dr Daniel Miles e-mailed from Oxfordshire to enquire about a private school in Vassall Road which his great grandfather attended in the 1860s.

Small private schools were very common in larger houses in the mid-1800s, but gradually declined in number after free state-funded education was introduced in 1870. Postal directories do not cover our area fully until 1876, but Vassall Road is included in the 1860 PO Directory. This lists Mr James J. Miller with an Academy at 7 Clarendon Place, Vassall Road, near the Perseverance public house. He was still there in 1876, by which time the house was re-numbered as 63 Vassall Road, which would have been about halfway along on the north side. Sadly this section has since been rebuilt, twice over.

Archives Temporary Closure

Lambeth Archives closes for annual stocktaking between 25 January and 6th February inclusive – re-open from Monday 8th.

Spot the Bus Stop?

The photo on p.3 was taken in Brixton Water Lane outside 30-36 c.1950 – note tram lines in the left foreground. The bus is an STL type of the late 1930s, 20 years before Routemasters. The stop has since been moved to the left of Arlingford Road.

Recent Events

Remembrance Sunday



Remembrance Sunday this year was Sunday, 8th November 2009.

In recent years, the Society has been represented at the act of remembrance at the Stockwell War Memorial. This is the main commemoration in our area and is attended by the mayor of Lambeth and local MP, Kate Hoey. This year, a wreath was laid on our behalf by our Treasurer, Norma Williamson, shown in the photograph above.

Various members of the Society have done the honours over the years. If anyone would like to volunteer for 2010, please contact the Chair.



**Merry Christmas to the
Brixton Society
Station Officer
Mat Rosendale
Brixton Green Watch**

Visit to the Brixton Fire Station, Gresham Road

On the evening of Friday, 27 November 2009, a group of Brixton Society members were given a guided tour of the Brixton Fire Station by Station Officer Mat Rosendale (on the right of the photograph below).



The fire-fighters at the Gresham Road Station have been protecting the people and property of Brixton since 1906. It was once one of the busiest fire stations in Europe and it is still one of London's busiest.

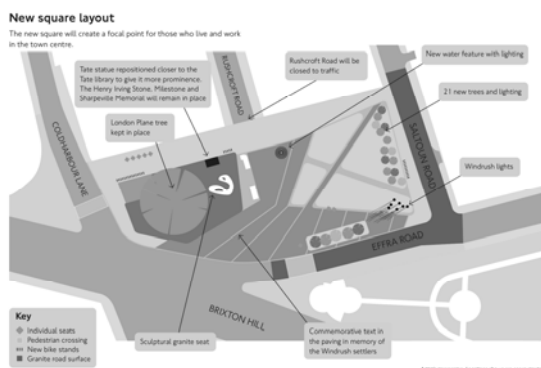


Among many of its original features, the station still retains the poles down which the fire-fighters slide when the alarm sounds (these days, an electronic trumpet instead of a noisy bell). These are no longer fitted to modern stations for health and safety reasons, but our fire-fighters think they are safer than having a group of people rushing down flights of stairs.

The fire-fighters are at least as characterful as the station - they once included one of TV's Gladiators. His stage name was "Saracen" - now promoted and at Forest Hill Fire Station.

We will not reveal now all of the interesting features of the station because Station Officer Mat Rosendale has very kindly offered to give us another guided tour next year - details in the spring Newsletter.

Tate Library & Windrush Square



Windrush Square

The redevelopment of Windrush Square is on course for the re-opening of the square in January 2010. The new traffic flow system - involving making Brixton Hill two-way, taking some pressure off Effra Road - has been implemented, apparently successfully. The Council has an opening event pencilled in for the last weekend in January.

USES: it is hoped that the square will attract many everyday uses. Ideas already floated include Tai Chi and a chess club.

EVENTS: as well as day-to-day usage, specific events are being planned throughout the year. The Society is, so far, involved in two of them.

OPEN GARDEN SQUARES WEEKEND

12-13 JUNE 2010: our bid to be part of this weekend has been accepted by the London Parks & Gardens Trust who organise it. As well as inviting people across London to come to see our new square, we are planning an event called: "Growing in Brixton". From window boxes and pots, through gardens and allotments, to parks and the public realm generally, this event is to celebrate and encourage all things horticultural. If you are interested in helping, please contact Bill Linskey.

ART FAIR 24-25 JULY 2010: at which not only existing works of art would be displayed but also visitors would be encouraged to join in the creation of new art. If you are interested in helping, please contact Norma Williamson.

Tate Library, Brixton

In the past, whenever the Society organised an event in the old Tate Library Gardens (now part of the new Windrush Square) the library was an enthusiastic supporter. Thus we had no hesitation in including the library in our sub-committee "The Friends of Tate Library and Windrush Square".

However, the library has not had a proper Friends' group in the way that most other libraries in Lambeth have one. We thought it was time it did!



*Doye Akinlade & David Warner,
two of our team of helpers*

On Saturday, 5 December 2009, a relay of volunteers from the Society staffed a stall in the lobby of the library. A display of pictures of the library and its environs in the past drew people in and we challenged them by asking if they were as interested in its future.

As a result, some 35 people signed up to show interest in forming a Friends' group and gave their contact details so that we could organise an inaugural meeting in the New Year.

The meeting will be held on:

**Saturday, 6 February 2010 at
2:30pm in the Tate Library, Brixton**

Everyone interested is most welcome.

Community Networks

Networking with other Amenity Societies

Within the borough, amenity societies like ours have regular contact at the Lambeth Local History Forum. This has little time to discuss planning or environmental issues, but at least we know who to contact between meetings. For London-wide issues, such as the Mayor's policies on transport or planning, we can share concerns through the London Forum of Amenity Societies. Our Chair, Bill Linskey, was elected to their committee in October so contacts may strengthen in future.

Discussions are continuing over a national umbrella body to replace the Civic Trust, but the difficulty is to avoid repeating its mistakes. With most of its past functions taken on by other bodies, linking a thousand local societies looks like a manageable task. Yet some have ambitions for a large staff team which would be impossible to sustain from societies' subscriptions – we in turn would have to double what we charge our own members, which is not acceptable.

A final package is expected in February, with an invitation to societies to join, and a launch event in April. Further information meanwhile at www.civicsocietyinitiative.org.uk – and do let us have your views in the meantime.

Volunteers Wanted!

Age Concern Lambeth is making an effort to attract more volunteers to help provide its local services. Three sessions are being held in Brixton for people to find out more:

Saturday 9th January, 10 am to 1 pm,
Wednesday 20th January, 10 am to 3 pm,
Thursday 21st January, 5 pm to 8-30 pm
at the Vida Walsh Centre, Saltoun Road, SW2
Further details from ACL on (020) 7346 6802

VolunteerCentre Lambeth

Training for voluntary groups

If that last piece set you thinking "Our group could do with more volunteers too" then help is at hand...

Lambeth Voluntary Action Council is running various events to help community groups, in three strands:

- The current training programme of one-day and half-day courses runs to the end of March, typical cost £25 a time with concessions for smaller groups. Contact (020) 7737 9460.
- The Active Citizens' Hub offers free training for residents aspiring to take up responsibilities such as school governor, magistrate, or a community representative on a local forum, board or steering group. Enquiries to (020) 7737 1419 or active.citizen@lambethvac.org.uk
- Thirdly, a free training programme for volunteers and for volunteer managers launches in the New Year. Contact (020) 7326 5490.

More details are on the LVAC website, www.lambethvac.org.uk

In Memoriam

Looking back over 2009, the year has seen the deaths of some familiar local figures.

David Hart was a sincere champion of the disabled and elderly, and of Council tenants generally. He worked hard to widen community involvement in the Local Strategic Partnership.

Phil Cremin of local solicitors Cremin Small was long active in local affairs including Brixton's business forum.

Peter Marcan, who died in July, was well-known among London's local history enthusiasts as a book-seller with an aptitude for re-discovering obscure titles which filled gaps in their local knowledge. Earlier in the year, our colleagues in the Norwood Society mourned the loss of veterans **Leo Held** and **Betty Griffin**.

Paul Reynolds had been involved in many local organisations, but was probably best-known recently as Secretary of the Herne Hill Forum, which began as a sub-group of the Brixton Area Forum. His funeral in October was attended by representatives of many local groups, as well as Tessa Jowell MP.

Heritage Hopes Dashed

In the last issue, we reported on the Townscape Heritage Initiative bid proposed by the Prince's Regeneration Trust. Not long after publication, we heard from Council leader Steve Reed that English Heritage had not been able to make its expected contribution of £300,000 and that the Council was unwilling to meet the shortfall itself. So the £2.6m package has gone the way of most town centre plans...

Despite the lack of new funds, the Council has been pursuing proposals for several artworks and other facelift measures around the Town Centre, as also mentioned last time. We were recently asked to advise on reinstating the windows on the Electric Avenue facade of the Reliance Arcade (below), in an Egyptian style inspired by the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922.



Boost for Market Arcade

Over at Brixton Village (or Granville Arcade to us oldies) there was a real surge of interest in November when the owners, LAP, offered empty units with 3 months rent-free. Although that's only half what you'd expect if you were leasing a shop anywhere else these days, there were 90 applicants, with 17 units being allocated, some of which are now trading.

We considered combining efforts with other community groups to have a presence, but it proved too complicated. Nevertheless, the Friends of Brixton Market, the Brixton Pound, Transition Town Brixton and the Market Trader's Federation have got together to share a unit – pop in and see them sometime.

Comment on Mayor's Plans

12 January is the closing date for comments on 3 draft strategies applying to all London boroughs. If you want us to take up your concerns, e-mail/ write to our Secretary NOW (contact info is on page 2).

- London Plan (spatial strategy);
- Transport Strategy;
- Economic Strategy.

See www.london.gov.uk/shaping-london or call 0800 093 5808.

Crunch for Short-life Homes

In the early 1970s, Lambeth Council was buying up property all around Brixton with a view to rebuilding on a massive scale. Many of its plans remained unrealised and as buildings fell empty, the Council licensed many to housing co-ops or even did deals with squatter groups, as a short-term expedient to limit the dereliction. Some short-life groups achieved legitimacy through partnerships with housing associations, as at Villa Road. Many others seemed to have been forgotten, but lately the Council has been taking a tougher line so it can sell the properties, despite the depressed market. Evictions have already taken place in Rushcroft Road and at the St. Agnes Place squat in Kennington.

Now the Council has turned its attention to Carlton Mansions on Coldharbour Lane, sandwiched between the railway viaduct and the temporary site of Evelyn Grace Academy. Residents have been warned of eviction in April, although plans for this corner of the Town Centre are still quite vague. No planning applications have been made yet. There are hopes of Oval House Theatre moving to the site next door, but it is uncertain that the Academy will be ready to move all their operations onto their new Loughborough Park site in September as hoped. Even if Lambeth regards short-life occupants as inferior even to its Council tenants, it would make sense to keep the block occupied and looked after until firm plans are ready to start. From the wider community's viewpoint, it provides some casual surveillance and life after hours in a gloomy corner of the Town Centre.

Alan Piper.