

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Winter, December 2013

No.212, Quarterly issue,

Distributed free to members

Registered with the London Forum of Amenity

Societies, Registered Charity No.1058103,

Website: www.brixtonociety.org.uk

Our next event:

Thursday 9th 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 at wjdc1@globalnet.co.uk or (020) 7274 3835.

More dates inside...

We try to distribute this issue to members before Christmas, to give you ample notice of the Winter Social, but more 2014 dates will be firmed-up soon, so check our website later. Meanwhile, seasonal greetings to you all...

Christmas Carols

A last-minute reminder about two events:
A Christingle Carol Concert around the bandstand in Myatt's Fields Park on **Sunday 15 December** from 5 pm, (after the Christmas market). Then on **Thursday 19 December** in front of Herne Hill Station, Carols and Christmas songs from 5-30 to 7 pm in aid of the Healthy Living Club at Lingham Court, Stockwell, SW9.



Brixton Challenge Photo Archives

Following the recent death of Nelson Mandela, residents have been recalling the impact of his visit to Brixton on 12 July 1996, as part of 4-day state visit while President of South Africa. We have dug out a few of the photos taken when he arrived outside the Recreation Centre in Brixton Station Road, to be greeted by the Prince of Wales and the Mayor of Lambeth, before meeting more dignitaries and community representatives at an event inside.

More on page 4...

Dates for Early 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).

- **13 February,**
- **13 March,**
- 10 April,
- 8 May,
- 12 June (AGM)

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.

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

Links with Other Groups

Dates are still coming in for 2014, but please check directly with the organisers if any queries over times or admission.

Monday 6th January - Recent Discoveries in Local History:

A round-up of research by various speakers, 8 pm at Woodlawns, Streatham Darby & Joan Club, 16 Leigham Court Rd., SW16
The Streatham Society

Tuesday 7th January – Touch of Evil

A restored version of Orson Welles' 1958 film, last in the "film noir" season at the Minet Library, Knatchbull Road, SE5, 6-30 pm, free.
Minet Film Club

Until Sunday 12 January – Dulwich Picture Gallery

Last chance to see special exhibitions on Whistler and on Margaret Desenfans, one of the founders of the gallery: more details at: www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk

Sunday 12 January – Friends of Brockwell Park AGM

Although many local groups and interests are involved in the wider Brockwell Park "Community Partners" or MAC, the park still needs its core group of Friends to champion it. 2-30 pm in Brockwell Hall – details at www.brockwellpark.com

Tuesday 14th January – The Royal Surrey Zoological Gardens

A forgotten treasure on the borders of Walworth and Kennington, described by Stephen Humphrey: opens at 7 pm for 7-30 start, Housing Co-op Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1 (almost opposite the Old Vic).
Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society

Wednesday 12 Feb. – Lambeth's Libraries:

A review of the borough's library buildings by Robert Drake of the 20th Century Society, 7-30 pm for 7-45 start, Herne Hill United Church Hall, c/o Redpost Hill and Herne Hill, SE24.
Herne Hill Society

15 & 16 February – The Listed Property Show:

At Olympia, 10 am to 5 pm, more details and tickets from www.lpoc.co.uk

Sunday 16 February – Southwark Archaeology

Presented by Dr Christopher Constable of Southwark Council, 3 pm at the Goose Green Centre, St. John's Church, East Dulwich.
The Peckham Society

Monday 17 Feb. – Sir Frank Baines

The life of Clapham-based architect and conservation expert. Note new day and venue: doors (and bar) open 7 pm for 8 pm start, at **Omnibus** (the old Clapham Library) 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4.
Clapham Society

Underground, Overground

Something which Brixton residents are missing out on is access to the London Overground, whose trains now cross Brixton Road without stopping nearby – you have to be near Clapham North or Denmark Hill to get aboard. We are pleased to report that Lambeth Council has commissioned consultants to investigate the feasibility of providing platforms both in Brixton Town Centre and at Loughborough Junction.

In October, a few of our committee members met with Mark Trevethan, Lambeth's Transport Policy Manager, to review the brief that he was about to issue. We were agreed that this should not only fit platforms in among existing and proposed buildings, but also enable interchange between different rail and bus services.

Lambeth Local Plan

This is the main town planning policy document for our borough, which says what proposals will be accepted or encouraged and what is likely to be refused. It is particularly critical for Brixton Town Centre because the "SPD" or supplementary plan that was adopted earlier this year is vague on detail and needs to be underpinned by firmer wording within the Local Plan. Not the way these things should be done, but that's how it has panned out.

We are now entering the next phase in refining and updating the Local Plan, publication of the Proposed Submission for objections and comments. The deadline for these is Monday **3rd February**, so through January we will be reviewing the plan and the Council's response to our earlier comments made in Spring 2013. This is the stage where it gets more technical and legalistic, so if you have concerns about any proposals or policies (or the lack of them) please share them with us within the next few weeks, so that we can work together to be more effective. Meanwhile, the latest version of the plan and supporting documents should be on the Council's website by the time you read this, at www.lambeth.gov.uk/planning and follow the links.

New Town Hall Campus

Following up our report in the last edition, it has been confirmed that Muse has been selected as the preferred developer for a package of sites around the Town Hall. We had illustrated proposals for Olive Morris House on Brixton Hill, and have since heard concerns at both the loss of a building scarcely 30 years old (hardly a "green" approach) and that Olive's name would no longer be commemorated locally. We have been advised that International House is no longer part of the package, so we assume this will be disposed of separately in due course.



Civic office building proposed by Muse to replace 1-7 Town Hall Parade – view of the Brixton Hill frontage from St. Matthew's Peace Gardens.

Housing developers persist

One of several planning applications that we have commented on is that for a warehouse between Mandrell and Mauleverer Roads, between Brixton Hill and Lyham Road. Plans were submitted for rebuilding half the site with 8 houses, evading the obligation to provide any affordable housing that rebuilding the whole site would bring. This would also remove half of a mural painted on the rear wall of the warehouse some 30 years ago, so the London Mural Preservation Society has taken an interest. Lambeth refused the application but the developer has appealed. Unusually for such a modest site, the appeal will be a public hearing (on 10 February) rather than written representations to the Planning Inspectorate.

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Mandela in Brixton



Brixton Challenge Photo Archives

Nelson Mandela receiving an enthusiastic reception from the crowd in Brixton Station Road (top) and on his way to the steps of the Recreation Centre (lower picture).

We have heard from the Recreation Centre User Group that a book of condolence has been placed in the reception area for visitors to record their thoughts and comments on his life and example. It will be passed on to the South Africa High Commission after Christmas.

Local History Publications

A second edition of Edmund Bird's book on **Lambeth's Edwardian Architecture** was launched at the Lambeth Archives Open Day in September. Edmund has taken the opportunity to add some more examples, so this is more than a reprint, though the price remains at £9. Available through Lambeth Archives, ISBN 978099266950 8.

We also promised to review two recent biographies linked to our eastern boundary with Camberwell over a century ago:

Inventor & Industrialist

Venturing into Herne Hill for a guided walk a few months ago, I pointed out where Sir Henry Bessemer had lived, at the summit of Denmark Hill. His grand house has long gone but it is now better illustrated in a new edition of a biography of Bessemer recently published by the Herne Hill Society. First compiled by Patricia Jenkyns thirty years ago, this 2nd edition has been updated by John Brunton to match the quality of the society's other recent titles.

The new edition was prompted by the 200th anniversary of Henry's birth in Hertfordshire in 1813. He was one of those prolific inventors that seemed to characterise the Victorian era. He first made his fortune with a formula for "gold" paint, but it was his steel-making process that made his name, allowing mass production of the steel which was soon being turned into railway bridges, skyscrapers and battleships.

In 1863 he bought a large house on the east side of Denmark Hill, gradually enhancing it. He built an observatory in its extensive grounds, as well as an adjacent house for his son and daughter-in-law.

The Story of Sir Henry Bessemer is £5 (and £1.50 p&p) from the Herne Hill Society, PO Box 27845, London SE24 9XA.

A Camberwell Artist

Steven Harris has recently produced a biography of Ernest Stafford Carlos (1883-1917) who is today best remembered for a number of paintings from the early days of the Scout movement. Ernest's first boyhood home was 46 Camberwell New Road, but by the turn of the century the family had moved a short distance to 46 Foxley Road, SW9. Ernest attended school nearby in Elliott Road, before winning a scholarship to the Lambeth School of Art in St. Oswald Place, Vauxhall. From there he went on to win a scholarship to the Royal Academy Schools in Piccadilly. By 1904 he had set up a studio in a shed behind the

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family home, but commissions for portraits often took him out of London. Some of his works survive in different versions: he eventually produced 12 copies of his 1911 portrait of Charles Edward Brooke, at the request of the late Canon's friends and family.

In those days when the obligations of local authorities were very limited, most churches were responding to social deprivation by organising self-help groups and charitable activities. Ernest became involved with the social work of St. George's Church (now within Burgess Park) and the Cambridge House Settlement in Addington Square. He painted several pictures promoting the new Boy Scout movement and started a Scout Troop himself early in 1914, run with help from his brothers John and Arthur (and which survives as the 21st Camberwell).

Ernest volunteered at the outbreak of the First World War but initially was rejected on medical grounds. He was accepted in 1916 but saw little fighting until he was commissioned as an officer and returned to France in March 1917. Some of his sketches of army life have survived. He was killed by shellfire while leading an attack on a German position south of Ypres on 14th June.

Steven's account is good at picking up the local and family connections of the time, but sadly a few of the photographs used have become distorted in the course of printing the book.

Painting in Earnest is £12 (and £3 p&p) from Lewarne Publishing, PO Box 26946, London SE21 8XG.

Common Threads

Although people ask us about many obscure corners of Brixton, or all sorts of ancestors who lived round here in the past, there are certain common threads that we usually need to include in our replies. Whenever we feature such enquiries, we try to highlight techniques and sources that may help the rest of you with your own topics of interest.

For example, Peter Shipton recently asked us about **Loughborough Central School**, which he attended in 1954-56, and particularly any photos of that vintage.

There are two on-line picture archives relevant here, though anyone prepared to visit the public archives may find other illustrations.

Lambeth Archives have digitised much of their picture collection, but it has been a piecemeal process and it can be difficult to trace particular streets or buildings – especially with name changes! The collection is strong on postcard views from a century ago, and on the neighbourhoods and estates which were the subject of demolition or conservation efforts in the 1970s. For access, go to www.landmark.lambeth.gov.uk

The “area” here would be Loughborough Junction, though the school does not feature.

London Metropolitan Archives is the main repository for records from the Greater London Council and its predecessors or satellites, including the London County Council and initially the London School Board. This is the most promising place to start researching any school, and many London-wide organisations. Again there is a separate digitised picture collection, called Collage, at: <http://collage.cityoflondon.gov.uk/collage/app> Search under “Places” and choose L in the A-Z section, then scroll down to Loughborough Primary School (the present name of the site).

In this case there were 2 sets of photos, one of the Infants Christmas Party c.50 years ago, but maybe more relevant is a set showing a new prefab block added to the Loughborough Road frontage c.1967. The original block from c.1930, closer to Minet Road, seemed only to appear in the background, but I only scrolled quickly through the 37 photos. Just taking a modern photo is difficult because the old building is now surrounded by recent extensions.

Alan Piper.

Centenary of the Great War

Lambeth's current mayor, Cllr. Mark Bennett, has been a keen champion of heritage issues and has set up a working group to encourage commemoration of this, particularly in 2014. This is likely to be a major theme of the next Lambeth Heritage Festival and linked events.

Townscape Heritage Bid finally moving forward

Following up our last report in the July edition, the steering group has begun regular meetings to work up proposals for the second stage of the bid, due by the end of March. There is a meeting scheduled just after we go to press, and the next on 21 January. To recap, the focus of attention will be around Electric Avenue and Atlantic Road. Care also needs to be taken to integrate this with the current re-planning of the whole “public realm” within Brixton Town Centre by Shape Landscape architects.

Advising Black Cultural Archives

BCA have asked us to assist with compiling some display material on the rather complex history of the building that they will be moving into next year. 1-3 Effra Road has had many different uses over two centuries, and the challenge is to reflect this within a limited number of words.

Old Garden Walls

A resident of Archbishops Place asked for advice on an old brick wall extending beyond her neighbour's new extension.

Unless your deeds say that the wall belongs to one side or the other, it is probably a party fence wall under the terms of the Party Wall etc Act 1996. This means that you cannot split it down the middle and demolish half of it – it needs to be considered as a whole and maintained jointly by both owners. Under the terms of this Act, the side which is building the extension is responsible for protecting the wall where they are building directly against it, or including it in their extension. They should make good any resulting damage on your side and pay any fees for Party Wall Surveyors etc. However the rest of the wall beyond the extension remains a joint responsibility.

Having removed the old render from the face of the wall, your neighbours have discovered why it was rendered over originally – because the bricks are in poor condition. Now it is quite possible for one side to become worse than the other, due to frost or driving rain or failure

to repoint the joints often enough. The simplest solution would be to re-render the existing wall but there are 3 measures that would prolong the life of the new covering:

Use a cement/lime/sand mix to provide some flexibility and reduce the risk of cracking.

Divide the render into panels no more than 3m wide, with movement joints between them, to reduce the risk of cracking from thermal movement.

Fix a fibreglass mesh to the wall surface before rendering it, to bind the render together better. This technique is now widely used for rendering the outside face of house walls, particularly when applied over thermal insulation panels.

I do not know the height or length of the wall but its strength and stability depend on the distance between any piers or corners, and on the type of bond in which the bricks are laid. Traditional patterns for a garden wall would combine stretcher bricks running along the face of the wall with headers laid across the width of the wall to bind both sides together. Unfortunately the wall was built when labour was cheap and bricks were expensive, so many of the headers may turn out to be only “snap headers” or half-bricks, so that the wall might be in effect two separate skins only joined by the top coping course.

If individual bricks really are crumbling, it is possible to insert individual replacements, but it needs to be done with care – colour matching is not an issue here but beware of size discrepancies between modern and traditional bricks.

Alan Piper.

Cressingham Gardens

Backing onto Brockwell Park, this Lambeth estate is largely unchanged since it was built in 1967-79 – it has not needed major remodelling like its contemporaries at Stockwell Park or Angell Town. The TRA organised tours during London Open House weekend in September, and in November their bid for listing the estate was endorsed by the Twentieth Century Society.

How Much Is That in Today's Money?



From a programme of 7 March 1938. Original sizes: cover 243x191mm; advertisements each 102x71mm.

Whenever one reads a price in an old document, the inevitable question is: how much is that in today's money? This turns out to be a difficult question to answer. Even the current measures of inflation are controversial. In the April 2010 budget the Government announced that future pension increases would be based on the consumer price index (CPI), instead of the normally faster-rising retail price index (RPI). This resulted in a major court case over the legality of the decision¹. If you are not clear about the difference between CPI and RPI, you could try consulting the Office for National Statistics website². Unfortunately, under Consumer Price Indices, you would not only find the CPI and RPI but also the Pensioner Prices Indices, the Rossi Index and the Tax and Price Index. Of course, there are also the House Price Indices and the Producer Price Indices!

If tracking current price changes is so difficult, it is no surprise that understanding price changes over long periods of time is much more so. How can we compare the cost of, say, clothing in Georgian times with today when there are so many differences? Incomes for different groups of people have changed differently over time with a long-term trend for the poorest sections of society to have become relatively better off (a trend that many feel has halted in recent years!). Not only do different sections of society have different incomes, they have different patterns of expenditure. Prices and wages are not uniform across the country. Technological changes mean that we spend money today on items that our ancestors could not have dreamt of. A very good book on this

subject is published in association with the British Association for Local History³ of which the Brixton Society is a member.

Is it worth the bother? If you found that an ancestor had died a century ago and left, say, £100, wouldn't you be interested to know today's value of that £100? For a simple approximation, an easy resource is the Bank of England's (BoE) website⁴. Here you can insert a sum of money and a year from 1750 onwards and the calculator will tell you the equivalent cost in 2012 (or another, earlier year if you enter one). It turns out that £100 in 1913 is worth about £9,800 today. Not a fortune by modern standards but a handy sum as a hedge against adversity in an era without the modern welfare state.

This article was prompted when I noticed a coincidence in the advertisements in a programme for The Empress Theatre (above). Incidentally, note that the venue is billed as the "New Empress Theatre", something they did after the theatre underwent an "art deco style facelift in 1931"⁵ until the start of the war when they reverted to plain, old Empress Theatre. For those who do not remember pre-decimal currency: a pound was divided into 20 shillings and a shilling was divided into 12 pence. Therefore the 12s.6d. perm in decimal terms is £0.625 and the house costs exactly 1,000 perms. The BoE says that the 1938 £625 is worth £35,625 now. This just shows how insane house prices have become. Someone will have to tell me whether £35 is cheap or expensive for a perm today.

Bill Linskey

¹ www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/personalfinance/pensions/8930868/Public-pensions-switch-from-RPI-to-CPI-declared-lawful-by-the-High-Court.html

² www.ons.gov.uk

³ How Much Is That Worth? by Munby, Lionel M., Phillimore & Co Ltd 2nd Ed. 1996 ISBN 9780850337419

⁴ www.bankofengland.co.uk/education/Pages/inflation/calculator/flash/default.aspx

⁵ A History of Brixton by Alan Piper, The Brixton Society, 1996, ISBN 978-1-873052-07-5

Caribbean Cooking

Do you know your akra from your ackee? Come and share your recipes, tips and stories of Caribbean cooking – and meet local entrepreneur Levi Roots, who will be joining us for the first session.

Join Ceri Buckmaster and Virginia Nimarkoh for 4 cooking sessions on **Saturdays** in the New Year at Myatt's Fields Park, 12 to 3 pm:

- 25 January,
- 8th February,
- 22 February,
- 8th March.

All welcome but places are limited – to reserve one, contact Victoria Sherwin on (020) 7926 0394 (Tuesday-Friday before 3 pm) or at Vsherwin@lambeth.gov.uk

For other events at the park, see: www.myattsfieldspark.info
Myatts Fields Park Project

Refining Recycling

For those who are less successful with their cookery, this may be a good point to mention the recent changes to Lambeth's recycling and refuse collection arrangements. Scaling down to 110-litre wheely bins as the norm (from 240 litres) certainly leaves a bit more pavement width for us pedestrians, but I am confused by the re-appearance of pig-swill bins, which I remember from my childhood. It would be an impressive "green" concept to recycle our food waste into pork pies or bacon. The snag is that it's presently banned by European agricultural policy! If we could just persuade the rest of Europe to adopt a standard for heat-treating the food waste, it could work well. For the present, our food waste will only be composted, for which a home compost bin would surely be more efficient?

Something which deserves more prominence is the appearance of kerbside recycling banks for waste cooking oil – just drop a bottle in! So far the only one we have seen is outside Tesco in Acre Lane, but it would be good to have more, because more uses are being found for this as a bio-fuel.

ADP

BRIXTON Neighbourhood Forum

You may not have heard much from the Forum since the summer, partly because there has been little space in the diary to fit in Forum meetings amongst the other events held by member groups and by Lambeth Council itself. Lambeth has held its own consultation events (with varying success) around the new Town Hall plans, the future of the Ice Rink site, the Community Infrastructure Levy, Townscape Heritage Initiative, Public Realm improvements and Somerleyton Road plans. Meanwhile, the Business Improvement District has been approved by a ballot of local firms, so hopefully we can start pulling some of these projects together and identifying the gaps or conflicts to resolve.

In the background, the various forums around the borough have been busily networking to prepare a collective bid to the Council, to provide continued co-ordination and support for the communities that we work in, through 2014 and beyond. Nobody really knows how the "Co-operative Council" concept is meant to work (including the Council staff!) but if we can master it between us, we should have some positive news by the time of the next Newsletter.

Alan Piper.

More about Energy

Monday 10 February: a follow-up meeting in the monthly Shared Space series at the Loughborough Centre, Barrington Road, SW9, open 6 pm to 9 pm.

Transition Town Brixton

Makerhood goes wider

Here's a way to save on transport costs! Makerhood launched in Brixton in 2010 to promote and support locally produced goods, art, design and food. It's now extending to the whole of Lambeth – see their website for the range of products and services, or how to join: www.makerhood.com