

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Winter, December 2014

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Distributed free to members

Registered with the London Forum of Amenity
Societies, Registered Charity No.1058103,
Website: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk

Our next event:
Thursday 8th January:
Winter Social

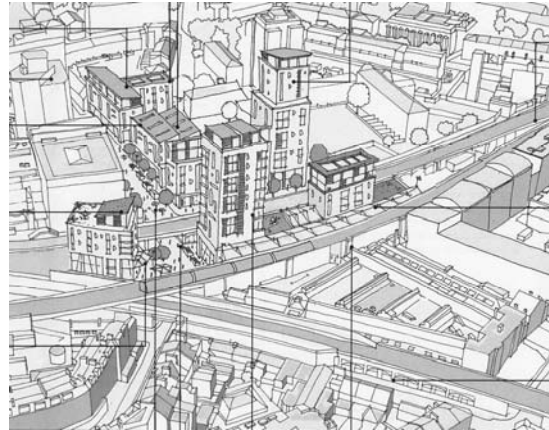
Marking our 40th anniversary
7 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre,
2b Saltoun Road, SW2

This is a members-only event. Admission is
free, but to help our planning, please confirm if
you are coming. Notify Bill Linskey at
wjdc1@globalnet.co.uk or (020) 7274 3835.

Christmas Market & Carols

A reminder about two events around the
bandstand in Myatt's Fields Park on **Sunday
14 December**. The Christmas Market runs
from 3 - 5 pm, with Christingle making for
children in the cafe from 4 pm, then carol
singing from 5 - 6 pm. After dusk, use
Cormont Road gate opposite St.Gabriel's
Manor. *Myatt's Fields Park Project*

Future Brixton Round-up



BTC-CentB.jpg

We have just been through another round of
consultation events on 3 major Brixton
projects, each of which involves several sites.
A summary of key points is included in this
issue, with updates on other proposals
affecting the wider Brixton area.

Heading the page is the Brixton Hill frontage of
the "New Town Hall" development by Muse.
The greatest concern here is the 14-storey
residential tower on the left, on the site of
Hambrook House, which would dominate
views of the Town Hall and St. Matthew's
Church from Brixton Road. The new Council
offices just uphill of the Electric are also rather
bulky. On the Acre Lane frontage, an extra
storey would be added to Iver House, the old
Co-op store, and its old loading bay on
Buckner Road would be divided between a
cafe and cycle-parking for Council staff.

Continued on page 6...

More dates inside...

We aim to deliver this issue before Christmas,
to give you ample notice of the Winter Social,
but please check our website in the New Year
for further dates. In the meantime, seasonal
greetings to you all...

Diary of Events, New Year 2015

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).

- 12 February
- 12 March
- 9 April
- 14 May
- 11 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.

Sunday Walks

We put on guided walks on most Sunday afternoons from May onwards, jointly with other amenity societies around Lambeth. It may seem early to ask, but we try to fix the programme by the end of January, so tell us soon if there is an area you would like included.

Brixton Windmill

Guided tours and other events will resume in April – see the Friends' website for dates and details:
www.brixtonwindmill.org/visit

Links with Other Groups

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

Sunday 14th December – Free Community Meal

Come and share a free meal with neighbours in Myatt's Fields Park, every second Sunday of the month, from 1-30 pm. We collect food surplus from local shops, invite local people to cook together and welcome everyone to share a tasty vegetarian meal – at the Depot Kitchen, Cormont Road, SE5. See www.brixtonpk.wordpress.com

Brixton People's Kitchen

Until 22 December – Making Freedom

Although Britain abolished the slave trade in 1807, a million existing slaves in the Caribbean were not freed until 1838. Arthur Torrington has curated this short exhibition at the BCA in Windrush Square to tell the story.

Black Cultural Archives

Monday 19 January – The Ebony Horse Club

A talk on this unusual Brixton youth project, 8 pm at the Woodlawns Centre (Streatham Darby & Joan Club) 16 Leigham Court Road, SW16

Streatham Society

Thursday 22 January – Sustainability Forum

Lambeth's Sustainability Forum meets at 7 pm on the

4th Thursday of the month, usually at the Town Hall – contact Anna Birley to confirm venue, a.m.a.birley@gmail.com

14 & 15 February – The Listed Property Show

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

Monday 16 February – How Fair is Fairtrade?

To coincide with FairTrade Fortnight, Nicolas Mounard of the ethical trading organisation Twin, will discuss what fair-trade is and how it works. He will look at the impact of buying habits on rural economies in the developing world, and particularly on women farmers.

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

Clapham Society

Editorial Notice:

Space permitting, we try to feature local events and publish reminiscences or enquiries in our newsletter. We welcome news and comments from all who are interested in the Brixton area, so opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the Brixton Society.

All material should be sent to the Secretary, Alan Piper, 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, or by e-mail to APiperBrix@aol.com
Phone/ fax (020) 7207 0347

40th birthday for the Brixton Society

The Brixton Society was officially launched at a meeting at Effra Parade School on 30 January 1975, so next month sees our 40th birthday, and we finally become part of the heritage in our own right! In reality, forming the Society was a more gradual process, with discussions underway through most of 1974. At this time, Lambeth Council had been pursuing a policy of demolishing and rebuilding whole neighbourhoods around Brixton Town Centre, in addition to fantastical plans for the Town Centre itself. Today, the Recreation Centre (plans unveiled in 1973) is the main built survivor of those plans. Around Brixton, clearance was increasingly resisted by residents' groups, who gradually learned how to convince councillors, planning inspectors and eventually Government ministers, that the Council's approach was unsustainable and would not deliver the expected housing gain.

The origin of forming an amenity group for Brixton as a whole came from increasing networking between activists from those residents' groups, and in particular we realized that we needed to combine to speak up on behalf of our Town Centre, or risk losing it.

Those early days have continued to influence the way we have worked ever since. We try to support residents and other local groups when we can, and we still benefit from a large committee of members sharing the workload. Sadly Lambeth Council still regresses from time to time, so local history and promoting conservation techniques occasionally have to be put on hold while we fight off new generations of planners keen to remove all that makes Brixton interesting...

Reproduction Edwardian Postcards

We illustrated the latest additions to our series of cards in the last newsletter, but regrettably some of the captions got transposed (the lower three on the right of page 3). The second one down is of course Atlantic Road, a slightly later view than the previous card BX28. Third one down is part of Brixton Road, around the present-day Beehive pub. The card at the

bottom right-hand corner of the page shows Connaught Mansions on Coldharbour Lane. Incidentally, the view of the Brixton Theatre and Tate Library is a reprint of card BX21, which was almost out of stock.

“It will all be over by Christmas...”

The First World War formed the theme for the Lambeth Heritage Festival which ran through the month of September, so here we have gathered some thoughts on the war and its local implications:

Through July 1914 a complex network of war plans and alliances fell into place across Europe, and finally Britain declared war on Germany on 4th August, after German troops marched into Belgium. Although Britain's main military asset was the Royal Navy, from the start it was assumed that the Germans would need to be confronted by a British army on land, fighting alongside the French. It was the efforts to recruit and equip this large army, which then had to learn its skills on the job on the Western Front, that provide our most enduring images from this war.

Yet this was as much a World War as that in 1939-45. Germany had built up a chain of colonial outposts – including today's Namibia, Rwanda, Cameroun, Togo, Tanzania and Papua – which had to be eliminated, largely by colonial forces from around the British Empire. The many parts of the Empire contributed volunteer manpower, critical after Turkey entered the war in 1915. The wide involvement of soldiers, sailors, nurses and labourers from Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent was recognised during the recent Festival events.

In Britain, the rush to join the fighting forces hampered the production of war materials until women came into the factories, and into many other roles previously limited to men. Even the traditional roles like nursing had to be massively expanded to cope with the rising casualties. Thus St.Gabriel's College in

Heritage Focus

Cormont Road was taken over as the No.1 General Military Hospital, soon expanded into the nearby Board School and then into tents and eventually huts across the road in Myatt's Fields Park.

Not far away were two of the Territorial Army depots which provided initial rallying points for recruits – the Surrey Rifles in Flodden Road (now the London Irish) and a unit of the Royal Field Artillery in Minet Road. Such TA units, together with an Indian Corps, provided essential reinforcements for the British Army as trench warfare set in during the autumn of 1914. By then the German Army had been stopped on the Western Front, and peace might indeed have been made by Christmas, except that the defeat of two Russian armies in the east encouraged the German High Command to hang on and dig in, so another 4 years of warfare ensued.

Increasingly Britain itself came under attack, with East coast towns like Scarborough shelled by German ships. The real threat though came from submarine attacks on merchant shipping, critically reducing the supply of imported food and materials in 1917. In response, efforts were made to increase home food production, such as the introduction of allotments, and the first drive to recycle or "salvage" materials. There are ample local records of support for the "Home Front", and adaptations to changing times, e.g. reduced train services.

A new dimension was aerial attack, first by Zeppelin airships (from 1915) and later by bi-plane bombers. Material damage was slight in comparison with the Blitz of the Second World War, but even in Brixton today, scars can be found on Brixton Hill and nearby roads.

Alan Piper.

Shock Cuts at Imperial War Museum

Despite the Museum's higher profile arising from the First World War Centenary, it is facing deep cuts to its operating budget due to a reduced Government grant. This is likely to result in the closure of the library at its main site in Lambeth Road, even as more people are likely to want to consult its archives. At

least there is a petition calling on George Osborne to reverse the cuts, at www.change.org

Recent Enquiries

Anita McKenzie recently asked about Campbell's Photos in Atlantic Road, who photographed her parents' wedding in 1959. I can recall at least two establishments in that road but which was it?

Going back much further, George McHardy is trying to locate Frederick's Place, Brixton Hill, home of an ancestor, Joseph Earle, timber merchant, between 1845 and 1891.

Loughborough Road as it was



Looking into Loughborough Road from Brixton Road c. 1966, with Angell Road running diagonally to the right - all demolished to make way for building the Angell Town Estate in 1974-76. Bx-LR1.jpg



Houses on the north side of Loughborough Road newly-refurbished by Lambeth Council c. 1978. Bx-LR2.jpg, courtesy Marley-Eternit

Heritage Focus

The History of a Brixton Street

Tracey Gregory has been researching Loughborough Road, from Brixton Road to Fiveways junction:

The history of Loughborough Road broadly reflects the development and changes in many streets across London over the last 150-200 years. The houses were built between the mid 1850's and 1860's during the Victorian housing boom as London opened up beyond the centre with new bridges across the river and railways providing access to the City and West End.

My research into the history of Loughborough Road started with trying to find out when my house was built and who lived here. After two years of research I haven't definitively answered any of my original questions, but I'm still finding new sources of information and I have uncovered a great deal about my house and the street.

Maps have been really useful in trying to pinpoint when the houses were built. The Tithe maps and registers held in Lambeth Archives showed who owned individual plots of land along and around Loughborough Road around 1840. The Slade family owned the plot on the north side of the street and the Angell family the south side. Both plots were leased out and run as 'nursery gardens'. By 1861 there is a map of Angell Town in the archives showing houses on the south side of Loughborough Road and a few houses starting to appear on the north side of the road. The 1861 census confirms that the houses on the south side are occupied by trades and crafts people and their families. There was a jeweller, printer, tobacco merchant, bookseller, civil engineer and several clerks, early office managers. The census shows six houses, all unoccupied on the north side at the Brixton Road end of the street. This suggests these houses may have been recently built.

The hand-drawn **street renumbering** plan of Loughborough Road from 1872 was an incredibly useful (and beautiful) document. It showed the houses on the north side of the street referred to as Loughborough Villas and those on the south side as Gloster Villas.

Knowing this allowed me to identify the houses in the 1861 census and to find articles and adverts in **newspapers** that helped to date the first occupants of the houses. There are announcements of births and marriages of occupants of Loughborough Villas between 1863 and 1867. In 1865 Mr Clever of 14 Loughborough Villas (29 Loughborough Road) had a tree in his garden damaged by some drunken young men! The earliest record of anyone in Gloster Villas is a George Patrick who was elected as an associate to the British Archaeological Association in 1859. Kelly's **Directories** and **Electoral Registers** held at Lambeth Archives have also been really useful in finding out who lived in the houses. Of course they have limitations - for example it wasn't until 1918 that all men and women over 30 got the right to vote and therefore appeared on the electoral register. The **Census**, every 10 years, is the best source of information about residents as it lists everyone in the house, unless they are away from the house on the day the census is taken. The Census give details of occupation, age and place of birth making it easier to further research into family histories. Census details are only available up to 1911 though, so after this time it becomes a little harder to find detailed information about residents.

Through the research I have started to build up stories of some of the people that have lived on the street. Ella Zuila and George Loyal, world-renowned trapeze artists, lived here between 1891 and 1895, travelling the country and across Europe and the USA with their act that they had brought over from Australia. George and Herbert Tear, father and son photographers with a studio in Clapham, lived here between 1892 and 1906. I have many more stories and there are still more to be uncovered.

I'm also going back to the **London Metropolitan Archives** to see if I can pin down who built the houses and exactly who the first residents were and when they moved in. Then there are the changes in the 1970's when the surrounding streets disappeared to be replaced by Myatts Fields and Angell Town Estates. So much more to find out, so many more stories...

Future Brixton Round-up

Continued from front page

The Town Hall itself is the least of our concerns, with no external changes except at the rear. On Brixton Hill, the proposed residential replacement for Olive Morris House now appears similar in height and bulk, though we doubt if complete replacement is a “green” approach. We have similar reservations about International House, where residential use is intended as part of the Central Sites package.



*View eastwards from Brixton Railway Station
BTC-Jn12-09.jpg*

Central Sites

This is a combination of sites owned by the Council – the Recreation Centre, International House and the former car park/ ice rink site – and the railway viaducts and land between owned by Network Rail. In reality these will interact with other nearby sites, notably the Walton Lodge Laundry (now vacant) and the Brixton Village arcade, though so far the plans pay little attention to them.

Typically for Town Centre sites, there are complex issues and competing needs. There is an aspiration for less traffic, yet delivery vehicles must be able to reach the shops and market traders are keen that shoppers can park their cars to pick up bulky items. Even a docking bay for Boris bikes will need lorry access to redistribute the stock of bikes. A hotel above the railway station seems fanciful – this too would need coach access. Changes to the railway station would need to provide easier routes for arrivals and for interchange with the Victoria Line.

There are ambitions to extend the shopping area between the railway viaducts and into

more arches but these risk displacing other workspace. The numerous existing enterprises appear to have been overlooked. Although the Council has recently acknowledged the need to provide for business-start-ups, it still shows little regard for businesses to be able to grow and persist locally, providing local employment.

Retail use and cafes may be more attractive to landlords, but will only work on well-defined routes, and some parts are just too isolated to get enough trade.

Consultations showed strong support for truly affordable housing and of course nowadays developers love to do residential development, but are grudging in how much of it will be affordable. High-rise blocks are proposed above the railway viaducts, but people were concerned about the difficulties of living directly above markets and work-spaces, and even more so about compatibility with late-night entertainment venues.

High-rise blocks raise other issues such as overshadowing nearby sites and blocking long-distance views. We recently discovered that Lambeth planners had produced more detailed guidance on tall buildings in Brixton – we had thought the earlier policies were too vague – but so far nobody involved with Future Brixton seems to have paid much attention to it.

Next Steps: For the Central Sites, a report will go to the Council’s Cabinet in April/May, to agree or amend the development brief. A full planning application is unlikely until Autumn 2016.

Things seem to be moving faster for the “New Town Hall” package, with planning applications expected in February/March 2015.

Somerleyton Road

The overall proposals still look like a good mix of uses, though the average height has crept up from earlier plans in an attempt to squeeze in more homes. There is still uncertainty over the future of Carlton Mansions – restored residential use would be easiest, though use for creative workspaces would be welcome.

Alan Piper, with additional material from Vivienne Lewis and Matthew Clarke.

Rebuilding Council Estates

Further afield, Lambeth Council seems to be looking enviously at any green space or low-rise estate with a view to squeezing in more new flats, forgetting that the original densities were limited in order to provide more tolerable living conditions. **Fitch Court** in Effra Road and the **Cressingham Gardens** Estate on Tulse Hill have been mentioned, but nothing tangible has been put out for public comment.

All change at Stockwell

The Friends of Stockwell War Memorial and Gardens have alerted us to major changes to the Stockwell “Gyratory” where Stockwell and South Lambeth Roads intersect with the Clapham Road. Although the present island site will be joined to the Tube Station and the pedestrianised end of Binfield Road, traffic will run closer to the memorial on the other 2 sides of the present triangle. Consultation runs until 18 January – see www.tfl.gov.uk/consultations

Cross about Vauxhall?

Obviously not in our territory, but many Brixton residents pass through here on daily or occasional journeys, so proposed changes to the busy intersection may affect you, whether you drive, cycle or use public transport. Most alarming is the threatened loss of the nearly-new bus station, which allows interchange between all the local bus routes. Closing date for comments is **19 December** – see the TfL website as above.

Loughborough Junction

Lambeth still intend to have a neighbourhood or district plan for a large chunk of the borough between Brixton Town Centre and Camberwell Green, but timing and process are as yet unclear. Meanwhile, road closure proposals aired in October as “public space improvements” look enormously disruptive to a wide area, and stimulated a petition from local residents objecting.

We were relieved to see the Council refuse plans for residential towers above the Higgs Industrial Estate opposite Loughborough Junction Station, but we suspect that the developers will try again. Our main concern

was that the present enterprises would be forced out by new residents demanding a quieter, tidier environment.

Nearby, the Council's small Wanless Road depot has been dropped from the “New Town Hall” package of housing sites, because the GLA have safeguarded it as a “waste transfer” site. Residential development still looks likely in the longer term though.

Over our heads

We are used to airliners traversing overhead every 90 seconds on their way into Heathrow Airport, but occasional flights into London City Airport can seem more disruptive because they are lower and so appear more suddenly. Brixton Water Lane residents recently alerted us to a consultation that most of South London appears to have missed out on. London City Airport (LCY) proposed amendments to their approach routes to tie in with use of modern GPS air navigation systems (the old radio compass is now SO last century!). LCY prefers aircraft to land and take-off in an eastward direction, so that aircraft flying past Canary Wharf's office towers are slowing down and light on fuel, rather than have them take off westwards towards these towers at high speed and full of fuel (remember 9/11?).

One of the regular routes for arriving aircraft is westwards over Nunhead and Dulwich, then turning right over Brockwell Park to head north, and then right again over the City for their final descent. Currently these aircraft overfly a broad swathe of SW2 and SW9, with a rising proportion of faster jets which tend to swing out further to the west. This is because transatlantic air services from Newark New Jersey have become popular for relatively direct business travel between New York and Canary Wharf or the City. The changes may be helpful in keeping air traffic closer to the designated route, and at least for now, no increase of flying hours or frequency has been proposed, but this is something to watch for in future.

Alan Piper.

News from Brockwell Park

Support for 2015 Events: Brockwell Park Community Partners (the management advisory committee) are inviting local groups to put on events in the park, and have £4,000 to support the best proposals. They expect to support 10-15 events, at a maximum of £500 each. Closing date for expressions of interest is **30 January** and the main criteria will be:

- Not commercial or members-only;
- Not for more than 1,000 people at a time;
- Not part of the Lambeth Country Show

For more details see the website:

<http://brockwellparkcommunitypartners.org.uk>

Brockwell Park Watch: A counterpart of the Neighbourhood Watch approach but covering the park, to combat not only crime, but also casual vandalism and ant-social behaviour. Metal plaques have been placed at all park gates with contact phone numbers, and any concerns can also be e-mailed to brockwellparkwatch@gmail.com for relay to the Police Safer Neighbourhood Team for Herne Hill ward.



Next Meeting: **Monday 12 January**, 7 pm
Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2

Meetings in 2014 have mainly featured local planning issues and other physical changes. For 2015 we would like to cover a wider range of issues, both to link up existing groups and to support grassroots community activity. One idea used by similar forums is to give small "seed money" grants to local groups. Help is also being lined up with organisation, IT skills and recruiting and managing volunteers. There is still funding available through the Lambeth Forums Network, and we would like to agree a budget at our January meeting so we can put in a bid soon after.

Alan Piper.

St. Matthew's Churchyard

Lambeth Council has been encouraging local groups to play a larger part in managing parks and open spaces around the borough, and the Trustees of The Brix have taken up the challenge. Most of the churchyard or Peace Garden is maintained by Lambeth, apart from a small area immediately around the building. The Trust commissioned SHAPE Landscape Architects to redesign the whole outdoor space for easier management and more scope for events or other income generation. The latest proposals were discussed at last month's Forum meeting, with a planning application intended shortly. The most ambitious change is to improve the crypt-level access on the north side into a wider easier approach. Car parking would move from in front of the portico to the south-west corner, and the play-space may be redesigned. Alterations may take place in stages to suit available funding.

Friends of Tate Library

Boosting Library Members: Plans are being laid to enrol more library users in the first quarter of 2015, particularly around National Libraries Day on **7th February**. Enquiries to Tim O'Dell. Development Librarian, 020 7926 1105, to'dell@lambeth.gov.uk Some layout changes will take effect within the library from 20 December.

New Library Signs: A more colourful style of signage has been installed at Streatham Tate Library, and during 2015 it is intended to introduce similar signs at other libraries, including Brixton, with variations in colours for each of them.

A Greener Setting: The Friends group have been discussing with the librarians how to install some planters around the building, inside the railings. This would complement efforts to reintroduce some larger planters nearby in Windrush Square.

Art and Craft Workshops: The Friends are exploring ways to run another series of sessions later in 2015.

Friends of Tate Library Brixton