

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Winter, December 2011

No.204, 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 12th 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

Our latest publication

Discovering Brixton Markets

Our latest book has been produced to
supplement guided walks around the Brixton
Market area led by members of the Society.
We plan to run these walks once a month
when there is a "Makers' Market" in Brixton
Station Road on the second **Saturday** of the
month.

The book will also work perfectly well as an
introduction to the area for those who just want
to sit and read or would like to know more
about the area as they walk through the
markets. It describes the street markets, the
three covered arcades and some of the shops
on the high street and side roads.



Electric Avenue, view from Brixton Road

A recommended route is shown on the map on
the centre pages. The main viewing points are
numbered and they form the section headings
of the book. It is fully illustrated with historic
and contemporary images of the area.

It is 24 pages A5 black and white inside with a
full-colour cover. It will be available at events
where we have our stall or by post from:
Diana Linskey, 32 Stockwell Green, London,
SW9 9HZ for £2.00 + 50p postage & packing.

*We also hope to offer a couple of guided walks
further afield, within the wider Brixton area, as
part of the Summer series organised by
Lambeth Local History Forum. If you would like
us to focus on your neighbourhood, or if you
feel another area is worth exploring, we would
like to hear from you in the next month or so –
contact details overleaf.*

More dates inside...

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

Dates for your new 2012 diary

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).

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

Forward Planning

We are likely to be involved in some way in the following events later in the year:

London Open Garden Squares weekend,
9 & 10 June.

Lambeth Country Show,
Weekend 21 & 22 July.

London Open House
weekend 22 & 23 Sept.

Lambeth Archives Open Day, Saturday 29 Sept.

Brixton Windmill

A programme of guided tours resumes at Easter, on Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th April, from 1 pm to 4 pm. The Windmill Festival will be held early, on Bank Holiday Monday 7th May, including a parade starting from Windrush Square. Enquiries to info@brixtonwindmill.org

Links with Other Groups

Dates are still coming in for 2012 events, but please check directly with the organisers if any queries over times or admission.

Monday 2nd 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 Road, SW16.

The Streatham Society

Christmas Past - Until Sunday 8th January:

Visit the Geffrye Museum's period rooms, decorated in authentic festive styles from 1600 to the present day: Kingsland Road, E2.
www.geffrye-museum.org.uk

Wednesday 11 Jan. – The Southern Electric:

History of the Southern Electric Railway since 1909, by Neil Lloyd, 7-30 pm for 7-45 start, Herne Hill United Church Hall, c/o Redpost Hill and Herne Hill, SE24.
Herne Hill Society

Wednesday 18 Jan. – Twixt the Commons:

Timothy Walker outlines 300 years of social change in the South Battersea / Clapham Junction area, 7-30 for 8 pm start, at Clapham Manor Primary School, entrance in Belmont Road, SW4 0BZ.
Clapham Society

8 to 23 February - Pictures from Lambeth Archives:

Selected prints, drawings and paintings from the Archives are making another brief appearance, this time at Morley Gallery (next to Morley College, SE1). Opening hours yet to be confirmed, but probably closed 18 & 19 February.
Lambeth Archives

Tuesday 14th February – Brixton Windmill:

Its history and recent restoration, by Richard Santhiri; opens at 7 pm for 7-30 start, Housing Co-op Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1 (almost opposite the Old Vic Theatre).
Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society

18 & 19 February – The Listed Property Show:

At Olympia 2, details from www.listedpropertyownersclub.co.uk

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 (020) 7207 0347

News from the Friends of Tate Library Brixton

The future of Lambeth libraries

Recommendations in the final report of Lambeth's Library Commission have been approved in principle by the Council's Cabinet and consultation on the proposed new service model is due to start in December.

The Commission was set up to examine how the borough's library service could be improved and modernised while reducing the service's budget by £750k by 2014. The proposed new model for the service has Brixton and Streatham libraries providing a 'guaranteed' 7-day-a-week service, with extensive resources and stock, a wide range of specialist staff and access to additional services.

Other libraries will be developed as community libraries, with stock and services 'tailored to local need'. The aim will be that these should be 'run in partnership with the local community who will be given the power to decide how they are managed, how budgets are spent and what services the libraries should provide'. Other proposals include the creation of a network of 'Library Access Points' at locations like schools, GP surgeries, council customer service centres and re-organisation of the home visit service. The Commission also recommended that a long-term solution be found to secure the archive service, possibly linked with the Black Cultural Archives, but that for the time being it was 'inextricably linked' with Minet Library.

Where do the savings come from?

At the Cabinet meeting the Leader of the Council noted that no area would lose library service and that existing buildings would be used unless the local community agreed to relocation.

Modernisation of the service, particularly in relation to IT, will require additional expenditure. Proposals include the installation of self-service technology to deal with book issues and returns

The Commission's report says that some savings will come from remodelling the staffing structure, reducing the number of managers, and back-office efficiencies. The projected budget for Brixton and Streatham in 2012/13 is given as £1.5m reducing in 2012/14 to £1.4m. This leaves operating budgets for all the other library service points of £1.719m reducing to £1.469m in the following year.

Council officers are working on ideas for methods of dividing up the budget so that each library can have a 'transparent' allocation of money. On this will depend the level of service, opening hours, staffing and the book and other stock at each location. These proposals will be considered at a Cabinet meeting on 12 December.

The other big budget issue is the need for capital resources. The Commission report states that at least £4m would be required to bring all existing library buildings up to a reasonable standard. Libraries are not currently included in the Council's priority capital investment programme.

The full report of the Library Commission is available on the Council's website.

Next steps

Consultation on the proposals, including the budget methodology, should start in December and go on until February. We have asked that this should be based on individual libraries so that the detailed implications for Brixton can be explored.

We intend to arrange a meeting of Friends of Tate Library as soon as we have firmer information about the consultation programme.

Some initial thoughts on libraries

The Library Commission's report is starting to be discussed by the Friends group supporting each library, and by other community groups. We kicked a few ideas around at a recent meeting of the Lambeth Civic Forum, where representatives of the borough's amenity societies compare notes.

Of special concern was the long-standing neglect of library buildings, many of which were donated over a century ago. Members suggested there was more potential to attract contributions from developers wanting to build in the north of the borough – libraries need to be moved up the Council planners' wish list. Working through Friends groups, it is also possible to attract Lottery funding for modest improvements.

Some of us have reservations about the "community hub" concept. In many ways that sounds like the former St. Martin's Library at the top of Tulse Hill, which is a valuable educational resource – but the one facility they do not have is a conventional lending library.

ADP

Local History Focus

New base for the Black Cultural Archives underway



Stripped for action: Interior of 1-3 Effra Road seen before work started on fitting out the building for the Black Cultural Archives.

A brief tour for supporters was organised by BCA on 19 November, just before the builders were due to start work. Preparatory works during the summer had cleared the debris and stripped most plaster, leaving bare brick and exposed floor joists. There are a few internal walls to be removed to open up the reading room etc, and there will be a new front wing which will help enclose the forecourt space. However, the expected completion continues to slip back, and is now likely to be in early 2013.

Henry Tate's garden open

We mentioned in our last issue that the project on Tate Connections included a visit to Sir Henry's former home in Streatham, Park Hill. As part of the housing development carried out a few years ago, a condition was included that the grounds should be open for visits twice a year.

Unfortunately this lapsed when some members of the residents' management company objected, and arrangements have only recently been reinstated. The Streatham Society is leading on this, and provided guided tours during Sunday 9th October. Look out for a repeat date in the Spring. On a past occasion we actually got into the old billiard room where Sir Henry hung some of his pictures, but this is entirely at the discretion of

individual residents – the tour itself is of the surviving grounds and landscape features.

A Brixton Architect

A couple of years ago, Doug Black of Lambeth's conservation team, passed on some background information on the designers of several Brixton shops, built between the two World Wars. This is proving useful now we have instituted regular guided walks around the Markets area.

It included an obituary from the Brixton Free Press, published on 22 May 1942, for Herbert Payne Wyatt, of Woodfield Avenue, Streatham Hill. Mr Wyatt was taken ill during a court case where he had been giving expert evidence, and died soon after, at the age of 77.

His firm had been established in Brixton for over half a century. He was a pioneer of the commercial development of Brixton, and after being articled locally to Mr Cruwys (architect of the Railway Hotel) he set up his own practice in 1894.

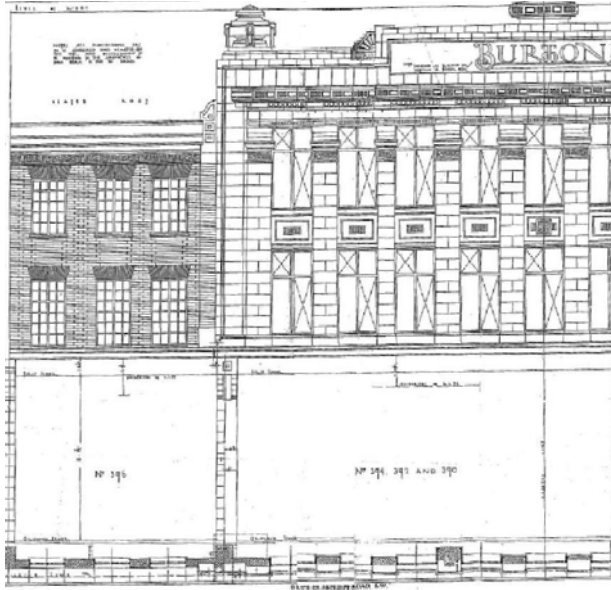
His buildings included Quin & Axtens (on Brixton Road between Ferndale and Stockwell Roads) Jones & Higgins, David Greig's head office in Waterloo Road, and modernisation of the Bon Marche building. When the Brixton Road was widened in 1935, he designed the Barclays Bank building.

In his early days he was associated with the Lambeth Carlton Club, and supported the Brixton Association in their endeavours to carry out local improvements.

More commercial buildings

Old plans also came to light for the rebuilding of the frontage between Stockwell Park Walk and Stockwell Road. The skyline remains much the same, but the dance studio and billiards hall above Burtons the Tailor eventually became the Ram Jam Club in the 1960s. This was a frequent arrangement for Montague Burton's stores. Burtons themselves eventually moved to the site on the corner of Atlantic Road, more recently occupied by Foot Locker.

Local History Focus



Part of the original drawings by T.P.Bennet & Son for rebuilding the west side of Brixton Road with shops below and flats or offices above, c.1930.

Quin & Axtens Ltd. v Salmon

David Warner discovered an obscure legal case ,AC442 at the Court of Appeal in 1909. Quin & Axtens Ltd was set up as a business of drapers, furnishers and warehousemen at 422 to 440 Brixton Road. William Axtens was the chairman, Joseph Salmon and another man, Arthur Way, were managing directors. Mr Boys-Tombs replaced Way in 1906. Axtens and Salmon held the majority of shares.

The constitution (Article 80) said no resolution would be effective if either Axtens or Salmons dissented. The directors were otherwise to manage the company (Article 75).

Axtens and Tombs wanted to buy 426 Brixton Road, to secure control of the whole terrace, and let out 252 Stockwell Road, but Salmon disagreed. Then an extraordinary general meeting was held, where the same resolution was passed by the majority of shareholders.

The case eventually came before the House of Lords, where it was held that any resolution passed that was inconsistent with other articles of the constitution must fail.

Brixton Village Art-Trail

The first Group exhibition within the arcade as a whole will run until 3 pm on Sunday 5th February. There are 12 artists, showing selections of their work in 12 different shops or restaurants. The best times for viewing the whole trail are Thursday/ Friday/ Saturday from 12 noon to 5-30 pm.

More info from www.art-trailbrixtonvillage.co.uk

BRIXTON Neighbourhood Forum

So far, Dates have been mapped out for half the year ahead, subject to booking suitable venues. The next meetings should be on Wednesday 25th January and Wednesday 25th April. Contact has been established with the Council's support team for local forums.

On a borough-wide basis, the Lambeth Civic Forum will be meeting on Wednesdays, 7th March, 6th June, 5th September and 5th December, all at 7 pm.

Reports from recent meetings should be circulated soon, and if there are any activities that we ought to be doing, let us know...

Website Report

For the period 10th October to 9th November, we had 327 unique visitors to our site, who looked at an average of 2.76 pages per visit (1037 page views).

80% of these were new visits. The biggest source of referrals was the Urban 75 website (31 visits) and also some from Wikipedia.

Putting on a bold front



Temporary "ghetto blaster" frontage for the re-opening as the Electric, September 2011.



Previous frontage as the Fridge

When the former Fridge venue re-opened as the Electric in September, its temporary frontage got mixed reactions. Personally I rather liked the inventive treatment, but the Planning Department brought pressure to bear and it's since reverted to a grey facade even plainer than in the heyday of the Fridge.

Under the grey paint is the 1950s facade that replaced the original 1913 design, which was in the manner of the adjacent Town Hall but with that common landmark feature of the time, a copper dome. Not much chance of that feature returning, given the rate at which copper roofing and cables are being stolen as the price increases! However, another of our committee members, Nic Weedon, has contacted the proprietor to suggest some more affordable ideas.

The 1913 version features on one of our reproduction postcards, BX13.

ADP

Recent Planning Cases

At any given moment we are likely to be considering several planning applications, and sending in comments or objections if we think the developer is trying to squeeze too much onto the site, or if the design seems too ugly or intrusive. We will flag some of these up on the website from time to time, to invite your feedback. The ponderous process of producing and distributing a newsletter does not lend itself to getting responses within the usual 3-week deadline set by the Planning Dept. We rarely intervene if it's a modest domestic extension or improvements to smaller business premises. I have quoted a few recent cases below as examples.

1a Brailsford Road, SW2

This site lies behind 44-46 Brixton Water Lane, and any substantial building on it would overlook the route into Brockwell Park from Brixton Water Lane. Past uses have been low-key light industrial, but there have been a few applications for putting a block of flats on the site. The most recent application has been scaled back a little, but we suggested the developer contribute to tree planting within the park to help screen the new building, similarly to most of the earlier Victorian housing along Brailsford Road.

Harmony Bar, 82 Railton Road

A recent application attracted a lot of opposition from nearby residents, including neighbours in Effra Parade and St. George's Residences. One major concern was the risk of the club/ bar use being revived with extended opening hours, which have been issues in the past. Another was the proposed increase in bulk to fit in more flats above the pub. This would have inserted another floor and filled the site up to the back edge of pavement line at front and both sides – the original shops in Railton Road have their upper storeys set back above the shopfront.

I am pleased to report that this application was turned down, but there is another, slightly smaller application somewhere in the planning system, which we are looking out for.

Planning & Regeneration News

84 Railton Road, SE24

Curiously, not next to the Harmony Bar but 2 blocks away: A clumsy block of flats was put up on a corner site left vacant after the 1981 riots, but not in keeping with the (eventually) approved plans. This one slipped past us, but later the Herne Hill Society picked it up, and they have been prompting the council to take enforcement action.

35 Bedford Road, SW4

This is the George Moore's builder's merchant site at the far end of Ferndale Road. It's only just inside the old parish boundary, so the Clapham Society is also likely to be taking an interest in this. Proposals for housing development were rejected by the Council, so now the developer is appealing to the Planning Inspectorate. His consultants are proposing a number of minor modifications to the original design – if too many changes were made at this stage, the Inspectorate could ask why a revised application was not submitted instead of the appeal.

Our concern is that, yet again local employment and facilities which support small-scale housing renovation are being displaced in order to squeeze more dwellings onto the site. All this at a time when there is an acute shortage of school places in the borough, due to the population increase resulting when other such schemes were completed.

National Planning Changes

The Localism Bill, which we flagged up in our last two issues, became an Act of Parliament on 15th November. However, the provisions for Neighbourhood Planning will not take effect until 6th April 2012, once regulations have been agreed.

The other issue which concerned us was the draft National Planning Policy Framework, intended to replace several more substantial guidance notes on a variety of topics. The Ministry apparently received representations from some 14,000 organisations and individuals. It sounds like they are at least trying to read through them first, because the definitive version of the National Framework is not going to appear until sometime in April.

Housing Strategy

Lambeth is currently consulting on its Housing Strategy for 2012-16, with a number of workshop sessions being held in December and January. Nine top priorities were identified in the Autumn, and the aim now is to define those priorities more clearly, to make best use of limited resources over the next 4 years.

A fuller explanation is on the Council website at www.lambeth.gov.uk/housingstrategy



Use of Windrush Square

In some ways, the Square is proving too popular. The number of people passing through, even on an ordinary day, is quite attractive to market traders, and there have been several approaches to the Council for holding regular markets there.

We are keen to see the Square being used, but we are anxious that it should not be dominated by any one business or activity, to the detriment of others who might want to use it for a special event.

Unfortunately, when the Square was opened nearly two years ago, the management arrangements had not been finalised, and responsibility still seems to be divided between different departments, with poor co-ordination between them.

We are keeping in touch with developments, and trying to ensure that all potential users get a piece of the action, rather than one body monopolizing it.

It could be worse...

We don't envy the Vauxhall Society, with some massive developments expected near the rail & tube stations – the latest proposes replacing Sainsbury's in Wandsworth Road with 7 blocks including 3 tall ones rising to 37 storeys!

Warning: Urban Life can be bad for your health

Wellbeing and the Built Environment

We thought Lambeth First – the local strategic partnership – had faded away, and that the Government had already abolished the Primary Care Trusts. However, they are both still around, despite keeping a low profile in recent times.

On 29 November, an innovative event organised by Lambeth PCT and Lambeth Council brought together staff from Lambeth's Planning and Housing Departments with representatives from several voluntary agencies and community groups. The morning session consisted of a walkabout round the recently-improved Herne Hill Junction, followed by a short train ride to Loughborough Junction, where the Action Group outlined their ideas for brightening up this neglected corner.

We then gathered at the Coin Street community centre in SE1, for lunch followed by short presentations and discussion. It was good to see Housing, Regeneration and Environment issues being considered together in the presentation by Sue Foster, Lambeth's Executive Director responsible for all 3 areas of work.

The underlying aim of the Wellbeing programme is to encourage healthier lifestyles, and in particular, reduce the stress of modern urban life, which otherwise costs the NHS a great deal in treating people with conditions including diabetes, heart disease, obesity and depression. There are 5 "ways to wellbeing" which residents are encouraged to adopt:

- Connect with the people around you. Get involved in community activities or rebuild links with distant family members.
- Be Active – take part in some regular form of physical exercise. Even walking around, visiting places of interest, or as part of a guided walk, is helpful.
- Take notice of what's happening around you. Take time out from your daily schedule to relax, take stock and notice the world around you.
- Keep Learning – Learn a new skill or rediscover an old interest.
- Give – Helping someone else can make you feel better about yourself and your action will make other people feel good too.

For more information and tips on how to improve your wellbeing in Lambeth, visit www.nhs.uk/lambeth

For health practitioners and voluntary care agencies, there is a follow-up event on 11th January, focussing on Mental Wellbeing impact assessment – contact Michael.morgan@slam.nhs.uk

Your Newsletter in 2012

We regularly receive newsletters or magazines from neighbouring amenity societies and some Friends groups, and there is no doubt that the standard of production and design is steadily improving. This was brought out at the Walter Bor Media Awards, presented by the London Forum of Amenity Societies to encourage higher standards. Of course some societies have access to professional designers or journalists, or sell advertising space to cover the cost of extra pages or better production quality. South of the river, the Sydenham Society and the Herne Hill Society were among the commendations.

Frankly, our own newsletter design has been on a plateau for several years – it looks much like the London Forum's own newsletter - but there are practical limitations on the time we can devote to it. It can be a scramble to get it all together in time, so "slow news" such as local history research or reminiscences, arriving between our quarterly editions, enables us to lay out some of the pages at leisure. So please don't leave it until the deadline date to send us material – earlier is always better, and reduces the likelihood of bits being chopped out to fit in the story.

ADP.