

# NEWSLETTER

## New Year issue 2007

No.184, Quarterly, distributed free to members

Registered with the Civic Trust and the London Forum of Amenity Societies; Registered Charity No.1058103

Website: [www.brixtonsociety.org.uk](http://www.brixtonsociety.org.uk)



### **Our Winter Social - Thursday 18 January**

From 7 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre,  
2b Saltoun Road, SW2 (Effra Road  
end, facing Windrush Square).

Admission free to members, but to help  
our planning, please confirm as soon as  
possible if you are coming, to Bill Linskey  
on (020) 7274 3835 or by e-mail to:  
[wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk)

### **How to contact us...**

#### **Editorial & Event Notices:**

Material for the next issue should be sent  
by 1<sup>st</sup> March to the Secretary, Alan Piper,  
at 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, or e-mail to  
[APiperBrix@aol.com](mailto:APiperBrix@aol.com) or phone or fax to  
(020) 7207 0347.

#### **Publications & Membership:**

Publications orders, membership renewals  
and updates to the mailing list should all  
be sent to Diana Linskey, Membership  
Secretary, at 32 Stockwell Green, SW9  
9HZ, or e-mail to [wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk)

#### **Planning issues:**

If you are concerned about a local  
planning application, contact David  
Warner at [david@scriabin.force9.net](mailto:david@scriabin.force9.net) or  
(020) 7924 0618, or write to him at 290  
Coldharbour Lane, SW9 8SE.

#### **Local History:**

We cannot undertake detailed research,  
though we will try to point you in the right  
direction – contact the Secretary as above.

*We welcome news and comment from all  
interested in the Brixton area, so opinions  
expressed in these pages are not  
necessarily those of the Brixton Society.*

### **A special project for 2007**

200 years ago the first step was taken in the  
abolition of slavery, when in 1807 an Act of  
Parliament forbade the trade in slaves  
between Africa and the British colonies. The  
bicentenary has a lot of local connections,  
both from the early campaigners and from the  
many Brixton residents, past and present,  
whose ancestors include slaves carried off to  
the Caribbean and elsewhere.

There will be a number of related events in  
Lambeth this year, including one in Tate  
Library Gardens/ Windrush Square on  
**Sunday 25 March** (details still to be  
confirmed).

However, we wanted to create a lasting record  
of Black experience in Brixton with all its  
different connections, so we are compiling a  
book of reminiscences on this theme. We  
would like to capture memories of coming to  
Britain while there are still people around who  
arrived on the Windrush – or earlier. Even  
from later generations, we want to hear about  
growing up or finding work in a changing  
society. We particularly want to hear about  
local organisations and social life.

It's too early to say when the book will appear  
because this depends how quickly stories can  
be collected and edited – so just start writing,  
or remind other people who you think have  
something to say!

A couple of volunteers have been lined up to  
transcribe the stories from anyone who needs  
help in getting the words down on the page.  
Our Treasurer, Norma Williamson, has offered  
to co-ordinate this. Please send your  
contributions to her at 40 Hubert Grove, SW9  
9PD or by e-mail to:  
[Norma.williamson@btinternet.com](mailto:Norma.williamson@btinternet.com)

**More 2007 dates overleaf!**

## **Brixton Society meeting dates**

The Executive Committee usually meets on the second Thursday of the month to plan activities and agree our responses to local developments. All meetings 7-30 pm at the **Vida Walsh Centre** 2b Saltoun Road, SW2. Contact the Secretary to confirm details.

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

## **Friends of Tate Library & Gardens**

Meetings are normally held at 6-30 pm on the same dates as our committee meetings (listed above), again at the Vida Walsh Centre.

## **Special Events**

We are also likely to be involved in...

**Slave Trade Abolition Commemoration** – Sunday 25 March,  
**Open Garden Squares Weekend** – 9/10 June,  
**Crystal Palace Victorian w/e** - 30 June/ 1<sup>st</sup> July,  
**Lambeth Country Show** – 21/22 July,  
**Brixton Splash** – Sunday 5 August,  
**London Open House w/e** – 15/16 September,  
**Lambeth Archives Open Day** – Saturday 29 September.

## **Brixton Area Forum**

For meeting dates of the Forum and its working groups, contact the Town Centre office on (020) 7926 1077.

## **Links with other groups**

*We suggest checking with organisers in case of changes since these details reached us. Some events may be charged for, and most groups welcome donations.*

### **Wednesday 17 Jan. – Windmills on my mind:**

Illustrated talk by Clapham resident Peter Cobley, recently retired as conservation architect at Kent County Council, where his responsibilities included 8 windmills. 7-30 for 8 pm at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4. *Clapham Society.*

### **24 January to 15 April – Canaletto in England:**

Exhibition of 50 paintings & 30 drawings produced during Canaletto's stay in England in 1746-55. Entry to gallery & special exhibition £7 (£6 seniors, children free). *Dulwich Picture Gallery.*

**Thursday 8 Feb. – Great Tarts in Art:** High Culture and the Oldest Profession, a talk by Linda Smith, 8 pm at James Allen Girls School (6<sup>th</sup> form lecture theatre). *Dulwich Decorative & Fine Arts Society.*

### **Tuesday 13 Feb. – Recent Research:**

A round-up of recent archaeology in South London, from various speakers. 7 pm for 7-30 start at the Housing Co-op Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1 (almost opposite The Old Vic).

*Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society.*

### **Wednesday 14 Feb. – My life in Show Business (so far):**

Anecdotes of stage, screen and Santa's grotto by the irrepressible Robert Holden. 7-45 pm at Herne Hill URC Hall, c/o Redpost Hill and Herne Hill, SE24. *Herne Hill Society.*

### **Thursday 15 Feb. – Crystal Palace:**

Michael Gilbert of Crystal Palace Foundation describes the themed courts of exotic styles of architecture included at the Sydenham site. 8 pm at the Phoenix Centre, Westow Street, SE19. *Norwood Society (local history group).*

### **Saturday 17 Feb. – Lambeth Orchestra:**

Concert including Lalo's Cello Concerto, Dvorak's Seventh Symphony and two popular overtures. 7-30 pm at All Saints' Church, Rosendale Road, SE21. *The Lambeth Orchestra.*

### **Sunday 11 March – Local History:**

A selection of short talks and recent research, introduced by Alan Piper. 2-30 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2 *Lambethans' Society.*

### **Monday 19 March – the Clapham Sect:**

Peter Jefferson-Smith on the group which led the fight against the slave trade, 8 pm at Woodlawn's Streatham Darby & Joan Club, 16 Leigham Court Road, SW16. *Streatham Society.*

## Local History Focus

This photo of Electric Avenue by night was taken by Baron Corvo at Christmas 1895 (picture kindly supplied by Bill Linskey). This street was built in 1888 as the first shopping street to be lit by electricity. Until the First World War, it was usually enhanced by ambitious decorations for the Christmas shoppers.

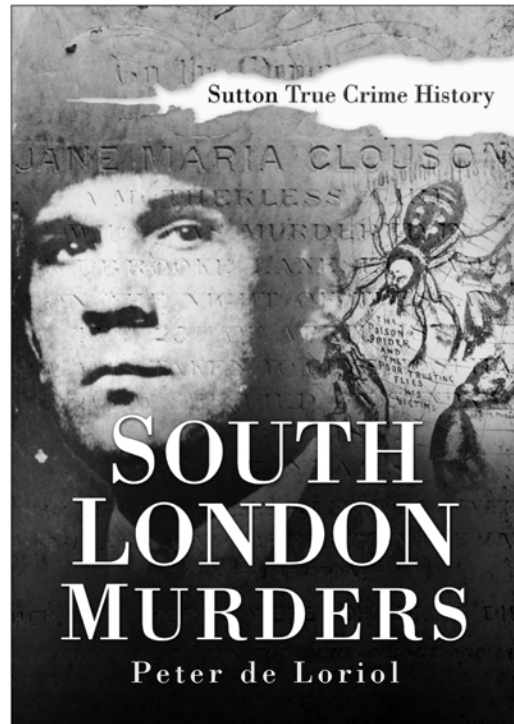


### Still fighting Slavery

The 1807 Act against the Slave Trade was largely due to the efforts of a well-connected group of Clapham businessmen, inspired by their local vicar, the Rev. John Venn. The Abolitionist movement spread and eventually achieved the end of slavery in the British Empire in 1833, but it took another 30 years for emancipation to reach the USA, and yet 20 more for Brazil. By this time, Africa was experiencing a new form of exploitation as European powers carved out colonies, displacing the local rulers whose forbears had profited from selling their unwanted people literally down the river.

Sadly, slavery is one of those ideas that has never quite gone away, and there is increasing concern at the trafficking of young people from Eastern Europe and Asia for prostitution and domestic service. The successors to the Abolitionists, now Anti-Slavery International, continue the struggle from a local base, Thomas Clarkson House, The Stableyard, Broomgrove Road (off Stockwell Road) SW9 9TL.

Website: [www.antislavery.org/2007](http://www.antislavery.org/2007)



Over the centuries South London has seen literally thousands of murders, but those included in the pages of this book are those which have most shocked or fascinated the public or contemporary commentators. Some were milestones in crime detection techniques such as fingerprinting or DNA testing. Some continue to generate interest, such as the Charles Bravo case in Balham over a century ago, while some are long forgotten, like the murder of St. Alfege in Greenwich nearly a thousand years ago.

Of particular interest to Brixtonians is the heartbreaking story of little John Walter Cowen. His murder in 1870 near Loughborough Junction brought to public attention the wanton abuse that the baby farmers of the time inflicted on their charges and their patrons, usually single mothers who desperately wanted to keep their children alive but would not have been able to get jobs if they had to look after them. This case marked the end of the practice of baby farming, previously unchecked, as the Government felt compelled to bring in legislation against it.

Peter de Loriol has based his latest book on trial and inquest transcripts, personal stories and contemporary newspaper reports, as well as visits to the crime scenes today (though nothing in Gordon Grove survives from John Cowen's time).



the  
CIVIC  
trust

## Every action counts

### A new initiative through the Civic Trust...

Every Action Counts (EAC) is a new campaign to encourage groups of people to make our future more sustainable by working together. You may already know that the Civic Trust is the national body promoting better urban design and supporting local societies like ours. The Trust has joined a consortium of 25 national voluntary organisations in promoting EAC across all their networks.

The London Region launch seminar on 12 December reflected this with contributions from the Chair of the London Forum of Amenity Societies, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, London Community Recycling Network, BASSAC and the Environmental Law Foundation.

The programme is supported by Government funding through DEFRA with the aim of mobilising community groups to make more impact on environmental issues.

There are 5 guiding principles:

- **Save energy.**
- **Travel wisely.**
- **Shop ethically.**
- **Save our resources.**
- **Care for your area.**

Many of the suggested actions are simple everyday things, but the idea is that collectively they will soon add up and make a difference. Some can be done by individuals or families, but if the members of a group take action together, there will be a bigger impact. Suggested actions can be found on the website:

[www.everyactioncounts.org.uk](http://www.everyactioncounts.org.uk)

In the year ahead, we will be featuring some of these themes in the Newsletter (and on our own website) and we will continue to collaborate with residents' and Friends groups and kindred societies as opportunities arise.



## Flying into Trouble?

*Reflections on the seasonal crop of travel advertisements*

Only 10 years after the Wright Brothers first flight, the world's first four-engined passenger aircraft made its maiden flight near St.Petersburg. For the next 60 years, airliners were refined to fly faster, higher and further. Then a dramatic rise in fuel prices meant a new priority to fly more cheaply, leading to the larger and more fuel-efficient designs that now pass over South London every 90 seconds. The latest "double decker" Airbus 380 is claimed to consume less than 3 litres of fuel per 100 km travelled – comparable to an economical family car.

This efficiency is a mixed blessing. Sure, we are now getting more out of each litre of paraffin (the usual jet fuel) but the lower costs have made flying much more affordable, so that passenger numbers have greatly increased and it is the main means of international travel.

There has been growing concern at the pollution effects of this increasing airline traffic, and particularly since most of the emissions take place at high altitude, typically 36,000 feet (11 km) above sea level, at a typical temperature of -55 degrees C. Burning each gallon of paraffin produces just over a gallon of water, in the form of water vapour, usually seen in the form of those white condensation trails behind high-flying aircraft. In certain atmospheric conditions these can persist and increase the cloud cover at high altitude, potentially affecting climatic conditions. Air traffic is reported to be responsible for cloud cover over the USA increasing by 1% per decade since 1975. And that's before we take account of the carbon dioxide, soot and other chemical pollutants which also emerge in the jet exhaust.

So are there alternatives?

Rail via the Channel Tunnel is a competitive option for much of Europe, but many island resorts owe their success to direct air links. Although ships are much more fuel efficient than planes, holiday-makers may not want to spend too much of their break on a slow sea voyage. While we could restrict our holiday ambitions to closer to home, the reality for many of us is that we want to keep in touch with family and friends in places like the Caribbean or Australia.

Maybe we should now look to another wave of innovations in aircraft design, to a less polluting form? Solar panels have been getting a lot of attention recently for home use, but a solar-powered aircraft first flew across the Channel back in July 1981.

A solar-powered airliner would work best as a flying wing design so that all of the upper surface could be covered in solar PV cells. It would be driven by propellers via quiet electric motors, but would need to cruise at 50,000 feet to enjoy continuous sunshine with least air resistance.

There are drawbacks of course. Current designs are still much slower than modern jets, so flights could take 3 times longer – though after travelling to the airport, security checks, baggage-handling problems and air traffic delays are taken into account, there may not be such a great difference in the total journey time.

Inevitably power is much reduced in cloudy conditions or when the sun is low in the sky, so storage batteries would have to be carried to boost performance in an emergency.

On the other hand if it became the norm, it might put an end to night flights over South London!

*Any comments? Write to Alan Piper at Building 518, Biggin Hill Airport, Westerham, Kent TN16 3BN.*

### **Can't wait for the next issue?**

Remember that we put event dates and news items on the website in between our quarterly Newsletters (and back numbers too if you missed an issue).

## **Modernising Schools**

The London Open House weekend last September provided the chance to see inside a selection of school buildings, ancient and modern. Off Lambeth Walk, what remains of the old Lambeth Ragged School has recently been converted into an art gallery. Here, one of the original 1850s classrooms survives, a big space with high windows and the floor stepped up towards the rear. Closer to home, the rebuilt Effra Early Years Centre/ Nursery School was informal, bright and adaptable. Similar ideas had been used to upgrade King's Avenue Primary School on the Clapham fringe. Both have improved insulation to save energy in winter, but extra energy is sometimes needed in summer to ventilate or cool hot spots from generous use of top-lighting.

Just outside the borough, the 1960s Kingsdale School had been transformed by roofing over the courtyard to create a modern atrium containing a new plywood lecture theatre.

Back in Brixton there is more to come. A planning brief has been drafted for rebuilding Stockwell Park School, on Clapham Road. Planning permission has just been given for adapting the old Strand Grammar School building for special needs secondary use, to replace Elmcourt School whose old site near Tulse Hill Station will be used for a new secondary school.

An outline planning application has been made for a new Academy on the Council depot site between Loughborough Park and Shakespeare Road. The design by avant garde architect Zaha Hadid looks effective (no triangles after all!) but the site will need access from both frontages so that pupils can use all local bus routes. So far there is only a token green roof on one block, but the design may develop.

On the Herne Hill side of the tracks, the new Michael Tippett special needs school has already gained planning permission. Environmental design is impressive, including a "biodiverse" green roof – and eliminating travel between the two present split sites must help! Contrary to what we told you last time, this one was designed by Clapham architects, Marks Barfield, best known for the London Eye.

ADP

## Will Trams return to Brixton?



*Croydon Tramlink service in Crown Hill, Central Croydon, with the Whitgift Almshouses in the background. (Photo by Nick Goy, ref.20431, Autumn 2006)*

### **The story so far:**

This tram proposal has been championed by the member boroughs of the Cross-River Partnership for several years. A map of the proposed route was shown on the front cover of our Newsletter in Autumn 2001. After competing for attention with other lines within Greater London, now funding has been authorised for detail design, local consultations and preparatory works, totalling £24m. Construction cost will be over £500m., a major element being the need to divert underground utilities so that future repairs do not disrupt tram services.

### **Proposed Routes (and variations):**

The core route between Euston and Waterloo will have 30 trams per hour, one every 2 minutes. North of Euston, the line splits in two, one branch continuing NW to Camden Town, the other NE to King's Cross, beyond which there will be a depot for parking trams overnight.

Trams will cross the Thames via Waterloo Bridge and pass in front of the station, but sooner or later the route divides into two branches, south to Brixton and south-east to Peckham. The core service may continue to the Elephant & Castle before dividing into the two branches, or as originally intended, the western branch may split off at the Old Vic, thence via Lambeth North and Kennington Road to join Kennington Park Road. Both options would reach the Oval Tube Station.

From the Oval, the probable route is along Clapham Road to Stockwell Tube Station, thence along Stockwell Road to Brixton Town Centre. A possible alternative is to run along the length of Brixton Road, which may benefit neglected areas east of that road. However there is already lobbying from the Clapham area to continue in their direction, perhaps as far as Clapham South. A possible variation is to run due south

from Clapham North Tube Station via Bedford Road and Kings Avenue, to reach the Clapham Park area. This might even include a loop back down Brixton Hill to the Town Centre.

Within Brixton Town Centre, the original route was via Canterbury Crescent to terminate in Popes Road between the Recreation Centre and the present multi-storey car park. This is still considered practical, though space is a bit tight if both buildings remain. The promise of improved access and footfall might be enough to stimulate development on one or both sites if this route was confirmed.

Another possibility is to run on past Brixton Tube Station and finish on the Effra Road frontage of the Central Square site. This would complicate planning the Central Square, and the busy section around the Tube Station could be a bottleneck, but it leaves scope for extending to Streatham.

### **Physical Impact:**

The route through Lambeth follows existing roads, so

there is little direct effect on existing properties. However, a depot is proposed in the Peckham area to house the trams overnight (running times will be similar to the Tube). Typical street arrangements can already be seen in Croydon Town Centre, though outer parts of the Croydon Tramlink are more like the suburban rail network, partly due to re-using established rail lines.

### **Timetable:**

After allowing for a public inquiry process to resolve objections, and the construction process, the tram is expected to start operations in late 2016, i.e. almost 10 years off.

### **Consultation:**

Formally, this will be in two stages, first to settle the route, and later to deal with details of road junctions, parking bays etc. The Mayor launched the process in mid-November, and responses to the first stage should be made by the end of January.

*Alan Piper.*

## **Business in Brixton**

*An edited version of the mid-term report from the Chair of the Brixton Business Forum:*

The last quarter of 2006 has been a challenging one for business in Brixton. The tone was set on 24 September, when two men were shot outside The Fridge Nightspot, after a major fracas both inside and outside the building.

Four days later, four young men were waiting to be served their burgers in the McDonalds Restaurant a few yards down the road, when a few stern words were exchanged between them. A few moments later, one of these young men was lying on the floor by the counter and another on the pavement outside by the door,

both with gunshot wounds. The chaos in the town after such occurrences is considerable and many business people reported up to 30% fall in trade in the weeks following.

I was near McDonalds when things were going crazy, heading for the Town Hall for a public meeting on this very subject! Parts of Manchester have also been suffering violent youth gun and knife crime, and Professor Gus John had come down from his home town to launch his new book, 'Here I Stand', that deals with these issues, on the invitation of Lambeth's Chief Executive, Derrick Anderson. He was also nearby when this scene unfolded.

Understandably, when the meeting took place in a packed Town Hall a short time later, the mood was sombre and angry, that these things should be taking place in our home town, in a family restaurant at 5.30 on a pleasant autumn evening, with many families and children enjoying the ambience of Brixton.

We didn't sit still for this, however. The very next week a public meeting was convened, where the local community came together to discuss the situation and seek difficult but necessary solutions. The owner of the Brixton McDonalds, Terry Eagle, gave a moving presentation on what it was like dealing with such a situation, as a business person and a human being. Many local key decision makers were in attendance, and all resolved to make every effort to tackle this terrible social aberration.

Unfortunately this wasn't the end of the story. Another young man was shot and

killed next to the Pizza Take-away on Acre Lane in late October and another candle-lit vigil was held for another bereft family.

A meeting for business people was held on 7th December, to discuss actions they could take to prevent similar events such as these happening again, and contribute to community safety and prosperity. The BBF have played a major role in these efforts, supporting the businesses affected, providing guidance, counselling and community involvement.

Businesses report that it is still very quiet in this run up to Xmas, but much positive effort is being expended to turn things round. An organising committee comprising ourselves, the Brixton Society, the Friends of Tate Gardens, Brixton Town Centre Manager and the General Manager of the Tate Library, put together an impressive programme of events for the Xmas season that was launched on Friday 1st December, with the switch on of the Town Centre Xmas lights by the Mayor. This was accompanied by performance from local school choirs and musicians, clowns, stilt-walkers, actors and singers.

Morley's Store contributed financially and co-ordinated the re-launch of their refurbished store with these festivities.

A three week programme of pre-Christmas activities includes an enhanced craft market on Saturdays, a Sunday Up-Market, and a Brixton Market Mambo all culminating in a Peace and Light Celebration on 21 December.

Much publicity has been put together to accompany these efforts with coverage in the local press, and colourful posters and flyers designed by Mo-Shon, a local PR company that worked closely with us, and which is developing the Brixton B brand around positive values. Our work next

## Regeneration Issues

year needs to build on this. The Living Bar offered their facilities for a short celebration after all the hard, soaking work that Friday. Thank you's were offered and bouquets awarded to Chris Sipidias, the Town Centre Manager and Sarah Slater, event organiser.

Sadly, neither of our major bids for large investment funds for the area have been successful. The bid to the Big Lottery Fund's 'Living Landmarks' scheme for £22m to revamp Electric Avenue and the Markets fell at the first hurdle. Similarly our bid to the government's Local Enterprise Growth Initiative for £30m over the next 10 years to invest in business development programmes and local business also fell at the first stage.

My sources tell me that our bids lacked imagination, financial robustness and sufficient leadership by the business sector. However Croydon Council and their business representation organisation, Croydon Business did succeed in winning LEGLI money, and . Croydon Business's Chief Executive, Angelina Purcell, has agreed to give a presentation at one of our meetings early in 2007.

BBF have now signed the Business Link For London's Business Concordat, making us an approved organisation with access to their business information website and database.

A delegation from BBF also attended the African Caribbean Business Network's Annual Conference in October that focussed on the supply chain and securing contracts for the 2012 Olympics. We were also recognised at the European Federation of Black Women Business Owners 11th Annual Awards Dinner.

We have been working closely with the Lambeth Business

Against Crime Initiative, which is extremely timely given what has been set out above. We have collaborated not only around its own objectives but also, in establishing a Lambeth Business Network, to more effectively put business's case to the decision-makers. Through our work with McDonald's, the possibility of establishing a Business Resource Centre, housing ourselves, LBAC, LBN and perhaps other business initiatives, in their building is being explored.

The Cultural and Creative Industries Group is now up and flying with productive meetings with the new Head of Culture at Lambeth Council and the London Development Agency. Resources are being offered to facilitate the work of the sector by a business directory/trade guide and a major launch event.

The Lambeth Hair, Fashion and Beauty Expo was a very successful event held at the Town hall in early November, organised by one of our key members, Adornment.

The work of our sub-group set up to examine Lambeth's Planning policies as they affect business and to set a new Green agenda has recently delivered an excellent proposal that we aim to implement in the New Year.

The Herne Hill Traders have continued patiently to pursue the improvement proposals around the road junction adjoining Brockwell Park.

A delegation from BBF attended the sumptuous Annual General Meeting of the Clapham Park Project held at the Ritzy Cinema in November. CCP is injecting substantial investment into the Brixton Hill area including

business development. Discussions are being held with the Angell Town Community Project about developing a new business infrastructure there. Contacts are also being developed in the North Brixton/Oval /Kennington area, as the businesses there feel unrepresented.

We will also be seeking to develop social enterprises, for which the government has just announced a new £16m development fund.

Despite all the problems it has been an extremely dynamic year. The BBF has been revived from a moribund shell, where its officers' own businesses had gone to the wall after last Xmas, into an active organisation, respected by the decision-makers.

I would like to thank the Forum officers for their support and the various venues which have hosted our meetings, and the Brixton Town Centre office for having put up with our administrative demands.

*Devon Thomas.*



### **Putting the heart back into Brixton**

*Enclosed with this issue you should find a flyer/poster from ABC Brixton about their proposals for the Railway Hotel (Brady's) in Atlantic Road – if not, see their website [www.abcbrixton.org](http://www.abcbrixton.org) or e-mail them at: [info@abcbrixton.org](mailto:info@abcbrixton.org)*