

NEWSLETTER

Summer issue, July 2005

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Website: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk



Our next appearance: Lambeth Country Show 16 & 17 July weekend

Once again we will be joining in with this big event in Brockwell Park, with the Society's stall in the usual area, forming a block with kindred groups covering different parts of Lambeth. Do take the opportunity to check out our current publications, renew your membership and chat about your own interest in Brixton.

Thursday 8 September: Revitalizing Brixton

Caroline Townsend from Brixton Town Centre Office will update us on the Council's big "Revitalize" package which we first reported last October. Nearly a year on, how are the Brixton parts of the plan shaping up? We hope members will take the chance to comment and ask questions. 7-30 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road (facing Windrush Square) SW2.

Saturday 24 September: Lambeth Archives Open Day

Open from 10 am to 5 pm at the Minet Library, at the corner of Burton and Knatchbull Roads, SE5. As usual there will be a series of short talks linked to displays and stalls run by amenity societies and history groups.

If any member can spare an hour or two to help staff our stall, please speak with Glyn Kyle (Chair) on (020) 7326 5070.

Sunday 25 September: Ferndale Walk

Meet at 2-30 pm outside Clapham North Underground Station for a guided walk around Ferndale Ward, led by Alan Piper. This will be a circular route, based loosely on Brixton Heritage Trail No.2 but also including new or topical material.



How well do you know your way around Ferndale Ward? The flats on the left recently replaced a former prefab office at the corner of Hetherington and Kepler Roads, off Acre Lane. To the right is one of the "pentagon blocks" of flats built by Lambeth c.1968. Photo from James Toohill.

Regular readers should receive a full programme of all the Summer Walks with this issue, and a few of these are highlighted on the next page.

Thursday 13 October: London Lives

Recent Archaeological discoveries in London, including Brixton area.

An illustrated talk by Sophie Jackson of the Museum of London, 7-30 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2.

Further details in our Autumn issue.

Brixton Society meeting dates

In addition to the dates highlighted on the front page, our Executive Committee usually meets on the second Thursday of the month to plan events and activities, and agree our responses to local developments. All meetings at 7-30 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre (BSSS) 2b Saltoun Road, SW2 – near corner of Effra Road, facing Windrush Square. Contact the Secretary to confirm arrangements.

- 14 July
- 8 September
- 10 November.

Links with other groups

Check with organisers first in case of changes since news reached us. Some events may be charged for, and most groups would welcome donations.

Future entries to Alan Piper (Secretary) at 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, tel/fax (020) 7207 0347 APiperBrix@aol.com

Monday 18 July: Brixton Area Forum - Tulse Hill group

10 am at High Trees CDT, St.Martin's Library, corner of Tulse Hill and Upper Tulse Hill, SW2
For other meetings of the Forum and its working groups, contact the Town Centre office on (020) 7926 1077.

Wednesday 20 July – Clapham

An evening guided walk around Old Clapham, led by Mary Coales. Meet at 6-30 pm at the Clock

Tower outside Clapham Common Tube Station.
Clapham Society.

Wednesday 20 July (Hastings) and Wednesday 24 August (Brighton)

This summer, Brixton Sheltered Street Scheme is opening up its seaside coach trips to all groups like ourselves who meet at the Vida Walsh Centre. Cost is £7.50 a head and please book as early as possible – contact Sharon Marks at the Centre on Tuesdays and Fridays, (020) 7326 1780 (messages can be left at other times).
Brixton Sheltered Street Scheme (Young at Heart Club).



Wednesday 17 August – Park Hill & Clapham Park

An evening guided walk around Park Hill, led by Peter Jefferson-Smith and John How. Meet at 6-30 pm by the Clock Tower outside Clapham Common Tube Station.
Clapham Society.

Sunday 21 August: Old Deptford

Meet at 2-30 pm below Deptford DLR Station, on the south side of Deptford Bridge, for walk led by Alan Piper.
(Buses 47, 53, 177, 225)
Lambethans' Society.

All Saints' to St. Faith's:

Sunday 4 Sept.

Meet at 2 pm outside All Saints' Church, Rosendale Road, SE21. Guided walk around Herne Hill's Dulwich fringes, led by Robert Holden.
Herne Hill Society.

Sunday 11 Sept. – House History:

Illustrated talk by Alan Piper on dating your house and ways of researching previous residents.

2 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2 (Effra Road end).
Lambethans' Society.

Saturday 17 & Sunday 18 Sept. – Open House London

A range of interesting or historic buildings open their doors to the public –details from (020) 7383 2131 or see: www.openhouselondon.org

Thursday 6th Oct. Brain of Lambeth:

This year's general knowledge quiz will be run on a team basis, so why not join in? You can be confident that at least one of you will have an answer to those awkward sport or TV questions, while you deal with the history stuff - or vice versa! 7-30 pm at Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, SW2.
Lambethans' Society.

Friday 7th October: Celebrating Age

10-30 am to 4 pm in the Assembly Hall, Lambeth Town Hall. Exhibits and entertainment, part of a month's programme of events for over 60s – details from (020) 7733 0528.
Age Concern Lambeth

It's Simple

Away with opaque consultation,
Myriad meetings, confabulation.
Make level the playing field,
Open up the tent
Let us all enter
All one intent.
Bring on the councillors,
Their experts, their kit
And make of our talk
Not improvements a bit
But a great whopping change
For the better - not shit.
We all come together in a big open
place
Where all's for discussion, not set in
concrete.
"There's an idea! My goodness, how
sweet!"
Comes it from a tenant? a landlord?
Who cares?
The point is it fits and I'll show you
where.

ABC Brixton abcbrixton@gmail.com
It's simple so let's keep it that way.

Editorial

Yes, there's a distinct feeling of consultation fatigue in the air at the moment. Enormous effort and cost has been going into publicising and consulting on several major initiatives such as Brixton Central Square, the Lambeth Community Strategy and the "Revitalise" initiative, but there is a widespread feeling that comments fed into the system will make little difference to the outcome.

In recent years, projects like the Town Centre Forums and the Lambeth First Assembly have clearly encouraged a fresh input of people to get involved in community issues, but if it all turns out to be a waste of their time, the credibility of the whole democratic process is undermined.

Consultation in itself is never enough – it can even be counter-productive by first

raising hopes and then reinforcing cynicism and apathy when people are unable to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Over the past 30 years we have often seen Lambeth Council persisting with flawed proposals long after reality should have dawned. Old habits die hard and current examples spring to mind all too easily.

Close to Brixton Windmill, allotment users are threatened by proposals to add their cherished plots to a proposed school site. Now this narrow triangle can hardly provide useful games pitches - which really need a big rectangular space like the covered reservoir of the adjoining waterworks, which will soon be redundant anyway. Only last year a narrow strip alongside the railway in Somerleyton Road was being suggested for a secondary school. Why is the planning of schools in this borough done in such an amateur way?

For years Lambeth has lacked any kind of Advisory Panel for its many Conservation Areas. Once a Conservation Area has been created, there is no mechanism for involving residents or shopkeepers in enhancement schemes or design guides, or for keeping the Planning Department in touch with the local residents' groups which somehow manage to survive on a shoestring and goodwill.

One of the groups in Norwood has made a fresh proposal for a system of Advisory Panels, based on experience from neighbouring boroughs. Other amenity societies are now responding positively to the idea. But the Planning Department has set its collective face against the concept, frightened that it might mean extra work in telling residents about local planning applications – a legal obligation on the Council anyway!

If you have a particular concern over a development or regeneration plan, tell us and we will try to help. We will air issues here if our quarterly publishing and page-space permit. Our Committee members are involved in a range of meetings and boards for this and that, so we want to keep in touch with local problems, even if we cannot always do as much about them as we would like. But at least we know what works and what might be changed.

Alan Piper, Secretary.

Tate Library Gardens Re-opening

A Multicoloured Fantasy



On the 23rd April 2005,
a modest event took place,
In front of the library steps,
Between 12-5pm,
A few stalls,
Some information and
500 multi coloured inflated balloons,
music and more...



Children planted sunflowers seeds in
recycled pots,
Friendly adults encouraged chalk
drawing,
And hop scotch - the old fashioned
way!
Chalk on concrete... Oops mind ya
feet!

Weaving drunks wandered and
Wino's gently slumbered,
The junkies stayed away!
Generally a good day!
The ritzy did us proud with teas and
coffees and cake,
And the crafty few stalls did
escape,
with room for more.

Brixton Society hold strong with
Alan and Co

As ever at the core.

Donations from B&Q
and Brockwell park (friends of)
was involved some how tooo!)



A man who liked to walk and talk,
and would take you out and about,
historically.. and with reference
There was a story teller, from the
library

And lovely Laura tooo

A mud monster with clay, (who had
a lot to say...)

drummer from the tube - we paid
him to stay...

and the caretaker was a joke,
... A Funny fellow very tall, with bad
hair

And carried Hodge his Hedge Pig.....!



The band LIQUIDIFICADOR
played
(and those two guys with sunglasses
and wigs
that always do the Elvis Hips -
... did a turn)
and generally "there was dancing in
the street" ya!

Tate Library Gardens Re-opening

Then Cleanaway - did just what it
says on the tin,
it was all cleared away... (thanks
JOHN!)



.....Oh the balloons.....
the balloons, those 500
Multi coloured inflated balloons.
..... later that day.....
A Tea time treat - The balloon
released at 4pm
Oh the rainbow of delight
as the multicoloured orbs took flight
the visual feast, up up and away...
puff puff..... the physical feat
3 people, 3 hours to inflate
.....and seconds to fly free....
Free as a bird in the sky ... as I'd
like to be,
A moment away from grim Brixton
Reality!
The oohs and aaahhhh went a long
way for me

As I'm really hoping that you too can
see,
A vision, an idea
A Bloody impossibility of

People living and playing in
harmony.....
It Was a Good Day
It was a jolly good show
and just so ya know
There IS more on the way!!!
Cheers,
Sarah Slater

All photos by Alan J Robertson, except
Brixton Society stall photo by Bill Linskey.

Events in Central Square

Provisional programme as at 20 June...

Bastille Day - 14 July - Ed from The Ritzy

Bank Holiday Weekend - Sunday 28
August, 12 noon to 8 pm
Family/ children's entertainment,
Salsa band and dancers, Circus skills,
Football competition,
Arts & crafts workshops,
Hairdressing competition.

Peace Week - 11 to 18 September,
An opening event in the Peace Gardens on
Sunday 11th,
After-school workshops in the Library
during the week,
Peace Parade on Sunday 18th,
Processing around St. Matthew's Church.

Tate Gardens 100th Birthday,
Tuesday 11th October,
Fireworks and a huge cake!

On the Shortest Day - 22 December,
Peace and Light celebration, Children and
Families event 3-30 to 6-30 pm latest,
Multi-faith singing and lanterns.

Friends of Tate Library & Gardens
Continue to meet on 2nd Thursday of the
month, 6 pm to 7-30 pm at the Vida Walsh
Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2.

Tracing your Lambeth House History

During September Lambeth Archives is co-operating with Open House London and local amenity societies to run a series of talks and workshops designed to get you started on tracing the history of your house.

The first element will be a series of six introductory talks in libraries around the borough, focusing on the history of each locality. Each talk will be given by a local expert, followed with an introduction to house history sources at Lambeth Archives, presented by a member of the Archives' staff. All sessions run from 7 pm to 8-30 pm.

Tuesday 13 September:

North Brixton & Herne Hill: Alan Piper & Jon Newman at Lambeth Archives, Minet Library, SE5.

Norwood: Don Bianco & Len Reilly at Upper Norwood Library, Westow Hill.

Wednesday 14 September:

Streatham: Brian Bloice & Graham Gower at Streatham Tate Library.

Vauxhall: Jim Nicolson & Jon Newman at South Lambeth Tate Library, SW8.

Thursday 15 September:

Brixton: Alan Piper & Graham Gower at Brixton Tate Library, Brixton Oval.

Clapham: Peter Jefferson-Smith & Len Reilly at Clapham Library, Clapham Common Northside, SW4.

The second element is a series of workshops at Lambeth Archives in Knatchbull Road, SE5. These will cover how to plan your research, use of relevant sources and drawing your conclusions:

Tuesday 27 September, 7 pm – 8-30,

Wednesday 28 September 2-30– 4 pm

Thursday 29 September, 7 pm – 8-30.

Numbers are limited, so please book early. To book a place at a talk or workshop, please ring Rosanna Osbourne on (020) 7926 0750 or by e-mail to: rosborne@lambeth.gov.uk

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.

Postcard Champion

It is with sadness that we report the death of Pat Loobey, who died after a short illness on 4th June at St. George's Hospital, Tooting.

He was a prominent and much-respected member of the South London local history "network", best known for his mammoth collection of over 30,000 photographic views of the area.

He was a long-standing member of the Wandsworth Historical Society, of which he was Chairman from 1991-94 and 1998-2001.

He collaborated with John Brown on several books for the Streatham Society, and these will perpetuate his memory and reputation as a major contributor to the history of South London.



Pat Loobey was an early champion of collecting and publishing Edwardian postcard views of South London, like Brixton's Electric Avenue seen here c.1910.

Rune Readings

Little oddities can sometimes be spotted while walking through Brixton Streets. For example, a hand-drawn sign recently spotted in a house window in Mervan Road said "Rune Readings". I shall bear this in mind if I find any runes that I need deciphered, but I cannot help thinking there must be little passing trade!

Runes were the primitive alphabet of pagan Northern Europe, just beyond the sphere of influence of the Roman Empire. In this country, northern parts with lots of boulders and building stone are more likely to have surviving runes than here in the south-east where any runes on timber, clay or vellum are less likely to survive.

They were first introduced to Britain by the Anglo-Saxons in the early 400s. As Christianity gradually returned, with its texts written in Latin with Roman characters, runic characters largely went out of use. However a few characters persisted for uses where there was not a direct equivalent in the Roman alphabet.

These were used for inscriptions or texts in the spoken language of the time. Nowadays we

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use combinations of letters like th or gh - but not very consistently, after 15 centuries of spelling mistakes and mis-hearings.

The last trace of the old system is seen in mock archaic terms like "Ye Olde Tea Shoppe". Medieval clerks used to represent "th" as in "them" by a Y with a dot over the top, based on the original rune shape. Later scholars failed to notice the dot, perhaps assuming it to be a blot or blemish, and assumed that "Ye" was an old version of "the". The revived fashion for Medieval designs in the 19th century saw "Ye" and other old spellings widely taken up to give an authentic look to anything with historic pretensions.

Where you find runes is also a reflection of who used them. Before Roman influence, the Celtic people of these islands relied on oral traditions, so runes only begin to appear in Ireland or Northern Scotland with later Viking invaders, typically short inscriptions of the "Kilroy was here" kind. Earlier Anglo-Saxon runes could turn up anywhere else down the eastern seaboard of the country, including most of the Scottish Lowlands which were absorbed into the "Anglish" kingdom of Northumbria, centred on Hadrian's Wall. Romanised Celts continued to carve their inscriptions in Latin – one memorable example in Cornwall is a memorial to Drustans, son of King Marcus Cunomorus of Cornwall and the original of the Tristan legend.

Runes were reintroduced with the Viking invasions from the 790s onwards, which account for most surviving examples. Again they diminished as Vikings accepted Christianity and respectability. One of the last big runic inscriptions known, at Yelling in Denmark, celebrates King Harald Bluetooth adopting Christianity on behalf of his people in around 990.

Here in the Greater London region, in 886 the River Lee was established as the boundary between King Alfred's West Saxons and the Danelaw to the east. South of the Thames was nominally under Saxon control, but after over a century of struggle, the Danes finally triumphed in 1016 when Bluetooth's grandson Cnut (or Canute) became King of England. His two sons followed him in succession, and we finally begin to find local historical references. Harthacnut, last of these Danish Kings, actually died at Lambeth in 1042.

By 1062, Bricsti, owner of the Manor of Hatcham (at New Cross, SE14) had erected a

stone at the top of Brixton Hill to mark the meeting place of the Hundred Court covering the north-eastern corner of the old County of Surrey. Sadly, Brixton's stone has long been lost, but if it came to light again, we could at least see if runes were still being used officially alongside Latin or Saxon inscriptions, or were confined to Danish graffiti defacing it.

Alan Piper.



Part of Stanford's 1876 map: The SW sheet of 1862 extends west from Tulse Hill and Brixton Road, so omits Herne Hill and Loughborough.

This Season's Offers

Reprints of old maps are always popular, and we have obtained a batch of the 1862 Stanfords map of SW London as recently published by the Wandsworth Historical Society. This reproduces the hand-colouring of the library version, so water areas and public open spaces are easier to identify. Copies are £4 each.

Last year the National Portrait Gallery were able to obtain a portrait of Mary Seacole, the Jamaican widow whose exploits in the Crimean War were recently featured on television. Her picture has recently been published as a colour postcard, which we can supply at 35p, the same price as our Edwardian Brixton postcard series.

Due to heavy commitments at this time of year, it has not been possible to prepare extra pages, so the Annual Report and other articles have been held over to the next issue.

Remembering Ska

My name is Ewan Taylor. I'm a film maker living in London and I'm about to make a documentary about Ska music, its Jamaican history and its popularity in Britain from the 1950s onwards. I am hoping to use the film to pitch the idea to the BBC for a full series on the subject of the influence of Jamaican music in Britain.

I am looking to interview people of Jamaican descent in the Brixton area, who might like to talk about their love of this music and how it was received in Britain upon their arrival.

The name of the company is Brown Eyed Boy, and I can be contacted on (020) 7291 8024 or by e-mail at: Ewan@browneyedboy.com

Ewan Taylor.



The well in Stockwell

Colin Davies e-mailed from Stockwell Green to ask about the location of the well or wells referred to in the place-name.

The geology of South London means that wells are fairly easy to dig or bore as a source of water, hence place names including "well" are quite common. The first written record of Stockwell dates from just before 1200, and the most likely location for a communal well would be around Stockwell Green itself, which was the old village centre. The Manor House was nearby on the north-east side of the Green, where the Waltham Estate and (of course) Moat Place are today.

Nothing remains today which is older than 1767, and by then many more wells would have been dug for private use as the

area became more populated in the 17th and 18th centuries. Even after mains water was available, wells continued to be important sources of supply for the two breweries operating in Stockwell.

Stockwell Manor as a whole lay west of Brixton Road and extended almost to the top of Brixton Hill, as far as the corner of New Park Road and Lyham Road, whilst Stockwell Wood continued west of Lyham Road to beyond Clarence Avenue.

Wells certainly existed in more distant parts of the Manor. For example, an earlier Secretary of the Brixton Society, James Wilkes, found one in his garden at 212 Acre Lane some 30 years ago. The house dates from c.1815, nearly 20 years before the water works was established on Brixton Hill. This old well was eventually filled in for safety reasons.

Alan Piper.

Two Civic Awards

Congratulations to two of our committee members on receiving Civic Awards from the Mayor of Lambeth on 17th May. In both cases the award recognizes their work with a range of local organizations including this Society.

Glyn Kyle, Chair, has also been chair of the Streatham Darby & Joan Club for several years, and serves on the boards of LVAC, Age Concern Lambeth, Brixton On-Line and the Streatham Society's committee.

Margaret Westcott became an active member of Streatham Ratepayers & Residents Association some 25 years ago, and has since been involved with Streatham Darby & Joan Club, the Friendly Almshouses, and for the past year, the Friends of Tate Library & Gardens.

Contact Us

For general enquiries and to include material in future Newsletters, contact Alan Piper on (020) 7207 0347 (tel or fax), APiperBrix@aol.com

or write to 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ.

For individual planning applications and appeals, contact David Warner initially on (020) 7924 0618, david@scriabin.force9.net

or write to 290 Coldharbour Lane, SW9 8SE

For publication orders, website updates and membership/ address changes, contact Bill Linskey on (020) 7274 3835, wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk

or send to 32 Stockwell Green, SW9 9HZ.