

NEWSLETTER

Summer issue, July 2008

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Website: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk



Our next appearance: Lambeth Country Show 19 & 20 July weekend

Once again we will have a presence at this big event in Brockwell Park, but there are some changes this year. We agreed to take a pitch in a marquee with other community organizations so that we no longer need to hire a van to take all the kit, but other groups have dropped out entirely due to a doubling of site charges. The Council has compounded the problem by late issue of details, so the better attractions may already have been booked for other events. Nevertheless we hope you will take the opportunity to check out our current publications, renew your membership and chat about your own interest in Brixton.

Sunday 10 August: Myatt's Fields Walk

Meet at 2-30 pm at the corner of Brixton Road and Loughborough Road (Max Roach Park, opposite Jamm or the old White Horse) for a guided walk led by Alan Piper. Based on our Brixton Heritage Trail No.4 with elements from No.5.

Thursday 9th October: Transport and Brixton

7 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre,
2b Saltoun Road, SW2.

Advance notice of an opportunity to get up-to-date on developments in or around Brixton, including traffic schemes and the proposed Cross-River Tram. Your questions and comments will be welcome.

Further details in our Autumn issue.

More dates listed inside...

Why Brixton Market is still looking for Friends - Follow-up meeting on Wednesday 16 July, 7 pm

Probably the biggest issue to come out of the Future Brixton consultations earlier this year was the future of Brixton's markets – not just the street market but also the covered arcades. There was widespread opposition to the Council's apparent encouragement of Granville Arcade being replaced by private flats, but also concern that the street market was being left to a more lingering decline.

The Friends of Brixton Market is being set up because these issues are too important to be left to the market traders to fight alone. Residents and customers need to be involved as well. Certainly there was a good turn-out of all interested parties at the Vida Walsh Centre for the first meeting on 18 June. The support is there and some good ideas have been kicked around but now, to start making things happen, the organization needs to be formally set up. That means adopting a constitution and forming a board or committee to steer the group. There's also talk of forming working groups around particular topics or activities.

That's the basic agenda for this meeting, at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road SW2, facing Windrush Square.

Meanwhile, a website has already been set up to provide more information, www.friendsofbrixtonmarket.org Or you can call Alex Holland for more details or to offer help, on 07 515 728 972. The Brixton Society is supportive and we look forward to reporting progress in future Newsletters too.

Diary of Events, Late Summer 2008

Brixton Society Meeting dates

In addition to our special events, the Executive Committee usually meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month to plan activities and agree our responses to current developments. Meetings are at 7 pm at the **Vida Walsh Centre**, 2b Saltoun Road SW2, facing Windrush Square.

- **10 July**
- **11 September**
- **9 October**
- **13 November.**

Summer Walks

An updated list of guided walks in and around Lambeth should be enclosed with this issue – otherwise collect a copy from our stall at the Lambeth Country Show.

E-mail updates

If we have a current e-mail address from you, we will try to advise you of any extra events or changes. Just send a quick e-mail to APiperBrix@aol.com and we will amend our list.

Links with other groups

We also list here events by other local societies that may be of interest. We suggest checking with organisers in case of changes since these details reached us. Some events may be charged for, and most groups will welcome donations.

Sundays 13 & 19 July, 10 & 17 August – Live Music in the Park

Outside the Hall in the centre of Brockwell Park, performed by John Brown & Friends, featuring a tea

dance with the South London Jazz Orchestra on 17 August. See also www.brockwellpark.com for more music arts and drama events with details. *Brockwell Park MAC.*

Thursday 17 July – Old Streatham

Illustrated talk by John Brown, 8 pm at the Phoenix Centre, Westow Street, SE19. *Norwood Society.*

Monday 21 July – Heathrow Expansion – is it necessary?

Presentation by John Stewart of Heathrow Campaign against aircraft noise. 8 pm at Woodlawns Streatham Darby & Joan Club, 16 Leigham Court Road, SW16. *Streatham Society.*

Sunday 3 August – Brixton Splash

The Town Centre street party returns for a third year, running all day on Coldharbour Lane, Atlantic Road, Electric Avenue and Windrush Square. For details see www.brixtonsplash.co.uk

Sundays 3 August, 7 & 21 September – Shirley Windmill

Open Day at the mill from 1 pm to 5pm, last tour at 4 pm –an interesting comparison with Brixton's own windmill Buses 130 & 466, parking in Oaks Road. Enquiries: Tony-skrzyptl@hotmail.co.uk *Friends of Shirley Windmill.*

Sunday 31 August – Urban Green Fair

11 am to 7 pm in Brockwell Park. Seven zones with something for everyone. Free entry but

suggested donation £3. www.urbangreenfair.org

13 & 14 September – East London Heritage

A weekend highlighting historic buildings in and around the borough of Tower Hamlets. More details to follow. *Heritage of London Trust.*

Wednesday 17 Sept. Underground London

An illustrated talk about the wartime deep shelters along the Northern Line, including their origins and the various uses to which they have been put. 7-30 for 8 pm start at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4. *The Clapham Society.*

Weekend 20 & 21 September – Open House London

London-wide opening of historic, innovative or curious buildings – full list available from Lambeth libraries in late August, or see the website www.openhouse.org.uk



Saturday 11 October – the London Maze

A London-wide Local History Fair at the Guildhall Art Gallery, open 10 am to 4 pm. More details in next issue. *City of London Corporation.*

Saturday 8 November – Archives Open Day

Note the later date this year – see facing page.

Brixton Tramways

I came across this link to a goldmine of information via an English Heritage bulletin: www.londontramways.net

There are 77 pictures of trams in Brixton, mostly taken near the Town Hall around 1950, when most trams were looking rather worn and clapped-out. They show a lot of information about the street scene, surrounding buildings and shop-fronts. Details include long-gone tram reservation islands and a conduit-pit in Effra Road where the ground-level conduit supply switched to overhead wires. Other revealing pictures show the area around the White Horse (now Jamm) with lots of horse buses on the forecourt, shops up Brixton Hill, and one shot of the Tube Station before it became the Tube.

Nick Weedon, Brixton Area Forum.



Brixton Road c.1951 (via P.Hotchin).

Town Hall Centenary

We strive to give you early warning of upcoming events but sometimes circumstances change between these pages being typed and our quarterly newsletter dropping through your letterbox. Last time we blithely announced an April event to mark 100 years since the official opening of the Town Hall, but in the meantime the Council had changed its plans without telling us! We were able to advise some members via e-mail but can only apologise to anyone else who had a wasted journey.

We gather there is now to be a smaller scale reception for invitees in mid-July and the theme will be developed further for Lambeth Archives Open Day this Autumn. The open day itself will be later than usual, on **Saturday 8th November** at Minet Library.

Black Cultural Archives moving forward...

The Black Cultural Archives has obtained planning permission for the refurbishment of 1-3 Effra Road as its base in Brixton Town Centre. However, this is subject to an unusual number of conditions – 20 in total – mostly concerning the detailed design. The original building is listed but is intended to have a new wing projecting at the front corner on Saltoun Road. The plans showed this wing as a bulky concrete blockhouse which would largely obscure views of the old building, while a gloomy overhang on the Saltoun Road side presents a new opportunity for the local drug dealers. In short, a lot needs to be sorted out yet to produce a worthy building which is also easy to manage. There will have to be some more planning applications to agree the details, and we will try to comment on these.

Tracing Old Stockwell

I have been looking for information about my grandfather, John Kingdon Gilley. He lived at 12 Wiltshire Road, Brixton, from about 1900 to 1920. What I know from my mother is that this house was split by a bomb from the Zeppelin L31 on 23 September 1914, later shot down in Croydon. His son at home at this time was concussed and died some 6 months later without regaining consciousness.

My mother told me that at some point in her childhood my grandfather built a large garage at Stockwell, in buildings that had once been stables. This included a paint shop - she described fish scales being laid in rows under varnish in panels on the doors. They assembled French Velos and Renaults for the cab trade. She said he later built a bungalow behind the garage for his wife, who had a heart condition. The bungalow could be reached via the door in the machine shop. If my mother had been 7 or 8 at this time, that would be about 1919.

She said that at an earlier date he had owned up to 100 Hansom cabs, but lost these as motor cars came in. He had built a "posh place" for the cabs somewhere between Stockwell and

Local History Focus

Clapham. His brother Chris Gilley had previously gone into cars. Their father, Tom Gilley, had worked on horse buses in the Kennington area.

John Fenn, Launceston, Cornwall.

Zeppelin Raids:

The first and only German air raid in 1914 was on 24 December, when a single aeroplane dropped a bomb on Dover. Raids by Zeppelin airships only began in January 1915. Fortunately our counterparts in the Streatham Society produced a little monograph about the local effect of these raids, which provides some basic dates and details. The most notorious raid that impacted on this area was on the night of 23 September 1916, when the Zeppelin L31 proceeded northwards roughly along the line of the A23, dropping bombs in Kenley, Croydon, Streatham, Brixton and Kennington. Its sister ship, L32 had also approached London from the South, but was shot down over Essex, near Billericay. The L31 itself was shot down during another attempted raid on the night of 1st October, again east of London.

Lambeth Archives Dept. has photos of some of the damaged houses in Brixton, though I am not sure if Wiltshire Road is among them. Most of the original houses made way for the Angell Town Estate in the early 1970s. See the website www.lambethlandmark.com

Garage Premises:

These can be traced using the local trade directories for the years referred to, in combination with the local large-scale Ordnance Survey maps. The most likely site (from the 1916 directory) was Gilley & Stammers motor garage at 14 Eastcote Street, just north of Crossford Street at the rear of the present YMCA. The building and most of the surrounding small cottages disappeared in the 1950s when new Council flats were built as part of the Stockwell Gardens Estate.

Stables:

Before motor transport became general, there were quite a few stable yards of various sizes in the area. One such example was behind the Old

Queen's Head (now Sri Lanka House) in Stockwell Road, and I think pre-World War I it was used for horse trams – the tram lines could be seen crossing the pavement into the yard until only a few years ago, when they were tarmacked over to reduce the trip hazard.

Another nearby example was added in 1877 as part of the building-over of Stockwell Green. Mr Cobbledick's stable yard, in the centre of the block, was entered by an archway in the frontage of 60 Stockwell Green, only recently filled-in.

The 1902-03 Directory lists Tom Gilley as a cab proprietor operating from next to 117 Hackford Road, which was at the southern end across the road from the late Type Museum. Tom's home then was at 59 Hackford Road. By 1916 the proprietors are listed as Salmon & King.

Alan Piper.

Brixton History is back!

We are pleased to announce that the History of Brixton has finally been reprinted, and that we have been able to maintain the cover price of £9.99, set when it first appeared in 1996. We have taken the opportunity to make a few corrections, and the format is reduced slightly to A5 size to match our Heritage Trails book.

Copies available from our stall at the Lambeth Country Show, at Lambeth Archives, or by post using the order form on our website.

City of London History Walks

We have just been told of some guided walks starting from All Hallows by the Tower, in Byward Street EC3. Walks last 2 hours and cost £6.

Friday 15 August: at 2 pm, Blood, fire and pestilence – the City's dark history.

Friday 22 August: at 2 pm, Mincing, Seething and Staining – lanes and alleyways of the City.

Further dates and details from Helen Elletson, (020) 7481 2928 or see www.ahbtt.org.uk

Thanks to Glyn Kyle

Glyn became Chair of the Society in June 1989, in succession to High Barclay. Over the past 19 years he has represented us on various other bodies and became involved in a wide range of community groups and enterprises. Early experiences included chairing Brixton Sheltered Street Scheme and serving on the boards of Brixton Challenge and then Brixton On-Line.

This work was recognized by a Lambeth Civic Award in 2005 and by the award of an MBE at the beginning of this year.

Sadly for us, those other commitments have taken an increasing share of Glyn's time, and he decided to stand down as our Chair this summer. Streatham Darby & Joan Club, where he is chair of the management committee, recently obtained Lottery funding for a major remodelling of the premises, and this was probably decisive. Current commitments also include Lambeth Voluntary Action Council, Lambeth Primary Care Trust, Age Concern Lambeth and the Streatham Society.

Bill Linskey has been elected as our new Chair, but we have yet to agree how to share out Glyn's other duties such as representing us on Lambeth Parks Forum or Friends of Lambeth Libraries, or charming grants out of a wide range of funds and public bodies...

Alan Piper.



Glyn taking a turn on our bookstall at Lambeth Archives Open Day.

Help wanted!

For events like the Lambeth Country Show, we encourage members to help with staffing our stall, so that we can organize a rota with nobody having to commit for more than 2 hours, giving us all time to look round the rest of the show. We have just a couple of slots still to fill during the Country Show weekend, so if you can lend a hand, please contact Bill Linskey on (020) 7274 3835 or by e-mail to wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk

In contrast, a passive but still valuable way to help is by storing part of the Society's stock of publications. Recent printings are proving difficult to fit into the Secretary's basement and the Chair's hallway! If you have any space in your loft or spare room where up to half-a-dozen boxes of books can sit for a year or two, it will leave us with enough space to sort out the rest of the Society's paperwork.

Offers to Bill Linskey or Alan Piper.

How to contact the Society

Editorial & Event Notices

Material for the next issue should be sent before 13 September to the Secretary, Alan Piper, at 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, or by e-mail to APiperBrix@aol.com Phone/ fax enquiries to (020) 7207 0347.

You will see from this and recent issues that we are happy to announce events and publish reminiscences or enquiries, but we also like to feature community activities. 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.

Publications & Membership

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

Planning Issues

If you are concerned about a particular planning application, contact David Warner at david@scriabin.force9.net or on (020) 7924 0618. For wider plans and policies, consult Alan Piper as above.

The Brixton Society

Understanding the Past, Looking to the Future
Registered Charity No.1058103, Registered with the Civic Trust and the London Forum.

ANNUAL REPORT, 2008

AIMS & ORGANISATION

CHARITY STATUS: This report covers the key points suggested by the Charity Commission, reflecting our charitable status since 1996.

AIMS & LINKS: We aim to encourage awareness and understanding of our surroundings, and to give local people a say in Brixton's future. We cover a wide area of Central Lambeth, extending beyond the "Town Centre" to include areas such as Myatt's Fields and much of Stockwell. The Society is registered with the Civic Trust, London Forum of Amenity Societies, Brixton Area Forum and Lambeth Voluntary Action Council.

MANAGEMENT: The Executive Committee has met 8 times since the previous AGM, with membership consisting of Glyn Kyle (Chair), Alan Piper, Rosemary Honey, Doye Akinlade, Bill and Diana Linskey, Barbara Davies, Norma Williamson, James Fairweather, Phil Isaac, Devon Thomas, David Warner and Margaret Westcott. The constitution has been reviewed for the first time in 30 years and the new version just adopted is based on the Civic Trust's latest model, reflecting current charity law.

PROGRAMME & ACTIVITIES

EVENTS: During 2007 we again supported a number of outdoor events in Tate Library Gardens, through the efforts of Sarah Slater and Glyn Kyle. Summer guided walks are provided as part of the series from member societies of the Lambeth Local History Forum. We have hosted occasional open meetings, including a focus on the Council's "Future Brixton" plans last October. We collaborated with Lambeth Libraries for a very successful evening to launch *Black British – a Celebration*.

OUTREACH: We were unable to take up all the opportunities offered to us, but during 2007 we ran a stall in Tate Library Gardens during London's Open Garden Squares weekend and also at Windmill Gardens Festival, Lambeth Country Show and Lambeth Archives Open Day. We continue to respond as best we can to varied enquiries, mostly via e-mail, triggered by our website, from students, media and family history researchers.

NETWORKING: We play an active part in

several borough-wide or local organisations, including the Lambeth Local History Forum, the Brixton Area Forum, Lambeth Voluntary Action Council and the Police/ Community Consultative Group. We have provided representatives on the boards or committees of several projects, including Lambeth Credit Union and Brockwell Park Management Advisory Committee. We also try to encourage and assist smaller community groups around Brixton, such as the Friends of Windmill Allotments. We continue to support the Friends of Tate Library & Gardens, and aim to establish it as a standing committee of the Society.

PLANNING: The dominant topic in the past year has been the Council's "Future Brixton" proposals, and developing from this there is increasing local concern to protect and promote Brixton's markets.

Our responses to individual planning applications have been limited by other pressures but we have tried to support local residents' groups in fighting unsuitable proposals, such as at Tudor Close, Brixton Hill.

PUBLICATIONS: Ongoing commitments are our quarterly newsletter and maintaining our website. Our new publication in Autumn 2007, *Black British – a Celebration*, recorded the Black experience in coming to Brixton. We recently reprinted the *History of Brixton* to meet continuing demand.

RESOURCES

FINANCE: See the accompanying accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2008.

SUPPORT "IN KIND": With no premises or staff of our own, we are grateful to all members who provide help or facilities such as distributing newsletters, staffing our stall at various events, storing books, archives or equipment, and attending meetings of other bodies on our behalf.

MEMBERSHIP: Our mailing list has been around 250 for several years, of whom c.50 are people now living further afield who want to keep in touch, but we are keen to attract more support within the local community.

Alan Piper, Hon. Secretary.

Networking

The Brixton Society is part of a complex web of affiliations and alliances, and here's a quick guide to our main contacts...



The Civic Trust

The Trust acts as the national umbrella body for civic and amenity societies, while also promoting better standards of building design and landscaping. Flagship schemes now include the Purple Flag awards for town centre management as well as Green Flag awards for better care of parks.

Griff Rhys-Jones, now a veteran of several TV series on restoring old buildings, has recently become the President of the Civic Trust. Chair of the Trust is Philip Kolvin who first came to prominence with the Crystal Palace Campaign.

Lambeth Local History Forum

Currently this is our main channel for liaison with other amenity societies within Lambeth. The Forum itself meets only quarterly, but there are lots of contacts with member groups in between, and summer walks are a joint effort.

London Forum

The London Forum of Amenity Societies does what it says on the tin, linking similar societies across Greater London.

It's useful to see how different boroughs respond to similar problems, but its main value (particularly now with a new Mayor) is to monitor London-wide planning and transport policies. It has also channelled information about the effects of further expansion of London's Heathrow Airport.

Lambeth Voluntary Action Council

LVAC is the umbrella body for community and voluntary organisations within the borough. It has been an important channel for grassroots groups to feed in their concerns to public bodies like the Council and PCT, and to the local strategic partnership, Lambeth First. LVAC also offers "capacity building" for smaller groups such as cheap training events and news of funding sources.

Grassroots Groups

There's a wide range of groups on our patch, and we are most likely to be in touch with those organised to champion a particular amenity like a park or library, or to safeguard or improve a neighbourhood or estate.

Local Forums

The best-known local body with a specific topic is Lambeth's Community/Police Consultative Group, which emerged out of Lord Scarman's report into the 1981 riots, and is still a valuable arena.

The Council-sponsored Town Centre Forums (or is it fora?) have been blighted by 5 years of indecision over their role, but remain a useful outlet for comment and for keeping in touch with other groups on the local scene.

On similar lines, larger parks like Brockwell have acquired Management Advisory Committees to try to bring together all the different user interests.

Alan Piper.

Photography competitions

Like certain bus routes, you wait ages then three photo competitions come along at the same time...

Postcards from the Park

Another chance if you missed last year's successful competition. This is organised by Greenspace, the national parks and green-spaces forum. Deadline is 1st August, for details see www.green-space.org.uk

Plantlife

The charity Plantlife International is seeking photos for its 2009 20th anniversary calendar, on the theme of wild plants of the UK through the seasons. Even fungi will be considered. Deadline is 15 August, details at www.plantlife.org.uk

Bicycle Belles

Lambeth is seeking photos to promote women's cycling – details on the back of Lambeth Life on 1st July or see www.lambeth.gov.uk