

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Summer, July 2015

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

Weekend 18 & 19 July Lambeth Country Show

12 noon to 8 pm, Brockwell Park SE24

Look out for our stall in the usual area – if you enter by the Herne Hill gate, we are in the group to the right of the path up to Brockwell Hall. By now we should have volunteers lined up to staff our stall through the weekend, but we welcome offers of help at the Archives Open Day and monthly Market Walks.

If you can spare some time to help, please call Bill Linskey on (020) 7274 3835 or e-mail to wjdc1@globalnet.co.uk

Our next Summer Walks...

Sunday 12 July Brockwell Park & Tulse Hill

Meet 2-30 pm outside Norwood Lodge – inside the park gate at corner of Norwood Road and Brockwell Park Gardens, for a circular walk led by Alan Piper.

Bus routes 68, 196, 322, 468.

Sunday 9th August North Brixton

Meet at 2-30 pm inside the front gates of St.Mark's Church, Kennington – opposite Oval Tube station. A circular walk led by Alan Piper.

Buses 3,36,59,133,155,159,185,333,436.



Toplin House revival

The former annexe to the Bon Marche store has been bought by architects Squire & Partners who will use most of it for their own offices, with the Post Office moved along to the old fire station opposite Nursery Road. It may also be the new base of Brixton Cycles.
BTC-F13-10.jpg

Thursday 10 September: Brixton History evening

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

Recent research on Brixton's local history and a review of the changing townscape since the Society began 40 years ago, with light refreshments (part of Lambeth Heritage Festival - see page 2 inside)

Saturday 26 September: Open Day at Lambeth Archives

Displays and talks divided between the Minet Library, Longfield Hall and the Michael Church, Burton Road SW9.

Diary of Events, late Summer 2015

Society Meetings

The Executive Committee usually meets on the second Thursday of the month to plan activities and agree our responses to current issues. Meetings are at 7 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2 (at the Effra Road end, facing Windrush Square).

- 9 July
- 13 August
- 8 October
- 12 November

Market Walks

Our guided walks round the market area continue on the second **Saturday** of every month – see back page of the Heritage Walks leaflet. Prior booking advised.

Links with Other Groups

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

Thursday 16 July – Loughborough

Junction Masterplan
Re-arranged date for a workshop discussion on the Master-Plan for the eastern fringe of Brixton, 6-30 to 9 pm at the Marcus Lipton Youth Hub, Minet Road, SW9.

ljmasterplan@fluidoffice.co.uk
Fluid Consultants and Lambeth Planning

Saturday 18 July – Summer Book Fair

The Power of Books: (in partnership with Bogle LOuverture Publications)

brings writers, readers, publishers and distributors together to celebrate the written word. 11 am to 4 pm, 1 Windrush Square SW2
Black Cultural Archives

Monday 20 July – 40 years of the Streatham Society

Talk by Graham Gower, 8 pm at the Woodlawns Centre (Streatham Darby & Joan Club) 16 Leigham Court Road, SW16
Streatham Society

Thursdays 23 July & 20 August – Garden Open Evenings

Open 6 pm to 8 pm, admission free, at the South London Botanical Institute, 323 Norwood Road, SE24 (south of Brockwell Park).
SLBI, 020 8674 5787.

Sunday 26 July – Larkhall Walk

Meet at **3 pm** at Wandsworth Road Station (Overground) for a walk led by Anne Wilson, finishing at The Surprise pub next to Larkhall Park.
Clapham Society

Sunday 9th August – Art in the Park

Brixton Windmill plays host to creative activities for all ages during the afternoon. All art materials provided free. The windmill will be open for free tours, and a guided walk around Brixton Hill starts from the Mill at 1 pm (£5 a head, concessions £3, children free). See also: www.brixtonwindmill.org
Friends of Windmill Gardens

September – Lambeth Heritage Festival

A variety of events are taking place around the borough, leading up to the Open Day at Lambeth Archives. Libraries will have a free booklet listing events, or from next month, see www.lambeth.gov.uk/heritagefestival

Lambeth Local History Forum

Sunday 13 September – Henry Tate Gardens

See the grounds of Sir Henry Tate's old home at Streatham Common North – tours depart from the Lodge gate, Henry Tate Mews, Streatham Common North (near Leigham Court Road) SW16 at 2 pm & 3 pm.
Streatham Society

Thursday 17 Sept. –

Buildings of Herne Hill

Illustrated talk by Alan Piper, 8 pm at the Phoenix Centre, Westow Street, SE19.
South London Local History Group

Editorial Notice:

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

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

The Brixton Museum

In association with the Brixton Townscape Initiative, Anchor & Magnet have been awarded Heritage Lottery funding for their "Brixton Museum" project. Plans are for a short film and temporary mobile museum case to appear in the Autumn – for further news, check out: <https://anchorandmagnet.wordpress.com>

Researching Brixton Hill

Back in December I mentioned an enquiry from George McHardy, who was trying to locate Frederick's Place, Brixton Hill. This was the home and business premises of Joseph Sim Earle (1839-1912) who continued his father's timber merchant business at this address. One of them also appears to have paid for the pulpit at Christ Church, Streatham Hill – probably Mr Earle senior, since the church was consecrated back in 1841.

There are a few problems with tracing any old addresses in Brixton Hill. For most of the 19th century, the present road was treated as a number of different sections, such as Brixton Rise or Raleigh Gardens, and continuous house numbering from the centre of Brixton to the present South Circular Road was not achieved until almost the end of the 1800s. Before then, houses were numbered within a particular terrace or block, so Frederick's Place might be one such, or just a single property, fronting onto Brixton Hill. However, terms like Brixton Hill were also used just to indicate the district, much as we might use SW2 or SW9 today. Frederick's Place might therefore be a side road or court, opening off the main road or even just somewhere near it. Unfortunately the old directories at Lambeth Archives are limited in their coverage pre-1876, further complicated by addresses in Lambeth, Streatham and Clapham parishes being listed separately.

Joseph Earle was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and bequeathed to them a large collection of material on Essex and Suffolk, which Mr McHardy has catalogued and written on in the FSA's journal. If you have any information, you can contact him direct at: Edge1929@gmail.com

Tower behind Town Hall would spoil Listed buildings

Heritage England has criticised Lambeth's "New Town Hall" package for its adverse impact on the setting of St. Matthew's Church (listed Grade 2*) and of the Town Hall itself. They were not happy with the loss of the Edwardian frontage at 1-6 Town Hall Parade, the size of its replacement or the extra storey added to Ivor House, but their main concern is the 14-storey residential tower replacing Hambrook House. Updated plans are open to comment until 24th July.

Gresham Road Outpost

Paul Wakefield contacted us earlier this year while researching the history of the Royal Observer Corps in Surrey and Sussex. The corps was formed just before the Second World War to monitor and report aircraft movements, supplementing the limited coverage of the early radar stations.

The Corps had a look-out post on the roof of the telephone exchange in Gresham Road, established in 1939 and connected to other posts at Weybridge and Malden, who all reported to their headquarters at Bromley, Kent. Once the war had started, the post was manned 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, until May 1945. Mr Wakefield has supplied this photo of the 16 crew, probably taken at the end of the war. Most would have been part-time members, with full-time jobs elsewhere. He has no details of names yet, but would welcome any contact with relatives or other researchers who are aware of this local part of Britain's air defences. Contact him at paulwakefield18@sky.com (and tell us too!)



Brixton Post.jpg

Round-up of Local Issues

News from the Friends of Brixton Tate Library

Unfortunately the good times look like being over, and we can't congratulate ourselves at all. Libraries are more than threatened. The plan by Lambeth Council will mean the selling-off of two libraries, Waterloo and Minet. According to Councillor Jane Edbrooke (Cabinet member for Neighbourhoods) Carnegie will only be saved if the Carnegie Community Hub project goes ahead as a Trust. As a member of the audience at a recent Brixton Rec User Group meeting rather tellingly put it, it's a "co-operative" council, not "corporate". Jane Edbrooke says Lambeth is up against it because of the previous Government's policy under Eric Pickles, and reduced funds for Labour-led local authorities.

Are community-managed trusts the only answer? Is it inevitable? Not according to Friends of Lambeth Libraries, who are putting up a tremendous campaign on Facebook and other social media. We hope people will renew their membership of the Friends of Brixton Tate Library during the Lambeth Country Show weekend, at the Brixton Society stall. But we also need active members to ensure that Lambeth Council managers are held to account. Re-join and ask a friend to join. Save our future heritage in buildings and cultural activities.

Thanks to Joanna Spilman who successfully ran the monthly Art/ Craft workshops over the past year, organised by the Friends and funded in part by Coldharbour Community First. Our most recent event was in May as part of Lambeth Readers & Writers Festival, a lovely evening featuring Sophie Herxheimer (poet/ artist performer), Ravinder Randhawa (author) and Shazea Quraishi (poet). Thanks for their support to Susannah Barnes (Head of Lambeth Libraries) and Tim O'Dell (Reader Development).

Marilyn Rogers, Chair of FofTLB

Parks under pressure

Lambeth has put the future of 6 out of 10 libraries in doubt for a mere 20% saving in their running costs, but the 64 parks and open

spaces around the borough face a cut of 50% in their annual budgets. Reluctantly, Friends groups or management advisory committees for some spaces are exploring the scope for running their park themselves, with uncertain support from the Council.

However, not every open space has an active friends group, and only a minority have the potential for generating income from hosting extra events. So will they be left to decay (like Elam Street was until a Friends group was recently formed) or will they be built over in a mad drive to replace every tuft of grass with high-rise concrete?

*Lambeth's Cabinet is due to decide on the future of parks, recreation, libraries and cultural services on **Monday 27 July**.*



Coldharbour Lane with entry to Loughborough Road in background. Hdn-A14-01.jpg

Challenging road closures at Loughborough Junction

Recent consultations on the Loughborough Junction Masterplan have revealed the extent to which small businesses have survived – and new ones even started – in railway arches and in small industrial estates on Brixton's eastern fringes. Yet Lambeth Council has already agreed to new flats replacing the Higgs Estate (opposite Loughborough Junction Station), so those businesses have gone and the prospect of interchange between Thameslink and London Overground services has been lost.

As a follow-up, Lambeth proposed numerous local road closures, which would make light industrial units in Lilford and Paulet Roads inaccessible for deliveries or for getting finished goods out. This was originally promoted as a chance to form an extra public

Round-up of Local Issues

open space at the Coldharbour Lane end of Loughborough Road, but with no thought for access to businesses in Ridgway Road or Rathgar Road. Nobody considered the practicality of the P5 bus trundling through this new space every 8 minutes – or the dwindling budget for existing open spaces. Nobody thought to ask residents around the other end of Loughborough Road, or others affected further afield, or the local businesses.

Once word got out to a wider circle of residents, more people signed a petition against it than were consulted at the outset, yet Lambeth pressed on regardless, apart from a stay of execution during the General Election campaign. At last a local councillor has taken notice and called the decision in for review, but we suspect more arguments will be needed before sense prevails.

The Strange Death of Council Housing

In the early 1970s, Lambeth was keen to build Council housing on a large scale, but there was increasing resistance from residents when the emphasis shifted from slum-clearance and bombed sites to streets of houses which were in good condition or capable of refurbishment at lower costs than replacement. In several cases in the mid-1970s, residents showed at public inquiries that there was little or no gain in quantity or quality. As a result, new building slowed down as sites ran out, and more effort was put into upgrading existing estates. Then 1979 saw a new Conservative Government introduce the Right to Buy, so councils had less incentive to build new family housing.

Council housing was usually financed by loans repayable over 60 years, which means that as Council tax-payers, we are still paying for the 1970s blocks at Angell Town and Myatt's Fields North that have since been replaced – and in the latter case very little of the new development is still Council housing. Complex funding restrictions mean that any attempt to rebuild an existing estate results in a net loss of ordinary Council tenancies. Government definitions of "affordable" mean that rents or sale prices are too high for most of the people that Council housing was meant to support.

In the current situation it would make sense for councils to conserve what they have and avoid major investment, particularly with the new Government keen to refresh the Right to Buy and divest London boroughs of their most valuable housing. Lambeth has been quietly selling off "street properties" (ordinary old houses) for a couple of decades, but seems keen to reduce its stock even more by another round of estate "regeneration", Six estates are lined up including Fenwick on Landor Road SW9 and Cressingham Gardens on Tulse Hill.

It baffles us why they would want to do this, as the only beneficiaries of this increasing privatisation of estates will be estate agents, building professionals and overseas investors. No surprise then that "Gentrification" is a growing issue locally!



We have been here before – a cartoon by the Landor-Hargwynne Residents Group from 40 years ago. BS-LHRA.jpg

Cressingham Gardens

Although this estate echoes some of the features found at Stockwell Park and Angell Town estates of the same vintage, it has stood the test of time better and is even liked by many of its residents. It's a relatively successful example of Lambeth housing designed under Ted Hollamby as Director of Development, benefitting from a lower zoned density and a site adjacent to Brockwell Park. The site is permeable, allowing access through the estate to the park, and smaller green-spaces and planters have been looked after by residents. The estate includes a small circular playgroup building which in practice has been used for a wider range of community meetings and activities.

Emerging Plans for Somerleyton Road

Lambeth's Cabinet will take key decisions on several housing projects on 13 July including the brief for redesign of Cressingham Gardens and appointing a contractor for Somerleyton.

In the wider context of Lambeth Housing policy, Brixton Green have done well to keep the idea of affordable rented housing alive through this project. Even so, the blocks have been increased in height and bulk to make the figures stack up.

Latest plans were on display on 27 June. The site between Somerleyton Road and the railway has been split into several plots designed by different architects, which should bring some welcome variety. Yet the redesign of Somerleyton Passage and the Theatre setting has been given to Gross Max, the firm responsible for Windrush Square, so expect materials here that are expensive and hard to maintain!

Fronting Coldharbour Lane, Carlton Mansions is to be refurbished as small business space, and the scheme by Zac Monro Architects retains the cellular layout, with a shared roof-top break-out space. Oval House Theatre (by Foster Wilson Architects) will stand on the corner, similar in height.

The first site along Somerleyton Road will be 125 new homes for rent in 3 linked blocks rising to 10 storeys (by Metropolitan Workshop). The next site will be extra-care housing, 65 flats in 2 linked blocks by Mae Architects.

London Underground's plant building above the end of the Victoria Line has to remain, but between that and Somerleyton Passage will be another 3 linked blocks, providing 71 new homes for rent (by Haworth Tompkins Architects).

Beyond this the final block will replace the dustcart depot with another 40 rented homes by Metropolitan Workshop. Both these sites appear to rise to 6 storeys. A number of community uses will be fitted in at ground level along the street.

Help Reclaim Brixton from the Grime!

Residents in several corners of Brixton have been moaning about a sharp decline in streetcare in recent months. Another burning issue is the Council's complete failure to face up to the provision of public toilets, while continuing to allow more bars, clubs and cafes in the town centre. How about some joined-up thinking? Meanwhile you should complain to:

Report fly-tipping, or rubbish left uncollected, to: www.lambeth.gov.uk/rubbish-and-recycling/report-rubbish/report-dumped-rubbish-in-a-public-place

Complain directly to senior officers and lead councillors by e-mail (ideally with photos):

Keith Naish, Streets & Highways Manager:
knaish@lambeth.gov.uk

Carolyn Dwyer, Director of Communities, Housing & Environment:
CDwyer@lambeth.gov.uk rial text in 10 pt

Keeping up with changes

Emerging developments and changes in Town Planning policies are happening faster than we can adequately cover in a short quarterly newsletter, but the London Forum's website features frequent updates – see www.londonforum.org.uk/updates.php

Protecting Old Pubs

In recent years we have been concerned at the rapid loss of old and characterful public houses from Brixton streets. It has been an uphill struggle but a recent change could be helpful. Earlier this year, the government decided that pubs listed as "Assets of Community Value" would not have an automatic right to change to other uses, but would require a full planning application. This overcomes the difficulty we faced in defending the George IV pub on Brixton Hill from use by Tesco. It helps that Lambeth has recently adopted a process for registering such ACVs.

Alan Piper.

The Brixton Society

Understanding the Past, Looking to the Future

Registered Charity No.1058103, Registered with the London Forum of Amenity Societies

Website: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk

Annual Report 2015

AIMS & ORGANISATION

STRUCTURE & MANAGEMENT: The Society is a registered charity and an unincorporated association. The society's constitution was last revised at the 2013 AGM, to better reflect current practice.

The Executive Committee has met 9 times since the last AGM, consisting of Bill Linskey (Chair), Annick Alet, Doye Akinlade, John Cunningham, Barbara Davies, Rosemary Honey, Diana Linskey, Vivienne Lewis, Alan Piper, Marilyn Rogers, Eileen Walkin, David Warner, Nicholas Weedon and Norma Williamson.

AIMS & AFFILIATIONS: We aim to encourage awareness and understanding of our surroundings, and to give local people a say in Brixton's future. Our area extends well beyond the Town Centre to include Myatt's Fields, much of Stockwell, and out to the South Circular Road. The Society is registered with the London Forum of Amenity Societies, the British Association for Local History and Lambeth Voluntary Action Council, all of which provide useful support in our work.

PROGRAMME & ACTIVITIES

PLANNING & REGENERATION: We aim to comment on significant local planning applications, and also to suggest buildings for protection through listing, conservation areas or Lambeth's Local List. We have been able to share the oversight of the many applications through our "virtual" planning sub-committee. We have also commented on aspects of the Lambeth Local Plan and key policy proposals. We remain involved with Brixton's Townscape Heritage Initiative. To keep up with London-wide and national policies, we continue to work with the London Forum of Amenity Societies.

NETWORKING: We are in touch with a wide range of community groups. We support the Friends of Tate Library and the Friends of Windrush Square, which operate as sub-committees of the Society. We have participated in the Brixton Neighbourhood Forum, Brockwell Park

Community Partners (the Management Advisory Committee), Lambeth Local History Forum, Friends of Lambeth Libraries, and Lambeth Parks Forum. The future of the Lambeth Police/ Community Consultative Group is in doubt but we continue to keep in touch with the issues through the Safer Neighbourhoods panels. We also try to respond to a rising number of e-mail enquiries from students, media and family historians.

EVENTS: In 2014 we put on displays or stalls at the Brixton Windmill Festival, Lambeth Country Show and Lambeth Archives Open Day, all of which we hope to repeat this summer. We also ran activities in Windrush Square and Tate Library as part of London's Open Garden Squares weekend. In addition to our summer guided walks for the Lambeth Local History Forum, we have sustained a series of monthly Brixton Market walks on the second Saturday of each month. We will again be presenting a local history evening as part of Lambeth Heritage Festival in September.

PUBLICATIONS: The website continues to develop, becoming a vital channel for wider sales of our publications. More are being developed, but always contingent on funding and members' spare time for research. We distribute some 300 copies of our Newsletter quarterly, including copies for key groups and local councillors.

RESOURCES

MEMBERSHIP: There were 155 paid-up members, a net loss of 40 who had not renewed after reminders. Support "in kind" from individual members includes delivering newsletters, staffing stalls, reporting back from a variety of meetings, and other tasks which all help maintain the Society's level of activity.

FINANCE: Annual accounts for the year ended 31 March 2015 will appear with the next newsletter, but we can report that total funds increased from £3890 to £4199. Subscriptions were last revised at the 2010 AGM.

Brixton's Food Bank

It is a sad comment on our modern society that Brixton now has a foodbank among its many services. Increasing numbers of people in our community have no money to spend on food, often because of benefit delays, sickness, debt, or homelessness. The Norwood and Brixton Foodbank tries to help them. The foodbank is part of the Trussell Trust, a Christian charity committed to community action against food poverty, and is run in partnership with local churches. The Brixton foodbank operates out St Paul's Church on Ferndale Road, with another distribution centre in Norwood and a central warehouse in Streatham.

Clients are referred from a number of agencies, including social services, housing associations, doctors, advice bureaux and others, who issue them with a food voucher. The clients come to the food bank — the one in Ferndale Road is open every Tuesday and Saturday morning from 10:00 to 13:00 — and are given enough food for three days, as well as a cup of tea or coffee, a welcoming smile, and expert advice if required on housing or money issues. The food is donated by local people, either directly to the foodbank itself or into the collection bins in Tesco's in Acre Lane. Local bakers donate their unsold bread. The generosity of many people is humbling and their donations always welcome.

The number of clients varies each week, but it can easily reach 15 a session, many of those claiming for two or more family members as well. They won't get a slap-up meal, but they will get a bag or two of basics that will keep them fed for a few days. It seems so little when the need is so great.

Simon Adams

Urban Art 2015

Now in its 14th year, London's largest open air display of contemporary art takes place in Josephine Avenue SW2 over the weekend 11 & 12 July, from 10 am to 6 pm each day. See and buy over 2000 works from 200 exhibitors. Details at: www.urbanart.co.uk

It is with the deepest regret that we have to announce the death of

Norma Williamson

following a short illness.

Norma had been our Treasurer for some 15 years but stood down at the June 2015 AGM because of her illness.

Norma will be sorely missed by her family and very many friends, not least those in the Brixton Society. Our thoughts are especially with her son, Stuart, and wider family.

We hope to print a fuller appreciation in our next issue.

Brixton Splash, Sunday 2nd August:

This year marks the 10th anniversary of Brixton Town's own street party. As well as the usual sound stages in Coldharbour Lane, Atlantic Road and Windrush Square, there will be family-friendly stalls in St. Matthew's Peace Garden. Timing 12 noon to 7 pm, for more details see their website:

www.brixtonsplash.org