

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Summer, July 2012

No.206, quarterly, free to members.
Registered with the London Forum of Amenity
Societies, Registered Charity No.1058103,
Website: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk

Our next appearance:

Sunday 22 July

Art in Brixton

11 am to 5 pm, Windrush Square

A repeat of the event we first ran in June last
year – further details on page 3 inside.

Our next Summer Walk...

Sunday 12th August

Coldharbour Lane and

Myatt's Fields

Meet 2-30 pm outside Loughborough Junction
Station on Coldharbour Lane, SE5, for a walk
round Brixton's eastern fringes led by Alan
Piper. The station is closed on Sundays but
bus routes 35, 45, 345, P4 & P5 pass nearby.

Forthcoming Market Walks will be on
Saturdays **14 July, 11 August & 8 Sept.**
More details on diary page overleaf.

Saturday 29th September:

Open Day at

Lambeth Archives

10 am to 5 pm at the Minet Library,
Knatchbull Road, SE5.

The programme of talks etc. is expected soon.



*Brixton's windmill during its re-opening on 2nd
May last year – remaining dates for this year's
tours are listed overleaf. (BxW Ma11-003.jpg)*

Olympic Corner

The Olympic Torch Relay finally comes to
Brixton on **Thursday 26 July**, the last day
before the opening ceremony of the
Games.

A total of 16 torchbearers will carry the flame
through Lambeth. The torch itself is due to
travel through Southwark before entering
Lambeth along **Coldharbour Lane**, passing
Windrush Square at about **12-30 pm** to
continue up **Acre Lane** and via Clapham Park
Road to Clapham Common, thence via Cedars
Road into Battersea.

On **Windrush Square** there will be market
stalls and a children's entertainment area with
athletics activities taking place. *See also p.9*

More dates inside...

Late Summer Events Diary

Society Meetings

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

- **13 September,**
- **11 October**
- **8 November**

Rediscovering Brixton Market

To coincide with the **Makers' Market** on the second **Saturday** of each month, the Brixton Society conducts a guided walk through the market and arcades. Charge is £3 including the illustrated booklet of the route – tickets available on the day from our stall in Brixton Station Road, near the corner of Beehive Place. Walks set out from there at **2-30 pm** and take about an hour and a half.

Links with Other Groups

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

Weekend 14 & 15 July – Urban Art Fair

For the 10th year, Josephine Avenue turns into a bustling Art market with 160 artists and makers, plus food stalls and sound stage. 10 am to 6 pm both days, admission free, www.urbanart.co.uk

Brixton Windmill Openings

Following restoration work last year, the Friends of Windmill Gardens organise regular tours for the public on a few days each month. Dates for the rest of the 2012 season are:

- Saturday & Sunday, 11/12 August,
- Sunday 26 August,
- Saturday & Sunday 8/9 September,
- Saturday & Sunday 22/23 September,
- Saturday 6 October,
- Saturday & Sunday 13/14 October,
- Sunday 28 October

Free, but prior booking is advisable for access to all levels. See their website for more details:

www.brixtonwindmill.org

Thursday 19 July – Bygone Streatham

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

Norwood Society

Thursday 26 July – Open Evening

6 pm to 8 pm at the South London Botanical Institute, (midway between Tulse Hill station and Brockwell Park) 323 Norwood Road, SE24 See www.slbi.org.uk

Sunday 5th August – Brixton Splash!

In addition to the music, sound systems and food, between Atlantic Road and Windrush Square, this year's event extends into St.Mathew's Peace Gardens

to showcase Brixton artists and provide activities for families. Enquiries to info@brixtonsplash.org

Saturday 18 August – W. Norwood Cemetery

A special tour, jointly with the Dickens Fellowship, to highlight relatives and friends of Charles Dickens buried in the cemetery, led by Paul Graham. Meet at **2-30 pm** inside main gate on Norwood High Street. *Friends of West Norwood Cemetery*

Wednesday 12th Sept. Buy Fairtrade or local?

Harriet Lamb from the Fairtrade Foundation describes their work with local organisations, 7-30 for 7-45 pm start, Herne Hill United Church Hall, c/o Redpost Hill and Herne Hill, SE24.

Herne Hill Society

15 & 16 September – Lambeth Country Show

The change of date means some of our key people will not be around so we are unable to run our own stall, though we are promised the usual mix of attractions in Brockwell Park, 11 am to 6 pm both days.

Lambeth Council (ACS)

Wednesday 19 Sept. – Reducing the bills in older houses:

Greening a small Victorian terrace house in Clapham: 7-30 for 8 pm start, at Clapham Manor Primary School, entrance in Belmont Road, SW4 0BZ.

Clapham Society



Art in Brixton

Last year, the second day of London's Open Garden Squares Weekend saw the first presentation of **Art in Brixton**, an exciting Art Fair celebrating the works of local artists, organisations and institutions.

Art in Brixton 2011 took place under cover of a vast marquee. The Art Fair was free – the Brixton Society did not charge either the public for coming to admire the works of our local artists, or the artists for their participation. The event was supported by The Big Lottery Fund and the society would like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude to the local businesses, Kingshield on Brixton Road and John Purcell Paper in Stockwell for their support in kind, which allowed us to hold workshops* much appreciated by visitors. Our thanks also go to the artists who generously gave their time and talent to run the various workshops.

Despite the atrocious weather, the event was a great success and by popular demand will be repeated this year on **Sunday 22 July** from 11 am to 5 pm. We hope that the heavens will be more clement to us this year. However, to be on the safe side, **Art in Brixton** 2012 will once again be under cover so that we can offer you a welcoming shelter when you come to visit and admire the works on display.

We trust that you will take the opportunity to enjoy our local talents and we look forward to meeting a large and interested audience on Windrush Square for this opportunity to celebrate **Art in Brixton**.

Annick Alet

**Marilyn Rogers has since secured funding for more art workshops from the Coldharbour Community First Fund.*

A Hub for the Community?

A big issue for the past year has been the future of Lambeth's Libraries, and also of many other buildings used by grassroots community groups. Two major reports were being considered by Lambeth Council just as this issue of the newsletter was being written...

These then are first impressions, and it remains to be seen how community interests will react, and how the Council will follow up. Some of the worst dangers seem to have been averted, partly by some creative accounting, but a lot of thorny issues have merely been deferred for further investigation. Friends of Lambeth's Libraries will not be able to relax their vigilance.

The future of Lambeth Libraries

The latest report aims to set a strategic vision, following the "Lambeth Libraries Commission" report in November 2011. A 7-day a week service will operate at Brixton, Streatham and the new Clapham Library. At Minet, Carnegie and Tate South Lambeth, the intention is to "develop the range of services in partnership with the local community," which overlaps with the parallel report on Community Hubs.

Other sites further afield have more difficult problems: at both West Norwood and Waterloo, services may return to the former library buildings because of the poor state of the modern premises. The Upper Norwood Library is the subject of a dispute with Croydon over sharing the cost.

The populous area along the South Circular Road is poorly served, following the closure of St. Martin's and Clapham Park Libraries some years ago. There is only a vague reference to a library building or service being provided as part of the ongoing Clapham Park Estates regeneration.

The report recognises the chronic lack of investment in library buildings over the past 40

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years, but fails to mention the similar failure to maintain book stocks, or the increasing public interest in archives services.

Modest sums have been set aside for feasibility studies, to explore options for selected libraries. The prospect of a Minet Community Hub integrating the Library, Longfield Hall and Myatt's Fields Park will be investigated. Where community hub or "co-design" services have been proposed, there should be local meetings with stakeholders during July and August.

Other Community Buildings

In parallel, the Council is trying to rationalise its holdings of buildings in community use, so that it can either sell sites or at least rely on user groups to take on responsibility for all costs and management.

Modest funds have been set aside to improve the management skills of community groups, and to remedy some of the most limiting building defects, such as disability access. At the same time the Council expects to raise £7 million over the next 4 years from sales of redundant buildings. A programme of asset transfers to the voluntary sector is to be prepared by March 2013 but how favourable this will be for existing users is yet to be seen.

Next Steps

Friends of Tate Library are setting up a meeting in September to discuss the implications for Brixton's Tate Library. There will be a further report to the Council's cabinet on Libraries issues in September, and perhaps further progress on Community Hubs in general may appear then too.

Devolving Playgrounds and Youth Centres

Apparently unrelated to the wider plans above, Lambeth held a series of local consultations in May and June about devolving management of its adventure playgrounds and youth clubs to other organisations, to help it choose from a variety of community groups, charities, social enterprises and businesses interested in each site. Affected sites on our patch include Marcus Lipton YC (Minet Road SW9), Tulse

Hill adventure playground, SW2, Max Roach (Wiltshire Road SW9), Loughborough Park (Moorland Road SW9), Willington Road SW9, and on our northern fringe, Lansdowne YC (South Lambeth Road SW8).

The Dexter (Railton Road) and Pulross Road playgrounds are already run independently.

Alan Piper



Crowds around the Little Cat Cafe during Myatt's Fields Park Fair on Saturday 2nd June

Myatt's Fields Park events

There is a programme of weekly Sunday performances on the bandstand from 2 pm every week up to **9th September**, and a few odd dates after that – see the website www.myattsfieldspark.info for details of all activities and events. If you would like to receive regular e-mail alerts about what's coming up, send an e-mail to Victoria Sherwin, VSherwin@lambeth.gov.uk

Support and Ideas for your Park

Love Parks Week runs from **21-29 July** to raise the profile of parks and public spaces nationally. For linked events and sources of help or ideas to improve your local park, see the website: www.loveparksweek.org.uk

Organisers are **Greenspace**, formed back in 1999 as the Urban Parks Forum – see also www.green-space.org.uk or call 0118946 9060

Within Greater London, parks are championed by the **London Parks & Green Spaces Forum**, which has been under the Greater London Authority umbrella but is about to become an independent charity. Enquiries to the Director, Tony Leach on (020) 7983 4495 or see www.lpgsf.org.uk

Ideas for the Garden?

Good to see a couple of local private gardens being opened to visitors as part of the National Gardens Scheme. Admission fees go to charity.

225a Brixton Road (by Mostyn Road) opens on **Sunday 26 August**, 2 pm to 6 pm. £3 admission, enquiries to 07 773 816 622 or Deborah@naganjohnson.co.uk

48 Stockwell Park Road opens on Sunday 9th September, 2 pm to 5 pm. Admission £3.50, Enquiries to (020) 7274 6052 or mail@rsmcconnell.co.uk

News from Brockwell Park

Trees for the Park, 3rd June

Devon Thomas reports on the dedication of a tree on behalf of Old Boys of the former Tulse Hill School:

Letting you know that we had an extremely successful annual tree planting and memorial celebration in Brockwell Park. The wet weather followed us from the Cherry Groce Memorial Day, but we didn't allow that to dampen our spirits.

After a stiff walk up the hill from the Lido entrance at Dulwich Road, we assembled around Brockwell Hall and the clock tower at 1-30 pm. Our first tree was dedicated by Mr Benson, the owner of the eponymous Fun Fair that visits us each Whitsun near the Herne Hill gate. In my youth I ran away from home for two days to collect the sixpences for the merry-go-round because I was so dazzled by the glamour of this life on the road!

After Mr Benson, we acknowledged the life and contribution of Paul Reynolds, that doughty fighter for local rights on local forums, through a tree provided by his two surviving sisters. We followed a trajectory along the Dulwich Road planting trees as we went, until we dived into the undergrowth to plant varieties that needed sheltered places.

We finally reached the Brixton/ Tulse Hill tree, a holly. We gathered at this sacred spot, near to the Lido and Shepherd's Youth Club, to honour our dearly departed, lit a candle and said a quiet prayer. We then initiated the

libation ceremony, calling on the ancestors to guide and protect those who had come to join them. We made dedications to Tony Sinclair and Henry Mayne, and remembered several others who had passed over to the ancestors in the past year, including Gavton Shepherd and George Greaves.

We repaired back up the steep incline to Brockwell Hall, which itself is celebrating its 200th birthday, for a welcome cup of hot beverage fortified with some libation rum and cake, to reminisce and warm up, before setting out in the wind and rain to get home through the Jubilee crowds.

The Tulse Hill Old Boys send greetings to all their alumni – and to the others who grew up in the area who were unfortunate enough to attend other local schools! Check out www.brockwellpark.com for photographs of the event.

Return of the Bristowe Bust

Thomas Bristowe was the MP for Norwood when the site of Brockwell Park was about to be sold for housing. He led a campaign to buy the estate and make it a public park – and personally guaranteed the money! After a very successful campaign, the park was opened on 6th June 1892. Sadly, Bristowe collapsed and died on the steps of Brockwell Hall during the opening ceremony, but the existence of the park is a tribute to his energy and dedication.

A memorial was erected to his memory a year later but this was demolished back in 1958 to allow some road works. At the time, the portrait bust from atop the memorial was returned to the Bristowe family who have looked after it ever since. Now the family have generously donated the bust to Brockwell Park, and it was unveiled by Cllr. Clive Bennett, Mayor of Lambeth, accompanied by members of the Bristowe family, on 6th June – the park's 120th birthday.

The bust is now set up in the entrance lobby of Brockwell Hall, back where it belongs. We all owe a debt of thanks to the Bristowe family and to the working group from the Friends of Brockwell Park and the Herne Hill Society who made it happen.

FoBP

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 2012



Market stalls back in Brixton Station Road - photo taken by Nic Weedon from above TK Maxx in Brixton Road.

AIMS & ORGANISATION

STRUCTURE & MANAGEMENT:

The society is a registered charity and an unincorporated association. The society's constitution was last revised at the 2008 AGM, to reflect current charity law. The Executive Committee has met 9 times since the last AGM, consisting of Bill Linskey (Chair), Annick Alet, Doye Akinlade, John Cunningham, Barbara Davies, Tom Harle, Phil Isaac, Rosemary Honey, Diana Linskey, Alan Piper, Marilyn Rogers, Devon Thomas, Eileen Walkin, David Warner, Nicholas Weedon, Norma Williamson, and Sue Whitaker who has represented the Friends of Tate Library.

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

NETWORKING: We are in touch with a wide range of community groups. We also try to respond to a varied stream of e-mail enquiries from students, media and family historians.

To improve networking between groups, we have helped to establish the Lambeth Civic Forum and Brixton Neighbourhood Forum.

We have been represented on the boards or committees of several local projects. We have participated in Brockwell Park Community Partners (the Management Advisory Committee), Lambeth Police/Community Consultative Group, Lambeth Local History Forum, Friends of Lambeth Libraries and the Lambeth Parks Forum.

PLANNING & REGENERATION:

We aim to comment on significant local planning applications, and also suggest buildings for protection through listing, conservation areas or Lambeth's Local List. However, it is more efficient for us to focus on overall planning policies rather than individual cases. Lambeth's current review of plans for Brixton Town Centre may lead to our involvement in a Neighbourhood Plan.



Setting up for another event – Marilyn Rogers and Bill Linskey on the right

The London Forum of Amenity Societies keeps us in touch with London-wide and national policies. We are also sharing more information with adjacent amenity societies through the Lambeth Civic Forum.

Annual Report 2012

EVENTS: For Open Garden Squares weekend 2011, we organised a "Growing in Brixton" event on the Saturday and an Art event on the Sunday. We also put on displays or stalls at the Lambeth Country Show, Stockwell Festival, Brixton Windmill Festival and Lambeth Archives Open Day. We are maintaining a similar level of active participation in events through 2012, though we sometimes have to miss out due to competing commitments or short notice for our volunteers.

In addition to our summer guided walks for the Lambeth Local History Forum, since November we have been conducting monthly walks around the market area, to help promote the new Makers' Market on the second Saturday of each month.

PUBLICATIONS: During the past year we have produced booklets on Windrush Square and for the Market Heritage Walks, as well as a reprint of local articles from the early 19th century "Mirror" magazine. Four more postcards were added to our range, and the cards have continued to be our strongest-selling line despite the first price increase in many years. Net publications income increased from £1141 in 2010/11 to £1310 in 2011/12, including £332 from cards and almost £300 from sales of the History of Brixton.

The website has been redesigned and continues to develop. However, since not everyone has internet access, we continue to publish a quarterly Newsletter, to keep all our members informed and to help spread the word more widely about what we do. Extra pages or colour inserts are becoming more frequent.

RESOURCES

MEMBERSHIP: We have attracted 41 new members since the last AGM, raising the paid-up total to 191. People have been able to join on-line since last autumn, typically adding 2 members per month. The Newsletter is a major benefit, and we distribute nearly 300 copies quarterly, including some for key amenity groups and local councillors. Over two thirds of copies go out via a network of 14 volunteers, with a useful saving in postage.

Other support "in kind" from individual members includes staffing stalls, reporting back from a variety of meetings, checking local planning applications and other tasks

which all help maintain the Society's level of activity.

FINANCE: The annual accounts cover the year ended 31 March 2012, but the usual independent examination had not been completed in time for the AGM in June, so definitive figures will appear in the next newsletter, once agreed by the Executive Committee.

Provisionally, total income was £12,878, including grants of £6,995 from the Big Lottery Fund for our Open Garden Squares Weekend events, and £500 from the Peter Minet Trust. Morleys department store made a donation of £500 towards the Market Walks booklet.

Despite increased expenditure on events and new publications, the society's total funds increased from £2,072 to £3,552.

We have updated the inventory of publications held. Subscriptions were last revised at the 2010 AGM.



One of several appearances on Windrush Square, which have generally attracted healthy interest and helped us to enrol new members. (C668 J10-001.jpg)

Editorial Notice:

Space permitting, we try to feature local events and publish reminiscences or enquiries in our newsletter.

We welcome news and comments from all interested in the Brixton area, so opinions expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the Brixton Society.

All material should be sent to the Secretary, Alan Piper, at 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, or by e-mail to APiperBrix@aol.com

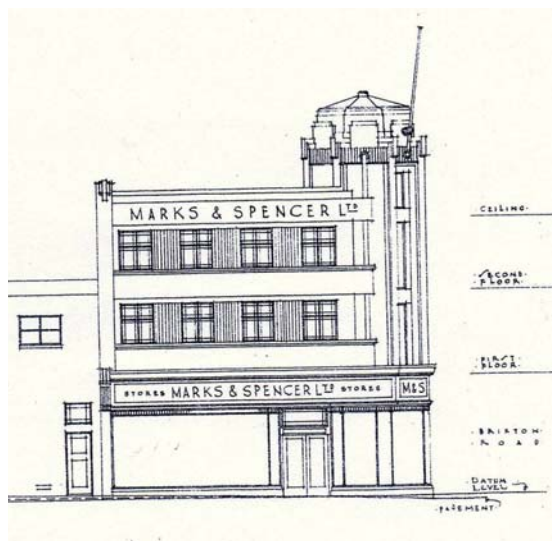
Phone/ fax (020) 7207 0347

Inter-War Buildings

Lambeth Architecture 1914-1939 is the latest joint publication by Lambeth Archives and the Lambeth Local History Forum. Following an earlier volume on Edwardian Architecture, Edmund Bird and Fiona Price have illustrated a range of inter-war buildings around Lambeth, including the 1938 extension of the Town Hall and a generation of “atmospheric” cinemas. Brixton is strongly featured, partly because the rebuilding of the east side of Brixton Road in the 1930s created many new opportunities for architects.

Appropriately, the book was launched in the 1st floor function room above the “streamline” 1930s rebuild of the Prince of Wales pub (now part of the Dex Club) on 29 May during Lambeth’s Readers & Writers Festival. Edmund Bird was previously Lambeth’s Conservation Officer, and is now the Mayor’s Head of Urban Design. He provided a brisk and cogent slide show with many examples from the period.

As with the earlier volume, we aim to have some copies available for sale soon, or in the meantime, you can buy a copy at Lambeth Archives, at the Minet Library.



Marks & Spenser in Brixton Road – view of the Dorrell Place side, as designed in August 1931 by W.A. Lewis & Partners, Architects.

Composer Centenary



Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, from the souvenir programme for performances of “Hiawatha” at the Royal Albert Hall, 12-24 June 1939.

This year sees a glut of centenaries, jubilees and anniversaries. Among these, the Black Cultural Archives recently flagged up that 1912 saw the death of the composer Samuel Coleridge-Taylor.

He was one of a promising generation of British composers to emerge in the 1890s, but which was to be thinned-out all too soon by illness and war, leaving only his fellow student Ralph Vaughan-Williams as the grand old man of British Music post-1945. Changing musical fashions too meant his work was gradually eclipsed after his death.

Samuel was born in Holborn, London in 1875 after his mother Alice Hare Martin had an affair with a medical student at King’s College. His father Daniel Taylor was an African from Sierra Leone, who had been educated in England and returned to Freetown after qualifying as a doctor, probably with no knowledge of his son.

Samuel grew up in the suburb of Croydon, among a musical family, starting violin lessons at 5 and joining his local church choir at 7. At the age of 15, in 1890, he won a scholarship to

Heritage Focus

the Royal College of Music, but switched from violin to composition as his main subject, in 1892, graduating in 1896. He began teaching at Trinity College and at Rochester Choral Society as well as privately. In 1897 he first heard African-American Spirituals performed by the Fisk Jubilee Singers, visiting London from the USA. He also met African-American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar and they began collaborating on an opera.

1898 was his breakthrough year, with support from Edward Elgar and Novello's music editor, Auguste Jaeger. His Ballade in A minor was a successful commission at Gloucester's Three Choirs Festival, and then the premiere of Hiawatha's Wedding Feast in London made him a star. In 1899 he married a former fellow-student, Jessie Fleetwood-Walmsley. Two sequels to the original Hiawatha cantata followed, performed as a complete work with new overture at Birmingham in 1901. That year, actor/ manager Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree engaged Coleridge-Taylor to write incidental music for his plays.

In 1904 Samuel visited the USA for the first time, where the African-American community adopted him as a cultural role-model. His teaching commitments were increasing, as professor of composition at Trinity College (1903), Crystal Palace School of Art and Music (1905) and the Guildhall School of Music (1910). A long-standing student friend from Croydon, William Hurlestone was similarly a professor at the Royal College of Music, but died in 1906 after an asthma attack, at the age of 29.

Samuel returned to the USA for a tour in 1906, and again in 1910 to conduct the Song of Hiawatha at the Norfolk Music Festival. This last visit led to a commission for a Violin Concerto, but the first draft was rejected and after the second version went down with the Titanic, he had to write it a third time!

His workload took its toll and after collapsing at West Croydon Station on 28 August 1912, he died of pneumonia on 1st September, at the age of 37. The Violin Concerto proved a posthumous success when conducted by Sir Henry Wood at the Queen's Hall in October.

Until the outbreak of World War II, Hiawatha remained a firm favourite with choral societies, keeping Coleridge-Taylor's name alive. It even formed the centrepiece of the Royal Albert Hall's summer programme, as a lavish staged production latterly conducted by the then Dr Malcolm Sargent, with 14 performances in the final season in 1939.

There are two useful modern biographies:

Coleridge-Taylor – A Centenary Celebration

by Jeffrey Green, published by History & Social Action in association with the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Network. For details see: www.historysocialaction.co.uk

Black Mahler – the Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Story by Charles Elford, appeared in 2008 and was recently re-published. For details see: www.blackmahler.com

Olympic Corner

Having already hosted two Olympic Games, in 1908 and 1948, London has a lot of archive material about sporting venues, personalities and events. The London Metropolitan Archives, Archives for London and the British Library have collaborated to make more of this material available on-line, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The results can be seen at www.winningendeavours.org Two self-guided walks can be downloaded, around the 1908 site at Shepherd's Bush (White City) and the new Olympic Park at Stratford. Caution – this site only remains live until December!

There are also Olympic connections closer to Brixton. The Herne Hill Cycle Track in Burbage Road, SE24, hosted the cycling events for the 1948 Olympics. The banked track had first been planned in 1896 so was well-established by 1908, with its own grandstand which still survives, but perhaps the organisers felt it was easier to run everything at the new White City.

Along the road, at No.84, a plaque has just been unveiled on the former home of Scipio Africanus "Sam" Mussabini (1867-1927). He is best known for coaching Harold Abrahams to Gold Medal success in the 1924 Olympics, as seen in the 1981 film "Chariots of Fire".

Local History Focus

Stockwell Station

Work began on the first section of what we now know as the Northern Line in 1886. The section ran from King William Street in the City of London to Stockwell. It was opened in



*Engraving from the Illustrated London News
The Prince of Wales on a platform at Stockwell*

1890 by the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII. The City and South London Railway, as it was then called, was not the first underground railway in London, but it did claim two firsts. It was the first to use electric traction (the earlier Metropolitan and the Metropolitan District lines used steam engines) and it was the first deep level tube. The earlier lines were built using the “cut-and-cover” method. Basically, a large trench was dug into which the railway was installed. This was then roofed over where necessary but much of it was left open to the sky and so was not really “underground” at all. The deep level line was built using a relatively new technique where a circular shield protected the tunnellers and cast iron segments were installed behind them to create the “tube”. The station at King William Street was adapted from an existing building; the rest of the line had purpose-built stations at Borough, Elephant & Castle, Kennington, Oval and Stockwell. These all had distinctive domes to accommodate the hydraulic lifts as can still be seen at Kennington station today. The line was extended in 1900 from Borough via London Bridge and Bank to Moorgate, bypassing King William Street which was closed. In the same year, the southern end was extended from Stockwell via Clapham North to Clapham Common. More sections were added in the ensuing decades to create the complex line we know and love (or not, when it lives up to its nickname, “The Misery Line”) today.



An Edwardian photograph of the station. The frontage on Stockwell Road has already been altered and extended - the first of many changes.



*This photograph was taken in 1955.
The queue was caused by a bus strike.*

In 1924 the station was rebuilt with a corner entrance in the style to be seen at the Oval today. The current station is a result of a rebuild in 1974 to accommodate the Victoria Line.

Sadly, this historic station is probably best known today for the shooting on 22 July 2005 of Jean Charles de Menezes by the police. This has led to the most recent addition to its fabric: a mosaic commemorating the innocent Brazilian electrician.

There is a splendid model of the original station in the London Transport Museum in Covent Garden. This shows the layout below, as well as above, ground.

Future Brixton

...back from the past

It's now exactly 3 years since Lambeth published its "Future Brixton" Masterplan after extensive consultation.

But then nothing happened – the Council failed to promote it as part of the local planning framework, or to follow it over the Ice Rink case. The housing developers carried on regardless while grassroots businesses and groups struggled to make something special of Brixton.

Now it seems someone has looked out of the Town Hall window and noticed we are still here. Yet another set of consultants has been appointed – Allies & Morrison Urban Practitioners – with a brief to prepare a **SPD** or Supplementary Planning Document, to guide future development in Brixton's Town Centre. This is meant to flesh out the bare bones in borough-wide planning policies and identify priorities, key sites and distinctive character within the Town Centre. Some worthy principles have been set as the starting point but these urgently need to be translated into firm criteria which developers will conform to.

Simultaneously the Council's cabinet adopted an "Accommodation Strategy" which revives the 1971 concept of a Town Hall "office campus" and reverses the recent trend to base key services at Vauxhall.

Allies & Morrison have made initial approaches to local stakeholder groups, and a few recent workshop sessions have been held to identify current issues. They intend to produce a draft SPD during August, for formal consultation to start in September. Depending on responses, the new SPD would take effect during 2013 to promote or discourage different types of development, though projects already approved, like Barratt's "Brixton Square" are not affected.

For the present, we are going along with the SPD approach because it could take effect fairly quickly and offer some safeguards for the rich mix of uses that is Brixton. We have not abandoned the idea of local stakeholder

groups getting together to promote our own **Neighbourhood Plan**, as set out in the recent Localism Act. We are still investigating this, because such a Plan would carry greater weight in controlling developers' excesses, but it would also take longer to come into effect, so let's see how the SPD pans out first.



*Market Row – the branch opening onto Coldharbour Lane was added in 1931
(BTC-Jn12-003.jpg)*

Our suggestions so far...

Points we have already made to the consultants include:

Sustaining a mix of leisure and cultural activities is crucial to the Town Centre being a focus for the borough and within Greater London. The Recreation Centre is restricted by awkward and intimidating access, which needs improvement. We commend Brixton Green's proposals for a Creative Hub at the corner of Coldharbour Lane and Somerleyton Road.

If Brixton is to be of more than local significance, it must be easier to reach from a

wider area. New platforms on the high-level railway viaduct, immediately east of the rail station, would give access to the latest Overground service. Loss of the multi-storey car park needs to be made good, oriented to shoppers rather than commuters. The centre needs to be more pedestrian-friendly.

Town Centre shops and markets form an important concentration of employment, which needs to be protected. Space needs to be safeguarded for small enterprises and creative industries. Token provision by developers is too often unsuitable.

We deplore the reduction in social housing and the Council's failure to embrace innovative forms of tenure and management. Re-use of residential space above shops needs to be encouraged, with independent access. Recent increases in density need to be matched by improvements in the environment and local amenities – there is still a shortfall of school places, so children have to travel further. We would encourage projects to include roof gardens and collective energy generation.

Please remember that this is a brief overview, so if you have ideas for particular sites around Brixton, please tell us!

Alan Piper

“That will do nicely, sir...”

A weakness of all these plans is the readiness of the Council to abandon them whenever a developer comes along offering a large enough bribe, as provided for by Section 106 of the Planning Act. A possible move for the good is the introduction of a **Community Infrastructure Levy** which will be charged at a set rate per square metre on new floorspace or dwellings. Councils are able to set different rates for different parts of the borough or for different types of development. The Mayor has already introduced a CIL scheme to help fund Crossrail, with different rates charged according to how much a borough is expected to benefit from the new rail link. Lambeth is due to consult on its draft CIL this autumn. This may at least bring some transparency into this system of institutional bribery.

Trouble in the Air

With so many issues on the ground here in Brixton, it's difficult to give much thought to London-wide or regional problems, but some of them come to the fore every couple of years.

We live under the busiest airspace in the world. The perverse location of London's main airport at Heathrow means that most incoming aircraft make a long approach across South London, converging on Brixton at about 3,000 feet. Nowadays we also have aircraft cutting across at 2,000 feet in order to approach London City Airport from the west. This is considered safer than fuel-laden aircraft taking off from there towards the towers of Canary Wharf. To reduce the risk of a low-flying aircraft coming down in the built-up area, single-engined aircraft are not normally allowed over Inner London (except for helicopters following the line of the Thames).

Logically, London's main airport should be east of the built-up area to avoid all this over-flying – hence the appeal of sites on the Isle of Grain or in the Estuary itself. But after decades of growth in air travel, the recession has blunted demand and airlines are struggling with rising fuel bills, so do we still need to plan for more flights?

Despite this, Heathrow's Spanish owners, BAA, and their main customer, British Airways, have been agitating to revive plans for adding a third runway, which would mean North London experiencing similar problems to us down south. All this is to maintain Heathrow's “hub” status as an interchange between routes, in the face of competition from Amsterdam and Paris to capture transatlantic passengers and distribute them around Europe. If you just want to go from A to B, it's probably less hassle to fly from another London Airport – hence the rise of London City, while there's a direct train link to Luton Airport from Herne Hill, or to Gatwick from Victoria Station via Brixton.

Alan Piper.