

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Summer, June/ July 2017

No.226, Quarterly issue,
Distributed free to members.

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

Weekend 15 & 16 July Lambeth Country Show

12 noon to 7 pm, Brockwell Park, SE24
We have published this newsletter a month
earlier to give you advance warning, so we
don't know the exact location of our stall yet - if
you enter by the Herne Hill gate, look out for
us to the right of the path up to Brockwell Hall,
towards the Village Markets area.

Saturday 2nd September: Local History Fair

10 am to 5 pm at St. Leonard's Church
Corner of Streatham High Road and Tooting
Bec Gardens, SW16. The first in a series of
events running through September – collect a
Heritage Festival programme from us during
the Country Show.

Helpers wanted

We are seeking offers of help with staffing our
stall at the above two events, and for the
monthly Market Walks where we run a stall
from 12 to 2-30 pm on Saturday in Brixton
Station Road.

If you can spare us some time during any of
these events, please call Bill or Diana Linskey
on (020) 7274 3835 or e-mail to
Diana@linskey.org.uk



*Atlantic Road plans are still taking shape, so
it now looks as if the final round of consultation
will take place during September. More detail
inside on page 3. (Bx & R17-05.jpg)*

Our next Summer Sunday Walk...

Sunday 18th June: Effra Farm and Effra River

Meet 2-30 pm outside Brixton Tate Library for
a circular route including nearer parts of
Atlantic Road, Poets Corner, Brixton Water
Lane, and the 1870s Stuart-Bruce Estate.

Thursday 14th September: Who was Sir Henry Tate?

7 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre,
2b Saltoun Road SW2
An open meeting to share our research on the
founder of our local library and the Tate
Gallery, This will form part of the Lambeth
Heritage Festival.

More dates listed inside!

Diary of Events, Summer 2017

Society Meetings

The Executive Committee 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. These meetings are open to all our members, but if you want to raise a specific issue, it helps if you can tell the Secretary beforehand.

- 13 July
- 10 August
- 12 October
- 9th November

Market Walks

Our guided walks round the market area continue on the second **Saturday** of every month, at £3 including the illustrated booklet of the route. Tickets are best booked in advance via marketwalks@brixtonsociety.org.uk Walks start from Brixton Station Road, corner of Beehive Place at **2-30 pm** and take about 80 minutes.

Editorial Notice:

Space permitting, we try to feature local events, issues and reminiscences 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 by e-mail to APiperBrix@aol.com

Links with Other Groups

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

Thursday 15 June – Upper Norwood Shops

Shopping in Edwardian splendour near the Crystal Palace: illustrated talk by Alun Thomas in conjunction with the Triangle Shops Project, 7-30 pm at Upper Norwood Library, Westow Hill, SE19.

Norwood Society

17 & 18 June – Open Garden Squares Weekend

Up to 230 London squares and semi-private gardens open during this weekend. Tickets are £13 – details and ticket sales are at www.opensquares.org

Tuesday 20 to Saturday 24 June – the Russian Revolution and the First World War.

Free exhibition open 2 pm to 5 pm (to 7 pm on Friday). Talk by Prof. Mary Davis on the Significance of the Revolution at **7 pm on Friday 23rd**, non-members £5, at SCRSS, 320 Brixton Road, SW9.

Society for Co-operation in Russian and Soviet Studies

Thursday 22 June – Unveiling of Memorial

2 pm to 4 pm (music from 1-30 pm) in Windrush Square adjacent to the Black Cultural Archives. See www.acmemorial.com

Nubian Jak Community Trust and African & Caribbean Memorial Project.

Monday 26 June – the Black Cultural Archives

Talk by Victoria Northridge, collections manager, covering the 30-year process of developing the Archives and achievements since opening the present building 3 years ago. Starts at 8 pm (doors open 7 pm) at Omnibus, the former Clapham Library, 1 North Side, SW4.

Clapham Society

Thursday 17 August – Bygone Streatham

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

South London Local History Group

Thursday 28 September - Brain of Lambeth Quiz

We follow a “pub quiz” format for teams of 4, with rounds of questions on general knowledge topics including Lambeth and London. Doors open at 7-15 for a **7-30 pm** start, at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road SW2, facing onto Windrush Square in Brixton Town Centre. If you are thinking of entering a team, whether on behalf of your society, group, or as a family, it helps our planning if you can tell our quizmaster in advance – call John Moore on (020) 8677 6490 or ideally by e-mail to moore309@hotmail.com *Lambethans Society*

Planning and Amenities

Atlantic Road progress

In our last issue, we predicted another round of consultation in April, but this is now likely in September, on the lines of “tell us if we have missed anything” before final submission to Transport for London.

To be fair, in the meantime there have been discussions with a variety of stakeholders about trying to make the scheme work for them. TfL themselves have changed their funding criteria, though the changes seem to be to Brixton’s advantage. One significant addition is a proposal for a Cyclist Hub behind the former Railway Hotel (now Wahaca) next to a ventilation shaft from the Victoria Line. The forgotten arcade alongside the Tube Station might even be re-opened, to improve links between the two stations. Although Network Rail have been stung into joining in the discussions, improvements to the railway station are likely to be further off, complicated by the split responsibility between NW Rail and the franchise company, South Eastern.

Brixton Economic Action Plan

Back in April, Lambeth unveiled a major study of Brixton’s economy, prepared by Regeneris and We Made That. It identifies key issues for local businesses, residents and the Council itself. At first glance, this is the most positive set of policies that we have seen for many years, but it’s not clear how much of this will be carried through into Council decisions and planning policies.

Business premises of all kinds have been squeezed out by the priority given to housing development, which is now more valuable than any other use. The study analysed the different business activities around Brixton, the space they occupied and their different needs. This in itself is an advance on the token space usually required in a housing development, which turns out to be unsuitable for most uses, allowing developers an excuse to adapt it as extra housing units.

The Plan also revives the idea of linking Brixton’s residents to training opportunities, and encouraging training and employment in association with major developments.

Potentially the Plan could redress the dominance of housing and safeguard the businesses and social amenities that make for a more balanced community, so more stakeholders need to get behind it and urge the Council to put it into practice.

The full text should still be accessible via the Council website, www.lambeth.gov.uk.

Remembering Olive Morris

Olive Morris House on Brixton Hill is due to be demolished next year once the “New Town Hall” and Civic Offices are completed. There was local concern that the name of this community activist, who died in 1979, should not disappear from the Brixton scene, and Liz Obi recently passed on news of negotiations with the Council and its developers.

There will be a new memorial plaque at 1st floor level on the replacement block of flats, at the corner of Brixton Hill and Sudbourne Road. In addition funds are being set aside for an annual award or prize to recognise or support young women involved in community activism.

This approach was one of the alternatives suggested when plans for a David Bowie memorial were first proposed. In the event, that over-ambitious proposal came nowhere near its crowd-funding target, but an award scheme for young people in music or entertainment would be welcome.

Public Toilets in Brixton

Rob Goacher has been campaigning for some time over the lack of public toilets in Brixton (“Taking the P out of Brixton”). Toilets, free or otherwise, have also been taken up as a cause by the Brixton Neighbourhood Forum and the Brixton Society.

Some months back, the Brixton Business Improvement District (BID) put in a tender to Lambeth Events to reopen the underground toilets in Windrush Square, combined with a ground-level kiosk. The Council seems to be holding out for more money, so the stalemate continues. The only public toilets are on Popes Road, within the market, but are no longer free.

Planning and Amenities

Age UK has urged the Mayor to work with local councils to help communities devise neighbourhood plans that include provision of suitable seating in streets, parks and transport facilities, and more public toilets, supported by clearer labelling and signposting to help users find them.

But let's not think that it's only the older person whose bladder needs relief – free public toilets are in everyone's best interests.

Although toilets (mostly chargeable) have been added for public use within Brixton Village, Market Row, Pop Brixton and Brixton Beach, the greatest problems arise outside market hours due to the increase in evening club and bar uses in the Town Centre.

Do we just cross our legs and hope things will improve, or remind Councillors to consider this when re-shaping Brixton?

Becca Thackray.



Becca recently spotted these two discarded toilets in Electric Lane, behind H & M – fortunately before a queue formed!

Toilet public Becca 0418.jpg

“Green” Heating system accused of causing fuel poverty

Summarised from report on BBC website, 30 April.

A heating system meant to reduce bills is leaving people in fuel poverty, according to

campaigners and residents. In recent years the Government has been encouraging the installation of “district heating networks” to help meet carbon reduction targets. Instead of having a gas boiler in every home, networks distribute heat and hot water around an estate via underground pipes from a central heat source or mini power station.

But residents on some networks say they are more expensive than conventional heating, and have been beset by problems.

Residents of the Myatt's Fields North Estate, within the “Oval Quarter” get their heat from the concrete “submarine” in Akerman Road, where a new system was installed by E.on when the estate was rebuilt.

A report about the problems on the estate was prepared by Ruth London of Fuel Poverty Action, and Stuart Hodgkinson from the University of Leeds. It said there had been heat outages on 48 days within 4 years. It detailed individual cases of vulnerable people left without heat for weeks and months on end.

The Chair of the Residents Association pointed out that some smart meters did not work, so some people were receiving higher estimated bills, sometimes for hundreds of pounds a month, and having to choose between heating and eating.

Unlike traditional energy customers, people on district heating cannot go to Ofgem to complain about bills, because district heating is largely unregulated. And while traditional customers can switch energy suppliers, those on district heating are locked into long contracts – 25, 40 or even 80 years have been found around the country.

Alan Piper adds: District heating gained a poor reputation in estates of the 1960s and 70s because tenants had little control over it, while much energy was lost before it even reached the users due to poorly insulated distribution pipes. Despite the promised efficiency, the systems are being discredited by sloppy design and managers lacking any commitment to providing a good service. Perversely, users on another part of the estate are aggrieved at having to install individual boilers when the original district system was shut down!

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 2017

AIMS & ORGANISATION

STRUCTURE & MANAGEMENT: The Society is a registered charity, structured as 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, Joanna Spilman, Eileen Walkin, David Warner and Nicholas Weedon.

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 Archives for London. 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. However Lambeth Voluntary Action Council appears to be dormant, with no news received in nearly 2 years.

PROGRAMME & ACTIVITIES

PLANNING & REGENERATION:

We share oversight of local planning applications amongst our "virtual" planning sub-committee. As well as "densification" of major developments, we have had to pay closer attention to individual home extensions when they become too bulky or intrusive.

We have been represented on steering groups for the improvement of Electric Avenue and for Atlantic Road. We remain involved with Brixton's Townscape Heritage Initiative.

We comment on planning policy proposals whenever draft changes are published.

When the opportunity arises, we also suggest buildings for protection through Listing, conservation areas or Lambeth's Local List.

We continue to work with the London Forum of Amenity Societies, to keep in touch with London-wide and national planning policies.



Electric Avenue after completion of the repaving works (Bx&R17-07.jpg)

NETWORKING: We try to keep 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 (see below).

There are also frequent e-mail enquiries from students, media and family historians, to which we try to respond.

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FRIENDS OF WINDRUSH SQUARE:

Ongoing issues are the lack of resources for maintaining the surfaces, excessive commercial use and anti-social behaviour. In spite of these, the space is popular and the Black Cultural Archives has added interest to the south-east corner.

The Friends have tried to bring back some plant life to the Square, in new planters and by planting bulbs for spring flowering, supplied through the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association.

Sadly, Annick Alet has had to stand down as Chair of the Friends, due to her other commitments, so we are keen to involve some extra people.

FRIENDS OF TATE LIBRARY: This has been a difficult time, with increased pressure on library space due to the ongoing closure of Minet and Carnegie libraries, and reduced services in Norwood and Waterloo. Despite this, library staff have been co-operative over events. We continue to support the Friends of Lambeth Libraries in their campaign to restore core services.

EVENTS: We put on displays or stalls at the Lambeth Country Show and Lambeth Archives Open Day last year, and other occasional events such as the recent Love Your Market promotion.

For the past 5 years we have sustained a series of monthly Brixton Market walks on the second Saturday of each month, in support of the Brixton Market Traders' Federation.

During the summer we provide several other longer guided walks in conjunction with the Lambeth Local History Forum. We also organised a local history evening as part of the Lambeth Heritage Festival last September, and a members' social evening in January.

PUBLICATIONS: A summary of publications sales over the past 2 years is shown alongside the annual accounts. Following a couple of promotional events in the previous year, sales fell back a little last year.

New titles are under consideration, but progress is always contingent on funding and on members finding spare time for research.

A major commitment is the quarterly newsletter, for which we would like to include more in-depth articles. Presently we produce up to 300 copies of each edition, including copies for key groups and local councillors.

The website is a major channel for wider sales of our publications, and for walks bookings. Currently redesign is underway to allow easier updating and posting of topical items.

RESOURCES

MEMBERSHIP: There is always some turnover due to old members moving away, and 15 were deleted in the past year, but numbers remain steady around 150 paid-up members.

Over two thirds of Newsletters 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, and researching local issues, all tasks which help maintain the Society's level of activity.

FINANCE: The annual accounts cover the year ended 31 March 2017. Our thanks go to our Treasurer David Warner for compiling the accounts and to Andrew Thurnburn for providing independent examination.

The only grant received was on behalf of Friends of Windrush Square, towards their Community Day in April 2016. Variations in costs of newsletters and meetings are mainly due to some late charges from the previous year. Overall there was still a surplus of £187.44 over the year. Subscriptions were last reviewed at the 2016 AGM.

Alan Piper, Secretary.

BRIXTON SOCIETY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT 1st APRIL 2016 - 31st MARCH 2017

	2016/2017	2015/2016
<u>INCOME</u>		
Grants/Awards	500.00	0.00
Members' Subscriptions	992.00	999.00
Sale of Publications, etc	1,424.97	1,854.90
Donations	356.18	345.73
Postage	71.93	100.05
Bank Interest	1.14	1.19
Miscellaneous	-0.50	0.00
Sub-Total	<u>£3,345.72</u>	<u>£3,300.87</u>
Refunds	-1.10	-8.00
Discounts	0.00	-89.14
Ebay/Paypal fees	-88.67	-70.16
Receipts less discounts/refunds	<u>£3,255.95</u>	<u>£3,133.57</u>
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
Photocopying	0.00	2.10
Newsletter Prod	545.18	315.00
Postage	277.10	260.19
Stationery	88.33	19.95
Publications - purchase	0.00	64.00
Publications - printing	423.00	740.65
Posters/Leaflets/Banner	75.40	7.39
Insurance Cost (general)	65.00	65.00
Subscriptions	63.00	91.00
Cost of Meetings	455.00	350.00
Miscellaneous	343.63	9.00
Equipment/Stall	20.00	0.00
Events	81.32	210.00
Catering/Refreshments	184.50	149.70
Website hosting	122.00	80.38
Friends of Windrush Square	325.05	226.15
	<u>£3,068.51</u>	<u>£2,590.51</u>
Surplus	£187.44	£543.06

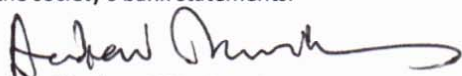
Publications Sold	2016/2017	2015/2016
Town Trails	85.50	31.50
Memories	24.95	72.88
Windrush Square	10.00	11.00
Brixton - Story of a name	6.00	13.00
Effra - Underground River	34.50	204.00
Greeting cards	7.00	1.50
Maps	12.50	5.00
Brixton Abridged	0.00	1.60
Postcards	216.00	231.00
History of Brixton	239.76	259.74
Brixton Market LT poster	0.00	24.00
Brixton Boy WWII	49.80	22.41
Black British Celebration	86.00	173.00
Synagogue	34.86	32.37
Market Walk Tickets	180.00	205.70
Market Walk Books	422.00	444.00
Brixton & Stockwell Mirror	3.60	7.20
Brixton MPs	12.50	115.00
	<u>£1,424.97</u>	<u>£1,854.90</u>
Less Discount	0.00	-89.14
	<u><u>£1,424.97</u></u>	<u><u>£1,765.76</u></u>

Net Paypal income from subscriptions/publications was £703.96

Balance sheet	2017	2016
Opening Balance	£4,421.04	£3,877.98
Surplus for year	£187.44	£543.06
Closing balance	<u>£4,608.48</u>	<u>£4,421.04</u>
Represented by:		
Closing balances		
Current a/c	£2,649.14	£2,466.80
Dep A/C	£1,817.38	£1,816.24
Paypal	£141.96	£138.00
	<u>£4,608.48</u>	<u>£4,421.04</u>

Statement by External Examiner

I have reviewed the cash book and the totals of receipts and payments stated above are in accordance therewith and correspond to the balances shown in the society's bank statements.



Andrew Thurnburn FCA - Examiner

24/5/17

Should Be Better Remembered

EMPRESS BRIXTON

For the week commencing Monday, 17th October 1910, the *Empress* is proud to announce at the top of the bill, Harry Lauder, the Great Scottish comedian and Marie Lloyd, the Queen of Comediennes. Even today, these names will be at least vaguely familiar to most of our readers. But how many will recognize the next big name on the bill: Joe Elvin? He should be better remembered.

JOE ELVIN

Joe Elvin was born Joseph Peter Keegan in 1862 in Soho, London, the son of a music-hall entertainer. He was treading the boards himself before the age of ten.

The successful stage character he developed was that of a cockney working man who was not overawed by those who would consider themselves his social superiors.



In 1892 he married Charlotte (Lottie) Elizabeth Heffer; they never had children. Lottie died in 1916; he died in 1935.

OFF-STAGE

It is for his off-stage life he is most remembered.

In 1907 he played a major role in the "Music Hall War", a strike not only about pay but also some of the restrictive conditions imposed by proprietors. The dispute was



The Empress, Brixton on the corner of Bernay's Grove and Brighton Terrace; opened as a "theatre of varieties" 1898; re-modelled in art deco style, 1931; became the *Grenada, Brixton cinema*, 1957; demolished 1992; now flats on the site.

resolved largely in the artistes' favour.

Also in 1907, he helped found and became first president of the Variety Artistes' Benevolent Fund.

His next big philanthropic endeavour began in 1909 and culminated in 1911 with the opening of the Variety Artists' Benevolent Institution known as Brinsworth House in Twickenham: a home for old and infirm performers.

He was keen on horse racing: the gee-gees. But in his case, the "g"s included gregariousness and generosity as well as gambling which led to his most famous foundation.

He owned a trotting pony and offered to donate any winnings to charity. Once, on a rainy trip to the Derby, someone commented that the soaked pony looked more like a water rat and, in 1889, the Grand Order of the Water Rats was formed.

BRIXTON CONNECTIONS

For much of his stage career, Joe lived at Rainham House, 63 Effra Road. He is shown there in the 1911 census with Lottie and two servants. Other variety artistes were regular callers on Sundays.

In the 23 August 1890 edition of *The Era* newspaper there is an announcement of an outing of the "Select Order of Water Rats" (they only became Grand later). This lists one, Harry Freeman, as King Rat. He was the first holder of that title rather than Joe, who was too busy being "Bank Rat", their treasurer.

The address of the Water Rats is given as *The Lodge, The White Horse, Brixton Road*



The White Horse Brixton Road, corner of Loughborough Road; now called *Brixton Jamm*.

TODAY

The Variety Artistes' Benevolent Fund still exists, now called the Royal Variety Charity and it still runs Brinsworth House, the "*Old Pro's Paradise*".

The Grand Order of the Water Rats is still going strong. A recent King Rat was Rick Wakeman, keyboardist of "Yes" fame. Their recent charitable donations include to Guy's Hospital, the Macmillan Cancer Fund and, of course, Brinsworth House.

Well done Joe!

Bill Linskey

Local History Overview

When Brixton once was a New Town...

We have just been asked to provide a tour of Brixton in connection with a conference on New Towns, At first the connection seemed a bit tenuous but the idea of creating new towns or suburbs has been around for a couple of centuries, though in and out of favour at different times. However, different landowners rarely co-operated and it's only in the past 70 years that there has been any co-ordination, through the Town Planning system.

Brixton only began to be recognised as a distinct place scarcely 200 years ago – prior to that, it merely signified the north-eastern corner of the County of Surrey, extending across the modern London Boroughs of Wandsworth, Lambeth, Southwark and the Deptford part of Lewisham.

Place-making started with the enclosure of two areas of Common land on the opposite sides of the Turnpike Road to Croydon and Brighton. On the east side, Rush Common was part of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Manor of Lambeth, enclosed under an 1806 Act of Parliament but not shared out amongst its tenants until 1810. Unusually, building lines were included to prevent development too close to the road frontages, retaining a suburban look for many years. An amending Act of 1821 provided sites for a new parish church (St. Matthew's) and its vicarage. On the west side, the smaller Stockwell Common (from Stockwell Manor) was enclosed in 1813.

Early residential development was peripheral to the present Town Centre. **Holland Town** was built around the northern end of Brixton Road in the 1820s, interrupted by a recession in the 1830s before continuing south to **Loughborough Park** from the 1840s. **Stockwell Park** was also developed from the 1840s, followed by **Angell Town** from the 1850s.

To the south, **Tulse Hill** and **Clapham Park** developed slowly as more upmarket suburbs from the 1820s onwards.

These early residential districts were marked by the willingness of the estate developers to provide sites for churches as focal points for their new suburbs, though shops and public houses were usually confined to the edges, or inserted when later generations of freeholders were less fussy.

Transport Infrastructure

Rapid urbanisation began with the construction of railway lines through the area from 1862. The first line was built by the London Chatham & Dover Railway Company from Bromley to Victoria, closely followed by another line eastward from Brixton via Loughborough Junction and hence to Blackfriars. Another company, the London Brighton and South Coast, built a line in 1866-67 sailing over Brixton Station at high level, with its own local station at East Brixton. (One of our ambitions is to re-open this to gain access to the London Overground services.)

As a result, the neighbourhood rapidly filled with new streets of terraced houses, allowing people to commute from these new areas to work in Central London. Such developments were carried out independently by different landowners, and the streets on adjacent sites would not necessarily line up, leaving us with an eccentric street pattern, rather than a logical grid.

Commercial Momentum

Alongside the new railway station, Atlantic Road was lined with small shops during the 1860s. Market stalls were also established in Atlantic Road by 1870.

With a rising resident population, demand for local shops increased but what really made Brixton a more significant centre was the opening of the Bon Marche department store in 1877. This was the first purpose-built example in the country. It began to attract shoppers from further afield, first taking advantage of the railway access and later of tram services joining up the suburban stations.

Soon both sides of Brixton Road between Acre Lane and Stockwell Road were lined with shops, including several department stores.

Local History Overview

In 1887 the Bon Marche store was almost tripled in size, and the next year the prestigious Electric Avenue opened, with electric lights suspended from glazed canopies over the pavements on both sides of the road. In 1910, the Bon Marche expanded again, building a new annexe on the opposite side of Ferndale Road, linked by a tunnel below the road to allow goods to be moved between the two buildings. The end nearer Brixton Road was given a tower topped by a copper dome, to make it more visible from the trams passing along the main road.

By 1914 Brixton had acquired most of the amenities expected of a small town, with the addition of the Tate Library (1893), two theatres, a roller-skating rink, Turkish baths, a Town Hall (1908) and a couple more public halls, and several cinemas (if we include a few short-lived enterprises in railway arches!).

Commercial development continued between the two world wars, including the Astoria "super" cinema, designed for the "talkies", and the distinctive shopping arcades, which provided traders with a step up between a market stall and a "proper" shop. Meanwhile, light industry replaced some of the earlier grand houses, made obsolete by the decline of domestic servants.

The eastern side of Brixton Road, between Atlantic Road and Coldharbour Lane, was rebuilt between 1935 and 1939 as the result of a deal between the London County Council and the various freeholders. Building on the original front gardens was prohibited by the original Inclosure Act, but many unsightly structures had been put up in defiance of the Act. Owners gave up the front half of their gardens for road widening, in exchange for the right to build on the remainder, though below the high-level rail viaduct, a single-storey shop survived until some 25 years ago.

Planning without Investment

Brixton had developed without any overall plan and the start of a Town Planning system in 1948, only meant the County of London Plan setting out broad-brush policies.

This changed in 1965 with the creation of London Boroughs with enhanced powers,

combined with an enthusiasm for building more Council housing, by slum clearance or by rebuilding existing neighbourhoods at higher densities. The Greater London Development Plan encouraged each borough to compete in enhancing its own "Strategic Town Centre".

Lambeth produced a series of ambitious plans for the "comprehensive development" of Brixton Town Centre, but the net effect was to deter private investment, so that instead Brixton declined as a significant shopping centre. Lambeth's limited resources for non-housing development only allowed building of the Recreation Centre and an adjacent multi-storey car park (the former now listed, the latter demolished several years ago). The rest of the plan remained unrealised, including high-level footbridge links to adjacent estates.

Market Forces return

In the mid-1980s Lambeth accepted a more modest approach to planning the Town Centre, lifting the blight, though it is still susceptible to grand projects with adverse effects on the local environment. In 1993-98 a City Challenge programme provided some useful investment, including partial refurbishment of the arcades. Conscious efforts were begun to encourage entertainment uses and the night-time economy, to fill the gap left by the decline of shopping trade. The survival of some large venues such as the O2 Academy helped this trend, though the consequences have not been planned for.

Good public transport access and proximity to Central London have revived the housing market so much that established local residents have difficulty remaining. More disturbing is the Council's current enthusiasm for premature demolition of housing estates, reducing the proportion of Council tenants in the denser rebuilt estates. Business space too has gradually been eroded by residential development, and the Council has been slow to protect what remains. This means that it is now becoming difficult to find space for new enterprises, or for existing firms to expand without moving out of the district.

Alan Piper

Beyond Brixton

London Festival of Architecture

A series of events and talks runs through June, including an Open Architecture exhibition by 11 designers in a disused shop near the Elephant & Castle. Open Thursday to Sunday until **25 June**, noon to 7 pm at 53-55 East Street, SE17.

Living with the Night Economy

Also within the Festival schedule, a free exhibition on the ground floor of the Building Centre shows the results of a recent ideas competition. What should a 24-hour city of the future look like? Are there any ideas here worth applying in Brixton?

Continues until **15 August**, weekdays 9 am to 6 pm, Saturdays 10 am to 5 pm at 26 Store Street, WC1E 7BT. www.buildingcentre.co.uk/news

Garden Museum re-opened

Next to the gates of Lambeth Palace, the Garden Museum recently re-opened after a re-fit of the former Lambeth Parish Church, St. Mary's. The new layout reveals original features within the deconsecrated church, including many memorials to distinguished members of the congregation. Exhibits are now mostly on 1st floor galleries but ground floor extensions provide extra meeting spaces adjacent to

a courtyard garden centred on the family tomb of the Tradescants, residents of South Lambeth Road, who introduced exotic plants to England in the 17th century.

There are concessionary admission charges for Lambeth residents. See www.gardenmuseum.org

New Post Museum

Another London museum is due to open in July. This will be the Postal Museum, which will include a section of the former London Post Office Railway. Until 2003, this ran underground between Paddington and Whitechapel, carrying mailbags. For emerging information, see www.postalmuseum.org



Rare postbox with Edward VIII cipher on Brixton Hill (BxWMa11-09.jpg)

Underground Food

London has its first underground farm, based at Clapham North in the former deep air raid shelter whose tunnels run parallel to the Northern Line.

The main products are herbs and salad items, grown hydroponically within the shelter tunnels. The founders recently signed a deal to supply their produce to Ocado.

(from London Sustainability Exchange)

Heritage talks at Southwark Cathedral

Ruth Miller has reminded me that Southwark Cathedral puts on a number of history talks in the course of the year, some at modest cost and some free – details are at: <http://cathedral.southwark.anglican.org/visit/talks-and-lectures>

New Pavilion at Dulwich Picture Gallery

Perhaps inspired by the series of high-profile kiosks alongside the Serpentine Gallery, Dulwich Picture Gallery has just launched its own temporary pavilion, designed by IF_DO Architects.

It consists of a lightweight roof above a flexible space defined by movable mirrored panels, the whole erected within one month. It will host various events until 8th October.

For the gallery's summer events programme, see: www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk

Notes and News

An AGM and a sequel...

Arrangements for our Annual General Meeting have been complicated by the Government calling a General Election for the same date. By the time most of you read this, we should have pressed on and dealt with the formal business, but we like to have a topical guest speaker or presentation too. We had intended to invite Councillor Sonia Winifred, Lambeth's new Cabinet member for Equalities and Culture but the election meant all politicians were committed elsewhere.

Fortunately Cllr. Winifred has agreed to come to address our next committee meeting on **13 July**. (Meeting details are on page 2.)

As usual, other members of the Society are welcome to join us, and to stay for the rest of the agenda if they wish.

Myatt's Fields Park Fair

Saturday 17 June will be the Summer Fair in the park, running from 1 pm to 5 pm. There will be music on the bandstand, children's play activities, and a range of stalls run by local groups and businesses. For more details or to book a pitch for a stall, e-mail to enquiries@myattsfieldspark.info

Brockwell Park Events

Annual Dog Show, Sunday 9th July, this year's theme is "the mystery of Brockwell Park". Registration between 12 noon and 1-30 pm, show and judging 2 pm to 4 pm. More details from friends@brockwellpark.com

Monthly Car Boot Sales continue in the Lido car park on these Sundays: 11th June, 9th July, 6th August, 10th September. Open to the public from 9 am (sellers from 7 am) and closing at 1 pm. Enquiries as above.

Saturday 19 and Sunday 20 August will be the Jus'Caribbean Festival, sponsored by Grace Foods. Confirmation whether this will be in Brockwell Park or another South London park was still pending as we went to press, so check out www.juscaribbean.com again soon.

Brixton Design Trail

Although entries have closed for full publicity in September's London Design Festival, free entries can still be made to the BDT platform and website until noon on **Monday 12 June** for local publicity. This year's Trail theme is Love is Power. Enquiries to hello@brixtondesigntrail.co.uk

Friends of Tate Library

A successful evening upstairs at the library on 26 May to present highlights of the **Vintage Voices** oral history/ creative writing project. Several members contributed and there may be more to come – enquiries to Caroline Funnel at info@sixteenfeet.co.uk

On the second **Tuesday** afternoon of the month, the Friends join with the Friends of Windrush Square to clean and cultivate the planters outside the library, and on Windrush Square itself – next session is at 1-30 pm on **13 June** and extra helpers would be welcome – offers to foftlbrixton@gmail.com

Market opportunities

Here are 3 ways to have a go if you want to try your hand at running a local market stall:

Bringing our Communities Together is putting on 3 events in the Brixton area, on Sundays 25 June, 2nd and 9th July. Not just traders but also entertainers, health and wellbeing practitioners and community information will be welcome. See www.facebook.com/Bringing-our-Communities-Together or e-mail to Andrea Brown at bringingourcommunitiestogether@gmail.com

The Night Market on Windrush Square has some slots for extra traders – contact Tina Jennings of Street Concepts CIC at info@street-concepts.co.uk or see www.street-concepts.co.uk

Brixton Market Traders Federation continue to run the market in Brixton Station Road with a different theme on each Saturday of the month, so pick whichever suits. Details on their website, www.brixtonmarket.net