

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Spring issue, March 2015

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

Website: www.brixtonociety.org.uk

An Early Spring?

Normally we distribute our Spring issue in April, but arrangements are sometimes complicated by the variable date of Easter and the unavoidable absence of key volunteers, so this year we are publishing earlier than usual. We are still awaiting updates on various Lambeth plans, so we have taken the opportunity to include some additional local history research that has arrived in the past few months.

Guided Walks List:

We hope to have the list of guided walks from all Lambeth's amenity societies in time for distribution with this issue. Nowadays the series starts earlier, but do check our website for any late additions or changes as the Summer season progresses.

Thursday 11th June: Annual General Meeting

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

Time again to report on what we have been doing over the past year, collect ideas for the year ahead, and elect committee members to carry them out. Agenda details available from May, from the Secretary, Alan Piper on (020) 7207 0347 or by e-mail to apiperbrix@aol.com



Atlantic Road with Brixton Railway Station above, as it appeared c.1910. The vulnerable shops are in the railway arches. (Atlantic 2.jpg, Linskey Collection)

Testing Times for Town Centre Traders

Last month we had the greatest threat to Brixton shopping for many years, with Network Rail's proposal to evict all the businesses in the railway arches in Atlantic Road and Brixton Station Road, between Brixton Road and Popes Road. The aim seems to be to modernise them and re-let them at higher rents, to cash in on the current revival of the market area. Even if you can forgive that, it will create a big hole in the heart of the shopping area while the work proceeds and reduce trade for the stallholders in Station Road.

Network Rail intends to submit a planning application "in the spring" and has agreed that traders can remain in place for the run-up to Christmas. By the end of last month, over 18,000 people had signed the on-line petition calling on Network Rail to let the shops stay: see www.change.org/p/network-rail-halt-the-evictions-of-brixton-and-herne-hill-s-beloved-businesses-from-the-railway-arches

One recent piece of good news is that the Mayor has granted Lambeth £869,000 from his High Streets Fund to support Brixton's shopping area, including improving the street markets and arcades, and promoting the Brixton Pound.

Diary of Events, Spring 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 April
- 14 May
- 11 June (AGM)
- 9 July

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 21 March – Restoring the Crystal Palace Subway

Talk by Sue Giovanni, 8 pm at the Phoenix Centre, Westow Street, SE19.
South London Local History Group

Friday 27 March – Gone to Seed 2015

Launch of the third year of our community gardening project – come and see what it's all about, between 1 pm and 4 pm at the Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses, Brockwell Park, tel. (020) 7926 6283.

Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses

Brixton Windmill

Guided tours will resume on Easter Saturday, **4th April** – see the Friends' website for further dates and details: www.brixtonwindmill.org/visit

Monday 6th April – The South London Potteries

Brian Bloice unpicks the stories of the Doultons, Greens and Stiffs, 8 pm at the Woodlawns Centre (Streatham Darby & Joan Club) 16 Leigham Court Road, SW16
Streatham Society

Monday 20 April – Brave New World

Edmund Bird, heritage adviser to the Mayor and TfL, will introduce his recent book on Architecture in Lambeth in the 20 years after the Second World War. Starts at 8 pm (doors open 7 pm) at Omnibus, 1 North Side, SW4.
Clapham Society

Thursday 16 April – Balloons, Airships and early Aeroplanes at the Crystal Palace

Talk by Jerry Green at Upper Norwood Library, Westow Hill SE19, 7-30 pm.
Norwood Society

Tuesday 12 May – Protecting London, past, present and future

Talk by Gustav Milne of the University of London, 7-30 pm (doors open 7pm) at the Co-op Housing Hall,

106 The Cut, SE1 (almost opposite the Old Vic). £1 for non-members.

Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society

Sunday 24 May – tour of Henry Tate Gardens

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

Until 30 June – Staying Power

The current exhibition documents the experiences of Black people in Britain post-1945, featuring the work of photographer Charlie Phillips in Notting Hill in the 1960s. (A further selection is on display at the Victoria & Albert Museum until **Sunday 24 May**.) BCA, 1 Windrush Square SW2
Black Cultural Archives

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

Changing Times in Brixton

All change!

Simon Adams considers the massive changes that have affected Ferndale ward over the past 20 years:

From 1995 to 1998 I was honoured to serve as councillor for Ferndale Ward in central Brixton. For those that do not know the ward, its butterfly-shaped boundaries stretch from Clapham High Street in the west to Brixton Road in the east, and from Acre Lane in the south to roughly the railway line and then up to Sidney Road and Robsart Street in the north. Its current population is around 13,000 people, of whom around 10% move in or out of the ward each year. In the 20 years since I was councillor, this ward has changed almost beyond recognition.

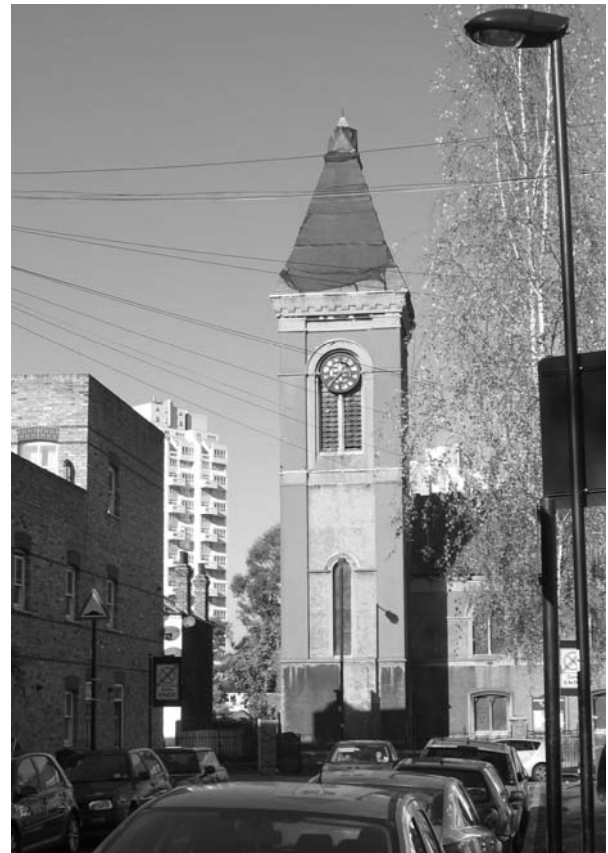
The main change has been in the hollowing out of Lambeth Council services. Since 1995 two – Santley and Haselrigge – of the four primary schools have since closed due to falling local schools rolls (ironically, in the light of the recent population explosion). There is no other education provision in the ward, although there are two training centres. Two Lambeth-funded social service day centres have also closed, although the ward still has three almshouses and, a recent new but sad addition, a food bank. The only other surviving Lambeth Council services are some local play spaces, including the skateboard park on the Stockwell Road, the sports centre in Ferndale Road and a new library, which just sneaks into the corner of the ward on Clapham High Street.

The other big change is in employment. Since 1995 the Fulham Timber Yard in Acre Lane and the Britannia Tiles and builders' yard in Bedford Road have all closed, as has the regional office of the Kone Lift company, also in Bedford Road. All have or are being replaced by apartment blocks. Gone too is the excellent trade lighting shop on Acre Lane. As a result, the only manual work in the ward is now metal bashing and car repair under the railway arches. Lambeth Council has continued to shed jobs at speed, with the result that shops large and small, particularly in Brixton, and a variety of offices and services are now the major local employers.

In recent years, Ferndale has become home to four small supermarkets, with a Tesco and Sainsbury's in Clapham High Street, a Morrisons in Acre Lane and a Tesco Express and petrol station on the Brixton Road – the only one in the ward – as well as many other convenience stores. Difficult to get money to use at them, however, as there are only two banks and one credit union in

the entire ward, easily outnumbered by the ten or more estate agents.

If you want a drink, four pubs have closed – the most recent being The Grosvenor in Sidney Road – leaving only five remaining in the ward, although there are numerous bars in both Brixton and Clapham. The Brixton Academy thrives, having fought off a takeover bid by a fundamentalist Christian church, although other clubs have come and gone under licensing pressure. Of the many churches, the Seventh Day Adventists pack in a vast congregation every Saturday at their church in Santley Street, although the more mainstream churches continue to decline in numbers.



The decaying tower of St. Andrew's Church, Landor Road (C888-Nv14-07.jpg)



Changing trading patterns on Acre Lane: 90-92 were built as houses in the 1830s, with shops built over the front gardens in 1884 (2013 photo). C832-My13-10.jpg

Changing Times in Brixton

Underlying all these changes is the rise in house prices. A house in Santley Street cost around £110,000 in 1995. One in the same road fetched a shade under a million last year while houses in more affluent streets easily top that figure. This astronomic rise has fuelled a massive middle-class regeneration and improvement of many streets, although at the cost of pricing many local people out of the ward. Increasing numbers of houses are now divided into flats on short-term, expensive rentals. Social housing continues to dominate, notably on the Stockwell Park Estate, currently undergoing extensive rebuilding, although that estate is now independent of council control.

What once was a ward of mixed social classes involved in both manual and blue-collar work is now, with exception of the seven large social housing estates, an increasingly middle-class ward with professional careers in the city and elsewhere. What once was a thriving local mainly working-class community is increasingly a residential dormitory for increasingly asset-rich commuters. Ferndale has indeed utterly changed over 20 years.

For those interested in changes over a slightly longer timescale, Alan Piper adds that an earlier profile of Ferndale and Stockwell wards was published as part of the Government's Inner Area Studies in 1977 and can be consulted at Lambeth Archives.

Thomas Bailey and family

A Brixton businessman whose name is still displayed on Acre Lane, the man who "built and endowed" the Trinity Homes almshouses in 1822, but people often ask who was he?

We are pleased to report that one of his descendants has been trying to find out – Mary Gray has been in touch by e-mail from British Columbia. She has been researching the family tree, and we have been able to pass on to her some information based on the brief entries in the Lambeth volume of the Survey of London, compiled back in 1956.

So far, she has been able to add that Thomas was born in 1753 in Newcastle-under-Lyme, and is first recorded in London in 1775 as a business partner of James Neale, another Staffordshire man who established himself at 8 St.Paul's Churchyard as a warehousman and cut glass manufacturer. The company of Neale & Bailey was eventually wound up in 1815. As the business prospered, Thomas was able to set up home in Brixton, then on London's rural fringe, at Bethel House on Brixton Hill. This was a substantial house built in 1768 almost opposite

Brixton Water Lane. Corpus Christi Catholic Church now stands on the site. Mary was able to locate a plan of the property among family papers at the London Metropolitan Archives during a previous visit to London (see facing page). The house had generous grounds and more land was acquired across the road after the enclosure of Rush Common in 1810.

When the Thornycroft Estate (the rump of the old Stockwell Manor) was auctioned off in 1802, Thomas Bailey bought the Eight Acres Field on the north side of Acre Lane. Within this he built The Cedars (now 48-50) in 1819, and sold them to his son-in-law, John Illidge, stockbroker. Illidge and his wife Mary Ann initially occupied No.48. Bailey sold the remainder of the field in 1825 to John Illidge, who eventually built another 4 houses (now 88-92) from 1831.

For the almshouses, originally Trinity Asylum, Bailey bought part of the Further Six Acres Field from George Wheeler. Originally there were 8 apartments in the front block and 4 at the rear. He gave an endowment of £2000 in 1824, and a bequest of £500 on his death in 1828, with a further bequest from his widow Mary on her death in 1835.

After Thomas Bailey's death, Mr & Mrs Illidge moved into Bethel House. The freehold estate was auctioned after John Illidge died in 1846, but members of the family continued to occupy the house under a lease until 1871, when they moved back to The Cedars. John Betts Illidge (Bailey's grandson) sold this to the London School Board in 1899, initially for use as a school for mentally defective children. In 1902 Santley Street School was opened on the former grounds at the rear.

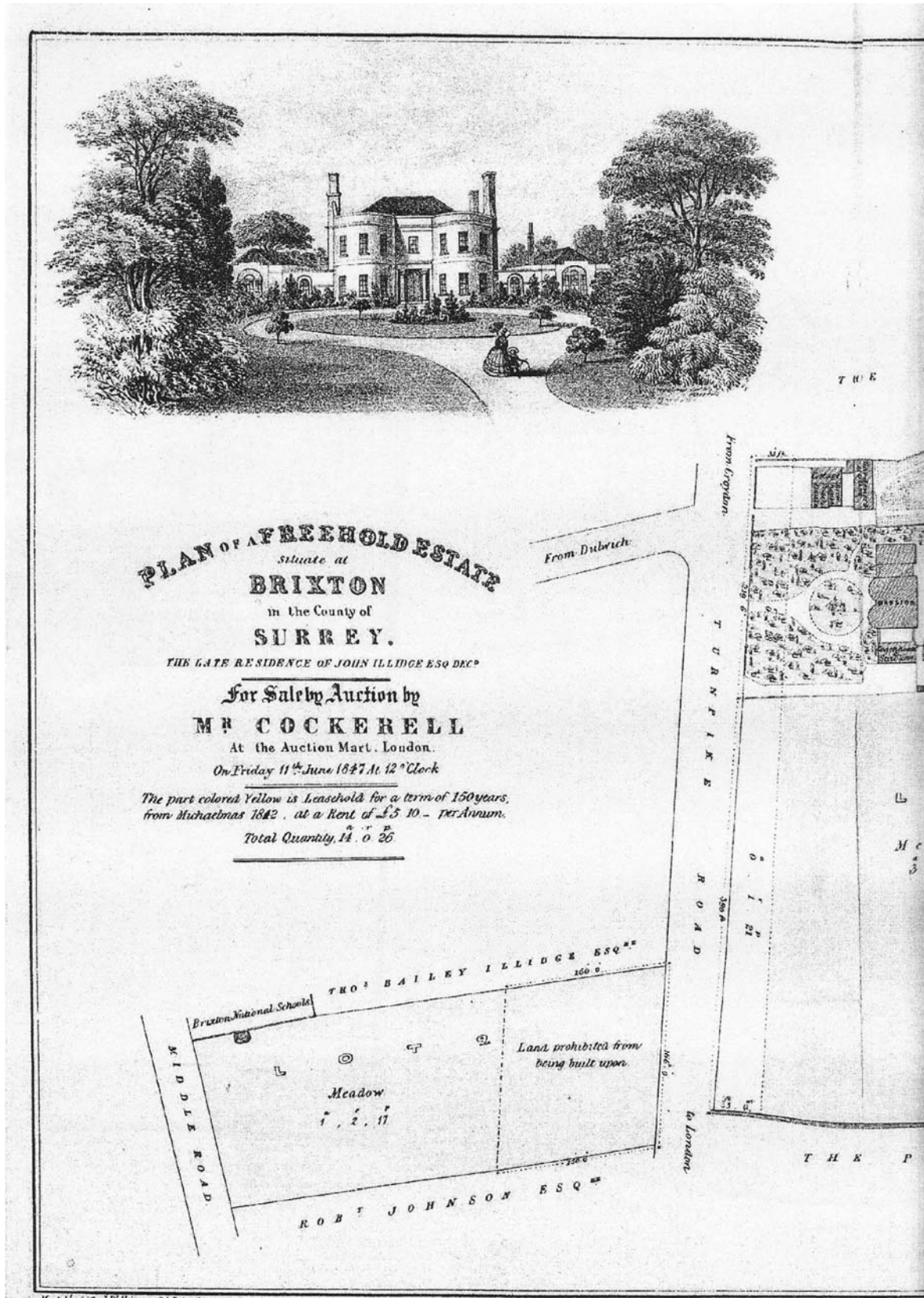
Of wider interest, we noticed during this research that Lambeth's Landmark website now includes some of the plans showing renumbering of local streets – for Acre Lane, it was in 1877 (#11550). See www.landmark.lambeth.gov.uk

Historic Mapping Tool

Nick Weedon recently came across a website which displays a number of historic maps alongside a choice of current online versions. Go to <http://maps.nls.uk> and select "side by side" from among the useful-looking links (others yet to be explored!).

Nick tried this for Reliance Arcade, Brixton Windmill and the former East Brixton Station. He reports that the mapping appears to be very accurate, to the extent that if you put the cursor on the corner of a property that no longer exists, a shadow cursor shows the exact spot on the modern map.

Bethel House, Brixton Hill



Sketch view and part of the site plan for Bethel House, as prepared for auction in 1847
Note that North is at the top, the Middle Road now being St. Matthew's Road.

426 COLDHARBOUR LANE



The *Lambeth Landmark* website shows images from the Lambeth Archives collection including a splendid photograph of 426 Coldharbour Lane taken in the 1930s.¹ Our photo shows a mirror salvaged from the shop, now in a private collection. Research at the archives has revealed an interesting history.

WEBSTER Cheese Monger 1875 – c.1893

The first record of the occupation of 426 Coldharbour Lane has been found in the 1875 Rate Book where it was shown as a house owned and occupied by Arthur Webster. By 1880, the address is appearing in Kelly's directory described as a cheese monger's and continues to do so until c.1893.²

VARIOUS c.1893 - 1899

There are then various businesses in the premises, including a cycle maker and an estate agent's, until the end of the century.

COOMER Oyster Bar 1900 – 1905

The Kelly's directory for 1900 shows the "Theatre Oyster Bar Co." and thereafter lists it as an oyster bar run by Charles Coomer. This unfortunate man died in 1905 aged just 42 leaving a widow and 6 children.

WALKDEN Fish Restaurant 1906 – late 1920s

The next recorded occupant is Alfred Walkden who ran the premises as a fish restaurant. In the *Lambeth Landmark* photograph, the name Walkden can be clearly seen at the top of the pediment.

YOUNG Dining Rooms early 1930s – c.1937

The available Post Office directories for this period record John Young running dining rooms here. The *Lambeth Landmark* photograph and the mirror show that this was a very special class of dining room: an Eel & Pie House.

BURROUGHS Dining Rooms c.1938 – 1994

The famous Eel & Pie family of Burroughs took over the premises and ran an Eels, Pie & Mash shop there for well over 50 years. The Burroughs family opened their first such shop in Bethnal Green in 1910 and over the next 84 years had many shops in various parts of London. When it closed, the Brixton shop was the last Burroughs Eels, Pie & Mash shop and so its passing marked the end of an era.

VARIOUS Restaurants 1994 – 2015

In 1994 the premises became a West Indian restaurant. Today, it is Gyoza, a Japanese and Chinese restaurant.

For almost all of their 140 year recorded history, these premises have been – in one way or another – feeding the people of Brixton.

1 http://landmark.lambeth.gov.uk/display_page.asp?section=landmark&id=9010

2 Some dates are approximate because there are gaps in the available records.

BOOK REVIEW

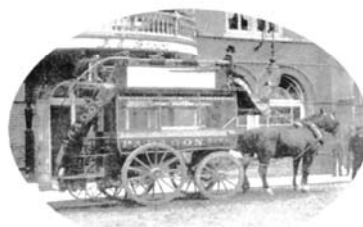
Balls Horse-Bus Service by Janet Weeks

This is the latest publication by our good colleagues in the Streatham Society. It will be of interest to Brixton local historians because many routes ran through Brixton and some began and terminated here.

The logistics of running a horse bus service might not

Balls Horse-Bus Service Streatham's First Public Transport

by
Janet Weeks



LOCAL HISTORY PUBLICATIONS
310 GREEN LANE, STREATHAM, LONDON SW16 3AS

occur to modern readers. A coach, two horses and a driver is what you see in the cover illustration. But two horses could not pull a coach for the distances required all day and each coach might need a team of up to 12

horses. They needed stabling, feeding and watering (and clearing up after!). A blacksmith would need to attend to their shoes and a vet to their health.

In consequence, fares were not cheap. Inevitably, trains, trams and motor buses finally saw off the horse bus. But not the Balls family: they turned to motor taxis and car hire and traded well into the middle of the 20th century.

This is a stapled booklet, 24 pages A5 plus cover, lavishly illustrated and is available from the Streatham Society for £3.20 including postage and packing. See: <http://www.streathamsociety.org.uk/>

Bill Linskey

Lambeth Borough Plan already out of date

Until recently, it looked as if the Borough Plan was almost ready for adoption. Most objections had already been considered by a planning inspector, and a final round of modifications was in the pipeline. The Society had just one objection arising from these modifications, where Lambeth had diluted its Tall Buildings policy without consultation, in order to give its pet developer free reign in the Town Centre.

However, while an amended version of the Plan is likely to be adopted on an interim basis, the planners are already starting to review it to take on board new Housing targets imposed on the boroughs by the Mayor. These are not so frightening when you remember that developers are already trying to build more new flats than the target number, but at a recent workshop session, representatives from amenity groups and local businesses found key weaknesses. Crucially, more people will mean more demand for amenities, utilities and school places. The Plan needs to ensure a mix of uses within neighbourhoods, including local shopping and usable employment space. So we can be sure that the plan-making process will continue...

Poor Publicity for Plans Revised Statement of Community Involvement

A frequent complaint we hear from residents and businesses is that they are not properly notified of nearby planning applications which may affect their home or workplace. Too often it's a mad rush to object before the deadline, and too many people realise the outcome only when building work starts. If news of high-profile proposals gets out to a wider public, a big response is possible, as was shown recently by a plan to wrap the upper floors of the Prince of Wales pub in animated colour LED displays. This provoked 750 objections, which must be a record for a non-Council proposal, and the planners were obliged to turn it down.

The response was due to it being featured on the local Brixton Buzz website, but Lambeth's publicity methods are sadly a century behind the times. Current proposals are only based on surface mail and reducing the number of neighbours to be notified. Plans would no longer be available to see in libraries (on the basis that few libraries will survive?). A full weekly list of applications has not been sent out for years, and notices to amenity groups are very hit or miss – we sometimes hear of plans for Clapham or Streatham, but cannot rely on hearing about everything on our own patch. The fortnightly list inside *The Weekender* is what most of us rely on, but it is limited to certain types of application.

So then, a poor show even before we study the cuts proposed in the latest Statement of Community Involvement, which sets out how the Council publicises applications and new policies. We need to respond by **14 April** so if you have views on this, tell us soon, in time for our 9th April committee meeting.

More detail at:

www.lambeth.gov.uk/planningmatters

Changing Policy on Home Extensions & Alterations

Another revised policy that we aim to comment on deals with Alterations and Extensions. 2008 changes to Permitted Development allowed a wider range of works to family homes, but any external changes to flats require planning permission, as do most works in Conservation Areas. The policy (or SPD) attempts to guide householders and designers towards acceptable changes, but still tends to lump together as "heritage assets" a wide range of properties of different ages and styles. Guidance remains oriented towards pre-1860 houses so becomes confusing or contradictory when applied to Edwardian terraces or 1930s semis.

The deadline for this one is closer – we must respond by **Monday 30 March** so tell us NOW if you have any specific concerns.

Alan Piper.

Notes & News

Summer Festival, Windmill Gardens, Sunday 28th June

Provisionally 1 pm to 5 pm, with stalls, music, theatre and food: the Gardens and Mill are between Ramillies Close and Blenheim Gardens, off the west side of Brixton Hill, SW2. More news soon on the FoWG website: www.brixtonwindmill.org

Council's Cultural Services Review is not just Culture!

You might think the current consultation is just about closing a few libraries, but a much wider range of Council services are affected.

Indoor recreation is also facing tough choices. The Brixton Recreation Centre has its champions, but the Ferndale and Flaxman sports centres and Brockwell Lido are also in Brixton's orbit and competing for support, while arts, events and local community buildings are facing reduced resources too.

As for parks - and the smaller open spaces - Lambeth wants to generate more income from increasing the number of commercial events, so you may not have full access to your local park throughout the year. Lambeth is also keen to devolve the management of most open spaces to voluntary bodies or social enterprises. Our December issue reported that The Brix is exploring this for the St. Matthew's Peace Garden. Various Friends of Parks groups are investigating what's involved.

Lambeth proposes to retain Brixton's Tate Library as a "town centre library" but space would be reduced by squeezing in the borough archives presently at the Minet Library, which would be sold off. The Carnegie Library in Herne Hill would be left to volunteers to run. Other libraries around the borough face a similar choice of fates. It has recently come to light that some facilities from the Tate Library might be moved over to the Brixton Rec.

There are discussions underway within the Lambeth Parks Forum, the Friends of Lambeth Libraries and other user groups. The Council

has several workshop events lined up to discuss these proposals, the nearest being:

Wednesday 18 March: 7 pm to 9 pm at Myatt's Fields North Community Centre, with the emphasis on community hubs.

Saturday 21 March: 11am to 1 pm at the Karibu Centre, Gresham Road, SW9, with the main focus on Parks and events.

Wednesday 25 March: 7 pm to 9 pm at Platanos College (Stockwell Park) in the main hall, Clapham Road SW9, with a sports theme.

Lambeth is encouraging people to register on-line for these events if possible. See: www.lambeth.gov.uk/culture2020consultation

Deadline for comments is **Friday 24 April** but we would like to hear members' views by **9th** to inform our own response.

BRIXTON Neighbourhood Forum

Next Meeting: **Monday 16 March**, 7 pm
Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road, SW2

This meeting aims to decide on recent bids for community chest grants, share information on what local groups are doing, and plan for the next few months.

Ways to Wellbeing

Lambeth & Southwark Public Health publish regular digital bulletins on a wide range of events and services, not just in mental health but also social care and healthy lifestyles generally. The March issue can be found at: <http://lambethwellbeing.wordpress.com>

Learning to Knit (or refresher)

Age UK Lambeth has launched new weekly sessions based at the **Hetherington Group Practice**, 18 Hetherington Road SW4 on Thursdays between 2 pm and 4 pm – enquiries: Age UK Lambeth (020) 7346 6800.