

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Autumn, October 2008

No.191, Quarterly issue,
Distributed free to members.

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

Thursday 9th October: Transport and Brixton

7 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre,
2b Saltoun Road, SW2
Transport is key to Brixton as a place
where many modes of travel converge.
Once again we attempt to bring together
the latest information on what's happening
and what could happen with the will or the
funding. We are keen to gather comments
and ideas about what works and what
doesn't. All welcome.

Saturday 8th November: Lambeth Archives Open Day

10 am to 5 pm at the Minet Library,
Knatchbull Road, SE5.
Inspired by the centenary of the Town Hall,
this year's event focuses on the past 100
years of public services and community life –
and our own display will show you the prefab
building that stood on the Town Hall site
before construction started.



View from The Brix across St. Matthew's Peace Garden.

Town Centre Plans draw closer

The long-awaited **Master Plan** for Brixton is due to be considered by Lambeth Council's Cabinet later this month, but as we went to press no firm details had appeared on the Council's website.

Meanwhile, the Town Centre has been more congested than normal while road works continue along the "high street" section of Brixton Road. Travellers have also had to endure late evening and weekend closure of the Underground Station. At least the market repaving is complete, but it leaves the stalls rather thinly spread now.

The next controversy looks set to develop around St. Matthew's Peace Gardens, where Gross Max appear to have learned nothing and are proposing to extend their Central Square design across Effra Road by removing the railings previously restored at great cost. And nobody's taken into account the drinkers and drug dealers...

More dates listed inside...

Diary of Events, Autumn 2008

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).

- 9 October
(Transport, as p,1)
- 13 November
- 8th January

Links with Other Groups

We have received details of many events, but contact organisers directly for any queries over times or admission.

Wednesday 8th October – Herne Hill Harriers:

Talk by Kevin Kelly on the early days of this South London athletics club. 7-30 pm for 7-45 start, Herne Hill United Church Hall, corner of Redpost Hill and Herne Hill, SE24. *Herne Hill Society.*

Saturday 11 October – The London Maze:

London-wide local history fair at the Guildhall Art Gallery, open from 10 am to 4 pm. Lambeth's amenity societies are joining with Lambeth Archives to run a joint stall. Most London boroughs and many special interest groups will also have a

presence, and there will be a series of talks.

Brockwell Park Autumn Walk,

Sunday 12 October – meet at **2 pm** by the clock tower near Brockwell Hall. *Friends of Brockwell Park.*

Tuesday 14 October – Archaeology of Standing Buildings:

Talk by Andrew Westman, Museum of London. Opens at 7 pm for 7-30 start, The Housing Co-op Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1 (almost opposite the Old Vic Theatre). *Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society.*

Wednesday 15 October Times Past History Box:

10-30 am to 12 noon at the Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, SE24. Bring old family photos, papers or curios for expert advice or dating. *Lambeth Archives and Friends of Carnegie Library.*

Saturday 15 November – London Recorded, by word, map and camera:

Local history conference at City of London Girls School, Barbican, 10 am to 5 pm, admission £10 inc. afternoon tea. Details at www.lamas.org.uk *London & Middlesex Archaeological Society.*

Wednesday 19 Nov. Clapham 1945-60

Illustrated talk by Peter Skuse on growing up in

postwar Clapham. 7-30 pm for 8 pm start at Clapham Manor Primary School, Belmont Road, SW4. *The Clapham Society.*

Saturday 22 Nov. Indignities Suffered by the Famous Dead

Illustrated talk by Robert Stephenson, who shows that fame is no guarantee of a hallowed tomb. 2-30 pm at Chatsworth Baptist Church, Chatsworth Way (off Norwood Road) SE27. *Friends of West Norwood Cemetery.*

Until 29 March 2009 – From War to Windrush:

Special exhibition featuring the stories of West Indians who served in the British Forces and Merchant Navy during two World Wars. 10 am to 6 pm daily at the Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, SE1.

Reminiscence

Screenings is a season of Tuesday afternoon trips down memory lane at the Ritzy Cinema, Brixton Oval, SW2. Each classic movie is followed by discussion led by Graham Rinaldi.

21 October – Sapphire (1959),
18 November – Wonder Man (1954),
16 December – The apartment (1960),
20 January – The Man in Grey (1943).

Bookings to 0871 704 2059.

Friends of Tate Library and Gardens

Lambeth Libraries Changes

The Friends' group has always had the twin purpose of championing both the Tate Library and the public open spaces in front of it, though in the past couple of years, plans for the outdoor spaces have dominated our attention. High time then that we brought you up to date with changes in the Library, and to Lambeth's libraries as a whole.

Sadly the area library manager, Laura Chrysostomou, who we found very supportive with events both inside and outside the Tate Library, has moved on. Pending a replacement being appointed, Vincia Bennett is standing in. Gareth Symonds made a good impression as the acting Divisional Director for Cultural Services, comprising libraries, parks and sport, but he too has gone, to be replaced by Peter Jones who has been running cultural services for Luton and takes office from 1st October. He will though be the 4th Director in 2 years and Friends groups are concerned that they have been departing so soon before making any real improvements.

Our thanks to Friends of Carnegie Library for sharing this news with us.

Linking with Borough Forums

Lambeth's **Parks Forum** brings together representatives of the management advisory committees and Friends groups from parks and open spaces around the borough, to meet with Council officers and key councillors. We have not been fully in the loop for several months, but our new Chair, Bill Linskey, has agreed to represent us at future meetings.

Similarly the Friends of Lambeth Libraries provide networking between the Friends groups defending individual libraries. We are picking up occasional e-mail messages, but do not have a regular representative yet – is any member willing to lead on this, and report back to the executive committee every couple of months?

Central Square Works

As far as we can tell, all the detailed matters that we noted back in April now have planning permission, so the landscaping and traffic works should be able to start soon. The main risk of delay arises from the progress (or otherwise) of the highway works on Brixton Road – TfL may be reluctant to start on Effra Road or Brixton Hill alterations until the current works are nearly complete.

The Garden Museum

The Museum of Garden History was established several years ago in Lambeth's former parish church, St.Mary's, in Lambeth Road close by Lambeth Palace, SE1. Right now the museum is closed for a facelift, but it is due to re-open from **18 November** as simply the **Garden Museum** starting with a retrospective exhibition of the work of garden designer Beth Chatto. Enquiries to (020) 7401 8865 or see their website www.museumgardenhistory.org

London Parks & Gardens Trust

The Trust are the lead organisers of London's Open Garden Squares weekend, though Tate Library Gardens missed out this year due to uncertainty over when the landscaping works would happen. That weekend is only one strand of their work, and another is a series of Winter Lectures at the Garden Museum, as above. All on **Mondays** at 6-30 for 7 pm start,

- **10 November** - Gardens and Green assets of the Peabody Estate (Mathew Frith).
- **8 December** – Garden ornaments in artificial stone, London makers in the 18th & 19th centuries (John Davis).
- **12 January** – John Brookes: 50 years of garden and landscape design in London (Barbara Simms).

Applications to the Events Secretary, LPGT, Duck Island Cottage, St.James's Park, London SW1A 2BJ, enclosing a SAE. Cost is £7 per lecture (£6 for Friends of the Garden Museum or LPGT members) – enquiries to (020) 7839 3969.

Home Improvements Boost?

A lot of the planning applications notified to the Society are small in scale, such as domestic alterations, though the cumulative effect can gradually change the character of an area, so we try to monitor applications and promote good practice.

In the past few years, high house prices, stamp duty and now the difficulty of getting mortgages have encouraged more home-owners to consider extending or adapting their house instead of moving home. For many years Town Planning rules have included concessions to prevent planning departments being swamped with planning applications for relatively minor works. For some time the Government has been considering how to accommodate more improvement works within the "General Permitted Development Order" without incurring outrage from amenity societies and neighbours over unsightly additions. A new set of rules takes effect from 1st October, as outlined below.

Home Extensions

Crude volume and height limits have been replaced by more complex criteria to limit the impact on neighbours.

Extensions can only be of one storey and no more than 4m high. They should not extend more than 3m behind the house (4m if detached) and be no closer than 7m to the rear boundary.

External materials and roof pitch should be similar to the existing house. Rear extensions should not be wider than half the width of the house, nor extend beyond the side of the house. Windows facing to the side must be obscure-glazed and fixed shut below eye-level. Cladding cannot be applied to the exterior of the house without planning permission.

Roof Alterations

This section has changed little, so "big-box" extensions are still allowed on rear roof-slopes, though they must be set back 200mm (8 inches) from the original roof eaves. Only roof windows are acceptable on front roof slopes, not dormers. Windows facing to the side must be obscure-glazed and fixed shut

below eye-level. No changes to be made to existing chimneys or flues.



Roof extensions in Railton Road.

Porches

Class D is unchanged. Porches may be added up to 3 sq.metres in area, and not more than 3m high, but must not be within 2m of a boundary with the highway. Verandahs, raised terraces and balconies are not allowed without planning permission.

Outbuildings

A variety of buildings, enclosures, fuel storage tanks and swimming pools are still permitted but subject to height restrictions. In total they must not cover more than half the garden area. None can be erected in front of the house without planning permission.

Hardstandings

There has been a widespread trend to pave over front gardens to provide off-street parking, stimulated by the spread of charges for on-street parking. As a concession to "green issues" and the risk of flash floods from storm-water run-off, paved areas in front of the house of 5 sq.metres or more must now be permeable, or have a means of storing the rainwater for more gradual release. However there is no restriction on paving over all the back garden!

Chimneys, Flues and vent pipes

These can be installed OR replaced subject to:

- Height being no more than 1 metre above the highest part of the roof.
- Installation OR replacement on front or side roof slopes, or any wall fronting a highway, requires permission.

Planning and Regeneration News

Microwave Antennae

No changes to previous rules. Up to two satellite dishes or pole antennae are acceptable, subject to not extending above chimneys (or else the highest other part of the roof) and size limits on each type of dish or aerial. Anything more or bigger requires planning permission.

Solar Panels

Installation of solar thermal or photo-voltaic panels on roof slopes is now permitted. Wind turbines still require planning permission.

Article 4 Directions

The rules are structured so that a Council can withdraw a particular class, or series of classes, of the above works if it considers that one of its Conservation Areas needs additional protection against uncontrolled alterations. In practice this is very rare in Lambeth. In any case, some of the rules are more restrictive in Conservation Areas or for listed buildings.

Certificates of Awful Development?

If yours is a single-family house, you can do all these things without planning permission, though owners sometimes like to confirm their plans are OK first by applying for a Certificate of Lawful Development. The application fee is half that for a full planning application, but can take almost as long because Lambeth still invites comments from neighbours and amenity groups like ourselves. (In contrast, Southwark does not!)

Remember that for flats, or accommodation over a shop, a full planning application is still required even for these minor works.

Controlling Conversions

The other class of planning application that frequently appears in Lambeth's weekly list is for conversion of a single family house into flats. There are occasional variations like changing the number and size of flats within a block, or once in a while, even de-converting back to a single house.

Despite Mayor Boris Johnson sounding off about restoring Parker Morris standards, each borough has subtly different policies for what it

will allow, reflecting differing priorities or past problems that they have experienced. For example, Lambeth tends to discourage private balconies or terraces (apparently to protect neighbours' privacy) whilst Wandsworth is keen that flats should each have 10 sq.metres of outdoor space!

The bottom line in many boroughs though is that houses below a minimum size cannot be sub-divided into flats. This is to protect the supply of family houses with gardens, though it does not prevent an owner taking in several lodgers.

Again boroughs express this in different ways, but in Lambeth the minimum is 120 sq.metres, based only on the floor area in 1948, so any later extensions will not count.

At the end of July, Lambeth formally adopted revised standards for room and dwelling sizes in conversions, so check their website (planning pages) before you consider applying.

Clapham Park Project

It's easy to assume that the big projects happen in town centres. However, at the extreme south-west corner of the Brixton Society's patch lays the Clapham Park New Deal for Communities Project. This unites a patchwork of Council estates and the properties in-between under a wide-ranging programme to replace or upgrade most of the public sector housing and also to boost job prospects, health and education for local residents. The Master Plan is now being followed up with a wave of detailed planning applications for specific issues and individual sites.

The NDC area straddles the South Circular Road, and most of it falls within the areas of the Clapham Society and the Streatham Society, so we have not given it much coverage in our newsletters to date. Within our patch, New Park Court and the ex-LCC Tilson Gardens Estate fall within the NDC area but Dumbarton Court, at the corner of New Park Road and Brixton Hill, is excluded.

Alan Piper.

Ghosts of Brixton?

With darker evenings and then Halloween at the end of the month, perhaps it's timely to tell you about a request for local ghost stories, or reminiscences of psychic experiences or strange encounters. It comes from James Clark who is compiling a companion book to his earlier "Haunted Wandsworth". If you have any suggestions, contacts or stories to offer, you can respond via the Secretary, or contact James directly at writer@clarkweb.co.uk or by post to 102 St.James Road, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 2DB. For details of his previous books, see www.james-clark.co.uk

Remember Kennedy's?

It must be over 20 years since their Brixton branch closed, but another shop survived at the Herne Hill end of Railton Road until December last year. I inspected a disused branch in Walworth Road this summer and it was like stepping back 70 years – marble slabs, metal-lined refrigerators with varnished wooden doors, glass shelves in varnished cabinets and the shop window topped with an Art Deco sunray motif in leaded lights.

Kennedy's was one of the familiar shops across South London. The story starts when Andrew Kennedy, a tea trader from Stranraer in Scotland, moved south to Canterbury, where he married Harriet Bangham in 1835. Their second eldest son John was born in 1837 and married Mary Ann Rolfe, a local girl in 1869. Her parents sold meat and meat products, including sausages. John and Mary raised their family in Maidstone where he ran a drapery business. In 1877 they moved to Rye Lane, Peckham, where he started a meat products business, making sausages and meat pies at the back of the shop. The family lived over the shop until John's death in 1895. By then a second shop had been opened in Rye Lane, and the business was continued by John's two eldest sons, Sion Rolfe and Alexander.

Sion Rolfe died in 1920, and the business was split into two. Sion's son Herbert continued the John Kennedy business, whilst Alexander set up a new company, Alex Kennedy, with a

factory in Peckham Road, Camberwell making sausages and other products. Over the next 20 years this business opened up more shops including Beckenham, West Wickham and two in Bromley. John Kennedy too opened factory premises in Harders Road, Peckham, in 1931, as well as shops in Catford, Lewisham, Crystal Palace and Orpington.

Eventually times changed and the Peckham factory closed in 1974, with all production supplied by Alex Kennedy's works in Camberwell. The John Kennedy shops closed one by one, leaving only the Alex Kennedy business. Faced with changing tastes and shopping patterns, business steadily declined and the directors (still all members of the Kennedy family) ceased trading at the end of 2007.

Based on articles in the newsletters of the Camberwell Society and Herne Hill Society.

Sam the Wheels

Sam's hand-painted sign has long been a familiar sight for cyclists passing along Railton Road. "Sam the Wheels" is a participatory video project exploring the heritage of Brixton, inspired by unique film footage of the area shot between the 1960s and 1980s by Clovis Salmon, better known as Sam the Wheels. Sam is a first-generation Jamaican immigrant who arrived in London in 1950. The project was launched at 198 Gallery in Railton Road in May. It is looking for people of all ages who would like to be involved, to record oral histories or help research or review footage. Further information from 198 Gallery, (020) 7978 8309, lucy@198.org.uk or from Celia Willis, celiawillis@artserve.net, 07 894 863 739, or see www.samthewheels.co.uk

More City History Walks

Following the item in our last issue, the City church of All Hallows by the Tower is holding more guided walks twice a month up to Christmas.

Walks start from the church at 11 am and cost £6 a head. For the full listing, see their website, www.ahbtt.org.uk or contact Helen Elletson (education officer) on (020) 7481 2928.

**BON MARCHÉ,
BRIXTON.**

THE DISASTROUS FLOOD.

GREAT SALE
OF

DAMAGED GOODS.

A CONSIDERABLE portion of the Spring Stock, unfortunately stored in the Basement of the above Establishment, and which consisted chiefly of Men's and Boys' Clothing, Hosiery, Hats, Caps, &c., together with some portion of the General Drapery Stock (stored in the Reserved Stock Rooms), and also a large amount of the Stock in the Grocery Department, have been all more or less injured by the disastrous Flood of Thursday last. The Proprietor has therefore decided to offer at once the whole of the Goods thus damaged at such a Reduction in Price as must ensure a very speedy clearance of the whole.

Mr. SMITH embraces the present opportunity to thank most sincerely the public of Brixton and the surrounding neighbourhood for the sympathy which has been so freely and so kindly expressed in his behalf.

APRIL 13, 1878.

**GREAT FLOODS
SERIOUS INUNDATIONS IN LONDON**

There was an extraordinary fall of rain in the metropolitan district on Wednesday night and during the greater portion of yesterday. The result was that large portions of London have been for several hours under water, and that much suffering to the poor and destruction of property have to be borne. In former times a small river, called the Effra, ran from the foot of Brixton-hill past Kennington Church. This has for many years been covered over and used as a sewer. Yesterday morning at about half-past seven water was seen to issue from the outlets of the sewer into the Brixton-road, and in a short time nearly the whole length of the road from Brixton Station to Kennington Church was covered by a rushing stream of water, extending in some places from the houses on one side to those on the other, and in others from pathway to pathway, and being about a foot deep. The streets branching out from the Brixton-road were speedily filled, the water rushing down the Vassall and the Camberwell New-roads with great velocity. It was at first thought that the drain had burst, but this was not the case, the real fact being that, in consequence of the rain, an extraordinarily large quantity of water had descended from the upper part of the Effra, and so caused an overflow of what is now the sewer. To show the extent of the

Spring Floods 1878

Despite considerable flooding around the country in the last couple of years, London has not suffered because of the Thames Barrier. It was not always thus. South London suffered a bad flood in April 1878 as a leaflet put out by the Bon Marché department store (the first to open in the country) and the text of a contemporary press cutting show.

Bill Linskey

mischief done, it may be mentioned that several cellars were flooded at the bottom of Vassall-road where it joins the Camberwell New-road, this being quite a quarter of a mile from its point of junction with the Brixton-road. The cellars of houses close to Brixton Station and of those in the low-lying parts of the road were also filled. Most damage must have been done in those streets which connect the Brixton and Clapham roads, as they leave the former at a steep gradient; and this is the more to be regretted, on account of the poverty of the people living there. Although the traffic was not absolutely stopped it was very considerably impeded, and public conveyances found it impossible to keep their time. Omnibuses and tram-cars passed through the water at a slow pace, the middle of the road being covered to a depth of at least two feet. The steps of the cars were submerged for a very considerable distance, and in some spots the floor was actually reached. The pavement being completely under water in some places, the water found its way down every area, the shops opposite the White Horse and those near Kennington Park suffering particularly in this respect. Even on the high pavement near the railway arch the basements of the houses were under water, though there appeared to be some uncertainty as to whence it proceeded. In some parts of the Brixton-road the paving-stones were displaced and the gravel torn in large holes. Robert-street, a narrow turning opposite the White Horse, where the main breakage appears to have occurred, was one large pool. St. Ann's-road and Vassall-road also suffered severely, while South Island-place, a street running on an incline into the Clapham-road, presented the appearance of a mountain torrent. In fact, wherever there was a declination the water found its level. Even where it had not made its appearance in the road it had risen in kitchens and areas of private houses to the height of three or four feet, rendering those parts completely inaccessible. The water began to subside at about twelve o'clock noon, and by half past two all the roads which had been flooded were passable to pedestrians.

April 12th 1878

Brixton Society Contacts and Links

How to contact the Society

Editorial and Event Notices:

Space permitting, we are happy to announce 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 these pages are not necessarily those of the Brixton Society.

Material for the next issue should be sent before 12 December to the Secretary, Alan Piper, at 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, or by e-mail to APiperBrix@aol.com
Phone/ fax enquiries to (020) 7207 0347,

Publications & Membership:

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

Planning Issues:

If you are concerned about a particular planning application, contact David Warner at david@scriabin.force9.net or by phone on (020) 7924 0618.

For wider plans and policies, contact Alan Piper as above.

Get E-mail updates

If we had e-mail addresses for more of our members, we could alert you to late changes in meeting arrangements, or share information about other events and developments that arrives between quarterly issues of the newsletter. A quick e-mail to the Secretary is all we need, or just remember to include your e-mail address on your membership form.

Walking Your Way

With this year's series of guided walks coming to a close, we are already inviting suggestions for which areas to feature in next summer's programme. This is a collective effort so can take in any part of Lambeth and even beyond. *Ideas to the Secretary by mid-December.*

BRAIN OF LAMBETH QUIZ, Thursday 16 October

7-30 pm for 7-45 start, Lambeth Town Hall (provisionally Room 101 but check on arrival). Now run in a "pub quiz" format for teams of 4 with rounds of questions on general knowledge topics including Lambeth and London. Entry fee only £2 per team. It would be good to enter a Brixton Society team – after all, our squad won the Mayor's quiz in a similar format last year – so tell Alan Piper if you are coming.

If you want to bring your own team, contact John Moore at moore309@fireflyuk.net or tel. (020) 8677 6490.

Taking a stand for the Society

We are often asked to mount a display at events throughout the year, but it always depends on the availability of members to set up and staff a stall, so we cannot take up every opportunity that comes along. I am glad to say we appeared at the **Claverdale Road** street party on 13 September, marking 100 years since the road was opened off Upper Tulse Hill. Thanks to Annick Alet, Phil Isaac and Bill Linskey for helping cover this one. Our thanks also to the residents for their generous catering!

Lambeth Archives Open Day is our next effort, and if you can spare a couple of hours during Saturday 8th November to help look after our stall, please contact Bill Linskey (Chair) on (020) 7274 3835, or at wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk

Websites to Note

Black Cultural Archives:

www.bcaheritage.org.uk

Friends of Brixton Market:

www.friendsofbrixtonmarket.org

Friends of Brockwell Park:

www.brockwellpark.com

Friends of Windmill Gardens:

www.brixtonwindmill.org

Lambeth Voluntary Action Council:

www.lambethvac.org.uk

London Forum of Amenity Societies:

www.londonforum.org.uk