

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Autumn, October 2009

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Distributed free to members.

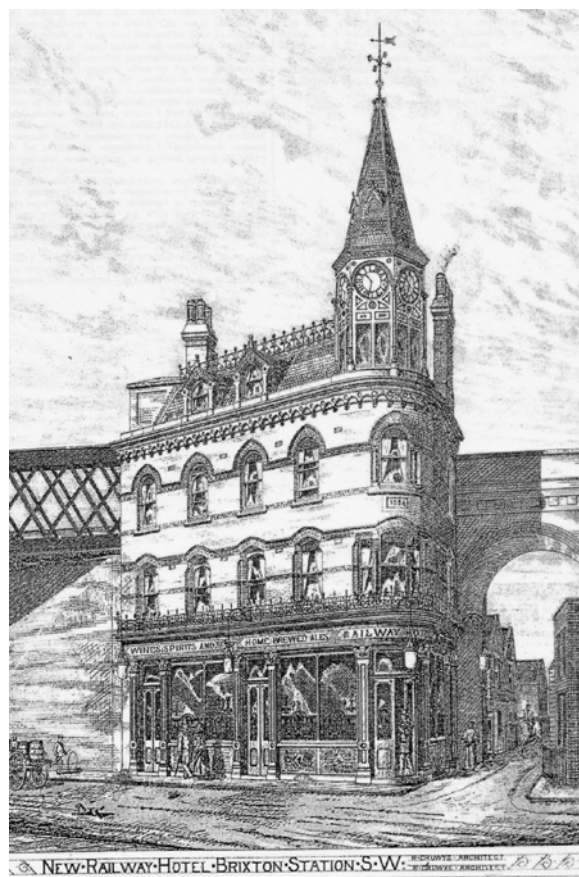
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Thursday 29th October:
Brixton Tate Library
needs friends...

6-30 pm in the library, Brixton Oval

The Friends of Tate Library and Windrush Square functions as a sub-committee of the Brixton Society. The Society has long had close relations with the library, which has played a full part in many events in the old Tate Library Gardens, and is determined to do so in the enlarged Windrush Square in the future.

However, what has been missing for some time is the active involvement of library users in a group dedicated to helping develop the library itself. Many other Lambeth libraries have such groups that do sterling work with their libraries. To see if there is interest in such a group for the Tate Library, there will be an open meeting in the library on Thursday 29th October, starting at 6-30 pm – all welcome.



A different Brixton landmark heads this issue –the Railway Hotel in Atlantic Road is the subject of a bid led by the Brixton Community Trust to restore the building to active use. The original drawing appeared in The Architect magazine in April 1881 when the building was newly completed.

Bid for Townscape Heritage Initiative

The Prince's Regeneration Trust has been supporting the bid to renovate the Railway Hotel as a focal point for the community. It has become clear though that its surroundings also need some kind of lift, so the trust has also proposed a THI scheme for the Town Centre. The Heritage Lottery Fund has run 185 such projects since 1998, but they are rare in London, where most Conservation Areas tend to attract investment naturally. Brixton though has had long periods of "planning blight" due to unrealistic plans deterring smaller-scale investment. The fund would provide c. £2.6m which can be used to restore features, fill gaps and generally help put some life back into local landmarks.

More Town Centre news on page 3...

Diary of Events, Autumn 2009

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).

- 8th October
- 12 November
- 11 February 2010

Links with Other Groups

We receive news of many events, but please contact organisers directly for any queries over times or admission.

Saturday 17 October – Big Draw in Myatt's Fields Park:

From 2 to 5 pm around the bandstand, free drawing event, all ages welcome, assisted by South Island Workshop and Groundwork London.

Myatt's Fields Park Project Group.

Sunday 18 October – Brockwell Park Autumn Walk, meet at 2 pm by the clock tower near Brockwell Hall.

Friends of Brockwell Park.

Wednesday 21 October – Remembering Olive Morris:

An evening of reminiscence and exhibits about Olive Morris, founder of the Brixton Black Women's

Centre, who died in 1979 aged only 27. 7 pm at Brixton Tate Library – bookings to (020) 7926 1075 or by e-mail to blackhistorymonth@lambeth.gov.uk

From Wednesday 21 October –

Drawing Attention:

A visiting exhibition of 100 drawings, ranging from old masters to modernists. Admission including main galleries £9, seniors £8, children free. For details see www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk

Dulwich Picture Gallery

Thursday 5th November – Serendipity in the Archives

Archivists and users share tales of unexpected finds in library collections. 6 pm at the Podium lecture theatre, at the London College of Communication, Elephant & Castle, SE1. Prior booking required, to seminars@archivesforlondon.gov.uk

Archives for London.

Monday 9 November - Mayor's Question Time

Mayor Boris Johnson faces questions from the public, at the O2 Brixton Academy. Our local Assembly Member Val Shawcross will chair the evening. Book by e-mail to peoplesquestions@london.gov.uk or phone (020) 7983 4762 (answerphone service)

Wednesday 11 Nov. – Indignities suffered by the famous dead:

Robert Stephenson recalls some historic characters who were not allowed to rest in peace. 7-30 pm for 7-45 at Herne Hill United Church Hall, Redpost Hill, SE24.
Herne Hill Society

Monday 16th November – Darwin at Down

House:

Talk by Annie Kemkaran-Smith, 8 pm at Woodlawns, Streatham Darby & Joan Club, 16 Leigham Court Road, SW16
Streatham Society.

Thursday 19 November – Upper Norwood Joint Library:

Talk by Jerry Savage, librarian of the library in Westow Hill which is run jointly by Lambeth and Croydon boroughs. 8 pm at the Phoenix Centre, Westow Street, SE19.
Norwood Society.

Saturday 21 November –Brompton Cemetery:

Like Norwood, once one of London's seven "company" cemeteries, described by John White. 2-30 pm at Chatsworth Baptist Church, Idmiston Road, SE27.
Friends of West Norwood Cemetery

Monday 8th December – Music and Musicians in Lambeth & Southwark

AGM Lecture by Len Reilly, Lambeth Archives Manager, 7pm for 7-30 start, Housing Co-op Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1 (opposite the Old Vic)
Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society.

Town Centre Focus

Windrush Square Events – Your ideas welcomed

Windrush Square will be opening in the New Year, and the Brixton Society is working with the Council and others to develop a programme of events to take place on the Square. Examples that we are currently exploring include: occasional specialist markets, some commercial events, outdoor films, school and college choirs, other music, art exhibitions and other displays, and food and gardens events. But we can't think of everything – we are sure that there are innovative ideas out there that we have not thought of.

We are looking for people who can put on events themselves (maybe with a little bit of support). So what community events could you organise? Which are the Lambeth schools and colleges with bands or choirs? Who could put on a gymnastics display? Who could – could you?

Please let us have your ideas – contact our Chair, Bill Linskey, tel.(020) 7274 3835 or e-mail to wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk



Let's do the show right here! The view from the Clapham omnibus on 24th September.

Lambeth Call for “Lick of Paint” Volunteers

Lick of Paint is part of the Future Brixton Arts and Creative Lighting programme. This programme will work with local artists to deliver a number of innovative projects to help make Brixton an even better place to be.

Lick of Paint will be delivered with Community Freshview. Community Freshview is an off-shoot of the successful monthly clean-up campaign, Freshview. After being approached by and helping several community groups to do their own clean-ups, the Council saw an increase in demand for the service from more and more residents who were keen to get involved.

We are seeking volunteers to make a difference to the environment. Whether you want to brighten up an area of green-space, give a face-lift to a disused area of land or any other activity that improves your local environment, we will help you do it.

How does it work? If you belong to a community group or are a volunteer, we can help you by giving you equipment, expertise and some extra helping hands.

What types of activity can I do?

You can do any activity that helps to improve the quality of the environment in your local area, for example:

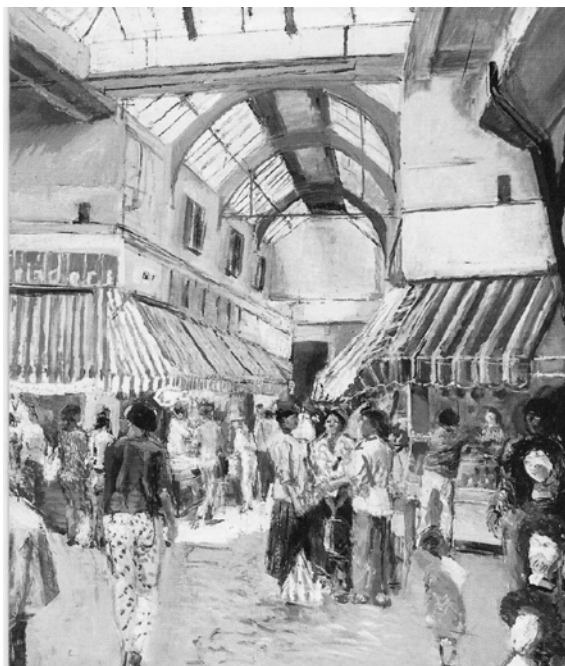
- Painting and brightening-up local areas and properties to make them visible and safe.
- Removing debris from disused land.
- Cutting-back overgrown roads, alleys and footpaths.

How do I get involved?

It's simple, just talk to us about your idea and we will be happy to give you any advice. Please contact Janet Clarke, Neighbourhood Development Officer, tel. (020) 7926 2784 or e-mail to JClarke@lambeth.gov.uk or write to her at Lambeth Town Hall, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, London SW2 1RW.

Proposals need not be limited to the core of Brixton Town Centre – Ed.

Town Centre Focus



Art in Lambeth was the theme of this year's Open Day at Lambeth Archives last month, so here's a chance to own a piece of local art. Despite threats of redevelopment, Granville Arcade (Brixton Village) is still much as painted by local artist Anthony Eyton for a London Underground poster some 15 years ago. We inherited a supply of the posters when the Brixton Challenge programme closed in 1998 and can supply copies for only £2 each – use our order form on the website or ask at our next event.

Road –works update:

Work on remodelling Windrush Square started on 26 May and is presently expected to complete in January 2010. The basic layout is already evident.

However, changes to the road system and pedestrian crossings around the St. Matthew's Church island will not be finished until late in 2010.

Night working starts on 11th October to resurface the roadways. From **Sunday 15th November** there will be 2-way traffic in Brixton Hill outside the Fridge. The pedestrian crossing outside the Town Hall should be reinstated before this date.

The section of St. Matthew's Road linking Effra Road to Brixton Hill will remain one-way for the time being.

Ideas to boost the Markets

Back in July, the Friends of Brixton Market hosted a "Meet the Market" event at the Town Hall to build all-party support among Lambeth Councillors. Market traders laid out a great spread of food to show the diversity of what's on offer.

Since then, the Friends have been trying to tap into the Council's public art programme around the market and town centre, being run through the Regeneration Team.

Some ideas are already being explored but the Friends are also talking to the market traders and customers, and inviting more suggestions.

Ideas so far include:

- **Pope's Road entrance** is currently obscured by stalls but it could be more of a beacon or gateway, drawing people along Pope's Road. FBM have been talking to local artists about this and hope to make something happen soon.
- **Atlantic Road arch:** FBM would like to open up the final railway arch (a former fishmonger's) between Atlantic Road and the forecourt of Granville Arcade, possibly with a light installation or mural. For pedestrians access below the railway bridge over Coldharbour Lane is narrow and unwelcoming. Initial contact with Railtrack has been positive.
- **Shutter painting** – possibly a competition/ festival to paint the shop shutters, maybe with talented graffiti artists.
- **Wheely Bags:** Would it be good if there was a rack of free customised wheely shopper bags that people could take away and bring back?
- **Secret Sculpture:** Could we get a load of small scenes hidden around the market that people would have to look for? Kids would love it...

If you would like to learn more, contribute or even take a leading role in one of these projects, please contact FBM at: contact@friendsofbrixtonmarket.org
Also see the traders' own website at: www.brixtonmarket.net

The end of Brixton plc - absorbed by Slough

Back in 1924 an industrial estate was opened at the north end of Brixton Road, between Camberwell New Road and Cranmer Road. Part of the Brixton Road frontage had been occupied since 1907 by a garage for the General Motor Cab Company, who were provided with a larger garage in the new development. This was the start of a business originally known as Brixton Estate Ltd., who went on to develop other estates for light industry and warehousing over the next 80 years, around London and the Midlands.

In the early 1980s, there was a proposal to replace the Brixton Road site by a Tesco supermarket, but not pursued due to local opposition. The early emphasis was on industrial users such as Crompton Parkinson, making lamps. Recent occupiers have included offices for charitable organisations and rehearsal rooms for the National Theatre.

In recent years the firm's name had been simplified to Brixton plc and their flagship developments were mostly in easy reach of Heathrow Airport.

Like a number of developers, they were caught out by the recession, when the falling value of their properties no longer covered the loans secured against them. Several estates were sold to pay off loans but in the face of a bleak outlook the board had to accept a takeover by their competitors SEGRO, formerly known as Slough Estates. Staff of the merged firm are now being cut from 225 to 135, likely to be concentrated at Brixton plc's old head office in Berkeley Street, W1.

Alan Piper, based on Estates Gazette reports

Local List still open

Remember that we still need your suggestions for buildings, features or even whole streets to include in a Local List for their historic interest or quality. Send to Alan Piper (as on page 7) preferably before the end of October so that we can put some proposals to the Council.



Effra Parade c.1935

Gill Rayner recently sent me this photo to confirm the location of the Royal Oak pub, from which this coach party is about to depart. Her grandfather James Kent used to live in a cottage in Effra Parade in the 1920s, and later in Brailsford Road SW2.

In fact the pub stood on the corner of Effra Parade and Dalberg Road, until it and adjacent shops were destroyed by a flying bomb in 1944. In another picture, on page 80 of the History of Brixton, part of the ruined corner is still visible in 1951, just before the LCC built flats on the site.

The other side of the tracks

The Milkwood Road area is separated from Brixton by the railway line between Herne Hill and Loughborough Junction Stations. In many ways it's a typical slice of South London but a recent book compiled by the Herne Hill Society manages to capture many facets of local life. In addition to the history of how Milk Wood came to be replaced by terraced houses and industry, there are many personal stories that bring the neighbourhood to life.

Publication of **Milkwood Estate – the story of a Lambeth community** was supported by a grant from the Capital Community Foundation, which has helped keep the price to just £5 for 140 pages, plus 50p p&p if ordered via the website, www.hernehillsociety.org.uk

Probably the best opportunity to pick up a copy will be the Winter Fair at the Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road SE24, on **Saturday 28 November**, 11 am to 3 pm.

Green Spaces and Green Issues

100 years of Growing your own

Over the past year, there has been a lot of local interest in urban food-growing. Practical workshops run by Food Up-front at the Vida Walsh Centre have been well-attended.

TTB's Abundance Project has reinstated some of the allotment plots between the blocks of flats at the Guinness Trust Estate in Loughborough Park and has been running practical sessions – their next is on **Saturday 7th November**, from 11 am to 3 pm when they will be planting garlic and an apple cordon.

For more details see:

www.foodupfront.org or

www.transitiontownbrixton.org and click on the Food & Growing link on the left-hand menu.

Of course this is nothing new, as highlighted by an exhibition running at the Garden Museum (in the old parish church next to Lambeth Palace) through the winter until 7th March.

It traces the story back to the Allotment Act of 1908, and naturally includes the efforts made in two World Wars to “dig for victory”. It also features responses to the Great Depression (post-1929, not 2009!) and early attempts at self-sufficiency in the 1970s. Open daily 10-30 to 5 pm, admission £6, concessions £5.

See www.gardenmuseum.org.uk or phone the museum on (020) 7401 8865.

Tunnelling under Brixton

For some time, Thames Water has been carrying out major sewer renewal work around Brixton. This previously affected Ferndale Road to the west, and Barrington Road to the east. The focus has recently shifted further south, with mysterious excavations being conducted in a compound on Rush Common opposite Arlington Lodge, Brixton Hill.

More extensive works have been underway around Railton Road, where several side streets have already been excavated. In most cases the original clayware sewers are being replaced by larger concrete pipes – in the case of Talma Road the 300mm (12 inch) diameter pipe laid in the street in the 1870s has been replaced by a 450mm diameter pipe.

Work has lately moved up to a grander scale, with 5m diameter shafts being sunk in Leeson

and Chaucer Roads. Another will follow shortly in Shakespeare Road, in order to tunnel from each shaft to create a much larger sewer under Railton Road.

Although the local population is probably less than a century ago, modern lifestyles place greater demands on the sewers – more baths and showers, and particularly use of washing machines and dishwashers, as well as more paved areas to provide car parking or “patio” style gardens.

Myatt's Fields Park News

Myatt's Fields Park was among 6 Lambeth parks which were awarded Green Flags this summer to recognise their standard of safety, cleanliness and attractiveness. This is a national standard, originally promoted by the Civic Trust.

The Little Cat Cafe has been run through the summer by volunteers (backed-up by more volunteer cake-makers!) who have raised enough money to pay for equipping the hut to serve drinks and ice creams, with a little to spare for further development. Opening will now be limited to special events until next summer, with the aim of launching it as a sustainable business in due course.

Conservation Areas at risk

During the summer, English Heritage drew attention to widespread decline in these areas that should be receiving enhanced protection. Lambeth aims to review all its current CAs as recently done for the Town Centre, but expects this process to take 5 years.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

To those of you who have renewed their membership over the summer: many thanks. You should have received a new membership card with this newsletter. Please contact me if you have not.

If your membership was due in July 2009 and you have not renewed, please do so as soon as possible. Otherwise I regret that you will not receive any further Newsletters.

Diana Linskey

Brixton Society Contacts

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 [wjdccl@globalnet.co.uk](mailto: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.

E-mail updates

The ongoing disruption of the postal services has increased our reliance on e-mail to pass on messages and documents.

However, we only seem to have current e-mail addresses for a small proportion of our members, though I am sure there are more of you out there.

We are not going to bombard you with weekly e-bulletins (we don't have the time anyway!) BUT we can save you a wasted journey by alerting 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.

Taking a stand for the Society

We are often asked to mount a display at events, 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. We had to miss a few events this year because they came too close to other commitments, even on the same date, or because we did not get enough warning to get our act together. We like to get around our patch, so more invites are welcome - but ask early!

Walking Your Way

With this year's series of guided walks coming to a close, we are keen to hear your 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.

The printed programme goes to press at the end of February, but it helps if ideas reach the Secretary before Christmas.

Pass it on!

We rely on our newsletter as a simple way of spreading information about Brixton in general and the Society in particular – you don't need to plug anything in and you can read it on the train regardless of wireless reception.

Volunteers deliver about 250 copies locally, though we have to rely on the post for members further afield.

If you can deliver to other members in your own neighbourhood, please contact Bill or Diana Linskey as there are always gaps to fill and occasionally we lose a distributor when they move house.

Back Numbers

We have most issues going back to 1997, so if you want a particular issue, contact the Secretary and we will try to supply. We will usually have the past year's issues available free when we run a stall at a public event.

Alan Piper

The Brain of Lambeth Quiz - Thursday 22 October:

7-30 pm for 7-45 start, Lambeth Town Hall – due to be in the Assembly Hall but use the main entrance in case of late room changes. Once again in a “pub quiz” format for teams of 4 with rounds of questions on general knowledge topics including Lambeth and London - entry fee is £2 per team. If you are bringing a team, tell John Moore at (020) 8677 6490 or moore309@fireflyuk.net It would be good to have a Brixton Society team again – how about it?
Organised by the Lambethans Society.

Veteran Car Run – Sunday 1st November:

The Annual London to Brighton run will once more see a series of old cars struggling up Brixton Hill in the early morning. This year 500 pre-1905 cars are expected, including 100 guest vehicles from overseas. With the first car due to leave Hyde Park at 6-54 am, cars are expected to pass the Town Hall between 7 am and 9 am.

Replacing the Civic Trust

There have been wide-ranging discussions among amenity societies like ours about filling the gap since the demise of the Civic Trust in April. New arrangements are taking shape but some key issues are still to be resolved.

For local amenity societies, the Civic Trust provided a national **umbrella body** offering recognition and a reference point for advice, though resources were usually too thinly stretched to offer much beyond a modest magazine as encouragement. In recent years, better guidance and training in environmental issues, town planning processes and the organisation of community projects have become available through other bodies like BTCV, NCVO, CABE, Planning Aid for London and our own Lambeth Voluntary Action Council. Green issues and Green spaces seem to be amply covered by the London Sustainability Exchange, London Parks and Green-spaces Forum and a range of web resources. The London Forum of Amenity

Societies too has been active with London-wide planning issues. London-based societies need not lack encouragement or advice, though perhaps it's a lonelier prospect for groups in smaller provincial towns.

The Civic Trust offered an **insurance** package to member societies, but we found the scheme offered by the British Association for Local History to be more economical and sufficient for our range of activities.

The Civic Trust Awards have already taken on an independent life and nominations only recently closed for next year's awards. For details see www.civictrustawards.org.uk

Finally, that leaves the national lobbying and promotional role that the Civic Trust pioneered. Again the scene has become more crowded with other overlapping bodies involved, and a new organisation may struggle to make itself heard in the corridors of power. Links between the local societies and the national trustees were quite tenuous, with an implicit assumption that everyone shared the same values, so it was difficult to feed grassroots concerns into national policies of either the Trust or the Government.

On balance then, the gap to be filled looks a lot smaller now, and any new national body will have to work alongside others. It can only justify itself though if its member societies have a say in running it and see some results from their involvement – the old model of top-down steering by the great and the good can no longer cope in the 21st Century.

Alan Piper.

Events get Results

Thanks to everyone who supported our book-stalls at recent events – here's how we got on. At the Lambeth Country Show, our new shelter stood up well to the unsettled conditions, and our total takings over 2 days were £416. On 26 September we managed to cover two events simultaneously. Archives Open Day seemed less busy this year but we took a useful £51. At the Stockwell Festival in Larkhall Park we touched on fresh ground and brought home an encouraging £113.