

# THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Autumn, October 2010

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Website: [www.brixtonsociety.org.uk](http://www.brixtonsociety.org.uk)

## DON'T ICE BRIXTON MARKET

*Don't Ice Brixton Market* is the slogan of the campaign to stop the building of a temporary ice rink on the site of the Pope's Road car park in the centre of Brixton.

The car park, following years of neglect by its owner, Lambeth Council, has been condemned as dangerous and is now closed pending demolition.

The Brixton Master Plan envisages the redevelopment of this site, but only with the inclusion of a significant amount of replacement parking. There seems little prospect of such a development at the moment and so the expectation was that the site would be levelled and used as a street-level car park until such time as a redevelopment becomes viable.

Meanwhile, down in Streatham ... The so-called Streatham Hub development to create a Tesco mega-store includes the building a new ice rink to replace the existing one. The current planning permission requires the new rink to be built before the old one is demolished - meaning that the site has to be redeveloped in stages. Tesco says this is now too expensive and wants to clear the site and build the new Tesco before the new rink.

To make this possible, a site is required to erect a temporary (for at least two years) ice rink. Without any consultation, Lambeth has decided that this should go on the Pope's Road site. This has upset no-end of people. "Save Skating In Streatham" has been formed

to oppose the move. Brixton Traders: stallholders, market traders and shop keepers, are all opposed.

There has already been one demonstration when, on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2010 a large number of Brixton traders closed for an hour to demonstrate outside the Town Hall. Another is being planned (at the time of writing) for the 13<sup>th</sup> October 2010 to coincide with the next full Council meeting.

For more information, please visit:

[www.donticebrixtonmarket.org](http://www.donticebrixtonmarket.org)



## WINDRUSH SQUARE

Another local proposal to put something in an inappropriate place has been opposed by the Brixton Society. It came to our attention that there was a proposal afoot to have regular, three-days-a-week street market on Windrush square.

Your Chair and Secretary met with the Lambeth StreetCare officer responsible for the markets and put to him our objections. These included that this was not a proper use for a public open space that was also common land and that a regular market would inhibit the use of the space for community events such as the Open Garden Squares Weekend (which the Brixton Society organised) or Brixton Splash.

We have now received a response that StreetCare has decided to concentrate on other market priorities for now and that "the Windrush Square issue will not be revisited during the current financial year." While this is not the complete closure we would have wished, it does remove any immediate danger and is most welcome.



*What and where? Answers on back page!*

# Diary of Events, Autumn 2010

## 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).

- 14 October
- 11 November
- 13 January 2011

## Links with Other Groups

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

### Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> October – Annual General Meeting

3 pm in Brockwell Hall in the centre of the park.

*Friends of Brockwell Park*

## Celebrating Age

**A series of events for the over 55s runs for the whole of October – so still time to catch highlights including:**

### Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> October – The Future of the NHS

Public Meeting organised by the Forum, 2 pm to 4 pm at Lambeth ACCORD, 336 Brixton Road, SW9 (opposite Max Roach Park)  
*Lambeth Forum for Older People*

### Tuesday 26 October – Health & Wellbeing

Advice for older people, including stalls, displays, entertainment and afternoon tea – no need to book.

2 pm to 4-30 pm at Lambeth Town Hall (Assembly Hall) Acre Lane, SW2.

*Adult & Community Services*

### Wednesday 27 October

#### – Silver Surfers:

Computer workshop session, 10-30 am to 12 noon at Brixton Tate Library. Enquiries/ bookings to the library on 020 7926 1056.

*Lambeth Libraries*

For the new series of weekly activities for older people at the Vida Walsh Centre, see back page.

## Brain of Lambeth

### Thursday 28 October

7-30 pm at Lambeth Town Hall (Room 125), follows a “pub quiz” format for teams of 4 with rounds of questions on general knowledge including

Lambeth and London. Entry fee £2 per team. Enquiries to John Moore on (020) 8677 6490 or at [moore309@fireflyuk.net](mailto:moore309@fireflyuk.net)

*The Lambethans Society*

### Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> November –

#### Glass-making on the South Bank:

Talk by Dr David Watts, 7 pm for 7-30 start, at the Housing Co-op Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1 (almost opposite the Old Vic Theatre).

*Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society.*

### Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> Nov. –

#### Ghostly London:

Robert Stephenson reviews sightings, hauntings and modern ghost-hunting.

7-30 pm for 7-45 start, at Herne Hill United Church Hall, corner of Redpost Hill and Herne Hill, SE24.

*Herne Hill Society.*

### Monday 15 November – The Survey of London:

Talk by Professor Andrew Saint, general editor of the series of parish histories, focussing on work in South London. 6-45 pm for 7-15 start at the Durning Library, 167 Kennington Lane, SE11  
*Friends of Durning Library*

### Wednesday 17 Nov. – An Unpredictable Life

Clapham resident Maurice Stewart recalls 60 years in the entertainment industry. 7-30 pm for 8 pm start at Clapham Manor School – enter from Belmont Road, SW4.

*The Clapham Society*

### Saturday 27 November –Winter Fair

11 am to 4 pm at Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road, SE24: seasonal stalls and activities in the main library, gallery and children’s library.  
*Friends of Carnegie Library*

## Add your news here...

Space permitting, we are happy to announce local events. 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 Alan Piper – contact details on back page

## Archives Open Day 25 September 2010

The Archives Open Day is always an essential fixture in the Brixton Society diary. This year's event, with a sure-fire popular theme and blessed with good weather, was outstanding.



*Diana Linskey & John Cunningham  
looking after the Brixton Society Stall*

The theme was: "Screen Lambeth". The leaflets invited us to, "find out about some of the hidden stories of the silver screen: from the home movies that local people made to the big films that were shot on location here; the social life of cinema-going to the way that we now use film to record ordinary people's life histories." And lots of people accepted.



*Naomi Klein*

There were some talks outside the theme. Of particular interest to our area, Naomi Klein presented: *Stories from the Stockwell war memorial* and

introduced her new book on the subject which is entitled, *These Were Our Sons*. (See the review on page 5 for details.)

The grand finale of the day was an illustrated talk called *Going to the pictures: a local history of the cinema* given by Robert Holden, ably assisted by Richard Norman. Anyone who had heard Robert speak before would have known what to expect - we were treated to a tour-de-force which, of course, overran; as informative as it was hilarious. Richard treated us to many images of Brixton's cinema history.

Our apologies for the other excellent talks we have not had room to cover.

## Open House London O<sub>2</sub> Academy 19 September 2010

The O2 Academy originally opened as the Astoria Cinema in 1929. Now a leading music venue, live music has always played a part at the Academy. A full orchestra played on stage on the opening night and live music in the intervals was a feature of cinema-going in those days. Now the venue is a Grade II listed building and an important part of the local economy.



*One side of the auditorium from the stage*

The magnificent Italianate decoration in the auditorium can be difficult to see during a concert because of the stage lighting. This opening of the Academy therefore gave visitors a rare opportunity to see it at its best. The management provided a high level of staffing which enabled them to let visitors see



some of the back stage and to go onto the stage. They also booked a couple of look-a-likes: Madonna and Ozzy Osbourne (seen left with a Brixton Society member, while behind them another visitor dreams of playing to the gallery).

We do not have enough space this issue for photos of the grand Art Deco front of house but the good news is that they hope to open again next year. Or go to a concert to see it!

## Local History Focus

### New Ideal Homes re-launched

By the time you read this, the joint website from several South London boroughs should be enhanced. It illustrates a range of suburban housing developments over the past 150 years – see [www.ideal-homes.org.uk](http://www.ideal-homes.org.uk)

### The 2011 Census

Census data is of great value to researchers but somebody has to collect it to start with – staff are now being recruited for 2011, see [www.censusjobs.co.uk](http://www.censusjobs.co.uk)



*Responding to our feature on Railton Road shops in the last issue, Graham Gower of the Streatham Society sent in this picture of No. 122 just over 100 years ago, when an ancestor ran a greengrocer's shop in better trading conditions than today.*

### Memories of Brixton

*Several months ago, Terry Clark e-mailed from Adelaide in South Australia with reminiscences of growing up in Brixton between 1940 and 1953, and at last we have carved out enough space to print them:*

I was born in Battersea on 26 November 1937. My father was then a constable in the Metropolitan Police, stationed at West End Central for 19 years, from 1932 to 1951. Then he transferred to Brixton Police Station, still as a constable (L597) where he served out the rest of his 25 years before retirement in 1957.

During the war we were evacuated (with our mother) three times, to Wales early in 1940 for a few months, to Three Bridges from late 1940 for about 18 months, then in late 1942 to Devoran in Cornwall, returning each time due

to my father's poor health and an easing of the bombing.

My first childhood memories are of 13 St. Lawrence Road (near Mostyn Road, since replaced by the Myatt's Fields South Estate). The houses were small – about the only thing I remember about it was that I could climb on the roof from a shed in the small garden, and the toilet was under the main roof but only accessible from the outside. The air raid shelter there was a heavy duty metal table with cage sides, in the lounge/ dining area.

I am not sure when we moved to Loughborough Road, but it was probably after our return from Three Bridges. This house was still standing when I visited in 1998. During the war years we had an Anderson shelter in the back garden. Two families occupied the house – the Harris family downstairs and us upstairs. There was only one front door and no divisions to separate the two families, but we never went into the Harris's part of the house. Both families shared the air raid shelter, with as I recall, benches on three sides of the shelter. The garden then was quite long but during the rebuilding of the area the garden was shortened and the house turned into three flats, all with separate entrances. Burton Road ran parallel with Loughborough Road and rear gardens of the Burton Road houses backed onto ours. I think these houses may have gone during the rebuild to reduce the garden sizes and put in more buildings.

Despite all the bombing, we only had one window crack during the war years, and that was a small wire-reinforced window in the pantry. We had a coal cellar, with the horse and cart pulling up in front of the house and the coalman dumping a one hundredweight (55 kg) sack of coal down the coal hole near the front steps. The milkman (United Dairies) also had a horse and cart, later upgrading to an electric trolley with a handle sticking out in front with a controller on it. This handle was connected to the front wheels to steer the vehicle, and the milkman squeezed the trigger handle to make the trolley go forward

We grew a few vegetables in the back garden, but also had an allotment in Brockwell Park,

## Local History Focus

where most of our vegetables came from. Dad would strap his fork and spade to the crossbar of his bike. I would sit on the metal frame fitted above the rear wheel, and off we would cycle on a Sunday to the allotment, to weed and tend the various things we grew, potatoes, cabbages, onions, carrots etc. It was my job to collect any horse manure that landed in our street, to put in a sack for our garden and allotment. One room in the house was a spare room and that was used for such tasks as laying out the shallots to dry, prior to pickling them.

My first job at the age of twelve (in 1948) was prior to Christmas in a butcher's shop under one of the railway arches in Brixton Market. Prior to Christmas people would come in and buy their chicken for Christmas dinner. The butcher would then give the customer a ticket from a book of raffle tickets, the stub would be attached to the chicken which was then hung in the butcher's cold room. Just before Christmas the customer would return with their raffle ticket to claim their chicken. It was my job to go into the cold room and recover the appropriate chicken, pluck it for the customer and take it to the butcher who would wrap it and hand it to the owner.

Another of my family jobs was to scour the market stalls for wooden boxes. Oranges came in wooden boxes about 3 ft x 1.5 ft in two compartments. The top, bottom and centre divide were all of quite thick (3/4 inch) timber but with the sides made of thinner timber slats about 4 inches wide and 3/16<sup>th</sup> inch thick. I would work my way around the market, asking stall-holders if they had any boxes, until I came across one who had just finished unloading the oranges from the box. I would then tie a piece of string around the box and drag it triumphantly back to Loughborough Road. The box was too big, or maybe I was too small, to transport it any other way. Depending on the condition of the box, Dad would either chop it up for firewood or occasionally make something for the house. I remember on one occasion, by standing the box on its end, he made a small cupboard-cum-table to sit beside my sister's bed. Three sides were timber slats and on the open side he attached a small

curtain. Inside was stored some of my sister's clothing.

From Loughborough Road I used to cross Brixton Road to Robsart Street, where there was a hairdresser. A haircut was three pence for boys, but we used to have to wait until the men's hair was done, and we kids were always pushed back in the queue as men arrived and took priority.

*Terry Clark*

## “These were our sons”

These words inscribed on Stockwell's war memorial inspired this book looking at the lives of the 574 men whose names are inscribed there. Each one was loved and mourned by his family when he died.

By identifying the men through the 1911 census, military records, family letters and personal accounts, Naomi Klein has pieced together aspects of their lives and enabled us to see the people and personalities behind the names. The stories that have emerged are rich and varied – they include jack-the-lads, fraudsters and underage volunteers, as well as serving soldiers, family men and hard-working artisans.

London-born Naomi Klein has lived in Stockwell for over 20 years. She works full-time in magazine publishing but out of hours runs the local blog, [www.stockwellnews.com](http://www.stockwellnews.com). Her determination to bring out little-known aspects of this corner of Lambeth sparked her interest in researching the names on the war memorial.

**These were our sons: Stories from the Stockwell war memorial** by Naomi Klein is published in paperback by Elephant Books at £9.99, or order from [www.elephantbooks.com](http://www.elephantbooks.com) at the special price of £8.99. ISBN 978-0-956865-0-6

## **Black History Month**

Still time to catch a couple of local events before the series ends...

### **Wednesday 20 October –**

#### **The Wonder, by Diana Evans:**

Journalist and author Diana Evans introduces her second novel, recreating the world of 1950s Kingston and the early carnivals and Blues parties of Ladbroke Grove. 7 pm at Brixton Tate Library, SW2 – free but phone (020) 7926 1075 to reserve a place.

### **Wednesday 27 October –**

#### **Effra Poets' Voices:**

International cultural celebration and launch of a new poetry CD and book, "Spiritual Fitness", 12 noon to 6 pm at Effra Resource Centre, 65 Effra Road, SW2. Tickets £3, bookings to (020) 7926 1044 or to [dking@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:dking@lambeth.gov.uk). The centre provides daytime services and information for adults with mental ill-health.

### **Monday 1<sup>st</sup> November –**

#### **For Queen and Country:**

A one-woman show about the life of Mary Seacole, to raise funds for a memorial statue. 8 pm at the White Bear Theatre, 138 Kennington Park Road, SE11. This is almost opposite the site of the old Surrey Gardens, where a benefit concert was organised for her by Army friends after her return from the Crimean War. Tickets £10, concessions £8, box office (020) 7793 9193 or online at [www.thewhitebeartheatre.co.uk](http://www.thewhitebeartheatre.co.uk)

## **Black Cultural Archives**

BCA is now in the process of recruiting staff to manage its collections, raise funds and run its educational activities and exhibitions. Closing date is 18 October – details at [www.bcaheritage.org.uk/vacancies](http://www.bcaheritage.org.uk/vacancies)

Final funding from Heritage Lottery Fund and the London Development Agency was confirmed in August to allow a return to Brixton. Recent expectations are for work to start at 1-3 Effra Road in January 2011, with a view to opening the new venue in April 2012.

## **The Fun Factory**

We are now being asked to comment when developers seek approval to naming of new streets or blocks. Recently we were able to suggest ideas for a small close off Harbour Road, SE5, reflecting Fred Karno's "Fun Factory" nearby at what is now 40 Southwell Road. A century ago Fred ran a troupe of entertainers who would set out from this base to tour theatres around the country. His best remembered performers were Stan Laurel (later paired with Oliver Hardy) and Charles Chaplin, who both went on to Hollywood fame.

There is already a Chaplin Close in SE1 so the final selection will be made from Laurel Mews, Karno Mews, Fun Factory Mews or Factory Mews.

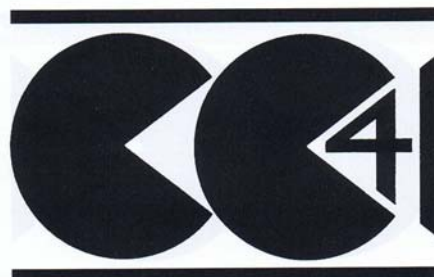
*Alan Piper.*

## **What did you wear in the Blitz, Granny?**

I was wondering if you could pass this enquiry on to your members. I am a postgraduate history student at the London College of Fashion and Cambridge University. I am researching the clothing of the Second World War period and I am looking to talk to women who lived in or near London at that time. Any one who is interested should contact me at:

[bethanbide@cantab.net](mailto:bethanbide@cantab.net) or telephone me at (020) 7586 5455 or 07 810 808 328 or write to:

Bethan Bide, Flat 2, 11 Chester Way, Kennington, London SE11 4UT.



*The wartime "utility" symbol applied to approved designs of clothing and furniture.*

# Town Cramming in Acre Lane

Although Brixton's Town Centre tends to get most of our attention, we have always been interested in the surrounding residential neighbourhoods. Over the past 6 months we have picked up increasing local frustration via Acre Lane Residents' Association about the adverse effect of Lambeth planning policies on the streets both north and south of Acre Lane.

### **Housing Dominates:**

Current market forces favour housing above all other uses. Central London has the biggest concentration of jobs in the country and homes in inner areas like Brixton are now more sought after because of the relatively short journey to work.

Since the early 1970s the Council has given unthinking priority to affordable housing. No longer able to build Council housing, it has been so keen on developments by housing associations that the usual standards for space and amenity have not been enforced.

Two proposals from registered social landlord Genesis have galvanised local opposition. Fulham Timber Merchants site was due to be replaced by a Yellow self-storage warehouse until they realised that a rival had just opened across the road. Genesis then stepped in with a housing scheme, soon expanding the site to include a couple more shops and the disused Duke of Wellington pub. Genesis had already been planning a high-density development in place of the old BP petrol station on the south side of Acre Lane, with rear access on to Sudbourne Road. Their first design was rejected for its shortcomings including blatant overlooking problems, but a new application is expected soon.

### **Lack of Amenities:**

The areas around Acre Lane have seen a steady increase in density since the 1960s. In the late 1970s, Lambeth and the GLC promoted housing improvement schemes which brought empty properties back into use

and encouraged conversion of larger houses into small flats. Infill developments, mostly by housing associations, have added to the rich mix, but the problem is that other amenities have not kept pace. There is hardly any public open space between Ferndale Road and Acre Lane, and only Windmill Gardens south of Acre Lane.

### **Shortage of School Places:**

The impact of the increased population is most keenly felt in the shortage of places in local primary schools. With a complete disregard for forward planning, the Council sold off the Ashby Mill and Santley Street school sites for private housing. As a result Sudbourne School is oversubscribed and this year had to limit its catchment area to 200m from the school. There is talk of expanding by putting the infants department on another site (if one can be found) but this replicates the limitations of the nearby Corpus Christi Catholic School, already on split sites.

### **Erosion of Character:**

Only a few existing buildings are protected from casual demolition, as part of the Town Centre or Trinity Gardens conservation areas, or by individual listing. Only a few of the major employment sites are protected from change of use to housing, including the Sunlight Laundry. One of the issues raised by residents was the piecemeal erosion of local character, such as clumsy window replacements and the dominance of the street scene by wheely bins.

### **Outdated Planning Policies:**

Part of the problem is the slow process of changing planning policies. Even if the issues were critically reviewed, the current Unitary Development Plan was devised 15 years ago and adopting the new Local Development Framework to replace it is proving a ponderous and alienating process.

### **Finding Ways Forward:**

Residents are reviving proposals for a conservation area, and more buildings for listing, nationally or locally, but clearly there are still policy gaps to deal with.

*Alan Piper.*

### Support for Community Groups

**Lambeth Voluntary Action Council (LVAC)** has just issued its new programme of training courses up to March next year. We know that many members are already involved in various community projects, and some groups are directly affiliated to the Society, so we wanted to remind you all in case the details have passed you by. See [www.lambethvac.org.uk](http://www.lambethvac.org.uk)

**Finding and Managing Volunteers** is a key issue for many community groups so LVAC has launched new support in this field. Contact their Volunteer Centre on (020) 7326 5488 or e-mail [gpdm@vclambeth.org.uk](mailto:gpdm@vclambeth.org.uk)

Specific guidance is now available to those taking on the roles of trustee, school governor, magistrate or running a tenants' and residents' association. Contact LVAC's Active Citizens hub at (020) 7737 1419 or by e-mail to: [active.citizen@lambethvac.org.uk](mailto:active.citizen@lambethvac.org.uk)

Advice can also be offered to smaller groups on capacity-building as well as monitoring and evaluation requirements set by funders – contact Charlotte Hennessy on (020) 7737 9477 or [monitoringandevaluation@lambethvac.org.uk](mailto:monitoringandevaluation@lambethvac.org.uk)

### Vida Walsh Centre re-launched

Age Concern Lambeth has recently re-started a programme of daytime activities for older people at the Centre.

**Yoga** sessions continue on Monday mornings, 10 am to 11-30, £4 per session.

**Goldies** coffee mornings for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people over 50, on Tuesdays 10 am to 11-30, 50p a session.

**Meet @ Vida's** for a variety of informal activities, on Wednesday afternoons 1-30 to 4-30 pm, fee £1.50. Other activities are already spinning off into extra weekly sessions including an art group and a gardening group.

**Eat @ Vida's** – a healthy lunch is served between 12 and 2 pm on Tuesdays and Fridays, cost £3.50.

**Out and About Club** meets at the Centre at 9-30 am on Fridays to set off for places of interest armed with a bus pass and a packed lunch.

**Advice & information services** continue, free, on Mondays 1 pm to 4 pm and Thursdays 10 am to 1 pm.

All enquiries about Centre activities to Erica on (020) 7326 1780 or by e-mail to: [vidawalsh@aclambeth.org.uk](mailto:vidawalsh@aclambeth.org.uk)

### Contact Us

#### General enquiries and Newsletter material:

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or [apiperbrix@aol.com](mailto:apiperbrix@aol.com)

#### Membership and sales:

Diana Linskey, Membership  
Secretary, 32 Stockwell  
Green, SW9 or by e-mail to:  
[wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk)

#### Planning issues:

For policy matters, Lambeth  
or London-wide, contact the  
Chair, Bill Linskey on (020)  
7274 3835 or at  
[wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk)

For individual planning  
applications, contact David  
Warner on (020) 7924 0618,  
[david@scriabin.force9.net](mailto:david@scriabin.force9.net)

#### Friends of Tate Library:

Vanessa Wood, Secretary,  
[vanessalkwood@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:vanessalkwood@yahoo.co.uk)

#### And contacting you...

With E-mail addresses we  
can quickly notify members  
of extra events or changes  
that crop up between  
newsletter issues. We can  
only contact c.60 of you this  
way, but there must be more  
– e-mail the Secretary and  
we'll do the rest.

#### Spot the Building

*(From our front page) This new  
Brixton school has a family  
resemblance to the MAXXI art  
gallery in Rome, which recently  
won the Stirling Prize. Evelyn  
Grace Academy was designed  
by the same architect, Zaha  
Hadid, and replaces the  
Shakespeare depot.*