

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Spring issue, April 2021

No.241, Quarterly issue,
Distributed free to members.

Registered with the London Forum of Amenity Societies, Registered charity no. 1058103, website: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk

Green Shoots and Stormy Skies ahead

After a year of on-off restrictions, we can start to make plans, even if much uncertainty remains. We include a number of events in this issue, and we will post more news on our website (as above) as the situation develops. There are plenty of challenges ahead too, as the economy falters and locally the gulf widens between Lambeth Council's ambitions and the aspirations of the local community.

Although events are now being planned again, the **Lambeth Country Show**, where we have always had a presence, has been deferred for another year. We are more hopeful about the **Lambeth Heritage Festival**, which should run through the whole month of September, even if this may be a mix of live and virtual events.

Our own **monthly committee** meetings are continuing on-line for the time being, but to enable our Annual General Meeting and **Social** evening to take place live, we have agreed to hold them 2 months later than usual, on Thursday 12 August. Final details, with the Annual Report and accounts, will be included in the July issue of the newsletter.

For any late changes of our plans, we rely on e-mail to alert most of our members. If you have changed your preferred e-mail address in the past year, please tell us via info@brixtonsociety.org.uk



The former Railway Hotel in a re-opened Atlantic Road. CI-2021.04.03-IMG9803.jpg

Guided Walks starting small

Once again, we will put on a limited series of guided walks around the wider Brixton area, monthly on Sunday afternoons. This year, you will need to reserve places in advance via info@brixtonsociety.org.uk due to limited numbers for the earlier dates, and for "test and trace" purposes. Walk routes have been adapted to allow social distancing, but are generally circular, to start and finish near public transport nodes.

Sunday 11 April – Railton Road linked to the 40th anniversary of the 1981 Brixton Riots. This route will be repeated on **17 October**.

Sunday 16 May – West Brixton based on route 2 in our Brixton Heritage Trails book.

Sunday 20 June – Loughborough Park and Wyck Gardens, starting from the Town Centre.

Sunday 18 July – Landor Road: How much has SW9 changed since the 1970s?
See our website for later dates.

Our popular **Brixton Market** walks remain suspended for the time being, due to crowded conditions within the market arcades.

Diary of Events – Spring & Summer 2021

Committee Dates

Our Executive Committee meets monthly, on the second Thursday, to plan activities and agree our response to current issues. Currently meetings are held on-line via Zoom. Meetings are still open to any of our members, but if you want to join in or to raise a specific issue, please contact the Chair a week beforehand at chair@brixtonsociety.org.uk

- 13 May
- 10 June
- 8 July

Guided Walks

Normally there are more walks provided by other groups within the Lambeth Local History Forum, but the usual printed leaflet is unlikely to appear anytime soon, as member groups are still emerging from lockdown. We will list events in our newsletters and website once we hear – or see the LLHF website at www.lambethlocalhistoryforum.org.uk

Editorial Notice

Space permitting, we try to feature local events, issues and reminiscences in our newsletter. We welcome news and comments from all who are interested in the Brixton area, so opinions expressed in these pages are not necessarily those of the Brixton Society.

All material should be sent to the Secretary, Alan Piper, 82 Mayall Road, SE24 0PJ, or by e-mail to info@brixtonsociety.org.uk

Events arranged by other groups

For the time being, most events are on-line or out of doors. Please check directly with organisers for any queries over times or costs.

Brixton Re-openings

At **Pop Brixton**, all food, drink and retail spaces are due to open to the public from Monday 12 April. Table seating will be available for groups of up to 6.

Over at **Longfield Hall**, classes for under 18s will return to the hall after the Easter break, including McAlpine Dance, and Irish dance classes by Brosnan Academy on Sunday mornings. A number of classes for adults will return from 17 May, including Tai Chi and Pilates. See their website for more details: www.longfieldhall.org.uk

Lockdown Lifts

Live music performances by the **Brixton Chamber Orchestra** will be taking place across 3 Town Centre sites on Mondays 12 April, 17 May and 21 June, at 1pm, 2-30 and 4 pm. The sites will be Electric Circle (the junction of Electric Avenue and Electric Lane), Tunstall Square (alongside Morleys) and Brixton Station Road.

Brixton BID (Business Improvement District)

Brixton Windmill tour dates, Summer 2021

The windmill will be open for tours one weekend a month from May onwards, between

1 pm and 5 pm. Advance booking is essential due to space restrictions and Covid precautions. For latest details, see the website, www.brixtonwindmill.org Friends of Windmill Gardens

Yoga sessions in Myatt's Fields Park

Kevin Bridge of Yoga Fusion is offering a programme of 5 weekly yoga sessions in the park, on Sundays 10 am to 11-30, from **2nd to 30 May** inclusive. Fee £5 per session or £20 upfront for all five. More details at www.yogafusion.org.uk

Open Gardens, Sunday 6 June

Each summer the Dulwich Society co-ordinates the opening of private gardens across a wide area, in aid of charities. 60 & 62 Brixton Water Lane, SW2 are two local gardens included this year on the above date, 2pm to 5-30, combined entry fee £5.

Also locally, Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses and the South London Botanical Institute are contributing on other dates. More details at

www.dulwichopengardens.org The Dulwich Society

London-wide Events

The London Festival of Architecture will run through the month of **June** (various venues). London Open House is on **4/5 September**, a little earlier than usual. The Chelsea Flower Show has moved to 21-26 September.

The End of the High Street as we knew it?

Even before the shutdowns imposed during the Coronavirus pandemic, traditional high streets were struggling. During the 1980s it was the rise of out-of-centre retail parks and supermarkets with their own customer parking, followed by the eclipse of department stores and once-familiar chains which failed to adapt to changing times. The rapid rise of on-line shopping will accelerate the casualties. Landlords and Councils have attempted to plug the gaps in their high streets with restaurants and charity shops, and to my mind, too permissive an attitude to betting shops and night clubs. In Greater London we probably have too many high streets or town centres competing for Londoners' custom, with each of 33 borough or city councils having its own favourite (or two).

The Government now seems to have dealt a fatal blow with its latest change to Planning rules. It has confirmed that it will allow commercial buildings on high streets to be converted to residential use from 1st August. This will be classed as Permitted Development and require only a limited Prior Approval process rather than a full planning application. This covers all shops and business premises with floorspace up to 1500 sq.m. Regrettably, there will be no exemptions for Conservation Areas like Brixton Town Centre, and even if a Council has made an Article 4 Direction to safeguard existing business use, that will end on 31 July next year.

Why should we worry? Well, it removes any power for a local council to consolidate blocks of shops or businesses to concentrate footfall. Instead, individual landlords will rush to convert or rebuild shops which happen to be empty or underperforming. It will be harder to generate a buzz from a concentration of shops cafes and other attractions when any of them can be picked off by a landlord keen to cash in, because London residential values far outweigh the commercial rents that can be obtained in these challenging times.

Alan Piper.

Resisting Hondo Towers



*Hondo Tower design as shown in February 2020, view from Brixton Station Road.
CI/BTC-2020-02-01-IMG9395.jpg*

The Save Nour/ Save Brixton/ Fight The Tower Campaign (SNSB/FTT) continues to oppose Hondo Enterprises' planning application for a 20-storey office block on Pope's Road in the heart of Brixton.

Now, the application is in the hands of Sadiq Khan, who will determine its fate at a public hearing in a few months' time. Meanwhile the Campaign is engaging with local community groups, activists, residents, traders and skilled professionals like architects and engineers, who will all continue to play a significant part in building the case against this monument and symbol of gentrification. Brixton is our neighbourhood and London is our home. If the Tower is built, it will have a direct and detrimental environmental impact on the lives of thousands of people who call Brixton home. Brixtonians and Londoners in general will keep demanding more meaningful consultations from local authorities, and more transparency for any future projects.

Join the conversation at the Brixton Neighbourhood Forum meeting at 7 pm on **Wednesday 28 April.**

Lara Samuels.

BRIXTON

Neighbourhood Forum

Brixton Neighbourhood Forum is still holding its meetings on-line, via Zoom. For log-in details, please e-mail to apiperbrix@aol.com or admin@brixtonneighbourhoodforum.org

In addition to the meeting on **28 April**, we are organising an on-line briefing session on the basics of Town Planning, because most people find the system very difficult to navigate. More news of that soon.

Undermining Hondo Towers

Lambeth Councillors were persuaded to agree to the Hondo development because it seemed to offer a lot of employment floorspace. We have already questioned this, and expecting a large corporate body to shift its HQ to a 1960s-type office tower in Brixton seems unlikely. It was difficult enough to let International House 40-plus years ago, and Lambeth Council took the space after BT could no longer justify a Brixton outpost.

Now other critics are speaking up, too much to quote at length here, but especially see a piece by Tsiresy Domingos at <https://www.itsfreezinginla.co.uk/post/how-local-authorities-are-weaponising-sustainability>

There has been much other discussion in the technical press about future workplaces, and it looks as if there will be a glut of conventional office space in Central London as firms scale down their HQ office needs. Outside the Central Area, interest is shifting to flexible workspace for small creative firms and start-up businesses – just the sort of space the Council is rushing to eliminate with its plans for International House and the Pop Brixton site. Carl Turner, its promoter has since gone on to refine his workspace ideas at several other sites, from Peckham Levels to Stratford to Weston-Super-Mare. Tim Gledstone, partner in Squire & Partners, now based in Ferndale Road, also discussed the issue in an article at <https://product.costar.com/home/news/>

Again from the trade press, we picked up an earlier design by Sir David Adjaye which foreshadows the Hondo project. Same arched windows, same dark brick as the first Hondo drawings, and significantly it's a residential tower, 66 storeys in this case, but then it is in New York City where this is par for the course, 130 William Street to be precise. Surely a big clue that residential use is Hondo's fall-back when the offices fail to let – but without those awkward obligations to provide any affordable housing!

Another pair of Towers

As if one set of towers was not enough, another high-rise development is proposed at Loughborough Junction. Strictly speaking its site in Hardess Street lies just within the Herne Hill Society's patch, but with one tower of 20 storeys and the other of 29 storeys, it would dominate a very wide area.

We objected to this back in 2019, and it now emerges that this too has been called in by the Mayor for decision. Apart from its sheer size, it blatantly ignores Lambeth's policy on tall buildings, which may be allowed in the Town Centre with lots of caveats, but not at all in the wider Brixton area.

For more on London planning issues, turn to page 9.

Alan Piper.

Move or Improve?

Probably the bulk of the planning applications that we hear about are for domestic extensions or alterations. The majority are innocuous, but some features such as roof terraces can be contentious if they overlook neighbours. Unless within a Conservation Areas or a Listed Building, much can be done without planning permission as "Permitted Development" but once a house has been split into flats, almost any visible alteration requires planning permission.

Hosted by New London Architecture, the 2021 **Don't Move, Improve** exhibition shows some fresh ideas for home improvements – see them at <https://lnkd.in/dh3cbyN> or register for lunch-time talks on 20 & 22 April at <https://bit.ly/3fQvVSc> + <https://bit.ly/39OBvAy>

40 years on...

Soon after the original Brixton Riots on 11/12 April, the Society convened a special meeting on the following Thursday to discuss the situation. By that time the Government had already announced that Lord Scarman would conduct a public inquiry into the riots and their underlying causes.

Notes of that meeting came to light recently (typically, while looking for something else!) and make interesting reading. At short notice, we managed to bring together 16 people, not only from surrounding residents' groups but also a local councillor, probation officer, the minister from Railton Methodist Church and the director of St. Matthew's Meeting Place.

What is striking now is that there were no Black people present, even if that changed over the subsequent months and years of networking within the wider community. That led to our involvement with the Lambeth Inner City Partnership in the 1980s, the Brixton City Challenge programme in the 1990s, and then the Lambeth First partnership, until austerity hit in 2010.

What we can trace in these notes are the roots of several ideas that grew, including building links between the Police and the community (despite cutbacks, still surviving as Safer Neighbourhood Panels), various short-term improvements to derelict sites around the Town Centre, and offering more support to isolated elderly residents, leading to the Vida Walsh Centre (now run by Age UK Lambeth).

It has been disappointing though in recent years to see old habits returning, because those in charge no longer have experience from the 1980s to look back on. Thus we see the Police over-using stop-and-search tactics on Black people and using a heavy hand with women demonstrators. Recent experience has taught us not to expect much of Central Government, but Lambeth Council too has reverted to its old top-down model where the image is more important than facing the real issues.

Alan Piper.

81 Acts of Exuberant Defiance

The original intention was for a concentrated series of events to run from April (to mark the 40th anniversary of the "Uprising") until Black History month in October. Due to the impact of Coronavirus restrictions, the start is more low-key than first hoped, but the season will now run for a full year until April 2022. This means that new or delayed events can still be fitted within the overall programme.

Ideas have been kicked around since early 2019, but at last some firm funding for the programme has been approved by the Arts Council of England (ACE) and we expect a flurry of local publicity by the time this newsletter reaches you. See more at: <https://81actsofexuberantdefiance.com>



You can now find the origins of this tower block estate on our website.

BxW-29.12.23-IMG9369.jpg

Access to more local history

There are practical limits on the length of stories we can include in our newsletters, but over the past year, opportunities for sales of our shorter booklets and pamphlets have much reduced.

Heritage Focus

Therefore, we have moved to add more heritage material to our website, and a number of pieces can already be found at

<https://www.brixtonsociety.org.uk/local-history/articles/>

These include the story of Trams in Brixton, an example of a “Tin Chapel” only recently lost to development, and the story of the high-rise Grantham Road Estate in SW9. More will gradually be added.

In Memoriam

Susan Shaw

As a Camberwell resident, Susan Shaw’s obituary featured in a recent issue of the Camberwell Society’s Quarterly. Susan had died in June, aged 87. She was known to us as the founder of the Type Archive, off Hackford Road – one of her last successes was to have the south end of the street renamed as Alphabet Mews.

After a career in publishing, during which she learned the art of typographic design, she heard that the once great Monotype Corporation was in danger of bankruptcy. With her own astounding energy and a grant from the National Heritage Monuments Fund, she organised the transport from Redhill to Stockwell of the equipment and supporting documents. She bought out the occupants of a former veterinary hospital and installed her treasures as the Type Museum. In 1996 she persuaded the owners of Stephenson Blake of Sheffield, the last makers of metal type, to sell their plant dating back to the 16th century, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. In the same year she acquired the equipment of the last makers of wood letters for printing play-bills and posters. There were never enough hands to operate all the equipment, so the name changed to the Type Archive, which continues as a repository of printing history and a memorial to her efforts.

Daphne Marchant

We learnt from the newsletter of Outings for Older South Londoners (www.oosl.org.uk) that Daphne Marchant – nee Daphne Hayes-Mojon – passed away in early February at the age of 95. Daphne was a leading light in the

Streatham Society and a regular speaker on local history topics among other societies. She was twice Mayor of Lambeth. Her work for the wider community continued throughout her 20 years as a member of Lambeth Council, fighting her last election at the age of 88. She was also chair of the Norwood School governing body, chair of the Streatham Darby & Joan Club (later the Woodlawns Centre) and of the Myrrh Education Centre. She was proud to be awarded the British Empire Medal in 2013. She never suffered fools gladly, but she was without prejudice in identifying who the fools were. She had a keen eye for injustice and she fought hard for what she believed in.

Linda Quinn

We were very sad to hear of the death of Linda Quinn, editor of the Brixton Blog and Bugle, in February, a few days after her 70th birthday. Born in Glasgow, Linda moved to Brixton in 1975 and stayed local for the rest of her life. After picking up typing skills at Stirling University, she became a typesetter, and one of the few female members of their union, the National Graphical Association. She was also a leading light in left-wing and anti-racist activity in Brixton and more widely in South London.

As new technology began to destroy printers’ jobs, Linda successfully moved across to journalism, working on a variety of publications from Autoexpress to Robert Maxwell’s short-lived London Daily News. For several years she worked as a journalist and PR for trade unions, before becoming head of publicity at the New Opportunities Fund. Here she oversaw its transition to the Big Lottery Fund, and retired as its director of marketing and communications.

Retirement though was put on hold when she was asked to become editor of the Brixton Blog and Bugle when the founders moved on. She raised the brand’s profile and reformed the parent company as Brixton Media CIC. She was often to be seen at local events or Council meetings, when such things were still possible. Sadly the last 8 months of her life were spent in bed at home due to illness, though she continued to direct Brixton Media and keep in touch with many friends.

Heritage Focus

Local Heroes

Through lockdown, the Crafts group of the Friends of Tate Library Brixton have been working to embroider a banner depicting some of the Local Heroes highlighted at Friends' events in recent years. Our committee recently agreed to fund reproducing the banner design as a tea towel. After providing one for each participant, most of these will be available for purchase – more details will follow once these are available.

Compiled from several sources.

The Missing Census

Following the article from David Gwyther in the last newsletter, **David Thomas** has provided further information. Although no Census was carried out in 1941, a lot of information was collected in the September 1939 Government Review. This was carried out around the outbreak of the Second World War, and for each address recorded the name, date of birth, gender and occupation of each person there on the day it was visited. Lacking is a place of birth. Added (usually in different ink) is a note if a man is fit for "heavy duty" work. At later dates married surnames have been added for some women who were single in 1939 (but not new addresses).

Like the normal census, it recorded anyone temporarily away from home, even just for that particular day or night, as where they actually were. So for example, married railway drivers and firemen on lodging turns might appear to be residing at the house of a widow (landlady) in Bournemouth whilst wives in Lambeth, with whom they might be the next night, were recorded as women, perhaps with children, without a husband.

Before it became available to the public around 2018, names were deliberately marked through with thick ink to protect personal data of those who might still be alive. It can be seen in the same way as Census information up to the year 1911 inclusive on the website "Find My Past" which is generally available on computers at main libraries where Covid restrictions allow. So, although not as comprehensive as the Census, we have the benefit of seeing most of the record before the usual 100 years are up.

Americans in Brixton

The Craft family in Brixton, 1868-73:

Researching Music Hall performers has already flagged up several Black residents of Brixton from well before the Empire Windrush but there were others too, as recently pointed out to us by Jeffrey Green. He has provided details of one such family, as below.

Ellen and William Craft were escaped slaves from Georgia who fled from Boston, Mass., in late 1850, arriving in Liverpool on 13 December. They became literate through attending a village school in Ockham, Surrey, where they also taught – William taught handicrafts and Ellen domestic skills. By 1857 they had settled in Hammersmith, probably following one of their teachers who had moved there. The 1861 Census lists Ellen and 3 sons living at 12 Cambridge Road, Hammersmith. They remained in Hammersmith until 1868, while William made at least two extended trips to West Africa.

By 29 September 1868 the family is at 124 Stockwell Park Road, Brixton, when the birth of a daughter, Mary, is registered. When she was baptised at St. Matthew's Church on 11 August 1869, her parents were living at 5 Atkinson Place (opposite Electric Avenue). For some months, Ellen's mother, Maria Smith, also lived with them. Later in August 1869, Ellen and William sailed from Liverpool for the USA with some of their children, including the baby.

The 1871 Census lists two sons, Charles and Brougham Craft living at Brixton Lodge School in Atkinson Road (now Bernays Grove). This building still survives, after a few changes of use, behind Morleys department store. Brougham and another brother, William junior sailed from Liverpool in February 1873 on the SS Manitoban. Movements of other family members are still being traced, but it is known that William junior returned to London, where he married in 1888.

*Jeffrey Green is the author of *Black Americans in London (Pen & Sword, 2018)* and *Black Edwardians (Cass, 1998)*. Website: www.jeffreygreen.co.uk*

Heritage Focus

A forgotten lamp-post

An old street lamp remains in what is now a small car park between 211 and 213 Brixton Road. The lamp-post itself is concrete, a rare example of the pattern which was installed across Lambeth* in 1937. It is thought to be the last of its kind remaining in the borough, so would warrant at least local listing for its historic interest.

The lamp-post is an **Eddystone** column made by Concrete Utilities, and would originally have had a low-pressure gas lamp on a swan-neck bracket. The maker's advertisements of the time show an example in Barrington Road, opposite the old East Brixton Station.

The South Metropolitan Gas Co. provided street lighting for 78 miles of streets within Lambeth, but some lamps of the same pattern were electric from the outset. The gas lanterns were replaced in the 1950s, when Lambeth's street lighting was fully electrified. There seems to have been a mass clearance of the old-style concrete lamp-posts during the 1970s and early 1980s, first where new estates were being developed, then as part of an effort to upgrade street-lighting generally. Most of them seem to have ended up reinforcing the banks of the Thames downstream from London.

Lamp-posts of similar shape survive nearby in Durand Gardens and parts of some other Conservation Areas, but these are earlier cast iron types on which the Eddystone columns were based. One other example of a concrete column has been found, east of Kennington Park on Meadcroft Road SE5, but due to boundary changes this is now in Southwark, and a modern steel post alongside suggests it will not be there much longer.

The car park itself used to be the access into Melbourne Square, before the original houses were demolished for the building of Melbourne Mews and the adjacent Myatt's Fields North estates.

Tracey Gregory.

*Excluding Clapham and Streatham, which were then part of Wandsworth Borough.



The old lamp-post alongside 211 Brixton Road with Melbourne Mews in the background. DL-7.1.21.jpg



Detail of lamp, with compartment for electric switchgear. DL-7.1.21.jpg

We are often asked...

We typically receive a variety of local history enquiries between issues of our newsletters. Please now send to history@brixtonsociety.org.uk

We can only feature a few answers in these pages, but we already include some FAQs within our website.

London-wide Issues

The wider picture

With the delayed elections for the Mayor and Greater London Assembly finally taking place next month, it seemed a good time to look at issues facing London as a whole. We keep in touch with developments through the London Forum of Amenity & Civic Societies, and via bulletins from the London Society, the Centre for London and also the Mayor's occasional planning newsletters. All that's in addition to occasional contact with the amenity societies for the areas surrounding our own.

Sharing Good Practice

A recent report from the Centre for London **Town Centre Futures: evidence and ideas for recovery** does what it says on its cover. The most recent London Plan identifies 241, from Oxford Street to minor local centres. The report features case studies of 10 very diverse town centres, from Knightsbridge to Deptford High Street, and suggests 11 themes for improvements. The report was produced with the Cross-River Partnership (CRP) and highlights the contributions that Business Improvement Districts can make.

Another initiative supported by CRP is **Clean Air Routes**, highlighted by our own Brixton BID last month. The concept is to identify routes through urban areas for pedestrians and cyclists which avoid the higher air pollution alongside major traffic routes. People can reduce their exposure to pollution by almost a quarter by taking a Clean Air Route instead of the default route suggested by popular journey planners. The scheme launched with 14 routes across 11 London boroughs. Sadly, there is nothing near Brixton yet, but maybe this is an opportunity for local action? Meanwhile, see what's been done elsewhere at <https://cleanairroutes.london/>

This seems a good point to remind you that the **Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ)** is due to be extended up to the South Circular Road on 21st October.

We also hear that the Northern line extension to Battersea via Nine Elms will probably open to the public this Autumn.

Open City, best known as the promoters of the London Open House weekend, have just launched the Open City Stewardship Awards programme, which is open to entries until 18th June. Categories will recognise eminent examples of estate management, community engagement, open space management, and circular economy principles. It could be hard to find good examples locally, but see more at <https://open-city.org/stewardship-awards>



*Recent development north of King's Cross Station includes public areas and re-use of old buildings, as well as new development (London Design Festival 2019)
Dbx/CU/2019.09.20-LDF.11jpg*

London Plan is Live

Further to the brief report in the last newsletter, the definitive version of the London Plan was finally published last month. Draft guides have also been published to explain four policy areas more fully: fire safety, urban greening, air quality and land transport. Documents can be found at <https://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/planning/london-plan> or enquiries to londonplan@london.gov.uk

Wandle Art Festival

Far be it from us to lure people away from Brixton, but some of our local artists and creative types may be looking for more opportunities to promote and sell their work. The Wandle Industrial Museum have sent news of the Festival they are organising for the weekend **10/11 July**. If you are interested in taking part, more details can be found at the website www.wandle.org but please complete the expression of interest form before **26 April** or contact the museum at office@wandle.org

Lambeth Citizens Climate Assembly

Despite declaring a Climate Emergency some time ago, Lambeth Council has not moved with much urgency. Its intention is to convene a Citizens' Assembly, which will act as a sort of Grand Jury to hear evidence and then come up with recommendations for how Lambeth can become "carbon neutral" by 2030. So far, we have not heard when this will happen, or how we can submit evidence. Find more about the process at <https://bit.ly/2Zr7GR2>

There is already a lot of expertise within the local community, and **Transition Town Brixton** formed an eco-housing group back in November 2019, since when it has struggled to engage with Lambeth over future housing and planning policies.



The disused amenity building in the centre of the pocket park. CI/2021.03.19-IMG9773.jpg

Friends of Loughborough Park

A Friends group is now active to champion this pocket park on the east side of Brixton, after an on-line meeting adopted a constitution last month. Lockdown had frustrated earlier attempts to organise, yet more people were discovering the park on their daily exercise. A separate group had already come into being to manage the community garden area at the back of the site. It has helped that, after years of neglect, Lambeth found some funds to repair the children's play area. The amenity building in the centre of the park has remained resolutely shut for years, managed by another part of the Council, but the Dwaynatics Foundation, led by Pastor Lorraine Jones, is negotiating a new lease and has expressed a willingness to accommodate other local groups if they are willing to share the running costs. Enquiries about the park to friendsofloughboroughpark@gmail.com

Your streets, your way

When this newsletter reaches you, Lambeth's Street Design competition will be nearing its deadline of **19 April**. Ideas have been invited for 10 sites around the borough, of which five are within our area – the playground alongside Bedford House, off Hetherington Road SW4, two routes into the Roupell Park Estate, SW2, Somerleyton Passage, off Somerleyton Road SW9, and part of St. Matthew's Road between the tenants' hall and Trinity Congregational Church. Winners will only receive £750 but should see their design built. For details see www.urbangrowth.london/competition or enquiries to hello@urbangrowth.london

Community Weeding Scheme

Some residents have expressed concern at the Council's use of glyphosate weedkiller on its streets and parks. Lambeth has committed to end the spraying of streets to control weeds by October this year. It is inviting residents to commit to weeding their own streets by the end of April, so that spray applications in May and August/ September can be dropped from this year's schedule. More details at <https://beta.lambeth.gov.uk/streets-roads-transport/community-weeding-scheme>

However, this begs the question of whether weeding of pavements is even necessary. Incredible Edible Lambeth hosted an on-line briefing on BioDiversity last July, at which Sophie Leguil of More Than Weeds called for pavement plants to be encouraged, since they can be food sources for birds and insects. And Victoria Sherwin of Myatt's Fields Park recently highlighted how Rotherham Council had saved £25,000 in its mowing costs by planting 8 miles of wildflower verges.

You may have seen tree pits sprouting extra garden plants around the base of the tree. Planted by guerrilla gardeners or neighbours, these can help retain moisture in the soil for the host tree. Before you follow their example, be wary that plants bought-in from garden centres may have been heavily treated with insecticide or pesticide during production, so donating some surplus home-grown plants is safer for the bee population.

Beyond Brixton

John Ruskin's Camberwell

The Guild of St. George, the arts and educational charity started by John Ruskin in 1871, has produced a new edition of its 1990 publication, *John Ruskin's Camberwell*. Written and updated by Dr John Dearden, a Ruskin scholar and former Master of the Guild, the concise book explores Ruskin's long period living on Herne Hill and Denmark Hill, as well as his contributions to developments in contemporary Camberwell, like St. Giles' Church.

Ruskin's family moved from Bloomsbury to Herne Hill in 1823, when he was four years old. The critic and thinker retained a study in the house until his death in 1900, despite having moved initially to Denmark Hill, and later to the Lake District, as urbanisation crept into the once-rural area.

The book is engagingly written and beautifully produced – despite the photos having been taken on a short January afternoon by yours truly! It costs £10 plus P&P, and can be ordered from

<https://www.guildofstgeorge.org.uk/john-ruskins-camberwell> (Herne Hill Bookshop may also have copies, or can order for your collection.)

Joanne Nightingale.

Dulwich Festival, 7-16 May

For this year, the organisers have kept the festival going on-line, with a lively mix of music, poetry, art, history and literature. There will be live-streamed interviews, talks and music events, and a podcast on the history of Dulwich Village.

Artists' Open House, which has been a highlight of past festivals, attracting over 250 exhibitors, will be presented as a searchable gallery, with some artists offering on-line workshops or galleries of their own. See: <https://dulwichfestival.co.uk>

Dulwich Picture Gallery

The Gallery plans to re-open on Wednesday 19 May, following a year of closures. Dates of their exhibitions have been modified to suit.

Unearthed – Photography's Roots will now be extended to run until 30 August.

Helen Frankenthaler – Radical Beauty will open on 15 September, to run until April 2022. The main gallery collection has been rehung, and the entrance hall has been reconfigured, with new murals by Sinta Tantra. On-line events continue, with art workshops in the gardens on Sundays 2, 9 and 16 May (book on-line). More details at: www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk

The Garden Museum

The Museum was established in 1977 in the former parish church of St. Mary's, alongside Lambeth Palace. The nave currently displays a set of site-specific paintings by artist Shara Hughes (until 24 May). The exhibition season starts in earnest on 17 May, celebrating 20th century floral decorator Constance Spry (until 26 September). In the meantime, Sunday 25 April sees the return of its popular **Spring Plant Fair**, for one day only, 10-30 am to 5 pm. Please book tickets in advance at <https://gardenmuseum.org.uk/events/spring-plant-fair-2021/>

Crystal Palace Subway

The subway once linked the Park to Crystal Palace High Level Station. Restoration has begun, prompted by the Friends of Crystal Palace Subway, and Bromley Council have added a page to the borough's website to show information as the project progresses: <https://www.bromley.gov.uk/CrystalPalaceSubway>

Meanwhile in Clapham Park

Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing has been gradually redeveloping the Clapham Park area and there are still a few phases to go. They are currently exploring the idea of using some of the vacant sites for temporary development that could benefit local residents and business owners. Meanwhile Space and Jan Kattein Architects have been commissioned to assess this and are now canvassing local views. This area falls between the Clapham, Streatham and Brixton Societies, so gets little attention from any of them. More critically, it lacks an obvious focal point which would be attractive for business users.

Alan Piper.

Timeslip!

Due to complications like Easter and all the big planning cases that have been taking our time lately, compiling and distributing this edition of the newsletter is a week later than usual. We have tried to ensure we are not announcing events that have already happened, but lots of things are in the process of starting up again.

Mosaic Classes Return

Among the organisations restarting live events, Art4Space is back with in-person classes in mosaic-making since 13th April. The studio is Covid-secure and all safety advice is followed. Mosaic classes run on Tuesdays, 6-30 to 9 pm at Studio 1, 31 Jeffreys Road, SW4 6QU. Enquiries to jewels@art4space.co.uk



Following the report on p.6 of our last issue, the Nubian Jak Foundation have unveiled another plaque to Black achievers, this time to commemorate the first broadcasts by Choice FM in 1990, then based in Trinity Gardens.
CI/2021.04.03/IMG9796.jpg

Lambeth History Unlocked

A highlight of lockdown for local history enthusiasts has been the series of on-line talks given by Lambeth's Archivists, Jon Newman and Len Reilly. The series is now continuing on a monthly basis, typically on Thursday evenings at 7 pm. The next is on **20 May** on Edward Hollamby and Lambeth's programme of housebuilding – see www.lambeth.gov.uk/archives

Things to Come

History enquiries have trickled in over recent months and we will have more to say once we can check details at Lambeth Archives.

Healthy Living Platform (HLP)

HLP has been awarded a contract from Lambeth Council to co-ordinate and distribute surplus food in the borough, following a collaborative bidding process. HLP has been providing food parcels to vulnerable or shielding residents since March last year. They have developed a partnership with 33 other charities and food hubs, and linked up with Schools and Children's Centres.

HLP will provide a single point of contact to collect surplus or unwanted food. Distribution to local outlets will be via 3 hubs, the Brixton one being at **Southwyck House** Community Hall, off Moorland Road. If you are involved with a community group interested in joining in, or with a business that would like to donate food or toiletries etc., contact Mala Naicker at malafpm@googlemail.com If you are aware of families in need, refer them to the MyCommunity Gateway run by AgeUK Lambeth at mycommunity@ageuklambeth.org or phone 0333 360 3700.

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

We are continuing to monitor developments so do feed back to us how your corner of Brixton is affected by LTNs. Most schemes have been put in place quickly but need to be followed up by more investment in infrastructure. Sad to say, the footbridge link between **Ferndale** and **Landor** Roads via Hubert Grove looks likely to be closed for some time yet, weakening the supposed priority for pedestrians and cyclists. And if electric cars are meant to be part of the solution, kerbside charging points are still a rarity.

This seems a good point to mention that Clean Air Day this year will be on **17 June**, so expect more events promoting less polluting modes of transport.

Make it in Brixton

Lambeth's Creative Enterprise Zone has its own website at <https://www.inbrixton.org> Contents include practical advice for small firms and freelancers, news of events, shows and openings, details of local facilities and venues, and profiles showcasing local creative people.