

# THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

New Year issue, January 2020

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

## Walk this way...

We are currently firming up arrangements for some guided walks for the summer months, so they can be included in the annual programme published by the Lambeth Local History Forum. This goes to print shortly so that distribution can start in the Spring.

If there are forgotten backwaters that we should explore, or if you would like us to repeat a walk that you missed in the past year or two, you have just a week left to tell us!

Please forward your requests or ideas to us at [info@brixtonsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@brixtonsociety.org.uk)

**Brixton Market Walks** are already continuing on a monthly basis – if you receive a paper newsletter, a list of dates should be enclosed, or see page 2 overleaf for details.

**Brixton Windmill Heritage Walks** are put on by the Friends of Windmill Gardens and will resume in April to coincide with Sunday openings of the Windmill. These walks through the surrounding neighbourhood start and end at the mill.

**Tailor-made Walks** are occasionally provided for visiting groups. We hosted a local business just before Christmas, and a South Korean contingent earlier in the year.



*One of several system-built tower blocks erected near Clapham Road in 1967-68.  
(HP/CI/December 2019, IMG9369.jpg)*

## Return of the tower block

In recent years, developers have increasingly proposed high-rise flats on sites around Brixton, to extract maximum value from their sites. This is at a time when both Lambeth Council and the London Plan are more willing to accept higher densities.

*Read more on page 6.*

## The Year Ahead

You will find some dates overleaf, but many local organisations will only be re-opening after we send this edition off for printing, so other dates will probably trickle in over the next few weeks. It's always worth checking our website for updates, or – if you have told us your current e-mail address – we can tell you about any urgent changes to meeting details.

### Spring in Tooting – Sunday 29 March

Meet at **2 pm** at Tooting Broadway Tube Station for a walk led by Geoff Simmons, recalling the local flower growing industry. The walk finishes at Lambeth Cemetery in Blackshaw Road, SW17. *See page 9.*

# Diary of Events, New Year 2020

## Market Walks

Our guided walks around Brixton's markets continue on the second **Saturday** of every month, at £3 including the illustrated booklet of the route. Tickets are best booked in advance via [marketwalks@brixtonsociety.org.uk](mailto:marketwalks@brixtonsociety.org.uk)

Walks start from Brixton Station Road, corner of Beehive Place, at **2-30 pm** and take about 80 minutes.

## Committee Dates

Our Executive Committee meets monthly, on the second Thursday, to plan activities and agree our response to current issues. Meetings are at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road SW2 (facing Windrush Square) at 7 pm. Meetings are open to all members, but if you want to raise a specific issue, please tell the Secretary a week prior.

- 9 January
- 13 February
- 12 March
- 9 April.

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

## Events arranged by other groups

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

NB: The South London History Group has now ceased meeting. Herne Hill Society meetings are suspended.

### Saturday 11 January – Winter Tree Walk

Learn how to identify trees in winter from their twigs, bark and buds. 2 pm to 3-30 pm, meet at the entrance to the reserve on South Norwood Hill. Free and no need to book. *London Wildlife Trust*

### Thursday 16 January – Henry Tate

Bill Linskey traces the story of the founder of the Tate Gallery and sponsor of local libraries; 7-30 pm at Upper Norwood Library, Westow Hill SE19. *Norwood Society*

### Monday 28 January – Prohibition

A battle in America's last culture war, described by Gary Gerstle. Free history lecture presented by Gresham College, 6 pm to 7 pm at the Museum of London, London Wall EC2. *Gresham College*

### Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> February – A Tonic to the Nation

The Festival of Britain in London in 1951, described by Michael Gilbert, at 8 pm at Woodlawns, 16 Leigham Court Rd, SW16. *Streatham Society*

## Weekend 8/9 February – The Listed Property Show, Olympia

For ticket offers and more details, see [www.lpoc.co.uk](http://www.lpoc.co.uk)

### Saturday 8 February – Croydon Airport

The history of London's first airport recounted by Graeme Roy, 2-30 pm at St. James Church Hall, Merton. *Merton Historical Society.*

### Monday 17 February – Sharing your personal data in the Healthcare system

Dr Jack Barker, a consultant physician at King's College Hospital, is also Chief Clinical Information Officer for the 6 boroughs of SE London. He will explain how information technology is being used to handle data more effectively. Open 7 pm for 8 pm start, at Omnibus, the former Clapham Library, North Side SW4. *Clapham Society*

### Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> March – The Paint Detective

Patrick Baty describes the research needed to match the original colours of historic buildings, at 8 pm at Woodlawns, 16 Leigham Court Rd, SW16. *Streatham Society*

### Tuesday 10 March – Lambeth's Riverside

The Thames frontage and bridges described by Alan Piper, 7-30 pm start at Housing Co-op Hall, 106 The Cut, SE1. *Southwark & Lambeth Archaeological Society*

# Community Focus

## Next steps at the Windmill

Friends of Windmill Gardens are gearing up for a new season of windmill openings from April onwards. Progress towards completing the education building next to the mill has been painfully slow, but two part-time staff have already been recruited, Lucy Bridal as business development manager, and Mags Di Ceglie as project administrator.

The role of volunteers remains as vital as ever. During the 2019 season, some 35 volunteers contributed 540 working hours over open days and events from April to October.



HP/DL/IMG0591.jpg

## Friends of Brixton Library

One of the weekly activities in the ground floor meeting room, **Craft Wednesdays** (above) run from 1-30 to 3-30 pm. Led by Martyn Hines, the activities include sewing, embroidery, beading and macramé. The Brixton Society recently gave a small grant towards materials, but further funding is being sought.

**Tai Chi** sessions continue on Saturday mornings, 9-30 to 10-30 am, and are well-attended. The Friends are investigating other possible events in conjunction with the library management.

## Stockwell Park Community Trust

Last month, an exhibition of the paintings produced by a residents' art group led by Jason Gibilaro provided an excuse to see inside the spacious community centre. It's at the southern end of Stockwell Park Road, in the centre of the Stockwell Park Estate.

## Supporting Community Groups

Currently Lambeth Council has contracted the Integrate Agency to provide support and advice to voluntary and community groups working in Lambeth. Groups of which Integrate is already aware should be receiving monthly bulletins about funding and training opportunities.

There is also a networking and workshop event planned for **Wednesday 29 January** at Lambeth Town Hall (in the Assembly Hall on Acre Lane) between 10 am and 4 pm. Various local organisations will have stalls and there will be a rolling programme of workshops on hot topics such as income generation, social prescribing, sustainability, youth wellbeing and more. Free but book via Eventbrite or contact [Richard.davis@integrateagency.co.uk](mailto:Richard.davis@integrateagency.co.uk)

## Brockwell Park progress

Our information on the restoration of Brockwell Hall came from the November meeting of BPCP, the management advisory group, but all consultants were due to be appointed by Christmas, and public consultation on the plans is scheduled for May. A project website has been set up to provide updates on progress – so check out [www.brockwellhallrestoration.org/](http://www.brockwellhallrestoration.org/)

Literally at a grass-roots level, the BPCP also received reports on reinstatement after past major events, and how the Parks Investment Levy (PIL) had been spent. £3,000 has been reserved from this to support maintenance of the wildlife habitats that the Biodiversity Group has been creating in recent years, such as the boundary hedge and the wildflower slope. Further work was agreed in principle to make the old swimming lake more friendly to wildlife.

A new Events Strategy is to be unveiled in April, but a 3-day weekend of major music events is in prospect for 7/9 June, with set-up starting from 27 May, and dismantling to be completed on Sunday 14 June.

Further on, the Country Show will return in July, with site bookings to open in February.

## Members' Corner

### Adapting the Brixton Society for the Twenties

As a civic amenity society, we are part of a widespread national movement where most towns and urban areas have a similar group to champion local interests, protect the area's character and heritage, and promote good practice in the design and management of buildings and public places.

In Greater London, practically all amenity societies are registered with the London Forum of Amenity Societies. This holds regular meetings for representatives from its member groups, usually to discuss emerging developments in planning and transport. However, during 2019 a couple of evenings were set aside to discuss how to raise the profile of individual societies and attract more active members.

Our paid-up membership (leaving aside complimentary distribution to councillors and kindred groups) has been just above 150 for the past several years. While we attract some new members each year, we lose a similar number, mostly through people moving away. More critical to our success is the number of people who are actively involved, as committee members, newsletter contributors and distributors, and those who help at various events during a typical year.

Over the years, we have had an active executive committee of at least a dozen members, which has enabled us to share the workload and find delegates to send to other local meetings and report back. Though we have a nucleus of long-serving members, the downside is that age is catching up with us and now need reinforcements from a younger generation in order to sustain the present level of activity.

Buttressed by a larger membership, some of the neighbouring amenity groups are thriving, notably the Clapham and Streatham Societies. The latter has a busy programme of meetings which always seem to be well-attended, though the membership is visibly ageing. In contrast, the Vauxhall Society seems less active nowadays, and the Norwood Society is

still recovering from the departure of long-serving office-bearers. More surprising, the Herne Hill Society's meetings are currently in abeyance, though we hope normal service will be resumed soon.

Is the amenity society model still sustainable? Membership subscriptions and our back catalogue of publications give us financial independence in an ongoing climate of cuts and unreliable patronage. Other strengths are continuity and local knowledge. We can act as back-up or mentor for grass-roots groups which spring up to defend a local amenity or landmark, but which can too easily fade away if most of their supporters limited their efforts to occasional re-tweeting.

However, we need to work at keeping in touch with other local interests and making ourselves known as new people come on the scene. For the coming years, the challenge will be involving younger people and passing on the baton to the next generation. It's also to our mutual advantage to improve liaison with nearby civic societies, to ensure that sites on our boundaries don't slip through the net.



*Local History Fair (DL-20190907-101223.jpg)*

It seems we are doing some of the right things, though more and better would be preferred. The website was upgraded in 2018 but we still need more members posting or responding to articles. We had 2400 followers on Twitter last year, and it's growing. We also want to appear "in the flesh" at more events, but that always depends on hearing about them before our diaries fill up. We are always glad to hear ideas from our members, but what we really want is for the ideas to come with offers to help put them into effect!

*Alan Piper.*

### Transition Town Brixton responds to the Climate Emergency

Back in November, TTB used one of the Open Project Nights at Pop Brixton's Impact Hub to brainstorm solutions for the Climate Emergency just recently declared by Lambeth Council. Participants began dissecting the Council's "Corporate Carbon Reduction Plan" to replace the buzzwords by real actions that could make a difference. The plan seemed to claim that Lambeth's emissions were modest, on the basis that so many services were now contracted out and no longer delivered by their own staff. It was strongly felt that a wider view was necessary, taking in not just all public services, but also commercial and household activities. While this may seem ambitious, it also allows many more people to be mobilised and help to make a difference.

To develop ideas more fully, a number of topic groups were formed and have begun informal meetings and e-mail exchanges – transport, energy, buildings/ housing, rewilding/ nature, consumption & waste, and governance & procurement.

If you want to join in these meetings, please e-mail to [info@transitiontownbrixton.org](mailto:info@transitiontownbrixton.org) or post on [www.facebook.com/groups/transitiontownbrixton](http://www.facebook.com/groups/transitiontownbrixton)

### We need more trees!

Back in May, the Committee on Climate Change advised that the country needs a sharp increase in trees and woodland to help achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. That means increasing present woodland cover from 13% of UK land area to 17% in the next 30 years, or perhaps more achievably, planting 50 million new trees a year – that's less than one for each of us. After all, the latter approach offers more opportunities for doing something in the urban areas where most of us live.

Of course there are traps to avoid when planting in small gardens – tree species should be chosen to encourage a wider range of

wildlife, whilst not undermining the neighbour's foundations. A fruit tree with low spreading branches may be more useful. If you are inclined to plant a tree, now is definitely the best time of year, and it would be of more long-term benefit than our very short-lived enthusiasm for Norway Spruce or Nordmann Fir in the run-up to Christmas.

However, whether trees are planted in gardens or local parks, there will always be a need for occasional pruning or thinning to keep them under control or prevent overshading other trees or grass areas. But don't think you can use the thinnings to fuel your wood-burning stove – small stoves only add to air pollution in the form of fine particulates (PM 2.5 or fine airborne dust to the rest of us).

*Alan Piper.*

### Your Garden this year?

Even if you are not keen to rush out and plant or prune trees just now, it's worth laying plans to make any outdoor space greener and more friendly to wildlife. It's helpful if paved areas are permeable, or allow rainwater to run off into planting beds rather than overload the drains whenever there is a heavy shower.

It may seem early in the year, but while I have space available, I want to mention some hints on how to create a butterfly-friendly garden. 76% of our butterfly species have declined over the past 40 years, so anything that helps aid their recovery is welcome. Rachel Brown has shared her 3000-word blog on how to tackle this, which can be found at <https://diygarden.co.uk/wildlife/ultimate-guide-to-butterflies>

If you are still looking for inspiration, we hear that for the RHS Chelsea Flower Show this year, ways to combat climate change will be a major theme of the show gardens.

### Suddenly – nothing happened

It seems to be an occupational hazard that we tell you about some upcoming project and then hear no more for 6 months or a year. Maybe it's been Brexit uncertainty, but several major planning permissions have yet to be built out after a few years and may soon expire.

# Planning and Regeneration

## Tower Blocks Return

*Continued from front page:*

Tall buildings were rare in Brixton until the mid-1960s, when a newly-expanded Lambeth Council put up several distinctively ugly towers close to the line of Clapham Road. Another design of 5-sided tower was used on other sites, while a couple more were put up by the GLC (and ultimately inherited by Lambeth). Ambitions extended to two clusters of 50-storey towers planned for Brixton Town Centre, but in 1968 the partial collapse of the Ronan Point tower block discredited the concept. Lambeth instead adopted a lower-rise “groundscraper” approach for Stockwell Park, Angell Town and Hillmead estates, and by 1980 councils were shifting their priorities to refurbishing the existing stock, rather than new building.

Another forty years on, priorities have shifted again. Lambeth still dreams of building estates the old way, and the Brixton Green experience has shown it to be deaf to innovation and community involvement. Meanwhile, the pace is being set by private developers, even if some of them turn out to be former housing associations doing it to subsidise repairs to their existing estates.

Although there are planning policies limiting the height and location of tall buildings, in practice these have been weakened in recent times. The latest version of the London Plan moves away from the old density matrix which kept the southern half of Brixton at a lower density, while Lambeth Council itself is keen to maximise floorspace because each planning permission will then bring in more cash through the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This is meant to offset the impact of increasing numbers of residents on public services such as schools, health and parks, though in the face of reduced funds from Central Government, CIL tends to be used for any major expenditure on Council facilities. This gives the Council a vested interest in bigger developments going ahead.

Among the designs coming forward in recent years, the impact of simple height and bulk is too often reinforced by clumsy design. While

earlier towers tend to have a base and a top in addition to the main floors (e.g. Chartham Court behind Pop Brixton), recent designs tend to be extruded by the yard and just come to a stop at the conclusion of negotiation with the planners about exactly how many floors the developers can get away with. You suspect they might insert a couple more floors if they thought nobody was checking!



*Somerset Place, view from Porden Road  
(HP/pics/7-12-19/IMG9349.jpg)*

The worst are those which wrap an empty concrete frame around the top, to emphasise the height and bulk they have got away with, to intimidate the neighbours. And all these new towers seem to be wrapped in brick, as if this would help them blend with Victorian terraces nearby! The effect is more like a stack of giant cardboard boxes.

While a bit of brickwork at the entrance level can add interest, the vast number of bricks needed to clad a tower block represents a massive investment of embodied energy. Instead we need to encourage use of lower-impact cladding materials, ideally in lighter colours. For example, Birrell House (ex GLC) in Stockwell Road was refaced in the 1990s

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and seems easier on the eye than the recent Somerset Place by the new Civic Centre.

This is very much a current issue, because we are finding more developers are consulting us about their over-sized blocks before making their planning application. We certainly need to hear from our members what your concerns and red lines are, in readiness for the next project which may come along, because deadlines for responding to planning applications are always tight.

*Alan Piper.*

## Townscape Heritage Initiative

It's a relief to report some small success, with the restoration of Reliance Arcade almost complete. The high-level glazing has been opened up to public view, and if you enter from the Brixton Road end, you can glimpse the front of the original house above the arcade. On Electric Avenue, parts of the hoarding have been left in place, illustrating earlier versions of the front and rear facades. A combination of small unit sizes and a rent freeze has allowed long-standing businesses to continue in place.

Remember the Brixton Design Trail? They have since reinvented themselves as the Brixton Project, and have been co-ordinating the **Electric Patterns Project** on behalf of the Brixton THI. This will provide a choice of artist-designed motifs to be applied to the roller shutters of the shops along Electric Avenue. Local artists were invited to submit designs in November, and shopkeepers will have a choice from a short list of designs. Selected artists will be notified by 17 January, and will be limited to 4 shutters each to ensure variety along the street. Final designs should be installed in March and April.

## Livable Neighbourhoods moves on

Following the consultation in the Autumn, Lambeth's draft plans for encouraging cycling and walking over motor traffic should be out for comment from 21 January to 21 February. We have already arranged a presentation at our Executive Committee meeting on Thursday 13 February (see p.2) and it's also likely to be on the agenda of the Brixton Neighbourhood Forum shortly.

## Planning as if people mattered?

Civic Voice, the national umbrella body for the civic society movement, used the recent general election season to call for a rethink of the Planning system. It's been endorsed by the London Forum, and its 3 main goals are a more accessible, balanced and collaborative system, citizen-led participative governance for our towns, and ensuring councils have the powers and resources to protect the historic environment and make better places.

Specific asks included a more formal process of pre-application consultations, a limited community right of appeal, stronger Statements of Community Involvement, and better use of technology to ensure that everyone can be engaged in the planning process, rather than a shrinking pool of the usual suspects.

Sadly, the election result means that the government will reinforce its approach of "permission in principle" regardless of local opinion, but we will keep pushing!

## Brixton Eateries come and go...

The major opening in November was **The Laundry**, taking space at the front of the former Walton Lodge Laundry at 374 Coldharbour Lane, newly-refurbished by Lexadon. It's the brainchild of Melanie Brown, New Zealand-born chef and owner of the New Zealand Cellar wine bar in Pop Brixton. The new enterprise describes itself as a bistro and wine bar, with the main dining space in the top-lit front basement. The kitchen is overseen by Australian chef Dylan Cashman.

**Other Side Fried** had been in a shipping container on the Pop Brixton site since 2016, but is now open in one of the few Atlantic Road arches that's not hidden by Network Rail scaffolding. High-profile street food operator **Black Bear Burger** is now operating from 11-13 Market Row, after seeking an arcade site for several months. All these eateries were recently reviewed by Nick Buglione on the Brixton Blog website.

*Sources include the Big Hospitality website and Brixton Blog.*

## Local History & Heritage



*This earlier incarnation of the “Hero of Switzerland” pub in Loughborough Road was adapted from one of the original 1840s houses on Lord Holland’s Lambeth Wick estate.  
(W.J.Linskey collection)*

### More sources for the history of your street

Back in October 2017 (newsletter 227) we provided a roundup of the main resources for researching the history of your home or street. Although we are often asked about the age or origins of a local street or building, unless it’s a case we have already investigated, it’s difficult to find the time to respond in much detail. However, we are keen to encourage you to do your own research, so we try to share sources and short-cuts that we have found useful, and from time to time we will flag up those we have just discovered.

#### Researching London’s Houses

*By Colin Thom, Historical Publications, 2005, ISBN 1-905286-00-7*

Not only does this book provide helpful explanations of the sources that we highlighted in our earlier article, it introduces others that are less familiar but which may help you pin down dates or resolve contradictions in the emerging story. The author is a researcher for the Survey of London, and shares his inside knowledge of title deeds, wills and estate records, taking the trouble to explain the technical terms, and the dodges that lawyers used for centuries to minimise official scrutiny and tax liabilities.

To set you off on a sound basis, an extended introduction provides a potted history of housing development between 1440 and 1940, with many differences from current practice.

Each chapter deals with a different type of source material, including a suggested list of further reading. Examples range across Greater London but the Brixton area is well represented. The author rounds off with 3 case studies, to lead you through how the techniques could be applied to a modest Georgian terrace in Camden, a Victorian terrace house near Wandsworth Common, and a small group of interwar suburban houses in Ruislip, now in the Borough of Hillingdon.

The book was written to highlight sources that are particular to Greater London, or parts of it, that a more general work might skate over. It was published in association with the London Archive Users’ Forum, a predecessor of Archives for London (AfL), of which the Society is a member. The cover price is £13.95, but my copy came via Postscript at £5.99 (plus p & p). For completeness, here are the additional sources from the book that we did not touch on in our earlier article:

#### Newspapers & Periodicals

Newspapers come into their own if you want to investigate the people who lived or worked in your house, but unless they were notorious, the local papers will be more relevant.

The architectural press is better for information on newly-completed buildings from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The Builder (founded 1843 and still published as Building) is particularly useful for public buildings and apartment blocks; Lambeth Archives still has copies from 1843-1994.

#### Rates and Taxes

Colin Thom uses 46-66 Brixton Water Lane to demonstrate how to use Rate Books to check approximate construction dates and owners. Provisions of the Window Tax (repealed 1851) and the Hearth Tax (repealed 1689) are also described.

#### Probate Records

This aspect may seem obscure, but a few wills from local landowners have had wide-ranging implications for how the area was divided up and developed. Notable examples were the disputed will of John Angell junior (d.1784), and the forged will of Richard P. Roupell (d.1856).

## Local History & Heritage



*The rather modest entrance to the London Metropolitan Archives, 40 Northampton Road, EC1. (IMG8210, Pics-31-5-17)*

### Building Control & District Surveyors

In October 2017 we referred to some other local government records, including town planning and drainage files, voters lists and what has tripped up many investigations – renumbering and renaming of roads. Another source which has recently become available at Lambeth Archives, at least on microfilm, is the record of approvals under the London Building Acts and Building Regulations, both for new buildings and for structural alterations. If you find these local records too limited in scope and date range, more extensive records are held at the London Metropolitan Archives.

### Fire Insurance Records

Before the creation of the London Fire Brigade in 1865, the major insurance companies each maintained their own fire-fighting force. The company's badge was fixed on the front of each insured house to identify it for the company's firemen. Few such badges remain in place but there is still one on a clap-boarded house in Dulwich Village.

Records survive at the LMA from some of the insurance companies active before 1865, and these may confirm when insurance was first taken out on a newly-completed house.

*Alan Piper.*

### History Day reveals wider range of sources

If you are tempted to find out more about an institution or a distinguished individual linked with your house or street, a whole new world of sources opens up, as was recently revealed at the History Day organised at the University of London's Senate House by the Institute of

Historical Research. The personal papers and correspondence of many eminent men and women have been deposited with academic and professional institutions, particularly useful if biographies are incomplete or non-existent. Even for the less eminent, there is the Burnett Archive of working class autobiographies at Brunel University in Uxbridge!

Some fifty such institutions had stalls at this event, ranging from the Archives & Records Association to the Zoological Society of London, and almost all provide helpful guides to the scope of their collections. Lambeth Archives and the Lambeth Local History Forum shared a stall here for the first time, and are hoping to return – look for a repeat in November.

### Flowers for Nellie?

*Tracey Gregory writes:*

Through our Loughborough Road history project, and the benefits of social media, I was contacted by Summers Town 182, originally a project to reveal the stories of the 182 soldiers of the First World War named on the memorial in Streatham Cemetery (see their website <https://summerstown182.wordpress.com>).

The project has now expanded and last year they put up a plaque to Peter Barr, the Daffodil King. This led them – or at least, Geoff Simmons – into exploring the history of flower growing in Tooting, the area around Lambeth and Streatham Cemeteries. As Nellie Roberts, for many years the RHS orchid artist, is buried in an unmarked grave in Lambeth Cemetery, Geoff was keen to highlight her story as part of his project this year. Nellie lived all her life at 72 (now 92) Loughborough Road, and did all her paintings in the upstairs room.

So, on Sunday 29 March, Geoff will be leading a walk through Tooting, explaining a bit about the flower-growing history, and ending in Lambeth Cemetery by the plot where Nellie is buried, at least where we have worked out she is buried. Unfortunately the cemetery will not let us put up a plaque near her grave, and as she was a Jehovah's Witness, she may not have wanted one. So we will just be telling her story and commemorating her life and work,

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on the 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary of her death, 29 March 1959.

The walk will start from Tooting Broadway underground station at 2 pm on Sunday 29 March. The walk is free and there is no need to book. The walk concludes in Lambeth Cemetery, where the tribute to Nellie will be at about 3-30 pm.

### New Light on Old Stories

In the field of local history, there is always fresh information coming to light, which sometimes means correcting earlier stories we have published. Thus the latest reprint of our Market Walk booklet includes more accurate dates for a few sites, as a result of further research. Also, our friends at the London Fire Brigade Museum featured the original Brixton Fire Station in Ferndale Road in their e-mail bulletin just last month. It turns out that it opened in December 1867, about 10 years earlier than the “guesstimate” attached to the photo below when it appeared in Newsletter 228 two years ago.



*Ferndale Road (HP/pics/6-9-17-IMG8271.jpg)*

### Postcards from the Past

For many years we have been adding to our range of reprints of old postcard views of Brixton, mostly from the decade before the First World War. In case you have not already seen them, we added 8 cards last summer. Two are direct replacements for earlier cards out of stock, plus a slightly different view of Electric Avenue with the old canopies. There are two classic types of card, a shopfront with the staff outside, and a (horsedrawn) coach outing about to depart from the Prince of Wales pub. We also feature Loughborough Junction shops, the old police station, and an earlier version of St. Matthew's Road. Cards are still 50p each or 5 for £2. Buy at our monthly market stall or via the website.

### More Black History resources

News reached us just before Christmas from Sweet Patootee about their latest documentary film, *Mutiny*, featuring unique video testimonies of Black British veterans of the First World War.

For more information on this and earlier films, see <http://www.sweetpatootee.co.uk/work>

### Family History Day

On Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, we ran a stall at the Migration Museum in Lambeth High Street as part of their Family History Day. We don't often stray far from our home patch, but this event brought together several bodies with resources for family history research, including the Black Cultural Archives, and Brixton People's Kitchen provided part of the catering services.

Actual sales were modest, but we had many interesting conversations, both with visitors and with other organisations taking part. We also gave away many flyers, newsletters and walks leaflets. Many of the history enquiries we receive are from people researching their family history, so we have since added our Family History flyer to our website, under Local History FAQs.

The event was organised by the Migration Museum, who have been sharing the old workshop building with the Fire Brigade Museum. Both museums will be moving on, because planning permission was recently given for a major redevelopment on the site, (see page 11) but the Migration Museum hope to repeat the event in the future. More about them on their website, [www.migrationmuseum.org](http://www.migrationmuseum.org)

### Back issues of our Newsletter

We have been adding past issues of these newsletters to our website (except the most recent) because they usually include snippets of local history. Indexing is still incomplete, but we may also be able to provide paper copies from the past ten years, or single pages by e-mail from within the past three years. Contact us at [info@brixtonsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@brixtonsociety.org.uk)

## Beyond Brixton

### Exhibitions and museum news

*Reminders of exhibits closing soon and fresh events in prospect...*

### Tate Galleries

At **Tate Britain**, Sir Steve McQueen's installation of Year 3 class photos will continue until 3<sup>rd</sup> May. The William Blake exhibition ends on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, but soon to be followed by new exhibitions on British Baroque (from 4 February) and Aubrey Beardsley (from 4 March).

### Dulwich

#### Picture Gallery

The current exhibition, **Rembrandt's Light**, closes on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, with over 30 of the Dutch master's works on display. The next exhibition starts on 26 February, on **British Surrealism**, marking the centenary of the movement with 70 works on display. Tickets are already on sale, see [www.dpg.art](http://www.dpg.art)

### Volunteer at Florence Nightingale Museum

2020 is the bicentenary of Florence Nightingale's birth, and the Year of the Nurse. The Lambeth-based museum has a busy year planned with events and celebrations, so this should be an exciting time to get involved with their new volunteer programme. For more details, see <https://florence-nightingale.co.uk/volunteering-opportunities>

### Friends of Crystal Palace Subway

The subway was completed in December 1865 to link the Crystal Palace complex with the high-level railway station. Both these have gone but the subway survives, and efforts have been made in the past few years to repair it and re-open it for public viewing. Bromley Council recently agreed to spend £2.34 m on structural repairs. Enquiries to [info@cpsubway.org.uk](mailto:info@cpsubway.org.uk)

### Go-ahead for the Fire Brigade Museum

For the past couple of years, a "pop-up" version of the museum has been operating in the former workshop building behind the 1930s Albert Embankment headquarters. In December Lambeth gave planning permission for a massive development which will include a permanent museum space within the refurbished HQ building.



### Geffrye Museum to reopen as the Museum of the Home

The museum is intended to open this coming summer, with almost twice the past floorspace. There will be a new entrance directly opposite Hoxton Station, on the London Overground. The 300-year-old Geffrye Almshouses have been restored, and access to the archives and gardens will be

opened up. For more details of what's coming up, see [www.museumofthehome.org.uk](http://www.museumofthehome.org.uk)

### Museum of London

Another museum planning ambitious changes, the Museum of London will actually move from the present site on London Wall to within the Smithfield Markets in Clerkenwell, close to Farringdon Station. The broader ambition is to make the Markets site a 24-hour cultural destination. Opening is not expected until 2024, when the present site will be used to build a new concert hall.

### The Garden Museum

The museum was founded in 1977, based in the former Lambeth Parish Church, St. Mary's, next to Lambeth Palace.

For visitor information, see [www.gardenmuseum.org.uk](http://www.gardenmuseum.org.uk)

Their next topical exhibition opens on **24 April**, telling the story of Derek Jarman's garden at Prospect Cottage, Dungeness. On a stony beach overlooked by a nuclear power station, he created a contemporary garden around the old fisherman's shack he bought in the 1980s.

The title will be **My garden's boundaries are the horizon**. For the first time, the exhibition will show works of art and film, alongside personal artefacts and furniture borrowed from inside the cottage, which is not open to the public.

## Notes & News

### Compensation scheme for former children's home residents

In the last newsletter, we flagged up Lambeth's compensation scheme for former inmates of its Shirley Oaks children's home. The scheme has recently been extended again, to cover all the sites operated by Lambeth. Around Brixton this included Angell Road, Calais Street, Knowle Close, Lorn Road and Stockwell Park, all long since closed. For claims arrangements, see [www.lambeth.gov.uk/redress](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/redress)

### Open House London

One of the highlights of London's calendar is the regular free opening of many London buildings on one weekend each September. This is co-ordinated by Open City, who have published a report on the 2019 programme. Over 800 sites were opened across all 33 London boroughs, clocking up a total of 326,800 visits, assisted by over 7,000 volunteers over the two days. Most sites, like Brixton Windmill, provide their own staff but Open City provide extra volunteers for sites which would otherwise be short-handed.

The original emphasis was on opening up older buildings to the public, but architects and developers have increasingly offered access to new buildings, so that a wider range of types and styles can be seen nowadays. Sites with regular opening arrangements also use the scheme to raise their profile. Within Lambeth alone, 35 sites were opened and half the visitors were from other boroughs, with 26% local and 24% from outside London.

Open City's chief executive, Rory Olcayto, steps down at the end of January and a replacement is currently being sought, in readiness for this year's open weekend. This will be on **19/20 September**, and nearer the time we will suggest a few sites worth a look, other than the high-profile sites which are always busy.

In addition, Open City now also organise selected openings and tours through the year, although these extra events are charged for – enquiries about these to [tours@open-city.org.uk](mailto:tours@open-city.org.uk)

### Changing Plans for Lambeth Archives

In October 2017 (newsletter 227) we reported that plans were going forward to relocate the Archives to a new building in Kennington. This autumn we heard that Lambeth has had second thoughts after encountering some limitations with developing the new site, which tend to increase the costs.

Fortunately, a new opportunity has arisen, to relocate the Archives to the ground floor and basement of the proposed rebuilding of Olive Morris House on Brixton Hill. This would provide a little more space on just two levels, with a reduction in the total building cost. Clearly this would be more convenient for Brixton residents, as well as being closer to more public transport routes, and the new site has already been welcomed by the other members of the Lambeth Local History Forum. It could also provide a chance for continuing the Olive Morris name for the new site.

### Doreen Heath

We regret to report the death of Doreen Heath, for many years Secretary of the Lambethans Society, in November. Doreen grew up around Dalyell Road in Stockwell, but moved to West Norwood when she married. She had been a leading member of the Lambethans Society since it changed its name from the Lambeth Civic Society some 60 years ago. Alan Piper recalls that she was a pillar of strength when he had to step in as Chair after the death of Brian Vale in 1992. Most of Brian's papers were lost so Doreen's memories of past activities were a great help. Sadly, the society struggled to adapt as residents increasingly identified with more local societies such as Brixton or Streatham, and eventually closed at the end of 2017.

The funeral will be at West Norwood Cemetery, but as we close for print we are still awaiting confirmation whether it will be on Thursday 16 or 23 January.

Old friends should contact Alan Piper at [apiperbrix@aol.com](mailto:apiperbrix@aol.com) or her son, Martin Heath, for final details.