

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Summer issue, July 2019

No.234, Quarterly issue,
Distributed free to members.

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



Weekend 20 & 21 July

Lambeth Country Show

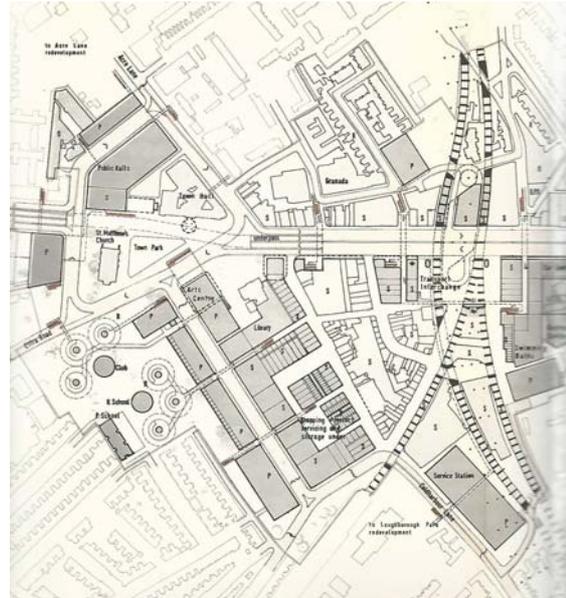
12 noon to 8 pm, Brockwell Park SE24
The music stage returns to the field uphill from the Lido, so our own stall should be back in a busy area of the show. We were still waiting for the site map when this edition was due to go off for printing, but if you enter by the Herne Hill gate, look for us to the left of the path, just short of Brockwell Hall. Once again, the Show will be fenced-off, so please allow time to queue to get in – last admission is at 6-30 pm, and we finish at 7-00 pm.

Our next Summer Walk...

Sunday 18 August - Brixton's West Side

Meet 2-30 pm on Canterbury Square in front of the police station, for a look behind Brixton's old department stores and the nearer parts of Ferndale Ward, led by Alan Piper.

See inside for more coming events...



Part of the 1969 Town Centre Plan

Lambeth Heritage Festival

Once again the month of September will be filled with events linked to Lambeth's diverse heritage. The brochure is too fat to deliver with your newsletter, but please come to our stall at the Country Show to collect a copy. Meanwhile, here's a couple of local highlights...

Saturday 7th September:

Local History Fair

at the Tate Library, Brixton

This showcase for Lambeth's Heritage Festival comes to Brixton this year – operating between 10-15 am to 4-15 pm, including a series of talks and some local mini-walks. If you can spare some time to help staff our stall, please call Bill Linskey on (020) 7274 3835 or e-mail to [wjdc1@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk)

Thursday 12 September:

Markets, Megastructures and Motorways

7 pm at the Vida Walsh Centre,
2b Saltoun Road SW2 1EP

It's now 50 years ago that plans were unveiled for the full rebuilding of Brixton Town Centre – Nicholas Weedon will reveal the futuristic concepts and what happened to them.

Diary of Events, Late Summer 2019

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

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. These meetings are open to all our members, but if you want to raise a specific issue, it helps if you can tell the Secretary beforehand.

- 8 August
- 10 October
- 14 November.

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

Events arranged by other groups

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

Weekly at Tate Library - Wake up to Tai Chi on Saturdays 9-30 to 10-30 am, to revitalise your body and mind.

Craft Sessions on Wednesdays, 1-30 to 3-30 pm, offering sewing, embroidery, macramé, beading and more, free. Both at Brixton Tate Library, Brixton Oval SW2 1JQ. *Brixton Library with Friends of Tate Library Brixton.*

Thursday 25 July – SLBI Garden Opening
A small but densely planted botanic garden, free entry, plants on sale, open 6–8 pm at 323 Norwood Road SE24, just north of the South Circular Road. More events and information at www.slbi.org.uk
South London Botanical Institute.

31 July to 27 October – What to look for in the garden

An exhibition inspired by the popular Ladybird series of children's books from the 1960s and 1970s, linked with children's activities during the school holidays. At the Garden Museum, Lambeth Palace Road, SE1 7LB, 10-30 to 5 pm daily (4pm Saturdays), admission £10 – for concessions and other details, see website: www.gardenmuseum.org.uk
The Garden Museum

Thursday 15 August – Bygone Streatham

Another helping of Bygone Streatham, presented by John Brown: 8 pm at the Phoenix Centre, Westow Street, SE19.
South London Local History Group.

Monday 2 September - Architecture of the Underground

Edmund Bird, heritage adviser to TfL, illustrates the history of our underground stations. Starts at 8 pm at Woodlawns, 16 Leigham Court Rd, SW16.
Streatham Society

Until 14 September – Windrush: looking back, moving forward

The current exhibition at the Black Cultural Archives continues into September – for details and other events at BCA see their website, www.blackculturalarchives.org

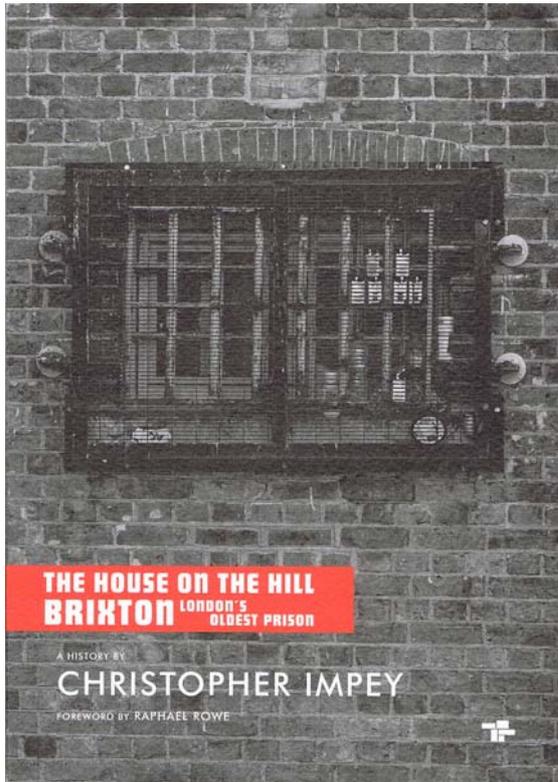
Until 27 October - Secret Rivers

A free exhibition of artefacts, maps, and films showing the lost network of streams and rivers that fed into the Thames within Greater London, most of them now below ground. Museum of London Docklands, West India Quay, E14 4AL, see www.museumoflondon.org.uk
Museum of London

More local history events at: www.lambethlocalhistoryforum.org.uk

Book Review

The House on the Hill



This recently published book is timely as this year is the bicentenary of the beginning of the construction of Brixton prison in 1819, although then it was the Surrey House of Correction.

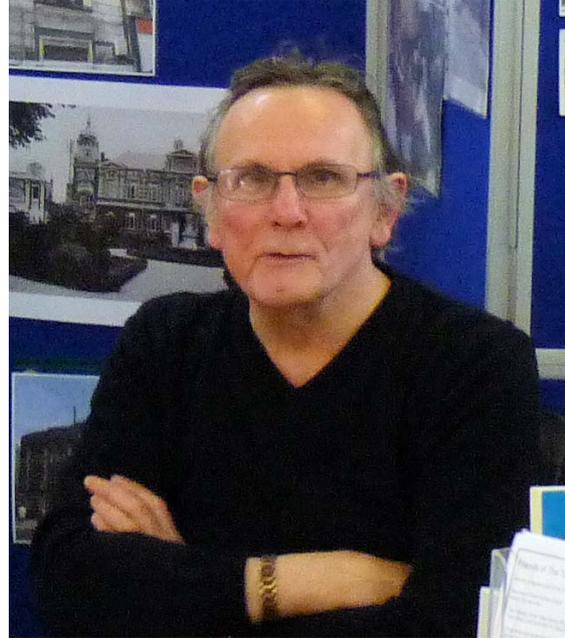
This eminently readable book takes us through the history of the prison: the many changes to the building itself and the way it was run, against the background of changing penal policy. What is prison for? Are we really any clearer about that now than we were two centuries ago?

But what really makes this book is the cast of characters that march through it, both staff and inmates. Some you will have never heard of, such as one of the first prisoners, David Deer, incarcerated there for begging in Lambeth – hardly worth a mention really, except that he was just 10 years old! Others are among the most famous people in the country, if not the world. Mick, sorry *Sir Mick*, Jagger spent a night there following a drug bust. Among the notorious, our home-grown fascist in WWII, Oswald Mosley and the Kray twins. Highly recommended.

Committee News

R.I.P. John Cunningham

It is with the deepest regret that we have to report the death of long-standing Committee member, John Cunningham.



John, helping on our stall at the Archives Open Day 2010

John had been battling illness for some time and died on 21 May. Many friends from the Society attended his funeral in June. As well as his family, the funeral was attended by his many friends from the Society for Co-operation in Russian and Soviet Studies where he worked for more than 20 years as their librarian and administrative assistant.

Farewell

Another long-standing Committee member, Rosemary Honey, stood down at the recent AGM. She has helped the Society in many ways over the years and will be missed.

Volunteers Needed

We really need to recruit more volunteers. If you would like to consider joining the Committee why not come along to a meeting (dates elsewhere in this Newsletter) to see what we do, without any commitment. We also need to strengthen our two sub-groups, the **Friends of Tate Library Brixton** and the **Friends of Windrush Square**. If you feel you may be able to help, in any way, do contact chair@brixtonsociety.org.uk to discuss.

Dexter Playground

Back in January, Lambeth Council invited proposals for running the Dexter Adventure Playground on Railton Road. Despite tight deadlines, 19 organisations expressed interest, including the Moorland Community Development Group. Lambeth announced on 4th July that it would sign a 10-year lease with BIGKID, who already run a programme based in Stockwell. Services should resume on site once formalities are completed between the Council and the new operators.

Brockwell Park News

Last month's meeting of the park's management advisory committee, Brockwell Park Community Partners, provided an update on several activities within the park.

Brockwell Hall

In December, Lambeth was finally granted stage 1 approval from the Lottery Heritage Fund, and currently various consultants are being appointed to develop proposals in more detail. These are based on using the stable-yard behind the hall to provide extra space for functions and activities, so that the Hall can generate income to offset the running costs. Joahanne Flaherty, the newly-appointed project officer, was introduced at the meeting.

Community Greenhouses

Brockwell Park Community Greenhouses have been planning extra space for educational work for some time, but the latest version shown at the meeting is low-rise and unlikely to be visible above the walled garden and surrounding trees. Functions will be similar to the building now taking shape alongside Brixton Windmill, with a classroom for school visits, a fully equipped kitchen, and extra toilets. More details on their website, www.brockwellgreenhouses.org.uk

Big Events in the Park

There was general concern at the cumulative impact of major commercial events in the park. While the Mighty Hoopla weekend last month was better managed than last year, there was still damage to be made good to paths and grass. Councillors appear to be rowing back

from the previous target of 8 days of major events each year, realising that it is not sustainable. Nevertheless, we need to hear from members if any problems or issues arise from events in the park, including the Lambeth Country Show.

Biodiversity

Less obvious but of underlying importance, BPCP has led on several measures to enhance the park for wildlife and nature. Recent efforts included planting the slope above the lido with perennial wildflowers, and improving the hedge along the Tulse Hill/Cressingham Gardens boundary. Work is ongoing to develop the habitat for water birds around the ponds.

Other stakeholders

The meeting was held in the newly-refurbished play building, originally the one o'clock club, and it was reported that a new group of parents is being formed to support children's play in the park.

The miniature railway team finally have their container in place as an engineering base and small shop. As previously reported, this is the last season of use for the old bowling green, due to its deteriorating condition. Brixton BMX Club remain active, and are hosting other clubs for a competition on **Sunday 29 September**, 12 noon to 5 pm.

Alan Piper.

Windmill Gardens

Tours of the Windmill are continuing on the weekends 13/14 July, 10/11 August, 14/15 and 21/22 September, and 12/13 October. Book via info@brixtonwindmill.org.uk for a full tour.

Other major events are Art in the Park, on **Sunday 11 August** and Harvest Festival on **Sunday 22 September**.

Fortuitously, Tai Chi sessions are continuing in this pocket park because the Friends of Tate Library were successful with 2 funding bids for their sessions in the library. It was agreed with City Hall staff that the National Park City Funding could be diverted to the Friends of Windmill Gardens to support this. Good to see two Friends groups collaborating like this.

The Brixton Society

Understanding the Past, Looking to the Future

Registered Charity No.1058103, Registered with the London Forum of Amenity Societies

Website: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk

Annual Report 2018-19

AIMS & ORGANISATION

AIMS & AFFILIATIONS: We aim to encourage awareness and understanding of our surroundings, and to give local people a say in Brixton's future. Our area extends well beyond the Town Centre as far as Stockwell Tube Station, north-east to Myatt's Fields Park, and up Brixton Hill to the South Circular Road.

The Society is registered with the London Forum of Amenity Societies, the British Association for Local History and Archives for London.

STRUCTURE & MANAGEMENT: The Society is a registered charity and an unincorporated association. The society's constitution was last revised at the 2013 AGM.

The Executive Committee met 10 times in the year up to the 2019 AGM, consisting of Bill Linskey (Chair), Annick Alet, Doye Akinlade, John Cunningham, Barbara Davies, Rosemary Honey, Diana Linskey, Vivienne Lewis, Alan Piper, Marilyn Rogers, Jo Spilman, Eileen Walkin, David Warner and Nicholas Weedon.

PROGRAMME & ACTIVITIES



CD-2017-July BTC

PLANNING & REGENERATION:

We share oversight of a high volume of local planning applications amongst our "virtual" planning sub-committee. Although high-rise apartment blocks are still coming forward, some recent schemes

are more focussed on providing business space.

We commented on several wider planning policy changes in the course of the year. To keep in touch with London-wide and national policies, we have benefitted from involvement with the London Forum and the London Sustainability Exchange. Our comments on policy issues and planning cases are now being posted on the website.

A quiet week for planning cases...

Members may not realise that there is a steady flow of planning applications or other proposals coming to our attention every week. Even for a quiet week back in February, cases included:

- 5 domestic alterations, including one listed building (in Foxley Road)
- 3 similar notified to us by Lambeth but outside our area;
- A very minor change to another listed building (the Fire Station);
- Revised plans for the depot building in Myatt's Fields Park;
- The big redevelopment scheme nested among these was a new plan for the old Higgs industrial estate at Loughborough Junction, where we liaised with the Herne Hill Society and Loughborough Junction Action Group.

NETWORKING: We support the Friends of Tate Library and the Friends of Windrush Square, which operate as sub-committees of the Society, but we also keep in touch with a wide range of local groups. We participated in the Brixton Neighbourhood Forum, Brockwell Park Community Partners (the park's Management Advisory Committee), Lambeth Local History Forum, Friends of Lambeth Libraries, and Lambeth Parks Forum.

We also try to respond to frequent e-mail enquiries from students, media and family historians.

EVENTS: Once again we put on displays at the Lambeth Country Show and the Lambeth Local History Fair. We also kept up a regular presence in Brixton Market in support of our Brixton Market walks on the

The Brixton Society

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Annual Report 2018-19

second Saturday of each month through the year. In addition we provided some guided walks for the Lambeth Local History Forum's summer series, and a few "special" walks for other organisations.

Although it's many years since we have attempted a regular programme of talks, we have a local history evening each September to coincide with the Lambeth Heritage Festival. In September 2018, this covered the evolution of Windrush Square and its surroundings.



DL/ AnnickLH.jpg

Friends of Tate Library Brixton:

The Friends have been working closely with library staff, who have been fully stretched to cope with extra demand during closures at Minet and Carnegie libraries. A highlight was the Local Heroes evening in September, and it is hoped to follow this up with a "roll of honour" in the library in digital form.

Friends of Windrush Square:

We took up an offer of spring bulbs from the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association, and the Council's landscape team has also added more planting to this busy little space.

Activity has been limited because we still lack a convenor to follow on from Annick Alet, who has less time to spare.

Nevertheless, we have kept a watching eye on the Square and on Council policies for public open spaces generally.

PUBLICATIONS: The new version of our website went live in June 2018, and other material has been added since. It's been a key element in promoting our conventional publications, and an analysis of sales is

provided as a footnote to the accounts. The current financial position enables us to plan for a couple of new books in the next year or two.

We continue to publish our quarterly Newsletter, normally of 12 pages. To save on postage we are encouraging members who are further afield or hard to reach, to receive this digitally.

RESOURCES

MEMBERSHIP: Paid-up membership in June was 153, excluding council contacts and kindred local groups with whom we exchange information. Membership has been steady for several years, partly reflecting the turnover of population. Numbers tend to grow in July as we sign up new members at the Lambeth Country Show, and fall back in the Spring as we prune from the mailing list those who have still not renewed their subscriptions, perhaps because they have moved on.

Like many other charities, we reviewed our database and privacy policy last May.

We are grateful for "in kind" support from individual members including delivering most of our newsletters, staffing stalls, reporting back from a variety of meetings, and other tasks which all help maintain the Society's level of activity.

FINANCE: The annual accounts cover the year ended 31 March 2019: overall we showed a surplus again despite printing another book. (*Figures appear on the facing page.*) Income was boosted by two substantial donations, from the Carlton Mansions Housing Co-op following their winding-up (£925), and from the Brixton branch of Howdens (£250). Subscriptions were last reviewed after the 2016 AGM.

The above is an expanded version of the report presented at the AGM in June.

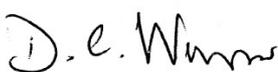
Annual Accounts 2018-19

BRIXTON SOCIETY STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT 1st APRIL 2018 - 31st MARCH 2019

	2018/2019	2017/2018		2018/2019	2017/2018
<u>INCOME</u>			Publications Sold		
Friends of Windrush Square	538.14	0.00	Town Trails	39.00	55.00
Members' Subscriptions	981.00	1,056.00	Memories	34.93	35.94
Sale of Publications, etc	1,368.59	1,393.35	Windrush Square	16.00	7.00
Donations	1,522.88	303.69	Brixton - Story of a name	10.00	4.00
Postage	61.10	54.75	Effra - Underground River	18.00	6.00
Bank Interest	0.56	0.61	Greeting cards	9.50	1.20
Miscellaneous	9.00	50.00	Maps	55.50	27.50
Friends of Tate Library	£664.13		Brixton Abridged	0.00	0.00
Sub-Total	£5,145.40	£2,858.40	Postcards	143.00	147.00
Discounts	-9.66	-33.30	History of Brixton	189.81	309.69
Ebgy/Paypal fees	-80.46	-68.03	Brixton Market LT poster	5.00	20.00
Receipts less discounts/ fees/refunds	£5,055.28	£2,757.07	Brixton Boy WWII	19.92	9.96
			Black British Celebration	198.00	80.00
			Brixton Synagogue	17.43	34.86
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>			Market Walk Tickets	221.50	245.00
Friends of Tate Library	559.24	228.24	Market Walk Books	220.00	404.00
Friends of Windrush Square	154.98	38.22	Brixton & Stockwell Mirror	6.00	1.20
Photocopying	0.00	0.00	Henry Tate/Library	145.00	0.00
Newsletter Prod	469.13	429.00	Brixton MPs	£20.00	£5.00
Postage	188.50	209.10		£1,368.59	£1,393.35
Stationery	25.01	30.11	Less Discount	-9.66	-33.30
Publications - purchase	83.50	0.00		£1,358.93	£1,360.05
Publications - printing	421.00	1.60			
Posters/Leaflets/Banner	8.35	71.86	Net Paypal income	£488.49	£518.29
Insurance Cost (general)	75.00	75.00			
Subscriptions	68.00	68.00	<u>Balance sheet</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
Cost of Meetings	370.00	350.00	Opening Balance	£5,351.69	£4,608.48
Website development	539.99	260.00	Surplus for year	£1,795.05	£743.21
Equipment/Stall	4.29	0.00	Closing balance	£7,146.74	£5,351.69
Events	154.96	67.00			
Catering/Refreshments	23.02	70.55	Represented by:		
Website hosting	£115.26	£115.18	Closing balances		
Refund	0.00	0.00	Current a/c	£1,534.58	£3,410.03
TOTAL	£3,260.23	£2,013.86	Dep A/C	£5,000.00	£1,817.99
Surplus	£1,795.05	£743.21	Paypal	£612.16	£123.67
				£7,146.74	£5,351.69

Donations include £925 generously given by Carlton Mansions Housing Co-op who were winding up.

Accounts prepared by



David Warner
Hon Treasurer

Statement by External Examiner

I have reviewed the cash book and the totals of receipts and payments stated above are in accordance therewith and correspond to the balances shown in the society's bank statements.



Andrew Thurburn FCA
Examiner



DL-IMG5360.jpg

Market Activity

There have been several things going on around Brixton's markets lately, so here's a quick summary.

Reliance Arcade: Brixton's smallest arcade is undergoing a facelift as part of the Townscape Heritage Initiative. Traders are as busy as ever, separated from the work by a ceiling of scaffold boards. The heading photo was supplied by the structural engineer, Stuart Tappin of Stand Consulting Engineers, and shows the high-level glazing over the rear half, previously hidden by a plastic suspended ceiling. More historical views are displayed on the hoardings at the Electric Lane end.

Expanding Brixton Village: or Granville Arcade as us old-timers still think of it! Hondo Enterprises have bought the old Tesco site in Popes Road from Sports Direct. They recently unveiled plans to expand their market arcade offer onto the site between the railway viaducts, with workspace and possibly a hotel on new floors above. This is not yet a planning application but we would like to hear your views **now** so we can respond when the time comes.

Exchanging Ideas: Early last month the Mayor hosted an International Markets Conference at City Hall, but a popular choice for delegates was a morning spent in Brixton, where a few of us helped show them round, and they were introduced to various stakeholders and stallholders.

This was followed a couple of weeks later by another conference on the future of London's Street Markets, organised by JustSpace and hosted by Brixton Community Base in Talma Road.

The latter event attracted a mix of residents, traders, activists, students, academics and market managers.

These events are useful because they make us think about Brixton's weaknesses and strengths, and what we are trying to achieve – plus we can pick up ideas from other places, from Shepherd's Bush to Singapore. Although Stuart the Watch-man no longer has a stall in Popes Road, he remains active with the Brixton Market Traders Federation and played a key role in both these events.

Challenges of the Night-time Economy

During the Brixton Challenge programme some 25 years ago, Lambeth Council agreed to the concept of expanding evening leisure activities in Brixton Town Centre, partly to compensate for the decline of high street shopping which had been the mainstay of the Brixton economy since the 1870s. However the implications were never followed through, so the Council simultaneously allowed more residential development and more late-night clubs and bars in Central Brixton.

We now have a crisis of rowdiness and noise as young customers from all around London spill out from late-night venues and then spill out their bodily fluids on their way back to the Night Tube.

After years of inaction, the Council appointed Night-Time Economy Solutions (NTES) to advise on a way forward, based on good practice from other town centres around the country. NTES held 3 workshop sessions with a range of stakeholders in May/June, and have promised to report back in September. We will keep you posted as things develop.

Changes in Planning rules

There is an ongoing tension between Central Government ministers keen to unleash any development, however inappropriate, and their semi-detached suburban supporters anxious to defend their amenities. Thus the rules for what needs planning permission change from time to time, to reflect government fads like

Planning & Regeneration News

“free schools” or to restrain uses which are considered to lower the tone of an area.

Permitted Development allows a wide range of changes and extensions without planning permission, originally to prevent planning departments being swamped by minor matters, but nowadays a lot of proposals can escape scrutiny. The latest changes took effect from 25 May, including some temporary concessions being made permanent.

There is also an intermediate process called Prior Notification, which means the Council has less scope for saying no. This can apply variously to homes and business premises. However, we should point out that alterations and extensions to flats and maisonettes almost always require planning permission. To check what needs consent, consult the Planning Portal, www.planningportal.co.uk

Secret Consultation?

Livable Neighbourhoods looks beyond Atlantic Road changes

Two years ago, we reported on emerging plans for tackling the traffic problems of Atlantic Road.

Eventually this came to the top of Transport for London’s pending tray, and Lambeth’s funding bid was approved in March to go on to the next stage of design. However, TfL asked for the addition of proposals for “low traffic neighbourhoods” over a wider area. Their worthy aim is to link communities together and provide “healthy routes” for walking and cycling, while discouraging motor traffic from rat-running through residential areas.

The first stage of consultation is to collect resident and user comments about the area bounded by Brixton Water Lane, via Brixton Hill to Blenheim Gardens, northwards along Lyham Road and Bedford Road to Clapham North tube station, thence via Landor Road, Robsart Street, across Brixton Road to Loughborough Road, via Loughborough Junction and Milkwood Road to Herne Hill Station. Perversely, Dulwich Road is excluded!

This is a great opportunity to pick up lots of very local problems which can make a

“natural” route either impractical or intrusive. Yet the consultation pages on Lambeth Council’s website make no mention of it, and nothing was sent out to the Brixton Society or Brixton Neighbourhood Forum. Only Lambeth Cyclists appear to have picked up on it, so we are now spreading the word so that the voices of pedestrians and bus users can be heard too. Already 604 comments have been made, though they overflow further north and south of the target area, reflecting the practicalities of people’s daily journeys.

Sadly there is no obvious closing date for comments, nor any human contact point for enquiries. We can only urge you to get your points in quickly – see the website:

<https://brixtoninmap.commonplace.is>

Over our heads again

Following the report in the last issue, we now draw your attention to two key consultations.

Third Runway at Heathrow:

The master plan includes burying part of the M25 under the new runway, airport access changes, expanding Terminals 2 and 5, and new car parking. The consultation roadshow (travelling exhibition) comes to Lambeth Town Hall just for **Thursday 18 July**, 2 pm – 8 pm.

Closing date for comments is 13 September – see the website for more details and how to respond, www.aec.heathrowconsultation.com

London City Airport:

With its aircraft 1500 feet nearer to our heads, the new master plan for London City Airport could affect us more. The aim is to handle more passengers, though at least no night flights or runway expansion are being proposed. The nearest consultation roadshow will be at The City Centre, 80 Basinghall Street EC2V 5AR on **Wednesday 11 September** between 12 noon and 7 pm. That’s just round the corner from the Guildhall Art Gallery and 5 minutes from Bank Tube Station.

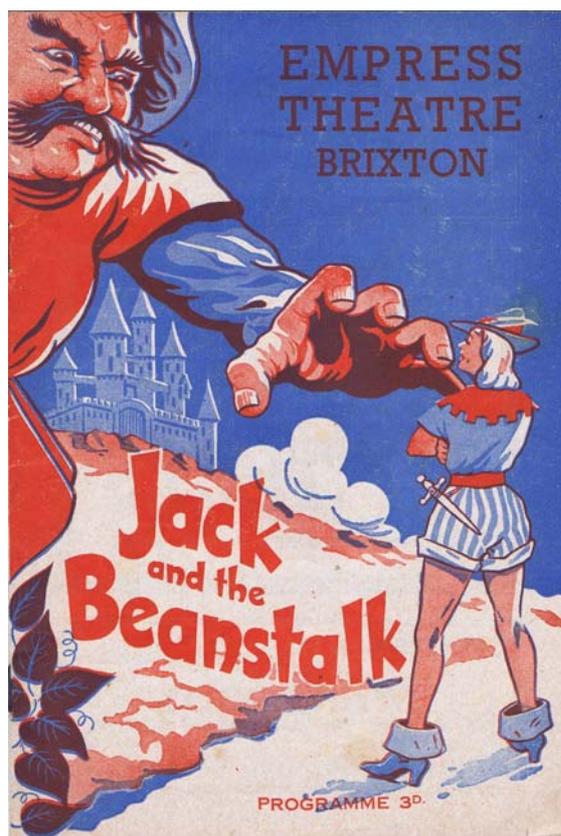
Closing date for comments is 20 September – see their website for more details and how to respond,

www.londoncityairport.com/consultations

Alan Piper.

Two Knights and Squires

December 1952



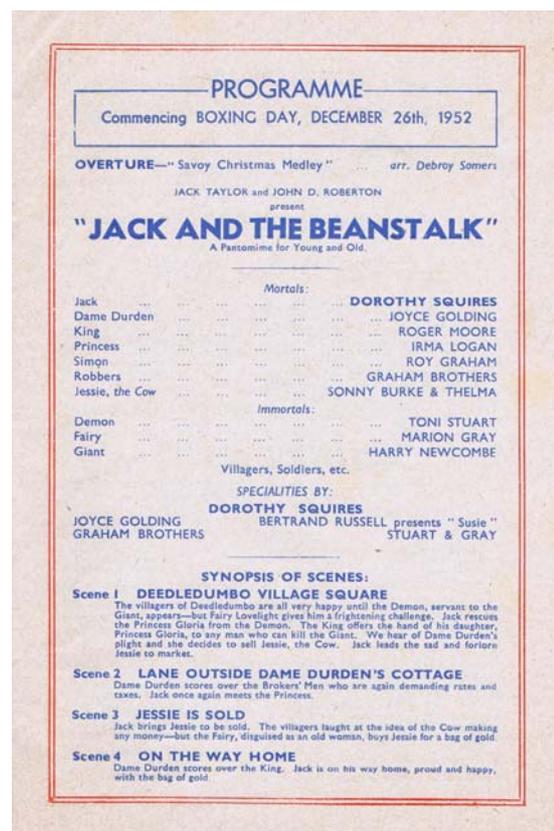
Early in December 1952, the “Great Smog of London” descended on the capital. So bad was the pollution, that it is said to have killed thousands (estimates of the exact number vary) in the 5 days it lasted from the 5th to 9th.

No doubt by Christmas everyone needed cheering up; and what could be better than a traditional pantomime. The Empress Theatre Brixton (which stood on the corner of Bernay’s Grove and Brighton Terrace, a site now occupied by flats) had Jack and the Beanstalk with one of the biggest singing stars of the day, Dorothy Squires, in the lead role of Jack.

Dorothy Squires was born in Wales in 1915 and was a professional singer by the age of 16. Her career properly started when she joined Billy Reid’s orchestra in 1936. Post WWII she worked on BBC radio, released a string of records, and became the highest paid female singer in the UK.

At the other end of the cast list, the Giant was played by another Welsh-born singer: Harry, later Sir Harry, Secombe. Secombe was one of that generation of entertainers whose

Fairy Tale



careers began in variety shows put on by -and for - the forces in the war. A comedian as well as a singer, he was known from *The Goon Show* which began in May 1951.

Someone else who would later be knighted appeared as the King: Stockwell lad, Roger Moore. Today mostly remembered for his role as James Bond in no less than seven movies, in 1952 he was a relative unknown.

And hereby hangs a tale; barely 6 months after *Jack and the Beanstalk*, on 6 July 1953, Roger Moore married Dorothy Squires. Roger, born in 1927, was 12 years her junior. This was one factor in their tumultuous and, ultimately, disastrous marriage.

She took him off to Hollywood and as his career grew, hers faded. The marriage was over by 1961 although they did not divorce until '69. The rest of her life was as sad as his was successful. She was famously declared a “vexatious litigant” after launching a string of hopeless court cases that bankrupted her.

There was no fairy tale ending for Dorothy.

Heritage Focus



1860 cell block seen from Thornbury Road
CDL 2018-06-24-01

200 years of Brixton Prison

Friends of Windmill Gardens tell us that they will have a presence at an event in Jebb Avenue, outside the prison, to mark its 200th anniversary. It will be on **Friday 26 July** from 2 to 5 pm.

The prison spent most of the 20th century as a remand prison, with occasional use for political prisoners, and last month we received details of two of those cases.

During one of our guided walks last summer, we noticed a painted memorial on the back wall of the prison, in the style of an official blue plaque, to Terence MacSwiney, MP and Lord Mayor of Cork. Brixton resident Fergus O'Farrell has supplied more details:

A teacher, playwright and Irish language scholar, MacSwiney was elected as Sinn Fein MP for Mid Cork in the General Election of December 1918, though he refused to take his seat at Westminster. He had not been involved in the 1916 Easter Rising, but supported its aims.

The Irish War of Independence broke out the month after the election, and Cork was a focal point for rebel activity. In March 1920, the Lord Mayor of Cork, Tomas MacCurtain, was shot dead by police as he slept in his bed. In the troubled city, a man of MacSwiney's standing was a natural replacement. However, he did not remain in office very long. In August he was arrested and tried by a military tribunal, where he was sentenced to two years imprisonment, to be served at Brixton.

MacSwiney immediately began a hunger strike, and his case attracted worldwide media attention. Within days, his supporters were

gathering outside the prison in solidarity. On 25 August, a riot broke out between the crowd and the police.

The case divided public opinion, with some MPs calling for his release. Even the King favoured clemency, though he decided not to intervene. Messages of support poured in from all over the world. From the USA, Marcus Garvey sent a message of solidarity from "400 million negroes". The Mayor of New York sent a telegram to Lloyd George, then Prime Minister.

After 74 days without food, MacSwiney died on 25 October. His body was taken to Southwark Cathedral. Thousands came to pay their respects, including the Mayor of Stepney, Clement Attlee, later Prime Minister. After the funeral mass, the body was taken to Euston Station in a procession that stretched for more than a mile, including members of the Irish Volunteer movement and hundreds of Catholic priests. The body was put on a train bound for Holyhead, whence it was transported by ship to Ireland.

Messages of support and sympathy poured in from all over the world. Gandhi, Nehru, Ho Chi Minh and Nelson Mandela were later to cite MacSwiney's protest as an inspiration. Is it now time for his memory to be honoured with a permanent blue plaque?

*Fergus O'Farrell has just published **Cathal Brugha**, a biography of the Irish revolutionary, University College Dublin Press, ISBN-13: 9781910820278.*

Ravinder Randhawa has been researching Udam Singh, another former inmate who challenged the British Empire, this time for its rule in India. This year is the centenary of the massacre at Jalianwala Bhag in Amritsar, when Brigadier Dyer ordered his troops to fire on demonstrators gathered in a walled garden with limited exits.

Udam Singh worked as a signboard painter while supporting the struggle for Indian independence. After serving time in prison for his activities, the police continued to harass him, so he moved to England in the 1930s.
continued overleaf/...

Brixton Prison: continued from p.11

Here he helped to set up the original Indian Workers' Association (GB) which aimed to raise support for the Independence movement, and through branches in cities such as Birmingham and Coventry, it tackled racism and unfair work practices. At some point he had a version of his name tattooed on his arm, *Ram Mohammed Singh Azad*, combining Hindu, Muslim and Sikh names with Azad, freedom.

On 13 March 1940, Udam Singh shot Sir Michael O'Dwyer during a meeting of the East India Association at Caxton Hall, Westminster. He stated that this was to avenge the Amritsar massacre of 20 years earlier, when Sir Michael had been Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab and had endorsed the Brigadier's actions.

Udam was immediately arrested, and then held in Brixton Prison pending his trial, in June 1940. He was executed at Pentonville on 31 July. The records of his trial were kept secret at the time to avoid provoking more unrest in India at a critical stage of the Second World War, and not released until the mid-1990s. It was only in 1974 that Sadhu Singh Thind, a member of the Legislative Assembly of India, persuaded Indira Gandhi to push the British government to hand over Udam Singh's remains, which he accompanied back to India for them to be received with great ceremony.

A major book on Udam Singh is due out soon from Anita Anand, with another due from Kim A. Wagner on the Amritsar Massacre. For a fuller version of the outline above, see: <https://bit.ly/2KelLY2>

From a whisper to a roar

Opening Doors London, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, are creating an archive based on interviews with older LGBT+ women. The aim is to capture a female perspective of changing social visibility as their voices became more prominent, hence *From a Whisper to a Roar*. ODL are keen to interview older women for this project – contact Evelyn Pittman at: evelyn.pittman@openingdoorslondon.org.uk

BRIXTON Neighbourhood Forum

The next meeting takes place on **Monday 22 July, at 6-45 pm** at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road SW2 (facing onto Windrush Square). One of our topics will be support for community groups, and we will introduce the Integrate Agency, who Lambeth recently appointed to continue the support service previously provided by LVAC and Community Southwark.

We are keen to bring together all the groups with an interest in the Brixton area, and so are encouraging them to become more involved in the work of the Forum. If there are local issues that you think the Forum should take on, tell us - enquiries to: apiperbrix@aol.com

First Aid for Van Gogh Sculpture

Anthony Padgett e-mailed us to report that the final bust in his series of Van Gogh sculptures was successfully unveiled at Ramsgate last month, with support from the Ramsgate Society and the Friends of Spencer Square.

Sadly, Brixton's own version off Hackford Road was defaced with emulsion paint, but local residents reported it promptly to Anthony, who was able to come down from Lancashire to clean it properly. For a recap of the whole project, see www.ayearwithvincent.co.uk He is now pursuing a new project, on Pablo Picasso – details at www.ayearwithpicasso.co.uk

London Canal Museum

Canals launched the Industrial Revolution, but never quite reached Brixton. The museum shows the wider context of course, but has special events over the weekend **27/28 July** to mark the birthday of Carlo Gatti, whose Ice Wells alongside the canal basin supplied ice in large blocks in the days before refrigeration. Victorian Music Hall on Saturday evening, ice wells visits on Sunday. London Canal Museum, 12-13 New Wharf Road, N1 9RT, tel. (020) 7713 0836.