

THE BRIXTON SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Autumn issue, October 2019

No.235, Quarterly issue,
Distributed free to members.

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



*Following the Local History Fair, we may appear at a couple more events this year.
(Alan Robertson, 19A-00047.jpg)*

Saturday 2nd November: Family History Fair

at the Migration Museum, SE1 7AG

Many of the local history enquiries that we receive come from people trying to discover where their ancestors lived or worked, and what our area was like at the time.

We hope to join in this event, open 10-30 to 4-30 pm in the former Fire Brigade workshop on Lambeth High Street (behind their Albert Embankment HQ), admission £5, or if you can spare some time to help staff our stall, please call Bill Linskey on (020) 7274 3835 or e-mail to wjdcl@globalnet.co.uk

Sunday 1st December: Brockwell Park Winter Fair

11 am to 3 pm in Brockwell Hall – contact info@brockwellpark.com if you want to run a stall yourself.



*Windrush Square guided walk during the Local History Fair – see reports on pages 4 & 5.
(Alan Robertson, 6A-00030.jpg)*

50 years of Brixton Plans Markets, Megastructures and Motorways on 12 September

We were pleased to have a full house for our open meeting last month, when Nicholas Weedon described the series of development plans proposed for Brixton's Town Centre in the late 1960s. Maybe it helped that a couple of other events on similar topics were fully booked, or perhaps we are seeing renewed interest in the architecture of that period.

One question that arose was whether the Brixton Society helped stop the 1969 plan, but the reality is that the early plans largely collapsed under the weight of their own contradictions, and we only came into being a few years later. In the early 1970s, residents of areas surrounding the Town Centre became increasingly active in resisting Council plans for the demolition of their homes. As those residents' groups began to achieve success and network with each other, thoughts turned to saving the Central Area too, as it spiralled into decline from planning blight. Thus it was only in January 1975 that the Brixton Society was launched. By this time, most of the compulsory purchase orders for demolishing surrounding areas were being turned down by Central Government, and thoughts were turning to refurbishment and revival.

Continued on page 5...

Diary of Events, Autumn 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.

- 10 October
- 14 November
- 9 January 2020.

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.

Thursday 17 October – House History

Guidance on researching the history of your South London home, presented by Alan Piper; 8 pm at the Phoenix Centre, Westow Street, SE19.

South London Local History Group.

Saturday 19 October – Home Movie Day

Bring your home movies for inspection by professional archivists – 8mm, Super8, 9.5mm and 16mm formats welcome. Plus special archive screenings, including Dirk Bogarde's home movies and assorted vintage home movies from the museum's collection. Open 11 am to 4 pm at the Cinema Museum, 2 Dugard Way, Kennington SE11 4TH. Enquiries to loulapankhurst@gmail.com
The Cinema Museum.

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

Friday 25 October – Back to the Future

A free performance by adults and young people to celebrate the story of the **Dark and Light Theatre**, the country's first black-led theatre company, which was based at our hall from 1969 to 1975. We want more of the community to know their story. 7 pm at Longfield Hall, 50 Knatchbull Road, SE5 (opposite Minet Library).
Longfield Hall.

Monday 4 November - Dream Palaces

The picture houses of Streatham, Tooting, Balham and Brixton, illustrated talk by Richard Gray. Starts at 8 pm at Woodlawns, 16 Leigham Court Rd, SW16.
Streatham Society

Saturday 16 November – Streatham Cemetery

Cherishing History and Nurturing Wildlife are the themes of a talk by Kath Church of the Friends of Streatham Cemetery; 2-30 pm in the Lounge, Chatsworth Baptist Church (Family Centre entrance) Idmiston Road SE27.
Friends of West Norwood Cemetery.

Monday 18 November - Architecture of the Underground

Edmund Bird, Heritage Adviser to TfL, illustrates the history of our underground stations. Starts at 8 pm at Omnibus Theatre, Clapham Common Northside, SW4.
Clapham Society

Fitting more into Windrush Square?

Proposals were announced at the end of September for a new memorial in the Square, to commemorate Mrs Cherry Groce, who was shot by police during a botched raid on her home in 1985. This incident set off a fresh round of rioting in Central Brixton at a time when relations between the police and the black community were still fragile after the original riots in 1981. Mrs Groce was left disabled as a result of the shooting, and passed away in 2011. There is a small plaque on her former house in Normandy Road, put up by the Nubian Jak Foundation. Her family have been through years of wrangling with the police over liability and compensation.



Proposed memorial in Windrush Square, designed by Adjaye Associates (scan 049.jpg)

Agreement has finally been reached over a restitution package, with the Metropolitan Police and Lambeth Council contributing to the cost of the memorial. The design takes the form of a triangular base, providing bench seating, with a canopy above, including a green roof. The proposed site is at the junction of paths in the centre of the Square, on the edge of the grassed area and presently occupied by a small planting bed with railings.

We expect a planning application shortly as the aim is to have the memorial in place next summer. We have not had a chance to discuss this yet, because our next committee meeting takes place between this being written and the newsletter reaching our members. We are sympathetic to the cause, but there is the practical problem of several existing memorials in a small space which has not been laid out

very well. It took some ingenuity to fit in the African & Caribbean War Memorial, and since then there have other additions, such as extra cycle racks. If you have a view on this, it would help us to hear from you soon, because notices of planning applications tend to arrive with tight deadlines for responses. Respond to planning@brixtonsociety.org.uk

Bringing life back into Loughborough Park

Efforts are being made to revive the Friends group for this pocket park. At present the park is run-down and attracts few visitors, but a corner is already in use as a community garden, and there are ambitions to resume work on a Masterplan for improvements which was drawn up by Groundwork several years ago. There is also potential to re-use a disused playgroup building which sits on a large walled-off patch in the centre of the park. Enquiries to belldorothy16@yahoo.com

More local amenities to support

Loughborough Junction Action Group have grown into managing several local projects, including the **Grove Adventure Playground** and the **Loughborough Farm**. Their Annual General Meeting is on Wednesday 16 October from 6-30 pm (formal business at 8 pm) at the Playground in Gordon Grove, off Minet Road.

Friends of Brockwell Park have their Annual General Meeting on Sunday 20 October, at 11 am upstairs in Brockwell Hall.

Advertising Boards in Parks

In a desperate attempt to generate some more cash for maintaining its greenspaces, Lambeth is making a series of planning applications for advertising panels to be placed on railings or walls around its parks and open spaces. The downside is that this detracts from the green setting and reverses the efforts over the last 70 years to scale back street advertising. So far, we have only seen proposals for smaller spaces like St. Matthew's Peace Garden, though some like Blenheim Gardens are really too tucked away for adverts to get much public exposure and commercial interest.

Alan Piper.

Heritage Festival Highlights

Remembering our Local Heroes

Wednesday 18 September

Creative, varied and well attended with an audience of over 60 people, our Local Heroes Initiative (LHI) event unfolded beautifully. The Mayor did us the great honour of choosing to attend our LHI celebration among his many invitations. He arrived promptly but had to leave for a subsequent appointment as attendees were still arriving, so was unable to open it formally. He did leave us with the task to pass on his warmest wishes and support for the audience, our LHI and all connected with the Local Heroes.

We enjoyed riveting presentations, first for existing Local Heroes, names that you are already familiar with (Cherry Groce, Dwayne Simpson, Derrick Accra, Nellie Roberts...) and fascinating insights into the continuation of their impact on our community, some of which you are also aware of, like the Loughborough Road project and Nellie's exhibition.

Then we discovered highly expected new nominations: Gloria Bailey, MBE; John Cunningham of both the Society for Co-operation in Russian and Soviet Studies (SCRSS) and the Brixton Society; and Jimmy Rogers of Brixton Topcats; prompting additional contributions from the audience. It is interesting to note that some of our local Heroes, (Cherry Groce, Dwayne Simpson...) are currently celebrated in the Brixton Bugle.

You would have felt a different sense of expectation in the air as we changed location to reconvene. It was quite a sight to find the audience occupying both the stairwell and the staircase of the beautiful Brixton Library's foyer, looking at Helen Hayes, MP, at the

foot of the digital screen ready to spring into life with our celebrated Local Heroes. Helen addressed all present prior to switching on the Roll of Honour, drawing their attention to the importance of the moment as well as its significance for each of our Local Heroes. Her countdown to the switch on definitely enhanced the Roll of Honour with an engaging and interactive element.



Helen Hayes MP introducing the Roll of Honour, Annick Alet in background. (20190918-202755.jpg)

We then moved into another Library area (Enquiry desk), still buoyant with curiosity about the evening's next step, for the unveiling of Norma Williamson's portrait by Pam Williams. Julia Shelley, former Age UK Lambeth Chief Executive did the honours in the presence of the artist and Norma's son Stuart. After Julia's speech, both Pam and Bill Linskey (Chair of Brixton Society & Local History Forum) said a few words that were equally applauded by the audience as helping to shed more light onto Norma's life. Celebrated as the inspiration that started the LHI, Norma had been Brixton Society treasurer for 16 years. After her death in 2014, a green memorial was planted for her

Heritage Festival Highlights

within the curtilage of the Brixton Library.

Both the Roll of Honour and Norma's portrait are meant as a constant reminder to all library users of our Local Heroes, their commitment to our community and legacy for us all.



Julia Shelley, Pam Williams and Stuart Williamson in front of Norma's portrait. (20190918-204730.jpg)

The evening came to an end just before 9 pm and it was heart-warming that people left in little groups, still talking about some of the Local Heroes, the Roll of Honour, Norma's beautiful likeness and even about some of the presenters including Helen our MP. I understand that numerous tweets have been sent. Some have followed up with emails and texts, such as our own Bugle distributor Philip King, who researched **60 untold stories**, a project mentioned by Bev Campbell (Gloria Bailey's daughter).

Annick Alet.

Nellie Roberts exhibition

The Nellie Roberts Life and Works exhibition at the San Mei Gallery is now closed, but we thank all who visited during the Heritage Festival.

It was fantastic to be able to celebrate the work of this largely unknown artist of Loughborough Road, and bring some of her works back to the street where she painted them. There has been a lot of interest in the exhibition and the research that we brought together on Nellie and the orchid collection of Mr R.I.Measures, so we are hoping there will

be more articles and book chapters on Nellie and her work in the future.

We are also working on the Blue Plaque application to go to Heritage England, and on getting a memorial plaque to Nellie in Lambeth Cemetery. We will keep you posted.

While all the prints of Nellie's paintings for the Northern Orchid Society sold out, we do have a few of her original watercolours for sale, at £360 each framed. Each picture has a label detailing the orchid and its award by the RHS committee. Do let us know if you are interested – contact me at leaftra@gmail.com

Tracey Gregory.

Local History Fair

Many thanks to all who helped with our stall at the Local History Fair in the Tate Library. Our stall took a total of £199.69. We thought last year's result of £123 was good, so clearly it helped to be on our home turf. Thanks also to Annick, Marilyn and other Friends of the Library for providing non-stop refreshments. The Library staff too seemed pleased with the day.

Diana Linskey.

Markets, Megastructures and Motorways, 12 September

Continued from page 1...

The Society began to lobby for a similar approach to the Town Centre, but for years the Council persisted with one of the original elements in the 1969 plan – the diversion of Coldharbour Lane to allow the building of an elevated shopping mall between Atlantic and Brixton Roads.

After a series of failed plans, one of them finally came before a public inquiry in 1984, by which time the Council's enthusiasm and resources were flagging. Working closely with residents from Rushcroft Road and Nursery Road, we were able to achieve substantial concessions before or at the inquiry. From this point Lambeth's ambitions for Brixton took the form of proposals for separate sites within the Town Centre, rather than the comprehensive plan of earlier years.

Alan Piper.

Local History Focus

Some Random Questions

Our stalls at the Country Show, the Local History Fair, and even in Brixton Market, will often generate questions about how Brixton used to be. For “frequently asked questions”, we are gradually adding the answers to our website. Our resources for researching individual queries are limited, so we try to encourage people to do their own research and point them to the most useful sources. Meanwhile, here’s a few topics that arose in recent months.



Long before Brixton Orchard was planted on the corner of Brixton Hill and St. Matthew’s Road, the site was occupied by Lambeth’s prefab Civil Defence training centre (on right of picture) with the Council’s nuclear bunker directly below it, both being installed in the early 1950s and removed about 20 years ago. Despite the vintage pre-war bus, this photo was taken in November 1975, during the annual Veteran Car Run to Brighton. (BS-BxH-75-03.jpg)

Moving Pictures

We receive occasional enquiries from makers of documentary films, and of course what they most want are moving images rather than old photos or postcards. The London Metropolitan Archives is one such source, and they recently staged a little film show for AfL (Archives for London) of which we are members. Examples shown reflected both the official promotional films produced by the LCC and City and some very early film clips donated to the collection.

Until **17 October**, LMA have a small exhibition on one of the pioneers of the film industry, Robert Paul, who started back in 1895 with “What the butler saw” type machines, then devised his own cine film camera and began

making short films, followed in 1896 by a film projector which was used to show his films in existing Music Hall programmes. He went on to set up the first London film studio in Muswell Hill in 1898, but in the face of rising competition, he gave up film-making in 1910 to focus on making scientific instruments.

Underground London

LMA is also hosting an exhibition of material on different aspects of London below ground, including railways, sewers, tunnels and other subterranean spaces, until **4th December**. LMA is at 40 Northampton Road, EC1R 0HB - for opening times etc see their website, www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma



Image-1(1).jpg

We were recently asked about the history of the “fish and fisherman” motif above the Atlantic Road entrance to the Market Row arcade. It’s not part of the original 1930 design but was added as part of a major facelift during the Brixton Challenge programme of 1993-98. Different ceramic designs were produced for each entrance, but not all were used. This one replaced a simple circular window. Any further enhancements would need planning consent because the arcades are now listed.

Street names are a big field for research, and we have been asked to advise some furniture makers who want to give their products local names – we’ll let you know how we get on!

Alan Piper.

Community Arts

81 Acts of Exuberant Defiance

Update on the development of the 2021 cultural programme for the 1981 Brixton Uprisings commemoration / celebration:

Brixton-based arts activists Tony Cealy and Chloe Osbourne, with support from Ubele Initiative and Edge Fund, have been doing their best over the past few months to meet and talk with potential partners and steering group members, in order to build the most dynamic and robust cultural programme they dare imagine. 81 Acts of Exuberant Defiance is a community-led programme of activity that will commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Brixton Uprisings in 2021.

They are determined that the myriad of conversations and ideas generously shared are incorporated into the final outputs, so that what is produced is greater and more aspirational than the sum of its parts.

They believe these commissioned acts are going to play a pivotal role in

- how the whole programme is received by the wider community;
- the social impact they are aiming for,
- ensuring that it ripples out beyond Brixton.

The tasks of the 76-member steering group are still being refined, but they are working on the basis of:

- Commissioning up to 10 acts designed and led by the steering group to scaffold, inform and disseminate the programme;
- Curating a series of about 31 acts, working with partners, individual artists, community groups and activists to reach as wide an audience as possible, in a variety of scales, media and locations;
- Providing the conditions for another 40 acts to emerge. These acts will be created in response to the Call to Action in our Humanifesto, supported but not moderated, and which may appear unexpectedly rather than be advertised.

In order to harness the necessary resources, time is now being invested in planning to realise the aspirations of the cultural programme.

Tony is in correspondence with the Black Cultural Archives about developing a National Lottery Heritage bid.

The Human Library hope to co-produce an Uprising Exhibition to launch in April 2021. An application has been drafted to the Mayor's Culture Seed Fund.

Co-creating Change is another potential support programme, which explores the role of artists, cultural organisations and communities in co-creating change together.

Our first mission is to generate support for a pilot programme of research and activity in 2020, and to develop a strategic plan for the next 18 months. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Tony and Chloe at: 81radicalactsofdefiance@gmail.com

Or phone Chloe on 07 812 993 002 or Tony on 07 956 877 358 or see the website, <https://www.81actsofexuberantdefiance.com>

Events at Brixton Tate Library



Chorus Berlin Blues.jpg

The Friends of the Library are working with the librarians to develop a series of cultural events and activities in the library. National Poetry Day was recently marked by a performance of Berlin Blues, a cabaret based on the poetry of Beata Duncan, published posthumously as *Breaking Glass* (Green Bottle Press). Poems from the collection were set to music by Andreas Demetriou, supported by his Berlin Blues Band, and introduced by Stephen Duncan.

Should Be Better Remembered

WILLIAM HIGGS BUILDER

William Higgs was a prominent Victorian builder; and much more beside.

He was born on 8 April 1824 in Ferry Street, which no longer exists, but ran in line with where Lambeth Bridge is now, between the railway and Lambeth High Street. His father was a dairyman but William wanted to be a builder and so apprenticed to an uncle who was a successful builder. By the age of 21 he had saved £50 (over £6,000 today), enough to set up his own business, initially in Bayswater.

By the age of 35 he was one of the most successful builders in London; for example, he built the Chelsea Barracks. In 1873 he won the tender to build the new Law Courts in the Strand.

When St Thomas's Hospital had to be relocated from its Southwark site, where it had been since medieval times, to make way for railway building, Higgs built the new Lambeth version. What is more, he became a governor of the hospital.

He built the first public swimming baths in London at Kennington Oval. Large buildings were not his only works, he also built houses.

His success was not built on ruthlessness; quite the contrary. His obituary in *The Builder* commented: 'It is said of him that no employer was more respected, for he was fair and honourable in all his dealings, and always had the welfare of his men at heart'. (Quoted from his entry on the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography which has informed much of this article.)



image: Lambeth Archives

RELIGION

Religion was important to Higgs. Always a non-conformist, he was brought up a Wesleyan, but attended a Congregational chapel in Marylebone; reverted to Wesleyanism when he moved to Lambeth, and finally was baptised in 1858 by the famous Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

His relationship with Spurgeon resulted in his building for him: a house, a chapel in Wandsworth, and the Metropolitan Tabernacle in Newington Butts, which is still there, opposite the Elephant and Castle shopping centre although only the façade is original Higgs. He became a deacon of the tabernacle and made a large financial contribution to it.

He co-founded with Spurgeon the Spurgeon Orphanage at Stockwell, which stood more-or-less on the current site of Platanos College (formerly the Stockwell Park High School) and was its Treasurer.

He served on the Lambeth Poor Law Board of Guardians for 21 years, including several as its chairman.

FAMILY

In 1848, William married Letetia Ann (née Charlton). They had 3 sons and 12 daughters. They moved to Lambeth in about 1852 where they live in a variety of houses.

At one time, Higgs owned Park Hill in Streatham, now best known as the final home of Henry Tate who knew both Higgs and Spurgeon.

They lived in Stockwell Lodge, on part of the site now occupied by the Lambeth Hospital in Landor Road. They then moved to Kenyon House in Bedford Road where the 1881 census shows them living with 7 of their children and 6 servants, including a coachman and a gardener.

Finally, they moved to Gwydyr House, Brixton Rise (the lower part of Brixton Hill). That house was on part of the site now occupied by Lambeth College).

Here William Higgs died on 3 January 1883. He left more than £50,000 in his will (over £6 million today).



image: the author

As a memorial, his family built an entire church: the Kenyon Baptist Chapel in Solon Road. Anyone passing today who looked at the memorial tablet (above) might first notice the name of Spurgeon who laid it, his name being more prominent than Higgs'!

Bill Linskey

Changes in the Air

Brixton Liveable Neighbourhood

Just as we were compiling this newsletter, Lambeth's Transport Team were holding a series of on-street consultations, to round off the website consultation which ran to the end of September. Their aim now is to digest all comments collected and try to produce a transport plan for the Brixton area which is friendlier to cyclists and pedestrians and discourages motor traffic.

Already Brixton is busier

Brixton's Business Improvement District (or BID) recently reported that footfall in the Town Centre is 14.4% up on the previous year. The number of visitors counted in the week from 16 September onwards was 413,265.

While this is impressive at a time when many other town centres are struggling, it would help to know how the numbers vary over a 24-hour cycle. There are always lots of commuters dashing between buses and tube, but is the growth only due to revellers using the Night Tube to sample Brixton's late-night bars and clubs? Timely then that efforts are being made to revive the Take the P out of Brixton campaign, and shake our councillors out of their indifference.

Changes in Landor Road?

During the 1990s, the Victorian smallpox hospital in Landor Road was replaced with a modern range of buildings, designed by local architects Greenhill and Jenner. A "cottage hospital" or local care centre was provided at the back of the site, accessible from Pulross Road, while most of the site was given over to new mental health services, managed by the South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLAM).

Last month SLAM announced that it was exploring future options for the hospital site with the Lambeth Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). One idea is to transfer in-patient services to a "new high-quality building" on the Maudsley site at Denmark Hill, while moving community services to existing community locations which might be refurbished. It is claimed that there will not be any loss of beds or of specific services. There is a stated aim to replace "outdated wards in

poor condition" though it is not clear if this means the older Maudsley premises or includes Landor Road too.

In order to pay for the new Douglas Bennett House at Denmark Hill, with 143 beds in 8 wards, it is implied that the extensive Landor Road site will be sold off. This seems a wastefully short life for a modern building complex. The destination of out-patient services is less clear. The danger is that they will be used to fill up the large and inaccessible Akerman Health Centre on the north-east fringe of Brixton. This has already sucked in many GPs and health clinic services that were once distributed more evenly around Brixton.

Neighbourhood Health Plans

Following a consultation event earlier this year, two of your committee members took part in another event last month. The worthy aim is to establish a Lambeth-wide health and wellbeing collaborative network, including GPs, specialist clinics and voluntary and community groups. However, it's still very high-level stuff and too early to say how it affects your access to a GP or dentist.

Shirley Oaks children's home: Compensation scheme extended

Lambeth's Cabinet recently agreed to extend the compensation scheme for former residents for another 2 years. Previously it was due to close in January 2020. It covers both those who were abused, and at risk of abuse, as children resident at the children's home and the associated primary school.

Shirley Oaks was originally opened c.1906 as a series of small self-contained children's homes in a parkland setting south of Croydon. It was designed for the Bermondsey Union of Parishes, which also managed workhouse provision for that area. Eventually it was absorbed by the London County Council, which in turn passed it to Lambeth in 1965. Despite the changes of ownership, it seems that on-site staff and practices carried on much as before. The home finally closed in the 1990s when the site was sold for housing development. For details of the redress scheme, see www.lambeth.gov.uk/redress

Straws in the Wind

It has been encouraging to hear about a number of local initiatives to reduce our impact on the environment. Here's a few examples:

Recycling with Brixton BID

For some time the BID has been working with **First Mile** to provide subsidised and discounted recycling services to local firms. See <https://thefirstmile.co.uk/benefits> or call 0800 612 9894.

The latest initiative is the first recycling scheme in the borough for **paper coffee cups** targeting Brixton's potential catchment of 20-plus independent coffee shops. These cups need their own recycling stream because of their plastic lining. This scheme is managed by the environmental charity Hubbub, with financial support from Starbucks.

Reducing plastic bottles

The Bid also helped launch a free water re-filling station on Windrush Square, as part of a drive to encourage use of refillable flasks rather than "disposable" bottled water – see www.refill.org.uk for other water points.

Free Gardener Training

Now recruiting for January 2020: if you live in Lambeth and are aged between 16 and 25, you may be eligible for a free place on a Level 2 course in work-based horticulture. For more details, see the Walworth Garden website: <https://walworthgarden.org.uk/qcf-gardener-training>

More gardening opportunities

For more casual practice and advice, you could join the free open-access sessions at the **Brixton Orchard** on Thursdays, to help keep it ticking over. To sign up, see the Urban Growth website, <https://urbangrowth.london>

There are also opportunities for practical exercise and picking up basic skills as a volunteer with the Great North Wood project run by the London Wildlife Trust. Work takes place across a range of sites which are remnants of the original woodland, from Streatham Common, via Dulwich Woods to New Cross Gate railway cutting. Enquiries to greatnorthwood@wildlondon.org

Blooming Lambeth Awards

With all this talk of gardening, we have just remembered that the 2019 Awards are being presented on **Tuesday 15 October** at the Town Hall (Assembly Hall on Acre Lane). Arrive at 6 pm for amazing music and vegan food, before the 7 pm opening by Levi Roots followed by prize-giving by the Mayor of Lambeth. Organised by Incredible Edible Lambeth – see www.incredibleediblelambeth.org

Garden Festival Umbrella

Landscapers and nurserymen are beginning to get behind the idea of the Great British Garden Festival for 2020. Rather than one big central exhibition, the concept is a season of events around the country, perhaps repeating on a 4-year cycle. Certainly promoting tree planting and plant care is a worthy cause. Enquiries to info@GreatBritishGardenFestival.org.uk

Craft at the Garden Museum

The Garden Museum, the former St. Mary's Church next to Lambeth Palace, is hosting Beautiful and Useful, a craft fair, on **Sunday 17 November**, from 10-30 am to 5 pm. It will feature a mix of ceramics, wood, glass, metalwork and more, from Britain's best designer-makers.

Tall buildings and the environment

One concern about Lambeth planners' current enthusiasm for tall buildings is the impact they have on conditions down at ground level. This is not just overshadowing, but also the effect of deflecting strong winds down the face of such blocks, or creating whirlwind effects between blocks.

The City of London, with long experience of these things, has adopted some new planning requirements to limit the impact on pedestrians and cyclists at street level. Wind tunnel testing or computer simulations must accompany planning applications for blocks over 25m tall, to show that street level conditions will be tolerable. Just look at Vauxhall to see how urgent it is for Lambeth to follow suit.

Alan Piper.

Beyond Brixton

Keeping up with the Neighbours

Brixton is such a happening place these days that you can find a great choice of activities and events within our own patch. Nevertheless we are part of several wider networks, so from time to time we will share highlights from other parts of London – some just a few bus stops away, some in Central London, and once in a while, in a distant suburb.

Streatham Festival

A busy programme is taking place between 11 and 20 October, including:

- Streatham Strut on Saturday 12th, 10 free live gigs in 10 venues;
- Festival Ceilidh on Friday 18th;
- Family Fun Day on Saturday 19th;
- Art23, with 30 local artists exhibiting around Streatham.

More details at www.streathamfestival.com

Dulwich Picture Gallery

Just a short ride from Brixton on the P4 bus, the Gallery's latest special exhibition marks the 350th anniversary of Rembrandt's death in 1669. Its theme is Rembrandt's Light and it features 35 of his paintings, etchings and drawings, some of them shown in the UK for the first time. This exhibition continues until 2nd February.

It also marks the start of a new £5 ticket offer for visitors aged between 18 and 30, in order to attract a younger audience. People can sign up for the scheme at www.dpg.art/under30

There is also an ongoing programme of art classes, lectures and family activities. For more information see:

www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk

William Blake at Tate Britain

Sometime Lambeth resident William Blake is the subject of the current paid exhibition at the Millbank site. Curiously, this too runs until 2nd February, in this instance with over 300 original works on show.

More information at www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain

Looking after Listed Buildings

Lambeth's boundaries include over 2000 Listed buildings, and their upkeep can be a struggle for individual owners. Support and advice are available through the Listed Property Owners Club, which lobbies for a fairer deal such VAT reform. They put on an annual Listed Property Show, which brings together a range of specialist firms and experts. For more information, see www.lpoc.co.uk

Battersea Society

We have listed some events from the civic societies nearest to us on page 2, but the network extends across Greater London, co-ordinated by the London Forum of Amenity Societies. It was good to see the Battersea Society represented at the Local History Fair last month, so here's news of one of their events too:

Thursday 14 November, 6-30 for 7 pm at St. Mary's Church, Battersea Church Road, SW11 3NA, a talk on 17th Century Battersea by local historian Sally Sellers. £5 donation on the door.



The City of London from near City Hall, 2018. (IMG8535.jpg)

The London Society

For those interested in London-wide issues, the London Society offers a chance to hear about and discuss both current topics and longer-term historical trends. We have mentioned them before, but their events have become more ambitious in the last few years, so maybe it's worth a look at their website – www.londonsociety.org.uk

BRIXTON

Neighbourhood Forum

The next Forum meeting takes place on **Thursday 24 October, at 6-45 pm** at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road SW2 (facing onto Windrush Square). The agenda includes a presentation from Repowering London on opportunities to get involved in their renewable energy work, and news of a couple of upcoming developments in Brixton.

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 up, tell us - enquiries to: apiperbrix@aol.com

Slade Gardens

Lambeth Council is supporting the provision of a new community building at Slade Gardens Adventure Playground, at the corner of Lorn Road and Stockwell Park Road. The total cost of the project is £2.5 million, of which Lambeth is contributing £1 million. MAX Architects and other experts worked on the project free of charge. Management of the site will be passed to the Slade Gardens Community Play Association on a 99-year lease.

Planning permission has been granted for the present cluster of huts to be replaced by a double-height part-sunken "green" building. While the adventure playground will remain at the heart of the scheme, the wider range of facilities on-site will include community meeting rooms and a teenage parents job club.

Raised-bed allotments, polytunnel green-housing and a few beehives will be added to the site, so that food grown on-site can supply a new café which will also provide training for young people. This will be supported by Divert, a charity aiming to steer youngsters away from crime and onto constructive paths.

Work is expected to start next May and take a year, though experience at Windmill Gardens suggests this is optimistic!

Inside the O2 Academy

By the time you read this, we will be halfway through Lambeth Age Concern's Celebrating Age Festival month.

Mature readers may welcome the chance to see backstage at the Academy, which they may still remember as the Astoria. The visit is on **Monday 28 October**, 10-30 to 11-30 am. To reserve a place, see their website, www.celebratingage.org/events/backstage-at-the-o2-academy-brixton/



The O2 Academy in 1998 soon after its restoration. (BS-BTC-98-03.jpg)

Which Borough Plan?

You may have heard Councillors or their staff referring to a Borough Plan, but this is not the plan which guides planning applications and the like. That field of policy is covered by the Lambeth Local Plan, last updated in 2015. In contrast, the Borough Plan is an attempt to coordinate all the Council's activities, and the latest version identifies 20 goals or priorities. It is being launched at the Annual Conference of Lambeth First, being held at the Coin Street Community Centre on **16 October**.

Thinking about 2020 events:

Within the next couple of months, our Executive Committee will be settling the skeleton of what we do next year.

It will help us greatly to hear from our wider membership, and sooner rather than later. What would you like us to repeat (or avoid) next year? Is there enough support for any visits to places of interest, and if so, near or far? Any suggestions for topics or speakers for open meetings? Remember too that our next newsletter should reach you in mid-January.