

Diary and Events

COMMITTEE DATES

Our Executive Committee meets monthly at 7:00pm on the second Thursday, to plan activities and agree our responses to current issues.

Meetings are at the Vida Walsh Centre, 2b Saltoun Road SW2 1EP, facing Windrush Square.

These meetings are open to any of our members, but if you want to join in or raise a specific issue, please contact the Secretary at least a week before at:

secretary@brixtonsociety.org.uk

The next few dates are:

- 9 May
- 13 June AGM

A flyer Notice & Agenda for the AGM is included in printed copies of this newsletter.

- 11 July

LOCAL HISTORY WALKS

The society runs history walks throughout the year. The next ones are:

Stockwell Park

- Sunday 19 May at 2:30pm

Brixton Market Heritage Walk

- Saturday 8 June at 2:30pm

Brixton's Blue Plaques

- Sunday 23 June at 2:30pm

Brixton's Beginnings

- Sunday 7 July at 2:20pm

Brixton Market Heritage Walk

- Saturday 13 July at 2:30pm

Details and booking for all walks:

brixtonsociety.org.uk/events

THEIR FINEST HOUR

If you visited the Lambeth Local History Fair last September you may have seen or spoken to a

member of the project team of 'Their Finest Hour' which supported 73 Digital Collection Day events across the UK in 2023 and 2024, recording and digitising thousands of Second World War stories and artefacts. Collection has now finished, and the team are producing a digital archive.

The online archive will go live on 6 June 2024, the 80th anniversary of D-Day. For more information, go to:

theirfinesthour.english.ox.ac.uk

REVISITING BRIXTON RECREATION CENTRE

Would you like to help gather Brixton's History? Do you have any memories of Brixton Rec?

Revisiting Brixton Rec is a community heritage project to create an archive of oral histories, photographs and other digital objects about the often-neglected histories of Brixton Recreation Centre. They want to capture your experiences of the energy, tournaments, conferences, exhibitions and parties at The Rec that make our building, and the ways we use it so special. The project aims to ensure these histories become an archive and resource for future generations. They need your help!

The project will focus on four main themes: Sports leadership; Art and design; Social Justice; and Conviviality.

If you have a connection to or memories of The Rec and would like to take part they would love to hear from you. They will be interviewing people throughout the year. Go to:

revisitingbrixtonrec.org.uk

MYATT'S FIELDS PARK EVENTS

Sun 9 June: Pico Players - Conduct me!

Sat 15 June: Pride Picnic

Sat 22 June: Windrush Celebration

Sun 23 June: Midsummer Night's Dream performance

Sat 29 June: Fiesta del Sol (Andean Festival)

Sun 14 July: Family Fun Day

For information about the park and the above events: myattsfieldspark.info

Diary and Events

ON YOUR BIKE

Brixton BID is again sponsoring free monthly sessions by Dr Bike mechanics for cycle safety checks and essential maintenance, on the following Wednesdays at 12 to 3 pm:

24 April: outside F Mondays, Brixton Hill (near corner of Blenheim Gardens)

29 May, outside British Heart Foundation, Acre Lane (across the road from Tesco)

26 June, outside Article, 61 Atlantic Road.

BRIXTON WINDMILL

The Friends of Windmill Gardens continue to run a lot of regular activities through the week. They have restarted their regular guided walks and have a spring general meeting on 17 April, and The Dream Sequence - aerial theatre - on 15 June. Sadly, no Bread and Beer Festival this year due to cost and logistics.

brixtonwindmill.org/all-events

NATIONAL OPEN GARDENS SCHEME – GARDENS OPEN FOR CHARITY 2024

In or near our area the garden openings are starting with:

28th April, 14:00 - 17:00

South London Botanical Institute

20th May, 17.00 – 20.00

Lambeth Palace Gardens

5th June 17.30 – 20.00 (or other dates by arrangement up to 1 June)

5 Burbage Road Herne Hill SE24

9th June 14.00-17.00

103 & 105 Dulwich Village SE21

9th June 13.00-17.00

31 Trelawn Road SW2

In 2023 the National Garden Scheme donated £3.4 million to nursing and healthcare charities. Full details of all gardens open for 2024 from ngs.org.uk

SOUTH LONDON BOTANICAL INSTITUTE

SLBI re-opens this summer after major building works. Its small botanical garden has survived with its rare specimens and will be open for visitors on **Thursday 30 May** from 6 to 8pm, including a plant stall. No need to book but pay what you can for entry. Enquiries to info@slbi.org.uk

BRIXTON BLOG & BUGLE ART SHOW

Entry is now open for the ever-popular Brixton Blog & Bugle Summer Art Show.

The show is open to any artist – professional or self-taught – who is at least 16 years old and is based in or around Brixton.

You can submit up to TWO works. They must be no larger than one metre square and capable of being hung safely and securely on a wall. To enter, all you have to do is send up to three digital photos of each work to arts@brixtonblog.com

Please entitle the email “Summer Art Show” and include your name, address, contact number, social media, the title and a brief description of the work including its dimensions.

The closing date for entries is:

Monday 13 May 2024



Last year's awards ceremony

All selected works will be exhibited in the Summer Art Show in the Brixton Tate Library throughout July 2024. The winner will be decided by a people's vote.

Supported by the Arts Council of England and local businesses.

Diary and Events

URBAN SKETCHING

When I was at art college studying architecture, the art tutors took us to the local high street to hone our drawing skills by doing quick-fire sketches of the setting and people moving through the spaces. I found the combination of representing the architecture and the challenge of capturing something recognisable in the character of the passers by an enjoyable and stimulating experience. A few decades later, I offer the exercise for school placement students, finding that staying local in Brixton provides the perfect place for this.

Architect Mariam Kamara said, “architecture is the stage on which we live our lives” and this is no truer than spending a few hours immersed in the life of our familiar streets and markets. The process of sketching in this way is so engaging that I felt it was something that others, regardless of experience or ability would also enjoy. In this way, Urban Sketching with the Brixton Society was offered as part of last year’s Lambeth Heritage Festival - a unique way to appreciate a place, learn a little more about it and have something to show at the end.



We had a good turnout of very enthusiastic people, some of whom came as groups of friends, making for a sociable occasion in which, regarding the drawing, there was no right or wrong, just having fun in the doing and seeing what came out of it. The sketches reflected various locations, contrasting from the stark forms of the Rec to the bustle of the shop-lined streets.

As architect Michael Graves put it: “Drawing expresses the interaction of our minds, eyes and hands... I have a real purpose in making each drawing, either to remember something or to study something... I’m fascinated in not just by what people chose to draw but also by what they choose not to draw.”

Sketching builds different connections in the brain; you slow down and notice new details. It increases empathy and some say, even increases the blood flow to the reward centre in the brain. There is a connection with the people and surroundings in that moment.

What struck me when chatting to those who took part was that it was something that they would not have contemplated doing alone - at least in such a public space as the centre of Brixton. It was gratifying to provide an opportunity for others to try something new and try it out, so we are offering it twice this year, once on **Sunday 23 June** and again at the time of the Heritage Festival on **Sunday 1 September**. Places are free but must be booked. Email: sketch@brixtonsociety.org.uk

Nick Weedon

INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE WALK FROM COLLIERS WOOD

Organised by: The Wandle Industrial Museum. The walk takes in Miller's Mead, Wandle Park, Merton Mill which was converted to flats having previously housed a flour mill and then Connolly's leather works, a housing estate where a calico printing works and then Paxton's patent leather factory once stood, Wandle Bank, William Morris's works, and finally Merton Abbey Mills where refreshments are available in the former Liberty textile printing buildings.

- **Friday 19 April**, 11am until approx. noon
- Meet outside Colliers Wood station
- Free (any donations to the Wandle Industrial Museum welcome)
- Booking required – contact: john.sheridan08@gmail.com

Notes and News

SUPPORT FOR OLDER RESIDENTS

Age UK Lambeth has appointed a Wellbeing Champion to signpost older people to suitable resources for their health issues, as well as running events which offer basic healthy checks and advice. Enquiries to 07 873 102 248 or email: nicholas@ageuklambeth.org

They are also re-launching their **MYSocial** service, which offers exercise classes, meet-ups, visits, and days out of London. Most events are free, or otherwise at affordable prices. From 1st April, membership is £50 a year (payable in monthly instalments if preferred).

Enquiries to 020 3143 5695 or

members@mysocial.london

or via website:

mysocial.london/lambethjoin

MAYOR AND ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

These take place on **Thursday 2nd May**. We should remind you about two government measures to reduce support for other parties: Firstly, voters will need **photo ID** to vote in person.

The other change, which has had far less publicity, is that you will no longer be able to vote for a second choice for London Mayor or GLA members. Also note that, following the boundary changes to Council wards a couple of years ago, your polling station may be in a different location to the last time you voted.

TOWN HALL ADDRESS

Despite centralising most Council services in Brixton, for the past several years the postal address for services such as planning and building control has been a PO box number in Winchester.

At last, somebody has seen sense and this has been quietly switched to an address back in SW2 – it's PO Box 80771, London SW2 9QQ.

REFUSE COLLECTION CHANGES

Household waste collection from black wheely bins will be reduced to fortnightly from 15 April. Recycling collections will continue weekly.

Further south, around Tulse Hill and West Norwood, fortnightly collections began on a trial basis from 6th February. Housing estates with communal waste storage should not be affected. For more details of recycling and waste services, see:

lambeth.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling

LAMBETH CONSULTATION

A reminder that Lambeth are seeking views on the next five School Streets in Lambeth. The consultation will run for 6 months closing on 8 July 2024 (Phase 3)

School Streets create pedestrian and cycle zones in streets around schools during drop-off and pick-up times. The scheme aims to:

- reduce road danger at the school gates,
- tackle congestion,
- improve air quality, and
- increase active travel to school.

The current phase will include School Streets in five schools:

- Allen Edwards Primary School
- Dunraven Primary School
- Henry Cavendish Primary School Streatham
- Loughborough Primary School
- Sudbourne Primary School

Have your say at:

lambethschoolstreets.commonplace.is

WRITE FOR US

We are always happy to receive information from our members. Could you even write something for our newsletter?

It could be as short as a news item, such as you find on this page, or a local history piece that's one or two pages long. Illustrations are especially welcome but please don't attach very large files to an email – they can get blocked.

If you would like to discuss an idea, please email: newsletter@brixtonsociety.org.uk

Our next newsletter will be in July. Closing date for contributions is 30 June.

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Wednesday 27 March saw the third community meeting arranged by Action on Anti-Social Behaviour (AoASB), the community led group protesting against the current state of Brixton Town Centre. At the previous meeting Lambeth Council and the police had committed to present a plan of how they would tackle the current high levels of criminal and anti-social behaviour in the town centre. St Matthews Church hosted the meeting with some 170 residents and representatives of community and business organisations present, plus all 3 local MPs and councillors from all 4 Brixton wards.

A recap by Peter Impey AoASB gave the highlights from their survey seeking views of how people felt about the town centre. The top priority of respondents was drug dealing/use in public. 84% had seen drug dealing/using, 58% faced aggressive begging and 54% had suffered intimidation. 92% felt Lambeth were not effectively tackling the issues and 75% felt the police did not take ASB seriously enough.

Cllr Hashi (lead for community safety) set the scene. Superintendent Cameron explained police resourcing issues and Shaun Biggart council community safety overview. The actual plan showed a commitment to better partnership working between Lambeth and the police. Since the last meeting bi-weekly meetings were taking place, data and intelligence was now being shared, joint patrols between police and Lambeth Community Wardens had been re-established. Some 40 arrests had been made on the Brixton wards, 68 drug addiction referrals made and 28 CPN/CPWs (Community protection notices/warnings) issued. There is a small public health protection team now in place to support people with substance misuse. The Town Centre police team is returning with 1 sergeant and 8 Police Constables, and links with British Transport Police have been strengthened. The strength of feeling from residents responding at the meeting was that this was simply not enough, particularly from

Lambeth, to deal with the years of lack of enforcement, lax licensing and prioritisation of footfall for the nighttime economy over residents' needs.

It remains to be seen whether what AoASB has kickstarted will have more tangible results going forward. It is certainly focusing minds and some resources within the council and Police, at least at present. The pressure needs to be kept up to push for some lasting change.

What can the community do to support the Plan?

Incidents of ASB being reported to Lambeth and the Police are far below what is actually happening on the ground. In these times of stretched resources, they need evidence in order to increase and focus resources where we need them to make a difference. The ways and means of reporting are not always clear but if you can please do report incidents that you see and affect you.



HOW TO REPORT ASB

Reporting ASB is not as straightforward as it should be because it needs to be reported in different ways depending upon the type of ASB and the urgency of the issue. Fortunately, AoASB has set up a website actiononasb.org with a page that tells you how and where to report incidents of ASB: actiononasb.org/report

Planning News

WHOSE PLANS FOR BRIXTON?

Following the report in our winter newsletter, Lambeth Council is now inviting comments on the latest version of its **Site Allocations** plan document, which highlights 3 sites in Brixton (and 2 more at Loughborough Junction) for high-density rebuilding. At first sight, it seems to threaten us with more tall buildings, while putting the squeeze on health and community facilities.

The full package of Council documents can be found on the Lambeth website at: bit.ly/SiteAllocations

This latest draft of the plan is open for comments or objections until **Friday 3rd May**. We should warn you that there are limited grounds on which you can object, and we aim to provide more guidance on this shortly. If you have specific concerns, we urge you to share them with us at:

planning@brixtonsociety.org.uk



One of the target sites on Brixton Road in the Council's latest plan

CAN WE DO BETTER OURSELVES?

We also reported last time renewed interest in developing a Neighbourhood Plan for Brixton, to better reflect local preferences and needs. The Brixton Neighbourhood Forum has agreed to lead on this and has begun by consulting with nearby neighbourhood forums about boundaries.

There are already precedents within Lambeth. There is an adopted Neighbourhood Plan for the Waterloo/ South Bank area, while the Kennington, Oval and Vauxhall Forum recently published the latest draft of their own Neighbourhood Plan, which can be seen at kovforum.org.uk/full-neighbourhood-plan

That plan includes a small area west of the northern section of Brixton Road, so any queries or comments should be sent by **13 May** to:

kov@kovforum.org.uk

Thinking so far is that such a Plan for Brixton should focus on a limited number of sites and not revisit sites with settled plans such as Pop Brixton and Somerleyton Road. Sites most likely to be considered include these three from the Site Allocations Plan:

- 330-336 Brixton Road (Site 17)
- Tesco, Acre Lane (Site 20)
- 51-65 Effra Road (Site 21)

And in addition:

- Windrush Square,
- St. Matthew's Churchyard,
- Old Sudbourne School,
- Waterworks and Prison sites,
- Corner of Acre Lane & Kings Avenue,
- Lambeth Hospital site, Landor Road.

There are many steps in the plan-making process, the final one being a referendum to confirm that the finished plan is acceptable to the local community. So, from the outset we need to ensure that residents around the key sites are included and have a vote. In the meantime, if you have bright ideas, questions or concerns, please contact Alan Piper at apiperbrix@aol.com

LAMBETH HOUSING STRATEGY

Continued uncertainty over Fenwick and Cressingham Gardens estates.

Lambeth's Cabinet agreed a new Housing Strategy last month, ranging across all related Council services. While it's more coherent than the first draft, details of the house-building element are still sparse. Ambitions have been scaled back from 1000 new homes in the 2015 version to 500 now, though the numbers mean little when they are only achieved by the slow process of emptying and rebuilding existing estates, producing a net loss of social rented housing. Homes for Lambeth proved to be a brake rather than a boost to getting homes built.

ST. MARTIN IN THE FIELDS



The main school building stands behind 157 Tulse Hill, one of the few original houses still surviving on Tulse Hill.

Further to the short report in Newsletter 250, we can say more about the former girls' school on Tulse Hill. The school buildings have recently accommodated Corpus Christi primary school during building works. Last month a consultation meeting was held about the future of the site, and local resident Simon Morrow has shared the main points:

The site will be run by Oasis Charity but will still be owned by the St. Martin's Foundation. The school will be renamed Oasis St. Martin's from September. It will serve as a therapeutic centre offering support to children struggling with mainstream education, initially through supplementary education, music and dance classes, sports, mentoring and parent support. This is likely to increase evening and weekend use.

Much detail remains to be worked out, including the funding basis. That might involve sub-letting some space for office use, though there would be practical and safeguarding issues to resolve. Oasis reaffirmed that they had no intention of building housing on the site.

LONDON-WIDE PLANS

As we reported in our last issue, a review of London-wide planning policies is in prospect, whatever the outcome of the elections for the Mayor and Greater London Assembly. **Just Space** held a follow-up conference at Coin Street on 2nd March, to collate grass-roots views, and there will be a launch event for the key conclusions on 13 April. This required my presence on a zoom call to refine the wording of the section on Town Centres and Work-space when I should have been writing these pages, but we hope to remind candidates of the issues that impact on local communities.

WALK THIS WAY...

In the ongoing controversy over Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, the focus has been on where motorists can or cannot go, but the needs of pedestrians have been neglected. Sure, some roads are now quieter, but others are busier or more congested. So Railton Road is a haven for cyclists, but Landor Road now gets 69% more traffic since the Ferndale LTN started.

One of Lambeth's low-key initiatives is a batch of 5 **Walking Routes** which might start to redress the balance. Two of these are in our area, Landor Road and the northern arm of Shakespeare Road. The focus so far is on seating, planting and wayfinding, though more dropped kerbs would be welcomed by pram-pushers. We hear that designs are being finalised for installation of this first batch to start in the summer.

In the meantime, some "tweaks" are being made to existing LTNs. These are mainly cosmetic in terms of extra planting and parklets, though its more cycle parking and electric vehicle charging points that contribute directly to the original objectives of reducing air pollution and traffic noise.

There is also a **School Streets** programme of restricting traffic past schools at peak times. Proposals for Loughborough and Sudbourne schools are open for comments until 20 May – follow the links from the Council website.

Alan Piper.

UNLAWFUL REMOVAL OF GRADE II LISTED SEWER VENT



The original pipe

STINK PIPES

Not everyone knows what the tall, often green pipes, found scattered across Brixton and Lambeth are for. Well, they are sewer vents, more affectionately known as stink pipes. One such pipe stands at the junction of Lilford, Minet and Knatchbull roads near Minet library and the old home of Lambeth Archives. At least it did stand there until Thames Water removed it in November last year and replaced it with a less ornate and much shorter pipe. The pipes are still needed to vent the gases from the drainage and sewage system that runs below the streets. The High-Level Sewer, part of Joseph Bazalgette's original sewage system laid out in the 1860s, runs below Lilford Road, hence the need for the pipe here.

THAMES WATER

Thames Water's removal of such a heritage asset that has stood in the same place for 160 years, with a few minor adjustments, may be viewed as disappointing. The Stink pipe on Lilford Road was more than likely originally a street lamp with gas coming up from the sewers lit to illuminate the street. Once adapted, it was significant for its height and for this reason it was Grade II listed by Historic England in 1981 making it one of the only listed sewer vents in the borough. So, Thames Water's action in removing it was unlawful as they did not seek the necessary planning permission.

Thames Water has now submitted a partially retrospective planning permission for a replica vent. Unfortunately, the replica will not use any of the original pipe even though the base was salvaged. Brixton Society and others are calling for a Section 106 planning obligation to cover the refurbishment and installation of the original base near to the replica pipe with an information board detailing the history of this and other sewer vents and their connection to Bazalagette's sewer system.

Tracey Gregory

HETHERINGTON ROAD TABERNACLE – END OF AN ERA

We have previously covered the former Primitive Methodist Tin Tabernacle in Hetherington Road on our web site. (brixtonsociety.org.uk/hetherington-road-tin-chapel-folds/). This building was a well-maintained, prefabricated corrugated iron chapel as commonly used in their hundreds in Britain around 1900. Clearly intended to be temporary, there are few left around. The Hetherington Road Methodist chapel was sold to the Bible Truth Church of God in 1962. The site was then designated for housing development by Lambeth Council, but their Compulsory Purchase Order was struck down on

appeal by Labour Environment Secretary Anthony Crosland in 1975. An article celebrating this appeared in the South London Press in October 1975

The chapel was actively used by its owners until the Covid outbreak – during which contractors got to work implementing the planning permission agreed in 2014 to build flats and a new chapel beneath.



Here is a reminder of the old tin tabernacle and the new-look replacement.

David Warner

BEHIND THE BLUE DOORS

Behind the Blue Doors is a new photography exhibition by Jim Grover, the award-winning south London social documentary photographer. It reveals the fascinating story of an almshouse in the heart of Brixton, endowed in 1824 by Thomas Bailey, a very successful china and glass merchant, and which continues to offer accommodation, for those in need, 200 years later.

Brixton's busy Acre Lane, and which are always firmly shut. Who lives there and what are their stories? How did it come to be here and who was the man whose name is prominently displayed above its doors? It's been a wonderful voyage of discovery for me, full of extraordinary revelations that span 200 years. I am so pleased to be able to throw open the doors and share the remarkable and inspiring stories that lie behind them."



The exhibition includes over 50 photographs and accompanying narrative which are a combination of contemporary photographs and interviews, that bring to life the current residents, their life stories and their homes, as well as documents, prints and portraits from the nineteenth century that shed light on the almshouse's first 100 years.

It also includes documents and objects going back some 200 years as well as some personal possessions that

the current almshouse residents have selected which highlight the diversity of their lives.

The story is in three parts and is full of revelations. One part reveals how Trinity Asylum, as it was then called, came to be, and the two key characters behind its early years who, hitherto, have been unrecognised as important Brixton figures in the early nineteenth century. One part reveals how this almshouse 'for pious aged women' operated in the nineteenth century, including what it took to become an 'Inmate', its rules and regulations, and the life of 'The Superintendent'. And one part reveals the inspiring stories of some of the current 17 residents, two hundred years on, for whom age is no barrier to living a full life.

Comments Jim Grover, photographer. "I've often wondered what lay behind the blue front doors of this distinctive Georgian building on

Behind the Blue Doors
Venue: Lambeth Archives
16 Brixton Hill, SW2 1ET
Dates: 19 April – 1 June
Opening Times:
Mondays 1-8pm
Tuesdays and Thursdays 10-6pm
Fridays 10-3pm
Saturdays 9-1pm, 2-5pm.
Wednesdays and Sundays: Closed
Admission: Free

GUSTAV GRAIS

Gustav Grais – the man with the zebra and other performing animals

Many will have seen this image of a man driving his zebra drawn carriage through central Brixton c. 1925. When I first saw it, I was intrigued and wanted to know about the man and his zebra.

family and was a dancer and equestrian performer.

Gustav and Selma travelled to England, via India, in 1885. Their first son Gustav Carl Alexander Eichler was born in Lambeth just after they arrived. Gustav and Selma had three



It's Gustav Grais, a showman who made south London his home. Born in West Prussia in 1860 and baptised Gustav Carl Eichler, he performed as Gustav Grais, Professor Grais and Herr Grais in Asia, the US, Europe and the UK. He was clearly a flamboyant character, described in some newspapers of the time as having 'pompadour hair and imperial moustache'.

In the early 1880s, Gustav performed in circuses in Asia, marrying his co-performer Selma Troost in the Dutch East Indies (now Java, Indonesia). Selma was from a circus owning

more children: Charles born in Montreal Canada (1887), Virginie (1889) and George (1892) both born in Lambeth. In 1891 the family were living on Lambeth Road. Selma stopped performing and became a costumier, first working from home then opening her own shop, Mme Selma 114-116 Westminster Bridge Road.

On arriving in London, Gustav started performing as a juggler and soon added animals into his act. By 1889 he had developed a new act as an 'aeronaut', a pioneering skydiver,

Local History

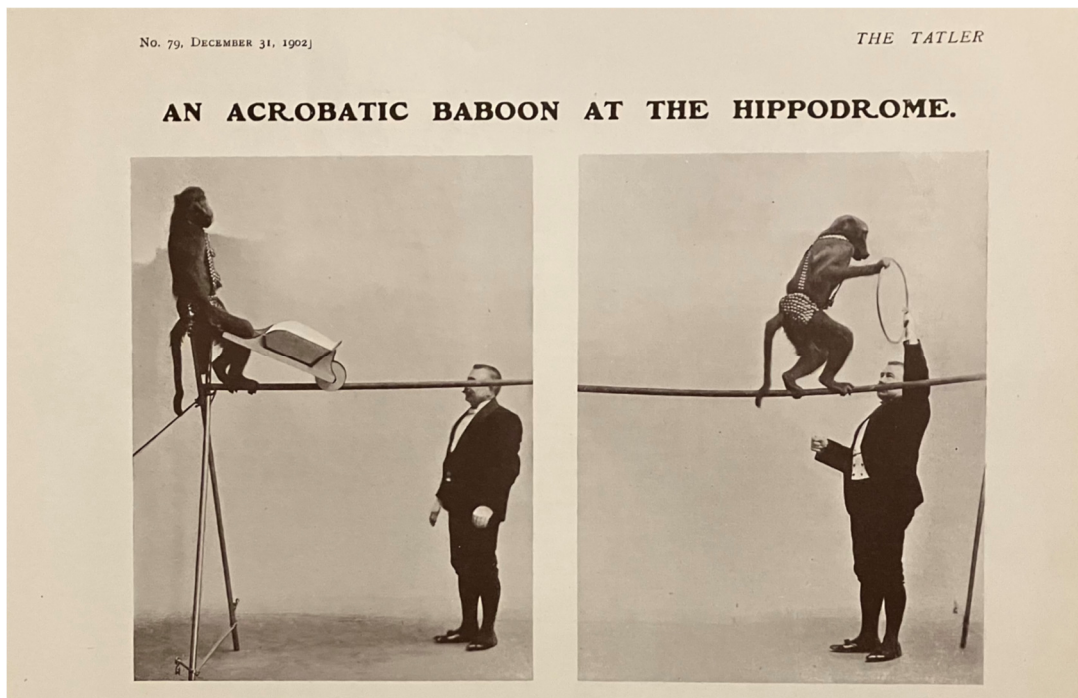
ascending in a gas filled air balloon, jumping from the basket and descending by parachute.

But his aeronautical career only lasted a few years and he returned to training and performing with animals. For the next 20 years Gustav travelled round Britain, to America and Europe with his baboons and donkeys. Zebras joined the act in the early 1900s.

As his performing career changed so did his personal life. In 1901 Gustav was lodging with a new 'wife' Eva, at 32 Coldharbour Lane, along with a few other performers. (No record of a marriage has been found). They had four children together between 1896 and 1906 – Frederick, Mabel, Lena and Doris.

zebras as personal transport, as the photo of him in Brixton shows.

In March 1912, disaster struck and 10 of Gustav's baboons were killed in a fire at the Price and King vets on Hackford Road, north Brixton, where many performers quarantined and housed their animals. After this, Gustav seems to have largely stopped performing but he continued to live in Brixton and was seen out about in his zebra drawn carriage. He had three more children with a third partner Evelyn, thought to have been the daughter of a pub owner from Brixton. The children, Stella, Basil and Cyril were born between 1914 and 1917.



Gustav Grais and Baboons Tatler 31 Dec 1902 Tracey Gregory collection

For the final decade of his life, Gustav lived with Evelyn and their children at 1 Horsford Road off Brixton Hill (the house now gone). Records from the family say daughter Stella remembers having zebras stabled in the garden of the house. Gustav died in Kings College hospital, not far from his home, on 14 February 1929 aged 68.

By Tracey Gregory.

Gustav and Eva, set sail for New York together in June 1908 returning to London in April 1909. They travelled all around the US from the East to West Coast and up to Canada with Gustav performing with his baboons. The children stayed in London with Eva's family.

Back in England, zebras started to appear more regularly in Gustav's act and he trained the baboons to ride on their backs. He also used the

A version of this article appears in Music Hall Brixton and Beyond of the Layers of London website along with information about many other Brixton music hall performers.

layersoflondon.org/map/collections/music-hall-brixton-and-beyond.

Beyond Brixton

CLAPHAM PARK CUBE

We start our roundup of events just across the road from the south-west corner of our area. The cube is the community centre for the “regenerating” Clapham Park area, at 116 Kings Avenue SW4 8EP on the corner of the South Circular. They have launched a series of free activities for the over 50s on Tuesdays between 1 and 3 pm. There are also Tai Chi sessions from 10 to 11 am. More details from Ching Wah Wong at 020 8678 5922 or:

cwong@claphampark.org.uk



Cassava Garden (via DPG)

DULWICH PICTURE GALLERY

From Brixton, bus P4 passes the gallery or it's a short walk through the village from the 37 bus stop. The current exhibition **Soulscapes** (until 2nd June) features landscape art by artists from the African Diaspora, curated by Lisa Anderson, director of the Black Cultural Archives. This is complemented by school tours and two evening events. “The Air We Share” on Friday 19 April at 6-30 pm will be a roundtable discussion on healthy urban landscapes. On Tuesday 31 May, a “Gallery Late” line-up features several performances and workshops. More details at: dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk

THE GARDEN MUSEUM

The Museum was established in 1977 in the former parish church of St. Mary's, alongside Lambeth Palace. This might reach you in time for its popular **Spring Plant Fair** on Sunday 14 April, 10 am to 4 pm, this time with several workshops included. Please book tickets in advance at gardenmuseum.org.uk

The current exhibition (until 24 April) is on Claude Monet's garden at Givernay, and its restoration by his great-grandson Jean-Marie Toulgouat. Their parallel exhibition **Why Women Grow** continues until 30 June, and next up will be Bloomsbury Women Outdoors from 15 May to 29 September.

WEST NORWOOD CEMETERY

Since the Walks leaflet was produced, the **Friends of West Norwood Cemetery** have confirmed the dates for their Saturday tours: 13 July, 10 August, 7 September, 12 and 26 October. These take a different route to the tours on the first Sunday of the month. In addition, a special tour of First World War memorials will take place on Saturday 11 May, led by John Clarke and Peter Hodgkinson. Prior booking essential for all their walks, via:

fownc.org/tickets

EVENTS IN SOUTHWARK

Camberwell Food Festival takes place on Camberwell Green on Saturday 18 May. There will be cooking demos, tastings, food walks and a variety of stalls from local restaurants and cafes. Organised by SE5 Forum – see: se5forum.org.uk

Southwark's Industrial Legacy is a free exhibition at the Southwark Heritage Centre and Walworth Library, running until December. It supplements the permanent “Story of Southwark” displays by highlighting bygone crafts and industries. The library is near the Elephant & Castle end of Walworth Road, and open seven days a week (Sundays 12- 4 pm).

Alan Piper

BACK TO GARDENING'S ROOTS

Back in mid-February, we arranged a visit for members to the Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society in Vincent Square. They have a large collection of books, periodicals, artworks and photographs covering the whole field of gardening and plant life, and we saw some examples of each.



Photo by Annick Alet

We began with a first edition of a Herbal compiled by John Gerard in 1597. This type of book provided a reference to the plant knowledge of the time, emphasising their use for medical purposes. Gerard's work was an early example published in English, earlier herbals typically being written in Latin or even in cipher. Gerard himself combined the roles of Master of the Guild of Barber-Surgeons with being head gardener for Lord Burleigh, one of Queen Elizabeth's chief ministers with a grand house on the Strand in generous grounds. This period saw the first introductions of new plants into Europe as seagoing trade ranged further afield. So the Potato had its own entry, though we were told that the Sweet Potato had arrived slightly earlier.

The next book was a mere three centuries old, the *City Gardener*, written by Thomas Fairchild in 1716-22, and aimed at owners of gardens in and around the London area. He noted the adverse effect of the London smoke, as by then the burning of "sea-coal" had largely replaced wood for domestic heating and cooking. His aim

was to promote trade for his own nursery at Hoxton, then on the periphery of the built-up area but close to the present Museum of the Home.

Fairchild was the first to produce a hybrid plant, "Thomas's Mule" by cross pollinating one type of plant from another, but he felt he was interfering with God's Creation and never attempted it again.

The library takes its name from a Mr Lindley who served the RHS in several different roles, and we were shown a report into Coffee that he produced in 1852. At that time, grocers often adulterated products with cheaper and even harmful materials to bulk out their supplies. After analysing a range of samples of ground coffee bought by his "mystery shoppers", study under the microscope revealed surprising materials including mahogany sawdust and dried peas.

The last batch of printed works dated from 1962, when landscape architect John Brooks designed a garden for the Chelsea Flower Show which introduced "hard landscaping" such as precast pavings and screen walls in hollow concrete blocks alongside the planting. This set the tone for landscape design for new housing estates for the next 20 years, both for council estates and housing for sale built by such as Span in Blackheath and Wates in Dulwich. We saw both the first reports in *Garden News* and the design handbooks subsequently written by Brooks himself.

Fittingly, our tour concluded with examples of the many paintings produced by Nellie Roberts to record the varieties of orchid registered with the RHS's Orchid Committee. During the first half of the 20th century, Nellie painted at least 4500 species in her studio in Loughborough Road. This method continues, and we also saw a more recent example from the current RHS artist, Dorothy Lambkin.

Alan Piper

CAMBERWELL SELF-GUIDED BLACK HISTORY WALK

Starting from Camberwell Green, a series of plaques over two and a half miles showcase black heroes through history and art. The walk was developed a walk by local historian Stephen Bourne commemorating the profound impact of black historical figures from Camberwell, ranging from the 17th-century John Primero to activist and writer Una Marson and contemporary actor John Boyega. It was previously available on the Camberwell Society's website, but now has a physical presence. In 2022 local artist Tayo Fatunla was chosen to illustrate the walk and her graphics illustrate a map on the lectern on the Green, and on plaques fixed at points of interest around the walk. Each plaque has a short text on one individual's inspiring achievements and a QR code. Scan the code to hear extracts from the walk guide voiced by young actors from Theatre Peckham which supported the project. The walk is around two and half miles, 6000 steps.



Download a walk guide and Google map tour by scanning this QR code.



About the Brixton Society

Understanding the past, looking to the future
Member of the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies

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Joining the society on-line: www.brixtonsociety.org.uk/join-us
Ordinary membership £8.00 per annum
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