

HERNE HILL

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HERNE HILL SOCIETY • ISSUE 156 • Spring 2023 • £3.00



THE TRANSPORT DEBATE CONTINUES

► *See page 10/11*

REAL VERSUS IMAGINED

► *See page 14/15*

CROXTED ROAD
GARDEN CENTRE ► *See page 17*



The Magazine of the Herne Hill Society



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Front cover: Brockwell Park's swans at their nest on 26 March 2023.

Our thanks to Kara Tritton for the photograph. Also thanks to Pat Roberts for his photographs on pages 3, 5, 7 and 17 and to Colin MacInnes for his photographs on page 14.

Losing a landmark

The regeneration of the junction at Herne Hill, completed in 2010, included moving the park boundary at the main gate to Brockwell Park and creation of a new slip-road and a sizeable paved area outside the park, much of which once lay inside the park. Within this area new trees were planted but one mature tree was retained, whose size and position and branches garlanded with lights have made it a distinct local landmark. The tree, a Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) was once within the park boundary, as the historic aerial image shows. But



The tree within the park (2003)

it has been ailing for some time and has reached the end of its life. Lambeth inform us they will be taking it down, grinding out the stump and putting in a new tree in the next planting season

(2023-24). We understand the Herne Hill Forum will be inviting people to vote for their favoured tree and the popular choice will be submitted to Lambeth. Whatever tree is chosen, it will have to be suited to its location. The Norway maple, introduced in this country in the 17th century, is in fact a tree well-suited to urban locations, being tolerant of compacted soils and atmospheric pollution.



New junction with tree outside the park (2020)

Loss of trees in our cities arouse strong emotions (witness events in Sheffield and Plymouth), so it is good to see that Lambeth will be planting 650 trees across the borough in the current season, with almost 80% as street trees and the remainder in parks and open spaces. Sounds a lot, but should it be more?

Some TLC for the Carnegie Library

The scaffolding now (March 2023) surrounding most of the building shows that our much-loved Carnegie Library is finally getting some necessary care and maintenance from

Lambeth's contractors. Apart from the inevitable fabric deterioration that comes with age, the heavier rainfall in recent years has overwhelmed the capacity of the Edwardian guttering system, leading to water ingress at certain points which in turn has damaged brickwork, windows and interior floors.

It's not a small project. We understand that the repair works will address degradation of the complicated heritage windows and much of the extensive roof, as well as addressing the damp issues in the walls and the damage to interior floors. Guttering will need to be adjusted or replaced to cope with the



long-term challenge of higher rainfall.

The repairs done, the large room on the right of the main entrance will once again be safe and comfortable for use, possibly

as a coffee shop which will attract more people to the library and its expanding facilities. Library usage is showing a healthy increase on the pre-Covid levels, and the Carnegie Library Hub are attracting more events and activities. The Friends of Carnegie Library also continue to organise regular events with talks, chess and bridge clubs and a book group.

A gift to Lambeth of the famous philanthropist Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919), the library opened in 1906; the building was listed Grade II in 1981. It has been described as “a splendid example of Edwardian civic architecture”.

A steep learning curve

Deepak Sardiwal looks back on his first year as a Lambeth Councillor

It is important to say at the start that I count myself privileged to be serving, for the first time, as one of the three councillors for the Herne Hill and Loughborough Junction ward.

My first week as a councillor was not unlike my first at school or university. I collected my credentials and laptop, began to get to know my colleagues on the council and tried to take in as much information as possible. As a freshly elected representative I was bursting to the seams with enthusiasm to get on with making a difference (and still am!) yet also aware that I was the least qualified that I'll ever be during my time in public service. It came as no surprise that the first weeks and months were a steep learning curve as I developed an understanding of how the council works and the experience of residents about how the council works. The complexity of local government means the learning journey never ceases but when you're looking to hit the ground running it can be quite stressful not having the information on issues residents are raising.

One of the most important and fulfilling aspects of serving as a councillor is directly helping residents with casework on a myriad of issues from housing, financial support to wider issues in the neighbourhood. Clearly in some of the cases brought to my attention people are not receiving the consistently high-quality service from the council they deserve. My role as a councillor is to advocate on their behalf and engage the council to get a prompt resolution. It is incredibly rewarding when this does happen; the role of MP tends to attract more public attention and interest than that of councillors but that is not to say local government isn't special. Councillors share the level closest to the people and when residents come to us for assistance we can be their last line of defence.

Contrary to what some may think, I have found that your politics isn't particularly relevant to whether or not individual pieces of casework get addressed effectively. The ability to show empathy and request action from the council in the right way and perseverance to see things through to completion is what makes the difference. As a backbencher you also have a certain level of independence that allows you to fight on behalf of your electorate. The Full Council is where the political theatre comes to life. This is a meeting of all the councillors in Lambeth at the Town Hall around five times a year. Important decisions about people's lives are made in these meetings and it's a

chance for the different political groups that make up the council to debate their positions.

I'm proud of the improvements that I've been able to deliver for Herne Hill in my first year, including enhanced street lighting, introducing recycling provision to a new site and getting CCTV installed to defend residents from anti-social behaviour. While

some interventions may not seem particularly grand they can make a significant difference to the people directly involved who have raised them. There is of course a lot more work to do and I have an abiding faith in the possibilities for Herne Hill.

One thing the past year has taught me is the need to manage expectations as people won't always realise there is a lot of process involved in local government that inevitably slows things down and funding constraints have put a reality check on what councils around the country can deliver. But we should always strive to push the boundaries of what is possible for our community, just as



Deepak speaking at the Full Council

our predecessors were able to transform Herne Hill from a scattering of houses lying amidst fields and farms two centuries ago into the thriving and diverse place it is now.

It was a considered decision to stand for election last year and there haven't been many surprises. One area that has taken some time getting used to is my phone ringing at any time. This was the case on the evening of 30 October following a double fatality on Railton Road, which served as a tragic reminder of the work remaining to stop such terrible violence in our community. It was heart-breaking speaking to people at the scene that night who had been directly affected by the incident. There is nothing that prepares you to respond to such a situation as a councillor.

Living, as I do, in the ward I represent has also taught me more. The advantages are intuitive in terms of it being easier to proactively find local issues, identify with what's on the mind of residents and be quick on the scene in emergencies. It can though make it difficult to switch off and you need to learn how not to put too much stress on yourself.

In concluding, the past year as a councillor in Herne Hill has been a learning curve but an extremely rewarding experience. I hope more people of all backgrounds and political persuasions who are interested in improving the lives of people in our community will consider exploring this route in the future.

Lambeth

1. Carnegie Community Hub at the Carnegie Library, 192 Herne Hill Road, SE24 0DG, 6 – 7 pm last Tuesday of each month
2. Lilford Area Residents Association, Lilford House, Lilford Road, SE5 9QD, 10 – 11 am, second Saturday of each month

For your information – Local Councillors' Surgeries

Southwark

Herne Hill Methodist Church Hall, 155 Half Moon Lane, SE24 9JG, 6.30 pm, second Thursday of each month

Herne Hill Society Excellence Awards

Since the Society has never done anything like this before, we did not know what to expect. But entries for the awards flooded in! The concept of celebrating what is good about our area really caught on and we had a large quantity of inspiring, exciting and humbling aspects of Herne Hill entered for consideration. Everything was forwarded to our judging panel (pictured) all of whom are experienced ex-officers of the Society.

Our judging panel set to work after the close of entries at the end of 2022 and commented:

“All the entries were worthy of recognition. Each one illustrated a positive contribution to life in Herne Hill. As we were limited to a small number of Awards, the judging process was challenging but enjoyable. We independently assessed each entry, then met several times to reach our decisions, which were unanimous.”

Now the judging is over it only leaves the official announcement of the Winners and Highly Commended in the three categories of Heritage,

Environment and Community. This will take place at a special event, so please save the date now. It will be :

Thursday 27 April 2023, 6 – 9 pm at the Temple Bowling Club, 1A Sunset Rd, Denmark Hill, London SE5 8EA.

This historic building will provide a unique venue for what promises to be a very rewarding evening – and not just for those receiving awards.



Pat Roberts, Sheila Northover and Colin Wight

The judges said:

“It was good to see that so many entries demonstrate innovation, sustainability and ambition and benefit a wide range of people in our community. We were also pleased to be able to reward excellent projects in the Herne Hill area across both boroughs of Lambeth and Southwark.”

We look forward to meeting and welcoming you there for our memorable first Awards Celebration. More details about this event and how to book your place will be circulated after 3 April and made available on the Society’s website.

Rebecca Tee

This issue of the Magazine is going to press at the same time as the Society’s AGM on 30 March. So we may not be able to include in it the results of elections to the Committee for the coming year. We can say in advance that there will be changes. Annie Gelly is standing down after bravely stepping forward to help out when the future of the Society looked perilous. Forty years ago Annie was a founder member of the Society

and has given unwavering support to the Society over all those years. Also stepping down is Michèle Arnal who has contributed her skills as the Committee’s minutes taker. It’s a post that now needs filling! Our thanks to Annie and Michèle. Martyn Hall is retiring as Treasurer, but following the plea in the last issue of the Magazine we were delighted, and not a little relieved, when a successor stepped forward. He is Lyndon Fothergill, long-standing Herne

Your committee

Hill resident and newly retired from many years working at the GLA, in particular in their Planning Team. A warm welcome to Lyndon, who is now co-opted to the Committee. And a heartfelt thank you to Martyn for looking after the Society’s finances so well over the last six years. We are delighted that Martyn is willing to stay on as a member of the Committee.

Can the Society achieve a Brian Lara? *We’re very nearly there!*

Ten years ago the Herne Hill Society had about 300 members. Not a bad figure, but one of the things that our Chair Rebecca Tee was determined to do when she stepped in at a critical time almost three years ago was to see the membership grow. And she has worked extremely hard to make that happen, because only through a strong membership can the Society survive and thrive. But what on earth does Brian Lara have to do with it?*

And while we are on the subject of membership can we please urge all members – if you haven’t yet got round to doing so and don’t have a standing order – to renew for this year. Without your subscriptions we would not be able to do carry on the work of the Society, not least the production of this Magazine, which in terms of cost is by far the greatest of the Society’s outgoings. Despite rising costs and inflation we are holding the subscription this year at £10.

*Brian Lara, as all cricket fans will of course know, holds the record for the highest number of runs in a Test innings – 400.



PLANNING & LICENSING

The Society's planning group has commented on the following applications:

70 Chaucer Road, Lambeth 23/00521/FUL

We objected to one aspect of the application, namely the creation of a crossover to facilitate parking in the front garden. This is consistent with the group's opposition to such development, especially in conservation areas, as in this case, and also with stated policy in the Lambeth Plan. A decision is pending.

77 Herne Hill, Planning breach (Southwark)

We reported to Southwark the continued presence of a permanent canopy over the outside terrace at these premises in use as a shisha bar. Southwark have issued an enforcement notice.

63 Brantwood Road, Lambeth 22/04504/FUL

We objected to a wrap-around ground floor extension which was taken up to the front elevation of the house, was not set back and was poorly designed. We thought the design generally was excessive in its scale, extent and bulk, badly articulated and poorly integrated with the host building and the prevailing local character. A decision is pending, but Lambeth have allowed (as permitted development) a full width hip to gable loft extension.

71 Herne Hill Road, planning breach (Lambeth)

Lambeth have now responded to our reporting a possible planning breach and inform us that an amendment to the application will be submitted. We understand that this will mean a fresh planning application but to date none to our knowledge has been submitted.

5 Dorchester Court, Lambeth 22/04467/FUL

We supported an application to build a new house on land that forms part of the large garden of 5 Dorchester Drive (Dorchester House), a mid-1930s Grade II listed house. Applications to build a house 15 years ago were refused. However, Lambeth accepted in principle building a house on this site. On this basis we then considered the objections made to those applications against the substantially modified new application, especially in the context of harm to the setting and visual impact of Dorchester House and other listed buildings nearby. We concluded that those objections were met. We thought the design, choice of materials and sustainable building methods did not merely respond appropriately, in a contemporary manner, to a setting that contains modernist buildings of their day, but added something of architectural quality making a valuable contribution to 21st-century building in our part of London.

Laurence Marsh

For more than 20 years there has been a scheme to commemorate notable Southwark residents and places with blue plaques. The criteria are rather less strict than those of English Heritage; the person remembered can still be alive, the building does not have to be the original building where that person lived, and a building or place without



The young Crawford

reference to a particular resident can itself be honoured with a plaque. It is also a very democratic award, since anyone can vote for one of the nominees. In this way the commemoration of a huge range of Southwark people and places has been possible, from Geoffrey Chaucer (born 1342) to Rio Ferdinand (born 1978) to Peek Frean (the Bermondsey biscuit makers).

Four years ago the Grafton Dance Hall on Village Way, with its links to ballroom champions Bob Burgess and Doreen Freeman, was honoured. This year Herne Hill has another strong



Southwark blue plaque

contender with Michael Crawford (born 1942), actor and star of many successful musicals, who spent part of his childhood living above the shop at 16 Half Moon Lane, today the Peachy Goat restaurant.

For more than 60 years until the late 1970s the shop was a David Greig grocery store, where Michael's stepfather was at one time the manager. Original tiling on the shopfront with the initials DG still survives.

Other nominees this year include Francis Peek, without whom we would probably have no Dulwich Park, the Concrete House on Lordship Lane and Johnson Beharry VC, awarded the Victoria Cross when serving in Iraq in 2004. More details can be found on the website of Southwark News

To vote for any of the nominees email isabel@southwarknews.co.uk or admin@southwark.org.uk with the name of the person/place you want to nominate. Voting closes on Thursday 1 June.

Shop and business news

Maroon

A new restaurant / bar is scheduled to open this spring on Norwood Road, occupying generous three-unit premises that are currently being smartly outfitted. The previous business was



demonstrably flagging (indeed closed for several years), and we hope that the new tenants – who have clearly brought serious investment to the decor – will prosper. The business will be called Maroon and will offer, they say, “a vibrant Caribbean-Latin fusion restaurant celebrating togetherness and tradition”.

Maroon, 75-79 Norwood Road SE24 9AA

Better Vision

Although it was sad to say goodbye to Kinderlala, the high-quality toyshop at 147 Dulwich Road, it's good news that the premises are now to be occupied by an optician – a business that has long been lacking in Herne Hill. The premises are being refitted accordingly, and the new owners, Hill Opticians, have a notice in the window advertising for staff.

Hill Opticians, 147 Dulwich Road, SE24 0NG

More than Coffee

The premises at 137 Half Moon Lane, at the corner of Holmdene Avenue, has recently been the scene of much refurbishment. The site been shuttered for some years after the closure of the wineshop, Bacchus. But a planning application to Southwark Council reveals that the new owners intend to open a café/restaurant with ancillary cooking school facilities on site. Side and rear extensions are planned, and a larger basement area. The cooking school activity would be aimed, according to the

application, at cookery lessons for local school children, some evening lessons and private dinners for adults, and daytime holiday cookery classes for local children. We hope to report with more detail once the business has opened.

Half Moon Studio

In the Bath Factory Estate behind the Norwood Road shops, the professional artist printmakers who have been working at the Half Moon Studio have sadly decided to close down at the end of March.

The rising costs of rent, services and energy have made it uneconomic to keep going in their present premises. They aren't



the first and won't be the last to walk away from the arches, which for generations have provided unglamorous (OK, downright scruffy) but functional and affordable accommodation for small businesses which often operate on narrow margins. A recent visit showed several repossession notices affixed to premises by landlords The Arch Company (a joint venture between Telereal Trillium and Blackstone Property Partners), who bought the UK's huge estate of railway arches from Network Rail in 2019.

The Brothers Green

The well-placed shop which had been a showroom and workshop for furniture makers Unto This Last (now sadly gone into liquidation) has just reopened as The Brothers Green, stocking among other things homeware, houseplants and pre-loved clothing. They are on a one-year lease from the Dulwich Estate.

The Brothers Green, 2-6 Half Moon Lane, SE24 9HU

Pat Roberts



Hold(en) the Front Page!

Some journalistic licence here – it wasn't the front page, but the chance to use this headline was too good to miss. It was in fact an inside page in the *South London Press* in February. But there it was, the familiar face of Herne Hill's very own Robert Holden in a story about Lambeth Archives leaving their old home and moving to brand new, custom-built premises on

Brixton Hill. We carried a story about the move in the last issue of the Magazine. Robert's starring role as, he informs us, the very last person to sign in at the Archives' old home had not occurred at that time, so we are happy now to include this picture perhaps to be discovered by local historians scanning old copies of *Herne Hill* magazine at Lambeth Archives in years to come.

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Setting the Ruskin record straight

Whose claim to John Ruskin as an inhabitant is stronger? Herne Hill or Camberwell? No prizes for guessing which of the two this Society favours. To set the historical record straight it required a letter by the authors of the Society's most recent publication to the magazine of the Camberwell Society, which they were kind enough to publish in their last issue and which we take the opportunity to reproduce here.

Ruskin: Does he belong to Camberwell or Herne Hill?

Jon Newman & Laurence Marsh claim Ruskin for Herne Hill

Rosemary Hill's piece in the last issue of the Quarterly summarising local history writing about Camberwell kindly referenced our recently published book, *Sunset Over Herne Hill*, John Ruskin and South London. However, in doing so Ms Hill also perpetuated a long-standing error in suggesting that Ruskin was an inhabitant of Camberwell.

Ruskin and his parents lived in two houses in Herne Hill between 1823 and 1872. The house of his childhood and young manhood, no 28 Herne Hill, which he continued to use as his London pied a terre after moving to the Lake District in the 1870s, has always been in the parish and borough of Lambeth.

The confusion arises because the second family home, originally no 163 Denmark Hill, to which the family moved in 1843 and which stood on what is now Blanedown in the Denmark Hill Estate, is indeed now in the borough of Southwark. However, it only became so after boundary

changes in 1900 when the triangle of land between Denmark Hill and to the west and south of Champion Hill - and within which Ruskin's house and grounds stood - was transferred from Lambeth parish into the new Metropolitan Borough of Camberwell and the borough boundary was tidied along the line of Denmark Hill and Herne Hill. This change took place a year before Ruskin's death and over a quarter of a century after he had left South London.

For all his time there, and despite the undoubted significance of Camberwell in his life, John Ruskin was a Lambeth ratepayer and an inhabitant of Herne Hill, not of Camberwell.

Brockwell Hall – restoration hit by rising costs

In the last issue of the Magazine we reported on the planned restoration of Brockwell Hall. The pandemic had delayed the scheme. But in the interim building costs have soared, by at least 28%. So the cost of the scheme is now above budget.

This does not mean that the scheme will not proceed, but some "value engineering" will be necessary, in other words some parts of the project will not go ahead, at least for the time being. In particular work on the adaptation of the Stable Block for office use will now be restricted to exterior restoration and making it weathertight. The restoration of the Hall itself should not be affected, but since it will not be possible, as had been planned, to accommodate council officers in the Stable Block they will continue to need space in the hall itself. This limits the space available for park volunteers, for meetings and for storing equipment. The involvement of volunteers is an important part of the project



and, more generally, public engagement with the many different aspects of the park, particularly in times when access to funds is so tight.

We are told by Brockwell Park Community Partners (BPCP),

who have from the start worked very closely with Lambeth and represent the interests of the many stakeholders, that the reductions in the project will not affect the crucial moving of the operational depot from the stable yard to the refurbished Norwood Road site. That is nearing completion. With the depot gone work can then begin on the Hall itself and BPCP tell us this will include the creation of the new

Events building, formed by a roofed space in the stable yard.

Costs saving will also see the scale of landscaping improvements around the Hall reduced, but we are told the provision of disabled access, a key aspect of those works, will go ahead.

Transport Notes

On the Kerbside

Lambeth Borough has recently announced an ambitious programme to change the use of some street kerbsides from car use to a wide range of other uses. At present, just under half of the 580 kms of kerbside in Lambeth is used for car parking, a similar proportion is accounted for by yellow lines and driveways, and just six percent is used for other uses such as bus and cycle lanes, cycle and hire scooter parking, electric vehicle charging points, and school safety measures. The Kerbside Strategy seeks to: enable accessible and active travel; create places for people; increase climate resilience; and reduce emissions and traffic. The specific proposals are to follow – the document puts a commendable emphasis on local community involvement and consultation – but are planned to increase facilities for bike parking (getting hire bikes off the pavements), school approach safety measures, and a wide range of ‘micro-parks’ to provide planting, drainage and seating opportunities. Watch this space – and the space outside your home!



On-street Residential Parking Permits

Not so welcome to Lambeth car owners using on-street controlled parking zones in the Borough is the “re-structuring” (an average 75% increase) of the residents’ parking charges, which were already almost the highest in London. With minimal consultation, the pricing system has been changed to reflect the (more complex) graduated scale used for national vehicle licensing. The changes include a three-fold increase in the parking charge for electric vehicles.

ULEZ expansion

The current Ultra Low Emissions Zone already covers all roads within the North and South Circulars, and involves a daily £12.50 charge for higher emissions vehicles on the roads (broadly petrol vehicles made before 2005, and diesel vehicles pre-2016) – the TfL website has an exact check of the engine standards using

registration number). Most Herne Hill vehicle users, including visiting tradespeople, are well aware of this. The Greater London Authority has now set a firm date of 29 August to extend the Zone to encompass the whole of their area (a ragged boundary of all London Boroughs). This will cause a major sell-off of an estimated 200,000 older vehicles in the outer suburbs to avoid the charge, with only a small scrappage scheme. Most of the 2,750 CCTV cameras proposed for enforcement will be mounted on TfL traffic

signal poles. Several outer London boroughs are threatening not to cooperate. Debate and legal challenge on cancelling or postponing the extension will continue through the Spring.

Training train fares to be fair

Most Herne Hill rail users will be aware that train fares rose at the beginning of March – the single fare to the centre of London has gone up from £3.90 to £4.10 – about the national average increase of 5% across all standard fares. The illogical, poorly

understood, complex and changing range of advance purchase single and return fares remains. There has been some pressure on the Government to simplify the fares structures, but no sign of any rationalisation soon. Suggestions have included a simple one-way fare arrangement, doing away with cheap returns. While some “demand management” (discounting fares on off-peak less crowded trains) is sensible, the current system for longer distance fares is difficult to understand. Tickets normally go on sale 10 or so weeks in advance, with fares starting low, and increasing as cheap allocations are filled. Another complexity is the “split fares” issue – where for a longer journey it is often cheaper to buy two tickets to and from an intermediate calling point. Sometimes a saving is possible by having two tickets for a single journey, as long as the train stops at the intermediate station. There are a wide variety of websites to help find these split fares savings for a small fee – just search for “split train fares”.

Bil Harrison



Herne Hill Road at the junction with Wingmore Road c1905, in the background St Saviour’s Church (demolished 1981). A reminder of an era before the requirements of motor transport came to dominate our kerbsides.

“Annoy and inconvenience”

– Richard Leeming sees it differently

In the last issue of the Magazine our regular transport correspondent Bil Harrison discussed Southwark’s traffic management schemes in and around Dulwich Village, saying they were devised to “annoy and inconvenience”. Councillor Richard Leeming contacted us and asked to be given the opportunity to put another point of view, which we do here.

If you believe the latest conspiracy theories, you might think that Southwark council’s traffic policies are being dictated by a shadowy cabal at the World Economic Forum. Obviously, this is nonsense, but the fact that Don Valley Tory MP Nick Fletcher has even described 15-minute cities in Parliament as an “international socialist concept designed to take away people’s freedoms”, shows how far from reality these conversations have travelled.

The responsibility to manage and reduce traffic has always been a core duty for local councils. Different councils have different names for their policies - the only thing that’s new about them is their name - but one thing in common, the legislation that underpins traffic reduction policies in the 1974 Road Traffic Act.

In Southwark we’re calling the policy ‘Streets for People’ and our approach builds on changes that have proved popular in Herne Hill in recent decades. This includes the pedestrianisation of the area outside Herne Hill station in December 2010 - as part of the Herne Hill Centre Regeneration Project, which has facilitated a popular Sunday Market. Around the turn of the century Southwark council introduced several new measures, banning right-hand turns from Carver Road into Herne Hill- which stopped motor vehicles avoiding the traffic lights at the junction of Herne Hill and introducing infrastructure on Elmwood Road and Red Post Hill that stopped rat-running through some of the North Dulwich triangle.

But the need to reduce traffic on our streets has become more urgent in recent years, which is why Southwark Council has recently consulted on its Sustainable Transport Strategy which starkly sets out the issues facing the borough.

Road traffic is responsible for nearly 20% of Southwark’s carbon emissions; cutting this is vital if we’re to meet our commitment to net zero by 2030. Road traffic also exacerbates several different health problems; it’s a major contributor to illegal levels of air pollution which harms children, old people and those with pre-existing health issues. Across London 9,400 premature deaths are attributed to poor air quality every year, costing the health service between £1.4 and £3.7bn. Southwark has one of the highest rates in the country of people who are overweight or obese, which also creates long-

term health issues and, again, costs the NHS billions every year.

Active travel addresses all these problems, it reduces climate change emissions, it reduces air pollution, it enables children to create lifelong healthy habits and it helps our ageing population to feel less isolated and to get out and about to shop and socialise. If we want people to make short journeys sustainably we have to make our streets



safer; two thirds of people in the UK say they don’t cycle because they think it is unsafe.

There’s also an equity issue. The wealthier someone is, the more likely they are to benefit from owning and using a car. The negative effects of excess traffic are experienced by people who don’t own cars, who are often the most vulnerable and disadvantaged people in the borough. Excess traffic discourages them from walking and cycling, worsening their health and social isolation.

We need to reflect the fact that the way people get around London is changing. The rate of young people learning to drive is plummeting; so the council must accommodate new types of travel such as cycle hire, e-bikes, cargo bikes and e-scooters. These have the potential to reduce driving and to encourage people to be active. However, they require regulations and infrastructure so they can be used safely and considerately, we know that inconsiderate cycling and scooting on pavements can deter people from walking.

Cutting traffic levels is also a popular policy. In March this year YouGov published research showing that the majority of people in the UK support their council in making their area a 15-minute neighbourhood. It can be good for business too – recent research showed that shop takings went up by 200% in Stoke Newington Church Street after Hackney Council closed it to through traffic. It’s also safer: research from Westminster University showed that crime fell in Low Traffic Neighbourhoods introduced in London during the pandemic.

But as local councillors we recognise that change can be difficult and that we need to bring people with us – that’s why we’ve made sure the council consults at every step of the way and we’ve urged officers to publish all the data we collect about the impact of these changes on roads in the area. We will continue to listen to people’s views as London continues to change.

BUSHEL BASKETS AND BOXING PONIES

The Velodrome in a less familiar light

Cycling became hugely popular in the later years of the 19th century. It was not only men who were buying Matchless, Rudge, Globe and Zephyr bikes – and many other long-forgotten makes; women were also seizing the greater independence that cycling offered, a significant factor in their growing calls for emancipation. Scores of cycling clubs sprang up all over London, followed by a drive to build tracks where races could be held.

The Herne Hill track opened to the public on 23 May 1891. In the early years the term “velodrome” was not generally used for English tracks, being reserved for those starting to appear in Belgium and France – the word itself being borrowed from French (the “vélo” being short for “vélocipède, a term for some early bikes). The Herne Hill track was instead known by



Music Hall Benevolent Fund Sports, 1901

reference to its official description, the London County Athletic Grounds. It was rapidly joined by tracks at Catford, West Ham, West Brompton, Putney, Paddington, Crystal Palace – and more.

Some were very short lived; that at Catford lasted a mere five years. Everything depended on ticket sales and drawing in the crowds. In Catford the profits to be made from selling the land for housing development simply made more financial sense. Unlike cycle tracks built today, such as the magnificent 2012 London Olympics velodrome, the early velodromes were outside arenas. One notable exception was the short-lived track built inside the Royal Aquarium. This remarkable building (built 1876, demolished 1903) once stood facing Westminster Abbey on the site now occupied by the Central Methodist Hall. For a few years in the 1890s the new sensation of lady cyclists racing round the wooden track drew large crowds. Other tracks lasted longer, the one at Paddington into the 1980s, but all the London tracks are now gone – with the exception of the Herne Hill Velodrome.

From the start sport at Herne Hill was not seen as confined to cycling. Inside the banked cycle track was an athletics circuit, 440 yards in those pre-metric days. And the central grassed area could be used for a wide variety

of sports. During World War I, Crystal Palace Football Club, their grounds requisitioned by the War Office, moved to Herne Hill. There was a women's football match here in 1925 (a story we covered in #138 of this Magazine), with Lily Parr playing for Dick Kerr Ladies. Lily Parr is now seen as the pre-eminent player of her age and an inspiration for women who have fought against the prejudice the women's game had to suffer until very recent times.

For more than 30 years London Welsh Rugby Club regularly played their home matches at Herne Hill, until moving to Richmond in 1957. If you wonder why Dylan Thomas is included in the mural in Herne Hill station's underpass, that is the connection. The poet was a keen supporter of London Welsh, and after the match would move on to the local pub, either the Half Moon or The Commercial (perhaps both). Whether his links to Herne Hill extend to actually living here at one stage or to finding the name of Milkwood Road as the inspiration for his best-known work are questions for which definitive answers remain elusive.

Gaelic Sports were also popular events at the Velodrome and the cause of serious public disorder on one occasion in June 1930 when, according to press reports at the time, 500 or more Irishmen, supporters of rival hurling teams representing Dublin and Cork, engaged after the match in a pitched battle in the street outside the Half Moon Hotel. The police were called out in force. A baton charge eventually quelled the mob. Apart from the participants themselves, it was the Half Moon that came off worst, with hundreds of glasses smashed and the door to the billiard saloon “broken to smithereens”.

Bushel baskets were once common sights in London's fruit and veg markets, with workers acquiring great skill in balancing several on their heads. Before World War I and revived again for a time in the 1930s a popular annual charity event was organised at the Velodrome by the Borough Market and South London Fruiterers Association. In bushel basket races contestants had to complete a circuit balancing as many as 10 baskets on their heads. A regular supporter through the 1930s was Charlie Chaplin who would send £20 for one of the prizes. It is said there was a time when the very young Chaplin had worked at Borough Market.

Such is the fame of the Velodrome as a cycling venue that the charity sports events tend to be forgotten. These used to draw in crowds just as numerous as the big cycle races.

The presence of music hall stars helped. In 1899 the Camberwell & Dulwich Pension Society held its sports day, including a cricket match between Camberwell Tradesmen versus Dan Leno's Eccentrics. At one stage Leno and fellow entertainer Harry Randall



Dan Leno

*Hilda Glyder and contestants
at the Laundry Industry Sports, 1931*



cycled round the track while the match proceeded. Their antics, said the *Sporting Life*, “would have made a horse laugh”. Dan Leno was back in 1906, along with Fred Griffiths and Little Tich, the latter a resident at this time at the top of Herne Hill. They were supporting the Music Hall Benevolent Fund, which up to 1907 regularly held their summer sports day at the London County Grounds. There were conventional running and cycling races and there were knockabout turns, such as “Cliffe Berzac and his boxing pony”, shown in the photograph from 1901. Big stars such as Marie Lloyd, Marie Loftus (a Herne Hill resident in the 1890s) and Vesta Victoria would put in an appearance. In the same way that the posh frocks of female film stars at public events are widely commented on today, the music hall stars had their attire closely studied – “chic and dainty in a pink foulard, zigzagged with black”, “cool and pretty in a white muslin dress, much embroidered and befrilled” and so on.

The venue at Burbage Road was convenient for many of the music hall artistes attending such occasions. Many of them lived in the Brixton and Herne Hill area. It was a tight-knit community. News about places to rent would be handed on. A link to Brixton is there in the evocative picture of Hilda Glyder (recently acquired on ebay), who is shown helping one of the contestants with her make-up at the annual Laundry Industry Sports held at Herne Hill in August 1931. Hilda Glyder was quite a star as a young vaudeville performer, though by 1931 her most successful years were behind her. Indeed the great music hall era was disappearing as audiences turned to the cinema for their night out. Today she is a name seen on old copies of sheet music of the day, comic and sentimental songs that must have sat on the music stands of countless pianos, the country’s pre-television entertainment.

Google searches will not tell you very much about Hilda, so further research was called for.

She was born in New York in 1895 as Madoline Glyder, though that became Matilda and later Hilda. Her mother was the Manchester-born child of German parents. Her father was John Glyder, a tailor born in Minsk, then in Russia, who after a period in London moved to America. Both parents were Jewish. Hilda was one of six children and, since her father died in 1906 aged 46 one can imagine times were very hard for the family. Hilda left America aged 18 in January 1914 and came to England. By this time she was already a vaudeville performer.

Within a month she was appearing as the “Original Ragtime Kid” at the Hippodrome Manchester. She moved on to London and found lodgings at 36 Brixton Road. Brixton was also the home of Mayer Isaacs, born in London’s East End in 1892, the son of a watch and clockmaker born in Reval in Russia (today known as Tallinn, the capital of Estonia). Although trained for the same profession as his father, he chose to use his talent as a pianist and took the stage name Martin Romaine. He teamed up with violinist Jack Terris and the duo had considerable success in the music halls, playing arrangements of classical, popular songs and ragtime. He presumably met Hilda through his work (they were both performing at exactly the same time in Glasgow in 1915). They married in 1916, but, unlike many male popular entertainers in World War II who were given a role to play in maintaining morale, Martin was conscripted. He served with the Northumberland Fusiliers and was killed in action in France in April 1917. Hilda continued to work. She applied for a war widow’s pension, but



Bushel basket race c1913

such pensions were extremely meagre. She remarried in 1926, the popular entertainer Harry Weldon, but Weldon died four years later, leaving a bare £1000. One can only hope that Hilda was paid a reasonable fee for appearing at Herne Hill in 1931. Later that year she returned to the United States, in due course remarrying and finally finding financial security.

Dig a bit deeper into the story of the Velodrome and remarkable seams of social history can be found with or, in this case, without bikes.

Laurence Marsh

REAL VERSUS IMAGINED

The visual impact of new building development

In the paired images the “visualisations” in the planning application (on the left) are contrasted with actual views (on the right) of the development as it nears completion.



Viewed from Herne Hill Road



Viewed from Hinton Road and Milkwood Road



Viewed from Ruskin Park

In issue #154 of this Magazine **Colin MacInnes** looked at the changing face of Loughborough Junction, not least the major development by Peabody on the “Higgs Yard” site at the foot of Herne Hill Road. Here he considers how the simulated views of such developments at planning application stage can turn out to look rather different in reality.

Visitors to Ruskin Park will recently have become aware of the bulk of the Peabody development appearing in views towards central London, and might have been taken aback by its prominence.

London-wide and Lambeth planning policy means that high-rise developments of this kind are going to become increasingly common in areas like Herne Hill and its surrounds. Setting aside the debate about whether they should be happening at all, how can we best assess the visual impact of other proposals that might appear in the near future?

The planning application for the Peabody development included various simulated views from locations around the site, and these were used to support an argument that the visual impact would be acceptable. Some of them are reproduced here, and compared with some “real world” views, to illustrate three basic points that are important to bear in mind when looking at such images.

1. Beware of the strategically chosen viewpoint. It’s not difficult to choose a location where parts of a development are conveniently hidden by trees or existing buildings - but are very visible from other points close by. The one simulated view from Ruskin Park gives the impression that only the upper part of the main tower would intrude on the skyline. But moving a little higher, to the path running along the top of the park, reveals the bulk of the lower parts of the development too. A similar effect can be seen by comparing the simulated view from Hinton Road with the one from Milkwood Road a very short distance away.

2. Impact doesn’t necessarily decrease with distance. This might seem counter-intuitive, as things generally appear smaller as you move away from them, but longer views often make large differences in scale more obvious. The real-world view from Herne Hill Road is only a few metres up the street from the simulated one - but the apparent size of the new buildings, compared to existing ones in the foreground, changes hugely.

3. Height isn’t everything. There’s a tendency for objections to large scale developments to be very focussed on the height of the highest parts, but this can be a distraction from other elements of a design which are lower but still have significant visual bulk. Reductions in height, in response to objections, often result in an increase in horizontal bulk. Whether this creates more or less impact can be a subjective question, but looking at well-chosen simulated views can help answer it.

None of the simulated views provided with the Peabody application were inaccurate in themselves - but the choices of viewpoint will not have been neutral. Really, it is not possible to make a proper assessment of the visual impact of a large development based only on a small number of views - something to bear in mind when the area’s next application for high rise development appears: likely to be for the Hardess Street site. Planning officers can and should request simulated views from locations that haven’t been chosen by the developer.

ABBEYFIELD SOCIETY IN STRADELLA ROAD



The Abbeyfield Society is a national charity with over 500 properties across the UK. Some are nursing homes and others at the other end of the scale, like Abbeyfield Dulwich, offer supportive retirement living.

In Herne Hill we have been providing a sheltered home for elderly residents in Stradella Road since 1963. Originally at two separate properties, we are now at numbers 89-91, two adjoining houses with six flats, one studio flat, and a large and well-tended garden. We are a charity and are delighted to be part of the community but we are also conscious that some people may be new to the area and not familiar with our work.

Our seven residents come from a variety of backgrounds and some of them have family connections in the area. The residents live independent lives but benefit from two home-cooked meals a day, taken communally, as well as their own flats which they furnish themselves. Residents are self-supporting in lots of ways but also like the security, sociability and community that Abbeyfield offers.

We have three permanent staff members, but, like any charity, we rely on the help from a wide range of volunteers to make the house run smoothly and who are part of promoting our friendly atmosphere and caring ethos. There are games sessions, summer garden events, occasional talks and a few outings each quarter to join in with, and all the residents enjoy the company of younger and older neighbours!

We find that our residents are very proud of the warm and interactive life that we offer in the house and, should you wish to enquire further about our charity, have a tour of the house on behalf of yourself or a relative, or join the volunteer team, please email us at dulwichabbeyfield@gmail.com

Paul Barber, Chair of Trustees

PIONEERING PHARMACEUTICAL RESEARCH – THE HERNE HILL CONNECTION



In 1898 Henry Wellcome signed a lease on buildings and land in Brockwell Park to provide a home for the Wellcome Physiological Laboratories. This was a revolutionary development. Medical advances and new treatments are now the stuff of everyday news. But at that time there was only one specific treatment for any infection, quinine for malaria. Vaccines were being developed to prevent some infections but only smallpox vaccine was widely available. Serum therapy using antibodies raised in horses was seen as the best way forward. This had been shown to work for both tetanus and diphtheria.

Funds for the laboratory were provided by Burroughs, Wellcome & Co. Henry Wellcome had founded a research laboratory in 1894 and it was this lab that transferred to Herne Hill.

This was a first for the pharmaceutical industry; the laboratory was intended not only to develop new commercial products but also to work on basic biomedical problems. His unprecedented actions revolutionized the pharmaceutical industry; Wellcome saw basic research as key to the company's growth and success.

Wellcome was keen to attract the best scientists for his new venture and tried to recruit Gowland Hopkins (Nobel Prize 1929) as director but he was unsuccessful – perhaps due to academic snobbery towards commercially linked research. In retrospect this is surprising in that there was little academic research in the UK. Research degrees were not introduced until 1922. Research was among the primary functions of German universities.

In 1904 he was more successful in attracting Henry Dale (Nobel Prize 1936) to become director in 1906. It was then that Wellcome formulated the dictum “Freedom of research—liberty to publish”. This attracted many talented scientists to the Wellcome Laboratories until their closure in 1995.

The move to Herne Hill provided the opportunity to recruit more staff, many of them locally. The most remarkable were two 17-year-olds recruited from Alley's School in 1899. Alexander T. Glenny and Arthur J. Ewins became laboratory technicians. To obtain a BSc they studied in the evenings at the South-Western Polytechnic (later Chelsea Polytechnic, now part of King's). This was one of many institutions preparing students for the University of London Exams. Both men went on to be elected Fellows of the Royal Society

in the 1940s. Glenny was involved in the production of antitoxin and Ewins in the chemistry division.

Antitoxin had been shown to work but many problems remained. The immunisation of horses was haphazard; antibody production was not understood, nor was the immune response, and the sterile production of biologicals was in its infancy. Glenny analysed the record on antiserum production which resulted in systematising the immunisation of horses and optimising antiserum production. While working at Herne Hill he also made major contributions to our understanding of the immune response and to vaccine development. He was the first to demonstrate the secondary immune response, the reason we are given a booster dose to increase protection. His work on the inactivation of diphtheria toxin to produce toxoid contributed to the development of diphtheria vaccine for children introduced in 1939.

In 1914, on the basis of his work at Herne Hill, Dale was elected to the Royal Society and invited to become director of the new National Institute of Medical Research. Both Dale and Ewins joined the Medical Research Committee (later Council). The outbreak of war revealed how heavily dependent Britain was on imports from Germany. Dale coordinated the development and production of substitutes. The Wellcome Laboratories and works were now engaged in the production of a wide range of drugs and medical products for which there had been a virtual German monopoly. For example, Wellcome had to produce and manufacture a British version of aspirin and, in collaboration with other companies, arsphenamine, at that time the sole treatment for syphilis. Government support resulted in the development of the British pharmaceutical industry. Ewins was fully involved and in 1917 moved to May & Baker where he became director of research. He worked on chemotherapy, particularly sulphonamide antibacterials, most famously M&B 693. In 1943 this was used to save Winston Churchill's life when he fell ill with pneumonia.

R. A. O'Brien had succeeded Dale at Herne Hill as director. He had a particular interest in tetanus antitoxin, which was fortunate in the context of WW1, tetanus being a particular hazard to wounded soldiers. In late 1914 David Bruce, commander of the Royal Army Medical College at Millbank, advised that all wounded should be treated with tetanus antitoxin. O'Brien and Glenny rose to the challenge and produced a mixed anti-gas gangrene antitoxin.

The war expanded the scope of research and increased the production of both antitoxins and drugs. The decision was taken to consolidate the research on a new site in Beckenham. In 1922 the Herne Hill labs closed, having played a pivotal role in both peace and war. Antitoxins may seem old-fashioned but it should be remembered that monoclonal antibodies used for Covid 19 and other diseases are the modern manifestation of the same ideas.

Bo Drasar

Bo Drasar is an Emeritus Professor of Bacteriology, working in particular at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Note: all the buildings that housed the Wellcome Laboratories were demolished in 1923. They stood half way up the hill on the right between the main Herne Hill gate and Brockwell Hall. No visible sign of them remains today.

CROXTED ROAD GARDEN CENTRE

This familiar and very popular garden centre was opened in 1969. It owes much of its success to the fact that it is still owned by the same family, now in the third generation of the business, who know their market and offer deep expertise and a noticeably friendly and helpful service.

The Abbotts family trace their roots back to the Staffordshire/Shropshire borders in the Midlands. It was from there that the youngest of 11 children, Donald Abbotts (Don to his family and friends), moved down to London's suburbs with two of his brothers in search of work.

They found it in Morden and Epsom, becoming responsible for the maintenance of a wide network of school playing fields as employees of the London County Council, later to become the GLC. That might have been the fulfilment of Don's ambition, except that in 1968 he had a flutter on the horses and won £200 – a more significant sum than it would be today, of course.

Sadly, he had failed to place an accumulator bet on these races: had he done so, his winnings would have been more like £2 million and his life would have been altogether different. But making the best of his luck, he and his sister Betty Abbotts invested in a lease from British Rail for this oddly shaped plot of land squeezed between the railway embankment, Hawarden Road and Croxted Road. In 1969 the garden centre opened. In the early days it was open 365 days in the year. Later the momentous decision was taken to close on Christmas Day; and later still we can remember Mondays when it didn't open. But nowadays it still opens every day of the week except of course for Christmas. It credibly claims to be the longest established garden centre in South-east London.

The present owner, Kevin Abbotts, is Don's nephew and has been in the business alongside Don since he was a teenager – first working weekends and then full-time. His long acquaintance with the needs of South-east London's gardeners has given him a deep and unerring sense of what they want – whether it is a wide selection of house-plants, flowers and shrubs for their gardens, pots and window boxes, or vegetable seedlings for their allotments.

Come the spring, sales of his trays of sweet corn seedlings are apparently legendary, but there is always a wide choice of colourful annuals and perennials throughout the year.

There is also a unique detail about their ever-changing and very seasonal stock. After a decade or so, Don Abbotts bought a house near the family's birthplace in Staffordshire – a house which had an extensive garden (all now bequeathed to the next generation). This ground was, with much hard work, worked up into a nursery producing plants and seedlings for sale on Croxted Road. So

while some produce in many garden centres is shipped in from the massive nurseries of the Netherlands, this offers a supply chain with a lighter footprint, particularly now that, thanks to the work of Kevin and his son, irrigation methods are focused on modern and efficient methods of reducing water use.

Don Abbotts, a familiar figure to many customers, sadly died at the end of 2021. But Kevin's son Daniel



Kevin and Dan Abbotts

now works full-time here, representing the third generation of Abbotts to own and run the business.

The fluctuating phases of lockdown during the Covid pandemic of course meant that the garden centre was closed to the public for some periods. But home deliveries offered a welcome respite to many people who were confined to their houses and flats but could still hope to do some garden improvements and add a little flowering colour to mitigate the gloom. And when garden centres were once again allowed to open, Kevin recalls the queue stretching for hundreds of yards down Croxted Road with people desperate to restart work on their gardens or allotments. The loyal customer base promises a solid future for this three-generational business.

Pat Roberts

*Croxted Road Garden Centre, Croxted Road, SE24 9DB
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<https://www.croxtedroadgardencentre.co.uk/>*

FOOD BANKS – *now more than ever*

A report by Pat Roberts

Though we all acknowledge that life will never be quite the same again, many families, businesses and social organisations have – more or less – recovered from the devastating shock of the Covid lockdown.

But if some of us have reclaimed a semi-normal life with sensible ambitions, many others haven't recovered at all and may not see any light at the end of the tunnel, particularly those whose incomes and personal circumstances were already precarious.

For many such people the damage of the Covid pandemic hasn't subsided at all. Worse, that bleak period, dominated by severe lockdowns and closures which now appear to have been unnecessary, is now prolonged by an economic crisis, one which further threatens employment, inflates prices of essential goods and services, and offers more excuses for government to tighten up expenditure. Then there's the rocketing cost of energy. People who were more or less managing two or three years ago, or who had partially recovered from the impact of lockdown, can suddenly find themselves facing another dramatic crisis with no comforting solution in sight. And even before then, many families were not "managing" at all.

When future historians look back at this period, the spread of food banks will be one of the clearest markers of the long-running poverty crisis – a crisis that now threatens to become a constant feature of life here. A few commentators can be spotted blithely claiming that the poor should not need charity to feed their families. But for the majority, no-one resorts to food banks unless they desperately need to; and many are embarrassed to receive handouts. Once in that system, however, they realise that for millions, this is now the norm. A supply of food, even at the most basic, is essential for people to go to work and school, feed their families and maintain some degree of dignity and self-respect.

Food banks were certainly around before the pandemic and the lockdown, but by most accounts they have grown and expanded dramatically in the last two years as more and more people fell into poverty. There are now over 1,400 Trussell Trust food banks in the UK, in addition to at least 1,172 independent food banks, said a House of Commons library report last year.

Here in South London there are food banks – when you look – spread across the map, each with its network of partner organisations and volunteers manning the warehouses and collecting and donating essential items – not just food but also toiletries, cleaning products and stuff for babies and children.

One such local food bank is the Albrighton Community Fridge, based in the housing estate just opposite the big Sainsbury's on Dog Kennel Hill in East Dulwich, and open four days a week. It was set up in 2018, well before the pandemic, by the Albrighton Community Centre to reduce food waste among local food retailers and support the surrounding community by providing small food items at no charge, and is a part of the Hubbub Community Fridge Network. Staffed by volunteers, it relies on donations of food and money from individuals, local groups and businesses. Today the Fridge provides food and other essentials to an average of 350 households per week – a total of over 900 adults and more than 450 children.

Then there's The Trussell Trust – probably the biggest and best-

known national food bank charity. The Trust also campaigns for change to end the need for food banks in the UK.

Trussell support more than 1,400 food bank centres in the UK to provide a minimum of three days' nutritionally balanced emergency food to people who have been referred in crisis, as well as non-judgemental wider support to help people resolve the challenges they face. Between April and September 2022, their food bank network provided 1.3 million emergency food parcels to people in crisis. In that period alone, more than 320,000 people were forced to turn to food banks in the Trussell Trust network for the first time. Demand continues to rise.

One of Trussell's local food banks is the Norwood and Brixton food bank, which opened in September 2011 and is one of four making up a Lambeth network. The project lead here is Elizabeth Maytom, who opened a food bank in South Lambeth back in 2011 and was awarded an MBE in the recent New Year Honours. She confirms that the early months of the lockdown saw an unparalleled explosion in demand for help, with many low-paid and casual jobs being terminated with little notice. A slight recovery when Covid ended has now been followed by another crisis driven by inflation and the cost of living which can make people face painful choices between paying for heating and other essentials or buying food. With centres already in Norwood and West Dulwich, they will soon be opening another centre on Brixton Hill which will also house an adviser linked to the Brixton Advice Centre to help attendees in coping with the numerous problems they face – of which food shortage may only be one element.

Most food banks use a voucher referral system (e.g. from Citizens Advice, social workers, probation, schools, children's centres, doctors, charities which work with people in need, Department of Work & Pensions and others) which confirms the number of adults and children the food parcel needs to support, the ages of children, and any special dietary requirements the recipient may have. All food banks depend on donations either in money or in kind: our Herne Hill-based enterprise Local Greens, for instance, supplies this food bank with fresh fruit and vegetable every week. Meanwhile, Citizens Advice Centres continue to help people with the wider elements of poverty – including rising rents, evictions, homelessness, partner abuse, family breakdowns, legal challenges, finding schools and doctors and benefits delays.

All these food banks publicise details of how we can help them. The common theme seems to be that while gifts of food are very welcome and necessary, donations of money, particularly if on a regular basis, give them the flexibility to buy in exactly the supplies they need.

Thanks to Fred Taggart MBE, Elizabeth Maytom MBE and the Brixton Advice Centre for help with this report.

- Albrighton Community Fridge: albrightoncommunityfridge.org/
- Norwood and Brixton foodbank: norwoodbrixton.foodbank.org.uk/
- The Trussell Trust: www.trusselltrust.org/
- Brixton Advice Centre: brixtonadvice.org.uk/

HISTORY IN TWO POSTCARDS

For readers who come across items of Herne Hill local history on Twitter this story may be familiar, but on the assumption you are in a minority we venture to repeat it here and in rather more detail than 280 characters allow.

The houses on Ferndene Road facing Ruskin Park are a group constructed shortly before the First World War, probably in 1912, and numbered 50 to 76. The photograph shows them not long after they were built. Such postcards are a valuable source of information, because the visual record of our streets – until the arrival of Google streetview in 2008 – is very much a matter of pot luck. You will not find any historic view of these houses in Lambeth Archives. This card was recently found on ebay. It connects very nicely with the second card shown (also an ebay acquisition). Unlike the first card it was “postally used”. This allows us to link the image to Ruskin Park. The card was written in 1916 from 78 Ferndene Road by Minnie Davis to a Miss Waring. No. 78 is on the far left of the street view, just visible behind the telegraph pole. Miss Davis concludes her message “We have been having such a lot of wounded from the last few days”. It seems reasonable to conclude that she was a nurse and chose the picture



Houses on Ferndene Road, c1920

for that reason. She might even be one of the nurses in the picture.

We know that in the First World War King’s College Hospital on Denmark Hill became the 4th London General Hospital and in time grew to have the largest capacity (for 300 officers and 1625 other ranks) of all the London hospitals. Ruskin Park saw temporary shelters built, allowing wounded men to leave the wards and recuperate in the open air. The postmark date of 25 July 1916 also tells us something. The Battle of the Somme had begun on the first day of that month. On 1 July alone there were more than 57,000 British soldiers killed or wounded. After initial treatment in field hospitals many survivors would have been brought back to England for further treatment.



Soldiers recuperating in temporary shelters built in Ruskin Park, 1916

Some further research has also revealed the identity of the builder of 50 to 76 Ferndene Road. He was Herbert Charles Morrell and took No. 50 as his own family home, a house just outside the view of the camera at the right. His twin sons, Stanley Charles and Cyril Herbert, born 1908, both followed him into the business, expanding it hugely and going on to develop and build Dorchester Court and houses on Dorchester Drive in the mid-1930s. But they were over-ambitious and their business ran into difficulties. By 1942 both brothers had been declared bankrupt. But this is a story for another time.

Laurence Marsh

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'Clock Tower, Brockwell Park, Autumn' by Matthew Berry. – Limited edition 'Giclée' print available.

Other prints and original paintings by Matthew Berry and other artists, including Peter Forsyth, Mark McLaughlin, Ken McCalla, Su Au, Max Rush and John Bateson-Hill are also available.

**Virtually all our pictures
are available online
and can be seen at:**

www.brockwellgallery.london