

# HERNE HILL

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HERNE HILL SOCIETY 🌿 ISSUE 157 🌿 Summer/Autumn 🌿 2023



Brockwell Park August 2023

## BROCKWELL PARK ... EVENTFUL AS EVER

► See pages 4/5

## THE SOCIETY'S 2023 EXCELLENCE AWARDS

► See pages 12/13

## DRINKING FOUNTAINS

► See pages 14/15



# The Magazine of the Herne Hill Society



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## CONTENTS

Oasis on the Lane	3
Location, location	3
Herne Hill undivided	4
Local Councillors' surgeries	4
Brockwell Park ... as eventful as ever	4-5
Planning and Licensing	6
The planning group	6
No 10 revealed	6
Shops and business news	7
Tales away	7
A changing scene on our borders	9
Transport notes	10
Dear Editor	10
Lambeth Heritage Festival	11
Why are foodbanks necessary?	11
The 2023 Herne Hill Society Excellence Awards	12-13
Drinking fountains	14-15
So what is a "Soviet tree"?	15
Oxfam on Half Moon Lane	16
The Editor has asked me ...	17
The Elfindale story	18
Shaping impressionism in Dulwich	19

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*Many thanks to Pat Roberts for the photographs on the front cover and pages 3, 5, 7 and 16 and to Victoria Tee for her photographs on page 13.*

# Oasis on the Lane

A life-enhancing new street feature has been added to Half Moon Lane, just where Village Way starts to swoop under the railway bridge heading towards Dulwich Village and East Dulwich.

The pavement here was built out some years ago to deliberately slow down traffic at a tricky junction, but this created a featureless hard-surfaced protuberance. Local artist Kate Whiteford OBE, whose house and studio (see our issue number 152 - Winter 2021) stand close by, saw an opportunity to civilise and humanise this barren patch, and set about designing a solution.

That was back in 2019, before the Covid lockdown slowed everything down. But finally, this spring marked the triumphant conclusion of these patient efforts. The new development, featuring appropriate plants, seats and a fine bench set around the existing London plane tree, is a tribute to Kate's perseverance over several years. It is also witness to the support and funding of Southwark Council's "Cleaner, Greener, Safer" programme and the support of Southwark Councillor Margy Newens and the CGS team at Southwark. The late departed Alastair Hanton OBE, the esteemed social entrepreneur and local transport activist, had been another key supporter of Kate's campaign; his family have supported some of the features of the



new 'pocket park', as Cllr Newens described it.

The important and attractive plantings that visibly separate the road from the new seating area are a key feature, and selecting them proved a challenge. Excavation below the road surface had revealed only many layers of concrete: no drainage in fact. So under Kate's careful guidance, the species of plants supplied

by Southwark Council had to be chosen to survive extremes of both drought and waterlogging. Alongside the plantings, the light colour of the partially bonded gravel surface transforms what was a dark dingy tarmac corner.

The welcoming new installation was completed in early May and inaugurated at an informal street party on 7 May attended by Kate Whiteford, Cllr Newens and

many local residents. Already the feature is a great success with people passing by, including parents and guardians pausing before collecting children from the nearby Judith Kerr Primary School and the Half Moon Nursery.

Opportunities exist for similar 'greening' schemes on adjacent corners, for example where Elmwood and Beckwith Roads join Half Moon Lane. The junction layout justifies its informal name Five Ways – a reference to the unusual road formation. Indeed, Kate Whiteford's original proposal had planting on other corners too. So maybe the job isn't finished yet. **Pat Roberts**

## Location, location

How often does Hollywood come to Herne Hill? It was too late for inclusion in the last issue of this Magazine, but now we can record that back in April A-list stars Andrew Garfield and Florence Pugh (the latter currently starring in the phenomenally successful *Oppenheimer*) were busy filming on location in Station Square. And we have a picture to prove it – with a walk-on part for Herne Hill Books. The film is titled *We Live in Time* and the plot, with an original screenplay by Nick Payne, seems to be a closely guarded secret, though described as a "funny, deeply moving and immersive love story". Garfield and Pugh were co-presenters at the 2023 Oscars and there was, by all accounts, much comment on the chemistry between the two of them.

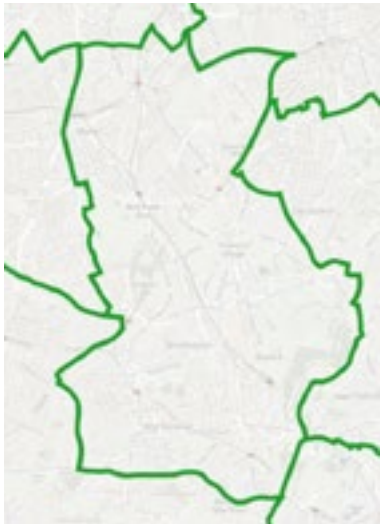
Reports also reach us that in early summer Brockwell Lido was the location for the filming of scenes for Channel 4's screen adaptation of Candice Carty-Williams's hugely successful



and critically acclaimed novel *Queenie*, which will be made into an 8-part TV series. "I'm a proper south London girl for ever," Carty-Williams has said.

Incidentally, there is no such thing as a free lunch when it comes to filming on location in Lambeth. Depending on the size of the film crew, Lambeth Council charges between £750 and £12,000 for licences for a full day's filming with extra costs if traffic controls are needed.

Location was also the source of much speculation, when the news was announced that the hugely famous, often controversial, Irish singer Sinead O'Connor had died at her home in South London on 26 July. It emerged that, a few weeks before her death, she had moved into a penthouse flat in a mansion block at the Loughborough Junction end of Shakespeare Road. The block had undergone a major refurbishment in recent years that included the addition of a penthouse storey.



## Herne Hill undivided – the final stage

Last year we reported on the Boundary Commission for England's proposal for changes to parliamentary boundaries affecting the Herne Hill area. In their initial recommendation they had proposed that Herne Hill be split between three new constituencies. In the consultation process that followed, the Society made a strong submission arguing against this, as did many others, pointing out strong community ties in Herne Hill and the disadvantage our area already suffers by being split between Lambeth and Southwark for local government. Following the consultation the Commission published revised proposals, by which, subject to some slight adjustments, the Dulwich & West Norwood constituency would be retained and Herne Hill would not be divided. There was then further consultation and George Hornby, representing both the Herne Hill Forum and this Society, spoke in support of the revised proposal at a meeting where the Commission heard members of the public. At the end of June the Commission delivered its Final Report to the Speaker of the House of Commons. The revised proposals stand and have not been changed. The Report will be given effect by an Order in Council within four months and, assuming no snap general election is called before then, will be fought on the new boundaries. But from Herne Hill's point of view we stay as we were.

### For your information – Local Councillors' Surgeries

#### Lambeth

1. Carnegie Community Hub at the Carnegie Library, 192 Herne Hill Road, SE24 0DG, 6 – 7 pm 4th Tuesday of each month
2. Lilford Area Residents Association, Lilford House, Lilford Road, SE5 9QD, 10 – 11 am, second Saturday of each month

#### Southwark

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

## Brockwell Park ...

It wouldn't be summer in SE24 without a big fuss over the festivals that take over much of Brockwell Park. This year didn't disappoint.

The main events were scheduled between 26 May and 4 June, followed by the Lambeth Country Show on 10–11 June. The idea seemed to be that the park could then enter recovery mode before the height of the summer and the school holidays. That was supposedly the agreement reached between the council and Brockwell Park user groups.

However, this year there was an added and unexpected complication – a Pokémon Go festival on 4-6 August with the inevitable installation and de-rigging phases. Bang in the middle of the summer holidays. See below for a view on its impact, and an attempt, probably miscarried, to understand what Pokémon Go is all about.

The successive music festivals – and the attendant arrangements to build, staff, police and eventually de-rig the ambitious structures required by each separate festival – were managed collectively by Brockwell Live. This organisation also set out to promote the financial and other benefits which the music events were able to make to the park, Lambeth Council and the community.

#### Benefits for Lambeth and the park

These benefits included £350,000 payable to Lambeth Council; over £150,000 available to spend on park improvements in 2023 – 24; job opportunities for over 900 crew and event staff; community benefits such as 3,000 free tickets plus a free-to-enter community festival on 31 May, Brockwell Bounce; and help towards the funding of the Lambeth Country Show. Naturally, local councillors have been making much of these benefits

In the event there were five separate festivals. Project 6 opened on Friday 26 May, followed on successive days by Wide Awake, Cross the Tracks and City Splash on Monday 29 May – this last evening described by the organisers as the capital's biggest celebration of Reggae, Afro Beats and Dancehall. If you don't know what that means, you probably don't need to know. The following weekend was all about Mighty Hoopla, the LGBTQ+ event, Time Out's 'Best London Festival', with "two big days of pop and fun". Although of course each of the events will have attracted some local attendees, the majority of tens of thousands of festival goers arrived from elsewhere in London. So for them, presumably – and for the concert organisers – it was all worthwhile.

#### Not pleased

Not for everyone though. We noticed a cross-section of objectors on social media platforms – perhaps a little more vociferous than in previous years. Many people were upset, as before, about the blanking off of important areas of the park behind the infamous Great Wall of Brockwell fence; and also about the severe damage to much of the ground. Council spokespeople claim that this can all be made good, but some of the objectors are sceptical. Another major complaint was about the noise, particularly running on late in the evening when the people were sitting exams the following morning or even trying to sleep. Complaints about the noise levels came from as far afield as Clapham and Streatham, though some people

## ... eventful as ever

in Herne Hill and Brixton claimed to be untroubled. Maybe it all depended on the wind direction.

Traffic disruption, with many parking zones denied to residents, seemed to be not much worse than usual except on the evening of the City Splash concert where a large number of attendees arrived in their cars, parked recklessly and drove aggressively when leaving: Brockwell Live later apologised to residents and promised stricter enforcement.

And are there offsetting benefits to local businesses? Predictably, the local pubs saw big boosts in their takings from visitors before and after attending the musical events. Good for them and their staff. But what about other traders? We doubt that the council Events Team have carried out any systematic opinion surveys that would justify arguments that local businesses profit from the festivals; and we have heard some say that their takings slumped. So it's all a matter of claim and counterclaim, swings and roundabouts, depending on who you talk to. Maybe next year there could be some independent professional survey? But would it make any difference?

### **Pokémon GO Fest, 4-6 August**

This new three-day festival was split between Brockwell Park and other locations in across London. It was not a noisy music festival and allegedly occupied a smaller footprint in the park, with access to most areas remaining open (sort of) for park users. The major build period lasted from Wednesday 26 July to Wednesday 3 August, preceded by three days when numerous network masts were built for the enhanced wifi/phone connectivity that Pokémon requires. The de-rig took from 7 – 10 August.

Each of the three days had two sessions (at £32 per head) with reportedly a maximum capacity of 9,999 players at each session –



so on each day the park might see an influx of some 20,000 ticket holders plus non-playing family and friends. But hey, who's counting? Recent rumours have suggested a much higher headcount; the

organisers didn't respond to enquiries.

Park stakeholder groups such as Friends of Brockwell Park and Brockwell Park Community Partners objected (rather quietly) to this add-on event, saying it is in breach of the undertaking that the Council had given that major events would be restricted to the May/June period allowing the park to recover over the summer and leaving it free for everyone to enjoy over the summer holidays. They say that by agreeing to a 3-day event with nominally just under 20,000



attendees per day, Lambeth deliberately avoided the need for full public consultation. Numerous commentators on social media have deplored, with mounting fury, the installation of the many polluting diesel-powered generators and the incursion of heavy trucks – not to speak of the many thousands of visitors traipsing all across the park on a damp weekend – causing extensive damage to the ground.

### **So what is Pokémon GO?**

Pokémon GO is a 2016 augmented reality (AR) mobile game, part of the vast Pokémon franchise, developed and operated by US company Niantic in collaboration with Nintendo and the Japanese-owned Pokémon Company. It uses mobile iOS and Android devices with GPS to locate, capture, train, and battle virtual creatures, called Pokémon, which appear as if they are in the player's real-world location. (Hence the seven tall signal masts erected across the park, and the almost comical sight of the players, known as Trainers, stumbling around gazing at their mobile phones.) The addictive game launched with around 150 species of Pokémon, which had increased to around 700 by 2021. It delivers almost unbelievable revenues to its owners: in the first half of 2021 it reportedly generated revenues of over £600 million. It has a worldwide following. There were visitors from all over Europe, possibly from further afield.

Lambeth have declined, so far, to confirm financial details, but Niantic, rummaging through their small change drawer, are rumoured to be paying Lambeth Council an Investment Levy of £20,000. (Are Lambeth getting really hard up? To date, they have not responded to a Freedom of Information request to publish the financial deal.) The Pokémon GO publicity website says "Attendees will enjoy glittering gameplay, beautiful bonuses, and hidden surprises as they adventure alongside thousands of fellow Trainers and spend half their day in Brockwell Park and half exploring Greater London!"

**Pat Roberts**

# PLANNING & LICENSING

**The Society’s planning group has commented on the following matters:**

**1a Spenser Road, Lambeth23/00509/FUL**

While acknowledging modification of an earlier scheme 22/03369/FUL, to which we had objected and which Lambeth refused, we objected to this revised application. The modification did not meet the fundamental reason for the refusal of the earlier scheme, namely “excessive scale, massing and bulk, resulting in an incongruous and overly dominant addition that fails to respond positively to the original architecture of the host building, dominating the rear elevation and undermining the rear return.” We expressed our concern that, if allowed, the rear addition would provide a precedent potentially very damaging to the Poet’s Corner Conservation Area. Lambeth have refused the application.

**14 Sunray Avenue, Southwark 23/AP/1544**

We objected to a proposal for an addition at the side of this house in the Sunray/Casino Estate Conservation Area. We pointed out that the garage structure which it sought to replace was of very recent construction and built without planning permission and should not therefore be regarded as any sort of precedent. Any addition should be judged against the character of the Conservation Area, an integral part of which

is the generous amount of space allowed between and around its houses. We submitted that if any permanent extension to the side of the house were considered appropriate it should be properly set back from the frontage and should not have a pitched roof, which would be incongruous in the context, but a lean-to roof. Southwark have given permission. It would seem no application has as yet been made under the Dulwich Estate Scheme of Management.

**259 Railton Road**

We have written to Lambeth reporting the construction of a front boundary wall well in excess of 1 metre in height and therefore requiring planning permission, but which does not appear to have been obtained. Lambeth are considering enforcement proceedings.

**71 Herne Hill Road, 23/01180/VOC**

We had reported to Lambeth the building of a side extension (running along Finsen Road) that was not built in accordance with the original planning permission. There was then an application to vary the conditions of the original permission. We objected to that, saying that the addition should be built according to that permission. Lambeth have refused the variation application.

**Laurence Marsh**

## The Planning Group

In July the Society’s planning group (*photo from left: Laurence Marsh, Crispin Tuckley, Rafael Marks, David Taylor, Mike Rundell, Edmund Bird, Colin MacInnes*) took the opportunity to meet up for real, something we had not done for a very long time. Our usual contact is done by email. But we wanted to welcome two new members, Rafael Marks and Crispin Tuckley, who have recently joined the group.



It was a particular pleasure to be able to do so at the house of Mike Rundell, one of the Group’s members. It is a remarkable Grade II listed building from the 1930s.

We also wanted to say farewell to

David Taylor. David is not only a founder member of the Society and a former committee member and vice chair, but, for as long as the Society has been active in monitoring planning applications in Lambeth and Southwark, has been at the heart of that activity, bringing to it all the expertise and experience from a career centred on the area of local government planning. Moreover, working with the Herne Hill Forum David put in countless hours in devising a Neighbourhood Plan. Sadly, this project did not come to fruition. It remains to be seen whether it might be revived. Now David and his wife Beth are leaving Herne Hill, after living here, in Rollscourt Avenue, for more than 40 years. They

aren’t moving far, to Gipsy Hill, to a house on the very edge of the Dulwich Estate, but far enough for David to feel that he should now be taking an interest in planning issues in the Norwood area. We are truly sorry to see them go and wish them the very best in their new home.

## No. 10 revealed

The house in Dorchester Drive may be familiar – we have talked about in several previous issues – but perhaps less familiar in its newly refurbished state. For the last year it has been shut behind hoardings, only partly visible from the street. In July these came down and this 1930s gem is revealed. What you cannot see

is a single-storey extension that has been added at the back That is more controversial given the building’s listed status. The Society had joined the C20 Society in objecting to the proposal



because of the loss of historic fabric, but Lambeth gave permission. We did acknowledge that the proposal was significantly better than an earlier one, which Lambeth had refused. All in all, given that the survival of the building was in doubt, it’s a very good outcome for Herne Hill’s heritage.

## Shops & Business News

### Gail's lands in Herne Hill

The premises in Station Square recently occupied by Brixton pizzeria Agile Rabbit are now being taken over by Gail's Bakery. Does this mark another change in the retail landscape of Herne



Hill, following the arrival some years ago of first Sainsbury's then Tesco?

The move to Herne Hill fills in a gap in Gail's map of south London: until now the nearest branches had been in Dulwich Village, East Dulwich, Abbeville Road and Clapham. There is already nervous speculation about the impact this will have on our established local bakeries and coffee shops. The refit work started in July.

Although it defines itself cosily as a "neighbourhood craft bakery", Bread Holdings, the holding company owning Gail's Bakery and The Bread Factory, is a giant with huge resources available for survival (as it efficiently demonstrated during Covid) and for further expansion. In 2021 it was bought (though retaining the same top management) by US private equity player Bain Capital in a deal valuing the company at £200m. This transaction rewarded a previous management buyout investment transacted in 2011 by Risk Capital Partners. Based on recent trading, in 2021 the business declared annual sales of over £130m.

Gail's was founded in the early 1990s in Hampstead as a wholesale bakery and in 2005 opened its first high street bakery.

Alongside the growing number of local bread shops-cum-cafés, Bread Holdings also has valuable contracts to supply 'Artisan' bread to several supermarket chains and to the hospitality business.

That might all sound negative. But Gail's is an undeniably successful brand, and often succeeds in attracting new visitors to wherever it opens a new branch, so helping other businesses. And of course some other businesses in Station Square are 'chains', such as Lark and Blackbird Bakery, in the sense of having a number of branches.

### Seasons of England

Our long-established family-owned greengrocers closed their shop near the bottom of Milkwood Road in May over a disagreement with The Arch Company about new rent increases. But they have now moved a few units up the road to smaller premises alongside the butchers Dugard & Daughters. Some readers will remember that they originally had a shop on what has since become Station Square and had to relocate when a whole row of the units there was closed in 2017 and rebuilt, agonisingly slowly, by Network Rail.

### Forget Me Not And Green

At 19 Norwood Road, the former coffee shop The Parlour, which had opened back in 2015 and closed in August 2022, is reopening this summer as a sustainable greeting card and gift shop under the name Forget Me Not And Green.

### Maroon

As trailed in our last issue, a new restaurant/bar has now opened in July on Norwood Road, with a splendidly refurbished décor. Maroon offers vibrant Caribbean-Latin American fusion food. The owner Shereene DeLeon has tested the local market and is confident that the formula will be well received in Herne Hill and neighbouring areas.

Maroon, 75-79 Norwood Road SE24 9AA

<https://www.maroon-restaurant.co.uk/> tel: 02030 115 901



Too many sighs of regret from around Herne Hill and beyond, our exemplary and indeed famous children's bookshop, Tales on Moon Lane, closed on 27 July.

Well, sort of closing. The company is retaining the premises but they will

become Moon Lane's education hub, open by appointment only for teachers and other educational professionals. It will cease to trade as a shop for the public.

This recognises the fact that the company is more than the retail bookshop: it runs many community outreach projects and ventures, and (as Moon Lane Education) has a big and still expanding footprint in educational sales in the UK and across numerous other locations including China. The group's subsidiary Moon Lane Ink CIC is a not-for-profit Community Interest Company dedicated to addressing inequity in children's books.

The founder and children's author Tamara Macfarlane opened the shop in Herne Hill

## Tales away

20 years ago. She moved to Whitstable on the Kent coast in 2020, and now the retail activities of the shop will follow her there. During its time here in SE24, the bookshop won numerous awards, including British Children's Bookseller of the year on many occasions. It seems that Moon Lane Books over in Catford will continue as a children's bookshop with a carefully curated selection of adult general fiction and non-fiction too.

We will be sad to say goodbye to Tamara and her outstandingly well-informed, gracious and helpful team, whilst thankful for the wonderful service they have given to local children and their parents (and grandparents, aunts and uncles!) over the last 20 years.

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## A changing scene on our borders

More than two decades into the present century, how much architecture and design from the 21st century can be found in Herne Hill? If you include the loft conversions and ‘wrap-around’ rear extensions added to countless houses, the answer would be a great deal. But such extensions do not affect Herne Hill’s predominant character as a late Victorian/Edwardian residential suburb, since, if you discount rooflights on roof slopes facing the street, they are rarely visible from the public domain. And



*New Territorial HQ for the Salvation Army*

so long as real estate economics and current planning policies prevent any major redevelopment of areas of existing housing, that character is likely to last and the opportunities for interesting new architecture with a public aspect will be distinctly limited.

But on the borders of Herne Hill the scene is rather different. In recent issues of the Magazine we have looked at the ever-growing presence of the Peabody development at the foot of Herne Hill Road, its effect on the local street scene and, not least, the impact of the 16-storey tower on the neighbourhood and on Ruskin Park. If one leaves the Park and heads for Denmark Hill Station, work is nearing completion on an impressive, in part six-storey addition to the Salvation Army’s William Booth Training College. It arises from the Salvation Army’s decision to leave their territorial headquarters at Elephant and Castle and bring that part of the organisation to join the College at Denmark Hill. When the Salvation Army acquired the



*Champion Park site c1900*

land after the First World War, there was a terrace of mid-Victorian houses (pictured). The new building takes the place of two unremarkable blocks built by the Salvation Army in the 1980s to provide residential accommodation for married couples and families. Designed by architects Tate Hindle and built by McLaren Construction, it departs from the rather forbidding appearance of

Giles Gilbert Scott’s original group of College buildings with its massive central tower as tall as St Paul’s Cathedral. At the same time the overall bulk and mass of the new building mirrors that of the 1920s building and in fact reflect what Gilbert Scott had originally planned, a large wing built out to the west but which was never constructed. The use of brick, though of a rather lighter tone, and the emphasis on the vertical are also characteristics of the older building. But the use of large areas of glazing throughout mark the building out as very much of the present century. This allows a huge full-building-height atrium inside to be filled with natural light. The central atrium is a very striking feature of the design with flexible facilities for working built around it, sufficient for 450 employees and officers. There has been an emphasis on sustainability in construction, for example the use of GGBS (ground granulated blast-furnace slag) concrete and photo-voltaic cells. The new wing will include multifunction rooms, recording studios, an editing suite and a café open to the public. One wishes that the modern additions to its near neighbour, King’s College Hospital, showed the same architectural quality and attention to good design detail, but no doubt financial constraints play their part.

Further up Denmark Hill another recent development is also nearing completion. Built on what used to be part of the spacious grounds in front of Sir Henry Bessemer’s grand house, it uses a slim triangle of land tapering to its apex near the junction with Sunray Avenue. It seems Southwark, having sold the land, originally refused permission in 2017, but on grounds relating to affordable housing criteria rather than design. The developer will now be paying just over £1m to Southwark to be freed from the obligation to include



*New flats at the top of Denmark Hill*

affordable housing. The plan was originally for 10 houses, but this seems now to be altered to 24 duplex units. Until the hoardings are down it is difficult to gauge exactly how the building will work in relation to the street. The amount of ‘amenity space’ at the front (there is none at the back) – given the limited depth of the site – is very restricted. The development does illustrate how the relentless pressure for building more housing in London, whatever the site constraints, shows no sign of abating. Opinions may vary as to the appearance of this latest addition on Herne Hill’s borders, but its undulating tile-hung front elevation does provide an interesting and provoking contrast to its neighbours on Denmark Hill, the four monumental six-storey blocks constructed by Camberwell Council not long after the Second World War.

**Laurence Marsh**

# Transport Notes

## Lime litter louts

Both Lambeth and Southwark are converting parking spaces near shops and transport interchanges for parking by rental e-scooters and bikes, to encourage considerate use of these increasingly popular forms of healthy sustainable transport. On the majority of residential footpaths, however, badly parked bikes are an increasingly frequent obstruction. This is illegal. While I am not a Lime user (rather an annoyed pedestrian) the Lime rules are unequivocal: park out of the way of pedestrians, and apparently users are required to send a photograph of the parked bike to the website, with the threat that “all photos are reviewed”! The website also suggests that users need to send a photo of 18+ ID before use as well. While some of the abandoned bikes may be hi-jacked ones (which make a clicking noise when being ridden) Lime (and the local Boroughs) clearly need to do more to enforce their rules (and the law). Or the able-bodied can take matters into their own hands – you can help people with prams, wheelchair users and the elderly by moving obstructing bikes out of the way. Raise the rear wheel by lifting the saddle, and wheel the offending bike to where it is no longer a nuisance.

## ULEZ expansion

At the time of writing, the major expansion of the Transport for London Ultra Low Emissions Zone to cover all London boroughs on 29 August is still planned, and by the time of reading should be implemented. Herne Hill is already within the existing ULEZ, bounded by the South Circular Road, which was introduced in October 2021. (This was a condition of the Department for Transport funding support package of May 2020, and the planning for widening the scope and levels of the ULEZ scheme was again a requirement of the further Government support package of September 2022). The £12.50 per day charge for the more polluting vehicles in the wider expanded region is contentious, and there are still a large number of older vehicles in use in the expanded area. The area covers a ragged administrative boundary not related to a clear bypass route (although generally within the M25); has more patchy public transport provision than in the original inner London scheme; and only a limited scrappage scheme has been funded to help non-compliant vehicle users swap to a less polluting vehicle.

## Rail station ticket office closures

The Rail Delivery Group (run partly by Network Rail, and partly by the train operators) are proposing to close most of England’s railway station ticket offices, and redeploy the staff elsewhere about the stations. This follows a rise in on-line and machine use, a decline in face-to-face ticket purchase, and funding pressures from



Government. This will cause difficulties for all occasional users, and particularly for disabled passengers and tourists. The intention is to redeploy

ticket office staff ‘out and about’ their stations – probably this will not be universally popular with staff. In London, about 150 station ticket offices are suggested for closure, including 65 operated by Govia Thameslink/ Southern/ Great Northern, and 40 operated by Southeastern. The only local station ticket office NOT threatened with closure is – Herne Hill! A “consultation” (sorry about the repeated use of quotes) was conducted by London Travel Watch and the operators during a few weeks in late July – later extended to 1 September. I presume a station-by-station negotiation will ensue.

## Dulwich Village CPZ proposal

Southwark are pushing ahead with a plan to fill in the gaps between the Controlled Parking Zones in the Borough, with several areas under “consultation” (sorry, more quotes – but the Council has already renewed its enforcement contract with an extra 48 wardens) Dulwich Village has little parking stress, and I am not aware of requests from residents for bringing in a Zone, but the Borough has started a “consultation” (closing date 10 September) to implement a new CPZ in the area bounded by Croxted Road, the South Circular, the southern part of Lordship Lane and parts of Half Moon Lane and East Dulwich Grove. (This meets up with existing CPZs designated ED, P, and HH). An initial “consultation meeting” was converted on the evening into a poorly organised “drop-in” session, with no information apart from a boundary on a map. Most of the residential roads involved have a large proportion of off-street parking, there are no major transport interchanges, while on-street parking mainly involves trades people and visitors to Dulwich Park and Picture Gallery. Given there are only minor commuter parking issues (mainly related to the private schools) and most shopping activity limited to Lordship Lane, it is unclear if the CPZ would operate all day, or just for a couple of working hours during the working week. The Borough annual parking permit charge is currently £225 for most cars, but rising steeply each year. Visitors’ on-street parking permits can be bought by any Southwark resident, with a complex structure of on-line and paper systems, times, and discounts. There is no intention that those vehicles with a local CPZ permit would be exempt from the timed ‘bus gates’ around Dulwich Village.

**Bil Harrison**

## Dear Editor

*I was very interested to read Richard Leeming’s response (Spring 2023) to Bil Harrison’s comments on Dulwich Street Closures Phase 2 - initial ideas in his Transport Notes (Winter 2022). To say I was disappointed would be an understatement.*

*Mr Leeming was granted a whole page for his response but failed to deal with the two issues raised by Bil Harrison. Nothing about the “initial idea” to close Turney Road to vehicle traffic at its junction with Dulwich Village. Nothing about ongoing congestion on Croxted Road or East Dulwich Grove. Instead we got praise for the pedestrianisation of the area outside Herne Hill Station which had nothing to do with Mr Leeming or Southwark Council.*

*One thing that we can all agree with is “the need to bring people with us (the council)”. Something Southwark has failed to do which was evidenced at the meeting referred to in Bil Harrison’s article but not mentioned in Mr Leeming’s reply. And saying that “we’ve made sure the council consults at every step of the way” is downright insulting.*

*Yours sincerely, Yvonne Levy*

## Some dates for your diaries ...

By the time this Magazine reaches you the 2023 Lambeth Heritage Festival will be under way. It offers a rich and diverse collection of walks, talks and activities, more than 40 in all. Lambeth can take great pride in this annual event – and it can only be regretted that Southwark can offer nothing comparable. Details of the Lambeth Heritage Festival can be found here [www.lambeth.gov.uk/lambeth-heritage-festival](http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/lambeth-heritage-festival)

We won't attempt to summarise 40 events. But we can say Herne Hill is not forgotten: **Robert Holden**, indefatigable local history guide for our area, will be leading **three walks**:

- Saturday 9 September starting from Herne Hill Station
- Saturday 16 September starting from Herne Hill Velodrome
- Saturday 23 September starting at All Saints Church (Lovelace Road)

**All walks start at 10am**

Please book via [noticeboard@hernehillsociety.org.uk](mailto:noticeboard@hernehillsociety.org.uk)



Station Square in 1920

# Lambeth Heritage Festival

The Society also has an **online talk on Wednesday 27 September at 6pm**. Its subject is **Station Square** (though the official address remains Railton Road). Drawing on recent, hitherto unpublished research into the shops that grew up around the station, **Laurence Marsh** will be looking at the shopkeepers and their families and the social history of the area 100 and more years ago. Also included will be the station itself, whose arrival in 1862 did so much to create the Herne Hill we know today. The talk will be on Zoom, booking at <https://stationsquare.eventbrite.co.uk>

**Fact check:** for some the imminent arrival in Station Square of a branch of Gail's (see p.7) is a worrying sign – independents replaced by chains. But dig a bit deeper, as the Society's talk on 27 September will seek to do, and you will find that chains are not unknown in Station Square. Next to the shop now being transformed into a Gail's there used to be a Home & Colonial store, one of the 3,000 that at one time spread across the country. It remained for 60 years. There was a branch of Timothy Whites the chemists in what is now Jo's House, one of more than 600 nationally. And the shop (still empty!) next to the railway bridge was for 40 years a tobacconists, A.I. Jones & Co, with multiple branches across London.

## Why are food banks necessary?

Readers who were, rightly, disturbed by the report on food banks in our last issue may also have wondered how the fundamental problems of poverty could be tackled – realising of course that lack of money is the primary reason why people queue up for food handouts. Which alleviate the problem but don't really begin to solve it.

Poverty is of course one of the most pressing problems of our modern society even in relatively prosperous countries like ours, and one frequently debated in the media and in the political world. If the solution was simple, it would have been found by now. In the end, possibly, governments must do the heavy lifting. But many charities at the grassroots level are trying to help on a local and individual basis.

One such national charity, launched in 1996, is Christians Against Poverty (CAP), which has a local foot on the ground at Saint Paul's Church on Herne Hill. Its highly-trained volunteers can offer free help on debt management and household or personal

budgeting, often through setting up a Debt Management Plan and engaging in regular advice sessions including a three-week Money Course – all totally confidential.



Alongside help with debt, CAP runs Job Clubs with weekly workshops and one-to-one sessions. These have a proven record of rebuilding confidence and motivation. They can provide opportunities to connect with local employers who can offer advice and even work experience, and practical help in creating useful CVs.

No religious affiliation is required to access the CAP's services.

All these services can be accessed by telephone on 0800 328 0006, or by dropping into the weekly Hope Café in the church which offers

free refreshments and lunch between 9 am and 4 pm every Thursday (except in August). Anyone who would like to learn more about how CAP could help them, or others, can also contact local representative Jon Taylor on [jontaylor@capuk.org](mailto:jontaylor@capuk.org).

CAP website: <https://capuk.org/>

# THE 2023 HERNE HILL SOCIETY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

## HERITAGE/HISTORY CATEGORY

### Winner

*Friends of Ruskin Park*

### Highly Commended

- Herne Hill Velodrome
- Carnegie Library Hub

## ENVIRONMENT CATEGORY

### Winner

*Herne Hill Tree Watch  
and  
Friends of Sunray  
Gardens*

### Highly Commended

- Brockwell Park  
Community Greenhouses  
and Barn
- Post Box Happy  
Crocheted Toppers

## COMMUNITY CATEGORY

### Winner

*Herne Hill Music Festival*

### Highly Commended

- Andy Gray for Off the  
Cuff Junior Open Mic
- Champs Within  
Boxing Club

A year ago we announced in these pages something the Society had never done before – the Herne Hill Society Excellence Awards was open for entries! Some eyebrows were raised. Is this the sort of thing that local societies such as ours do? Our Chair, Rebecca Tee, was undaunted. This was her brainchild. She approached the project with the same energy and determination that had prompted her to step up almost four years ago, when it looked as if the Society might not survive. Not only has it survived, but membership has risen – a key element in Rebecca’s strategy to strengthen the Society. It has been able to celebrate 40 years since its founding in 1982, has embarked on an ambitious project to explore the history of Herne Hill’s shops, and continues to produce a much-admired Magazine. Rebecca saw the Excellence Awards as a way to highlight what is best about Herne Hill and to give some public recognition to what we too easily take for granted. She was looking for groups or individuals who were working to enhance the community, encourage local engagement or promote civic pride and saw such activity as coming within the three broad categories of Heritage/History, the Environment and Community. Once word spread about the project one could only hope that nominations for the awards would materialise, but it was impossible to predict whether the result would be a soaring rocket or a damp squib.

In the event it turned out to be very much the former. Rebecca had hoped for not less than three nominations in each category nominations, which would provide a Winner and two runners up to be Highly Commended. As the number of nominations grew far beyond expectations the work for the judging panel (Sheila Northover, Colin Wight and Pat Roberts) became more arduous. They put in many hours. Then the less than easy task arose

of finding a suitable venue for the Awards ceremony itself. Rebecca and her team scouted a number of locations and after careful deliberation chose the Temple Bowling Club on Sunset Road. Although just outside the SE24 postal area, which is taken as the Society’s very approximate ‘borders’, it was an ideal location in so many respects – having the required space and facilities (including a bar), ground-floor access and, perhaps above all, an interesting building and unique character unfamiliar to most people.

The other unknown was how many people would attend the ceremony on 27 April. But as the day approached it became clear that there need be no fear of a half-empty room. Although the event was the creation of the Society, it was essentially not about the Society but about the wider Herne Hill community. This was reflected in the fact that about half of those attending were not members of the Society. And, partial though this account may be, it was an exceptionally successful occasion. We were delighted that Helen Hayes MP was able to attend and present the Awards. Also there were our local councillors and a throng of people with the shared wish to see Herne Hill thrive and recognition given to those working to make this happen. Some excellent food and a free drink from the bar helped the evening pass in a most convivial atmosphere.

To Rebecca and her team a huge thank you. Organising such a project and making a public event a reality involve an immense amount of work. We know that other local societies have observed with great interest what this Society has achieved, so do not be surprised if you see similar schemes launched elsewhere. The 2023 Excellence Awards are not seen as a one-off, but, unlike the Oscars, they will not be an annual event. Rebecca would like to see them return in two years’ time, when, if the 2023 Awards are anything to go by, there will surely be just as much to celebrate.



*In this issue we look at those who were given awards in the Heritage/History category and will return to those in the other two categories in subsequent issues.*

## Friends of Ruskin Park – Winner

The park was described 15 years ago in these words: “Today this once elegant small park has a wistful air. Over the last 10 years the Park has been allowed to fall into a state of neglect with rogue motor bikers, dumped cars and dogs roaming the dog free area.” But today, thanks to the unstinting work of the Friends and their engagement with Lambeth Council, the owner of the Park, and other partners, a totally different picture emerges. The former bowling green has become a Labyrinth Garden and a peaceful oasis at the heart of the Park. At the garden’s centre stands the Mendelssohn sundial, fully restored and placed in a more prominent position than before. The portico has been made safe and restored, so too the bandstand, in regular use in the summer months. The paddling pool, thanks to generous financial support from local people and organisations, has undergone overdue repairs and provides endless fun for younger children on warm summer days. In terms of heritage, celebrating the man



*Lucy Hadfield accepts the award for Friends of Ruskin Park from Helen Hayes MP*

whose name was bestowed on the Park has been a particular focus for the Friends. John Ruskin was born in 1819 and the Friends embarked on a series of events to mark the bicentenary, with walks, talks, a photography competition, an exhibition at the Carnegie Library, poetry workshops and a unique oak log carving, suitable for children to clamber on

The Friends had been nominated across all three categories, though had to be, perhaps rather arbitrarily,

confined to one. As Colin Wight remarked, in explaining the judges’ decision, a park can provide so much on so many different levels. Its value during the lockdown as a public space for physical and mental well-being was incalculable. Expressing her delight at the Friends winning an Excellence Award, co-Chair Lucy Hadfield said the categories in the Awards matched the priorities of the Friends’ work and that monitoring and oversight of heritage assets such as Ruskin Park could not be taken for granted – “Heritage is so important and we need to show this to young people.”

## Herne Hill Velodrome Highly Commended

That the Velodrome survives is something of a miracle – the only one to do so of the many cycling tracks that sprang up in London at the very end of the 19th century as cycling took off as a popular sport. The



*... and Thea Smith for the Herne Hill Velodrome*

Velodrome became the premier cycling track in England, with major meetings attracting crowds of 10,000, and was the host for cycling events in the 1948 Olympics – the “Austerity Games”. At other times, with fluctuating demand and maintenance it has seen football, rugby, athletics and tennis, comic entertainment, a World War II barrage balloon site and even allotments. Some 20 years ago the future of the Velodrome looked uncertain.



*Rebecca Tee introducing the Excellence Awards*

Today the Herne Hill Velodrome Trust, a registered charity, working with partners and with support from the Friends of Herne Hill Velodrome, has overall responsibility for the operation of the track and its facilities. Tim McInnes, Chair of the Trustees, said he saw the Excellence Award as “a huge vote of confidence in the work of the team. As well as protecting the velodrome, keeping it open and viable, sustainable and well-used, promotion of the Velodrome’s heritage is an objective for us. We are the custodians of that heritage.”

## Carnegie Library Hub – Highly Commended

The Carnegie Library, opened in 1906 and today a landmark Grade II listed building, has undergone many trials in recent years. Like the Velodrome its future has often looked bleak. In 2016 the Library closed and remained closed for two years, another victim of austerity and changing social patterns. How the Library should be managed was, and to some extent remains, the subject of controversy in the local community, sometimes heated. But the Library remains and still functions as a library, though there have been significant changes.

Lambeth Council, owner of the building, has created a large basement area that houses a gym, part of the plan to see the building as an asset that can produce income as well as use resources. Lambeth have also entrusted the Library’s management to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, the Carnegie Community Trust. Since 2023 the Trust administers the Library under the name Carnegie Library Hub. Its aim is to provide a thriving sustainable centre of local activity attractive to the whole community, with rooms available for a wide range of activities and capable of generating an income that can contribute to the maintenance of the Library.

The Trust wants to see the fabric of the building protected and enhanced and its history and legacy both protected and celebrated. Repairs to the building currently under way reflect that commitment. And the Trust sees the creation of a café in the building, if approved, as a valuable enhancement for the Library.

Beth Prince, one of the trustees, said the Excellence Award came “as a surprise and a delight. It is a great boost for the Carnegie Library Hub, because it is entering a period of renewal with new trustees.”

It was temporarily closed and the Victorian pavilion found only fit for demolition. The future looked bleak.

Britain’s Olympic cycling successes came in the nick of time, and in 2010 a high-profile and brilliantly successful *Save the Velodrome* campaign was launched. Since then, boosted by further cycling success in the London 2012 Olympics, the Velodrome has gone from strength to strength, with new tracks, floodlights and a stylish, award-winning pavilion designed by Hopkins Architects.



*... and Rabi Wilson for the Carnegie Library Hub*

# DRINKING FOUNTAINS

## *Ros Jones investigates*

Until the 1950s the entrance to Brockwell Park was dominated by a particularly grand drinking water fountain. On its top was the bust of Thomas Bristowe, a wealthy stockbroker and Norwood's first MP. He was primarily responsible for the acquisition of the park for the people of London and died on the steps of Brockwell Hall in 1892 on the very day the park was officially opened.

Fountains like this had become an increasingly common sight in London from 1859 onwards. That was the year the first one was erected in Holborn. Until then the only option for huge numbers of people had been to quench their thirsts by drinking cheap beer in pubs. Echoing criticism of water companies today, private water firms had prioritised profits over investment in infrastructure and the result, back then, was that both water quality and coverage were decidedly poor.

By the 1850s pioneering medical research had linked fatal cholera epidemics to polluted water and it had become crystal clear that people were paying for that with their lives. The rapid expansion of drinking water fountains was in large part a response to that public health crisis. Fountains provided access to clean drinking water, vital for the many thousands of homeless people as well as the working poor who often lacked reliable and safe water at home. By the end of the 19th century about a thousand fountains had been installed across London (and countless more in most other cities across the UK).

Funding for individual fountains came from various sources, including wealthy benefactors, local governments and multiple contributions from local residents.

Designs varied but were often decidedly ostentatious. Fountains were frequently sculpted from stone, perhaps marble, fashioned from cast iron or covered with elaborately decorated tiles. Common features included the name of the person who provided the bulk of the funding and some form of biblical messaging. Financing a fountain became a way for philanthropists to gain social prestige while also expressing their religious piety. A moralising mission was clearly there too. Pubs were considered a corrupting force, whereas drinking fountains symbolised the purification of working-class souls.

The upkeep of the structures became the responsibility of The Metropolitan Free Drinking Fountains Association, which also catered for animals by providing access to water for horses, cattle and dogs. It's worth noting that at the foot of Thomas Bristowe's memorial fountain in Brockwell Park there was a drinking trough for dogs.

These fountains proved to be extremely popular, especially in the summer heat. Take one example: on 4 and 5 July 1865, the association recorded 5,603 drinkers using just one central London fountain. There were more than five hundred per hour during the early afternoon, and a steady flow throughout the rest of the day and night.

In a nod to more modern times the fountains were often the focus of vandals. In the association's annual report of 1874 it was noted that the structures were "peculiarly exposed to thoughtless or malicious injury" – perhaps as a reaction to the moralising messages inscribed on them. For a while the association felt forced to pay for security



*Bristowe memorial and fountain c1905*

guards to protect the fountains that were most frequently damaged.

In the early 20th century private water companies were brought under public control and the country's water crisis began to ease. Over time the vast majority of homes were connected to safe and reliable mains water. Then, from about the 1950s onwards, the maintenance costs involved in keeping the thousand or so drinking fountains in working order was often the reason given by local councils to either dismantle them in their entirety – those situated at junctions were particularly vulnerable when road networks were changed - or have their water supply cut off. Brockwell Park's historic fountains disappeared. As well as Thomas Bristowe's there had been at least one other situated near the clock tower.

It was assumed that these civic structures, which had often served a dual purpose as meeting points- the resemblance of some of them to medieval market crosses was intentional - were now neither loved nor needed.

### **But is it time to rethink all that?**

It is estimated that the average Londoner buys three plastic water bottles a week, with 7.7bn bottles bought nationally each year. This creates mountains of plastic waste that takes between twenty and five hundred years to decompose. Partly in response to this 21st-century environmental crisis, drinking fountains are beginning to creep back on to some political agendas. London's Mayor, for example, has already erected one hundred slim-line blue drinking fountains throughout the capital. Brockwell Park has two like this, designed specifically to refill bottles, located near the wet play area and the playground.

In addition there are another three in the park, erected some decades ago, to replace the park's Victorian monuments. These are of a modest utilitarian design – small, squat and easy to miss.

There is an argument that, in constructing new fountains, it's become easier to turn our backs on the city's older ones that still stand. The Heritage of London Trust (HOLT), with no public funds, wants to ensure that doesn't happen. Its director, Nicola Stacey, estimates that across London there are about a hundred Victorian fountains left. So far HOLT has restored about 10 of them and has another dozen in the pipeline. Stacey says that the organisation is keen to hear from members of the public who are aware of neglected historic fountains in need of attention.

So far HOLT has focused its efforts on monuments with particular

historic or artistic merit that are situated in locations where the beneficial impact of a water fountain – even if that means moving it from its original location - will be most keenly felt.

In a more modest vein to the research carried out by the Metropolitan Free Drinking Fountains Association in 1865, HOLT has assembled its own statistics on the public's attitude to one such fountain in Wimbledon. A minority of those questioned on 6 July of this year said that they had previously known nothing about Joseph Toynbee, whose life the fountain commemorates.

He was a pioneering ear surgeon who treated Queen Victoria and fought to keep Wimbledon Common open to the public. The monument's refurbishment has successfully brought him back to prominence in the neighbourhood where he once lived. Perhaps more importantly, though, 79% of those interviewed said that, as a result of having easy access to drinking water while out and about, they would in future be buying fewer plastic bottles.



*The Behrend fountain*

For Herne Hill residents, the nearest example of HOLT's work can be seen in West Norwood. A water fountain was erected there in 1906 by the widow of Dr Henry Behrend to commemorate her husband's 20-year career at the Jewish Orphanage. This institution was founded in Mile End in 1795 but relocated to what would then have been open countryside, and is now South London, in 1866.

The orphanage buildings were demolished in

1961 and replaced with a school. As a result the water fountain was removed for safe keeping and not re-instated until many decades later. The new health centre built in 2015 now has the water fountain in its grounds but the Lion of Judah on top has gone and the restoration promised by HOLT has yet to take place.

One of HOLT's frustrations is that over the years some councils have filled historic fountains' bowls with concrete– maybe to ensure they are not used as rubbish bins.



*Ruskin Park fountain*

Stacey says that this amounts to desecration, particularly because in many cases restoring the water supply to old monuments, which are still in a reasonable condition, costs less than erecting new ones.

What seems unlikely is that any new fountains will linger in the public imagination in the way the monumental ones, often adorned with the names of wealthy individuals who provided much of the money to build them, once did. Instead, the modern bottle-filler fountains are

often emblazoned with the name and logo of whichever private water company helped fund them. So one thing at least remains unchanged – the provision of public water is still helping to support the reputations of private individuals or, nowadays, private companies.

## So what is a “Soviet tree”?

And what is the connection to Herne Hill? The answer can be found in the definitive guide by Paul Wood (yes, his real name) in his *London's Street Trees: a Field Guide to the Urban Forest* (rev. edn 2020). As the planet heats and we seek to find ways to mitigate some of the consequences urban trees have acquired a

new and urgent importance. This was surely reflected in the fact that in the Society's Excellence Awards earlier this year, the winner in the Environmental category (something we will cover fully in the next issue of the Magazine) was Herne Hill Tree Watch, a community group on the Southwark side of Herne Hill dedicated to the care of existing street trees and the planting of new trees in their area. But to get back to



the “Soviet tree” – Paul Wood identifies one in Fawnbrake Avenue, part of a tree walk around Herne Hill singled out for special mention in his book. He gives it this name because of its link to Uzbekistan, once part of the Soviet Union. In the 1960s a botanical scientist at the oldest and largest botanical garden in Central Asia, the Tashkent Botanic Garden, managed by the Uzbek Academy of Sciences, created a hybrid that in due course found its way to America and from there to Europe. It combined a tree native to North America, the Desert Willow (*Chilopsis linearis*) and the Catalpa or Indian bean tree (*Catalpa speciosa/Catalpa ovata*). The result is the Chitalpa, a hardy medium-size tree well-suited to the rigours of urban existence and producing, in addition to elegant willow-like foliage, attractive tubular flowers with frilled edges.

Gone are the days when almost every street tree was a London plane. There is now a huge variety. Residents of Fawnbrake Avenue, who six years ago got together to help fund the planting of 40 trees by Lambeth – a project assisted by this Society – will be aware of this. The Soviet tree pre-dates that planting by a few years. Round the corner, in Lowden Road, there are three more examples, one of which we picture. It illustrates the perils that our street trees undergo from vans and lorries thoughtlessly parked. However, like the tower at Pisa, it shows every sign of wanting to stay put.

**Laurence Marsh**



# OXFAM ON HALF MOON LANE

**T**hank you to residents in the Herne Hill area for your custom and donations. The combination of local support and hard work in 2022-23 raised £403K!

## Why buy from Oxfam?

For every £1 donated to Oxfam, 84p directly helps emergency, development and campaign work, 8p supports running costs and 8p goes on fundraising.

Oxfam works to end poverty, its causes and consequences. Its projects help millions get safe, clean water, build and equip schools and sustain women-run businesses. It responds urgently where communities are hit by disasters: flooding in Pakistan, drought in Kenya.

It helps address livelihoods in crisis: the average income of a



Ghanaian cocoa farmer fell by 16% at the start of the pandemic, while the average profits of the four top chocolate corporations rose by the same rate. Oxfam have challenged chocolate corporations' sustainability programmes which fail to deliver on promises to raise crop prices paid to cocoa farmers.

Buying Fairtrade chocolate gives farmers a premium price for cocoa beans in Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire.

A gift of an 'Oxfam Unwrapped' card may have more impact than a physical present when the receiver knows that £10-£25 has been targeted at stronger

communities, women at work or climate justice.

## Why donate to Oxfam?

Its online sales attract considerable interest and that is satisfying for an item that means a lot to you and certainly for the benefit of vital global projects.

## What can you donate?

Half Moon Lane boasts two Oxfam shops. Inside Number 9 are all the book donations. Number 20 can't take electricals but can take clothes, bric-à-brac, vinyl records and 'designer', 'niche' or collectable items.

Donations distinguish the seasons and the era: a discarded Christmas present, a corkscrew, typewriter, writing paper and a defunct money box, a redundant handkerchief – and thereby hangs a tale ... An embroidered handkerchief was left anonymously in a bag of clothes. It was recognised as by the artist Tracey Emin. On sale for half the price it would fetch at auction, it was stolen from the shop before Christmas 2021. Hearing of the theft, Emin offered



Oxfam a limited edition artwork of a Paralympics lithograph which was then auctioned and raised even more funds for clean water where it was desperately needed.

## Who runs the shop?

Fifteen years ago Gokcen Erdinc arrived from Turkey, improved her English as a volunteer at Oxfam and now, at Herne Hill, she is manager of three deputies and a host of volunteers.

Anthony worked in Beckenham Oxfam where they accepted four bags a day, not every hour, as at Herne Hill. Nina trained in window-dressing and worked for M&S as well as Oxfam in Wimbledon Village. She shares her precision and creativity with volunteers and the displays are a source of surprise and fun. Selen volunteered at Herne Hill Oxfam and now sells donations online, which alone made £61k last year from accessories like scarves, shoes and handbags – a Bottega Venetia handbag sold for £2000.

## Why volunteer with Oxfam?

Four hours of volunteering time equates to hand-washing provision for 150 people. Herne Hill's team of about 30 volunteers come because it's worthwhile, it's fun, good for their mental health, to learn skills or as a stepping stone to a job. Fancy putting out items or being on the till? Pop in to discuss possibilities.

## Why is there a cut-off time for donations?

Because the shop is open every day (Monday to Saturday 10am-6pm and Sunday 11am-4pm) and staff sort items on a daily basis; one bag of donations per person per day and a cut-off time – two hours before the shop shuts – ensure staff in the small sorting area aren't overwhelmed.

## Why sign up for Gift Aid?

Government funding for charities enables Oxfam to claim an extra 25% for an item sold if you are a UK taxpayer. It's easy to set up and really worthwhile.

Two Oxfams make Half Moon Lane worth a detour. Oxfam is good for the community of Herne Hill and for communities worldwide.

**Becca Thackray**



# The Editor has asked me ...

## ...to write a poem about Herne Hill. *Et voilà!*

*In Herne Hill's embrace, a vibrant scene,  
Where streets unfold with charm serene.  
South London's gem, where stories bloom,  
A tapestry woven with history's loom.  
A gentle slope, where nature's grace,  
Paints parks and paths in verdant embrace.  
Herne Hill's heart, Brockwell's green,  
Where sunlit meadows invite the serene.  
Beneath the arch of a Victorian past,  
Lies a neighborhood built to forever last.  
Majestic homes, their facades declare,  
An elegance steeped in Victorian flair.  
The rhythmic pulse of the railway's beat,  
Echoes tales of commuters' hurried feet.  
Platform greetings, a familiar hum,  
Connecting souls as journeys come.  
A market thrives, its treasures displayed,  
Artisans' craft and delicacies arrayed.  
From fresh produce to vintage find,  
Community spirit, a binding bind.  
In cafes, laughter dances on the air,  
A symphony of flavors, aromas to share.  
Friendships forged over cups of delight,  
In Herne Hill's warmth, day turns to night.  
Through history's chapters, a spirit endures,  
Of Herne Hill's people, their hopes and cures.  
From Lido's splash to Half Moon's stage,  
A tapestry rich, their stories engage.  
So let us wander, where Herne Hill weaves,  
Its magic in every corner it breathes.  
In South London's embrace, a vibrant sight,  
Herne Hill's essence, a beacon of light.*

What were you expecting? "O muse, guide my pen for I have tales to tell of sun-kissed SE24"? Something more avant-garde? A rap? I admit it: I'm not much of a poet. But, though I'll never topple T.S. Eliot from his pedestal, bear in mind that it only took me all of 10 seconds to come up with it.

Some readers may have twigged that this doggerel was written by a robot. Artificial Intelligence is always in the news these days. There are justifiable fears that AI will do many of us out of a job (if we have one) and steal our money. And lead to the extinction of the human race. But back to the versifying.

Need to write a poem, a song or an essay without making an effort? Simply create a free account with ChatGPT and ask it to do it for you. I typed "Write a poem about Herne Hill, South London." That is all (but note that I added "South London" to my request in order to exclude references to Western Australia, with its wineries and kangaroos).

Almost instantly, words began to appear on my screen, and literally

a few seconds later I had 32 lines of verse. You might think it's not very good ("a binding bind" for goodness' sake!), but if you were a foreign student of English perhaps it would get you a GCSE pass? I talked to a friend who teaches English in France and she has little doubt that it would. In fact it's becoming a significant problem, and more difficult to detect than old-fashioned copying and pasting from the internet. Psychologists will tell you that, statistically, most people will cheat if they get the opportunity. Especially if they think everybody else is doing it.



It's interesting to see what the chatbot considers to be a poem.

Rhyming quatrains (AA, BB), for a start: bland, generic, repetitious – even pseudo-Victorian. Shades of Christina Rossetti, even Betjeman at his least inspired. But does it not align with Herne Hill's pastiche "Gothic" architecture that Ruskin railed against? On the other hand, robots speak with an American accent (e.g. neighborhood, flavors). The battle for British spelling is all but lost.

It is also interesting to see what it knows about Herne Hill: railways, Lido, Brockwell Park, market. No reference to the Velodrome though, and "Half Moon's stage" no longer exists, although there are occasional performances in The Workshop. All's well in Herne Hill; fortunate are those who live there. But what of the muggings, graffiti, speeding cars?

Essentially AI creates stereotypical material based, of course, on what it can scrape from the Internet. It is programmed to shun sexist and racist language (though it can be tricked). It is not trying to create something avant-garde, ironic, controversial ... as I said, it's not T.S. Eliot. Of course I could have given it a more complex instruction, such as "Write a poem about Herne Hill in the style of Ted Hughes or T.S. Eliot or John Betjeman". But I didn't. This is the default poem.

To copy-and-paste Wikipedia: "Some scholars have expressed concern that ChatGPT's availability could reduce the originality of writing, cause people to write more like the AI as they are exposed to the model, and encourage an Anglocentric perspective centred on a few dialects of English globally."

And for my next project, I hear you ask? A crime novel perhaps: *Silent Shadows of Herne Hill*

"In the serene neighborhood of Herne Hill, South London, a chilling crime takes place that challenges the boundaries of perception. *Silent Shadows of Herne Hill* is a captivating crime novel that unfolds within the confines of a detective's home, where she battles illness while investigating a baffling murder. Detective Laura Thornton, once a brilliant investigator, finds herself confined to her home due to a recent illness that has rendered her blind. Despite her physical limitations, her sharp mind and indomitable spirit remain intact. When a well-known local historian is found dead under suspicious circumstances, Laura's thirst for justice reignites ..."

**Colin Wight** (assisted by ChatGPT and Wikipedia)

# THE ELFINDALE STORY

– *more is revealed*

It is always a pleasure to receive a response to what we publish in this magazine. A year ago we had an article by Mike Tuffrey that gave the story of Henry William Segelcke, a 19th-century German merchant who prospered and lived until his death at Elfindale Lodge on Herne Hill, one of the many grand villas that used to line the road, all of which disappeared 100 and more years ago. Mike Tuffrey's great grandfather worked for Henry Segelcke as his coachman. The story made its way to south-west London and I was contacted by Robin Wedderburn, the great-great-grandson of Henry Segelcke and great grandson of his only child, Mathilde (or Matilda) who married the lawyer and Ruskin editor Alexander Wedderburn KC. The Wedderburns are a Scottish family with a long history, which includes an ancestor who met a gruesome end on Kennington Common, executed for treason, following the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, and whose sons went on – all the family's property having been seized by the Crown – to make a fortune in the West Indies, thanks to the labour of enslaved people.



*Mathilde Segelcke*

about Mathilde after her marriage and also portraits of the protagonists – except one of Wilmot. The absence of her portrait is not so surprising, because the identity of Mathilde's mother had been a family mystery for more than a century. Somehow her true origins had been very successfully obscured. One story in the family was that Mathilde's mother was a Russian ballerina. Miranda's grandfather had tried to discover his own mother's origins 50 years ago, but drew a blank. It was a mystery that Miranda was determined to solve.

Henry Segelcke never married Wilmot but he made generous provision for both her and their daughter. From Miranda Johnson's research in Devon Archives we know that Wilmot had money

for the building of two cottages in her native Bideford and left her mother a substantial house in the town. Wilmot died young at the age of 32. In her final illness she had returned to Bideford, but Henry, her husband in all but name, had her body brought back to London and she was buried in Lambeth Cemetery.

We also now know something about Mathilde's daily life, because Miranda



*Henry William Segelcke*

had access to the diaries that Mathilde kept after her marriage. From these it is clear that she became a fully integrated member of the Victorian upper class, something which, without her father's support, would never have been possible. They reveal a very busy life – from her home in Cadogan Place, a dizzying social round of lunches, teas, dinners and balls, with private views of the latest art exhibitions and many visits to the theatre (including the opening night of *Lady Windermere's Fan*). There was walking for miles, across London, in Scotland, Switzerland and the Lake District. And in the 1890s she was one of the many women who discovered the pleasures of cycling. The diaries also reveal that father and daughter had a very close relationship, with Mathilde and her children making frequent visits to Elfindale Lodge on Herne Hill. It was a terrible blow when Mathilde died aged only 34 in 1898, predeceasing her father by three years.

With the help of surviving original documents made available by Robin Wedderburn it has also been possible to learn more about Henry Segelcke. We knew he was born in Cuxhaven in 1813, but did not know that at the age of 15 he went to Amsterdam where he worked in a counting house for the next six years, then moving to London to work for an established German merchant, J. Horstman. Another "find" was the existence of a letter written by Henry to a friend in 1839, describing a short holiday in Paris, with fascinating detail about travel in a pre-railway age and the pleasures Paris had to offer to the young visitor.

Sadly, however, no visual record of Elfindale Lodge seems to have survived. Our thanks, however, to Robin Wedderburn and Miranda Johnson for making it possible for us to show these family portraits and allow us a further insight into two of Herne Hill's past residents.

**Laurence Marsh**

## SHAPING IMPRESSIONISM IN DULWICH

**S**adly, this review can probably only be read after the exhibition closes, but what Jeff Doorn writes will serve to remind us of the exceptional quality of this artist and record one of Dulwich Picture Gallery's most rewarding exhibitions.

It has been over 70 years since a major exhibition was held in the UK celebrating the work of Berthe Morisot (1841-1895). Dulwich Picture Gallery, in collaboration with Musee Marmottan Monet, has closed the gap beautifully with *Berthe Morisot: Shaping Impressionism*.



Born in 1841, Morisot began training as an artist at the age of 16. Excluded from the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, she nevertheless began showing her work at the Salon de Paris from 1864 and went on to become a founding member of the Impressionist group.

Despite the prevailing dismissive attitudes to women artists, she proved herself a leading figure, appearing prominently in all but one of the nine Impressionist exhibitions, missing that because of pregnancy. She also modelled for friend and brother-in-law Edouard Manet.

We begin with a bold self-portrait, the serious painter turned away from her palette to meet the viewer with a confident gaze. Two open-air paintings, *Summer's Day* and *In the Bois de Boulogne* feature model Marie Renard in a blue dress and yellow hat, painted early in the morning to avoid curious crowds.

While male painters often depicted café or street scenes, Morisot preferred more intimate moments. *At the Ball* shows a dark-haired beauty holding an 18th-century fan – and the actual fan is in a display case here. *Woman at her Toilette* is seen from the back as she unpins her hair before the bedroom mirror. The softness of the surroundings emerges from feathery brush strokes. She captured fleeting moments in daily life, such as the exquisite painting (pictured right) of her sister Edma, also an artist, watering a plant on a Parisian terrace.

Morisot declared, "I like either extreme novelty or things of the past." Inspired by 18th-century art, she created her own versions of fashionable ladies, elegant interiors and working girls in domestic settings. These pictures are shown alongside works by Chardin

and Watteau. Her swift, vigorous method presents a still *Reclining Woman in Grey* near Boucher's *Madame de Pompadour*, while her face-on, upright *Girl on a Divan* relates to Fragonard's *Young Woman*.

In 1875 she travelled to the Isle of Wight, where she painted husband Eugene, and then on to London. "The things I saw gave me a great desire to become acquainted with English painting." Romney's *Mrs Mary Robinson* inspired a similarly-posed woman with muff in Morisot's *Winter*. Other paintings echo Reynolds and Gainsborough. Grosvenor House catalogues are also on display.

Morisot created dialogues with the past from a new, feminine perspective, exploring inner life plus interpretations of grand mythical scenes. She gave prominence to minor figures, such as nymphs extracted from Boucher canvases.

The final part of the exhibition focuses on portraits of family and friends during the last decade of Morisot's life. With her south-facing window, she could observe the shifting light. "My ambition was limited to waiting to capture something of what goes by, just something, the smallest thing." There are several depictions of daughter Julie and niece Paule. In one, the latter is painting, her still profile contrasted with a rapidly moving hand. Paule also appears in a ballgown which reflects the colours around her.

*Portrait of Madame Eschaliere*, her lifelong friend, at a Louis XV marquetry table, and *Young Girl Reclining* on an Empress style chaise longue evoke Morisot's reimagining the past.

*The Dovecot at Mesnil* celebrates the family's new home in 1892; but Eugene died a few months later, and Berthe moved to an apartment with her daughter. The poignant *Julie Manet and her Greyhound Laertes* (pictured left) shows the 14-year-old in mourning for her father, an empty chair nearby.

**Jeff Doorn**



From 9 September to 25 February 2024, London-based Syrian artist Sara Shamma presents *Bold Spirits*, a new body of work which responds to the Gallery's historic collection with a focus on paintings of women. This is a natural follow-on to the Berthe Morisot exhibition.



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