

HERNE HILL

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HERNE HILL SOCIETY ❧ ISSUE 147 ❧ Autumn/Winter ❧ 2019 ❧ £3.00

HERNE HILL 1914-1918

IN MEMORY OF ALL THE PEOPLE
OF HERNE HILL WHO SUFFERED
IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE WAR
INCLUDING MORE THAN FIVE
HUNDRED WHO LOST THEIR LIVES

Never such innocence again

THIS STONE WAS PLACED HERE IN 2019 ON BEHALF OF
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A PIECE OF WELSH SLATE
TO OUTLIVE US ALL

► See page 4

HERNE HILL'S
BEST-SELLING NOVELIST

► See page 15

NEW FUTURE FOR OLD DAIRY

► Turn to page 11



The Magazine of the Herne Hill Society



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The future of the Society

The Society's November meeting was given over to just one subject: the Society's future. There was a lively discussion and we are grateful to all who came. It was clear to us that they did so because they feel a strong loyalty to the Society and want to see it continue, even if that means contemplating something different to what it has been up until now. We are aware that the Society, like many local amenity societies, was created almost 40 years ago, using a model that has probably not adapted sufficiently to a changing world – one only has to think of how methods of communication have altered in that period. We also recognise that just as the Society has grown older so has its Committee and (we suspect) its membership, on average. This makes it harder to face up to changing the model that has stood us in good stead.

The November meeting has given us grounds for hope. It seems unlikely that sufficient people will step forward to restore the size of the Committee to what it strictly should be and to carry on the work of the Society exactly as before. However, several people

have expressed a wish to find practicable ways to preserve a distinctive role for the Society, especially where it does so in providing a voice for Herne Hill that other groups do not – for example, in the planning field.

What we will do is put together a working group that will draw in those who want to see the Society endure but who are prepared to introduce changes, possibly quite radical, to make that possible. Three key members of the Committee are committed to leaving next year. If a way forward can be found, we must find it as a matter of urgency.

We will keep everyone informed of progress. At the same time we can only repeat a plea we have made so often before – that a Society such as ours depends on its members. If you were not able to come to the recent meeting and have your own ideas about how to secure a future for the Society please get in touch. We are listening.



Christmas Credit

TV Christmas adverts timed to touch our heart strings – and loosen those of our purses – have become a regular event. This year Visa, with the message “Show your High Street Some Love”, have chosen Herne Hill for a starring role in their seasonal offering. You can view it here : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UnywHTN8tI>.



Hats off to Jim Davidson, Herne Hill picture framer – and profiled in our Spring issue – here in fine voice and the first of a chorus of South London shopkeepers who take it in turns to sing Queen's “Somebody to Love”. Herne Hill in a thin dusting of snow has certainly never looked prettier. Now all we need to do is take out our flexible friends and show our High Street some love.

OUR AUSTRALIAN VISITORS

In September it was an especial pleasure to greet visitors from Australia who made their way to Herne Hill with the specific purpose of visiting the area where their grandfathers had once lived. We had made contact through our research into the First World War, in which both men died. Our first visitor was Frankie Maclean, granddaughter of Fred Lucas and niece of Grace Lucas who wrote of her experience of growing up in our area during the Great War. It was through Frankie that we learned



Val and Martin

of the memoir that we were proud to publish last year as *Grace's Story*. We took Frankie to see Kemerton Road, where the family had lived, and Herne Hill Road, where the Lucas children, including Frankie's father, went to school at St Saviour's. Frankie was followed shortly afterwards by Val Kingsley-Strack and her brother Martin Lewis, the grandchildren of Alfred Nisbett. This time we took Val and Martin to Trinity Rise (or “Road”, as it was in



Frankie with Colin

those days), where Alfred and his wife Winifred and their daughter Kathleen lived. It was particularly pleasing to gain access to Holy Trinity

Church, although officially closed, and find Alfred's name on the fine altar screen memorial, something Val and Martin were not previously aware of.

Colin Wight and Laurence Marsh

Your starter for 10...

When did the last tram run through Herne Hill?



A Date for your Diary Quiz Night and Flash Sale

**Wednesday
11 December 2019, 7.45pm
Herne Hill United Church
Hall, Red Post Hill**

Quiz questions from Dave & Annie Gelly, Laurence Marsh and Colin Wight.

We will be offering festive pre-Christmas (and pre-Election) cheer with mince pies, and there may even be prizes for the lucky winner or winners. We will, as usual, also run a raffle, though on this occasion we propose to give all proceeds to Herne Hill Welcomes Refugees.

With the opportunity to buy Society books and maps at low low prices for one night only ... perfectly timed for Christmas.

In view of uncertainty facing the Society's future and the practical problems of running the Society with such a depleted committee, we are not undertaking a programme of future talks and events at this time.

NEVER SUCH INNOCENCE AGAIN

Half Moon Lane is a chilly place at this time of the year but I am basking in the warm glow of a job well done. As I write, it's nearly a week since a very successful event at Herne Hill Station on Remembrance Sunday and I am still asking myself how we did it. In less than six months we planned and delivered something that even a year ago would have seemed most unlikely: a hand-carved memorial slate in prime position in central Herne Hill's most important building.

A new 1914-18 war memorial for Herne Hill was on the agenda two and a half years ago when we were sketching out our research project with the Charter School but... where would we put it, what would it say, who would design it, what would it cost? With no clear answers and so much else to do, we put the idea to one side. A year ago we published the memorial website and our little book to schedule, then held Herne Hill's first ever two-minute silence on Armistice Day: an event that left many close to tears. A perfect way to celebrate the completion of the project. Except that it wasn't complete; there were literally hundreds of casualties left to investigate.

One fine June morning Dave Statham, Managing Director of Southeastern and a great supporter of community projects in Herne Hill, said to me "How about a permanent memorial in the station? You commission it and we'll pay for it". No committee, no fiddling about with our proposed text (though we did check that we had got the name of the railway

company right!). We were trusted to get on with it. Through the Lettering Arts Trust Mark Brooks' name was suggested. When we met him at the station in June, Laurence and I were sure we had found our man. Southeastern liked his work as much as we did and I wrote him a letter of appointment.

So here we are. Websites and books come and go but a big lump of Welsh slate is as permanent as it gets. It will outlive us all.

The Background

After preliminary research that started five years ago the Herne Hill Society, with help from the students of the Charter School North Dulwich and other local volunteers, embarked in 2017 on a National Lottery-funded project to identify all the servicemen and women from Herne Hill who died in the First World War. The database now contains over 540 records and our team continues to discover and investigate more casualties. For their help in realising the project that culminated in the unveiling of the memorial at Herne Hill Station the Society records its special thanks to:

- Karen Brookfield • Mark Brooks • John Brunton • Mary Carter-Campbell • James Castle • John Conway • Sophie Elder • Walter Feeny • David Gibson • Helen Hayes • Robert Holden • Tricia Keracher-Summerfield • Frankie Maclean • Laurence Marsh • Ian McInnes • Elaine Partleton • Patrick Roberts • Kate Roncoroni • Jessie Ross • David Statham • Dan Townsend • Anne Williams
- Colin Wight**





Helen Hayes unveils the memorial slate



*Mark Brooks,
stonecarver and calligrapher*



*Jessie Ross, pupil from Charter
School reads Larkin's MCMXIV*



Elaine Partleton with young helper



*from left: David Statham, Colin Wight,
Mark Brooks and Helen Hayes*



Walter Feeny



*Becca Thackray
with town crier*

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2019

photos: Tricia Keracher-Summerfield

A December Election



Herne Hill voters have been kept busier than usual over the last few years. Unusually this time we will have to fit in our visit to the polling station between the Christmas shopping, the first time this has happened since 1923. In that year an election was precipitated by two factors: the death of the Conservative prime minister Andrew Bonar Law – he happened to be MP for Dulwich – after less than a year in office and the

decision of his successor Stanley Baldwin to try to improve on his comfortable majority in Parliament in order to have a clear mandate for his economic policies. The decision backfired and the result was a hung parliament – which sounds not unfamiliar. At that date Herne Hill was partly in the constituency of Norwood and partly in that of Dulwich. Both returned Conservatives to Parliament and continued to do so until 1945. Boundary changes saw both constituencies abolished in 1997 and the present constituency of Dulwich and West Norwood emerged. We are hoping to have this magazine out before election day on 12 December so in that hope we publish the names of those we understand to be standing for Dulwich and West Norwood:

- Jonathan Bartley (Green Party)
- Helen Hayes (Labour)
- Anthony Hodgson (Christian Peoples Alliance)
- Jane Lyons (Conservative)
- John Plume (UKIP)
- Julia Stephenson (Brexit Party)

Helen Hayes was elected as MP in 2015 and re-elected in 2017. At the last election her majority was 28,156 over the Conservatives on a turnout of 71.9%. Jane Lyons was until 2018 a councillor for Southwark Village Ward. Jonathan Bartley is the co-leader of the UK Green Party. The Liberal Democrats are not standing, having reached an agreement with the Green Party not to do so.

Professor Godfrey Boyle

If you had seen a slight, elderly man taking his daily stroll in Ruskin Park, browsing the shelves in the Carnegie Library or taking coffee in a Herne Hill café you would never guess you were looking at an international authority on Renewable Energy. Long-term Herne Hill resident, and my friend, Professor Godfrey Boyle died in July.

Godfrey grew up in Ireland and read Electrical Engineering at Queens' University, Belfast, in the 1960s. He was active in the struggle for Civil Rights and operated a pirate radio station to beam out news, gossip and information on protests and demonstrations; an early example of social media! He also produced a range of innovative alternative technology technical magazines. He was my running mate for Deputy President

when I stood for election as President of the Students' Union on a progressive and Civil Rights ticket in what was then a deeply conservative university. We won, but, alas, Godfrey had neglected his studies and failed his finals, so left without a degree.

He came to England to work as a journalist, where he met his wife Sally, and then founded the influential radical technology magazine *Undercurrents*. His interest in renewable energy grew and in 1975 he wrote *Living on the Sun*, that advanced the then revolutionary idea that industrial countries could power themselves from renewable energy. Much derided at the time, the ideas Godfrey developed 40 years ago are now conventional wisdom. In 1975 he co-edited the truly pioneering

and influential book *Radical Technology*. He was appointed lecturer at the Open University, where he established the Alternative Technology Group to research energy and the environment. Godfrey led ground-breaking renewable energy projects on wind turbines (his speciality), solar energy and early electric cycles. His crowning achievement was to develop the Open University's highly-acclaimed courses in Renewable Energy, and his host of books and research papers remain definitive texts throughout the world. He was the go-to person for generations of academics and researchers in Alternative Technology. In 2009 in recognition he was appointed Professor of Renewable Energy and, on retirement, Emeritus Professor.

A supporter of the Carnegie



Library, he developed ideas for converting it into a renewable energy-powered building should Lambeth deliver its promise to gift it to the community.

Professor Godfrey Andrew Boyle became ill in November last year but until his death welcomed a stream of friends and colleagues to his bedside. He is survived by his ex-wife Sally, two daughters, Holly and Katie, four grandchildren, and his partner Romy. To his admirers worldwide Godfrey had an M.Sc. in Vision and a Ph.D. in Faith in the Human Race.

Fred Taggart

Cleaner Greener Safer

The Herne Hill Society is supporting three applications from local residents in Southwark Council's annual round of bidding for community projects.

Two of them are for street trees in Southwark's half of SE24, while the third is for road safety improvements on Half Moon Lane. They're each looking for a share of the £60,000 which has been allotted for Dulwich Village ward under the Cleaner Greener Safer programme (CGS).

CGS funds schemes that benefit the environment, public health and community safety. Bids that meet the criteria are scrutinised by Councillors Margy Newens and Richard Leeming. Their decision on which projects get financial backing will be announced on 11 February 2020.

The tree proposals have been put together by Paul Millington, the chair of the Friends of Sunray Gardens and a resident of Red Post Hill, and Jeff Segal, who lives in Warmington Road. Helped by former ward councillor Robin Crookshank Hilton, Paul and Jeff spent a few weeks over the



summer looking at all the street trees in the neighbourhood bounded by Herne Hill in the north, Half Moon Lane in the south, Sunray Avenue in the east and Carver Road in the west. They found some trees in distress, which they reported to the council, many gaps along the pavement where new saplings might go, and a number of empty tree pits where previous plantings had died.

Paul drew up a list of 12 potential sites for new or replacement trees on Beckwith Road, Casino Avenue, Elmwood Road, Red Post Hill, Sunray Avenue and Wyneham Road. Jeff identified 14 locations on Danecroft Road, Elfindale Road, Frankfurt Road, Half Moon Lane, Hollingbourne Road, Holmdene Avenue, Ruskin Walk and Warmington Road. They each applied for £10,000, covering the cost of the trees and the work needed to dig new pits. The council's tree officers have been kept in touch and Paul and Jeff are now gathering residents' views on the kinds of tree they prefer and where they should go.

Jeff also drafted a £5,000 bid for electronic speed signs on Half Moon Lane and Village Way which has additional support from the Herne Hill Forum and the Dulwich Society.

These two streets make up part of the busy A2214 from Brixton to Peckham, but they have no physical infrastructure to curb speeds. The LED signs would show the 20mph limit and a Slow Down message when vehicles are travelling too fast. Other versions display the speed of the approaching car plus a smiley or unhappy

face. Locals routinely complain about fast traffic and dangerous driving on Half



Moon Lane, which has seen some serious accidents, and speeds have also risen this year on Village Way since a new controlled parking zone cleared the road of parked cars.

Regular Community Roadwatch sessions testify to the high numbers of cars and vans consistently going at 25mph or above on the two streets, often by a very wide margin. They're very effective when the Roadwatch team of police and volunteers are standing at the roadside in hi-vis jackets, but speeds shoot up again when they leave.

Jeff Segal

BREAK IN

Visitors to Dulwich Picture Gallery on Thursday 14 November were surprised to find a notice saying that the gallery was temporarily closed. News emerged later in the day that there had been an attempted theft of two Rembrandt pictures from the current exhibition (we review the exhibition at p. 17). A thief, or possibly thieves, managed to enter the building on Wednesday night and remove the pictures, but alarms were set off at 11.30pm and police arrived



quickly at the scene. The pictures were abandoned in the grounds of the gallery when a thief was challenged by police but, after spraying a policeman with an unknown substance, managed to escape. At the time of writing investigations are continuing and no further information has been disclosed. Meanwhile the whole gallery has remained closed. For the gallery a Rembrandt exhibition is a major crowd-puller and we can only hope that they are able to open their doors again very soon.

NEWS

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Women war workers of Herne Hill, June 1944

The front cover on our Summer issue provoked considerable interest. Not only was it a striking image – and all the more so for being a colour photograph taken 75 years ago – but it also raised two interesting questions. The image



came with the description “Women war workers taking a break for PT on the lawn in the garden at Herne Hill whilst making life saving devices for the RAF”. So what exactly were they making? And secondly, which Herne Hill garden is shown?

Because of the expense of purchasing the rights we could not show a companion photograph. Visible on the Getty Images website this photograph shows the women working at tables in the garden. On each table there are piles of light khaki-coloured rings about 4 inches across; a few wooden formers held in stands with rings slipped

over them; and what look like fabric sleeves stretched over these rings like concertinas. Lengths of strapping are also being handed out. Thanks to Jeff Segal and his sister the answer to the first question is that the women were making hand-operated emergency bellows. Research among dealers in vintage wartime equipment revealed that the bellows were provided for one-man inflatable survival dinghies. The dinghies – known as the K-type – were designed for use when fighter pilots had to ditch their aircraft in the sea. They were made in rubberised cotton with a cape and hood to keep the airman dry, an aluminium mast and a cotton sail, all folded up and attached to his parachute or lifejacket. The dinghy was initially inflated by a CO₂ cylinder, but the bellows were needed for topping up. Before they were introduced in 1942 the pilot only had his Mae West survival vest to keep him afloat – not very effective for survival in the North Sea unless the pilot could be picked up quickly or was close enough to swim to the shore.

The answer to the second question is more elusive. Assuming the Herne Hill attribution is correct, it can be said with certainty that the houses no longer exist. A good guess is that these two substantial shown in the background used to stand

in Burbage Road, where Donne Court, houses on Delawyk Crescent and a number of garages now stand. There are other possibilities, though this would place the houses more in West Dulwich than Herne Hill.

What still remains a mystery is why war work would be informally carried out in a garden. One suspects that the event



Airman with bellows

was created for morale boosting and propaganda purposes, in which event one would expect the pictures to have been published somewhere, possibly in the United States. **Laurence Marsh**

The Cambria closure

The Cambria pub at Kemerton Road has been going since about 1880. It is a good example of a corner-site Victorian public house, retaining much of its historic character. It therefore came as a considerable shock to regulars of this popular pub that it suddenly closed down, apparently without any forewarning, in September. Since then there are reports that the pub tenants had not been paying bills and the owners obtained a court order for possession. One particular concern was that, electricity having been cut off, a generator was being run on the premises to provide power. It is a sad sight currently, with all doors and windows sealed with steel shutters.

The closure of pubs across the country has been an ongoing issue of concern for many years. However, the rate of closures

has slowed down more recently as greater awareness, on the part of local authorities and local resident groups, that pubs form an important part of our social fabric



and that to allow change of use, almost always to residential, is often not the right answer. Lambeth have specific provisions in the Local Plan which are designed to discourage the closure of pubs, unless there is compelling evidence to justify it.

We have been told that in this particular case the Cambria owners, Punch Taverns, do not plan to seek planning permission for change of use and that they intend to refurbish the pub and already have another landlord in mind. We trust that is correct and very much hope that the new year will see the Cambria open again for business. Meanwhile it is good to hear that the Cambria Choir, the popular community choir with more than 50 members, that used the pub for rehearsal and performance, continues to meet – at the Prince Regent, Herne Hill.

PLANNING & LICENSING

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

The Temple, Brockwell Park, Lambeth 19/02327/LB and 19/02326/FUL

We objected to an application for alterations to the interior of the building and placing of shutters in place of bars on the windows, because the application was not for one defined scheme but for various alternatives and because insufficient detail was given for the shutters proposed and the manner in which they could be secured without putting the security of the listed building at risk. Since we commented the application has been revised, in particular to adapt the current window bars so that they can be removed when the building is in use as a proposed yoga studio. Lambeth is still considering the application.

Dulwich Hamlet Ground and Greendale Metropolitan Open Land, Southwark 19/AP/1867

We joined other local amenity and environmental groups in objecting to the proposal by developers who have acquired the Dulwich Hamlet Ground to build housing on the ground and construct a new stadium on adjacent Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), a scheme made possible by Southwark, as owners of the MOL, making that land available. We objected on the principle that the London Plan and Southwark's own policy give very strong protection to MOL and that no exceptional circumstances existed to go against that principle. We also emphasised that the developers bought with knowledge that the ground has a condition limiting use to leisure and recreational uses. The application has raised strong feelings, with loyal Dulwich Hamlet supporters pitted against others trying to prevent Southwark being pushed by developers into a bad planning decision. A decision is awaited.

Shurgard depot, Milkwood Road, Lambeth 19/02886/ADV

We objected to an application for illuminated signage on the Shurgard depot currently in the course of construction. We said that the application was misleading in stating the area to be "largely industrial", when it was light industrial on one side and residential with a park on the other. The proposed signage was too prominent and out of character with the residential neighbourhood and existing low-key light industrial units. A decision is awaited.

6 Elfindale Road, Southwark 19/AP/3350

We objected to a proposal for a top floor rear roof terrace on grounds that there was no precedent for such an alteration to houses in the area, that the arguments seeking to minimise the risk of noise nuisance were wrong and that the form of terrace proposed contravened Southwark's own Residential Design Standards. A decision is awaited.

Proposed electricity sub-station, Station Square, Lambeth 19/03371/FUL

We objected to a proposal to place an electricity sub-station in one of the very newly refurbished shops, acquired from Network Rail this year by the Arch Co. A sub-station is required if the shops are to function fully but we questioned the

short-term logic of the decision, in that once a sub-station was installed it would stay there and a shop would be lost for good. We pointed out that there was a viable and far more appropriate alternative, in the yard next to the station (owned by Network Rail). With goodwill on both sides that ought to be possible. If there really was no alternative we urged that the frontage be made to blend in better with neighbouring shop fronts, for example by creating window displays for other local shops. A decision is awaited

Higgs Industrial Estate, Herne Hill Road, 18/05425/FUL

In view of some revisions to the scheme, to which we had earlier objected (see Issue 145), we re-asserted our objections to this major development that proposes 134 dwelling units, more than 4000 sq.m. of commercial space and includes 8-storey blocks along Herne Hill Road and a 17-storey tower. Whether on the basis of density levels for an "urban" area (as we say this is) under the current London Plan, or density having regard to site context and infrastructure under the new draft London Plan, this is a gross over-development of the area. Our objection joins those of the Loughborough Junction Action Group, the Brixton Society and numerous individual local residents. A decision is awaited.



14 Dorchester Drive

We have drawn Lambeth's attention to the replacement of the original windows in this attractive Kemp and Tasker designed house with new single-pane sheets in steel frames. In our view, planning permission is required for such an alteration to a façade and none has been obtained. We await to hear what action Lambeth propose to take.

St Paul's Church, Herne Hill

We reported on our objection to alterations to the churchyard in the last issue. We were reacting to multiple planning applications. Since then it transpires that, with the exception of an application for three illuminated notice boards, these applications were unnecessary because the church had obtained permission under a "faculty" from the Diocese of Southwark, churches being exempt from much of the planning process. We were not aware that such a faculty had been sought (publication was limited to display of a notice on a church notice board) and by the time we were it had already been granted. It seems that there was a "split decision" on the application for illuminated signs and it was then withdrawn.

Laurence Marsh

A NEW FUTURE FOR AN OLD DAIRY

The former dairy on Rosendale Road, once an Express Dairies depot, has been a sorry sight for many years. It started life in 1906, catering for the huge increase in the local population in the late Victorian and Edwardian period, not least derived from the neighbouring 300 flats and cottages built by the Peabody Trust between 1902 and 1908. It ceased to operate as a dairy in 1981 and was later used for storage and gradually fell ever further into decay. The Society, especially through the efforts of John Brunton, who lives round the corner, has been advocating

the need to find a new use for the site and now it looks as if an answer can be found.

The site has been acquired by North London developers Lipman Properties who will shortly be putting in a planning application for housing on the site. The proposal is for 34 new homes, including affordable. Presentations of the plans were held at the Rosendale Community Centre in mid-November, providing an opportunity to local residents to see the proposals and comment. A common concern on these occasions is car parking. We understand the development will be car-free. The scheme will retain the distinctive façade of the old dairy, an attractive structure that is locally listed.



Proposal for Rosendale Dairy

ZERO WASTE IN HALF MOON LANE

Jessica Rimoch is the young woman who owns, and can nearly always be found in, Jarr Market, the zero-waste shop that opened in Half Moon Lane this July. Born in Mexico City to a Mexican father and a British mother, Jess came to London six years ago. After initially working in the IT industry she became increasingly concerned about the worsening state of the environment and began to think about how she could make a difference. So she quit her job a year ago and started to do in-depth research about how she might be able to have an impact as an entrepreneur. A Prince's Trust course for start-ups was helpful, and now she is a business owner.



take the train in every day from Hampstead.”

Nearly everything in Jarr Market is bought in bulk from two suppliers: one for food and one for cleaning products, mostly dispensed from 25-litre bottles which are returned for refilling. Then there are the toiletries, which come from a variety of small-scale producers. Everything is either on display in the shop itself

What was her greatest challenge? Jess doesn't hesitate: "Understanding the legal terminology involved in leasing a commercial property. And finding a suitable location, which is what took me to Herne Hill." Did she know the area? "No, apart from a visit to the Lambeth Country Show, not at all; I

or stored at the rear. So, how is it going? There has been a very positive response, with lots of returning customers bringing their own bags and jars with them. Pasta, spices, bran flakes, washing-up liquid... there is even an amazing machine that creates peanut butter in seconds from a mound of salted peanuts. Jess is buying



Jarr Market owner Jessica Rimoch

in more stock than expected at this stage. (It seems we are keen on our muesli: 25 kilos a week, in fact.) As a one-outlet company with one working director and two part-time assistants, she is able to react very quickly to customer demand. Clearly everything has been cleverly thought out, but there is a suggestion board just in case! She also keeps an eye on the online support network for zero-waste shops.

What's next? Workshops and talks, and, in time, another shop – it seems that there are six or seven in South London, but fewer North of the River. So her next venture might be back in Hampstead.

Christmas being the most wasteful time of the year, with unwanted presents, and reams of wrapping "paper" going straight into the bin, look out for a Christmas promotion.

Colin Wight

SIR FRANK BAINES, ARCHITECT



*Lambeth Bridge in 1932 with Imperial Chemical House and Thames House on Millbank, centre of photograph.
Photo: Lambeth Archives*

We are proud of our Sunray Estate in Herne Hill, built just after the First World War in 1920-22 for the Metropolitan Borough of Camberwell as part of Prime Minister David Lloyd George's Homes Fit For Heroes initiative to improve Britain's housing stock. This year we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the 1919 Housing Act introduced by the Minister of Health, Dr Christopher Addison, which paved the way for the construction of nearly a quarter of a million council homes in the early 1920s.

The Sunray Estate is acknowledged as an outstanding example of inter-war town planning and design, recognised by its designation as a conservation area in 2009 and its protection by an Article 4 Directive over 20 years before, that together seek to preserve its special historic and architectural character and appearance. It comprises 240 cottage-style houses and six two- and three-storey blocks of 40 flats, built on the site of two late Georgian mansions: Dulwich Hill House (demolished 1896) and Casino House (demolished in 1906), preserving part of the latter's gardens and its lake as the public park named Sunray Gardens. The planning, design and construction of this garden-suburb style

estate was carried out by the Office of Works led by its director, Sir Frank Baines.

Baines was a notable architect of the early 20th century and few people realise he designed both the Sunray Estate and the pair of gigantic classical office buildings that grace the western approach to Lambeth Bridge, just two miles apart and built in the same decade.

Frank Baines was born in 1877 in Stepney, East London which was then in Middlesex, the fourth child of a coppersmith. In the 1890s he trained under the distinguished Arts and Crafts architect Charles Robert Ashbee who built a number of fine homes on Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, and in Chipping Campden in Gloucestershire.

In 1895 18-year-old Frank entered the Office of Works - the central government department created in 1851 to oversee public building projects that became the Ministry of Works in 1940 and subsumed within the new Department of Environment in 1970. Its responsibilities included the construction of military buildings, government workers' housing, public buildings such as post offices, telephone exchanges, and from the 1880s the upkeep of ancient monuments. This latter role was

CT OF SUNRAY ESTATE, AND HIS FALL FROM GRACE

transferred to English Heritage in 1984.

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 Baines was promoted to the post of Principal Architect. During the war he designed the huge Flying Boat Hangar in Hythe (Hampshire), now a Grade II-listed building, and worked on munitions workers' housing at Well Hall to serve the Royal Arsenal Woolwich (a vast estate of nearly 1,300 homes), the Roe Green Estate in Kingsbury (Brent) near the Airco Aeroplane factory at Hendon, and the Chapel House housing scheme on the Isle of Dogs (in Tower Hamlets) where each house and flat was given a garden and a complimentary fruit tree. All three estates are now conservation areas.

Baines was a member of the Tudor Walters Committee whose report, issued in 1918, strongly influenced public housing policy and design throughout the 1920s and 1930s. He promoted the philosophy of mixing low-rise flats with houses (as is evident on the Sunray Estate) to provide for different needs and create a healthy social mix. The Committee disagreed with this strategy and declined to include it in their final report which resulted in Baines resigning shortly before it was published.

Baines was knighted by King George V in 1918 in recognition of his important and valuable services rendered to the ministries of Munitions and Air, the Admiralty, the War Office and the Office of Works. In 1920, the year the Sunray Estate was begun, he was appointed as the Director of the Office of Works, reaching the pinnacle of his career.

In the 1910s and 1920s he developed an international reputation,



Houses on the Roe Green Estate, Brent

working on a number of pioneering building conservation projects, including the preservation of Westminster Hall at the Houses of Parliament, the great hall at Eltham Palace, the abbeys of Jedburgh, Melrose and Dryburgh in the Scottish Borders, Tintern Abbey in Monmouthshire and Caernarvon Castle in North Wales.

His most famous work is undoubtedly the pair of monumental classical office buildings that face Lambeth Bridge either side of the Horseferry Road on Millbank. Both were built for the private sector, Baines working for the private developer in addition to performing his duties as a senior civil servant. Thames House is now the headquarters of the British Security Service (MI5) and 9 Millbank was once Imperial Chemical House: head office of ICI, and currently being converted into luxury flats. Both are Grade II-listed.

Baines's private commission to design these two landmark buildings were to end his distinguished 32-year career at the Office of Works, as Parliament objected to his private work and considered it would compromise his position and adversely affect his work for the government. He was therefore "invited" to retire early and stepped down in 1927, aged only 50. It is perhaps ironic that government departments were to move into both buildings in the 1990s.

Baines went on to supervise the completion of the two office buildings in 1931 before dying at the young age of 56 on Christmas Eve 1933.

Edmund Bird

Edmund Bird is an architectural historian and author of the series of five books on Lambeth's architectural heritage 1837-2000. These are available from the Society.



Sunray Estate

NEWMAN ON RUSKIN

Ruskin was a South Londoner essentially, Jon Newman, author and manager of Lambeth Archives, told the audience at the Thomas Lynn Bristowe memorial lecture in June. He moved here when he was four and he continued to live here into his sixties.

He was born 200 years ago. His lifespan paralleled Queen Victoria's and he was one of the most celebrated public figures of her reign. Newman called him "a public intellectual and arbiter of taste who shaped much of the culture of the age to which she gave her name ... a hugely complex polymath." There was Ruskin the art critic; the fine art professor; the author; the political economist; the defender of craft traditions; the conservationist; the campaigner; the naturalist; the protector of landscapes; the historian of Venice; the traveller; the watercolourist; the collector; and the moving spirit behind Gothic Revival architecture – Britain's 'national style' in the later nineteenth century.

Brought up in the top-floor nursery of 28 Herne Hill, a house at the crest of the hill, Ruskin had a solitary childhood but loved the back garden, "renowned all over the hill for its pears and apples". As he wrote in his autobiography: "That great part of my acute perception and deep feeling of the beauty of architecture and scenery abroad was owing to the well-formed habit of narrowing myself to happiness within the four brick walls of our fifty by one hundred yards of garden." And he remembered "the leafy seclusion which remains in all essential points of character unchanged to this day. . . I can still walk up and down the piece of the road between the Fox Tavern and the Herne Hill station imagining myself four years old."

After studying at Oxford he returned home to write his first book, *Modern Painters*, which launched him as a respected art critic. He would often wander along Croxted Lane (now Croxted Road, then a lovely "green by-road"): "I used to walk in the summer shadows, as in a place wilder and sweeter than our garden, to think over any passage I wanted to make better than usual in *Modern Painters*." The book championed J.M.W. Turner and when it was published Ruskin's father bought him Turner's painting *The Slave Ship* – the first of what was to become the largest private collection of the artist's works.

Ruskin wrote most of his work in the large house at Denmark Hill to which his family moved in 1842, where he also painted a

series of glowing watercolours of the dawn. The view in the early days was "entirely lovely", he wrote. "East and south the Norwood Hills, partly rough with firs, partly wooded with birch and oak, partly in pure green bramble copse and rather steep pastures."

But after the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park closed in 1851 Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace was rebuilt on the ridge in Sydenham and Ruskin's view changed irreversibly. The huge glass and iron structure, he fumed, possessed "no more sublimity than a cucumber frame between two chimneys". As suburban housing and railways spread, the South London of his early years disappeared and his disenchantment grew, as his diary reveals:

"Walk in Dulwich Fields, all looking black, cindery, infinitely small. Cottages pulled down, houses built on hill where view used to be, vexed by the nonchalance and the sadness of it all."

Ruskin's writing on architecture with its lauding of Gothic over Classical was hugely influential but he came to regret it. "I had", he remarked, "an indirect influence on nearly every cheap villa builder

between here and Bromley. There is scarcely a public house near the Crystal Palace but sells its gin and bitters under pseudo-Venetian capitals copied from the church of the Madonna of Health or of Miracles." His utter disillusion with what he saw being built can be seen in what Newman described as "one of the most contemptuous pieces of writing that I know". He had been invited by businessmen in Bradford in 1864 to give a public address to advise them on the best style of architecture for their new Exchange. Casting all politeness aside Ruskin blamed his hosts for the types of buildings he detested, all built in honour of the "great Goddess of Getting On".

At the end of this very fine talk, of which only a bare outline can be given here, Newman asked why should we be concerned about Ruskin today – why we should be interested in this man who both as young fogey and as grand old man can seem peevish, arrogant and proto-nimby? Ruskin, in his view, was the first articulate critic of arrogant Victorian self-assurance that saw no merit in anything that came before it and would destroy and build in whatever way it thought fit. Ruskin offers us a sensibility and a sensitivity to landscape, to art, to architecture, and to a sense of place that still feels relevant and important today.

Jeff Segal



HAPPY BIRTHDAY BILL!

In our last issue we showed the Society's President Bill Kirby in a photograph taken in Hamburg in 1945. This time we salute Bill a mere 74 years later, about to celebrate his centenary in December. A Happy 100th Birthday, Bill! And thank you for the unwavering support you have given to the Herne Hill Society over so many years.



A CONVERSATION WITH LOUISE CANDLISH

Herne Hill resident Louise Candlish is a bestselling novelist. Her thriller *Our House* was a number one bestseller in paperback, ebook and audiobook and has sold over 200,000 copies in the UK. It was picked as a Book of the Year 2018 by the *Washington Post* and in May it won the 2019 British Book Award's "Crime & Thriller Book of the Year".

With *Those People* now out, Louise has 13 books behind her. Her cunningly-plotted stories in contemporary settings have a large and loyal following. Louise joined us for a cup of coffee in The Roome on Half Moon Lane, just as *Those People* was poised for publication in paperback: an exciting if nail-biting time for any writer.

Born in Herne Hill?

Not at all – in Northumberland, actually, and her parents were Geordies. They moved south to Northamptonshire, which is where Louise was brought up and went to school. But then she came down to London to study English at UCL: a step which, as for so many of us, cemented a commitment to capital life and a weakening of the ties to childhood haunts. At that stage, Louise hadn't ventured south of the river, still less heard of Herne Hill.

But when Louise met her partner, Andrew, the couple lived in Battersea. Then, 16 years ago, they moved here with their baby daughter.



Has Herne Hill changed a lot in that time?

Hugely of course. When they first arrived, Herne Hill was, as Louise puts it, "undiscovered and quiet. When you walked home after visiting friends in the evening, the streets were almost spookily deserted and silent." Fast forward to the present, we have a very active evening and night-time economy. She wonders whether this was stimulated initially by the relaunch of The Florence (previously Ganley's Irish Bar and prior to that Brockwell Park Tavern) in 2007. Then came the National Lottery-funded improvements to Brockwell Park and the explosion of social media that encourages the easy sharing of information – no "hidden gems" any more. All this encouraged first a trickle and then, as now, a flood of people – many not from SE24 but from Brixton, Tulse Hill and other neighbouring areas – stopping off in the centre of Herne Hill to take advantage of our great bars, pubs, restaurants and Sunday market - so many destination venues making Herne Hill a buzzy place to live in.

So back to the writing of novels, you hide yourself away to research and write?

Maybe a little, says Louise. She does much of it on her laptop on



the sofa surrounded by messy notes, books and papers: a contrast to the highly-organised, closely-plotted novels that emerge from the process. Reassuringly for traditionalists, some of her notes are still captured by pen and paper. If family life intrudes too much, she adjourns to the quiet of Carnegie Library, having tried other local libraries but found them too permissive of chatter and mobile phone usage.

Start with the plot, or develop as you go along?

For Louise's psychological thrillers, she makes a point of starting with the plot. "Unless you do that, you waste too much time thinking and writing about stuff that will never be used." And reading habits have changed in recent years. The slow-moving dialogues, detailed character development and leisurely unfolding scenes of books and movies of 20 or 30 years ago have less appeal to today's readers, who expect fast-moving action and lots of cliff-hangers and twists.

So perhaps without even consciously realising it, Louise says, "writers have had to adapt to the way people consume stories now. Television has had an effect. We have become very fast paced." At the same time the universal freedom and ability to instantly criticise everyone and everything online means that writers have had to develop a very thick skin. "It's nice when we get a big chorus of praise, but obviously no book can please every reader."

Those People – is it similar to Our House?

Perhaps even a companion novel, Louise says. A cautionary tale in a similar affluent suburban South London setting, striking a chord with thousands of property-obsessed readers. "But I'm conscious that readers have their favourites. *Our House* is, at its heart, a tragedy. *Those People* has more traditional whodunnit elements".



Pat Roberts

KING CAMP OF SHAVES

In researching material for the talk that Ian McInnes gave in September as part of the Lambeth Heritage Festival month, I was reminded of something I came across several years ago. At No. 44 Herne Hill the Post Office Directory for 1905 had a certain King Camp Gillette in residence. It seemed most unlikely that there could be more than one person with this distinctive name and the resident in question had therefore to be the man who gave mankind the disposable razor.

The recent acquisition of a slim volume *Inventor of the Disposable Culture: King Camp Gillette 1855-1932* published in 2001 made it possible to confirm that conclusion. This excellent short biography is the work of fellow-American Tim Dowling, though to Guardian readers – especially on Saturdays – he surely counts as an honorary Brit.

Until the arrival of Gillette's invention, shaving was a tedious and sometimes hazardous business. The standard implement was the straight "cut-throat" razor that required skill and patience in handling and regular honing and stropping to retain its potentially lethal edge. The man who shaved himself would allow up to half an hour for the task, hence the ubiquity of barbers' shops and, one suspects, a liking for full beards in the 19th century. Forms of "safety" razors appeared in that century but the blades still needed to be regularly sent away for re-sharpening. Gillette's idea – to replace the blade that was no longer razor-sharp with a brand new one – was very simple but the technical obstacles were great, in particular producing a very thin steel that could be sharpened to a razor edge. The idea came to Gillette in 1895 but it took another 10 years before technical and production problems were finally overcome.

In that time, with no income from the invention, Gillette continued to work as a salesman. Selling was probably Gillette's greatest strength, allied to his keen



understanding of the power of advertising. He had been employed by the company that produced the very popular "Sapolio" soap in the late 1880s, working in London to promote the brand. He moved on to the Crown Cork and Seal Company. It was this company that produced the crimped bottle top that is still with us today. The throwaway nature of this hugely successful invention was an influence on Gillette's thinking for his own invention.

Bottle tops brought Gillette to London in February 1904. He set up a London office

It is one of a group of three that took the place of one of the large villas that lined Herne Hill in the Victorian era. In the garden land of that villa a further six houses were built on the newly laid out Rollscourt Avenue. However, Gillette's stay in London was brief. His safety razor business was just beginning to take off and he hastened back to America after only six months to look after its affairs, returning at the end of the year to collect his wife and son. In 1903 the company had sold the grand total of 168 blades and 51 handles to hold the blade. The following year this rose to more than 12 million blades and 91,000 handles. It was the former product that made the profits – and they were huge. The First World War also contributed – the Gillette razor became standard army issue with 36 million blades sold.

Gillette became a multi-millionaire. He was also good at spending money, acquiring real estate and art and having a remarkable mansion at Calabasas built by the fashionable architect Wallace Neff in the hills outside Los Angeles. And he continued to propagate the utopian ideas that he had published in *The Human Drift* in the 1890s, an attempt to harness the power of capitalism in ways that would be fairer and more efficient: ideas that included extraordinary schemes for a mega-city of 60 million people (then 90 per cent of the US population) next to the Niagara Falls and powered by hydro-electricity. But the Gillette millions did not last, falling victim to the stock market crash of 1929. Gillette died at his Californian mansion in 1932. His widow and son were forced to sell up everything.

In Herne Hill we are proud of our English Heritage blue plaques. Those honoured need to have been dead for 20 years.

There does not seem to be any hard and fast rule about length of residence. In terms of fame King Camp Gillette surely fits the bill. The Society will enquire.

Laurence Marsh



Razor blade booklet, 1907

in the City for the Crown Cork and Seal Company and found the house on Herne Hill for himself, his wife and 12-year-old son. The house was only a few years old.

REMBRANDT'S LIGHT SHINES IN DULWICH

With the nights drawing in, we all want to make the most of the available light. Dulwich Picture Gallery's current exhibition, Rembrandt's Light, marks the 350th anniversary of the great Dutch artist's death with an exploration of how he dealt with and depicted light and shadow. The curators worked with renowned cinematographer Peter Suschitzky to create a mood appropriate for each section; and they



use the gallery's new LED Bluetooth lighting system to telling effect.

We begin with paintings and etchings shown in a dark-walled room with very subdued light, inviting us to focus on the drama of the scenes on show. A new theatre had opened in Amsterdam in 1638, the year before Rembrandt moved into a nearby house with large windows, where he worked happily for 19 years. His figures are often positioned like actors on a stage, one speaking as others listen. *The Denial of St Peter* is lit by a candle which glints off soldiers' helmets. We can also compare a drawing of *The Supper at Emmaus* with an oil of the same scene and the similarly themed



Philemon and Baucis, never before shown together, for use of dramatic gesture and flashing light as opposed to a halo glow reflecting emotion.

Room 2 represents Rembrandt's house with yellow walls and a recreated window with canopy to direct light in, as shown in *The Artist's Studio* and *Tobit and Anna with the Kid*. The latter was a training exercise to show how light from a window and a fire diffuse within the room.

Several works were painted with or by students, one depicting the workshop on the second floor.

We move behind the window to see how light can be manipulated at night. Life drawing using models, including students, explores how flickering candlelight illuminates a figure or spreads through the darkness. A rare addition, the nocturnal *Landscape with the Rest on the Flight into Egypt*, relies on yellow and orange fire, a tiny lamp, a distant window and purple moonlight.

Even the gallery's mausoleum is lit by nearly 40 candles, retaining the atmosphere as we move through. Light grey walls evoke a meditative mood. A dark etching and a muted-toned painting of *The Entombment* depict grief; while *Student at a Table by Candlelight* and *St Jerome in a Dark Chamber* create an intense atmosphere of study and contemplation. A display case contains the Friendship Book of Jan Six, never before seen outside the Netherlands, open at Rembrandt's *Minerva in her Study*, the goddess seated before a book, with the sun shining into the window behind her. *Christ and St Mary Magdalen at the Tomb* depicts the gradual realisation that the gardener is Jesus; lighting focused on the painting slowly rises, bringing out the sunrise over Jerusalem as the truth dawns on Mary. Glorious.

The final room features eight portraits, exploring the effects of light on people of different ages, bringing out their character, personality and status. *A Woman in Bed* is an intimate study in sensuality;

while *Christina Hooghsaet* presents a strong, independent lady. From an old warrior gazing into the distance to young Titus looking straight out, placement of light helps



tell the sitter's story. In this context, we can see the familiar *Girl at the Window* and *A Woman Bathing in a Stream* in a new light. We finish with an etching *Self-Portrait in a Fur Cap* and an oil painting, *Self-Portrait in a Flat Cap*, experimenting with light falling on the face from different angles. Though Rembrandt later had to give up his very expensive house, here he is confident and successful, an apt image to end with. We leave with a quote from a letter: "My lord, hang this piece in a strong light and where one can stand at a distance, so it will sparkle at its best". This exhibition, replete with British and major international loans, is both sparkling and enlightening.

Jeff Doorn

Rembrandt's Light opened 4 October and continues to 2 February 2020

Open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays 10am–5pm. Entry: £16.50*; seniors £15.50*; students, unemployed, disabled, Art Fund £8* (*includes voluntary Gift Aid donation); under 30 £5 (sign-up required); under 18 and Friends free. Book online and save £1.50 off tickets (excludes concessions).

RUSKIN AND FRIENDS

In the latter half of 2019, life in Herne Hill has been enlivened by - what shall we call it? Ruskin-mania? Hardly. Let's say Ruskin mild excitement. We have had Ruskin talks, Ruskin walks, a Ruskin exhibition, tea with Ruskin and, high on this list of attractions, "Ruskin and Friends", a musical entertainment to mark the bicentenary of his birth, part of the Herne Hill Music Festival. It was devised and narrated by the composer Andrew M. Wilson, along with pianist Robert Mingay-Smith and tenor Charles MacDougall. Mr Wilson has made a study of Ruskin and his work, to the extent of composing two song cycles, *Pearls On Scales* and *A Darksome Garland*, based on poems by Ruskin. Both received their first performance at this event.

Ruskin is, of course, best known for his writing on art, architecture and social matters, his drawings and watercolours and his philanthropy, not to mention his memoirs, which vividly describe Herne Hill and its surroundings in the mid-19th century. His verse is less well known, and hearing these settings was the first time most of us had come across them. The music certainly conveyed the mood and feeling of the words and was stylistically appropriate without sounding deliberately



"Victorian". It would perhaps have been helpful to have the poems, or extracts from them, provided with the programme.

When it came to appreciating music, Ruskin had strong likes and dislikes, Mr Wilson reported, and among his dislikes was Beethoven. Even in those days, this would have been a pretty eccentric view and, as if to prove it, Robert Mingay-Smith gave a beautiful rendition the first movement of the *Moonlight Sonata*, one of the best-loved pieces in all of classical music. On the other hand, Ruskin loved Mozart, so we had two from him, which was only right and proper.

As for his own compositions – and, yes, he wrote music, too – we had Ruskin's song, *On Old Aegina's Rock*. It turned out to be a perfectly efficient piece of work, although vaguely reminiscent of several Victorian hymns.

There were various other pieces from the period, including *Home, Sweet Home*, and the programme ended with an aria by Vincenzo Bellini, whose most popular opera was *Norma*. The thought struck me as this final piece drew to a close, that here in his birthplace, Ruskin is remembered in a very British way, by street names and a park. Bellini, on the other hand, is remembered by a dish served in his home town of Catania, Sicily. It's called Spaghetti Norma, and very delicious, too.

Dave Gelly

RECENT LOCAL HISTORY PUBLICATIONS

South London's rich history continues to provide rewards for readers. These recent publications have caught our eye:

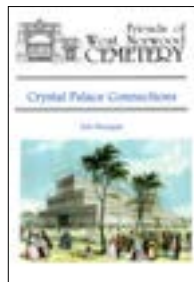
The fascinating story of the old West Norwood fire station is told by co-editors Helen Chadney and Jeanette Hoile and their fellow writers in this well researched and beautifully illustrated book. Its use as a fire station was short, lasting from 1882 to 1916.



But in that time its horse-drawn equipment was called out to many fires, including an arson attack on Dulwich College by suffragettes in 1913. The building became the home of South London Theatre in 1967. Long in need of restoration it has now, with Heritage Lottery funding, been given a new lease of life and

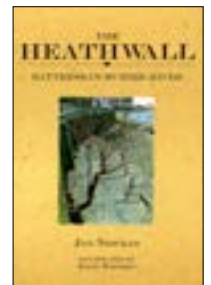
provides a 21st-century home for SLT.

West Norwood Cemetery was opened in 1837. As London rapidly expanded in the Victorian era spacious burial grounds became a necessity. Bob Flanagan, Chair of Friends of West Norwood Cemetery, has collected a group of the great and the good, as well as others less well known, from that era. All 68



entrants in the book have some link to Crystal Palace. Sadly many of the monuments – and often the graves themselves – have been lost, mainly due to the earlier destructive policies of Lambeth Council who acquired the cemetery in 1965, but this does not prevent the stories being told of a very interesting group of entrepreneurial men. That there are only two women included tells us something else about our Victorian ancestors.

Following his very successful tracking of the River Effra, in history and in today's South London (albeit out of sight), Jon Newman has turned his attention to the Heathwall, an "overlooked and under-loved" watercourse. Until taken in hand, like the Effra, by Joseph Bazalgette in the 1860s it crossed the fields of Battersea, once a low-lying island in the Thames before disgoring at Nine Elms, a site now covered by the cylindrical 50-storey "Faustian observation tower", as the author puts it, known as Vauxhall Tower. In this meticulously researched and lively account, with attractive illustrations by David Western, the course of the Heathwall is traced and along the way we gain a remarkable insight into a part of London – frequently squalid and unhealthy – that has largely disappeared, now replaced by an ever growing regiment of gleaming steel and glass.



Laurence Marsh

- *The Old Fire Station: 1881–2018 A History*, ed. Helen Chadney and Jeanette Hoile, South London Theatre, 2018
- *Crystal Palace Connections*, by Bob Flanagan, Friends of West Norwood Cemetery, 2018
- *The Heathwall: London's Buried River* by Jon Newman, Backwater Books, 2019



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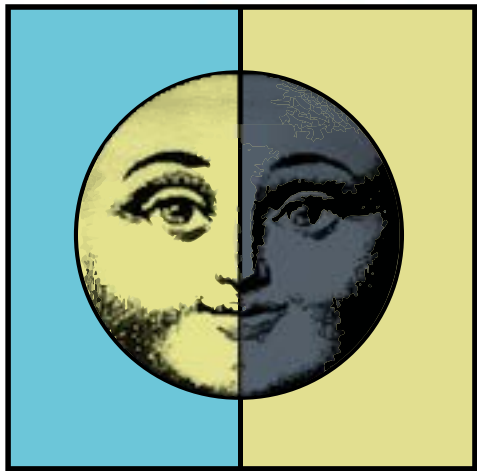
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