

# HERNE HILL

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HERNE HILL SOCIETY ❦ ISSUE 150 ❦ Winter/Spring ❦ 2021 ❦ £3.00



## LOCAL ARTISTS AT WORK

► See page 14 - 15

ISSUE  
150

## TRAFFIC CALMING - THE DEBATE

► See page 9

## SOCIAL MEDIA IS OLDER THAN YOU THINK!

► Turn to page 20



# The Magazine of the Herne Hill Society



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*Our particular thanks to **Pat Roberts** on whom we have relied, in this issue and many past issues, for photographs of outstanding quality. Pat is leaving the Committee, but, very fortunately, has indicated he is prepared to provide pictures and articles for this Magazine in future.*

## 150 not out!

There is some way to go until we reach the grand total of 10,000 issues that was reached last year by *The Spectator* – a world record – but we can still take some pride in reaching our century and a half. A good excuse to cast an eye back over the Society's Magazine, or Newsletter as it was called until ten years ago.

Appearing for the first time in 1982, a simple A3 sheet folded in half to give four pages, with no advertising and no illustrations, it records the meeting at the church hall of St Philip and St James in Poplar Walk where the first executive committee was formed for the Society with "plans to promote and preserve local amenities and research into and record local history". It is interesting to see that the main Herne Hill road junction was an early matter of concern – it would be almost three more decades before the junction regeneration that we celebrate below. Attention is also drawn to the very limited heritage protection in our area, with the Brixton Society urging protection for buildings such as the Carnegie Library and Herne Hill Station. (For the Library this had been achieved the previous year but the Station had to wait until 1999.) Among future events publicised is one at St Paul's Church Hall, an "entertainment with music, readings and songs about the old Dover to London road", written by Patricia Jenkyns and performed by the Ballad Mongers, admission 60p.

Moving on to Issue No. 50 we arrive at Spring 1995. The newsletter has expanded to 12 pages and the Society has acquired a logo (one it retained until a few years ago). There are now some advertisers, including Jim Davidson at Brockwell Art Services and

Olley's, to this day unerringly loyal. And there are some rather rudimentary illustrations. Family subscriptions for membership of the Society have increased from £2.50 to £4.50 per annum. Page 1 leads on "Chunnel Noise Warning", a story about the increased noise from the running of Channel Tunnel trains through Herne Hill (the tunnel had opened in 1994) and – a familiar theme over the years – the holding of events in Brockwell Park and the disturbance and damage caused. Brian Green writes about how World War II affected our area, but it is really focused on Dulwich – why is it that some residents of Dulwich continue to regard Herne Hill, or a substantial chunk of it, as really belonging



*1 - 50 - 100 - 150 now in your hands!*

to Dulwich? There is a query about the name Gubyon Avenue. (As far as we know, the query has always remained unanswered. We plan to answer this in a future issue).

We come to Issue No. 100, Autumn 2007 and 25 years since the start of the Society. The newsletter has expanded to 20 pages and has moved to a front and back cover in green paper but remains otherwise black and white. The leading article concerns the project to regenerate the junction and explains the benefits of "Option A" – the one that was

adopted and which we see today. David Taylor, one of the founding members of the Society, looks back on planning issues over the last 25 years. That has remained an important part of the Society's local role and we are very fortunate that David still contributes his expertise to our planning work. Other anniversaries are celebrated, 100 years of Ruskin Park and 70 years of the Lido, and Peter Bradley's book *Out of the Blue*, published to coincide with the latter is reviewed. An editorial that reviews the Society's 25 years of existence concludes: "New members are always welcome and there is always space on the committee for people with new ideas and drive. Do get in touch." Plus ça change.

## Ten years on – a Community Project to celebrate

If your memories of Herne Hill are limited to the last ten years you will not remember the far from good old days when dense traffic trundled past the front of Herne Hill Station and queued up at the lights waiting to cross the main junction while pedestrians squeezed their way between buses and cars in an air laden with polluting particulates. That came to an end ten years ago, to be precise



on 4 December 2010, on the official completion of a project that was conceived of in a community meeting and designed and pushed through to completion by a dedicated group of local volunteers. In terms of public benefit the Herne Hill Regeneration Project has surely been the most ambitious and most successful scheme for our area in modern times, and the anniversary deserves celebration. It gave Herne Hill a "village" centre and an attractive identity, one that a traffic-filled thoroughfare will struggle to create, as well as a much improved layout for the traffic flow at the junction. It was the standard bearer for so many other improvements with which we are familiar today – the Sunday market, the refurbishment of the station, the underpass mural, the restoration of the shops formerly owned by Network Rail (which we hope will find tenants once some post-Covid normality

returns) and, we trust soon to come, a community use for the first floor of the station and conservation area status for the whole area. We owe a great debt to those who had the initial idea for the project, took on the powers that be in TfL and Lambeth Council and saw it through to triumphant completion.



# Colin Wight steps down as Chair

Here he talks to Val Suebsaeng. *Colin joined the Society at the 2004 Lambeth Country Show. He was recruited to the Committee and became Chair in 2012. After nearly eight years in the role, he stood down in December. Colin will leave the Committee at the next AGM. He is a Life Member and intends to support and help the Society in the future – if asked!*

**What skills did you bring?** I came in with a modern perspective. Well it was at the time! My long career at the British Library had given me a thorough knowledge of publishing, marketing and communications, running events and creating websites. All very relevant as it turned out. And working for a large public-facing organisation had taught me how to be diplomatic!

**What have you enjoyed most from your time as Chair?** Without doubt the most satisfying experience was planning and completing the Remembering Herne Hill First World War project, to budget and on time. I threw myself into it, quite obsessively to be honest. I confess I knew little about the war when we started.

I was elated by the success of the first Remembrance Sunday commemoration, which we held at the Station on 11 November 2018. We also produced an online database of Herne Hill's 500+ casualties and a book (*Grace's Story*). That same evening I went with Laurence Marsh to the Armistice Centenary service at Westminster Abbey – a memorable culmination to the project.

It was by sheer luck that I'd met, while on holiday some years before, David Statham, who became Chief Executive of Southeastern Railway. Without his support we would not have been able to get the memorial installed and unveiled by Helen Hayes MP in November 2019. I did not imagine that we would go on to achieve so much.

**What have you enjoyed least?** There has been the odd disagreement which I have had to try and resolve. It has been stressful at times. I have possibly given too much time to the Society to the detriment of other things in life – but if you want to achieve something you have to put the hours in.

**What do you consider to be your achievements?** When I joined the Committee I made it my mission to modernise every aspect of the Society's work. There was little opposition, but there was something of a skills and experience gap early on. Fifteen years on I think I have taken it as far as my ability – and energy – allow.

I remember that when I went to my first monthly talk there was no PA and the presentation was delivered on a 35mm slide projector. The audience struggled to hear what was being said. One of my first tasks was to specify and purchase the equipment. Again, there was a website that worked OK, but you couldn't do much on it, such as join the Society or buy our books. I had to start again from scratch. We had no social media and no e-newsletter. I sat at home one wintry Saturday, creating a design and a mailing list while it snowed all day. The quarterly newsletter was full of excellent content, but it deserved a modern look. It was a major step forward when the Magazine was redesigned and - a couple of years later - printed in full colour. Of course I can't take credit for that! I set up annual planning meetings where we agreed our aims

for the year. We started to collect data about, for example, how many people attended our events and bought each of our books, month by month, so we could measure where we were.

**What were your challenges as Chair?** I was aware of the regard in which the Society was held and how much work had gone into building it up and keeping it running. I knew I had to take my new role seriously, as well as dedicating time to team building. This meant establishing a relationship with each individual. Perhaps I was a bit arrogant at first, but I have learned that you have to admit when you've got it wrong. Not everything I wanted to do has worked.

I was always very keen to set a high standard. Of course we are a group of unpaid volunteers but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't act "professionally". For example, a few years ago we decided to post our meeting minutes on our website, although at first not everyone saw the point. But the majority agreed that we had to be seen as open and democratic. Sometimes you have to lead, to say "this is a bad idea" or "we should do that".

The Chair has to help the Committee reach a consensus and I don't think I've ever had to use my casting vote.

**Why have you decided to stand down?** Principally because I need to dedicate more time to my very elderly parents who live over 200 miles away. And there are a lot of other things I want to do. I also believe there comes a time when you should move over and let other people have a go, which is easier said than done!

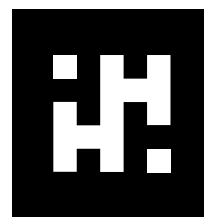
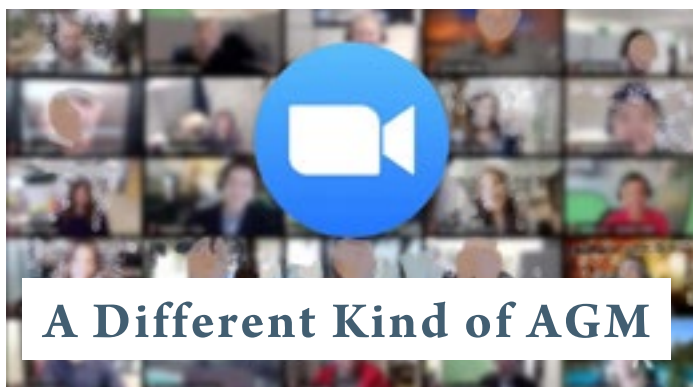
**Who do you want to thank?** I would like to thank Sheila Northover, long-serving Chair before me, who encouraged me to join the Committee. Sheila is a remarkable person. She said that she was available for advice, but would not interfere. She stuck to that and helped me get on with the job in my own way.

My fellow Committee members have been great. It's impossible to run a Society like ours without such a team. Many of them have become friends. I don't want to single anyone out... but I really must thank Laurence who has been a brilliant colleague and so hard-working.

**What single piece of advice would you want to offer the new Chair?** We are really fortunate that Rebecca Tee has stepped up to be Acting Chair. I would say: create a vision for the Society, then work out how you are going to achieve it! But listen to advice and accept that it's OK to change your mind.

**If the Herne Hill Society were to be created today, what do you think it would look like?** I have thought about that. I'm pretty sure it wouldn't be a subscription-based membership organisation but an internet-based group. But having a steady income has been helpful in enabling us to plan ahead. Actually, membership is on the up and we have more members than we had two years ago. It's a good time to hand over the reins.





Wednesday 24 March 2021  
7:00pm on Zoom

We are pleased to report that the future of our Society, in some doubt not long ago owing to a lack of Committee members, looks more assured. The second half of 2020 saw a gratifying increase in member numbers. In fact we now have more than two years ago. One effect of the pandemic lockdown seems to have been an increase in interest in one's immediate locality. People who used to commute to work, travelling for half the year in the dark, have been taking exercise in local parks and quiet streets, and noticing things they had previously hurried past. Hence the renewed interest in the history and built environment of Herne Hill, and a consequential rise in

book sales via our website.

Having endured 12 months of uncertainty and unease, we are keen to present our AGM in a positive frame of mind. In what has become the new normal, it will be held online for the first time. Naturally, this will suit some members better than others. For some, the technology (access to Zoom, and of course a laptop or mobile device) - or lack of same - will be a barrier; for others, the requirement to travel to a meeting at a particular place, at a particular time, on a particular evening has always been equally limiting. We would expect an online AGM to be better attended than usual, but we shall see.

Ahead of the AGM, we are pleased to

share key documents on our website at

<http://bit.ly/3truPkg> to include: Agenda for 24 March 2021 AGM, Draft minutes of the 2020 AGM and Draft accounts for 2020

Our Acting Chair, Rebecca Tee, will send out an email well before the event, inviting members to register in advance. Those who register will be given a code to access the Zoom link. (At the time of writing there are only 21 members for whom we do not have an email address.)

There'll be a chance to ask questions and join a discussion, and of course you are welcome to submit your questions in advance to

[chair@hernehillssociety.org.uk](mailto:chair@hernehillssociety.org.uk)

## Calm or chaos? The traffic issue

As Bil Harrison describes in his article (at page 9) Lambeth and Southwark have been busy during these troubled times working on ways – depending on where you stand on the issue – to drive residents to distraction or to give them a better world of calmer streets. As Bil describes, views are polarised. You need look no further than the views about Low Traffic Neighbourhoods on BrixtonBuzz. And this presents a quandary to a society such as the Herne Hill Society. Should we take a position, and if so what position? Should we be canvassing members to find out exactly where they stand on local traffic issues? Assuming there were a majority for one position, does it necessarily follow that the Society should therefore come out campaigning for that position?

The numbers of those for and those against might be very close. There will almost certainly be a significant number who either have no opinion, or none they wish to make public, or who do not want to see the Society taking a campaigning stance, particularly on such a divisive issue. And, in our view, we would also need to look at Herne Hill more broadly, because it is a place not wholly inhabited by members of the Society, just as it is not only they who read this Magazine.

Some will say, you should get off the fence – but that assumes there is a “right” side to step down onto. We are not persuaded that there is a right side, or at least not one that this Society should be supporting or promoting. The inherent nature of the traffic issue

is that it often affects the residents of one street very differently from those of another. It is calm and lower carbon emissions for some and chaos and carbon overload for others. Residents of those streets can and do get together and promote their views. Local councillors have to listen and in turn our local authorities have to balance the multiple arguments in making policy decisions.

We think this Society works best when it plays to its strengths and a particular strength, through its long-running Magazine (150 issues and still going strong!), is its ability to reflect, illuminate and report on issues and events in our area, great and small, present and past. So through whatever constraints, obstacles, diversions or roadmaps that might be placed in our path we will do our best to follow that course.



# Time for a Herne Hill Community Fund?

## Fred Taggart makes the case for one

I believe the time is right to establish a Herne Hill Community Fund. Herne Hill has great groups and charities doing good works, but for most it is a hand-to-mouth existence, a merry-go-round of funding applications and fund-raising, involving many funding sources each with its own criteria, deadlines and constraints. And all funders are oversubscribed. Small informal groups needing comparatively small amounts of money really struggle; groups that typically might use a church hall or space in a community building. Other larger and formally established ones with some income still often need donations for specific projects. All these could, with a bit of additional locally-generated income, better flourish, and new ones could get started.

Plenty of folk in Herne Hill could donate a tenner a month and never miss it: happy to invest in the community in which they live. Many already have monthly standing orders for national and international charities about which they usually know little. We trust the Oxfams of this world to do the right thing! But for many of us, London and Lambeth are too big and impersonal. Rather, we now want to focus our money nearer home.

Sometimes history throws up moments when everything changes. Such has been the impact of the pandemic on society and lifestyles that this is one of them. Locally, it has revealed a yearning for a better, caring society where no-one gets left behind. The number of local initiatives and personal interventions that have sprung up to address the new issues has been humbling to witness. We should build on that.

The national debate appears to demand new models for doing things (like working from home), decentralising power and spreading national wealth more equitably, and moving from a “top down” to a more “bottom up” form of social organisation. Part of this has been a greater emphasis on Community Empowerment and involve greater community control of money and buildings. The direction for change is self-evident.

In the past we looked to local councils. In my experience over decades Lambeth Council has done its best to protect grants to community organisations and be supportive. I think the same is true for Southwark. However, austerity, privatisations, loss of budgets and staff have reduced the ability of local government to support and develop community organisations. Groups have seen budgets shrivel, with a consequent reduction in what they can do. While a new role for local government is essential, we can't wait: now is the perfect opportunity to create a new Fund to fill the gaps left by shrinking Council and Charitable Funding Bodies.

We are a relatively well-off community that could sustain a Fund to help finance local organisations and develop more social and community enterprises to address Herne Hill issues. As it will be spent locally, we will also see where our money goes and who benefits. I don't envisage a redistributive model, although those struggling to make ends meet, of whom we have our fair share, will

definitely benefit, but one where all sections of the community will receive support. The shared endeavour will help bind us together.

So, I propose that we create a Herne Hill Community Fund.

To protect the public interest and donations an appropriate legal entity would need to be in place, but we don't need a small group of well-intentioned volunteers working themselves to death to deliver this. We surely can recruit experienced people to assume legal oversight and they can be supported by a wider structure that spreads decision-making. We have many residents experienced in the range of activities that need support, such as youth work, education, sport, the arts, elders, and community groups. We can assemble panels for each to evaluate applications, recommend grants and, perhaps, even offer practical advice and support. The aim is to engage “the many”.

The Society's Committee has been kind enough to give this vision a green light for consultation. If enough people are supportive and willing to lend a hand we can move to a more structured stage.

We would need:

- A legally-established body with clear Charitable Objects
- People with the necessary qualifications, experience, and local credibility to be trustees and formally responsible for the charity
- To agree the area of benefit (Herne Hill Ward with adjoining bits)
- Criteria on which to allocate funds, and an application process
- People with knowledge and experience in the different activities for which funds will be sought to recommend awards for each activity in line with an overall strategy
- People with PR and marketing skills to promote the vision
- People with finance or legal qualifications/experience to handle the money
- Volunteers to engage the community.

I am happy to initially pull this together if there is any interest. If you want to help or have a view then get in touch.

**hhcomfund@gmail.com**

*Fred has lived in Herne Hill for 40 years. A Town Planner by profession he worked in local government and was a Chief Officer in a London borough. Before retirement he was for 15 years Projects Director of The Prince's Regeneration Trust.*

*He served as Labour Councillor for Herne Hill 1986-90 and was Chair of the Council's Housing Committee. He has also served as Chair of South London Family Housing Association, Governor of three Lambeth schools, and on the Governing Bodies of the two Lambeth FE Colleges. He was Honorary Secretary of the Carnegie Community Trust until Lambeth withdrew its offer to transfer the Carnegie building to the community. For 30 years he was Honorary Secretary of Brixton Advice Centre on Railton Road. Fred was awarded the MBE for services to regeneration and charity.*





# Enlarging the Brockwell Park Conservation Area

At the end of last year Lambeth Council published an appraisal which contains recommendations for the enlargement of the Brockwell Park Conservation Area. This Conservation Area, one of 62 in the borough, was originally designated in 1986. It comprised the park, Brockwell Hall, St Jude's church, Brockwell Gardens and some houses on Norwood Road. In 1999 it was enlarged to include houses on Dulwich Road backing onto the park, some houses on Norwood Road and Trinity Rise as well as the Peabody Estate on Rosendale Road and Holy Trinity church. It is now proposed to add all the area now known as Station Square, including Herne Hill station and railway embankment on Milkwood Road, the Florence public house and houses on Dulwich Road facing the park.

The Society has responded to the consultation, warmly supporting the proposal, not least because it is one we have been advocating for some years. However, we also make the point that there is a striking omission from the appraisal, that is the Cressingham Gardens Estate at the top of the park on Tulse Hill. This estate has been the subject of controversy over many years, ever since Lambeth, who own the estate, declared their intention to pull it down and redevelop, citing the poor state of repair of the buildings. The opportunity would be used to rebuild at greater density, and therefore height, with the loss of exceptionally well-designed low-rise and generously spaced social

housing, the creation of the legendary architectural design team led by Ted Hollamby. Numerous organisations have spoken out on this issue. Already in 2014 Historic England were recommending



that Cressingham Gardens be included in the Conservation Area. In the current consultation this Society joins the Brixton Society, the Friends of Brockwell Park, Brockwell Park Community Partners as well as the Twentieth Century Society, SAVE Britain's Heritage and the many residents and supporters of the Save Cressingham Gardens campaign, in calling for the estate to be added to the Conservation Area and for its importance both socially and architecturally to be recognised. Our full submission can be found on the Society's website.

Linked to the issue of Cressingham Gardens is a recent planning application by Lambeth to demolish and redevelop a part of the estate, known as Ropers Walk,

which faces onto Trinity Rise. The Society responded with a detailed objection. We deplored the fact that the innovative social origins of the estate and its contribution to social housing reform were not valued and that the significance and quality of the estate's design and layout were downplayed. We drew attention to the absence of a Masterplan for the whole estate and the apparent "salami slicing" approach, that is redeveloping the estate in stages and avoiding a coherent plan that would involve proper scrutiny and controls. We also argued that the proposal contravened Lambeth's own planning policies in failing to respect the local context. The four-storey block proposed was too large and too tall and

damaged the amenity of neighbouring buildings and would have a negative effect on views from Brockwell Park. We also criticised the loss of three trees which will be felled, not least a mature English oak. And we pointed out that the proposal went against Lambeth's own declared intention to use natural resources prudently in moving to carbon neutral practice by 2030. The building should be retrofitted to ensure that embodied carbon is reduced. On 9 February, at a hearing where the Society spoke against the proposal, Lambeth's Planning Applications Committee voted by 6 to 1 to allow the application. Herne Hill ward Councillor Becca Thackray voted against.

**Laurence Marsh**

## Remembrance Day 2020

The Society were able to mark the November Remembrance Day in 2020. Fortunately, lockdown restrictions were not so strict at that time to prevent it.

The year before the memorial tablet had been unveiled for the first time in the hall of Herne Hill Station. On that occasion the hall was packed with people with many more outside, as Colin Wight, the Society's

Chair, gave an address, Helen Hayes MP unveiled the tablet, wreaths were laid and the Last Post rang out over Station Square.

November 2020 was necessarily a very quiet occasion with no wider public engagement. The Society was very appreciative of Helen Hayes joining Colin for a laying of wreaths, something that was given an additional and poignant significance in a time of pandemic.



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# The Herne Hill Society Membership Renewal for 2021

## Renew your Membership – no increase in 2021

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**Concessionary membership is £8**

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- Or send a cheque to the Society at the address on page 2 of this magazine.
- If you are one of our many members who currently pay by Standing Order and wish to continue to do so, please check that you are paying the correct amount.

However you choose to pay, we are grateful for your loyalty and continued support.

If you have any queries please write to the Membership Secretary at

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The Society values being able to communicate with members by email. If you are not receiving our mailings that keep you updated between Magazines, it means we don't have a current email address for you. Please email the Membership Secretary with your address.

*Thank you for your supporting the Society!*

## Herne Hill *matters*

- Our Community
- Our Environment
- Our Heritage
- Our Future





# LTNs – the shape of things to come?

Over recent years, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) have been put forward to improve the environment near homes and schools, by reducing the intrusion of satnav-savvy drivers into minor roads. This has been happening worldwide.

Since the first lockdown, LTN initiatives have been brought in as “temporary” measures with little warning or consultation throughout the UK. While some were urgently needed changes to enable social distancing, most were part of a general trend to rebalance roadspace use – away from cars using residential roads, and towards more space for walking and cycling, especially near schools. They were encouraged by the UK Government’s £2.5 million “emergency active travel fund”. In London, TfL was required to encourage boroughs to implement LTNs as a condition of its £1.6 billion bailout, and more than 70 LTNs were launched in London between last March and September. The difficulties of conducting any meaningful two-way post-implementation council consultation, and the impossibility of any meaningful monitoring during the ups-and-downs of the pandemic, have resulted in strong opinions being formed, with little opportunity to be responded to or quantified – for or against. While generally welcomed by cyclists and some residents of restricted roads, they have enraged others. The earlier successful LTN in Walthamstow showed clear evidence of displaced traffic gradually reducing as new modes were explored and habits adjusted. With the current preference for Covid-safer private car use where available, it is not possible at present to assess accurately the “traffic evaporation” from the through routes here.

On the Lambeth side of Herne Hill, the closures of Railton and Shakespeare Roads (both previously functioning as strategic routes) have caused considerable inconvenience to some, diverting traffic onto more sensitive residential roads, but easing the job of the drivers of the 322 bus. Brixton Buzz website chronicles the comments.

On the Southwark side, the closure of Court Lane and Calton Avenue at Dulwich

Village has resulted in a space disputed between pedestrians and cyclists funnelling through the planters. Comments (mainly



from critics) can be left on the Southwark Streetspace Commonplace website. Southwark was meant to summarise the results and respond in Autumn 2020. Southwark is now promising a response “next month” – possibly prompted by a recent analysis on a website called Dulwich Alliance. Southwark also brought in a video-camera-enforced series of peak-hour “bus gates” south and west of Herne Hill, designed to stop commuter and school traffic rat-running, while allowing all addresses to be accessed. Drivers venturing back towards Dulwich after November last year during daylight hours may have noticed some blue signs on Village Way, Burbage Road, Turney Road and Townley Road. These indicate that only buses (this means school coaches, minibuses and the P4), taxis, cycles and scooters are allowed to pass these points during peak hours (8am to 10am, and 3pm to 6pm). Detours into and out of all roads are still possible, and the affected roads are all still two-way – with entry restrictions monitored by lamp-post-mounted cameras. At some locations, but not all, there are white paint signs on the road saying “Bus Gate”. The blue roadside restriction signs are unlit, and easily missed. Camera enforcement (with fines) has apparently been considerable,

while there is evidence of non-compliance from confused/oblivious/ignoring drivers. Any system to exempt local residents, care workers or blue badge holders would require a system similar to that used for residential controlled parking zone permits. Until properly conducted, unbiased surveys of traffic flows and traveller impacts can be safely carried out, it is difficult for the councils to make a balanced assessment and respond to their communities.

## Meanwhile, in Europe

In Paris, the recently re-elected mayor Anne Hidalgo is an advocate of the concept of the “15-minute city”, where quotidian work, school, shopping, leisure and social activities are organised nearer to housing, enabling most day-to-day travel to be made in less than 15-minute journeys by foot or cycle.

In Barcelona, an ambitious programme is under way to remove traffic from one in three roads in the Eixample district (built on a grid pattern in the 19th century), with their intersections being turned into green park spaces. An early (pre-Covid) pilot project claims a 30% reduction in pollution, and a 30% increase in roadside retail activity. These plans require lots of local involvement in scheme design, and huge amounts of public money – and a Mediterranean climate.

## IMHO

Personally, I am a strong advocate for locally-supported, sensitive and effective measures to enhance the local environment, encourage walking, cycling and public transport use, while reducing car traffic. Local authorities also need to respond to the step changes in home working, local shopping use, and the increasing concern about environmental degradation as we emerge from the pandemic. The current measures, brought in without adequate soft local consultation, may not survive the harder legal challenges, and the approaching one-year review deadline for the temporary powers to be confirmed. With economic activity (and traffic) adjusting to a new level, there will be many bumps in the road as environmental policy is pursued at the local level.

**Bil Harrison**

## PLANNING & LICENSING

### 18 Dorchester Drive, Lambeth 20/02304/FUL

The Society's planning group objected to a proposal to largely demolish and rebuild this detached house, as being entirely out of sympathy with the architectural character of the surrounding area, a remarkably complete and homogeneous example of a mid-1930s development. The proposal failed to add anything positive to the streetscene, damaged the setting of nearby listed buildings and went against policies under the Lambeth Plan and the London Plan. Permission has been given.

### Land to the rear of 18-24 Herne Hill, Lambeth 20/01797/FUL

We commented on a proposal to remove garages and build a three-storey building comprising nine flats. We welcomed the reduction from four storeys, as originally proposed, but were critical of the blandness of the design and the apparent darkness of the choice of brick. A decision is pending.

### 7 Deepdene Road, Lambeth 20/03186/FUL

We objected to a loft conversion with rear and side dormer and balcony, on the basis that the style adopted was out of character with roof alterations in the area, visible from the street and would impact negatively on neighbouring properties in terms of overlooking and privacy. Lambeth has given permission.

### 13 Stradella Road, Southwark 20/AP/3082

We objected to an application for a rear ground-floor extension that involved demolishing half of a double garage shared with the neighbouring house. Unusually, the garage, visible from the street, was built with proper regard to architectural context. Cutting it in half would leave an unsightly and misshapen structure, of especial concern given the Conservation Area status of Stradella Road. We also criticised the scale and style of the extension. Southwark has given permission, but the Dulwich Estate (to whom we also sent an objection) has not yet decided.

### 15 Nairne Grove, Southwark 20/AP/3513

This was an application for a side extension in the Sunray Gardens Conservation Area. Our concern was that a mature chestnut tree that had grown in the front garden and which Southwark's records showed to be protected by a TPO had been felled. We have enquired whether such removal took place to facilitate extending the house. Southwark have to date failed to respond to our enquiry.

### St Jude's former church, Lambeth 20/04290/P30

We commented on an application to convert the former church from office use to use as 17 residential flats. (The Mark Allen Group having decided, for reasons connected to the pandemic, they no longer need such extensive premises.) Such change comes within Permitted Development. However, natural light is a pre-requisite and we questioned whether this was shown for all flats on the plans submitted and also the apparent absence of dual-aspect for some flats. We also urged landscaping improvements for the front of the building and a car-free condition for the scheme. There has been no decision.

### 76 Ruskin Walk, Southwark 20/AP/3848

This is a two-storey infill proposal on a small site, currently covered by a side extension/garage. We objected to one particular feature, namely an oversized round window on the front elevation, as wholly out of character with the architecture of the street. We supported the intelligent use of the plot, but questioned the provision of adequate private garden space, the choice of brick colour and the ability on the plans submitted to deliver a "sunken" kitchen that would not protrude excessively at the front of the building. Permission has been refused.

### Bengeworth Road, Lambeth 20/04417/LDCP

National Grid have made an application for extensive works at their premises at Loughborough Junction. Such works by statutory undertakers come under Permitted Development. We have nevertheless expressed our concern to Lambeth about the effect of such works locally, and in particular that the scheme has been incorrectly categorised in respect of the relevant regulations as not requiring a full Environmental Impact Assessment. We will continue to monitor developments in this case.

### Shakespeare Road, Shakespeare Wharf, 20/01822/EIAFUL

This application for residential redevelopment on a waste disposal site is linked to 20/01066/EIAFUL at Windsor Grove in West Norwood. There can only be redevelopment if a satisfactory alternative site can be found for the waste disposal use. There is strong local opposition in West Norwood to waste disposal moving to Windsor Walk. We have submitted that we are not opposed to residential use of the site but we oppose the current scheme as being too dense and out of scale for the location (it includes an 11-storey tower) and in conflict with Lambeth planning policy. We have also said that in our view the West Norwood site does not provide the necessary capacity as an alternative and would in any event breach policy in terms of noise and pollution in that location. No decision has been made.

### Roper's Walk, Cressingham Gardens, Lambeth 20/02406/RG3

See p. 7 Enlargement of Brockwell Park Conservation Area

### New Planning Use Class E

We responded to the government consultation relating to the proposal to create a new Use Class E that would enable change of use to residential for many more premises, especially on the high street, without the need for planning permission. We have indicated our opposition, following the policy guidance provided by the national organisation Civic Voice. We regard the growing scope of permitted development as inimical to the principles of democratic local government.

### GI Express 87, 87 Norwood Road

We objected to a licensing application for sales off the premises up to 2am seven days a week. We submitted that Southwark should adhere to their own guideline policy for such premises in our area, namely up to 11pm. Southwark has granted a licence with the latter hours.

Laurence Marsh



# A sorry site

Over the years we have been watching the shops in Station Square. Most of the tenants had moved out more than five years ago, though one tenant held out until summer 2016. The then owners, Network Rail, moved in for a major refurbishment. Work proceeded and a little over a year later we asked in this Magazine “Light at the end of the tunnel?” with September 2017 as the promised date when marketing the shops would begin. But structural problems emerged, some involving damage caused by the ubiquitous railway coloniser, *buddleia davidii*. Another year passed. The Arch Co. acquired the shops and a new problem was discovered.



The electricity supply for the new shops was inadequate. A new sub-station would be needed. Why this was not realised at the very outset we know not. A proposal to put this where the Flower Lady, Elaine Partleton, has her shop met with an outcry and the plan was dropped.

In winter 2018 some of the hoardings had come down and three cheerfully painted shops were revealed, but the sub-station issue remained unresolved – and the shops empty. Two more years have passed. In that time a “solution” for where to put the sub-station has been found, by putting it inside one of the refurbished shops, thus permanently losing its function as a shop – and with metal louvred doors to greet passers-by. This Society objected on planning grounds, as did the Herne Hill Forum, and urged other alternatives, but to no avail. Lambeth’s Planning Committee approved the application by a majority.

And herein lies the explanation for why the hoardings are up again. The sub-station is to be installed and cables to the shops need to be laid. The weighty concrete blocks are needed to support the hoardings.



The Arch Co. is promising “early summer” as the date for completion of all works. We can only hope so. When we spoke of “light at the end of the tunnel” three years ago we never thought the tunnel would turn out to be that long, but at least that light should now have an adequate power source.



After many months the restoration of Herne Hill’s railway bridge is nearly complete. We show it in its new livery and as it appeared before the scaffolding went up last year. Laid across a point where no less than six roads come together it can justly claim to be the epicentre of Herne Hill.

Also shown is the bridge as it appeared in about 1910, an early electric tram en route to Norwood. Rutter’s Mitcham Shag is advertised on the wall, a popular brand of tobacco that was once produced on the banks of the River Wandle. Herne Hill as we know it would be nothing without the arrival of the railway and the bridge is an important part of our heritage. It is pleasing to see it looking so trim.

Bridge restored





# Census 2021 will provide a snapshot of Herne Hill

For more than 200 years statistics have been collected from households in England and Wales every 10 years, in order to create an accurate picture of the make-up of Britain.

With the next census being carried out by the Office for National Statistics on Sunday 21 March 2021, let's take a brief look back at the history of the census in England and the wider world.

The census is older than the Chinese, Egyptian and Greek civilisations, dating back to the Babylonians who used a census as a guide to how much food they needed to feed the population. From around 2,500 BCE the Egyptians used censuses to work out the scale of the labour force they would need to build their pyramids. They also used the information to plan how they would share out the land after the annual flooding of the Nile. China, too, began to take censuses around this time. The most well known, taken by the Han Dynasty in 2 CE, recorded 57.67 million people living in 12.36 million households.

The first thorough census of England was carried out in 1086 when William the Conqueror ordered the production of the Domesday Book. This detailed inventory of land and property was a massive undertaking, taking many years to complete. The Domesday Book paints a very detailed picture of life in Norman

England. But unlike the modern census, it did not provide an accurate count of the people living in England.

In 1279 Edward I commissioned the Hundred Rolls, which paints a more detailed picture of rural society than the Domesday Book, though nothing was

So in 1801 the first official once-a-decade census was conducted, and aside from a break in 1941 it has taken place every 10 years since. March 2021 will see the country being asked to complete the census once again, but is it still relevant in modern Britain and to residents of Herne Hill?



The answer, in short, is yes. The census helps authorities to inform policy-making, plan public services, and decide where billions of pounds are spent, for instance on roads, schools and hospitals. Without the information collected from the

done with the results! In Tudor and Stuart times, bishops were made responsible for counting the number of families in their dioceses, but England and Scotland were reluctant to adopt the idea of a regular official census. While Quebec held its first official census in 1666, Iceland in 1703 and Sweden in 1749, Britain was slow to follow suit.

Towards the end of the 18th century, however, it became obvious that there was little idea of how many people lived in Britain. The Industrial Revolution had seen an increase in agricultural output, leading to a steep population rise. It was important to know that enough food was being produced to feed everyone; and it was now possible to know how many men of fighting age there were to fight the war against Napoleon.

census it would be a lot more difficult to provide adequate public services for the population.

But the census is not a static instrument and it changes to reflect the times. The 2021 census will be digital-first, meaning people will be encouraged to complete it online. It will also ask three new questions that will help build a better picture of modern Britain, by asking about previous service in the armed forces, and including voluntary questions on sexuality and gender identity.

Households will start to receive letters from 1 March 2021 and it is important that everyone takes part. That way we can help shape Britain for the future, and be part of a history thousands of years in the making.

**David Gwyther**  
Office for National Statistics

## Helen Hayes MP resigns from Shadow Cabinet

We reported almost a year ago in these pages that Helen Hayes MP, whose Dulwich and West Norwood constituency includes Herne Hill, had been appointed by Keir Starmer

as Shadow Minister for the Cabinet Office.

On 30 December Parliament was recalled from recess to vote on the bill to enact the trade agreement negotiated by the government with the

EU. Helen Hayes was one of 73 MPs who voted against the bill. Since this went against the party whip imposed for the vote she resigned from the Shadow Cabinet. In a statement on her website she

has given her reasons, referring to her constituents voting overwhelmingly to remain in the EU and to her belief that the agreement was "a bad deal which will make our country poorer".

# Herne Hill gains another listed building

In October, the Secretary of State for Culture decided to add The Quadrangle, one of Herne Hill's finest Edwardian buildings, to the National Heritage List, accepting the advice of the government's heritage agency Historic England. It is now a Grade II listed building.

This complex of flats at the top of Herne Hill (opposite the parade of shops between Frankfurt and Elfindale Roads) was built in 1911 as a residence for professional women. It has a distinctive Tudor-style half-timbered frontage and is described in detail in the October 2018 edition of Herne Hill magazine, available online at <https://issuu.com/hernehillsociety/docs/herne-hill-mag-143/12>

The Quadrangle joins two dozen buildings and structures that are already protected by statutory (national) listing. Over a dozen more on the Lambeth side of Herne Hill are locally listed;



most regrettably Southwark Council has yet to adopt a local list to protect its built heritage.

Three of our buildings are Grade II\* listed, one of the highest grades in England and Wales (i.e. in the top 8% of all listed buildings), indicating outstanding historic and architectural importance. These are the very fine and well-preserved late Victorian Half Moon pub,

the imposing Regency-era Brockwell Hall (1816) and the mid-Victorian gothic St Paul's Church, halfway up Herne Hill (1858).

Some 92% of listed buildings in the country are Grade II listed and we have wonderful and very diverse examples, mainly from the Victorian and Edwardian eras. They include Herne Hill Railway Station (1862), the Tritton Clock Tower in Brockwell Park (1897), the Baptist Church on Half Moon Lane (1896), Rosendale Primary School (1899), Carnegie Library (1905), St Saviour's Church on Herne Hill Road (1915), and Holy Trinity Church on Trinity Rise, with its commanding spire and Kentish ragstone elevations (1856). Several good examples of inter-war heritage have also been listed Grade II, such as our much-loved Brockwell Lido (1937), Dorchester Court (1934) and Dorchester House (1936).

Our statutory listing system has protected the UK's built heritage since 1947. Changes or additions to both the exteriors and interiors of listed buildings have required listed building consent

from the local planning authority, since the introduction of this protective measure in 1968. Historic England has to be consulted on applications affecting Grade I and II\* listed buildings. Other heritage organisations such as the Victorian Society and the 20th Century Society are also consulted in certain cases. Listed building status is not intended to preserve a building exactly in its original condition but it enables local authorities to manage change in a way that retains the character, historic fabric and architectural significance of the building.

Compared with most other districts of London and beyond, Herne Hill has lost relatively few historic landmarks since the Second World War. However, one grievous loss was the original St Saviour's Church on Herne Hill Road (next to St Saviour's Primary School) of 1867, torn down in 1981. Another sad demolition was the Herne Hill Wesleyan Methodist Church on the corner of Half Moon Lane and Beckwith Road, built in 1900, demolished in 1971, and replaced by flats (Wesley House). Even earlier, we lost two fine historic houses on Denmark Hill from the early 1850s: Bessemer House and The Grange, once owned by the family of the renowned inventor and engineer Sir Henry Bessemer. They had become hotels by the 1920s but were demolished by Camberwell Borough Council in the later 1940s to make way for the Denmark Hill Estate. There is little doubt that if these had survived intact they would all have come to be listed.

There are still some surprising omissions from the National Heritage List in our neighbourhood. These include Sainsbury's Local, which is a very handsome Edwardian former fire station built for horse-drawn fire engines in 1906, the Ruskin Park bandstand (1911), St Jude's Church on Dulwich Road (1868), a modernist 1930s "sun-trap" house on Dorchester Drive, the surviving Edwardian classical buildings at King's College Hospital (1913), together with its magnificent chapel and the Art Deco Odeon-style Guthrie Clinic on Denmark Hill (1937), and the two Victorian pubs on Dulwich Road, The Florence and The Prince Regent. Most of these have rightly been awarded locally-listed status by Lambeth Council but surely deserve assessment for Grade II listing. The charming early 19th-century lodge to Brockwell Park on Norwood Road has also so far been overlooked for national or local listing.

On the Southwark side, obvious candidates for appraisal for statutory listing include "Onaway" on Half Moon Lane/Ardbeg Road (c.1900) and, from the same era, St Faith's Church Hall on Red Post Hill (1907).

**Edmund Bird**

*All of the buildings on the Lambeth side of Herne Hill feature in the series of five illustrated volumes on Lambeth's architectural history by Edmund Bird and Fiona Price, available from us by mail order <https://www.hernehillsociety.org.uk/publications/> and at our local bookshop, Herne Hill Books on Station Square.*



# THE ART OF TREE CARVING

## - a playful homage to Ruskin



If you have walked through Ruskin Park since late last summer, you will probably have noticed changes in that the massive branch underneath the ancient Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*), near the Finsen Road edge of the park.

Previously just a fallen branch, it now displays a diversity of humorous and affectionate carvings (whale, squirrels, oak leaves, acorns) that exploit the colour, texture and density of this great timber. This has made it – even more than before – irresistible to young children who clamber all over it exploring the variety of three-dimensional images, worked into the wood in homage to John Ruskin. Few people, even those too old to scramble on fallen branches, fail to stop and admire. There is even a small seat and a place to rest your coffee cup.

For some months in 2020 we had seen barriers installed by Lambeth to protect the site and the artist as the project progressed (it took around six weeks to complete). The results have now been widely



applauded. It is the work of local artist Morganico, working to a brief supplied by the Friends of Ruskin Park whose chair, Lucy Hadfield, was the principal manager of the project. The Arts Council England contributed to the budget as part of their support for the Friends' "John Ruskin at 200" programme. Indeed, Ruskin's name is carved at a central point on this great branch, fallen from an oak that was undoubtedly there during the great man's lifetime.

We went back to visit the oak carvings with the artist on a mid-January Sunday. As ever, the carvings were a talking point for everyone who strolled by, and a powerful toddler magnet.

Born in Stockwell (indeed, close to where Van Gogh lived), but growing up in Loughborough Junction, Morganico is a multi-talented street artist and carver. He had earlier produced a vertical peace tree sculpture in the grounds of the Imperial War Museum as well as the Peckham Totem Pole based on a fallen plane tree on Peckham Rye alongside East Dulwich Road.

More good news: there is a plan, still in the early stages, for him to



*Morganico in Ruskin Park*

work on another fallen branch carving in Brockwell Park: another oak branch indeed, this one from the venerable English Oak - *Quercus robur*, and one of the largest oak trees in London – which stands just below Brockwell Hall and which has the distinction of being listed as one of the Great Trees of London by urban tree guru Paul Wood. Funds still need to be raised for this new project, via

<http://gofundme.com/BrockwellParkOaktreeSculpture>

**Pat Roberts**



# ALL FIRED UP IN SE24



*Frances Plowden*

railway arches clustering around Loughborough Junction. So making a change from the Bath Factory Estate. There are arches all around South London, thankfully.

Here near the bottom of Herne Hill Road she hammers away making wholly original gates, railings, security grilles, benches, ornaments and larger pieces – generally these days for domestic use – but she has also worked on designs and structures for circuses and festivals and the Olympics.

Cheerily, she has a satisfactory order book at present. It seems that during the long lockdown, people stuck at home have time and sometimes (the lucky ones) more money to think about domestic improvements. So many are commissioning Frances to create some permanent and pleasing enhancements to their homes and gardens. Turn to her website for images of some of the enviable pieces she constructs.

And yes, Frances lives in Herne Hill. As well as her blacksmith work, she holds ESOL qualifications and has taught IT and life skills courses to vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers over at Lambeth College, with the Helen Bamber Foundation and more recently with the WEA.

What's a smith?

Of course there aren't many actual smiths now, but once there were a lot of them: coppersmiths, silversmiths, goldsmiths, gunsmiths, and more, as well as blacksmiths. As we all know, it is the most common surname in the British Isles. Originally the word derived from *smið* or *smiþ*, the Old English term meaning one who works in metal and related to the word *smitan*, the Old English form of *smite*. Never claim



*A recent example of Frances's work*

that this magazine fails to teach you something even if it comes from Wikipedia (and apologies to any former students of Old English for whom this is elementary stuff). So when you need a skilled person to craft something original and beautiful by smiting steel, Frances may be your person.

Frances Plowden <http://francesplowden.org/>

**Pat Roberts**

Over recent years, this magazine has been thrilled to discover and celebrate the depth and range of creative talent that survives (we hope) and sometimes flourishes in our area.

Further, our entrepreneurial and inventive neighbours often run their businesses tucked away in the railway arches - unglamorous but ever-useful - that are one of the enduring spin-offs of our mid-Victorian ancestors' railway investments. We have often explored the hive of innovation and industry in the so-called Bath Factory Estate, the arches running behind Norwood Road.

Are there more to come? Of course! But did you expect to find a blacksmith in SE24? Probably not but read on!

Perhaps it is presumptuous to imply that we have 'discovered' Frances Plowden. Yes, we have only just come across her, but she has a wide and long-standing reputation for her original and adventurous work as a blacksmith, welder and metal designer, acquired over the 30 years she has been producing metalwork.

She learnt to weld during a design course at Brighton Polytechnic, won an apprenticeship with a Master Blacksmith at Kew Steam Museum (note to self: that looks worth a visit when we are allowed to move around again), and was awarded a scholarship by the prestigious Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust (QUEST) to spend time in Spain learning the finer points of blacksmithing from a Catalan master.

For more than 20 years now, she has had a workshop in one of the

# RUSKIN IN SHEFFIELD – OR ANYWHERE?

John Ruskin lived from 1819 to 1900. His decisive influence in the 19th century as a critic of art and architecture may be what we first think of when his name comes up. But he was also of course – and radically so as he got older – a profoundly influential and outspoken social and political thinker and prophet, to the extent that on such topics some of his publishers occasionally declined to print the copy he submitted. Many of his ideas in this sphere, decades after his death, created the environment from which the first architects of the Labour movement emerged.

In the 1870s, Ruskin's concern for the laissez-faire industrial economy's dehumanising impact on people and on their environment led him to establish in Sheffield a philanthropic charity, the Guild of St George. It was intended to put his ideas into practice in the contemporary world, alongside an important education-focused museum now housed (as the Ruskin Collection) in a dedicated gallery in Sheffield's Millennium Gallery. Sheffield was becoming the nation's industrial epicentre of steel, iron working and cutlery manufacturing – a vibrant city, which was to prosper in step with the global dominance of British manufacturing. It suffered under the 20th century's industrial decline and has seen much recovery; but Sheffield has always nurtured a special (if sometimes understated) relationship with Ruskin.

The ambitious project that gave rise to this new handbook sprang from a decision by the Guild of St George to revitalise the connection between the Ruskin Collection and the people of Sheffield in ways that make a difference today. This coincided with the wider re-emergence of interest in Ruskin's ideas. Like many commentators who have been reassessing Ruskin's teachings 200 years after his birth, the Guild acknowledged

that his concerns about the environment, mass consumerism, loss of creative and craft skills, and a growing wealth divide, resonate strongly today – nationally and globally. It was from such convictions that a new programme, described in this book, emerged.

In 2014, accordingly, the Guild launched

artists and volunteers and engaging 25,000 adults and children who took part. The programme cost £193,000, a large proportion of which was raised from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Arts Council England and local funders.

The author, Ruth Nutter, was the organising force and producer of the project. Here, going beyond the case histories, she sets out the practical principles of the programme which can be widely applied when planning community engagement projects in any locality, all with the aim of making lives better in harmony with John Ruskin's approach.

Her guiding principles include Purpose from Passion – Act on What You Care About; Preserve & Pioneer, reflecting the importance of local heritage, its role as a powerful driver for shaping the future, and the importance of mobilising local communities to draw out of the heritage what is important to preserve; and Go Polymath (like Ruskin himself) to embrace the widest range of ways for people to come together and join in activities.

Her key recommendations for potential organisers include: Be highly visible in daily life – “put yourself in people's path”. Keep things simple. Engage in creativity at the heart of things. And use partnerships to build communities and remain socially engaged.

The book's messages cannot fairly be summarised in this short review but the project constantly reminds us of Ruskin's celebrated proclamation: “There is no wealth but life. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest numbers of noble and happy human beings ...”

This inspirational and modestly priced book is published and sold online by the Guild of St George via their website.

**Pat Roberts**



its “Ruskin in Sheffield” project. Under the direction of Ruth Nutter, the project spread its wings over the city and brought Ruskin's mix of aesthetic, environmental and social concerns into diverse communities.

*Paradise Is Here – Building Community around Things That Matter* opens with a series of case histories that together made up the “Ruskin in Sheffield” Project, which ran between 2014 and 2019. It brought together and revitalised some of the most deprived communities in Sheffield, harnessing the Ruskin Collection. The project in the end embraced a total of 76 mainly free events involving professional



# UNEARTHED: PHOTOGRAPHY'S ROOTS

Dulwich Picture Gallery's spring exhibition, *British Surrealism*, opened in February last year but, within a month, was forced by the first lockdown to close and the display had to be taken down. The gallery used the prolonged closure for a full reburbishment and to rehang the permanent collection. The gardens were reopened in the summer, along with a



*Richard Learoyd, Poppies*

pop-up shop and takeaway cafe service.

*Unearthed: Photography's Roots*, projected to run from 21 November to 9 May, was delayed until 8 December. Your reviewer was lucky enough to visit before the third lockdown closed the gallery after only eight days. One can but hope it will reopen before the next show is due.

We begin with 'Victorian Pioneers 1840-60', including Henry Fox Talbot, experimenting with paper negatives. Early photographers often aimed to recreate Dutch still life. Examples here are shown alongside Jan van Huysum's painting *Vase with Flowers*. The themes of botany and nature continue throughout the exhibition. Other pioneers included are Adolphe Braun, James Mudd and Anna Atkins. Also present are Cecilia Glaisher, whose *Five British and Irish Ferns* receive their first public showing, and Roger Fenton with six very detailed prints of fruit, flowers and decanters, clearly bringing out the textures.

'Taxonomy and Form' features Charles Jones's never before shown gelatine silver prints and stereographs discovered more than 20 years after his 1989 death, of flowers or vegetables, taken to show photography as a greater aid to classification than drawn illustrations. Karl Blossfeldt's close-ups of plant specimens were meant to aid designers and manufacturers. Others arranged plants in patterns to promote photography as art. A Jan Breughel bouquet painting contrasts with 11 hand-coloured photographs made by

Kazumasa Ogawa 30 years before colour film was invented, and nine glass lantern slides by his student, T. Enami.

In the gallery's mausoleum, three video screens present shimmering views, Ori Gersht's *On Reflection*, re-imagining the Breughel as a broken glass kaleidoscope image slowly dying then springing back to life.

Room 4 is in two parts: 'Modernism in Bloom 1925 - 55' examines photography as art form versus a means of addressing contemporary issues. Works by Steichen, Sudek and Lou Landauer sit alongside Andre Kertesz's *Melancholic Tulip* and Gyula Holic's semi-abstract image of peas as an advancing army. Several works by Imogen Cunningham illustrate her talent, unappreciated in her early period (1920s) as a woman struggling for recognition. Her friend and fellow American Edward Weston's sculpture-like pepper, fan-like toadstool and tropical fruits hang nearby.

'Nature, Now and Beyond 1984 - 2020' illustrate technical advances moving from analogue to digital. Robert Mapplethorpe, known for his erotic images, depicts two tulips facing each other with sexual tension, a close-up blue rose photogravure and three orchids in a line as if sitting on a wire. Sarah Moore presents a transfer print of dreamlike orchids in deep purple pigment. An Adam Fuss 2014 daguerrotype of a Taj Mahal dado is from his 'My Ghost' series of camera-less photography. We also see Albert G. Richards narcissus radiographs, a technique he developed from dentistry X-rays.

Araki, known for bondage pictures, here shows ikebana from his 'Flower Rondeau' series and sensual blooms like wrought iron in a vase. Joy Gregory's clover, Pradip Malde's dying plant dubbed *Head of a Drowned Woman* and Lorenzo Vittori's giclée print collage, *Yellow Red Bokum*, round out the room.



*Imogen Cunningham, Agave*

The final room features a double-sided tapestry photo-collage. Richard Learoyd's poppies in states of decay in vases and Mat Collishaw's *Auto-immolation* (flower aflame behind an LCD screen), evoke 17th-century floral images as symbols of mortality. Helen Sear's bright images, like portraits against deep fabric, Sarah Jones's print on aluminium *Cabinet III, Drape* and Nick Knight's yellow roses taken by mobile phone and digitally reconstructed complete the show.

**Jeff Doorn**

Though the gallery is closed, the café and shop remain open with limited capacity. Aim to see *Photography's Roots* as soon as lockdown is lifted. Hopefully this will be possible before the next scheduled exhibition:

Helen Frankenthaler: *Radical Beauty*, showing the abstract expressionist's woodcuts.



# HERNE HILL - ACTUALLY

True film enthusiasts will go to extraordinary lengths to pursue their passion. It might require prodigious feats of memory – like remembering all the films of Ingmar Bergman, no less than 37 in all, starting with ... [we don't want their names, ed.] But for some film fans tracking down film locations is a particular obsession. Novices might travel to the Royal Naval College, where it seems well over 100 films of every description have made use of Wren's architecture, at times standing in for places far from Greenwich – Paris and St Petersburg come to mind – and parliament and palace buildings at home. And how often have King's Bench Walk or Middle Temple Hall at the heart of legal London appeared in one or other historical drama?



But that is all far too obvious. It is the more obscure corners that appeal to the dedicated fan. So where was the street in Richard Curtis's *Love Actually* (2003) where Hugh Grant knocked on so many doors searching for his true love? Said in the film to be in "the dodgy end of Wandsworth" it was in fact filmed in Poplar Road, Herne Hill, though some internet sites are determined to call it Brixton. Can Herne Hill lay claim to locations used in other films? There is the advert for Red Rock cider (what happened to that?) starring the brilliant Leslie Nielsen made more than 30 years ago and shot at the Half Moon, and the 2019 Visa advert that highlighted some Herne Hill traders. But if you know of others, let us know.

## STREET TREES

Sometimes the scale of the climate crisis seems so great that a sense of helplessness overwhelms. At times like these to concentrate on the microcosm of your own immediate neighbourhood and to realise that there actually are things that can be done brings some comfort. A growing awareness of the value of street trees provides a good example. Street trees soak up air pollution, help to dampen noise and regulate temperature, sustain wildlife and encourage biodiversity – and they enhance the appearance and feel of a neighbourhood and lift our spirits. In the spring of 2016 we reported in this magazine how Lambeth residents in Fawnbrake Avenue got together, put their hands in their pockets and with the support of the Herne Hill Society persuaded Lambeth, who agreed to provide match funding, to plant 40 trees in their street. This year, helped by some Gift Aid recovered by the Society on the original donations, Lambeth are filling a few remaining gaps. Over on the Southwark side remarkable work is being done by Herne Hill Tree Watch, a group of volunteers led by Jeff Segal and Paul Millington. Working closely with Southwark council, they are having great success and in December were able to announce 50 street trees would be planted

in their area in 2021, largely replacing trees that have been lost. There is also a hands-on aspect to what they do because the group are carrying out simple maintenance, particularly the pruning of basal shoots



### *Herne Hill Tree Watch*

which can be a problem with some species. Find out more about their work by emailing [hhtreewatch@gmail.com](mailto:hhtreewatch@gmail.com). The story of street trees in London is a fascinating one and deserves more space than is available here. But deserving particular mention is a new edition published in 2020 of Paul Wood's *London's Street Trees: A Field Guide to the Urban Forest*. First published three years ago this is a much expanded edition and beautifully

illustrated on every page. It reveals not merely the writer's huge knowledge of his subject but his passion for it. And if anyone wonders why we single it for particular praise, look no further than the front cover of the book, where the glories of the Winterbrook Road Yoshino cherries are shown, and go to pages 210-11, where Herne Hill is chosen as South London's representative in six London street tree walks. Paul Wood has also been active – not least via the internet during the lockdown – conducting excellent London tree tours. More information on his website at <https://the.streettree.com/>.

And note an upcoming walk for the Dulwich & District U3A on 18 March at 2pm. Final mention should be made of his *Great Trees of London Map* (2020), celebrating some 50 trees including an ancient oak in Brockwell Park, possibly 700 years old but more likely about 500, a tree that may well have started its life when Shakespeare was still busy on London's Southbank. A branch from this oak has had to be taken down and we understand that the wood carver whose work in Ruskin Park we show at p.14 will be putting his creative skills to work on the branch – surely something to bring cheer in these uncertain times.

# Building in your garden

## – what is allowed?

Packed trains leaving Herne Hill in the morning and returning in the evening – it seems an age away and one wonders whether those days will ever return. In its place for so many (who have not yet reached the happy position of retirement) working from home has become well established. As I write this I look out on a substantial structure taking shape in my neighbour’s back garden. I cannot say how many home offices/garden rooms/men’s sheds have gone up in the last year, but I suspect the number is prodigious. So are there any limits to what you can put up in your garden?

A key practical consideration of course in all matters concerning building activity is– does it require planning permission? That depends on whether it comes within what is known as “permitted development” (PD). Such development does not need planning permission. Home offices and similar structures in gardens are regarded as PD, so long as they come within the limits currently contained in the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, as amended. These limits relate particularly to size and height. If these are exceeded planning permission will need to be sought.

Thus a home office will not be PD if:

- it exceeds one storey
- its height exceeds: (i) 4 metres where the building has a dual-pitch roof, (ii) 2.5 metres where the building is within 2 metres of the boundary, or (iii) 3 metres in any other case
- the height of the eaves exceeds 2.5 metres
- the area covered is more than 50% of the “curtilage” (i.e. all the land that goes with the house), but excluding the area of the house itself
- it includes the construction of a balcony, veranda or raised platform (defined as above 0.3 metres)
- any part of it is forward of the principal elevation of the house.

There are some additional rules for special sites such as “areas of outstanding natural beauty”, but much as some of us would like to put Herne Hill (or parts of it) in that category we probably still have some way to go to reach that status. Perhaps surprisingly conservation areas do not have any special protection in this context, except that in such a case a home office built between side elevation of the house and the boundary will not be PD. Listed buildings are protected; planning permission will always be necessary.

The ability to build such structures in back gardens as PD does not mean they can be used for permanent overnight accommodation. Planning permission must be obtained for such use, which is likely to be unpopular with neighbours; despite which I have seen it granted by Lambeth, although with a planning condition to prevent the creation of a self-contained dwelling.

Buildings with an internal floor area of less than 15m<sup>2</sup> do not need to comply with building regulations, nor do those with an internal floor area of between 15m<sup>2</sup> and 30m<sup>2</sup> provided they are built not less than 1 metre from any boundary or are built of non-flammable materials. The building quality will vary greatly for garden rooms, but one serious concern – since many if not most are not of a size to require compliance with building regulations (other than in respect of electrical work) – is that insulation may be inadequate resulting in use of energy that is wasteful and environmentally unsustainable.

On the broader question of planning policy and the relative ease with which gardens can be built on opinions will vary. One finds in the Lambeth Plan (Policy Q14) this statement: “Development in rear gardens has the potential to erode the amenity value and habitat value of rear gardens generally” and in the commentary at para 10.54 “the introduction of home offices, garages, outbuildings and new dwellings/premises can have a significant impact on the collective value of gardens.” However, such policy is only relevant to planning applications. Local authorities have no say over what does and what does not constitute permitted development. That power lies with central government and the trend in recent years has all been in one direction – enlarging the ambit of permitted development.

A word of warning: if a garden room is used “exclusively for the purposes of a trade, business, profession or vocation” you could find yourself facing a Capital Gains Tax bill when you sell your house. I imagine accountants will advise, don’t advertise the house as coming with a “state of the art custom-built home office” – this may well alert HMRC – and make sure there’s some Lego lying around at all times (“Ah yes, the children love playing here!”)

And a final practical point: it is prudent, if embarking on a building project within PD, to obtain a Lawful Development Certificate from the council. It is proof that the building is lawful, especially of value if you come to sell, and also if the council later turns out to be wrong about the lawfulness.

**Laurence Marsh**



# Social media is older than you think!

from the South London Press, 27 September 1912:

## DEFACED THE PAVEMENT – A CHEAP ADVERTISEMENT AT HERNE HILL

**A**t Lambeth Police-court on Tuesday, Margaret Bartels, Acacia-grove, Dulwich, was summoned by the police for unlawfully defacing the footway of Norwood-rd., Herne Hill, by writing thereon.

The proceedings were taken under a by-law recently made by the Lambeth Borough Council.

P.S. Humphries, 27W, said the defendant, and lady friend, chalked an advertisement of a suffragette meeting on the pavement. When spoken to on the



*Suffragette pavement artists at work!*

matter, the defendant said she thought she was in a borough in which there was no by-law. The spot was just on the borderline

of two boroughs, and it was just possible the lady made a mistake.

Mr Francis, the Magistrate (to defendant): Apparently they do not like it in this borough, and you must not do it.

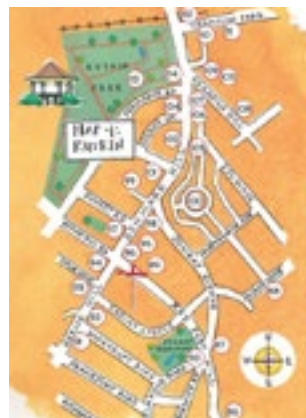
Defendant: I did precisely the same thing in the same place on the day before, and nothing was said to me. How was I to know?

Mr Francis: I don't know. You are supposed to know the law. You must pay one shilling and two shillings costs.

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# GONE BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

It's a truism to say that if you wait long enough everything acquires historic interest, whether it's a tin of Oxo cubes or a Victorian pillar box. Everyday local views are no exception and can be especially evocative for the viewer for whom the image brings back memories. This view recently appeared on eBay and shows a scene in Herne Hill from at least 40 years ago. The Post Office, with its distinctive ziggurat-style pediment, was built in 1938 and survived until 2006. It was replaced by the sports shop with flats above now on the site. Also gone are Christine the florist and the tobacconist/newsagent in the corner of the building that was then a still functioning bank, but the buildings are fortunately still with us, since 2012 part of the small Herne Hill conservation



*When did you last see one of these?*

this picture dating to about 1932 they were enrolled at a school in Switzerland but with an address at Bessemer Grange on Denmark Hill.

By this time almost all the grand houses on Denmark Hill and Herne Hill had gone. The few that survived became residential hotels, including The Grange and Henry Bessemer's house next door. Clearly visible behind the Platini Mettler girls is the garden front of Bessemer House. Nelly later returned to Argentina

but Julieta stayed in England and in 1940 married a professional soldier, Lt. Col. Basil James FitzGerald Donlea MC. Both The Grange and Bessemer House were demolished in 1947 and their spacious grounds built over. More detail on the history can be found in the Society's *Herne Hill Heritage Trail* (featured at p. 20) and *The Story of Sir Henry Bessemer*.

A second item of interest was a message we received from Michael Robarts with memories of living at Flat 11 Dorchester Court 50 years ago. His mother came to visit and the place immediately brought back memories of an event 20 years earlier. During the war she was working as a physiotherapist at King's and was called to a flat at the very top of one of the blocks. The patient was Joan Hammond, the great Australian operatic soprano – actually born in New Zealand – who was beginning to make her way as a singer in London. She had injured her ankle on stage and needed urgent treatment.



*Joan Hammond*

A memory of the amazing views over London had always stayed with Michael's mother, as had that of running up Denmark Hill with tin hat on her head to reach a shelter during an air raid. The remarkable views over London remain, but given the buildings' present state of repair use of a tin hat by visitors might be advisable.

**Laurence Marsh**



*In the garden of Bessemer House*

area. And the car in the centre? Yes, it's an Austin Maxi (5-speed gearbox, hydrostatic suspension) with a registration dating it to 1971. When did you last see one of those?

Herne Hill's past was also evoked in two items of interest to reach us recently. The first was an enquiry about a photograph which we show here. Susan Donlea, who has kindly allowed to use the photograph, tells us that the picture shows her mother-in-law Julieta Platini Mettler, on the right, born in 1916, with her sister Nelly next to her, born the following year. Both girls were born in Buenos Aires and spent their early years there. Their father, Angel Platini, was a banker of Italian descent and their mother, Julia Mettler, of Swiss descent. The family came to England in 1924 and the girls were educated at a convent in Wimbledon. At the time of

# THE OLD ELM TREE

*Note from the editor: We would like to mark Colin Wight's departure as Chair of our Society with something a bit different. Colin, among his many talents, is a gifted linguist. His poetry translations have been read on BBC Radio. The theme of "green shoots" seems particularly apt today.*

Antonio Machado (1875-1939) is one of Spain's greatest poets, though not as well-known outside his homeland as his younger and more flamboyant contemporary Federico García Lorca. His work owes less to startling, clashing imagery we associate with Lorca and more to a calm contemplation of nature that has its roots in Latin poetry.

"Al olmo viejo" is from *Campos de Castilla* (Castilian Landscapes), first published in 1912. It is a justly famous collection. The context of this poem is well known: Machado was mourning the loss of his wife, Leonor, who was just 18 when she died of tuberculosis.



On the old elm, struck by lightning  
And rotten to the core,  
April showers and the rays of May  
Have teased out a few green leaves.

Ancient elm on the hill  
Lapped by the Douro! Yellow moss  
Stains the white bleached bark  
Of its worm-eaten, crumbling bole.

Unlike the whispering poplars  
That guard the path and the river bank,  
It will never be home to dusky nightingales.

An army of ants ascends  
In single file, while spiders  
Weave grey webs within its bowels.

Before an axe-wielding woodsman  
Fells you, elm of the Douro, and a carpenter  
Makes of you a bell tower,  
A cart yoke or axle;  
Before you blaze red,  
In the hearth of some wretched hut  
Along a country path;  
Before you're uprooted by a whirlwind  
And flattened by the white sierra's breath  
Before the river drags you seaward  
Through valleys and gullies,  
I wish, elm tree, to put into words  
The grace of those green shoots.

Turning towards light and life,  
Like you, my heart craves  
Another miracle of spring.

Al olmo viejo, hendido por el rayo  
y en su mitad podrido,  
con las lluvias de abril y el sol de mayo  
algunas hojas verdes le han salido.

¡El olmo centenario en la colina  
que lame el Duero! Un musgo amarillento  
le mancha la corteza blanquecina  
al tronco carcomido y polvoriento.

No será, cual los álamos cantores  
que guardan el camino y la ribera,  
habitado de pardos ruiseñores.

Ejército de hormigas en hilera  
va trepando por él, y en sus entrañas  
urden sus telas grises las arañas.

Antes que te derribe, olmo del Duero,  
con su hacha el leñador, y el carpintero  
te convierta en melena de campana,  
lanza de carro o yugo de carreta;  
antes que rojo en el hogar, mañana,  
ardas en alguna mísera caseta,  
al borde de un camino;  
antes que te descuaje un torbellino  
y tronche el soplo de las sierras blancas;  
antes que el río hasta la mar te empuje  
por valles y barrancas,  
olmo, quiero anotar en mi cartera  
la gracia de tu rama verdecida.

Mí corazón espera  
también, hacia la luz y hacia la vida,  
otro milagro de la primavera.







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