HERNE HILL

THE MAGAZINE OF THE HERNE HILL SOCIETY ❧ ISSUE 164 ❧ Winter ❧ 2026

The Magazine of the Herne Hill Society

The Herne Hill Society

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From the editor – Laurence Marsh

Some 17 years ago I wrote to the Herne Hill Society expressing an interest in local planning issues. Before I knew it, I had been persuaded to join the Society's committee. One thing led to another and I found myself deeply involved in local history research, in coordinating the Society's planning group and, not least, editing its magazine. Since our first all-colour edition 10 years ago. it has been the skill of my wife Sophia with *InDesign* software that has made it possible for us to put the magazine together in our home before dispatching to the printers.

Printing a "real" magazine is far and away the Society's greatest expense, but one we have strongly defended because we get good feedback. It's more than something to be quickly skimmed or lost in the vastness of the internet.

The current issue of this magazine has, as some readers may have noticed, been delayed. The aim was to have it out by the end of 2025. But editors have their frailties and in my case health issues that have been around since 2021 became recently far more serious.

Rather than throw in the editorial towel I decided to carry on. But this – I stress – would not have been possible without the support of all those who kindly heed my regular entreaties to contribute to the magazine, in particular Pat Roberts... And impossible without the support of my wife.

There is only one publication that records our particular corner of south east London. It's a record the Society is proud of.

Given the uncertainties about my health, I cannot be sure what the future holds. As the Society's Chair loves to say, "we are a society run entirely by volunteers". We have no deputy editor and no deputy layout designer. We could not afford to employ the skills required.

I sincerely hope a solution can be found, meanwhile, apologies for the delay, but we do have a magazine that I trust you will enjoy perusing.

"Sadly Laurence Marsh died, peacefully and at home, shortly after writing these words. We shall celebrate his life fully in the next issue of the magazine."

The Lady Who Came to Tea

Not a tiger, this time. The Judith Kerr school on Half Moon Lane had a distinguished visitor on 3 December – the wife of the President of Germany, who was on a state visit to Britain.

Frau Elke Büdenbender, the wife of President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, visited the bilingual school, met some of the staff and pupils, and read a Christmas story to a group of children.

Judith Kerr's book *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit* is often used as a school textbook in Germany, though her series of *Mog* books is better known to young British readers, as of course is *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*, which sold its millionth copy when the author was 94 years old.

The Judith Kerr school in Herne Hill opened in 2013 and enjoyed permission from the famous author to use her name as its title. She visited the school frequently – the last time in 2018, a year before she died. The school's support for bilingual education has been endorsed before by German representatives: the German ambassador and representatives of the Goethe Institut visited in 2024.

Judith Kerr was a young teenager when her family emigrated from Germany and settled in London after Hitler came to power in 1933.

Planning – The Coalyard, Shakespeare Road

Given the growing number of tall buildings with approval by the planning committees of London boroughs, it will probably not come as no surprise that Lambeth have approved the application to increase the number of units for the proposed Coalyard development (from 218 to 278 units) – see the last issue of the Magazine p.5 – and in so doing raise the height of all four blocks. The tallest will be raised by four storeys to 11 storeys and a height of 68 metres. This is almost twice the height of the tallest building on the other side of the railway, Kerin House on Milkwood Road. Its residents have been among the most outspoken in their opposition to the scheme.

Welcoming the approval, the architects for the scheme, Rolfe Judd, comment that the new homes will provide nearly 21% of Lambeth's annual housing target. In the sort of prose favoured by architects and their consultants in planning applications, they say "the crafted quality of its façades draw inspiration from the site's rich industrial railway heritage. Brickwork anchors the architecture in the local fabric, stitching the new into the old, while refined metal details weave a contemporary layer that both complements and elevates the warmth and texture of the brick whilst

referring back to the site's history." As an afterthought they state "additional height was added but kept to locations within the site that had least impact on neighbours and wider context". "Least impact" is not a judgement that many would share. **LM**

Access for All?

Helen Hayes MP takes up the issue of Loughborough Junction station

We looked at this in the last of the Magazine. In an adjournment debate in the House of Commons on 9 September on step free access for local stations, MP Helen Hayes spoke particularly strongly about the campaign for lifts and safer access at Loughborough Junction Station. The key passages were as follows:

"… An example of the urgent need for more joined-up preparatory support is Loughborough Junction station, currently, being supported by a local community campaign called Lift Up Loughborough Junction. A tiny station occupying just half a railway arch, Loughborough Junction has a particularly long steep flight of stairs up to its two platforms.

It has seen an increase in passenger use compared to pre-COVID levels of footfall, likely as a consequence of new nearby housing development. Through this development, some funding has been allocated towards improvements at the station, but there is at present no mechanism to decide how this is to be spent or to

Members of the LJ Station Access for All group

deliver the improvements. As residential development in the local area continues to expand, a station which already feels unsafe at peak times due to the large number of passengers will become more and more dangerously overcrowded, and disabled residents, families with young children, and frail and elderly people will continue to be locked out of rail travel. …" **PR**

All Aboard! – *New trains for Station Square*

A dozen years ago the first pair of kids' locomotives and bench carriages pulled up either side of the entrance to Herne Hill Station. However, a life outdoors plus plenty of usage have pushed the current trains beyond reasonable repair and so replacements are needed.

The new trains will be made of stainless steel with seasoned oak slats to sit on. The design is based on the Lord Nelson Class engines which passed through Herne Hill Station between 1926 and 1962 and the Pullman carriages in service at the same time. The trains are painted green which was the livery colour for Southern Railway in the 1920s and 30s.

However, all is not quite as it seems. To intrigue the curious and spark young imaginations, anyone peering inside the carriages will glimpse some

unexpected passengers. Penguins commuting to work, an owl in a flap, a ghost on its way to Halloween, a fox and his friends, a heron migrating back to the hill and a bear checking tickets have all been smuggled on board. The carriages themselves will be clad with painted wooden boards for local artists and school children to repaint when necessary.

The quality of the materials and the design should ensure the trains' longevity but also come at a price. To cover the costs, the Herne Hill Forum has launched a crowd funding campaign and, if all goes well, the new train should be installed by the spring. The campaign has the full support of the Herne Hill Society and Station Hall and donations are welcome from all local residents and businesses.

George Hornby

From 65 years ago

A picture recently acquired – and one I was not familiar with. There is no doubt about the location, with the Half Moon and what used to be the Westminster Bank clearly in view. A date of 23 August 1960 came with the image and the decidedly cryptic description "34082. BB. 615 Squadron".

It dates from the year that I moved from my childhood home and arrived in London, where I have remained ever since, and brought back vivid memories of the days of coal-fired steam locomotives. Such is the dedication of age-of-steam enthusiasts that it did not take too much research online to discover details about this impressive engine.

At the end of the Second World War Southern Railway, one of the pre-nationalisation "big four" railway companies decided to name 40 of its "Bulleid light pacifics" after famous airfields, aircraft, squadrons and related subjects associated with the Battle of Britain, as a tribute to the part they played in defeating the Luftwaffe, for the most part over territory served by the Southern

Railway. Oliver Bulleid was the name of Southern Railway's Chief Mechanical Engineer and responsible for developing a number of well-known locomotives. The number 34082 is the number of this particular engine (34 the prefix for the class), 'BB' refers to the Battle of Britain and "615 Squadron" is the name of this engine. The Royal Auxiliary Air Force's 615 Squadron, stationed at RAF Kenley, flew the Hurricane, the mainstay of Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain, shooting down more enemy aircraft than all other defences, air and ground, combined.

The engine was built in 1948, rebuilt in 1960, withdrawn in 1966 with almost 700,000 miles travelled and then scrapped. By the mid-1960s many steam locos had their name and number plates removed while still in service to prevent theft as such items increased in value, and the frequently filthy and uncleaned locos saw out their final days with cabside or smokebox numbers crudely painted or chalked on. Our image appears to show the insignia still in place at the side of the boiler. Moreover, these have been preserved and can be found in the collection of the RAF Cosford Museum in Shropshire. **Laurence Marsh**

New cafés in old buildings

It's a favourite game round here to count the total number of cafés, broadly defined, in our town centre – a total which of course continues to fluctuate, mainly upwards. Enough already? But so far the demand seems to be there, notably at weekends. Anyway, who are we to say there are too many?

However, looking out towards the further frontiers of Herne Hill, where we are guarded by our two parks, options tail off abruptly. For many years, those green zones have been a café / coffee desert. There was a snack bar and coffee stall at Brockwell Hall but by general agreement it fell short of modern expectations.

Now however in both East and West (or is it North and South?) frontier regions, people can finally meet for a hot drink with friends, families or laptops. Indeed, not just meet and snack but also do so in style and comfort.

Carnegie Café

A café at the Carnegie Library Hub has long been part of the long-term strategy for the Hub's services provided to the community – indeed, local community consultations over the last decade showed a café scored very high among the offerings that people wanted, alongside the existing library. Not least because this part of Herne Hill's public space has always been a caffeine-free zone.

Many readers will be aware of the protracted, sometimes-difficult negotiations with the council. But persistence, good will and careful conversations seem to have resolved these challenges, and the future looks sound provided that both parties can agree to a longer lease extension in 2026. If this can be done for Brockwell Hall, another important listed building in Lambeth (see below), prospects for Mr Andrew Carnegie's library should be good too.

So now finally the café has been installed and opened, and enjoying strong success under the appointed operator Sweet Carolina. Alongside the Hub's other community offerings, the café's presence encourages visitors to spend longer in the building and to be more aware of the other facilities on offer including the Library and other room hire activities. The café works too because the adjoining lounge area also provides ample and comfortable seating for informal meetings, even when the Library itself shuts at lunchtime and on Sundays. It was indeed part of Carolina's plan for the café that there should be no obligation to buy food and drink while using the lounge area, which provides a natural focal point for small meetings, informal socialising and quiet reading. In this preponderantly residential area of Herne Hill, there was nothing comparable beforehand.

The café of course needs and deserves community support so that the operators can enjoy the financial success which will help it to contribute to the overall Hub's success. It's started well, attracting visitors throughout the day, including commuters on their way to work, people visiting Ruskin Park, healthy individuals drifting in after fitness and yoga lessons elsewhere in the building, parents and minders stopping in after school pickup, laptop workers of course, and quite a lot of passing trade who simply want to capture a good coffee and possibly a very fresh snack. Starting early December 2025, the café has been open every day.

Behind all this, and as touched on above, many people will know that the Carnegie Library Hub is run by the Carnegie Community Trust, set up in partnership with Lambeth Council to preserve the historic local library and to develop a hub as a welcoming place for community activity. For this most recent venture, the Trust followed an open bidding process – in which Lambeth Library staff played a vital role – before selecting Sweet Carolina to develop and operate the café. Carolina Fox, a widely-respected operator of a successful bakery and café in West Norwood, proved the strongest and ultimately successful contender, not least because she understood and shared the Hub's aim of providing a welcoming space for all users of the building, including the library and ultimately the gym in the basement.

The café preparation and installation process, including the numerous and complex planning and listed building consents throughout the journey, was a shared endeavour between the Hub team and the operator. Carolina and the Hub worked together, with significant investment and cost-sharing from her business, to complete the warm and engaging Loughborough Junction Lounge in sympathy with the historical Carnegie space. In designing and fitting out the area, she was able, with Lambeth's permission, to share some of the decorating costs and to install congenial lighting and suitably styled prep and serving facilities, all designed to be in keeping with this unique setting. Some of the comfortable furniture was kindly provided by Peabody, owners of the Higgs Yard development down the road at the Loughborough Junction.

All leading to the clever outcome we see today, and the feeling that this is the most natural and fitting addition to this classic and handsome Edwardian space.

https://carnegielibraryhub.org.uk/

– Pat Roberts reports

The Glassmaker's Café

The profound renovation of Brockwell Hall, our Georgian Grade II* listed mansion, with the support of the National Heritage Lottery Fund, Lambeth Council and local community group, in particular Brockwell Park Community Partners, has been necessarily slow, careful, respectful of the building's heritage, and complex in many ways. But when it re-opened this spring in a greatly expanded and more welcoming layout and purpose, it was widely welcomed as a triumph. And now, cementing its destiny to be accessible, hospitable and central to all the users of this remarkable park, it has a café to match. The new café, occupying elegant high-ceilinged rooms on the ground floor, is a fitting complement to both the Hall and the Park.

We spoke in November to Charles Oppenheim, founder and one of the directors of the company which won the contract to design, equip and run the café. The company, Roots & Berries, has deep experience in running similar ventures in public parks. Charles noted that each one is different, and precious to its local community, but that the Brockwell Hall project has been special in many ways. Renovated and revealed in its revived Georgian elegance, the café has provoked enthusiastic praise. The late Victorian paintings that punctuate the different spaces (see separate article) have happily lent some of their colour schemes to the furniture. The huge windows

create an airy, light-bathed atmosphere but also invite visitors to look out to the ample seating outside, which will clearly more than double the seating capacity of the café when weather permits. The climate-friendly energy scheme has banished the kitchen's traditional cooking gas, so only electricity can be used for heating and cooking. And of course, great care has had to be taken in this listed building when installing catering equipment: additions and alterations were currently underway when we spoke and should enable an expansion of the menu to include hot brunch-type food in 2026.

As always there are some challenges. Like every hospitality venue operator we've spoken to, recent and ongoing increases in the costs of materials, utilities, employment rules and VAT (to name but a few) impose enormous pressure on managers and operators wanting to be fair employers offering acceptable prices while still earning enough to sustain and grow the business. Many small hospitality businesses survive day by day on a knife edge.

But here it's working so far. The company's long experience of this specialist parks-centred hospitality sector is very evident. The service is highly professional, the coffee is excellent, the snacks are fresh, varied and tempting. It's a universe away from what was here before. Whenever we've stopped by, most tables are occupied by a wide mix of contented park visitors, some with their laptops, many with their dogs. Maybe they will have a different sort of challenge: will the café be able to cope with the hundreds of visitors flooding into the park on sunny weekends?

Meanwhile the Glassmaker's Café – the name is of course a tribute to John Blades, the businessman who originally built and owned Brockwell Hall – also aims to be a good neighbour in the park and to the wider community. They've made a start by partnering with the Friends of Brockwell Park, to sell appropriate beak-safe food for people planning to waddle downhill to the ponds to feed the ducks with something other than unsuitable sliced bread.

www.theglassmakerscafe.co.uk/ @theglassmakerscafe
www.rootsandberries.co.uk/

The Glassmaker's Café pictures
– some art history

Part of the attraction of the newly opened Glassmaker's café is surely the display of the large haymaking scenes on the walls. They give the café a very distinct character, one you would be hard pressed to find in any of the multitude of cafés that abound in London today. These canvases are no recent acquisition. They were in a room that is now part of the café, but which used to be not generally accessible. But why are they there and who painted them?

The second question is easier to answer than the first. They are the work of the artist Henry Strachey (1863-1940). Strachey was the youngest of three sons of Sir Edward Strachey, from an old Somerset

family with strong links to India over three generations, initially through the East India Company. Henry Strachey grew up in the family home at Sutton Court in the Chew valley. Most of his life was lived in the area with the Mendip Hills providing the landscape for the Brockwell Hall pictures. Henry seems to be rather eclipsed by his elder brothers' achievements – Edward Strachey, a Liberal politician and first Baron Strachie, and John St Loe Strachey, the outspoken and often radical editor of *The Spectator* (where Henry was the art

critic for more than 20 years) – or those of his first cousin the author and eminent Bloomsbury Group member, Lytton Strachey. We do know that Henry studied at the Slade School and exhibited widely between the 1890s and 1920s.

He never married and lived most of his life in the area of Somerset in which he grew up. When he died his work as a District Commissioner for the Boy Scouts movement was given rather more attention in local newspaper obituaries than his work as an artist. He is also described as a talented musician and a "devout Churchman." His local church at Stowey-Sutton contains a series of large mural paintings by him, currently the subject of a restoration project.

The attractive Brockwell Hall paintings (one of which – that of the single girl – is a copy of the original destroyed in a fire some years ago) were painted in the 1890s (the largest is dated 1896) and reflect in their choice of subject matter and style a form of painting described as "Naturalism". It can be traced to the influence of the French Barbizon School and the work of Jean-François Millet and can be found in the work of numerous artists right across Europe in the late nineteenth century. In this country the Newlyn School provides a good example of the genre.

As to how the Strachey paintings come to be in Brockwell Hall, they were, according to John Sexby, the LCC's Chief Officer of Parks, in his book on London parks published in 1905, "the work and gift of Mr J. St Loe Strachey and his brother" – a curious description, since you would expect Henry as the artist, as opposed to his journalist brother, to be named. Sexby also stated that "a large room on the ground floor serves for a refreshment-house. The walls have recently been embellished by fine mural paintings representing typical English scenes". What prompted the gift remains unclear, although investigation (which I have not as yet been able to undertake) of the LCC minutes for their Parks and Open Spaces committee might reveal this. It seems unlikely that the pictures were commissioned for the "refreshment house", since the cutting down of two corners of the long canvas to fit around two doorways cannot have been intended by the artist.

With the café now in full swing one can only hope that some measures will be taken to protect the pictures from accidental damage. The way they are displayed at the moment – two in particular – makes them extremely vulnerable. This is something that has been drawn to Lambeth's attention.

Laurence Marsh

Shops & Business News

Regretted …
The vegan restaurant Peachy Goat, on Half Moon Lane (opened in March 2020) announced this August that they were closing and vacated the premises quite promptly.

… but now Repotted
But the same premises have now been taken up by a new business, Mino, which opened a pottery painting workshop and café in December. Pottery painting studios elsewhere have proved popular with families looking for activities to entertain friends and children, so this is probably something that Herne Hill and neighbouring areas – with our many family households – will welcome, in Mino's reckoning.
Mino Pottery Painting & Café 16 Half Moon Lane, SE24 9HU
@minopotterypainting
https://www.minopotterypainting.co.uk

Replaced
Let us head up along Norwood Road, where the extensive premises of the now departed Caribbean / Latin American fusion restaurant Maroon, which opened in the summer of 2023, have been taken over and restyled by the high-profile and ambitious Caribbean-style chef Nathaniel Mortley. His personal journey began with cooking at home, then in some well-established restaurants but also included a spell in Brixton prison's Clink restaurant. Now his new venture in Herne Hill -- 2210 by Natty Can Cook - "From Island flavours to South London soul - every detail tells its own story" -- has already attracted smart foodies and a raving review by Grace Dent, no less, in The Guardian: "Much more than just posh jerk chicken at fancy prices. It's already mobbed and there's something genuinely good going on here."
2210 by Natty Can Cook, Wednesday-Sundays
75 Norwood Rd, SE24 9AA
020 3713 5108
https://www.2210bynattycancook.com/

Renamed
Back on Half Moon Lane, the well-established Italian coffee shop and deli Gusto has rebranded as Café del Cuore but with the same family ownership and friendly service.
Café del Cuore 135 Half Moon Lane, SE24 9JY
020 8166 6205

Restored
Welcome back! We reported in the last issue that the long-established family-owned estate agents Oliver Burn at the beginning of Half Moon Lane had closed. It is a pleasure to report that this was due to a misunderstanding with the landlords. The branch has now reopened and is operating in full swing again

Revealed
A newly restored arch hiding under the railway lines, tucked well behind the shops on Station Square, and just along from the Off the Cuff bar, now offers simulated golf practising and entertainment sessions. You can practise your swing and watch the ball digitally bounce on the green at Arch Golf, "London's Biggest Golf Simulator".
Arch Golf 301-303 Railton Road, Herne Hill Station
07393 938910
info@archgolf.co.uk
www.archgolf.co.uk

Repeated
Further raising the game for drinks and food in Station Square, the all-day bar and coffee shop, Sessa, trailed in our last issue, has now properly opened and will be serving snacks, lunch, drinks (look online for their long wine list) and cocktails.
Sessa, 8:00 AM to 10:30 pm (until 11 pm at weekends, not open Mondays)
222 Railton Road, SE24 0JT
hello@sessa.london - 020 4568 2668
https://www.sessa.london

Refitted
The closing weeks of 2025 saw extensive refurbishment works at the retail premises in Station Square sitting between Gail's and Sharp Works, our our smart wool and yarn shop – premises which for some years had been a Chinese food takeaway. The local whisper is that it will, when reopened, definitely not be a Chinese takeaway but its actual purpose has not yet been revealed.

Pat Roberts

Remembrance at Herne Hill Station

The Society maintained the tradition of the laying of wreaths at the engraved slate plaque on an inside wall of Herne Hill Station, a tradition followed each year since the unveiling of the plaque in 2019. Pictured here are Pat Roberts and Councillor Deepak Sardiwal, who were among those who attended the quiet ceremony amidst the busy coming and going of the Sunday market.

Jour d'Armistice

Colin Wight was there

They do things slightly differently in France. Armistice Day is a national holiday. Since 11 November fell on a Tuesday this year, everyone made a bridge, a popular French tradition meaning that by general agreement no-one went to work on the Monday either.

It was a warm and sunny day in Auge, a village of about 200 people in rural south-west France, half an hour's drive from Angoulême. We assembled before the war memorial at 10:20am. The mayor, Bernard Salamand, wearing his tricolour sash of office, had already presided over an earlier service in the commune, with a third to come. You see the French equivalent of the British memorial poppy, *le bleuet* (cornflower) worn by all and sundry on TV. A gentleman offered each of us a *bleuet* to attach to our coats.

Four young schoolchildren read poems and letters from the Front, very clearly and solemnly; they had been practising. Then the Mayor's assistant read out the names of Auge's dozen First World War casualties, one by one, each name being followed by the refrain "mort pour La France". (Fortunately ours is a small village.) France lost 1.4 million killed in the war, almost twice as many as the UK.

We observed a minute's silence. Then we sang the Marseillaise - even the British contingent of seven (25 percent of the attendees), which included two ex-servicemen. We contributed such words as we could recall, our efforts being duly acknowledged by the Mayor, who referred in a short speech to "our large colony of allies".

Afterwards we repaired to the *salle polyvalente* (i.e. the village hall) of Auge Saint Médard for another great French tradition, the *vin d'honneur* - though it was not wine but pineau des Charentes and cognac-and-tonic that was offered. What had began as a sombre and formal event ended as a friendly get-together with plastic cups and trestle tables. It was an honour to be part of it.

Local Councillors' Surgeries

Lambeth

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

Southwark

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

Coldharbour Blue launched

It's a members-focused independent cinema space in the heart of Loughborough Junction, accessible of course from Brixton and Camberwell as well as Herne Hill. A refreshed version of the old Whirled Cinema run by Mike Atterby (see the Spring 2024 Magazine #159) under a new name and an enthusiastic younger management team, it still offers affordable membership rates to watch new releases, art-house, classics and documentaries all in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere with a reasonably priced bar.

Along with scheduled film screenings, several nights a week and some weekends the unique space is available for private hire for events (and often at a reduced rate for charities) involving screening of films and videos, informal presentations or just convivial gatherings. One other new feature is a regular comedy night which has been attracting strong attendance from far afield. The website and an active Instagram presence are how new owners Chris Field and Tom Jennings reach an expanding circle of supporters.

And the understated door in the arches of 259-260 Hardess Street still ensures that visitors feel a twinge of intrigue – a private entrance to a more sociable world amidst Loughborough Junction's sometimes uninviting jungle of anonymous Victorian railway arches. **PR**

Desirable property? But not for the faint-hearted

Local estate agents John D. Wood used Halloween for some unusual properties to be advertised in their windows. It would be a pity not to record what was on offer. Here are two examples.

Hellgrave Square, SW00

Set in the heart of London's eeriest postcode, this Belgravia townhouse offers five grand bedrooms, two oubliettes, and a drawing room rumoured to trap reflections. Once the home of a prestigious estate agent, whispers of long-closed deals still echo through the halls. Mind the cracks – they're spreading.

Drowning Street, HE11 1SH

Situated on the undesirable Drowning Street, this charmless basement flat provides unimpressive views of the polluted street above. With an EEEKPC rating of Z, this energy inefficient home also features low ceilings, peeling wallpaper and damp throughout. Creepy crawlies and associated cobwebs included. £1,313 Per Calendar Month (fleas apply)

A famous view – *but not much longer*

It takes a clear day and keen eyesight, but the dome of Christopher Wren's masterpiece can be seen from the top of Brockwell Park, as our picture proves. When Brockwell Hall was built for John Blades it would have been the dominant feature on the horizon, a dominance it retained until the tall buildings of more recent times started to encircle it. Now the view will finally disappear. That is admitted in a planning application for which Southwark has given permission – a development adjacent to the Bakerloo underground station at Elephant and Castle rising to 31 storeys. The Society's planning group asked Southwark to take into account the lost view, but to no avail

Milkwood Community Park

October saw a ribbon-cutting ceremony that brought together pupils from Jessop Primary School, Lambeth Council and representatives of the Friends of Milkwood Community Park, to mark the major refurbishment of the playground.

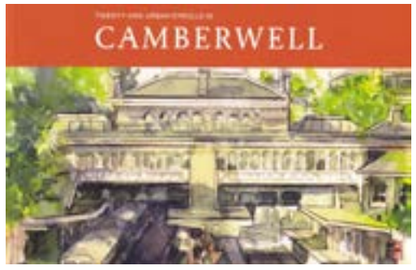
Maude Estwick, Honorary Patron of the Park, described a meeting with Prince Charles, now King Charles III, when the park originally opened, before cutting the ribbon to officially declare the refurbished playground open.

Following the ceremony, children enjoyed an energetic play session exploring the new facilities, after which they received healthy goodie bags generously supplied by Kompan, the company that built the playground.

The £50,000 refurbishment project has been funded through Section 106 developer contributions to the Council, an important component in community infrastructure levies that directly benefit local residents and create lasting improvements to neighbourhood amenities.

Camberwell explored

Our neighbours in the Camberwell Society have just published an attractive new book *Twenty-One Urban Strolls in Camberwell*, a walking guide produced by a team



of five volunteers over two years, that 'reveals the history, creativity, and spirit of SE5'. It can be bought (£15) at the intriguing Lala Books, at the bottom of Grove Lane. One of the featured walks, through the eastern section of Ruskin Park, celebrates the thinking and work of John Ruskin.

But if our own bestsseller *Herne Hill Heritage Trail* is not already on your bookshelves, you may want to start by buying a copy from Herne Hill Books in Station Square or from our website. *www.camberwellsociety.org.uk/*

THE 2025 HERNE HILL SOCIETY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

HERITAGE/HISTORY CATEGORY

Winner

Dorchester Court Residents Association

Highly Commended

- Lambeth Archives
- Grafton Dance Centre

COMMUNITY CATEGORY

Winner

Herne Hill Free Film Festival

Highly Commended

- Wheels for Wellbeing, Herne Hill
- Jessop School Dads & Male Carers Club

ENVIRONMENT CATEGORY

Winner

Get Rid of and Donate

Highly Commended

- Jarr Market
- Delawyk Crescent Residents

The Society's Excellence Awards 2025 were presented at a special Celebration evening held at the Temple Bowling Club on 7 May. The Society's website at www.hernehillsociety.org.uk *has short video highlights* of the evening, *with Awards presented by Helen Hayes MP.*

Weighing up the many submissions in the Community category was no simple task. Our three judges were faced with a hugely interesting choice of high-quality submissions, but they eventually selected three strong entries for special recognition. Common aspects were the involvement of local volunteers, innovation in responding to a clear need, and demonstrating the potential for development and sustainability.

Herne Hill Free Film Festival – Winner

This ambitious and successful annual event screens films in a wide variety of venues across both sides of Herne Hill's borough boundary. They have included the Baptist Church on Half Moon Lane, Holy Trinity Church, Judith Kerr Primary School, Bird House Brewery, Alleyn's School Sports Club, the Carnegie Library Hub, and – last year, for the first time – the newly renovated Brockwell Hall. Screenings of silent classics, with piano accompaniment by the incomparable Neil Brand, have taken place al fresco in Station Square.

During the 13 years since its creation, the Festival has shown nearly 170 feature-length films, 125 shorts, and over 150 films made by local residents for the 48-Hour Challenge. This event showcases the work of 10 or so filmmakers each year. The results are presented in a packed-out awards evening, with young cineastes thrilled to see their work on the big screen.

The Festival also puts on ambitious and inspiring Q&A sessions: for example, with the producer of *Shakespeare in Love*, David Parfitt; Oscar-winning actor and director Sir Mark Rylance; and the late Terence Stamp. There are also singalongs and quiz nights.

Essential to the Festival's success is the effort of passionate and hardworking volunteers (aged 18 to 70+). Many learn new skills, and all enjoy being part of a community team, bringing a fun, inclusive event to their neighbourhood.

The audience reach has grown year on year. All venues are actively involved in promoting and staging the screenings. Audiences are introduced to venues that are not normally associated with film: some large, often open-air, accommodating hundreds of people; others smaller, off the beaten track. More than that, the Festival enjoys the support and active patronage of a number of local businesses, who benefit from the exposure a new audience brings.

The choice of films celebrates independent as well as commercially-produced work. Volunteers, organisers, audiences and venues are spread across Herne Hill – all doing their bit to reinforce the reputation of Herne Hill. And because attendance is free, every event is accessible to everyone.

Thoughtful curation aims to represent all parts of our community and opens eyes to other identities, cultures and stories. It is evident that inclusivity is at the heart of this Festival, which has become a favourite May Bank Holiday activity for families.

The nomination reads: "*I attended four of the screenings last year. Venues included a pub, a church, a sports club and the Lido. Volunteers were all welcoming and friendly. Each film proved thought provoking, brought new insights and, in the case of* Summer of Soul, *pure unadulterated joy, in the festival of music under the evening sky!*"

Richard Hayes and Tom Worth accepting the award from Helen Hayes MP

So, the Herne Hill Free Film Festival was the overall Winner in the Community Category in 2025. Congratulations!
https://freefilmfestivals.org/filmfestival/herne-hill/

Wheels for Wellbeing Herne Hill - Highly Commended

Wheels for Wellbeing is a registered charity run by volunteers, based at Herne Hill Velodrome and two other venues in south-east London. It supports disabled and elderly people wanting to have the experience of cycling at this famous professional venue. The physical, emotional, and social benefits of cycling are well proven.

Staff are there to help potential cyclists find suitable machines and develop their confidence and technique in a safe and sociable environment. The charity has access to a fleet of more than 200 machines, including two, three and four wheelers, hand cycles and wheelchair cycles. People who want to acquire their own transport to enhance their independence and fitness can try out different models and be trained to use them. There is a small charge, but the charity subsidises the cycling sessions.

Isabelle Clement for Wheels for Wellbeing

One nominator said: "*I can attest that cycling at the Velodrome can be fun, exciting at times, exhilarating and rewarding. One cannot speak highly enough of the volunteer experts who were on hand to find the most suitable bike, give advice, and speed you on your way safely around the track. For the less able-bodied and visually-impaired,*

a wide variety of machines and accompanying riders are on hand to ensure no-one misses out on the thrill of the Velodrome."

Another nomination reads: "*It gives local disabled people, of all ages and impairments, the opportunity to experience the fun of cycling, by offering specialist cycles and support, thus promoting the physical and emotional wellbeing of anyone facing some kind of barrier to exercise. As the parent of a disabled person, I know that this kind of accessible activity is very limited. Additionally, the cycling sessions are heavily subsidised by the charity, and they are run by many volunteers in order to keep them as affordable as possible - I don't think they have raised the charge per session for at least 10 years!*"

The judges commented: "*We hope they will continue their work here in Herne Hill. We were very glad to recommend them for a Highly Commended award.*"
https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/cycling-sessions/

The Jessop School Dads & Male Carers Club - Highly Commended

Jessop School Dads & Male Carers Club is a unique initiative, launched in 2024. Jessop is an OFSTED-graded "Outstanding" local school for children aged 4 to 11. The Club was started by the father of a pupil, Scott Leonard, with strong support from Mr Baffoe, the widely respected head of Jessop School.

The regular presence of a father, another male relative or close family friend can be positive in shaping a child's individual and social behaviour, academic success, and overall well-being. Male carers, along of course with male teachers, also play a crucial role in being good role models and regulating aggression in both boys and girls, particularly boys. Evidence shows the more engaged a dad or male carer is involved in their children's education, the less likely they are to be suspended or excluded from school, repeat a year or go to prison.

Dads, uncles, granddads and male carers aged --25 - 70, of all backgrounds, identities and faiths, take part. Many friendships have been made in this way. They meet on the last Saturday of each month to tackle playground tidying-up, fix bikes, learn fire-making and bushcraft skills, enjoy crazy golf, play chess, play sports and do gymnastics, Lego building, boxing, rope-climbing, badge-making, logic and number puzzles! A free lunch is prepared together as part of the session.

Jessops Dads & Male Carers Club

Since its launch, attendance at the Club has doubled. It is already recognised for its positive community impact in promoting empathy and strong role models. There are plans to help start similar clubs at other local primary schools, and eventually more widely.

The nomination reads: "*Launched early in 2024, led by parent Scott Leonard, Jessop dads and male carers club has grown in popularity and more than doubled attendance to an average of 57 dads, carers and kids per session. We believe we are the only dads and male carers club in any of Lambeth's 62 primary schools… such clubs offer mutual support, strengthen communities and show children positive examples of male parenting. Nationally only 14% of nursery and primary school teachers are male (Office of National Statistics, 2024).*"

One young child said: "*It's an exciting place where we do lots of things and have fun, and eat nice food.*"

Scott Leonard stated: "*To date we've managed to raise funding from Brockwell Live and the London Cycling Campaign. We have ambitions to inspire and encourage other primary schools to start dads and male carers clubs, and are currently talking to Stockwell and Bonneville Primary Schools. The 2026 ambition to take the club model nationwide.*"

The judges commented: "*We were very impressed by this initiative – emerging not from some government ministry or think-tank but, as it were, from the grassroots, and in practical terms trying to meet the need for male parenting and caring at a critical period in children's development. We recommend them for a Highly Commended award.*"
https://www.youtube.com/@DadsKidsClub

Rebecca Tee

THE ROSENDALE ROAD ALLOTMENTS – A PERSONAL FAREWELL

Where does Herne Hill end and West Dulwich begin? The Brockwell Park end of Rosendale Road is surely Herne Hill but what about Rosendale School or All Saints Church so finely restored after the terrible fire of June 2000? The authoritative *Herne Hill Heritage Trail* favours boundary flexibility and includes the church but has only a modest reference to another feature of the area that, if one is not familiar with it, remains concealed on the hillside behind the interwar semis that line the western side of Rosendale Road. Here are the Rosendale Allotments, an area of no less than 18 acres that any building developer would surely see as a prime opportunity for profit.

The distribution of the roughly 330,000 allotments across Britain is remarkably uneven, with the north-east by far the best off and the south-east by far the worst. Scotland also fares badly. In London the boroughs of Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea are least well provided - and perhaps not surprisingly the City of London has no allotments.

Numbers reached their peak in the interwar years, although

the Rosendale Allotments have been leased from the freehold owners of the land – the Dulwich Estate – since 1908. There has been a huge decline in the number of allotments across Britain, with two-thirds of allotment land lost over the last 100 years. But the Rosendale Allotments survive and thrive, a reflection perhaps of the slower pace and concern with preserving local character that endures in the unique institution that is the Dulwich Estate.

Ten years ago, I became the holder of plot 19. I had joined a waiting list and been warned of a very long wait. It turned out to be six years and I confess I had forgotten about my application.

Allotments are not for the faint-hearted. The disappointments often appear seem to outweigh the advantages. All that hard work and nothing to show for it, as assorted wildlife, rain, disease or drought play havoc with your best endeavours. But at other times the sheer physical pleasure of working out of doors on a fine day is an incomparable joy. The open nature of the site gives magnificent views that stretch from the cluster of gargantuan buildings in the City, dominated by the Shard, across to Canary Wharf, then Dawson's Heights, and finally, nestling in leafy Dulwich, the imposing Victorian brick and tracery of Dulwich College. And the pleasure of returning home as the light fades with a home-grown harvest of 100% organic blackcurrants, courgettes, rhubarb or tomatoes is deeply satisfying.

When Covid struck in spring 2020 the Society was faced with the dilemma of what to do about the next issue of this magazine. We decided to restrict it to an online issue and abandon any distribution of a printed version. I came up to the Rosendale allotments and took photographs, one of which was used on the cover with Wordsworth's lines from his immortal poem:

> *Dear God! The very houses seem asleep;*
> *And all that mighty heart is lying still!*

Moments recollected in tranquillity remain in poetry but life moves on. So it has to be with my allotmenteering. Age and health concerns have persuaded me to say farewell to a plot of land very dear to me – whether we call it Herne Hill or West Dulwich. There is no absence of younger local people anxious to take over a plot. So many that the waiting list for the Rosendale Allotments is now closed (more information available at *www.rosendale-allotments.org.uk/*).

Long may the allotments thrive, free of what often seems an inexorable pressure to cover every available open space with more housing.

Laurence Marsh

ANNA ANCHER: PAINTING LIGHT

Dulwich Picture Gallery is noted for highlighting artists famous in their own countries but unknown here. Anna Ancher (1859 – 1935) is one of Denmark's most celebrated artists. This exhibition of over 40 of her paintings reveals her as distinctive, innovative and unique.

Born Anna Brøndum in her parents' hotel in the small fishing village of Skagens, she studied drawing from age 15 for three winters in the Vilhelm Kyhn College of Painting in Copenhagen.

We begin with the only self-portrait Anna made, a thoughtful, contemplative young woman, sombrely dressed against a dark background. Then, *Old Man Whittling Sticks,* which she showed, aged 21, at the prestigious Charlottenborg spring exhibition, where her work was featured almost every year throughout her life.

She soon began using bold colours within light-infused spaces. A red-skirted *Maid in the Kitchen* viewed from behind faces light filtered through thin yellow curtains. Inspired by impressionist and post-impressionist works in Paris, Anna developed her own, Scandinavian, response, using loose brush strokes to striking effect. *Sunlight in the Blue Room* (pictured) has light from the windows reflected on the wall, carpet and her daughter's blonde hair. *Three Old Seamstresses* sew a blue gown, sunlight through windows making the yellow walls glow. In *Brøndum's Annex* one empty room can be seen leading to another, glass panels from the connecting door and interior window casting yellow-orange squares, rectangles and triangles of light on pale blue walls.

Like Monet, she captured atmosphere at different times of day. A woman dressed in red, knitting in the blue room is bathed in a

soft evening glow. Two little girls are taught how to sew in a sunny room with a tall plant whose leaves and stem throw shadows on the wall. A woman reads by lamplight, red roses before her.

Room 2 focuses on Skagen and its people. Many artists came to Skagen, forming a group of which Anna, as the only resident, was a central figure. She stated, "I firmly believe that the very best thing is to go on small trips, but staying mainly at home and painting the people of one's own country". Friends, neighbours and family were her models, in their homes, at meals, plucking geese or chickens, counting money after selling bread, a fisherman in a red scarf against a yellow background. These natural scenes depict poverty and weariness but also the quiet concentration of her sitters. There are children playing on the beach, getting vaccinated, having a haircut, plus boats in moonlight and unpaved streets. Nine photos and a map put it all into context.

In the Mausoleum, you can sit on tree-stump seats watching four short films about Ancher's life and career, the Skagen artists and village.

Home and Family introduces Anna's husband, fellow painter Michael Ancher, her mother and siblings, all subjects of touching paintings. Also on show are four works by female contemporaries. Emilie Mundt and Marie Luplau were a couple who went on to establish their own painting school for women. Louise Bonfils and Marie Sandholdt were noted landscape artists. Women were not admitted into the Royal Danish Academy until 1888; Anna had met them in Kyhn College.

The final room examines the spiritual landscape. *A Girl in the Garden*, dressed in white sits on a white bench by a white-topped table, surrounded by colourful flowers, sunlight dappled through trees. *Lunch Before the Hunt* shows husband Michael in a bright, sunny room. In contrast to these happy scenes, *After Labours of Day* has her two sisters exhausted by hard work. There are moving views of her mother, in the blue room, the red room, on her death bed.

In 2014 a large number of previously unknown oils was discovered including many landscapes. *Fireworks on Fyrbakken* depicts a festival which combines Christian and pre-Christian traditions. In *Blue Sunset* sky and sea merge, the sun reflected in the water reminiscent of Munch. In *A Field Sermon* a preacher addresses a crowd gathered on a hill high above dunes and the distant sea. Grief came to the artist in a dream: a young woman, her long hair covering her nude body, kneels by a gravestone, flanked by an older woman; a study for the girl hangs nearby. *At the Grave* presents a female mourner kneeling, facing the sea.

This exhibition is a rare opportunity to see works not shown before in this country by a great artist. It is illuminating on many levels.

Jeffrey Doorn

Anna Ancher: Painting Light *opened 4 November and runs until 8 May 2026. Entry £18.00 including admission to the permanent collection. Concessions available.*

CATASTROPHE CABARET – at the Half Moon Workshop

"Life is a cabaret, old chum, go to the Cabaret," said my editor, so off I duly went.

The sell-out show began with a warm-up from our compères, "the dynamic Nixon Twins" (Olivia and Luke). Some amusing moments came courtesy of the audience: "What do you do, Campbell?" Answer: "I am a diplomat". Another chap bravely admitted to being a civil servant. "How far have you come?"- a line popularised by the late Queen - produced impressive answers:

"Dulwich"… "Edinburgh"… "Hong Kong"… "New Zealand". You really can't beat that. It was the cue for the Nixons to lead us in a hearty performance of Craig and Charlie's "I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)": da-da dum diddy dum diddy dum diddy da da da, we roared.

And so to the guest acts. Jen Nolan announced: "I'm a mixed race gal from east London doing a show in white Brixton". I quite liked that line, but not much that followed. Next up was young Osman Shibli (British Pakistani), followed by comedy musician Joe da Costa. We were advised to "expect laughs, music, and pure joy", which was perhaps overselling him, but anyone who can coax a decent tune out of a Suzuki Omnichord has my respect. Top of the bill was Christopher Hall, whose sexual preferences were never in doubt. I was keener on the likeable Ajay Rose. His shtick was a series of amusing anecdotes illustrating the contrasting mindsets of the English and Indian sides of his family, e.g. the (English) cousin who described his wedding as "not bad; a decent day out, to be fair".

And that pretty well sums up my experience. To be fair, it was a decent evening out, for the money. There were some witty observations, but little to challenge or bamboozle the audience, as Stewart Lee does so brilliantly. Of course these were young people starting out on what might become a glittering career. Time will tell.

It short, it was all so inevitably, and safely, "right-on". Whilst you risk being picked on and gently humiliated by a performer, it's just part of the show, with no hard feelings. If a comedian says "I hate the police" or "I never pay on the tube", the audience will cheer enthusiastically, even if they are the whitest, most conventional-looking, middle-class bunch of people anywhere. Whilst Herne Hill is not exactly 1930s Berlin, it would have been edgier to have a Nigel Farage impersonator on the bill, or even local hero Nigel Farage himself. I may attend again, in hope. **Colin Wight**

ACROSS THE BORDER

Nunhead Cemetery

In the last issue of the Magazine we reported on the regeneration project funded by the National Lottery recently completed at West Norwood Cemetery. Another remarkable cemetery in south-east London, at Nunhead, one of the "Magnificent Seven" Victorian cemeteries created around London's periphery to provide for the burial needs of the city's rapidly expanding population, is looking forward after many delays to a similarly funded project. It will see the ruinous Grade II listed entrance lodge restored to its former glory and including– yes – another café venue, as well as community space, and a new base for Friends of Nunhead Cemetery and their volunteers.

The 52-acre site contains some 44,000 memorials and provides a remarkable mix of untamed nature and the elaborate formality associated with death favoured by our Victorian ancestors. The company that ran the cemetery had abandoned its use by the middle of the last century, since when, subject to some maintenance by Southwark Council (who acquired the cemetery for the sum of £1 in 1975), woodland has largely taken over. Sadly, vandalism has also played a part, accounting for the condition of the Gothic chapel, gutted by fire 50 years ago and now roofless, albeit one that suits the overall character of the cemetery and its atmosphere of tranquillity and as a space for quiet contemplation and a haven for wildlife. And if you're looking for a less usual place for dog walking it can also be thoroughly recommended.

Vision of the restored Lodge

Restoration does not come cheap and the National Lottery Heritage Fund is investing £3.7 million, with more funds contributed by Southwark, and grants from Historic England, the Garfield Weston Foundation and the Pilgrim Trust. Friends of Norwood Cemetery have played a key role in maintaining the momentum necessary for making the project a reality. Jeremy Partington, Chair of Trustees of the Friends, has said that the funding "will enable the realisation of the Friends' 40-year aspiration to see the East Lodge fully restored for community use and to further promote the heritage and ecological importance of this wonderful Victorian landscape for contemporary enjoyment." **LM**

www.fonc.org.uk/east-lodge-project-press-release/

CELEBRATING LOCAL ARTISTS

The local artists featured in this issue bring a change of style from those we met in the last three magazines.
Pat Roberts reports

Rosemary Lindsay

The work of Rosemary Lindsay (who lives in a family house on Burbage Road) proves the appeal and impact of the pure and classic discipline of botanical painting, a tradition as ancient and challenging as portraits, landscapes and historical paintings.

Rosemary's watercolours of individual living plants, seizing our attention from a pure white background, show not only the necessary, almost clinical accuracy of shape and colour, but come with an aura that speaks of deep affection and respect as well as scientific precision – not mere illustration but resurrection.

Initially trained and practising as an architect, Rosemary switched to botanical painting and trained at Morley College and the Horniman. Her detailed knowledge of plants is put to good use in the family's large and generously planned garden, which is annually opened for visitors in the Dulwich Gardens programme. She is also a regular contributor to the gardening journal Hortus.

Her paintings can be viewed on her website and during the annual Dulwich Artists' Open House programme. She also produces a series of postcards which can be bought online and also from serious garden shops. *www.rosemarylindsay.com/*

Kevin Bickham

With a home and studio in Regent Road, Kevin Bickham arrived in Herne Hill via Loughborough Junction but originally from his native state of California — joining the cosmopolitan community of artists who contribute to our cultural environment in and around Herne Hill. He particularly treasures Brockwell Park and the Lido, almost on his doorstep.

He qualified professionally as a product designer, with degrees from Stanford University, the Royal College of Art and Imperial College, then went on to hold significant design positions for major global companies and the British Museum. But more recently he has focused on a very different and more classic design challenge: ceramics. Unlike many creators in this discipline, he has his own wheel and kiln in his Herne Hill studio. He has an intense interest in the ancient and complex details of pottery glaze as well as professional casting techniques, which he continues to explore, whilst making ceramics and objects for the home and garden. Kevin regularly shows his work at exhibitions and in Dulwich Artists' Open House events; he also accepts commissions.

kevinbickham.com/
@kevinbickham

DULWICH LODGE – *a house on Half Moon Lane*

The story of Dulwich Lodge, known at various times as Dulwich Place, Surrey Lodge, and Ellison Lodge, begins in the mid-eighteenth century on the site now occupied by the Judith Kerr Primary School at 68 Half Moon Lane. Dulwich College Archive records show that the earliest house on the site dated from the 1760s and that one of its occupants was Alderman Brass Crosby, Lord Mayor of London in 1770, and an outspoken defender of public rights. When he refused to sentence a printer for what was then the illegal publishing of parliamentary debates, he was imprisoned in the Tower of London, sparking public demonstrations in his support. His boldness earned him the saying "bold as brass". The 1771 obelisk at St George's Circus bears his name. Crosby leased Dulwich Lodge around 1775, but his stay was short; after he moved away, the house lay quiet until 1788, when Nathaniel Bogle French took over the tenancy.

Bogle French's family, particularly his mother, had connections with slavery in the West Indies. His father, James, had held several important positions on the boards of City institutions as a director of the Hand-in-Hand Fire Office and a member of the committee of the Africa Company, whose business included transporting enslaved people. Bogle French worked for his father but, on his death in 1792, set up on his own. He became a Governor of St Thomas's Hospital, and in 1799, was elected to the Board of the Bank of England, a position he held for several years.

He renewed his lease in 1795 and again in 1800, when he agreed to build a new house. While a relatively rich man, he had a neighbour with even more money building an even larger house nearby. His wife, Elizabeth, keen to rival the nearby Casina House on Herne Hill, embarked on a lavish interior redecoration. She hired the fashionable firm Fricker and Henderson of New Bond Street to transform the rooms, gilding walls and festooning ceilings with floral plasterwork. Costs spiralled out of control, leading to a lawsuit in 1802 when the decorators sued for payment. Newspapers mocked the extravagance – 'It will scarcely be credited,' wrote one, 'that the expense of the papering of one room and a small cabinet amounted to £163.' But Elizabeth died that same year, and her rival, Emily Shaw of Casina House, also died shortly after. In a curious twist of fate, Bogle French's daughter Anne later married Richard Shawe, the owner of Casina.

By 1823, the property was being advertised for sale along with 27 acres of parkland, extensive outbuildings, and every 'genteel convenience' from a conservatory and library to an icehouse and grapery, as well as that eighteenth- century must have, force pumps supplying the premises with hard and soft water. The buyer was Johann Friedrich Schröder, a German merchant who had come to London in 1800 and established the firm J.F. Schröder & Co. that would evolve into today's global financial company Schroders. Before moving to Dulwich the family had lived 'above the shop' in Old Broad St and the move was no doubt a considerable improvement in living accommodation as well as being closer to his wife's mother who lived nearby at 'The Hollies' in Dulwich Village. Schroder and many of his immediate family were buried in the Dulwich Burial Ground.

By 1841 the house had changed hands again. The occupier was recorded as the Dowager Countess of Dunmore, but the actual lessee was Octavius Wigram. One of 23 children of the shipbuilder and MP Sir Robert Wigram, he was also a successful merchant and shipowner, and a partner in Huddart's Patent Cables Company and Reid's Brewery – indeed in the Census returns for both 1861 and 1871 he styled himself as a brewer rather than a merchant. He had also played a brief role in royal history, being one of the guards at Westminster Abbey during the coronation of George IV who prevented his wife, Queen Caroline, from forcing her way into Westminster Abbey to disrupt the service. His life at Dulwich Lodge was uneventful and, by 1851, he had moved away, selling the house's contents at auction.

After passing briefly through the hands of George Greaves and Peter Sainsby, Dulwich Lodge found a new owner in George Bevington, a prosperous leather manufacturer from Bermondsey. Bevington's family firm, Bevington & Sons, was among the largest in London, known for producing fine leathers for gloves and shoes. The firms' works, Neckinger Mills, is still standing with the firm's name above the main entrance. He lived at Dulwich Lodge with his family and servants, describing himself as a 'proprietor of land and houses,' he was perhaps not too involved in the day to day business of running the company. He had interests in railway construction serving as a director of the Farringdon Railway, and was on the committee of the South London Ophthalmic Hospital at St George's Circus.

He died at the house in 1866 and, shortly afterwards, his widow sold the property to the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway Company to make way for the new railway line between North Dulwich and Tulse Hill. Construction, including a new road called Village Way, proceeded very quickly and the house, with a reduced site, was sold again the following year to Richard May, a timber merchant. He was living nearby at Pond House and had acquired the house and its grounds as a potential housing development site. In the interim, he leased the house to Mrs Margaret MacFarlane as a girls' school, though one of his other plans – to turn the stables into a laundry for Spiers and Pond, the railway caterers, were blocked by the Dulwich Estate after complaints from neighbours. The housing scheme proved unviable and and in 1879, the property, by then called Surrey Lodge, was sold again. In 1880 the house reopened as a boys' boarding school under Mr W.J. Reed, who promised the Estate that his pupils would not compete with Dulwich College. The venture failed within a couple of years, leaving the house empty and in disrepair.

The Estate considered demolishing the house but eventually leased it to William James Mitchell, a successful local builder, in 1886. He had started his career in Loughborough Junction, then moving into Dulwich Village and acquiring the local plumbing business of Henry Goodman Adams. It was known as Mitchell's Yard until the 1990s, and today as Mitchell's Place, the housing development. Mitchell and his wife had four sons and five daughters so probably needed the 12 bedrooms. The early 1890s, however, were a very sad time for the family as one of their sons, a young merchant navy officer, took his own life on the nearby railway line by North Dulwich Station.

In 1896 Mitchell transferred the lease, with the Estate's agreement, to the Church of England Temperance Society (CETS), which converted the property into a home for what were then called 'inebriated women.' The house was renamed Ellison Lodge after Henry Ellison, a leading figure in the temperance movement. Newspaper reports from the time mix respect with irony – one ran a headline saying 'Drunkards at Dulwich' when noting the home's license renewal in 1901. The society renewed its lease again in 1907 but left at the end of the First World War.

In 1919 the house became the short- lived London District Army

Children's Home, before being taken over two years later by the Marylebone School for orphan girls. It remained in this use until the mid-1930s, when it was briefly vacant before becoming home to the Glenshee School, a girls' school and kindergarten previously based on the opposite side of Half Moon Lane. Wartime pressures forced its closure in 1942.

The house was then let, like many others in Dulwich, to the Evan Cook Depositories, which used it to hold furniture salvaged from bombed homes. It was still in this use in 1950 when King's College London agreed to lease the premises for their botany department. The university invested £20,000 in renovations including converting its grand rooms into laboratories and offices, adding steel windows in lieu of the old timber ones, central heating, and modern utilities. In the early 1960s King's College were looking to expand the department and the Estate agreed to lease them the sites of the three adjacent houses, Nos. 62, 64 and 66 Half Moon Lane. Subsequently King's College demolished the old Dulwich Lodge and two of the houses, and constructed the three-storey building we see today.

From 1988 until 2006 the site was the home of the Sir James Black Foundation. Established in 1988 with funding from the American drug company Johnson and Johnson it had a team of 25 scientists working in drug research, including work on gastrin. However, funding came to an end in 2006 and the building remained empty until taken over by the Judith Kerr Primary School in 2013.

In 2018, following opposition from Southwark (and the Herne Hill Society), the Estate abandoned plans for new almshouses that would have covered a large part of the open space adjoining the school.

Ian McInnes

YES, HERNE HILL … BUT WHY?

— Pat Roberts suggests some answers

What makes people come to live in Herne Hill?

Herne Hill seems more popular than ever. So we thought we should try to explore what's happening here, while obviously not claiming to conduct a comprehensive opinion survey of all incoming individuals, couples and families. To gather information, we were able to capture some thoughts offered by recently arrived neighbours. We also spoke to several local estate agents and looked at the websites of the others. All that said, it's important to emphasise that there are a host of reasons why people end up here, so we can't be sure that we are representing the whole picture. It will be normal if some of our readers have different perspectives.

Still, it's not a frivolous question. Because the answers, however incomplete, highlight three important topics: firstly, for long-term residents, how radically Herne Hill has changed in the last 20+ years; secondly, of course, the features of our area that draw people here– the main point of our enquiry. But thirdly, those positive aspects which are worth preserving, defending and perhaps enhancing – for all of us, long-term residents and newcomers alike. Like it or not, we are all a little responsible for the future of our community as well as its present condition.

Children in the mix?

Where to start? Naturally, emphases varied. Incomes and aspirations vary too. Let's simplify. Features that are important to people with children -- or for whom children might be on the horizon – stood out in many responses. In these circumstances, parents may need to research schools: not just location in relation to homes but the mysteries of catchment areas, entrance requirements and of course, for private sector education, the costs.

Is this key? When asked what chiefly prompts people to settle here, the local manager of one national estate agent just said outright *Schools!*. And that crops up a lot. Digging more deeply into that category of incomers, it's clear enough that the fluctuating catchment areas of the

View from Ruskin Park

state schools are an important factor for some. There is now a higher price on properties within the catchment area of the Charter School North Dulwich. But additionally – this was somewhat unexpected – the traditional premium on homes inside the catchment areas of some of the state and private primary schools in Dulwich Village has now, according to some observers, faded somewhat due to the growing reputation of the Judith Kerr School in Herne Hill.

More broadly (and not uniquely, of course) Herne Hill offers options similar to Dulwich. Either way, choices obviously have major budget and lifestyle implications. It emerged from some of our discussions that Herne Hill and Dulwich are still attracting families with steady incomes, despite current concerns and uncertainties over some aspects of government policies, particularly council tax, stamp duty and VAT on independent schools. But how do people choose between these two locations? See further comments below.

No kids?

But of course, it's not all about children and schools.

A growing number of people are not planning to have children of course. Or not yet. Released from those "catchment area" considerations, what about a decently-salaried or indeed well-salaried professional individual or two-income couple with no plans for children but seeking a safe and lifestyle-enhancing location? They may give greater weight to easy access to rail links or the tube, closeness to the vibe of Brixton but without the hassle, outstanding parks, and the charm and convenience of small local shops. For them, too, Herne Hill may be the ideal spot.

Choose your house

And the houses? Of course, Herne Hill is not an inexpensive area. Not many bargains here. Even houses in the more modest streets can cost significantly more than equivalent properties further out. And there isn't a great choice of flats.

Meanwhile, we all know which are the most prestigious and expensive streets in our relatively small area. Pricey, certainly, but it seems you might get more for your money than in some more famous locations north of the river and you also get the many other advantages of Herne Hill. Even in these relatively hard times, with buyers worried about the economic trends, top-end houses, we were told, can sell quickly, and often before they go on the open market. In that sense too, Herne Hill's prices for quality houses can be comparable to, though normally just a little less, than Dulwich prices – but again, Herne Hill often beats Dulwich on other attractions. One estate agent told us that when people look around, even when they think first that they want to live in Dulwich, having visited both places they prefer Herne Hill – for the vibe, the shops, and the transport and the wide choice of house styles.

One new couple told us:

We love the traditional praoperties. The prospect of moving to a Victorian terrace has a lot more charm to it than a new build.

So why SE24?

What, finally, are the estate agents and new arrivals saying about the features of Herne Hill that clinch the deal? Here's what one said:

Herne Hill really is one of London's hidden gems – a place where village charm meets city convenience. With independent shops, fantastic cafés and restaurants, and the brilliant Herne Hill Sunday Market, there's always a buzz and a genuine community feel. Of course, one of the biggest draws is Brockwell Park – a huge green space with the lido, tennis courts and stunning views across London. It's the kind of park that makes you forget you're in the capital.

It's no surprise that *Time Out* ranked Herne Hill as the highest of the 14 "poshest suburbs" in the UK in December 2024 – something I still reference regularly when speaking with buyers and renters alike."

Gulp! We might struggle to agree with *Time Out* that Herne Hill is *posh*. No, we are definitely not Chelsea or Notting Hill. And closer to

home, there is probably a consensus hereabouts that the central part of Dulwich Village is more entitled to that label, principally because of the Gallery, the sports clubs and the plethora of expensive and well-maintained properties including some utterly beautiful mansions. By contrast, some corners in Herne Hill are certainly far from posh – indeed, are a bit scruffy. But setting aside "posh", much of the above quote is echoed by other estate agents and by recent arrivals. Brockwell Park scores high. And the restored Brockwell Hall with its immediately successful new coffee shop is a great new feature. To the east, the charming new café in the Carnegie library has also filled a gap. The vibe around Station Square with its range of snack bars, Sunday market, food shops (including Bunhead Bakery, said to attract people from all over London!), restaurants (Llewelyn's and Sessa were named), coffee shops and unique bars to drink at (some cited Lulu's and the Birdhouse Brewery) make Dulwich Village seem rather dull. And we have four pubs too. Yes, across in East Dulwich you can find an impressive range

of shops and small restaurants which suit many couples and families, and there is a good choice of traditional housing, but the transport links are poor. Whereas transport is a trump card for Herne Hill.

With this in context, one estate agent with very local roots wrote on their website:

This elegant part of Southeast London is nestled between its big sister Dulwich Village to the South and vibrant Brixton to the North. Its strong sense of community and independence, coupled with exceptional schools (both state and independent) and its exclusion from the tube network mean that it has avoided the onrush of high street chains found in most gentrified districts.

Another writes:

The blend of green spaces, period properties, and a strong local community makes Herne Hill a truly unique place to live. As the area continues to thrive, it's attracting a diverse range of new residents, eager to experience all that it has to offer.

And this is confirmed by what another newly arrived couple told us:

We particularly wanted to move to Herne Hill because it feels like a leafy village oasis, but it is quick into central London and super accessible to all the fun parts of Brixton. We love being close to beautiful Brockwell Park and the Lido and are excited to become part of the local community.

Community

What emerges often points to the buzzy and almost village-like atmosphere of our small town centre, with independent and highly useful shops, restaurants and cafés sitting within a few minutes of our efficient Victorian station, our pubs, our gyms, our bus stops and our marvellous parks at both sides of Herne Hill. And that palpable sense of community, noted and celebrated in so many ways including film and music festivals.

Confirming this, one estate agent writes convincingly:

Convenient transport is by no means the only reason that Herne Hill is taking the fancy of so many family-minded house hunters. From excellent schools to leafy parks and a warm, welcoming community where there is always something going on, Herne Hill is increasingly seen as the perfect place to put down roots.

People will explain this "community" sentiment in different ways but maybe it's because we are a relatively safe but compact and very definable area compared with the extended and looser borders of our main neighbours. We feel very much aware of our own identity.

What makes it so?

We are living with the benefits of good decisions made in earlier years. The people who negotiated and lobbied purposefully so that Brockwell Park and Ruskin Park could be liberated from their original

Winterbrook Road

owners and dedicated long-term to the public use should always be celebrated. In our generation and before they relinquished ownership of the railway arches, Network Rail were meticulous in rebuilding some of the rundown shops at the top of Railton Road, in what is now Station Square, and in refurbishing the arches on the other side along Milkwood Road. The Dulwich Estate have kept a careful, usually beneficial eye on the properties that they oversee on Half Moon Lane and Norwood Road. The local groups that, 15 or so years ago, worked with Southwark and Lambeth – yes, we are a frontier town! – to make Station Square a semi-pedestrian and engaging town centre, and separately encouraged the remodelling of the road layout by the gates of Brockwell Park – they all deserve credit for that vision, and for following through.

But we also know that communities are fragile, and easily unbalanced by poor decisions, unresolved disputes, failures to act or the harsh realities of the national and local economy. Small shops particularly, the lifeblood of our town centre, are vulnerable to excessive charges, ill-considered changes in government and local authorities' policies, unfair competition and the unpredictable expectations of consumers. We can easily take them for granted, but they will always need our watchful support – from newcomers and old-timers alike.

With thanks to all who contributed, including new residents and our local estate agents. Particular thanks to Diana Burn, Mel Carter, Sarah Dirilen and Wendy Peterman who found the time to talk to us.

'Clock Tower, Brockwell Park, Autumn' by Matthew Berry. – Limited edition 'Giclée' print available.
Other prints and original paintings by Matthew Berry and other artists, including Peter Forsyth, Mark McLaughlin, Ken McCalla, Su Au, Max Rush and John Bateson-Hill are also available.

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

www.brockwellgallery.london