



STREATHAM SOCIETY NEWS

Published quarterly

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Railings at Streatham Common Station Bridge

(see article p.3)

(photo Brian Palmer)

STREATHAM SOCIETY MEETINGS & EVENTS

CHRISTMAS THEMES

Members' Evening
Monday 3rd December 8pm
(Please read note p29)

RECENT LOCAL HISTORY DISCOVERIES

Various speakers
Monday 7th January 8pm

THE LIFE OF Lt HENRY BOWERS, ANTARCTIC EXPLORER

Anne Strathie
Monday 21st January 8pm

THE HISTORY & RESTORATION OF PECKHAM RYE STATION

Benedict O'Looney
Monday 4th February 8pm

LONDON'S INLAND WATERWAYS

Roger Squires
Monday 18th February 8pm

THE BRIXTON WINDMILL - A DREAM COME TRUE

Richard Santhiri
Monday 4th March 8pm

THE WORK OF THE STREATHAM YOUTH & COMMUNITY TRUST

Clive Winters
Monday 18th March 8pm

STENTON COVINGTON - THE ROOKERY & NORWOOD GROVE

Daphne Marchant
Monday 1st April 8pm

SCHOOLS IN THE 21st CENTURY

Jillian Smith
Monday 15th April 8pm

*All meetings at "Woodlawns" 16
Leigham Court Road SW16
unless otherwise stated*

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The Streatham Society welcomes articles of interest to our members, but the editor reserves the right to edit these. Opinions expressed may not be those of the Society. Articles and photographs may be reproduced only with the editor's permission.

STREATHAM NEWS & PLANNING MATTERS

STREATHAM COMMON STATION – TRAFFIC CHAOS?

BJB

As a result of the Network Rail work on extending the existing platforms 1 and 2 at Streatham Common Station, it is necessary to replace the road bridge over the railway from Greyhound Lane to Streatham Vale. This will mean that the bridge will be closed to traffic from November to April next year. There will be a temporary foot bridge built, so the way for pedestrians will not be impeded. The result of this work, which has already started, is that there will be severe disruption for all who live in, work in or travel through the area. Obscure one way road systems will be introduced and bus services will be changed and re-routed.

At a public meeting held in early October, it was stated that there may be a rethink on the timing of this work, so members are advised to watch out for details in the press and on public notices.

Another causality of the work may be the loss of the railway ornamental railings alongside the bridge near Ellison Road (*see photo on front cover*). We believe these will be put into storage by Network Rail. It is probable that these railings date from the building of the station or even earlier. The Conservation team at Lambeth Council has been informed of the concern about this loss of Streatham's heritage.

IMPROVING STREATHAM STATION

Brian Bloice

On a recent visit to Streatham Station I was puzzled to see a ramp for access to a waiting room and ladies' toilet, from the down platform, has been constructed. Why was this constructed when there appears still to be no disabled access to either platforms from outside the station? On carefully looking around the station, it is possible that access gates could be constructed either from Russell's Footpath or Station Approach. It is also a pity that better facilities have not been planned and constructed for access from the new bus interchange into the station. A lift at this point could even now be included in a revision of the present plans. This would give an easier approach to both the new Tesco's store and leisure centre.

Ron Smail adds: I too noticed the ramp recently and wondered about it. From the historical point of view, I do remember exiting from the station onto Russell's Footpath; of course in those days there was just a gate and a man checking tickets. I think I also remember going into the station through a booking office, or was it just a gate, on Station Approach. After all why was that road called Station Approach? All was changed with the erection of the Job Centre. I guess John Brown will be able to help with the former points of access to the station.

I've noticed that West Croydon station now has a proper exit on Platform 1 giving quick access (without stairs) to the bus station and trams. But of course for the return journey you need to use stairs to get to the correct platform.

It seems that Network Rail has no plans to give elderly and disabled passengers proper access to Streatham station. So Tesco and Network Rail plan a 21st century facility with access from a 19th station. How did the Hub get the go-ahead without improving access to the station?

STREATHAM LIBRARY

BJB

The Streatham Society, together with the library Friends Group, were consulted in connection with the terms of the appraisal tender document. The document was subsequently amended by the Council to remove the option of moving the whole of the library into the Gracefield Gardens Health Centre site. However it is still apparent that the library IT service might be situated there. The Society opposes this idea and believes the library service should be situated under one roof. The solution we put forward is printed below. We also republish the report of a previous appraisal undertaken in 2006.

Streatham Library - New 2012 Appraisal

The Streatham Society is grateful for being given the opportunity to comment on the Draft Terms of Reference of the new Streatham Library Options Appraisal. However we question if a new appraisal is necessary and at what cost.

We are more than happy, as a society with many members who use the library, to assist in the creation of a new library service in Streatham. We feel that the draft document published by the council does cover well the points for consideration with one or two omissions. We therefore make the additional comments for inclusion in the appraisal:

a.. The ease of access to the building from the heart of Streatham, together with its warm, friendly classical architecture, make the building a welcome focal point for Streatham residents and make it ideal for community use.

b.. Press articles at the time of its opening and covenants deposited in the Lambeth Archives suggest that the building was given as a library by Henry Tate in perpetuity.

c.. We feel that strong consideration should be given to the opportunity to bring back Tudor Hall into community service. This would cover the great need in Streatham for a lecture hall, art gallery and exhibition space. This building could be made very multi-functional with moving internal shutters. The available floor space data could be amended in this case.

d.. The list of groups to be consulted is very small; certainly the Streatham Society and Streatham Action should, with other community groups, be included.

e.. The provision of a small heritage space for the display of the history of Streatham, using both paper and solid artifacts, should be considered.

The Society feels that this is a great opportunity to create a central facility for Streatham that should not be missed by making short term economies. In fact the consultation should also explore external sources of funding for the sites future development.

Streatham Library - 2006 Assessment

£35,000 was spent in 2005 on an assessment of the use and condition of Streatham library. The following items are selected from the report, published in May 2006:

- Streatham Tate library is arguably Lambeth's second busiest and best located library with a frontage on Streatham High Road. However, it was built in 1891 and, despite minor refurbishment works in 2000 and 2005/06, the building remains unsuited to the efficient delivery of modern services.
- There are key difficulties with the interior physical structure throughout the building which impact on customer service and significantly reduce the amount of useable space. These include the ground floor being on different levels which hinder customer service and make it impractical for wheelchair or pushchair users accessing expanded services, and a rabbit warren of rooms on the first floor which are not accessible for customer use.
- Tudor Hall, at the rear of the library, is of a similar age to the library and currently provides a LearnDirect centre in partnership with the library service. This is accessible via Pinfold Road.
- The library has no available community or meeting space which endorses the general lack of community space in Streatham as a whole.
- The lack of community space and the restrictions of the current Streatham library determined the Streatham Area Committee to commission the feasibility study to consider the redevelopment potential of the library and Tudor Hall to provide a new reconfigured 21st century library and to provide new space for community use; to include meeting rooms, performance and exhibition space.
- Restrictive covenants on the library land restrict the use to that of a library and associated facilities in perpetuity making a sale for different use impossible
- Covenants on the Tudor Hall site protect it in respect of light, air and nuisance to adjacent properties.
- The site generally is within a conservation area which requires that any demolition or partial demolition and rebuild would need to demonstrate a significant improvement when compared with the existing building.

The scope of the study included the requirement to maximize the development potential of the site and consider options to provide a cross subsidy to deliver a financially and technically viable scheme.

THE SOUTH LONDON PRESS NEWSPAPER

BJB



The South London Press building in Leigham Court Road has been the head office for this local journal since it was built in 1935-39. With the changing world of the newspaper industry, the paper's owners have decided to move to more modern premises. They state that the existing building is no longer fit for purpose.

This was the second home of the journalistic and printing sides of the paper, founded in 1865. The building

is an American style five storey edifice with a full height stairway housed in a tower which projects above the parapet creating a noble vertical element. The ground floor is clad in black glazed tiles. A stylistic clock which was a feature on the facade was removed in recent times.

Currently a consultation is taking place in advance of a planning application to change this iconic building into 35 flats with shops on the ground floor. The print works to the rear will also be rebuilt for accommodation. It is the intention to refurbish the buildings frontage in accordance with the 1930's style of when it was built. It is not clear what will happen to the addition made to the building in 1963. The building is not listed but lies within the Streatham Hill and Streatham High Road Conservation Area.

The Streatham Society regrets the sad loss of these commercial premises so conveniently situated adjacent to Streatham Hill Station. It is not clear where the paper will be relocated, but the editorial team will remain in Streatham.

VICTORY FOR CAMPAIGNERS

The Boundary Commission has revised the proposed changes to the Streatham Parliamentary Constituency to keep all four Streatham wards in one seat along with Clapham Town, Gipsy Hill and Knight's Hill. The proposals, recently announced, are a victory for the 'All Streatham' campaign who opposed an earlier plan to carve up the wards. This would have put Streatham Hill in the Clapham Common constituency, St Leonard's and Streatham Wells with Streatham & Tooting and Streatham South with Merton. The revised proposed changes show Clapham Common and Thornton remaining part of the constituency while Brixton Hill and Tulse Hill would join with Brixton.

However, although these new proposals work well for Streatham, others may be unhappy with the knock-on effects in their area and may oppose the proposals - and, in the present political situation, they may never be implemented.

OLYMPIC GAMES FOR SENIORS HELD IN STREATHAM JWB

The Spirit of the Olympic Games came to Streatham on the 13th August when St. Leonard's Church hosted an Olympic Funday for Seniors. Organised by the church Freedom Club it included a range of sporting events especially designed to exploit the skills of Seniors including: Synchronised Tea Drinking, Marathon Knitting, Chocolate Taste Tests, Balloon Relays, Sucking a Sweet Challenge, Walking Egg & Spoon Race, Balls in the Bucket and Feel & Squeeze Object Recognition. The games were held in the church with over 100 contestants competing in both individual and team events, with representatives participating from other local churches and organisations. A packed programme of events was held throughout the day and medal ceremonies were held at the end of the morning and afternoon sessions.

STITCHING UP THE HIGH ROAD

Some months ago the Streatham branch of the Women's Institute embarked on an ambitious project to make a tapestry/artwork featuring all the buildings along Streatham High Road. As the road is reputed to be the longest High Road in Europe, this is quite an undertaking. It is hoped the project will be completed in stages with the needle-workers, embroiderers and quilt makers involved beginning their mammoth task on that stretch of the High Road between St. Leonard's Church and the Odeon Cinema.

At our October meeting, Sue Heeley exhibited her excellent representation of the White Lion public house. Another High Road building has now been completed by Jackie Smith, who has quilted Boots the Chemist (*right*), complete with its cash point and various adverts in the shop windows. (*We'd love to publish more contributions; photos to me, please - Ed*)



60's REUNION PLANNED FOR BISHOP THOMAS GRANT SCHOOL

William (Willy) Hill, a pupil at Bishop Thomas Grant school between 1966-1972 is hoping to arrange a reunion for all former pupils who will be celebrating their 60th birthday in 2013/14 (born 1953-54). Any former BTG student interested in attending should contact William by phone on 01603 712 041 or by email to: will.hill635@btinternet.com

LOCAL HISTORY MATTERS

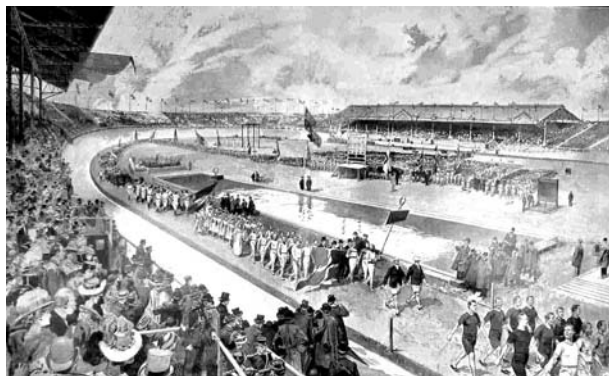
JOHN JAMES WEBSTER - Streatham's Olympic Engineer JW Brown



J.J. Webster

In our last issue Kevin Kelly mentioned the famous engineer, John James Webster, who designed the British Olympic Stadium in 1908, whilst he was living in Streatham. Then at our August Antiques & Collectables meeting, Brian Bloice exhibited a book containing numerous illustrations of the Stadium. This prompted me to check my archive to see what information I had on Webster.

John Webster was one of a number of former residents of our town who excelled in the field of engineering and construction, which includes James Greathead of Ravenscraig, Leigham Court Road, who designed the Greathead shield which revolutionised the building of underground railways, and John Treadwell who lived at Leigham Court House and was a railway contractor and worked with Isambard Kingdom Brunel.



1908 Olympic Stadium at Shepherd's Bush

Webster was born on the 9th June 1845 in Warrington, Lancashire, and was educated at Owen's College in Manchester. He trained with the Manchester firm of Messrs. E.T Bellhouse & Co. where he acted as Chief Draughtsman and Assistant Manager and where he gained considerable experience in bridge design and construction.

At this time Britain was the leading industrial power in the world, responsible for administering an expanding global empire. This presented numerous opportunities for Webster and in 1871 he designed a number of bridges in India for the Ashbury Carriage & Iron Co. This experience led to his appointment of Chief of the Bridge Department of Messrs Thos. Brassey & Co., with which organisation he was responsible for the construction of the Liverpool landing-stage designed by G.F. Lyster.

His skill as a designer, constructor and engineer led to his talents being in constant demand in the later half of the 1870s in which period he worked for the Aberdeen Harbour Board and the Hull Dock Company. In 1881 he set up a con-

sulting business in Liverpool, the success of which subsequently led to him basing his operations at 39 Victoria Street, Westminster. The 1880s-90s saw him working on bridges in Bedford, Cambridge, Guildford and Northwich, as well as undertaking international work in India, South America, Spain and Australia.



Widnes-Runcorn Transporter Bridge

He was responsible for the reconstruction of the Conway suspension bridge, Abergavenny bridge, the Portsmouth bascule bridge and the Littlehampton swing bridge, as well as numerous piers for Dover, Bangor, Minehead, Llandudno, Penmaenmawr, Egremont and the Menai Bridge. Although Bridge and Pier work formed the mainstay of his operations, he also excelled in other areas of engineering working on machinery for the Alexandra Dock in Hull and in producing designs for the Lyndhurst Gas and Waterworks.

His later achievements included the design of the Widnes to Runcorn transporter bridge, which he designed with J.T. Wood; the Big Wheel at Earl's Court; four of the largest buildings at the Franco-British Exhibition and the world's then largest sporting stadium, which formed the centre piece of the 1908 Olympics, to which Kevin referred in his article in our last edition. Fittingly, his final commission was for his home town of Warrington, for which he designed a reinforced concrete bridge which was completed following his death. This was one of the earliest uses of reinforced concrete in bridge building.

Webster was a member of the Institution of Civil Engineers and was awarded the Institute's highest prize, the Telford Gold Medal, as well as gaining four Telford Premiers for papers read and discussed by the Institute. He was also a member of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers and President of the Liverpool Engineering Society. In open competition, he was placed first or second on fourteen different occasions, including in one of the completions for the design of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in New South Wales, for which he was runner up.

Around 1891 John moved to Streatham and spent almost the last 25 years of his life living in our town; first at 26 Criffel Avenue and then at Fawley, 81 Mount Nod Road, where he died suddenly on 30th October 1914 aged 69. He was buried in West Norwood Cemetery where a simple granite headstone marks his grave (Grave 33,856 square 93).

CHARLES DICKENS AND STREATHAM

John W Brown



*Charles Dickens
1812 - 1870*

Paul Graham's witty, informative and knowledgeable talk on Charles Dickens at our September Local History meeting highlighted the author's links with a number of people who are interred in West Norwood Cemetery. Although, to the best of my knowledge, Dickens never visited Streatham our town has a number of links with the great author.

Edwin Durrant, of 70 Penwortham Road, purchased the lease of the Old Curiosity Shop in Portugal Street around the turn of the 20th century and under his ownership it traded as a curio shop. Mr Durrant later gave the lease to his son, Leonard, as his 21st birthday present. Many old pictures of the premises clearly show the Durrant family name above the door.



Edwin Durrant

Bleak House, in Broadstairs, where Dickens used to holiday and where John Jarndyce lived in his novel named after the house, was purchased in 1953 by Mrs M.E. Scholeboom, of Prentis Road. She described the house as 'magnificent', standing in an acre of ground overlooking the sea and comprising some 15 rooms. Mrs Scholeboom used the property as a country residence and holiday home.

Sir Arthur Helps, another resident of Streatham parish and who is buried in St. Leonard's graveyard, was secretary of the Privy Council and introduced Queen Victoria to Dickens. An entry in the Queen's Diary made at Balmoral, dated 9th March 1870, reads: "I saw Mr Helps this evening at half past six, who brought and introduced Mr Charles Dickens, the celebrated author. He is very agreeable, with a pleasant voice and manner. He talked of his latest works, of America, the strangeness of the people there, and of the division of the classes in England, which he hoped would get better in time. He felt sure it would come gradually."

Mrs Florence Lascelles Skinner, a chiropodist, lived for 53 years at 23 Greyhound Lane until her death in August 1940. Her family were 'great friends' of Dickens, and her mother, Mrs Emma Maria Farran, was considered by many to have been the inspiration for one of Dickens' characters, the identity of which has sadly not been recorded.

Another Streatham resident worthy of mention is Bertram Waldron Matz, who moved to 29 Woodfield Avenue in 1924. He was acknowledged as the world's greatest authority on Charles Dickens. In his youth he worked for Dickens' publishers, Chapman and Hall, and later became a partner in the publishing

business of Charles Palmer of Chandos Street. A prolific author on Dickens, he founded the Dickens Fellowship in 1902 and was its first honorary secretary and later president. For over 20 years he was the editor of the *Dickensian*, wrote at least 11 books on Dickens related subjects, edited 'The National Edition of Dickens Works' and 'Dickens Miscellaneous Papers, Plays and Poems'. During his life he amassed the largest library of books on Dickens in private ownership, which he presented to the Dickens Museum in Doughty Street. In recognition of his popularisation and promotion of the works of Dickens, the author's family presented Mr Matz with the famous author's writing desk.

Further a-field, we know that Dickens visited Richard Edwin Austin Townsend at Springfield, a large house that used to stand at the junction of Beulah and Biggin Hills. It was here that he wrote parts of *David Copperfield* and used the location to set the scene for *David Copperfield* to meet Dora Spenlow. In nearby Thornton Heath, at 86 London Road, lived, between 1846 to the late 1850s, the famous illustrator of Dickens works, Hablot Knight Brown, better known as Phiz.

Although Dickens appears to have never visited Streatham, his son came to the town in March 1889 to read from his father's works in the Streatham Town Hall. A contemporary account of the occasion, published in the *Norwood Review and Crystal Palace Reporter* on 9th March 1889, recalls the events of the evening:

"MR CHARLES DICKENS AT STREATHAM

An appreciative audience assembled in the Streatham Town Hall last Saturday evening to listen to Mr Charles Dickens' admirable rendering of 'The Story of Little Dombey' and 'Bob Sawyer's Party'. The pathetic relation of Paul Dombey's short life was given with great dignity and tenderness, and the audience thoroughly enjoyed a good laugh over the familiar incidents of Bob Sawyer's memorable supper party.

The profits of the reading were given to the Indigent Blind Visiting Society, whose office is in Red Lion Square, and who devote themselves mainly to visiting the blind in their own homes, where they assist them with small pensions, gifts of coal and bread, supply guides to conduct them to classes and places of worship, sympathise with their efforts towards independence, and endeavour to alleviate the sadness of their lot. A large part of the work of the society is carried on by blind visitors, and in this way the blind are doubly benefited themselves by receiving and imparting the society's aid.

We are glad to hear that between three and four hundred ladies and gentlemen faced the inclement weather, and the result has been the satisfactory addition to the funds of this valuable society."

THE BROSTERS OF BRIDEWELL PRECINCT AND UPPER TOOTING

Christine Jones



A gang of coal-whippers unloading a ship on the Thames in 1790s

On the night of the 29th October 1940, during the height of the Blitz, Streatham was once again bombed by the Luftwaffe. Eleven high explosive bombs caused considerable damage in various parts of the town that night, but miraculously there were no fatalities recorded.

However, one of the bombs did result in numerous dead bodies being discovered among the rubble the following morning for it fell at the rear of St. Leonard's Church, damaging the building and destroying many of the graves in that part of the churchyard. Today, the damage caused to the north western part of the graveyard that evening can still be seen. The area is clear of tightly packed gravestones and tombs which fill the surrounding area and few memorials occupy this part of God's Acre.

Among those which do survive, is a large tomb slab laying on a shallow base by the bend in the path. Originally this was a handsome 'Altar' tomb rising about five feet above the ground. Before the war the tomb provided a picturesque sight, being

covered in ivy, which added greatly to the antiquarian charm of this corner of the churchyard. Sadly the tomb was destroyed in the blast of the bomb that fell close by that October night in 1940, but fortunately the large slab that sat atop the tomb survived the explosion and now rests a few inches above the ground marking the site of the final resting place of Joseph and Ann Broster.

Joseph was born around 1743 and lived in Bridewell, on the northern banks of the River Thames. By the time he was 16, in 1759, he was a member of the Waterman and Lighterman's Company and was to spend his working life on the river. His main business centred on the coal trade and he was involved in ferrying coal from vessels bringing the fuel to London which moored on the River Thames for the off-loading of their cargo. It is likely that having off-loaded the fuel from the boats he also sold on the coal, acting as a coal merchant; the combined operation making him a wealthy man.

By the time he was in his late 20s he felt secure enough in business to wed and, on the 8th April 1770 at Bridewell Chapel, he took as his wife Ann Ireland, who was a year his junior. On the 13th May 1771 Ann gave birth to their first child, a baby girl, who was christened Martha on the 2nd June 1771 at Bridewell Chapel.

Around two years later, on 15th March 1773, another baby girl joined the family when Elizabeth was born, and she was baptised in St. Bride's Church, off Fleet Street, the following month on the 9th April. Another two years passed before the third member of the Broster family arrived, another baby girl, who was born on 4th June 1775 and was christened Mary at St. Bride's on 30th June. No doubt Joseph Broster longed for a son to make his growing family complete and the couple were duly blessed on the 7th September 1777 with the birth of their fourth child, a baby boy who was baptised Joseph, after his father, at St. Bride's on 5th November 1777.

1779 was a tragic year for the Brosters as, in July, 6-year-old Elizabeth died and was buried in Bridewell Chapel on 2nd August. On July 1st of the following year, Ann gave birth to their fifth child, another baby girl, whom they christened Elizabeth, in memory of her sadly missed elder sister; the baptism taking place at St. Bride's Church on 20th July.

For Joseph and Ann all seemed to be going well. But they were to suffer another tragedy in 1781. As Christmas approached, there was little rejoicing in the Broster household as that December their only son, Joseph junior, died and was buried at Bridewell Chapel on Christmas Eve. The following years must have been hard ones for Joseph and his wife to endure. All their hopes of handing the business on to their son had been dashed. Joseph and Ann were to have no more children and their family was complete with their surviving three young daughters, Martha, Mary and Elizabeth.

In 1794 the family's fortunes took a favourable turn with the marriage of 23 year old Martha to the 25-year-old Charles Hoppe, at St. Dunstan in the East on 6th July. It was probably at this time that Joseph took his new son-in-law, Charles Hoppe, into partnership in his coal merchants business, which was based at 4 Water Street in Bridewell Precinct.

In the opening years of the 19th century Joseph's thoughts turned to retirement and, on the 15th January 1803, the partnership was dissolved, leaving both men free to conduct business on their own account. No doubt over the next few years Joseph began to wind down his business operations and started to search for a house in the country to retire to.

It was this quest which was to bring the Brosters to Streatham in 1809, when they settled in a large house on the southern side of Upper Tooting Road. At that time Streatham was a large rural parish, much famed for its beautiful countryside and healthy fresh air. No doubt their new home provided Joseph and Ann

with an ideal retreat in which to enjoy their final years together, in contrast to the claustrophobic conditions they must have experienced in the built-up area of Bridewell in the City of London. Joseph appears to have spent a quiet retirement in Streatham. He did not seek any parish office or undertake any parochial duties. The parish records contain no mention of him other than to record his regular annual payment of the rates due on his large house at Tooting Bec.

Ann Broster died in her 70th year on 23rd March 1812 and, on the last day of the month, she was buried in the large tomb which her husband had purchased in St. Leonard's churchyard. After the funeral Joseph arranged for the following inscription to be carved on the large slab atop the tomb:

In memory of
MRS ANN BROSTER
wife of MR JOSEPH BROSTER
of Upper Tooting
Late of Bridewell Precinct London
who died March 23rd 1812
In the 70th year of her age

Six years later, on 15th May 1818, Joseph died and on the 23rd May he joined his wife in the tomb; the following inscription being added to the slab:

Also
to the memory of the above
MR BROSTER
who died May 15th 1818
in the 75th year of his age



*Broster Gravestone
in St Leonard's Churchyard*

Joseph's eldest daughter, Martha Hoppe, and her husband Charles later moved to Devon where Martha died in 1841. Charles subsequently returned to London and lived at The Grove, on St. John's Hill, Battersea Rise, where he died on 23rd January 1858 and was buried in West Norwood Cemetery. Mary Broster married Thomas Edgley at St Edmund the King and Martyr Church in the City of London on 2nd July 1797. They had five children: three girls and a two boys.

Joseph's youngest daughter, Elizabeth, appears to have remained single and in 1803-4 was admitted as a Freeman of the City of London by Patrimony of her father, who became a Freeman in 1768.

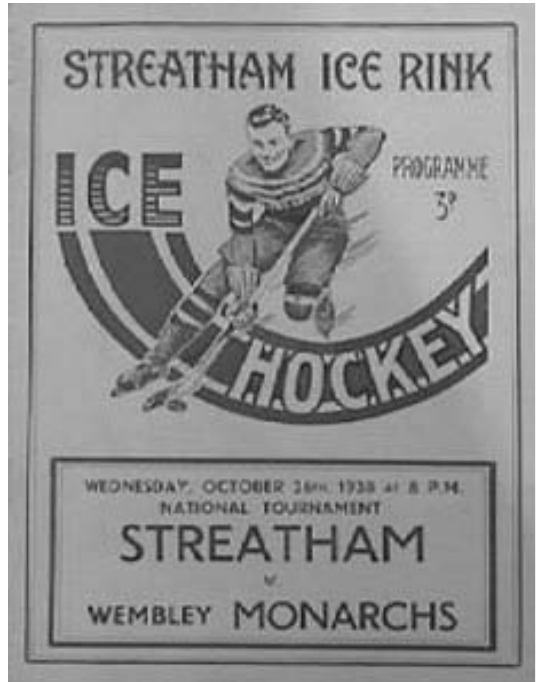
A DOOR CLOSSES ... A DOOR OPENS Part 1

Allan Palmer

In the first of two articles, Allan Palmer, a long-standing supporter of the Streatham Ice Hockey Club, takes a look at the history of Streatham Ice Rink and the fortunes of the club that played at the rink during the eight decades it was based there.

2011 was a momentous year in the history of Streatham Ice Rink. On 26th February this home of Streatham Ice Hockey Club reached the grand old age of 80 years! Regular visitors to Streatham Ice Rink in the recent past might well feel, although with a heavy heart, that the closure of the rink and its move into a temporary home at Brixton until the new rink is completed in Streatham, is, in fact, to be welcomed - if not overdue. However, these events present an opportune occasion to look at a little of the history of the Club's home, and the hockey that was played there over the past four score years.

On that February day in 1931, over 3,000 people attended the opening of Streatham Ice Rink. As a period, the twenties and thirties are a strange mixture; the trauma of the Great War left an indelible mark on British society but the twenties also brought about 'the jazz age' and the Bright Young People, whose exploits both scandalised and amused in turns. But there was also a major economic crisis that one would have felt precluded the opening of major entertainment projects like the Streatham Ice Rink. Then again, 1927 saw the advent of 'talking pictures' which kick-started a major interest in 'going to the pictures'. Indeed, just as happened in the mid-forties, perhaps it was the very existence of this dire background that led people to want to forget their troubles and just be entertained.



Ice Hockey Programme October 1938



Ice Rink Ice Hockey Pennant

The relevance to the cinema is important because Streatham Ice Rink was designed in the late 1920s by Mr Robert Cromie, a well-known designer of cinemas. He was very much a man of his time in that Art Deco was the feature design of the period and many buildings of that era were in this style; from cinemas to tube stations and major business centres such as the Shell Mex building in London. Streatham Ice Rink was built in white Portland stone and black faience whilst the interior was a kaleidoscope of everyday images from buildings to ships, from sea waves to gramophone records.

A major feature of the new rink was that it benefited from having the largest indoor ice pad in Europe (21,000 sq ft), much larger than that required by today's international standards. The object of the new facility was plainly to encourage the public to 'come skating'. The local paper of the time headlined 'Don't go to Switzerland, come to Streatham' - a clear invitation to those wealthy folk who tended to go overseas for their winter sports 'fix' to stay at home. And with its excellent transport connections, major cinema chains and theatre and much sought after apartments at The High and at Pullman Court, Streatham was a magnet for the well-off of the time.

Those searching for news of hockey of the time will be disappointed; much is

made - rightly - of the number of top class skaters who trained and won recognition for their efforts; Megan Taylor was World Champion in 1938, for example. There were speed skating competitions, carnivals but ... very little about hockey. This is not too surprising. As with World War II later, the Great War seriously undermined



Ice Rink Ice Hockey Pennant

(Both pennants courtesy Andrew Hadden & Colin Crocker)

sport; the death toll was appalling and injuries worse. Hockey had been played in Britain for many years but mainly by clubs (in the strictest sense of the word, rather like club cricket before the establishing of leagues in the 1970s) and by Services organisations, the universities and such like. The British Ice Hockey Association (BIHA) had long since been set up and Britain played in many internationals with players from the aforementioned clubs. However, the war took a toll of players and, despite their presence in the international arena, it was as often as not, in the 20's, that Britain could not raise a team. That said, there were a number of ice rinks around; in London alone there were rinks at Millbank, Golders Green, Hammersmith, Richmond, Bayswater (Queen's Club) and (astonishing for today's fans) at the Grosvenor House Hotel on Park Lane. There were also rinks at Hove (forerunner of the later rink at Brighton), Oxford, Birmingham and Liverpool and a new rink opened in Glasgow. The fact that some of these establishments were used for hockey by clubs like United Services and the Park Lane Club encouraged others to want to play the game and there was a big growth of interest as the 20s closed.

Between 1928 and 1933 there developed an English club championship that was the forerunner of the National League that started in 1933/34. In the initial period, United Services, London Lions and Oxford won two championships each with the new National League tournament in 1933/34 won by Grosvenor House Canadians. Remember that the next time you see the award ceremonies from the Grosvenor House on TV!

This growth in competition generated more interest, such that the clubs went looking for better players and the players looked for better clubs; many business assignees from hockey-playing countries at last found an outlet for their sport in Britain. The new National League clubs sought to import better players to come and play for them and, with the prospect of the Empire Pool and Sports Arena opening at Wembley in 1934 (to which the Grosvenor House Canadians would decamp), the status of hockey in Britain grew. Having only been opened in 1931, Streatham had no history at this stage but they did have a brand new rink and a number of good players gravitated to Streatham. Indeed, as early as March 1932 the touring Boston Rangers played at Streatham and were held to a draw by the newly formed local team. Thus, Streatham competed in the 1933/34 league and, in a league won by the Grosvenor House Canadians, they finished a creditable fourth.

Many saw Grosvenor House Canadians (now playing at Wembley under the name of Wembley Canadians) as a shoo-in for another title in 1935 but, not for the last time, Streatham confounded the 'experts' and won their first title. However, although Streatham was still a team to be reckoned with, as the decade closed the 'Big Rink' clubs at Wembley and the newly opened arenas at Harringay and Earl's Court began to dominate.

Several Streatham players were in the British Olympic squad in 1936 which was captained by Streatham player Carl Erhardt, who led the team to victory; winning not only the Gold medal, but the European and World Championships as well. Another Streatham team member, Gerry Davey, was the star player in the British Olympic squad, finishing top scorer with seven goals, including a hat-trick against Czechoslovakia and a goal after just 20 seconds in the semi-final against Canada.

By now war clouds had formed and, as with most places of entertainment (except, famously, for the Windmill Theatre!), Streatham Ice Rink closed for the duration. Some quick thinker felt that an ice rink might be a good place to store food and, in fact, that is exactly what Streatham Ice Rink became during the war. The rink reopened in 1946.

A PLAGUE ON STREATHAM

Graham Gower

Of all the events that cast a shadow over our history, the Black Death was probably the darkest. Its rampage across the land devastated the population, sowing in its wake the seeds of social and economic change. The first reports of this pestilence began filtering out of the West Country during the summer of 1348, and during the ensuing month was to spread its fear far and wide. By the autumn of this fateful year, the plague had touched London. From late 1348 to early 1350, the plague raged through the narrow streets and alleys of the city; a miasma of death moving from one house to another and killing, it is thought, some 30,000 people, half of the city's population. Many, who were driven by a fearful panic, made for the surrounding countryside, only to find village after village struck down by this virulent plague. Whichever way the people turned, they were caught by this dreadful pestilence.

How many people died of the Black Death is not known, although we can gain some idea from contemporary record keeping. However, it suffices to say that around 40% - 50% of the population are believed to have perished – perhaps even more. As the plague swept across the land chaos followed, with many of those charged with keeping the records and noting the events of the day perishing along with the rest. By its nature, the plague was indiscriminate. As one chronicler crudely observed, “It slew Jew, Christian and Saracen alike, it carried off confessor and penitent alike. In many places not even a fifth of the people were left alive”. All the same, we can gain some measure of this event from the many documents which have survived from this terrible time, particularly those generated by the abbeys and priories, as they detailed the effects of the plague upon their monasteries and their secular interests. Furthermore, we can look into these records and imagine the impact the plague would have had upon the towns and villages that lay in its path.

One place that lay in its path was Streatham, a settlement that randomly spread its houses along the highway leading from London to Croydon, one of many communities found nestling alongside this ancient Roman road. During the Middle Ages, Streatham was a large vibrant parish, blessed with rich farmland and the wealth that a roadside community could generate. The records from these times suggest a presence of a small community, possibly reaching to 400 to 500 people, busy about their work in the bright years before the Black Death darkened their world. There can be little doubt that the plague reached Streatham soon after it hit London, brought by people passing the along the highways, and unwittingly bringing the sickness to the parish by late autumn of that fateful year. We cannot imagine the horror and fear that befell our Streatham predecessors, as family after family succumbed to the plague. Although we have no list of those who perished in Streatham, we can nevertheless make a reasonable estimation of the local death toll, which at the time, was aptly described as the 'Great Mortality'.

It is from one of the medieval land holders of Streatham, Bec Abbey and its successor Merton Priory, that we draw a general idea of the local death rate. In the course of running their monastic estates in Streatham, the monks kept tabs on their tenants, listing on a regular basis the names of people on their Streatham estates. Once the plague had passed, and the monks returned to normal business, we find from their records approximately two thirds of local surnames had disappeared. Bearing in mind the natural extinction and migration of families, the disappearance of so many local surnames is no doubt attributable to the plague, and probably reflected the mortality rate experienced in the remaining parts of Streatham not held by the above monasteries, namely Leigham and South Streatham, for which we have a dearth of information.

It is likely that Streatham did suffer a high mortality rate, paying for being a highway village. This may explain the loss of Leigham, a familiar name to local people, and a village that stretched along the High Road north of the parish church. From the tax returns for the year 1332, a short time before the arrival of the plague, we see an assessment made for the villages of Leigham and Streatham. As these tax records show, Leigham was an established place, giving its name to a local manorial estate owned by the Benedictine Abbey of Bermondsey. Yet as the Middle Ages draw to a close, we find little mention of Leigham village, particularly by Tudor times. Perhaps the demise of this important village can be attributable to the sweeping hand of 'a most pestilent plague'.

Moreover, we find other local places profiled during the Middle Ages which fade into history like Leigham village. We know for example about the thriving communities living on the edge of Streatham parish. There was Crocstrete, Norwood, documented by the clerks of Bermondsey Abbey in the 1340s and, standing not too far away, was the village of Frankingham, with its green and open

fields, a thriving community that by the 16th century had ceased to be. Such obscurity also befell the hamlet of Bodley. Long forgotten since the Middle Ages, the people of this little known place found their toil and livelihood farming the rough and sloping ground of Brixton Hill.

Whether these communities failed through the misfortune of plague or by the fickleness of economic or social change, we cannot tell. But what we do know is that a number of local places, familiar to us from history, failed to make the post-medieval world. Other places that disappeared were Paginworth at Balham and, over towards Battersea, the communities of Rydon, Watsingham and Hese. Towards the Wandle Valley lay Heyford, Dunsford and Down, further places which did not survive the Middle Ages to become modern places. Although these places may have been either medieval farming estates or hamlets, it does show there was an active and populated countryside, which would have felt the full brunt of the Black Death.

As the 1332 taxation shows, some of these places were established and viable communities. For example, the village of Battersea with Walsingham and Rydon produced some 42 taxpayers, hinting at a population of some 200 people at least. We see similar places in our area, such as Wallington and Waddon, whose profile as villages also appear to have declined following the Middle Ages, when seen in comparison with other nearby communities, such as Carshalton for example. Unfortunately, we shall never know the full tale of misery the Black Death cast upon our local communities. It suffices to say, with high mortality rates recorded elsewhere, there would have been little chance of Streatham, along with Tooting, escaping the clutches of this engulfing pestilence and not severely affected, if not brought to their knees.

It seems the smaller communities did not weather the attacks of plague that appeared during these times and quietly disappeared, or simply became a mere shadow of their former self. Perhaps places like Stockwell and Kennington shared this fate, with their communities decimated as the plague moved from house to house. Also, as people found little future in their shattered communities, movement to another village would occur as the traditional system of parish and feudal administration quickly broke down. We may well imagine the riverside community of Lambeth, and its urbane neighbour Southwark, reeling from the plague, with high death tolls and groups of refugees blindly fleeing for a safer place and life. With such movement, we could expect a consolidation of surviving villages as the plague abated and people made good in their new communities. Perhaps this is how the South London villages of Wimbledon, Clapham, Streatham, Peckham and Camberwell, for example, survived the disaster to become typical Surrey villages by the 17th and 18th centuries.

Although the pestilence had spent itself by 1351, it returned with some vigour in 1361-62, 1369, 1379-83 and 1389-93, bringing further calamities to a battered

society. Moreover, there is little doubt that the monasteries which controlled medieval Streatham would also have felt the full horror of plague as it ricocheted around their cloistered environments. Not only did it kill off their brethren and lay brothers but it heralded a loosening of control over their estates. As for Streatham, we can imagine, with little effort, a feudal landscape marred by unploughed lands, interspersed with strips of un-gathered crops and clusters of untended livestock; The winding village street of thatched and timbered dwellings would be still, a peace momentarily broken by the tolling of the church bell as the dead were brought for burial.

But who buried the dead? Was it the parish priest or one of his faithful flock? In some places, for example at Croydon, we see the Rector die in the plague year of 1349 and his replacement die in 1351. While at Streatham, along with Battersea, Wandsworth, Camberwell, Morden, Carshalton, Mitcham, Clapham, Beddington and Tooting, we find the list of Rectors missing for the crucial years 1345 to 1366. Perhaps this noticeable break in the ecclesiastical record suggests the hand of plague at work. Indeed, it was to show no mercy to either lay people or clergy, as Thomas Bradwardine, Archbishop of Canterbury, found on entering his spiritual kingdom. He fell victim to the plague at Lambeth Palace during August 1349.

The lack of people to work the land of Streatham and elsewhere stimulated economic change, bringing higher wages and better working conditions for the manorial tenants, much to the concern and agitation of the landowners. In quick response, they introduced the Statute of Labourers during 1351. This sought to control wages and prices and haul them back to the levels seen before the plague years. A bold and reactionary effort, which appears not to have affected the villagers of Streatham, who seem to have prospered with their time-honoured feudal obligations reduced.

However, if flesh turns to dust and memories fade, the work of man survives. In celebration of deliverance from the scourge of plague, villagers across the land turned to God and honoured him in the way they knew best – the glorification of their parish church. As we know, the people of Streatham survived the onslaught of plague and their thanks for deliverance is still with us today. Set in stone and mortar stands the tower to St. Leonard's parish church. In style and construction, the tower dates to the middle of the 14th century, the years following the plague. To some the tower has been attributed to Sir John Ward, a companion of the Black Prince, whose effigy still exists within the church. But a fitting and nobler reason for the tower's origin should be directed towards the deliverance of Streatham from that dreaded of all pestilence – the Black Death. But, alas, deliverance was no reprieve. Little did they know that the shadow of death would return once more to cast its dread upon the people of Streatham – but this time it was to come as the Great Plague of 1665.

DONALD MCGILL'S COMIC POSTCARDS AND THE STREATHAM CONNECTION

Judy Harris

Streatham News 19th October 1962

NEAR THE KNUCKLE' MCGILL

King of cheeky postcards dies at 87

Donald McGill, the comic postcard king who but for a sick relative might have confined his artistic talents to the architect's drawing board, is dead.

For years he carried out the business of humour in his flat at Christchurch Road, Streatham Hill. He died at the week-end aged 87.

Donald McGill's career was as colourful as his postcards. In 1892, as a schoolboy of 18 - he attended Blackheath Public School - he had his first joke published in the now extinct magazine *The Joker*. But it was in 1904 that the trail, which took his cheeky cards to numerous British seashores and over the world, really began. He drew a sketch for his nephew, ill in hospital. It showed a man attempting to get out of a hole in an iced-over pond. "Hope you will be out soon," ran the caption. McGill's brother saw the drawing and put him in touch with a postcard publisher. And that was the start of a prolific half-century during which thousands of his cards sold in their millions.

Success did not come immediately. Then in 1914 he designed a classic. A chambermaid, peeping through a bathroom keyhole, assures a waiting guest: "He won't be long now, sir, he's drying himself." That was the forerunner of a succession of angry wives, bulging women, hen-pecked husbands, timid vicars, and so on.

NOT A FORTUNE

McGill's cards became as much a part of the holiday scene as jellied eels, paper hats, fish and chips, and boarding houses. But although he made millions laugh he never made a fortune. His friend and business partner, Mr. Ernest Maidment, said this week: "He just made a good living". It was from another Christchurch Road house that they marketed the cards. Their firm, D. Constance Limited, ran into censorship trouble in July, 1954, for publishing obscene postcards. Police seized the cards in shops at Cleethorpes, the Lincolnshire seaside resort. McGill and Maidment were each fined £10, and their company £50 with £25 costs.

McGill, a dapper little man, always well-dressed, once said: "I admit some of my jokes are a bit near the knuckle"; another time he described his work as "good, honest vulgarity, sticking to the mainstream of British humour". In the early years he would often produce two cards a day. But at the end it was only about one a month. A little while ago he appeared on "What's My Line".

The above article is one of many such on Donald McGill, particularly from 1954, when he appeared in court, to the present day. His was a good media story: one very respectable man who designed thousands of comic cards.



Donald McGill



36 Christchurch Road SW2

In 2003, the Streatham Society published my booklet on Donald McGill. My research for this started some years earlier when I noticed, in a 1940s Streatham directory entry, that at 22 Christchurch Road was listed as a comic postcard publisher. This led to the fascinating story of McGill, who spent his final twenty years in a small flat at nearby 36 Christchurch Road.

I gave my first talk on McGill to a group of elderly people in Clapham, who subsequently referred to me as “the little girl with the dirty postcards”! Although not too flattered by this, the McGill research has led to a number of talks, exhibitions, book sales, contact with McGill collectors and one of his family and an interest in the regular publicity generated by this scholarly, courteous gentleman.

Perhaps the most widespread publicity was generated when Michael Winner, film director and Sunday Times columnist, sold his large collection of McGill’s original artwork. Winner’s research discovered that McGill was buried in an unmarked grave in Streatham Cemetery. His attempts to provide a suitable gravestone failed, probably because, being a private cemetery, the necessary permission from management and family was not forthcoming.





*Larry's cartoon of the memorial
that never was*

McGill's name lives on. McGill cards are sold at postcard fairs and are included at the Cartoon Museum (35 Little Russell Street, near the British Museum) and, notably, at The Donald McGill Postcard Museum at 15 Union Street, Ryde, Isle of Wight (www.donaldmcgill.info). This advertises the largest display of Donald McGill's work to be found today. Its walls and ceiling are covered with McGill's cards. As for the story - buy my booklet; there are only a few left! (£2.50 & 50p p&p, from me, see contact back page.)

THE LEIGHAM COURT HOTEL

Peter Skuse

In 1956, my Mum took a morning job at the Leigham Court Hotel, as breakfast cook for the proprietors at that time: Annie & George Wiel. This was after a two-and-a-half year stint when Mum was running a B&B at our home in Daysbrook Road. Two doors down from us, towards Wyatt Park Rd, lived the Staples family, where the dad was a brass player with Ken Mackintosh's dance band. My Dad was chief booking clerk at Piccadilly underground station, and our family needed extra money to pay for help for granddad.

Around this time, Kelloggs (GB) opened an offer for Insignia Plate cutlery: dessert and teaspoons, knives and forks, obtainable with coupons cut from packs of Cornflakes, and the offer ran for around a year. Annie Wiel, of the Leigham Court Hotel, then altered the choice of cereal, formerly offered by her to her clients, so that cornflakes alone were the alternative to rolls & butter (or whatever). Since Kelloggs would not keep sending cutlery to the same address, and certainly not to a hotel, she got some 'L' cutlery sent to the Hotel, quoting only the street number, and some was sent to Mum and to her other friends, relatives, and employees; there was a complete set, with spares, for the Hotel, just a few months after the offer ended, though she had to write to Kelloggs and get an extension for the validity of coupons to make sure there were spares 'especially of teaspoons, which have a habit of disappearing'. (Certainly, when a part-time (Saturdays only) cashier at J. Lyons & Co's teashop, we had to order 50 teaspoons a month to keep pace with the thieving public who half-inched these ever-getting-thinner-and-cheaper-steel items from their saucers!)

Mum continued as breakfast cook into the early 1960s, nearly always serving up fried eggs, bacon, fried bread... there was little choice at the Leigham Court Hotel in those days.

STREATHAM SOCIETY REPORTS

ENVIRONMENTAL & PLANNING MATTERS

Brian Bloice

Committee Report

Items discussed at recent committee meetings include:

- Library Future - Society has been consulted by Lambeth Council on terms of reference for appraisal on its future.
- Loss of through Thameslink train service - a cross party meeting, organized by Jeremy Clyne, was held in the Hide-a-way jazz club. It was made clear to government officials present that the consensus of opinion in Streatham was opposed to the loss of this through service to St Pancras and beyond.
- Artisans' street market proposed for Streatham Green/Babington Road alongside Manor Arms. No details yet of availability of stalls for community groups.
- High Road Travelodge hotel - site still unclear. ABC cinema foyer – premises still vacant.
- Society has sent a letter of support for new grant application for Rookery Community Garden.
- New survey form received from Streatham Action.
- Arrangements for power point equipment for meetings still need firming up.
- Rookery centenary working party meetings attended. Horticultural trail for Rookery being written and designed by students from Capel Manor College with help from Streatham Society.
- Society has agreed to support the purchase of a new cedar tree in Rookery.
- World War II Anderson air raid shelter discovered on Network Rail land intended to be used for community allotments.
- A second plaque to Birdie Bowers to be unveiled on the site of his birthplace in Pathfield Road on November 12th at 12 noon (*all welcome*). Arrangements with Lambeth Living in hand by John Brown.
- Russell's Footpath - many complaints on the appalling condition. Although it was suggested a survey be carried out to assess usage, this was thought unnecessary as this public footpath must be maintained by the Council.
- Art Deco plaques - Tesco's developer asking if they were plain bronze or painted when originally put in position. General feeling is that they should remain unpainted if possible.

Web correspondence

The Society email correspondence has been monitored for a year. In the last year 2,930 in-coming mails were received and 618 mails sent on behalf of the Society

- averaging 244 incoming and 52 sent per month. Monthly mails will no longer be recorded. The email correspondence included house and family history enquiries book orders, local history enquiries and notice of meetings of bodies such as Friends of Streatham Green, Friends of Streatham Common, Rookery Community Garden and Streatham Action.

PLANNING MATTERS

Planning Applications

NEW - Nil. RESOLVED - Nil

CONSULTATION & OTHER - Major development for Thrale Almshouses. Some concern of residents. Society has requested a consultation with trustees, but no answer received.

Outstanding items

- Local Listing of Society's new selection. These items have now all been photographed ready for submission.
- Need to update charity commissioners' listing of Society trustees.
- Can the Society request putting areas and buildings on the 'At Risk' register, held by English Heritage? This is not clear and advice is being sought from English Heritage.

Membership of other organizations

The Society is a member or is affiliated to the organizations listed below:

- * Lambeth Voluntary Action Council
- * London Forum of Amenity Societies
- * Lambeth Local History Forum
- * Lambeth Civic Forum
- * Streatham Action
- * Wandsworth Heritage Panel

Committee members also attend or support Friends Groups; viz: Common, Library and Green

EVENTS REPORTS

J H/BJB

Meetings

COLLECTABLES AND ANTIQUES

As ever, we were amazed at the scope of the items bought along, on August 6th, to this ever popular meeting. Members displayed and described their own contribution. These included a dolls house, a clock, unusual knives and swords and even a collection of commemorative neck ties for the Australia/Americas Cup. One member showed us a collection of books all with her name 'Jill' in the title. We were puzzled by a decorative mirror and enthralled by a number of souvenirs of royal coronations, including some souvenirs of Edward VIII, the king that never was.

DICKENS AND WEST NORWOOD CEMETERY

Paul Graham spoke to us, on September 3rd, on his research into the connections of Charles Dickens with West Norwood Cemetery. He spoke on some of the people of Dickensian interest buried in the cemetery. He made it clear that his list that follows may not be exhaustive. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) attended three funerals at Norwood: those of Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd (1854); Douglas Jerrold (1857); and George Cattermole (1868). Of the 39 other individuals identified and described in a booklet Paul has published, the extent of the Dickens connection varies from the tenuous to the significant.

The connections with the first six of Dickens' novels are particularly interesting. *Pickwick* was dedicated to Talfourd and extra illustrations for it were produced by Forrester. *Oliver Twist* was first published by Bentley, who has also been identified as the original of Pecksniff in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. *Nicholas Nickleby* contains an interpolated story unwittingly inspired by Britton. Both *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge* were illustrated by Cattermole. If there is a 'book of the cemetery' however, it is undoubtedly *David Copperfield* as three of those buried at Norwood - Gurney, Talfourd, and Tidd - have *Copperfield* connections.

The *Copperfield* connection with Norwood Cemetery is appropriate, as it is the most autobiographical of Dickens' works and Norwood features prominently in it. Mr. Spewlow lived at Norwood. He invited David down to spend the weekend and, "When the day arrived, my very carpet-bag was an object of veneration to the stipendiary clerks, to whom the house at Norwood was a sacred mystery". It was at Norwood that David met Dora.

Paul Graham's *The Dickens Connection* is available from the Friends of West Norwood Cemetery or by post from Jill Dudman 119 Broxholm Road, London SE27 0BJ (£4 incl. p&p). (See also article by John Brown p.10)

THE WORK OF CONTACT THE ELDERLY

At a most interesting meeting on September 17th, Cliff Rich and Nick Attwood told us of 'Contact the Elderly', a national charity that helps to change the lives of lonely older people. Their volunteers run Sunday afternoon tea parties - a simple but very effective idea. So many people over 75 spend their days alone - isolated from friends and family, or too frail to leave home without a bit of help. The tea parties are a lifeline of friendship, bringing older people and volunteers together for an afternoon of stories, laughter and conversation.

One Sunday afternoon a month volunteers use their car to take older members to and from a volunteer host's home for tea, cake and companionship. Hosts take it in turn to welcome the small group into their home for a few hours. At the end of the afternoon everyone goes home happy.

Contact the Elderly is always looking for friendly people to help. Volunteers are needed to: use their car to take one or two members with them to a tea party every month; to host a tea party by welcoming a small group into their home once a year (easy access and a downstairs toilet are essential); or to coordinate a group by joining in and ensuring the group runs smoothly.

Brenda Hargreaves, who organizes our Social & Programming sub-committee, speaks highly of this group. She is unable to leave her flat without help and very much enjoys the tea parties. Like many over-75s, Brenda may have mobility problems, but her mind is alert and the parties provide conversation rather than the passive entertainment so often provided for elderly people.

Should you wish to volunteer, contact the group on 020 7240 0630 or info@contact-the-elderly.org.uk

A LOOK AT SAMUEL PEPYS

GG

Mr Samuel Pepys, the Diarist, was warmly received at our local history meeting on October 1st, when Society member, Graham Gower, gave an informative talk on Pepys's life and achievements. The talk, which was profusely illustrated, looked at the early editions of his Diary, which had been incorrectly transcribed and censored, with the first complete and accurate translation being published in the 1970s. The talk also looked at Pepys's journalistic observations of the Great Plague and Fire of London, and of his visits to the theatre, plus his love of books, music, his family affairs and life in general. Also included in this lively talk was Pepys's achievements as a naval administrator and his success in becoming the First Secretary of State for the Navy and establishing the foundations of the Royal Navy. Graham continued with Pepys's political career and later life, concluding with his retirement to Clapham, where he died in 1703. Samuel Pepys was buried next to his wife Elizabeth in St. Olave's Church, Hart Street, in the City of London.

Other Events

WHAT HAS LOCAL GOVERNMENT EVER DONE FOR US?

Local councils and their legacy

Lambeth Archives Open Day, on Saturday September 29th, was enjoyable, although perhaps not as well attended as hoped. Perhaps the subject did not appeal but, in fact, the speakers, talks and displays were most interesting; in our opinion, more so than in some other years. Topics included public spaces, sewers and waste disposal, civic architecture, libraries, health, council housing and Lambeth Council and community action since the 1970s. Films from the archives were shown. Excellent refreshments were on sale in the Michael Church, opposite.

TOURS OF HENRY TATE GARDENS

On Sunday October 7th, The Streatham Society ran hour-long tours of the lovely gardens surrounding Park Hill, the impressive mansion inhabited by William Leaf, Sir Henry Tate and, latterly, St Michael's Convent. The house is now privately owned and the adjoining buildings have been either converted or replaced by sensitively designed dwellings. The historic gardens and grotto survive for the use of residents and are well-maintained. The Society has permission to conduct tours in May and October each year, usually on the first Sunday. Our visitors enjoyed the sunshine, were most appreciative and bought a number of our publications.

CHRISTMAS THEMES MEETING - Please note

Judy Harris

Because of its popularity and your generosity, our Christmas evening needs some re-organisation. Over recent years, attendance has at least doubled, from a manageable 30ish. Last year, other organisers and I failed to benefit from the festive spirit - the problem being too few pre-arranged helpers, too many people, far too much food - and too little to drink! After much thought, we make the following suggestions and requests:

- We need about 15 minutes to arrange the furniture; organisers will therefore arrive earlier, at 7pm, and we request members do not arrive before 7.20pm. Food and drink need to be unpacked from this time for the 8pm start.
- The tea/coffee team will serve tea and coffee as usual. The raffle and subscriptions payments will be in the back room - please don't overlook them!
- Members are again requested to bring drinks and/or finger food, but in smaller quantities - perhaps to cover a small plate (i.e. one pack of cakes, not three!). Sandwiches are very popular (Janis's have usually gone before most members see them) - but any surplus would be thrown out; so anyone willing to supply these, please check with Janis in advance. Silver foil platters are available for these - and for the always popular home baked/cooked items.
- No packets of biscuits or squash needing dilution, please, as these are usually not touched. When possible, bottles of wine should be screw-topped.
- Any unopened packets of food should be removed by donors before we give them to others. If anyone is able to donate any surplus to 'a worthy cause', please collect at the end of the evening.
- *Please* do not stand chatting in front of the food and raffle tables so that others cannot access them.
- Sorry about my bossy organisation but the 2-hour event, plus an hour's setting-up and clearing, for last year's c.60 members is not easy to organise.
- Finally, the usual team will provide the entertainment. Thank you all for your generosity, support and good will - your committee wish you a happy, peaceful Christmas and New Year.

SUBSCRIPTIONS 2013

JH

Subscriptions are now due (£10 single, £15 household, £180 life; cash or cheques payable to The Streatham Society), payable by post or at meetings. I shall send out final reminders with the February newsletter, but please pay before this, if possible, as it is much less time-consuming for me. To continue to receive the newsletter uninterrupted, please pay by March 31st.

I'm sorry, but I cannot accept on-line or standing order payments as it would involve too much extra work. If it helps, I can accept payment in advance for up to five years or Life Membership at £180. As ever, donations are always welcome; these mainly offset the meetings' venue hire and extra expenses.

(Also see my article on running a local society on p.31!)

MISCELLANY

LOCAL ORGANISATIONS - INFORMATION WANTED

JH

The Streatham Society would like to publicise details of local (adult) organisations, such as those listed below. We are well aware that there are a number of social/interest groups in or near Streatham which would welcome new members. Since the virtual demise of adult education, there are many people, particularly those without work or family commitments, who would welcome such groups, especially those offering interesting events and skills. Please send details to the editor (see back page).

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Rookery Community Gardens

We hope to publish a longer article on this 'secret garden' site in the next issue. Website: projectdirt.com/group/streathamcommoncommunitygarden.

Brixton Windmill

Lambeth Council and the Friends of Windmill Gardens (FoWG) need help to open this unique building to the public on a regular basis. They need guides and stewards to be part of a team to help out at open days and special events. Guides need enthusiasm and a willingness to learn about the history of windmills and milling and to develop communication skills, if necessary. Stewards welcome visitors and ensure their safety. Other skills welcomed are baking, fundraising, gardening, teaching and first aid.

Brixton Windmill (built 1816) has been recently restored with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Friends are enthusiastic and efficient and are to be congratulated on the quality of their recent events - but to survive still more are needed. Comprehensive training is given; the Windmill is open from April to

October at weekends and holiday periods. Contact info@brixtonwindmill.org.uk or phone 07587 170029 or write to 24 Prague Place London SW2 5ED

Action on Elder Abuse

AEA Groups, made up mainly of older volunteers, raise awareness of elder abuse in their local community, act as buddies for victims, offer peer support, visit care homes, nursing homes and hospitals and provide a source of experience for consultation by other organisations. The Lambeth Group meets once a month at the Darby & Joan Club (Woodlawns) 16 Leigham Court Road. Contact Gloria Eveleigh (Project co-ordinator) on 07930 411 419.

VALE ARTISTS

JH

Vale Artists was formed in 1973 by and for artists living in Streatham. They meet every third Wednesday of the month at Immanuel Church, Streatham High Road, opposite the common.

A variety of art activities are arranged during the year including workshops such as pen & ink, watercolours, collage and charcoal. (Not oils, because they take so long to dry.) In July a sketching morning/day is arranged locally for outdoor drawing. A lunch is held at a local pub/restaurant in December, while on the usual meeting date is a Christmas party with quizzes and games, which are fun and intellectually demanding. The AGM is held in January, with a Good As New/Bring and Buy sale and in February is a life-drawing class. In addition, for the past few years in March or April, workshops have been arranged on such topics as portraiture and landscape.

During the summer, six or seven open-air exhibitions are held at the Rookery, Streatham Common. These take place on Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays from 10 am to 5 pm. Each artist can exhibit up to ten paintings. There is a small hanging fee and a sales commission. Both fees are well below those charged at any other venue, so it is well worth you exhibiting your pictures here.

For details of membership, please contact John Quickenden, 82 Downton Avenue, Streatham SW2 3TS, phone 8674 3172.

THOUGHTS ON RUNNING A LOCAL SOCIETY TODAY

JH

The following is a recent summary of the tasks undertaken by the retiring membership secretary of a local society, requesting volunteer(s) to replace her:

Needs: a computer with internet access and a good printer; to be fully conversant with all aspects of MS Word and MS Excel, including mail merge, and able to maintain and update the website; type and correct electronic and hand-written letters, articles and documents and deliver to the newsletter editor; prepare and proof-read the final newsletter layout prior to sending to the printers.

Use mail merge and send out membership renewals and reminders by post and/or email. Record, analyse and balance incoming payments ready for banking by Treasurer. Keep membership list up-to-date. Write thank you letters for donations and welcome letters to new members. Prepare mail-merged labels and post quarterly newsletter. Answer telephone and email queries; receive and send a 'holding' reply to all incoming emails then forward or print out to committee members and send full email replies as needed. On website, update events, news, letters and appeals for help sections. Supply action reports at committee meetings. Estimated time given for these activities; up to 6 hours a week, plus up to 10 hours a month, plus a concentrated 15 - 20 hours per quarter.

Not surprisingly, I understand five people replaced this 'star', an honorarium is now paid to the secretary and a computer has been purchased. This perhaps illustrates why it is so difficult to attract volunteer help in some fields - and the above list does not include the demands of organizing events, health & safety issues, insurance etc. (But at least we no longer have to hand-address 400 envelopes six times a year!) The Streatham Society is fortunate in the number of volunteers who use (essential) home computers and do not claim (offered) expenses, preferring to donate their services; thank you all.

MEMORIES PROJECT

Barbara Wright

There must be lots of people with happy memories of the Rookery. The Friends of Streatham Common, in partnership with the Streatham Society, is looking for your memories - which we will collect for display at the centenary. Over the next year we will also be publishing them from time to time. So please sharpen your pencils and think back; write down your memories and either email them to friendsofstreathamcommon@gmail.com or give me a call (020 8764 8062).

THE STREATHAM SOCIETY NEWS

email from **Edmund Bird**

Congratulations on a cracking newsletter - I receive a good many amenity society news bulletins from all around London and the Streatham Society's newsletter really is top of the league in terms of the tremendous energy and wide range of really good articles. In an age where there is so much bad news and never ending public complaint about so many aspects of our nation, the newsletter's upbeat tone and very comprehensive and objective coverage of all aspects of the community is most welcome. Coupled with its highly effective promotion of all the positive developments and showcasing of past and forthcoming community events in Streatham, the publication is a real tonic and a tremendously important force for good.

Edmund is Heritage Advisor to the Greater London Authority and Mayor of London. On behalf of all our contributors, thank you, Edmund - just the sort of encouragement we appreciate, especially recognizing our positive outlook.

PUBLICATIONS

TWO NEW STREATHAM SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS:

NORWOOD GROVE & THE ROOKERY, STREATHAM COMMON £5

The History of Two Georgian Estates in South London

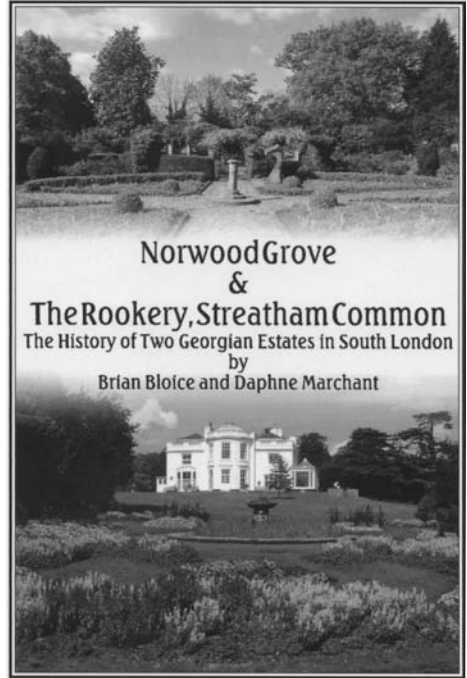
by Brian Bloice and Daphne Marchant *A4, profusely illustrated, colour cover*

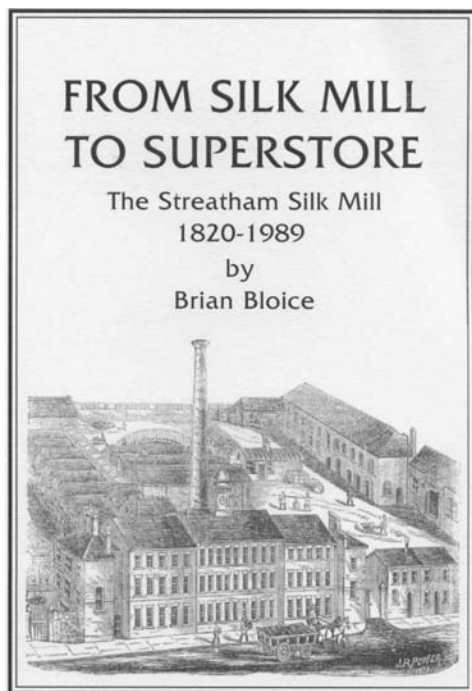
This excellent book (32 pages) provides a rich historical account of the two estates of its title and of the local benefactor who helped bring them into public use. Daphne Marchant starts with two pages on the benefactor, Stenton Covington, who roused local residents and raised sufficient money to ensure that the areas that are now known as the Rookery and Norwood Grove did not fall into the hands of developers. She then provides descriptions and a history of the gardens and the house - commonly known as the White House - in Norwood Grove, followed by an account of its residents over the years. Finally she returns to detail how the gardens were saved for public use and opened by the late Duke of Windsor in 1926.

Brian Bloice then takes over with a history of the Rookery house and gardens. He tells how the original house that used to be on the site was built to accommodate the increasing number of people who visited the area in the late 17th century to drink Streatham's mineral water drawn from local wells. The Well House was rebuilt and became a private residence once the wells closed and was known as the Rookery. A good deal of detail about the various owners over the years is provided, culminating in an account of how the house was demolished and the site brought into council ownership and opened to the public in 1913.

The well written and highly informative text is copiously illustrated with early maps, paintings and photographs of the more illustrious owners of both houses and a large collection of early photographs of both sites. *Peter Newmark*

Available from the Streatham Society, (see back cover) £6.20 including p&p.





Since the opening, in 1989, of the Sainsbury's superstore at Streatham Common, customers have had the opportunity to visit one of London's oldest and most important industrial buildings. The coffee shop for the customers and the administrative block for the superstore are housed in a restored Georgian silk mill, which is situated off Streatham High Road, to the rear of the Pied Bull public house.

The mill was built in 1820 by the Wilson family of Streatham. After 18 years as London's first silk factory and the place where the French Jacquard loom was introduced for the first time into Britain, it became an India rubber factory until it closed in 1986. During this period of 166 years, the building has only had three occupants and two owners

and, like the superstore, has always contained a predominantly local workforce.

This second edition (2012) of the site's history includes new information, recently discovered, and names the Frenchman who probably helped the owners to construct the innovative loom used in the mill.

Through the principal efforts of the Greater London Industrial Archaeology Society (GLIAS), together with the Streatham Society and other interested bodies, and supported by local public opinion, representation was made for the preservation of the silk mill. On the 9th May 1986, the former silk-mill was added to the statutory list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest, Grade II, for the London Borough of Lambeth, compiled by the Department of the Environment. This decision was subsequently upheld at a Public Inquiry before Her Majesty's Inspector in March 1987, at which the Streatham Society gave evidence, amongst many others.

Between 1987 and 1989, a caring restoration and conversion into an administrative and service block, associated with the new superstore, was carried out by D. Gibson and Associates, architects, on behalf of J. Sainsbury and Company.

Available from the Streatham Society, (see back cover) ££2.50 including p&p.

BRIAN'S PICTURE QUIZ - Do you know your Streatham?



The last picture quiz (*above*) was Hambly Houses, 412-416 Streatham High Road, built in 1877 as one detached and two semi-detached houses. The client was P.B Cow and the architects Ernest George & Harold Ainsworth Peto. Now divided into flats above shops occupied by Potter Perrin, Bathrooms & Kitchens.

Where is our new picture (*right*)? An easy one for many of you - but a surprise for those who are unfamiliar with Streatham's history.



MORE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

November Tuesday 20th 7.30pm
Concert Süssmayr: Quintet in C for guitar, oboe abd string trio; Paul Cott: Oboe Quartet; Mozart: Oboe Quartet in F, K.370 *Berkeley Ensemble* Free
St Peter's Church, Leigham Court Rd.

November Wednesday 28th 8pm
Talk Blooming Britain
Lambeth Horticultural Society Free
St Luke's Church, Knight's Hill, West Norwood

December Tuesday 4th 7.30pm
Concert Bach: Christmas Oratorio pts 1 & 2. *Berkeley Ensemble & Choir of St Peter's.* £10
St Peter's Church, as above

December Sunday 9th 11am-3pm
Winter Fair *Friends of Brockwell Park*
Brockwell Hall, Brockwell Park

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**The aim of the Streatham Society is to maintain and improve
the quality of life for all who live and work in Streatham**

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