STREATHAM SOCIETY NEWS

Published quarterly **No. 258 Autumn 2024**

Lambeth Local History Fair hosted by the Streatham Society
Shea Richardson, Chair, and Deputy Mayor Cllr Adrian Garden at the Society's book stall *(See p.32, photo Freda Graham)*

2025 SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE ON JANUARY 1st
See p.35

STREATHAM SOCIETY MEETINGS

MEETINGS

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in St Leonard's Church, Streatham High Rd/Tooting Bec Gardens.
Booking is not required. Refreshments are available.
Visitors are welcome and are requested to donate £1 towards expenses.
Check our website for details and any changes or additions.
Our finalised meetings' programme is emailed to members and advertised on our website, Facebook and social media.
Several talks are recorded for YouTube for later viewing.

3 Dec **Members' Christmas Party**

2025

7 Jan **Music and the Crystal Palace** by Phil Emery

4 Feb **The Artists of the Artists Rifles** by Patrick Baty

4 Mar **Christina Broom, First Female Press Photographer** by Alexis Haslam *(Exact title tbc)*

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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 ROUND AND ABOUT

PLANNING MATTERS

STREATHAM'S NEW ART DECO PENTHOUSE FLAT

Streatham's Art Deco buildings seem to be all the rage now – walking tours on this topic are becoming almost as popular as Jack the Ripper walks in east London.

But look out for the new penthouse flat at Leigham Hall Parade on Streatham High Road. Eagle-eyed developers have seen the potential to build a studio flat on top of one of the six-storey blocks.

The planned Penthouse Flat

A roof top building has been used for many years as a store previously termed the "wardens office" but now lying vacant. Unfortunately, it was never served by a lift meaning quite a hike walking up six storeys carrying your shopping. So, the plans before Lambeth Council propose to build a connecting covered brick lobby from the new flat to the staircase lobby to the south which thankfully does have a lift. The current store has two windows and high timber framed ceilings,

and the intention is to create two new windows to enjoy the views across Streatham and Tooting Bec Common. The overall floor area is 37 square metres (just under 400 square feet) with developers claiming, "it's more than adequate for a studio flat". They boldly state the proposed development provides a "rational, sensible and appropriate addition to the host building".

The push to build new homes is leading to all sorts of ingenious solutions for squeezing in more buildings. Elsewhere in London we've seen clever solutions such as the very slim house (squeezed into 2.3metre-wide gap between two existing buildings); converted small workshops into bijou studio flats and of course river boats on the Thames. In Streatham we are also seeing more basement properties being built even though traditionally the area didn't have many basements. The challenge for Lambeth planners as always is to try and get more homes ("optimising density" is probably the screen saver on Lambeth planners' laptops), but also ensure standards.

Developers make great claims how their plans meet the requisite standards. Last year Planners refused permission for a basement flat under the Vape shop on the corner of Woodbourne Avenue and Streatham High Road due to lack of daylight and failing to demonstrate that the proposed flat would provide a 2.5m floor to ceiling height for over 75% of the floorspace. As such the proposal would provide "poor quality" accommodation and fail to comply with policies. The risk of pushing for more housing is an era of poor-quality accommodation without vigilant planners.

Back to Manor Court – in 1938 it was advertised as the most economical lowest rented luxury flats in Streatham. Flats included central heating, constant hot water, uniformed staff, separate tradesmen entrances, gardens, as well as a residential club with swimming pool, bowling green and a pavilion for dancing etc. A three-bed flat cost you over £110 to rent per annum back then working at today's prices at just under £10,000. Today roughly the same type of flat would set you back nearly £30,000 rent per annum.

At the time of writing planners are considering the penthouse flat proposal. If approved, then answers on a postcard please as to how much it is likely to be sold for.

THE COSTS OF DEMOLISHING HOMES IN STREATHAM

49 Abbotswood Road is receiving the wrecker's ball and by the time this is published the foundations will be dug for 17 new units. Number 124 Sunnyhill Road is also likely to be bulldozed but waiting on planners' decision.

Both properties were or are architecturally interesting well-built houses and will be sorely missed by neighbours. The benefits are that two individual properties housing just eight people now morph into 21 housing units potentially together housing 77 people. Of course, if demolishing one property to build bigger units was replicated in every street in Streatham, then it would make quite a dent in Lambeth's housing growth target. Infill development comes to the rescue.

49 Abbotswood Road awaiting demolition

Clearly building more though demolishing buildings has always been part of Streatham's development. But now with climate change we have vastly different expectations and naturally there are concerns about jumping to demolish buildings with the high climate cost due to the large amount of embodied carbon released. Environmental critics argue we should move to refurbishing and refitting buildings. Studies show that demolishing a 1,500 square metre home and replacing it with a new 3,000 square feet home releases about 126 metric tons of CO2 emissions. Supporters claim building energy efficient homes are better though there is an exceedingly long payback period of between 10-80 years. It's expected that 95 per cent of materials from a demolished building should be reused though this is not monitored. Overall, the UK's construction industry contributes to just over 10 per cent of all UK carbon emissions.

In 2019, Lambeth was the first London authority to officially declare a "climate emergency", making an ambitious pledge to reach net zero in its operations by 2030. But from freedom of information requests to Lambeth Council it appears the council doesn't monitor demolition effects, neither the number of buildings demolished, nor the impact on carbon emissions. Moreover, CO2 emissions arising from demolition don't count in planning decisions as it isn't a requirement in planning policies. Many argue there needs to be a whole carbon life assessment on developments.

If we are genuinely concerned about climate change, how can we mitigate the effects of demolishing just two houses in Streatham. It's estimated that we

A 'Forest' of Lime Bikes

would need to plant 5,788 trees in one year to absorb 126 metric tons of CO2 – the demolition of a large house. Lambeth's commitment is to plant 5,000 new trees across the borough over the next four years as part of mitigating climate change. But demolishing Numbers 49 Abbotswood Road and 124 Sunnyhill Road would require over ten thousand trees being planted making Streatham extremely wooded. Another eco solution would be to convert car users to using Lime e-bikes, removing cars from the roads, so reducing carbon emissions. A quick of the back of an envelope calculation means over 500 Streatham residents would have to switch from their cars to e-bikes to save the 552 metric tons of CO2 from the decision to demolish both these houses. Perish the thought of extra Lime bikes on pavements.

QUICK PLANNING ROUNDUP

The much loved and missed Pratts & Payne pub on Streatham High Road has plans to be redeveloped as flats and possibly a bar on the ground floor. Very sensibly the developers did reach out to residents to ask for their views – something that other developers should take note of and follow.

The Horse & Groom pub on Streatham High Road is now reborn as "Stanleys", named after the owner's son. It's a great credit to the owners that we have retained a pub, though some naysayers have questioned the name change and the lack of any historical connection to Streatham. Of course, there's no reason why those who laud local history shouldn't in their own minds celebrate it as commemorating Stanley Lupino, the 1930s actor and singer, who lived in Leigham

Stanley's Pub now officially open
(Photo stanleysofstreatham)
For clarification. Stanley's pub is not named after the famous 1930s Streatham singer and dancer Stanley Lupino (right)

Court Road and performed just along the road at Streatham Hill Theatre. Others no doubt will just keep referring to it as the Horse & Groom. There are still plans to create a hotel above it as pubs no longer have lived in manager's accommodation.

The sorry looking old Police Station on Streatham High Road vacant since 2015 has exciting plans for a 57-bed boutique hotel with an ancillary café and a new entrance on Shrubbery Road. Previous applications have been for converting the building to flats. There are few details about the proposed hotel and whether it will be Streatham's first Hotel Du Vin. Meanwhile down the road we're still patiently waiting for the arrival Travel Lodge on the site of the Hideaway which received planning permission.

Lambeth's Local Plan as well as the London Plan does support more visitor accommodation where they help town centres and don't affect amenity. In that sense Streatham is ill-served by hotels, and one assumes there's a business need for such accommodation. Generally, it's received some support though one objector stating it should be knocked down and turned into a car park. Lambeth Planners will judge soon.

LAMBETH'S PARKS AND OPEN SPACES HERITAGE STRATEGY

Lambeth Council are producing a 'Lambeth Parks and Open Spaces Heritage Strategy' which aims to try and set the scene for what heritage assets we have within Lambeth's other public open spaces, and what actions we need to be taking to help conserve, restore and promote it through better local dissemination.

St Leonard's Churchyard

This includes any heritage – green spaces, buildings in open spaces as well as churchyards and the strategy maps where all these assets are and their location. In Streatham. This includes Streatham Common, the Rookery, Unigate Woods, the Dyce water Fountain on Streatham Green (currently being "refurbished"), the War Memorial and graves in St Leonard's Churchyard. The aim is to assess risks to the condition of these "assets" and working with partners seek to secure their future and ensure they are well maintained. The Streatham Society repeatedly raises issues with Lambeth Council on the state of the Streatham War Memorial and the Dyce Fountain. St Leonard's Church graveyard is a valuable heritage and biodiversity asset to Streatham but needs attention.

It's a very laudable and much needed strategy, though inevitably as heritage costs money it all depends on resources and it's noteworthy the report doesn't come with an indicative budget nor a breakdown to support this whole approach. It's worth considering alternative sources of funding; in particular sponsorship and crowdfunding. Similar planning decisions need to reflect the strategy, yet this doesn't always happen. The recent decision on Woodgate Towers and its height and impact on views from Streatham Common is a great example of where natural heritage considerations in strategic views were thrown out of the window by a disingenuous policy argument that dismissed any harms from a whacking great obtrusive large tower.

Tim Whitaker, Trustee Streatham Society

EVENTS - August - October

There were too many to mention here, all within Streatham, including **Jazz in the Rookery** on Sunday 4th August *(below)*.

Then came September's packed **Lambeth Heritage Festival** month

- and the **Rookery Community Garden's Apple Day** on Sunday 15th .

Finally on October 11-20 the annual **Streatham Festival** sponsors included the Streatham Society.

The Festival banner, pictured here on St Leonard's railings, was one of several around the area *(photo MB)*.

The well-established Streatham Strut on Saturday 12th trailing live music, entertainment and food treats being particularly popular. The Art Trail at various venues was a delight.

It was held after our copy date so photos should appear in our next issue.

JH

LOCAL HISTORY MATTERS

THINGS THAT WENT BUMP IN THE NIGHT

(Photo Bettmann/Getty Images)

One of the most enthusiastically received tales I told on my recent Grave Encounters tour of St Leonard's churchyard was that of Streatham's body snatchers. With Halloween creeping up through the autumn chill, I decided to find out why body snatching was such a lucrative opportunity.

Like most graveyards of the early 19th century St Leonard's had problems with keeping its dead well and truly buried. The trade in fresh corpses was fast and furious, and there were rich rewards to be had for supplying surgeons engaged in anatomical research. London, along with Edinburgh, was home to most of the medical schools.

The body of anyone executed for a crime could be legally purchased for anatomical study. However even in the eighteenth century when executions were relatively common there was more demand than supply. The 'Bloody Code' was the unofficial name for a whole raft of offences for which you could pay with your life. Many of these crimes would be regarded as relatively trivial today. For example, there's no doubt that vandalising a fishpond is antisocial, but to be hung for it seems harsh.

By the early 1800's, capital crimes had been greatly reduced due to law reform. This resulted in a huge shortage of subject matter for the anatomists, so the procurement of bodies became very lucrative. If caught stealing a body, you were unlikely to pay a very heavy price unless you stole some personal property as well. The worst that could happen would be a long holiday in Australia; a fine or short sentence at the monarch's pleasure was much more likely. Cadavers were so difficult to come by that a receiving surgeon would rarely ask difficult questions and it is known that some eminent surgeons had body snatchers working for them.

In February 1794 a party of three body snatchers was disturbed at Paradise Row burial ground in Lambeth High Street (now Paradise Gardens). They escaped, but there was a near riot afterwards when distressed relatives converged on the graveyard to excavate their dead relations and check they were still safely in their coffins. Sadly some were not - several empty coffins were discovered.

During the following investigation it came to light that a large, well organised gang of men was targeting at least thirty burial grounds. They were supplying eight surgeons of 'public repute'. There was a set menu of prices for bodies, each adult was worth 'two guineas and a crown' and anyone who was underage and therefore not fully grown was worth six shillings for the first foot (of length!) and nine shillings for each further inch. It was revealed that some bodies were being made into skeletons which could end up in destinations as far removed from Lambeth as the West Indies. Clearly not the eternal rest intended when you said your fond farewells to Auntie Gertie.

For many body snatchers, the money made through their nefarious nocturnal activities far outweighed the risk. Although not a pleasant activity a couple of nights grave robbing could be deemed preferable to much lower proceeds from weeks of labour on the roads or in a factory.

Streatham's encounter with body snatchers occurred in St Leonard's churchyard in February 1814. The attempted theft took place at the Davies family grave on the south side of the church. According to a contemporary newspaper report, intelligence reached the nearby White Lion pub that the graveyard was being robbed. A man called Watts was apprehended as he abandoned his shovel and tried to flee. Two others, Butler and Lane, who were in league with Watts were caught later. All three were charged with intent to steal dead bodies. They each served three months at His Majesty's pleasure.

One of the damning pieces of evidence presented was that they had all been together the day before when Butler approached the church sexton to enquire about a fresh grave in the churchyard. While there is no suggestion of the sexton being involved on this occasion, it was common for sextons and gravediggers to be in cahoots with body snatchers. They had all the inside info and many surely welcomed a little bonus to top up their wages.

It was usual at the time for watchmen to be paid to guard the graveyard at night for six weeks after a burial. By this time a corpse would have become less attractive, even though many body snatchers only operated in the colder months. Church accounts at St Leonard's show that much money was spent on watchmen's wages, and for supplies of bread and beer to sustain them. Of course, many watchmen had their price, and it wasn't unknown for the more unscrupulous to turn a blind eye.

In 1831 tall railings were installed around the graveyard to deter theft and these stood until 1942. They were cut down and along with railings from around some individual graves sold to help the war effort.

The Anatomy Act was passed in 1832 which allowed bodies of the poor and destitute to be used as anatomy subjects. This helped to reduce the market for bodysnatching. But there was a never-ending market for fresh bodies, and until embalming was in regular use by the 1880's decay was the body snatcher's friend.

There is more to tell of hair being sold for wigs, teeth used to make dentures, and of course the story of Burke and Hare who cut out the middlemen and murdered to order. But perhaps that's enough for this Halloween.

Trudy Kuhn

GEORGE PRATT (1827 to 1890)

If you've ever looked up as you walk along Streatham High Road you might have noticed a small plaque that says G.P. & F.P. above Regen's gym. This plaque is a reference to the Pratt family, headed up by George Pratt, who was significant in the development of the Streatham retail scene in the 19th century. You might even remember Pratt's department store as part of the John Lewis Group.

So where did it all begin…. According to the 1871 Census, it is recorded that George Pratt was born in East Meon a small village in Hampshire, and records show he was baptised in the Parish Church on the 8 July 1827. He was one of four children born to Jane and Joseph, recorded as a Servant.

Before the 1900s, there was no national system of education, so very few children received any schooling; where schools existed it was either because of local benefactors or people who saw it as a means of making a living. So it is not known if George received any formal education or schooling, but in 1840 he made his way to London at the age of 13 and started a five-year apprenticeship at the Draper's shop of William Reynolds, at 5 Old Bedford Row, Streatham.

Old Bedford Row is now part of Streatham High Road and would be situated between Gleneldon and Stanthorpe Roads. It was the main shopping centre for Streatham and this row of mainly 17th and 18th century properties faced the

road opposite Streatham Green, and it was here that Reynolds ran his linen draper's shop.

By the 1840's apprenticeships were nearly always a private arrangement with relatives or a personal recommendation. In theory an apprentice did not need to be paid a wage, as the training provided was in return for labour, and like domestic servants, shop workers often lived on the premises. However, by this time, regular salaries/wages, at least in the last two or three years of the apprentice, became more widespread. But with the growth of the population at the end of the 18th century and the greater demand for goods, opportunities for work became more widely available and the use of formal apprenticeships, except in some skilled trades, ended.

How did George get from a sleepy village in Hampshire to an apprenticeship in London? This might be explained by the fact that his uncle, Henry Pratt, moved to Streatham in 1835 and lived at 1 Bedford Terrace and later at Pendennis Road Streatham, and no doubt both he and his wife were frequent visitors to the Reynolds draper's shop.

By the time George arrived in Streatham, the population was around 6,000 and it was still very much countryside, with grand houses for wealthy businessmen away from the squalor of London.

In 1841 the census records George, age 14, as a draper, living (and working) at 5 Bedford Row in Streatham. However, ten years later the 1851 census records George still living and working at 5 Bedford Row, but the sign has changed to read "G Pratt, Linen Draper" with George having bought the business from Reynolds when he retired.

In 1855 George married Mary (nee Thorpe) in the Parish Church of St Leonard, Streatham, on 9 August. Mary was the only child of John and Caroline Thorpe of 10 Bulstrode Street, London. In 1838 age 6, she was sent to live with relatives in Streatham, having lost both her parents. Before she married, she was the governess to the daughters of Jane Hill, wife of James Hill a Tobacco Manufacturer of the "Rookery" Streatham. A year later in 1856, George and Mary's first child, a daughter Marianne, was born on 6 July. This was followed by Henry on 15 February 1858 and Charles on 29 June 1859. All the children were baptised in St Leonard's Church, Streatham.

In 1861 at auction, George acquires his first plot of land on Streatham High Road, that would be the site of "Eldon House". It is claimed that while looking through the deeds of the site, George saw that the land had once been owned by the late Lord Eldon, hence the name of the new building, (and later the naming of Gleneldon Road). The name "Eldon House", would remain right up until the stores closure in 1990.

More children followed with Herbert born 6 October 1863, Ellen born 17 February 1865 and Percy born 30 July 1866.

With the coming of the railway and the building of Streatham Hill station in 1856, the population expanded from 6,000 in 1840 to over 20,000 by 1881. This, and the proximity to London meant that gentrification followed - a fashionable rural location for wealthy merchants and the aspiring middle classes.

In 1867 George (Senior) built the first section of a new store at 210 Streatham High Road (Eldon House). The river Wandle ran under the store, marked by two pumps positioned in the basement. Also, that year sees the arrival of another daughter Alice Sarah born on 9 July, who sadly died 11 months later on 12 June 1869. A year later in 1870 a son Eldon is born on 15 April.

In the late 1870's Streatham's new shopping centre began to take shape, when between Streatham station and St Leonard's Church was redeveloped. George continues to buy or rent further sections of the High Road to expand his retail empire, extending Eldon House from 210 to 224 Streatham High Road and becoming the largest shop in Streatham.

The family continued to grow with Ethel Agnes born on 17 November 1872 and Stanley on 26 October 1874.

An advert appeared in the *South London Press* on 21 June 1879 announcing the sale by auction by the Solicitors Messrs Winter and Co of Bedford Row on behalf of the Trustees of the late Robert Russell, of the Bedford Park Estate, to take place on 30 July. The property extended from the top of the hill opposite St Leonard's Church to Streatham Station, comprising approx. 60 acres, and included Bedford old house, Bedford House, Bedford Terrace, Bedford Row, and the old shops where much of the trade of Streatham village was done. In 1785 the Duke of Bedford had purchased 22 acres of land on which he created a park. This was not the Duke's main residence and he only resided there when he visited Streatham. The house had belonged to several owners since the Duke of Bedford.

Eldon House today (above) and the view from the early terrace towards Gleneldon Road and Eldon House at the St Leonard's Junction

George Pratt brought Bedford House and the extensive grounds and rented the house to Sir William Grantham MP for Croydon. The entrance to the house was moved to what is now Gleneldon Road, to allow shops to be built on the high street frontage. After Sir William moved out, George stripped much of the house and used it as a furniture depository. George developed the grounds and parkland of Bedford Park for housing, which became known as the Bedford Park Estate. Stanthorpe Road was laid out by George (Senior) and named after his 11th child, Stanley, and the maiden name of his wife Mary - Thorpe. This development made George one of the largest property owners in Streatham.

Northendene, Streatham Common North

George Pratt's Tomb in St Leonard's Churchyard

In 1885 George (Senior) now in his 50's decided to divide up his business. Under the management of sons, Charles and Henry, they became "Pratt Brothers" and took over the running of the drapery side of the business at Eldon House.

Around 1889 George purchased "Northendene" on Streatham Common Northside, a large Victorian house. Local historians have suggested that the building dates from 1873 and was extended in 1878. Mary continued to live there until her death in 1915. The house is still there today *(left)*.

Behind Eldon House, Pratt's furniture store became flats, recently rebuilt (below right). The entrance is in Gleneldon Road

Also in that year on 31 August, George (Junior) married Florence Dickenson and moved into his own new premises at 121 Streatham High Road having been given the men's tailoring side of the business from his father George (Senior). Known as Camden House, it was built on the front garden of Bedford House and it is believed that George (Senior) built and gave these premises to George (Junior) as a wedding present when he married Florence.

Today on the first floor can still be seen those initials G.P. and F.P. A second date plaque in the gable confirms the date AD.1889. This business was headed by George (Junior) into the 1950's when he was in his 90s. This was the last store owned by the Pratt family and in 1954, two years after George died in 1952, the shop was sold.

George senior, head of the family and the retail dynasty that shaped Streatham died on 14 March 1890 aged 63 at this home "Northendene" Streatham Common North. He is buried at St Leonard's Parish Church, Streatham.

Freda Graham

MEMORIES OF WARTIME STREATHAM

Reprinted from the Streatham Society's 1990s Reminiscences project.

The siren sounded the Alert at 11.05, after Mr Chamberlain's speech declaring war on Germany.

I lived with my parents in Riggindale Road, Mitcham Lane end, near Rydal Road on the railway side. My parents were at St Alban's Church, I was cooking the dinner. We had a maid at the time, and she went berserk dashing back and forth to the front gate. Everybody evidently came out of Church, as my parents came home.

After that, although we carried our gas masks everywhere for a week or two, nothing else happened in London for some time. I suppose there may have been an Alert or two, but I can't remember. Life seemed to carry on much as before for a while, but of course we all had to have blackout curtains of some sort and were soon knocked up by the Air Raid Wardens if you showed a chink of light.

Later on, we used to think that some people were deliberately showing lights and were spies or aides to the Germans, some may have been. Also, most of the young men were called up if they were not in reserved occupations, but those in the Territorials or Naval Reserve went before war started.

Things started to hot up during the summer of 1940. I remember sitting in Norwood Grove on the seats outside the house with my then boyfriend, later my husband, watching a 'dog fight' in the distant sky over Beckenham way I should think.

I worked in a bank at Knightsbridge, and when the raids really started, we all dashed to the basement of the bank and into the safe. We felt stifled and not too happy lest blast would shut the door of the safe, and, of course, no work was done. Customers were ushered out temporarily and the front door closed. This only happened once or twice and then we just stayed at our allotted desk and got on with it.

As the raids became more regular, I rushed to get home by 6pm as that was the usual time for the evening Alert. We sheltered in our cellar and slept in bunk beds there. We also had a primus stove to make a cup of tea, but we had to dash up to the kitchen to get water for a fill up and, of course, going upstairs to the toilet was quite nasty if there was a lot going on - we tried to wait for a quiet spell.

During that time I went through a fire bomb test at the Convent (St Andrew's I think); the nuns had gone away with the school. We crawled through a hut filled

with some sort of fire and smoke. At the Bank only the men did fire watching. I guess the local pubs did well out of that.

As we lived by the railway and had very heavy ammunition trains going by, we preferred them to pass when the planes were not overhead as we could not hear how things were going. Also mounted guns used to pass from the bridge (where they kept out of sight) to another railway line and fire at the planes en-route.

This was not very popular with us as we felt we could be a special target. When my boyfriend came round, we used to play bezique in the cellar.

One day we heard a line of bombs gradually getting nearer and one fell in the road outside our house. Luckily they were only small bombs and it went deep into the road before exploding.

My brother was at home at the time and my boyfriend visiting and as his car was in the road they went to the front door to see what had happened. The door was jammed. However, we were very lucky as his car had gone up in the air and fallen on top of the debris.

On one occasion the lady next door had a large piece of glass stuck in her jugular vein and had to be taken to hospital with it still in place, lest she could bleed to death.

At this time, people were always having to board up their windows until glass could be replaced, which was quite a long time usually. I can still hear the sound of glass being swept up each morning as I passed on the bus to go to work.

I didn't realise until the blackout that the stars gave such a good light, but of course we did not like the moon to be full as we nearly always had a raid because they could see much better.

The morning after a raid, my mother went to the top of the house and found a shell cap had come through the roof and landed in the middle of my brother's bed, luckily, he was away in the army at the time.

Most social activities ceased during that time and so life was rather humdrum for a young person. Food became difficult and people would be surprised at the things that were rationed and how little the amounts we were allowed each week per person.

It was always good when the boys came home, as well as being very happy to see them they brought ration cards for the time they were at home. Rations in the Forces were much better than for civilians of course. My mother was always able to keep us fit and well.

My boyfriend went in the Army 18th December 1940, after being reserved in his job before and having been in the Home Guard at Tooting and fire-watching at his job. In 1941 we became engaged in May and married at St. Alban's Church in November and spent our honeymoon at The Lion Hotel, Guildford, which was only five days as he had to return to the Unit.

One evening when returning from work there was a very bad fog, a real pea-souper, all the buses had stopped and so I had to return by tube to Tooting Bec Station and walk with many others in complete darkness and in the middle of the road up Tooting Bec Road and down the end of Riggindale home.

Later we had the flying bombs and there was no regularity in those, day or night. You heard this noise rather like a loud motor bike and then suddenly it would stop and you held your breath till the explosion and found you were still alive.

The nearest one to our home was a house called Walmer Court in Aldrington Road which was on the other side of the railway to us. My mother and I were in the kitchen near the scullery, and I remember suddenly finding myself by the kitchen door leading to the front of the house, blown by the blast I presumed. Many windows broken on that occasion.

After that we had rockets, and you would suddenly hear these deep thumps and somebody had got a direct hit.

Many of our friends were wounded or killed in the war. One of my brothers was blown up in his tank in Italy and most of his right leg removed, the other one was full of shrapnel.

Of course, there was great joy on VE Day when the Germans surrendered and a public holiday. It was rather an anti-climax for me as then my husband was sent to India, Singapore and Malaya to finish off the Japanese War.

He finally was demobbed in June 1946, and we had a second honeymoon at Newquay in Cornwall. He was lucky because he had a job to go back to. Of course those who had not had to go to war had risen in rank and so many men returning found that they had been left behind.

We had a top floor flat in my parents' house until 1949 when we moved to Streatham Vale, still on rations I believe.

Barbara Sly

TWO NEW MURALS HELP BRIGHTEN UP STREATHAM HILL

Motorists negotiating the Streatham High Road/ Streatham Hill junction with Leigham Court Road in September 2024 had their journey much brightened by the new mural that has recently been painted on the railway bridge which links Drewstead Road with Sternhold Avenue.

Drewstead Road Bridge

A bright and colourful scheme on the concrete walls of the bridge was organised by Global Street Art and London Mural Fes to the designs of Krudspen.

For many years previously a bright blue and black mural covered the walls of this railway bridge at the rear of Streatham Hill Station.

This was painted in 2008 to help counter graffiti which was a continual problem on the bridge.

The original mural was designed by Joe Schneider and featured a number of silhouettes of people of all ages walking, shopping and going about their business. One person could be seen feeding a flock of pigeons and children were shown riding a scooter and carrying a balloon in the shape of a dolphin.

The mural was based on a series of photographs of people in Streatham taken by the artist and celebrated the everyday life of Streatham High Road.

It was commissioned by Lambeth Council and was funded by a £10,000 grant from Transport for London.

When the mural was unveiled it drew criticism from some members of the public who thought it a 'sinister mural' showing images of hoodies and what looks like someone being mugged. The council assured people that the image apparently showing a mugging was in fact two children playing!

Sadly the mural itself was subject to graffiti but this was promptly removed by Lambeth Council. However, in recent years the council was unable to match the blue colour used in the original mural and the the work of art became a patchwork of over painting by the council and had lost much of its original integrity.

Be that as it may, for many years the painting was a much admired local landmark image in Streatham Hill.

The bridge was designed by British Railways and was built by the London County Council (LCC) and their successor organisation, the Greater London Council (GLC).

The original Drewstead Bridge Mural photographed in 2008

Details including the road sweeper - with the real sweeper in the distance

Construction began in July 1965 and pilings were sunk 40 feet to support the structure without it having to rest on the original concrete embankments erected when the station was built in 1856.

To allow for the different height of the embankments either side of the track the bridge was built with an incline of one in 43 and the Sternhold Avenue side of the edifice is four feet lower than in Drewstead Road.

At midnight on 18th February 1967 a 50 ton crane set up 96 prestressed concrete beams, each 46 feet long and weighing four tons, in 29 hours upon which the road surface of the bridge was laid.

The bridge is 52 feet wide with a road width of 30 feet and cost around £103,000 with 80 per cent of the cost coming from the Ministry of Transport and the balance from the GLC.

Work was completed on the bridge in July 1967 and it opened for use on Monday 31st July.

The new mural does much to brighten this otherwise nondescript part of Streatham Hill and it is to be hoped that it will remain free of graffiti and become a much appreciated piece of local street art that residents, visitors and motorists can enjoy well into the future.

Drewstead Road Bridge Mural showing Council repairs and a recent mural in Sternhold Avenue

Also worthy of praise is the new mural that adorns the flank wall of 29 Sternhold Avenue which replaces an earlier painting that used to adorn this site.

Whilst welcoming these two new murals in Streatham Hill it is sad to record that the 'Where The Wild Things Are' mural painted high on the upper western flank wall 29 Leigham Court Road is no more and the wall has now been painted completely white.

This mural featured two strange creatures dangling from the branches of trees and was based on an image featured in the famous children's book *Where the Wild Things Are* written and illustrated by Maurice Sendak.

The mural was painted in 2007 by two graffiti artists, 28 year old Mylon Domican and 31 year old 'Ed' of Brixton Hill.

The pair spent three days creating the artwork using spray paints and were delighted at the end result and the attention the work received when it was unveiled.

The image was prompted by their friend who occupied the flat behind the wall on which the mural is painted. The freeholder of the property, Fernando Mato, gave permission for the painting, the wall having previously been used for other

Leigham Court Road/Streatham Hill Mural

works of art including a picture of Wayne Rooney during the 2006 World Cup in Germany.

Speaking to the *Streatham Post* about the mural when it was completed Mylon said he and Ed wanted the painting to capture people's attention.

"It's a really eye-catching piece and we are pretty pleased with it.

"Banksy has done a lot for the image of graffiti and people now are realising it's art rather than vandalism. But there needs to be more places where people can do it legally", Mylon said.

Maurice Sendak was born in New York in 1928 and is a popular children's author and illustrator. *Where the Wild Things Are* was published in 1963, since when it has become a classic of American children's literature.

It tells the story of a young boy called Max who, after putting on his wolf's costume, causes mayhem in his home and is sent to bed without his supper. His bedroom is then transformed into a jungle and he ends up sailing off to an island inhabited by beasts called the 'Wild Things'. Max successfully overcomes the beasts to become their king and after playing with them returns home to find his supper waiting for him in his bedroom.

The mural depicted Max, wearing his crown, playing in the trees with one of the Wild Things.

John W Brown

DECORATING STREATHAM FOR CHRISTMAS

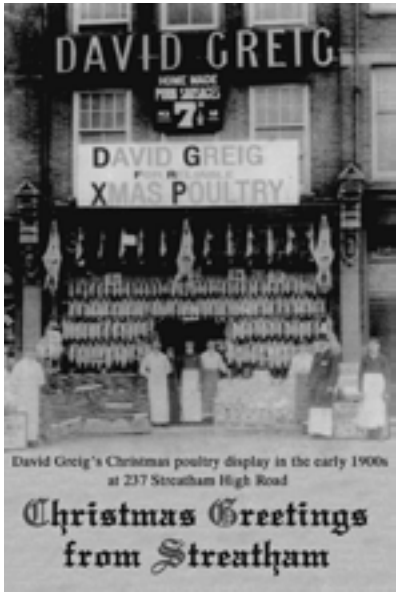
In late Victorian and Edwardian times Streatham was famous for its Christmas decorations. Before the First World War it was common practice for the local shop keepers and traders to decorate the High Road with bunting, flags and Christmas embellishments.

Streatham Station Railway Bridge
Christmas 1908

At Streatham Station a large banner reading 'Welcome to Streatham' was erected over the railway bridge so that visitors to the town arriving by train would quickly get into the festive spirit.

Over the High Road by St. Leonard's Church, two huge banners greeted visitors with the words 'Welcome to All' and 'Streatham for Value' to emphasise the yuletime bargains to be found in the local shops in the town.

Streatham High Road, Christmas 1908
Looking north from St Leonard's (left) junction



David Greig's Christmas Poultry Display on a card in 2009

Much time and effort was put into the display and individual shops would complement the exhibition by dressing their own windows in a similar festive manner. Local traders would vie with each other to see who could mount the best Yuletide window displays.

In 1910 E.K. King's confectionery shop at 83 Streatham High Road won considerable praise for its windows which contained 'a wonderful collection of the latest novelties suitable for the festive season, including an immense variety of bonbons, Xmas crackers, and quaint and curious freak boxes containing choice confectionery'.

All this hard work to decorate the High Road was done to encourage people to visit Streatham. Shoppers would come from far and near to view the decorations and to do their Christmas shopping in the local stores.

One of the best yuletide displays was to be found in the old Streatham Police Station. This was the centre of attraction in the weeks leading up to Christmas, with many people visiting the station just to admire the Christmas and New Year decorations erected there by the policemen.

Potter & Perrin's Christmas Display 2007

Contemporary accounts tell us that the interior of the station was tastefully adorned with evergreens, artistic designs and mottoes. Paper chains covered the ceiling and were looped around the walls, 'presenting altogether a charming appearance'.

Upon entering the old station an inscription in bold letters over the fire-place greeted you with the words 'Long life to our Superintendent'. Around the room were vari-

ous other mottoes, such as 'Success to the Streatham Police', 'Success to the W Division', 'Truthful and Honest' and 'Industrious and Sober' with a pretty sketch of Blarney Castle and some lines appropriate to the season.

The significance of Blarney Castle and the slogans 'Truthful and Honest', 'Industrious and Sober' and 'Long life to our Superintendent' are interesting ones but there is no denying that the local constabulary embraced the spirit of the festive season.

Today local traders continue to decorate their shop windows for Christmas. Some of the best displays in recent years have been at Westbury's chemist shop at 84-92 Streatham High Road, their windows being decorated with various festive scenes complete with moving snowmen, huge reindeer and dancing Santas.

Probably the most innovative display was at Mediworld, a medical supplies company operating from 436 Streatham High Road, opposite Streatham Common. Rather than feature a jolly Father Christmas they used items from their stock and adorn life-size skeletons in yuletide garb and tinsel!

Streatham Library 2018

Mediworld 2009

Westbury's 2008 & 2018

JWB

STREATHAM POSTCARDS from the Frances Partridge Collection

Thrale Road c.1912

This postcard shows the view along Thrale Road looking north from the junction with Penwortham Road. The estate agency run by Charles Tinniswood can be clearly seen on the northern side of the junction.

Thrale Road was developed on the western edge of the Streatham Park Estate which was the home of the Thrale family after whom the road is named

In the latter part of the 18th century Streatham Park became a fashionable centre for society and here Henry Thrale and his wife, Hester, entertained the leading luminaries of the day, including David Garrick, Edmund Burke, Oliver Goldsmith, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Samuel Johnson.

The estate was sold in 1863 and the fine old mansion was demolished and land given over for development.

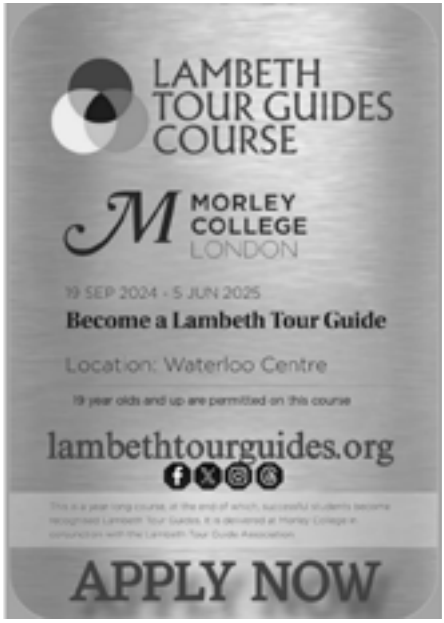
Thrale Road, formerly known as Green Lane, was laid out in 1888 and a number of large impressive Victorian houses were erected there.

JWB

LAMBETH TOUR GUIDES AND STREATHAM

Several Streatham Society members have completed the excellent Lambeth Tour Guides Course, including two of our trustees, Trudy Kuhn and Emma Fleming.

Focussed on the London Borough of Lambeth, this one-year course mixes tuition on guiding skills with learning about the diverse history and architecture of the borough. The tours appeal to both tourists and residents.



Held at Morley College, Waterloo, the current course, starting in September 2024, offered 33 weeks and 93.5 hours training, including 15 Saturdays and 30 evening sessions plus additional time for self-study. The full fee was £1,015 with a concession rate of £812. Visits to Lambeth Archives and other sources are included for individual research.

Becoming an Accredited Lambeth Guide offers a skill as a knowledgeable public speaker and an enjoyable way of earning a little extra income. All I have spoken to have very much enjoyed the course, despite it being quite challenging.

So if you are fit, active, enthusiastic, love our wide heritage and want a new interest, why not have a go?

It is wonderful that the Tour Guides have rejuvenated and continued the exploration of Lambeth's rich heritage. Several early local history groups ran many walks but these mainly stopped c.2010 as leaders aged.

Brian Bloice, our late chairman, was an Adult Education tutor at Morley College for some years from the 1970s. His popular local history classes focussed on South London and how to research a local areas. Moving from Brixton to live in Streatham in 1976, he started another evening class at Granton School then, post-retirement, daytime classes at the Adare Centre, Leigham Court Road, until the demise of Adult Education.

It was a time of considerable enthusiasm for local history; local groups providing a wealth of walks covering Lambeth and adjacent boroughs.

The first walk published by the Streatham Society in 1982 was *A Walk Round Streatham Hill* by guide Derek West. The *Millennium Trails* followed, revised and reprinted 2001- 2012 as 12 *Heritage Trails* by Gaham Gower (7), John W Brown, Judy Harris and Brian Bloice (all still available). Brian and John also published and led walks for the Victorian Society.

Trudy Kuhn's tour Grave Encounters in St Leonard's Churchyard *(See p.10, photo MB)*

Emma Fleming recently receiving her certificate from the Mayor of Lambeth, John-Paul Ennis
(Photo Nicky Somerville-Jones)

John is the last of these to continue, leading tours of St Leonard's Church and a tour of Henry Tate's grounds at Park Hill.

Happily Robert Doyle, a Streatham Society trustee, also runs a Park Hill tour and leads new local history walks.

Our early walks leaders displayed much original research but the Lambeth Tour Guides offer a wider choice. They are better trained in conveying information clearly, particularly in noisy locations.

Our early walks were popular but the most popular, John W Brown's Streatham Village tour, attracted far too many people.

I remember John trying to herd some 50 people across the A23 at St Leonard's junction. Too many took no notice of his attempt and continued chatting, disregarding traffic!

So grateful thanks to our early tour guides but welcome to a rather safer programme to suit the continued enthusiasm for Lambeth's local history.

All Accredited Lambeth Guides participated in September's Lambeth Heritage Festival.

Some early guides also contributed to this, perhaps the most well-known being Allan Piper of the Brixton Society who has been leading walks since c.1975 - almost 50 years!

JH

STREATHAM SOCIETY REPORTS

RECENT MEETINGS *(Photos Mark Bery)*

Lost Rivers of South London

Our meeting on Tuesday September 3rd was part of the Lambeth Heritage Festival month. We are fortunate in having St Leonard's Church as our venue as, unlike most groups, we have unrestricted access and could accommodate the 150 people who attended - almost every seat taken. The evening was a triumph; an excellent speaker and a very sociable atmosphere.

Dr Tom Bolton, the author of several books including *Lost Rivers of London*, gave an illustrated walker's guide to a most appreciative audience. Some of his books were on sale on our bookstall and sold well.

Little Women *(Photo Sandy Hardy)*

The presentation by Angela B Morgan, Lambeth Guide and Blue Badge Tourist Guide, on October 1st was part of Black History Month. The talk highlighted the lives of three women: Olive Morris, Claudia Jones and Amanda Aldridge. Their individual stories offer an insight into the challenges they faced, but also celebrates their acts of bravery, defiance and determination that demonstrated their indominable spirit.

Despite atrocious weather some 50 stalwart people heard an extremely well-researched and presented talk from Angela, photographed with Society Chair, Shea Richardson.

MB/JH

LAMBETH LOCAL HISTORY FAIR *(Photos MB)*

The Fair was again hosted by the Streatham Society on Saturday 7th September at St Leonard's Church.

Deputy Mayor of Lambeth Cllr. Adrian Garden and Bill Linskey, Chair of the Lambeth Local History Forum, *(above),* opened the event

Grateful thanks to everyone involved in making this heritage day a very special day. We think everyone enjoyed it.

Special thanks to the teams of volunteers and litter pickers, the organisations in Lambeth, Emelia Kenlock who lent us Neil Kenlock's photos, the musicians and lastly the Church.

This was the second Fair to be hosted by the Streatham Society in St Leonard's. The first was very successful but this was even better.

Photographs record the variety of events inside the church and the church hall. The hall has been beautifully restored and redecorated and is now available to rent. It can comfortably seat about 100 people and the facilities are excellent.

Pictured here: Emelia Kenlock with Neil Kenlock's photo display, the Streatham Society bookstall, musicians performing, John Brown's St Leonard's history display and the delicious cakes provided by the W.I.

Overleaf shows a packed talk in the Church Hall and Roy Vickery's botanical walk, 'Herbal Heritage, in the churchyard.

All participants seemed delighted with the event and there was plenty of comfortable seating for all our visitors to rest and chat.

The hall and churchyard - and the end to a perfect day.

HENRY TATE GARDENS TOURS *(Photos MB)*

Our regular Autumn tours of Henry Tate's gardens at Park Hill, Streatham Common North, took place on Sunday 29 September as part of Lambeth's Heritage Festival. Mark Bery coordinated the event, Robert Doyle *(above)* and John W Brown each led a tour and Emma Fleming ran the bookstall.

Fully booked, this was much enjoyed, especially the grotto and folly *(left)*.

The Spring (May) tours will be advertised nearer the date.

MB/JH

MEMBERSHIP 2024 - 2025

New Members

We welcome 11 new members since our last issue: Felicity Smith & Martin Sharpe, Rebecca Cooper & Mark Brown, Paul Marks, Greg Richardson, Sally & Robert Edmondson, Elaine Wallace, Anne MacArthur, Sandra See. We thank them for their support and hope they enjoy their membership.

Subscriptions

Individual £10; Household £15 (2 named adults); Life membership (single or named couple) £180. These are paid by bank transfer (BACS), standing order, cheque or cash at meetings. See our website or contact me for further details.

Both our treasurer and membership secretary must be informed of direct bank payments. We cannot cross-check, especially with a growing membership. We both must have names and details to register membership.

In 2025 our system will be updated. Our membership year starts on January 1st. Please check your standing order or reminder so that subscriptions are paid close to this to ensure the continued delivery of our newsletter. The February 2025 newsletter will be the last issued until payment is received.

Members' Details

Problems have occurred if insufficient information is given. Please contact me if you have any queries about your subscription.

Life Membership is a brilliant way of supporting your Society, donating, and never having to remember to pay a subscription again - specially welcome if it is also Gifted-Aided. Several of our Life Members are/were well over 70 in age when they contributed and their membership was/is much appreciated.

Gift Aid: Tax payers; boost your subscription and any donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1. A form can be sent to you on application or is available on our website to email or post to our secretary *(Contact back page)*. Thank you!

Judy Harris, Membership Secretary and *Streatham News* Editor

FINALLY … THE SEASONS GREETINGS

May 2025 bring peace and harmony to all.

Grateful thanks to our trustees, volunteers and all members. Without you small local charities such as the Streatham Society would no longer exist.

Keep smiling!

Mediworld Window Display, Christmas 2010 (Photo JWB)

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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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