

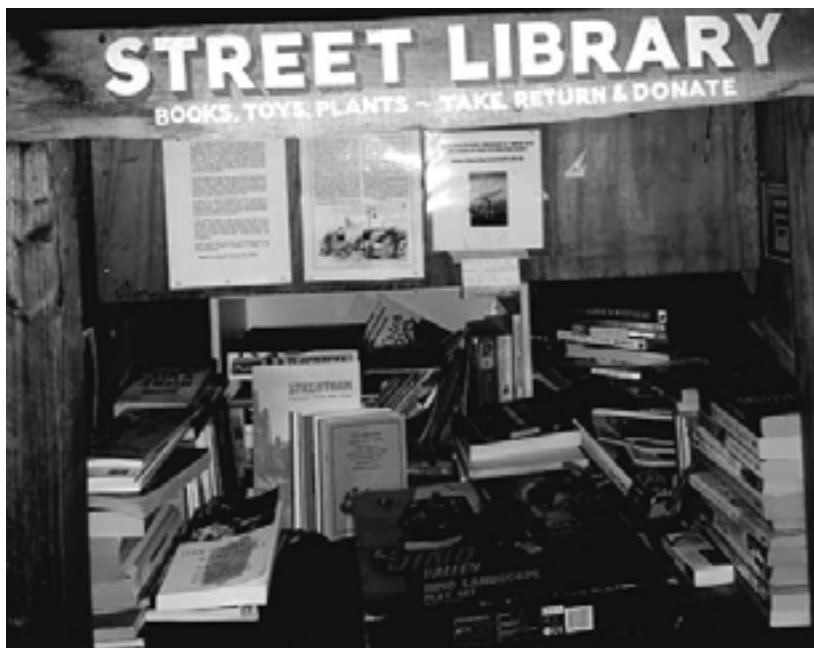


# STREATHAM SOCIETY NEWS

Published quarterly

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**STREATHAM SOCIETY BOOK DONATIONS**  
**The Doodlebug Garden Street Library in Wavertree Road**  
*(Photo Mark Bery. See p.32)*

**MEMBERSHIP 2023 - HAVE YOU PAID?**  
**Reminders enclosed** *(See p.29)*

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# STREATHAM SOCIETY MEETINGS & EVENTS

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## MEETINGS

Our meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in St Leonard's Church, Streatham High Rd/Tooting Bec Gardens. Non-members are very welcome but are requested to donate £1. Please check our website for any recent programme changes made.

- 6 June **Alfred Carver of Dulwich College** Talk by Drs Spence and Black  
*Also for Wandsworth Heritage Festival*
- 4 July **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** for members at 6.30pm.
- 7.30pm **The History of Streatham in a Dozen Objects** Talk by John W Brown
- August NO MEETING
- 5 Sept **The Measures' Brothers and their Orchid Collections**  
Talk by Tracey Gregory *Also for Lambeth Heritage Festival*

## EVENTS

- Mon 22 May **St Leonard's Church Tour** John W Brown. Booking  
1.30pm essential (see our website) *Also Wandsworth Heritage Festival*
- Sun 28 May **Tours of Sir Henry Tate's Grounds at Park Hill**  
2pm & 3pm Guides: Robert Doyle and John W Brown  
Streatham Common North, near Leigham Court Road junction  
Note: There are no on-site toilets or parking  
*Also Wandsworth Heritage Festival. Booking essential*
- Sept 1-30 **Lambeth heritage Festival** including Streatham Society events:
- 2 Sept **Lambeth History Fair** from 11am West Norwood Library
- Sept 4 **St Leonard's Church Tour** as above.

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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.*

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## STREATHAM ROUND AND ABOUT

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### NEW DEFIBRILLATOR ON THE HIGH ROAD



*(Photo Mark Bery)*

Regular shoppers along Streatham High Road will have seen a new kiosk installed on the pavement which has a large advertising screen but on the other side an interactive display with information, plus a defibrillator.

A defibrillator gives an electric shock to the heart of someone suffering from cardiac arrest and can be a vital part of trying to save their life before emergency services arrive. Very often they are found installed in public parks, workplaces, high streets, train stations and sporting venues. These defibrillators are known as public access defibrillators (PADs) as anyone can use them.



The new kiosk is operated by JC Decaux in tandem with the Community Heart-beat Trust Charity which is pioneering the roll out of defibrillators across the UK. Whilst the Streatham Society is generally against huge advertising displays on pavements (see last edition's article on street hubs) we do support this initiative as providing a helpful public service. They save lives but to help someone in cardiac arrest they need to be found quickly to help with survival.

So, it is crucial the public know more about how to find their nearest defibrillators. There's a national map of where they are located where you can put in your post code and find them [Defib finder – find the defibrillators nearest you.](#) It would be helpful if Lambeth Council or some other organisation produce a map of where they are located in Streatham like other neighbouring areas such as Dulwich have.

But how do you use one and do you need training? Thankfully the St John's Ambulance provide helpful advice including a video [Defibrillator Guide for Rescuers | St John Ambulance \(sja.org.uk\)](#) and [How to save a life with a defibrillator - YouTube.](#) And there's also advice from the British Heart Foundation - [Defibrillators \(AEDs and PADs\) - how and why to use them | British Heart Foundation - BHF.](#)

**Tim Whitaker, Trustee**

## **HORSE AND GROOM PUB UP FOR SALE**

The Horse & Groom pub on Streatham High Road closed since the pandemic and now looking incredibly sad is up for sale (see picture 2023).

You'll need to shell out £2.75 million for the freehold – but it's ok, that also gets you the adjoining El Chico's restaurant, whose lease is up in ten years' time. The brochure is here for those still having a think

- <https://search.savills.com/property-detail/gb0456s136696>



So, the big question is will it remain a pub or restaurant - or become flats.

Savills the estate agent handling the sale helpfully state that the properties are not listed, but are situated within Streatham High Road and Streatham Hill Conservation Area. The pub is included within the London Borough of Lambeth's Local Heritage List.

The Horse and Groom pub has a long and illustrious history (see picture below 1985). As the High Road conservation area statement says, "The "Horse and Groom" was formerly known as the "Halfway House". There has been an Inn on this site for a very long time and was a convenient stopping point on the road between London and the coast. The Prince Regent is reputed to have frequented the tavern for gaming and cock fighting on his way to Brighton. The present building dates from circa 1870."

Losing a well-known pub will be a loss for the High Road and we know the community and social value of pubs (Quiz question: how many pubs in Streatham have closed in the past thirty years?). But nationally we're seeing pubs now closing at a dramatic rate with many most recently hit with rising energy costs. Across London famous pubs have been bulldozed down and converted into flats. And some in Streatham are at risk and facing uncertain futures. The Crown and Sceptre further along Streatham High Road was closed last year, but has now re-opened but for how long?

The Streatham Society together with Bid Streatham are desperately trying to engage with Lambeth Council on reviewing the High Road in terms of both conservation and heritage with a shared aim of making Streatham more attractive and welcoming for local people. Lambeth Council have promised they are look-

ing at the Streatham High Road conservation area but no action yet. We're also concerned about vacant and derelict buildings which are such an eyesore. And as usual we're looking for local councillors interest and support...!



**Tim Whitaker, Trustee**

## **“WATES YARD” IS ARRIVING**

So, the one-hundred-and-twenty-year history of Wates furnishings on Mitcham Lane is now being celebrated by a new housing development - named “Wates Yard”.

The long-standing family furniture shop and workshops are being replaced by what the developers call an “exciting development” of 17 unique and individually designed apartments in an “exciting and secure courtyard development”. The back where the workshops were is being called Albert House. The front part named Edward House will still have a commercial use and the two Victorian original villas will return to residential living again. To their credit Wandsworth Council supported the retention of the building for both “aesthetic and sustainability reasons” - though the application and approval merely stated it was replacing a “retail furnishing shop”. Thankfully the developer’s website does convey a very short history of the site - <https://watesyard.com/> as part of the marketing of the apartments.

But will the new or future owners living in their exciting flats really know or appreciate the heritage of their site when the website ends - and more importantly will there be anything else to remind local people of what existed there ?

This highlights the problem facing not only Streatham but all parts of the UK – how do you celebrate and commemorate heritage.



Keeping buildings and refitting them is now pushed with planners. “Facadism” has been with us for some time, where the facade of a building is preserved with new buildings erected behind or around it. Sadly, the bad examples of this can look a bit tacky and tokenistic. Obviously, street names and building names are the commonest way of recognising something historical, though it’s a bit of an opaque process how this happens, plus can be controversial as we’ve seen recently with the slave trade.

What’s less clear is how local councils think about celebrating heritage in terms of planning. The heritage statements in planning applications are often cut and paste jobs from Streatham Society history books without much thought or imagination.



*E & A Wates 2020 (top) and 1913*

But one great idea if the planners don't step up is from the Norwood Society with their Crystal Palace Triangle Blue Plaques Shops, now running for over five years (see [Blue Plaques \(norwoodociety.co.uk\)](http://BluePlaques(norwoodociety.co.uk))). Plaques are displayed in shop windows in 'The Triangle' (Westow Hill, Westow Street and Church Road) part of Crystal Place showing a significant past trade, trader or some history of the building.

Obviously, this would need good funding. But imagine if that was rolled out across Streatham. Instead of future passers-by mistakenly thinking Wates Yard was named after the developer's favourite haunt or tippie, they saw a blue plaque with details of E & A Wates and then a QR code to link to the E & A Wates website which has loads of great history on it [E & A Wates | Furniture, upholstery, French polishing, caning, rushing, gilding, soft furnishings, interiors | SW16, Streatham, South London \(eawates.com\)](http://E&AWates|Furniture,upholstery,Frenchpolishing,caning,rushing,gilding,softfurnishings,interiors|SW16,Streatham,SouthLondon(eawates.com)). And of course, it would also link to the Streatham Society Mitcham Lane Heritage Trail and the video from excellent Society You Tube talk by John Brown on Mitcham Lane (<https://youtu.be/mI-DPu2Jr78>).

**Tim Whitaker, Trustee**

## SPRING IS HERE!



The first Saturday in April was a lovely sunny day so I decided to visit as many locally advertised events as possible. First I walked to Streatham Common to photograph the **Willow Rain Garden Project**.

On February 4 from 12 noon a gathering of volunteers set to create a new willow woodland rain garden. The Streatham Common Cooperative's (SCCoop) project is backed by the Mayor of London and Lambeth Council.

The site is below the spring-line which runs from the top of the common. This is usually very boggy in winter then dries up and develops large cracks in the summer months.

By digging embankments to create ditches to slow drying-out, it is hoped new willow trees and others planted will have enough moisture to thrive and attract diverse wildlife.





I then went on to the **Belmont Bowling Club's Open Day**. As ever, the bowling green, borders and clubhouse in Broadlands Avenue were beautifully maintained.

There I met Furzedown community's **Jane Tingle's Walks** group - regular easy walks for all, looking at areas of interest, starting from the Tooting Bec café. There is no need to book or register.

Then to the **Woodfield Pavilion** (entrance Abbotswood Rd or Tooting Bec Common). This lovely community centre has a large number of courses, events and exhibitions of a high quality.

I chatted to member Ronnie Hackston who with others was exhibiting and selling paintings, prints and cards at 'Nature Unlimited' (*below right*).

Then back to St Luke's Church, West Norwood, to enjoy the excellent **Lambeth Horticultural Society's Annual Spring Show**.

Finally was *Dixit*, the magnificent **Streatham Choral's concert** in St Peter's Church, Leigham Court Rd. With some 120 singers plus orchestra it attracted a large audience. As usual, the performance was of a professional standard,

I was exhausted by the end of the day. Who says there's nothing to do in Streatham? Covid was a disaster and advertising via a website is now the usual way to publicise events - but it's worth the effort to check. Many are free, or inexpensive and do not always need to be booked.



JH

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## LOCAL HISTORY MATTERS

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### HIRAM MAXIM - A BIT OF A MYSTERY



*Maxim demonstrates his gun to his grandson*



*Eldon Maxim Joubert*

*A Bit of Mystery* in FOWNC (Friends of West Norwood Cemetery) Newsletter 103, January 2022, raised various questions about the Maxim family, and I have been able to add some further material.

Thanks to one of our FOWNC members being on the staff of South London Crematorium, in Streatham Park Cemetery, we have information from their records that Maxim Joubert, who died at 22 Kempshott Road, Streatham SW16 on 24 November 1980, was cremated there on 27 November 1980, and his ashes were removed by Maxwell Bros, Funeral Directors, Streatham High Road.

However, subsequent correspondence with Maxwell Bros, who were very helpful and searched very hard, failed to find any record of what then happened to the ashes. So that mystery remains, and indeed, it must be wondered who organised the Norwood headstone inscription, which would seem to be just an In Memoriam, unless of course the ashes were scattered here without the cemetery office staff being told?

I was prompted by this work to delve into the life of Maxim Joubert a little more (his full birth name was actually Eldon Maxim Joubert (*left*), but he always went by the name Maxim). The following material has

been compiled largely from newspaper reports, thanks to *British Newspaper Archive* (from British Library) and *Chronicling America* (from Library of Congress), and also *FreeBMD*.

More than 30 British newspapers, national and local, carried reports of what was seen as a remarkable event, that Maxim Joubert travelled in August 1909, aged seven, all alone, 4,000 miles from Boston, via New York for the Atlantic crossing on the Cunard liner *Lusitania*, to visit his grandparents, with Lady Maxim picking him up at Liverpool. The *South London Press* stepped in to do a lengthy interview, finding him to be a very keen sportsman, whilst the *Daily Mirror* showed photos of him in his baseball kit, and of Lady Maxim bowling a cricket ball to him.

It appears that he then stayed permanently in this country and was adopted by Sir Hiram and Lady Maxim as their own son. Later reports on the death of each in turn, Sir Hiram in 1916, and Sarah, Lady Maxim in 1941, show that they both left bequests to him in their respective wills.

The court case at the end of this next episode was also widely reported in British newspapers. Maxim Joubert, having been a first year undergraduate at Cambridge in 1923, had left university to work in a bank, in order to afford to marry Cecile Alexandra Follain. However, they separated after five months, a divorce eventually being granted in 1931 on the ground of her adultery, although he continued to pay her an allowance. He was then living in Drewstead Road, Streatham. In 1932 he married again, to Ivy Irene Holmes. There do not appear to have been any children.

Reports can be found across the years of him playing rugby, cricket and baseball, even into his forties, captaining various teams, in Streatham and elsewhere, and later moving into administration, in all these sports. A couple of reports in the 1950s can be found of him attending military cemetery ceremonies representing London Post No. 1, American Legion (a veterans' support organisation). Is there possibly a clue here as to how he is described as a U.S. army officer on the headstone, for which no other evidence has turned up? Was it in fact some sort of honorary position? Another mystery remaining.

The reason for Maxim Joubert coming to this country in the first place appears to have been the early death of his mother. As reported in American newspapers, Sir Hiram's daughter Adelaide, wife of Eldon Joubert, died from heart trouble, aged only 32, in 1907, whilst living at the home of her mother, Mrs. Jane Maxim, in Hyde Park, a suburb of Boston. Mrs. Maxim is described in these reports as having being divorced from Sir Hiram, although they don't say when. Mr. Joubert was in New York when his wife died, and his work seems to have involved much travelling, notably with the pianist Paderewski, hence one assumes he was in no position to look after his young son.

Whilst browsing these American newspapers, some extraordinary reports were found in 1898. Hiram Maxim (this was before he was knighted) was arrested in New York on warrants of bigamy and abandonment and put on trial. A woman variously named as Helen Leighton or Nell Malcolm brought a case against Maxim, claiming that he had married her in 1878, rather shockingly when she

was aged only 15, thus committing bigamy against his first wife, Jane (nee Bud-den), and he had then abandoned her in 1881. She claimed further that Maxim had fathered a daughter named Romaine or Roumania with her, born in 1879 (and adopted by another family). This latter fact seems undisputed, and he later left a bequest in his will to Romaine.

However, Maxim insisted that he had never been legally married to Helen, whilst she claimed that he had stolen her marriage certificate. (There had been earlier reports in 1884 that Helen, described as his second wife, was suing Maxim for divorce, citing unfaithfulness with Sarah Haynes.) Maxim did state that it was because of the affair with Helen that his first wife had divorced him. The criminal case was dismissed, but with Helen then claiming \$25,000 damages in a civil action, though finally agreeing to only \$1,000.

One further note: whatever the legality or not of Maxim's earlier marriage to his actual second wife Sarah (the date and place of which seem to be in doubt, as some websites state 1888 rather than 1881, and none state where), they registered their marriage again in London in 1890. What a tangled web of philandering and lying!

**Jill Dudman**

## MARJORIE CROSSLEY



The recently published book by sculpture expert Terry Cavanagh *Public sculpture of Kensington and Chelsea with Westminster South-West*, includes a sculpture, *The Journey by Night*, in St Mary Abbot's parish church in Kensington. It is by Marjorie Crossley, whose dates are given as 1890-1968 (*photo Philip Attwood*).

The subject of the sculpture is, of course, the Flight into Egypt, with Mary and the Christ Child shown on the donkey, led by Joseph. It is a beautiful piece of modelling. As the author writes, 'Crossley has conveyed the urgency of the flight by the straining forward of the donkey's neck and the great stride taken by Joseph ...'

Cavanagh begins his brief biography of the artist by saying, 'Little is known about Marjorie Crossley. She is recorded as residing at

5 Prince of Wales Terrace, Kensington, in 1950, although at some later date she moved to Streatham where she died in 1968'. According to Cavanagh, in 1955 she was one of a team of sculptors who contributed to the Christmas crib at St

Paul's Cathedral and in 1961 she was elected honorary treasurer of the Royal Society of British Sculptors.

Additional biographical information appears on the [suffolkartists.co.uk](http://suffolkartists.co.uk) website, and both there and on the Public Statues and Sculpture Association website her final address is given as 70 Madeira Road, Streatham. That is as far as my research has taken me.

To judge from the work in Kensington, Marjorie Crossley was a very able sculptor. Perhaps there is a member of the Streatham Society who can tell us more about her. Maybe some of her works remain in Streatham? They would seem to be well worth looking out for.

**Philip Attwood**

### **GAS STREET LIGHTING – STREATHAM VALE IN THE 1950s**

As a child, born in 1944, my earliest memories go back to the late 1940s and the 1950s when we lived in Sherwood Avenue, Streatham Vale. One of those memories relates to seeing men working in the street to service the gas lighting. I really didn't understand at the time – and being only four or five years old – what they were doing, but the process was fascinating.

The street lamps were tall (much taller than the concrete lamp standards and electric lights that replaced them some time in the 1950s) and made of metal (steel, obviously). At the top of the lamp post a metal arm extended out above the road and a glass globe gas lamp was attached to the end of the arm.

I have not found a clear photograph of one of these lamp posts but this one (*right*), taken from approximately outside No.87 Sherwood Avenue, just includes a lamp on the extreme left. Another is just visible in the distance to the left of the telegraph pole. (Incidentally, the photo also shows the gap in the row of houses on the right where a bomb fell, destroying the last three houses





before Nettlewood Road and the whole of the terrace between Nettlewood and Drakewood Roads. The roof of one of the pre-fabs erected on the bombed site can just be seen above the hedge). Yes, that is the writer on the trike!

Old-fashioned gas lamps could be cleaned, have mantles changed and servicing carried out using a ladder resting on an arm at the top of the lamp post but these “modern” lamp posts were far too tall for the work to be done that way.

Instead, the servicing team (usually two men, I think) would open a door at the bottom of the lamp post, insert a handle and the lantern would be wound down on a wire cable until it was at shoulder height above the road. The glass globe could then be opened, mantles changed and other cleaning and servicing

carried out by the men standing in the road. When finished, the lamp would be wound back up to its position on the end of the horizontal arm where, presumably, it automatically connected back on to the gas supply. I don't know how the lights were controlled: no “lamplighter” came round to turn them on or off so I imagine some kind of mechanical control (clockwork timer?) was installed in the lamp standard to open and close the gas valve and, no doubt, each globe had a pilot light as well.

Although I haven't found a good photo of the lights in Sherwood Avenue, I believe the same type were widely installed in the area though those on the main roads might have been even taller than those on side roads. Two of them can be seen in this photo (*above*) of Streatham Vale below the railway bridge while other photos (*below*) show them near St Leonard's Church and in Mitcham Lane. Closer examination of these photos shows what might be pulleys attached to the horizontal arms and the wire cable that was used to lower and raise the lamps to road level.

**Derek Buttivant**

## STREATHAM VALE COACHES

In the late 1940s and 50s, when I was growing up in Sherwood Avenue, few people owned cars. We didn't. As an occasional treat (probably only in the warmer months of the year I imagine - many details uncertain as I was a young child at the time - I was taken for a day out at the seaside (Brighton, Eastbourne, Worthing, etc) on a coach operated by the local firm, Streatham Vale Coaches. Their depot and small office, just a shed I think, was situated at the junction of Marian Road and Lilian Road. There is now a modern, curved housing block on the site.

My mother would walk there, with me, to see what excursions were on offer and book three seats, the third being for my grandmother. On the appointed day we would then go to the depot where the designated vehicle would be ready, either just inside the yard or standing outside in the road. Although interested in the journey and the coach itself, I didn't know enough about the vehicles at that time to be able to identify their type, except that one or more must have been either a Bedford OB or similar because they were distinctive in not having a separate driver's cab, the driver sitting in the saloon. Other coaches were bigger with the separate half-cab for the driver. A day trip would have cost just a few shillings, leaving around 9 a.m. and getting back about 6.30 or 7 p.m.

In recent times I have looked for information about Streatham Vale Coaches and here are some photos and a little more detail.

The company seems to have been owned by a Mr Charsley, probably one George Alexander Robert Charsley who was born in Streatham on 15 March 1900. A Ray Charsley, born in 1947, also in Streatham may have been a relative: his father's occupation was bus driver.

It appears that at least some of the coaches were acquired new but I think there were some older vehicles too, perhaps pre-war. One example of a new coach, delivered to Streatham Vale in November 1950 was LUW61, a Leyland PD2/3 with a front-entrance, 33-set Harrington body. In July 1961 this coach was photographed approaching Victoria Coach Station but by then owned by Denham Coaches of Pinner.



*The GYE 590 and DUF175*



A splendid pre-war (1934) Dennis Lancet, OY8974, was owned by Streatham Vale Coaches and is the kind of vehicle I remember seeing at Marian Road. A photo of it can be found on-line, probably taken after the war and with an Orange Luxury Coaches (Brixton) Bedford OB standing next to it.

GYE 590 (*pictured*) is newer. It's another Leyland, this time with a rather different style body. My memory doesn't tell me the colour scheme used by this company but in this photo it's clearly a two-tone livery. Light and dark green might be right and both these photos appear to show a roundel of some kind on the body side.

Finally, DUF175 also belonged to Streatham Vale and is another very smartly turned out Leyland vehicle in the same two-tone paintwork (*pictured*).

It would be a very pleasant surprise if anyone can offer further information on this small company. Particularly welcome would be photos of the Marian Road premises, other vehicles, information on the company such as starting and closing dates and memories of using its services.

*After submitting the above article, Derek made great efforts to locate the source for permission to use these photographs. He discovered Paul Redmond, photographer, and a lively exchange of emails ensued. Paul replied:*

'I remember Streatham Vale Coaches as they were regular visitors to Margate in the 1950's... As for my photos, feel free to use them and there's no fee.'

**Derek Buttivant**

## **J HARVEY BLOOM - A 'PARSON EXTRAORDINARY' AND A NOTED STREATHAM HISTORIAN**

As one who has written a number of slender volumes on the local history of Streatham, I have taken an interest in fellow authors who have also explored the fascinating past of our town. None is more intriguing or interesting than the Reverend J Harvey Bloom who, in 1926, wrote two small books on the history of our parish called *Bygone Streatham* and *Bygone Balham and Tooting Bec*.

J Harvey Bloom was born in Norfolk on 28th December 1860. His parents separated whilst he was still small, and so he was brought up by his aunts and grandparents at his grandfather's Rectory at Castleacre in Norfolk.

Harvey was to prove a good scholar and attended Cambridge University. His grandfather was a major influence on him in his early years and provided the inspiration for the young Harvey to join the church.

In 1888 he was ordained at St. John's Church at Stratford-on-Avon following which he took up his first curacy at Hertford. Harvey's good looks and outgoing personality made him a popular member of the local community, especially with the ladies of the parish. According to his daughter he was warmly welcomed 'by cooing young girls and ardent old maids' alike. Not surprising then, that when



friends of his from Swaffham, in Norfolk, moved into the area he quickly won the heart of their young daughter, Polly, whom he married later that year.

Harvey's next curacy took the young couple to Chelmsford, where their first daughter, Ursula, was born in December 1892. Ursula was to become a noted author in her own right, gaining an entry in the Guinness Book of Records as Britain's most prolific author-ess with some 500 full length books to her credit.

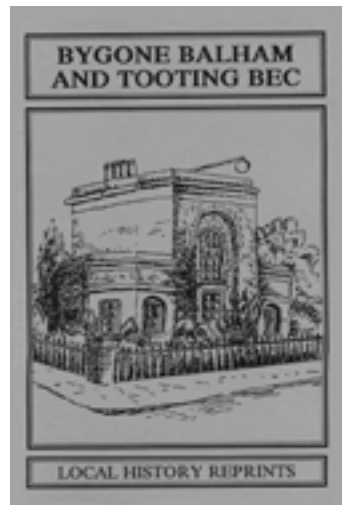
The initial excitement experienced by the Blooms with Harvey's subsequent appointment to the living at Whitchurch was somewhat dampened when they saw the dilapidated state of the old Norman church. It stood isolated in the middle of a field, save for the nearby Rectory stables which provided a humble home for a lonely shepherd.

The church was in a dilapidated state of repair and badly infested with dry rot. Just when they thought that things could not get worse they saw the Rectory, which was in a worse state of neglect being almost a ruin.

However, Harvey's £300 stipend provided a significant boost to the couple's finances and they immediately threw themselves into the life of their new parish. Realising that the local villagers did not have the financial resources needed to refurbish the church and Rectory, Harvey used his natural charm to encourage the local gentry to help finance this work.

The Blooms quickly endeared themselves to the parishioners. Polly used her skills with the needle to make vestments and furnishings, while Harvey threw himself into the restoration work; removing the old gallery before it fell down and installing new pews. In his spare time he started a village cricket team and taught the local children to swim.

Word about the boundless enthusiasm and energy of the new vicar quickly spread, attracting a number of well known people to the church, including the Astors, Clara Butt and Ellen Terry.





My father at the time of his marriage (moustaches were "in"), and my mother in her mid-twenties

*Photographs from Ursula Bloom's book 'Parson Extraordinary'*



*Ursula Bloom*

At the turn of the century Harvey was asked to edit the Victoria County History of Warwickshire. This was to be one of the definitive histories of the county and was a monumental undertaking. Like all his labours, Harvey accepted the challenge with enthusiasm and set about the task with his normal boundless energy. However, the tremendous strain of his parish work and his writing began to take its toll, and in 1906 he suffered a breakdown.

To help gain his strength, he went to Weston-Super-Mare to convalesce. It was while recuperating there that he met Annie Sims, known as Jo, who returned with the Blooms to their Rectory in Whitchurch

as housekeeper, and was later to become Harvey's second wife. Jo's residence at the Rectory was obviously not a very satisfactory arrangement and Polly and Ursula eventually left the family home and went to live in Stratford.

Following Polly's death on 12th March 1917, Harvey married Jo in the old parish church at Whitchurch, where he had been vicar for the preceding 23 years. The couple decided to start a new life together in London and settled in Balham.

Harvey (*right*) had initially hoped to find work at the British Museum or the Public Records Office. However, when no employment was forthcoming from these sources he set himself up as a freelance genealogist and archivist. His transcription of an early volume of the Streatham parish registers can still be consulted at the London Metropolitan Archives.



It was while residing at 31 Veronica Road that he became interested in the local history of the area and, in 1926, he wrote two books on the history of the old parish of Streatham. These companion volumes were called *Bygone Balham and Tooting Bec* and *Bygone Streatham*. As well as writing these two publications, he also wrote *The Natural History of Tooting Bec Common*.

With the outbreak of the Second World War Harvey was keen to play his part and despite being almost 80 applied unsuccessfully to join the Auxiliary Fire Service. During the Blitz, the Blooms had a narrow escape when an unexploded bomb was discovered near their flat in Ryde Vale Road. Just a few hours after they were evacuated from the building the bomb exploded badly wrecking their home. Ursula found temporary accommodation for them in South Kensington before they eventually moved to Stratford-on-Avon where Harvey died in 1943 following a stroke.

Subsequent research has revealed a number of minor errors in Bloom's histories of the parish but none the less they remain a concise and fascinating account of our neighbourhood in bygone days. Both volumes contain a number of delightful drawings of places of interest in the area drawn by Harvey himself, which make delightful illustrations in the books.

Both titles grace the shelves of my library. The Streatham volume being given to me by my former neighbour and friend, Geoffrey Page, who knew Bloom before the war when Harvey was in his late 70s.

In 1993, now some 30 years ago, I reprinted both books under my Local History Reprints imprint selling 500 copies of both titles to a new generation of readers. Sadly, both titles are now out of print. However, I was recently advised copies are occasionally offered for sale on Ebay, where Bloom's original books may also be found from time to time.

A full and fascinating account of Harvey's life was the subject of his daughter, Ursula Bloom's book, *Parson Extraordinary*, which was published in 1963 by Robert Hale Ltd.

**John W Brown**

## THE FIRST STREATHAM AUTOMATIC CAR WASH



Today, car washes are common place, many forming part of road-side garages. This quick, efficient and relatively cheap means of cleaning a car attracts little attention and many users go off for a quick cup of coffee in the service station as their vehicle slowly completes the process.

But this was not always the case. It is difficult to say with

any certainty which was the very first automatic car wash in Streatham, but if I was a gambling man a safe each way bet would be the facility at South London Motors (SLM) at 516-522 Streatham High Road (*above*), the site of which is now occupied by an Access self-storage unit.

SLM started business at the junction of Mitcham Lane and Streatham High Road, opposite the Church of the English Martyrs. They quickly prospered requiring larger and more impressive premises which were opened on the site of a large Victorian building called Aberfoyle House in 1930. In the war the engineering works here produced component parts for the Hurricane and Spitfire fighter aircraft.

In 1948 the motor works here took on a special apprentice, when the actor Richard Attenborough worked here briefly to gain experience for his part in the film 'London Belongs To Me' which also starred Alister Sim and Faye Compton.

SLM was taken over by Godfrey's Limited in 1963 but continued to trade under the SLM name, being one of the largest car dealers and mechanics in South London. It provided cars to a number of famous celebrities, such as Lance Percival who bought a Jaguar here.

Following the closure of South London Motors in the 1970s the site was taken over by a mysterious organisation. No notices indicated who the occupiers of the building were and there were security cameras and blinds at the windows. It was probably the worst kept secret in London, that this was in fact the engineering workshops for the secret service, where Q devised and produced the various gadgets James Bond and his MI5 and MI6 colleagues use around the world.

This is not as far fetched as it may at first seem, for James Bond, in the form of Roger Moore, lived for a brief time in Buckleigh Road following his first marriage to Doorn Van Steyn.

But we digress. There is little doubt that in the 1930s the South London Motors building was one of the most modern and advanced show rooms and garages in

the country. Ramps within the building enabled cars to be driven to each level with ease, and the roof provided a large area which was used as a car park.

The service areas of the building were fitted out with a number of inspection pits to enable work to be undertaken beneath the vehicle with ease; the mechanic standing upright to complete the tasks required, rather than laying on their backs in a cramped position beneath the car.



Because of the ramps at the rear of the building, SLM could boast three floors of luxury showrooms, one above another, where both new and second-hand vehicles were displayed. In addition to the full range of mechanical and repair services offered by the firm, the business also operated a successful driving school from the premises.

It was therefore not surprising that SLM, being one of the leading motor business in London, installed an automatic car washing facility to augment its other services to the motorist.

The process took twenty minutes to complete, and such was the then novelty of the operation, many owners would slowly follow the vehicles through the process as their cars were transformed from grubby automobiles to shining chariots of the road.

Such was the novelty of the process the Meccano Magazine sent one of its reporters, T. R. Robinson, to Streatham to witness the operation for himself and he wrote about his experience in glowing terms which was published in the journal in 1939. A copy of his feature is reprinted below together with the accompanying photographs by T. R. Robinson.

‘The cleaning of motor cars on a conveyor of a type very similar to those used for assembling them is the latest method of thoroughly removing dirt and grime. The principle adopted is to move the cars slowly past a series of groups of plant, each of which is designed to carry out a particular stage of the removal of dirt and subsequent polishing. An installation of this kind, including a special ‘soap-foam’ wash as part of the cleaning process, is in use at the service station of South London Motors Ltd., Streatham, London S.W., and it was at this plant that the photographs illustrating the present article were taken.

The cars, which come in straight off the road, are first lined up at the entry end of the conveyor line, and as they are moved forward in turn for attention, special



A car on the first stage of the 20-minute washing conveyor. The wheels are being cleaned by water sprayed on them under pressure, and the floodlighted pits and quick action jacks can be seen.

### *A Conveyor Plant for Speedy Dirt Removal*



The snowstorm effect on this car is produced by spraying soap foam all over the bodywork in order to loosen grease and dirt.

### *Motor Cars Cleaned in Twenty Minutes*

various forms of jet to be used by simply turning a finger ring, and the water spray can be continually adjusted to suit the needs of the parts being dealt with. For instance, large under surfaces of wings can be washed with a diffused spray, while axles and other parts can be treated by a concentrated jet.

As this part of the cleansing is completed, each car is attached in turn to an endless conveyor chain that moves forward continuously in a groove in the floor. The coupling of the car to the chain is by a short length of steel wire rope with hooks at its ends, one hook being attached to the car chassis, and the other engaged with any convenient link of the chain.

The car then creeps forward slowly, and passes under a six-jet shower-bath, while men armed with special long handled brushes wash off dirt from the roof. At the same time others provided with water jets and sponges wash the body panels and upper surfaces of the wings.

The slow movement of the car next brings it to the most interesting part of the

floor ramps align them and bring them on to skeleton tracks, which are some two feet above the floor level of the pits in which the operators stand.

This level was chosen in order to permit easy and rapid operation of the water sprays, and to make all parts that are likely to harbour dirt accessible for inspection and cleansing.

As soon as each car is positioned on the ramps, two quick-action jacks lift all four wheels at once, and so permit them to be revolved and cleaned. While this first stage of the work is being dealt with the car is stationary, and four operators, one for each wheel and wing, remove the mud and dirt with water-guns supplied through hoses with water at a pressure of 300 lb. per sq.in.

Special quickly-adjustable nozzles on these guns permit

process. Special hoses are trained on the car from opposite sides, and a spray of soapy lather, forced out under pressure, is coated all over the bodies, wings, and other surfaces. In a few moments the car looks for all the world as if it had been out in a really severe snowstorm. The action of this soap spray is to loosen and remove from the polished surfaces all the greasy dirt and thick film left by the atmosphere and the exhaust fumes of road traffic.

When the car is thoroughly coated, operators with, sponges clean it down, working the lather evenly over the panelling and helping it in its work of washing off the dirt. Then the soap and dirt are rinsed off together in a complete wash-down with clean water.

The next process is to dry the body thoroughly by means of leathers and to remove by jets of compressed air all water that may remain in crevices and beading. Alongside the conveyor at this point is a mechanical washing machine, which cleanses the leathers and maintains a continuous supply for the operators.

While the outside of the car is being dried, the inside also is receiving attention from another group of men who clean the upholstery and carpets with a powerful vacuum cleaner, and polish the windows and internal fittings.

Next comes the polishing. Compressed-air sprays are used to produce a fine even mist of polish all over the body and wing surfaces, and then electrically operated mops of lambs-wool get to work to give the car a high gloss. The mops are so designed that they can reach such difficult points as those between the bonnet and wings and around the door handles and to complete the work a final polish is given by hand.

By this time the car is nearing the end of the conveyor chain, and the next stage is a critical inspection, to see that all points have been attended to. If all is as it should be, the car is uncoupled from the chain and driven down to a bay where it awaits its owner. The whole process, from the entry of the car on to the conveyor to the completion of the inspection, usually takes about twenty minutes, which represents a considerable saving of time when compared with the older method of washing.

The mechanism used in connection with the conveyor is interesting. The chain itself is driven by a small electric motor through reduction gearing, and a number of alternative sprockets are provided on the driving unit, so that the speed of the chain can be varied if necessary. Compressed air is supplied by a large motor-driven compressor, and other pumps of the reciprocating type are used to provide the water jets.

The contrast between the appearance of a car when it enters the conveyor and when it leaves is very striking, and shows how completely the vehicle is cleansed from all dirt. The process is so interesting to watch that many owners follow their cars along the whole way.'

*MECCANO MAGAZINE 1939*

**JWB**

## THE FALKLAND ISLANDS BECKON FOR STREATHAM CURATE



*Curate Hayley Argles-Grant*

I have always believed that if you look hard enough you can find a connection or link with Streatham for almost any place on earth.

I have written before of how over a quarter of the early explorers of Antarctica who died there had lived in Streatham, one of whom, Birdie Bowers, died with Captain Robert Scott on his journey from the South Pole in 1912.

I am now pleased to report our town has another link with Antarctica and the Southern Ocean in that The Reverend Hayley-Noelle Argles-Grant, who for the past three and a half years has been the Curate at our ancient Parish Church of St. Leonard, was licensed to be the Rector of the Falkland Islands at a special service at St. Leonard's on April 3rd and will

be journeying south to take up her post in May.

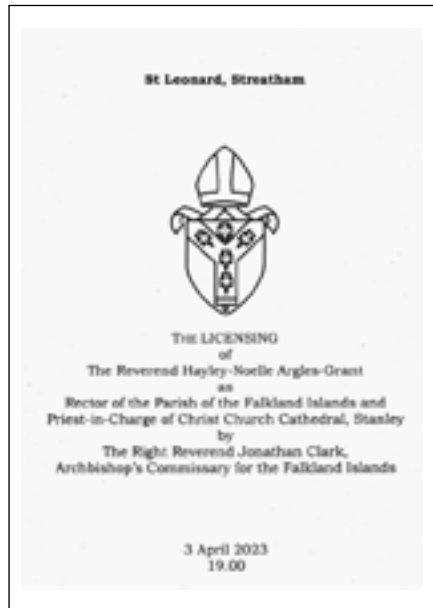
Her new parish is probably the largest in the world and includes South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. Dare I mention that her parish contains more penguins than people - there I have dared, but enough of the penguin jokes as by now there is not one Hayley has not heard before, many, many, times before.

Streatham, of course, has other links with the Falkland Islands. The most prominent of which is probably Sir James O'Grady who lived in Cavendish Road, Balham, which was in the ancient parish of Streatham. Sir James was born in Bristol and was a pioneer of the Labour movement and became the secretary of the National Federation of General Workers in the West Country. In 1897, at the age of 31, he was elected to Bristol Council, and a year later became President of the Trades Union Congress. In 1906 he became MP for the Parliamentary division of South East Leeds, a seat he held until 1924. During the First World War he was sent on a special mission to Russia which won him international recognition.

In 1924 he was offered the Governorship of Tasmania in Australia. At first, he was reluctant to accept the appointment as his wife was seriously ill at the time, but she encouraged him to take up the post and become the first member of the Labour Party to hold such a position. So it was he moved to Government House in Hobart, and every week wrote and sent cables home to his wife whom he was



never to see again as she died whilst he was in Australia. After serving as Governor for six and a half years Sir James returned to Balham in April 1931, and a month later was sailing south again, this time to take up the post as Governor of the Falkland Islands. Whilst serving at Government House in Stanley, Sir James was stricken with a form of blood poisoning in 1933 and had to return to England for treatment. His recovery was slow, and despite pressing to return to the Islands to continue his duties, medical specialists advised this was not practicable and his sick leave was extended. However, his position deteriorated, and he died in a nursing home in Nightingale Lane in December 1934, aged 67.



Another Falklands Islands link is Major Henry Morton Stanley Turner whose father, James Turner, lived at 140 Mitcham Lane, Streatham. Henry became a doctor and during the First World War joined the Royal Army Medical Corps. At the outbreak of war, Henry was in the Falkland Islands, and was officer in command of the Falkland Islands Volunteer Force, his organisation of which was recognised by his appointment to the Order of the British Empire in October 1918.

Several residents of Streatham saw action in the Falkland Islands following the invasion by the Argentine in 1982. Andrew Winter, the son of Streatham Youth Centre Treasurer, Ron Winter, was a 21 year old sub-lieutenant when his ship, HMS Sheffield, was hit by an Argentine missile and he played a key role in rescue operations aboard the vessel.

Twenty-year-old John Huxtable of Harborough Road, was an electronic engineer aboard HMS Glasgow, the same vessel on which Mark Robinson of Barrow Road served. HMS Glasgow was hit by a 1,000lb Argentine bomb and was forced to withdraw from the Falklands due to the severe damage caused by the explosion.



We wish Hayley every success in her new role in serving one of the most isolated communities in the world and know that her cheery and happy disposition will hold her in good stead for the many adventures and challenges which lie ahead.

**JWB**

## LAST DAY OF THE LAMBETH ARCHIVES AT THE MINET LIBRARY



I am sure that readers will be thrilled to see these remarkable photos. They show the very last person to sign the attendance register at the Lambeth Archives, on the very last day that the Archives were based in their present location, the Minet Library in Knatchbull Road, Camberwell, south-east London, where they had been for 133 years. A truly historic moment, and now recorded on film for posterity.

The person signing-in explained to the staff that he was there to research his paternal grandparents, who he said were married on 5th August 1895 at the former church of St. James in Knatchbull Road, just 500 yards from the Archives building. Furthermore, he told them that his paternal grandmother lived with her twelve siblings at 1 and 1A Foreign Street, off Lilford Road, just round the corner. The house and Foreign Street were demolished, probably in the 1950s/1960s, and the area was turned into a park, but Foreign Street was still in the 2005 edition of the London A-Z.

I am pleased to report that his research was successful.

With thanks to Elisabeth Lee, Senior Archives and Local Studies Assistant at Lambeth Archives, for the splendid photos.

**Robert Holden**

*Vice-chairperson, Lambeth Local History Forum*

*Note:* Robert has been a Life Member of the Streatham Society since May 2012 - 13 years ago. He points out that he lives in a part of Herne Hill once identified as 'Streatham Detached'. For many years he has supported local groups, is an accomplished actor, and has appeared as Father Christmas in West End stores.

His report and photograph (*left*) of the last day of the Archives appeared prominently on the Memories page of the *South London Press*.

Well done, Robert - keep up all your activities!

## **LEN REILLY RETIRES**

Lambeth archivist Len Reilly has decided to retire after many years working with archivist Jon Newman and the library staff. The closure and removal of the Archives to Brixton is a convenient time for him to broaden his activities. He still intends to be involved with the archives - but how and when he wishes.

We thank him for his vast contribution to Lambeth and wish him well.

## **LAMBETH ARCHIVES OPEN DAY - Saturday 26 September 2015**



*(Photo JWB)*

Robert Doyle shown on our bookstall in a rather crowded Minet Library before the stalls and displays moved to the church community hall opposite.

**JH**

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# STREATHAM SOCIETY REPORTS

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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2023

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the 47th Annual General Meeting of the Streatham Society (Charity Number 283297) will be held at 6:30pm on Tuesday 4th July 2023 at St Leonard's Church, SW16 1HS to transact the following business:

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting** - To be agreed and matters arising
2. **Chair's Report**
3. **Reports and Accounts** - To receive and consider the accounts for the year ended 31st March 2023.
4. **Appointment and remuneration of independent examiner of accounts** - To appoint an independent examiner for the financial year to 31st March 2024.
5. **Appointment of charity trustees** - Nominations for the position of Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and other committee members must be received by **30th June 2023**.

All committee members are Trustees of the Charity.

6. **Members' resolutions** - Resolutions should be sent to the Secretary by 30th June 2023.
7. **Any other business** - To deal with any relevant matters raised at the meeting.

**Mark Bery, Secretary 4th April 2023**

At 7:30pm, following the AGM, John Brown will give an illustrated talk: **The History of Streatham in a Dozen Objects.**

To aid communication with members it would be helpful to have members' email addresses. For those members who have not registered an email address with the Society and wish to be contacted by email, please include details via the web site; there is a form on the contacts section <https://www.streathamsociety.org.uk/contact.html> or email [streathamsoc@gmail.com](mailto:streathamsoc@gmail.com)

**Members:** We are looking for new trustees. Please contact me if you are interested or want to know more about the role. Trustees will be approved by members at the AGM in July 2023. The Streatham Society is a Registered Charity (283297).

**Mark Bery** (*Contacts back page*)

## MEMBERSHIP

**Membership 2023:** By mid-April we had welcomed over 40 new members, making a total of 267 who had paid - another record at this time of year!

We welcome 23 new members: Luisa Del Gatto, Lance Hodgson (household), Tom Killick & Lois Davis, Sandy & Robert Hardy, Keith Riggs-Long, Fiona Martin & James Crane, Claudia Ruane & Robert Curd, Ann Heywood (household), Bruce Logan, Marilena Walton (household), Richard Garner, Sally Howel, Gillian Lunnon, Caroline Starkey and Annie James (household). We hope they enjoy our events and publications.

**Renewals:** To receive our quarterly *Streatham Society News* uninterrupted, your subscription should have been paid by March 31st 2023. Payments last until December 31st 2023. Subscriptions remain unchanged at: Individual £10; Household £15; Life membership (single or named couple) £180.

**2023 subscription:** A few **final reminders** are included with this newsletter. Please ignore this if you have paid since April 119th 2023 (our *News* print date).

**Payment** is via bank transfer (BACS) or standing order to: The Streatham Society, Lloyds Business Online, Sort Code 30-84-68 Account number 39526068. Please identify the amount and destination (subscription, donation or publication) and email me confirmation to activate registration.

Payment is also accepted by cash or cheque, payable to The Streatham Society, to me at meetings or posted to 125 Thornlaw Road, West Norwood SE27 0SQ.

If you prefer, or if your details have changed, our membership application form can be downloaded then given, posted or scanned to me.

**Gift Aid declaration:** 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*).

**Your email address:** Please supply this for our contacts list as it is now our only method of communication, apart from our quarterly newsletter. Your details are not passed on to any other group or individual without your permission, as stated on our privacy policy. See: <https://www.streathamsociety.org.uk/>

**Subscription acknowledgement:** Payments will be acknowledged by email; in-person payments will have been recorded by members at meetings.

**Streatham Society News:** Our quarterly magazine is posted to your address, not emailed. Back copies are available for public view on our website.

**Life Membership:** Especially with Gift Aid, this is a welcome source of income. Particularly welcome are our oldest members who may not benefit financially as much will be a donation - with the added bonus of not having to re-member to pay annually! We now have over 40 Life Members.

**Judy Harris, Membership Secretary**

## RECENT MEETINGS

### Why Streatham would survive the Apocalypse



On February 7th over 80 people heard Streatham's M.P. Bel Ribeiro-Addy give a great non-political talk which included tasty bites courtesy of Suzanne, her office manager.

In giving thanks and posting his photo on our Facebook page, our secretary Mark Bery commented he was relieved we are well-placed to escape the apocalypse. The talk was repeated later on YouTube.

It was a most entertaining presentation which promoted Streatham as the place to live - because we have everything necessary to survive. Bell cleverly combined our past and present-day facilities to illustrate this by suggesting we have the tools to

return to a simpler way of life: a safe, inventive and close community.

She pointed out that much of our area is well above sea-level and any failure of the Thames Barrier; we have large buildings for shelter such as the Streatham Hill Theatre and many churches; we have spring water, the near-by windmill on Brixton Hill and the Conyers Road pumping station. New community groups and social media promote local produce, home cooking, baking, brewing, gardening and entertainment. At each mention of locally produced food, Suzanne circulated an appropriate taster.

In previous years I have heard excellent talks given to the Streatham Society by former M.P.s Keith Hill (still a Streatham Society member) and Chuka Umunna. Bel joins them in giving a well-prepared, interesting and non-political talk for all constituents. However, I think she moves slightly ahead with her original and amusing presentation.

It almost makes me wish I lived in her constituency!

## The Life and Work of Charles Voysey, architect

Many thanks to Richard Havelock of the Voysey Society for a very interesting talk on Charles Voysey on March 7th (*photo below*). We had over 100 attend, possibly a record attendance for one of our talks. Charles Voysey briefly lived in Tierney Road and was the original architect of “Dixcot” in North Drive. His links to Ernest George, Lutyens, Shaw, Horniman and others were fascinating.



(Photos MB)

## Great Exhibition, Great Expectations

Philip Emery's talk on May 2nd attracted an expected large audience (c.70) as the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Crystal Palace continue to fascinate. He repeated, with some local additions, his popular on-line Covid-restricted presentation. He also brought several books on Crystal Palace which sold well.

We heard about the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, an international exhibition, opened by Queen Victoria, which took place in Hyde Park. It attracted 6 million visitors and was a huge financial success and funded the new Kensington museums.

Architect Joseph Paxton dismantled and erected an extended building in Sydenham (Crystal Palace) which became a popular venue for events until it was almost destroyed by fire in 1936.

**JH**

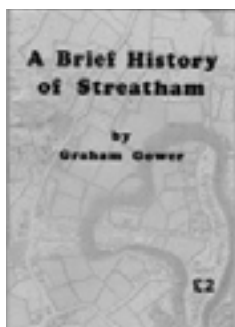
## STREATHAM SOCIETY BOOK DONATIONS

Last February our secretary Mark Bery posted the following on Facebook:

‘We are dropping off local history books to street libraries in the area. Let us know if there is one near you and we will add some stock.’ He included his photos to illustrate. What is the story behind this brilliant idea?



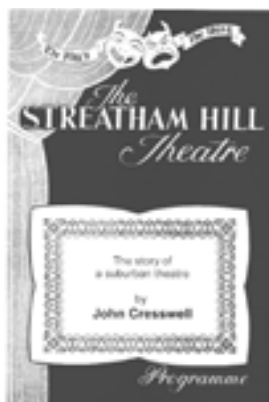
In the 1980s a Streatham Society book storage crisis arose. The member holding the bulk stock was moving and no-one offered to house c.1,500 publications. Mostly these were the very successful *Streatham Pictures from the Past*, (initially sponsored by WHSmith), and *A Brief History of Streatham*. Sales had raised £1,000s, providing us with the secure financial backing we have today. (They (left) are available on our website.)



In 1983 I met my late partner Brian Bloice (later Streatham Society chairman) at the Society's Local History Research Group. He suggested that my large loft would be ideal storage. I asked why his similarly-sized but much lighter, well-boarded and more accessible loft was not more suitable.

I reluctantly accepted his reasoning on condition I was never involved in sales. Many boxes were then hurriedly plonked into my loft. I had no knowledge of what was deposited and never went into the loft. Had I known Brian a little longer I'd have refused them.

Little did I know this was just the start. The increasing current stock was held elsewhere but over several years most was transferred to me.



With the closure of two local bookshops in the 1990s, our sales decreased considerably. Village Books in Shrubbery Road had previously sold almost all our publications. Words Worth in the High Road (junction Gleneagle Road) was where John W Brown sold hundreds of his Local History Reprints and Local History Publications. Both shops were a great loss to us and the wider community.

The first book with poor sales was John Cresswell's excellent *Streatham Hill Theatre* (the Bingo Hall). This was published in 2000. John had moved to the south coast so publicity was minimal. Only following David Harvey's formation of the Friends of



Streatham Hill Theatre did sales rocket. It has just been reprinted by the Friends using 130 original covers - found in my loft. (See the Friends website to purchase.)

A new publications officer was appointed c.2000. She donated copies of *Pictures from the Past* and *A Brief History* to about 25 local schools with a full book list and sales offers. This list and publicity were also circulated to most churches and other organisations; but there were no resulting orders.

Subsequent budget cuts eventually curtailed all sales at local libraries and Lambeth Archives. It soon became evident that local history books sold only at events in their locality. At the large Lambeth Show only the Brixton and Herne Hill Societies and Friends of Brockwell Park continued to sell well.

By 1986 the Streatham Society had an increasing number of enthusiastic researchers who published, gave talks, displays, tours, ran exhibitions and led walks until increasing age problems ended many - including mine. During this period a large number of articles, booklets and books were published; from c.2000 by John W Brown's Local History Publications. Several of these, particularly the *Trails*, were reprinted. Eventually we offered over 60 titles. Volunteers sold well at meetings and popular events.

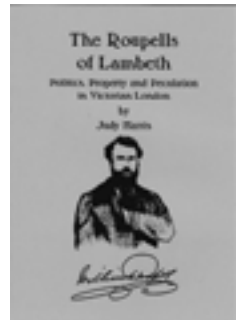
My books and booklets are typical examples of our sales patterns; in particular *The Roupells of Lambeth*, and *Donald McGill's Comic Postcards and the Streatham Connection*.

In 2002 *Roupell* was published. My research had concluded a few years earlier and I intended financing publication myself. I had met John when we both joined the Streatham Society in 1984. He helped with my research and suggested it should be published by the Society. He ordered 400 copies but a printers' error gave us 450 - 50 'free' - if they sold - but they didn't.

I knew *Roupell* wouldn't sell in Streatham as the Streatham part of the early Roupell Park Estate had been heavily bombed in WWII. Many remaining old houses were divided into cheap flats with shared facilities (such as Donald McGill's in Christchurch Road).

New council estates were built to rehouse tenants from substandard accommodation; St Martin's Estate being one of the first in the early 1950s. Few former residents would be interested in its earlier history.

Including more photographs and illustrations to make *Roupell* more attractive would have added significantly to the cost. I wanted all my research to be recorded so was happy for it to be boring-looking and cheaper (initially £7.99).



I sold it via talks, walks and displays to the then many local groups in and around Lambeth. I stored all the stock and dealt with sales. On-line orders were received from (since closed) book dealers - but these required a trade discount which wiped out profit. Good sales were made to the new residents of Roupell Street SE1 and from a bookshop in that area. It took over two years to go into profit - leaving 100+ copies for the loft.

*McGill* had two reprints, selling particularly well at the Cartoon Museum in Bloomsbury, until Bernard Crossley's excellent *Donald McGill - Postcard Artist* was published in 2014. Bernard warned me this was imminent but I had already ordered a second reprint of 300 of my book which subsequently hardly sold - so up in the loft went most - to join the present donations stock.

By c.2010 nearly all the remaining Society stock was in my house. Between 2000-2010 book sales were steady but most sold within two months of their publication, leaving an increasing surplus for the loft. I calculated most titles stored of over 40 copies could take 20-50 years to sell, deterioration allowing!

Since then I have advertised unsuccessfully for a publications' officer. But with over 60 titles and c.4,500 publications in store, there were no takers. Following Brian's death in 2015, I was landed with the lot - and all orders.

We are congratulated on our large number of titles - but most don't sell. Even at the pre-Covid crowded Streatham Common Kite Days, where we sold well, many titles were unsold. I spent much time preparing and pricing our books for sale then more time returning most of them back in store. How did such an asset become such a problem?

Ageing authors and volunteers, the internet, Amazon, Kindle books, changing library-use, tastes preferring pictures to shelves of books and finally Covid all hit our and other groups' sales. For a few months in 2021 local orders improved a little due to lockdown, people working at home, and our increasing Facebook and Society membership.

Now sales have returned to our pre-Covid pattern. On-line orders are usually for our well-researched histories but locally people prefer information about their house or street, particularly illustrated with old picture postcards. John Brown's Local History Publications cater well for these.

Seven years ago I started observing some twenty other groups' bookstalls - all with similar problems. The star was John Brown. Although he has published hundreds of titles, he never displays more than about 10 of the most attractive, well spaced, and targeted to an event. He knows his stock and sells well.

John has also solved part of our problem by publishing and selling directly to an author, group or organisation for sales, with Streatham Society promotion and a few copies for our stock and profit. Over the last decade our five new publications have sold thus. John's recent Local History Publications are ordered in small numbers for our sales as needed. Only successful publications, published

in recent years, are displayed on our bookstalls, but all are available on our website. Once out of stock, none are re-printed unless sales show it is worthwhile.

Since 2016 I have produced a detailed record of sales for my annual report to our trustees. Initially it was suggested all the loft stock should be recycled into my green bin, leaving only the current sales stock in my study. This wasn't followed through. But it is obvious as I approach my 80th year that I can no longer house or manage publications and my house-clearance could be imminent.

As Covid restrictions eased, a larger meetings' venue, Facebook and other social media have resulted in increased membership and new trustees. All is well - except for our unwieldy publications management.

Then last January, after my final report (2022), our energetic trustees sprang into action. Within five days of the executive committee meeting, my loft was completely cleared of some 2,600 publications - 12 titles in 32 boxes - the boxes of the more recent A4 books being particularly heavy.

Donations to the community proved the best idea; especially via the Streatham area's several street libraries. Provided and maintained by residents, anyone can borrow, keep, return and deposit books. Our 2,000 local history books donated should soon be thus distributed.



Within three months of my loft clearance over 20 drops had been made to ten local street libraries, plus donations to the Woodfield Pavilion, Dunraven School's World Book Day, Streatham Library, British Heart Foundation book shop and our remaining stock of the St Leonard's School history to their PTA.

In our next newsletter (No 253 Summer) I'll explain in detail what is required of a publications officer in the hope that a more streamlined system will attract at least one or two volunteers.

In the meantime we need members to help run our bookstalls at meetings and events now. Please contact Mark Bery if you are interested. *(Photo MB)*

Would the outcome have been different if I had refused to store the stock almost 40 years ago and insisted Brian's loft was used? When Brian died in 2015 he left the entire contents of his house - to me ...!

**Judy Harris**

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## STREATHAM SOCIETY CONTACTS

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### TRUSTEES

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#### *Membership, Newsletter Editor &*

#### *Publications Orders*

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**<https://www.facebook.com/groups/546435545867439/>**

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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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