



STREATHAM SOCIETY NEWS

Published quarterly

No. 235 Winter 2018/19



FRIENDS OF STREATHAM HILL THEATRE PHOTOSHOOT

November 25th 2018 - Crowds gather to save the Theatre

(See p.5)

STREATHAM SOCIETY MEETINGS & EVENTS

DEATH ON THE BRIGHTON ROAD - Places of execution in the 18th and 19th centuries

Talk, Jon Newman

Monday 4th March 8pm

MAYHEM, MURDER, MUTINY AND MISERY - The Greely Arctic Expedition 1881-84

Talk, Allen Brown

Monday 18th March 8pm

THE WATERWAYS IN AND AROUND LONDON - Development, restoration and maintenance by the Canal and River Trust

Talk, Phil Emery

Monday 1st April 8pm

FRIENDS OF STREATHAM CEMETERY - Cherishing history and nurturing wildlife

Talk, Kath Church

Monday 15th April 8pm

No meeting 6th May Public Holiday THE HISTORY OF BEULAH SPA, UPPER NORWOOD (See p.33)

Talk, Stephen Oxford

(Programme change)

Monday 20th May 8pm

HENRY TATE GARDENS TOURS Meet main gates Streatham Common North/Leigham Court Rd

Buses 249, 417. No parking or toilets on site. Strictly no photos of private homes.

Free, donations welcome; bookstall

Sunday 26th May 2pm & 3pm

(Part of Wandsworth Festival & Lambeth's Local History Walks programme)

BYGONE STREATHAM

A lost corner of Wandsworth

Talk, John W Brown

Monday 3rd June 8pm

(Part of Wandsworth Festival)

Meetings are at The Woodlawns Centre, 16 Leigham Court Road SW16 2PJ, unless otherwise stated. Visitors are welcome, but £1 contribution is requested.

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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 with the editor's permission.

STREATHAM ROUND AND ABOUT

DEATH OF JUNE WHITFIELD

One of Streatham's most famous comedy actresses

June Whitfield, one of Britain's most popular comedy actresses, died on Friday 28th December 2018, aged 93.

She was born in Streatham at 44 Mount Ephraim Lane on November 11 1925. June's parents, John and Bertha Whitfield, were leading lights of the Comedy Club which used to be based at Streatham. Her father was a Streatham member on Wandsworth Council and was appointed managing director of Dictograph Telephones Ltd in 1927. The family later moved to Calderwood (formerly The Limes), 5 Palace Road, Streatham Hill, which at one time was Christ Church vicarage.

As a child June attended the local Robinson School of Dancing and appeared in the Pageant of Streatham staged in the 1930s.

After appearing in provincial theatres her big break came in the early 1950s when she played the role of Eth Glum in the hit radio show *Take It From Here*. Over the decades she starred in a never-ending string of successful radio and television comedy programmes, including the long-running *Terry and June* series which was screened from 1979-1987.

For decades it seemed as if she was present in every successful comedy programme on television; appearing as a nurse in the famous 'blood donor' episode of Tony Hancock's television series, as well as episodes of *Steptoe and Son*, *Last of the Summer Wine*, the American series *Friends* and a number of *Carry On* films.



June Whitfield:
- Switching on
Streatham's Christmas
Lights (2006)
- At Robinson
School of Dancing
- Take It From Here
with Dick Bentley
as Ron (right)





*June in The News Huddlines,
Terry and June
and
Absolutely Fabulous (2012)*



She was also one of the stars in Radio 2's *The News Huddlines*, appearing with fellow Streatham comedian Roy Hudd, in what became one of the station's most popular long-running comedy programmes. June also appeared in various drama programmes such as *Dixon of Dock Green* and the popular BBC TV soap, *East Enders*.

In the 1990s she won a new audience of young fans for her rôle as Jennifer Saunders' mother in the BBC TV show *Absolutely Fabulous* and as recently as 2016 appeared in a film based on the series.

This Christmas she could have been heard on Radio 4 Extra playing Miss Marple in a repeat broadcast of *They Do It with Mirrors*, one of a series of Agatha Christie Mysteries in which she appeared as the elderly sleuth in the 1990s.

June was awarded an OBE in 1985, followed by a CBE in 1998, and in 2017 became a Dame in the Queen's Birthday Honours in recognition of her outstanding contribution and service in the fields of drama and entertainment.

John W Brown



FRIENDS OF STREATHAM HILL THEATRE PHOTOSHOOT



A great turnout for the Flashmob photo!

Our flashmob photoshoot on Sunday 25th November attracted a very large crowd of over 1000 supporters who want to save the theatre for the community. People travelled from near and far to show their support. We also had BBC London present, recording a piece which featured that day in both BBC London's evening news bulletins.

Result!

We responded to Beacon Bingo's appeal against Asset of Community Value (ACV) status. In reply, after an independent review, Lambeth confirmed the Streatham Hill Theatre building remains an ACV for five years from the original decision. There is a possibility that the owner may appeal further to a legal tribunal - we shall have to wait and see.

The Future?

Since closing down the bingo operation, Beacon Bingo have been seeking new operators who would offer live entertainment and community use. They continue to talk to a number of potential organisations. Beacon Bingo have a sub-lease under Mecca, who in turn lease from the freeholders, Pollmount. The leases have under 10 years to run. This complicates any changes of owner/operator.

Pollmount have said they do not currently have any specific plans for the building but have also said that any development would likely leave the auditorium and foyer unaffected. This suggests that the stage and dressing room block could be at risk. We are concerned that this would make the building unusable and unsustainable. However, any such changes would need planning permission and listed building consent to which we could object.

The Friends continue looking at the detail of a community future for the theatre and how we can achieve it. Please spread the word to friends, family, colleagues and on social media. *Contact StreathamHillTheatre.org*

Thanks to David Harvey, Chairman FoSHT

REMEMBERING THE CENTENARY OF THE END OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR



Colin Crocker and the recently re-erected St Leonard's Church War Memorial

As usual a large crowd gathered at the Streatham War Memorial by Streatham Common on Remembrance Day on the 11th November 2018 to lay wreaths and remember the fallen. The date was significant as it marked the centenary of the Armistice which brought the First World War to end in 1918.

At Streatham's ancient parish church, the Rector, Canon Revd. Anna Norman Walker, re-dedicated St. Leonard's War Memorial which was re-erected on the south wall of the Church, next to the Chapel of Unity. The service was particularly poignant as Anna had arranged for a number of clear Perspex silhouettes of First World War soldiers to sit among the congregation; their 'ghostly' presence (*right*) emphasising the tragic loss of life which occurred during the Great War of 1914-1918.

JWB

There but not there



'Ghostly' Perspex World War I soldiers
(Photos Marion Gower)



STREATHAM COMMON

Litter Bins

With picnic days long past, perhaps it is time to reflect on the topic that comes up repeatedly during warmer weather: what can be done about litter on our Common? How can people be persuaded to use the bins? Do there need to be more? Would it help to have persuasive signs up? Why is there such a mess in the vicinity of some bins? And so on.

First - have a guess at how many rubbish bins are on the Common, excluding the Rookery, the cafe and the paddling pool. The answer is below. In fact there were several more than that until very recently. Three of these were removed because they were in a poor state of repair and so close to others that Lambeth Council did not think they needed replacing. The other four were removed at the request of the Friends in order to reduce footfall and the driving of rubbish collection vehicles on sensitive areas of the Common.

This reduced the number of bins to around 50. In addition two very large wheelie bins have been by the car park since the summer. And during the summer months, Lambeth's Patrick Griffiths - who does such a good job of clearing up litter - was putting extra black bags next to the most used bins. Yet still the Common would be full of litter some evenings and early mornings, before Patrick did his round.

Why? For a start, there is the problem created by foxes, crows and squirrels. If a bin is of the type that is easily accessible to such scavengers, they can create a

horrible mess while searching for titbits. The solution is simple - replace the old open bins with the type that are inaccessible to scavengers. This would be costly, although little by little it is happening when an accessible-type bin needs to be replaced for some reason.

Then there is the problem of people who seem not to care. If there isn't a bin right next to where they have generated the litter, they leave it there when they go. Worse still are the people who sit on benches that have litter bins right by them and still can't be bothered to use them. A partial solution would be large signs that encourage people to take their litter to a bin or, better still, to take it home with them. Another solution, especially for the worst offenders, would be on the spot fines, were there anybody to hand them out.

We hope that at least some of these solutions can be implemented. We also hope that people will think to take their recyclable litter home with them and/or that recycling bins are provided on the Common. Let us know if you have any other thoughts on how to reduce the littering problem.

Peter Newmark

This article first appeared in Common Knowledge Issue 65, with thanks.



*Patrick Griffiths clearing
the Streatham Memorial Garden*

A few months ago Patrick was unsure whether he should give me permission to take a photo of him for publication. I recently saw him with his lorry in the distance thoroughly emptying litter bins at the bottom of Streatham Common.

Snap! Got him! He looked up and saw me. I waved and he waved back; but I don't think he recognised me.

Thanks, Patrick!

JH

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES



You may be surprised to hear that Streatham has more public conveniences than any surrounding area south of the South Bank. I frequently walk around the local streets and think I've used or located most of them. I have also developed surreptitious strategies to use those that aren't open to non-customers, especially in pubs; arguably more difficult for a woman, especially at night.

The days of supervised public conveniences have gone. The only ones I know of are pay facilities. Unsupervised toilets are often dirty and vandalised, despite being cleaned once or twice a day. It takes only one idiot to make a mess.

I have followed various petitions to provide public toilets with interest. The now closed facilities in Gracefield Gardens and Leigham Court Road were dark and dismal. The latter was a large off-putting space. Following a short re-opening it was closed after local businesses complained it attracted the drug trade. Those at Crystal Palace bus station closed because of use by drug users and sex workers.

Speaking to some local café owners, they explained they had limited cleaning hours and women's toilets were frequently blocked by wet wipes and baby and sanitary products. Having inadvertently blocked two toilets recently, I can add flimsy inadequate toilet paper which can need a fist-full, only a short flush and a small waste extract hole. It took me fifteen minutes, a toilet brush and four flushes to clear one. I reported the other to be told it would be children who blocked it deliberately. No it wasn't!

Wimpy was one of the first local cafés to advertise community facilities on their window although their street sign has now disappeared. McDonalds, Streatham Place, still displays this sign (*both above*). Another local café which did not deter non-customers has since locked their toilets, the doors of which show signs of vandalism.

I consider the only answer is for high usage venues with long opening hours to provide facilities. So congratulations to Sainsbury's, Streatham Common, Tesco, Streatham Station, both M&S Food Halls, the library, the Rookery café (outside), Gracefield Gardens and other large NHS Health Centres.

JH

STREET FURNITURE - PHONE BOOTHS

Following the article in the last *News* about the 35 phone booths along the Streatham section of the A23, I received an email from Cllr. Clair Wilcox. She wrote: "I agree that the issue around telephone boxes is one which needs resolving and my understanding is that the previous Cabinet Member with responsibility for the Environment/Transport was working on this very issue. I also am aware of successful removals of extraneous 'street furniture' as well as alternative useful functions for phone booths such as critically important defibrillator machines."

The reply to her Member's Enquiry stated: "This road is the responsibility of TFL (*Transport for London*), including the footways. The BT kiosks in terms of maintenance and renewal/removal is the responsibility of BT and this enquiry will need to be directed to them."

Clair's response was that she will add this issue to her list of concerns to discuss with our GLA representative. She will also raise the matter with the Cabinet Member responsible for public realm. She thanks us for bringing the matter to her attention. Thank you, Clair, for your quick response and action.

CYNTHIA PAYNE BECOMES A CULTURAL ACHIEVER

Just as I'd finished this *News*, it was announced that 'Madam Cyn', Cynthia Payne, has been included in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, a collection of people who are said to have shaped British culture. The 'luncheon voucher' scandal of the services provided for visitors, including MPs, in her Ambleside Avenue home, hit the headlines in 1978. She would have loved this latest development!

JH

PARKING WHITE LINES – CLARIFICATION

In the Autumn 2018 Newsletter Frank Purdy says, quite rightly, that parking white lines are not legally enforceable. However, this does not seem to prevent traffic wardens from issuing penalty notices for vehicles parked on white lines.

At a property a few doors from where I live which has a white line in front of it but no one who owns a motor vehicle, there have been at least four penalty notices issued in this year alone. It is also the case that most motorists will treat white lines in the same way as they do yellow lines and avoid parking on them so that the white lines remain a wasteful and inefficient method of managing kerbside parking space. In my opinion the points I made in my article in the Summer Newsletter are still valid – that white lines are longer than necessary and that there needs to be mechanism for removing them when they are no longer required.

Andrew McKay

POETRY CORNER

Hi to the Streatham Society. I'm Stefanie Stansfield and shy!!! I'm twelve years of age, Year 7. I'm London-born and lived in Streatham for a while. I've written a poem. I asked my half-brother what he remembers about the area, then I put my thoughts onto paper. I could have written much more but I wanted to keep it short and yet still include a little tribute to June Whitfield, so it's as if I've travelled through time to include so much! I hope my poem is of some use.

Yours sincerely, Stefanie.

Walking along Leigham Court Road
during a visit to Streatham.
Plenty of children my age
and it's nice to have met them.

Done-up for Dunraven
and rightly, it's part of behaving.
Year 7 and getting it right,
new school and things that need doing.

Mount Nod Road, Stockfield Road
close by the school and my half-brother's
abode,
and half a mile away, Stanthorpe Road
where his girl friend Zoe lived - that I know.

In 1992 and 1993, a lovely friendship
but then Zoe moved, you see.
But he will never forget her,
says my half-brother David.
Seeing her after school gave him self-belief.

And the general store, nearby Prontaprint
from 1994 to early 1996.
The owner's eldest daughter
made David's heart fly.
He'd buy things he didn't need
just to look her in the eyes.

Streatham and Clapham High School,
the green uniform and ties era.
All the movies that have been screened
at the Odeon cinema.
The various meals
served in all the restaurants.
The joy of the queue,
as waited-for buses get nearer.



Leigham Court Road junction



Shops opposite Streatham Green

The changing fashions and solid friendships.
The standing still to let delivery chaps complete,
the knowledge of products,
the quality, the hours.
And how time stood still
when your partner you did meet

The many real-life versions of Terry and June.
And June trod the boards
long before men walked on the moon!
With June Whitfield, wit really meant wit,
a Streatham-born legend,
we won't forget you anytime soon!

Stefanie Stansfield, age 12

Pratt's

Oh for the time when I used to stroll,
"Lonely as a cloud",
Up Streatham High Road.
And there I'd wander into Pratt's
Not to shop, you understand,
But to ... what? To browse? To reconnoitre?
Certainly not to buy.
I'd look at the carpets.
What to lay in our hall,
Or loo, or dining room?
Assuming it was something I could afford,
Which mostly it wasn't.
Then to the basement, down below,
To watch the latest in TVs
And listen to the Hi-est Fi.
What next? While down here,
Cooking gadgets are worth a look
Followed by fitted kitchens.
What's the time? It's only half past two.
Time for some furniture,
And it's some while since
I looked at all varieties of lamps.
My God! Is it three? It's time
I went and did the proper shopping.
Pratt's is now, alas, long gone
And so is my recreation.



Pratt's of Streatham

David Standfast

LOCAL HISTORY MATTERS

FENSTANTON HOUSE



Several months ago, I received an order for two copies of my history *From Fenstanton House to Fenstanton School*. As this is out of print, I almost replied that it was unavailable. However, the fact that two copies were ordered from the Slough area intrigued me. I still had ten copies which I had bought to keep so I checked with the buyer, Mr MJ Boxall, that he was not expecting a history of Fenstanton School in Cambridgeshire.

The outcome was most exciting. Mr Boxall sent me eleven photographs of Fenstanton house and grounds, together with details of Fenstanton Ltd which bought the estate c.1933 for £18,000 and, unknown to me, existed until 1963.

Mr Boxall writes: "At the outbreak of War in 1939, the business evacuated to Five Diamonds, Chalfont St. Giles, Bucks, where it remained until the beginning of 1947. All fifty staff and patients are listed in the 1939 local register. It then moved to Hitcham Place, Burnham, Bucks. until 1963.

'My mother's father Abner Ward (1882-1966) was head gardener at Fenstanton. Her mother was Kate, nee Hysom, (1878-1941). They had four daughters, of whom my mother Dorothy (1916-1996) was the youngest. I know my mother worked for a Dr. and Mrs Davidson, looking after their daughter, Grace, somewhere in the Brockwell Park area.



Dorothy Ward & Alfred Boxall (left) at Fenstanton, on the day they got engaged in May 1939 and (right) Abner, Dorothy & Kate Ward outside Fenstanton in Christchurch Road

‘My father (Alfred Boxall 1912-1989) was taken on as under-gardener in 1936. He remained with the company until it ceased trading in 1963. I also enclose copies of three letters which were among his paperwork and which might be of interest. The quality of the estate photographs suggest they may well have been taken for a sales catalogue. I suspect my father was given copies simply by asking his employers for them.’

Fenstanton House stood on the site now occupied by City Heights Secondary and Fenstanton Primary Schools. It was built c.1875 in the second phase of the development of the Victorian Roupell Park estate which was bisected by Christchurch and Palace Roads. It was the largest house on the estate, with extensive grounds. By this time the area was under rapid development with housing for the lower-middle- and working-classes with the wealthier inhabitants of the earlier houses migrating to leafy Surrey.

An 1890 auction catalogue describes it as an eight bedroomed mansion with an imposing staircase and reception rooms. Its dual carriage-way entrance led from Christchurch Road. Flower gardens lay to the front and back of the house with a tennis lawn, kitchen garden, glass houses, farm and staff buildings mainly to the west bounded by the present Gaywood Close and the upper section of Abbots

Park. Fields to the east included the present sports area serving the St Martin's estate.

In 1890 the house was bought by Bernard Parsons, a wealthy local butcher. His wife Elizabeth was born in the village of Fenstanton in Cambridgeshire, after which the house was named. The couple had six live-in staff plus grounds workers.

By 1899 Fenstanton was leased to Mrs Gardiner-Hill and her son James, a surgeon. The house was considerably extended and run as a nursing home, mainly for the elderly and mentally ill, by various doctors until c.1932. After its acquisition by Fenstanton Ltd it was listed as a private mental home.

At the outbreak of World War II, Fenstanton Ltd moved the residents to Chalfont St Giles. Fenstanton became an MOD fire-watching centre and supported two land girls. Part of the building was bombed, as was much of the surrounding area, thus accelerating its decline.

After the war, along with other large houses, Fenstanton was bought by the London County Council and from 1943 until 1950 it was an LCC Rest Home, probably for unmarried mothers and babies, as were others nearby.

In 1950 Fenstanton House was demolished to make way for



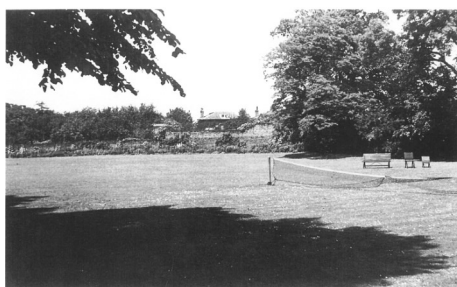
Extensions built behind the house, facing towards Tulse Hill Station and Norwood Road



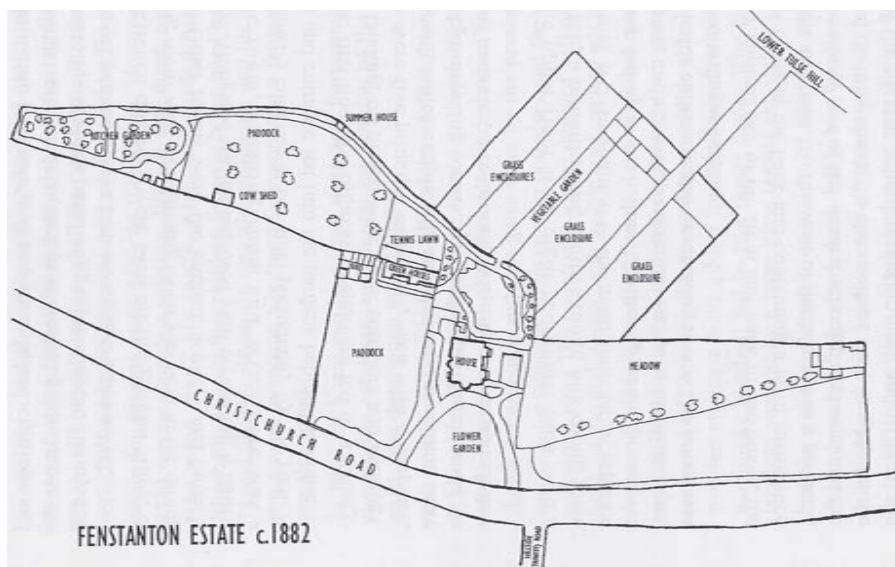
View from the above; the distant church spire to the right would be that of the Roupell Park Methodist Church, facing Tulse Hill Station, which was bombed during WWII.

Fenstanton Infant and Junior Schools, built to serve the post-war ‘baby-boom’, along with St Martin’s estate. Fenstanton Schools opened in 1952. By the late 1960s the junior school (years 3-6) alone had more than 550 pupils and new schools were built nearby. A few years later school rolls fell considerably and by 1990 building faults became increasingly apparent in Fenstanton Schools. They were demolished a few years ago and replaced by the present schools. Happily, the Fenstanton name lives on.

During my research I found only two photographs of Fenstanton - until now. Another fact has also been revealed: Fenstanton moved to Chalfont St Giles where it was in 1947. From 1946-1948 I also lived there (aged 2-3). Little did I know I would teach at Fenstanton Junior School from 1965-1997, then still be involved in its research today!



Fenstanton - The rose garden and tennis lawn



MJ Boxall & Judy Harris

MISS D - Edith Mary Davenport



*Miss Edith Mary Davenport
and (right) as a nurse in WWI*



Miss Edith Mary Davenport (1891-1972), affectionately known by all who knew her as Miss D, was a founder member of the Streatham and Norbury Branch of the Royal Air Forces Association (RAFA), and a benefactor to the branch. She lived most of her life in a large house in Telford Avenue and was for many years a very active member of her local branch.

The Streatham and Norbury Branch was formed in 1946, and originally met in an upper room of the White Hart Public House by St. Leonard's Church.

Miss D had served as a nurse during World War I until her father demanded that she return home as he did not like his daughter to be out and about in such a short skirt (it revealed her ankles).

Then later, in 1919, some of the ladies who had served in the WRAF, formed the WRAF Old Comrades Association to foster the comradeship that they had experienced during their service in the Forces, a leading figure of which



64 Telford Avenue (left)



RAFA river trip in 1946

was Dame Helen Gwynne-Vaughan who had been a Commandant of the WRAF during the war. Dame Helen became president and was an administrator well ahead of her time. It is believed that Miss D may have been a member of this early committee.

In 1941 the WRAF Old Comrades Association amalgamated with the Comrades of the Royal Air Forces Association and adopted the name The Royal Air Forces Association using the word Forces (plural), to recognise the service in the RAF

by citizens of what are now Commonwealth countries.



*WRAF Parade in Portsmouth 15th September 1946,
Battle of Britain Day,
including Yvonne Watkins' step-mother*

For the RAFA Miss D offered her home for rehearsals of RAFFI-ANS, a dramatic Group; herself taking small parts in some of their productions. She was a member of the committee for many years, at one time membership secretary, and the committee meetings were held in her home in Telford Avenue.

Miss D had a brother who was killed in an air accident after WW1, whilst serving as a pilot for one of the aviation companies, and it is thought that her closeness with her brother was one reason why she was so 'air minded'.

When Miss D died in 1972, a portion of her estate was bequeathed to Streatham & Norbury RAFA.



RAFA display in the Odeon Cinema in 1976

Yvonne Watkins

As veterans of the war declined and fewer local residents had any connections with the RAF, the Association's numbers declined and the local branch closed in 2014 when its colour was laid up in St Margaret's Church, Streatham Hill.

JWB

SVPOA JOURNALS

We are indebted to Mrs Jill Mills of Walton-on-Thames for the generous donation of three early volumes of the Streatham Vale Property Owners' Association Journal covering the years December 1928 to December 1931 (Vols 2-4).

Jill's grandfather, Walter Frederick Pierotti, was among the earliest residents in Streatham Vale, living at 28 Sherwood Park Road. He was chairman of the Association and churchwarden at the Holy Redeemer Church, being heavily involved in the building of the church in 1927.

For two and a half years he was Editor of the SVPOA journal, *Vale Topics*, and it is this period which is covered in the bound volumes of the Journal which Jill has donated.

Walter and his colleagues in the SVPOA worked tirelessly on behalf of the new residents moving into the area in the late 1920s and early 1930s. They campaigned for improved conditions and facilities for the estate which was built on a large area of poor quality land on the Streatham/Mitcham borders of the ancient parish of Streatham.



Streatham Vale was the name dreamed up by the developers to provide the area with an Eden-like aura when in fact the locality was far from such. It had formerly been known as Lonesome, indicating the remote and lonely nature of this then isolated location. The land was boggy in places, covered with scrub and the heavy clay soil made it difficult to drain and develop. These were among the reasons why the area was the last to be developed with housing in the parish. It had been neglected and rejected by builders until well after the First World War when they had no better plots to build on left in the area.

People initially moving onto the 'Vale' had muddy roads, a lack of bus services and normal civic facilities to contend with and it was largely through the efforts of Walter and his companions that these hardships were addressed and rectified.

The early copies of the SVPOA journal Jill has donated detail some of these challenges as well as the hive of activities and campaigns undertaken by the SVPOA at that time. In addition the adverts featured provide a fascinating glimpse of some of the early traders who set up shop in the Vale.

From The Editor's Chair (*copy*)

Good-Bye

28, Sherwood Park Road,
S.W.16.

Dear Readers,

With the presentation of this issue, my tenure of office as Editor of VALE TOPICS expires. Increasing business pressure, growing parental and domestic responsibilities, and other neglected local work, are reasons underlying my request to be relieved; and, I am therefore, laying on one side the editorial pen and blue pencil, and for the first and last time, writing my monthly notes in the first person, in bidding you all an editorial "au revoir."

For the past two and a half years it has been my privilege and pleasure to piece together the multitudinous contributions that go to the making of VALE TOPICS each month. It has been my endeavour to do this in a manner that brought out the natural characteristics, abilities, and individual lines of thought of the various contributors, whether official or private, to give life and tone to the whole, and, whilst giving credit where it was due, to quietly but firmly refuse any attempts to use our pages for private gain, or personal advertisement; always keeping our Charter steadily in mind, and so declining to allow VALE TOPICS to become a general magazine, comic paper or technical journal, but to balance the available matter to the best advantage, and in the best interests of both the Association and Sports and Social Club, and those whom both these bodies desire to serve.

To all those very numerous friends who have helped in any way, whether with contributions, or with the distribution, I offer my grateful thanks both on my own behalf and on behalf of the Committee. I trust that they will continue their most valuable work, and afford a like measure of support to our new Editor. To those gentlemen who have been associated with me on VALE TOPICS

Committee: Mr. Rixon, Mr. Powell, Mr. Wingate, Mr. Ridger, Mr. Dowden from the Association, and Mr. Kirkland, Mr. Voisey, Mr. Smith, Mr. Barley, and Mr. Jowett from the Sports Club, I thank also, not only for their co-operation and help, but also for their kindly trust and the wide scope allowed me. To the printers also my thanks and appreciation for their unfailing courtesy and promptitude.

The new Editor of VALE TOPICS is to be Mr. Rixon, of 170, Abercairn Road, to whom all matter for VALE TOPICS should now be sent. Mr. Rixon needs little introduction from me as he is already well known to most of you. He has served on VALE TOPICS Committee since July, 1929, and also served for two years as Chairman of the Association's Publicity, or Road Steward Committee; at the last Annual General Meeting he was elected Vice-Chairman of the Association. He will make his bow to you as Editor in the January issue, and I ask for your full support for him in his endeavours for VALE TOPICS.

In conclusion, may I wish all my friends and readers the old, old Yule-tide wish: A Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year - and to those who are ill - a speedy return to the best of all happiness - good health.

Believe me to remain,

Your obedient servant,

W.F. Pierotti.

December 1st, 1931.



Streatham Vale Estates Property Owners' Association Executive Committee 1929

JWB

JAMES LEACH AND BENJAMIN GEARY: TWO MORE STREATHAM VC HEROES

The unveiling of three Victoria Cross memorial plaques at the base of the Streatham War Memorial in 2015 and 2016, to mark the centenary of the award to three former residents of our town, highlighted the outstanding bravery of these local heroes.

However, Frederick Henry Johnson VC born on 15th August 1890 at 13 Bedford Row (157 Streatham High Road), Geoffrey St. George Shillington Cather VC, born on 11th October 1890 at 55 Christchurch Road and Arthur Fleming-Sandes VC, born at 'Beverley', 3 Northstead Road, Streatham, on 24th June 1884 are not our town's only VC holders.



Captain J Leach VC

A small item in the *Streatham News* published on 5th April 1918 makes a brief mention of Captain J Leach of Streatham who gained his VC on the Western Front in October 1914, one of the earliest VC holders of the First World War.

I discovered this item in the 1980s, well before the advent of the internet, and was then unable to uncover exactly what his connection with Streatham was, there being no reference to him in local directories or census returns. I therefore placed the clipping, together with other information about him I had discovered, in my archive and, with the passing of the years, he slipped from my mind.

However, recent research by Andrew Had-don has established his domicile in our town through an entry in the Wands-worth Council Electoral Roll for 1918 which shows him then living at 102 Norfolk House Road. His tenancy there must have been brief, probably less than 12 months. Local Directories show the house was occupied by John Edmund Kennedy in 1912, 1913, 1917 and 1922. It therefore appears that either Leach rented the property from Kennedy in 1918 (Kennedy is not listed in the 1918 Electoral Roll) or he and his family lodged in the house with Kennedy.

Further evidence of Leach's residence there comes from the birth certificate of his first son, James Walter Barry Leach, who was born on 1st June 1918 at 118 Norfolk House Road, Streatham. There is no number 118 in Norfolk House Road as the even numbers end with no. 112, so this would appear to be an error and probably should have been entered as no. 102.

Why then was James residing in Streatham in 1918? Again, Andrew's research

has revealed the reason, for in March 1918 James was appointed Adjutant of the South West London Cadet Battalion affiliated to the 23rd London Regiment. On 25th July Leach applied to the War Office to be retired from the Army on account of medical unfitness. Three months later approval was given for him to leave the army on retired pay on account of ill health contracted on active service and he was discharged in August 1918. It is likely that, shortly after his discharge, he and his family moved to Grimsby to be near his wife's family.

The event for which Lt. James Leach and Sgt. John Hogan, both serving with the 2nd Manchester Regiment, were to be awarded the Victoria Cross, Britain's highest military medal for bravery, occurred near Festubert on the 29th October 1914.

The citation for their awards reads: "... when after their trench had been taken by the Germans and after two attempts at recapture had failed, they voluntarily decided to recover the trench themselves, and working from traverse to traverse at close quarters with great bravery, they gradually succeeded in regaining possession, killing eight of the enemy, wounding two and making sixteen prisoner."

Andrew has also undertaken research into another VC holder with Streatham connections, Benjamin Handley Geary VC, whose commemorative plaque was unveiled by the entrance to Brockwell Park in 2015.

In 1896 his widowed mother, Mrs Geary, moved to a new house at 131 Palace Road where she continued to reside until 1925. Sadly Benjamin's father had died shortly before the birth of his son in June 1891. In 2017 a block of flats erected on the site of no. 3 Palace Road was named Geary Court in honour of Benjamin.

Andrew's research, in addition to that undertaken by Jeff Doorn of the Herne Hill Society, reveals that Benjamin was educated at Dulwich College Preparatory School and later at St Edmund's School, Canterbury, before attending Keble College, Oxford, in 1910. On leaving university Benjamin became a teacher until the outbreak of World War I, when he joined the East Surrey Regiment.

He was awarded his VC for "most conspicuous bravery and determination" on April 20th and 21st 1915. The citation referred to his "splendid gallantry and



Lieut. BH Geary VC



*Benjamin Handley Geary V.C.
Commemorative plaque in Brockwell Park*

example” in the face of heavy artillery fire and repeated bomb attacks. ‘At one time he used a rifle with great effect, at another threw hand grenades, and exposed himself with entire disregard to danger.’”

Having been shot in the head and lost the sight in his left eye, Benjamin was evacuated to England and promoted to Lieutenant. He then worked on ground duties and returned to France with the Royal Flying Corps in 1916.

Although he should not have resumed active duty on medical grounds, he commanded a company, and later that year was wounded again.

He retired from the Army in 1919 with the rank of Captain. He subsequently became a vicar and in 1926-27 served as Chaplain to the Forces. He later emigrated to Canada and in the Second World War served in the Canadian Army with the rank of Major. Benjamin died in 1976.

Other ‘local’ VCs include Edward ‘Tiny’ Foster, the Tooting dustman who won his VC in the First World War. He lived in Fountain Road. As a corporal in the East Surrey Regiment, he won the Victoria Cross in 1917 for his “reckless courage” in overpowering an enemy machine gun position, enabling the allies to break through enemy lines and capture the village of Villers Plouich. ‘Tiny’ was a gentle 6ft 2ins, twenty stone, giant of a man who was employed as a council dustman. After the war he was promoted to a dust inspector. He died on 22nd January 1946 aged 59. He was born in Tooting Grove in the registration district of Streatham.

Cpl. Arthur Henry Cross VC is buried in Streatham Park Cemetery, the only VC to be buried there. Also connected with the Streatham area is Acting Captain Arthur Moore Lascelles VC who was born at Wilby Lodge, Nightingale Lane, in what may have been that part of the lane which used to be in the parish of Streatham.

Lt. K Paul Bennett VC was the nephew of Mr and Mrs Johnson of Rydal Lodge, Rydal Road, Streatham. Mrs H J Chaperlin lived at Streatham Court and was the daughter of Col. Douglas Ross VC. Mrs Bond of 6 Ribblesdale Road, was the

sister of Lt. Chard VC of Rorkes Drift fame. Fl. Lt. Henryk Szczesny of Norbury Avenue, SW16, won the Polish equivalent of the British VC.

Then, of course, we must not forget Gyp, the brown terrier who lived in Bodium Road, Streatham Vale, who won Britain's first dog VC for rousing his mistress's three young children from a burning tent.

Also Olga, a police horse, who won the Dickin Medal for bravery in the Second World War when on 3 July 1944 she was on patrol in Besley Street with her rider, PC J E Thwaites, where a bomb exploded 300 feet in front of them. The explosion destroyed four houses; killed four people and caused a plate glass window to fall directly in front of Olga. Startled, the mare initially ran a short distance away from the blast until Thwaites was able to calm her and guide her back to the area where he administered help to survivors and, mounted on Olga, diverted sightseers away from the devastation.



*Metropolitan Police Dickin Medal Award Winners
(l-r) Olga, Regal and Upstart.
Olga, ridden by PC JE Thwaites, received the medal for an incident in
Besley Street in 1944*

John W Brown & Andrew Haddon

BOYS & GIRLS COME OUT TO PLAY



Further to the article in a recent edition of the *Streatham Society News*, Colin Crocker reports that the old BOYS and GIRLS signs have now been re-erected at Sunny-hill School, restoring a feature of the establishment which dates back to when the school was built in 1900.



The BOYS sign was completely refurbished and has been returned to its original position on Valley Road, close to the end of the fencing, near where the boat is in the playground. The GIRLS sign was made anew and has been positioned as close to where it had originally stood as possible, next to the main school entrance on Sunnyhill Road.

We are grateful to Colin for helping to make this possible and to Sunny-hill School for the time and trouble they have gone to in order to preserve a part of the heritage of the school building.

TRIPLE FUN IN GERMANY



Following John Brown's recent article on the joys of being a triplet, Rosemary Honey has forwarded this picture of her with a set of German triplets taken in July 1951.

Rosemary was working that summer in Germany for the Leuchterberg family, helping out in their home and in the family's antique business.

The photograph was taken when Rosemary and the family's triplet sons, (from left to right) Karli, Marci and Albert, went on an outing not far from Munich.

STREATHAM HILL THEATRE PROGRAMMES

Our thanks to Ann Donoghue for the donation of a number of old Streatham Hill Theatre programmes dating from the mid to late 1950s. During the more than 30 years the theatre was in operation, around 1300 shows were performed there, given that some performances, such as pantomimes, ran for more than a single week. The Streatham Society is trying to compile a complete run of programmes for the theatre as a record of the productions performed there. Ann's kind donation has now taken our holding to over 700 programmes taking us a little closer to our goal.

JWB

THE STREATHAM HILL INSTITUTE 1852

On Monday 19th November 2018 I went to the British Museum to see an exhibition about Ashurbanipal, King of Syria. Imagine my surprise when I saw a print of Streatham Hill Institute 1852. It seemed to have a big hall for lectures. Perhaps it was an early form of the Streatham Society! Layard made some important discoveries in Nineveh. His assistant came to Streatham in 1852 to give a lecture about these discoveries. His name was George Scharf. Later he became director of the National Portrait Gallery.

Does anyone have any more information about the Streatham Hill Institute?

Andrew Christos

PETER JEFFERSON SMITH 1939-2018

We were very sorry to hear of the death of Peter Jefferson Smith a few days before Christmas. Peter was an outstanding figure in Clapham and in the Clapham Society for over 50 years. He was totally committed to the good of the local community and his contributions to the area have been diverse, numerous and long-lasting.

In recognition of these, the Clapham Society have issued an account of the most prominent of these: Holy Trinity Church history, its restoration and development; the preservation of Old Clapham; the restoration of the Clapham Common bandstand and his contribution to local history via his research, publications, talks and guided walks.

He and his wife and co-worker, Anna, were long-standing members of the Streatham Society as their interests covered all areas in Lambeth and Wandsworth around Clapham. We send much sympathy to Anna and their family. Peter will be sorely missed.



JH

STREATHAM SOCIETY REPORTS

NEW SECRETARY NEEDED

Our Acting Chair, Shea Richardson, has also been our secretary for several years but wishes to retire from the post to give more time to her other Streatham Society activities as well as those of several organisations she supports.

The position involves attending six annual executive committee meetings, held at 8pm on the second Monday of alternate months. He/she is also required to deal with all emails (apart from enquiries regarding membership and publications), take minutes and co-ordinate an annual report. All executive committee members are also trustees of the Society.

The position would run from the next AGM held in June. Please contact Shea if you are interested (details back page).

OUR REFRESHMENTS TEAM RETIRES

After 9½ years, our two team organisers, Barbara Beer and Pauline Hewitt, have retired. Their provision of cakes, tea and coffee at our twice-monthly meetings has been invaluable. The refreshment breaks, held in the comfortable dining room, have significantly contributed to the sociability of the evenings. We thank them profusely for their excellent service.

When they, with Ruth Garnett and Christine Bonnell, first offered their services we accepted immediately. Previously tea and coffee were supplied by a pay-machine, since removed, which frequently served only soup or was out of order. Barbara and Pauline agreed to organise independently, buying refreshments, cups etc., accessing the upstairs storage, filling the urn in the kitchen to serve teas and coffees in the dining room and dealing with the finances.

As our venue hire stipulates that we must leave it clean and tidy for the following day's users, this means tables must be wiped, the floor checked and rubbish cleared. In addition our regular c.50 attendees should be served in 15 minutes! Unfortunately the preparation and clearing meant that Pauline and Barbara missed about twenty minutes of the talk each side of the break.

Have we any volunteers? They are a hard act to follow. It needs at least one organiser and additional helpers. It could be simplified by not using the dining room, serving biscuits instead of cake, or only packaged/bottled drinks, but it is still quite a task for twenty-plus meetings. If you are interested, please speak to Pauline or Shea.

OTHER HELPERS NEEDED

Our numbers of meetings' helpers are dwindling, particularly to prepare, clear, fetch and carry before and after meetings. Any more volunteers?

EVENTS REPORTS

Meetings

The Great Stink

On October 15th Julie Chandler gave an illustrated talk on Joseph Bazalgette and the London sewers. Julie is a London Blue Badge guide who is a guest lecturer on their guide training course. She gives tours and talks to Londoners, visitors and at a variety of events to a wide range of audiences. She also takes overseas visitors on day trips to other heritage sites outside London.

The River Thames was always London's main water supply, but by the 1800s it was basically London's biggest toilet and it stank! Streets were filthy and cholera was rife, with thousands dying from the disease. Matters came to a head in 1858 and Parliament finally decreed that something had to be done. Enter Joseph Bazalgette, engineer and Commissioner of the Metropolitan Board of Works, and his plan to build a network of sewers under London's streets. We were told the story of the Great Stink and how one man's vision and feat of engineering genius cleaned up the streets, cleaned up the Thames, eradicated cholera and saved thousands of lives.

Streatham at Westminster

On November 5th the Rt Hon Keith Hill's talk was about Streatham's parliamentary history 1885-2010. He was rather worried listeners would find the subject boring but it certainly wasn't. An accomplished speaker, Keith could make any subject interesting and this was an excellent presentation. We eagerly await his planned book on the subject.

Keith was the Labour Member of Parliament for Streatham from 1992 to 2010. He had several ministerial positions including housing and transport minister and minister for London. He was PPS to Prime Minister Tony Blair from 2005 to 2007. He was made a Privy Counsellor in 2003. He is a long-time member of the Streatham Society.

The Unknown Warrior

Don Doncaster's subject on November 19th was the story behind the unidentified soldier who was brought from the western front to England to be a focus of the grief for the friends and families of those hundreds of thousands of missing soldiers with no known grave. His excellent talk was enhanced by an impressive display from Colin Crocker.

Don spent five years in the Grenadier Guards. He was Standard Bearer for the Royal British Legion and carried national standards many times.

Members' Christmas Party

We rounded off the year with a most successful party. Thank you so much for the variety of food and drink members brought. We ask members to contribute

these to give our refreshment team a rest. This year this was particularly appropriate as our two team leaders, Barbara Beer and Pauline Hewitt, were retiring, although this was not announced until January.

The occasion went particularly well as our organisation was better and we had more time to relax, eat and chat. Allen Brown gave a most amusing quiz identifying animal cricketers. And there were only posh biscuits!

The Collection of Sir Henry Wellcome

Our 2019 programme started with Jack Mitchell's history of medicine artefacts.

Sir Henry Wellcome was a remarkable figure of interwar Britain, and although his name is perhaps more synonymous with pharmaceuticals, his medical collection was, at the time of his death in 1936, the most comprehensive in the world.

The lecture focused on how Sir Henry Wellcome acquired his enormous collection of history of medicine artefacts and the intellectual ambitions which underpinned the process. Part of the collection is now on loan to the Science Museum in London. The lecture also highlighted a few key examples from the collection in order to demonstrate its depth and variety.

Jack Mitchell is a former Assistant Curator of Medicine at the Science Museum in London. He has around seven years experience within the museum industry. His role allowed him to work with the Wellcome Collection on a daily basis, and as such he had a unique understanding of its contents and scale. Working so closely with the collection lead him to become interested in the life and work of Sir Henry Wellcome.

He left the museum in September 2017 to pursue a MSc in the History of Science, Technology and Medicine at the University of Manchester. He hopes to return to the museum profession after completing his degree.

Thanks to all those speakers who provide us with notes about themselves and their presentation on the booking form. These enable me to write these reports.

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome new members Ian & Maggie Minards, Ian Hunter (from Wakefield), Brendan Grennan & household, Marc Sheppard and Jonathan Gray. We hope they enjoy our events and publications.

By mid-January almost half of our membership had paid their 2019 subscription - before the reminders were sent out! This is very helpful as it saves me printing reminders to send with the February *Streatham Society News*. If one is included with this issue, please send your payment to me (details on the reminder and back page), unless you have paid in the last month. Subscriptions are £10 individual or £15 household (please name all). Cheques should be made payable to The Streatham Society. BACS details are available on request.

Payment should be received before 31st March when non-payees are deleted from our database. You can renew at any time during the year but back copies of the *News* may not be available.

Yet again may I thank all of you who have included donations, notes, cards and letters with your subscription. Your generosity and thoughtfulness never cease to amaze me, especially as most come from members who cannot attend any of our bi-monthly meetings because of age, ill-health, other commitments or living outside the area. Their only contact is via the *News* and your appreciation of this makes it well worth the effort.

Our committees and helpers are fewer in number each year as we live in an age when the gap between internet users and personal contact has widened and people are retiring later. It is increasingly difficult to attract members who are willing and able to help. As I tear my hair out over Windows 10 and unwanted upgrades, I am reassured by your encouragement!

Judy Harris

NEW PUBLICATIONS

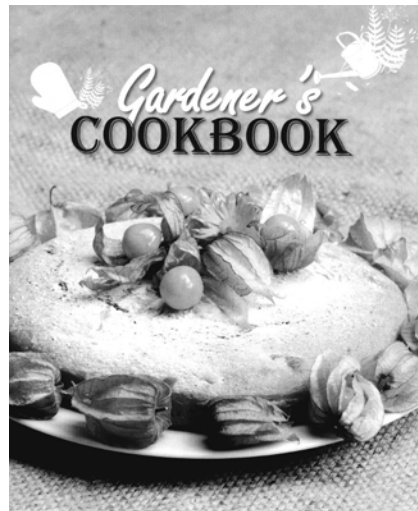
GARDENER'S COOKBOOK

The Streatham Common Community Garden £7

This cook book, which is profusely illustrated in colour, contains recipes from some of the garden volunteers and how-to-grow guides for the vegetables and fruits used in the dishes.

It is easy to read and follow as it is well designed, the type is a clear size and the information concise. An introduction to the establishment of the Community Garden follows the contents list, then come the recipes.

Each recipe identifies the donor and gives illustrated instructions. The photographs make every dish look mouth-watering. I was particularly attracted by Kate's courgette glut pizza, Valentina's apple cake and Debbie's cape gooseberry cake!

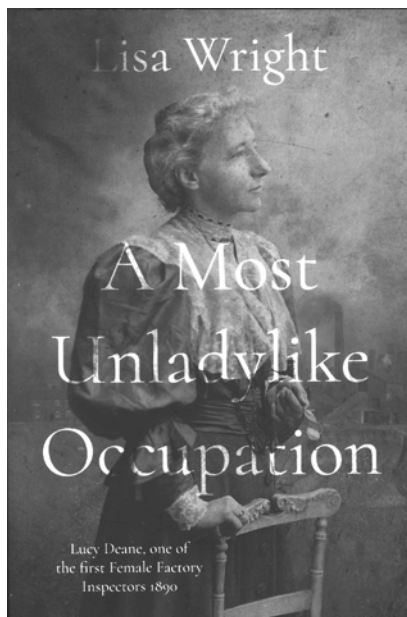


The Streatham Common
Community Garden Cookbook

JH

A MOST UNLADYLIKE OCCUPATION by Lisa Wright

The Book Guild Ltd. £9.99



A fascinating book on the life of a female pioneer in late Victorian Britain has recently been published. Written by Lisa Wright, a well-known member of the clergy team at Streatham's ancient parish church of St. Leonard, the book follows the story of Lucy Deane, one of the first female factory inspectors in the United Kingdom.

Lucy was appointed in 1893 by Herbert Asquith, the then Home Secretary, and was sent across the British Isles to inspect and report on the conditions of women workers, much to the dismay of male factory inspectors. She was advised to keep private records of everything and everyone in small, cheap exercise books. These twenty-three books became the basis of this biographical novel.

During the First World War Lucy was in charge of organising the Women's Land Army and received the CBE for this vital contribution towards Britain's war effort.

Lisa Wright has a family connection to Lucy and has used her diaries to put together this incredible life story, with photos and anecdotes throughout. Lisa says: "Lucy was our Great Aunt Evelyn's best friend, who kept her diaries and a store of anecdotes. The least I can do is tell her story".

Copies can be obtained from Lisa Wright at 19 Hillside Road, Streatham, London SW2 3HL.

JWB



THE BEULAH SPA 1831-1856 - A new history by Chris Shields

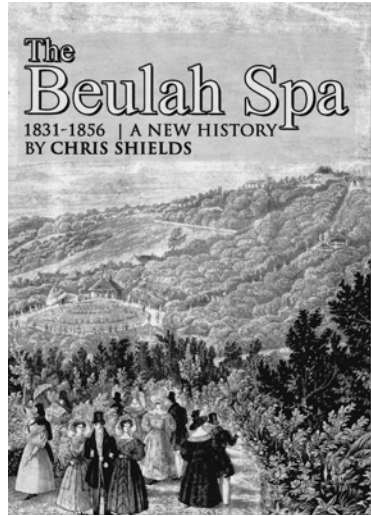
Available from the Norwood Society and Upper Norwood Library £9.90

This impressive 100-page history is packed with colour illustrations. It is well-indexed and divided into chapters: The Great North Wood, Enclosure, The Beulah Spa and After the Spa.

The author, Chris Searle, grew up in the area and spent many hours playing in Spa Park in the early 1970s. In the preface, he describes how he soon became interested in local history. He has worked for the Croydon Library Service for over 30 years.

During this time he has spent many hours researching in Croydon's local history archives. He has skilfully recorded the results of this in this excellent book.

(See our talk on Monday, May 20th.)



THE VICTORIAN VILLAS AND RESIDENTS OF GRANGE ROAD **by Stephen Oxford**

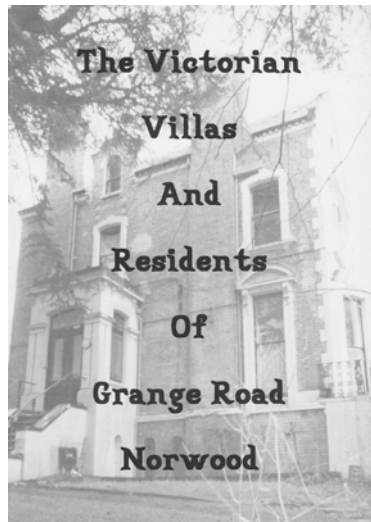
Available from the Norwood Society and Upper Norwood Library £8

Another detailed 100-page history which is interesting as well as being informative, it covers the development of one road from the mid-19th century.

Today Grange Road stretches from Beulah Hill to Thornton Heath High Street but originally only the northern part had this name and the southern part was either in the grounds of Beulah Spa or the adjacent wooded slopes.

After the closure of the Spa, fine villas were built. This book details them and their inhabitants and what replaced them, including the history of Grangewood Park.

A wealth of illustrations, photographs, maps and charts brings this history to life.



JH

MORE DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

MARCH

- Sat 16**
2pm **Blooming Tooting - The horticultural heritage of the area and the story of Peter Barr, ‘The Daffodil King’.**
Guided walk. Meet Tooting Broadway u/g station by King Edward VII statue. *Summerstown182 project*
- Sat 16**
2.30pm **Gideon Mantell in Brighton 1833-38**
Talk, John Cooper. Lounge, Chatsworth Baptist Church (Family Centre entrance), Idmiston Rd, SE27.
Friends of West Norwood Cemetery
- Mon 18**
8pm **Henry Tate, local sugar magnate & philanthropist**
Talk, Bill Linskey. Omnibus, 1 Clapham Common North Side SW4
Clapham Society
- Thur 21**
7.30pm **The Other Triangle - Fox Hill, Tudor Road & Belvedere Road**
The history of the hills and past residents
Talk, Alun Thomas. Upper Norwood Library, Westow Hill.
Norwood Society
- Sun 31**
7.30pm **Saint Bartholomew’s Spring Concert**
To include Mendelssohn, Mozart, Haydn
St John’s Church, Sylvan Rd, Upper Norwood

APRIL

- Sat 13**
2pm **Revolutionary Tooting - Hotbed of subversive & radical history**
Guided walk. Meet Tooting Broadway u/g station, as above.
Summerstown182 project
- Mon 15**
Battersea Arts Centre
Talk, Maddie Wilson. Omnibus Centre. *Clapham Society*, as above.
- Thur 18**
7.30pm **The Crystal Palace Dinosaurs - Their history and restoration**
Talk, Ellinor Michel. Followed by the Society’s AGM
Norwood Society, as above

MAY

- Sat 4**
2pm **‘Summerstown182’ First World War - Local lives lost**
Guided walk. Meet St Mary’s Church, Keble Street, SW17
Summerstown182 project
- Thur 16**
7.30pm **Surrey History Centre Local History Collections**
Talk, Julian Pooley. *Norwood Society*, as above
- Mon 20**
8pm **Panorama of the Thames Project - 200 years of change**
Talk, John Inglis and Jill Sanders. *Clapham Society*, as above.

Streatham Common Community Garden

Usually open to the public Wednesdays and Sundays 11am - 3pm. There may be some seasonal closures. Workshops are regularly advertised on their website.

Introductory Tours of West Norwood Cemetery

First Sunday of each month at 2.30pm Jan, Feb and March; at 11am April and summer months. Meet main gate, Norwood Rd. Additional events and information, see website. *Friends of West Norwood Cemetery*

May 25 - June 9 Wandsworth Heritage Festival

Theme: **Entertaining Wandsworth**

Submissions are not limited to this theme.

SPRING IS COMING - THE ROOKERY CASCADE



I am delighted to see the progress being made in re-establishing the Rookery cascade and look forward to the spring replanting. This is the work of Lee Heykoop, Landscape Architect and Garden Designer.

The Streatham Society regularly supports and gives donations to projects on the Common, in the Rookery and the Community Garden. It is impressive to see what has been achieved since local authority funding massively decreased. Congratulations to all concerned, especially the army of volunteers. I regularly use the Common in all weathers and the large number of users seems to increase each year.

JH

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