

HISTORY & SOCIAL ACTION NEWS

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Walking into the Past of Lavender Hill

Additional guided walk by me

**Lavender Hill Business Association
& Clapham Junction Town Centre Partnership**

Sunday 14 June, 2pm

Meet outside Battersea Arts Centre

A Lavender Festival Event

No charge

I have agreed to lead an additional walk along Lavender Hill on Sunday 14 June at 2pm meeting outside Battersea Arts Centre for the Lavender Hill Business Association's Lavender Festival. The Association is a group of mainly independent traders who have led a number of initiatives in the past, and have given up a lot their time (which most of them can ill afford, especially in the current economic climate) to promote the street. In the late 1970s and early 1980s I worked on Lavender Hill in the Solon Wandsworth office, and of course was a regular visitor to Battersea Party's office at 177, so I have seen lots of changes over the years, some beneficial, some not so. My other Lavender Hill walk on Tuesday 16 June at 6.30pm starts outside the Wessex Rooms on St John's Hill opposite the entrance to Clapham Junction Station. The 14th walk is free; the 16th has a charge of £5. See HSN 9 for the rest of the Festival events I am running: 16, 18, 24 and 30 June.

OPEN GARDENS IN LAMBETH 13/14 JUNE

An Open Gardens weekend takes place this 13 and 14 June. Guerrilla gardeners is now the hip phrase for doing what people have done for years, taking over waste land and turning them into community garden assets, like Harleyford Rd Community Gardens and Bonnington Square Gardens out of the squatting movement of the 1970s in Lambeth. Both these gardens are open this weekend: Bonnington Square both days 10am-5pm, and Harleyford Rd on Sunday from 10am to 5pm. The beauty of visiting both on the Sunday is that there is a linking alleyway through two of the houses.

My friend Elaine Kramer, who edits *Homeground* magazine, is drawing attention to another more hidden garden that will be open: Durand Gardens, open both days 10am-5pm. The following is an explanation: 'They are an unusual D-shaped space in the Stockwell Park Conservation Area. The shape of the gardens is said to be derived from its being the site of a plague pit. The area was developed from around 1840 to 1870. The houses were built around the gardens on a pattern-book system in a wide variety of styles. The gardens themselves were neglected for many years until the residents bought them in the 1980s. Since then they have been kept as woodland gardens and are at their best in the spring, with large displays of bluebells and daffodils. The main group of trees are limes and oaks, with a scattering of specimen trees amongst them. The central grass area is a delightful spot for a picnic and refreshments will be provided for visitors. There is now a residents' scheme to develop a wider season of plant and tree display. An exhibition will explain the history and plans for the site.'

Durand Gardens is not far from the Oval so it is possible to walk from them to Harleyford and Bonnington which are on the other side of Kennington Oval.

JOHN ARCHER & BLACK EDWARDIANS

Black & Asian Studies Association Conference

Saturday 27 June, 2.30-5pm

Providence House Youth Club, 138 Falcon Rd, London, SW11

One minute from Grant Rd exit from Clapham Junction Station

Speakers include:

Sean Creighton - John Archer and the Black Atlantic

Jeff Green - "Do we really know Samuel Coleridge-Taylor?"

David Killingray - the 1900 Pan African Conference

John Archer (1863-1932): Battersea's black Progressive Mayor 1913/14; campaigner for black rights/colonial freedom; leading Labour activist 1918ff.

Bookstall and displays

Cost £3

To book in advance contact Sean Creighton, BASA Secretary, 020 8640 2014. sean.creighton@btinternet.com

BASA is holding a Member only discussion 'Who Do We Think We Are? Key Black & Asian Contributions in British History and the Challenges Ahead' and its Annual General Meeting in the morning. To join BASA email Sean Creighton (as above) or download membership form on www.blackandasianstudies.org.

The Conference is being held as part of Wandsworth Heritage Festival

LAUNCH OF WANDSWORTH HERITAGE FESTIVAL

On Monday 1 June Wandsworth Council opened its first Heritage Festival with an evening involving the launch of its new Heritage Strategy, a guided look at archive material in the Heritage Service library/archive room, and me talking on the Edwardian Roller Skating Boom. In my opening comments I welcomed the Strategy and the Festival as recognising the importance of local heritage following the Council's loss of direction over the Museum and the Local History Library - coded reference to the closure which 20,000 protested against, and the 'redundancy' and resignation of staff and effective closure of the Library.

My talk covered the invention of the roller skate in 1760, technological developments enabling skating to become popular, and the boom in the 1870s with a rink in Haldon Rd, Putney. The 1890s boom saw the large St George's Hall Skating Rink in Wandsworth High Street, the beginning of interest in the sport by the National Skating Association (NSA) with events at that rink, and the report in the *Streatham News* about road skating. I then explained the development of the Edwardian boom, the involvement of American agents for US skating equipment manufacturers, and the existence of 526 rinks in 1910. I discussed the role NSA local members, including C. Val Hunter and George Blundell Longstaff. I drew attention to the fact that the American sports manufacturer A. G. Spalding had a factory in Putney. I looked at the actual and proposed rinks in Balham, Putney, Central Wandsworth, Clapham Junction, Streatham and Tooting, some of their activities, and the problems with getting music and dancing licences. The Central Hall rink on Wandsworth had a successful roller racing club, one of whose members, R. W. Marsh, continued to skate after the First World War and became an officer of the NSA. I discussed the reasons for the decline of the boom.

The talk was illustrated with photos of relevant buildings, skaters and comic Edwardian postcards. In ending the talk I indicated that I hoped that I had been able to show that like all specialist topics roller skating is another way of opening up a wider view of local history. Each sports and leisure activity should be seen in its wider context both for its social significance, and economic aspects. The Olympics in 2012 gives us the opportunity to look at the local histories of sport and physical exercise. I suggested that the Council should consider seeking funding for such a project, especially as the HQ for the British Olympic Association is based in Church Row, Wandsworth Plain.

WANDSWORTH TOWN CENTRE WALK

Those who came on my Wandsworth Town Centre walk on 3 June asked so many questions and made their own contributions that it went for two and a half hours. This showed their interest and stamina despite the increasing night time chill. As I had lived off St Anne's Hill for just over 24 years to January 1995, had been active in the Labour Party in and Councillor for the Fairfield Ward covering the east side of the Town Centre, and in the last few years active in Wandsworth Society, I was able to give a personal perspective. We started at St Anne's Church. We looked at and discussed:

- the Wandle Valley and the development of the town along it
- the building of the church as a Waterloo Church
- buildings along and streets off St Ann's Hill down to Malva the new very blue extension to South Thames College
- the Old Burial ground and two of the tombstones
- the building and history of the Arndale Centre (now Southside)
- the Sainsbury's shopping development
- the saga of the Court House/Arndale Community Project/Wandsworth Museum
- the role and changes in the buildings associated with the Spread Eagle Pub
- the way the Arndale had led to Buckhold Rd being realigned to the back of the Centre from its entrance near the junction with the High St

- the bridge across the Wandle, the former Youngs Brewery and its proposed redevelopment, and the Surrey Iron Railway
- All Saints Church and the role of the Vestry
- the 18thC buildings in Wandsworth Plain
- the Kings Heads as a meeting place for decades from the 1750s of one of the earliest Surrey freemason lodges
- the two 18thC cottages which I had campaigned to save from demolition in the early 1980s
- the history of former school on the corner of Armoury Way and its use for a public meeting about trade unions in New Unionist wave
- the building of Armoury Way and its flats
- Wentworth House and its associated buildings in Dormay St and my work to reduce the pollution from the lead works that had been based there
- the site of the first factory in Britain of the American Burroughs Wellcome Company
- the Wandsworth Chartists who met at the Crane pub
- the industrial past of the the Causeway, the River Wandle and Bell Lane Creek, changes that had happened, and the fact that key elements of the Council's planning intentions in the 1980s had not materialised
- the Western Riverside Waste Authority (WRWA) transfer station and the abortive campaign against it
- Ken Livingstone's unfulfilled promise of a public park and walkway along Feathers Wharf and the transfer station
- the failure of the WRWA and Wandsworth Council to develop the Wharf as an open space and walkway
- the history of the Gasworks until its closure in 1971
- the partnership between the GLC and a developer to provide an industrial and warehousing area on part of the site
- the road bypass to help open up the Gasworks site
- the Ferriers Rd industrial site as an example of Labour controlled Wandsworth's pioneering economic development in the 1970s
- the haulage company William Hampton off Fairfield St and one of its workers John Seaman, a socialist trade unionist
- the 1900 Wandsworth Fightback demonstration of 3,000 outside the Municipal Buildings against the cuts to voluntary groups which I was involved in organising
- the reliefs on the Municipal Buildings depicting figures from the histories of the five parishes which made up the former Wandsworth Borough Council (up to 1964/5 merger with Battersea).

WANDSWORTH HERITAGE FESTIVAL OPEN DAY

Wandsworth Heritage Festival's Open Day for local groups, historians like myself and the Heritage Service, was held on Saturday 6 June at Putney Library. The number of people coming was not as high as we would have liked due to the fact it took place at the end of election week, and publicity for the Festival has been slow to get around. Two people asked me about parts of the Wandsworth Town area which I had not been able to cover in the walk two days earlier: Point Pleasant on the Putney side, and the Tonsleys area on the east side. If I do further walks in the Town Centre I offer alternatives that will include Point Pleasant and the Tonsleys. And what is the Tonsley housing district's greatest claim to fame? Ranking among the top must be that for a while Tony Blair and Charles Falconer lived there! Or perhaps not. I sold a lot of books and pamphlets on local history from the late Martin Tupper's collection and showed the Battersea Labour Party *Red Battersea* DVD on a lap-top. The day before I sent out an email to people in Wandsworth reminding them about the Open Day, and stating that there would be a continuous showing of the DVD. It was not long before I had a phone call from a Council Officer saying that Conservative Councillors were concerned about 'continuous' and that the matter would be at

that night's Leader's Group meeting. This silly storm in a teacup petered out.

VAUXHALL CITY FARM IS RECRUITING AN EDUCATION CO-ORDINATOR

The excellent Vauxhall City Farm now has a website: www.vauxhallcityfarm.org. It is recruiting an Education Co-ordinator (closing date 15 June). Its History page is a very useful reminder of another aspect of the rich history of community action in the area resulting in the creation of projects wanted and supported by local people.

'Vauxhall City Farm came into fruition through the dreams of local people living in the area. Between 1972 - 1976, changes were taking place with large-scale demolition buildings in the area: of Italian Walk and the school on Laud Street and local residents protested the demolition of Louisa Court. This resulted in the setting up of the North Lambeth Neighbourhood Council (NLNC).

The Neighbourhood Council galvanised people, and in the spirit of taking responsibility for their community. In formal relations with Lambeth Council there grew licensed family and Land squats.

People expressed their ownership of their environment with youth projects spring up in and around Vauxhall. By 1977, a group of Architects were squatting St Oswald's Place and began working a small plot of land. The collaborative projects created the Jubilee City Farm with local residents growing and providing for themselves vegetables and caring for livestock.'

TOM PAINE EXHIBITION IN SALFORD

The Working Class Movement Library is celebrating the bicentenary of the death of revolutionary writer and radical political thinker Thomas Paine with an exhibition at Salford Museum and Art Gallery from 15 August to 22 November: 'Thomas Paine: the Voice of the Common People', It will be based on the Library's holdings of Paine material, which the Thomas Paine Society has called 'the finest private collection of books by and on Paine in Britain'.

The exhibition will tell the story of Paine's adventurous and eventful life, his narrow escapes from death and his involvement in both the American and French Revolutions. The main focus will be the very modern ideas in his three key publications, *Common Sense*, *Rights of Man* and *Age of Reason*, early editions of which will be on display. There will also be political cartoons, radical pamphlets and rare editions of books by and about Paine and his followers.

Paine's ideas have inspired radicals and shaped government policies for over 200 years. Barack Obama quoted him in his presidential inauguration speech. Many of the reforms which Paine advocated such as universal suffrage, the abolition of slavery, retirement pensions and free education have been put into place, while others such as a written constitution for Britain are still being hotly debated.

The Library has been awarded a grant from the Lottery 'Awards for All' for a film-making project, working with local school students studying media, politics or citizenship to produce short multimedia works looking at the modern relevance of Paine's ideas. The results will be presented as part of the exhibition.

The Museum where the exhibition takes place is situated in Peel Park, an ideal setting to celebrate a man who dedicated his life to making complex ideas accessible to ordinary people. This is where, almost fifty years after Paine's death, people flocked to enjoy the country's first free public Library.

Although Thomas Paine has been dead for 200 years, his ideas are still very much alive and his writings are still an inspiration to anyone who wishes to change society for the better.

For more information contact Lynette Cawthra, Library Manager on 0161 736 3601 or email enquiries@wcml.org.

LAUNCH FOR 'BRITAIN AT WORK 1945-1995'

Tuesday 16 June. 10am - 12.30pm. House of Commons (Jubilee Room). John McDonnell (MP), Professor Nina Fishman (Swansea University), Frank Cooper (President of National Pensioners' Convention), Graham Smith (Oral History Society), Mike Gold (Royal Holloway), Christine Coates (TUC Library Collections), Eve Turner (Ealing Trades Council) and Colin Prescod (film-maker and Chair of HISTORYtalk). Britain at Work 1945-1995 is a major new initiative in Britain's oral history tradition. It's a nationwide project which aims to collect oral testimonies of the men and women who helped to reconstruct the economy after World War Two. HISTORYtalk, the local community history group in west London, will be kicking off the project by interviewing people in west London and Middlesex about their working lives in factories across the boroughs of Brent, Ealing, Hayes and Hounslow - the manufacturing 'belt' of post war London. This will include some of the well known workplaces such as EMI, Kodak, Napiers, Trico, Hoover and Park Royal, as well as the Post Office, London Transport, British Rail, the NHS, the BBC and local government. It will also look at the role trade unions played in these workplaces. Interviews will appear on the TUC Library Collections website at www.unionhistory.info/britainatwork. Pat Fuller, HISTORYtalk's Director says "This is a ground-breaking project. We need to record the ways in which working people rebuilt Britain after the war and how they came to be the backbone of the post-war trade union movement." For more information please call 020 7792 2282 and speak to Dave or Roraima or email rjoebear@historytalk.org.

EVENTS

Heritage, Legacy & Leadership Seminar. London's Intangible Heritage. 23 June. 3.45-7.30pm. Museum of London Docklands, West India Quay, London, E14 4AL. Cultural Partnership Programme and Mayor's Commission on African & Asian History.

Past, Present and Future Multicultural London. 2 July. 4:30pm. Speakers: Jerry White, Historian and Local Government Ombudsman, author of '*London in the Twentieth Century: A City and Its People*' (Vintage, 2008); Kate Gavron, Trustee of the Young Foundation and co-author of '*The New East End. Kinship, Race and Conflict*' (Profile, 2006); Rob Berkeley, Director of the Runnymede Trust. The Brunei Lecture Theatre, SOAS, University of London, WC1H 0XG. This event is part of the Anglo-American Conference of Historians 2009; Cities, organised by the Institute of Historical Research. Registration is essential, please RSVP to ruth.evans@sas.ac.uk. 020 7862 8781.

A new adaptation of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* by Robert Tressell. From Working Class Movement Library, Salford. Often called "The Workers' Bible", *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* has been one of the most influential books of modern times. It was often said that the book won Labour the General Election, when a stunned Tory party saw Winston Churchill defeated at the polls. The book is undoubtedly the first realistic fictional portrayal of life amongst the working classes, brilliantly analysing the power structures that keep the status quo stable even when people are clearly ill-treated and abused. This adaptation honours the original, while tailoring the action for a modern audience - for how much has changed? Tressell wrote about a time of boom and bust; of high unemployment; of a slump in the building trade; of graft, sleaze and downright thieving amongst politicians and the wealthy.

Performance dates:

Mon 29 June 7.30pm, The Casa, Hope St, Liverpool 0151 709 2148

Tues 30 June 7.30pm. Kirby Unemployed Centre 0771 684 8894
Wed 1 July 7.30pm, The Met, Bury 0161 761 2216
Thurs 2 July 7.30pm, Salford Arts Theatre 0161 761 2216
Sat 4 July 7.30pm, Concordia Hall, Church Road, St Leonards-on-Sea 01424 460 735
All tickets £5/4 concessions.

The tour has been supported by The Unity Theatre Trust, The Barry Amiel Trust and PCS. More information from 0771 684 8894 or tomm562002@yahoo.co.uk

Gerrard Winstanley Event. 12 September. This year marks the 400th birthday of Gerrard Winstanley, the 17th century Christian radical who led the Diggers on St George's Hill and Little Heath, Cobham. To mark this event a plaque is to be put up in St Andrew's parish church, Cobham where Winstanley served as a Churchwarden and Overseer of the Poor. The Plaque will be unveiled during the morning as part of Cobham Heritage Day. On the next day, Sunday 13 September, Professor Chris Rowland, Dean Ireland Professor of the Exegesis of Holy Scripture at The Queens College Oxford and a speaker and writer on Radical Christianity, will be preaching at the morning service (10am) on a theme related to Winstanley and his message for us today.

The London Week of Peace, 20-27 September is an annual week of events, initiatives and action organised principally by communities and individuals but also engaging organisations, businesses and public agencies, to promote greater community cohesion, safety and peace across the capital. The theme for 2009 is Unity. There are many ways to take part. You can organise or sponsor an event. You may wish to take part in one of the key events or one of the many borough events taking place in London during the week. To find out how you can get involved please visit www.weekofpeace.org.uk or email info@weekofpeace.org.uk.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS

Not in My Name Petition. The petition will be handed into the European Parliament on the day that the BNP take their seats. If you want to consider signing go to <http://action.hopenothate.org.uk/notinmyname>.

RCDT Kennington Alliance Enews. When I worked for RCDT (Riverside Community Development Trust) I produced a weekly Enews. This had to stop when my hours were reduced and finally when my employment came to an end. RCDT has decided to restart a new ENews linked to expanding its membership. It has asked me on a freelance basis to edit it. The first issue went out on Monday 8 June.

Roger Moore on Growing Up in Stockwell. See The Times
http://property.timesonline.co.uk:80/tol/life_and_style/property/article6342085.eece.

May Day History Research Bulletins For Sale. 1-6 (April 1966-February 1990) Information on the state of the research projects and proposals of investigation. Edited by Frondazione Brodolini, Milan. Photocopied papers. £12 the set inc. postage.

New Information About the Titanic. Arthur Torrington, a leading member of the Windrush Foundation and Equiano Society and fellow member of the BASA Committee, has just posted information that came to light in 2000 that the Leonardo DiCaprio's role in the film *Titanic* could have been told about a black Haitian passenger Joseph Phillippe Lemerrier Laroche. He lowered his wife and two children into a lifeboat and died when the ship sank. See details on www.haitianinternet.com/f45/joseph-phillippe-lemerrier-laroche.html.

Colonialism, Slavery, Trade, Reparations. Remediating the Past. New website hosted by the University of Essex. www.essex.ac.uk/reparations.

Kenya: Reparation for the Mau Mau Online petition. www.thepetitionsite.com/1/www-khrc-or-ke. The Kenya Human Rights Commission has now documented 40 cases of castration, severe sexual abuses and unlawful detention, which were carried out by officers of the British Government. The actual number of Kenyans who suffered this barbaric treatment at the hands of British officers in fact runs into their thousands. In recent years, following exhaustive research by historians, it has become clear that far from being the acts of a few rogue soldiers, the torture and inhuman and degrading treatment of Kenyans during the Emergency Period (1950s to early 1960s) resulted from policies which were sanctioned at the highest levels of Government in London. One of my teachers at school was a white Kenyan whose brother had been killed by the Mau Mau. He loved beating us boys across the hands. One day he took my wooden ruler with a metal strip in it, and beat some of us so hard he broke it with the metal strip all bent.

The Educational Strategies of the Black Middle Classes. This ESRC funded project is being carried out by a team of researchers at the Institute of Education. They are interested in the experiences of middle class Black Caribbean parents in relation to education and how they plan and make decisions about their children's schooling. They would like to interview Black Caribbean parents who are in professional or managerial occupations and have one or more children between 8 & 18 years. More information about the project from n.rollock@ioe.ac.uk, Please pass on to anyone you know who might be interested in taking part. I have suggested to the research team that they contact a sample of different types of schools across the country most likely to have black middle class parents.

ARCHIVES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY" CONSULTATION

A consultation is underway on the future of archives ending 12 August. See: www.mla.gov.uk/news_and_views/press/releases/2009/Archives_consultation. There is a questionnaire www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archivesconsultation. National Archives says: "Archives for the 21st century sets out a path for publicly funded services in both England and Wales, to raise awareness of the contribution archives make to everyone's lives and to kick start action to ensure their continued survival...Archives contain your history - and this consultation is your opportunity to contribute to and shape the new policy for archives. It began on 6 May and ends 12 August. There is a questionnaire to complete online, and comments can also be emailed or posted (details are at the end of the consultation documents). We look forward to hearing your views." As a contributor to the BASAJISC discussion says this is an opportunity to express concerns to Government on such things as 'the need to improve archival practices & policies to enable a more holistic & truthful picture of UK history; the role of archives in relation to community identity; and the urgent need to offer more than token measures to encourage a more diverse and representative archives profession to help shape & inform heritage practices (especially in view of the power behind archival appraisal/selection processes that determine what society chooses to remember versus what it chooses to forget.' Positive suggestions also need to be made. **Closing date 12 August 2009.**