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# CAMBERWELL QUARTERLY

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMBERWELL SOCIETY

No.160 Spring 2009

£1 (FREE TO MEMBERS)

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[www.camberwellsociety.org.uk](http://www.camberwellsociety.org.uk)

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**OPEN GARDENS DAY**  
**SUNDAY 14 JUNE 2009**

**Society members open their gardens  
for the benefit of other members.  
Details of gardens will be available on  
the day. All proceeds go to Camberwell  
Arts, our Charity of the Year.**

**THE CAMBERWELL SOCIETY  
MEMBERSHIP AND EVENTS**

**Membership** is open to anyone who lives, works, or is interested in Camberwell.  
**The Executive Committee** is elected annually at the Society’s AGM. Meetings of the Executive Committee are usually held on the first Thursday of the month – please contact the Secretary for dates. Members are welcome to attend as observers with prior notice to the Secretary, Ann Dannatt (see inside back cover).  
**Sub-Committees** on planning, parks and open spaces, traffic and transport, publications and local history form an important part of the Society’s work and all members are welcome to involve themselves in areas which interest them.

<p>Forthcoming Events  <b>Thursday 21 May</b>  7pm  VENUE  <b>Sunday 14 June</b>  2pm-6pm  TICKETS FROM</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Annual General Meeting</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Institute of Psychiatry, 16 De Crespigny Park SE5</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Open Gardens Day 2009</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">34 Grove Lane on the day</p>
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**GAZETTE OF LOCAL SOCIETIES, VENUES AND EVENTS**

We recommend checking details

**Brunswick Park Neighbourhood Tenants and Residents Association** Jason Mitchell 07985 548 544  
*tandra.brunswickpark@yahoo.co.uk*

**Burgess Park, Friends of** Monthly meeting. Membership is free. Contact Steve Hedger. Email *stevhedger@iftsl.co.uk*

**Camberwell Gardens Guild** Membership enquiries to: Pat Farrugia, 17 Kirkwood Road, SE15 3XT

**Carnegie Library, Friends of** See the Friends’ tray in the Library or email: *foclchair@googlemail.com*

**Cuming Museum**, Old Walworth Town Hall, 151 Walworth Road, SE17 1RY. 020 7525 2332  
*www.southwark.gov.uk/DiscoverSouthwark/Museums*

**Dulwich Picture Gallery**, College Road, SE21 7AD  
020 8693 5254. *www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk*

**Friends of the Earth Southwark** Tim Atkinson  
020 7358 9905. E-mail: *southwarkfoe@btopenworld.com*

**Herne Hill Society** Jeffrey Doorn 020 7274 7008  
Membership: Herne Hill Society, PO Box 27845, SE24 9XA  
*www.hernehillsociety.org.uk*

**Jazzlive** Live jazz music every Friday night at St Giles’ Church Crypt, Camberwell Church Street, SE5. Admission £6,

concessions £3. Cheap food and bar. Contact Les Alden 020 8693 5207. See *www.jazzlive.co.uk* for latest listings

**Lambethans’ Society** See Brixton Society website *www.brixtonsociety.org.uk*

**Minet Conservation Association** 020 7737 8210  
*www.minet.fsnet.co.uk*

**Nunhead Cemetery**, Linden Grove, SE15. Friends of Nunhead Cemetery (FONC) 020 8693 6191. *www.fonc.org.uk*

**Peckham Society** Peter Frost 020 8693 4001. AGM 19 April at 3pm followed by ‘Southwark’s Modern Architecture in a Victorian Townscape’. Goose Green Centre, St John’s Church, East Dulwich Road SE22 (Alan Camp)  
*www.peckhamsociety.org.uk*

**Ruskin Park, Friends of** Mary Kidd 020 7274 4756

**South London Gallery**, 65 Peckham Road SE5. Open: Saturday 3-9pm, Sunday 4-9pm  
*www.southlondongallery.org*

The views expressed in the *Camberwell Quarterly* are not necessarily those of the Society unless clearly stated as such. The Camberwell Society is a registered charity (No. 264751).

*Cover: Gerry Sutcliffe MP, Minister for Sport, visits the Leisure Centre. Pictured with him are Baths supporters, children from Lyndhurst School, Councillor Lewis Robinson (on the Minister’s right) and Harriet Harman MP (far right)*

## Report from the chairwoman

After the snows . . . spring, bright yellow buds and that toppling moment for the daffodils at the Green whose stalks can't support the weight of their multi-layered petals when they open fully. Lots of fresh initiatives to report on, good news, and prospects which we hope won't flop like our exuberant daffodils.

I have received a letter from our MP Harriet Harman to say that the East London Line linking Denmark Hill and Peckham to Clapham Junction will be going ahead in time for the 2012 Olympic games. Many congratulations to all those who campaigned so hard for this. The Cross River Tram is not going ahead. Given that the tram threatened to damage Burgess Park and that it was not in any event going to come to Camberwell, at least as part of the main line, this is perhaps not a great loss to our area.

The Council's funding applications for £1.5m of central government money and £0.5m of Heritage Lottery money for the Camberwell Leisure Centre have now gone in, supported by a letter from us and letters from Groundwork London and Camberwell Arts. The Council has told us that it will match the £1.5m if it gets it and it has particularly asked for help with the Heritage bid as it appears that it needs to demonstrate an educational aspect to the refurbishment.

To plug this gap in the application, and because it is interesting, we, together with Camberwell Arts, are trying to put together a project at the Baths with an artist and a local historian to encourage local people to see the building in a new way and to take an interest in its history. The idea is that there will be an installation at the disused second-class entrance to the pool and a talk. Do please get in touch with me or Camberwell Arts if you can help. We have made this



Nicholas Roskill and Campaspe Lloyd-Jacob are pictured in 'the big freeze'  
Photo: Anna Hardinge

project our Charity of the Year as it seems to us that we should do whatever we can to increase appreciation of our lovely listed pool and help make sure it gets the funds it badly needs for refurbishment.

Many congratulations also to the Camberwell Baths Committee for its very effective presentation to Gerry Sutcliffe MP, Minister for Sport, on his recent visit to the Baths (see cover picture). He seemed genuinely impressed by the Baths, by what had been achieved at the Tennis Club and by the photogenic children of Lyndhurst School who prepared a CD for him and waved splendid banners.

Our AGM will be at 7pm on 21 May in a snazzy new venue, The Institute of Psychiatry, which should be more accessible than Wilson's Hall. The topic is *Development in Camberwell* and we will have speakers who can tell us about what will happen to the Georgian Terrace

on Peckham Road where the Registry office is, what the current plan is at the St George development of the old Mary Datchelor School site, what Kings is doing on Champion Hill, and what is happening at Denmark Hill station. Do please come and ask questions and if you would like to nominate anyone for any of the Society's officers' posts or for the executive committee, please do so at least 14 days before.

Gardens Day will be on 14 June this year. Please get in touch with me if you feel you can open your garden and perhaps even send in a small photo of some interesting detail which visitors would have to find in it. We might try to arrange some sort of treasure hunt . . . Also, nearer the time, we would love offers of cakes, plants, helpers . . .

Campaspe Lloyd-Jacob  
campaspe@campaspe.co.uk

### R K NEWS

10 Camberwell Church Street, London SE5 8QU / Phone 020 7703 2784

Prop: Mr S. & Mrs J. Nathan

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## Camberwell is choking with buses and fumes

*In November Tim Gaymer wrote on behalf of the Society to Mayor Boris Johnson about the transport situation in Camberwell and its effects on the community. Below is an edited version of Tim's letter.*

**T**he centre of Camberwell, bereft of tube, can often appear awash with buses. Served by 15 high-frequency routes, it generally is.

The retail and commercial experience has declined greatly over the last 10 years, and this seems directly proportional to the increase in traffic which chokes the centre and led to Denmark Hill – the main shopping street – to be declared the most polluted area in London during a scientific study in 2005.

Of course there are other factors: the pollution is exacerbated by the South London hills behind, the shopping decline by the loss of a major anchor store when Safeway was taken over, and commercial loss when traders move to new purpose-built facilities outside Camberwell. Nevertheless, the poor quality of the public realm and congestion to the roads, and to the pavements (with pedestrians and those waiting for a bus) are also of great significance. Local police safety officers say 36,000 set foot in Camberwell every 24 hours (primarily to change buses) but with very little benefit to retail, leisure or commerce. Safety fears from the congested roads means pedestrians are often landlocked and cannot walk freely through the centre of Camberwell to use facilities.

One further factor which seems to just add to this congestion could also be the key to unlocking this red

doubledeck gridlock, and that is Walworth Bus Garage. I believe this is within your remit, as some years ago the mothballed Walworth Garage was requisitioned by Ken Livingston to again house buses. Its location, however, has never been essential to the bus services provided in Camberwell, for although it is only 100m from Camberwell Bus Garage, it has always housed services which start and finish elsewhere and do not serve Camberwell, thereby generating additional traffic to and from the depot.

The key to unlocking the gridlock is therefore a combination of fewer buses on the road as a result of closing the Walworth Bus Garage, and a bus and rail station interchange on the site of the Walworth Bus Garage, further reducing bus dependence.

Walworth Bus Garage is adjacent to the four-track Thameslink line which currently sees, off peak, only six trains an hour each way, hardly an intensive timetable. A railway station in this location would provide considerable benefit in reducing bus travel on Walworth Road – one of the most heavily trafficked bus routes in London (11 high-frequency daytime routes) and horrendous for cyclists like me! The proposed railway station would also provide a fast route into London for those who are not in walking distance of other stations (all 15 to 20 minutes walk from the Bus Garage. Network Rail's argument in its South London Route Utilisation Strategy against a rail station in Camberwell because it is too near Loughborough Junction, is consequently diluted, as the

Walworth Bus Station Garage is further away than the previous proposed site (where the previous station had been 90 years ago), and as a bonus is closer to the deprived Wyndham Road area, where improved transport links are vital.

With the redevelopment of Blackfriars Station underway, which will deliver an increased number of train paths by 2012, and greater operational flexibility as a result of a turnback facility recently installed at Herne Hill, a new Camberwell Station could provide huge benefit through tapping into the upgraded infrastructure.

The proposed Cross River Tram was conceived to aid the recognised congestion and lack of rail/tube facilities to inner South London. Now that the Cross River Tram will not be built, the proposal to supplement the existing public transport with further buses will only exacerbate the congestion in Camberwell, which lies between the two tram routes to Brixton and Peckham.

To the wider community beyond Camberwell, it is easy to see that a stopping service between Loughborough Junction and the Elephant and Castle, with a stop also reinstated halfway along Walworth Road, could support further custom for the East London Line Phase 2 via Denmark Hill, and a potential interchange at Loughborough Junction. A stop halfway along Walworth Road would also further reduce the congestion on the Walworth Road

The statistics point out the validity of a proper segregated bus interchange in Camberwell. There are more routes running to a greater frequency than neighbouring areas where new bus interchanges have been judged both viable and a necessity.

I believe the time to plan for this change is now. The decline to the centre of Camberwell is at variance with the level of development of new residential accommodation, the expansion of the trio of medical centres of excellence in the form of Kings College Hospital, the

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More than 200 buses an hour, off peak, pass through or stop in Camberwell

Maudsley Hospital, and the Institute of Psychiatry, and increasing student numbers at the Camberwell College of the Arts.

One of the main bus services to use the Walworth Garage is the ELS Service (the replacement for the East London Line while it is closed for rebuilding and expansion). This service, and therefore need, will finish when the line opens in three years' time. The bus garage would then be at approximately half capacity. There is spare capacity at other nearby bus garages.

*Transport for London (TfL) responded at length on the the Mayor's behalf. An edited version of the main points is given below.*

Walworth Garage is an indispensable part of the network, and the fact that it operates bus routes which do not serve Camberwell is not sufficient reason to consider its removal. Walworth Garage is currently near capacity, and it would be extremely difficult to find alternative location(s) to replace it.

There are six daytime bus routes serving Camberwell Green that are not operated by either Walworth or Camberwell Bus Garages, partly because they are not operated by one of the two companies owning bus garages in Camberwell. The actual routes operated by a bus garage depend on which routes the bus company has successfully tendered for, and this changes over time.

In regard to a new station at Camberwell, between Elephant and Castle and Loughborough

Junction/Denmark Hill, tight timings on the Thameslink Wimbledon Loop service, caused principally by pathing through the flat junctions at Herne Hill and Tulse Hill, make it difficult to accommodate an extra stop at this location. Stops could not be accommodated at a new station without trains non-stopping at another station. The only other station where stops could be omitted is Loughborough Junction, and there is no evidence that stops in the Camberwell area would have greater benefits for Londoners overall than stops at Loughborough Junction. Accommodating an additional stop at Camberwell in services that operate through Denmark Hill is likely to be more feasible, although this would provide a relatively low frequency service at a new station.

TfL also carried out analysis of the likely demand at a new station based on the population within the catchment area of the station. This was compared to the catchment of Loughborough Junction Station. It showed that approximately 5,000 people live within 400m of a new station at Camberwell compared to 5,300 at Loughborough Junction. Some 21,900 people live within 800m of a new station compared to


20,300 at Loughborough Junction. The similar size of the catchment areas shows that stops at Camberwell would have no significant advantage over stops at Loughborough Junction.

From an engineering point of view, platforms would be required on all four lines so that trains routed via both Loughborough Junction and Denmark Hill could call. This would require significant widening of the viaduct on which the station would be located to provide space for the platforms to meet current standards. The track would also need to be slewed either side of the station. It is also possible that widening of the viaduct could infringe on neighbouring properties, therefore construction of a new station at this location is likely to be very expensive.

Following analysis in 2007 TfL did not recommend opening of a new station at Camberwell. This is due to the operational difficulties of opening a new station on the line without closing Loughborough Junction and the difficulties of constructing a station at this location that did not impinge on the operational efficiency of the railway.

TfL does not agree that the ending of the ELS contract will make the garage half empty. Also, this garage houses the Head Office of Travel London, which would need to be relocated.

**● We would like to hear your views on this subject. Please write to the Editor,  
4 Datchelor Place SE5 7AP  
or email  
mpowleybaker@hotmail.com**



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## 4A, 6 and 6A Grove Lane: is this the end of the saga?

*Nicholas Roskill has been writing about 4A, 6 and 6A, Grove Lane in the Quarterly for more than 21 years, most recently in March 2006.*

The three properties (painted dark green by considerate neighbours) at the north end of Grove Lane have been derelict since 1977 after being used for some years by Elders, a local greengrocers.

I have been campaigning for their restoration since 1988 and wonder if it is something of a record that these properties should now have been derelict for 31 years and have been the responsibility of Southwark Council for most of this time. The cumulative notional cost of keeping these properties empty for so long, in terms of lost rent and rates, is on my calculations now approaching £2m, an astonishingly high sum which of course largely falls on the ratepayers of Southwark.

When I last wrote, there had been an Appeal against the rejection by Southwark Council of a planning application for the site, submitted in December 2003. The application had been made by Mr J McLister who, after many years of litigation with the Council, had been confirmed as the long leaseholder of the site. The application was for the building of a two-storey office/workshop on the Grove Lane frontage and for a two-bedroom flat at the corner adjoining Jephson Street. The proposals were generally welcomed, and were supported by the Grove Lane Residents Association (GLRA) and the Camberwell Society which described the scheme as ‘well designed and one which suited the site and scale and proposed use’.

Needless to say there were no objections. It was thus all the more surprising that the planning application was rejected on the grounds that the ‘existing buildings on the site are considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of Camberwell Green Conservation Area’. You might think that this was a rather poor joke but I am quoting verbatim!

An Appeal against the rejection was held in October 2005 but sadly



*According to Southwark Council, the ‘existing buildings on the site are considered to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of Camberwell Green Conservation Area’*

Mr McLister had meanwhile died in a yachting accident and the decision on the Appeal was delayed. Apparently the result could not, under the relevant rules, be published until probate on Mr McLister’s estate had been granted, although quite obviously the value of the estate itself depended on the value of the property subject to the Appeal! I wrote several times to the Planning Inspectorate to query this extraordinary ‘chase your tail’ situation: in the end, having taken legal advice, they agreed to publish in May 2007 the results of the Appeal under which, as might be expected, the planning application was upheld.

Having obtained planning permission, the McLister estate put the lease on the market in April 2008 through the estate agents, Kinleigh, Folkard and Hayward. However, this revealed some surprising facts about Mr McLister’s lease of which I (and perhaps others) was unaware at the time of the planning application. First, when the lease was examined, it turned out that it required Mr McLister to refurbish the existing property promptly (that is in 2001) and second, it did not permit him to carry out any kind of redevelopment of the property.

Two things followed from this. First, by 2008, Mr McLister, or by this time his estate, were in serious breach of the obligation to refurbish, and indeed the Council was already

in the process of taking legal action to forfeit the lease when the property was put on the market. Second, Mr McLister’s estate did not have the necessary legal rights to develop in accordance with the planning permission which had been obtained. Consequently no buyer of the lease could redevelop either. So it seems as though Mr McLister’s victory in the planning appeal was a false dawn: he was applying for permission to undertake a redevelopment which he never had any right to complete. It is not clear to me whether the planning inspector handling the appeal was made aware of the deficiencies in the lease.

Unsurprisingly in these circumstances the McLister estate could not find a buyer for the lease which it held. So ultimately, in mid-2008, the estate entered into a deal with the Council which involved the surrender of the lease with the Council becoming the unfettered freeholder. The property was then sold by the Council in an auction held by Andrews and Robertson in December 2008 to a local firm of developers, Sutherland Partners. They tell me that their plan is to develop a high-quality scheme, in a traditional architectural style, which they claim will outshine St George’s well-designed development across the road. I have seen a preliminary sketch and it looks charming.

Obviously the new proposals will require further planning approvals and I hope they will receive general local support. I gather that the time-scale is likely to be two to three years so patience is still required before we see a satisfactory conclusion to this long-running sore in a potentially lovely corner of Camberwell. I hope that this is the end of the saga.

*The support and professional advice from Elizabeth Borowiecka, who attended the Planning Appeal, is much appreciated.*

*Sutherland Partners can be contacted at [jkenny@20essexst.com](mailto:jkenny@20essexst.com)*

# The Cambria – more than just a pub

Address: 40 Kemerton Road  
SE5 9AR  
Tel: 020 7737 3676

We hadn't booked – after all it was just a local pub with good food, on a 'tucked away' corner in a residential neighbourhood between Loughborough Junction Station and Ruskin Park, or so we thought! Our hearts sank on arrival as the Cambria appeared full; all tables occupied and many customers eating, rather than just enjoying the ambience with a drink, as you can. The atmosphere was very welcoming, soft yet sparkling with lighting just sufficient to read the menu, and subtly enhanced for the Christmas season. Despite being hungry we resolved to stay for at least one drink and enjoy the buzz.

The very positive and helpful staff managed to arrange a table for the four of us and took our drinks order while we studied the food menu (six bar snacks, seven starters, eight mains). There were a number of beers on draught including two bitters on hand pump. I settled for a pint of Black Sheep bitter while the others shared a bottle of Piedmont Cortese from the comprehensive and interesting wine list, advised by one of the knowledgeable owners. After perusal, food was ordered, we had quite a wait (there were about 60 covers before us) but in fairness, the staff kept us informed, and upon bringing our starters, announced they would be complimentary. This was a nice touch. (Reviews for the *CQ* are undertaken anonymously – in case you were wondering . . .)

The choice of food was eclectic, including dishes that were multi-cultural, multi-national, hearty and light – multi ambitious? – read on. To start we had a bistro classic – snails in garlic butter which we were told had been brought personally back from France that day (looking at our garden later, I thought coals to Newcastle). A friend who eats snails as often as she can said they were a triumph. The final starter of chorizo was pronounced small but it was a bar snack chosen as a starter



and was priced accordingly. For mains the cubed Cuban pork with black beans was hearty, no more noodles with the teriyake salmon, but garlic mash. The meze eaten by my wife was a good selection of well-sourced ingredients. The sausage (wild boar) and mash was a good staple. The provenance of all the ingredients is known – with meat and vegetables sourced daily from the key London markets. The care in sourcing is evident in the cooking process as well. The tiny kitchen must be well run to achieve this. No time for pud or cheese – our friends had to return to West London which they describe as pretentious and boring in the gastropub stakes (a generalisation, I'm sure).

To conclude the review, we returned three days later for a glass of chilled pudding wine and to share homemade cinnamon and pistachio ice creams – served in a gorgeous tall glass. Again the Cambria was full – it was the Monday jazz night and the quartet and scat vocalist were swinging.

The Cambria is a rare success in these strapped times, combining local neighbourhood public house

with very good food. Its very success may ultimately be its failure when everything is running to the max, but the proactive approach of the owners, who have achieved so much in less than six months, suggests this will not be so. Already there are events most nights with a desire to capture as wide an audience as possible and in particular those who wish to eat out. Curry night, for example, is a Bollywood themed evening.

We hope the success of the Cambria will encourage the opening of similar establishments offering good value with an emphasis on well-sourced high-quality food, drink and entertainment. Let us hope this is a recession-proof formula.

*Additional information:*

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*Tim Gaymer*

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## Lost and found: the original well of Camberwell

A hole in Noreen (Hanora) Morrin's garden at 56A Grove Park marks the spot of an ancient historic well – the original Camber Well, no less. How amazing to have this piece of ancient history in one's garden! Noreen thinks so too and would like it to be acknowledged or commemorated in some way. The Council did suggest a plaque, but she would like something more substantial.

Generally, her efforts to interest Council officialdom met with a lukewarm reception. However, it was thanks to Stan Dubeck of Camberwell Neighbourhood Renewal that a visit from the Borough Archaeologist was arranged. He confirmed the existence of the well but concluded that the site was potentially dangerous and that proper excavation would be difficult and expensive.

End of story? We hope not.

Noreen says she has always felt drawn to the site. Years ago, during her time as a nurse and midwife at the old St Francis Hospital (now Sainsbury's) she used to walk past Grove Park and think how she would like to live there.

When she moved into No 56 she had no idea it included the well and

was intrigued when a neighbour told her that it was believed to be in her garden. Nothing much happened until she met John Chaple, a local artist, who had done a vast amount of research into the well. He asked Noreen if he could dig up her garden to try and find exactly where it was. She agreed, and work began at the end of 2007.

First of all he tried dowsing the area hoping it would point to water. This was not hugely successful, but by using this method and old Ordnance Survey maps, the well's location was more or less pinpointed and John started digging. This was laborious work, sometimes using a hand trowel. As he dug down John realised something significant: they were digging through topsoil – there was no subsoil. This spurred him on and eventually, between three and four feet down, he uncovered a large yellow stone, under which were bricks.

Noreen says she didn't do any digging. 'I encouraged John, or perhaps may have delayed him by my chatter,' she says. 'Suffice to say I supplied encouragement and plastic bags to hold the soil.'

The discovery of the bricks tied in with information they already knew: a builder, a Mr A Howes of 13 Oglander Road, East Dulwich,

had covered over the well in 1895 with three layers of bricks. The big yellow stone was not mentioned but Noreen thinks Mr Howes put it there deliberately, perhaps to mark the spot. This type of stone, incidentally, is not indigenous to the area.

The well's water was said to have healing properties. Mary Boast, in her book *The Story of Camberwell*, writes: 'There were many wells in old Camberwell. One on the site of 56 Grove Park, was believed by some to have been the special "Camber Well". It was in use until about 150 years ago with a donkey going round drawing up the water. Several ideas have been put forward about the first part of the name Camberwell. Some old books say that "camber" meant crooked and that the water from Camberwell's well could cure crippled or crooked people.'

There is also an association with St Giles to whom the church is dedicated. Some say that this was because of the Camber Well and its association with disabled and sick people (St Giles is their patron saint).

How old is the well? From John Chaple's research it is clearly an ancient structure. Roman coins are said to have been found at the bottom of the well, which, if true, means it is at least 2,000 years old. Some opinion puts it as old as 4,000 years.

Later history brings us to Doctor Lettsom – now hardly known, although he was rich and famous in his day. His estate, which he bought in 1776, included the well. Perhaps, as a doctor, its healing properties attracted him to the area. He made many improvements to his estate and to the well, which according to one account is lined with red brick.

Research shows that the well was surrounded by a wall and an iron gate to keep out children. There was a horse track around the well, indicating that a horse or donkey had been fastened to the windlass on the well. It is thought quite likely that this was installed by Lettsom.

Many years later, in 1937, a letter appeared in the *Daily*



Look into the hole and you can see the old brickwork belonging to the well



*Telegraph and Morning Post* from 'Old Camberweller' who said his grandfather had built a house in Grove Park in the 1850s.

'At that time,' wrote Old Camberweller, 'it was a private park with only four or five houses and a lodge at the Grove entrance and another at the Peckham end, where the lodgekeeper, old Scriven, was a terror to all who tried to get in without a proper "passport". I visited there constantly and later lived in that house until 1931. In the early days there was an enclosure in the park, of which the few inhabitants had keys, and in the enclosure was the well, which I always understood was the Camber Well. I have somewhere a photograph which must have been taken in 1872-75 of old Scriven and the little donkey which trotted round and drew up the water. I might add that the very fine old red-brick wall which ran one side of our kitchen garden was part of the original boundary of the famous Dr Lettsom's property.'

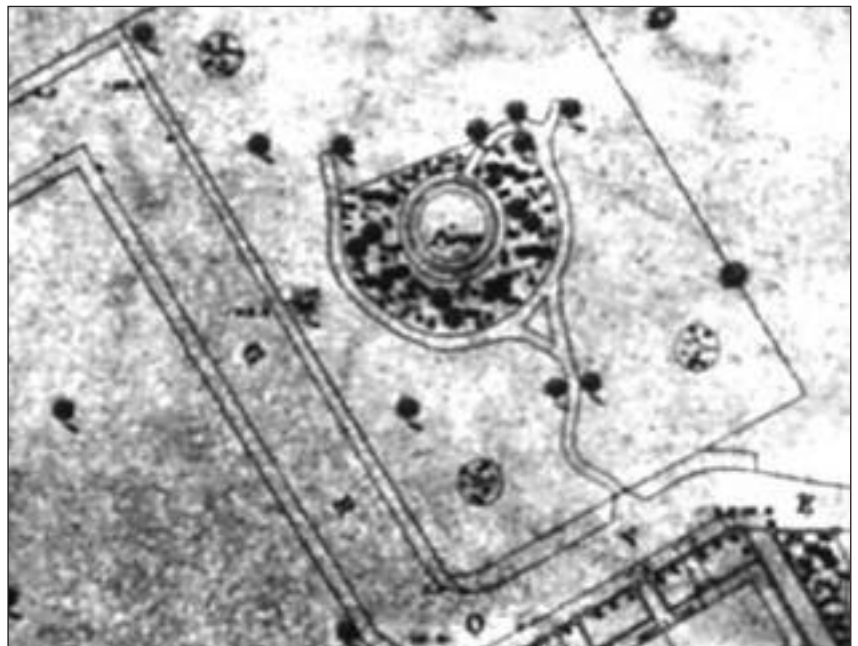
What now? Noreen says she would dearly like further excavations to establish the age of the well, to find water and then, most importantly, to analyse that water's mineral content to discover if, in fact, it does have healing properties.

*Margaret Powley-Baker*

*Our thanks to John Chapple for allowing us to quote from his website [www.johnchapple.co.uk/camberwell](http://www.johnchapple.co.uk/camberwell) and to Mary Boast and Southwark Council for the quote from The Story of Camberwell.*



*The old well and pump on Doctor Lettsom's estate (circa 1892). It is thought that the man in the picture could be 'old Scriven, the terror to all'*



*An old Ordnance Survey map showing the site of the well. The original map is much clearer and you can see that the lettering in the centre reads 'pump'*

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# An illustrated guide to a church's past and present

**Guide Book of St Giles' Church**

*Published by Friends of St Giles' Church*

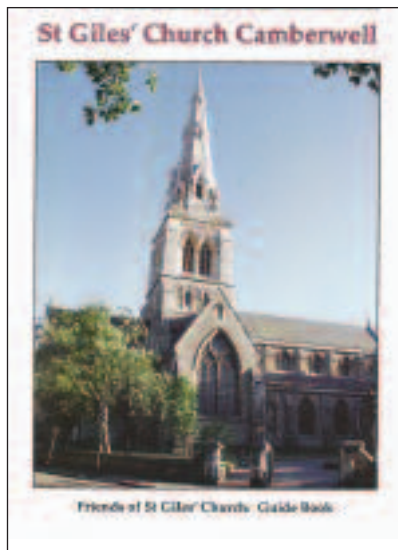
Price: £4

Available from St Giles' Centre,  
81 Camberwell Church Street,  
London SE5 8RB

Church guides might be a suitable subject for Betjemanesque humour – a favourite opening seems to recur ‘of the presence of a Saxon church on the site there can be no doubt, note the roughly hewn stone block incorporated on the SE corner of the chancel . . . etc etc.’

This is not the case with the St Giles guide, cliché is avoided and a nicely produced booklet tells all you want to know and more. All aspects are very well covered, of the past and of today.

The material is well organised and includes *the Parish, the Old Church* – seemingly a building conglomeration of various dates burnt down in 1841 – *The Present Church* – which includes an account of its various building vicissitudes from the deterioration of the original Caen stone facings (replaced by Portland at the architect's expense – was he insured?) the serious WW2 damage and recently major work to the spire (2000) and more recently, dry rot. Gilbert Scott (1811-1878) is suitably acknowledged as an architect converted to Gothic (after I believe an earlier career devoted to penitentiaries) by the passionate writings of AWN Pugin. The church now is probably in as good a condition as it ever was and it is interesting to compare the *Illustrated London News* illustration of the consecration (1844) where the timber



roof seems light and airy, at one with the structure and space below, whereas today the roof timber is dark and seems oppressive in comparison. The drawing also shows the galleries (which it is stated were added) but were removed around 1945.

The restoration and present condition are a tribute to those who care for old buildings, to clergy, parishioners, and the funding by English Heritage and the National Lottery as well as privately.

The main text gives full account of the *The Building* and its features and comparatively few furnishings and memorials, together with the stained glass credited to Ruskin and also by Comper. Pictures of this are included in the 17 colour illustrations throughout the text but the best is the cover photograph showing the tower/spire in all its glory, surely the most powerful element, well composed at the crossing of choir, nave and transepts; the embodiment of a thrusting architectural density that is truly magnificent.

In contrast for me the interior

seems tepid and lacking the decorative enrichment of later Scott – or for that matter the almost contemporary All Saints Margaret Street (1851) by Butterfield, a very personal interpretation of Gothic, overpowering in visual incense – or at the end of the Gothic Revival, a late flowering St Cyprians, Clarence Gate (1903) by Ninian Comper (1864-1960) who interestingly restored St Giles after 1945. Behind a humble exterior lies the most breathtaking light capturing and transforming truly Gothic interior imaginable. Both buildings have to be visited! And they demonstrate that good buildings have content that transcends style.

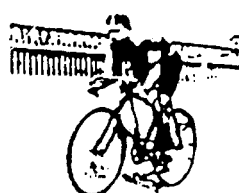
In complete contrast I feel I must mention my recent discovery of St John Peckham (1966 architect David Bush born 1925) – well worth a visit. An angular if slightly industrial exterior relates to an unexpected fine brick interior, dark on entering but with rear lighting such that there is a gradual revelation of enclosure with a rising but serene space, which as it were embraces and evokes the numinous.

To return to St Giles, the unacknowledged author of the guide is Victoria Arthur.

*Trevor Dannatt*

*Camberwell Through Time*, which will include 90 old photographs, is being written by John D Beasley who is keen to borrow any old photographs of Camberwell. Please contact John at 6 Everthorpe Road, SE5 4DA. Tel: 020 8693 4912.

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## A social history of South London

### Charlie Chaplin's South London

Published by QBS

Price: £15 (plus £2 p&p)

Available from Dr Alan Parkinson,  
South Bank University, London  
SE1 OAA

This book presents a social history of South London at the time of Charlie Chaplin's birth and early years, and tells something of the story of his childhood and influences in the area. The book itself arose from a schools project initiated in 2008 by the London South Bank University PGCE department. This involved 250 pupils in five primary schools, together with four groups of trainee teachers and the Chaplin Association, Paris.

The book sets out to paint a picture of life in Lambeth and Southwark at the turn of the 20th century – the time of Chaplin's childhood and entrance into show business. After a brief biography of Chaplin, born near East Street in 1889, the bulk of the book is taken up with a detailed picture of the social conditions of the area and the sort of influence these clearly had on the future star. From his films and his own writings, detailed here, we learn how Chaplin was affected by the poverty and hardship endured in



his early years, growing up with parents who themselves, despite their music-hall careers, were struggling with alcoholism and mental breakdown. Parkinson vividly portrays how difficult life could be, in sections outlining Victorian South London at school, prayer, and work and play. The author has spent time researching at Southwark and Lambeth Local Studies Libraries and has done a particularly thorough job with school records.

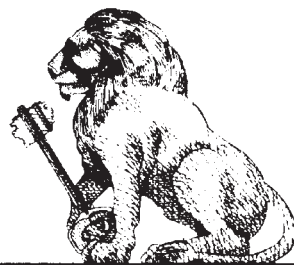
Although the book deals mainly with a social history of Chaplin's period, there is also mention of the 2008 schools project at various

points. However, the two different subjects are not combined very well, and there are sudden uneasy jolts into the 21st century educational project. I would have appreciated a section with a fuller report on the results of the project, perhaps with insights from the children themselves, and analysis of how similar and different they see their lives today. Instead, there are a few examples confined to appendices. It would have been interesting also to know which schools Charlie might have, however briefly, attended and when, and have these marked on the otherwise useful map at the back.

An irony of the book, not mentioned at all, is its inception in a schools project and the lengthy exposition on late Victorian school life, while on the other hand, we hear that school was the one place which had very little influence on the young truanting Charlie!

Also a disappointment are the illustrations. The reproduction of the black and white archive photographs is poor, and the lack of captions is really inconvenient. The very basic list of illustrations at the front of the book has to suffice in what is otherwise a useful introduction to the origins of Charlie Chaplin.

Andrew Pearson



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## Lights, camera, action! Camberwell on the big screen

Local film buff Stephen Bourne looks at ways in which Camberwell has found its way onto our cinema screens during the last hundred years

In the recently published *London Film Location Guide* (Batsford, £14.99), author Simon James offers a comprehensive guide to the many films which have used the capital city for locations. James claims that the IMDb (Internet Movie Database [www.imdb.com](http://www.imdb.com)) website lists well over 1,000 films made in London, which has proved to be one of the most vibrant and versatile film locations in the world.

James includes several films made on location in Camberwell, some of which provided a few surprises. I wasn't aware when I went to see *Mona Lisa* at the cinema in 1986 that Bob Hoskins was picking up his daughter from my old school, Archbishop Michael Ramsey, on Farmers Road, just off Camberwell New Road. However, I have always known that Earl Cameron was filmed on location here for *Pool of London* (1950) with the Camberwell Palace of Varieties in the background. This was the famous variety theatre on the corner of



A young audience is enthralled at the cinema. The small boy in the sailor suit is author Stephen Bourne

Denmark Hill and Orpheus Street near Camberwell Green.

I was nicknamed 'MGM Steve' by friends because of my encyclopaedic knowledge of cinema (I am always in demand for pub quizzes when film questions are asked, but left out in the cold when it comes to sport). MGM Steve proved to be an apt title when, to my joy, I discovered that Camberwell is mentioned in the spectacular MGM musical *Ziegfeld Follies* (1945). In the opening of the *Limehouse Blues* segment, starring Fred Astaire, a troupe of pearly kings and queens sing the music hall favourite *Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road* which includes a line about 'rich Uncle Tom of Camberwell'. I also spotted the following address on a letterhead in Alfred Hitchcock's thriller *Sabotage* (1936): Plouthorp Road SE5. This was the address of the fictitious Bijou Cinema where the action of the film takes place.


Newsreels are always worth investigating. When I worked as a researcher at the British Film Institute I discovered that its archive holds prints of several silent news films featuring Camberwell. These

include *Royal Procession Through Camberwell* (1911) with George V, Queen Mary and the Prince of Wales driving in an open carriage; *Recruiting at Camberwell* (1914), with shots of men handing in their forms and papers at recruiting tables; and *Camberwell Artillery Division's Farewell Parade*, which was filmed before the Division went to the Front on 5 July, 1915.

The internet now provides us with free access to some memorable scenes from Camberwell's past. For example, if you go to the MovieTone website ([www.movietone.com](http://www.movietone.com)) and register (free), by typing Camberwell in the search box you can view a number of newsreels such as 'The King and Queen Drive Through Southern Boroughs' (1935), which shows King George V and Queen Mary alighting at Camberwell Green, and 'Hussein Welcomed' (1962), in which King Hussein of Jordan lays a foundation stone for St Giles Youth Club. St Giles' Church is also featured.

British Pathe is fun ([www.britishpathe.com](http://www.britishpathe.com)). You don't have to register and when you type Camberwell in the search box it brings up some fascinating items such as 'Poor Old Joey!' (1927), in which an escaped monkey is recaptured in Camberwell; 'Black Couple Wedding' (1963), in which an African couple marry at St Giles' Church and their guests include Kenya's Minister of Justice; and, best of all, 'Queen Mother at the St Giles Care Centre' (1967), which includes shots of St Giles' Church and the Queen Mother having tea and biscuits in the crypt with Reverend John Nicholls and some of his patients.

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## Blue plaque for Una Marson

The Jamaican poet and wartime BBC producer, Una Marson (1905-1965), was honoured with a Blue Plaque on International Women's Day (Sunday 8 March). Una's plaque was unveiled on her former home in Brunswick Square, Camberwell, where she lived from 1935 to 1939.

Una was well known as a feminist activist who campaigned on black women's issues, such as discrimination in the nursing profession.

During WW2, as the presenter of BBC radio's *Calling the West Indies*, she helped many service men and women from the Caribbean stay in touch with their families.



Una Marson

## Latest news on Baths

A decision on the Leisure Centre is expected in April this year following the Council's submission of its proposals for a grant of £1.45m from the government's Free Swimming Capital Modernisation Fund, which together with the £1.5m earmarked by the Council, would go towards covering the shortfall needed for renovation. The total needed is around £4.5m and the Council believes it can get an additional £0.5m from English Heritage and £0.5m of youth capital. The remainder will be met through S106 funds and smaller grants.

## Honour for Camberwell campaigner

Our congratulations to Ann Kenrick (Warby) who was awarded an OBE in this year's New Year Honours for her services to promoting Anglo-French relations.

Ann is Secretary-General of the Franco-British Council (FBC), an organisation which aims to promote better understanding between the two countries through topical debates on subjects as different as Truancy in Schools, Challenges of Diversity and Deforestation.

She is a noted Camberwell campaigner. In May last year she received a Southwark Civic Award for environmental awareness and was commended for her activities as chair of the Safer Routes to School campaign which she set up and ran until 2006. She is now writing a book *LET ME OUT! Your guide to green school run solutions* to encourage parents and teachers to get children walking and cycling to school. The book will be published this year.

Ann stepped down recently after five years as chair of the Grove Lane



Ann Kenrick (Warby) Photo: Ben Rice

Residents Association. She is a trustee of the London Cycling Campaign and will be cycling from London to Paris in September with her son, husband and other locals to raise funds for the Royal British Legion. She says she would be very grateful for any donations, which can be made via [www.justgiving.com/annkenrick](http://www.justgiving.com/annkenrick)

## Local parks receive grants for improvement

Burgess Park has been chosen as the Mayor of London's Premier Park, and will receive a £2m grant. Added to this will be the £4 of match-funding secured from the partnership between the Council and the New Deal for Communities, to make the total value of improvements to the park £6m.

Sadly, Camberwell Green missed out in another competition for a £400,000 improvement grant.

Myatt's Park is open again after

nine months of building works. These include refurbishment of the bandstand, which now has permanent lighting so that it can now be used at night; a freshly painted summerhouse which can be heated in winter; a new meeting room; and a refreshment kiosk.

A massive £121,000 has been spent on new trees, shrubs and plants, the bindweed has been cleared and the wildlife area has new paths and a pond.



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## East London Line Extension is given go-ahead

The East London Line Extension (ELL) is going ahead and should be completed by 2012.

The Society has campaigned over the last 18 months and has been in regular contact with the Mayor's Office, Transport for London, the Department of Transport and local MP Harriet Harman to express support for the proposed westward extension of the ELL and to urge an agreement to be reached over funding the project.

The new extension will create a new line to link from Denmark Hill Station to the following stations, with four trains an hour in both directions:

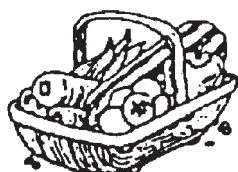
- Eastbound: Peckham Rye, Queen's Road Peckham and Surrey Quays
- Westbound: Clapham High Street, Wandsworth Road and Clapham Junction.

At Clapham Junction trains will be able to run on to the London Overground services via Shepherd's Bush to Highbury and Islington, completing a circuit of Central London around zones 2 and 3. At Surrey Quays passengers will be able to take the ELL across the river to stations on the east of the City or change onto the Jubilee Line at Canada Water to access Docklands or the West End.

Although this does not offer a solution to the proposed loss of the link from Denmark Hill to London Bridge, the new service will bring more transport opportunities to Camberwell.

*Alex Blacknell*

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## David Cameron visits Camberwell



*What was David Cameron doing in Windsor Walk?* Picture taken from television

David Cameron was shown on BBC Television News in February talking about homelessness and empty properties against the background of the boarded up terraces in Windsor Walk. While it is in everyone's interests (except perhaps the owners') that empty properties should be identified in the hope that they will quickly be brought back into use, was this the best example to choose? Part of the boarded-up terraces, numbers 16 to 20, has been bought by the Harris Birth Right Trust and will become a research institute for foetal medicine. The other we understand is designated for rehabilitation as flats,

possibly for students. So at least there is a plan to do something with these properties and there could have been more telling examples.

The Society continues to press for the regeneration of Windsor Walk to be undertaken as soon as possible, as Camberwell residents have waited long enough. One promising sign is that there is now scaffolding up on numbers 16 to 20.

The BBC should also get its facts right. It reported that Cameron was in Lambeth while showing him in Southwark. Despite the credit crunch, let's hope the attention Cameron has brought to Windsor Walk produces some action soon.

### CONTRIBUTE TO THE *QUARTERLY!*

Articles, letters, photographs and other contributions always welcome

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**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 21 MAY 2009**

**The Annual General Meeting of the Camberwell Society will be held at 7pm on Thursday 21 May 2009 at the Institute of Psychiatry, 16 De Crespigny Park, SE5.**

**Agenda**

- 1. Apologies for absence**
- 2. Previous minutes and matters arising**
- 3. Chairwoman's Report for the year 2008-2009**
- 4. Treasurer's Report**
- 5. Election of Officers and Committee**

All officers of the Society and members of the Executive Committee retire annually in accordance with the Constitution of the Society and are eligible for re-election. Nominations are required for the Officers and Committee. Any paid-up member may, together with a seconder (also a paid-up member), make nominations. These must be sent to the Secretary, Ann Dannatt, 92 Talfourd Road, London, SE15 5NZ, to arrive at least 14 days before the Annual General Meeting.

- 6. Any other business**

*Ann Dannatt, Secretary*

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OFFICERS AND  
COMMITTEE**

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Vice-Chairman: Nick Holt  
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Secretary: Ann Dannatt  
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Assistant Secretary: Sara Hargreaves  
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Annual membership costs £15 (household) £8 (individual) or £3 (concessionary)  
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