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# CAMBERWELL QUARTERLY

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The magazine of the Camberwell Society  
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[www.camberwellsociety.org.uk](http://www.camberwellsociety.org.uk)



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## THE CAMBERWELL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP & EVENTS

*Membership is open to anyone who lives, works or is interested in Camberwell. To join, see page 19.*

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 details. Members are welcome to attend as observers with prior notice to the Secretary, Robert Wainwright (see inside back cover for contact details).

Sub-Committees on planning, the public realm, 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.

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).

## LOCAL SOCIETIES, VENUES AND EVENTS

We recommend checking details

### Brunswick Park Neighbourhood Tenants and Residents Association

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[tandra.brunswickpark@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:tandra.brunswickpark@yahoo.co.uk)

### Burgess Park, Friends of

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### Camberwell Gardens Guild

Membership enquiries to:  
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### Carnegie Library, Friends of

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[foclchair@googlemail.com](mailto:foclchair@googlemail.com)

### Concerts in St Giles' Church

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### Cuming Museum

Old Walworth Town Hall, 151  
Walworth Road, SE17 1RY.  
020 7525 2332  
[www.southwark.gov.uk/Discover-Southwark/Museums](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/Discover-Southwark/Museums)

### Dulwich Picture Gallery

College Road, SE21 7AD  
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[www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk](http://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk)

### Herne Hill Society

Jeffrey Doorn 020 7274 7008  
Membership: Herne Hill Society  
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[www.hernehillsociety.org.uk](http://www.hernehillsociety.org.uk)

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Peter Frost 020 8613 6757  
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### Wells Way Triangle Residents Association

Andrew Osborne  
[WWTRACamberwell@gmail.com](mailto:WWTRACamberwell@gmail.com)



Cover: The bridge over what was once the route of the old canal with St George's church in the background (see page 11) Photo:Carole Mason



## How will traffic proposals impact on Camberwell?

I hope that you enjoyed the summer. The weather at the end of August and early September (as I write this letter) seems to have given us a stark reminder that autumn approaches, which will be a fact by the time that you read this issue of the *Quarterly*.

The summer seems to have been a summer of consultations. The cynic in me might feel that summer is a good time for the powers that be to sneak things through on the quiet, although I am sure that is not the case. Even so, I do think that the piecemeal nature of the traffic and transport consultations that we have seen over the last few months makes it difficult for anyone who has at heart the best interests of Camberwell, to take a considered, balanced view of what is being suggested, and more importantly, the impact that these proposals will have on Camberwell as a whole.

If you are a road user (whether by car, cycle or bus), then it seems to me that getting in and out of Camberwell at the moment is almost an impossibility. There are the works at Vauxhall and The Oval, which seem to give rise to a permanent tailback all the way down the Camberwell New Road. Then there are the works at Elephant & Castle, with similar effect on the Walworth Road and Camberwell Road. I am sure that "it will be alright when it is finished", but surely there could have



Nick Holt

been some thought given to the staggering and/or co-ordination of these major projects?

It would also seem that both Southwark and Lambeth Councils are taking the opportunity to renovate (even if no renovation works are required) a number of junctions in and around Camberwell. Is this strictly necessary, I wonder?

I mentioned the number of consultations. We have had the Camberwell Green traffic consultation as well as the Champion Hill Quietway Consultation. There was also a consultation exercise by Lambeth Council on proposed road closures in the Loughborough Junction area. A number of members have copied the Society in on their responses, and the Society has also

responded to these Consultations. Where the full or partial closure of a road to vehicular traffic is proposed, then we have tried to take a cautious view. The idea that by closing a road to vehicles one will therefore encourage drivers to switch to journeys by bike or on foot is to my mind fanciful – it will more likely mean that those car drivers will simply find another way through. The Loughborough Junction closures are, in my view a contributing factor to the Camberwell New Road traffic mentioned above.

I realise that this is not an easy topic. Depending on where you live, then some of these measures may be long overdue. Others, as evidenced by the correspondence the Society has received, are unwelcome, to say the least. All I am asking for is more of an overall balance, looking at the area as a whole, rather than breaking everything up into single issue/single road proposals. I would be very interested to hear from you with your views.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the *Quarterly* – with articles on the new (and long awaited) Camberwell Library, the works at Datchelor Place and the local vinyl heaven that is Rat Records, it is yet another good read! My thanks once again to our Editorial team!

Nick Holt

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## Living on the edge

**A**t last! Camberwell's first pocket space is finished. Long-term residents of this little cul-de-sac are jubilant – no more living in a car park, enduring years of parking squabbles, crime and anti-social behaviour.

It's taken a long time. It was some 15 years ago that we first submitted our plans (unsuccessfully) for a Cleaner, Greener, Safer grant to pedestrianise the street.

When we moved here more than 25 years ago the street was separated from the D'Eynsford Estate by a formidable looking high wall well over six feet tall with one set of steps leading down to the estate. Datchelor Place barely existed as far as the Council was concerned – there was no street lighting, not even a street name signpost. One restaurateur got so fed up that he made his own sign: it's still there, alongside the proper one eventually erected by the Council. Cars parked with impunity along both sides of the road and down the middle, which meant frequent obstruction.

Crime was rife. Perpetrators from Camberwell Church Street could dash down Datchelor Place and, shielded by cars and the wall, disappear down one of the many alleys on the estate. Or they could run from the estate into Datchelor Place, through to Church Street where they could leap onto the open platform of a Routemaster No 12 or No 36 bus and be whisked away. Once, watching *The Bill*, a troop of the real Bill thundered past my window. Surreal.

Muggings were an everyday occurrence. I was just one victim.



*A convenient urinal*



*Fly tipping and dumping of rubbish was commonplace*

More alarming was the time I awoke to see a man climbing through my first-floor bedroom window. I leapt out of bed and pushed him out! He plummeted to earth, taking with him a terracotta window box and my curtain which he grabbed, hoping it would stop his descent. Later, when the police were getting details, one of them glanced out of the window: "Leave that car alone," he yelled. We looked out to see a man in a red afro wig trying to steal the police car.

On another occasion I was

awakened by a thud, thud, thud against our front door. I looked out to see a couple "having it off" on our doorstep!

After presenting the Council with facts like these, and supported by the Metropolitan Police, the wall was demolished and a brick planter about four foot high took its place. The steps adjacent to our house were moved further away and turned into a ramp, and at the other end of the planter new steps were built. Crucially, all the alleys on the estate were closed off. These changes improved local crime figures as, according to the police, gangs that had worked in Camberwell moved to Peckham, but the petty crime, muggings and anti-social behaviour continued.

Our next plague was the arrival of nightclubs in Camberwell Church Street. First of all there was the notorious Cube Bar (later it became Club Couture) with its amplified music and badly behaved patrons.

Living on the edge is all very well, but... Depressed by the noise, litter and selfishly parked cars, we toyed with putting our house up for sale, until one of those big yellow police notices appeared on our corner appealing for information about a shooting...

You may wonder why we stuck it out. Well, we love our house and we love living in Camberwell.

The Cube was closed down after two shootings, but operating at the same time was Miura Bar, whose patrons discovered the convenience of parking in Datchelor Place. Unfortunately for us these revellers partied every night, departing



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*The “carpark days”. A car-spares shop, now the Flying Fish restaurant, made things worse as its customers carried out repairs on the street*



*Datchelor Place as it is today, a calm and peaceful space, awaiting autumn plantings and spruced up buildings*

between 3am and 6am in high and voluble spirits. They partied too on Datchelor Place, where they danced to loud music from car stereos, accompanied by laughter, shrieks and shouting.

Miura was eventually shut down at the end of 2006. There were over 50 complaints from local residents.

But before that we continued nagging the Council. A meeting was arranged with Councillor Ian Wingfield (who has been unfailingly helpful) and representatives from Transport for London (TfL) and the Council at which it was agreed that the street would be pedestrianised. This was in 2005.

The transition was painful. Datchelor Place was already a Red Route. This had worked but only after a fashion. During the day, as it was badly policed, red lines were largely ignored and at night parking was permitted between 7pm and 7am. Great for Miura Bar patrons but not much fun for us. Southwark said nothing could be done as TfL was refusing to hand the road over to them.

We appealed to Harriet Harman MP who contacted Mayor Boris Johnson. They were super-efficient and within weeks TfL gave the road back to Southwark and parking was

changed to double yellow lines. In theory this meant no parking at any time but again restrictions proved ineffective.

Two local businesses objected strongly to parking restrictions of any kind, claiming that they were harming their businesses. We thought this was nonsense: there were nearly

*Revellers partied every night, leaving between 3am and 6am in high and voluble spirits*

always 20-minute bays available on the Red Route and ten-minute parking was allowed on double yellow lines for pick-ups and deliveries. However, it caused immense bad feeling.

By this time tenants on the D’Eynsford Estate had joined forces with us, pointing out that Datchelor Place was the main pedestrian entrance to their estate. RevitaliSE5’s

plan to turn Datchelor Place into a pocket space pleased us no end but failed to charm the naysayers.

Meanwhile, there was still illegal parking on the street; coaches even parked overnight, in the chilly mornings spewing out thick clouds of noxious gases while they warmed up.

Residents’ solution was to block the road with planters, allowing parking space for two cars at the Church Street end. One of the business owners overturned the planters in a rage and complained about their presence to the Council so we were ordered to move them.

Meanwhile, designs for the pocket space were proposed, chewed over and modified until we achieved what we hope will be a peaceful space where the street’s cafés and restaurants can put out seats and tables for patrons and where occasional street markets can be held.

Even the doubters have been converted and all our properties are being spruced up.

Why not pay us a visit? You can have a wine, coffee and/or a light meal at the Pigeon Hole, fish and chips at the Flying Fish or Middle Eastern fare at the Lebanese Mix Grill.

*Margaret Powley-Baker*

## The cult readers of Camberwell

Camberwell readers are an adventurous lot, keen on *avant garde*, cult fiction and poetry. So says Mike Allport, Southwark's Reader Development Manager, and as the man responsible for stocking fiction in libraries, he should know. Mike (favourite book: *Concrete Island* by JG Ballard) has invited readers to share these catholic tastes by nominating a book for the empty shelves of the new library opening by the Green this autumn. These books will carry the name of the nominator on a bookplate on the inside front cover – 600 suggestions have been received already.

We have had to wait a long time for this new library – the last purpose-built library in Camberwell was destroyed in the Blitz. But with cuts in funding to major libraries (Birmingham has had to appeal to the public to donate books), the closure of all Camberwell's bookshops, and electronic devices taking the place of the printed word, perhaps the question is less why did the new building take so long than how come a brand new library is opening at all.

According to Pam Usher the Libraries Arts and Heritage Manager (favourite author Jane Austen) new libraries have been a key part of Southwark's regeneration plans. The newest libraries include Peckham which opened in 2000, Canada Water in 2011 and new Camberwell library which is due to open this year. Newington Temporary library opened in the containers next to Elephant Park in September 2014 as an interim service while the Walworth Town Hall site is developed. John Harvard and Blue Anchor libraries have reopened after major refurbishment.

The new building is designed to encourage community activities. It has free WiFi so residents can access Council services on-line, small meeting rooms for local services and surgeries and a community room for up to 60 people. An Early Years officer will run activities for under fives in and around the new children's library on the ground floor; there will be a story-time reading club, help with IT, homework help clubs run by volunteers in term time, and



*Camberwell Central Library on Peckham Road was destroyed in the Blitz*

conversation cafés to improve spoken English. For individual study there are workstations and 17 study desks on the mezzanine. Local book clubs will be able to borrow multiple copies of their book, one for each member. And electronic books are available (go to [www.southwark.gov.uk/ebooks](http://www.southwark.gov.uk/ebooks)) – with no fines for their late return: “They simply disappear from your screen at the end of the lending period,” says Mike.

The library's former premises in a shop in Camberwell Church Street were too small and overcrowded for this level of activity. But many will remember the friendly old library with fondness. Bright book posters displaying inscriptions such as “Who's the Boss Rhinoceros?” or “The Cat in the Hat” papered the basement staircase to the children's library, snoozing newspaper readers were a fixture in the middle room and

the workstations were crowded with students researching coursework.

But readers will benefit from the wider stock and better facilities in Camberwell Green. Popularity will be boosted by promotions like this year's children's summer reading competitions, the annual poetry festival each June and talks by well-known authors such as Lionel Shriver to Michael Rosen who have held events in other Southwark libraries. Book issues in Southwark are up some six per cent over the last 12 months, proving that neither cuts nor Kindles can keep a good library service down.

*Marie Staunton*

*Camberwell Library Opening Hours:  
Monday to Friday 9am to 8pm,  
Saturday 9am to 5pm,  
Sunday 12 to 4pm.*

*The new  
Camberwell  
library, behind  
schedule and still  
with the barriers  
round it, but  
almost ready for  
occupation*





## Now we know – mystery of the plaque is solved

The mystery of the bronze plaque (Forgotten and found, CQ p185.12) has been solved thanks to Brian Green and George Young.

Brian Green says: "It is one of a number (many may still exist in situ) placed on the Homes for Heroes initiative of Camberwell Borough Council after World War 1. The site is the Casino Estate, Red Post Hill. It was the subject of an article by Bernard Nurse in the *Dulwich Society Journal* recently and is available online."

George Young agrees and goes further: "Certain houses received one after the estate was completed in 1922 and they can still be viewed by walking along Sunray Avenue, Red Post Hill and Casino Avenue. Comprising 292 dwellings, mainly two-storey houses, they were built as homes "fit for heroes" after World



*You might see one of these around*

War 1. It was probably one of the first council estates built by the former Borough of Camberwell. It may be possible to work out which

house this plaque came from.

"The estate, bordering Sunray Avenue, is on land once occupied by Dulwich Hill House (later 169 Denmark Hill; built about 1800 and demolished about 1890). This house was the home of banker and MP, Matthias Attwood (1780-1851). Thomas Lynn Bristowe (1833-92), stockbroker, MP and founder of Brockwell Park, lived there from 1875-1885.

"The estate bordering Casino Avenue is on land occupied by Casino House (later 3 Herne Hill), built 1796 for Richard Shaw (c1755-1816), solicitor for Warren Hastings (1732-1818). Hastings' trial at Westminster Hall for mismanagement of funds while Governor-General of Bengal lasted seven years (1788-95). Casino house was believed to have been designed by architect John Nash, with gardens laid out by Humphrey Repton. The house was last occupied in 1894 and demolished in 1906. The lake in the grounds was retained to become a feature of Sunray Gardens, a park formed in the 1920s."

## The poet who lived in Grove Lane

Nicholas Roskill has told CQ about a poet of some distinction who used to live in Grove Lane. In fact the Roskills bought their house from her. Her name was Margaret Stanley-Wrench.

Did she write about Camberwell? One likely contender is a poem she wrote entitled "Mice".

*Night after night they come  
Climbing with claws like children's hands, innocent  
Nursery creatures, yet they desecrate,  
And sleekly sign their name  
Vermin, evil and yet meek and tame.*

*So we set traps and bait,  
After dark hearing the whisper and the feet  
Rustling word-like, syllables of living  
That in the old house, late,  
Reiterate, repeat, "Wait, stranger, wait."*

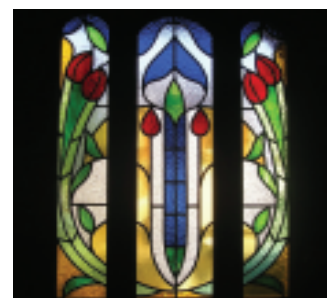
*Wait. The stammered, sad  
Movement of mice, night after night coming  
To the empty rooms, the haunting of the wainscot  
Will end. The last sound said,  
Dumb, clean and purged, the silent house is dead.*

The mice are still with us in Camberwell.

As well as being a poet, Margaret Stanley-Wrench was a playwright and author of a number of successful children's books and, according to one obituary, was "an inspiring teacher to students at Camberwell". Unfortunately it doesn't say where.

She died in 1992, aged 57.

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## Art for the People: Camberwell's "secret" collection

In Angela Weight's article on the South London Gallery's Director (CQ184) there is a tantalising mention of "the collection". There is indeed a large and important art collection associated with the South London Gallery (SLG), now held by Southwark Council, and local people may not be aware of its proud history and present obscurity. Enough for the moment to say that the Collection is intact and well looked after.

The imposing building on Peckham Road that houses the Gallery and part of the Camberwell College of Art, with its long facade and two entrances, dates from 1898 and suggests solid public or corporate investment. In truth the Gallery emerged erratically over two decades and three sites, with constant cash-flow problems, completed largely through the dogged determination of a Londoner without private means – William Rossiter, employed in working-men's education.

Rossiter and his supporters founded the Gallery (and a Technical Institute) to serve ordinary south Londoners: free, open on Sundays and welcoming children. This progressive but controversial aim was endorsed by a group of eminent artists who agreed to join the council of the Gallery in 1887. They were Sir Frederick Leighton, George Watts and Edward Burne-Jones, supported by the wives – Mary Watts and Georgie Burne-Jones. Paintings donated by these artists and their friends formed the core of the Collection.

Visit the South London Gallery and you will find temporary (and

contemporary) exhibitions in its various spaces, but not "the Collection". You will however be close to one of its star attractions. The floor of the main gallery is modern and covers an original floor where a large, intricate marquetry (inlaid wood) panel can be found. This gift is the work of another noted late 19th century artist, Walter Crane. The design is drawn largely from

*The people's art collection has been kept for many years in a state-of-the art secure storage facility at considerable cost*

nature, and bears the words *The Source of Art is in the Life of a People*.

To the best of my knowledge the Walter Crane floor has not been shown publicly since September 2001 when it was the centrepiece of an exhibition devoted to the artist's life and work.

The story of "the Collection" is woven into the history of the Camberwell College of Art, emerging from the earlier Institute, and more recently part of University of the Arts London. Tutors and students have

conserved art in the Collection, while work from Camberwell-trained artists has been gifted and purchased since the 1920s. There were periods also when the SLG was able to purchase art-works on the open market at what now seem modest prices.

In the 1990s, during David Thorp's period as director, the Gallery enjoyed a share of works by emerging and now well-known artists through subscription to the Contemporary Art Society. Some idea of the borough's holding of paintings can be gathered from the Southwark section of *Oil Paintings in Public Ownership in London: South East* (2013), published by the Public Catalogue Foundation. These paintings can also be viewed at [bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings](http://bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings).

The last substantial show featuring the SLG Collection was for three months in 1994 at Dulwich Picture Gallery. Entitled *Art for the People* and curated by Giles Waterfield and others, the SLG was seen in the context of other galleries and museums set up in poor areas of cities in the late 19th century.

Sixty-six works from the SLG were shown, ranging in scale and subject from Valentine Prinsep's *The Death of Siward* at 185 x 251cm to Henry Scott Tuke's engaging study, *A Boy Drinking*, at 23 x 16cm. Also shown was Prinsep's *An Unprofessional Beauty* – a gorgeous anonymous portrait. (See opposite.)

There were John Ruskin watercolours on show, a large oil painting by Alfred Parsons of an apple orchard from his time in America, and several moral or

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sentimental scenes of Victorian life. Frederick, Lord Leighton was represented by three engravings and an oil sketch, but also “present” in the form of a bronze bust by Thomas Brock.

William de Morgan tiles were exhibited, and a large oil by Evelyn de Morgan. Further extending the world of art/craft was a large wood engraving, *The Triumph of Labour*, and a section of wood-blocked wallpaper, both by Walter Crane.

The exhibition catalogue remains an important resource with four essays around the themes of the event, and is richly illustrated (black and white other than coloured covers).

In the late 1980s the SLG was suffering from low visitor numbers and a move was made to showcase contemporary art – a return to founding principles – often by local artists such as Sean Scully and Tom Phillips.

By the time Christopher Jordan became keeper in 1997, much of the Collection had been housed in a deep, narrow space upstairs in the SLG. Framed paintings were packed on new sliding vertical racks, with loose works in large cabinet drawers. Space was so tight it was difficult for more than three people to visit and view the works. The largest paintings had been commercially stored.

I got to know the Collection by volunteering at that time, recording and cataloguing, and helping to hang selected works temporarily in council offices.

Christopher Jordan curated several specialist shows during the early 2000s, the first being a *Walter Crane* retrospective in the downstairs gallery, with the marquetry floor panel as central feature. Many works were newly framed for the exhibition, and framing became a regular requirement for subsequent shows. With acid-free mounts, these works were thus upgraded for the future.

The Collection includes an important holding of lithographs by the brave and prolific French social “commentator” *Honore Daumier*, 1808-1879. Numbering nearly 500, this gift by a local man, William



*Valentine Prinsep, An Unprofessional Beauty*

*Courtesy London Borough of Southwark/South London Gallery*

Wright, is the largest holding of this artist in the UK. Christopher Jordan and Jane Bird selected some 40 of these wickedly animated monochrome works under the subtitle *Lithographer Extraordinaire*, presented at the Cuming Museum, Walworth Road in 2002.

In the same year over 30 works, mainly paintings and engravings of portraits and groups were gathered together at the Carnegie Library, Herne Hill Road under the title *Look at Me: Look at You*.

Next came a small but important exhibition held at the Cuming Museum, *New Visions: Print and Printmaking 1620-1932*. In a typical SLG scenario, a neglected box of near-200 prints, often tattered and torn, was appraised and many

conserved with a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, then 28 were framed and exhibited with researched commentaries. Among these rare and beautiful works, I recall being amazed by *Minerva and Mercury Arming Perseus* by Jan Muller after Bartholomaeus Spranger, 1604, and delighted by *A Bachante (Lady Hamilton)* by John Raphael Smith after Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1784.

Another specialist genre from our eclectic Collection was shown in 2005 when wallpaper samples from leading designers of the late 19th – early 20th centuries were presented, this time at Mary Ward House, WC1. All were block printed by Jeffrey & Co, and were acquired in 1914 by the

*Continued on next page*

# Art for the People

*Continued from previous page*

then curator and director of the Camberwell School of Art, William Dalton.

Returning to fine art, the Collection holds unique chalk/charcoal drawings (cartoons) by Ford Madox Brown for fresco decorations in the new Houses of Parliament. Brown failed to be accepted for this project despite critical acclaim at the time. These works, in particular the massive cartoon *The Body of Harold brought to William the Conqueror*, were damaged in WW2, but conservation enabled them to be shown at the De Morgan Centre, Wandsworth.

In 2011 the ASC Gallery was venue for *Crossing Centuries: Works by Women Artists*.

Two shows had outcomes as curious (bizarre perhaps) as the story of the Collection itself. In the first a cult-like following was experienced, while during the last event of Dr Jordan's SLG involvement, the venue was partly consumed by fire.

Regarding the first, I can do no better than quote from the publicity flyer. *Austin Osman Spare* (1886 – 1956) lived and worked in Southwark for most of his life. He

was initially celebrated as a genius by the Edwardian art scene. Affected by his experience as a WW1 artist, he rejected fame and fortune to explore a mystical but poverty-stricken path. Today he is regarded for his portraiture and Symbolist book illustrations.

This exhibition at the Cuming Museum featured work from the

*The Gallery was founded to serve ordinary south Londoners: free, open on Sundays and welcoming children*

Southwark Collection and other lenders – over 80 items in all. As word spread, visitors came from far and wide.

In February 2013 some curious pots from our Collection were united with others from the Arts and Crafts period for an exhibition at the

Cuming Museum called *Birds, Beasts and Beyond: the ceramic artistry of the Martin brothers*. A month after the opening, a number of these unique, humorous creations were damaged when fire swept through the roof of the building causing timbers and flooring to collapse. Vast amounts of water were pumped in to quench the fire, adding to the damage.

This building is still in the early stages of refurbishment, but is likely to provide new gallery space for some of the Collection, and for temporary exhibitions.

Built up with dedication since the late 19th century, the people's art collection – the hundreds of paintings, prints and artifacts mentioned in this article – has been kept for many years in a state-of-the-art secure storage facility at considerable cost to Southwark residents. It seems that there was no building in the borough to display even a fraction of the Collection.

But it is certainly not forgotten. Last year a precious engraving by Albrecht Durer was expertly cleaned and repaired with a grant of money from alumni of Birkbeck College. More friends like these will help to restore the Collection to its public.

*John Turpin*

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## A part of Camberwell that has entirely disappeared

George Gilbert, a young country doctor from “the little town of Graybridge-on-the-Wayverne, in pretty pastoral Midlandsire”, has come to London to spend a week with an old schoolfellow, Sam Smith. Sam, who has abandoned a legal career to write sensation fiction and now calls himself Sigismund, has rooms in the Temple, but he lodges in Camberwell with the Sleaford family.

*“It was a long walk from the Temple to Camberwell, but the two young men were good walkers, and as Sigismund Smith talked unceasingly all the way, there were no awkward pauses in the conversation. They walked the whole length of the Walworth Road, and turned to the left soon after passing the turnpike. Mr Smith conducted his friend by mazy convolutions of narrow streets and lanes, where there were pretty little villas and comfortable cottages nestling amongst trees, and where there was the perpetual sound of clattering tin pails and the slopping of milk, blending pleasantly with the cry of the milkman. Sigismund led George through these shady retreats, and past a tall stern-looking church, and along by the brink of a canal, till they came to a place where the country was wild and sterile in the year 1852. I dare say that railways have cut the neighbourhood all to pieces by this time, and that Mr Sleaford’s house has been sold by auction in the form of old bricks; but on this summer afternoon the place to which Sigismund brought his friend was quite a lonely, countrified spot, where there was one big, ill-looking house, shut in by a high wall, and straggling rows of cottages dwindling away into pigsties upon each side of it.”*

I think it can be fairly said that this is a Camberwell which has entirely disappeared and indeed, as Mary Elizabeth Braddon acknowledges, was probably already disappearing when her tenth novel, *The Doctor’s Wife*, was published in 1864.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835-1915) was an immensely successful author. For the most part



Above: Camberwell Gate, where the Turnpike used to be and (below) it’s now a familiar site where the Red Lion pub stands

Courtesy Local Studies Library



she wrote sensation novels, like those written by Sigismund Smith: they featured secrets, adultery, bigamy, murder, in contemporary middle-class settings. Her own life was not without sensation. She was the daughter of a solicitor who abandoned his wife and family when she was a child. When she was still a very young woman she became an actress to support herself and her mother, but gradually developed a career as a writer. In 1860 she met John Maxwell, a publisher of periodicals whose wife was in an asylum, and he and

Braddon began to live together the following year. She became step-mother to his five children, and bore six of her own, finally marrying him in 1874 after the death of his wife. They settled in Richmond, Surrey, where there are streets named after characters from her novels, and that is where she died.

The crucial fact from our point of view is that while she and her mother Fanny were still living a hand-to-mouth existence, they – like

*Continued on next page*

# An old part of Camberwell that has disappeared *continued*

Sigismund Smith – lodged for a time in Camberwell. Rare books in Southwark Local History Library show that some time between January and July 1852 Fanny Braddon moved to Park Street, and she was listed there as a ratepayer at least until January 1855. Park Street is now Parkhouse Street, and is indeed much changed though not in ways Mary Elizabeth could have predicted – an industrial estate runs along both sides of the road for most of its length. There is a small terrace of Victorian houses near the junction with Southampton Way, but these had not been built in 1852.

The year in which the Braddons moved to Camberwell, 1852, is the year in which the Camberwell chapters of *The Doctor's Wife* are set: the later part of the novel takes place in and around George's home in Graybridge and describes his marriage to Isabel Sleaford. In 1880 Braddon published *The Story of Barbara; her Splendid Misery and her Gilded Cage*. This also begins in 1852 and gives a rather fuller picture of life in Camberwell. Barbara Trevornock lives, with her mother and her sister Flossie, in South Lane, Camberwell:

*"South-Lane, Camberwell, is one of those places which progress has doubtless eradicated from the face of*

*the earth. ... It had come into being at an Arcadian period of the world's history, when land about Camberwell was of little more than agricultural value. The houses, villas, cottages, what you will, were various in architecture, and set in gardens that were extensive as compared with the gardens of to-day. The lane described a gracious curve, and made a vista of greenery as seen from either end. Trees grew and flourished – hawthorn and lilac, lime and sycamore, sweet bay and Portugal laurel. There were good tenants and bad, gardens neatly kept and gardens neglected, but the general effect was prettiness and rusticity. ... An old brick wall divided [the Trevornocks'] garden from the canal that flowed outside it. Seen from the upper windows the canal had a picturesque effect. Mrs Trevornock, who was inclined to see the romantic as well as the humorous side of everything, said the garden and canal in spring-time reminded her of Holland. She had never been in Holland, but that country was vividly represented in her pictorial mind."*

This is recognisably the same area as the one through which George and Sigismund walk on their way to the "lonely countrified spot" where Mr Sleaford lived with his family. There are other details which

link the two novels. The Trevornocks do their shopping in Walworth Road. The Sleafords' landlord is in Albany Road, which is also where the Trevornocks go *"to pay a horrid tax, a thing which wrenches seventeen-and-ninepence out of one without rhyme or reason, but which must be paid on pain of summonses and all manner of grisly horrors"* – and it may be relevant that the rate books show that in 1854 and 1855 Fanny Braddon was in arrears with her rates. Charming as this part of Camberwell is said to be, it is evidently a place where the Sleaford and Trevornock families – like Fanny and Mary Elizabeth Braddon – are living because they are poor.

Braddon doesn't mention it, but George and Sigismund would have passed the Walworth Workhouse on their way to Camberwell. In 1852 the Workhouse stretched back from Walworth and Camberwell Roads to the west. The Camberwell turnpike, which was on the boundary between Walworth and Camberwell, crossed the road from outside the Workhouse to what was then called Boyton Place. The Workhouse has long gone and Westmoreland Road now runs where Boyton Place used to be but the Red Lion, which was on the north side of Boyton Place, is still there. Turnpikes were abolished by law in

## At home in Camberwell



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Roy Brooks



1865, but the name has endured: the railway station which opened in 1863 just north of Beresford Street (now John Ruskin Street) was called Camberwell Gate, before its name was changed to Walworth Road. The Local History Library has a postcard – probably early 20th century – of the area to the north of where the turnpike used to be showing that it was then called Camberwell Gate, and just to the west of the area depicted there is now the Gateway Housing Estate.

Having passed the turnpike, Sigismund and George turned left. A contemporary map shows that there were many turnings they might have taken. One possibility is Boundary Lane, which ran eastwards between Walworth and Camberwell just to the south of Boyton Place and still exists, although it is much shorter than it used to be. But in truth the area was a maze of lanes and houses, and I think it would be impossible to follow their route. However, the “tall stern-looking church” which Sigismund and George passed on the way to Mr Sleaford’s house is

certainly St George’s Church, Wells Street (now Wells Way).

In 1852 St George’s was on the south bank of the Grand Surrey Canal, close to a bridge. The Canal had its own tollhouses and one of them was on this bridge, which is still to be found in Burgess Park crossing the footpath which marks the route formerly taken by the Canal. The 1851 census informs us that the Collector of Tolls was called William Pike and that his wife and daughter, both called Mary Ann, sold milk. His son John William was a “Carman and Cow Keeper”. So this may account for the sound of the slopping of milk which Braddon mentions. I have been unable to find in the census any pig-keepers who could account for the pigsties near Mr Sleaford’s house. However, it does record a butcher in Neate Street, north of the Canal, where there was a cluster of houses rather separate from those near Camberwell and Albany Roads, so possibly this is the area which Braddon had in mind.

As to South Lane, where the Trevornocks lived, it resembles Park

Street in being curved. However, no part of Park Street was adjacent to the Canal so Braddon cannot have been describing the house in which she lived.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon had a great narrative gift. The events she describes are often preposterous, but her characters are vividly described and the reader keeps turning the pages. A number of her novels are still in print and others may be read online. Camberwell Library has both *The Doctor’s Wife* and *The Literary Lives of Mary Elizabeth Braddon: a study of her life and work* by Jennifer Carnell, which does not have much to say about Camberwell but describes Braddon’s acting career in some detail.

**Carole Mason**

*Two old maps are available via email from the Editor, one (below) showing the area round the Canal and Park Street as well as the Workhouse and Turnpike, and the other showing a map of Camberwell only, hence not the workhouse and turnpike.*

*The Greenwood map of 1826*



## Turning the tables at Rat Records



*Customers queue along the pavement for the Saturday morning sale*

**S**urely vinyl died in the 1990s, killed by the CD. So why is there a queue for LPs outside Camberwell's Rat Records on Saturday mornings? Owner Tom Fisher explains that reports of vinyl's death were much exaggerated – and now it is having a revival. “The music cognoscenti have always enjoyed the warmer sound of vinyl, but since 2010 it has gained a whole new audience of under 25s.”

Since he started dealing in records in 1989 Tom has seen the rise of the CD (the first million-selling CD was *Brothers in Arms* by Dire Straits, he remembers) which in turn was threatened by MP3 players which were replaced by iTunes. As a politics student at QMC Tom splurged his whole grant on music, but in order to eat had to sell part of the collection and that's how his hobby became a career. With wife Rachel (RAT stands for Rachel and Tom) he started a stall on Greenwich market. Seventeen years ago business was going well enough to support a shop. “We wanted an area that would produce a customer base for the wide

range of music we carried. It needed to be culturally mixed with people from different countries. So we looked in Camberwell, Brixton and Spitalfields.” Just by the Green in Camberwell New Road they found the former Mrs M's African medicine shop, complete with rabbit's feet and strange herbs and potions in the basement.

### *Vinyl draws customers from across London*

Rat Records has always stocked CDs but it is the vinyl that drew customers from across London. “They were male, older and into specialised music – reggae, psychedelic music and jazz. The jazz buyers are very particular about sound and condition of records, some of them had never switched over to CDs. In the last couple of years customers have had wider tastes and

are happy to buy Pink Floyd or the Beatles on vinyl.”

Oddly, as unauthorised downloads have enabled some to get music for free and iTunes has made access virtual and instant, sales of vinyl have increased. In 2013 iTunes downloads started to reduce, but for the last six years vinyl sales have been climbing, helped by their use in sampling by nightclub DJs, vinyl-only releases by bands such as the Foo Fighters and the Rolling Stones re-release of back catalogue on vinyl with a digital download. However, as there are now only 23 machines left in the world that manufacture new LPs (in Czech Republic, Tennessee and Germany) supply is limited. The second-hand vinyl records that Rat Records sell are in increasing demand. “The vinyl sound is warmer, it is the original analogue sound that artists intended and albums are so tangible,” says Tom.

Buying vinyl is a slow pleasure in a world of instant downloads. Holding the record, unwrapping it at home, reading the cover notes, the



lyrics, the iconic designs of some sleeves, playing the tracks in the order that the musicians intended, turning the disc over and placing the needle just right are all tangible satisfactions of ownership. But vinyl is also fragile and the jump by scratched records irritating. A record-cleaning brush (costing £7) is essential, according to Tom. Rat Records do not sell equipment, but Tom recommends a good deck (for example Technics 1210 costing around £400) and a decent amp and speakers which will cost about £200.

Rat Records has met increasing

*A typical week could include a trip to Rome, where Tom picked up a collection of 2,000 records*

appreciation of vinyl by expanding into a website, which now accounts for one-third of its business, with passers-by being another third and referrals making up the balance. The shop has been used in the cult BBC3 series "People Just do Nothing" and it is asked to do shoots for music videos two or three times a week.

To meet demand Tom, the buyer, travels far and near. A typical week could include a trip to Rome, where Tom picked up a collection of 2,000 records recently, or Eltham where a parent had emigrated to Australia leaving his son with an unwanted heavy metal collection. Like his customers Tom has eclectic tastes. A 6 Music fan, he listens to blues, reggae, dance, jungle, gospel and jazz, but even he balked at listening to the whole of an Aberdeen *avant garde* jazz collection. He sees no point in stocking mainstream pop such as Wham or Rod Stewart: "You can just as easily buy that at ASDA." But the unusual attracts, like the



*Owner Tom and Rat Records Manager Phillippe on a busy Saturday morning*



*A happy customer finds what he wants*

complete collection of Irish, Scots and Breton bagpipe music, which was snapped up by a French couple in their 30s.

To succeed a niche business needs to be inventive and have commercial nous. Tom believes in ever-changing stock, sold cheaply. Phillippe, Rat Records manager, runs the price challenge. If a record is cheaper online, the customer pays the lower price, but is honour bound to pay more if the online price is higher. Tom buys constantly, some two or three collections every week and

every Saturday all the new stock is released. On the same day guest DJs do a three-hour set in the shop and are paid in records. Tom says: "Customers pile in and the disco section is savaged. Classic rock sells well, like Bowie, the Stones, Dylan. Reggae goes fast as does West African music. Recently we have been selling a lot of unusual disco, 1970s, pirate type and house music." No wonder there's a queue outside the shop on Saturday mornings.

*Marie Staunton*

## Recipe

# Ari's favourite rabbit dinner



After the *Quarterly's* article on Cruson's greengrocers (CQ No 180), Maria Aristidou has been asked about her rabbit recipe by several customers. Now that autumn's on its way, it's a good time to try it.

### Ingredients

- Six pieces British rabbit skinned and prepared (*as sold by Clive from Marsh Produce at the Saturday Farmers' Market*)
- Four large Spanish onions (or red onions – slightly better taste but more expensive)
- Sunflower oil – 1 Greek coffee cup
- Two bay leaves
- One or two cinnamon sticks
- Four or five black peppercorns
- One small Greek coffee cup of malt vinegar or wine vinegar

### Method

*A day or so before you aim to serve the meal:*

- Gently fry rabbit in sunflower oil, until just brown but nowhere near burnt.
- Take rabbit out of the oil and set aside.
- Thinly slice onions and add to the oil.

- Fry gently until they caramelise and go the lovely golden colour that gives the best flavour.
- Discard oil.
- Add rabbit to onions in the pan and mix together.
- Now soften the rabbit either by adding boiling water to the pan and simmering gently for half an hour until water almost evaporated or, even better, use a pressure cooker.
- Put rabbit, onions and water in pressure cooker, bring to pressure and cook for four minutes.
- Add two bay leaves, one or two cinnamon sticks, four or five black peppercorns to the rabbit and onions in the pan.
- Add one Greek coffee cup of vinegar.
- Season with salt to taste.
- Cook slowly for about 20 minutes (you may need to add a little more water) until the vinegar is absorbed. *You can eat straight away but it is better to leave for a day or so to let the flavours infuse. Serve with rice or boiled potatoes and a fresh Greek salad.*



## Where to buy the Camberwell Society cards

The cards and notelets shown below are available from the SE5 Forum stand at the Farmers' Market which is held every Saturday from 10am to 2pm. The market is usually held on Camberwell Green but while the Green is closed for refurbishment the market will move to another location. Look out for signposts.



*No.1: Old House on  
Camberwell Green*



*No.2: Telegraphs on Grove  
Hill, 1796*



*No.3: Old St Giles' Church,  
Camberwell, 1804*



*No.4: Fountain Cottage,  
Camberwell, c. 1794*



*No.5: St George's  
Church, 1827*



*No.6: The Camberwell Free  
Grammar School*



*No.7: The Camberwell  
Beauty*

*No.8 (below): Set of four notelets on cream-coloured card. From left to right: St Giles' Church, 1750; St George's Church; Camberwell Green, 1907; The Triangle, Denmark Hill, 1833.*



*No.9: Early 19th century  
view of Dog Kennel Hill  
(postcard)*

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*Roy Brooks*

## The Society comments on planning applications

The Society looks at all planning applications within the SE5 area and occasionally at other applications which are significant to our area of interest. We advise the relevant planning authority (either Lambeth or Southwark) that we object, support or have no objection to an application where we have decided to comment.

Owing to the limited space available in the *Quarterly*, we are only able to print an edited selection of the applications on which the Society has commented.

You can also see our comments on the Society's website at [www.camberwellsociety.org.uk](http://www.camberwellsociety.org.uk)

**Note:** The Society objects on all counts to the proposal to use UPVC windows and doors. These are non-sustainable and will result in crude fenestration. We recommend timber or powdercoated aluminium.

15-AP-2644/2645

### **167 Camberwell Grove, SE5**

*Erection of single storey side extension to replace existing garage and rear terrace with associated timber sash windows to front and french doors to rear elevation, installation of a new window, re-location and replacement of existing door and window to rear elevation at lower ground floor level; installation of new sash window to rear elevation at first floor level; replacement of existing door with sash window to side elevation at lower ground floor level; erection of new boundary wall on the boundary with No 169; creation of parking area to side elevation with new opening within the front boundary wall together with dropped curb to*

*provide access from Grove Crescent.*

In the plans, the design and access statements, there is only one mention of timber-framed doors and windows and that is in relation to the existing ones. We would object to any windows or external doors that are not made of timber.

Internally, alteration seems sensible, especially the reinstatement of the whole of the first floor landing which includes the window above the portico. At the front of the property the reconstitution of the existing garage is a welcome modernisation, but the two sash windows should have a single vertical glazing bar in each sash as this would be in keeping with all other windows at the front of the property.

The rainwater down pipe and hopper should be in keeping with the age of the house and crescent/street, not an off-the-shelf black plastic type.

The plans do not give much indication of the proposed changes to the railings at the front of the property, in particular where there is a new three metre parking area. It is hoped that any changes to the railings will be dealt with in a way that is sympathetic to the original design of the house and front garden.

15-AP-2993

### **Rylstone, Grove Park, SE5**

*Erection of a single storey rear extension to dwelling house*

This is a retrospective application which was required because one side of the extended kitchen is within 2m of the rear wall of the adjacent property's garage, and the ridge of the extension is 4.2m high, thus not within the scope of automatically permitted development.

The extension doubles the size of the kitchen, which was very small for the size of the house, and also improves the appearance of the rear elevation of the house by adding a bay window that matches the existing bay windows at the front of the house.

While it is regrettable that the application has been made retrospectively, the extension will improve the facilities and appearance of the house and will have only a marginal impact on the

adjacent property.

The Camberwell Society has no objection to this proposal.

15-AP-2725

### **19-20 Stories Mews, SE5**

*(land to the rear of Nos 145-147 Grove Lane, SE5)*

*Erection of two two-storey three-bedroomed dwellings with solar panels on roof and bicycle storage)*

The two houses are planned with two bedrooms and bathrooms upstairs and one bedroom downstairs, together with a kitchen/dining livingroom with access to the garden. The upper wall materials are slate board cladding and tile hung slate on the upper floors and perforated metal cladding on the ground floor front. The roofs are slate and arranged with diagonal ridges which are behind a parapet at the front but visible from the rear.

The planning of the houses is neat and economical, and the perforated metal cladding on the ground floor front is a sensible way of screening the ground floor bedroom without resorting to a fake garage door.

However, the use of slate board cladding and tile hung slates on the upper floors gives the houses an appearance which is out of keeping with the lighter tones of the brickwork and rendered houses adjacent, and not in a good way.

The lack of vertical definition between the two houses also means that the rhythm of the existing buildings in the street is broken.

The diagonal ridges are also a unique element, with no obvious justification and give the house a jagged uncompromising look from the rear. Some form of symmetrical pitched or flat roof would fit the street scene better.

The Camberwell Society would welcome guidance from Southwark Council on the future development of Stories Mews now that more houses are being built there.

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#### Local Information

South London Guide. Website on all aspects of South London, including shops, services and property. [www.southlondonguide.co.uk](http://www.southlondonguide.co.uk)

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### STOP PRESS: FOUND

A dark blue/grey linen Phase Eight “wrap” was left behind on Open Gardens Day in June. If it's yours please contact the Editor.

## CONTRIBUTE TO THE *QUARTERLY!*

Articles, letters, photographs and other contributions are always welcome.

Contact the Editor, Margaret Powley-Baker,  
on 020 7701 4417  
or via email to  
[mpowleybaker@gmail.com](mailto:mpowleybaker@gmail.com)

## Join the Camberwell Society

There are three categories of subscription:

- Household (up to five people at the same address) – £15 a year
- Individual – £8 a year
- Concessionary – £3 a year

To join, please see our website [www.camberwellsociety.org.uk](http://www.camberwellsociety.org.uk) for an application form and Standing Order Mandate.

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The Camberwell Society is the recognised amenity society for those living, working or interested in Camberwell.