

THE CAMBERWELL SOCIETY

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NEWSLETTER NO.65

November 1984

CAMBERWELL'S NEW SHOPPING PRECINCT IS UNDER WAY AND ON SCHEDULE

At midday on Monday, 9th July, the Worshipful the Mayor of Southwark, Cllr Jim Greening, at the controls of a mechanical excavator, performed the official turf-cutting ceremony which formally marked

the start of Camberwell's new shopping precinct situated close to the junction of Denmark Hill and Camberwell Church Street.

The £4½ million development by Estates Property



Jill Westwood (with umbrella) and Billie Densumbe (half hidden) represent the Camberwell Society at the turf-cutting ceremony initiating the Camberwell Green shopping centre on 9th July 1984

Investment Company (EPIC) will provide over 50,000 sq.ft. of shopping floor area (about the size of 17 tennis courts) and much needed parking for over 130 cars. Presto Foodmarkets has already taken 24,000 sq.ft. for a supermarket and negotiations are well advanced with other national retailers for the major store units. The precinct will also include a branch of the Midland Bank who are being rehoused from other accommodation on the site.

Following competitive tenders the building contract was let to Fairclough Building Limited and the development is being carried out in three overlapping phases with the entire construction expected to be completed so that retailers can be trading by Christmas 1985. By the end of September 1984 the structural frame of the new bank was virtually finished and the frames for the other phases were coming out of the ground.

The site has been assembled by EPIC over many years. It had been hoped that a start could have been made two or three years ago, but the acquisition of the last independent land ownerships did cause the development to be delayed. However, EPIC are particularly pleased that, in the event, it was possible to acquire all land ownerships by negotiation, without the use of Compulsory Purchase procedures by the London Borough of Southwark with whom EPIC were originally to develop in partnership.

The first land purchase can be traced back to about 1960. Since then most of the site has been bought in small amounts. It slowed down in the early 1970s in the financial crisis and then, in the latter part of the 70s, EPIC resumed negotiations to buy the remaining properties.

During the delays caused by the various negotiations, EPIC were able to acquire the land interests of the Local Authority. The freehold interest in the scheme has been retained solely by EPIC, who are financing the development from their own resources with the aid of an Urban Development Grant provided by the Local Authority and the Department of the Environment.

So far the centre has no name, and discussions are underway with interested parties to choose something suitable and relevant to the history of the area.

Don Westcott for EPIC

Editor's Note: If any of our readers have suggestions for a name for the shopping centre, please let us know and we will pass them on to EPIC.

THE CAMBERWELL SOCIETY CHRISTMAS SHOP 1984

We are negotiating for premises on a prime site in Camberwell for the Society's Christmas shop. We hope we can count on those people who have helped us before to volunteer their services once more. We would like more volunteers to serve in the shop on a rota basis. The shop will be open on Saturdays between 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. for six to eight weeks prior to Christmas and, depending on the

support of our members, the shop will possibly be open one weekday for a full day or half day (9.00 a.m. to 12.00 noon).

As well as the usual superb selection of the Society's cards, display boards and local community information, we are hoping to sell goods suitable for Christmas gifts donated by our members.

Please contact Joan Piper on 733 4059 or Pauline Hawkins on 733 9132 if you can help in any way.

CAMBERWELL GREEN TRAFFIC SCHEME

The Camberwell Society promoted and has long campaigned for Road Option 7, the traffic management scheme for relieving congestion at the Green, which is the heart of Camberwell. Its campaigning culminated in its representatives giving evidence at the public inquiry last January.

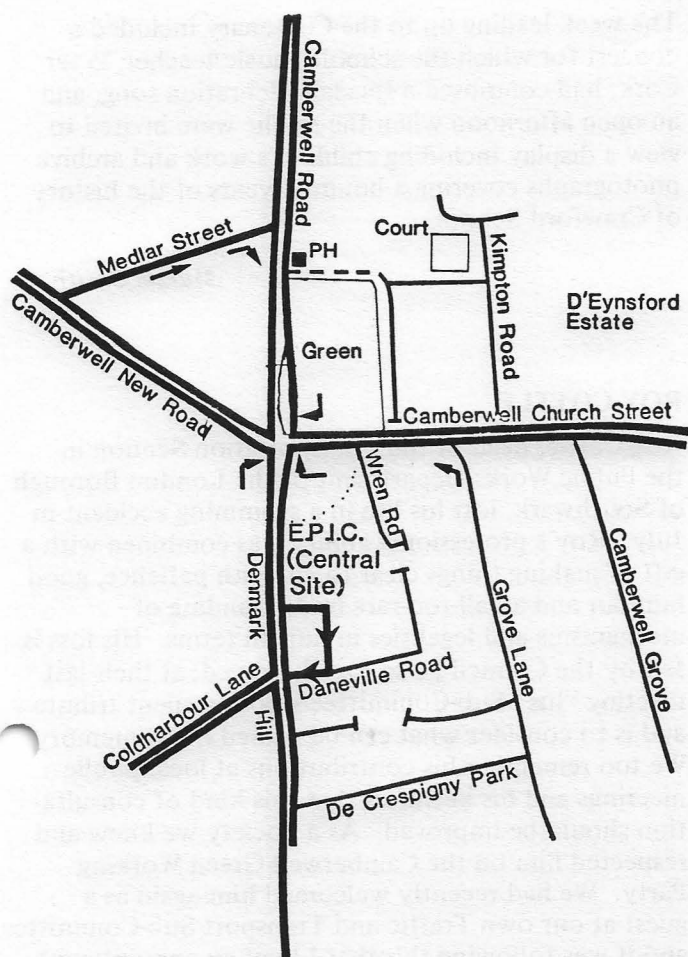
Both the GLC and Southwark Council have now formally abandoned Road Option 7 for their own reasons. In its place Southwark has put forward a new scheme for the Green which it has presented at public meetings on 9th and 10th October. It has produced a pamphlet with a cut out section containing a questionnaire which it invites members of the public to fill in and return to the Borough Planning Department.

At its meeting on 4th October the Executive Committee of the Society held a full debate on the Council's proposals at the end of which it agreed a statement for issuing to the Council. This statement is reproduced in full below.

The Camberwell Society, at the public inquiry held in January 1984, argued in favour of the Road Option 7 Traffic Management scheme modified to retain the Father Redcap public house because it believed that this was the best traffic scheme for Camberwell Green. This scheme has now been formally abandoned by both the GLC and Southwark Council.

Southwark Council have now put forward a new proposal — "The new traffic scheme for Camberwell Green" — set out in their consultative leaflet and questionnaire. At a meeting of the Camberwell Green Working Party on 20th September 1984 the Southwark Council traffic engineer expressed the belief, shared, he said by the GLC engineer, that if that proposal were adopted, although there would in the short term be more congestion locally and longer delays, in the longer term traffic would settle into a similar pattern to the present and that essential traffic should not be affected any more than at present.

In the light of that belief and in the absence of any material to the contrary, the Camberwell Society acquiesces in principle in the proposal. The proposal provides some of the environmental improvements of the Green long sought by the Camberwell Society, particularly the road closures to the north and east of the Green and in Daneville Road. It also satisfies



the views of those who objected to extra traffic in the Kimpton Road area.

The Society, however, reserves the right to make points on detail. For example, (a) the scheme shows no pedestrian protection at the Denmark Hill/Coldharbour Lane intersection, and (b) proposals to deal with overflow traffic in side roads are referred to in the consultative leaflet but their adequacy will need to be examined.

The Camberwell Society has therefore decided not to press for the reintroduction of a reference to Road Option 7 in the Mid-South Southwark Local Plan as the only solution to the traffic problem of Camberwell Green.

ROAD TRAFFIC NOTES

Speed humps fiasco

After all the thought we have given to speed control humps (page 4 of Newsletter No.61) it is an anti-climax to find that the Department of Transport rules about them have been found by Southwark and many other councils to be unworkable. Various spacing requirements can't be satisfied by any road on the list of priority candidates — on which Camberwell Grove stood high. Early action by the Minister on the anomalies in the rules is being sought but not counted on. Meanwhile Southwark have found that humps in Pytchley Road (off Dog Kennel Hill) might be possible under the existing rules and are well ahead with consultations about installing them there,

using £25,000 from the 1984/85 budget. Pytchley Road was not in the priority list, nor did anyone suggest it in the replies to our own questionnaire. We need any comments at once if they are to be in time.

Camberwell Grove/Stories Road junction

Parking in front of the corner houses (182 and 184 in the Grove) is to be prevented by widening the pavement and edging the widened section with bollards. The aim is greater safety when vehicles come out of Stories Road but the narrowing of the carriageway, to 5m, must also affect traffic in the Grove. The 50 members who favoured speed humps in the Grove and the 19 against will all be interested in the effect produced, and we want their comments in due course. Council consultation on this measure, which has been taken at the instance of car owners in Harfield Gardens, was limited to affected frontagers, none of whom had objected.

Lights at top of Dog Kennel Hill

Surprisingly the paragraph in the last Newsletter (page 8 of No.64) has produced no comments from members. We expect less traffic in Champion Hill if and when the link from Wanley Road through to Sunray Avenue is closed, but formal steps to do this still awaited GLC approval as we went to press. One new development is that this is one of the light-controlled intersections due to be adapted so that an electronic device on a bus approaching a light about to turn red will extend the green time so that the bus has priority. This extension will be at the expense of the time allotted to Champion Hill and Grove Hill Road traffic. It will not reduce the "green man" time for pedestrians.

Brunswick Park

The proposed closures and other changes in the Brunswick Park area are being referred to in the consultations about the Council's new traffic scheme for Camberwell Green (reported elsewhere in this Newsletter). They are, however, proposals that could go forward independently of what happens at the Green and interested members who have not got the leaflet with details mentioned on page 8 of Newsletter No.64 can still get it from me at 9 Champion Grove SE5 (274 3529). That of course is the address for comments on anything else that is in — or missing from — these Notes.

Norman Hutchison

THE BOOK OF LONDON SOUTH EAST

Human and local angles, the history of an area in street and pub names, this is how Muriel Searle refers to her book of south east London. A chapter is devoted to each S.E. postal division, 28 districts in 28 chapters, and so the story unfolds in words and is illustrated with 200 pictures. It is a well researched book written by a local historian, but is not a formal historical tome. It is intended as a lively readable book, accentuating human interest and the wealth of lore that lies behind the area's Victorian development.

A pre-publication subscription edition is to be produced, all copies will be numbered and printed with a list of subscribers' names.

Cloth case bound Subscription Edition
£12.95 (£15 after publication)

Half leather Heritage Edition
£35 (£45 after publication)

Full leather Archive Edition
£75 (£95 after publication)

If you would like to support this publication by buying a pre-publication copy you should fill in the application form enclosed with this Newsletter and return it to Barracuda Books.

Islay Charman

CRAWFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL — A CENTENARY

At the end of October Crawford Primary School in Crawford Road, Camberwell celebrated the centenary of its Junior School building with a week of festivities.

When it first came into use on Monday, 27th October 1884, there were no ceremonies as only the building, not the school itself, was new. There has been a school in Crawford Street — as it then was — since the 1860's, when a British School for 250 pupils was opened opposite the present site. In 1880 this was taken over by the School Board for London, predecessor of the Inner London Education Authority. At the time the Headmaster was James Wadey (interestingly, his brother John was headmaster of the National School which stood in Denmark Road) and during his incumbency much building was done locally. It was decided to replace the school with two buildings to accommodate almost 1300 pupils. The site chosen was a field on the north side of Crawford Street, now surrounded on three sides by Valmar Road and Morna Road, which were also built in 1884. The transfer of pupils to the new buildings, Infants (5 to 7 year olds) and Higher Grade (7 to 12 at the time, latterly 14) took place on 27th October 1884. The original building became an Institute and was demolished after the First World War. During that conflict the buildings were used as a Military Hospital. The Higher Grade (present Junior) building suffered bomb damage in the Blitz, and one classroom was destroyed and eventually rebuilt to the original design in 1955. In 1974 the houses on the west side of Morna Road were demolished to make way for a new Infant School, and in due course the old Infant School (which stood opposite the site of the first school) was also demolished to make way for a new playground. In 1981 both schools merged as a Primary School under the present headteacher, Dick Vesotzky; the older building had been a Junior School since the 1940's.

The week leading up to the Centenary included a concert for which the school's music teacher, Peter Cork, had composed a special celebration song, and an open afternoon when the public were invited to view a display including children's work and archive photographs covering a hundred years of the history of Crawford School.

Martin Smith

ROY COTTLE

Roy Cottle, head of the Transportation Section in the Public Works Department of the London Borough of Southwark, lost his life in a swimming accident in July. Roy's professional ability was combined with a gift of making things clear to all, with patience, good humour and an all-too-rare understanding of mechanisms and legalities in human terms. His loss is felt by the Council he so loyally served; at their last meeting "his" Sub-Committee stood in silent tribute and is to consider what can be named in his memory. We too remember his contributions at local public meetings and his keenness that this kind of consultation should be improved. As a Society we knew and respected him on the Camberwell Green Working Party. We had recently welcomed him again as a guest at our own Traffic and Transport Sub-Committee and it was following this that I kept an appointment at Larcom Street the very day he so sadly failed to return to his desk there. So I can speak personally of the grief of his colleagues, who were particularly shocked that it was on an excursion to Hastings by the staff of the Council's Planning Department that the accident occurred which cost the lives of Roy and of John Charter, a young colleague in the Architect's Department of the Council. Roy was a single but far from solitary man, happy in his friendships. Those of us in the Camberwell Society who knew him may perhaps understand a little the loss which his tragically early death at 34 has brought to those friends, and to his folks in Liverpool.

Norman Hutchison

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Our Treasurer reports a steady if modest increase in the number of members who have elected to pay their annual subscriptions by Banker's Order. This method is of very practical help in the running of the Society as it avoids the need to chase up the more forgetful amongst us who might otherwise not get around to renewing their subscription when it falls due. It also makes budgetting much more effective.

In an effort to encourage more members to use the Banker's Order we are again proposing to hold a champagne draw for the next 100 members who do so. We hope to hold the draw at the Christmas Party. A Banker's Order form is included in your Newsletter.

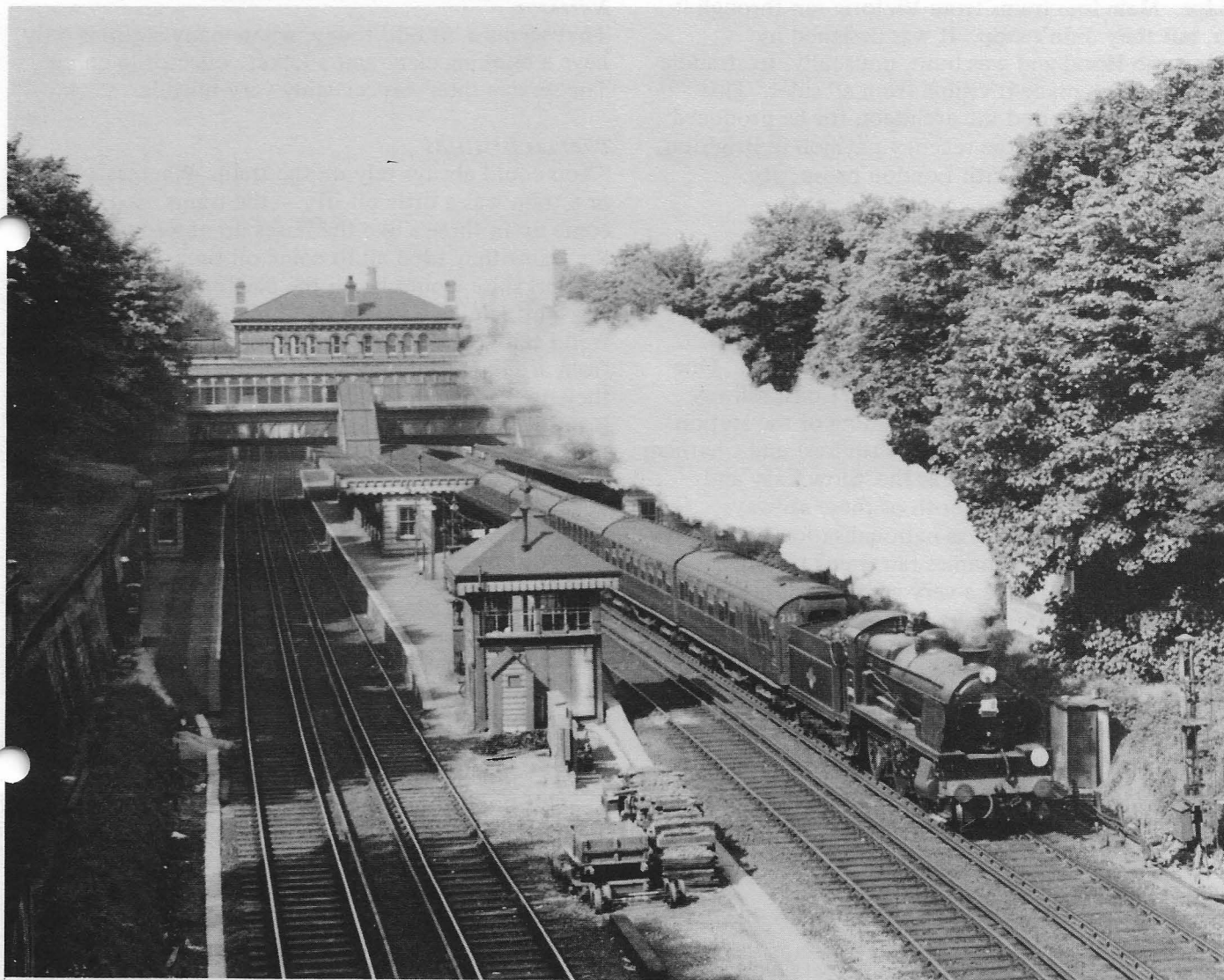
DENMARK HILL STATION

A supplement to the Camberwell Society Newsletter No.65 November 1984

In July 1984 Radio King's – King's College Hospital's own radio station – first broadcast a programme on Denmark Hill Station. It traced the history of the station up to March 1980 when it was burnt by vandals and interviewed those who were involved in restoring the station and converting it into a very successful pub – now called the "Phoenix and Firkin". The producer of the programme was Kate aan de Wiel who runs and presents programmes for Radio King's.

The programme was later submitted as an entry for a prize at Radio 210 – Reading's independent radio station – and it won Radio 210's Training Trophy and will be broadcast by them.

As a special souvenir edition and as a record of the story of Denmark Hill Station and by kind permission of the producer, we are glad to publish Kate aan de Wiel's account of "Denmark Hill Station".



Steam train passing through Denmark Hill Station, May 1959. Reproduced by kind permission of Mr. R.C. Riley

Narrator

In 1980 a railway station in South London was set alight by vandals. Vandalism in an inner city is not uncommon and the fire damage was to a part of the building that British Rail didn't use. The building was in any case too big for a modern commuter station, so did it really matter if the vandalised station was pulled down and replaced by something modern and more convenient? A lot of people thought it did. This programme traces the history, near demise and

resurrection from the ashes of a very fine Victorian thing – Denmark Hill Railway Station.

Jeremy Bennett

"It was March, in the middle of the night. Some vandals got into the station and burnt the central pavilion, burnt it very badly. The roof was burnt off, the walls were damaged and they never caught them. It was a useless act of vandalism ... burning down a particularly attractive Victorian station that had been built in 1866 and has been compared by some people to

“a Tuscan Villa” in the middle of Camberwell.”

Narrator

That was Jeremy Bennett, Chairman of the Camberwell Society and one of the people firmly of the opinion that the building was worth saving. It was principally his efforts and those of his Society that assembled a large number of local people and others who worked together to save a part of South London history. The station stands half-way up Denmark Hill in Camberwell, South London. Its history began on the 13th August, 1866. That was when it was opened to serve mainly as a commuter station on the line between Victoria and London Bridge. Main line trains from Victoria ran through it too, but they didn't stop. It was designed by W. Jacomb-Hood and was built, unusually, to straddle the lines which made it visible from all sides. This seems to have inspired the architect, for he produced a building rather like the regency pavilion in Brighton, a real monument to South London prosperity.

Jeremy Bennett

“It had very fine domed roofs on either end and a very fine central pavilion which was kitted out in the old days with mahogany seats and open fireplaces, with two ticket offices and the two ticket offices were for the two railways that used the station. One was the London, Brighton and South Coast railway which actually undertook the building of the station in 1866 and the other was the South East and Chatham Railway, commonly known as the ‘Slow Easy and Comfortable’ railway and both of these railways before, of course, there was nationalisation of railways, both these railway companies ran trains through Denmark Hill. So it was a very grand station, I mean people used to wait in a very elaborate waiting room.”

Narrator

One of the people who can remember the station as it used to be earlier this century is Mr. Thomas Griffiths. Although he now lives in Bristol he clearly recalls the station as it was, when as a boy, he used to go there to play with Fred Berkshire, the formidable station master's son.

Thomas Griffiths

First of all you come to a window and a double door. In the hall was a great big booking office, with just little teeny weeny grilled windows. You could just get your hands in with the money and behind there used to be rows of tickets for one side, and rows of tickets for the other side. The whole thing had a great big destination board, which the porter used to read off as the trains came in. He used to read it off the board. So everybody knew what train was going and where it was going to and all the rest of it, and that was changed every day and that was a job that a porter had. If Mr. B — that's Mr. Berkshire, the station master — if that wasn't changed there was hell to pay. The punishment for that was two days in the lamp-room. You see if you had an eight-to-ten duty or whatever it was you'd have to clean and fill up

lamps and put the lamps in and that was a kind of a punishment.

Mr. Berkshire — he had a frock coat, black, with gold facings, he had a pill-box hat, with a little peak and gold facings and on the front in gold “Station Master”. He had a white shirt and a black tie and his shoes were very highly polished and he was a real martinet of a man, he was. Let's face it he had the jurisdiction, he had the running of the trains, he had to see that all the trains were on time. If there were any problems with the track within his jurisdiction, he would be to blame. He had the signalmen under his control. They weren't controlled by the railway. While he was a station master he was the authority.”

Narrator

That seems a bit odd today, when many stations only have a booking clerk and a ticket collector in charge. The service then was certainly very reliable.

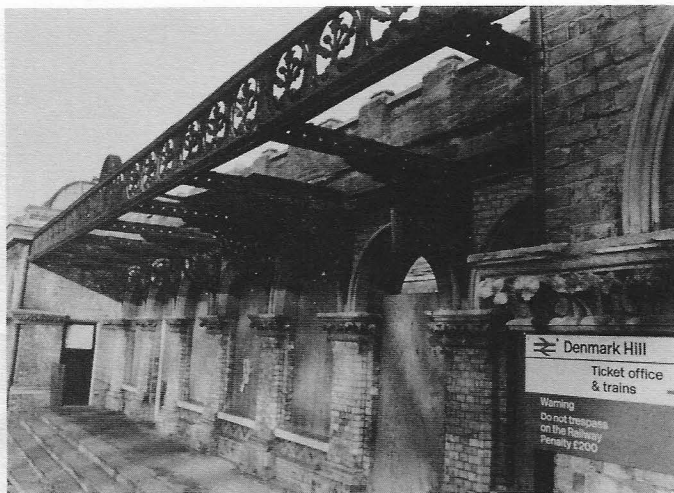
Thomas Griffiths

“You could always rely on the train. Whereas a bus or a tram was a little bit iffy — the trams used to come up in three's like the buses do nowadays — but the trains they used all to come on time. As I say Mr. Berkshire would be on the platform and if a train was a bit late he'd have something to say to the driver. Well I tell you how regular it was, a lot of people from around Camberwell and Herne Hill and all that, they used to catch the train to Brixton to go to Brixton Market and you used to pay thr'pence return.”

Narrator

So the station was used for local shopping too, but the bulk of the passengers were going to and from work. Not only could they be sure of punctuality in Mr. Berkshire's day, but the railway companies offered concessionary fares to those obliged to travel into work every day. Unlike these days when the commuter seems to be regarded as something of a fixed asset. Special workmen's tickets were available for early morning travel, to persuade workers to use the new line rather than the buses, trams or simply shank's pony — not that the workmen's tickets found favour with everyone — as this letter, written in complaint to the *South London Press* by H.D. of Clapham and published on Saturday, the 15th September, 1866 shows.

“I would briefly complain of a matter requiring instant attention. Working men's tickets are issued at one third ordinary fare, which allows working men on all trains before a certain hour in the morning and after half past five in the evening. Consequently a large number of workmen avail themselves of this boon, and it is no uncommon thing to see a plasterer, or bricklayer fresh from his job, sitting next to and putting his trademark upon his fellow passenger, who may be a black-coated swell, or a decently attired female. The other evening I saw a plasterer's boy, covered with cement, packed next a widow whose newly purchased mourning was not improved thereby and this evening I rode next a man covered with grease from some machinery, intoxicated and scented



Denmark Hill Station burnt and boarded up

more strongly than violets. Another just cause of complaint is that as these workmen nearly all smoke, or wish to do so, and why should they not in a proper place, the carriages are filled with tobacco smoke, which accompanied by the scent of gradually cooling and profuse perspiration is anything but a pleasant preliminary to one's dinner or tea. All this can be rectified by having separate carriages for working men and smokers."

Narrator

All the trains ran on steam then of course, from the milk train last thing at night that even as late as the 1920's still brought milk in churns into the city centre from farms just a few miles from Camberwell, to the first paper train in the morning carrying Fleet Street's early editions.

Steam trains seem to generate a lot of nostalgia in those who can remember them from experience and in a lot who can't too. But what was it really like to travel on them when the line was newly opened in the good old days? H.D. of Clapham had something to say about that too.

"I have been a daily passenger by this line since it first opened and can easily recall to mind the many inconveniences to which I have been subjected. Commencing from its earliest days, twice have I suffered wreck. On the first occasion having to walk from near Camberwell New Road Station upon the line to the Elephant and Castle. The second breakdown I was detained between Walworth and Camberwell about an hour, while the engine was repaired. I should think I have spent days in waiting for overdue trains, I know every house and every tree round Loughborough Road Station, so often have I patiently waited there. The advertisements at nearly every station cease to interest me, so often have I tried to kill time with them. In short I am getting used to it, for this very morning I waited thirty-five minutes at Clapham for an overdue train."

Platform Announcer

"We regret the inconvenience caused, we apologise to the passengers just arriving on platform 13 for the late arrival of your train this morning, and we regret the inconvenience caused."



The Station after British Rail had 'made it safe'

Narrator

Come 1980 the station had been reduced to a shadow of its former glory. In common with much fine railway architecture British Rail, chronically short of funds for decades and never noticeably keen to act as custodians of our architectural heritage seemed content to allow the building to crumble.

Jeremy Bennett

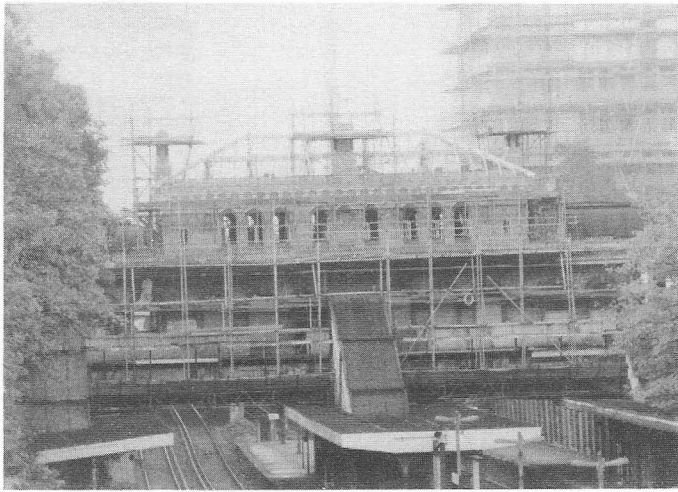
"British Rail appeared to be doing absolutely nothing about it. Very shortly afterwards they sent in a gang of workmen who "made safe" the building. Now in "making it safe" they knocked down a lot more of it than we thought was necessary. We made a lot of noise locally through the press. So much so that the local newspaper, the *South London Press* got on to British Rail at Croydon and said, 'What are you going to do about it?' and a very irate public relations man said, 'Oh well it's all these local people, why don't they put their money where their mouth is. We can't afford it, we haven't got the money and anyway it's not an important building'."

Narrator

Jeremy Bennett and the Camberwell Society found an ally at British Rail Headquarters. It was Bernard Kaukas, Director of Environment, British Rail, a relatively new appointment. It was his enthusiasm for the project that persuaded British Rail to take the idea of restoration seriously. Here he explains the Railway's view of the problem.

Bernard Kaukas

"It became evident that we couldn't take the risk of the gutted part of that building falling onto the track, so our engineers started demolishing it. Now that meant that the local people suddenly saw this happening and they said 'Help ... what's going on, stop you see, ... you're being wanton vandals and you're demolishing this and you don't need to.' This all comes to me in fact and we say, 'Well it's too late to stop the demolishing now. They're only taking down what they thought was going to be dangerous to the public'. But they left it at first floor level, and



Putting the roof back on after the fire, August 1983

as usual when local people go for a public authority first of all they always attack it like a terrier yapping at someone's heels because they think we're not going to get fair treatment. Unfortunately, great big monoliths like ourselves take rather a long time to react."

Narrator

For all those involved at that stage, finance was the biggest obstacle. With the best will in the world, British Rail could hardly justify spending thousands of pounds on an obsolete building and the Camberwell Society couldn't raise such large sums on its own.

Jeremy Bennett

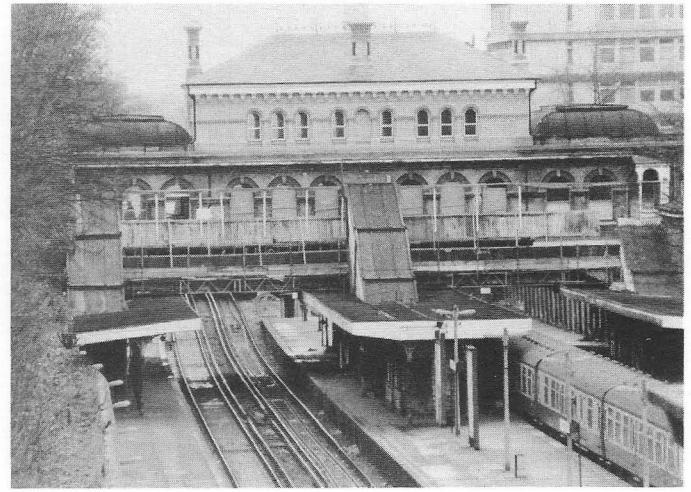
"We knew then that the cost of restoring the outside of the building was likely to be in the region of £150,000. Well it so happened that around that time a new charitable organisation was set up in Southwark which I became involved with, called the Southwark Environment Trust, and this was an organisation set up to improve the environment generally in the Borough. So the Camberwell Society approached the Southwark Environment Trust and said 'would they take over responsibility now for restoring the station?' Gradually over the period of a year we got British Rail interested in the thought that perhaps with a combination of support from British Rail and the local community and Southwark Council and anyone else we thought we could bring in, we might actually manage to raise the funds, raise the steam to restore the station."

Narrator

So the ball was now firmly in British Rail's court.

Bernard Kaukas

'My contribution to the affair was to say, 'Look, whatever we do, we've got to do something to this Central Pavilion to put it in a reasonable shape.' The lowest possible cost would merely be putting asphalt on the floor below to stop the rain going down, capping off the walls, and just leaving it as a standing ruin. So there's that sum of money available straight away. Jeremy Bennett and the Camberwell Society,



The central pavilion rebuilt

as you know, raised two thousand pounds and then they had it doubled. So they then said 'Look we've got the sum of four thousand pounds.' Then of course, we were dealing with the Southwark Environment Trust as well, who were interested in this sort of thing. So we're in the whole field of what we call community partnership ventures, with the private sector, which was Jeremy and his Society, the local authority in the form of Southwark Environment Trust and we're a national undertaking. So it was a very good exercise of how we can co-operate together. Then between us we raised a sum of money which would enable us to rehabilitate that building but this is the crunch. We weren't going to rehabilitate that central pavilion at a cost of over £150,000 just so people could look at it and say 'How sweet'. We had to have a commercial use for it."

Narrator

Here Jeremy Bennett and the Camberwell Society agreed whole-heartedly with British Rail. An empty beautiful building would be useless and a further target for vandalism, but what can you use an old railway station for, especially one built above the tracks that's still partially in use?

Jeremy Bennett

"The most important thing about any restoration of a building, particularly in an inner city area, is not that you just restore a ruin and say, 'look it's a marvellous ruin, or it's a marvellous building'. There has to be some use for the building, and I don't think that we ourselves would have worked so hard at raising the money if we hadn't got some end use in sight for the building. Quite early on Terry Jones who is one of the Monty Python team and a member of the Camberwell Society, when I was talking to him said, 'Well, what sort of ideas have you got for using it', and I said, 'We've been exploring the idea of a mini cab office, we've approached the Salvation Army, which is nearby and Kings to see if they want extra flats or a gallery to display various things. We've talked about ordinary commercial offices. We've been to the local estate agents and I'm trying a

brewer now.' I said to Terry Jones that we were trying one of the big brewers to see whether they felt like opening a pub or restaurant. We got very little response from the big brewers, but Terry said, 'Why don't you try Bruce?'"

Narrator

Terry Jones of the Monty Python team lives just round the corner from Denmark Hill Station. He's just one of a number of well known local people to have chipped in with their support. But it was his suggestion of local brewer David Bruce that really set a seal on the Station's future.

Terry Jones

"I subscribed to it and thought it was a good idea to try and restore the station ... and then Jeremy Bennett said that they had to find some use for the station because British Rail decided they couldn't use it all and they'd been thinking about a pub — which I always think is a good idea. I think there aren't enough pubs in London, personally I think every other house should be a pub! I suggested that he approach David Bruce, because I knew he'd started these home brew pubs in London. I have a sort of vested interest in small breweries because I started one in, I think it was '77, I started a little brewery in Herefordshire. You see we found as a brewery that one of the difficulties of being a small brewery is that it's alright brewing the beer, we don't make much money out of it and by the time you've put it in a lorry and transported it twenty miles, the value of that barrel of beer has gone down even more, and really the best thing to do is to brew it actually on the site and sell it, and that's what David's done, and he's had tremendous success in London."

Narrator

The trouble was there were already at least two other pubs nearby, and surely a building in a semi-derelict state, partly occupied by a nationalised industry wasn't the kind of place likely to interest a young entrepreneur like David Bruce.

Jeremy Bennett

"Well I wrote to him and he was immediately enthusiastic, he wanted to see what the station was like, so I took him around, he said, 'What a marvellous site', he said that he welcomed the challenge or would welcome a challenge of opening a pub in a once beautiful building that was going to be restored, and to cut a long story short, after he'd been into it with his colleagues he wrote me a letter saying that if the trust could restore the exterior of the station he was so enthusiastic for the project that he would be prepared to invest approximately £100,000 of his own money on fitting out the interior as a pub/restaurant. So we were absolutely delighted. It would be a local amenity which we believe people would like, good pub food, a decent pub of a very different nature to the sort of pubs that are around here. His pub's going to be called the *Phoenix and the Firkin*. The Phoenix of course was the bird that arose from the ashes, and looking it up

in the dictionary the other day, I discovered that phoenix's are supposed to last for five hundred years."

Narrator

Apart from the challenge, quite an expensive one at that, and the charm of a lovely old building, what on earth was it that had persuaded the business man which David Bruce undeniably is to take on the task?

David Bruce

"I feel with Denmark Hill that there is an ideal opportunity to try to get a new licence, otherwise the only way I can expand is by taking closed-down and boarded-up pubs off the big brewers, as and when they feel that the trade's got so bad. Therefore it's usually in quite an awful sort of area in the big brewer's opinion, and so one's got a double problem of trying to build up from where a big brewer has failed and it always costs twice as much because the building is always in an appalling condition. I must say, until Denmark Hill, every pub I've taken over so far has at least had a roof on it. But the first thing to do, and it's quite interesting because it's peculiar really to the licence trade, the first thing I have to do is to go to Newington Causeway to the Quarter Session's house where there is a thing called a Licencing Planning Sub-Committee. If I'm successful there, then I can go to the main committee, and believe it or not if I'm successful there, the Licencing Planning Committee will give me a certificate of 'non-objection' to my further application to go then to the Licencing Justices. If there are any objections from any residents or businesses in the area, then the chances are that the Licencing Justices will have to delay it another two or three weeks and that means that my solicitor and market research team and licence property surveyors and all the witnesses which I hope will volunteer to come along and say yes there is a need — we've got to prove this need and it doesn't matter how marvellous the building is or how much enthusiasm has gone in, if we can't actually get that licence because we haven't proved the need, then the whole of our involvement just disappears."

Narrator

David Bruce, speaking in the brew house of one of his pubs, *The Fox and Firkin* in Lewisham. I asked him what the pub at Denmark Hill would look like if he got his licence.

David Bruce

"The Phoenix and Firkin will in fact use the two existing but obviously burnt out and at present boarded-up entrances. The bar will run along the back and there's going to be a mezzanine level going up a spiral staircase to take up about a third of the area which will enable people to go up the spiral staircase and look out over the railway line to see the trains going out, the only way we can actually get a view of the lines. The other thing we're going to do is take our food very seriously, heavy emphasis on food. It's not just beer, but of course beer is one



Opening day at the Phoenix and Firkin, 5th June 1984

of our great things. In fact you can hear all gurglings and stuff going on in the background now, I should think, standing in this brew house. We will be brewing our own beer there. We're not sure what we're going to call the names yet. We will have a lot of fun thinking up local names and obviously to do with railway stations if possible."

MUSIC

Narrator

Come the Autumn of 1983 the restoration of the outside was complete. The building firm of Bovis, a company which specialises in building restoration, had re-created Camberwell's Tuscan villa. The new roof was on, much of the decorative iron work had been repaired or replaced and it was time for the ceremony of topping out. A party was held on a chilly afternoon in the shell of the building to mark the occasion and to make a presentation to the apprentice who had performed his traditional task.

Announcer

"Are any of you ladies standing by the apprentice, we've lost him, can you find him?"

Jeremy Bennett

"Thank you all for coming, this is the third ceremony we've had on Denmark Hill Station, but it's the first time that we've had it under a roof. Today we're marking the topping out, the topping out means putting the last brick in place on the highest point of the station, which is the chimney. Here's one of the apprentices who has been working on the station and learning the art of bricklaying under Bovis's direction on what is clearly a very complicated job, needing a lot of skill. We're very pleased that at this topping out ceremony the presentation goes to someone who's worked on and learnt from the building, so on behalf of everyone

here and all those mentioned in the list of thanks may I give you this which is a builders' level and thank you for topping out Denmark Hill Station."

APPLAUSE

Narrator

So far, so good. But a pub is no good without any beer, and for beer you need a licence. How had the licence application gone?

David Bruce

"Well in the end we were victorious. The various stages were quite tricky though in many respects because we ended up with one of the national brewers called Charringtons who've got a pub up the road called *The Fox on the Hill*, and they objected to my application all the way through, at the sub-committee stage, the main committee stage and even in front of the Licencing Justices and they ended up hiring probably the best barrister in the country to try to stop me getting this license. So I'm particularly glad that we've got it. Democracy has prevailed and just because a national brewer's got a few pubs in the area doesn't mean that opportunities to private individuals are excluded. So I'm delighted. They're obviously frightened about our competition and I hope we give them some."

Narrator

With the exterior finished and the roof on, work could start on fitting out the inside. Like all of David Bruce's pubs it would be fairly spartan and unadorned wooden benches and tables and plain wooden floors, no plush carpets and definitely no space invaders. Progress was slower than expected. However, on Tuesday 5th June 1984 the *Phoenix and Firkin* opened its doors to the public just the day after being granted its final licence. It would be nice to imagine that somewhere in the throng of people crowding the bar and the pavement outside, the ghost of Mr. Berkshire, the former station master, raised a glass of Bruce's Rail Ale to his lips and imbibed a toast to the twentieth century enterprise that had given a new lease of life to one of South London's forgotten monuments to Victorian endeavour.

But perhaps the last thought should come from John Betjeman, our late Poet Laureate, who lent his support to the project.

Jeremy Bennett

"John Betjeman was one of the original signatures to the first letter of appeal. I wrote to him because I knew that he liked trains and I knew that he was involved in Victorian architecture and he wrote back a very warm and encouraging letter saying that we could use his name. He said in his letter that he regarded Denmark Hill Station as 'a very fine Victorian thing, a monument to South London prosperity'."

PUBLIC PROPERTY – PUBLIC WASTE

In Newsletter No.62 (March 1984) we printed an open letter from Jeremy Bennett to Southwark Council's Housing Committee. In our last Newsletter (July 1984) we published a detailed reply by Councillor Ritchie, formerly Chair of the Housing Committee and now Leader of the Council. The open letter has also provoked responses in letters to the Editor from several members of the Society, widening the debate. We now publish two more letters from members. It is probably unnecessary to remind readers that all the letters we have printed represent the views of the individual members who have written them and that no individual member can be said to be presenting the Society's policy.

from C.P.Mead

Jeremy Bennett's original piece on Southwark's housing policy has done considerable service in bringing this borough's housing problems under scrutiny. Particularly revealing are the replies of those attacking him.

Mr.Oliver points out that council housing accounts for over two thirds of Southwark's total. This is precisely what is wrong.

The bloated size of the council housing empire has come about because of the policies of property acquisition and wholesale demolition and redevelopment, pursued by the Town Hall since the war. This has left most Southwark residents, except the rich, with a council tenancy as the only option. I agree with Councillor Ritchie that the cost of keeping up this vast empire runs into hundreds of millions of pounds. I also agree there are few homes in Southwark on the market at prices most people in the borough can afford.

But whose fault is that? What happened to the working class terraces that could have brought home ownership to those on low incomes? They vanished in the big Council demolitions, in Burgess, Graganza Street, Manor Place, Selborne Road, Moncrieff Street ... the list is endless.

This was the policy that was carried out when the purse strings were relatively loose. If the Government was again to open the coffers as Councillor Ritchie wants, what guarantee is there against a return to policies of the bulldozer, massive overspending on Council projects and prestigious new Town Hall plans?

I must agree, however, that as it is constituted at present, the Government's 'right to buy' policy is limited in a borough where most of the council homes are flats.

It is possible for some tenants to buy their flats, as Mr. Jack Jones found out, but the Government does need to broaden its policy to give all flat tenants a right to own their own homes too.

It's easy to criticise: let's look at some possible answers.

Firstly we need to know the size of the problem.

The official figure for the number of empty properties is way below the real one. If Councillor Ritchie

were to visit the Kingslake Street, East Dulwich and Tustin estates he would find several hundred empty or squatted properties – just for a start.

We need an accurate register of empty Council properties. For a modest fee I am sure tenants associations would be delighted to help compile one. I suspect it might even show that the real number of empty properties is greater than the 8,000 waiting list. Secondly the Council must seek to reduce its home empire by selling off blocks to tenants. Most of the estates with the worst disrepair problems are those built before inflation took off. This means that although maintenance costs are high, very little of the debt is still left to pay on the original construction price.

The Council could bring the properties up to a reasonable state of repair and sell them to tenants for virtually the repair costs – about £5000, in mortgage terms about £10 a week. The Council would only need a short term loan to undertake the repairs as the money would be recovered almost immediately on sale and the loan repaid.

Of course tenants would become responsible for repairs, but they could do some of it themselves or at least find firms who would do the work much cheaper than the Council's Direct Labour Department.

Many tenants will still not want to buy, so other blocks on the estate could be earmarked for retention by the Council to rent. Tenants would be transferred between the blocks in accordance with their future wishes. In this way mixed communities would be created for the benefit of all.

This programme could start on those estates with the greatest number of empty properties, tackling that problem at the same time.

Those who remain tenants will gain from the Council concentrating its resources on a much smaller housing empire. And the bulk of the homes left in Council hands will be those built more recently, which means those staying tenants would probably end up in better homes than they are in now.

It admittedly does mean the Council and rate-payers are still burdened repaying the debt on the construction costs of the new properties but that debt will be with us whatever policy is pursued. The Council would have lost, however, the cost of maintaining much of the older estates.

Those who did buy their flats would start on the owner occupation ladder and thereby have a better chance of acquiring a house and garden than waiting for Southwark Council to build, even given unlimited Government cash.

There are many single young people and couples, clerical and professional workers, who at present have to commute long distances, because of the lack of homes for sale near their workplaces in Central London. They would leap at a chance to buy a former Council flat near the centre of London at a price of £20,000 - £25,000 – thus giving a £15,000 - £20,000 profit for any former tenant who decided to sell. Ex-tenants could use the profit in a number of ways. Younger people could put it as a deposit on a house and garden, either one of the few for sale in the

borough or in a home counties town, thus giving workers the mobility to go where many of the new manual jobs in high technology and microchip industries are being created. And for the elderly it could meet most of the price of a small flat or home at the seaside or in the country.

Of course this will mean changes in the character of Southwark's population, but this has been changing rapidly anyway over the years. Surely no one could oppose population moves that improve the quality of life for those who come and those who leave? If Councillor Ritchie accepted the challenge I am sure all fair-minded people would support him.

C.P.Mead

from Jim Tanner

Sir,

Jeremy Bennett's *Open Letter to Southwark Council Housing Committee* has achieved its objective of opening up for debate a subject which is of growing public concern. We are indebted to Councillor Ritchie for taking the trouble to write a detailed and thoughtful reply.

Councillor Ritchie seems concerned that Jeremy's views are his own rather than those of the Society. Two of our members, in letters to the Editor, are at pains to make clear that the open letter does not necessarily reflect the views of all members of the Society. This seemingly obsessive concern that one member's views may or may not represent the Society's views smacks of rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. *The fact is that in this Borough, as elsewhere in inner city areas, we are facing a crisis in public sector housing of frightening magnitude.* Pointing the finger at those we think are responsible for the crisis is – believe it or not – of less urgent concern than finding practicable ways of coping with it.

As Dick Oliver pointed out in Newsletter No.64, the root problem for so many who live in Southwark is the poverty trap. For such people 'the right to buy' may have a hollow ring.

Like Dick Oliver I do not believe that the Society should attack the Council over its housing problems. But I am amazed that my friend Dick interprets Jeremy's open letter as an attack. Whilst I and others may not agree with all of Jeremy's points, it is patently clear that he is seeking to make constructive suggestions. Councillor Ritchie, in his reply, acknowledges that some 40% of empty properties (using his figures) could be sold. He also informs us that the Council is looking into using housing co-operatives and short life user groups. It is, he says, examining other initiatives such as establishing Housing Trusts to raise money in the private sector for rehabilitating empty properties.

This debate – I would prefer to call it a dialogue – should continue. What we need is a forthright exchange of ideas, not ideologies. To suggest that Jeremy Bennett's views are those of a particular political party and, by implication, therefore do not merit serious consideration is nonsense. Long before

Jeremy stood as a candidate at the last local elections, long before Simon Hughes entered Parliament and, so far as I can see, long before the Liberal Party got round to propounding such policies publicly, the Camberwell Society was actively campaigning against blight, for environmental regeneration and for an improved quality of life in our community.

Jim Tanner

BRITISH RAIL SERVICES

..... AND THEIR ABSENCE

BR representatives at a recent LBS Council Sub-Committee (which had invited them to discuss public concern about cuts in services made last May) had good, middling and bad news for Camberwell. The good news is that BR hope to get Government authority early in 1985 to go ahead with the Blackfriars/Farringdon link so that by 1987 there could be direct north-south services via the presently disused Snow Hill tunnel under Holborn Viaduct Station. New dual-voltage rolling stock would cope with the third rail south of the River and the overhead electrification of the recently developed routes northwards from Farringdon. So we might see a service from Kent to Bedfordshire serving Denmark Hill, Elephant and Castle, Blackfriars, Farringdon, King's Cross and St.Pancras, plus another from East Croydon via Crystal Palace, Herne Hill and the Elephant. Less good is the news that although BR would like these trains to serve a new station in Southwark (Union Street) and re-opened stations in Walworth (Fielding Street) and Camberwell (Station Road) their current submission to Government does not include expenditure to provide any of these stations, for which the "benefit methodology" has still to be worked out. In plain language I think this means we won't see them without something like a 50/50 LBS share of the cost – unless maybe BR could be convinced they would attract hordes of new passengers. BR are, however, open to suggestions (have we any?) that something other than the pre-1916 site for the Camberwell or Walworth station would be more rewarding or easier to develop. The Council also heard that agreement to share costs was the price of much else they wanted, such as facilities for the disabled at stations, better sign-posting to stations, and new ways of publicising services locally.

The bad news is that BR gave the Council no hope whatever of reversing the cuts in the Victoria/London Bridge service, which is now limited to peak hours from Monday to Friday – the heaviest of all last May's cuts, we were told, with the ominous comment that it was mainly due to low usage "even in the peak hours". Denmark Hill's regular links with Victoria and London Bridge, by-passing bus congestion, were and could again be of great value to West End, City and hospital commuters and visitors, but several members have said the increasing price excess over travel by bus plus the hazards of enforced

changes at Battersea Park have forced them to desert the train. Looking ahead, can we see constructive policies the Society might urge on BR? It would be deplorable if the restored Denmark Hill Station, in which we take such pride, were to lose its links with these two main line termini — and it would be no sort of answer to say that we might, if BR's hopes are realised, get a direct link with King's Cross and St.Pancras. What can members suggest?

Norman Hutchison

THROUGH THE WINDOW

Anyone who visited the exhibition at the Peckham Civic Centre at the beginning of July, referred to in Newsletter No.63, must have been impressed by the standard of work, the research undertaken and the ideas produced by many local primary school groups.

The project, first discussed in Spring 1983, and inaugurated in September at an exhibition in which the Camberwell Society participated, was reporting back. Local town planners, social workers, conservationists and the community as a whole should have taken note of what the children had seen and done and thought. Their landscaping and planning of a residential area showed amazing care for young and old as well as for the working populace. Their detailed study of a local open space will still be valuable as an accurate record for naturalists in 10 or 100 years time.

The children's work has taken them through the window and into the community. Through their study of their immediate environment they are learning skills, learning to look, write, measure, record, apply statistical methods, talk, meet people, sketch, and so on, but also, they are giving back to the community in their imaginative ideas as well as in their accurate records. This is an on going project and we hope to see more of it.

During the week of 19th November a series of meetings is being arranged at the Teachers' Centre in Lyndhurst Grove, child orientated in the afternoons, for adults in the evenings, but the community is welcome at all sessions. Mary Todd (703 7146) will give you more information.

Islay Charman

RSPCA

I have just finished reading the 1983 Annual Report of the Streatham, Brixton and Clapham Branch of the RSPCA, which covers the Camberwell area, and am totally appalled at the cruelty and neglect extended by people towards their pets and other animals. Local RSPCA Inspector J. Eachus recorded 347 complaints of cruelty to animals in 1983. Most of the animals involved were dogs and cats. A great number of the complaints were either of neglect or for lack of veterinary care and attention. Inspector Eachus did not find this to be due to any current

economic situation, having ascertained that most of the owners investigated had been on social security before the current economic slump. In almost all of the cases investigated, Inspector Eachus found the animals were neglected primarily through laziness or indifference on the part of the owner.

107 verbal warnings were given in 1983 for such things as hitting a dog in the face with a cane, keeping animals in a filthy environment, keeping dogs on small balconies for long periods of time, leaving dogs inside cars on very hot days with no ventilation, selling animals without a Pet Animals Licence.

Some of the successful prosecutions by the RSPCA heard at Camberwell Magistrates Court were:

Causing unnecessary suffering to a Great Dane by injuring with a knife.

Causing adult Jack Russell dog unnecessary suffering by throwing out of a fourth storey window and refusing to aid dog after it hit the ground.

Abandonment of Animals Act — abandoned two adult cats inside Council flat for 5 days.

Causing unnecessary suffering to a young kitten by killing by strangling.

Causing unnecessary suffering to a German Shepherd dog. The dog was underweight by 30%. She had a pussy discharge on the gums and teeth. Despite her sore mouth she ate 14 ounces of tinned dog food in ten seconds.

Inspector Eachus operates a 24 hours service on 228 1131. Details of the local RSPCA Branch can be obtained on 701 1293.

(Reproduction of the above information by kind permission of the Streatham, Brixton and Clapham Branch of the RSPCA).

Pauline Hawkins

LETTER FROM CANADA

The Society's post often contains letters from abroad, seeking or giving information. This correspondent has been researching the Butler family mentioned several times in Blanch. Does anyone remember the Sharps who lived in Maude Road, or is even a relative of this family which he is writing about here?

We had visitors in for dinner last night, and got into an interesting conversation with a friend who we have known for 10 or 12 years. I mentioned Nevis, and brought people up to date with my search for Butlers, and when Camberwell came into the conversation, our friend Dorothy pointed out that she was born in Camberwell! Her parents were Leonard and Nora Sharp, and they moved from Liverpool to Camberwell in 1926. Dorothy was born in Maude Road, and remembers living in Church Street. She also attended Green Coat School — where Col Thomas Butler was a director in 1717! So she was very pleased to look through the Blanch book, that you were so helpful in locating, and we had a great chat. Both Dorothy and her mother were actresses, and her mother appeared

in the first episodes of Coronation Street. Dorothy made some film appearances, but most of her work I think was on stage.

I finally finished my article on the Butlers — it has taken me 2 years! — and it now is in the hands of the Butler Journal editor in London. Will keep you posted on events. Very best wishes.

Sincerely,

Herb Taylor

MEMBERS' MEETINGS

Thursday, 13th December — 7.30 to 10.30 p.m.

OUR TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

at

SCF Datchelor House (Grove Lane entrance)

*Local Quiz ... Music ... Magician (Stephen Burne)
Raffles ... Christmas Cards*

Champagne Draw Light Refreshments & Wine

This is a social evening for you to meet your fellow members and the Committee but as it is an expensive meeting members attending will be asked to contribute £1 per person towards Society funds.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Thursday, 17th January, 1985 — 8.15 p.m.

Ken Glazier is digging into London Transport Archives and will talk on

TRAMS and TRANSPORT

at

**United Reformed Church
Grove Lane/Love Walk, SE5**

There will be meetings on

**21st FEBRUARY
21st MARCH**

Subjects are being arranged.

Thursday, 18th April, 1985 — 8.15 p.m.

THE WORK OF THE SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND

at

**United Reformed Church
Grove Lane/Love Walk, SE5**

A speaker from the International HQ of the Save the Children Fund in Grove Lane will talk on the work at home and abroad.

If you have attended the AGM of SCF at the Queen Elizabeth Hall you will realise what fantastic work they do. If you have read their publications or seen television reports you will know how much they are involved in any disaster area as well as all they do for all children in need all the time and at any time. This is an opportunity to hear about the work and to see it on film.

Groups support the Fund throughout the country. Who will form a Camberwell Group?

Thursday, 17th May, 1985

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

STOP PRESS

Apology to a few members who did not receive their 'News of Meetings' on time. Notices were printed and distributed well before the October meeting but unfortunately a few were delayed en route.

Copies of literature from the October meeting on Neighbourhood Watch, Locks, Marked Property and other aspects of SECURITY will be available at future Society meetings or from the Hon. Sec.

As the Society grows (which is excellent) delivery rounds get bigger. Offers of help which enable us to split rounds into smaller groups are always very welcome. We are very grateful to all those members (now a band of 20 strong) who undertake this task.

Hon. Sec.