



Architecture
Today

284 January 2018

Structural stone
Groupwork + Amin Taha
at 15 Clerkenwell Close

Forum
Fred Scott, Sarah Featherstone,
Kay Hughes, Chloë Phelps,
Henry Squire

Works
Assemble, Steven Holl Architects,
BDP, Allies & Morrison, Dixon
Jones, Glenn Howells Architects,
Panter Hudspith, Bell Phillips,
Farshid Moussavi Architects

Focus
Envelope: Waugh Thistleton,
Light Earth Designs



My Kind of Town

Henry Squire



Slap bang in the heart of the south London jungle / With every kind of building, some assertive, some humble. / Overground, underground, a major artery, / Brixton is, without doubt, the best place to be.

Located in south London, SW2, SW9, / The very last station on the Vicky line. / Famous, notorious, often misunderstood, / There's nowhere else in London like this neighbourhood.

Developed as a retail hub for the well-to-do, / The Bon Marché and Morley's are the famous two, / Now in faded splendour, memories of the past, / Historic urban fabric, strong and built to last.

Hustle and a-bustle it's a major destination, / A place where people live, not just for recreation. / Department stores, butchers' shops, an array of market stalls, / Some are lined up in the streets, others in the halls.

It really is the streetscape that creates the Brixton flow / The best thing is to wander, taking in the show. / Hollering, bartering, trading, everything goes, / Cherimoya, chayote, breadfruit, avocados.

Located in the centre is the Brixton Rec, / A monumental building with a brutalist spec. / Made of brick and concrete, rising to a height, / Inside a gentle sculpture of playful forms and daylight.

Perched high upon the hill, just behind the clink, / Lives the Brixton Windmill, moving all in sync. / London's only working windmill, grinding every hour, / You can even bake a cake, using Brixton Flour.

Home to Lambeth Town Hall and the Brixton Pound, / Street art and murals are seen all around, / On buildings and bridges, arches and walls / A fine urban tapestry created for all.

The Black Cultural Archives and Windrush Square, / Electric Avenue, Atlantic Road, extensions in your hair. / Pretty Georgian houses, around a garden square, / All these things talk about the people living there.

A village within the city and a strong sense of place, / People are accepted here, whatever creed or race. / A retail and creative hub, everything is here, / There's even Brixton Brewery brewing Brixton Beer.

The undercover market needs to have a verse, / Everything available from the universe. / Household goods and food from the Caribbean, / Icons for the shelf from every known religion.

Reggae, blues and hip-hop heard on the street, / Heading to the Fridge for the drum-and-bass beat. / Music is the birdsong in this part of town, / Jazzie-B and David Bowie both getting down.

The Clash, Wham!, Soul II Soul and the Beastie Boys / Snoop Dog, Dr Dre, the hip-hop boys. / U2, Blur, Kraftwerk and Public Enemy / Everyone who's anyone has played the Academy.

At night it seems to find a gear to move it up a level, / The bars the restaurants come alive, people come to revel. / Dancing, drinking in the streets with lots of fun and verve, / You might even catch a whiff of the special herb.

Regeneration is now the game, or is it gentrification? / There's no doubt that this has caused a local kind of tension. / If everyone comes together and actively takes part, / Brixton can still retain the soul that makes it stand apart.

It's something very special when you leave the tube, / The sounds, people, atmosphere, the steel band in the groove. / Everyone should visit to see what's going down, / To see why Brixton really is my kind of town. /