



## Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 11 November 2020, via Zoom

### Chair's Annual Review 2019 / 2020

Despite the Covid pandemic, this has been an eventful year for Brockley Society.

#### Begin with a chronological list

*Wednesday 13 November 2019: Brockley Society's Annual General Meeting* at St Peter's Church heard a fascinating speaker, S.I. Martin, on *Black Historical Presence in Lewisham from 1593 onwards*.

*Sunday 1st December 2019:* Once again we offered cheaper tickets due to bulk purchase for the **Pantomime outing to Sleeping Beauty** at Greenwich Theatre.

*Thursday 23 January 2020:* Brockley Society held an interactive event in Lewisham College to consider what Brockley Society means to its members and supporters.

*Friday 24 January:* we helped arrange a Brockley Ward walkabout with Lewisham's Mayor, Damien Egan

*Saturday 15 February:* The ever-popular **MidWinter Warmer** for Brockley's seniors at Brockley Social Club was again an extremely enjoyable event, with refreshments and lively entertainment.

**LOCKDOWN:** *Monday 23 March 2020:* The coronavirus lockdown meant cancelling **Breakspears Mews Community Garden's** Spring Open Day; the sessions with Lewisham College to support Horticulture students with practical experience; and a 'growing' session with the nursery at Myatt Garden School.

Other Brockley Society events cancelled were the **Hilly Fields Midsummer Fayre**, our annual **BBQ** on Hilly Fields, and our July **Open Meeting**.

*Thursday 14 May: Brockley Society and Street Trees for Living* signed a legal Handover Agreement which transferred the project's assets and responsibilities to a separate, independent Charity No.1185165.

*Saturday 20 June:* Some of Brockley Society's Fayre committee marked the date of the Fayre with a picnic on the slopes of Hilly Fields. The park became a treasured resource for fresh air and exercise during the months of lockdown and social distancing.

*Saturday 4 July:* As lockdown began to be lifted **Breakspears Mews Community Garden** held a socially-distanced Open Day. The unexpectedly large attendance reflected the thirst for social interaction and open air. The garden rescheduled its

AGM to an evening with smaller numbers and later hosted two popular coffee mornings and an evening of poetry and music. The garden has really come into its own this summer and has been much appreciated by many people suffering the isolation of lockdown.

**Saturday and Sunday 12-13 September 2020:** The **Coordinated Front Garden Sale** jointly run by **Brockley, Ladywell and St John's Societies** provided another safe, social event and a chance for neighbours to meet, chat and benefit from sales or purchases at 116 different addresses.

**Saturday and Sunday 19-20 September 2020:** in response to **Open House** London's appeal for little-known open spaces to be included in their annual, corona-hampered event, we organised a **Walk through Brockley's Historic Mews** with small guided tours, a self-guided map, a brochure and an online list of planning and architectural details. The walk was attended by over 150 people and ended in the tranquillity of Breakspears Mews Community Garden for refreshments and a chance to admire the thriving vegetable beds. We linked up with the **Brockley Three Peaks Walk, Friends of Brookmill Park, Luxmore Gardens, Brockley and Ladywell Cemeteries**, and the **Arthouse**, who also took part in Open House.

**Our 12-strong Planning Group**, under its Chair, Chris Johnson, has met every month to consider planning applications submitted to Lewisham Planning Department for the Brockley Conservation Area. During lockdown this has been by email commenting. This unglamorous work is the foundation and origin of Brockley Society. The separate planning report contains more detail.

**Newsletter and communications:** The newsletter records our activities and is distributed by over 50 people, three times a year to 4,000+ houses in the conservation area and beyond. The June issue was slightly delayed by the corona lockdown and several of our long-standing distributors were shielding for all three issues, but we found replacements. Despite cancelled events, we assembled varied articles and received thanks from several people for brightening the rather bleak months. A substantial number of contributors write the articles and we try to ensure the newsletter reflects our community.

**Communications and Admin:** Our **Website** is an extremely important resource. Brockley-relevant **circular emails** go to nearly 1400 addresses fairly regularly. This year we have used **Twitter** more. We use **Facebook** to some extent.

**Archives and records:** We are grateful to a local family who house our archives. Plans to sort and manage them have been hampered by lockdown but we hope to return to this in the new year. **Brockley Voices**, our oral history project, has been dormant and needs to be revisited.

**Telephone boxes:** Our three decommissioned BT telephone boxes on Lewisham Way are 'listed buildings': a children's library at Wickham Road and a general library at Tyrwhitt Road, maintained by volunteers. We are waiting to install a defibrillator at Breakspears Road with support from Lewisham College's maintenance department, delayed by lockdown for the moment. We have signed a community partnership with **Lewisham College** and look forward to future collaboration.

## Strategic issues

Our management committee has met eight times to deal with overall management of Brockley Society's work. This included two major issues:

### Street Trees for Living separation from Brockley Society

This imaginative project, incubated by Brockley Society, required a year of intense legal and financial reconciliation by the treasurer and a sub-committee for separation from us, its parent body. Because of the complexity and large sums involved we again arranged an Independent Examination of our accounts, completed in time for our July 2020 Charity return. In May 2020 a Handover Agreement was jointly signed, transferring all assets and responsibilities relating to the project to the separate, independent Street Trees for Living Charity No.1185165. We wish them well.

### Brockley Society's constitution

This has been unchanged since its foundation in 1974 and needs updating to reflect the Charity Commission's new definitions and Brockley Society's own development over the last 46 years. A sub-committee has been preparing a new constitution for submission to the Charity Commission:

1. We propose to become a **Community Infrastructure Organisation (CIO) Association Model** using the Charity Commission template.
2. Our proposed **Objects** maintain the spirit of our 1974 constitution but are more up to date.
3. The proposed new constitution will introduce **Voting Membership** open to anyone who has indicated agreement with BrocSoc's Objects and who accepts the duty of members set out in the constitution. Members will be able to vote on policy and strategic issues.
4. Our **Management Committee (Trustees)** will be elected from among voting members.
5. We will retain the existing **Non-voting or Associate Membership** which can include anyone living in the Brockley Conservation Area or elsewhere who wishes to be a member. This allows their involvement in all our activities but not the right to vote on policy and strategic issues.
6. We will also use the opportunity to **regularise and update** our management committee roles and responsibilities, governance processes and procedures.
7. Once finalised and agreed, the draft constitution will go to the **Charity Commission for registration**.

## Risks in the year ahead

The **Covid pandemic** prevented us holding the Hilly Fields Midsummer Fayre. Normally attracting around 6,000 people, it is our main fundraiser and ensures our major community presence. It has been central to Brockley Society for 46 years and complements our planning and conservation activities — our other face. We hope to be able to run the Fayre in 2021, but may have to make adjustments or may have to consider other means of fund-raising

**Legacy for the Planning Group:** Although we have a broad and committed committee, it is heavily dependent on Chris Johnson's expertise and experience. It is

vital to upskill the group via mentoring from Chris and others in the group, and by attracting members with architectural or planning knowledge.

**Our Management Committee depends too heavily on the Chair:** Brockley Society carries out a myriad of quite complex activities, many listed above. We have links to individuals, advertisers, amenity societies and other community organisations within Lewisham. We aim to keep abreast of borough-wide and strategic questions that affect Brockley. Far too much of this falls on the Chair. This is not sustainable and could threaten some of BrocSoc's activities, specifically when the Chair steps back. The incoming management committee needs to tackle how this can be reorganised.

## Opportunities

### 'Outreach' for volunteers

Volunteering is the essence of Brockley Society, reflected in proposals for our new constitution. The Hilly Fields Fayre is run entirely by volunteers mobilised from the community by handing on from one year to the next and seeking new ones each time. We find volunteers for many of our events and activities, but we always need more. We attract volunteers through our printed newsletter, our circular email, website, Twitter and other social media. But this is not enough: we need **face-to-face outreach** with those in the community who have not responded via these routes in the past although they participate in large numbers at the Fayre. I propose that the incoming management committee should discuss how to establish this kind of 'outreach' and identify people who can conduct it.

### Running activities despite the corona uncertainties

We can organise open air events, such as guided or online walks in the conservation area, around our amazing green spaces and cooperating with other local organisations. We could repeat an informal walk round Brockley's Historic Mews as an informal Boxing Day event. We can develop imaginative plans for Lewisham Borough of Culture 2022. Let us not limit our ideas.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "U. C. Cowen". The "U" and "C" are capitalized and connected, followed by a period and then "Cowen".

Clare Cowen  
Brockley Society Chair  
November 2020