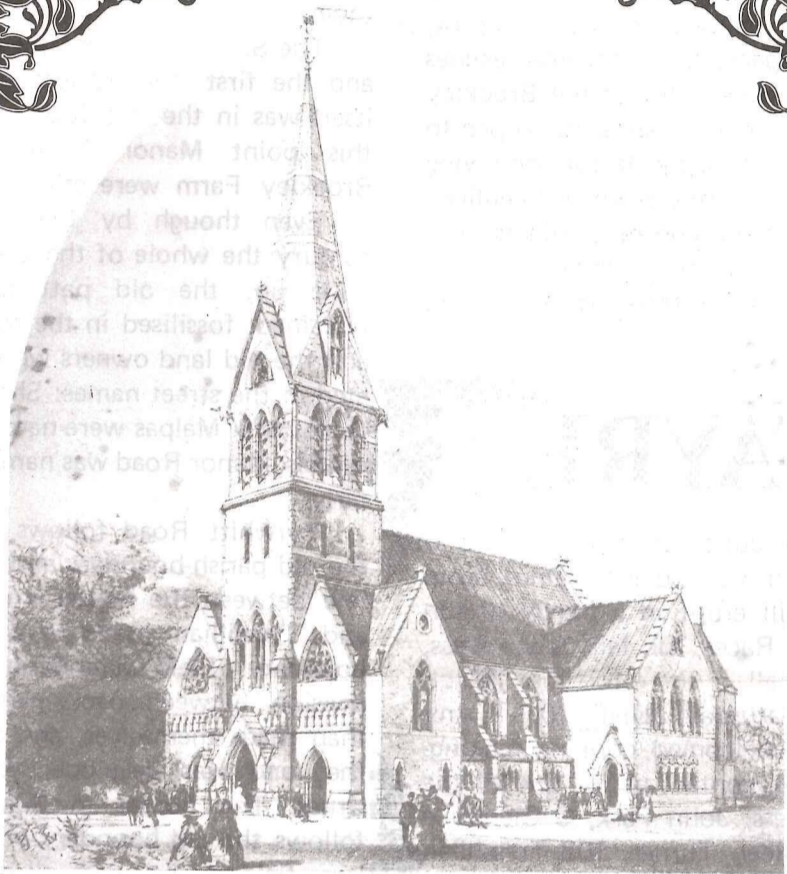




Save St. Peter's



Spire as originally proposed

A Short History of St. Peter's Church, Brockley

The Parish is part of the ancient riverside settlement of Deptford. St. Nicholas's was the original parish church. In the late 17th century, the town started growing and in 1730 the parish was divided into two, and St. Paul's Deptford was established. Development continued southwards, away from the river, and in 1855 the parish was divided, the southern half becoming St. John's parish.

Large and fashionable houses were built on the land going south. Many of them, particularly in Wickham Road, still exist as a reminder of the opulent past. The residents wished to have a place of worship of their own and, in 1866, a temporary main building was erected. Rev. Joseph McCormick, the Vicar-designate, was granted a licence to hold Divine Service.

On 26th May 1866, a group of gentlemen formed themselves into a Building Committee for the purpose of raising the necessary money to build a permanent church and establish a new parish. They started well, agreeing with Messrs Dove Bros of Studd Street Islington for a church to be built for £8,565 to the design of Mr Frederick Marrable, the architect who designed the Garrick Club in London. The Committee ran into financial trouble right from the start, for the money collected had run out by 14th July 1866, the architect was asked to reduce the expensive part of the plans, and the builders gave notice that they could not continue work until more money was forthcoming. A little further actual cash was raised immediately and work continued, but the Committee continued to stagger from crisis to crisis. It is interesting to note that it also acted as a local pressure group demanding improvements to the area. It carried on a

running battle with the Local Authority to get the lighting in Wickham Road improved, and the approaches to the church paved.

The building was completed ready for use in 1868 and the congregation met there, although it was not consecrated until the building debt was cleared. The Bishop of Rochester performed the ceremony on 12th August 1870. Afterwards there was a public luncheon, where the Chairman mentioned that, in their final fundraising effort, £1,400 had been collected in 10 days. However it was not until the end of the century that all debts were paid and the building finally completed.

The church was designed to seat 1,100, of which 170 pews were free. Owners of the large houses paid rents for their pews, and some even went as far as to rent a pew for their servants. The pew rents provided a good annual income for the church. The system continued until after the First World War. Those who had no rented pew had to wait outside until a short time before the service was due to begin and then were allowed in to take their places in the pews whose "tenants" had not arrived. The gallery pews were all free. It seems that no thought was given in those halcyon days to the fact that such a large building would soon need extensive funds to keep it maintained. No investment fund was started to meet future liabilities.

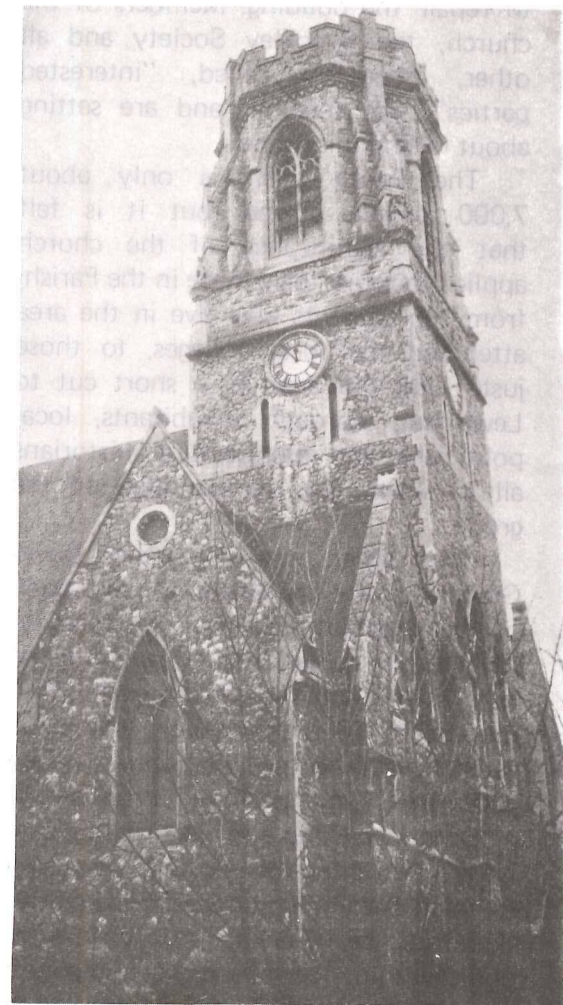
The congregation did have some problems with the building. The original plans had allowed insufficient ventilation for the floor. During the works connected with the installation of the organ, dry rot was discovered. The church had to be completely refloored only 8 years after consecration, the work being paid for by the new Vicar!

Apart from improvements to the organ in 1888, the next major project was the completion of the church by the addition of a tower. This project was started in 1889, and it was originally proposed to include a peal of bells. The suggestion sparked off correspondence in the national papers, including "The Times", and drew a surprisingly large coverage. Public opinion was against the suggestion, and the request for bells was not granted by the Diocese. The tower was completed in 1891, and a clock and chimes were included. The clock was set in motion just before 8 p.m. on Christmas Eve, 1891, and a starting ceremony was performed to release the clock pendulum, and the chimes for 8 p.m. were listened to with great solemnity.

It was intended to erect a spire, but there was no money. So the octagonal tower was later finished with 6 pinnacles. These pinnacles were removed some years ago as they had become dangerous.

Today, St. Peter's looks solid and permanent. We get so used to this impressive building, handed down to us from our predecessors, that we cannot imagine Brockley without its parish church. Indeed, it is unthinkable. Yet beneath its imposing exterior, St. Peter's hides many problems. Structurally the building is basically sound - thanks to the craftsmanship and thoroughness of Victorian builders. But there is much to be done if it is to be put in a satisfactory condition to last well into the 21st century. Some problems are very urgent, such as the dry rot discovered in the roof. Others, because they are less pressing, tend to get postponed, until they in turn become urgent and very expensive to deal with. Such problems as general roof repairs, re-pointing of the stone face, the removal of a weathered boiler stack, a complete overhaul of the clock and chimes and the provision of new window guards, need to be tackled now. Will you help the Preservation Group write another significant chapter in the history of this fine church?

Rev David Graham



Tower today

Fund Raising



ST. PETER'S CHURCH PRESERVATION GROUP

Everyone in Brockley is probably a member of some sort of Association or fund raising activity, and we thought it was worthwhile outlining why the St. Peter's Church Preservation Group has been set up, what it aims to do and who is involved.

You cannot travel in Brockley without being aware of the Church, which is one of the outstanding buildings of the area and certainly the most prominent. To all those who merely walk up and down Wickham Road, the Church is the most important landmark and, standing as it does on the top of a hill surrounded by trees, a building surely no one would wish to see decay or be knocked down.

The church is threatened by dry rot. Although not yet an extensive area of dry rot, a large sum of money is needed to repair the building. Members of the church, the Brockley Society and all other, popularly called, "interested parties", got together and are setting about raising this money.

The Parish itself is only about 7,000 people strong, but it is felt that the significance of the church applies to more than those in the Parish, from the students who live in the area attending the local colleges, to those just using the area as a short cut to Lewisham, borough inhabitants, local politicians and architectural historians all of whom are represented on the group.

The Vicar, the Reverend David Graham, and Julian Oliver the Chairman of the Brockley Society, therefore got together to organise a programme of fund raising activities. We hope this will have some 10 or 12 people doing the careful planning that we believe will be necessary to organise fund raising events.

In undertaking a project of this size, we are restricting the jobs of fund raising to small specific components which can therefore be quickly and efficiently done within the scope of someone's spare time. We are anxious for more help from anyone interested in contributing to the community effort. Tel. 692-4894. Perhaps you could let Julian Oliver know if you are interested.

We're in the Protection Racket

The Brockley Society

Every now and again in this Newsheet, we restate the aims of the Brockley Society.

Briefly, the society is you - all of you who live in the conservation area, and the society is a mirror of you not an imposed or self selecting group, nor an elitist collection of newcomers to the area. Merely whatever you, the residents care to make it.

This year we thought it might be helpful to state what the Broc Soc does not do. Perhaps by putting it this way, we may arrive at a better definition of what we do do!

- We are not a housing authority, any queries you may have about your housing should be addressed to the Local Housing Office situated at 86 Wickham Road, SE4.
- We are not in any manner a social service, should you require advice about the handicapped, children in need, the problems of the elderly, or of the mentally ill, then your Social Service Office is, Ashby Road, SE4. There are various playgroups in the area. One is at St. Peter's Centre, Carol Black can tell you more about it.
- We do not control planning applications, should you wish to alter the external appearance of your house then approach the Planning Department of the Council at Lewisham Town Hall, Catford.
- The Citizens Advice Bureau can advise you better than we can about legal matters. The nearest Citizens Advice Bureau, is at 2 Lewisham Way, SE14.

ST. PETER'S,

BROCKLEY.

PROGRAMME of . . .

THE BAZAAR

TO BE HELD IN

ST. PETER'S HALL,

On 28th, 29th, 30th MAY, 1907.

In aid of the balance required for meeting the cost of Re-roofing St. Peter's Church and Sundry Repairs.

PRICES OF ADMISSION:

Two Shillings and Sixpence for the Three Days.

or

One Shilling each day.
(Children half-price.)

Sixpence after 6 p.m. on 30th May, by payment at the doors.

The Bazaar doors will be opened at 2.30 p.m., and will close each day at 10 p.m.

Broc Soc Newsheet is published every 3 months. Your contributions are welcome. Send them to the Editors c/o 114 Tressillian Road.

We are of course very concerned, about all these issues but have neither the resources nor the skill to deal with them adequately.

However, there is still enormous scope for the things, we can effectively do. Anything which improves the area for us, the residents, will naturally be of interest. If you have a large tree which needs pruning, we may be able to help. We own a saw, and know an extremely talented woodman. Have you a garden which is too big? We may be able to match you up with frustrated gardeners, hampered by gardens too small for their grand designs. Maybe you would like to start a baby sitting circle, a brass band, a choir a playreading group, football team, old time dancing, chess club, morris dancers etc. Let us know, take some space, this magazine reaches over 3,000 households in the Brockley conservation area. We are always open to ideas, either for projects for improving the area, or for ways in which to enliven this newsheet and ensure it reflects what you want for your community.

A happy and interesting 1981 to all of you.

FAYRE

Saturday June 20th. is the date to keep free in your diary. Once again Brockley will erupt in a frenzy of fun and delight. Races, fun fair, fancy dress, food it will all be there for your delectation on Saturday JUNE 20. Any help will be welcomed, cooking, making, stall holding, contact us, or one of the fair organisers, John Park, 3 Glensdale Road, Kathleen Turner, 108 Tressillian

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ANTIQUES WANTED

I wish to purchase any of the following pre 1930 items:
Wardrobes, Sideboards, Bookcases
Display Cabinets, Dining Tables,
China, Brass, Tiles, Bric-a-Brac
ANYTHING OLD AND INTERESTING

Phone Ian Middleton 01-692-2845 or write 91 Tyrwhitt Road, London SE4.

Local History

It is difficult to access the real impetus of the growth of Brockley into a fully-fledged suburb. The building which had already taken place in 1844 in Upper Deptford around Tanners Hill seems to have been largely to accommodate a growing population within Deptford itself. Brockley seems to be the result not so much of the growth of Deptford, but of the growth of London.

Just as the market garden function was a product of the 18th & early 19th century growth of London. So the incorporation of Brockley as a suburb was the result of a regular railway, omnibus and later tram link with the town.

The S.E. railway was opened in 1849 and the first development in Brockley itself was in the late 1850's to 60's. At this point Manor Farm and Little Brockley Farm were still in existence.

Even though by the turn of the century the whole of the area had been built up, the old pattern of fields remained, fossilised in the road pattern, and the old land owners were commemorated in the street names: Shardeloes, St. Donatt's & Malpas were names of family estates. Manor Road was named after the farm.

Tyrwhitt Road follows the line of the old parish boundary and the dividing line between the houses in Breakspears and Tressillian roads is an old field boundary. Field boundaries mark the division between back gardens rather than roads themselves, and suggest that the land was developed in fields or tithes. The houses in Geoffrey Road follows the old boundary of Mr. Myatts large field. A river with all its twists and bends is preserved in the line of the back garden fences of the houses in Malpas Road. The division line between Shardeloes and Malpas Road is again an old field boundary and St. Donatt's Road followed the course of an actual field edge.

The roads running in an East-West direction tend to cut across existing boundaries. Harefield and Cranfield Roads especially cut right across existing fields even orchards.

By 1900 the whole of the area had become suburban, apart from the area known as Brockley Tips which was still partly occupied by a brickmaking concern.



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