

BROCKLEY SOCIETY



Issue 154 March 2022
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Delivered free to 4000 households in Brockley Conservation Area
three times a year: March, June and November www.brockleysociety.org.uk

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Brockley Society Open Meeting
Wednesday 20 April, 7-9pm
Lucas Vale School, SE8 4QF

A celebration of Lewisham Way Youth & Community Centre

We wish to salute the Centre's vital role as part of Lewisham's cultural heritage for the Borough of Culture 2022

Speakers: Les Back (author with William 'Lez' Henry of 'Reggae Culture as Local Knowledge: Mapping the Beats on South East London Streets')
Other speakers tbc

Celebrate Lewisham Way Youth Centre



For over 40 years, from 1973 until 2016, Lewisham Way Centre provided a safe place for black young people to come together,

increasing their sense of identity and confidence.

We wish to salute the Centre's vital role as part of Lewisham's cultural heritage, contributing to the Borough of Culture 2022.

It offered multiple activities: choirs, music production, numeracy and literacy classes, mentoring, photography, drama, film-making and popular dances in the large back hall.

In 1977 John Goto made a series of photographic portraits in the Centre, where he taught photography classes, published in 2013 as *Lover's Rock* (see picture).

The Centre played a role in the development of the *Lovers' Rock* record label around the corner in Upper Brockley Road.

Dr. Lez Henry has described the big sound system dances out the back where 'they used to do everything from black history to martial arts, but reggae was central.' The Centre was a safe space, 'a black world, hosted by black people'.

'This part of London played a significant role in the development of reggae in Britain,' says Professor Les Back. It was home to important sound systems like Jah Shaka and Saxon Studio and is where *Lover's Rock* records were first made. 'Many female Londoners sang an "ethic of loving blackness" into being in politically harsh and hateful times.' Steve McQueen's recent *Small Axe* series included

a film of the same name.

The New Cross area was a notorious hotbed of National Front activism and racist arson attacks. In 1977, the Moonshot, a black youth and community centre, was fire-bombed. In 1978, the Albany Theatre in Deptford was fire-bombed in a suspected racist attack, as was the Lewisham Way Centre in 1980.



The Centre before closure in 2016. The Grade II listed Arthouse is next door

Street battles between National Front supporters on the one hand and anti-racists supported by black youths on the other in 1977 is known now as The 'Battle of Lewisham'.

Lewisham Way Centre had 'an impact on the way young people chose to resolve conflicts ... they will have less options unless people are giving them guidance to stay outside of the criminal

justice system,' said Everton Augustus. C. Carpenter volunteered at the Centre: 'An Afro Caribbean youth centre, providing support, training and activities for the local black community for all age groups. Due to cuts and austerity measures from government they lost their funding, as did most youth and community services. This was a real blow to the local community.'

The Centre was precious to the community. In this year of the Borough of Culture let us celebrate its long history, akin to an 'intangible heritage asset'.

• On 24 February Lewisham's Planning Committee C confirmed the change of use status of the former youth centre from a community building to commercial Class E.

Hilly Fields Midsummer Fayre

Saturday 25 June 2022 12 noon to 5pm



In its 47th year. The longest-running community event in the borough, a brilliant contribution to Lewisham

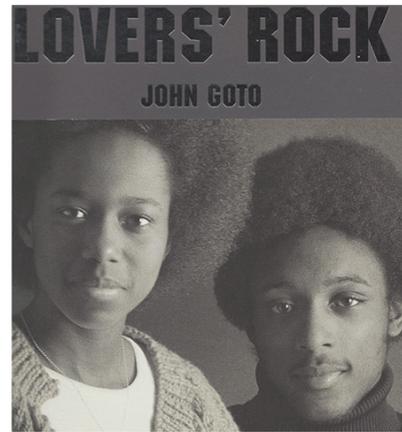
Borough of Culture 2022, run entirely by volunteers.

Application forms will be on the website www.brockleysociety.org.uk on 1 April for catering, stalls and advertising.

Join our organising team

Would you like to join the committee, one of the teams or even be a team captain? Email chair@brockleysociety.org.uk

Teams include: programme adverts and prizes / arena events / field events / car marshalling / stewarding / event set-up / BrocSoc tea tent / BrocSoc BBQ / children's competitions / marquee arts&crafts / catering stalls / field stalls (arts&crafts, community, bric-a-brac, food-related) / programme distribution / prize draw ticket sales / litter collection / strike down.



Brockley Society and Crofton Books

Brockley Literary Festival (Part of Brockley Max)

Saturday 28 May 2022, 2pm to 8pm

St John's Church, Howell Hall, St John's Vale / corner Lewisham Way, SE8 4EA.



The festival aims to celebrate past and present writers living and working in the broader Brockley area, to encourage new writing talent of all ages and backgrounds and to foster an enjoyment of reading and talking about books and everything connected to the written word.

The festival will include readings, 'open mic', talks, workshops and interactive sessions across all aspects of the written word including:

- fiction • children's fiction • poetry • non-fiction • local history
- journalism • publishing • writers' group/ creative writing
- book groups • meet the author • book sale

Admission FREE (but donations welcome). Refreshments available, bar from 6pm. To contribute to the programme contact chair@brockleysociety.org.uk
More details: www.brockleysociety.org.uk, Crofton Books, 315 Brockley Road, SE4 2QZ, and Brockley Max <https://brockleymax.co.uk>.

Telegraph Hill festival

25 March - 10 April
Book tickets (available from 5 March at 9am)

through www.telegraphhillfestival.org.uk

Jam-packed with events from choirs, classics, jazz, disco, karaoke to comedy, performance, open studios, workshops, health promotion events and talks ... a full children's programme.



Brockley Max
See page 3

Karl Brandt

5 February 1953 - 24 December 2021



Very sociable, Karl was known in Brockley for his friendliness, professional advice on computers and informal advice on many health issues.

He enjoyed social events with Brockley Society, Breakspears Mews Community Garden, the annual street party in Tyrwhitt Road, Hilly Fields Midsummer Fayre, the annual barbecue on Hilly Fields, and among Brockley Market's traders and customers.

Around his business System Solutions in East Dulwich he had a wide community of customers and neighbours.

His sudden death was unexpected because he appeared to be in good health.

*Life is mainly froth and bubble
Two things stand like stone
Kindness in another's trouble
Courage in your own*

Adam Lindsay Gordon (1833-1870)

Debbi Powton

We are sorry to report the death over Christmas of Debbi Powton, who lived in Garsington Mews for many years and was a stalwart of St Peter's Church.

She used to send timely emails, chasing articles and adverts for Brockley Society Newsletter.

Her world of Public Relations and putting on plays, was revealed at her funeral at Kensal Green.

BROCKLEY SOCIETY

President: Gillian Heywood, MBE

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Planners, architects and others with conservation knowledge or interest are welcome to join our planning and conservation group. See planning email above.

Breakspears Mews Community Garden.....

breakspearsmews@brockleysociety.org.uk

Join our occasional email circulation

about Brockley Society and local events:

email_chair@brockleysociety.org.uk

Everyone in the Brockley Conservation

Area and its surrounds is a member

of the Brockley Society.

Brockley Society welcomes all.

Newsletter copy deadlines:

1 February, 1 May, 1 October

Email to news@brockleysociety.org.uk

Advertising rates - back page

Post-war Prefabs in Lewisham

On a dark evening in early November the Brockley Society was welcomed into the spacious well lit assembly room at Lucas Vale primary School.

Socially distanced seating, tea coffee and biscuits provided.

Local Resident Jane Hearn gave us an enthralling illustrated talk about the online Prefab Museum, the national archive of post war prefabs and prefab life, of which she is the curator and co-founder.

Many older Brockley residents have fond memories of the prefab dwellings which were erected all over the country after WWII to address the acute post war housing shortage. They were new, 'modern' the proportions were good and they often had a wonderful amount of garden. Dozens were erected on Hilly Fields, for example, immediately after the war.

Catford had the largest surviving prefab estate in London – the Excalibur Estate. All the streets were named after Arthurian legendary characters!

The gardens were leafy, trees grew there was a strong sense of community, and although it was planned to be a temporary solution for 10 years, was still going strong in 2014 when demolition began.

Jane told us that a group formed to save or at least commemorate the spirit of the estate.

Fundraising events and memory sharing events were held in a vacant prefab on the estate. A plan was formed to create a national archive of prefabs.

The group researched prefab history and design, but found there was not much information recorded.

In 1944 designers were commissioned and in 1944 Churchill made a speech outlining a plan to rehouse bombed out families.

Ultimately the challenge was to re house half a million families – using no bricks (as there were no not enough skilled brick layers- or bricks) or steel

The prototype was the modular bungalow. There were 6 or 7 types of prefab. Jane showed pictures of their interiors with the charm of a well proportioned doll's house. Fitted kitchens – incredibly modern! Built in cupboards and heated towel rails in the bathroom (unheard of in 1948!)

Helped mostly by German and Italian POW's they were prioritised for returning conscripts and people who had been bombed out.

The doodle bugs and flying bombs of 1944/45 were especially destructive to South East London. Adelaide Avenue and Brockley Road had massive hits , so the need for pre fabs increased and there were estates on Hilly Fields and Telegraph Hill. After ten years many of the prefab estates had been demolished, but the Excalibur remained as a piece of living history.

Jane explained that only six of the prefabs are Grade II listed, and three are in disrepair, their future is unknown.

The national archive preserves the information – it can be accessed online at www.prefabmuseum.uk – including archive photos donated by former residents and filmed interviews.

Modular economically constructed well heated houses, using sustainable materials – with a garden space for planting – doesn't that sound like a good idea in 2022?

www.prefabmuseum.uk



Friends of Brookmill Park

Park Life Poetry

Class 5F from Lucas Vale School has been working with poet Laila Sumpton in the park and school to create poems for performance as part of the first Deptford Literature Festival. The Festival is organised by Spread the Word, renowned writer development agency based at the Albany, Deptford.

In their poems, the children have brought to life little heard voices of the natural world inspired by meetings with bird, tree, and eel experts and exploration of the river coordinated by the Friends' group. A printed and online version of the poems will be available soon. The children and Laila perform their poems on Saturday 19th March at lunchtime (1.00-1.30pm) in Deptford Lounge. The session is free, just drop in. Look out for other family writing activities that day too.



Lucas Vale students interview Glendale team members in the park with poet Laila

Great North Wood

Telegraph Hill Society General Meeting

Saturday 26 March, Hatcham Oak Children's Centre, 29 Wallbuton Road, SE4 2NX.

7:30pm: General Meeting to elect officers and committee

8:00pm: Talk on the Great North Wood
Speaker: C J Shuler

Hatcham Oak Children's Centre is named after the old Hatcham Wood which covered this area, part of the Great North Wood which ran from Norwood to the Thames. CJ Shuler, a writer who lives in South East London, has written a book called "The Wood that built London". He will talk on his researches and the wood's history.

The talk is being held as part of the Telegraph Hill Festival, is free and open to anyone.

Tackling Climate Change Starts at Home



Buildings constructed before 1900 account for 17% of England's housing stock. Historic England estimates if 50% were to be retrofitted to reduce carbon emissions over ten years this would result in a significant reduction of 39m tCO₂. Retrofitting of Victorian housing in Conservation Areas like Brockley is a priority, but where to start?

Local energy co-operative, South East London Community Energy (Selce), recently teamed up with the Brookmill Road Conservation Area Society (in Brockley ward) to hold 2 webinars on this subject. We were given valuable insights from Historic England experts, an architect, a conservation planner and a homeowner who has already gone through the process.

One of the most important messages was that installing more energy-efficient technologies like air-source heat pumps isn't effective if the home hasn't been properly insulated first. This means ensuring that: your roof is insulated to a high standard; your windows are soundly constructed, draught-proofed and, ideally, double glazed, and poorly-fitting doors are draught-proofed as well.

The next step is to consider insulation for internal walls and under floors. Importantly, we learned that natural/controlled ventilation is essential to stop your home overheating in summer and prevent damp and mould arising from trapped condensation.

Retrofit projects can be complex, especially in older properties where specific problems can arise from bad workmanship. Before starting work on your conservation area property, it's a good idea to check the latest guidance from Historic England and the Sustainable Traditional Buildings Alliance, talk to local homeowners who have already completed retrofit projects and check if planning permission is required.

Tenants in privately rented buildings and Tenants of Housing Associations and the Local Authority should make enquiries.

Selce offers a special service for local homeowners who want help with taking their first retrofit steps. More details can be found on the co-operative's Future-Fit Homes website along with links to all Selce's webinars.

Links:

- futurefithomes.org
- brookmillroadconservationarea.org.uk
- selce.org.uk • historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/energy-efficiency-and-historic-buildings/ • www.stbauk.org/

Hilly Fields Bird Watch

We held our Big Birdwatch event on 31 January for the first time since Covid struck. The weather was good, people turned out in force and 23 species were recorded including the lovely nuthatches who've nested in the park for the last 2 years. It was great to see parents bringing their children, both to the stall to make feeders and on the guided walk. We also had a display of bird feathers and sold more copies of our Birds of Hilly Fields booklet.

Nazanin is free



We are delighted that former Brockley resident Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe has been freed by Iran after 6 years and is now reunited with her husband Richard and daughter Gabriella in London. We wish them all the best in rebuilding their lives.

Francis Drake Bowls

One of our disabled members has qualified to take part in the Paralympic Commonwealth games. Steve Simmons – who is partially sighted – has passed his initial trials and just awaits the call to join the squad.

It has been a strange year. We started the season under lockdown rules. For the upcoming season, however, it looks as if we could be returning to something like normal.

Last year we tried a new tack and opened during the Midsummer Fayre on Hilly Fields. We were surprised and pleased with the response. Visitors flowed in, some had a trial game, some just wanted a place to sit and rest their feet but we met a lot of locals who wanted to join. We will be back for the next fayre.

Our new clubhouse has been fully utilised with members using it for games afternoons during the off season and committee and section meetings. A number of our players have already entered the Kent competitions so we are already thinking about the new season.

Of course, we want more new members. Everyone is welcome, including those who just want a casual game now and then. Initially, bowls is a simple game. The basics can be taught in just a few hours. If necessary, our Bowls England coach offers one-to-one sessions.

Once the basics have been learned, the game takes on a different slant. Bowls is also a game of tactics and can take a lifetime to master. New members will find a range of skills and a warm welcome when they join.

Breakspears Mews Community Garden Spring Plans



As spring is slowly appearing the garden is beginning to wake up. The committee has met to plan events for you all to come and enjoy this peaceful haven.

Our **AGM will be held on 19th March 2022 2pm**. The Garden will be open from 12. We will be discussing last year's achievements, looking for volunteers for this year's events and electing our committee.

Over the Easter Holidays we will hold a workshop on **Sat 9th April 2 to 3.30pm** with Easter egg dying/painting plus an egg hunt – with refreshments – **Volunteers needed**.

This year **Brockley Max** coincides with the Platinum Jubilee weekend – **27th May to 4th June with the Big Lunch on Sunday 5th June**.

We will run a Workshop on **Saturday 28th May 2 to 4pm** making sculpture out of recycled materials and will also exhibit sculptures made in advance in the garden.

There will also be a **High Tea 4 to 6 on Sunday 5th June**.

So a big shout out to all you singers, poetry slammers, beat boxers and performers, recyclers and sculptors, bakers and chatters – come to the AGM to find out more and volunteer yourselves.

Further events include **Hilly Fields Summer Fair** where we hope to sell plants sown and propagated in the garden and **Brockley Open Studios on the 2nd/3rd July** when the garden will be open for refreshments and also available for local makers to display their wares.

Find us on the Broc. Soc. website, Facebook and Instagram or sign up for an email copy of our monthly Newsletter which includes our opening times.

Lewisham has best parks in London!

Lewisham came first out of thirty participating boroughs in the Good Parks for London Report 2021. Congratulations to all Friends groups whose collaborative approach has contributed to this significant success.



Celebrating 21 Years of Brockley Max

Brockley Max returns in its full in-person glory to celebrate its 21st Birthday from 27th May to 4th June 2022.

As part of Lewisham's Borough Of Culture festivities, running across various venues, Brockley Max 2022 will have something for everyone. Events include:

- The famous **Brockley Max Opening Night** open air in Coulgate Street on 27th May.
- **Art In The Park** on Hilly Fields on 4th June from 12-6 pm.
- **Brockley Music Trail** bringing live music to front gardens and public spaces.
- **Brockley Max Art Trail** engaging whole streets during the festival.
- **Brockleywood Nights** showcasing short films from local directors, both professional, student and amateur.
- Our 21st birthday Party at the Fox and Firkin pub.
- And plenty more.

Check out the full programme in May and more details at www.brockleymax.co.uk

Letter

My mother-in-law, Mary Mulcahy, was very interested to read the letter about the Queen Mum's visit to Brockley in the last issue. Although she wasn't present at the actual visit to Geoffrey Road, Mary was a frequent visitor to the garden in question, which was just around the corner from her home.

The garden was owned by Mr and Mrs Hough (or possibly Howe) and the star attraction was the lawn. Mr Hough was a London cabbie and all his spare time was devoted to tending his back lawn, the edges of which he trimmed with a pair of scissors. Mary recalls that the grass was so immaculate that she didn't want to walk on it.

She thinks that the Queen Mum's visit was part of some kind of annual 'Best Kept Garden' competition and that other gardens in the area were also graced with a royal presence during the 1960s. Mrs Hough told Mary that she put out her best china for the visit but the Queen Mum's entourage had brought in a special tea set to be used instead. No explanation was given but she thought it was possibly a precaution against attempts to poison the royal family.

Camilla Mulcahy

West Africans in Brockley Conservation Area 1960 – 1975

In the last year we have published varied reminiscences and historical articles including: growing up in Brockley during World War II; why streets were named after Gordon Brock Bridgman and siblings; local resident Stewart Parnell who campaigned for Home Rule for Ireland. We have been delighted to receive this article about Nigerians and other West Africans who lived in Brockley.

Growing up in Brockley Conservation Area I was aware of four West African families living on Breakspears, Cranfield, and Rokeby Roads (the daughter was my friend) and Manor Avenue. A fifth couple rented my parents' basement. In later life I met a Sierra Leonean lady, whose mother was Guyanese, and had lived on Breakspears Road, and a second Nigerian family from Rokeby Road. On social media I met a Nigerian lady from Brockley Road between the late 1960s and early 1970s.

West Africans' histories are hidden because they came to Britain to study and then return to play a role in their independent countries — Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia, the only four British colonies in West Africa — where they took advantage of expanding opportunities in the civil service, health, science, law. All the families referred to above returned to Nigeria, a number returned to Britain as diplomats, including Mummy's brother, or company representatives or for short courses.

No doubt there are hidden histories of other West Africans, including international students at South East London and Goldsmith's Colleges. Practically, Sierra Leoneans' records may languish in archives unassociated with their African history because of English first names and surnames, often mistaken for West Indians or British. Francophone West Africans tended to go to France or Belgium, though some came to England and anglophone West Africans also headed to continental Europe.

One of our tenants became one of Nigeria's wealthiest men, holding sway over real estate in north London, Lagos and Spain.

My parents chose a large house in Brockley so they could rent out sections to finance their training, and they liked the area. Our house had a side building, a former Victorian coach house. We had apple and pear trees in our garden and we were never short of fruit. The garden was so big that I never got to the back wall. My sister and I even tried building a tree house. Our intriguing mantelpiece was massive. If you were looking for anything — thread, needles, pens, glasses — 'It is on the mantelpiece' was the usual answer. No family photographs or vases.

In the original drawing room were french doors that led to a sort of balcony. High in our bedroom wall was a small square window which put the fear of God into me. I was concerned that the Daleks of ancient Dr Who episodes would come through. Our growing family occupied the upper ground and first floors. We spent a lot of time upstairs. Victorian and Edwardian young girls would have walked downstairs graciously. Not us. If the door bell rang we slid down the banisters and crashed to the floor. The first to land would open the door. We were christened at St Peter's Church a few doors away.

Daddy taught us to ride our Raleigh Chopper bike, first produced in 1969. We practised on the mews from St Peter's Church in Wickham Road through to Breakspears Road. We played in our garden and on the street

with our 'cousins' who had bought a similar property in Camberwell. I have used the term 'cousin' because their mother was Mummy's best friend and their father, my Godfather, was Daddy's best

friend. They had respectively attended the same schools in Nigeria. In my community you are deemed to be related.

Even when St Peter's Church was closed we played in the grounds. We always created adventures and, yes, we did read 'The Secret Seven'. A few years ago I watched 'The Railway Children' again, and tears flowed. I would never have been allowed near a railway embankment but there was something about the antics of the children in the film that reminded me of my childhood.

The story of West Africans extends to the surrounding areas around Goldsmith's College and Deptford, St John's, Lewisham and Crofton Park. West Africans were more numerous there up until the 1980s. My family are from a western Nigerian sub-group, like being English from Lancashire and having Manchester as your county capital. So a street in Deptford, where five families of blood relatives lived, was nicknamed as our Nigerian hometown. Houses were smaller and, I guess, cheaper to purchase, but there was no 'them and us' between those in the smaller houses and us in Brockley Conservation Area. In the mid 1960s houses cost between £1,800 to £6,000. Daddy was bold and bought his property nearer the higher figure. Not all the dreams and aspirations were achieved in their generation of West Africans, but in the generations to come.

Social housing for personal or financial reasons became a reality as the years went on, a few in Brockley Conservation Area and an abundant supply in the surrounding areas.

School

At the bend of Amersham Road, before one crosses Lewisham Way into Shardeloes Road is a building owned and used by the local authority or the NHS. When I was aged three to four and my mother was expecting my younger brother, she went there to see a doctor, nurse or midwife. We toddlers learned to count our 123s and read ABCs under supervision.

I went to Lucas Vale Junior School from 1967 to 1971. I walked along Wickham Road with my mother and baby brother in his perambulator. New girls were

often addressed as 'Little Girl' by their contemporaries. I remember the Victorian aura of the classrooms and I am glad I had the opportunity to school in such an environment with Mr Hopkins and Miss Pond. We learned to sing 'Kumbaya My Lord', revolutionary at the time, and hymns with a Celtic tone like 'Be Thou My Vision'. I joined a choir and learned all the old school Christmas carols. We made Christmas decorations, including a display candle set. One Easter I was chosen for our Easter Parade but fell ill and my mother refused to allow me to go to school. But the beautiful Easter Bonnet was with me when it should have been kept in the school. The teacher was livid.

At that time, Commonwealth Day was a big thing and was always marked in one way or another. My father did not like colonialism and had lived to see an independent Nigeria in which he was going to participate on his return. However, he was a great fan of the Royal family. My Rokeby Road best friends' Nigerian parents were of a different ethnic group. Our fathers eventually met and for the first time ever I heard a discussion in Nigerian Pidgin English, relaxing the atmosphere between two strangers even though both were conversant in English.

School dinners consisted of spam in batter, fish fingers and shepherds pie, the most pilloried of school dinners. Side dishes were chips or mashed potatoes. Dessert, known as Afters, could be 100ls with custard, or jam tarts with custard, or rice pudding with a date in the middle. At Lucas Vale we were asked to write how we thought Deptford would be in 20 years time. I remember thinking, 'I do hope Deptford Library will still be there.' It was very important to my whole family, including my Dad. The building is still there but now used for art.

One day in 1971, we were told to ask our parents if we wanted to attend the new school, Myatt Gardens on Rokeby Road. I believe Lucas Vale was overcrowded. Perhaps they had already written to all the parents. Two days later we were at the new very modern school. Both schools were very mixed, with children from various ethnic groups. My best friend also crossed over to Myatt Gardens. I remember a teacher, Mr McMeccan, partly because of his unusual name and plus he was very active, and also Mr Dickens.

We visited the Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street; The Cutty Sark; we swam at Ladywell Baths every Thursday; we visited Blackheath every Wednesday. One summer holiday was themed 'Holiday Special' and was of a religious nature, perhaps for children whose parents worked during the



Classes at Lucas Vale School around the time that Ola will have been a pupil



A class at Lucas Vale in the late 1960s

summer holidays. In 1971 we changed from pounds, shillings and pence to the decimal system. I loved the old shilling — if you had one as a child you were rolling in it. The sweet shop on the corner of Rokeby Road as you go towards Upper Brockley Road was a slice of heaven for us school kids and we used to congregate there after school.

The female members of my family stood out in the community as first generation Africans. Mummy plaited our hair using black thread unflinchingly every week, at the beginning of a popular programme 'The Last of the Mohicans'. We siblings quarrelled over who would be last to have her hair done.

Mummy had been a Grade 3 teacher in Nigeria, meaning she could teach elementary school pupils. But in England without having the option to pick and choose she was lucky to become a comptometer operator and worked in an office in the West End. She also trained as a secretary, studying shorthand, typing, and English. In addition she was an Avon representative. Yes, the Avon Lady did ring. Mummy was always very busy. By 1971 she began driving — slowly, using Dad's old car. It was still unusual for a black woman except nurses and midwives to be driving. I remember the Green Shield Stamps she used to collect. She embarked on a one-year course at a University of London college that would qualify her to begin a degree. She was a very accomplished person. Being a Grade 3 teacher was OK and respectable in a small town, but for careers in more dynamic cities in Nigeria it was better to up the ante. Daddy finally gained three degrees including a postgraduate degree in science.

Having already gained some qualifications, a lot of West Africans studying in Britain were already married with children. Our parents wanted us to aspire and to get what we wanted to do in the future right from the start so as not to go through what they went through. Academic qualifications were a very important part of our upbringing. Yet we still had a very carefree, rough and tumble childhood. My father preferred it that way and believed children should be seen, heard and spoken to, sometimes on the same level with adults.

Brownies

I was a member of the 12th South Deptford Division of the Brownies, meeting at St Peter's Hall, Cranfield Road. Once we met on Breakspears Road and all trooped to St Paul's Church, Deptford, when the Queen Mother was in attendance. We visited the Donkey Farm, a most idyllic place, with a small stream running through it. We visited Crystal Palace. For my Brownies singing badge I had singing lessons with an elderly English lady on the corner of Cranfield Road. We did a lot of baking especially of fairy cakes. We did old people's gardens. In our uniforms we knocked

on their doors and asked if they needed help. We made tea for them in their own houses or the more sprightly ones made us sit down after we had helped them and made us tea. I have a life-long liking of bazaars, because of St Peter's Hall and the Brownies.

Parks and shopping

At the top of Shardeloes Road I used to buy London cheesecakes from the stand in the small park. The Friendly Street park was a favourite for Lucas Vale pupils. We sat at the edge of its pool and splashed our feet in the water. In a shop on Lewisham Way we bought delicious ham sandwiches wrapped in white, almost transparent, paper or chips wrapped in newspaper. The brook running through Brookmill Park had a rustic charm. I have very pleasant memories of Hilly Fields, almost indescribable. Did I roll down the hills or was I tempted to, like in 'Little House On The Prairie'? I cannot remember. While contemplating rolling down the hill, we used to watch the men below play cricket.

My sister and I attended the Jamaican Church at St Peter's Hall after having attended Sunday School and the adult service at St Peter's Church. It was a delight to attend. It was very lively and sort of evangelical. Christmas in Brockley was heavenly. The Sally Army (The Salvation Army) walked down a street in front of shops with their brass band and collection tins. It was a huge celebration in our house. Once Mum and Dad sheepishly informed us that Father Christmas could not come as he had to go down the road to two less advantaged sisters, but we woke up to unwrap lovely presents.

I remember shopping trips to Lewisham near the Army and Navy store. Brockley Cross consisted of a chemist, a Spar supermarket where we purchased Mother's Pride bread, a pet shop where we bought feed for our goldfish, a shop where I used to buy wool for knitting and crochet.

As well as the milkman the liquid paraffin man used to come around: 'Esso Blue Paraffin'. You grabbed your containers to buy paraffin and other items. Many blacks had no central heating and used paraffin heaters. Once in a while we purchased West Indian bread. We liked the ones with traces of currants, a bit sweet, and had the opportunity to eat in friends' homes, especially rice and peas, cooked authentically by first generation West Indians. I am not sure what Caribbean island they came from. For our African cooking we shopped at Deptford Market.

West Africans, especially Nigerians, began renting halls, such as Deptford Town Hall, for parties. I remember my family attending a few there. An iconic advert between Goldsmiths College and New Cross Bus Garage showed an electronic figure climbing up and down stairs. It was a landmark for about 30 or 40 years.

Mobility and social mobility.

West Africans can move about a lot, including those who went back to West Africa to become leaders in their professions and community. Some travelled to the US to study and, in recent decades, to live. Although there were excellent facilities including universities back home in the pre-independence years and early years of Independence, some sent their children to Britain to be educated. After a few years back in Nigeria my family, though not grand, sent me to an English school for girls in the country. My Sierra Leonean friend was sent to a top public school. Had we not left we would have gone to Haberdashers Askes in Hatcham, New Cross.

By the time some West Africans were sending their children back or had acquired the middle-class, upper-class West African taste of holidaying in Europe they regretted having sold their properties in Brockley Conservation Area. Even while in Nigeria my family were never far from Brockley as my father spent some time in the St John's area and we children eventually returned to live in Crofton Park in the early 1980s. I used to cross a small footbridge to see an aunt in Honor Oak. I mentally linked a small cottage on the Honor Oak side of the embankment to 'The Railway Children', knowing of Edith Nesbit's connection to that section of the railway line.

West Africans' insistence that their offspring should enter the professions enabled more to purchase what their parents could not commit to in the 1960s, including in places like Brockley Conservation Area. I know of a Sierra Leonean architect, for example.

Postscript:

While living at Crofton Park aged 20, a Jamaican man at a bus stop at Brockley Cross said Hello to me. I said, Hello, and stared at him. 'It is me,' he said and mentioned his name.

I had crossed the Sahara by plane as a child, lived in Sub-Saharan Africa, spoken another language in addition to English, gone to a girls' school in the shires — and yet the Jamaican man remembered me. I responded to his greeting. Always of quiet disposition, he went his own way.

How poignant. As children, we had spent a lot of time in or outside his house two doors away, playing with his children. I regretted not chatting with him. But I bumped into his daughter a year or two later and we spoke for about an hour. Their family had been amongst those who had mourned my mother's very sad passing.

Although my father was very attached to us, he had had no choice but to send us to Nigeria to his mother and relatives. He visited as often as he could and provided everything we needed before finally joining us a few years later. In Nigeria I watched 'Little House on The Prairie'. To say the children rolling down the hills reminded me of Hilly Fields is an understatement.

I count myself blessed to have had a childhood in such a wonderful part of London, despite my parents' limited resources and tight budget. I now live north of the river, partly due to work. My lingering memories of Brockley Conservation Area are of wide, tree-lined Wickham Road, other roads with various architectural designs, the country-like ambience, even without the layout of other London villages, the calm, the parks, the church.

Naturally my own childhood home and its garden are forever etched in my memory.

Ola Laranmi

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Before you start making decisions on any changes to your property, we strongly advise you to look at the Council's guidelines at: www.lewisham.gov.uk. Click through [myservices / Planning / Conservation and urban design / Conservation areas / Brockley](#). The Brockley Conservation Area Supplementary Planning Document describes what building modifications will be allowed. Under the Article 4 direction external changes visible from public viewpoints require

planning permission (doors, windows, roof, driveways, gates, walls, fences, painting the exterior).

You can view planning applications in the Planning section of the website, and then select 'Search and comment ...' You must log in to make a comment supporting or objecting to an application.

To get involved in preserving the character of Brockley or for further guidance on planning issues, contact planning@brockleysociety.org.uk

Pending:

57 Breakspears Road, SE4: Replacement of existing single glazed timber sash windows with double glazed timber sash units

4 Wickham Road SE4: Construction of a 2 storey building at the rear of for (Use Class E) Commercial, Business and Service purposes

38 Tyrwhitt Road, SE4: Replacement of existing casement windows with double-glazed timber sash units

39 Wickham Road, SE4: Replacement of windows to the rear and side of the LG floor, installation of French doors to rear. Enlargement of window opening to the rear elevation to create a door, and the installation of a Juliette Balcony

Flat 6, 18 Wickham Road, SE4: Replacement of existing timber sash windows with double glazed timber sash units to the front and rear first storey

38 Admiral Street, SE8: Replacement of existing windows with double glazed timber sash units to the front elevation, and double glazed uPVC to the rear elevation; replacement of the existing roof slates and lead flashing with like

152-154 Lewisham Way SE14: Construction of mansard roof extension the existing flats to provide three, three-bed self-contained flats

232 Lewisham Way, SE4: Replacement of timber sash and casement windows with double glazed timber units with like opening styles, the replacement of timber French doors with double glazed timber units

1 Wickham Gardens SE4: Partial demolition of the existing building and construction of new two storey, three bed dwelling, together with retention of existing front facade

124 Upper Brockley Road, SE4: Replacement of existing single glazed timber sash windows with double glazed timber sash units

44 Ashmead Road SE8: Construction of a bin and bike store in the front garden

Second Floor Flat, 13 The Parade, Upper Brockley Road, SE4: construction of a rear dormer extension

43 Admiral Street, SE8: Replacement of two casement windows and one. glazed door with like

3 Harefield Road SE4: Extension to the first floor level at for use a beauty salon

263 Lewisham Way SE4 (rear of): Construction of a two storey building comprising 2, one bedroom self-contained flats at the (fronting Ashmead Mews), together with the provision of two car parking spaces and cycle storage

1-3 Ashby Road SE4: Construction of a one/ two storey roof extensions to create 3 self-contained flats, together with the conversion of an existing studio to provided additional living accommodation

Granted:

82 Tressillian Road, SE4: Replacement of existing timber sash windows with double timber sash double glazed units to all elevations

9 Wickham Road, SE4: The removal of the existing roof tiling and installation of natural slate replacements

Flat 2, 14 Brockley Cross, SE4: Replacement of all existing uPVC windows to double-glazed timber sash windows

44 Cranfield Road, SE4: construction one/ two storey rear extension to replace the existing rear addition, enlargement and replacement of two windows in the side, replacement of the existing front windows, renewal of the slate roof coverings, insertion of a rooflight to the main roof and associated works, changes to the front garden and wall, and installation of solar panels to the rear of the main roof

1 Avon Road, SE4: Replacement of existing single-glazed timber sash windows with double-glazed timber sash replacements

43 St John's Vale, SE8: Construction of a single-storey rear side return extension, new boundary wall between Nos. 41 and 43

Flat 4, 62 Wickham Road, SE4: Replacement of single glazed timber sash windows with double glazed timber sash units, and the existing single glazed crittal window with a double glazed timber replacement

2 Brockley Gardens, Upper Brockley Road, SE4: Replacement of existing uPVC windows to the front and first-storey rear elevations with uPVC units

51 Wickham Road, SE4: The construction of an additional storey on top of the existing two storey dwelling

59A Cranbrook Road, SE8: Replacement of existing single glazed 1st floor rear elevation window with double glazed steel Crittal frame window

142 Upper Brockley Road, SE4: Removal of existing single storey rear glazed link and replacement with single storey extension

108 A, B, C Upper Brockley Road, SE4: Replacement windows – timber front and side, uPVC rear, uPVC door to rear

6 Tack Mews, London, SE4: Dormer extension to the rear roof slope

Refused:

3 Upper Brockley Road, SE4: Replacement front wall, railings and boundary wall

14 Wickham Road SE4: The construction of four lockup garages and a single storey outbuilding for use as office/studios on the land at the rear

7 Brockley Cross, SE4: Installation of a non-illuminated advertisement

9 Bolden Street SE8: Construction of a bin and bike store in the front garden

Trees:

69 Tressillian Road SE4: Eucalyptus: remove branches overhanging summer house

Chester Lodge 25 1/2 Wickham Road, SE4: Prune beech, sycamore

90A Upper Brockley Road, SE4: Prune Elder (rear), Ash (front)

54B Tyrwhitt Road: Re-pollard poplar, reduce height by 6m to 14m

Lloyd Villas, Lewisham Way, SE4: Two sycamore trees (rear), crown reduction

59 Tressillian Road, SE4: Pear tree (rear), height reduction

Flat A, 15 Cliff Terrace, SE8: Eucalyptus tree (rear), fell to ground

40B Geoffrey Road: Pollard Robina

28 Tressillian Road: lime, height reduction, radius reduction

Brockley's celebrated astronomers



Walter Maunder (1851-1928) and Annie Maunder (1868-1947): Astronomers Walter and Annie Maunder will be celebrated with a blue plaque at their former home in Brockley.

They are particularly celebrated for their work on the periodic variation of Sunspots, as well as for their pioneering contributions to solar photography and the debunking of the myth that there were canals on Mars.

The Maunders were very active in promoting amateur astronomy, and wrote a number of popular guides, including *The Heavens and their Story* (1908), which came out while they were living in Brockley.

It was their avowed aim to make astronomy more accessible to amateur astronomers, and to women in particular.

Women of Brockley

Each year for International Women's Day a local initiative called fabric runs a project inviting the women of Brockley to express their creativity and celebrate women. This year's project "May we know them" invites the women of Brockley to create a

portrait of a strong woman who inspires them!

Portraits displayed throughout the neighbourhood in the week leading up to International Women's Day, and then featured in an exhibition at the Lewisham Arthouse March 5-13.

For more information follow @fabricexperiments on Instagram or email fabricthemagazine@gmail.com



Whispers on the Wind

A charming Audiovisual Brockley Fairy Tale Walking Tour, this is the story of Pip, a child living in Brockley who thinks she sees the trees outside her window uproot and commune for a night-time dance.

The following day, Pip goes on a journey to talk to the trees and confirm her suspicions, all whilst discovering many of their mythological and biological secrets.

Pip's story is told through a 17-minute film, with an illustrated map so you can trace Pip's footsteps and explore the wonders of Brockley's trees for yourself. The film and a digital version of the map can be viewed at: whisperonthewind.co.uk/watch

Physical maps (carbon neutral printing on recycled FSC-certified paper) are available free from:

- The Broca, 4 Coulgate St, London SE4 2RW.
- My Eco Brockley, 7b Harefield Rd, London SE4 1LP.
- Pistachios in the Park, 47 Vicars Hill, Hilly Fields.

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- For information, visit our website lewisham.ac.uk or contact: CELTA@lewisham.ac.uk

Apply now!

Brockley's Mews

An action group has been formed in the Brockley conservation area to help safeguard the natural environments that exist in our local mews.

The movement against mews erosion (MAME) is working towards the provision of improved signage to benefit pedestrians, ramblers and cyclists, as well as maintaining and protecting community access to all the Brockley mews roads.

This important endeavour is being supported by local councillors and expects to meet Mayor Damien Egan.

If BrocSoc readers would like to hear more about the progress of this work, news alerts will be made available to all. To request updates please email MAME at v.mcgregor@hotmail.co.uk and tell us how you would prefer to access information (e.g. text or email)

Let's conserve the environment in our conservation area!

Brockley Open Studios Christmas Fair

Unlike winter 2020 when the fair was outside under multi coloured tents in a cold wind, in November 2021 the 20 Tables were inside — lively and warm with underfloor heating and lots of customers.

Varied work was on sale: photo, cards, paintings, jewellery, cushions, Christmas decorations, candles, ceramics, glass, prints, clothes.

Videos were screened about St Peter's food bank and work with children with additional needs. There were things for children to make and toddlers intently watched musicians Klezjammers and Hornstars. Buns, cake, coffee, tea and mulled wine were provided by the Little Nest Bakery and Salthouse Bottles. A great team effort.

Juliet Johnson



The Migration Museum has published a statement on the invasion of Ukraine and the refugee emergency. Our thoughts are with everyone who has been displaced and whose lives have been turned upside down by this ongoing situation.

We have become even more convinced of how necessary our museum is. More than ever, we need a dedicated space:

The museum (in Lewisham Shopping Centre) is closed at the moment to prepare our next exhibition, Taking Care of Business, that will weave together the threads of who we are in a new and exciting way and find even more ways to express our interconnectedness and shared identity.

Meanwhile we remain committed to securing a permanent space and long-term future for the Migration Museum. Find out how you can help at migrationmuseum.org or contact info@migrationmuseum.org.

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