

London Borough of Lewisham Local History and Archives Centre

Info Byte Sheet No. 27

History of Grove Park

This area was mainly woodland until the 18th century, when the trees were cut down. Many of them were burned to make charcoal, hence the name Burnt Ash for part of the area. After the trees had been cleared, Burnt Ash Farm covered much of the present Grove Park area and the only inhabitants were a few farm labourers and their families. A smaller farm, near Somertrees Avenue, was called Grove Farm and was to give its name to Grove Park.



In the mid-nineteenth century much of the land was dug up for earth to make bricks, and houses began to be built. Grove Park station opened in 1871 and made the area an attractive one for commuters; many more houses were built. But farming, particularly dairy farming and plant nurseries, continued.

Lewisham Council built the Grove Park Estate in the 1920s, acquiring Chinbrook Meadows for a recreation ground. Private housing was also built between the wars; the railway to central London was electrified in 1926, making the journey to central London faster and therefore encouraging commuters to live in Grove Park.

The last farmland was built on in the 1960s; however, private sports grounds as well as Chinbrook Meadows provide open spaces. Grove Park Hospital was built as a workhouse for the poor of Greenwich in 1902. It was taken over by the Army in the First World War, and then became a hospital. It is now a housing estate, although some of the hospital buildings have been preserved.

Edith Nesbit (1858-1924), author of children's books such as 'The Railway Children', lived in Baring Road. A footpath leading to the Hither Green Nature Reserve is called Railway Children Walk. Desmond Tutu, later Archbishop of Capetown and Chair of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, lived in Chinbrook Road 1972-1975. He was made a Freeman of the Borough in 1990.

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