

London Borough of Lewisham Local History and Archives Centre

Info Byte Sheet No. 29

History of Ladywell

The 'Lady Well' was near Ladywell Bridge, and was probably a holy well dedicated to the Virgin Mary. (Lewisham's ancient church, nearby, is also dedicated to her.) It is mentioned on a map of 1592. On the corner of Lewisham High Street and Ladywell Road is the former vicarage of Lewisham. Built in 1693, it is one of the oldest buildings in the borough.



Away from the High Street there were only a few cottages in Ladywell, near the bridge over the River Ravensbourne, until the railway was built and Ladywell Station opened in 1857. Ladywell Fields is a park, opened to the public in 1889. It lies beside the river, and may be the 30 acres of meadow' mentioned in Domesday Book of 1086. Another park is Hilly Fields. One of the highest points in Lewisham, it has been a site for celebratory beacons.

On the hilltop is Prendergast School; former schools on this site were Brockley County School and the West Kent Grammar School. The Ladywell Cemetery was founded in 1858 to serve the population of Lewisham.

Henry Williamson, author of 'Tarka the Otter', lived as a boy in Eastern Avenue. He wrote several autobiographical novels about his childhood.

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