The lost houses of St Mary Cray

Charles Darwin, justice campaigner

Chislehurst’s Kangaroo Walk

How Bromley led the way in organic farming
Bromleag
The journal of the Bromley Borough Local History Society

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2 Bromleag September 2013
What was it like to live in Bromley in WWI?

Next year we are publishing a book to mark the centenary of the start of the First World War. Originally it was intended to have a special edition of Bromleag, in September 2014, with articles about the war. However, the project has grown and it will now be a book that will be sent free to members in the autumn and then go on general sale.

We will be including material that has been written by members over the years and fresh research is being undertaken too. The working title is The Home Front: in and around Bromley in WWI so there will be only a small amount on the actual fighting on the Western Front and elsewhere.

The book will comprise a series of articles covering subjects such as the work of the Red Cross, industry and the work of women, how children viewed the war and how people adapted to the shortages, the worry, grief and the upheaval in everyday life. It will cover both the rural and the urban parts of Bromley and include the war and possibly the immediate post-war years.

If you have any family papers, reminiscences of relatives now passed or have carried out research that is relevant we would love to hear from you. There is no pressure to write an article and all original material will be copied and returned.

We have a lot of information on the VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) and Red Cross but would like to know more about what small industrial companies did for the war effort and there is a shortage of information on the munitions factories. We know there were some in Bromley borough, but where were they and what was it like to work in them?

Many women worked in the factories and in the VAD but they also drove buses and did other work. Again, has anyone researched that area?

Pictures are also very important. Do you have any illustrations or photographs of the Great War years showing the towns, villages, events and workmen and women of the Bromley area at that time?

If you can help please contact Christine Hellicar on 01689 857214 or email chris.hellicar@btinternet.com

Local Studies bid for WWI Lottery funding

Bromley Local Studies Library will also be marking the World War One centenary. They are planning a programme of events and intend to apply for Heritage Lottery Funding.

The theme is Bromley’s role in caring for casualties in WWI. It will be borough-wide, run from 2013 to 2016 and if they are not successful with the HLF bid
there will still be scaled down events on the same theme.
These will include a small touring exhibition which will start in November 2014 and go to libraries etc around the borough, running until 2016. A project with Greenwich University history students to produce a guide to WWI resources in the borough, a photographic survey of all the VAD/Red Cross sites with then and now pictures, family history workshops on WWI held in conjunction with North West Kent Family History Society and a series of talks.

There will also be a civic commemoration in March 2016 at the Canadian Cemetery at All Saints, Orpington.

BBLHS will be working with, and supporting, Local Studies on the WWI project. We will have details of the full programme of events in the December issue.

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**Bromleag** is published four times a year. The editor welcomes articles along with illustrations and photographs. These can be emailed, on disc or a paper copy.

Items remain the copyright of the authors and do not necessarily reflect Society views. Each contributor is responsible for the content of their article. Articles may be edited to meet the constraints of the journal. Articles are not always used immediately as we try to maintain a balance between research, reminiscences and news and features about different subjects and parts of the borough.

Next journal deadline — 30 October
Meetings and events
September — December 2013

Meetings are held at 7.45 pm on the first Tuesday of the month (unless otherwise stated), from September to July, at Trinity United Reformed Church, Freelands Road, Bromley.
The hall has free on and off-street parking, good public transport links and facilities for the disabled. Non-members are welcome at meetings for a nominal charge of £1.

Meetings
1 Oct  Penge Almshouses — Vanessa Williamson
5 Nov  Researching a local grave — Paul Rason
3 Dec  The landscape legacy of deer parks in West Kent — Susan Pitman

Bromley Local Studies talk
21 Oct 2.30 — 3.30 Central Library Bromley
Marshalsea: A Victorian Prison — Stephen Humphrey
One of London’s main debtors’ prisons, the Marshalsea was made famous by Charles Dickens whose father, John, was admitted there in 1824.
To book ring 020 8461 7170 or email localstudies.library@bromley.gov.uk

Scadbury Open Weekend
Sept 14 & 15 2pm — 5pm
The moated manor house site where Orpington and District Archaeological Society has been carrying out excavations over many years will be open to the public with guides

London Open House
Sept 21—23
The full programme of the 700 properties that are opening, free, is in the catalogue which is available, price £7.50 from www.londonopenhouse.org
Beckenham celebrates pioneering editor

Two new town signs were unveiled in Beckenham this summer to mark the start of improvements to Beckenham High Street. The one pictured here is at the junction of High Street and Kelsey Park Road on the ornamental gardens.

It is near the house where Tom Thornton, the campaigning editor of the *Beckenham Journal*, lived and his grand-daughter Valerie Sheldon cut the ribbon to unveil the sign. Tom Thornton was largely responsible for the council buying Kelsey Park in 1913.

In the photo is the rooftop of Thornton’s home and the tower of St George’s Church. The lych gate of the church was restored by Tom Thornton in memory of two of his sons who were killed during the First World War. Two plates on a joist in the roof of the gate show their names. The second sign is located on the Regal roundabout outside the cinema.

The sign uses the borough arms from 1935–1965. The Tudor supporters represent West Wickham and the lion comes from the Cator arms. Beckenham was in Kent, represented by Invicta, the white horse. The two white horse chestnut trees are characteristic of the town’s tree-lined roads and the wavy lines represent the rivers Beck and Chaffinch that rise in West Wickham and the Shirley Hills.

Heritage and arts events listing for Bromley

The newly formed Bromley Heritage and Arts Forum is planning to launch a website listing all the arts and heritage events in the borough.

The forum — previously known as the Heritage and Arts Group — was started earlier this year as part of the Priory Revisited Heritage Lottery Fund project. Already nearly 20 organisations — including your own society — have become members with the aim of promoting and raising awareness of what is on offer in the borough and to look at opportunities for groups to work together.
Conservation and education volunteers needed

Have you ever wanted to know how museums deal with pests, conserve fragile artefacts and decide on the right environment for storage and display? Now is your chance to find out. Bromley Museum is looking for volunteers to help with the care of its artefacts, which include the nationally important John Lubbock collection, important Roman and Saxon material from the borough and a whole host of items donated by people in Bromley.

There are also opportunities to be part of the team cataloguing, photographing and researching. The collections are all undergoing a thorough review by curator Marie-Louise Kerr as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund project. Ideally volunteers should be able to commit to half a day each week.

As well as conserving material, an important part of the museum’s work is education and there are opportunities for volunteers to help the Education Officer with formal and informal activities for children. The volunteers help with school visits, planning and setting up holiday activities, both in the museum and at other venues. Volunteers must be able to commit to two days a month.

If you would like to find out more about volunteering at the museum contact Charlotte Cranidge Charlotte.Cranidge@bromley.gov.uk or she will be happy to tell you more if you call on 01689 873826.

Priory revisited plans go on show

An exhibition of the updated plans for the £1.8 million redevelopment of Bromley Museum will go on display at The Priory in Orpington this month. The dates were not available as we went to press but will be on the BBLHS website.

A borough-wide consultation, which many of you may have contributed to, has helped the architects, interpretation designers and the development team — who will decide on the focus and activities of the museum — to amend their plans. The final bid for Heritage Lottery Funding will be made later in the year.

The consultation embraced the whole of Bromley and included heritage and arts organisations, residents’ groups, schools, and disability groups.

The key issues, over and above the focus of the museum in the future, have included accessibility, parking, toilet facilities and a cafe to bring in a wider audience and how to ensure the considerable resources of the museum are seen and enjoyed in other areas of the borough.
A tale of two villages

Our summer programme of visits included walks around two very contrasting villages — St Mary Cray, which is full of hidden historical gems but has not been treated very kindly in the 20th century, and Shoreham with its well preserved heritage which has hardly been touched by modern development.

For all their differences now, in the past they had a lot in common. Both are ancient settlements and at Domesday were attached to big neighbouring manors — Orpington and Otford respectively — held by the Church. Both lie on the upper reaches of neighbouring rivers, the Cray and the Darent, both had paper mills in the 18th century, later became important for fruit farming and, for much of their existence would have been about the same size. Now their stories are very different.

Shoreham, a jewel on the Darent

Shoreham today is picturesque and packed with visitors on sunny weekends and for those of us who have visited often it was a delight to discover the history of so many of the buildings. A chilly spring day also meant most of the other visitors had stayed away.

More than 20 members of BBLHS began the visit at Shoreham aircraft museum. After an interesting tour of the many war relics, mostly recovered from the area around the village after the Second World War, we enjoyed some warming refreshments courtesy of museum curator Geoff Nutkins, who opened specially for us. For those who might like to visit in future, a lot of information about the museum can be found on its website www.shoreham-aircraft-museum.co.uk

After lunch — there is no shortage of places to eat in Shoreham — we were taken on a guided circular walk through the village and along the river bank, finishing at the bridge where the war memorial sits by the river’s edge and from Shoreham was the first place in Kent to commemorate the First World War with a chalk cross on the hill
which the cross carved into the hillside above the village can be seen. Along the way we were shown at least two recognisable medieval hall houses and our very knowledgeable guide from the Shoreham and District Historical Society pointed out other buildings that still contain hall houses deep within centuries of additions. Along the narrow streets can be found the 15th century almshouses, the residence once rented by artist Samuel Palmer, a 17th century mill house — all that is left of the paper making industry — six public houses that originated as early taverns or beer-houses, and many Victorian houses. There are very few 20th century buildings.

The tour was completed by a visit to St Peter and St Paul’s Church with its 15th-century fine timber porch and rood screen. A tour of the village in pictures can be found on the What Was On pages of our website: www.bblhs.org.uk

There is also a picture tour of St Mary Cray on the website. This shows some of the old buildings left in the village but pictures added to the website photo page give a better flavour of the early 20th century village.

**St Mary Cray hiding among the housing estates**

Our tour of St Mary Cray began at Orpington’s Priory Gardens near the ponds that are the source of the River Cray. Tony Lathey from the St Mary Cray Action Group was our guide and he led us to the southern end of St Mary Cray, New Town.

This was built mainly in the mid 19th century for mill workers and those employed building the railway. With two huge viaducts straddling the valley at Orpington and St Mary Cray, this was a very big building project during the 1860s needing a lot of labour.

The terraces of Victorian cottages that are New Town are clustered in a block along three parallel roads — Lower, Wellington and Anglesea — leading onto the old Kent Road. In New Town there were once three of St Mary Cray’s 14 pubs and one of the village’s 13 butchers was on Kent Road. Hidden among the terraces are two very interesting buildings, a Wealden hall house on Kent Road and the 17th century South Cray Farmhouse — South Cray was the original name for St Mary Cray. Archaeological work in the area has shown evidence of both Roman and Anglo-Saxon settlement.

Our walk then took us to the start of St Mary Cray High Street, which runs for three-quarters of a mile from Kent Road to the parish church on the border with St Paul’s Cray. New Town and the southern end of the High Street are not the heart of the old village but more of the older buildings survive here. These include Rowlands, an 18th century house with a Tudor cellar, a timber framed 17th century house with 19th century additions, late Georgian Grade II-listed Latimer Court – rescued from life as a Bingo club some years ago – and some very picturesque cottages.

But three of the village’s most important buildings, which once stood on the next stretch of High Street, are gone. The Rookery (pictured on the front cover) and
Society visits and walks

Effingham Lodge (pictured below), homes of two of the Joynson family who owned the mill, and the original very impressive Temple Church which was financed by the Joynsons.

Second World War bombs, a fire and the council’s decision to redevelop the area in the 1960s has left the middle High Street with several council estates along one side and a very pleasant riverside walk along the other where once there were substantial houses, a flour mill, a brewery, rows of shops, the Roman Catholic church – which bore the brunt of a Second World War bomb — and the blacksmiths. Pictures of this area as it was before demolition are on the website.

With the help of our guide Tony, who brought along some old photos to help us
visualise the old middle High Street, we eventually came to the parish church in the upper High Street area where there are still some interesting buildings, including the old police station, now converted into housing, and the most important house of all Survey House (pictured on the previous page). Built of elm around 1500, after a fire in 1998 it was rebuilt to English Heritage standards and during work footings were discovered that date from the 12th century.

The River Cray runs parallel to the High Street and separates the old village from the main A224 and the warehouses that now cover the meadows, fruit fields and the site of the Joynson paper mill. It is no longer a pretty village but with a little imagination, a sharp eye for the hidden building treasures and help from our guide we were able to rediscover the old village that was St Mary Cray. Christine Hellicar

A labour of love — Harcourt House

It was as unexpectedly hot and sunny June day when 19 BBLHS members visited Harcourt House, the beautiful home and garden of Freda and Peter Davis in Grasmere Road, Bromley.

The house is listed by Bromley Council as being of local architectural interest and the garden has won many awards, including 2012 Best Back Garden for the London Garden Society and 2010 Garden of the Year for Kent Life. Freda gave us a brief introduction to the history of her home, illustrated with numerous photographs, and then we split into two groups to tour the house and later to enjoy a cup of tea and cake. All proceeds went to charity.

Harcourt House was built in 1887 as a family home by local architect Walter Albert Williams in what was originally the Bromley Hill Estate. The first residents, in 1890, were a family with five children and servants. The house was originally called The Glade and when used as a school between 1908 and 1940, it was known as The Glade Garden School and then Harcourt House School. During the Second World War, part of the building was used as offices for the Red Cross and in the 1950s it was converted into three flats. The Davis family bought the top floor flat in 1981 and shortly thereafter they acquired those on the middle and ground floors. Since then, they have spent much time, hard work and enthusiasm on restoring their home to its original Victorian glory.

The house has 24 rooms over four floors, including the cellars, and BBLHS members were able to tour the ground floor. It has been lovingly restored by exposing previously covered fireplaces, by replacing the staircase and by reproducing the style of original cornices, corbels and stained glass where they had been removed.
or damaged. Freda and Peter have expended much energy in sourcing reclaimed radiators, fire surrounds, balustrades and a chandelier, and have furnished their home with many antiques, particularly antique clocks, the oldest of which is dated at 1680. The original conservatory was in ruins and was rebuilt in a Victorian style such that it complements the house perfectly and forms a link between the house and the garden.

The tranquil garden is a delight. When they first moved in, Peter owned a traction ploughing engine, which is now called The Prince and is housed in Hampshire Steam Museum at Liphook, Hampshire. When he gave this up, Freda took over the garden and developed it to a very high standard. It comprises paved walkways, structured flower beds, containers, water features and seating areas. Further interest is added by antique statues and French lampposts. The planting is largely trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses and box hedging and is a delight to explore and to sit in contemplation. It is part of the National Gardens Scheme and a visit is highly recommended. **Valerie Stealey**

The gardens are featured on Freda’s website: www.fredasgarden.co.uk and pictures from our visit can be seen on the society’s web pages.

* **A report on our summer visit to Shirley Windmill will appear in the next edition of Bromleag.**
Bromley and the Ravensbourne

Access to water is always important for the development of settlements and although Bromley sits on the hill above the River Ravensbourne we learnt from our June speaker, Paul Rainey, how the river and the easy access to wells influenced the development of the town.

The river, which is 11 miles long, begins its life in three streams, two originating from Hayes and Croydon and the main one from Keston where it comes to the surface in Caesars Well above Keston Ponds. They converge “under St Mark’s Church” at Bromley South which has made the area flood-prone in the past. Today the river flows on in pipes and culverts through Bromley and Lewisham and joins the River Thames at Deptford Creek.

Paul set out the geology of the water course and then focused on the three important sites in Bromley where the water rises to the surface.

The Civic Centre gardens were once the site of St Blaise’s Well. With its Chalybeat properties (containing traces of iron) the well first became a place of pilgrimage in the 14th century when the property was held by the Bishop of Rochester.

Lost after the Reformation, the well was rediscovered in the mid 18th century and the waters became renowned for their healing properties.

Paul said it was claimed that “drunk daily the waters were better than Tunbridge Wells water”. The lake that is now in the Civic Centre gardens was also once a fish pond and moat for the bishop’s palace.

The second place where the water rises is in Church Gardens. Today there is only one lake but once there were three, and lastly the most important site in Bromley is the lake below the gardens, Glassmill Lake which sits on the Ravensbourne. A mill at Bromley is recorded in the Domesday Book and it is likely to have been on this site.
Its early use was to grind corn but in 1742 that mill was demolished and a new owner, Lord Saye, built a paper mill which operated for 50 years until it went bankrupt. For a short time at the turn of the 19th century it became a glass mill. Owned by Lord Gwydir, it was used by Thomas Ribright, an artist and oculist from London. The next tenant was also a glassmaker and the mill was used for grinding and polishing mirrors and lenses from one to five feet in diameter, both convex and concave. But by 1832 it closed, the mill was demolished and Glassmill Lake became part of a private residence.

Lakes, wells and businesses came and went through the centuries without changing the lives of most Bromley residents. Anyone in the town could get water by building a well 15-20 feet deep. Then in 1865 the Shortlands Water Works was built and great water debate gripped the town.

The prevailing mood of many people was, Paul said: “Why would anyone be foolish enough to buy water when they can get it free by digging a well?” An outbreak of cholera four years later helped change minds when free standpipes were set up to ensure clean water was available and people did not have to use contaminated wells.

Sewage in the rapidly expanding town was a big problem and for many years the Local Board prevaricated at the cost of solving it. [Bromley not so clean and green].

Eventually Bromley was joined up to the 58,000 feet long, 6ft high and 4ft wide West Kent sewer which ran from Southend, just over the border in Lewisham, to Dartford where it was joined by another sewer coming in from Orpington.

The abstraction of water for piped supplies affected the Ravensbourne and groundwater levels fell, marking the end of the water meadows that had bordered the Ravensbourne at Bromley — a fact lamented by HG Wells, who grew up in Bromley, in an article to the Pall Mall Gazette in 1894.

Paul quoted from this article in which Wells painted a word picture of an idyllic landscape in the 1870s: “On one bank was a broad flat meadow and a footpath near the edge ... along the river edge was a tangle of peculiar growths, sedge, sapphire, forget-me-nots, floating leaves with pink flowers, cress in quieter places and waving green forests of waterweed among the stones. Here especially the fishes lurked, water beetles and water boatmen and quick, spider-like things that ran over the surface.”

Wells then recalls the same area 20 years later: “The little trickle of water is still running but most of the bed of the river is dry. There are hats in it, in all stages of decay, old boots, rusty relics of meat tins, kettles and broken pails ... the banks are now dusty and dry ... It was hard to believe that ever a minnow lived in that arid desolation.”

What would he have made of today’s Ravensbourne in concrete culverts and formal lakes set in the manicured gardens? **Christine Hellicar**
The pioneering health farm of Bromley Common

Len Smith has sent me information on Mary Langman and the pioneering farm she worked at Oakley House after the Second World War. During the war the farm was run by the Mothers’ Auxiliary Yeoman Service but was known as “Misery Farm” after the words of the Service’s signature song whose first lines were: “We’re miserable, so miserable; Down on Misery Farm.” Though as far as we know it was anything but a miserable place to be in the war years.

I will be passing the information onto Sophie Greenway, an MA student, who contacted our website to ask if anyone had information on the farm. Mary Langman was one of the first organic farmers in Britain and a champion of alternative sustainable agriculture at a time when it was dismissed by many as “muck and magic”. She was also a founder member of the Soil Association.

Before the war she was involved with the Peckham Experiment set up in 1935 by two doctors to study the effects of diet and exercise on health. Mary was their secretary. The Peckham Experiment stopped during the war but mothers and children from Peckham, South London, whose husbands and fathers were in France, were evacuated to Bromley Common during the war along with doctors and organisers of the Peckham Health Centre, where the experiment had been based. Each woman had a job in the house and on the farm. Husbands on leave or not in the services had weekend jobs on the farm.

It is not clear if they were evacuated to Oakley House or to the separate Oakley Farm building as the RAF occupied the house for part of the war and later it was taken over by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines as a rehab centre for injured troops.

In 1994 the late Denise Rason, then editor of Bromleage, was given photographs and articles about the farm by a neighbour, who had been there briefly during the war, and copies of these are in Bromley Local Studies Library.

For two decades after the war Mary Langman — who had not been there during the war — looked after Oakley Farm, which covered 125 acres and included a herd of 45 Jersey cows and a two-acre market garden. She grew and supplied organic produce for the Peckham Experiment, which started up again after the war, until it came to an end in 1955. Ten years later, when the tenancy on Oakley Farm ran out, Mary moved back to London and opened the first organic food shop in London.

Another of our members, Brian Williamson, remembers the Peckham Experiment from when his family lived in Peckham: “It was [based in] a big building, all concrete and glass on the New Cross side of Peckham. I understood that the “Experiment” was to investigate whether happy families were healthier than others — a sort of follow-up to watching lab rats! “We (Mum, Dad, big brother and I) had medical examinations
and were allowed to go to the centre and use the equipment there. The only stipulation was that you had to fill in a form for everything you used. I was 11 or 12, and was allowed to go by myself. The Centre closed down when I was 12 or so.

I remember that a film was made about the time it closed, which had an opening sequence of a tram ride to Peckham. By the time the film was ready the trams had ceased running.”

Maternity Hospital founded for WWI soldiers’ wives

A history of the Bromley, Chislehurst and District Maternity Hospital has been found by Loraine Budge of Bromley Local Studies Library. In our March edition two Australians — who had both been born in the hospital — wondered if any of our members knew any more about the building.

The history features in a 1936 guide to the hospital for mums-to-be. It started life in 1917 when the VAD hospital at Brackenhill, Highland Road, Bromley, needed to provide better maternity provision.

The guide tells us: “A small Committee of ladies was therefore set up and Burlington House was rented, and the first year some 47 patients were received ... many of them the wives of officers and soldiers who had no home in which they could be properly nursed.

“The work grew apace and large sums had to be spent on repairs and decorations and improving facilities.”

After the war the hospital continued and energetic fundraising allowed the committee to buy the property for £1,300 and the freehold for £650. Plans to expand the hospital had to be scaled back after the financial crisis of 1931 but with £1,800 in hand they decided to do a smaller extension, redecorate and improve facilities.

But within a few years “the increasing applications for admittance from would-be patients, both from Bromley and the surrounding districts, made it necessary for the full extension — providing seven extra beds ... the Hospital is, now fully equipped with two labour wards, nurseries, ward kitchen and accommodation for 19 beds”.

The guide does not reveal the criteria for admittance but it was clearly difficult to get a place in the hospital because it ends by saying: “The call on the beds from a widely extended area is an urgent one, and in the last 12 months over 100 cases have had to be refused. The committee are therefore considering further extension.”

Whether the good people of Bromley continued to fund the hospital until it was absorbed into the NHS in 1948 is not known, nor whether it continued as a maternity hospital until its demolition in 1983.
Eleanor Marx and her links with the area

The publisher George Allen bought a property, Sunnyside, off Tubbenden Lane, Orpington, and is likely to be the publisher referred to in the article on Eleanor Marx in June’s Bromleag.

On the internet there is a long illustrated article about the history of Sunnyside and the Allen connection, with location map. We can’t at present make a direct connection with George Allen and Eleanor Marx, but this might be a start. http://www.georgeallen.co.uk/sunnyside.html

Susan Pittman

I saw the piece on Eleanor Marx in Bromleag. I can’t shed much light on why she was in Green Street Green but there is this internet link about her home in Sydenham: http://sydenhamforesthillhistory.blogspot.co.uk/2008/11/blue-plaque-for-eleanor-marx.html

It just piqued my interest. H G Wells, of course, was a socialist, though he was based in Bromley 1866-1879, so would have been too young to mix with Eleanor and didn’t become a anti-marxist socialist until much later. We also had Prince Peter Kropotkin, the Russian anarchist/communist, living in Bromley 1896-1907. Marx and Kropotkin were both communists, but with very different approaches so I suspect the two would not have been close family friends who would have encouraged Eleanor to move to the area. Very interesting to see these political connections with local link!

Marie-Louise Kerr, Curator, Bromley Museum

There was an article about Sunnyside by Simon Finch in the September 2008 edition of Bromleag. Kropotkin and his time in Bromley is explored in an article by Michael Rawcliffe on Page 21 of this edition. Ed

Website query — Second World War remains sought

I am about to start research on what remains of WWII buildings in Bromley and West Wickham and the surrounding area and would like to collect photos of anything that remains, it could be something small like a sign or the foundations of an important building used at the time. If anyone knows of anything interesting that I can visit and photograph I would be most grateful. Are there any air raid sirens or Anderson shelters left in the borough?

Paul Masters — contact direct through the website or via the editor.

Why not have a look at “Questions and Answers” pages on our website to see if you have the vital information researchers are looking for or take part in online discussions www.bblhs.org.uk
We recently received an email asking some questions about Chislehurst. One in particular was about “Kangaroo Walk”. Never having heard of it, I had a look in the library to discover more and found a report in the Bromley Record for 1 February 1890:

The state of “Kangaroo Cage Walk”. At a meeting of the Rural Sanitary Authority recently, Mr. Gedney called attention to the disgraceful state of the path known as the “Kangaroo Cage”, leading through Camden Park to Chislehurst Common.

Mr Strode, the owner of Camden, put a high fence, to shut the public in a narrow path. It was much used by the residents of Bromley, especially since the opening up of Camden Park, and was a short cut to Chislehurst. He was not exaggerating when he said there was from twelve to fifteen inches of clay like batter-pudding, and the worst of it was that the fence was too strong to break down – at least he could not do it. He thought, however, it was quite within the province of this Board to take action, for he believed an indictment of a nuisance could be obtained against Mr Strode. – Mr Willis: He is dead. – Mr Gedney: I know; but his executors are worse than he was. – Mr Willis said the affairs of the estate appeared to be in a strange way. Mrs Strode had married again, and her husband, Mr Adcock, had no power to act in the matter. Camden house was shut up, and the whole place going to rack and ruin. It would be no use to apply either to Mrs Strode or to Mr Adcock. – Mr Gedney said the law fixed the responsibility upon the person liable. – Mr Filmer mentioned a similar case which came to his notice elsewhere, and in that instance the path was inclosed because the public would not keep to the footway – (Mr Willis: The same here) – but the owner had to make a good gravel path. – The Chairman thought it was very unwise of the owners not to put the path in order, and so avoid all trouble. The subject had better be referred to the Parochial Committee. – Mr Willis: We’ve had quite enough of it at the Parochial Committee, Sir John. (Sir John Farnaby Lennard) – The Chairman pointed out that that must be the first course to take before the Authority could move. – The matter was then referred to the Parochial Committee.

The path used to run from opposite the White Cottage, just above the Imperial Arms in Old Hill, parallel with what is now Raggleswood (across the former wood of that name) and then at a slight curve towards Yester Road. A line of trees now appears to mark much of its course and it is recorded on the map as Footpath 38. The original path was nearly 1000 metres and was so reported in 1952 in a survey of public rights of way under the Countryside Act of 1949. However, by 1971 it had been reduced to 810m and by 1976, to 552m, its present length. The path appears to date...
back a considerable time but presumably lost much of its value once Lubbock Road was built. In 1952 it was still “unmade” but had acquired a gravel surface by the 1970s.

The tantalising report of the Bromley Rural Sanitary Committee raises more questions than answers, however, so let us first paint a little background. The Camden estate was named originally after William Camden (b.1551), an Elizabethan historian now buried in Westminster Abbey. It subsequently passed through various hands including, from 1765, those of Charles Pratt, who wisely perhaps when ennobled called himself Baron Camden of Chislehurst. The property, basically all the land in Chislehurst to the north of Old Hill, was purchased in 1860 by Nathaniel William John Strode (1816-89), a man of somewhat obscure wealth, who did much to improve the estate and, in 1872, at the age of 65, married a Miss Eleanor Courtney. As mentioned above, after Nathaniel’s death, she married G F Adcock of Paignton in Devon. After she left the property and her son went into the Army, it appears the property fell on hard times and became a golf club in 1894.

As is well known, from 1870 until his death in 1873, it was the home of the deposed Emperor Napoleon III and his wife Eugenie, who stayed there until 1881, two years after her only son, the Prince Imperial, was killed in South Africa. It appears that
Napoleon had stayed at Camden Place in the 1830s, when owned by the Roach family, which may have influenced his choice of exile home.

Mr Strode would seem to have benefited to the tune of 900,000 francs but, because his presence embarrassed the Emperor, had to move to his other local property, Cranmore Place. Strode had been developing the area now known as Lower Camden from the late 1860s, perhaps needing the money after spending a great deal on Camden Place, including furniture and fittings from an old French chateau.

Developments included Christchurch, Lubbock Road, the Methodist Church and Prince Imperial Road between 1868 and 1872. But this still leaves the puzzle of Kangaroo Walk or, as it had been known at one time, Pussy Foot or Pussyfoot Walk! It is fairly unusual for rural footpaths to have a name; to have two seems quite odd. Clearly the Kangaroo name cannot be that old as the animal was only identified to the Western world in 1770, by Captain Cook.

As the original correspondent pointed out, nearby Frognal Manor was the home of the Townshend family, where Thomas Townshend as Minister of War and later Home Secretary became better known from 1783 as Baron Sydney (after a female family name), later Viscount Sydney and after whom an obscure cove in south east Australia was named by Captain Arthur Phillip who set up the first penal colony there.

Subsequently, John Townshend, the 3rd Viscount became the First (and last) Earl Sydney (1805-90) in 1874, and held various posts including Lord Chamberlain and Lord Lieutenant of Kent. So, we finally have an Australian connection, albeit on a property two miles away. Nearby Botany Bay Lane also has obvious connections and perhaps Adelaide Road, off Red Hill, but none of them is very near Frognal Manor. But calling local roads after or because of local dignitaries is not quite the same as naming a muddy path, formally at least. So was the use of the name Kangaroo some sort of local joke, and particularly why Kangaroo Cage? There were certainly other Australian connections as on Friday 7 October 1870, at the Fruit, Flowers and Vegetable exhibition in the Village Hall, “a lady” showed a “nest of Australian Paroquets” which had been hatched in Chislehurst. So, if birds, why not marsupials? It would be really nice to know the answer – can anyone help?

Sources
Bromley Record November 1870, August 1886, February 1890
Bromley News Shopper September 2000
Biographical and other material held by Bromley Local Studies
Footpaths based on LBOB definitive public rights of way 1976
Map based on OS, drawn by JC Fergusson October 1982
Kropotkin was a man of many parts — zoologist, explorer, and geographer and, interestingly for a prince, an anarchist.

In 1862 he joined the army and explored parts of Manchuria and Siberia as Russia sought to expand in the Far East. Later he became secretary of the Russian Geographical Society. In 1867 he quit the army and went to university in St Petersburg. There he became linked with the revolutionary movements. In 1874 he was arrested and sent to the notorious jail in the St Peter and St Paul fortress. Two years later, just before his trial, he managed to escape to England. In the following years he visited several other European countries and developed his anarchist ideas.

Like his contemporaries, Herzen and Bakunin, Kropotkin settled in London, first living in Boxborough Road, Harrow, and then Woodhurst Road, Acton, before moving to Bromley. In 1886 he rented a semi-detached villa, 6 Crescent Road, Plaistow. Crescent Road had been built over the years from the 1860s by the People’s Freehold Society, which was based in Greenwich. The Society aimed to build houses that would give the owners the vote, as there was still a property qualification for parliamentary elections at that time. The houses were to be sold at not less than £450. The cheapest villas were enhanced by classical stonework facing around the doors, giving an added veneer of respectability and prestige. They were initially bought by prosperous traders and shopkeepers.

In the 1901 census the Kropotkin household was listed as follows: Peter Kropotkin, head of household, 59, born Russia; Sophie Kropotkin, wife, 44, born Russia; Alexandra, daughter, 13, born Harrow and Mariendeman (sic), servant, 19, born Belgium

While opposed to Communism, Kropotkin returned to Russia when the Bolsheviks...
seized power in 1917. He was offered the post of Commissar [Minister] of Education, which he refused as it violated his anarchist principles. He soon became opposed to the revolutionary violence of the new regime under Lenin.


Surprisingly, in spite of his opposition to Communism the Anarchists were allowed to parade at his funeral in 1921. This was to be the last time a non-Communist parade took place in Russia until the late 1980s.

In the 1970s the Observer newspaper carried an article by its architectural correspondent poking gentle fun at “true blue Bromley” which had recommended that a Blue Plaque should be placed at Kropotkin’s house in Crescent Road. The correspondent’s first enquiries to Bromley Council resulted in him being asked whether he was confusing Bromley with Bromley-by-Bow. Later it was admitted that Bromley had “simply passed on the prince’s nomination on behalf of a local resident”.

Kropotkin was a famous Russian exile who while in Bromley had written his book on a gradualist theory of anarchism. While in England he was in contact with William Morris and other members of the Socialist League.

In retrospect he probably deserves the Blue Plaque alongside other exiles to the borough, such as Napoleon III, Emperor of France, and General de Gaulle.
The Darwins and the Pitch and Toss case

This article is based on original correspondence from the great grandson of Charles Darwin, Randal Keynes, and further research by Geoffrey Copus and Christine Hellicar

In the dying days of the summer of 1870 the newspapers were full of details of the Franco Prussian war. In Kent the hop-gatherers were arriving for the harvest and the fine weather was attracting “excursionists” from London.

A letter to The Times had protested that at Guildford Assizes a labourer called Mahoney had only received an eight-month sentence for abusing and killing his wife.

But, at the end of August, in among the reports of carnage on the Continent the magistrates of Orpington found themselves in the headlines.

First they handed out a rather harsher form of justice than judges in Guildford, giving an “excursionist” one month’s hard labour for the theft of damson plums worth 8d from a garden.

Then they sentenced carter Stephen Holder to two months’ hard labour for playing pitch and toss on a Sunday. That “over-the-top” punishment was to propel them on to the front pages of the national press and give Stephen a very high-profile champion, Charles Darwin — a championship that was to upset Emma Darwin when the press blurred the lines between what was private and what was public.

The case was reported at length in the Bromley Record and Bromley Telegraph but it also caught the eye of the editor of a national publication, The Echo. She was Frances Power Cobbe, a writer who is remembered today as a social reformer, feminist theorist, pioneer animal rights activist and one of the most influential figures in the British Unitarian movement at that time.

On Friday 18 August the second editorial on the front page was entitled Even-handed Justice. It summed up the Holder case and the outrage at the magistrates’ sentence:

“Are we to assume it is as a thing settled that offences are to be punished in England in the inverse ratio of their atrocity? In the past week two monstrous instances of unequal justice have come before us, and, even in the midst of all the excitement of the hour, we must ask our readers to pause for a moment and consider them. If nothing can be done to add to the trifling punishment of the great offender [Mahoney] something may be found possible to alleviate the heavy penalty allotted to the comparatively innocent delinquent. [Holder].

23 Bromleag September 2013
“Stephen Holder was a carter in the service of Mr Groombridge of Orpington. By the witness of the sergeant of police he ‘bore a very good character’ and ‘there was nothing against him till last Sunday [13 August]’. According to his own account he went on that day to a part of his parish called Cock Manning, to feed his master’s horses. On his way home he saw a dozen men playing at pitch-and-toss. Holder couldn’t join them at play as he avers, having left all his money in his master’s hands on Saturday night for a particular purpose. Be that as it may, he stood by and watched the game.

“Presently a policeman appeared, and the original players ran away and escaped. Holder was caught, and brought up on Monday before the Bromley magistrates, charged with the offence of playing pitch-and-toss. He told his tale, and Sergeant Higgins witnessed to his blameless character, and then sentence was passed on him by Colonel Lennard, Mr W Waring, and Mr R B Berens.

“Perhaps it will be taken for granted that it was merely a caution for the future not to ‘walk in sinners’ ways’ on Sundays, or at most a fine of half a crown for a breach of a law obviously meant to punish professional sharpers, and not their victims? Very different was the judgement of these three worshipful gentlemen of Bromley. They committed Holder to prison for two months with hard labour; and added that if he came before them again, they would sentence him to three months of the same. No wonder that, there was, as we are told, ‘sensation in the court’, and that poor Stephen Holder ‘appeared overwhelmed,’ and implored the Chairman not to send him to prison.

“The Minos, Rhadamanthus and Aeacus of Bromley were inexorable, and the carter who last week honestly earned his bread, with a character free from stain, is at this moment undergoing all the shame and degradation of a prisoner sentenced to hard labour – perhaps never again to hold up his head in the world. ... we have no hesitation in designating Holder’s punishment as one of the worst acts of magisterial tyranny that ever disgraced a bench of English gentlemen.”

The magistrates in the case were all stalwarts of Bromley and Orpington society: A Lord of the Manor, Colonel John Farnaby Lennard of Wickham Court, West Wickham; William Waring of Woodlands, Chelsfield, also a Lord of the Manor, and Richard Benyon Berens of Kevington, the third Lord of the Manor and principal land-owner in St Mary Cray. Charles Darwin had sat on the bench with all three men in the early 1860s and was known to have corresponded with William Waring at least until 1874. Darwin disagreed with their sentence and took up Stephen Holder’s case with the Home Secretary, Henry Austin Bruce. A letter from Darwin to the Home Secretary about Holder is recorded as being received before 19 August. Unfortunately, the contents of Darwin’s letter to the Home Secretary have not survived. While it is not
known if Darwin was acquainted with the Home Secretary, Bruce did know John Lubbock, Darwin’s close friend and neighbour.

Miss Cobbe was also among Charles and Emma Darwin’s correspondents, they shared botanical interests and corresponded about Trapaeolum [nasturtiums]. He wrote her a personal letter about the Holder case which included the following:

“We [Emma and Charles Darwin] are both quite delighted with your admirable & most just article. Your editors have more power with your strong right arm than the Knights of old, in righting the oppressed. Will you be so kind as to put my name down for 1£, or (whichever you think best) my name for 10s & my wife’s for 10s. (Charles Darwin of Down Beckenham Kent)”

Five days later the private letter had been transformed into a more public document and appeared in The Echo on 25 August:

“To the Editor of The Echo, I have read your admirable and most just article on ‘Even-handed Justice’ and beg to say that if anyone who sympathises in the case be disposed to open a subscription for the benefit of Stephen Holder, I shall be happy to contribute to it £1. –

I am, Sir, yours etc., Charles Darwin Down, Beckenham, Kent
By now the “Pitch-and-Toss” case had made the very influential Illustrated London News. On 27 August, the somewhat sarcastic comment column read:

“The Bromley magistrates had better explain this pitch-and-toss case ... we may properly ask whether a man of decent character has been sent to prison for two months for playing pitch-and-toss on a Sunday, he protesting his innocence, and having been convicted on the evidence of a single witness. Of his frightful crime, if he committed it, of course it is impossible to speak with too much ferocity of language, though one has heard of most respectable people playing at cards on Sunday evenings (to be sure it was when they were travelling on the Continent, and this makes a difference); but two months, with hard labour, is more than is got by an ordinary ruffian who has half killed his wife.”

Three days later the Home Office replied to Charles Darwin’s letter to tell him that the remainder of Stephen Holder’s sentence had been remitted. Again, unfortunately, the actual letter has not survived.

The Illustrated London News carried on being “outraged” up until 10 September 1870:

“The Bromley magistrates did not comply with the invitation of the press to explain why a decent man had been sentenced to a severe imprisonment for alleged playing at pitch-and-toss on a Sunday; but the Home Secretary has, I read, remitted the sentence and released the man. This implies, of course, that the Bromley magistrates did a wrong thing; and there is an addition to the score of those who count judicial blunders. It is to be regretted that such is the case, not only because a vulgar prejudice against unpaid magistrates is strengthened, but because the hands of those who believe such magistrates to be most valuable are weakened. It would have been better to confess manfully to a mistake.”

Miss Cobbe and the Darwins

At this point the press lost interest and Stephen Holder faded into history but Miss Cobbe’s appropriation of a private letter for her newspaper had not gone down well with Emma Darwin and was still a matter of concern many years later.

Even before Holder’s reprieve Emma wrote to her daughter Henrietta Litchfield: “We are rather dismayed at a note from Miss Cobbe, saying that the Ed. & she are so much pleased at F’s approval of her article that they have published his note to her, which is quite unjustifiable & he is rather alarmed at what strong expressions he may have used about the mags. It makes us feel a little flat that Stephen Holder shd have been in prison before. Here is Parslow’s acct. The master keeping his place open is the best voucher for his character however.”

More than 20 years later in 1894 Emma Darwin was still aggrieved by the matter.
Miss Cobbe when writing her autobiography wrote to Emma Darwin asking permission to include the correspondence about Stephen Holder.

In Emma Darwin: A century of letters Henrietta says:
“Miss Cobbe was then the editor of the Echo, the newspaper in which the case had been brought forward. Without asking for permission, she changed the opening of this letter from ‘dear Miss Cobbe’ into ‘Sir,’ cut out, without putting omission marks, all those sentences which would show that it was a private letter to a friend, and then published this travesty of his letter in the Echo above his signature. All readers would suppose that my father had addressed it expressly to that paper for publication. “He took no steps in the matter, though on further enquiry he found that there had been no harshness and that there was no miscarriage of justice. ... the effort to decide what to do as to Miss Cobbe’s request harassed my mother very much.”

Emma Darwin did not give her consent and The Life of Frances Power Cobbe by herself has reference to correspondence with Darwin about Tropaeolum but no mention is made of the Holder case.

This correspondence does reveal that Stephen Holder was not quite such an innocent, having been in prison before. But his master keeping open his place and Sergeant Higgins stating he was “a blameless character” do not mark him out as a villain. Maybe that was why Emma Darwin said her father subsequently found there had been no miscarriage of justice.

The life of Stephen Holder
This incident was just a minor one recorded in the full and public life of Charles Darwin, but there is little else to mark the life of young Stephen Holder.

He was born in Islington in 1847 and came to the Orpington area with his parents when he was a young boy. At 14 the family, which by then included a three-year-old sister, Emily, were living in St Mary Cray and Stephen was working in the paper mill.

His father, also Stephen, a jobbing gardener, had a brush with the law in 1859 charged with stealing a mattock from his employer. His defence that the mattock had
only been borrowed was believed and the case was dismissed. Two years later, either Stephen or his father was fined for stealing rabbits at Chelsfield.

But in July 1868 young Stephen was definitely in trouble when he served three months’ hard labour in Maidstone prison for stealing 25lbs of lead from the Cray Gas Company. According to the Maidstone Telegraph: “When Holder was apprehended he said to the policeman: ‘I’m into it; it’s no use telling a lie, I took it.’”.

Taken back by his employer George Groombridge, after the pitch-and-toss case, the goodwill was not to last. He was indicted for embezzling 5s 6d, the money of George Groombridge, his master, at Orpington, in December 1873.

He appeared at Maidstone Assizes in March 1874. The evidence showed he was employed by Groombridge to deliver brooms, his duty being to account for money received during the day when he came home at night. The South Eastern Gazette reported: “One of his master’s customers paid the prisoner 5s 6d, for which he gave a receipt, through he did not account for the money to Mr Groombridge. The jury found the prisoner Not Guilty”.

Stephen appeared in court once more in 1875 but this time he was the innocent party when a Herbert Sampson was fined for assaulting Stephen. After that he appears to have stayed out of trouble.

His sister Emily married and moved to Otford but Stephen remained with his father in St Mary Cray and in 1891, at 42, was still single. His father died in the Farnborough workhouse in 1902. But, on his own, Stephen seems to have avoided the 1901 and 1911 census and the final record found for him is his death in the Orpington area in 1937 at the age of 89.

Sources

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Emma Darwin. A century of family letters 1904 by Henrietta Litchfield
Census records 1861-1911
The name Sir John Lubbock may not immediately spring to mind as a Chislehurst hero of the 19th century. However, we have a lot to be grateful to him for and this year, the centenary of his death, we should remember and celebrate his name.

Lubbock Road, Chislehurst, is where the great man lived, very happily, with his first wife Ellen and young family for four years from 1861. Sir John was already familiar with Chislehurst, aware of the Roman archaeological finds in a quarry in 1857 near where Hatton Court stands today, certainly a visitor to the caves, where he etched his name in a smoky section of chalk, and was a regular left-handed batsman and demon bowler for West Kent Cricket Club on the common at the top of Old Hill.

The family, made up of five children during the Chislehurst years, with Norman and Gertrude born in Chislehurst in December 1861 and February 1863 respectively, moved into a substantial detached house called Lamas, pictured below, named after the family seat near Cromer in North Norfolk. The house stood where 103-105 Lubbock Road stands today, behind two — but at that time four — brick gateposts. The road was then a gated cul-de-sac, just a muddy track known as New Road with a
footpath down to the quarry at the western end, where a converted stable block, originally built for William Willett [of daylight saving fame], now stands. Lamas had a large flight of steps up to the front door and the Lubbocks did a lot of entertaining. Imagine the scene, sitting on the steps facing the sunset with no church spire of St George’s, Bickley (built in 1865), no church bells pealing from Christchurch (1872) and no houses opposite, where Sandy Ridge and the Vicarage now stand. Peace!

Initially Sir John rented the house from Nathaniel John William Strode of Camden Park before buying the freehold. Sir John and his wife entertained the eminent scientists of the day, known as The X Club. These were academic liberals, united by “a devotion to science, pure and free, untrammelled by religious dogma”. Fiercely enamoured of Darwin’s theories of natural selection, they were Thomas Huxley, George Busk, Edward Frankland, Joseph Hooker, Herbert Spencer, William Spottiswoode and John Tyndall.

On the death of his father in July 1865, Sir John, as he then became, left this house and returned to the local family seat at High Elms, Farnborough, Kent.

**Lubbock’s career**

Lubbock was an accomplished amateur man of science, publishing eminent works of archaeology and entomology which were best-sellers around the world. Lubbock Road was named in 1865 in honour of the publication of his seminal and popular book *Prehistoric Times*, published from Lamas.

He was a very successful author; his book *The Use of Life* is a series of chapters full of wise words of kindly philosophy. Sir John published a list of 100 books in 1896 that he felt were “worth reading”. The Bible is top of the list. He was an earnest social reformer and employment rights campaigner and a very successful banker, but most significantly the most successful law-maker of his time.

When you visit an ancient monument, walk in open spaces, visit a public library or write a cheque, be grateful to Sir John Lubbock for he introduced the Acts of Parliament that enabled these developments. But most of all when you enjoy a day
with your family away from work on a Bank Holiday you should recall Sir John. As a banker himself, he wanted his staff to enjoy some hard-earned days of “repose and recreation” but he always intended Bank Holidays to be universal in their appeal. The days were so much appreciated that initially they were known as St Lubbock’s Days. Given the bad press banks receive today, there was a call in parliament recently to return to this soubriquet!

**English heritage pioneer**

Sir John was a forthright campaigner for the protection of ancient monuments. His title Lord Avebury comes from the circle of Neolithic stones in Wiltshire that he bought to prevent their destruction by local builders.

In passing the 1882 Ancient Monument Protection Act, he appointed his father-in-law, General Augustus Lane Fox Pitt-Rivers, as the first Inspector of Ancient Monuments. Kits Coty in Kent was the first site to come under the guardianship of the Act. However, the Act had no “teeth” and it was not until the later Consolidation and Amendments Act of 1913, supported by Lord Curzon, that it became a national duty to conserve and protect our ancient monuments.

It is especially satisfying that Lord Avebury lived to see its passing, though not its Royal Assent. The centenary of this landmark Act was commemorated this year by English Heritage with an exhibition in the Quadriga Gallery of the Wellington Arch in central London. Lubbock’s work in relation to archaeology and heritage can be seen locally at The Priory Museum, Orpington.

Overall, it would be hard to name anyone who did more useful things, in more fields and yet won less lasting fame for it. Lord Avebury died on 28 May 1913, having predicted and worked tirelessly to prevent the Great War, and his name rather disappeared along with that extraordinary Victorian era.

But his legacy lives on in the Liberal parliamentary family of Lord Avebury (he who won the famous Orpington by-election over 50 years ago) and in the wonderful BEECHE Centre at High Elms. The mansion no longer stands, it burned to the ground in 1967 on August Bank Holiday.

Joanna is writing a book on the history of Lubbock Road entitled *Fortune and Distinction*. **Sir John Lubbock is just one of the many illustrious characters whose stories will be told.**

She is the heritage representative on the Executive Committee of the Chislehurst Society and warmly welcomes any information, anecdotes and questions you may have on Chislehurst history. **Contact her at joanna.friel@yahoo.co.uk**
Bromley Local History Society

Registered Charity No 273963

History is continually being made and at the same time destroyed, buildings are altered or demolished, memories fade and people pass away, records get destroyed or thrown in the bin.

BBLHS was formed in 1974 so that those with an interest in the history of any part of the borough could meet to exchange information and learn more about Bromley’s history.

We aim, in co-operation with the Local Studies Library, museums and other relevant organisations, to make sure at least some of this history is preserved for future generations.

We hold regular meetings and produce a newsletter and occasional publications where members can publish their research.

The society covers all those areas that are within the present-day London Borough of Bromley and includes:

- Anerley
- Beckenham
- Bickley
- Biggin Hill
- Bromley
- Chelsfield
- Chislehurst
- Coney Hall
- Cudham
- Downe
- Farnborough
- Green Street Green
- Hayes
- Keston
- Leaves Green
- Mottingham
- Orpington
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