

COSMO

Creating
opportunities
for
participation
and
recovery

Written by users of Lewisham mental health services • Issue 13 • Spring 2012

Luscious Lewisham

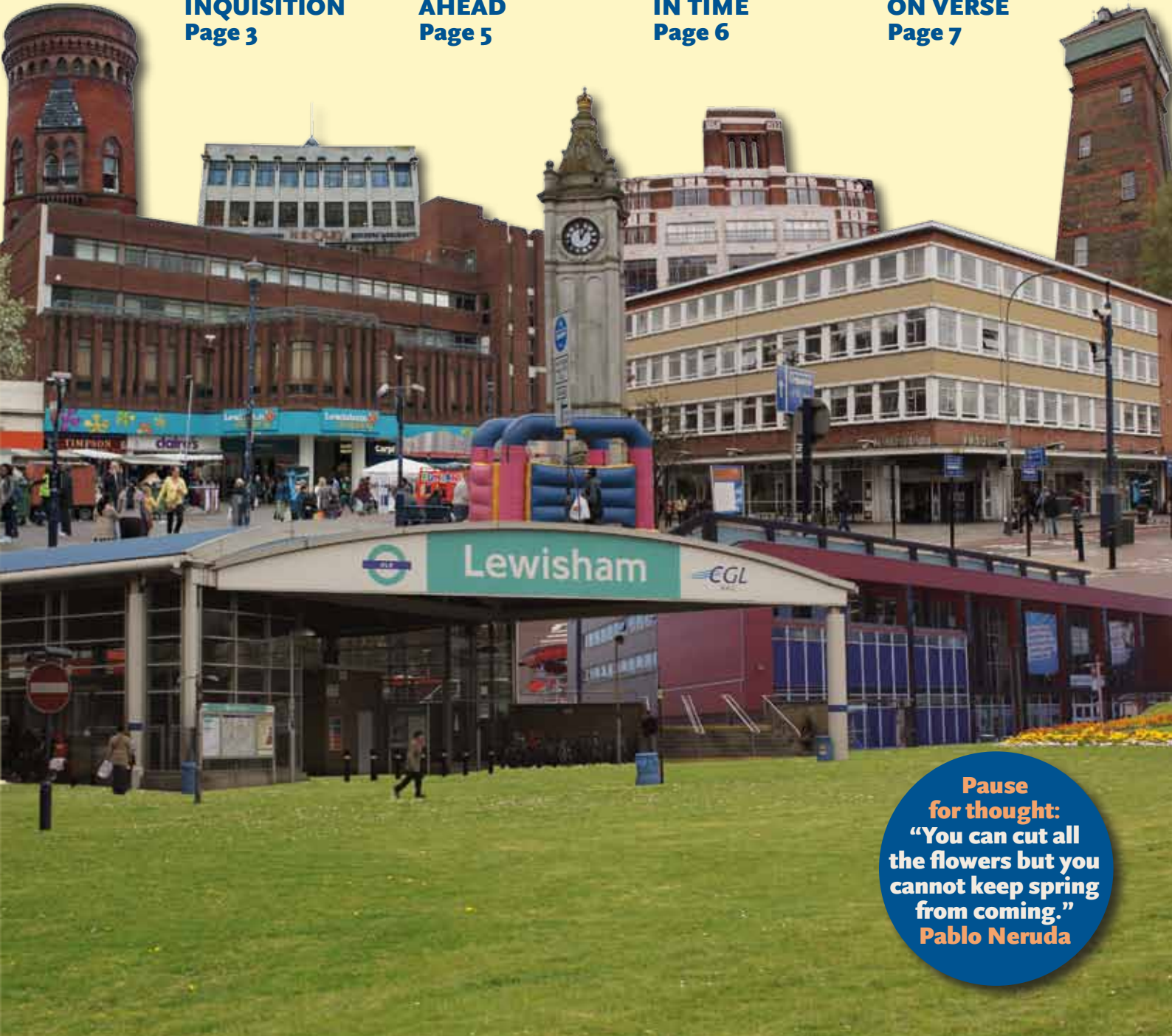
The beating heart of the Borough –
five steps to wellbeing in Ladywell and Lewisham

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**Pause
for thought:**
“You can cut all
the flowers but you
cannot keep spring
from coming.”
Pablo Neruda

Editorial

Introducing a new era

Welcome to another edition of Cosmo. Articles and stories in this newsletter have been written by service users for the benefit of other service users.

We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

As many of our readers will know the Community Opportunities Service (COS) is no longer a service within the borough of Lewisham. A new service called the Social Inclusion and Recovery Service, Lewisham (SIRS) has been created and carries out similar work, although there are some differences.

The SIRS team is made up of Occupational Therapists, Vocational Specialists and Support Planners. The team is involved with Personalisation and Self-Directed Support which will be unfamiliar terms to some people. For more information on what this means turn to page five.

The SIRS team works with people both in the community and as inpatients for a set period of time. It offers support around a variety of areas including; activities of daily living, personal goals, social networks, returning to paid or unpaid work and education, assistance with personal budgets and leisure interests.

If you would like more information about the SIRS service please speak to your care coordinator. Now sit back, relax and enjoy the newsletter.

Kirsty Humby

Cosmo**The Cosmo team is**

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Five steps to wellbeing in Ladywell and Lewisham

Luscious Lewisham

1 Connect

Lewisham Users Forum: monthly meetings supporting people who use mental health services. Salvation Army Hall, Albion Way SE13 6BT, phone 01322 555 335.

Action for Refugees in Lewisham: Talk Shop also at Salvation Army Hall, www.afril.org.uk, 020 8297 4111. Afril (pictured) is also recruiting volunteers.

Leamore Community Hub: a variety of projects to help people with learning and physical disabilities. Bonfield Road SE13 5ES, 020 8314 9061.

**2 Be Active**

Ravensbourne River: walk through green spaces from Catford Bridge to Lewisham station (pictured). Go to www.london-footprints.co.uk/wkladywellroute.htm.

Ladywell Fields: plenty of regular projects. Go to natureconservationlewisham.co.uk/rivers-people and www.lewisham.gov.uk/ladywellfields.

Ladywell Leisure Centre: Swimming and exercise. 261 Lewisham High Street SE13 6NJ, 020 8690 2123 www.lewisham.gov.uk/sport.

3 Take Notice

St Mary's Conservation Area: for the origin of Lewisham town go to lewishamparish.org/history.html.

Local history: landmarks and events from days gone by at lewishamhistory.org.uk/links.php and picasaweb.google.com/lewishamheritage.

Limelight Gallery: based at Lewisham library showing regular exhibitions by local artists. Go to www.lewisham.towntalk.co.uk/events/d/59873/limelight-gallery.

Olympic public art: go to www.podia.org.uk (pictured).

**4 Keep Learning**

Lewisham library: have fun celebrating reading and learning from books. Go to lewishambookblog.com. 199 Lewisham High Street SE13 6LG, 020 8314 9800, www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/libraries.

Community Education Lewisham: including MindLift supported learning courses, with concessions, at Granville Park, next to Lewisham station (pictured). 020 8314 3279 www.cel.lewisham.gov.uk.

Learn Direct: go to www.learndirect.co.uk.

**5 Give**

Volunteer Centre Lewisham: includes the Small Steps project. 020 8613 7113, volunteercentrelewisham.org.uk/news.php. You can also support Kay Kelleher's sponsored bike ride for Ladywell Playtower (pictured).

Lewisham Link: An online newsletter for volunteering projects at www.lewishamlink.org.uk/Latest.pdf.

Compiled by Neil Bellers, photographs by Jaiteg

● For more information on the five steps to wellbeing go to www.slam.nhs.uk/wellbeing-garden.aspx



Taking part in research

A psychological inquisition

Jaiteg talks about the changing landscape of research and the opportunities he has been involved in over the last eleven years.

The psychological research register is run by the Maudsley Hospital PICuP clinic. Service users are, from time to time, offered to take part on a voluntary basis according to the usual confidentiality standards.

In most cases taking part is paid about £10 an hour. Travel expenses are also paid. There are practically no obligations as service users can withdraw at any time.

Research topics vary. They cover ground such as Understanding Thoughts and Voices in Virtual Reality, Understanding and Coping with Worry, Wellfocus – Focus on Wellbeing, and Individual Differences in Interpretation and Suspiciousness.

Questionnaires

These types of research usually involve one or two one hour sessions, filling in questionnaires that are very similar to those used for cognitive behaviour therapy assessments. Other types of research may be spread over a longer period of time with further follow up assessments and may involve several months of therapy.

Research is normally conducted at the Institute of Psychiatry in Denmark Hill, but some may take place within a Community Mental Health Team. Some researchers provide useful information about coping strategies and relaxation techniques.

In all cases a summary of research, including the eventual findings, is provided on request.



People conducting research using virtual reality.

Over the last 11 years I have taken part in close to a dozen research projects. Virtual Reality was probably the most fun, with a helmet connected to a computer simulating being on a tube train and trying to record my reactions to various situations during a 20 minute trip.

Most research, however, is answering questions. Modern methods are used, no psychoanalysis or hypnosis, and no drugs are involved (other than your regular prescription).

Taking part in research can be tiring, but it can also be fun – spending time with sympathetic mostly young people. It can also double your therapy allowance as it did in my case.

• For more information contact Dorothy Abrahams, PICuP Administrator, PO79, Maudsley Psychology Centre, Maudsley Hospital, Denmark Hill SE5 8AZ, phone 020 3228 3524.

Recovery group

Cosy, cordial and congenial discussions at the Albany

Our sugar-laden community discussion at the Albany in Deptford is addictive medicine. Treated with psychiatric weight, participants in this facility debate political issues of the day and deep-rooted domestic topics.

There is a ten minute recess half way through our assembly for regaining your wits during our teasing, mental excising and casual offerings. Conversation about our social experiences with calm wishes, etched with our vocal cords or written

down on paper. Heart felt shrugs of your chest in a congenial warm gathering. The host, Antony Daly, encourages the deliberation and his associate contributes to the argument.

Drinks and light snacks are provided. The sessions last about two hours. Everybody foxtrots out afterwards, content. The recovery group continues all year round apart from bank holidays.

The architectural design of the Albany expresses the earnest desire to revitalise our circumstances in the borough and to recognise what faculties are in the area.

Lots of organisations meet at the Albany. It has a very cordial theme and lots of people come there.

The Albany also caters for parties, theatres, musicals, comedy and religious events. Sofas make the place cosy and the complex is huge.

Joseph Johnny



Ask a professional

Getting in touch with our feelings

In his regular column, **Matthew Richardson**, a psychologist with Northover Community Mental Health Team, offers some ideas about how we can deal with negative thoughts.

Powerful feelings and sudden changes in emotion, such as mood swings, can be difficult to cope with.

Sometimes feelings seem to come from nowhere whereas other times it is obvious why we feel the way we do; however, the extent to which emotions are within our control is debatable.

We may be able to change our mood by thinking about someone we love or focussing on a happy memory but unwelcome feelings can be incredibly hard to shift.

In some instances it may be possible to stop and reflect on why we are feeling a certain way, and ask “what was I thinking about just before I started to feel this way?” or “what was happening when my mood changed?”

In cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT), the goal of changing how we feel is often achieved by identifying unhelpful thinking patterns and habits that are associated with the unwanted feeling, such as self-criticism and a tendency to focus on negative beliefs.

Self-affirming

These feelings can sometimes be influenced by committing to holding a more balanced view and choosing to focus on self-affirming beliefs as well as acknowledging what is upsetting and choosing to do activities that bring a sense of achievement, satisfaction and closeness to others even when you don't feel like it.

In a previous article I described being more mindful in response to unwanted thoughts and experiences, and this can also help with emotion.

Rather than struggling to change your feelings, take a step back, acknowledge the emotion and even name it but then choose to act in a way that supports your personal values and commitments regardless of what you are feeling.

This is not easy and takes practice but it can help you feel more in control of your life and less controlled by the feelings that are hard to change.

● If you have a subject you would like Matthew to write about, please email us at cosnewsletter@live.co.uk

**In my view**

There's going to be sunshine after the rain

Donna Walker shares some of her thoughts and ideas about a very sensitive and often taboo subject. She finds that things are not always as bad as they may at first seem.

Thoughts about suicide to some are a bad thing. To me it just tells me how low I am feeling and that I need to find a place from deep within and find the strength to somehow will myself out of it.

Similarly with depression. You can feel alone and isolated within your pain, emptiness and grief. It helps if you put yourself around people you like – those who care.

You may even feel like talking or participating in an activity which you usually do not do and could not manage to motivate yourself to partake in before – you may even enjoy it. Part of your illness and recovery may be that you talk now, whereas a month ago you were silent and more withdrawn.

Good news

The good news is you are still here and life has been worse and it will get better. You are just in pain or despair and so things look a bit gloomy.

Feelings of depression and suicide pass, so do not be afraid of the feelings; but accept them as a part of you and a warning of how low you are.

Maybe you need to increase your medication for a while or work out why you are feeling like this and in some cases go into a psychiatric hospital if the urge is too strong for you to control.

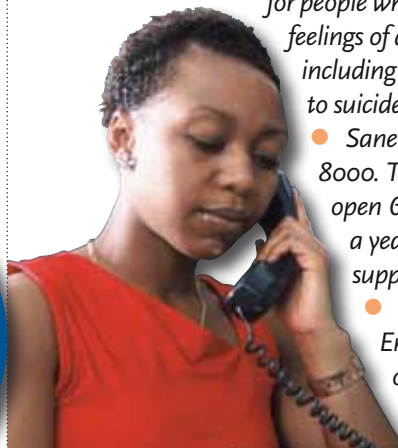
Confide in someone you trust, who understands your problem such as a friend, work colleague, GP, psychiatrist, relative or partner. They may be able to advise you what to do or who to contact to access support. Despairing thoughts means you are human with emotions and feelings.

● Samaritans: Phone 0845 790 9090 or go to www.samaritans.org. 24 hour helpline offering emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which may lead to suicide.

● Saneline: Phone 0845 767 8000. Telephone helpline open 6pm-11pm, 365 days a year, offering specialist support and information.

● The Accident and Emergency Department of Lewisham Hospital, on Lewisham High Street, is open 24 hours a day.

“
Choose to act in a way that supports your personal values and commitments.
”



There are people you can talk to.

Personal budgets

Full steam ahead

Personalisation is a new way of providing services aimed at giving people increased control over the support they use to meet their social care needs. **Laurent** tells us what it all means.

Personalisation is part of a history of survivor movements. It is based on viewing the health and social care needs of an individual, who can be responsible for themselves. They can then make decisions about what they require as a person with strengths and preferences, with support and information. They may have their own funding sources or be eligible for state funding.

An individual budget, or personal budget, is a pot of money that is paid from the council as a direct payment to a disabled person, either physical or mental health. It is paid through an "individual service provider" or into a bank account managed by you or a carer.

Relevant

The money can be spent on your personal needs and on what is relevant to your life and what will help you to manage your care.

In this way services should respond to the individual instead of the person having to fit with the service. It is about giving people much more choice and control over their lives.

Personal budgets will give people the opportunity to think about their needs and how the money can be spent to meet them. As personal budgets are a new way of working within Lewisham the exact processes for how they will work are still being agreed.



Lordship Lane Station in Dulwich by Camille Pissarro. Mehmet (interviewed below) used his personal budget to attend an art course in Dulwich.

The first stage would be to speak with your care coordinator and prepare for your assessment. Once you have been assessed you may be allocated a personal budget.

The money can be spent to support your needs; this could include using it for training, equipment for courses, healthcare needs such as home support or for social activities or events. If you do not qualify for a budget, then an appeal can be made through local advocacy centres (Voice Ability), finance department of council, or law centres.

- For more information go to www.mind.org.uk/help/social_factors/personal_budgets-the_mind_guide or www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/Personalisation

- Cooltan Arts have produced podcasts on issues around personalisation which are available at www.cooltanarts.org.uk/category/podcast/ and an animated film which you can watch at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hse31n05Z3A

Interview with Mehmet

Mehmet took part in the *Self-Directed Support pilot scheme in Lewisham*. He spoke to us about using his personal budget for an art course at Dulwich Picture Gallery.

Why did you pick this course?

First of all I wanted to improve my skills and try something different. I wanted to gain some more experience. I learnt new techniques from an artist.

It was really fun to be with other people in the group. Everyone was older and all were ladies! The course was in part of the gallery. It is in beautiful surroundings and very peaceful.

Did you look at any alternative courses?

I looked at courses with Arts Lift, Sydenham Gardens, Brockley Rise and Lewisham College. I felt the course I chose was as good as the ones the colleges offered but it was more informal and not in term time.

How easy was it to access the course?

I did this with help from my Lewisham Social Inclusion and Recovery Service worker. We visited and looked round the gallery and spoke with one of the staff. I filled in the form at the gallery and this was then paid by the Self-Directed Support Pilot Budget. The course was for

five weeks. It was easy to follow and the tutor was very welcoming and friendly.

What did you get out of the course?

I gained new skills and ideas to use for building my portfolio. I hope to be able to use these for entry to University.

How will the course help in the future?

It has given me alternative choices in ways to work. It is a good development tool. The course has also given me the confidence to start volunteering.

Did it help that the course was paid for?

I would have not been able to afford it on my own. It meant I had no pressure to find the money from elsewhere.

Time Bank interview

Mark in time

Pamela Moncrieffe and Neil Bellers invited **Mark Evenett** to the Compass Centre for tea and a chat about his participation in Lee Fair Share time bank.

Mark's activities are varied, including volunteering in an Eltham charity shop and also as a valued contributor to previous issues of Cosmo.

As a resident of Lee, Mark chose to offer some of his abilities to Lee Fair Share time bank – a neighbourhood community of around 70 members.

A time bank is a place where skills and time are valued and time credits are earned and spent. It is an exchange of time and not money. It works as an alternative currency.

When you need a hand, someone will help you. People help each other.

Lee Fair Share is a registered non-profit charity and its board of members are able to apply for grants to help cover any extra expenses.

Lorraine, the coordinator, tries to match people's skills to members' needs.

Exchange

Mark finds that the companionship means he does not feel so isolated, therefore participating is good for his confidence. He says there is the atmosphere of a safe environment when invited to visit each other to carry out tasks.

In Mark's case he has had help with his gardening and in return he has given advice to people about their

computers or even with their maths studies.

Events can be held during the day and in the evenings, and the exchange of skills can be on a one-to-one basis or in a general group, such as when Mark helped out on a stall for the time bank at the local fair.

There is also the option to join in with the cookery or book clubs or assisting with projects such as an environmental scheme set up at a local school. Lee Fair Share members have even enjoyed day trips to the seaside.

Mark says that each activity can lead on to another related one, with the same or different people, and that is it great to be a part of something going on locally.

Connection

Even if you get off to a slow start and find yourself in the position of having negative time credits for a while, this can be easily rectified by carrying out a useful task yourself when requested by someone else within the network.

People of all ages and abilities are involved from children who join in with various projects to the lady who teaches French. It provides a connection to people from a wide diversity of backgrounds.

Finally, there is always the satisfaction of establishing roots where you live and with those living alongside you.

● For more information go to www.leefairshare.org.uk email leefairshare@hotmail.com or phone Lorraine on 07875 082 571.



Mark Evenett. Photo: Terry Haynes.

Web round-up

Surfing suggestions for service users

Here are some websites offering support to people who use mental health services.

- www.blackdogtribe.com/ was launched because of the success of Ruby Wax's theatre performances about her depression. They have an online doctor and video blogs by members of the public who have mental health conditions.
- www.time-to-change.org.uk is a campaign to challenge the stigma associated with mental health. They also organise events around the UK and

encourage people to join in (see picture).

- www.blackmentalhealth.org.uk gives news, reports and campaigns updates of particular interest to members of African-Caribbean communities. You can also download copies of the two-monthly magazine The Solution at this site.
- www.schizophreniaquiry.org is a site investigating labels like "schizophrenia" and "psychosis". Fill in the online survey to contribute evidence to the final report.
- www.mind.org.uk, www.rethink.org and www.sane.org.uk are mental health charities all offering advice and support.
- www.mentalhealthy.co.uk/ is the

website of Uncovered magazine. It provides support and advice to people looking to improve their state of mind.

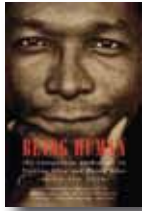
- www.myhealthboxlondon.nhs.uk is the Maudsley's new site where you can store your health records online.

Peter Robinson



Poetry book reviews

Spotlight on verse

Being Human
Edited by Neil Astley

Generally this is a good book. It is broken into various chapters, each focusing on a primary feature of simply passing through life.

There are a few well known authors with a number of obvious selections, Sylvia Plath, Rainer Maria Rilke, et al.

The chapters begin with a two or three page introduction, including a general description of the chapter's theme, and introduction to the poems included. The selection is good – even great in a few selections.

This means of course there is a tendency by many of the contributors to speak of the commonality and universality of these things – such as “sunrise-sunset”.

There are few if any references to mental health directly. More to the highs and lows of being alive, that with all the variations of mental states, the same things are always there.

Old age and the fear of death; adulthood and the fear of freedom; just living and the things that come with it; whatever your mental state the fear of the loss of autonomy; and the fear of loneliness.

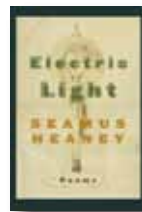
The message of the text is obviously the universality of these things. The

commonality of the pain, and the joy.

Which brings us onto my personal problems with the above. It doesn't intend to but it drums into me that, whatever truth life holds, it is not for people who find it hard to look outside their ego. Who find it hard to reach out.

It throws into my face the feeling that people like me are less than human. I can see that the book is good, it's just that it has nothing to say to me. Except that I'll never find any reason, any purpose. The very qualities that will help me find that are the ones I'm afraid of.

Christian Papantoniou

Electric Light
Seamus Heaney

Reading poetry invites a stirring tear within me. In 1995 Seamus Heaney was awarded the Nobel prize for literature.

Electric Light, his 2001 collection of verses, is a most vivid description of writing of English as a vocation.

Heaney was raised in Belfast – the nightmare of sectarian violence and anti-catholic discrimination, bombings and assassinations.

In your local library: The 1980 film Babylon about the Deptford reggae scene has finally been released on DVD.

No one else arouses the formations of words from rural Ulster like Heaney. The reality, artistry and personal and social notes are so appealing.

Arion, one of his poems, grabs the idea of the turbulent life in Northern Ireland and the militant protests in the suburbs about British occupation.

The Gaelic rotting darling rose of many of his struggles in literature and the hated, macabre, sinister grave of squelching, soggy bitterness is dramatised in his written sketches. A community of sailors equipped for salvation ends in a fresh Chicago ghetto poison.

*We were all hard at it in the boat,
Some of us up tightening sail,
Some down at the heave and haul
Of the rowing benches, deeply cargoed,
Steady keeled, our passage silent,
The helmsman buoyant at the helm;
And I, who took it all for granted,
Sang to the sailors.
Then turbulent
Sudden wind, a maelstrom:
The helmsman and the sailors perished.
Only I, still singing, washed
Ashore by the long sea-swell, sing on,
A mystery to my poet self,
And safe and sound beneath a rock shelf
Have spread my wet clothes in the sun.*

Joseph Johnny

Seasonal thoughts

Spring has finally sprung

The heavy loads of clothes are lightening slowly, now it's light cardigans and no scarves.

Lose that winter duvet and no more heating on full blast. Start taking the kids to the park again and in light jackets, it's almost time for sandals.

So throw away that winter coat and get used to those brighter evenings again. Spring puts a spring into my step! I have lost a few layers of clothes and the day is longer in the evening. I feel happy



Mudchute city lambs. Photo: Jaiteg.

because it's warmer and summer is almost here.

Spring, a time for cricket – leather against willow. Spring, a time to feel free and easy, light and bouncy.

Spring means wearing lighter clothes and almost time to get out my summer duvet. Spring means walks in the park wearing light jackets and looking forward to wearing sandals soon.

The evenings are a little longer and the winter coat is in my winter cupboard along with my thick jumpers.

I love spring.

Donna Walker

Olympics

Lewisham's Olympic dreams

Neil Bellers takes a hop skip and a jump down memory lane and looks at Lewisham residents' involvement in the Olympic and Paralympic games.



How to sum up Lewisham being “a gateway to the games”? Excitement, bemusement, frustration, anticipation – according to levels of local enthusiasm regarding Olympic and Paralympic events being near but not quite here.

On 23 July, from 7.30am onwards, the Olympic torch will come to the Borough. The route starts in Deptford, then goes along Lewisham High Street, through Ladywell to Rushey Green and beyond. Included in those selected to participate in the relay are Van Truong MBE, from the Lewisham Indo-Chinese Community Centre, and Marcel Jenkins, who is treasurer of the Friends of Blythe Hill.

Lewisham-born and resident athletes who have represented the UK at the Olympics in the last twenty years include Montell Douglas and Shani Anderson.

Natasha Danvers and John Regis have both won medals and Vicki Hansford won a bronze medal in rowing in the 2008 Paralympics.

The first London Olympics were held in 1908. Lewisham gold medallists were Charlie Bartlett (cycling) and Gladys Eastlake-Smith (tennis). 1924 gold medalist Eric Liddell went to school in Blackheath. His life story was made into the film *Chariots of Fire*.

The “Lewisham Big Screen” will be on Blackheath in July and August. The events are likely to concentrate on the sports facilities that Lewisham has to offer now and in the future.

● For information go to www.lewlife.net/lewisham2012 or lewishamlegacy.wikidot.com/

Clockwise from top left: Montell Douglas, John Regis, Vicki Hansford, Eric Liddell and Gladys Eastlake-Smith.

Ask Pamela

Coping in these modern times

Dear Pamela

Do you have any advice you can give me on how to survive in today's society?

From Troubled Man

Dear Troubled Man

Surviving in today's society can sometimes stress you out, and sometimes you can learn so much as you go about your daily routine. If you are someone who has a label you have a place in a part of society that sees you as one of them.

If you are an ordinary individual in employment trying to make ends meet, sometimes you are left watching others and their expenditure, and how progressive they are.

If you are unemployed some times you are left begrudging those who are employed, not thinking of yourself and how lucky you are receiving what society can offer you. If you should take a birds eye view of every thing how can you sum it up?

Fallibility

It becomes very hard to do a summing up that would be fair for everyone. So it would be wise not to challenge your thinking faculties and leave everyone to get on in life how they can, with what, and who they can get along with.

That way you will have time to take note of your own fallibility so you can be one step of negativity so you can hold on to what is real and positive.

Sooner or later you will become aware of the fact that all the issues and categories that people find them selves into is a part of reality and that we all are a shadow of what makes life goes on.

Keeping out of trouble is first and foremost in order to survive in today's society. The next thing is to try your best to stay healthy, if you must try this and that, then do every thing in moderation because too many, and too much of every thing is bad for you.

Seek out what is on, where, and when you should try to involve yourself in activities that will keep you focussed.

A lot of people misconstrue the meaning and effect that meditation can have in their lives, but it can be great, and it is one of the most effective ways to stay positive and focussed.

Pamela Moncrieffe

● If you have a question for Pamela email cosnewsletter@live.co.uk

