KINGSWOOD HOUSE RESEARCH PROJECT

This research was produced as part of a collaboration between the Dulwich Society Local History Group and Kingswood Arts, the community group that runs Kingswood House in Dulwich. We researched the servants who worked in Kingswood House when it was a private home and a community artist then made an exhibition to share the stories, which now hangs in the café at Kingswood House. If you are related to one of the families who served the house please get in touch, the Dulwich Society would love to hear from you. Email history@dulwichsociety.com
For details of the house and the other servants who worked and lived there please go to https://www.dulwichsociety.com/local-history/kingswood-house-who-worked-in-a-house-like-this

ROOTS family at Kingswood Lodge

Narrative for John Roots, gardener at Kingswood House
John Roots was born in 1803 in a small village near Epping Forest, in what was then Essex, into a family of agricultural labourers. He moved to Dulwich in the 1830s and became a gardener (an appropriate occupation given his surname) working at Kingswood House for nearly 40 years until his death in 1874 aged 70.
John married Christiana Smith at St Leonard's church, Streatham. Christiana was able to sign her name on her marriage certificate but John was illiterate and signed with a cross. Christiana was born in rural Cheam then moved to Streatham. The young couple set up home at Kingswood Lodge. All their nine children, four girls, five boys, were born at Kingswood, not all survived though: Sarah died at birth, her twin Jane survived. A son called John was born in 1840 but must have died before he was ten years old as a new baby was named John in 1850 who sadly also died young.
Those of John and Christiana's children who survived into adulthood built good lives for themselves, with most of them living in South London before moving out to the suburbs.
Elizabeth went into service as a housemaid in Chester Terrace. She married a bank messenger at the Oriental Bank Corporation and they lived on Threadneedle St. Their 4 sons became clerks and their daughter married a clerk.
Jane became a housemaid and never married. In her 70s she went to live with her niece (Elizabeth's daughter).
Rosa Matilda went into service as a children's nurse in Ladbroke Gardens but later became a needlewoman, possibly because she had epilepsy which may have made caring for children more difficult. In her 40s she spent time in an epilepsy convalescent home in Finchley before becoming a housekeeper for a corn merchant's family in Westwick Gardens.
Joseph William took advantage of the railway boom and became a railway porter before moving out to Tunbridge Wells and opening a small dairy; his sons followed him into the business.
Thomas was a bricklayer's labourer in Gipsy Hill, living in Woodland Rd and servicing the housebuilding boom in the area. A hard life: he was still labouring into his 60s and even in his 70s he was 'helping in the garden' at Virgo Fidelia Convent on Central Hill.
Robert Daniel began work as a labourer but soon became a carpet packer which must have been heavy work. He married Sarah Ampleford and together they brought up their family of five boys and three girls. By the age of 58 Robert was able to retire and described himself as a pensioner (and perhaps proudly) as an 'ex-packer', though when he was in his 60s he did some labouring for Forster & Gregory Chemical Works in Streatham, so perhaps the pension wasn't quite enough.

John died in 1874 and Christiana died in 1876, both at Kingswood. They are buried at West Norwood Cemetery.

Research people in red lived at Kingswood Lodge

1803 John Roots born Lambourne, Essex (aka Abridge, nr Epping Forest), the son of Thomas, an agricultural labourer, and Jane.
28 Aug 1836 he married Christiana Emily Smith at St Leonard's Streatham. Christianna can sign her name but John is illiterate and signs with a cross.
August 1837 John and Christiana were at Kingswood Lodge and their children were baptised at the chapel in the Village.
c.1837-1876 the Roots family lived at Kingswood:

John Roots
Christiana Emily Roots
1837 Elizabeth went into service as a housemaid in Chester Terrace. Married a bank messenger at the Oriental Bank Corporation and lived on Threadneedle St. Their 4 sons became clerks and their daughter married a clerk.
1839 Sarah died young?
1839 Jane (twins?) became a housemaid, never married. In her 70s she went to live with her niece (Elizabeth's daughter).
1840 John died young?
1842 Rosa Matilda went into service as a children's nurse in Ladbroke Gardens but later became a needlewoman, possibly because she had epilepsy which may have made caring for children more difficult. In her 40s she spent time in an epilepsy convalescent home in Finchley before becoming a housekeeper for a corn merchant's family in Westwick Gardens.
1845 Joseph William took advantage of the railway boom and became a railway porter before moving out to Tunbridge Wells and opening a small dairy; his sons followed him into the business.
1847 Thomas was a bricklayer's labourer in Gipsy Hill, servicing the housebuilding boom in the area. A hard life: still labouring in his 60s and even in his 70s he was still working: 'helping in the garden' at Virgo Fidelia Convent on Central Hill. He lived at 75 Woodland Rd
1850 John died young
1853 Robert Daniel began work as a labourer but soon became a carpet packer which must have been heavy work. He married Sarah Ampleford and together they brought up their family of five boys and three girls. By the age of 58 Robert was able to retire and described himself as a pensioner (and perhaps proudly) as an 'ex-packer'. 1921 census: labouring for Forster & Gregory. We have made contact with Robert's great grandson who is delighted to hear about his family's links with Kingswood House.

1841
Kingswood Back Lodge

John Roots	38	1803	Gardener
Christiana Roots	29	1812	Surrey
Elizabeth Roots	3	1838	Surrey
Jane Roots	1	1840	Surrey

1851
Penge Rd

John Roots	Head	42	1809	Gardener	Essex
Christiana Roots	Wife	39	1812	-	Maldon, Surrey

Elizabeth J Roots	Daughter	13	1838	-	Dulwich
Jane Roots	Daughter	11	1840	Scholar	Dulwich
Rosa Roots	Daughter	8	1843	Scholar	Dulwich
Joseph Roots	Son	6	1845	Scholar	Dulwich
Thomas Roots	Son	3	1848	-	Dulwich
John Roots	Son	0	1851	-	Dulwich

25 Dec 1853 their son Robert Daniel born at Kingswood [photos on ancestry]

1861
Kingswood Lodge

John Roots	Head	50	1811	Gardener	Surrey
Emily Roots	Wife	49	1812	-	Surrey
Jane Roots	Daughter	21	1840	-	Dulwich
Joseph Roots	Son	16	1845	Mill boy	Dulwich
Thomas Roots	Son	15	1846	Gardener's labourer	Dulwich
Robert Roots	Son	8	1853	-	Dulwich

1871
Lodge at Kingswood

John Roots	Head	66	1805	Gardener	Leytonstone, Essex
Emily Roots	Wife	59	1812	Minding Lodge	Surrey Cheam
Robert Roots	Son	18	1853	Labourer	Dulwich

June 1874 John died at Kingswood Lodge aged 70
30 Jun 1874 he was buried at West Norwood cemetery Ref 42069
Nov 1876 Christiana died at Kingswood, she was buried at West Norwood cemetery Ref 47266