

Village History • Langton Green

## Northfields and Pavey's: Langton Green's vanished maternity homes

While looking at archived posts on the Rusthall history website [Crescent Moon](#), I came across an email enquiry sent by Danny Maguire in New Zealand in 2013. Danny had understood from his mother that he had been born in a maternity home in Happy Valley in July 1943 and wondered if anyone knew which house it was. As it happened, having recently been reading the Langton Green village website, I knew the answer; the maternity home was in Langton Green, not Rusthall. As the email had been sent in 2013 I thought it likely that Danny had already found this information, but just in case, I decided to email him with a link to the Langton Green site.

The information on the Langton Green site was a response to the frequent enquiries from people who have found out they were born in Langton Green during World War Two, and want to find out why. It was written by local historian Peter Batts and tells how the outbreak of World War Two led Kent County Council to purchase two formerly private houses; the Victorian Northfields on Langton Road, and Pavey's on Speldhurst Rd. The women would stay at Pavey's before being transferred to Northfields for the delivery. You can read more of Peter Batts's interesting information [here](#).



Pavey's, Speldhurst Road, Langton Green.

Receiving my email in New Zealand, Danny confirmed that he had tracked down his true birthplace, and sent me the following account of how his mother, Florence Alice Maguire, came to give birth to him in Langton Green.

"It really is an intriguing story

I had searched on and off, over the years, to pinpoint my birthplace. As often happens, both my parents were gone when I began to search. I had all these questions that I should have asked while they were alive.

My birth certificate registered my birth as Tunbridge Wells. I had thought that I was born in Happy Valley as my Mum had always told me that as a child. That put me off track for a while – searching in the wrong area!

Luckily, I had parents that kept a lot of old photos and letters. Among them I found a postcard that my mother had written to her mother in New Zealand in 1943. She described how she was spending the last month of her pregnancy at a home in Langton Green called "Pavey's", before going further up the road to a maternity home named "Northfields" to give birth.



Northfields, Langton Road, Langton Green.

My mother lived in Broadstairs which was considered too great a risk for mothers to be. They sent the women inland to give birth, considering it was safer, even though they were returned to their homes after.

My mother was twenty-two years old when I was born. She had met and married my father in 1939. He was an officer in the Royal Navy transferred to duty in New Zealand prior to the outbreak of war. In 1942 she decided to join him in England. This meant an extremely dangerous five-week voyage from New Zealand to Scotland with the possibility of submarine attacks. She made the voyage with my older brother who was only eighteen months old at the time!

After arriving in England she settled in Broadstairs where I grew up until my Father retired from the Navy and we all emigrated to New Zealand in 1953.

The picture shows me, my mother and my older brother at Viking Bay Broadstairs in 1944 with anti-tank barriers in the background. I have also sent photographs of the postcards my mother sent, and a picture of her holding me at Northfields."



Danny with his mother in Langton Green.

Danny also has postcards his mother kept from her stay in Langton Green, which depict the local area. Writing to her mother from Pavey's, Florence wrote; "This is the house I'm staying in. The bottom window near the road is our ward. Six of us in it. We stay here for the month before the baby is born. As soon as we start labour we go up the road to the hospital. You can't see the actual beauty of the place as they have taken the road in. This would be the place for Molly to have her stay. It is very nice here and the girls are all very nice. They take great care of us and best of food. You'd love it all Muma I can hear you saying 'Oh! Isn't it beautiful!'" On a postcard of The Hollands Lodge she wrote, "We go for all these walks and they are really wonderful." It is wonderful to have this insight into the thoughts of one of the women who stayed in Langton Green all those years ago.

Thank you to Danny Maguire for sharing these pictures with me and his mother's story.