

Tuesday April 16th - Sunday April 21st

On the Tuesday I went, with Neville, to Wesley Church, Mandeville, where there was a weekly Bible Study and Prayer Meeting. There I met the Superintendent Minister, The Revd Wayneford McFarlane, but more surprisingly, one of the members came up to me straight after the meeting calling my name. It was Shirley Dawkins, who had been a member at Walworth Methodist Church when I was the minister there, and who had gone back to live at Mandeville about the year 2000. She informed me that two other former members at Walworth were also members at Mandeville - Winston and Rosalee White - and they had gone back around the time that I left Walworth. I had no idea that I would have met these three people, all of whom I knew extremely well, and on the Saturday I went with Neville to Shirley's house, where we ate the finest Jamaican Cuisine - including, of course curried goat, rice and peas and goat head and belly. We stayed about three or four hours with them, and, on the Sunday, when I worshipped at Wesley, Mandeville and brought greetings from Clapham, I met Shirley again.



Neville Lawrence with former Walworth members – Shirley Dawkins, Winston and Rosalee White

In August of last year Clapham held a special service to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the country's independence. One of the guests was Roy Anderson, a film-maker who had produced a film called *Akwantu - The Journey* about the history of the Maroons in Jamaica. Rich in culture and history, the Maroon descendants still have towns in Jamaica, where they have their own government and rules. I was eager to see a Maroon community and emailed him to ask where these villages were. He informed me that the closest Maroon community to Manchester was Accompong in St Elizabeth and he gave me a few contacts, one of whom was Roy's cousin, Jack Rowe. So, on Friday April 20th I was taken by Cleve, to see the community. I met Garfield Rowe, the Colonel's brother and headmaster of the school and met Jack Rowe. Cleve and I were guided around the village and given an account of all the history - which made the Maroons the first to rebel against slavery and won the battle against the British to keep their freedom - long before the abolition of slavery.



Mural painting at the Maroon Village



Meeting Jack Rowe at Accompong

Monday April 22nd

On April 22nd 1993, Stephen Lawrence was murdered in a vicious racist attack. The persistence, dignity and energy that Neville and Doreen Lawrence showed in pursuing justice and getting Stephen's murderers identified and prosecuted is known throughout the world. Their tireless efforts have had a dramatic and positive effect on racial justice issues in the U.K. and beyond.

Stephen was buried in Jamaica in a plot where his maternal grandmother and another family member are also buried - an area in Clarendon where members of Doreen Lawrence's family lived.



Stephen Lawrence's Grave

At the time of the MacPherson Inquiry into Stephen's death, Neville Lawrence used a room at Walworth, where I was then the minister, as an office and it is since then that I have come to know Mr Lawrence well. When we met last year I had said that I would like to pay my respects by visiting Stephen's grave but I didn't realize then that I would be in Jamaica on the 20th anniversary of that tragic event.

In London on that day, as well as the annual gathering at the site of Stephen's murder in Eltham, a memorial service was held at St Martin's in the Field, attended by the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Mayor of London, but Neville had stated that he wanted to commemorate the day by visiting Stephen's grave, saying a prayer and having quiet reflection and I was asked to join the car load of friends and to lead a short service of prayer.

The Daily Mail had sent a photographer and the BBC had sent a cameraman and journalist. The article in the Jamaica Observer was written by Ingrid Brown, the niece of Joy Johnson at Clapham. Ingrid had been present at our Jamaica 50th Independence Service last year and I had spoken to her on the telephone, but unfortunately was unable to meet up with her whilst I was in Jamaica.

It was a privilege to be there and to stay with Neville during that particular week.

Stephen Lawrence's dad continues to feel the pain

Son's death in UK racial attack 20 years ago still hurting J'can father

BY INGRID BROWN
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TODAY marks 20 years since Neville Lawrence lost his son, Stephen, to a violent racial attack in which a group of white boys stabbed the then 18-year-old teen as he waited for a bus at Eitham in south-east London on April 22, 1999.

But two decades have put little distance between Lawrence and the pain he feels when he reflects on who his son would have been had his life not been so senselessly snuffed out.

Lawrence, a Jamaican, who has since returned to live in the country of his birth, said although the pain is not as intense as when he first received the devastating news that his firstborn was murdered, it is still difficult to accept.

Stephen, who was born in the United Kingdom, was buried at the family home in Clarendon and that is where Lawrence said he intends to spend today, reflecting on the life his son never had the chance to live.

Although trusts, buildings and organisations in Britain have been named in Stephen's honour, and his mother was invited to carry the Olympic flag during last year's London Olympics, Lawrence would

trade it all to have his son, alive and living his dream of being an architect.

Today, there will be the annual wreath-laying at the site in London where this young man took his last breath, but Lawrence said he opted not to participate in that activity this year as he prefers to spend the time at the graveside, in reflection and prayer.

"I felt uneasy when we normally go to the tree (where he died) and say a prayer, because I didn't like the atmosphere. I feel more at peace visiting his graveside, because at the tree was where he suffered, but he is now at peace in his grave," Lawrence told the *Jamaica Observer*.

Although years of fighting for justice ended in the prosecution of his son's killers, and an overall transformation of race relations in Britain, Lawrence said he still wished that it did not take such a tragic event to bring about change. A change which, he said, has not yet come full circle since young people continue to wreak mayhem on the lives of family.

"There are still tragedies going on... young people still being killed in the same situation, and the younger generation don't understand the pain and anguish they cause family when they do these stupid things," he bemoaned.

Lawrence said his reflection today



LAWRENCE... I am here all alone, depending on the support of friends

will extend beyond the death of his son, to include the subsequent effect the killing had on his marriage and the breaking up of his family.

The absence of his now ex-wife, Doreen, from his side further brings home the harsh reality that he lost everything that fateful day.

"... I thought that, at this stage of my life, I would be married to my wife and be doing all the things that families do; instead, I am here all alone, depending on the support of friends," Lawrence said.

The senior citizen was forced to return to live in Jamaica in secrecy because of the death threats he received as he campaigned throughout London for justice.

This justice which eluded the family for years finally came last year in a landmark court ruling which saw two of Stephen's murderers — Gary Dobson and David Norris — being retried, convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 15 and 14 years, respectively.

Rev Norman Grigg, who offered tremendous support to the family in the aftermath of the murder, said his first trip to Jamaica coincides perfectly with the anniversary as he will have the opportunity to visit the grave with Lawrence.

According to Rev Grigg, it is Lawrence's resilience and strength which have helped to get him through these last two decades.

"I think Mr Lawrence has been remarkable, because his resilience and perseverance at getting at the truth have made a big difference and his son's death has changed British law as well as understanding and perceptions," he told the *Observer*.

Each year Stephen's death, he explained, is remembered far beyond the Jamaican or black community, because of how significant it has been to the way things were in Britain.

Grigg, who pastors the Clapham Methodist Church in London, which is attended by scores of Jamaicans said, he too, much prefers to spend a reflective day at Stephen's grave and is happy that he was able to be here in Jamaica for Lawrence at this "significant time."

This is a gesture which is warmly welcomed by Lawrence, who said it would have been so much harder were he to be alone at this time.

"The reverend was there for us in the early years, and 20 later he is still sitting with me, and I am grateful, because it would be really hard if he was not here," Lawrence said.

Tuesday April 23rd

Neville and Mr Banjo took me to Kingston, where I was staying with Marylyn Tapper. Her 14 year old great nephew was living in the house - and had to get up very early, about 4 a.m., to catch the schools bus (on school days). I soon discovered that Marylyn was a good cook and I ate well throughout my stay. I also was given the keys of the house, so could go out on my own, which I did often.

Wednesday April 24th

Marylyn drove me to the NCH, where I met Mr Anderson (the Principal) and had a good look around the building. There were about 150 children and young people resident in the complex and those who are able, go to local schools. It is run very much on the lines that NCH residential care used to be run in the UK. It is a distinctly Methodist organization, with some government help, but relying heavily on Methodist and voluntary donations. I was glad to be able to give a donation, having the extra money from Clapham Church members. There is also a Special School over the road, which was started by the Methodist Church, but now is government-run. Here about 200 children with special needs attend every day. There is a special link between CMC and the Jamaica NCH, with Lena James being very active in 'The Friends of JNCH' - Mr Anderson and other staff members knew Lena very well and spoke affectionately about her.



Meeting Mr Anderson at the NCH Jamaica



The NCH Jamaica

After visiting the Children's Home, I made my way to Providence Methodist Church, where George Mulrain is the Superintendent Minister. Rev Hewie had given me a book and a letter to deliver. I have met Rev George before; as he was a lecturer at Kingsmead in Birmingham and had been President of the MCCA. I had a long conversation with him and visited the school run by the church, which is on the same site.



*The Revd George Mulrain
at Providence Methodist Church*



The Methodist School attached to Providence Methodist Church

