

Westcombe NEW

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July/August 2013 Issue 6

A community newspaper commended by the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies

Monthly newspaper of The Westcombe Society: fostering a sense of community

Forecourt-trading: "the last straw"

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has introduced a new policy relating to the licensing of "forecourt trading". If you are a business you will now need a licence to place tables and chairs, or have shop-front displays and other amenities such as heaters and planters on the public highway. This is known as "forecourt trading".

If you wish to sell items from a trailer, stall or any receptacle in a street, you need to obtain a street trading licence from the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Food traders must also be reg-

Food traders must also be registered with the Royal Borough's Environmental Health office.

Subject to certain conditions, you don't need a street trading licence if you are:

* a market trader operating at a licensed market venue

* a news vendor selling only newspapers and periodicals.

So the Big Issue seller doesn't need a licence: but if you want to place a table or chair outside your cafe, or place flowers or other items on the pavement outside your shop, there's a bill to pay.

And it's not cheap: cover one square metre, and it will cost £7.00 a week - £364.00 a year. Local traders could easily have to pay two or three times that sum.

Cafe-owners and florists in particular will be hard-hit: people – and flowers – like to sit in the open air, especially during the summer.

Traders will have to pay £35.00 for the privilege of a visit from a council assessor, and are very unhappy about the imposition of what they call a pavement tax.

The Federation of Small Businesses say that hard-pressed businesses will suffer unless the Council thinks again. Chandra

Sharma, Chairman of SE London FSB Branch, says: "The Council needs to pursue policies that encourage business rather than

damage it."

reporter

One trader in Old Dover Road (who did not wish to be named) described it as "the last straw" at a time when high street trading conditions are becoming more and more difficult.

"It is a pity if the Council is placing a further burden on our hard-pressed traders," Cllr Geoff Brighty told the *WN*.

"Given the relatively small number of businesses at the Standard using pavement area, the potential revenue seems unlikely to swell the Council's coffers much. We need to be supporting our independent shops, not making life more difficult."

Summer - what summer?



In June, the Westcombe Society celebrated its Fortieth Anniversary with style, or at least a smile (through gritted teeth!), as rain nearly stopped play. Some still braved the rain to do a bit of shopping and jollification in the stalls outside in Mycenae Gardens, helped by the odd glass of Pimms (with Caroline acting as barmaid) and a delicious cake from Jenny's cake-stall. Here, at the St George's stall, everyone's having a laugh.

Wonder what the joke was ... For more, please see page 2.

Woolwich Incident Update

Statement by the Borough Commander, Richard Wood:

Fusilier Lee Rigby in Woolwich, we continue to have extra officers on patrol across the borough to provide a highly visible reassuring presence.

"Our colleagues from the Counter Terrorism Command are working on a complex and fast-paced investigation....

"In the meantime, I have been meeting with faith leaders and community representatives. . . There are up to 200 extra officers on the streets of the borough of Greenwich and the extra presence and reassurance patrols will continue for the foreseeable future. I would urge people to continue to show restraint and calm.

"Anyone experiencing hate crime is strongly encouraged to make contact with us and report it as soon as possible. I have a dedicated team of police officers who will investigate every lead. We will do all we can to bring offenders to justice.

"I would like to thank all of you who have written to us, helped with the initial investigation and provided vital information - we are grateful for your help and the support we have received so far.

"Anyone who knows the two men who carried out the attack and may have information which may be useful should call the confidential Anti-Terrorist Hotline on 0800 789 321.

"Anyone who filmed or took photos of the incident are asked to send the moving or still images to police via woolwich@metincident.co.uk - please include your name and contact details, which will be treated in strict confidence. Anyone who may have such material is asked not to delete it after sending it in."

Third NO for NIMBY

The Westcombe News has learnt that NIMBY, which was given a licence "in perpetuity" by Lewisham Council, has withdrawn its application for a two-day, two-stage music festival in September this year.

The concert organisers, OnBlackheath, made the decision after interrogation of their application revealed a number of issues ranging from appropriate consultation with residents, road closures, a clash with Run to the Beat, and questions over the amount of money set aside for remedial work to the heath post event.

This is the third year that OnBlackheath has had to cancel. Organisers estimate that between 10,000 and 50,000 people will attend what they hope will be an annual event. A new application for 2014 is expected. Watch this space!

More scams!

One day you are telephoned by someone who claims to be from your bank You are alarmed to hear there's a problem: your card has been used at the Apple Centre in Regent Street, or wherever, and your account compromised.

You weren't born yesterday, and you remain unconvinced: so the caller advises you to call a genuine number – such as the number on the back of your bank card.

However, the suspect keeps the phone line open and so the call goes straight back to the fraudsters who convince you of their authenticity. So you then reveal your bank details and secure information – mother's maiden name, and so on – and, unless you are very vigilant, your PIN number.

Sometimes they tell you your bank card must be collected: a courier arrives to collect your card; armed with your PIN number, the fraudsters are in business – at your expense!

The average loss is £4,000. This type of fraud is on the increase; it even happened to a member of the *WN* team, who managed to escape unscathed, but who said: "The dialling tone sounded strange, and I queried it, but they were VERY convincing . . ."

The police advise everyone: NEVER under any circumstances reveal your PIN, and if you are a victim, ring 101.

< < NEWS BRIEFS

Macmillan Walk

A walk around Regents Park on August 31st! If you are interested in walking to raise funds for Macmillan Cancer Care, or would like to sponsor the Westcombe Society Team, please contact Caroline on 020 8853 0948. For walkers there is an entry fee of £10, so even without sponsorship, you can contribute to the invaluable work of this wonderful charity.

Congratulations Carol!

Carol Storer, Director, Legal Aid Practitioners Group has received an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours list for services to legal aid.

Greenwich Square

Michelle Baker of Hadley Mace, the developers of the Old District Hospital site, now officially designated "Greenwich Square", reports that all is proceeding on schedule. The first release of the apartments for purchase took place in April. The apartments have been well received with Phase one already sold out; Phase two is now selling.

Royal visit to the Cutty Sark

The Duke of Edinburgh visited the Cutty Sark on 28th May. Among those he met was local eleven-year-old Hamilton Scott-McDonald from the Ahoy Sailing Centre. HRH was in good form: looking puzzled at the badges worn by a group of young people from the Ahoy Centre he asked what it was all about. "Do you all greet each other by saying 'Ahoy'?" he asked. STOP PRESS: The Cutty Sark has just won a prestigious 2013 London Award from the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Full marks for our TIC

Greenwich Tourism Information Centre (TIC) is one of the best in the country. It has just won a Gold Award in the Visitor Information Provider of the Year category at the prestigious Visit-England Awards for Excellence 2013. The Gold Award is the highest accolade for Excellence in Tourism in England that can be bestowed. The Borough welcomes some 18 million visitors each year – and tourism contributes £817 m. annually, supporting more than 12,000 jobs.

Thanks for the compliment!

Our sister publication *Greenwich Visitor* has a section called Nelson's Column, edited appropriately enough by "Horatio", who writes:

"Congratulations to the *Westcombe News*, a small but perfectly informed community paper here that has just turned 40. It wouldn't be wrong to say that it helped to inspire the launch of *Greenwich Visitor*. Its mix of interesting material, useful super-local news, events and community advertisers shows printed paper remains as vital as ever." Thanks, Horatio, we in turn are very impressed by your paper.

Blackheath/Westcombe Ward

The line-up for the local elections in May next year is as follows: Conservative: Geoff Brighty, Thomas Turrell, Laela Pakpour Tabrizi; Labour: Cherie Parker, Simon Thomson, Paul Morrisey; Green: Trevor Allman. Denise Scott-McDonald has been selected as a Labour candidate for Peninsula Ward; commiserations to Cllr Mary Mills (a founder member of the Westcombe Society) who was not selected in Peninsula Ward.

Race for life

On Sunday 7th July Cancer Research
UK will again be holding their annual
Race for Life on the Heath and they will
be closing the following roads:
Prince Charles Road 5 am - 5 pm

Goffers Road 9 am - 5 pm
Talbot Place 9 am - 5 pm
Hare and Billet Road 9 am - 5 pm
Duke Humphrey Road 9 am - 12.30 pm
Tranquil Vale (north) 9 am - 12.30 pm

The village will be kept open to traffic. The PA system on the Heath will be at its loudest from 09:50 until 10:50 am and from 13.20 until 14.20 pm. If you find the noise levels unacceptable, you should contact the organisers on 07757758253.

WESTCOMBE NEWS

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http://westcombe.gold.ac.uk

DISTRIBUTION Myles Dove & Barbara Henley

Jean-Jacques and Maureen Aune Volunteer distributors please phone 8853 3740, we need your help!

ADVERTISING MANAGER Marilyn Little, 163 Westcombe Hill, SE3 7DP 020 8853 1312

(email:marilyn.little@btinternet.com)

All adverts payable in advance by cheque to The Westcombe Society.

DISPLAY: Single column 6cm x 6cm: One - four issues £35, five-plus issues £30 each. Other sizes: please inquire. Classified Ads (Market Place) 30p per word (A telephone number = one word. An email/ web address = 3 words.) Deadline for all adverts is 10th day of the preceding month

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The views expressed in the Westcombe News are not necessarily those of the Westcombe Society or of the Editor.

We take all reasonable precautions to protect the inretests of our readers by ensuring as far as possible the bona fides of our advertisers but cannot accept any responsibiity for them. Any complaints should be adressed to the advertiser.

Back-numbers (in colour) can be accessed on: http://westcombe.gold.ac.uk/westnews.html Westcombe Society's Blog: http://westcombe.blogspot.com

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Our 40th Birthday Party

Invited to the tea party were those who founded the Westcombe Society 40 years ago, including (centre) our first chairman, Tom Crowe. Yes, these are some of the heroes (and heroines) who started it all!



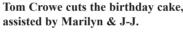


Only the Westcombe Society would attempt both a big tea party, and a garden party - on the same day! With Dave Silk's jazz band, and Chris's hamburgers part of the deal, too!

Our stalwart chef Chris (LEFT) seems to think that a barbecue in the rain is an Olde English Custom, and who can deny it?

But one thing is true: Chris's hamburgers were deLICious!







Tom Crowe cuts the birthday cake, Tom and Dick Allard discuss an old issue of the WN; but Daphne is more interested in the sandwiches.

Marilyn's Message . . .

66What a hard-working and hardy team you all are!" said Marilyn Little, Chairman of the Westcombe Society. In a message to all the volunteers who made the day such a success, she commented:

"It was a shame about the weather but there was a lot of stoicism on show and despite all the rain you stood your ground.

"Inside, though drier, more hard work. A special word of thanks to those who made the delicious sandwiches and cakes and scones. Everyone I spoke to had a lovely time and our VIPs certainly enjoyed themselves and appreciated the opportunity to meet up with folk that some of them had not seen for years.

"And the band played on – great music, Dave! The Punch and Judy was very good too, and it is just a shame that they didn't get the audiences that they deserved.

"Many thanks to you all!"

In Peak Form

n the first weekend of July, five Hospice staff from Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice clinical and fundraising teams are embarking on the challenge of a lifetime. Stephanie Fuller, Stacey Lewis, Rachel Williams, Penny Jones, Carla Rattigan and Ellen Tumelty aim to complete a 54 mile trek through the night across the Peak District in 24 hours.

"If you would like to sponsor the team it would be much appreciated." says Penny Jones, Director of Care services. "The hospice is an invaluable service that is provided free of charge; and only a third of funding comes from the NHS." If you want to sponsor the team, visit: http://

uk.virgin money giving.com/team/hospice hikers 5

Letters to the editor may be edited through lack of space. Views expressed are those of Letters to the editor Letters to the editor may be edited through lack of space. Views expressed are those the writers only, and are not necessarily those of the Westcombe Society or the WN.

From: Terry Wheeler

Foyle Road With the recent terrible events that took place this week in Woolwich, I would like to propose that a permanent memorial be set up in Woolwich at the spot where Lee Rigby was killed, as was set up for Stephen Lawrence, to remind people in the future of the terrible event that occurred, and to ensure that this young man's name and memory are kept alive.

From: Trevor Allman Coleraine Road I am writing in response to the letter by Dr Angela Burr (WN June 2013), with regards to Ms Anna Townend.

I'd like to correct Dr Burr's assumption that Greenwich Council is being ageist in not recognising the work of Anna Townend. They are not being ageist, though she is correct they would like to see her disappear into oblivion. No, the Council has long regarded Anna as being part of the "Awkward Squad"

I certainly know that during my tenure as a Councillor for this area from 1986 to 1990, Councillors and many Council Officers' hearts sank whenever they saw Anna appear at a committee or full council meeting, as she was excellent at asking the questions that they would rather were not asked. Anna has always been great at delving into the minutiae of plans and being abreast of planning rules, so knew exactly what she was talking about.

So rather than being highly esteemed, and welcomed as someone holding Councillors to account and ensuring their actions are transparent, which any democrat would surely welcome, Ms Townend was often cursed and ridiculed in private, if not to her face

Such was the democratic deficit that existed on Greenwich Council then, and going by the recent statements by Cllr Alex Grant when announcing he would not be standing for reelection in 2014, this deficit still exists.

Whilst as a republican, I'm opposed to the current honours system, if it is the wish of people of this borough to see Anna receive such an award, I would certainly support this if I am elected as a Green Party Councillor for Blackheath Westcombe Ward in 2014. In the meantime, the least Greenwich Council could do is award Anna the Freedom of the Borough, even if it was done through clenched teeth.

On a personal note, can I say what a privi-

lege it was to have Anna as a neighbour for 38 of the nigh-on 40 years I've lived in Coleraine Road. And let no one believe that Anna has stopped campaigning to protect the environment we live in, as I met up with her again recently at the initial meeting of "Keep the Green in

Let's all hope that Anna will be asking those difficult questions for many years to come

From: Christine White

I refer to the article on Cllr. Alex Grant by Sarah Winterbottom in May's WN.

I would like to add that Alex has been a splendid Councillor committed to supporting all areas of the community which makes up Blackheath/Westcombe Ward.

Westcombe Park Road From: G. Bailey

I notice that a second hand car dealer is in the habit of parking his cars in Old Dover Road: thus occupying half a dozen or more parking spaces. I understand that it is illegal to park a car on the public highway with a "For sale" notice displayed – so he is apparently within the law to place his cars there, even though it cle ly impedes the business of other traders in Old Dover Road by occupying spaces that would be available to would-be shoppers - and there is no doubt he certainly wants to flog those cars.

Meanwhile, traders are to be charged for placing items harmlessly on the pavement outside their shops in what the council describes as "forecourt trading". This applies also to cafes who place tables and chairs for passers-by to sit and enjoy the sun if and when it comes out.

Can one assume that if a trader does not put a "for sale" sign on his or her goods on the pavement, this would or should be legal, and non-chargeable? Or is it one rule for the selfish motor-trader, and another for the hard-pressed shopkeeper? Isn't it time the Council pulled its finger out and organised a one-hour parking rule on Old Dover Road so people can do a quick stop-and-shop?

From: Liz Chowienczyk Trustee, Ahoy! On behalf of everyone at the AHOY Centre I would to express my thanks to the Westcombe Society for supporting The AHOY Centre charity and your generous donation of £1000.

Last week the Sailability group of young

adults, all with learning difficulties, sailed our Long Boat to London from Deptford. This involved two of the group tacking against the wind all the way to London, a difficult task for anyone. We enjoyed tea and biscuits moored outside St Katherine's Dock in the lee of Tower Bridge. The other members of the group steered the boat in a straight course on the return journey. Alex's face was all smiles and told everyone on our return that we had "sailed all the way to London..!

The Westcombe Society's kind donation will enable us to replace some of our sails and repair our boats to allow us to continue to take local children and adults with disabilities sailing and rowing on the Thames, not only enjoying the Thames but also learning new skills, working together and improving their social skills.

We would also like to take this opportunity to invite the Westcombe Society to our Supporters Day to celebrate our 10th anniversary on Thursday 25th July 2013 from 13.00 to 16.00pm to give you an opportunity to see the excellent work of this local charity.

Thank you for your invitation for the tea party on June 15th. I regret I am unable to join you, but I would like to extend my congratulations for reaching such an outstanding age. When we got together to form the society we

little thought that it would have such a long future. I have many memories of the activities we were all involved in, many of which enhanced the use of Kidbrooke House as the focal point in the community. Best wishes to all your members, past and present. Editor's note: John Ayling was the warden of Kidbrooke House, later renamed Mycenae House. Tom Crowe told the WN that it was John who convened the first meeting of what became the Westcombe Society, of which Tom was the first Chair - John Ayling being the Vice-Chairman. Tom said that the WN, a newsletter funded by advertising, was originally the brainchild of Anthony Renouf, who after a year, handed it on to John Petty, who (with the help of his wife Ida) became, as editor, the driving force for a period of more than ten years. We would welcome all personal memories of the society, so that a historical account of its activities over the years can be developed.

LOCAL NEWS

Could you design a racing car?

These girls can! Blackheath High School's Teams win places in Jaguar's 'Maths in Motion' National Final. **Corrie-Jane Rafferty reports**

In July last year, the WN reported on the ■ mathematical successes of Blackheath High Junior School, when the girls reached the National Final in the Mathematics Trust Junior Maths Challenge.

This year, BHSG has done even better: two teams from Blackheath High School have secured places in the 2012/13 Jaguar Maths in MotionTM Challenge national final, beating off stiff competition from schools across the country.

The teams had previously won a series of regional heats before entering the semifinal knock-out round. As the WN goes to press, the teams will be competing in the national final at Gaydon on 26th June.

The 'Maths in Motion™ Challenge' was established by Jaguar in 2000 and has this year attracted entries from more than 100,000 pupils, making it the largest maths challenge of its kind in the UK.

Children have to use maths. to set up a virtual racing car, taking into account such factors as fuel load, tyres and speeds.

This data is then entered into a computer-based simulation, ready for the race!



Head of Blackheath High Junior School, Sarah Skevington, is delighted with their efforts. She commented: "It is a joy to see the girls so inspired and excited by the Maths in Motion Maths Challenge."

Matilda Marcus, aged 11, said: "I feel much more confident with maths now. It's really increased my interest in maths and engineering – and it's also lots of fun!" Ed: Educators point out that Mr Gove's plans to remove Design and Technology from the National Curriculum will mean our youngsters may have to go to private schools to pursue their interests in D&T...

Set sail in Royal Greenwich

The Royal Borough of Greenwich is set to welcome a spectacular flotilla of Tall Ships as Sail Royal Greenwich returns for a second season.

Running from August 28th until September 1st, this stunning fleet of Tall Ships will sail the Thames and offer visitors unforgettable views of iconic maritime Greenwich.

The Royal Borough is delighted to welcome the Tall Ships back for another year after the success of the first festival, hosted during last summer's Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Passengers will pass some of the very best sights the Royal Borough has to offer including the Old Royal Naval College, the Queen's House, the Royal Observatory, the Thames Barrier, The O2, the Meridian Line and The Cutty Sark.

Cllr Chris Roberts, Leader of the Royal Borough of Greenwich said:

"Our aim is that Sail Royal Greenwich becomes a regular fixture on our calendar, attracting a growing number of visitors, both domestic and international."

Laurens Winkel of Sail Royal Greenwich said: "This is a fantastic way to enjoy the iconic Thames-side views of this unique and historic area. Last year we saw more than 12,000 people join us and we're really looking forward to building on that success this summer."

All cruises will sail past the O2 Arena, Canary Wharf, Old Royal Naval College, Queens House and the Observatory. The ships will pass through the Thames Barrier and cross the Greenwich Meridian Line

The VIP Thames Tall Ship Cruise is a longer cruise all the way to Tower Bridge and back (snacks included.) In the evening there is a spectacular fireworks display on the river exclusively for the Tall Ships.



TICKET SALES STARTED! Three different cruises are on offer: Thames Tall Ship Cruise (departures. between 10.00 am and 5.00 pm daily) price range £ 39.90 - 59.90 Thames Tall Ship Cruise + Fireworks (8.00pm daily) price range £ 59.90-79.90 VIP Thames Tall Ship Cruise + Tower Bridge + Fireworks (departure 6:30pm) price range £ 99.90-139.90 **YOU CAN BOOK ON-LINE:** Visit www.sailroyalgreenwich.co.uk OR BY PHONE:

Call Ticketweb Hotline on 08444 771000

Well done Westcombe Woodlands



The Friends of Westcombe

Woodlands were recently awarded a £680 grant by the Mayor of London under the Capital Clean-Up Community Scheme, enabling the purchase of hand tools to maintain and improve the habitat – and also some more bird boxes. One was quickly snapped up by a firsttime buyer - a blue tit! PHOTO: Joe Beale

Susan Clark Interiors

Susan Clark Interiors has just opened up in Humber Road – just round the corner from Westcombe Park Station. The shop provides the complete package, from major renovations to that perfect little gift for the living room. Her services include:

- * Local architects conversant with both local and national planning regulations.
- * A team of skilled builders and craftsmen * Project management to oversee the work
- from inception to conclusion. * Advice on the latest trends in interior
- * Bespoke kitchens in a variety of styles English Country, Shaker, Sea-side, Modern....

Susan told the WN:

"Above all we have the ideas to make your dream home a reality. As well as our renovations service, we stock an eclectic mix of period and vintage items including industrial lighting, shabby chic furniture, Industrial sized blackboards, traditional Persian carpets – not forgetting lots of curtains and textiles, vintage and new. We also show prized work by local artists."

The shop is also the local stockist for Little Greene Paint and Papers, The Original BTC lighting, True Grace Candles, and many other products.

Susan says: "Why not pop into 113 Humber Road SE3 (Near Westcombe Park Station) and see what amazing changes you can make to your home?"

Well done Lorraine!

Tommunity interest company, Greenwich Communication Centre has been selected as a finalist for the inaugural London Business Awards 2013 hosted by the Federation of Small Businesses.

Said director of GCC, Lorraine Turton: "We had to demonstrate to the judges a high degree of innovation: How we encourage creativity and new thinking, and how knowledge played an important part in developing our selected business

"We also had to explain how the new idea came about and how we went about

innovation.

implementing it. The judges also wanted to hear what unforeseen challenges and hurdles had to be overcome - so we demonstrated how the mis-management of people movement, traffic and signage during the Olympics in Greenwich last summer, cost our business some £15,000".

The FSB London Business Awards 2013 will reach its finale at a glittering awards ceremony which takes place in the Grand Connaught Rooms, Great Queen Street in Covent Garden on the evening of 27th June (as we go to press).

Good luck, Lorraine!

A matter of Life and Deaf

 Γ he Life & Deaf Association uses poetry and the arts to help deaf children explore their identities and develop communication skills and emotional literacy; our overall aim is to improve the mental health of future generations of deaf people.

We have spent the last seven years working with deaf children expressing themselves though poetry, performance, film and art. We have been repeatedly amazed by the quality of the work that the children have produced.

In 2006 we published a book of poetry written by deaf children in Greenwich along with a DVD of the poetry in British Sign Language. This is the only published book of poetry by deaf children. Later, our team won the Children & Young People's 'Team of the year' National award.

In 2012, the short film created by deaf children, That's not all of me, won the Ritter Sport award at the ZEBRA International Poetry Film Festival in Berlin and was screened at the Southbank Centre, IndigO2, the Barbican and national and international film festivals.

From 8th – 24th July, the Life & Deaf Association will carry out a nationwide tour, taking the film and other deaf awareness materials created for and by deaf young people around the country in a VW camper van called Heidi.

From 12.00 - 4.00 pm on the 8th July, the tour will be launched at a festival within the grounds of the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich featuring live performances of poetry in British Sign Language (lifeanddeaf.co.uk/events).



www.mycenaehouse.co.uk

Mycenae House & Gardens is a community hub committed to serving the communities of Westcombe, Blackheath & Greenwig

90 Mycenae Rd, Blackheath, SE3 7SE

MEND YOUR ENGLISH What We Should Have Been Taught At Primary School

STOP PRESS: For further

details about the deaf children

campaign, please contact

Helena Ballard - 07748 104

051 / info@lifeanddeaf.co.uk

Focuses on the BBC

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£9.99 from the British Library Bookshop or other good bookshops

New book launched

ongratulations to local author, Dr. ✓ Malcolm Torry, who launched his new book, Money for Everyone: Why we need a Citizen's Income, on the 27th June at the London School of Economics.

Malcolm is Director of the Citizen's Income Trust. He recently completed an honorary research fellowship in the Social Policy Department at the LSE. He is Vicar of Holy Trinity, Greenwich Peninsula. The book is available at a discount on the website: www.policypress.co.uk.

FEATURES

My Dad – unsung war hero! Malcolm Tremain

Jim Tremain was born in Stepney, where his father ran a fish and chip shop. Jim has been a resident of the Westcombe Park area for over 40 years.

Now 92 years old, he was a veteran of RAF Bomber Command, and has just received his Bomber Command clasp award in recognition of his service during the war

As a member of 466 squadron, which was one of the Royal Australian Airforce squadrons, he was a gunner aboard a Halifax heavy bomber.

He flew 41 bombing missions between 6th March and 5th August 1944 – a very high number of missions, most crews flew between 20 to 30. He is the last surviving member of his crew of seven – five Australians and two British.

Jim is second from the left. front row. A memorial in **Green Park** was unveiled by the Queen on 28th. June 2012 to highlight the price paid by the aircrews. Of the 125,000 aircrew, 55,573 were killed in action; some 18,000 were wounded or captured.



He met my mother Kathleen when stationed at RAF Driffield in Yorkshire. They married in 1947 and ran the fish and chip shop in Stepney until 1986. They have three children, nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Now living in Vanbrugh Park Road, they celebrate their 66th wedding anniversary this year.

Yes, we will remember them!



Coping with welfare reform

Most people seem to agree that the government needs to carry out welfare reform — the laws of unexpected consequence loom large in this area.

In the case of the so-called bedroom tax, the consequences were both foreseen and forseeable. The aim of the bedroom tax was to get people to leave "under-occupied" social housing, and let in people from more cramped homes. To achieve this, housing benefit is reduced by 14% a week for one spare room, and 25% for two or more

As widely predicted, most people are understandably reluctant to leave behind the networks of family and friends, and to disrupt their children's education. Nor is it easy to find one-or two bedroom flats.

The result has been stress and misery in many parts of the country. Big increases in rent arrears were forecast by councils and housing associations, as well as an increase in stress-related illness.

In line with the new legal requirement making councils responsible for preventing poor mental health, Greenwich Council has done its best to alleviate the problems caused by these and other welfare reforms. The Council's view is that the only sustainable solution has been to get those affected into employment, and a £6million fund for this purpose has been ring-fenced.

Households worst affected by the welfare reforms have been offered fixed term employment with the Royal Borough – as a means to accessing permanent jobs with the Council and other employers.

Already 40 people are into work with a further 16 getting ready for the next tranche. They are working as town centre wardens, within our recycling and street cleansing operations, in our parks and open spaces teams and elsewhere.

The aim is to prevent local families from being uprooted by enabling them to stay in the place they have ties, support and where their children go to school.

A Council spokeswoman said: "We want local families to be able to remain in London where long term they have a better chance of employment, and so they can keep their children in local schools."

Work experience at Blackheath Pet Supplies

Paul Horlock-Brown, a student at Thomas Tallis, reports

Over the past year Blackheath Pet Supplies at 7, Old Dover Road has had work experience children from schools in the local area.

When I was looking for work experience, I hoped to find work for a business that would teach me valuable skills – and Blackheath pet supplies did just that.

The owner of the business, Susan Donnelly, taught me many things such as Visual Merchandising, stock control, health and safety with and around food and finally ordering stock by phone or internet.

The opportunity of working with the public has given me a lot more confidence. I am amazed at how many different products there are for both domestic and wild animals. I am very grateful for this work experience. I hope I will be able to use these skills in the future.

Susan Donnelly the owner of the business says: "I myself did 900 hours of unpaid work experience whilst training to be a hairdresser and found the opportunity very rewarding.

"Moving from the classroom to obtain inside knowledge on how hairdressing businesses work was a revelation. Yes I had to clean and sweep the floors and make the coffee, but this gave me the chance to interact with customers and build up my confidence.

"Even though I was a mature student,



every day I learnt something new, and I have taken the skills with me in regard to running my own pet shop business.

"Paul, from Thomas Tallis School, worked with me for two weeks. He worked very well, and was a very good team player. He really had a great attitude towards the job in retail, and was a very good time keeper – and his customer care skills have been excellent. Overall he was excellent, a hardworking, friendly and self-motivated individual and I wish him well for the future

"Hopefully more businesses can give the youth of today a real opportunity to get that crucial 'Work Experience'."

Community Opera at the Halls: Verdi's Macbeth

Blackheath Halls Opera gives the local community an opportunity to take part and see inside a fully-staged opera.

Over 100 singers and instrumentalists from the local community perform alongside local primary school children, students from local special schools, students from Trinity Laban and a cast of professionals to create a production of great energy and originality as well as high artistic worth.

This year, Blackheath Halls Opera is presenting its seventh fully staged community opera, Giuseppe Verdi's *Macbeth* - in celebration of the bicentenary of the composer's birth. It is to be staged from 9th - 14th July. Please see page 5 for details.



A scene from the Royal Opera House 2011 production of Verdi's *Macbeth*

If you would like more information about Blackheath Halls Opera or you think you might like to participate in the future, then please contact Rose Ballantyne.

"There can be few more worthy uses of Arts Council England grants." Graham Rogers in The Stage.

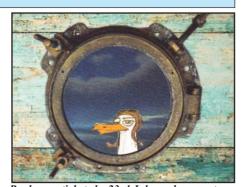
"Blackheath Halls Community Opera annually brings together local children and adults, students from Trinity Laban and a handful of young professionals in one of the calendar's most heartening events." Anna Picard in The Independent on Sunday.

All Aboard for Drama!

reenwich Theatre in association
with Powderkeg are embarking on
a new venture – a play combined
with a free boat trip!

Jennifer Skylark and the Seagull's Handbook is about a girl who accidentally finds herself on a giant ship destined for Australia. As the story unfolds, she acquires a number of weird and wonderful companions to help her on her way ...

The play is being put on at Trinity Buoy Wharf, 64 Orchard Place E14 0JY from Sat 27th July to Sunday 11th August (not Wednesdays) at 11.00 am, 2.00 pm and 5.00 pm, and is good family entertainment, suitable for children of 8+.



Book your tickets by 23rd July, and you get a free return boat ride from North Greenwich Pier (at the O2), courtesy of Thames Clippers. For full details visit www.greewnich.org.uk or call the Box Office on 020 8858 7755

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WHAT'S ON

ARTS

BLACKHEATH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY, St Mary's Church Hall, Cresswell Park Blackheath 4th Thursday of every month, 2.00 for 2.30. Next meeting: 25th July Hilary Williams on Albrecht Durer. Non-members £5 on the door www.artsinblackheath.org.uk or ring 83187550 GREENWICH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY King William Court, the Univ. of Greenwich NEXT LECTURE: 8th July 7.30 for 8.00 pm lecture "Urbino and the Court of Federigo Montefeltro" by Jethro Lyne. 020 8852 7873 ROYAL OBSERVATORY GREENWICH Until Sept 8th: Alien Revolution: the role of aliens in science and culture, from Copernicus to the detection of alien worlds orbiting the stars.

THE GREENWICH GALLERY Until 3rd July: Julia Hodgson's photographs of microscopic landscapes of the natural world at Linear House. Peyton Place SE10 8RS Info at: 020 8853 4809. MADE IN GREENWICH GALLERY 324 Creek Road SE10 9SW, 020 82939823, info@madeingreenwich.co.uk

Until Aug. 4: "Combining images and text". July 2nd, 7.00 pm: "Pushkin", lecture/performance with Graham Fawcett and Tatiana Akhmatova advance booking now open, £10 includes light buffet and drinks. Artists' informal get-together second Friday of each month, all welcome.

CHILDREN

GREENWICH THEATRE AHOY, LANDLUBBERS!!! 27th July - 11th August (NOT Wednesdays) 11.00am, 2.00 pm \$ 5.00pm

JENNIFER SKYLARK AND THE SEAGULL'S HANDBOOK£16.00, Children & Concs. £11.50 With a FREE boat ride to the venue - Trinity Buoy Wharf - by Thames Clipper from the O2 Pier. Box Office 020 8858 7755 WOODLANDS FARM331 Shooters Hill. Tel. 0208

319 8900 Every Thursday Toddler Club 10am -12pm £2 per adult, children free Meet the animals, enjoy some crafts or just play. MYCENAE HOUSE COMMUNITY CINEMA

Children's movies Saturdays at 10.30: July 6th Lady and the Tramp

July 20th Chicken Little

July 27th Madagascar (1) Aug 10th Pocahontas

Aug 17th Snow White & the Seven Dwarfs

SE LONDON DADS GROUP

DADS ALERT: Regular stay-and-play for dads and children under five @ Sherington Children's Centre, 14 Sherington Road every Wednesday from 9:30 - 11:30am. Contact:

www.SELondonDads.org.uk or email: info@selondondads.org.uk



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COMMUNITY

Westcombe Society Dates for your diary:

Sept 7th. Members' Evening, Main Hall, Mycenae House. Invitations are going out

Sep 27th Macmillan Coffee Morning, bar/ Main Hall Mycenae House

Sept 28th Nearly New Sale, Main Hall, Oct 26th Quiz Night, Main Hall

Nov. 18th Dickensian Christmas Bazaar, Blackheath Girls High School, Mycenae Road

CANCER RESEARCH LUNCH The next fundraising lunch is on Thurs. 4th July at the Clarendon Hotel, Blackheath from 12 noon to 2:30pm. The cost is £8.50. The Speaker TBC. Lunches can be booked by telephoning Wendy on 020 8265 0335 by Monday 1st July latest. There is no luncheon event in August. MYCENAE HOUSE COMMUNITY CINEMA

Tuesdays at 8.00 pm: July 2nd Rebel Without a Cause

July 9th: Django Unchained July 16th Oh What a Lovely War July 23rd Paul

July 30th A Very Long Engagement

ST GEORGE'S CHURCH GLENLUCE ROAD Sat 6th July: 11 .00 am - 1.00 pm JUMBLE SALE The follow up Clearance Jumble Sale is on the 20th July at the same time

BLACKHEATH SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY July 8th Visit: Rochester Airport

Details from the Secretary Sept 2nd (Recommended) Crossness Engines Trust Open Day - Pumping Station Beam Engines in **Steam** Visitors are welcome, and are requested to donate £3.00 to Society funds.

INDUSTRIAL HISTORY SOCIETY

16th July. 7.30 pm Chris Rule on W.H.Smith – 'Spread The News'. "Ruler of the Queen's Navee" Meeting are held at The Old Bakehouse, Bennett Park, SE3 (at the back of Age Exchange Shop. There is no on site parking – please do not park there, but use the car park behind the station.

BLACKHEATH BRIDGE CLUB welcomes all players to duplicate sessions in Mycenae House Mon & Thurs. 7.15 pm & on Wed. at 1.15 Tel. 8851 2609 WESTCOMBE WRITERS' CIRCLE 1st. Thursday each month, 2.30-4.30 at Mycenae House. Ring Joan Paice on 8305 1652 or Rosemary Gill on 8858 5088 BLACKHEATH FLOWER CLUB Meets third Friday of every month at 1.45 pm at Mycenae House **BLACKHEATH & GREENWICH WOMEN'S INSTITUTE:** First Wednesday of every month at 7.30 pm at Sunfields Methodist Church, Old Dover Road, SE3 8SJ eileenflanagan194@btinternet.com BLACKHEATH HALLS

Wed 24th July 2.00 - 4.30 pm TEA DANCES: sequence dancing, quickstep, cha cha cha and much more, compered by Mr Wonderful

TICKETS: £5 includes light refreshments Tickets: 020 8305 9300 or 020 8463 0100 FRIENDS OF MYCENAE GARDENS Sun. 8th September 12 noon - 4.00 pm Friends'

dog event, the Canine Capers Fun Day. This year it is being organised by the Dog Society Greenwich & Blackheath for the Friends of Mycenae Gardens, and will once again include competition classes for dogs as well as doggie jumble, treats for dogs etc.

Plenty of warning to get the pooch spruced up!

Friday 12 July from 10am to 12pm

The Council is reviewing its home care services for elderly and vulnerable people and is seeking the views of service users, their carers and families to help improve the service. Give your views at the Eltham Centre, Archery Road SE9. or email: christine.moran@royalgreenwich.gov.uk

University of Greenwich

Public Services International Research Unit Invites health practitioners to a half day conference on: HEALTH PROVISION IN THE UK: understanding the challenges for professionals **Sat 6th July 0930** at King William Court, University of Greenwich: Half-day conference aims to keep health professionals informed of the background to the coming

changes in healthcare provision. All health practitioners wecome.

Speakers include: Dr Colin Leys and Kim Holt

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THEATRE & OPERA

THE GREENWICH THEATRE Crooms Hill, Greenwich, London SE10 8ES 020 8858 7755 FOUR FARCES Thurs 4th - Fri 5th July 7.30 pm. A delicious evening of one-act farces from the Victorian stage. "Witty and hilarious"

STELLA Thurs 11th - Sat 13th July 7.30 pm Sat Mat. 1.30 pm "the audience choked on the bared emotions and the wonderment of people seeing deep space for the first time." The Guardian.

TRACK 3 Tues 27th - Sat 31st August 7.30 Sat Matinee. 2.30 pm Chekhov's play Three Sisters reinterpreted, with music and dance. Award-winning production straight from Los Angeles

THE SPACE 269 Westferry Road London E14 3RS 0207 515 7799 / www.space.org.uk Nearest stn: Mudchute (DLR) Buses: D3, D7, 135 2md - 9th July FESTEN.

SCRIPTSPACE 7th July, 1pm 4th August, 1pm ScriptSpace is our monthly script-reading workshop which provides playwrights with an opportunity to have a work in progress read by professional actors Free events

July 14th 7.0 pm IN PURSUIT OF COOL featuring Lucy Frederick

July 22nd - 28th 8. pm PENTHESILEA Gothic & gory myth of gender war

30th July - 3rd August 7.30 pm THE DAGGER AND WHITE LILY Alex lives in a council flat in SE London when a new neighbour moves in

Aug 6th - 17th 8.00 pm A DARK NIGHT RISES The surreal world of Eugene Ionesco Aug 22nd 7.30 pm PERFECTION? "Mirror, mir-

ror, on the wall 26th August - 1st Sept 8.00 pm STORY OF A NIGHT PIANIST

MUSIC

JUNIOR TRINITY PRIZEGIVING CONCERT Sat. July 13th 7.00 pm Cadogan Hall £15., £12, £8, £5.00 for children under twelve

Featuring Strings, Concertante, Symphony Orchestra, Wind Orchestra, Big band, Voice Choir, Four Part Choir & Concerto performances by final year Junior Trinity students

LIVE JAZZ - AT MYCENAE HOUSE

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See http://www.jazznights.co.uk/ ENGLÍSH FOLK MUSIC

9.00 pm every Tuesday at the Lord Hood pub, Creek Road; mainstream jazz every Thursday SECOND CHANCE CHOIR We rehearse Thursday evenings during term time, in Blackheath.

Margery Nzerem 0208 858 3544 margery@nzerem.bbmax.co.uk

BLACKHEATH HALLS **COMMUNITY OPERA**

Macbeth

by Giuseppe Verdi

9th, 10th, 12th July at 7.00pm; 14th July at 2.00pm

Blackheath Halls: Great Hall

To book ring 020 8463 0100 Tickets: £17.00 | £15.00 concs.

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discussion, or to arrange a visit? We could be just what you are looking for! Call me, Justine O'Hare, Manager, on 0208 331 6703. Alternatively, email me at bella@zoom54321.fsnet.co.uk

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LOCAL COUNCILLORS

Cllr. Alex Grant Tel. 8855 7292E-mail Alex.grant greenwich gov Surgeries: 1st. Friday of each month, 7.00 - 8.00 pm, Mycenae House; 3rd. Saturday of each month, 3.30-4.30 pm, St James Church Hall, Kidbrooke Park Rd.

Conservative: Cllr. Geoff Brighty
Tel. 8921 5663 (Town Hall) or
8858 9731 (Home)

geoffrey.brighty@ greenwich.gov.uk Cllr. Alex Wilson Tel. 07783 611607 Email: alex.wilson@greenwich.gov.uk Surgery:
1st Monday of the month 6 -

7.00 pm Blackheath Library, Old Dover Rd.

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FEATURES

A Rose by Any Other Name ...

LINDSEY ABBOTT

homeless woman known to many residents of Greenwich and Blackheath simply as 'Rose,' passed away this spring. She was hit by a cement mixing truck as she crossed Shooters Hill Road between Royal Greenwich Park and the Heath.

My husband and I first met when we lived along Tranquil Passage, the pedestrian passageway in Blackheath Village.

Rose, most recognizable as a pale round face peering out from layer upon layer of coats and blankets, read (and possibly slept) sitting upon one of the benches in the Village. This bench was her evening spot, and my husband and I, along with many other residents of Blackheath, would bring her cups of tea and food. We would also bring her our finished books. Rose was always reading.

My husband and I would see her reading in Greenwich Park, too. Always sitting on the same bench in the Rose Garden under an umbrella in the rain or slightly unfurled from her layers when the sun was out. We understand from the park gardeners that that is how she came to be called Rose

Rose was a kind-hearted young woman. After she passed away, people who knew her left flowers, cards, and paintings of her that they had made and left them on her bench in the Rose Garden. Rose had become a fixture, a figure of the garden space, and these offerings were a small memorial to her life.

When the London Olympic Games were celebrated last summer and Greenwich Park was closed, Rose moved to the Cator Estate, where my husband I had subsequently moved. Again, she occupied a

bench in the sun tucked away down Blackheath Park Road. Rose enjoyed new kindnesses from different villagers who passed by her during those summer months

But Rose was kind, too. In fact, my only exchange with Rose involved her watching my baby, so I could use the ladies' toilet in Greenwich Park.

It would be an untruth to say that we knew Rose. We didn't. She kept herself to herself like so many homeless people do. Or perhaps, Rose was unknowable simply because we chose not to know her. We didn't want to become involved, get too close. We could offer tea, not time.

But we gave Rose a name. She had both a name given to her by her family – a name I don't know – and also one given to her by this community because in fact, she was a member of our community.

Rose is like our homeless Thomas, the older bearded man in Blackheath Village or Kevin with his paintings outside of Shepherd's or the South Asian chap who sells the Big Issue some days near the train station. I'm afraid I have bought his magazine but never asked his name.

Yes, Rose is like these other homeless people but she is also like you and like me. Our very act of naming makes her, makes us, human. It links us, binds us. We are no longer animal when we name, even if we behave that way toward each other sometimes.

We would do well to remember Rose and her presence in our community. And now that Rose is gone, we would do well to remember people like her — and to remember they are human, just like us.

Farewell Rose. Wither thee shall not.

Your comments, please!

At the Westcombe Society Annual General Meeting, members were asked to complete this short questionnaire. Now it's <u>your</u> chance to give <u>your</u> views! Please email your answers to WestcombeNews@yahoo.co.uk, or send to:

WN Feedback, 163 Westcombe Hill, SE3 7DP

The Westcombe News: Questionnaire

Please help to shape the Westcombe News (WN) in the way you want by answering these questions. Please answer like this, for example: 1 A 2 B 3 C etc.

1	The WN is	A too big	B too small	C about right
2	The print size is	A too large	B too small	C about right
3	The photographs	A too many	B too few	C about right
4	The adverts are	A too many	B too few	C about right

5 The news and features, im terms of local material there is:

A not enough

B enough

C too much really

6 The news and features are:

A not varied enough B too varied C about right

Any other comments e.g. on use of colour, welcome!

THANK YOU!

'Let your talent shine!' says Ben.

hink you've got talent, do you want to share your music with a new audience? If so then Ben Golding wants to hear from you and to get you a showcase for your artistry.

The Charlton based writer/producer now puts on several 'open mic' shows locally including The Railway in Blackheath village, The Morden Arms in Brand Sreet, Greenwich as well as The Belvedere Hotel in Belvedere.

"The venues are all great: The Railway is loud, busy and great for building up your showmanship whereas the Morden Arms and The Belvedere Hotel are a bit more intimate and quiet, really good for developing your skills as an artist"

Ben kicks off the sessions with a couple of his own songs, then it's open house. Folk, blues, pop and jazz – you name it and you can perform it. The opportunity is all there! There are sometimes as many as



twelve different artists playing.

"It's really straightforward." says Ben.
"The acts just get in touch with me to book up a slot in advance, or if they're a little nervous they can just turn up on the night and see if they feel courageous enough to give it a shot there and then, no pressure!"

Explained Ben: "The main purpose of the nights is so artists can gradually begin performing without all the stress and hassle of having to book gigs or cut deals with promoters."

Ben says he's always been really impressed with the talent. "It's incredible to get some of the best singer songwriters and vocalists coming along to share their music, it's a real privilege to be involved."

The Railway - Open mike evening 16 Blackheath Village, London SE3 9LE Every Wednesday at 8pm to 10.45pm -Free admission -

Age Exchange

If you're passing by why not drop into Age Exchange? The beautifully designed and revamped interior, and the volunteers who staff it, create a very welcoming ambience, and it is a good place for morning coffee, or a pleasant lunch, and a chat with friends.

You get a pleasant mix of people there – from senior citizens having a quiet cup of tea and a chat, to young mums.

The library downstairs is an added attraction, where one can browse even if one does not want to borrow a book.

Here is a check-list of Age Exchange's regular events:

- * Mondays: 12.30 2.30 pm Drop-in session for people with dementia and their carers. There are creative activities and special events throughout the year.
- * Wednesdays: swimming group free transport and swimming for Lewisham residents 60+. (Bad luck for those of us living the wrong side of the border!)
- * Thursdays: A Stitch in Time knitting group, beginners welcome



- * **Fridays** 10.15 11.00 am Rhyme-time for pre-school children
- * Every third Friday of the month: 2.00 4.00 pm DJ Jeff nd Jo's Boogie Woogie afternoons: Join the dancing or just relax and enjoy the music. £3.00 includes tea, cake and chat.
- * Last Friday of the month: 2.00 3.00 pm Film and Theatre Club Tickets £3.00 Films and talks on a range of 20th Century actors and theatrical themes.

Paul Coldwell: A Layered Practice (Graphic Works 1993-2012), on show at the Stephen Lawrence Gallery until July 11th, focuses on Coldwell's considerable contribution to printmaking, both as an artist and researcher, over the last twenty years. The works in the exhibition explore relationships to objects through memory and space, while reflecting the artist's ongoing concern to integrate traditional printmaking practice with digital technologies. Paul Coldwell is Professor of Fine Art at the University of the Arts London. Above: "Constellations: Suitcase" 2002

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ENVIRONMENT



Planning applications can be viewed in the library, or at the Woolwich Library on the lower ground floor of the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington St. They may also be viewed on www. greenwich.gov.uk/planning



At the June volunteer day in Westcombe Woodlands, the Friends decided to make use of various pieces of rubble, brick and rubbish lying around the woods to construct something which would actually encourage the wildlife – rather than simply consigning it to landfill. The posh name for what was constructed is a hibernaculum (a winter shelter for dormant insects and reptiles) but it was immediately dubbed the "Bug Hotel". The architects of the hotel were Don Albrecht and Miriam Hier (who built something similar in the garden at Halstow Primary School). We have no information about any reservations made so far!

The devil is in the diesel

In a recent meeting on air **I**pollution, organised by the London Forum, Dick Allard from the Westcombe Society's **Environment Committee heard** how many roads in our locality continue to breach the European Commission's air **SARAH**

quality standards. While exhaust

fumes are generally invisible, on a sunny day you can actually see the haze over the city when standing high up in Greenwich Park

Dangerously high pollution levels are associated with poor health, particularly when it comes to respiratory diseases one of the seven stated health priorities in the Royal Borough of Greenwich's Health & Wellness Strategy (2010).

Material presented by the keynote speaker, Dr Ian Mudway, lecturer in respiratory toxicology at King's College London, clearly demonstrated

that while diesel performs much better than other fuels with respect to CO2 emissions, it is far worse in terms of nitrous oxides and 'particulate matter' tiny particles which according to the organisation Healthy Air can

be up to "100 times thinner than a human WINTERBOTTOM hair and which lodge themselves into the

lungs and impact respiratory function"

"While I was aware of the general issue of traffic's major contribution to the high levels of pollution, I was unaware that, in addition to tailpipe emissions, there is also a lesser but nonetheless significant contribution from tyre wear and braking," commented Dick Allard following the meeting.

Find out how to reduce your contribution to air pollution and get alerts when pollution levels are high by logging on to www.healthyair.org.uk

Our Oak Tree

ve years ago, I moved into Beaconsfield Close d in Westcombe Park, a friendly 1950s housing estate built around a towering, ancient oak tree Our neighbourhood would be a very different

place, and much poorer, without this amazing, resilient oak, and I want to find out and share more about its history so that we continue to value and protect what I think of as a grand old lady

It takes four people, with arms outstretched, to circle its trunk, which puts its age at roughly 400 years, at a guess. This incredible tree has survived the development of residential Greenwich, World Wa II bombing and – only just – the great hurricane of 1987, and no doubt much more.

Local people have saved her in the not-very-distant past, and it would be good to believe we would, if necessary, do so again – but if we know her story, we'll be more likely to.

So I'll be blogging at www.beaconsfieldgreatoak. wordpress.com as, with help, I try to piece together the story of our great oak. And I'd welcome guest blogs from others – for if this becomes a collective project, it will be much better.

I would really like to hear from anyone who knows more, who has memories or stories of the oak, who wants to share photographs or artwork of it (kids' or adults'), who has pointers on whom I should speak to; or anyone who would just like to say what this tree means to them.

I'll also welcome anyone putting me straight if they feel that I've got facts wrong.

GAVIN McGREGOR

Meeting our Councillors ANNE ROBBINS reports

On June 5th, the three councillors for the Blackheath & Westcombe Ward met members of the WS Environment Committee, to discuss planning

Geoff Brighty, Alex Wilson, and Alex Grant are our immediate points of contact with the Council, and know how to navigate the complex organisation of the Royal Borough of Greenwich. They all serve or have served on the Area Planning Committee, and share many of our concerns.

Some of the issues were pretty technical. For instance, sometimes the Borough's planning department has seemed to move slowly to enforce rules which have been breached – the Council has had difficulty tracking this.

The Government has relaxed mandatory reporting requirements, so data on enforcement isn't being collected as rigorously as in the past. However, we heard that a new head of Enforcement has been appointed which should help.

We looked too at the question of what constitutes a non-material change to a planning application, as there's no guidance on the Council's website. We also questioned the quality of public consultations, both in local planning applications and more major issues such as the proposed new river crossings.

Other questions were more specific. The re-purposed shipping container in Mycenae Gardens, which was used to store judo equipment, stands empty, and the

councillors said that the current owner has now been given a dead line for its removal.

Sadly, nothing could be done to stop the removal of so many trees at Westcombe Park Station. The Council designated the railside a feature of the area, as an undisturbed wildlife habitat, but the owner, Network Rail, is a statutory body which largely is exempt from normal planning rules.

Parking also remains an issue, with commuters using the free bays, especially in Mycenae Road and Old Dover Road. Now that the backlog of work from the Olympics has cleared, councillors said there may be ways to restart discussions with the Traffic Department, though this could take some time.

All the councillors are very aware of issues to do with the use of the Heath, and have found this quite frustrating, given that much of the open space is controlled by Lewisham Council.

However, the Greenwich Environmental Health officers have become much more involved in monitoring noise from events

such as Run to the Beat. And councillors commended the work of the Greenwich Parks and Open Spaces team, restoring habitats on local areas of the Heath after the Olympics. Both of these are areas that the Environment Committee has been working hard on, with help from the councillors.

The Committee also asked about impartial decision-making, when the Council itself is applying for planning permission. Here, the councillors argued that it's better by far to have the local, elected, representatives making decisions, than central government, which will not know the

The councillors all referred to the fact that the local elections of May 2014 will likely see changes to the composition of the Council. Locally, there will be at least one new councillor, and already the parties are getting ready to develop their campaigns. Whatever happens, it will be hard to match the dedication of the current set of councillors to helping residents in Westcombe Park.

Christopher's column

Orange skies

In late May, I saw candy pink tulips hovering above ea froth of blue & pink in a distant island bed which was an antidote to the harsh red & vellow mixes elsewhere in the park.

Later, I went back to see what the froth was – pink and blue forget-menots (a notable weed in most gardens). An ephemeral bedding cheme, but one which looked fresh & sparkly – and note they were candy pink, not the harsher bluer pink of children's toys.

Having planted many tulips in dark red or maroon and rather fewer of the more enervating shades (orange Ballerina, the pink & tan Bruine Wimpel (aka Malaika)), I like a shot of colour in a dull Spring. I've said before that deeper colours often

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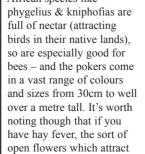
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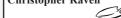
create a dark space in a garden, and many people cannot 'see' them (though some bright colours are also apparently hard to register).

Allium and Dutch irises come in blues & purples which are vibrant, but we are stuck in a rut with the tasteful dark tulips. Offset dark tones with greys or lime greens, yes, but I still yearn for bright colours.

Flower colour also affects how successful they are at attracting bees & butterflies. Bees like blue & yellow (which appears blue to them), while butterflies are keen on red. They also see a range of colours we can't and some plants have 'bee guides', striped patterns to lead the insect into the nectar. If you're keen on your beneficial insects, flowers which open late such as evening primrose and Mirabilis jalapa will extend the day for them. South

> African species like phygelius & kniphofias are full of nectar (attracting birds in their native lands), so are especially good for bees - and the pokers come in a vast range of colours and sizes from 30cm to well over a metre tall. It's worth noting though that if you have hay fever, the sort of open flowers which attract insects may also affect you!







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30 MYCENAE ROAD ref 13/1301/TC Reduce and thin two sycamores and reduce neigh bour's acacia back to boundary

57 MYCENAE ROAD ref 13/1328/TC Crown reduce eucalyptus by 30% in rear garden

7 COLERAINE ROAD ref 13/1327/TC

24 WESTCOMBE PARK ROAD ref 13/1299/TC **Christopher Raven** Fell silver birch in rear garden

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