



# Westcombe NEWS

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September 2013 Issue 7

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

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

## Whose side are they on?

How many times have you driven along Old Dover Road, planning to do a bit of shopping, only to find there's no place to park? And then driven home . . .

Our news editor, Geoff Garvey, asked this question in February 2012... and 18 months later, the answers still remain EXACTLY THE SAME.

At that time, we reported that in January – 2012! – , the Royal Borough's Highways Committee decided "on further consultation". Even though the committee was presented with a petition signed by 14,000 people demanding free but controlled parking, no decision has been made. 18 months later, we still await results.

In June local Councillor Geoffrey Brightly asked the Council for an update on the outstanding parking review. He told the *WN*: "Unfortunately following the aborted consultation on parking in Old Dover Road, it is now part of a Borough-wide review of parking which is due to report 'sometime' – but seems to have been kicked into the long grass."

So the parking problem continues, compounded by a problem identified years ago by the Westcombe Society Environment Committee: at that time they strongly opposed a planning application for a second hand car-dealership in Old Dover Road on the grounds that it would contribute to serious traffic congestion.

The borough approved the planning application, in its wisdom . . . and, sure enough, there IS serious traffic congestion in Old Dover Road. Looking through the files, the *WN* discovered that the planning application was granted on a number of conditions, including:

*"No loading or unloading of vehicles arriving or departing from the premises shall be carried out except within the curtilage of the premises, and all activities associated with the business shall be confined to the curtilage of the premises. All cars displayed for sale and awaiting display for sale shall be located within the application site."* The reason given was: *"To avoid obstruction of surrounding streets and to safeguard amenities of adjoining properties"*.

Local people have alleged that cars awaiting sale are often parked in the street, sometimes six or more. This would significantly diminish opportunities for shoppers to stop and shop.

**If this is true, then there is clearly a breach of the planning condition, and Council enforcement action is required.**

**Whose side are they on?**

That is the question local traders are beginning to ask – parking is just one issue. However, another gripe, business rates, is not down to the Council: they are laid down by central government, and the local council has no control over them; but, as a London Council report indicated recently, 7,000 small

businesses have closed across the capital, and the burden of taxation is not helping.

For this reason, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) London is calling for a freeze in business rates for 2014/15.

One thing the Council *can* do is to review its proposals on "the pavement tax". In July, the *WN* reported on Council plans, which could cost traders up to £2,000 a year. If some traders feel compelled to close in the light on this extra burden, it means that the number of boarded up shops will continue to grow – and council revenues from rent will suffer as a result. And the community will suffer, too. A "real lose-lose situation," one could say.

A spokesman for the Council said: "The policy was agreed by Cabinet on 23rd Jan. and letters were sent out to all relevant traders . . . They were a precursor to visits from the Street Trading Team, who make an assessment for Licensing and assist in completion of applications. . ."

The Council points out that all local authorities bar one in London are making use of the London Local Authorities Act 2007 "to facilitate and manage the trading in question. The fees charged in the Royal Borough are pretty well the lowest in London ... The first square metre is charged at £7.00 per week, with each additional square metre charged at £3.50."

**The East Greenwich Business Association in partnership with the FSB has launched a petition to oppose the Council's scheme. Google: "Street trading petition".**

**WN  
reporter**

## Welcome to Mycenae House!



"... what a find this place is ... one of London's best kept secrets"

Mycenae House has just launched a fabulous new Café Bar. It's a replacement for both the old bar and the old café to combine them into a modern, stylish and comfortable place to hang out.

Styled on a 1930's New York Deli café, it complements the look of the original 1930's architecture of the house – but also provides a contemporary setting for resting from all the activities of the house.

This new development is just the start of a planned raft of improvements, redevelopments and building upgrades planned for the next few years. Next on the agenda is a new long building lease from the Royal Borough of Greenwich which will unlock the potential for major building developments including the desperately needed customer lift to all four floors.

The new café bar has seen heavy investment in new equipment and new stock to offer a broad selection of healthy food and beverages whilst providing a licensed bar for drinks from quality wines, draught beers, bottled beers and spirits.

The coffee at Mycenae House is now amongst the best available locally after the delivery of a state-of-the-art bean to cup fresh coffee machine – "We are told that the latte is particularly recommendable," said the manager, Mark Johnson-Brown.

Mark added: "We plan to stock as much local produce as possible with local beers from the Greenwich-based Meantime

Brewery and Chiswick-based Fullers, locally made scrumptious cakes and sandwiches and all other produce from locally based suppliers."

The old café has now been replaced with a new workshop and meeting room with disabled access. This is an important development for the house as all other meeting rooms are located on the first and second floors. The room will be a flexible space with kitchen facilities but will also be suitable for meeting and workshops for up to 20 people.

## Injured fox cub

In July, Marilyn Little heard that there was an injured fox on Westcombe Hill, and called out Eddie from Willow Wildlife Rescue – a local charity supported by the Westcombe Society.

The fox was little more than a large cub but had obviously been hit by a car and had what seemed to be a broken leg. It had settled itself down by the roadside but unfortunately just before Eddie arrived it was scared by the traffic and ran down the road, dragging its leg.

"Due to the amount of traffic we couldn't see where it went," said Marilyn. "Eddie had a good look for it but couldn't find it. I apologised for an unsuccessful trip but he was only too happy to try. So we are making good use of our donation!"

**Ed: If anyone manages to locate this fox cub, please ring Eddie Williams at Willow Wildlife Rescue on 07956 472 284.**

## < < NEWS BRIEFS > >

View our new web site!

The Westcombe Society has created its new website - <http://www.westcombesociety.org/>. For a preview, see page 2.

### Run to the Beat

Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research are once again the official charity for Run To The Beat 2013. The Run to the Beat half marathon is on Sunday, 8th September, and starts and finishes in Greenwich Park. Among the roads affected are: Old Dover Road west of Banchory Road, Vanbrugh Park, Charlton Way, Trafalgar Road and Woolwich Road. Over 19,000 runners are expected to make their way around the 13.1 mile course. [www.runtothebeat.co.uk](http://www.runtothebeat.co.uk)

\* Race for Life on July 7th raised nearly £1m for Cancer Research UK. Well done, all!

### Traffic petition

A petition signed by 95 residents of Westcombe Hill and Siebert Road on behalf of the Westcombe Hill Neighbourhood Watch was handed to Geoff Brightly to deliver to the council meeting on 31st July. The petition was to request Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG) to enforce the speed limit.

### Burglary threat

Garden tools have been used in a number of burglaries/attempted burglaries in the Blackheath Westcombe Ward. Please make sure that all tools are stored in securely locked garages and sheds.

### Westcombe Park Hood-lums

A woman who boarded a train at 6.00 pm on March 24th. at Charlton Station had her mobile phone snatched from her grasp as the train arrived at Westcombe Park Station. Police are searching for two young men in light, and dark, grey hoods they believe can help with their enquiries. **Anyone with information should ring 0800 405040, or to remain anonymous, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111**

### Meet your police

The Blackheath and Westcombe Safety Neighbourhood Team will be hosting a meeting at St John Fisher Church, Kidbrooke Park Road on September 12th from 3.00 - 4.00 pm – and also on September 25th.

**Police in Greenwich can be contacted by email at: [policegreenwich@met.police.uk](mailto:policegreenwich@met.police.uk)**

## The Westcombe Society

### The Members' Evening

is on Sat 7th Sept. 7.00 - 10.00 pm  
in Mycenae House.

Invitations have gone out for this party but if you have not received yours and would like to come, please contact Caroline on 020 8853 0948.

### Macmillan Biggest Coffee Morning

is on Fri 27th Sept 10.00am to 2.00pm in Mycenae House.

Please come & support this event

& help raise funds for Macmillan. If you are interested in helping on the day or by making cakes and sandwiches for sale at the Coffee Morning, please contact Caroline on 020 8853 0948.

### Children's Nearly New Sale,

is on Sat 28th Sept 2.00 - 4.00pm at Mycenae House. Bargains galore in children's & babies' toys, clothes & equipment.

Entry 30p (50p non members of the Westcombe Society) Children enter free. If you are interested in having a table or rail to sell your nearly new items, please contact Joanne on 07709 571777.

### Westcombe Society Quiz Night.

The date has changed to Friday 1st November 2013 at Mycenae House. More information will be in the October issue.



# COMMUNITY NEWS

## WESTCOMBE NEWS

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**http://www.westcombesociety.org**

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**Marilyn Little, 163 Westcombe Hill, SE3 7DP 020 8853 1312 (email:marilyn.little@btinternet.com)**

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*http://www.westcombesociety.org/westcombe-news/*  
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*http://westcombe.blogspot.com*

Westcombe society membership

please send this membership form to: peter Lewins, 221 Westcombe hill, se 3 7Dp

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WS

THE WESTCOMBE SOCIETY

Neville Grant views the Westcombe Society's new website:

http://www.westcombesociety.org

Have you ever hit on a website, and got lost and confused? No chance with our new website! It is extremely user-friendly, and very informative, and we should all give our grateful thanks to Emily Norton, Anne Robbins and Marilyn Little for their hard work in setting it up.

In parenthesis, we should also pay tribute to Dave Riddle, who has for years placed the *Westcombe News* on a site hosted by Goldsmiths. I understand that all the back numbers of the *Westcombe News* included there will eventually find their way onto our new website.

Yes, our website is not stationary – it is being added to all the time, hopefully, by users, too, when comments are invited.

The website opens up with a very clear home page starting with a *Welcome* – and you can see an overview of ongoing issues, such as the latest planning applications, and news about John Roan development, the Greenwich Line users Group (with the somewhat bibulous mnemonic "GLUG", and cycling in Greenwich Park. You will also find coverage of events that occurred too late to be included in the *WN*, like the *Race for Life* that took place on July 7th.

Click on the invitation to continue reading, and at once you get the chance to 'go interactive' with these words:

"Please explore and let us have any comments. Comments can be emailed to info@westcombesociety.org Please also contact us if you have any information that might be interesting to other residents or to the society. We would also love to receive photographs if you are happy to share them with us and the local community via our

website or the *Westcombe News*.

"You can find out more about us by clicking on the links on the website menu – best to start with the 'About Us' option."

The other options, across the top of the home page, are *Events*, *Westcombe News*, *Environment*, *E-Alerts* – and then two invitations, to *Join us* and *Contact us*.

Explore this website, and, just with the *Westcombe News*, you immediately get a sense of what it is like to live, not just somewhere in London, (or Greenwich if you prefer!) but in a local community – something very rare in any major city.

The website highlights the main areas of activity carried out under the auspices of the Westcombe Society – Events, the *Westcombe News*, and the Environment.

Under "Environment" for example, there is information about the work of the environment committee. In addition, there are other sections on transport, planning and licensing, and green spaces. There is also an invaluable section called *Links*, where you can find out all about a host of sister organizations in our neck of the woods, too numerous to list here.

Readers may feel slightly alarmed by a section called *E-Alerts*. In the immortal words of the late Michael Winner (and David Cameron!) 'Keep calm, dear!' This section enables you to register with the webmaster, and receive information on events, planning applications or consultations that come in too late to be covered by the *Westcombe News*.

Something for everyone, then. And don't just contact us – join us! Yes, a warm welcome awaits you!

Letters

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

**From: Zoe Cooke**  
**Westcombe Park Road**  
I have lived in Westcombe Park my entire life, and usually enjoy the Westcombe News, as it celebrates community and showcases how great an area we live in. I was however, incredibly disappointed at issue 6 [for July/August].

On the front page in your piece on the Race For Life, you rejected a fantastic opportunity to show how great a fundraising event Race For Life is. There were no details about how to get involved or participate at all, and the majority of the column was dedicated to how to complain about the potential noise. It was incredibly disheartening to read. I hope that after the event you use a lot of column inches showing the event and how people can donate.

Furthermore, the triumph with which you applauded the defeat of NIMBY was appalling. You write that between 10,000 and 50,000 people hoped to attend. That's 10 - 50,000 people who are now disappointed that they cannot attend. Such events are great for bringing people together, creating a sense of community, and frankly, are a lot of fun. Surely that's what the Westcombe Society should embody as well.

**Ed: Thanks Zoe. The paper belongs to the readership not to the editorial team, and what is printed is what is sent in. The information on Race for Life came straight from a circular delivered to some**

dwelling close to the Heath by the organisers, and this letter gave no additional information about the event or how to register for it. If you wanted to publicise Race for Life you could have written in! We make a point of publicising the work of many charities, but cannot claim to be comprehensive! Next year, perhaps we can expect to receive some column inches from you? The paper is yours, too!

**2. Nimby. There was absolutely no triumphalism: what happened is what was reported. There is not an editorial policy on this event. That said, the ongoing issues seem to be**

**\* the way Lewisham has granted a commercial licence "in perpetuity"; a unique arrangement, I think.**  
**\* the incompetence shown so far by the organisers. 10 - 50,00 fans are to be disappointed not by the WN, but by the organizers who could not get their act together!**  
**A spokesman for the Blackheath Joint Working Party adds: "Disappointed pop fans can of course easily travel to the O2, where there will be no disturbance to local residents and the delicate eco-balance of the Heath grassland will not be damaged."**

**From: Gabi Marston Coraline Road**  
Shopping at the Standard is made more interesting by the excellent imaginative and often humorous window displays of the Cats Protection League shop.

These are of such a high standard (no pun intended!) that I wonder if there is any organisation which could give official, recognition of their quality? Perhaps a certificate to display in their window, from the Traders Associations or Local Chamber of Commerce?

I feel efforts like this which improve our already very pleasant area should be acknowledged. Any ideas, readers?

## Coping with welfare reforms

The government has considerable public support for attempts to reduce the welfare bill with "benefit caps", and one strategy adopted has been "the universal credit". Unfortunately, research by the respected Joseph Rowntree Foundation has shown that many on benefits are little better-off when working. Meanwhile, the Trussell Trust has revealed that since benefits were cut, three times more households are turning to food banks. **MARY ANDREWS describes what local people are doing to alleviate the problems**

**"Don't let's sit here moaning....."**  
said an organiser of the event held at St John's church in July to discuss how to respond to the Welfare reforms of the government, "...but let's try to respond positively on behalf of our neighbourhood."

It was these welfare reforms – briefly alluded to in August's *WN*, that prompted the meeting, hosted by the Greenwich Borough Deans (who represent local churches to the Council) which included representatives from local charities and voluntary organisations as well as Eileen Edwards, who co-ordinates the local authority's Welfare Response Team.

Eileen outlined the help the council provides to 3,577 Greenwich households – including 2,000 children – affected by the Housing Benefit reduction (the 'bedroom tax'). Saying 'Let's share our good ideas and common desire to help' she urged us to dialogue with the council (while making clear that money is extremely tight).

Mike Leader, pastor of Charlton and Blackheath Christian Fellowship, highlighted the Council's practical and moral support for local initiatives such as Street Pastors and the Greenwich Foodbank.

The second speaker, Marva Millwood, was a local debt councillor with national charity Christians Against Poverty (CAP), which is 'passionate about lifting people out of debt and poverty through its award-winning debt-help service and money management courses'.

CAP provides a free service to 100 clients in Greenwich who have been impoverished by relationship breakdown, unemployment and benefit cuts, like the 400 families who will be worse off under the Total Benefit Cap. Marva emphasised CAP's holistic approach to tackling both debt and its causes; clients are befriended and supported until they are debt-free – typically for five years.

Also present were Meridian Money Advice, and youth charities, Superkids, XLP, Greenwich Youth for Christ, and Emmaus Greenwich, whose community of homeless in Plumstead gives people 'a bed...and a reason to get out of it'.

Questions and discussion among the audience revealed a desire to help by sharing ideas, working together and using individual time and skills. Surely a positive response – better than "sitting here moaning."

## From the archives . . . Westcombe News October 1974: Flying Fireman

Fireman Jim Wills (38) is building an aeroplane in the front room of his home of Humber Road – a real one, not a toy!

It already fills the room, and is being built with an eye to getting it out when it is ready. It is the first Pietenpol Air Camper to be built in GB, though the American design goes back to 1927.

The aircraft will have a range of approx. 450 miles when complete.  
**Editor's Note: Mary Mills tells us that he really did fly this aircraft – at Biggin Hill – for a bit. Did anyone take any photos?**

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Westcombe News September 2013



# LOCAL NEWS

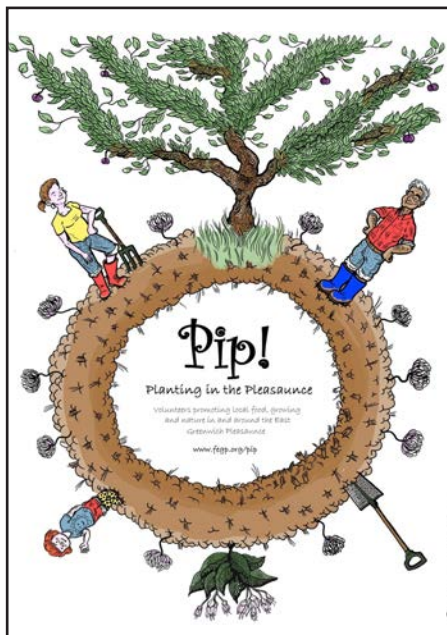
## Pip Pip Hooray!

Gavin  
McGregor

The volunteers who created and now care for the community orchard of apples, pears and plums in the East Greenwich Pleasaunce have renamed themselves **Pip!**, which stands for *Planting in the Pleasaunce*.

While keeping the fruity theme central, the new name also takes account of the other work the local residents have been doing in the area, including wildflower sowing, planting to boost biodiversity and other, future activities to support local food growing and wildlife.

As well as going by the name @pip-greenwich on Twitter, the group also has a page on the brand new website of the Friends of East Greenwich Pleasaunce – go to [www.fegp.org/pip](http://www.fegp.org/pip), where you can read their mission statement, join the Facebook group and find out about events and opportunities to get involved.



## Council accused of hypocrisy

Local readers of the *Evening Standard* for August 8th. may have been intrigued to read this news item:

*Thomas Turrell, a former employee of Labour-run Greenwich who is standing for the Conservatives at Blackheath Westcombe said: "When I worked for the council I had a zero-hour contract." He accused local Labour councillors of hypocrisy for condemning such contracts.*

This story also featured on Channel 4 news as reported by Michael Crick.

The *WN* has now been told by the Council that the story is factually incorrect, and Mr Turrell seems to have been ignorant of the terms of his contract.

A spokesman from the Royal Borough told the *WN*: "The council does not and has not employed anyone on zero-hours contracts. We do not support this.

"The council runs an employment project called GLLaB which has placed over 16,000 people into work over the past

decade and a half.

"Their website offers a range of posts available with employers in order to maximise job opportunities for local people . . .

"In the case of Mr Turrell, his contract of employment was with Manpower and not the Council. They have assured us that he was not employed on a zero-hours contract. The advert for the post made both of these points clear.

"Manpower have assured us that time-sheets were submitted showing he worked 35 hours a week. Under his contract, Mr Turrell accrued and was paid holiday pay."

Some of these statements are difficult to square with the Council's website, which states that: "[For some jobs] Contracts will be offered on a zero-hours basis, as the requirements are ad hoc."

## Votes for Women!

The Votes for Women exhibition at the Greenwich Heritage Centre gave a riveting glimpse of what it was like to campaign – for years – for a cause that today we take for granted. Not then!

This exhibition reminded those living in Greenwich that history was being made on their doorsteps, with several key local figures in the suffragette movement: Rosa May Billinghurst, who campaigned in a wheelchair (sometimes being hurled out of it by burly policemen . . .), and Emily Wilding Davison, who famously, tragically, died on Derby Day under the hooves of the King's horse in 1913.

The exhibition included many interesting artefacts and documents (including a "Troll" letter written to Rosa), and recent newspaper reports of women fighting for their rights around the world – indicating that the campaign is far from over – "La Luta Continua".

*Sadly, this exhibition closed at the end of August. It was curated by Carolyn Ayers, a recent graduate from Goldsmiths. Well done, Carolyn!*

## Ormiston Road Eye-sore



"Is this the most over-the-top traffic calming eyesore in the Royal Borough of Greenwich?" asks Ormiston Road resident, Steve Chantrell.

"It has to be seen to be disbelieved. It certainly ranks as one of the costliest and most unsightly – as well as being pretty useless," he claims

"The new seven foot width restriction comprises no less than six posts, twelve separate signs, four lights, two bollards (striped) and two islands – all this in a quiet residential road which already has a 20mph speed limit, and where vehicles cannot pass each other due to parking on either side.

"The main reason the council gives is to deter heavy goods vehicles speeding past Halstow School in the next road. But traffic approaches the school from many other directions, entirely unaffected by the width restriction."

"All it achieved in its first week of operation was at least three vehicles hitting it, including one which took a three inch chunk out of its kerb", he said.

"Ormiston Road residents were not properly consulted on the visual impact

and appropriateness of the signs, contrary to Department of Transport advice in their 'Reducing Sign Clutter' (Traffic Advisory Leaflet 01/13, January 2013 )

"The Department's advice is that signs should be minimal and sympathetic to their environment," says Steve. "With new schemes, the aim is to avoid clutter on the basis that less is more.

"They strongly recommend that local authorities should consult fully on the details of the design so that residents can understand and comment on their placing and appropriateness.

"This the local council signally failed to do. It even failed to include its finalised design in a document that was sent out to residents.

"Why is the Royal Borough ignoring the Departments's advice? If there had been proper consultation on visual impact and appropriateness, I am confident most residents in Ormiston road would have rejected the scheme", he said.

**Ed: See also WN April 2013 page 7: "Change for change's sake"; and Helen Causley's letter to the editor in May 2013. What do readers think?**

## Potty (-) training in the new century

Michael Gove wants five-year-olds to learn computer-programming – though most authorities point out that the ability to think in an abstract rather than a concrete way starts in most children between the ages of six and eight – and is not fully developed until one is a teenager.

## Calling all carers

Age Exchange in Blackheath Village has three events that carers may find helpful:

\* **Inspired Carers' Group:** Drop-in session for people with dementia and their carers: creative activities and special events throughout the year. Mondays 12.30 - 3.30 pm in the Studio

\* **Care after Caring Support group**

A warm welcome for those who were carers, and may perhaps be bereaved or have had to move. Call Tony or Jacqueline on 8318 9105 - or just turn up! Mondays 2.45 - 4.0 pm fortnightly from 2nd Sept to 9th Dec.

\* **Memories project:** record your memories, or those of a loved one. Tuesdays 9.30 - 11.00 am To book a free place leave your details at the box office on at No. 11 or call Alex on (020) 8318 9105

A new invention, the iPotty could be an answer to his prayers: last year, Mr Gove sent a copy of the King James Bible to every primary school in the country. In the same spirit, perhaps he should send an iPotty to every nursery school.

Parents are meant to use the iPotty plus iPad as a toilet training tool, thus it has what you'd expect from such a product (such as a removable potty bowl).

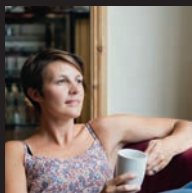


An iPad stand is attached to the front and includes a plastic cover/enclosure to protect the tablet from "messy hands."

**Read more:**  
[www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/ipotty-for-ipad/](http://www.digitaltrends.com/mobile/ipotty-for-ipad/) #ixzz2Mkvg6WV1  
Twitter: @digitaltrends

## Mycenae House community centre

".... one of London's best kept secrets"



### We Have A New Cafe/Bar

02088581749 [www.mycenaehouse.co.uk](http://www.mycenaehouse.co.uk)

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



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# FEATURES

## Rock with Felix!



LEFT: The iBand. RIGHT: some shots of a gig at Thomas Tallis

Felix's School of Rock (FSOR) is a Greenwich based music charity for children. It was established in 2004 by Felix Glenn, a local teacher.

The organisation has been teaching children to 'rock' in band formation on guitar, bass, drums, keyboards and vocals, plus a wide range of other instruments including brass, strings, harmonica and ukulele.

An energetic and community focused charity, in their 9 years, they have tutored over 800 children from over 70 schools, and hosted over 150 community music events including Lewisham Peoples Day.

FSOR has an independent bursary fund to assist single income families plus a fantastic bursary scheme for Thomas Tallis School kids; they can do FSOR for just 10% of the full cost!

The philosophy at FSOR is Self-esteem through music. "We're here to bring out the true potential of young people in this area. FSOR gives them a unique opportunity to shine and an enormous confidence boost," says Felix.

They use a four day experiential pro-



gramme during half terms, Easter and summer holidays, where age-grouped kids are banded together with experienced tutors and musicians (plus a technical assistant for each band) to prepare them for THE GIG on the final day.

Playing to a heated crowd of enthusiastic parents, grandparents plus brothers and sisters is always a winning combination!

As a small, self-funded charity, FSOR relies on the good-will of parents and tutors and the sale of tea, coffee and cakes at the gigs, plus small donations by local organisations. THE GIG is a really spectacular feast of live rock and pop performances by talented young musicians, often with very little experience. THE GIG costs just £1 for kids and £2 for adults.

**The next gig is on Thursday October 31st at 3.00 pm at Thomas Tallis School, Kidbrooke Park Rd, SE3 9PX**

**The next FSOR School is Half Term Mon 29th - Thursday 31st October**

[www.fsor.org.uk](http://www.fsor.org.uk)

**Call Felix on 07888 717 605 for more information.**

## Apples 'n Oranges



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Meet your neighbour:

## Anna Townend

Angela Burr celebrates the life and work of a valiant environment campaigner

In his letter to the *WN* in July this year, I was pleased to see that Trevor Allman shares my view that Anna Townend deserves a medal for her forty year contribution to local and national issues.

He is right, she does ask awkward and frequently annoying questions, but often pertinent and insightful ones. She has over the years put up the backs of many local notables – not just Greenwich Council. But those who denigrate her often know little of her rationale or contribution.

Born in Bexhill, Anna has been a life-long and enthusiastic promoter, both globally and locally, of environmental and ecological issues, including global warming, and is still an active campaigner. Her motto: 'thinking globally, acting locally'.

Anna believes that there should be a balance between the built and natural environment around us. The built environment of cities needs to be balanced towards providing spaces for nature.

She has particularly campaigned for the importance of nature to be integrated into community awareness and borough planning procedures. She has partly channelled her green perspective to planning issues through her involvement in the Greenwich Conservation Group.

Often questioning and becoming a thorn in the flesh of local council planners and developers, Anna was one of the Oxleas Nine' who helped see off the motorway through Oxleas Wood in the 1990s.

Anna was a founder member of the Westcombe Society, and is also a member of many local environmental groups, such as the Greenwich Society, the Friends of Greenwich Park, and what is now the Greenwich Wildlife Advisory Group.

Anna is a founder member and current convenor of Greenwich Environment Forum through which she has channelled her concerns about environmental issues. She was one of the first, in a letter in 1996 to Virginia Bottomley, to suggest the creation of the Millennium Village on the Peninsular.

### The dwarf orchard

Much of her energy has been devoted to the Queens Orchard formerly known as the Dwarf Orchard in the north east corner of Greenwich Park. Anna first visited the site in 1969. She later turned it into an ecological garden (one of the first in London), wildlife reserve and educational centre for local children, and provided for a number of years work experience for unemployed teenagers and released offenders.

Initially unofficially, and officially from 1981, she carried on this work until it was returned to the Council in 2008. She set up Greenlands in Trust to manage it with the aid of volunteers with some funding from herself and local financial help.

From as early as 1975, she started a range of activities and projects involving young school children, teaching them in terms they could understand the practical



PHOTO: Linda Sole

Anna in her beloved Dwarf Orchard

aspects of nature, and encouraging them and their parents to be aware of and appreciate the natural environment.

She also invited national and local speakers to give talks on environmental issues under the umbrella 'Wildlife City'. These Wildlife City events took place over a period of nearly twenty years, with the support of Greenwich Community College.

In 1979, during National Tree Week, she organised a "Plant trees for children" campaign, with much support from the Park Superintendent, Mr Murray.

The children picked the seeds and they were planted in the Park greenhouses, and later transferred to the Dwarf Orchard.

Later, some of the trees were used to replace those destroyed by the great storm of 1987.

The Dwarf Orchard has won various prizes including recently a London Conservation Trust award, and Anna was short listed last year for the National Trust 'Local Heroes' award.

### A plum property development site

On a number of occasions over the last thirty years Anna, with community support, has had to fight off attempts to turn the garden into a housing site. It was only when she confirmed through her research that the outer wall of the garden was the original Tudor wall that, with public support, she got it listed, thereby ensuring that the site became permanently safe.

Given her years of unstinting support for environmental issues, and the manner in which Anna has worked tirelessly to protect and enhance the magic of the Dwarf Orchard, it is particularly unfair to consign her to oblivion and write her out of its history, as has happened in so many newspaper reports.

Isn't it time that Greenwich Council and the Royal Parks searched their consciences and recognised her contribution in some

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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: 26th Sept A.G.M. followed by Barry Venning on True Originals: outsider art - some self-taught artists and others outside the mainstream** Non-members £5 on the door. [www.artsinblackheath.org.uk](http://www.artsinblackheath.org.uk) or ring 83187550

**GREENWICH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY** King William Court, the University of Greenwich **NEXT LECTURE: Mon. 9th Sept. Shafts of Light – The Phenomenon of Mining Art - Robert McManners** 8852 7873 Non-members £8.00

**BLACKHEATH ART SOCIETY** "Impressions of Greenwich and Blackheath" Blackheath Art Society Exhibition at Discover Greenwich (upstairs gallery), ORNC, Cutty Sark Gardens, Greenwich SE10. Open daily: 10am to 5pm. 7th September to 1st November.

**MADE IN GREENWICH GALLERY**, 324 Creek Road SE10 9SW September group show: "Elsewhere: Greenwich artists out and about".

## CHILDREN

**GREENWICH THEATRE**  
**Tues 3rd - Sat 7th Sept. SAM ROSE IN THE SHADOWS 7.30 pm Sat Matinee 2.30 pm** Ages 8+  
**Tue 10 - Sat 14 September SINCERELY, MR TOAD** Eves: 7.30pm Sat Mat: 2.30pm £17.50 (Concs £12.50) **Matinee & first night, all £12.50**

**BLACKHEATH HALLS**  
**Sat 12th Oct. 3.0 pm** Recital room. **OLD McDONALD & THE THREE PIGS** A comical version of the 3 pigs with mime, participation, and a big book. Ages 4 - 9. Tickets: £7.00

**WOODLANDS FARM**  
**331 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.**

**CUTTY SARK: The race is on!**  
**Sat 7th & Sunday 8th Sept. 11.30 - 1330 & 1400 - 1600** Create your own board game inspired by *Cutty Sark's* races around the world

**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](http://www.SELondonDads.org.uk) or email: [info@selondondads.org.uk](mailto:info@selondondads.org.uk)

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## COMMUNITY

### Westcombe Society Dates for your diary:

**Sept 7th.** Members' Evening, Main Hall, Mycenae House  
**Sep 27th** Macmillan Coffee Morning, bar/ Main Hall Mycenae House  
**Sept 28th** Children's Nearly New Sale  
**Fri. Nov. 1st** Quiz Night, Main Hall  
**Nov. 23rd** Dickensian Christmas Bazaar, Blackheath Girls High School, Mycenae Road

**CANCER RESEARCH LUNCH** The next fund-raising luncheon is on Thursday 5th September at the Clarendon Hotel, Blackheath from 12 noon to 2:30pm. The cost is £8.50. **PAUL MARTIN** speaks on "Magic & Mind-Reading" To book please phone Wendy on 020 8265 0335 by Monday 2nd Sept. latest.

**CROSSNESS PUMPING STATION, The Old Works, Crossness S.T.W. Belvedere Rd, London SE2 9AQ 020 8311 3711** is open **Sunday 1st Sept.** from 10.30 am - 4.00 pm admission £5 (children, under 16, free). Car parking is on site.

**INDUSTRIAL HISTORY SOCIETY**

**17th September.** Terry Scales gives an illustrated talk on the Rise and Fall of the Pool of London. Meetings 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. Meetings start at 7.30 and non members are charged £1.

**SECOND CHANCE CHOIR – Renamed Greenwich Meridian Choir!** A workshop for both beginners and more experienced singers alike will be held at Sunfield Methodist Church Hall, Old Dover Road, Blackheath, near the Standard shopping Centre on **22nd September at 2.00 until 6.30pm** and the cost will be £25.00, including refreshments, and a £5.00 credit to the Autumn terms fees. If you are interested in either the workshop, or joining the choir as a regular member, (rehearsals are Thursday evenings during term time), please contact Jean Valsler at 0208 8527548 or email [brookjean@btinternet.com](mailto:brookjean@btinternet.com)

Or Susanna Gadd at 36457596 or email [susanna-gadd@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:susanna-gadd@yahoo.co.uk)

**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](mailto:eileenflanagan194@btinternet.com)

**LIVE CANDELEIT JAZZ AT MYCENAE HOUSE** special featured guest each month. Occurs on the second Friday each month. Bar & Food available. 8pm. £10/ £8 See <http://www.jazznights.co.uk/>

**ENGLISH FOLK MUSIC 9.00 pm every Tuesday** at the Lord Hood pub, Creek Road; main-stream jazz every Thursday.

**BLACKHEATH HALLS**  
**Wed 18th September 2.00 - 4.30 pm**  
**TEA DANCES:** sequence dancing, quickstep, cha cha cha and more, compered by Mr Wonderful Dancing. **TICKETS:** £5 includes light refreshments  
Tickets: 020 8305 9300 or 020 8463 0100

**SPINNING & WEAVING EVENT** at **SEWINGTIME 7 Delacourt Rd, SE3 8XA**  
**Sat. 28th Sept, 10.00 am - till 4.00 pm,** in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. Drop in any time! Call 8465 5520. [www.sewingtime.co.uk](http://www.sewingtime.co.uk)

**AGE EXCHANGE, 11 Blackheath Village**  
DJ Jeff & Jo's Boogie Woogie Afternoons. Waltz fox-trot, quickstep, tango - and more! Come and join in - or just watch, and enjoy. £3.00 includes tea, cake, and chat. **Every 3rd Friday in the month, 2.00-4.00 pm**

**BLACKHEATH QUAKERS: 50 YEARS**  
**FREE TALKS** Fridays 7.30 Quaker Meeting House, Lawn Terrace, SE3 9LL. Booking: [blackheathquakers@gmail.com](mailto:blackheathquakers@gmail.com) or 07582 729 185

**Sept. 20th. Peace and Reconciliation**  
**TERRY WAITE** Conversations with Idi Amin, Revolutionary Guards, General Gaddafi, Hezbollah

**Oct. 18th. Affluent city, austere times**  
**JUDITH MORAN:** Quaker Social Action Londoners struggling on low incomes

**Nov. 15th. Drone warfare: convenient killing?**  
**MARY DOBBING:** researcher DW UK

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## THEATRE & OPERA

**THE GREENWICH THEATRE** Crooms Hill, Greenwich, London SE10 8ES 020 8858 7755  
**Tues 17th - Sat 21st September MOBY DICK:** a romp through Melville's classic tale  
**Eves: 7.30pm Sat Mat: 2.30pm**  
**Prices: £17.50 (Concessions £12.50)**  
**Matinee and first night, all tickets £12.50**  
**Sun. 29th Sept. 7.30 TAIKO MEANTIME** trad. Japanese rhythms and techniques with eclectic, original compositions from the company founded in Greenwich in 2001 £15.00 children/concs £12.50

**Monday 30th September 7.30 THE GHOST SHIP**, based on the story by Joseph Conrad  
Tickets: £15.00 concs £12.50

**THE SPACE 269 Westferry Road London E14 3RS 0207 515 7799 / [www.space.org.uk](http://www.space.org.uk)**  
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**26th August - 1st Sept 8.00 pm STORY OF A NIGHT PIANIST**  
**3rd - 21st Sept 7.30 pm** Shakespeare's **COMEDY OF ERRORS** 21st Century version! £14 | £10.00  
**24th-28th Sept 7.30pm THE MEMOIRS OF LUCY BELL** Musical play: A jazz singer's road to success

## WORSHIP

**Mon, 9th Sept, 7.30pm** at Christ Church, Trafalgar Road Institution and Induction of Rev'd Margaret Cave as Team Rector of the Parish of East Greenwich.  
**Sat, 14th Sept. London's 1st ever Ride + Stride** a national event where people are sponsored to walk or cycle between places of worship. Over 100 faiths are taking part.  
**More info at [www.heritageoflondon.com](http://www.heritageoflondon.com)**  
St Georges Glenluce Road is open for this event  
10 am - 5.00pm with refreshments, book & craft stalls, nearly new stall etc. **For more information contact Cynthia on 020 8858 2883**

## MUSIC

**BLACKHEATH HALLS** Tel 020 8463 0100  
**BLACKHEATH HALLS ORCHESTRA**  
**REHEARSALS** begin Sun 15th Sept. 2.30 pm  
**Other dates:** Sunday 22, 29 Sept.; 6, 13, 27 Oct.; 3, 10 Nov, 2:30pm - 5:30pm, Sun. 17 Nov. 2pm - 5pm  
**Subscription: £57 | concs. £51.00**

**BLACKHEATH GOES GOSPEL REHEARSALS**  
Come and join our Blackheath Halls Gospel Choir. Suitable for all, no previous experience necessary. Rehearsals: Monday 16, 23, 30 Sept; 7, 14, 21, 28 October; 4 Nov. 7:30pm - 9:30pm **Performance: Fri. 8th Nov. Subscription: £57 | £51 conc**

**MUSIC APPRECIATION WITH MATTHEW TAYLOR**  
Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971) Mondays: 23, 30 September; 7, 14, 21 Oct; 4, 11, 18, 25 Nov.; 2 December | 10am | Recital Room  
**For more information and to make a booking contact: Lionel Lewis on 020 8297 1075, email [lj1@lioneljlewis.org.uk](mailto:lj1@lioneljlewis.org.uk) or Michael Mellish on 8852 6391. Fee: £75 (10 week course)**

**CHARLTON HOUSE: FREE!**  
Every Friday at 1.00 pm: Sept 6th.  
Olga Stezhko, piano, plays Mozart, Liszt & Debussy  
Sept. 13th. Royal Academy of Music presents Emma Halnan, flute, and Daniell King-Smith, piano: Bach, Tchaikovsky

Sept. 20th Riccardo Bozolo piano plays Brahms and others  
Sept 27th Lyrit Milgram violin & Morta Grigaliunaite, piano, play Beethoven

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**Cllr. Alex Wilson**  
Tel. 07783 611607  
Email: [alex.wilson@greenwich.gov.uk](mailto:alex.wilson@greenwich.gov.uk)  
**Surgery:** 1st Monday of the month 6 - 7.00 pm Blackheath Library, Old Dover Rd.  
**Labour:**  
**Cllr. Alex Grant**  
Tel. 8855 7292 E-mail [Alex.grant@greenwich.gov.uk](mailto:Alex.grant@greenwich.gov.uk)  
**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.



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# THE ARTS

## Blackheath Art Society at Discover Greenwich

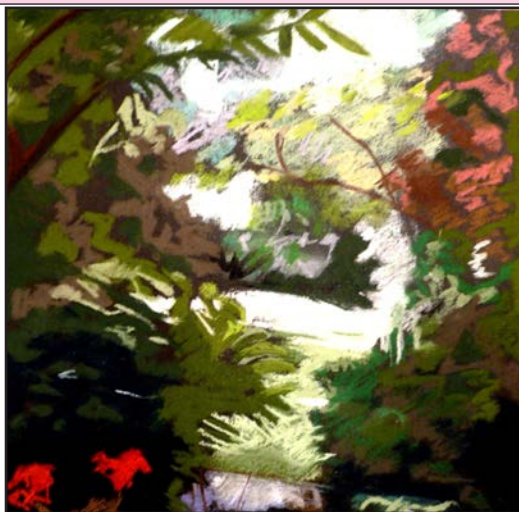
Ann Hillary

The Blackheath Art Society are pleased to be invited back by the Old Royal Naval College to show recent work by its artists in the upstairs gallery at Discover Greenwich.

Visit the exhibition any day from 7 September to 1 November to see vibrant and varied work by this talented group of local artists. You will see a broad variety of techniques, modes and interpretations on the theme: "Impressions of Greenwich and Blackheath".

66 years since it was launched, the Blackheath Art Society is flourishing!

This active group of painters, print-makers and crafts people show their work around the Royal Borough in annual exhibitions and Open Studios. After a recent successful exhibition in the Blackheath Halls, the Society's new show at Discover Greenwich is not to be missed!



ABOVE: *In the garden* by T. Colman

RIGHT: *Wolfe Monument* by Wayne Foskett (detail)

BELOW: *Up River Thames* by Ann Hillary



"Impressions of Greenwich & Blackheath" Blackheath Art Society Exhibition at Discover Greenwich (upstairs gallery), ORNC, Cutty Sark Gardens, Greenwich SE10. Open: 10am to 5pm. 7th Sept. to 1st Nov. Contact: Ann Hillary 020 8853 3405

## Sad news for theatre goers

For 25 years, Galleon Theatre operated upstairs at St. Christopher's Inn on Greenwich Station forecourt at the much-loved Greenwich Playhouse, which staged many creative and innovative productions.

Greenwich Playhouse's fight for survival, has now, sadly, been lost. On the 3rd July, at an 'informal hearing', Greenwich Councillors unanimously voted to grant Beds and Bars (ex-theatre landlords) 'change of use' permission for an illegally built backpacker's hostel to replace this much loved SE London studio theatre. This decision was made despite

public outcry and thousands of letters and emails from theatre supporters dismayed at the theatre's closure.

Alice de Sousa, Greenwich Playhouse's award-winning artistic director said: "There is in Greenwich no shortage of budget hostel accommodation. There is however a profound lack, following the closure of the Greenwich Playhouse in April 2012, of quality theatre entertainment."

The search for an alternative venue continues – one suggestion: the West Greenwich Library might be a possibility.

## Myth-maker



Catwoman by Vanilla Beer

MYTHMAKER is an exhibition of paintings by Vanilla Beer at The Greenwich Gallery Peyton Place Greenwich London SE10 8RS (8465 5968) from Sept 13th - 28th.

There will be a Round-table discussion on Post Avant-Garde Marginality at the gallery at 3.00 pm on Sept 22nd with mathematician and art critic Tony Mann and artist Peter Clossick. All welcome!

## Autumn Concert

The Centenary Company invites us all to an evening of words and music, (cabaret and classical) in aid of Action Against Hunger. The Centenary Company is well-known for its entertaining productions of Gilbert and Sullivan.

This fun event is on Monday 23rd September, 7.30 for 8.00 pm, at the Nelson Room of the Trafalgar Tavern, Park Row, Greenwich SE10 9NW.

The magnificent Nelson Room, upstairs at The Trafalgar Tavern, overlooking the Thames at Greenwich, provides a wonderful setting for this event.

**Doors open at 7.30pm with seating at tables of 10. Book early for this fun evening – tickets at £12 a head are available in advance. Early bird offer: buy a whole table by 13th Sept. for £108! Booking: ring 07970 866034, or email centenarycompany@gmail.com, or turn up on the door on the night.**

## Blackheath Halls Triumph

A review of the Halls' production of Verdi's *Macbeth*

The community opera version of Verdi's *Macbeth* in July was a huge success.

The production involved professional singers of international repute in the key roles, an adult chorus drawn from both the community and Trinity Laban, local school children from four local schools – two of them "special" schools – and the Blackheath Halls Orchestra – composed of amateurs who play to a high professional standard; all backed up by a very creative production and design team headed by Director Christopher Rolls, assistant director Natalie Katsou, and Nicholas Jenkins, Musical Director.

There is no better way to present opera to a wider audience. The involvement of the school children was particularly appreciated, and not just by the parents: the children came from St Margaret's Lee, Charlton Park Academy, Greenvale School, and Trinity School. Well done Rose Ballantyne for bringing them all together.

This was a modern dress production, with the soldiers sporting AK47s and desert boots. Macbeth changed from professional soldier to a murderous dictator in a uniform bedecked, Gaddafi-like, with epaulettes and gold braid – but these baubles did him no good as the opera ended in a kind of "Scottish Spring".

Lady Macbeth – an outstanding performance by Miriam Murphy – achieved the near impossible, starting off "more deadly than the male", but ending in a most poignant sleep-walking scene watched by the ghosts of the children she may or may not have had . . . What came to mind was L.C. Knights' famous essay "How many children had Lady Macbeth?" – a question first posed, jocularly, by F.R. Leavis. No joke in this production.

To see these different groups coming together for a common creative purpose in an outstanding production of a great operatic classic was heart-warming.

General manager of the Halls Keith Murray is to be congratulated for setting up this very talented community orchestra, followed by an annual community opera, (every year since 2006) that has become a firm favourite with the community – and has also achieved critical acclaim. **N.G. The Halls provides a unique opportunity to become involved in Community Opera, and other events throughout the year, with workshops for orchestral players and singers. If you would like to be added to the community programme distribution list email your details to rballantyne@blackheathhalls.com**

## Chaucer at the Made in Greenwich gallery

Neville Grant

Have you visited the Made in Greenwich gallery at 324 Creek Road, Greenwich yet? It is situated very close to the DLR station and Cutty Sark.

Featured in our columns a year ago, the gallery goes from strength to strength. Local residents Ed and Irena Hill started it to showcase local talent: the gallery not only features local arts and crafts, it also offers poetry events – and acts as a forum where people can network and exchange ideas, particularly on protecting and enhancing the local environment: it is a place of welcome where you can drop in for a cup of coffee and a chat.

The quality of the work is uniformly high, and all the work on show is for sale at affordable prices, including prints, photos, paintings, drawings, posters, greetings cards, gifts and books, Jewellery, Glass, Ceramics, Textiles, and Metalwork. As well, of course, as Edward Hill's famous photo-spheres.

Also on offer is quality scanning, photo-shop and printing on demand.

In the inner part of the gallery is "the Hothouse", with seating for 20 - 30 and a 55-inch screen. It can be hired for poetry readings, individual exhibitions, art videos, book signings, group discussions & events.

The next event is on Tuesday 17th September at 7.00 pm, when Graham Fawcett gives one of his acclaimed lectures – this time on Geoffrey Chaucer.

Graham has already led sessions on Pushkin and Emily Dickenson at the Gallery, and for his next talk, on Chaucer, he brings back with him Sue Aldred as a reader, herself a specialist on Middle English: a happy reminder that history, too, was "made in Greenwich".

Chaucer has long been associated with



Geoffrey Chaucer - "the Father of English Literature"

Greenwich ('therne many a shrew is in' as he joked in the prologue to *The Reeve's Tale*) and probably, according to Peter Ackroyd (who did a transliteration of Chaucer), wrote much of *The Canterbury Tales* while living here. Certainly, his pilgrims passed through Deptford and Greenwich on their way to Canterbury.

Eltham is also mentioned in one of his other poems. In 1386, he stood surety for one Simon Manning of East Greenwich, who it is thought was his brother-in-law.

Around this time Chaucer was made Commissioner of Walls and Ditches – with special responsibility for the Thames wall between Woolwich and Greenwich.

However, not all his experiences locally would have been happy – in 1390 he was attacked and robbed at 'le Foule Ok' in Deptford: he lost personal property including his horse – and more than £20 of money belonging to the Crown. Plus ca change . . .

**Graham Fawcett's lecture-performance is on Tuesday 17th September at Made in Greenwich Gallery, 324 Creek Road.**

**Tickets are £10.00, and include a light buffet and drinks, on sale at the Gallery. Or send a cheque, payable to Greenwich Landscape Artists, to MIG, 324 Creek Road, Greenwich SE10 9SW. Or ring 020 8293 9823.**

**info@madeingreenwich.co.uk. (Interval 7.40 pm, buffet 8.30 pm)**





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](http://www.greenwich.gov.uk/planning)

## All in good time? M.A. Qavi

All Saints Church clock has fallen on hard times once again. This iconic feature on the Heath fell victim to benign neglect from 1994 onward before its restoration in time for the Millennium at the urging of village traders and residents under the guidance of the then MP for Lewisham East, Bridget Prentice [the Glasgow Rose].

The comprehensive overhaul and refurbishment of the mechanism under the supervision of saintly Jonathan Betts, the curator of Horology at the Royal Observatory, was supposed to have restored the clock to its pristine condition.

The frequent breakdowns and malfunctions experienced recently suggest it has not been so. For example, in 2011 the clock went comatose for months on end: banners appeared in the Village and outside the Church before it started ticking

again. Then, sadly, the glorious experience of the London Olympics enjoyed by the thousands in the Washer-women's Bottom and Church Field parts of the Heath was marred by the sight of the Church Clock which had come un-stuck on 3rd August.

On Marathon day, which was some three weeks after we reverted to British Summer Time, the Church Clock was showing GMT. Last May the clock got stuck at quarter to eleven, and in July three of its four faces went out of sync with the fourth. Each and every malfunction takes weeks and months to rectify.

The health of this clock matters because of its landmark situation on Blackheath. The church authorities claim no knowledge why it keeps malfunctioning so often. Perhaps readers can help in devising a strategy for the maintenance of this clock.

## Christopher's column



### Now that the butterflies' gone

In Barbara Kingsolver's latest novel *Flight*, the unsung heroes (or victims) are the King Billies – not as you might have thought a rocking blues band from Grenoble, but the nickname given to the Monarch butterfly – a reference to its orange colour, and William of Orange, who shared the throne of Protestant England in the late 17C.

In the novel, the butterflies are seriously endangered because of climate change - thus making it highly relevant today ...

No surprises then, sadly, to read that given the late cold Spring, and the gloom brought about by last years 'summer', butterflies may be in a worse state than ever before.

They emerged weeks later than last year, but anecdotally, the picture seems better in places, after the late summer's hot weather ([www.bbc.co.uk/nature/23327715](http://www.bbc.co.uk/nature/23327715)).

Walking through rough unmown grass in Hyde Park (Buck Hill – the sound of grasshoppers was astonishing), there were many butterflies – and a dragonfly actually SAT ON MY SHOULDER!

This is a patch in full sun, and so hard to



replicate in many gardens – but why not have a go? Mix flat-topped flowers like sedum and yarrow, with simple daisies and slight, unpretentious, grasses such as *deschampsia* (or you could just simply let your lawn 'go' in patches and see what you get).

Spread the joy of nectar with chives, evening primroses and late flowering asters, and for next year add some early bee food like comfrey (earliest is *symphytum grandiflorum*, good ground cover in summer).

Doing your small bit will make a difference and you might get to love a slightly shaggy patch with a buzzy feel to it.

Soon, we should have the result of the 'citizens scientist' Big Butterfly Count\*, but hopes are high that the news might be better than for the few past years.

Insect 'hotels' too are very fashionable (and expensive and elaborate), but just adding some logs or chunky branches to your insect-friendly area will attract a wider range of visitors and provide some cold weather shelter.

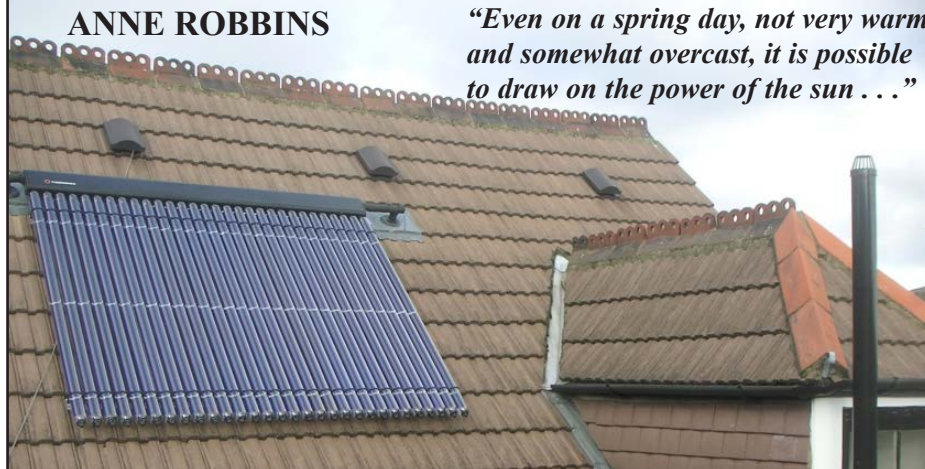
### Christopher Raven

\* The big butterfly count is a nationwide survey aimed at helping us assess the health of our environment. It was launched in 2010 and has rapidly become the world's biggest survey of butterflies.

## Solar-panel update

ANNE ROBBINS

*“Even on a spring day, not very warm and somewhat overcast, it is possible to draw on the power of the sun . . .”*



As I come upstairs, towards my airing cupboard, I can hear a low hum. It makes me very glad: the sound tells me that my solar panel is working, and heat from the sun is being transferred to my hot water tank.

We installed our solar thermal system (not to be confused with a photovoltaic system, which makes electricity from sunshine) at the end of 2008, after a tussle over planning was resolved. The regulations have been relaxed since then, but conditions apply for conservation areas such as Westcombe Park, and for locally or nationally listed buildings. It's worth checking with local planning officers, and you can get advice from the government's Planning Portal. In addition, solar panels must comply with building regulations, to ensure that a roof is strong enough to support the weight.

A solar thermal system like ours consists of a collector, with pipes inside through which fluid runs; a pump for circulation; and a large cylinder with two coils in it, one for the gas heating and one for the solar. The collector is set on our south-facing rear roof, and catches the sun's rays from morning till late afternoon. As it does, the liquid picks up heat and the pump – which makes that happy hum – circulates it into the hot water cylinder, where the heat transfers into our domestic supply.

Even on a spring day like today, not very warm and somewhat overcast, it is possible to draw on the power of the sun. Just

now, the collector is at 30°, and the temperature at the bottom of the cylinder is 24°. Whenever the collector is more than 2° warmer than the water in the cylinder, the pump starts up, and heat makes its way from the roof.

At the top of the tank, the water is 42°, and later the gas boiler will contribute to raise the temperature to 55°, in time for evening showers, washing-up, and so on. In summer, the water can reach up to 70° just from the solar input, so there is very little call for the boiler.

Anyone who has tried to work out their gas and electric bills will recognise how difficult it is to quantify energy use in terms of cost.

It's a similar conundrum with solar thermal. Our control unit tells us how many hours the pump has run (6,489 in the 4½ years) and the kilowatt hours, or energy use, for that. But the heat transfer figures aren't shown. And it would be almost impossible to calculate, as the transfer of heat begins at 2° but can be much higher: even in winter, it can heat a cold tank of water up to 60°.

The collector's summer safety mechanism kicks in at 130° (the pump switches off at a lower temperature, to save the mechanism and the cylinder from melting!).

Happily, others have made useful estimates. The excellent YouGen website, covering many aspects of renewable energy, suggests that a solar thermal system can provide up to 60% of a household's hot water.

With hot water accounting for around 25% of a

gas bill, typical savings are around £55 per year for a small home, £150 for a larger house. It's worth paying some attention to maximising its efficiency.

For instance, you should buy washing machines and dishwashers that have a feed from the hot water, not just from the cold. And you may need to adapt your patterns, perhaps showering in the evening when the system has had a chance to work, rather than the morning. But in both 2011 and 2012, our gas bill for the July-September quarter was under £70. That is very satisfying.

But solar power isn't just about the money. It saves some of the carbon dioxide we would have released into the atmosphere, so it helps in the struggle against climate change. The amount may not be huge, in terms of tonnes of carbon saved, but it helps me think about other reductions, like using the car less, and improving the insulation of the house to use energy more efficiently.

The airing cupboard is always warm, so we don't need a clothes dryer: another saving of energy and carbon output. And we have enjoyed supporting a new technology, one which in time will affect power generation patterns, and employ thousands.

**Websites:**  
**Planning:**<http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/permissions/commonprojects/solarpanels/>  
**Advice:**<http://www.yougen.co.uk/renewable-energy/Solar+Thermal/>



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