In 2013 trains will have been running for 150 years between Charing Cross and Greenwich. Unfortunately, it may also be the last year as, from January 2015, there are plans to stop all direct trains to Waterloo East at Westcombe Park and Maze Hill, with all services being diverted into Cannon Street.

Even worse, for three years until the beginning of 2018, it will not be possible to change trains at London Bridge for a Southeastern service to these stations. This is all a consequence of the Thameslink programme, a £6bn Government-funded scheme to improve capacity on the Thameslink route through the re-building of London Bridge. This programme means that from January 2015 until August 2016 no Charing Cross trains will call at London Bridge.

No direct trains to the West End

Then from August 2016 to early 2018 no Cannon Street trains will call at London Bridge, meaning that when you get on a London-bound train from Westcombe Park and Maze Hill it will whisk (or trundle) you non-stop from Deptford to Cannon Street, and no further. There will be alternative routes, but all have disadvantages in time and cost. Many may be tempted to use the Underground from North Greenwich instead, but that line is already crowded in the peak hours.

Once the work is complete, it will once again be possible to change at London Bridge, but there will be no physical track connection that will enable trains to reach Charing Cross.

So, after 150 years, the West End will no longer be reached by direct trains from Greenwich. The Greenwich Line Users’ Group was formed this year, with the support of the Westcombe Society, to represent the interests of all passengers who use the Greenwich Line. Whilst we recognise that the work at London Bridge will bring about much-needed improvements for passengers generally, it will disadvantage users of the Greenwich Line.

Our objective is to remove that disadvantage. Insufficient thought has been given by the Department for Transport to the impact on Greenwich Line users and the possible ways in which direct Charing Cross services could be maintained.

Cannon Street is a fine station for the City, but hopeless for getting to and from the West End: and on Saturdays there isn’t even a Tube connection.

The Group will be lobbying the Department for Transport, Network Rail and Southeastern trains for a service that meets the needs of South East Londoners.

The Group has been invited by SE Trains to make an input into the service proposals currently being negotiated with Department for Transport for the period 2014 – 2018. We will be doing this and focussing on ways to mitigate the impact of the London Bridge re-development as well as the longer-term service that local rail users want to see.

The Users’ Group are happy to receive any comments and can be contacted at greenwichline@outlook.com

The next dog show organised by the Friends of Mycenae Gardens with The Dog Society Greenwich and Blackheath is on October 13th. Winner of last year’s fancy dress event was Batman and Robin, Harry Mackesy, 6, and his dog Henry, 6. Please see the story on page 3.

Can you spend 20 minutes a month helping with the W?N?

A lot of people are involved in producing and delivering your favourite local newspaper, the W. The paper is delivered, free of charge, to every household in the area, in the belief that the Society exists not just for its members, but for the whole community.

However, the time has come to call on new volunteers – to write for and produce the W. and also to deliver it.

Currently, our Distribution Manager, Myles Dove, ably assisted by Barbara, does a wonderful job of “counting out” bundles, street by street, and ensuring the different bundles are delivered to our splendid team of deliverers. Myles and Barbara greatly appreciate the help of all who help them in this process. However, one problem is that Myles and Barbara Henley, who have been doing this job for the last 21 years, are no longer car drivers, and they are taking round the bagged-up copies by pedal cycle. This is clearly not an ideal situation.

We are asking for volunteers either to take turns doing the counting out, or delivering the bundles to the deliverers (and to a few other outlets such as public libraries), say once every three months or so.

“Counting out is a fun job,” said Myles. “We get to see advance copies of the W. and when three or four people set about the job, it becomes quite an enjoyable social occasion!

“we could also do with more street-delivers,” he adds. He points out that the average time per round is only 20 – 30 minutes, depending on the number of copies involved.

More volunteers are needed to help out when regular deliverers are ill or on holiday or decide to move away.

Willing to help out from time to time? Please give Myles a ring on 0853 3740.

The Westcombe Society

Quiz Night

Main Hall of Mycenae House on Friday, Nov. 1st at 7.30 for an 8.00 pm start.

Teams of 6. Get a team together or come on your own & help make up a team.

Please book in advance:

Members £5.00 per person; Non Members £6.00. Fish ’n chip suppers – or simply chips – can be ordered when booking.

Please ring Caroline on 0853 0948 to book your place/and any meals.

Complimentary nibbles provided, & the Bar will be open. Raffle, Prizes. Bookings close Friday 25th October.

Dickensian Christmas Bazaar

This very popular event is on 23rd Nov. from 11.30am to 4pm at Blackheath High School for Girls.

Many delightful craft stalls and entertainment for children including Santa’s Grotto.

Gifts Wanted...I

Any unwanted gifts, toiletries or bottles that can be donated as prizes in the tombolas or raffles gratefully received? Please call Marilyn 020 8853 1312

**Westcombe NEWS**

Est. 1973 Free to 3800 homes, and in libraries & some shops

October 2013 Issue 8

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

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

**NEWS BRIEFS**

Why not send in YOUR news? Write to: wnews@westcombesociety.org

View our new web site!
The Westcombe Society has created its new website - www.westcombesociety.org/
Have you seen it yet? One trust - you can read the Westcombe News in colour!

**New Blackheath Guide**

Planned for the autumn is a new guide about Heath walks called – an introduction to its 1000 year history compiled by our local historian, Neil Rhind, and the students gained A*/A grades in at least 8 subjects, 69% of the grades were A*/A and 60% of increase of 7% in the top A* and A grades.

At A level there was a another year of superb academic achieve-
pleasing,” said Des.

At GCSE 95% of our students achieved at least 5 A* or A, 64% got at least 5A* C including English and Maths.” There were many exceptional individual performances including: Thomas Schelkner 3 straight As at A level; and, at AS level. Wing Choy 5 straight As, and Rosa As 4 As at GCSE level; Nina Law (11 As or A’s). Ninomiya Saburi, Eliza Ahmed, Ella Shallum all got 10 As or A’s, and Eleanor Rayment got nine. “In a year greatly damaged by our building pro-
gramme, all these results are particularly pleasing,” said Dave. Blackheath High School also celebrated another year of superb academic achieve-
ment, bucking the national trend with an increase of 7% in the top A* and A grades. 69% of the grades were A* or A, and 60% of the students gained A* or A grades in at least 8 subjects.

Food banks

There are three Food banks in Greenwich. The nearest one is at The Boys’ Brigade Hall, Reynolds Place, open on Thursdays from 11.30 am – 2.30 pm. To use Foodbank you need a voucher from your social work-
ner, GP or headteacher. To donate food or to-
ities, items can be taken to the Hall at the above times, or to St John’s Church or Sandfields Church. For information and shopping list greenwich.foodbank.org.uk

Attacked by a dog

A lady waiting at a bus stop in Westcombe Park Road was the victim of an unprovoked attack by a dog. The dog’s owner, said sorry, and walked away. A friend called an ambulance, and today, four weeks later, her leg is still heavily bandaged. The dog was grey, it looked like an English Bull terrier.

**Attacked by a dog**

Sensitive Christmas Bazaar

This very popular event is on 23rd Nov. from 11.30am to 4pm at Blackheath High School for Girls.

Many delightful craft stalls and entertainment for children including Santa’s Grotto.

Gifts Wanted...

Any unwanted gifts, toiletries or bottles that can be donated as prizes in the tombolas or raffles gratefully received. Please call Marilyn 020 8853 1312

**PHOTO: Jack Kay**

**ATTACKED BY A DOG**

**The Westcombe Society**

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40th Year
COMMUNITY NEWS

THE WESTCOMBE SOCIETY MEMBERS’ PARTY

O ur annual members’ Party went with its usual usual pace, on the 16th October, along side Dave Silk (double bass) and Phil Mead (piano). Members enjoyed a delicious meal. Many thanks to J-J and Maureen Aune, Caroline Owens, Joanne Lucas, Patricia Slade Baker and Tessa Coss for helping to organise the party.

Chairman of the Society Marilyn Little thanked members for their support, and urged them to encourage more volunteers to come forward to help out at events. She emphasised that responsibilities were not onerous and were a very good way of meeting new friends.

She also urged all to look at the society’s new website.

Marilyn then introduced Sharon Brookes, who runs the South London Specialist League. This provides sports facilities and events for disabled and disadvantaged players. Sharon then spoke about the work of the SLSL, particularly the Specialist Sports Camp, an exciting project that offers unique opportunities for these young people. SLSL is the Westcombe Society’s Charity of the Year and we will be funding their Specialist Sports Camp to be held next February.

Marilyn said that we all looked forward to our next big event, the Christmas Bazaar, on November 23rd, which would be raising funds for the SLSL.

South London Special League

The South London Specialist League (SLSL) is a successful, independent charity that exists solely on contributions, grants and public funding. The SLSL encourages the participation in regular and competitive sport by disabled children and adults.

The SLSL began with football, but now includes sports such as cricket, Powerchair Football, table cricket, Boccia, New Age Kurling, and, recently, archery. It also offers opportunities for disabled young adults to pursue coaching qualifications.

In ten years the South London Specialist League has evolved considerably: it has won several awards and continues to lead the way in terms of sport development for disabled people. Over 500 disabled players have played for SLSL, in that time.

We believe that sport is the greatest leveller whatever one’s background or ability. We are here to enable people to access sport appropriately and safely. Our coaches and volunteers are highly qualified, and have been selected specifically to lead their way in terms of sport development for disabled people.

It became increasingly apparent to me that disabled youngsters are excluded from sport. Mainstream sports clubs, although willing, are not set up to deal with the special needs of our users.

Our Specialist Sports Camp is held at the Waterfront Leisure Centre, Woolwich.

It is designed to ensure that everyone feels confident, successful and valued. It is important that there is no cost for this sports week, as we want to ensure there are no barriers to inclusion.

We adapt sports to ensure our young players can enjoy playing them, and reap the benefits of fitness from taking part in sporting activities. Emily, a girl with cerebral palsy, and a keen sports woman, told us that she loved the sports Camps because it made her feel so “normal”.

Next year South London Specialist Year will be celebrating its tenth anniversary with “Special World Cup 2014” at London Marathon Playing Fields, 364 Shooters Hill Road. Dates to be announced.

Letters to the editor

From: Keith Townsend
Stratheden Rd.
Thank you for including in September’s WN the splendid article on Anna Townsend. Anna shrinks from promoting herself, and you have done her, and her cause, great service.

From: Janet Sweet
Westcombe Park
I refer to Zoe Cooke’s letter in the September issue. Personally, I am delighted that the Heath and surrounding areas are saved from NIMBY. I feel sure I am not your only reader to hope that this happy state of affairs continues.

Apples and Day

Join us at Woodlands Farm for a cele- bration of British apples on Sun. 13 October 2013, from 11.00am to 4.00pm. This is an opportunity to discover and buy many different types of traditional British apples. There will be a variety of activities including traditional crafts such as making corn dollies, a treasure hunt, archery, apple pressing to make delicious juice, stalls selling local produce, including our own honey and home-made jams and cakes. Try some Kentish Cider, too! A great day out for all the family. Entry is free, but donations are welcome and go towards the running of the Farm.

The Woodlands Farm Trust
331 Shooters Hill

Corrections: September’s WN

Apologies to Gabbie Marston and the residents of Coleraine Road for reman- ding her to Coraline Road.

In the article by Angela Burr on Anna Townsend, a grumbly destroyed the last sentence, which (literally) lost its way: the last word should be way, and the whole sentence should have been: Isn’t it time that Greenwich Council and the Royal Parks searched their consciences and recognised their contribution in some way?
All serene in Seren Park

The fiasco of the locked gate between Maze Hill station and Seren Park is finally over.

When residents first moved into flats at Seren Park, they promised direct access to the station. However, the gate remained locked for four years, and the residents either faced a long detour – or a short cut through Tom Smith Close.

A result at last – but only after many months of nagging Network Rail, who promised, in February 2012, that the gate would be open “within a few weeks”.

The bone of contention: who would foot the £30,000 bill for an Oyster Card reader. Nick Raynsford and local councillors joined forces to press for a result.

“The fiasco was a great service to the residents either faced a long detour – or a short cut through Tom Smith Close, with more robust materials. So this long-running saga has at last been resolved.”

Memories of the Great War 1914 - 1918

Age Exchange in Blackheath Village is appealing to relatives of those who fought – or indeed refused to fight on conscientious grounds – in the Great War, as well as those who served in the ambulance corps, in munitions, or on the home front.

Age Exchange plans to assemble a collection of family stories and memories, as part of the “Children of the Great War” project which will involve a traveling installation and theatre production; the material would then go into an archive to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the war.

Anyone who would like to share photographs memories or memorabilia is invited to call into Age Exchange, 11 Blackheath Village or email greatwar@age-exchange.org.uk

Waiting for the beat

The London Marathon is a great and joyful national event, and raises a lot of money for charity, and no one complains about a certain amount of inconvenience.

The same does not apply to the Run to the Beat event which this year involved 19,000 runners in a circular route beginning and ending in Greenwich Park. Like the Marathon, the event should be fun.

But for many local residents, it was a run too far. Although individual runners may get sponsorship for charity, it is not in itself a charity event, and the Council is paid £10,000 for making its streets – our streets – available. (Next year the sum is set to be raised to £20,000).

This is chicken feed for the amount of inconvenience caused, say local critics, who also claim that there was little or no local consultation on how it should be organised, or what route causes the least mayhem.

This year, the complaints came not only from residents, but also from the runners: “many were brought to a stand-still four miles into the course, at a bottleneck in Artillery Barracks in Woolwich. Many runners complained that their timing was wrecked – and some suffered from cramp as a result of running, and then waiting, before starting to run again. Not best practice.”

Others were not be very keen on the coconut water they were given. The final stage of the course – up hill in Greenwich Park – meant that wheelchair runners had their front wheels upended!

One consolation: those that made it back to the park were greeted by a concert from Jessie-J; amazingly, despite their exertions, many managed to start!

Don’t say: Let’s go for a healthy run!

Do say: Shall we dance?

More canine capers

Following last year’s successful event the Friends of Mycenae Gardens with The Dog Society Greenwich and Blackheath will hold an afternoon of canine capers: fun and activities for dog owners, their families & pets, from 12 to 4:00 pm on Sunday 13 October.

New for 2013 will be the Dogs Trust, offering free microchipping for dogs, as well as vouchers for free health checks and free neutering.

This year Grumpiest Dog joins the ranks of the other popular competitions for canine owners, their families & their pets, from 12noon - 11pm in Greenwich Park – meant that wheelchair runners had their front wheels upended!

The charity, Kairos, works together with the Prince of Wales Foundation to set up a successful pain management service based on these principles in Maidstone and wanted to develop a similar concept in Greenwich.

Patients receive anthroposophic treatments (including eurythmy movement therapy and massage) which may be combined with social projects (such as gardening, craft making and a choir). The garden is much admired by visitors and patients.

Dr McGavin has set up a successful pain management service based on these principles in Maidstone and wanted to develop a similar concept in Greenwich.

The pain clinic is NHS-funded. You need to be referred by your GP – anyone registered with a Greenwich GP is eligible.

The charity, Kairos, is still in touch with the pain clinic but anyone interested in the alternative and social therapies they offer can also contact them directly via: Ingrid Hermansen 07712 810108

New Community Garden

This is a project that has developed out of the community pain clinic that I have been running at Vanbrugh HC since 2009,” says Dr Ellen Wright, GP Partner in Vanbrugh PMS Practice, Vanbrugh Hill Health Centre.

The pain clinic was established as a pilot with the aim of treating patients with chronic pain in a community rather than a hospital setting, so providing both more holistic and cost-effective care.

“I was most fortunate to be approached by Dr David McGavin, “of the Kairos charity,” says Dr Wright. “David is a specialist in anthroposophic medicine.”

Anthroposophic medicine is based on the philosophy of Rudolf Steiner, that particularly seeks to value and integrate the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of the human being.

The approach is particularly appropriate for patients suffering the complex effects of long-standing chronic pain, particularly isolation and mental distress.

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Patients receive anthroposophic treatments (including eurythmy movement therapy and massage) which may be combined with social projects (such as gardening, craft making and a choir). The garden is much admired by visitors and patients.

Dr Mcgin says Dr Wright: “The garden is open to all patients and the local community, and we are keen to encourage all who wish to participate.”

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The charity, Kairos, is still in touch with the pain clinic but anyone interested in the alternative and social therapies they offer can also contact them directly via: Ingrid Hermansen 07712 810108

Well done Greenwich

The Royal Borough of Greenwich’s anti-poverty polices have been praised by the Government for being among the best in the country at helping local families turn their lives around.

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, and Louise Casey, the head of the troubled families programme, visited Greenwich last month, and met local families who have had their lives transformed.

The Royal Borough’s ‘Families First’ programme helps people who have a range of issues which may include involvement in youth crime or anti-social behaviour, high levels of truancy, health concerns or an antisocial work.

The successful scheme provides each family with a dedicated support worker.

New figures show that a £650 million programme has turned around the lives of 14,000 of Britain’s most troubled families.

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Westcombe News October 2013 3
features

yes, you!

Photograph of some of the founder members of the Westcombe Society: when the society started back in 1973, these same people would have been quite young. Times have changed, and people these days are under great pressure in many ways. Many of us simply do not always have a great deal of spare time that can be devoted to volunteering.

There are so many opportunities for volunteering both locally and nationally; and those who take part find the experience enriching. The Westcombe Society regularly gives financial and other support to numerous local charities, all of which depend heavily on the support of volunteers. However, if you have an urge to volunteer to support your local community here in Westcombe Park, you need look no further than the Westcombe Society.

On the face of it, we are not short of volunteers: ten times a year, more than sixty people take part in producing or distributing the Westcombe News; and there is a good turn out for our big event of the year, the Christmas Bazaar.

However, there is a shortage of volunteers when it comes to running other events, particularly the Children’s Nearly New Sales (twice a year), Quiz Nights, the Macmillan Coffee morning, the New Sales (twice a year), the Macmillan Coffee morning, the Summer Picnic... Often, it is the same small number of people (some of whom are beginning to show their age?) who help out on these occasions.

In June, the Westcombe News included a photograph of some of the founder members of the Westcombe Society: when the society started back in 1973, these same people would have been quite young. Times have changed, and people these days are under great pressure in many ways. Many of us simply do not always have a great deal of spare time that can be devoted to volunteering.

The Urge to Volunteer

Mary Spence

This summer’s Olympic anniversary was marked by legacy laments focused on sports participation, economic growth and volunteering. The urge to volunteer, it seems, didn’t last. As someone who volunteered for both the Olympic and Paralympics, plus a small stint as a London Ambassado, I feel inspired to respond.

The bad news is that there is no “urge to volunteer”. For people to work without pay they need good reasons. Here are three: to be part of something bigger than themselves, to use a part of themselves that gives satisfaction and pleasure, to make a contribution that is appreciated.

70,000 people joined the Olympics because they wanted to be part of something big, famous, unique, and on their doorsteps. This wasn’t just about sport. The Olympic brand was already strong and 2012’s marketing made it stronger. Thousands wanted to say “I was there”. The very title used – “gamesmaker” – exalted productivity and contribution.

We were told that we would make the difference between a good enough Olympics and a great one. We were also told that we would be one of the most important factors in the overall experience of both athletes and spectators. We believed it – and it turned out to be true. From the beginning, the media played a positive role. We were heroes (and heroines). People spoke to us in bus queues. We benefitted from and contributed to the general Olympic feel-good ambiance.

We benefitted from and contributed to the general Olympic feel-good ambiance. Being an Olympic volunteer was not a hard road to travel.

But back to the real world. Could anyone possibly want to volunteer in more mundane contexts? Of course they do. People work in schools, sports clubs, community centres, music and arts venues, in any area that piques human interest. They write newsletters, deliver leaflets, run databases, tend bars, mentor and teach others, work on committees, anything that required skills and gave satisfaction.

My advice? If you have any spare time keep your eyes open for an organisation that you value and want to be part of. Look for activities that would give you pleasure or satisfaction. If you’re chatty, work front of house. If you want to keep your computer skills up, volunteer for a computer task. And if you need exercise, deliver leaflets. The main thing is to have a look, and when you find a fit, put your hand up.

Editor: You could do worse than play your part in your local community organisation – the Westcombe Society!

The Prokofievs

The Prokofiev family has had a long-standing connection with Blackheath Halls. Sergei's widow, Liina, lived in Blackheath during the 1980s, and his son, Oleg, was a supporter of the Halls. Liina Prokofiev had a rich and colourful life. Once an operatic soprano, she loved to recall her encounters with Marlene Dietrich and Coco Chanel. Abandoned by her husband, she survived eight brutal years in Soviet labour camps, and was released only after Stalin’s death in 1953. She was finally allowed to emigrate to England in 1974. Liina Prokofiev spent a lot of time in Blackheath where her younger son, Oleg, resided. This festival features an exhibition of Oleg’s paintings and sculpture and Sergei's grandson, Gabriel, hosts a special club night: Nonclassical Meets Trinity Laban @ Blackheath.

trinity laban’s prokofiev festival

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Editor: You could do worse than play your part in your local community organisation – the Westcombe Society!
**ARTS**

**BLACKHEATH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY**
3 Mary’s Court Hall, Grosvenor Park, Blackheath SE3 Tuesday of every month, 2.00 - 3.30 

**THEATRE & OPERA**

**NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM**
11:30am. Contact: www.SELondonDads.org.uk or Sherington Road every Wednesday from 9:30 - 5:00 @ Sherington Children’s Centre, 14 Hilly Road, Blackheath. 

**LANCER RESEARCH LUNCH** The next fundraising lunch is on Thursday 5th October at the Chandos Hotel, Blackheath from 12 noon to 2.30pm. The cost is £8.00. Our guest is Maria Lourisa, Belly Dancer. Lunch can be booked by telephone: Wednesday 25th September on 020 8312 0533 by Monday 30th Sept. latest. 

**BLACKHEATH FLOWER CLUB** More than 400 members enjoy a flower arranging session every Wednesday from 9:30 - 11:00 @ Blackheath Library, 25 New Mill Road, SE3 8SJ eileenflanagan194@btinternet.com or 020 8858 5088 7.30 pm at Sunfields Methodist Church, Old Dover Road, SE10 8SJ. 

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**THE GREENWICH THEATRE**
Crooms Hill, Greenwich, London SE10 RES: 020 8808 7775
Tues Sat - Thurs 3rd Oct. ACADEYE for the YOUNG at HEART 7:30 pm. 

**MUSIC**

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WED 23 OCT 13 CHAMBER MUSIC
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**BLACKHEATH HALLS ORCHESTRA**
Tel 020 8463 0100

**MUSIC**

**THE SPACE**
269 Westferry Road London E14 30 Oct 12.00pm - 12.30pm FREE THE KING OF FRANCE and YOU. £5.00 Subscription: £45.00

**BLACKHEATH BRIDGE CLUB**
7.30 and non members are charged £1.00. 

**WESTCOMBE WRITERS’ CIRCLE**
& Thurs. 7.15 pm & on Wed. at 1.15 Tel. 8851 2609

**BLACKHEATH & GREENWICH UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION**
holding an International Art Auction in the hall of Mycenae House on Saturday 14th November. Pictures from five continents to be auctioned; plus an auction of “items of special interest”. Viewing is 1.30, auction starts 2.30 pm. Entrants by catalogue only. Includes free drink. Lucky numbers on catalogue to be shown at 4.00 pm. In aid of refugees in Middle East.

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STORM SMITH-SUCKOO and SUZY COOPER of John Roan describe their experiences on the Tall Ships Regatta

W e both sail at a local sailing centre called The AHOY centre in Deptford – a local sailing charity which has an ethos open to all.

We are part of the centre's youth sailing scheme and have enjoyed taking part for the last seven years. The Royal Borough of Greenwich offered the charity two ambassadorial roles for the tall ships race which finishes in the Royal Borough late summer 2014.

Tall Ship

As a part of this role we took part in a voyage where we would crew on board the wonderful tall ship Astral. We started the voyage in Southampton on 14 July and from there we enjoyed a whole 10 days of crewing on board the Tall Ship. As part of the crew we learned new skills such as team work, communication and navigation – to name just a few.

We made our way around the English coast stopping off in lovely resorts like Weymouth and Penzance. Sadly we had to finish the trip early in Kinsale, on the south coast of Ireland, as the AHOY Centre's tall ship program had come to an end.

We had a great experience which we would like to share with others.

Press Launch

We were involved in the 'One Year to Go' celebrations which took place in Woolwich and Greenwich at the start of September, with nine tall ships running races which finished in the Borough. The press were there to cover the celebrations, and also to publicise the event "Sail Royal Greenwich". It was a great experience which finished with a tour of the Cutty Sark.

This is a once in a lifetime event and we would like to thank Royal Greenwich and the AHOY Centre for giving us this wonderful opportunity. We cannot wait till next year and will hopefully see some of you there with us.

If you are aged 16 or over and would like to try sailing for the first time on board a magnificent tall ship - for more details including how to register, visit: www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/tallships

The modern architecture of Greenwich

The annual Greenwich society lecture is to be given this year by Prof. Alan Powers of University College, London. Greenwich always evokes thoughts of Christopher Wren and Inigo Jones, but what about 20th Century architects?

Our 2013 Lecturer, Alan Powers, is a distinguished architectural and cultural historian who is widely regarded as a leading authority on British architecture and design in the 20th century. He is the author of the standard work Modern: the Modern Movement in Britain and has been Chairman of the Twentieth Century Society.

The lecture takes place at the National Maritime Museum lecture hall at 11.00 am on Sunday 3rd November. Tickets are £10 and include a glass of wine. There are available from Jackie Hicks 60, Greenwich Park Street SE10 9LT (60, Greenwich Park Street SE10 9LT) hicksjackie60@gmail.com

The Second Chance Choir

The Second Chance Choir has been renamed the Greenwich Meridian Choir. The choir’s musical director, Virginia Rushton, has left to follow new interests in North Yorkshire. Virginia has led the choir through ups and downs and thick and thin for nine years. Many members of the choir have appreciated her kindness and empathy in times of personal crisis, and she will be very sorely missed.

The new musical director will be Hilary Campbell, assisted by Richard Harker.

Hilary is an experienced and accomplished choral conductor and performer, who has appeared on television and been heard on the radio. Recent solo performances include Mozart's Requiem, Bach's Magnificat, and Haydn’s Nelson Mass under the direction of Sir David Willcocks. She has been singing with various ensembles for over a decade, including the Royal Academy of Music Chamber Choir and Trinity College of Music Chamber Choir, among others. Richard Harker, a freelance choral conductor and accompanist, is musical director of Landmark Sound and Teatime Opera and assistant conductor of Dalwich Chamber Choir. He is also choral master for Harrow Opera.

Under Hilary’s direction the choir will embark on a new, very varied repertoire, which will include traditional folk songs, world music, the works of some famous classical composers, and much more.

If you are interested in joining the choir as a regular member, rehearsals are on Thursday evenings during term time, please contact: Jean Valsler at 020 8852 7548 or email brookjean@btinternet.com Or Susanna Gadd at 3647759 or email susannagadd@yahoo.co.uk

Blackheath Halls Art exhibition:

Cristiana Angelini

Cristiana Angelini is primarily a landscape and still life artist, her favourite mediums being oil and pastel. Her traditional techniques were developed during her training at the School of Art in Carrara, Florence where she attained a Diploma in Fine Art and Art History.

After moving to England in the sixties, she was overwhelmed with love for the lush, green English countryside and her passion for painting landscape began. “Looking back on my days as a student, I remember the incredible we all shared on seeing black and white prints of Constable trees, so high they seemed to touch the clouds. I count myself fortunate to witness how right he was.”

Over the years Cristiana’s paintings have been exhibited widely and have enjoyed much success. Her paintings have been accepted at the Royal Academy, Whitechapel Gallery and the Twentieth Century Art Fair. In 1990 her work was awarded first prize in The Lang Collection Exhibition for London and the South East and in 1995, her work was selected for inclusion in the world-renowned Bridgetman Art Library collection.

Cristiana’s exhibition runs from 3rd - 20th October in the Cafe Bar of Blackheath Halls. Open 10.00 am – 5.00 pm

All change for the Second Chance Choir
Locals rally around our Foot Tunnels
Ian Blore & Francis Sedgemore

The River Thames foot tunnels at Greenwich and Woolwich owe their existence to that remarkable Victorian working class hero, and son of Poplar, Will Crooks. Trade unionist, Fabian, London County councillor and later MP for Woolwich, Crooks’ vision was of a free passage under the Thames for people commuting to work in the docks and factories on the north bank. And not only work; the tunnels were ever popular with both bank residents looking to sample the cultural delights of Greenwich.

Concerns laid by Crooks over a century ago remains. Around a thousand people walk every day, each way, through the Greenwich tunnel, which is prone to failure, despite repeated calls from local people and other stakeholders.

In October 2012, the Royal Borough of Greenwich, with the GLA (Greater London Authority), commissioned an inquiry into the tunnel debacle, but the report of inquiry chairman John Wilmoth has yet to be published, despite repeated calls from local people and other stakeholders.

One of this year’s brood of sparrowhawks raised in Westcombe Park was killed on what appeared to be its first day away from the nest. The inexperienced young bird flew into a large window and died instantly from the impact. The accident happened shortly after two youngsters were observed caring around the trees in Mycenae Gardens, vociferously denouncing fear from a Woolwich parent. The other youngster was later observed around the area for a few days until it learned to stop screening.

Who is responsible for the tunnel debauch? Financial supervision of the project was moved from the Homes and Communities Agency to the Greater London Authority, but until February of this year City Hall denied that it had any responsibility for the tunnels. The GLA now admits only that it must “continue to monitor the position through regular liaison with the Borough”.

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The Woolwich tunnel is less well used, owing in large part to competition from the Woolwich ferry. Still, it is surprising how many people walk the Woolwich tunnel, following the demise of the docks. The Woolwich tunnel is especially appreciated by sight workers employed in the new transport industries based north of the river in Newham.

In 2009, Greenwich Council proposed to refurbish both tunnels, and there was widespread local enthusiasm for the plan, given the appalling state of the tunnels and their access points. New lifts, lighting, cupolas and a thorough clean were all part of a refurbishment project which received £11.4m funding from the Department of Communities Agency to the Greater London Authority.

In 2011, there was another attempt by Greenwich Council to keep the public informed, with delays being blamed first on “hidden structures”, or “non-drying masts”. There has been no response from the council to repeated calls for a detailed explanation, and the legacy today is more of vandalised gems than rejuvenated heritage.

For more than a year now no further work has been carried out, and both of the new lifts at Greenwich are prone to failure. There are no new lifts at Woolwich.

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Still beautiful . . .

Moving on . . .

Last year the RHS reminded us that Autumn is the traditional, and best, time to plant gardens.

Although the subsequent lengthy winter may have decimated some newly planted subjects, they are right. Autumn is also the best time if you need to move plants, and perhaps the only sensible time to relocate shrubs. Deciduous shrubs can be moved relatively easily once they shed their leaves and are dormant (usually November, depending on temperature), but evergreens are trickier. They should be lifted slightly earlier, while they are still growing, to enable them to send out fresh roots in their new location before the temperature drops. Water any plant you plan to shift very thoroughly a day before you lift it, then plant into a hole which has also been soaked. Add some slow release fertilizer and water well for several weeks. Herbaceous perennials need the same treatment but are easier to move or just divide. Large clumps may be too big to dig out, though, and its best to replant smaller pieces and discard old woody roots.

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Additional resources 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

Estate agents & surveyors, established in 1975, Branches in Westcombe Park, Blackheath, Greenwich & Lee, alongside dedicated branches for Lettings & Commercial.
Contact the Westcombe Park branch on 020 8858 6101

Christopher’s column

It’s also time to consider bringing in a few new varieties – about now, nurseries should be filling up with relatively inexpensive small pots of all sorts of perennials. My favourites over the last year were echo-lavender (in a range of colours - but watch out for slug attacks!) and nepeta (catmint) varieties. The latter is best in full sun and cutting back hard mid Summer gives more flowers later on. Pale yellow Nepeta ‘Gyrospermum’ is an unusual upright variety, which goes well with agastache and monarda – all of them most friendly and good for cutting.

It will soon be bulb planting time and for me, dwarf iris ‘Purple Gem’ was a success, flowering in January. I also liked unusual varieties of the ubiquitous muscari (grape hyacinth) – for Valentine’s Day, ‘Cupido’ and the two tone m/lavender/magenta is zany.

There’s also a yellow, highly scented M. ‘Golden fragrance’. All of these will flower in a cool light spot, but crumpled in quantity into a clay pot. Happy planting!