



Westcombe NEWS

40th Year

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November 2013 Issue 9

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

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

Taxing time for the traders

Sarah Winterbottom

Traders in Old Dover Road were hit with a surprise tax this summer – what's become commonly known as the 'pavement tax'.

With many businesses struggling in the current economic climate, questions are being asked as to the logic behind the introduction of this new trading license by the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG).

It was in July when RBG enforcement officers served papers on shops in Old Dover Road, with traders being told that they were "breaking the law" by displaying goods, or placing tables and chairs outside cafes on the pavement.

Charges are set at £1 per square metre per day plus a one-off £35 set up fee – seemingly insignificant, but it soon mounts up. A double fronted shop would need to pay some £1,500 per year.

For the new owners of Apples 'n Oranges, it came as a nasty surprise: they recently invested some £20k in a refurbishment.

"If we'd known about the new tax, we would have configured the shop differently, taking the stalls on the pavement inside the shop to avoid this additional cost," said the new owners.

The lack of consultation or information prior to the introduction of the new licensing requirement is something that Susan Donnelly, owner of Blackheath Pet Shop Supplies was very surprised about. "As our landlords, you'd imagine

that the council would have consulted with us first, or at least given us some notice especially at a time when the whole country is feeling the squeeze."

While Greenwich is not alone in instigating pavement trading licenses, there are more small business-friendly approaches being taken by some. For example, neighbouring Bexley Council has a sliding scale of charges, with concessions heavily weighted in favour of small businesses.

At a recent meeting of local traders, called by Greenwich Conservatives, concerns were voiced as to how this new tax could lead to higher prices for customers, and may even contribute to shop closures and subsequent job losses.

Petition

Spencer Drury, councillor for Eltham North and opposition leader of the RBG, has called for this tax to be scrapped, a view supported by a petition due to be handed in at the full Council meeting at the end of October.

"The pavement tax came as a bolt from the blue for most traders, loading more costs on to already struggling businesses," said Cllr Geoff Brighty (Con).

"The Council didn't even bother to consult them. My call at the Council meeting in July for the tax to be scrapped was met with a commitment just to 'monitor' it."

(Cont. top of p.3)

Nearly new – always popular



Last September was a very busy month for the Westcombe Society: on Friday 27th the Macmillan Cancer Support Coffee morning took place – and Saturday saw the Children's Nearly New Sale. As the picture above shows, this was HUMMING with activity as bargain-hunters joined the melee in Mycenae House.

No prams please – we were all pushed for space! See below, and stories on p. 2.

The "A" Team at the coffee morning



The Coffee morning (well, lunch too, really) in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support was a great success, and raised over £940.00 for the charity. Many thanks to the Westcombe Society team of volunteers: Marilyn, Heather, Tessa, J-J, Monica, Pauline, Maureen and Caroline. Don't say: "Just let them eat cake Do say: "Try our scones, too – and why not stay for a delicious sandwich lunch?"

PHOTOS
Neville Grant

Crash course

On Thursday October 23rd, at around 1.05 am, the driver of a recently purchased Fiat Punto smashed into a bookies at the top of Westcombe Hill. Driving the wrong way westward on Batley Green one way system, the driver lost control and headed into the bookies. Not a safe bet.

The vehicle was impounded by the police, the driver lacking valid insurance.



NEWS BRIEFS

Fraudsters beware!

Greenwich has won an Excellence in Anti-fraud Silver Award, in recognition of the range of work it does to tackle fraud and to protect public money.

Police warning

Around midday on October 11th, six motor vehicles, including builders' vans, were broken into on roads in and around Westcombe Park Road. The police urge drivers to always lock their cars, even for short periods, and to use properly-fitted burglar alarms; they also warn people not to leave anything open to view in their vehicles.

Contact: Tom Button A/PS
Blackheath Westcombe SNT 0207 161 8420

View our new web site!

Have you viewed the Westcombe Society's new website yet? One treat – you can read the *WN* in colour! Try it out: www.westcombesociety.org

Fireworks threat

Around 100,000 people enjoy the fireworks event every year on the heath. But for how much longer?

First, Greenwich pulled out, leaving Lewisham to foot the bill – and now Lewisham has lost its sponsor, leaving a massive shortfall this year, and the strong possibility that there will be no fireworks next year. This would be a great pity: apart from anything else, firework parties in the back garden increase the danger of accidents. If everyone puts a pound in the bucket that night, Nov. 2, the problem would be solved.

Shakespeare Greenwich-style

Eight Greenwich schools, including The John Roan, Eltham Hill, Thomas Tallis, St. Ursula's, and Corelli College will be performing at the Greenwich Theatre in Crooms Hill between November 4th and 9th. For details go to www.greenwichtheatre.org.uk/shakespearefestival.

Jan on show

Our own Jan Barnett is showing her work in an exhibition entitled "Serenity" at the Gallery, Ruby & Norm, 266 Lee High Road SE13 5PL from 22nd November - 20th December.

Volunteers

There has been a good response to our request for volunteers. THANK you. But we could always do with more!

Dominic Coleman

This year, the Westcombe Society's Dickensian Christmas Bazaar will be opened by local resident and celebrated actor Dominic Coleman.

Dominic has starred in *Stupid!*, *Sex Lives of the Potato Men* and more recently *The Cup* as Vincent Farrell. He played the part of Kevin Trent in *My hero*, and was the shady journalist in the episode "Shock, horror!"; he has appeared in the comedy series *Miranda*, Coronation Street, and played the part of Neville (no relation) in the Sky1 sitcom *Trollied*.

THE WESTCOMBE SOCIETY'S DICKENSIAN CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

ENJOYABLE CHRISTMAS SHOPPING, FOOD & ENTERTAINMENT

Saturday
23rd
November
11.30 - 4.00



Blackheath
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To be opened by *Dominic Coleman*
FREE SHOWS FOR CHILDREN
12.15 & 2.30 Traditional Punch & Judy Show

Craft & Charity Stalls Refreshments Mulled Wine
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Adults £2, 12 - 16s £1, under 12s free, Members £1
proceeds to South London Special League

Sponsors: David Lloyd, Kidbrooke, Davy & Co, Wine Merchants, Westcombe Dry Cleaners.

COMMUNITY NEWS

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Raising money for Macmillan Cancer Support



Cllr Angela Cornforth, the
Mayor of Greenwich,
arrived to open the Coffee
Morning for Macmillan
Cancer Support on Friday
27th September. Best
behaviour, everyone!
PICTURED, LEFT:
Marilyn Little & J-J Aune
of the Westcombe Society,
Mark Johnson-Brown
(Manager of Mycenae
House), the Mayor, and
Peter Dixon of the
Vanbrugh Community
Association.
RIGHT: Two volunteers



Heather Petty and Maureen Aune grab
a quick cuppa before the rush starts.
The trendy colour this year, ladies, is
definitely green. (See the *WN* on line for
the colour edition!)



The baby seems slightly amazed by the
Mayor's Bling ...



... while the Mayor seems amazed by
the delicious cakes!

Sell-out at the Nearly New Sale

After the Macmillan Coffee
Morning, it was time for a
quick rearrangement of all the
chairs and tables in the hall of
Mycenae House, ready for the
Nearly New Sale next day. Phew!

Marilyn Little reports:
“We had nearly 100 people
through the door which was
more than last time.
“The main thing was, we had
lots of satisfied customers (and
stall-holders!) so it was a very
worthwhile day for everybody.
“Thanks must go to Joanne
for organising the event, well
done. Added bonus: we also sold
some of the left-over cakes,
scones and sandwiches from the
coffee morning, thanks to our
friends in Mycenae House.
“So all in all a very good day!
Many thanks to all concerned.”

PHOTOS Right, & Below:
Happy stall holders



PHOTOS: Neville Grant

There were lots of
happy stall-holders
at the Children's
Nearly New Sale.
Baby clothes and
equipment, toys,
ornaments, even
equipment, you name
it, there was an
Aladdin's cave of
goodies – and at
bargain prices. Just
the place to stock up
for the autumn.
A popular event,
this – so popular that
in the end, Mums
(and Dads) had to
leave their prams at
the door.



All too much for some: this lovely baby
slept through it all (thankfully!)

From: Gabi Marston Coleraine Rd.
Rus in Urbe? Blackheath Village, Kidbrooke
Village, Millenium Village – the myth of
country life in SE London continues.

But is it a myth? In the last fortnight in
fruitful SE3 I've given away surplus tomatoes,
grapes, perennials and home-made chutney;
and have received windfall apples, and the
visits of innumerable bees with the promise of
honey in due course from a neighbour's hive.

From: Cllr Geoff Brighty (Con.)
I noted in the Planning Board papers for the
Lovells Wharf application a very helpful sub-
mission from the Westcombe Society. By now
readers may have heard that the Planning
Board, unanimously, rejected plans to increase
the number of residential units.

East Greenwich residents were very well
organised and put forward a compelling case.
Before the meeting, I paid a visit to the
Thamescraft Dry Dock as well as Greenwich
Park and the Old Naval College to assess how
views would be affected.

In my comments I referred to the impact the
development would have on views from the
World Heritage Site at the Naval College, and
from Greenwich Park, the impact on the East
Greenwich Conservation area, concerns about
arrangements for the dry dock and the effect of
the proposed hefty increase in residential units
on local infrastructure – in particular transport.

Given the devotion of some Planning Board
members to large, high rise developments on
the river front and in the north of the Borough I
was very pleased this was turned down.

Taxing times for traders *(from p. 1)*

Cllr Brighty added: “But that just isn’t good enough and local Conservatives are keeping up the pressure. Do the powers that be at the Council really think this is the best way to encourage local shopping centres, like Old Dover Road, to thrive?”

Cllr Alex Grant (Lab) commented: “In principle it is sensible for the council to charge traders to use the public highway for merchandise, and ensure they are not blocking pavements, as most councils already do. But I am pleased that the council has listened to concerns raised by

traders and residents, and pledged to charge a lower tariff on smaller shopping parades like Old Dover Road than in town centres, cap charges, and carry out a full review after six months. I am also asking if any surplus income for the scheme can be spent on brightening up our high streets.”

Some observers note that, given the cost of administration, it is unlikely to yield significant revenue for the Council, and if some businesses close as a result, it is lose, lose, lose all round.

Readers’ comments welcome.

Les Dodson

Les Dodson, who sadly died on 31st August after a long illness, was, with his wife Pat, one of the founder members of the Westcombe Society, and its precursor, the Humber Neighbours.

Les was keenly interested in sporting activities and a formidable footballer in his younger days and even into his later years. He was also a founder member of the Westcombe Parkers cricket team – formed by a random group of local friends.

Les went beyond the call of duty to become a demon opening bowler, and contributed to the demolition of many opposing challengers over the years. In later years, there are those who remember him looking like ‘Doc’ from *Back to the Future*, in his cricket white coat, umpiring behind the stumps.

Before the advent of health and safety rules, Les was at one time in charge of the society’s Bonfire Fireworks display in

what was then Kidbrooke House, while his wife Pat led the wives in preparing soup and goodies for the post-fireworks supper.

Les was a great character, his warmth and wit endeared him to many. He really made you laugh. He exhibited an intelligence that could immediately find the humour in a situation or conversation and produce an apposite witticism that would raise anything from a chuckle to gales of laughter.

That was evidently an ingredient of Pat and Les’ marriage – almost to the end, he could make Pat laugh, and we all know that’s not only the best medicine in life, but fundamental to a strong relationship. He will be sadly missed. **I.P.**



The story of song

The Thomas Tallis Society (TTS) is performing in a concert ‘The Story of Song’ is at 7.30pm, on Saturday November 9th, in St Alfege’s Church, with period instruments and the choir of New Renaissance Voices.

The concert explores the development of choral music over three centuries, and includes music by Josquin, Schutz, Tallis, Gabrieli, J.S Bach and Monteverdi.

In short, a treat!

Tickets are priced £12 and are available on the door, or from
www.ticketsource.co.uk/ttsc

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Dogged Determination

J-J Aune

On Sunday 13th October the heavens opened. But undeterred by the rain and cold (they must have been barking mad...) the Friends of Mycenae Gardens along with the Dog Society Greenwich and Blackheath held a most successful Canine Capers fun dog event.

An amazing selection of dogs from Great Danes to a Chihuahua via cross-breeds and rescue dogs took part in competitions to find the waggiest tail, grumpiest dog and many more.

The local police did a super job as did the Dog Society who were doing free microchipping and giving out poobags.



The best puppy award went to Harley who also won the Westcombe Society prize. Harley (pictured) is a 14 week old rescue puppy who is believed to be part Golden Retriever, part black Labrador and is owned by Mandy and Ian of Ulundi Rd.

Break a leg!

Good Things is a poignant, hilarious play with a lot to say about finding love the second time round.

Suddenly single after twenty-plus years and with a stropky adolescent daughter, a senile father and an ex who can still wound, Susan Love views her approaching ‘Big Five-O’ without enthusiasm.

Good Things will be presented at the Alexandra Hall, Bramshot Avenue, Charlton SE7 7HX. It runs from Thursday to Saturday, Oct. 31st- 2nd at 8pm.

Doors open 7.30 pm. Tickets £8 (£7 Concs). Ring 07867 627 987 or e-mail alexandraplayers@gmail.com

Thank you everyone!

David & Jenny of Collins Cleaners on Stratheden Parade would just like to say a heartfelt thank you to all the wonderful people of Blackheath for all your good wishes and unwavering support since David’s illness. It’s been overwhelming.

We would also like to say a sincere thank you for your valued custom over many years. David has been part of the community for the last 15 years, and I did not realize how much he is thought of around The Standard. To be honest, when I started travelling up from Kent (to keep the shop ticking along) I was very nervous, and don’t think I could have coped without the support from the community.

We wish Em & Clare of Westcombe Dry Cleaners every success and give our best wishes as they take over our business. We know they will continue to provide a first class service to you. I’d also like to thank them for all their help and support.

Jenny Pickles



Juliette Harrison Photography

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: Nik Renouf, Mark Higgins, Janet Denne, Rose Bayley, Janet Sweet, George Allonby, Louise Gaul

INTERNATIONAL ART AUCTION

Saturday Nov. 16th 1.30 - 5.00 pm
Mycenae House, 90 Mycenae Rd. SE3 7SE



1.30 - 2.00 pm Viewing time
Auction of pictures from around the world 2.00 - 4.30pm
Plus a silent auction - something for everyone!

In aid of UNHCR’s work among refugees in the Middle East - particularly Syria.
Entrance on door by catalogue £4.00 includes a free drink & lucky number for draw at end of auction.
Generous prizes include a food hamper.
Information: 0208 858 8489

Organised by Blackheath & Greenwich United Nations Association

Christmas at The House Mycenae House community centre

Nov 29 The Al Jolson Show

Nov 30 25 Sleeps ‘til Christmas Party

Dec 9 Blackheath Centre for Singing Concert
plus Scrooge

Dec 13 Friday Club Concert & Lunch
feat Maureen’s Music

Dec 13 Jazz & Curry Special
feat Luluk Purwanto, Bob McKay, Paul Taylor

Dec 14 Diddi Dance Christmas Party

Dec 16 Becky Dell Music Academy
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Mycenae House & Gardens is a community hub committed to serving the communities of Westcombe, Blackheath & Greenwich



FEATURES

‘Fascinators and Frocks’



Lisa Bennett and Jo Berry are local Mums who have formed 'Crafty Pear'. They met over four years ago pregnant with their second children, and whilst bonding over tales of sleepless nights and potty training, they realised they had a shared love of making things.

After several years of selling their handcrafted jewellery and accessories at School and Craft fairs, they were offered a stall at Greenwich Market in the summer with the organisation 'Greenwich Mums', who were helping local Mums starting their own businesses. For the next six months, they have a regular slot in the market.

'Crafty Pear' are now selling handcrafted girls' reversible dresses and hats in 100% cotton spotty and floral fabrics. The Autumn/ Winter range features reversible pinafore dresses in a fine Robert Kauffman needlecord. They also sell hair accessories, jewellery, crochet hats and baby shoes.

The other side of 'Crafty Pear' was inspired by Jo's previous career as a Wig Assistant on West End shows such as *Grease*, and *Guys and Dolls*. She missed creating the glamorous looks of the 1940s and 50s so decided to create an event where you could have your hair styled and, whatever your sewing skills, create a beau-

tiful fascinator before sitting down to an afternoon tea with vintage china.

They have been keen to use local venues such as The Old Cottage Coffee Shop in Charlton Park, 'Sewing Time' at Blackheath Standard and the beautiful Dutch Room at Charlton house. The concept has been very popular with private hen parties but equally people have enjoyed coming on their own or with friends to one of the ticketed events.

Businesses like 'Crafty Pear' and the many others founded by local Mums are thriving in this area because of the wonderful community spirit that we have and the support network that is available. This is something to be very proud of, especially in these financially difficult times.

Come and support 'Crafty Pear' and the other 'Market Mums' at Greenwich Market on 6th November and 4th December!

Tickets are available for the next 'Vintage Afternoon Tea' on Saturday 16th November 2.30pm-5pm at £25 each (including all sewing materials, hair-styling and afternoon tea) at Sewing Time, Blackheath Standard.

Please contact Jo on 07971 296792 or email craftypear@hotmail.co.uk for more information.

Changes to welfare policies and cuts in housing benefit Cllr Alex Grant

Cll. ALEX GRANT gave a presentation to the Vanbrugh Park Estate Tenants and Residents Association in September. This is an edited version.

In Blackheath Westcombe ward, like much of Greenwich, there is a real mixture of housing types, with the well-to-do often living next door to low-income families, the unemployed, and pensioners on low incomes.

By and large, the different groups of people get on together well. There are no ghettos in Blackheath Westcombe ward. But this rich mixture is now under threat. Like many areas of London, Blackheath and Westcombe Park could increasingly become somewhere where only the affluent or those lucky enough to have a secure tenancy on a council or housing association home can live.

There have been three key changes – cuts in Housing benefit, the Benefits cap and (a long-term trend), the steep rise in private renting. This report outlines what the local impact has been.

Housing benefit

Local Housing Allowance (the kind of Housing Benefit that most claimants now receive, known as LHA for short) is now fixed at 30% of the highest rents in the area, not 50%.

Council and housing association tenants are mostly unaffected. The real sting in the tail is for those who for one reason or another rent private accommodation.

These tenants are faced with a double whammy: some may be able to absorb the extra rent bill, but many will be forced to move – it is estimated that across London as a whole, 80,000 households may be forced to move. Greenwich Council figures estimate that most, if not all, the 114 households in Blackheath Westcombe ward which currently get LHA have lost out. Almost all have lost at least £10 a week, many will lose more than £20 a week, and a few have lost more than £30 a week. Indeed, the highest average loss of Housing Benefit of any ward in the Borough (almost £16 a week on average) is here in Blackheath and Westcombe Park. Across London, in popular areas like Greenwich, Westcombe Park, and Blackheath, where rents are higher, hundreds of households will lose out.

The government has created a Discretionary Housing Payment (or DHP) – an extra pool of money that the council can use to top up people's Housing Benefit in cases of genuine need, and I have seen its good effects. For example, when a working single mother living locally approached me for help some months ago to say her private landlord had put the rent up higher than the LHA level, I helped her obtain a DHP to tide her over while she looked for somewhere cheaper to move to locally, so she did not need to uproot her children from school by moving suddenly to somewhere cheaper far away.

The growth in private renting

There has been a huge growth in private renting in Blackheath and Westcombe Park in the last decade: up from 16.8% of households in 2001 to 24.5% in 2011. One in four households here is now rented from a private landlord: a decade ago it was just one in six.

At the same time, because of the right to buy, the proportion of people renting their homes from the council has dropped sharply from 22.4% in 2001 to 15.0% in 2011

The number of owner occupiers has, surprisingly, also fallen slightly, from 51.5% of all households in 2001 to 49.9% in 2011. Probably for the first time, fewer than half of the households of Blackheath Westcombe ward are people living in homes that they own.

So a reduction in council housing, through the Right to Buy, has been more than offset by an increase in private homes being rented out by their owners, and home ownership has fallen overall.

Benefits Cap

Since the "Benefits cap" came into operation over the last few months, we are beginning to see what the real impact is on families in the borough.

In a nutshell, the government's policy is that total benefits cannot now exceed:

- * £500 a week for couples (with or without children living with them)
- * £500 a week for single parents whose children live with them
- * £350 a week for single adults who don't have children, or whose children don't live with them

According to figures from the Royal Borough of Greenwich, about 340 families in the borough are affected by the Benefits Cap. Of these, the council is already advising 110 families – of which 68 (well over half) are in private rented accommodation, not council or housing association homes.

On average, each household is losing £56 a week of benefit; some are losing more than £100 a week. With the cap not yet fully phased in, and more cases likely to come to light, this is probably just the tip of an iceberg. However, the exact impact on Blackheath and Westcombe Park is currently unknown.

What action the council is taking

The council has proactively contacted all households affected by the benefits cap, and has already been advising hundreds of households. Residents have been given advice about returning to work, what help they can receive from Discretionary funds, or given advice about moving to more affordable housing.

(cont on page 6)

Blackheath – and beyond

Two important events are coming up in November. First, Professor Alan Powers of University College, London, is giving a lecture on *Exotic or Native? Modern Architecture in Greenwich and Blackheath* at the National Maritime Museum lecture hall at 11.00 am on Sunday 3rd November.

Tickets are £10 including a glass of wine and are available from Jackie Hicks, 60, Greenwich Park Street SE10 9LT hicksjackie60@gmail.com

Then on Friday 15th. November, at 7.30 pm, the Astronomer Royal, Lord Martin Rees, is giving a talk on *The Universe, Stars & Prospects for Planet Earth* at St Margaret's Church, Lee Terrace SE13 5EA. This is the first public lecture in the annual Edmond Halley lecture series. (Halley is buried in St Margaret's churchyard.)

Tickets cost £12.00, and are available from: stmargaretslee@btinternet.com or phone: 020 8318 9643

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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: Nov 28th. **John Benjamin Fabergé: his mercurial rise and career in pre-Revolutionary Russia** Non-members £5 on the door. **GREENWICH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY** King William Court, the University of Greenwich **NEXT LECTURE:** 11th. Nov.: Mrs Beeton Presents - Beeton's Book of Household Management in the Culinary Context Talk by Annie Gray 8852 7873 Non-members £8.00 **MADE IN GREENWICH GALLERY** www.made-ingreenwich.co.uk Ring 8293 9823 for details: Nov.10th. Silent Cacophony, Remembrance Sunday event in partnership with Platform-7. Free. **November 19th - 24th: Greenwich Open Studios** Autumn Exhibition. Free. **Nov. 21st: "Elected Silence, Speak To Me":** wonderful local poets Mick Delap, Graham High and Fiona Moore read some of their work and discuss poetry and silence with Graham Fawcett. **THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY, LONDON:** The Cave Linear House, Peyton Place, London SE10 8RS **EXHIBITION:** Movement and Moment, People and Places Angela & Roger Ford have been making images since the 70s. This is their photographic journey **9th Nov – 20th Nov Mon, - Fri. 9:00 am – 5:00pm Sat/Sun 12:00m – 4:00pm (NOT OPEN Sun 17th)** **FREE ENTRY**

CHILDREN

GREENWICH THEATRE
Wed. 30th Oct - Sun 3rd Nov. **WE'RE GOING ON A BEAR HUNT** Ages 2+ Wed-Fri 11.00 am & 2.0 pm Sat & Sun. 10.00 am, 12.30 and 3.00 pm **SAT 2nd Nov. COMEDY CLUB 4 KIDS** 6.00 pm £7.00 adult, £5.00 children Ages 6+ **THURS 21st Nov. - Sun Jan 6th PUSS IN BOOTS** Andrew Pollard is back! **BLACKHEATH HALLS**
Sat 16th Nov 3.0 pm. **THE SORCERER'S APPRENTICE** With puppets £7.00 Ages 4 + Sat 30th Nov 3.00 pm. **THE MUSICIANS OF BREMEN** £7.00 Ages 3 + **WOODLANDS FARM** 331 Shooters Hill. Tel. 0208 319 8900 Every Thursday Toddler Club 10am - 12pm £2 per adult, children free **SE LONDON DADS GROUP DADS ALERT:** Regular stay-and-play for dads and children under five @ Sherington Children's Centre, 14 Sherington Road every Wednesday from 9:30 - 11:30am. Contact: www.SELondonDads.org.uk or email: info@selondondads.org.uk

CONCERT in aid of WATERAID
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COMMUNITY

Westcombe Society
Dates for your diary:
Friday 1st Nov. Quiz Night, Mycenae House
Sat. 23rd Nov. Dickensian Christmas Bazaar, Blackheath Girls High School, Mycenae Road



Join us at Davy's Wineshop, 171 Greenwich High Road SE10 8JA Telephone: 020 8858 9147
* for our monthly **Cheese and Wine Tasting** in conjunction with The Cheeseboard at 7pm on **13th November**. Tickets £25
* **The Art of Whisky Blending, 7.00 pm 27th Nov.** Sample five fine malts from Speyside, Islay, the Highlands and Lowlands, sampling the incredible melody of flavours and blending them to create your own unique whisky. Tickets £35 include a two course supper after the tasting.
CANCER RESEARCH LUNCH The next fund-raising luncheon is on Thursday 7th November at the Clarendon Hotel, Blackheath from 12 noon to 2:30pm. Featuring **Jason Melville**, professional vocalist Soul, Swing, Rock, 60s & 70s. The cost is £8.50. Lunches can be booked by telephoning Wendy on 020 8265 0335 by Monday 4th Nov. latest..
BLACKHEATH SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY Mycenae House, 90 Mycenae Road. Meetings begin at 7.45pm. Visitors are welcome, and requested to donate £ 3.00 to Society funds. **Nov. 15th:** Conservation - Knole in Flux Ms Emily Watts, MA, House steward, & Ms Sioban Barratt, Conservator talk on Knole: A project for External Repairs & a new Conservation Studio
BLACKHEATH & GREENWICH UNA's International Art Auction in Mycenae House on **Sat.16th Nov.** Pictures from five continents to be auctioned, plus a "silent auction" of smaller items. Viewing 1.30, auction starts 2.00 pm. Entrance by catalogue £4.00 includes free drink. Lucky numbers on catalogue to be drawn at 4.00 pm. In aid of refugees in Middle East
INDUSTRIAL HISTORY SOCIETY 19th November Paul Sowan. What happened at Merstham? Questions answered and un-answered Meetings are held at The Old Bakehouse, Bennett Park, SE3 (at the back of Age Exchange Shop. There is no on-site parking, please use the station car park Meetings start 7.30 and non members are charged £1.
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. For information ring 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
GREENWICH MERIDIAN CHOIR (formerly **SECOND CHANCE CHOIR**) If you are interested in joining the choir as a regular member, (rehearsals are Thursdays evenings during term time), contact **Jean Valsler** at 0208 8527548 or email brook-jean@btinternet.com Or **Susanna Gadd** at 36457596 or email susannagadd@yahoo.co.uk.
BLACKHEATH QUAKERS' 50 YEARS **FREE TALK** series continue. Quaker Meeting House, Lawn Terrace, SE3 9LL Booking: blackheathquakers@gmail.com or 07582 729 185
Fri. Nov. 15th. 7.30 Drone warfare: convenient killing? **MARY DOBBING** researcher DW, UK



Songs from the shows!
Friday 29th Nov
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£30.00 (Table for 10 £275) (includes glass of bubbly)
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Vanbrugh Community Association Annual General Meeting

on Thursday 21st November 2013 at Mycenae House at 7.30pm

Nominations for two members of the VCA Management Committee wanted!
A Member Organisation may nominate one representative to be a member, but anyone who may be interested in joining can be nominated if they become an Individual Member of VCA. Nominees with experience in human resources, community development, marketing and fundraising particularly welcome!

Nomination Forms are available in Mycenae House, and should be completed and returned by Friday 15th November. **Sheila Peck Chair, VCA**

THEATRE & OPERA

THE GREENWICH THEATRE Crooms Hill, Greenwich, London SE10 8ES 020 8858 7755
GREENWICH COMEDY FESTIVAL
Sun 3rd Nov. 8.00pm **ALEXEI SAYLE** £17.50 £12.50
PUSS IN BOOTS (Andrew Pollard strikes again!) Thurs 21st Nov. 2013 - Sun Jan 5th 2014. Times vary. Tickets £20, £26, Conc. £18, £24.00
THE ALEXANDRA PLAYERS
Alexandra Hall, Bramshot Avenue, SE7 7HX
Thurs-Sat Oct. 31 & Nov. 1 & 2 8.00 pm
The Alexandra Players present **GOOD THINGS** by Liz Lochhead. Finding love in a charity shop £8 (£7 Concs). Box Office 07867 627 987
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EMERGE 13 Dance group
Week 1: 5th-9th Nov. 8.00 pm £10|£8.00
Week 2: 12th 16th Nov. 8.00 pm £10|£8.00
OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD by Timberlake Wertenbaker: 21st - 23rd Nov. 8.00 pm £10|£6.00
GEOFFREY WHITWORTH THEATRE
Beech Walk, Crayford DA1 4NP 01322 526 390
Sat 16th - Sat 23rd Nov. **BARE FOOT IN THE PARK** by Neil Simon bookings@thegwt.org.uk

MUSIC

BLACKHEATH HALLS Tel 020 8463 0100
Blackheath Sundays:
Sun 10th Nov. 11.00 am **WIHAN QUARTET** play Schuberts, Janacek & Dvorak £14.00 | £12.00
Sun 24th Nov. 11.00 am **JAMES BRAWN** piano plays Mussorgsky Pictures at an Exhibition & Beethoven sonatas £14.00 | £12.00
BLACKHEATH GOES GOSPEL REHEARSALS Come and join our Blackheath Halls Gospel Choir. No previous experience necessary. Rehearsals: Mondays 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) continues: Mondays: 4, 11, 18, 25 Nov.; 2 December | 10am | Recital Room Contact: Lionel Lewis on 8297 1075, email lj@lioneljlewis.org.uk or Michael Mellish on 8852 6391. Fee: £75 (10 week course)
Sat 9th Nov. **GRANT DOYLE & the Mini Proms** String Quartet with ANNA PATALONG 7.30 pm Great Hall Tickets £15 | £12.00
Thurs. 14th Nov. **TRINITY LABAN SINFONIA** Mozart & Beethoven £10 | £5.00
Tues. 27th Nov. **TRINITY LABAN STRING ENSEMBLE** play Britten et al. £10 | £5.00
Thurs. 28th Nov. 7.30 pm **TRINITY LABAN WIND ORCHESTRA** £10 | £5.00

Royal Greenwich International Early Music Festival and Exhibition at OLD ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE

& St Alfege Church

Thurs. 7th - Sat. 9th Nov. 2013

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(Town Hall) or 8858 9731 (Home)
geoffrey.brighty@greenwich.gov.uk

Cllr. Alex Wilson
Tel. 07783 611607
Email: alex.wilson@greenwich.gov.uk
Surgery: 1st Monday of the month 6 - 7.00 pm
Blackheath Library, Old Dover Rd.

Labour:
Cllr. Alex Grant
Tel. 8855 7292 E-mail 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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Monday Lunchtime Recitals

The Friends of Blackheath Halls bring you a series of fundraising recitals for the autumn. All concerts are in the Recital Room and start at 1.10pm. A light lunch is available prior to the recital. Admission is free with a retiring donation to Blackheath Halls.
Mon. 4th Nov. Rika Zayasu piano
Mon 11th Nov. Olga Stezhko piano
Mon. 2nd Dec. Rie Kosaka voice and harp
Mon. 9th Dec. Linos Piano Trio

NON-CLASSICAL MUSIC EVENTS

BLACKHEATH HALLS
Sat. 2nd Nov. 5.00 pm **SUSAN CADOGAN & FRIENDS** This reggae/soul queen celebrates her birthday! £18.00 | £16.00
Sat 16th Nov. 8.00 pm **LAU Modern folk's** most innovative band £18.00 | £16.00
Sat 30th Nov. 8.00 pm **KATHRYN TICKELL & THE SIDE** Classical meets Northumbrian folk! £17.0 | £15.00
BEATS IN THE BAR: Tues./ 19th, Thurs. 21st Nov. 7.30 pm All sessions free
LIVE JAZZ - AT MYCENAE HOUSE
Candlelit jazz, 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; mainstream jazz every Thursday

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FEATURES

Charlton Lido's Winter Closure

Anne Robbins



PHOTO: Nikki Coates

On our doorstep sits a delightful resource: Charlton Lido is a heated outdoor swimming pool, built in 1939 in classic art deco style, and now being refurbished as part of the Olympics legacy.

Tucked into Hornfair Park, it's a short way along Shooter's Hill Road from the junction with the Old Dover Road. The main pool is 50m long, so Olympic sized, and there is a shallow pool for toddlers, too. When the new works are finished, it will also have a gym, exercise studios, improved changing facilities, and a first-floor café and sun deck with step-free access. Some of this will be newly-built and other parts refurbished. It will sit sympathetically with the original fabric.

The sad news? It was reopened as a year-round facility – but this winter it will be closed, mainly because it needs members. The Lido is being run by Greenwich Leisure Ltd., a successful co-op which manages leisure centres across London. GLL must, of course, charge admission fees. There are discounts for Greenwich Card holders, and regular users can join for a monthly fee and use it all they would like.

The membership scheme has not been very clearly advertised, however, and with only around 150 members, the income won't be enough to cover costs through the winter. So it will be closed from November, reopening in the Spring.

The good news, though, is that local residents are looking at forming a Friends group, to advocate and care for this great facility. This approach has worked well at

other London Lidos, like that at Brockwell.

The Charlton Lido helps feed a sense of community; when I was last there, early in September, the pool was being enjoyed by plenty of families, school friends, and groups of mums. It had space for lap and club swimmers, but also for larking about and catching the sun. I'm told that the water has felt delightful even in chillier October mornings.

The people hoping to develop the Friends group would love to hear from anyone interested in supporting the Lido; you can read more here: <http://charlton-champion.co.uk/2013/09/19/friends-of-charlton-lido-time-for-action/>. (You can also find out about controversial plans to rename the Lido!) And swimmers at every level can look forward to the spring and to being able to swim under open skies again.



Effects of welfare policies (cont from p.4)

The council has also just decided to invest £900,000 in improved inspection of private sector rented housing to check that it is safe, and that it is not being used as a base for crime and/or anti-social behaviour. Though welcome, these resources will only concentrate on 1,000 properties – about 5% of the 20,000 homes in Greenwich which are rented privately.

At the same time local churches have set up a Greenwich Foodbank for those in most need, and lots of advice agencies have set more sessions for people in need. But the real solution apart from a reduction in private sector rents, is more affordable housing of all kinds, both for those looking for work and for those in low-paid work.

Conclusion

It is important to realise that people receiving housing benefit are not all "work-shy scroungers": 40% of Housing Benefit claimants are in work, and many of the others will be disabled or retired. Much of the income that these families receive is not cash in hand – it is housing benefit which in many cases is passed on directly to their landlords in the private sector. In Blackheath Westcombe ward, one in four households is now rented from a private landlord, as the 2011 census data reveals.

With rents in this area high, and rising further all the time, for those who are unwell, are single parents, or find it hard to find jobs, the choice is simple: economise, or up sticks and move. The situation will get worse as the "Bedroom tax" kicks in - which will mean that people lose part of their housing benefit if they are judged to have one more bedroom than they need. Where any people affected could move to remains a major issue.

According to the Mayor of London's figures on private sector rents, the median weekly rent for a home with four bedrooms or more in the SE3 postcode is a whopping £600 – well above the benefits cap. This effectively makes it difficult, if not impossible, for families with children on housing benefit to be able to afford to rent in areas like Blackheath or Kidbrooke.

Rather than address the real issue – the chronic shortage of affordable housing in inner London – the benefits cap, and changes to Housing Benefit, demonise the poor and in many cases force them to uproot themselves to other parts of London, with children forced to change schools, or even move out of the capital entirely. Do we really want to live in a society where only the well-off can afford to live in SE3?

The heroines of Greenwich

CAROLYN AYERS looks at the role of the women of Greenwich in the campaign to win women the vote

Greenwich might not be the first place one thinks of when thinking of the suffragettes. However, the houses, roads and buildings in and around the borough of Greenwich were the site for many a meeting, protest, arrest and supposed plot.

In June 1910 the Greenwich and Deptford Women's Social and Political Union was formed at the Blackheath home of Rosa 'May' Billingham. The WSPU were a militant organisation formed in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters. Disillusioned by the suffrage campaign, the Pankhursts' and their supporters decided on a more confrontational approach to the campaign. Not all of the members of the WSPU were militant, but from 1906 WSPU members were known as the 'suffragettes'.

Rosa, born and raised at 35 Granville Park, Lewisham was disabled by polio from infancy. Around 1907, she joined the Lewisham WSPU, but by 1910 disagreements within the branch lead to the formation of the Greenwich and Deptford WSPU. Billingham was chosen as its honorary secretary. In 1911 the branch merged with the Woolwich WSPU to become the Greenwich, Deptford and Woolwich WSPU branch. (WSPU was but one of many campaigning groups.)

As well as taking part in large national demonstrations in London, Billingham and members of the Greenwich branch were active within the borough. Members went out and about within the neighbourhood in a pony and trap decked out in the suffragette colours – purple, white and green – and handed out hundreds and hundreds of flyers. They went on poster parades, walking in the gutter as they would have been arrested for obstruction had they walked on the pavements.

Members held meetings at Woolwich Town Hall, inviting the likes of Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst to talk. 'At homes' were held at the Ethical Hall, now West Greenwich House, and at Rachel's home. Open air meetings were also held in Woolwich and on Blackheath.

Members canvassed from house to house, and sold the WSPU newspaper on street corners. Leaflets were handed out at the Arsenal Gates and WSPU posters advertising processions and meetings were everywhere. There were suffrage plays put on at the Co-operative Hall – and St Alfege's Church was the scene of a suffragette disruption. There was even a rumour



of a foiled plot to blow up a water reservoir near Shooters Hill.

Despite being in a wheelchair, Billingham was actively involved in many publicity stunts (she was often at the head of processions with her wheelchair bedecked in the suffragette colours) but as a weapon to try to break police cordons.

Her wheelchair also proved useful for hiding things; in 1912 she hid toffee hammers, stones and slings underneath the blanket on her lap, she used these items to smash shop windows.

Billinghurst was arrested on numerous occasions and went to prison twice: in 1912; she was arrested and charged with window smashing and given one month's hard labour in Holloway. In December 1912 Billingham was arrested in Aberdeen Terrace for damaging post by pouring acid into letter boxes. She was sentenced to eight months in Holloway. Immediately she went on hunger strike and was force fed at least twice. The force feeding left her very poorly and she was released early after public outcry at her treatment.

Greenwich Council was not sympathetic to the votes for women campaign, but Woolwich Borough Council passed a resolution in support of the franchise in 1908.

Billinghurst was by no means the only Greenwich suffragette. The 'Suffragette Martyr', Emily Wilding Davison, who was killed by the King's Horse at the infamous 1913 Derby, was born in Roxburgh House, Vanbrugh Park Road.

Edith Bessie New, who lived for a time in Hyde Vale, was one of the first militant suffragettes to be arrested for throwing stones at 10, Downing Street. Mabel Tuke, born in Plumstead, was the Honorary Secretary of the National WSPU at its London headquarters.

These women played an important part in achieving the vote, and in putting women's issues on the map, but many others have followed in their footsteps, not just nationally (and across the world) but locally. Among many others, Mary Stott lived in Blackheath, and played a pioneering part in women's journalism and feminist issues (she started the *Guardian* Women's page), and Jane Grant, who lives in Westcombe Park, and who founded the National Alliance of Women's Organisations.

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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

Air pollution ‘exceeds legal limits’

Shocking new figures, shared at a public meeting organised by the ‘Say No to Silvertown Tunnel’ campaigners, reveal that air pollution levels in Greenwich exceed both legal limits set by the European Commission, and WHO guidelines – in some areas by more than 50%.

The Royal Standard gave readings of 51.88µg/m3 (readings above 40µg/m3 are in breach of EU air quality regulations). These new results mirror those of the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG), which were obtained through the Freedom of Information Act by the ‘Say No to Silvertown Tunnel’ campaign.

In fact, according to figures from the Environment Agency, London is the most polluted capital city in Europe.

Speaker, Dr Ian Mudway, lecturer in respiratory toxicology at King’s College, told the well-attended meeting about his findings from a five year study investigating the effects of air pollution on the population in Tower Hamlets and Hackney (on the north side of the Blackwall Tunnel).

The results are grim and costly: premature death plus increased hospital admissions, GP visits and medication. In fact there are 29,000 premature deaths in the UK each year due to exposure to particulate air pollution.

The audience learnt how exposure to air pollution, at levels similar to those in Greenwich, causes inflammation of the lungs and lung function changes in healthy adults, and actually stunts the growth of developing lungs in children.

“Air pollution is largely traffic created,” explained Dr Mudway, and according to Andrew Wood from the ‘Network for Clean Air’, diesel is responsible for 90%. (See *The devil is in the diesel*, *WN*, July/August 2013, page 7)

This point was reiterated by Simon Birkett from ‘Campaign for Clean Air in London’, who added that diesel vehicles represent 50% of the total market in the UK and are responsible for up to 30 times more emissions than petrol driven engines.

Birkett went on to challenge the audience to petition Greenwich to provide greener buses, and replicate residents’ success in Putney. Sian Berry, from the

‘Campaign for Better Transport’ also shared campaign successes as part of what was a rallying call to attendees.

The link between air pollution and the proposed Silvertown Tunnel became clear when John Elliott, an ex-GLC Transport Planning Consultant with forty years’ experience, stood up to speak. Mr Elliott challenged the kitchen logic that new roads reduce congestion.

Sharing many examples of new roads that have been built in London and elsewhere, he provided evidence to show that new roads result in additional car journeys, and actually increase traffic levels and exhaust emissions. And with the approach to the new tunnel sharing that of the Blackwall Tunnel the audience was left

wondering how this could possibly result in anything other than traffic gridlocks and even worse air quality.

“The RBG has not offered any evidence to support their pro-Silvertown Tunnel stance,” said the meeting’s host, a concern echoed by members of the audience at the end of the evening, who left questioning the actual need for another road crossing. Dick Allard of the Westcombe Society Environment Committee has contacted the RBG expressing serious reservations. *Further information can be found on www.silvertowntunnel.co.uk which has a map showing the most polluted areas in Greenwich. Roads badly affected are those leading to the Blackwall Tunnel, particularly the A102, the Sun in Sands intersection, and the Woolwich road flyover.*

News from the park

Greenwich Park is looking better than ever. The Friends of Greenwich Park report that the Park has been restored so well that no one would know that the Olympics had taken place.

The Friends have arranged a Sunday Morning Bird Walk on 17th November at 8.30 am. led by Patricia Brown.

There is no need to book, just turn up at the official meeting point near the Blackheath Gate. The walk is free and having binoculars will greatly add to the pleasure.

Christopher’s column

Clean sweep

When the leaves start to fall you have to decide whether to sweep or not. As a teenager one of the joys of Autumn was walking to school and finding conkers amid the ankle deep leaves on the pavements . . . Those were the days . . .

I was glad to read that at least one garden writer lets leaves remain on their flower beds - but you have to clear lawns, I’m afraid. Plane tree leaves are slow to break down but if you shred or mow over them, they will rot down – eventually. Other leaves are far easier to incorporate into compost making.



But if your garden is in full sight of the house you will also have to decide whether to clear up for Winter, or not. Tidy doesn’t equal organized in my eyes, and you will have to plan what to do if you are to get the best out of the garden in the ‘bare’ cold months. Cutting down old stems all at once isn’t necessary or even the best thing to do.

Every gardening move is in some way an aesthetic one – pruning, mowing etc are all based on how it looks as well as the rest - so what you want to see will affect the ‘tidying’ you do. For example, leaving seed heads to stand until they collapse with frost or wind is OK if you like that look – and it’s also good for birds and insects if there are any around. Hollow stems like fennel will provide shelter for insects if you cut them and pile up somewhere – but can also provide home for slugs. It’s your decision.

However, you must be tidy where small bulbs or perennials are coming through (early geraniums like *G. malviflorum* for example). These do need clear space – not a blanket of soggy leaves – and also a shot of grit or fine gravel to deter slugs. And do protect crocus bulbs from digging by mice or squirrels with a sheet of wire or plastic mesh.

Christopher Raven



Saving the acid grass-land

EMILY NORTON
of the
Westcombe
Society
Environment
Committee



A small group of volunteers spent a warm sunny Sunday afternoon in October raking up the grass cuttings left by the mower on the corner of the heath next to Vanbrugh Park. This is an area of acid grassland which is important for the flora it supports, in particular harebells.

Leaving grass cuttings lying on the site for more than a few days is not good for acid grassland, which can be damaged if the layer of cuttings blocks light and air from the turf, or if increased soil nutrients are released when the grass cuttings decay. Once the cuttings had been lying long enough for the valuable seeds of plants (such as harebells and birdsfoot) contained in them to fall to the ground, it was a real case of ‘making hay while the sun shines’.

Many people will have noticed the meadows on Blackheath this year and it is hoped that they will continue into the future, with both acid grassland meadows and the flowering bunds sown with brightly coloured flowers (such as blue cornflowers and vipers bugloss, and red poppies) typical of arable field edges. However, in order to preserve the ecosystem of the heath it may be that there is an occasional need to ask for help from volunteers, as there was that day in October.

If you would be interested in helping on the heath, please let the Westcombe Society Environment Committee know by emailing environment@westcombesociety.org with the subject ‘Blackheath nature conservation volunteers.’

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Westcombe Woodlands

The AGM of The Friends of Westcombe Woodlands will be held on
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