



Westcombe NEWS



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February 2015 Issue 1

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

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

Traffic hotspots: time to act

WN
reporter

There are continuing reports of a great deal of disillusionment with mainstream politics in the UK. The result: the growth of minority parties such as the SNP and UKIP.

How to counter this trend? Well a good start may have been made this year with the brave proposal for plain-paper packaging of tobacco products.

Another good way to restore some of this faith, is to seize the dying days of the present parliament in a way that would benefit not just Greenwich, but London, and every city in the country.

Listeners to the BBC were disturbed to hear that in 2015, so little legislation was planned that MPs were being advised to return to their constituencies on Wednesdays – presumably to prepare for battle in the forthcoming General Election.

There is however one piece of legislation that is crying out to be passed. It's controversial, and not that straightforward, and would make some people very cross: this is legislation to clean up our cities.

Death by diesel

Drivers of diesel-fuelled vehicles have been encouraged to buy them by well-meaning but ill-informed legislation: the idea was to make diesel cheaper in an effort to limit greenhouse gases.

However, up to 60,00 people die each year from disease caused by air pollution – including the NO₂ gas emitted mainly by diesel engines. As the *WN* has repeatedly warned, "the devil is in the diesel."

A recent report by a House of Commons cross-party environmental audit committee is very concerned over the major public health issues caused by air pollution. Evidence given to the committee indicates that diesel vehicles produce 22 times as much particulate matter and four times as much NO_x – the term covers both nitric oxide and nitrogen dioxide – as petrol vehicles. The committee is urging the government to change the tax system.

The committee also recommends that

new schools, hospitals and care homes should not be built next to air pollution hotspots; and schools next to busy roads should be fitted with air filtration systems.

Joan Walley MP, chair of the committee, said: "New figures suggest air pollution could be killing almost the same number of people as smoking in the UK, yet the government seems unwilling to put saving lives before economic growth."

A good start might be to do more to encourage bio-diesel.

The impact on children

"Children growing up near busy roads with high NO₂ (nitrogen dioxide) and particle emissions have stunted and impaired lung development," she added. "Over 1,000 schools are only 150 metres away from major roads. Protecting children and vulnerable people in the worst affected areas must be made a priority."

A number of schools in our area are very near traffic hot spots, and should definitely be made a priority; they include Invicta and Halstow Primary Schools, St Alfege with St Peters' Church of England Primary School, and the Millenium School. Greenwich Council is also building a new school on the Greenwich Peninsula – St Mary Magdalene school, due to open in 2015, very near the proposed Silvertown Tunnel. Campaigners claim this is another reason for opposing a new tunnel.

This issue is above party politics. If all parties were to agree on introducing the necessary legislation, to be phased in over the next two years or so, the issue would not become a political football in the General Election: and would do much to restore faith in our political leaders.

Meanwhile, in a separate development, the mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, has announced radical plans to ban diesel cars from the French capital by 2020 as part of an anti-pollution drive. If Paris can do it, why can't London?

Are you listening, Boris? Or are your hands tied by Westminster?

A lorry's human cargo

It was around 1.00 pm on Monday 29th December when Betty Padilla looked up from the job she was doing at Go West Hairdressers at the top of Westcombe Hill to see a large white pan-technicon, the size of two houses, parked opposite.

That's funny, it's a Spanish lorry she thought. As she watched, the driver got out to ask the way.

A friendly passer-by pointed to a nearby building. A Spanish-speaker, Betty was about to cross the road to see if she could help out when someone dashed in. "There's something going on!" she cried.

The driver had opened up the back of his lorry – and out stumbled six cold and exhausted people, two of them children. Allegedly, another appeared from beneath the lorry. One of them then did a runner.

The police were called, and within ten minutes, two police vehicles arrived. The police behaved "impeccably", and carried

off the "illegal immigrants" – if that is what they were – and handed them over to immigration authorities.

One young man nearby said "If they are that desperate to get here, you'd hope that there would be some way of allowing them to stay." However, a holding centre, and deportation, is more likely. . .

Betty said: "The poor driver was in shock. He said that the vehicle had been carefully checked on his departure from Calais. At least my Spanish came in handy."



PHOTO:
Neville Grant

The tunnel: "part of a strategic travel plan"

The latest consultation on the detailed proposals for a tunnelled, tolled Thames crossing between the Greenwich peninsula and Silvertown is in process – the deadline for representations from the public ended in December.

The proposed new tunnel could bring major changes to the traffic patterns of the area. Levels of air pollution and road noise are also likely to be affected if the plans are carried out.

The Westcombe Society held a public meeting on December 3rd to gather views of its members. A report on this meeting can be found on page 7.

The questions now being raised concern how genuine this consultation can be? The *WN* has learnt from reliable sources that the tunnel is regarded as part of a strategic national transport plan, and even if the Council opposed it, it would be likely to go through in any case. The *WN* can do no better than quote ex-CLlr Alex Grant:

"... you have to admire the chutzpah of Transport For London – going through the motions of an extensive 'consultation' on a new motorway that is, as near as damn it, already almost certain to be built. The

Silvertown Crossing has been deemed a 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project' which will probably be approved by an Infrastructure Planning Commission and a secretary of state in early 2017.

Although there will be 'hearings' before then there won't be a public enquiry, let alone a vote by local councillors. Even the London Mayor, who chairs TFL, will not get a look in. Given the seeming inevitability of the tunnel you have to admire the determination of the No to Silvertown Crossing campaign . . ." *

However, we should not give up: it is understood that the Council will be trying to fight for amendments to the scheme, and arguing for a number of conditions, in order to soften any impact the scheme might have on the local area.

Among these amendments would be a ban on lorries over a certain size, and a commitment to improvements in public transport. A ban on diesel-fuelled vehicles might also be imposed after an interval - but this might be a *WN* pipe-dream . . .

**For an exhaustive analysis of the politics of East London River Crossings (ELRIC), visit Alex.Grant.me*

< < News briefs > >

Parking issues

CLlr Geoff Brightly writes: Now that the Council has adopted its Parking Strategy, the development of which was given as the most recent excuse for not getting on with the Old Dover Road parking review, I put down a written question at a recent Council meeting asking when it would be undertaken.

The answer I got from CLlr Danny Thorpe, the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Transport, was that a review of parking in Old Dover Road would be part of the 2015/16 "parking works" programme. Something to keep an eye on!

Crime watch

St John's Park was hit by a number of attempted shed thefts/break-ins, on both sides of the street, late last year.

A man known to the police

has since been arrested. Advice from the police is obviously to keep your shed locked, and if you have bikes in there then to padlock them to something, if you can. Our local SNT team can also arrange to "stamp" your bike, to improve the chances of recovery if it is stolen.

In December, jewellery was stolen from a property in Shooters Hill, and a woman was mugged in Langton Way.

Police warn of continuing incidents at the Natwest's ATM machines in Old Dover Road. It seems the police have been having some difficulty in getting CCTV film from the bank.

The *WN* has learnt that some ATM machines are now proof against "Lebanese notes" used by fraudsters to grab customers' cards. The ATM to use at the Natwest Bank is the one furthest from the newsagent's.

New Year Honours

Local people honoured include film actress Emily Watson who once lived in Maze Hill, and Blackheath resident Peter Holbrook, CE of Social Enterprise UK. Also Paul Howard of the Minnie Bennet sheltered accommodation home in Shooters Hill.

Thanks

The Westcombe Society has received a message of thanks from Macmillan Cancer Support for the £1,224.50 raised last year. "Your group is making a difference at probably the most difficult time in someone's life."

Well done

Sun Yah for so quickly recovering from the fire in December.

And to the East Greenwich Pleasance for their New Year Wassail in January.

Westcombe Society

Sat 21st Feb – Helpers' and Newcomers' Party 7.00 – 10.00pm Mycenae House
Invites will be going out to our magnificent helpers. If by any chance you don't receive your invite, please contact Caroline on 020 8853 0948

to let us know if you are able to join us.

If you are a newcomer to the area and would like to meet your neighbours and those involved in the Westcombe Society, please let us know via chair@westcombesociety.org. We look forward to meeting you.

Sat 7th March - Daffodil Tea 2pm – 4pm Mycenae House
Invites will be going out to our regular guests. However, if you would like to attend and haven't been before or haven't received your invite, please let us know. Likewise if you know of someone in the Westcombe Park area who would like to come along, then please contact us. The person to contact is Caroline on 020 8853 0948.

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The Christmas Bazaar

The Dickensian Christmas Bazaar is the Westcombe Society's major fund-raising event of the year. It seems a long time ago now, but people are still feeling the benefit of it, today.

The Westcombe Society's Christmas bazaar and carol singing operation raised over £2,500 for the society's charity of the year, the 999Club.

The money has been used already to go towards the purchase of industrial laundry equipment. The people who attend the 999 Club in Deptford, many of them homeless, can now turn up, have a shower, get their clothes washed and dried, eat a square meal, and emerge refreshed and clean ready to face the world again.

"It makes such a difference," said Andrew Mitchell. It seems that cleanliness may not mean the next thing to Godliness; but it makes a huge difference to someone's confidence and self-respect.

Without the Westcombe Society's assistance the numbers of those who can benefit from the 999Club would be far smaller. Opening the bazaar, Holby City actor Bob Barret (aka Dr Sasha Levy, pictured above)



said he was most impressed by the Westcombe Society's activities.

Marilyn Little, chairman of the Society, said "We are tremendously grateful to Blackheath High School for Girls for allowing us to use their premises for the event."

She also said how much the society appreciated the support of many local traders and businesses in support of the bazaar, a list of whom appears on page 3. Without them, and the terrific team of volunteer helpers, the bazaar would never be able to get off the ground.

Meat-free Mondays campaign launched

Greenwich and Blackheath Ecogroup launched the local 'Meatfree Monday' campaign on Monday 19th January at The Studio at Age Exchange.

Meat Free Mondays is all about helping people to have one day a week free of meat. It doesn't have to be a Monday!

Eating more vegetables is good both for your health and for the planet. The UN's top climate scientist Rajendra Pachauri states that "People should consider eating less meat as a way of combating global warming. UN figures suggest that meat production puts more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere than transport." There are lots of other reasons, too: visit <http://www.meatfreemondays.co.uk>

Letters to the editor

Any views expressed are those of the writers only, and are not necessarily those of the *WN* or the Westcombe Society.



From: Margaret Hussey

Woking

Thank you for some very good issues of the *Westcombe News* marking the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of WW1.

The casualties not mentioned in your coverage were the 306 British and Commonwealth soldiers who were executed for cowardice or desertion. The real cause for their offences was often a psychological reaction to the stresses of war. Today they would have been diagnosed as suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome or combat stress reaction.

They are commemorated at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alweras in Staffordshire. The monument above is called *Shot at Dawn* and was unveiled there in 2001. Created by the British public artist Andy De Comyn, it is modelled on the likeness of 17-year-old Private Herbert Burden, who lied about his age to enlist in the armed forces, and was later shot for desertion.

The 306 wooden stakes speak for themselves.

From: Christine Harrison

I found your newsletter on line and wondered if you could help me with any information regarding the following:

In 1901 Bridget Robinson (née Costelloe) was living at 60 Ormiston Road, Greenwich with four children still at home. Aged 40 years, she was widowed and worked as a 'Police Station Matron' at Westcombe Park Police Station where her husband John had been a policeman.

In 1911 she was still working as the station matron but living at 14 Combedale Rd, Greenwich. She died in 1931, address 35 Combedale Rd. According to family stories she was given 'a full police funeral' - this is what I wondered if you could help with as I have searched on the web but found nothing at all. She was my husband's great-great-grandmother.

Ed: Can any of our readers help?

From: Christine Godwin

I hope the Westcombe Society and others will strongly oppose the planning application to demolish the art-deco house at 57a Westcombe Park Road. This house has been neglected for a very long time, even when inhabited, and it has now been empty for at least two years, although there were buyers willing to restore it.

There was a similar situation at a large Victorian house two doors away, also subject to deliberate neglect by owners who hoped to profit by demolishing it and building a block of flats on the land; after much local opposition, the Council stood firm, and the house was eventually restored with care and converted into flats, without loss of period character. This precedent should help to inform the planning decision. The art-deco house has historical value; it adds to the architectural diversity of this conservation area, and should not be replaced by a modern block of flats which - at four storeys - would dwarf the buildings on either side. It appears that the garden and trees would also be threatened.

Ed: The Royal Borough of Greenwich has agreed that this proposal is inappropriate 'by reason of its excessive height, scale and bulk would constitute an inharmonious and unsympathetic overdevelopment of the site' and have refused planning permission. It is possible that an appeal will be lodged.

From: Kate Fowler Tonbridge

In cold weather, we should be aware that wild animals may search for warmth and sustenance within our homes.

Animal Aid encourages people not to panic and call in 'pest' controllers. Instead, we ask people to take a few practical steps to encourage that animal to move on. Animal Aid has produced a

Number 57A:



series of free fact sheets to help local residents deter squirrels and rodents from their homes, as well as foxes, moles and birds from their gardens.

The fact sheets can be ordered free of charge from info@animalaid.org.uk or by calling **Animal Aid on 01732 364546**. Address: **The Old Chapel, Bradford Street, Tonbridge, Kent TN9 1AW**

From: Eimear Mallen in Australia

As regards the Charlie Hebdo cartoons, the only thing I wondered about is where do Égalité et Fraternité fit in - or does Liberté trump them by a mile?



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Eirona Wiseman

We are very sorry to record the death on Jan. 12th, shortly after her 97th birthday, of Eirona Wiseman, who lived in Westcombe Park Road for many years. We extend our deepest sympathy to her children, Gillian, Richard and Buffy, and other members of the family.

Janet Sweet writes:

Eirona was a friend of mine for more than 50 years and taught me most of my stage-craft. She joined the Alexandra Players in 1973 and appeared in, and directed, many plays, including a critically-acclaimed production of Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*, and *Way Upstream* by Alan Ayckbourne, which set almost insuperable technical challenges on the tiny stage available to the Alexandra Players.

In one of Eirona's own pieces for our programmes, she said that at the age of 17 she just wanted to go on the stage, but her parents persuaded her to "get a proper job" and go on acting as an amateur, which she did for the following 70 years and never regretted. She wrote two plays premiered by The Alexandra Players, *All is not Gold* (1993) and *No Contribution* (1980).

Her Christian name is unusual, it was composed specially for her. She was of Welsh descent and could easily slip into a Welsh accent for character parts. Her father was a doctor and Eirona trained as a physiotherapist and worked for a while at the Miller Hospital in Greenwich.

The funeral at 2.00 pm on February 3rd is at the Blackheath & Charlton Baptist Church in Shooters' Hill Road, where Eirona worshipped for many years.

We are very sorry to report the death on January 21st of Yanno Patrinos. Our deepest condolences to Hilary. We hope to print an obituary next month.

LOCAL NEWS

Many thanks to all our donors and sponsors

Our Christmas Bazaar could not succeed without the support of local businesses and traders. With their assistance, the Westcombe Society raised over £3,000 for the charity of the year, the 999Club.

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Westcombe News

Schools in Greenwich “among the best in the country”

Primary schools in the Royal Borough of Greenwich are among the best in the country. That's the verdict of The Sunday Times. Its influential 'Top 500 State Primary Schools' list Greenwich schools among the high achievers.

Among the 32 London boroughs, the newspaper puts Greenwich third – just behind Richmond and Wandsworth.

The news is a glowing tribute to the dedication and hard work of the borough's primary school teachers, supported by parents, governors and council education staff.

The Sunday Times used Key Stage 2 results from 2013 to draw up its top 500 list. In Greenwich, these results have improved year-on-year, putting Greenwich primary schools in the top performing 25

per cent of local authorities in England.

With 86 per cent of the borough's 11-year-olds achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, compared with the national average of 79 per cent, Greenwich is the fourth best in the country.

The success of Greenwich's primary schools was underlined in December. The current national target is for schools to have at least 65 per cent of pupils reaching the expected level for 11-year-olds (Level 4) in reading, maths and writing. The great news for Greenwich parents is that every single primary school is meeting this target. Only 21 other local authorities can make this claim – out of 152 in England.

For a profile of Invicta Primary School please see page 6.

Cars of the future

What do Milton Keynes, Coventry, Bristol and Greenwich have in common? Answer: they are all conducting trials of driverless vehicles.

Greenwich will see the biggest trial, and in case you have visions of the Standard being taken over by ghostly cars without drivers, think again: initial tests will take place in car parks and in routes off main roads on the peninsula. Three different zero-emission driverless vehicles will be tried out.

The trials are being carried out by GATEway (Greenwich Automated Transport Environment), a consortium led by Transport Research Laboratories (TRL) – originally the highly respected Road Research Laboratory founded in 1933.

The trials are to start this year; however, eventually, by 2016, is hoped that driverless vehicles will offer a shuttle service, taking people to and from various attractions in Greenwich.

Designing London

This year, the Friends of Blackheath Halls annual architecture lecture is by Sunand Prasad, PhD, a senior partner in Penoyre & Prasad Architects, speaking about designing London for 2020.

In the current decade, a population the size of Birmingham's will be added to London. London's economy is set to grow

by 15% in the next five years. Under this pressure how can we retain and improve what is best and beautiful about the city? And all this while cutting emissions?

London's status today has been gained at the expense of very many Londoners for whom living here is less and less affordable. What can we do through planning, architecture and technology to make a London to love? The lecture is on Wed 11th Feb. at 8.00 pm. £12 (£10 seniors, £6 students) Box office 8463 0100

Success for Tena

The Croatian playwright Tena Stivicic lived on Shooters Hill Road while studying for her MA in Creative Writing for Performance at Goldsmiths College, Vesna Domany told the *WN*.

Tena's play *3 Winters*, currently on at The National Theatre, depicts a family living over four generations in Zagreb.

The family dynamics subtly mirror Croatian history and politics. Although now living in Islington, Tena continues to visit Blackheath and Greenwich as some of her favourite places in London.



Is it a village, or a town?

The Blackheath Society argues that the New Kidbrooke Village Master Plan proposals are still unacceptable

In the last couple of months of 2014, Berkeley Homes submitted to the Royal Borough of Greenwich a series of planning applications seeking approval to intensify development in three areas of the Kidbrooke Masterplan Area - Phase 3 (Village Centre), Phase 5 (Meridian Gate) and Phase 6 (Blackheath Quarter).

In summary, the developer is seeking to increase the number of dwellings in the KMA as a whole from an approved figure of 4,000 new homes to a proposed figure of 4,782 new homes. It also proposes to increase their height significantly.

Strong views were expressed at a public meeting in December. Despite the site

being designated a Strategic Development Location in the Mayor's London Plan – and therefore a suitable area to provide the additional homes needed to address the shortfall in housing provision – it was felt that the supporting public transport infrastructure was inadequate. The building densities and heights envisaged were not acceptable.

The anxieties expressed over this new development echo a more general concern: that there are areas of Greenwich where development is taking place, willy-nilly, without consideration of transport and other infra-structure, and green space: an issue which is causing increasing concern.

Renewing your Freedom Pass?

Older readers really value their Freedom Passes, not so much perhaps for the money that they save, as for the convenience.

Four months short of the expiry of his Freedom Pass, local resident Malcolm Hardy was informed that it was no longer possible to renew a Freedom Pass in a post office, “presumably because Royal Mail wants too much in payment to maintain the service.”

He decided to renew online – and was totally frustrated by repeated and unsuccessful efforts to complete the procedure.

He says: “It involves scanning documents to attach in JPG format. But the website refused to accept files as attachments – and rejected my post code as not being a London postcode.

“I am 74 years old but quite computerate, so I fear that a great many other pensioners will have as much or more difficulty in making the application. I advise other applicants to go to the trouble of mailing the application, with photo-copies of the required documents.”

The *WN* contacted our MP, Nick Raynsford, and got an almost immediate response from the Chief Executive of London Councils, John O'Brien. Mr O'Brien

said there was a specific problem in Mr Hardy's cases involving several computer errors. He pointed out that some 850,000 Londoners are due to renew their passes by 31st March 2015. All Freedom Pass holders were given the options of returning their paper form or renewing online. He said that the Freedom Pass website was tested rigorously with older users to deal with any problems: so far the online process is working “reasonably well” for most people, he said. London Councils have taken on extra staff to cope with the workload, and to give telephone assistance to those who need it.

So if you need to renew your Freedom pass, don't panic! Thanks to Malcolm Hardy, Nick Raynsford MP and Mr O'Brien for raising and dealing with these issues.

Malcolm Hardy comments:
I find it difficult to accept that the problem was specific to me alone and only because I tried to correct my name and address that had been wrongly scanned. With the increasing use of scanners, I'm also very wary of the mistakes that OCR systems can make. It would be interesting to hear if other people have also had problems; also how many people have depended on younger members of their family to cope with the online application.

Lovely cafe seeks lovely volunteers

says

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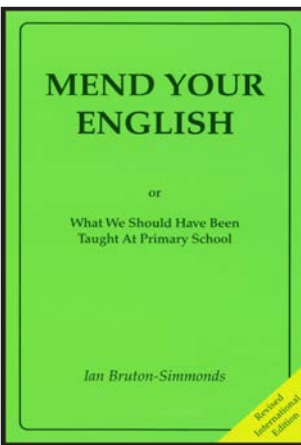
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A high old time in Old Dover Road

It's the 6th of December – ‘Business Saturday’. This is when the local shops in the Old Dover road and around the Standard show-case themselves, with special deals and Christmas discounts, raffles, free samples etc in an attempt to attract more custom.

My son Micah, living near the Standard, ever community-minded, is playing key-board outside Moca, the Italian delicatessen and café, so I decide to check it out...

I've lived in the Old Dover Road for over twenty five years. I've witnessed many changes. H. Hirst & Son the bakers' on the corner of Stratheden Road used to be Hirst the butchers; several newsagents have become Mini-marts. Moca the Italian café used to be Well Bean Health shop before that moved across the road; the Hair Salon next door is now Bella's Hair Boutique & Academy. Blackheath Eye-care Opticians was once a patisserie.

G.G Sparkes the Organic butchers has always been there. But Blackheath Cooks was once a Computer Shop, Apples n Orange the greengrocers are under new management with a dazzling array of fruit and veg plus pickles, soft fruits and Turkish delight. The Royal Grill was once the Star Burger. Marks and Spencer Food Hall was once Safeways and then Morrisons. Every day, the 386 bus ploughs back and forth with customers for this vibrant shopping centre on our doorsteps.

So here am I strolling down the Old Dover road passed Sun Garden Cottages opposite the British Oak. In Delacourt Road, I pop into the Mental Health Charity shop for mince pies and mulled wine. Outside G.G Sparkes there's a table for organic hot-dogs; dogs, hot, and healthy. Other tables have been set up for the

ubiquitous mince pies; but look, the health shop is giving out gluten-free mince pies.

Outside Moca my son has set up his key-board where he and guitarist/ singer Roza from his band Cadence are belting out Christmas carols...

Once upon a time Blackheath Pet Supplies had a life-size toy dog chained to a bollard outside the shop. It began nipping people so they had to put it down...! Ottie and the Bea kiddies' emporium is like Aladdin's cave. Wondering how to make a Baked Alaska, or an Egg Benedict? Blackheath Cooks will enlighten you.

A man from the chip shop is plying shoppers with hot chips; the road is humming. In Passionflower, I buy a cyclamen on special offer. A lady with a hibiscus in her coal black hair peeks out at me from behind the potted plants. The Moca café has become a focal point; outside is a table piled with wedges of classic Panettone, Crostini and a selection of Italian cured meats.

A character in a black suit fedora and red scarf materialises strumming a guitar singing a Music-hall ditty about a mother bathing a baby who slips down the plug-ole!...

The owner of Pet Supplies in a red tunic and Santa Claus hat joins us in a rendition of *Jingle-Bells*: for a moment Old Dover Road has become the Russian steppes and the 386 is a one-horse open sleigh; and Christ, there's Julie Christie all wrapped in furs – while we're freezing our butts off. But Moca manageress Lucia Levoci fortifies us with hot chocolate; a great, great day for community spirit. “Oh, Excuse me that nice man with the chips is back . . .”
* *Micah, Piano Teacher, Accompanist and Session Musician, 07942231967*

MAURICE BEN ROSE remembers “Business Saturday”

Blood is thicker than water . . .

The NHS blood and transplant service is urging us to swap the gym for a donor chair this year.

NHS Blood and Transplant is asking people in Greenwich to consider spending an hour of their time to donate blood in the New Year. With each blood donation potentially saving or improving up to three lives, this good deed can help more people than your average resolution.

Every blood donation is vital, but NHS Blood and Transplant particularly needs to ensure supplies of the universal blood group O Rh Negative which is often in short supply as demand is so great. The NHS also needs to ensure supplies of the rarer blood groups A Rh Negative, B Rh Negative and AB Rh Negative as these are also vulnerable to shortfall.

To book an appointment to donate visit www.blood.co.uk or call 0300 123 2323 to find your nearest session. It is also easy to book through mobile apps for Windows, Android and Apple devices.

To download the app, search 'NHSGiveBlood' in the app store. Make a note in your diary now!
BLACKHEATH The Church Of Jesus Christ Lds (Main Hall) 2-4 Lee Road Blackheath London SE3 9RY
Thu 2nd Apr 14:00-16:30; 17:30-20:00
GREENWICH MINI MOBIL Emirates Greenwich Peninsula Emirates Airline Cable Station Car Park Of Gllab Learn Centre Chandlers Avenue North Greenwich SE10 0G
Thu 9th Apr 10:00-12:30; 14:00-16:30
CHARLTON Asda Stores Ltd Bugsbys Way London SE7 7ST
Fri 6th Mar 13:40-16:30; 17:30-20:00
Tue 28th Apr 13:40-16:30; 17:30-20:00
Wed 29th Apr 13:40-16:30; 17:30-20:00
LEWISHAM Shopping Area High Street Lewisham, SE13 6LS
Mon 26th Jan 10:00-12:30; 14:00-17:00
Mon 16th Mar 10:00-12:30; 14:00-17:00
Tue 31st Mar 10:00-12:30; 14:00-17:00
10th Apr 10:00-12:30; 14:00-17:00

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Happy New Year!



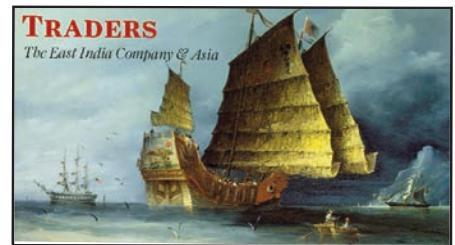
A bit late, you might think? Not if you're Chinese! Chinese New Year - the Year of the Goat - is on February 19th, and the National Maritime Museum and Queen's House, Greenwich have a number of February Family Events to celebrate.

There is a full programme of events for children and family visitors.

Celebrate Chinese New Year and British East Asian heritage at the National Maritime Museum with a day of workshops and performances. Come along with all the family, and discover more about how trade by sea brought people and cultural celebrations from Asia to Britain.
February school holidays, Monday 16-Friday 20 February 2015 On Saturday 21st from 11.00 am to 4.00 pm there are free family workshops and activities, with performances and story-telling

A New Gallery
Traders: The East India Company and Asia is a new permanent gallery exploring Britain's maritime trade with Asia, focusing on the role played by the East India Company.

For over 250 years, the East India Company uniquely shaped trade between Britain and Asia. The gallery explores the influence of Company trade and power, tracing the changing relationships between Britain and Asia that this brought about.



The Alexandra Players' new shows

The Alexandra Players are putting on two one-act comedies from Thursday 19th to Saturday 21st February,

The double bill looks interesting: *Cinderella - The Untold Story* and *The Flesh Game*. As usual, the performances take place at Alexandra Hall, Bramshot Avenue, Charlton SE7 7HX.

The performances on February 19th and 20th start at 8 pm; on February 21st they are at 2.00 pm and 6.30 pm. Both plays are suitable for children and adults.

Cinderella, The Untold Story is almost a pantomime: the audience has to decide “Which of the characters is the REAL Cinderella?” *The Flesh Game* is about ladies at a weight-loss farm. Janet Sweet told the *WN*: “Some lines are slightly adult but we think there is nothing offensive.”
Hmmm! Sounds intriguing . . .
Tickets: £9 (£8 Concessions) Children (under 16) £5. Box Office 07867 627 987 or alexandraplayers@gmail.com website: www.alexandraplayers.org.uk

A Kosovo Christmas for Charlton Football Club

It has been a tough new year for supporters of Charlton Athletic, yet there is one part of Europe where the red shirt is being worn with pride this month.

Two hundred school children from Kosovo spent two days at Christmas battling it out for a coveted jersey from the Championship club in a special tournament taking place in the Balkan state.

The third annual Kosovo football tournament for children kicked off on Boxing Day in the city of Gjakove. Twenty-two schools took part, with the event receiving television and radio coverage over the two days of tough competition. The standard of football was extremely high and the finalists each received a Charlton kit and other moments.

The competition first started in 2012 when local teacher Steve Garvey joined forces with US charity Service International to set up a Christmas tournament for Kosovan football clubs. Since then, it has grown in size with the emphasis now on school children who rarely have the chance of playing in competitions. Steve teaches at The Pointer School in Blackheath, and has been a long-standing supporter of Charlton.

“For me it was the chance of giving pupils aged 11-14 in Kosovo an opportunity to play in their own tournament and to get Charlton's name known in the Balkans,” he said.

Steve raises the money by running in marathons. (He completed six in 2014!) This Christmas the Kosovan children used the



PHOTOS: Steve Garvey

newly renovated Sports Palace for the event, with seating for several thousand spectators.

There were fourteen matches on the opening day with the quarters, semis and final on the 27th December. The competition winners, Zekirija Rexha defeated Fehmi Agam 3-1 in the final, with the trophy now taking pride of place at the champions' school.

Following the success of this event, a second tournament is planned for April. This will comprise children from the top football clubs from all over Kosovo. And, next December, the Zekirija team will once again line up to defend their own title, but this time they will play their matches wearing their newly-acquired Charlton shirts.



WHAT'S ON

ARTS

NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM
THE QUEEN'S HOUSE:
WAR ARTISTS AT SEA Until February 2015 A new display showcasing the very best of the museum's collection of First & Second World War art
THE ART AND SCIENCE OF EXPLORATION 1768 - 1780 In The Queen's House. See the Stubbs Kangaroo (and Dingo) saved by the public, and work of artists from all three of Captain Cook's voyages
BLACKHEATH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY, St Mary's Church Hall, Cresswell Park, Blackheath 4th Thursday of every month, 2.00 for 2.30. Next meeting **26th Feb.** Valerie Woodgate on Joseph Wright of Derby. Portraying people and scenes of his northern home town in the 18th century. Non-members £5
GREENWICH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY King William Court, the University of Greenwich **NEXT LECTURE: 9th Feb.:** From Mauve to Mumbai Talk by Susan Kay-Williams For thousands of years man dyed textiles using plants and insects for the colour, but in 1856 an 18-year-old student discovered the first fully synthetic dye, Mauve. 020 8852 7873 Non-members £8.00
MADE IN GREENWICH GALLERY 8293 9823 The gallery will be closed throughout February.

CHILDREN & FAMILY

GREENWICH THEATRE, Croom's Hill
HANDA'S SURPRISE
Sun 15th - Mon 16th Feb. 11.00am, 12.30pm, 2.30pm, 4pm Travel to Kenya and follow in Handa's footsteps as she journeys to see her best friend Akeyo, in the next village... Handa is taking 7 delicious fruits as a surprise – but 7 animals have different ideas...
THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS
Tue 17th & Wed 18th Feb. Award-nominated Immersion Theatre and the critically-acclaimed Cambridge Touring Theatre present a spectacular musical adaptation of Kenneth Grahame's classic tale.
CAPTAIN FLINN AND THE PIRATE DINOSAURS Thu 19 - Fri 20 February Captain Flinn and the Pirate Dinosaurs arrives on these fair shores for an adventure filled with music, merriment and mischievous pirates!
BLACKHEATH HALLS
Sat 14th Feb 3.00 pm The ADVENTURES OF PERSEUS £7.00
Sat 28th Feb. 3.00 pm £7.00 **THREE PIGS HALF TERM AT WOODLANDS FARM** To book, please call 020 8319 8900.
Wed. 18th Feb. 10.00am-12.00pm & 1.00pm-3.00pm A Stickman Adventure. £3 per child.
Thurs. 19th Feb. Welly Wander 1.00 - 3.00 pm Explore the farm with our welly trail. £1 per child.
Friday 20th Feb. 11am – 1pm and 2pm-4pm **Get Wild in the Woods** Learn how to survive in the wild. £3 per child Age 7+ See our website: education@thewoodlandsfarmtrust.or

FR IENDS OF GREENWICH PARK

The Annual Lecture *Many Mansions* is by local historian Neil Rhind. A look at Crombie House on Park Vista, Maze Hill House, Vanbrugh Castle & House, Montague House etc. **Sun. 22 Feb.** at 11 a.m. in the King William Building, at The Royal Naval College, Greenwich. Tickets: £10 (to include a glass of wine) from Friends of Greenwich Park, 3 Orchard Drive, SE3 OQP. Tel: 020 8852 8831. Cheques payable to Friends of Greenwich Park with an sae.

THE WESTCOMBE SOCIETY

Sat 21st Feb. Helpers' & Newcomers' Party,
Sat 7th March Daffodil Tea
Sat 21st March Nearly New Sale
Sat 4th April Easter Egg Hunt Mycenae Gardens
Fri 17th April Quiz Night
May: AGM: Dates to be confirmed
Sat 27th June Members' Evening
Fri 25th Sept Macmillan Biggest Coffee Morning,
Sat 26th Sept Nearly New Sale
Sat 10th Oct. Chrysanthemum Tea
Fri 23rd Oct..10.15 Quiz Night
Please ring Joanne on 07709 571777 if you would like to help out on any of these events!

COMMUNITY

MYCENAE HOUSE
Fri 6th Feb. 8.00 pm **FAKE THACKRAY** John Watterson presents the words and songs of Jake Thackray as if the master was there before you. Includes songs about , gypsies, gorillas, landladies, cock and bull, bantam cocks, cops, nuns, and things people get up to on national monuments. £10.00
Fri 13th Feb. JAZZ NIGHTS, 2nd Friday of every month. Featuring JazzNights Allstars & guests. Backed by Phil Mead Trio hosted by Dave Silk £10.0
THEATRETRAIN GREENWICH
Dance - Act - Sing, Professional theatre training for children aged 6-18 every Saturday 10-1pm. TT Minis classes for 4-5 year olds 12.00 -1.30pm: Mycenae House Blackheath. Contact Diane on greenwich@theatrettrain.co.uk or T:07977 582456
THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS Talk at Mycenae House Sat. 7th of March at 12 noon by Suresh Sippy, £10 Interested readers can call Suresh directly on 07931 561 885.
CANCER RESEARCH LUNCH
Thurs. 5th February at The Clarendon Hotel, Montpelier Row, Blackheath SE3 0RW Prize draw & Raffle. To book, call Wendy on 8265 0335 by **Mon. 2nd February.** £8.50.
INDUSTRIAL HISTORY SOCIETY
17th February John Kennedy Melling talks on **The Noakes family and the Noakesoscope: Greenwich Film Pioneers** Meeting at The Old Bakehouse, Bennett Park, SE3. Please use the car park behind the station. Meetings start at 7.30: non members £1.
BLACKHEATH HALLS
FRIENDS' ANNUAL ARCHITECTURE RICHARD GRIERSON LECTURE
Wed. 11th Feb. 2015 at 8.00pm Sunand Prasad, Past President Riba (2007–2009): **Maybe it's because: Designing London 2020** Tickets: £12 (£10 seniors, £6 students) Box office: 8463 0100 www.blackheathhalls.com
BLACKHEATH BRIDGE CLUB duplicate sessions in Mycenae House Mon. & Thurs. 7.15 pm & on Wed. at 1.15 Tel. 8851 2609
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 If you are interested in joining the choir as a regular member, (rehearsals are Thursday evenings during term time), contact **Jean Valsler on 0208 8527548** or email brookjean@btinternet.com
GLOBAL FUSION MUSIC & ARTS Free workshops Fortnightly Tuesday & Friday evenings 7.30 - 8.30 at Masealls Meeting Rooms off Victoria Way Charlton SE7 7TT: Tai Chi. Singing, Drumming, Writers' Group, African Dance Info: 020 8858 9497

ENGLISH FOLK MUSIC 9.00pm every Tuesday at the Lord pub, Creek Road; jazz Thursday

AGE EXCHANGE

BOOK SALES: on the second Saturday every month (except August & December) 10.00 am - 4.00 pm.
LUNCHTIME CONCERTS on the last Wednesday of every month by Trinity Laban students. Free: a retiring collection in aid of Age Exchange & Blackheath Village Library.

THEATRE

THE GREENWICH THEATRE Crooms Hill, Greenwich, London SE10 8ES 020 8858 7755
SHAKESPEARE SHUFFLE Fri 30 & Sat 31 January 2015 Five acts. Five approaches. One thrilling play shown five different ways
JEKYLL AND HYDE Wed 11th - Sat 14th Feb. Robert Louis Stevenson's cult classic Jekyll and Hyde is reinterpreted in this modern adaptation set in an alternative London of the future, written by Jo Clifford and multi award-winning touring company Sell a Door
THE FORBIDDEN DOOR Sat 21st Feb. Don't open that door! As soon as the rule is laid down, we know it will be broken. Once the door is opened, then what? - adventures! All of us love a good tale, and this is a wonderful one. Expect love, loss, drama, danger, horror, humour, twists and trials. A scintillating combination of music, sound and story.
BLEAK HOUSE Tue 24th - Thu 26th February Join The Pantaloons Theatre Company for a fog-filled adventure in Victorian London. When a dead body is discovered in Mr Krook's Rag-and-Bone shop, a web of mysteries starts to untangle...
MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING Fri 27th- Sat 28th Feb. Our boys have returned home from war. The real battle is just beginning: the war of the sexes.
KATE Wed 4th - Sun 8th March 2015 Twice winners of the NSDF Emerging Artists Award, Lost Watch bring their acclaimed production to Greenwich following dates at the New Diorama Theatre and Plesance Islington.
THE SPACE
Email: info@space.org.uk Tel: 020 7515 7799
269 Westferry Road, London E14 3RS
THE DOMESTIC EXTREMISTS 10th - 28th Feb. 7.30pm £14/ £10 The channel want a sensational documentary about volatile protesters. What they get is far more explosive...
The Collector 3rd -14th March, 7:30pm £12/£10 They say, 'There are two sides to every story.' I think that's very true. People are always jumping to the wrong conclusions... The truth is a lot more complicated. What if anything has the socially reclusive entomologist Frederick Clegg got to hide?

MUSIC

BLACKHEATH HALLS Tel 020 8463 0100
MUSIC APPRECIATION WITH MATTHEW TAYLOR RECITAL ROOM, Orchestral Splendours 10.00 am on: Mondays 2nd, 9th., 23rd Feb. and March 2nd. £10 per lecture | £80 full course
TUES. 3rd FEB 6.00 pm **TRINITY LABAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**, "Side-by-Side" in the **GREAT HALL** Conductors James Ham and Jonathan Tilbrook direct our fourth Side-By-Side concert this academic year with a performance of Weber's Der Freischutz Overture, and Beethoven's Fifth. Free, but ticketed. Box office: 8463 0100
MONDAYS 9th., 16th & 23rd FEB. at 1.10pm **LUNCHTIME RECITALS in the RECITAL ROOM** sponsored by he Friends of Blackheath Halls. A light lunch is available before the recital.
Thursday 26th Feb. TRINITY LABAN SOLOISTS' COMPETITION FINAL 7.30 pm **Great Hall.** Free, but advance booking recommended.
FRI 27 FEB 18:00h **GREAT HALL TRINITY LABAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**, "Side-by-Side": Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 6 in B Minor (Pathétique). Free, but please book: 8463 00100
STERNBERG DUO **FRI 20th FEB. 7:30 PM performance:** Mozart, Beethoven & Strauss Sonatas 1901 Arts Club, 7 Exton Street, London, SE1 8UE Tickets: £20, £16 (conc.) Based in Vanbrugh Hill the Sternberg Duo have an international reputation, and have just released their third CD.
Local studio performances: Usually last Sunday of each month. **Sun. 22nd Feb.** 6.00 pm: Beethoven & Strauss 137 Vanbrugh Hill in the Plaza building at foot of the hill, near 386 bus stop (behind the frosted glass window). Studio performance also on **Sun 29th March 6.00 pm: CD highlights.** Tickets: £10.00 booked in advance www.steinbergduo.com

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Wed 18th Feb. 11.45 am Ash Wednesday service

and, beginning February 25th:
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Thursdays at 8.00 pm Lenten Course on the Beatitudes

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FEATURES

As part of our series on local schools, the *WN* looks at

Invicta Primary School



At long last Invicta Primary School has been given the go-ahead: plans for the redevelopment of the school were passed at a planning meeting in January. There were no objections.

Invicta Primary School is a great local success story. Last year it was judged as “Outstanding” by Ofsted. No wonder that it received more than 200 applications for the sixty places available - the school has been growing at the rate of one extra class every year.

The school has also been supporting Bishop John Robinson School in Thamesmead – a huge vote of confidence in the head, Marie Corbett, and the other staff at Invicta. As documented in the *WN* two years ago, it has a thriving Children’s Centre in its grounds, offering a range of services for under-fives and their parents.

It is also opening on a new site in Deptford, in Benbow Road.

What is the secret of the school’s success? The head, Mrs Marie Corbett, says: “I am extremely proud to be the Headteacher of Invicta Primary School. I get the opportunity to support, nurture and encourage the development of both pupils and their families; as well as my staff.”

A parent (quoted on the schools’s website) said: “I’m impressed by the professionalism, approachability and commitment of staff at Invicta. They seem to have struck the right balance between discipline and care.”

However, Invicta has long been in need of better buildings. Its current building dates back to 1952, replacing a Victorian building that was badly damaged by wartime bombing, and this 1950s reconstruction was never intended to be permanent. By and large the building (apart from the addition of some portacabins because of its recent expansion to two forms of entry) is exactly as it was in the early 1980s. Its windows and roof have reached the end of their lifespan and the building is simply not fit for purpose.

In late 2011 the Council put in a bid to the Government’s Priority School Building Programme (PSBP) for funds to rebuild Invicta and three other Greenwich primary schools.

In May 2012 the council was told that the bid had been successful, although the language used (each school was told it

would “have its condition needs met by the programme”) fell short of a promise of a new building.

For two years after the council first put in its bid, Invicta School waited to hear when it would get better buildings. As the former governor (and ex-pupil at the school), Alex Grant observed in his blog, meanwhile, “it was galling that the Coalition Government could find the money for 180 new Free Schools before giving money to existing schools like Invicta that badly needed rebuilding.”

For a long time, the school had to wait to find out whether it would be rebuilt or remodelled, and when work would start.

However, it emerged that the construction of Invicta and other schools in the programme was to be conventionally funded by the Education Funding Agency (EFA). This means the process should have been a lot quicker than if it had been done by a Private Finance Initiative (PFI).

The good news now means that work can begin almost immediately – and it is hoped that work will be completed within the year.

The plans are to construct a new two-storey building at the northern end of the existing site, bordering Invicta Road, with a maximum height of 8.2 metres.

This will house an entrance lobby, offices, toilets, nursery playrooms, reception and infant classrooms (all on the ground floor); on the first floor, there will be junior classrooms, a staff room, library resource centre and storage space.

To the west of the main building there will be a single storey building with a maximum height of 6.6 metres which will accommodate a main hall, kitchen and dining area. This building will be slightly set back from the western boundary to allow for screening by a nature trail (which will surround the whole site). The rest of the site will comprise playgrounds, amenity grassed areas, and a playing field grassed area on the southern part of the site.

As a result of these improved facilities, there will be an increase in pupil and staff numbers to 420 and 75 respectively. No change in the school’s catchment area is envisaged. The Head teacher Marie Corbett said, “Everyone at Invicta is really excited about the prospect of getting a modern school for our children. We can’t wait to get started!”

Fun with Arthur Smith

Got the New Year Blues? Need cheering up? Look no further! This February, Blackheath Halls have two treats in store.

First, on Thursday Feb 12th, at 8.00 pm, the Laughing Boy Comedy Club features Peter Firman, star of BBC1’s *The Magicians*, bringing his trademark mix of comedy and jaw-dropping magic.

Then on Sat. Feb 21st., “The House of Fun” is back with Arthur Smith, promising a truly uproarious night of variety, with

fantastic comedy, sparkling music, saucy stand-up, scintillating theatre and more.

Arthur is of course well-known in Greenwich, a local boy who went to John Roan School. Apart from Arthur – “the compere beyond compare” – the evening features one of Britain’s best loved comedians, Jenny Eclair, and The MacCarricks, “two of the freshest and most energetic performers in Edinburgh this year.”

Box office: 8463 00100.

Tickets: £17.50 | £15.00

Want to write? Then read!

ANGIE SMITH, Literacy Leader at John Roan School, recounts the visit of author Shivon Sudesh

Years 7 and 8 at John Roan had the opportunity of meeting a young but very inspirational and talented author on the morning of 8th December.

Shivon Sudesh’s novel *Wolves Within* was published in August 2014. She wrote the novel over a period of fifteen months during her last year at school while studying for her A Levels and during her first year at King’s College, London.

Shivon arrived in this country from India when she was ten years old: she could speak no English. Within a year she was able to read, write and speak fluently in English.

When one of the students asked Shivon how she was able to accomplish this impressive achievement, her simple response was “reading”.

This was music to my ears as my message to students is always the same when they ask me how they can improve their literacy skills: “the best writers in the school are those who always have a reading book on the go.”



This is why it is part of our whole school policy that all students should bring their current reading book to school every day.

The students had lots of questions following her presentation (which included a video) and greatly benefitted from the visit.

Her talk will have inspired all the students to work hard and always strive to do their best and have the faith to believe that they can achieve their goals. In particular, I believe Shivon’s talk will be a huge encouragement to those students who either have difficulty with their reading and writing or who have English as their second language.

Local advice & drop-in centres

Greenwich Local Labour and Business (GLLaB) brings its services to residents in their local communities. GLLaB gives support and advice on jobs and skills

Services available include:

- * confidential one-to-one assessment of your skills and training development needs
- * a personal advisor to help you produce a Personal Development Plan that establishes the process for achieving your work aim
- * specific and relevant training and work experience opportunities.
- * information on specialist agencies that can also offer you support, skills and experience matching to job vacancies
- * job search support such as workshops and help with job applications
- * assistance with travel fares, childcare fees, protective clothing and tool kits where funding is available.

GLLaB has three centres across the Royal Borough of Greenwich:

GLLaB Work & Learn Centre, Chandler's Avenue, North Greenwich, SE10 0GE Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm. Telephone: 020 8921 2440.

Woolwich Work and Learn Centre, Old Library, Calderwood Street, Woolwich SE18 6QW Monday to Friday 9.30am to 4.30pm. Telephone: 020 8921 2440.

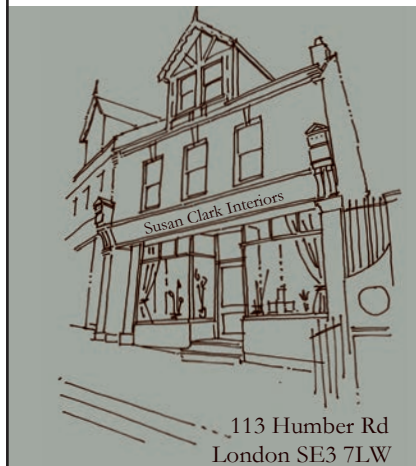
Kidbrooke Project Office & Skills Centre 85 Tudway Rd, Kidbrooke, SE3 9YG
Project Office open: Tues.10am -12.00.
Skills Centre open: Tues. 2.00 - 4.00 pm
Telephone Rachael on: 07774 666 983 to arrange an appointment.

Eltham Centre, 2 Archery Road, Eltham SE9 1HA Information, advice and guidance service: Friday 9.30am to 1pm.& 2pm to 4.30pm. Phone Hayri on: 07903 199 043 to arrange an appointment.

Work and Learn Bus

The GLLaB Work and Learn Bus is an outreach resource for bringing GLLaB information, advice and guidance services to communities around the borough. Please ring 020 8921 2440 to find the latest timetable.

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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

The Westcombe Society's Environment Committee report

John Roan planning application

A meeting of the Planning Committee considered three applications with regard to John Roan School. They concerned **lighting**, which local residents complain is too bright, directed at the wrong angle and alight too late at night; **the siting of the lockers** which are unsightly due to the removal of the trees which screened the area; **Community Use**: the Westcombe Society WS supports the use of the buildings by the community but there is concern because of the hours, including weekends, that it proposed the buildings stay open. At the planning meeting all three applications were allowed but councillors agreed that there were concerns that needed to be resolved through urgent meetings between the school and local residents and Matt Pennycook agreed to take up the relevant issues with the Director of Children's Services.

57A Westcombe Park Road

A planning application submitted to the council to demolish 57A WPR and replace it with a block of eight flats, mostly two-bedroomed, has been turned down.

The Environment Committee objected both to the demolition of a unique local building, which although not perhaps the best of its kind, nevertheless contributes to the local variety of buildings in the conservation area; also to the new building which would be larger in footprint and in height.

No to IKEA

The campaign continued with a demonstration on December 6th. Recently a lawyer acting on behalf of the group informed them that until the council actually issued an order there was no outline planning consent. The public were asked to request that before granting such permission, further, independent, traffic assessments should be carried out.

Troubled bridge over water

River-watchers are intrigued by the proposals put forward by an outfit called the Garden Bridge Trust for a garden bridge over the Thames. The £175 million scheme has now been approved by both councils involved – Lambeth and Westminster Councils.

The bridge – brainchild of designer Thomas Heatherwick and actress Joanna Lumley – will provide an area for people to learn about gardening and horticulture.

The 1,200 foot pedestrian bridge will feature a wide variety of shrubs, plants and even trees. It is claimed that the cost of the scheme will be met by companies, charities, and individual donations, with £60m pledged by the Treasury and TfL.

However, the plan has run into strong local opposition. It would mean the closure of Temple Station for six months, felling 30 trees and the loss of greenspace on the South Bank, to accommodate the bridge landing at Bernie Spain Gardens.

Anti-bridge campaigners point out that losing green space to create green space makes little sense. They also argue that the estimated 7.1 million visitors a year would lead to over-crowding in areas already thronged with visitors. They also claim that the bridge will cost £3.5m in annual



maintenance. Concerns have also been raised about the potential loss of views such as St Paul's Cathedral.

Civil engineers have also called it "the most expensive footbridge in the world". Bridge expert Simon Bourne says the copper cladding makes the bridge five to 10 times more expensive than it should be. He told BBC London that the cost is "five to 10 times more than you'd expect a foot-bridge to be".

However, Ben Emmott, the Executive Director of the Garden Bridge Trust, says that around 90% of local respondents support the proposals. The project has received "huge support" from Londoners.

Not from our neck of the woods, though: one disgruntled local resident complained: "While central London gets yet another (unnecessary) bridge, here we are desperately short of river crossings." **Interested? Visit www.gardenbridgetrust.org or Email info@gardenbridgetrust.org**

Troubled tunnel under water

On 3rd December many local residents attended a lively meeting organised by the Westcombe Society about the proposed river crossings.

Transport for London are in the process of holding public consultations on a number of alternatives. The one that most affects our area is the Silvertown Tunnel which involves building a new tunnel of two lanes in each direction to the east of the Blackwall Tunnels. Traffic from the new tunnel would join the road system close to the existing southern exit.

TfL claim that, 'the Silvertown Tunnel will provide a viable alternative for some users of the Blackwall Tunnel; reducing congestion, making journeys more reliable and significantly reducing the impact of disruption.'

Many residents agreed that some measures need to be taken to ease the congestion at the Blackwall Tunnel, which at peak times can back up well beyond the Sun-in-the-Sands.

But there were concerns about the location and design of the Silvertown proposals. There were concerns also that the new tunnel would lead to an increase in traffic – and yet the changes to the road system on the south side of the river, did not appear to cater adequately for this increase.

Dispersal of traffic on leaving the tunnel was also thought to be a major problem. Will the new tunnel reduce congestion and pollution as promised? And since the new tunnel will allow larger lorries to cross, will it result in more pollution?

Some people argued that the basis for the projected modelling was unclear and lacked detail and there was not enough information about destinations and origins of current users in order to usefully inform projected changes in traffic flow. It is not clear how many – if any – users of the tunnel will want to use the eastern route.

TfL say the tunnel, 'will also create opportunities for new public transport connections across the river'. Anything that can affect the very high level of pollution in parts of North Greenwich was welcomed although public transport is only

likely to be used for local journeys.

Of particular concern, and an issue which divided the meeting, were the proposals to introduce charges for both the new and the existing tunnel. TfL argue that "this is as an essential element to manage demand and provide a source of revenue to help pay for construction and operation of the new tunnel at Silvertown."

There was some anger that those living in west London had the free use of many bridges while we in the east face having to pay for the few crossings that exist.

Others, however, felt that charging was the best way to regulate traffic flows and could be effective if it was sufficiently flexible. The question is would the level of charges be sufficient to regulate the traffic?

A straw poll was taken at the meeting based on the questions in the consultation document to inform the Environment Committee's response.

This can be seen on the Westcombe Society website. TfL will review the consultation and publish more details from mid-2015 and there will be other opportunities to respond to their plans in the final consultation in 2015. **The TfL website is <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/travel-information/improvements-and-projects/silvertown-tunnel>.**

Margaret Gravelle

Westcombe Woodlands

TIM BARNES

We continued our volunteer work throughout last year, and planted about 300 wild flowers. The fruit trees we planted with the aid of a grant from Capital Clean-Up are thriving.

The hawthorne and rose hedge planted between the glade and the Seren Park development is now well established. The glade is a lovely place at any time of the year and I do urge Friends to turn up as volunteers at one of our monthly work sessions, so as to enjoy both the surroundings and good company.

The saga of the gate from the Seren Park Car Park into the woodlands is now nearing its close. The legalities are being tidied up, with the Blackheath Preservation Trust Woodlands Company paying for these legal costs. That company and the Friends are dividing the costs of the gate between them.

We are establishing the path down from the mound area towards the car park and

we hope that early this Spring we will have access to the lower part of the woodlands, which no longer relies on the good will of the Mountfields in Maze Hill. Once that access is established and safe, we hope to involve a local primary school for limited and supervised access to the woods by the school children.

The Lasseter Place end of the woods has seen the planting of hundreds of blue-bells together with birch, hazel and aspen saplings. The four rustic benches made from the wood of a large tree which fell in the glade, makes an attractive feature.

At our last AGM we enjoyed a talk from Nick Day of the Plumstead Common Environmental Group about the work they have been doing over the years.

It is sad that Alex Grant is moving away from Greenwich and leaving the Committee of the Friends. He has been a valuable supporter and we hope to see him again on his return familial visits.



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