**Westcombe News**

**Free to 3800 homes, and in libraries & some shops**

October 2015 Issue 8

**EIR Long May She Reign**

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

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**Calling all Council tenants**
The Council reminds its tenants that if they sign up to direct debit payments before October 30th, they will be entered for a draw. The prize: £1,000 worth of shopping vouchers. For details visit royagreenwich.gov.uk/ housingagreements

**Speed restrictions**
The Royal Borough is introducing 20mph speed limits in residential streets across the borough to make our streets even safer. The speed restrictions in Westcombe Park are not always observed, but they have had a definite calming effect. Recent figures show that the borough has seen the biggest reduction in serious road casualties of all London boroughs.

The borough is trying to improve this record even further, and bringing in lower speed limits is an important part of that work, alongside awareness-raising about road safety which has been going on in Thamesmead, Woolwich, and Kidbrooke. New traffic calming road humps are to be built on Westcombe Hill.

**Newsbriefs**

**Air quality**
In 2013, a pollution survey by the No to Silvertown Tunnel Campaign revealed a nitrogen dioxide reading of 52 – the EU legal limit is 40 – in Brampton Avenue, just on the other side of the road. The Siebert Road residents were shocked. They knew that Greenwich has high rates of asthma in children – and that exhaust from cars and lorries can cause respiratory and heart problems in adults, too. And they’re still shocked by it.

The residents’ group, including Becky Ham, Amanda Bradley, Vicky Rubery, Eve Oldham and Rebecca Moore, have sent hundreds of emails. From standing and prospective ward councillors to then Managing Director of Transport for London, Michelle Dux, the neighbours approached everyone they could think of.

Their letters led them to politicians and civil servants at local and national levels. They also raised a petition, leafleted both locally, and across other areas that back onto the A102, and became experts in noise and air pollution mitigation measures. In that intense period of activism, the problem has diminished.

The Westcombe Society air quality survey of this year shows that local air pollution levels remain too high, with a reading for NO2 of 54 in Siebert Road.

Ward councillors Cherry Parker helped facilitate the petition and Paul Morrissey brought TFL into discussions with senior officers at Royal Borough of Greenwich. New local MP Matt Pennycook insisted on a meeting with TFL once he took his seat following the election in May. And this seems to have been what finally pushed TFL over the line – though it’s not a done deal.

The hope is that TFL will eventually install speed bumps that will direct noise vibrations from the high-flow carrying vehicle emissions upwards, away from the back gardens where children play and their parents try to enjoy their green spaces.

It’s not still a sure thing. TFL will need to find funding, either as part of the Silvertown Tunnel development or within its own budget. If TFL decide that barriers would be ineffective.

But when faced with what sometimes seems an unapproachable bureaucracy, reaching this point is a testament to what a well-organised, tenacious group of residents can achieve.

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**The hope is that TfL will eventually install special barriers that will direct noise vibrations from the high-flow carrying vehicle emissions upwards, away from the back gardens where children play and their parents try to enjoy their green spaces.**

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**Greenwich comes of age**

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has been recognised as the most successful council in the country for preventing homelessness since receiving the Gold Standard award for tackling and preventing homelessness.

Achievements include taking action against rogue landlords, preventing residents from becoming homeless and reducing the need for housing people in temporary accommodation. The number of households in temporary accommodation was reduced by almost 60 per cent between 2008 and 2013.

Among many other achievements, last year the council prevented 1800 households from becoming homeless through its casework and support.

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**Refugee crisis: Help!**

The Bishop of Southwark has issued a statement saying: “There is a real and urgent need to act locally in the face of a global challenge, and to respond to the UN’s plea for resettlement. This would be in keeping with the finest Christian and Jewish traditions of championing human dignity and offering sanctuary to those fleeing persecution.”

As the refugee crisis deepens, not just in Calais but across Europe, the Bishop has appointed Mr Peter Haddock, a Reader in the Morden Team Ministry, as his interim Chaplain to coordinate responses to the refugee crisis from within the Diocese. “We can help with money, with offers of lodging, and with many other forms of assistance.”

Local churches are getting on board. Rev. Tim Yeager of St George’s in Glenlucy Road has offered to put up one family, and urges those who can to do something similar. In September, members of St George’s Church, and other local churches from different denominations, took part in a rally in central London calling for solidarity with the refugees. What else is happening locally? Many people are donating to charities working with refugees, both in this country and abroad. Age Exchange in Blackheath Village is accepting donations such as warm clothes, sleeping bags, tents, and shoes, from 9:00am – 6:00pm on weekdays and 10:00am – 5:00pm on Saturdays. Blackburn and Greenwich United Nations Association is holding another of its International Art Auctions in Mycenae House, on November 14th in aid of the work of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Details in November. The number to ring is 0208 858 8491.

Greenwich Council has indicated that it expects the Government to meet any of the “unavoidable costs” of housing refugees. Meanwhile a petition is circulating calling on Greenwich Council to “offer home to 50 refugee families in our Borough. Many years ago we welcomed and supported the Vietnamese Boat People and now their families are part of the fabric of our region. We can find space to share with those refugees now in dire straits. After all if we had to flee war, terror and torture wouldn’t we hope to be given refuge?”

The petition can be found on: https://134deagres.org.uk/petitions/ refugees-welcome-in-greenwich-14

Similar petitions sponsored by 38 degrees are going to other councils around the country. * Enquiries to Peter Haddock at the Diocesan office: 0207 923 9400

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**Westcombe Society**

The Chrysanthemum Tea for senior citizens on 10th October 2.00-4.00 pm at Mycenae House. Invites will be going out from 21st September. If you don’t get an invite or are new to the area and would like to attend, please contact Caroline Owens on 020 8853 0948.

Quiz Night 23rd October 7.30pm for 8.00pm start at Mycenae House. Please book your team of 6, or your place on a team, by calling Caroline Owens on 020 8853 0948. Lunch/Tea: In chips may also be ordered. Cost: Members: £5 - Quiz only £11 - Fish and Chips Non-Members: add £1.00 to the above price list Priced guiler: Bar. Please book by Tuesday 20th.

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Westcombe Woodlands Open Day – Tim Barnes

Because of the nature of the terrain and the wildness of the woods, public access will be limited to 2½ hours a year, although volunteers on the monthly work days will see the woods at all seasons. We are creating steps, (using surplus railway sleepers) to lead up from that entry point to the mound and the path to the glade.

The woodlands are on a steep slope and good walking shoes or boots are recommended. It is hoped that visitors may be able to access the “top” part of the woodlands from Lasseter Place. We have done a lot of work there too, clearing a path and planting tree chips and clusters of bluebells leading up to a vantage point looking out over the woods.

It would be great if we had a good turnout on October 4th and we were able to recruit more volunteers and enroll additional Friends. But first and foremost is it an opportunity for local people to see and enjoy a unique and largely unknown place.

Come and see for yourself on Oct 4th! The next volunteer day for the woodlands is Sunday, November 7th and December 8th.

Why not become a friend?
westcombe@westcombe.org.uk
www.westcombe.org.uk

Tim Barnes is Chair of the Friends of Westcombe Woodlands

Your local paper – brought to you by the BBC

Last month, the BBC put forward plans to offer staff and content to local newspapers. Among his proposals for a new “Open BBC”, Lord Hall revealed plans for a new multi-million-pound partnership with local newspapers to provide a network of 100 public service reporters.

The News Media Association, which represents the national and regional press, has criticised the BBC’s plans. The NMA accused the BBC of further “expansion” into local news provision as a way of recruiting more BBC local journalists “through the back door”.

In a statement, NMA vice chairman and Johnston Press chief executive Ashley Highfield responded: “The BBC’s latest proposals are an attempt to circumvent the recognition of the need to cooperate and not colonise.”

He added: “There are many aspects of the report to be commended...”

“But it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the BBC’s proposals – to create a work of 100 local public service reporters for towns and cities “run by the BBC” and with the BBC itself to “compete to win the contract” – are anything other than BBC expansion into local news provision and recruitment of more BBC local journalists through the back door.”

“The local newspaper sector already employs thousands of journalists and is the only reliable source of independent and trusted local news across the UK.”

The Editor of the WN said: “As far as the WN is concerned, what is needed is not professional journalists muscling in on local papers: what is really needed is much more community involvement.”

“The WN would welcome more contributions of news and features from local members of the community.”

Correction: Sorry Cllr Chierry Parker, we know your name isn’t Cheric. Apologies for spelling your name wrong in September’s issue of the WN.

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: Andrew Graham Vanbrugh Hill
I refer to September’s issue of the WN, which deals with the Royal Borough of Greenwich’s turning a blind eye to pollution issues with regard to the new line terminal at Enderby Wharf. The behaviour of planners is at best absurd. The cost of electrical supply to Enderby Wharf would be recovered from charges – and in any case is irrelevant to the legal issues. The failure to go to a Hearing EU 2012, which by controlling air pollution also constitutes a breach of the General Agreement on Tariffs, as it gives London an unfair trading advantage.

The same planning officers also brought the same allegations when they permitted a development between Fair Road and Vanbrugh Hill. Thankfully, all the committee voted the proposal, and an appeal was refused. Very serious questions are raised by the failure of planners to engage sufficiently with local public benefit.

PS Congratulations to Matt Pennycook MP for standing up for the law. If only Parliament did the same – especially on international issues...
Westcombe Park October 2015
Part of our heritage

Neville Grant

Twenty-one pubs across England have just been granted listed status by Historic England. All of those listed were built between the end of the 1920s and middle of the 1930s. They seem to have been selected as examples of a reaction against "modernism".

Some exhibit characteristics that could be described as an almost Disneyfied version of Tudor England, with phony beams and airtight lattice windows: like some of those stockbroker houses one sees in Bromley or Woking.

In 1946 a young poet called Moon Under Water, writer George Orwell described his ideal pub: it would be "uncompromisingly Victorian", offering "no glass-topped tables or old-fashioned manners, no sham roof-beams, inglenooks or plastic panels masquerading as oak"; it would be a place where people "go for conversation as much as for the beer" and should be "family gathering places."

The nearest pub of those listed is the beautiful Daylight Inn in Petts Wood. Built in 1935, it was so-named because of local resident William Willert's campaign for daylight saving.

Although many pub-goers may feel outraged at how invidious this new list is, it is good to note that these pubs have been recognised in this way. They join a long list of other historic pubs, including England's oldest, Ye Olde Fighting Cocks in St Albans, Hertfordshire.

So what about our own local pubs? –

According to Closing Time, a report by Christian Lusson, Tony Maddison of the Institute of Economic affairs in Dec. 2014, the UK has closed 21,000 pubs since 1980 – half of these since 2006.

Among the reasons cited are the alcohol licensing laws, the decline in disposable incomes, the smoking ban, and long-term "cultural change"; a decline in the number of consumers who go to pubs as their "second home", the arrival of big supermarkets in the 1990s and 2000s with their low prices.

Another reason is the failure of the government to recognise pubs as "fundamental aspects of our social fabric and its symbolism is too important to be lightly dismissed".

As to the future of pubs, the report states: "... when you have lost your Inns, drown your Inns, drown your Inns, drown the last Inns, drown the last of them all..."

"... then you have lost your Inns, drown your Inns, drown your empty souls, for you will have lost the last of England."

Hilaire Belloc (1912)

50 years of Thomas Tallis

This year the Thomas Tallis Society ("TTS") celebrates its 50th anniversary. TTS was founded in 1965 by Philip Simms who remained Musical Director of the choir from its formation until 2006. Stephen Dagg, Director of Music at St Alfege to the present day, took over from Philip in 2006 as the second Musical Director of TTS. In 2014 TTS appointed Eamonn Dougan as its third Musical Director to take us into our 50th year.

We are celebrating with a concert on 17 October at 7.00pm, in which all three Musical Directors will take part, both playing/singing and conducting, together with the Thomas Tallis Society Orchestra, led by Simon Standage. Eamonn Dougan will conduct Haydn's Missa Brevis Sanctae Johannae de Deo, known as the Little Organ Mass, with Stephen Dagg playing the organ. The mass will be interspersed with motets, including the first performance of a new commission by Roderick Williams composed for this TTS 50th anniversary concert.

Stephen Dagg will conduct Tallis's 40-part motet Spem in Alium, a popular part of the TTS repertoire. The first performance of Spem in Alium by TTS was in 1966; this will be TTS's 7th performance, the previous performance being part of the memorable celebration of the Millenium of St Alfege in 2012.

In the second half, Philip Simms will conduct Fauré's Requiem, first performed by TTS in its very first concert in 1965. Eamonn Dougan will sing the baritone solo, Stephen Dagg will play the organ and alumni members of TTS will join the present choir. The concert concludes with The Trumpet shall Sound and the last chorus from Handel's Messiah.

The concert is at St Alfege's at 7.00 pm on Saturday 17th October. All concert attenders are invited to the post-concert party in the church hall, with entry £2.50. Tickets for the concert are available now online at www.ticketsource.co.uk/50years £18 for allocated pew seat, £14 unallocated seats.

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below.
In August the BBC showed three films in what five Chinese teachers were pitted against their British counterparts in a school in Hampshire. The films were called, ‘Are our kids tough enough?’ Chinese School. Though one might have thought are the teachers tough enough? could also have meant an apt title.

The BBC required the Chinese teachers to teach one group using traditional Chinese approaches: features of this included the ‘lock-step’ teaching of large undifferentiated classes, very tight discipline, teacher instruction, with lots of what used to be called ‘chalk and talk’ while students take notes, tough testing, long hours – a twelve hour day – followed by two hours of homework. The class was unselected, and sat in rows of desks facing the front. The British teachers had a more student-centred approach with their group: the students sat in groups, in smaller classes that were “set” in terms of ability; the teacher was a facilitator and helper, and the emphasis was on their students ‘learning activity’, as independently possible, rather than being taught.

At the end of a month, both groups of students were tested. Subjects learnt: taught were Maths, Science, English, Mandarin, and, in the case of the Chinese-taught group, PE. Every Chinese student had to pass a PE test to progress through the course of the month when I departed from teaching in the classroom. It is often suggested that Chinese approaches result in a more quantifiable teaching; the opposite is probably true in many British schools.

NG: Did you find it hard to teach in a traditional Chinese way, given the experience you have had in Britain? Yes! I had to remember the way I was taught, when I had to play the BBC game. But there were many times during the course of the month when I departed from that stereotyped model: in effect, I mixed and matched. For example, I rearranged the classroom furniture, and had the pupils seated in groups, so that they could co-operate in doing experiments. In one experiment, I wanted the pupils to observe a beam of light, so had to switch off the lights, and darken the room by closing the curtains. Then a BBC man came in and complained that the cameras could not see the pupils’ faces! So I said, yes, but we need them to see the beam of light! NG: So how do you explain the results? Yes! To tell you the truth I was surprised; before the results were announced my colleagues and I were very nervous – and of course we were very pleased when the results showed our students did better.

But the experiment is not really very conclusive: our methods varied, though it is true that the classes were much more than our students were used to grades. It is also the case that we had far more class time, and much more homework: so you could say we should have done better, even though our students were parachuted in with alien approaches.

NG: Thanks Jun. Well, the series certainly aimed at the British teachers, and Grow up with the British schools.

The teachers were tough enough: they tried to recruit teachers from China, but for some reason only managed to recruit two – a Maths teacher, and the Mandarin teacher. The other teachers, like me, were living or working in England.

What are your thoughts on the two contrasting approaches to education? JY: I think the way Chinese education was supposed to be depicted was misleading: the traditional Chinese way of teaching has barely existed. In 2001 the Chinese government introduced a National Curriculum Reforms which embodied many aspects – the best aspects you could say – of western education, including a more participatory activity based approach; but for some reason there is great variation in how the curriculum is implemented.

As for the western style of teaching, the same thing applies: when Ofsted isn’t implemented.

This is on the first Thursday of every month 2.30 - 4.30 pm in Mycenae House, 113 Humber Rd London SE3 7LW. For more information, please ring Rosemary Gill on 8853 5088.
**Environment**

**Green is better than grey**

Ann Hill

Paving over front gardens is becoming increasingly common, and today one in four front gardens is completely paved over*. In London this is equivalent to paving over 22 Hyde Parks. Although paving front gardens may seem a logical solution to cur-parking problems, these extra hard surfaces and loss of greenery have considerable adverse consequences, including the following:

- **Increased Air Pollution:** Loss of vegetation leads to higher levels of nitrogen dioxide and traffic pollutants that can cause conditions such as asthma. Trees, bushes and greenery improve the air we breathe by giving off oxygen and filtering out injurious pollutants.

- **Hottter summer temperatures:** Paving absorbs heat during the day and radiates it at night making ‘urban heat islands’. Trees can reduce summer air temperature by as much as 10 degrees, and the temperature difference is especially noticeable at night.

- **Flooding:** Paving, especially if non-porous, increases rainwater run-off, which collects pollutants on its way. London’s run-off goes into the sewers, which can become overloaded during heavy rain and the excess is diverted into the Thames. Last year 55 million tonnes of untreated sewage and rainwater were jettisoned into the river. Porous paving helps to reduce this problem.

- **Subsidence:** Paving can lead to subsidence and cracking of garden paths and walls because the ground may shrink if rainfall is prevented from getting into the soil.

Although the Royal Horticultural Society has launchd its **Greening Grey Britain campaign which is a call to action to transform hard grey spaces into green beautiful places to enrich lives and benefit the environment. Some suggestions are listed below:**

- Keep paving to a minimum. Porous paving is best. Just two paved tracks may be all that is needed. Low-growing plants like creeping thyme (Thymus serpyllum) and bugle (Ajuga reptans) tolerate being packed over, and can be planted in pockets in the paving or gravel.
- Place shrubs near the house and grow climbers up the wall. These plants will help to insulate the building in winter and also provide cooling in hot weather.
- Plant a hedge to filter out dust and fumes. It also provides a home for wildlife.
- Fill corners and borders with garden plants, and trees. These will intercept heavy rain, slowing run off and reducing pressure on drains. Trees with a slender trunk take up little space.
- Place pots and containers where there is no soil. They provide colour all year round and take up space more appealing.
- Where possible plant herry-bearing trees and shrubs. They provide food and shelter for birds – and of course flowers produce pollen and nectar for bees and other insects.

Even the smallest space can be greened and made beautiful while still providing room for a car. Lovely front gardens and leafy streets provide pleasure and increase the value of homes, as well as improving the environment. Front gardens provide many remarkable benefits – so let’s keep the green in Greenwich.

* More suggestions and advice can be found of the RHS website: Royal Horticultural Society 2015 www.rhs.org.uk/comunities/pdf/Greener-Streets-greening-grey-britain-report

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**Fish survey**

Good news for anglers – and river-watchers! A fisheries survey by the Environment Agency has revealed a huge variety of fish in the River Thames.

The survey found Dace, Smelt and Common Bream, as well as marine species such as Sea Bass and Flounder. A variety of invertebrates, which are an important food source, and several rare and unexpected fish, such as Sea loach and Porriges were also discovered.

Since the 1960s, specialist fisheries-keepers have surveyed fish populations at 8 locations on the tidal Thames, between Gravesend and Richmond, and identified 17 different species in total.

These surveys are supported by volunteers from Zoological Society of London (ZSL). The work involved netting off small sections of the river and counting the amount of fish in each section.

Peter Gray, Environment Agency Fisheries Officer, comments: “These surveys provide a valuable snapshot of what species are living in the river – and the freshwater and marine juveniles that use the estuary as a valuable nursery area.”

Joe Pecorelli, Citizen Science Project Manager at ZSL, said: “These surveys have enabled us to better protect species such as the European eel, allowing us to identify barriers to their migration and build eel passes.

Visit Twitter @EnvAgencySE

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**“If at first you don’t succeed...”**

Try, try, try again”, is the usual mantra, but one could just say “Push your luck.” Local residents have received a notice from the Royal Borough of Greenwich’s Directorate of Enterprise, Regeneration & Skills that the developers have yet again appealed to the Planning Inspectorate over their scheme to build on the semi-derelict lock-up garage site behind 34, Foyle Road.

This saga has been going on for years. Plans to build on this site have already been rejected, twice by the local planning committee, once on appeal, although the current scaled-down plan for two houses may be rather more aesthetically acceptable than the original plan to squeeze in three dwellings.

However, local householders have raised strong objections including:

- the narrow and twisted access path would create chaos during the building phase and present serious difficulties, and potential damage to neighbouring properties
- very difficult access for emergency and refuse vehicles and larger service trucks and delivery vans;
- the loss of a peaceful green space which is part of an important corridor for birds and a habitat for stag beetles would be regrettable
- access to the site would mean that Foyle Road – where there are already parking problems, would come under even more pressure, as access to the narrow lane would have to be widened.

As the Inspector commented, it ought to be possible to replace the existing run-down garages economically with good quality lock-ups which would be a significant asset in an area that is desperately short of off-street parking. A case of fouled again? Watch this space.

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To find more and arrange an informal visit please call Ann Riley, Assistant Childcare Director on 020 8716 4175 or ann.riley@zoomnurseries.com

MEFA Meeting

Family Programme (dancing time once) at Montessori House, 135 Westcombe Hill, Blackheath, SE3 7DP.
All enquiries 07711 433994

Tuesday 3:30-5:30 After-school Nurture at Montessori House Community Centre

Wednesday 9:30-11:30 Preschool, 1:30-3:30 After-school Nurture at Montessori House Community Centre

For more information please contact Lynne at 07731 536533 or 0203 1038 1038

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This Month

Please send ads for the Market Place with pay -ment by the 15th of the preceding month to:

Marilyn Little, 163, Westcombe Hill, SE3 7DP
083 1312 Advertising/westcombeociety.org
All credit cards accepted, please make checks payable to The Westcombe Society

www.zoomnurseries.com

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