New chapter in Eltham?

The Stephen Lawrence murder has long lived as a dark shadow over Eltham, and in the words of the Lord Chief Justice, "scarred the conscience of the nation." In the same year the first Eltham jury was ever to mean in Eltham, Katherine Carpenter quoted Professor Les Back, a sociologist, who has lived and worked in the area for years. He said: "The murder of Stephen has been like an open wound for the community." However...it is needed to be remembered how many people went to the police to try and do the right thing, to speak with their concerns about what they knew.

Young people at one youth club are optimistic about Eltham today. In the same report, Reggie Oliver, a young-old youth worker at Middle Park Community Centre, says the area has changed. "From the early parts of when I was living here, you couldn't really be in Eltham after 10.30 or 11.00 with the pubs closing. But now you walk through and you see quite diverse faces. On the face of it, it's changed, quite drastically." The report concludes: "With two men found guilty of London's most high-profile racist murder there is hope Eltham's open wound will begin to heal."

There is however no room for complacency. One young man told the WV: "I've been living here and I've been get shot at me in the street. You still have to be a bit careful when and where you go in some places." Security concerns continue to plague Greenwich and Woolwich and attended a nine-pipe pylee-up at midnight on the A102 Blackwall Tunnel approach. Not only were injured but debris covered the road until 1.00 am. Who'd be a firefighter on New Year's Eve?"-Fierce storms

Gale-force winds caused massive delays at the Dartford Crossing – and Queen Elizabeth Bridge was closed for days. A New Year's Day shooting took place inside that Club, a Greenwich nightclub. A number of shots were fired at 4.00 am on New Year's Day. No one was injured. There have been no arrests, and the police are appealing for witnesses.

In November, the club has in licence suspended until December 25th, following a near-riot outside, which saw extra police drafted in from Bromley and Lewisham.

Bluebeats School closing

Greenwich Council has decided to close Blackheath Bluebeats College of England Secondary School from 2014 after councillors heard that a sustained decline in pupil numbers means there is no realistic prospect of reversing a serious and increasing financial deficit in the school’s budget. A carefully planned transition process will ensure that children currently attending the school experience as little disruption as possible.

The school has been making significant improvements, but numbers have been falling consistently. The number of pupils aged 11–15 has fallen from 767 in May 2005 to 481 in September 2011. This means the school is little more than half full (23% of the 900– pupil capacity), and unfortunately this has left a very large financial deficit. But it wasn’t all bad... New Yorker Mark Daniel, of P olebrook Road, Kidbrooke, has publicly thanked the police officers who went “beyond the call of duty” and helped his girlfriend give birth to their son in a car park.

Westcombe Society’s New Year Calendar

This can be found on page five.

Welcome to the Royal Borough of Greenwich!

The people of Greenwich will have the chance to join in the celebrations when the borough formally becomes the Royal Borough of Greenwich on Friday 3rd February 2012. This is one of the first events to mark the year of The Queen’s Diamond Jubilee. The Letter Patent, a document formally confirming the Borough’s Royal status and signed by The Queen, will be presented to the borough on Friday 3rd February. It will then go on show across the borough.

That weekend will see fireworks in General Gordon Square at 6.45pm on 3rd Feb; high jinks all day in Eltham on 4th (including free entry to Eltham Palace) with fireworks at 6.00 pm, and all-day celebrations in Maritime Greenwich with a dark shadow over over Greenwich. Eltham, in which are added other heraldic features including the Tudor Rose.

It is hoped that HM the Queen will visit Greenwich on April 27th.

Libraries threat

Greenwich council proudly boasts of a freeze in Council tax for seven of the last thirteen years. But a cold wind is blowing through the library service, as currently, the leader of the Council Chris Roberts said: "It is a source of great relief that the process of justice for the family of Stephen Lawrence has finally begun..."

"This is just the first step towards ensuring that all of those responsible are brought to justice. I hope the police will continue with their investigations to ensure everyone involved is held to account."

Happy New Year 2012! 2012 got off to a bad start for many: 20 fire-fighters and incident commanders. Greenwich and Woolwich attended a nine-pipe pylee-up at midnight on the A102 Blackwall Tunnel approach. Not only were injured but debris covered the road until 1.00 am. Who'd be a firefighter on New Year's Eve?"-Fierce storms

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The Christmas Bazaar was the Westcombe Society's main fundraising event for their charity of the Year. The Christmas Bazaar in a Blind Greenland was their chosen charity.

Colin Brown, Chair of Executive of B.L.G said: “We had a very successful and enjoyable day on Saturday 19th November. Many Portia’s Stationary Terrier members, both charities and local communities, and certainly generated a buzz.”

Mr. Brown also mentioned that record numbers this year and our takings were up. All our helpers are volunteers and the event was a complete blind effort without their hard work. We are also grateful to local traders for their very generous donations.

The popular publicans Jim and Jenny Pugh of the Royal Standard have left after three years.

They departed mid-January to take over the Ardleigh and Dragorn at Hornchurch. They plan to bring a pub with an emphasis on Thai cuisine.

Jim said: “If any of the friends we made during our time in Westcombe Park are out of our way we’ll love to see them.”

The couple – who have a one-year-old daughter – have raised thousands of pounds for charity during their time in the pub. In a chat with Geoff Garvey, Jim said: “We’re sorry to be leaving, but we’ve been offered a great new challenge.”

They raised £10,000 for assistance dogs and around £5,000 for children’s charities.

Their latest fund-raising was for Crisis at Christmas when they raised £630.

Cynthia Finlady, the honorary curate at St George’s Church, said: “They have been helping St George’s to raise funds for CRESIS over the Christmas period – so far they’ve raised £630, with more still to come.”

“I thought it would be good if we could thank them in the WSN for this splendid effort. I wish to thank them for all their community work in the pub and wish them and their daughter Daisy all the best for the future.”

And so say all of us. See you in Hornchurch, Jenny and Jim!”

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**Letters**

**To the Editor (Cont.)**

Blackwall West

The December-January edition of the WSN drew attention to the strong opposition to the Shooters Hill Eviction Court. Despite this, Greenwich Borough Green has been known to promote the centre as a high profile legacy in return for its status as an Olympic Host hotel. All well and good perhaps, but I do find out nothing when asking about Council backing for this court, nor are they preparing to stop up over 13m as a consequence of the scheme. The organisation might see a slight edge to its status if it responds to the pay for it.

Despite continuing public money of the scheme, the December Council meeting I asked how many residents from the Shooters Hill community, or the centre, the Cabinet member who was responsible about not to know.

Given that, to the dismay of local residents, the centre is to open – Metropolitan Open Land and displace the much loved Woonky dog – and is so just over 13m – local residents may have some convincing this is a good deal.

**EDITOR:**

Curtain and caregiver, as delt to my house was at such an hour, that for the moment she quite forget how to speak good English”. But at least Mr. Thorne seen happy that his donkey has been allowed over new fields to foreign in near Eltham Palace.

From: Dafydd (Humber) Room

At last a visit to this much coveted bight from island Roslin - Brunsbts Bennet for My English (reviewed in the last issue of the WSN)

The BBC has long been in the forefront of the downfall of dumb language, especially all too often in our streets and in the mouths of the people. But the language which has been maligned by the BBC is its own, through the unbridled aims of the BBC’s great leader, Lord Reith, who retired after a long period of service. However, the BBC’sottish automated words were spoken, is a complete lie.

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From: Annie Hart

Fastidious West

To relieve road congestion around here, how about asking Network Rail to create a new station at the Standard? It would be sited where the railway between Charlton and Blackheath is in a ‘cut and cover’ near the shops on the Old Dover Road along the line of Vicarage Avenue. It would require digging out for platforms, signalisation and track layout and steps but might need much infra- structure to be added, apart from a ticket machine and ticket barriers. I think it is worth exploring: the cost need not be great, and it would be for the railway, it is one financial responsibility to keep a record of how often our trains are cancelled. If the service is not given until to its joint friends, for example.

The Hospice provides a free spe- cial care and support to local peo- ple. The Hospice in the last year alone it supported over 2,900 local people and their fami- lies, friends and carers in the town of Greenwich and Bexley.

Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice on Bostall Hill, Abbey Wood in SE London is calling for local support all ages to its friendly volunteer team.

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**Charity calls for volunteers**

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LOCAL NEWS

Shopping? Go no further than the Old Dover Road!

Geoff Garvey takes a look at some of the dynamic businesswomen of Westcombe Park. PHOTO: Geoff Garvey

“As we settle into Diamond Jubilee Year and our borough now becoming Royal Greenwich – what about all those forecasts for doom and gloom in 2012? Well, for a bunch of women at the Standard, they’re not being put off with tales of woe and despair. They’re the new (ish) girls on the block who are breathing fresh life into our shopping parade. Some lively newcomers include the newly revamped pet shop, a children’s outfitters and toy shop; a classy florists; a cookshop, and a deli.

So, what have they got to say for themselves? Take Susan Donnelly, who runs Blackheath Pet Supplies. She’s trading in premises that first started 25 years ago. No anonymous supermarket-style chain tactics for Susan. She declared: “The main aim of my pet shop is to give people a personal service with the choice of great items for their pets...we stock and recommend natural hypo-allergenic pet foods from British-owned companies...we have deliveries from our suppliers twice a week. And always aim to source that special item for your pets...”

“I supply products with health and behaviour benefits and always have plenty of free samples for your pets to try...Just think...what would your pet really like?”

“I have amazing nutritional help from the ‘Bums’ advisors who support my business...after attending the many trade shows around the UK I enjoy networking with other people within my industry...”

“Now I’m very excited to be expanding my business to provide a dog walking/car sitting service in partnership with a local girl who has studied for the past 3 years in Animal Management.”

From pets to kids
Just across the road is the bright sparkling business of Julia Mares – intriguingly named Ottie and the Bea after her children. Julia told the WY: “Customers keep coming back to us because they enjoy the experience of shopping in Ottie and the Bea – they love the atmosphere, the wonderful customer service, and most importantly they love the superb selection of products which are constantly being refreshed and are reasonably priced. Children themselves review products and I’m constantly looking for new items that allow creative and imaginative play.”

“Products are always out in the shop to be looked at and played with and our prices compare favourably with other shops. Importantly, we are seen as a key part of the community.”

From kids to food
Now when toddlers grow up a bit more then perhaps their mums and dads hope they’ll be dab hands in the kitchen. That’s where Joy Neal steps in. She runs Blackheath cooks – the Cookery School and Cookshop.

Joy recalls: “I still remember spending my pocket money here 25 years ago when the shop we now occupy was a card shop. I trained as a primary school teacher, and after teaching in Deptford for three years I ran a catering company. I then started a kids cookery business called Munchkins Kids Cooking in 2005. It was unique – it focused on teaching kids to appreciate ‘real’ food from an early age.

“We’re a cookery shop at the front where we aim to sell ‘useful and beautiful’ items for the kitchen – so we have all kinds of gadgets and gift items and have recently expanded our baking section due to customer demand. The nice thing about being a small shop is that we can get to know all our customers, order in special items that they want, and we’re always happy to have a chat and give cookery advice!”

“We love it when people bring in photos of things they’ve cooked (or even better, samples to taste).”

“Behind the shop is our cookery school where we run fun hands-on cookery classes for cooks of all ages and all abilities! Our customers range from stay-at-home parents, to retired gentlemen who have never needed to cook before, to students, professionals, local foodies and everyone in between.”

And from beauty – to flowers!
Passion Flower owner Hatti Abracbi told the WY: “Starting any business is an anxious and daunting prospect, often taking many years to grow from a seed of an idea to fruition. Yet amongst all of the variables, there was always one certainty for me and that was the location.”

“As a Greenwich resident for many years, I had identified Old Dover Road as a special place where its uniqueness lay in its blend of independent retailers and palpable sense of community.”

“Declared Hatti: “Whether you are buying a quick bunch for the home, flowers for your wedding...or a gift for a special occasion, our attention to detail is paramount and we’ll go that little bit further to provide our customers with the unusual and beautiful.”

“Like all romantics, we LOVE weddings and understand that the thrill of organising your wedding starts with selecting your dress and then, the flowers. This is why our flower service is truly personal. We give our brides (and grooms) unlimited time to discuss and sample our flowers to ensure that they are 100% happy with their choice and we also provide the added bonus of sourcing table accessories through our vast network of suppliers.”

“So the next time you think of going to a bland chain store mall think Old Dover Road.”

The WY wishes all our local shopkeepers and traders a Happy and Prosperous New Year. AND urges all our readers to support our local shops. We are SO lucky to have them!”

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Starkey Financial Planning Ltd. is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority
Westcombe News wins new awards

The Westcombe Society has yet again moved forward with the Westcombe News - and for its outreach to the community. Every two years, the Walter Bor Media Awards take place London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies (based in Hillingdon), and publications are submitted from all over London.

Walter Bor 1916 – 1999

Walter Bor was an architect who was born in Vienna of Czech origin. A secular Jew, he escaped to England with his friend, the actor Herbert Lor in the Nazis took over Austria in 1938. Tragically, he failed to persuade his family to join him, and they all perished at Birkenau concentration camp.

He then had to teach himself optimism. As an architect, he saw his mission as helping to rebuild a clean, rational and democratic world for everyone after the ravages of the second world war. He regarded modern architecture and urban planning as weapons with which to forge a new world of common decency.

He specialized in mass housing and the comprehensive planning of bombed-out brand new towns and cities, and worked with the London County Council on replacing the heavily blighted East End of London.

His long life saw him working in places as far afield as Shanghai (China), Glasgow (Scotland), Liverpool (Ohio), Cambridge, Prague, Bogota – and Milton Keynes.

The Westcombe News won the Walter Bor Award for local newspapers in London in 2005, the year the award was started. It has since been repeatedly commended.

This year, the society won two awards: it was commended for its local community newspaper the Westcombe News; and the society was “particularly commended” for “effective use of multi-media channels to distribute society news and views to the public.”

The Westcombe Society, and the Westcombe News, has featured on BBC TV news on several occasions in recent years, and also in the Guardian newspaper, and on numerous occasions in the local press. The Westcombe News also has its own web pages and blog.

A spokeswoman for the London Forum particularly commended the way the paper came out so frequently – and was delivered street by street by volunteers to the whole community, not just members of the Westcombe Society. Also commendable was the way it was made available in libraries and public places.

Commenting on the awards, Gordon Baker, Chairman of the Society, said: “The Society is extremely pleased to have had our work recognised in this way. This represents a huge tribute to all the hard work of our members, particularly Neville Grant, the editor, but also the editorial and distribution teams, the contributors, and all who contribute to the society’s website and blog.”

Free NHS courses help Greenwich residents manage their condition

The NHS in Greenwich is offering residents the opportunity to take long to short courses designed to help people with long term conditions, or their carers, learn new skills to help them get the most out of life.

The Expert Patients Programme run by Greenwich Healthy Living Service – a part of NHS Greenwich – is a series of informal courses run by two trained tutors who have experience of long term conditions themselves. They provide expert advice directly to patients, their carers, and to parents of children who have long term conditions.

A long term condition is one that can’t be cured – but can be managed through medication and/or therapy. They include conditions such as diabetes, asthma, depression and coronary heart disease.

Ruth Shaw, Deputy Head of Greenwich Healthy Living Service, said: “The Expert Patient Programme courses are an excellent way to manage your own health and to overcome their long term health conditions while also discovering new ways to manage them in the most appropriate way.”

“The courses are run by two trained tutors who are living with a long term condition themselves and are passionate about helping others to cope. This means anyone coming on a course can speak with an appropriate expert who can understand their own experiences and ideas.”

Greenwich resident, Barbara, has made positive changes to her life through the Expert Patients Programme. She said “I have suffered from a number of long-term conditions and when I recently went through a bad stage I was referred to the Expert Patients Programme. Being shown new techniques and setting myself manageable goals gave me the inspiration to start living again. I am so grateful that the Expert Patients Programme has provided me with the help and understanding I needed.”

NHS Greenwich is now taking bookings for the next term of courses running through February and March 2012.

The courses are informal, easy to follow and cover a variety of topics including relaxation, exercise, problem solving, communication with healthcare professionals and family and friends. Each course runs for two-and-a-half hours per week over six weeks.

To book a place or for further information about the upcoming courses running in February and March 2012 call the NHS Greenwich Expert Patients Programme office on 020 8312 6670.

Hotel parking woes

H ow many times have you driven along Old Dover Road looking to do a bit of shopping, only to find there’s no place to park? And then driven home – not eager for another visit? Yes, it happens all the time. And the problem is that the people parking in Old Dover Road are not shopping at all – they either work there, or they are commuters.

The vexed question of parking at Old Dover Road – whether there will be a change or a free petrol pump plus a fee – is still being considered by the Council, which, at a meeting in January, decided on further local consultation.

The borough’s Highways Committee was presented with a petition signed by nearly 1,400 people demanding FREE but controlled parking. This follows concern from traders that the free parking places in the road were almost entirely occupied all day by commuters to Central London. In addition, big employers like Marks and Spencer and the Natwest Bank use the spaces as, effectively, company car parks.

The petition requested 2-hour monitored free parking bays to ensure a quicker turnaround in the whole standard area to support local shops.

At an oddly confused Council meeting on January 10th, The Westcombe Society argued that it was vital for the survival of the shops and businesses that something be done to discourage commuters, and to encourage passing and local trade, by the introduction of time-limited free parking, preferably restricted to two hours. But should pay & display be introduced it stressed the importance of including a short period (e.g. half an hour) of free parking.

Councillor Brightly asked for 2 hour free parking to be included in the forthcoming local consultation.

In a statement, the traders said: “We recognise that Old Dover Road is very unusual in having unlimited free parking. However we are also very unusual in the borough as a ‘traditional’ shopping parade, which includes the whole range of independent businesses needed to support a local residential area, and we believe that this should be protected.”

“We also recognise the council’s need to make money from parking opportunities, we are all council tenants, and pay rent to the council from premises. Any introduction of paid parking will adversely affect our ability to run our businesses.

“Since the very steep increases in parking charges at the Old Dover Road car park in 2011, many of our businesses have suffered a decrease in customers, with one being forced to close, and the parade has been noticeably less busy. Our concern is that introducing paid parking along the parade will continue this trend, and more of us will not be able to continue.”

The recently published report by Mary Portas states: “It fundamentally believe that to increase the cost of parking in a locality (when there are alternatives offering free parking elsewhere) is to curtail the appeal of that location to the shopping consumer and therefore the longer term economic viability and wellbeing of the area.”

Local traders argue that 2-hour (as in the petition) or 1-hour free bays would stop people parking there all day and would greatly increase the turnover of customers on the parade. This would greatly benefit local businesses.

One method of payment being considered is by mobile phone only. But the traders (and the Westcombe Society) objected strongly. “This would cause major problems for many of our elderly customers, or those who don’t use mobile phones – and would make it difficult for such people to shop at the parade. We object strongly to the introduction of paid parking for only by mobile phones.”

The Westcombe Society notes: The Council’s Sustainable Communities and Transport Scrutiny Panel report of 2008 noted that: “Most (shopkeepers) favoured a system of short-term free parking. It recommended: ‘The Council should be open to consider proposals supported by local residents’ community groups for free change or introduce parking restrictions.” In particular, parking and loading arrangements on Old Dover Road.”

What’s wrong with home-grown trees?

It has come under fire for buying trees from Germany to plant at the side of the Blackwall Tunnel approach road.

Local Lew MP Nick Raynsford said: “While I welcome the planting of trees to shield residents from the noise and traffic fumes of the A102, why couldn’t TfL have bought home-grown British saplings?”

The trees were due to be planted last year, but the work has been delayed because the German saplings couldn’t be delivered in time.
The Westcombe Society

Dance party at 10th birthday! Sat. 16th Feb Hosts: Roberts & Newcomers’ Party inspections will be going on soon. Any newcomers to the area welcome - please contact Caroline Pemberton at 0858 0405 if you would like to attend.

10th March - Children’s Nearby New Sale anyone interested in turning a table or stall should please contact Joanne Lucas by calling or texting 07715 737 811.

17th March - Daffodil Tea Sun 14th April – Easter Egg Hunt

20th May – AGM

26th June - Jane Austen Tea for Senior Citizens July – Summer Picnic - date to be confirmed 22nd Sep – Members’ Meeting 20th Sep – Macmillan World’s Biggest Coffee Morning 20th Sep – Nearby New Sale 27th November - Dickensian Christmas Bazaar

FRIENDS of MYCENAE GARDENS will be holding its Annual General Meeting at 7.30pm on Monday 18th February at the Greenwich Steakhouse Room.

Mark Pemberton, Main Hall Sun 26th Feb. 9.30 am – 5.40 pm Antiques Collectables and Craft Fair Alzheimer’s Society £1.00 Entrance: 07762116756 0776744708

BLACKHEATH BRIDGE CLUB welcomes all players to duplicate sessions in Mycenae House Mon. & Thurs. 1.30 pm - 6.30 pm in Mycenae House WOODLANDS FARM, Shelters Hill The full list of open every day every Mon and Wed from 9.30 – 2.30 FREE.

Toddler Club Thursday 10 – 12

BLACKHEATH HALLS for BLACKHEATH WOMEN’S INSTITUTE: First Wednesday of every month at 7.30 pm in St George’s Methodist Church, Old Church Road. £3.50 includes tea and cake.

BLACKHEATH SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY Fri 17th 7.45 Mycenae House. £1 of the £15 ticket goes to Local Hospitals and Medical Halls.

BLACKHEATH HALLS Quiz Evening Fri 5th 2012 8.00 pm OPEN MIC NIGHT with Box Dining at Blackheath Newley Club, 22 Charlton Road.

SE3 8RG on Saturday 4th February by 8pm. If you’re a music lover/fan feel free to come and play! Ring Box on 0750 251885 or just turn up! SECOND CHANCE CHOIR: Thursdays evenings term time in Broadheath. New members welcome. Ring: Margaret Nunn 058 3544

ENGLISH FOLK MUSIC 9.45 every Tuesday at the Lord Nelson, Charlton Road.

ANNUAL ARCHITECTURAL LECTURE Wed 16th February at Blackheath School. Eric Parry on ARCHITECTURE & THE GENIUS OF PLACE Tickets: £20 (18+ conc. 16 students)

URGENT – The Westcombe Society needs storage space for Christmas Bazaar equipment etc., for example in an unused garage. Please ring Marjorie on 0208 855 1112 if you can help.
FEATURES

Getting fit in 2012!

Shenda Fulvey Personal Training & Bootcamps, is raising the pulses of local residents with the launch of a new health and fitness service for those living in the Westcombe Park and Peninsula area. With exhilarating outdoor group Bootcamp classes and individual personal training, there is something for everyone!

Every Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday sees the Bootcamps classes taking place at Central Park – in front of the Pilots Inn, 68 River Way, Greenwich Peninsula – straight after school and nursery drop off – perfect for these busy parents. If that time doesn’t suit there is also the evening sessions every Monday and Wednesday at 7.30pm. From new mums to marathon winners these effective and fun classes offer complete body conditioning for all ages and abilities. Locals can finally forget about boring gym sessions and cramped studio classes, and instead enjoy an hour of Bootcamp fitness fun to burn fat and lose inches, increase fitness, muscle strength and endurance, reduce stress, blood pressure and cholesterol levels and improve body shape – who can ask for more?

The personal touch is guaranteed by keeping the classes small and with the sessions changing daily, until beginners to fitness enthusiasts stay motivated whilst achieving great results. And with a FREE taster session on offer to everyone, Westcombe Park residents are set to be in top condition in 2012!

For those who prefer a more personal approach, Shenda also offers one-on-one training with programmes specifically designed, after a FREE consultation, to meet clients’ individual goals.

Shenda said, “I’m delighted to be offering this new service to the people of Westcombe Park. With the choice of personal training, either one on one or with a partner or friend and group Bootcamps, residents have the option to create a health and fitness package to suit their lifestyle – a great way to get into and stay in shape this year.”

Prices are as follows:
Bootcamps: £9.99 per drop in session
£90 for 12 sessions per month (mornings)
£90 for 12 sessions for 6 weeks (evenings)
Mix of evening and morning classes available on request
Personal Training
£45 per hour session with FREE consultation meeting
Buy 10 sessions get one FREE
For further information, to book a FREE Bootcamp taster session, discuss Personal Training options or purchase gift vouchers contact Shenda on: 07577 727 315
Email: shenda@shendafulveypersonaltraining.com
Website: www.shendafulveypersonaltraining.co.uk

We Need Family & HOME!

More Greenwich families than ever are needed to become foster parents. And it’s not just in Greenwich.

The charity Fostering Network warns that around 1,200 extra foster cases need to be found across the capital in the next 12 months. The new figures, published by the Fostering Network, show the scale of the challenge for fostering services as they struggle to provide the right foster homes for all the children who need them.

Since 2008 the number of children living in foster families in England has risen by 16 per cent, and is continuing to rise. There is also an ageing foster carer population and around 14 per cent of the workforce retire or leave every year.

Without these extra families, too many children will have to settle for second best. This might mean living with a foster carer who is a long way from the child’s home, school and family, or who does not have space for their brothers and sisters, or even living in residential care when fostering has been identified as the right option.

Helen Clarke of the Fostering Network said: “All children in care need a family they can grow up with who can love them, be ambitious for them and help them achieve their potential. For a growing number, foster care is the best option.”

“By becoming a foster carer people can help the children they welcome into their homes to have the best possible opportun- ity of a positive future, to do well at school and succeed in later life.”

“Foster carers come from all walks of life, from teachers to factory workers and builders to nurses. If you want to work with children and have the right skills to foster, then finding out how you can make a real difference to children across the cap- ital could be a great start for this new year.”

To be eligible you need be over the age of 21 and able to offer a stable home. You must show you can afford to look after a child and satisfy the relevant checks. You do not need to live in the borough, and whether you own or rent your property is not important. The main thing is being able to meet the needs of each individual child. In Greenwich, adopters are sought from all ethnic backgrounds. Careful work goes into finding a suitable match but this does not automatically mean that the adopting parent has to be from the same ethnic background as the child – the key thing is a willingness to acknowledge and support the child in his or her own racial identity.

The process starts with contacting the Greenwich Adoption Team, based in the new Woolwich Centre, Westminster Street. Prospective adopters are interviewed, fill in an application form and then go for an assessment. Checks on adopters include medical, criminal and reference checks.

A social worker will work alongside them. If all is well, an adoption panel will grant them the right to adopt. Then they would have to wait a while for a child to be matched to them. They might later apply to adopt the child if they wish. There can also speak to people who have adopted a child themselves – the best way to understand what it involves.

Clare Jackie Smith, Greenwich Council’s Cabinet Member for Children and Young People said, “Adoption helps change the lives of young people, and … is very rewarding. It is not a daunting process, but it does take time, effort and commitment.”

To find out more about becoming a foster carer, contact Greenwich Council’s adoption team on 020 8952 2752 or email adoption@greenwich.gov.uk

Information is also available on: www.greenwich.gov.uk/adoption Or call Fosterline on 0800 804 7675, or visit www.couldyoufoster.org.uk

Photo-opportunity!

R&B Photo School runs a number of photographic workshops in and around Greenwich.

R&B stands for “Richard and Ben”.

Our studio workshops are based at Mycenae House and our off-camera flash location workshops use the splendour of the Old Royal Naval College as a back-drop.

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Your tutors are Richard Liston and Ben Joseph. Richard specialises in portraiture and also teaches at a London College, and Ben specialises in reportage weddings photography, and also has teaching experience.

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For a list of workshops, see www.rundphschool.co.uk

Our next six-week studio workshop starts on February 5. Mention Westcombe News when you book for a 10% discount.

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Westcombe News February 2012
Greenwich’s N/S divide

Transport for London has remained noncommittal about a feasibility study, led by Hyder, commissioned by Greenwich Council, for an eight-station extension of the DLR to reach as far as Falconwood.

So far, the feasibility study has cost £25,000. The proposed route would run from Silvertown. It would cross the river by a tunnel that would emerge on the Peninsula to meet the BTSA on the east side and would then run along the centre of the A2 on an elevated structure.

It would cross Woolwich Road, run up to the Sun and the Sands, then on to Kidbrooke, Eltham Station and would then finally terminate at Falconwood.

According to the study, the total cost would be likely to exceed £1bn.

However, the report remains positive about an extension, highlighting particular importance for the Kidbrooke regeneration project and saying it will have “extensive environmental and regenerative benefits for the south of the borough”.

The Council has since authorised a second feasibility study, costing £45,000.

In December, Eltham MP Clive Efford called for a DLR extension as part of an alternative to the Blackwall Tunnel.

He has been arguing for similar proposals since 2005. He said: “In the long term I want the DLR at Eltham and to put my part of south east London on the map.”

Critics say the feasibility study is a waste of Council funds, given the fact that no such development is envisaged by TIL.

John Roan Redevelopment

Since the go ahead was given to John Roan’s planning application in October last year, the Westcombe Society Planning and Environment Sub-Committee (WSPESC) has approached the school on behalf of residents with the view to setting up a working party while the upper and lower schools undergo significant redevelopment over the next few months.

Local residents are bound to be affected so it is reassuring to know that John Roan school has responded enthusiastically to the suggestion.

Equally, local councillors Alex Grant and Geoff Brighty broadly support the initiative. The working party would keep lines of communication open between the school, the developers and residents to resolve any issues that may arise during the redevelopment. Work is due for completion in 2014.

“John Roan is right in the heart of the Westcombe community, and as the local amenity society we are well placed to bring stakeholders together and set up a working party,” comments Dick Allard, Chair of WSPESC.

With building due to start imminently, local residents who want to take part are asked to contact WSPESC directly on wespec@gmail.com.

Aircraft noise

The Government is due to publish its new aviation policy for public consultation before the end of March, and local campaigning group, HACAN East, is calling for them to relook at how they measure aircraft noise levels.

HACAN point out that noise levels in SE London from Heathrow and London City flights are as serious as those in West London.

Dig & delve

In January, Transition Greenwich and the Friends of East Greenwich Pleasance doubled the size of the park’s memorial orchard with a new year planting of six more fruit trees.

A good turnout of volunteers did the digging, planting and erecting of tree guards, with expert guidance from the London Orchard Project, which has supported the project since the beginning.

It is hoped that, as it matures, the orchard will come to have uses for community activities in the Pleasance, such as an Apple Day and new year wassailing.

The project benefited from a grant from the Greenwich Pride award scheme run by the council, with financial support from Capital Growth and practical support from Greenwich Parks and Open Spaces department and the Pittasch in the Park cafe.

When the buds burst in spring, local volunteers will be busy rolling a rota to water them. If you are able to help with this very enjoyable task, please email gavinmevgridge@gmail.com

Gavin McGregor

London 2012 Olympic Update

Greenwich Council is currently considering LOCOG’s planning applications for the Olympic and Paralympic events due to be held in Greenwich Park in August and September.

In March 2010 Greenwich Planning Board gave outline permission for the Greenwich Park events to be held, but laid down over 30 conditions with which LOCOG would have to comply before full clearance could be given.

LOCOG’s applications for release from these conditions was due to be considered by the Planning Board meeting on 26th January, but consideration has now been postponed, without a fresh date, to give the Council more time for the paperwork.

Before Christmas the Westcombe Society’s Planning and Environmental Sub-Committee (WSPESC) scrutinised a mass of text, plans and maps related to the application, and duly submitted its views to the Planners along with other stakeholder and interested parties.

WSPESC has found that LOCOG’s response has still left a number of key questions unanswered, and reiterated in original concerns to the Council.

The Olympic Transport Plan was only produced in December. WSPESC contend that this was much too late for proper consideration, lacking in clarity, and based on wholly inadequate local consultation.

The plan left unanswered vital questions about public transport, the Park’s closure schedules, parking restrictions, disabled access and noise pollution among others.

WSPESC insists planning permission for the Transport Plan should not be given until full further public consultation, with a full debate, into the Olympic Trust.

“Westcombe Park stands to suffer more inconvenience from the Greenwich Park Olympics than anywhere else in the Borough,” WSPESC chairman, Dick Allard asserts. “We are looking for a more strategic and joined-up approach to the critical issue of transport, to avoid the area becoming gridlocked.”

Many local residents are now asking themselves whether the Olympic period would be a good time to leave home...

The Cutbacks

I started this during those warm-sih wet-sih days before Christmas, following an unplanned bit of hacking in a client’s garden.

My glamorous assistant ‘tidied up’ two large plum trees, cutting them back to stumps. On aesthetic grounds alone, why would anyone do that?

About four days later, I found that some acanthus I’d carefully cut back in July, giving shy new leaves for the Winter, had been hacked to the ground.

In a small garden open to the (pissing) public, creating such empty spaces seemed unwise, but it seems that no-one can agree when or whether to cut back over Winter.

My general advice to clients is to cut back plants whenever they become unacceptably scruffy, but I never advise an Autumn cut.

Winter is dreary enough without looking out on bare earth and our austerly produced lovely yellow and brown stems, while the natura-

1 WTs went on till after Christmas.

Cutting back in Autumn was traditional, but with some warmer, drier winters, and a mix of perennials, shrubs and grasses, it’s unnecessary. If you like cutting everything in one go, wait till February, when light levels & soil temperature give faster regrowth.

Otherwise, cut in between the eye and lower buds should be left (April), the lavender cut to produce new shoots which you can trim later

(by a third) to stagger flowering. Cut all roses to a good shape and produce new flower buds (which varies according to type).

Robust growers (buddleia, lavatera) can be cut hard at pretty much anytime, but they can also be trimmed again later to give flowers over a longer period.

Most perennials are tipped up as new growth starts, with a few cut according to taste – trim any thistle types in August for new leaves over Winter, but if you leave some seedheads, the new foliage is smaller.

Cut dogwoods (for coloured stems next Winter) last as long as new leaves appear. After that, it’s just trimming shrubs which flaxen and die.

Remember, whenever you cut back a plant apply general purpose feed (seaweed, Greenurex – or bonemeal if local wildlife allows), and water well. Christopher Raven

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