



Westcombe NEWS

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April 2012 Issue 3

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

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

Think of a number and double it . . .

The *WN* looks at the escalating security costs of the Olympics and Paralympics . . .

Between March 5th - 9th, an MOD Armed Forces Air Security Testing Exercise took place on Blackheath, and in Oxleas Woods.

The *WN* learnt that as part of defensive security arrangements required for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, an assessment was being made to determine whether Air Defence Systems should be deployed around London.

An initial site assessment undertaken by the military indicated the potential to locate such systems in Oxleas Wood and on Blackheath (probably near Holly Hedge House, on the Lewisham side of the heath) and in other locations around London.

Allaying local concerns, Cllr Alex Grant said: "National security considerations mean that there has to be some secrecy about the plans, but Blackheath is not Salisbury Plain. The plans will not endanger anyone, and any presence of military installations on the heath is not going to cause any damage. Access will not be impeded any more than necessary."

A decision on whether and where to deploy Air Defence Systems will be made by Ministers in due course.

Concerns over costs

Meanwhile, there are the usual predictable concerns over the failure to predict the escalating costs of security during the games – now estimated to have risen from £282 million to £553 million. Instead of

10,000 staff at the 34 Olympic venues originally estimated, LOCOG has stated at least 20,000 would be needed.

The permanent secretary at the Home Office, Dame Helen Ghosh, admitted to parliament's Public Accounts Committee that the original figure was only a "finger in the air" exercise. The Public Accounts Committee is particularly concerned about the significant increases in the security bill.

LOCOG has been accused of taking too long to hire a director of security to do the detailed work. Meanwhile, security firms are having a field day . . .

Last February, Defence Secretary, Philip Hammond revealed that 13,500 military personnel will be involved in ensuring the smooth running of London 2012.

But with commitments elsewhere, there are fears that hundreds of armed forces' families, including some with relatives now in Afghanistan, could be forced to abandon their summer holidays.

The street-by-street route the London 2012 Olympic torch relay will take has been set out - and it comes right through Westcombe Park.

On July 21st, at about 8.15 am, on its way from Greenwich to Woolwich, it goes from Trafalgar Road to Woolwich Road, and then turns right into Combedale Road. It then goes up Westcombe Hill, into Charlton Road and then back to Stratheden Road and Shooters Hill Road.

Evidence sent to Parliament

The Parliamentary Transport Select Committee has invited written evidence on the transport plans for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The committee stated that it is particularly interested in: the impact on the road network resulting from Games Lanes (the so-called "Zil" lanes) and the Olympic Route Network (ORN); the measures taken to manage travel demand during the Games; the impact on public transport, including aviation, of increased demand

during the Games; the effects of travel disruption for businesses and services; and the delivery of a "transport legacy."

Two robust responses have been sent from Westcombe Park, one by the Westcombe Society covering the main issues, and an individual response (supported by the Society) on the need for disabled access at Maze Hill station (the designated station for the World Heritage Site). The submissions have been posted on <http://westcombe.blogspot.com/>

Blackheath murder convictions

GEOFF GARVEY

In February 2011 firemen were called to a burning car in Angerstein Lane, and found the body of a young man in the boot.

The body was that of 21-year-old Gagandip Singh, a successful entrepreneur, and chief executive officer of Sikh TV.

Twenty-year-old female medical student Mundhill Kaur Mahil of Gladstone Place, Brighton said that the victim had tried to rape her, and she "deserved justice".

She lured the young man to her home in Brighton. He drove from his home in Bexleyheath to Brighton, poignantly stopping at a service station on the way to buy Mahil a teddy bear.

In Brighton, he was beaten

unconscious by her associates. Wrapped in Mahil's duvet, he was bundled into the boot of a Mercedes, driven to Blackheath, where the car was set alight.

Harvinder Shoker, aged 20, of Charlton Park Lane, was sentenced to life for murder and ordered to serve a minimum of 22 years. Darren Peters, also 20, of Shooters Hill Road received 12 years in a Youth Offenders Institute for manslaughter.

Mahil was convicted of grievous bodily harm with intent and was given 6 years in a Youth Offenders Institute.

Gagandip's mother, Tajinder Kaur said: "As a mother I cannot even begin to find the right words to express the loss I feel."

POST OFFICE RAID

The post office at Stratheden Road was robbed of £20,000 on Thursday March 8th. Around 1.45 pm two men entered the building and stole money that was being delivered by a Post Office cash-in-transit van.

One of the men stood by the door and the other went to the counter. As the money was being handed over the raider grabbed the cash and fled. They escaped in a silver Audi car.

Only a few customers were present and they were shocked even though no weapons were involved.

The police are appealing for witnesses to ring 020 7232 6530 or, if they wish to remain anonymous, they should call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Happy Easter!



All are welcome at the Woodlands Farm Trust Lambing Day on Sunday 15th April (11.00 am - 4.30 pm) . Come and see newborn lambs, and enjoy the chance to buy quality local produce at reasonable prices, including homemade preserves, cakes and honey. Relax in the Café, enjoy the treasure hunt or get involved in craft activities.

Entry is £1 for adults and 50p for children, and all proceeds go towards caring for the farm's animals. A great family day out! For more Easter events at the farm, see page 5.

Greenwich Park Gates

There have been a number of complaints about the demolition of the southern gates to Greenwich Park. Among the complaints are that bricks that could have been reused were carelessly jettisoned, and that the gates had been officially "vandalized".

The truth is that work was required on the gates to allow large vehicles through for the staging of the Olympics in the park. The park authorities said that they were using this as an opportunity to carry out improvements that have been needed for some time. There have been concerns that vehicles such as fire engines were unable to pass in the event of an emergency.

The Royal Parks manager of Greenwich Park, Graham Dear, commented: "The work will make improvements to the layout of the junction and have been needed for some time, and although some disruption will be caused, the end result will mean improvements for all users of the park. The current gates date from a time when the only traffic was pedestrian, cyclists and horse-riders and small horse-drawn carriages. The gates are not wide enough and they are regularly damaged. There have been many accidents involving cyclists. The new design is much safer."

The vertical piers have been demolished, but Royal Parks say only one of them retained its original bricks – dating back to 1885 – and they will be kept for

use on future repairs to St Mary's Gate. Royal Parks also say that all of the original Portland stone cornice and plinths have been salvaged, to be repaired and reused.

The new design was approved by English Heritage and Greenwich Borough Council. The work is to be completed by 16th. April. Until then, vehicles can only enter the park via Blackheath Gate, and exit through St Mary's Gate

Footnote: The park authorities deny rumours of wide-spread tree felling and pruning. A large Turkey oak at the south east corner of Rangers' Field, suffering from serious disease, was felled in February for safety reasons. A look at the centre of the stump confirms its sad medical state.

Antiques, Collectables & Craft Fair

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Enquiries

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www.r-and-t.co.uk

The Westcombe Society

Easter Egg Hunt Sat. 7th. April 2.00 pm.

Come to Mycenae House gardens for an Eggcellent Hunt!

No adults allowed unless accompanied by children!

Sat 21st April – Quiz Night

7.30pm for an 8pm start at Mycenae House. Bookings and 'Chippy' suppers, if required, must be ordered in advance. Please contact Caroline on 8853 0948 to make your booking. Quiz tables will be for six. Why not get your neighbours to make up a team or come on your own and meet some new people.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING MAY 20th.

The Society needs to elect its new committee and Chairman, as Gordon Baker is retiring this year. We urge members to come forward and stand.

We would welcome some new faces and fresh ideas so that we can continue to evolve – a Membership Secretary needed in particular!

MACMILLAN CANCER RESEARCH SPONSORED WALK

The walk this year at Cobham, Kent is on Sunday 6th May (Bank Holiday weekend) and is 8 miles in length. The walk goes through the village of Cobham, through Luddesdown and across spectacular open countryside. It is said to be "moderately challenging" with stiles and steep slopes, so it is not suitable for pushchairs or wheelchairs. There is a shorter route of just 3 miles.

This year each walker has to pay £10 registration fee at the outset and then find sponsorship – no minimum amount has been quoted so far.

To take part or to sponsor a team, please ring Caroline on 8853 0948

COMMUNITY NEWS

WESTCOMBE NEWS

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DISTRIBUTION

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(email:marilyn.little@btinternet.com)

All advertisements payable in advance
by cheque to **The Westcombe
Society**. **Costs:**
DISPLAY: Single column 6cm x 6cm:
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Classified Ads (Market Place) charged at
30p per word (A telephone number = one
word. Any email/web address = 3 words.)
Deadline for all adverts is 10th day of the
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*The views expressed in the Westcombe
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Westcombe Society or of the Editor.*

*Back-numbers (in colour) can be accessed
on:*

<http://westcombe.gold.ac.uk/westnews.html>

Westcombe Society's Blog:

<http://westcombe.blogspot.com>

WESTCOMBE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Please send this membership form to:
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London SE3 7PH

Name.....

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A B.I.G. “Thank you!”

On Saturday 18th February
Henry Bufford and Colin
Brown, Chair and CEO respectively of
Blind Independence Greenwich (B.I.G)
were honoured to attend a presentation
party thanking Westcombe Society volun-
teers for their efforts throughout the year.
“We were presented with a cheque for the
grand total of £3,000 which had been
raised throughout the year 2011-12.

“BIG are a small locally-run charity
who rely on volunteers, states Colin. “We
support many blind people living in the
Royal Borough of Greenwich funding
worthwhile projects for some very deserv-
ing people. The money will go towards
providing specialist equipment for newly
blinded people, to give them confidence
that there is a future after losing their sight.
“Some of our other projects and services
are: fortnightly coffee mornings, tandem



Chairman Gordon Baker presents the cheque

club, music project, home visiting, help
with benefits claims etc. etc. All these are
ongoing and we are striving to keep them
so. Donations play a very important part
in keeping BIG running.

“If you would like to become involved
with BIG, we are always looking for vol-
unteers and friends who can help, so don't
hesitate to get in touch. Local blind people
need your help. We are now recruiting
'My Guide' volunteers to be trained: they
would then spend a few hours a week with
service users, for up to six months, to help
them become independent.

“Many thanks to the Westcombe Society. Henry
and I enjoyed meeting you all.”

Contact B.I.G. on 020 8853 2474. EMail:
colin@blindindependencegreenwich.org.uk

Letters

Letters to the editor may be edited through lack of space.
Any views expressed are those of the writers only, and are
not necessarily those of the Westcombe Society or the *WN*.

**From: Cllr. Alex Wilson (Con.) Blackheath &
Westcombe Ward**

The March edition of the *WN* featured articles on two
very large infrastructure projects which will benefit
both this area and the wider South East of London.

Firstly, the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson's
suggestion that we should investigate having a Thames
estuary based airport. This would bring jobs and help
to improve London's overall economy, as well as
reduce disturbance, as the holding pattern for the
planes could be based over the North Sea.

Part of the difficulty with existing airports around
London, such as Heathrow is that there was little
strategic decision made regarding their location,
instead they were developed from smaller former RAF
bases. Locally, Conservatives along with David
Cameron and Boris Johnson have opposed the third
runway at Heathrow which therefore means that alter-
natives need to be investigated.

The second large infrastructure project which has
been promoted by Mayor of London, Boris Johnson,
are the Silvertown Tunnel and the Gallions Reach
Ferry. The Silvertown tunnel has been talked about for
a number of years; however hopefully the current
proposals, for which consultation has just closed, will
see additional capacity added to our arterial road
network which should help to reduce the delays
caused when either one of the Woolwich Ferries is
being repaired, or the Blackwall Tunnel is closed,
which currently causes long delays.

From: Chris Peters SE3

Can I add to Sarah Winterbottom's notes on page 7 of
the March edition of the *WN*?

The Silvertown rail tunnel carried the now defunct
Stratford to North Woolwich railway and it is this
tunnel which I believe may be used for part of the
Crossrail route. A new road tunnel crossing the river
from the peninsula to Silvertown is much needed.

Woolwich Ferry has been running from its present
loading points since 1963 but the ferry had run to and
from the Hare Street jetty since 1889 and an earlier
ferry crossed the river from 1847. If the Thamesmead
ferry ultimately replaces Woolwich Ferry, will that
crossing then form the North and South Circular Road
link? Incidentally, the official consultation map is
slightly misleading as it does not show the
underground part of the DLR from King George
V to Woolwich Arsenal.

From: Mary & Peter Andrews Coleraine Rd

Edward Hill claims that 'most local people' want the
Olympic Equestrian Event moved from Greenwich
Park. (In his letter to the *Mercury* he went so far as to
say 'the overwhelming majority' feels this way). How
does he know this? I suspect that most local people,
including me, are fairly neutral on the matter.

I have no interest in Equestrianism but I have been
impressed by the park's recovery from the Test Events
and am confident that this will be achieved with the
same speed and success after the Olympics.

I am not looking forward to the transport chaos but
will be glad to welcome the many interesting visitors
Greenwich – and Westcombe Park – will be hosting,
and will certainly join in the excitement of this special
world event. I shall miss using the Park in the summer
but will make full use of the Heath, Charlton Park,

Oxleas Woods and the river.

We are fortunate that Mr Hill and others care
about, and have influenced, decisions regarding
Greenwich Park, but surely this subject has been cov-
ered enough. So please can we all keep a sense of
proportion and look forward both to the Olympic
experience and to many pleasant walks in 'our' park
when it is restored to us in the autumn.

From: A. Brown

Humber Rd.

I recently drove my wife into London Bridge follow-
ing a signals failure at Charlton. On no fewer than six
occasions, pedestrians, five of them women, crossed
the road either using their cell phones, or wearing
headphones, quite oblivious to the obvious dangers.

I think that people need to be aware of these dan-
gers. Recently a young woman was killed on a level
crossing in Hertfordshire, and the police said that
head-phones found at the scene will form part of their
enquiries.

Of course, there may be no connection; but it
looks as though we may be becoming neurotically
obsessed with communication, even when on a busy
road, and that can't be healthy.

From: John Bartram

Blackheath

The Blackheath Society Graffiti Busters meet at 2.30
pm on the first Saturday of every month (14th April
because of Easter) outside the minicab office at
Blackheath Station. If you would like to help out,
please ring Meg Dinkeldein on 8856 3545.

**ED: The Westcombe Society has its own graffiti
clean up team, which operates as needed. Please
ring 8853 3740 for details.**

From: Ian Bruton-Simmonds Langton Way

I refer to Mr Bailey's letter about the review of my
book *Mend your English* in February's *WN*.

My critic, Mr Bailey shares my view on the BBC
– that there must be a minimum of state control. ie. no
more than applies to the press.

The only government role I suggest
in my book is that a Secretary of State
should convene an advisory committee
of wise heads. As soon as the better
administration was in place, his or her
role would end at a stroke.

Mr Bailey is ill-advised on another
count: I have never referred to regional
accents: pronunciation and accent are
not in my purview. My focus is only on
the meaning of words, grammar and
style.

My words about the BBC over the
past thirty years stand: they have been
in the various printings of my book
Mend your English since 1990, and can
also be seen in my 2003 public lecture
(see [www.churchill-society-
london.org.uk/ChLect2k3.html](http://www.churchill-society-london.org.uk/ChLect2k3.html))

Only the most eligible would be on
the advisory committee, and I think Mr
Bailey is wrong to exclude Americans,
just as it would be wrong to exclude a
Quebecois from advising on the French
Academy. Nowadays, Standard English
is not confined to these islands.

Parking Saga continues

The Council has retracted the Old Dover
Road parking public consultation quoting
“errors” on the documentation. This
comes after some strong and organised
lobbying by the Westcombe Society, local
traders and local residents' representative
Toni Hale, over and above the 1,300 plus
petition presented to councillors in
October.

The Westcombe Society has responded
to the withdrawal of the consultation on
behalf of traders and residents by asking
again for two hour free parking west of the
motorway, and no change east of the
motorway.

Toni says: “Any further consultation
should be widened to include all the peo-
ple who will be affected by any type of
parking restriction imposed in Old Dover
Road.”

Many people have expressed particular
concern over the proposal that any pay-
ments should be made via mobile phones.

No date has yet been given by the
Council for a new consultation. Watch
this space!

The *WN* ...

The *Westcombe News* has been running for
nearly forty years. It started as a single
sheet of A4 paper, roneod off on a stencil (no
one probably recalls these ancient means of
production), very locally circulated, and only
sporadically produced.

Today it comes out regular as clockwork,
ten times a year. It is produced and distrib-
uted by volunteers; a genuine voice for the
community, it has become part of the
Blackheath and Charlton landscape – and
indeed part of the local economy.

But the *WN* can only continue with
YOUR support! To be a community news-
paper, it needs to be owned – actively inhab-
ited even – by YOU, the readers, and mem-
bers of the local community.

So please exercise active ownership by
contributing your own news and views. And
if you are interested in playing a bigger part
in its production, we can offer training in the
skills involved: it would be very healthy if
we had guest editors from time to time.

So if you are a young person seeking to
build up skills and experience, this is a great
way of enhancing your CV. (A student from
John Roan secured a place at University on
the strength of his contributions to the *WN*,
and is now pursuing a career in journalism.)

Or perhaps you are an older person – a
recent retiree maybe – looking for a more
active and creative role in the community.

If the cap fits! Give Neville Grant, the
present editor, a ring, and find out what fun it
is to work on the *WN* – and how easy
technology has made it to produce.

The phone number? It's 8858 8489.



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Westcombe Park, Blackheath, Greenwich & Lee, alongside
dedicated branches for Lettings & Commercial.
Contact the Westcombe Park branch on 020 8858 6101

John Payne

johnpayne.com

LOCAL NEWS

Mark Titman's Park Life

Local designer and artist Mark Titman recently held a showing in Greenwich of his latest work **PARK LIFE**.

You may remember that Mark was recently commissioned to design and install a drinking fountain for the Royal Parks. His **Park Life** series is another extension to his portfolio. Vivid colours and vibrancy portray various views that a walker may witness within the park in late Autumn or early Spring. By painting in the Park, the artist was able to give over much of the visualisation to the trees themselves. An exciting collection! For further details, visit www.marktitman.com



Happy birthday to the Blackheath Society!

This year the Blackheath Society is celebrating its 75th birthday. The Society, one of London's oldest and largest amenity groups, has been working to preserve local buildings and encourage good new design. All the battles it has won - and lost - are recorded in *Guardians of the Heath*, published in 2009 to mark our 70th anniversary in 2007.

The Society is more active than ever today. Apart from regular activities to support and preserve the Village and the Heath, our new initiatives include: creating the new Hub on the Heath; supporting the new Village Community Centre and Library; launching a new digital archive of Blackheath photographs; promoting a new Westcombe Woodlands organisation.

To mark the 75th anniversary, the Society has planned three special events:

There's a family Picnic on the Heath on Midsummer Day Sunday 24 June open to

everybody with free children's entertainment and the formal unveiling of the Hub.

BBC Radio 4's popular Any Questions programme visits Blackheath on October 26th in the Halls, and again is open to all.

On Friday 30th. November the Society will host a Gala Event at Blackheath Halls, for Society members.

For information on the year's events please contact John Bartram on 0208 852 2322; Johnbartram75@hotmail.com

Twenty's Plenty

Since the mid-1990s Greenwich Council has introduced a large number of 20mph 'zones' in residential streets across the Borough to improve road safety. In these zones, road humps and other traffic calming measures are used to slow traffic to 20mph or less.

Recently the Government changed road traffic regulations to allow local authorities to make more use of 20 mph 'limits'. These have '20' signs and road markings, - but without physical speed-reducing structures to like road humps slow drivers down.

In addition to the changes in road traffic regulations, there is a growing campaign (20's Plenty for Us) to cut speeds to 20 mph in residential areas. The perceived benefits are more walking and cycling (as people will feel safer), less fuel consumption and pollution, and better quality of life.

In February, representatives of the Westcombe Society attended workshops organised by Greenwich Council to discuss, among other things, 20 mph zones and 20 mph limits. There were a number of different perspectives on the issues, but there was wide support among those attending for a 20 mph limit in all residential roads.

The Council also organised an on-line survey to seek opinions about having more areas covered by 20 mph limits - but the consultation period was only 11 days.

Were you aware of this consultation? A lot of people weren't! Like so many of the Council's consultations, the notice and time-scale were too short to get a good response.

Ann Hill

Shenda is our Woman of the Year!

Shenda, of 'Shenda Falvey Personal Training & Bootcamps', has been awarded the prestigious title, 'Wonder Woman of the Year', after scooping 23% of the votes in a recent poll.

Locals voted with their fingers when they were asked by 'The Wonder Woman Network', a networking site for female entrepreneurs in Greenwich and Lewisham boroughs, to nominate their most inspirational business woman.

With over 60 hopefuls in the running, Shenda topped the league and was delighted when her victory was announced on March 8th. - International Women's Day.

The *WN* first profiled Shenda in February this year. When asked what made Shenda stand out, a voter explained:

"She should win for her determination and success at designing programmes that are affordable and make fitness accessible, even to working parents. Shenda provides a very friendly training experience that embraces all abilities. I really admire her for making such a success in such a short amount of time whilst being a mum of two. She truly is a WONDERWOMAN! She is a great inspiration to the women of Greenwich."

Said Shenda: "I have yet to replace my



tubing bands and skipping ropes for a golden lasso, or my gym kit for a sparkly corset and hot pants, but I feel very honoured to have won the title of 'Wonder Woman 2012', especially as it was my clients who got me the top spot!"

Alongside one-on-one training specifically designed to meet and exceed clients' personal goals, at a location of their choice,

Shenda also runs six bootcamp classes per week at Central Park, in front of the O2.

Come rain, snow or shine, you will find Shenda every Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday morning at 9.30am and every Monday and Wednesday evening at 7.30pm ready to put clients through their paces with a fun and invigorating workout.

Shenda is offering a FREE non-obligatory session to all potential new recruits. And for new and mums to be, Shenda is fully qualified in 'Pre and Post Natal Exercise'. With her personal experience as a parent, she has clients feeling in tiptop condition throughout their pregnancy, followed by an easier labour and birth, and a quicker recovery.

You can contact Shenda on 07887 727 335 or shenda@shendafalveypersonaltraining.co.uk "www.shendafalveypersonaltraining.co.uk"

Macmillan Cancer Walk

What could be nicer than a Springtime Walk in the Kentish countryside? Come and join us on Sunday 6th May at Cobham (Kent, not Srry!)) for a walk in aid of Macmillan Cancer Care.

The walk is 8 miles in length and we walk through the delightful village of Cobham, through Luddesdown and the grounds of Cobham Hall, a beautiful mansion now used as a boarding school,

and across spectacular open countryside.

The walk is said to be "moderately challenging" with stiles and steep slopes, so it is not really suitable for wheelchairs or buggies. There is however a shorter route of 3 miles for the less energetic.

Registration fee: £10 per person. Please for ring Caroline on 0208 853 0948 to be part of the Westcombe Society Team, or if you would like to sponsor a team.

Easter activities at Woodlands Farm

There's lots going on over Easter at Woodlands Farm at 331 Shooters Hill. From 1st - 9th April there is an Animal Egg Spotting trail: not only chickens lay eggs - come and explore the farm and find the hidden animals which lay eggs - you may be surprised by what you find! A self-guided trail is available when the farm is open - and it's Free!

On Tuesday 10th April there is a Spring on the Farm event from 10.00 am - 12.00 pm (£1 per child, accompanying adults free.) Spring is here and this is the chance to meet the baby animals on the farm. We will be doing crafts, games and seeing the new animals. Booking is essential, so call 020 8319 8900.

Then on Wednesday 11th April you can view 'Marvellous Minibeasts' from 10.00 am - 12.00 pm (£1 per

child, accompanying adults free.) What is crawling around in the leaves - and what is hiding under those logs? Join us as we go exploring in the woods to find what minibeasts are lurking about! Booking is essential, so call 0208 319 8900

The usual Toddler Club is on Thursday 12th April from 10.00 am-12.00 pm (£2 per adult, children free.) Meet the animals, enjoy some crafts - or just play!

For more information, see our website or contact Hannah Forshaw on education@thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org

New Gallery

The new *Made In Greenwich* Gallery & event space opens with "Our Park - a Celebration" on Sunday April 1st. Work by artists, makers and designers, with discussions, comedy, storytelling & videos will illustrate what Greenwich Park means to families, friends and visitors.

Made In Greenwich is an artist-run social enterprise to showcase local talent from those who live or work in the Greenwich area, as well as from anyone whose work portrays the area within about three miles of Greenwich Park, and its creative community spirit.

Our Park runs from Thurs - Sun 11.00 to 5.00 pm, from April 1st to May 5th. Drop in for a coffee! For special events, see www.madeingreenwich.blogspot.com Edward & Irena Hill 020 8293 9823 The Gallery is at 324 Creek Road, Greenwich, SE10 9SW - opposite the Cutty Sark DLR Station in Greenwich Town Centre.

Mycenae House community centre



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FEATURES

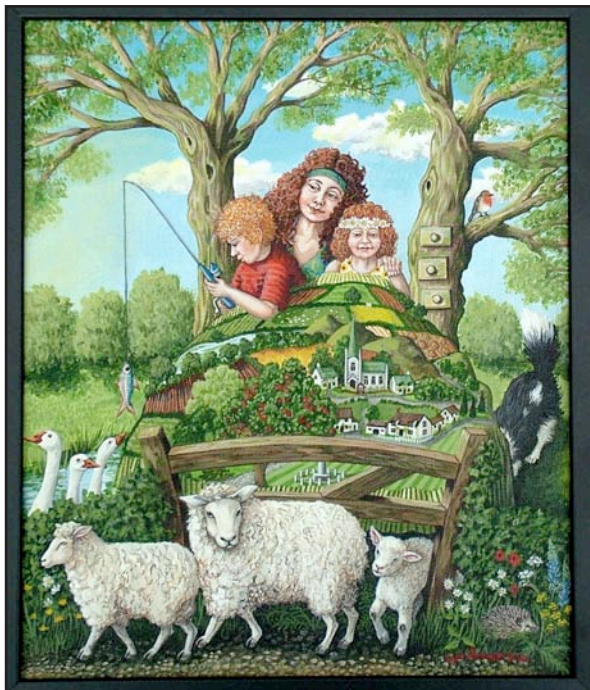
Festival of Art

Blackheath has a large number of extremely gifted artists, and their work can be viewed in the Blackheath Art Society's Spring Festival of Art. The Festival starts with an Open Studios Taster Exhibition in the Mulberry Tea Rooms at Charlton House from 2nd April until 19th May.

Twenty artists will be exhibiting a taster piece to whet your appetite.

Full details of all 3 events are available on www.blackhearthartsociety.org.uk or contact 020 8853 2269. See also page 5.

RIGHT:
Sheep by Lynn Bennett Usher
BELOW
Ceramics by John-Eric Johnson



For an opportunity to see the full range of their work, why not visit their studios – open on the weekends of 12 – 13th and 19 – 20th May from 12.00 – 6.00 pm? Paintings, prints, drawings, ceramics, photography, jewellery and textiles will also be on show. Leaflets with full details of the artists and the 11 venues in Lewisham, Greenwich and Bexley are available from libraries and community centres from April.

The third event is an exhibition of members' work at Blackheath Halls, 23 Lee Road, Blackheath, SE3 9RQ Tel 020 8318 9758.

Book reviews:

Not the Westcombe News

***The Murdoch Archipelago* by Bruce Page**
Simon & Schuster UK 2011 £14.99

***The Fox Effect: How Roger Ailes Turned a Network into a Propaganda Machine* by David Brock, Ari Rabin-Hart and Media Matters for America**
NY: Anchor Books 2012 \$15.00

Bruce Page, an investigative journalist – he was a former member of the *Sunday Times* renowned Insight team – has written a detailed analysis of how the Murdoch “archipelago” of media islands, large and small, came to be so hugely successful and influential.

It is often said that at present almost the only growth sector in newspapers is in very local, community-based publications (such as the *WN*.) But tell that to Rupert Murdoch who must at least be given credit for massive newspaper sales in the past – and indeed for rescuing Fleet Street from the so-called “Spanish practices” with his move to Wapping, and the use of modern technology.

Page's book, first published in 2003, has been updated to take into account recent history, and is rigorously researched, and beautifully written. Page shows that the hacking of Milly Dowler's phone was not a random offence. He argues that it originated in the Murdoch empire's essential character that is, after eighty years, still unchanged.

Called into question is not just the future of the press, the freedom of which is so important, and which, yet, has been so massively abused by ruthless journalists and proprietors.

Also at risk is the future of our media, which in the wrong hands could mutate – or should one say degenerate, all too easily into a version of Fox “News”, which the

authors of *The Fox Effect* argue really convincingly has become a serious propaganda outlet intent on reshaping the Republican party in its own image.

One of the authors of *The Fox Effect*, David Brock, was a former neo-con who had a “Road to Damascus” moment, and documents how Fox News in the US blatantly misrepresented Obama, and fomented the Tea Party movement.

The jury is still out on the future of NewsCorp and its BSkyB bid: many commentators point out that Murdoch came within a whisker of taking complete control of BSkyB. It was the revelations in the *Guardian* about phone-hacking that stopped it in its tracks. It is generally held that such a take-over would have a hugely negative impact on Britain's broadcasting culture.

As Page observes: “Certainly a great many people in Britain will find it hard to see how NewsCorp can be trusted to run the second largest (and richest) broadcasting system when its clear ambition is to become the only one, and its reputation says it will play rough in pursuit of things it wants.” We await the next chapter!

Morden College Care Home – Cullum Welch Court

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Take a walk on the wild side . . . ANNE ROBBINS

If you saw any of BBC2's recent series ‘Bees, Butterflies and Blooms’ you will already know that there is real concern among the horticultural world about the rapid decline in pollinating insects. This is having a serious impact on plants that are dependent on these insects for pollination, e.g. orchard produce such as apples and plums.

These insects are in decline as a result of a decline in their natural habitats which contain wildflowers. Apart from simply looking beautiful, wildflowers play an important role by providing pollen and nectar for bees, butterflies and hoverflies – vital pollinators in cities and countryside alike.

But these insects need to feed earlier and later in the growing season than the flowering times of domestic gardens. And with bees and butterflies threatened by loss of habitat and diversity of food sources, we can do much more in our own urban setting to help sustain them.

The “River of Flowers” campaign wants people to plant wildflowers in their front gardens – literally to create a ‘river of flowers’ which will certainly give pleasure to the human eye as well as the insects. According to the campaign, any garden with a tree is suitable for growing ‘woodland-edge wildflowers’. These flowers can give bees and butterflies an early source of nectar and pollen.

Many groups in London are already growing native wildflowers to support

insect life. Locally, the University of Greenwich Sustainability Team planted several hundred square metres of meadow with wildflowers and native grasses at its Avery Hill site last year. They are mowing less often to encourage seed production, and the results for insects have been encouraging.

Out on the Greenwich Peninsula, the Ecology Park grows wetlands and meadow species. In 2011, its Meantime Nursery started to experiment in growing turf with meadow wildflowers mixed in.

Some of this was planted in the East Greenwich Pleasaunce, along the north border, last autumn. The team from Transition Westcombe that carried out the work, with support from the Friends group and Greenwich Parks and Open Spaces, hope to see a positive impact on the biodiversity on the Peninsula as a result.

Elsewhere, people are monitoring the harebells and native grasses on Blackheath. On page 7 of this issue, there is an account of volunteers clearing ivy and scrub from Westcombe Woodlands to encourage forest undergrowth including wildflowers.

You can help, too! Why not sow wildflower seeds or plant young seedlings in your own garden? Advice and seeds for all situations are available online as well as from local garden centres.

For more information, see: urbanecology.org.uk; greengreenwich.blogspot.com; riverofflowers.org; reallywildflowers.co.uk; wildseed.co.uk



“Street Meadow” PHOTO: Anne Carter Van Roy riverofflowers.org

National Maritime Museum

“Titanic Remembered”

To mark the centenary of the Titanic disaster

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Due to local demand, Zoom are now opening a fourth nursery at **Lee Road, Blackheath.**

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Alternatively you can contact
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WHAT'S ON

ARTS

BLACKHEATH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY, St Mary's Church Hall, Cresswell Park, Blackheath 4th Thursday of every month, 2.00 for 2.30. **Next meeting: Alexandra Drysdale Red Vibrations:the aesthetic and emotional significance of red in western art** Non-members £5 on the door. See www.artsinblackheath.org.uk or ring 83187550

GREENWICH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY King William Court, the University of Greenwich **NEXT LECTURE: 14th May The Great Twelve: Introduction to Senior Livery Companies - their medieval origins and their role in modern society** Lecturer: Fenella Billington. **PLEASE NOTE THIS LECTURE WILL BE PRECEDED BY THE AGM AT 7.45PM** see www.gdfas.org or ring 020 8852 6248 Non-members £8.00

BLACKHEATH ART SOCIETY SPRING FESTIVAL OF ART www.blackheathart-society.org.uk or contact 020 8853 2269

Open Studios Taster Exhibition 2nd April -19th May Mulberry Tea Rooms, Charlton House, Charlton Road SE7 8RE, 020 8856 3951 open Mon - Fri. 9am-10.00pm (café 9-4) Sat. 9am -5 pm (café closed).

Open Studios 12-13th and 19-20th May from 12 - 6.00 pm. 11 venues across Lewisham, Greenwich and Bexley. Leaflets with full details are available from libraries and community centres from April.

Spring Exhibition 3rd - 31st May 10.00am-5.00 pm and one hour before evening performances at Blackheath Halls, 23 Lee Road, Blackheath, SE3 9RQ Tel 020 8318 9758 www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/blackheathhalls or see www.blackheathartsociety.org.uk or contact 020 8853 2269.

CHILDREN

Greenwich Children's Theatre

Festival Sat. 31 March - Sun 15 April.

The fifth Greenwich Children's Theatre Festival, presented as part of The Greenwich Festivals. This year we reunite with Greenwich & Lewisham Young People's Theatre, with shows and workshops at venues right across Greenwich including Greenwich Theatre, The Tramshed Woolwich, Greenwich Dance, Charlton House, Hangar Arts, the Fan Museum and more...

Sat 31st March THE OWL WHO WAS AFRAID OF THE DARK 11.00 am & 1.00 pm Ages 3 - 7

Wed 11th - Thurs 12th April HAIRY MACLARY AND FRIENDS

Fri 13th April Hardeep Singh Kohli in THE NEARLY NAKED CHEF 7.30 pm 14 +

Friday, 13 April

Mon. 16th April THERE'S A LEAK AND MEDEA

Splendid Productions team up with Kidbrooke Theatre Company at Corelli College for this dark comedy Ages 13 +**Sat 21 Apr 3.00 pm** Blackheath Halls Children's Theatre **THE SELFISH GIANT**



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COMMUNITY

The Westcombe Society

7th April – Easter Egg Hunt

21st April – Quiz

6th May – Macmillan Cancer Research

Sponsored walk in Cobham, Kent

20th May – AGM

16th June – Jubilee Tea for Senior Citizens

(Also to be the Summer Picnic)

22nd Sep – Members' Evening

28th Sep – Macmillan World's Biggest Coffee Morning

29th Sep – Nearly New Sale

17th November – Dickensian Christmas Bazaar

BLACKHEATH SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY

Fri. April 20th. A Bio-Industrial Revolution:

Standardised, Engineered Biology Dr Darren

Nesbeth University College London

BLACKHEATH BRIDGE CLUB welcomes all

players to duplicate sessions in Mycenae House Mon.

& Thurs. 7.15 pm & on Wed. at 1.15 Tel. 8851 2609

WESTCOMBE WRITERS' CIRCLE 1st. Thursday

each month, 2.30-4.30 at Mycenae House. Ring Joan

Paice on 8305 1652 or Rosemary Gill on 8858 5088

BLACKHEATH FLOWER CLUB Meets third

Friday of every month at 1.45 pm at Mycenae House

BLACKHEATH & GREENWICH WOMEN'S

INSTITUTE: First Wednesday of every month at

7.30 pm at Sunfields Methodist Church, Old Dover

Road, SE3 8SJ eileenflanagan194@btinternet.com

SECOND CHANCE CHOIR We rehearse Thursday

evenings during term time, in Blackheath. New members

welcome, contact **Margery Nzerem 0208 858**

3544 gery@nzerem.bbmax.co.uk

BLACKHEATH HALLS

Fri 27 Apr 2012, 8:00 pm Mark Steel's In Town

ENGLISH FOLK MUSIC

9.00 pm every Tuesday at the Lord Hood pub,

Creek Road; mainstream jazz every Thursday.

POETRY ON THE WATER

Fri 4 May, 7.00 pm Poet and performer Patience

Agbabi reads at **Greenwich Yacht Club**. Also

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With the support of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Greenwich Community Law Centre are running advice services in

at 187 Trafalgar Road, Greenwich, London SE10 9EQ.

Drop-in advice sessions on Tuesdays 2.00 pm - 4.00 pm,

Fridays 10.00 am - 12.00 pm.

* * *

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THEATRE & OPERA

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Wed 4th April 7.30 pm I'M AN ARISTOCRAT

GET ME OUT OF HERE! Paris 1792 ...

6th - 7th April SOUVENIR D'ANNE FRANK

Thurs 26th - Sun 29th April ONE GEORGIE

ORWELL

Tues 1st - Wed 2nd May COFFIN UP by the

Village Idiots theatre company. Superb farce

LITERARY EVENTS

Wed 18th April 8.00 pm Margaret Willes - **THE**

MAKING OF THE ENGLISH GARDENER

Blackheath Halls Literary Evening

DICKENS 2012

EVENTS IN GREENWICH LIBRARIES

Greenwich Dance Agency - artists deliver a

Dickens Dance Workshop **Wed 11th. April** 10.30

at West Greenwich Library; 2.30 at Woolwich

library **Thurs. 12th April** New Eltham Library

Dickens' London - Talk by Frances Ward Sat

14th April at 2.00 pm at the Heritage Centre

Tom-All-Along's - Author Lynn Shepherd talks

about her new book - an imagined continuation of

Bleak House Woolwich Library **Mon. 16th April**

6.00 - 7.00 pm

Tues 17th April Laurence Foster performs

Dickens Eltham Library 7.00 pm

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Sat 21st April 8.00 pm AN EVENING OF

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Alex.grant@greenwich.gov.uk

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pm, Mycenae House; 3rd. Saturday of each

month, 3.30-4.30 pm, St James Church Hall,

Kidbrooke Park Rd.

Conservative: Cllr. Geoff Brighty

Tel. 8921 5663 (Town Hall) or 8858 9731

(Home) geoffrey.brighty@greenwich.gov.uk

Cllr. Alex Wilson Tel. 07783 611607 Email:

alex.wilson@greenwich.gov.uk **Surgery:**

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FEATURES

Protecting your property

PAUL CARTER investigates

You go away for a much needed holiday; when you return, you find the locks have been changed, your property has been dumped in the front garden – and your home is full of complete strangers.

Of course, it couldn't happen to you or me, could it You sure about that?

So, what could you do?

The Government has announced a new offence to prosecute squatting in residential buildings to help address the appalling impact that squatting can have on homes, businesses and local communities.

They aim to tackle the great distress of people being unable to use their own homes – and the costly battle they can face trying to reclaim their property.

The change comes following the 'Options for dealing with squatting' consultation which took place late last year. Victims of squatting, homeless charities, students and police were among the 2,217 respondents. The consultation addressed the pros and cons of creating a new offence to tackle squatting, and the effect this would have on homelessness in the UK.

The Government plans to make the changes by amending its Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill. If passed by the Lords it is hoped the law will be introduced by this spring.

Legal professionals questioned whether the police would have the resources to enforce new offences when they appeared to be unwilling to enforce existing laws.

Not a criminal offence

At present, squatting is not a criminal offence, so unless breaking and entering can be proved, the police are often reluctant to get involved.

As a result, owners and occupiers of property usually end up following civil procedures to have squatters evicted. Under the new offence, squatters who occupy genuinely abandoned or dilapidated non-residential buildings will not be criminalised. However, these trespassers could still be prosecuted for criminal damage, burglary and other related offences.

Students and workers will be reassured by the fact they would not be prosecuted for occupying academic or office buildings to highlight their protests. The Justice Secretary Crispin Blunt has said that not criminalising squatting in non-residential buildings was a "balanced compromise".

Squatters' Action for Secure Homes

How much has changed?

“The day begins to break and soon there is the hum and noise of life. Those who have spent the nights on doorsteps and cold stones crawl off to beg; they who have slept in beds come forth to their occupations too and business is a stir. The fog of sleep rolls slowly off, and London shines awake. The streets are filled with carriages and people gaily clad. The jails are full, too, to the throat, nor have the workhouses or hospitals much room to spare.”

Master Humphrey's Clock – Charles Dickens 1840 - 1841

(SQUASH) argued that squatting is a symptom of the housing crisis, and that for many homeless and vulnerable people, it is the only way of avoiding sleeping rough. So more affordable housing is required, but the Government pointed out that owners cannot get in to renovate rundown buildings because squatters are present.

The Metropolitan Police conducted a survey of squats in the London Boroughs, and identified a total of 224 squats, although they conceded that there might be many more that they did not know about.

The Met point out that many of the known squats in the London boroughs are occupied by foreign nationals, and significant work would need to be undertaken with the communities affected, local councils and related third sector organisations, to ensure that enforcement was carried out in a proportionate and appropriate manner.

Greenwich Police confirmed they have no reported incidents of squatters moving into people's homes.

However, there have been several occasions when Greenwich Council property was left vacant, sometimes for an extended period, and squatters moved in, and had to be evicted, notably at a house in Coleraine Road, which was squatted in twice before being sold by the Council.

A criminal offence . . .

The police discourage homeowners from using force to reclaim their properties from squatters. A police spokeswoman said: "You could commit an offence if you use force to gain entry and an assault if you



CASE STUDY

Disused buildings in Anderton Park Road in Moseley are the subject of a seven-year struggle to bring them back into Birmingham city council's housing stock. It took the Council years to get a Compulsory Purchase Order – and there still remains problems There are thousands of such properties all over the country.

Photo: Nick Wilkinson/newsteam.co.uk

force the squatters out.

"Also, the squatters could make allegations against you. The best advice is to call your local police sergeant from the Safer Neighbourhoods team and discuss any plans you may have."

Not all squatters cause trouble

I have spotted plenty of vacant buildings in Greenwich and neighbouring boroughs and where there is opportunity, temptation often follows.

Obviously not all squatters cause trouble or target your homes and some people might not see a problem with homeless people living in an empty building.

However, if squatters occupied a property for ten years, they could become legal owners. But how many homeowners have to save up for more than ten years before they can buy their first home?

The Government is investing £400m in new homes over the next four years. It is hoped that this will help homeless people get off the streets – and that the new law will be passed to protect homeowners from squatters.

The fact is that getting on the property ladder is a monumental struggle for those fortunate enough not to live on the streets, and when you have a home you want to protect it.

Lewisham's Creative Squatters

In Lewisham, there are more than 17,000 people on the housing waiting list. Members of the Lewisham People Before Profit political party have taken over four of the Council's derelict properties and renovated them on their own initiative. The properties were due to be auctioned – but have had to be pulled. The Council said that it was not cost-effective to renovate them – and added that the proceeds of the sale were to have gone to renovating other houses...

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So, what DO you do?

The Greenwich Police answer the questions below:

Q: If you came back from a six month holiday and found squatters living in your house, with no sign of forced entry, then would the police arrest the squatters for burglary?

A: No, this does not amount to a burglary. In relation to property crime, burglary is where someone enters a building as a trespasser with the intention to steal, or forms that intention after entering the building as a trespasser and then steals. Dealing with squatters is a different issue and one which requires you to fit into two different groups of people before police can act. The first group is called "a displaced residential occupier." If the definition of displaced residential occupier is met, then police can assist the displaced occupier to request the squatters to leave. If the squatters refuse to leave, they commit a criminal offence and police can force entry to the premises to arrest the squatters for refusing to leave when directed by the displaced occupier.

Q: And the second group?

A: The second group of people that police can assist is called a protected intended occupier. They will have the appropriate legal paperwork to say that they were about to start residing in the premises as their main home and are protected intended occupiers. The process for police is the same as above, except that you will need paperwork to serve upon the squatters.

Q: How long would the court process take to evict squatters?

A: If you have an immediate right to possession of a property which has been taken over by a squatter (eg you are a landlord or the occupier of a property), you can apply for an interim possession order (IPO) to get your property back. You may be able to get an IPO from the courts within a few days.

You can only apply for an IPO if you are just seeking possession. You can't seek an IPO if you are making a claim for another remedy, for example, damages.

You can only use an IPO against people who are trespassers – it can't be used against former licensees, tenants or sub-tenants.

Once squatters are served with an IPO, they must leave the property within 24 hours. If they don't leave, they are committing a crime and may be arrested. It is also a crime for them to return to the property within 12 months of the date of service of the order.

To get final possession of the property, you must also make an application for possession when you apply for the IPO. A final order for possession will normally be made soon after the IPO.

The 'Options for dealing with squatting' consultation can be found on the Justice website:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/consultations/options-dealing-squatting-response.pdf>

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PLANNING APPLICATIONS

(See also <http://westcombe.blogspot.com/>)

20 COLERAINE ROAD ref 12/0267/F
Roof extensions with rear and side dormer windows, roof lights on front slope, and roof terrace at rear

73 COLERAINE ROAD ref 12/0551/F
Loft conversion with roof infill, rear dormer window and 5 roof lights

35 FOYLE ROAD ref 12/0204/F
Construct single storey rear infill extension

JOHN ROAN LOWER SCHOOL, WESTCOMBE PARK ROAD ref 12/0506/NM
Removal of condition 8 (green roofs).

20 VANBRUGH PARK ref 12/0262/F
Install vehicular and pedestrian gates, railings, and car parking access to front garden

114 WESTCOMBE HILL ref 12/0209/F
Construct single storey rear infill extension

89 HUMBER ROAD ref 11/2944/F and 11/2954/F
Retain rear decking and trellis, and changes made to front wall. Retain roof terrace & balustrade at rear

TREE WORKS

35 VANBRUGH PARK ref 12/0597/TC
Crown reduce lime tree in front garden

32 HARDY ROAD ref 12/0582/TC
Crown reduce by 30% two limes & sycamore at rear

62 HARDY ROAD ref 12/0371/TC
Fell Corsican pine and yew tree in rear garden. Lift crown of beech to 4.5m. Crown reduce by 30% two horse chestnuts in front garden and lift crown to 4.5m

19 CHARLTON ROAD ref 12/0536/TC
Crown reduce by 20% ash and London plane

Maze Hill Station Access Agreed

Network Rail has announced that it has finally allowed the gate between Seren Park and Maze Hill station to be opened.

For years, residents of Seren Park have had to take a long detour of 500 yards to get to the station that is only ten yards from their boundary, despite endless negotiations with Network Rail.

Lobbying over the five year period by local MP, Nick Raynsford and Labour councillor Alex Grant to get Network Rail and the owners of Seren Park to reach a financial agreement and open the gate has finally, after a long delay, proved successful. The purpose-built access gate is now due to be unlocked, much to the delight of residents.

Nick Raynsford said: "Once the installation of Oyster card readers at the barriers is complete, residents can look forward to using a more direct and safer route to the station."

Greenwich Masterplans

Greenwich is set to take a big share of London's prospective growth, with five of the 33 Opportunity Areas listed in the 2011 London Plan within the Borough.

Primary responsibility for determining the nature of developments within these areas lies with local councils, and Greenwich has been consulting on 'Masterplans' providing broad guidance for Woolwich, Charlton Riverside, Peninsula West and Eltham.

The combined target levels of growth set by the London Plan for these areas (including the whole of the Peninsula) are 13,000 jobs and 22,000 new homes.

Given that our transport system is already very congested, a main concern of the Westcombe Society (WS) is the neglect of this issue and of ways to prevent the planned expansion making the road congestion and over-crowding on public transport very much worse.

In the WS's view, the "Vision" section of the Plans should be seeking an actual reduction in the overall level of traffic in the Borough, and be aiming to minimise journeys generated by new developments.

Instead, the Peninsula West plan includes a proposal for a 40,000 capacity outdoor sports and music venue, and along with Charlton Riverside is set to release land around wharves by relocating wharf-related activity many miles away, generating many more HGV journeys to replace river traffic.

The WS strongly urged that the area around wharves should be kept for warehousing and industrial use, and that any new arena should be strictly contingent on additional public transport (such as the possible southern extension of the DLR).

Boris Johnson's decision to resurrect proposals for a new tunnel from Silvertown to the Peninsula came too late to be considered, but in the WS's view the main impact of an additional tunnel would be merely to generate yet more traffic.

Instead, we should be developing local bus links and aiming for an environment that is conducive to walking and cycling, rather than one that encourages private cars.

Getting stuck in!

FRANK SMITH

The latest news about the Westcombe Woodlands from The Blackheath Society is that plans are firming for activities in 2012. There a very encouraging and enthusiastic response to last year's pilot project from the local community (conducted in partnership with the Trees for Cities charity).

Nearly 100 local residents and stakeholders expressed an interest in volunteering or a wish to be kept informed about what's going on, 65 people visited the woods and over 40 people actually attended one or more of the five volunteer days.

The physical improvements made on site by the volunteers included the removal of brambles, ivy, bindweed and some litter and the creation of paths and clearings, on both the Vanbrugh Hill and the Maze Hill sides of the site. Log piles were created and some hazel tree whips and spring bulbs (wood anemone, wild daffodil, wild garlic, lily of the valley and English bluebell) have been planted – along with an oak sapling which was generously donated by one of the volunteers.

As ultimate owners of the woods, The Blackheath Society is keen to build on that enthusiasm as part of its overall strategy of implementing a woodland management plan, promoting volunteering, as well as investigating ways in which the ownership, management and funding of the woodlands could be developed to ensure a secure and sustainable future.

Activities in 2012 activities will include five volunteer days with specific aims, such as providing habitats for particular species and conducting bat and other



Action stations!

wildlife surveys – in addition to necessary maintenance work. The provisional dates are Wednesday 4th April, Saturday 19th May, Tuesday 10th July, Wednesday 15th August and Saturday 15th September. More details later!

A Friends of Westcombe Woodlands organisation is also being set up and will be launched – provisionally on the 19th May, a volunteer day. We hope that the Friends will help with ideas, activities and fund-raising events and will be able to make a financial contribution towards the regular running costs of the woods.

If you are interested in volunteering or becoming a Friend or have any questions, please contact the Blackheath Society on 8297 1937 or email westcombewoodlands@hotmail.co.uk.



Phew!

Christopher's column



Not much Fun and Games

Morris dancers promise flash-mobs during the Olympics, after commentators defending the expanded budget for the opening ceremony quipped that 'a few Morris dancers and a couple of school choirs' won't suffice.

In 2008 Chairman Seb Coe (ironically) promised Morris dancers en masse, prompting the Southbanks 5000 Morris event, where dancers of every age and gender performed to enthusiastic (occasionally disbelieving) crowds.

In the end, though, 'multiculturalism' will surely rule, and the five ring circus will not feature our folk dance and song in any recognisable form. Perhaps a little paganism would liven things up and reconnect us with the land – beltane fire, jack in the green or wickerman?

Since the Park will only open for the Games (access doubtless severely restricted),



by the time we see it in 2013, the planting will either be established or if there's a harsh winter, a lot of the perennials will vanish, leaving the structural elements (benches, hedges, and the 2,000 trees planted last year).

Planting includes 'natives' (whatever that actually means), but the themed park areas include plants from around the world which British plant hunters brought to the UK for cultivation.

The 'legacy' is a big park but a landscape which has been irrevocably altered – riverbanks moved, rivers wider & shallower than before – though the wetlands are to be restored too.

We are also promised that the historic (est 1900) Manor garden allotments will return to their original site after the Games. It may be good, but will be overshadowed by the Orbit tower, an ugly reminder of the folly that was the 2012 Games, a counterpoint to the elegance and optimism of the Festival of Britain.

Christoper Raven

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