The Olympics: Is Greenwich taking a running jump?

SARAH WINTERBOTTOM reports

A
surreal acrobatic display in May, organized by TL, launched its campaign to encourage us to “Walk to Work!” during the Olympics rather than use public transport.

“That should keep us fit,” said a local resident. “You couldn’t make it up!”
The display featured a “hop, skip and jump” stunt, as acrobats and runners made their way from London Bridge and Monument Station, inspired by Monty Python’s Ministry of Silly Walks?

No wonder the public are worried by the serious transport issues that remain unresolved as we go to press: after much high-level pressure from the WS and others, the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG) has, at last, convened a meeting of the Olympic Transport Group Forum (OTGF), as required by the March 2010 Planning Board Decision. Why has it taken so long?

But the OTGF meeting was held on 17 May, leaving stakeholders little time to respond to LOCOG’s transport planning application. The deadline for responses was 22 May, in time for a Planning Board meeting scheduled for 24 May.

Some observers see this as a clear indication that the RBG, LOCOG and the other agencies concerned aim to (may have to) force through a belt and, possibly ill thought-out, transport plan regardless of local opinion and interests. Current proposals on parking are not looking good face our report on page 7.

As reported in May’s P, there are numerous issues to be resolved; it is still not clear whose hand is on the wheel. Issues include bus and train services, and ZSL – reserved as one local comment has it “for Olympic planners.”

Meanwhile, what’s going on in the park and on the beach? If you’ve ever been to either, you have failed to notice that preparations are well under way for the impending Olympic events this summer.

So what exactly is happening?

The Westcombe Woodlands developments

There has been a great deal of volunteer activity in the Westcombe Woodlands in recent months. During the past year, the Blackheath Preservation Trust (part of the Blackheath Society) has been running a pilot project, in partnership with the environmental charity Trees for Cities.

Subsequently, HPT has been organising the volunteer activities and this has now led to the emergence of The Friends of Westcombe Woodlands group. The next volunteer day will be on Tues. 5th June.

Details of others this year follow. On Saturday 16th June all are invited to an inaugural event on the site. It provides an opportunity to visit a unique area of “wild” woodlands, to volunteer to assist in clearing, planting and other supervised activities, to learn about making bird and bat boxes – and to sign up to becoming a Friend of Westcombe Woodlands. Children are welcome but remain the responsibility of their parents/carers.

The event will run between 10.00am and 4.00pm and access will be via the cul de sac near the top of Maze Hill. Some refreshments will be on offer.

If you are interested in receiving information about future volunteer days (including exact times and points making) please email your contact details to: westcombewoodlands@hotmail.co.uk.

If you have any questions about the Friends organisation or the Westcombe Woodlands, please call Tim Barnes on 8858 1115 or Frank Smith on 8852 6390.

Meanwhile, we can rest assured...

Roger Marshall

Report surface-to-air missiles, last used in the Falklands campaign, have been set up on Blackheath to transport London 2012’s potential airborne threats this summer. Blackheath has been described by Air Vice-Marshall Smart Air DSOS ADC as a “first class site.” Oakwood Meadow has also been selected as a site for the missile defence systems. The missiles can offer protection within a five-mile radius. “Protection for whom?”

The Westcombe Society DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION – FREE!

Sat 16th June 1.00-5.00 pm, Mycenae House and Gardens.

Jubilee Tea Party for Senior Citizens in the Main Hall 2.00-4.00 pm (invitation only - these will be going out shortly).

AND, in the gardens, for all...

Punch & Judy shows, children’s races & “make your own Jubilee crown”, charity stalls, cake stall, raffle, live musical entertainment from the South London Jazz Orchestra & The Second Chance Chœur, raffle, BBQ & fancy dress competition – a prize for Best “red, white and blue” costume. Bring your own picnic or enjoy our BBQ in the lovely grounds of Mycenae House, with a drink from our Pimm’s Bar to toast Her Majesty. The licensed bar will be open in Mycenae House and we will be serving teas and coffees too. A day to remember for young and old in between.

Enquiries & help offers: pl. ring Joanne on 07709 517779 or Caroline on 8853 9948.
Thanks Gordon!

A t the Westcombe Society AGM, the members heard a very full report on the activities during the past year. Many members paid tribute to the outstanding work of Gordon Baker, our outgoing chair.

The new committee is as follows: Marilyn Little (Chair & Hon. Treasurer) Jean-Jacques Anne (Vice Chair) Jan Barnett Hon. Sec. Committee members: Gordon Baker, Barbara Henley, Joanne Lucas, Caroline Owens, Patricia Slade-Baker, with Dick Allard and Neville Grant as ex-officio members.

At the meeting, it was agreed that the Society’s next Charity of the Year would be the Woodlands Farm Trust (WFT), a close runner-up was the Greenwich Powerhouse FC. It was also agreed that, as before, smaller ad hoc donations would be given to Riding for the Disabled and Clapham in the Sky.

The meeting ended with an address by the new manager of Mycenae Community Centre, Mark Johnson Brown. Among his plans were a new lift, and a fuller programme of musical and cultural activities starting in September.

Marathon Lock-down

Despite last year’s assurances from the London Marathon organisers that roads would be reopened “faster… than ever before” to minimise disruption for residents, most roads feeding into the Standard were still shut after midnight, long after the race had passed by.

As so often happens, the leafletting informing people of road closures was print quality not kind — both non-existent: no leaflets delivered in Hamber Road, Ruthin Road, Beaconsfield Road, Streathed Road: the list goes on and on.

Indeed, even after the reopening of Vanbrugh Park and Westcombe Hill, the time local businesses that support our fund-raising activities, especially the Bazaar, and to all those who advertise in the WNS.

At last year’s AGM I announced that I had decided to stand down this year. I have been Chairman for five highly active years. It has been very much a team effort as well as great fun. I have enjoyed, and am deeply grateful for, the support and encouragement I received from the committee and club members.

The time has come for me to stand back and enjoy the Society’s welfare and activities to those with fresh ideas and vigour. I send my very best wishes to my successor, to whom I pledge my full support, and my warmest thanks to all of you.

Gordon’s end of term report

The detailed reports of this year’s AGM andbuffalocontomitoa proud record of achievement in the best traditions of the Society. Once again a small but dedicated and resourceful group of volunteers has strived hard to serve the Westcombe Park community. We have worked together successfully as a team. It would be wrong for me to single out individuals in that team for special mention: all have contributed in their own way and it is the sum total of our efforts that matters and makes a positive difference.

Our relationship with the Bazaar remains the high point of the Society’s year, the Planning Committee has been busier than ever defending the environment and character of the area we all cherish, andour relationship with the Bazaar has gone from strength to strength and continues to keep us well informed and supported.

The Society also organizes an amazing range of other activities – tea for Senior Citizens, a Summer Garden Party, Quiz Nights, Nearly New Sales, Easter Egg Hunts, Members evening, RentaSanita, coffee mornings, carol singing, sponsored walks – Each of the many activities is a proud and much-valued part of our collective community effort. That effort helps to make Westcombe Park a very good and special place in which to live and work. But we desperately need new volunteers to help us keep up the standards and momentum. I urge members present at this AGM to think seriously about joining the team and encour-

ge others to do so.

We have continued to spend a great deal of time monitoring the planning of the Greenwich Park Olymipics, working closely with our colleagues from other local societies, in dialogue with LOCOG, the Royal Borough of Greenwich, and the Royal Park Agency, and our contributions has enhanced the Society’s standing.

Our relationship with the VCA and the Mycenae House community centre remains mutually supportive, and we welcome the moves to revitalise the central and look for-

toward working more closely in the future.

We also welcome the initiatives that have been launched in the past year to set up the Friends of Park Royal, and promote footpaths in Woodlands, and to promote and protect the Royal Standard and Old Dover Road business community.

As always, we are greatly indebted to the local businesses that support our fund-raising activities, especially the Bazaar, and to all those who advertise in the WNS.

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Arts & Crafts – & More!

The Westouch and District Antiquarian Society is open to all. It campaigns for conservation in the area, and encourages interest in history. The Society organizes coach trips to places of interest. The next trip is on 26th June to the Wandele Valley – “Arts & Crafts” & More! It includes the Industrial Heritage Museum, and Little Holland House. 25 seats available. Contact: Sue Whistler, Shooters Hill and Shooters Hill area. Members: £26.00, non-Members: £30.00. Please e-mail: the_london_pikey@yahoo.com
Welcome aboard!

GEOFF GARVEY

居民 are the centre of the Free Press with empathy. At the

T
his year, the Blackheath Society is cel-

We wish to bring marketing and public rela-

T
o be...
DENISE SCOTT-McDONALD meets
Blackheath Conservatoire’s new head

T he Blackheath Conservatoire has served the arts world and our community for 130 years. Reflecting the skill of some of this country’s leading artists and instructing the public in art, music and theatre. And it has recruited a new head! Its new Executive Director is American-born Sydney Thomsett.

Sydney previously ran Web Play; a successful and ground-breaking arts education charity that combined drama and technology and worked with schools and children in England and across the world.

In the setting of the comfortable reception lounge, surrounded by old conservatoire and Victorian portraits, with both traditional and modern art work, your reporter sat down with Sydney to find out what the job was and what she hopes to achieve.

“Is it absolutely my dream job,” I’m thrilled to be here,” she said excitedly. When she finished her previous job at Web Play, which she did for about twelve years, Sydney did not expect to stay in the arts. But when she saw the advert for the position, she thought it was interesting, and decided to apply for it. She describes the job as “…a great perfect storm of everything I have done in my career and I’d never gotten to put all those things together at the same time.”

She says when she met the members and students of the Conservatoire they ‘were’ already ready for a reinvention of the business model and were talking about changing that organisation.

She says the idea of change and transformation attracted her to the job because she liked the challenges of transforming an organisation and bringing people along the journey – and she added fairly confidently that she thinks she is quite good at bringing about change too.

Of the change is already starting to happen; the internal space of the building has been redecorated by volunteers.

“Especially if you are an arts organisation you have to project creativity and a creative vibe. And I have to have that kind of buzz around me, and I really feed off that,” said Sydney, who describes the redecoration as ‘one of the big things’ being done.

She goes on: “It’s a great way to bring people together. If you’re gonna change something people need to feel that they are a part of that change, so when people are painting the walls … they feel that they are making that change happen.

Her enthusiasm is infectious. She also hopes to widen the music class offerings, which have mostly been classically based, and bring in a wider selection of music styles. Sydney is planning to start a Saturday school offering classes for all ages and skill sets in music, drama and art.

Sydney has a strong interest in early years work and hopes to develop a centre of excellence for early years learning between the years 0 - 5. She also wants the organisation to be more outward-looking and work with outside arts organisations and schools.

“I don’t ever want people to feel like they can’t walk through those doors,” she says, and encourages anyone walking by to simply pop their head through the doors to find out what is going on.

Sydney was born in New York, and raised in Los Angeles. She says she had an interesting childhood that involved moving continuously between two worlds; that of the arts and of business, a situation that she was very comfortable with and enjoyed.

She says her parents were and are very bohemian, her father is a Jazz DJ for a leading LA non-commercial radio station and was active in the civil rights movement and her mother is a visual artist, while her grandparents ran a chemical corporation.

She studied Theatre and African American Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, which she describes as an ‘odd’ combination for an American girl at that time. Sydney says that she has always been an entrepreneur at heart. When she left university she opened a very successful coffee house, called Espresso Bongo in Philadelphia. It was the first coffee shop in twenty years for the city, and she said she was inspired to do this because she could not get a decent cup of coffee while she was a student. She has one daughter and lives with her partner in Brockley.

The Conservatoire is located in a very beautiful Grade II listed red brick building on the border of the Conservators of Greenwich and Lewisham, right beside Blackheath Halls.

The Blackheath Conservatoire was originally two arts organisations: the Blackheath Conservatoire of Music and the Arts took on its current structure in 1991 with the merger of the two organisations. Some of its most notable students have included the singer Kate Bush, the singer and the actor Gary Oldman. Other notable students have included directors Douglass Perez Bliss, Eric Gill and Fatimah Tuggener, and musicians York Bowen, Harold Truscott and Sidney Torch.

Features

The Triumphs of Oriana

The historic church of St Alfege in Greenwich is set to provide the backdrop for a celebration of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee, with music and dance from the Golden Age of the first Queen Elizabeth.

On Saturday 2nd June the Elizabethan Golden Age will be brought to life in an evening of music and dance performed by singers, dancers and instrumentalists – all in period costume.

The entertainment will be linked by a Narrator, leading us through some of the highlights of Elizabeth’s reign. It is very appropriate that this event will happen in Greenwich, as Elizabeth I was born at the Palace of Placentia, now the site of the Old Royal Naval College, in September 1533.

The singers are The Friends Music chamber choir, directed by Norman Harper, with the Pastime Dancers, directed by Alison Ede, accompanied by the Friends Music Recorder Consort and actor Peter Kostas as the Narrator.

This will be a beautifully presented, unique occasion in a perfect setting.

Date: Saturday June 2nd
Start time: 7.10pm
Tickets: £12 & £10
(Concessions: Students, Equity Members, Greenwich Residents’ Cardholders)

Online tickets: www.WoGotTickets.com
Also available from www.thefriendsmusic.com
Tel: 020 8467 2985
Tickets available at the door if collected by 7pm on day of performance.

National Maritime Museum
“Titanic Remembered”
To mark the centenary of the Titanic disaster
Until September

New nursery opening - early 2011

Blackheath SE3
Childcare and development
3 months or $25 – 3 years
How differently children see things.

Things we take for granted new exciting experiences and every day occurrences are new challenges. The needs of all our students vary at every aspect of what we do through a child’s school years. It is our role as an exceptional team, our planned curriculum and our additional classes right through to our children’s play grounds and potential partnership programme.

Our new arrival nursery with an excellent reputation and three nursery rooms currently in the new Green and Elphin.

Due to local demand, Zoe are now opening a further nursery at Lee Road, Blackheath.

For more information visit our website at www.zoomarmynursery.com

Alternatively you can contact: Zoe O’Hare, Childcare Director, by phone on 0208 383 6720 or email her at zoomarmynursery@hotmail.co.uk

PHOTO: (c) Shara Henderson

The reception area has been turned into a work of art (incorporating discarded musical instruments) by artist Guillermo Monroy

Conservatoire of Music, which was founded by a local group led by William Webster in 1881, and the Blackheath School of Art, which was started in 1899.

The Conservatoire of Music and the Arts took on its current structure in 1991 with the merger of the two organisations. Some of its most notable students have included the singer Kate Bush, the singer and the actor Gary Oldman. Other notable students have included directors Douglass Perez Bliss, Eric Gill and Fatimah Tuggener, and musicians York Bowen, Harold Truscott and Sidney Torch.
FEATURES

From the silver to the diamond

Among the artists displaying their work are Westcombe Society member Frances Treanor (pictured left). Frances trained on our doorstep - at Goldsmith’s - and also at Middlesex (Hornsey), and has Open Studio events at her home at 121 Royal Hill every June and December.

Local artist妮c Amelia Johnson says: “Frances is, thank heaven, totally out-of-step with the malign influence of the Goldsmiths tendency, and does her own thing in a manner that delights and challenges the senses.”

Frances was artist-in-residence at Greenwich Royal Park in 2006, and was nominated “Woman of the Year” by the editors of the American Biographical Institute USA. Artists participating in the Westcombe area are:

Jane Jones 5c Clifton Road
Xavier White 26 Vauxburgh Park
Maggie Learmouth, Maria Silva and
Harriah Duke who lives near the Dome
which in that Silver Jubilee year of 1977
wasn’t even a glint in the planners’ eye.

Find out more during Greenwich Open
Studio, and meet the artists in their homes
and studios from 10.00am – 4.00pm on the
weekends of June 9th/10th & 16th/17th!

Welcome to The Big Buzz and Flutter!

Join us at Archbishop’s Park, Lambeth this spring and celebrate our wonderful birds, bees and butterflies!

We’ll be hosting free fun days every weekend from 19th May to 18th June, packed with activities and workshops for everyone to get involved with.

This is part of the Chelsea Fringe Events. The Chelsea Fringe Festival is a brand new initiative, entirely volunteers-run in its first year. It’s all about harnessing and spreading some of the excitement and energy that fizzes around gardens and gardening. The idea is to give people the freedom and opportunity to express themselves - through the medium of plants and gardens, to open up possibilities and to allow full participation.

Archbishop’s Park, Lambeth, London
(Very near Lambeth Palace)

Nearest Tube Station: Lambeth North
Nearest Bus Stop: Pratt Walk, Lambeth
(Praet Walk) and Lambeth (St Thomas Hospital) Hospital from 14mm to 5pm
each day. We’ll be open for lunch at 1pm-
2pm, you can bring some food and join us for a picnic in the park. We’ll also be running off each day with tea at 4pm-5pm.
The park has blue badge & disability access.

Local park

group’s Tree
Walks scheme

A parks group, have gained a £2,000 Lottery Grant from ‘Awards for All’ to develop a leaflet, website and smartphone apps to encourage visitors to get out and enjoy their walks in Maryon Wilson Park in Charlton.

The Friends of Maryon Wilson Park, a voluntary community group, encourages members of the general public to appreciate and use Maryon Wilson Park in Charlton, London.

It is said that the previous owners of the park, the Maryon-Wilson family, planted examples of every native British tree on their land. The Friends hope the general public will enjoy learning about the trees and that there will be an increase in the number of visitors to Maryon Wilson Park.

The Friends launched the Tree Walk and the websites on 26th May with guided walks led by Greenwich Council’s award winning arborist and tutor James Hedges.

Visitors to the park will be able to follow the Tree Walk with the leaflet or on their mobile phone. The phone-app has a compass to direct visitors to the next tree, but they had better keep looking up! For info: Email: anderson.aj@gmail.com
Mob: 07791 161 5417 The leaflet has been published and is available at libraries or via the Friends of the Parks: E-Mail: FriendsofMaryonPark@googlemail.com Telephone: 07999 299914

Dental Implants

The Centenary Company is holding its summer concert “An evening of words and music, classical and cabaret featuring soloists, ensembles and choirs” at 8.00 pm on Monday 18th June in the Nelson Room of the Trafalgar Tavern, Park Row. The Centenary Company is well known for inventive productions of G&S operas. Don’t miss this chance to see a showcase of the company’s multi-talented members, and help to raise funds for their staging of

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Westcombe News June 2012
What does the new mayor mean for the environment?

asks SARAH WINTERBOTTOM

The weather this Spring can only be described as unusual, even by English weather’s normal standards. We have had a warm dry March, followed by an unseasonably cold and wet April and early May. With the amount of rainfall we’ve had recently you might wonder we are still facing a drought and, worse still, fines of £1000 for using water pumps in our gardens or for washing cars.

The Thames Water graph of rainfall for the 12 months to the end of March helps to show why the hosepipe ban remains in place: only three months had more than the average rainfall, while most had far below.

Remember Spring 2011: we had three glorious months of sun and warm, but with no rain to supply water for a long time until May. In April 2011, the rainfall figure was -92%! Compare that with April 2012!

It’s not only the how much of rain that’s important, it’s the when that counts too. In Spring and Summer, it’s quickly snapped up by trees, gardens and grass, leaves and weeds. What’s left tends to run off into rivers, and from here it can be taken into reservoirs.

However, the most reliable source of water for our rivers is what comes from deep below the ground: the aquifers, formed as rainwater and snow melt on hills slowly sinks through the soil, into the limestone beneath, until it emerges from lower ground as springs. Without these, streams dry up, river levels fall, and reservoirs cannot be filled. And the least rainfall, particularly over the autumn and winter, means that the aquifers are dangerously low. Water could take two years of normal rainfall to replenish them.

According to the WWF, we can all make a contribution to help reduce our own water usage by many litres per day: avoid baths, in favour of short showers - and turn off pumps for power showers; turn off taps when brushing teeth or washing up; flash toilets less often, and fit a cistern displacement device to lessen the amount each flush uses.

* use a bowl, not a running tap, when washing fruit and vegetables, and empty it onto the garden.

Larger changes can make a difference, as well. Having a water meter fitted can bring down your own charges, and make it easier for water companies to identify leaks and mend them quickly.

Make sure that driveways and patio areas are water permeable, so garden areas stay moister and plants grow more healthily – and a water butt can collect rainwater. To stop plants from being watered thoroughly but less often – they can send their roots deeper. It’s also a help to keep the soil a little moist, by hand watering, so that when it does rain after a dry spell, the water doesn’t just run off – it will soak into dump soil much better, and help keep the soil healthier.

Water companies themselves aren’t only hoping that all we eat back: they are also updating and repairing to make their systems less leaky. But we often take our water supplies for granted. For now, and perhaps for much longer, we really need to think more carefully about how we use a valuable resource.

Westcombe News June 2012