



# Westcombe NEWS

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

## Was it worth it?

The partying is almost over as slowly we recover from the hangover following the Olympic extravaganza. As we consider the impact on our lives of the Olympics over the last several months, many of us are asking “Well, how was it for you?”

The *WN* has been asking the same question, and we report below a representative sample of the answers we got.

No one could fail to be impressed by so many aspects of the Olympics and Paralympics. We should take our hats off to all the athletes in particular - not just the medal winners, but all the athletes who worked so hard to make it to London 2012. Take Rebecca Adlington: since the age of six, she has spent over 12,000 hours in the water, and has swum some 25,000 miles – once round the world!

Marilyn Little reports: “We had a fantastic day in the Park at the Cross Country. It was a terrific venue. Getting into the Park via the Blackheath Bridge was no problem and once inside movement was very easy. We managed to get a good view of a number of the jumps and finished off in the Arena. The cross-country course was really beautiful and very imaginative.”

Marilyn added: “What a terrific venue Greenwich Park has been! All the people I spoke to on Cross Country day were blown away with the jumps, the course and the brilliant views.

“I know there have been a few wrinkles, – for example the reinstatement of the park is taking longer than we thought it would – but given the scale of the event that was to be expected.”

Local resident Anne Raynsford also enthuses in a report on page 6. But it was not just the festivities in the park: the heath was a huge attraction, too. “The screen on Blackheath and the area around the church looks great,” said Jan Barnett.

Geoff Bailey commented: “No one doubts that the Olympics were a sporting triumph. Those who saw the opening ceremony, and the equestrian events, also saw it as an aesthetic triumph. But it also needs to be emphasized what a logistic triumph it was: to organize so many events in so many locations, so smoothly, greatly redounds to the credit of LOCOG.”

And Sandra Barnes, writing from Philadelphia in the US, writes: “We’ve been watching your Olympic spectacle! I have

to say the British games have been monumentally exciting - and so well organized and presented. The pictures of London on our transmissions are simply gorgeous.”

Nothing can detract from the successes of our athletes, and their hard won Olympic medals; nor from the thousands of ordinary people who worked, paid or unpaid, to make the Olympics an event to be remembered for the rest of our lives.

However, it will be remembered by some for all the wrong reasons. Some local shopkeepers and traders reported a downturn in business.

Central London was uncannily quiet, with business and traffic down. Restaurants suffered, and hotels were reportedly slashing room prices. However, one bright spot was the South Bank, which was a milling mass of people on most days.

### Local traders

Nearer home, traders gave a mixed reaction. The wave of spectators passing through Blackheath on the way to Greenwich park had little effect on shop takings. The stall holders in Greenwich Market had particular cause for complaint because barriers erected by LOCOG on the route from Greenwich Station to the Equestrian Olympics in the park ensured that potential shoppers were prevented from entering the market.

The owner of the independent antique shop the Junk Shop, Toby Moy, tried in vain to draw custom by displaying some of his wares from behind the barrier by putting stock on the pavement outside, and was threatened with a £5,000 fine.

Fortunately, the Council intervened, and the barriers were eventually modified to allow the expected influx of customers into the market to materialize.

On Old Dover Road, Blackheath Cooks tried to celebrate with a small Olympic display, and were warned they could face a £30,000 fine. The message to local traders was “You’re not part of the national celebration, and if you aren’t a major sponsor from a Multi-national, get lost!”

While many had strong reservations about the stationing of Rapier missiles on the heath and in Oxleas Woods, at least locals did not have them placed on their roofs, as happened in Leytonstone. They probably played no part in the drop in crime reported by the police!

## Lovely even without the horses



One of the beautifully-designed cross-country jumps in Greenwich Park.

PHOTOS: Emily Norton

However, for most people the biggest issues were over parking and transport.

The surges of passenger numbers on the tube and the railways were better managed than predicted; but many drivers, defeated by traffic jams, simply gave up any attempt to get to where they needed to be.

The Zil lanes caused a lot of resentment, and traffic-light settings adjusted to favour major routes caused problems for many side-roads; but there was far less congestion than many had predicted. On the other hand, shops around the Standard received some benefit, as the two-hour maximum parking rule meant a quicker turnover of people parking and shopping.

Overall, most people agree that the games were a spectacular success.



A glimpse of the Stadium at sunset

## South London NHS in trouble

The announcement by the government that South London Healthcare NHS Trust is to be put into administration after it ran into financial trouble has caused consternation among NHS watchers.

The Health Secretary Andrew Lansley has appointed a special administrator to take over. “Past efforts have not succeeded in putting the South London Healthcare Trust on a sustainable path,” he said. Since its creation in 2009, the trust has run up deficits of more than £150m.

The Special Administrator has been named as Matthew Kershaw, who said:

“My priority is to work with staff, patients, the public and all those involved in healthcare services in the south-east London area to maintain high quality,

effective services during the running of the Unsustainable Provider Regime.

“Together we will need to think differently, and accept that change needs to happen. The status quo is not sustainable.”

This is the first time an NHS trust has been put into administration. The trust was created by merging three hospitals - the Queen Elizabeth in Woolwich, Queen Mary’s in Sidcup, and the Princess Royal in Orpington – and serves more than one million people. Last year, on a turnover of £424m it finished £69m in deficit.

Much of the deficit is as a result of an inept Private Finance Initiative: the interest is still being paid on a building that no longer exists – the vast white elephant that was Greenwich District Hospital.

Although the trust has some of the longest waiting times for operations, and longer-than-average waits in A&E, it has low infection and death rates. If it was decided to break up the trust, it would not necessarily mean the closure of all services, but one of the hospitals might go . . .

*See also our report on page 6.*

## < < < NEWS BRIEFS > > >

### Quiz Night

The Westcombe Society’s popular Quiz Night is on Saturday 20th October at 7.30 pm for an 8.00 pm start. Bookings and ‘Chippy’ suppers, if required, must be ordered in advance. A table is for no more than six people per team; individual and pair bookings are welcome and will be placed to make up teams as appropriate. Why not get your friends to make up a team – or come on your own and meet some new people!

**Ring Caroline on 8853 0948 as soon as possible, as bookings will close on 14th October – or earlier if fully booked.**

### Welcome home

to John Bennet after his illness. John has been a volunteer-deliverer of the *WN* for nearly 40 years.

### Attack in St John’s Park

A man was stabbed in the small hours of Saturday 3rd August when he and his partner were mugged in St John’s Park. They were confronted by two men at around 1.00 am on Saturday morning. The man was taken to hospital. The police are stepping up patrols in the area.

### Coffee morning

The Macmillan Coffee Morning – and lunch! – (Sept 28th) is always a very jolly and social occasion. Caroline Owens says: “Even if you are unable to help, please come along for coffee or lunch and support our fundraising event for this very worthwhile cause.”

### Open House London

750 buildings and events can be visited free, on 22/23rd September.

### Walk for Tom

Charlton Riding for the Disabled report that an amazing £5279.88 was raised this summer: part of it will go towards purchasing a new horse, a saddle and a saddle cloth.

### Not really mugged in Madrid

There has been another rash of emails, supposedly from people one knows, asserting that they have been mugged in Madrid (or Lagos, or Bangkok...), can’t pay their hotel bill, etc etc and please send money. The ‘victim’ claims – uncharacteristically – to be “freaked out”... not a turn of phrase used by most of our readers.

These are scams, and information should be sent to Action Fraud, a Government agency run by City of London Police (www.actionfraud.police.uk/scam-emails)

### Get on your bikes!

Until the Paralympic Games end on 9th Sept. SE Trains have categorized Deptford, Kidbrook, Maze Hill and Westcombe Park stations as being not only “busier than usual” but also receiving “a reduced train service.” Hmm! We are asked to try to avoid London Bridge Station at peak travel times

### The sky’s the limit

Mike Ash, 71, from Blackheath flew to legendary status when he did his “Biggles” skydive from 13,000 feet for the Freddie Farmer Foundation on July 25th.

### Book launch

In mid-August, Ottie and the Bea hosted a book-launch for Michael Buckley’s Nerd Series and Sisters Grimm - superb children’s books.

## The Westcombe Society

**In Mycenae House in September:  
Saturday 22nd Sept 7.00 - 10.00 pm –  
Members’ Evening. Invitations have gone out – if you  
didn’t get one please ring Caroline on 8853 0948.**

**Fri 28th Sep 10.00 am - 2.00 pm – Macmillan Coffee  
Morning. Please ring Caroline on 8853 0948 if you can  
make cakes/sandwiches, or can help on the day.**

**Sat. 29th Sep 2.00 - 4.00 pm – Children’s Nearly New  
Sale: Toys, clothes, equipment – Bargains galore!  
To book a stall or rail,  
please ring Joanne on 07709 571777.**



# COMMUNITY NEWS

## WESTCOMBE NEWS

**ALL EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO:**  
**Neville Grant**, The Editor  
westcombenews@yahoo.co.uk  
Tel. 0208 858 8489

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**News Editor:** Geoff Garvey

**Environment Editor:** Sarah Winterbottom

**Reporters:** Denise Scott-McDonald

### ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

**Dick Allard** All queries and comments to: 020 8858 7305  
The Planning and environment sub-committee: westpes@gmail.com  
<http://westcombe.gold.ac.uk>

### DISTRIBUTION

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*The views expressed in the Westcombe News are not necessarily those of the Westcombe Society or of the Editor.*

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

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## Proudly carrying the torch



PHOTO: Emily Norton

Marilyn Little (above, left) was one of many locals who held breakfast parties to celebrate the passing of the torch; and if you were lucky, you might have got a glass of Buck's Fizz! No fizz however for the torch bearer Ruqsana Begum who is the British Kick Boxing Champion; we suspect that JJ (right) probably drank her share!



PHOTO: Neville Grant

Justine Curry carries the torch along Stratheden Road - but Vikram Jaisingh manages to snatch a quick photograph with her as she passes!



PHOTO: Kanika Mehra Jaisingh

## ... and here comes Ella!



The Torch Relay passed by Westcombe Park on the 21st July, coming up Westcombe Hill at breakfast time. An opportunity not to be missed!

Parties were organised and the bunting came out (again). So at 8am the street was already full of revellers. The Torch arrived towards the top of the hill at around 8.15am and to everyone's excitement there was a 'Kiss' point (a change over) there. It couldn't have been arranged better. The new bearer was Ruqsana Begum the British Muay Thai Kickboxing Champion. It was an unrepeatable event and certainly put us all into the Olympic mood!

And that was not all ... A popular young resident of Westcombe Hill, Ella Statham, also carried the Olympic Flame. She carried the torch through the middle of the Equestrian Stadium and then on past the Queen's House.

Ella enjoyed huge public support and finished her run down an avenue in the Royal Naval College to a salute from the Naval Cadets – a memory she will treasure forever. She was nominated by the London FA as she has been instrumental in creating a leadership programme. She is now an LFA Ambassador because of the work she has done. Ella is a great inspiration to others in her age group.

## Silver for Gemma!

Local Judo star Gemma Gibbons won a silver medal in a brilliant display at the ExCeL in London, just over the water from her home in Charlton.

Gemma, 25, has been supported by Greenwich Starting Blocks. This is a local charity set up to help young people in Greenwich realise their sporting dreams.

She trained for years in Mycenae House with Blackheath Metro Judo Club (though this has now moved to Thomas Tallis School where the facilities are better.)

Injury in June last year threatened Gemma's participation in the Games, but though originally only ranked 42nd in the world, she won a silver medal, setting a new British record.

Royal Greenwich also boasts a British Record-holder after Zoe Smith, the weightlifter from Abbey Wood who didn't quite manage a medal, but who set the new bar at 121kg. These victories are a great boost for local athletes, and give young people impressive role models.

## 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: Trevor Allman Greenwich Green Party**  
With regards to the article and photographs of people celebrating 60 years of Elizabeth Windsor as our unelected Head-of-State in the July/August issue of the *WN*.

The whole sorry event reminded me of the quote by Irish revolutionary, James Connolly, (Commandant-General, IRA Dublin Division during the 1916 Easter Rising) :

"People mentally poisoned by adulation of royalty can never attain the spirit of self-reliant democracy for social freedom."

The facts that Blackheath has played host in the past to people like Wat Tyler, Jack Cade, the Cornish Peasants and the New Model Army during the Civil War, who have fought the tyranny of monarchy, make the whole affair even more galling, and an insult to those brave people who laid down their lives to try and remove the yoke of servitude from our shoulders. Time is long overdue to rise from your knees. *For Peace & Socialism*

**From: Cllr Alex Grant ((Lab.) Councillor for Blackheath/Westcombe!**

Your story in the July/August issue of the *WN* about the new swimming pool planned for the old Hospital site at the bottom of Vanbrugh Hill said it is not "good news" for anyone "serious about swimming". But it said nothing about how the pool will allow many more children to learn to swim safely: surely a key purpose of any public swimming pool.

I am sorry if any swimming club does not support the plan for a leisure pool which is 1m deep at each end, and 1.5m deep in the middle. But this pool has been deliberately designed to allow more inexperienced swimmers – up to 900 more children each week – to learn to swim

in safety, which I hope all clubs would welcome. By the year 2015, the council wants 90% of primary schoolchildren to have learnt to swim: the current figure is 71%.

The new pool will not just cater for children. It will be deep enough for an experienced diver to dive into safely. It certainly will not be an "advanced paddling pool" as your story put it.

It is also worth bearing in mind that the borough now has a heated 50m outdoor pool (at Hornfair Park, reopened after refurbishment in July), as well as four indoor swimming pools (at Greenwich, Thamesmead, Woolwich and Eltham). This is more pools than most other London boroughs: it seems sensible for the council to ensure that, between them, these pools cater for all swimmers – older people, competition club swimmers, divers – and also young children who need to learn to swim in safety.

**From: Gavin McGregor**

In a few weeks time I'm going to be crossing Scotland (by bike) as part of a team of volunteer educators, taking free workshops and resources to schools and youth groups – all on the theme of how their own lives can be powerful forces for social and environmental change.

It's going to be hard work, and because we're providing this service to schools for free, I'm asking people to put whatever amount they're able to towards making this project possible. My fundraising page is: <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/GavinTwoWheels>

Thank you! And if you can't help with money at this time, please send me good vibes for those moments when I don't think I can pedal up another Scottish hill...

*Peace and bicycle grease!*

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# LOCAL NEWS

## Under the Arches



The ceremonial foundation stone of the Arches shows it was built in 1927 as a municipal baths. It housed first and second class baths, slipper baths and a wash house and was updated in the 1950s to provide Russian and Turkish steam baths.

Today, the Arches Leisure Centre, remains popular and is much used by the local community. The East Greenwich Hospital redevelopment promises a replacement including a new 25m pool (with 1m depth ends, maximum depth 1.5m) and a smaller 'learners' pool.

Greenwich Council now tells us that a shallow pool is needed to provide for a bulge in the numbers of 5 to 9 years old between now and 2015. We ask what facilities this Olympic borough are proposing for those children when they are aged 10 to 14?

We therefore still question the suitability of such a shallow pool which will force serious and club swimmers to travel to Eltham or further afield should they wish to dive – or learn to dive.

We also ask what will happen to the Arches? The Arches takes its name from its decorative archways and is identified in the Council's 2010 East Greenwich Conservation Area Appraisal (2010), as a 'key unlisted building' of 'special interest', which is a 'well modelled Italianate building from the interwar period, noteworthy for its careful detailing'.

Even so listed building status, requested by the Greenwich Society, has been declined because 'some of the original internal features are missing', even though the centre's own website, talks about an "internal fabric (which) still shows signs of a varied history".

The decision seems to ignore the original Second Class Bath Hall, currently a fitness pool, which remains virtually unchanged from the date of completion.

It also underestimates the importance of the external design as a key part of the street-scape. The Arches' exterior is an unusually authentic interpretation of Roman domestic and administrative architecture and refers to the past presence of Roman buildings in the Greenwich area and en route to Dover. It also echoes the use of brick in a 'classical' style at the William building of the Old Naval College

and is typical of many public buildings in south east London at the time.

The four-square, low-rise form of the Arches is a significant landmark forming a cornerstone of the East Greenwich Conservation Area that is sympathetic to the lines and heights of Trafalgar Road and respects the character of the minor roads on its flanks.

Buildings which have been identified as positively contributing to the 'character or appearance' of a conservation area gives them some protection against demolition and should, in theory, oblige the Council to promote repair where there are signs of neglect and decay. Even so, without listed status, The Arches' future is uncertain. Listed building status gives the best protection against demolition or radical redevelopment.

With or without listed status, the Arches deserves to be preserved. The hard-working residents of 1920s Greenwich contributed to its construction through their rates yet today's Council is planning to sell it off. As a listed building it is likely to be less attractive to developers and so one can only assume that the Royal Borough of Greenwich is looking at the short-term gain, i.e. a quick sale.

Yet the exterior, and the original features of the interior, could be preserved with the building being converted for a new use. Although a listed building may pose problems for developers, the unique style of the Arches would go a long way to compensate for this. Hopefully the Arches can be saved to ensure it remains as a monument to the aspirations of a previous generation of Greenwich residents.

## Congratulations

Many congratulations to the choirs of Blackheath Girls High School, who have recorded a truly delightful anthology of songs ranging from *The Ugly Duckling* and *the Seal Song* to Palestrina's *Sicut Cervus*, Handel's *Zadok the Priest*, and Villa Lobos and Cesar Franck.

The recording was made in March this year at All Saints Church, Blackheath. The CD is a pleasure to listen to, and was very skilfully recorded (under one imagines less than ideal conditions) by Neil Luckett.



PHOTO: Frank Smith

Frank Smith says: "Many thanks to those who came along to Lasseter Place on what turned out to be a glorious summer's day in July.

"The volunteers – 11 adults and 6 children – 'reclaimed' the winding path and the clearing created last year as part of the Trees for Cities project. An area at the side of the path was also cleared in preparation for bulb-planting later in the year."

## Rain didn't stop play! Julia Marsen



The last time Britain hosted the Olympic Games was in 1948. Because everything was in short supply after the war, they were called the Austerity Games, so, here in London, the games were a bit of an improvised affair. (nothing has changed, then . . . only joking!)

So it was that the East Greenwich Community Association decided to build an improvised village made of cardboard for its 1948 Village Fete. Well known local artist and architect Mark Titman was asked to help Theo Luck and Michael Agyman with a 15m long 5m wide stage-like cardboard village located in The Pleasaunce, based on the plans of buildings in the Greenwich of 1948. The idea was to have a maze running through it for the children (and adults) to explore.

Children helped to build the cardboard houses, which included iconic buildings like the Queen's House and Naval College. Julia Marsen of *Ottie and the Bea* was also asked to help. Julia takes up the story:

"When I was asked to be involved, I was thrilled," said Julia. "Finally, I had the chance to do the big cardboard box build I'd always wanted to do, using Makedo's clips\*.

"While the plans were taking shape, the cardboard collecting began. Many thanks are owed to the traders at the Blackheath Standard for their boxes.

"The build day finally came – unfortunately so did the rain. We refused to allow rain to stop play, but we had to modify the

plan slightly. However, on Sunday we utilised two marquees to give the village cover, and thanks to lots of wonderful young helpers we did it. Once built, the village was decorated with stickers and stencils and Olympic-coloured paints. Our build was able to be brought out into the late afternoon sunshine for all to enjoy. A big thank you to all involved with the planning of the community events and of course to the friends of the East Greenwich Pleasaunce for letting us all share their wonderful secret garden."

**\*Editor's note: Makedo is a connector system that enables materials including cardboard, plastic and fabric to easily join together to form new objects or structures. When you're done playing, simply pull it apart to reuse over and over again. An ideal aid to creative play! A full range of Makedo is available at Ottie and the Bea.**

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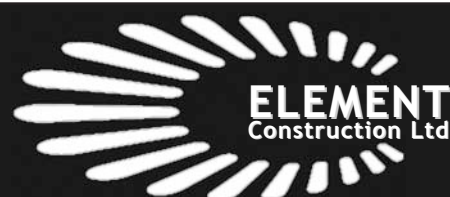
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# FEATURES

## Wonderful? Yes, but . . .

Neville Grant queries the IOC's sponsorship policies

Overall, Greenwich – the whole country – should feel extremely pleased and proud not just of our athletes (and not just the medal-winners.) We should also doff our hats to all those who have hosted, run, and participated in the Olympics, whether as professionals, organizers, sports administrators, project managers, builders, workers – or volunteers, both in that wonderful opening ceremony, and on the streets.

Not forgetting those in charge of security, especially the police and the military.

TFL came out well too, even though drivers were cursing the inconvenience of Zil Lanes and traffic-lights resetting, which meant that many local side-roads became traffic jams. There was also the oddity of having to go from Maze Hill to Charlton in order to get to London. (A special word of thanks to Theresa Ajayi who helped so many people out at Maze Hill Station).

What has left a nasty taste in the mouth, perhaps in more senses than one, is the Olympic movement's choice of sponsors.

Dow Chemicals was one; but at least we didn't have to (knowingly) purchase any of their products in the Olympic Park.

Cadbury was another: the once flag-ship of British food companies was taken over, with the help of a huge loan from a British bank, UBS, to an American company, Kraft, who subsequently closed the factory in Keynsham, moved production to Poland, and then sold it to a Korean company. Asset-stripping or a wise commercial move? You choose!

A real bugbear for many was McDonalds, which, for a relatively small amount of sponsorship money, built a vast Burger Emporium on the site of the park – the biggest in the world, though not big enough to avoid at times hour-long queues. It could certainly be seen from space – and then, as part of the deal, the company insisted that no-one else in the park could sell chips except (a generous concession!)



PHOTO: Emily Norton

for Fish 'n Chips outlets. The fact that McDonalds don't sell chips – they sell Fries – left many of us gasping with amazement. The only surprising thing is that they didn't ban potatoes within a half mile radius of the games, too. And what about crisps? After all, they are called chips in American English.

McDonalds – and Coca-Cola – at least purported to promote their more healthy lines. This did not prevent the Children's Food Campaign issuing a report called The Obesity Games. The report urges the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to ban junk food and fizzy drink brands from future sporting sponsorship, and argues that the committee missed a big chance to create a positive health legacy from the London 2012 Games.

Health professionals warn that obesity in England has tripled in the last 25 years, and it is estimated that obesity – linked with diabetes, heart disease and many other conditions – costs the NHS over £5 billion a year. Unhealthy eating, and lack of exercise, play a key role in creating the

obesity problem.

By the law of unexpected consequences, the dominance of food outlets in the park meant as a knock-on effect very difficult trading conditions for those outside ... whether restaurants or those street traders offering food. The latter in particular are waging a survival campaign against the mass-market food manufacturers, and represent delicious, local, varied and sustainable alternatives. One needs to go no further than Greenwich Market for a superb street-eating experience.

Sadly those who visited the Equestrian Olympics were steered clear of these street traders, and other stall-holders, by uncompromising barriers, steering the crowd as fast as possible out of the park and into Greenwich Station. A case of Big Business - Big Deal; Small Business - No Deal . . .

## Wonderful Olympics!

Anne Raynsford



PHOTO: Alan Barnett

The Equestrian events in our lovely park has exceeded all expectations! Such historic buildings framing such excellent horseriding made the event even more spectacular. And didn't the park look amazing in the cross country event?

Two other events made this week very special for me. First was peering into the park through the gate on Crooms Hill and seeing some members of the Equestrian teams sitting at tables, relaxing in the dappled sunlight beneath the trees, with their beautiful horses near them munching the grass. It just looked so calming and peaceful, and I felt that Greenwich had provided them with a perfect place to relax after the stresses of competition.

The day after the cross country, early in the morning, I saw two mounted policemen galloping their horses over the heath yelling with delight and joie de vivre – I think they were imagining they were about to compete in an event! The excitement of the event had got to them as well.

I missed being able to go to the park very much as I am sure so many people did, but I am so glad it provided such an exceptional venue for the Equestrian events of our Olympic Games.

## Will the park ever recover? was the question posed by those who were against the use of Greenwich Park for the Olympics. GORDON BAKER gives us an interim report

The re-opening of the Park got off to a rather shaky start for a few days. Not all of LOCOG's optimistic promises were met, but the situation is evolving and getting better day-by-day.

After the first week of Olympic events in August, I and representatives of the other local amenity societies, Councillor Dick Quibell and Royal Borough of Greenwich officials were shown by the Royal Parks Authority how well the grass has recovered in the area adjacent to the cricket pitch where the Cross-Country started. The rest of that area, which can be reached from the Heath via the gates at the top of Crooms Hill, is also in generally good nick.

However, some areas are still cordoned off, awaiting the removal of temporary structures and equipment, and the tennis court area will remain closed because it will be wanted as a practice area for horses taking part in the Paralympics. Where enclosures are dismantled, any patches caused by temporary structures will have to be screened off by the Royal Parks Authority to enable the grass to recover.

On the whole, park manager Graham Dear reported that little damage has been done by horses and spectators. He seems to have a good grasp of what will have to be done where temporary buildings and other structures are removed and to protect sensitive areas like the acid grasslands and archaeological remains.

We were told that the area under the Arena platform will probably be re-turfed

rather than re-seeded, but a decision will not be made until the ground is inspected once the platform has been removed. LOCOG sub-contractors will be closely monitored by Royal Parks. English Heritage and Natural England will also continue to have a watching brief on the restoration work.

The Flower Garden is now open, as is a dog-walking area; and the Observatory, a (somewhat constrained) cross-park route and the Bandstand field reopened on 14th August – rather later than planned.

However, some areas of the park remain closed off. We were told this is partly due to the need to protect pedestrians from the dismantling process. But there are apparently also security concerns about visitors who are not ticketed and who have not been through the screening process mingling with those who have.

Royal Parks have promised to meet us again in September, once the Paralympics are over, to review progress.

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## A surreal view of the Olympics

If you haven't already had more than enough of the Olympics, here is your chance for a surreal perspective, viewing them through the eyes of The Stephen Lawrence Gallery's artist in residence.

Terence Birch is the Gallery's artist in residence during the Equestrian Events at Greenwich Park. His residency project will it is claimed "reveal a synchronicity between the route taken by the horse trials in Greenwich Park, and the route taken by visitors around an exhibition."

A graduate from the Royal College of Art, Terence Birch "works with associations to investigate the language through which things are presented (whether horse trials or exhibitions)."

Birch has already brought into play this kind of associative pun or joke by work inspired by the building we love to call the

Gherkin in London. His work deals with the relationship between context and meaning, and is rooted in surrealistic method.

Birch is interested in the idea of perfection associated with sport and in unveiling contradiction within that. To open up the possibilities of such contradiction, he will be adopting characters and historical references associated with the event and the surroundings. These include James Thornhill, arguably Maritime Greenwich's first ever "artist in residence", whose ceiling painting adorns the Great Hall, and French educationalist and historian, Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the International Olympic Committee.

The work produced will be exhibited in the gallery from 15th September and will include an artwork for permanent display at the University.

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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: 27th Sept. Following the AGM at 2.00 pm, Antony Penrose talks on *The Boy who Bit Picasso* (Picasso visited his parents, Roland Penrose & Lee Miller) Non-members £5 on the door. [www.artsinblackheath.org.uk](http://www.artsinblackheath.org.uk) or 8318 7550

**GREENWICH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY** King William Court, the University of Greenwich **NEXT LECTURE: Monday 10th Sept. An Ideal Partnership: Lutyens and Jekyll - James Bolton.** see [www.gdfas.org](http://www.gdfas.org) or ring 020 8852 6248 Non-members £8.00

## CHILDREN

**GREENWICH THEATRE**  
Sat 1st Sept. 11.00 am **THE GOLDEN COWPAT**  
Sun 30th Sept. **SUITCASE CIRCUS**  
**WOODLANDS FARM**  
331 Shooters Hill. Tel. 0208 319 8900  
Every Thursday **Toddler Club 10am-12pm**  
**£2 per adult, children free**  
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**GREENWICH HERITAGE CENTRE**  
Artillery Square, Royal Arsenal, Woolwich SE18 4DX 020 8854 2452 **FREE** Saturday mornings: 10.30am to 12 noon. Free art and craft activities for 5 to 12 year olds. A fun way to spend a Saturday morning, with a chance to take part in loads of interesting activities. Children under the age of five must be accompanied by an adult. Please wear suitable clothes.

**ST LUKE'S PLAYERS** Want to take part in their panto *Babes in the Wood*? Ring Gwen on 8856 7373.

### *Blackheath Quakers*

at Lawn Terrace Blackheath SE3 9LL

**October 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> is Quaker Week**

an opportunity to discover who we are and what we do you are invited to join us at the following events

**Mon. 1<sup>st</sup> Oct. 7.30pm**

Welcome with refreshments followed by an informal Forum with Speakers and Questions.

**Tues. Oct 2<sup>nd</sup> 12.30 for 1pm.**

A brief experience of Quaker Meeting for Worship followed by Questions.

*Bring a sandwich - drinks provided*

**Sat. Oct 6<sup>th</sup> 7.30pm.**

**"Diary of a Nobody"**

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## COMMUNITY

### *The Westcombe Society*

**22nd Sept. – Members' Evening**

**28th Sept. – Macmillan World's Biggest Coffee Morning**

**29th Sept. – Nearly New Sale**

**20th Oct. QUIZ Night!**

**17th November – Dickensian Christmas Bazaar**

**FRIENDS OF MYCENAE GARDENS DOG SHOW!** We are holding a dog show, with a number of fun classes for you and your dog on 2nd September from 12.00 - 4.00 pm in the Gardens. All welcome.

**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.bbm.co.uk.

**GREENWICH HERITAGE CENTRE** Join the Greenwich '48 Club We want to bring our senior citizens together with our young people to talk about what the world was like and how it has changed. Contact the Greenwich Heritage Centre. Tel: 020 8854 2452 email: 48club@greenwich.gov.uk

**GREENWICH & BEXLEY COMMUNITY HOSPICE FUN DAY Sunday, September 23rd.** at Bostall Heath, Bostall Hill, Abbey Wood, London SE2 0GB 1 pm – 5 pm Free admission and parking. Rides, stalls, events arena, vintage village, BBQ, cakes, refreshments, live bands & plenty more! 020 8319 9230, email [info@gbch.org.uk](mailto:info@gbch.org.uk) or visit the website [www.communityhospice.org.uk](http://www.communityhospice.org.uk)

**BELLA HAIR BOUTIQUE & ACADEMY FREE OPEN DAY on Saturday 29th September** (from 9:30 am onwards) This exciting new hair salon at 11 Old Dover Road, London SE3 7BT invites all interested readers along to sample and enjoy Bella's high level of hair and scalp care and superb products for themselves. The day includes:- free advice on hair care & scalp analysis; free product samples; free demonstrations of balmain hair extensions, plaits etc., how to choose the best style To avoid disappointment, please book your place asap on 020 8858 1000 - first come first served!

**PERFORMANCE JAZZ in MYCENAE HOUSE** Every Monday evening. £5.00. Bar!

**ADVANCE NOTICE!** On Sunday 28th. October, The Royal Borough of Greenwich will be playing host to the fourth Run to the Beat musical half marathon.

## THEATRE & OPERA

**THE GREENWICH THEATRE** Crooms Hill, Greenwich, London SE10 8ES 020 8858 7755

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**Matinee Sat 15th 2.30 pm Sunday 16th. 6.00 pm** Tickets £20. (concs. £15.)

**FAUST** Award-winning music-fuelled adaptation of Sin, Seduction and Song Tues. 18th - Sun 23rd Sept. 7.30. Mat. Sat 2.30 Sunday 4.00 pm

**Tickets £15.00 (concs. £12.50)**

**ANTON'S UNCLES** Uncle Vanya LA-style! Tue 25th - Sat 29th September Winner of Outstanding Theatre Award! £15 (concs 12.50)

**SHERLOCK HOLMES - A Study in Fear!** Tues 2nd - Sunday 7th October starring Nicholas Briggs and Ian Sharrock Tues- Sat 7.30 pm

**Matinee Sat 2.30 pm Tickets £17.50, £15.00 (concs £12.50)**

## MUSIC

### BLACKHEATH HALLS

**Mon 17th Sep. 7.30 pm** Blackheath Goes Gospel Project!

**Sat 22nd Sep. 8.00 pm** **THE ANIMALS AND FRIENDS** The band who brought us international Number 1, House of the Rising Sun, are coming to Blackheath Halls! Featuring Mickey Gallagher and John Steel from the original line-up.

**Sun 23rd Sep. 8.00 pm** Blackheath Halls

**Orchestra: Come and Play Beethoven**

**Mon 24th Sep. 10.00 am** Music Appreciation with Matthew Taylor: Music from the Belle Epoque

**Fri 28th Sep. 7.30 pm** Ceilidh

**GREENWICH THEATRE**

**Sun 9th Sep. The WAGON BAND 7.00pm £5.00**

**Sun 30th Sep. 7.30pm** MARTIN SIMPSON £15

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**MONTHLY CHEESE AND WINE TASTING – SEPTEMBER** There will be six wines to taste with cheeses to match, chosen by Robbyn Linden at The Cheeseboard in Royal Hill. **Date: 7pm Wednesday 5th September Ticket price: £25**

**A TASTING TOUR AROUND ITALY** Carolyn Bosworth-Davies wine writer and educator will give a tour of the major regions of Italy with plenty of advice for perfect food and wine matches **Date: 7pm Tuesday 18th September Ticket: £35**

**AN INTRODUCTION TO BORDEAUX** Martin Everett, Master of Wine, will introduce six wines from Bordeaux. If you've ever wanted to learn the basics of Bordeaux: a fascinating and informative evening. **7pm Wednesday 26th £25**

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# FEATURES

## Our local health service: in need of a transfusion

**SLHT has been declared bankrupt. The Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley, has declared South London Healthcare Trust (SLHT) an ‘unsustainable provider’ and appointed a Trust Special Administrator (TSA) to determine its future. There are serious worries that in the administration process the TSA can ignore any existing strategic planning, and will create his own plan for future local healthcare, bringing in private providers and closing departments as he sees fit.**

If there is one topic which rouses the interest of the public more than another it is the state of our health service. It is therefore small wonder that there was a full attendance at Charlton House on the evening of 19 July to discuss the present situation of the South London Healthcare Trust (SLHT) which is at present in administration under Matthew Kershaw as Trust Special Administrator (TSA).

The meeting was called by John Galloway, the Co-ordinator of We Love the NHS and was supported amongst others by Dr Wendy Savage of Keep Our NHS Public, Laura Perks of Unison and Nick Raynsford MP for Greenwich & Woolwich.

### Bedeveloped by the PFI

All three speakers expressed their concern that under the Health and Social Care Act it appeared that the Government was not willing to attempt to renegotiate the terms of the Private Finance Initiative which governs the finances of our three local hospitals. Indeed it was claimed that it was not at present inclined even to consider properly consulting the public on any alternatives which might be available.

All speakers and commentators from the floor were at pains to make clear that, in their view, the quality of the service and care in all our hospitals in the SLHT (particularly Queen Elizabeth Woolwich, Queen Mary’s Sidcup and Princess Royal Bromley) could not be criticised.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the staff it was of the highest standard. The failure lay in the impossible task of

### DAVID ALEXANDER reports

servicing the debt imposed on the SLHT by the badly drafted PFI contracts entered into.

It was also made clear that the time scale imposed on the Administrator was far too short. The TSA was obliged to publish his recommendations by October with final decisions to be taken by the Secretary of State for Health in February 2013. It was felt that this timescale was far too short for full consultation with staff and public.

### The four threats

To impose decisions in so short a time threatens our three hospitals in at least four ways – privatization, closures, mergers or the selling off of services, to the detriment of the excellent services at present offered and the morale of the staff.

It was suggested that the views of the speakers were not made from a party political standpoint (all parties had to share the blame for the current state of affairs) and any initiatives in opposition to the present proposals should be made in a spirit of co-operation by all interests concerned.

Local MP Nick Raynsford promised to continue his strong representations to the TSA and to the Secretary of State for Health, particularly to press him to agree to the renegotiation of the PFI contracts.

*The obvious anxieties of the public could best be expressed by supporting the Greenwich Peoples’ NHS Charter being promoted by the We Love the NHS campaign ([www.ilovethenhs.org.uk](http://www.ilovethenhs.org.uk)) or by joining the demonstration to be held on Saturday 15 September at 1.00 pm in General Gordon Square, Woolwich.*

**We Love the NHS campaign  
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## Lessons from Auschwitz

a personal memoir by **FRANKIE MAYO**

Recently a group of students from south London were taken to Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland for a long day trip, organised by the Holocaust Education Trust. Every year this trust takes two students from a number of schools in different areas from all over the country, and this was South London’s chance, and along with a friend I was one of the two from Thomas Tallis School.

The whole course was really well organised, consisting of 2 seminars, one before and one after the visit. On the day we were accompanied by Rabbi Barry Marcus, the man who pioneered the idea of these visits, and has been to this site many times as part of the ongoing education programme. A brilliant and engaging public speaker, he shepherded us through the tours, along with our exceptional guides.

We were taken to two sites. Auschwitz 1 is the transformed barracks and consists of tall prison buildings. It was here we visited the rooms of the collections, the piles of suitcases with people’s names on them, and shoes behind glass walls. and. most upsetting of all, the room of human hair; this great volume of hair is shocking and overwhelming as your eyes trace over the individual lighter tufts that stand out from the rest, and where it was cut off from the person’s head clearly visible.

Auschwitz-Birkenau is the second site, this was not transformed but a purpose built death camp, into which runs the railroad. Specifically built near the town of Oświęcim – a town whose population was over 50% Jewish – it is far larger than the barracks at Auschwitz 1. It is industrially large, it stretches on and on. The housing cells stretched on along the rail and are cordoned off with large barbed-wire fences.

Standing in the tower at the entrance one can see everything, the buildings, the wire, the place where the victims would get off the trains in the centre, the gas chambers and the sites of the crematoria.

It was worse than I’d expected: I didn’t think we’d stand in the gas chamber, nor in the cramped dormitories, nor the toilets or the guard chamber. We were immersed in the activities of the death camp. Yet it is impossible to say one knows how it must have felt. How does it feel to have your humanity taken away, to have your reasons for living removed and hope destroyed, to

be punished for being different?

The survival stories are desperately important; they remove all arguments denying the Holocaust and give us a much clearer understanding of the horror.

However it is equally important not to forget the millions of individuals, just like you and me and our families and friends, that died in Nazi camps: Jews, Gypsies, Jehovah witnesses, Christians, Soviet prisoners, homosexuals, intellectuals, many Poles, Hungarians, and disabled persons.

Remembering those involved as individuals, that was the lesson to be learned: statistics – while important – take away from the individuality of those involved. So we need to remember the victims, bystanders, and perpetrators as individuals.

One of the most emotional rooms for me was a collection of the photographs the victims had brought with them and buried or had confiscated. These all were smiling families; on their wedding days, or birthdays, or days out. These were the memories that these people had brought with them to a terrible fate, the memories that made them who they were, and the most important ones that had been carried with them. I remember many of the faces in those treasured photographs and hope I never forget.

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# ENVIRONMENT



Planning applications can be viewed in the library, or at the Woolwich Library on the lower ground floor of the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington St. They may also be viewed on [www.greenwich.gov.uk/planning](http://www.greenwich.gov.uk/planning)

## Heathland flora in Greenwich Park

Members of the environment committee have been seen peering intently at the grass in Greenwich Park.

No, they were not looking for a lost contact lens! They were learning about dry heath and acid grassland flora, and how to identify buck's horn plantain (tiny rosettes of narrow leaves) and sheep's sorrel (easy to spot, as masses of tiny flower stems create russet-coloured patches). However, harder to find are speedwell and bedstraw, which are also typical of acid grassland.

Conserving the few remaining areas of heath and acid grassland is a top priority for wildlife conservation nationally. A distinctive community of insects and spiders enjoy our acid grasslands. Collectively these are known as the 'Thames Terrace Invertebrates' and are rather special. They

include many solitary bees and wasps.

Conserving the acid-loving flora is also important because without their fine network of roots the soil could wash away exposing millions of little pebbles. Not a comfortable picnic prospect!

In preparation for the Cross Country Event, the areas of acid grassland were helpfully mapped by LOCOG.

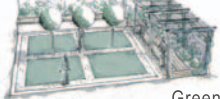
The soil of acid grassland is typically low in nutrients, so the grasses and flowers grow slowly and remain small. Bare patches were visible in the Park even before the Olympics, so now it will be important to check to what extent these areas have suffered from the thousands of spectators' feet that have trodden over them.

The Westcombe Society will welcome any restorative work that may be needed. This might include not mowing the grass quite so low, or as frequently, to give the plants a chance to re-establish themselves.

There are also specialist firms that provide seeds of acid grassland plants. Having seen the wonderful display of poppies, daisies and cornflowers along the bunds of the Heath, it is clear that dramatic changes can be achieved from a few seeds.

(Download a map from [http://www.royalparks.org.uk/\\_documents/main/docs/park\\_maps/greenwich-park\\_english\\_map.pdf](http://www.royalparks.org.uk/_documents/main/docs/park_maps/greenwich-park_english_map.pdf).)

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## It's a frog's life!

The Royal Parks and national wildlife charity, Froglife, have partnered to bring dragonflies, toads, frogs, newts and other wildlife back to an important lake in Greenwich Park. The project was made possible with contributions from Froglife and The Friends of Greenwich Park and a £50,000 grant from Biffa Award.

The project aims to improve standing water habitats and enhance biodiversity in Greenwich Park and to rejuvenate the Flower Garden Lake.

The Flower Garden Lake dates back to the 17th century, but the high numbers of wildfowl and the sterile nature of the concrete pond liner have led to an increase in the nutrient levels and algae in the water. It is hoped that new floating rafts supporting a rich variety of aquatic plants in the pond, will encourage wildlife back to the area.

Graham Dear, Greenwich Park Manager, said: "The project provides an exciting opportunity to significantly

increase biodiversity within the park in addition to creating a special place for visitors, local residents and children to enjoy and learn about nature."

A new wildlife pond has also been created in the nearby deer park, receiving clean water run-off from a nearby building. Park staff and volunteers helped plant the pond with aquatic plants.

During the planting work three species of dragonfly were seen breeding in the pond and laying eggs on plants that had only been in the pond for a few minutes!

Alex Draper, Conservation Officer at Froglife, said: "We are creating over five hundred square metres of new pond planting around the Flower Garden Lake, with a colourful range of aquatic plants such as Branched Bur-Reed, Flowering Rush and Yellow Fringed Lily. These will provide homes for zooplankton, invertebrates as well as amphibians."

## Watchout! There's a fixed penalty about!

Greenwich Park has announced that fixed penalty notices (FPNs) now apply to 3 additional offences in the park – unauthorised cycling, littering and dog fouling. There is still some debate, however, about how the regulations are to be implemented. For example, will one or two warnings be issued first? Will the fines be proportionate to the offence?

There are cyclists who seem surprised that they are not allowed to cycle on the paths, some of which are quite wide.

However, as one local resident said, "There are a lot of elderly people, as well as children and mothers with babies who use the parks. The last thing they expect is a cyclist to come flying down the path and having to move out of way in time."

PHOTO: Emily Norton



A view of the Tall Ships, a fleet of which visited Greenwich this summer. A number of locals enjoyed a trip up and down the river on some of them.

In case you wondered, no, they didn't hit the cable cars!

PHOTO: Roger Marshall



The bunds – those small banks lining the heath – have at last come into their own this year. However, the flowers on the bund are annuals, and must be resown each year. Sadly, local observers doubt if the London Borough of Lewisham intends to reseed this bund in future years. It's more likely that the display of wild flowers will disappear in a year or so as the bunds compact.

## South Eastern Trains Update

The Westcombe Society has learnt that the long-term plan is that all Greenwich Line trains will go to Cannon Street. No rush hour service to Charing Cross will be provided.

If you wish to give your response to this proposal, the South Eastern Franchise Consultation runs until 13th September (<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/dft-2012-29/>). Residents are encouraged to respond. For more information contact [westpes@gmail.com](mailto:westpes@gmail.com) or 020 8858 7305 – especially if you are interested in a rail-users group should one be formed.

### PLANNING APPLICATIONS

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

38 HARDY ROAD ref 12/1770/F

Construct single storey rear extension loft

conversion with window & three roof lights

34 DINSDALE ROAD ref 12/1665/F

2 rear dormer windows & two roof lights

22 COLERAINE ROAD ref 12/1558/F

Single storey rear and side infill extension

GARAGES TO REAR OF FOYLE ROAD

Appeal: File Reference 11/3003/F &

Associated Ref. 11/3004/C.

Comments should be submitted to

Catherine Evans of the Planning

Inspectorate at 3/19, Temple Quay House,

2, The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS 1 6

PN by 12 September.

## Update on John Roan Redevelopment

Demolition is now underway at the Westcombe Park Road site of John Roan School. Residents are warned that a concrete crusher will be on site for about three weeks.

We have been assured that noise will be kept to within specified limits, and there will be no pile driving.

An electricity sub-station is to be installed during September, but no building work is scheduled on the Maze Hill site until after Christmas. The Westcombe Society and resident representatives meet regularly with the school and developers. For more information contact [westpes@gmail.com](mailto:westpes@gmail.com) or 020 8853 2756

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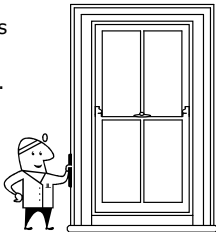


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