



Westcombe NEWS

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

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

The Paralympics: ‘Yes, we can!’

By *WN* reporter

In September's *WN*, we may have given the impression that the Olympics were all over, and that was that – all over as well as the shouting.

If so we have to tender apologies to our readers, because as the TV ads indicated, the Olympics were just a warm-up for the Paralympics which ended on September 9th.

What an extraordinary display of courage, talent and determination by these Paralympic athletes, clamouring for recognition, not of their disability, but of their ability.

Inspiring

There are so many moving – inspiring – stories of athletes who refused to allow the word “can’t” into their lexicon: people like Natasha Baker, who won two gold medals in Equestrian Individual Grade II events, Sarah and Barney Storey who won gold medals in cycling events, Richard Whitehead who won a gold in the Men’s 200 metre event. ... the list goes on and on.

Winners or losers, these athletes from all over the world elicited waves of admiration, and no one who attended a Paralympic event, whether in the Olympic Park, Weymouth, Woolwich Barracks, Greenwich Park or Eton Dorney, could fail to be moved, and inspired at what was truly a triumph of the human spirit; an inspiration to us all.

Nor, at this time, when our journalists have come under fire, should we forget the outstanding coverage by our broadcast media, so easy to take for granted. It is interesting to note that Channel 4 devoted over 150 hours of broadcasts to the Paralympics, compared with four hours, put on by NBC in the United States....

The Paralympics are a great cause for celebration at so many different levels: of course, as outstanding sporting events; but also as witness to the contribution that people with disabilities make to our society, not least by their example.

The event also serves to remind us of how far we still have to go, in our enlightened society, to make proper provision for people who are disabled.

It is often pointed out that all of us are disabled at least three times in our lives – as babies, when we are totally dependent on others; when we are ill; and in old age, when infirmities of various kinds come to afflict us all.

Issues

How far, then, do we still need to go? Just to take the Paralympics as a case-study, there is general agreement that provision for disabled spectators and athletes, on site, were generally extremely good, whether by the installation of lifts, or buggies (which proliferated in some venues); and also by special seating arrangements.

However, Caroline Owens warned: “Don't bother to ask about accessibility on the 2012 website as the responses, when and if I received them, only contained misinformation!” (including a route up One Tree Hill for disabled people!)

Outside the sports venues the picture was not as rosy, as one of the letters on page 2 of this issue reminds us. Lawrence Smith reported that the “overflow” disabled parking area at North Greenwich Station was closed (and remains closed as we go to print), and the disabled bays in the station car park are often full. Drop off and pick up in the car park is prohibited, which makes life difficult for everyone.

More generally, stories still circulate of tube stations with no lifts, of stations with lethal gaps between the train and platform; of trains that offer no easy access for wheel-chair users, of bus stops inconveniently closed. . . . TfL to give some credit, did make provision for ramps at some tube stations: but as we go to press no guarantee has been offered that these will continue in use. Meanwhile, of the 279 tube stations in London, only 67 provide disabled access.

We still have some way to go: the *WN* would love to invite those with their own stories – positive and negative – about disabled provision, particularly on our public transport, to use our columns to draw attention to such issues. So, over to you!

Let the stories you have to tell act as an important legacy of the wonderful games that we enjoyed this September.

Elegance & flair in Greenwich



PHOTO: Neville Grant

Sophie Wells produced an international personal best on her way to her first silver medal in the Individual Championship test Grade IV (Dressage). Sophie later won a second silver – and helped Great Britain to win a gold medal in the team event.

Protecting our Health Service

The government’s plans to privatise and fragment our NHS are starting to take shape across England, and the pressure is on the new Health Minister, Jeremy Hunt, to deliver the radical changes that Andrew Lansley has been foisting on the public.

Local doctors are now getting together to form CCGs, or “Clinical Commissioning Groups”. These groups will have to make big decisions about how NHS money is spent locally, and what health services will be available to you and your family.

CCGs will be under pressure from the government to implement plans which will inevitably cut services – and hand out contracts to private companies. However, NHS watchers point out that CCGs also have a legal obligation to pay attention to local patients – and many doctors on the CCGs were against the plans from the start.

Those who care about protecting the NHS are being asked to sign up to a petition to our local CCG now. Go to the address in the box! The last thing most doctors want is to cut services and carve up our NHS for the profit of the private

sector. This is an opportunity to get in early, while CCGs are still being formed, to give doctors an alternative roadmap, including watertight wording to write into their constitutions – one based on sound legal advice and the interests of everyday patients, not private companies.

The government and the private health industry probably will not like this initiative at all, but there’s little

they can do to stop people power.

Meanwhile, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) is asking for views on its strategy for 2013-2016. Published on 6th Sept., the national regulator for health and adult social care sets out proposals for what it thinks it should focus on and what the public and others can expect from it.

CQC’s new Chief Executive David Behan said: “For CQC, being successful means that more health and care services meet quality and safety standards – and improve quickly if they don’t.

“I want people to know that together with Health-watch as the consumer champion we will listen to them and use their experiences to help inform the judgements we make about services.”

The consultation runs until 6 December. Full details of the proposals and how to respond are on CQC’s web site at www.cqc.org.uk/thenextphase

<http://www.38degrees.org.uk/page/m/74c0553a/2d45f847/5d83d00d/4672136b/910719689/VEsH/>

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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 will be 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.

The Blackheath Society at 75

The Blackheath Society is holding a Supper in Blackheath Halls at 7.00 pm on Friday 30th November to celebrate their 75th anniversary. The Tallis Choir will be performing. Carriages at 10.00 pm. Tickets are £30 or £27.50 if a table for ten is booked.

ATM thieves in Blackheath Village

There have been several incidents of theft at ATM machines often involving “distraction” strategies. You have been warned!

Only Seven Weeks to Christmas Bazaar!

The very popular Westcombe Society’s Dickensian Christmas Bazaar is to be held on the 17th November this year at Blackheath High School in Vanbrugh Park SE3. Over 50 stalls, free entertainment for the children, and a visit from Father Christmas! If you have any unwanted gifts, toiletries or bottles for the Society stalls, please ring Marilyn Little for delivery or collection on 020 8853 1312.

Pubs change names

The Greenwich Tavern, located near St Mary’s Gate, has been renamed *The Gold and Saddle*. *The Pilot* on the Greenwich Peninsula has commemorated the Paralympics with its new name *The Wheelchair Basketballer*.

Attack in St Johns Park

Two teenagers have been charged after a married couple aged 27, were robbed in St. John’s Park on August 3rd, as reported in the last issue of the *WN*. The husband was taken to hospital and treated for a stab wound in the leg. The youths – aged 16 and 17 – appeared at Bexley magistrates court accused of robbery and were remanded in custody. A third youth was bailed to report to police in October.

Drug seizures

Cannabis with a street value of more than £600,000 was seized across Greenwich on the morning of September 20th, when officers took part in “Operation Hawk” set up to tackle drug-related crime. Fifteen people were charged. The Home Office estimates that between a third and a half of acquisitive crime is committed to fund illegal substances.

The Crimestoppers number is 0800 555 111, and may be used anonymously.

The Westcombe Society

QUIZ NIGHT

Our next Quiz Night is on Saturday 20th October at 7.30 pm for an 8.00 pm start in Mycenae House.

Bookings and ‘Chippy’ suppers, if required, must be ordered in advance.

Please ring Caroline on 8853 0948. Bookings close on 14th October - or earlier if fully booked!

DICKENSIAN CHRISTMAS BAZAAR
Sat 17th November. To book a stall, please ring Marilyn Little on 8853 1312.

LOCAL NEWS

Blackheath - a Builder's Paradise?

The coalition Government's announcement that they were to consult on a proposed three year relaxation in planning legislation has already caused controversy.

In an effort designed to boost the economy, under the new 'Permitted Development Rights', shops, offices and residential properties will be allowed to build larger extensions without the need for planning permission.

Equally, developers who, according to David Cameron are held back by the "many obligations" on them to provide affordable housing will be able to exempt themselves if they can prove that this makes a site commercially viable.

In addition, first time buyers would be helped onto the housing ladder with an extension of the Government's FirstBuy scheme which offers those without a deposit an equity loan of up to 20% of the purchase price. Communities Minister Eric Pickles also points out that local shops and services would also benefit from a boost to the flagging construction industry.

Figures released by the Local Government Association which show that there are some 400,000 prospective homes with planning permission which have not

yet been built, seem to suggest that is not simply a question of local planning departments holding up progress due to the current planning laws.

Labour believes that the focus of the new initiative is misplaced and that ministers are simply "kidding themselves." Party leader, Ed Milliband derided the plans: "a one-year holiday from the current rules on planning for a conservatory extension of up to eight metres into a garden... does not represent an economic plan."

Others have pointed out that a relaxation of planning rules on home extensions could breed bitter disputes between neighbours. Two councils – Tory-run Richmond and Sutton – have already indicated they have no intention of relaxing planning regulations, and observers suggest that other councils are likely to follow suit.

When asked what this proposed relaxation would mean for Westcombe Park, Dick Allard, chairman of the Westcombe Society's Planning and Environment Subcommittee is clear: "All conservation areas have been exempted from this proposal, so as such, Westcombe Park and much of its environs are not affected."

Sarah Winterbottom reports

Italian job in Westcombe Park



WN Reporter

The firemen confer: "How do we get the driver out of the cab, and the truck out from under the tree?"

PHOTO: Alex Wilson

A lorry driver was trapped in his cab when his huge vehicle hit the curb on a roundabout, tilted 20 degrees on two axles, and became wedged under a 400-year-old oak tree in Beaconsfield Close.

It happened at lunchtime on September 3rd. In a scene reminiscent of the film *The Italian Job*, the lorry rested at a dangerous angle, and diesel slowly seeped across the road, presenting a serious fire hazard.

It took 15 firemen over an hour to rescue the man, and winch the lorry to safety. The whole incident was witnessed by local Councillor Alex Wilson, who commented: "It was Italian-jobesque!"

This tree has a history: the Westcombe

Society (led by Anna Townsend) campaigned hard to save the old oak tree in Beaconsfield Close, and protested strongly when the Council threatened to fell it "for health and safety reasons."

The Highways Department stated that because one not particularly big branch fell, it was dying and unsafe, and without consultation brought in their street trees team to remove it.

Caroline Owens comments: "The matter was resolved by Anna who negotiated a moderate reduction in overall size; the tree has flourished ever since. I hope the tree doesn't get blamed for the latest mishap rather than the delivery man."

Lenny Thorne

1934 - 2012 JO BURNAND

A funeral service is to be held for Lenny Thorne, who for more than sixty years gave donkey rides on Blackheath.

The humanist service will take place on Monday 1st October at midday outside Greenwich Park's main southern gate where Lenny gave joy to so many generations of children. The hearse will then proceed to Charlton Park cemetery.

Two of Lenny's oldest donkeys, Apache and Zimbo, will offer rides to younger members of the family prior to the service as a final tribute.

The great grandfather died in July, aged 78, in QEH, Woolwich. Mr Thorne's daughter, Mrs Lorayne Ahmet, was keen to hold the service where Lenny had worked since the early 60s, but she was unable to get permission until the Olympics and Paralympics had ended.

Mr Thorne, who in his forties was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy, was a skilled horse trainer whose racehorse *Imco Double* was ridden by Lester Piggott and finished second in a photo finish at Lingfield Racecourse.

Mrs Ahmet, said: "He was the most inspiring and wonderful man. Donkeys were his passion but he also had a very close affinity with horses. Last year we were at an event where a show-jumping horse bolted and he managed to stop it, even though he was on his mobility."

Grace Flowers, 7, who with her mother Helen would travel up from Dartford at weekends, explained, "That's why we came here. To feed them carrots. On their backs I could see everything."

Mehmet Joe, who runs Rossi's ice cream van and worked nearby, says he last saw Lenny outside the park in mid-May writing songs in his van while talking to passers-by and shouting instructions to a younger often partially disabled crew he employed in his later years to look after the donkeys.



PHOTO: Denise Scott-McDonald

The family are hoping to start giving the donkey rides again in October.

Mrs Ahmet explained: "We really want to keep the rides going for the children and would be very grateful if people could continue to support us by coming down."

Mr Thorne's family also hopes to set up a memorial fund to help keep the donkey rides up and running.

Lenny's donkeys made news back in 2003 when the *Daily Star* reported that nine had been stolen and eaten by East African asylum seekers. The Police were unable to substantiate these claims and the *Guardian* launched a campaign calling on the paper to retract its accusation.

For more information please contact Lorayne Ahmet at lorayne.acquillas@hotmail.co.uk

In May 2008 the W/N printed an interview Lenny gave to Denise Scott-McDonald, at the end of which he sang this joyful and poignant song, which he said he wanted sung at his funeral:

On the 6-97 the old donkey man is going to heaven,
He's not coming back, cause he's got the sack,
On the 6-97 on the way to heaven,
He's not coming back no more, he's not coming back to Earth,
Because it isn't worth the time and space, to live there anymore
So he's going out to space, 'cause he's fed up with the human race
He's not coming back no more.
He's going to the moon where there's plenty of room
And going to the sun where he can't walk around,
And he's going to Mars to give donkey rides to the stars
On the 6-97 on the way to heaven.

Computers stolen

Geoff Garvey

The police report that a massive haul of computers has been stolen from John Roan School's Maze Hill building.

The equipment comprised 65 brand new HP laptops, 65 iPads and seven Samsung Netbooks worth £65,000 and they were taken on the evening of Thurs. August 16th.

Even though it was during the school's summer holiday, the building was open for a parents' event, and computer engineers were also in the building.

The stolen iPads were still in their boxes and all the items had a 'Capita' tag on them (see the image, right.)

Officer in the case Karl Buckwell said: "The items stolen amount to a significant value and are likely to be sold either via the Internet, pawn shops or to people who

are unaware that they are buying stolen goods. If you saw or heard anything suspicious on the day of the burglary please contact us.

"Perhaps you may have come across someone who has recently been trying to sell a large number of electrical items at



significantly reduced prices and have become suspicious. All items have a distinctive 'capita' tag which cannot be removed."

Anyone with information should ring DC Buckwell of the burglary squad at Plumstead Police Station on 0208 284 9449

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FEATURES

The Geese of Blackheath

JO BURNAND

Ever since Chesley B. Sullenberger III successfully ditched US Airways Flight 1549 on the Hudson river following a run-in with a skein of Canada geese, many have sprung to the defence of these beautiful birds.

Canada geese are known for their fidelity, and their concern for their offspring, and are adept at adapting to their environment. In days gone by, they would leave their homes in North America and fly south for the winter, returning again in early Spring to the same nesting grounds.

Many were ensnared along the way or lost their bearings, and the learned impulse to migrate faded away. So it is that Canada geese have flourished on Blackheath.

But how safe should they feel? As far back as the Protection of Birds Act in 1954 Canada geese were considered fair game in open season: the birds have always been considered non-native after arriving here among the entourage of Charles II in 1665. They have become the subject of reviews by DEFRA, which under EU legislation is allowed to derogate from rules protecting all wild birds in the interests of health and safety, destruction to crops, air safety or damage to the local ecosystem.

Some local councils concerned about water quality have had geese in their sights, and the process by which Natural England awards general licences to control numbers has become increasingly passive.

Prior to DEFRA's 2003 review into the intrusion of wild species, Councils had to apply in writing for a general licence specifying concerns about geese numbers. However, it is now possible to download a licence from Natural England's website.

While DEFRA cites "containment" as the preferred course of action, the licence now stipulates that "the user must be satisfied that legal (including non-lethal) methods of resolving the problem are ineffective or impracticable."

Wandsworth Council attracted little



attention when in 1992 it successfully contained numbers by identifying nest sites and pricking eggs. However, when I asked the Windermere Geese Management Group the reasons for attempts to cull the birds, I was referred to Natural England's web site.

Those who favour Boris Island as a possible airport should note that following Captain Sullenberger's heroic landing, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg had thousands of the birds culled. But they got the wrong birds: scientists at the Smithsonian Institute discovered that feathers from the downed aeroplane belonged to migratory Canada geese and not the resident variety. Sadly, the majority of those culled probably were of the resident variety...

In the UK, "Canada" geese are by and large resident Greylag geese native to the UK; they have increased in far greater numbers than Canada geese, and they have adapted well to the urban environment.

Standing on Blackheath watching where the birds were coming from, I reckoned that some were nesting in the Greenwich Peninsula Ecology Park.

While they pose no immediate threat, these grounds are just across the water from London City Airport. The Civil Aviation Authority actively discourages any birds from nesting or feeding near airports, but it has proved difficult to prevent them from crossing the paths of aircraft.

In 2003 the CAA made it mandatory for cabin crews to report bird-strikes, and in 2010 called for crews to report the specific species involved. Suffice to say the tactic used by Canada geese of flying in formation, usually in skeins of between 6 and 12, does not bode well for them.

It remains to be seen what increasing urban sprawl and growing airport capacity especially in the South East holds in store for them. As airlines can sue an airport something in the range of \$7.5m for irresponsible bird management, things don't seem to be looking good for Canada geese.

PHOTO:
Jo Burnand

A classroom volunteer

LAURA FINCH describes what it was like to be an American volunteer in a Greenwich school

My hope when coming to London was to spend some of my time as I do in the U.S. volunteering at my children's school. I thought this would be a great way to give back to our community, an avenue to meet adults and see first-hand, what my children were learning.

My husband's research brought us to London for 6 months on a visa that allowed our children to attend school in the UK. We come from Richmond, Virginia, a medium size city (1 million) two hours south of Washington DC.

Parents in our area of Virginia are very involved in school. We have about forty regular weekly volunteers in the classrooms (570 students), and most parents volunteer to help with other activities or for fundraising events throughout the year. Our parent-teacher association reached 100% membership this year.

The CRB

I did not realize that in the UK this would be an unusual concept and one in which the government plays a part. A background check (CRB) is required for every adult who works with children in schools. While enrolling the children, I was not encouraged to complete the CRB form, and was told it takes 6-8 weeks. But at a parent-teacher meeting two weeks later I spoke with my son's teacher whose eyes lit up at the prospect of help.

About three weeks later, CRB in hand, I arrived for my first volunteer effort. I am not sure if currently there are any other parent classroom volunteers. Quite a few parents have CRBs and volunteer for class trips. CRBs are free of charge for volunteers. I haven't been able to determine if the school incurs a cost, but individuals pay around £30 - £40 when they pay for CRBs. The paperwork is simple and they are only concerned about any criminal activity that might make you dangerous to children — not your latest parking ticket.

Very appreciative

I went in regularly to each son's class on Monday and Wednesday to listen to children read, help children with projects, or do whatever the teacher needed at the moment. She was always available. I now realize that I was the one benefiting from this. I got to know the children, who were darling, excited to see me and so good, and my sons were happy to have me nearby. The teachers were very appreciative of an extra pair of hands.

The opportunity to be a fly on the wall in my son's classes for a couple hours made me much more secure about their well-being. I was so happy that our school welcomed me into the classroom.

Good schooling is vitally important to all the families I have met in the UK. School assignments, at least in London are emotionally fraught. I met a woman in her 30s who had complete panic in her eyes when she described her own depressing state school experience. Her children are 3 and 1 and she admits she is already frantic about school even though she lives by an outstanding state school.

After what seemed a poor school assignment, my new Canadian friend was told to enter her children in private school: "It's just the way it's done here." Then I met a parent who, with disdain in his eyes, said independent schools and their elitism are the cause of all British problems.

I met a scared little boy, new to my son's class, whose sad dark eyes needed a friendly face and a little extra attention. The next week when I saw him at school he recognized me and I saw his smile for the first time.

Parent involvement

Parent involvement at school may be a partial solution to some of the school placement anxiety, as well as concerns about education attainment gaps and discrepancies in opportunities for social mobility.

Few people know it but there is a little gem of a school in Kidbrooke containing about 170 bright eyed, well-behaved students and some fantastic teachers. The head and administration are excellent—determined to make a difference in these students lives. They told me that Ofsted encourages schools to support parent involvement.

The children's families, many with young children not in nursery, are from all over the world: Spain, India, Somalia, Iraq, Nigeria, U.S.A. and even a few from England. Our school invites parents to coffees and to school assemblies and they come, despite work, language barriers or child care issues. Class numbers are about the same as at home — 22 and growing.

However, the class rooms themselves are much more spacious than what we are used to, with plenty of room for volunteers to work with small groups. Being at this school has been a great learning experience for my children and for me.

At our school, there seemed to be enough teachers and teacher aids, plenty of books, music and learning. However, a parent volunteer can still help to make a difference. And being involved in your local school can be meaningful for you and your family.

I would encourage all grandparents or parents with even a little time to complete their CRB and spend some time getting to know the future of Great Britain.

Robert Hooke Day

Christopher Wren loved him... Isaac Newton loathed him... Robert Hooke, polymath genius of the 17th century, provoked intense loyalty, controversy, jealousy and hatred.

An ingenious man, undoubtedly our English Leonardo — and yet Robert Hooke was written out of history. Like Da Vinci, he was a fine artist, a brilliant scientist, an extraordinary engineer as well as an accomplished architect who played an important part in London's recovery from the Great Fire of 1666. But after his death, even his portrait strangely disappeared.

Polymath or curmudgeon, this is a man whose life and times are worth exploring — and Take The Space return to Greenwich Theatre to perform a new play called *Hanging Hooke* by Siobhan Nicholas on Sunday 14th October at 4.00 pm.

Also on offer is ROBERT HOOKE DAY: you can take a guided walk around Greenwich to discover Hooke's links with the area, see the show, then take part in an exclusive post-show Q&A with special guest Rebekah Higgitt from the Royal Observatory Greenwich. £20 (concs. £15). Contact the Box Office for details.

Police warning about snatch robberies

The chances of a snatch robbery happening to you is quite small, but you should take some basic precautions:

- * Make sure your jewellery is not visible. Plan your journey in advance.
- * Avoid deserted areas late at night.
- * Be aware of your surroundings and stay alert to what's going on around you.
- * Always try to let someone know where you are going, and when you are returning.
- * Try to avoid wearing headphones, which restrict one's ability to hear potential trouble
- * Photograph valuable items of jewellery.

A 12-year-old girl whose chihuahua was snatched was left weeping in the street in Beckenham in September. Tae Bennett was walking her dog when a blue car drew up alongside. A little girl with blonde curly hair and blue eyes got out and asked if she could stroke the grey and white dog.

A man with an Irish accent came out of the car, grabbed the dog, and drove off, hitting her foot. The girl was devastated. **Anyone with any information should contact Bromley CID on 020 8284 8859, and quote ref. no. 3316374/12**

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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: **25th Oct Jo Rhymer talks on Hammerchoi and the Art of Silence: his paintings of interiors** 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: Monday 8th Oct The Art and many crafts of Medieval Manuscripts: Influences, materials and techniques** - Patricia Wright Ring 020 8852 7873. Non-members £8.00

BLACKHEATH ART SOCIETY Exhibition of their work at the Paul McPherson Gallery Lassell Street Greenwich SE10 9PJ Tel. 0208 269 2990. From 29th October- 9 November Open: Mon 12-5 pm, Tues-Fri 11-5 pm. Sat 10-2.30 pm. Sun Closed. www.paulmcphersongallery.com

STEPHEN LAWRENCE GALLERY University of Greenwich 'TOUR DE HORSE' Until 12th Oct. Work by Olympic artist in residence Terence Birch **MADE IN GREENWICH GALLERY**, 324 Creek Road, SE10 www.madeingreenwich.co.uk

NOCTURNAL: exhibition of new work by local artists Oct 17th. - Nov.18th. Oct. 23rd at 7.30: **NOCTURNAL:** **POETRY EVENING** with Greenwich Stanza and Greenwich Poetry Workshop. Limited number of tickets at £4 (£3 concs) on the door. Please book by emailing: info@madeingreenwich.co.uk

CHILDREN

GREENWICH THEATRE
Sun 21st Oct. 11.00 am **DUMBS UP!** Stand up comedy show for adults & children
Sun 28th Oct. 2.00 opm **CLOCKHEART BOY** Adults £8, Children £7.50 Family tickets (4) £28.00 Thurs. 22nd Nov - Sun. 6th Jan. **PANTO TIME!** Andrew Pollard's **ROBIN HOOD** Tickets £19 £25 Concs. £16 & £23. Children half price.
Tues. 16th - Fri 19th Oct. **SHAKESPEARE SCHOOLS FESTIVAL** 7.00 pm £8 (£6 concs.)

WOODLANDS FARM
331 Shooters Hill. Tel. 0208 319 8900
Every Thursday Toddler Club 10am - 12pm £2 per adult, children free
Meet the animals, enjoy some crafts or just play.

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. Under fives must be accompanied by an adult. Please wear suitable clothes.

BLACKHEATH HALLS Sat 20th Oct 3.00 pm Robin Hood: The Tale of the Silver Arrow

Laptop Club@Mycenae house

Come along on the 12th Sept 7-9pm and start learning to look after your laptop, web surfing with confidence, getting creative and more...



You don't have to be an expert to join the club, new starters welcome!

If you're interested , call Paul on 07958 251448 or email paul.clayton@soulchlp.co.uk

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COMMUNITY

The Westcombe Society

20th Oct. **QUIZ Night!** Please sign up before

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17th Nov. – Dickensian Christmas Bazaar

BLACKHEATH HALLS

Tues 9th Oct. 2.00 pm **TEA DANCE**

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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

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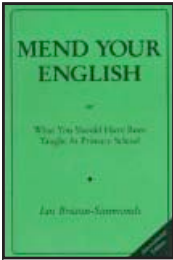
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Matinee Sat 2.30 pm £17.50, £15 & £12.50

Sun 14th Oct. **HANGING HOOKE** by Siobhan Nicholas What happened to England's Leonardo? Sat 20th - Monday 22nd Oct. **YOU and ME** by Roger Simeon ATale of Age-Old Folly Sat & Sun. 7.30 pm Matinee Monday at 2.00 pm

Tues 23rd - Wed 24th Oct. **THE DANCER & THE DEVIL** by Anna Maria Murphy 7.30 pm
Thur. 25th Oct. **2DEEP** Hiphop Comedy 7.30 pm
Fri 26th - Sat. 27th Oct **BORGES & I**
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Other Sundays 18th Nov & 25th Nov.

Fri 19th Oct. 7.00 pm Great Hall **OTHELLO** by

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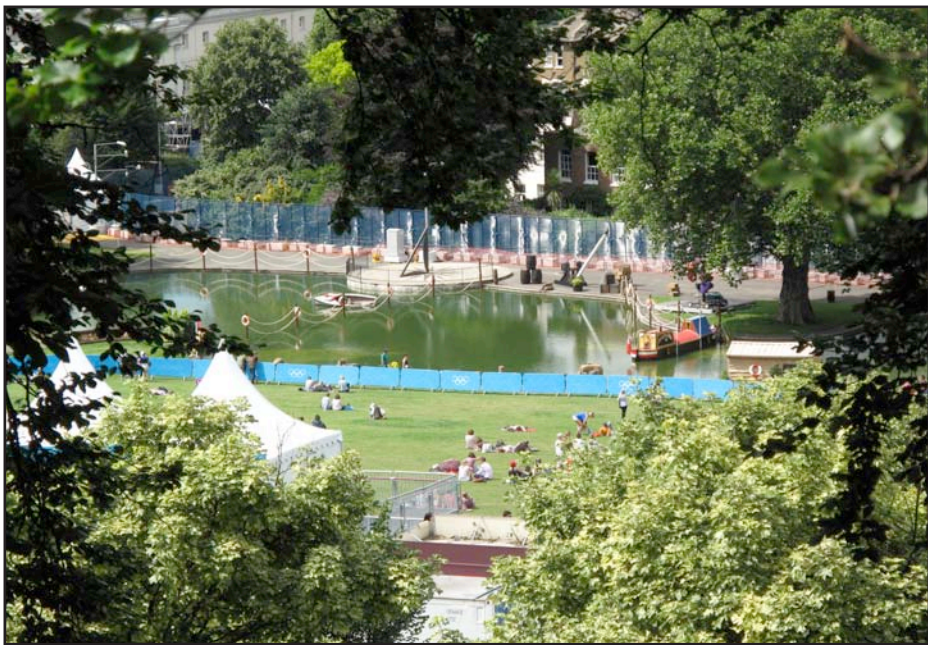
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FEATURES



Two views of the Olympics and Paralympics . . .

Even now, after the Olympics and Paralympics are over, controversy over the use of Greenwich Park lingers on. Those who campaigned against the use of the Park, flying the NOGOE banner, continue to cite the petition signed by 13,500 locals, as evidence that “the majority of Greenwich residents were against the use of the park”. Others cite the many thousands who did not sign the petition, and the thousands who attended the events in the park – and the millions who witnessed this World Heritage site, mostly for the very first time, who say them neigh. What do our readers think? Here, two local residents air their views . . .

From: Jane Grant Stratheden Road
After months and months of depressingly negative comments about the choice of venue for the Olympic and Paralympic equestrian events, I finally got to view the events at the stadium in Greenwich Park (for the Paralympic Dressage) in person.
Like thousands of others I was overwhelmed not just by the grace and elegance of the horses and their riders but the stunning beauty of the venue and the efficiency of the arrangements.
This was in stark contrast to the negative attitudes of a number of our fellow residents in Greenwich who did their very best to prevent any of this from happening.
Of course living near a World Heritage site brings a responsibility to preserve that site for posterity. There is no evidence that any serious damage has been done to the park; indeed, the park will be improved in several ways as a result of the Olympics.
Critics should be aware that we also have a responsibility to share this World Heritage site with the world. The park’s constituency is much wider than local residents: this has been brilliantly illustrated in the last few weeks. This is a cause for celebration, just as the Olympics and Paralympics were.

From: Ed Hill Foyle Road
The Olympics as a whole have been a success, because our athletes have done well and everyone enjoyed the action.
However, Greenwich is only just starting to assess the full cost for millions of ordinary visitors to Greenwich Park, the huge losses for hundreds of small businesses, to say nothing of damage to the trees, wildlife and heritage. One preliminary financial estimate of the full cost to our community is £100 million.
So was it incompetence or corruption that led all the politicians and government agencies to have backed the cover-ups, illegalities and lies about the use of Greenwich Park for the Olympics?
Analysts and politicians knew very well that only corporate sponsors have profited from the Olympics for the past 50 years. At least a legacy could have been left in other locations.
Most people were always against a Greenwich Park Olympic event, with 13,500 signatures collected in a few hours, and an unprecedented 2000 letters of objection



received to the planning application.
Greenwich Park is a sanctuary for the community and for wildlife. Sir Frank Berman pointed out before the Olympics that it is illegal for Royal Parks to hire it out and close it to the public, because that is in breach of the 1997 Royal Parks and Open Spaces Regulations, besides breaking many other international and UK conservation, wildlife and protected species laws.
Former manager Derek Spurr says that Royal Parks intend hiring out Greenwich Park, which in my view was the financial motive behind their demolition of Blackheath Gate – to allow access for lorries. His comments in a recent issue of the *Times*, which applauded the “inspired” choice of the park, and concluded “let’s do it again soon”, are deeply reprehensible.
Rupert Murdoch epitomizes the years of collusion between government, corporations and the media. Surely we can safeguard Greenwich Park from exploitation by these corporate interests?
Footnote: Lorraine Turton, of the East Greenwich Business Association, claims that trade was down in her area by 50% during the Olympics, and is campaigning to get compensation. She says that people stayed away from shops because of travel warnings.

ABOVE LEFT: Exit from the park
ABOVE: Looking down on the water jumps
BELOW: Lena Weifen (Germany) riding in the Paralympic Dressage event
PHOTOS: Emily Norton & Neville Grant



Local drama groups make waves

The Alexandra Players autumn production is Alan Ayckbourn’s sparkling adult comedy, *Private Fears in Public Places*. True to one of the author’s recurring themes, six flawed characters are looking for love, despite having their romantic aspirations dashed at every turn.
This is a film for the stage: it uses techniques drawn from the movies, involving fast cutting between short scenes, relying on lighting and minimal sets.
Private Fears in Public Places will be presented at the Alexandra Hall, Bramshot Avenue, Charlton SE7 7HX on Thursday to Saturday November 1st, 2nd and 3rd at 8pm. Doors open 7.30 pm. Tickets £8 (£7 Concessions). Box Office 07867 627 987 or e-mail alexandraplayers@gmail.com
Meanwhile, Eltham’s Priory

Players are putting on a new production of Arthur Miller’s *All My Sons* from Thursday 11th - Sat 13th October.
The play is being performed at 7.45 at Progress Hall, Admiral Seymour Road, Eltham. Tickets £8 7.00 (concs. £6.00) For tickets ring 07502 450983 or email info@theprioryplayers.com

Greenwich open Studios Update

Xavier White curated a very successful exhibition with an equestrian theme in August - you can see one of his equine sculptures in the front garden of 26 Vanbrugh Park, SE3 7AF. Maggie Learmonth will be exhibiting at Arthub Gallery, 5-9 Creekside SE8 4SA together with award-winning print-maker Ralph Overill 19th- 28th Oct. (www.arthubgallery.com).



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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

Foyle Rd Garages Appeal goes to Public Hearing

The developer's appeal against Greenwich Planning Board's refusal of planning permission to demolish the garages behind 34, Foyle Road and build three two-storey houses on the land will be heard by the Planning Inspector in the Council Chambers at Wellington Street, Woolwich on Tuesday 20th. November at 10 a.m. Members of the public may attend.

Both the Planning Board's refusal and the withdrawal of the earlier planning application followed numerous objections from local residents.

Objections to the appeal should be sent to: Catherine Evans, Planning Inspectorate, Temple Quay House, 2, The Square, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6PN, quoting references 11/3003/F & Associated Ref. 11/3004/C; Appeal ref. APP/E5330/E/12/2180345 by 4th October.



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Good news for pedestrians

Following a number of accidents at the road junction at the top of Westcombe Hill, plans are afoot to improve pedestrian safety.

Local shopkeepers and residents are likely to welcome the proposals outlined in recent consultation documents which include the installation of new parking bays with partial on-pavement parking, and pedestrian safety measures.

Traffic flow is set to improve at a junction where drivers regularly park despite yellow lines, often rendering making it difficult for buses to pass through without rendering the road single file.

Pedestrians, while losing some of their pavement space, are set to benefit from improved crossing facilities to and from Batley Green with a new and, what is described as, 'more substantial island', making the walk from one side of the Standard to the other safer.

The Westcombe Society's Planning & Environment Subcommittee has put forward their recommendations which include ensuring that the needs of those with disabilities and reduced mobility are taken into consideration. The Council promises a public exhibition when full details have been finalised.

Arctic Sea Ice Melt- Down

RIGHT: Greenwich Observatory in the snow: are these days going for good?

The Arctic ice cap is disappearing before our eyes: this is the first large scale unmistakable impact of climate change, and is clearly visible from space.

The Arctic sea-ice broke an all-time record for lowest-ever extent on August 24th, nearly a month earlier than scientists predicted. It was still decreasing in mid-September.

Scientists are considering the possible consequences, including the effect on the Arctic biosphere. Scientists are concerned that the melting of the permafrost will accelerate global warming.

There is also the strong possibility that the methane hydrates under the Arctic



Ocean will be released: this could create an apocalyptic future.

Professor Wadhams, Head of the Polar Oceans Physics Group at Cambridge University, said: "For 40 years I have been measuring sea ice thickness in the Arctic from UK submarines.

"I first detected substantial thinning in 1990, and since the most recent submarine voyage in 2007 I have been warning that the combination of sea ice retreat and a massive amount of thinning will lead to the disappearance of the summer sea ice by as early as 2015."

Run-to-the-Beat 2012

This Charity event takes place on October 28th. There will be no Run-to-the-Beat sound stage at the Gibb Memorial this year, though music from the Gibb Memorial has not caused problems to local residents in previous years.

However, this year there will be a sound stage at the A102(M) / Woolwich Road roundabout, and this might affect some residents of Westcombe Park. Perhaps more importantly, there will be two sound stages

in Greenwich Park. The proposals appear to breach the Royal Parks licensing arrangements.

Greenwich Council's requirements for site notices have also been breached, thus reinforcing the need for a review meeting about the Royal Park Licence, now that the Olympics are over.

Details of how to access Westcombe Park on the day were not available as the *WN* goes to press. **Lawrence Smith**

Christopher's column

Spreading the net

This morning I discovered almost an entire biscuit wedged into the edge of a flowerpot not much wider than the biscuit.

As they say, squirrels really take the biscuit . . .

Yes, it's time to order and plant your bulbs – and for squirrels to get busy. Sprinkling garlic or chilli powder (or both) over areas of newly planted treasures will deter squirrels and mice.

But it's not that easy if you are trying to establish crocus, which are apparently the most delicious. If you can put some net or mesh over pots or areas of bulbs, this should do the trick, deterring all but the most determined thief.

Allium, being garlicky, are less vulnerable to squirrel voracity - just as well, given how much some of them can cost!

This year, in an attempt to keep my bulb purchases to a minimum, I am cutting back on tulips – which should be planted in November – and the allium: they tend to go a bit mildewy if not planted straightaway.

Searching for period plants recently – anything which was in the UK in the 17th century – I came across some unusual bulbs, but most are unavailable or tricky to grow.



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John Roan Demolition Job

The lower school in Westcombe Park Road has been razed to the ground! And with it comes divided opinion among local residents.

For some the sizeable demolition project has resulted in excessive dust and noise, and even vibrations akin to "earth tremors", while for others the overall feeling is that the site has been well managed and the overall impact kept to a minimum.

Others complain about the noise from the temporary generator (installed without the required planning permission) which considerably exceeds the level specified by the Council's Environmental Health Officer and which runs 24 hours a day.

With calls for continuous monitoring of noise and dust, a further meeting date with Wates, the developers along with representatives from the school and members of the Westcombe Society's Planning and Environment Subcommittee is taking place

as we go to print. Parts of the Grade II* listed Maze Hill Building are also due to be demolished, starting after Christmas.

If you want to have your say or to find out more, email westpes@gmail.com.

On a more general note, the question really remains as to why a school built just thirty years ago was not able to house the increase in local pupil population and as such deemed no longer fit for purpose.

In fact, many point out there were other serious design deficiencies in the building – including extraordinarily cramped classrooms.

The life of this 'permanent' building has proved to be shorter than that of many of the 'prefabs' of the kind it replaced. Let's hope that all those involved in the plans for the new building have factored in sufficient population increase and that we really are building a school for the future and not just for the next three decades.

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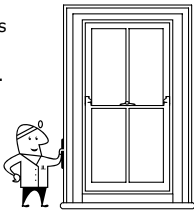
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