The Conservatoire under threat...

For the past 132 years the Conservatoire has fostered quality art and music in this community. Founded in 1881 by William Webster, the Conservatoire is Blackheath’s local independent arts centre. Each week it provides a broad mix of music, art, drama and cultural classes to over 1,200 people aged to 90.

The WN profiled the Conservatoire in November 2011, and ran an interview with its new head, Sydney Thombury, in June 2012. However, today the Conservatoire is under great threat. Like many charities, it has struggled to survive the recession.

Chairman of the Trustees, Lora Mason OBE has launched an appeal with these words: “Sydney and our new team of Trustees have a strong track record of transforming charities and developing innovative and sustainable business models. We have a solid recovery plan to not only turn around the Conservatoire, but to transform and reinvigorate it for a 21st century world.

“But we are racing against the clock. We must raise £175,000 by the end of February or we risk having to close in August, before our new plan can take effect.

“A £75,000 Challenge Donor Fund has been generously pledged by a group of local donors. To claim it, we must match those donations through support from others. “The situation is truly urgent. Without your help, we may have no future at all. Your donation will be matched pound for pound by our Challenge Donor Fund. And because we can also claim Gift Aid, your donation will be worth an additional 25% on top of the amount you donate. If, for example, you donate £100, it will be worth £125 towards our goal.”

Donations can be made by visiting www.conservatoireleftr.org.uk

See What’s On page 5 for a list of fundraising events.

The Conservatoire’s stunningly northern Victorian building includes one of the last Victorian Life Drawing studios still in use in the UK.

Westcombe News

Below are the notes from the Westcombe News page of the February 2013 issue:

**New to the gap...**

**Sarah Winterbottom**

**Community leaders, local businesses and entrepreneurs have their weight behind a campaign for more river crossings in East London.**

But some local residents have some serious reservations.

“Drivers who use the Blackwall Tunnel out of the Silvertown one will feel like push pound fodder for the new crossing even though they have no reason to use it.”

The AA points out that drivers already pay huge amounts in Vehicle Excise Duty – only a quarter of which is spent on road and highway maintenance.

And the side effects... London Watchdog TravelWatch supports TFL’s proposals. A side effect might be that a toll charge might help to ease congestion – good news for pollution levels – but critics point out that the plans might have the opposite effect in South London. Data that Dick Allard, Chair of WSPEC requested from computer simulations indicating the likely resultant levels of congestion and traffic flows are still awaited as we go to press.

There are other issues, too: for years, local councillors have been supporting the residents of Westcombe Hill and Sibeer Road on the need for better lighting to reduce noise and vibration disturbance from the A102 – a request that TFL have refused.

If the proposal to increase traffic flows on the A102 are go ahead, such measures should be a condition. In addition, observers argue that another condition would be that public transport capacity needs to be greatly increased.

As we reported in last month’s WN, the public consultation by TFL on major proposals is set to run until 1st February 2013. If you were unable to attend any of the consultation “roadshows”, log on to : https://consultations.lff.gov.uk/river-crossings/ consultation or find out more, and to make your views known. A printed information leaflet can also be requested by calling 0841 222 2524.

Meanwhile, there are those who argue that these suggestions are a bridge too far. Please turn to page 7 for information on a campaign opposing the new river crossings.

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WESTCOME SOCIETY NEWS

WESTCOME SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Please send this membership form to:
Mrs Margaret Ellis, 4 Insingle Grove
SE3 7RI

Name: ____________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________

Address: ________________________________________________
________________________________________

Tel: ____________________________

Email: ____________________________

Please enclose payment as appropriate:

Family Membership at £12.00
Individual Membership at £8.00
Senior Citizens/over 60’s at £4.00

WESTCOME NEWS

COMMUNITY NEWS

Westcombe Society’s plans for 2013

T he Westcombe Society celebrates its Fortieth Birthday this year! Last year, we raised £3,000 for our Charity of the Year: Woodlands Farm Trust. We hope to celebrate our fortieth anniversary by raising a record sum for our charity of the year, so we are asking our readers to send in their nominations. It must be a locally based charity or one that supports our residents living in the Westcombe area. Please contact Marilyn Little with your nomination or for more information on 0208 853 1312.

Events being planned include:

Feb 23rd: Help for Seniors’ Anniversary Party – Main Hall, Mycenae House 2.00 – 4.00 pm

Mar 16th: Children’s Near West Sale – Main Hall, Mycenae House 11.00- 4.00 pm

Apr 20th: Quiz Night – Main Hall

Jun 15th: Summer Picnic and Senior Citizens’ Tea Party

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 RNW.

From: Ivy McGeorge Vanbrugh Fields

There has been a great deal of discussion in the area regarding the possible application to remove the Horse Chestnut tree on the corner of Vanbrugh Park Road and Vanbrugh Park Road West. It is very distressing to see a mature tree of great historical significance removed, and those who are objecting have done a great job raising our voices.

The current proposal is for the tree to be removed and a substantial tree of 60 cm girth planted in its place – the tree will survive for five years by the Nursery supplying it. When the plans for the new school were done an independent Tree Company was asked if the tree could be saved – in their opinion it was possible. Now excavations have been started and the roots of the tree have been exposed it is clear what has to be done and the proposal is correct. The building is proceeding as planned, and the independent specialist has confirmed that it will not be possible. A measured decision was made and it proved to be the correct one.

Given that a substantial tree will be planted in its place I firmly believe that in the interests of everyone it is a good compromise. The cost in human terms of the changes at this stage would be huge, with delays in completion dates and the advantage of many students being disrupted – (e.g. the John Roan students are being temporarily accommodated in the Royal Hill site, which is due to become a primary school – that will be delayed.)

Neighbours have been put up with building works longer than planned. On top of which the financial cost of the scheme is 10 years’ interest and I say it is massive.

The positive note long-term is that the new tree will be there in 100 years’ time – the expected life of the current tree is at least 20 years. It has been in planting for up only 30 years was never “fit for purpose”. This was due in part to some poor condition at the planting stage following objections from the neighbours who did not want a school on the site. The main objection was the height of the building, which was reduced – and therefore the classroom ceilings were too low. It would be a tragedy if the proposed building followed the same route.

From: Colin Fancey Combe Avenue

How can local Councillor Alex Wilson claim there is a “substantial” in the local hospital case? (RNW Dec/Jan) Like many local people we have not used both Lewisham and Queen Elizabeth Hospitals. As your report showed, waiting time at the A&E at QEII is already over 4 hours on average – just imagine how long it will be if the people currently using Lewisham A&E are forced to travel to the QEII. The government is threatening cuts across the NHS while ensuring PFI shareholders are guaranteed their profits, while the rest of us who pay for the service are facing a future without the health service we need. I urge everyone to sign the petitions and join the campaign.

Get Greenwich

Want to know what’s happening in the Royal Borough? If so, the smart-phone app called Get Greenwich can help you to discover events and offers near you – right now.

Events at grand festivals right down to the humble pub quiz.
* Offers in places such as eateries, shops, cinema.
* Create your own list of favourite events, offers, places & searches
* Free to try out

Available on iPhone, iPad and android.

The idea was conceived, designed and built locally by a creative team based in Charlton, whose client base is in Greenwich, thus providing the inspiration and knowledge to make the most of the area.”

Helpers and Welcome to New Residents’ Party 2013

The Westcombe Society is holding its annual Helpers’ Party on Saturday, 23rd February 2013 from 7.00 pm to 10.00 pm at Mycenae House, Mycenae Road.

This is our chance to thank all those who help and support the Westcombe Society in the past 12 months in running events, supporting and participating in the work of the various committees and producing and delivering the Westcombe News. We are very grateful for this help and couldn’t keep everything running without you.

We do hope you can come along and meet some old, and some new, faces as we are combining this with our Welcome to New Residents’ Party.

If you are new to Westcombe Park we’d love to meet you. The invitation is open to all new residents of Westcombe Park and we hope you can come along, meet fellow neighbours and find out more about both Westcombe Park and the work of the Westcombe Society.

There will be a welcome drink and a light buffet available and the bar in Mycenae House will be open.

We are sending out personal invitations to those helpers for whom we have postal or email addresses.

If you are a helper and don’t receive an invitation, perhaps because we don’t have an address for you, or you are new to the area and would like to join us on the 23rd February, please contact Joanne by post at 41 Glencarse Road, SE3 7BD or by phone on 0208 1329 249 by Friday 22nd February so that we can cater for the right numbers.

We look forward to seeing you and thank you for your help.

If you are interested in helping with the Westcombe Society’s activities, and would like to help, please complete the helper’s Little a ring on 8853 1132 for more information. We are currently seeking a Membership Secretary and someone to help with the Bazaar organisation.

Ken Clark 1927 – 2012

Westcombe News February 2013
Documenting the High Street

Art is you interested in acting – or work in picture-taking? If so, the opportunity to indulge your passion exists right on your doorstep. Capital Theatre Company – a small, locally-based amateur theatre group – rehearses on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at Mycenae House. Exercising considerable ingenuity in its choice and presentation of plays, the Company seeks to make a virtue of its modest circumstances by placing its actor firmly at the centre of its productions. Bold play selection, sparse but imaginative presentation, and fast and easy access to the Company’s hall-marks. Two productions are put on each year. These are presented in the Old Bakehouse Theatre, Blackbird and St Margaret’s Crypt, Lee – whose intimate surrounds allow the Company to play to its strength.

The Company receives no financial support, relying only on box office revenue and membership subscriptions. Nonetheless, the Company has an impressive track record of achievement and takes pride in its high standards. Its adventurous and eclectic choice of plays includes: Teaching by John Godber, Fools of Silence by Shelagh Stephenson, Bally with the Bathwater by Christopher Durang, The Five Wives of Maurice Finley by Matt Charman, Joseph K by Tom Baden, Mine by Polly Talc, Sylvia by A.R. Gurney and recently, The Country by Marti Crimp.

The future of policing

There is deep concern about the proposed cuts in policing numbers in this ward – and about the reduction in police stations. Proposals to use Post offices as police stations have been described as “ludicrous”, police stations have had private interview rooms, who wants to have their concerns listened to by a queue of people buying stamps?

In January, local MP for Greenwich and Woolwich wrote to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, raising his concerns about the future of policing in Greenwich. Nick Raynsford was responding to the announcement that the Metropolitan Police proposes to close Woolwich and Greenwich Police Stations. Nick Raynsford told the RN: “Whilst I recognise the need to look for efficiency savings, if these closures go ahead many of my constituents will be left out on a limb. “I have repeatedly stressed to the Met. that it should consider looking at co-locating at other civic buildings, to ensure that there is an accessible Police presence for local residents whilst at the same time, saving money”.

BGHS in Guiness Book of Records

Greenwich and Bexley Community Hospice has a dedicated team of over 500 volunteers working in a variety of roles from charity shop work and fund-raising to working directly with patients and their families at the Hospice.

Hospice charity calls for volunteers

Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice have a dedicated team of over 500 volunteers working in a variety of roles from charity shop work and fund-raising to working directly with patients and their families at the Hospice.

Volunteers at the Hospice.

The Sheffield district of the Hospice has a number of vacancies for volunteers to work on the fundraising teams and in our retail shops. Please contact Claire Brevett on 8288 3625. Alternatively, you can visit our website at www.greenwichhospice.org.uk.

Share fraud warning

A local resident wrote: “I was recently approached on the phone by a very persuasive American lady about a small quantity of shares I have: the dividends from these have marginally increased each year, but being less than 1500 I would have been quite willing to sell them. “But a friend was suspicious and checked out the company on the internet, and very quickly discovered that it was a share scam. I reported this to the FSA (Financial Services Authority), Action Fraud, and the company that pay my dividends, all of whom were very helpful.”

The FSA says that fraudsters operate in “boiler room” mostly based abroad. The FSA remains vigilant and is in touch in the UK each year in this way.

If you have any concerns, please contact the FSA on 0845 606 1234 or visit www.fsa.gov.uk/register to ensure they are authorised, and use the details there to contact the firm. Call the FSA Helpline on 0845 606 1234 if there are any doubts at all. Also search the FSA’s list of unauthorised firms or individuals to avoid doing business with.

In general, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If you are approached about a share scam, use the share fraud reporting form www.fsa.gov.uk/scamwatch and also find out about the latest investment scams. If you have already been defrauded then you should contact Action Fraud on 0100 123 2040.

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Check out what's NEW in 2013!

The new season is upon us and it’s time to start considering your planting and landscaping plans. We’ve got the latest news on what’s new this season. From new shrubs, bedding plants, trees and turf to the use of the latest drought resistant and water saving techniques.

020 8588 1749 www.mycenaehouse.co.uk
The Art of Self-Defence

PAUL CARTER

How do I punch someone? was the final thought that went through my inebriated mind when I was robbed on Troufaur Road.

It was late on a summer evening in June 2006. I felt for the classic rose of ‘Have you got the time, mate?’ and believed the fellow when he shoved his hand in his pocket and told me he had a knife.

I handed over £10 and my cheap watch

... I clearly wasn’t thinking as phoning the police didn’t enter my mind.

The childhood aggression which leads to many playground fights dissipates as you mature and realise the futility of violence, but you are allowed to define yourself if someone tries to rob or attack you.

The problem is knowing how. Krav Maga is a martial art focused on self-defence moves for real world situations. It originates from Israel and is Hebrew for ‘hand-to-hand combat’. Stewart McGill is an expert and runs classes all over London, including a 7:00pm Monday night class at St Michael’s Church Hall in Blackheath.

With other experienced martial artists he developed his own style called Urban Krav Maga, which in Stewart’s opinion, offers a more leveraged approach.

Stewart said: “If an attacker has a knife then give them your money or phone – your life is more important. But if the attacker won’t go away then you strike first. Attack is a great form of defence.

“If you train enough then you improve your fitness and the moves become instinctive. It’s important you know how to strike and get leverage over your opponent. So come along and give it a go. It is a good exercise class, too.”

Around 18 men of different ages, shapes and sizes attend my first class. We warmed up by jogging round the room, aiming punches and kicks at invisible targets, and get the heart pumping. Then comes the tricky part: remembering how to do the moves that Stewart demonstrated.

Stewart McGill in action.

My partner grabbed me so I steppped on his foot, struck out with an elbow then pushed him to the floor and twisted his arm until I found his pressure point. We worked on a number of other moves, too. I have poor coordination, and held on to my judo white belt for two years before accepting I didn’t belong in the white suit. So I was quite amazed when I was able to execute some of the moves and put my partner on the floor.

I learned that you should not punch with a clenched fist – and a rolled-up newspaper can be effective. Also consider carrying a purse or wallet with some coins and foreign notes and an old mobile phone which you can throw to one side as you run off in the other direction. I look forward to my next class but hope I never have to escape a dangerous confrontation.

Men and women are welcome to the class. To know more about Krav Maga and the class locations then go to www.kravmaga-eaustlondon.com/index.htm

The first class is free and £60 buys your first 10 lessons, which you can arrange around your diary.

The bronze, silver and gold membership packages range from £40 to £60 a month depending on how many classes you want to attend.

For those who like schoolgirl novels . . .

The Alexandra Players next production is Daisy Pulls It Off by Denise Deegan. This bears NO resemblance at all to the girls of Grimsby…….but still retains much of the old-world charm of Angela Brazil’s schoolgirl novels.

Daisy Pulls It Off engagingly captures the uncomplicated innocence of Angela Brazil’s schoolgirls. It is about the attempts of superchic Daisy Meredith to submerge her poor elementary school background and find acceptance in the snobby confines of Grangewood School for Young Ladies.

Our plucky heroine undergoes a number of obstacles before beginning her brave life in all things, comes right in the end.

Daisy Pulls It Off will be presented at the Alexandra Hall, Bramshot Avenue, Chanter Set 7IX on Thursday to Saturday February 21st, 22nd and 23rd at 8pm. Doors open 7.30 pm.

Karen Storey goes national

Cleaving out unwanted items is becoming a country-wide trend in 2013 – and local decluttering expert Karen Storey of Homespaces has gained national exposure. Articles in the most recent editions of House Beautiful magazine, Yourwellness and men’s styling newsletter Sartorialist quote Karen as they advise on how to clear unwanted stuff from your life.

All these articles can be viewed via Karen’s Homespaces website.

Karen, whose Wasteless – Park-based business has been running since 2007, has seen the business grow as people aim to streamline their lives and their belongings.

Karen told the WN: “Initially, people found the idea of hiring a decluttering expert strange, but now more and more people really embrace the idea. It’s a major trend for the pared down, austere times we live in, and can be hugely cathartic.”

Contact: 07951 191686/info@home-space.co.uk. See also the Small A4s on p. 3.

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FEATURES

Have book, why travel? on the joy of book clubs

MICHAIL GOLDMAN

“Each country Bookclub bows to the knee to Brand...”

This quotation from Byron shows that book clubs, book groups, reading groups – call them what you will – go back a long time. And now, including twenty or so years they have flourished as never before, giving the lie to those who mourn the decline of reading.

Typically a reading group consists of a dozen or so members who meet monthly to discuss the chosen book, sometimes chosen by the members in turn, sometimes chosen at the start of a season by collective decision. The majority of groups consist solely of women, many are mixed but all male groups are rare.

A major virtue of reading groups is that they literary horizons of members, encouraging them to read books that they would otherwise miss.

The social aspect is also important. The level of seriousness varies: wine and gossip sometimes predominate over literary discussion. Most groups concentrate on contemporary fiction but some read classics from the past. There are even groups, mostly in America, which only read James Joyce’s Finnegans Wake.

Some reading groups are local to library which provide multiple copies of the chosen books. Bookshops have realised the value of reading groups and many branches of Waterstones, including the one in Greenwich, have monthly groups. These are open to anyone who turns up. Websites list groups all over the country, including some in SE London.

Most local UJA (University of the Third Age) branches include reading groups on various programmes – free, for example, in UJA South East London.

One of these has been going for eighteen years and meets weekly. This is unusually frequent and is testimony to the dedication of the twelve members who devote several sessions to each book, depending on its length and complexity.

The UJA reading groups usually have waiting lists because they meet in members’ homes, where room is limited, and also because coherent discussion is difficult with more than a dozen or so people. Hearing others’ opinions, as well as voicing your own, is one of the joys of reading groups and discussion tends to be most lively when opinions are sharply divided.

The South East London UJA website is www.uja.londonse.org or information can be obtained from the Membership Secretary, Anne Richards, 307 London Health, Chanter Set 7IX, 020 8883 4645 (please mention that you saw this in the Westcombe News).

Ticket £4 (5 Children and Concessions).

Box Office: 07867 627 987 or e-mail alexandra players@gmail.com or to book and pay in advance by PayPal, visit our new website at http://www.alexandraplayers.org.uk Seats booked by telephone or e-mail must be collected no later than 15 minutes before the performance or they may be resold. Seats booked and paid by PayPal will be held until collected and not re-sold. The Alexandra Hall in Bramshot Avenue is attached to Chanter United Reformed Church, who support the Players and enable them to put on productions there.

Potty Pancake races

The 1st Annual Royal Greenwich Potty Pancake Race is at 11.00 am on Tuesday, 12th February at the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich.

Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice is hosting the event. Teams of four or five in full costume to find Greenwich’s fastest pancake flippers, optional fancy dress. The fastest team will be crowned “The Fastest Flippers of Greenwich” and will receive a Winners trophy.

Entry to The Old Royal Naval College is via the Cutty Sark entrance and is free for up to 1000 people.

Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice Pancakes are also for sale between 11.00am and 5.00pm.

Entry is £5 per person in teams of 4. FREE for spectators. For more info email smallfriends@kong.com, call 0751819 9238, or visit the website www.communityhospice.org.uk.
FEATURES

A Visual History of the Heath

In November, the Blackheath Society was awarded a grant of £7,900 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for its exciting project to develop a new digital archive called ‘The Story of the Heath.’ The images in the archive, which is led by volunteers from the local community, focus on the use and development of the Heath next to Blackheath since the 19th century. The project will also enhance the Society’s growing digital archive and could lead to national publicity on BBC television.

The entry was accepted for the HLF’s project AOur Storiesthree stories, which supports a planned BBC programme ‘The Great British Story – a People’s History’ due to be screened from the end of next year. The application for the grant was headed by one of the Society’s volunteers, Allan Griffen.

Under the terms of the grant the Society has to digitise 1,500 images of the Heath by October 2013, and then make them generally available to the public.

Good progress has already been made: over 1,000 Heath images have already been completed, and well over half of its 15,000 photographic images of Blackheath and the surrounding areas have been stored on computers.

The Blackheath Society will now be asking its members, and the general public, to search their attics for any interesting photographs of the Heath which could supplement the images it already owns.

The plan is to create mobile exhibitions of the images of the Heath to be shown in local schools and churches, at the library in the newly re-opened Age Exchange in the Village, and at the Blackheath Concert Halls.

Other plans include using the project to update and reprint local historian Neil Rhind’s Heath trail guide and putting a rotating selection of the images on the Society’s website.

The grant brings the Society’s 75th anniversary year to a fitting end. On the award, the Society’s Chair Howard Shields said, “We are thrilled to have received the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund and are confident the project will encourage Blackheath people to become more involved in their local heritage. The grant will also greatly enhance our archive of local photographs.”

Wassailing in the Pleasance

The community orchard in the East Greenwich Pleasance had a winter treat on January 6th, when a crowd gathered to sing to the trees. Wassailing is an ancient tradition, prevalent in cider-making areas of the country. It’s an occasion for tending the trees, for making lots of noise to scare any ill-wishing spirits and relieve the glooms of winter, and for enjoying a good drink of cider (or other, less alcoholic drinks!).

A very enthusiastic crew of youngsters delved into the piles of mulch supplied by Greenwich Council’s Parks and Open Spaces Department, and made a bonfire around the twelve trees. Planted in 2010 and early 2012, the orchard is still very young and will benefit from this care, which keeps the grass from competing for nourishment.

Once the digging was done, the entertainment began. Local resident Peter Hamilton-Dyer led the way through a quirky take on the Twelve Days of Christmas, before rushing off to appear in the Globe Theatre’s acclaimed production of Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night. Story-telling followed, with tales with an apple theme presented by Nick Hunt and Rich Sylvester. The Charter-based group Murrigan wove harmonies with traditional wassailing songs before leading a procession among the trees, which were then given a little cider to encourage them into new growth.

Traditionally, a wassail can include election of kings and queens; here, children were able to create their own crowns, using leaves and bright Christmas cards to decorate them.

The Holly King, leading the way, wore a truly impressive top hat, and explained that the oak and the holly trees have a friendly rivalry, but that the holly always

2013: It’s Time to Dance!

2013 is Greenwich Dance’s 20th anniversary, and there is no better time to sign up for a course. On offer are Flamenco, Contemporary, Lindy Hop, Salsa and Greenwich Dance’s brand new Street Dance class Xpressive Yo’Self. Caron Louden, Artistic Programme Manager at Greenwich Dance, said: “This is a multi-disciplinary showcase examining how bamboo has been appropriated in a context of space, in place-making and within the process of establishing national boundaries.” Each project “explores cross-cultural interaction and linkages, forged through material and spatial syntax in the formation of cultural codes and future identities across borderlines.”

What: clear Ed Contact: 020 8331 8200 or email slg@gec.ac.uk website: www.stephenlawrencegallery.net Opening Hours: Monday-Friday: 10am-5pm, Saturday: 11am-4pm

Photograph: Alan Proctor

Parallel Horizons

The Stephen Lawrence Gallery, Queen Anne Court, University of Greenwich, Park Way, London SE10 8RJ is showing a new exhibition until the end of February called Parallel Horizons, curated by Safi Osmanii.

This is “a multi-disciplinary showcase examining how bamboo has been appropriated in a context of space, in place-making and within the process of establishing national boundaries.” Each project “explores cross-cultural interaction and linkages, forged through material and spatial syntax in the formation of cultural codes and future identities across borderlines.”

What: clear Ed Contact: 020 8331 8200 or email slg@gec.ac.uk website: www.stephenlawrencegallery.net Opening Hours: Monday-Friday: 10am-5pm, Saturday: 11am-4pm

Greenwich Housing Society: volunteer needed

For over 50 years, the Society has offered affordable, one bedroom flats at its two sites, Glencoe Road and Heathways, both easily accessible to the Blackheath Standard and all the facilities offered there. The Society was established to help those of 60 years of age and above and who have a link with the Royal London Borough of Greenwich.

The Society has always been run by a volunteer Management Committee and currently, we are seeking a volunteer to replace our Treasurer who, in due course, will be moving out of London.

The role of the Treasurer is to oversee the finances of the Society. A bookkeeper and a firm of accountants are employed by the Society so day-to-day involvement is required.

The role is one of keeping an overview on the bookkeeping work and occasional liaison with financial institutions and the Society’s bank.

The Treasurer is expected to attend Committee Meetings at Mycenaee House 6-8 times a year.

If you have a financial background, are interested in joining the Committee or would like further information on the role, please contact our Chairperson, Dorothy Morris on 020 859 59915 or write to her at the Society’s registered address, 12 Glencoe Road, London SE3 7SR.

Photograph: Shilvan van Goem

Matching as well as wassailing – takes precedence during the winter months. There was more music, from the delightful May Birds, and inspired free-form dancing by Mara Polak, who is studying at the Laban Centre in Deptford.

Naturally, the refreshment of the day was delicious mulled cider, supplied by the Orchard Press Cider Company. Based in Greenwich, its cider maker Morgan Clark- West travels the country to find the very best of ciders and perrys, he is also often found selling on Greenwich Market.

Posthoo’s cafe did a roaring trade in hot and cold drinks, much appreciated given the chilly weather.

The procession around the trees was led by Martin Ghula of the Charlton Folk Mob, who inspired everyone to raise their voices and beat out the rhythms with sticks of hazel. Singing Here we come a-wassailing. Among the leaves so green was a perfect way to see off the holiday period, and to usher in the New Year for the orchard and for the Pleasance.

Find out more about the Memorial Orchard and how to help nurture it at https://transitionwestcombe.blogspot.co.uk/ along with other news from Transition Westcombe. Photos of the Wassail, and film of some of the entertainment, can be seen at https://www.facebook.com/events/441491475721864/
Stand-off at New Roan Lower School

As we go to press, we learn that Greenwich Council has reluctantly accepted the application to fell the horse-chestnut tree at the NE corner of the John Roan building site in Westcombe Park Road.

What local residents were consulted about the new school build- ing, they were shocked to hear that a Decision Notice to fell it, had ever been made, let alone be submitted to the library with the parking bays on Blackheath Avenue. At a time when the whole area is suffering from severe traffic congestion, it is an unhelpful decision to make.

A subsequent application to fell the majestic flowering Horse Chestnut at the north-eastern corner of the site undoubtedly triggered a wave of protest. Although the original application had claimed that the design of the sports hall had been revised to mitigate damages to the tree, it was admitted that “ground penetrating radar” which can precisely locate roots had not been used.

The reason for felling the tree was that the roots extended unacceptably into the area needed for excavation for the sports hall. The developer’s tree specialist had reported that the tree had shown vigorous growth, and had many years of life remaining.

The Council at first rejected the developer’s application under a Trees Protection Order and telling the developer to explore other options for felling the tree that would preserve the tree in accordance with the planning consent. However, a new application to fell the tree was submitted without any other design options appearing to have been considered. The developers claimed that any redesign would delay completion of the school and that this would incur costs the school would be unable to bear.

The Westcombe Society feel that the costs should have been borne by the developer who should have done an earlier root survey, they believe that the risk to the tree if the roots are cut is small if the excavation were not beyond the building line. This is stated in the arboricultural report obtained by the developer. The concern is that even if the replacement tree has a similar growth rate, it would take many decades to achieve the screening effect of the existing tree.

Many Greenwich taxpayers resent paying to remedy the developer’s failures either by delays to the school or by the loss of the tree. They feel the Planning Board were misled when they were assured at the time of the original application that the tree could be saved. Had the risk to the tree been identified earlier the architects could have been required to redesign the building to accommodate the tree.

As it was, the Greenwich Area Planning Committee were put in an impossible position given that a redesign would delay completion resulting in huge costs to the school and a potential battle with the developers. Sadly, sacrificing the tree may not have been the Lower School’s option in time, as other elements of the project seem already to have fallen behind schedule.

The critical date is September 2014 when the temporary relocation of students to premises in Royal Mill must finish, and the students will be returning to the Westcombe Park Road site.

The school’s Maze Hill site is due for completion later in the autumn of 2014.

New year, new park?

The Olympic Games have started and the Greenwich Peninsula has been undergoing a substantial reinstatement programme in preparation for the post-Olympic period and condition or better.” Graham Dear of Royal Parks anticipates that work will be completed by early Spring 2013.

The final phase of this restoration overlaps with a significant road and pathway revamp which started in January. While the car park remains open, the Park is closed to through traffic (motorists and cyclists) and will remain so for a total of eleven weeks. Works include:

* A reduction in the width of the tarmac path in Bower Avenue, denoting the ‘landing area’ of the most historical tree-lined avenues in the Park – the aim to improve the health of the trees by replacing tarmac close to the roots with turf. There will be a cycle route along the avenue.

Hyde Park today – Greenwich tomorrow?

The Royal Parks have announced a new five year partnership with AEG Live to deliver six summer concerts each year. The income received by The Royal Parks from the concerts will be used to maintain and manage all eight Royal Parks across London. The Royal Parks are now under Boris Johnson’s control “with strong safeguards to protect their traditional character.” The Mayor took over day-to-day management of the eight historic green spaces – including Greenwich Park, Royal Park and Regent’s Park as well as Greenwich – after the Olympics.

There are concerns that the Royal parks will become overly commercialized to the detriment of the local community. However, the chain of command seems somewhat murky. In an interview in Horticulture Week in September of last year, Linda Lennon said: “The Royal Parks are an agency of the Government’s Department for Culture Media & Sport (DCMS) and we get a grant from them. Boris has appointed a Royal Parks board, which reports to him, while I report to the DCMS but owe him once a month.” We all want the same thing — to protect and preserve the parks for future generations.”

AEG Live is dedicated to all aspects of live contemporary music performance, including concert touring, music festivals and special events.

Christopher’s column

Cutting corners

Apart from noting what’s in flower on January 1st at a local garden in winter, jasmine, buds on summer jasmine, osteoporeum and a lone climbing narcissus, elsewhere choysias were going strong. This year we have a Feb. 14 deadline to think about. I’m involved in a community garden project: this is funded by the Hampstead (www.hampsteadgardenproject.org), which we hope will produce its first Moons for Valentine’s Day.

We have planted around 5000 bulbs in and around the grounds of the Garden Museum, using mainly species of narcissus and tulips, bluebells and allium. We have also planted native hedging shrubs within the grounds of the Museum, including three shoulder high winter flowering cherries, which arrived before Christmas when the ground was frozen, but already have blossoms.

Our emphasis for the Garden Museum commission is on creating a winter cutting garden which will provide simple posies and bouquets as an alternative to the supermarket’s roses and lilies.

We use seedheads, stems and buds as well as ivy, forsythia, early prunus, cornus mas (from the dogwood family) and hazels. We introduce flowers and leaves if cut as bare stems and kept indoors in a deep vase (in a cool room) for a week or two. Over the Christmas period, our stems of willow sprouted roses as well as leaves. Like the debate about importing ash trees, this project has revealed how tricky it is to buy UK grown plants and especially trees – many are started off here as seedlings, then go to Italy or Holland, to be grown on in natural warmth or polytunnels, only to be imported back into the UK as saplings or fully mature trees.

The question of ‘flower miles’ – we read that most cut flowers are traded through the Netherlands, regardless of where they are grown. Perhaps the accompanying exhibition ‘Floriculture’ will consider it. Just so happens that it opens on February 14th.


Christopher Raven

**TRAVEL APPLICATIONS**

See also http://westeastsblog.blogspot.com/ 20 WESTCOMBE PARK ROAD 13/106F Commonage terrace and extension 1 and rear dormer windows 37 GLENCLUCE ROAD 13/090F Esthetic joinery and external finished at front TREETOP WORKS 1 HUMBER ROAD 11/036CT Full bay frosted and x-lighting at rear. Crown railings offer c/a 300P

Christopher Raven

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Planning applications can be viewed in the library, or at the Woodberry Library on the lower ground floor of the Woodberry Cross Centre, 35 Wellington St. They may also be viewed on www.greenwich.gov.uk/planning

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