The sky’s the limit
Sarah Winterbottom

Even before his re-election, Boris Johnson has made his views known on the London airport debate – he wants to see either a new airport built on the Thames Estuary or an additional runway at Stansted.

Additional air capacity is currently being looked at by the government, but the Airports Commission, headed by Sir Howard Davies, is not due to publish its review and recommendations until 2015. MPs, peers and campaign groups have joined with the leaders of nine local authorities to call on the Government to bring forward the publication date of the final Davies report. They have written a joint letter to Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin asking for the report to be published well before the 2015 General Election.

The scheduled date for publication is currently July 2013, but two months after the Election. They are also calling on Sir Howard Davies in his interim report, due by the end of this year, to “lay out very clearly what does not work”.

Keen to accelerate the government’s timetable, Boris has lost patience, and announced to the Transport Commission that he has brought together his own team of experts to deliver a shortest of possibilities within weeks followed by a detailed feasibility report against each option as soon as early next year.

“The government has thus far failed to realize that dawdle when dash should be the order of the day,” said Johnson. “It is absolutely imperative that we work to progress a new airport in the South East is completed as soon as possible.”

Travel experts understand his sense of urgency: airports in Europe such as Schipol are a threat to Heathrow, as are new hub airports in the Gulf, where massive investments are taking place.

Proposals to build a new airport on the Thames Estuary received much criticism from environmentalists both from an air and noise pollution perspective, as well as the prospective damage to globally significant wildlife areas which support notable amounts of bird life.

London Assembly Green Party member Jenny Jones said: “Instead of squandering taxpayers’ money on developing fantasy airports, we will inevitably lead to massive carbon emissions, he should be prioritizing climate mitigation and adaptation.

“Whatever might be the local impact of an airport in the estuary? There are already local complaints ofunya people who find themselves under both the Heathrow and City Airport flight paths. They fear that an airport in the estuary would add to rather than ease the problem.

“Orchers are able to argue in the estuary would be too far away to create a noticeable hub in SE London. Medway Council has earmarked funds to fight the idea of an estuary airport, partly on these grounds, but a campaigning group (Demand Renovation in North Kent (DRINK)) is in favour.

Sinister development

Meanwhile, in a sinister development, it has been reported that John Stewart, the chairman of the airport campaigning group HACAN, arrived in New York only to be met by armed guards, and sent home. HACAN is a peaceful and very well organised campaigning group. Why the Americans should have thought Mr Stewart a threat to public security is a complete mystery.

Mr Stewart is the author of Why Noise Matters (Earthscan 2011).

The Westcombe Society

The Westcombe Society’s Defold Tea has become so popular that senior citizens are even being based in to enjoy the delicious tea party organized by the Westcombe Society. Others were collected, and driven home, by volunteer drivers, though some arrived at Mycenae House on foot. See the story on page 2.

Emergency services closures

Boris Johnson is pushing ahead with plans to cut twelve fire stations, 18 fire engines and 85 police front counters across the capital.

The fight for Lewisham Hospital

Lewisham Council has decided to apply for a judicial review into the Government’s decision to downgrade the accident and emergency unit at Lewisham Hospital.

Those who do not live in Lewisham, but want to help, can donate to the Save Lewisham Hospital Local Challenge Fund, to help offset the possible £200,000 costs of this appeal – a small price to pay to ensure Greenwich, Lewisham and Bexley residents don’t have to rely on one hospital.

The Fun Project

Several readers have asked for information about coping with mosque. The Fun Project can be contacted on 01892-824811, week-
days from 9.00 am - 6.00 pm, (www.funproject.org.uk). For Human For Dummies advice, ring 01892-462262.

If you are concerned about an injured or sick fox, ring the project on 01892-731565 between 9.00 am to 9.00 pm, or, outside these hours, please contact the RSPCA (0300 1234999).

Schools in the dock

The Royal Borough’s new recorder is Nicholas Hilliard Q.C., M.A., a former chairman of the Criminal Bar Association. He is currently Lord Justice of the South Eastern Circuit and is also Southwark’s recorder.

He is on record as expressing deep shock over local crime – much of it knife crime, and much of it gang related. He said:

“Soon after arriving at inner London Crown Court, I tried to start an initiative by inviting local schools to send groups for visits: to watch a case in action, meet the judge, to sit in the dock. Few replies were received, sadly none of them positive.

“I’m going to try again; with the additional clue that you have given me as the honorary recorder of Southwark I might achieve more than I did last time around.” Let’s hope that he tries this same idea.

Stop beeping!

Those who are beeping about the contamination of beef ready meals with hormones should be reassured by government statements that eating beef is as safe as horses.

The Virgin London Marathon

This is on Sunday April 21st. Beware road closures (see p.6)

Run from the heat

Local resident Annie Keys has started a petition asking the Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin, to refuse permission for the road closures necessary for the Run to the Beat event on Sept 8th. The event raises funds for Leukemia & Lymphoma Research.

The petition is at: https://www.change.org/en-
GB/petitions/the-secretary-of-state-for-transport-close-the-streets-for-run-to-the-beat

Sorry to lose you, Sue

We are sorry to hear that Sue is leaving Apple’s in Oranges in Old Dover Road.

Vehicle and bicycle thefts

Since the Olympics, thousands of pounds worth of petrol cycles have been stolen. Cycle owners should contact the Safer Transport cycle task force for advice on cycle security.

Streets in the southern and northern parts of Westcombe Park in particular have been targeted by thieves stealing from cars and vans. Motorists are urged always to lock their cars – even for brief periods – and not to leave valuables on display.

Bogus callers

Residents are yet again warned not to admit bogus callers: use a door chain, and always ask for ID. If you have any doubts, close the door while calling the number displayed on the ID card.

Phone and email scams

Email messages from friends claiming to have been hospitalised in Madrid, or Manila (or wherever) and asking you to send money, are almost certainly fraudulent. Recently someone received a fraudulent email from Lagos a friend, whom they knew happened to be in Lagos: it was, nonetheless, a scam!

40th YEAR

Westernme NEWS

Est. 1973 Free to 3800 homes, and in libraries & some shops April 2013 Issue 3

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

From: Richard Fenney
In your March issue you state: "...for the whole of the three year period, [2015 - 17] Greenwich Line passengers will have no access to Charing Cross." This is only correct if peak period is prior to late evening.

I think that the direct Greenwich line to/from Charing Cross at peak times and late evening will still run during February 2015, 2016 and 2017. It's just that they won't stop at London Bridge, but passengers can continue to Charing Cross at peak times and late evening.

What I think will be a problem for 2015, 2016, and 2017 is if the Greenwich Line is modified to stop at Charing Cross at peak times. Passengers would then have to use a train that stops London Bridge and Charing Cross trains won't be stopping at London Bridge (2015-2016) or because the Greenwich Line/Cannon Street trains won't be stopping at London Bridge (2017).

However I wonder what will happen to the current late evening trains from/to the Greenwich Line to/from Charing Cross.

ED: Thank you Richard for your clarification. We hope that you and other rail users will join in the Greenwich Line User Group being set up.

From: Tracey McGregor Beaufortdon Rd I have just discovered two very new fantastic small businesses in the local area.

The first is a wonderful new sewing shop in Delceanut Road called Sewing Time. I am doing a wheelchair course there and also a knitting course. I'm enjoying it so much that I am sure others in the area will, too.

The second is my excitement is a little cafe in Chatton Park called The Old Cottage Cafe. The staff were very friendly and the food is delicious.

From: Trevor Allan Coleraine Road The 4R's should be using the prefix "allred" in relation to so-called "fix attacks". So far, there has not been a single substantiated fix attack. All the stories so far have only ever been on the word of the "victims" of the injured children. Not a single victim of a "fix attack" has accepted the 4R's statement that they will help investigate how the alleged attacks happened, or take up the office of free for determination advice to ward off any future incidents.

The most recent case of an alleged fix attack was also a dubious narrative given that the initial story was contradicted by the child’s mother in an interview in The Free that week. But it was confirmed that the family did get the long sought after housing transfer they were after, stating they were too scared to return to their property after the alleged “Fox attack”.

The case in Hackney where children allegedly attacked by foxes was also thrown into question when the father appeared on "Facebook" with a dog - despite the family’s insistence they didn’t have dogs.

As far as "free" contacts go, free contacts are expensive and futile, as merely open up the territory for further fox to adopt. Needless to say, I plan to continue to be a good friend to my foxes.

From: Edward Hill Foyle Road Graham Dear is simply incorrect in claiming that a bit of gardening will fix the Olympic damage to Greenwich Park’s trees, soil, grasslands and wildlife.

Greenwich is paying a heavy price for the Greenwich Park Olympics, with dozens of closed businesses, with health and amenity impacts for millions, and unprecedented damage to the Park. This contrasts with the reported £100 million value of the event to local corporate sponsors and corporates. Rupert Murdoch’s in the Times was triumphant: “the choice of Greenwich was inspired... Let’s do it again soon.”

Companies entered with enthusiasm Greenwhich Park and the World Heritage Site doesn’t merit maximising commercial benefits by going for ever greater privatisation through corporate sponsorship. This is kept out of the media, including PR professionals at Royal Parks and local institutions have taken misinformation lessons from LOCOG, which of course has the power to suppress the true story.

Local residents are starting to act as community warriors who can challenge contractors of the Royal Parks, can help and advise the police, and can record all that happens for the community. Local small businesses are also starting a network to do something about the excessive rents, rates and parking charges, and about the unethical, tax-avoiding multinational chains invading Greenwich.

A quick walk to see the damage to Greenwich Park and to support the remaining local small businesses is planned for 2pm on the May Bank Holiday - Monday 5th May. Readers can visit www.makinggreenwich.co.uk for updates, and to join us as email list.

From: Cllr Geoffrey Brightly Your March article raises some important issues regarding the Mayor's consultation on the future of policing. However it doesn't mention the rea-son for some of the measures - the need to find savings following the explosion in public expen- siture created by the last Government. Boris has to find 500m savings and understood build- ings seem a sensible place to start.

As your article states the pattern of reporting crime has changed more and more to phone and email and there are figures showing that police stations across Greenwich have seen an average of 1.6 visits per opening hour. While possible changes to how the NTSV work were also in the consultation, the overall proposals seek to increase existing levels of police on the streets - a nebulous but buildings argument.

The consultation provided an opportunity for everyone to have a say and, for those opposed to change, to put forward their own solutions.
“A time to tear down and a time to build” Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8

London Fashion Week – Blackheath style
Corrie-Jane Rafferty

A deary Spring was much cheered on by the girls of Blackheath High School who sauntered down their own catwalk, wowing their audience, to showcase the design talents of GCSE and A level students in their annual Winter Fashion Show.
The show is entirely organised, produced and directed by the students themselves with girls modelling garments they themselves designed and made.
Kate Elliott, Head of Sixth Form, said: “I was really bowled over by the show, the wealth of creativity displayed, and meticulous organisation, were outstanding! All of the girls should be congratulated for putting on such an entertaining and successful event which was produced to a very professional standard.”

This year’s event, which raised over £1225 for the Fashion Targets Breast Cancer Charity, was themed “Juxtapose”, and the garments featured in the fashion show were all designed specifically around this theme. Designs included “black and white”, “wild and tamed” and “angels and demons.”

Blackheath High School Social Prefects Lottie Kerr and Ellice Hathorne were delighted by the final result, after months of hard work, explaining “It was wonderful to see our dedication paid off with every thing coming together perfectly.” The show provides an opportunity for students to display their design and musical talents and, of course, designing garments for the fashion show is also a great addition to students’ art and textile portfolios.

The girls worked very hard to produce an extremely professional and exciting show which was enjoyed by everyone.

Blackheath Conservatoire exceeds target

The Conservatoire in Blackheath has raised an astonishing £200,000 from the local community in less than six weeks, surpassing its target of £175,000 and avoiding the threat of immediate closure.
The Conservatoire is still in the process of securing re-financing from a bank of its existing debt, but so far everything is going to plan.
“The response from the community has been simply amazing,” says Sydney Thornbury, the Conservatoire’s Chief Executive. “The banks have been enormously impressed by the local community’s show of support.
“We are on course with our new business model. We’re not out of the woods yet, but we have an extraordinary future ahead, and we are extremely grateful to the community for all of its efforts.”
For information: Sydney Thornbury, Sydney@conservatoire.org.uk, or Telephone: 0208 852 6204/67791 609 971

Blackheath Funeral Service opens

Blackheath Funeral Service on Stratheden Parade, Stratheden Road, Blackheath opened its doors to the public on Saturday 2nd March for their Chapel of Rest Dedication service, which was officially opened by The Mayor, Councillor David Grant. The dedication took place with members of the local clergy, funeral staff and members of the public.
The owners of the company are proud to bring their family-owned and run company to the Royal Standard. They feel that the personal service shown by their caring and compassionate staff, and reasonable prices, are needed in the area.
Adrian Goward, co-owner says: “We understand that families need support and guidance through this traumatic time and our experienced staff are there to help every step of the way. We even visit families in the comfort of their own home to make arrangements if desired. “We pride ourselves on our care and compassion shown to all clients, whatever their circumstances, and offer low cost simple services, through to the most extravagant funerals.
We want to become part of the local community. If members of the public have any questions about funeral services please feel free to come into the office and talk to our staff. We also offer talks and “behind the scenes” tours to help dispel any myths about funerals.

Invicta Primary School in Chatham has been described as “outstanding” by Ofsted inspectors in a glowing inspection report – just three years after being judged ‘satisfactory’.
The Ofsted inspectors visited the 273-pupil school in January and found that: * Teaching is increasingly outstanding and almost always at least good in all subjects and year groups * Pupils’ behaviour is exemplary * Standards are well above average in all subjects and have been consistently high over the last three years * Teachers expect the best of every pupil. They set tasks which are at the right level – sufficiently demanding for pupils to build on their skills and abilities * The headteacher is an inspirational leader who is dynamically supported by highly committed governors and staff. Headteacher Marie Corbett said: “What really pleased me about the report was that it recognised the hard work the school has put in over the last three years. We have gone from satisfactory to outstanding as a result of relentless determination to raise standards at the school.”

Well done, Invicta!

house & home maintenance
• extensions • refurbishments • repairs
• kitchens • bathrooms
• plastering • painting • decorating
• floor coverings • windows
• electrical • plumbing

WHATEVER YOUR HOME NEEDS
call us on
07898 760269

Westcombe News April 2013
Daniel Day-Lewis: master craftsman

Neville Grant looks at the early life of one of the finest actors in the world — and how Greenwich helped to shape him

Across the road from the Greenwich theatre in Crooms Hill, there is a Georgian house with a red door. On the wall nearby, a blue plaque marks the fact that Cecil Day-Lewis, Poet Laureate, lived there.

What the blue plaque does not record is that here also once lived Jill Baldwin, the actress. Tamara Doran, the vintage film-maker and cookery writer; and her younger brother, Daniel Day-Lewis, winner of three Oscars for best actor, and arguably the best actor in the world.

Daniel Day-Lewis’s parents came to live in Greenwich in 1957, and stayed here until 1972. Daniel started off school life at Invicta School from where he moved to Sherington. Surrounded by tough South London children, and talking “pole” (he was often bullied).

In his acceptance speech in Hollywood for the Oscar he won for his role in the film There’s Something He spoke about his childhood here, recalling: “Invicta Infants School, Sherington Primary School in Charlton, Greenwich Park, Blackheath — these were the play-grounds of my early life.”

Another famous local boy making good, Jules Holland, featured in the WN in 2007, recalls having called “a run-in” with Daniel: “I have a photo of him, and I recall exactly what that meant. One can easily imagine that at that time, survival was the name of the game, and Daniel felt he needed to improve his street cred with his classmates. He became a bit of a thug: he acquired the local street lingo, and — causing much anguish to his parents — indulged in petty crime (stealing from sweet shops etc.)

He later recalled that these were his first convictions and performances.

He became totally wild. He was a bright child not being academically stretched, and his parents were at their wit’s end to know how to break the cycle, so they decided that boarding school was the answer, so he was sent to Sevenoaks — but he only lasted there for two years. He was transferred to Bedales in Petersfield, Hampshire, which his sister attended, which was famous for its relaxed and creative ethos.

He was much happier at Bedales, where one of his teachers, John Rogers, recalls he brought to school a pet pig which all too-often escaped and caused chaos.

Meet your neighbour

Howard Goodhew

What: Howard, how long have you been working here?
HG: I’ve been here ten years.
W: What brought you to the job?
HG: Oh gee… I was looking for a job that was different from my previous employment; something that was local and involving people because I am a people person. I used to work in the motor trade.
W: What did you do?
HG: I was a Postal Transport Technician What: that’s classes (confused)
HG: I worked for the Royal Mail for twenty-two years.
W: You can do such this job if you’ve worked here for ten years?
HG: Yes, yes, it suits me… because I’m within walking distance to where I live. It always appealed to me to be a caretaker in a school or something.
W: What you’re interested about working here?
HG: The people are all so different. You get some eccentric people like the jazz band, you’ve got a woman that does erotic dancing (laughs). I think it’s just getting to know people, everyone that walks through the door is different… it’s been an eye-opener.
W: Where were you born?
HG: I was born in Australia?
W: Whereabouts?
HG: I was born in a place called Orange, about 160 miles west of Sydney.
W: What brought you to England?
HG: Like a lot of Australian people you want to see the rest of the world. I was a conscript in Australia from ’69 to ’71, and I had an English grandparent as well… I used to work for an English guy. He came from Surrey… I worked down there and then I met my late wife, she died of breast cancer a few years ago.

She lived in the Kidbrooke area and she wanted to remain in this area, so I made the move up. I’ve lived there since ’76. My late wife was a civil servant and she wanted to remain in London.

How many kids do you have?
HG: I’ve got two kids, I’ve got a son he’s twenty-five, he’s a school teacher at a school in Camberwell, where he teaches geography. And my daughter, she works at Lewisham College.

W: Oh! Brilliant! Does she get you tickets?
HG: Oh, I haven’t got there yet.
W: Do you go to cricket games?
HG: Occasionally, I can’t say I’m a really big fan, but it’s on my to-do list.
W: What do you enjoy most about the job?
HG: I enjoy working here because of the variety, and I like variety, I can’t do a mundane job… Here, every day is different and you meet so many different people and the day seems to fly.
W: Thanks Howard… Enjoy the rest of your day.

Pauline Mullins

We regret to announce the death in February of Pauline Mullins, aged 79. The funeral service at St John’s Church was packed with mourners.

Pauline spent the war years outside London to escape the blitz. She went on to marry Ron Mullins, who had been a prisoner of war of the Japanese.

As her children grew up, Pauline went to work as an untrained social worker in the Ferrier Estate. She went on to train as a professional social worker, and is very fondly remembered all over Greenwich, and particularly in Thamesmead, for the work she did in the children’s fostering and adoption service.

Our deepest condolences to Deborah, Stuart, her grandchildren and great grand-children.

DENISE SCOTT-Mcdonald talks to the caretaker of Mycenae House

“My day to day job is not just to keep the building open, but to maintain a building and to run the daily aspects of a building. We have a very small team of people who work Monday to Friday and we have weekends which are very busy because we have a lot of events and we have a lot of drop ins who need a cup of tea, who need a place to sit. We have a lot of volunteers who come in and help us out, they’re amazing. We have a very good team and a very good group of people who come in and help us out.”

“Old and new” New exhibition at Made in Greenwich Gallery

Rosewood artist and former Westcombe Park resident Maureen Black will be showing some of her work at Made in Greenwich Gallery, 124 Creek Road SE10 9SW from March 26th to April 14th, and will be at the gallery herself on the weekend of the 13th and 14th of April.

Her exhibition is called ‘Old and New’. Since moving to Salisbury in 1995, Maureen has been experimenting with different techniques and colours in works inspired by the Down South, which will be shown alongside some of her more familiar local views.

The gallery is open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Sunday and Bank Holidays 11-3, Friday and Saturday 11-7.
www.madeingreenwich.co.uk 020 83923923.

Westcombe Park Dental Practice

Treatments Available
Zoom Tooth Whitening
Dental Implants
Invisalign
Smile Makeovers
Tooth Colouring Fillings
Anti-Wrinkle Treatments & Dermal Fillings

13 Station Crescent, Westcombe Park, London SE3 7EQ. Tel. 0208 853 3304 Fax: 0208 858 1784

4 Westcombe News April 2013

13 Station Crescent, Westcombe Park, London SE3 7EQ. Tel. 0208 853 3304 Fax: 0208 858 1784

4 Westcombe News April 2013

STARKEY FINANCIAL PLANNING LIMITED

INDEPENDENT PERSONAL AND CORPORATE FINANCIAL ADVISERS

Investments - Pensions - Estate Planning
2 Charlton Road, Blackheath Standard, London, SE10 9SW (T) 020 8383 1769 email: admin@starkeyfinancialplanning.co.uk website: www.starkeyfinancialplanning.co.uk
HELPING YOU PLAN YOUR FUTURE
Starkey Financial Planning Ltd. is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority.
Eltham mansion’s restoration award highlights exotic Chilean origins

GORDON BAKER

The University of Greenwich has gained initial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a £2.9 million bid for conservation of the Avery Hill Winter Garden. Development funding of £192,100 has also been awarded to help the university to apply for a grant to restore the Winter Garden to its full architectural and horticultural splendour.

The building’s iron structure is the second biggest glass-house in the UK after the Temperate House at Kew. It would be carefully conserved and filled with lush new planting, recreating the temperate style which once flourished there.

The plans also include increased access to the building; improved visitor facilities; new learning, meeting and exhibition spaces and an education and outreach programme to promote understanding of the history of this elegant listed building and its garden.

Many readers will know the Avery Hill estate that sits above Eltham and is now the centre of Greenwich University’s Avery Hill Campus. But how many know that its origins are linked to the deserts of Northern Chile?

‘Colonel’ John Thomas North was a buccaneering Victorian millionaire notorious as the ‘Nitrates King’. He returned to this country in the 1880s after making his fortune in Chilean nitrates. He bought Avery Hill and transformed it into a glittering mansion for his lavish entertainment and sporting exploits.

Despite war damage and extensive rebuild- ing by the university, Avery Hill still displays numerous features from North’s days including his library, sculpture gallery and stables—and the only Grade II listed ladies lavatory in London!

Born to a modest Yorkshire family, North trained as an engineer. In 1869 his employers, the steam machinery manufacturers Fowlers of Leeds, sent him to look after their equipment in nitrates plants in Chile and Peru.

He stayed on and prospered through a series of astute deals after Chile acquired extensive nitrates-rich territory from Peru following the Pacific War of 1879/1881. Nitrate was then the main source of fertiliser, which nourished the dramatic growth of global agriculture in the late 19th Century, as well as a raw material for explosives.

Besides dominating the nitrate industry, North amassed extensive interests in Chilean banks, railways, coal mines, shipping and water supply.

His vast wealth was invested in Welsh coalmines and iron foundries, Australian gold mines and Egyptian tramways—and rubber plantations in what was then the so-called ‘ Congo Free State’, at a time when little was known about the horrors of King Leopold’s private African colony.

North became a noted benefactor, especially locally and in his native Yorkshire, and he took great pride in being appointed Honorary Colonel of the 2nd Tower Hamlets Engineer Volunteer Corps. When he died in 1896 thousands turned out to watch his funeral procession to Eltham Parish Church, where his tomb still stands.

A new biography The Nitrates King by William Edmundson (published by Palgrave Macmillan as ISBN: 978-0-230-11283-5) tells the fascinating and now largely-forgotten story of this picaresque adventurer, one of several British speculators whose wealth made in Latin America added substantially to Victorian British capital stock and built some of our greatest houses.

U3A: Adult Learning for Fun

MICHAEL GOLDMAN

Fun—that is what the University of the Third Age (U3A) is all about: keeping the mind enjoyably active as one grows older. It is not truly a university but it is more than just another old people’s club—much more.

The movement started in France and reached this country in 1988. There are now 870 U3As all over the UK, with nearly 300,000 members. They are autonomous bodies, usually with charitable status, affiliated to the Third Age Trust which has its HQ in Bromley.

The concept is very simple: retired people teach, or lead groups of, other retired people. The age of most members is well over fifty and the ratio of women to men is about two to one.

The movement has barely scratched the surface of our ageing population: there are 10.75 million people aged over 65 in the UK, out of which three percent of whom belong to U3A. It is generally acknowledged, as we are all living longer, that it is important to keep mentally, as well as physically, active.

Some people are put off by the word ‘university’ and the correspondence pages of the quarterly Third Age Matters (formerly Third Age News) are full of time to time with letters on this subject.

There is no doubt that the same deterrent some who would benefit from and enjoy membership, but it seems reasonable to discourage old folk who just want a cup of tea and a chat. However, there is one very positive benefit of belonging to U3A: the opportunity to make new friends. The membership is overwhelmingly white and middle-class, but that may change over time.

Although the educational element is fundamental, most U3As put on a whole range of activities. The programme of South East London U3A, for example, lists 77 different activities, including a badminton group, a country dancing group, four scarab groups, four reading groups, three history groups, two philosophy groups and seventeen language groups at various levels.

There are also outdoor activities such as bird watching, walking and architectural visits.

Many of the events take place in people’s homes, while bigger groups are held in various community centres—including Goldsmiths’ College, which carries out our administration.

This means that the annual subscription can be kept down to £18 and Goldsmiths’, for their part, are pleased for South East London U3A to enhance its further education activities. Membership has grown steadily and now stands at nearly 800. Some U3As in rural areas are much smaller and tend to centre on weekly or monthly meetings for the whole membership. Bromley and U3A in London are among the biggest groups with over 1700 members.

Shared learning projects are a growing feature of U3A. These often involve cooperation with a museum whereby U3A members carry out research into an archive, for example. Summer schools are also a popular activity: there are two national events and various others organised by regional groups of U3As. Retired people often say that they are so busy that they do not know how they found time for work: membership of U3A reinforces that feeling, and provides a framework and a purpose for lives which might otherwise be rather shapeless.

The South East London U3A website is www.u3alondon.org.uk; or contact the Membership Secretary, Anne Richards, 19 Little Heath, Charlton, SE7 8HU; Tel 020 8951 4645 (mentioning the U3A).
**Good news for Thames travellers**

It has announced a plan to double the number of commuters travelling along the Thames over the next seven years. The scheme, costing some £10 million, aims to increase the number of passengers to twelve million. Included in the plans are three new piers on the river – the first at Plantation Wharf in Battersea this year.

Two more piers have planning permission – at Battersea Power Station and Enderby Wharf. Enderby Wharf is the site for the International Cruise Liner Terminal, as well as a 251 bedroom hotel, 770 luxury townhouses and apartments. Existing piers will also be upgraded. River commuters will be able to use new contactless “wave and pay” tickets. There will also be better interchange announcements on Tube and rail lines, and more cycle parking.

The scheme is likely to prove extremely popular – many observers have said that much greater use should be made of the river for transport purposes.

Mr Johnson has been trying to encourage more people to use the river for their daily commute. Since 2009, it has been possible to use Oyster cards on river boats, and passenger numbers have increased by more than 25 per cent in the past few years – from 5.3 million up to 6.6 million.

TFL expects that there will be an extra 100,000 new homes and 220,000 new jobs close to the Thames. This will inevitably create increased passenger demand for river services by 2030, Mr Johnson said: “...I am determined to maximise its potential.”

---

**The Marathon**

The Virgin London Marathon takes place on Sunday 21st April, and after previous years’ experiences, local residents will be keen to know about road closures.

Last year, members of the Westcombe Society environment committee met the organisation to discuss some of the problems that had arisen in 2012, including roads being closed without warning, and the unnecessarily long opening of some routes, causing great inconvenience. As a result, the marathon organisers have agreed to post leaflets to all residents within the next few days.

**Hospice Springwatch**

The Westcombe Society has donated four bird nest-boxes to the Berkeley

**Change for change’s sake?**

Local residents were left more than a title proper by a recent invitation by the Council to take part in a consultation on traffic curbing measures for the Halstow-Oomington Road area.

Some are asking whether, in such times of austerity, the degree of inconvenience currently suffered by residents of Kennington and other local roads justifies the local council in spending thousands of pounds on signs and restrictions (not alone the consultation process itself), especially without a full analysis of the consequences for other roads.

With the Council wanting to put measure in place before the end of the financial year, a two-phase consultation period start-

**Live Jazz Gem in Mycenae Road**

Once a month some world class live jazz occurs at Mycenae House in the main hall.

Fri 8th March, distinguished Portobello musician Earl Okin is featured, along with local top-line jazz guitarist

**Christopher’s column**

In for a penny... There are few gardening rules that you can’t bend, or actually break.

But there are some examples of ‘green rhetoric’ which you should never ignore. An old saying suggested that if your plant cost a penny, you should spend a pound on planting it – into a hole full of manure.

These days we grow plants harder, without large amounts of fertiliser or water, but planting well does pay dividends.

You need only dig a hole slightly larger than the rootball of the plant – again, contrary to old practices – and then water the hole and the plant. Soak the plant in water until any bubbles stop coming from the rootball, and fill the hole with water and let it drain, twice. Add a handful of compost and a little fertiliser to the hole, and scuff the roots of the plant into the soil. Finally, set the plant with the top of the rootball level with the surrounding soil and gently fill the hole. Firm around the plant and water again. Simple.

This method ensures that the plant sends its roots down into the damp soil beneath it, and out into the surrounding soil. A plant in a large hole full of compost is less likely to root out into the soil beyond, it seems. If you don’t have any trees or shrubs from large containers the same applies; but dig a square (sh) planting hole, which again encourages the plants roots into surrounding soil. (This tip comes from Rev’s tree experts).

Speaking of root breaking, I have transplanted some pinchum and chard for the second time in six months – soaking the plants before digging them up, then setting them in a bucket of water and planting as above.

Both varieties have quite robust roots, so we shall see how they go, with regular watering till they show new shoots. I also moved wallums, onions, chives and garlic, which should be fine as the bulbs have enough vigour to withstand the move – though they may slow down a little. A little warmth or sun would help.

---

**All change in Mycenae Road**

As the recession in Europe bites deeper, governments are desperately search-

**Planning applications can be viewed in the library, or at the Woolwich Library on the lower ground floor of the Woolwich Centre, 39 Wellington Road. They may also be viewed on www.

---

**michelle Mylax Dove**