



# Westcombe NEWS

40th YEAR

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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 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 2015, 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 the direction of his thinking.”

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 shortlist of possibilities within weeks followed by a detailed feasibility report against each option as soon as early next year.

“The government has set a timetable that dawdles when dash should be the order of the day,” said Johnson. “It is absolutely imperative that work to progress a new hub airport in the South East is completed as soon as possible.”



Travel experts understand his sense of urgency: airports in Europe such as Schiphol 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 that will inevitably lead to massive carbon emissions, he should be prioritising climate mitigation and adaptation projects.”

What might be the local impact of an airport in the estuary? There are already local complaints from 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.

Others argue that an airport in the estuary would be too far away to create a noise nuisance 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 Regeneration 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).



PHOTO: Neville Grant

The Westcombe Society’s Daffodil Tea has become so popular that senior citizens are even being bused 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.

## Operation Big Wing

**Police officers working on Operation Big Wing at the end of February arrested some 350 suspects across London.**

In Greenwich there were 27 arrests for a variety of offences from burglary to GBH and possession of drugs. In addition, 82 vehicles were stopped in Automatic Number Plate Recognition operations, four of which were seized for no insurance and no MOT.

Other incidents included the arrest of a man suspected of absconding from prison after he was found hiding in a loft at a house in Beckenham, while in Bromley, police officers raided a cannabis factory and seized 80 plants. Local police warn of a number of ongoing problems:

### Burglaries

Despite regular police patrols, burglaries have occurred in the Westcombe Park area – especially in and around Seibert Road. Recently, two people were arrested in Humber Road: one got five years, the other a nine month suspended sentence. Residents are urged to contact the police if they want advice on security, and an officer will arrange a visit.

### Vehicle and bicycle thefts

Since the Olympics, thousands of pounds worth of pedal 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 mugged in Madrid, or Manila (or wherever) and asking you to send money, are almost certainly fraudulent. Recently someone received a fraudulent email from Lagos from a friend, whom they knew happened to be in Lagos: it was, nonetheless, a scam!

Never do business on the phone: always ask callers, however plausible, to put it in writing. And just because someone refers you to a website does not mean that it is trustworthy!

The number to ring if you want the police is 101; in real emergency, 999.

Finally, computer users should beware of a fraudulent email from “Microsoft Digital Crimes Unit” designed to trick them into installing malware on their PC.

## NEWS BRIEFS

### Emergency services closures

Boris Johnson is pushing ahead with plans to cut twelve fire stations, 18 fire engines and 65 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 Legal Challenge Fund, to help offset the possible £200,000 costs of this appeal – a small price to pay to ensure Greenwich, Lewisham and Bexley boroughs don’t have to rely on one, already-overloaded, A&E unit in Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich.

### The Fox Project

Several readers have asked for information about coping with foxes. The “Fox Project” can be contacted on 01892-824111, weekdays from 9.00 am - midday. ([www.foxproject.org.uk](http://www.foxproject.org.uk)) For Humane Fox Deterrence advice, ring 01892-826222.

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 on 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 Leader of the South Eastern Circuit and is also Southwark’s recorder. He is on record as expressing

deep concern 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 a judge, to sit in the dock. Few replies were received, sadly none of them positive.

“I’m going to try again; with the additional clout 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 the same here.

### Stop beefing!

Those who are beefing about the contamination of beef ready meals with horsemeat 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.7*)

### Run from the beat

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 Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research. The petition is at: <https://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/the-secretary-of-state-for-transport-dont-close-the-streets-for-run-to-the-beat>

### Sorry to lose you, Sue

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

### The Westcombe Society

#### Forthcoming events:

**April 20th. 7.30 for an 8.00 pm start Quiz Night, Mycenae House**

*Why not get up your team (of six) ready for this popular event - or come alone! Enjoy a fish & chip supper too. Reserve this date, and your table, by calling Caroline on 020 8853 0948.*

**BOOKINGS CLOSE ON SAT. 13TH APRIL**



# COMMUNITY NEWS

## WESTCOMBE NEWS

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(email:marilyn.little@btinternet.com)

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Westcombe Society's Blog: <http://westcombe.blogspot.com>*

### WESTCOMBE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

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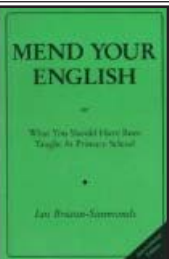
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## Westcombe Society events in March

The Westcombe Society had a busy time in March: first there was the Daffodil Tea for Senior Citizens on March 9th. in Mycenae House. Over thirty guests turned up to enjoy a delicious tea supplied by our devoted band of volunteers, accompanied by a free raffle, a quiz – and a good old natter! The quiz this year had the theme Food and health, and was devised by Maureen Aune, who said: “A quiz is a good way of getting people who turn up on their own to get talking: it breaks the ice, and they soon feel at ease!”

This was followed by the ever-popular Children’s Nearly New Sale on March 16th. Then at the end of the month we held the Easter Egg Hunt in Mycenae Gardens, with its hotly-contested Easter Bonnet and Easter Egg Basket competitions.

**RIGHT: Marilyn wheeled round the trolley full of free raffle prizes. The winners only had one problem: which one to choose?**



**PHOTOS:**  
**Neville Grant**

**RIGHT: Three of our volunteers. Where would we be without them?**



## Message from WS chairman Marilyn Little

With our elections coming up at our Annual General Meeting on May 12th, this is a good time to consider who you would like to be on your committee. Maybe you would like to stand yourself? It’s not very onerous, and can be fun!

Or maybe you would just like to get a little more involved as a volunteer – perhaps in the background by helping administer the Society, or by helping out at some of our events for children or old people, or other events such as the Christmas Bazaar. Or maybe you would like to contribute to our award-winning community newspaper, the *WN*?

London has comparatively few community organizations – and none, as far as we know, exactly like the Westcombe Society,

with its blend of community events, and its support in so many different ways of the local community and the environment.

This is the year when we celebrate our fortieth birthday, and we are very much still a going concern; but whether we survive another 40 years depends on a new wave of volunteers coming forward to play their part in so many different ways: organizing things, or just helping out on the day – graffiti-bashing, writing for (or delivering) the *WN*, watching out for key environmental issues, manning stalls, making sandwiches – and making friends!

*If you are interested, please ring any of the following: Marilyn Little (8853 1312) Joanne Lucas (8293 3429) Neville Grant 8858 8489*

## Letters

**Letters to the editor may be edited through lack of space. Any views expressed are those of the writers only, and are not necessarily those of the Westcombe Society or the *WN*.**

**From: Richard Feeney**

In your March issue you state: “..... for the whole of the three year period, [2015 - 17] Greenwich line passengers will have no rail access to Charing Cross.” This is only correct at off-peak times prior to late evening.

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

What I think will be a problem for 2015, 2016 and 2017 is getting from/to the Greenwich line to/from Charing Cross during off-peak hours – either because trains between 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 Beaconsfield Rd**

I have just discovered two new fantastic small businesses in the local area.

The first one is a wonderful new sewing shop in Delacourt Road called Sewing Time. I am doing a quilting course there and also a knitting course. I’m enjoying it so much that I am sure others in the area would, too.

The second object of my excitement is a little cafe in Charlton Park called The Old Cottage Cafe. It’s wonderfully cosy and the staff are very friendly.

**From: Trevor Allman Coleraine Road**

The *WN* should be using the prefix “alleged” in relation to so-called fox attacks. So far, there has not been a single substantiated fox attack. All the stories so far have only ever been on the word of the parents of the injured children. Not a single victim of a “Fox attack” has accepted the “Fox Project’s” offer to help investigate how the alleged attacks happened, or taken up the

offer of free fox deterrence advice to ward off any future incidents.

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

The case in Hackney of the two 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 for “pest” controllers, they are expensive and futile, as you merely open up the territory for another 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 Olympics damage to Greenwich Park’s trees, acid 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 the jubilant corporate sponsors and politicians. Rupert Murdoch’s leader in the Times was triumphant: “The choice of Greenwich Park was inspired... Let’s do it again soon”.

Agencies entrusted with safeguarding Greenwich Park and the World Heritage Site think only of maximising government funding by going for ever greater privatisation through corporate sponsorship. This is kept out of the media, because PR professionals at Royal Parks and local institutions have taken misinformation lessons from LOCOG, those masters of Orwellian spin and the suppression of evidence.

Local residents are starting a rota to act as community wardens who can challenge contractors of the Royal Parks, can help and advise the public, and can record all that happens for the community. Local small

## Lambing day



Woodlands Farm Trust on Shooters Hill is the Westcombe Society’s Charity of the Year, so why not go and see more of what they do on the farm on Sunday 7th April – Lambing Day?

All are invited to go and see their new-born lambs. This is also a very good opportunity to buy quality local produce at reasonable prices, including home-made preserves, cakes and honey.

Maureen says: “Relax in our café, enjoy the treasure hunt or try out our craft activities. It’s a great family day out!”  
**Lambing Day runs from 11.00 am to 4.30 -m on 7th April. Entry is £1 for adults and 50p for children, and all the proceeds go towards caring for the farm’s animals. Contact: The Woodlands Farm Trust, 331 Shooters Hill, Welling DA16 3RP Tel: 020 8319 8900**

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 guided 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 May 6th. Readers can visit [www.madeingreenwich.co.uk](http://www.madeingreenwich.co.uk) for updates, and to join an email list.

**From: Cllr Geoffrey Brighty**

Your March article raises some important issues regarding the Mayor’s consultation on the future of policing. However it doesn’t mention the reason for some of the measures – the need to find savings following the explosion in public expenditure created by the last Government. Boris has to find £500m savings and underused buildings 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 receive an average of 1.6 visits per opening hour. While possible changes to how the SNTs work were also in the consultation, overall the proposals seek to increase existing levels of police on the street – a bobbies before 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.



# LOCAL NEWS

## “A time to tear down and a time to build”

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8



PHOTO:  
Neville Grant

On March 10th, the Rev. Peter Farley-Moore of St Johns Church, Stratheden Road, welcomed a large congregation to a service of remembrance for those who died, or survived, the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and Tsunami that devastated the NE coast of Japan two years ago.

Speaking at the service (in both Japanese and English), the Bishop of Woolwich, the Rev Dr Michael Ipgrave, paid tribute to the community spirit of the survivors.

He also praised the work of those who were involved in reconstruction, including volunteers from other countries outside Japan, including the US, China, Canada and New Zealand.

More than 18,000 people were left dead or missing in the disaster, which also

caused the Fukushima nuclear crisis. Tens of thousands of people remain displaced, after entire communities were destroyed.

During the service, which was conducted in both Japanese and English, moving film was shown of both the tsunami and its aftermath, with heart-warming glimpses of ordinary people trying to cope with bereavement and destruction, and expressing their thanks for those who had come to their aid.

In attendance was a large congregation, and a Japanese choir, The Green Chorus, who sang several songs, including *Hana-wa-saku* (Flowers are blooming), a rehabilitation support song for the sufferers of the earthquake; and *Home Sweet Home*.

A collection was made for two support charity projects, *Yarn Alive*, and *Let us Walk Together*



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](mailto:Sydney@conservatoire.org.uk),  
**or Telephone:**  
**0208 852 0234**  
**/ 07791 609 971**

## 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 foreclosure.

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

## London Fashion Week – Blackheath-style

Corrie-Jane Rafferty

A dreary Spring was much cheered on by the girls of Blackheath High School who sashayed 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 Ellie Hathorne were delighted by the final result, after months of hard work, explaining “It was wonderful to see our dedication paid off with everything 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 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.

## Well done, Invicta!

Invicta Primary School in Charlton 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.”

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# PEOPLE

## 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**

**A**cross 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 Balcon, the actress, Tamasin Day-Lewis, documentary 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 "posh", he was often bullied.

In his acceptance speech in Hollywood for the Oscar he won for his role in the film *There will be blood* he spoke about his childhood here, recalling: "Invicta Infants School, Sherington Primary School in Charlton, Greenwich Park, Blackheath . . . these were the playgrounds of my early life."

Another famous local boy making good, Jules Holland, featured in the *WN* in 2007, recalls having what he called "a run-in" with Daniel, but history does not 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 tearaway: 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 convincing performances.

He became totally wild. He was a bright child not being academically stretched, and his parents were at their wits 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 piglet which all-too-often escaped and caused chaos.

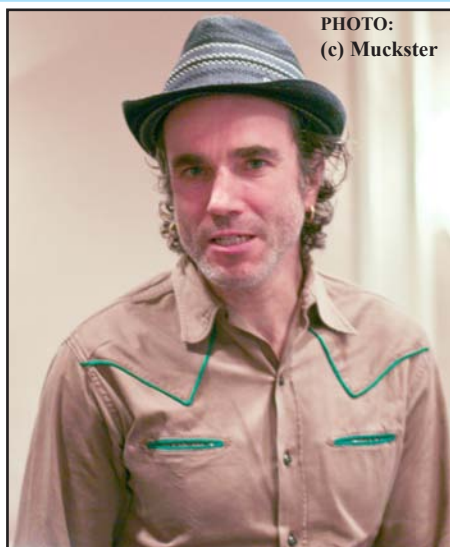


PHOTO:  
(c) Muckster

Street-cred: Day-Lewis in New York, 1989

It was at Bedales that his love of drama really came to the fore: he played a leading role in Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, and later had a small part in the film *Sunday Bloody Sunday*.

However, it was touch and go what career Daniel chose to follow: at Bedales, he spent hours in the woodwork shop, where his woodwork teacher, David Butcher, recalled that he was an extremely talented cabinet-maker.

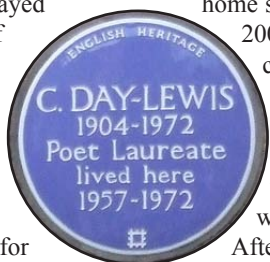
David visited Daniel's mother at her home shortly before her death in 2009, and recalls sitting in a chair made by Daniel at Bedales. It seems that Daniel loved doing things with his hands, working with materials – in 2002 he even went to Milan to make shoes.

After briefly toying with the idea of an apprenticeship in cabinet-making, Daniel chose a stage career. From the National Youth Theatre he went on to the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, eventually performing at the Bristol Old Vic itself.

In 1982 he had his big theatre break when he became the lead in *Another Country*. He later joined the Royal Shakespeare Company, playing Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*. However, he forsook the stage in 1989, when, acting the part of Hamlet at the National Theatre, he walked offstage mid-act, having allegedly seen the ghost of his father in the famous ghost scene.

The rest is history. His achievements as an actor are astonishing: just as he lived the part of a street urchin in Greenwich, so he became famous, Stanislavski style, for living the part of the characters he played, on and off set. When he played the part of Christy Brown, who had cerebral palsy, in *My Left Foot*, even offscreen he refused to break character: he had to be moved around the set in his wheelchair, so that he could gain insight into all aspects of Brown's life.

Who knows what his next role will be? It is said Daniel wants to go back home to County Wicklow (he has joint British and Irish citizenship) where he lives with his wife Rebecca Miller, daughter of the playwright Arthur Miller, and his two sons. David Butcher thinks he may be planning to return to cabinet-making – but dry-stone walling may also be on the cards.



## Meet your Neighbour

## Howard Goodhew

**DENISE SCOTT-McDONALD** talks to the caretaker of Mycenae House

*WN*: Howard, how long have you been working here?

*HG*: I've been here ten years.

*WN*: 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. *WN*: What did you do?

*HG*: I was a Postal Transport Technician

*WH*: What's that? (*confused*)

*HG*: I worked for the Royal Mail for twenty-two years.

*WN*: You must enjoy 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.

*WN*: What's interesting about working here?

*HG*: The people are all so different. You got some eccentric people like the jazz night, you've got a woman that does erotic dancing (*laugh*)... I think it's just getting to know people, everyone that walks through the door is different ... It's been an eye-opener

*WN*: Where were you born?

*HG*: I was born in Australia?

*WN*: Whereabouts?

*HG*: I was born in a place called Orange, about 160 miles west of Sydney.

*WN*: 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



PHOTO:  
Denise Scott-McDonald

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 Lord's Cricket Ground.

*WN*: Oh brilliant! Does she get you tickets?

*HG*: Oh, I haven't got there yet.

*WN*: 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.

*WN*: 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.

*WN*: Thanks Howard ... Enjoy the rest of your day.

## Pauline Mullins

**W**e 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.

Pauline, deeply committed to human values, was a great believer in freedom and human rights, particularly the right to fulfil one's potential. She was an active supporter of the Westcombe Society, and the Labour Party. Baroness Howells was one of many who spoke at her funeral of her strong gift for friendship.

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

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

**R**enowned artist and former Westcombe Park resident Maureen Black will be showing some of her work at Made in Greenwich Gallery, 324 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 Seaford in Sussex, Maureen has been experimenting with different techniques and colours in works inspired by the South Downs, which will be shown alongside some of her more familiar local views.

*The gallery is open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Sunday and Bank Holidays 11-5.30, Friday and Saturday 11-7.*

*www.madeingreenwich.co.uk 020 82939823.*

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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 April: Jane Gardiner "All the Beasts of the Earth: ways in which potters look to the natural world for their inspiration"** Non-members £5 on the door. [www.artsinblackheath.org.uk](http://www.artsinblackheath.org.uk) or ring 83187550

**MADE IN GREENWICH GALLERY 324 Creek Road, SE1** 'Old and New' monoprints by Maureen Black till April 14th. 'Natural World' exhibition from April 16th.

Poetry lectures by lecturer and broadcaster Graham Fawcett: 'Emily Dickinson' April 10th, 'Pablo Neruda' May 1st, 6.45 - 8.15 [www.madeingreenwich.co.uk](http://www.madeingreenwich.co.uk)

**ROYAL MUSEUMS GREENWICH**  
**Until 28th April: PHOTOGRAPHY from the MOUNTAINS to the SEA** The amazing photographs of Ansel Adams

**ROYAL OBSERVATORY GREENWICH**  
**Until August: Alien Revolution:** an exploration of our thinking about aliens in science and culture, from Copernicus to the present

## CHILDREN

**GREENWICH THEATRE Crooms Hill**  
**Box office: 8858 7755**  
**Thur 4th - Sat 6th April 11.am & 3.00 pm THE THREE LITTLE PIGS** A Musical leaving you squealing with glee . . . Tickets: £12.50 Children & Concs. £7.50 Family Ticket £32.00  
**Sat 20th - Mon 22nd April THE SNOW QUEEN** Hans Christian Anderson's story goes to India! Following its acclaimed tour of India. Sat & Sun. 7.30 pm Mats Sun. 2.30 pm Mon. 1.30 pm £15 Children & concs £12.50 Family ticket £38.00  
**BLACKHEATH HALLS**  
**Sat 13th April 3.00 pm THE GOLDEN CROWN** Wonderful puppet play £7.00 Ages 4+.  
**Sat 4th May 3.00 pm RUMPELSTILTSKIN & THE WHEEL OF FORTUNE** £7. Ages 4 - 9  
**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.

**SE LONDON DADS GROUP**  
**DADS ALERT:** Regular stay-and-play for dads and children under five @ Sherington Children's Centre, 14 Sherington Road every Wednesday from 9:30 - 11:30am. Contact: [www.SELondonDads.org.uk](mailto:www.SELondonDads.org.uk) or email: [info@selondondads.org.uk](mailto:info@selondondads.org.uk)



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## COMMUNITY

**Westcombe Society**  
**Dates for your diary:**  
**April 20th.** Quiz Night Mycenae House  
**May 12th AGM, Main Hall, lunchtime**  
**CELEBRATING OUR FORTIETH YEAR!**  
**Neville Grant will give a talk on "Producing the Westcombe News – the beginning, or end, of a career?"**

**June 15th** Summer Picnic and Senior Citizens Tea Party  
**Sept 7th.** Members' Evening, Main Hall,  
**Sep 27th** Macmillan Coffee Morning, bar / Main Hall Mycenae House  
**Sep 28th** Nearly New Sale, Main Hall,  
**Oct 26th** Quiz Night, Main Hall  
**November:** Dickensian Christmas Bazaar

**CANCER RESEARCH LUNCH**  
The next fund-raising luncheon is on Thursday 4th April 2013 at the Clarendon Hotel, Blackheath from 12 noon to 2:30 pm. Cost £8.50, including full meal and a free drink. Raffle! The Speaker: Millicent Turnbull (Millie) on "My eventful childhood before 1920" Lunches can be booked by telephoning Wendy on 020 8265 0335 by Monday 1st April.

**BLACKHEATH SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY**  
Mycenae House, 90 Mycenae Road SE3 7SE  
**April 19th Monorails of 19th Century**  
**Mr Adrian Garner** Visitors are welcome, and are requested to donate £ 3.00 to Society funds.

**BLACKHEATH BRIDGE CLUB** welcomes all players to duplicate sessions in Mycenae House Mon. & Thurs. 7.15 pm & on Wed. at 1.15 Tel. 8851 2609

**WESTCOMBE WRITERS' CIRCLE** 1st. Thursday each month, 2.30-4.30 at Mycenae House. Ring Joan Paice on 8305 1652 or Rosemary Gill on 8858 5088

**BLACKHEATH FLOWER CLUB** Meets third Friday of every month at 1.45 pm at Mycenae House

**BLACKHEATH & GREENWICH WOMEN'S INSTITUTE:** First Wednesday of every month at 7.30 pm at Sunfields Methodist Church, Old Dover Road, SE3 8SJ [eileenflanagan194@btinternet.com](mailto:eileenflanagan194@btinternet.com)

**SECOND CHANCE CHOIR** We rehearse Thursday evenings during term time, in Blackheath. New members welcome, contact **Margery Nzerem 0208 858 3544** [gery@nzerem.bbmax.co.uk](mailto:gery@nzerem.bbmax.co.uk)

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

**ENGLISH FOLK MUSIC**  
**9.00 pm every Tuesday** at the Lord Hood pub, Creek Road; mainstream jazz every Thursday.

**NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM**  
**Broadsides! Caricatures and the Navy 1756-1815** Ends April 30th FREE

**THE GREAT MAP** New interactive world map to explore key events in Britain's Maritime History

**GREENWICH AND BEXLEY COMMUNITY HOSPICE** Sunday, 28th April **Mini Marathon** for kids around Greenwich Park. A sponsored 2.62 mile Mini Marathon for 7 to 16 year olds – starting at 10.00 am from the bandstand. Registration costs £7.50 per child and all runners will receive a special Mini Marathon medal at the finish line.

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## THEATRE & OPERA

**THE GREENWICH THEATRE** Crooms Hill, Greenwich, London SE10 8ES 020 8858 7755  
Wed 10th April 7.30 pm **TOM CREAM – ANTARCTIC EXPLORER** One of Ireland's unsung heroes £15 | £10 concs.  
Tues 23rd - Wed 24th April 8.00 pm **GRIT** Visual theatre depicting the experiences of a war photographer £12.50 | £7.50  
Mon 29th April - Sun 5th May Mon - Sat 7.30 pm  
**GHOSTS** by Henrik Ibsen. Matinees Wed 1.00 pm, Sat 2.30 pm & Sunday 4.00 pm  
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2nd – 13th April, 7:30pm **THE 8th WAVE** £12 | £8 concs. Lonely and unmarried, Brian's little world revolves around his shop, his self-righteous world-view caged from the Daily Mail . . .

## GREENWICH HERITAGE CENTRE

**THIS ELTHAM OF OURS TO 18th MAY**  
Early 20th-century watercolours, etchings and drawings by Gertrude Ashworth and Daniel Warry: Eltham around the 1910s and '20s, a time when it was on the cusp of great change. In 1900 Eltham was like a Kentish village - before becoming "a seething town-ship". The artworks on display here capture the Eltham of old before it largely disappeared forever.

**A WOMAN'S PLACE... TO 13th APRIL**  
The vital role of women in the British Army during WW II and in today's Afghanistan. Firepower's collection of historical artefacts and stunning photographs by Alison Baskerville, who followed female soldiers on patrol in their special role - to win the hearts and minds of Afghanistan's rural communities.

## MUSIC

**BLACKHEATH HALLS** Tel 020 8463 0100  
Wed. 3rd April 7.00 pm Jette Parker Young Artists  
**Programme Tickets £7.00**  
**Fri 5th April** Rock royalty arrives in the form of **DEBORAH BONHAM**, with Steve Rodgers  
Tickets £14.00 £12.00 concs.  
**Sat 13th April 8.00 pm** More rock with **THE BLOCKHEADS** £20.00 (£22.00 on the door)  
**BLACKHEATH DOES BROADWAY**  
Final showcase performance on Sun. 28th April at 7.30 pm  
**19th April THE ICARUS CLUB** with Bruise, Christy Gallacher & Bob Collum 8.00 pm

**MYCENAE HOUSE**  
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**Surgery:**  
1st Monday of the month 6 - 7.00 pm Blackheath Library, Old Dover Rd.

**Labour:**  
**Cllr. Alex Grant**  
Tel. 8855 7292 E-mail: [Alex.grant@greenwich.gov.uk](mailto:Alex.grant@greenwich.gov.uk)  
**Surgeries:** 1st. Friday of each month, 7.00 - 8.00 pm, Mycenae House; 3rd. Saturday of each month, 3.30-4.30 pm, St James Church Hall, Kidbrooke Park Rd.



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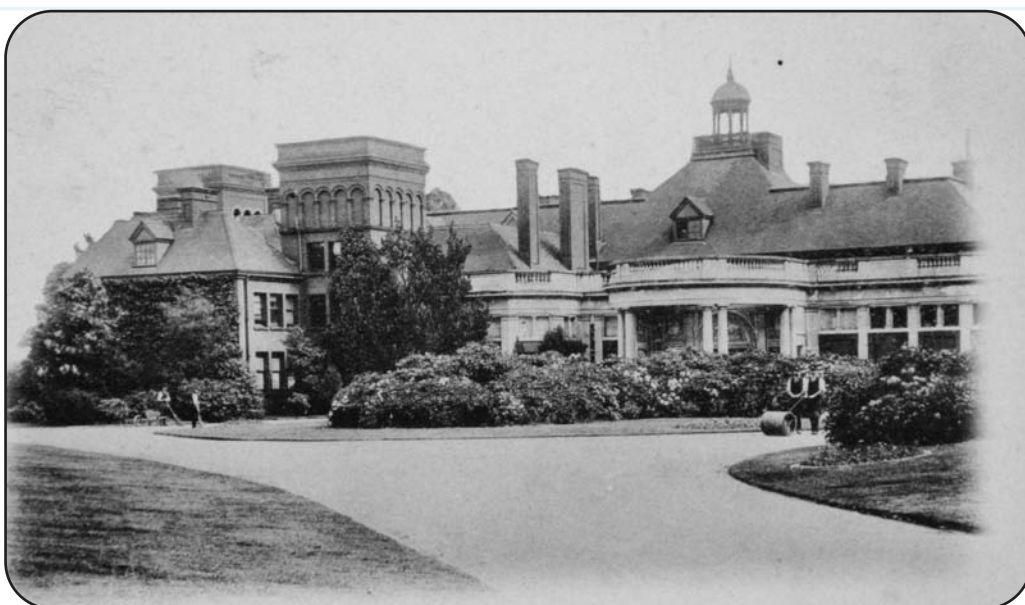
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# FEATURES

## Eltham mansion's restoration award highlights exotic Chilean origins

GORDON BAKER



Avery Hill, Eltham, circa 1896

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 "Nitrate King". He returned to this country in the 1880s after making his fortune in Chilean nitrate. He bought Avery Hill and transformed it into a glittering mansion for his lavish entertainment and sporting exploits.

He created the Winter Garden to grow exotic Chilean plants, built a huge ballroom, a gallery to house his vast art collection and centrally-heated stables for his racehorses and greyhounds.



Despite war damage and extensive rebuilding 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 nitrate plants in Chile and Peru.

He stayed on and prospered through a series of astute deals after Chile acquired extensive nitrate-rich territory from Peru following the Pacific War of 1879/1881. Nitrate was then the main source of fertilizer, 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.

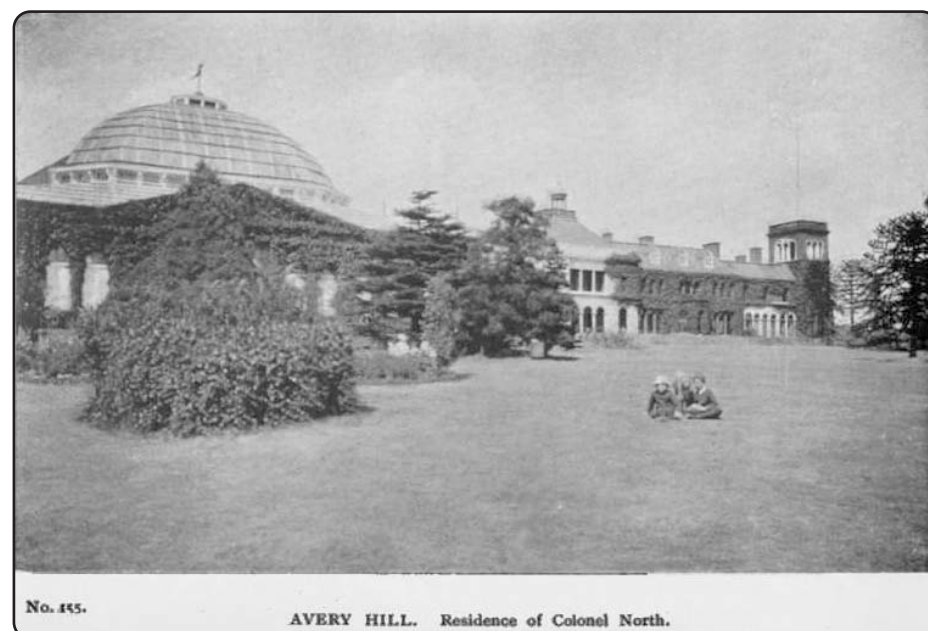
North became a noted benefactor, especially locally and in his native Yorkshire, and he took great pride in



Belgian Congo stamp 1894

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 Nitrate King by William Edmundson (published by Palgrave Macmillan as ISBN. 978-0-230-11280-3) 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 grandest 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 10,378,000 people aged over 65 in the UK, not quite 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*) erupt from time to time with letters on this subject.

There is no doubt that the name deters 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 scrabble 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 co-operation 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.u3asites.org.uk/london-se](http://www.u3asites.org.uk/london-se) or contact the Membership Secretary: Anne Richards, 30 Little Heath, Charlton, SE7 8HU Tel 020 8854 4645 (mentioning the WN!)*





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

## Good news for Thames travellers

TfL 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 Tubes and buses, 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

### FACT FILE: ENDERBY WHARF

\* Enderby Wharf is a 3.6 hectare riverside location within easy reach of the Jubilee Line, DLR, Maze Hill Railway Station and the Thames Clippers river bus service.

\* The wharf benefits from a 180 metre frontage onto the River Thames and close proximity to the world famous Greenwich Maritime Heritage Site and the O2 entertainment complex, and within sight of Canary Wharf.

\* Planning permission has been secured for the regeneration of the wharf for a mix of uses including 770 luxury townhouses and apartments, and quality hotel accommodation served by a new river bus service and set within an extensive array of public and private landscaped spaces.

\* At the core of the approved scheme is the provision of the new London International Cruise Liner Terminal which will create a further tourist destination in the maritime heartland of Greenwich.

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.”

## All change in Mycenae Road

As the recession in Europe bites deeper, governments are desperately searching for ways of finding new revenue.

Greece has been hit particularly hard, and the Greek government now sees “intellectual property” as one potentially lucrative source. And now, as a result, Westcombe Park is being targeted.

“Mycenae has played an iconic role in Greek mythology and history,” Dr Apryl Foole-Hardupoulos, a spokeswoman for the Greek government said. “It is time we reclaimed our own! We have obtained the copyright on the use of its name, and expect to generate significant income.”

It seems that the names *Mycenae Road* and *Mycenae House* are both under threat.

As a result, it looks as though the Royal Borough of Greenwich would have to pay a hefty licensing fee to use the name; but a cheaper alternative is at hand.

Our streets are in any case gradually acquiring new signage since Greenwich acquired its Royal Borough status, and so it looks as though a name change is the way forward for Mycenae Road.

Several suggestions have emerged so far. *Angerstein Road* could be a front runner, but some like the idea of calling it *Iceni Road* (Queen Boudicca would have approved). The Council’s consultation exercise on the issue ends on April 1st.



PHOTO: Myles Dove

The £60 million Thames cable car opened in June 2012. It can carry 2,500 passengers per hour in each direction (the equivalent of 50 London buses). It costs £4.30 – £3.20 with an Oyster Card. Children under five go free!

## The Marathon

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

Last year, members of the Westcombe Society environment committee met the organisers to discuss some of the problems that had arisen in 2012 event, including roads being closed without warning, and the unnecessarily late 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 Bexley-heath Cottage Hospice. These will be put up in the hospice gardens, in time for this year’s nesting season so that patients can watch the birds using them. Woodlands Farm Trust provided valuable advice on the best type of nest-boxes to order.

## Change for change’s sake?

Local residents were left more than a little perplexed by a recent invitation by the Council to take part in a consultation on traffic curbing measures for the Halstow/Ormiston Road area.

Some are asking whether, in such times of austerity, the degree of inconvenience currently suffered by residents of Kemsing and other local roads justifies the local council in spending thousands of pounds on signs and restrictions (let alone the consultation process itself), especially without a full analysis of the consequences for other roads.

With the Council wanting to put measures in place before the end of the financial year, a two-week consultation period started at the beginning of February. Letters outlining the proposals were sent to just under 3,000 local residents.

The two options being considered are: (i) to make Halstow Road one way (south-bound only), or (ii) to install width restrictions at the junction of Ormiston Road and Kemsing Roads. Many fear the expected outcome would be increased traffic using Combedale Road and Westcombe Hill.

The Westcombe Society Environment Committee (WSENV) has challenged both proposals, requesting that additional work be carried out to determine which traffic uses these routes and what the impact would be on other roads should either of these proposals be implemented.

“We’ve suggested that, if anything, a temporary width restriction be put in place,” explains Dick Allard, chairman of WSENV. He continues:

“We believe that this is an economical way forward which will allow the Council to monitor the effects of such a measure – including any unintentional outcomes – both on the specific and wider areas before any significant financial outlay is made from the public purse.”

Residents point out that the laws of unexpected consequence could come into play here: a number of parents dropping their children off at Halstow School would be likely to stop in Humber Road, causing chaos, and danger, in the area. It is also extraordinary that Halstow School – the teachers as well as parents – were not properly informed of the proposals.

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## Christopher’s column Christopher Raven

### In for a penny...

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

But there are some examples of ‘good practice’ which you shouldn’t 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 up the roots of the plant a little. Finally, set the plant with the top of the rootball level with the surrounding soil and gently fill the hole. Firm the soil 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 are planting trees or shrubs from large containers the same applies; but dig a square(ish) planting hole,

which again encourages the plants roots into surrounding soil. (This tip comes from Kew’s tree experts).

Speaking of rule breaking, I have transplanted some spinach and chard for the second time in six months – soaking the plants before digging them up, then steeping 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 welsh onions, chives and garlic, which should be fine as the bulbs will have enough vigour to withstand the move – though they may slow down a little. A little warmth or sun would help!





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