Many local residents are already concerning the impending demise of the Arches – the best place for a local swim. The Arches has been a very popular venue for people all over the Borough. Their regret at losing the Arches is compounded by continuing doubts about the ability of the new public pool, designed by the Royal Borough of Greenwich on the Old District Hospital site in East Greenwich, the opening planned for 2014. The new pool being built has been designed to have two shallow ends. The Council’s rationale is that it will help the borough meet one of its key aquatic targets, teaching children aged between five and nine who can swim 25 metres from 71% (2011) to 90% by 2014.

A laudable goal, and on the face of it, a pool with two shallow ends seems quite logical in terms of teaching twice as many children at one time. However, according to the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) and British Swimming (the UK’s national governing bodies for swimming), this is at odds with their recommendations and government guidelines.

They clearly state that: “a shallow pool works against the interests of children being introduced to the various aspects of swimming and water depth.”

Teaching children to swim exclusively in shallow water does not give them the skills they need to deal with deeper water. This potentially puts them at risk when they are in an unstandard public, or private, pool, i.e. with a shallow and a deep end. They are also ill-equipped to deal with swimming in natural water, such as the sea or a river, where water depths can vary quite suddenly.

At this month’s Public Council Meeting, Councillor Chris Roberts, standing in for Councillor Kotz, was asked why the expert opinion of the sport’s national governing bodies had been seemingly disregarded when it came to the design of the new pool.

He replied that he did not believe that this was the case but that clarification would be sought from Councillor Kotz. We understand from the ASA that when they reviewed and approved the design of the centre there were certain provisos; one of these provisos was the configuration of the pool bottom. However, the ASA does not recommend a pool with two shallow ends.

The ASA believes that this type of pool is more hazardous than a pool that has a shallow and a deep end. According to Dennis Freemen-Wright, a member of the ASA’s facilities team at the ASA: “The ASA would not recommend this pool bottom configuration for two reasons.”

He went on to explain: “By having two shallow ends the deep part of the pool in the middle … the gradient of the pool floor is doubled and increased to a hazardous gradient that can cause slips and drowning accidents. This has happened in similar pools.

“A pool that has two shallow ends and a maximum depth of 1.5m cannot be used to teach diving from the poolside. This is an important aquatic skill and lack of ability in this area is the major contributor to aquatic swimming pool injury.”

According to the ASA, the RBG made the wrong assumption with regards teaching children to swim: “To increase the number of children who can swim 25m aged 11 from 70% to 90% can be achieved without a double shallow ended pool.”

Apart from the inherent dangers and health and safety concerns regarding the gradient, the ASA clearly stated that they “do not support a pool which is shallow at both ends as it does not support the full swimmer journey.”

While the new public standard pool public includes a movable floor (such as one in Lewisham), according to British Swimming’s guidance on public pools, when costs prohibit this, a pool with a deep and shallow end is recommended. (cont. on page 7)
Bye to Dave, our pavement sweeper!

Dave Nutley from Erith has been sweeping the Standard and Westcombe Hill for over twelve years. He is retiring on the 31st of May. He says he will miss the summer mornings and all the friends he has made – but not the cold winter days!

The Council moved him to Greenwich town centre at one point, but local residents and shopkeepers made such a fuss that Greenwich Council had to let him come back. Tributes from local residents and businesses include: “Dave has done an outstanding job for many years. He is out in all weathers and never complains about what he has to clear up. Each morning, he comes along the road sweeping and tidying in his usual jovial and cheerful manner and always has time to stop and say hello, especially to the children. Sadly, it does not seem that Greenwich Council will be replacing him and he will be sorely missed. I don’t think the roads around the Standard will be as clean in the future.” “Dave is incredibly reliable and has been unswerving in his dedication. He has braved all weather conditions and always has the same upbeat approach and smile.”

He will be sorely missed. It was lovely to see someone who cared about the community and who took pride and pleasure in his work. I wish him a very happy and healthy retirement.”

Happy retirement Dave, may you enjoy it peacefully, Geoff Board, Siebert Road resident.

Letters

From: Trevor Allain
Caterham Road
It was with dismay and disgust that I read on Twitter, that local Councillor Alex Grant, would not be standing for re-election to the Council in 2014. This decision was reached due to the fact that he has been bullied and intimidated by fellow Labour Group members, because he decided to question their un-democratic practices when it came to decision making. I was dismayed, as despite being political opponents, we all knew Alex found it to be a thoroughly pleasant and genuine person. I was disgusted, as having been the victim of bullying, a number of occasions in my life, I know how thoroughly despicable this is, and the stress it can cause to the victim.

I was also dismayed to think that many of those people who have been bullying him will probably be re-elected, when they clearly hold the ideal of democracy in as much contempt as they hold to the residents of the borough – clearly demonstrated by the so-called “consultation” process about reducing Council Tax. Before, the poor, sick and disabled, which hardly anybody appears to be aware has even taken place.

Whilst the people of Blackheath Wombridge are losing a Councillor with a proven track record of commitment to this Ward like Alex Grant, they do have the chance to elect another who has lived in the Ward for 41 years, as I stand again as a Green Party candidate.

From: Helen Casley
Kensing Road
I wanted to assure readers that the Council’s proposals for road-calling in Halington, Keston and Ormiston Roads were brought about because of genuine safety concerns by residents in the area and not ‘change for change’s sake’ (as suggested in the WN last month).

These roads are regularly used by ‘travelling salesmen and heavy goods vehicles, as shown by a traffic survey carried out by the council which looked at the amount of traffic on these roads.

Concern about traffic volume and speed is shared by a number of my neighbours who have worked closely with the Council on these proposals. This concern is born out by the positive response to the consultation where I understand a large majority have supported the road narrowing in Glennemore Road.

The traffic engineers proposed two options which, together would reduce the number of vehicles using the whole area as a short cut, while still enabling local residents to get in and out of their homes. The Council have also promised to keep traffic flows under review. On this basis, both proposals seem a sensible solution to a very real problem. Thank you to everyone who responded in the consultation and to those who use our roads regularly.

Every day the Zoom Patrol puts a lot of work into ensuring safe travel for pedestrians and to keep our streets clear. The patrol is6 an essential business. The Council also have the power to keep traffic flows under review. On this basis, both proposals seem a sensible solution to the real problem.

Thank you to everyone who responded in the consultation and to those who use our roads regularly.

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Car club relaunch

The Royal Borough of Greenwich has relaunched its borough-wide car club – with a great new sign-up offer for local businesses and residents.

The club – operated in Greenwich by Zipcar – is similar to the bike hire scheme in central London. You join up, then book out a car whenever you want from any of the 40 Leas across the Royal Borough. (Nearest bays here are at the foot of Maze Hill.) Being in the car club means you can drive whenever you like and can avoid the cost and hassle of owning your own van to move house or buy furniture. If you don’t use a car every day then give this a go.

In 2011, the local authority launched a local car club, and now the relaunch means you can have the information available on a website and a Facebook page.

Mid-Summer Jazz is back!

The Friends of Greenwich Park have announced that the Phoenix Dixieland Jazz Band is back in the Observatory Garden, Greenwich Park, on Sunday 16 June. This will be another marvellous event for the all the family, organised by the Friends of the Park, and is open for all to attend.

The concert is from 1.00 pm to 3.30 pm and the Garden opens for picnics at 12 noon. There will be a bar and an ice-cream stall. Tickets are £5 for adults (£6 at the gate, subject to availability). Free for youngsters under 16.

Tickets from: Friends of Greenwich Park, 52 Greenwich Park Street, London SE10 9LT (telephone 020 8553 2150 or email cnbran@hotmail.com), Cheques payable to “Friends of Greenwich Park”. Please enclose an s.a.e. and mark the envelope “Jazz in the Park”.

Charlton Lido

On a wet and cold Monday morning at the beginning of April I decided to go and look at the newly refurbished Charlton Lido. Much to my surprise there were eight hardy individuals enjoying the 25 degrees of the water.

This historic 50 metre outdoor pool has been open since Easter and the massive refurbishment aims to bring a new range of leisure facilities to the local community. It is operated by charitable social enterprise GLL of Better Leisure Centres and is the cornerstone of the £4million Olympic legacy that is due to transform Hornpark into a multi-sport hub.

The pool will host a range of lessons and scheduled to be completed by 2014. In addition to recreational swimming the pool will host a range of lessons and courses for all ages. Charlton Lido is open for all to enjoy the open air swimming.

Jazz is back!

As a keen swimmer who prefers swimming in the sea, I nevertheless enjoy the fitness pool of The Arch. It has a quiet and friendly staff that makes swimming both relaxing and good exercise. However swimming in the open air has many attractions and a heated pool even in the depths of winter has its own appeal.

The demise of Lidos in London and elsewhere is much to be regretted and it is therefore most pleasing to see that this facility that has been enjoyed by so many in the past will continue to bring enjoyment to future generations.

Visit: www.londonorchardproject.org

Soil-Mates!

Last month volunteers for the Westcombe Woodlands planted 8 fruit trees (apples & pears, all old varieties). Said Frank Smith: “The London Orchard Project (www.londonorchardproject.org) has historic maps which show there were orchards here in the 1890s, so we thought we’d try to recreate one!”

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Writing workshops

O n the last Saturday of every month two writing workshops. On Monday, 20th May 4.00 - 6.00 pm building Writers aged 8-12 can join inking stories and stir up a storm; they can create characters together, and then write a chapter each.

Participants receive a printed copy. Cost £5 (includes a 10% donation to Winston's Wish) Booking is required! Then on Sunday 9th June 10.00 am - 12.00 noon Charlotte Kemp is back to run her wonderful Journalism Workshop. Charlotte has worked as a freelance journalist and was editor of The Weekend Magazine for The Daily Mail for a few years. All budding journalists receive a copy of the newspaper they will have helped build.

This workshop is for those aged 7+. The cost is £15. Booking is required! ED:Maybe they could contribute to the Westcombe News! }
News of Alex Grant’s decision not to stand for re-election as Blackheath Westcombe ward’s Labour Councillor in 2014 first broke on Twitter in March. This was soon followed by a piece in the News Shopper which revealed more details from his leaked letter to the local Labour Party where he set out his reasons behind his decision. With Nick Raynsford, our local Labour MP also stepping down, was the sound of Big Ben beckoning? We were intrigued to find out more about his next move.

First elected onto the Council some fifteen years ago in 1998, at just 24 years old, Alex Grant was the youngest Labour councillor in Greenwich at the time. “It all rather happened by accident,” he explained. “I just applied for ‘Council of the Year’ by the Local Government Chronicle, the trade paper for councils. I went to a meeting in 1996 at Mycenae House of what was then the Vanbrugh Ward Labour Party and came out of the meeting as the branch organiser for the run-up to the 1997 general election, and a year later was a candidate in the 1998 elections.”

Fifteen years later, his leaked letter to the local Labour Party revealed uncomfortable reading for the Royal Borough of Greenwich’s PR people who were bathing in the afterglow of being awarded the ‘Council of the Year’ by the Local Government Chronicle, the trade paper for councils. Apart from simply wanting to explore other avenues after a decade and a half of public service, Grant’s email cited a “bullying” culture where the community, the council and it is because there has been an alliance of being accused of “decisions are made with little or no consultation with the community, the party, or backbench Labour Councillors.”

He went on to talk about “verbal abuse” and “sinister threats of disciplinary action” – and is not the first to speak out about the manner in which the RBG carries out its business.

The next elections are still about 12 months off and Alex, while shifting away from questions concerning his decision not to seek re-election, was keen to emphasise his personal priorities for the time he has left to serve, namely: housing: securing funding for the rebuilding of Invicta school (he is a governor of the school); and transport. All important issues for a ward which has a very wide and diverse community – a unique characteristic that Alex cites as one of the things that he has relished in his role: “One of the great things about representing Blackheath Westcombe is that all human life is here – there are huge extremes of wealth and poverty – so no day is the same.”

Alex cannot remember ever having had any strong political ambitions as a child and confirmed that this is still the case when he claims that he is “not putting his hat into the ring” for the gap that will be left when local Labour MP Nick Raynsford stands down. For those who may be considering standing as a councillor, Alex describes a role which has improved over time. Remuneration is more attractive, and the position’s flexibility allows for family commitments and even a second job. However, while he feels that the job is now relatively family-friendly, he wants to devote more time to his family while his daughter is still young. “I am proud to represent the ward, not only as it was the one I grew up in and where my parents still live, but also because of the strong sense of community – epitomised by organisations like the Westcombe Society which actively seeks to bring local people together for the good of the community,” he concludes.

“On the rare occasions I personally may have helped to make a difference – to improve the council’s housing policies, helping to get the Gibb Memorial on the Heath restored, or getting our railway service improved – it is because there has been an alliance of the community, the council and other bodies working together to provide both funding and expertise.”

We wish him luck and thank him for having worked on behalf of local residents in the area for the last fifteen years.

Wonderfully the legacy of what Walk for Tom is all about lives on through Megan, Tom’s twin sister. “One petrified of horses, Megan has become a natural at horse riding, and spends her weekends volunteering at Charlton RDA,” he concludes.

Megan has written this piece about her time spent at Charlton Park RDA:

Volunteering with the RDA horses
On Saturdays I help out with the RDA horses. My usual day goes like this: Up and out of the house by 9.00 am – pretty early for a teenager at the weekend! I head off to the pen the horses call home in Maryon Wilson Park. Here I meet up with the rest of the gang and have a drink and make their food. Then we feed them. After this we tack them up with their saddles etc and have a drink and make their food. Then we feed them. After this it’s time to tack them up with their saddles etc, put our riding hats on and go into the sand and ride them as they need their exercise.

It’s really good fun and my riding skills have increased massively since I started volunteering! After we have finished I put the horses on the ‘chill out’ area for a bit before we head back to the pens. Once we have finished, I put their rugs (coats) on (it’s cold). Then we put their bridles on and go back to the pen and muck out. Once the horses are clean and ready for the evening I give them a bit of hay and water and go home.

The group was founded in 1974 by Liz McMillan, and is the only RDA team in Greater London that owns horses and does not pay staff to care for them, but depends on volunteers who also raise funds. The Royal Borough of Greenwich Council provides shelter for the horses and an area for riding lessons.

Riding is provided for up to 50 disabled riders each week during term time. The group aims to provide riding for a diverse range of disabilities as long as riders meet height and weight restrictions and are medically capable. Riding can help people of varying disabilities. For the physically disabled riding can help build core muscles to improve movement, and for learning disabled or those with autism it can be extremely therapeutic, calming and a great way to socialise. Some children have said their very first words while at the RDA.

Megan writes . . .

Some of the great things about volunteering is that for the kids who come to the RDA, it is their chance to do something new, something exciting, to make friends. It is a chance to do something different.

The funniest two things that have happened to me were when I was swimming with the horses and we all fell in the water, and when I was riding a horse and it stood on another horse’s tail.

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Learning is fun at St Olave's is a Prep School in New Eltham for boys and girls aged 1-11 years.

- Broad, child-centred curriculum
- Excellent results in the 11+ selection
- Clubs, outings and residential trips
- Excellent pastoral care
- Small classes
- Specialist staff for PE, IT, Music, French and Drama
- Sibling fee reduction
- Small classes
- Enhanced your child's development and add to your experience as a parent.

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Local slimming champ!

Before . . .

How did Kay achieve an amazing weight loss of over 6 stone – and drop ten dress sizes?

Kay Bennett from Greenwich, aged 25, had suffered weight issues all of her life. After looking at a photo of herself taken at her son’s first birthday party she just knew she had to do something. She realized she could not make changes alone and that she needed support and help at the highest level. So she mustered all her courage to become a member of a local Slimming World group.

She was inspired by the healthy eating plan on which she could eat normal everyday foods freely without weighing or measuring plus a couple of weighed changes alone and that she needed support and a weekly weigh in.

As Kay entered into the world of Slimming World, she found Slimming World has an extremely healthy feel and so does my little boy, aged 3, who eats healthy meals.

Slimming World has, without doubt, given me my life back. I took the bull by the horns and volunteered in a local school which led to me enrolling on a college course which I am thoroughly enjoying and, after attending a Slimming World South East London Opportunity event, was accepted to become a Slimming World Consultant!

Diane, Kay’s consultant, says “Kay has transformed into a completely different person. The group have seen her blossoms and become happier and healthier. She has lost a fantastic 6 st and dropped 10 dress sizes. When Kay was recently voted Nesbit Road Miles Slinkly we were all so proud of her achievement.”

Kay is now a consultant at a Turning Pages Community Centre, 6 Nesbit Road, Eltham, London SE9 6HS - the group meets on Wednesday at 7.30 p.m

For further details of the Turning Pages, Nesbit Road Group you can contact Kay on 0785278493 or e-mail her on: silver162005@gmail.com

After his retirement, for many years he volunteered to work for the “Citizens” Advice Bureau, believing that one should give one’s community.

Despite the infirmity of his last few years, he had every reason to be happy, and, at least, with very wide interests: literature, music, art, theatre, history, politics, nature, sport.

Although he had private means and could afford to be well looked after in his home, he held dear. Until the end of his life, he provided his family with the income needed to support his wife, his godson Tim Greaves who used to play chess with him once a week.

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... and After:

The help I received in the group was second to none. I now eat so much more healthily, and so does my little boy, aged 3, who eats healthy meals.

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The weekend feature displays work of numerous addresses in and around Blackheath. Full details can be found in leaflets available at local libraries. For a taster visit Blackheath Art Society’s exhibition at the Greenwich Tourist Information Centre, Curty Sark Gardens every day until 19th May. Open Studio weekends are 27th - 28th April and 4th - 5th May 12.00 - 6.00 pm

FEATURES

Wanted - Friendly, Welcoming Host Families
Earn £200 + per week!

Do you have a spare room in your home? Then turn it into cash by hosting our friendly, polite foreign students.

If you live locally or within easy distance of Blackheath Village and Greenwich please call one of our friendly team on: 07752 986 834

British Council, so we had a great deal of trust in her. After meeting "So good of you to have come!"

Chris all do exciting work. Do come and meet them and enjoy an afternoon of art.

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British Council, so we had a great deal of trust in her. After meeting "So good of you to have come!"

Chris all do exciting work. Do come and meet them and enjoy an afternoon of art.
The question remains as to why the RBG, in partnership with their chosen leisure service providers, GLL, decided to construct a pool which clearly does not follow the national governing bodies' requirements can be met the Eltham pool and at the Chatham Lido... Apart from these priority issues, the Greenwich Line User Group will consider any issue of concern to users of the line, and contact details will be publicised soon.

Christopher's column

A warm front

It's the warmest day since last September, and people are sporting shorts. Gardens are around six weeks behind and hundreds of unusual spring bedding plants are being binned. Chelsea Flower Show exhibits are hoping some of the plants they need will be ready in time. In your own patch, proceed slowly and see what happens. Cut back dead looking stems cautiously and look for signs of regrowth – in the last few days, leaves and stems have suddenly taken on a new healthy look. The cold and dry weather will have caused some casualties but most things will recover. If you think you have lost plants, don’t dig them up and throw them away for a while. Pelargoniums and osteospermum may have died back to the ground, but look about from the base if the roots are sound, and fuchsiae might do the same. When the weather reaches 10 degrees, apply a general purpose fertilizer to kick things into action.

Sowing seeds and planting out seed potatoes will have been delayed, but covering soil with a sheet of fleece or plastic will help warm it and dry it out. Potatoes will have been delayed, but with a moveable floor. Or they can always go to Lewisham’s Glass Mill leisure centre which caters for the full range of swimming activities for the range of people with disabilities. Clearly no single pool can meet the needs of people with disabilities. No single pool can meet the needs of people with disabilities. Diving and Club requirements can be met by the Eltham pool and at the Chatham Lido...

So, once the Arches leisure centre is closed, swimmers will be expected to travel through Wimbledon to access pools which meet their needs when they could have all been satisfied with a single pool with a moveable floor. Or they can always go to Lewisham’s new Glass Mill leisure centre which caters for the full range of swimming activities... A small group of pupils from The John Roan School, and students from John Roan and Meridian Secondary School have also been in the secret. Local artist Heather Burrell who designed and produced the Orchard’s unique metal gate and well covering, explained how drawings produced by the children were the source of the inspiration behind the new gate...

Mike Sparham, the Convenor of GLUG, said “Whilst the need for work at London Bridge is understood, it could not be an excuse to deprive our line of services. Patients going for treatment at Guy’s or St Thomas’ hospitals, holidaymakers flying from Gatwick or Heathrow, as well as many daily commuters, all need to change trains at London Bridge. It is essential that these needs are recognised.”

Apart from these priority issues, the Greenwich Line User Group will consider any issue of concern to users of the line, and contact details will be publicised soon.

Christopher Raven

The Keep the Green application, you must support) the new application, you must... More information can be found on Greenwich Park’s website.

KEEP THE GREEN

FINCHLEY ROAD ref 13/0581/F

Install rear dormer window

KEEP THE GREEN

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A warm front

It's the warmest day since last September, and people are sporting shorts. Gardens are around six weeks behind and hundreds of unusual spring bedding plants are being binned. Chelsea Flower Show exhibits are hoping some of the plants they need will be ready in time. In your own patch, proceed slowly and see what happens. Cut back dead looking stems cautiously and look for signs of regrowth – in the last few days, leaves and stems have suddenly taken on a new healthy look. The cold and dry weather will have caused some casualties but most things will recover. If you think you have lost plants, don’t dig them up and throw them away for a while. Pelargoniums and osteospermum may have died back to the ground, but look about from the base if the roots are sound, and fuchsiae might do the same. When the weather reaches 10 degrees, apply a general purpose fertilizer to kick things into action.

Sowing seeds and planting out seed potatoes will have been delayed, but covering soil with a sheet of fleece or plastic will help warm it and dry it out a little. Unless you have a greenhouse or cold frames, it may be better to buy in vegetable plants than try to raise them yourself at this stage. Some really tasty herbs which have bloomed reliably and more or less on time include fennel, parsley, leek and Leucojum. Cardoons, Vinca Orychophragmus and Lecinias. Wallflowers have also come through more or less unscathed. If you want some unusual but useful hardy plants, angelica, lovage and sweet cicely are feather leaved umbellifers which attract insects and can be used in cooking – all are well over a metre tall in flower, but otherwise compact.

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The Keep the Green application can be viewed in the library, or at the Woolwich Library on the lower ground floor of the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington St. They can also be viewed on the Greenwich.gov.uk/planning