Next year’s draft train timetable

MIKE SPARHAM

Remember the old British Railways Ad: “This is the age of the train”! Railways are now more likely to call it “the age of the stadium” as they struggle to get onto the sporting scene.

However, maybe help is at hand: the Greenwich Line Users’ Group (GLUG) has been studying the draft timetable that Southeastern propose to apply to train services from January 2015; and has been trying to mitigate its worst side-effects. As expected, there will be no direct services to Wormley (East) and Charing Cross from Westcombe Park and the other stations on the Greenwich Line. The nearest direct services will be from Charlton, Blackheath and Lewisham. Cannon Street station will be open all day, including Sunday, as will the underground station.

The number of trains stopping at Westcombe Park and Maze Hill throughout the day will be the same, but at Greenwich there will be three fewer trains in the evening, and one fewer in the morning peak. The withdrawal of semi-fast trains puts additional pressure on the remaining trains, but GLUG has succeeded in persuading Southeastern to increase total capacity across the evening peak period as a whole, with most trains being 10 cars long. However, the period between 17:30 and 18:30 will inevitably see a reduction in capacity.

The rebuilding work at London Bridge means that it will not be possible until 2018 to change trains there to reach Waterloo and Charing Cross on other Southeastern services. GLUG has received a commitment that the intention is to allow travel to these stations by other means at no extra cost, but this depends upon the Department for Transport and Transport for London reaching an agreement on funding.

Overall view is that there are two aspects to this: onward travel from London Bridge and Cannon Street by underground or bus; and travel by bus, train or DLR to Chatham, Blackheath and Lewisham to pick up direct Charing Cross services from there.

Southeastern have listed the alternative routes on which free travel should be allowed, and GLUG are continuing to press on the detail. GLUG are also pressing for alternative routes to be well publicised at stations and in timetables.

GLUG now has a website: www.greenwichline.org.uk

Our schools ‘among the best’

Greenwich’s primary schools have proved they are among the best in the country at helping pupils to make progress, the latest national results have shown. They show that our 11-year-olds’ achievement in maths, reading and writing exceeds the national average in all the main measures of achievement and have improved on 2013 results in every category.

Impressively, Greenwich came equal fourth in the nation and equal third in London for reaching or exceeding the required standard (level 4) in reading, writing and maths – areas seen as the most significant gauge of achievement.

The GC and A Level results are also very encouraging. The three quarters of Greenwich students achieved A*-C grades in English, 13 points ahead of national results and were 4 points better than the national average in Mathematics.

Greenwich’s A level students results were in line with the national average: the overall pass rate in A-Levels was 98 per cent. 39.1% passed at grades A*-A. BTec passes continued their upward trajectory:

- 39.1% passed at grades A*-
- 39.1% passed at grades A-
- 39.1% passed at grades B.

Well done to all our young people!

The Pleasaunce

LIZZIE COOPER

Now the holidays are over it’s all happening down at the East Greenwich Pleasaunce (off Halstow Road). The Market at the Pleasaunce will be back in full swing 11am to 4pm on 28th September and on 19th October. Also on the 19th there will be a Barrow Sale at the children’s play centre to raise funds for this facility, which is run by volunteers. (Second hand clothes and toys).

The cost is £10 per stall. For further details, contact thebridgese10@gmail.com.

On the 5th October, the 3rd Great Greenwich Treasure Hunt starts at 11.00 am and ends at Pleasaunce. This event is in conjunction with Oxfam. Search for answers to the clues you are given. See Facebook for further details.

There is a Malcolm Hardee tribute night on Saturday 11th October. Clare Hardee will be talking about her brother and the winners of the Malcolm Hardee ‘Cunning Stunts’ award from the Edinburgh Festival will be entertaining you. Kick off 7.00pm, there will be burgers on sale, and a Pay Bar.

On Friday 31st October there will be an after-school Hallowe’en party for the little ones: dressing up encouraged. Scary play and refreshments. So, why not visit the Pleasaunce with its ecocafe and children’s play areas – one of our best kept secrets!
Residents concerns over Ronan Community Use Scheme

Several wan residents have expressed some concerns about the John Ronan School’s sports centre and the Community Use Scheme, and at least eight objections (ref:14/1671/SD Community Use Scheme) have been recorded by the Council.

Some local community members have access to a sports facility is a good thing? Well, yes. But there are concerns that many may stay quiet at night, leading to noise disturbance, with engines running while drivers wait to pick up people. There are also concerns about the suitability of the building site being even noisier at times.

The Westcombe Society Environment Committee have formally supported the request for reducing the proposed hours of use. Emily Norton, who serves on the Westcombe Society’s Environment Committee, said: “The school are responsible for the Maze Hill site lettings as they own that site. However, the Westcombe Park Road site is owned by the Council and part of the BSF (Building Schools for the Future) scheme for which the City of London paid. The Council have recently inquired about availability for the Community use available. Until the redevelopment of both sites, residents enjoyed quiet evenings, weekends and school holidays. Since the redevelopment started they have suffered noise and disturbance about a year round – but not for most of the weeks. Now they are being told that the facilities will shortly be available for Community use both indoors and outdoors all year round including evenings and weekends. It is not surprising that they are concerned.”

However, there are only outline plans at the moment as the details will be down to Greenwich Leisure Ltd and the Council to sort out so it may not actually happen for months or even years. Originally residents thought that it would just be the Sports Hall that would be available for community use, and that use would finish at 9:00pm with everyone off site by 10:00pm. A recent Working Party meeting was told that no lights would be on in or around the school after 10:00pm. However the current planning application for the Community Use Scheme may go on until 10:00pm – and outdoor facilities are also available. Residents want more restrictions on use of outdoor facilities so that there is a least one day a week when they are not used, and a limit of no later than 9.00pm for activities. They would also like everyone off site by 10:00pm.

Steve Tribble
Westcombe Hill

Many thanks to Sarah Sutton for her letter in September’s edition regarding the 286 bus. I too was surprised to receive the noise.

There is a back story to the change of ownership – I campaigned for two years against the black smoke that was being emitted from the 286 bus, with the help of Cllr Alex Grant and Martha Mingay, in Len Duvall’s office, and TfL. After the previous owner was very curtailed as an operator, but eventually we heard that the 286 route would be operated by Go-Ahead. However, I noted that the 286 relied almost completely on hybrids, despite saying that they were pledged to implement electric buses throughout London. An opportunity wasted ...

Anyway, the buses are brand new so I thought that was something until I heard the noise. My family said, “Leave it alone!” but I can’t leave it alone when it is happening on my doorstep and I notice the noise following us around and anyone who felt impacted by the event.

I would like to hear from other members and non-members alike until 7th October. The Society will be passing on the results of its survey to the Council as well as publishing them. We would also like to hear your responses on Facebook at www.facebook.com/blackheathsoc or its Twitter account @blackheathsoc. or contact member John Barratt on 0208 752 2322 or at johnbarratt67@gmail.com.

Ed: Anne Robbins told the WN: “The issue will shortly be going to Greenwich Area Planning for a decision. It may be that there will be discussions between Planning Officers and Gillian Edgar, the BSF Programme Manager, who is the applicant, to try to address the objections. If new proposals emerge there would have to be a reevaluation.”

“It was always likely that residents would have understandable concerns about aspects of the community use scheme and those concerns certainly need to be taken into account.”

From: John Card Plymouth

In issue 6 of the WN I found the item “Three weeks at Nepal” very interesting. It reminded me of the extreme poverty in which many Nepali live, and in particular the man who have been part of our army and have fought alongside our soldiers in many conflicts for over 20 years.

I was interested to read how the country has nothing in the way of pensions or health care in any形状 or form, and how such reality is a view we think it's wrong more than a simple "shockwave".

I shall be sending you a News Letter from the Guiding Angel, a registered charity that helps those who may be eligible for the 286 bus. It is available for all members and non-members alike until 7th October. The Society will be passing on the results of its survey to the Council as well as publishing them. We would also like to hear your responses on Facebook at www.facebook.com/blackheathsoc or its Twitter account @blackheathsoc. or contact member John Barratt on 0208 752 2322 or at johnbarratt67@gmail.com.

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Letters to the editor
Any views expressed are those of the writers only, and are not necessarily those of the WN or the Westcombe Society.
Meet Frank, Klink & Klank

Julia Marsen

Frank Einstein looks like becoming an iconic character in children’s reading. Jon Siczska and Brian Biggs have created a unique world of fun and Sci-Fi in what will be an irresistible chemical reaction for kids.

In Frank Einstein and the Antimatter Motor, one of Frank’s inventions—the robots Klink and Klank—come to life! Not exactly the ideal lab partners, but they help Frank attempt to perfect his Antimatter Motor, and consequently the robots Klink and Klank—the answer to all Frank’s arch enemy, T. Edison, steps in. Aimed at middle-grade readers, these books encourage young readers to question the way things work and explore how they, too, can comment on science. Ohie and the Bee is stocking the book (£8.99), and selling tickets for the event on Oct 24th.

Closely observed trains?

A creative relationship has been forged between Made in Greenwich and South Eastern Railways. Some people are able to make things happen, without putting endless (and often unnecessary) obstacles in the way. One such person is Sonia Maulson, Station Manager (Dartford and Woolwich Group).

Last year Irena Hill of Made in Greenwich approached her to allow Camille Desmarest, a Laban graduate, to display as posters at the station itself. Some of the visual works will also be on exhibition at the station. The three artists were chosen because of their completely different approaches. Nancy, who has just had her first work published by Live Canon after winning a competition, is an established writer. Her poetry collection Competition, was able to interview staff, hear lots of stories and even ride in a train cab!

So, if on your train journey you spotted people sketching or talking with artistic intent, you’ll be pleased to know that from October 1 to 19 the outcomes of the residency will be on display at Made in Greenwich Gallery, 324 Creek Road (open Tue - Sun 11-5:30) and that the poetry and some of the visual works will also be displayed as posters at the station itself.

Another local artist, Michele Franklin, will be having a solo show at the gallery from October 22nd - Nov 12th. Please visit www.madeingreenwich.co.uk for further details.

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Beware the phone scammers

Christine Godwin warns us to beware the scammers who continue to prey on the elderly and vulnerable. They are targeting those who are likely to have cash to hand, and who may not be aware of the tactics of these criminals.

The culprits call themselves Telecom Protection Service, and tell you that they have been booked to stop all silent and nuisance calls, for a fee of £99.99. They sound friendly, efficient and extremely plausible – but it is a fraud.

They will take your credit card details, and promise to return your calls in a specified time. The following text will be recorded: “Hello, this is Telecom Protection Service. We can cancel all nuisance calls.”

If you have any doubts at all about a caller, contact the Police on 101 (the non-emergency number); they will take you seriously, and put you in touch with the Action Fraud Service. Remember that the national Telephone Preference Service is FREE (though not always very effective).

The Telephone Preference Service (TPS) is the official central - opt out register on which you can record your preference not to receive unsolicited sales or marketing calls. You can register with the Telecom Protection Service by ringing this number: 0845 807 9700; or go on line and register: http://www.tpsonline.org.uk/tps/index.html

Our latest carbuncle?

Every year the magazine Building Design awards the Carbuncle Cup for ‘unforgivably’ bad design. In 2012 the Cutty Sark won this doubtful honour. The Woolwich Central construction, above, put Greenwich on the carbuncle map again this year. This Tesco super-market clad in striped metal, mounted on a multi-story carpark and topped with hundreds of apartments has been named Britain’s worst new building. The judges described it as “oppressive, defensive, arrogant and inept”, and possibly “inspired by the 1948 Berlin blockade.”

Chair of the Planning Committee at the time, our own Alex Grant, displays a rare glimpse of honesty in public life in his blog by expressing regret over the scheme. With refreshing candour, he writes. “When I am chatting with friends and the conversation turns to new development in Greenwich, I freeze. Between 2006 and 2010 I was chair of Greenwich Council’s Planning Board – the committee of councillors that makes decisions on all the big applications – so if we’re talking about a new building in the borough there’s a fair chance I was somehow involved in granting it planning permission.”

“All big developments take several years to go from drawing board to construction, and the credit crunch often made the process even longer than usual. So several schemes that were going through the planning process during my time as chair have only recently been built. “Some of them – the new Thomas Tallis School, the Sammy Ofer wing at the National Maritime Museum, the exemplary new housing development at the Royal Military Academy in Woolwich, and the new homes and a leisure centre built on the old hospital site in East Greenwich – I can look at with pride. But there were a few more controversial developments…”

And the Tesco building is one of them. In his blog, Alex points out that he inherited the proposal, and had some input into it, but subsequently, the scheme was marred “by a welter of cost-cutting changes in the four years between planning consent being granted in 2007 and the Tesco opening its doors in 2012” and the end product looks remarkably different from the one that the planning board looked at initially. Usefully, Alex lists some of the lessons that planners can learn from the saga. Readers may have heard the treatments of the issue in the Today programme on Radio 4 on Sept 3rd, and seen accounts by Alex and others in The Guardian.

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Welcome to Delacourt Road

Delacourt Road today is a far cry from what it all those years ago before the A102 was built. It was a buzzing high street with lots of shops and a bus route going to Eltham. Though it is a lot quieter nowadays it has not lost its village feel with everyone happy to smile or say hello. Delacourt Road is coming back to life with a buzz of activity from new businesses opening and family-run businesses continuing, a great community feel with a friendly, happy atmosphere from business owners willing to help you in your quest. Check out Delacourt Road businesses and hear what they have to say.

Handcock & Co
Estate Agents Surveyors & Valuers

13 Delacourt Road, SE3 8XA
Tel: 020 8858 5959
Fax: 020 8858 6969

Handcock & Co at 13 Delacourt Road is a leading estate agent in Blackheath situated at 2 Delacourt Road. It offers a wide range of services for people wanting to sell or let their property. To find out more about the services we offer please call 0208 858 5337.

HydroZone UK
Hydroponic specialists

HydroZone UK is a new innovative business opening up in 13 Delacourt Road SE3 8XA. We will be supplying horticultural and hydroponic systems to buy from our shop and or online. Hydroponics is a subset of hydroculture and is a method of growing plants using mineral nutrients solutions, in water, without soil. The systems we will be selling are used for indoor/outdoor cultivation that is 100% organic and are used by many restaurants in London already. We stock Dutch Pro, Canna, BioBizz, Rhino pro, Ionic, Maxibright lighting and many more major brands. Opening times Mon-Fri 10am-8pm Sat 10am-5pm. Want to know more? Visit www.hydrozoneuk.com or call us on 0208 8583 3503.

The Greenwich TV Show

Greenwich TV, the hyper-local TV programme, was launched on Sept 1st at 9.30 pm. on Sky 212, Freesat 401 & online.

The show is on the first Monday of each month, so the next programme will be on October 6th. The Greenwich TV show team told the RFV: “If you don’t have access to satellite TV you will be able to watch the programme on the internet.

“As part of our strong commitment to showcase the talent of local filmmakers we were delighted to have included a short film about Thames Watermen, directed by local filmmaker Danny Bullman.”

The first programme also included a an award-winning vintage car club event “Park it in the Market”; and a look round the recently restored Severndroog Castle. There was also a feature on the Tall Ships, and a local events guide.

During the inaugural programme the presenter Robert Gray appealed for help in finding people who used to work at Greenwich Cablevision or who may have any photographs or footage. Launched in 1972, Greenwich Cablevision was the country’s very first local TV station. Robert Gray [pictured] said: “The Greenwich Show is replicating history by reinvigorating the first ever local TV station in the country, so we want to remember and honor the pioneering work of the Greenhithe Cablevision forefathers. We also want to emulate our Greenwich TV programme. The Greenhithe Cablevision gave to the people of the borough the chance to get involved in television production, many of whom went on to big things in the media industry.”

The Greenwich TV Show website, also launched in September, will be full of exciting stories and will be working on the idea of creating a local TV channel, which will show programmes produced by the people of Greenwich. The TV channel could include programmes such as “From the Window” which covers local stories, or “Greenwich Watchdog” which looks at local issues. The programme also includes a feature on the work of the Mental Health Activity Trust, which was set up to help people with mental health problems.

Handyman and Handywoman Services

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Health Wise
Natural Therapy Centre

HealthyWise was launched in 2001 and is a centre for all those interested in natural therapies including Sports Massage, Osteopathy, Cranial Osteopathy, Reflexology, Hypnotherapy and Child Family Therapy. HealthWise is owned by a couple who have created a warm and friendly practice in which to come and have your chosen treatment. They have stayed away from the typical clinical environment whilst maintaining to offer their clientele a professional and confidential service. www.healthwisetherapy.co.uk

Theatre Extravaganza

Art exhibition

October 13, 2014 - Westcombe Park, London SE3 7EQ
Tel. 0208 853 3304 Fax: 0208 858 1784

Trinity Laban students who have given us their time and effort to put together a show that will be spellbound by Walt Disney’s film during World War II. Terry will be present to discuss his paintings in the gallery on Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th October 2000. 2.00 - 4.00 pm.

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Terry Scales is a prolific local artist who is best known perhaps for his scenes of river life, which he got to know intimately during his time as a docker.

In his latest exhibition, London City of Music and Other Delights, Terry Scales pays homage to the cultural life of his native city – and, in particular to its young musicians. In it, he brings together the two art forms of music and painting.

Terry Scales told the RFV: “Over the last decade, my paintings have been increasingly inspired by the performances of the Trinity Laban students who have given us so much pleasure at St. Alfege’s and other venues. I am excited about the show.”

Terry’s introduction to classical music began at the age of ten, when as an evacuee during World War II he found himself in a small cinema in Devon. He was utterly spellbound by Walt Disney’s film Fantasia. Disney’s vision of music and images had entered my psyche.”

The exhibition London City of Music and Other Delights runs from 1st - 29th October at, appropriately enough, Blackheath Concert Halls. Terry will be present to discuss his paintings in the gallery on Saturday 4th and Sunday 5th October 2000. 2.00 - 4.00 pm.
The Westcombe Society

MEMBERS’ NIGHT – Saturday 10th October

Cherubin Choristers Tea Thursday 27th October 2014

GENERAL MEETING – Tuesday 11th November

THREE OF A KIND – Monday 17th November

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS – Wednesday 26th November

THE GLEBE – Wednesday 26th November

AT THE THEATRE – Thursday 27th November

LIVE AT THE THEATRE – Friday 28th November

Theatre Award – Saturday 29th November

HAPPY HOLIDAYS – Sunday 30th November

COMMUNITY

GREENWICH HERITAGE CENTRE
Wed 8th Oct, at 6.40 pm
Katy Attie talks on ‘Fighting on the Home Front’

THE LADIES OF FARNDALE AVENUE
Fri 3 - Sat 18 October ALTAR BOYZ

WORSHIP

ST GEORGE’S CHURCH, Blackheath
Communion for Children’s Church for ages 3 and up.
First Sunday in each month is an all-age service

TRINITY LABAN
Thurs 20th, 23rd, 30th October

THE PRIORY PLAYERS
The Trench

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WHAT'S ON

ARTS

NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM
THE QUEEN’S SAILS MEMORY
Until Nov. 16th: 10.00 am – 5.45 pm Free.
This world renowned collection of maritime representation and memory in the fitting setting of the Queen’s House as part of the Queen’s House Festival.

ART AND THE SCIENCE OF EXPLORATION
1788 – 1870: The Age of Great Travels until 30th August 2014. Queen’s House. See the Stipple Kangaroos (and Dingos) found by the public, and work of artists from all three of Captain Cook’s voyages.

FORGOTTEN FIGHTERS: THE FIRST WORLD WAR AT SEA Until 31st October. 2014 10.00 – 17.00 daily
BLACKHEATH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY
St Mary’s Church Hall, Crossness, Blackheath.

WORLD WAR I TALKS
Mon 20th Feb & Tues 21st Feb
Exhibition at Arthub Gallery, Creekside, SE8 4SA

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF EXPLORATION
1788 – 1870: The Age of Great Travels until 30th August 2014. Queen’s House. See the Stipple Kangaroos (and Dingos) found by the public, and work of artists from all three of Captain Cook’s voyages.

FREE SASH WINDOW DOCTOR SERVICES
At The Theatre Workshop, 28a Blackheath Vale, Blackheath.

W.O.R.S.H.I.P
St George’s Church, Blackheath
Communion for Children’s Church for ages 3 and up.
First Sunday in each month is an all-age service

FASHION THROUGH TIME
Queen’s House. See the Stipple Kangaroos (and Dingos) found by the public, and work of artists from all three of Captain Cook’s voyages.

THE BRAZILIAN KICKERS
– teaching football

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1788 – 1870: The Age of Great Travels until 30th August 2014. Queen’s House. See the Stipple Kangaroos (and Dingos) found by the public, and work of artists from all three of Captain Cook’s voyages.

GREENWICH YACHT CLUB
TRINITY LABAN 19.30, 23.10, 27.10, 31.10, 4.11

THE CHAPEL HOUSE
What does it mean to be a creator, and what does it mean to be an artist for the digital age? Followed by post-show discussion

ST OLAVES
First class examination results

ST OLAVES THEATRE
First class examination results

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THE PRIORY PLAYERS
The Trench

AT THE THEATRE – Thursday 27th November

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BOOK SALE: On the second Saturday every month from 10am to 12 noon in the car park behind the station. Non-members £1.

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Ends’, ‘The Smith Lectures’ and TV’s ‘The Moonlighters’ live in the area. Many of the band Danny and the Moonlighters live in the area.

It will be an uproarious night of variety with fantastic comedy, sparkling music, saucy stand-up, scintillating theatre and much else.

It is intended that the show will always involve local talent: this inaugural show involves local talent; stand-up comedian DAVID SPECTATOR Dubs comedian DAVID WHITNEY ‘the silver-tongued warrior’, who presents the show; stand-up comedian, playwright, king of comedians, professional Leonard Cohen impersonator and star of radio’s ‘Loose Ends’, ‘The Smith Lectures’ and TV’s ‘The One Show’ and ‘Grumpy Old Men’ Arthur Smith: “compere beyond compare”

The line-up so far; The Spectator dubs comedian DAVID WHITNEY ‘the silver-tongued warrior’, while Will Self says ‘very funny. I’m going to keep my eye on you’. And Reginald D. Hunter says: ‘You can’t stop going to keep my eye on you’. And Iain Lee on Absolute Radio, he’s ‘mind excellence through effort’. In the words of the Iain Lee on Absolute Radio, he’s ‘mind blowing - you’re in for a treat’.

If you like your magic a little bit more conventional, you’ll be amazed by SCOTT PENROSE, Vice President of The Magic Circle, no less. ‘Spectacular’ says the Daily Telegraph. Please note: line-up subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control.

Tiny Lee on Absolute Radio, he’s ‘mind blowing - you’re in for a treat’. Arthur Smith: “compere beyond compare”

Surreal, irreverent, hilarious and down-right amazing, PETE HEAT is something like Derren Brown crossed with Russell Brand. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’.

Now she’s not touring the world with Mamma Mia!, FELICITY DUNCAN can grace us with her presence as the manic cleaner Eva, scattering inappropriate malapropisms all over the place.

Then there’s DANNY AND THE MOONLIGHTERS: expect irresistible upbeat, catchy tunes in a 50s high-school prom rock’n’roll style.

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Tiny Lee on Absolute Radio, he’s ‘mind blowing - you’re in for a treat’. Arthur Smith: “compere beyond compare”

Surreal, irreverent, hilarious and down-right amazing, PETE HEAT is something like Derren Brown crossed with Russell Brand. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’. In the words of the JWT, Pete is ‘the rock & roll magician’.

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Then there’s DANNY AND THE MOONLIGHTERS: expect irresistible upbeat, catchy tunes in a 50s high-school prom rock’n’roll style.

It is intended that the show will always involve local talent: this inaugural show involves local talent; stand-up comedian DAVID SPECTATOR Dubs comedian DAVID WHITNEY ‘the silver-tongued warrior’, who presents the show; stand-up comedian, playwright, king of comedians, professional Leonard Cohen impersonator and star of radio’s ‘Loose Ends’, ‘The Smith Lectures’ and TV’s ‘The One Show’ and ‘Grumpy Old Men’

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Westcombe wildlife

There is plenty of interesting flora and fauna around the Westcombe area although it isn’t always obvious. On the open Heath and the Vanbrugh Dips are uncommon plants that thrive on the thin, sandy soil. In June, Knotted and Clustered Cleftworts put on a fine display. These low-growing plants have pretty, pinkish flowers. The very tiny Blef’s Foot flower is not as scarce but, when seen closely, the flowers are surprisingly beautiful. A rich population of delicate blue Harebells in one corner of the Vanbrugh Dips is more noticeable.

Less well-known, perhaps, is that the males of the Large Bellflower Bee like to hide in the Harebell flowers on rainy days! According to David Notton, who has been surveying the biodiversity of Blackheath, there are an astonishing 84 species of bee (and counting) in the area. A number of these are scarce or rare and show what a complex and important area this is for wildlife.

Ragwort to grow in certain sheltered spots, this approach now allows for swathes of yellow on Ragwort flowers. Recovering. Grassland species did well, with butterflies, with Small Tortoiseshells (and counting) in the area. A number of species bred - Whitethroats raised at least three years – not bad for SE London! Another feature of sunny autumn days is the Red Admiral butterfly, which feeds at ivy flowers (the ivy around Vanbrugh Castle, for example) and Michaelmas Daisies. Many will migrate to escape the British winter, and it is even possible to witness this on a warm autumn day as they fly determinedly south across the Channel!

This autumn try looking for Wheatears on the open Heath. Dapper little birds (even more so in spring) with a black and white tail and black mask, they are long-distance migrants that stop by in our area in September/October and return in April. Another feature of sunny autumn days is the Red Admiral butterfly, which feeds at ivy flowers (the ivy around Vanbrugh Castle, for example) and Michaelmas Daisies. Many will migrate to escape the British winter, and it is even possible to witness this on a warm autumn day as they fly determinedly south across the Channel!

Despite the increasing sightings of Marbled White, with its pied chequerboard pattern. Perhaps this species is joining the others as a resident.

Some of this success is doubtless due to the more relaxed mowing regime so sensibly agreed for the Heath. On the Greenland side of Blackheath, at least 29 species of butterfly have been seen in the last three years – not bad for SE London!

Birdlife

Nuthatches nested in the Westcombe Woodlands this year, in an old nest hole that was used by Woodpeckers in 2013. They plastered mud around the edges to make the entrance hole smaller. In Greenwich Park, successfully breeding species included Great Spotted and Green Woodpeckers, Nuthatches, Goldcrests and Song Thrushes. Recent Tawny Owl sightings in Greenwich Park are exciting news and raise hopes that this species might once again nest locally, either there or in the Westcombe Woodlands.

House Sparrows are still holding on locally after their decline in London. In midsummer they congregate between their nests in the Westcombe area’s roofs and the Vanbrugh Dips to gather food for their young. Such proximity to grassland and scrub with plenty of insects and seeds may help explain why these populations have managed to survive.

On the Vanbrugh Dips, three warbler species bred - Whitethroats raised at least one family as did Chiffchaffs and Blackcaps. With the resident Song Thrushes, Robins, Blackbirds and Wrens, the dawn chorus is often impressive here in May. By mid September, these Whitethroats will be on their way back to southern Africa for the winter, while the other two will have left, probably for the Mediterranean, by mid October. It is not just birds that migrate here - in July I found a Visceral moth in the grass on Vanbrugh Dips. This creature comes from southern Europe and is tiny and delicate, camouflaged in a strawberry-coloured stripe on its wings. It honestly doesn’t look like flying half a mile never mind across the Channel!

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Christopher’s Column

Period gardens

In the 19th century, there was a fashion for ‘Shakespeare Gardens’, using plants mentioned in his work and making in the style of his times. Most surviving examples in the public domain are in American parks, botanical gardens or university grounds. Any New York’s Central Park has four. The American scheme was begun in the 1880s but dedicated officially to Shakespeare in 1913. After massive neglect it was restored in 1987 with rustic wooden benches and bronze plaques with quotations from the Bard.

A more modest knot garden by Ernest Law in Stratford upon Avon (1920) was modelled on one shown in “The Chelsea Labyrinth” (Thomas Hill, 1586), which also inspired the 1969 Quoos Garden at Kew Palace. The list of plants mentioned by the Bard is long, and hard to decode with modern names so different. (“Woodbine” is honeysuckle and “gillyflower” is a dianthus, though herbs have the same names). Of course in the texts they “stand for” actions, emotions and so on, rather than having a horticultural context. E F Benson satirises the fad for period gardens in “Mapp & Lucia” (1931), describing Lucia’s Perdita Garden, which is ‘gay in Spring’ with plants true to Perdita, but only ‘gay all summer’ by importing other ‘Shakespearean’ flowers (pansies, rose’s and honeysuckle).”

Sainsbury’s Update

Maggie Gravelle

The possibility that the No to Ikea campaign were hoping for was that English Heritage would halt demolition plans by designating the Sainsbury’s store as a listed building.

The Twentieth Century Society argued that the building was the ‘most innovative supermarket building to have been built in the last 50 years’ and that it was designed to reduce waste and environmental damage. It won numerous awards and was shortlisted for the prestigious Stirling Prize when it was built only fifteen years ago. English Heritage, while acknowledging its ‘inspiring design’ nevertheless deemed that it was not ‘of sufficient importance as a pioneer of, or turning point for, sustainable retail architecture’ to be listed.

So it is to be demolished and perhaps replaced with an Ikea blue and yellow box. Negotiations continue with local groups to mitigate problems of congestion and pollution.