



# Westcombe NEWS

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April 2016 Issue 3



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

## Decision Time for John Roan *WN* reporter

In February this year, the governors of John Roan School wrote a letter to the parents informing them that there is a clear need for schools in Greenwich to consider their future.

“Essentially, all secondary schools will be academies by 2020, and the local authority calls on its governors to carefully consider their options,” they said.

They reported that Cllr Miranda Williams, Cabinet Member for Education in Greenwich Council, had said that John Roan’s best interest would be served by governors taking an active role in any academisation process.

“The alternative would be to await an imposed assignment to some academy chain by anonymous officials who have no vested interest in our pupils or our staff. This doesn’t bear thinking about, and would be failing the school and its future.”

In order to meet their legal and moral obligations, The John Roan governors have decided to form a working group to investigate the options available for becoming an academy. The working group was to report back to the full Governing Board in March, though the *WN* has learnt that this will not occur before the autumn.

Other Greenwich schools, both primary and secondary, are carrying out similar exercises, so John Roan is not alone in having “to formulate a strategy to navigate the complex educational landscape.”

Parents and teachers and students are aghast at the situation, but Cllr Williams had to bite the bullet. She warned that \* the current government is determined to accelerate the conversion of school to academy status “The Prime Minister has stated explicitly the intention that all schools will be academies by the end of this government’s administration.”

\* all new schools will be academies, with the local authority playing no role.  
\* there is growing recognition in government that schools do not thrive in isolated single institutions but function best within some kind of grouping which provides accountability, challenge and support. (Observers have pointed out that this was exactly what used to exist, when local authorities were in a supervisory role with regard to local schools. . . )

In February, parents and teachers from John Roan, and Deansfield Primary school in Eltham lobbied Greenwich Council, demanding to know why Greenwich Council appeared to be encouraging its schools to convert to academy status.

In response, Cllr Williams made it clear that “academies and Multi Academy Trusts

are not the choice of Greenwich Council,” and added “All schools being academies is the last place that this Council wants to be.” But in the face of national legislation, the Council had very little room for manoeuvre, she said, and added “any resistance to the process of academisation must come from the schools themselves.”

### The choices

The choices it seems are as follows:

\* to maintain the status quo, with John Roan being the much-loved community school that it currently is. This is now no longer an option: the government is saying that it will impose academy status, placing it almost certainly under the aegis of one of the big Academy Trusts – the Big Beasts roaming school corridors...

\* to form a single school Academy Trust But how long could this last, given the government’s policy of forming groups of schools?

\* to form a partnership trust in a group with other schools in a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) on the best terms available.

The Governing Body has a clear duty to base any decision on what they see as the best interests of the school – the students, and the parents and the staff. Clearly, they would be remiss in their duties if they did not consider all options, and the working party that has been set up under the leadership of Linda Karlsen, a former Deputy Head, is certainly a necessary step.

Less palatable to the unions, but certainly also necessary, was an exercise in which Leigh Academies Trust gave a presentation to the governing body on what is involved in forming an Academy Trust.

### A bombshell

The news that the Governing Body is exploring all possible options, including academisation, has been treated as a bombshell by both parents and teachers and even some students. They are calling for a vote against academisation in a parental ballot that is fair and democratic. However, a threat of strike action by the NUT seems premature given that John Roan’s governors are simply doing their job and exploring options.

Opponents argue that the academies are “privately controlled, non-accountable institutions.” However, the truth is that they are not privately controlled: they are charitable trusts. Like all state-funded schools, they are accountable to the government through Ofsted. They are subject to the same level of scrutiny as comprehensive schools. However, there have been



reports of financial irregularities and the selling of services to friends and family. A report of a recent protest meeting in early March can be seen on page 3.

A spokesman for The John Roan Governing Body told the *WN*: “We are not in any talks with any party to change the school. What we have done is to take the prudent step of setting up a small working party to research and review how the current Government education policy may affect the school and prepare appropriately.

“Nine of the current 13 secondary schools in Greenwich are now academies, reflecting the Government’s commitment to enact its policy on academisation. Our duty as Governors and our commitment is to do the right thing by the students, parents and staff – and to actively consider all the evidence and different options that will best equip us to make the right decision. Until then, no decision will be made.

“We share our community’s pride in The John Roan School and are committed to shaping its destiny without sacrificing the best aspects of its past. We are doing this in an open and transparent manner and are including parents and staff as part of the dialogue.”

The question arises: why is there such strong opposition to academies? It is argued that although they have charitable status, they are run on a business model with a strong emphasis on attainable targets; allegedly, some have in the past used dubious tactics to attain those targets, including unofficial exclusions to improve their results, and “cherry-picking” children.

They also fix their own levels of pay and conditions, and employ unqualified teachers: so they are unpopular with teachers’ unions. It is also claimed that they offer a limited education by setting their own narrow curriculum. Teacher turnover is said to be high, and the Department of Education has admitted that 85% of academy chains are “underperforming.”

Academisation is irreversible, and under current legislation it would be impossible to return John Roan to the good comprehensive school we know now.

**A protest group has been formed.**

Contact: [parentsforjohnroan@gmail.com](mailto:parentsforjohnroan@gmail.com)

For more, please see p.3.

Yes, it’s that time again:



The London Marathon

The Virgin Money London Marathon will once again take place on Sunday 24th April 2016. More than 36,000 competitors will take up the challenge to complete the 26.2-mile course from the starting points at Blackheath to the finishing line on The Mall.

Roads will close to secure the race route at 07:00, including Woolwich Road, Shooters Hill Road, Charlton Way, Charlton Road, Vanbrugh Park, Old Dover Road and St John’s Park. Stewards will reopen the roads as soon as it is safe to do so. Those who need to leave the Westcombe Park area should consult the map issued to residents.

The crossing points for residents on Woolwich Road will be stewarded. Stewards will assist vehicle movements across the route and/or onto the A102 until 09:00 and will resume once the event has passed at around 11:30 and until the roads re-open fully.

The closure at the top of Maze Hill will open to residents at approximately 11:00 to allow movement along Shooters Hill Road west towards Deptford and Lewisham before Shooters Hill Road re-opens fully.

For more information contact the Virgin Money London Marathon helpdesk on 020 7902 0200 or [www.virginmoneylondonmarathon.co.uk](http://www.virginmoneylondonmarathon.co.uk)

## Shop-lifters beware

A Charity Shop based in this area has experienced a number of shop-lifting incidents for the past two years.

A suspect has been identified. The *WN* has been told that the case is likely to end up in court if the offences continue. What sort of person steals from a charity shop, one wonders?

## < < Newsbriefs > >

### SouthEastern Rail services

Mike Sparham reports:

On Wednesday 2nd March, the House of Commons held a debate regarding Southeastern train services.

The two MP’s in our area, Matt Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) and Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham Deptford) both spoke in the debate, as did a number of other MP’s. None were complimentary!

Matt Pennycook MP gave a plug for the Greenwich Line Users’ Group (GLUG), and the Charlton Users’ Group.

**A report of the debate can be found on this link:**  
<http://bit.ly/1LWMtz0>

### Kenneth Bound RIP

We are sorry to record the death on 8th February of Kenneth Bound, who was Chair of the Blackheath

Society from 1989-1993. He was a life member who joined the committee in 1979 and following his time as chair became a Vice President. He lived in Blackheath for many years and directed the Society through a number of difficult campaigns with great effect.

There was a Service of Thanksgiving at St Mary’s Church, Brettenham, Suffolk, on Thursday 10th March.

## The Westcombe Society

Spring Quiz Fri 15th April, Mycenae House, 7.30pm for 8pm start

£5.00 entry for members / £6.00 non-members

Please ring Caroline on 8853 0948 – booking by 9th April.

Fish/Chicken & Chip suppers or simply chips must be ordered in advance. Bar open.

Children’s Nearly New Sale in conjunction with Charlton Toy Library,

Sat 23rd April, 2pm - 4pm, Mycenae House

Babies’ & Children’s Toys, Clothes and Equipment

Bargains Galore! Admission 50p, Members 30p, Kids Free

For Table Bookings contact Laura on [charltontoylibrary@gmail.com](mailto:charltontoylibrary@gmail.com)



WESTCOMBE NEWS

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Helping children to grow  
and develop Sue Gay



Eve, Kelly and Glenda

What started as an ideal for three local  
mothers who founded and ran the  
Bridge, a voluntary run, drop in centre for  
under 5s at the Greenwich Pleasaunce, has  
turned into a reality. More2 childcare, the  
first permanent Greenwich flexible nursery  
and work hub has got Ofsted approval and  
is now up and running for 0 to 5 year olds.

Based behind the Forum at Greenwich,  
Trafalgar Road, More2childcare gives  
parents the resources to enhance their work  
life balance at the same time as providing  
physical and social development for their  
children.

It challenges outdated, inflexible  
childcare provision and transitional  
employment models and gives parents a  
voice, while offering flexible, quality  
nursery options and support to find or  
pursue family friendly work choices.

Eve Daniels, Kelly Salambasis and  
Glenda Alexander, the founders of  
More2childcare, have three bright, light  
and spacious nursery rooms, split by age.  
Rollers, Runners and Racers have been  
designed for different age groups and filled  
with a wide range of toys and educational  
resources to ensure fun, variety and to help  
children learn and develop.

There are also two secure playgrounds  
perfect for mobile children to explore, dig,  
master trikes and ball skills.

Adjoining this is the work hub and  
training room. There you can take courses  
or just plug in and work away. While you  
child is looked after next door.

More2childcare was opened by Charles  
Medland who was a former pupil over 80  
years ago when the building was Christ  
Church School. He was delighted to see the  
return of the building to its original  
purpose of learning, education and a place  
where children can thrive.

Contact www.more2childcare.com for  
information or phone 07763990376.

Guided tours are available to suit.



Letters to the editor

Any views expressed are personal, and are not  
necessarily those of the W/N or the Westcombe Society.

From: John Card Plymouth

This amazing tree, below, may be the answer to  
Maurice Ben Rose's search for God's Tree! (I  
refer to his article in March's W/N.)



Ed: This ancient yew tree on the Dartington  
Estate near Totnes in Devon is thought to date  
back up to 2000 years - a date when Christ was  
walking the earth. The tree is alive and well,  
and grows in the churchyard of the remains of  
St Mary's, a twelfth century church. Researcher  
Katherine Ross says yew trees were planted as  
winter meeting places in the UK at a time  
when yew, box and juniper were the only  
native evergreens. Most yew trees were lost to  
produce longbows, but the tree survived  
because it was on religious ground.

The gardens at Dartington were laid out by  
three well-known garden designers – Henry  
Avray Tipping, Beatrix Farrand and Percy  
Cane, and are well worth a visit. Thanks to  
our long-standing member of the Westcombe  
Society John Card now living in Plymouth for  
sharing this information.

From: Chris Ormell Secretary, PER Group

I find the government's stance on turning all  
schools into Academies incomprehensible. Sir  
Michael Wilshaw has said that some chains of  
Academies are doing a worse job than the Local  
Authorities.

Furthermore, academies don't have to follow  
the National Curriculum, so when all schools  
have become Academies, the National  
Curriculum loses any bite it previously enjoyed.  
It was said when the National Curriculum was  
introduced that it was a listing of all those  
things every pupil had a right to be taught. Has  
this ceased to be their "right"?

The principle that Academies have a lot of  
freedom to do things differently was introduced  
to get schools out of their ruts, and to encourage  
them to try out new approaches. Clearly it is

From: Frank Smith Blackheath

Bravo for an excellent article on free intellectual  
exchange at Goldsmiths. Some of what's been  
happening in our Universities is unbelievable  
but sadly true.

From: Cllr David Gardner Charlton

The Royal Borough is asking residents who have a  
mental health condition, or who knows of someone  
that does, for their views about local services.

It wants to hear what people think about mental  
health counselling, and community support  
services, and any suggestions for how they could  
be improved to meet residents' needs.

The survey runs until 29th April 2016.

To take part go to  
www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/mentalhealthsurvey  
or pick up a form at the Woolwich Centre recep-  
tion in Wellington Street, Woolwich.

Memorial Lecture

The Institute of Gas Engineers and  
Managers' annual Sir Denis Rooke  
lecture is on April 5th at the Royal College  
of Physicians in Regents Park, reports  
Mary Mills. Professor Dieter Helm CBE  
will be delivering the lecture on "The  
future of energy generation."

Sir Dennis Rooke OM, who died in  
2008, was born in New Cross, and lived  
in Westcombe Park. He was Britain's  
most distinguished gas engineer.

He became deputy chairman of the  
British Gas Corporation in 1972 and was  
its chairman from 1976 to 1989. He was  
chancellor of Loughborough University  
from 1989 to 2003.

Famously feisty, he had what could  
politely be called an uneasy relationship  
with both politicians and journalists. He  
once said "If a minister just twists my arm,  
I'll stand there and have it twisted — but  
it'll be a long time before it drops off."

Roy Hinson



I am very sorry to report the death of my  
father, Roy Hinson, who lived in Foyle  
Road from January 1970 until he moved  
into a Care Home last year aged 82.

He was the local window cleaner for  
over a decade in the 1990s and a frequent  
sight for all in his retirement as he strolled  
around Greenwich and jumped on and off  
the 386 every day.

His wife, Pat – a well known child  
minder in the area for many years—survives  
him. I have informed residents who I  
know were friends, but I am aware that  
many householders and local businesses  
were friendly acquaintances and may like  
to be informed.

Jo Hinson

being abused by some unscrupulous operators.  
But this "freedom" is also largely an illusion.  
This is because Academies still operate in an  
accountability framework which is grossly  
behaviouristic, controlled by the cheapest  
possible examining procedures.

I don't think most people realise how much  
strain this is putting on everybody, not to men-  
tion acting as an "anti-education" factor,  
because many students won't learn things unless  
they know they lead to marks in the exam. This  
is a positive encouragement for pigeon learning.

My advice to Roan School would be to find a  
body of people to form their own Trust who can  
insist on no scams, no waste of money and a  
maximum possible amount of genuinely  
educational activity assessed in a proper, "all  
round", civilised manner.

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# LOCAL NEWS

At a protest meeting in early March, parents, staff and students of John Roan School vented their fury and frustration at what they saw as a threat to the school. Two sixth-formers led the charge, and they were swiftly joined by angry parents and teachers. Among the many issues raised: the possible impact on the quality of education on offer; the threat to teachers’ pay and conditions; the allegation that it was “privatisation by the back door”; and the point that “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” The discussion below has been pre-empted by the news that academisation is to be compulsory . . .

## What are the pros?

It is argued that because academies are independent schools, receiving their funding directly from central government, rather than through a local authority, they have more freedom than other state schools over their finances and curriculum.

Academies don’t have to follow the national curriculum, and can set their own term times. They still have to follow the same rules on admissions, special educational needs and exclusions as other state schools. Some academies have sponsors such as businesses, universities, other schools, faith groups or other voluntary groups.

The day-to-day running of the school remains with the head teacher, but they they are overseen by individual charitable bodies called academy trusts and may be part of an academy chain. Theses trusts provide advice, support and expertise.

Now, over half of all secondary schools in England are academies. Originally, the policy, when started under Labour, aimed to improve struggling schools, primarily in deprived areas, and this continues under the sponsored-academy model, where failing schools are taken over and run by an academy trust, usually under a new principal and governing body.

However, now, all schools – primary as well as secondary – will be required to convert to academy status, priority being given to those deemed by the education watchdog Ofsted to be "outstanding" or "performing well". The government says that all secondary school are to become academies by 2020.

The government argues academies drive up standards by putting more power in the hands of head teachers, and cutting a lot of bureaucracy. It claims that they have been shown to improve twice as fast as other state schools, but these claims have been questioned.

Schools benefit from becoming academies in other ways. In addition to the £25,000 towards conversion costs from the Department for Education, academies can potentially top up their budget by as much as 10%, unless it is a “Multi-Academy Trust,” as the money then goes towards management costs.

This is because on top of the regular per pupil funding, it gets money that would previously have been held back by the local authority to provide services such as special needs support. If the school is able to buy in the services it needs more cheaply, or has less need of those services, it can benefit financially from becoming an academy. Academy chains can create economies of scale themselves.

Academies do not need to follow national pay and conditions for teachers. More freedom over staff pay can mean they can either make savings – or attract and retain good teachers by paying more. This is an important consideration, given that it is harder and harder to retain teachers. It is also difficult to recruit teachers willing to take on the responsibility of running a school as head. In addition, control over the length of the school day can allow academies to teach more lessons.

## What are the cons?

A parent, Pete Sinclair, gives a personal view:

The main reason for choosing to become an academy is that– so it is claimed – they get better results. A lot of people do believe that academies perform better than schools that do not become academies.

But the truth is, they don’t. It is true that there are some high-performing academies – but according to the Department of Education’s own statistics 85% of academies are underperforming. According to the findings of the study carried out in March 2015, in the majority of chains, children’s results were worse than they would have been if they were still in a local authority school.

More data released by Ofsted in December 2015 showed that a school is six times as likely to remain inadequate if it became a sponsored academy. In an article in the Guardian, Lola Okosilie concluded: “The evidence increasingly shows that academies are an expensive failed experiment, and that children, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are paying for it.”

So you have to ask why would anyone choose to become an academy? The idea that children do better in an academy school is a myth. So, who does do better under an academy school? Well, the executives who run it, that’s who. Here are some figures:

At Woodlands Academies Trust in London, described as a struggling small academy chain, two senior executives received a combined figure of nearly £500,000 from tax -payers in 2014- 2015, which seemingly includes pay-offs. And that was despite what its new leadership team now describe as “under-performance.”

It makes you wonder what they would have been paid if they had done a good job - or even an adequate one. Even their income was lower than that of the Harris Federation’s chief executive, Sir Daniel Moynihan, who earns £395,000 - £400,000 a year; questions are being asked about Harris schools unofficially removing students from the school roll. (To improve performance figures?) In some cases, students who have been suspended have to take public exams like GCSEs privately, at their own expense.

But this situation is not unique. Of 22 high profile chains whose accounts were looked at, 18 had at least one member of staff paid £140 - £150,000. but even that is nothing compared with what went on at Silver Birch Academy Trust in Waltham Forest, which consists of two primary schools. The executive Headteacher was paid £170,000; and each of the primary school also had its own head-teacher! At the same Academy Trust, the ICT Support Contact was given to a company where the Chair of Governors works, despite their bid being higher than the two other bids submitted.

Again, at the same academy, here’s the furniture spend: £4,487 on the headteacher’s desk; £4,887 on a conference table; and £4,976 on a wall unit. Why all under £5,000? Because “the school policy is that quotations are necessary for items over £5,000.”

It is abundantly clear that academisation is not about improving our children’s education: it’s about selling our schools so that people can make a profit out of them. I would urge people to reject the idea of an academy, and to insist on a parental ballot.

## The Voewood – beautiful things for you to enjoy



A new independent lifestyle shop, The Voewood, has opened at 13, Old Dover Road. Set up by local mum, Nicola Hibon-Jackson, The Voewood offers a unique mix of stylish clothing, accessories, gifts and home décor. It is a one-of-a-kind destination for those seeking something unusual to reflect their personal style.

Womenswear at The Voewood ranges from stylish easy-to-wear pieces for day, to more structured pieces for work as well as glamorous evening and occasion-wear. Many brands are stocked, including Sandwich, Second Female, Selected Femme, with red-carpet dresses by Kevan Jon, and ssoft Italian fabrics alongside bags, accessories, footwear and nightwear.

Gifts ideas range from organic beauty balms, candles and jewellery to watches, prints and posters, men’s accessories, handmade chocolates and books. Beautiful things for the home include handmade ceramics, glassware and ornaments, artisan throws and blankets, lighting, cushions and mirrors.

Nicola said: “I’m passionate about being able to find unique and beautiful things that people can treasure.”

She added: “We are also collaborating with talented local designers to bring to customers things full of creativity and that also support the local community.”

One of the key aims of the shop is to offer an informal, family-friendly environment. Nicola says,

“As a mum of two, I understand the challenges of shopping with young children so we have really tried to make it a nice and welcoming experience for both adults and small ones alike by having lots of lego. toys and books in a play corner.”

The Voewood is also an official stockist of Frenchic furniture paint – a lush and creamy paint with a gorgeous pallet of 40 colours that can be painted straight onto just about any surface. There are plans to offer a variety of creative furniture and fashion workshops later in the year.

The Voewood is just one among a number of independent shops, bars, cafes, and restaurants that make Old Dover Road a very special place to do one’s shopping.

**About Nicola:**  
*Originally from Durham in the north-east, mum of two Nicola has lived in SE3 for the past 20 years.*

## Help for Fibromyalgia and Chronic Pain

Fibromyalgia is a mysterious condition. Like many other chronically painful conditions it is known to be hard to treat, and it can cause widespread disruption of people’s lives.

In addition, it is common for patients suffering chronic pain to have to put up with difficulty sleeping, chronic fatigue, headaches, anxiety, IBS and depression.

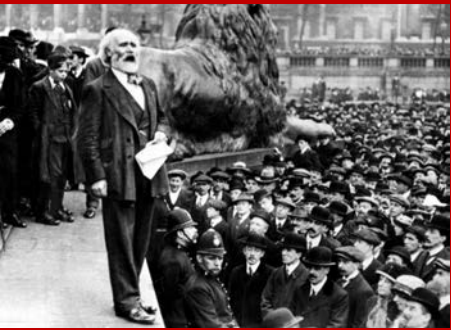
Vanbrugh NHS Community Pain Clinic in Greenwich Square has now extended its services in order to help those suffering these conditions by working along with Kairos Rehabilitation Trust (registered charity 1157359).

Kairos has developed a

number of new ways of bringing relief using therapies and social activities to address patients’ basic needs and so help them back to greater activity.

The approach to treatment will be explained by Dr David McGavin and Kairos’ therapists at two public talks for patients and relatives on Monday 4th April at 2.00pm and Tuesday 5th April at 2.00 pm at: Kairos, 2nd floor, Forum at Greenwich, Trafalgar Road, Greenwich, SE10 9EQ

**For further information ring 07712 810 or see [www.kairosrehabilitation.org.uk](http://www.kairosrehabilitation.org.uk)**  
**Referrals to Vanbrugh Clinic are made by your GP.**



Keir Hardie speaking against the First World War. Trafalgar Square, 1914.

## Socialist Opposition to World War One

An Exhibition of Images and Stories

Friday, 15 April	9:00 am - 9:00 pm	OPEN TO PUBLIC
	7:30 pm	Lecture by Prof. Mary Davis with Q&A
		Refreshments provided.
Saturday, 16 April	9:00 am - 7:00 pm	OPEN TO PUBLIC



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Rev'd Tim Yeager 07804 614245



### What's On!

## April 2016

**JAZZNIGHTS CLUB** - Friday 8 April 8pm £10 on the door  
Originals Night featuring Nigel Hanson, Emel Michael & Lara Lacovini

**GLOBAL FUSION** - Saturday 23 April 7.30pm £8  
St Georges Day Special featuring Wizz Jones plus Guests

**MY' COMEDY CLUB** - Friday 20 May 8pm £10  
featuring Tom Allen, Phil Nichol, El Baldiniho & Tiernen Douieb

**GLOBAL FUSION** - Friday 29 April 7.30pm £6  
Opening Night with a Springtime Ceilidh Special

More information on our website  
**020 8858 1749** [www.mycenaehouse.co.uk](http://www.mycenaehouse.co.uk)



# FEATURES

## House Prices in Greenwich up Fivefold

JIM WINTOUR

House prices have increased fivefold in the Royal Borough of Greenwich over the last two decades and the average house in price is now £385,000.

A young person trying to get a foot on the property ladder in Greenwich, even with substantial savings and the Greenwich median household income of £35,000 a year, will struggle to raise a mortgage to buy even the cheapest flat. It is no surprise that we have Generation Rent.

The reason for the increase in house prices is simple. Housebuilding in England over the last decade was at the lowest level since the Second World War. Housebuilding was so low over the last decade that another million homes were needed simply to keep pace with the growth in households.

### Generation Rent

Finding an affordable home to rent in Greenwich is even harder than finding a home to buy. Greenwich's council waiting list now stands at 11,000. Private rents are now so high that you can go into some private rented accommodation in the borough and find two or three beds in each room.

The reason for the shortage of affordable rented housing is simple. The number of council and housing association homes in England has fallen by over 1.5 million since 1981, mainly because of the right to buy.

The Housing Bill now before parliament largely ignores the overall housing shortage and will actually make the shortage of affordable rented housing worse.



Peninsula dwellings: so near, so far

### Robin Hood in Reverse

The Housing Bill is a Robin Hood in reverse. Less affluent people will pay the cost of measures to help people who are better off. In two main ways resources will be moved from affordable rented housing for less affluent people to fund home ownership.

First, the Bill will require developers to provide starter homes for sale instead of affordable homes for rent. In Greenwich 282 affordable homes for rent were started last year, many by developers. In two years' time developers will instead be building starter homes for sale.

These homes are unlikely to be affordable for most households in Greenwich. Indeed, it has been estimated that in Greenwich an income of as much as £75,000 a year may be needed to buy a starter home.

Second, the Bill will require councils to fund the Housing Association right-to-buy discounts by selling their most valuable

council houses as they become empty.

The Conservative Party estimates that councils will have to pay the Government £4.5 billion a year, funded by selling 15,000 expensive council homes a year.

If Greenwich is typical of England, the Council will have to pay the Government about £60 million a year, funded by selling about a quarter of the council homes that become empty and available for letting each year.

### Fewer Affordable Rented Homes

The effect of the Housing Bill in the Royal Borough of Greenwich is clear: the number of affordable rented houses in Greenwich will be reduced.

- \* People on the council waiting list will wait longer.
- \* Homeless households will be left longer in temporary accommodation.
- \* Young people looking for renting housing may face a choice between moving out to Bexley or Dartford or else sharing a severely overcrowded flat in Greenwich.

### What Can You Do?

If you are concerned, write to a peer at the House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW. See [www.HousingBillAction.org](http://www.HousingBillAction.org)

Jim Wintour is a former director of housing in the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

## Jimmy Carr: Work In Progress



Make a date with comedian Jimmy Carr - on Fri 11th May 8.00pm! This is your chance to be the first to hear Jimmy's new material before he takes it on his UK tour! The Best of, Ultimate Gold, Greatest Hits Tour is touring throughout 2016. This show is unfinished so essentially you're watching Jimmy do his homework for a special price.

Tickets: £20

**BOOK Now at Blackheath Halls: BOX OFFICE: 0208 463 0100**

Special Bonus: Comedy Happy Hour - 20% off all drinks from 6.30-7.30pm on the night!

### Flower festival

St George's Church on Glenlue Road is holding a flower festival on Saturday 18 June with a theme of music. Viewing will be from 2.00pm to 4.00pm. The church will be open for arranging from 10.00am to 12.00 noon. All welcome to take part. Please register to enter a display at [juditheastaugh@gmail.com](mailto:juditheastaugh@gmail.com). [www.stgeorgeswestcombepark.org.uk](http://www.stgeorgeswestcombepark.org.uk)

## Review "Boys will be Boys" at the Greenwich Theatre

Barbara Ward & Sophie Hall

The talented young women of Corelli College, part of Kidbrooke Theatre Company), took centre stage this February at the Greenwich Theatre, performing their own powerful production, 'Boys Will Be Boys'. The show was developed from their own original outstanding GCSE work, inspired by Laura Bates' award winning, 'Everyday Sexism' project. \*

This innovative production by local sixth formers was directed by Lucy Cuthbertson, an ex pupil, now working at the college, and was part of Greenwich Theatre's season promoting women in theatre.

This gritty, sometimes playful, production kept the audience engaged with a meticulous blend of humour and poignancy to tell its tale of everyday sexism, a tale as old as time, in uniquely effective ways. The audience laughed as the cast danced their angry dance routines, made sighs of recognition as they performed their staged dialogues, and stayed respectfully silent as they stripped off their frilly, coloured underwear to reveal their plain black leotards. and to softly proclaim their compelling personal experiences. This was a production, worthy of any local theatre, and it has already been shown at Camden People's Theatre feminist festival,



'Calm Down Dear'.

Overall this was a clever and powerful combination of acted out experiences and highlighted memories, an impressive cast performance by Joanne Sziendt, Ana-Maria Hurjui, Ellie Brayne-Whyatt, (Asst Director), Ruth Oshunkoya, and Edie Friar. Boys will indeed be boys – but this company had it covered as they drove their entertaining message home. The Director's signature was all over this piece but she rightly left the cast and the Asst Director to take the well deserved applause and curtain calls: it was well and truly their night.

\* Visit [everydaysexism.com](http://everydaysexism.com)

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# WHAT'S ON

## Arts

**BLACKHEATH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY**, St Mary's Church, Cresswell Park  
4th Thursday of every month, - 2pm for 2.30pm  
**Thurs 28th April – Diana Lloyd** Historical Use of Wallpapers in the British Interiors from 1685 to today. Non-members may pay on the door  
**GREENWICH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY** King William Court, University of Greenwich Mon 9th May -8pm – Charles Beauclerk John Ogden- The Man and the Music. Non-members may pay on the door  
**MADE IN GREENWICH GALLERY**  
324, Creek Rd SE10 9SW  
Tues- Sun and Bank Hols 11.00 - 5.30pm  
Tues 5th -7.30pm Greenwich University Poets, prize giving, and poetry readings £5 | £3 concs  
Wed 27th: 6.45-7pm Graham Fawcett on WB Yeats. £10 include drinks & light buffet. Book!  
April 8-17:th 'Inside Out' new work by Juli Jana. (Meet the artist Sunday 10th April 2-4pm)  
**STEPHEN LAWRENCE GALLERY**  
10, Stockwell Street, Greenwich SE10 9BD  
Until Sat. 9th April- (Tues-Fri-11-4pm Sat 11am-4pm –closed Bank Holiday) Where is my Mind? The work of legendary art director and designer Vaughan Oliver and band The Pixies Free  
**FAN MUSEUM**, 12, Crooms Hill, SE10 8ER  
Sat 16th Jan – Sat 05th June 10am-5pm  
'Treasures of the Fan Museum' Exhibition  
UK's only fan museum £4.00 | £3.0 Children: £3.00

## Children & Family

**ZIPPO'S CIRCUS** Blackheath Common, Shooter's Hill Rd www.zippos.co.uk  
**Thurs 24th March – Tues 5th April**  
Call 0871 210 2100 for ticket information  
**GREENWICH THEATRE CROOMS HILL**  
London SE10 8ES: Box office 8858 7755 greenwichtheatre.org.uk  
**Sat 2nd April** 11am & 2pm A Pocketful of Grimms clowning, puppetry and music (ages 4+) £11 |£8.50)  
**Sun 3rd April- 2.00pm Orion and the Dark** (Fantastic For Families) 'A heart warming tale of friendship, adventure and overcoming your fears' (ages 3+) £11 (Conc - £8.50)  
**Mon 4th - 2pm & Tues 5th April - 11am & 2pm At the End of Everything**  
'when her best friend, a little yellow bird named Tito goes missing, Icka...sets off on a mission over land and sea to save him' (ages – 6 +) £11 –(Conc - £8.50)  
**Wed 6 April -11am Granny Locks & The Monstrous Duckling** (Fantastic For Families) 'A father returns home with a magical cloak. A cloak that hides a story' (age 3 plus) £8.50 (Conc. & children £7  
**Thurs 21-Sun 24 April** (Thurs 7pm Fi 10am & 7pm , Sun 1pm & 5pm) **James and The Giant Peach** Roald Dahl's classic tale £21 (Conc. & children £15)- Thurs – all tickets £15  
**BLACKHEATH HALLS** 23, Lee Rd, London SE3 9RQ Box Office: 0208 463 0100 www.trinitylaban.ac.uk  
**Saturday 23rd April- 3pm Pandora's Magic Box** Recital Room – Blackheath Halls Tickets £7  
**SHERINGTON CHILDREN'S CENTRE, 14, Sherington Road, Charlton SE7 7JW**  
**DAD'S STAY AND PLAY** session every Wed. 9.30-11.30am Sherington Children's Centre, all home dads welcome.

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LEARNING FOR LIFE

## The Westcombe Society

All events are in the Main Hall of Mycenae House unless otherwise stated:

**Spring Quiz - Fri 15th April**  
**Spring Nearly New Sale Sat 23rd April 2.00 to 4pm**  
**AGM May 13th 7.00 - 9.00 pm** Steiner School,  
**Members' Evening - Fri 17th June**  
**Summer Picnic Sat 25th June** Mycenae Gardens  
**Macmillan Coffee Morning - Fri 23rd Sept.**  
**Autumn Nearly New Sale - Sat 24th September**  
**Chrysanthemum Tea - Sat 15th October**  
**Autumn Quiz - Friday 4th November**

## community

### HALSTOW COMMUNITY CHOIR.

Sessions every Tuesday evening at Halstow School. We are a friendly choir of mixed ability (note-reading useful but not essential) singing music from all genres over an occasional glass of wine. *For more information contact Penny on Halstowcc@gmail.com*  
**WESTCOMBE WRITER'S GROUP** Thursday monthly – 2.30-4.30pm Mycenae House, Contact: Rosemary Gill 0208 858 5088  
**BLACKHEATH BRIDGE CLUB** duplicate sessions in Mycenae House Mon & Thurs 7.15pm & on Wed at 1.15pm .Tel Ron 0208 319 1312  
**BLACKHEATH & GREENWICH WOMEN'S INSTITUTE** First Wednesday of every month - 7.30pm at Sunfields, Old Dover Rd, SE3 8SJ  
Next meeting: **Wed 6th April – 7.30pm-9.30pm** (Arrive 7pm for 7.30pm start) **A History of The Old Royal Naval College & Painted Hall**  
**Chris Roberts** eileenflanigan194@btinternet.com  
**GLOBAL FUSION MUSIC & ARTS**  
Globalfusionarts.co.uk  
**Fri 8th- World Cinema Night- Venue – The Grand Salon, Charlton House £3 donation**  
**Sat 23rd – St George's Day with Wiz Jones- Venue – Mycenae House £8 Conc. £7**  
Free workshops Fortnightly Tuesday and Friday evenings 7.30-8.30pm at Mascalls Meeting Room off Victoria Way, Charlton SE7 7TT Tai Chi, Singing, drumming, Writer's Group, African Dance Info 0208 858 9497858 9497 .

## spoken word

**BLACKHEATH FLOWER ARRANGING SOCIETY** 3rd Friday of each month Mycenae House 18th March Fri-2.00pm Jane Patterson – Happy Days  
**INDUSTRIAL HISTORY SOCIETY**  
**Wed 16th April - 6.30pm** The London pub and beer scene in the 19th century Adrian Tierney Jones 75, Cowcross Street. Non-members £1  
**BLACKHEATH SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY**  
**Fri-April 15th- What Can Cause Sea Level Change? Dr Tom Armitage –University College** Visitors welcome; pl. donate £3 to the society.  
**BLACKHEATH HALLS** 23, Lee Rd. SE3 9RQ  
**Box Office: 0208 463 0100 Great Hall:**  
**Fri -15th April -8pm 'Frazzled' - Ruby Wax** a follow up to Ruby Wax's sell out touring show, and best seller Sane New World £18 –Conc. -£16  
**BLACKHEATH QUAKER MEETING HOUSE**, Lawn Terrace SE3 9LL  
**Fri 6 and Sat 7 May 7.30 Red Flag over Bermondsey** Lynn Morris tells the story of Ada Salter, first woman councillor in London 1910, first woman Labour mayor & her campaigns for better health and housing – and trees and flowers to the dark streets of Bermondsey . For information and to reserve seatsblackheathquakers@gmail.com

## Blackheath International Chamber Music Festival 9th-25th April 2016

**Saturday, 9 April 2016 at 19:30**  
Double Concertos by Bach and Vivaldi  
All Saints Church - All Saints Drive SE3 0TY  
**Wednesday, 13 April 2016 at 19:30** Church of the Ascension Dartmouth Row SE10  
**Sunday, 17 April 2016 at 18:00**  
Guitarissimo – chamber music with guitar virtuoso Nejc Kuhar All Saints Church - All Saints Drive  
**Wednesday, 20 April 2016 at 19:30**  
Church of the Ascension Dartmouth Row SE10  
**Friday, 22 April 2016 at 19:30**  
Mozart All Saints Church SE3 0TY  
**Saturday, 23rd April 2016 at 14:00**  
Shakespeare & Art Workshop for all ages / free Church of the Ascension Dartmouth Row  
**Monday, 25 April 2016 at 19.30** Sajko/Haas Duo Church of the Ascension SE10 8AN  
For tickets: <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/blackheath-international-chamber-music-festival>-  
Tickets on the door: £15 Adult, 65+ £13, Friends of Age Exchange £11 Students £5, Under 18 Free

## Theatre

**CUTTY SARK STUDIO THEATRE**  
Cutty Sark Ship, Greenwich www.rmg.co.uk  
**Fri 1st April – 7.30pm, 9.30pm CHASING THE WHALE: KING OF THE SOUTH SEAS** £18  
**THE GREENWICH THEATRE**, Crooms Hill, London SE10 8ES **BOX OFFICE 8858 7755**  
**Thurs 7th April – 8pm THE WONDERFUL DISCOVERY OF WITCHES IN THE COUNTY OF LANCASTER** 'Britain's bloodiest witch-hunt' £16 Conc. £13.50  
**Tues 12th –Sat 16th 8.00pm Sat matinee 2.30pm SHERLOCK HOLMES – A WORKING HYPOTHESIS** £16 | £13.50  
**Tues 26th-Sat 30th April – 8.00pm Fable** £16 Conc £13.50  
**THE SPACE** 296, Westferry Rd E.14 3RS  
**Tues 5th April – Sun 10th April – 7.30pm (Sunday – 4 pm) WILDE TALES** Post Show Event - 9th April: a complimentary drink and a chat

## Music

**BLACKHEATH HALLS**  
**Box Office: 0208 463 0100**  
**www.trinitylaban.ac.uk**  
**Sat 23rd April- 8.00 pm** The Magic of the Beatles  
**Great Hall £22 Conc. £20**  
**Wed- 13th April -7.30pm** Jette Parker Young Artists Recital Rising starts of The Royal Opera House Recital Room – Blackheath Halls  
**£7 | £5 students**  
**Sat 9th April - 8pm** Kate Rusby Folk music  
**Great Hall £24 | £16 (under 16s)**

## Age Exchange

11, Blackheath Village, London SE3 9LA Tel :0208 318 9105 www.age-exchange.org  
**Sun. 3rd April, 10am-2.00pm.** Hand-made goods sale from local makers & artists.  
**Sat. 9th April, 10am-4.00pm** Secondhand booksale  
**Sat 11th April - 7.30-10pm.**The Annual Age Exchange Quiz At Kingswood Halls, London SE13  
**Sat. 23rd April PLANT SALE** in the Bakehouse at Age Exchange, a colourful array of flowers and plants  
Weekly Events:  
**MONDAYS:**  
**Pilates** 9.45-10.45am  
**Chair Pilates** 11am-12pm (£7.50 both)  
**Rhyme Time** free group, nursery rhymes & stories for under 5's, 2,00 - 2.45pm

## MYcenAe House live events: March

**Fri 8th April 8pm - JazzNights.** Candlit Live Jazz music event hosted by Dave Silk. £10.  
**Thurs 14th April 4pm - Bach To Baby.** Classical Concert for Baby and You. £10.  
**Fri 22nd April 8pm - Mycenae Comedy Club.** Stand-up comedy from rising stars of the circuit. £10.  
**Sat 23rd April 7.30pm - St Georges Day event** featuring Wiz Jones. Hosted by Global Fusion Music & Arts. £8.  
**Fri 29th April 7.30pm - Springtime Ceilidh Special** with Morrigan. Hosted by Global Fusion Music & Arts. £6.

For further information about all Mycenae House events and to buy tickets visit [www.mycenaehouse.co.uk](http://www.mycenaehouse.co.uk)

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*Sun. 17th April Young shoots and New Lambs walk*

*Meet in the green Education Building at 10.00 am*

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**Sat. 16th April, 11am-12.30pm. Belly Dancing** £7.  
**Sat. 16th April, 11am-12.30pm. Belly Dancing** £7.  
**TUESDAYS: SOOM Dance** classes for over 50s, 10-11.30am (Free\*)  
**Belly-dancing**, 11.45am-12.45pm £3.  
**WITH GREENWICH MORRISMEN:**  
Meet every Thursday at 8.00pm in Mycenae House. - Newcomers welcome  
**WITH GLOBAL FUSION:**  
**Fri 29th April GFMA Acoustic Night-/Barn Dance**  
Venue – Mycenae House £6 Conc. £4



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# FEATURES



Neville Grant invites you to join the WN in

## Celebrating Shakespeare

In this, the 400th Anniversary of William Shakespeare's death, the *WN* takes a look at the Bard's links with Blackheath, Greenwich, and Kent.

Although the marriage of Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon took place here, Greenwich gets hardly a mention in his plays: just one short reference in his play, *Henry VIII*. However, Shakespeare would have been familiar with Greenwich. We know that on 26th and 28th December 1594, Shakespeare, Burbage and Will Kemp were paid for a royal performance at Greenwich Palace, when Shakespeare himself acted before Queen Elizabeth I in two separate comedies.

It is also likely that the Christmas celebrations of 1612/13 saw performances here of *Much Ado*, *Othello*, *The Winters Tale* and *The Tempest*.

Not far down the river, Shakespeare had of course much closer links with Southwark, where the Globe Theatre was sited, and where his brother Edmund was buried in 1607. Visitors to Southwark Cathedral can view the alabaster statue of Shakespeare created by Henry McCarthy in 1912, and Christopher Webb's stained glass window depicting characters from Shakespeare's plays, unveiled in 1954 to replace the one destroyed in the war.

Blackheath does not loom large in the Shakespeare pantheon, except in Henry IV Part 2, when Jack Cade meets up with his fellow rebels. It is here that Dick, the butcher of Ahford, resolves to "kill all the lawyers!" Later, Jack Cade rewards Dick for his villainy, saying that he will double the length of the Lenten holiday. It was in "Fields between Dartford and Blackheath", that Jack Iden, a poor esquire of Kent, presented the King with Jack Cade's head, for which he was duly knighted. . .

Shakespeare also had strong links with Kent. It was here that the Earl of Kent spent agonising moments with King Lear, on the edge of a cliff now named Shakespeare Cliff.

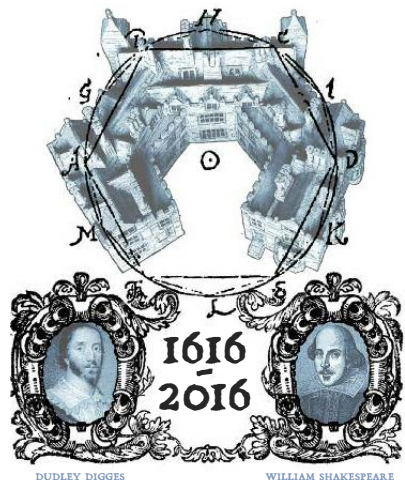
And, incidentally, Smallhythe Place in Kent was the home of Ellen Terry, famous for her portrayal of Shakespearean heroines. Here, among other memorabilia, one can view the beetle wing dress she wore as Lady Macbeth in 1888, along with a copy of the famous painting of her in the role by John Singer Sargent.



The historian Michael H Peters has uncovered some little known facts about Shakespeare's links with Kent. Dudley Digges, whose family over the years had close associations with Shakespeare, started to build Chilham Castle near Canterbury around 1612: it was completed in 1616.

In 2003, the castle's current owners, Tessa and Stuart Wheeler, asked Michael Peters to do some research on the history of the castle. He recalls: "In 2012, after nearly a decade's research and study, a series of facts hit me, like a series of thunderbolts, highlighting links between Dudley Digges and a family friend called William Shakespeare."

He discovered that it was Dudley's brother Leonard who wrote a preface to the First Folio of Shakespeare's works – and his stepfather Thomas Russell was the overseer of Shakespeare's will, with its famous second-best bed. It has been suggested that the wrecking of the "Sea



Venture" on the shores of Bermuda in 1609 – a financial disaster for Dudley, one of the financiers of the voyage – inspired the plot for Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*.

Michael Peters claims that it is highly likely that the hexagonal shape of Chilham Castle was inspired by Dudley's father, Thomas Digges, who was at the time widely regarded as England's leading mathematician and astronomer.

With the Digges family's close associations with theatrical designers such as Inigo Jones it is no surprise that the castle's shape also reflects the hollow-core polygon that typified a number of theatres in Shakespeare's time, including The Globe. It was partly as a result of these links that the Globe Theatre Company on Tour has chosen Chilham Castle as one of the places where a travelling company is to perform *Two Gentlemen of Verona* as part of the Quarter-Centenary of Shakespeare's death in April 1616.

*The Globe's production of Two Gentlemen of Verona takes place at Chilham Castle on May 21st/22nd. For tickets, phone the Globe Box office on (0)20 7401 9919*

## Book Review The faces of Shakespeare

In May last year, *Country Life* won a Scoop of the Year award when it claimed to have discovered the only surviving image of William Shakespeare that was produced in his lifetime.

A botanist, Mark Griffiths, found the image in a book published in 1598, *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes* by John Gerard. The encyclopaedia of plants (1,484-pages long) has four portraits engraved on its title page. Three of them are of Lord Burghley, John Gerard, Rembert Dodoens, all of whom are either botanists or (in the case of Lord Burghley) as a sponsor of botanists.

The fourth portrait? Dressed in Roman military dress, it is usually claimed to be that of Dioscorides, intended no doubt to bestow a classical and respectable lineage to the science of botany.

Mr Griffiths claims that he is in fact Shakespeare: the fourth man holds lily-like flowers and an ear of corn, which feature in Shakespeare's earliest poem and play in print—*Venus and Adonis*, published in 1593, and *Titus Andronicus* in 1594.

Griffiths claims that the connection

would have been obvious to theatre goers. Griffiths argues (more plausibly) that Burghley was also "probably" one of Shakespeare's patrons. However, a number of authorities claim that the evidence is pretty thin: that a playwright and poet should feature on the title page of a book on botany seems an affront to credibility.

The face of Shakespeare has roused passions on all sides, and the question is examined in depth in an enchanting book by Katherine Duncan Jones *Portraits of Shakespeare*. Along with most authorities, she argues that the so-called Cobbe portrait of Shakespeare recently acquired by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust is almost certainly a portrait of Sir Thomas Overbury. It is certainly a picture of a nobleman. Her view is shared by experts at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington DC, among others.

Duncan-Jones comments that it is "unfortunate" that this has not prevented the portrait from being plastered all over Stratford on Avon by the Birthday Trust and the tourist board.

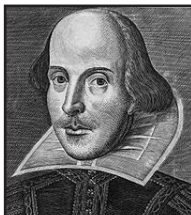
Another possible contender is the



The engraving in Gerard's botany book



The Cobb portrait: Sir Thomas Overbury



The First Folio's Droeshuit engraving



The Chandos portrait

Droeshuit engraving that appeared seven years after his death, on the title page of the first folio. There is nothing that tells us what the image was based on; it was not drawn from life, and indeed to many it appears crude and lifeless.

Katherine Duncan-Jones argues strongly in favour of the Chandos portrait as being the most likely "face of Shakespeare". She argues convincingly that it was painted by an artist now identified as Joseph Taylor, a gifted actor who was a close friend of Shakespeare, and was completed in his lifetime, around 1610.

There is strong evidence that he painted Shakespeare from life – the picture is informal: the pose is relaxed, the collar is loose and unfastened, and the ring in his ear is without the jewel that would hang from it on more formal occasions.

Those interested in the arguments for and against all the possible candidates, are urged to read Duncan-Jones' book.

Does it matter? Perhaps not. But the arguments remain fascinating.

*Portraits of Shakespeare* by Katherine Duncan-Jones Bodleian Library 2015

## If Musick be the food of love, play on . . .

**Shakespeare has inspired many composers through the ages. Here are some of them:**

**1616** Henry Purcell *A Midsummer Nights Dream*

**1692** Thomas Arne *As you Like it*

**1741** Antonio Salieri *Falstaff*

**1795** Haydn song from *Twelfth Night*

**1799** Gioacomo Rossini *Otello*

**1816** Fanny Hensel *Unter des Laubdachs Hut* (rendition of "Under the Greenwood Tree" from *Twelfth Night*)

**1839** Hector Berlioz symphony inspired by *Romeo and Juliet*

**1841** Felix Mendelssohn *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (including the Wedding March)

**1842** Otto Nikolai *The Merry Wives*

**1847** Giuseppe Verdi *Macbeth* (revised in 1865)

**1862** Hector Berlioz *Beatrice et Benedict* (based on *Much Ado*)

**1868** Ambroise Thomas *Hamlet*

**1886** Tchaikovsky *Romeo and Juliet*

**1893** Giuseppe Verdi *Falstaff*

(based on *Henry IV & The Merry Wives*)

**1926** Jean Sibelius *The Tempest*

**1932** Dmitri Shostakovich film music for *Hamlet*

**1934** Dmitri Shostakovich *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District*

**1935** Sergei Prokofiev ballet music for *Romeo and Juliet*

**1938** Ralph Vaughan Williams *Venetian Beauty*

**1944** William Walton film music for *Henry V*

**1957** Leonard Bernstein *West Side Story* (his version of *Romeo & Juliet*)

**1960** Benjamin Britten *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

**2002** Jonathan Dove *Moonlight revels* (a double concerto for Titania and Oberon)

**2004** Thomas Ades *The Tempest*

**2008** Judith Bingham *Shakespeare Requiem*

**2014** Joby Talbot *A Winter's Tale*

(Royal Opera House production)

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## THE CASE FOR RADICAL CHANGE IN EDUCATION

This report was prepared by the PER Group to send to the political parties in May. It has forewords by Antony Selsdon, Richard Harries and Frank Furedi

You can buy it post free if you receive the *Westcombe News* for the special price of £5.00 by sending money or cheque, payable to PER Group, to:

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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)

## The Dell: a refuge for wildlife Ann Hill

The Friends of Mycenae Gardens were entertained at their AGM on March 8th by Tim Hoe's medley of photos of happy volunteers busy working in the Dell, Mycenae Road, and very impressive 'before and after' images of what has been accomplished.

Joe Beale, a local naturalist, was guest speaker and his talk included a fascinating comparison of bird species observed in the Dell during his surveys in 2015 with those observed by John Burton in May 1949.

Two species appear to have been lost (willow warblers and spotted flycatchers,

both of which are summer visitors that have drastically declined across SE England).

However, we seem to have gained seven species (blackcap, stock dove, magpie, ringed-necked parakeet, coal tit, long-tailed tit and nuthatch). In total, Joe observed 26 bird species in the Dell, showing that it continues to provide a safe haven for birds even in our urban environment.

The evening ended with a quiz of 10 photos of birds, insects and plants that are found in the Dell. The winning team had an impressive score of 9½!

## Good news for Blackheath Halls

Blackheath Halls, which is an integral part of Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, has been awarded two major grants to enable it to undertake an extensive programme of capital works.

The planned works will ensure that this beautiful and historic building within Blackheath can continue to thrive for many years to come and remain at the heart of cultural life in South East London.

As the result of a grant of £234,832 from Viridor Credits, which is part of the Landfill Communities Fund, the Halls will be undertaking a complete renovation of the main roof, commencing in July this year.

Trinity Laban, as the proprietor of Blackheath Halls, will provide matching funding towards the cost of the roof.

Keith Murray, General Manager of Blackheath Halls, said: "As a second stage in the development of the Halls, we are delighted to announce the award of £499,999 from Arts Council England. This is the largest award made in the London

area, and will enable the Halls to be transformed into a flexible, creative performing arts centre."

The improvements planned include including modern stage equipment, improved backstage facilities, and an auditorium that will provide easy access to the arts. The Great Hall works are planned to commence this Summer.

Keith Murray added: "We are delighted to receive this funding from Arts Council England. The improved facilities will enhance the experience of audiences and artists alike."

In addition to the forthcoming programme of capital works, the Friends of Blackheath Halls have recently supported a complete refurbishment and redecoration of the Café Bar and Foyer at the Halls.

**Blackheath Halls is a Grade II listed building. It opened its doors as a concert hall in 1895 and since then it has presented a diverse programme of performances and events, featuring some of the world's leading artists.**

## Oxleas Woods: buzzing with activity



The Oxleas Apiary and its bees have overwintered very well and is going from strength to strength. We are looking forward to a very active 2016 bee-keeping season.

For this year we have installed an automatic weather station and some electronic wizardry and gizmos in the hives to enable us to monitor the bees comings and goings and their foraging performance set against the prevailing climatic conditions.

We have also broadened the range of Queens, thereby adding to the diversity of our bee strains, and are experimenting with a range of different hives.

Readers interested in bee-keeping and the activities in our Apiary should read the general introductory text on the Apiary on the Home page at the Oxleas Wood Apiary website ([www.oxleaswoodapiary.com/](http://www.oxleaswoodapiary.com/)).

The Introduction to Beekeeping Course gives details of the course and

there are separate Apiary Days for the public to obtain some 'hands-on' experience of working with the bees in the apiary - there is a downloadable brochure providing details of the Beekeeping course and Apiary Days. Talks and visits to schools, societies and clubs are also available with, generally, these being available from late-May onwards through the Summer.

The Oxleas Wood Apiary website contains downloadable images and posters, and/or if you prefer I can print up some small, laminated posters for your Notice Boards. If need be I can provide you with the HTML code to link directly to the Oxleas Wood

Apiary web site. My contact details are here.



John Large

## Are you a Tenant? and are you worried about getting your deposit back?

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## All change for Talbot Place

Mike Norton

The London Borough of Lewisham is currently seeking suggestions from the public for how the more or less derelict changing rooms at Talbot Place on Blackheath could be redeveloped.

The rooms were closed after asbestos was found, and currently they are being used just for storage. Cllr Amanda de Ryk is looking for any ideas for how this space could be used and would like suggestions sent in by April 17th.

The question of funding will be tackled once a plan has been adopted.

Please contact:

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## Tail-piece



It has been the custom to include an April Fool in the April issue of the *Westcombe News*.

This year, there's no need: students at Pembroke College in Cambridge have cancelled an *Around The World In Eighty Days*-themed party because it could be racist. They feared the event – based on the film of the Jules Verne novel – could lead to "cultural appropriation" if revellers dress up in clothes from an ethnic group they do not belong to – and could lead to "racial stereotyping".

Asked for her views, local commentator Ms Apryl-Foole-Hardie replied: "No comment." They've done me out of a job."

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