



Westcombe NEWS

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May 2016 Issue 4

A community newspaper commended by the London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies



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

John Roan School: the plot thickens

WN reporter

Many government politicians including Jeremy Hunt, have admitted that Lansley's attempted reforms of the NHS were a serious, and expensive, mistake.

Is history repeating itself, this time in the education sector? Parallels are now being drawn with the huge reorganisation involved in the academisation process, as serious questions are now being asked about the costs involved.

At present, out of 3,381 secondary schools 2,075 are academies, and 2,440 of 16,766 primary schools have academy status. The government is proposing the compulsory transformation of 17,000 schools in England to become academies, the aim being "to free them from local Council bureaucracy."

As reported in last month's *WN*, Greenwich councillors have made clear their opposition to the plans, but claim that there is little, legally, they can do: Cllr Miranda Williams, who is the councillor responsible for education in the Royal Borough, said that John Roan School will have to decide for itself what to do in the light of the government's plans.

Greenwich is not alone: four leaders of the Local Government Association (the LGA) – Tory, Labour, Lib.Dem. and Independent – have all signed a letter of protest in the *Observer*. (April 3rd.)

The benefits

There are compelling arguments for some form of educational reform in England: in January the OECD published a report that put England at the bottom of the league table for advanced countries in maths and literacy. The figures for 16 - 19 year olds put England in 23rd place in the list of advanced countries for literacy; and in 22nd place for numeracy, beating only the US. (The top performing countries are South Korea, Japan, the Netherlands and Finland.)

The OECD lists a number of what it calls "an impressive range of initiatives addressing the needs of young adults" carried out by the government to improve matters, including an increased emphasis on basic skills, and raising the school leaving age from 16 to 18.

But one reform not listed is the radical reorganisation of the system, taking it out of the hands of local authorities, and encouraging the creation of charitable trusts to replace schools with "academies."

The government claims that schools that have become academies have improved their performance, but many question the evidence.

But the process of turning primary and secondary schools into academies comes with significant financial costs, and many local authorities, including some run by Tories, are unhappy about these proposals.

The costs

Already, between the years 2010 and 2012, the Department of Education spent a huge sum on academies (the exact amount is disputed). Many say this should have been spent on supporting public education.

Labour party researchers now claim that the cost of conversion per school amounts to some £44,837. This is made up of a £25,000 government grant paid to schools, intended to cover conversion expenses for things such as legal and human resources, "rebranding", and changing software licensing. Total cost: about £1 billion.

In addition, local authorities will also incur legal costs required by the changes: and if as is more than likely, there are school budget deficits when they convert to academy status, local authorities will have to pick up the bill, which could amount to around £20,000 per school.

The Regional Schools Commissioners

Apart from such calculations, no one has put a price on the bureaucrats that will replace those in local authorities.

The government's plans envisage eight Regional Schools Commissioners (RSCs) The RSC for SE England and S. London is Dominic Herrington. He started his role on 1st July 2014. Before this he had been Director of the Academies Group at the Department for Education. Earlier in his career he had also led a range of policies at the Department for Education including specialist schools, school improvement, 14 to 19 reform and education legislation. He also worked for a leading management consultancy. Leaders of the LGA say the RSCs will be "unelected and remote".

And of course above the RSCs there will have to be another layer, to ensure they are doing their job . . . They will not be democratically elected, and there are concerns about accountability. No one is betting that the outcomes will be any better – or cheaper – than the LEAs.

Other causes for concern

Forget the financial costs: there are many other causes for concern:

- the lack of representation on school boards by parents or locally elected councillors
- the fact that they do not have to hire professionally-trained teachers



PHOTO: Neville Grant

- the fact that academies do not have to keep to agreements with unions on terms and conditions of service
- the fact that exclusion rate are five times higher at academies than in state-run schools (there are cases where pupils who have been excluded have to take – and pay for – exams privately.)
- the fact that they do not need to follow the National Curriculum.

This is a point picked up by local specialist in education Chris Ormell, who is secretary of the locally-based international organisation Philosophy for Educational Renewal. (PER) In last month's *WN* he observed "when the National Curriculum was introduced ... [it listed] all those things every pupil has a right to know. Has this ceased to be their 'right'?"

The government hopes that "sponsors" will play an important part in running the MATS – the Multi-Academy Trusts, but it is not clear where all these sponsors will come from; and they are unlikely to want to be involved with those schools that have poor records – or that have big PFI debts: who will pay these off?

As the government's austerity plans are extended, fears have been expressed that as academies run out of funds, they may even begin to charge fees.

Strikes looming?

There may be trouble ahead: teachers have threatened to strike. Union leaders assert the academies plan threatens teachers' pay, conditions and job security; the treasurer of the NUT, Ian Murch, described it as a step towards the privatisation of schools. There are concerns that academisation involves a huge shift in wealth, as publicly-owned land, buildings and resources are handed over to charitable trusts.

At the NUT's annual conference at the end of March, delegates overwhelmingly passed a proposal to hold a strike ballot. If it passes, it is probable that the strike will take place in July, to avoid disrupting examinations.

In March, teachers from Greenwich including some from John Roan took part in a demonstration in Westminster against the government's proposals on academies

The Daffodil Tea



PHOTO: J-J Aune

This is 'a great social occasion', said one guest at the Westcombe Society's Daffodil Tea for Senior Citizens in March, and 'very much looked forward to', said another.

The Daffodil tea was well under way and it was wonderful to get such positive comments from the guests who all wanted their thanks passed on to anyone involved in making it happen.

Several commented on the beautiful cakes and delicious sandwiches which are all made by our local volunteers. One aspect of the tea, which was valued, was the opportunity to meet the local community and make new and like-minded friends. The level of conversation certainly indicated a buzzing event.

This time we were very pleased to welcome a number of new people as well as catching up with those who attend regularly. As ever there was a table quiz that always helps to get people chatting. Many prizes were available for the free raffle due to the generosity of those who support our bi-annual teas. We all hope our newcomers will soon become regulars and we look forward to seeing them all again in the Autumn.

Maureen Aune

< < Newsbriefs > >

Greenwich Line Users Group

Mike Sparham of GLUG told the *WN*: it has been announced that Arriva are the preferred bidder for London Overground. They are part of the consortium that currently operate the concession. Arriva is a subsidiary of Deutsche Bahn.

Transport for London will continue to be responsible for setting fares and marketing the services, and will retain revenue from ticket sales, advertising, retail and car parking. The operator will be responsible for ticket retailing and revenue protection, as well as operating the service.

Congratulations

There were three winners of the arts and entertainment award in the Council's Civic Awards ceremony in March, and Global Fusion Music & Arts was one of them. Particular mention should be made of Louisa Le Marchand for the energy and creativity she has brought to this outstanding project.

Congratulations too to Mrs Jean Seymour on her Ninetieth Birthday; and to the winners of the Westcombe Society Quiz in April – and thanks to J-J and Maureen Aune and their helpers in organising yet another very jolly event.

Departures

We are very sorry to announce the death of Judith Gillespie: an obituary appears on page 3. We also mourn the death of Monica Clow. Both were members of the Westcombe Society.

Monica was buried on the 21st April. The funeral was at The Chapel, Plumstead Cemetery at 10.00am on 21st April then on to Woolwich Cemetery for the burial. No flowers but donations can be made to the PBC Foundation or on justgiving.com/Monicaclow. There were refreshments afterwards at the Trafalgar Tavern, Greenwich.

The Westcombe Society

The Annual General Meeting of the Westcombe Society is at 7.00 pm on Friday May 13th, at the Steiner School, Mycenae Road (next door to Mycenae House). All paid-up members of the society are invited to attend.

The Agenda:

1. Minutes of last AGM
2. Matters arising.
3. Reports
4. Elections.
- 5 Any Other business

Jane Wilson (Hon. Sec.)

After the meeting, wine and cheese will be served.

Westcombe Society Members' Evening

Friday 17th June
7.30 – 10pm
in Mycenae House



Invitations will be going out by mid-May. If you don't receive your invite, please ring Caroline on 020 8853 0948 and we'll ensure that you get one.

WESTCOMBE NEWS

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What's On: Barbara Ward
Reporters: The community - that means you!

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info@westcombesociety.org

DISTRIBUTION Emily Norton and volunteers.

Volunteer distributors please phone 020 8853 2756 , we need your help!

ADVERTISING MANAGER

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Advertising@westcombesociety.org

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Costs:
DISPLAY: Single column 6cm x 6cm:
One - four issues £35, five-plus issues £30 each. Other sizes: please inquire.
Classified Ads (Market Place) 30p per word (A telephone number = one word. An email/web address = 3 words.) Deadline for all adverts is 10th day of the preceding month

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

WESTCOMBE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Please send this membership form to:
Christine Legg, 69 Mycenae Road,
London, SE3 7SE

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Tel.....

Email:

Please enclose payment as appropriate:

Family Membership	£12	[]
Individual Membership	£8	[]
Senior Citizens/unwaged	£4	[]

Congratulations –
from the Queen!



PHOTOS: Neville Grant



Tudor Grange pushed the boat out to celebrate Les and Jean Seymour's 70th Wedding Anniversary. Exactly seventy years ago, on April 6th, 1946, Les and Jean got married: and they are still enjoying life to the full!

Champagne flowed, and delicious food was served, as all the inhabitants of Tudor Grange gathered round to enjoy the celebration, and admire the personally-signed card of congratulation from HM The Queen.

Les and Jean met during the war when Les was in the RAF, working with Coastal Command in an Air Sea Rescue Unit, based at one time in the Shetlands. (ASRUs saved over 13,000 lives in the war). Four months before being demobbed Les managed to wangle a leave pass to get married. After the war he got a job first with a fire shutter company, and then with the GPO. Jean meanwhile combined motherhood with several jobs.

Ninety this April, Jean said they have three children, six grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

"We've lived in Greenwich for forty years," said Jean. "Before that we were in Deptford. Now we're very happy in Tudor Grange: the staff are wonderful!"



Among those present were her daughter, Jen, and two granddaughters, Emily and Charlotte. Jen made a superb wedding anniversary cake.



Letters

Any views expressed are personal, and are not necessarily those of the Westcombe Society or the WN. Please give address & telephone number; these will not be printed.

From: Rosemary Gill Heathway

Sadly the Westcombe Writers' Circle finished in April after 27 years. I dedicate this last poem to the WN, with thanks for all the free publicity.

Paper round by Rosemary Gill

From a long dismal winter.
Dark, damp and bleak
I watched spring arrive
Within a short week

From bare silhouettes
In a matter of days
I saw twigs and branches
Become clothed in a haze
Of light green, and new buds unfurl
And the lane turned into this canopied world

There are swathes of celandines
Rich sparkling and gold
Close by, blue borage
And the vincas unfold.

Small patches of daisies
Are scattered about
I see clumps of bluebells
Waiting to come out

Creepers and climbers
Escape garden walls
The clematis will soon be
A pink waterfall

You may ask where I get
Such pastoral views?
Down our Lane, when delivering
The Westcombe News

From: Lucy Cuthbertson
(Head of Drama at Corelli College.)

As some of you will know our anniversary production of Just by Ali Smith was offered the top venue, the Assembly Rooms, at the Edinburgh Festival last summer; but unfortunately our new headteacher pulled the project, even though we have a long track record of taking shows.

This summer, the venue have offered us the same space for the same show again. The head has now allowed it to go ahead but is not prepared to fund it at all, so we have to raise all the money or it will be cancelled. We have to raise £10k so the large cast can be accommodated in a hostel for a week.

We know the experience of going to Edinburgh for our young people is one they will never forget – life-changing, in fact. That will be intensified by the prestige of performing at the Assembly Rooms, normally the preserve of experienced professionals and unprecedented for a student show.

Sadly, with the Arts being cut and devalued in state schools, this kind of opportunity is fast becoming something only for students who go to independent schools. We are very grateful for the support given by Greenwich Theatre but we now need wider public support.

Can I ask your readers to contribute to our crowdfunding effort if they can, and then to share this with anyone else they know who might be prepared to help fund it. It's off to a good start but we need an awful lot more if we are going to make it.

http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/just-by-ali-smith

Ed: Lucy was the Director of the play Boys will be Boys reviewed last month.

St George's Church
Glenluce Road

Weekly services:

Sundays
11:00 a.m. Holy Communion (All age service on the 1st Sunday of each month)
8:00 p.m. "Sceptics" Discussion Group (1st and 3rd Sundays at the Vicarage - 89 Westcombe Park Road SE3 7RZ)

Wednesdays
8:30 a.m. Morning Prayer
12.30 p.m. Lunch and Fellowship (Soup, bread, fruit and cheese)

The Revd Robert T. "Tim" Yeager
Team Vicar
07804 614245
rtyeager@gmail.com

Westcombe Society Quiz Night

The Spring quiz was held on April 15th. at Mycenae House. We had a slightly lower turnout than usual, but 6 full tables pitted their knowledge on a range of topics from TV detectives to Books and Authors.

As usual we enjoyed Chippy suppers provided by Fishermen's Inn on Trafalgar Rd which arrived hot and on time; and Mycenae House's bar did brisk business!

Only 12 points separated the winners from the losers which indicates a closely contested evening, and there was a tie break for second place. Congratulations go to the Soda Streamers from Beaconsfield Road and High Standards who came second. And for the losers: the consolation prize was a tin of baked beans !

It was a most enjoyable community event and we look forward to hosting another Quiz evening on October 21st. J-J Aune

Maryon Park Community
Garden Open Day Tim Anderson

Maryon Park Community Garden had a 'Drop-in Open Day' on Saturday 16th April organised by the Friends of Maryon Park. The Garden is a not-for-profit voluntary community project in the former council plant nursery in Maryon Park.

Visitors learnt more about the Community Garden, which provides organic growing plots for local people, a Forest School for primary schools and volunteering opportunities for individuals and corporate groups as well as educational visits for special schools.

Visitors were also able to sign up on the waiting list for growing beds.

Janet Gillespie Pat Dodson

The many acquaintances and friends of Janet Gillespie were very saddened and shocked at the news of her sudden death.

Janet had a medical background, not only as the wife of Colin, for many years a local GP, but also a nurse, District Midwife and latterly in domiciliary Family Planning. This no doubt explained her encyclopaedic knowledge of routes and roads not only in the immediate area but also further afield.

Janet was a walking A-Z.

After retirement she and Colin were able to indulge in their joint interest in foreign travel but there was still time for her other passion, her garden, which remains as a testament to her love of gardening.

Janet and Colin were prodigious and generous hosts. Their 'themed' parties were astonishing in their phenomenal application to detail. And such fun!

Janet was a valued member of the Westcombe Society, as well as a local Poetry group – she could do a pretty fair Pam Ayres.

Nothing was too much trouble for Janet: she was always ready to offer support where needed, and those of us privileged to have been her friends will sorely miss her.

I asked a group of friends if they could think of one word to describe her; after the expected comments one word emerged: Janet 'twinkled' – and so she did! We send out deepest condolences to Colin and the family.

LOCAL NEWS

Photos of a community that still hangs on



In 1968, the 21 year-old photographer Tony Othen was sent by an organisation called Task Force to photograph three communities in Derbyshire. Poolsbrook, Shirebrook and Heanor were carefree societies with a strong sense of belonging.

'Spike', as Poolsbrook was known because of the distinctive spikes on the roofs of the houses, was an old mining community serving nearby Markham colliery. The old village and the colliery were demolished in 1984 to make way for a country park. Some of the residents then relocated to a new estate in Staveley, where some still live today. Others have moved throughout the world.

Tony Othen, (former chair of the Westcombe Society) took thousands of photos of these communities, which were forgotten for nearly half a century.

By 2015, the former inhabitants of Poolsbrook, Shirebrook and Heanor from

1968 and their descendants all had thriving groups on Facebook. The members of these groups were still united in a common sense of belonging to a community which had disappeared.

Facebook Photo Triggers shows what happened when the Facebook groups and Tony's photographs came together.

Sample comments:

'Your photos are amazing' 'All gone' 'Oh my goodness yes that's me' 'Happy days they can't take away'

Facebook Photo Triggers gives an insight into a unique and ongoing process of recovering community experience.

April 8th - May 19th 2016. Weekdays 9.30 - 5.30. Weekends 12.00 - 4.00

The Greenwich Gallery, Peyton Place, Greenwich, London SE10 8RS

Tel: 0208 465 5968

www.thegreenwichgallery.com

www.phototriggerpacks.com

Designers and Inventors of the future

Blackheath High School's winners in the 3D Design Challenge for Wateraid:

Bianca Cole, Karen Whitely, Sophie Waite, Ella Watts, Elena Zeeven & Lily Yue.



On Thursday 10 March, students from Blackheath High School took part in the final of the first ever Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) 3D Design Challenge.

Working in teams of no more than five, students from across the GDST were asked to design a 3D printable product to support the work of the international charity, WaterAid. Mary Aspden, Head of Creative Arts at Blackheath High School was delighted that both of her Year 8 teams won prizes in the challenge.

The charity works to improve access to clean water and improved sanitation in some of the world's poorest countries, where many women and girls have no choice but to walk many miles every day to collect water for their families, leaving little time for education.

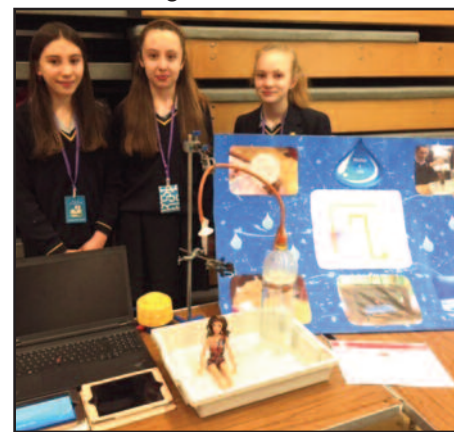
Students aged twelve and thirteen from Blackheath High School submitted designs to a distinguished band of industry experts. The designs included a shower operated by a foot pump and a collapsible barrel on wheels that could be used to transport water from waterhole to village.

The Challenge helped students develop new skills, confidence and knowledge of the career options available within the broad field of computer-aided design and digital technology.

Helen Seacombe from WaterAid said:

"One in ten people lack access to clean water, while one in three have nowhere safe to go to the toilet. This injustice hits women and girls the hardest, affecting their health, dignity and life chances. WaterAid is grateful to the GDST for helping to raise awareness of this global crisis."

Mary Aspden, Head of Creative Arts at Blackheath High School commented: "What a fantastic day! Our Year 8 students have been working on the Challenge design brief during their 3D Printing club sessions since Christmas. They won two awards – and a 3D printer for the school! The result could not have been better, well done to all the girls!!"



Red Flag over Bermondsey



If you walk along the Thames path near Bermondsey Station and the Angel Pub you will see the statues of Ada and Alfred Salter, their daughter Joyce and a cat.

In a one woman performance enlivened with the music of Sankey, Libby Morris tells Ada's story in a play called *Red Flag Over Bermondsey*.

Ada Salter was a radical campaigner for equal rights, and a leading light in the transformation of the Bermondsey slums in the early part of the twentieth century.

Born into Methodism, she became a Quaker in 1915. With her husband, Alfred Salter, she dedicated her life to the people of Bermondsey, living and working

right in the heart of their community – and having to accept the tragic consequences of their choice.

Ada broke through the glass ceiling of her time, becoming both the first woman councillor in London and then the first woman mayor.

'Very powerful and moving performance'

Friday 6th and Saturday 7th May at 7.30 Blackheath Quaker Meeting House, Lawn Terrace SE3 9LL.

For more information and to book go to blackheathquakers@gmail.com The play lasts 65 minutes, followed by discussion.

Blackheath on line

The Blackheath Society have announced that the Blackheath Village Archive Images went live on Friday 25th March.

The first batch of 280 images show Royal Parade, Montpelier Vale and Tranquil Vale. This first release will be followed by further releases each Friday until April 29th. Over the next few weeks, over 1200 images will be made available.

Work has been going on quietly but

continuously on the archive over the past few years and thanks are due to Neil Rhind, without whom the archive would not exist. Thanks are also due to Sue Shields, Helen Doris, Jo Swadkin, Hilary Weedon and Philip Smith for their painstaking efforts. Thanks also for recent contributions from David Warren, Frank Smith, Roger Marshall and Olive Amos. New additions always welcome! Go to www.blackheatharchive.org to see them.

Commemorative Walk

Ann Dingsdale

Did you know that this month is the 150th Anniversary of the start of the campaign for votes for women? Decades before the Suffragettes, courageous local women (and men) spearheaded this campaign.

Among the leaders were Helen Taylor, of Blackheath Park, Elizabeth Garrett and her sisters who went to school in Dartmouth Row and Emily Davies, first elected School Board member for Greenwich. John Stuart Mill MP, who lived in Blackheath Park, presented a petition to Parliament in June 1866. It had been signed by 1,499 women. In Greenwich and Blackheath supporters

included remarkable women like Celeste Sinibaldi, engineer, and shoemaker's daughter Maria Mondy who championed Reading Clubs for children worldwide.

Visit the places where these Suffragist women, (and some of their Suffragette followers) lived 150 years ago and hear their fascinating stories. Led by local historian Dr Ann Dingsdale, this is a (1hr 30m approx.) Story Walk starting at Greenwich Station and ending at Blackheath Station.

Sunday 22nd May and Sunday 29th May 11.30 am Free. Booking essential. Please contact Ann on 8853 2269, email ann.dingsdale@talktalk.net

EEA on show for Shakespeare

Emergency Exit Arts (EEA), based in Greenwich, was invited back to the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) a second time to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death.

On Saturday April 23rd, a special celebratory evening took place in the

Royal Shakespeare Theatre, hosted by David Tennant, and broadcast on BBC Two and live to cinemas. EEA created a stunning finale with a fireworks display showing Shakespeare's face.

EEA were featured in March's WN.

Farewell to Steinberg

We are sorry to say good bye to the Steinberg Duo, Louisa Stonehill and Nicholas Burns, who are soon heading for California. The Steinberg Duo are exceptionally gifted musicians who have made many CDs, and have given much pleasure at their informal Sunday evening concerts in Vanbrugh Hill. Their last one is on May 22nd.



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FEATURES

Here come the girls: Launch of a Women's World War One Project

Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust has launched a new project that celebrates the lives and contributions of women in Greenwich during the First World War.

The Trust has been awarded a grant of £58,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for an exciting project, *Here Comes the Girls – Women in Wartime, 1915-18 a Touring Museum Project*. Awarded through the Heritage Lottery's Our Heritage programme, the project will explore the lives and contributions of women in Greenwich during the First World War.

The project focuses on the women that worked at the Royal Arsenal, the nurses and Voluntary Aid Detachments, working in the borough's large hospitals and temporary auxiliary hospitals such as Charlton House and the families living on the Progress Estate, Eltham.

The Royal Borough played a vital role during the Great War; not only did the borough provide nurses who tended the wounded at hospitals such as the Royal Herbert and Brook Hospitals, but the Royal Arsenal in Woolwich provided vital munitions for the war effort. The Borough itself also grew with new housing estates such as that at Well Hall Estate in Eltham and new workforces – over 30,000 women at the Arsenal.

From April 2016, as part of the Trust's



Centenary celebrations, Here Come the Girls will see three portable exhibitions facilitated by actors go on a tour across the Royal Borough to share the stories of women at work during the First World War. A new Blog page will also tell the stories of Greenwich Women at War.

Stuart Hobley, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: "The First World War transformed the role of women in early 20th century British society by drafting them into a wide range of employment, including, at Woolwich, some of the most hazardous jobs on the home front. Thanks to National Lottery players, we are able to support this excellent project so that their inspirational story can be told."

Tracy Stringfellow, Chief Executive Officer of Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust told the *WN*: "We are very excited to have been awarded a generous grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to support this local women's project."

"The role of women in the Royal Borough during the First World War was vital to the war effort and this project allows us to explore their role in much greater detail with our local community. With touring interactive performances and an online blog, families will get the chance to explore the lives and contribution of Greenwich Women at War."

The project, including interactive performances, runs from April to September

The causes of sea-level change

In a talk in April organised by Blackheath Science Society, Mr Tom Armitage of the Earth Sciences Dept, University College, London gave a talk about changes in sea-level.

In his talk, he discussed why, and by how much, sea level is currently rising, how sea level is measured, and what is

projected over the 21st century.

Mr Armitage discussed the reasons and mechanisms by which sea level varies in both space and time, based largely on Polar Observation & Modelling.

He pointed out that relevant factors included climate change but also more fundamental things such as variations in the Earth's gravity, rotation and terrestrial ice distribution, and more local effects such as tides and stormsurges. **Blackheath Scientific Society meets in Mycenae House, Mycenae Road SE3. Visitors are welcome, and are asked to donate £3.00. The next meeting is on May 20th, when Prof Guan-Zhong T Yang of Imperial College speaks on Sensors in the Body – Post-op Chips**

STGEORGE'S WESTCOMBE PARK

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. www.stgeorgeswestcombepark.org.uk

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BOOK REVIEW Taking Power Back

ALEX GRANT reviews Simon Parker's new book

"We will know when we have succeeded when people start holding parties to mark the demolition of old hospital buildings that are no longer necessary," argues Simon Parker in *Taking Power Back*.

This book is a persuasive account of how we have reached "peak state" and how the only solution to the policy problems Britain faces in the 21st-century – shrinking resources, growing public expectations, robotic technology and increased life expectancy – is for the state to decentralise and devolve power back to communities.

The book is also an international survey of how cities and states as diverse as Maryland, Utrecht, Bogota, Bologna, Woking and Manchester are innovating with venture capital funds, citizen's income, renewable energy companies, iPhone apps and even municipal clowns: all in all, a tall order for 140 pages.

Simon Parker recoins an old term – The Commons – as the name for the territory these projects inhabit. In the future, he argues, successful public services will not be delivered by the state to the public but by a mutual partnership: the state will be more "like a DJ, deciding what music gets played" rather than playing the music itself.

I know and admire Simon – director of the New Local Government network, Blackheath resident and husband of Cherry Parker, a Labour councillor in Blackheath Westcombe ward since 2014 – and this survey of the challenges facing local government, and the historical reasons why Britain has become so centralised, is a riveting read.

Parker explains that the NHS was supposed to have been a decentralised service until the centralising Aneurin Bevan won the argument with Herbert Morrison in cabinet). Parker's analysis of how Labour-run councils ran into the trap Thatcher laid for them in 1980s – defying rate-capping, losing public support and inviting their castration – is spot-on. But he's a bit too harsh on the Blair government – despite its "Napoleonic", centralist instincts, it did devolve power to a new London mayor and offer regional assemblies.

The growth in social enterprises

Since 2010 there's been a 26% growth in social enterprises, helped by the growing pool of fit, recently-retired and skilled baby-boomers who can help run them. But Parker's right to point out that the "localist", Big Society rhetoric of the current government is often a smokescreen for cuts, cuts and more cuts. England is only slightly less centralised in 2015 than 2010, though the Northern Powerhouse could soon change all that.

Parker also correctly identifies a major obstacle to change: the "Party person": councillors for whom party loyalty, careerism and control freakery always takes precedence over community needs, empowerment and accountability.

There are plenty of "party people" in places like Greenwich: Parker advocates choosing councillors by Athenian lottery, overlooking more realistic remedies like proportional representation. Equally, he fails to acknowledge that community control of services is unlikely to make it easier to rationalise them: one of Britain's most successful recent community campaigns, in Lewisham, saved a hospital rather than celebrated its demolition.

Control and accountability

And Parker does not always distinguish between central control and central accountability. At the start of the book he celebrates the abolition back in 2010 of the Audit commission, the government quango set up in the wake of the T Dan Smith and Shirley Porter scandals to inspect councils' books, and he describes its former HQ, Millbank Tower, as "the nerve centre of British centralism."

A few years ago I helped to unearth a financial scandal in Greenwich – dozens of council properties being emptied of tenants, standing empty for months or years on end, and then being sold off at auction for less than their full value.

This malpractice only ceased when I paid a visit to the Audit commission in that very building. "Localist" solutions were nowhere to be found. Councils now hand-pick their own auditors, and it is only a matter of time before a huge new financial scandal somewhere in local government prompts a rethink.

Parker does not identify how this accountability gap is to be filled: you cannot properly inspect a council's books through a citizen jury or an iPhone app. "The commons" and other Parkerisms such as "Commissioning hubs" and "Total Social resource" could prove just as bureaucratic and unaccountable as current local government structures.

Localism is all well and good if the localisers are competent and ethical – but it is not time to give up on benign centralism just yet. As Parker rightly says "In a country as unequal as Britain we will always need the state as the final guarantor of fairness". I would add immigration, terrorism, climate change and financial crises as other challenges that can't always be solved locally. Sometimes, just sometimes, the person from Whitehall does know best.

Alex Grant was a Labour councillor in Greenwich – representing Blackheath Westcombe ward – from 1998 to 2014

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4th Thursday of every month, -
Thurs 26th May 2.00pm for 2.30pm 'Not Just Smoke and Mirrors' Nicholas Reed explores –'The Magical Art of Camouflage in Warfare'- How did a professional conjuror hide the Suez Canal?.
Non-members may pay on the door
GREENWICH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS King William Court, University of Greenwich
All lectures 8.00pm Mon 9th May
'John Ogden-The Man And The Music' Charles Beauclerk explores the life and music of England's greatest pianist. Non-members may pay on the door
MADE IN GREENWICH GALLERY
324 Creek Rd SE10 Tues- Sun and Bank Hols 11-5.30pm Fri May 6th – Fri May 15th 'Greenwich Park in Shades of Grey'- Graham Smith & 'Canned Heat'- Chris Francis Meet the artists over a drink on Sun 8th May 2.00-5.00pm www.madeingreenwich.co.uk
ART HUB GALLERY 5-9 Creekside, Deptford
www.arthub.org.uk 'Keep Me Posted'
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Sat 30th April- Mon 2nd May -1.00pm - 5.00pm

CHILDREN & FAMILY

SEVERNDROOG CASTLE Castle Wood, Shooters Hill, London SE18 3RT Main opening times-
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1st May -10-30am -12.00pm 'The Tiger Who Came To Tea' £2.50 www.severndroogcastle.org.uk
GREENWICH THEATRE CROOMS HILL
London SE10 8ES:Box office 8858 7755
greenwichtheatre.org.uk
Sat 28th May 2pm & 6pm The Adventures Of The Little Ghost'- Fantastic for Families Venue-
Bathway Theatre- The Old Baths, Bathway, Woolwich. (Suitable for children 4+)
£10 –(Concs. - £8.00)
Fri 3rd June - 11am & 2pm
Jessie And The Cloud Machine -Fantastic For Families Venue- The Tramshed 51-53 Woolwich New Road, Woolwich SE18 6ES
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(Suitable for children aged 6+) £8.50 – Conc. £6.50
BLACKHEATH HALLS 23, Lee Rd, London SE3 9RQ Box Office: 0208 463 0100
www.trinitylaban.ac.uk
Sat 14th May 2.00pm Family Opera: 'The Rattler'
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SHERINGTON CHILDREN'S CENTRE
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Friday, 13th May 7.30 pm AGM at Steiner School, Woodlands, 90 Mycenae Road, SE3 7SE
Members' Evening - Fri 17th June 7.30 - 10.00
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

SEVERNDROOG CASTLE
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www.severndroogcastle.org.uk Fri May 13 7.30 - 10.00pm Museums at Night- 'Severndroog Castle After Hours' Explore the castle after hours at a rare late night opening. Enjoy a glass of wine on the terrace and listen to local folk musicians.
BEXLEY HERITAGE TRUST Hall Place & Gardens, Bourne Rd, Bexley DA5 1PQ Tel- 01322-526574 Until 4th Sept 10am-5pm **HOW DOES MY GARDEN GROW?** A Garden Museum exhibition, looking at the evolution of gardening £10 £9 Conc./under16 £8 family ticket £30
BLACKHEATH BRIDGE CLUB duplicate sessions in Mycenae House Mon & Thurs 7.15pm and on Wed at 1.15pm. Tel Ron 0208 319 1312
BLACKHEATH & GREENWICH WOMEN'S INSTITUTE www.blackheathandgreenwichwi.com
Meets first Wednesday of every month, doors open at 7.00pm for 7.30pm at Sunfields Methodist Church on Old Dover Rd. Wed 4th May 7.30pm - 9.30pm (Arrive 7pm for 7.30pm start) **Members Only AGM & Bee Keeping Talk** by Cairis Chickey
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All welcome to our Open Day on Sat 7th May from 2.00 - 5.00 pm.

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BLACKHEATH FLOWER ARRANGING SOCIETY 3rd Friday of each month. Annual outing – Fri 20th May – Penshurst Place & Gardens, Kent
Contact: Mrs Jillian Smith 0208 857 1355
INDUSTRIAL HISTORY SOCIETY
Tues 10th May- 7.30pm 'The East Greenwich Tidal Mill' **BRIAN STRONG** Check website for venue
Non-members £1
Greenwichindustrialhistory.blogspot.co.uk
BLACKHEATH SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY
FRIDAY LECTURES AT 7.45pm Mycenae House, 90 Mycenae Road, SE3 7SE Visitors are welcome at all meetings, and are requested to donate £3 to the Society. Friday lectures at 7.45pm in Mycenae House.
Fri-May20th **PROF GUANG-ZHONG YANG** of Imperial College speaks on **Sensors in the Body – Post-op Chips.** bss.btk.com
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23, Lee Rd, Blackheath SE3 9RQ
Box Office: 0208 463 0100 www.trinitylaban.ac.uk
Wed 4th May- 8pm **JANET DAVEY: Another Mother's Son:** Her unsettling new novel about family and strangers. Recital Room £10
WED 8 JUN 8pm MISHA GLENNY
Nemesis: One Man and The Battle For Rio: Brazil's Most Wanted Man Recital Room
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Thurs. 9th JUN 8pm **PROF. ROBERT WINSTON**
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Fri 20th May – 7.30pm World Cinema Night-Venue – The Grand Salon, Charlton House
£3-donation – 'Life Above All '(South African)
Fri 27th- Acoustic Night-/Barn Dance Venue – Mycenae House Live music and dance, ceilidh, floor singers, £6 Conc. £4 -Special guest – Aubris Woki and friends from Botswana

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23 Lee Road, Blackheath SE3 9RQ
Fri 6th MAY 6.00 pm **TRINITY LABAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** are joined by members of the Welsh National Opera Orchestra as they perform Elgar's Symphony No.1 **FREE**
Sun 8th May 6.30pm **Blackheath Halls Orchestra** joined by Dulwich Symphony Orchestra play Beethoven's Egmont Overture & Symp. No 4.
Great Hall £10 | £8.00 concs. Under 12s £5.00
Mon. 16th May 1.10 pm **GUILDHALL SCHOOL CANTATA ENSEMBLE** Dir. **JAMES JOHN-STONE**, harpsichord, perform John Blow's **VENUS AND ADONIS:** Earliest surviving English opera written in about 1683 for court of Charles II. A light lunch is available prior to the recital.
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SUN 22nd MAY 11am **NAUFAL MUKUMI** piano
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SAT 18th JUN 8pm **FAY HIELD - With The Hurricane Party** and members of The Full English (folk) Recital Room, £17 | £15 concs.

MYCENAE HOUSE LIVE EVENTS: MAY

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Fri 13th May 8pm - JazzNights. Candlit Live Jazz music event hosted by Dave Silk. £10.
Fri 20th May 3pm - Pink Bus Project Launch. Launch event for Miss Libby Rose's travelling sewing bus. Free.
Fri 27th May 7.30pm - Global Fusion Music & Arts Acoustic Nights. Special guest artist Aubrei Woki & friends from Botswana (part of Africa Day Celebrations) £6.
For further information about all Mycenae House events and to buy tickets visit www.mycenaehouse.co.uk

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FEATURES

The 150 year fight for equality

Congratulations to Jane Grant on the launch of her book *In the Steps of Exceptional Women: a history of the Fawcett Society*. The book is timed to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the start of Millicent Fawcett's campaign for women's suffrage.

Millicent Fawcett was at school in Blackheath and started off campaigning for the women's vote in the 1860s with local resident John Stuart Mill. Her fight continued for decades: remarkably, she lived to see final success in 1928.

Jane spoke not just of the exceptional women who had for decades campaigned on women's issues, but of those today who continued to campaign on so many issues: equal pay, trafficking, violence against women, the list goes on.

The launch took place in Westminster, in the Millicent Fawcett Hall in Marsham Street. Tory peer and Times columnist Lord Danny Finkelstein, who has been campaigning for a statue of the famous suffragist Millicent Fawcett (1847 - 1929) to be erected in Parliament Square, made a strong speech saying it was a disgrace there was not a single statue of a woman in Parliament Square. He said there was a strong case for Millicent Fawcett's role in securing the universal suffrage for women to be so recognised..

Labour MP Fiona McTaggart also spoke: she said it was largely due to the efforts of Millicent that there was a significant presence of women on the benches of Parliament; she also highlighted many other causes that Millicent espoused.

The president of Fawcett Society Jenni Murray (scion of Women's Hour) emphasised the importance of a continued commitment to women's causes by interviewing two student members of Fawcett. **See p. 3 for details of Ann Dingsdale's 1866 Women's Suffrage Petition walk in Greenwich and Blackheath. There is an exhibition about the Fawcett Society in the LSE opening on 23rd April.**



Cycling in remembrance

This year marks the centenary of The Battle of the Somme, recognised as one of the bloodiest battles in human conflict with over 1 million casualties over a 4 month period. 100 years on, people today are the last that will have spoken directly to those that fought on the Somme.

In 1914, throughout the UK the Army Cycling Corps comprised 15 cycling battalions. Many stayed in the UK as part of home defence; others headed to France and the frontline. Less expensive than motorbikes, the cycle was an everyday reconnaissance and communication weapon in the fight against the enemy.

Local historian Simon Parker-Galbreath has compiled a full history of the London Cyclists Battalion: it can be seen at www.25thlondon.com.

Ride to the Somme is a 3 day cycle over 200 miles which will culminate in paying respects at The Memorial to the Missing of the Somme at Thiepval which lists the 72,195 missing British and African soldiers that have no known grave.

We will also pay respects to members of the Army Cycling Corps, including the London Cycling Battalion, commemorated at the nearby cemetery in Pozieres, one of our key destinations on Day 3 of The Ride.

When riders enlist they will be asked to report on the 31st August to the "recruiting centre" at the Imperial War Museum. From there they will cycle in Northern France and visit locations where their ancestors will have fought.

This is an ideal opportunity to raise money for an appropriate charity and we will be working with SSAFA, the longest serving national tri-service military charity. For 130 years, they have provided lifelong support to those who are serving or have ever served in our Armed Forces. Their support covers both Regulars and Reserves in the British Army, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force and their families, including National Servicemen. They are all entitled to lifelong support from SSAFA, which supports 50,000 people.

We are liaising closely with both the Imperial War Museum London and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. SSAFA – the Armed Forces charity, formerly known as Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association – is a UK charity. Anyone currently serving or has ever served in the armed services and their families, is eligible for their help.

For more information, visit www.SSAFA.org.uk
SSAFA's professional staff and network of 7,000 volunteers assist more than 90,000 people every year, from World War Two veterans to the families of young servicemen and women wounded or killed in Afghanistan.

Founded in 1885, SSAFA is the UK's oldest national Armed Forces charity. Contact Andrew Jones 07882 562405 Email info@ridetothesome.org.uk
We are still seeking riders to enlist. Entries will close at the end of May.

Make sure you visit the fan museum! Barbara Ward

Don't miss this wonderful and visually delightful exhibition celebrating the museum's twenty fifth anniversary and showcasing the rarest and most remarkable fans within it's collection. Greenwich is fortunate to have this 'undiscovered gem' of a museum, the UK's only museum dedicated to the history of fans.

This beautiful museum first opened in 1991, and was founded through the vision and passion of its Director, Helene Alexander MBE, who has been collecting fans since an early age. The Duchess of Cornwall is now a Patron and the museum with its Grade 11 listed Georgian buildings has a collection of over 4,000 fans.

The museum focuses on both fan evolution through history and the craft of fan making; it holds rare books, paintings and fan-related artefacts. The ground floor is given over to a permanent display and this serves as an introduction to fans, their history, manufacture, types and sources. Helpful volunteers are on hand to answer questions. I was personally fascinated by the glass and wood fan storage piece, now acting as a donation collector on the entrance table.

Move upstairs to view the breathtaking main exhibition of the great variety of fans

showcased in their glass exhibition cases. There is also a well-produced video upstairs that telling the very interesting story of the museum and its acquisitions.

The exhibition showcases the extraordinary diversity of the museum's holdings; the highlights include a propaganda fan produced during the reign of King Charles 11; a 1740 fan with eye holes that doubles as a masquerade mask; lace fans made popular by Queen Victoria in the 1870s; twentieth century fans by artists George Barbier and Salvador Dali, and a modern

feathered fan by the Paris fan designer Sylvain Le Guen. In addition one marvels at the beautiful décor throughout the building.

If you book in advance you can also enjoy a leisurely afternoon tea downstairs in the café that overlooks the garden. You can even book yourself onto a fan-making workshop!

Letter from the Front

Private John Lamont of the Army Cycle Corps, wrote home on 15th October 1915 from France about some terrible scenes that he had witnessed. He began politely with thanks:



"Your welcome parcel received today ... The cakes were in excellent condition, and you can depend they were enjoyed, more so as we just returned from the trenches this morning about one o'clock, where we have had some hard times. Since last Saturday we have been continually on the go, biking here, marching there, back to the bikes, then off again to some other part of the line, a few hours there, then off again to some other part, and so the time has gone in, with hardly a warm meal, very little sleep, until today we have been left to ourselves.

"Indeed, it has not been much of a rest, as we have all our clothing, equipment, rifle and bicycle to clean, but we don't take that into account, and just smile through it all. By the time this reaches you I suppose you will be reading some details of the titanic battle which is raging here. We have taken our share in it, and now, as I have time to think, I am actually surprised to find myself with a whole skin. However great the British losses are, the German losses are bound to be twice the amount, not to say anything about prisoners of which I have seen hundreds in these last three days. The scenes were awful, too ghastly for description, but they will remain forever stamped on the mind."

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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

What’s next for the Silvertown Tunnel?

Remember the Silvertown Tunnel? It’s the proposed road tunnel that would cross the Thames from the Greenwich Peninsula to the Royal Victoria Docks, roughly under the Emirate Airway. There would be user charges for both the new tunnel and for the Blackwall Tunnel; these would rise and fall according to the time of day, and would remain in place once the new tunnel has been paid for.

Transport for London argues that the tunnel would relieve the tailbacks to the Blackwall Tunnel, and increase reliability for drivers. TfL says that charges are needed to pay for the work and also keep traffic at current levels.

But local users, particularly from the south side of the Thames, have complained that any charges are discriminatory, when crossings further west are likely to remain free of charge. And critics also argue that any new roads encourage more people to drive, and that this scheme would lead to bottlenecks and congestion through the area, which already suffers from heavy traffic and poor air quality.

The tunnel would carry heavy HGVs that cannot use the Blackwall Tunnel, adding to pressure and pollution. Instead, critics say, lorries should be kept away from central London roads, and TfL should instead invest in public transport for south-east London.

The statutory consultation for the Silvertown Tunnel closed in December 2015, and we’re waiting for the full analysis from TfL. But there’s still plenty to report:

Public opinion

Public support for the scheme has fallen markedly since the previous consultation. Positive responses were 58%, down from 83% in the previous consultation. And of those who were in favour, many expressed unhappiness about the charges.

Greenwich is now the only council that supports the plan, though it would also like to see improved public transport.

Lewisham and Hackney Councils both passed motions against the Silvertown Tunnel. Newham, Southwark , Waltham Forest and Tower Hamlets all expressed doubts about a likely increase in local traffic and the environmental impacts of the proposals.

TfL has offered to install noise and pollution barriers to protect residents in

Siebert Road and Westcombe Hill – but only if the tunnel plans are approved.

TfL will commission two new boats for the Woolwich Ferry, so that service will be maintained for the foreseeable future.

What comes next?

A complex planning application process lies ahead.* The issue will eventually be decided by the Secretary of State, as a National Strategic Infra-structure Project. But first, there’s the opportunity for the public to have a say, during an enquiry process.

- There are several stages:
- TfL expect to submit the application for a Development Consent Order to the Planning Inspectorate this spring.
 - The Planning Inspectorate will have a month to make sure all the documentation is in order.
 - The Planning Inspectorate then has a three month period to collect written comments from registered members of the public, in a pre-examination stage.
 - During the next six months, the PI invites full responses from those who sent in earlier comments, and considers these and all the other documentation.
 - The PI then has three months to make its recommendation to the Secretary of State, who has three months in turn to make a decision.
 - And finally there is a six-week period when that decision can be challenged in the courts, using a Judicial Review.

What the Mayoral candidates say

And of course, the new London mayor may well have something to say, too. The Green and Liberal Democrat parties oppose the Silvertown Tunnel. The Conservative candidate, Zac Goldsmith, said that he favours the plan. The Labour contestant, Sadiq Khan, has called for a review of river crossings.

You can register with the Planning Inspectorate for news on the Silvertown Tunnel’s planning progress here: <http://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/london/silvertown-tunnel/>

** Ed: Fancy the French system? In France they carry out the project, and then call for objections afterwards*

Asthma Attack

Asthma linked with transport pollution has long been an issue in Greenwich, as in other parts of London. Dr David Finch, GP lead for asthma care at the Healthy London Partnership, said:

“Healthy London Partnership is a partnership between London’s 32 CCGs and NHS England. It has published London asthma standards for children and young people and is developing an asthma toolkit to support pharmacists, GPs, commissioners, schools and hospitals to provide the best care for children and young people with asthma in London.

“The toolkit, which will be published on World Asthma Day on 3 May, will also include information and practical tools and resources for children and young people with asthma and their parents and carers.”

Dr Finch added: “Asthma can have a major impact on a child’s life .”

EGRA’s Anger

The plan to build a cruise liner terminal in Enderby Wharf is being challenged in the High Court.

A local resident backed by the The East Greenwich Residents’ Association (EGRA) has applied for a judicial review of Greenwich Council’s granting of permission to build the terminal on the grounds that it failed to adequately assess the dangers of air pollution. EGRA claims that the cruise ships will add to pollution equal to 688 lorries idling as they burn fuel to generate on-board power, and will thereby endanger public health.

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Weather news

In the Spring issue of the excellent Friends of Greenwich Park Newsletter, Greenwich Park Manager Graham Dear reports that, according to the MET office, the winter of 2015/2016 has been the mildest on record since 1910 – and the second wettest, after 2013/2014. So Lawn mowers have already started doing overtime, and Swiss ski resorts are facing big problems . . .

One by-product: a growing threat of Japanese Knotweed, which can grow through concrete and destroy buildings ... also an increased danger of lyme disease (watch out for ticks after dog walking through thick grass or woodlands . . .)

To join the Friends of Greenwich Park, please contact: Fran Tyler, 51 Lock Chase, London SE3 9HB. Annual subscription: £5.00 Cheques made out to Friends of Greenwich Park with sae, please.

Council’s Warning

Greenwich Council warns that residents are being cold-called by companies offering valuations, council tax banding and area comparisons of their property, claiming to save them thousands of pounds in council tax.

However they will charge a “small” administration fee of anything upwards of £55. If you are contacted by one of these companies please remember that the government’s Valuation Office Agency offers a valuation service – for free.

To get in touch with the Valuation Office Agency you can call 03000 501501 between 8.30am to 5.00pm or visit the government’s website.

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Funfair on the Heath

This event was quite noisy and a number of residents have been irritated by it but haven't felt they should complain. The situation with Circus Field from now on is that residents should not be able to hear anything inside their homes. If they do, or if there is a noise nuisance, they should ring the Council Noise Line number: 020 8921 8921. There is also a Noise Complaints page on the Council website.

Can we do anything about Education?

Yes! The arrival of computers has bowled over thoughtful people and upstaged the best educational practice of the past. People reason that because computers stem from mathematics, the kind of drilling used in maths teaching needs to be applied across the curriculum. This puts a lot of pressure on teachers and pupils: pressure which puts most children off education, or at best leads them to learn as little as possible to pass the exam.

The PER Report is based on 21 years’ analysis: a 37,000 word document which shows exactly what is going wrong. Readers of Westcombe News can buy it by sending £5 and their address to

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