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ONCE again a Westcombe Society team is participating in The London Bridges Walk on Sunday, 18th September, to raise money for Macmillan Cancer Support. This enjoyable walk starts at London Bridge and crosses each bridge, stopping halfway at Victoria Gardens for a picnic lunch. You can either walk the whole distance of 15 miles or just choose the 7 mile option; whatever you choose the route is suitable for those in wheelchairs or pushing baby buggies too. It costs £10 to register and walk and we hope everyone will turn up and make a donation but this is not compulsory. Just ring Carol Gravelle on 0208 853 0948 for further details or to register to join the team.

Westcombe News

Letters

The following closure in June of the Royal Borough’s newspaper Greenwich Time (called “a rag” in Newsshopper) the Council has announced a new fortnightly publication, called Greenwich Info – to be used primarily for Statutory Adverts such as planning applications.

Accused of being merely “propaganda”, Greenwich Time has been closed down by the Council as a Government-initiated legal action, alleging that the paper did not comply with the Local Authority Publicity Code.

A court case was something the Council was keen to avoid, as it would have cost local taxpayers hundreds of thousands of pounds. But a Council spokesman has pointed out that “All Councils are required to communicate with their residents, and placing statutory adverts in local papers is very expensive.”

Leader of the Council Cllr. Denise Hyland said that placing ads in alternative newspapers would have cost an additional £200,000 a year. It is not the case that no one has access to local papers.

Opposition councillors have ‘called-in’ the decision for scrutiny, calling Greenwich Info “completely shameless”. But it is not clear how else the Council can inform residents of planning applications and other important information on social housing etc. in a timely way.

In the referendum, the Royal Borough of Greenwich voted in favour of remaining in the EU by 65,248 votes to 52,117, and the Greenwich and Woolwich constituency voted overwhelmingly in favour by 72,806 votes to 15,809. In our ward (Blackheath & Westcombe) about 73% voted to remain. Commenting on the result, our MP, Matthew Pennycook, said: “The referendum result is probably the most disastrous single event in British history since the Second World War.”

At a recent public meeting he held in Woolwich, Matthew pointed out that while he respected the result and accepted that it creates a democratic imperative for the UK to leave the EU, he did not rule out the possibility that a further referendum, on the basis of a pre-negotiated proposed new relationship with Europe – or a fresh democratic mandate – could supersede the decision made on 23rd June.

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Now, where am I?

W e s t c o m b e N e w s

COMMUNITY

All editorial correspondence to:
Neville Grant, The Editor
wnews@westcombebseociety.org
Tel. 020 8858 8489
All material to be sent to:
wnews@westcombebseociety.org
Deadline for the October issue: 16th September
Environment Editor: Maggie Gravelle

What’s On: Barbara Ward
Reporters: The community – that means you!

Environment Committee
Emily Norton
All queries and comments to: 020 8853 2765
environment@westcombebseociety.org

Distribution
Emily Norton and volunteers.
Volunteer distributors please phone 020 8853 2765, we need your help!

Advertising Manager
Marilyn Little, 163 Westcombe Hill, SE3 7DP 020 8853 1312
advertising@westcombebseociety.org

All adverts payable in advance by cheque to The Westcombe Society.

Display: Single column 6 x 6cm: One – four issues £35, five-plus issues £30 each.

 Classified ads (Market Place): 50p per word (A telephone number = one word. An email address = five words). Deadline for all adverts is 10th day of the preceding month.

Printed by: Trojan Press

Contact the Westcombe Society:
WestcombeNews@groups.google.com Publisher: The Westcombe Society
Chairman: Marilyn Little
Tel. 020 8853 1312

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To access back numbers (in colour) go to www.westcebseociety.org/westcombe-news/

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

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Please enclose payment as appropriate:
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Pain clinic success

The Vanbrugh NHS Community Pain Management Clinic has won the Gruenenthal 2016 Pain Award (Patient Benefit section) worth £5,000. The clinic, led by GP pain specialist, Dr Ellen Wright, treats patients suffering chronic pain and multi-morbidity.

It now works with Kairos Rehabilitation Trust, a small medical charity providing therapies and social activities which begin to address the many issues that commonly hinder patients making progress.

The aims of the clinic are to improve the person’s clinical condition and overall circumstances by addressing all their pressing needs, thereby reducing unnecessary hospital appointments.

The Kairos method involves one-to-one therapies combined with social activities which begin to address the many issues that commonly hinder patients making progress.

BHS’s new Sixth Form Centre Opens

Blackheath High School was delighted to welcome visitors, parents, staff and students to the official opening of its newly refurbished Sixth Form Centre, when Helen Fraser, Chief Executive of The Girls’ Day School Trust, was granted permission to bring the claim for a Judicial Review of the council’s decision to grant planning permission for a major phase of its site redevelopment. The school is now commencing with the major phase of its site redevelopment. The refurbishment has been designed to inspire a mature, pre-university atmosphere and create a truly contemporary study environment for Sixth Form students.

The Head, Mrs Chandler-Thompson is understandably delighted with the results of the refurbishment which forms Phase 1 of the school’s redevelopment. Westcombe House is equipped with the latest interactive projector technology, versatile class-room furniture and special “break-out” spaces to encourage the girls to develop independent and collaborative learning.

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End of the line for Enderby Appeal

A claim for a Judicial Review of the council’s decision to grant planning permission for the Enderby Wharf development in 2015 was dismissed by the High Court on August 3rd. An application for permission to appeal against the judgment was refused.

As reported in June’s N.W. B, the claimant was granted permission to bring the claim earlier this year on the grounds that the council had allegedly failed to require an assessment of the cumulative effects of the proposed development on air quality in the immediate area.

The High Court dismissed the claim, finding that the 2015 decision made by the Royal Borough of Greenwich was not unlawful and the Royal Borough had properly taken into account the cumulative effects on air quality.

Is education happening?

Education means the process by which children are led to acquire deep knowledge and deep insights to prepare for their adult lives: about how people think, about themselves, and about the history which led to where we are today, the natural world, science, technology and the computerizing of information.

Cramming means memorizing things superficially, quickly, and in a short memory – to pass an exam.

The P.E.R (Education Renewal Group) was founded in 1993 to try to ban cramming in schools and get back to genuine education.

For more details contact phil@per.co.uk

Westcombe News September 2016
The show must go on!

Greenwich Theatre is getting a makeover thanks to an investment from the Royal Borough of Greenwich. Also unveiled are artistic plans for a bold new era over the next 25 years.

Extensive refurbishments of this historic 1855 building should be completed this month: included are roof repairs, rewiring, and some front-of-house improvements. There will also be a new ‘pop-up’ studio theatre, offering a completely flexible space with seating for up to 60 or 70. Longer term, there are plans for further improvements.

The theatre hopes to match the local authority’s investment for phase two of the refurbishment programme, which will see further electrical work around the building as well as other improvements.

“At the same time,” said James Haddrell, “We are announcing a new autumn programme of shows both on the main stage, and in our new pop-up studio, from some of the country’s newest and most exciting theatre-makers.

“We will also be announcing a programme of master-classes for new artists and companies on everything from marketing, lighting and sound design to touring, production management and theatre finance.”

Totally Thames Festival

The National Maritime Museum is mounting a series of events in September as part of its Totally Thames Festival, including:

- Maritime Lecture series: Totally Thames
  Every Thursday from 1st Sept. to 6th October 11.00 am - 12.30 pm. Archeologists and curators uncover the river Thames’ rich history from Roman ports to the Landlubbers’ Maritime Folk Festival
  Sat 24th Sept. 10.00 - 5.00 pm National Maritime Museum & Cutty Sark
  The best of maritime folk culture - sea chanties, salty yarns of the museum’s figureheads - and try out some traditional maritime crafts. Culminating in the BBC Folk Folk Club winner the next Collective’s new monthly sessions at Cutty Sark. Ticket prices vary.

- Muslims at Sea: From Barbary Pirates to Brick Lane
  Sat 9th Sept. 11.00 - 1.30
  Exploring Britain’s long and fascinating relationship with Islam. Encounter Muslim pirates, European converts to Islam, some beautiful Middle Eastern scientific instruments and maps, and much more.

- National Maritime Museum Study day
  Sat 24th Sept. 10.00 - 5.00 pm National Maritime Museum
  Tickets: £15.00 | £12.00 members

- Gallery tours: Free

The Department of Music at Goldsmiths is committed to “to all types of music from classical to world and popular.”

For those adventurous souls who like to venture into minimalism, a CD entitled Goldsmiths, and recorded at Goldsmiths in August last year, has recently been released by the label Another Timbre, based in Sheffield and founded by Simon Reynall, who specialises in this area of music.

The website of Another Timbre notes that “The softer you whisper, the closer people have to listen. This is true enough in everyday conversation, but is powerfully illustrated by the British composer Frank Denyer.”

The Plains Pokot, (part of the Kalenjin group) live mainly in remote areas of north-west Kenya. Denyer notes that they sing more “potent” songs more softly, “and the closer other people have to listen. This is true enough in everyday conversation, but is powerfully illustrated by the British composer Frank Denyer.”

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The Plains Pokot, (part of the Kalenjin group) live mainly in remote areas of north-west Kenya. Denyer notes that they sing more “potent” songs more softly, “and the closer other people have to listen. This is true enough in everyday conversation, but is powerfully illustrated by the British composer Frank Denyer.”

At the same time,” said James Haddrell, “We are announcing a new autumn programme of shows both on the main stage, and in our new pop-up studio, from some of the country’s newest and most exciting theatre-makers.

“We will also be announcing a programme of master-classes for new artists and companies on everything from marketing, lighting and sound design to touring, production management and theatre finance.”
All events are in the Main Hall of Mycenae House unless otherwise stated:

Macmillan London Bridges Walk

Macclesfield Coffee Morning - Fri 30th Sept.
Bays Bridge Hall, Bayden's Place, Chesham Heath Tea - Sat 25th October

Autumn Quiz - Fri 21st October
Sewanese Branz Saturday 26th November at Invicta School, Invicta Road.

Godfrey, Mary Knight, Ana Mejia and Tracy Ward,
Until Sept. 5: ‘Contours’ and Wayne Foskett.

case works by local artists, poets and makers.

on daniel.hall1985@hotmail.co.uk for more details.

Charlton SE7 7JW (0208 853 0900). Continues even in school holidays and half-term.

DAD’S STAY AND PLAY

23 Lee Road, Blackheath SE3 9RQ
Box Office: 0208 463 0100
Sun 25th Sept. 14.30: Blackheath Halls Orchestra
Sun 18th Sept. 11.00 pm  LEON BOSCH Double Bass SUNG-SUK KANG Piano play Bach,

TAYLOR  Schubert & Schumann Face To Face NEUS PERIS, PIANO plays in ST ALFEGE ROOM, BLACKHEATH HALL S£70 | £63

SUN 2 OCT 11:00 am  Blackheath Sundays: TZIGANE PIANO TRIO  Recital Room, Gillian Hill
formed the Tzigane Piano Trio over 20 years ago.

Fri 2nd Sept Garden Concert for Baby and You. £10.

Sundays:

8.00 pm First and Third Sundays of each month. “Sextuplets” discussion group at the Vicarage - 90 Westcombe Park Rd.

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9.30-11.30 Sherington Childrens Centre, all Home Sessions in Mycenae House Mon & Thurs 7.15pm and
Wednesdays 7.5pm

Backed by live group, space currently available for new members. Led by John Wilks (Worrier). Interested in writing? Please contact johnwilks@hotmail.com

Thurs 22nd Sept. AGM, followed by Barry cartoonists. Non-members may pay on the door

Concert for Baby and You. £10.

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Once again in 2016, for the tenth year in succession, Blackheath Halls crafted a musically excellent, sell-out, community opera. This year’s acclaimed production, Carmen, was a wonderful mix of professional and amateur musicians featuring singers of all ages melded together in a seamless, inclusive, expert way. The result? Yet another splendid community opera performance for which Blackheath Halls has become renowned.

Behind this incredibly successful and complex opera production, orchestrating all the diverse strands that bring it to a successful conclusion, was the very talented Rose Ballantyne. Rose is Blackheath Halls Community Engagement Manager. She had the initial vision and the requisite expertise to build this much loved annual event from it’s inception ten years ago.

A short video of Rose telling the story of the community opera is available at www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/blackheath-halls and is well worth a view. The video highlights the positive pleasure that the annual event brings locally and in it Rose explains why this unique co-operative venture has restored her faith in humanity.

The community is at the centre of this masterpiece of ‘arts inclusivity’. The production seeks to bring opera to all and to open its doors to all. It draws on a seventy- strong community chorus, local school children (including those with special needs), a community based orchestra of exceptional quality, local Trinity Laban music students and a host of professionals that give their time and expertise year after year, alongside engaged professional opera singers.

This unique recipe works – and works exceedingly well, so much so that musicians of international repute continue to be associated with the project long after the curtain closes.

Behind the scenes there are many uncelebrated community participants that keep it afloat. Within the chorus, Jay Hassan, a local maths tutor, has been taking part in the opera from the very beginning. Over time, she has become a mainstay of the production. When spring blossoms the opera becomes her priority. Not only does she attend all the rehearsals, to help new chorus members find their feet, she also organises a tight team of community bakers who sell cakes at rehearsals to fundraise for the opera.

It is very much a family affair: Jay’s children have also performed in the operas and her husband has helped out on many an occasion. Jay did not read music when she started, but over the years her love of opera and her performance confidence has grown. Through this local Blackheath treasure she has built lasting friendships and enduring joyful memories.

This year’s Carmen involved some additional initiatives away from the Halls. For the first time the chorus sang opera excerpts in a flash-mob style in Greenwich market to get the project started, and the run ended with an outdoors choral bandstand: a special way to close a tremendous successful production.

Once again, there was an annual ‘after party’ with presentations for community contributors. This year, Rose was presented with ten special gifts to mark each of the ten operas she has superbly managed.

Perhaps you too could be a participant in future productions!

Carman

The very strong professional singers included Hannah Pedley (Carmen), Pauls Putnams (Escamillo, pictured above) and Adrian Dryser (Don Jose). The cast also included Adam Music (Dancaire - a smuggler) and James Hutchins (Remendado - another smuggler).

Below: Hannah Pedley’s Carmen; gorgeously she faces up to her rejected lover, in the harrowing final scene.

PHOTOS: Lena Kern

This year’s Carmen production of Carmen shows how inclusive opera can be, as members of the community enthusiastically take part.

No, the lady in the hat is not Carmen – she is a member of the Torodear Escamillo fan club (Blackheath Branch!).

The result? Yet another splendid community opera performance.

Barbara Ward

FEATURES

Blackheath Halls: the home of community opera

Celebrating Shakespeare

READERS may recall that Jonathan Dove, who grew up in our own area, was profiled in April’s FW. In the same issue, we listed some of the music by great composers inspired by Shakespeare. However, we need to add another item to that list.

This year, to celebrate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death, Jonathan Dove’s Our revels now are ended – words used by Prospero in Act IV Scene 1 of The Tempest – is to be performed on the last night of the Proms. The words remain an evocative now as when they were first performed over 400 years ago.

Our revels now are ended. Our act is concluded.

As I foretold you, were all spirits, and are melted into air, into thin air… We are such stuff.

Dove’s work is an eight minute piece for Baritone Solo, Vocal Ensemble and Orchestra, first performed in August 2004, at the Bayreuth Festival in Germany.

There is seemingly no end to Dove’s creativity. A visit some 20 years ago to the Roman ruins of Palmyra, in Syria – vandalised last year by Da’esh, and since rectified – saved the seeds of a new work called In Damascus, a piece for tenor and string quartet.

Dove was moved by the extraordinary kindness of Syrian people he met, and appalled by current events. His new work contains words adapted from A Black Cloud in a London Sky or Death by Stabs in Sorrows, by the Syrian poet Ali Safar, as published by Saqi books in Syria. Spears.

This extract from Safar’s poems gives some idea of the subtlety of thought and emotion, even in this translated version:

On all my travels, I’d take a book. Usually I’d leave it in the country I visited. When my friends took a trip, I’d give them a book. My problem now isn’t the books we give to the people who leave us, hoping they’ll return, but the books that go with the people who leave us, as I foretold you, were all spirits, and are melted into air, into thin air…

Jonathan Dove’s work called In Damascus is rounded with a sleep.

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Got the Basement Blues . . .

Serious questions arise over the Council’s treatment of basement developments.

“take a large hoe and a shovel also. And dig till you gently perspire;”

Kipling urged an alternative to boredom and inactivity which, it seems, has been taken to heart in some parts of London. Westcombe Park is an area of changeable, complicated and unpredictable drainage. Surface sands and gravels lie on top of London clay and this can cause some of the more severe drainage problems. There is a history of subsidence in the area. Residents may have had to underpin their properties – a real problem on deep piles in order to stabilise their extensions. Dry cellars have flooded unexpectedly and springs have developed in gardens.

So, planning applications for new basements should be treated with caution. Planning officers at Westminster have an SPD on basements running to 4 pages plus appendices. In 2015 the London Borough of Richmond produced 20 pages of guidance on basement development. Canendon Planning Guidance on Basements and Lightwells is nearly 40 pages long and includes the warning that “The sides of excavations always move to some extent no matter how they are supported. The movement will typically be both horizontal and vertical and will be influenced by the engineering qualities of the ground, groundwater level and flow, the efficiency of the support system employed during the underpinning and the efficiency or stiffness of any support frames used.”

The GLA Housing Supplementary Guidance (2016) This document directs planners to consider ground and surface water flooding and land stability and mitigation measures in their deliberations about basements. We recognise that planning committees have a large number of local and national policies to consider, some of which are statutory and others advisory. The Flood and Water Management Act (2010) gives London boroughs clear responsibilities related to flood risk. The London Plan (2016) warns that climate change brings an increased risk of flooding and changes in water levels.

There are also building regulations, which fall outside the remit of the planning committee, as well as aspects of permitted development which do not require planning permission. We recognise that planning decisions have to be made on the basis of planning alone and cannot pay regard to individual or personal factors.

Decisions made by the Planning Committee are of importance both to the individuals concerned, but also to the wider community. They set a precedent and a single decision can therefore have far-reaching implications. Family homes have to meet changing needs and we value the variety and adaptability of the housing stock but we would not wish to see the character of the conservation area debased.

As the Character Appraisal says, “Westcombe Park is an area of considerable architectural and environmental value; it’s not a jungle, it’s designed for Greenwich to look again at its SPD.”

For a spectacular, joyful few days, Londoners kept their eyes wide shut to the real world of referenda and political reshuffles as they took part in the 21st year of the Greenwich and Dockland International Festival. Spook for choice this year; in Mycenae House and gardens, we had the Westcombe Society Family Summer Picnic in June, and in July we had a Summer Sunday Extravaganza organised by Mycenae House Community Centre.

All Change for SE Trains

Southeastern trains warn that there are changes to forthcoming timetables due to developments at London Bridge. Between 27th August and 1st September inclusive there will be NO SERVICE on the Greenwich line and CANNON STREET STATION WILL BE CLOSED. There will instead be a rail replacement bus service.

On 27th and 28th August trains from Charlton, Blackheath and Lewisham will run into Victoria. On 30th, 31st August and 1st September trains will run from Charlton, Blackheath and Lewisham into London Bridge, Waterloo and Charing Cross with additional trains on this route. The DLR from Greenwich to Lewisham will run and rail tickets will be acceptable. Despite requests by the Westcombe Society, however, we have not as yet succeeded in securing rail ticket acceptance on North Greenwich.

After September 1st trains on the Greenwich line will NO LONGER CALL AT LONDON BRIDGE, instead they will all go direct to Cannon Street. There will be some changes to the frequency and timing of trains on both the Greenwich Line and the line through Blackheath.

There will be a slight peak time reduction on the Greenwich Line service to Cannon Street and a slight increase in services to London Bridge, Waterloo and Charing Cross via Blackheath and Lewisham.

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