The Westcombe Society has been campaigning to ensure that the Woolwich Ferry and the effects of an estimated extra 100 vehicles per hour drive through the World Heritage Site. Despite these concerns, Greenwich still actively wants the Silvertown Tunnel. It is the only borough that supports the plans.

Role of the STIG committee

But none of the local authorities is happy with TIL’s plans with ‘STIG’ - the Silvertown Tunnel Implementation Group. This would be a committee formed from the boroughs acting for around eight years during the building and the early years of running the scheme. TIL say they would consult about the plans for charges and mitigating local impacts. The STIG would meet only annually, and at this point there is no obligation for TIL to follow its advice.

The role of the inspectors

It is true that the Planning Inspectorate is asking tough questions. They want TIL to justify in traffic modelling, its claims of new bus routes, and how the council will affect people - especially those on low incomes. And they have been very clear that they want to ensure a voice through the proceedings, including individuals who might feel quite shy, given the array of professionals at the table.

In relation to Westcombe Park, the Inspectors have taken a strong interest in the Siebert Road campaign for fencing to lessen the air pollution and noise affecting them and their neighbours down Westcombe Hill and up Invicta Road. On a site visit, they were invited into a resident’s garden to see the effects for themselves, and they continue to ask TIL for clear indications that the fence will be built in the event of planning permission for the new Tunnel being granted.

As a member of the Siebert Road campaign group, wrote, ‘…we would just like a legal guarantee that this will happen before the building of the Silvertown Tunnel. Ensuring this is incredibly important to us as it will mitigate the noise, vibration and pollution from the construction traffic.’

(continued on page 3)

Greenwich too has concerns, including pressure on the Woolwich Ferry and the effects of an estimated extra 100 vehicles per hour drive through the World Heritage Site. Despite these concerns, Greenwich still actively wants the Silvertown Tunnel. It is the only borough that supports the plans.
A usual, the party was held for our volunteers to thank them for all they do to support the activities of the Society. We were very pleased to welcome Toni Hale, of the Mental Health Activity Trust, as a guest at the party, where Marilyn handed over a cheque for £2,000. The MHAT is the Society’s 2016-7 “Charity of the Year”.

In a moving speech, Tony said how much this grant meant to him and those she called “her family”. The aim of the Trust was to support people with mental health problems and help them back into employment. Everyone was very impressed to hear that 41 people had so far been helped in this way.

Beating the winter fuel blues

If you know of anyone who is worried about paying their gas and electricity bills this winter, help is at hand. A local community group is offering free advice on how to get the best energy deals and how to keep the cold out.

Trained energy advisors from South East London Community Energy (SELCE) are offering individual support over a cup of tea and cake at weekly advice sessions in Woolwich and Catford.

The SELCE co-operative has secured funding from the government’s Big Energy Saving Network initiative, and its energy advisors are ensuring that residents are getting access to available support and services as well as help with fuel bills.

The new Energy Café’s are being held on Mondays from 10.00am to 4.00pm at the Woolwich Centre Main Library foyer, 35 Wellington St, London SE18 6HQ and on Tuesdays from 10.00am to 4.00pm at Lewisham Homes’ customer support office on the ground floor of Catford Old Town Hall, Catford Road, London, SE6 4RU.

Interested in attending a session? Drop in on the day or book an appointment on SELCE’s website at selce.org.uk/energy-advice/energy-cafe. Anyone attending a session should bring their latest gas and electricity bills with them.

St George’s, Glenlude Rd. Westcombe Park

Sundays: 11.00 am Children’s Church 11.00 a.m. Holy Communion (All Age service 1st Sunday of each month)

Wednesdays: 8:30 a.m. Morning Prayer 12.00 p.m. Soup Lunch Fellowship

Spectives Group meets at 9 Westcombe PI Road 1st & 3rd Sunday each month

Special Events in March
Wed. March 15th 7:30 at St George’s: Spiritual Film Night: “The Rehearsal” Richard Burton & Victor Mature

Contact: Revd Tim Vynger
Tvynger@gmail.com Tel: 07944 614249

Letters

From: Victoria Line
Westcombe Park Rd
I read with not a little fury about Greenwich Council’s ‘eviction notice’ to the users of the community garden. Greenwich Council is apparently seeking planning permission prior to selling off the land, so its hand-wringing about creating much needed new homes is somewhat disingenuous. The buyers of these idyllic “luxury” homes are not those in need.

Tony Ollerenshaw’s hope that the presence of the old Greenwich Park Line railway tunnel will prevent development is sadly misplaced. Much of the tunnel is already built over, for example, the newer properties in Blissett Street.

From: Nick Raynsford

Thanks for sending me a copy of the latest edition of WN, which has clearly gone from strength to strength.

Well done. Thank you also for printing Jim Winstanley’s very kind review of my book. It was a pleasure to write the book and I have been gratified by the many positive responses it has generated.

I just wish that the political climate both here in the UK and internationally was more conducive to the kind of serious political dialogue that in my view is essential if we are to restore confidence and overcome the cynicism and populist ranting that now dominates political debate.

From: Andrew J Graham
Vanbrugh Hill

In February, the WN said that no major tree work can be carried out without the Council’s permission. In reality this is not true. A neighbour’s contractor butchered my 60 ft birch tree without my permission. I contacted the Council, but they chose to ignore me.

From: Marilyn Little
Westcombe Hill

The AGM of the Westcombe Society takes place some time in May. (TBC) At the AGM members decide on what local organisation or charity should be our “Charity of the Year”. Please send in your suggestions or proposals to me at marilyn.little@hintonnet.com
Nursery schools under threat

Al parents need to be fully informed about the threat to Nursery Schools across the country. In Greenwich, there are four, including Robert Owen Nursery School and Children’s Centre in Commerell Street. The management have introduced a new early years national funding formula for nursery schools that is effective from next September. This funding formula is affecting local authorities in different ways. In three years’ time nursery schools will all lose a large sum of funding, if the shortfall is not made up, nursery schools may be forced to close. The Royal Borough of Greenwich is doing its best to support the four nursery schools in Greenwich but the WBN has learnt that it cannot sustain such a loss. These schools are hugely important. Ruth Mercer, the head of Robert Owen says:

“The school has provided nursery education for young children in East Greenwich for 70 years. We have highly qualified and experienced teachers and a core staff team that have been working at Robert Owen for many years.

“The opportunities for play and learning here are developmentally appropriate for young children and if we lose our children leave full of confidence, and with a strong foundation for future learning.”

“Reception teachers tell us they can always tell a Robert Owen child, because they are just so much readier.”

Why are Nursery Schools so important?

- 99% of Nursery Schools are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted – making them the most successful sector of education

- Nursery Schools have qualified teachers who make a huge difference to children’s learning and development.

- 60% of Nursery Schools are in the most deprived parts of the country, and thus helping to bridge the gap.

- They provide specialist support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in a fully inclusive way.

- Greenwich is the highest performing borough in the country for the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and Nursery School Progression.

- Our Nursery Schools, including the four in Greenwich offer initial teacher training for specialist early years’ teachers with Qualified Teacher Support.

Please forward your concerns to the Ministers, Justine Greening, and MP’s Caroline Dineage and Lucy Powell – both of whom are concerned with early years education. Our MP has told the WBN that he is lobbying hard to secure the necessary funding from Govt.

The Fitrovia Radio Hour coming to Blackheath

The Fitrovia Radio Hour will be in Blackheath on Sat. 25th March when they will perform brand new versions of 1940s style radio plays to support the St Bartholomew’s Church radio appeal. Blending comedy, homage and satire to create a heady theatrical cocktail, the cast of three will create all the sound effects live as you are transported into a bygone age of stiff dinner jackets and even stiffer upper lips, and everything is “Ripping good fun.”

Doors open at 7.00pm in the Church Hall in Blackheath Park, SE3, and the evening starts with a light supper of fish and chips.

There was lots of festive fun in December when families met in Mycenae House, for a Christmas coffee morning. This event was held to raise funds for Debbie Rocke, a mum of three in need of a lifesaving operation that is currently unavailable in the UK. The event raised an amazing £672 for Debbie’s Operation. Debbie and her family and friends gave thanks to all who took part in the day, or attended, including the staff at Mycenae House who were so helpful.

Debbie is a debilitated Ms. Unstable Chi-square which is causing compression of her brain stem. This means she is currently unable to walk unaided. She is in constant pain with chronic pain, and has a whole host of other symptoms that make life very difficult.

Without this operation, Debbie’s condition will continue to deteriorate. The operation cost is £60,000 and Debbie’s family and friends are organising fundraising events to help her reach this target. So far, fundraising events and donations have raised a fantastic £10,000 towards Debbie’s target. A big event is set to be held at the end of February – a fun-filled family disco called Honey I’ve brought the kids to add to this sum. Debbie’s friends still want you to go! The next event is in Mycenae House on Friday, April 7th – a showing of the film, Dirty Dancing, followed by a holiday welcome... For more information or to donate please visit www.youcaring.com/debbie-rocke-002045. You can also see updates by liking her Facebook page http:// www.facebook.com/debbiesfightforlife

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 tick, about themselves, about the history which led to where we are today, about the natural world, science, technology and the computerizing of information. Considering these means memorizing things superficially – quickly – in short term 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 philosopher@ael.com

“Ymca? Why Not?”

The Tunnel (cont. from page 1)

Greenwich is also pressing for action on the proposed Greenwich Tunnel. The Inspectors will also be reviewing the plans for dealing with construction impacts, which set out clearly that lorry services may – none of them are residential roads. And the Inspectors are questioning the effects of charging for use of the tunnel, which would particularly affect local users. The public inquiry is due to finish in mid-April. After that, the Inspectors have three months in which to make their recommendations to the Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling. So in about four months, we will all know what they recommend.

Even then the Secretary of State for Transport still has the power to reject or approve the scheme, whatever the recommendation. And the Mayor of London will even then have the power to halt the project. So the project’s outcome will be uncertain for some time yet.

Paul Abercrombie

We are very sorry to report the death on 28th December of Paul Abercrombie, who lived in the area for over 70 years. Readers of the WBN may recall a review in January 2016 of Paul’s thinly disguised autobiographical novel, “Evening before Dawn” and will know that Paul was brought up in a children’s home. Paul was exceptionally gifted and despite the normal lack of aspiration for children in care at that time, went to the local Grammar School. He continued his education at Goldsmiths’ College, where he made lifelong friends.

Paul then began his career as a teacher, teaching English in France, Or peninsular Guinea in West Africa, then to London he taught French at Samuel Pepys and St Austin’s. He was in his late 30s when he took his degree in French and Russian at Queen Mary College. He was a brilliant teacher and enjoyed great exam results for his pupils... but he had his own method – not always favourable of the month. His classes once failed an Ofsted inspection, despite the fact that he had consistently achieved such good results with his pupils. Paul was undeterred and proudly wore a badge stating “Failed by Ofsted Inspectors?” So much the worse for Ofsted... 

When Paul left Eglesfield, where he taught for many years, he was strongly urged by Belsey Grammar. Between his career he arranged school trips to France, Russia and Africa. He was much loved by his pupils.

Paul loved his social life – on the lawn, end-of-term parties, as well as theatre outings he organised for the regulars at the British Oak pub. He was a ruthless croquet player – and even taught the French to play the game. He was also a keen bridge player, playing regularly at Mycenae House.

He dreamed up an amazing scheme for celebrating the 50th anniversary in Greenwich: a glass maze, in which you could see where you wanted to get to, even though that didn’t help.

Paul had a zest for life, his work and his social activities. He had a great sense of fun, had a plethora of stories, and was such good company. In the last years Paul led quite a restricted life due to ill-health, but his memory will live on, and many will be grateful to have had their lives touched by Paul. Our deepest condolences go to Paul’s wife Avril and their son, Gavin.

The Fitrovia Radio Hour is coming to Blackheath on Sat. 25th March when they will perform brand new versions of 1940s style radio plays to support the St Bartholomew’s Church radio appeal. Blending comedy, homage and satire to create a heady theatrical cocktail, the cast of three will create all the sound effects live as you are transported into a bygone age of stiff dinner jackets and even stiffer upper lips, and everything is “Ripping good fun.”

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For more details contact philosopher@ael.com
Will Woolwich Barracks remain in its historical home?

Practising for the Trump visit? No, it was last year; they were enjoying Armed Forces Day which has taken place every year at Woolwich Barracks.

Following the announcement that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) plans to sell Woolwich Barracks, Greenwich councillors have unanimously agreed to lobby the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to keep the historic barracks in its home in the heart of the borough.

The Grade II listed barracks have been used by the Royal Artillery since the American War of Independence in 1776, finally pulling out in 2007. The barracks have been a core part of the Council’s community links with the Armed Forces. The Kings Troop Royal Horse artillery with its 11 horses are now based in Woolwich, and regularly exercise their horses around the borough.

Cllr Denise Hyland, the Leader of the Council, said: “The barracks have a long and respected connection with our borough and we value their continued presence here. I was proud to be part of a motion that crossed the political divide and we stood united in our mission to lobby to keep the Army in Woolwich at the heart of our community.”

Leader of the Opposition Cllr Matt Hartley, said: “I am pleased councillors from both parties supported the motion.”

Each year, the barracks plays host to one of the UK’s largest Armed Forces Day events to be held, organised by the Royal Borough, attended by over 20,000 people.

Combined, the Great Get Together and Armed Forces Day event is set against the stunning backdrop of the Royal Artillery Barracks parade ground. The annual event is a regular favourite of local residents, and features a very wide range of attractions which include an army assault course for children, and other spectacular displays.

Local MP Matt Pennycook has added his voice to the issue. He questioned the wisdom of selling the barracks, telling fellow MPs that a base in Woolwich could accommodate troops in the event of a terrorist attack. In a debate on December 2016 he secured a commitment from the Defence Minister to look again in the New Year at the Government’s decision to close the barracks.

The MoD said the sale formed part of their Better Defence Estate Strategy. There have been reports that the military have been experiencing some budgetary difficulties, partly as a result of the purchase of American equipment becoming an unforseen extra expense after the pound’s devaluation of the pound. The barracks is one of dozens of sites being sold off.

Visit the new permanent exhibition telling the fascinating 300-year history of the Royal Artillery and its association with Woolwich, at the Greenwich Heritage Centre, Artillery Square, Royal Arsenal, London SE18 6ST

Paws for thought!

Paws and Padlocks is a new children’s opera commissioned by Blackheath Halls in celebration of 5 years of the children’s opera programme

With a score by the award-winning composer Kate Whitley (co-founder of the Multi-Story Orchestra) and libretto by Sabrina Mahfouz.

The Multi-Story Orchestra will be accompanying the performances under the musical director of their co-founder Christopher Stark. The opera will be the usual brilliant mix of professional singers and local talent, including, of course, children.

What’s it about?

George and Georgina are accidentally locked in a zoo for the night. Whilst there they discover talking beasts, and disturbingly plans are afoot...

With a story perfect for families and the usual high quality performances, Paws and Padlocks will be a very special event and offers entertainment for all. Sat 8th/Sun 9th April 2.00pm & 6.00pm Tickets from Box Office Tel. 8463 0100: £11 | £6 under 12s Suitable for ages 6+

Alarming – or Alarmist?

PETE GREAVES reviews John Pilger’s film ‘The Coming War on China’

As we start a new Chinese New Year – the Year of the Rooster – many observers are wondering if under President Trump the possible trade war could become even more serious...

Speaking to a packed meeting in Davos, Jack Ma, the Chinese billionaire and founder of Alibaba, chided the US for wasting money on military hardware rather than spending it on infrastructure. But is Mr Trump likely to listen?

Early in his film John Pilger says that its aim “is to break a silence”, and asks at the end “can we really afford to be silent?”

The silence refers to the American military build-up in the Pacific. It’s not making the US many friends among the locals: The Marshall islanders resent being treated as guinea-pigs for the testing of nuclear weapons, and the islanders of Okinawa (Japan) and Jeju (South Korea) are shown resisting the establishment of nuclear bases.

In the film a Chinese academic says: “There never have been two countries more interdependent on each other than China and the US in history.” But today more than 400 American military bases encircle China with missiles, bombers, warships and nuclear weapons.

The film asks whether Trump will take us to the brink; can we rely on his recent “cordial” phone call with the Chinese president? The Guardian referred Trump “recklessly baiting China” during his campaign, and the day after the inauguration sub-titled “Prepare for a direct clash with China.” We have been warned...

There will be a showing of this film by Blackheath & Greenwich United Nations Association at 7.00 pm on Tuesday March 21st in The Old Bakehouse, Age Exchange, Blackheath Village. Free. Followed by a discussion. All welcome. Enquiries 8588 8489

Return of the Steinberg Duo

On the 6th March in 1917 two soldiers took to the stage in uniform at Aeolian Hall in London to perform works by Brahms, Beethoven and Ireland to a war-weary audience. It was this concert in 1917 that launched John Ireland’s career overnight, and led to fame and fortune for the young composer.

To celebrate the centenary of this extraordinary event, and the release of their latest recording on the Lyrita label, the Steinberg Duo presents a reprise of that concert, exactly one hundred years later. The Steinberg Duo’s one-night only concert will be at Blackheath Concert Halls on 6th March 2017.

Readers of the WN may recall that the Steinberg Duo – husband and wife artists Nick Burns and Louisa Stonehill – are a violin and and piano duo who used to give monthly recitals in their studio on Vauxhall Hill before moving to the US last year. So this is our chance to hear them again!

See page 5 for details.

Fighting for votes for women

From the 1860s women campaigned to get the vote – and finally succeeded in 1928. Was this due to Mrs Pankhurst and the suffragettes?

In the words of Shirley Williams, the suffragettes got the publicity (often negative...) – but it was the suffragists led by Millicent Fawcett, who got things done – and got the vote. Jane Garri, author of In The Stags of Exceptional Women, a History of the Fawcett Society, talks about the campaign, and its aftermath, at the Old Bakehouse, Age Exchange on March 14th at 7.30pm.
WHAT’S ON

ARTS

BLACKHEATH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY, St Mary’s Church Hall, Crouch End, London N8 9BQ. All meetings are on the 4th Thursday of each month except August and December 7.30pm for 8.30pm.
15th March 2023, 7.30pm – 8.30pm
RAFUNEZ AND THE TOWER OF DOOM by THEATRE OF WORDEA. 4* Tickets £5.00 Sat 1st April 10.00am & 3.00pm Ripper Theatre presents JUDM. ALICE’S ADVENTURE Why do animals want to steal all the Earth’s fluffy things? £5.00 Sat 28th April 10.00am & 3.00pm Pierpont Puppet Theatre 5* Tickets £5.00

COMMUNITY

CHILDREN & FAMILY

BLACKHEATH HALE S3, 25 Lax Rd, Blackheath SE3 9QW 020 856 461 010 www.trinitylab.co.uk
West End March 8.00 pm Boris Rumyati: The SPLIT S, RECITAL ROOM. A memoir and honest account of a lifetime in hospital. £5.00 INDUSTRIAL HISTORY SOCIETY greenwichindustrysociety.blogspot.com Thu 14th March 7.30pm Jane Grant talks on In the Shadow of Exceptional Women: A History of the Fawcett Society, Meeting at The Old Bakehouse, Age Exchange, Penratck Park.
BLACKHEATH SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY Friday lectures at 7.45pm Mycenae House, Viziors Rd, Greenwich, SE10 8HR. £5.00
IS-WORDS West Green Library, 46 High Road SE10, in association with IS-WORDS Mon 7th March 7.00pm, 7.30pm poetry reading from four published poets: James Flynn, Michael L spread, Mal Peet Price and Frances Saunders. Hosted by Simon Powell and Sue Atkinson. £5.00
Music
BLACKHEATH HALE S3, 25 Lax Rd, Blackheath SE3 9QW 020 856 461 010 www.trinitylab.co.uk
CLASSICAL: Sun 5th March 11.40am Recital Room the TRIO DISMISSIS: play Haydn, Schumann and Beethoven tickets £24.00

THEATRE

THE GREENWICH THEATRE, Cannons Hill, London SE10 8RS Box Office 020 8856 7755 greenwictheatre.co.uk
Until Sun 12th March: a Gothic Rock Musical LIZZIE, the story of Lizzie Bordereau who took an axe, and goes her thresher forty vehicles... A 2.30pm ticketed £25.00 Con £15.00. 7.30pm £35.00 Con £20.00 26th March: a New Musical COMIN' ON CALLIN' celebrating the 80th birthday of our Culza - Cella MIGHTY-PERM (incorporating Diz!), £18.00 Con £11.00 9th April: $20.00

Events in Mycenae House:
Sat 18th March 2.40pm Duffield Tea Sat 1st March 7.30pm for 8.00pm Spring Quiz Sat 15th April 2.00 - 4.00pm (In garden) Easter Egg Hunt
May AGM Date TBC PL, send Marilyn
Proposals for Charity of the Year Sun 16th June 7.30pm Members’ Evening Sat in July Summer Picnic – 26th July Sat 24th Oct. 2.40pm Chrysanthemum Tea for 3rd New. 7.30 for 8.00pm Spring Quiz The Westcombe Society really needs more volunteers to help out at these events. If you are interested, please ring Joanne on 07709 517177.

Blackheath & Greenwich Women's Institute Meets first Wednesday of every month, doors open at 7.30pm for a Swiss style Methodist Church on Old Dover Road GREENWICH UNION (MEANTIME) READING GROUP New local reading group starting 1st Wed of each month. Reader - Dine Share food at members homes. Contact Barbara Ward bward@barbara.co.uk 07960 107387. FRIEDEL MCCALL DEBATE No more sessions in Mycenae House Mon & Thurs 7.50pm and on Wed at 6.15pm. Tel 0208 201.5132 DYSLEXIA ASSOCIATION OF BEXLEY, BROMLEY GREENWICH & LONDONSS. Info: 07762525872 Help Line: 0300 999 1000 Thurs 28th April 7.45pm Talks on Handwriting and Revision Tips and Techniques. At Athlone Church Hall V2 Village Hall Church Lane, Chislehurst Kent BR2 9PS. Adult Dyslexia Group: First Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm Community House, South Street, Bromley BR1 1RJ.
CHART House will be celebrating The Coming Out with Cilla, John Wagner’s (alarming) film. The Trump effect!
Meeting at the Old Bakehouse, Age Exchange, Bonnatt Park, Blackheath starting at 7.30pm as the film is long, and time is needed for discussion. Free. All welcome.
WEST END WOODLANDS next volunteer day: Saturday 4th March 10.00am - 1.00pm

Trinity Laban - Free Concerts
Diana Cunningham & Iryna Lyakehovskai play The Complete Beethoven Sonatas 1.5pm every Wednesday 1st & 22nd March in the Peacock Room King Charles Court

Events

MYCENAE HOUSE LIVE EVENTS - MARCH 2023
3rd March 6.30pm - Once Upon a Time Tea, a fundraising ‘Classic Book Themed High Tea. £15.00
Fri 10th March 6.30pm - JazzNights, Callino Live Jazz music event hosted by Jimms Bar and Restaurant. £15.00
Sat 11th March 3pm - Pup! A magical comedy show for 3-5 year olds & their families. £5.00
Tues 14th March 5pm - Kathryn Tickell, World-renowned exponent of the Northumbrian Smallpipes. £15.00
Sat 18th March 5pm - Shkoom Soup. A fundraising evening of dance for Peace. £15.00
Fri 24th March 3.30pm - Icarus Club. An evening of acoustic live music performed by high quality, original songwriters. £7.50.

For further information about all Mycenae House events visit www.mycenae-house.org.uk

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2A Haxenden Road, Blackheath SE3 8TS Telephone: 0208 858 7309 r.g.austin@fmsnet.com

AGE EXCHANGE
Library Opening Hours: The community library will be opening until 7pm on Tuesdays. Special thanks to Kathleen Evans for helping us with this new initiative.
Feel Better with a Book
Starting on Wednesday 3rd March is our Reader Group facilitated by volunteers with theReader Organisation. Jim Penny and Helen (our two tireless poets, poems and stories) in a supportive and inclusive setting. Participants are invited to read aloud and share responses to the writing of a cop or fanfiction. Held in The Studio from 10.30am to 4.45pm, the session has tea and for new readers a small charge for refreshments.

St Olave’s is a Prep School in New Eltham for boys and girls aged 3-11 years
Broad, child-centred curriculum
Excellent results in the 11+ selection
Classes, clubs and evenings trips
Excellent pastoral care
Small classes
Specialist staff for PE, IT, Music, Art
Bible teaching
Sibling fee reduction
Before and after school care
Tel: 020 8239 8930
www.stolaves.org.uk

McYneae House Live Events - March 2023

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Westcombe News March 2017

5
The British inventor who sank 13 Allied Vessels  Malcolm Hardy

Maritime Greenwich would seem to have allowed the 150th anniversary of one of the most momentous developments in naval warfare to slip by unnoticed – though admittedly, it did not take place in Greenwich or even Britain. In 1866 the Lancashire-born inventor and industrialist, Robert Whitehead, produced the first effective naval torpedo. It was constructed in his factory in Rijeka (Fiume in Italian), Croatia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which was the first power to accept its invention. By 1870, his torpedoes could travel at 6 knots (11km/h); ten years later, he was selling torpedoes to ten other countries. Eventually he set up a British torpedo factory at Portland in 1890. Meanwhile, the British licensed his technology for their own torpedo made in the Arsenal at Woolwich from 1872, supplementing this production with purchases of Whitehead torpedoes produced in Rijeka. The Rijeka “Torpedo” factory went bankrupt in the 1920s, but was again producing torpedoes for Italy in the Second World War.

By 1943, it was producing 160 torpedoes a month – no wonder it became a target for allied bombers. The factory in Rijeka continued to supply the Yugoslav armed forces for some 20 years after the war.

A curious footnote: a curious footnote to the Whitehead story is that his grand-daughter Agatha married an ambitious Rijeka-trained officer in the Austrian Navy who commanded the Austrian submarine squadron in the First World War – so successfully that a special medal was struck to commemorate his exploits. Under his command, the submarines SM U-5 and SM U-14 sank thirteen Allied ships.

His name? Corvette Captain Georg Johannes Ritter von Trapp, an Austro-Hungarian officer familiar to us from the film The Sound of Music. His numerous decorations included the Order of Maria Theresia. However, in this era of fake news it is worth noting that he was not an Austrian aristocrat (as in the film) but was born in Zadar, a coastal town in Croatia, but at the time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1920, Zadar became part of Italy, and Georg was therefore technically an Italian citizen, along with his wife and children.

After the death of Agatha from scarlet fever, the family moved to Austria where Georg subsequently married the children’s tutor (aka Julie Andrews!). Badly affected by the depression, they turned their hobby, music, into a profession.

Later, unwilling to become part of the Nazi war-machine, he and the family went by train to Italy, from where they travelled to the US in pursuit of a musical career. Another grand-daughter of Whitehead’s married into the Bismarck family.

Unravelling DNA Machines, one Molecule at a time...
**ENVIRONMENT**

**It gets worse every year...**

MARY MILLS on the problems of hill-dwellers

She gets worse every year!’ said an elderly neighbour to me when I moved to Humber Road fifty years ago. She was talking about Vanbrugh Hill – yes, it does, get worse and for many people the struggle to get up it is impossible.

This does not just affect the disabled, elderly and those with small children; there are many people with a whole range of conditions which make climbing steep hills a bad idea – or impossible.

In our area the hillside up from the river stretches from Greenwich proper, right along to Plaistead. Very few of those hills have adequate bus services – in our immediate area Westcombe Hill is well served – but Maze Hill has no public transport, and Vanbrugh Hill has – oh dear, oh dear – the very inadequate 366.

One major concern now is that traffic along Trafalgar and Woolwich Roads has led to plans for increased parking controls. Consultation rules mean that people north of the railway line are being asked – although Trafalgar Road shops and the Greenwich centre serve a population up Vanbrugh and Maze Hills.

Plans for new transport facilities on the Peninsula – buses, routes, roads – a planned new station, etc., etc. – don’t take into account the access problems of people who live ‘up the hill’ and who need to use them too.

We don’t have a direct bus which goes to North Greenwich and it’s a bit too far to walk. At other stations there are proper facilities for local people to pick up and drop off passengers, luggage, or what – but not for us at North Greenwich. Many of the new – and old – facilities on the Peninsula are awkward for us to access – and we are increasingly missing out.

Planners need to factor the steepness of hills into their plans – and it isn’t just about transport. As a local councillor I used to argue that light pollution from new Peninsula facilities didn’t affect those who were consulted in the surrounding areas on the same level. People ‘up the hill’ weren’t asked although those bright lights shine right in their windows.

So as far as the planners were concerned the consultation rules are about distance, not gradient. So we need to get gradients on to the agenda when plans are being made, and see that they get factored in to the changes being made in our local environment.

A reader asked the W N about two chestnut trees recently felled near the Maze Hill entrance to Greenwich Park. A spokesman for Greenwich Park told the WN that the trees had to be felled because they were dangerous: they were ‘tied with canker’ caused by an ascomycete fungus.

Until recently, there have been only isolated outbreaks of the disease in England. The disease was first spotted in Warwickshire in 2011, and isolated outbreaks have occurred in seven other locations, including East Sussex and Devon. In 2016, the disease was confirmed again near Maidstone, Kent in a single sweet chestnut tree which had been planted in 2009.

The owner noticed symptoms and reported it to the Forestry Commission with Tree Alert. The tree was destroyed with the owner’s co-operation, and in line with the normal precautions, a survey was conducted of sweet chestnut and oak trees within 5km (3.2 miles).

Fortunately no further cases were found in the area.

According to the website of the Forestry Commission, Sweet chestnut blight is a plant disease caused by the ascomycete fungus Cryphonectria parasitica. For years this pathogen has caused severe epidemics – which have destroyed sweet chestnut trees in North America: during the first half of the 20th century, it killed some 3.5 billion trees after it was accidentally introduced there from Asia.

It was first identified in Europe (in Italy) in 1938. Although losses have not been on the same scale, it has spread steadily throughout much of the continent. Sweet chestnuts are grown commercially both in mainland Europe and the UK for the timber and for the country in addition to environmental and biodiversity impacts. the disease can have an economic impact.

The disease poses a threat to people, pets, or livestock, and it does not affect horse chestnut (canker) tree. However, sadly, oaks are likely to be infected, and therefore felled, in Greenwich Park, although the park authorities are hoping that losses can be minimised.

The Forestry Commission is asking local people, especially tree professionals, to help by checking their sweet chestnut trees every year, whether they are in gardens, woodlands, hedgerows or elsewhere, for signs of the disease.

Any suspected symptoms must be reported, preferably with the Forestry Commission’s Tree Alert disease reporting tool: https://treecare.forestry.gov.uk.

**Green light for Greenwich**

In December, Greenwich Council got the go-ahead for “The Greener Greenwich Strategy” which outlines the actions planned to tackle air pollution and air pollution across the Borough.

This follows a series of consultations the Royal Borough ran earlier in the year, on its Greener Greenwich Strategy and the Royal Borough’s Air Quality Action Plan, both of which were launched last summer. Some of the key initiatives included are:

* Expanding solar panel installation on Council-owned properties.
* Exploring the development of waste networks to supply locally produced lower emission energy to residents; including the investigation of a water source heat pump in the River Thames to supply council homes.
* Trialling smarter lower emission transport solutions such as e-bikes, electric vehicle car club and e-charging points through the EU funded Horizon2020 programme and the Low Emission Neighbourhood scheme.

**PARKING IN OLD DOVER RD**

Traders in Old Dover Road are pressing for an early solution to this problem. Traders complain the problem has been going on for years. Newsagents who start work at 5.00 am report that there is no room to park anywhere in the road at that time. One van has not been moved for days on end.

“Parking controls would make a huge difference to the viability of businesses in Old Dover Road,” said one Trader.

“How much longer do we have to wait?”

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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 accessed online at www.greenwich.gov.uk/planning**

Canker in the Park

Neville Grant

**The new gold: Grass**

**Y es, not gold. GRASS. A new report shows that Britain can get almost all of its gas from a very simple source – grass. So a new outlet for the countryside. Ecotricity , is calling on the government to rethink where Britain gets its gas.**

Already, incredibly, researchers have found there is enough suitable land to produce enough green gas each year to power 97% of the homes in Britain. And it can be done without affecting food production – in fact, it would be boosting it (via crop breaking), and at the same time creating new wildlife habitats.

Not to mention the £7-Stollon boost to the economy and 15k new jobs in a new and sustainable industry – and making fracking a redundant concept.**

It’s not too late, because fracking hasn’t started yet. But Britain needs a proper review of where Britain gets its gas – from grass, from our fields and gardens, which we can grow the grass. It’s that simple.**

Ecotricity recently got permission for its Green Gas Mill. All that is needed now is for the government to get behind this simple, abundant and benign energy source.**

There’s lots more information on our website about what we’re doing, including the full report and data on how our Green Gas Mills will work. Visit ecotricity.co.uk**

**Dale Vince is the founder of Ecotricity Group Limited, Lion House, Roxcourt, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL5 3BY**

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