



Westcombe NEWS

Free to 3800 homes, in libraries and some shops

February 2018 No. 1



Not too late to say Peaceful and Healthy New Year to all our readers!

Have your say: how to improve our area?

Last October the *WN* reported on the Community Infrastructure Levy which is collected by the local authority from large developers and used, in part, to mitigate any negative effects of development.

The scheme was introduced by the Government to allow councils to raise money from local developments which is then used to deliver infrastructure improvements. It largely replaces the Section 106 agreements between councils and developers – which will continue for affordable housing, local employment schemes and “non-strategic transport”.

The money available will change each year, depending on what new developments have been built locally.

At a Council Cabinet meeting in December the arrangements were clarified and adopted.

Westcombe Park is part of “Area 2” comprising Greenwich West, Peninsula and Blackheath Westcombe wards. This year just over £137,000 is available as part of the, renamed, Greenwich Growth Fund and applications are invited for projects. The good news is that there appear to be several projects already in the pipeline.

The bad news

The bad news is that by the time you receive this, you have less than a week to apply for a grant for this round. Though the scheme was signalled at the Better Together meetings in each of the four neighbourhood areas in June, it was only given the final go-ahead at a Council meeting in December – too late for the joint December/January issue of the *WN*; and not ideal timing with Christmas and New Year festivities looming.

Despite the representations by the Westcombe Society and others that the timescale was unrealistic, proposals have to be submitted by February 4th. But in case you are worried that you may have missed the bus, any unspent money will be rolled over to the following year.

Proposals, for projects over £5,000, have to meet a number of criteria, including demonstrating how they relate to the neighbourhood priorities which were

established by surveys and through Better Together meetings. They must have the support of all ward councillors and should be ready to start within 6 months.

To deliver on this scheme, Royal Greenwich has divided the borough into four neighbourhood areas, with each area given an allocation of money out of the Greenwich Neighbourhood Growth Fund created by CIL. There is already half a million pounds in the fund, to be split between the four areas in the borough.

The procedure

Some of the ideas suggested by residents at the Better Together meetings were a youth club for people with special needs; the

conversion of the old toilet block in Queenscroft; dredging The Tarn pond; installing public water fountains in Greenwich Town centre, near the Cutty Sark; and more community art or murals, involving the local community.

Proposals must be fully costed and must be endorsed by all councillors in the ward in which the proposal will be delivered.

All applications will be reviewed by a project board, which will then draw up a shortlist. The projects listed will then be open for public consultation before a final decision is made in March.

It was clear from discussions with councillors and officers that the Royal Borough of Greenwich is committed to local improvements which are supported by the community and that they view this initial round as the start of an annual process which will change and develop over time. They have appointed a project officer to give advice and assistance to any groups wishing to discuss ideas.

The Westcombe Society, in collaboration with other amenity societies in the area, is following developments closely. We will report on any decisions taken and would particularly welcome suggestions for local projects from residents.

Conditions, guidance and the application form are on the Royal Greenwich website. Community groups requiring further guidance or who have any questions can email CIL@royalgreenwich.gov.uk



PHOTOS:
Myles Dove

A storm brought down this huge beech tree in Greenwich Park at around 4.00 am on January 18th, creating a hole in the park wall, and slightly damaging a parked car. It blocked Maze Hill but was swiftly removed early in the morning.



Our Community needs YOU!

Calling all Westcombe Parkers who love their area and would like to be part of the buzz of community spirit that makes living in this part of London so special.

Perhaps you have recently moved to the area and would like to make new friends.

and maybe give something back to a local area we treasure for its people, natural beauty and history by getting involved with environmental matters. Whatever your reason, the best way to kick off a fresh new relationship with your fellow locals is to join The Westcombe Society and/or volunteer to help with various fun activities, fundraisers and get-togethers during the year.

Community needs are always changing and The Westcombe Society has long played a dynamic role in helping young and old to enjoy a sense of togetherness, and in encouraging new friendships.

Now we are calling for more people to get involved and help out in its activities. We would especially welcome an influx of young people to get involved to bring new ideas together with their energy and enthusiasm to the Society's many various events.

Would you like to help organise teas, quizzes, charity walks and parties? Your contribution may simply be to offer a lift to elderly folk who find it hard to get to a function. Alternatively you may wish to get involved with reviewing changes to our area and supporting infrastructure.

Is technology your strength? Perhaps you can help re-shape the Society's website, a vital means of linking the local community and sharing information with other local groups. Or is journalism your thing? If so the award winning *Westcombe News* is always keen for input from locals – writing stories, taking photos, helping put the paper together, or assisting in delivering it.

Will you answer the call? Will you help keep the wonderful spirit of friendship and kindness alive in our special corner of the world? Please phone 0208 853 1312 if you are interested.

Di Blackwell

WESTCOMBE SOCIETY



**Saturday 17th February
7.30 - 10.00pm**

**Members' & Helpers' Party
Mycenae House Main Hall**

**Invitations went out in mid-January.
New members welcome:
come and join on the night!**

**Please ring Caroline on 8853 0948
if you did not receive yours**



Newsbriefs



Westcombe Controlled Parking Zone

Since the initial consultation last year there have been a number of comments and amendments – one of which came from residents asking for their road be included. These all resulted in delays in implementation. In a letter to Cllr Geoff Brighty, Tim Jackson, RBG's Assistant Director, Transportation, apologised for the delay. Cllr Geoff Brighty has now informed the *WN* that the letters and permit packs to residents and traders will be distributed by the 26th January. The scheme will commence by 19th February. At last!

Gas holder: doomed?

Following the advice of Historic England that the gas holder on the peninsular “does not meet the criteria for listing”, the government has issued a Certificate of Immunity against listing the structure. The gas holder, in place since 1888, was in use until 1980.

So it looks as though the powers-that-be will finish the job started by the IRA in 1980, when

parts of the frame were slightly damaged by a bomb. There are still hopes that it could be retained as a framework for apartments because of its historic significance..

Westcombe Hill traffic calming

Speeding vehicles and HGVs have long been a problem. Now proposals include new chicanes (at the cost of some parking spaces) and a larger roundabout mid-hill; A width restriction at the foot of the hill to prevent HGVs taking a short-cut is also being considered.

St George's new shower

The Westcombe Society donation towards the cost of a shower at St George's means that guests during the Night Shelter period can have a shower if they wish to. The Night Shelter operates from January to March.

An ill wind . . .

Not just Maze Hill! In November, high winds blew many tiles off Westcombe Court.

Bid to save the Natwest Bank

In December Natwest announced that they will be closing their branch in Old Dover Road. Local conservatives are campaigning to save it, and urge us all to sign an online petition at ipetitions.com/petitionkeep-blackheath-westcombe-park-natwest-open

Ultra-low Emissions Zone

All drivers should be aware of the Mayor of London's proposals. *See page 7.*

Plans to expand Steiner School

Steiner School is proposing to expand its facilities by building a new classroom block opposite Woodlands House. *See page 6.*

More disruption on the railway?

Although Greenwich Line trains now call at London Bridge again, we still suffer from weekend closures and overcrowding. The WS Environment Committee and the Greenwich Line User Group would like to hear your views: environment@westcombesociety.org and/or greenwichline@outlook.com

“Rezone our stations”

As fury mounts over the 3.5% fare rises in train fares, there are calls for Westcombe Park and Maze Hill Stations to be rezoned from Zone 3 to Zone 2. Critics argue that North Greenwich is in Zone 2 – and is a similar distance from central London to our local stations. The change would save local commuters some £260 a year.

Local Conservative Cllr Geoff Brighty and his fellow candidates Thomas Turrell and Malcolm Reid have launched a petition online, and are urging people to sign up. The petition is at tinyURL.com/RezoneWPandMHP.

Better Together . . .

The council has announced that the next Better Together meetings will be held in late January and early February. Details soon. Your chance to share your views on what's going on in the borough with the Borough Council.

. . . **but better apart** The council has decided that if Mr Trump visits the UK, he would not be welcomed in Greenwich. It seems that he got the message . . .



新年快乐

(xīn nián kuài lè)

It's February, so you may think it's too late to say "Happy New Year" Not so in China! Chinese New Year is celebrated by 20% of the world's population. This year it's the Year of the Dog, and it begins on February 15th 2018. During Chinese New Year it is the custom to pay a visit to the eldest (seniors from the husband's side) in the family first. Don't forget to bring gifts! (*Your editor eagerly awaits same . . .*) In return, the oldies give the younger generation money "to anchor the year", and bring prosperity. The money used to be small coins fastened with red ribbons. These days it's paper money in red envelopes. The only snag is the money isn't real, it's like Monopoly money.



St George's, Glenluce 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
12.30 p.m. Soup Lunch Fellowship followed by Lenten study of the Acts
Sceptics Group meets at 89 Westcombe Pk Road) 1st & 3rd Sunday each month
Special Events in February
Ash Wednesday 14th Feb: Communion Service 11.45am
Wed. Feb 21st 7.30 at St George's:
Spiritual Film Night: "Glory"
Contact: Rev'd Tim Yeager
ryeager@gmail.com Tel. 07804 614245

issue of the *WN*. How can Greenwich Council expect residents to take its claims of wanting to combat air pollution and climate change seriously when it continues to support the Silvertown Tunnel project?

If the Silvertown Tunnel is built, it will increase pollution in the borough, not to mention congestion, as it will attract more traffic to East Greenwich. It would also increase the traffic levels in Blackheath Westcombe Ward, as vehicles try and avoid congestion elsewhere.

As the Official Monster Raving Loony Party candidate for Blackheath Westcombe Ward in the 2018 local elections, I will continue to oppose the tunnel if re-elected to Greenwich Council. Even Loonies think the Silvertown Tunnel is a crazy idea!

From: Ann Hill Beaconsfield Road
Dear Team You do an excellent job...thank you. In response to your 5 questions in November's issue regarding the amount and coverage of local news, local issues etc the answer is 'Good' to all five. If there had been an 'Excellent' option I would have chosen that.
ED: The survey is still open for responses.

WESTCOMBE NEWS

ALL EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO:
Neville Grant, Editor
wnews@westcombesociety.org
Tel. 020 8858 8489

ALL MATERIAL TO BE SENT TO:
wnews@westcombesociety.org
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Sub-editor: Annie Grey
Reporters: The community – that means you!

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
Emily Norton All queries and comments to: 020 8853 2756
environment@westcombesociety.org

DISTRIBUTION Emily Norton and volunteers.
Volunteer distributors please phone 020 8853 2756, we need your help!

ADVERTISING MANAGER
Marilyn Little, 163 Westcombe Hill, SE3 7DP 020 8853 1312
Advertising@westcombesociety.org

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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 MEMBERSHIP

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

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Please enclose payment as appropriate:

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

Good news for the park

In January, the Royal Parks charity told the *WN* that Greenwich Park is a giant step closer to receiving a multi-million pound investment for Greenwich Park Revealed. — a project to uncover its hidden historical gems and enhance its natural environment for generations to come.

Last year, the Royal Parks applied for a grant of £4.8M through the Parks for People scheme, jointly funded by the Big Lottery Fund (BIG). The charity has now been awarded development funding to work up proposals over the next eighteen months, and then invited to submit a Phase 2 application to secure the full £4.8M grant.

Greenwich Park Revealed will enable The Royal Parks charity, which manages the 183-acre park, to conserve and improve the World Heritage Site and Grade 1 Listed landscape for the 4.8 million people who visit every year.



The plans include proposals which aim to:

- Revive historical features from Andre Le Notre's original 17th century baroque design for the park.
- Reinstate the Edwardian landscape at the Flower Garden and Wilderness Park
- Create more opportunities for the local community to get involved
- Improve visitor facilities

Graham Dear, Greenwich Park Manager, said: "We're delighted to be a step closer to securing this crucial investment. Our next task is to build on the proposals we've submitted; we look forward to a successful final result in the months to come."

Many thanks to all our donors and sponsors

Our Christmas Bazaar could not succeed without the support of local businesses and traders. With their assistance, the Westcombe Society raised over £1,300 for the charities MumsAid and MEfA.

Sponsors of the Christmas Tree
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at 74 Westcombe Hill

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Westcombe News
Westcombe Food & Wine
who also donated the water for the Macmillan Walk,
Together with a number of private donations.



Letters

Any views expressed are not necessarily those of either the Westcombe Society, or the *Westcombe News*.

From: Wendy Fidler MEfA
On behalf of the board of trustees for Montessori Education for Autism (MEfA), I would like to thank you for choosing us as one of the Westcombe Society charities of the year. We were thrilled to receive your donation which has enabled us to replace some ageing tables with high quality tables which have adjustable height legs. The new tables are now suitable for children aged 4 - 14 years. (see photo below.) Our children, parents and teachers are delighted, and they join with me in thanking you all, and wishing you a very Happy 2018.



From: G. Bailey Westcombe Park Road
Peter Greaves' review of Nick Clegg's book *How to Stop Brexit* in the last issue of the *WN* was timely: last year the book was voted the Parliamentary Book of the Year by both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Could it be that our esteemed representatives in Parliament are themselves having second thoughts, and are at last thinking of putting the good of the country above their party loyalties? One also wonders why a significant number of MPs passionate about leaving the EU should wish to hamstring parliamentary democracy and prevent Parliament having a vote on crucial issues on the Brexit process. The same people were insistent on how important sovereignty and the democratic process are when they conned the electorate in the referendum campaign...

From: Mike Radcliffe
It seems to me that the vast majority of the

British people will be the losers with any Brexit "deal", so who are the winners that are pulling the strings of the executive behind the scenes?

I think it is necessary to smoke out who is pulling the strings on Brexit. Who was providing the funds to Aaron Banks to bankroll the Brexit campaign in the referendum? There is a huge hidden dimension to Brexit that must be brought out clearly into the open. Who is it who is having such an influence on policy and what are they hoping to gain? Tax exiles? It worries me when I learn that John Redwood is advising investors to invest outside Britain.

Meanwhile we urgently need a paper that describes the salient steps necessary to negotiate a free trade deal with other markets in which there are bound to be both winners and losers. Any free trade deal opens up your own market to the same access from the 'other markets'. Is that what we really want?

For the negotiators to reach agreement, both sides need detailed sector by sector analyses of current and future trade in each sector, and both sides need to conduct their own 'impact assessments' of the effects for consumers, employers and employees. Such a negotiation would probably take years.

Meanwhile, the British economy is likely to deteriorate badly, with the result that Mr Fox would be negotiating from a position of weakness.

It's time for our elected representatives in Parliament to do the job they were elected to do: to decide what is best for the country. That includes a non-Party political debate (no Party Whips allowed) on whether to abandon the Brexit process, and hold a properly informed referendum.

From: Trevor Allman Coleraine Road
I read with incredulity your article on Greenwich Council's "Greener Greenwich Strategy" in the last

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Mycenae House & Gardens...

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Gordon Giltrap Friday 20 April 7.30pm

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020 8858 1749

www.mycenaehouse.co.uk

LOCAL NEWS

Plans for Greenwich Town centre

Royal Greenwich’s ambitious plans to transform Greenwich Town Centre moved a step closer after winning funding from the Mayor of London’s Liveable Neighbourhoods initiative.

Royal Greenwich is one of only seven boroughs to be chosen in the initial round of bids for funding under the Transport for London programme.

The Liveable Neighbourhoods initiative is the first scheme set up to deliver the Mayor’s ‘Healthy Streets Approach across London’ plan. This plan aims at improving air quality and reducing congestion, and encouraging residents and visitors to walk, cycle and use public transport.

Key target: Greenwich.

Greenwich Town Centre is at the heart of the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site which attracts an estimated 18 million visitors a year.

Observers note that, given that the town is on a major East-West travel route, with most of the traffic coming from outside the

immediate area, it is likely that making improvements will be quite a challenge.

The plan is to make Greenwich Town Centre a much more attractive place for both visitors and residents. The Council’s proposals include designing a more generous and welcoming pedestrian environment, in particular on the approach to the World Heritage Site. It will also provide a safe cycling route through the town centre.

Cllr Denise Hyland, Leader of Royal Greenwich, said: “We worked hard to develop a successful bid that will help transform Greenwich Town Centre into a destination truly compatible with its World Heritage Status and we look forward to improving the environment for residents and visitors alike.”

The Royal Borough of Greenwich is one of London’s most popular destinations, attracting over 18 million visitors each year, providing more than 15,000 jobs, and generating some £1.2 billion for the local economy.

Mental Health Activity Trust Awards Aline Doriaud

In December, local charity The Mental Health Activity Trust’s annual award ceremony took place at The Boys’ Brigade Hall in Blackheath.

The event was a lively celebration of the volunteers and supporters who contribute to keeping this independent community organisation running. Since 2014 MHA Trust has improved the lives of people with mental health problems by helping them gain the skills and confidence needed to find paid employment and training.

It has helped over fifty people to access work and supported over a thousand with welfare and benefits issues.

The theme of this year’s event was True Colours, signifying the charity’s mission to create a welcoming space where people can be themselves. Over seventy people attended and enjoyed cocktails, music, a buffet dinner and entertainment in the form of celebrity drag queens Bagga Chipz and Minnie Diamond, and a stunning fire eating and juggling display by Tom.

CEO Toni Hale and volunteers spoke about the charity’s impact on their lives and the local community. Toni Hale said “People have come from far and wide, not just Greenwich but from Kent, Essex and all over London to get help and support from the MHA Trust. However, we are



only a small independent charity in the back end of Blackheath.”

Toni emphasised the importance of this organisation and how financial backing is necessary to keep it going. Awards were given out to volunteers for outstanding contributions over the past year by *Westcombe News* editor Neville Grant.

The event reflected the Mental Health Activity Trust’s mission of inclusivity with a wide range of local people, some who had experienced mental health problems, others professionals in the mental health field, and customers and locals, coming together to enjoy a fun and celebratory evening with a serious message.

The MHAT is unique in its creative approach to supporting people with mental health problems: it works by providing a real working environment, and organising social groups, including a weekly drop-in. It also runs arts and crafts activities and a sustainable gardening group, and has an open door policy to anyone who wants help. Last Saturday’s event brought home the important contribution of MHAT to our local community.

MHAT is a not-for-profit Social Enterprise charitable number: 8803428 at 15 Delacourt Road SE3 8XA. Telephone: 0207 564 3087



PHOTOS: KEN & BEN BROWN & DAN @DANIEL_LDN



All systems go at St George’s TIM YEAGER

St George’s Church had a fruitful Christmas season. At our Christmas services more than £500 was collected for the Greenwich Winter Night Shelter. Then on 5th January the church hosted a concert by the Aeris Brass ensemble; the retiring collection raised more than £200 for the Shelter. St George’s thanks everyone who came and for the generous donations.

We have started the New Year with an active schedule of community events, study groups and loving service to the community. On 9th January, the first night of the Greenwich Winter Night Shelter at St George’s began, hosting up to 15 homeless people, with a delicious dinner, a warm sleep, and a hearty breakfast.

The Spiritual Film Night series resumed in January with a showing of Woody Allen’s “Crimes and Misdemeanors”. Also in January, Rev’d Tim led a group on a tour of Westminster Abbey, culminating in Evensong. On 27th we hosted a Burns Night celebration, with a live band, haggis (of course) and bagpipes.

A Lenten study course is being offered on the Acts of the Apostles, using video and materials from the Yale Divinity School: sessions follow the Wednesday soup lunch fellowship, starting on the 7th of February, repeated at 7.30pm on Thursdays at the Vicarage. (But please note that the first evening group will be on Wednesday, 31st of January, but other sessions will be on Thursdays.)

Ash Wednesday on 14th Feb. kicks off with a ceremony dispensing ashes at Westcombe Park station during morning rush hour, followed by a communion service at 11:45 am. And February’s Spiritual Film Night features “Glory”, a 1989 film about the first Black regiment in the American Civil War.

Members are very engaged in the Greenwich Winter Night Shelter and also in the Greenwich Sanctuary Project, which provides support to Syrian refugees. If you would like more information or would like to volunteer for any of these activities, contact Rev’d Tim at rtyeager@gmail.com.

The EU Can’t act on Enderby

The petition by East Greenwich Residents’ Association (EGRA) to the European Parliament on the London City cruise port at Enderby Wharf has been turned down. The petition called for a cleaner, shore-based energy supply for visiting ships. In the considered opinion from the European Commission:

- overall environmental assessment is not a requirement under EU law,
- breaches in air pollution within the UK, which the Opinion notes occur in London and specifically Greenwich, are being pursued through infringement fines, and finally,
- "If the Member State grants permission to a project that would increase pollution beyond the limit values for ambient air quality, it would logically have to take compensating measures to ensure compliance with the limit values"

These opinions may appear anodyne but they may well help with the next steps in securing a clean cruise port with onshore power supply at Enderby Wharf.



EGRA is considering its next steps. They will include following up the case made last summer to Michael Gove, Secretary of State for the Environment. EGRA will seek a meeting and will also continue to discuss riverine air pollution with the Port of London Authority (PLA) and the Royal Borough. Our local MP, Matt Pennycook, continues to actively promote the case for a clean cruise port.

“No cruise liner will happily dock in Greenwich unless shore-side power is installed,” comments Ian Blore, for EGRA. “The community will see to that.”

“I’ve really suffered for my art – now it’s your turn.”

Roger McGough, the popular poet from Liverpool, played a blinder at Mycenae House in December, as he performed his poems in front of an enthralled audience, his poems merging seamlessly with music from LITTLE MACHiNe, with Steve Halliwell on keyboard, bass and mandolin, Chris Hardy on lead guitar, and Walter Wray on acoustic guitar and banjolele.

As you saw Roger interact with his audience – one moment wonderfully funny, the next very poignant, even moving – you could not believe that this man, a legend in his own lifetime, is now in his eighties.

And whether delivering classics like *Ozymandias*, or *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*, or his own witty and highly personal poems, Roger McGough had his

audience eating out of his hand. Well done Mycenae House – and well done Mark Johnson-Brown, our very own local impresario!

Roger McGough (in a cap) with the musicians in The LITTLE MACHiNe



PHOTO: Mark Johnson-Brown

FEATURES

St Alfege's Church wins Lottery bid



St Alfege Church in Greenwich has received a grant of £1,836,800 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for its proposed “Heart of Greenwich, Place and People” project.

Thanks to National Lottery players, the project aims to reinforce the church’s position as a heritage asset at the heart of Greenwich, and to reveal and interpret our hidden spaces and heritage for visitors, and the local community.

Vital repairs to the fabric are planned, bringing to light the splendid work of Nicholas Hawksmoor, and improving facilities.

Working with the University of Greenwich, the Royal Borough of Greenwich and schools, students will gain practical experience. Volunteer Heritage Ambassadors will be trained to help provide a programme of activities.

This will strengthen the Church’s role as a resource for future generations. As custodian of the emerging story of the place, St Alfege’s holds the remains of significant figures in British history, and plays an important role in the Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site.

The Vicar, Chris Moody, commented: “This has been a culmination of years of planning and we are absolutely delighted

at this award. I would like to thank everyone who has made this possible.”

Explaining the importance of the HLF support, Stuart Hobley, Head of HLF London, said: “The Heart of Greenwich project will see Hawksmoor’s building restored and the heritage of this well-loved church brought to a wider audience. It is great that this gift from National Lottery players will support this well-loved historic building.”

If you would like to find out more or visit St Alfege Church, and have a hidden spaces tour please contact office@st-alfge.org.uk. Please mark for the attention of Wendy Foreman, or telephone Wendy on 07773 521 906 St Alfege Church, Greenwich Church Street, Greenwich, SE10 9BJ

Fact File:

St Alfege Church is a Grade 1 listed building, the first church built under the Fifty New Churches Act of 1711. It was the first complete church project undertaken by Nicholas Hawksmoor, pupil of Wren and one of England’s most significant architects. The present building was constructed between 1712 and 1718, and is one of the key buildings within the Greenwich World Heritage Site. Its patron saint was murdered on the site of the church by Viking raiders, just over 1,000 years ago, and there has been a place of Christian worship on the site ever since. Henry VIII was baptised in the church. His court composer Thomas Tallis, “the father of English church music” was its organist. He and General James Wolfe are buried here alongside other figures of local and national importance.

London Marathon Events Launches the Big Half



London Marathon Events has announced plans for The Big Half, a unique new annual mass participation event, which will take place in London on Sunday 4th March 2018.

The Big Half is more than just an event: it is a campaign. This unique event will demonstrate how sport and the community can get together to inspire social change, create social cohesion and improve health and well being.

Its guiding principle is to be “Truly Global yet Uniquely Local”. The Big Half will be much more than a mass participation running event with the world’s best athletes and thousands of mass runners. It will be a street party of epic proportions and it aims to inspire participation from a variety of socio-economic groups, faiths, ages, ethnicities. It will thus become the first sports event whose participants truly represent London’s diverse population.

- The programme features:
- *The Big Half*: a half marathon starting at Tower Bridge and finishing in Greenwich, passing through Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Lewisham and Greenwich.
 - *The Little Half*: a relay and other events over different distances of The Big Half course for participants of all abilities and ages.
 - *The Big Relay*: this will be exclusively open to community groups from the host boroughs

of Southwark, Lewisham, Tower Hamlets and Greenwich. Participants will be able to run in teams of four, each person will run one leg of The Big Relay – over distances ranging up to five miles.

• *The Big Festival*: a celebration of London’s diverse culture, food and music which will take place throughout the day in Greenwich Park.

The route map can be seen above. The Big Half aims to attract people of all ages and all backgrounds and to inspire them to take part in an event, centred on running. Working in partnership with Sported, the sports development charity, London Marathon Events will engage with local communities at grassroots level, in a way that has never been done before. The event will be accessible, affordable and fun. It will celebrate London’s diverse communities in a way that no other sports event has done before.

A total of 7,500 places are reserved for community groups from the four host boroughs of Tower Hamlets, Southwark, Lewisham and Greenwich who will be able to get entries at just £10 each through their local schools, faith institutions, sports groups and other community groups. *Alternatively, you can apply to community.entries@thebighalf.co.uk Come and join the party on 4 March 2018 and enter now on www.thebighalf.co.uk*

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Capt. Walter Stone VC

Acting Captain Walter Napleton Stone was born in Blackheath, the tenth son of Edward Stone, a solicitor. His family lived on Blackheath Hill, and later moved to Vanbrugh Park.

He attended Pembroke College, Cambridge before dropping out after five terms. In the First World War he served in the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers on the Western Front., and was awarded a posthumous VC. A plaque at the Lewisham War Memorial was unveiled at a ceremony on 30th. November. His citation in the London Gazette 12 - almost exactly a hundred years ago - February 1918 reads:

For most conspicuous bravery when in command of a company in an isolated position 1,000 yards in front of the main line, and overlooking the enemy's position. He observed the enemy massing for an attack, and afforded invaluable information to battalion headquarters. He was ordered to withdraw his company, leaving a rearguard to cover the withdrawal. The attack developing with unexpected speed, Capt. Stone sent three platoons back and remained with the rearguard himself. He stood on the parapet with the telephone under a tremendous bombardment observing the enemy and continuing to send back

The memorial in Lewisham; there is also a memorial in Greenwich Cemetery

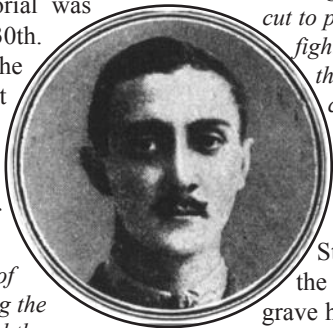


valuable information until the wire was cut by his orders.

The rearguard was eventually surrounded and cut to pieces, and Capt. Stone was seen fighting to the last till he was shot through the head. The extraordinary coolness of this heroic officer and the accuracy of his information enabled dispositions to be made just in time to save the line and avert disaster.

There is a memorial to Captain Stone in Greenwich Cemetery, near the graves of his family. His actual grave has never been found and he is commemorated on the Cambrai Memorial to the Missing. But there is a mystery: he is also commemorated on a memorial in Shrewsbury, even though he has no known link with Shropshire.

Readers may now be asking: so where does he belong? Greenwich, Lewisham – or Shropshire? The answer, perhaps, is that he belongs to history.



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WHAT'S ON



ARTS

GREENWICH DECORATIVE & FINE ARTS SOCIETY King William Court, University of Greenwich 12th Feb 2018: 18th Century Sevres and 19th Century Minton Porcelains - Ann Haworth Visitors please may pay on the door
THE ARTS SOCIETY BLACKHEATH (formerly BDFAS) 22nd Feb. David Phillips Income and Inspiration: Secrets of the Masters All meetings are on the 4th Thursday of each month (Except AUGUST & DECEMBER) , and start at 2 p.m. with tea and coffee, and lectures at 2.30. Our lecture venue is St Mary's Church Hall, Cresswell Park, Blackheath Visitors welcome, please pay on the door.
UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH GALLERIES Stephen Lawrence Gallery Until 16th Feb. The Performativity of Painting For information visit greenwichunigalleries.co.uk
THE GREENWICH GALLERY, Peyton Place, Greenwich, London SE10 8RS
NICK RAYNSFORD ON WATER 1st - 18th Feb. 9.30-5.30 weekdays. 12 - 4.00pm Weekends. Exhibition of photographs at The Greenwich Gallery www.thegreenwichgallery.com
BLACKHEATH HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS In January, Farrow & Ball Blackheath hosted their first art exhibition 'SE3: Surfaces and Structures' to showcase work from Blackheath High School that was created using paints and materials donated by Farrow and Ball. "Outstanding work"

CHILDREN & FAMILY

Sat 3rd Feb. 2.00pm THE PRINCESS & THE SUFRAGETTE by Holly Webb £8.50 Age 8-12yrs.
SAT 10 Feb.11.00am & 3.00 pm THREE LITTLE PIGS & GOLDBLOCKS | FAIRY TALE DOUBLE BILL Theatre of Widdershins present these two much loved fairy stories in one production £8.50 Ages 3+
Sat 24th Feb. 3.00pm & 4.30pm MARK THOMPSON'S SPECTACULAR SCIENCE SHOW Think science is boring? Think again; this is science like you have never seen before. Tickets: £12.50 adults | £10 children
GREENWICH THEATRE
Sun. 4th Feb. 7.30pm MISTER BUFFO Dario Foe's hilarious take on the Bible. Ages 14+ Tickets: £13.50 | £11.00
Fri 9th Feb. 1.00 and 6.00pm BOYS DON'T Who picks up the pieces when boys hide their feelings? £13.50 | £8.50 Ages 8 - 12
Sat 10th Feb. 12, 2 and 3.30 pm Classic folk tale with a twist: **THE ENORMOUS TURNIP** Ages 3 - 8. Tickets £11 | £8.50
Sun 11th Feb. A NECKLACE OF RAINDROPS Moonlit magic and mayhem. including hand-crafted shadow puppets Ages 5+ £11 | £8.50
Mon 12th Feb. 11, 1 and 3.00pm LEAF Life story of a leaf £11 | £8.50 Ages 0 - 3
Tues 13th Feb. 12.00 & 3.00 pm THE GINGER-BREAD MAN £11 | £8.50 Ages 3+
Wed 14th Feb. 11, 1 and 3.00pm GLISTEN Interactive performance for babies and grown-ups Tickets £11 | £8.50 Ages 0-18 months
Wed 14th Feb 2.30 & 7.30 pm PANDORA'S BOX Spellbinding new play with dramatic story telling played by a full cast. £13.50 & |£11 Children £8.50
Fri 16th Feb. 2.00 pm HOOT OWL Songs, puppets, £13.50 Concs. £11.00 Children £8.50 Ages 3+
Sat 17th Feb. 11.00am & 2.00pm TOM THUMB Tickets £11.00 | £8.50 Ages 3+

THEATRE

THE GREENWICH THEATRE, Crooms Hill, London SE10 8ES Box Office: 8858 7755
Sat Feb.3rd 7.30 TRUMPAGEDDON Unmissable "rally"! Maybe truth is even stranger than this satire. Does that make it fake satire? Tickets: £16 | £13.50
Mon 5th- Tues. 6th Feb. KING LEAR RETOLD Acclaimed at the Hay Festival, Debs Newbold tells the harrowing story. £16.00 | £13.50
Wed. 7th Feb. Debs again, in **LOST IN BLUE**: performance story-telling at its best £16.00 | £13.50
SPECIAL offer if you book both of Deb's shows
Mon19th - Wed 21st Feb. HANNA by Sam Potter What happens when it turns out your daughter isn't your daughter? £16.00 | £13.50
Sun 25th Feb. 7.30 Dan Cruikshank on 100 BUILDINGS AROUND THE WORLD £16 £13.50
Tues 27th Feb. H.G.Wells THE TIME MACHINE Music and Mystery £16.00 | £13.50
Wed 28th Feb. 7.30 ADAM KAY in THIS IS GOING TO HURT A sell-out at the Edinburgh Fringe and the Soho Theatre. The diary of a junior doctor. So funny you may need to have an operation... £16 |£13.50

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THE WESTCOMBE SOCIETY

Sat 17th February Members' & Helpers' Party (evening, main hall, Mycenae House)
Sat 31st March - Easter Egg Hunt (gardens, 2.00-4.00pm, plus use of toilets; bar open
Sat 14April Queen Elizabeth's Birthday Tea
Friday, May 11th AGM
Sat June 30th Summer Picnic
Fri 28th September - MacMillan Coffee Morning
Fri 16th November - Quiz 7.30-10.30pm Main Hall, Mycenae House
We needs more volunteers to help out at community events being planned for 2018. Interested? Please ring Joanne on 07709 571777.

COMMUNITY

BLACKHEATH HALLS
Tues. 27th Feb 1.30pm TEA DANCES 2018
GREAT HALL, BLACKHEATH HALLS
Come and enjoy a magical afternoon on the dance floor of our beautiful Great Hall. £6.00
BLACKHEATH & GREENWICH WOMEN'S INSTITUTE Meets first Wednesday of every month, doors open at 7.00pm for 7.30pm at Sunfields Methodist Church on Old Dover Road
GREENWICH UNION PUB (MEANTIME) READING GROUP Local reading group-first Wed. of each month. Read –Discuss–Share food at members homes. Contact: Barbara Ward ward.barbara@mac.com 07960 107578 Free
BLACKHEATH BRIDGE CLUB duplicate sessions in Mycenae House Mon & Thurs 7.15pm and on Wed at 1.15pm. Newcomers welcome! On your own? Hosts available to play with Mondays & most Thursdays. Tel. Ron 0208 319 1312
CHARLTON HOUSE www.charltonhouse 0208 -856 -3001 Mulberry Tea Rooms
Lunchtime concert every Friday 1.00pm – 2.00pm
SHERINGTON CHILDREN'S CENTRE, Tel. 0208 – 3053140 - 14, Sherington Road SE7
7JW DAD'S STAY AND PLAY session every Wednesday, 1.00pm -2.30pm –free drop in Sherington Children's Centre. 2nd Saturday of the month 10,00am -11.30am free brunch/arts and craft. For more details contact Daniel.hall1985@hotmail.co.uk
ST ALFEGES CHURCH , GREENWICH
Wed 14th Feb. 10.30am Tercentenary celebrations of the Dedication of Hawksmoor's historic hurch building in 1718.
WESTCOMBE WOODLANDS
Next volunteer days Sun 4th Feb, Sat 3rd March

FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK

Sat. 24th. Feb. - 1.00pm to 3.00pm
Drop In at the Wildlife Centre
Wed. 7th March - 7.30pm for 8pm
The Friends Annual Lecture 2018 at the King William Building, RNC, :
Our World Heritage: A UK and International Perspective by PETER MARSDEN
Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site
Co-ordinator Greenwich Tickets £10 incl. a glass of wine from: Friends of Greenwich Park, 52 Greenwich Park Street, SE10 9LT. Tel: 020 8853 2150. Pl. include an sae.

BREAKING BARRIERS: BLACKHEATH HALLS CELEBRATE 100 YEARS OF VOTES FOR WOMEN

BOX OFFICE 8463 0100 Multi-buy Discounts available
Fri. 2nd Feb. 6.46pm WOMEN & THE ORCHESTRA
Talk by Dr Sophie Fuller £10.00
8.00pm HARRIET HARMAN on A Women's Work £10.00
Sat 3rd Feb. MAKE MORE NOISE Suffragettes in Silent Film £10.00 | £8.00 concs.
4.00pm SUFFRAGETTE: Mothers Daughters & Rebels Cert 12A Film with Carey Mulligan £10.00 | £8.00 concs.
6.00pm A MAN'S WORLD? Panel discussion £10.00 8.00pm WOMEN IN MUSIC Ayanna Witter-Johnson
Sun 4th Feb. 11.30 am & 5.30pm DEEDS NOT WORDS About the Great Suffragette Rally in 1908 in Hyde Park £5.00
2.00pm DIANE ATKINSON on the Remarkable Lives of the Suffragettes £10.00
2.30 - 5.30 pm WOMEN CONDUCTORS' W-SHOP £10.00
4.30pm JOHN BALL SCHOOL perform Sarah Freestone's new composition inspired by the local history of the suffragette movement. FREE
Wed. 21st Feb. 8.00pm CATHY PORTER Alexandra Kollontai's fight for women's rights and workers' democracy £10



MYCENAE HOUSE LIVE EVENTS: FEB/MARCH 2018

Thurs 8th Feb 4pm - Bach To Baby. Classical Concert. £10
Fri 9th Feb 8pm - JazzNights. Candle-lit Live Jazz music event hosted by Dave Silk. £10.
Fri 16th Feb 7.30pm - Global Fusion Music & Arts. A musical celebration for Chinese New Year - "The Year of the Dog" £6.
Fri 23rd Feb 7pm - Nick Harper. He is "Dylan for the iPod generation" said Guitarist Magazine. £14.50.
Fri 2nd Mar 7.30pm - Protein Dance's May Contain Food, May Contain You. Digest a performance of dance, theatre and song that unfolds around you. Ages 12+ £10
Wed 7th Mar 7.30pm - Rhodri Miles in Dylan Thomas' Clown In The Moon. A dramatic portrait of the poet's chaotic, frequently hilarious, and all too brief life. £10
For further information visit www.mycenaehouse.co.uk

MYCENAE HOUSE: MEN & WOMEN IN SHEDS

Men In Sheds Every Wednesday 1pm-3.30pm from 7 Feb 2018 until Easter A project for men 50+ to meet in a friendly workshop environment. You don't have to be an expert woodworker, you simply need an interest; we will help you with the rest. "This has given me a new lease of life"
Cost: £1.00 per day inc tea & biscuits. email: meninshedsinfo@ageukbandg.org.uk www.meninshedsageukbg.org.uk
PLUS
Women In Sheds Every Wednesday 10.30am-1pm from 7 Feb 2018 until Easter "Why can't women join Men In Sheds" As a response to numerous requests this trial of Women In Sheds aims to help women 50+ to meet and learn or share skills, help the community or just have a chat over a cup of tea.
Cost: £1 per day including Tea & Biscuits.
Further details: 020 8294 3012 /
We are also still running our friendly drop in cafe for seniors 1-4pm every Thursday (except week of 26th Feb) - we are busy knitting scarves & hats for our local community. We need donated wool to be dropped into Mycenae House.

MUSIC

BLACKHEATH HALLS 23, Lee Road SE3 9RQ 0208 463 0100 www.trinitylaban.ac.uk
BEATS IN THE BAR 7.30pm on: Feb. 6th & 7th March 6th, 13th, 20th 27th & 28th.
Mon 5th Feb. 1.10pm REFLECTIONS ON WAR & PEACE Fleur Barron soprano & Maya Irga gala piano perform Schumann, Schubert, Janacek, Debussy Ives etc. FREE, donations
Sat 17th Feb 8.00pm EMILY ASKEW BAND
A thrilling collaboration where Medieval and Folk music world's collide £15.00
Mon. 19th. Feb. MUSIC APPRECIATION WITH MATTHEW TAYLOR 10.00am on Mondays
Beethoven's Chamber Music - 10 week course. £96 (Ten weeks) £11.00 single lecture
Mon 26th Feb. 7.30pm THE SOLOISTS' COMPETITION FINAL Trinity Laban's most prestigious competition FREE but ticketed.
Fri. 2nd March 6.00pm TRINITY LABAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & the BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA perform Sympony No 3 by Mendelssohn FREE but ticketed
Sun. 4th March 6.30 pm BLACKHEATH HALLS ORCHESTRA perform Tchaikovsky (Swan Lake excerpts) & Brahms' Piano Concerto No 1 - soloist LEIGH O'HARA in his farewell performance. to mark his departure after 10 years as Musical Director FREE but ticketed

SPOKEN WORD

INDUSTRIAL HISTORY SOCIETY
20th Feb. 7.30pm Michael Delap on Unlocking Deptford Creek: industrial and domestic development in the 19th century at The Old Bakehouse, Age Exchange.
BLACKHEATH SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY
Fri. Feb. 16th 7.45 The Cassini Legacy and JUICE
Dr Greg Hunt, Imperial College in Mycenae House.
IN-WORDS West Greenwich Library SE10 8NN
Tues. Feb 13th 7.00 for 7.30 pm
JANE GRANT & ANN DINGSDALE present "Courage Calls to Courage Everywhere - the Birth of the Women's Suffrage Movement in Greenwich and Blackheath". Free and unmissable!
Visit www.in-words.co.uk for more information.

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Is education happening?

Yes. But not with the intensity needed today. Schooling is stuck in a rut which seemed to make sense in the 1980s, but now everything is twenty times more complicated, and the system is not responding. Parents need to help their children – using the internet – to see the big picture in every area of the curriculum. This easily gets lost in the constant pressure to cram for exams.

Children need to work, and seek help, to really understand their topics, not simply swallow them to get by.

The P E R Group's website: www.perprospero.co.uk

FEATURES

Planned extension to Steiner School



The proposed new building opposite Woodlands House; the entrance to the shared site is to the left.

On December 6th, the Greenwich Steiner School at Woodlands (which is next to Mycenae House) opened its doors to the local community to view and discuss its plans to build three classrooms in the small garden across the driveway, facing the School entrance.

The School moved into Woodlands, which is a Grade II* listed building, in 2007. It leases Woodlands and the area to the south of the driveway (which includes the small garden and three parking spaces) from the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

The aim is to move the existing kindergarten classes from the main building into the new classrooms, freeing up space to allow further intake of 13 and 14 year olds.

The plan is for the student roll to increase by 45 to a total of 225, representing an increase of 25%. The new intake is to be phased in over three years between 2018 and 2020. Additional teachers will be recruited.

The design is for two classrooms to be grouped together, with a courtyard separating them from the third classroom. Each grouping will have its own toilet block. The design is eco-friendly, single storey, timber clad with

small windows facing the drive, and a green roof. The classrooms nearest to the road will be elevated to provide a level site, which will stretch from near the entrance to the disabled parking bay in front of Mycenae House.

Ann Hill

In addition to the loss of parking spaces and a bin store area, most of the large trees (see the photograph, below) are to be felled, including some memorial and commemorative trees.

The architect's illustration (above) shows the site of the proposed new buildings, and gives an impression of how the classrooms might look. The actual design will become clear when the planning application is submitted, which is expected soon. Plans may of course change again somewhat when a planning application is submitted.

The statutory consultation of the application means that notices have to be displayed on or near the site and residents have three weeks from the date of the notice to respond.

The planning application was to have been sent in in January 2018 but none has been submitted at the time of going to press.

Residents who have comments to make should keep an eye out for the planning application

on royalgreenwich.gov.uk and on www.westcombe-society.org or contact the Westcombe Society's Environment committee.



PHOTO: Emily Norton

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WANTED!

New Trustees for Mycenae House Community Centre

Trustees attend about one evening meeting every two months from 7.30 to 10.00 pm - although we normally finish earlier. If you

- * have the extra time to devote to being a trustee.
- * are interested in extending social interaction within the community
- * are keen to further develop ideas for future continuing success of the centre
- * are a proactive thinker – and respond to messages
- * would be happy to maybe go on a workshop session “how to become a Trustee” hosted by Greenwich Council
- * are computer-literate, or at least are on email

- YES? Then this is for you!

Please note: There is no remuneration: we are a charity that has to pay its way (it does have a small annual grant from Greenwich). The staff are really good, and so far it has thrived. Still interested? Please ring Mark on 8858 1749

How Greenwich Women Changed History

2018 marks the centenary of the Representation of the People Act which, after a long struggle, gave the vote to women – but only those with property over the age of 30.

This talk by local historians of the women's movement Jane Grant and Ann Dingsdale examines how this great national event grew out of local events. They describe how women in Blackheath and Greenwich as far back as 1866 helped to precipitate a struggle which would last until the modified vote was won in 1918. Millicent Fawcett continued to campaign, and won the full vote in 1928.

Tuesday February 13

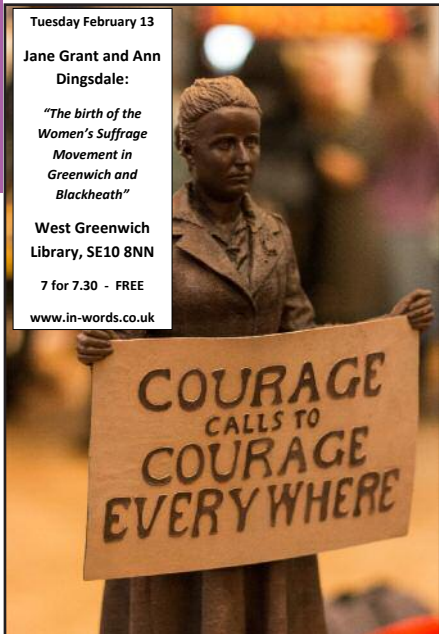
Jane Grant and Ann Dingsdale:

“The birth of the Women's Suffrage Movement in Greenwich and Blackheath”

West Greenwich Library, SE10 8NN

7 for 7.30 - FREE

www.in-words.co.uk



Millicent Fawcett's Statue is to be erected in Parliament Square in April

Architecture talk

Time again for the annual Friends of Blackheath Halls Architecture lecture. Tom Dyckhoff, architecture historian, TV presenter and judge for the Stirling Prize, will discuss his first book *The Age of Spectacle: Adventures in Architecture and the 21st-Century City* which examines the modern city, and the brash architecture that threatens how we live in it.

The lecture is at 7.30 pm on 28th February in Blackheath Halls.

Tickets £15 | £10 concs.



One wonders what Tom Dyckhoff may have to say about the proposed Woolwich Tower in General Gordon Square... What do you think?

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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

Calling all drivers: the Rules are a-Changing ... EMILY NORTON

Air pollution is one of the most significant challenges facing London, affecting the health of all Londoners, transport being the biggest source of damaging emissions. The recently introduced T-charge followed by the even tighter ULEZ restrictions coming into operation in April 2019 aims to significantly reduce air pollution in Central London. The next stage in the Mayor’s ambitious project to tackle air pollution is an extension of the ULEZ restrictions to London suburbs including Greenwich. The first proposed extension in October 2020 would bring in charges for polluting heavy vehicles, anytime, anywhere in London.

The new proposals
In October 2021 it is proposed that ALL polluting vehicles, including private cars, vans and motorcycles pay a daily charge. Charges would affect all who drive older vehicles 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, up to but not including, the North and South Circulars. This will affect everyone who lives in or visits Westcombe Park.

Hopefully we will all benefit from cleaner air, but those who own petrol cars and small vans registered before 2006 (which do not meet Euro 4 standards), or diesel cars and small vans registered before September 2015 (which do not meet Euro 6 standards), will either have to replace their vehicles before October 2021 or pay a daily charge of £12.50 whenever they are used. (Applicable registration dates vary slightly).

Silvertown: yet another delay

The Government has announced a further delay in its decision on TfL’s proposed Silvertown Tunnel in order to assess the impact on the environment and air quality. The final decision is to be announced in May. Promises, promises.... Fed up with traffic congestion and delays, supporters of the proposal are desperate for an early decision. Opponents are angry that the alternatives – crossings in Thamesmead and/or Belvedere, were turned down by the Mayor of London.

(apart from those whose vehicles fall in the 'disabled' or 'disabled passenger vehicles' tax class and are exempt from vehicle tax). Currently no ‘sunset’ period is proposed for residents so the daily charges would start for everyone affected in October 2021. That’s less than four years from now . . .

The consultation
By now all households should have received a letter from Transport for London consulting about the proposals. The consultation runs until 28 February 2018 and more information can be found at tfl.gov.uk/airquality-consultation. For those who don’t have internet access please ask friends, neighbours or the library to help you access it. Alternatively you can write to FREEPOST TFL CONSULTATIONS. The Westcombe Society Environment Committee will be responding but would like to include the opinions of residents. The following is a list of questions we are asking ourselves, residents may have others to suggest:

- Are the proposals a good idea in principle?
- What about the boundaries? Should the area be smaller or should restrictions on all vehicles be extended to cover the whole of London?
- Is the proposed charging structure fair? Do the proposed charges unfairly penalise those with older vehicles who only drive short distances*compared to others? Do the proposed charges unfairly penalise those who may not be able to afford to replace their vehicle – or indeed to afford a new enough vehicle at all? Should those who bring polluting vehicles in from outside London pay more than those who live in London?!

Please let us have your views so we can reflect them in our response to TfL. Note also that TfL are keen to point out that using alternative means of transport are also the best ways to cut these dangerous emissions. Contact the WS Environment Committee at the address given on page 2.
**Note: All petrol and diesel vehicles pollute the air with their emissions. What varies is the level of emissions. Therefore it can be argued that emissions are mileage-related and that charges should be based on mileage driven as well as the level of emissions.*

Greenwich Conservation Group: The future? ANNE ROBBINS

The Westcombe Society covers three conservation areas – Westcombe Park, Blackheath, and Greenwich. To some, the rules on conservation areas might seem restrictive. However, they can also be a real help in preserving and protecting the character of local buildings and of the area as a whole, and the Westcombe Society works hard to ensure this is the case. One element is to coordinate with other amenity societies, and this function has been facilitated with the enormous help of the Greenwich Conservation Group [GCG]. It’s now more than 50 years since the Civic Amenities Act, 1965, promoted the idea of conservation areas and asked local authorities to set up appraisal committees to designate them, identifying them by their special features or characteristics. In our case, the late Victorian and Edwardian architecture, mature trees, and uncrowded streetscapes are notable. In addition, Blackheath and Greenwich have many older buildings, including some fine 18th century architecture, to protect. But the borough of Greenwich disbanded its appraisal committee in the late 1970s.

Why the GCG started
So how does the local authority protect its conservation areas? Part of the answer is the Greenwich Conservation Group. GCG was founded with several members of the appraisal committee, bringing together ward councillors and local amenity groups to meet regularly, discuss, and comment on proposals. It has never covered Eltham, but it did, and still does, include Westcombe Park, Blackheath, Charlton, Woolwich, and Greenwich. The group meets monthly at Woolwich Town Hall to share views on planning applications, some of them very major indeed. Its members include architects, planning consultants, archaeologists, and the untrained. All have a strong interest in local building conservation.

Architects can play a major role. The Blackheath Society has two of them on its planning committee, and can call on local practising architects for unofficial advice and comments. The Greenwich Society had until recently the former Chief Planner for Greenwich, John Franklin, and has several local professionals on its planning committee. The Westcombe Society Environment Committee includes a former planning officer. Its GCG representation, though, is carried out by non-professionals.

Busier than ever
The intensification of development in the borough since the Millennium has meant that GCG has been very busy. Members have reviewed and commented on draft Masterplans, and the proposals for Greenwich Peninsula, Woolwich Arsenal, Charlton Riverside, Kidbrooke, and the Charlton Retail Park. Heritage issues have come up, including

the Olympics in Greenwich Park, the Cutty Sark development, and refurbishing of Greenwich Market. GCG was closely involved in recent work by Greenwich to update its guidance in its Residential Extensions, Basements and Conversions Guidance document. The GCG also looks at planning applications for individual buildings, for instance to maintain appropriate proportions in loft conversions. GCG also speaks at public hearings of the Planning Committee and Board. Its comments are taken seriously by council planners and ward councillors, and help strengthen planning statements made by amenity groups such as the Westcombe Society. Philip Binns, GCG’s chair, has been part of the group since late 1977, representing the Blackheath Society. He’s lived in Blackheath since 1965. He was an architect until 1980 when he joined the Government Property Services Agency. Most of his experience there was with housing, schools, offices, and government buildings, but he spent his last two years in the Museums and Galleries Division, advising on museum displays. Philip’s work as chair of the GCG has been invaluable: his ability to translate the group’s comments into precise detailed advice for the council planners and elected members has meant that GCG’s work is taken seriously by the Council.

Under threat
Yet GCG is under threat at the moment. While the forum is respected and has some support from the council, it has no official standing, and neither council officers nor elected members are on the committee. And its chair, Philip, is standing down after 20 years of service. As yet, no one has stepped forward to take on that role. There are other challenges, too. Greenwich has moved away from paper copies of plans, but new technology can make it difficult to compare different elements of a planning application, for instance existing and proposed elevations, side by side. Some development plans are very complex, and developers can change them, increasing the numbers of structures, or decreasing the number of affordable or social housing units. And the GCG needs to maintain a coherent voice, so that its comments continue to carry weight. The Westcombe Society very much wants the GCG to continue. We have particular reason to be grateful for its influence, because we cover more than one conservation area, and we thank Philip whole-heartedly for his service. Our chair will be working with the Greenwich Society and the other groups to find a way to carry the GCG forward. And the Westcombe Society would be very glad to hear from local people with planning and architectural backgrounds, who might want to join our Environment Committee, to help maintain the local character that helps make this area such a pleasant place.

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