Update on the ORNC

Many members and residents have expressed dismay at the proposed change in name of the Old Royal Naval College (ORNC) to Greenwich Park. The campaign to save the name, led by local resident Linda Baker, told the WN: “Parents campaign for a freedom of information request, found that the UST,لاقية and the Department for Education decided that the 380-year-old school should become an academy. It indicated that UST was its preferred sponsor.

Local opposition

The proposal was met with strong local opposition by teaching and support staff, and some parents, and there were several one-day strikes last year. Campaigners pointed at alleged management failings of UST, questioning whether UST had the necessary financial resources – a claim seemingly born out by events.

A local resident, Linda Baker, told the WN: “Parent campaign, via a freedom of information request, found that the UST, which ran a school in Tower Hamlets, had a very high staff turnover of 21%.

Also, it was found that last year about one million pounds had been spent from the school budget, some of it spent on so-called school improvement plans run by the UST, and leaving the school in deficit. The “professional services” of the UST failed to improve the school, but a significant amount of money was spent.

Parents are also concerned that academisation creates the dangers of the run-down of Special Needs provision, and of “off-rolling” - i.e. weeding out weaker students, especially in examination years, to improve results. But above all, perhaps they hate the idea of a well-loved local school rooted in the community being placed in private hands.

Jane Chesters, the leader of Greenwich Council said UST was probably “not the council’s first choice” of provider. In December, the council’s cabinet deferred approving the choice of sponsor in order to carry out “due diligence.”

Positive developments

UST alludes to “weaknesses” at John Roan, yet this word may be more appropriate when applied to UST. However, David Skinner, the chair of the new governing board of a school, is working with several years ago. The Lead Inspector had properly declared this at the time of the inspection, two sessions of Governor training that the Lead Inspector delivered to the Foundation in commission further research with focus groups over the coming weeks so that they can hear from as many people as possible on the naming and identity proposals.

This will include local Amenity Societies. The WN understands that the Royal Borough of Greenwich supports this plan. The Westcombe Society will be taking part in this research. Watch this space.

Chatbot hears out Greenwich will not be renewing their licence to run their service from Shoolen Hill as from the end of January.

Well done, Ian

Rebecca Moore told the WN that the school was successful in its application for a Community Green Space Grant and has been awarded £500 to contribute to their “green wall.” Thanks to all for your support.

Mums’ Aid

More brilliant news – the local charity Mums has had yet another success. It has been awarded funding as part of the National Lottery’s “Building Communities” Fund. The money will help the organisation to office venues from peer supporters for mums who are in need.

STOP PRESS:

Goodbye to the one-way system in Greenwich town? The Council asks your views! See page 7.


date last year, three Blackheath High School ballerinas, Elissia Carter (Year 7), Sophia Sutton (Year 7), and Isabella Carter (Year 6) [Front row, above] went on tour performing a spectacular ballet, Sleeping Beauty, with “Let’s All Dance” a top London professional dance company. After a performance at Blackheath Halls, the girls went on to perform at Sadler’s Wells as part of a tour of Sussex and Kent. The special highlight of the tour was the girls returning to Blackheath High Junior School to perform in front of their old school friends along with the full cast and crew of Sleeping Beauty, a special end-of-term Christmas treat.

Let’s All Dance

The Head teacher Linda Cederander Thompson said “It is a very proud moment to see our Senior School and Year 6 girls act as superb role models for our younger Junior School girls. Dance is very important to us at Blackheath High School. We know it is incredibly good for students’ confidence, poise, social skills and positive well-being. It helps girls to overcome inhibitions and develop performance skills that have an impact in other areas of their lives.”

New year resolutions

How many New Year Resolutions did you make? And how many have you already broken - be honest, now! Some people have resolved to do more exercise; others to take up yoga (Right: thanks to Meghan Markle’s blog The Tig).

Other people have supposedly gone on a diet. For more ideas on “Green” resolutions please see pages 4 and 5.

In the December edition of the Westcombe News we published an open letter from some parents at The John Roan school which wrongly stated that Ms Whatford, the former Chair of Governors of John Roan, was a “close personal friend” of the lead Ofsted Inspector, and twice made reference to this “possible conflict of interest” affecting the outcome of the inspection.

It is now known that this was not the case: they did not know each other personally at all and the only relationship that existed was a professional one in that Ms Whatford had met the Lead Inspector briefly when she attended two sessions of Governor training that the Lead Inspector delivered to the governing body of a school Ms Whatford was working with seven years ago.

The Lead Inspector had properly declared this at the time of the inspection, and this was not deemed to be a conflict of interest.

We recognise that that the publication of these completely unfounded serious allegations, is potentially damaging to Ms Whatford’s reputation as someone who has worked in schools and Local Authorities for 50 years and whose work was recognised in 2002 by the award of a CBE for her Services to Education.

We would like to apologise to Ms Whatford for the hurt that has been caused by the publication of these allegations.

WESTCOMBE SOCIETY Members’ & Helpers’ Party

Mycenae House Saturday 16th February 8.00 – 10.00pm

Invitations went out in mid-January. Please ring Caroline on 0883 0948 if you did not receive yours. New members are welcome: come and join on the night, but please let us know in advance by ringing Caroline.

Daffodil Tea

Sat 16th. March 2.00 – 4.00 pm

The Daffodil Tea for Senior Citizens is by invitation, and these will be going out in mid-February. If you haven’t had an invitation by then, or are new to the area, and would like to come, please ring Caroline on 020 8883 0948.
The Christmas Craft Fair

T he Westcombe Society’s Christmas Craft Market last November seems an age ago already, and we should all be grateful to all those who worked so hard to make it such a success, and raise funds for charity. Marilyn Little, Chair of the Westcombe Society, said: “Yet again we would like to record our sincere thanks to all the local traders and others, for their generous donations. Our donors are listed below.” Sue Clark (for sponsoring the Christmas Tree) Felicity Lord (the bunnies)
David Lloyd Kidbrooke, Sue Clark and Burn It Flies (for giving items for the silent auction).

For the raffles, our thanks are due to several private donors, and to our wonderful local businesses.

Apple and Orange
B Brown
Blackbird Bouquet
Blackheath Pet Supplies
Boulangerie Jade
DIY Standard
Fergus Noone
Go West
Hartikut
Moca
N & R News
Nights News

Wassailing in the Pleasance

The Wassail event at the East Greenwich Pleasance in January was enjoyed by over 150 people entertained by Wassail Crown, Halstow Community Choir, Greenwich Morris Men and Morganian – plus stories from the Holly Man aka @richterites. All celebrated the memorial orchard that has been run for 5 years by PIP! Planting in the Pleasance. The cider stall did a brisk trade and many children made Wassail crowns.

From: Chris Godwin Vanbrugh Park
I was very interested in the report of Matthew Pymoval’s speech, and was glad that you published it. I however, the first paragraph in the second column on page 1 does not seem to make sense “and no deal would be better than membership” does not follow from the earlier part of the sentence. After all, it should be “However, he argued...” rather than you. Your link to the text of his speech was very helpful. Ed: Thanks for that. The text should have read “and whether no deal would be better than membership.” The word that should be whether.
The corrected version appears on-line.

From: Trevor Allman Catorline Road
So, Seaford Freight has been awarded a Government ferry contract, despite having no ships, no history of running a ferry service, and a website with terms and conditions allegedly copied and pasted from a takeover package deals site. The Official Monster Raving Loony Party have also applied for a ferry contract, given they have two seaworthy vessels, with more easily obtainable.

From: G. Bailey Hunter Road
Between them, the Confederation of British Industry, the British Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, the manufacturers’ association EEF and the Institute of Directors represent the great majority of businesses operating in the UK, and are now agitating at the political in-fighting in Westminster. The only way to resolve the issues is by a People’s Vote.

As well as the last two months of our membership the EU have seen the UK economy stronger than it has been for decades. Our politicians are deeply culpable for not ensuring the prosperity was not shared round the whole country: those who seek to blame the EU, without any evidence of what is far too often overlooked is the fact that we need immigrant workers to help run our country: in our NHS, in business and commerce, in agriculture, in our universities, in our care and in our construction industry.

All the deals on offer are much worse than the best: to remain. Mrs May’s deal cedes control to Europe; No Deal destroys our trade with the EU – and cuts us off from the 91 Deals that the EU already has with countries round the world which we would have to renegotiate. Moreover, turning our country into a small offshore island north and south is to reduce its standing in the world to a minor irrelevance. In the EU we were a major player commanding much respect; outside we would be a BVI spectator. Better our voice is heard in Europe than we simply submit to “their” rules in order to trade with them. The rules that currently exist in Europe were in many cases drawn by us and are a reflection of the standards that have been set very largely the result of British input – and have influenced standards around the world. If you vote for a People’s Vote – and to remain.

From: C. G. Bailey Hunter Road

Southeastern Train Services Enquiry

S ome of you may have been caught by a snowfall or slipping as a result. Southeastern’s autumn timetable.
The good news is that date to no more station

However Southeastern has announced a ‘Winter Weather Timetable’ and a ‘Severe Winter Weather timetable’ which may come in at very short notice if the weather forecast is poor or severe. They have also announced that ice-boarding trains will run to keep the clock to us all moving.

Richard Upton is giving the Michael Higginbotham Memorial Lectures this year. It’s on Tuesday 12th February at 7.30 pm in The Recital Room in Blackheath Halls. Richard Upton is an unusual developer who straddles the boundary between architecture and developer. He believes strongly in heritage and the quality of buildings, and has a clear vision of what architecture can achieve for the wider community beyond its commercial objectives. He was involved in the successful regeneration of Deptford Market, and the saving of the Beautiful Market. He was appointed a Commissioner of Historical England this year.

A patron of the arts, he is a Fellow of the Royal Society for Arts, and a member of the London Archaeological Advisory Committee. Richard Upton is giving the Michael Higginbotham Memorial Lectures this year. It’s on Tuesday 12th February at 7.30 pm in The Recital Room in Blackheath Halls. Richard Upton is an unusual developer who straddles the boundary between architecture and developer. He believes strongly in heritage and the quality of buildings, and has a clear vision of what architecture can achieve for the wider community beyond its commercial objectives. He was involved in the successful regeneration of Deptford Market, and the saving of the Beautiful Market. He was appointed a Commissioner of Historical England this year.

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**LOCAL NEWS**

**New cultural hub in Woolwich**

Woolwich Council’s ambitious plans for redeveloping the riverside at Woolwich recently attracted coverage of the London Evening Standard. The council is investing some £40m in the project. The plans are for an arts and media hub rivalling the South Bank, covering some 160,000 sq feet, and involves repurposing a series of historic buildings – including the munitions factory that used to house the Heritage Centre.

Local historians are still musing over the improved plans for access to records that used to be housed in the Heritage Centre, which also gave space to excellent exhibitions on local history, culture and wonder why it could not have been included as part of the master plan.

Difficult to argue: impossible: the building it was in is to be redeveloped as a 4,000-seat performance venue. Also planned is a 1,600-seat open-air courtyard theatre, and a small 450-seat studio theatre.

The intention is to provide rehearsal space for theatre companies and individual artists.

Phase 1 covering restoration work and pop-up theatres received planning permission last summer.

Once the buildings are complete, the council will be setting up the Woolwich Creative District Trust, responsible for overseeing the development and growth of the project, and recruiting trustees.

Ideal candidates will be from the borough and able to demonstrate experience of not-for-profit governance with organisations of similar scale and complexity in the cultural sector, or creative industries. Proficiency in the sectors of finance, facilities management, creative arts, law, leisure and hospitality, education and training, marketing and digital transformation are urged to apply.

Cllr Miranda Williams, Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and the Third Sector said: “The Woolwich Creative District will create around 400 new jobs and attract investment in the creative industries.”

**For an information pack please contact:** Volunteer Centre Greenwich Telephone: 020 8117 3817

**Our local police**

The Blackheath & Westcombe Safer Neighbourhood Team, (SNT) is a group of Met police officers dedicated to serving the local community.

Each SNT is made up of officers including at least one Police Sergeant, two Dedicated Ward Officers (PCs) and one Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) who are based in your area. These officers are supported in their work by emergency response team officers and additional officers from the wider area.

Your local SNT works closely with local authorities, community leaders, neighbour- hood watch schemes and local residents to decide the policing priorities for the area.

On the home page of the Met Police website there is a section that says, ‘Find your area’. If you enter your location here it will bring up details of your local SNT. You can also get the latest crime statistics, and advice. Residents can also help with appeals for information and can find out how the SNT is tackling crime in the area.

There is also a section for you to relyed solely on touch rather than sight to find their way about.

Filling two kilometres of shelving, the archive details the work of the PLA and its predecessors from 1770.

**New PLA film & archive**

Public access to a unique river and docks archive charting the history of the River Thames over nearly 250 years has been secured following a new agreement between the Museum of London and the Port of London Authority.

To mark the milestone, the PLA has also issued a new YouTube film about its archive, housed at the Museum of London Docklands since 2003. The film has a diverse cast list, including Field Marshall Montgomery thinking dockers for keeping the docks operational during World War II.

Giraffes arriving in the docks en route for London Zoo in 1946.

Chipperfield Circus elephants landing in the UK in the 1950s.

The port’s first female police officers, recruited in 1954.

Also featured is a PLA diver from the 1930s in full protective gear, when their work regularly involved raising wrecks, as well as checking under water structures.

Due to the murkiness of the river, they relied solely on touch rather than sight to find their way about.

Filling two kilometres of shelving, the archive details the work of the PLA and its predecessors from 1770.

**Members of the Port of London Authority police force testing new life-jackets. Did they sink, or swim?**

(e) PLA

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**FEATURES**

**John Roan School**
(cont. from page 1)

The John Roan campaigners firmly believe that the school should stay under local authority control. The campaigning group Parents for John Roan are now calling on the MP, Matt Pennycook, David Gardner and the head, Cath Smith, to do everything they can to halt the academisation process.

Greenwich Council deputy leader and education cabinet member, David Gardner, made these comments to the \*WN\*:

“As a former long-standing John Roan governor, I know what a special place the school has in the local Westcombe Park community on top of its historic and enduring relationship with Greenwich.

“While it has had some incredibly tough challenges these last few years, I do have confidence that with the support of local parents and the wider community as well as the outstanding leadership of the new Head, Cath Smith in its resilience, spirit, dedication and huge reservoir of talent will pull it through.

“As much as I oppose any forced academisation and the government’s ridiculous legislation, I would strongly urge the Regional Schools Commissioner to take strong account of the school’s traditions, ethos and the need to continue being rooted in its community in the selection of a new sponsor.”

**A Fresh Look At Christianity**

St George’s Church is happy to announce the launch of its new course exploring matters of faith entitled: **THE GALLILEE-COURSE** - A fresh look at Christianity for inquiring minds.

Designed by the Rev Tim Yeager, the course will meet on Thursday nights beginning on the 14th of February at St George’s Church on Glenhouse Lane. The format begins with a simple meal at 7:30, followed by a talk with a slide show or video on a key topic, and then discussion in small groups, ending by 9:30 pm.

There will be eight sessions, with the first one on the 14th of February. Participants are encouraged to attend all the sessions, but you are also welcome to attend any one or more of them. It is designed as an introduction to Christianity for the curious, but seeks to offer new insights for more experienced Christians as well.

Bible stories will be examined in the light of their historical and social context, and a variety of perspectives will be offered. Questions about the meaning of the Kingdom of God and the Resurrection, including those of contemporary progressive thinkers.

Participants are invited to explore their own faith questions in a friendly and welcoming environment. The course is free and open to the public.

For more information or to register for the course, contact Rev Tim Yeager at: atmin@stgeorgeswesternpark.org.uk or call: 020 3663 5494.

**A drama for those who grow younger, not older**

Go to Trieste, and you will see a statue of James Joyce; go to Charlton, SE London and you will see a blue plaque to his friend Aron Schmitz. It’s at 61 Charlton Church Lane. As we contemplate the leap in the dark that is Brexit, it is so easy to forget the close cultural and historical links between the British Isles and Europe – and that their citizens have played beyond the countries of their birth.

Born in Trieste (in Austria-Hungary) as Aron Ettore Schmitz to a Jewish German father and an Italian mother, Italo Svevo was one of seven children, and grew up enjoying a passion for literature from a young age, reading Goethe, Schiller, and the classics of Russian and Italian literature. Despite his German name Svevo thought of himself as Italian, and that’s why the language he wrote in.

Known to some as “the man with the split personality,” Italo Svevo led multiple lives. He was a man of letters, a bank clerk, and the manager of his father-in-law’s paint factory first in Trieste, and later in Charlton. He was an enthusiastic supporter of Charlton Football Club, the Addicks, and he was featured in the \*WN\* in 2017*.

As a Man Grows Younger is a play for one voice. By Howard Colyer a former resident of Vanbrugh Park. What does a man think as he waits for a knock on the door by the Fascist secret police? The play is set in Italy in the 1920s, and is inspired by the friendship between two writers – Svevo and James Joyce, and their roads from obscurity to fame.

*See the \*WN\* for July/August 2017 p.4 for an article on Italo Svevo by Irena Morvai Hill and Vesna Domany Hardy.*

**Facing up to Obesity**

A recent report in the Mercury highlighted the problem of childhood obesity. It quotes a Public Health England report indicating that six of the ten councils with the highest levels of childhood obesity are in South London: Greenwich, Lewisham and Bexley are all above the national average. Greenwich has the third highest obesity rates in London.

In Greenwich over 40% of children are overweight. In England, the average for 11-year-olds is 33% – which is already unacceptably high. Greenwich was among the first London boroughs to launch a Sugar Smart scheme, which asked local instructors to take action to promote healthier, lower-sugar alternatives and it gained support from 18 organisations.

The council is now planning to reduce obesity in the borough through new well-being strategies, and a specific healthy weight action plan.

Parents and guardians can play an important role, but much can be done through improved dietary requirements for school meals, and building physical activities into the school day.

However, while the Borough might be able to influence matters in local authority schools, there is no such leverage available in schools that have been academised.

**What about adults?**

The hard work to tackle obesity in Greenwich has been highlighted in the Best Practice award 2017 from the Association for the Study Of Obesity. The Public Consultancy, which delivers the service on behalf of Greenwich CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group), has been singled out for praise.

Increasing obesity is directly linked to a rise in Type 2 diabetes and is a major factor in developing certain cancers.

The on-going healthy weight programme is a specialist weight management service for patients with severe and complex morbidity. The referral service is accessed by 400 patients a year.

Patients accepted onto the programme have a 15 month intensive support (a three month rigorous treatment phase followed by a maintenance plan). Dr Ellen Wright, Clinical Chair of NHS Greenwich CCG said: “It can be difficult for people who are overweight to seek help.”

This service has been designed as an alternative treatment to bariatric surgery. It is located in GP surgeries and community locations across the borough of Greenwich. Eltham Community Hospital Gallions Reach Mid Devonshire, Peninsula Practice Charlton Carers. For information on how to cope with obesity, visit the NHS Choices website.
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Mon 4th Feb 1.10pm GODDESS OF BEAUTY
1 hour. Jane Connolly soprano & Glyndebourne piano perform Brahms etc. Free, donations.
Wed 6th Feb. 7.30pm Great Hall. Tim Layton. Solons Competition Final
Fri 8th Feb. 7.30pm. Great Hall. SHAPESPER Concert. Beethoven Symphony No. 8, and other works.
Free, but booking required.
Sat 10th Feb. 11.00am Reinald Issues Yvanna Prodanova & Mike Ritosi perform Franck, Chopin & Chetlin £10.00
The 21st Feb. Fri & Fri 22nd Feb. Trinity Laban perform a cross-disciplinary programme including jazz dance 2.00pm & 7.00pm. Free, booking required.
Sun 24th Feb 3.00pm FROM BUSSUM TO AMSTERDAM WITH LOVE. Stuart Jackson tenor & Jocelyn Fevere piano perform Liszt’s ‘Pagan Sonata’, plus Prokofiev and Rachmaninov.
Mon 25th Feb 1.10pm Ann Yui plays Brahms, etc., free, but a donation required.
Fri March 1st 6.45pm Trinity Laban Symphony Orchestra perform Dvořák’s ‘The Wild Dove’ and Be The Beautiful Atlas

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John Kemmis: The Children's Champion

We are very sad to report the death on December 12th of local resident John Kemmis. The WN pays tribute to his life in an interview carried out shortly before he died.

There was a time when children at risk were shunted around from care home to foster family, then back to care home, another foster family … and so on, without being consulted about what they wanted, or needed. The System was In Charge.

The National Charity Voice (formerly The Voice for the Child in Care (VCC)) started to change all that – largely through the efforts of its second executive director, our neighbour, John Kemmis.

For more than 30 years, VCC provided specialist advice and training services for professionals in the care field with the aim of helping children give voice to their own needs. They were thus enabled to tell the children’s courts in their own words that a given children’s home had not served their needs well; or that they did not want to be split up from their siblings; or that they did not want to live with a parent, step-parent or guardian that the System might have come to think of as a problem. And if that foster home was not working out well.

It was largely through the dedication, and persistence, of John Kemmis that VCC achieved what has now become (almost) normal in some areas, at least.

How many of us neighbours are aware of all the good work he has done?

John and his wife Sue have lived in Greenwich since 1972, for ten years or so on Royal Hill, and then in Westcombe Park. Educated at Downside, and then Oxford, John acknowledges that he comes from a privileged background – yet he has dedicated his life to the welfare of children.

The VCC asked how he got this urge to serve society?

“I think it started in primary school, where I was bullied by a sadistic teacher,” says John. “Ever since then, I have had this urge to stick up for the underdog.”

So it was that on leaving Oxford, John Kemmis joined VCC, “to stick up for the underdog.”

Teaching in Poplar

So was it that on leaving Oxford, John became a supply teacher in Poplar; this gave him an aim at first hand into what was going on; and into some of the serious issues that face many members of society: for example, children who are poorly educated, and who have correspondingly low aspirations. The children are often members of local primary schools – that they needed to talk to, and learn from; that they needed help to talk to themselves.

Many of the secondary school children I taught could barely read and write, ” he says. “I went to be a headteacher and said we needed to talk to the feeder schools – the local primary schools – that they needed to do something about it.”

A fresh young supply teacher, his voice fell on deaf ears, so he decided to take matters into his own hands. He set up literacy classes, run by volunteers. He also set about broadening the children’s horizons, and raising the consciousness of the children as to what was possible: by organising extra-curricular activities: visits to cinemas and theatres, picnics and camping trips, and so on. John even managed to persuade Michael Caine to visit the school – an ideal role-model.

Social work

However, it was clear that the problems facing the schoolchildren were more deep-rooted than education, and he enrolled on a social workers’ course in Hall in order to train as a child care officer.

There he met his wife Sue, a teacher of music and French, who has been a stalwart supporter in all his endeavours. For some years John worked as a social worker and then team leader in both Wandsworth and Greenwich.

He eventually became an area manager in Wandsworth, where he became much wider than children’s issues, but he retained a special interest in children’s welfare. It seemed to him that there was a need for systemic change that could only be dealt with politically; which is why he joined Voice for the Child in Care (VCC) where he became Chief Executive.

Since then, the organisation has mutated, first into Voice, and then joining the Coram group of charities to become Coram Voice. But the main function remains the same: to offer help (called advocacy) to young people who are living in care or have recently left care as well as providing support to young offenders in the prison system. They can also help children if they cannot live at home any more and feel they need extra support and services. Currently, there are about 68,000 children and young people reliant on the state for their care and wellbeing: 378,000 more need some level of support from children’s services.

The impact of austerity

The government’s austerity measures have created an increasing need for the work of such organisations. John says: “In the face of the closure of youth provision, children’s centres and many community-based voluntary organisations, together with changes in welfare benefits, we should not lose sight of the harm done by the knife crime and increasing numbers of children coming into care.”

The children’s advocacy services remain very patchy across the country; a new campaign led by Article 39, spearheaded by some 40 organisations, including Coram Voice, has been launched to ensure that children and young people can access an independent advocate whenever needed.

Independent advocates are necessary, because advocates employed by the state or local authorities can be placed under some pressure (due to financial constraints and other factors) not to “rock the boat”. In John’s words: “So many decisions are driven by money at the expense of what the child or person really needs.

Article 39 formed in 2015 and became registered with the Charity Commission in March 2016. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child grants children living apart from their families the right to special protection and assistance. Our focus is on making sure children who suffer abuse and neglect are able to recover in environments which nurture their health, self-respect and dignity. 

https://article39.org.uk/donate/

We were mentioned to our friends in North West London in the late fifties that we were planning to move to South East London, the news was met with disparagement and ridicule.

Then, as now, there was a condescending attitude, with the Thames as the dividing boundary.

Our reasons for moving were: lower house prices, the Royal Park, green spaces, the river, historic buildings, good schools, and easy access to the Kent countryside.

While none of these advantages have diminished, after sixty years here I want to add yet another: the kindness and consideration shown to me in my eighties by people, particularly at the Standard and in East Greenwich.

On shopping trips to the nearby facilities, I am almost invariably offered help with opening and holding open the doors of shops (these usually have strong closing springs) and if I need help with moving my “walker” into the boot of my car. So I would like to thank all these unknown people adding to the joy of living in SE3

Gabi also sent in this poem - “Inspired,” she says, “By Wendy Cope and the arrival of a Christmas Letter…”

Grandaughter

Can be a joy
No matter whether
They be girl or boy.
But those I’ve never
Clapped eyes on
Or seen
Along the horizon?
Though to boast of them
Is endemic,
My interest must be
Academic.
Of course none
Are fine.
So beautiful
And clever …
To talk about them
Would take forever
So I’ll refrain…

A good advocate can ensure a child is properly heard and their rights respected. They also give children an independent person to turn to when boxed in, feeling isolated, or, in extreme cases, are being abused.”

I asked John what he was most proud of in his life. He thought for a moment, and then said: “First my family (he and Sue have four children and nine grandchildren); and, of course, VCC.”

N.G.

A case study

“I could not live with my mother.”

Sonya is fifteen and an only child. She has never known her father. Her mother is a Jehovah’s Witness, and very strict. Sonya’s advocate tells her story.

Sonya was more or less a prisoner in her own home, forbidden to socialise after school or at weekends. When her mother went out she would lock up the TV, the video and the telephone so Sonya couldn’t use them.

Sonya had gone to Social Services many times asking to be put into care. Sometimes they said no, other times they said if she went home they would find something. But they never did.

Sonya could not carry on living with her mother so she left. After seven months, staying with friends and her boyfriend’s family, she found herself homeless.

Reaching a compromise

She contacted Social Services and was told about a Refuge. She was also put in touch with VCC and given an advocate. A meeting was arranged with Social Services, who still refused to find her a place in a home or with a foster family. Instead a compromise was arranged. Social Services agreed to fund Sonya to stay with a family she knew through some friends of hers. Sonya agreed to this. Social Services agreed to speak to her mother about the arrangement.

Sonya agreed to meet her mother at a meeting with Social Services for a “reconciliation” meeting.

New family

Sonya moved to the new family. She has managed to continue at school and is studying for nine GCSEs. She hopes that her relationship with her mother will eventually be repaired. (Sonya is not her real name.)

From Short to be heard - Stories from Young People in Care. Published by VCC 1998, edited by Tamsin Growney

Westcombe News February 2019
Maggie Gravelle looks at the pros and cons of timber or uPVC frames.

The Energy Saving Trust approved by a small majority. ‘open and natural aspect’ of views across Greenwich, from the Grosvenor, the BJWP, objected to the proposal had changed since the earlier rejection and that the height of the tower was excessive. Those residents who live closest to the building were eloquent in their criticisms, demonstrating how overpowering and obtrusive it would be.

There were strong concerns too about housing provision in the proposed development, with only 20% of the units affordable, and only 7% available for social rent. There are some 10,000 people on the housing waiting list in Lewisham. The Westcombe Society, on behalf of residents and the BJWP, objected to this development.

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The Council’s Westcombe Park Conservation Area Character Appraisal, 2010, which informed planning decisions, discourages the replacement of timber window frames and doors with uPVC. It states that “Many of the Victorian and Edwardian buildings have retained their original timber sash and mullioned windows. However a few have been replaced with unsympathetic uPVC frames.”

The Supplementary Planning Guidance, 2016, suggests, “Extensions should respect the original architectural features and detailing of the dwelling and should be designed to complement the dwelling in terms of windows, doors, openings, roofs and materials. ”

“uPVC replacement windows and doors will be discouraged where they would be detrimental to the character of a conservation area.”

Many choose uPVC (which stands for unplasticized polyvinylchloride) because it is less expensive than timber, and easier to install. However, the Westcombe Society often opposes planning applications that include uPVC replacement frames on the grounds that they are unsound environmentally, unsustainable and unsightly.

The Westcombe Society’s environment committee are also working with the Council to apply for an Article 4 Directive: this would increase planning powers, including replacement windows and doors, in the conservation area.

Cost and durability

Manufacturers often argue that uPVC is cheaper or similar in cost to replacement timber frames but the Wood Window Alliance claim that ‘lifetime cost’ taking into account the durability of wood, makes uPVC more expensive than timber. This is disputed by some manufacturers and by the Swiss Institute for Testing Materials which claimed in 1996 that there was no difference in durability.

Energy conservation

A consideration by householders choosing replacement windows is often energy conservation. Double glazed units are often uPVC and it is claimed that uPVC tends to be more energy efficient. All materials can be made into double glazed units and the energy efficiency depends on the type of glass, the gap between the panes and what this gap rather than on the material of the frame.

Manufacturing process

To date this is one of the main areas of difference between the two materials. The production of plastic is clearly damaging, with some research claiming that 43% of uPVC is made of (non-renewable) oil products and the waste products, some of which are toxic, are mainly disposed of in landfill. It also takes more energy to manufacture plastic than timber. Manufacturers of uPVC claim that recent improvements in production have reduced the negative environmental effects. They also argue that timber is not as well managed or as sustainable as is sometimes maintained.

Sustainability

Timber, particularly fast-growing soft wood, is more sustainable than plastic. In general plastic is not easily recycled whereas timber is biodegradable.

However, the Energy Saving Trust argue that ‘uPVC frames last a long time and may be recycled.” However, if uPVC is disposed of by burning, it gives off toxic fumes.

Appearance maintenance and alterability

One reason why many conservation areas oppose the use of uPVC windows and doors is that they do not match with the style of historic buildings.

Since plastic is not as strong as timber the window frames have to be thicker in order to support the same area of glass. uPVC degrades more rapidly in sunlight than timber and cannot easily be mended if damaged.

In addition, uPVC cannot be painted and the range of colours is very limited. However, manufacturers are increasing the range of styles of windows they produce and many of them are very similar in appearance to the historic originals.

* on the fourth advantages and disadvantages to uPVC, and obtaining independent advice is not easy. Some websites such as those listed below might help in taking decisions:


Would you be interested in the work of the Environment Committee? If so please contact the Westcombe Society Environment Committee on environment@westcombesociety.org.uk

E-Z Cycle is open to anyone who lives, works or studies in the Royal Borough of Greenwich aged over 18. The £10 cost is to cover insurance for a month. Loan sessions, where you will collect your e-bike and do some training, take place twice per month:

on the first Saturday of each month at Chariton Athletic FC Training Ground, Sparrows Lane SE9 2JR.

on the second Sunday of each month at The Valley stadium, Fordy Road SE7 8BE.

The first session was on Saturday 26th January, 1-4 pm, at Chariton Athletic FC Training Ground, Sparrows Lane SE9 2JR. You can also have the option to buy an e-bike at a discounted rate after taking part.

E-Z Cycle is a Royal Borough of Greenwich scheme, part of the Sharing Cities programme and the Mayor of London’s Air Quality Fund.

Want to book a bike? Visit e-cycle.org.uk/ E-Bike Loan Scheme

Greenwich’s Local Implementation Plan – basically the Royal Borough’s required response to the Mayor’s Transport Strategy – was a big document with very little time to respond.

Following a successful trial in the Low Emission Neighbourhood of Greenwich West and Peninsula wards last year, the Council and Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT) are expanding the scheme to all residents in Royal Greenwich.

Cllr Denise Scott-McDonald, Cabinet Member for Air Quality, Public Realm and Transport, said: “This is one of a wide range of measures we’re taking to improve air quality across the Royal Borough.

“As well as helping more people try out cycling, which is a great way to take more exercise, the E-Z Cycle e-bike hire scheme will help reduce traffic,” she said.

Deb Brown, CACT’s Head of Health Improvement, said: “We are delighted to be supporting this project and very much looking forward to the first session. We know that there are many benefits to be enjoyed through cycling, including increased cardiovascular strength, muscle strength and flexibility, improved joint mobility, and increased decreased stress levels - the list goes on, really.

“Our Health Improvement advisers will be on hand to provide one-to-one support to everyone who collects and drops off an e-bike and will be able to inform residents how they can keep cycling.”

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