



Westcombe NEWS



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April 2019 No. 3

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

The cuts are coming . . .

WN
Reporter

At a meeting of Greenwich Council at the end of February, there were few surprises as it was decided to raise the Council tax by 2.99%. But local residents don't get off that lightly, since the overall tax bill has been raised to 4.2% as the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan increased the GLA precept to fund additional police officers.

This means that the average bill for dwellings in Band D is £1,489.55.

Despite the increase in the tax bills, cuts to services are unavoidable because of continuing cuts in government funding. Council Leader Danny Thorpe regretted that "we just don't have the resources we need to continue services at the present level." Observers note that social care is particularly vulnerable.

Despite the increase – every 1% increase in council tax only brings in £800,000 to the borough – continued deep cuts in government funding still means service cuts, with Thorpe warning "we simply don't have the resources we need".

Among the services to be cut are:

- the Violent and Organised Crime Unit, saving £350,000
- a scheme to combat domestic violence saving some £200,000.

However, concerns over knife crime have resulted in the formation of a new unit to tackle the problem.

Uncollected tax

The Conservative opposition, led by Cllr Matt Hartley, raised the question of uncollected tax, which created a hole in the borough's finances.

Currently, Greenwich Council collects 94.6% of council tax; the average for inner London is 95.9%. It was pointed out that only 53% of residents pay their council tax bills by direct debit.

In response, Cllr Thorpe said that collection rates are lower in Greenwich because there are higher rates of deprivation in the borough.

There was an angry response when Cllr Thorpe suggested that the Tory

opposition wanted to set up "an army of bailiffs" to harass poor people "in order to extract even more money from them."

Outraged, Cllr Matt Hartley said that this response was deeply dishonest. The council was already sending out debt collectors, he said; he also asked about Cllr Thorpe's broken promise to get rid of the council tax for residents with the lowest income.

The cuts in core funding

Given the grave crisis facing local councils, this local spat pales into insignificance. Councils are facing increasing financial pressures and uncertainty. As the *WN* reported last year, by 2020, local government in England will have lost 75 pence out of every £1 of core central government funding that it had to spend in 2015.

This is money used to pay for services such as collecting bins, filling potholes, protecting children and caring for elderly and disabled people. The Local Government Association has long warned that Council tax rises will not fix the local government funding crisis.

Almost half of all councils – 168 councils – will no longer receive any of this core central government funding by 2019/20.

The Economist has warned that some authorities may soon be unable to meet their statutory obligations: it's already happening in some areas. As the *WN* has pointed out, the need for adequate funding for local government is urgent.

Councils face an overall £5.8 billion funding gap by 2020. Even if councils cut basic services – for example, if they stopped filling in potholes and maintaining parks and open spaces, closed all children's centres, libraries, museums, leisure centres, turned off every street light and shut down all discretionary bus routes they still would not have saved enough money to plug this gap by the end of the decade.

Expect more council tax rises next year . . .



The End of a Garden

Three years ago, local residents were fed up with the way the car park opposite the old police station on Royal Hill was being used as a rubbish dump. The site was a derelict eye-sore.

So they decided to turn it into a community garden – and it flourished: hundreds of locals donated trees, shrubs, garden seats and other items.

The garden became a place of beauty and tranquillity: it was like an open-air community centre: the derelict car park had become the Royal Hill Community Garden, and was much enjoyed by old and young alike.

The trouble is that the site belonged to the Council, and the guerrilla gardeners, as one supposes they must be called, were technically illegal squatters, as they had not got permission from the Council.

So the Council has moved in, and decided, against strong local protests, to take active ownership of the site. At a meeting in February, councillors agreed unanimously to close and fence off the site with a view to exploring the possibility of a building project. One proposal was to build a care home on the site.

The site had been used as a car park because beneath it ran a disused railway

line: for a long time it was thought that erecting a building would not be possible. However, modern building techniques can overcome this problem.

Local resident, Mary Kate Connolly, said: "The RHCG is a unique green space in Greenwich, created by the community, for the community. It is used by people of all ages and backgrounds from across the Borough, especially by families who don't have a garden. The

value of such a space in terms of social cohesion, community involvement and environmental impact is immeasurable. The council have other suitable sites at

their disposal for development – what a shame they seem unable to see this one as anything other than a space to build on. My six-year-old son asks me why they are cutting down all the trees when his teachers are telling him how our air is so polluted. I can't answer him." **STOP PRESS:** A County Court judge has ordered Lewisham Council to suspend work on the Old Tidemill site in Deptford because the council had not considered the human rights of the garden protestors.

Below: Matt Pennycook MP unveils a piece of community art at the garden



PHOTOS: from Facebook page of Royal Hill Community Garden

< < Newsbriefs > >

Chain pulled on public loo



Ever wondered what was this building on Shooters Hill Road? Well it used to be a public toilet – but has been derelict for years. At long last the Council is now selling it, presumably at a price not to be sniffed at. Let's hope the buyer is not at the end of a chain.

Next London Marathon

The 39th annual edition of the world's greatest marathon takes place on Sunday 28th April with more than 42,000 runners. As usual there are road closures and parking restrictions in this area. (see page 2)

ULEZ is coming!

The 24/7 ULEZ begins on 8th April to help clean up London's dangerously toxic air. It will replace the current T-Charge and operate in the Congestion Charge Zone. It's hoped to cut harmful emissions in the zone by up to 45%. Drivers need to check if their vehicles meet the emission standard to see if they have to pay a ULEZ charge.

Westcombe Hill

Residents were disappointed that the hoped for width restriction to prevent HGV access would not go ahead. But the borough's Highways Department claim that road improvements around the Angerstein Roundabout and Woolwich Road expected this year should ease the situation.

However, there are serious concerns that the SiTEA area (the Silvertown Enhancement Area) will include Westcombe Hill as an alternative route

for construction traffic. due to start towards the end of this year. Greenwich Council have been asked to comment but as yet there has been no response.

John Kemmis

The late John Kemmis, whose obituary appeared in February's *WN*, was given a Greenwich Civic Award, the Lifetime Achievement Award, on 22nd March. Sue Kemmis received the award on behalf of her husband.

Mary Jennings

We are very sorry to report the death in February of Mary Jennings, a long-time Westcombe Society member with a strong sense of community. Mary lived almost her whole life at 82 Westcombe Park Road. Instead of flowers she asked for donations for the RNLI and The Westcombe Society.

The Westcombe Society

Easter Egg Hunt

Sat 20th April 1.30-3.30pm

Two hours of fun hunting for eggs in Mycenae Gardens.

£2.50 per child (£2.00 for members)

Prizes for best Easter hat & basket. Face Painting, too!

Toilets & bar open in Mycenae House.



COMMUNITY

WESTCOMBE NEWS

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Reporters: The community – that means you!

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DISTRIBUTION Emily Norton and volunteers. More volunteer distributors needed, please phone 020 8853 2756

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Volunteers wanted

Greenwich have committed to welcoming 20 Syrian families displaced by conflict into our borough. This is being done in partnership with a number of local organisations.

So far there are five families being supported by this project and another five will be arriving later this month.

As part of Greenwich Sanctuary Project, Greenwich Islamic Centre have a contract to support the families arriving in to the area by helping them to settle in in many ways, including such processes as registering at doctors surgeries, enrolling at college and setting up home.

However, we all know that there is a lot more to moving to a new area, let alone a new country, than these practical things.

We are eager to help these families to feel at home, to feel part of the wider community, to learn the language and to make friends.

Having local people volunteer to help support the families is key to helping them flourish, here, in our community.

We are therefore asking for local people who:

* can speak Arabic to help these families when they first arrive with getting to know

the area, where to catch a bus, which shops are nearest and cheapest, where to buy Syrian bread etc, as well as occasional interpretation.

* can teach ESOL, we have found language to be the greatest barrier to both finding employment and building friendships within the community. The adults in the families will be enrolled at college, but they need people who can support their learning in their homes.

Also wanted are local people and are willing and able to make friends with these families, their new neighbours, to get to know them, to help them practise speaking English and to offer them your knowledge of the local area.

There may be other volunteering roles that occur depending on the needs of the families, so if you are unable to do these specific tasks, but still eager to get involved please do still get in touch.

If you are interested please contact becca@trinityvineyard.org.uk or Becca on 07818486287 for more information.

Volunteers will have an informal meeting with a volunteer co-ordinator and be asked to fill in an application form, give two referees and undergo a DBS check.



Letters

Views expressed are not necessarily those of either the Westcombe Society or the WN.

From: Peter Greaves The Plantation

I have just received my Council Tax Bill for 2019/20, and am entirely happy with the small increase, and am impressed by what the Council is achieving in these hard times.

However, I was surprised to read that you the Council is building a new cinema in Eltham. With all the problems associated with cuts in funding, especially as they affect schools, this seems to me and my wife an extraordinary use of reduced resources, and we would like to hear how the Council can justify it. If the Council has money for some non-statutory projects, surely supporting community centres would have a higher priority?

From: Lucie Murphy The Bridge

My name is Lucie and I took over as General Manager at the end of last year, so I wanted to take the time to introduce myself and a few new things that The Bridge is working towards.

Please see my first newsletter on our

website - www.thebridgegreenwich.co.uk

I'm a local mum with two young daughters, two older step children and a past career in large scale, high profile event management. I became involved at The Bridge as a volunteer in 2013 and really have a huge passion for the centre.

It was a lifeline to me as a new mum in the area and I've made some life-long friends through it. I'm really pleased to be the new GM and hope we can make a big difference to our brilliant community.

From: Gabi Marston Coleraine Road.

Not only did you add two words to the poem [they be] on page 6 of Feb's WN, but you changed the title of my article - it was meant to be "In Praise of SE3."

Ed: The Editor's job is to exercise editorial judgement which in the nature of things is not of course infallible. I am sorry if you disliked the amendments. So far most contributors seem to have been happy with editorial interventions.

Can I use Equity Release to help my children buy a home?

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The Marathon: Road closures

Advance warning signs will be displayed in affected roads in the build up to Race Day (Sunday 28th April) and stewards will be present on the day itself to help answer queries.

Short sections of Shooters Hill Road and Charlton Way will close at 04:00 to enable the installation of the Start Area gantries. There will be a small diversion via Princes Charles Road and Prince of Wales Road to get around the early closure on Shooters Hill Road.

Local roads in the area will then close at 07:00 to secure the race route. These include: Shooters Hill Road, St John's Park, Old Dover Road, Charlton Way, Vanbrugh Park, Charlton Road, Charlton Park Road, Charlton Park Lane and Woolwich Road (A206).

Road Reopening Times

Roads will reopen as soon as it is safe to do so. Roads to the south of Westcombe Park are anticipated to reopen by 13:00 while roads to the north of Westcombe Park are anticipated to reopen by 15:00.

Access For Residents

During the road closure times, Vehicle Crossing Points will enable vehicles into and out of the affected area. Vehicles will be facilitated across the event route by stewards at the following locations and at the times indicated:

07:00-09:05 and from 12:30

- Vanbrugh Hill to Blackwall Lane FROM 11:30
- Maze Hill to Shooters Hill Road westbound (only) towards Deptford and Lewisham.

Please note that between 08:45 and 12:00 Vehicle Crossing Points will not operate while the runners will be using the full width of the road.

WANTED!

More volunteers to distribute the WN – and to help with Westcombe Society's community events. We have recently lost two of our wonderful WN deliverers, who have moved away, so more volunteers are more than welcome. Please phone 8853 2756 if you would like to help.



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LOCAL NEWS

Bad news for home-seekers

The government aims to build one million new homes by the end of this parliament. However, the belated hope by government to build massive numbers of new homes seems increasingly forlorn.

A potential exit from the European customs union and the single market without a transitional period could have a significant impact on supply chains, says Alex Altmann the leading accounting, tax and advisory firm Blick Rothenberg. He said: “The construction industry in the UK is dependent on foreign investment, overseas suppliers and European workers. “Over 60% of all building materials used in the UK are imported from the EU. If the UK ceases its membership of the customs union, the cost of bringing building materials, machinery and other goods from the European mainland would significantly increase.”

Threats to workforce recruitment

He added: “Not being a member of the single market could see free movement of workers being compromised and a shortage of the workforce would be the result, European nationals account for around 10% of the UK construction industry’s workforce. On building projects in London this figure stands at around 40%.”

The UK Government plans to invest significantly in infrastructure in the next 20 years, with projects such as HS2, Crossrail 2 and a new runway at Heathrow airport. The UK has also a dramatic housing shortage and, as reported in the media, England alone requires about three million new homes by 2040.

Alex said: “The UK’s construction market is very competitive with some major European construction and project management companies bidding for building work, with Germany being one of the strongest international market participants. An exit from the European customs union and the single market could have a challenging effect for the UK’s construction industry.”

He added: “Many building projects in the UK are European ventures. From clients, investors and design teams to main contractors and specialised craftspeople – the UK’s construction industry is largely based on the EU membership. Ultimately the loss of access to the single market could result in the UK being a less competitive player in the international construction industry.”

Silvertown Tunnel Vision continues

A motion in March to oppose the building of the Silvertown Tunnel was defeated by 14 votes to 12 in a closed doors meeting of Greenwich Council.

Greenwich and Tower Hamlets have both supported the construction of the controversial tunnel; while Newham, Lewisham and Hackney have opposed it on the grounds that it will generate even more traffic in the area.

Work on the tunnel is due to start at the end of this year. There are fears that the proposed toll charge will encourage many drivers to drive west to the Rotherhithe Tunnel, causing a great deal of congestion south of the river.

There are also concerns that a second tunnel may cause huge congestion south-bound as the two tunnel routes converge into one.

John Roan: the saga continues WN reporter

The saga of John Roan school continues: there is a Swahili proverb: “When two elephants fight, it’s the grass that gets trampled.” No prizes for guessing who gets trampled when those supporting academisation fight with those who don’t.

There is now something of a backlash against those protesting about the forced academisation of the school. A number of parents have expressed the view that the relatively poor examination results at the school justify academisation.

One said: “The only way to avoid academisation is by significant improvement in results; those who embarked on a series of strikes are likely to achieve the very result they wish to avoid.”



There can be no doubt that the strikes at the school have certainly disrupted children’s education, and thus likely to have affected exam performance: thereby creating the very results they wanted to avoid, namely, academisation.

Readers will recall from previous reports in the *WN* that the 300-year-old school has been repeatedly hit by strikes by teachers and support staff opposing academisation since Ofsted judged it to be “inadequate” in June 2018. The University Schools Trust was originally selected to take on the school. However, they claimed that they did not have the resources to cope, and opted out.

New player: the ULT

There is now a new player, United Learning Trust (ULT), thought to be the most likely trust to take over the school. ULT is headed by Jon Coles, who has been hailed as “the cleverest man in education.” credited with reducing class sizes in state schools to a maximum of 30.

The campaign group John Roan

Resists wrote a letter to Mr Coles this month, questioning ULT’s ability to run the school. In their letter, they said “We ask that you respect the views of the majority of parents and school staff at John Roan and withdraw your decision to impose your organisation on our community. The UST attempted to take over our school but teachers, parents and the wider community united in opposition and through our own due diligence, exposed them as inappropriate. and they withdrew.”

Accusing ULT of being “a wholly inappropriate sponsor for our school,” they cast doubt on its financial viability, and drew attention to the high pay rates of senior executives.

Coles hits back

Now, according to the local 853 blog, the head of ULT, Jon Coles, has responded to the protestors, accusing them of intimidation and bullying.

Mr Coles claims that most of the protest group are not connected with the school – or even the local area – and has suggested there have been instances of “individuals feeling personal and social pressure to continue supporting your group.”

In a robust a five-page letter he rejected the group’s assertions: the campaign group had argued that the council was democratically accountable: Mr Coles queried the extent to which this could be true.

He also questioned how likely it was the Council has the resources to “turn the school round.”

As to financial viability, he pointed out there was a £124million deficit in the council’s budget.

He also questioned the democratic accountability of the signatories of the petition: he suggested that many of the 311 signatories to John Roan Resists’ letter had little idea of its contents. The group did not make the signatories public – though they had claimed it had been signed by “parents, children, families, former staff and students, Old Roans, other parent campaigners and union reps.”

Mr Coles asserted that “less than a third of the signatories were parents at the school” and claimed that “the large proportion of signatories” who identify themselves as activists were “from other parts of the country with no connection to the school”.

Is this spat to run and run? There can be no doubt that unless and until the situation is resolved, despite the best efforts of the head, teachers and pupils, the grass will remain trampled.

Goodbye to our Gas Holder



Sadly, the campaign to save the gas holder on Greenwich peninsula has run into the buffers. Despite a petition, and numerous suggestions as to how it could be retained, and used, the decision has finally been reached.

This great historic monument to British industry, which survived the huge munitions explosion in Silvertown in 1917, the blitz, and IRA bombs, is to be demolished.

Originally, there were two gas holders in East Greenwich. They were built in the 1880s by the South Metropolitan Gas Company. The other larger gas holder was demolished in the mid 1980s, but there were high hopes that this one would be preserved.

However, as Mary Mills points out in an article in *Weekender* on March 6th, Greenwich Council had little say in the matter. The Secretary of State had ordered the demolition of almost all the gas holders in the country (one in the Old Kent Road has been spared). These days, gas is stored underground and the regulatory body, Ofgem, has decreed that gas holders should be demolished. As if that were not enough, its fate was sealed by TfL’s plans to build the Silvertown Tunnel: the gas holder would have been too close to the route planned for the tunnel.

So this great structure is to become scrap metal, with lip service paid to its heritage value in the form of a sculpture made from a few rescued fragments. And it could have looked like this one in Dublin . . .



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FEATURES

The fight against Fake News

Information is now being weaponised - and “fake news” has become a threat to our democracy . . .

Social Media giants face a new series of regulations as the government leads the way to a crackdown on fake news and misuse of data, after allegations from MPs that the the internet giants have acted “irresponsibly”.

As Jackson Lears, in the *London Review of Books* (27th Sept. page 6) points out, it is a sobering thought, too, that our media are shrinking. For example, “in the US in 1983 there were fifty multinationals controlling US media: now there are five. Would-be investigative reporters (like Seymour Hersch) have almost nowhere to publish their findings. It is harder now than ever to find reliable information.”

News expert, Dr Lisette Johnston, who is an ex-BBC World News boss and now Head of School at ScreenSpace, has given some top tips on identifying when we’re being fed fake news.

Check the source – and the date

Look at the publication or site and look at its other stories – try to think critically, and consider whether there is any questionable content casting doubt on its reliability. Sometimes a story from years ago can masquerade as up-to-date news.

Do your own research

Check if the story has been run on other sites; if so, how is the story presented? If the article has a writer’s byline – Google the person to see what else he/she has written.

Read beyond the headline

Some papers and websites use sensational headlines as a way to encourage you to ‘click’ on the story, this is called ‘click bait’. Sometimes the actual story bears no resemblance to its headline.

Check the facts

There are some great fact-checking websites such as: <https://fullfact.org> and <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/> to use when you’re really not sure about a story, whether it’s a statement from MPs or a piece from other organisations.

Also ask yourself these two questions:

- * Can the statement be proved or demonstrated to be true?
- * Can the statement be verified by witnesses, or documents?

Dr Johnston is Head of School at Screen-Space at the University of West London offering a BA (Hons) degree in Content, Media and Film Production.

STOP PRESS:

A specialist unit set up last year to monitor and combat disinformation and “fake news” online is set to continue operating after its pilot phase was deemed a success by the Government. The Rapid Response Unit, which is based across the Cabinet Office and Number 10, has secured funding to continue its work for the foreseeable future after launching in April 2018.

What’s in a name? Is ‘UK’ passé?

As UK Ltd seeks to redefine its role with regard to the European Union, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Constitutional Change (APPGCoC) has recommended that with the new role there should be a new name.

For some backbenchers – no names, no pack drill – *Britain* is a good deal too close to *Brittany* in France, even with the prefix *Great* to distinguish it from *Brittany*.

The APPGCoC is now recommending that a new statute should rename the UK *Albion*, as King Athelstan referred to it in the Ninth Century AD. There is strong cross-party support for the name change. It was noted that *Alouïōn*, (“Albion”) was the old Celtic name for mainland Britain – Ireland was called *Ierne*.

In a minority report, Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg favoured *Britannia* because of its Greco-Latin roots, though the company that he founded has chosen to relocate in *Ierne* in view of Brexit “uncertainty.”

Was a new name chosen because the UK was so dis-united during the Brexit process?

Apparently not. A spokesperson for the

group, Dr Apryl-Foole-Hardy MP (Silly Isles) said: “This historic name, Albion, has many advantages. It’s shorter and pithier, and is very convenient for anyone making a purchase online, when one has to scroll from Afghanistan down past United Arab Emirates to get to the UK – No. 186 on the list.”

The APPGCoC has recommended that a referendum should be carried out to find the will of the people before the statute is presented to Parliament.

Brutalized . . .



This shocking photo of a young woman, left beaten by police at a protest march went viral on social media in France.

Are you outraged? Want to share it with your friends on the internet? Hold on – there’s one small problem: the image has nothing to do with France. It was taken in Madrid, years ago. It’s fake. Untrue. A lie. An example of “fauxtography”.

And it’s dangerous. Disinformation like this has the power to turn protests violent, and create hatred. So, find out who sent it and why – and spread the news: it’s a lie.

QUIZ: Who said what?

Facts are facts – but opinions are what people want to believe. The only way of deciding how far to agree with them is by looking at the evidential basis. Tough!

Opinions expressed in the past are easy to assess – time has a way of showing them to be unreliable, even laughable, so one could say that “Time” is the best critic...

For example, can you guess who said the following:

1. “I don’t think there will be a woman prime minister in my lifetime.”
2. “I think there will be a world market for about five computers.”
3. “This ship is unsinkable.”

No. 3 is easy - you could probably hazard a guess that it was one of the designers of *The Titanic*, which sank with the loss of over 1500 lives after hitting an iceberg.

No. 1? Mrs Thatcher, of course, our first woman prime minister.

What about No. 2? That’s harder. In fact, it was the Chairman of IBM, one of the biggest manufacturers of computers in the world. Can you guess which MP expressed the following opinions? And how reliable they are...

| | |
|--|--|
| A. My policy on cake is pro having it and pro eating it. | G What kind of city are we living in, if we encourage the development or ownership of large, expensive properties for investment and land banking... while people are sleeping on the streets? |
| B: Getting out of the EU can be quick and easy – the UK holds most of the cards in any negotiation. | H We deserve a chance to look at the evidence, to weigh up the pros and cons, not a fantasy Brexit, but Brexit reality, and we deserve a people’s vote |
| C. The free trade agreement that we will have to do with the European Union should be one of the easiest in human history. | I. I’d like to apologise to the British people for the state our politics is in. |
| D I have come, reluctantly, to the conclusion Boris cannot provide the leadership or build the team for the task ahead. | J If parliament can’t agree we’ll have to go back to the people. We’ll be forced to. |
| E Well look, no one takes pleasure from people making money out of the misery of others, but that is a function of capitalist markets. | K I believe it is clearly in the national interest to remain a member of the EU. (April 2016) |
| F We must educate our sons to save our daughters. | Answers page 6 |

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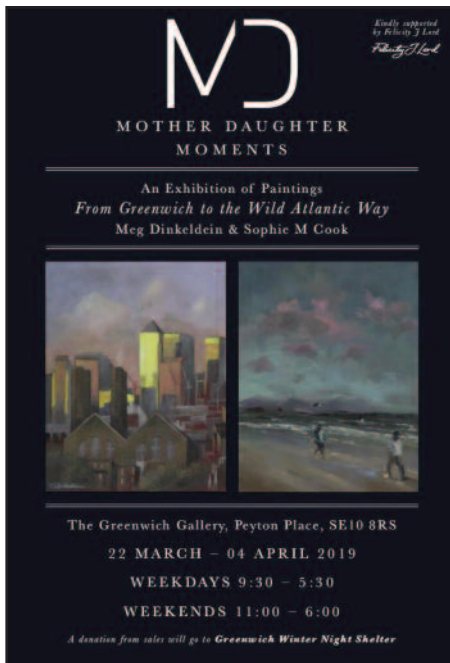


WHAT'S ON



ARTS

THE ARTS SOCIETY, BLACKHEATH
25th April JULIA MUSGRAVE talks on BRITAIN VERSUS THE BAUHAUS: MODERN DESIGN IN THE 1930'S 2.00pm. with tea and coffee, and lectures at 2.30. Venue is St Mary's Church Hall, Cresswell Park Blackheath Visitors welcome, please pay on the door.



SPOKEN WORD

IN-WORDS

Tues. April 9th 7.00 for 7.30pm West Greenwich Library Blake Morrison presents award winning Irish poet Jane Clarke and her newly published pamphlet 'All the Way Home'. The backstory to this involves the Mary Evans Picture Library, and in particular Gill Stoker, and Patricia Aubrey, niece of Albert Auerbach from Ealing, London. Free, but please let Irena know if you are coming.

BLACKHEATH HALLS

Wed 3rd April 8.00pm JAMES RUSSELL: Edward Bawden, Artist & Adventurer £10.00 & glass of wine

Fri 5th April 7.30pm JEREMY VINE: What the Hell is Going On? £16.00

Sun 7th April 8.00pm ANGELA BARNES: post Edinburgh Fringe comedy £14.00 Age 14+

INDUSTRIAL HISTORY SOCIETY

16th April Richard Buchanan on Street Furniture Meeting in the old Bakehouse, behind Age Exchange.R

GREENWICH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WED, 3rd APRIL 7.15 for 7.30 pm AGM; & Anthony Cross talks on "Our Good Old Governor: Admiral Hardy in Greenwich" Venue: James Wolfe School, Royal Hill Campus, Greenwich SE10 8RZ



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THE WESTCOMBE SOCIETY

Sat 20th April - Easter Egg Hunt
May 17th. Westcombe Soc. AGM
Sun 15th Sept - Macmillan Walk
Fri 27th Sept Macmillan Coffee Morning
Sat 26th Oct - Quiz Night

THEATRE

THE GREENWICH THEATRE, Crooms Hill, London SE10 8ES Box Office: 8858 7755
Tues. 2nd - Sat 6th April THE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE brilliant production by the European Arts Company
Wed 24th - Sat 27th April THE LONG WALK BACK Cricket meets cocaine. CHRIS LEWIS discusses the issues after every performance
Tues 7th - Sat 11th May Sherlock Holmes: THE SIGN OF FOUR by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle adapted by Nick Lan
THE JACK STUDIO THEATRE
The Brockley Jack, 410 Brockley Road SE4 2DH
9th - 27th April QUEEN OF THE MIST, a musical by Michael John Lachiusa
April 30th - May 4th The Astonishing Singing Fish

WOODLANDS FARM: EASTER

Lambing Day

Sun. 14 April 11:00-16:00

Come and see our new-born lambs, & buy quality local produce at reasonable prices



Tues. 16th April 11.00 - 3.00pm The Stick Man Day. Inspired by the Julia Donaldson story of Stick Man, try our Stick Man trail. + story readings, wild art and minibeast hunts £3.50 per child includes activities and an Activity Pack. No need to book.

Wed. 17th April 10 - 12noon Silly about sheep: sheep activity day. Fun sheep fact trail and see our new-born lambs. £3 per child. Just drop in.

Thurs. 18th April 10.00 - 2.00pm

Eggs-cellent Easter Trail. Easter eggs can you find hidden round the farm? Win a chocolate egg prize! No need to book, just drop in. £2 per child.

Adult Crafts Courses in conj. with SE Yarn Academy
Sunday Mornings, 10am - 1pm Wet 4 week Felting Course starts 28th April £100 includes all tuition and materials required on the course. For more information or to book visit www.thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org

Beginners Crochet Course Sun. afternoons, 2-4pm starting from 28th April for 4 weeks. £100 includes all tuition and materials; For more information or to book visit www.thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org

Sun. 28th April 10 - 11.30am Guided Bird Walk
Meet outside the mess room in farmyard at 10am. Involve muddy fields, so not suitable for buggies. If bad weather this walk will be cancelled. £2 adults, £1 children. For more information, see our website or contact Hannah Ricketts on education@thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org

TELEGRAPH HILL FESTIVAL New Cross

Celebrating its 25th year! Here are a few highlights of its very full programme:

Tues. April 2nd. 7.30pm Classics on the Hill St Catherine's Church £10 | £5.00

Wed 3rd April 8.00 - 9.15 pm at The Rosemary Hungarian Restaurant 178 New Cross Rd. SE14 5AA The Hasty Nymphs sing. Free

April 4th 7.00pm at The Hill Station Vanessa Tate talks on Sex & Drugs in Victorian Britain

Thurs 4th April 7.00 & 8.0pm GIRL WORLD, a Madcap Comedy at The Telegraph Dennett's Rd SE14 5LW Tickets £6.00 | £4.00

INFO: www.telegraphhillfestival.org.uk



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MYCENAE HOUSE LIVE EVENTS: April

MYCENAE HOUSE, Mycenae Road SE3
Fri 5th Apr 7pm - Art Theman Quartet. GFMA present a night of high performance jazz. £13.
Thurs 11th Apr 4pm - Bach To Baby. Classical Concert for families. £10.
Fri 12th Apr 8pm - JazzNights. Candlelit Live Jazz music event hosted by Dave Silk. £10.
Fri 26th Apr 7.30pm Nine Below Zero Acoustic Duo. An evening of acoustic blues from the stars of Nine Below Zero, with support from Leon Tillbrook. 8pm. £16/ £14 cones
Plus lots going on for Children over the Easter Hols, check our website for the full timetable; and for information about other events in Mycenae House: www.mycenaehouse.co.uk

MUSIC

BLACKHEATH HALLS 020 8463 0100

Sat 6th April 7.30pm National Youth Jazz Orchestra with counterparts from Germany and the Netherlands
£15.00 | £13 cones. £10. under 18s.

Sun 7th April 11.00am JuliaSitzkovetsky & Roger Vignoles Lieder + Debussy & Rachmaninov's 'Six Songs' £10 | £8.00

Sun 7th April 7.30pm Budapest Cafe Orchestra £17.00 Folk & gypsy music from Russia and the Balkans

Sat 13th April 2.00pm JOURNEY TO OZ Young people aged 8 years and over perform exceptional musical theatre £5.00

Thu 25th - Fri 26th April TRINITY LABAN OPERA SCENES: Verdi, Strauss, Charpentier & Wagner

Various times. Free, booking required

Sun 28th April 3.00pm FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE Between war and peace

Gareth Brymar John baritone & Jocelyn Freeman piano £10.00 | £8.00

Mon 29th April Lunchtime recital Fleur Barron mezzo soprano & Maya Irgalina piano Schubert's Winterreise

D.911 Freewith retiring donation A light lunch available before the recital

OLD ROYAL NAVAL COLLEGE

Wed 17th April 7.00pm Trinity Laban Chapel Choir: Holy Week: BACH's MASS IN B MINOR



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Catford Library

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to Melanie Jones 020 8290 4999 or talkaboutart@outlook.com



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FEATURES

Royal Greenwich: The Painted Hall

The Painted Hall at the Old Royal Naval College, reopened on 23 March 2019 after a two-year National Lottery Funded conservation project which has brought its magnificent painted interior vividly back to life.

The Painted Hall has been referred to as the ‘Sistine Chapel of the UK’ – its vast decorated interior, extending to 4,000 square metres, is the masterpiece of English baroque art.

This £8.5 million conservation project, supported by a £3.1-million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), has reversed years of decay and conserved the Painted Hall for generations to come. Between 2017 and 2018 an accessible observation deck gave over 80,000 visitors the opportunity to observe the conservators at work.

Its reopening is part of a major transformation project by Hugh Broughton Architects – with Martin Ashley, the College’s Surveyor of the Fabric, giving conservation advice.

It will also see the reopening and restoration of the King William Undercroft beneath the Painted Hall, which will house a new café, shop and a new gallery, The Sackler Gallery.

The reopening of the Painted Hall sees the introduction of a new visitor experience at the Old Royal Naval College. It will allow visitors to enjoy a guided or self-guided tour of the extensive site, setting off from the newly-refreshed Visitor Centre and access into the Painted Hall.

The tour will take in all aspects of Wren’s riverside masterpiece including the famous Water Gate, Grand Square and the Chapel, and include access into the Skittle Alley (normally a ‘limited access’ area of the site).



The Painted Hall experience will include a new multimedia guide providing an informative and playful introduction to the paintings, with 60 minutes of content available.

Live talks led by an expert team of staff and volunteers throughout the day will also help to bring the paintings to life, alongside a collection of exquisite touch objects inspired by characters and items depicted on the ceiling which visitors will be able to get up close to and try on. These include a replica of King William’s crown and cloak, Athena’s shield with Medusa, and the red cap of liberty, symbolic of freedom in William’s Hand.

For younger visitors, a family trail has been developed with sensory backpacks. An audio-described tour will also be available for partially-sighted and blind visitors and tablets will be available loaded up with a virtual tour of the hall, allowing visitors to zoom into detail on the ceiling.

The extensive grounds, the refreshed Visitor Centre, Chapel and the King William Undercroft will be accessible to all visitors for free, but you will need to buy tickets to see the Painted Hall.

From April, the site will introduce a brand new initiative to ensure the Painted Hall remains as accessible to as many people as possible with its ‘Pay as you wish’ every first Wednesday of each month.

Angela McConville, Chief Executive of the Old Royal Naval College, says: “We are hugely excited to be able to put on show the beautifully conserved Painted Hall. This is the greatest ensemble of baroque buildings in the UK and we welcome over one million visitors

and students to this special place every year.

“We passionately believe that the story of Greenwich starts here, on this magnificent site. It is a great delight that through this epic project, we can reveal 500 years of history. Our new visitor experience will, we believe, bring delight and stimulate curiosity for many more visitors and be a place for locals to enjoy again and again.”

The ground-breaking project to clean and conserve the paintings started in 2016. It was one of the largest open-access conservation projects in Europe. As the painted surfaces were cleaned, new details were uncovered revealing how Thornhill planned and executed his vast work. Shadows of corrected details appeared behind paint layers and large areas of beautifully detailed history painting emerged from behind dirt and decay. As many as 30 signatures from previous ‘restorers’ were studied at close quarters, including one indelicately placed on the bosom of Mary II.

Adult tickets will cost £12 which give unlimited re-entry up to a year after purchase; children under 16 go free and there are other ticket concessions available. Local school groups will continue to visit for free as part of the schools and education programme.



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| C Dr Liam Fox MP | I Anna Soubry MP |
| D Michael Gove MP | J John McDonnell MP |
| E George Osborne | K Theresa May MP |
| F Yvette Cooper MP | |

Pub theatre in Brockley

Vesna Domany Hardy

History records that until 1576 or so, pub theatre was the norm in Queen Elizabeth’s London. It never went away – and you can see it at its best at the Jack Studio in Brockley. A thriving pub, the Brockley Jack, hosts a thriving tradition in drama. thanks largely to a very talented young Artistic Director, Kate Bannister.

The *WN* theatre critic was impressed by a recent production *As A Man Grows Younger* by former local resident Howard Colyer, produced by Irena Hill of In-Words, which created a fascinating insight into the life and times of the Austro-Italian novelist Italo Svevo, known as the Italian Proust, sometime manager of a paint factory in Charlton, ardent Addicks supporter, and friend of James Joyce.

The play was a one-hander performed with astonishing virtuosity by David Bromley as Svevo. The *WN* published an

article on Svevo in August 2017.

March saw a Yard Players production of *King Lear*, and Angel Theatre Company’s production of Samuel Beckett’s *Footfalls and Play*. A visit to the Brockley Jack is highly recommended - and you can even dine out there, too. *See What’s On, p.5.*

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Has education lost its way?

‘Education’ actually means the induction of youth into the core of the historic classless culture. This isn’t simple. We need first to de-toxify it by removing ancient strands of imperialism, sexism and racism. We need second to energise it by adding new, enduring stuff – modelling with digital electronics. Many educationalists lean towards the left and they conflate the historic classless culture with the current Status Quo – which they hate.

The historic classless culture of the UK is about common law, commonsense, and a freedom to think deeply which was stamped out in most other countries. This is needed.

A society which neglects its core values falls apart. The P E R Group websites:
www.philosophyforeducation.co.uk www.perprospero.co.uk



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

The Friends of Westcombe Woodlands is one of the area's most successful community activities. Here, the *WN* looks at its latest annual report

Welcome to the Westcombe Woodlands

One of the winners of the Greenwich Neighbourhood Growth Fund this year is the Westcombe Woodlands, a voluntary group which tends with loving care the area of woodlands south of Seren Park. The bid was put together by Richard Sylvester and Ruth Cracknell, two of our Trustees, on behalf of the Friends.

The award was given to assist sessions with schools in a tree planting programme. 180 local school children, with staff and parents, from Halstow, Christchurch and St Joseph’s Schools, are to take part in termly visits to the Woodlands with each visit delivering a cycle of activities.

The staff will receive expert guidance on using their neighbourhood woodlands as a resource for learning. Each visit will be closely supervised and monitored by experienced woodland leaders. The project is also supported by the Peter Harris Trust, the Greenwich Society and East Greenwich Residents’ Association.

This spring the children will be doing seed planting, tree nursery management and transplanting; a wide variety of trees – including cell-grown dog-rose, hawthorn, hazel, crab apple and elder, along with a smaller number of blackthorn, wild cherry and rowan.

In the summer, they will be managing, mulching and watering the new saplings as necessary.

In the autumn, it will be seed collection and seed planting again. The trees have been donated by the Woodland Trust.

Tim Barnes, the Chairman of the Westcombe Woodlands, says that they are also open to suggestions for suitable sites within Westcombe, Blackheath and Peninsula areas where a new native hedgerow may be appropriate – of course in close liaison with the landowners.

Other projects

However, this is but one of the projects being carried out by Westcombe Woodlands volunteers. They have been



busy clearing the oak glade at the top of the steps leading up from the Mound, and planting bluebells – all are invited to come and see the bluebells at the next Open Day (Bluebell Day) on Saturday May 4th.

The removal of self-sown sycamores remains an on-going task, and big efforts are being made to keep the bees happy in their new hives. The problem here is that the bees need more sunshine than they get in their present location, and the plan is to move two hives to the area beside the hedge running down to the pond, where they will get more direct sunlight. One hive will remain in its current location for “re-queening”.

Big Garden Birdwatch - 2019

The annual bird survey took place on 26th January between 9.15 and 10.15am. Three of our trustees, Nigel, Rich and Andrew participated together with Joe Beale, whose expertise in recognising birds both by appearance and song is invaluable.

15 species were seen and five were overheard, and so not eligible for the RSPB count. The most common birds were long-tailed tits and blackbirds with five

sightings. They were followed by carrion crows and goldcrests with four views, ring-necked parakeets, wrens, blue tits and robins with three; magpies, great tits, wood pigeons and goldcrests with two; and jays, dunnocks and stock doves with a single sighting. Those that were heard but not seen included a mistle thrush, a greenfinch, a feral pigeon, a black-headed gull.

The elm project

Nigel Duncan has been closely involved with the planting and recording of elm saplings and elm trees in the woodland. Readers may recall that during the 1960s and 1970s the UK elm population was largely destroyed by Dutch elm disease. The Conservation Foundation has been taking cuttings from parent trees that appear to have resisted Dutch elm disease for 60 years. The hope is that the cuttings will be disease-resistant, although this cannot be guaranteed, given this is an experiment. The cuttings, five in all, have been donated by the Conservation Foundation.

Membership

Chairman of the Friends Tim Barnes says: “I commend our Volunteer Days to all Friends and to others who live locally and

would like to see the woodlands, and new members are welcome. “The work is as onerous as you decide, the company is good, the biscuits are excellent and the opportunity of being in a beautiful and tranquil place at different times of the year is a special experience.”

Two new Honorary Life members have been appointed – Joe Beale, a fount of information about flora and fauna; and Peter Sparkes, who has been the WW’s tree surgeon for many years. All visitors are also welcome to the WW’s Open day in October, which last year included story-telling with Rich Sylvester.

Tim Barnes adds: “Children are very welcome and enjoy the volunteer days as much as their parents, so do come along. And I am keen to expand the membership of the Friends. Subscriptions from our members provides a principal source of income, and increased membership gives the Friends greater ‘clout’ when it comes to seeking funds.”

The website is currently being overhauled which will provide full details as to how to subscribe for membership. But in the meantime do get in touch with Tim Barnes personally on tim@tbbarnes.com

- Dates for your diary:**
- Sunday 7th April
 - Sunday 4th May – volunteer morning
 - Sunday 4th May – Bluebell open day from 2:00 pm until 5:00 pm
 - Sunday 2nd June - volunteer morning
 - Sunday 23rd June – Summer Party for members from 12:30 pm.

News from Greenwich Park

The park’s new project, Greenwich Park Revealed, is now well under way, reports Graham Dear.

In December 2017, the park obtained development funding for a Phase 2 bid in August 2019. From now until then, a range of activities is planned, including consultations with the public.

If the Phase 2 bid is successful, the project proper will start in early 2020 and run for the four-year life of the project and beyond. Among the plans are:

- * the children’s playground renovation
- * a Changing Places toilet for disabled visitors near the Learning Centre
- * extending the buggy mobility scheme
- * provision for visitors with visual impairments with an audio trail
- * improved café facilities
- * improving the water quality of the lake
- * better provision for deer-watching

Among other developments, Jon Sheaff & Associates have been appointed to work on the restoration of Greenwich Park’s historic landscape.

In the 1660’s Andre Le Notre provided designs for Greenwich Park to King Charles II. That layout still survives today but it is under threat from tree pests and diseases as well as visitor erosion. The project will reverse this decline.

‘Architype’ have been appointed to design the new Learning Centre, and ZMMA architects will be designing coherent, attractive and accessible information points throughout the Park.

The Ecology Consultancy have already undertaken grassland and lichen surveys and advised on biodiversity enhancement.

Public consultations began in February, and two more are planned for April. These are an opportunity to meet staff and consultants, view plans and give feedback.

The next consultations will be held near the Bandstand in the park from 10.00-4.00 pm on the following days:

Thursday 11th April 2019

Sunday 14th April 2019

The consultation process will include information about volunteering opportunities. These include researchers for new talks and walks, gardening, mobility drivers, education, community archeology and Park Ambassadors to meet and greet visitors, and to give them information about the park.

To learn more please ring 07817 882135 or email hwallis@royalparksofuk

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PALM SUNDAY – 14 April
11.00am Communion with Procession

MAUNDY THURSDAY 18 April 7.00pm
Dinner, Footwashing, Communion & Stripping the Altar

GOOD FRIDAY – 19 April
10 -11:30am Craft activities and fun for children and their families
12 - 2pm Quiet Time for Prayer and Reflection
2.00pm Good Friday Service

EASTER VIGIL – 20 April
8pm Candlelight, Incense & Communion

EASTER SUNDAY – 21 April
11am Holy Communion. Following which:

THURSDAY – 25 APRIL 7:30pm COMMUNITY LECTURE SERIES: *From Constantine to the Early Caliphs: Christianity, Judaism and Islam in the Near East in Late Antiquity, c. AD 320 to 750'. Illustrated Talk by Dr Sam Moorhead (British Museum). Free.. Refreshments served. A retiring collection will be taken.*

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23 WYCHERLEY CLOSE ref 19/0521/HD
 Construct rear dormer extension & 3 front roof lights
35 VANBRUGH PARK ref 19/0793/TC
 Fell 2 conifers & thin eucalyptus in rear garden
 Fell 2 conifers in front garden
35 VANBRUGH PARK ref 19/0738/TC
 Reduce height of lime tree in front to 8m.
36 VANBRUGH PARK ref 19/0739/TC
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