Sometimes. What do readers think? “Humane cull.” Madrid have had enough, and are to carry out a “lean, mean time.” The FT for Sept 28th/29th quoted a manager of Greenwich Park as saying Roaming gangs: parakeets. An article in last year’s WN about volunteering call 020 7939 1220 or visit Siebert Road and Westcombe Hill. Some preliminary moves, notably a wider discussion of the transport and other suggestions include ways of reducing traffic volume through the Greenwich was facing a “lean, mean time.” It’s great to hear that, in the light of the climate emergency and the local air quality crisis, Dan Thorpe and the Labour Group asked the Mayor to halt and review the plan. And we thought it was all over . . .

Among the possibilities the Council suggested is a Dockland Light Railway extension to Tathan Road. The proposed route would be through Greenwich Park and have been met with controversy. Many residents and environmental groups have voiced their opposition to the proposed route. However, the Council has maintained that the scheme would help reduce traffic in the area and improve public transport links. The decision on whether to proceed with the scheme is due to be made in the coming months. The council will consult with residents and other stakeholders before making a final decision. In the meantime, the community is urged to remain involved and to express their views on the proposed changes.
Drivers beware

Every Monday morning, the Mycenae House Local History Group meets to hear talks on local history. As they left at around midday on 23rd September, some members were startled by the ugly sound of a car turning round in Mycenae Road, and clattering off.

“It made an awful jarring noise!” said one eyewitness. “It sounded as though the exhaust pipe was falling off.”

What happened on Mycenae Road that morning was an outrage: a silver Prius, a hybrid, had been parked in the road outside Mycenae House, and during the meeting, a gang of thieves had stolen the catalytic converter fitted to the exhaust.

Catalytic converters are fitted to all hybrid cars, including Toyota Prius and Lexus 400h, to break down harmful exhaust emissions such as hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides. Up to 80% of the gases are eliminated. Exhaust fumes pass through a honeycomb of metal coated with precious metals such as rhodium and palladium. Thieves can make a killing by stealing the converters, and either selling them on, or extracting the precious metals – which are then sold back to the market.

On this occasion, the victim was a local resident who had been giving a talk on the history of the Westcombe News in Mycenae Park.

“As soon as I started the engine and tried to move off, there was this awful noise,” he said. “I knew at once what the trouble was.”

The AA arrived an hour later and said the car was safe to drive – the short distance home. According to the AA, thefts of catalytic converters are taking place over a very wide area.

The problem is increasing. The Guardian (September 21st) reported that last year there were 1,700 thefts. This year it has already risen to 3,000 and counting.

As a result, there is a serious shortage of spare parts: many drivers face delays of weeks or months to have their vehicles repaired.

These thefts are perilous, because drivers are in effect being punished for trying to reduce vehicle pollution levels. A gang typically consists of three people – a driver, a thief, and a minder who stands on the kerb watching everyone. A theft can be effected in less than a minute.

So far, the WH has heard of two such thefts in the Westcombe Park area – and there may have been more.

So: watch out! There are thieves about!

SUNDAY 15TH SEPTEMBER was a perfect sunny day for our annual walk. Engineer- ing works meant that we had to catch a bus to Chafford Station where we boarded the train to Erith.

From there, 17 intrepid walkers set out along the Green Chain Walk, alongside the river towards Belvedere.

We turned inland at Riverside Resource Recovery, near Crossness Nature Reserve and had a welcome coffee/tea break at Starbucks in Thamesmead. From there we walked through Rostal Woods, to Leeson Abbey where we had a great view of Canary Wharf.

We enjoyed a sandwich lunch in the abbey ruins under the shade of the trees. Then some of us took the train from Abbey Wood back to Chatham. The rest of us continued onto Oasted Woods and Shoer Hill, covering six miles in all.

Our Westcombe Macmillan Coffee Morning took place at Mycenae House on 27th September. As will be seen from the photos, it was very well attended. On offer: delicious sandwiches, and aces prepared with butter, jam and cream as well as a variety of homemade cakes. We were delighted to welcome the Mayor Cllr Nick Hayes and his wife Gillian.

Many people gave extra donations and our Coffee Morning raised a total sum of £1,000 for Macmillan Cancer Support. Many thanks for all of you who came along and supported either one or both of our events, making a total donation of £1,421 to this very worthy cause.

And thanks too to all the volunteers who helped including Caroline and Robert Owers, Monique & J J Jones, June Baker, Trena Croy, Jill Domenech, Christine Legg, Marilyn Little, Shirley Little, Joanne Lucas & Jenny O’Keefe.

From: John Murphy Omnium Road

In opposing the Silverterow Tunnel (RN, October), the Green Party once again shows themselves as completely out of touch with ordinary Londoners who are trying to earn a living, house their families, and lead responsible lives.

Their alternative policies, set out in your lead story on the front page, show they have no idea how ordinary people live.

Living less than a mile from the Blackwall Tunnel, daily I watch the traffic passing along the Tunnel Approach on the A101 trying to struggle through the Victorian tunnel built in 1907. Well done to Greenwich Council and TfL for taking forward the new scheme which will provide some much-needed relief to the Blackwall Tunnel.

Having worked for a decade in the 1990s for the Highways Agency, which managed and maintained the Blackwall Tunnel, I can vouch for its vital importance to Londoners as an essential artery between north and south London.

Once built, the Silvertown Tunnel will ensure Londoners continue to travel safety and smoothly between both parts of our capital. Until then they will have to struggle daily to get through.

No amount of unrealistic, impractical hand- waving by the Greens will solve the daily problems which beset Londoners, trying to go about their daily lives.

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

Letters

From: Christine Legg, 69 mycenae road, London, Se 3 7Pl

Name: .................................
Address: ..............................
Tel: .......................................
E-mail: .................................

Please enclose payment as appropriate:

Family membership £12
Individual membership £8
Senior Citizen's discount £4

Correction

Sourly, if the writer is so convinced that the trustees are making the changes in order to make more money, and therefore are removing residents so as to be able to rent out the flats commercially, and if the writer really thinks that the CEO is behaving badly towards the residents, can’t the writer take these concerns actually to the Charity Commission but a thought?

From: Christopher P Mountford College

The slow moving traffic on Blackheath Hill is a public health disaster. The Blackheath Society would not doubt resist any road widening or on the sacred soil of the Heath. “Let them grind on” – to misquote Marie Antoinette.

From: Peter Greaves

The Plantation

Aged 87, with a recent new I, I went on the People’s Vote march on Saturday.

At one point I was appropriately near the statue of Churchill at the corner of Parliament Square, and saw a man with a placard which read: “Never in the history of peace time politics has so much damage been caused by so few to so many.” Perhaps my favourite, carried by a little girl of about 10, was “I am too young to vote, but I am not too young to care.” Could be.

I hope that now he is a back-bencher our MP will speak forcefully for a Peoples’ Vote.

(Another letter page 3 col 1.)
BREXIT: A Walk in the Park

On September 20th, a number of local residents attended the book-launch of Stewart Wheeler’s *Winning Against the Odds: My Life in Gamesmanship and Politics*. The latter interviewed the author, who evoked his strong support for Brexit. About this, Mr. Cummings produced his remark, much repeated on BBC News, that “Brexit means Brexit” – a walk in the “park” compared with the referendum campaign which he master-minded.

The comment, cheered enthusiastically by many of those present, elicited one comment from a bystander: “If he doesn’t understand the complexity of leaving the EU, he shouldn’t be the Prime Minister’s special advisor.”

For those readers who enjoy a walk in the park, and who are VAT registered, we offer this guide (below) on getting ready for Brexit from HM Revenue and Customs.

*Sustounced Publishing: £20.00*

You should now have your EORI (Economic Operator Registration and Identification) number that starts with “GB”.

Find out if you also need an EU EORI by reading our EORI mythbuster. Go to: www.gov.uk/government/publications/eu-rori-communications-resources

Go online to find more step by step guides

- For importers, go to: www.gov.uk/government/publications/import-toll-eu-after-brexit

Our recommendation is that you consider TTP (Traditional Simplified Procedures) to make your importing as easy as possible.

- For exporters, go to: www.gov.uk/government/publications/export-from-eu-after-brexit

Focus on understanding what information you will need to give to the person you are selling to, so that they can complete the transaction.

- Keep up to date with the latest Brexit news including details of upcoming webinars where we are running on importing and exporting with EU after 31 October.

Register for your free email update service, go to: www.gov.uk/hmrc/business-support and select “business help and education emails”, then select “Brexit”.

Easy-Peasy. Yes, a walk in the park is called for...
The Success on our Doorstep

WNN Reporter

On Tuesday October 1st, the Mayor of Greenwich, Cllr Mike Hayes, came to cut the ceremonial ribbon to mark the official formal launch of the new MEfA Montessori Forest School/Wellbeing Area on Westcombe Hill.

Montessory Education for Autism is a charity founded in 2009 to support children, young people and families with autism and special needs and to promote good mental health and well-being.

MEfA had a small “soft launch” for the local community in July to recognise the support received from the Neighbourhood Growth Fund. In attendance were Cllr Geoff Brighty, the chair of the Westcombe Society, and many past and present parents, children – and teachers.

Also present were representatives of Mycenae House Community Centre, who have supported MEfA for many years and continues to host its successful conferences.

MEfA runs special classes for babies, toddlers and school-age children. It also supports parents – and teachers.

The centre is well-equipped with books and materials to suit all ages.

What is autism?

Autism is a developmental delay characterized by difficulties with social interaction and communication, and by challenges with imagination and behaviour. Parents usually notice signs during the first three years of their child’s life. These signs often develop gradually, though some children with autism reach their developmental milestones at different stages.

For fuller information please visit the website of Montessori Education for Autism (MEfA)

Jane’s Kitchen Stories:

My favourite time of year

Autumn is here, decked out in its golden finery. This is my favourite time of year, inspiring me to cook warming soups, rich stews and cake filled with fruit and spice. It’s the kind of food you cook to nurture the people you love. This morning was fine and clear, there was dew on the grass and a light mist hanging low on Blackheath. I was out early with the dog walkers and joggers, enjoying the riot of colour in the park. Returning home, I was ready for tea, sourdough toast and jam, but finding no jam in the house I decided on making apple butter with the last of the fruit annually given by a friend. A sharp smell of apples pouched in juice and cider vinegar pervades the house as I sit down to plan what to cook for a Bonfire Night party. Something simple, seasonal and delicious is the order of the day – I want to cook ahead so that preparing supper doesn’t spoil an evening with friends.

It’s impossible to go wrong with great sausages, oven-cooked, served with crusty bread and an amazing sauce you have an easy, crowd-pleas- ing supper. Go to a butcher for the best sausages, I use Drings where they make a fantastic selection with free range Blythburgh pork. My best winter salad comes from a Leon book – roasted root vegetables with a chermoula dressing. It’s easy to prepare and is packed with flavour and texture, a masterpiece of many a party at mine.

These proportions are for 4 peo-
ple, but it is easy to scale and left overs for your lunch box are always a pleasure. Take about a kilo of mixed winter vegetables, maybe carrots, pumpkin, celery and beetroot, but choose whatever you have in or like. Peel them, cut into chunks, then mix them in a bit of olive oil, salt and pepper and roast for 40 minutes or until tender (pre heat your oven to 180C).

Meanwhile make your dressing, I usually tip all the ingredi- ents into a clean jam jar and shake it to mix thoroughly.

Dry roast, then grind 2 teaspoon of cumin seeds, and a teaspoon each of fennel and coriander seeds, it only takes a minute or two in a frying pan. Mix them with a finely chopped shallot, a red chilli (deseeded) chopped, 3 tablespoons of smoked oil, ½ lemon juiced, a tablespoon of red wine vinegar, a clove of crushed garlic, 2 teaspoons of smoked paprika, a teaspoon brown sugar and a pinch of cinnamon.

Season to taste, pour over the hot vegetables then leave them to cool, just before you serve them, mix in some salad leaves, add some crumbled fetas and perhaps a few toasted seeds.

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Eltham Palace: The Courtalds

Simon Black: English Heritage looks at

Eltham has been done up by the
Stephen Courtalds who received me.
The house is quite a modern one built by
them, but the Old Hall dating from the 14th
century [sic] has been restored beautifully.
We went all over the house and the moat
garden and had tea in the Hall. A charming
visit.” – Queen Mary, writing about a visit to
Eltham Palace on 8th June 1938

But if Queen Mary had visited Eltham
Palace just a few years earlier, she would
have found a very different scene. As we
discovered in Part 1 (PN, Sept.), the once
magnificent royal palace complex and
hunting lodge favoured by medieval and
Tudor monarchs had declined into a sad
and neglected ruin, overlooked by the shell
of the 15th century Great Hall.

Fortunately for Queen Mary and all of
us, the site was rediscovered in 1933 by the
wealthy society couple Stephen and
Virginia ('Ginie') Courtalds. They wanted
a substantial semi-rural property within
easy reach of central London.

Two young architects – John Seeley and
Paul Paget – were appointed to design a
new house bearing an ultra-modern design
and the latest technology, adjoining a sym-
phony of garden rooms similar to contemporary
gardeners, and visitors can enjoy walking
around one of London’s finest 1930s
gardens, including a rock garden, a moat
walk, formal rose garden and a progression
of garden rooms similar to contemporary
designs at Sissinghurst and Great Dixter.

Other highlights include the stunning
art-deco dining room with its shimmering
ceiling of brushed aluminium leaf, and
Ginie’s outrageous bathroom featuring gold
mosaic tiles, onyx fittings and a gold lozenge
head tap.

The Courtalds were also very keen
gardeners, and visitors can imagine they are guests of the
Courtalds, stepping into the breath-
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Climate crisis: The Lie of the Land

International wildlife charity Born Free has announced the launch of its new education- al ‘Great Debate’ initiative and is now call- ing out to schools across the UK to get involved.

Born Free’s Great Debate is designed to provide teachers with the tools to engage their students in meaningful debates about key wildlife or environmental topics that will affect their future. It will not only allow students to gain knowledge about the debate topic, but also offer them skills that will help them to research, frame and deliver an argument while becoming responsible citizens, reducing their impact on biodiversity and the environment.

“Future generations will have the tremendous responsibility of protecting our planet from a catastrophic decline in wildlife from which our ecosystem may never recover,” explains Laura Gosset, Head of Education at Born Free.”

Each academic year Born Free’s Great Debate will focus on different topics, with 2019’s launch topic the uses and abuses of plastic.

Science and Wildlife TV Presenter Liz Bonnin, who is backing Born Free’s Great Debate, said:

“The full impact of plastics on our envi- ronment is only just beginning to be realised. I have seen Shearwater chicks bringing up plastics from their stomachs, and seals entangled in fishing nets. I have also seen how corals are dying because plastic is delivering toxic loads of bacteria to an already stressed ecosystem, damaged by toxic chemicals. The more I learn about the scale of this problem the more I know that it’s important to act now, before it’s too late.”

Born Free’s education team is providing schools with five FREE one-hour lesson plans, activities and resources, with key curriculum links for KS2, KS3 and KS4. For more information or to download the resources, schools should visit www.bornfree.org.uk/great-debate, email the educa- tion team at greatdebate@bornfree.org.uk or call Laura Gosset, on 01403 240170.

Keep Wildlife In The Wild

Did you know that there is now a Workshop at the Recycling Centre in Nathan Way in Thamesmead to bring old items back to life?

This timely initiative is organised by Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice in collaboration with the Royal Borough of Greenwich. It’s run by a fantastic team (mainly volunteers) who give visitors to the Recycling Centre the opportunity to donate items for ‘repurposing’.

The team processes a huge range of items… unwanted furniture, fireplaces, doors, flooring, timber, pallets, tools, bikes, lighting – a seemingly endless list. However, sofas are accepted only if they have a fire retardant tag.

The team then get to work until they end up with something they are really proud of that they either put on display at the Repurpose shop at the Recycling Centre or at one of the Hospice’s shops ready for sale, such as at their shop in the Blackheath Standard. This raises money for the Hospice.

If you would like to get involved in mending, painting, wiring, sanding, lifting, moving, sewing, driving, tea making, laughing, chatting, and generally being helpful, then why not call 020 8311 6680, or contact repurposethat.org.

All materials and equipment are provided and the sessions are held at the Repurpose Workshop. You never know…you may become the next ‘Money for Nothing’ celebrity!”

The Real Point of Education

The point of trying to get educated is to cultivate mental grip. We all need this urgently today because the total environment is getting more and more complicated. The point of trying to get educated is to cultivate mental grip. We all need this urgently today because the total environment is getting more and more complicated. The point of trying to get educated is to cultivate mental grip. We all need this urgently today because the total environment is getting more and more complicated. The point of trying to get educated is to cultivate mental grip. We all need this urgently today because the total environment is getting more and more complicated. The point of trying to get educated is to cultivate mental grip. We all need this urgently today because the total environment is getting more and more complicated.

As our work on the RSA’s Food, Farming and Countryside Commission recently revealed, society’s relationship with the land has been profoundly broken in the last 70 years. Driven by poor policy and perverse incentives, the farming and food system has become one of the main drivers of human and ecosystem crisis.

“The food and agriculture system accounts for a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions overall. None of this is inevitable. Our recommendations for the UK included a ten-year transition plan for sustainable farming, a comprehensive land-use strategy and a National Agro-ecology Development Bank to facilitate investment in our most vital natural asset: the land that nourishes and sustains us.”

The impact on wildlife is also serious. More than a quarter of mammals are facing extinction, according to a detailed and devastating report on the state of the natural world in the UK: the causes: climate heating, and agricultural practices. The report also said one in seven species are threatened with extinction, and 41% of species studied have experienced decline since 1970.

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Travel notes by Christopher Peters

One thing the travelling public really need is reliable information. Not available on Deptford station, however, where both sets of timetable boards at concourse level are in the wrong order. This has happened at Blackheath station too, sometimes, so it may be the same elsewhere too.

The booking clerk showed no interest in getting them switched.

On the bright side, London Bridge station has won an architectural award and today looks fine! The directors of the old London and Greenwich and Blackwall Railway must be looking down with some pride.

The electric charging point in Blackheath Post Office car park is “empty” – yet again. It can’t be seen from the Village so in view of the importance of cleaner engines, it needs to be more clearly signposted and , of course, sorted.

Every day, residents, and drivers, have to put up with very slow traffic on the A2 on Blackheath Hill A2 com- pounded by converging traffic from side roads converging side roads. Do the Department of Transport or the GLA have any desire to improve matters in the light of the costs gener- ated in terms of pollution for local res- idents and economic loss? A problem replicated elsewhere, including of course on the Blackwall Tunnel approach roads.

The point of trying to get educated is to cultivate mental grip. We all need this urgently today because the total environment is getting more and more complicated by the minute. ‘Grip’ means having the basics of keen observation, avoiding bias, cool abstraction, and awareness of the pitfalls of partial knowledge. These disciplines are not motivated by a thirst to know more, or to get more marks so it may be the same elsewhere too.

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