

Westcombe NEWS

Free to 3800 homes, in libraries and some shops

April 2020 No. 2



'YOU NEVER KNOW HOW STRONG YOU ARE UNTIL BEING STRONG IS THE ONLY CHOICE YOU HAVE'

CORONAVIRUS - COVID19

Information and support for Westcombe Park Residents

We are living in worrying times. Most of us have not experienced anything of this extent before.

Living in a beautiful part of London, as we do, it is difficult to comprehend the impact the current pandemic is having on the world. But its effects and the actions that are being recommended to mitigate these could be severe for some people.

The Westcombe Society has always nurtured a strong sense of community and I feel sure that our members will be looking out for folk living close-by especially the elderly and vulnerable and will be responding to their needs wherever possible.

We rely on our members to support us in many ways. They are behind us in our efforts to improve local travel facilities, to scrutinise planning and environmental matters and to pursue local issues with the relevant bodies including the Council. Our members help by becoming photographers, reporters and deliverers for the Westcombe News. They help at our social events and assist in raising funds for local charities.

So.. when it came to volunteering to support those Westcombe Park residents in need during the ongoing pandemic we knew we could rely on them.... read on to see how.

Many of us will become more house-bound over the coming days and weeks. I know many of you will have friends and neighbours willing to help at this difficult time. But for those of you in Westcombe Park who do not, we now have a team of volunteers who are prepared to support those who are unable to leave their homes. We can offer to collect food, toiletries and pharmaceuticals, including prescriptions (the address and birth date is needed to allow collection). We can also be a friendly voice on the end of the phone.

Should you need help please email info@westcombesociety.org or phone or text 07908 400555 between 9am and 6pm with the type of help you need together with your address and a contact number. A volunteer will get in touch with you to take details and

offer support. In the event that we are overwhelmed with requests, help is also being offered by:

St Johns Church (020 8305 0520) or email care@stjohnsblackheath.org.uk

St Georges Church (020 3633 5494) or email tim@stgeorgeswestcombepark.org.uk

Other options:

We are aware that the on-line services offered by many Grocery Stores are under considerable pressure, with long timescales for delivery, but we hope this will improve.

N&R News (0208 858 5163) in Old Dover Road will take telephone orders in the morning for later delivery.

Pravin Supermarket (0208 858 2623) at the top of Westcombe Hill will also take telephone orders in the morning for later delivery.

Sparkes Butchers (020 8355 8597) and **Apple and Orange** (07946475462) will take telephone orders for collection.

Please bear in mind that stocks may be low from time to time and choice limited.

Another option is **Milk and More** your local Milkman.

<http://www.milkandmore.co.uk>

They also have a wide range of items for home delivery but at the moment are not accepting new customers.

Note: Most of our volunteers are members of the Westcombe Society and can only be reached by emailing us or using the number above. We are not knocking on doors or leafleting but we are reaching out to the whole of the Westcombe Park Community.

Do heed Government Health advice and take care.

Thank you

Marilyn (Little)

Chair, Westcombe Society

Volunteers

If you have an interest in helping us in any of the above ways or in becoming a member do get in touch with us at **info@westcombesociety.org**.

SAFE SHOPPING PRACTICES

We are hopeful that panic buying will reduce as shoppers see shelves being re-plenished.

However we all need to buy what we need. Take care to follow Government guidelines for Social Distancing when out and about.

This is a challenge when using small shops particularly Food Shops and Pharmacies and you may feel safer by queueing outside the shop and encouraging others to do likewise. This will ensure that shopping is safer for us all. If food shopping is a space that encourages the spread of the virus we will never beat it.

Also please consider others and shop staff when handling goods. Handling is inevitable when shopping but please make sure you keep this to a minimum and that your hands are clean. Perhaps wearing gloves at these times is best.

Always wash your hands on return and always after handling cash.

PLEASE PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING AT ALL TIMES

FANZONE EURO2020

Postponed to 11th June – 11th July 2021

So.... no FanZone this year and Planning Permission will need to be re-sought for the delayed event together with another Licensing Application.

The Licensing sub-committee had approved the premises application for this year's event with a number of conditions.

These include, sales of alcohol limited to noon to 9.30pm for up to 12 Match days and eight Community Days. In actuality site

opening times are normally later than this on Match days except when pre-match entertainment is planned.

There has been no information on the types of entertainment being considered apart from a band before some matches. No details on activities on Community days.

The licence is dependent on Transport Management Plan being agreed by the Safety Advisory Group

(SAG). One of the conditions also states that: *'The Organisers shall ensure that a minimum of two security staff are deployed to patrol the Children's Playground area, beginning at least two hours before the premises open to the public on event days until the end of licensable activities.'*

And we go through the same procedures again next year! - Marilyn Little



Photo: Anne Williams

THE WESTCOMBE SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday May 15th at 7.30 pm

in The Wollstonecraft Room,

Blackheath High School for Girls,

Vanbrugh Park

Your chance to hear what we have been doing

and to elect a new committee.

Guest speaker: Lynne Dixon

+ Wine & Nibbles.

Nominations for new members of the committee needed.

Members only – but new members can join on the night!

PLEASE CHECK IN THE MAY ISSUE OF THE WESTCOMBE NEWS IN CASE THIS MEETING HAS BEEN CANCELLED.

< < Newsbriefs > >

Congratulations

to Scott O'Connor, Terry Pullen, Paul, George and the rest of the team of our local Champions4Change (based in Charlton) who have won the Greenwich Business Award for Health and Wellbeing; their work for the young people (and others) of Greenwich is amazing.

Vera O'Brien

Some residents may not be aware that Vera, a life member of the Westcombe Society, passed away after a short illness, just after March's WN came out. Despite her age Vera lived a very independent

and active life and was very much part of the St George's community. She will be much missed.

The funeral will be held on the 2nd April (at St George's) and afterwards at the Newbridge Club on Charlton Road. The WN offers deepest condolences to her family. [Obituary: on Community page

After the horse has bolted ...

... it's not much good locking the stable door. In a powerful letter to Lloyd Grossman, Chairman of the Trustees of the Royal Parks, a local resident argued strongly against the Fanzone proposals. Unfortunately, this letter was sent after detailed

consultations with local groups had taken place – and after planning permission was granted.

Campaigners point out that this underlines the importance of making one's voice heard in a timely way if one wants to influence events.

Let them eat chocolate

The Belgian outgoing chair of the UN Security Council has marked the 75th anniversary of the UNO by presenting a special award to those members of the security council whose speeches were shortest: South Africa, the US, China, France and Estonia. The

reward: large bags of Belgian chocolates. The Westcombe Society is thinking of initiating a similar annual award.

Greenwich Council's Civic Awards

This annual event took place on 19th March. Among those on the receiving end was Neville Grant, who received a "Lifetime Achievement Award."

Council Tax

The council has increased the council tax by 3.99%.

COMMUNITY

Westcombe News

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ALL MATERIAL TO BE SENT TO:
wnews@westcombesociety.org

Deadline for the April issue: 16th April 2020
Advertising 10th April

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To access back-numbers (in colour) go to: www.westcombesociety.org/westcombe-news/ Westcombe Society's Blog:
<http://westcombe.blogspot.com>
Front page quote by - Bob Marley

WESTCOMBE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

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

Name.....

Address.....

Tel.....

Email:

Please enclose payment as appropriate:

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

Membership cards

A membership card is only issued at the time you join the Westcombe Society, and should be retained.

Should you require a replacement card, please contact the Membership Secretary, as above.

THE WESTCOMBE SOCIETY AGM 2020

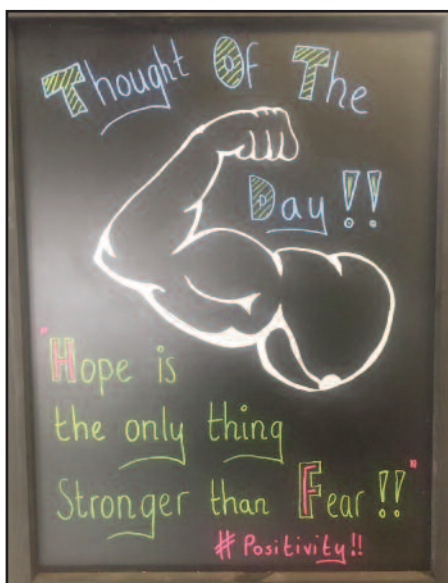
7.30pm on Friday 18th May 2020
in the Wollstonecraft Room,
Blackheath High School for Girls
Order of Business

1. Welcome and apologies for absence
 2. Approval of, and matters arising from, Minutes of 2019 AGM
 3. Reports from the Chair,
 - * Events Sub-Committee,
 - * Environment Sub-Committee,
 - * Membership Secretary,
 - * Editor of the Westcombe News
 4. Treasurer's Report and presentation of audited statement of the accounts the year ending 31/03/2020
 5. Election of Officers
 6. Charity of the year 2020-21
 7. A.O.B.
 8. Guest speaker: Lynne Dixon
- Subject: John Julius Angerstein and Woodlands. We will learn more about this fascinating person, his family and his links with Westcombe Park.

Do you have a Fitbit?
Are you keen to 'up'
your step count?

Why not take on a Westcombe News delivery? Some rounds even have steps!
Only around half an hour 10 times a year I'm afraid, but you are doing your 'bit' for the community at a time that suits you!

Call 020 8853 2756 for more info



Noticeboard at Better Gym & Pool, Greenwich Centre - boosting customers' moral

BE KIND, SHOP SENSIBLY,
THINK OF OTHERS' NEEDS AS
YOU TAKE CARE OF YOUR
OWN



Letters

NOTICE FROM ST GEORGE'S CHURCH

In light of the Government guidance around non-essential contact during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have issued advice that public worship is suspended until further notice.

Therefore there will be NO church services at St George's Church until further notice. All other group activities which take place at the church are suspended as well.

Please check the St George's website for updates and resources to encourage you in this time of challenge. We will also be posting times when the church will be open for private prayer. If you have need of pastoral help or need any further information, please contact Rev Tim Yeager, Team Vicar.

St George's website: www.stgeorgeswestcombepark.org.uk

Rev. Tim Yeager: 020 3633 5494 or tim@stgeorgeswestcombepark.org.uk

VOLUNTARY WORK FROM HOME

Do you have a couple of hours free a week? You could be doing something from home, doing some desk research, making some calls, sending press releases or designing great leaflets. You could be joining sessions making art for an action, handing out flyers, be a smiley face at a community event, planting seeds, putting posters up in your local shop.

Get in touch with Karen there's lots to do and we will make it fun. Extinction Rebellion Greenwich Plumstead Common Road London, London SE10

WN 'WHAT'S ON' PAGE NEEDS YOU

As we face a number of weeks where nearly every public event, class and meeting has been cancelled what plans do you have to use this unexpected free time. Do let us have your ideas/suggestions and we will share them with our readers in our next issue.

WRITERS THE TIME IS NOW

Isolated, during times of plague, Shakespeare wrote some of his best plays. So, dear readers, why not write something for the WN? Stories, poems, feature articles on people or of a place of local interest – even angry letters to the editor, all grist to our mill!
- Neville Grant

Vera Blanche O'Brien 1924-2020

On 29 February, Westcombe Park lost one of its most outstanding, unforgettable citizens, Vera O'Brien who died peacefully at Lewisham Hospital after a brief illness.

Born at the Hospital for Mothers and Babies in Woolwich in 1924, she grew up in Westcombe Park, one of three children of Ethel and Albert Devile. In 1947 she married Roger O'Brien, who predeceased her in 2008.

She worked for 30 years as a secretary at Bredinghurst School in Peckham, retiring in 1989. For nearly 50 years, she served as a leader in the Girl Guides, running the 2nd Greenwich East Girl Guide troop, producing 18 Queen's guides. For years after that, grown women would stop by St George's Church on Sunday, just to say hello to their beloved "Mrs. O".

Vera is also known for the huge amount of work she did raising money for Christian Aid. Even up to her 93rd year, she could be seen up and down the hills of Westcombe Park, collecting donations.

She helped with children's reading at Kumon, with Messy Church at St James and Christ Church, was a governor at Christ Church School, churchwarden at St George's, fully immersed in Sunday school, choir, jumble sales, concerts, quizzes, handing out water bottles at the Marathon...and a regular deliverer of the Westcombe News. Rev. Tim Yeager calls Vera 'the heart and soul of St George's', and will be dearly missed by all.

Two days after Vera died, her family received notice from the Royal Borough of Greenwich that she had been awarded a Civic Award for Lifetime Achievement. The award will be presented posthumously to the family.

In view of the Covid-19 epidemic, and in order to protect all those who would want to attend, the family is organizing a Memorial service for Vera, to be held later in the year when the danger of the virus has abated. It will be at St George's Church, followed by a wake at the Blackheath Newbridge Social Club.

Further announcements will be made as soon as a date can be determined, and all will be welcome to attend. Donations in Vera's honour may be made to Christian Aid. <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/>

Vera is survived by three children, four grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.



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

From Alex McWhirter

Just wanted to thank you for alerting readers to the planned refuse collection changes in the March issue.

Myself and family were completely unaware that changes were being proposed.

One wonders how many of the Borough's residents are also unaware?

From Sue Gay Humber Road

Hi
When I first came to Blackheath 50 years ago I joined the Westcombe Society for the baby sitting club. There was also a Hospital Visiting Group who took elderly people to go and see their friends and relatives in hospital.

I was wondering if we couldn't organise a similar thing now to deliver shopping etc to people who may be isolated due to the corona virus in the coming weeks. I know lots of us can do on line delivery but many people can't or haven't got a computer.

I'm sure we could get lots of volunteers! (see front page - ed.)

From Mandy & Peter SE3

Dear Westcombe News
You may be interested to know as a footnote to the interesting article 'Winter Gardens For Sale' in the March issue of W. N.
Col. J.T. North of Avery Hill House, Eltham, had a son, Arthur Jewell North who played rugby for Blackheath and is named on their World War 1 Memorial Board at

the Rectory Field. Captain North of the 4th Battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers was fatally wounded leading an attack on a strong position and died the next day September 27th 1918, just three days before his 35th birthday and a month and a half before armistice. He was awarded the Military Cross, the citation for which appeared in The London Gazette, 11th January 1919. It states: "Captain Arthur Jewell North, 4th Battalion attached to 12th/13th Battalion. For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. This officer led his company in the attack only four days after he had taken it over capturing 70 prisoners and four machine guns. His leading contributed greatly to the successful issue."

From Neville Grant, Stratheden Rd

On a recent visit to India, rigorous checks were applied to visitors from the cruise ship I was on: our temperatures were taken - twice - and forms completed stating where we had been for the past month. Some people were not allowed ashore in consequence.

On our arrival at Gatwick - nothing! Not a single question even. Not a leaflet giving basic advice. I heard that a plane load of Iranians from virus-struck Tehran was ushered through without a single check. The much touted slogan to "Take Back Control" is a sad joke. Our government needs to take a grip.

LOCAL NEWS



photo: Myles Dove

Has Spring arrived at last? Seen in a back garden in Westcombe Park, this heron seems to think so.

Putting the House of Lords in its place

Earlier this year, Tory chairman James Cleverly mooted the idea of moving the House of Lords to York. Although this would be one way of demonstrating the government's commitment to reinvigorating the north, an influx of elderly lords (and ladies) might not be the most effective strategy.

Others point to the logistical problems of moving the Lords northward unless and until HS2 links London and York. However, relocating their Lordships will be necessary once work starts on refurbishing the Palace of Westminster, for where else could the House of Commons find a home?

One idea that has been mooted is steadily gaining traction: why not use the huge space that so often stands empty in Royal Greenwich? Yes, the O2! Members of the House of Lords could hardly object to being located to a Royal Borough. The O2 would accommodate as many of their Lordships as choose to turn up to pick up their daily stipend, and is only four stops away from the fleshpots of Westminster on the Jubilee Line. A similar idea surfaced in 2015, as reported in the WN.

Event organiser Ms Apryl Foole-Hardie is enthusiastic about the idea. "We could combine legislation with recreation," she enthused. "Many people would queue up, and gladly fork out £10.00 or so for a chance to hear their Lordships debating."

Greenwich Council is cautiously supportive of the idea, but worry there might be crowd control issues, as well as a danger of flouting local alcohol laws.

-Neville Grant

RECYCLING/DISPOSING OF PAINT

Westcombe News has recently featured several articles on Recycling and Waste disposal but so far we have not been able to advise on how to safely get rid of spare and old paint. Carole Destre, Waste and Streets Advisor for the Council has sent us the following information;

- Water based paints (emulsion) can be dropped at the site on Nathan Way, Thamesmead. There is a container at the far right hand side which is collected by a contractor. Bulk waste collection can be arranged for large numbers of cans.
- Solvent based paints and chemicals are considered hazardous waste and can be collected from individual properties by arrangement via the Council's website. It is gathered by the Corporation of London - 0207 606 3030 - which operates a household hazardous waste collection and disposal service on behalf of the Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Residents are requested to fill in a form on line including details such as quantity, size of container, type of paint, etc. Response time is 10-14 days and a phone call is made by the collectors two days before pick-up. All cans/bottles need to be boxed up in cardboard or plastic

THE WESTCOMBE NEWS TEAM

As reported last month in Westcombe News we are pleased to welcome our new (or perhaps we should say returning) editor, Anne Williams. Anne says that her first job will be to create a team around her that will reflect the differing interests and voices of the Westcombe News readers.

She welcomes input from the outgoing editor, Neville Grant, in fact finds it invaluable. So we will still be treated to his sometimes quirky, sometimes political, contributions. Neville cares deeply for our neighbourhood and was instrumental in developing the paper into the form it takes today.

New to the team are Polly Morgan, an experienced journalist who works in the Charity sector and Anastasia Panova, a young mum who wants to pick up the reins of a working life again and has chosen the WN to do so. Both of them have produced editorial this month and are fun to work with.

The Environment Editor, Maggie Gravelle, with the help of the Environment Committee provides important information on planning matters that concern the Conservation Area as well as reporting on other issues affecting our area such as transport. We appreciate the work they do to protect the environment in which we live; as we do Anne Robbins's knowledge of urban green spaces and her accessible writing style.

Checking our spelling and grammar is Annie Grey and WN is very grateful to her ability to proof the paper at the last minute.

Gavin Hose is our new Advertising Manager who has a welcome practical clarity, the advertising income pays for the paper so an important job!

Our printer, Dave, has been very supportive over the handover and continues to support us, his knowledge of Quark is invaluable.

So that is the production team.

And then...we have a host of Volunteers who first sort 4,000 copies into rounds and then deliver to all homes in the Westcombe Park area. This process is managed by Emily Norton who is in charge of distribution. Another important part of the process.

Finally, but most importantly, we have our readers' letters to publish.

DONT BE DUPED....

Below is a list to cut out and keep - on your fridge, notice-board - anywhere that reminds you, in these times of self-isolation and perhaps the boredom and loneliness that comes with it, **not to be duped by a smooth talking operator!** Tried and tested winners for scammers are:

Police scam you may receive a call from someone claiming to be a police officer or detective who convinces you to withdraw funds and hand them over to an investigator. They may give you a fake crime number and investigation details. They also convince you not to trust bank staff. In some cases, people are asked to call 999 or 101 to verify the call is genuine but the scammers keep the line open, so you are actually talking to them.

Amazon Prime scam you may get a call from someone claiming to be from Amazon Prime saying you've been charged for an annual subscription. They then tell you that fraudsters have hacked your account to authorise payment, but it can be cancelled if you press 1 and then give access to your bank account in order to undo the hack. Amazon Prime would never ask you to do this.

Bank scam someone may call claiming to be from your bank saying there's a problem with your card or account. They may ask for your account, card and PIN details. They may also advise transferring your money to a 'safe' account to protect it. A bank would never ask you to do this.

HMRC scam you may get a call from someone claiming to be from HMRC saying there is an issue with your tax refund or an unpaid tax bill. They leave a message asking you to call back. HMRC would never contact you in this way and ask for personal information and bank details.

Compensation scam you receive a call to tell you that you are due compensation for a vehicle/work accident, and you are then asked to provide personal details and/or pay an admin fee to proceed.

Computer repair scam an old one, but still very popular. Someone calls claiming to be from a well-known IT firm such as Microsoft to tell you your computer has a virus. They will ask you to download 'anti-virus software' which may cost but also turns out to be spyware, used to get your personal details. IT companies don't contact customers this way.

GREENWICH COUNCIL COST CUTTING

Below are the key budget savings that affect Parks and Open Spaces. Please note the dates of the different actions may change depending on coronavirus developments:

- Removing the dog waste bins, to be actioned between April and July 2020. Please note you can put your dog waste in the normal mixed waste park bins
- Stop locking parks and park carparks overnight, to be actioned from 1st April 2020.
- Reduce grass cutting frequency in parks, to be actioned from 1st April 2020. This will create new opportunities for conservation grass areas, new wildflower areas and new tree planting areas, and will make a positive contribution towards combating Climate Change.
- Stop providing dog waste bags, to be actioned from 1st April 2020
- Increasing the amount of allotment sites that are self-managed, to be actioned from April 2021
- Transferring the management of park bowling greens to bowls clubs, to be actioned from between April 2021 and April 2022. Discussion will be held with bowls clubs during 2020, to discuss transferring the management of the bowling greens over to them.
- Reduce overtime at weekends and bank holidays at Maryon Wilson Animal Park from July 2020
- Planned changes to staffing arrangements will ensure there is improved cover at the Animal Park at weekends and will reduce staff overtime costs.

If you have any concerns regarding the above, please contact parks@royal-greenwich.gov.uk

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The Meaning of Education

It is not widely known that the meaning of the word 'education' changed in the 1980s to be the early (or late) learning of facts and processes the authorities regarded as needed by young people in their adult lives. (Unfortunately 'learning' has been widely interpreted in schools as 'memorising', something which usually only lasts for a few weeks.) Before 1960, the word 'education' referred to something much more spirited, elusive and less precise: a life-transformative initiation into the disciplines and knowledge which had sustained and grown the best culture of a country for countless decades. It was not, at that time, regarded as the same thing as 'schooling'. In those days a school might be put down as being 'just a cram factory', meaning that it tried to bully its students into learning facts and processes. This was not 'education', because it only impinged superficially and temporarily onto the child's psyche, and actually impeded the lifelong initiation into common values, standards, norms, insights and perspectives.

Why did the authorities adopt this changed meaning of 'education'? They were at their wits' end, because a so-called 'reform' of schooling in the 1960s had taken over in many places and had produced school-leavers who had been indulged, flattered, dumbed-down, radicalized against their own society, and encouraged to waste time. They and others who had been to genuine schools were tarred at the time as 'Generation X'. Today we urgently need to resume genuine education. Make your voice heard! SEE www.philosophyforeducation.moonfruit.com.

FEATURES

THE MAN FROM MYCENAE

Polly Morgan

Meet the Executive Director of the fantastic local community venue, Mycenae House & Gardens, Mark Johnson-Brown.

“When I came here, I had no ambition to run a community centre at all”, Mark declared. But it seems that Mark would be intrinsically tied to Mycenae House and to transform it eventually into far more than just a community centre.

Mark joined Mycenae House & Gardens, eight years ago in 2012 and since then has turned the venue into a buzzing hub of social activity for the local area.

Mycenae House, on Mycenae Road, Westcombe Park is an historic building, managed by the Vanbrugh Community Association and leased by the local council. The House has 23 flexible spaces available for community, private and commercial use including its own atmospheric Main Hall and Café/Bar. Activities cover almost anything you can think of, from live music, choirs, yoga, to counselling, children’s activities such as at the much-loved Easter Egg Hunt put on by the Westcombe Society, 11th April this year as well as a wealth of activities for older people.

For all who love Mycenae House & Gardens, it will come as no surprise, given the exciting music scene there, that Mark’s professional background lies in the music business, as a drummer in successful bands who travelled the world, and then moved into working with recording studios, live music concerts and venues, theatres and contemporary dance companies.

In 1988, Mark moved to London and lived in a bedsit nearby, joined a successful band, and they used to jump over the gates to the then derelict building of the centre and write songs in its garden! He said: “I said then that my dream would be to buy the rundown building one day, do it up and turn it into a recording studio and my home.” It was only 20 years later, when the financial crash of 2008 happened, and Mark’s music work suffered due to cuts in funding, that his wife spotted an advert in the paper for the job of running Mycenae House. She said it was ‘written in the stars’ that Mark applied. He did, and hasn’t looked back since.

When asked what his secret was in transforming the ailing venue he said: “I used techniques used in the arts world to turn the venue around – simple things, like producing a ‘what’s on’ brochure of our events similar to an arts or theatre brochure.”

Mark’s background in the music business has created something wonderful at Mycenae House, in that the venue is now infused with very popular live music all week round and hosts many community choirs. He added humbly, “The music

they can reinvest into the business. They are a registered charity with a very active Board.

Highlights of Mark’s tenure at the venue, include, when he realised they were ‘doing something different, but successful,’ than other community enterprises, when they hosted live music from famous guitarist Clive Carroll, which resulted in a ‘spectacular concert,’ that led Clive to recommend the venue to his musician friends.

Another highlight of Mark’s time at

people gain vital digital skills since the project launched.

The project has now been established for over two years and is managed by Deborah Fitzpatrick, their Community Project Outreach Co-ordinator.

Another successful project is the wonderful art from local contributors that adorns the venue’s walls, crafts made by local sellers and local photographers showcasing their work.

Mark sums up what Mycenae House embodies to many people and said: “We strive to serve the community, to help and embrace people and to support their development”.

When asked how important community still is to Londoners and British people in this fast-paced, digitally isolated world, he responded: “Change is inevitable, but we have to respond to that change. The world has changed. We also host many more rooms for counselling services than we used to which shows the effects of this new world. We need to change with the world and still be a space that brings people together, as people have told us how important that still is to them.”

Future exciting plans for Mycenae House, include expanding the enterprise, as well as funding a new outdoor, wooden ‘making space’ for arts and craft. And, to continue striving for excellence in all their activities.

Mark concluded: “There’s something unique about this area and the people that I have grown to love.”

In these tricky times, there is little doubt that under Mark’s vibrant guidance, Mycenae House will continue to flourish. He said: “With the coronavirus dominating world news at present, even if schools and workplaces shut, Mycenae House will be one of the last venues’ open, offering the community a cup of tea, shelter and support.” <http://www.mycenaehouse.co.uk/>

COVID-19 UPDATE

Mycenae House is open at present but running with a greatly reduced programme, due to the situation with the Coronavirus. Please check with each group leader before attending as the session might be cancelled. But their aim is to continue serving the community, while keeping everyone as safe as possible.



“Our ethos is ‘People and Positivity’

aspect of the venue was an obvious thing for me to do.”

“Our ethos is ‘people and positivity.’ Our door became always open to all. Our staff have made the venue a success with their positivity and people skills. We smiled at people. We tried to say yes to as many ideas as possible. We like good ideas, which come directly from staff or the community itself, which makes it attractive to local people.”

“I don’t call Mycenae House a community centre. We also thrive on our ability to have partnerships with the Westcombe Society through to the NHS, we nurture our partnerships. And overall, our purpose is to serve our community which is what we always try to do.”

This formula for success certainly translated – they used to receive more funding from the local council who own the building, but now that funding is lower they still manage to turnover a good profit, which

Mycenae House, has been the very successful community projects they have launched such as Mycenae Soup, based on ‘Detroit Soup,’ in the USA, which became a fundraising dinner raising vital funds for important local, grassroots causes.

Another community highlight has been the successful launch of their ‘Reach Out’ programme. After making a profit one year, Mark convinced the board to reinvest in this new community pilot. They brainstormed ideas to help reduce social isolation in older people’s lives and develop skills, and trialled projects for a year. They created a popular drop in session for seniors, ‘knitting nanas’, a social enterprise knitting for profit, and a very successful digital inclusion programme for seniors. ‘For our digital inclusion programme, we have been inundated with young people wanting to volunteer their time as ‘digital buddies’ for the seniors to learn from’. He estimates they have helped 250-300 older





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WHAT'S ON



By the May edition I'm sure WN readers will have figured out lots of activities to do during isolation. Currently there are many options available via Live streaming. Cultural activities ...opera, film, ballet, virtual art galleries even virtual zoos with live webcam in some of the animals' cages, poor things! As we prepare for an extended period indoors, what to do with the children, is going to be heard often. With this in mind WN asked its rookie journalist Anastasia Panova to share with our readers some of the things she has planned to keep her own children occupied and entertained during Easter time.

WHAT CAN WE DO, MUM?

Anastasia Panover

In my family, my Babushka, (Granny in Russian), would explain to us that Easter is when the Spring is finally here and we have to welcome it and make ourselves ready for it.

After 40 days of mindfulness (I think this is the best word for fasting) our mind and body are ready for the new season. The next step, according to my Babushka, is to clean your house. The whole family, even the youngest people, would have a little bucket with water, a cloth and an area to clean.

After the cleaning, I will probably reward my crowd by allowing them to run around the garden and generally mess around.

DRESSING UP FOR TV NIGHTS

I highly recommend this link: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x6u8h01> as it has good quality of a sound and video.

For special nights, opera night/ballet/premieres/musicals, we all dress up, put on long dresses (from the dressing up box), the girls wear make-up and the boys a moustache.

When we are all sitting down we pour 'champagne' into best glasses. It's fun and helps them enjoy less accessible (for children) cultural choices.

RECOMMENDED FILMS

A French musical directed by Jacques Demy called 'Donkey Skin', 1970.

It is also known by the English titles Once Upon a Time and The Magic Donkey. The film was adapted by Demy from Donkeyskin, a fairy tale by Charles Perrault about a king who wishes to marry his daughter. It stars Catherine Deneuve and Jean Marais, with music by Michel Legrand.

-Series from Sweden Nobel prized author – Astrid Lindgren, Pippi Longstocking, Germany 1969
-Emil i Lönneberga, 1971

PAINTING EGGS BABUSHKA STYLE

I would always be fascinated by the brilliant colours that my Babushka created from the natural world around us. Below are a few of my favourite memories, as well as a few suggestions I've discovered over the years, that I hope will inspire and amaze your children today as they did me.

My Babushka would always use natural dyes. The great thing about trying these natural products is that you can let your children safely experiment with them and find different ways to get different shades and intensity of colours out of them.

Challenge your children to come up with different ideas for using the natural ingredients and let them crush, squeeze and prize the colours from their sources.

Yellow onion skins

I used the skins from two yellow onions in one cup of boiling water and two tablespoons of white vinegar. Leave the skins in as the egg soaks for about two hours. Of the natural dyes, this produced the best colour in the least time.

Blueberries

I used 1/4 cup of blueberries and mashed them up really well. Then added one cup of water and two tablespoons of white vinegar. The egg had to soak for four hours to get the color

in the photo. It will come out of the dye looking purple and will dry to blue.

Beetroot juice

I used beet juice from a can of beets, undiluted, with two tablespoons of white vinegar. It took 16 hours of soaking!

Coffee

I used one cup of left-over coffee with two tablespoons of white vinegar. You could probably get a deeper colour by adding some instant coffee to make a more concentrated mix. I let this soak about three hours.

Note: Ones that I read about that did not work at all - (defined as very little color absorption in 3 hours): spinach, grass, cherries, wine, carrots, lemon peels, grape juice, any sort of flower petal, chili powder, paprika and cocoa powder. Two that I have not tried, but which I think might work, based on the experiments I did: red onion leaves and turmeric.



Pininterest

COLLECTING TOKENS

I have never tried using tokens as rewards before, but now is the time, with the (potentially extended) holidays upon us, to try it with my 10 year old daughter & 12 year old step-son. I would like to have a rewarding system for my younger girls too (I'm still working on ideas to motivate them fully).

So here we go with a reward system that I hope you will find helpful and fun too. The idea is straightforward: to reward positive actions. Tokens will be given for studying, helping in the house and practicing different languages. They can use tokens for buying extra time watching something of their choice, or perhaps on home cinema tickets (which can include ice-cream/popcorn), or to increase their pocket money.

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The English Bridge Union are running games on Bridgebase Online that have been going well and appreciated by the players, so the EBU have arranged to hold them in the afternoons as well as the evenings, at 2.00pm and 3.30pm. Visit the EBU website for details.

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FEATURES

CORONAVIRUS AND MENTAL HEALTH

I am the director of a counselling charity in Greenwich, which we have had to close this week, due to the coronavirus pandemic. It feels counter-intuitive that we are closing our doors at a time when our services are more needed than ever. These are extraordinarily strange times and, in addition to feeling unprepared for the practical repercussions of the Covid-19 virus, we have no previous experience of how this will impact us emotionally. All of us have suddenly had to re-adjust our expectations around our health, our freedom and our daily life, and drastic changes are being announced daily by the government. It is hard to avoid coverage of the virus; it is brought into our living rooms and workplaces via the TV, news and social media.

Everybody is talking about it all of the time; it can seem very frightening and it is hard not to get caught up in difficult feelings of anxiety, helplessness, frustration and anger. The scenes in the supermarket; panic buying, empty aisles and counters, and queues out to the car park are a potent symbol of people's fear; to someone who feel powerless, stockpiling may seem like a way of taking back some control. How do we prevent these powerful emotions from becoming so out of control, that they can prevent us from coping?

One thing that we can do is to monitor how we are accessing information and ensure that we are getting it from accurate sources. If you are feeling paralysed by anxiety it can be helpful to ration exposure to the news and build in regular distractions such as music, reading, box-sets, Netflix, playing games or any absorbing activity that focuses the mind elsewhere for a while.

If you are anxious it is also important to talk about it and not bottle it up. Sharing your concerns with another person may be beneficial for both of you, provided you

also talk about other things as well. If you can identify specific worries (what if my 96-year old mother gets the virus? how can I manage working from home while minding the children?, how will we survive without a guaranteed income?), you can then make decisions about things that are in your control. Remember to focus on what is actually happening, not on what might be going to happen- catastrophising will not help you to control your anxieties.

Be aware of what helps you to relax – this could be something sensory. Everybody responds differently but many people find playing certain music, scented candles, hot baths, yoga can be helpful. It is important to keep fit and try to get plenty of fresh air. Spring is almost here and assuming the park remains open, going for walks is one of my favourite ways of rebalancing my mood. Pets can also help sooth anxiety.

Stay in touch with others. We are all going to feel more isolated, and this can lead to loneliness. Without the regular day-to-day human contact of work and school, it is important to make use of phone, internet and social media to continue communicating with friends and family.

Let us also not lose sight of some of the positive things that are also happening at the moment. In the local area the crisis has generated many random acts of kindness; neighbours offering to help each other out and keeping an eye on the vulnerable and isolated. It may well be that we emerge from all of this in a few months' time, with a stronger sense of community and connection. In the meantime, we need to support each other, re-assure each other, really appreciate the key workers who are in the front line, and learn to connect with each other in a different way.

Rosie Stadon (The Deborah Ubee Trust)

CHALLENGING ACTIVITY BAKE OFF AT HOME

This recipe will test even a practised cook. Most of the ingredients can be bought in a health food shop or online.

Ingredients:

1 and 1/2 cups almond meal – 150 grams
1 cup buckwheat flour – 140 grams
3 tbsp chia seeds – 27 grams
3 tbsp psyllium husk
1 cup mixed seeds (I typically use a blend of buckwheat groats, sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds)
2 tsp bicarb soda
1/2 tsp salt
2 tbsp rice malt syrup (can substitute maple syrup or honey) – 40 mL
2 tbsp apple cider vinegar – 40 mL
2 cups water – 500 mL

Instructions

Combine the almond flour, buckwheat flour, psyllium, chia, mixed seeds, bicarb and salt in a large mixing bowl. Make sure there are no lumps in the mix.

Take another smaller bowl and combine the water, rice, malt syrup and cider vinegar. I find this is easiest to do if you first use a fork to whisk your rice, malt syrup and apple cider vinegar into one cup of warm water (not boiling, just hot enough to melt the syrup), then add a second cup of cool water.

Pour the water mix into the dry mix and combine thoroughly. Yes it will look like a wet, grey-ish mess (but don't worry as it

turns a nice dark brown when you bake it).

Cover with a tea towel and allow to sit in the bowl for at least one hour. During this time, turn your oven on to 80°C/350F/Gas 4 and also line a loaf tin with baking paper. I used a fairly small loaf tin, about 20cm long (this is so you get a taller loaf).

After an hour or so check on your 'dough'. It should have absorbed any excess water, though it will still be wetter than a standard bread dough. It will feel quite sticky to touch.

Scoop the dough into your loaf tin and smooth the top out evenly, smoothing out any air bubbles.

Place in the oven and cook for

between 1 hour – 1 hour 15 minutes. At the 1 hour mark, check on the bread and make sure it is not burning. It should be a very dark brown on the outside, and very firm to touch in the centre, when it is done

Remove from the oven and allow to cool completely; remove it from the baking tin as soon as it's cool enough to handle to avoid it 'sweating' in the tin.

Once cooled, slice and store in the fridge for up to a week or keep in the freezer for a longer life.

This recipe was recommended to Anastasia Panova by a nutritionalist...I wonder what Paul Hollywood would make of your nutritionally dense bread bakes?



DIARY OF A CRUISE

Going on a Cruise is not as popular a choice of holiday as they once were; but Neville and Jane Grant went on a fly-cruise for a month in February. So how did it go?

'We flew to Colombo, in Sri Lanka, or an Air Lanka flight. The cabin crew all wore face masks because of the coronavirus.

We all felt like patients. It wasn't clear whether they were protecting themselves from us – or protecting us from them. We were met on arrival by representatives of Fred Olsen Cruise Lines, and installed in our cabins in the good ship Boudicca. We were lucky enough to have two portholes.

We weren't in Colombo for long – time for a quick city tour, and a cultural evening of Singhalese song, dance – and food... and then we were off.

We sailed up the west coast of India, first stop at Kochi in Kerala. India was taking no chances – we all had to complete health questionnaires, and had our temperatures taken – twice – before being allowed ashore. Kochi is famous for its Chinese fishing nets and there are Chinese influences in its architecture. For an insight into the interior of Kerala we went on a river trip on one of hundreds of house boats, a delight, despite extremely hazardous boarding arrangements

Next stop, Goa, (a fine tour of Catholic churches and picturesque old Portuguese houses), and then Mumbai. There we met up with a family member who showed us round after a delicious lunch in the Sea View Room of the Taj Hotel, overlooking the famous Gateway to India. No visit to Mumbai would be complete without a look at the magnificent Gothic Revival architecture of The Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, formerly known as Victoria Terminus – the headquarters of the Central Railway and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We had planned to spend a night ashore with our relative, but couldn't risk it, as there was uncertainty about the Boudicca's time of departure next morning. So we returned to the ship that evening – just as well, because the ship left at 6.00am.

Our last stop in India was Porbander, in the state of Gujerat, birthplace of Mahatma Ghandi. We visited a temple, tried our sense of direction in a maze – and visited

the house where he was born.

From there, we sailed on the calm blue waters of the Indian Ocean enjoying the delights of a sea voyage. Fred Olsen spared no expense in entertaining passengers, mounting a very full programme of activities, including educational lectures and 'port talks', classes in singing, dancing and art – and even bridge, with a show every evening. And of course, sunbathing and swimming in one of several pools. The main hazard: indulging too much in the superb food and drink on offer.

Next stop – the Gulf. En route we took on three security men, ex Royal Marines, who were there to keep a sharp look out for, and help see off, any Somali pirates. Razor wire was attached to the sides of the ship, just in case.

A frisson of danger did nothing to dampen our spirits, as we visited first Dubai, with its over-lavish architecture, and then several stops in Oman, whose capital, Muscat, showed how much more attractive architecture inspired by Arab influences could be.

Then on to Aqaba, on the southern tip of Jordan, where one of the highlights was a trip to the Nabataean site of Petra. Very impressive, of course, despite the fact that it was unseasonably cold (8 degrees Celsius.)

From there, we passed through the Suez Canal and to a fascinating trip in Israel to Masada, the site of the Jews' last stand against the Roman Empire, and the Dead Sea. Finally Limassol, in Cyprus, with a quick tour of the amazing Roman mosaics of Paphos, before flying back on a BA charter flight to Gatwick.

No health questionnaire or temperature checks on arrival: and seemingly no panic – until we finally read the newspapers which were full of information on the coronavirus. Had we been sailing in a fool's paradise? Perhaps. But it was a memorable trip – an exercise really in sampling the different places we visited: for there was frustratingly little time to do more than sample these fascinating places.

And the cruise? Not for everyone perhaps, but if you want to go on a cruise, we would highly recommend Fred Olsen Cruise Lines'. -Neville Grant



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BE A HELPER BEE THIS SPRING

Plant for Bees and other Pollinators

Climate change, habitat loss, pollution and disease are pushing some of our insect life close to extinction. But without these useful creatures, we would have no fruit or vegetables to eat, and plants would have no way to reproduce themselves. The natural cycle would be disrupted, with dangerous consequences. Whether you have a balcony, a small patio or a large garden, growing flowering plants is an effective way to help Britain's bees, hoverflies, butterflies, and other pollinating insects, plus the birds and bats that feed on them.

Pollinating insects need food, water and shelter. They love flowers that are rich in nectar and pollen. Nectar contains sugar for energy, while pollen contains protein and oils – forming a balanced diet.

Bumblebees, honey bees, and solitary bees are active throughout the year, so you'll need flowering plants from spring to winter. Choose plants with pollinators in mind. Pollinators prefer to feed on plants in full sunshine.

Plant in large blocks, grouping plants together rather than dotting them about your garden, to save the insects' energy when foraging.

Best small trees, shrubs and plants

For spring and summer, willows (for pussy willow), apples and orchard fruit including crabapples, plum, pear and damson, and hawthorn all produce great blossoms. They can all be very decorative, too, though hawthorn can be thorny. Useful shrubs include flowering currants, pyracanthus (also thorny), and rosemary. There are lots of perennial plants: pulmonaria, crocus, snowdrops, hellebores, primroses and grape hyacinths flower early. Scented herbs including marjoram, English lavender, catmint and calamint, and many types of sage; all support insect life. Hardy geraniums like Rozanne are a good choice.

Phacelia, which you can sow annually, and viper's bugloss, which seed in one year to flower the next, are attractants. Bear in mind that very fancy flowers can produce less nectar and pollen. And find an area in your garden which can be left less tended: some weeds like dandelions, thistles, and even brambles are great insect feeders.

In autumn and winter, shrubs like abelia and mahonia extend the feeding season for bees. Michaelmas daisies, sedums like Autumn Joy, perennial wallflowers like Bowles Mauve, and single-flowering dahlias are all attractive choices. There are some winter flowering plants for insect support, including winter aconite and

lesser celandine. And ivy, which flowers in the autumn, is a particular treat for insects.

What else can we do?

Cut the grass less often, so pollinators can find shelter and a place to feed. Create bug habitats with a small wood pile in a corner where insects can nest, and bee

hotels. You'll find advice for these online, at the Wildlife Trusts website. Avoid treated wood, though, as it's poisonous to insects, and don't use pesticides or herbicides. You can rub greenfly off with gloved hands, or let blue tits and lady birds have a feast! Insects need water, ideally from rain, so providing a shallow dish with a few stones for insects to perch on, or adding perches in a pond using floating-leaved plants, wine corks, or rocks, is a help. And try to avoid peat-based compost, to save a precious and very endangered habitat.

You'll find lots of advice from the conservation charity Buglife, the Wildlife Trusts, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, and Friends of the Earth. See also 'Plants for Bees' by W. D. Kirk and F. N. Howes, a great resource. - Shirley Broughton



Photo by Claire Wallace for the Bumblebee Conservation Trust

LOCAL EXTINCTION REBELLION MURAL



Photo: Cerys Luck

A new feature of the area is being created in Dinsdale Road, a street mural depicting climate activists across the world. Fiona, on whose wall this is being painted, says that she wanted to mark their courage and concern and notes that it will be the first Extinction Rebellion mural in London. The artist is Dan, 'a talented portraitist and pavement artist', who has promised to take great care of the plants and the bench. When the mural is finished local children will be invited to add their own contribution.

Margaret Gravelle

BRINGING A SECRET GARDEN BACK TO LIFE

I was pleased to see in the March edition of the Westcombe News that the 590-year-old Greenwich Park has secured £4.5m in Lottery funding, and has such exciting changes planned. This is in sharp contrast with 400-year-old Charlton Park, only a short step away and yet very much the poor relation and in need of our support.

A shade younger than both parks is the Charlton & Blackheath Amateur Horticultural Society (CABAHS) which celebrates its 70th anniversary this year, and takes 15% of its membership from the Westcombe Park area. It has been holding its monthly meetings at Charlton House for the last 30 years. A Grade 1 listed Jacobean gem, which has stood largely unchanged for over 400 years, although much of its lands were sold off for housing in the 1930s. Its once famed views over the fields down to the River Thames and Greenwich Palace are no more (Charlton Riverside etc is in the way), but it is still a little green oasis in London's suburbia. The House runs as a community centre, library, wedding and film venue.

While the House is beautiful, the Horticultural Society is clearly more interested in its gardens. I was amazed how many of our members had no idea that it possesses not just one but three walled gardens - whose romantic, ivy-covered walls

are almost as old as the House.

Funding for garden maintenance has been cut recently, and the largest of the three, the Pond Garden, has become overgrown and weed infested. So at the end of February, CABAHS launched the Old Pond Garden Volunteer scheme, and since we picked the weekend of Storm Dennis we were prepared to be disappointed.

Gardeners are a hardy, waterproof lot, though and most of them would give their eye teeth for a walled garden to play in, so we had a fantastic turn out.

We have run three very successful sessions in the garden so far and lots more dates are planned. The offer of cake in return for some weeding seems to be a winning formula, and you should see the difference we have made already. We welcome all abilities, from novice to semi-professional.

With great timing, the new film of 'The Secret Garden', with Julie Walters and Colin Firth, is due to come out for Easter – why not take the kids to see it and then come and visit the real thing? The gardens are open Mon-Sat 10-5pm and the Volunteers are there most Sundays, come and see what we are doing; we are open to everyone, and love to chat! Website: cabahs.wordpress.com Follow us on Facebook and Instagram -Kathy Aitken



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See also <http://www.westcombesociety.org/>

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