

# Westcombe NEWS

Free to 3800 homes, in libraries and shops and online

March 2021 No.2



*“We’re going to make mummy breakfast in bed....we’ve been practising...”*

*Megan (9yrs) and Edie (7yrs) Macqueen*

## THE FUMES AND SPLUTTERS OF PROPOSED TRAFFIC CHANGES

The minefield that are efforts to reduce traffic in SE London and make Westcombe Park Greenwich’s next low-traffic neighbourhood continue apace. Consultation on the LTN includes questions as to what times of the day cameras should operate on Maze Hill, Vanbrugh Hill and will end on 8th March.

In addition to freeing up access for buses, emergency services and taxis, the idea behind using cameras is so that the hours they operate can be changed in accordance with the times of heaviest congestion between the A2 and Trafalgar Road. This would not only deter cars from outside of the area but also residents from using their car to make journeys at the restricted times. A local resident had this to say. “The proposed experiment for the creation of an LTN ...on Westcombe Hill we have had to suffer the tsunami of traffic levels for years - the skip lorries passing through, the commuter buses and HGVs rat-running the A102 and in the years of Waze and Google Maps much more traffic from out of the area flooding a residential neighborhood. We have been desperate for this - our lungs are polluted, our children are vulnerable, our environment plundered - with potholes and water pipe bursts...”

“The objections of the people who are crying out about what MIGHT happen are upsetting. The proposed measures are an experiment and MIGHT work. LTNs are a necessity... surely any measures that encourage us to use the buses, walk or cycle should be welcome - we need to live more sustainable lives. Indeed we have also seen another bus route (very lightly used) added to our hill much supported by those who didn’t want it running through their neighborhoods - so people should use it.”

However, for the less able, other modes of transport aren’t an option as this local resident writes, “Once again the assertion is made that we should be walking or cycling. I am nearly 70 years old and have arthritic knees and arthritic fingers. I do not intend to take up cycling. Nor can I walk up hills with gradients as steep as those of Maze Hill, Vanbrugh Hill or Westcombe Hill with my shopping.”

“Vanbrugh Hill has a gradient of 17%. It is also worth noting that the only bus (the 386) that comes up Vanbrugh Hill has to be diverted if there is ice or snow on the road.” Another resident adds, “there may be plenty of buses on Westcombe Hill but for residents in the west of the area there is

only the 386 which doesn't serve North Greenwich or the Peninsula shops.”

It seems that Greenwich Council may be planning to extend camera enforcement to a further 40 sites during 2021. Whether local residents agree with any of these proposals remains to be seen. Opinion is certainly divided on the proposals for Westcombe Park and East Greenwich both on the subject on whether there should be a LTN at all and, if an LTN is implemented, the timings of camera operation and whether or not Halstow Road should be camera-controlled or closed completely.

Views are polarised, those who live on streets that have suffered from rat runners for years and those that have found themselves suffering more recently may be in favour of an LTN but others worry that residents who have no choice but to use their cars will be forced to make longer journeys on already congested main roads, causing more pollution to other residential streets as well as inconvenience. We do not have enough room to print all the letters we have been sent this month but have include extracts/summaries from them.

The Westcombe Society is critical of the survey which is rather imperfect in the range of answers that can be given, but nevertheless we urge all readers to respond, if they have not already done so. The Westcombe Society also feel that any measures taken must not increase pollution, either in Westcombe Park or elsewhere, so this will be central to our response to the Council.

The consultation questionnaire is available at <https://greenersafergreenwich.commonplace.is/proposals/westcombe-park-and-maze-hill-area-low-traffic-neighbourhood>. **The final date for comment is 8th March.**

Even the questionnaire itself has caused controversy as this resident points out, “I started to fill in the online Council survey but it quickly became clear that it was designed to get the results the Council were after rather than seriously canvassing local opinions on the proposal.” And this from another frustrated resident, “We have just completed our response to this survey but were disappointed there was no option for voting for things staying as they are.”

The Westcombe Society will also urge the Council to be flexible if any LTN measures go ahead with careful monitoring.

*continued on next column....*

## Carbon Neutral Plan 2021-2030 Have Your Say!

The Council have opened a consultation on their strategic plan for responding to the Climate Emergency and have “set an ambitious target to reach net zero carbon emissions” by 2030.

Key elements of policy include:

- Increased energy efficiency in buildings by installing insulation, window glazing, solar PV panels, etc.
- The replacement of gas boilers with electric heating (such as using heat pumps).
- Deployment of renewable energy and district heat networks.
- Reduced car, van and heavy goods.

vehicle use.

- The uptake of low emissions vehicles, including electric cars.
- Schemes to shift from car use to walking, cycling and public transport.
- Improving recycling and schemes that help minimise production of waste.
- Planting more trees and rewilding Council-owned parks and open spaces.

Details of the plan are at <https://carbonneutralgreenwich.commonplace.is/overview>

**Consultation is open until March 7th**  
*Maggie Gravelle*



Leila Miah (8yrs), a Blackheath High School pupil inspired by Marcus Rashford’s free school meals campaign, wanted to play her part in helping feed children and families in her community during lockdown.

She chose to cook her favourite meal of meatballs and rigatoni after receiving an Italian recipe book for Christmas. She awoke at 5am and cooked for eight hours to complete the meals. “I am lucky as I have nice food to eat but I know there are some children who do not always have hot food during lockdown so I wanted to share my cooking with them.”

Sarah Skevington, Head of Juniors at Blackheath High School said: “Blackheath

*.....continued from previous column*

While traffic has increased during Covid we don't know what levels traffic will return to post covid when hopefully people will start to use public transport again.

At the moment the situation is not helped by works on the Tideway tunnel on Deptford Church Street which are expected to continue into early next year and continuing works in East Greenwich and Charlton. Nor do we yet know what effect the delay in closing off the north-bound exit from the Angerstein roundabout onto the Blackwall Tunnel approach will have. This is as part of the ongoing construction of Cycleway 4 between Tower Bridge and Woolwich. No date has yet been given for when this will happen.

This debate is not going quietly into the night and might well end up a legal issue, as this resident foresees:

1. Information on the Council’s website is wrong and misleading
2. The proposed scheme in law is likely to be judged as disproportionate and could cause more harm than good
3. TfL Guidance has not been followed
4. The ‘Consultation’ itself has inherent bias and is not fit for purpose
5. The scheme is not an experiment.”

But change is necessary and it is coming. The fact being there are too many cars on the road, causing unhealthy levels of pollution for us.

But one person’s gain is another’s loss, as one resident of Maze Hill recognises as he paints a picture of what happened in their road when the LTN was implemented in West Greenwich, “Things changed overnight. We rose to a 5.30am chorus of commuters, horns honking, stereos blaring, engines spewing” but he ends his opinion with this, “I, for one, cannot see that a viable alternative is to do nothing.”

**THIS REPORT IS A WN TEAM EFFORT**  
*(WN withhold names due to trolling experiences on both sides.)*

High is extremely proud of Leila and her amazing achievements – not only did she cook for a whole day, but she also raised a fantastic sum of money to help her local community in the process.

“Throughout the pandemic we have been humbled by the efforts our pupils have made to support their communities, the NHS and our key workers. They’ve captured the Blackheath High spirit, taking initiative and going above and beyond to help others.”

Leila cooked 500 meatballs, using 30 tins of tomatoes and 15kg of pasta, in one day, to donate 100 hot meals.

*Well done Leila!*

## Your local food bank needs YOU!

The Bridge food bank based in the East Greenwich Pleasaunce, is still welcoming donations on behalf of a few chosen charities, namely: GRACEaid, a refugee charity based in Lee; the Queen Elizabeth Hospital wellbeing hub for NHS Staff in Woolwich; the Her Centre, a domestic violence charity, and MumsAid.

Lucie Murphy, General Manager said: “The charities we collect for are very grateful for any donation, however small, as it makes a big difference to those they support. We are still not as busy as we would like to be, but have regular kind-hearted people who donate, also local mothers and we have seen some new people donating, including those who must have read about it in the Westcombe News, which is great.”

“Covid has been hard on all of us but for some it has been a real struggle. Even a couple of items from the store cupboard can make a huge difference to a family wondering where the next meal will come from. Things are getting harder for people financially, so if you are in a position to donate a few items, it is more needed than ever”

Items still very much needed, include: store cupboard essentials, tins, packets of food, jars of sauce, teabags, instant coffee, cereals and chocolate biscuits, as well as full-sized toiletries, sanitary products, nappies, brand new underwear and socks.

The Bridge is open for donations every day 12pm-2pm and for an hour on a Saturday. For more information as to how to donate, please visit: [thebridgegreenwich.co.uk](https://thebridgegreenwich.co.uk) Facebook: thebridgeSE10.

*Polly Morgan*



# COMMUNITY

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## A ZOOMING QUIZ

J.J. Aune

We have the Norton family to thank for a very successful Westcombe Society Quiz on Zoom!

The organisation was amazing with extremely clear instructions. It was a surprise to many of us that groups from different households could join together in teams. Lively discussions of the suggested answers were possible in ‘Break Out Rooms’ where teams could meet between rounds. When answers were submitted we rejoined the main ‘room’ for more questions, answers and an update on scores all presented expertly by Emily. The graphics were very clear and worthy of a Peston programme!

The test of a good quiz is when the final scores are evenly spaced and they were. It means that everyone got the chance to get answers right somewhere in the question

categories. A good quiz is hard to organise but with the added demands of technology it really is quite a task!

There was even a raffle and an opportunity for the usual banter across teams. An added bonus was seeing friends and neighbours even if divided by a screen. At this peculiar time it was, in a strange way, very reassuring that they were well and that life goes on. We were able to welcome participants joining their families from other parts of the country and from as far away as Italy.

We all had a marvellous evening and must thank all those involved for their very hard work.

The quiz made £650.00 and Westcombe Society donated £1000 to their charity of the year. There were 14 teams.

## STGEORGE'S WESTCOMBE PARK

Our building may be closed but the Church is open. Join us online for worship:

•Sundays 11am on Facebook or YouTube - go to our website for links.

•Wednesdays at 8am – 9am for Morning Prayer on Zoom; for log-in details go to our website

•Our Easter services are planned will be online unless the Church building has reopened, watch the website for details. Our choir meets to rehearse on Zoom on Tuesdays at 6 pm – 7pm. For log-in details go to our website

Our Discussion/Study groups:

•First Sunday of each month 8pm, our freewheeling Discussion Group meets on Zoom, for log-in details go to our website.

•Our Lent course is Life Changing stories, for details and to download course material go to <https://www.church-poverty.org.uk/bible/lifechangingstories/>. The sessions, which will be on Zoom unless the Church has reopened, are on either Wednesday afternoons at 1.30pm (last session 24 March); or Thursday evenings at 7.30 pm (last session 25 March). Watch the website for details.

Telephone: 0208 858 6953

Website: [stgeorgeswestcombepark.org.uk](http://stgeorgeswestcombepark.org.uk)

“So what are you doing for Mother’s Day?”

“Nothing..be with Daddy” said Olyn (4yrs).

*Sorry mum!*



## Covid-19 Vaccination Bus arrives in Greenwich

The bus is visiting areas of the borough where there has been lower uptake, and targeting communities where evidence shows there is greater hesitancy about receiving the vaccine.

Cllr Denise Scott-McDonald, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economy and Skills at the Royal Borough of Greenwich, said: “The Council is strongly encouraging everyone to get vaccinated as soon as it becomes available to you – it’s the best thing you can do to protect yourself, your loved ones and everyone in Royal Greenwich.”

More information about Covid-19 Vaccinations can be found on SELCCG website: <https://selondonccg.nhs.uk/what-we-do/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine>

## LONDON TO CANADA Walk the Walk

Heather Lawson, a local woman from Vanbrugh Park, Blackheath is spearheading a huge virtual walking and fundraising challenge.

In February 2020, Heather travelled to the Arctic Circle with a group of 13 women and men to backcountry ski a marathon for Walk the Walk. Lifelong friendships were formed, as the group skied 26 miles on the virgin Arctic Circle snow.

During 2020’s Covid-19 restrictions, the friendships grew and they wanted to keep walking virtually.

When three members of the group – including Heather – discovered that close friends, all of them young, had been diagnosed with breast cancer, a new and much bigger virtual walking challenge was born. The plan was for the group to walk the 3,492 miles from London to Rousseau in Canada, from where one of the group originally hails.

As the merry band of eight people could not walk from London to Rosseau in Canada - the Atlantic is in the way- they have mapped out the distance, and each week they send Heather their mileage from the walks they do on their own. She then maps how far they are on their journey. The current collective total walked is 2,196 miles, with the group aiming to raise £1,000 for Walk the Walk.

Money is being raised through the virtual walking challenge for grant-making breast cancer charity Walk the Walk, which specialises in promoting the benefits of walking for overall good mental health and wellbeing. HRH The Prince of Wales is the official Patron of Walk the Walk.

**To sponsor Heather Lawson and her team, visit:**  
<https://walkthewalk.enthuse.com/pf/team-fever-tree>  
**or: [www.walkthewalk.org](http://www.walkthewalk.org).**

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## Letters

Brian Stater, Langton Way, SE3

Dear Editor,  
With great respect to Neil Rhind, I’m not sure he is entirely fair to dismiss the story of Inigo Jones as a possible architect of the Summerhouse at Charlton as “a myth” (Westcombe News, Feb 2021). The relevant volume of the highly-respected Buildings of England series, by Bridget Cherry and Nikolaus Pevsner, dates the building to around 1630, adding: “There is no documentary confirmation of the traditional attribution to Jones, but the complete absence of Jacobean frills at evidently such an early date makes it quite justifiable”. Cherry and Pevsner also identify Nicholas Stone, a mas-

ter-mason employed by Jones on the Queen’s House at Greenwich, as a contender for the Summerhouse design. It is not possible to prove that Jones was the architect; equally, and charmingly to my mind, it is impossible to prove that he wasn’t! Senior Teaching Fellow in architectural history, UCL

Trevor Allman

29 Coleraine Road SE3

Dear Westcombe News,  
In response to Paul Wheeler’s article (Westcombe News – February 2021) in which he asks why HM Government and Greenwich Council have enforced detrimental major road schemes at this juncture.

I think it is evident why this time has been chosen.

Central and local government are exploiting the Covid chaos induced by HM Government policy to the fullest degree, which has enabled them to bypass the usual democratic norms and ensured that local communities have been unable to organise concerted campaigns and protests against the so-called Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) schemes.

HM Government have similarly exploited Covid to trample our civil liberties into the dirt.

Just to reiterate that the Official Monster Raving Loony Party (Greenwich Branch) are totally opposed to the LTN schemes, as we support reducing

traffic volumes, not merely moving them elsewhere.

Away from politics, I was saddened to read of the passing of Doreen Grandon.

Our gardens back onto each other, so we had been neighbours for 47 years and both my late Mum and I had many conversations with Doreen over the fence during that time, and I also took up some local issues she raised when I was a Borough Councillor for this area (1986-1990).

My sincerest condolences to Doreen’s family at this sad time. Trevor Allman

(Official Monster Raving Loony Party – Greenwich Branch)



# LOCAL NEWS

## New Vegetable Farm on our Doorstep

WN Reporter

The food we eat and how it is produced has taken centre stage both in the health of the individual and of the Environment. It is therefore heartening to read of a small regenerative farm enterprise starting up right on our doorstep. Sitopia is a two-acre modern farm within Woodlands Farm, Shooters Hill.

Chloe Dunnett, the founder of Sitopia, shares with WN how her dream became a reality. “I’ve long dreamed of being a farmer, but for many years worked first overseas in Tanzania for international development charities then for over a decade in the civil service, doing bits of volunteering on farms in my holidays.”

“A couple of years ago I took the plunge to leave government to pursue the farming dream! I learnt as much as I could e.g. doing an urban food-growing traineeship in

Hackney with Growing Communities and also working with Alice Holden - Head Grower at Dagenham farm (now on our advisory board!); studying for an MSc in food policy at London's City university (to understand how farming fitted into the bigger food system issues we face); and then lived off-grid in a shepherd’s hut working full-time at a small biodynamic veg, fruit & flower farm in Herefordshire.”

“Covid (and my boyfriend) took me back to London in March last year, and I set up what were to become the pilot sites for Sitopia Farm - converting underused small patches of land in Islington and Hackney with the help of a wonderful team of local volunteers into thriving little farms, selling the produce locally and donating a proportion of our harvest to the local food bank.

Chloe says of Sitopia, “this is about

hope, practical action, community spirit, a love of our planet, and belief in the power of food. Our current food system is not fit for purpose, contributing to the climate crisis and biodiversity collapse, obesity and rising food poverty here in Greenwich as elsewhere. Yet the food system offers huge potential to solve these problems, and to be a joyful source of connection, nourishment, pleasure, creativity and local jobs.

“We know that London and other cities offer untapped potential for growing good food! We want to grow food with and for our community, making delicious, fresh, healthy, environmentally-friendly produce more widely available and spreading the word about the changes needed in the food system.”

“Food grown using regenerative agricultural techniques that enhance the environ-

ment, biodiversity, soil fertility and provide beauty; that recycle rain to water the crops, and use Londoners’ green waste to feed them! A place where all members of the local community can come, to connect with each other, to the land.”

So if you fancy learning about growing vegetables, salad and herbs or want to support this enterprise with its start-up costs, or just want to put your name down to receive a regular supply of its produce get in touch with Sitopa Farm. Incidentally, they also plan to grow and sell cut flowers to deliver to local homes and businesses.

They have a crowdfunding page on Spacehive with a financial target of £80,895. [www.spacehive.com/sitopiafarm](http://www.spacehive.com/sitopiafarm) and there's more about us on our website [www.sitopiafarm.com](http://www.sitopiafarm.com) and our Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/sitopiafarm/>.

## Tony Lord Paints a Picture of Bygone Times

While reading the revue of Neil Rhind’s Blackheath Village & Environs Vol III in your February issue, I was reminded of the times, almost 90 years ago, when my mother and I walked down Love Lane, as it was called in those days. Halfway down was a footbridge over the railway. On the land where John Ball School was built in 1953 were some sidings where railway trucks and wagons were shunted to and fro by steam engines. I loved watching the 325 to Charing Cross leave Blackheath Station heading for Lewisham. Occasionally one of the locomotives would come over the points onto the main line and puff under the bridge with smoke covering us with black smuts.

I think it was in 1937 that she read the story in the ‘Kentish Mercury’ of the man who had leaned over the bridge wall and threw his baby girl onto the railway track 20 feet below before making off. Someone passing by a few minutes later found the child’s empty pram and then saw

the child wrapped in a shawl lying perilously close to the electric conductor rail. Running up to St. Margaret’s Church, the man found a policeman (they walked about in those days). The brave constable ran down the pathway and got down the slippery grass embankment and lifted the girl off the line. Miraculously she was unhurt. When her father was arrested he said he had been unemployed for months and was unable to feed his daughter. He was sent to prison with seven years’ hard labour and the little girl taken into care.”



“Mum and I watching the trains on the footbridge in Love Lane, Blackheath.”  
Original artwork by Tony Lord

## Vehicle Crime

Marilyn Little

Figures have risen sharply mainly due to the theft of catalytic converters and also the theft of high value cars. Instances are occurring between midnight and 3am.

1. Always lock your car.
2. Close windows and the sun roof to prevent ‘fishing’.
3. Secure your number plates with tamper-resistant screws.
4. Fit locking, anti-tamper wheel nuts to secure alloy/steel wheels.
5. An additional visible deterrent such as a steering wheel lock or clamp can persuade a potential thief to move on.
6. Secure anything that’s on the outside of your vehicle – i.e. pushbike on rack or items on roof rack.
7. Take personal items with you or hide them out of view
8. Hide electrical items and leave no clues.
9. Tool theft from vans – use a form of security marking liquid
10. Park in well-lit and busier areas.

**Note:** For key-less cars, keep all sets of key fobs including the spare in a Faraday pouch. (‘Signal Blocking’ pouches can stop access to your vehicle by blocking your car key fob from transmitting its code to the vehicle, as the pouches are lined with layers of metallic material. Potential thieves have equipment that can access codes that are not protected.)

Always take note of manufacturers recommendations and consider fitting a tracker. Use ‘Find My Car’ Apps.  
**Catalytic Converter Theft Security**

### Advice:

The precious metal in catalytic converters has led to an increase in their theft. To keep yours safe, ask your car dealer if they can give you any advice on locks or guards that are approved by the vehicle manufacturer.

Try to park so that the convertor can’t be easily reached by potential thieves i.e. close to a wall or kerb to make jacking the car up more difficult. Vehicles that sit high above the road are particularly vulnerable. Get a protective mesh fitted.

You should also register your converter and mark it with a forensic marker, which will make it harder for thieves to dispose of. Visit ‘Secured By Design’ for further advice regarding theft prevention of Catalytic Convertors.

**For further advice:**  
[www.met.police.uk/crimeprevention](http://www.met.police.uk/crimeprevention)

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# FEATURES

## CHILDREN LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Teach the Future was formed by young people to lobby for "climate action, education and justice". Recently four young representatives of the campaign held a meeting with Matthew Pennycook, our local MP and Shadow Climate Minister. Bea H writes, "We discussed his role in Parliament and he expressed his support for Teach the Future's aims:

1. A government-commissioned review into how the whole of the English formal education system is preparing students for the climate emergency and ecological crisis.
2. Inclusion of the climate emergency and ecological crisis in teacher training and a new professional teaching qualification.
3. An English Climate Emergency Education Act - we are in the process of writing - to be submitted to Parliament.

However, our discussion also raised the argument that as effective and necessary government-funded top down schemes are, as Mr Pennycook put it, "grassroots" work and community development are essential.

So, next time you are complaining about

road closures in the local area, try to consider the advantages of this; cleaner air, safer streets, a prerogative to cycle more and an overall reduced carbon footprint.

Greenwich's carbon neutral draft plan is impressive, but our community cannot rely on just big projects, simple things like buying loose veg, reducing meat intake, talking with your children (or parents) and friends about the climate and what you can do to mitigate damage. We all have a part to play and if you can take one thing away from this article, let it be what we took away from our meeting; that although we are in the midst of an ecological and social justice crisis... it is not too late."

### One of those interesting facts:

The 38 years it took for Mr Pennycook to get to this point, 72.85 parts per million volume (ppmv) of CO2 gas has been emitted. With this, it is useful to keep in mind that 1 ppmv is equivalent to 17.3 gigatonnes (17.3 billion tonnes) of carbon dioxide. I am sure you agree... that is a lot (equal to the weight of four billion elephants).

## New Gardening Enthusiasts

Ann Hill

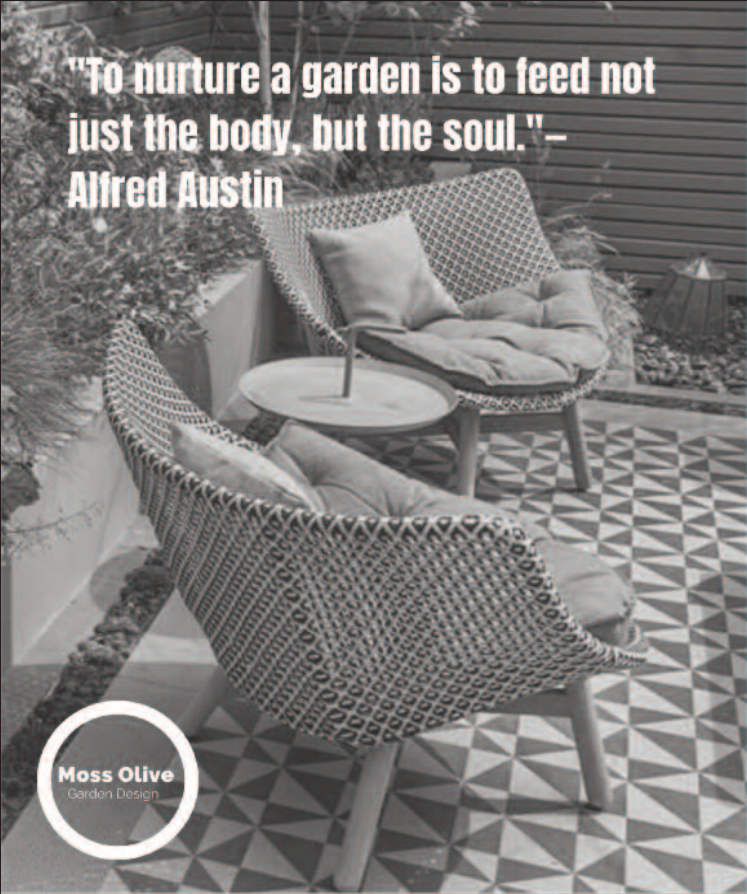
In March last year as lockdown started, the rush to buy toilet rolls and pasta was accompanied by an unprecedented rush to buy seeds and compost. Suttons Seeds reported sales 20 times higher than the year before and, by May, gardening was listed as one of the most popular lockdown activities. Suddenly, enforced time at home provided an opportunity to experience the calming and restorative powers of gardening. As Monty Don says 'We garden to nurture our little corner of nature but just as importantly, to nourish our souls.'

The Royal Horticultural Society reported also that front gardens are getting greener and paving and gravel becoming less trendy. This is welcome news as greener front gardens not only give pleasure to their owners and passers-by but they help wildlife, soak up rain water in storms, improve air quality, cool the air in hot weather and help insulate homes in winter.

It will be interesting to see if this trend away from paving and gravel is replicated in our Westcombe Park area. The RHS has some helpful design solutions for making front gardens green and beautiful, while providing room for a car or two (<https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=879>).

### Some tips for greening front gardens are:-

- hedges are better for wildlife than fences or brick walls. They also filter dust from the street. Mixed hedges with flowers and berries are best.
- grow climbers up the front of the house and plant shrubs at the base
- fill up corners where cars cannot park
- use all spare space around the edges for planting shrubs and flowers
- plant a tree: many are suitable even for small spaces and have flowers for pollinators and berries for birds.
- keep paving to a minimum – just two tracks can be sufficient
- leave pockets in gravel for plants
- use containers and pots to beautify areas with no soil
- aim to have plants in bloom from early spring to late autumn.



"To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul." – Alfred Austin



## Moss Olive Garden Design

Moss Olive design, build and maintain high quality gardens in Greenwich and Blackheath.

for a friendly chat ring Daniel on 07989 421 841 or [mossolivedesign@gmail.com](mailto:mossolivedesign@gmail.com)

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moss olive design



## Mother's Day Russian Style

Mother's Day is a day when we celebrate the women that gave us life. Mother's Day is the day we celebrate the people that looked after us, gave us food and cherished us. We celebrate this day in Spring because Spring represents new birth to all the baby leaves.

My family's tradition is to have a concert for all the mothers. We sing, recite poems and sometimes even dance. But that's not all we do. The concert I just described is a quarter of what we actually do. We plan the concert a month before, we then decide what acts we're going to do. On the actual day we dress up and put some makeup on (if we want to). Then the theatre begins. But because of this year's virus we won't be able to do this tradition but we will still celebrate this exciting day.

Vasilisa Nesterenko, 11yrs,

"I'm planning on making lots of cups of tea, buying daffodils and letting her have breakfast in bed" says Rafferty (10yrs)

Aw Bless...have a nice day Mum!

## "Choose to Challenge" International Women's Day 8th March 2021

The IWD's website explains this year's theme, "a challenged world is an alert world. Individually, we're all responsible for our own thoughts and actions - all day, every day."

"We can all choose to challenge and call out gender bias and inequality. We can all choose to seek out and celebrate women's achievements. Collectively, we can all help create an inclusive world."

"From challenge comes change, so let's all **choose to challenge**."

Inspirational women from the past who chose to challenge, from left to right:

Amy Johnson (1903-1941)

Florence Nightingale (1820-1910)

Emmeline Pankhurst (1858-1928)



## In Praise of Poetry

I woke this morning a praise on my lips  
Rejoicing I'm yawning a praise on my lips  
God always finds me even when I go adrift,  
So, I woke up this morning a praise on my lips.

So, I'm thinking about my nephew who talks to me.  
His lovely baby daughter walks to me  
Down the lens of a camera  
On video WhatsApp  
I'm thinking I'm enjoying all our little chats.

At a time now when were locked away from each other, true love rises above all, communications not as it was before, lockdown restrictions can leave you feeling raw.

Leave some people feeling poor, poorer then poor, loneliness is poverty!  
But even if you don't feel love you can still give love.  
Even If You Don't Feel Love You Can Still Give Love

So, I woke this morning a praise on my lips  
Rejoicing I'm yawning a praise on my lips  
God always finds me even when I go adrift,  
So, I woke up this morning a praise on my lips.

Kay Soord

## Gas Industry The Early Years



The Early East London Gas Industry: How it began and how it helped London industries to grow by Mary Mills

This book recalls a history of the early days of the Gas Industry in East and south east London, in the lively days of the early 19th Century. It looks at the gas works, their promoters and how the waste products were used. It demonstrates some of the roles gas manufacture played in the growth of industry in this period, in a dynamic urban environment.  
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# WHAT'S ON

## TV/FILM REVIEWS

In the 80s the young city dwellers of *It's A Sin* (Russell T.Davies) form an unlikely bond amid the oncoming unknown disease called AIDS. Ritchie (Olly Alexander), breaks free of his conservative home on the Isle of Wight, arriving in the smoke to study Law, but is soon treading the boards with his friend Jill (Lydia West).

What might not sit well with everyone, is the judgement ultimately heaped on Ritchie's mum, Valerie (Keeley Hawes), towards the end of the series. A generation of parents suffered the injustice of this unrelenting disease, and all too often they had no idea their children were even part of the community at risk. So, out of shame, thousands of boys were taken home 'for good', wrenched from their support networks.

*It's a Sin* delves deeper than this though, it explores unshakeable friendship in a hedonistic generation of innocents, faced, all too soon, with the serious realities of life. It's the afterglow of these relationships that endures.

Also available to stream is Netflix's *The Dig*; Simon Stone's muted dramatisation of the 1939 excavations at Sutton Hoo. Ralph Fiennes stars as excavator and amateur astronomer Basil Brown. Enigmatic landowner, Edith Pretty (Carey Mulligan), wants him to excavate the mysterious burial mounds on her rural estate, but Brown, with a self-assuredness won't work for less than £2 a week! Fiennes and Mulligan are joined by Downton Abbey's Lily James as the eager to please Peggy Piggot, and Ken Stott as pompous archeologist Charles Phillips, who is set on taking the credit for Brown's skilful endeavours. Add in the hint of an illicit gay affair, the passionate farewells of war-parted paramours and the terminal affliction of widow Edith and you have all the trappings of a faux Merchant Ivory classic. Don't expect to be on cloud nine after this one, but worth a look if you're in the mood for a slow-burner.

Quick suggestion: Is it a coincidence Trump's departure from the White House coincided with BBC iPlayer streaming a rather nice print of Orson Welles's 80-year-old classic *Citizen Kane*? They say it's the best film ever made, but, with pre-scient Trumpian parallels, I'll just encourage you to give it a watch and come to your own conclusions. I wonder what will be Donald J's 'Rosebud'!?

## ZOOM DATES

### Charlton & Blackheath Amateur Horticultural Society

Monday, 15th March at 7.15pm

Dr David Marsh, garden historian with the Gardens Trust, will present his talk on "Elephants in the Garden"

Non-members are welcome but please contact cabahshortisoc@gmail in advance. See our website <https://cabahs.com> for details of other events, and for latest news of the volunteer scheme at Charlton House.

### Virtual Travel anywhere in the world!

This idea was sent in by Helena Ballard which we think is fantastic. She said: "Whilst there is now some hope, many of us are missing travel abroad and have no idea when, or if, it may become possible. Meantime, we have come across a wonderful way of experiencing places and people all over the world, through Virtual Trips. These 45-minute visits take place in real time and are guided by locals who love both their job and their home territory."

"So far we've been to Glencoe with guide Craig and to Kyoto with Kentaro, who was apologetic about his English as he'd picked it up from hitchhiking across America! In each case their camera gave you the impression you were actually walking through the glens, along the paths, through the mountains, into the temples, between the ancient Japanese architecture. We went to Kyoto from our bed, as the tour took place at 7am!"

"The tours are free and you can invite friends to join you. Visit: [<https://www.virtualtrips.io/calendar>], there is enormous variety. We are off to St Petersburg at the weekend!"

### Enjoy some Burlesque Dancing!

Why not spice things up this Spring with an online burlesque class, courtesy of Luscious Cabaret, a London cabaret club which has just celebrated its 10th anniversary!

Emily Flynn (known as Little Lady Luscious), Founder of Luscious Cabaret, said, "Back in 2009, I was living in New Zealand and looking for a class which didn't involve a partner and came across burlesque. When I returned to the UK,

This month's TV/film review is written by Andy Morley, a talented, professional local conductor of classical music orchestras, including St.Paul's Sinfonia, a local chamber orchestra. Visit: <https://www.stpaulssinfonia.com/>

I wanted to continue lessons but struggled to find a teacher." So she became that teacher! "Ten years on and I have taught more than 200 people, hosted many cabaret shows and seen students continue their burlesque careers becoming award-winning performers. With the pandemic forcing classes online I have been able to teach people across the country who I wouldn't have normally met."

Visit: [www.lusciouscabaret.com](http://www.lusciouscabaret.com).

### Arts Society Greenwich

#### THE ART OF 1935

Lecturer: Pamela Campbell-Johnston

4pm Monday 8 March 2021

#### Can a single year adequately encapsulate an artistic environment in British art history?

This lecture explores that year's many aspects of decorative and fine art, demonstrating how these artistic forms reflected the period in a fitting and cohesive manner. Set against the backdrop of the 1935 Silver Jubilee Celebrations of King George V and Queen Mary, the fully illustrated talk examines the range of contemporaneous art forms. An exploration of the year 1935 would not be complete without a study of certain significant works by the Polish-born artist, Tamara de Lempicka, which have come to personify this age of Art Deco. We also review Art Deco interiors on stylish cruise



liners and film sets, as well as acknowledging the importance of The Lansdowne Club which opened its doors for the first time on 1st May 1935. Sporting and motoring trivia are also revealed.

Members will receive email joining instructions. Guests are welcome for £5 - please email [ticaclark@hotmail.com](mailto:ticaclark@hotmail.com) for further details.



If you have any events, happenings or entertainment you'd like publicised, please email: [wnews@westcombesociety.org](mailto:wnews@westcombesociety.org). Polly Morgan (above) and our readers look forward to hearing from you.

Saturday 13 March 2021 at 2pm

### EAST MEETS WEST

Indochina and France Cultural Exchange and Artistic Fusion -

A Study Afternoon presented by Denise Heywood

When Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos became Indochina, part of France's colonial empire, French scholars uncovered and studied their ancient cultural heritage. The Hindu and Buddhist temples of Angkor, Luang Prabang and Champa became the pearl in the crown of L'Indochine française. But France also made Indochina visibly French, building elegant cities to rival Paris, such as Hanoi and Phnom Penh, their remnants today evoking nostalgia. French artists taught painting to a new generation of Vietnamese and were in turn influenced by their rich artistic traditions.

Cambodian dancers visiting Paris inspired the sculptor Rodin and a generation of western ballet and performing arts. A new aesthetic emerged in art and architecture, a fusion of East and West. The first talk will focus on Vietnam and Laos and the second on Cambodia.

Two 45-minute talks with a 10-minute break and followed by a question and answer session will be presented on Zoom

**Cost: £25. For further information or to book a place please email Nancy Bettelley [nancybettelley@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:nancybettelley@hotmail.co.uk) [www.theartsocietygreenwich.org.uk](http://www.theartsocietygreenwich.org.uk)**

### IN-WORDS

25th March at 7.30: 'ONE YEAR ON' lockdowns, tiers, losses and insights. Listen to individual takes on the last 12 months with poets Rosie Johnston, Alex Josephy, Colin Pink, Jacqueline Saphra and Rob Walton. Free. Please email [irena@in-words.co.uk](mailto:irena@in-words.co.uk) to receive a Zoom invitation.

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# FEATURES

## COMMUNITY LOSSES, INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND REGENERATION

The Westcombe News is a community newspaper created by volunteers who live locally. We are receiving many stories of community losses caused by the pandemic; individuals and groups are mourning the loss of local group meetings and venues during these lockdowns. However, here at the Westcombe News we don't stay down for long and focus on positive solutions, so we are launching a page in our paper to encourage all of you in the local area to reach out and reinvest in vital community services to regenerate post-pandemic. Dig deep, reach out and invest...and send us your stories of loss, through to regeneration...*we can rebuild the future!*

### THROUGH THE RED DOOR

Helen O'Hara

In 2015 I moved back to London. I'd started to busk, playing my violin in Greenwich where I lived. Passers-by would stop and chat, but there was one conversation which changed my life. Elizabeth said I should seek out Edward and the Red Door café. "It's your sort of place" she said, "lots of music - you could play there."

The café was in Turnpin Lane - an ancient narrow footpath running across the market, flanked securely by Hawksmoor's St Alfege Church at one end and the Old Royal Naval College at the other. I found



the red door and stepped into 'my sort of place'. Glenn Gould was playing Bach, and Edward - a Scot with wild curly hair and vintage clothes - was drying some floral patterned china cups and saucers under the light of a beautiful chandelier.

I introduced myself and mentioned that I used to play with Dexys Midnight Runners. Edward nodded. I explained that I'd stopped playing the violin for over twenty years but had recently started playing again and was looking for places to play, not for money, but to build up my confidence - to help me pick up my career again. Edward said I could play at the café, high up in a sort of minstrels gallery, accessed only by a ladder. And that's how it all started - not me playing my violin again, although I'm doing a fair bit of that

- but the loveliest friendships in the most enchanted space I've known.

Over the following months I called in regularly and met others - musicians, an archaeologist, a choreographer, a rare stones dealer and local market traders. Edward would hold court in the tiny central space where he would make Monmouth coffees and speciality teas, slice locally-made delicious vegan cake and put together cream cheese, chilli jam and avocado bagels. We'd put the world to rights or discuss music, set against a backdrop of fairy lights, fresh flowers and album covers.

Sometimes I'd find the café closed. There were no regular opening hours. On other occasions, customers would say "He's just popped out for a bit." Edward had left them in charge. There was no till or card reader. "It's cash only - there's an ATM around the corner" he'd proclaim. They'd always come back, their money going into a small red petty cash tin.

Without warning, Edward might burn some sage and waft it around the café to the amazement of customers who I sensed felt like they'd been flung back to medieval times. He'd play Dylan and the Beatles and get excited about certain lyrics or musical passages and the whole café would tune in together. It could also be the most tranquil

place imaginable - friends quietly chatting in a corner, someone reading a book, whilst Leonard Cohen sang softly to them. However it turned out, Edward was the ringmaster.

Most of us had done a turn there, washing up or holding the fort when Edward had to leave for something happening elsewhere in his life. Disasters occasionally struck - a slight problem with the plumbing or a chair might suddenly collapse. It was all part of the Red Door theatre, where anything could happen.

Edward and I had recently introduced live music evenings - gypsy jazz, classical, folk - anything went. Everyone who performed commented on the wonderful atmosphere and warmth from the appreciative audience. I had never experienced evenings like these before.

One morning the red door was closed, and then the next and then the terrible realisation that it wouldn't be opening again. The pandemic had struck. When I bumped



Edward O'Connor far left

into friends I could sense the loss, like a bereavement. Our magical café, full of love and friendship - the heart of Greenwich to us - had gone. A reminder too, that the Red Door was one of many community spaces lost to the pandemic. The very places we desperately need now. A few months later, on a bright summer's morning, Edward phoned me. He was buoyant. "We're meeting in the park. I've found a place."

At the top of the hill in Greenwich Park stands a beautiful ancient oak tree. The towering oak looks out over the Thames towards Hampstead and beyond. It will have seen turmoil and sadness, but also hope and happiness. When rules have allowed, we've met under the oak's huge branches which tenderly wrap around us. We've brought our own drinks, laughed and continued to put the world to rights. We've listened to the birds and children playing instead of Dylan and Bach. We've celebrated two solstices, Edwards's birthday, a new baby, and of course, our friendship. The Oak has become our 'sort of place' for now, and when rules change we'll meet there again. I hope others have found their 'sort of place' too, which will look after them, until new doors open for us all.

*Helen is currently playing violin with Tim Burgess & The New Skies and writing her memoirs. (Both Pics by Helen)*

### The Art of Greenwich by See Thru Sarah

The word 'Art' embraces all kinds of creativity and Greenwich is blessed with a wide variety of classes and venues in which, before Covid-19 hit, we could explore and express our talents. Venues for live music include local pubs as well as the growing development of festivals along the river, OnBlackheath and the high-profile 02. There are also a variety of art galleries, exhibition venues and markets. I really hope when we have all managed to get the vaccine and overcome the very frustrating effects of the pandemic, these brilliant centres will recover and reopen. BRING IT ON!!!

Art classes include ceramics and pottery, photography, painting and drawing - including watercolours - in fact, all painting genres of different mediums, oils, acrylics, pastels etc. I have also participated in writing and screenwriting. My friends have been inspired to make mosaics, stained glass, jewellery and learn new languages.

All art provides an opportunity to embrace a wealth of cultural interactions, inspiring and motivating us all to get even more creative!

**Venues offering classes:**

**-Greenwich Learns - see <https://greenwichlearns.org.uk/coursesfor courses and locations>.**

**-Greenwich Community Directory see <https://greenwichcommunitydirectory.org.ukfor courses and locations>**

### Investment Opportunity!

NIGHTINGALE MUSIC CIC provides free access to music classes for some of the more vulnerable members of the local community and beyond.

Prior to lockdown we ran classes at Mycenae House in collaboration with Reach Out. These classes became popular and so we started to run an extra weekly class at The Greenwich Carers Centre based in The Stables where wheelchair users could also access these sessions.

The sessions provided a platform for service users to perform solos as well as join in ensemble music-making. A team of volunteers assisted the sessions and great fun was had by all. Everyone left the sessions feeling uplifted and positive. Some of our most vulnerable service users would arrive withdrawn but by the end of the sessions were transformed and alert.

Throughout lockdown many of our service users sadly have not been able to access the online sessions that have been running. Therefore we are planning for a great return to live music-making at some point in the future. When we are able to meet again we hope to rebuild our connections with all our service users and their carers.

**NIGHTINGALE MUSIC CIC operates as a non-profit organisation and relies completely on donations, grants and awards.**

We have been busy fundraising since June 2020 with over £2000 raised via online concerts, community singing events, recording projects and donations. To find out more about our projects and to donate, please visit [www.singtogether.org.uk/community](http://www.singtogether.org.uk/community). Every penny counts! **Emma Bond**



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Planning applications can be viewed in the library, or at the Woolwich Library on the lower ground floor of the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington St. They may also be viewed on [www.greenwich.gov.uk/planning](http://www.greenwich.gov.uk/planning)

Risk of further changes to Permitted Development Rights (PDRs)

Helen Warner

A recent government planning consultation proposes “measures to support housing delivery ...” by extending the recently created E Use Class to include housing. This extension to PDRs would mean that planning consent would no longer be required for a change of use to housing on high streets and in town centres. Only basic criteria to secure prior approval would need to be met.

Class E of the Use Classes Order 1987, was introduced on 1st September 2020 and amalgamates former classes such as shops, restaurants and cafes, financial and professional use, non-residential institutions and leisure facilities into one Use Class (E). It enabled complete freedom for change of use within that Class.

[Full details of Class Use E are on the Planning Portal web site, [https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common\\_projects/9/change\\_of\\_use](https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common_projects/9/change_of_use) .]

These are ‘one-size-fits-all’ proposals for the whole of England. Of key concern is that change of use cannot be targeted simply to vacant properties or surplus retail

space, it will also apply to occupied properties. In London, where there is a strong housing market, developers may see opportunities to convert properties to housing regardless of the impact on the vitality or viability of the high street.

The London Forum, in its briefing to societies, suggests that the most severe risk is likely to be for local centres and corner shops. In light of Covid-19, with our greater need to shop locally and have ready access to other local facilities, this is of concern. Peppering a high street with housing makes a shopping frontage less attractive to shoppers and reduces the vitality of the street.

Most of the E Use Class uses are essential to the continuing vitality of town and local centres. To encourage their removal through PDRs undermines any local strategy and denies community input. To support and revitalise a neighbourhood/town centre we need strategic local planning.

**The Westcombe Society responded to the government consultation with our concerns.**

Noise Barrier Meeting

Marilyn Little

The Development Consent Order (DCO) for the construction of the Silvertown Tunnel contained the statement: "Prior to the opening of the authorised development for public use, TfL must install noise barriers to protect properties in the Siebert Road, Invicta Road/Westcombe Hill area from the effects of traffic noise from the A102. Details of these barriers must be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority after consultation with local residents, before installation is commenced."

The Examining Authority also advised: “We accept that the barriers are already needed to address the existing adverse noise climate experienced by residents and community facilities including the Invicta Road primary school.”

TfL organised a meeting on 3rd February with Atkins, the Engineering Company who are the relevant contractors. Tim Perry of Atkins described how they have been undertaking engineering studies which will lead to feasible options. A proposal for a green wall was supported by local residents and a formal request for inclusion as an option will be taken forward.

John Pardoe, the Project Sponsor, advised that an options study would take place taking into account residents' views. The consultation area will include those

properties immediately affected by the barrier - residences siding the A102, from Charlton Road to Station Crescent.

The contractors will build on these options taking into account the way the barrier can be mounted, the line of the barrier, possible materials and whole life costs i.e including on-going maintenance. A number of potential designs were included in the meeting documentation. It is likely to be a hybrid solution along the route of the barrier.

Options will be passed to TfL and reduced to a short list. There will then be a public consultation in the summer following which TfL will give consent to proceed and a concept design package will go out to tender.

The Silvertown Tunnel is due to open in 2025 and the barrier is to be built by 2023 i.e before the tunnel is open for public use as decreed in the DCO.

There were many questions/concerns from affected residents including acceptable noise levels, noise measurement, height of the barrier (which may be different along the length of the barrier) and the effect on buildings from night-time speeding HGVs.

We hope that these will be answered when further discussions take place with the contractors as options become clearer.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS  
(See also <http://www.westcombesociety.org/>)

**120 HUMBER ROAD ref 21/0185/HD**  
To construct rear side infill extension and external alterations.

**LAND REAR OF BLACKHEATH SERVICE STATION, 37A SHOOTERS HILL ROAD ref 21/0172/F**  
To construct a two-storey 4-bedroom house with parking.

**TREE WORKS**

**60 HUMBER ROAD ref 21/0637/TC**  
To fell elder and reduce fig and silver birch by 2m in rear garden.

**14 WESTCOMBE PARK ROAD ref 21/0609/TC**  
To thin and crown reduce lime in front gar-

den by 2-3m and likewise to silver birch at rear.

**56 BEACONSFIELD ROAD ref 21/0574/TC**  
To crown reduce two oaks by 2m in front garden, and at rear crown reduce row of sycamores by 4m, trim holly and fig.

**75 BEACONSFIELD ROAD ref 21/0540/TC**  
To crown reduce oak by 2.5m in rear garden and remove lower branches.

**37 VANBRUGH PARK ref 21/0575/TC**  
To fell holm oak and pear in rear garden.

**66 COLERAINE ROAD ref 21/0507/TC**  
To fell sycamore in rear garden.



“We sat in silence, letting the green in the air heal what it could.”  
— Erica Bauermeister,  
The Scent Keeper

Thinking about Trees

Emily Norton

We are lucky to live in an area with so many trees especially in these times when we are spending so much time at home. Last spring I was particularly taken with a wonderful magnolia on Westcombe Park Road and the cherry blossom which seemed so abundant. In the summer we could view blue skies behind the delicate leaves of the silver birches, find welcome shade under swathes of broad leaves and watch the evening sun glancing through the branches. In autumn we had the wonderful colours as the leaves turned and fell, and in winter we can enjoy the silhouettes of trees against the sky and the continuing green of our many evergreens which look especially beautiful if we have snow.

Even leafless branches provide a lacelike screen as they move in the wind. In every season the presence of trees brings us benefits, not just visually but also in how they help mitigate against climate change.



The Westcombe Society Environment Committee hopes that this area will remain the beautiful leafy place it has been for so many years. However, we do have concerns. Back at the turn of the century Myles Dove, a local resident, drew up a tree map showing all the trees in Westcombe Park. Now more than 20 years on, the Westcombe Society Environment Committee are updating the tree map to reflect the current state of our trees. The good news is that the Council have planted a significant number of new street trees in the area, meaning that some roads now have street trees for the first time. In years to come we hope these new young trees will continue to give pleasure to future generations.

However new street trees are not the whole story. Trees in residents' gardens are also very important and we need mature trees everywhere to be preserved for as

long as possible to allow time for new trees to grow. Sadly, there are a number of mature trees that have been lost in the last 20 years. Some because they have come to the end of their life or are diseased but others simply because they are viewed to be ‘in the way’ perhaps providing ‘too much shade’ or obstructing a new development. I personally still mourn the loss of the horse chestnut on the corner of the John Roan site where Westcombe Park Road meets Vanbrugh Park Road West. It looked particularly wonderful in the winter when dusted with snow or frost. Maybe my yet-to-be-born grandchildren will be able to appreciate the fully-grown replacement in their old age, I certainly won’t.

We on the Environment Committee have been concerned recently by the lack of consideration for mature trees when planning some new developments. We live in a Conservation Area so any work to trees requires permission from the Council but still some residents and developers clear their land of trees without permission, risking heavy fines. Even those who apply for permission sometimes don’t seem to realise that ‘excessive shade’ can be reduced by crown reduction, that root damage to walls can be mitigated by making a break in the wall and building a fence round the tree and that extensions and new buildings can be designed around existing trees. Replanting is of course good, but it takes many lifetimes to replace what is lost when a mature tree is felled.

We know that many residents also care for the trees as we do. We hope we can encourage others to do so too. We would like to thank the residents who care for their trees and also those who are helping to water new street trees, this has helped many of our new trees survive and thrive. We hope that more residents will adopt a tree near them and help make sure it gets watered at least once a week, especially in the summer.

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