

Westcombe NEWS

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June 2021 No.5

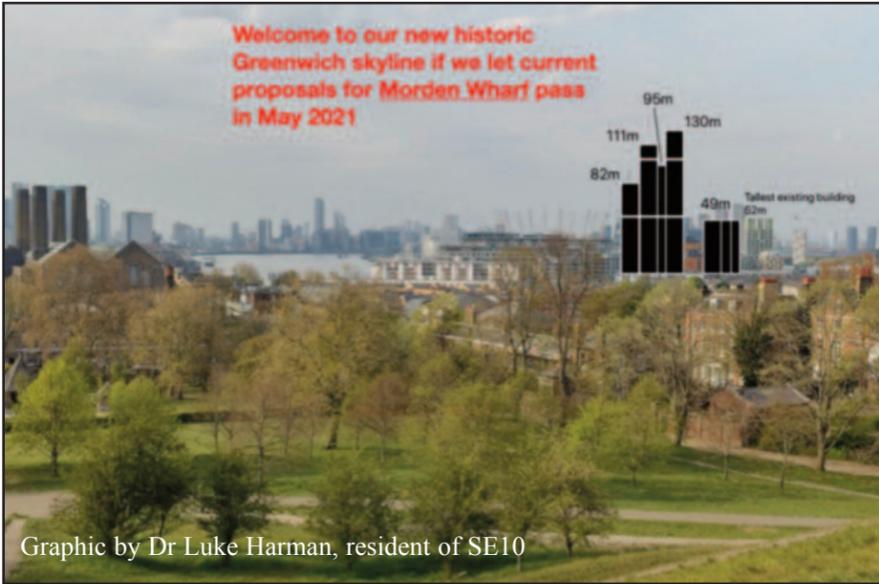


"There is strength in independence but there is power in community."

— Dr. Madeline Ofina

More skyscrapers?

Maggie Gravelle



The application consists of 226 documents but the main points raised by the objectors are:

1. The site is not suitable for such a dense cluster of high rise buildings. The council's own Site Allocation Policy (Jan 2021) states the site "falls within the setting of the World Heritage Site and the Protected London Panorama from Greenwich Park" and "the sensitive setting of the site means that it is not suitable for the establishment of a distinct cluster of new tall buildings". It notes "if any taller buildings are proposed their height should be demonstrably subordinate to those developed at neighbouring Enderby Place", the future of which remains uncertain, making respect for the existing local area all the more critical.

2. The Core Strategy (2014) requires that new developments should not "cause an unacceptable reduction of daylight or sunlight" and that this is particularly the case for tall buildings. Objectors claim that the "buildings of the current proposed height and density will necessarily and substantially reduce levels of light to lower levels of accommodation and ground level and also enclose the open aspect of the

riverside."

3. The proposal does not include adequate plans for infrastructure, particularly public transport, which is already inadequate for this part of the Peninsula, contravening the council's explicit requirement in its Site Allocation Policy.

Although the public consultation period has passed, objections can still be submitted until the planning meeting. If enough objections are made it will be brought to a planning committee to which the public have access and at which their views can be expressed. A group of concerned local residents are urging neighbours to object to the proposal by writing to:

Mr Andrew Thornley
Directorate of Regeneration Enterprise and Skills, The Woolwich Centre, 5th Floor
35 Wellington Street, London, SE18 6H

Note: As of going to press the 853 website reported that Matthew Pennycook, MP for Greenwich and Woolwich, has voiced an objection to the scheme on social media, saying that it would interrupt views from Greenwich town centre and be out of proportion with the lower-rise Enderby Wharf development next door.

The Westcombe Society does not often comment on developments outside the immediate area but this proposal may affect us all! The Morden Wharf development includes proposals for four towers - the tallest at 130 metres (36 storeys) - plus eight other high rise blocks providing 1,500 dwellings. These buildings would overwhelm the two and three storey houses

in Mauritius Road, Azof Street and Christchurch Way and have a significant negative impact on natural light levels. Views from Greenwich Park, a World Heritage Site, would be changed forever. The increased population would also have a significant impact on local transport and other infrastructure that is already severely overstretched.

Lack of Action on Serious Traffic Issues

Marilyn Little

Readers will remember that in the April issue we wrote about the council's response to the consultation on the Westcombe Park and Maze Hill Low Traffic Neighbourhood. The council were aware that there were strong feelings on the suggested LTN and were intending to gather more information before attempting to re-shape the proposals.

We were very aware that residents were concerned that as people return to work the traffic situation could worsen. This fear has proved true as traffic numbers have increased causing gridlock and dangerous driving.

The Society wrote, on 6th May, to the Cabinet Member for Environment,

Sustainability and Transport, Sizwe James, the leader of the Council, Danny Thorpe and copied our Ward Councillors asking for an update; a copy of our request is below.

Westcombe Park and Maze Hill Low Traffic Neighbourhood.

"We appreciate your decision to re-address the proposals for the above scheme given the divergence of views. However it is now some weeks since we replicated your update on the Streetspace pages of the RBG website in the Westcombe News.

We are concerned that traffic levels may further increase as commuters who may wish to continue to avoid public

transport return to work.

We feel that an update on progress on the ongoing shaping of proposals is overdue and we would be happy to share this with our residents/readers via the June issue of the Westcombe News.

Has the gradual relaxation of the Covid restrictions been reflected in the figures gathered via the on-going traffic monitoring and modelling of traffic behaviour data? We understand that residents feel there has been an increase in vehicle numbers. Does the data you are collecting inform any possible change to the shape of any proposals going forward?

Are you considering discussing the temporary re-opening of The Avenue

with The Royal Parks to alleviate congestion in the morning rush hour.

As a local stakeholder we are concerned that we have yet to be involved in discussions around any possible changes to the scheme. We are also unaware of any involvement with local people as we are constantly asked for information by concerned residents. We would appreciate an update that we could share with them via the Westcombe News.

Thank you, Marilyn Little, Chair, Westcombe Society

At the time of going to Press we have had no update on progress towards a solution. Since the latest relaxation of restrictions the traffic situation has seriously deteriorated and action is urgently needed.

Newsbriefs * * * * *

#Fish & Chips

National Fish and Chip Day, is back for its 6th year on Friday 4th June! This is the day when the nation comes together to celebrate its favourite dish and despite the pandemic, Brexit and cod wars, our amazing fish and chip shops are continuing to be at the centre of their communities cooking this iconic family dish.

Stop the Tunnel

A "Stop the Tunnel" demonstration is being held on Saturday 5th June. Assembly point: 1.30 pm at Terry Spinks Place, London E16 1GU (off Rathbone Street, 5 mins walk from Canning Town station). March starts at 2pm.

The march is supported by the Stop the Silvertown Coalition, and by campaign

and community groups in Newham. All are welcome: there will be a family atmosphere, with music playing and the Extinction Rebellion "Banshees" with us.

How did she do it?

A nine-year-old Blackheath High School pupil has achieved Grade 8 iGCSE Physics during lockdown, taking the exam an incredible six years early.

Seojin Park (known as Ipin) who is in Year 5, was inspired by her science lessons at school and started studying Physics during her summer holidays.

When asked what her advice to other young pupils who want to excel at their studies would be, Ipin said: "I recommend that they study the subject having fun like I do. I normally read

books, watch science videos, play with materials and explain what I have learnt by writing on a whiteboard to my parents."

Congratulations MumsAid

This award winning local charity has just won another award - the 2021 GSK IMPACT Awards Winner for outstanding contribution to improving the UK's health and wellbeing.

MumsAid, a former Westcombe Society's 'Charity of the Year', provides pregnant women and new mums with specialist counselling for emotional or mental health difficulties. "Our vision is of a society where all mothers are supported with giving their babies the best start in life."

Change their world for £2 a month...

...that's the cost of providing a school-age girl in Africa with sanitary pads for a month. Without such protection, girls often miss lessons and can lose over two month's education every year.

A small group of individuals provides sanitary protection in Kenya for up to 600 girls every month. We are now seeking to create a regular donation base of £400 a month (to achieve a maximum of £5,000 a year) to continue this work into the future.

Stamen's is a 'small charity' [registered under HMRC for GiftAid] based in Greenwich - 100% of the donated money is to be spent on the Project, which has no administrative costs.

To find out more or to set up a £2 monthly donation, please visit www.stamens.org.uk

Do you have £2 a month to help?

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WESTCOMBE NEWS

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Please enclose payment as appropriate:

Family Membership £12 []

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Westcombe Society

Events Programme 2021

17th July at Mycenae House
Members and Helpers Party

23rd July at Mycenae House
AGM

7th August Westcombe Park Treasure
Hunt

11th September Walk in aid of
Macmillan

24th September at Mycenae House
Macmillan Coffee Morning

9th October at Mycenae House
Senior Citizens Tea

November - Quiz
Date to be confirmed

Liz Coyle

We are sad to report the death of Liz Coyle on 15th May. Liz was a long standing member of the Westcombe Society and an indefatigable leader of the Friends of Greenwich Park and our sympathy goes to her family.

A Chairman of the Friends at a time when the debate raged over Greenwich Park being used for the Olympic equestrian events. Liz was the voice of good sense and reason at a time when those qualities often seemed in short supply. Of course the Olympic Games were a triumphant success and Liz played her part in achieving that result.

Under her leadership the Friends gained numerous new members and has become the highly influential voice that it is today.

All of us in Westcombe Park and Greenwich have benefited from Liz's energy and will miss her cheerfulness and determination.

- Marilyn Little



Letters

From G. Bailey, Humber Road

I've been away but on my return I note that West Greenwich is now festooned with cul de sacs and road blocks and one can no longer drive down Crooms Hill to Greenwich town centre; and adjacent roads are also blocked off to deter so-called rat runs.

This cunning plan is, I suppose, about to be extended to Maze Hill and Westcombe Hill, so to get from north to south in this area you have to join the queues of traffic going either east or west. A lot of local traffic will have to join the Blackwall Tunnel Approach Road to get to

West Greenwich.

Combined with the cycle lanes along Trafalgar Road, it means that there will be more and more stationary and semi-stationary traffic, on the A2 and Trafalgar Road, emitting worse fumes than in the past. Many fear that the cure may be worse than the disease.

If and when the economy is in recovery, the traffic situation can only get worse. One would like to think that electric cars will alleviate the situation, but is the National Grid able to cope with millions of electric cars? Only time can tell.

From Neville Grant, Vanbrugh Park

Many of us have our purses or wallets filled with cards from various organisations - the AA, the Globe, Tate Modern, you name it. I notice that the National Trust issues membership cards made sturdily from paper. Why don't other organisations follow suit?

I remember that a container filled with millions of Lego pieces fell into the sea off Cornwall in 1997. They are still washing up on Cornish beaches today. Plastic is now entering our food chain. We real-

ly need to minimise use of plastic. Membership cards made of paper would be a small but significant step.

From: Marilyn Little, Chair Westcombe Society Westcombe Hill

Steve and Kay of M&S Blackheath very kindly and ably attended one of our members who had tripped and fallen in Old Dover Road a few days ago. They, together with my neighbour Helen, stayed with her until an Ambulance arrived. Their actions were much appreciated.

Know your neighbourhood

Tudor Grange, Independent Living Retirement Complex

If you have reached the retirement age zone and are thinking of downsizing, perhaps releasing some capital to help family members, or even just fed up living alone but want to stay in the area, then one of the options to consider is moving into a retirement complex. Tudor Grange sits at the beginning of Westcombe Park Road and has recently been taken over by Housing 21, who are dedicated to "providing safe, secure independent living in a social and amenity-rich environment".

WN asked Denise Marney, TG's manager, what life was like for the staff and residents in the complex. "I took over as its Manager in April 2020 just at start of the pandemic. As well as myself, we have a full time handyman Steve Tatman, and part time Assistant Court Manager, Melissa McPherson."

"Since taking over we have done and are still doing, extensive works in the gardens to make them more appealing for residents and residents have got behind this and are now really starting to enjoy the outside space."

"We have lots of activities like fish & chip afternoons, film afternoons, wine and

coffee mornings and sometimes live singers. As we come out of lockdown we are looking to have outside caterers in, to do barbeques. Residents are also looking into having afternoon teas delivered."

"I know I'm the manager but I think Tudor Grange is a fantastic retirement community. I love my job working for Housing 21 at Tudor Grange and I enjoy my time with the residents."

There are 33 self-owned apartments in the complex. Residents can employ their own Carers should they need to but TG does not offer or provide this service. To them it's all about independent living albeit with a community spirit. There is even a guest flat for relatives to use.

The last word goes to resident Jackie Bogue who says, "Tudor Grange is a hidden oasis with a really friendly atmosphere and the opportunity to socialise when you want to. Residents are able to organise social events should they wish and the management is extremely supportive."

So now you know a little of what lies behind the sign Tudor Grange!

- Anne Williams

Volunteer Opportunities

The Westcombe Society is looking for their new Treasurer

We are seeking a person with a head for figures and a few hours to spare each week to fill this key position in our community organisation.

Basic book-keeping skills using Excel spreadsheets required.

For further information please email Treasurer@westcombesociety.org

Join the crew at Charlton Village Theatre for 'Mamma Mia!'

Have you experience in theatre production? Then why not join the new drama group 'Charlton Village Theatre' to help prepare for their new production in November. Before casting can begin, they need to get a new crew together to assist with lighting, scenery, sound and backstage requirements.

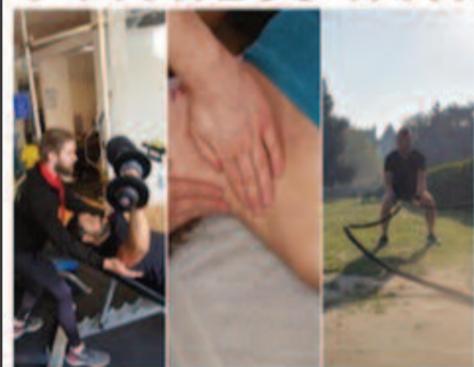
Here's your chance to get involved in local theatre as theatres everywhere open up to the public. Interested? Please contact their Stage Manager:

davidwhitehead21@gmail.com

Venue: The Assembly Rooms, The Village, Charlton.

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LOCAL NEWS

Top Schools Merge

Some schoolchildren from this area attend The New Beacon Preparatory School in Sevenoaks and will already know that their school is merging with the highly regarded Tonbridge School. The merger takes place from 31 August 2021.

Mike Piercy, Headmaster of The New Beacon, said: "This merger will strengthen our long connection with Tonbridge and will expand our access to the expertise of its senior school staff and facilities. I am also delighted that we will be working with Tonbridge to develop further our intellectually creative academic curriculum to align Years 7 to 9. This will support the boys in preparing for entrance assessments and transition to senior school, not just academically but also in terms of confidence and life skills – benefits which will, of course, apply to all boys, whichever their preferred senior school destination."

Tonbridge School, winner of the 2019 Independent Schools award, believes in enabling bright and talented boys access to a Tonbridge education, regardless of background. In 2019/20, £2.5m of fee support funding was provided, and Tonbridge will be doubling the number of boys at the School receiving significant financial support by 2028, investing a further £20m in widening educational opportunity. Such investment may give more boys the benefits offered by the school.

Locally Grown and Delivered

Exciting news from Sitopia Farm! We hit our crowdfunder target, raising over £77,000 through the generosity of the very many generous souls who want to see this happen in Greenwich. Somewhat poetically it was our 400th backer who took us over the finishing line. Work to create the farm is now cracking on at speed, with new beds being built each day, the poly-tunnel up, and our first rows of vegetables, herbs, fruit and flowers planted out. Over 100 fabulous volunteers have already helped out...and within a few weeks we hope to be harvesting our first crops. If you're interested in buying our produce, please sign up to our newsletter so you can be the first to get a pre-order in...<https://www.sitopiafarm.com/contact> Thank you all for your excellent support.



Blackheath High looks to the Future

Last month Blackheath High School hosted a Future of Education Event. A digital event attended by some 100 people from across the education sector - including parliamentarians, journalists, parents and NGO representatives.

The event was held to discuss the impact of the pandemic on education, the lessons learned and the opportunities to capitalise on moving forward. "School leaders have risen to what has been an appalling situation" says Lord Mike Storey.

Dr Kevin Stannard, Director of Innovation and Learning at the Girls' Day School Trust called for exam reform in schools post-pandemic, saying: "This is a huge opportunity, and it would be very disappointing at the end of this, that policy changes aren't made with lessons in mind, particularly with exams.... Life can go on without a battery of formal assessment, particularly at the age of 16."

Speaking on the role of education technology in classrooms now schools have returned, Genna Ash-Brown added: "Tech brings big wins for the inclusion of everyone across the sector. There really is no going back and I think a mixture of online and in-person structure will help shape the future of education."

Council listening to Housing Need?

Residents of the Royal Borough of Greenwich are being asked to have their say on a draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy for the borough.

The new strategy sets out to address the scale of housing pressures in Greenwich and the council's ambitions for the next five years to tackle the crisis of housing affordability, insecurity and need. The strategy, which will cover the period 2021 to 2026, has been developed through a collaborative process which they say places residents' needs at its heart.

The Covid-19 pandemic has only exacerbated the housing crisis with a devastating impact on many people in the borough, which, in turn, has put a huge amount of pressure on council services.

For more information and to give feedback on the Council's plans, visit <https://housingstrategygreenwich.commonplace.is>

Grants for Local Projects

The Royal Borough of Greenwich have for the past few years used a portion of the Community Infrastructure Levy to fund local projects through the Greenwich Neighbourhood Growth Fund. Proposals have been submitted annually and they are then shortlisted after which the public has a chance to read and vote for their preferences.

Despite limited publicity, 19 submissions from Blackheath and Westcombe have reached the shortlist. Following the public vote, the councillors in each neighbourhood area will decide which applications will be funded.

Unfortunately, voting will have closed before the June edition of the Westcombe News, but we hope to notify readers of the successful projects in the July WN.

Meanwhile they are available on line at https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/info/2/00245/grants/1913/apply_for_the_greenwich_neighbourhood_growth_fund

- Maggie Gravelle

Drain Cover Thieves

The Royal Borough of Greenwich are currently investigating the spate of thefts, but they need the public's help, asking residents to stay vigilant, and if they witness suspicious behavior to:

- Try to take as many details as possible, including photos of the missing drain cover, number plates, exact location of the gully covers.
- Call the police on 101 if they see someone in the act of stealing.
- Report any missing covers to the Council and the police.

New Owners for the Pleasance Cafe?

After 12 years as the face of Pistacchio's Cafe in the Pleasance, 'Lizzie' wants to sell the franchise and relocate to Tonbridge Wells. "The Cafe is a full time job and then some and I want to spend more time with my partner and focus on getting my novels published."

"Wonder what the new owners' coffee will be like?" the dog owners discuss, and "will she or wont she sign on the dotted line?" as Lizzie continues to keep her cards close as rumours abound in the Park.

Let's beat loneliness together!

Jenny Allen

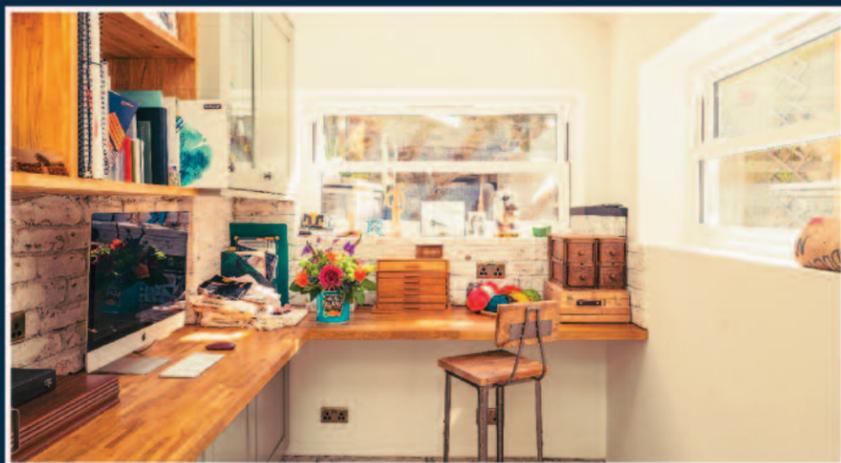
For the last couple of years, The John Roan School and Mycenae House have worked closely together to help the local community with events such as the Community Christmas Celebration, Let's Beat Loneliness Club, and many more. Even a pandemic didn't stop us. Students ran The Sunshine Project - a book of drawings sent to local care homes, Virtual Christmas Party and made bookmarks for World Book Night. Through their work The John Roan School Community Librarians have reached the National Finals of the Goldsmith's Community Engagement Awards.

However, Reach Out has been affected by the pandemic as it is currently funded from any surplus made from running Mycenae House so The John Roan School and Mycenae House are looking for local primary schools to join in with our Inter-

School Fundraising Competition.

Mycenae House and The John Roan School are running a Sponsored Keep Fit Session on Wednesday 7th July from 1pm and we'd love for local schools to join in with their own sponsored keep fit events on the same day. There will be a prize for the school with the most participants.

We're hoping that the fundraising won't stop there. Come up with your own ideas to raise money. There will be a trophy for the school that raises the most money! Contact mycenaehouseoutreach@gmail.com or Jennifer.allen@thejohnroanschool.org.uk to register for the sponsored keep fit or our inter-school fundraising challenge. Mycenae House have also established a crowd-funding campaign to support and donations can be made here: <https://gofund.me/2e283eef>



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FEATURES

Having Fun with Language

Most of us know the apocryphal story of the English tourist who unwittingly asks a French butcher if the sausages are made out of condoms, a delicious mistake ripe for the making due to the linguistic phenomenon of “faux amis” or “false friends”: words in a foreign language which look similar enough to English to trick you into thinking you’re asking about the preservatives in your meat products when what you really said is something quite different! The name of our language school is of course the absolute opposite of a false friend - it does exactly what it says on the tin - we love to laugh over this kind of thing together in our classes, so if you have a smattering of French, Spanish or Italian or you think you know your preservatives from your préservatifs, have a go at our “faux amis” quiz below: you might learn something that will spare you a

Lucy Martin

cringeworthy moment next time you go away!

1. The Spanish word “carpeta” means a) folder b) carpet c) carp
2. The Italian word “morbido” means a) soft b) morbid c) dead
3. The Spanish word “constipado” means a) constipated b) congested nose c) stuck
4. The French word “raisin” means a) grape b) raisin c) reason
5. The Italian word “ratto” means a) erratic b) rat c) grated
6. The Spanish word “embarazada” means a) pregnant b) embarrassed c) embraced
7. The Spanish word “fatal” means a) fatal b) foetal c) terrible
8. The French word “privé” means a) private b) privet c) stupid

Answers 1a, 2a, 3b, 4a, 5b, 6a, 7c, 8a

The Roxy

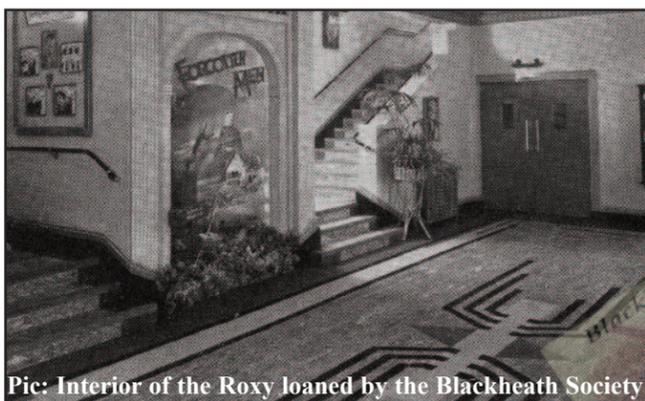
by Tony Lord

I doubt if many of you know that the railway tunnel linking Blackheath Station with Charlton runs under the Marks and Spencer car park in Old Dover Road. For some reason the tunnel is close to the surface which is why there is a strip of land (Vicarage Avenue and the Conservative Club car park, for example) which has no buildings of any size standing on them. After reading the May edition of this newspaper you are aware that the Marks and Spencer store stands on the site where the Roxy

of picture houses and did good business as the other local cinemas such as the Granada at Blackwall Lane were a bus ride away. On Saturday mornings Old Dover Road was thronged with boys and girls (ABC minors) heading for the Roxy to see a programme consisting of Westerns, Abbot and Costello, Popeye and Mickey Mouse cartoons. At the end of the showing, the staff would be desperately sweeping up peanut shells and unsticking bubble gum from the seats.

My own memories of the Roxy include queuing up under the canopy at the side of the cinema with Jeanne, who lived at 39 Vanbrugh Park, waiting for the commissionaire to say, “Two in the one and sixes” and, much later, taking my boys to see 'Chitty, Chitty, Bang, Bang' only to find Richard, my number three son hiding under his seat away from the Child Catcher. I hasten to add that he was only six at the time.

I did the same thing in Barnard's Theatre in Croom's Hill one evening in 1943 when the top secret battery on Blackheath first fired off its battery of rockets during an air raid. Their noise sounded exactly like the swish of a bomb coming down.



Pic: Interior of the Roxy loaned by the Blackheath Society

Cinema was built in the thirties.

If there was a quiet love scene showing on the Roxy's screen one could sometimes hear the 20.45 train to Dartford rumbling down underneath the left side. One could almost expect Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers to stop dancing cheek to cheek and wait 'til the train had passed.

The Roxy was part of the ABC chain

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Reviews

by Patrick Barry

All crime novels follow a formula. The current vogue is for “why-dunits” rather than “who-dunits”

Katherine Faulkner and BP Walter are both graduates of the Faber Academy of novel writing and choose to begin at the end.

“Greenwich Park” (, GBP 12.99 hb, Pub. Bloomsbury Raven (2021) 442 pages) uses Greenwich as the backdrop for a middle-class murder. I found it hard to warm to the over-privileged, pregnant, sourdough Helen, jealous of her sister-in-law and “struggling” with renovating her five-bedroomed Grade II listed house. Had I accidentally purchased another Bridget Jones sequel?

I persevered due to the SE10 setting and then enjoyed the plot twists. The pace allows one to forgive some unlikely coincidences and connections. It’s enjoyable to recognise each location.

As Faulkner is a North Londoner we can forgive her for misnaming our local (“The Trafalgar Arms”) but as a former investigative journalist she ought to know that there are no gavels in English courtrooms (“knock of the hammer”).

The main characters in “The Dinner Guest” (GBP 8.99 pb, pub One More Chapter/Harper Collins, (2021), 402 pages) meet in Waterstones browsing for “traditional book-club-esque crime-fiction”. BP

Walter worked in the shop and I was recommended the book by one of their work-force,

so perhaps I ought to have appreciated it more. Maybe I’m allergic to SW1? Instead of yummy mummies we have the self-styled “cute same-sex kings of Instagram” but rather than fawning over the success, looks and breeding of the well-born, Walter critiques the wealthy upper-class bubble that cushions (most of them) from the real world.

Searching the two novels for a sense of Faber Academy “rules” suggests that one should start at the end, have interleaving chapters headed with character names and dates, allowing for alternate perspectives and flashbacks, and have one your characters write a letter from their prison cell.

Also, do make sure you withhold some historic connections. Perhaps we will have a glut of Faber Academy novels as emanated from the UEA writing course founded by Malcolm Bradbury in the 70s, although that gave rise to McKewan and Ishiguro rather than a probable future ITV mini-series.

BP Walter makes the journey interesting and you will want to confirm your suspicions, even if it all takes place on the wrong side of the river.

Navigating Podcasts

Patrick Barry

There are three broad categories of podcast:

- 1 A merry-go-round of celebrities back-slapping each other on their respective podcasts.
- 2 Two mates pontificating.
- 3 A reporter unravels their story through a series of investigative episodes with a denouement.

Here's a suggestion for each category:

Merry-go-round:

"Off Menu" has been around long enough to win numerous awards. It's a food version of Desert Island Discs, with celebrity guests choosing their perfect menu with the help of comedians Ed Gamble and James Acaster. There's humour but also genuine debate and discussion about food with occasional insight afforded into the featured celebrity. It's good enough to forgive Gamble for his ageist comments when chastising the audience at Mycenae House

when we failed to appreciate his weak performance.

Pontificating:

In "The Rest is History" Tom Holland, a scholar of ancient history is pitted against Dominic Sandbrook, whose speciality is modern history, to explore a new general topic each week. They make each episode enjoyable and relate the topic to the present. Are there any lessons to be learnt or are we condemned to repeat our mistakes?

Investigative:

"Nice White Parents" follows the endeavours of progressive ("woke" before the term existed) middle-class American parents as they seek a seemingly integrated education for their children. Are they improving the outcomes of their neighbourhood school for all or just for some, and what is the lasting legacy of these well-intentioned liberals?

A Book to get Children Talking

A new, illustrated, hardboard book has been launched to aid and develop children's speech. *DeeDee and DanDan's Busy Day* is an interactive reading book, written by parents of a late talking child.

Aneta and Mariusz Wojcik established that reading to their son Daniel was the ultimate way to help him and soon learnt that making a story interactive and engaging assisted their son with vocabulary

retention. Mariusz said: "The book gives you everything in one place, so you don't need to think after a long day. And with 38 pages and thousands of possibilities, no two reads are the same and the book grows with your child."

Dee Dee and Dan Dan's Busy Day costs £9.99, is available from Amazon and <https://deedeandandan.co.uk/>. Published by Little Frog Media,

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WHAT'S ON



If you have any events, happenings or entertainment you'd like publicised, please email:

wnews@westcombesociety.org

Polly Morgan (above) and our readers look forward to hearing from you. We need our readers help to bring the What's On page fully back, so let us know of any entertainment/classes you have found reopened.

Fancy seeing a Film? In a Cinema!

Finally, exciting news - the Greenwich Picturehouse, a favourite local cinema, will have reopened its doors as of May 19th and is showcasing some top films including:

Nomadland, Judas and the Black Messiah and Godzilla vs King Kong..

Please support your local cinema, visit: <https://www.picturehouses.com/cinema/greenwich-picturehouse>

The Joy of Singing

We featured this free online choir in the last edition but they are looking for **new members**.

Mondays June – October 2021
10:00 – 11:15. Online via Zoom



Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust are offering people with lung conditions in Greenwich the opportunity to join a free virtual singing group.

Led by trained Singing for Lung Health practitioner James Moriarty, this group is designed to help people to manage feelings of breathlessness whilst taking part in a fun and social activity.

Find out more at www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/take-part/for-adults/singing-for-good-health/singing-for-lung-health/

The Kimberleys Live streamed concert

"Fairy Tricks and Queer Fancies"
Saturday 5th June 7pm

Concert will be live streamed via their website www.thekimberleys.org

FREE with tip jar

Local folk duo The Kimberleys will be performing a free live streamed concert on 5th June at 7pm. Open to all, these local favorites and internationally touring band will be singing traditional folk songs on the theme of mythology and strange folk stories. Hailed as "industry leaders" for their sound and video quality, this promises to be an evening of beautiful harmonies and virtuoso guitar, do join them at 7pm. Find the link to YouTube on their website www.thekimberleys.org



Mycenae House is offering all the community a feast of activities and treats; contact details:
Tel: 020 8858 1749
info@mycenaehouse.co.uk
www.mycenaehouse.co.uk.

Bandstand Concerts back in the Park



Photo: Roger Stevens

Providing that the Government does not alter its current timetable for easing the lockdown restrictions, the Friends of Greenwich Park will bring a welcome return of live music in the open air. Their series of ten ever-popular concerts will take place at the Park bandstand on every Sunday in July and August and on August Bank Holiday Monday. Concerts, which

are free, begin at 3pm and end at 5pm. In addition, Rhythm Passport & Tramshed will present 'Sounds of the World' concerts as part of the Greenwich Park Revealed project. These concerts are free and will take place on the Band Stand on Saturday 3rd and Saturday 31st July from 2pm – 4pm.

Clive Corlett.

Laban Summer concerts

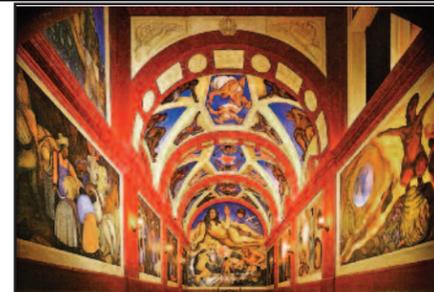
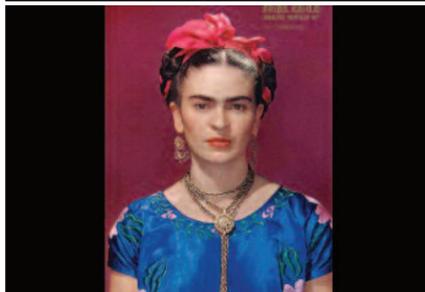
Feast your senses post-lockdown in the beautiful surroundings of Greenwich, with top performances for free by classical students from Trinity Laban. <https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/whats-on/event/lunchtime-concert-trinity-laban-chamber-musicians-25/>

Poetry Please with in-words

Neetha Kunaratnam, Gordon Meade, Gillie Robic and Sarah Westcott will read on the theme of Family, Animals and Other Things. Free event. Please email irena@in-words.co.uk to request a Zoom link. in-words.co.uk for further details and information.

Thursday June 24th, 7.30 on zoom.

ARTS SOCIETY GREENWICH



Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera - The Golden Age of Mexican Painting
Lecturer: Chloë Sayer
4pm Monday 14 June 2021
Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) and Diego Rivera (1886-1957) have iconic status in Mexico. The Mexican Revolution of 1910 swept away the old régime and banished European influence in the arts. Kahlo and Rivera, in their different ways, helped to shape the cultural identity of twentieth-century Mexico. Together they made Mexico a magnet for the rest of the world. Their turbulent marriage and the turbulent times they lived through are the subject of the film *Frida* (USA, 2002). They are key figures in *The Lacuna*, a historical novel published in 2009 by Barbara Kingsolver. The lecturer, Chloë Sayer, is a freelance specialist in the art and culture of Latin

America and she will explore the life and different artistic styles of this influential couple.

This lecture will be presented on Zoom. Members will receive email joining instructions. Guests are welcome for £5 - please email ticaclark@hotmail.com for further details.

www.theartsocietygreenwich.org.uk
The photograph of Frida Kahlo, taken in 1929 by Nickolas Muray, was used for the cover of the book published in 2018 by the V&A Museum to coincide with their sell-out exhibition 'Frida Kahlo, Making Herself Up'.

Frescoes by Diego Rivera in the deconsecrated chapel at the Agricultural College of Chapingo in the state of Mexico (photograph Chloë Sayer)



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FEATURES

A Walk in the Park

Wendy Fidler

Most of us know intuitively that nature is good for us; just being in nature can give us an emotional lift and a walk in the park can calm and restore us.

Recent research reported in the British Journal of Sports Medicine provides scientific proof that walking in nature and spending time under the leafy shade of trees causes electrochemical changes in the brain that can lead people to enter into a highly beneficial state of “effortless attention”.

The researchers from Heriot-Watt University in Edinburgh state that “happiness, or the presence of positive emotional mindsets, broadens an individual’s thought-action repertoire, with positive benefits to physical and intellectual activities, and to social and psychological resources.”

One interesting aspect of this research is how it confirms a theory concerning the ‘soft fascination’ of nature. In The Experience of Nature: A Psychological Perspective, researchers Stephen and Rachel Kaplan deconstruct what they call ‘the restorative experience’ – of being lifted out of a state of mental fatigue, which is most often accomplished by ‘getting away’ or ‘escaping’ from stressful environments and situa-

tions.

In the process of escaping from mental fatigue, there are certain types of restorative experiences that seem to transcend others and produce multiple benefits – one of which is the ‘fascination’ that occurs when an individual is immersed in nature. Entering the state of effortless attention can occur in a variety of ways – walking in the woods, hiking along a trail in a totally natural environment, or sitting by a stream watching water tumble over rocks.

When we enter a green space of natural light and shadows containing the colours of nature, we can also enter a particularly reflective mode during which we can comprehend more than one thing at a time, a state in which stresses and pressures are reduced. We are able to enjoy multiple sensory stimuli and perceptions even when we are thinking about other things.

All in all, being in nature can provide a fully restorative experience, a walk in the park may be the most beneficial thing we can do for our mental and physical health.

Wendy Fidler, MEfA Montessori School, Forest School and Well-being Garden

Help Grow the Local Community

Community is one of the buzz words arising from the pandemic because many of us found ourselves leaning on our neighbours, friends and strangers alike for help with shopping, as socially distanced company and as Zoom buddies. As we ease out of lockdown there seems to be a more cohesive feeling at the local shops, gym, restaurants, etc. A more respectful way of living together has been birthed perhaps? Although anyone looking at the litter on our streets and green places may think otherwise.

The Westcombe Society was formed in 1973 following a severe winter with press reports of elderly residents alone and without help succumbing to the elements. Concerned that such events could occur in the Blackheath area, a meeting was arranged by John Ayling, Warden of Kidbrooke (now Mycenae) House, the local Community Centre. Such was the turnout that the Society, a fully independent amenity (pleasant and agreeable) group, was formed.

To spread local information to residents, a free newspaper, the Westcombe

News was first produced in June 1973.

The Society has grown considerably over the years but is mindful that the area changes and along with this, the needs of its residents. Therefore the Westcombe Society has begun a recruitment drive to encourage residents of the neighbourhood to join the Society, to add your voice to others; to share concerns you might have about the area, the local shops, the traffic, public transport? (today’s issues). Post-pandemic, with ‘community’ a desirable commodity, it’s a perfect time to get more involved and play a part in maintaining and enhancing this very special area that we are so fortunate to enjoy.

Other benefits of joining are friendships arising from a shared interest, yearly parties and other diverse events where you can help out making another person’s or child’s day, like the senior citizens’ Daffodil tea or the Easter Egg Hunt.

-Anne Williams

On the Community Page is a Membership form with prices. Donations are also accepted...contact treasurer@westcombesociety.org

The Party Chef on Meringues

Jo Burnand

While many countries lay claim to the meringue the recipe has probably evolved over time with a dish resembling an Italian meringue featured in a 13th century Syrian cookbook. It most likely passed into Europe via Portuguese-controlled territories in Africa or through the Moorish occupation of southern Europe, sugar, its most expensive constituent, making it only available to the most wealthiest of kitchens from where it became more readily available to the wider world. Baked meringues were on the menu in the Spanish Habsburg’s Imperial Madrid kitchen by the late 16th century but also feature in a manuscript of recipes and remedies kept by Elinor Fettiplace (1570 – 1647), born in Gloucestershire to an upper class land-owning family and cousin of Sir Walter Raleigh. In the Loire Valley they are still referred to as ‘pets’ after a recipe by Lady Rachel Fane (1612 – 1680) of Knole, Kent.

The science here is simple enough. Egg whites are 90% water and 10% protein. Protein is made up of amino acids, some of which are repelled by water, some attracted to it. By whisking you disturb, or denature, these neatly folded acids, the water-loving ones clinging to the water, the water-averse, the air. Because the chains of amino acids in egg white are longer than those, for example, in milk they can incor-

porate much more air and so expand further. Sugar acts like scaffolding around the water molecules which evaporate when heated leaving a caramelised shell.

When making a meringue remember that any fat will interrupt these acids rearranging themselves, just as skimmed milk will foam up better than full-fat milk, so keep your fat-laden egg yolks separate from your whites and stay clear of anything plastic which is liable to retain stray fat molecules.



Method

Set your oven to 200c/400f/Gas 6. Using double the amount of sugar to egg whites begin by whisking the whites in a glass bowl at high speed. When the whites begin firming up start adding the sugar very slowly, whisking continuously. Once the sugar is well incorporated you can add a little lemon juice which will help the meringue retain its structure. You are looking for silky peaks, the ultimate test being to turn the bowl upside down. If the peaks keep you are ready to bake. Shape the mixture using two spoons into a baking tray lined with parchment paper and put in the oven. Immediately turn the temperature down to 150c/300f/Gas 2 and leave to cook for 1 hr.

Leave to cool in the oven with the door slightly ajar.

For the Love of Bees

Sophia Chiang

When Michael Walsh was ten, his mother took him to an introduction to beekeeping course and he’s been hooked ever since. In the years which followed, he became skilled in the art of beekeeping and set up local hives in Charlton, where he continues to tend bees.

As a trainee lawyer, Michael quickly realised it would be possible to combine both his enthusiasm for law with his passion for environmental sustainability. He proposed a beekeeping project within his law firm, setting up an apiary on the office rooftop. The project became a big hit, Michael’s passion for the bees was contagious, and the Urban Apiarist was born.

The Urban Apiarist is a small locally run

business which now aims to provide both corporate and residential beekeeping services across London as well as educate the community on the importance of pollinators in supporting the ecosystem. The company also aims to promote awareness of bees on a wider scale, harnessing the power of social media platforms in particular to inspire the next generation of young beekeepers to start their own apiaries or at least be inspired to plant pollinator-friendly flora.

Whether it be one bee or one apiary at a time, Michael is working to make London a greener place to live.

The Urban Apiarist - www.theurbanapiarist.com/

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ENVIRONMENT



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

Vanbrugh Pits

Joe Beale

The Vanbrugh Pits (aka 'the Dips') in Blackheath Westcombe ward is a fascinating and important habitat mosaic of scrub, trees, unimproved grassland, acid grassland and bare earth areas. It is home to many bee species, some rare, and at least 26 butterfly species have been recorded there, including many grassland species – mid to late summer is a great time to see good numbers of them. Dragonflies such as Emperors, amongst Britain's largest, visit to feed before they are ready to go to their breeding areas and is probably the only Greenwich site to have recorded the beautiful Red-veined Darter dragonfly. Interesting plants include Clustered Clover

in London - while fungi of unimproved grassland, such as colourful Waxcaps, can still be found. All these benefit from maintaining open areas with some scrub and bare ground. Breeding birds in the Gorse and Hawthorn include Lesser Whitethroat, Song Thrush and Greenfinch, and this spring migrating Whinchat and Wheatears stopped to visit on their long journey north from Africa.

Issues facing the site include encroaching invasive scrub - Holm Oak, Turkey Oak, Cherry, and Sycamore are some of the main culprits. Over decades, these have started to shade out and enrich the grassland, making it increasingly unsuitable for the scarcer species. The Gorse benefits from some rotational cutting and removing the clippings, meaning there is always fresh, lush regrowth and sunny spots that invertebrates need and that encourage germination of wildflower seeds. To this end, volunteer work parties – in conjunction with Royal Borough of Greenwich Council – will be resuming in September to undertake some of this habitat work in a sensitive and careful way, to benefit both biodiversity and people.

To get involved, please keep an eye on the Westcombe News and twitter at @joe_beale and @WildGreenwich in August/September.



(nationally scarce) and delicate blue Harebells. Lichens include *Cetraria aculeata* - a heathland species found nowhere else

Invicta Road Fence



The fence in Invicta Road has been temporarily mended and it is more secure now, but it took a long time during which an inquisitive child could have been hurt. Delay apparently in part due to lack of clarity over which authority was responsible for the fence - TfL or RBG for the A102.

After a good deal of pressure from concerned residents a more robust temporary barrier has been put in place by TfL.

BEWARE: Squirrels

Ann Hill

Children (and adults) love feeding squirrels...so cute, bushy-tailed and superb climbers. However, some local areas including Westcombe Park are experiencing a huge surge in numbers of grey squirrels and they are causing great damage.

Please do not put out food for them at home. Here are some reasons. They:
1. Damage trees: grey squirrels are members of the rat family. They like to gnaw and strip off tree bark to get the sweet sap that feeds the tree. If the stripping is extensive, the tree will die. This is happening in Greenwich Park and is a great worry.
2. Damage gardens: not only do they dig lots of holes to bury food but they enjoy eating your precious soft fruit, plums, cherries etc. My entire plum crop disappeared overnight last summer even though I had done my best to net the tree. Eating tulip bulbs and digging up plants in pots are

other favourite pastimes.

3. Cause loft damage: In seeking to build their nest they can gnaw under the eaves or enter unscreened chimneys. Several local residents already have this problem and are distressed at the sound of them scrabbling overhead when they are in bed. These busy rodents enjoy gnawing attic beams and often strip insulation from electrical wires, causing a fire risk. They may tear up fibreglass insulation and can contaminate water tanks with urine and droppings. Their entry holes allow other pests to enter.

4. Raid nests of small birds: as well as raiding our bird feeders, squirrels eat birds' eggs and fledglings.

Grey squirrels have two litters per year, each of 4-6 babies, so it is easy to see why the population is surging. While they may seem cute and harmless, the common grey squirrel is a nuisance pest, so please, please don't feed them.

Mycenae Gardens

Maggie Gravelle

Many of us are familiar with Greenwich Park and grateful for this wonderful open space on our doorstep, but there is another smaller and less well-known gem in the heart of our neighbourhood.

Mycenae Gardens was part of an estate leased by John Julius Angerstein in the early 1770s. Angerstein was born in Russia in 1735 and came to London as a teenager. He became very wealthy through his position as a Lloyds underwriter. He also had interests in slave estates in Grenada and this income helped to finance his considerable art collection which became the nucleus of the National Gallery.

In 1774 he commissioned the building of Woodlands, now the home of the Steiner School, and the layout of the associated park. The park originally stretched from

part was designed as gardens. The line of massive plane trees probably dates from the original layout.

After Angerstein's death the land holding was gradually sold for housing and by World War II the Woodlands had fallen in to disrepair. It briefly housed a Catholic religious order until, in 1967, it was purchased by Greenwich Borough Council to contain the local history collection. The Garden remains a public space owned and maintained by the Royal Borough of Greenwich. It is used by the Steiner School and by Mycenae House as well as by the general public.

Today the Garden is in need of some TLC. Increased footfall and the dry weather in April have taken their toll. The grass shows signs of wear and the area around the plane trees has been compacted

and the wood chippings dispersed. Ground cover has disappeared in some places and shrubs have been damaged.

A small team of dedicated volunteers have spent time aerating, mulching, planting and constructing borders. In addition to this work more barriers need to be built in order to designate planted areas. Some of the shrubs need to be replaced and grass re-seeded.

The Gardens are a valuable resource and a haven for wildlife. Mycenae House and the Steiner School have pledged their support for keeping it that way and look forward to greater community involvement through the Friends of Mycenae Gardens.



Pic: Maggie Gravelle

Vanbrugh Park north as far as what is now the railway line, and from Beaconsfield Road in the west to beyond the A102 in the east. Part of the land was farmed by the Roberts family (see WN April 2021) and

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

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

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120 HUMBER ROAD ref 21/1698/HD
To replace timber shed with new garden room/home office in rear garden.
75 MYCENAE ROAD ref 21/1655/HD

To construct rear hip-to-gable roof extension, side dormer roof extension and front dormer roof extension.

75 BEACONSFIELD ROAD ref 21/1233/HD

To erect a two-storey and single storey side extension, and single storey rear infill extension.

Environment Poetry

*I really love
The bumble bee,
Though it doesn't
Make honey
To eat at tea
It pollinates
The flowers,
Bumbling around
For hours
And hours
So I think
You'll agree
We should all
Love the bumble bee.*

Gabi Marston



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