



*"She made herself stronger by fighting with the wind." – Frances Hodgson Burnett, The Secret Garden*

## Historic Angerstein Pedestrian Crossing - Closure Threat

The Angerstein Crossing is a pedestrian level crossing that has been in use since 1852. The railway is still in use as a single track freight route to Angerstein Wharf. It is used by a very few freight trains travelling very slowly carrying aggregate to and from the Angerstein Wharf. The pedestrian crossing is part of an important pedestrian link between Westcombe Park Station and Fairthorn Road that allows pedestrians to avoid the busy and polluted Woolwich Road. It is used every day by many local residents to access the station. It is also an important part of a relatively car-free pedestrian route from the Westcombe Park residential area to the retail parks at Charlton Riverside.

The crossing is one of only two such crossings left in London and has been listed by the Royal Borough of Greenwich as a Heritage Asset of value to local people. The crossing is described as a "Rare survival of a historic pedestrian route over a freight railway, still in regular use by residents for its original purpose - to avoid Woolwich Road - and as a route to Westcombe Park station. Railway also still in regular use for transport of aggregates around London"



Coleman (Community Relations Manager) and other representatives were Fiona Taylor (Kent Area), Gemma Kent, and Damian (Legal Department).

Network Rail have had cameras on the crossing and they produced photos showing incidents of concern. There were a couple of serious trespass incidents, not an uncommon occurrence on any railway, but local residents were less than impressed by the rest which included:

- somebody taking photographs on the crossing
- a woman carrying a buggy down the steps away from the crossing

Two years ago, just before Easter 2019, Network Rail suddenly announced that they intended to close the crossing. They gave less than one week's notice and held no consultation. This resulted in an outcry and in less than a week over 1,500 signatures were added to a petition against the closure. Network Rail withdrew and said they would rethink.

Two years later Network Rail wrote a letter to local residents saying they have

investigated alternatives and now intend to close the crossing on safety grounds and divert users via the very narrow pavement under the railway bridge on the Woolwich Road.

A Zoom meeting was held on 17th June to explain the reasoning. About 70 concerned residents attended. Judging from the chat all were opposed to the proposed closure.

The meeting was chaired by John Moss-

- a person on crutches
- young people sitting on the steps
- two people on the crossing appearing to be having a brief chat

All of these are cited by Network Rail as reasons to close the crossing. Their case is that these show vulnerable people at risk because they are distracted and not concentrating on the railway.

*Continued on the Environment Page.....*

## We have a Traffic Problem - its Official

The ongoing traffic issues within Westcombe Park show no signs of abating. Apart from the congestion, driver behaviour is now making the situation even more unpleasant and possibly dangerous.

Sarah Merrill the new Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Transport has begun meetings with groups of residents who are suffering from the increased traffic due to the combined changes to traffic routes

caused by the 'Hills and Vales' low traffic scheme, the closure of the park to rush hour traffic and commuter reluctance to use public transport. Actions are being discussed that could alleviate the current issues albeit possibly on a temporary basis. She was keen to point out that she felt a borough-wide approach was needed with area working parties and most important of all, buy-in from residents.

Meetings have also been arranged with the Royal Parks and residents of West Greenwich to discuss possible actions that will alleviate the immediate issues particularly to the west of Westcombe Park. The Royal Parks have been asked to consider re-opening the Avenue for two hours in the morning rush hour (a request they will be very reluctant to grant). The Westcombe Society very much supports the closure of

the Avenue in the longer term but has always been concerned about the knock on effects that the other closures would have. We feel able to support the re-opening for what we expect to be a temporary period to alleviate the issues we are experiencing.

We hope that these actions will allow Westcombe Park and the surrounding areas to return to more normal traffic conditions.  
- Marilyn Little Chair of W. Society

## Newsbriefs \* \* \* \* \*

### Royals on Display

The National Maritime Museum is mounting a major new exhibition of royal portraits, Tudors to Windsors. The exhibition, organised in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery, runs from 28th May to 31st October.

### Taking Back Control

Highways England has handed over a contract for "enforcement services" to a French company, Emovis, for Dartcharge, the Dartford Crossing payment system. This company will be responsible for toll collection on one of the busiest roads in Britain. An average of 165,000 vehicles per day use the Dartford Crossing, which consists of The

QEII bridge and two tunnels.

### Addicks Manager Honoured

Alan Curbishley, who brought a series of successes for Charlton Athletic in the 90s and 2000s, is to be honoured at the start of the next season by having a stand in the Valley named after him. The Curbishley Stand will be situated alongside the Jimmy Seed Stand. Jimmy Seed was another successful manager of the club. The stand named after Alan Curbishley was built when he managed the club in the 1993/4 season. When he first went to the Valley in 1974, fans had to stand on a bank.

### Lockdown Peculiars

Traffic is up on a second-hand watch sites.

Hot Tub sales soar as people miss out on their holidays

### Fly-tipper Finally Caught!

Greenwich Council has at long last apprehended a fly-tipper. Florin Avadanei was convicted by Bexley Magistrates on three accounts of fly-tipping. Not only was his vehicle seized but he was also sentenced to an 18-month community order, 200 hours of unpaid work within 18 months and will be electronically monitored from 8pm to 8am.

### Anyone for Cricket?

The Blackheath Society's

annual cricket match against the Greenwich Society will take place on Tuesday 20th July in Greenwich Park with a planned start of 5.30pm. It had to be cancelled last year due to Covid, so they urge cricket lovers to come and support the team as it battles to regain the famous Golden Elephant trophy.

### Sitopia Farm Harvest

SF are delighted to announce their first harvests, with all their seasonal produce bags selling out fast! They are increasing production capacity, and variety of what's on offer, week on week as new crops are ready to harvest. Order your bag at [chloe@sitopiafarm.com](mailto:chloe@sitopiafarm.com).

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# COMMUNITY

## WESTCOMBE NEWS

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## WESTCOMBE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

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

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Address.....

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Tel.....

Email.....

Please enclose payment as appropriate:

Family Membership      £12 [ ]

Individual Membership      £8 [ ]

Senior Citizens/Unwaged      £4 [ ]

## Westcombe Society Annual General Meeting 2021 for members

7.00pm on Friday 23rd July  
In the main hall at Mycenae House

### AGENDA

1. Welcome and apologies for absence
2. Approval of and matters arising from Minutes of 2020 AGM
3. Reports from the Chair, Events Sub-Committee, Environment Sub-Committee, Membership Secretary, Editor of the Westcombe News, Advertising Manager

4. Treasurer's Report and presentation of audited statement of accounts for year ending 31/03/2021

5. Election of Officers

6. A.O.B.

7. Linda Davies, a local historian will give a short talk on the Angerstein family.

Wine and nibbles will be served.

### Please Note

Westcombe Society members are invited to apply to serve on the Society's Committees.

They are also invited to apply for the honorary positions below.  
**Chairman, Vice Chairman, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer.**  
Thank you.

## Westcombe Society Treasure Hunt

Saturday 7th August 2021  
Starts from 10am  
Mycenae House Gardens

Over the last 15 months we've all had the chance to get to know our beautiful neighbourhood - but just how well do you know Westcombe Park? Take part in the Treasure Hunt and find out! Follow the clues to find interesting features, fixtures and facts.

Entry is free. The Hunt begins and ends in Mycenae House Gardens and answers are to be handed in by 3pm. It should take about two hours.

Come as a family, with a friend or on your own. Rain will not stop play and there is **a prize to be won.**

Please contact: Joanne on 07709 571 777 for more information about the Hunt

## 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](mailto:Treasurer@westcombesociety.org)

## Other Westcombe Society events for your diary...

**31st July (New Date)**

Members and Helpers Party (MH)

**11th September**

Walk in aid of Macmillan

**24th September**

Macmillan Coffee Morning (MH)

**9th October**

Senior Citizens Tea at Mycenae House

## Volunteering Opportunities

**'Mamma Mia!'** Charlton Village Theatre productions are looking for help to put on the above production. Contact [davidwhite-head21@gmail.com](mailto:davidwhite-head21@gmail.com)

**Sitopia Farm:** fancy shovelling compost & woodchip surrounded by beautiful trees, blossom, birdsong and other wonderful volunteers!  
<https://www.sitopiafarm.com/volunteer>

## A Mycenae House Invite...

### Friends of Mycenae Gardens Present as part of PARKSfest

A FREE Outdoor Family Friendly Theatre (3yrs+)....Two short shows will be performed in the garden at Mycenae House Sunday 11th July at 11.30am and 2.00pm



### Hare & Tortoise:

Join these unlikely friends and enter their vibrant world. Sing along as we learn to embrace the unknown...

**Riki Cycle:** A Children's Story: Riki is in training and

with help from his puppet friends Ali, Woodz and Tic, he learns what, where, and why we should recycle.

Book free tickets online or call 0208 858 1749 or [www.mycenaehouse.co.uk](http://www.mycenaehouse.co.uk)

**Mycenae House & Gardens, 90 Mycenae Road, Blackheath Standard, SE3 7SE**

## Breaking News!

The John Roan School are very pleased to announce that they have been awarded official School of Character status by the Association for Character Education (ACE).



## Letters

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

**Paul Wheeler, Blackheath Hill**

Well done to the Westcombe Society on pressing Greenwich Park on the serious traffic issues in the area (Westcombe News June 2021). However, the option of re-opening The Avenue in Greenwich Council to rush hour traffic is not one the Council can make. What the Council *can* do immediately is re-open the closed main roads of West Greenwich to through traffic; a decision which many believe has contributed directly to the 'serious traffic issues' in Westcombe Park and wider area.

**Trevor Allman, Blackheath**

In reply to Mr Neville Grant's letter regarding paper membership cards in the 'Westcombe News' (June 2021 edition), I'm sure he won't be at all surprised

to know the Official Monster Raving Loony Party were ahead of the pack and have been issuing paper membership cards, known as a "Loony License", for many years now (see attachment).

Undoubtedly, like some other Official Monster Raving Loony Party policies in the past, the paper membership card idea will also become a societal norm in time. Where Loonys lead, others follow.

With regards to Ms Ann Hill's claim that there has been a surge in the local squirrel population, I will have to disagree with her entirely.

Having lived in this area nigh on 48 years, I have noticed fluctuations in the various wildlife species we have the privilege to share our environs with, and

presently I would say there are fewer squirrels about.

This should be of no surprise, as I have noticed an increase in magpies, which predate on young squirrels in their dreys, and there are plenty of foxes around (I currently have a clan of eight coming round for food - four adults and four cubs), which predate on squirrels once they have left the drey.

I, for one, will certainly not be changing my wildlife-feeding arrangements. Yours for the manic, not the few, (Official Monster Raving Loony Party - Greenwich Branch).

**From: G Bailey, Humber Road**

Last year, the government for once did something sensible: they allowed free parking in council car parks for NHS work-

ers. On June 21st, they scrapped the idea so many of our wonderful NHS workers will have to spend a lot of cash they can't afford on parking fees.

There's a 38 Degrees petition going around demanding that the government change its mind. I urge all to sign this petition. It's not just the NHS that needs protecting: it's our amazing NHS workers who need protection, too.

**From a grateful cyclist:**

Thank you to all who stopped and offered to help when I fell off my bike on Maze Hill on 15 June. Thankfully both I and the bike were fine and suffered no problems when I continued my journey. However I did appreciate the concern and apologise for causing any disruption to others.

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# FEATURES

## To THC or not to THC Jo Burnand

Since being put on medication for seizures my doctor has told me there are always going to be side effects but I could not help but wonder whether if these particular side effects were not worse than the actual seizures themselves. As CBD has steadily appeared on every high street in the past three years I started to take a closer look at the cannabis compound and see what its downsides were.

Cannabis has, since the dawn of agriculture been caught in the cross-fire between those looking to criminalise its euphoric effects and those keen to harness its medicinal uses. The plant's very ingredients have been subjected to different laws in the hope that what is specified as criminal can be kept at bay from what is termed useful but can both comfortably co-exist?

From the world's first pharmacopeia, listing Cannabis as a cure for over 100 ailments, to Queen Victoria being prescribed it for period pains, cannabis has remained an alluring plant. In line with the 1961 UN recommendation that it should be prohibited except for research purposes, three medicines have to date been developed bringing relief, to among others, children suffering from severe forms of epilepsy.

Since peering at it under a microscope scientists have been able to tread new ground in how the brain and body are able to regulate themselves through a network of receptors. Indeed it is the ability of compounds in cannabis, chief among them CBD and THC, to mimic these processes

that allow, when ingested or smoked, to overwhelm them.

The law has always come down on the side of CBD. This is because THC exerts far more control over our receptors than does CBD, ensuring when the message is sent out to produce more dopamine it is done so by the bus load thereby causing

the high. So we have a law limiting the amount of THC that can be present in any CBD product and the FSA now forcing CBD stores to affirm in detail where their products originate and what percentages of either compound are

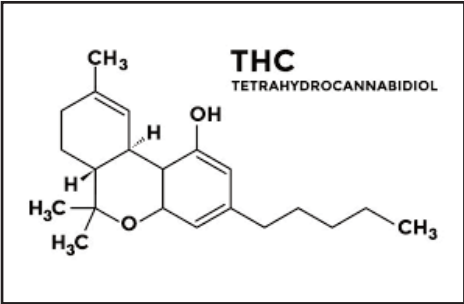
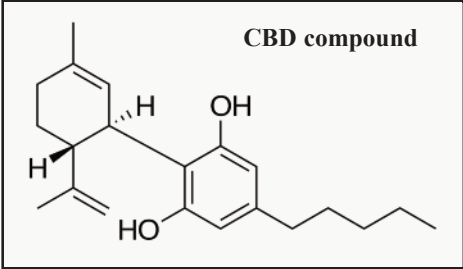
contained within.

But could it be that the truth is more nuanced? That CBD is more the Yin to

THC's Yang? Both are psychoactive, meaning they interfere with our central nervous system and both are mood altering albeit not to the same degree. There is also synergy between the two in that CBD only inter-

acts with receptors in the presence of THC or other cannabis compounds, leading to a catch-22 situation where the criminalisation of THC limits the use of CBD.

Given that a CBD isolate product will cost you less than a full-spectrum product that contains other cannabis compounds including THC I'm tempted to try the full spectrum. I would even consider volunteering for medical cannabis now being trialled by the NHS but clearly dosage would be a serious consideration given that this new medicine contains varying amounts of THC above what would otherwise be legally acceptable.



## Am I Dehydrated? Heart Research UK

Staying hydrated is important for keeping your heart and circulatory system healthy. Your heart often feels similar to hunger, so drinking plenty of fluid can prevent over-eating and weight-gain.

Symptoms of dehydration include headaches, tiredness, irritability and difficulty concentrating. If your urine is pale and clear then you are hydrated. If your urine is more yellow, brown or dark in colour with a strong smell, you are probably not drinking enough.

Aim to drink six to eight cups or glasses of fluid every day. You may need to drink more during hot weather, or if you are doing a lot of physical activity.

Water is best, but if you don't like water, try herbal teas or sugar-free squash. Coffee and tea also count, with no sugar. You can get water from fruit and vegetables, such as cucumber, watermelon, tomatoes, oranges and apples. Avoid drinking too much alcohol as it causes you to urinate more, which can lead to dehydration.

## The Perfect Creme Caramel by the Party Chef

The simplicity of ingredients probably accounts for crème caramel's ubiquity and the fact that it lasts so well. The Romans, were they still here, would claim provenance having made custards by the gallon - after a trend for domesticating fowl resulted in an egg surplus in the metropolis. Greece at this would look dispossessed. We would lay

claim to the syrupy dressing idea after bringing sugar back from the crusades while the Spanish and Italians would assert their ownership although the Moors, were they still here, might think differently. India would, of course, remind us that they were the first to refine sugar hence the word's origins in the Sanskrit for grit, Sakara. The French could chip in and say crème in this case means custard from the old French *croustade*.

Crème caramel, wherever it came from, is a variation on custard but unlike its nearest relation crème brûlée uses the egg whites as well as the yolks to provide both a gelatinous and creamy body but also sufficient water for the hardened caramel to then absorb and so become of a syrupy consistency.

### Ingredients

#### For the caramel:

80g caster sugar  
80g muscovado sugar  
6 tbsp water

#### For the custard:

4 eggs  
1 tsp vanilla extract



10g caster sugar  
1 pint full-fat milk

### Method

Pre-heat the oven to 150c and warm the ramekins in a roasting tray.

- In a very clean and preferably light-coloured saucepan gently heat the sugar and water. Do not stir. The sugar crystals have jagged edges which even after liquefying

want to regroup into a solid mass and stirring provides them with a convenient point around which they can accumulate. When the caramel is a dark brown turn off the heat and pour the liquid into the ramekins.

- Allow them to cool at room temperature. If you put them in the fridge the sugar will absorb moisture and go soft.

- Once hard, butter the sides of the ramekins above the level of the caramel.

- Gently whisk the eggs, vanilla and sugar. The less air your custard contains the smoother it will be.

- Gently heat the milk until it is just beginning to steam and then strain slowly through a sieve onto the egg mixture.

- Gently whisk together and then pour into the ramekins.

- Stand the ramekins in the roasting tray and fill half-way with boiling water.

- Cook for 1 hour or until the custard has set.

- Remove the ramekins and cool at room temperature. Transfer to the fridge overnight.

- To serve, place a serving dish on top of the ramekin and turn upside down.



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# WHAT'S ON



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. We need our readers help to bring the What's On page fully back, so let us know of any entertainment/classes/talks you have found reopened.

## Flowery Friends

Blackheath Flower Club members were really looking forward to returning to Mycenae House to start watching our new season of flower demonstrators on June 18th but the relaxation of the lockdown rules on 21st June has now been delayed until July. We have continued to make short flower arranging videos and you can find our latest on Google search or on YouTube by typing in Blackheath Flower Club. I hope we are improving but gosh it is an effort and I think we are tiring now.



At the same time, we have been raising awareness of our happy club by various events in the borough. First, we celebrated National Flower Arranging Day by handing out free posies outside Marks and Spencer to a perplexed public on 17th May. People still think there must be a catch - nothing is free in London, but we proved them wrong! We also left arrangements outside members' houses for people to take away and gave bouquets to people who could blog about us. Watch out for this event next year. We also joined forces with Charlton Garden Club and Greenwich and Bexley Hospice in two fetes which were held in blistering heat in April and May, a distant memory now. We held stalls showing off our flower arrangements and various flower themed gifts. People were intrigued by animal-shaped doorstops and wine bottle night lights, but these raised our profile and interest in our group and its activities. Luckily, our club has been able to book an outing to Mig Kimpton's garden in Deal on 1st July to see his field of home-grown flowers, his beautiful garden and small shop. A flower demonstration will be followed by a great outdoor lunch all in the beautiful Kent countryside. I have been there before on a willow weaving course and can highly recommend it. This should keep us happy until our return to meetings from 16th July at our new time of 1pm to 3pm. We encourage you to join us for a free taster session as a visitor and for the rest of the year at just £6.00 a session on the third Friday of each month. Why not try Flower Therapy yourself! Call Sian 07887790028 [siancaroline@googlegmail.com](mailto:siancaroline@googlegmail.com) - Richard Lovegrove

## Summer Evening Fun!

Watch classic films in the stunning setting of the Old Royal Naval College this summer plus do a film tour! The Luna Cinema is returning to the Old Royal Naval College on 8 – 11th July with a line-up of classic and feel-good films to make your summer. The programme of films for 2021 includes the must-see modern murder mystery Knives Out, classic rom-com Pretty Woman, and A Star is Born, starring Lady GaGa and Bradley Cooper. Musical fans won't want to miss the opportunity to show off their vocal skills at the Sing-A-Long version of the smash-hit movie The Greatest Showman. All tickets must be booked in advance and, due to social distancing, capacities are limited, so book your place early to avoid missing out! <https://ornc.org/whats-on/the-luna-cinema/>



Photo Credit: The Greatest Showman © 2017 Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation. All Rights Reserved

## Take a selfie on location!

Join in for a behind-the-scenes tour of 'the most popular filming location in the world' (Empire magazine). Tours run every weekend from June to September, and then on the last weekend of each month until spring. From a starring role as Buckingham Palace in The Crown to 19th century revolutionary Paris in Les Misérables, the Old Royal Naval College has provided the setting for some of the most memorable scenes in major film and TV productions. On this tour you will be guided through over 60 years of filming, both on their iconic riverside grounds and inside the magnificent Painted Hall. For further information and to book a film tour, visit: <https://ornc.org/whats-on/film-tv-location-tour-2/>



Photo credit: SteppingThroughFilm

## Join the Proper Blokes Club

Join Scott Johnson for this blokes-only 'walk and talk', to break the stigma of talking about men's mental health. This walk was established by The Mycenae House Reach Out project, managed by Deborah Fitzpatrick, their Community Project Outreach Co-ordinator. The programme supports those that are socially isolated and suffer poor physical and mental health and loneliness in our community. They try to connect those from hard to reach groups to get together and make friends. Deborah said: "We were thrilled to develop a new partnership with Scott from 'The Proper Blokes Club'. When I first met Scott, I knew he was perfect to work with. We found Scott to be an inspiration in all that he has achieved and in paying it forward helping others. He understood the issues men face and by getting together

over a common love of walking. By walking, Scott found a breakthrough for men who are reluctant to talk about their feelings." Scott added: "These walks have helped the lads feel better.....from those that jump two feet in are reaping the rewards of being able to talk and release that everyday pressure in life. Since we have started we have had 95% of lads staying. The others who have tried and left, are sometimes not in the right frame of mind to get involved in a group setting, but still remain in our WhatsApp group and can come back whenever they feel ready." Come join these brand new walks for 'ProperBlokes' on Thursdays 10-11am - meet outside main entrance at Mycenae House, 90 Mycenae Road, SE3 7SE [www.mycenaehouse.co.uk](http://www.mycenaehouse.co.uk) - advance bookings email [mycenaeoutreach@gmail.com](mailto:mycenaeoutreach@gmail.com)

## Not Just a Geisha - Women in Japan

**Lecturer: Suzanne Perrin**  
**4pm Monday 12th July 2021**  
An exploration of the development of Japanese women in art and fashion from the 18th century to the present day. The popular image of Japanese women is that of the Geisha, or professional entertainer, encapsulating the ideals of beauty, culture and intelligence packaged like a perfect porcelain doll for the amusement of men. In the modern age from the 1920s onwards, women have become more self-determined, creating a new generation of independent, professional entrepreneurs, as seen in the film and fashion industries with designers like Rei Kawakubo and Hanae Mori. This lecture will be presented on Zoom Members will receive email joining instructions. Guests are welcome for £5 - please email [ticaclark@hotmail.com](mailto:ticaclark@hotmail.com) for



Photo Credit: Suzanne Perrin

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# FEATURES

## Book Reviews

- Patrick Barry

Yaa Gyasi and Francis Spufford, two differing authors whose first novels were widely acclaimed and bestowed with prizes, have each produced their second novels. A second act is always tough but each has succeeded in producing something worth reading.

The Ghanaian-American writer Yaa Gyasi's debut novel "Homegoing", nominated for the Booker Prize, explored racial identity in a historical sweep through slavery, emancipation and emigration. Its strong theme was hampered by a flimsy structure of individual pearls of distinct, separate stories threaded unsatisfactorily together to form an imperfect necklace of a novel

In "Tanscendent Kingdom" (246 pages, RRP £14.99, pub Penguin Random House) racism and cultural identity are again present but here they are part of a disturbing and persistent background hum rather than forming the centre of the novel.

This change in emphasis makes the novel more enjoyable and makes the same message more powerful for being understated but ever-present.

Our heroine, Gifty, arrives from Ghana, in Huntsville Alabama, as a one of a family of four and we gradually discover why and how her immediate family shrinks to two.

Instead of an historical context we have flashbacks to youth and expeditions between countries as one sibling becomes too absorbed in US culture and one parent flees from it. The impact of their choices on Gifty and her mother are profound.

Raised on her mother's swaddling religion Gifty seeks answers and escape through rigorous scientific endeavour.

The novel suggest that perhaps love, and family and personal identity lie between science and religion, between Ghana and the US, between madness and sanity, and between the past and the present. Gifty needs to learn to feel as well as to think.

"Perpetual Light" (pub Faber, RRP £16.99, 327 pages) is set much closer to home. Spufford teaches writing at our local Goldsmiths College and was inspired by walking to work each day past the memorial to the 168 victims of the V-2 attack on Woolworths on New Cross Road. He imagines how the lives of five of the young victims of the bomb might have developed had the bomb not dropped.

The book becomes a social history of (South East) London with the characters imagined at five and ten year intervals through rationing, mods and rockers, skin-heads and the National Front, Thatcher and Blair, Britpop and property development, and Millwall and Glyndebournne.

It's an enjoyable read but the tragic bomb blast that is its starting point is strangely irrelevant: the five victims are fictitious (although fifteen youngsters were indeed killed) and if their existence is a fiction in a novel they could equally have been five survivors. However, without that particular springboard there may have been no novel and I'm delighted that he was inspired to write it.

## A Live Treat At Greenwich Theatre

- Polly Morgan

After nearly a year in and out of lockdown, when Greenwich Theatre ran some popular online theatre, many local residents will be thrilled to know the long-standing venue has opened its doors to audiences again.

With every Covid-secure measure in place, such as lovely al fresco drinks outside prior to the performance, socially distanced seating and masks required to be worn throughout performances, readers can be assured of a safe and pleasurable night out.

The Westcombe News were invited to see four short plays by acclaimed playwright Caryl Churchill, (Top Girls; A Number); entitled Bad Nights and Odd Days. Greenwich Theatre have added a fourth play to the season - the dystopian tale, Not Not Not Not Not Enough Oxygen, which featured alongside Churchill's unforgettable works, Abortive, Seagulls, and Three More Sleepless Nights.

Some of the plays were originally performed on the radio as far back as 1971, which puts Churchill's modernised vision into perspective.

Readers will surely recognise the lead actor, Paul McGann (Withnail and I; Doctor Who), who impressed particularly with bringing to life Churchill's clever, modern and ahead-of-its-time dialogue - along with powerful performances throughout the night.

In fact, the entire cast was impressive: Kerrie Taylor (The Bay; Where The Heart Is), Bonnie Baddoo, Dan Gaisford, Gracy Goldman and Verna Vyas, under Artistic Director James Haddrell.

The night opens, with a dramatic, interesting and at times darkly funny, performance of Seagulls Churchill's powerful and personal allegory about losing the ability

to write.

Bad Nights and Odd Days explores the darker side of Caryl Churchill's work, with life-shattering events, a carousel of shifting relationships and the presence of psychic phenomena.

If you are up for a dramatic evening of live theatre, which is powerfully acted, then this could be the night out you have been waiting for!

**Dates: To Saturday 10th July 2021**

**Tickets:**<https://greenwichtheatre.org.uk/events/bad-nights-and-odd-days/>



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## Out in a Boat on Blackheath

Tony Lord

Hidden away from the outside world. In dry summers it almost disappears. Not many people know that it is called Folly Pond. Old sepia photographs show that in Edwardian times it was a much larger and deeper affair, the haunt of sticklebacks, dragonflies and black, shiny stagbeetles.

Every spring Mr Maxwell, who apparently kept a fleet of children's canoes and paddleboats at Peter Pan's Pool in Beckenham, would bring some of them to Folly Pond where boys and girls would pay sixpence to paddle and drift dreamily over the sunlit surface of the pond for half an hour. Maxwell, who was an astute busi-

nessman, also had similar yellow boats floating on the pond near the children's playground at the foot of Greenwich Park. I remember one year before the second war when the good man added a few motor boats to his fleet which chugged around leaving streaks of oil on the water. It cost a shilling to steer one of these for thirty minutes which was out of my price range. Sometimes on Saturday mornings my best friend, Dicky would knock on my door and ask if I was coming out to play. If I had been a good boy my mother would press a silver sixpence into my grubby hand and tell me to be sure to be back for lunch at one o'clock.



Original artwork by Tony Lord

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Dicky and I would head across the heath and take a canoe out. There was a green

them a clip round their ears.

At about five o'clock the man would chain all his boats together, lock up his shed and leave them all floating in a group in the middle of the pond. One glorious evening Dicky and I were passing the pond and saw a canoe floating away from the others. Perhaps the man had missed slipping the chain through the hook on the canoe. Dicky, who was braver than me, slipped off his sandals and paddled out to it. The water was only about a foot deep. We had a lovely hour in it though we had no paddles and after abandoning it as dusk fell got into serious trouble for being late home. My bedtime was half past seven and it was now eight o'clock and why were my shoes soaking wet?

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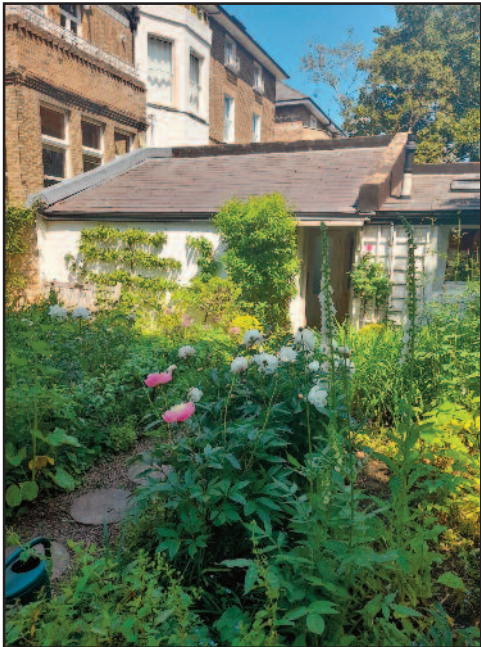


Planning applications can be viewed in the library, or at the Woolwich Library on the lower ground floor of the Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington St. They may also be viewed on [www.greenwich.gov.uk/planning](http://www.greenwich.gov.uk/planning)

Green Therapy

Some of us are born gardeners but for Steve Whitefield it was a lifestyle choice. A green therapy. He started planting outside his unique annex-style home in Angerstein Lane about 15 years ago. Big houses nearby dwarf this plot, even the old converted stable blocks opposite seem huge in comparison. Whereas Steve’s flower garden and dwelling look like they’ve landed there from a quaint Kentish village or escaped from the pages of a fairy tale. Children passing have been heard calling it a Secret Garden (after the book/film), fully expecting to see the characters, Mary or Colin, working there.

Steve’s easiest plants are the Welsh yellow poppies that spring up everywhere and he is perhaps most proud of the espalier Comis pear tree on the brick wall, “the Rolls Royce of pears ....often picked by passers by” he ends ruefully. His favourite flower could be the pink-edged peonies though, known as Bowl of Beauty, but he likes and tends for all of them equally. He feels he has to keep up with the expectations of regular passersby who will often stop for a chat to find out how his garden is growing.



One passer-by bought him a bench, dedicated to his wife, who had passed away suddenly and asked if it could become a feature of Steve’s garden. “He and his family visit sometimes man to sit on the bench.” said the community minded Steve, who no doubt offers them refreshments.

A new venture, past the planning stages but not fully realised yet are the Parterres, “I’m thinking I’m reaching beyond my station!” Steve says. The low hedges form the letters A and L. Standing over the letters is one of the lime trees that replaced the elms that used to line the Lane. In the spirit of topiary Steve has shaped the ivy growing on the brick wall to form a heart.

Steve’s garden opens every year in support of Greenwich & Bexley Hospice, and as I said my goodbyes to quite a gathering of locals, I thought Gertrude Jekyll would have approved of this blooming cottage garden. Passing the Parterres, I could envision a scene from 100 years earlier, two crinoline ladies stopping to blush as the Russian-born, John Julian Angerstein’s coach and horses drove past, bearing their owner back to his Woodlands home.

*-Anne Williams*

Planting Up a Station

Anne Robbins

Residents who use Westcombe Park Station will soon be seeing improvements to the plantings on the south, London-bound platform. Thameslink is planning to send in its team of landscapers to dig out tired or overgrown shrubs and rampant weeds from the beds, and rejuvenate them. They will be planting for low maintenance, but Thameslink has also been open to suggestions for shrubs that would also support pollinating insects like bees and hover flies.

In the past, the beds were weeded and replenished by a group of local gardeners, PiP! (Planting in the Pleasaunce), who also manage the small orchard in the East Greenwich Pleasaunce, with other locals chipping in when they could. Some residents donated plants, including rosa rugosa which has been a prolific source of flow-

ers. The gardening efforts have always been informal, and as PiP! members moved away or circumstances have changed, the group found it harder to keep maintaining the beds. Added to this, a member said that it was dispiriting constantly finding litter in the beds and having their efforts damaged when the station operators brought in strimming teams.

After the landscapers have replanted the borders along the platform, it seems that Southeastern Trains staff will be happy to have volunteers helping to maintain the beds. This might benefit from becoming a regular feature, and the Environment Committee would be delighted to pass along to PiP! any enquiries from people who would like to help look after our station. Interested? Please get in touch. ([environment@westcombesociety.org](mailto:environment@westcombesociety.org))

Check your vehicle

The ULEZ is expanding - have you checked your vehicle?

From 25 October 2021, the central London Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) is expanding to create a single, larger zone up to (but not including) the North Circular Road (A406) and South Circular Road (A205).

About half of the borough will be inside the new zone. Four out of five cars already meet the ULEZ emissions standards, but we need owners of the remaining polluting cars, motorcycles, lighter vans and minibuses to take action.

So please do check your vehicle meets the ULEZ emissions standards.

**- Maggie Gravelle**

Poppies

The poppies are a-popping  
There's just no way of stopping  
Their 'ex' 'plo' 'sions'  
Of colour.

GM, June 2021

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Continued from the front page...

Historic Angerstein Pedestrian Crossing - Closure Threat

.....This places them at risk from being struck by a train travelling at up to 15mph. What Network Rail never explained was how this can be the case.

All trains have to stop at the stop boards either side of the crossing and then sound their horn before moving off. There is no way a train will come hurtling around the bend and catch them unawares whilst concentrating on something else. Indeed, no train can possibly be travelling at 15mph across the crossing from a standing start at the stop boards. Residents thought the Network Rail case weak and largely theoretical, with no regard to the actual circumstances.

On looking at the alternatives, an underpass has been ruled out because it would cost £3m and would have drainage issues. What Network Rail are proposing is to:

- clear vegetation along Farndale Road
- paint the red walls
- paint a mural on the brickwork under the bridge on Woolwich Road

The legal representative said the path over the railway is not a public right of way, as the crossing was originally provided for private use of the landowner, John Angerstein. He also constantly refused to answer questions about the comparative risk of using the crossing and using the narrow pavement under the bridge on Woolwich Road. His position was that safety on the pavement was a matter for the Highways Agency. Residents suggested that Network Rail were washing their hands of the public safety of pedestrians. Residents thought the presentation poor,

the evidence largely unconvincing, the logic faulty and the proposed alternative route unacceptable as no number of murals will make the narrow pavement next to the main road safe. It seems that the retreat two years ago was a tactical one to allow Network Rail time to put up the cameras, try to obtain supportive evidence and research the legal position.

Residents have asked for more detail about alternatives such as a footbridge, tunnel or gates to make the crossing itself safer.

Residents are also organising a group to work together to oppose the closure or persuade Network Rail to provide a more suitable alternative than a diversion along a very narrow pavement next to a very busy road.

Local Councillors are also asking the Royal Borough of Greenwich to fight against closure or at least call for an alternative that will keep the pedestrian route open at the same location. Our MP, Matthew Pennycook has also written a strongly worded letter to Network Rail expressing his disappointment at their decision and asking them to answer a number of pertinent questions about their decision.

If you would like more information or to join the group mailing list please email [angersteincrossing@gmail.com](mailto:angersteincrossing@gmail.com) or telephone the Westcombe Society Environment Committee. There are now over 2,500 signatures on the petition which can be found at <http://chnng.it/9TCqmzbg>

*-Emily Norton and Mike Sparham*

Clutter

Clutter, clutter, clutter  
You can hear me mutter  
"I must clear this utter

Clutter  
From my house."  
But though I try  
Every day  
I have to say  
It looks  
Much the same  
Which is really  
A shame.

GM, June 2021

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

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