

Protest against train cutbacks to continue

New timetable with fewer off-peak services starts on Sunday 11 December

SOUTHEASTERN’s new timetable comes into force in December, despite strong opposition to the cuts in services from users and politicians.

Campaigners are continuing to press their case against the changes and hope to hold the state-owned operator to its pledge “to listen and take further feedback on board for future timetable changes”.

Leaflets urging passengers to protest against the cuts were handed out by Westcombe Society members and ward councillors during the morning peak at Westcombe Park station on Wednesday 16 November.

Commuters are being urged to make their objections known by writing to MPs and the company’s boss (steve.white_MD@southeasternrailway.co.uk) and by signing a petition on the Westcombe Society website via the inset QR code.

During the morning peak, Greenwich line services (Southeastern and Thameslink) will be reduced from 13 to 8. The evening peak will see train numbers reduced from 12 to 6.

Off-peak there are four trains an hour, but they are unevenly spaced with a gap of 23 minutes between some services. On Mondays to Fridays trains will depart from Westcombe Park at 14.05, 14.12 (Thameslink), 14.35 and 14.42 (Thameslink).

The Westcombe Society wants to see a return to the turn-up-and-go service of six trains an hour at 10-minute intervals but, recognising financial constraints, wants at least 4 trains an hour (including Thameslink) at 15-minute intervals.

Southeastern has defended its new timetable, pointing out that passenger journeys on some lines dropped by 40 per cent between September 2019 and September 2022, although off-peak passenger numbers have bounced back. “The new timetable means trains on our network will run on time more often, with fewer cancellations and sufficient space to match our current demand,” it said.



It’s getting to look a lot like Christmas

MARILYN LITTLE, who chairs the Westcombe Society, checks over the decorations and lights that will adorn the Christmas tree at the Standard from early December.

Two to three people are urgently needed to put up and decorate the tree. This task has been done for more twenty years by Peter Andrews, who is moving out of the area. He is willing to induct any volunteers.

Email J-J at aunejj22@gmail.com to find out more.

On page 2, there is a list of some of the Advent and Christmas events and services planned by neighbourhood churches, which includes opportunities to belt out your favourite carols while enjoying a pint or two at a local pub. For those who prefer to listen, there is St Alfege’s service of nine lessons and carols.

As the economic gloom deepens and belts are tightened, Diane Blackwell visits local charity shops in search of purse-friendly gifts and declares that they are “an absolute treasure trove”. Read more about her discoveries on page 3.

Make it a joyless season for criminals

CRIME DOESN’T stop for Christmas and there’s no goodwill from thieves. Westcombe Society is continuing to work with the police to identify areas for concern and steps the public can take to protect themselves against crime, writes Maggie Gravelle.

Greenwich Park is a target for thieves. Distraction theft, for example a person asking for directions on a map and then surreptitiously stealing a mobile phone or wallet. Pickpockets operate in crowded places, such as around the General Wolfe statue. Police try to prevent these crimes by having a visible presence. Increasingly, gangs on electric bikes or scooters operate to identify people using a phone and then silently speed past and snatch the phone. Where possible it’s advisable to keep your phone in a bag or pocket.

Thefts from vehicles happen frequently both outside and within the park. Often the car is unlocked. So, one obvious measure is to make sure your car is securely locked when you leave it and that any items of value are removed or out of sight. It is also sensible to park in a well-lit area.

With the popularity of online shopping, thieves have discovered a new target with deliveries left outside customers’ homes. If you don’t have a neighbour who can take in your deliveries, the best advice is to use one of the collection points now widely available in corner shops or at railway stations.

The theft of catalytic converters from cars is on the rise. Hybrid vehicles are a particular target because the combustion engine is used less and the valuable metals are less corroded. Little is being done by manufacturers to prevent this crime. The exception is Mercedes, which has moved the converters to under the engine to make access more difficult.

The RAC advises drivers to park off-road if possible and otherwise choose well-lit areas. They also suggest parking with a high kerb or other barrier as close as possible to the side with the convertor. This makes it more difficult to remove. The Met is carrying out a trial with SmartWater (the anti-theft marking solution) to mark the converters.

Scrap yards can then be targeted and stolen property identified. If it is successful a number of free kits may be distributed in the borough.

■ SmartWater is an invisible, anti-theft marking solution that can be painted on property and leaves an indelible mark which glows yellow under UV light.

Anything marked with SmartWater can be conclusively linked back to its owner if stolen. It also acts as a powerful deterrent. Trials carried out with the police in Harlesden and Kensal Green saw burglaries drop by 80 per cent and 50 per cent compared to the previous year. Home kits are available to buy for £59.50 from smartwater.com

WESTCOMBE SOCIETY

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■ Contestants rack their brains during the society's autumn quiz night at Mycenae House on Saturday 19 November, an opportunity to promote its work, attract new members and raise money for charity, writes Diane Blackwell.

It was a lively affair with quiz masters Patrick, Peter and Robbie putting knowledge to the test with a potpourri of questions on movies, the 70s, shrubs and trees, famous quotes and more.

As always though the main aim of the evening was to bring people together for an enjoyable time quizzing, winning attractive raffle prizes all raising money for the Westcombe Society's charity of the year (yet to be chosen).

At the halfway mark a supper of delicious fish and chips from the Standard Fish Bar fuelled everyone for the home stretch.

Say 'No' to 20m telecoms pole in Batley Park

PLANNERS are being urged to reject an application to install a 20-metre telecoms mast and four large cabinets on the green space at the eastern end of Batley Park.

The Westcombe Society environment committee queried whether it is necessary, given the generally good reception in the area.

It has also argued that the proposal by CK Hutchinson Networks (UK) Ltd (ref 22/3698/T3) would spoil the look and character of the conservation area.

The committee pointed out that Greenwich's policy for communications development states that "any proposal is sited, designed, coloured and landscaped so as to minimise visual impact on its setting and local environment".

The council had also failed to inform and consult residents about the application, the committee said.

Other planning applications
(See also www.westcombesociety.org)
97 Langton Way ref 22/3758/HD

To construct single storey outbuilding.
86 Coleraine Road ref 22/3383/HD
To convert garage into habitable space and replace garage door with window.
60 Humber Road ref 22/3831/HD
To construct single storey rear extension, rear dormer roof extension, and 3 roof lights to front slope

Volunteers needed to deliver Westcombe News

AN APPEAL has gone out for volunteers to deliver the Westcombe News.

Emily Norton, who organises the paper's distribution, said: "We are always in need of new people to volunteer to deliver the paper either to replace people as they leave or to provide much-needed occasional cover when regular deliverers are away or sick."

"Rounds take about 30 minutes to deliver ten times a year. Currently we need volunteers to deliver to the cafe in the Pleasaunce, to the west end of Westcombe Park Road and to part of Vanbrugh Park. More standby volunteers are also needed."

Join the editorial team

DO YOU ENJOY finding out what's going on in your local community? Would you like an absorbing and worthwhile voluntary job?]

We are looking for a team of people who would each edit the Westcombe News a few times a year. The Westcombe Society will

provide regular articles and support. If you like to write, are computer literate and are interested in joining the team please contact info@westcombesociety.org or call 07939386215 for more details.

Roll out the carols

CAROLS from St John's church will be served up at the British Oak pub on Thursday 15 and Thursday 22 December from 8.30pm. On Wednesday 21 December at 7pm there will be carols by candlelight at the church in Stratheden Road. On Christmas eve at 3pm and 5pm there will be a short family service where children will have the opportunity to make a Christingle while hearing about the Christmas story.

St George's, in Glenluce Road, will be holding a carol service on Sunday 11 December at 6pm and carol-singing in the Pleasaunce at 4pm on Saturday 17 December. There will be community carols at Mycenae House on Monday 19 December at 7pm, and beer and carols at the Royal Standard at 6pm on Wednesday 21 December. At 4pm on Christmas Eve there will be a service for all ages.

On Sunday 18 December at 6.30pm there will be a service of nine lessons and carols across the park at St Alfege's.

For details of all the Advent and Christmas services and events visit the churches' websites.
www.stjohnsblackheath.org.uk
www.stgeorgeswestcombepark.org.uk
www.st-alfege.org.uk

LETTERS

Parking permits woe

HOW I SYMPATHISE with the writer of the article about obtaining visitor vouchers from the Council. I had painters in for a week but had been using the old paper version of the parking vouchers until they ran out on the second to last day and then I needed to apply for some online.

When I eventually worked out which bit of the website I should be looking at, I managed to find, scan, convert to the necessary format and upload the necessary evidence of residency, cursing that I needed to do that even though I had a valid resident's permit already.

Having obtained some four-hour vouchers I decided to purchase some all-day ones and, having logged out, needed to access my account again. Unfortunately, I found I was locked out of my account, no reason given.

So the instructions are of course to phone the parking-permit section and twenty minutes later I was trying to explain to an officer what had happened. I was eventually

told that I would need to email the "back-office team" but there was no indication as to how long that would take. And so my poor painters were having to box and cox for their parking first on the small metered section in my road which allows two hours only, and then drive up the hill to two hours free parking on another street etc.

With no unlocking of my account in sight, I rang the next day and had a long conversation with someone who, although polite, clearly thought I must be incompetent at the use of the website. The conclusion was that there was no point in emailing the "back-office team" again because it would just go to the bottom of their pile.

Later that day the issue was resolved but it is extraordinary that the council would rather waste officers' time dealing with issues arising from an "unfit for purpose" online system, than actually put it right.
Lynne Dixon

Policing puzzle

I HAVE received a leaflet in my letterbox

from the Commander of the Police for Lewisham, Greenwich and Bexley who claims he has 1,700 officers and staff. Where are they all hiding? All the police stations in this corner of Greenwich have been closed a good while and the nearest seems to be in Eltham. Or are they all plain-clothed? Except for the occasional glimpse of uniformed officers in the Royal Park or greeting tourists at the Cutty Sark landing stage in Greenwich, I haven't seen one for many years. Nor did the auxiliary policemen round at the Royal Standard to protect the shops from the kids coming out of school last for long.

While any inefficiency is usually blamed on their being under-resourced, it seems the police are the only people responsible for keeping crime statistics and (in my experience) do their best to massage them down.

Malcolm Hardy

■ Have your say. Send your letters to wnews@westcombesociety.org. Please include your full address and a telephone number.

NEIGHBOURHOOD

Charity shops to the rescue at Christmas



Gift ideas from, left, Cats Protection, the Red Cross, Greenwich and Bexley Community Hospice and the Oxfam bookshop

THIS YEAR Santa may be tightening his budget belt and spending on loved ones may need to be restrained, but our local charity shops at the Standard can help give us a merry Christmas despite the economic crunch, writes Diane Blackwell.

Look no further than Cats Protection, The British Red Cross, and the Greenwich and Bexley Community Hospice for those special low-cost pressies. They're an absolute treasure

trove of gift ideas for everyone ... from sparkly tops and eye-catching necklaces for the party girl, wacky shirts and puffer jackets for that special man, pretty ornaments and delicate glassware for the houseproud to colourful toys and games for the kids. Plus stocking fillers galore like puzzles and fun mugs. With all price tags very purse-friendly.

And for the bookworms in your life the Oxfam bookshop situated next to the

entrance to Greenwich Market is bursting with interesting books at a reasonable price and is always busy and popular. From cookbook must-haves (Jamie and Nigella to name two) to self help and popular fiction as well as literature, psychology, music and arts. There are rare collectible books and first editions. They also have a lovely range of Christmas cards, as of course do the charity shops at the Standard

A place to feel safe and connect with others

THE MYCENAE HOUSE Reach Out Project helps to tackle loneliness and isolation in our community, writes manager Deborah Fitzpatrick

Established in 2017, it aims to get people together to engage in activities to find fulfilment in life.

"Our community who attend are often bereaved, at home with no family, or suffering from poor mental and/or physical health. We signpost to local organisations that can support community members if they have a specific need such as dementia.

"The bond that is made by those who join in activities cannot be underestimated. Friendships where you can discuss your worries have been made and mutual support is given. Friends play a significant role in promoting emotional wellbeing and overall health.

"Loneliness is a complex emotional response to social and emotional isolation, which typically includes anxious feelings about a lack of connection or communication with other beings, both in the present and into the future.

"Loneliness can be felt even when surrounded by other people. The causes of loneliness are varied and can impact on mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, sleep problems and increased stress.



"Right now anxiety is the new normal and it's not hard to see why with the pandemic, political instability and rises in energy prices. The Reach Out Project offers a place to feel safe and to have a connection with others. Community involvement provides a sense of belonging and social connectedness. It can also offer extra meaning and purpose to everyday life."

The project offers advice, especially for carers, with the Greenwich Carers Centre, and a wide range of activities. For more information, visit www.mycenaereachout.co.uk. Tel: 020 8858 1749. Here's a snapshot of what's on offer during December and January

Creative Dance workshops with The Vi.sa.

'The group has really helped me mentally, after staying at home through the lockdown. It's been lovely to meet and talk to people'

Dance Project 12 December, 16, January, 30 January, 13 February. Exercise and Dance aimed at those with poor mobilities/disabilities/poor mental health.

Walk with Confidence with Abdi from The Volunteer Centre Greenwich.

Mycenae Music. The Group chooses four music albums and discusses them next month.

Wednesday Tech Workshops with Paul Clayton from Comfortably Digital. 30 November: Get Around a mobile. 16 November/ and 7 December: Tame that Tablet; 14 December: Laptop Essentials and weekly face-to-face help with your gadget.

Chill n Chat with Reach Out volunteers for those who would like to get together with others.

Inclusive Everybody Sing – aimed at those with learning disabilities and families/support workers.

8 December Zumba – classes to be held at Blackheath High School – meet at Mycenae House to be taken to the school and back

Weekly Mycenae House Reach Out Well-being Cafe for those who are isolated and/or lonely suffering poor physical and/or mental health. With monthly seated exercise, bingo, mini massages and crafts.

Learn to knit and crochet with Reach Out volunteers.

Monthly Bingo 19 January (more dates available in New Year).

Monthly Crafts with Jane's Craft Corner: 24 November and 26 January: watercolour fun painting. 23 February: designing paper-stained glass using tissue paper and gemstones. 30 March: learn and design your own découpage jar. Even if you do not wish to do crafts you can come along and draw.)

Mini hand massages with 1st Excellent Care Podiatrist, 26 January, 23 February, 30 March (seated/accessible). Dates are flexible due to podiatry emergencies. First come, first served.

Book a 20-minute help session (bookable - Monday to Wednesday) for help with practical

Older workers' views sought for study

A researcher is seeking working people aged 66 and above to take part in interviews for his university project.

Ali Hitay, who is studying for a master's degree in gerontology at the University of Southampton, said: "I hope to conduct interviews with older working individuals about their relationship with their work, what it is like to be an older working person, motivations, challenges and rewards of working in older age."

The interviews will take less than an hour and can be in person or virtually. Ali's email address is ah12g21@soton.



■ A wreath placed by G49th Greenwich Beavers at the Maze Hill war memorial on Remembrance Sunday. It reads: "At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them."

Have your say on Silvertown buses

An ask-the-people exercise on proposals for a new cross-river bus network along with the opening of the Silvertown Tunnel in early 2025 has been launched by TfL

The consultation, which ends on 11 January, focuses on tweaking route 108 for quicker access to North Greenwich tube, extending route 129 to Great Eastern Quay and on a planned high-frequency limited-stop route, "X239", between Grove Park and Canary Wharf.

To find out more and have your say, visit www.tfl.gov.uk/silvertown-tunnel-buses.

Baroque concert: Handel's Europe
St George's Church, Westcombe Park
Saturday 28th January 2023, 7pm



City Music Foundation Artist Claire Ward is delighted to be bringing a programme of Handel's vocal music to Westcombe Park, exploring extracts from the Nine German Arias, Spanish, and French Cantatas, with theorbo and a small baroque ensemble.

For more information and tickets please scan the QR code or go to www.clairewardsoprano.com



Exhibition: The Fairy Tale Forest
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Easier access to park viewpoint

The steep climb up One Tree Hill in Greenwich Park is going to be made easier – and the seating once you get there renewed – as part of an £8m improvements package



WORK TO improve access to One Tree Hill, part of the £8 million Greenwich Park Revealed project, is to start in the New Year.

This means means that the popular spot, which offers panoramic views across London, and the steep footpath leading up to it from Lovers' Walk will be closed between January and April.

The Royal Parks said: "We will create a new, more accessible-friendly path, install a new bench around the principal tree at the viewpoint, and produce new interpretation to reveal the history and explain the view.

"We will inscribe a poem about One Tree Hill, published in 1784 and ascribed to poet Thomas Nichols, on etched paving along the new path."

One Tree Hill was the preferred view of visitors in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Friends of Greenwich Park have donated £50,000 to this initiative.

The four-year Greenwich Park Revealed project to restore and protect the park is supported by The National Lottery Heritage and Community Funds.

Restoration work is being carried out on the lake in the Flower Garden to "improve sustainability, improve the water quality, and enhance the habitat with aquatic planting and landscaping".

The Royal Parks said: "We're going to drain and clean the lake and connect a borehole supply to provide a sustainable water source so that there is no longer a reliance on a mains supply.

"We'll create new bog areas and introduce new marginal planting edges around the lake to be planted with marginal and aquatic plants, including yellow flag iris (*iris pseudacorus*), brooklime (*veronica beccabunga*) and arrowhead (*sagittaria sagittifolia*).

"We will also be dividing some of the waterlilies currently growing in the Queen's Orchard pond and bring those to the Flower Garden lake.

"These works will support a rich diversity of wildlife, providing a better home for frogs, toads, newts, dragonflies and damselflies as well as a host of other species.

One Tree Hill: it will be shut between January and April next year. Inset, brooklime will be planted around the lake. Below, the restored lake will provide a better home for frogs

"Works begin this November. We will work with Environment Agency-certified experts to remove and permanently rehouse the fish in the lake to allow the conservation works to take place.

"We will also rehome a number of non-native, red-eared terrapins that have been introduced as unwanted pets because these cause harm to native species.

"In the short term, ducks, moorhens and other birds will fly away but they will return when the lake is refilled.

"Vegetation clearance will also be carried out around the lake in November. There will be temporary closures of part of the Flower Garden, including Blackheath Gate, Bower Avenue Gate and lake access during January to April while these works are delivered.

The whole Flower Garden will also be closed for a couple of days in November while the fish and terrapins are removed.

"The restored Flower Garden Lake will be a fantastic location for both wildlife and our visitors by spring."



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FEATURES

How a Blackheath family home became the hub for pioneering work in understanding ordinary lives

Finding the voice of the people

REVOLUTIONS can start in unlikely places. 6 Grotes Buildings, in Blackheath, which has recently acquired a blue plaque from English Heritage, is one of them.

This was the home of Charles Madge (1912–96) who in 1937 co-founded Mass-Observation, a pioneering social survey, with another Cambridge University drop-out, Tom Harrisson (1911–76), and Humphrey Jennings (1907–50), later a documentary filmmaker.

In late 1936, around the time of Edward VIII’s abdication, Madge and his friends identified a wide gulf between “public opinion” as framed by newspapers – Madge was a Daily Mirror journalist at the time – and what people actually thought and felt.

A letter signed by Madge and Jennings appeared in the New Statesman on 30 January 1937 inviting volunteers for a new research project, an “anthropology at home ... a science of ourselves”. Harrisson, an anthropologist, contacted Madge and they joined forces to create a social anatomy of Britain through behavioural observation in the field and by collecting the diaries and questionnaire responses of volunteer observers.

By the end of the project’s first year, they had recruited 600 volunteer respondents and published, “May 12th Mass-Observation Day-Survey”, an account of popular responses to the coronation of George VI.

The vast difference between perception of public opinion and actual public opinion that so concerned Madge and Harrisson is shown by the responses relating to the government policy of appeasing Hitler: behind the apparent near unanimity in backing Chamberlain’s efforts to avoid war in Europe, Mass-Observation found privately expressed shame and disgust, along with a willingness by many to admit that they simply did not understand foreign policy.

Photo © National Portrait Gallery



Mass-Observation’s national operations, focusing on volunteer diaries and questionnaire responses, were directed from and sifted at 6 Grotes Buildings, where Madge, a published poet, lived with the poet Kathleen Raine, and their young children, Anna and James. Dating from the late eighteenth century and now Grade II listed, it was ‘the sort of house that one could become attached to’, wrote Madge.

Harrisson was initially based in Bolton (which the project called “Worktown”), where his team observed everything from the number of sugars taken in tea to the time it took for pub-goers to sink a pint of beer.

While headquartered in Blackheath, Mass-Observation compiled the commercially successful “Britain by Mass-Observation” (1939), which features an essay by Madge on the Lambeth Walk dance craze and gives a unique glimpse of working-class life in



London at the time. Other prominent projects included an interview-based investigation into anti-Semitism in the East End in 1939 and an observation of the West Fulham by-election in April 1938.

Simon Garfield, the writer and trustee of Mass-Observation, said: “It is wonderful that Charles Madge’s home still exists, and that we now have a permanent commemoration of the birthplace and engine room of such an extraordinary adventure. It is also a tribute to the thousands of contributors who shared their innermost thoughts and observations in a way that makes us forever able to understand their lives, and therefore ours, a little better.”

Howard Spencer, senior historian at English Heritage, said, “Mass-Observation studies ranged from an analysis of the ‘Lambeth Walk’ and the pub culture of working-class London, to a survey on the

Far left, Tom Harrisson, left, and Charles Madge. Left, 6 Grotes Buildings and, inset, the English Heritage blue plaque

extent of anti-Semitic beliefs. It is this eclectic approach that made the project so unique and ground-breaking, and such a valuable sociological and historical resource.”

At the time, however, there was hostility to Mass-Observation’s work. They were characterised as “snoopers” and “psycho-anthropologic nosey-parkers”. One critic described the typical Mass Observer as having “elephant ears, a loping walk and a permanent sore eye from looking through keyholes”. But George Orwell, in his As I Please column in late March 1947, saw it differently: “Democracy is only possible when the law-makers and administrators know what the masses want, and what they can be counted on to understand.”

Mass-Observation’s headquarters remained at 6 Grotes Buildings until March 1939. The Second World War effectively ended the Worktown project in August 1940 but led to commissions from the Ministry of Information and the Admiralty. Madge was uncomfortable with the transformation of the organisation into what Harrisson called “a war-time listening machine” for the government, and severed ties with Mass-Observation that year. After Harrisson left in 1949, the organisation became a market research company and was eventually incorporated into the British Market Research Bureau. He lodged the Mass-Observation archives at the University of Sussex in 1970.

The project was started up again 1981 by Professor David Pocock at the university and continues to run. In 2013 the archive was transferred to The Keep, a dedicated archive facility close to the university, just outside Brighton.

‘Elephant ears, a loping walk and a permanent sore eye from looking through keyholes’

■ Other plaques in and around Westcombe Park
William Henry Barlow (1812-1902). Engineer. 145 Charlton Road, Charlton. **Cecil Day-Lewis** (1904-1972). Poet. 6 Crooms Hill, Greenwich. **Sir Frank Dyson** (1868-1939). Astronomer. 6 Vanbrugh Hill, Blackheath. **Sir Arthur Eddington**, O.M. (1882-

1944). Mathematician, astrophysicist. 4 Bennett Park, Blackheath. **Charles Gounod** (1818-1893). Composer. 15 Morden Road, Blackheath. **G.P.O. Film Unit**, later Crown Film Unit. Pioneers of documentary film making had their studios at 47 Bennett Park, Blackheath, 1933-1943. **Nathaniel Hawthorne**

(1804-1864). Writer. 4 Pond Road, Blackheath. **Richard Jeffries** (1848-1887). Naturalist, writer. 59 Footscray Road, Eltham. **William Lindley** (1808-1900) and **Sir William Heerlein Lindley** (1853-1917). Civil Engineers. 74 Shooters Hill, Blackheath. **Donald McGill** (1875-1962). Postcard cartoonist. 5 Bennett Park,

Blackheath. **Herbert Morrison, Lord Morrison of Lambeth** (1888-1965). Politician. 55 Archery Road, Eltham. **Philip Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield** (1694-1774). Statesman, author. Rangers House, Chesterfield Walk, Greenwich. **Italo Sveso** (1861-1928) aka Ettore Schmitz. Writer. 67

Charlton Church Lane, Charlton. **Benjamin Waugh** (1839-1908). Social reformer. 26 Croom's Hill, Greenwich. **General James Wolfe** (1727-1759). Army officer. Macartney House, Greenwich Park. **Garnet Wolseley, 1st Viscount Wolseley** (1833-1913). Army officer. Ranger's House, Chesterfield Walk, Blackheath.



MEFA Montessori School
Montessori House, 135 Westcombe Hill, Blackheath SE3 7DP
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ENVIRONMENT

New committee plans to bring users and ecology together in the Gardens



MYCENAE GARDENS needs a bit of tender care: it gets used a lot and the Royal Borough of Greenwich has been cutting back on its parks maintenance.

This is where the rejuvenated Friends of Mycenae Gardens is determined to make a difference. Members of its expanded committee have skills that include garden design and maintenance, website development, and financial management.

Anne Robbins, one of the new committee members, said: “We’ll be starting with getting a better understanding of the way people like to use Mycenae Gardens. We plan to run a survey to look for ways that their interests coincide.

“We also want to find ways to protect the ecology of the space, which is a rare example of woodland being left to shelter all sorts of species. We’ll need to find a bit of funding for a survey of what is flourishing in the Gardens; the birds, insects, plants and other living beings like fungi and lichens.

“Some of this work is already under way. You might have noticed the “dead hedges”: barriers made of branches woven through stakes, that are there to stop people from impinging on wilder areas. We are working on ways to keep those in place, and educate the gardens’ users about what the hedges are protecting,” Anne said.

The committee will be glad of your helpful comments, and indeed of your support; there may be opportunities to volunteer or to donate. You can keep in touch via the website, mycenaegardens.org.uk

PUPILS WIN ENVIRONMENT AWARD FOR GREEN ACTIVITIES

BLACKHEATH High School has been awarded the Eco-Schools Green Flag for a second consecutive year. The school achieved this accolade with distinction, highlighting its continued commitment to environmental education and action.

To receive the Green Flag award, students completed a seven-step process that included forming an eco-committee, conducting an environmental review, and creating an action plan.

This year, the girls’ plan focused on biodiversity, waste and energy use. The students held an “eco-day” event to announce their plan to the rest of the school and to create momentum for their initiatives.

To beautify the environment around their school, students cleared weeds and nettles around the senior school pond. They also added a compost bin and introduced bird, bee, and hedgehog houses to support the area’s wildlife.

The students continued their waste initiative from the previous year and organised a litter-picking event in their community. By installing energy monitors, the girls helped the school to be more mindful about its energy usage and taught the students simple ways to conserve energy.

They also opted to walk to the PE field to encourage sustainable transport, promoted



effective recycling and limited single-use plastic at the school.

Natalie Argile, acting head of Blackheath High School said: “It is a testament to our girls’ amazing hard work and dedication that we have been awarded this prestigious award for a second year. We are always looking for fun and engaging ways to raise awareness of environment issues.”

The head of Eco Club, Ann Bijmens said: “I’m ecstatic! The Eco Club is committed to making Blackheath High School a sanctuary where nature can thrive. I’ve loved watching students care for the natural world and admire their commitment to raising awareness for the urgent need to protect nature. This award is so deserved by each and every one of them.”

Plants flourish and bloom in the mildest autumn on record

IF YOU’VE BEEN enjoying the unusually mild weather so far this autumn, you’re not alone, writes Thea Gioe.

Plants have also been making the most of the warmer than average temperatures. My silly strawberry plant has put out a whole new crop of flowers, and while I doubt any will make it to fruition, its optimism has me wondering.

Will a second round of blooms before winter hurt plants?

Not in most cases, according to gardening experts, though it could cause the Spring bloom to be less prolific. Several types of typically spring or summer flowers – poppies, nasturtium primroses, iris – are known to bloom again in autumn, especially if they’ve been through an extended period of drought over summer.

How can I make the most of this extended season?

Temperatures look mild – for now – so it’s a good time to tidy beds, plant fruit trees, put bulbs in the ground or even do a little early sowing. Peas, broad beans, onions and garlic planted now will yield early spring harvests.

How much longer will this weather last?

Met Office meteorologists suggest December could have some sudden cold snaps, but that overall winter is likely to be on the mild side again thanks to a third year of La Niña weather patterns. This means southern England should have about average precipitation, so we’ll hopefully be able to say ‘so long’ to the hosepipe ban, but may have stronger wind gusts.

So enjoy those bonus autumn flowers



A rose in Greenwich Park in mid November before they blow away and while the weather is still nice enough to be outdoors. Or bring them in for a spell to keep your blooms – or your berries – into the holidays.

■ Greenwich Council is to plant 500 young trees in 2022-23 and is urging residents to adopt the saplings and give them 20 litres of water a week.



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To find out more or to set up a £3 monthly donation, please visit www.stamens.org.uk

Do you have £3 a month to help?

WHAT'S ON

ST GEORGE'S CHURCH, WESTCOMBE PARK

This year the carol service is a little earlier than usual (**Sunday 11 December**) as the World Cup Final falls on their usual date. Community Café: Every Tuesday 9am-11am a place to talk over coffee and for children to play.

EAST GREENWICH KICK ACADEMY

The East Greenwich Kick Academy, run by parish youth worker Ebun, has now launched. This will run every Thursday at the St Mary Magdalene Peninsula Campus and is for all children (what ever school they go to!) in school years 6 to 8. More information and a registration form can be found here: www.eastgreenwichparish.org.uk/home/east-greenwich-kick-academy/

ST JOHN'S CHURCH PRESENTS A POP-UP NATIVITY

Visit our beautiful pop-up Nativity display where you can take photos with our Nativity cut-outs and dress up in costumes, enjoy free hot chocolate and mince pies as well as look at Nativity Sets from around the world. The event will be held in the old Bella Hair Boutique on the Standard (11 Old Dover Road, Blackheath, SE3 7BT) and is open on **Thursday 8 December** from 3-5pm, **Friday 9 December** from 5-7pm, and **Saturday 10 December** from 10am-4pm. All ages welcome. More details at www.stjohnsblackheath.org.uk or call the church office on 8305 0520

THOMAS TALLIS SOCIETY CHOIR

Saturday 3 December, 7.30pm. A Very English Christmas. Works by Vaughan Williams, Finzi and Britten. St Alfege's Church, Greenwich. Tickets from www.ticketsource.co.uk/tts

ARTS SOCIETY GREENWICH

Monday 12 December. Tiffany & Co: Diamonds and Decadence Brian Healey Lecture to be held on Zoom. Non-member guests are welcome for £8. Please email ticaclark@hotmail.com for further details. Founded by Charles Tiffany with a loan of just \$1000, The firm of Tiffany & Company, New York grew from a small bric-a-brac shop to become purveyors of the finest luxury goods and the world's leading jewellers. This is a fascinating tale of how art and luxury came together to create one of the world's most iconic brands. **Monday 16 January.** How we lived then: Britain in the 1960s as seen through its films Colin Shindler. James Wolfe Primary School, Royal Hill, Greenwich. Swinging London never reached Hartlepool and Mary Quant made more impact on Walton than she did on Burnley. For many of us, it was the decade of our youth. What does it look like now from the vantage point of nearly sixty years on?

THE WOODLANDS FARM TRUST

331 Shooters Hill, Welling, Kent DA16 3RP **Tuesday 20 December.** Festive Fun Day 11am-2pm. Come along to our Festive Fun Day at the farm. Join us in the Education Room for a range of crafts, including



Cast members of Robin Hood, at Greenwich Theatre

making tree decorations and Christmas cards. Outside there will be a scavenger hunt. Find all of Santa's helpers hiding around the farm to claim your prize. Hot chocolate will also be on sale for a festive refreshment. No need to book, drop-in at any time. £3 per child for crafts and scavenger hunt.

Wednesday 21 December. A Stick Man Christmas 10am or 1pm sessions Come along to our Stick Man Christmas event. Watch the Stick Man film before heading off around the farm on The Stick Man Activity Trail. Return to the Education Room to claim your certificate and special Stick Man Christmas gift. £7 per child. Sessions start at 10am and 11am. Booking is essential. Please arrive before the time of your booking as the film will be starting on the hour. To book visit www.thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org or www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/468286817477 For more information, see our website or contact Gemma Murray-Clark on education@thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org

GREENWICH INDUSTRIAL HISTORY

Tuesday 13 December: Paul Wyatt on the making of his film on the Greenwich Peninsula. On Zoom. Booking on GIHS Facebook page in the week before the event or ask to go on their mail out.

ST PAUL'S SINFONIA

Friday 9 December. St Alfege's Church Greenwich, 7.30pm. St Paul's Baroque from Chaos to Creation. www.stpaulssinfonia.com

ROYAL MUSEUMS GREENWICH

Get ready for Christmas in Greenwich. The Queen's House Ice Rink is the perfect way to get you into the Christmas spirit. Or go for a leisurely stroll around Greenwich and spot the festive displays in the windows of venues around the town centre. A new one is unveiled during Advent. Then warm up inside and build your very own

Christmas tree decoration at Cutty Sark.

All visitors, including members, are advised to pre-book their tickets at least 24 hours in advance. Please check rmg.co.uk for the latest information on what is open.

National Maritime Museum

21 January 2023. 10am-5pm. Lunar New Year. Celebrate the year of the Rabbit with workshops, performances and talks developed with community partners.

Prince Philip Maritime Collections Centre

Thursday 1 December; Thursday 5 January. Behind the Scenes Tour. The best way to access our collection and see conservation in action is through one of our behind-the-scenes tours. **Every Saturday.** 1.30pm-2.30pm. Saturday Super Store Tours. Gain an insight of the treasures of the collection with a tour of the stores. **3 December and 7 January.** 10.30am-12pm Coder Dojo is a free coding club for

young people (7-17) interested in programming. **Saturday 17 December.** 10.30am-12pm. Make, Do and Maintain. Ever wondered how to keep your silver shining or how to mount a picture? Join us as we build a community of makers and menders.

Royal Observatory

Wednesday 7 December 8pm. Marking 50 years since Apollo 17 **Friday 9 December. 6pm-8pm.** Annual Christmas Lecture. Hear about the latest discoveries from the rovers on Mars. Peter Harrison Planetarium. **2, 3, 16, 17 December 2022; 6, 7, 20, 21 January. 5pm-9pm.** Evening with the Stars See the Moon, planets and constellations through the 18-tonne Great Equatorial Telescope and catch a planetarium show during this celestial evening. Exploring Mars. Journey to the Red Planet in this exhibition exploring the incredible discoveries that have been made about Mars so far. Daily, 10am-5pm. There is a wide range of planetarium shows on this season check the website for further details.

Old Royal Naval College

Monday 12 December - Sunday 5 February. UK artist Luke Jerram's astonishing installation The Museum of the Moon returns to the Old Royal Naval College following the success of his Gaia installation in 2021. Website: ornc.org

GREENWICH THEATRE

Until Sunday 8 January. Robin Hood, starring David Breeds in the title role. The poor citizens of Nottingham have just about had enough of their scheming sheriff; relentlessly raising taxes and forcing folks to move out to the forest! But fear not, for our hero, Robin Hood, is here to right those wrongs! **Relaxed performance on Thursday 5 January.** For more details, visit greenwichtheatre.org.uk/events/robin-hood/

● Send submissions for What's On to wnews@westcombesociety.org



Crowds gathered in Greenwich Market for the turning of the Christmas lights on 16 November

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