

WESTCOMBE SOCIETY AGM

There was a good turn out of local residents to this year’s Westcombe society AGM (on May 19) which was once again held in the Centenary Room at Blackheath High School. Before the usual reports of the Society’s business and activities, outgoing Chair Marilyn Little welcomed new Chair Geoff Brighty. Unfortunately Geoff was unwell and couldn’t attend. Marilyn said she’d enjoyed her 11 years as Chair but has been concerned for some time that new blood was needed. She also said “as a Society we do need to attract new and younger members of our community to bring fresh energy and ideas to the Society”. Marilyn assured everyone that she would still be actively involved in the Society. The Society’s Charity of the year was announced as Reach Out project at Mycenae House. The Mycenae House Reach Out project, established in 2017, is managed by Deborah Fitzpatrick their Community Project Outreach Co-ordinator. The Reach Out programme offers events and regular programmes to help our community reduce isolation & loneliness and to develop skills, find support and capacity to enjoy life to the full.



Jean -Jacques Aune thanked Marilyn on behalf of the Society

for her consistent hard work and commitment over so many years and Tessa Cross presented her with flowers, wine and a theatre voucher. Treasurer Miles Storey delivered a reassuring update on the Society’s healthy finances, Anne Robbins gave a detailed report on the work of the Environment committee over the past 12 months , making it clear to all that this committee works very hard and dynamically to protect our local environment . All agreed that The Westcombe News is a vital link between residents and that the challenge

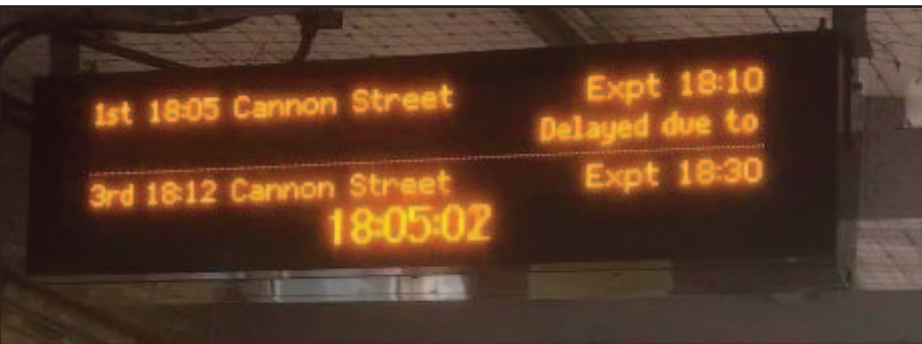


we’re now faced with - finding a new editor – needs to be resolved soon for the sake of the paper’s survival. Attendees at the AGM offered ideas for tackling this pressing problem. Following all the official business guest speaker Chris Hawkins delivered a fascinating Illustrated talk on the Lesnes Abbey, at Abbey Wood, an historic gem right on our doorstep. Chris volunteers his time to take visitors on guided tours of the Abbey ruins and grounds. Wine, nibbles and chat rounded off a successful evening.

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY

A new Southeastern timetable was introduced on 21 May but it has made no difference to the Greenwich line service, which remains inadequate. Reports have been received of travellers now preferring to take the bus to North Greenwich and then the Jubilee Line into London rather than rely on Southeastern. Whilst TfL have increased services on the DLR and Elizabeth Line, with five minute frequencies on each, Southeastern have cut services and think that an interval of 23 minutes between trains on a Metro route is acceptable. The most common complaint

Thameslink services are full, as they are the first train in 20 minutes, and it has also been reported that the 17.54 from Cannon Street, which has been reduced from 10 carriages to 8, is uncomfortably full on leaving London Bridge. This information from regular users of the service is invaluable to the Users Group as we continue to lobby Southeastern for a service that meets passenger needs. The Group is always interested in receiving feedback on individual experiences, which is used (anonymously) to support the case for a better service. Feedback



received by the Greenwich Line Users Group is the irregular pattern of services. Although punctuality has improved a little recently, it remains the case that Southeastern services are frequently late and delay the following Thameslink service. If demand no longer sustains a ten minute frequency of services, then at least the four trains an hour should be at regular intervals. The present timetable cannot be considered a “turn up and go” Metro service that the line had enjoyed until November 2020. The other complaint received is of overcrowding on services from London in the evening peak. The

should be sent to greenwichline@outlook.com A recent survey of passengers in the south east Metro area, conducted for London Travelwatch, found that two-thirds want the timetable changed, as they report longer journey times and the increased need to change trains. London Travelwatch have launched a parliamentary petition in support of TfL taking over London Metro routes, and it has 5,800 signatures. It needs 10,000 signatures to force a Government response. The petition can be signed at: www.petition.parliament.uk/petitions/633153

A BRIGHTY FUTURE

The Westcombe Society is delighted to announce that Geoff Brighty, a familiar face to many locals, has agreed to become the Society’s new Chair, thus taking over the reins from longstanding, passionately committed, Marilyn Little. Geoff admits Marilyn will be a very hard act to follow but is up for the challenge as “I have long considered the work of The Westcombe Society as vital in bringing the local community together and enhancing the quality of people’s lives”. As well as regularly attending the society’s events over the years – whether it be parties for volunteers, Christmas fairs, and charity coffee mornings and fund-raising walks - Geoff was an active councillor for 32 years,

much trusted and respected for raising issues and taking a keen interest in local affairs. If you had a problem, Geoff was the person so many went to for help. As a councillor Geoff is most proud of the assistance he was able to give constituents who had trouble dealing with the “normal channels” of Council bureaucracy. He also opposed the Council’s recent West Greenwich traffic management scheme because of its adverse effect on the Westcombe area. The scheme was eventually cancelled. The Westcombe Society looks forward to benefiting from Geoff’s wealth of experience, his well-established popularity and his commitment to his new voluntary role.

Mycenae House & Gardens

June 2023

Mon 5 Roving Folk Club - Sing & play in the round!

Fri 9 SWOP Unplugged - Jazz, Blues & Beyond

Fri 23 Greek Night with band Mosaic (GFMA)

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WESTCOMBE SOCIETY

Westcombe News

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We are currently looking for
deliverers of the Westcombe News
particularly in the Old Dover Road
area.
If you can help please contact Emily
on 020 8853 2756
We look forward to seeing you!

Quiz News!

Saturday 10 June 7.30

Mycenae House

It is that time again for another fun
evening pitting your knowledge on a
range of subjects against fellow
Westcombe Parkers and their guests.
You can form a team of six
neighbours and friends or come on
your own and help make up a team.
Robbie, Peter and Patrick have been
beaver away organising the
questions.
To make a booking call Patricia on
0208 8858 9293.
Members £6
Guests £8
Fish and Chip Suppers are available
at £10 please place your order at the
time of booking.
The bar will be open and there will
be the usual amazing raffle to raise
funds for the Society’s Charity of the
Year

Blackheath/Westcombe
Ward Councillor
Surgery times

Leo Fletcher, Mariam Lolavar
and Christine St Matthew-Daniel
Details are below, please come,
and say hello to us.
No appointments needed
1st Saturday of the month -
10am - 11am - Mycenae House, 90
Mycenae Road, London SE3 7SE
1st Saturday of the month
1.00pm - 2.00pm - Age Exchange,
11 Blackheath Village, SE3 9LA

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AGM REPORTS

Chairman’s Annual Report 2022/2023
It is pleasing to note that we are
continuing our return to ‘business as
usual’ following what has been, and is, a
difficult time for many. This is in no
small way due to our volunteers who give
unstintingly of their time and capabilities
over a range of activities. Many of them
have helped the society for many years
and new volunteers are small in number.
Our committees work hard to maintain
the environment that we all enjoy and
who also provide a comfortable and
pleasant social atmosphere for our
members and residents in Westcombe
Park. We have Officers who provide the
structure by which we maintain our
Society financially, including the
Westcombe News. So you can see that
we have a range of activities within the
Society and to maintain our level of
commitment I ask you all to consider
joining us in our work. I can personally
state that the work is enjoyable,
satisfying and can bring a feeling of
achievement. You would be joining a
friendly group and I do ask you to
consider whether you could spare some
time to enable us to continue the work
we do and bring with you new ideas and
energy, perhaps suggesting ways in which
we could encompass the changing needs
of our community.
The Environment Committee’s aim is to
maintain the character of Westcombe
Park’s built environment and its leafy
green spaces. We meet monthly to look
at environmental issues from tree
maintenance to major building work.
Where possible we look for neighbours’
views to help us form our positions. We
liaise extensively with other organisations.
These include the Greenwich
Conservation Group, bringing together
similar groups like the Greenwich Society
and the Charlton Society to look at
planning issues; the London Forum for
amenity societies across the city; the
Safer Neighbourhoods Panel and other
policing groups; and the Blackheath
Joint Working Party where we are now a
voting member. In addition, we try to
keep in touch with groups working on
issues where our area might be impacted,
like the cruise liner terminal in East
Greenwich.
The Committee has eight members,
including the Society’s Chair. We have
between us some planning expertise, but
we depend on our common sense as well.
It would be wonderful to have more
people join us! Please get in touch via
environment@westcombesociety.org to
find out more. As ever, our thanks to
the Society’s members, who keep us
informed and engaged.

Westcombe Society Events
May 2022 - May 2023
The committee organised the
following events.
Two teas for senior citizens
These were not as well attended as before
the pandemic. The committee has consid-
ered stopping this event but those who
do attend always say how much they
enjoy it. We will try to improve
attendance via the Mycenae House
groups as well as local care homes. After
the Chrysanthemum Tea this autumn we
shall reconsider the situation.
Two quiz evenings
These events are well attended. There is a
fish and chip supper on offer plus a
raffle. This is an opportunity to bring the
community together. Jolly banter and
gentle rivalry are the order of the
evening. It is an opportunity to raise
money for the chosen charity. We thank
Robbie, Patrick and Peter for their
testing and very entertaining questions!
Macmillan sponsored walk and coffee
morning
These events are held in September. This
year’s walk started in Greenwich and
finished in Victoria Park. The successful
Coffee Morning was held in Mycenae
House and we are very grateful to the
volunteer cake makers and raffle prize
providers. It is well supported and
regularly raises over £1000. Our thanks
to Patricia, Di, Tessa, and Caroline who
are heavily involved in the organisation
of these events.
A ‘Thank You’ Evening
This is held in February for members,
Westcombe News deliverers and those
serving on committees. There is food and
wine and an opportunity to get to know
those involved and new members.
Park Fest at Mycenae House
This is organised by Mycenae House and
The Westcombe Society participates by
providing a stall, a face painter, tombola,
and this year egg and spoon, sack races
and very successful tugs of war were
added.
Easter Egg Hunt
This was held on Easter Saturday in the
grounds of Mycenae House. This is
always very popular. The Easter Bonnets
and Baskets were quite amazing this year
and we were pleased to welcome many
new families.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS
(See also www.westcombesociety.org)

**PAVEMENT OUTSIDE 19-21
VANBRUGH PARK ROAD**
23/1520/T3
To install Telecoms H3G 15m street
pole and additional equipment
cabinets.

231 WESTCOMBE HILL
ref 23/1659/SD
Submission of details for new bin
location for enlarged HMO

231 WESTCOMBE HILL
ref 23/1614/SD
Submission of details for new
boundary and screening for enlarged
HMO.

5 BELVEDERE MEWS
ref 23/1276/HD
To demolish conservatory and
construct single storey rear extension.

4 BELVEDERE MEWS
ref 23/1284/HD
To demolish conservatory and
construct single storey rear extension.

64A ST JOHNS PARK ref 23/1285/F
To construct rear extension.

83 WESTCOMBE HILL
ref 23/1463/PN
To construct single storey rear
extension to extend 6m beyond rear
wall with height 2.7m

TREE WORKS

167 HUMBER ROAD ref
23/1673/TC
To fell ornamental pear in rear
garden.

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Westcombe News June 23

NEIGHBOURHOOD

Auditions for local talent!

Charlton Village Theatre are now preparing for a new show to take place at The Assembly Rooms, Charlton from 12th to 15th October 2023. Following on from last year's Mamma Mia and this year's Music on a summer Evening, another show is in the making which will contain songs/dancing/drama from several musicals as well as skits. They still need more people to make this happen and will be holding auditions at The Assembly Rooms on 4th June 2023 at 5pm. Anyone can come along including children, as we want to make this a family show. The charity will be nominated by the cast in due course. More details: 020 8856 7373. We hope lots of people will audition especially you fellas!

A Celebration Tea

The Bingo club holds regular sessions at Mycenae House but this particular Friday was definitely different.



The tables were decorated in red, white and blue (as were the guests) and there wasn't a bingo card in sight! Ivy Bainbridge organises the weekly sessions ably assisted by Ann May and they hosted a delicious Coronation Tea Party for their regulars. Home-made sandwiches and sausage rolls followed by scones, jam and strawberry roulade created a very enjoyable afternoon tea. The Mayor of Greenwich, Leo Fletcher, was in attendance and

very much enjoyed the spread. There was musical entertainment from Paul who played well-remembered hits from Gracie Fields to Paul Anka together with a rendition or two of the national anthem. Towards the end of the event those present were each given a teddy bear dressed in royal purple with a golden crown. A fitting and thoughtful end to a lovely afternoon.

WN reporter



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Open Gardens Festival 2023

The Open Gardens in aid of the Greenwich & Bexley Community Hospice will be taking place again this year on the weekends of 10/11th and 24/25th June from 2 to 6pm. Last year's garden festival raised a very worthwhile £24,000 and, helped by very pleasant weather, hosts and visitors had a wonderful time. There are 40 gardens taking part - a number of old favourites but eight that are either completely new or who haven't taken part for a few years. Of particular interest to Westcombe Park will be Andy Millns' allotment off Maze Hill station (complete with a ukele band), the Christchurch School Community Gardens and the Westcombe Woodlands. There will be refreshments of various kinds on offer in many of the gardens and a plant sale or two. Tickets (and more information) from communityhospice.org.uk/open-garden-festival. Tickets will also be sold at the door.

MEfA Montessori

Are having a Garden Party in their Forest School/Well-being Garden on Saturday 17th June from 2pm. Cakes, books, games, crafts and afternoon tea. Free entry but please bring some cash for yummys and goodies. All welcome MEfA Montessori, 135 Westcombe Hill, SE3 7DP - Our Well-being Garden is just behind our school on Seibert Road.

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Join our Committee.

Greenwich Housing Society is a small housing association with properties in Blackheath. We provide homes for the independent elderly over 60. It is managed by a voluntary committee that meets six times a year. We are currently looking for new members, especially with legal or media skills. You can find out more about us on our website greenwichhousingsociety.org.uk If you are interested, please email us at greenwich.housing.society@gmail.com

Blackheath Prep to host a Family Fun Day and Children's Book Festival

Saturday 1 July 2023 – Save the date!
To celebrate the school's bicentenary (1823 - 2023), Blackheath Prep will be opening its doors to the local community for a spectacular Family Fun Day & Children's Book Festival on Saturday 1 July 2023 11am – 5pm, a day packed full of exciting, not to be missed events and entertainment. Come and meet former Children's Laureate Michael Rosen, the internationally renowned children's author and poet who will perform his legendary We're Going On A Bear Hunt and other works. Entry to the event, literary festival programme and children's entertainment performances is FREE. Charges apply for some optional activities. Further information at www.blackheathprep.co.uk/funday



Latest on the Westcombe Hill/Siebert Road Noise Barrier

We understand that TfL have progressed to the detailed design stage and are currently considering designs recently received from their consultants. They are also gathering relevant land ownership information for land inside the proposed boundary which is not within their ownership. They will present the proposed design to local residents and property owners this summer. They continue to work with the Royal Borough of Greenwich to provide the information they require to approve the noise barrier, with a view to starting construction by the end of the year.

Big screen debut at Seattle International Film Festival

LOCAL actor and Blackheath High School student Zada Farrell made US acting debut in award-winning filmmakers Muayad and Rami Alayan film, A House in Jerusalem. The film was screened at the prestigious Seattle International Film Festival. At just twelve years old, this is Zada's first-ever feature film and she is already making waves in the industry. Zada first joined Blackheath High School at six years old and has since flourished with support from the school's drama department as well as at acclaimed stage school Sylvia Young. The film explores complex themes of heritage, culture and the meaning of home through the eyes of a grieving British family who move into an old house in the city, setting off a chain of unexpected events with a Palestinian girl whose family used to live there. www.blackheathhighschool.gdst.net

FEATURES

Ottoman Journeys: Life and Afterlife in Greenwich exhibit at Charlton House and Gardens now on by Polly Morgan

When Ramadan began in March for Greenwich’s local Muslim communities, the custodian of Greenwich’s collections and archives produced an exhibition focused on Muslim culture in the borough, available to see from May 2023 through to the end of the year. Ottoman Journeys: Life and Afterlife in Greenwich was developed in collaboration with the University of Greenwich and community group Peace of Cake and is designed around one long-unidentified slab of rock in



Photo: Polly Morgan

the borough’s museum collections. It wasn’t until 2022 that a visitor made a remarkable discovery: the slab was, in fact, an Ottoman grave-stone dating back to the 18th century. It’s not clear when the gravestone came to London, who brought it here and why, nor precisely where it came from. However, this fascinating object has given Greenwich Heritage and the University of Greenwich the opportunity to ask questions about the historical relationships between our borough and the Ottoman Empire. It’s also allowed them to work with community

groups living in Greenwich to help bring the past alongside the present, uncovering surprising stories along the way. This special, fascinating exhibition at Charlton House explores how journeys to and from the former Ottoman Empire have shaped our local, national and global cultures. “Since this revelation, it’s been deeply inspiring for our team and partners to delve into the story behind the stone,” says Janet Denne, Greenwich Heritage’s interim Chief Executive. “We’re delighted to so soon be able to share this newly-discovered history, and how it connects to life in Greenwich today.”

Adds Dr Michael Talbot, Associate Professor in the History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Middle East at the University of Greenwich: “It has been a huge and rare privilege to be able to research an Ottoman artefact right here in Greenwich, and to work with our partners from Greenwich Heritage and the local community to bring to life historical and modern stories. I’m so excited to share the fruits of our collaboration with the wider public.”

He told our WNews reporter: “A student of mine first spotted the stone which was known before identification as the ‘wiggly stone’. Some objects in the exhibit came from the borough, some were donated and loaned by the local Muslim community. Nadia, the student who helped with the project, was instrumental in the research project. We decided to focus rather than on the death of

this man but on his life, what he might have had with him, what objects he might have liked that we then placed with the stone, such as a prayer book and prayer beads. The students have been vital in this research on the history of this project – it’s what education is all about.” Nadia Lopes, a University of Greenwich 2nd year student in History, did the course with Michael as the history specialist: “I got first introduced when I was on a placement opportunity on Michael’s course at the University of Greenwich. I helped with the exhibit, writing TikTok scripts, promoting the exhibit and wrote two of the object labels for the tea caddy and tea caddy spoon. I

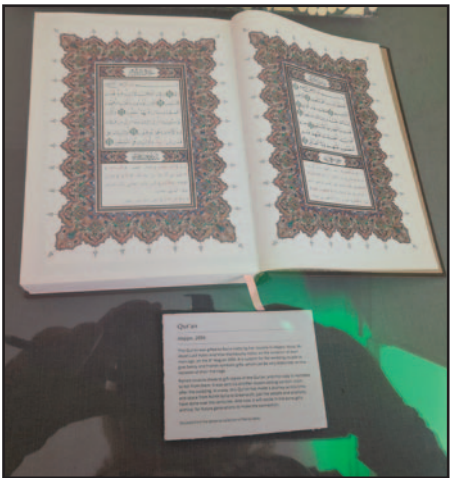


Photo: Philippa Wolff for Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust

did lots of research on object label writing; it was interesting, I looked at the links on the Victoria and Albert Museum website. It was a great opportunity really enjoyed it.” There is a Qur’an wedding gift in the exhibit as well as a visitors’ book taken from the Royal Arsenal in Woolwich where prominent Ottoman visitors of the

19th century were recorded. There is a small exhibit within the main exhibition on the spice route which connected the East to the West for over 2,000 years, supplying countries like Britain with the spices such as cinnamon, cassis, saffron and turmeric. This is a fascinating cultural exploration that brings history alive and is not to be missed. From Monday 15th May, visitors have been able to explore this cultural story spanning three centuries and enjoy a series of workshops and events celebrating Ottoman history and modern Muslim life in Greenwich. The exhibition is free to the public, with more details on Greenwich Heritage’s page for the exhibition in the coming weeks:

<https://www.greenwichheritage.org/events/ottoman-journeys-life-and-afterlife-in-greenwich/>

The exhibition is one of many events Greenwich Heritage has planned following Charlton House & Gardens’ re-opening to the public on Sunday 2nd April.

Visit Charlton House from May onwards to catch this special free exhibition and learn expert knowledge about the great Ottoman Empire and its links to the Greenwich Borough.

<https://www.greenwichheritage.org/visit/visit-charlton-house-and-gardens/>

WestcombeNEWS

Editor Wanted

The Westcombe News seeks an editor or guest editors to work within a team to plan, revise and co-ordinate material for publication together with input from the WestcombeSoc.

This is a voluntary position. For further details please contact info@westcombesociety.org or call 07939 386215 (Marilyn Little)



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Westcombe News June 23

FEATURES

Big steps forward for Mycenae Gardens

Mycenae Gardens is the local park for the Westcombe Park area, and it's loved by many, including pupils at the Steiner School, dog walkers, tree lovers, and anyone interested in local wildlife. But these groups of users don't always find it easy to share the gardens. Recently, the Friends of Mycenae Gardens convened a meeting for its chair, Mark Barnes, and several other members; representatives from the school, Mycenae House, and the



Friends of Mycenae Gardens

Westcombe Society; Ward Councillor Leo Fletcher, and two members of the borough's Parks and Open Spaces Department, Tony Bigwood and Rob Goring. Between them, the Parks Department representatives cover both policy and local implementation.

The aim of the meeting was to seek the advice and support of the Parks Department for general improvements to the space, but also to reach a framework for ensuring the park is enjoyed by all who use it. Our questionnaire has shown that not everyone loves kids or dogs! Some want a calmer space, some love the play the park enables, but everyone wants to see less litter and better lawns.

Over the next few months, the Parks Department will be looking at what can be improved, and how the various groups of users can share the space well. This may mean closing some areas on a rotational basis to let plants and soil recover, and adding to the areas protected by woven willow that allow shrubs to flourish. The Friends group is also being encouraged to commission an ecologist to survey the bird life of the park, and then to look at how the habitats can be improved.

If you have views, we would love to hear them. The questionnaire can be found on the Friends of Mycenae Gardens website, mycenaegardens.org.uk, under 'About the Gardens'. And while you're filling that in, add a date to your diary: Parksfest returns to the gardens, Sunday 30th July, with music, dancing, and plenty of fun for all.

Anne Robbins

Greenwich Park Revealed

Please see the latest updates on the Greenwich Park Revealed project **The Flower Garden Lake** – all the repairs have now taken place to the lake. There was a slight delay as a couple of valves needed to be replaced. The new railings and tar and chip surfacing are now complete. We will be able to start filling the lake in the next couple of weeks. We hope that the Flower Garden will re-open by the end of May.



Photo: Marilyn Little

One-tree Hill is now open but unfortunately, there has been a transport related delay to the delivery of the benches, and they will be installed as soon as they arrive. Signage is up to let people know the seating is on its way!

The Wilderness - The learning space concrete pad was laid some weeks ago and is all progressing well. A timelapse camera has been installed to capture the build.

The Vanbrugh Café is also progressing well. A timelapse camera will be put up opposite the entrance to the Vanbrugh Lodge and Yard this week to capture all the changes as they take place.



Photo: Marilyn Little

A three-week **Community Archaeology dig** has commenced led by Andrew Mayfield, to look at the site of the barrage balloons and air-raid shelter. The dig includes community volunteers, school groups and university students.

Westcombe Woodlands

The Friends of Westcombe Woodlands have been awarded £3,800 by Thames Water (Diversity and Inclusion programme) to run four seasonal water-based nature activities for young people. The brief is for events "aimed at young people



Photo: FoWW

and communities who are underrepresented in environmental action". We have a pond with a healthy newt population and also have a good range of nets and a microscope for "pond dipping" (purchased thanks to Ward funding a few years ago. The programme may start with a summer holiday event - for example "pond dipping", watering the tree nursery and a picnic.

The project invites expressions of interest from youth groups and organisations working with families



Photo: FoWW

who are less connected to nature and may wish to engage in such events. Please contact: westcombewoodlands@hotmail.co.uk Meanwhile you are warmly invited to visit the Woodlands on Sun 11th June 2-6pm. This event is part of the "Open Gardens festival" and there is an entry fee in aid of Bexley & Greenwich Hospice. If you prefer a more "hands on" role,there are regular monthly work parties Sat 3rd June / Sun 2nd July from 10am - 1.00pm See more at Westcombewoodlands.uk



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ENVIRONMENT

Vanbrugh Pits update, May 2023 – Joe Beale

We are lucky to have The Vanbrugh Pits (aka ‘the Dips’) in our neighbourhood. Adjacent to Greenwich Park, it is a habitat mosaic of scrub, trees, semi-natural grassland, acid

insects such as basking butterflies or burrowing bees. The work also ensures there are a range of heights and densities of scrub for birds to feed and nest, and prevents domination by invasive plants such



Photo: Joe Beale

grassland and bare earth areas, and home to a wide range of wildlife. This includes many bee species - some rare, beetles, grasshoppers, moths, dragonflies (more than might be expected at such a dry site), and 26 butterfly species have been recorded. This spring, cheerful yellow Brimstone butterflies, emerald-coloured Green Hairstreaks and fiery orange Small Coppers have been active, and the usual good numbers of grassland butterflies and day-flying moths should appear in summer. The tiny, exquisitely beautiful flowers of Bird’s-foot can currently be found growing extensively in areas of open ground. We have some Clustered Clover in the southern section nearest the Heath, but this attractive and nationally scarce flower can also be seen on the lawn of the nearby Parkside flats. Now is a great time to hear Song Thrushes, Greenfinches, Blackcaps and Chiffchaffs singing at Vanbrugh Pits, and I recently encountered a huddle of six newly-fledged Long-tailed Tits (which nest in the Gorse) there. Some good news – in April I rediscovered the lichen *Cetraria aculeata* which hadn’t been seen for some time and was feared lost. This is its only remaining site in London. It is now confined to a tiny patch of ground, and vulnerable to nutrient enrichment, including dog waste, and well-meaning but unhelpful attempts to plant things at the Dips! But it is still there, so there is hope.

Our Vanbrugh volunteer work parties during the winter help maintain a balance of habitats, including open spaces stimulating new, vigorous plant growth and for

as Holm Oak. I am thankful to the excellent group of volunteers we have, and it is always good to meet people walking by who stop to chat during these events. Our energetic litter-pickers removed over a dozen full bin bags’ worth of rubbish during two recent work parties! By managing the site carefully in this way, we also make it a more welcoming place for families and those who want to relax in a biodiverse green space. This work resumes in the autumn, always with permission from Greenwich Council’s Parks and Open Spaces team, who also help us remove the cuttings and litter. The Council’s tree team have recently removed some Holm Oaks that were shading out more vulnerable habitats.

Vanbrugh Pits is a vulnerable little site that is responding well to careful, ecology-based, habitat management - and a great community effort. We want to ensure it stays a wildlife haven and a place for people who respect it to enjoy spending time. This is why I will be approaching the Council to ask for Local Nature Reserve (LNR) status. While Vanbrugh Pits is already part of the wider Blackheath Site of Importance for Nature Conservation, LNR status would enhance its protection. The term ‘nature reserve’ is also clear and pithy, and it is hoped this will help everyone to truly appreciate and enjoy it. I hope readers of the Westcombe News will support the application for LNR status, and I will let you know how it progresses.

Vanbrugh Park Estate

Many readers will be familiar with the Vanbrugh Park Estate which was built in 1963. It was designed by the architects Chamberlin, Powell and Bon who went on to build the Barbican. Some of the flats have paved, open front areas, many of which have become small gardens with pots, seats and even gnomes. This creates fresh air and greenery for residents to cultivate and enjoy. As part of the council's review of



Photo: Phineas Harper

safety and fire hazards on its estates following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, notices have been sent to residents requiring them to clear the spaces in front of their properties. This led to protests and the launching of a petition which attracted over 1,200 signatures and was supported by Matt Pennycook, MP. Residents say that the council's fire safety inspection found no problem with the front gardens and their own independent fire safety expert stated that there was “no credible fire risk” posed by the plants. The walkways are wider than the regulations require

and areas of greenery create shade and fresh air which are highly valued by the residents. Since the extensive media coverage, a meeting has taken place between residents and the council. According to the residents a "series of meetings are scheduled to find mutually acceptable ways forward for front gardens." They look forward to reaching a "positive and appropriate compromise with the council." The Royal Borough of Greenwich have issued a statement (22.5.23) sympathising with the residents and adding, "We recognise that we need to be much more transparent with residents, and try our best to find compromises, without compromising on the most important thing – keeping people safe." "We had a productive meeting with the Vanbrugh Park Estate community this week, following which we have paused the decision to remove the plants. We will be holding an estate walkabout in the next two weeks, so we can try to find a way forward which works for everyone."



Photo: Phineas Harper



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WHATS ON

Charlton House & Gardens

Charlton & Blackheath Amateur Horticultural Society (CABAHS): next meeting Monday June 19th 7.30pm, at Charlton House Old Library. Our speaker is Tim Ingram from Copton Ash Garden, talking about Success with Seeds. Please contact cabahshortisoc@gmail.com if you would like to come as a guest, £2.

Charlton House Walled Gardens
Volunteer scheme meets every Tuesday 2-4pm and Thurs 10-12, and anyone with an interest in gardening is welcome. We are a friendly group, usually with 12-15 volunteers at each drop-in session. Please bring own gloves and a mug for tea break. Regular volunteers can look after their own bed in the Old Pond Garden, under the direction of Jason the Head Gardener. Occasional volunteers are very welcome to help with the varied tasks that now cover the whole estate. Contact cabahshortisoc@gmail.com for info or see our website <https://cabahs.com>

Ottoman Journeys: Life & Afterlife in Greenwich
Mondays to Fridays 9:30am – 3:30pm, Saturdays 9:30am – 2pm
Free entry
Explore the connections between the Ottoman Empire and our borough today in this new exhibition.

Ottoman Calligraphy Workshop with Ustadh Javed Choudhury
Thursday 1st June, 6pm – 8pm
£25 including hot drink & cake
Ustadh Javed Choudhury gives a beginners' crash course on Ottoman calligraphy. The pen and composition will be yours to keep!

Friday Concerts: Matthew Chin, violin
Friday 2nd June, 1pm
By donation
Solo recital featuring Biber, Prokofiev, Ysaÿe, and Bach's virtuosic Chaconne in D minor.

Friday Concerts: Bragi Quartet
Friday 9th June, 1pm
By donation
Trombone quartet, featuring a premiere of an original work by trombonist/composer Benjamin Newman

Friday Concerts: Bukolika Piano Trio
Friday 16th June, 1pm
By donation
Violin, cello, and piano in Charlton House's historic Old Library.

MURDER! at Charlton House – Mystery Theatre
Saturday 17th June, 7pm (doors & drinks)
£25 including a glass of fizz
An evening of exploration, intrigue, and immersive theatre inside Charlton House.

Sunday Producers' Market
Sunday 18th June, 10am – 3pm
Charlton House & Gardens
Free entry
Come to Charlton House's back lawn for a producers' market every third Sunday of the month.

Ottoman Henna Workshop with Maryam Shaleemi
Wednesday 21st June, 6pm – 8pm
£25 including hot drink & cake
Learn how Turkish henna is mixed and used and make your own designs. You'll even leave with a beautiful henna temporary tattoo!

Shakespeare in the Squares: Twelfth Night
Thursday 29th June, 7pm
£28 (cones for students, children, groups and accessible seats)
Experience one of Shakespeare's most loved and most modern romantic comedies in our gardens.

Friday Concerts: David Wallace, violin, and Helen Jorgensen, clarinet
Friday 23rd June, 1pm
By donation
Violin and clarinet in Charlton House's historic Old Library.
More details and booking information for all events at greenwichheritage.org

West Greenwich Library

Poetry Collections launch at West Greenwich Library.
Thursday June 15th, 730pm
Join Jane Clarke and Maura Dooley for the launch of their latest poetry collections, A Change in the Air and Five Fifty-Five respectively, both published by Blood axe Books this year – Maura's in April and Jane's in May.
This is the only live in-person launch for Jane's book in London and I believe in the entire country, and she will fly in from Ireland to read to us. Be there!
There will be a Zoom connection for those who are unable to attend in person. Please email to request a link: Irena Hill <irena.mh50@gmail.com>
Visit: www.in-words.co.uk

Café run by people with learning disabilities opens

Camouflage Cafe, a unique and exciting new cafe in the heart of Thamesmead is proud to have had its grand opening on April 28th, 2023. This one-of-a-kind cafe is staffed and operated by adults with learning disabilities, providing them with a valuable opportunity to gain job training and experience. At the same time, the cafe offers the community a welcoming space to enjoy delicious food and drinks.
www.camouflagecafe.co.uk or follow @camouflagecafe.

Royal Greenwich Together 23

Date: 10th June 2023
Location: Charlton Park SE7 8JB
Time: 12:00 - 18:00
Cost: Free
Expect live music and performances, arts and crafts, community stalls, marketplace and street food, 'have a go' sports and kids' activities, funfair rides and much more.
Norman Jay MBE legendary Notting Hill carnival DJ will headline alongside a host of musical acts including our very own local choir, the Woolwich Singers!
www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk

BLACKHEATH HALLS

Blackheath Presents:
SongEasel Young Artist Programme
Sat 10 Jun, 6.00pm
Tickets: £10
Selected participants from SongEasel's Young Artist Programme present a recital exploring Shakespeare's theme of Full Fathom Five through song. These talented young musicians receive coaching and mentoring leading up to this opportunity and perform a varied programme in a diverse range of languages and musical styles.

An Evening with Andy Hamilton
Sat 10 Jun, 8.00pm
Tickets: £20
In an intimate evening of comic reflection, reminiscence, and revelation, award-winning writer and comedian Andy Hamilton looks back over his more than forty years in comedy and seventy(ish) years on the planet and tries to answer some questions!

Midsummer Music at Garrison Church
Sat 17 Jun, 6.30pm
Tickets: £10 / £5 under 12s
Blackheath Halls Orchestra are delighted to perform in the magical outdoor setting of St George's Garrison Church in Woold with a selection of summer classics including music by Gershwin, Mendelssohn and Bach.

‘MUSIC FOR A SUMMER’S EVENING’

Sunday 25th June at 7.30pm, The Old Library, Charlton House, SE7
This popular Concert, which started in 1972, will be under the direction of Gwen Zammit BEM in her role as Chairman of “Save Charlton Assembly Rooms Project” (SCARP). The Concerts involve professionals as well as amateurs. All types of music are featured in the programme giving something to suit all tastes, as well as lots of fun!
Performers include our local professionals, Musical Director, Dominic Barlow; Tenor, Jim Kinsella; Pianist, Fiona Sinfield as well as the famous group “St Luke's Players” which Gwen also Directs.
Also, includes the duo, Richard O'Shea and Garry Keir, who will surprise you on the night...!
Tickets: £15, including a glass of wine/beer or soft drink. Contact: 07738 561544 or 020 8856 7373 to book, In aid of the The Food Bank HQ, 180 Shooters Hill, SE18 6EF.

Thomas Tallis Society Summer Concert 2023

ESPRIT de PARIS or a FRENCH COLLECTION
Saturday 24th June, 730pm at St Alfege Church in Greenwich, London, SE10
Performed by the Thomas Tallis Society Choir and will include music by Charpentier, Debussy, Duruflé, Fauré and Saint-Saëns. The concert will be directed by guest director, Olivia Shotton who also directs the University of Greenwich Choir.
The concert will be followed by a post-concert reception, outside if the weather permits.

Concerts in Greenwich Park



The Friends of Greenwich Park are again organising a season of concerts in the park this summer.
Their Midsummer Jazz concert takes place on Sunday 18 June in the Observatory Garden from 12.30pm to 3pm. It again features the South London Jazz Orchestra, who performed last year and return by popular demand. This is a family event and there will be a bar, refreshments, and ice cream.
Tickets purchased in advance are just £5 and available from Friends of Greenwich Park, 52 Greenwich Park Street, London SE10 9LT, telephone 020 8853 2150, email: cnbevan@hotmail.com Cheques made out to 'Friends of Greenwich Park.' Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.
Tickets are also available online at www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk. Last year's concert sold out well in advance, so early booking is advised.

During July and August, the Friends will be staging their popular **Bandstand concerts**. These will run on all Sundays from 2 July until 27 August, finishing on Bank Holiday Monday 28 August. All concerts, which are free, start at 3pm and end at 5pm.

National Maritime Museum and Queen’s House

World Oceans Day
Travel down the Thames and celebrate World Oceans Day is a family-friendly celebration of our blue planet. Experience the energy of VOU, a ground-breaking contemporary dance company from Fiji, get your face painted by merfolk, and listen to talks delivered by experts from



the Manta Trust, British Antarctic Survey and other marine scientists.
Date: 10 June 2023
Time: 11.00 – 16.00
Location: National Maritime Museum

Windrush 75
HMT Empire Windrush arrived in Britain on 22 June 1948. On board were more than 800 passengers from the Caribbean. This June marks 75 years since that voyage and the National Maritime Museum is partnering with the Caribbean Social Forum to host two special Windrush Day events during the 75th anniversary year.
Dates: 22, 24 June 2023
Location: National Maritime Museum

Migration Stories
To mark Refugee Week, we will be exploring the rich stories of migration within the collection, understanding the complex issues that migrants in Britain face today and celebrating the culture and heritage of our local migrant communities.
Dates: 17 – 25 June 2023
Location: National Maritime Museum.

Unfolding Stories
Join three LGBTQ+ refugees and hear their experience of migration, followed by a creative workshop with Newham Poetry Group, where speakers and the public will create a collaborative collage with all the aspects of our migration experiences.
Date: 17 June 2023
Time: 13.45 – 15.45
Location: National Maritime Museum.

Lunchtime Concert
Take an hour out of your day to relax in the sumptuous surroundings of the Queen's House Great Hall and listen to talented musicians from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance.
Date: 21 June 2023
Time: 13.00 – 14.00
Location: Queen's House, Greenwich.
Please check the website for more details
www.rmg.co.uk

Greenwich Industrial History Society

June 20th Alan Burkitt-Gray. London: the Silicon Valley that disappeared
July 18th Elizabeth Wiggans, ex-archivist Morden College. The College archive and its importance
September 12th Tracy Stringfellow, ex-CEO Greenwich Heritage Centre.
October 10th Mark James on trams and tram depots in Greenwich

Local classical music orchestra performs

Britten violin concerto with RVW and Smyth
St Paul's sinfonia
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<https://www.stpaulssinfonia.com/>

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