

WestcombeNEWS

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December 2023 January 2024 No 10



Season's Greetings to all our Readers

Moving Forward to Phase 2

Many of us visit Greenwich Park regularly and have already been aware of the various works that have recently been undertaken as part of the Greenwich Park Revealed project. A project undertaken to maintain and enhance the park and to future-proof it for its five million visitors annually which are expected to rise in number over the coming years. During its first phase One Tree Hill has been improved to enhance the views which were once celebrated as the subject of a painting by Turner. The flower garden lake has been drained, repaired and linked to a water source to improve its quality and water lilies have now been introduced.

Work continues on the Learning

well received). Other projects are now continuing into the second phase of the Greenwich Park Revealed project. It is difficult not to notice the work being undertaken around the Wolfe Statue! The viewing space overlooking the Queen's House is being extended to better accommodate visitors and reduce the congestion often experienced. The area behind the statue is being opened up as a car-free space with catering and café-style seating. The Giant Steps are to be 're-sculpted' into the hill below the Wolfe statue, a prominent historical feature. For more see our September issue. Alongside these changes, damaged and diseased trees in the Western



Photo: The Royal Parks

Centre in the Wilderness and extensive work in the Vanbrugh Yard is very apparent when entering the Park from Vanbrugh Gate. This work, whilst providing facilities for volunteers in a new Volunteer Hub also includes the creation of community space and garden. Work

Avenue are to be replanted. This is following the restoration undertaken last year to the Eastern Avenue. Care has been taken to use more resilient elm trees that were part of the original design and lime trees to attract wildlife. They will be planted on the re-landscaped, banked

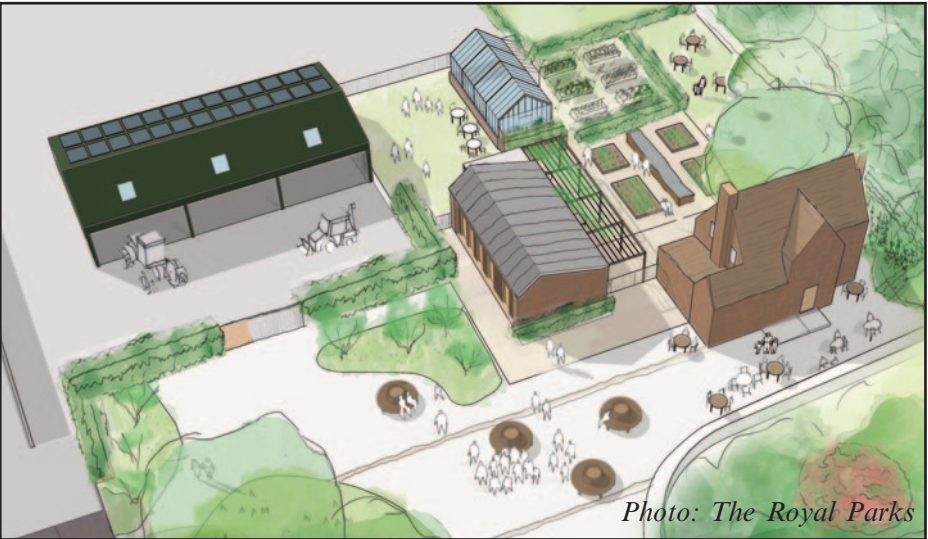


Photo: The Royal Parks

progresses on the changes needed to the building that will become the new café which will have an area for dog walkers. St Mary's Lodge is being turned into a Volunteer Hut and will house the mobility buggy (which has been very busy over the summer transporting visitors from St Mary's Gate to Great Cross Avenue and was very

terraces. The Blackheath Gate entrance to the park is be made more green and welcoming by the planting of new trees at the top of the Avenue together with the removal of hard surfaces. During the time these changes are taking place various areas of the park will be subject to path closures.

Diversions and signage will be used to reflect this. The Park Rangers will be happy to guide visitors in choosing alternative routes. Relationships with local groups will continue to provide social activities such as dance, film and children's activities; all helping to promote and appreciate the diversity of visitors to the park. Archeological projects and the popular Bandstand concerts will continue.

Finally and importantly....many of the changes being undertaken will improve the ecology of the park for wildlife, together with protecting and enhancing habitats.

We all look forward to seeing the evolving restoration which is expected to complete in the spring of 2024.

For further information go to Greenwich@royalparks.org.uk

Marilyn Little

Railway Timetable to Change Again

The railway timetable has been changed many times over the last three years. Until November 2020 there was a regular service at ten minute intervals through most of the day. It was a good Metro "turn up and go" service where passengers could simply turn up at the station and be confident they would not have to wait long for a train. Understandably, Covid changed that as virtually empty trains were running around the network. Two trains an hour were withdrawn in November 2020, leaving four trains an hour. In January 2022, as passenger numbers started picking up, the peak hour service was re-instated at six trains an hour although the non-peak service remained at four trains. Then, without any public consultation, the timetable changed in December 2022 and the service declined rapidly so that it can no longer be regarded as a "turn up and go" service. Punctuality has become worse, the evening peak service from London was returned to only four trains an hour, and the service to London now runs at irregular intervals with gaps between services of up to 23 minutes. These changes were justified on the basis of saving

costs and reducing conflicting train movements across the junction at Lewisham.

The result has been a less reliable service. In the month before the December 2022 timetable was introduced the percentage of trains on time on the Greenwich line was 80.4% (moving annual average). This average has now reduced to 75.6%. In other words, 1 in 4 Southeastern trains are late.

The Greenwich Line Users Group has been pressing for a more reliable service and a return to a regular interval timetable which meets the needs of passengers. Southeastern have now announced that a new timetable is planned for June 2024. No details are available, as it has not been formally signed off by Network Rail, but Southeastern are promising, amongst other things, that it will improve the spacing of services.

Until the detail is known, judgement will have to be reserved on whether the pressure has paid off and the service through Greenwich will improve and once again provide a good reliable service for passengers. The details are awaited with interest.

Mike Sparham

CHRISTMAS

@MYCENAE HOUSE

Thursday 7 - **Comedy Club**
ft Ben Norris, Andrew Bird & Arielle Souma £9

Friday 8 - **Martin Carthy**
Wassail folk legend supported by Morrigan (GFMA) £16

Wednesday 13 - **Citizens of the World**
Our resident choir bring seasonal songs from round the world £15

Friday 15 - **The SWOP Christmas Party**
Manouche, The Mycenae Crew with guests £8/4

Saturday 16 - **Lets All Dance Ballet**
Magic Word - A show for young people and families £8

Monday 18 - **A Choral Christmas**
St Georges Ch & Blackheath Centre for Singing Free

Thursday 21 - **Ronnie Ripple & the Ripchords**
High energy, good time rock n roll & skiffle £12

Friday 22 - **The Kimberleys**
Annual Christmas address & new album launch £15

020 8858 1749
www.mycenae.co.uk
90 Mycenae Road, Blackheath, SE3 7SE

tickets : www.wegotickets.com

WESTCOMBE SOCIETY

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APPLICATIONS


www.westcombesociety.org

81 MYCENAE ROAD
ref 23/3649/HD
To demolish conservatory and construct single storey rear and side extensions with changes to front fenestration and roof lights.
231 WESTCOMBE HILL
ref 23/3645/SD and ref 23/3613/SD
Details pursuant to Conditions 4, 5 and 6 relating to arrangements for fencing and refuse.
TREE WORKS
34 ST JOHNS PARK
ref 23/3692/TC
To fell conifer in front garden and fell magnolia grandiflora and cherry in rear. Reduce laterals of Indian bean and silver birch in rear garden by 2-3m.
12 STRATHEDEN ROAD
ref 23/3667/TC
To fell cypress in front garden and reduce crown of beech and robinia by 2m.

Did you know....?

It may surprise you to learn that we have in our midst the UK's leading refugee choir! The Citizens of the World Choir meets at Mycenae House on Wednesday evenings. The Choir has around 60 members, representing over 30 nationalities, made up of refugees, asylum seekers, newly-arrived migrants and their families, as well as members from the local community. No audition is needed to join the Choir, which has delighted audiences at prestigious events including performing at the Barbican Centre, the Royal Opera House, Glastonbury, and at the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee Concert outside Buckingham Palace in 2022. The Choir promotes understanding, dignity and kindness through the impact of music and song. It all began in 2017, after the closure of the Calais Jungle, when Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno dreamt of a project that would embrace the refugee community in the UK. As a proud Welshman, he knew it had to be a choir. It started as a five-month experiment, and just continued. The Conductor and Co-Founder, Becky Dell, had previously been to the Calais Jungle with other musicians to teach music to the children there. Recently, Becky has been teaching Siahamba, a Zulu folk song, to an enthusiastic group of children in Lewisham...one example of their outreach to bring people together through singing in a relaxed, creative, and fun way. The music team has four professional musicians with experience of performing in the West End and on TV. Artistic excellence is paramount and the Choir has an extensive and unique repertoire celebrating their rich ethnic and cultural diversity. You may hear folk music in English, Xhosa, Kurdish, as well as Indian raga and protest songs from across the ages. Every performance is an exciting creation, and may include art and poetry. Through the Choir, dignity and humanity flourish, and joyfulness pervades. Their next concert is the 'Big Social' at Mycenae House on December 13th. Expect an unforgettable evening of music and celebration. Doors open at 7.30pm for nibbles and networking, followed by two choir sets with a break in the middle to refill your glass! All ticket holders will receive a free Citizens of the World Choir tote bag. Details and tickets (£15) can be found at www.eventbrite.co.uk

Ann Hill



Heath Clean-up

Volunteers pictured after litter picking on Blackheath recently. Westcombe Society Chair, Geoff Brighty, who was amongst those taking part said, "Very happy to support our colleagues in the Blackheath Society who organise an annual clean up with Lewisham Council and their contractors, Glendale, to help keep the Heath tidy. A great opportunity for local residents to get involved."



Letter

Dear Westcombe News,

Unacceptable, an inconvenience and overly burdensome. These are words use to describe the proposed LTNs in the last two editions of the Westcombe News. A response written by motorists for motorists. Traffic, congestion and pollution are increasing. The majority of Greenwich residents don't own a car and they manage to get around. Action has to be taken if Greenwich is to become greener and safer for all. Unfortunately for those that drive it means the car can no longer rule and other ways of getting around need to be adopted. Change is never easy but sometimes it is necessary.

To get green infrastructure we need to be prepared to be inconvenienced. LTNs and building cycle lanes are a part of that. TFL aren't going to lay on a load of new buses in the hope that motorist are enticed out of their cars. LTNs must come first. If that inconveniences drivers then so be it.

Name and address supplied

WESTCOMBE SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

Christine Legg, 69 Mycenae Road, London, SE3 7SE or
email: membership@westcombesociety.org

Help Blackheath
Conservatoire and
Blackheath Halls
fund some worthy
projects this
Christmas

The Blackheath Conservatoire and Blackheath Halls are part of The Big Give Christmas Challenge this year, the UK's biggest match-funding campaign. From 28th Nov – 5th Dec, they are asking people to make a donation to two fantastic local community arts projects, with all the money raised by the Big Give platform being doubled.

The Big Give, a registered charity and match-funding platform runs The Big Give Christmas Challenge each year, which raises millions of pounds for good causes over the course of one week. Please visit their website listed below for a full list of causes they are supporting this Christmas.

Both Blackheath Halls and the Conservatoire are registered charities and don't receive any public funding for their projects so without donations, these community projects couldn't be realised.

Sanctuary for Refugees Through Art and Music at Blackheath Conservatoire

The Conservatoire is fundraising to provide free art and music classes for refugees and asylum seekers. This programme offers people of all ages who have fled war and persecution the chance to experience high quality teaching in art and music.

The Blackheath Conservatoire Big Give Campaign is championed by Human Rights Fund.

"Making art is like meditation. For two hours I must focus on what I'm making with my hands. I can't think about the news at home." Anna, Ukraine.

Transforming Lives Through Music at Blackheath Halls

With access to the arts becoming increasingly unaffordable for many, Blackheath Halls are raising money to take more free community arts projects into both hard-to-reach schools and special schools, opening up opportunities to a greater number of children in both Greenwich and Lewisham.


The Blackheath Halls Big Give Campaign is championed by The Childhood Trust.

"You are playing such an important role in maintaining children's mental well-being, engagement with art and their musical interests." Blackheath Halls Youth Choir Parent, September 2022.

If you can donate, please visit:

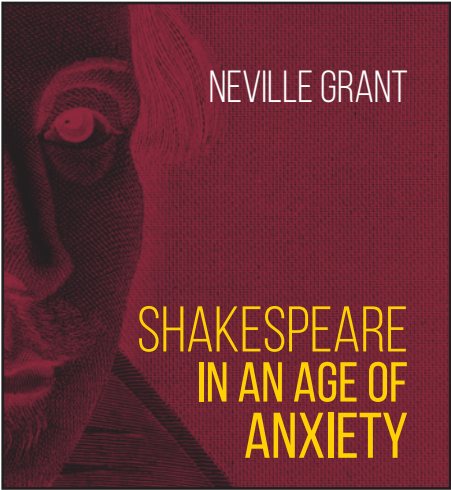
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Polly Morgan



NEIGHBOURHOOD

New book on Shakespeare lifts the lid on his Dark Lady



Local publisher Greenwich Exchange has published a new book to celebrate the

400th anniversary of the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays, published in November 1623, seven years after the playwright's death. The author of the book, entitled Shakespeare in an Age of Anxiety, is former Westcombe News editor, Neville Grant.

Shakespeare had a strong Greenwich connection," says Neville. "For example, there is a fascinating story about the Dark Lady of the Sonnets who lived on Crooms Hill. But there is also a story to tell how an unknown from the Midlands made a career in a highly competitive London."

Shakespeare and the age he lived in has an even stronger connection with us; the reign of Elizabeth 1 has so many similarities between England then and now. For example, problems in relations with Europe, and internal security threats; a possible existential threat (the Spanish Armada/Putin's Russia); a pandemic (the plague/Covid), and culture wars.

The publisher, James Hodgson, says "We are very proud to celebrate this 400th anniversary. This book, like Shakespeare's plays, is aimed at the general

public. It not only gives a reader-friendly update on recent research on Shakespeare – what he wrote, when he wrote it, and what he didn't write, but provides a lively critical appreciation of each of his plays."

Neville is giving a talk about Shakespeare and the Dark Lady of Crooms Hill, and his book, at Mycenae House on Tuesday 9th January at 6.30pm and invites readers to a glass of wine to celebrate the occasion. Copies of the book will be available with a 20% discount.

Festive Fun at the Old Royal Naval College

Polly Morgan

There are festive treats in store for everyone this Christmas at the Old Royal Naval College. The heartwarming Christmas tale, The Elves and The Magic Bear, will delight the younger visitors. When Santa's elves find a bag of unopened letters to Santa just two days before Christmas, they have a big job on their hands to save Christmas. With the help of Mrs Claus and the audience, some singing, magic and a surprise guest, Santa's elves race to make sure that every child gets a present on Christmas. Everyone will have the opportunity to take photos



with the elves and get a Nice List certificate from Mrs Claus. Father Christmas himself will stop by in the Nelson Room inside the Painted Hall - he's heard about the amazing Coalescence artwork, the major art installation Coalescence by Paul Cockshedge, and has some fuel for thought – families can come and hear a magical Christmas story inspired by the sparkling art installation receive a present and take a photo with Father Christmas! For adults and children alike, there will be a beautiful carol concert in

the stunning Chapel of St Peter and St Paul with a warming glass of mulled wine provided afterwards and a sighting of the art installation after hours.

Also, guests are invited to indulge in a delicious three-course Christmas meal in the amazing setting of the Painted Hall this festive season – a wonderful memory-making opportunity.

Festive afternoon teas await in the Café area and Christmas shopping at the annual 'pop-up' Christmas shop on College Way with books, gifts and decorations.

We think it's a great opportunity to come and enjoy fabulous festivities in Greenwich this Christmas season! Event Dates:

Father Christmas Storytelling in the Painted Hall (Nelson Room)

2nd, 9th, 11th – 17th December: 11am, 11.35am, 12pm, 1.35pm

3rd, 10th, 18th – 23rd December: 11am, 11.35am, 12pm, 1pm, 1.35pm, 2pm, 2.35pm

The Elves and The Magic Bear (Admiral's House)

9th – 21st December (selected dates and times, please see website for more details)

Carols and Coalescence (Chapel of St Peter and St Paul, Queen Mary Undercroft, Painted Hall)

11th, 18th and 19th December: 2pm

Festive Dining in the Painted Hall - 15th December

Chocolate Takeover and Wonka Screening (Visitor Centre) - 17th December

Festive Afternoon Teas
<https://ornc.org/christmas-2023/>

Volunteer at Eltham Palace



Eltham Palace & Gardens invites enthusiastic volunteers to contribute to the vibrant history of this unique site by warmly welcoming visitors and recounting the captivating narrative of the building and its former inhabitants. Originally a medieval palace and later a Tudor royal residence where King Henry VIII spent his formative years, the site underwent a remarkable transformation in the 1930s, evolving into a striking art deco mansion by Stephen and Virginia Courtauld.

English Heritage, the charity which cares for Eltham Palace, say their volunteers play a vital role in protecting and presenting some of the greatest places in England. The ideal candidates are individuals with confidence and excellent verbal communication skills, committed to regularly participating in one session per fortnight during the house's operational hours (with reduced winter hours until February 2024). Eltham Palace volunteer manager Nikki Druce says: "Our volunteers

are instrumental in helping us share this wonderful unique gem of a historic property and gardens with our visitors. We are looking to grow our team of volunteers and we're interested in involving many more people from the local community who hold Eltham Palace dear and who can speak passionately about its history and importance to our thousands of yearly visitors. Our volunteers say that assisting at the palace has a range of benefits from meeting new people, doing something valuable with their spare time and being part of a passionate and friendly team, calling it a worthwhile and enriching experience. We'd love to involve more volunteers in what we do and we're always looking for friendly new faces to join us in a variety of roles"

Anyone interested can learn more from the English Heritage website at: www.english-heritage.org.uk/support-us/Volunteer

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FEATURES

Local Wonder Woman

An average workday for Westcombe Park resident Lucy Johnson is anything but average. Super fit Lucy, 28, a stunt person and actor, has typical days that are



not for the faint-hearted. They may involve being set alight on a moving vehicle, slammed against a wall, and thrown down stairs ... as many times as it takes for a movie director to say "cut". "I never tell Mum when I'm going to do a stunt that involves being on fire" Lucy laughs. Hers is an extreme career demanding close to Olympic level fitness (Lucy

calls it "Olympic light") nerves of steel, and total commitment. And Lucy loves every bit of her extraordinary life, even when she's exhausted and her muscles are screaming. When she's not on set in Ireland, the UK or Hollywood, shooting movies like Vikings: Valhalla, Batgirl, the prequel to The Omen, and doing stunts for video games – she spends hours training. "Stunt work is highly competitive, so I've got to always be at peak fitness", Lucy explains. This means, at her own expense, top level gymnastic work, weight training, trampolining, karate (she's working towards a black belt), rock climbing and swimming. Once a week, when she's in London, Lucy heads to her physiotherapist

"to put my ribs back into place", this dynamic young woman laughs. As luck would have it, Lucy's godmother, Cecilia Winter, is a Westcombe Park Iyengar yoga teacher and Cecilia also helps iron out Lucy's knots. Incredibly, Lucy also holds down a high-flying day job as a head hunter for a real estate company! This gal is driven and although stunt training and performing consumes 6-7 days a week, her friends understand and snatch time with her when they can. Lucy's parents, of course, would rather she had a quieter life! Lucy caught the stunt and acting bug (she's been to acting school) when she was fencing with the Irish National team. She qualified for the European Fencing championships in 2019-2020 but stunt work took over. "I love the whole process of movie making and stunt work is, to me, the perfect combination of my athletic and acting skills. Stunts are acting with the body." She's not at all put off by the unglamorous realities. "Preparation is key and I trust the stunt

co-ordinators completely. For stunts to look realistic and dramatic there may be two months prep and two weeks of shooting for 20 seconds in the finished movie or TV series." Lucy may be wielding a sword all day and that same night have to do a stunt at 3am in freezing weather, with her body screaming. "There's still fun in it", she laughs. "I'm happy and excited to be part of movie making." A challenge for female stunt performers is to be slim yet strong enough to cope with the high impact action. "The actress I'm doing stunts for will most likely be trim so I can't be too muscly. I have to be strong but not show it too much." One of Lucy's biggest supporters is boyfriend Roberto, himself a stunt person. "We met at stunt training and are a good team on set", says Lucy. In their rare spare time, they like making their own films and both see their future as stunt coordinators and directors. Lucy hopes she's still doing top level stunts at 35. One thing is for sure - Westcombe Park has its very own Wonder Woman.

Diane Blackwell

Ticket Offices Latest

Following a Government announcement that the closure of ticket offices should not proceed, Southeastern formally withdrew their proposal to close 40 ticket offices in the London area including Maze Hill and Westcombe Park. The announcement came after London Travelwatch, who were responsible for conducting the public consultation, had issued their report objecting to the proposals. London Travelwatch received 19,918 responses to the Southeastern proposals. Of those 19,873 responses were objecting to the proposals. There were objections made about every single one of the 40 stations, as well as more general objections to ticket office closures. The top three

concerns were: the ability to buy tickets in future (including needing help to navigate the complexities of the fare system and difficulty in using ticket machines); the provision of information to plan journeys; and how passengers requiring assistance would receive help and support. All these issues were amongst the comments made by the Greenwich Line Users Group in their response opposing the proposals. Southeastern have told Users Groups that they were not expecting the Government decision, but it should not have come as a surprise. Apart from the large number of objections received, London Travelwatch themselves had published a report in March this

year (Left Behind Londoners) about digital exclusion and barriers to travel for older people and people with disabilities. This report had stressed the importance of ticket offices, so they would have been in some difficulty if they had changed their position so quickly. What for the future? In the immediate future, Southeastern have confirmed that they have opened a recruitment process to fill vacancies that will help to open, or re-open, ticket offices at their advertised times. This should help Westcombe Park where, although the ticket office recently re-opened, it still closes early in the afternoon. In the longer term, it is unlikely the issue has gone away. London

Travelwatch have said that, in principle, they support the more flexible use of staff, although they were not convinced that Southeastern's proposals would have led to an improvement in passenger experience. They believe that fares reform should be successfully introduced before any future closure proposals are made. It is clear that any future proposals would need to be much better developed and researched. For now, the ticket offices are safe, but expect further developments at some point in the future.

Mike Sparham

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FEATURES

Get your skates on this Christmas!

Polly Morgan

Get ready for festive fun at The Queen's House magical open-air ice rink, returning from November 23, 2023. The grand opening on November 25 features festive skate activities, including face painting for kids and a live choir for adults. Located within the UNESCO World Heritage Site near the 17th-century Queen's House, London's first Classical building, the rink offers a picturesque setting with views of Greenwich Park and Canary Wharf. Open daily (excluding Christmas Day) until January 7, 2024, visitors can enjoy winter drinks and spectate from the rinkside or the café area. For tickets and details, visit rmg.co.uk/icerink Queen's House, Greenwich, SE10 9NF



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Greenwich Archive

Mary Mills

Your editors have asked me to write an article about the petition which Greenwich Industrial History Society is currently running about the Greenwich archive. This is a much more difficult task than it appears since while the petition is running things change every day. The whole point of the petition is to impress on the Council, as the ultimate decision makers, that there is wide popular support for a functioning archive service. I'm sorry but I'm going to have to go back to 25 years ago when we did have a service which worked. There was a museum at Plumstead and an archive, here in Westcombe Park. They were open and rooted in their local communities. The sort of work which is currently going on in the east of the borough and around the Year of Culture bid could have been done by their staff very cheaply and effectively – they were not an expensive service to run. I am not going into all the whys and wherefores of what has happened since but we no longer have a museum and the archive is based in the trading estate, a long way from public transport; you have to make an appointment and order your one item in advance and there is no browsing. What we had in Westcombe Park - although it covered the entire Borough - was the local history department and archive. This was based in the upper floors of Woodlands – now the Steiner School. It was open six days a week, plus some evenings. It was friendly, it was accessible. You could chat to a staff member or you could just browse the shelves of books. Archive material was available immediately. Staff went regularly to speak at schools and help them with projects. They talked to local clubs and took part in the work of local historical organisations. Throughout most of its existence the archive and library were run by Julian Watson and Julian - who retired 20 years ago - is due to give a

talk about the history of the archive at a meeting next week. Hopefully next month I will be able to tell that it's available on YouTube for everyone to hear. I could talk about many of the staff but in particular, for most of the time the library was open, the senior assistant was Barbara Ludlow. As far as I'm aware, Barbara had lived in Westcombe Park all her life – her mother lived in Humber Road and when we moved here her Dad was Chair of the local Labour Party branch. Her family links included many of the local Labour and trade union movements. Her Uncle Charlie once hired Woolwich Odeon for a Union branch meeting and another member of the family was the owner of the trendiest record shop in South London. Over the past 25 years decisions have been made which changed all this. Initially, I'm sure they were with good intent to help the regeneration of the Arsenal site but it moved the service away from its community bases. I am sure many decision-makers today won't know about this past and see it as an irrelevant and elitist organisation which is not meeting the current aspirations of many of our residents. Technically it is now owned by the Royal Greenwich Heritage Trust and I'm sure it was thought that this organisation would grow to equal the success of the organisation, now called 'Better', which took over our leisure activities in the 1980s. It seems a shame that when Greenwich is bidding to become the next Borough of Culture, it is unable to find a suitable, permanent home for such a valuable resource. So one of the reasons behind the petition is to try and explain to the decision-makers on the Council that the archive and museum could be an inexpensive way of meeting their aspirations and that there is massive public support for it.

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ENVIRONMENT

Improving Mycenae Gardens

The Friends of Mycenae Gardens committee held a day of action on November 11th for volunteers to help this beloved space get ready for winter. There was a great turnout, on a beautiful clear day. The high point was planting a new tree, very kindly donated by Dr Twist, author of the biography of John Julius Angerstein, who lived in Woodlands. Mycenae Gardens and the Dell were part of the grounds of the house, now the Waldorf School, and several parents and pupils joined in the work. The newly planted tree is a white-beam, known for its white undersides of leaves and red berries in autumn, providing both aesthetic appeal and food for wildlife. Dr Twist's donation also includes four large bags of daffodil bulbs, to be planted in early December. The committee aims to



Committee member Bruce and volunteer James bringing the tree to its new home
Picture Credit: Anne Robbins

enhance the park's nature-friendly aspect while ensuring it remains enjoyable for visitors. At the Annual General Meeting in October, updates from the Royal Borough of Greenwich Parks and Open Spaces Department were shared. Plans include fencing some shrub beds to prevent damage and reseeded the lawn area in spring. The committee, with a new chair, Stewart Williams, was re-elected. Mark Barnes, who has led the group for several years, was warmly thanked, and happily remains on the committee. Christmas cards were available for purchase to support the park's improvements. You can find a link to buy them to support the improvements on the Friends of Mycenae Gardens website. The main speaker was Joe Beale, renowned local naturalist, who conducted a survey of birds and butterflies over the spring. He pointed out reasons for optimism: the Dell has a good variety of birds nesting, including four species of tits. The butterfly count was less encouraging, but Joe pointed out that the spring was cool and this may have delayed hatching. Overall, though, compared to previous surveys, there has been a decline in some of the woodland bird species like nuthatches. The Friends group hopes to attract these back. The earliest survey Joe cited was a set of observations from 1959: at the time there were no ring-necked parakeets, but surprisingly there were also no magpies in the area, so this survey was a great overview of how wildlife populations can change over time!

Gardening in Winter Ann Hill

Some winter days will be gloomy and wet but there is no shortage of things that can be done in the garden on a sunny day. A little fresh air and exercise can be a good tonic for flagging spirits.

Fruit Trees:

On sunny afternoons, consider the rewarding task of pruning apple and pear trees. However, it's advisable to wait until spring for wall-trained or cordon trees. Begin by removing dead, diseased, damaged, or weak branches. Keep an eye out for branches that cross or rub, as these can be entry points for diseases. Aim for an open, goblet-shaped framework and prune back overly long or straggly branches. Apply the same approach to gooseberries, removing the oldest branches and reducing the remaining ones by a third to allow air and light to reach every branch.

Patio Fruit Trees:

Ideal for smaller gardens, compact,

dwarf varieties of cherries, plums, figs, apples, and pears are perfect for those with limited space. Plant them now, choosing self-fertile varieties and larger containers for optimal growth.

Roses:

As the New Year arrives, prune established roses. If your roses are top-heavy and at risk of wind damage, cut back some top growth immediately, and follow up with proper pruning later. This is also a suitable time to plant bare-root roses. Sunny Day Suggestions:

- Plant bulbs in pots or in the ground.
- Rake leaves off the grass to allow in light and air.
- Clear soggy foliage from the base of perennials to deter overwintering pests.
- Spread compost to benefit from the work of worms.
- Use grease bands around fruit tree trunks to prevent damage from winter moths.

Maintenance Plan in Place for Dinsdale Road Trees

PA Housing has enlisted O'Roberts tree surgeons to oversee the upkeep of the Dinsdale Road trees this summer. Recently, the deceased trees, primarily silver birches, were removed and replaced with maples. O'Roberts will ensure regular watering during summer and has a winter watering plan in place. A resident of Dinsdale Road expressed delight, stating, "The site is now professionally maintained, and the dead trees replaced." With

proper care, it is anticipated that the newly planted trees will thrive, creating a picturesque environment for birds and wildlife in a few years.



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- Protect tender plants, like dahlias, cannas, and agapanthus, from frost with a thick mulch.
- Provide food and water for birds.
- Enjoy attractive seed heads until spring, cutting them back when new growth appears.
- Grow microgreens and peas indoors; they are ready for use in salads in just a few days.

On those less-than-ideal days, when you prefer to hunker down, take stock, clear out old seeds, and plan for future plantings. This reflective approach ensures that joy, beauty, and support for wildlife will be woven into the months ahead. Winter gardening offers a spectrum of tasks, catering to both the practical and contemplative aspects of the gardening experience.

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WHAT'S ON

National Maritime Museum

For further details of all events go to www.rmg.co.uk/whats-on

The Van de Veldes: Greenwich, Art and the Sea – LAST CHANCE TO SEE
Date: 2 March 2023 – 14 January 2024
Time: 10.00 – 17.00
Age: Suitable for all ages
Location: Queen's House, Greenwich
Admission: Free

Astronomy Photographer of the Year 15
The winning and shortlisted images will be displayed in an exhibition at the National Maritime Museum, including awe-inspiring scenes of the Milky Way
Date: Daily from 16 September 2023
Time: 10.00 – 17.00
Age: Suitable for all ages
Location: National Maritime Museum, Photography Gallery.

Feeling Blue
A major new tapestry commission is now display in the Queen's House. Scottish/Barbadian artist Alberta Whittle's *Feeling Blue* (2023) is a collaborative piece woven in Edinburgh by Dovecot Studios. See our November edition for larger feature on this tapestry.
Date: Daily
Time: 10.00 – 17.00
Age: Suitable for all ages
Location: Queen's House, Queen's Presence Chamber
Admission: Free

Our Connection to Water
Our Connection to Water brings together seven artists, to explore our human connection to water through photography, audio, film, illustration and installations.
Date: Daily
Time: 10.00 – 17.00
Age: Suitable for all ages
Location: National Maritime Museum, New Insights Gallery
Admission: Free

SPECIAL EVENTS

Queen's House Ice Rink
Date: 23 November 2023 – 7 January 2024 (closed on 25 December)
Time: 11.00 – 20.00 | Opens at 10.00 from 22 December
Age: Suitable for ages 3 and above | Skate aids available
Location: Queen's House, Greenwich
Admission: Adult from £17 | Student from £11.90 | Child from £10
URL: www.queenshouse.org.uk/

Queen's House Ice Rink: Relaxed Sessions
Date: 11 December 2023 | 3 January 2024

Season of Identity
Exploring different identities and their connections to the Museum's collection.
Date: October 2023 – March 2024
Age: Suitable for all ages
Location: National Maritime Museum, Queen's House and Cutty Sark

This is Who We Are: Journeys into Poetry
Join award-winning poet Jenny Mitchell for an afternoon performance of stimulating poems that take us across land, sea, and time to look at historical legacies and modern vulnerabilities.
Date: 2 December 2023
Time: 14.00 – 16.00
Age: Suitable for ages 18 and above
Location: National Maritime Museum, Seminar Room
Admission: Pay what you can

Poetry and Freedom
Jenny Mitchell will run a relaxed writing workshop on the themes of freedom and identity.
Date: 7 December 2023
Time: 10.30 – 12.30
Age: Suitable for ages 18 and above
Location: National Maritime Museum, Seminar Room
Admission: Pay what you can

Mycenae House

Fri 1st Dec 7.30pm - Rob Bartlitz. A Modern Classical Composer piano concert. £10.

Thurs 7th Dec 8pm - Mycenae Comedy Club. Featuring Ben Norris, Andrew Bird & Arielle Souma. £9.

Fri 8th Dec 7.30pm - GFMA Wassail Night. Folk Legend Martin Carthy headlines an evening of folk music. £16.

Sat 9th Dec 10am - Baby Broadway. The whole family can sing along to songs from hit musicals. £13.

Wed 13th Dec - Citizens of the World Choir. Christmas performance from the UK's leading refugee choir. Tbc.

Fri 15th Dec 8pm - The SWOP Sessions. Foot tapping, finger snapping, jazz, soul and blues. £7.

Sat 16th Dec 10.30am + 12pm - The Magic Word. Beautiful classical ballet with a warm message at its heart. £8.

Mon 18th Dec 7pm - A Choral Christmas. Sing-along with St

George's Church + Blackheath Centre for Singing. Free.

Thurs 21st Dec 8pm - Ronnie Ripple & The Ripchords. High energy, good time rock'n'roll, skiffle and rockabilly. £12.

Fri 22nd Dec 3pm - Bach To Baby. Festive Classical Concert for families. £15.



Fri 22nd Dec 8pm - Kristmas with The Kimberleys. Jim & Isobel play their favourite old folk & rare yuletide songs. £15.

For further information about all Mycenae House events visit www.mycenaehouse.co.uk

St. John's



This heart-warming and captivating original stage production tells the story of an

unlikely friendship formed in the middle of a snow storm. The play is staged and performed by the Artless Theatre company and will take place in St John's Church, Stratheden Rd, Blackheath SE3

Thomas Tallis Society Choir

Messiah – George w Handel – Friday 1 December, 7.30pm. St Alfege, SE10
Liederabend – Schubert/Schumann
Partsongs – Sunday 21 January
www.thomas-tallis-society.org.uk/concerts/

Sparkle in the Park returns!

From 30 November to 3 December, between 4.30 and 9pm, Avery Hill Park will be transformed into an enchanted winter wonderland. Enjoy the Winter Garden illuminated, and explore the Christmas market, a fun fair and pop up performances from local school and community choirs. Visitors won't need a ticket to enter this year's event but be prepared to queue.
On Sunday 3 December, there will be a quiet hour, for children and adults with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and sensory sensitivities.
www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/save-the-date-sparkle

Royal Observatory

Join the Royal Observatory astronomers for a unique stargazing experience that includes a planetarium show and then, weather permitting, the astronomers will guide participants across the night sky with both modern-day telescopes and the 130-year-old Great Equatorial Telescope.
Dates: 8, 9 December 2023 | 5, 6, 19, 20 January 2024
Age: Suitable for ages 7 and over
Location: Royal Observatory Greenwich
Admission: Adult £24 | Student £21.60 | Child £12

Christmas Lecture
Visit the Peter Harrison Planetarium after hours to learn more about the Universe during a lecture from a current researcher in the field of astronomy and space science.
Dates: 15 December 2023
Age: Suitable for ages 7 and over
Location: Royal Observatory Greenwich

In-Words

The next event, will take place at St Alfege's Church Hall in Greenwich (SE10 9JT) at 7pm on Thursday December 7th for the launch of *A Life in Verse*, the newly published book of the selected works of Patrick Early.

International Ceilidh

Invite your friends to an International Folk Dance Ceilidh with live music on Thursday January 25th at 6pm, at Mycenae House. Contact joclare@hotmail.it 07709952215.

7TH. Aimed at children aged 7-11 but open to the whole family. More details including booking details can be found at www.stjohnsblackheath.org.uk

Blackheath Halls

December
Sat 2nd Dec 7.30pm – Haven't Stopped Dancin' Yet Big Xmas Disco Ball
Sun 3rd Dec 3pm - A Festive Family Sing-a-Long
Mon 4th Dec 1.10pm – Lunchtime Recital Julian Jacobson (piano)
Thu 7th Dec 7.30pm – Trinity Laban Symphonic Winds
Fri 8th Dec 7.30pm – Trinity Laban BA Hons and Industry Bands
Sat 9th Dec 10am & 12.30pm – Teach Rex LIVE! Velociraptor Show
Sun 10th Dec 2pm & 4.15pm – The Snowman with East London Brass
Fri 15th Dec 6.30pm & 8pm - Trinity Laban Opera Scenes
Fri 15th Dec 7.30pm – The Magic Of Christmas (Belvedere Concert Band)
Sat 16th Dec 7.30pm – Blackheath Goes Gospel
Sun 17th Dec 7.30pm – Blackheath Halls Christmas Concert
Mon 18th Dec 1.10pm – Lunchtime Recital Elena Toponogova Ensemble
Fri 22nd Dec 1.30 & 4pm and- Sat 23rd Dec 11am & 1.30pm – The Nutcracker (Let's All Dance)

January
Mon 8th Jan 1.10pm – Lunchtime Recital Marsyas Trio
Sun 14th Jan 8pm – Tom Robinson Band
Sat 27 Jan – Mark Watson | Search
Mon 29th Jan 1.10pm – Lunchtime Recital Paddington Trio
To book and for info: www.blackheathhalls.com/whats-on/

Arts Society

Greenwich

www.theartsocietygreenwich.org.uk

A Bit of a Carry On
Monday 11 December at 7.30 pm
Lecturer: Tyler Butterworth
Venue: James Wolfe Primary School, Royal Hill, Greenwich
Annual membership: £55 (10 lectures).
Guests very welcome: £10

Picasso and his Women
Monday 8 January 2024 at 7.30 pm
Lecturer: Valerie Woodgate
Venue: James Wolfe Primary School, Royal Hill, Greenwich
Annual membership: £55 (10 lectures).
Guests very welcome: £10

St Paul's Sinfonia

Local, talented orchestra St Paul's Sinfonia, return for a monthly classical music treat with their Christmas concert not to be missed. Friday 15th December
Christmas Baroque, Bach, Vivaldi, Villa-Lobos, Corelli. .
January 19th Italian Strings with Respighi, Bottesini, Rota and Scelsi.
Both concerts 730pm at St Alfedge Church, Greenwich, Tickets £20 on door, £10 concessions.
www.stpaulssinfonia.com/



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Regular dance class for over 50s at Mycenae House on Fridays 11am-12pm.
All welcome regardless of experience, ability and mobility. Explore different dance styles whilst exercising. Come and dance your feet off and keep warm at international folk dance sessions on Tuesdays January 9th, 16th and 23rd at 2pm, open to all ages and abilities! Invite your friends to an International Folk Dance Ceilidh with live music on Thursday January 25th at 6pm, at Mycenae House. Contact joclare@hotmail.it 07709952215.

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