

“No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.” – Aesop

Royal Museums Greenwich will hold a Family Festival to celebrate Lunar New Year 2024

Royal Museums Greenwich (RMG) will celebrate Lunar New Year on **3 February 2024** with a day festival at the National Maritime Museum, suitable for all ages.

There have been Lunar New Year celebrations at the Museum for over 20 years, and this year RMG will welcome visitors back to mark the Year of the Dragon with performances, workshops, talks and gallery tours. Also known as the ‘Spring Festival’, the start of the new lunisolar calendar year is celebrated by many communities in

to provide the opportunity for families to celebrate their heritage in a cultural space, connect with other cultures and families, and engage with Asian objects in the Museum’s collection.

This year, RMG will also have a selection of street food vendors outside the Museum, and a Lunar New Year special planetarium show at the nearby Royal Observatory Greenwich.

For full details of all the many fascinating events including performances, demonstrations, music, talks, tours as well as the



East and Southeast Asia, and around the world, with traditions including gifting red envelopes, sweeping the grounds, family reunions, celebratory food, lighting lanterns and fireworks. RMG aims

latest information and the full schedule, visit

<https://www.rmg.co.uk/whats-on/national-maritime-museum/lunar-new-year>

BJWP AGM and Projects to Benefit the Heath

The Blackheath Joint Working Party (BJWP) manages funds that are intended to support projects that would benefit the

OUR BIG THANK YOU PARTY

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heath. Past projects have included: islands on the Prince of Wales pond, wildflower bunds on the edges of the heath, information boards and new bins. A formal call for ideas will be made to the various amenity societies within the next few weeks and will be published in the WN March edition, so time to get thinking. Also, a note for your diaries if you're interested in what's happening on the heath, the BJWP is intending to hold its AGM (the first for two years) on Tuesday 26th March. The date, timing and location will all be confirmed in the March edition. *Mike Norton (Westcombe Society BJWP representative)*

TfL Consultation on A206 Cycleway

As we reported in November, TfL has been consulting on the two-way cycle lane which has been introduced on an experimental basis along the Woolwich Road (A206).

The Westcombe Society responded by welcoming the recognition that parts of the route were dangerous for cyclists and needed to be improved but we also raised concerns about the impact on other road users. We pointed to the context of this relatively narrow, busy main road with many shops and with residential streets on each side and argued that the changes, particularly the loss of a dedicated bus lane, had increased congestion with damaging results. - bus journeys now take longer than previously

- emergency vehicles have been held up because there is nowhere for the traffic to move to clear the road

- air pollution has almost certainly increased at a time when the council is attempting to improve air quality

We also argue that the two-way cycle lane is confusing for pedestrians and drivers and dangerous for bus passengers, particularly those who are less mobile or have young children with them, because they have to cross the cycle lane to reach the pavement. Drivers, as well as cyclists, turning in and out of side roads also have to remember to look both ways for traffic and pedestrians.

Continued on Page 3

Upcoming Closures Of Blackwall Tunnel

Drivers are advised of upcoming closures at the Blackwall Tunnel for southbound traffic during weekends in February, to support works on the northbound carriageway approach for the new Silvertown Tunnel.

Closure Periods: Weekends of 10-12 and 24-26 February.

Closure Time: From 00:01 on Saturday to reopening by 05:00 on Monday.

Southbound traffic will be diverted, and alternative routes are recommended.

HGVs and vans over two metres in

height or two tonnes in weight should consider alternative routes. Route 108 will be split and terminate at Canning Town and North Greenwich. Customers can use the Jubilee line to cross the river and complete their journeys if required.

Additional Traffic Diversion: On the weekend of 24-26 February, northbound traffic will be diverted via Millennium Way from 22:00 on Saturday to 08:00 on Sunday for gantry installation on the A102.

For real-time traffic updates, visit: <https://tfl.gov.uk/traffic/status/>

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Westcombe News

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Cameras to enforce Banned Right Turn at Busy Junction

Concerns about the busy Shooters Hill Road / Stratheden Road junction, which is close to local schools, are to be addressed. Our friends in the Langton Way Association have been advised by Transport for London that it is aware of what have been described as "dangerous manoeuvres" with the long-standing problem of drivers regularly ignoring the banned right turn there.

Deployable Enforcement Cameras are to be used to enforce the banned right turn into Shooters Hill Road travelling north from Prince of Wales Road and the banned right turn via Stratheden Road where vehicles cut round the pavement triangle mostly to continue east along the A2. The plan is for the cameras to be in place within the next few months.

Geoff Brighty

Belated Thanks

The 2023 Westcombe Society Christmas Tree didn't go up in time to make the December issue of



The Westcombe News so this is our first chance to thank everyone involved.

Despite torrential rain and very high winds our lovely tree withstood it all and remained upright and lit throughout the Christmas period. This was in no small way due to the hard work of volunteers Duncan and Mike and we are all very grateful to them for their efforts. We received lovely feedback from residents and children who loved the way the tree lit up the area and added to the festive feel. We are also very grateful to Brown & Brooke Estate Agents for their sponsorship of the Christmas Tree. Thank you.



Letter

Dear Westcombe News, I'm writing in response to the letter from the anonymous pro-LTN supporter (WN – Dec 2023 Edition). Firstly, I write as a pedestrian (one of those people who risk their health and safety dodging cyclists who violate the 1835 Highways Act), who can't drive, thus not a motorist. I also write as someone interested in facts – so here are some from TfL and Census data: 54% of London households have access to a car; 56.9% of Greenwich households have access to a car; 57.7% of Blackheath Westcombe Ward households have access to a car. As we know, Low Traffic Neighbourhood schemes do not reduce traffic volumes – they merely displace traffic, as we witnessed when LTNs were enforced in 2020. As we also know, displacing traffic to what are already congested roads

at peak times will increase congestion, thus increase pollution, given we know "idling" vehicles emit more fumes. Therefore, given we know so-called Low Traffic Neighbourhood schemes do not reduce traffic, nor reduce pollution, they do not help to "save the planet", as their supporters claim. But, what we do know, is that Greenwich Council's plans to close roads in East and West Greenwich will ensure traffic and pollution is displaced from the two wealthiest wards in the London Borough of Greenwich to areas with higher densities of working class people in social housing and lower-income households. It could be suggested that this is the real reason for the so-called Low Traffic Neighbourhood schemes.

Yours,
Trevor Allman

Advertising Manager

The Westcombe News seeks a new advertising manager as the paper goes colour. Tasks in this voluntary position include responding to queries for new ads, invoicing and monitoring payment. Many advertisers pre-pay for future ads, so monthly

invoicing is minimal. Basic spreadsheet skills a bonus but training could be given. Around 7/10 hours over the month would be needed. Please contact Marilyn on Advertising@westcombesociety.org or 07939386215

Royal Parks Apply for Wine Licence at New Vanbrugh Lodge Café

The Royal Parks have applied for a licence to be able to serve wine at the new Vanbrugh Lodge Café, close to the flower garden, whilst the Café is open. The Café will normally close each day around an hour or so before the park closes. Including the later hours in the application means that, on the very few occasions there may be an event, there is the ability to stay open and serve wine. This is also the current arrangement at the Pavilion Café.

The Westcombe Society Quiz

All the world loves a quiz! So, for starters, what is the origin of the word Quiz? Well, the earliest known appearance of the word quiz in print, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), is surprisingly recent—1782—and the word then referred to an odd-looking person. It wasn't until 1867, that the word quiz, specifically applied to a set of questions which were used to evaluate a person's knowledge in an academic context. Fortunately, we didn't need to know the origin of the word quiz, when we took over the Westcombe Society Quiz from



The Westcombe Society Quiz has been held five times since May 2022

Jean Jacques Aune, who had been running it brilliantly for many years. (He couldn't remember how many years when we asked him!) Our first Quiz was in May 2022. We have done a total of five quizzes since then. The process of creating the quiz starts with a meeting in the British Oak, where we discuss the subject headings, and the two picture quizzes. Each of us takes away two subjects to create twenty questions for each. At the second gathering (yes, in the British Oak) we try out our questions on each other and then decide on the final ten for each subject. And we also finalise the picture quizzes. There are many authorities that claim that keeping our brains active is a good way to stave off dementia. We are very happy to maintain the Westcombe Society Quiz as a local public health initiative. The dates for the quiz in 2024 are Saturday April 27th and Saturday November 30th. Peter Conway, Patrick Freestone and Robbie Swales
Westcombe News February 2024

NEIGHBOURHOOD

Continued from Page 1

We would welcome improvements to the Angerstein roundabout which continues to be a dangerous eyesore. Interestingly, From the Murky Depths reports that 'Plans have been submitted to install cycle parking beneath the Blackwall approach flyover at Angerstein roundabout'. It is not clear who would use these hangars since they are not convenient for many local residents, nor close to amenities.

In the submission we suggested a number of improvements if the existing cycleway is to remain. These included: the encouragement of alternative routes for cyclists to avoid the main roads; the increase in raised pavements on side roads to slow traffic; better signage to warn drivers of pedestrian and cycling movements; improvements to traffic islands around bus stops; colour-marking the cycle lane to act as a warning; improvements to the phasing of some traffic lights, particularly around the Angerstein roundabout.

TfL claim that "Cycleway 4 will help connect communities along the route by linking important amenities and facilities." We trust that this is not at the expense of safety, pollution and congestion.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS

www.westcombesociety.org

113 MYCENAE ROAD ref 24/0071/SD
Submissions of details re soft and hard landscaping.
67 COLERAINE ROAD ref 23/4070/HD
To construct single storey rear infill extension.
TREE WORKS
78 FOYLE ROAD ref 24/0083/TC
To fell holly oak in front garden.
61 WESTCOMBE PARK ROAD ref 24/0057/TC
To crown lift horse chestnut in front garden up to 5m and reduce crown by 2-3m, and reduce crown of robinia by 2-3m.
59 VANBRUGH PARK ref 24/0047/TC
To crown reduce height and laterals of sycamore by 2m in front garden.
211 WESTCOMBE HILL ref 24/0022/TC
To fell two sycamores in rear garden.

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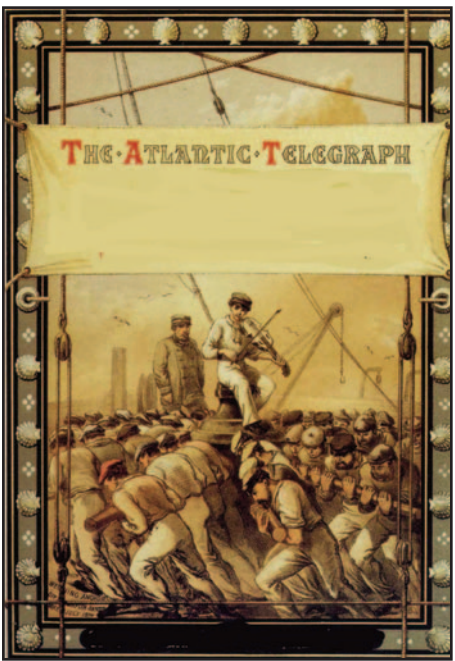
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Greenwich Industrial History Society Talks now available on YouTube

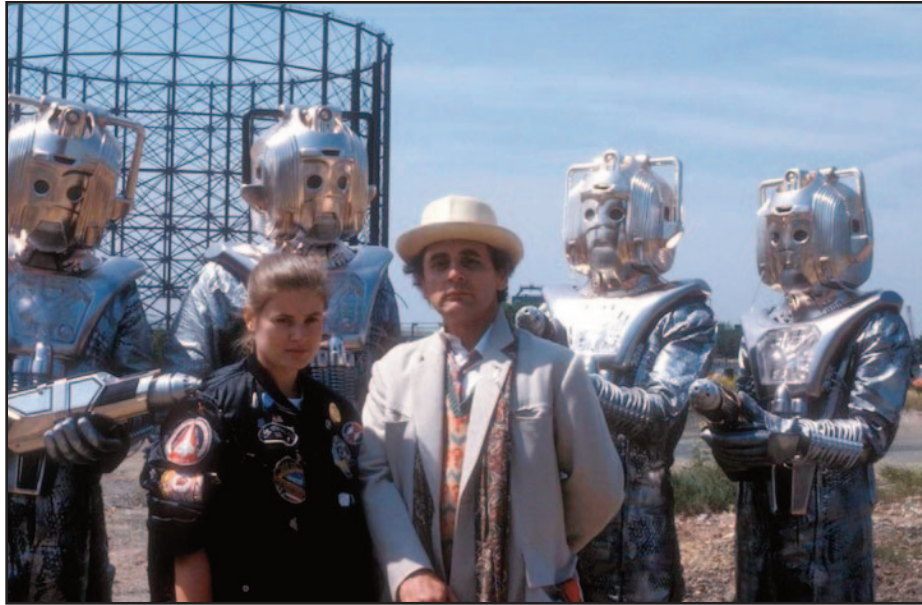
Over the last couple of years the Zoom talks held by the above society have been recorded in order that they could be made available on YouTube. The talks listed below are some of those available now and more will be added soon. Charlton and Woolwich's role in building the Pipeline Under the Ocean (PLUTO) of WW2 - Stewart Ash. How Siemens Operation PLUTO got fuel to the Normandy beachhead in the Second World War. Deptford, Greenwich and the History of Enslavement - Judith



Hibbert & Helen Paul (Museum of Slavery and Freedom). The sad role of our part of London in the trade in enslaved people. Deptford is the original point of departure for the first slaving ships. George England and the Hatcham Locomotive Works - Kevin Robinson. Hatcham Locomotive Works, New Cross was where George England (1812-1885) built six engines for the Ffestiniog Railway. Greenwich and Woolwich became the Birthplace of the Global Telecoms Network - Alan Burkitt-Gray. Workplaces in Greenwich and Woolwich began what is now the global network that lets people communicate by phone, WhatsApp, Facebook and other platforms. Greenwich Marsh to Greenwich Peninsula - 300 years of

regeneration - Mary Mills. The Greenwich Peninsula, now home to the O2, has been the scene of industry for a thousand years. Greenwich Riverside, from Deptford to Charlton - Mary Mills. What do we really know about the Greenwich riverside? How has it evolved and been used over the centuries? Keeping the World Connected, with Greenwich's High-tech Industry - Stewart Ash. About submarine telecommunication cables and the vital role our area has played. Marie Celeste de Casteras Sinibaldi, the undefeated blacksmith of Deptford - Ann Dingsdale. The extraordinary personality of Marie Celeste de Casteras Sinibaldi, whom she calls the "undefeated blacksmith". Peter Marshall's photographs of Greenwich and Docklands history since 1970 - Peter Marshall. Photographing London since the 1970s with a particular interest in industrial and commercial buildings. Progress Estate, Eltham, Munitions Workers' Housing - John McGuinness. The Great War created a need to house the enlarged workforce. The Progress Estate in Eltham, was built in 1915 to house Woolwich Arsenal workers. Royal Greenwich: Archaeological Sites, Past, Present and Future - Mark Stevenson. The Archaeological Advisor to the Borough on sites from the recent past, current sites and as sites soon to see — archaeologists hard at

work. South London's Failed Canals - Alan Burkitt-Gray. There are still remains of canals in south London if you know where to look. Built to connect to the English Channel they ultimately failed, while north London's canals thrive. Tools of Empire? The International Landscapes of the People and Materials of Submarine Telegraphs - Cassie Newland. Deconstruct the cables into their messy constituent parts, and tease out the international landscapes of people and materials linked by them - from the colonial copper-smelters in Chile to the indigenous gutta-percha collectors of Sarawak; and the peasant tar-burners of rural Sweden. Was There Really a Victorian internet? - Bill Burns. Over 170 years of history of communication after the laying of Greenwich-made cables began in the mid-19th century. What about the workers? The Social History of Greenwich Hospital - Jacky Robinson. The Royal Hospital for Seamen, 1705 - 1869, and the nurses and officers who lived and worked there. When Doctor Who and the Cybermen Came to Greenwich - Nigel Fletcher. The 25th anniversary of the TV series 1988 was marked by Silver Nemesis, part-filmed in Greenwich, on the peninsula. These Talks can be accessed at www.youtube.com/@GreenwichIndustrialHistorySoc



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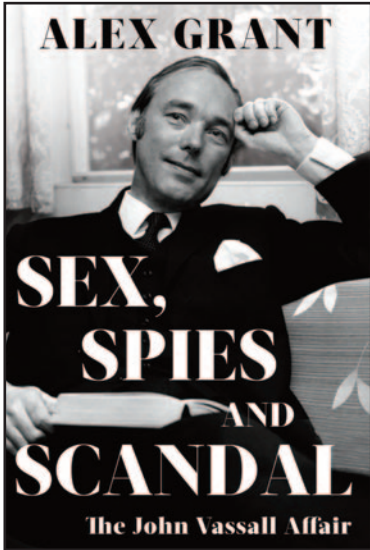
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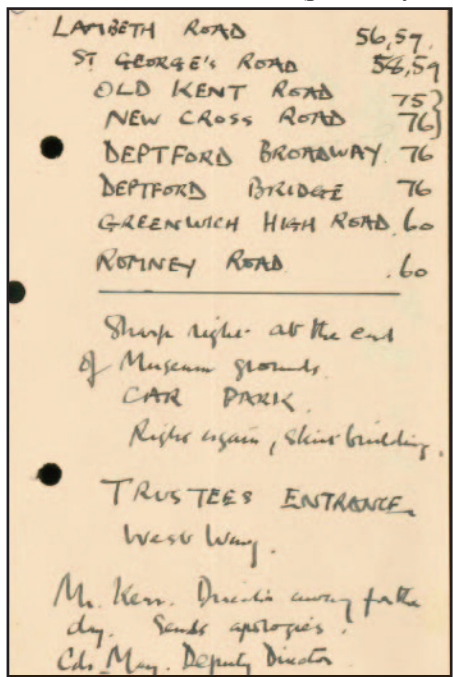
FEATURES

Sex Spies and Scandal: The John Vassall Affair



Alex Grant, who represented the Westcombe area as a Greenwich councillor for nearly two decades, has written a book about John Vassall, a 1960s spy for the Soviet Union, full of new revelations – and an intriguing Greenwich connection. Vassall, a clerk working at the British embassy in Moscow in the mid-1950s, was photographed in compromising positions and then blackmailed into handing British defence secrets over to his Soviet handlers for seven years, until his arrest in London in September 1962. With access to newly released MI5 files, and interviews with people who knew Vassall from the 1950s until his death in 1996, this book sheds new light on a neglected spy scandal. Despite having been drugged and sexually assaulted by the KGB in Moscow, as a gay man Vassall was shown no mercy by the British press or the courts. Sentenced to eighteen years in jail, he served ten years, despite telling MI5 everything. Once released, he found that many of his old friends and lovers had been persecuted or dismissed from the civil service in Britain, America and Australia. Unlike the Cambridge Five, who courted attention, on leaving prison, Vassall changed his name to avoid the media and lived

quietly in London. This is an explosive tale of sexual violence, betrayal, cover-up, snobbery, homophobia and hypocrisy that blows apart some of the British establishment's darkest secrets. It also contains a mysterious connection between Vassall and Greenwich. After Vassall's arrest, MI5 found a sheet of paper inside the back cover of an 'Authentic Atlas' of London, inside his desk at the Admiralty, carrying directions to reach the National Maritime Museum from central London and a reference to 'Mr Kerr, Director' (probably a



misspelling of Frank Carr, who was the NMM's director from 1947 to 1966). When Vassall worked in the private office of an Admiralty minister, Tam Galbraith, in 1957-59 he often arranged for him to make ministerial visits. The document could have been directions for Galbraith's chauffeur, telling him how to reach Greenwich. If so, why was Vassall keeping the document in his London atlas more than three years later? Did Vassall himself visit Greenwich during those years? Captain Adrian Northey, who

Volunteer Rangers in Greenwich Park

London's eight Royal Parks offer 15,000 acres of historic, nature-rich parkland across the capital, and attract millions of people every single year. The Volunteer Ranger service now operates across Greenwich, Richmond, Bushy and The Regent's Parks, with over 200 Volunteer Rangers welcoming and engaging



Photo: The Royal Park

with visitors, offering information and advice about the wildlife, history, and heritage found in these landscapes. Keen to further expand the existing service, The Royal Parks charity once again opened recruitment for Greenwich Park in Autumn 2023. Over 30 passionate people were offered the chance to join the Volunteer Ranger service, and are now undertaking in-park training. Operating on site in pairs, these volunteers aim to inspire and educate some of the five million visitors the iconic Grade 1 listed

landscape gets every year. In addition to guiding people to key amenities, providing facts about the park's fascinating heritage or wildlife, and offering tips on the best walking or cycling routes, the Volunteer Rangers will also be helping to share information to update the public about the exciting developments taking place on site as part of the Greenwich Park Revealed restoration project. Now entering the final phase, this four-year project includes the provision of new community, learning and volunteer facilities, an events and activities programme, and vital works taking place to restore the historic 17th century landscape in the hopes of protecting the park for generations to come.

The new recruits will join the 23 dedicated Volunteer Rangers already active on site, and are able to choose from a range of volunteering sessions across weekdays and weekends that suit their personal schedule. With a primary focus on public engagement, they'll mainly be found in the high foot-traffic areas of the park, such as the Flower Garden, One Tree Hill, The Avenue, the Rose Garden, or manning the recently refurbished Blackheath Kiosk information point. Very easy to spot in their branded orange uniform, if you see a Volunteer Ranger on site please do say hello!

had been Vassall's boss in Moscow in 1955-56, was the director of the Royal Naval College in the early 1960s. Vassall had got along well with Northey, and it is possible that Vassall visited him in Greenwich, though there is no evidence that Northey was aware of, or an accomplice in, his spying. This is a loose end in Vassall's story, and it would be good to know whether he visited Greenwich, and if so why. His known rendezvous points

with Soviet handlers between 1956 and 1962 were mostly in north and west London, not south-east, but maybe he sometimes met the KGB in Greenwich as well?

Alex Grant was a councillor for Blackheath Westcombe ward (previously Vanbrugh ward). The book can be ordered from its publisher, Biteback, at www.bitebackpublishing.com/books/sex-spies-and-scandal.

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FEATURES

Meet your neighbour - Tom Standage – 21st Century Man

Tom Standage, who lives in Westcombe Park, is Deputy Editor of the Economist, and editor of its annual, The World Ahead, which looks at the prospects for 2024.

Neville Grant interviewed him for the Westcombe News.

WN: Are you a local man, Tom?

TOM: Yes, I started life in St John's Park, and my wife grew up in Westcombe Park. I went to Robert Owen Nursery School and Kidbrooke Park Infants, and subsequently won a scholarship to go to Dulwich College.

WN: And university?

obvious?

TOM: Well, the problem was that AI didn't work back then. It's a period now known as the "AI winter". So I pursued a career in journalism instead, because I knew about something else that everyone was suddenly interested in - the internet. I freelanced for a bit, and then in 1994 I ended up at the Guardian, working on its tech supplement, Online. While I was there I also coded the Guardian's first website.

WN: And then you moved on to the Daily Telegraph?

TOM: Yes, there I edited its

up, and citing imaginary sources. But I don't think it's the threat that some people fear. I think it's a positive development.

WN: Why do you say that?

TOM: Well, it can write, but it can't write well. It gives you the average view of the internet. So writers like you and me have nothing to fear on that front, so far at least. But what it's really good for is writing software code. It can make programmers much more productive. Italy blocked ChatGPT for a week for various reasons, and during that week the productivity of its coders fell by half.

WN: So AI generally has a future?

TOM: We're going to need it; as the population ages, we're running out of workers. We'll need AI and robots to fill the gap by boosting productivity.

WN: On the subject of the future, many of your books are about how history repeats itself - that we can learn what is likely to happen in the future by seeing how things developed in the past.

TOM: Yes, that's a consistent theme in my writing. My favourite radio programmes are Melvyn Bragg's In Our Time, and Jonathan Freedland's The Long View.

WN: What about the future of newspapers?

TOM: There has been a big shift away from print media, and this will no doubt continue, but I think there will always be room for print. The majority of new subscribers to The Economist now read it online, but many take the print version as well - simply to get away from the computer screen or mobile phone. For some readers, we're the antidote to digital overload.

WN: There used to be an almost ethical division in the media for separating fact from opinion, but the line is getting blurred. What's your view?

TOM: The Economist is transparent - it makes no secret of its commitment to free market economies, and free people: economic liberalism and social liberalism. The protectionist urge that has been taking over Western economies is very destructive, very unhealthy. In the longer term, it harms productivity and prosperity.

WN: The French economist, Thomas Piketty, argues that economic inequality is increasing

and harms political stability. Why hasn't he had a bigger impact on economic thinking?

TOM: Perhaps because he's wrong. There's a huge debate going on among economists now about whether inequality is in fact falling. But his books are valuable because they opened up the debate about dealing with wealth distribution issues.

WN: And Brexit?

TOM: Brexit was the only time in history when a country imposed trade sanctions on itself!

WN: You have a demanding full-time job - and you have written seven books, and edited more. How do you find the time? Do you ever have any spare time?

TOM: The number of years between each book has been steadily increasing. But my books and my journalism are mutually reinforcing - one feeds into the other. I also enjoy video games and play drums in several bands - including a rock group called Sebastopol, and The Economist's jazz band, which is called The Invisible Hands - a reference to Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations.

WN: What advice would you give to a young person looking for work in journalism?

TOM: It's vital to look at the business model of the company to which you are applying - to see if it is sustainable.

WN: Tom, thank you for your time - and thank you for giving us all so much to think about!

At this point, we ran out of time. But it was fascinating to meet this man, someone fascinated by the past, and yet with a vision of how the future may unfold.



Tom: Worcester College, Oxford. Even then in the late eighties, I was interested in the possibilities of Artificial Intelligence (AI) so I really wanted to study Computer Science.

WN: AI! So you were ahead of the curve, then.

TOM: Yes, I had read too much science fiction! But you couldn't do a degree in Computer Science at Oxford, you could only do it with maths or engineering, so I did Engineering and Computer Science.

WN: The route from engineering to journalism would not have been

technology supplement, Connected.

WN: Next stop, The Economist?

Tom: Right. I didn't think newspaper tech supplements were a good long-term bet, so I applied for a job as science correspondent at The Economist, and I've been there ever since. As well as writing about tech and business I've also had a hand in our digital strategy and developing new digital products.

WN: What do you make of ChatGPT?

TOM: It writes plausibly, though it does have a habit of making things



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ENVIRONMENT

Garden Volunteering: Improve your Well-being in the Great Outdoors

The Friends of Mycenae Gardens ran a great volunteer session toward the end of December, to plant as many of the daffodil bulbs kindly donated by Dr Twist, who wrote the biography of John Julius Angerstein of Woodlands, now the Waldorf School. The gardens will be considerably more cheerful, because of this gift – around a thousand bulbs!

The work made the Friends committee realise that regular volunteer sessions are needed, and the aim is to set up monthly meetings when anyone can come along. What work needs to be done? The wildlife areas behind the



dead hedges will be left untouched, but the gardens closest to Woodlands and Mycenae House need regular pruning, bramble removal and weeding to look their best. Please look on the Friends website (mycenaegardens.org.uk) for

keeping them up. You can find out more by emailing environment@westcombesociety.org. The work is much lighter than at Mycenae Gardens, but the results are appreciated by many who use the station, and it's great fun. In Blackwall Lane, the Christchurch Community Garden runs friendly open sessions on Fridays from 10:30am. The garden is attached to the school, but anyone can come along to drink tea and help with the vegetables and fruit, with the emphasis on sustainable methods. It's a good place to learn techniques for sowing seed and growing food and it has plenty of ornamental shrubs and trees to maintain, too. Greenwichcommunitydirectory.org has contact details.

On a grander scale, the Charlton and Blackheath Amateur Horticultural Society - CABAHS - have been renovating the gardens at Charlton House for several years, and the results are spectacular. Volunteer sessions run on Tuesdays, 2-4pm, and Thursdays, 10-12am. Here, you might be planting the beds and troughs at the front of the Jacobean house, working on the formal Old Pond Garden and the



news and dates; the plan is to alternate Saturdays and Sundays each month. There are other opportunities to garden locally, as well. If you've admired the plantings at Westcombe Park Station, a small group meets on Wednesdays around lunchtime to pick litter, weed the beds, prune shrubs and plant up the beds. These were renovated by Thameslink, but station staff aren't tasked with

Peace Garden, or digging and weeding the Long Borders near the back of the building. No previous experience is needed. You could learn the basics of gardening in the company of others with all sorts of skills. There is a great sense of accomplishment in this work; the gardens were benignly neglected by the Royal Borough of Greenwich team, and now are a real showcase for sustainable improvements and

the spirit of volunteering. The cabahs.com website and Instagram feed are sources of inspiration, too. And on a more muddy note, Westcombe Woodlands run volunteer sessions monthly. This site is more challenging, as it's very steep, but the wilder landscape sustains a big range of life, from tawny owls and small birds like goldcrests, to bats, newts, and bees. Here volunteers maintain pathways and steps, prune, plant trees, and support the site to stay as natural as possible. Its website,

westcombewoodlands.uk, has more information on dates and the fascinating history of the site. This time of year, it's easy to feel assailed by fitness advertising, and to avoid going out into cold weather. Yet studies have shown the benefits of being outdoors and gardening for improving physical and mental health. It can be just as involving as going to a gym, costs less, and helps improve the local area for everyone.

Anne Robbins

Wildflowers in Neglected Places: Your Suggestions

Gardens are an amazing source of nectar for pollinating insects like bumblebees, but many insects are specifically adapted to drawing on wildflowers for their sustenance. Where garden plants have been bred to please humans, with showy heads



of petals or multiple colours, they might be less useful for insects. Inspired by the bunds along the Circus Field and the Heath, which have been sown with a variety of native flowering plants, the

Westcombe Society would like to encourage more wildflowers in the area. But where? There is a surprising amount of potential for planting along verges and other RBG-maintained sites. For instance, the green space where Webb Road meets Coleraine Road might provide benefits from less mowing and more flowering plants.

The Environment Committee would like your suggestions for areas that could support wildflowers around our neighbourhood. Our hope is to persuade the Parks and Open Spaces Department to take a more relaxed view of mowing, and to allow sowing of plants that will help support a wide range of bees, moths, butterflies, and other pollinators. Please get in touch with your ideas; not everywhere will be suitable, but we would like to find a range of possible spots that we could suggest to the council.

You can reach us by email: environment@westcombesociety.org, and perhaps have the pleasure of native blooms in the future.

07510 869947 twhellis@gmail.com

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WHAT'S ON

National Maritime Museum and Queen's House Greenwich

EXHIBITIONS AND DISPLAYS
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, vibrant star trails racing across the night sky, and amazing auroral activity.

Date: Daily
Time: 10.00 – 17.00
Age: Suitable for all ages
Location: National Maritime Museum, Photography Gallery

Feeling Blue
See this major new tapestry commission on display in the Queen's House. Scottish-Barbadian artist Alberta Whittle's Feeling Blue (2023) is collaborative piece woven in Edinburgh by Dovecot Studios.
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
Season of Identity
Royal Museums Greenwich will present a series of activities and creative responses in a new programme 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
LGBTQ+ HISTORY MONTH Out at Sea

Visit the National Maritime Museum for the annual Out at Sea festival, celebrating queer maritime history through the ages.

Date: 17 February 2024
Time: 11.00 – 16.00
Age: Suitable for all ages
Location: National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
Admission: Free

Cutty Sark
EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES
Talking Tea: Café Culture in Contemporary London

Join tea devotee Jonathan Nunn and caff connoisseur Isaac Rangaswami in a discussion on the enduring symbolism of tea as an emblem of comfort, conversation, and hospitality, and the role of the café in the changing metropolis of a rapidly gentrifying London.

Date: 8 February 2024
Time: 19.00 – 20.30
Age: Suitable for ages 18 and above
Location: Cutty Sark
Admission: £10
www.rmg.co.uk/cutty-sark

Greenwich Historical Society Spring Lectures

EMINENCE GRISE: E.H. LOCKER AND THE RE-INVENTION OF MARITIME GREENWICH, 1819-1844

28 February
Dr Pieter van der Merwe, MBE, DL
From 1819 until his retirement in 1844, Edward Hawke Locker (1777–1849) was first Secretary and then resident civil commissioner of Greenwich Hospital. A man of wide talent and influence, Locker not only established the Naval Gallery in the Hospital's Painted Hall – the first 'national' public art collection – but also masterminded the rebuilding of Greenwich for increased benefit to the welfare aims of the Hospital as the town's principal landholder. Find out more by attending these great Greenwich meetings:
Trafalgar Tavern, Park Row, Greenwich, SE10 9NW. 730pm. All Welcome! GHS Members free, visitors £3.<https://www.ghsoc.co.uk/>

February Half Term Fun at Woodlands Farm



Get Wild in the Woods
Wednesday 14th February
10am-12pm and 1pm-3pm
Booking essential, £6 per child
This activity is for children over 6 years only.

Crazy about Chickens!
Thursday 15th February
11am–3pm
£4 per child
No need to book, just drop in
Make a Willow Crown.

Friday 16th February
Sessions at 10am and 11.30am
Booking essential, £4 per child
Visit: www.thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org for more information and booking
For more information, please contact us: education@thewoodlandsfarmtrust.org or 020 8319 8900. Parking is limited, so please use public transport where possible.

Westcombe Society

OUR BIG THANK YOU PARTY!
Do join us from 7pm on February 17 at Mycenae House to celebrate our wonderful members and helpers and all the ways they sustain the work of The Westcombe Society. A warm welcome and a light meal. To book call Caroline on 020 8853 0948.

Royal Observatory

Many events and activities on this month, please visit: www.rmg.co.uk/royal-observatory

Arts Society Greenwich

www.theartsocietygreenwich.org.uk
The Story of the Fourth Plinth
Monday 12 Feb 2024 at 7.30 pm



Lecturer: Rosalind Whyte
Venue: James Wolfe Primary School, Royal Hill, Greenwich
Annual membership: £55 (10 lectures).
Guests very welcome: £10
Originally intended to house an equestrian statue of William IV, the Fourth Plinth in London's Trafalgar Square lay empty due to lack of funds for many years. Eventually, it was decided to use it for what has been described as 'the smallest but most prominent sculpture park in the world'. Find out more in this fascinating lecture.
<https://theartsocietygreenwich.org.uk/>

St Paul's Sinfonia

Local, talented, professional orchestra, St. Paul's Sinfonia, monthly concerts
Friday 16 February 2024 at 7.30 p.m. St Alfege Church, Greenwich.
Haydn Symphony No. 24
Alice Mary Smith
Andante for Clarinet and Orchestra
Ed Hughes Clarinet Concerto 'Sky Blue' Schumann
Symphony No. 1 'Spring' Alison Hughes clarinet
Andrew Morley conductor
<https://www.stpaulssinfonia.com/concerts/>

Greenwich Poetry Workshop

Welcomes new members to its weekly sessions which alternate between live meetings at Mycenae House and zoom meetings from home. In this long standing mixed group we share and critique each others' work, with an average weekly attendance of 8-12 and membership of up to 16. Also monthly tutorial sessions are led by a number of established, published poets. Members can access some or all of the sessions as required.
Our fees are £3 per session attended, plus a termly fee of £5. Reduced fees are available as needed.
For further details please e-mail - doreen.hinchliffe@ntlworld.com

Greenwich Theatre



Shakespeare Schools Festival
February 24th
Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation is proud to present the world's largest youth drama festival at Greenwich Theatre.

Anna Fiorentini Theatre School's Variety Performance 24
Students aged 4 – 18 that attend the Saturday School in Greenwich, will perform a variety of musical theatre, dance and song numbers ranging from traditional to contemporary. Many of the performers have worked professionally in the industry while many others simply attend to increase in confidence, self-esteem and transferable life skills.
Visit: www.afperformingarts.com

Feel Me
Feel Me is a new interactive theatre show from The Paper Birds, UK leaders in devised verbatim theatre. Feel Me asks, via your mobile phone, who and what you care about from the stories unfolding live on stage in front of you.
greenwichtheatre.org.uk/whats-on/

Greenwich Get Walking

Greenwich Get Walking delivers a number of free, guided walks across Royal Greenwich. The walks take place in some of the best locations the Borough has to offer and they are a real adventure.
No booking required, just come along and improve your health and fitness, make friends and explore your local area!
Call the Live Well Community Hub: 0800 470 4831 or email: robin.sneddon@cact.org.uk

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Visit: <https://ornc.org/plan-a-visit/talks-and-tours/>

MARKET PLACE

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TUITION

PIANO TUITION
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