

WestcombeNEWS



Free to 3800 homes, in libraries and shops and online

February 2026 No 1

'The day lengthens, the cold strengthens'

Railway News

Increase in passenger numbers supports a more frequent service

The station usage figures for 2024/25 were published just before Christmas and show a continuing increase in the number of passengers travelling by train. The figures are only estimates but do demonstrate trends. In 2024/25 Westcombe Park is estimated to have had a total of 931,670 entries and exits, and Maze Hill 1,397,904; an increase in each case of 12% over 2023/24. The number of passengers using Maze Hill is now higher than the level pre-Covid, although Westcombe Park remains lower. Nevertheless, total numbers are now higher than in 2010/11 when the daytime 10-minute frequency of services was first introduced. This service frequency was lost during Covid; it was re-introduced at peak times in 2024 and there is now a strong case for its re-introduction during the day. A regular train service every ten minutes is what a good "turn up and go" metro service should be. The case for a more frequent daytime service is being pressed with Southeastern.

A delay in new trains

At a time when passenger numbers are increasing, it is disappointing news that there has been a delay in the procurement of new trains to replace the ageing fleet of Networkers that are now over 30 years old. The tender for a new train fleet was first issued in 2022, but there is now a re-tender with a

different scope. Revised bids have been sought to accommodate what has been described as "minor changes" to the Southeastern requirement following feedback from potential suppliers. It is not known what these changes are, but commentators have speculated it has something to do with the proposed provision of batteries so that trains can keep running in the event of a power failure.

The 2022 tender notice anticipated the new fleet being introduced from October 2027. It is now unlikely that any new trains will arrive before the end of the decade. Meanwhile, perhaps not surprisingly, the reliability of the Networker fleet has fallen significantly and this has given Southeastern a maintenance headache, which is the reason these trains tend to be used mainly at peak time.

Change to services whilst maintenance takes place at Dartford during half term week.

From 14 February to 22 February the line between Slade Green and Gravesend will be closed to enable major track and platform works to be carried out at Dartford. There will be no changes to Southeastern services on this line, but Thameslink services will terminate at Plumstead. The Thameslink service will remain half-hourly during the week but will be reduced to hourly at weekends.

Mike Sparham

Contact:

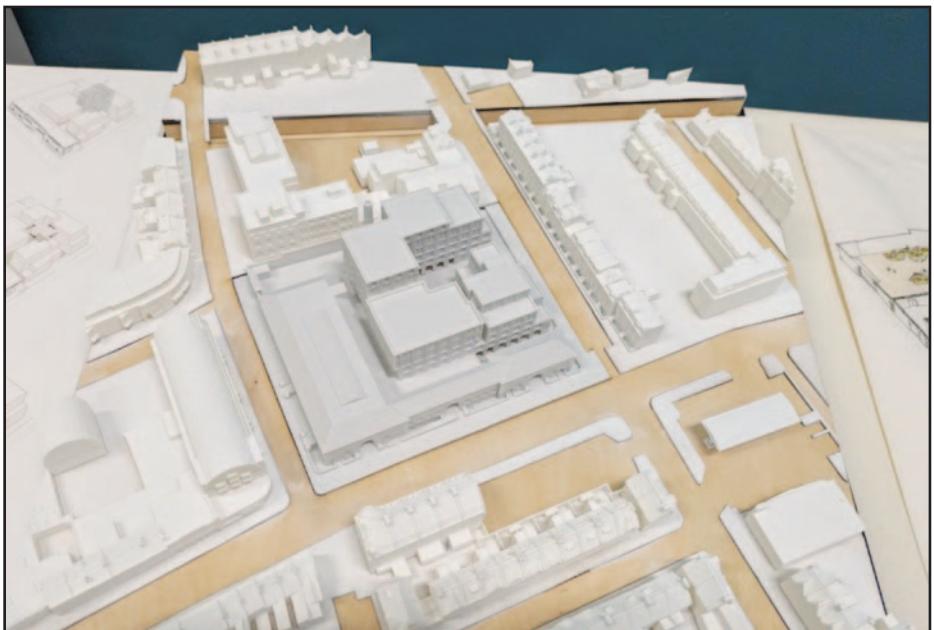
greenwichline@outlook.com

The Future of the Arches

The Arches on Trafalgar Road has been abandoned and neglected since it closed as a public swimming bath. There has been a bathhouse on the site since the 1850s, although the current building is only 100 years old. It was originally used as a washhouse and bathhouse for people who lived in the neighbourhood in small terraced houses without bathrooms. After the end of World War 1 it became inadequate for the needs of the local population and a new building was erected. In 2015 the Council sold the site.

thinking and to inspect plans and models

The new development is to retain the frontages along Trafalgar Road and Maze Hill and will have an educational purpose with lecture theatres and meeting spaces. There are plans for a central courtyard with shops and some housing. The south western part of the site would be redeveloped with slightly taller buildings than the current ones but these would be set back from the frontage. The street frontage to the west will feature arches that replicate the style of the arched doorways on



Model of proposal for The Arches showing frontage on Trafalgar Road with Maze Hill to the left

The Greenwich Society recently organised a meeting at which members could view the plans drawn up by the developer and the architect. There was a healthy turnout for the early December presentation of those proposals for the future of the Arches. Members of the Westcombe Society Environment Committee joined with residents to hear from the architects and developers about their current

the north and east frontage. There were concerns about the height of some of the proposed new buildings but generally the plans seemed to be broadly welcomed and the need to bring the building, sympathetically, back in to use is uppermost in many locals' minds. It seems the proposals remain at a relatively early stage with a planning application still to be submitted. One to keep an eye on.

Mycenae House *Live* 2026

Friday 13 Feb **The SWOP Sessions**
Friday 20 Feb **Chinese New Year (GFMA)**
Friday 6 Mar **UKEDELIX** Isobel Jane Kimberley & Raie (for Int. Womens Day)
Friday 20 Mar **St Patricks Day (GFMA)**
Friday 27 Mar **NICK HARPER**
Friday 10 Apr **The SWOP Sessions**
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Winners will receive book tokens, will be invited to read at an event, and will have their poems shared with the community.

ENTER ONE OR TWO POEMS
BY 23:59 SATURDAY 28 FEBRUARY

JUDGED BY JACK COOPER AND REPRESENTATIVES OF
THE FRIENDS OF GREENWICH PARK COMMITTEE

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk/Greenwich-Park-Poetry-Competition

The Friends of Greenwich Park is a charity registered with the Charity Commission (No 1029933)

WESTCOMBE SOCIETY

Westcombe News

PUBLISHER
The Westcombe Society
c/o 163 Westcombe Hill, SE3 7DP or
info@westcombesociety.org

CHAIR: Geoff Brighty

EDITOR: Christine Fells

EDITORIAL TEAM /
CONTRIBUTORS

Marilyn Little
Polly Morgan
Amanda Arthur
Helen Marley-Hutchinson
Anne Robbins
Ann Hill
Diane Blackwell

ALL EDITORIAL
CORRESPONDENCE/PRESS
MATERIAL TO BE SENT TO:
wnews@westcombesociety.org
Deadline for March Copy –
13th February 2026

SUB EDITOR
Annie Grey

ENVIRONMENT
Editor: Maggie Gravelle
All comments and queries to
Emily Norton: 0208 853 2756
environment@westcombesociety.org

ADVERTISING MANAGER
Marilyn Little
advertising@westcombesociety.org
Deadline for March Advertising –
16th February 2026

DISTRIBUTION/DELIVERY
Emily Norton and volunteers
Tel: 0208 853 2756
info@westcombesociety.org

PRINTING
Trojan Press.
Email: info@trojanpress.co.uk
www.trojanpress.com

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4 x standard	£138	£620

Marking the Tercentenary of Sir John Vanbrugh's Death

A talk on Sir John Vanbrugh is being arranged for late April. This is a joint event with the Greenwich Historical Society, Blackheath Society, Greenwich Society and Westcombe Society. It will be held in the Wilson Room at the Trafalgar Tavern.

2026 marks the tercentenary of the death of John Vanbrugh, the playwright-turned-architect who designed Castle Howard and Blenheim and, of course, Vanbrugh Castle was built by him - as a rural retreat for himself, his new wife and their family in the early 1720s. Charles Saumarez Smith, former Director of the National Gallery, has written a biography John Vanbrugh: The Drama of Architecture and will be giving a talk at Trafalgar Tavern on Vanbrugh and Greenwich. Architectural historian Neil Bingham will introduce Saumarez Smith.



Christmas Tree

Once again we thank Brown and Brooke, Estate Agents for sponsoring the Westcombe Society Christmas Tree.

Thanks are also due to Mike for helping with the stabilizing of the tree after the strong winds in December and Amanda for her help with the decoration. The tree was a little taller this year and the Royal Standard assisted with the loan of suitable step ladders! The removal of the decorations and lights was done with the help of Robin Akam.

REMINDER - Members' Standing Orders

Please check your annual member's standing order - membership increased from May 2024. The 2026 payment due should show:

Family/Household £15.00

Individual £12.00

Concession £6.00

Many thanks for your help - Membership Secretary

Pat Dodson RIP



We are very sorry to report the death of Pat Dodson. With her husband, Les, she was a founder member of the Westcombe Society, which, along with others including John Bolland, John and Ida Petty, Tom Crowe and John Ayling, warden of the local community centre, Kidbrooke House (since renamed Mycenae House), was established to serve the local community. Other founder members included Ida and John Petty - John was Transport Correspondent of the Daily Telegraph.

The winter of 1973 was bitterly cold, and local residents were shocked to discover that an old man had died alone in Humber Road

after succumbing to the elements. Concerned that such a thing could happen in the midst of our community, John Ayling convened a meeting at Kidbrooke House, with the aim of encouraging residents to look out for their neighbours.

What started as a local Humber Road group quickly became a fully independent community and amenity group, the Westcombe Society, with Tom Crowe as its first chairman. John Petty took over as editor of the Westcombe News. Another founder member, Anna Townend, became an active environmental campaigner.

The 40th anniversary of the Westcombe Society took place in 2013, attended by all the founder members still with us at that time - among them, Pat Dodson. Pat was heavily involved in organising many different events for the Westcombe Society, and it is for her efforts, and those who worked with her, that we must be thankful to have our wonderful community organisation.

Neville Grant

School Governor Sought

The John Roan Foundation, a charity founded in 1677, today funds extra-curricular activities at The John Roan School, donating several thousand pounds annually. The Trustees of the Foundation wish to appoint a School Governor and are interested to discover whether a local person would like to take on this role.

The John Roan School is part of United Learning Trust. More details can be found at www.thejohnroanschool.org.uk Local governors contribute to the overall governance of the school. They are critical friends of the school bringing their expertise to help the school achieve its aims by offering critique and support, helping leaders make better decisions.

This is a rewarding role where individuals can make a real difference. You will have the opportunity to help improve the

lives of young people, holding leaders to account as you join their school improvement journey. You will be valued as part of a team and you may have the opportunity to gain new skills through liaison with school staff and students, negotiation, decision making, chairing and by being part of the school community.

If you are interested in being considered for this role please contact Dr Jennie Sanderson – Principal - at Jennie.Sanderson@thejohnroanschool.org.uk

The Vanbrugh Ensemble



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19:30
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Purcell The Fairy Queen Suite
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Méhul Symphony No 1 in G Minor

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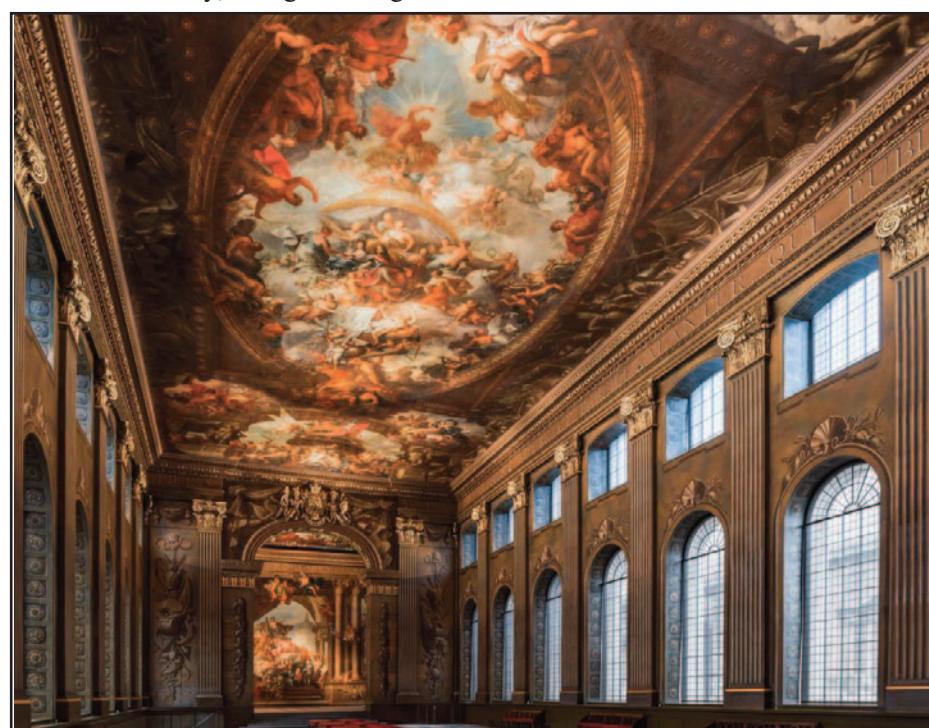
Old Royal Naval College Painted Hall celebrates 300-year anniversary! A huge milestone

The Painted Hall has been described as the 'Sistine Chapel of the UK' – and is celebrating its anniversary with some stunning events of culture, wellbeing and wonder.

The Painted Hall will also once again play host to the romantics amongst us with their Valentine's Day luxury fine dining experience; while new for this year is a Tea Ceremony, designed to guide

taking installation Peace Doves. Alongside this, Walker will also return with a new Luxmuralis light installation in November, marking the start of the winter season.

As the UK's number one heritage filming location, they will continue to champion film and TV culture following our celebration of 100 Years of Film. Go to <https://ornc.org/whats-on> for more information and tickets.



you on a tea-tasting journey. Also returning to the Painted Hall are their ever-popular wellness offerings: Feel Good Fridays and Lie Down and Listen, offering the chance to rest, reflect and rejuvenate under the celestial ceiling through yoga and sound healing. Their new partnership with the London House of Wellbeing brings new wellbeing activities, which will culminate in an all-new full-day Wellbeing Retreat in September 2026.

Autumn will see Peter Walker return to the Painted Hall, with his breath-

New for this year is a series of film masterclasses – designed and delivered in partnership with the University of Greenwich. These masterclasses will provide an opportunity to hear first-hand from leading experts who have helped bring the likes of Bridgerton to our screens. While their Film Tours: Wigs, Weddings, Powder and Palaces and Spies, Sleuths and Superheroes, both offer behind-the-scenes access to iconic shoot locations and cinematic secrets. Go to <https://ornc.org/whats-on> for more information and tickets.



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Way to Go

The only bug worth catching at this time of year is the travel bug. And, lucky us, as if by magic, C The World travel agency has popped up at The Standard with travel agent Matt Purser and his team ready to send us packing wherever our dreams and budgets desire.

Industry veteran Matt been in the travel business 30 years and has lived in Blackheath for 20 years. He opened for business a week before Christmas and the footfall into C The World was brisk from the start. He's been pleasantly surprised by the number of enquiries and bookings already, but knows from experience that building trust and reputation over time is key.



Travel agencies are enjoying a resurgence as travellers tire of the hours spent online, the booking hassles and the disappointments.

“Aspirational” travel is the current trend, Matt says. Holidaymakers seeking adventures in far-flung places, where exploring, not sunning by a pool, is the way to go. It could include staying with a local family to learn more about their culture or touring around a country, taking in its varied history and traditions. Sri Lanka, Japan and Southern Africa are popular right now.

Matt works with specialist operators, so whether it's a safari in Zimbabwe, a trek around Sicily, a walking holiday in the Lake District, a Bridge (the card game) holiday in Italy, a train trip through Canada or

a ski holiday away from the traditional hot spots, there's not a destination or type of holiday C The World can't rustle up for you.

And there's the other compelling reason for using an experienced travel agent you trust. Matt and the C The World team – Cara, Sam and Sharon, who are all very well-travelled themselves - will look after you from start to finish, organising visas, injections etc. A client with her husband and daughter headed out to Finland and Lapland in early January. She fell ill and had to have an operation. C The World organised a hotel near the hospital for her family and then arranged for them to join the trip again. A support network like this is gold.

Matt offers a 24-hour help line, his own mobile number, and will get on the case any time of the day or night.

Another popular travel trend at the moment is going to off the beaten track to places where contestants on the TV show Race Across the World have been.

Solo holidays are also on the up. For instance, one member of a family may decide to join a small tour group on their own. Groups of 10-12 like-minded people doing themed tours is also back in fashion. Matt points out that years ago, travel was an extra, a special treat; now it's a necessity with people feeling they deserve to get away.

Diane Blackwell

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FEATURES

Meet your neighbour: Ed Mayo MBE

Local resident Edward Mayo, described by the *Guardian* as 'a key figure in social innovation' and 'one of the 100 most influential people in Britain,' has been awarded an MBE in the 2026 New Year's Honours List for his contribution to charitable service. Neville Grant interviewed him for the *Westcombe News*.

NG: Ed, many congratulations on this well-deserved award! Tell me about yourself.



EM: I have lived in the area since 1997 and love it. I was born across town, in Wimbledon, to a family with its origins in Dorset. At university, I studied philosophy at Downing College, Cambridge. There, I signed up to help with the student Rag – raising money by mud wrestling with a fellow student, Kate. In my second year, I took on the organisation of the whole programme, along with John Penrose, who subsequently became a Tory MP. We raised a record £50,000 for charity.

NG: You then went on to the City University Business School?

EM: It was an Honorary Fellowship. I was doing research on how to measure the effectiveness of charities.

NG: Then in 2007, you were awarded an honorary doctorate at London Metropolitan University. What was your first job?

EM: I was a computer programmer at Anderson Consultants. But at the same time, I was also a volunteer for the international charity War on Want, at a local level to begin with and ending up a trustee at the national level.

NG: And so you then joined the World Development Movement, where you became acting director. How did the WDM define 'development'?

EM: At the time, bodies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund defined it as more money in the economy. We campaigned successfully, with others, to broaden this by looking at indicators of progress that tracked human health and environmental quality.

NG: You then moved on to the New Economics Foundation in 1992. There you became the director. In your, what, ten years with NEF, staff numbers went from 2 to fifty. What did the NEF stand for?

EM: In the simplest terms, NEF explored how to reorganise economic life to benefit more people and come into environmental balance.

NG: You've written several books and pamphlets. One caught my eye - *The Mutual State*. What was that about?

EM: Basically, involving people in

delivering public services. Take water companies. Privatisation of the UK water industry has been a costly disaster. What could be done? Take Eau de Paris: in Paris, water is delivered by a non-profit organisation, with the public participating in the ownership. Water is cheap, dependable, and if any money is made, it gets ploughed back not to shareholders, but to improving the service.

NG: All this time, you also acted as a volunteer as Chair of the Jubilee 2000 debt campaign, later renamed Drop the Debt.

EM: Yes, a petition I kick-started ended up attracting twenty-four million signatures. As a result, we did win international support to cut the crippling payments that the poorest countries in the world were making on their debts. In Tanzania, for example, as debt was reduced, school enrolments went up.

NG: Then in 2003 you became chief executive of the National Consumer Council.

EM: Yes, and I merged this with energy and postal service campaigns, but this organisation, a voice for consumers at the heart of government, was axed after I left by the Coalition government of 2010-2014.

NG: In 2009 you became Secretary General of Co-operatives UK. A good move?

EM: Certainly was. Co-operation and a sense of the common good make so much difference. It is one reason why Greenwich is such a great place to live: there are so many community-based initiatives - local charities, Riding for the Disabled, the Winter Night Shelter, Greenwich and Bexley Hospice; the list goes on. I am delighted that our local energy co-op, SELCE, has put solar panels on the roof of Invicta Primary School, where our children went, just round the corner from the Standard.

NG: Your last post?

EM: I was running Pilotlight, which works with businesses to bring their staff in to give expert support for charities. This is a tough time for charities. And the country needs them!

NG: Ed will tell you that he has now retired - but don't you believe it. His work as a volunteer continues. He continues to be a Trustee of numerous organisations, from Charity Excellence to the Parochial Church Council in East Greenwich; he is also Chair of Chair of RUSS, a community housing project in Lewisham – and is an active member of the congregation of St George's Church in Glenluce Road. An example to us all. Thank you, Ed Mayo, MBE, for all you have done, and are doing!

EM: Thank you for having me, as they say on the Beeb!

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Wedding Receptions at Mycenae House

Picture the scene: your wedding reception's in full fabulous swing when, an hour before the cake cutting ceremony, it's discovered that the wedding planner forgot to order a cake.

Such was the drama at a Mycenae House reception. Faster than you could say meltdown, staff rushed out and bought two cakes and worked such speedy decorating magic that no-one knew it was a hastily improvised cake.



Mycenae House hosts about a dozen wedding receptions a year, mostly between March and September, but any time of the year too.

The fun begins with the happy couple "designing" their party; it's bespoke and therefore allows for plenty of creative expression and freedom. The key words are fluid, flexible and informal. You may, for instance, have an Indian bride and an Irish groom who want to blend their cultures and traditions into a colourful melting pot of food, decorations, music and outfits.

Manager Mark Johnson-Brown says: "We're delighted when we've been able to enhance the experience, whether it be making the gardens available as well as the Main Hall; providing a quiet space for the bride to change her outfit, or providing somewhere for the kids to play."

Once the Main Hall is booked a couple is given a 12-page questionnaire to complete so staff have an idea what the reception will look like. Bride and groom are responsible for catering, table decorations and music. Mark and his wedding team (Anna, Stefan, Julia, Maji and Christine) provide lists of suppliers they work with, liaise with wedding planners and assist with

things like the sound system, lighting and setting up tables and chairs. They love the spontaneity, exuberance and uniqueness of each and every reception, but are always ready to troubleshoot because we're talking informal and fluid and while the results are mostly joyous celebrations. If arrangements are in the hands of someone who's not organised anything before, things can get tricky.

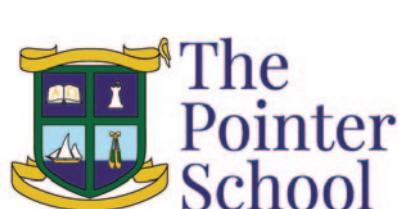


There are the outfit dramas which are swiftly sorted by Maji, who keeps a "first aid" stash of needles, thread and glue in her desk drawer for the gowns and bras that need emergency attention. The father of one bride was in shoes he'd not worn for 20 years and the soles fell off. Staff discreetly glued them back on.

Food can be cooked on the premises by caterers or brought in. At one reception, three courses were ordered from three different caterers, but no one thought to also organise serving utensils. Another party saw soup ordered in for 90 guests, but no soup bowls. We don't carry that many of anything, but we gave them what we had," says Mark.

Testimonials are all about the lovely building and the kind, attentive staff. But one comment really sums it all up: "It was great celebrating our day in a venue that does so much for its community."

For more details about weddings at Mycenae House, please call Anna on 020 8858 1749.



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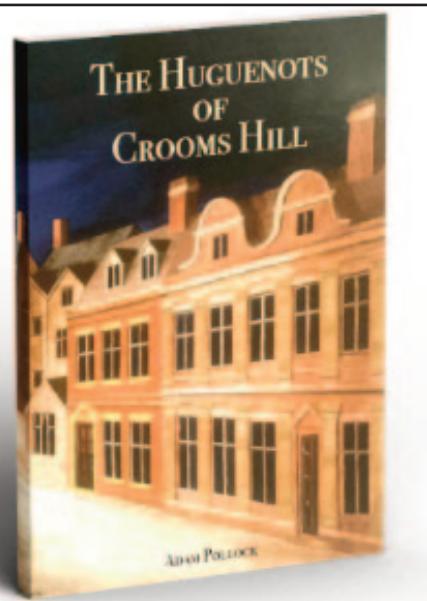
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FEATURES

Book Review: The Huguenots of Crooms Hill By Adam Pollock



Long before St Bartholomew's day in 1572, when many thousands of Protestant men, women and children were massacred on the streets of Paris and other cities in France, the French have taken up residence in England. In 1517, Sir Thomas More, then deputy mayor of London, put down an anti-French riot, as treated in Shakespeare's play Sir Thomas More. In his book The Huguenots of Crooms Hill, Adam Pollock reminds us that in 1550, King Edward VI allowed a mediaeval chapel in Threadneedle Street to be adapted as a French Church, where the Bible - in French, banned in Catholic France - could be used.



The massacre of the Huguenots in 1572 is by François Dubois. Musée Cantonal des Beaux Arts, Lausanne

Nevertheless, not counting the Norman invasion of 1066, the 1570s saw the first big wave of French immigrants - and many of them came to Greenwich to escape persecution. If captured, Protestant heretics, if they were not killed,

ended up as galley slaves; women were clapped into nunneries. The refugees came from all classes of society - from aristocrats - who to escape, sometimes stained their skins with walnut juice to disguise themselves as peasants - to craftsmen such as goldsmiths, watchmakers, and silk-weavers. One Huguenot immigrant became a Field Marshall and commander-in-chief of the British Army, serving under Marlborough in all his great battles; General Wolfe (of Quebec) whose statue stands in Greenwich Park, served under him.



The Draggonade 'missionary' forcing a Protestant to abjure (anon) French National archives.

The Huguenots of Crooms Hill by Adam Pollock is an invaluable addition to the list of books and publications documenting local history. This book is about the people, and the houses they lived in. The Huguenot immigrants were themselves an invaluable addition to English society, for they brought crafts, and entrepreneurial enterprise with them, making a big contribution to the local economy.

They also brought music: prominent among the newcomers were the Lanier family, who lived in 16-18 Crooms Hill - then, one house. They were brought over by Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, to become court musicians. His hope was that by doing so, the queen would forgive him for 'seducing a virgin of the blood royal' - (Lady Katherine Gray), whom he secretly married, without permission, in December 1560.

Nicholas Lanier was an accomplished flautist; a brother played the Sackbut (an early version

of a trombone.) Many of their fellow musicians came from the continent: they included French, Dutch, Italian - and a Jewish family, the Bassanos, originally exiled from Portugal, who performed for the Doge of Venice before being headhunted to perform in the court of Henry VIII.

to be sent to La Providence, the French Hospital, then at Finsbury. This is probably the inspiration for Lewis Carroll's Mad Hatter.

This book, The Huguenots of Crooms Hill, is packed full of interesting information about important events and people who have lived and worked in



The Savary House on Rooms Hill (now demolished) is by Richard Bate 1839 The Blackheath Society

A grandson of Nicolas Lanier, John's son, also named Nicholas, became an English composer and musician who became the first to hold the title of Master of the King's Music. One of the other Lanier sons, Alfonso, married Emily Bassano, sometimes thought to have been Shakespeare's Dark lady of the Sonnets, who had been mistress to the cousin of the queen.

Another Huguenot immigrant, Antoine de Teulon, a hatter and felt-maker, fled to England from Nimes, coming to Greenwich in 1689, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1683, when King Louis XIV inflicted his Dragonnades on Huguenots families. His son became a hat maker and started to use mercury to stiffen the felt used in making what we now call top hats. Unfortunately, one of the side effects of mercury poisoning can drive people demented when breathing in the fumes, and he had

Greenwich. It is beautifully written, copiously illustrated - colour and black and white - and very well researched. It is such a pity that since the closure of the Greenwich Heritage Centre in Woolwich, local history has become very hard to research. The Greenwich archives have become very difficult to access, as they are only sporadically open in a tin hut down by the Thames. The Royal Borough deserves better than this. To write this book, Adam Pollock had to go to the National Archives in Kew, the Metropolitan Archives, and various sources online. He also refers readers to a very full Bibliography at the back of the book. Written in a beautiful Huguenot house, this book is a labour of love, and readers will love it.

This book is obtainable by emailing adamallan377@hotmail.com.

Neville Grant is the author of *Shakespeare in an Age of Anxiety* (Greenwich Exchange 2023)

Advertorial Choosing the Right Primary School

Blackheath High School GDST's Head of Early Years, Lizzie Riordan, shares her top tips.

Choosing a primary school is one of the most important decisions a parent can make and knowing where to begin can feel overwhelming. The early years lay academic foundations as well as emotional, social and cognitive skills that last a lifetime.

Look beyond results. Academic outcomes matter, but they are only part of the picture. Visit schools, observe lessons and talk to teachers and pupils. Are children curious, confident and engaged? Do lessons feel purposeful and enjoyable? The strongest primary schools balance literacy and numeracy with creativity, independence and problem-solving, helping children develop a genuine love of learning.

Pastoral care is vital. Children thrive when they feel safe, known and supported. Warm relationships, visible kindness and clear wellbeing systems create the security pupils need to build confidence and resilience. A school's culture matters just as much as its curriculum.

Enrichment and environment. A broad co-curriculum and inspiring spaces help children discover interests. Research also shows that girls-only settings can offer particular advantages, with pupils more likely to speak up, take intellectual risks and explore STEM subjects without stereotypes.

Think long-term and trust your instincts. A great primary school doesn't simply prepare children for the next stage of education; it helps shape who they become.

Blackheath High School GDST is hosting a Reception taster morning on

10 February for families considering entry in September 2026. The event offers a chance to experience lessons, meet staff and pupils, and see school life first-hand.

Booking details are available at blackheathhighschool.gdst.net/reception.



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ENVIRONMENT

Advancing Mycenaee Gardens

Last summer, Friends of Mycenaee Gardens registered for the London in Bloom competition. Like hundreds of other parks and gardens across the city, we braced ourselves for being judged. In our case, we entered the 'It's Your Neighbourhood' category, the most appropriate because of the wonderful involvement of local people, from dog-walkers to kids and parents to our volunteers. We were delighted to receive our certificate, late in the year, with a very respectable 'Advancing' award. The judge was very kind about the work that's been going into the Gardens, though she noted the wear and tear on the lawn areas. Not surprisingly, Royal Greenwich Park beat us: it won the top prize, deservedly.

wildlife area, too. Council staff will be drilling in a new set of fence posts, which will extend the dead hedging a little further into the park. The old piles of branches will either be moved into the new space or left to reduce naturally, giving homes for all sorts of insects. Beetles especially love decaying wood, and we hope to find stag beetles next summer. Between the old piles and the new set of stakes, we'll be planting some native hedging species, which will produce pollen and berries to support bird and insect life. And you might even recognize your old Christmas tree in the new dead hedge! Volunteers collected at least fifty from around the area, before the green bin waste was collected at the beginning of January. While the work to build the new hedge goes



There's much to improve, of course. The planting we did last winter and spring is maturing. After the tough summer, we're hoping not to find many losses. Users will see that the meadow area, fenced off behind the Waldorf School, has been rotovated. We plan to sow that with wildflower seed, probably in April after the last frost, and it should be blooming around the end of June. And daffodils are already poking their noses through.

We have plans to enhance the

on, there will be some barrier mesh fencing. This won't look pretty, but we need to keep dogs and humans away from the new plantings while they take root.

The next volunteer session will be Saturday 28th February, 10:00-12:30ish. We welcome all abilities. You can simply come along to find out more about what we're working on, but if you like to get stuck in, there will be some planting, some pruning, and some cake!

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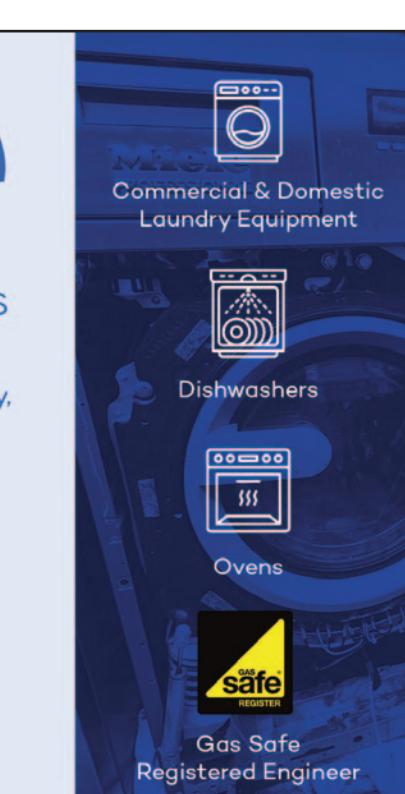
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Endangered! Avery Hill Winter Garden

Our local Kew Gardens is only a step away in Eltham. Built in 1889 by Colonel North it is a Victorian glasshouse made of iron,



brick and glass and is second in size to Kew itself. It once housed exotic plants, huge palms and rare specimens, including what is reputed to be Britain's largest Canary Island Date Palm.

This historic building is now endangered due to the collapse of

plans to build a school on the site, the sale of which would have financed the refurbishment of the glasshouse. Instead, the government

finance is likely to go to Special Educational Needs provision. Meanwhile, the glasshouse may still be visited free of charge between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm every day of the week. Now may be your last chance to visit this historic building.

'Smart' Postbox



PLANNING APPLICATIONS*

www.westcombesociety.org

55 ULUNDI ROAD ref 25/4220/F
To construct single storey rear glass extension with layout changes to existing rear patio and external staircase.

104B WESTCOMBE PARK ROAD ref 25/4098/F
To construct garden office in rear garden.

Flat 1, 73 HUMBER ROAD ref 25/4001/F
To construct lower ground floor rear extension and terrace.

TREE WORKS

WESTCOMBE PARK CARE HOME,
112 WESTCOMBE PARK ROAD ref
26/0085/TC

To fell sycamore in rear garden, and
prune three other trees.

51A WESTCOMBE PARK ROAD ref
26/0046/TC

To fell Robinia in rear garden.

* Please be advised that the planning applications noted here are based on information available at the time of print. For the latest updates, please visit our website www.westcombesociety.org

Lee Manor Society announce the 'Unwrapping' of their First 'Smart' Postbox

It's in Lee Green at the junction of Effingham and Wantage Roads. The website explains; "They are smart because as well as taking letters they will also take small parcels, up to the size of a shoe box."

Look out for the first one in Greenwich.



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WHAT'S ON

Royal Observatory

Transformation Works at the Royal Observatory Greenwich

Parts of the Royal Observatory site have closed from 8 September 2025 for a transformative redevelopment project titled 'First Light'. The first phase of the project has started with the closure of the Peter Harrison Planetarium, Modern Astronomy galleries and the Victorian Altazimuth Pavilion. Work is planned to be completed by spring 2028.

The Prime Meridian line, Meridian Observatory and historic Flamsteed House galleries remain open to visitors until spring 2027.

www.rmg.co.uk/royal-observatory/transformation

SPECIAL EVENTS

Mirror Moon by Luke Jerram

A monumental sculpture of the Moon will be installed at the Royal Observatory Greenwich.

Multi-disciplinary artist Luke Jerram has used accurate topographic data from NASA to map the textures of the Moon onto a mirror steel surface. For the first time, visitors can run their fingers along the craters, valleys and mountains that define the Moon.

Date: 3 March 2026

Time: 10.00 – 17.00

Age: Suitable for all ages

Location: Royal Observatory Greenwich

Admission: Free with entry to the Royal Observatory

Women of the Royal Observatory Tour

This tour will highlight the women behind some of the Royal Observatory's most compelling historical stories. Celebrating women in the science field, learn about the first woman to be paid for astronomical work, the 'Greenwich Time Lady' who sold the time and other women who have impacted the world we know it today.

Dates: 7, 8, 13, 14, 18, 19, 27, 30, 31 March 2026

Time: 15.00 – 16.00

Age: Suitable for all ages

Location: Royal Observatory Greenwich

Admission: £5

For more details please visit

www.rmg.co.uk/

The Blackheath Music Appreciation Group

meets each Monday morning from 1000 to 1200 in Blackheath Halls and its lectures this term by the British composer Matthew Taylor will cover The English Symphony through the Ages. The 11-lecture series started on **January 5 and will end on March 23**, with a one-week gap for half term on February 16. Each week Matthew gives the historical background to his talk, he illustrates them on the piano and also plays CD recordings of the music. The charge for the series is £170 and individual lectures cost £17. Further Information 07849 74441

GREENWICH THEATRE CONNECTS

This Summer the theatre is producing two plays.

Romeo and Juliet 26/6/26 to 2/8/26 to launch a new summer tradition of Shakespeare's best loved plays.

Followed by The Little Mermaid 7-23 August which will also be produced by Greenwich Theatre.

To book call 0208858775 or email Boxoffice@Greenwichtheatre.org.uk

Maritime Museum

EXHIBITIONS AND DISPLAYS

ZWO Astronomy Photographer of the Year 17

For the seventeenth year of the ZWO Astronomy Photographer of the Year competition The winning images will be displayed in an exhibition at the National Maritime Museum from **Friday 12 September**, alongside a selection of exceptional shortlisted images.

Date: Daily

Time: 10.00 – 17.00

Age: Suitable for all ages

Location: National Maritime Museum, Photography Gallery

Admission: Adult £10 | Child £5 | Student £6.50

SPECIAL EVENTS

BSL Tour: Amazing Animals in Maritime History

Join historian and guide John Wilson for a British Sign Language (BSL) tour about animals.

Date: 3 March 2026

Time: 14.00 – 15.00

Age: Suitable for adults

Location: National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

Admission: Free

Women's History Month

Book Launch – The Gods Smiled: A Journey of Overcoming by Shirley Baker

Date: 5 March 2026

Time: 18.00 – 21.00

Age: Suitable for adults

Location: National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

Admission: Free

Queen's House

Trinity Laban Concert

A classical music concert Each concert will feature a different selection of music and performers, offering ticketholders an hour-long recital of a variety of well-known classical pieces.

Date: 27 March 2026

Time: Doors open at 18.00 | Concert takes place 19.30 – 20.30

Age: Suitable for all ages

Location: Queen's House, Greenwich

Admission: Adult £16 | Adult Member £14.40 | Child £8 | Child Member £7.20

The Invincible Ones

Royal Museums Greenwich Caird Fellow, Sharon Walters, has developed a new series of artworks and will unveil them during a special evening event at the Queen's House.

Date: 20 March 2026

Time: 18.30 – 21.30

Age: Suitable for adults

Location: Queen's House, Greenwich

Navigating My Sea

The Navigating My Sea programme at Royal Museums Greenwich invites local support groups for women to engage with the collection and express themselves through the creation of artwork.

Date: Throughout March 2026

Time: 10.00 – 17.00

Age: Suitable for all ages

Location: Queen's House, Greenwich

Admission: Free

The Blackheath Flower Arrangement Society

Feb 20th is the next event. 1-3 at Mycenae House 1-3. £8 admission for visitors & £50 per year for members. We have professional demonstrators who make extraordinary, artistic displays that are raffled off. We also have creative workshops 3 times per year. siancaroline@googlemail.com

The Arts Society Greenwich

www.theartssocietygreenwich.org.uk

WE HAVE MOVED TO BLACKHEATH HIGH SCHOOL, VANBRUGH PARK

Thomas Heatherwick - a modern Leonardo?

Monday 9 February at 7.30 pm

Lecturer: Ian Swankie

Venue: Blackheath High School, Vanbrugh Park, Blackheath SE3 7AG

Guests very welcome: £10; reduced membership from February 2026 (5 lectures): £45

The past decade has seen the meteoric rise of this extraordinarily versatile British designer with his acclaimed Olympic cauldron, the iconic new London bus and designs for a spectacular new HQ building in King's Cross for Google. Over the last thirty years the Heatherwick Studio has used an intriguing combination of curiosity and experimentation to produce a vast range of solutions to design challenges around the world. This talk looks at the problems presented, and the wonderfully creative ways in which Heatherwick and his team have responded.

Ian Swankie - a Londoner with a contagious enthusiasm for art and architecture, Ian is an official guide at Tate Modern, Tate Britain, Guildhall Art Gallery and St Paul's Cathedral. He is also a freelance London tour guide. Since 2012 he has led a popular weekly independent art lecture group in his hometown of Richmond in West London. He is an Accredited Lecturer of The Arts Society and a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Art Scholars, one of the city livery companies.



Step back in time: 'Fans in the age of Jane Austen' Exhibition Open at The Fan Museum, until 21st March

Visitors of all ages are invited to explore, learn and enjoy the intricate beauty and craftsmanship, with one special fan giving a nod to the brooding Mr. Darcy, who's sure to have his admirers among the crowd.

Tickets: Available on-door.

Price: Standard entry £5, Senior (above 60) entry £3 with concessions including children under 6, Disabled, and National Art fund.

Information on access & Facilities: We have an operating lift to access the orangery and the first floor (our temporary exhibition), used with a supervising member of staff. For more information visit - www.thefanmuseum.org.uk/access-facilities

#JaneAustenFans

#FanMuseumGreenwich

#FansInTheAgeOfJaneAusten



National One rugby at The Utilita, SE9 6TE. Kick off at 15:00, £15 on the gate.

Feb 14th Birmingham Moseley

Feb 21st Rams

Mar 14th Rotherham

Blackheath Women at Rectory Field, SE3 8SR. Kick off generally 14:00 — check social media. Free entry.

Feb 8th Old Alleynian

Mar 29th Beckenham

www.blackheathrugby.co.uk

Mycenae House

Tues 10th + 24th Feb - Drawing Inward. A calming, mindfulness-based drawing workshop for all abilities. £20/£15.

Fri 13th Feb 7.30pm - The SWOP Sessions. Foot tapping, finger snapping, jazz, soul & blues with Open Mic. £8.

Mon 16th Feb 9am-3pm - K-Pop Demon Hunters workshop. Join JKPA for K-Pop inspired singing, dancing & acting for children age 4+. £40 per child.

Tues 17th-Thurs 19th Feb 10am-4pm - Engineering Minds STEM Camp. Ignite curious minds with a mix of science, technology, arts & play for children age 6-11. £57 per day.

Fri 20th Feb 10.30am - Bach to Baby concert. Classical Concert for families. £16.

Fri 20th Feb 7.30pm - Chinese New Year Celebration. GFMA present a Fantastic Night of Chinese music and culture. £15.

Sat 21st Feb 10am + 1.30pm - Mosaic Lamp Workshop. Joining Mosaic Arts Studio to design and craft your own mosaic lamp. From £59 per person.

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

Blackheath Halls

Sun 1 Feb 10am & 1pm – Peppa Pig's Big Family Show

Mon 2 Feb 1.10pm – Lunchtime Recital: Peter Mallinson and Mathias Wiesner

Sun 7 Feb 10- 5pm – Young Musicians Day

Sat 14 Feb 7.30pm – Courtney Pine & Zoe Rahman

Sun 15 Feb 7pm – Handel's Messiah

Mon 16 Feb 3pm – Sleeping Beauty (Let's All Dance)

Fri 20 Feb 7.30pm – Quiz Night

Sat 21 Feb 7.30pm – On the Run: The Music of Pink Floyd

Mon 23 Feb 1.10pm – Lunchtime Recital: Pražák Quartet

Sat 28 Feb 10.45am – Boppin Bunnies Interactive Music Show

www.blackheathhalls.com/whats-on/

Cutty Sark

Sea Shanty Singers

Cutty Sark's resident groups Swinging the Lead and The HogEye Men

Dates: 7, 8 March 2026

Time: 11.45, 12.45, 13.30

Age: Suitable for all ages

Location: Cutty Sark

Admission: Free with admission to the ship

Ship Mates

A weekly adventure for little sailors to explore.

Date: Wednesdays during term-time

Times: 10.30, 12.00, 13.30

Age: Suitable for ages 5 and under

Location: Cutty Sark

Admission: Adult £5 | Under 5s free

Character Encounters

Meet Captain Woodget, Jock Willis, Nannie, the ship's figurehead, James Robson, the ship's cook, or new dockworker characters, who all have special stories to tell.

Date: Weekends during term time

Daily during school holidays

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COME DANCE WITH ME! Regular over 50's dance class at Mycenae House, Fridays 11am-12pm. All welcome regardless of experience or mobility. Exercise have fun and socialise exploring dance styles. Tel: 07709952215

TWO LEFT FEET International Folk dance sessions at Mycenae House, information contact joclare@hotmail.it Tel 07709952215. Dance your feet off and have fun learning international folk dances!

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