**Woolwich Winter Warmer**

PWG Street, Woolwich. between noon and 5.30pm in the event which takes place this year, as the venue, Greenwich’s annual Woolwich Christmas Bazaar – a popular festive season on December 2nd - December 18th. Christmas cards for at least 25 charities are on sale at Age Exchange in Blackheath from 23rd Nov. - 6th December. They are also on sale at Age Exchange in Greenwich for reporting street level problems. Residents now have a new option for sponsoring the tree this year. Our thanks to Susan Clark of the Interiors shop in Humber Road for her help. In the quiz, making it a fun evening, generating much good humour and helping to foster a sense of community. We hope you’ll see them at future events. Congratulations to the winning team – our former chairman Gordon Baker, Dr Blackwell, Giri Hanks, and Sue Allen. The losing team won three raffle prizes, so I hope our Quiz Nights) on the Woolwich Road, which arrived hot, and on time. The MHA Trust has helped over fifty people to get back into full or part-time employment. Toni Hale told the MHA’s Trust Chair, recently appointed by Judy Garland. 

**Newsbriefs**

**Cards for Good Causes**

Cards for at least 25 charities are on sale at Age Exchange in Blackheath from 23rd Nov. - 6th December. They are also on sale at St Algie’s in Greenwich from November 2nd - December 18th daily, 10am - 4pm.

**Blackheath Village Day**

Blackheath celebrates the start of the festive season on December 5th with activities and events for all the family, and finishes on the Christmas lights at 4.30pm.

**Christmas Bazaar**

Sally, the Westcombe Society’s Christmas Bazaar – a popular annual event – will not be taking place this year, as the venue, Blackheath High School for Girls, is carrying out building work. The good news is that the Westcombe Society will still be erecting the Christmas Tree in the Standard. Our thanks to Susan Clark of the Interiors shop in Humber Road for sponsoring the tree this year.

**Parking consultation**

Don’t forget to respond to the Council’s consultation about possible changes to the Controlled Parking Zone, with regard to both your own street and Old Dover Road. The deadline for comments is December 11th.

**Fix My Street**

Fix My Street. Residents now have a new option for reporting street level problems to the council with the launch of a new, mobile-friendly website for us all to report problems as and when they encounter them.

**Woodlands Farm**

The Farm’s Christmas Fayre is on Sun. 4th December from 11.0am - 3.00pm. All are welcome. Visit Santa’s Grotto, sip mulled wine whilst browsing stalls of local produce and crafts for early Christmas present ideas. A great day out for all the family. Entry is free, but donations are always welcome. No parking on the farm, so please use public transport.

**Another successful Quiz Night**

The Westcombe Society held yet another successful Quiz night on the 23rd Oct. in Mycenae House. The usual suspects were present but we were very pleased to welcome new groups from Westcombe Hill and Handy Road. We hope we’ll see them at future events. Our thanks to Caroline for taking the bookings and organising the teams; also to the markers Joanne and Patricia, and to Jenny and Teresa for selling the Raffle tickets. We all enjoyed the chippy suppers from Fisherman’s Inn (a regular feature of our Quiz Nights) on the Woolwich Road, which arrived hot, and on time. Finally, thanks to all who took part in the quiz, making it a fun evening, generating much good humour and helping to foster a sense of community. Hope to see you again next time!

COMMUNITY

Christmas Nativity

Last year, St John's Church mounted a successful ‘Away in a Manger’ with over 600 members of the local community either taking part or coming along to watch. This year, we are putting it on again this year – and it will be on Saturday 12th December at 3.00pm. We see it very much as an event for the local community and one that will involve us all. Too. Our local school choir is singing, local traders and residents are some of the show’s 150 performers. We have a live donkey plus three live sheep from Woodland’s Farm in Shooters Hill ...

... We start at 3.00pm on St John’s church with the beginning of the Christmas story. Like the three wise men (or the three Kings) we then follow a ‘star’ to the British Pub. The choir will sing at each ‘stop’.

As we arrive at the Oak, the current Landlady will come and talk to us. If we let us know there is no room in the inn, just as it is organised in Bethlehem. We then depart because we have chosen the Christmas story to process to Blackheath Library, and then tell more of the story, as angels, shepherds and kings will appear on the balconies above the shops.

Finally, we process back to the church – and there, alleluia! is a stable scene with a live Joseph, Mary and baby! We see the whole event lasting around an hour: a wonderful way of ushering in the Christmas season.

Children are warmly welcome to come dressed up as an angel, king, sheep etc.

Our web address for further details: stjohnsblackheath.org.uk

Not just a Toy Library

Charlton Toy Library is a Registered Charity set up in 1982 by a group of mothers with children on a regular basis with their children. We now have our own premises in Charlton House and offer to run and play sessions and toy and safety equipment lending, as well as an outreach programme working with families in need.

The Toy Library is a fun, stimulating and safe place. We provide families with places to come and meet other parents, play with their children or get advice from our very experienced staff.

We serve 100s of families in and around the borough, many of whom have cited the library as the reason they have moved to Charlton. We have an extensive range of books on all aspects of childcare, health, disabilities, meal-planning and many more topics.

Our toy selection is fantastic, with age ranges from 6 up to 7 on selected toys. We have a wide range of story-books, special needs toys, toy babies, toys, games and puzzles, dressing up and many more, all available for free.

Our safety equipment is also extensive, with items ranging from fire guard rails to car seat safety belts.

These are on loan from one to six months at a time. We also provide vital support to families in three women’s refuges in the borough, to several Homestart groups and to many families referred by health visitors.

Stay and play for under 5s and baby equipment lending, as well as an outreach programme working with families in need: 020 8319 0055; or just pop in to one of our sessions and say hello.

Finally, many thanks to the Westcombe Society for their ongoing support.

Letters to the editor

Views expressed are those of the writers only, & may not be those of the WN or the Westcombe Society.

The Blackwall Tunnel is a rip-off for purpose, given the volume of traffic using it. It forms a pinch-point, and causes massive congestion, especially when a breakdown occurs. It also creates one of the highest levels of pollution recorded in the UK.

The proposal to build another tunnel is further and fatally flawed by the fact that it would form “a single point of failure”, a vast traffic jam. The plan is to build a toll tunnel that will close beneath the existing tunnel. There are on loan from one to six months at a time. We also provide vital support to families in three

Westcombe News 15th December 2015

Dear Caroline,

I am writing to say how much I enjoyed the ‘Come and join us!’ event that you organised last year to celebrate the anniversary of the Westcombe Society. All who attended had a fantastic evening.

The food was excellent, the ambience was friendly and informal, and I found the conversation about the community and the challenges that we face very interesting.

I have no doubt that you will achieve the kind of outcome that you hope for.

I hope that you will get involved soon!

Best regards,
Jane Beswetherick

On Tuesday 27th October 2015 at 2.20pm a man purposely threw a white plastic bag containing a sports bottle filled with motor oil into the middle of the Vauxhall Hill. A car drove over the bag, and an explosion caused over £1,500 of damage. A passing mother and child narrowly escaped injury.

If you have any information please alert the Police by calling 101, Crime No. 36218199/18, FOC P.C. Holmes.

DESCRIPTION: White Make-Apporx 30 years old of average height, with greying(?) hair. Wearing Orange Jumper, Chino Shorts, Brown Loafers, carrying a black backpack, and pushing a bicycle

WANTED
Sunday, 4th October 2015 saw the official and formal opening of the Woodlands to the public. After four years in the making, we saw blue skies and glorious sunshine greet more than 350 visitors entering through our new gate. The opening ceremony was presided over by the new MP for Greenwich & Woolwich, Matthew Pennycook. We also welcomed The Mayor of the Royal Borough of Greenwich, Councillor Norman Adams.

The photo above shows Matthew as he cuts the ribbon at the new entrance to the Westcombe Woodlands. After this ceremony, everyone headed into the woodlands, finding it hard to believe that this wild green space, haven for birds and other wildlife, existed in our city. Many of the people who attended the open day had never experienced at first-hand the inside of the woodland, so this was a great achievement for all the committee members’ and volunteers’ efforts over the years.

On arriving at the Glade visitors looked around, and examined the information boards. They also enjoyed the drinks and refreshments for sale – including cakes made by the children of a member of our committee Don Albrecht. Donations taken on the day amounted to an incredible £175!

The day was a resounding success: it generated much interest with new members eager to join in next year's activities. It is hoped we will be able to undertake another open day in the Summer of 2016. The Westcombe Woodlands are located in between Maze Hill and Vanbrugh Hill and are a Site of Nature Conservation Importance. 

The Dell in Mycenae Road is a Site of Nature Conservation Importance and, during three Sundays in September, a total of 26 volunteers picked up litter, removed dog mess, made log piles from fallen branches, cleared nettles from the perimeter path, and prepared three areas for woodland plants and spring bulbs.

These areas, near the entrance gates, have now been planted with honeysuckle, sweet woodruff, foxgloves and primroses to provide nectar for bees and other insects, while hawthorn and paracantha will provide autumn berries for birds. Look out in the New Year for patches of wood anemones, snowdrops, and bluebells, which have also been planted.

Also look out for a lovely display board ‘Wildlife in the Woodland Dell’ by local graphic designer Yu-Hsuan Lin, which features birds, plants and insects. These were photographed by her husband Joe Beale during monthly observations he made earlier this year. The panel is on an oak stand made by Greenwich Men in Sheds, a voluntary group within AGE UK.

The display board will be unveiled at a date to be announced. The work has been organised by Friends of Mycenae Gardens with support from the Mayor of London’s Capital Clean-up Community Grant, and has brought people in the community together in caring for and enjoying the space.

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The second tunnel

Anne Robbins reports on a recent meeting organised by the Westcombe Society to discuss TfL’s proposals

The Westcombe Society Environment Committee organized a residents’ meeting in November to gauge responses to Transport for London’s consultation on the proposed Silvertown Tunnel.

This consultation was our last chance to put forward suggestions for changes to TfL, before the planning application goes to the Planning Authority in the spring. The meeting looked at some of TfL’s arguments for building the tunnel, which would run from the Greenwich Peninsula to Newham’s Royal Victoria Dock, roughly following the line of the Emirates Airway. A number of issues were discussed:

* possible new bus routes
* the charging structure proposed for both Silvertown and Blackwall Tunnels
* current usage and the impact that the new road would have on traffic locally and on the A102 and A2 corridor
* air quality, and how TfL might monitor and mitigate the effects of the tunnel
* the impact of construction traffic

Residents at the meeting represented several viewpoints, including cycling and business. And while many wanted to see traffic queues on the Blackwall Tunnel reduced, it was agreed that the Westcombe Society should not support the plans without firm commitments from TfL to improve air quality and reduce traffic congestion in the area. There were doubts whether this could be achieved.

In particular, TfL’s plans for charging were questioned. The meeting felt that the charging plans would seriously disavant local businesses, could persuade them to move out of the area, and might also discourage new businesses from setting up in this part of south-east London.

The second tunnel also found that the changes, proposed or might not be high enough to discourage demand, so more drivers would be attracted to the area. With south-bound traffic already often backed up to the Sun in the Sand’s in the evening, the TfL proposal led to comments that the next step might end up being road widening, with strong feelings against this possibility.

As one attendee said, “It was a small gathering but very amiable and vocal and their views were interesting.” It was very useful to gain a variety of perspectives. The Westcombe Society is grateful to all who came, especially as they may not have anticipated how long the meeting would run! Following this meeting, the Westcombe Society will again object to the plans, with the support of residents. We will be asking for the strongest assurances, built into the plans, that local disadvantages will be minimized.

R.G. Austin

(Exiled 1976)

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Shakespeare School’s Festival at Greenwich Theatre

The pint sized boy as Bottom in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, had the whole audience laughing. He held the stage, as Bottoming Bottom. His class from Kidbrooke Primary School put on an entrancing adaptation of the play involving every child, six of them acting as narrators.

The same evening Hawkins Moor School from Thamesmead perform Macbeth. The three witches obviously relished deluding out “to illertaible,” and again six children were narrators, whilst the other roles were shared. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth passed their crowns to two others, and other members of the cast took turns to play different parts.

The previous evening, James Wolfe Primary School ably depicted in Romeo and Juliet the tragic outcomes of envy and violence.

Secondary schools also gave meaning to their adaptations of Shakespeare. St Ursula’s Convent incorporated effective group movement in Twelfth Night and some excellent acting. Sir Toby Belch was played with youthful talent and enthusiasm. Eltham College’s The Tempest also used imagina-
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Greenwich Park: the Peoples choice?  
Maurice Ben Rose gives a personal view

I noted with interest the picture of Greenwich Park on the front page of the October issue of the Westcombe News encouraging us to vote for its the ‘Best green space’ in the country.  I’d love to cast my vote for Greenwich Park; but honestly I can’t. There are so many beautiful, evocative, ancient green spaces in and around this wonderful city of ours. I remember when I first came South of the river to Greenwich over a decade ago. Then the park was a very pleasant place; Queen Elizabeth’s oak was still standing (an object of historical interest).  But really honestly and truly I can think of one thumb-nail hopping among the tall grasses; the time I went with my son to climb god’s tree, it was our secret, the spot over toward Parliament Fields where ‘Duke the Piper’ practised early in the morning... It’s a magical place, open and wild, and you can walk there any time, day or night.  The grassy dips down to the Vale of Health: a cluster of picturesque houses nestle there with another little pond fringed with reeds and willows, and a small fair with a carousel and swing boats. Through the woods you pass a pond; a tiny island of reeds, a pair of swans and a rustic bridge like a Monet painting. Beyond stands the beautiful Georgian mansion of Kenwood House... Forgive me for elucidating the Heath but that, dear Westcombe News readers, is some green space. I think I’ll award it a little green Flag of my own.  And now, back to Greenwich Park. Yes, I agree it is a very pretty, well-kept park. But, on certain days at certain times in the year that park is the only place to be. It’s after a heavy fall of snow and the place is blanked-over in the white crispy stuff. Then by god that park comes alive. It bears all the swanky ski-sorts with the poor in their fancy ski- suits shuffling sliding down the red and black pistes. Greenwich Park comes into its own; it becomes a mad-house! People from all over the borough descend on the park; all ages, all races, in fur-lined boots, bobble-hats, mufflers and parkas, their hot breath mingling in the cold air. I can remember going there with my eight year old son Micah and my wife Marie Claire. We had a couple of battered old plastic sledges, anything that would slide; Dustin lads; bin-liners; old coats, plastic sheeting; scraps of tarpaulin. I still remember it: a rather jolly man clutching a Pilsner launches himself belly-first down the ice slope like a penguin. Everywhere people are slipping, sliding and colliding. Multiple pile-ups occur, it’s a happy-go-lucky chaos. The park is a new place: on the crest of the hill is a ‘troika’ with Dr Zhivago and Julie Christie look-alikes swathed in furs, moving on out of the park across the ‘Russian Steppes’ of Blackheath ... Never have I enjoyed myself so much. It’s a joy to see people bonding. The place, the setting; the time of year: the mood of the people all conjoin to make that day and that place truly memorable; and there isn’t a blade of grass in sight. Then, oh yes then ‘Greenwich Park gets my vote for the best ‘green’ white space in the country.’

The Case for Radical Change in Education

This report was prepared by the PER Group to send to the political parties in May. It has forewords by Anthony Seldon, Richard Harries and Frank Fairey. You can buy it post free if you receive the Westcombe News for the special price of £5.00 by sending money or cheque, payable to PER Group, to: The PER Group c/o Box 16916, Blackheath, SE3 7WS

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www.homeinstead.co.uk/greenwich

PHOTO CREDIT: ROYAL PARKS

Features

Psychological Therapy For Young Mums
53% of Teenage Mums suffer Postnatal Depression, but there’s help at hand, writes KATE SMITH

It is estimated that more than half of new mums aged nineteen or under experience depression, putting them and their babies at risk. A new initiative from MumsAid is set to support young mums in Greenwich to help them to cope with the challenges of motherhood and give their babies the best possible start. Based in Woolwich Children’s Centres, YoungMumsAid offers free weekly psychotherapy sessions, along with a crèche, to pregnant and new mothers aged 16 – 19.

Early intervention is crucial in treating mental health problems among young mothers. Maternal depression has been linked to significant disadvantages for babies’ development, and can lead to behavioural problems such as aggression and ADHD. In more severe cases, babies can be at risk of neglect and abuse.

Since 2002 MumsAid has supported women before and after the birth of their babies by providing counselling, peer support and training for frontline staff in Postnatal Depression (PND) awareness. Clinical Director and Founder of MumsAid, Minium Donaghy says “The right support makes a big difference, not just to mothers, but also to the healthy development of their babies, and that’s why MumsAid is committed to developing and sustaining quality accessible services.”

It is thought that only 15% of women with symptoms of PND seek or obtain medical advice. Young mums and their babies are a vulnerable group, and the impact of PND is likely to be especially harmful.

Actress and local mum, Zoe Toppes, has helped with securing a Children-in-Need grant to develop YoungMumsAid. “The post birth period is a vulnerable time for any mum but for a young mum suffering from postnatal depression, it can feel overwhelming and isolating. Services such as YoungMumsAid are a much needed helping hand. A professional, experienced, non-judgemental ear can, quite literally, save a life.”

For more information or to access the service, please contact 0208 611 6611 or youngmumsaid.org

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How green is Greenwich?

asks IAN BLORE of the East Greenwich Residents Association

We all share in the pleasures of Greenwich Park and Blackheath as well as the trees and smaller green spaces that are a feature of our area. But the air pollution, 80% of which is caused by traffic, is less visible and less pleasant than potentially very serious. In June the EGRA repeated the measurements at the Woolwich Road flyover junction leading to the existing Blackwall tunnel. EGRA repeated the measurements at more sites this autumn and have also plotted the results of Greenwich Council’s own surveys over the last ten years. In their report, How Bad is Our Air in Greenwich, they present the findings and question some of the myths about air pollution.

Myth 1. Pollution is only serious at main roadside locations

All the local surveys, including those by Transport for London, Greenwich Council, and the Westcombe Society to measure pollution on local roads. Now EGRA (East Greenwich Residents Association) have produced a report about their measures of amounts of nitrogen dioxide (NO2).

Three sites were controlled to measure what was expected to be low background pollution. The results showed:
- NO2 limits were breached most on main roads, in some cases badly
- even the control sites indicated elevated levels of NO2
- the worst result was, very predictably, at the Woolwich Road flyover junction

EGRA also point out that traffic can be gridlocked along Trafalgar Road and free-flowing through the tunnel, so the pollution can not all be due to congestion at the tunnel.

Myth 2. East Greenwich Pollution is caused by the Blackwall Tunnel

TfL argue that because the Silvertown tunnel, so the pollution cannot all be due to congestion at the tunnel.

Myth 3. Air quality is improving

Greenwich Council reports show pollution levels at 4 sites in or near East Greenwich over the last ten years. These indicate that pollution has hardly changed - and at the Woolwich flyover has remained the same although, according to the Department for Transport, traffic levels over the same period have fallen. (hard to believe...) The EGRA report speculates that the unchanged level of heavy pollution despite apparent decreases in traffic could be due to an increase in heavily polluting vehicles or in congestion and therefore more idling. Whatever the cause, solutions are urgently needed.

Myth 4. Technology and regulation will cure the problem.

It is hard to believe that either regulation or technology will solve a situation to such an intractable problem that has been increasing in urgency over so many years. The East Greenwich Residents Association will shortly publish the second part of their report which will suggest some of the ways in which improvements could be made.

We pioneered the Clean Air Act in 1956. Let’s do it again.

EGRA and the Westcombe Society have co-operated on this “citizen science” work. It affects us all. Do you have any suggestions to improve our air quality?

The Call of the River Thames

Transport remained an important issue: cycling was being encouraged, and the number of electrical vehicle charging points has increased. The Car Club scheme was proving very successful. However, the problem of carbon and particulate emissions from motor vehicles was proving difficult, as most of the pollution caused in this area came from sources outside of council control - traffic, vehicles such as buses and taxis using diesel and through-traffic on TRL roads.

But the big issue focused on in the meeting was the air pollution, and the raise live terminal at Fenderley Wharf in particular: while the Council had put in place green planning regulations on the terminal buildings and the new blocks nearby, many in the audience raised concerns about emissions from the liners. Those in attendance feeling that the Council should have insisted on “shore-based power” for the cruise liners instead of permitting the use of on-board diesel-fuelled generators. It was argued that according to the developer’s own figures, generators on medium-sized cruise ships consume about 700 litres of diesel per hour - equivalent to 400 idling lorries.

Mr Thorpe said the Council had looked extensively into the emissions from on-shore power - and in particular the emissions. He said that the Royal Borough sits within the emission control area, which requires any shipping vessel on the Thames to burn less than 0.1% sulphur fuel.

Those in attendance urged the Council to think again about these issues.

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2) Wednesdays 10.30am to 12 noon, beginning 13 January 2016, ending 9 March 2016
We won’t meet the 3rd week of Feb. - it’s half term.

The fee for the course is £130, which includes all materials and a half-day silent retreat on 27 February. Please contact kellobronson@btinternet.com or 07908885035

Kelly Robson has a long-standing meditation practice and was introduced to the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) programme in 2011. She has trained with the Bangor University Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice and the Mindfulness in Schools Project.

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